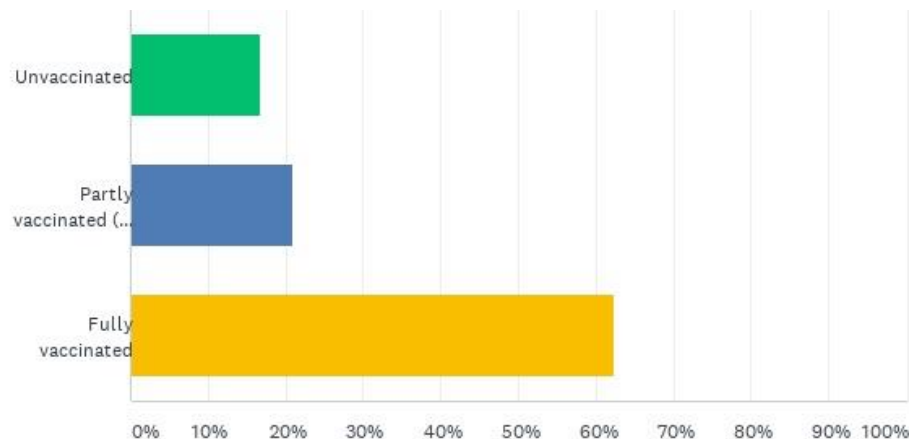


Transplant Australia has been committed to helping the transplant community navigate through the COVID-19 Pandemic. Because of the increasing membership enquiries about access to Covid-19 vaccination in July, Transplant Australia became concerned that many of the estimated 12,000 transplant recipients in Australia may not have taken up the option to be vaccinated when prioritised in March 2021. In the second week of August a simple survey was circulated widely by email, both directly to transplant recipient membership as well as an invitation to all directors of all Australian transplant units, the Transplant Nurses Association and AOTA to promote the survey to their transplant recipients. Not all transplant centres had a list of email addresses for their transplant recipients.

1,552 transplant recipients responded, principally from recipients of kidneys (46%), livers (29%), hearts (11%) and lungs (10%). The respondents covered all age groups, but more than half were aged between 50 and 70 years. A third lived in NSW and on a population basis, Victoria was underrepresented. They reported that routine recipient transplantation aftercare was undertaken at their transplanting hospital (57%), other hospital-based clinic (30%) and with remainder with a GP or in private rooms of physician.

Q5: Please nominate your current vaccination status:

Answered: 1,496 Skipped: 56



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By mid-August, 62% of respondents had been fully vaccinated and 21% were awaiting their second dose. Perhaps reflecting the age of the respondents, 65% had received the Astra Zeneca vaccine with bookings made with their GP (54%), MyGov website (42%) and the remainder (4%) at their transplanting hospital. Many of the unvaccinated respondents had an appointment but 127 (8.2%) remained unconvinced about their need for Covid-19 vaccination. Another 56 respondents also choose not to answer this question.

Following vaccination, 52% of respondents experienced side-effects from the vaccination that were minor symptoms and of a nature not different to the non-transplant community. They reported relying upon their transplant clinic, Transplant Australia and their GP (in that order) for information about COVID vaccination.

In summary, the Australian organ transplant recipient community has embraced the need for vaccination either from their GP or a government vaccination hub. Transplant Australia was seen as an important and trusted source of information with 99% of respondents keen to be provided with Australian data on the effectiveness of vaccination as well as advice about the need and timing of a third or fourth 'booster' vaccination. Furthermore, 91% of respondents requested ongoing Covid-19 related Webinars from TA on at least 'as needs' basis.

Worryingly, 100 respondents answered they were "yet to be convinced I should be vaccinated against Covid-19". An additional 27 cancelled their initial booking due to these concerns.

Professor Richard Allen
Medical Director
Transplant Australia