



COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Project

COVID-19, caused by SARS-CoV-2, continues to spread quickly in the United States and around the globe. A vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 is well-acknowledged to be the most reliable route to controlling COVID-19 in the long term. The United States is making a significant investment in several vaccine candidates to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the population.

A growing number of Americans have expressed strong reservations about vaccines in general and, specifically, a COVID-19 vaccine, even among those who have previously expressed trust in the medical establishment and vaccines. An analysis of both traditional and social media indicates that a substantial portion of the U.S. population say they will not take a COVID-19 vaccine. The reasons behind this hesitancy differ considerably and have yet to be fully understood.

The Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA¹ is assisting the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research to better understand the communication/perception barriers that lead so many Americans to feel hesitant about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, when available, specifically perceptions related to FDA's role in vaccine review and authorization/approval. This project aspires to gather and understand concerns and identify messages and potential messengers that may help to improve understanding about COVID-19 vaccines. The goal is to provide the vaccine-hesitant with the information they need to make an informed decision regarding whether or not to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, when available.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Messaging Project involves three stages:

- 1) Preliminary landscape analysis of media, including social media, to identify general trends about attitudes and concerns in the United States. (Completed)
- 2) Series of listening sessions to gather insight from different communities, as concerns may be specific to those communities' context and history. Listening sessions are prioritized for communities of color, the socio-economically disadvantaged, and essential personnel who may be in greater danger of being exposed to SARS-CoV-2, such as those working in retail and health care settings. (Ongoing)
- 3) Message development and testing that distills the learnings to create recommended messaging (and potential messengers) that could help build public confidence in COVID-19 vaccines in development for the U.S. population and contribute to adequate COVID-19 vaccine uptake, once one or more such vaccines are available. Centered on responses to expressed concerns related to FDA's role in the vaccine review and authorization/approval process, the messaging strategy will be tailored appropriately and tested with diverse audiences (similar to the listening session audiences) to confirm that the messages are trusted and effective. In addition, the messaging strategy will provide topline information on messengers, venues, materials, and tactics that would be trusted. (Planned for late October/November)

The results of this project will be shared with relevant audiences to support public health efforts.

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¹ The Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA is an independent 501(c)(3) created by Congress to advance regulatory science to help the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) accomplish its mission. The Foundation works to improve health and safety through stakeholder engagement and public-private partnerships that facilitate innovation, foster the use of real-world evidence, and identify modern tools and polices to keep pace with today's rapidly evolving science. For more information, visit <https://www.reaganudall.org>.