



## Qualitative Study

### Understanding COVID-19 misinformation and vaccine hesitancy in context: Findings from a qualitative study involving citizens in Bradford, UK

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**Abstract**

Background COVID-19 vaccines can offer a route out of the pandemic, yet initial research suggests that many are unwilling to be vaccinated. A rise in the spread of misinformation is thought to have played a significant role in vaccine hesitancy. To maximize uptake, it is important to understand why misinformation has been able to take hold at this time and why it may pose a more significant problem within certain contexts.

Objective To understand people's COVID-19 beliefs, their interactions with (mis)information during COVID-19 and attitudes towards a COVID-19 vaccine.



## Qualitative Study

**Design and Participants** Bradford, UK, was chosen as the study site to provide evidence to local decision makers. In-depth phone interviews were carried out with 20 people from different ethnic groups and areas of Bradford during Autumn 2020. Reflexive thematic analysis was conducted.

**Results** Participants discussed a wide range of COVID-19 misinformation they had encountered, resulting in confusion, distress and mistrust. Vaccine hesitancy could be attributed to three prominent factors: safety concerns, negative stories and personal knowledge. The more confused, distressed and mistrusting participants felt about their social worlds during the pandemic, the less positive they were about a vaccine.

**Conclusions** COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy needs to be understood in the context of the relationship between the spread of misinformation and associated emotional reactions. Vaccine programmes should provide a focused, localized and empathetic response to counter misinformation.

**Patient or Public Contribution** A rapid community and stakeholder engagement process was undertaken to identify COVID-19 priority topics important to Bradford citizens and decision makers.

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