



Who Are We Now? Reflections & Recommendations For Pandemic Communications

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Nina Chung:

(Silence) Hello to our early joiners. We're just going to wait a couple minutes before we get started, but welcome. (Silence) Hi everyone. We're seeing our attendee numbers tick up, we're just going to wait a minute or two before we get started. (Silence) All right. I think we are ready to get started. Firstly, welcome and thank you for joining us today.

Nina Chung:

My name is Nina Chung and I'm joined by my colleagues who you'll see soon. Carrie Schum, Paige Rice, Aida Fernandez Brillat and Tiara Broome, who is managing operations here with us on the back end. So this is the Rockefeller Foundation's communications community of practice for which Hattaway Communications has served as secretariat for over a year now.

Nina Chung:

This grew out of the foundation's State and Territory Alliance for Testing, or STAT, a group convened by the foundation so states had a place to truly collaborate and share hard earned lessons related to the pandemic response. We developed this group to bring that same spirit of active collaboration to the subject of strategic communications.

Nina Chung:

And if you're here, you probably know the value of that, how the stories and things we say have a direct influence and effect on our behaviors. And we are very grateful to the speakers and expert panelists who have shared their insights with us on all things pandemic communications over the last year.

Nina Chung:

Our team has been especially excited for this session, covering the sixth and last wave of the survey series commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation. Our surveys have tracked attitudes and mindsets toward the pandemic and public health since the fall of 2020. Today is a preview of the more comprehensive of handbook of data and insights we're launching later next week.

Nina Chung:

So just a few housekeeping notes before we begin. We'd love to know who you are too so if you're comfortable, please do share your name. Yes, I see someone popping it in. Where you're coming from, city and organization into the chat box. And we also welcome your comments and questions as we go through the presentation, we'll try and discuss all of that in the last quarter of the hour. So to start us off, I'm passing the mic to Carrie.

Carrie Schum:

Thank you all. So as Nina said, we're really excited to be here because we've been doing this for a long time, and this is our sixth survey. We're going to start by going through the core things that we've been tracking over time. And then each wave had its own unique focus, whether it was vaccine uptake, availability of testing.

Carrie Schum:

This one, the strategic focus is really on what have we learned? Looking back over the last two years, how have people changed? What are they continuing to do? How are they feeling about the guidance

they've been given and what can we as communicators learn from that? So following that review the core questions and some key attitudes and insights, we're going to talk about where people are today.

Carrie Schum:

We have some interesting new segmentation that goes far beyond just looking at vaccinated versus unvaccinated to really dig into people's motivations for why they're doing what they're doing. And then the last section will be to talk about insights from that and what it means for your communication. How do you message to people now that we're in this stage of the pandemic with people who think and feel this way?

Carrie Schum:

So if we can go to the next slide. Just a quick reminder on all of our different waves, the sizes. And for each one we've always done over samples of Black, Latino and frontline workers. This one we also added some very deep over samples of parents of children who are in school. Given how much controversy and discussion there's been about school mandates and school requirements and school safety we added that here.

Carrie Schum:

So we're going to do a deep dive on school based issues as well. We thought this was really important context for you all. So as we go forward, we wanted to keep this visual in your mind's eye that sort of reverse hockey stick of this last wave was fielded right in the thick of the Omicron surge.

Carrie Schum:

So there was a million plus cases a day, and this is how people were reacting in that moment when it was many orders of magnitude higher than it had been in the past. So that really, if you go to the next slide, that really leads to our first insight, which is that people's behaviors have become disconnected from their actual risk of disease.

Carrie Schum:

And we can dive into that. If you go to the next slide. We've been tracking a core set of actions since August of 2020, and we are at our lowest point ever. So the cases were the highest, people's behaviors were at the lowest, which again, shows that gap between what the risk may be and what people are doing.

Carrie Schum:

I do want to reinforce though that most people are still doing most of these. So it's not people have been responsible and thoughtful all the way along and many still are, but there was not a dramatic response to the surge that we were seeing in terms of what people were starting to do to protect themselves.

Carrie Schum:

And in particular, when we looked from May, when was sort of the height of, I don't know what the word is, height of optimism, about the course of the pandemic to September, when things started to look bad again, people sort of went back to things. We saw rise across the board and everything then, we did not see any corresponding rise between September and February. If you go to the next slide.

Carrie Schum:

You can see that played out in these other ways. People are concerned, a lot of people are saying that we're off on the wrong track, but again, that remains steady, it did not get worse. People didn't think that we were taking a nose dive over the last four months. And then when you go to the next slide, people do think this is a serious problem.

Carrie Schum:

You saw that close to over 80% of them Americans saying, COVID remains a big problem, but they're not agreeing that we're on the wrong track. It's probably some combination of sort of the limitations of what action can do. The pandemic is doing its thing, we're at the mercy of it. Right track, wrong track, doesn't really matter what we do, that was a lot of conversation recently. But yeah.

Carrie Schum:

So people think it's a problem, but they're not really doing a lot to attack that problem in a very specific way. And that's played out particularly when you saw the vaccine status, it didn't budge between September and February. We were sort of stuck at this level of just under 70% of Americans saying that they are currently vaccinated, a very small fraction saying yeah, I'll probably get vaccinated and the people who say they're not moving either.

Carrie Schum:

So that idea of vaccines as the silver bullet that we're going to save us from all of this, really the people who believe that have got their vaccine and everyone else is still sitting on the sidelines. So you want to take sort of a different direction and talk about the school based things that we saw.

Carrie Schum:

So the interesting thing we saw here is that there is general agreement about how safe schools are, very consistent across both of vaccinated parents and unvaccinated parents. So about half of everyone said. We asked this two ways. We said, how safe are schools? And then how safe are they compared to where they were in September? And again, about the same, not a lot of variants across vaccinated versus unvaccinated.

Carrie Schum:

So people are aggrieve of how safe things are, where they differentiate is why that is. So if you can go to the next slide. The people who we'd asked about that schools should have mandates about wearing masks and mandates about school testing.

Carrie Schum:

And this is where the people who are vaccinated are much stronger believers in those and likely that those are contributing to why schools are safe versus the unvaccinated people who are saying much less likely to agree with those and much less likely to see them as the reasons schools are safe.

Carrie Schum:

So now our attitudes are the same, but our beliefs and why that is are very different. You're starting to see people kind of pull apart based on vaccine status when you look at these questions. And then a lot

of conversation about why not enough kids are vaccinated and that again is very clearly being driven by the vaccination status of the parent.

Carrie Schum:

So vaccinated parents, 70% of them also have vaccinated children, unvaccinated parents, only 20% of them have vaccinated children. So it's really interesting that there's this mismatch between attitude and understanding, right? So people have the same belief, but not for the same reasons.

Carrie Schum:

And then when we looked into communication and the role it's playing for people, there are big areas of frustration and confusion that communication can continue to address. And so these are some of these new look back questions that we asked. We asked people said over the course of the pandemic, what happened. And the first question we asked about what was clear.

Carrie Schum:

You can go to the next slide. How clear was the guidance on all these different topics that lots of public health people were giving people a lot of guidance on. And what we saw here was most of the people were saying most of the guidance was very clear, which is good. Again, that's where public health did really well.

Carrie Schum:

But when you start to dig into it a little more, you see that the things that were very specific were clear than how to do that specific thing. So people knew when to wear a mask. 73% of people said, I know when to do that, it's very clear when to do that and yet a significant number of fewer people and 63% said, what kind should I wear?

Carrie Schum:

And when you think about this, any article that you read said, mask mandates are here, people should wear mask and then they immediately started pursuing the differences between K95s, N95s and surgical masks and cloth mask, and worry about the counterfeit mask and all of a sudden, the simple, clear action of where a mask started to get very complicated.

Carrie Schum:

And then you can see it similarly with testing. Two thirds of people were really clear about when to get tested and then only 49% were clear about which test to get. Because again, the same kind of dynamic often played out. You should get tested, but let's talk about PCR versus antigen and all of a sudden you're in a complicated swirl of how do I do this thing, that I'm clear on you to do, but now I'm not sure what to do.

Carrie Schum:

And this is a place too where the full spectrum of public health really comes into action. Rather than, or on top of explaining which test to get the government started mailing people tests. And now it's very clear, I know when I'm supposed to get tested and I have a test, and it's the test I should use.

Carrie Schum:

So that's we're starting to look at what are the other levers you can push in addition to communication to help people be successful at the thing that you want them to do. Then we asked another question, what made people frustrated? So this gets to the emotion around some of this stuff, right? We know emotions have been running high for a long time.

Carrie Schum:

People have pandemic fatigue, they're fed up, and this is how that played out. And as you can see, the number one thing that was frustrating was this conflicting information, but it's followed right behind by people's lack of adherence to COVID 19 protocols. Half of people say, this was the most frustrating thing. And again, makes sense.

Carrie Schum:

We've all seen it play out in our own lives. But the thing that really stood out to us was how much more frustrating those things were than the things the media focused on as frustrating. So the requirement to get vaccinated was presented as extremely controversial, causing a lot of frustration.

Carrie Schum:

A lot of people say they're going to quit their jobs and all these things are going to happen. Only 22% of people said that, that was one of their biggest frustrations. We heard a lot about how complicated it was to get testing, fewer than 20% of people said that was one of their top frustrations.

Carrie Schum:

So certainly some people were frustrated and probably in the moment that those things were extremely frustrating, but the overall things that drove people crazy over the pandemic were about conflicting information and other people. Now here's the other piece of really good news. We've had many of them, but this one, we asked, what's going to stick?

Carrie Schum:

Which behavior that you've adopted in the pandemic do you hope you will continue doing? And the headline here is 92% of people said something. So of all Americans, all these people, frustrated with the pandemic, most people are going to continue doing something.

Carrie Schum:

And the things that they're going to continue doing are these very clear sort of separating, isolating, protecting yourself when you're sick. So I'm going to stay home when I'm sick. I'm going to wear a mask when I'm around a lot of people. I'm going to wear a mask when I'm sick and I'm going to self isolate when I'm sick.

Carrie Schum:

And these are things that nobody or very few people in America would've said, a lot of people would suddenly agree that they're going to start wearing masks in public, in crowded locations and keep doing that. So from what we see, this is a huge win for public health.

Carrie Schum:

You have routinized and systematized a lot a very behaviors that were extremely unusual, a very short time ago, and people are going to, they know how to do them, they're going to keep doing them and they're going to carry them forward even after this immediate crisis is over.

Carrie Schum:

Then we took another dive, another look at this. We asked a couple, big attitude items about just how people feel about the pandemic. And so this was a sort of head to head of, do you feel the pandemic reinforced most people do what's best, or do you think it's reinforced that most people are looking out for themselves.

Carrie Schum:

And again, we saw across vaccinated and unvaccinated people, very consistent responses. There is not great difference of opinion. About half of the people say, most people are looking out for themselves. A plurality say, most people are doing what's best for everyone. And then there's a big swing group in the middle.

Carrie Schum:

And then we asked a different kind of question, which was about understanding. So how understanding are you of friends and families, different comfort levels. And again, this was a really positive finding. Most people are very understanding. So we've got these two really interesting attitude that are very consistent across vaccinated and unvaccinated and that led us to say, how else could we look at this?

Carrie Schum:

When we see all this kind of consistency, and we're seeing that it's not different between this core binary that a lot of people have been talking about for nearly a year, let's take another look and figure out some other segmentation that could help us really dive in and understand Americans today. And that's the segmentation that my colleague Paige is going to take you all through next.

Paige Rice:

Great. Yeah. So I think it can be very tempting to try to simplify everything into binaries, especially thinking about vaccinated versus unvaccinated Americans, but the effect of this is that it polarizes people and it doesn't really actually look at what's going on. And we see people taking this approach quite a bit as sort of a shortcut in click bait media.

Paige Rice:

But this far into the pandemic and with so many ways of staying safe, these binaries are not only unrealistic, but they're also dangerous and not very useful. They invite too many assumptions about audiences, which prevent communicators from actually meeting people where they are.

Paige Rice:

So on our sixth wave of research, we confirm that people's attitudes about safety measures in the pandemic fall in all kinds of categories and it's not necessarily directly tied to vaccine status. It's far more complicated than just left or right, or trying to sort people into vaccinated or unvaccinated.

Paige Rice:

So for example, we heard from a local community based partner in Houston, that there are some people who needed four or five conversations with local service organizations and staff people to trust the vaccine. And we've also heard of other people who have had negative experiences with the first shot, and then they've actually become more vaccine hesitant after getting the first shot.

Paige Rice:

So there are a lot of variables and a lot of stories and we can't account for every single one of them, but we wanted to share at least a little bit of that variability. And so our research on people's current attitudes towards testing vaccines and health guidance revealed at least for pretty broad categories about how people think about these things.

Paige Rice:

So many of us are familiar with this kind of story of the two Americas, vaccinated people who are following the guidance and doing what they needed to do, and America that's not. But when you take a closer look at these groups, it tells a very different story.

Paige Rice:

So we looked at a couple different variables, matching vaccine status with willingness to mass, or sorry to test and found some more nuanced stories here with the most interesting being these box checker and self defender groups.

Paige Rice:

So first we have the frontline defenders and this group it's half the population that is good news, they are vaccinated and they are basically on board with the guidance and with doing the things they need to do to mitigate the risk.

Paige Rice:

Then juxtapose against that, we have the unconcerned folks, they're not vaccinated and have a lot of concerns about the vaccine and they've in a lot of ways kind of checked out of the pandemic. They're not really following the guidance. However, in the middle, we have these other groups, these box checkers, and these self defenders.

Paige Rice:

The box checkers have been on board, but they're ready to move on. So they've gotten their vaccines, they might be boosted, they followed the rules and now they kind of want to go back to normal. And then we have the self defenders and these folks are vaccine hesitant, they haven't had the vaccine, or they've only had one shot, but they're mostly on board with everything else.

Paige Rice:

They're trying to follow the guidance as close as they can and they're taking more precautions than the box checkers. So as we know attitudes drive actions, and some people who are vaccinated that's part of a very closely reasoned approach to safety, whereas for others, it's kind of more of a quick fix.

Paige Rice:

On the other hand, some people who aren't vaccinated are deeply concerned about risk while others are less. And so these four segments they really give us a little more detail that helps plan communications and outreach, and about how to support good public health for everybody. So now we're going to dig into these groups a little bit more and give you some information on each of them.

Paige Rice:

So frontline defenders, they make up a full half of the population. And this group is basically on board. They're vaccinated, they're tested, they are willing to take the precautions that they need to take. Some of their core characteristics is that they're cautiously optimistic.

Paige Rice:

So about half are very concerned about getting COVID, but at the same time about half think that the U.S. is headed in the right direction. So there is this tension between being very concerned personally, but also recognizing that we have developed the tools that we need to stay safe.

Paige Rice:

I think unsurprisingly, there's almost unanimous agreement that vaccines and testing are important for stopping the spread, this is much higher in both regards than any of the other groups. And they are following the science and they're doing what they need to do.

Paige Rice:

So three fourths are very willing to wear a mask, get tested, social distance, and almost two thirds chose to hunker down during Omicron to protect themselves. And here are some of the interesting demographics that make up this group. So they do tend to be older and Asian Americans are disproportionately represented in this group.

Paige Rice:

They tend to skew suburban and urban. There tend to be higher income, higher education and Democrats. And I think again, unsurprisingly healthcare professionals tend to fall in this category, which was something we did on over sample on. And they have widespread trust for medical authorities. So they have increased their reliance on doctors, public health experts and the CDC. So they really are relying on the science.

Paige Rice:

Our next group is the box checkers. They make up about 21% of the population. I think that this group. I think about it this way is that this group, they're the people who feel like they've done their part by getting vaccinated, but now they really want to go back to restaurants and bars and they want to travel and of course they want to do the practical things like going back to work and school and seeing loved ones.

Paige Rice:

And they want to go back to doing those things without the fear that they've been experienced during the pandemic. So they tend to be more concerned about external forces than themselves. So half think that the country is off on the wrong track, and only 14% feel very confident that COVID is contained locally, yet only 20% are very concerned about getting COVID.

Paige Rice:

So these folks recognize that COVID is a problem, but they also don't want to let the fear of it get in the way of other parts of life. They find vaccines more important than testing, and they're not super willing to get tested. Only about 30% said that willing. And compared to the frontline defenders and self defenders, they are less likely to adopt additional precautions that doesn't necessarily mean they're not, they're just less likely.

Paige Rice:

So more than a third chose to live their lives as they did before during the pandemic during Omicron, and less than half are very willing to wear a mask or social distance. And you can see compared to self defenders, that's a pretty big split.

Paige Rice:

And as you will see in the next few slides, some of these numbers, they're only a little lower than the self defenders, but I think these differences really speak to the variability within those who are vaccinated, unvaccinated. And some of our previous assumptions about those groups.

Paige Rice:

So box checkers tend to be suburban Republican, and non-parents. They have decreased trust in a lot of different areas, including Biden and Trump. And they've also decreased trust in different forms of media. They have increased trust, but still only around a quarter have increased trust in doctors and medical professionals and their family and friends.

Paige Rice:

So I think there is this sense that they're not really sure who to trust and doctors and other medical professionals and family and friends that's a pretty big gap in who those people are and what their understandings are the pandemic. So I think there is maybe just some confusion here around exactly who they should be trusting.

Paige Rice:

Next. We have the self defenders and they represent about 14% of the population. So this group tends to be vaccine hesitant, but risk averse. So almost half, that's 46% think that COVID is a very big problem and are very concerned about getting COVID personally. And less than a third say that the U.S. is headed in the right direction.

Paige Rice:

So they're still very worried about the pandemic. The reverse of box checkers. Sorry, can you go back? The reverse of box checkers is true in that they're much more likely to say that testing is important than vaccines and around half are very willing to social distance and wear a mask. And 55% are willing to continue wearing a mask in crowded locations.

Paige Rice:

So they are continuing to take these precautions despite not being vaccinated. So these folks tend to be on the younger side, they tend to skew non-college. Black and Latino Americans are disproportionately represented in this group and they tend to be independent ideologically.

Paige Rice:

So as we saw in the box checkers, they're not super sure who to trust. Trust is pretty low overall. The highest increases we're seeing is hovering around a quarter and that's doctors and medical professionals and public health experts along with national news media, and they're really decreasing their trust in local elected officials all around.

Paige Rice:

And the final group is the unconcerned. So they've mostly checked out of the pandemic and they want to return to normal, but they haven't necessarily taken the steps to get to normal. And they make up about 15% of the population. So they don't see COVID as a big problem. Only less than a quarter think it's a very big problem, but at the same time two thirds think that the U.S. is off on the wrong track.

Paige Rice:

So they don't necessarily see COVID as a problem because of their personal risk, but rather because they don't want it to be a central focus for the country anymore. And they aren't really buying into testing and vaccines. So over half think that testing is unimportant and two thirds think that vaccines are unimportant.

Paige Rice:

And they aren't really well informed on the guidance and they're not necessarily taking the precautions to protect themselves. And so this group tends to skew younger as well, especially people age 25 to 34, they tend to be rural, and they tend to be lower income and non-college, and they skew Republican. They are very distrustful across the board.

Paige Rice:

So we can see they've decreased reliance on elected officials in all different areas, Biden, Congress, local elected officials and they've also pretty dramatically decreased reliance on news media. So now I'm going to kick this over to Nina to talk more about the implications of this data.

Nina Chung:

Yes. Thank you. Yeah. I am unmuted. Thank you Paige. So as ever, the critical question for us at this point is with all of this data, how do we move to strategic communications? What does all this data imply for our messaging? Our research led us to another set of four different, but mutually supportive themes for communications across the board.

Nina Chung:

One is focus on specific actions. Two, highlight commonality, not polarization. Three, empower the individual. And four lean into the local story. That should say story. So let's start with the first, focusing on specific actions. Given where people are now, we need to give them a roadmap that helps them follow through on guidance.

Nina Chung:

That is as Carrie has briefly alluded to before, that's the where, the when, the which kind of answers that tell people exactly what to do next. And at this point, we just want to avoid abstract ideas which can prompt potentially unhelpful political debates or stir those up or remind people of them.

Nina Chung:

Getting to the nitty gritty even of grammar, even leaning on active verbs can help keep people focused on the what to do. So again, as we talked about earlier, public health communications has been really successful in many ways. It shifted people's behavior for the long term. We found that most people across segments are hoping to continue at least one safety measure into the future. Only 8% of people are doing nothing.

Nina Chung:

For testing in particular, 76% of people said that it is important to stopping the spread. Again, people's biggest frustration throughout the pandemic was unclear guidance. So generally people are on board, they know the public health categories. We're two years into the pandemic now is the time to be as specific as possible about where people can get what they need, who to talk to, when.

Nina Chung:

One quick example on this point that our team found really inspiring comes from one of the foundation's grantees through the Equity-First Vaccination Initiative, a community based organization in Houston took advantage of a back to school event that was distributing free backpacks and spoke to families, literally waiting in their cars in the parking lot about the vaccine, the impacts of COVID-19 in the community.

Nina Chung:

And the kicker here is that if people were interested, they were told to go inside the school to get vaccinated, because they were there after they had picked up a backpack and if they didn't have time that day, they could sign up to get a text message in their preferred language about where to get vaccinated when they were ready.

Nina Chung:

So it's that combination of not just the encouragement and the general framing of the need to get tested or vaccinated, but of the immediate next steps. So there's no more guessing involved. Secondly, highlight commonality not polarization. Social proof continues to be a powerful motivator.

Nina Chung:

If you've joined us on our webinars before you might recognize this because we've tested this messaging multiple times to positive effect. It's that element of social momentum that we're moving forward together, that we're for each other. Highlighting shared goals helps show the reality that we actually share a lot of common ground, even if larger media narratives tend to emphasize that we don't.

Nina Chung:

As Carrie and Paige already explained, people are frustrated with each other and we are falling into different categories of attitudes. But at the same time, a majority of people, 61% have said that since the pandemic, Carrie mentioned this point earlier, they do understand how friends and families different comfort levels affect their behaviors, they know that's real.

Nina Chung:

And over the last holiday season, there actually weren't major differences across segments in people's actions to lower the risk of infection. So we are of mixed minds, but our communications when intentional can lead us toward that common ground that does exist, that is easy to forget.

Nina Chung:

One example of this comes from the Newark Equitable Vaccine Initiative in New Jersey, and we actually had Tara Dowdell, an organizer of that join us a few months ago on one of these webinars. That campaign launched with 17 different organizations at an IHOP, in a high visibility area. The IHOP was owned by a local community member who I think owned three other restaurants.

Nina Chung:

There's jazz music playing, which is a sensual and proud part of the Newark community. And that initiative's theme was do it for her, do it for him, do it for them. To cut across all communities was very intentional. They were thinking specifically about Latinx communities. They were thinking about their prominent Portuguese population.

Nina Chung:

And there was also a five month multilingual transit ad campaign featuring local leaders who were also quoted saying things like, I did it for my family, my customers, and my city. And something that I personally find very interesting, this campaign centered community as a really precious thing to defend.

Nina Chung:

And even when the campaign started talking about misinformation or warning people that, that existed they framed it as, this is attacking our community and our community's health.

Nina Chung:

So thirdly, empower the individual. Show people as individuals with qualities we admire rather than as part of an abstract group or some cog in a machine and perseverance self-reliance and independence are still qualities that resonate really strongly in this country's culture. Yet again, this is a theme that we've talked about in previous surveys under the heading of do your part.

Nina Chung:

And this wave of data suggests that, that framing over time has really worked. Almost half of our respondents said that they increased reliance on their own judgment throughout the pandemic. This was the single most shared category across all segments, regardless of vaccination status when we asked that question, that Paige mentioned, who they trusted and how grew or felt.

Nina Chung:

So we found that really remarkable. Generally people know they have to rely on and trust themselves. So communications can actually lean into that and show how we're trying to equip them to lead their life better, more safely, more freely, just reinforce that they're in charge and communications guidance is a tool or leading them to a tool

Nina Chung:

Lastly and fourthly, lean into the local story, vivid stories of neighbors, community leaders, local people making a difference can be incredibly moving and motivating because they're relatable. And this is a far, far cry from the panic and stress that I think many of us can relate to often comes from exclusively following the national story or headlines.

Nina Chung:

People's faith in local containment of the pandemic is interestingly incredibly sticky and consistently higher than people's faith in national containment and that also seems regardless of the case numbers. For example, back in fall of 2020, 45% of people said they are very or somewhat confident that COVID-19 is contained in their local community.

Nina Chung:

That proportion actually rose slightly to 50% in this last wave even after a 500% increase in average daily cases. And we consistently see that more people say that the country's on the wrong track more than the local community. So again, it's that local uplift that communications can really tap into. Yeah. Next slide.

Nina Chung:

So these are the key learnings again. I'm going to open up. And I should also mention, more detail on the data points that led to these insights and guidance will be in the full report that we share later next week. So with that, I think we can drop the slides and move into a Q&A time.

Nina Chung:

So again, if you're in the audience, please feel free to drop any questions that might have come up, or even if you think other people might be interested. I'm going to start with the first question here. Carrie, Aida, Paige.

Nina Chung:

So we've shared that Americans are divided into different segments, obviously not just across that binary, how do you suggest communicating with broad populations that may have all of these different segments in them?

Carrie Schum:

Yeah. I think the key there is to go to your channel selection. We have a lot of data on where people trust and it's different across sections. And in particular I think there's some interesting increases in the box checkers of their trust and family and friends. So how can you do things that start to become sort of common conversation, the kind of things that people share around the dinner table.

Carrie Schum:

What are you doing in your communication to be particularly interesting or novel so that you get into those people who've sort of decided they've checked out. I do think it's also important to say, what are you trying to get them to do? This is really important. You might be banging your head against the wall if you're constantly trying to tell our self preservers to get vaccinated.

Carrie Schum:

You're going to have really fertile ground if you're reminding them to get tested or wear their mask. So it also helps you target your message to the people who are most likely to make use of it. So I think it's that. I do think there's enough commonality in your message using those themes that Nina shared with you, and then real specificity in the specific action and the channel that you use to encourage people to take that action.

Nina Chung:

Aida, Paige, anything to contribute to that? Does that cover it generally? Yeah. Okay. We have an interesting question here from an anonymous attendee, how does COVID fatigue factor into all of this? I guess what does it relate to in the data that we uncovered?

Carrie Schum:

I mean, that's the headline of those tracking questions. People are done. Those levels have remained flat even as the pandemic sort of roared around the country in the last few months. So I think that again it adds to, what are people open to hearing about and how do you reinforce the things that they want to hear about.

Carrie Schum:

And frankly don't waste your time on people who are never going to change their mind. You always want to have, I think this is where availability of services, reminding people you can still get tested, reminding people there's still vaccines so that when one of those more recalcitrant quadrants does decide to change, they know where to go and how to get that action done.

Carrie Schum:

But focusing on what can you get people to do and making sure that you're repeating that versus again, trying to make something happen that maybe won't happen, but it is. I mean, that's the clear pattern here is just people are done.

Paige Rice:

Yeah. I think that the box checkers in particular are sort of the group that I would point to as the people who are sort of did everything right, and are now experiencing some COVID fatigue. And I think there is a risk that people will shift from sort of that frontline defender category into the box checkers category, which that also might just be part of turning the pandemic from a pandemic into an endemic, but yeah.

Nina Chung:

All right. Fantastic. We have a question from Sabrina Jennings. I believe how we would recommend reaching the self defenders to encourage vaccination.

Carrie Schum:

I think the question is, do you need to. Because they are very concerned, they're doing everything else, they're taking it very seriously and they're the ones that are very distrustful particularly of government. And so this is sort of your quadrant who the sort of conspiracy theories that the vaccine is sort of a government plant that we are able to have.

Carrie Schum:

It's very strong in this quadrant, that said, you never want to give up on people. And so I think that's where, what we've heard all along is people want to see people like them got vaccinated and were okay. So they didn't have any side effects that it wasn't a painful experience. So I think those real stories of people like them, that real community based outreach where you're sort of demystifying the process and repeating it.

Carrie Schum:

We did hear stories from some of the other Rockefeller grantees where people had 2, 3, 4, 5 conversations with people before they finally got vaccinated. So the don't give up. I sort of can contradict myself. Don't give up, but know that it may take quite a while to make it happen, but also be ready when it does, because that's the other story we heard.

Carrie Schum:

With somebody coming in and saying, if you can give it to me right now, you've got me, but I may not come back if I have to come back tomorrow. So I think it's that, be ready on the service side to deliver on the action that you're asking them to take.

Nina Chung:

Yeah. Something I think really important and empathetic we've heard from previous presenters as well who've been doing communications on the ground is, understanding people who are currently unvaccinated and unwilling as a potential slow to, yes.

Nina Chung:

Going back to Carrie's point about many people just need multiple conversations potentially with the same exact person from the same organization, multiple touch points, developing that relationship of trust before they come to a place where they might change their decision.

Paige Rice:

Yeah. And we asked the question of what are your biggest hesitations towards getting the vaccine? And an interesting piece here is we asked, you'd want to wait until more people have gotten the vaccine. And the self defenders agreed with that.

Paige Rice:

18% of the self defenders agreed with that versus only 8% of the unprotected. So that's a pretty big difference. And some of their other concerns were about it getting developed too quickly. So part of this might just be time and seeing the vaccine be successful.

Nina Chung:

All right. Moving on to this next question from our anonymous attendees here. Any tips for approaching those who go beyond unconcerned to vocally anti-public health, to the point when their message drowns out the public health messengers or actively erodes trust in them?

Carrie Schum:

Yeah. I mean, it's a real and ongoing problem. And it's a sort of interesting problem from the media's point of view, controversy always sells in the media, which is why you see it out there. I think the confidence that most people don't feel that way has been a really undersold story.

Carrie Schum:

As we've said, if you've been on these webinars, you've heard us with this say, most people have been doing the right thing most of the time and that most people don't know that, because you hear about these controversies. With that said, I do think these tips on how to communicate are really important. To focus on commonality, to focus on those stories.

Carrie Schum:

Particularly, I think some of these stories of people who came along later, the people who did get vaccinated, even if it's months after other people did, and those real stories of people sort of coming to realize that the things that they'd been asked to do were actually the right things to do. It's not as loud.

Carrie Schum:

And I do think that's where some of those really clever kind of engagements, how do you get beyond sort of typical public health speak to talk to people in interesting, more consumer friendly, real world ways that peak people's interests the same way those anti-vaccine controversies do.

Carrie Schum:

Public health doing interesting things, I think that's what you saw a few months ago with all of those kind of giveaways and lotteries around vaccination. Those were marginally effective on actually getting people vaccinated, they were extremely effective in getting media coverage of vaccines.

Carrie Schum:

So you can argue about which goal people were shooting for, but they really were effective in creating a lot of media interest around the topic of people getting vaccinated. So how can you look at some of those more out of the box solutions to getting your message out there?

Nina Chung:

Okay. Fantastic. We have another question here from Sabrina Jennings. Related to that most vaxxed parents have gotten their kids vaxxed, we've seen at our clinics a lot of parents getting vaccinated for the first time alongside their kids.

Nina Chung:

Do you have any data showing that relationship, are kids encouraging their parents to get vaccinated in a statistically significant way? That is a fascinating question.

Carrie Schum:

Yeah. We did not ask that, but that would be a fascinating study for someone to look at. What was your primary motivation for people who are parents of kids? Yeah. That's a really great thing.

Carrie Schum:

Because if you're unvaccinated and you're trying to get your child vaccinated, the first thing a child's going to ask is, well, did you get it? And that's a pretty powerful motivator for a parent. So we did not ask that specifically, but agree, it's a really fascinating thing to look into.

Nina Chung:

Okay. Another question here. These things sound easier with non-family members who won't get vaccinated. Has there been any research on moving people within families to get vaccinated when you have vulnerable people i.e. immunocompromised where the vaccines haven't worked? Also anonymous attendee.

Carrie Schum:

We have not [inaudible 00:46:55]. Yeah. Unfortunately, I don't know if any of our. Trying to think back of any of our other panelists that we've had over the years, we've really been focused on that exact dynamic though unfortunately. That said, we do know that do it for them messaging and we've tested various kind of specificity around that.

Carrie Schum:

And a message that worked really, really well that we tested early on where, there are people who are immunocompromised or otherwise can't get vaccinated, you can help protect them. And that tested extremely well. So that idea of doing it for them in and of itself is a powerful message.

Nina Chung:

Do these segments consider or differentiate between those who've been vaccinated with only their primary vaccine series and those who've also been boosted?

Paige Rice:

Yeah. I mean, the way that we formulated these segments is we looked at two different variables. One was vaccine status, which was broken out into a bunch of different options. So that was, are you boosted? Are you just vaccinated without the booster? Have you gotten one shot and you intend to get the second shot versus scheduled.

Paige Rice:

So there's a bunch of different options there and then we combine that with willingness to get tested. And so we did take that into account and the people who are boosted are kind of split between the self, sorry, the frontline defenders and the box checkers. Actually both categories are sort of split between those two categories. So there was differentiation there. Yeah.

Nina Chung:

All right. Thank you, Paige. Another anonymous attendee. I'm really enjoying this pattern. Under this new CDC guidance, focusing from pandemic to endemic, we are moving away from rules toward self-determined actions and behaviors, how does that change the talking points? I actually think it really supports our.

Nina Chung:

I'm assuming talking points here refers to our message guidance. I actually think it quite supports it. In some ways we're encouraging communications that reinforces that people are still in charge of their own life, but we're giving them the tools, we're showing them how to use those tools or where to get those tools.

Nina Chung:

It is not ideal for anybody to feel that they are kind of following someone else's guide for their life. The sense of empowerment though that can come from communications, I think is what we're trying to encourage.

Nina Chung:

So again, I think the interesting data point was that even amidst all the variation of decreased trust for this or that, there was a lot of variation on who people trusted throughout the pandemic, but the one shared trend that we saw was everyone increased reliance on themselves to a certain degree. And everyone still just wants to feel like they're in charge of their own life and can trust themselves.

Carrie Schum:

Yeah. And it makes sense when you see that the number one frustration is the changing guidance. You got to do something. You're frustrated by the guidance you're going to make some decisions. And so that's where it comes to. Well, I made some decisions and they worked out okay so I can trust myself that I can make the next one.

Nina Chung:

All right. Another one here. Judy Strait-Jones. Considering that mask mandates are being dropped, me and my friends will be one way maskers. Ideas for communicating the benefits of one way masking and reducing the negative community reactions that often follow the strategy, i.e., Florida press conference where one way maskers were ridiculed by the governor.

Carrie Schum:

Yeah. Again, this is this really interesting dynamic we see between the things that get highlighted in the media because they're like that and the things real people think in their real lives. So we saw that 60 plus percent of people say, I understand why people are doing the things that they're doing, I may not agree with them, but I understand why they do them.

Carrie Schum:

And there was a pretty significant neutral there. So the number of people who were really annoyed by other people is fewer than 20%. It doesn't mean those 20% aren't really loud and dominating the coverage, but I think the guidance is to say, again, I'm doing this because this is what. To go back to the previous question about individual choice.

Carrie Schum:

This is the world we're going to live in, everyone is going to be making individual choices. And just being confident that you are making the right choice for yourself and not trying to push it on someone else.

Carrie Schum:

I think that's where people got frustrated was other people not doing the thing that I wanted to do. I think the shift now is I don't have to convince you to do the thing I'm doing, but you have to be okay that I'm doing the thing that I've decided is right for me.

Nina Chung:

In some ways it's very American, just individualized.

Carrie Schum:

Those values of sort of independence, self-reliance, those are truly American values and people have leaned on them hard and we're going to continue to lean into them and that has to be okay with other people. And I know that's easier said on a webinar like this than if you're in reality with people who don't think you should be wearing a mask.

Aida Fernandez Brillat:

This is also part of our key learnings and messaging. It's about empowering the individual. So really leaning into that part of the presentation would be helpful.

Nina Chung:

Okay. So with about six or seven minutes left, I do want to ask for our amazing research team, what surprised each of you about this research? Carrie, for you over the span of your plus of work, and then Aida and Paige, having seen different segments of it?

Carrie Schum:

For me, it's this idea that most people were doing the right thing most of the time. It really was very hopeful. I also I'm a person living in a pandemic and so being able to look at this data every month and think things are not as bad as, I don't actually have this much conflict with all the people around me in the world as I see it highlighted in the news was really very reassuring all the way along.

Carrie Schum:

And sort of people's savvy about what they were doing. People are smart and people often make very good choices for themselves and it changes your opinion about them when you think that way about them.

Aida Fernandez Brillat:

I think for me, I've been on these wave on the research side since wave two. And I think for me, and especially with this wave, it's been about the nuance in the data and how we've been talking about the binary of people that test, people that don't test, people that are vaccinated, people that are unvaccinated, people that wear masks, people that don't wear masks, but there's more to that and there's more to this story than just that binary. So I think that's been a really cool way to see the data.

Paige Rice:

Yeah. I mean, definitely echoing what Aida says. I thought that some of the most interesting parts of this was the nuance between the box checkers and the self defenders. When we created these segments, I think we thought of this as, this group's going to be they're on board, the box checkers are going to be sort of the next easiest to reach and it was going to go down from there.

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Paige Rice:

And what we found was that there was so much nuance in there and that is this 14% of the population that's not vaccinated that really, really, really wants to do the right thing other than that. And that story was not being told.

Paige Rice:

It was always about sort of the people doing things the right way versus the people doing things the wrong way. And I think it's really important to recognize that people do things in different ways and sometimes you just have to meet people where they are.

Nina Chung:

Yes. We will be sending a copy of the slides and this recording and the full report with a lot more data that we could not have packed into this session sometime later next week. So please look out for that. This has been wonderful. Thank you all for joining us and spending an hour of your afternoon with us.

Nina Chung:

Along with the conclusion of this research series, we're also excited to mention that our colleagues at Brown University will be taking on the management of the community practice starting this spring there will be more details on that in your inbox and probably from us in a couple weeks. But in the meantime, thank you so much again and hope you have a good evening and afternoon and everything.

Carrie Schum:

Thank you all.

Nina Chung:

Bye.