Publicado em 12/01/2023 - 08:53

# Almost half of the population thinks that the vaccine against Covid should not be mandatory

A new opinion poll brought to light the denialist or misinformed view of a significant portion of the Brazilian population in relation to Covid-19: 46.8% think that the vaccine it should not be mandatory, which contradicts epidemiological studies and the effectiveness of mass vaccination to combat the spread and mutation of the virus. The survey also shows that 30.4% still consider the vaccine experimental and that 35% believe in the effectiveness of chloroquine (hydroxychloroquine) — a proven ineffective medicine against the disease.

The research was carried out by Sou_Ciência, a multidisciplinary research group linked to the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), in partnership with the Idea BigData Research Institute, on the 9th of November. 1,200 respondents were interviewed, including men and women residing in all regions of Brazil, aged 16 years or older, with different educational backgrounds, race/color, income and social class. The poll's confidence level is 95% and the margin of error is plus or minus 2.85%.

?? In an October 2021 survey, we had detected a wide population adherence to vaccines against Covid-19, with 95 % of the population positioning themselves in favor. This took place during 2021 and part of 2022, when most of the population completed the basic vaccination schedule [sem as doses de reforço]. Now society is divided on collective responsibility in the immunization process and on the effectiveness of the vaccine", says the general coordinator of Sou_Ciência Soraya Smaili.

"These data are quite worrying, as they show an advance in misinformation, very much related to the behavior of rulers and the lack of a State policy for vaccination. All of this contributes to a false impression that the pandemic is over and that we no longer have to worry about it," adds Smaili. Professor and researcher at the Department of Pharmacology at Escola Paulista de Medicina at Unifesp, Smaili was Dean of Unifesp from 2013 to 2021. Unifesp recently received CAPES Elsevier as the university that most contributed to research on Covid-19.

Adherence to denialism – In the survey, three phrases were presented (said by Jair Bolsonaro or by people close to the core of the previous government) on which respondents should agree or disagree: the vaccine against Covid-19 should not be mandatory, the choice is individual; vaccines against Covid-19 are not scientifically proven; and chloroquine and the Covid kit allowed early treatment. Finally, the state of mind regarding the government of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was asked.

"By crossing the data, we found that the responses with more denialist positions were from people who declared themselves to be pessimistic with the new government — an indication that this portion of the population adhered to the denialist discourse of the Bolsonaro government," says Smaili. "For example, among those who agreed with the non-compulsory vaccination [46,8%]62.6% were pessimistic about the Lula government."

Causes of backlash – Not only the denialist speech and actions of the previous government explain this setback, which is mirrored by the drop in vaccination. While 85% and 80.39% of the population took the first and second dose, respectively, adherence to the booster dose was 50.12% (data from January 9). ?? After the critical period of 2021 and with the proximity of the elections in 2022, the federal government started to treat Covid-19 as an endemic; States relaxed the requirement to wear masks; and the rapid drop in the number of deaths, combined with a lower number of serious cases with the new variants in healthy people, made the population return to social life without restrictions or care, believing that the pandemic was under control", she points out. .

"But what happens is exactly the opposite, because what we are currently seeing is a flood of subvariants and an increasingly distant transmission control", he continues. "The biggest problem is that just over half of the population is vaccinated with the booster dose, which contributes to protection against the new variants", he points out.

Challenges of the new government – In Smaili's assessment, the next government will have to act on several fronts to reverse the progress of the pandemic. In addition to rescuing epidemiological control work and taking stock of the quantity of vaccines available, it will be necessary to rebuild the National Immunization Program, resume mass testing, invest in antiviral treatments (currently very expensive) and in the purchase of bivalent vaccines, which provide protection against Omicron and its variants. In addition, it is essential that the Brazilian government increases investments in science and in the development of new drugs, vaccines and treatments.

"A major awareness campaign, combined with measures to support science and scientific dissemination, orchestrated with municipal and state managers, will be vital to raise awareness and make the population vaccinate again", he emphasizes. "Brazil knows how to do this. We have one of the biggest and best vaccination programs in the world. What is missing is a

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serious state policy, capable of containing the spread of the virus and bringing the number of cases of the disease and deaths to acceptable levels, following the example of what several other countries have achieved", he concludes.

Highlight of the main conclusions of the research:

**The Covid-19 vaccine should not be mandatory, the choice is individual**

Among respondents, 46.8% argue that the vaccine should not be mandatory, considering it to be an individual choice, against 45.9% who understand that the effectiveness of the vaccine depends on collective immunization. Richest (above 6 minimum wages), with 54.3%; evangelicals, with 53.1%; and the "pessimists" with the Lula government, with 62.6%, are those who most defend freedom of choice. Among "optimistic" people in relation to the new federal government, only 21% declared themselves against the obligation.

**Vaccines against Covid-19 are not scientifically proven**

30.4% of the people interviewed stated that vaccines "have not been scientifically proven". The most disbelieving portion of the vaccine's effectiveness is made up of the richest (33.2%), evangelicals (35.3%) and pessimists with the Lula government (37%). Among the segments that recognize scientific proof — therefore, with a greater propensity to believe in science — are those with higher education (60.2%), black people (57.8%) and, especially, those who declared themselves to be optimistic in relation to the new government (70.8%).

**Chloroquine and the Covid kit allowed for early treatment**

35.3% believe that the so-called "Covid kit" provided early treatment against the virus. This percentage is accentuated in the Midwest region (45.2%) and among evangelical people (38.9%). Among those who disagree with this statement, there are people with higher education (52.7%) who declared themselves optimistic about the future government (73.3%).

Complete data can be accessed here.

The article is in Portuguese

https://portugal.postsen.com/health/275191/Almost-half-of-the-population-thinks-that-the-vaccine-against-Covid-should-not-be-mandatory.html

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