# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1952**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 19)**

**Mr H A Shembeni (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

What (a)(i) studies has his department done to ascertain the extent of vaccine hesitancy in the Republic and (ii) are the causes of the hesitancy and (b) communication measures has his department put in place to allay the fears of persons who are hesitant to take the COVID-19 vaccines?

###### NW2184E

**REPLY:**

1. Our goal must be to vaccinate at least 70% of adults in South Africa, and especially to ensure that all people over the age of 50 are vaccinated before Christmas 2021. If we do that, the number of people who are hospitalised or die from COVID-19 will be substantially reduced.
2. In terms of vaccine hesitancy, the South African population falls into three main groups:

* Those who are eager or willing – this is the biggest group, roughly two thirds.
* Those who are uncertain and need to be supported to get them over the line by providing them with information and reassurance and making it easy for them to get vaccinated – a quarter of the population.
* Those who are opposed to vaccination (roughly a sixth).

This is encouraging, because it means that the vast majority of South African adults may come forward for vaccination if their concerns are addressed and if it is easy for them to access the service. The challenge is likely to be due to lack of urgency to be vaccinated rather than being unsure of whether to vaccinate or not.

**Extent of vaccine acceptance**

The Department of Health has drawn on a number of national studies to understand the extent and reasons for vaccine hesitancy. They include:

* The NIDS-CRAM series of panel surveys (which found that vaccine acceptance has increased from 71% in Feb/Mar to 76% in Apr/May 2021. Half of those who were vaccine hesitant in Feb/Mar 2021 had changed their minds were now willing to vaccinated.
* HSRC/University of Johannesburg survey (Dec/Jan 2021: Two thirds of the SA adult population say they will definitely or probably get vaccinated.
* Ask Afrika Survey: 62% of South Africans willing to get vaccinated.
* African Response (May 2021): 74% of South Africans are willing to get vaccinated and are confident of government’s efforts to manage the vaccine rollout.
* Afro Barometer (May 2021): 43% say they are willing to get vaccinated; 64% approve of government’s performance and 78% say government has done a good job of keeping public informed).
* SAMRC VAX-scenes (April 2020): 62% willing to get vaccinated.

All surveys with the exception of the Afrobarometer survey find that the majority (about two-thirds) of South Africans are willing to get vaccinated. Another quarter are open to persuasion. Only about one in six say they definitely won’t get vaccinated.

**Reasons for acceptance.**

The main reasons for accepting the vaccine are to protect themselves or family from contracting the virus (~75% of those who are willing).

**Reasons for hesitancy**

The main reasons cited for hesitancy include:

* Concern over side effects (about ¼ of those who are vaccine hesitant)
* Distrust of the vaccine (about ¼ of those who are vaccine hesitant)
* Unsure of its effectiveness

1. The Department’s response on communication measures put in place:

* The NDoH and GCIS work together on a national communications strategy to tackle the reasons for vaccine hesitancy. This includes a social media strategy, radio PSAS in all 11 languages as well as printed material in all 11 languages distributed to all districts. Over the past months, over 20 million information leaflets have been printed and are being distributed.
* The NDoH and GCIS also leverage the communications and social mobilisation capability of civil society organisations, labour and the business sector through the National Communications Partnership which has produced and disseminated contents through their networks.
* The private sector has also come on board, with the PEPKOR group of companies distributing over 10 million of the NDoH leaflets through their stores. Posters have been placed in 30,000 spaza shops encouraging people to get registered.
* A national Demand Acceleration Strategy has been developed and a National Task team established to direct its implementation. These activities will be accelerated over the next three months, even as efforts are expanded to make it easier for people to get vaccinated through mobile outreach and other access strategies.

END.