



ROUND 5

# UJ-HSRC COVID-19 DEMOCRACY SURVEY

## Research briefing

# A compelling debate: The public's views on compulsory Covid-19 vaccination and vaccine passports

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## Summary of key findings

- 54% of South African adults support employers making Covid-19 vaccinations compulsory and 51% support providing proof of vaccination to enter public places – so-called ‘vaccine passports’.
- Levels of support for compulsory workplace vaccination and vaccine passports to enter public spaces differ considerably by vaccination status and willingness to vaccinate. Among the fully vaccinated support for compulsory workplace vaccination and vaccine passports is 75% and 78%, respectively. However, among those that are unvaccinated and do not want to be vaccinated support falls to under 10% for both measures.
- Differences in the levels of support for compulsory workplace vaccination and vaccine passports can also be seen by race, education and accommodation type.
- Support for compulsory workplace vaccination is highest amongst Indian adults (65%) followed by Black African Adults (56%), Coloured adults (49%) and lowest among White adults (32%).
- Similarly, support for vaccine passports is lower among White adults, 32% compared to 54% for Black African adults, 51% of Indian adults, and 46% among Coloured adults.
- Higher levels of education seem to be associated with greater opposition to compulsory workplace vaccination and vaccine passports. 61% of those with less than matric support compulsory workplace vaccination compared to 39% of those with post-matric education. 60% of those with less than matric support providing proof of vaccination to enter public places compared to 40% of those with post-matric education.
- There were negligible differences by gender and small differences by age.
- Adults aged 18-24 years had slightly higher support for compulsory workplaces vaccination compared to older age groups. 57% compared to 52% for those aged 55 and above. However, they were slightly less supportive of vaccine passports, 51% compared to 55% for those aged 55 and above.
- The survey also gauged relative levels of support for vaccine passports to enter six particular types of public places. Close to half (47%) supported vaccine passports being introduced for sporting events at stadiums. Similar shares (43-45%) supported vaccine passports at schools and universities, and at restaurants, shisa nyamas, coffee shops or night clubs. Slightly lower support was evident for such measures at municipal offices (38%) and places of worship (40%). Vaccination status and level of vaccine hesitancy again matters appreciably for levels of support.

## Introduction

This briefing report presents findings from Round 5 of the University of Johannesburg (UJ)/Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Covid-19 Democracy Survey relating to the public's views on compulsory workplace vaccination and vaccine passports. The survey was conducted between 22 October 2021 and 17 November 2021. Only adults living in South Africa were surveyed. We asked the following questions;

- To what extent do you support or oppose employers making it compulsory for their employees to be vaccinated?
- To what extent do you support or oppose having to provide proof of vaccination to access public places, for example places of worship, restaurants or sporting events?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree that providing proof of vaccination to enter public places would lead to discrimination?

We also asked people about their support for having to provide proof of vaccination to enter the following specific places: a university, a school, a municipal office, a place of workshop, a sporting event, and a restaurant, shisa nyama, coffee shop or night club.

## Survey methodology

The online survey was conducted using the #datafree Moya Messenger App. The Moya Messenger app, which is operated by Datafree, has six million subscribers 800,000 of whom use the app every day. The survey was available in six languages: English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Setswana and Sesotho. English was the most common language used. The survey was fully completed by 6,358 participants via the Moya messenger app. Most people undertaking the survey did so using a smartphone, access to which has increased rapidly in recent years. However, there is a skew in terms of who has access to smartphones, particularly between older and younger people. In order to address this, we fielded a supplemental telephonic survey, which was undertaken by Ask Afrika.

The telephone survey was conducted between 28 October 2021 and 17 November 2021, and provided an additional 252 responses from those aged 55 and above. Ask Afrika was provided with key sampling criteria regarding this supplemental sample's demographic, social, and geographic characteristics. In addition, to address an under-representation of White adults in the survey, Ask Afrika also fielded our survey to 23 White adults drawn from their online panel. These cases were integrated with the Moya sample to produce an overall sample size of 6,633 respondents for this round. All of the data was weighted to match Statistics South Africa data on race, education and age, and can be regarded as broadly indicative of the views of the adult population at large. In addition, in Round 5 we incorporated an additional adjustment for vaccination rate by gender to match data provided by the Department of Health for the midpoint of the survey period.<sup>1</sup>

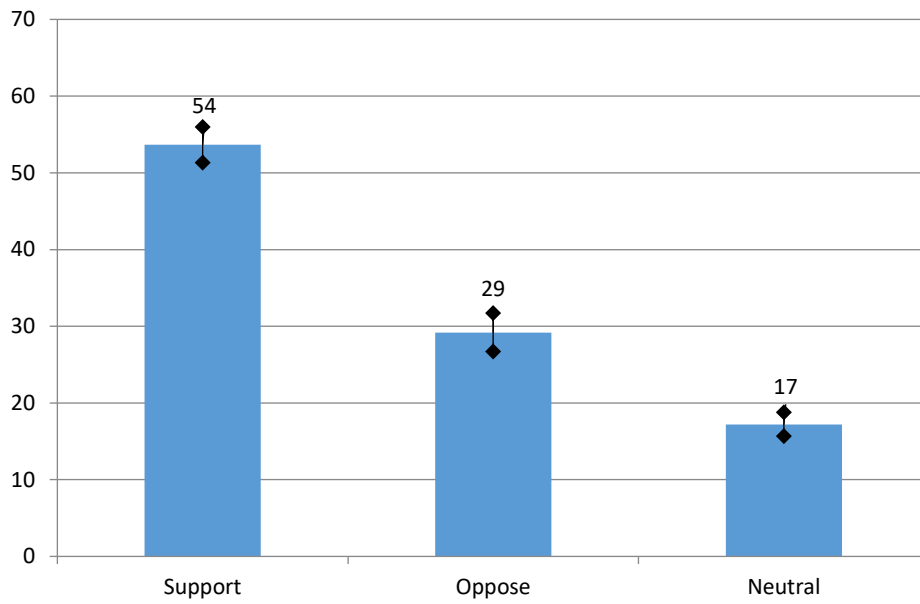
## The public's views on compulsory workplace vaccination and vaccine passports

Figure 1 shows the percentage that support or oppose employers introducing compulsory Covid-19 vaccinations. It demonstrates that just over half (54%) of the public support compulsory vaccination at workplaces. 29% oppose and 17% are neutral or uncertain.

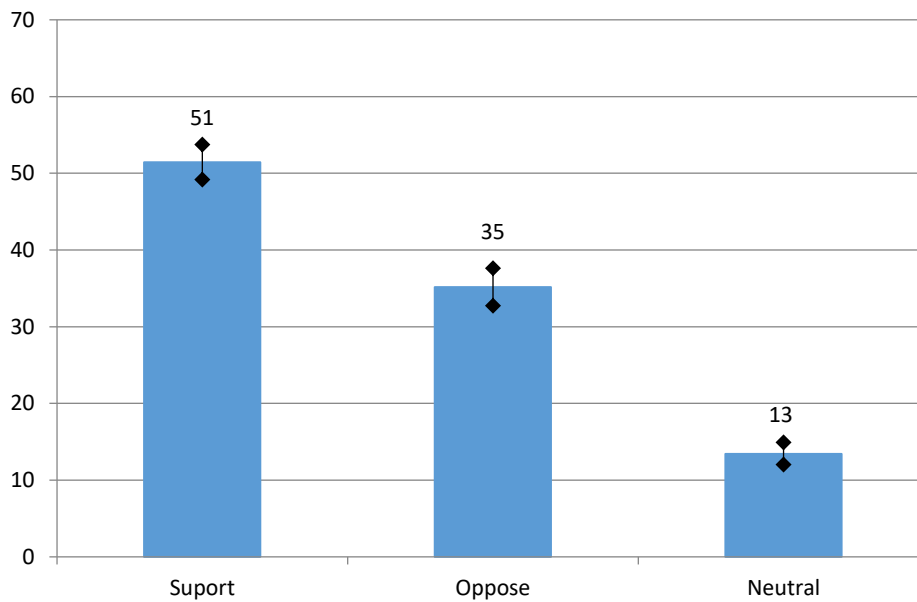
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<sup>1</sup> <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/latest-vaccine-statistics/>

**Figure 1: Views on compulsory vaccination at workplaces, aggregated results (%)**



**Figure 2: Views on providing proof of vaccination to enter public places, aggregated results (%)**

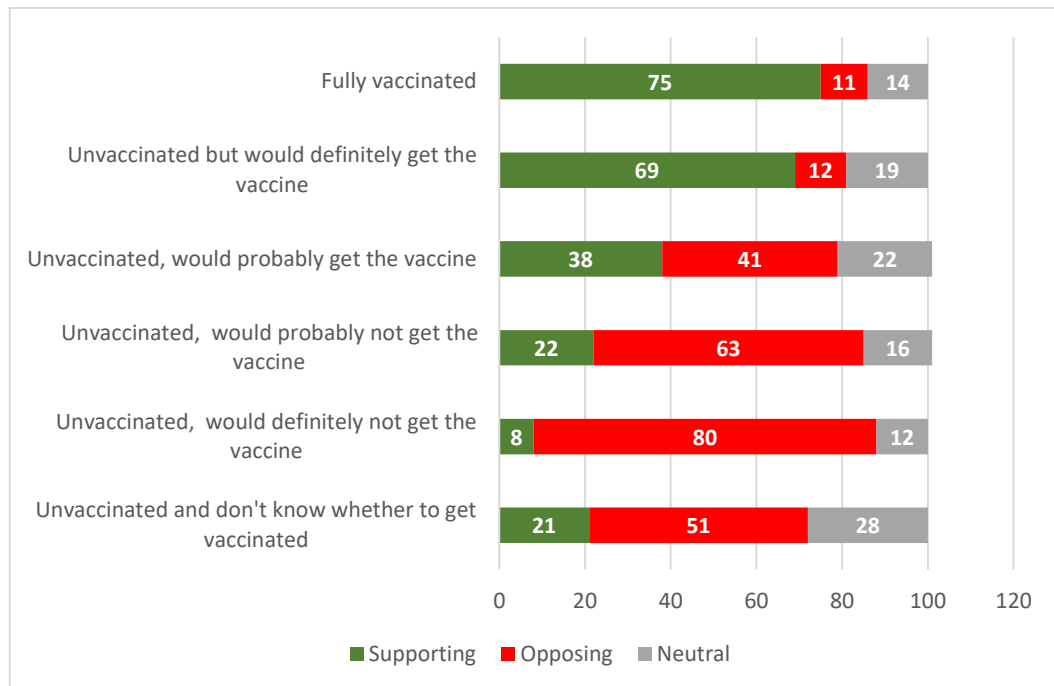


Support for having to provide proof of vaccination to enter a public place, marginally lower than the support for compulsory workplace vaccinations, 51% of adults support this. Correspondingly, levels of opposition are also higher with just over a third of adults opposing having to show proof of vaccination to enter a public place, while 13% are neutral or unsure of their view. Taken together, the findings in Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that just over half of the public are likely to support the introduction of vaccine mandates and vaccine passports.

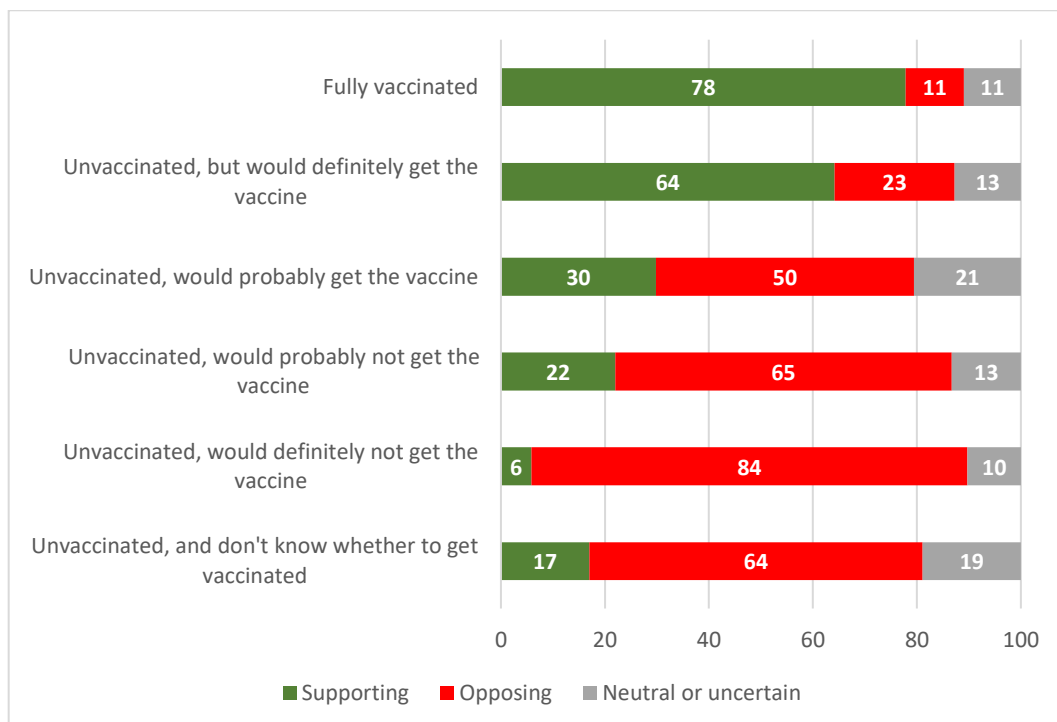
## Views on employer vaccine mandates and vaccine passports by vaccination status and vaccine hesitancy

The survey findings show that there exists a striking difference on the views on employer vaccine mandates and vaccine passports based on whether one has received the Covid-19 vaccination as well as the relative level of vaccination acceptance or hesitancy among the unvaccinated.

**Figure 3: Views on compulsory vaccination at workplaces, by vaccination status and vaccine hesitancy (%)**



**Figure 4: Views on vaccine passports, by vaccination status and vaccine hesitancy (%)**



The bar chart in Figure 3 shows firstly that 75% of fully vaccinated adults at the time of surveying were in favour of employers introducing compulsory workplace vaccination, with barely a tenth (11%) opposing this. Similarly, as figure 4 shows, 78% of fully vaccinated adults support vaccine passports to enter public places. Support for such measures declines amongst the unvaccinated.

Among the unvaccinated who were willing to take a vaccine, 69% were in favour of workplace vaccine mandates and 64% vaccine passports with only 12% and 23% opposed respectively (see figure 3 and 4). Support for workplace vaccination mandates drops appreciably to 38% among the unvaccinated who reported that they would probably get the vaccine, with 41% also unsupportive of this proposition. The equivalent figures for vaccine passports are 30% supporting and 50% opposing. This ambivalence disappears when one looks to the hesitant response categories.

Among unvaccinated adults who will probably not get the Covid-19 vaccination, 63% are against the introduction of compulsory workplace vaccination and 65% against vaccine passports. These figures increase respectively to 80% and 84% opposed for those saying they will definitely not get vaccinated (see figure 3 and 4).

## Views on compulsory vaccination at workplaces by socio-demographics

Table 1 shows group-based differences in views on employers making Covid-19 vaccination compulsory. It demonstrates that the level of support differs little by age or gender. Support for compulsory workplace vaccinations is highest amongst Indian adults (65%) followed by Black African Adults (56%). White adults oppose compulsory workplace vaccination more than other groups, 55% oppose compared to only 26% of Black African adults and 22% of Indian adults. This higher level of opposition to compulsory vaccination among White adults reflects the higher rate of vaccine hesitancy amongst this group, which we have documented in our previous findings.<sup>2</sup> As clearly demonstrated above, those that are unvaccinated and vaccine hesitant have strong opposition to such measures.

Higher levels of education seem to be associated with greater opposition to compulsory workplace vaccination. The highest levels of support for compulsory workplace vaccination is among those with less than matric (61%) compared to 39% of those with post-matric education.

When support for compulsory workplace vaccination is analysed by accommodation type some clear differences emerge. The highest percentage of support for compulsory vaccination at workplaces comes from those living in rural areas (59%), followed by those living in informal settlements (57%) and township and RDP housing (57%). Support is lowest among those living in suburban housing, only 37% of whom support workplace vaccine mandates.

Support for compulsory vaccination by employment status shows some level of variation in the degrees of support. This measure is mostly strongly supported by those employed part time (60%) followed by students (58%) and the unemployed looking for work (56%). Those who are self-employed show the lowest levels of support for compulsory workplace vaccination (44%). However, as demonstrated above, if these groups were further disaggregated by vaccination status we would see vastly different levels of support within each of these sub-groups.

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<sup>2</sup> See Alexander, K., Runciman, C., Roberts, B., Bekker, M. and Bohler-Muller, N. 2021. *Vaccine Acceptance and Hesitancy: Findings From The UJ/HSRC Covid-19 Democracy Survey*. Available at <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/uploads/pageContent/1045979/2021-08-18%20UJ-HSRC%20R4%20Report%201%20Vaccine%20acceptance.pdf>

**Table 1: Views on compulsory vaccinations at workplaces by socio-demographics, weighted row %**

	% supporting	% opposing	% neutral/uncertain
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	53	30	17
Female	54	29	17
<b>Age group</b>			
18-24 years	57	26	17
25-34 years	53	30	17
35-54 years	53	29	18
55+ years	52	32	16
<b>Population group</b>			
Black African	56	26	18
Coloured	49	33	19
Indian / Asian	65	22	13
White	32	55	13
<b>Education level</b>			
Less than matric	61	21	18
Matric	46	37	17
Post-matric	39	47	14
Vocational training	46	38	26
<b>Employment status</b>			
Employed full-time	51	33	16
Employed part-time	60	19	22
Self-employed	44	36	21
Employed in casual work or piece job	50	28	22
Unemployed, looking for work	56	27	17
Student or learner	58	26	17
Other labour inactive	50	35	16
<b>Accommodation type</b>			
Township or RDP house	57	27	16
Backyard shack or room in a township	55	28	18
Informal settlement	57	23	20
Suburban house	37	48	15
Flat, apartment or townhouse	43	41	16
Rural area	59	24	17
Other	44	39	17

## Views on vaccine passports to enter public spaces

As demonstrated above, 51% of the general public support having to provide proof of vaccination to enter public places – what have been termed ‘vaccine passports’. Support for these measures differs little by gender (see table 2). Similarly, there are marginal differences in level of support by age. Vaccine passports are supported by 55% aged 55 and above compared to 51% of 18-24 year olds.

As with compulsory workplaces vaccination, White adults show the lowest level of support for vaccine passports (32%). Black African adults have the highest support for vaccine passports (54%), closely followed by Indian adults (51%). Support for vaccine passports is highest amongst those with less than matric (60%) and is lowest among those with post-matric education (40%), a difference of 20 percentage points.

As we saw above, levels of support for vaccine passports is highest among those employed part time (55%) followed by those employed in casual work (53%) and the unemployed, looking for work (53%). Support for vaccine passports was lowest among the self-employed (43%). Interestingly students are

less supportive of vaccine passports than they were of vaccine mandates. Vaccine passports are supported by 47% compared to 58% supporting mandatory workplace vaccination.

Once again, accommodation type appears to be associated with support for vaccine passports. The highest levels of support for vaccine passports are in rural areas (56%), followed by those living in township or RDP houses (54%) and informal settlements (54%). Support is lowest among those living in suburban houses (35%) and those living in flats, apartments and townhouses (40%).

**Table 2: Views on providing proof of vaccination to enter public places by socio-demographics, weighted row %**

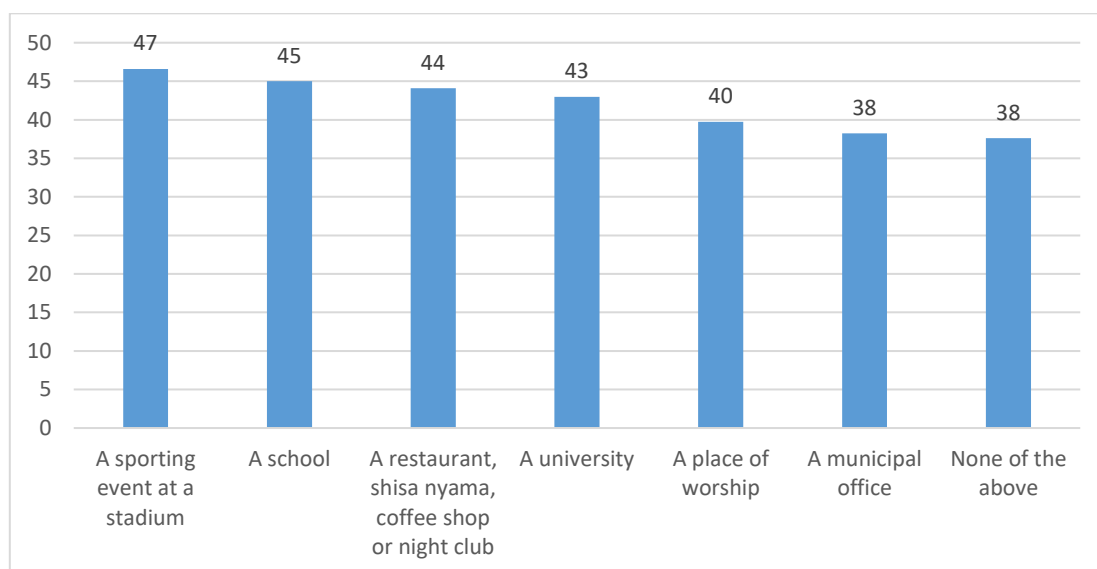
	% supporting	% opposing	% neutral/uncertain
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	52	34	13
Female	51	36	13
<b>Age group</b>			
18-24 years	51	36	14
25-34 years	49	37	14
35-54 years	53	34	14
55+ years	55	33	13
<b>Population group</b>			
Black African	54	33	13
Coloured	46	39	15
Indian / Asian	51	30	19
White	32	53	15
<b>Education level</b>			
Less than matric	60	27	13
Matric	42	44	15
Post-matric	40	48	11
Vocational training	49	41	10
<b>Employment status</b>			
Employed full-time	52	34	14
Employed part-time	55	30	15
Self-employed	43	45	12
Employed in casual work or piece job	53	31	15
Unemployed, looking for work	53	34	13
Student or learner	47	37	16
Other labour inactive	52	36	12
<b>Accommodation type</b>			
Township or RDP house	54	34	12
Backyard shack or room in a township	53	34	13
Informal settlement	54	32	14
Suburban house	35	47	17
Flat, apartment or townhouse	40	31	13
Rural area	56	31	13
Other	41	41	18

We followed the question on support for vaccine passports with a further question to gauge the relative levels of support for vaccine passports to enter particular public places. We asked participants to indicate which of the following places that they would support having to provide proof of vaccination to enter: a university, a school, a municipal office, a place of workshop, a sporting event, and a restaurant, shisa nyama, coffee shop or night club.



Figure 5 demonstrates the differing levels of support for vaccine passports in different public spaces. Slightly less than half (47%) support this being introduced for sporting events at stadiums. Similar shares (43-45%) support vaccine passports at schools and universities, and at restaurants, shisa nyamas, coffee shops or night clubs. Slightly lower levels of support can be seen for introducing these measures for municipal offices (38%) and places of worship (40%). Just under two-fifths (38%) did not support vaccine passports being introduced at any of these public places.

**Figure 5: Support for providing proof of vaccination to enter selected public places (% , ranked)**



**Table 3: Percentage supporting having to provide proof of vaccination to enter public places by vaccination status and hesitancy among the unvaccinated, cell %**

	General support for vaccine passports	A university	A school	A municipal office	A place of worship	A sporting event at a stadium	A restaurant, shisa nyama, coffee shop or night club	None of the above
Fully vaccinated	78	67	66	61	62	71	68	16
Unvaccinated but would definitely get the vaccine	64	49	56	43	45	50	49	25
Unvaccinated, would probably get the vaccine	30	25	24	21	21	32	27	53
Unvaccinated, would probably not get the vaccine	22	19	21	18	19	21	21	69
Unvaccinated, would definitely not get the vaccine	6	10	9	8	9	12	8	81
Unvaccinated and don't know whether to get vaccinated	17	17	19	14	15	24	21	67

However, views on vaccine passports again varies substantially based on vaccination status and level of vaccine hesitancy among the unvaccinated. (see table 3). General support for vaccination passports to enter public places stands at 78% among the vaccinated and 64% among those who definitely plan to get the Covid-19 vaccine. This support drops off significantly among those who greater levels of vaccination hesitancy, with only 6% of those who will definitely not take the Covid vaccine supporting vaccine passports.

This pattern is present when one examines support for the introduction of a vaccine passport to access specific public places. It ranges from majority support among vaccinated adults (between 61% for municipal offices to 71% for sports events in stadiums), to single-digit support for most of the examples provided among unvaccinated adults who definitely do not intend to get the Covid-19 vaccine. This reaffirms the unequivocal association between vaccination, vaccination hesitancy and views on vaccine mandates and passports in the country.

## Conclusion

Across the globe, countries are introducing vaccine passports – fuelling an international debate on compulsory vaccinations. Despite attempts at questioning the constitutionality of a vaccine mandate, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has publicly stated that it could be seen as a reasonable and justifiable limitation on human rights - thus if the state passes a law of general application mandating vaccination, it would pass constitutional muster, placing emphasis on responsibilities towards others in society.

Our findings show that compulsory workplace vaccinations are supported by 54% of adults and that vaccine passports to enter public spaces are supported by 51% of adults. However, support for these measures differs significantly by vaccination status and by levels of vaccine hesitancy. Those who are vaccinated or are willing to vaccinate broadly support these measures but opposition amongst the unvaccinated and especially those unwilling to vaccinate is significant.

In light of the slow uptake in vaccination, combined with the potential new risks of the Omicron variant, these findings underscore the ongoing importance of addressing access to vaccination sites and vaccine hesitancy.

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