

# Vaccine confidence trends in 2026

---

*Dr Emilie Karafillakis*

*European Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project*

*London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine | University of Antwerp*

*ESWI Acute Respiratory Virus Summit 2026 · Session 4: Uptake & Confidence*



University  
of Antwerp



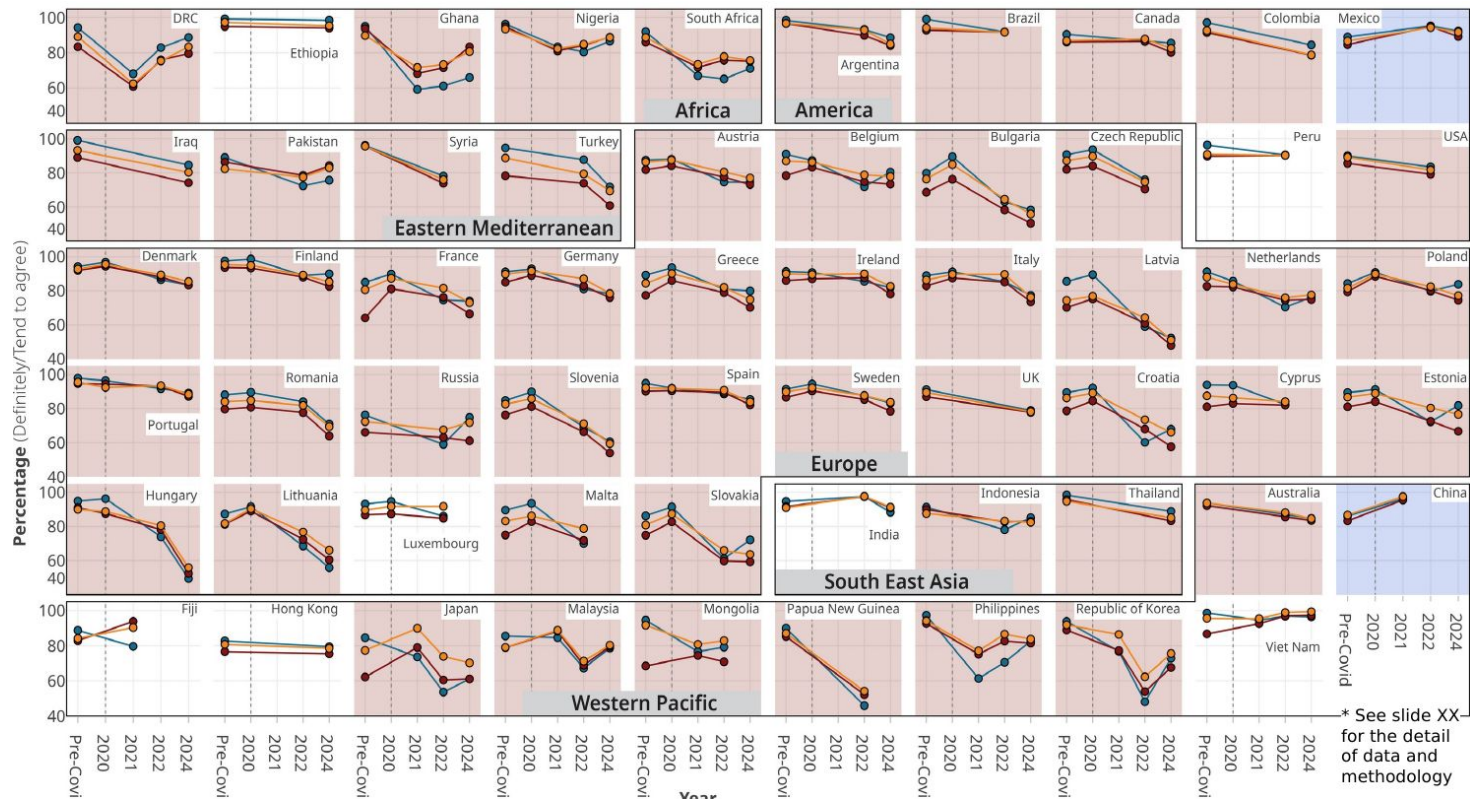
Vaccine  
Confidence  
Project

LONDON  
SCHOOL OF  
HYGIENE  
& TROPICAL  
MEDICINE



# Post-pandemic: confidence fell in most of the world

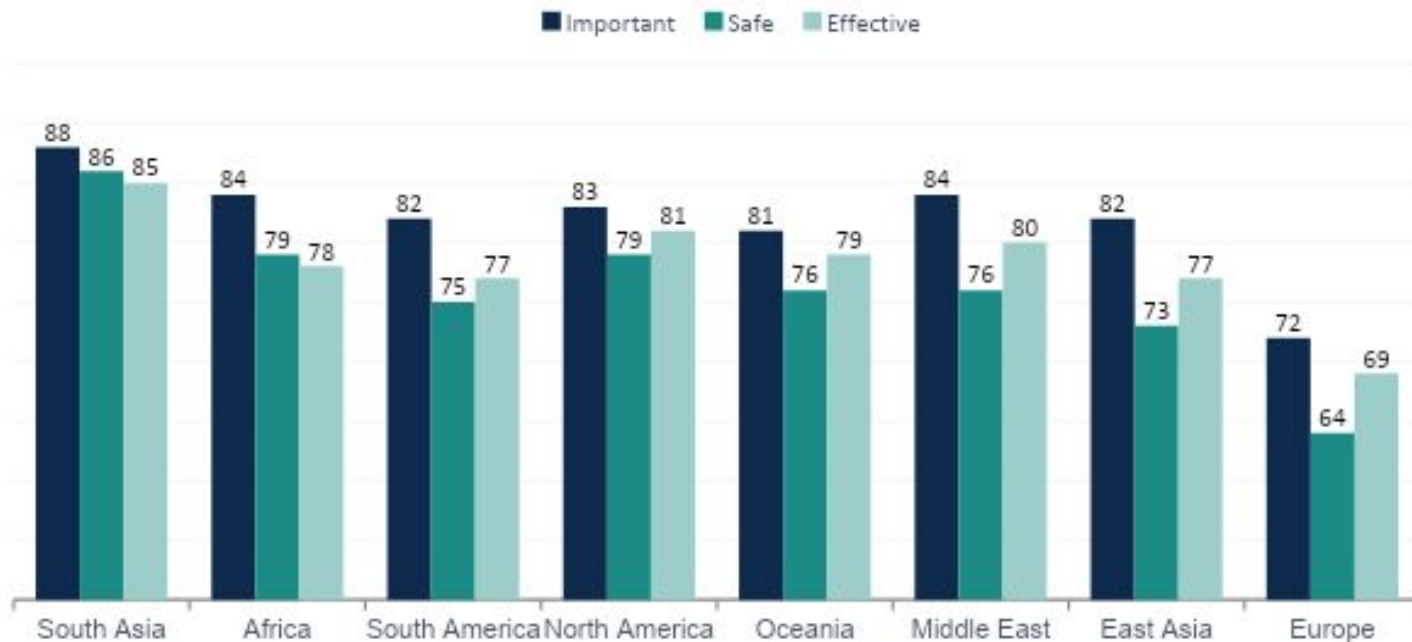
Country-level shifts in agreement that vaccines are important / safe / effective



Source: Choi & Larson. Trends of vaccine confidence across 59 countries between 2015 and 2024 (working paper).

# Europe has the lowest vaccine confidence globally

% who agree vaccines are important / safe / effective, by region (Global Listening Project, n = 70,781)



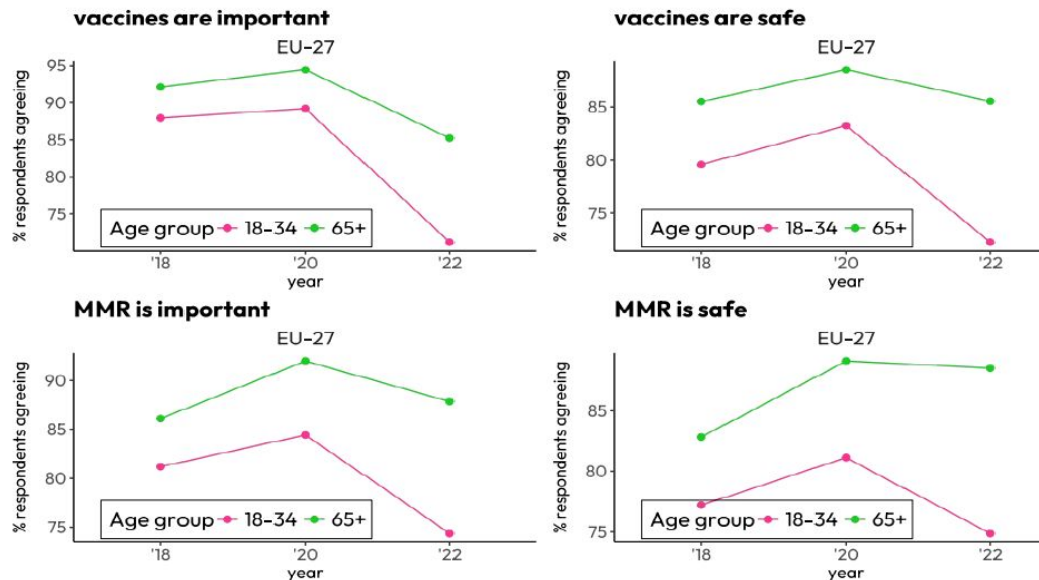
## Europe stands out

Only 64% of Europeans agree vaccines are safe: significantly lower than any other region.

Source: Global Listening Project, 2024.

# Young adults are driving the decline

*Younger adults (<35) lost confidence faster than older groups across the EU-27, 2018–2022*



Source: Vaccine Confidence Project / Global Listening Project, EU-27 vaccine confidence trends.

## A growing generational divide

Older Europeans hold steady; under-35s moved sharply down on importance and safety.

## Trust drives the gap

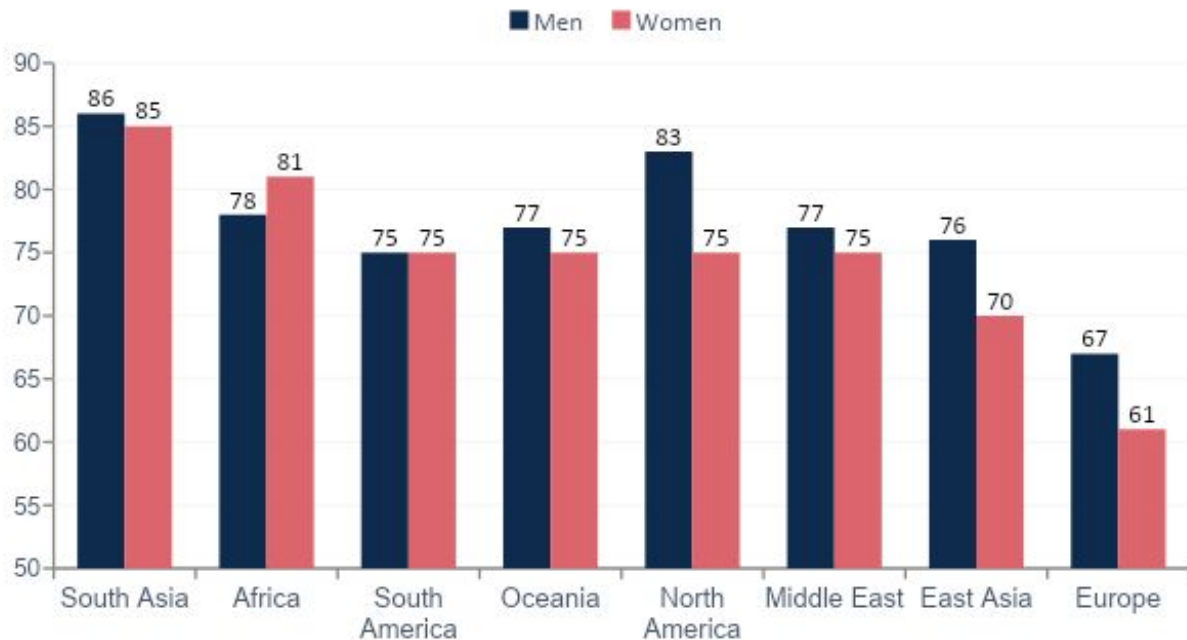
Trust in government among young adults is the strongest correlate of falling confidence.

## A signal for the next decade

Today's hesitant young adults are tomorrow's parents — coverage risk builds quietly.

# European women are the most hesitant group globally

*% confident vaccines are safe, by sex and region*



## A persistent gap

European women report the lowest vaccine confidence of any group globally.

The gap is widest in Europe, smaller or absent elsewhere.

*Source: Global Listening Project (Larson et al).*

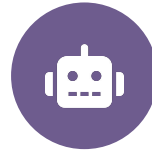
# Two forces reshaping confidence in 2026

---



## Politicisation

Vaccines have moved from a question of public health to a marker of political identity.



## A new information environment

Algorithmic amplification, declining trust in expertise, and now generative AI changing how information spreads.

# Misinformation is now the #1 short-term global risk

*Top global risks ranked by severity over the next 2 years (WEF, 2024–2025)*



**4 in 10 regret a health decision made on misinformation**

41% of adults say they have made a health decision based on misinformation at least once.

Highest among 18–34s and increasingly via user-generated content.

# AI is reshaping the vaccine information landscape

*Changing how clinicians, patients and the public seek and share information*



IN THE CONSULTATION

## HCPs are using AI to support advice

Used well, it supports communication. But it can also signal uncertainty and erode patient's trust in the recommendation.



BYPASSING HCPs

## Patients consulting AI

Patients now query AI tools before/instead of speaking to HCPs. Answers can be inconsistent, include mistakes, or carry hidden biases



POSITIVE USES

## Chatbots, translation and accessibility

Chatbots can extend reach in under-served languages, answer routine questions at scale, support shared decision-making, and free up clinician time.



AT POPULATION SCALE

## Faster, personalised, more plausible misinformation

Synthetic voices and deepfakes can lend false credibility. Narratives can be tailored to individual psychological profiles, not just demographic segments.

# What this means for adult immunisation

*Implications for influenza, COVID, RSV and pneumococcal programmes in Europe*

## 01 Tomorrow's older adults will be more sceptical than today's

Today's hesitant young Europeans are the cohort who will need annual respiratory vaccines in 10–20 years.

## 02 Trust is built before the crisis, not during it

Continuous monitoring of confidence and the information environment matters more than reactive campaigns.

## 03 Communication has to be relational, not just expert-led

Reach people through their trusted-and-relevant networks — HCPs, family, peers — not only through official channels.

## 04 Plan for the AI information environment

Immunisation programmes need to assume a fragmented, AI-shaped landscape, with rapid-response and pre-bunking capability.

# Thank you

---

*Dr Emilie Karafillakis*

emilie.karafillakis@uantwerpen.be

*Vaccine Confidence Project · University of Antwerp & London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine*