



Pneumonia Awareness Among Adults in Latin America



Introduction

Pneumonia is a lung infection that can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and less commonly, fungi.⁶ Pneumococcal pneumonia is a type of pneumonia,⁷ The bacteria that cause pneumococcal pneumonia can infect the upper respiratory tract and then spread to the lungs and blood.⁷

Older adults are at an increased risk for pneumonia because as people age, their immune systems weaken, making them susceptible to infectious diseases.⁷ Other risk factors include chronic conditions like lung, heart, liver, or kidney disease, asthma, diabetes, alcoholism, conditions that weaken the immune system, and smoking.⁸

The Latin American population is aging rapidly.¹ In 2015, approximately 47 million adults in Latin America and the Caribbean were aged 65 or over.¹ As this population continues to age, many individuals face new health challenges and often become more susceptible to infectious diseases like pneumonia.²

There must be a commitment to helping educate adults about the importance of a life course approach to vaccination toward maintaining a healthy life. Vaccines can help prevent infectious diseases like pneumonia, a form of acute respiratory infection that infects the lungs.³ Pneumococcal disease, including pneumonia, can be a deadly disease and affect people of all ages, but older adults are especially at risk.^{4,5} Even in economically developed regions, the adult mortality rate for pneumococcal pneumonia averages between 10 and 20 percent, and may exceed 50 percent in high-risk groups.⁶ However, this potentially serious disease can be prevented with a vaccine.⁷



A recent survey conducted by Pfizer of over 3,100 adults with an average age of 61 years old across seven countries in Latin America sought to gain a better understanding of the knowledge and perceptions of adult pneumococcal vaccination. The findings are stark. Despite the seriousness of pneumonia, **one third of those Latin Americans surveyed are not aware of the infectious disease and many underestimate their increased risk of infection.⁸ Only one in five respondents was previously vaccinated against pneumococcal disease.⁸**

This survey and subsequent report offer important educational resources to help change the way adults think about pneumonia and adult vaccination. By responding to knowledge gaps and highlighting common misconceptions about this potentially serious, yet vaccine-preventable disease, our goal is to help create a world of healthy older adults.⁷

The educational information contained within this booklet was prepared with contributions from the Editorial Committee of the International Federation on Ageing.

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Burden of Pneumonia

Pneumonia is a frequent cause of physician visits, hospitalization, and death among older adults in Latin America.⁹ Pneumonia can impose significant financial costs due to hospitalization, outpatient treatment, and lost productivity.⁹ Among older adults, the burden of pneumonia on healthcare systems is likely to become more significant over time.⁹

Pneumonia had a significant impact on respondents' physical wellness as well as their work, family, and social lives.



73%

experienced a negative impact on physical fitness⁵



68%

experienced a negative impact on their mobility and ability to get out and about⁵



60%

experienced a negative impact on their work life, social life, and caring for family⁵



54%

believe it can take months to recover from pneumonia⁵

Pneumonia also had a negative impact on emotional wellness, with respondents reporting common feelings of:



Fear⁵

49%



Lack of confidence that it would pass soon⁵

63%



Powerlessness⁵

33%



Depression⁵

31%

Prevention and Vaccination

Vaccines can help prevent infectious diseases.¹⁰ Vaccines work by teaching the body's immune system to recognize and defend against harmful viruses or bacteria before getting an infection.¹⁰ Vaccines have made a tremendous impact on public health around the world and greatly reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed many individuals.² **Additionally, vaccines are a cost-effective way of reducing infectious diseases.**⁴

72%

Trust vaccines to help prevent infectious diseases

71%

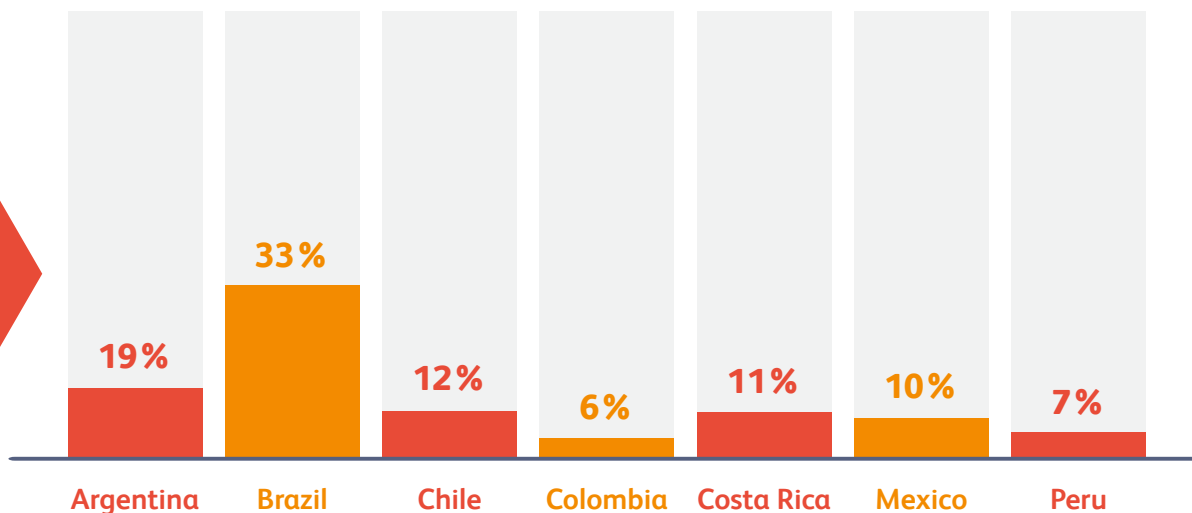
Believe that getting vaccinated can prevent pneumonia⁵

However, only

21%
– 1 in 5 –

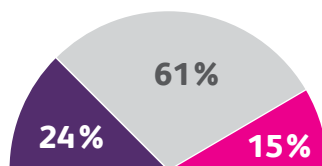
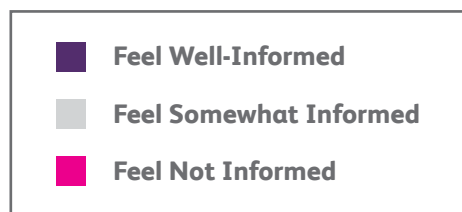
of total respondents are vaccinated against pneumonia with staggering differences in vaccination rate by country.⁵

Number of respondents that have been vaccinated

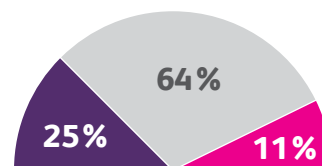


94% of those surveyed have heard of pneumonia, but only **68%** understand what it is.⁵

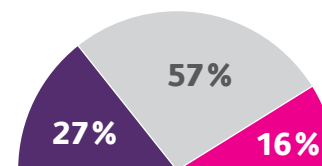
Overall, less than **30%** of respondents across Latin America report feeling well-informed about pneumonia:⁵



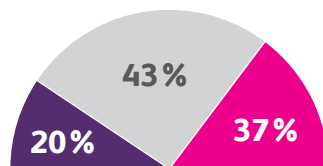
Argentina



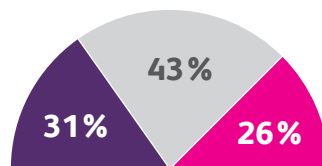
Brazil



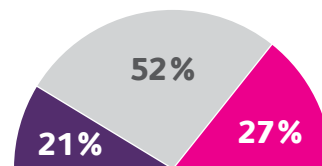
Chile



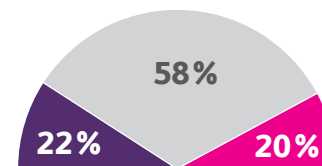
Colombia



Costa Rica



Mexico



Peru



54% of respondents are extremely worried about pneumonia⁵



Less than **30% of respondents** consider themselves to be at risk⁵

Overall, respondents do not feel well-informed about pneumonia or their risk for the disease, suggesting the need for improved education among older adults.

Reasons for not being vaccinated⁵



Do not know
about availability
of a vaccine:
59%



Not recommended
by healthcare professional:
42%



Need more
information:
38%



Doctor never
talked about it:
37%



Reasons for being vaccinated⁵



Recommended by
healthcare professional:
41%



Made them
feel protected:
44%



Vaccination can help protect against certain types of pneumonia such as pneumococcal pneumonia.³

Survey methods

A total of 3,253 adults aged 50 years and older were interviewed in seven countries across Latin America, namely Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Peru.

The 30-minute online and in-person interviews were conducted by APlusA between March 23 and April 25, 2016.

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