

# Correspondence

## Boost vaccine confidence with trust, not ire

Peter Hotez offers a counteroffensive to aggressive anti-vaccine disinformation (*Nature* 592, 661; 2021). However, vaccine hesitancy, rather than outright resistance, is a more important contributor to low COVID-vaccine uptake in certain communities. The concerns of vaccine-hesitant individuals are less polarized and so call for thoughtful handling.

In a large representative UK sample, the proportion of vaccine-hesitant respondents was four times greater than the proportion who were vaccine-resistant (J. Murphy *et al.* *Nature Commun.* 12, 29; 2021). COVID vaccine hesitancy includes reservations around safety, efficacy and the speed of the vaccine release (K. Pogue *et al.* *Vaccines* 8, 582; 2020).

A forceful counteroffensive risks widening the divide between those open to being vaccinated and those who are not, as well as alienating those with reasonable concerns about COVID vaccines. To avert a dwindling of trust in government and scientific authorities and promote the well-being of society, we must enact constructive ways to deal with vaccine hesitancy that are centred around respect, openness and empathy.

**Hari McGrath** King's College London, UK.  
hari.mcgrath@kcl.ac.uk

## Cameroon: doubt could mean vaccine doses expire

A huge global effort to increase the number of vaccines reaching low-income countries is necessary, but not sufficient. Working in Cameroon's vaccine roll-out against COVID-19, we've seen a level of hesitancy that we fear could mean that many doses will expire before people can benefit from them. Urgent investment is needed to counter misinformation in community-specific ways. Doses can then reach the most at-risk populations as soon as they arrive.

Cameroon, a nation of 25 million, has enough vaccine for 72% of those at high risk (812,300 people). By mid-June, just 2.3% of them had been fully vaccinated. Only around one in five health workers had accepted shots. Some people even refused polio vaccines, fearing that they were COVID-19 vaccines. At this rate, many of the allocated doses could go to waste.

Introducing a vaccine requires significant preparation to ensure optimal uptake (see, for example, [go.nature.com/3wmd3vn](https://go.nature.com/3wmd3vn)). However, one month after the launch of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Cameroon, the communication strategy was neither validated nor implemented. Fears about extremely rare adverse events are widespread; fear of the pandemic is not.

Low-income countries must act now to boost confidence in vaccines.

**Amani Adidja, Yap Boum, Pierre Ongolo-Zogo** University of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé, Cameroon.  
amaniadidja@gmail.com

## Dangerous to normalize solar geoengineering

We disagree with your view that research into solar geoengineering as a means to cool the planet should be given "a chance" (*Nature* 593, 167; 2021).

Your position aligns with those who seek to validate such research as a potential climate-policy option (see [go.nature.com/3jfqrbr](https://go.nature.com/3jfqrbr)). However, much climate-governance scholarship opposes these untested technologies as a dangerous distraction from decarbonization policies.

Many social scientists argue that democratic and fair global governance of solar geoengineering is unattainable. Any future use of the approach would require complex decisions at a planetary scale on where, how and for how long it would be deployed, and on who would take responsibility for any harm caused.

In our view, the current world order is unfit to devise and implement such far-reaching agreements on planetary management. In the absence of effective global control, the geopolitics of solar geoengineering would be complex and frightening.

We call on our governments and funding agencies to halt the normalization of research into planetary solar-geoengineering technologies. Decarbonization of our economies is feasible if the right steps are taken. Solar geoengineering is neither necessary nor desirable. A global moratorium is needed.

**Frank Biermann\*** Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, the Netherlands.  
f.biermann@uu.nl  
\*On behalf of 17 signatories; see [go.nature.com/35ncfgg](https://go.nature.com/35ncfgg).

## Notice who the science system honours, and how

As your Editorial points out, "Racism in science is endemic because the systems that produce and teach scientific knowledge have, for centuries, misrepresented, marginalized and mistreated people of colour and under-represented communities" (*Nature* 593, 313; 2021). It is also because these systems are selective in whom they honour and how.

In the same issue, a book review on Nobel prizewinner Fred Reines notes his creation of a neutrino laboratory "deep in a gold mine in South Africa in the 1960s, in defiance of academic sanctions against the apartheid state". It later states: "The man who rises off the page is an inspiring, supportive colleague ..." (*Nature* 593, 334–335; 2021). I understand that this could be representative of the framing offered by the book itself. But why did the crucial questions "inspiring to whom?" and "supportive of whom?" not capture editorial attention? The problems that arise from this kind of framing are much less elusive to detection than the neutrinos under discussion.

**Jason R. Dwyer** University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, USA.  
jason\_dwyer@uri.edu

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