

Media Briefing

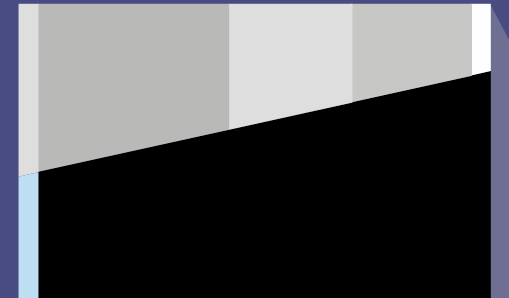
COVID-19 Vaccine Online Focus Group Findings

April 5, 2021

Conducted on behalf of



The Colorado Health Foundation™



About the Research & Public Education Team



Audience research and public education campaigns on the health and well being of people, communities and the environment.



Leads research that helps us to understand the factors that erode trust and confidence, and how to strengthen trust and confidence



Develops public education campaigns that facilitate trust and confidence to help people to make informed decisions

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Today's Briefing



Methodology



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- **Online focus groups in Colorado from December 8th through March 31st**
- 108 participants including:
 - A mix of women and men who are Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian-Pacific Islander and white from across Colorado
 - Focus groups in both English and Spanish
- Intentionally recruited a mix of participants based on their self-reported willingness to take a COVID-19 vaccine, ranging from acceptance to refusal.
- Upcoming research includes additional focus groups in English and Spanish as well as a quantitative online survey

Focus Group Findings



Findings: An Overview



Finding: There is a continuum of vaccine confidence and hesitancy.

Finding: Research participants are making risk/benefit calculations — weighing the risk of serious illness against “unknown risks” from the vaccine.

Finding: Research participants are not uninformed; still they have many questions and are missing important details about the COVID-19 vaccines.

Finding: Hesitant and skeptical research participants feel emotionally overwhelmed — making it difficult to sort through all the details about vaccines.

Finding: Research participants want to hear from: trusted community voices; experts who are connected to the community and respect their agency.

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Ambassadors

Accepters

Hesitant

Skeptics

Resisters

Refusers

Saboteurs

- **Ambassadors:** Will take a vaccine, and will encourage others to take it.
- **Accepters:** Will take a vaccine, but will not necessarily try to convince others.
- **Hesitant:** Open to taking a vaccine, but have strong concerns about safety.
- **Skeptics:** Skeptical about vaccines in general and want assurances they are safe.
- **Resisters:** Believe vaccines' side effects are riskier than going without a vaccine and possibly contracting COVID.
- **Refusers:** Those who will refuse to take the vaccine no matter what.
- **Saboteurs:** Those who will refuse and try to dissuade others from taking a vaccine.

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Research participants are making risk/benefit calculations weighing the risk of serious illness against “unknown” risk from the vaccine.



- There is heightened concern about long-term, unknown and presently unknowable side effects of vaccines.
- Many refuser participants are “willing to take their chances” with COVID and dismiss its seriousness.
- Some hesitant participants say they do not want to be a guinea pig and they will wait to see how others fare.

“...the statistics show less than 1 percent or about 1 percent of the people pass away from it [COVID]. Now, I think, ask us this question if there is 10 or 15 percent of the people that get it will pass away. I think you are going to find a different answer from all of us, but the statistics are just that.”

–White man, 49

“I have a pre-existing condition. I am on multiple medications. I am willing to take my chance of battling it [COVID] instead of injecting something that hasn't been tested and tried.”

–Native American man, 43

“I think a lot of it is there are not enough studies yet as to how this vaccine is going to affect you.”

–White man, 49

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➤ **Participants are high-information and yet still want to know more.**

"What is in the vaccine? How are all of the vaccines different from each other? Give us the actual science of how it works even if we don't understand it. At least it is more information for us to digest and to try to break down."

–Hispanic woman, 35



Questions Participants Want Answered

Participants demand answers for a wide array of questions and concerns.

- **How much does the vaccine cost?**
- **What's in the vaccine?**
- **Does the vaccine include the virus?**
- What's the difference between the three vaccines?
- Are all three equally safe and effective?
- How do the vaccines work?
- Does the vaccine change your DNA?
- How did they develop these vaccines so quickly?
- How do we know these vaccines are effective?
- How do we know the vaccines are safe?
- How many people have died from getting vaccinated?
- **Will we need booster shots and how often?**
- **How do we know the vaccines will be effective against new variants?**
- What are the side effects?

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- People feel emotionally drained by the COVID pandemic.
- Hesitant participants frequently lift up hardships unrelated to COVID illness itself (e.g., lost jobs, closed schools, restricted freedoms, etc.).
- Participants express frustration, sense they are being controlled by government and corporations.

"I am over it [COVID]. I am so over it. I am on the fence about it, if it is real, if it is not."

—Black woman, 43

"We all need to work to survive. This pandemic has definitely limited our options in regards to us having less opportunity to work in this economy."

—Black man, 36

"This social distancing is like changing that whole dynamic for children as well and kind of separating everyone, making everyone scared. That is a psychological thing like manipulation for sure. I don't really trust the government, honestly."

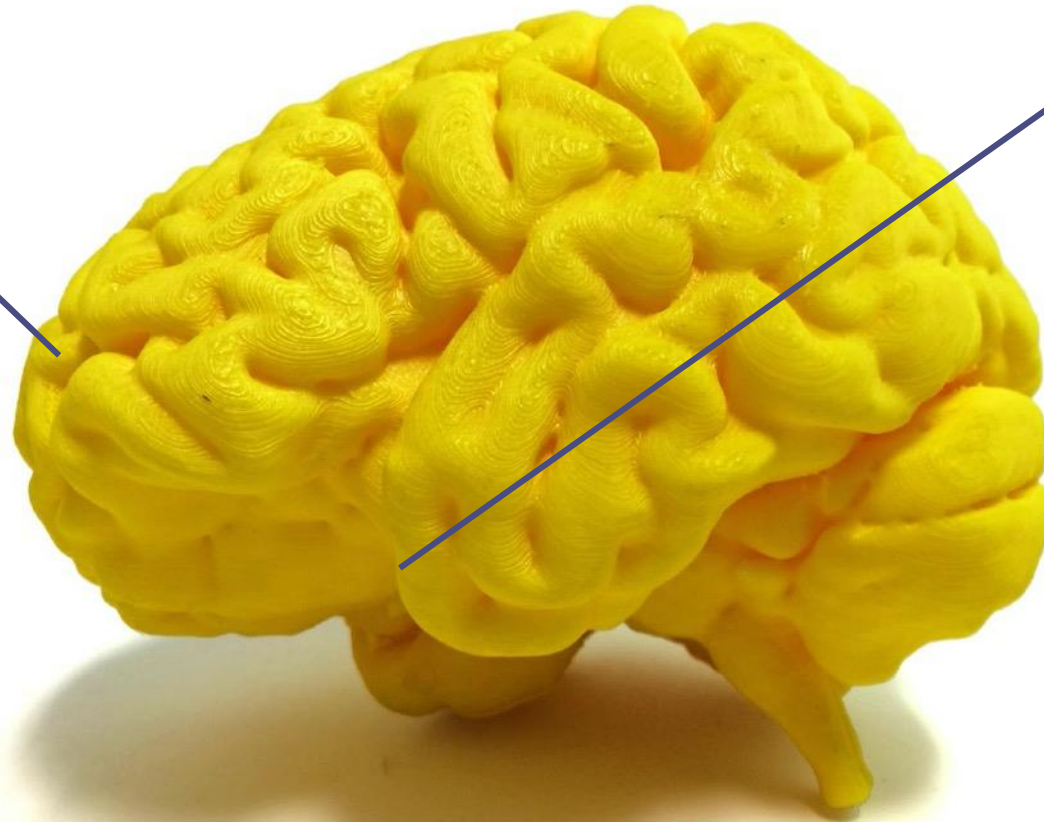
—White woman, 38

The flood of negative emotions is overwhelming — keeping people in fight or flight mode and cutting off access to their prefrontal cortex.



Prefrontal Cortex

Responsible for decision-making and planning, control over emotions and body, and self-understanding, and empathy.



Amygdala

The core of a neural system responsible for processing threats and danger and activation of appropriate fear-related behaviors in response to threats and danger.

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Research participants raise many doubts about pro-vaccine messengers.

- **Absence of explicit motivation for speaking out sparks concerns and fears.**
- **Fear of being tricked.**
- **Sense that confusion, mixed messages and misinformation are rampant.**

"I think there is a lot of misinformation as well and miscommunication. You have some people saying that it is nothing and that it is a hoax, or it is not as big of a problem as it should be. It is hard to know whether we can trust numbers or not. We've heard numbers might not be accurate; we've heard hospitals are misreporting people or saying that other patients have died of COVID to get money, so I just feel like I don't even know what to believe."

—Hispanic woman, 35

"Because where you are going to get the vaccine is essentially from a doctor, or from a pharmacy or someone who is in that space. These are company people. ... And I don't think that they are being dishonest. I just think ... they are here to push their narrative. They are here to push whoever is paying them, right—Moderna and Johnson and Johnson."

—Black man, 37

Finding: Participants want to hear from: trusted community voices; experts who are connected to the community and respect their agency.



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- **Participants want to know people's motivations and commitment to the community**

"As a doctor, I see the ways that the healthcare system fails to fully support the health and well being of those with the fewest resources in our society. That's why I became a doctor at a community health clinic that mostly serves low-income families — to ensure that people of all incomes are able to live healthy lives."

"My name is Lucille Echohawk. I am a founder of the Denver Indian Family Resource Center. I come from a very large family, we're one of the largest families in our tribe, which is the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma. Our family name, Echohawk, was my great-grandfather's warrior name. When you're gifted a warrior name like that, it's your responsibility to honor it and to practice the values of, certainly our tribe and its culture, to give back to our broader community."

Finding: Participants want to hear from: trusted community voices; experts who are connected to the community and respect their agency.

- They especially appreciate hearing from people who were initially hesitant or skeptical

"In October, I was approached by the Moderna trial and asked to be a participant. At the time, they were looking for minority participants, and also healthcare workers. I definitely had hesitations. So, I spent a lot of time researching [and] started pulling up papers from 2000, 2005, that first reviewed the mRNA vaccines."

"Initially, I was a little skeptical of getting vaccinated because I've had anaphylaxis before, an allergic reaction that can sometimes be severe. I wanted to make sure that I was comfortable getting the vaccination and through all the research and the discussion that I had and looking at the process on how the vaccination was done, I was very comfortable getting the COVID vaccination."

Finding: Participants want to hear from: trusted community voices; experts who are connected to the community and respect their agency.

➤ **Participants want detailed information about vaccines**

"Each vaccine contains a key ingredient that prepares your immune system to fight the virus, and a few other basic ingredients like fats, potassium chloride and sucrose. One thing that's not in these vaccines is a weakened version of the virus.

All three vaccines work by giving your immune system instructions on how to recognize the virus and how to fight it. None of the vaccines change your genetic code or DNA. You can go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or [DeTiDepende.org](https://www.DeTiDepende.org) for detailed information, in Spanish and English, about every ingredient in each of the vaccines and what they do."

Discussion



Thank You!

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