



The
ROCKEFELLER
FOUNDATION

Reinforcing the Value of Covid-19 Testing: Message Brief

JUNE 2021



ABOUT THIS MESSAGE BRIEF

In addition to tracking how attitudes toward the pandemic have changed over time, this survey explored people's perceptions about the importance of testing, how likely they would be personally to get tested, and the most effective messages in encouraging them to do so.

In this brief, we provide high-level audience insights and message recommendations.

Methodology

Fielded online, May 12-24, 2021

n=1098 U.S. adults, including oversamples of Black respondents, Latinx respondents, and frontline workers



Audience Insights

People feel we've turned the corner, and they don't want to look back.

Optimism about ending the pandemic is steadily growing. Since our last survey, U.S. adults are increasingly seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, and consequently feel less at risk. Key changes since our February 2021 survey include:

National optimism: The percent of U.S. adults who feel that Covid-19 is a “very big problem” for the country has **declined (from 60% to 36%)**.

Community comfort: People are significantly more confident that the virus has been contained in their community **(up from 62% to 76%)**.

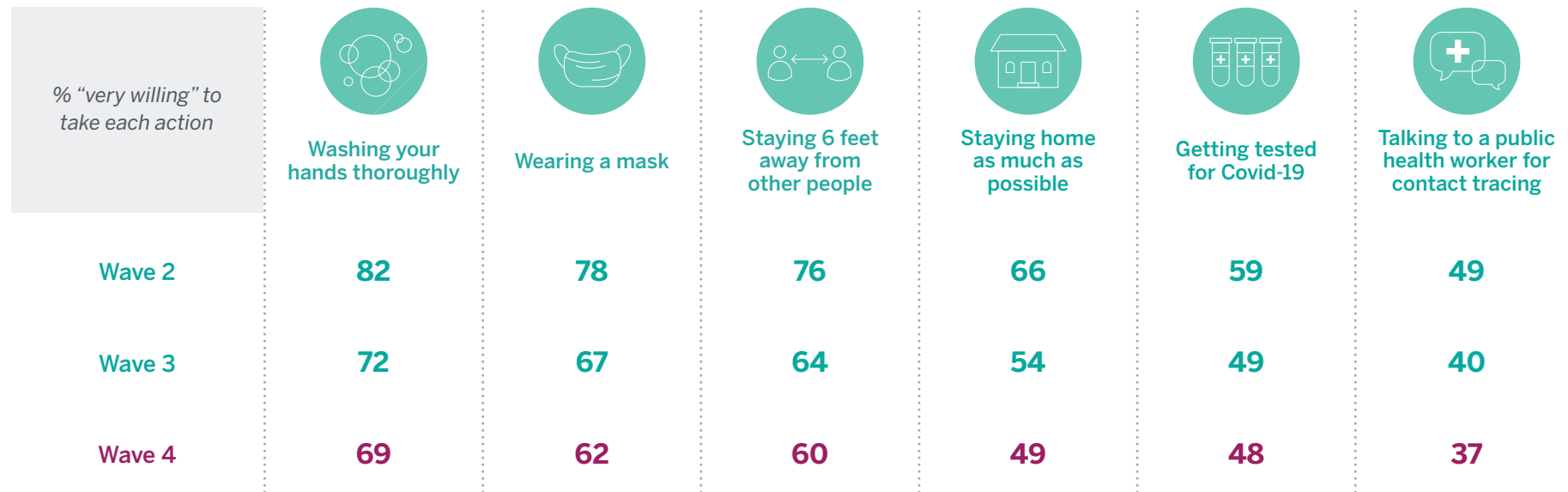
Personally protected: Perhaps more importantly, the proportion of adults concerned about personally contracting Covid-19 has **declined 16 points (from 74% to 58%)**, including a 14-point drop in the number of people who are very concerned **(40% to 26%)**.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR MESSAGING

Against this backdrop, people want to focus on forward momentum, rather than looking backwards. For example, one message that fell flat reminded people of the testing failures at the beginning of the pandemic, and emphasized that “we can't make the same mistake again.” Instead, the messages we recommend in the next section highlight how much our present and future depend on continued testing, rather than avoiding the mistakes of the past.

Covid fatigue is the problem—not testing fatigue.

While willingness to test is lower than we'd like it to be, it has not declined significantly over the last several months. In fact, it has stayed basically constant since February, while support for other protective behaviors like mask wearing, social distancing, and staying home have dipped slightly.



WHAT IT MEANS FOR MESSAGING

Optimism about vaccines and restlessness after a year of anxiety and isolation have understandably made people impatient. But there is no specific fatigue with testing. Rather than shame the audience for becoming complacent, messages should highlight the unique role that testing plays, even as mask wearing and social distancing rules become less strict.

Vaccines are driving national optimism, but they're not causing personal complacency.

Widespread vaccination is leading to the optimism and confidence that is likely responsible for a decline in protective measures. However, on an individual level, getting vaccinated does not make someone less willing to get tested. In fact, vaccinated adults are far more supportive of testing, and far more willing to get tested, than those who are not yet vaccinated.

64% of vaccinated people still think testing is **very important** to stopping the spread, compared to just 24% of hesitant people.

57% of vaccinated people would be **very likely** to get a Covid-19 test if offered at their workplace, compared to just 20% of hesitant people.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR MESSAGING

In the research that led to our Vaccine Confidence Message Brief, we found that many vaccine-ambivalent adults felt so strongly that they could protect themselves from Covid-19, the vaccine didn't seem necessary. It's possible that this audience de-prioritizes testing for the same reason. As detailed on the following pages, an important objective for messages is to remind people that testing is not just to protect yourself, but those around you.

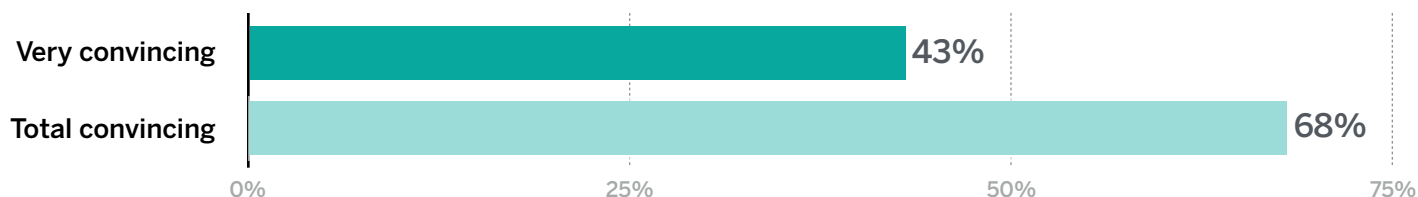
Message Recommendations



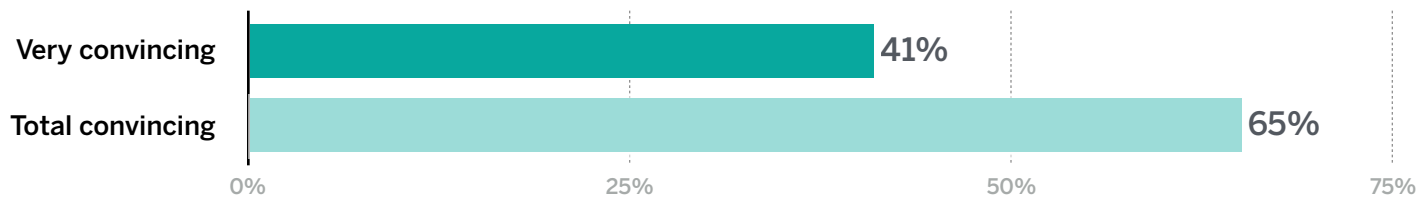
DO IT FOR THEM

MOTIVATING MESSAGES

There are some people—especially children and people with certain health conditions—who can't be vaccinated yet. Continuing to test for Covid-19 helps us stop outbreaks, so we can protect them.



We owe it to our teachers, frontline workers, doctors, and nurses to keep testing people for Covid-19. Regular testing helps us understand where the virus is still spreading, so that we can best protect them as much as they're protecting us.



WHY THEY WORK

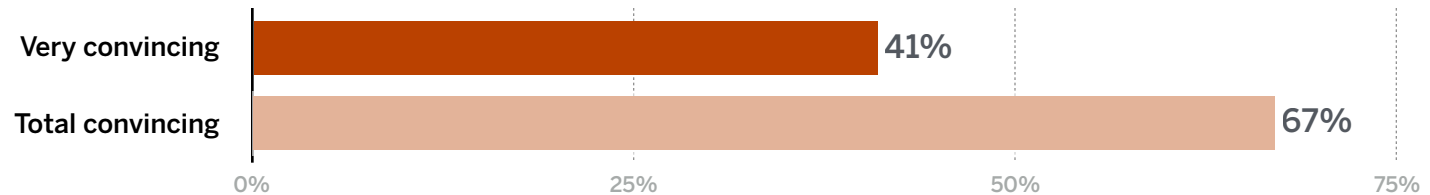
While people feel personally protected, they are still highly motivated to protect those they love, respect, or empathize with. These messages remind people that vaccines haven't ended the threat for everyone. They also give the audience a positive, personal responsibility to fulfill—rather than a burdensome obligation.



**BEFORE
IT'S TOO LATE**

MOTIVATING MESSAGES

The biggest threat to finally ending the pandemic is if more dangerous variants start to spread. Testing for Covid-19 is the best way to know if that's happening—and figure out a way to stop it.



WHY THEY WORK

Widespread vaccination has decreased the sense of urgency many feel to get tested. Those who are vaccinated may feel that even if they test positive, they're not at risk. And those who have chosen not to get vaccinated may feel they already know how to protect themselves from the virus.

This message leverages “loss aversion”—our disproportionate fear of losing something we already have—to remind both of these audiences what is still at risk. In doing so, the message remains future-oriented, rather than dwelling on the mistakes of the past 18 months.

Make the Decision Easy

Combatting Covid-19 fatigue requires more than just motivating messages. We have to find ways to make testing itself feel less burdensome and more appealing. For example:

Keep testing visible.

Traditional testing sites, pharmacies and drive-thrus are still desirable sites for people to get a Covid-19 test. Highlight that these sites still exist and likely have shorter wait times than before. There is also a significant interest in at-home testing, with 1 in 4 respondents saying that their top choice would be to get a test at home, if possible.

Add an extra incentive.

A tangible incentive can help push people over the finish line. When given a list of possible incentives, 37% of adults said a cash incentive would make them more likely to get a Covid-19 test, and 27% said the same of a retail gift card. In total, 81% selected at least one incentive that would make a difference in their decision.

