

COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Project Executive Summary

Project Collaborators: Numerous community groups and listening session partners; Heather Cobb; Chrisanne Wilks, PhD; and Hamilton Place Strategies.

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Project Overview

- This presentation outlines key findings from the COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Project and provides recommendations for strategic messaging around COVID-19 vaccines.
- The Project's intent was to help the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER): 1) understand public perceptions about authorized/approved COVID-19 vaccines, 2) identify what information key audiences want as they decide whether to get a vaccine, and 3) create messages to provide that information.
- Findings and recommendations are based on a rigorous research process that included a landscape analysis, listening sessions, and message development, design, and testing.
- The project focused on two key audiences: communities traditionally underrepresented (e.g., African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Indigenous/Native); and frontline workers in service, retail, and healthcare settings.
- Messages and recommendations are for use in one-on-one communications as well as incorporation into COVID-19 immunization education campaigns.

Our Four Step Approach

1 Landscape Analysis

- **Overview:** Identify key themes in media/social media surrounding COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy
- **Timeframe:** August - September

2 Listening Sessions

- **Overview:** Gather and listen to opinions and attitudes about a COVID-19 vaccine(s)
- **Timeframe:** September - November

3 Message Development

- **Overview:** Address concerns and common knowledge gaps while also tailoring messages for key audiences
- **Timeframe:** Late October - Early November

4 Message Testing

- **Overview:** Check that messages are relevant and credible to key audiences using polling, individual interviews, and message-testing groups
- **Timeframe:** November

Listening Session Themes: What We Heard

Vaccine Development

- ✓ Concern about the speed of the process and its effect on vaccine quality
- ✓ Fear the vaccine will not work for me, my family, or my community

Vaccine Review and Approval/Authorization

- ✓ Distrust of government and lack of transparency
- ✓ Concern that economics and politics will be prioritized over science

Historical and current structural defects

- ✓ Concern about disparities in the healthcare system
- ✓ Fear and distrust based on past personal or community experiences with research and medicine

Top-Performing Messages

Refined messages that resonated most broadly with audiences in testing:

"The FDA is publicly sharing information about COVID-19 vaccines so you can see the evidence for yourself."

"Only safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines that have been rigorously tested on tens of thousands of volunteers will be approved."

"Scientists and career public health officials, not politicians or their appointees, will decide when a COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and ready for public use."

"By getting a COVID-19 vaccine, you are protecting yourself, your children, parents, grandparents, and other loved ones."

"COVID-19 vaccine development is moving faster than normal because the medical and scientific community have made it their highest priority, not because any steps have been skipped."

Show, Don't Tell In Messaging

It's not enough to tell people that a vaccine is safe and effective. People want to see others taking it - along with scientific proof. Effective messages offer details to back up claims.

TELL

"The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective."



Forces your audience to trust you.

vs

SHOW

"Only safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines that have been rigorously tested on tens of thousands of volunteers will be approved."

"COVID-19 vaccines are following the same rigorous, three-phased testing process as every other vaccine."

"The FDA will publicly share information about COVID-19 vaccines so you can see the evidence for yourself."



Allows your audience to draw their own conclusion and buy in.

Personalize And Explain—But Never Shame

Messages will be most effective if messengers do the following:

Personalize Messages

- Messages that relate to protecting "your family" work by evoking personal, emotional connections that everyone can understand
- Move from abstract to familiar to maximize emotional impact

Explain The Process

- The public is concerned about the process, but they may not fully understand it
- Explain what makes the process rigorous and safe, but keep it digestible and high-level

Never Shame

- Do not use guilt to motivate the public or over-moralize messages
- Invoking a personal responsibility or duty to country does not inspire trust where there is distrust—and may alienate some audiences

Customize Messages for the Audience

While there are common themes across groups, it's important to account for cultural and regional nuances.

While all groups raised a desire for information on safety and side effects, certain nuances emerged:

- Healthcare workers asked about recommendations for children as well as people who test positive for antibodies or are pregnant. They wanted to know what would happen between doses and what support would be needed/available for people who experience side effects.
- Community health workers asked about safety for high-risk populations such as the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions.
- Retail workers want continued adherence to other safety precautions (such as handwashing, mask-wearing) while vaccine administration gears up.
- Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinx were concerned about safety for their racial/ethnic subpopulations.

Meet People Where They Are By Proactively Acknowledging Concerns Like Systemic Racism

Listening Session Quotes:

"I firmly believe that this is another Tuskegee experiment."

"The more they study me, the more they know how to get rid of me."

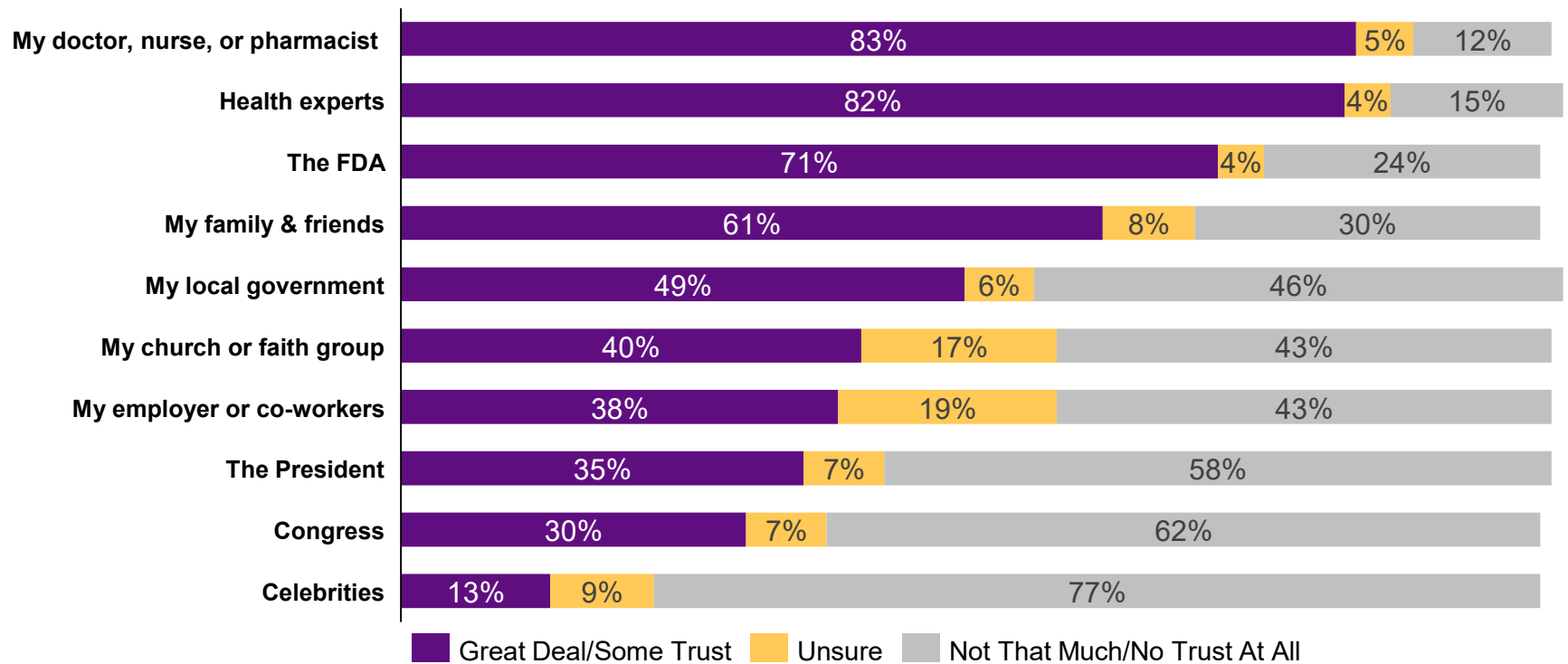
"Alaska Natives and Indigenous people are at the highest risk of death, and we are the ones that are guinea pigs for the rich."

Messaging Implications:

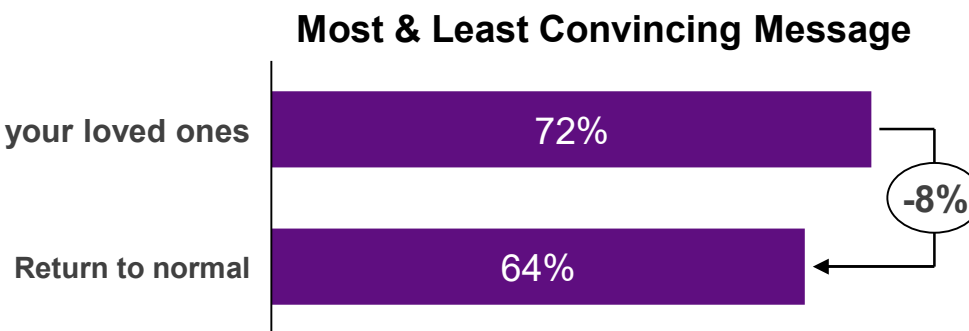
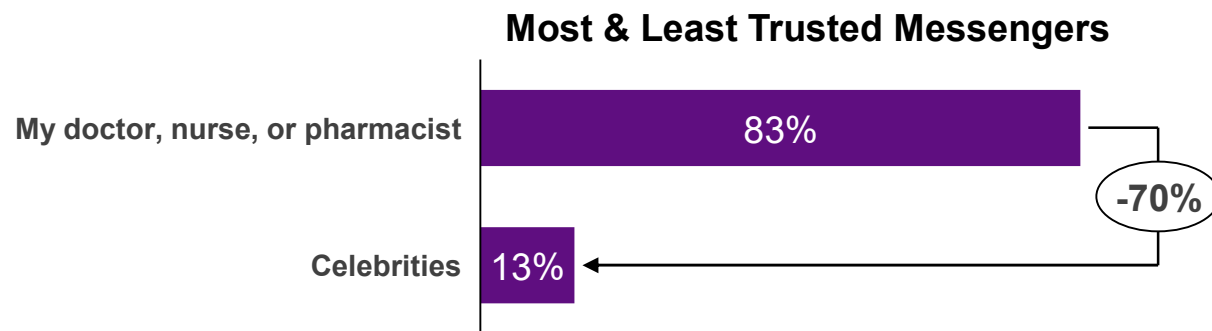
- It's important to acknowledge and address people's fears
- People of color are especially concerned about historic racism and racial disparities in health care
- Meet people where they are by demonstrating you understand their concerns before pivoting to tested core messages
- Example: "Recognizing the impact of historic injustices, vaccine developers are working to make sure clinical trials reflect the nation's diversity. These vaccines must be proven safe and effective for everyone."

Topline Survey Results: Messengers

Various medical professionals and experts were the three most-trusted types of messengers to respond to concerns. Federal elected officials and high-profile celebrities were near the bottom.



Focus More On The Messenger Than The Message



- There is much more variation between trust in messengers than there is between trust in messages.
- Using the best messenger is a more important factor than prioritizing one of several strong messages.

When It Comes to Messengers, Community Connection Is Essential

While some messengers are trusted across the board, certain categories of individuals rose to the surface with specific audiences during listening sessions and interviews.

Native Americans	African Americans	Latinx	Frontline Workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal leaders and elders • American Indian Higher Education Consortium • Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health • Wes Studi* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black health professionals who understand the science and/or have taken the vaccine themselves • Family and friends who have taken the vaccine • Churches and faith groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal health care providers • Dr. Fauci • Churches • Friends and family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FDA • Major hospitals • Doctors they know & physician/health professional associations • Familiar or local medical institutions • Medical journals

* Native American film actor and producer

Messengers Have Different Roles; Play Them To Their Strengths



Type of Messenger	Their Strengths	Strategic Goal
Health Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People trust these experts to deliver the facts over politics • The closer these experts are to the people, the more trust they can build 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combat disinformation and set the record straight • Build public trust in the science and facilitate informed decision-making
Family & Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People receive a lot of information from individuals who are closest to them • People act based on what their family members and friends are doing; these are often the people they trust the most 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model receiving a vaccine to their loved ones • Persuade their loved ones and friends to take the vaccine
Celebrities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widely known; people pay attention when celebrities speak out on issues outside of entertainment • Huge platform to spread messages and amplify other messengers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the word out that a COVID-19 vaccine is available and safe – and that they’ve received one themselves • Encourage people to seek out information from trusted sources



These findings are published to help individual messengers, such as community leaders and healthcare providers, as well as health communicators who are launching educational outreach campaigns about the COVID-19 vaccine. To learn more, contact the Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA at admin@reaganudall.org.

www.ReaganUdall.org