

The origins of Haiti's vaccine hesitancy | Coda Story

By Erica Hellerstein

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Earlier this week, Jean-Claude Louis was catching up with an acquaintance who worked in the medical field when the coronavirus vaccine came up. "I will never get the vaccine," she told him. "You don't know what you're getting."

As the coordinator of Panos Institute, a Haitian nonprofit that trains journalists and youth on media literacy and identifying disinformation, Louis has been paying close attention to the vaccine myths circulating online and in-person. And he is worried about how much of it is spreading inside Haiti's medical community. "The problem is there are so many false rumors about vaccines," he added. "People are very hesitant about getting the vaccines."

I approached Louis after coming across a dataset laying out vaccination rates for the Americas. Topping the list was Uruguay, where nearly 75% of the population has gotten at least one vaccine dose. All the way at the bottom was Haiti, with just 0.14% of the population inoculated against Covid-19.

Haiti was one of the last countries in the world -and the last in Latin America and the Caribbean -to begin distributing the shot.

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