



The
ROCKEFELLER
FOUNDATION

Lessons from the Covid-19 Pandemic for Future Public Health Communications

MARCH 29, 2022

Table of Contents

3	Introduction
5	Methodology
8	Key Audience Insights
9	Personal safety and personal autonomy are here to stay
11	Actions have become disconnected from risk
14	Confusion is preventable
16	Binaries are misleading
17	Schools feel safe, but parents differ on why
19	Portrait of America
22	Frontline Defenders
25	Box-Checkers
28	Self-Defenders
31	Unconcerned
34	Message Recommendations
36	Focus on specific actions
38	Highlight commonality
40	Empower the individual
42	Lean into the local story

Introduction

18 Months Later: Lessons from the Covid-19 Pandemic

In the early months of 2020, society was on the brink of unimaginable change. Covid-19 was about to radically recast Americans' understanding of society, science, and safety. As we enter the third year of this pandemic, the question before us is: What have we learned? And how do we move forward?

Since September 2020, The Rockefeller Foundation has commissioned Hattaway Communications to conduct quantitative and qualitative surveys on Americans' attitudes towards Covid-19 actions, addressing testing, vaccines, incentives, and mandates. These surveys have provided the public health community with a better understanding of people's attitudes toward the pandemic at major inflection points.

This sixth and final survey wave focused on the long-term changes in how Americans think, feel, and act. It examined how living through the pandemic shifted how we view ourselves in relationship to each other and the structures and systems that guide healthcare and policy.



Wave 1
August 2020



Wave 2
December 2020



Wave 3
February 2021

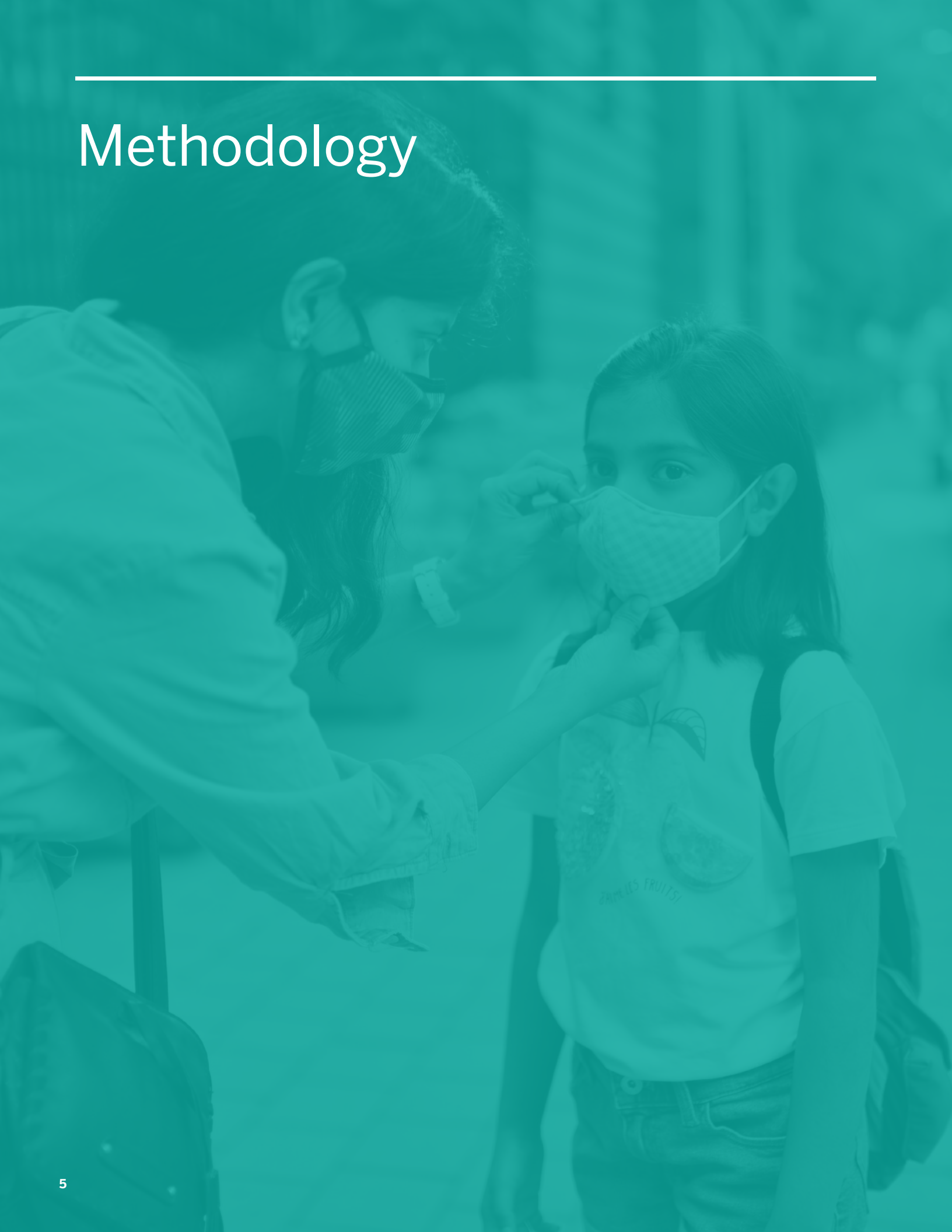


Wave 4
May 2021

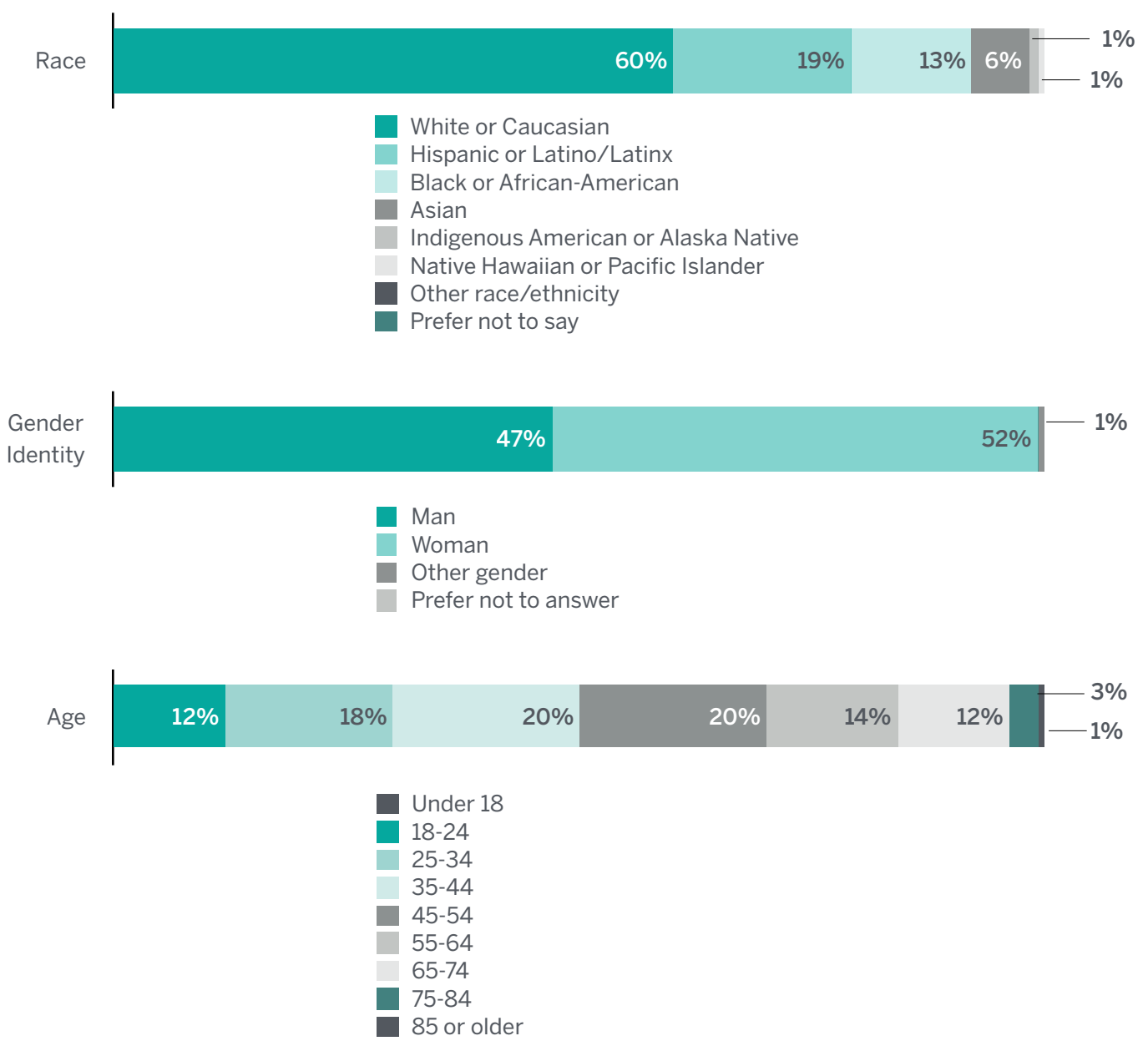


Wave 5
September 2021

Methodology



Hattaway Communications fielded a national online survey of 2,713 U.S. adults between January 21 and February 3, 2022. The sample included an oversample of Black, Latino, and frontline workers, as well as parents of children in preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school. As with the five previous survey waves in this series, this sample was weighted by race, gender identity, and age to reflect the demographic makeup of adults in the U.S. Sample size was the only methodological difference across waves.



WAVE 1

Aug 4-11, 2020

n=1,680
U.S. adults

Conducted online

WAVE 2

Nov 20-Dec 2, 2020

n=1,610
U.S. adults

Conducted online

WAVE 3

Feb 19-23, 2021

n=1,118
U.S. adults

Conducted online

WAVE 4

May 14-24, 2021

n=1,098
U.S. adults

Conducted online

WAVE 5

Sept 14-24, 2021

n=1,207
U.S. adults

Conducted online

WAVE 6*

Jan 21-Feb 3, 2022

n=2,713
U.S. adults

Conducted online

Each wave included oversamples of:

Black respondents | Latino respondents | Frontline workers

** This wave included oversamples of parents of children in preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school*

Key Audience Insights

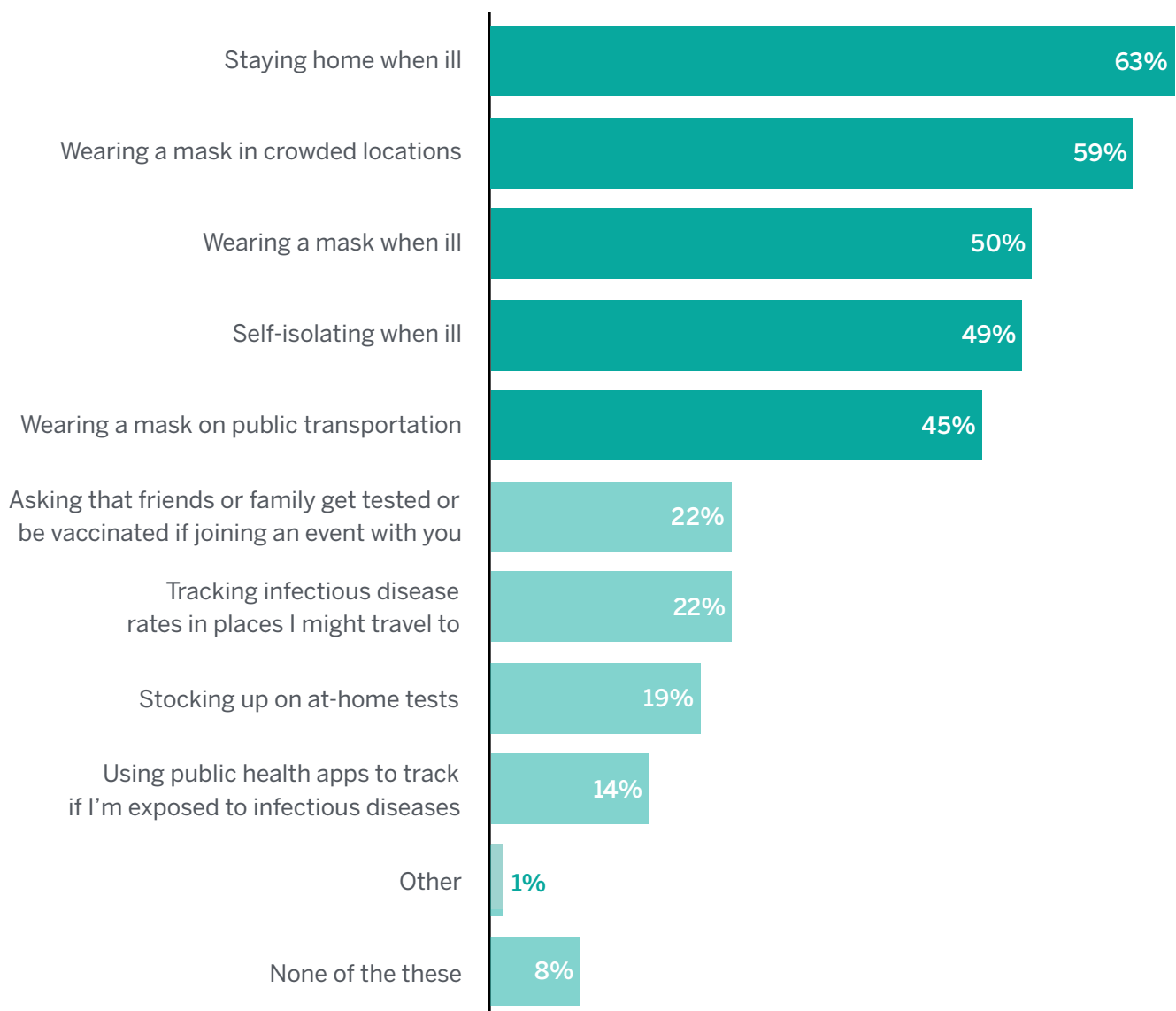


1. Personal safety and personal autonomy are here to stay

Public health had a clear effect on people's behavior for the long term.

In the spring of 2020, the idea of wearing masks in public to avoid respiratory infection was extremely uncommon (and, at one point, even actively discouraged). Our survey data shows that this once-unusual activity has become widespread and embraced for the long term, along with other behaviors that help avoid person-to-person disease transmission. **Additionally, the long-term actions most likely to stick are those that are individualized and that people can control for themselves.**

What behaviors have you adopted since the pandemic that you hope you will continue doing? % Overview

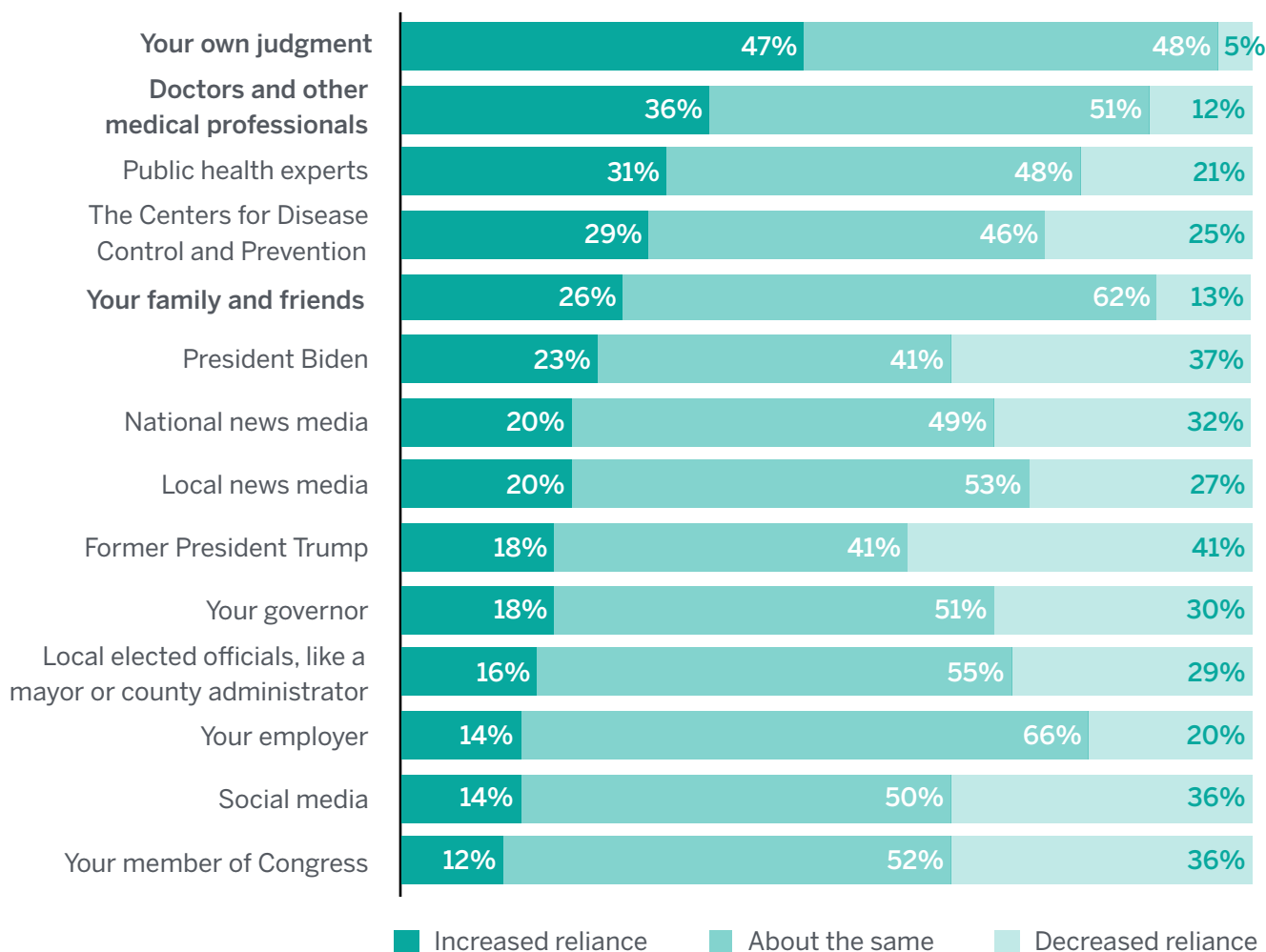


This is also reflective of a broader attitudinal trend of self-reliance. Throughout the pandemic, Americans often had to make decisions about personal risk and personal action by wading through conflicting and confusing guidance. Across all segments, people say have increasingly relied on their own judgment and knowledge to make choices for themselves and their families.

Nearly half of respondents say that **trust in their own judgment has increased**—the highest of any of the influencers or individuals mentioned. Doctors, friends, and family were also sources where people were more likely to say their trust had increased and less likely to say that their trust had decreased.

At the same time, **trust in institutions and policy leaders shows a more negative pattern.** While roughly 30% of respondents said their trust in the CDC and public health experts had increased, significant levels said they had decreased trust in these institutions. For other policy sources and the media, people were more likely to say that their trust had decreased than say it had increased. In particular, people were twice as likely to say that their trust in their local elected officials had decreased rather than increased; and they were three times more likely to say that their trust in their Member of Congress had decreased rather than increased.

Since September 2020, how much has your reliance on the following individuals/influences for information on Covid-19 changed?

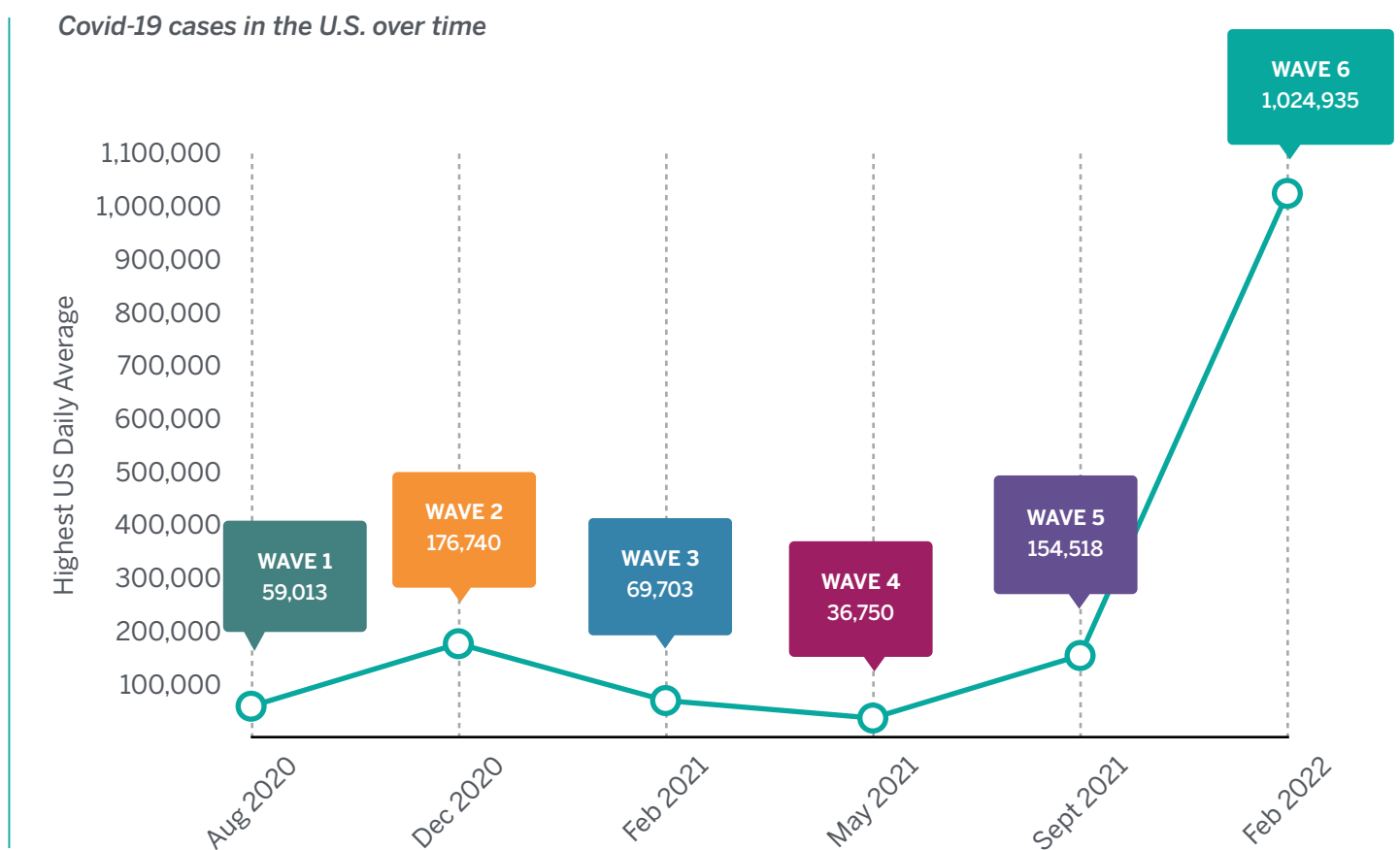


2. Actions have become disconnected from risk

People's attitudes and behaviors no longer track with case rates or infection trends.








This survey series tracked a set of core protective actions recommended by health leaders to determine how many Americans were acting on each—and how that changed as the pandemic ebbed and surged.

One encouraging finding over time was that **most people were willing to take most of the recommended actions most of the time**. In earlier survey waves, we saw that this willingness reflected and responded to pandemic trends. For example, we saw declines in willingness to take actions when Covid-19 cases declined in May of 2021, and increases in willingness in the September 2021 wave when the Delta variant surge was underway.



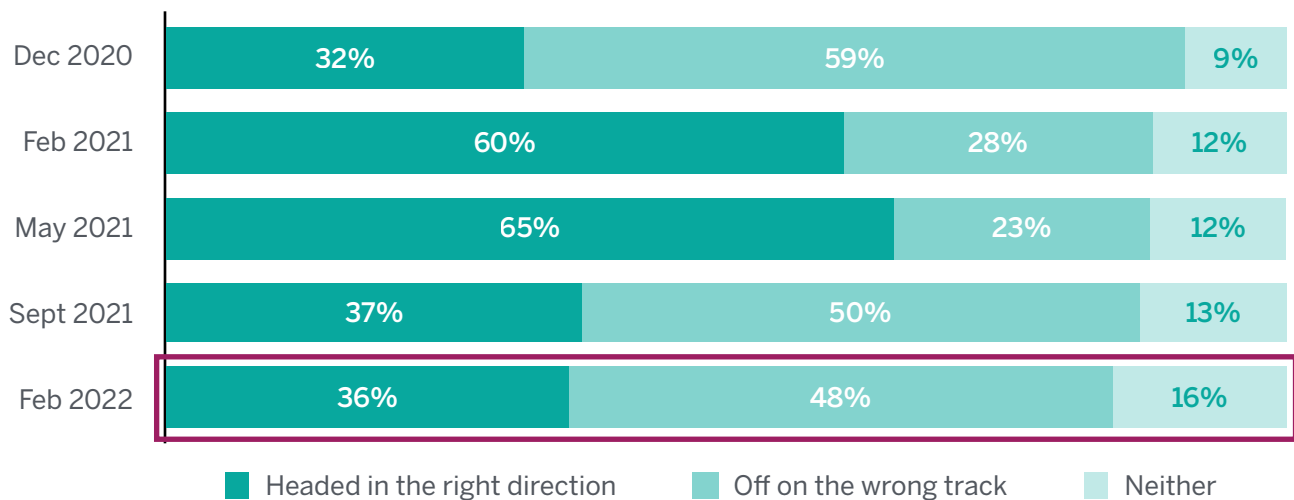
However, our latest survey showed that willingness to take action was at its lowest level ever, despite the fact that cases were the highest ever measured. This suggests that “pandemic fatigue” is real: People have hit the limit of their willingness to adopt protective measures. Their belief in the effectiveness of these actions may also have declined as the pandemic continued unabated despite them. Especially notable is how vaccination rates remained flat even as data from the Omicron surge demonstrated its value in preventing severe illness and death.

How willing are you to take the following actions to control the spread of Covid-19? % Overview

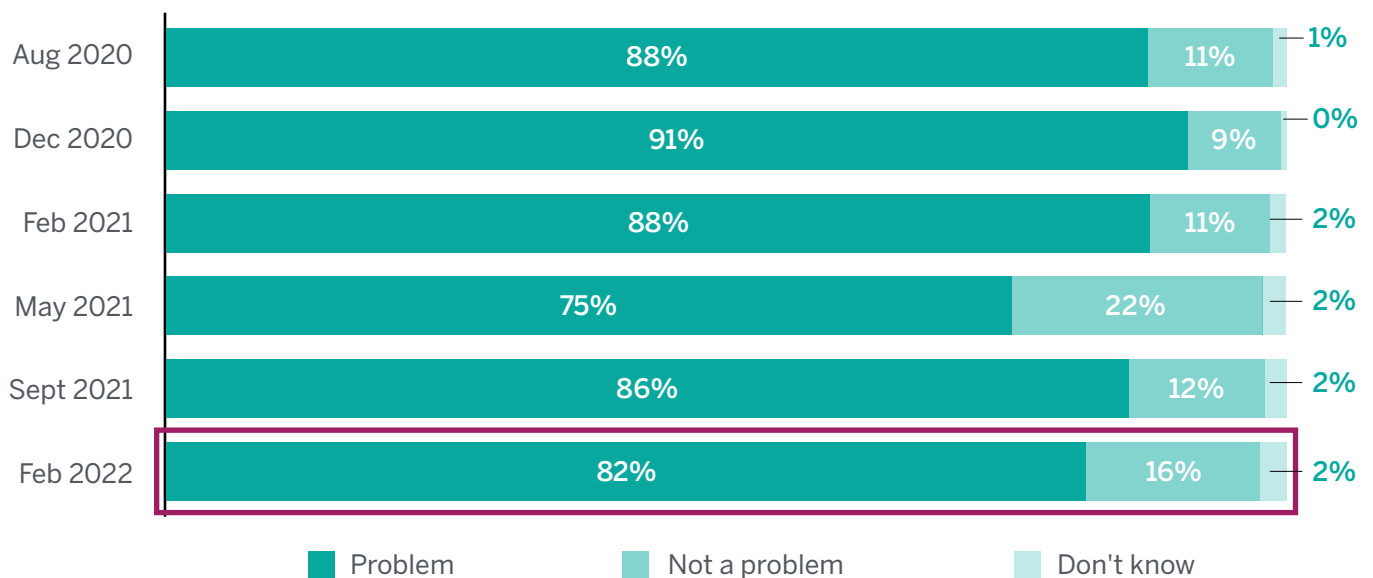
							
	Wash hands	Wear a mask	Socially distance	Getting vaccinated	Stay at home	Getting tested	Contact tracing
Aug 2020	80	74	75	—	65	58	51
Dec 2020	82	78	76	—	66	59	49
Feb 2021	72	67	64	47	54	49	40
May 2021	70	62	60	54	49	48	36
Sept 2021	79	65	68	58	54	55	41
Feb 2022	71	69	58	52	52	51	36

Another interpretation of this data is that people have accepted the limits of what personal, individualized action can achieve. Flattened levels of personal willingness to take action are not linked to a corresponding flatness in perceived risk from the pandemic; agreement that the “country is on the wrong track” has doubled since survey February and May 2021, returning to levels seen at the beginning of the pandemic. In addition, over 80% of Americans say that Covid-19 remains a big problem.

Regarding Covid-19, do you think that the country is currently headed in the right direction or is off on the wrong track? % Overview



In your opinion, how big a problem is the current situation in America regarding Covid-19? % Overview



3. Confusion is preventable

Nuances and specifics in Covid-19 guidelines were the source of confusion, likely affecting people's resulting actions.

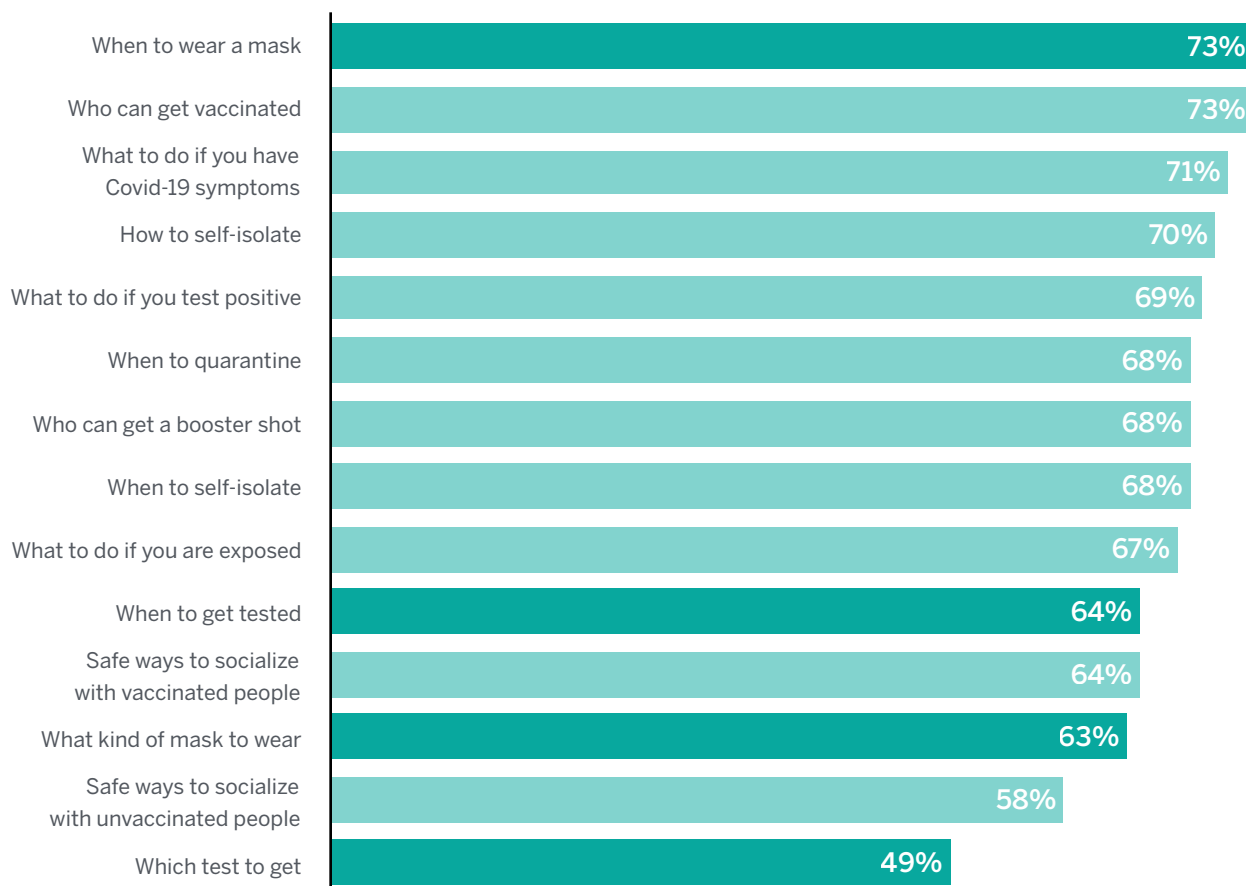
In this wave, we sought to understand the practical and emotional toll of pandemic-related guidance and activities by asking what people found most *confusing* and *frustrating* over the last two years.

Most people found most high-level guidance to be clear, but were confused about how to do it. For example, they were much clearer about when to wear masks (73%) than they were about *which* mask to wear (63%); they were clearer about when to get tested (64%) compared to *which* test to get (49%).

This suggests that public health's quest to be informative and comprehensive conflicted with people's need for simple, clear guidance. It also reinforces the importance of supporting people with the full spectrum of public health interventions. Increasing access to masks, tests, and vaccines—rather than just communicating the need for them—helps to eliminate confusion by putting the tools to take action right in people's hands.

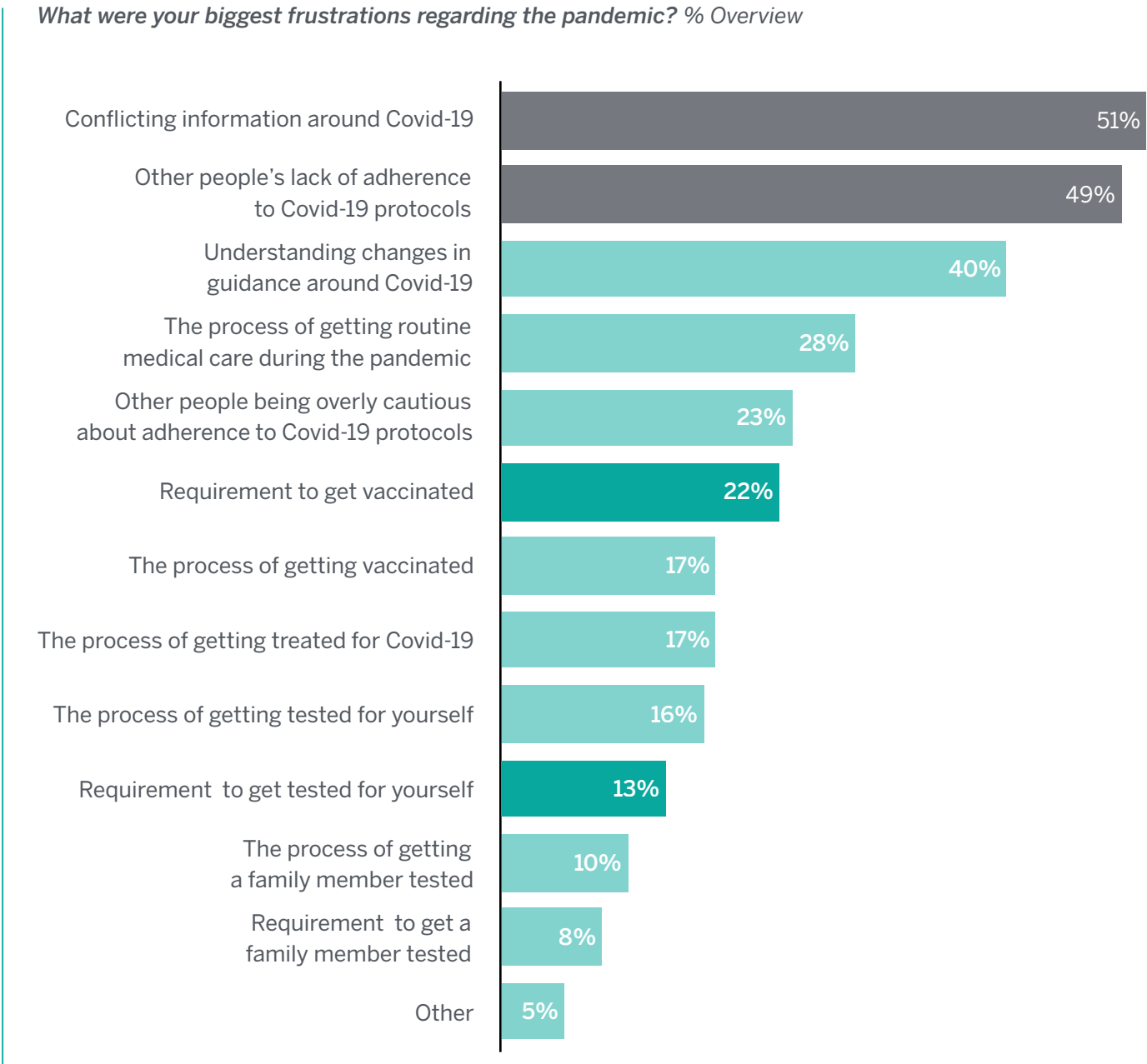
Please indicate how clear the following guidance has been to you throughout the pandemic:

% Top box 'Very clear'



The recent survey also revealed the difference between the real frustrations people felt and how frustrations were often portrayed in the media. Certainly, conflicting information was top of mind in both arenas. But “other people’s lack of adherence to Covid-19 protocols” was cited as frustrating (49%) nearly as often as “conflicting information around Covid-19” (51%)—and more than twice as often as vaccine mandates (22%), and three times as often as testing mandates (13%).

Simply put, most people were far more accepting of Covid-19 public health recommendations and actions than larger media narratives over the last two years have suggested.



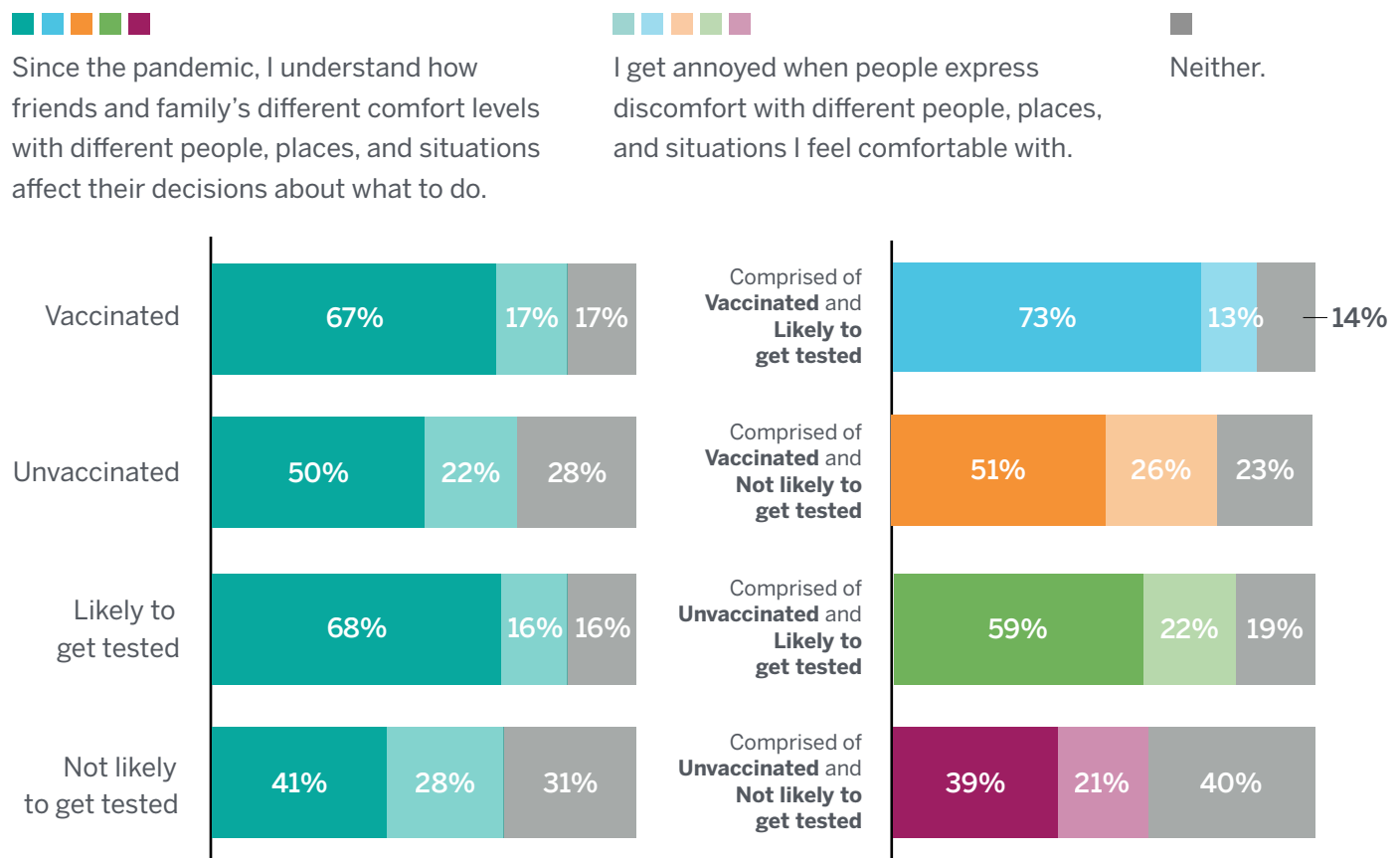
4. Binaries are misleading

Binary media stories miss the mark. There has long been a communications opportunity to acknowledge audience nuances and meet people where they are.

Since vaccines became widely available, it has been common to use vaccine acceptance and status as a proxy for attitudes about Covid-19. This survey wave shows that vaccination status alone does not predict attitudes or behavior. For example, there are vaccinated people who are not taking any other protective actions, and unvaccinated people who are deeply concerned about the risk of Covid-19 and taking many actions to protect themselves—except for getting vaccinated.

We saw the limitations of vaccine status as an indicator when we asked about attitudes surrounding two potentially polarizing issues: people's perceptions of others' motivations, and their acceptance of others' actions. In both cases, there was far more agreement between the vaccinated and unvaccinated segments than hypothesized. This led us to investigate more nuanced ways to understand current attitudes and motivations, which we explore in the "Portrait of America" section that follows.

Which of the following statements comes closer to your view? % Overview



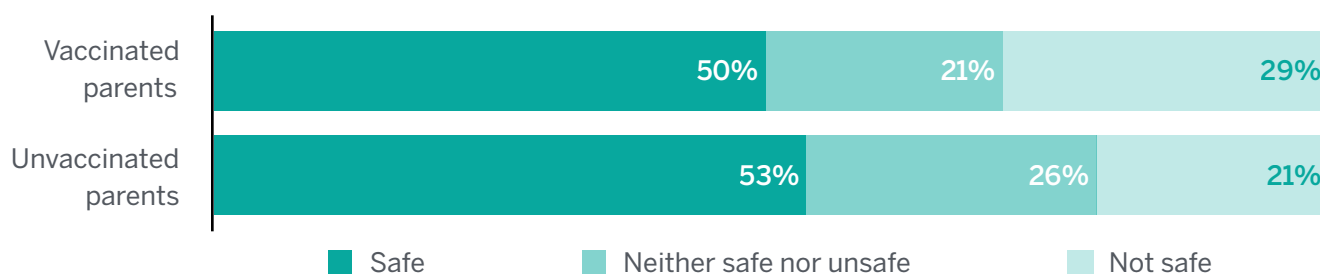
5. Schools feel safe, but parents differ on why

Despite vaccine status, parents are generally in agreement about school safety.

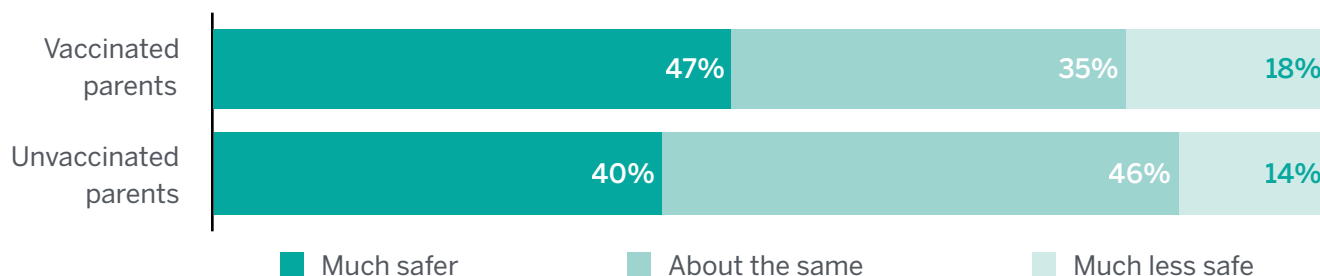
In the fall of 2021, as schools reopened widely for in-person learning, there was understandable concern about how safe they were and what precautions were necessary to keep children safe as they returned.

Nearly half a year later, there is consistent agreement among both vaccinated and unvaccinated parents that schools are generally safe and became safer as the year progressed. A majority of both parents also believe that attending school in person is critical for their child for both educational and social development reasons.

In your opinion, how safe from Covid-19 are children in school right now?



Now thinking of it in a different way, how safe would you say children are from Covid-19 infection now compared to at the beginning of the school year when attending school in person?



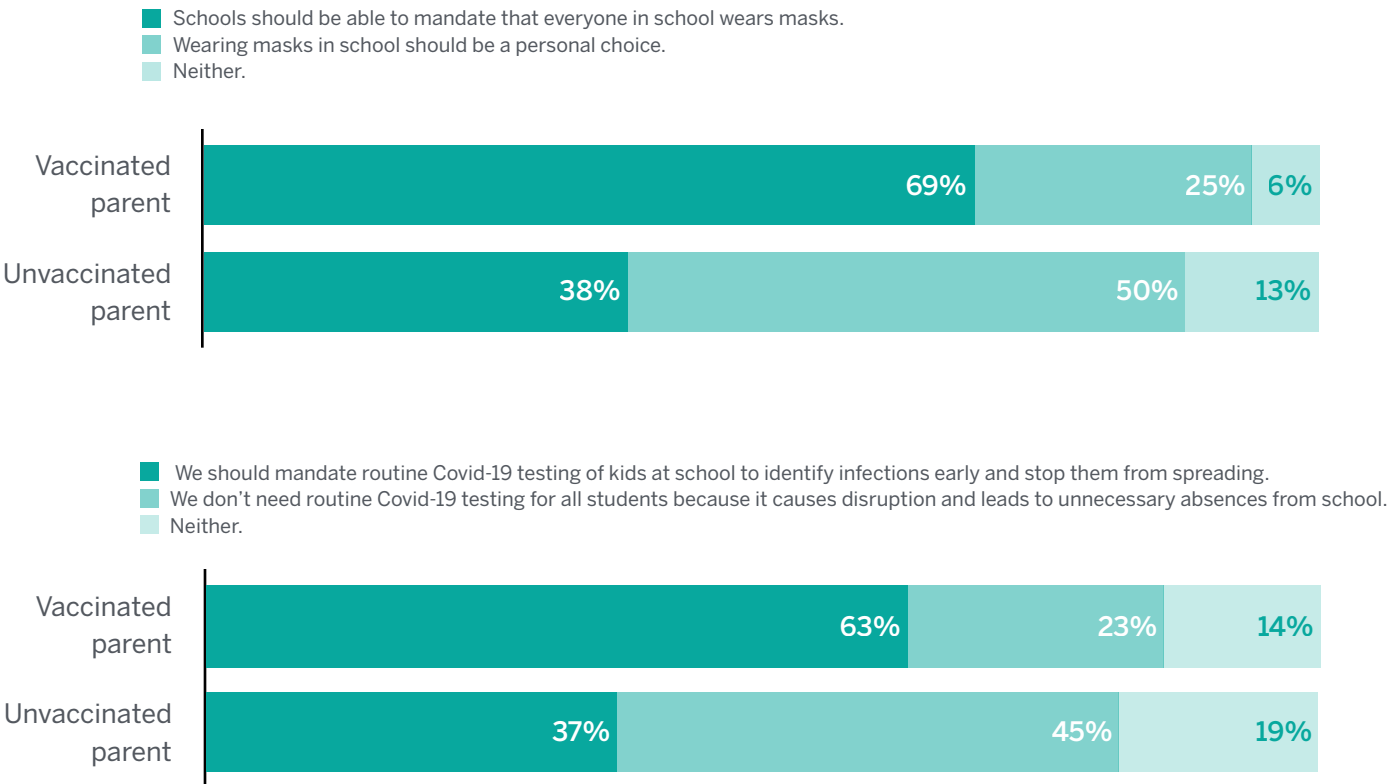
Which of the following statements comes closer to your view?

- It's important that my child attend school in person because it's critical to their educational and social development.
- Remote learning works for my child because it allows them to focus on their education without other distractions.
- Neither.

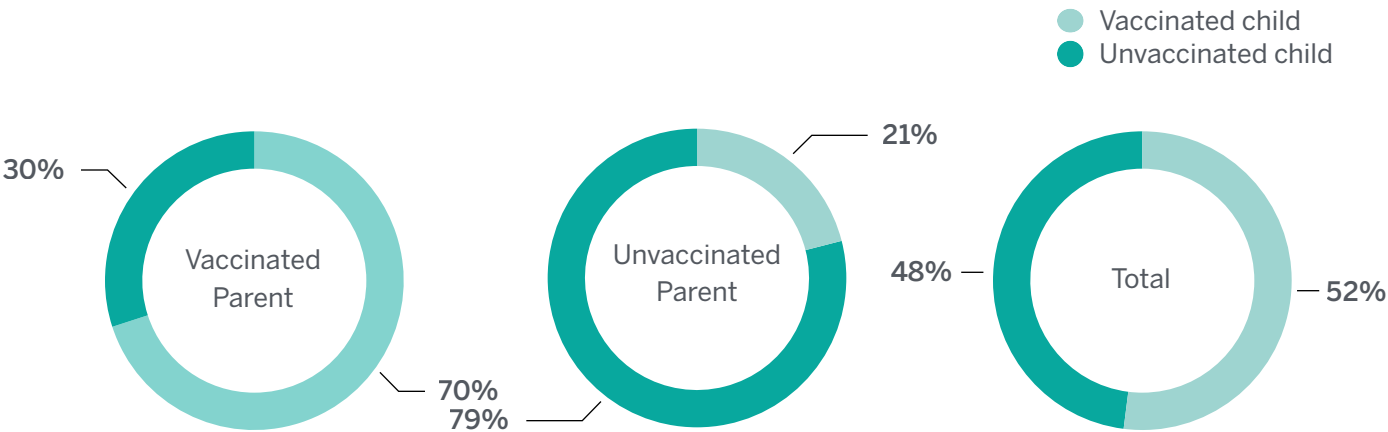


They disagree about whether key protective measures to protect children, such as mask and testing mandates, were important parts of keeping them safe. Unsurprisingly, vaccinated parents were much more likely than unvaccinated parents to support those mandates and to have vaccinated their child.

Which of the following statements comes closer to your view?



Child's vaccination status by parental vaccination status



Portrait of America

Multifaceted and Forever Changed

Audience Profiles

Our research identified that people's attitudes about the pandemic and safety measures fall in all sorts of categories. Notably, as mentioned earlier, the binary of vaccination status and likelihood to get tested were not accurate indicators for various attitudes.

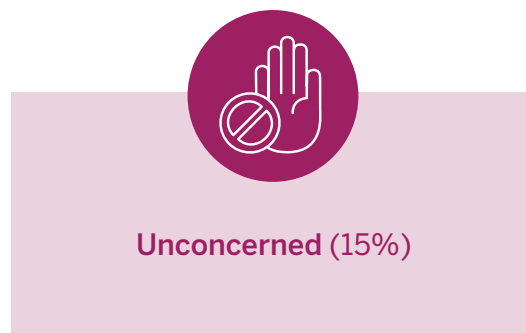
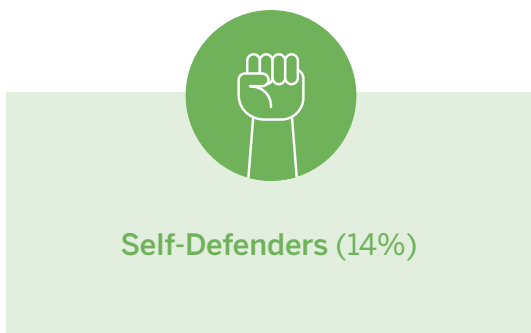
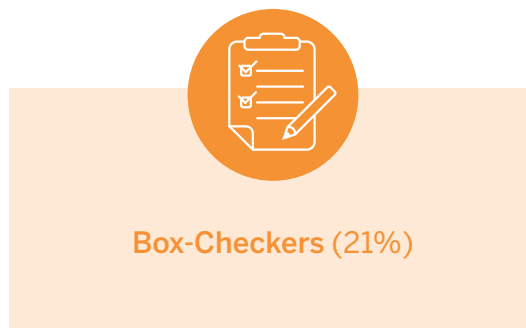
Four Audience Profiles were created based on respondents' answers to two questions:

Which of the following reflects your vaccine status?

How likely would you be to get tested for Covid-19 if it were offered to you?

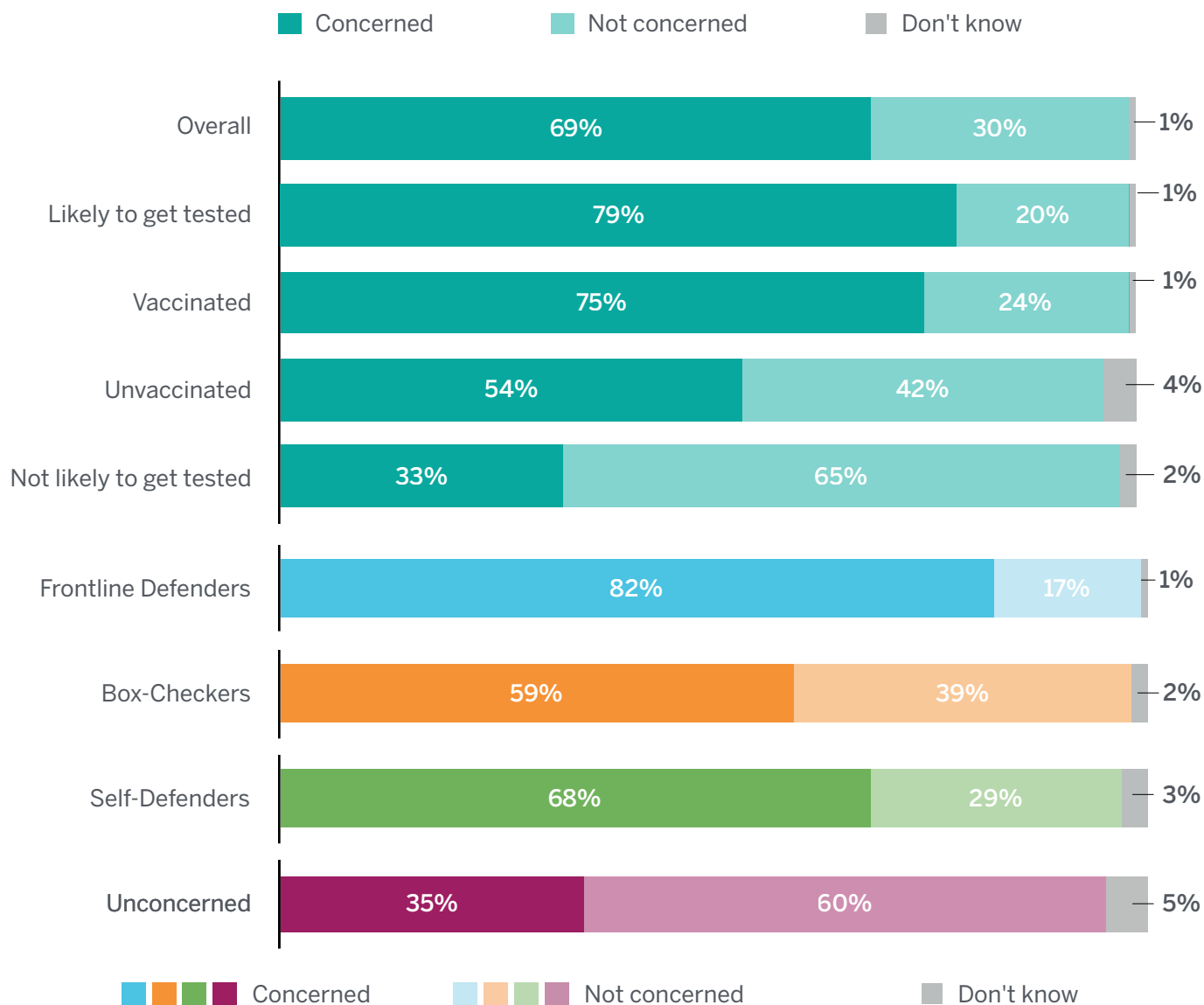
These four audience profiles—which we call psychographics—were each characterized by a unique set of shared attitudes and behaviors. They reflect a reality that, this far into the pandemic, with as many ways and means of staying safe as there are now, binaries are decreasingly useful in understanding our audiences and communities. They invite too many assumptions about audience motivations, which prevents communicators from focusing on how to best reach people so that they are engaged and take action.

These psychographics can provide a lens for you to think about your audiences in refined ways and tailor your communications to appeal to different people according to their unique characteristics. Demographic data is also provided to help you create content that reflects people from different backgrounds, as appropriate, and tailor your content for platforms and channels they may use more than others.



These psychographics were also more useful in helping us understand people's current attitudes toward testing, vaccines, and health guidance. The data below is a clear example of this, as when looking through the binary lens (i.e. vaccinated versus unvaccinated) those most concerned personally about contracting Covid-19 are respondents 'likely to get tested,' and those who are 'vaccinated.' Yet, when looked at through the lens of the psychographics, it is the Self-Defenders (i.e. unvaccinated and likely to get tested) who are more concerned personally about contracting Covid-19 than their vaccinated counterpart, the Box-Checkers.

How concerned are you personally about contracting Covid-19?

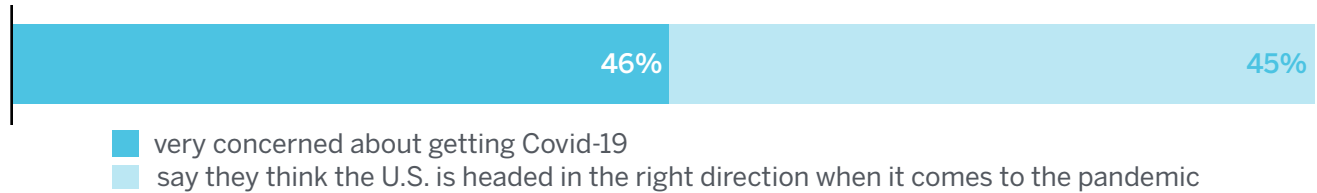




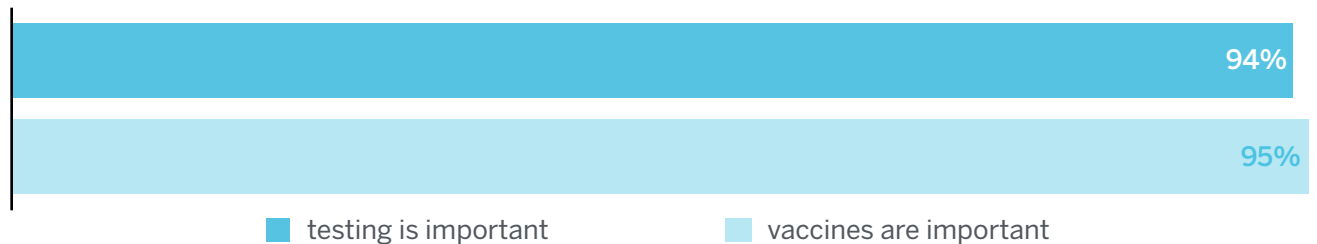
Frontline Defenders

The **Frontline Defenders** group is following public health guidance and feel confident in their ability to do so. They are vaccinated, willing to get tested, and following the Covid-19 guidance to mitigate risk to themselves and others. Frontline Defenders:

Are cautiously optimistic. 46% are very concerned about getting Covid-19. However, 45% say that they think the U.S. is headed in the right direction when it comes to the pandemic. Frontline Defenders are very aware of their risk, but they recognize that we have developed the tools to fight the virus.

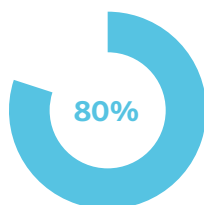


Almost unanimously agree that vaccines and testing are important to stopping the spread of Covid-19. 94% say that testing is important and another 95% say vaccines are important.



Feel confident they know how to deal with the pandemic moving forward. 80% say they feel confident that they know what type of test they should get if they need one.

That said, some of their biggest frustrations regarding the pandemic are understanding the changes in guidance (44%) and conflicting information around Covid (55%).



say they feel confident that they know what type of test they should get if they need one.

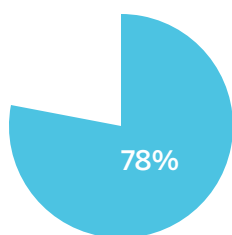


say their biggest frustration regarding the pandemic is understanding the changes in guidance.

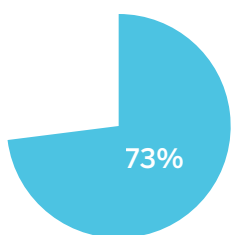


say their biggest frustration regarding the pandemic is conflicting information around Covid.

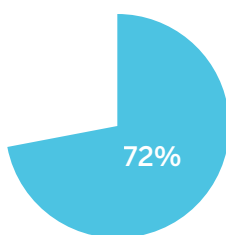
Follow the science and do what it takes to get back to normal. Around 3 in 4 are very willing to wear a mask (78%), get tested (73%), and social distance (72%). 62% say they chose to hunker down during the Omicron surge to protect themselves and others.



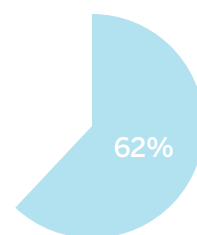
wear a mask



get tested



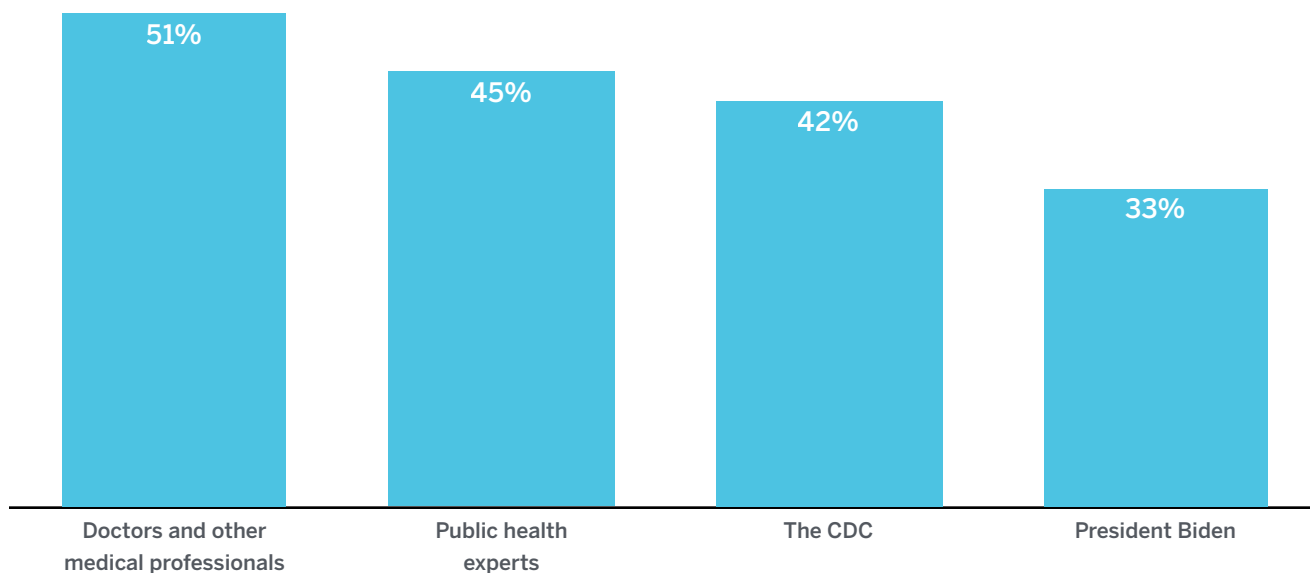
social distance



chose to hunker down during the Omicron surge

TRUST

During the pandemic, Frontline Defenders increased their trust in **doctors and other medical professionals** (51%), **public health experts** (45%), the **CDC** (42%), and **President Biden** (33%).



AUDIENCE SIZE



DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographically, Frontline Defenders' attitudes are prevalent among **people over 55**, **Asian Americans**, **urban** and **suburban** Americans, **high-income**, **college educated**, **health care professionals**, and **Democrats**.



People over 55



Asian Americans



Urban and suburban



High-income



College educated



Healthcare professionals



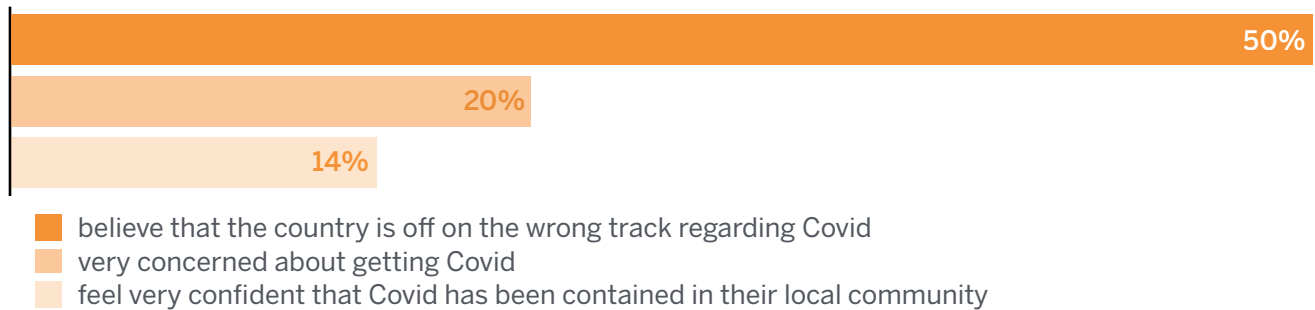
Democrats



Box-Checkers

The **Box-Checkers** are vaccinated, but less likely to adopt Covid-19 guidance like testing and mask-wearing. This group is ready for the pandemic to be over and go back to their normal lives. Box Checkers:

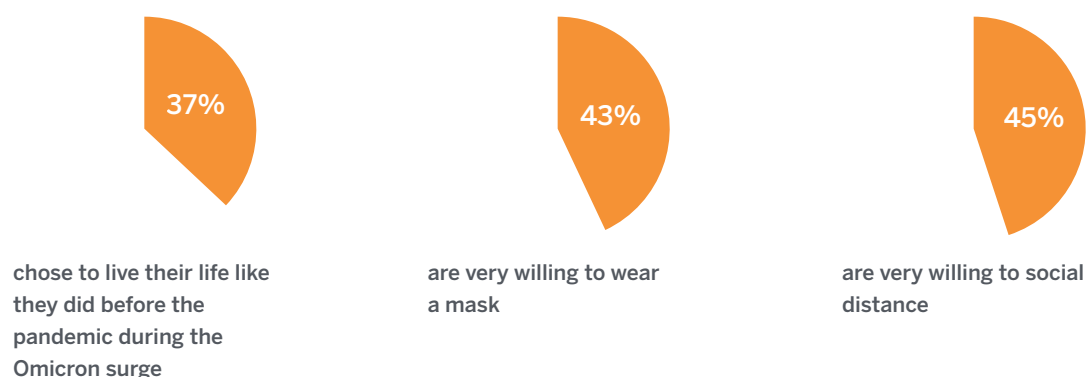
Are concerned about the state of the country and their local area, but not about getting Covid-19 personally. One in two believe that the country is off on the wrong track regarding Covid-19 and only 14% are very confident that Covid-19 has been contained in their local community. Only 20% are very concerned about getting the virus personally.



Take actions that will protect them long term, but are less likely to take actions that affect their daily lives. 79% say that vaccines are important compared to 63% who say that testing is important – and less than a third (30%) are very willing to get tested.



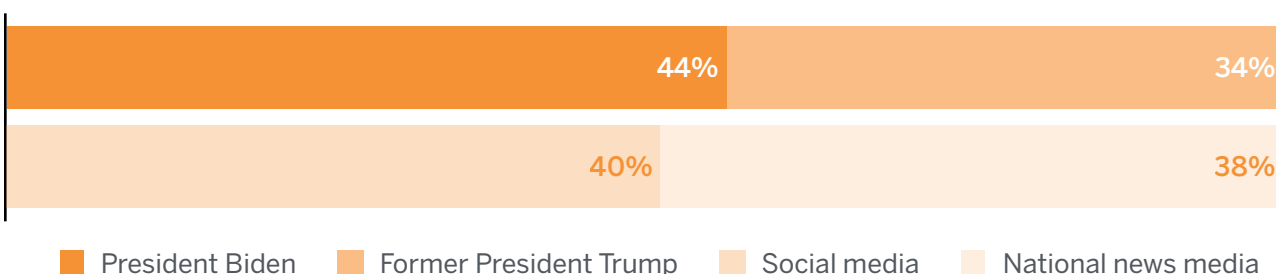
Want to get back to normal, but are less likely than Frontline Defenders and Self-Defenders to continue additional safety measures. More than a third (37%) chose to live their lives like they did before the pandemic during the Omicron surge compared to 28% of Self-Defenders and just 21% of Frontline Defenders. 43% are very willing to wear a mask compared to 48% of Self-Defenders and 78% of Frontline Defenders. 45% are very willing to social distance compared to 50% of Self-Defenders and 72% of Frontline Defenders.



TRUST

In terms of trust, Box-Checkers have not moved much and they are not sure exactly who to trust. The biggest shifts are increasing reliance on **doctors and other medical professionals** (28%) and **family and friends** (22%). They have decreased reliance most in President Biden (44%), social media (40%), and national news media (38%), along with former President Donald Trump (34%).

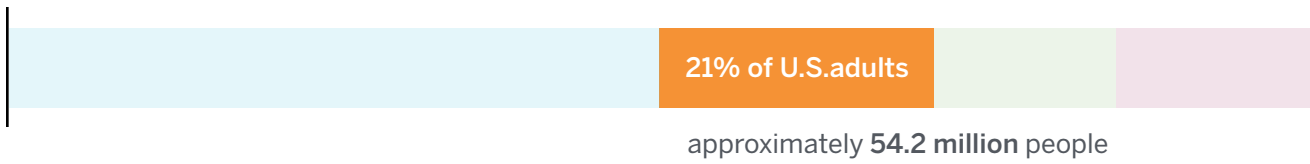
Have decreased reliance across the board



They have increased trust in



AUDIENCE SIZE

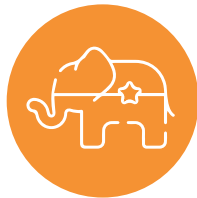


DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographically, Box Checkers attitudes are prevalent among people who live in **Suburban areas**, identify as **Republican**, and are **non-parents**. There are no notable differences in terms of age and race in this group.



Suburban



Republicans



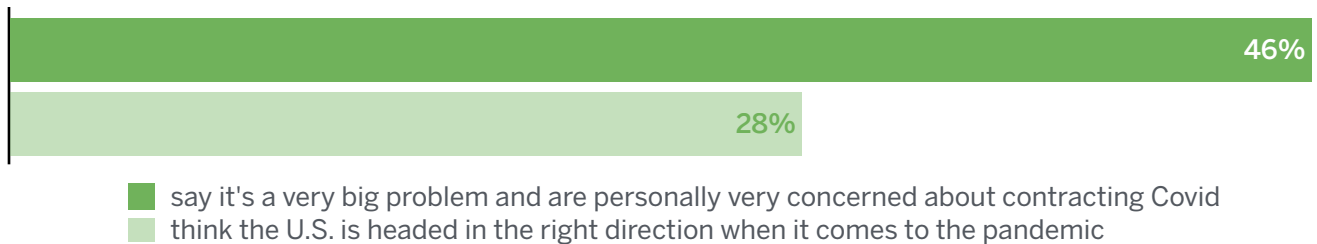
Non-parents



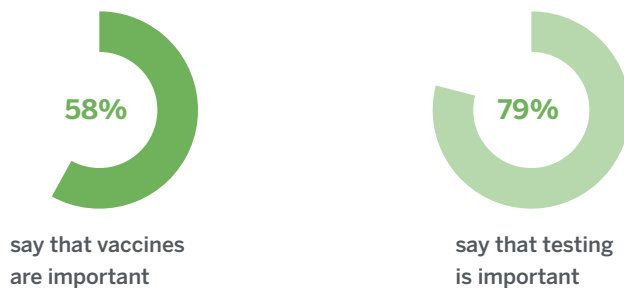
Self-Defenders

Self-Defenders tend to be very vaccine hesitant—while trying to do everything else right. They are more likely to get tested, wear a mask, and take additional precautions compared to Box Checkers, and they appear to be absorbing the guidance and continue adopting risk adverse practices into their daily lives as long as they don't need to get vaccinated. Self-Defenders:

See the pandemic as a problem nationally and locally—and don't think it's getting better. Almost (46% respectively) half say Covid-19 a very big problem and that they are personally very concerned about contracting Covid-19. Only 28% think the U.S. is headed in the right direction when it comes to the pandemic.

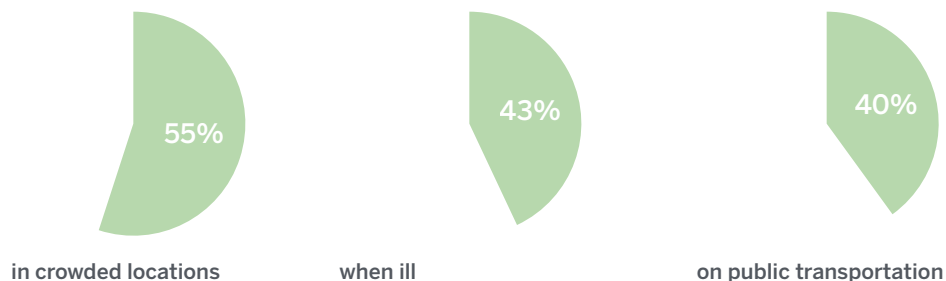


View testing—not vaccines—as integral to stopping the pandemic. 79% say testing is important to stopping the pandemic, compared to 58% who say the same about vaccines.



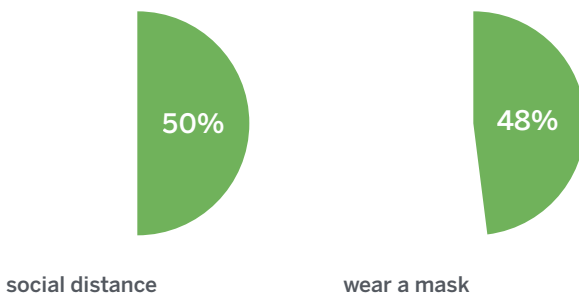
Will continue habits adopted during the pandemic. They hope to continue wearing a mask in crowded locations (55%), when ill (43%), and on public transportation (40%).

They are likely to wear a mask

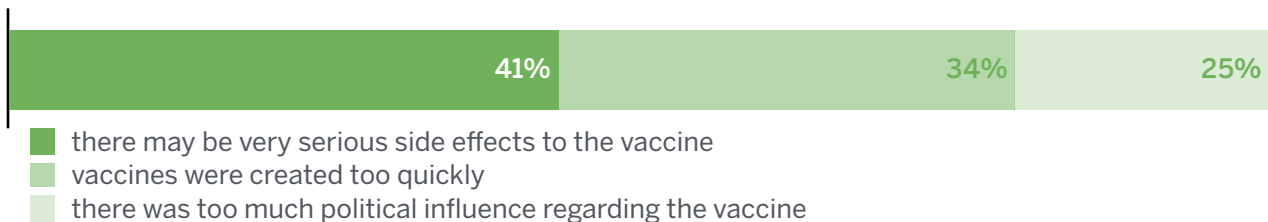


Take necessary precautions to protect themselves from Covid-19. Around half are very willing to social distance (50%) and wear a mask (48%). Overall, they are the second most likely to have taken extra precautions during the holidays, with 87% saying they took at least one action. The most common precautions during the holidays were staying home (40%), wearing a mask while not eating, avoiding hugs and handshakes (37%), putting more space between people at the dinner table (34%), and hosting fewer people than usual (30%).

Around half are very willing to



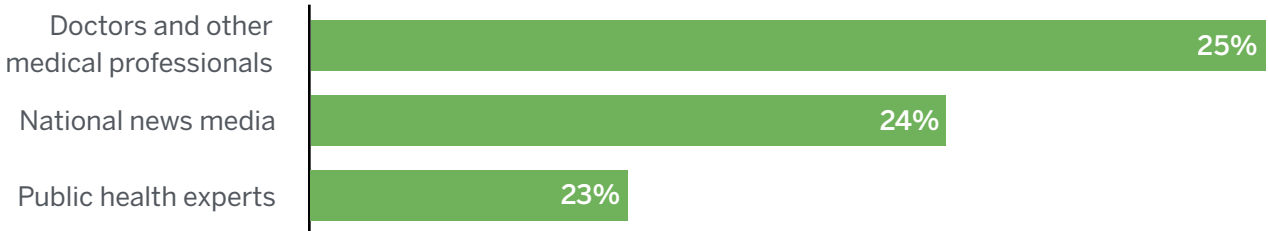
Are vaccine-hesitant. One of their biggest frustrations was the requirement to get vaccinated (34%) and very few (15%) say the pandemic has made them more trusting of the value of vaccines. Their biggest areas of concern for the vaccine are that there may be serious side effects (41%), vaccines were created too quickly (34%), and that there was too much political influence (25%).



TRUST

The Self-Defenders have most increased their reliance on **doctors and other medical health professionals** (25%), the **national news media** (24%), and **public health experts** (23%). Notably, around 30% have decreased trust in local elected officials, their governors, and their member of Congress, respectively.

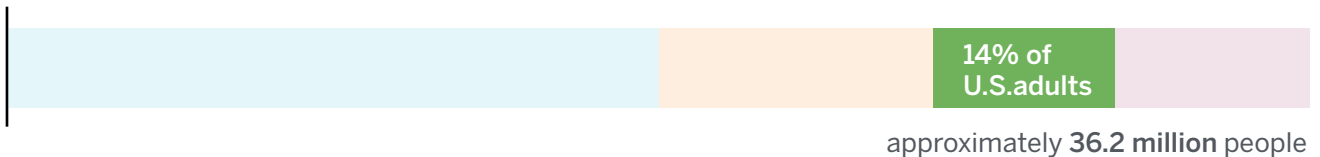
Have increased their reliance on



They have decreased their trust in local government officials



AUDIENCE SIZE



DEMOGRAPHICS

Self-Defenders are prevalent among **people under 35**, **non-college educated**, **Black and Latino Americans**, and **those who identify as independent politically**.



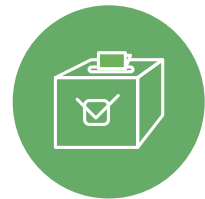
People under 35



Non-college
educated



Black and Latino
Americans



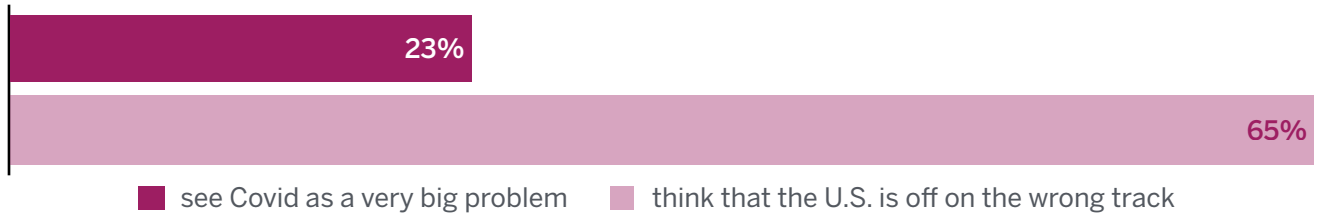
Independent



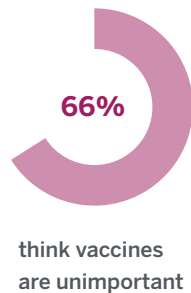
Unconcerned

Unconcerned Americans are unvaccinated and still have many concerns about the vaccine. In many ways they have checked out of the pandemic and are much less likely to be informed on or follow Covid-19 guidance like getting tested and wearing a mask. They also have a hard time knowing who to trust. Unconcerned Americans:

Feel Covid is not a big problem, but also they don't like the way the U.S. is handling it. While only 23% see Covid-19 as a very big problem, 65% think that the U.S. is off on the wrong track.

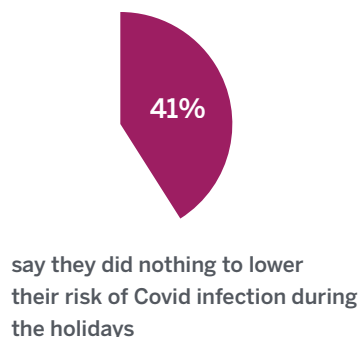


Do not think testing or vaccines are important. Only 55% think testing is unimportant and another 66% say the same about vaccines.



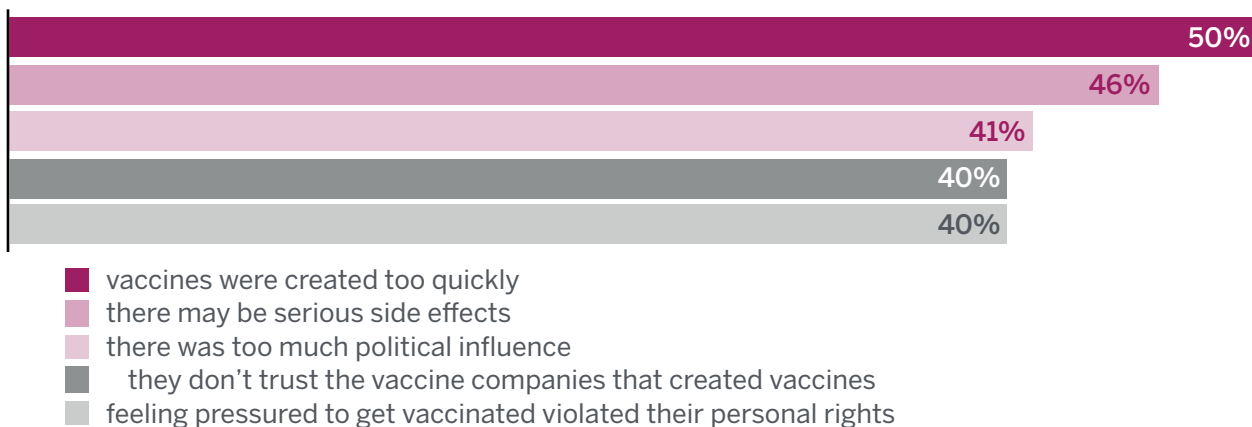
Are not well informed about the guidance and they aren't taking the precautions to themselves.

Almost two-thirds (63%) are not confident they know which test to get if they need one. Additionally, 41% say they did nothing to lower their risk of Covid-19 infection during the holidays and 30% say they will not continue any precautions adopted during the pandemic



Have many hesitations about the vaccine. The top concerns are that the vaccines were created too quickly(50%), there may be serious side effects (46%), there was too much political influence (41%), they don't trust the vaccine companies that created vaccines (40%), and that feeling pressured to get vaccinated violated their personal rights (40%).

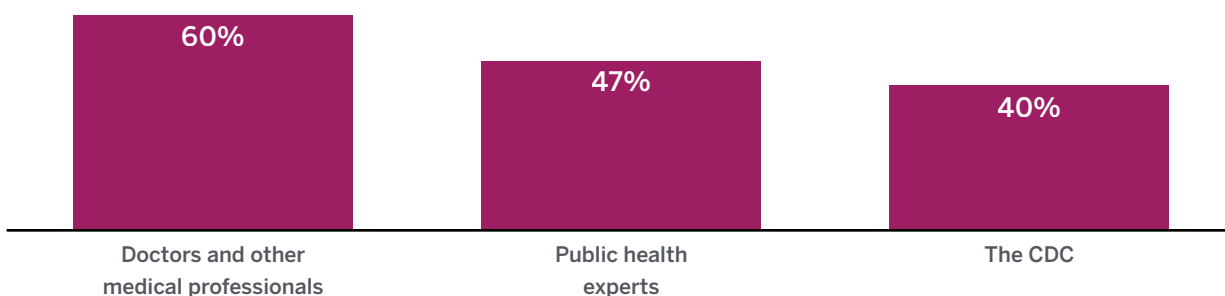
Top concerns



TRUST

Unconcerned Americans do not know who to trust and their trust in others and institutions has largely decreased. A large portion of this group has decreased reliance on elected officials like **Biden** (60%), their **member of Congress** (47%), and **local elected officials** (40%). They have also dramatically decreased reliance on the national news media (49%) and local news media (44%).

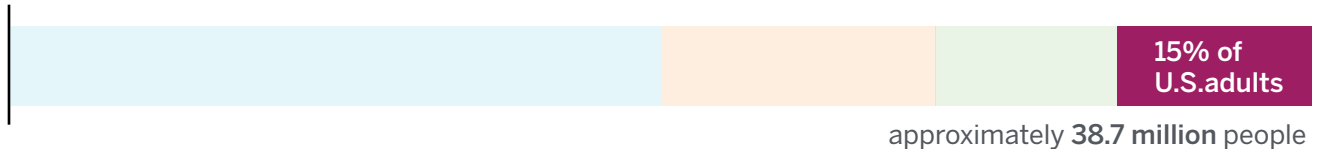
A large portion of this group has decreased reliance on elected officials like



They have also dramatically decreased reliance on the news



AUDIENCE SIZE



DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographically, Unconcerned attitudes are prevalent among people between the ages of **25-34**, **rural Americans**, **low-income**, **non-college educated**, and **Republicans**.



People
aged 25-34



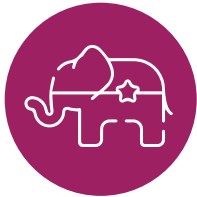
Rural



Low income



Non-college
educated



Republicans

Message Recommendations



Our message recommendations in this report draw on insights from all five previous studies including, with this sixth wave of research, how people reflect on the last two years of life. Our analysis led us to four different, but mutually supportive principles for communicators to consider in their public health messaging. This guidance is high-level, meant to be refined with a communicator's more localized knowledge of their audiences' needs.



Focus on
specific actions

Highlight
commonality

Empower
the individual

Lean into the
local story

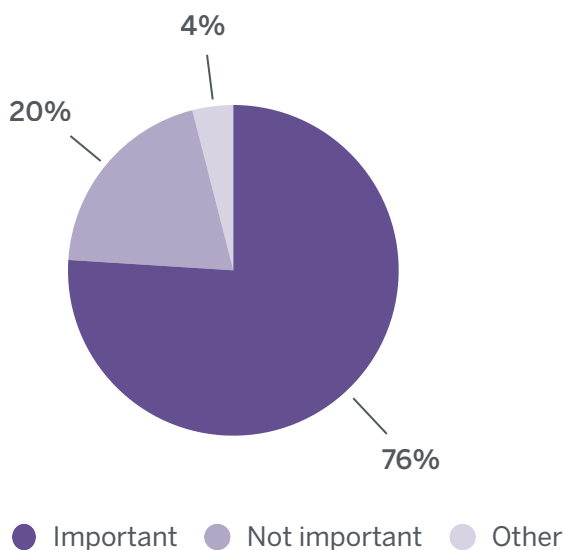
Focus on Specific Actions

Give people a roadmap that helps them follow through on general guidance. Give them specific details of what to do next, e.g., where, when, and which.

Avoid abstract ideas, which can prompt potentially unhelpful political debates. Use active verbs and outlining concrete actions, which help keep people focused.

Why? Most people want the pandemic to end, are supportive of actions that will make that happen, and have been doing many of these things for a long time. After all, we are two years into the pandemic. (See Audience Insight 1 figures on page 9.) Now is the time to be as specific as possible about how people can continue to take actions easily and successfully. For example, give them specific guidance like where they can get tests near them or how to order them, rather than reminding people to simply “get tested.”

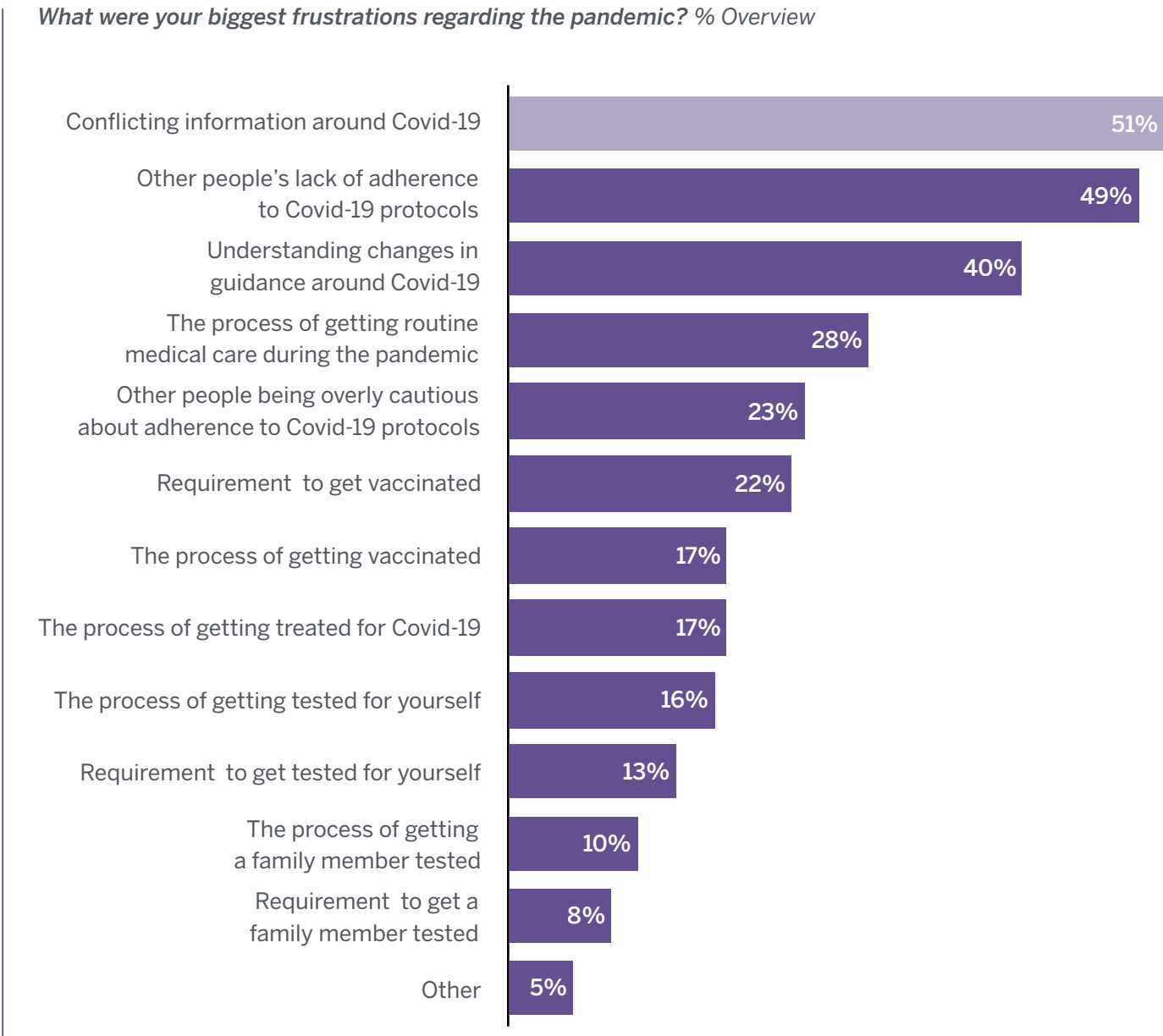
How important do you think testing is to stopping the spread of Covid-19? % Overview



Messaging moving forward can and should be combined with clear pointers about next actionable steps. The existence of numerous choices, names, and brands for safety precautions has increased the likelihood of continued ambiguity and frustration about the specifics—and therefore the importance of communication that offers specific how-to steps for accessing the tools they are being advised to take. (See Audience Insight 3 figures on page 14).

Make it simple for people to do things right by pairing high-level messages with the detailed means: for example, sending them what they need (as the United States has started doing with rapid tests, and many countries with masks). Where possible, prioritize localized specifics.

Grammatically, active verbs and action words should also take priority, where possible, over any abstract concepts about public health. They are also easier to understand and convey the audience's own decision-making and agency in their lives.



Highlight Commonality

Social proof is a powerful motivator. Tap into it by reminding people of the attitudes and actions we share. Highlight social momentum: we're moving forward together, that we're here for each other.

Highlight shared goals and how we got there. Bring progress to life by showing how people are working together and have reached common goals.

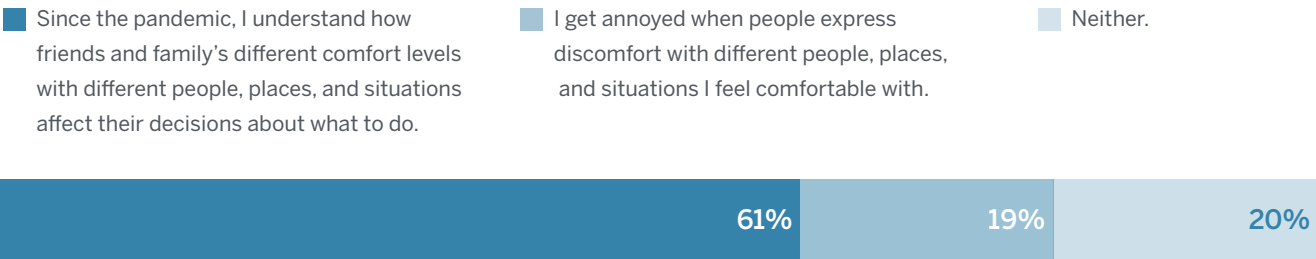
Why? Most people are taking significant actions that help lead us out of the pandemic. Based on this survey wave, 92% of people hope to continue at least one of the personal safety behaviors they adopted during the pandemic. (See Audience Insight 1 figures on page 9.) And a majority of people even said that since the pandemic, they understand how friends and family's different comfort levels affect their behaviors. Even if larger media narratives tend to emphasize that we don't, people actually share a lot of common ground.

But, people are also frustrated with each other, often driven by perceptions that others are not taking actions they are taking for themselves. Communication can either exacerbate these differences or intentionally remind audiences about stories and successes that have brought us together and there are ways to understand each other.

Our previous surveys repeatedly found that messages were convincing when they acknowledged social connections and how people are positively tied together. These messages help overcome the prevalence of the more exciting, but far less common experience, of controversy. It is time for a full and intentional shift in communication that emphasizes the goals people share to stay safe and feel connected to others. There remain numerous, untold, and positive stories of people following public health guidance and benefiting from doing so.

Social proof is a persuasive tool for indicating a general norm—especially that others are already taking an action you are inviting another person to adopt. Individuals are often motivated by seeing and hearing that there is social momentum around them for something important, and that they can play a part in, too.

Which of the following statements comes closer to your view?



Empower the Individual

Show people as individuals, rather than as part of an abstract group or a cog in a machine.

Perseverance, self-reliance, and independence are particular qualities that are shared and admired—and that people are especially cultivating now. They are still qualities that resonate strongly in this country's culture.

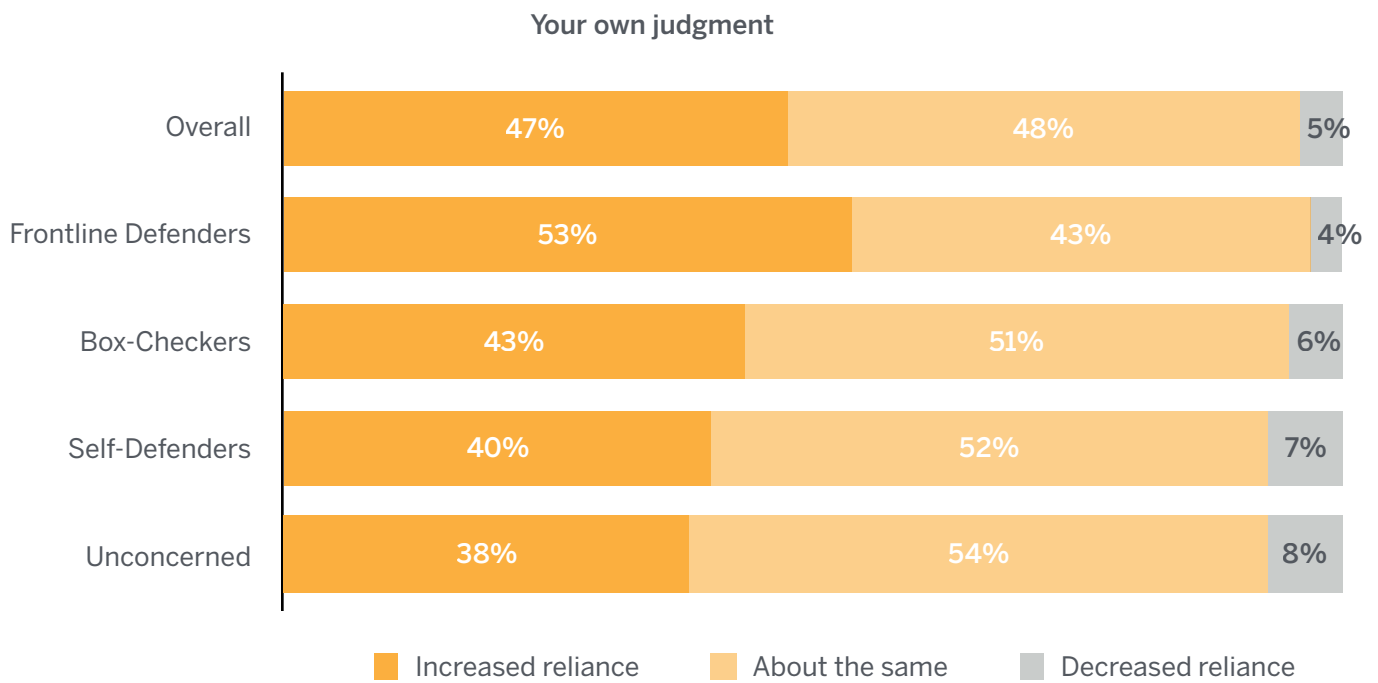
Why? People have learned the importance of relying on and trusting themselves—and have become comfortable with it. (See Audience Insight 1 figures on page 9.) Communications can actually lessen the burden on public health departments by supporting individuals and equipping them to lead their life better and more safely. Accept that they're in charge, and look for ways for your guidance to be a helpful tool that helps them feel competent and in control.

Our previous surveys showed that audiences consistently responded positively to messages that emphasized people's ability to take action and meet social responsibilities. These themes were powerful because they highlighted individual agency. This sixth wave of data suggests that that framing worked, tapping into upward trends of reliance on self and personal judgment in a time of chaos and uncertainty. (See Audience Insight 1 figures on page 10.)

An additional aspect of empowering individuals is to make sure outreach tells individual stories rather than lumping people into categories such as “vaccine hesitant.” In our work over the past two years, we've heard many powerful stories of people who have changed their attitudes and actions to help protect themselves and others, and of the public health workers, doctors, nurses, friends, colleagues, and family who took their own individual actions to help them along the way.

Related, we saw that a close understanding of individuals in specific settings and communities contributed to important changes in public health actions. For one community-based organization in Baltimore, one-on-one conversations with older residents living alone in senior buildings revealed their specific concern that they would not be supported if they experienced side effects after the vaccine. This finding prompted community-based organization staff to train ambassadors, including a building resident, on potential side effects and how to direct individuals to additional services. It is one example among many of health messaging and outreach growing more effective when geared toward meeting individualized needs and empowering individuals in specific ways.

Since September 2020, how much has your reliance on the following individuals/influences for information on Covid-19 changed?



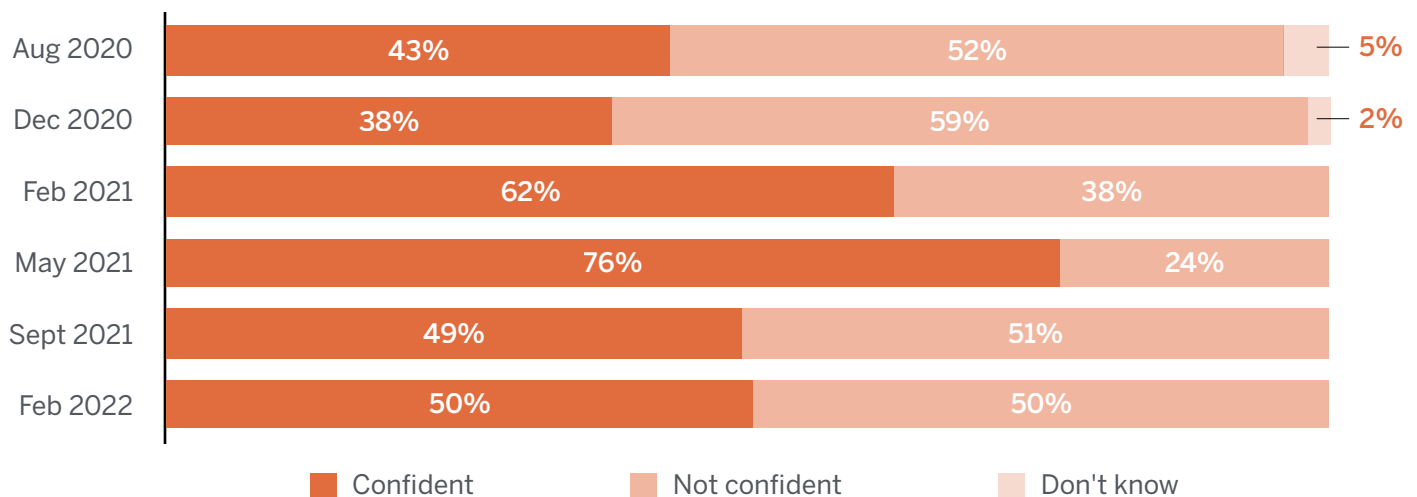
Lean Into the Local Story

Vivid stories of local actions making a difference helps bring abstract ideas of social connection to life in meaningful, motivating, and inspiring ways. The more personal they are, the more relatable they are.

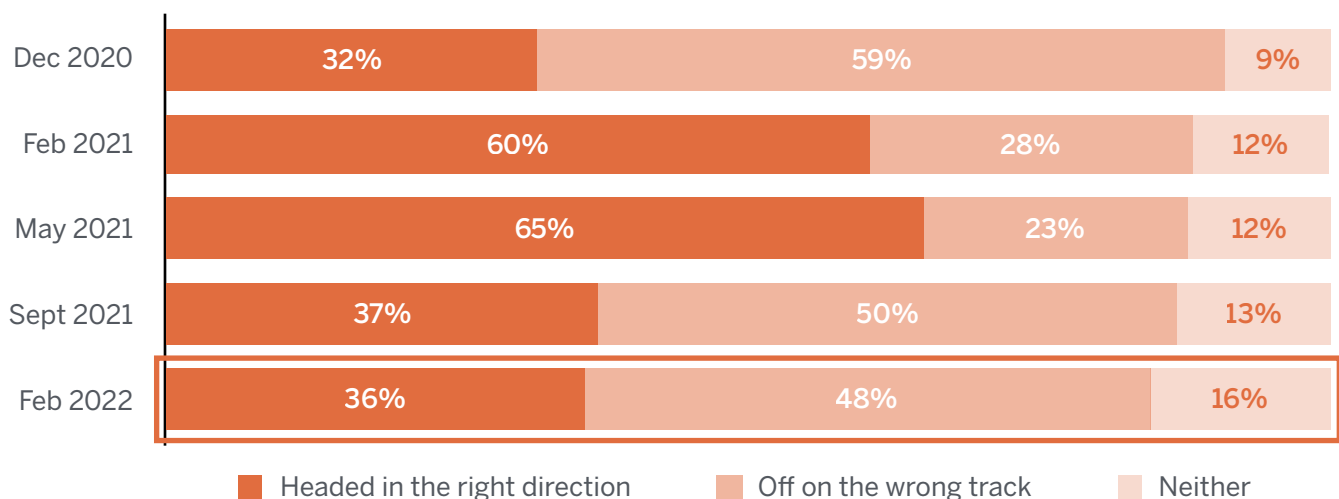
Why? Confidence and faith in local containment of the problem is sticky. It has held strong even through more dire phases of the pandemic. It is also consistently higher than their faith in *national* containment, seemingly regardless of actual case numbers. For example, back in fall of 2020, 43% of people said they are very or somewhat confident that Covid-19 is contained in their local community; that proportion actually rose to 50% in this last wave, even after a 500% increase in average daily cases.

Communications can lean into and build this confidence further. Communications can lift up local pride.

How confident are you that Covid-19 has been successfully contained in your local community? % Overview



Regarding Covid-19, do you think that the country is currently headed in the right direction or is off on the wrong track? % Overview

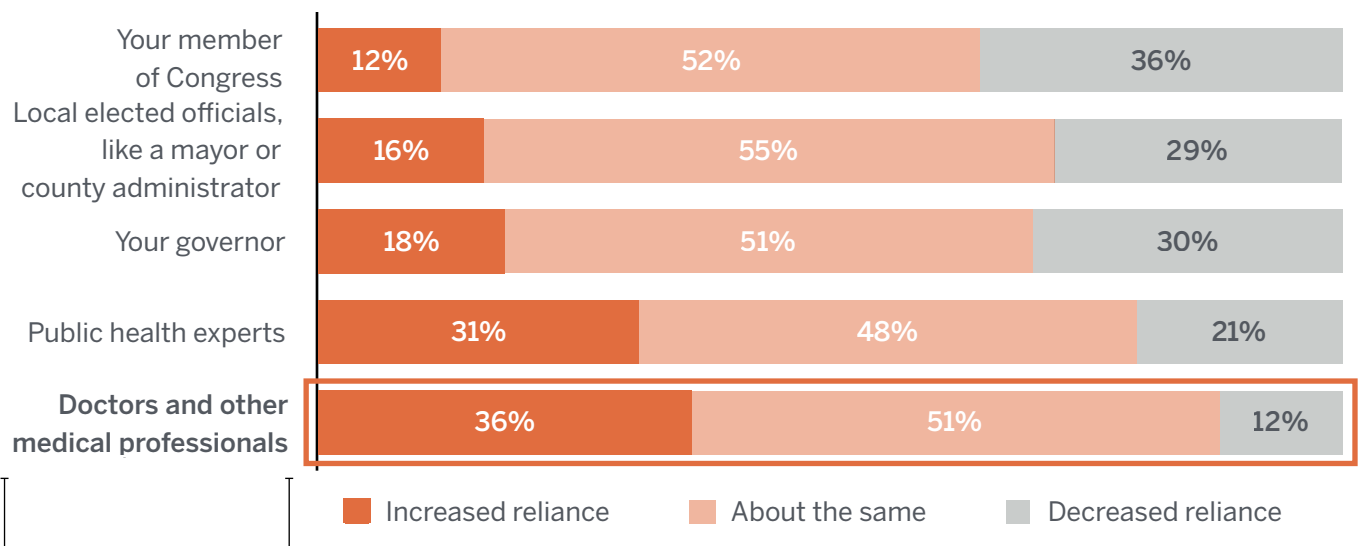


Notably, faith in local containment of Covid-19 should not be conflated with increased trust in state and local leaders. Our survey found that across segments, levels of trust in local elected officials (like a mayor or county administrator), governors, and members of Congress stayed the same for about half—but with more people saying trust had decreased than had increased.

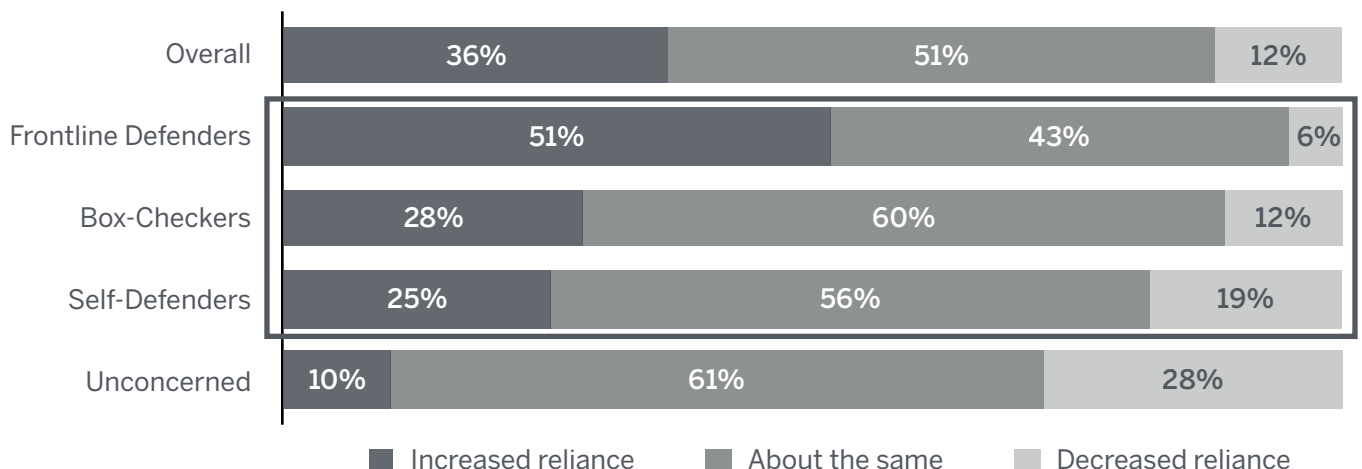
The reverse is true for levels of trust in public health experts and doctors and other medical professionals. In particular, Box-Checkers, Self-Defenders, and Frontline Defenders were more likely to feel increased rates of trust in doctors and other medical professionals than decreased.

Communications can build on these trajectories of trust and confidence by leaning into the local story—for example, real-life stories of relatable neighbors, and insights and guidance from local medical professionals if possible.

Since September 2020, how much has your reliance on the following individuals/influences for information on Covid-19 changed? % Overview



Doctors and other medical professionals





The
ROCKEFELLER
FOUNDATION



HATTAWAY
COMMUNICATIONS