

Vaccine skepticism is rampant among Indigenous Australians. This explains why

First Nations people like those in East Arnhem Land... are next in line in [Australia's vaccination program](#) that began last month and has focused on giving priority to health and other workers on the front lines of keeping Covid-19 out of the country.

In many ways, the vaccination program is a litmus test for nations with large indigenous groups that feel marginalized and distrustful of government policy.

...

“What we’re hearing now is probably 50-75% will say no,” said Eddie Mulholland, chief executive of Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corp., an indigenous-controlled primary health service.

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[According to an analysis in medical journal the Lancet](#), rates of chronic disease, including diabetes and hypertension, are higher among indigenous Australians than other Australians. Indigenous Australians are twice as likely to have three or more chronic conditions, it found.

Paired with higher rates of smoking, overcrowding in multigenerational houses, and poor access to water and sanitation, that puts indigenous people more at risk of dying from the coronavirus.

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While a botched rollout would hurt the reputation of regional health services among indigenous communities, low vaccination rates could be catastrophic.

“If they don’t do it, and someone comes in, they could wipe the whole place out,” [Mulholland] said, referring to someone introducing infection.

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