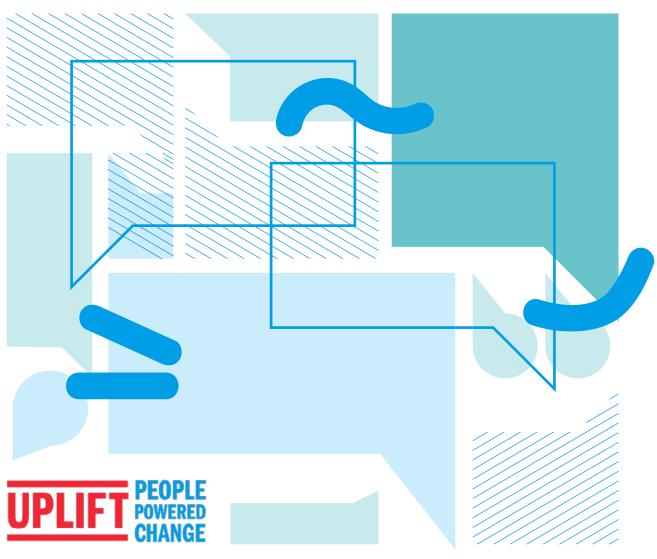


KEY MESSAGES THAT WORK



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Introduction

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

This research was funded by Rethink Ireland, The Community Foundation of Ireland, Open Society Foundations and Uplift Members.

At Uplift, we pride ourselves in being a community led campaigning group, and with conspiracy theories and far right organising gaining ground in Ireland, we felt that a community work response to the rise of extremism in our communities was needed.

Much of the mainstream discourse on the growth of the far right and indeed the growth of conspiracy theories fails to provide a structural analysis of the phenomenon, seeking rather to focus on individual actors. This leads to the production of individualistic solutions, rather than articulating what an effective community work response should look like.

And so, we conducted this research for community work purposes, in order to put well tested and evidenced tools and strategies for countering hate and misinformation into our own communities. It is imperative we put these tools, messages and strategies into the hands of the people most likely to pull those targeted by conspiracy theories back from far right radicalisation - the people in their own community, the people who love them.

Why research how we talk about vaccines?

According to the Centre for Countering Digital Hate¹ Anti Vax influencers are 500% more effective at recruiting persuadable populations via social media than pro-science or pro-vaccine advocates. It is of the utmost importance that we understand that people are not falling down these rabbit holes by themselves, but rather are being dragged down by a handful of 'influencers' and their base, who are being facilitated by social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. These social media platforms, incidentally, made almost \$1 billion last year alone from Anti-Vaxx content advertising. ²

If we are to use the metaphor of a rabbit-hole for talking about far right radicalisation, then Anti-Vaxx propaganda could be contextualised as the shiny object right at the entrance. It may not seem like a short jaunt from questioning the safety of vaccines to storming the U.S Capitol buildings or violent anti-lockdown protests on Grafton Street in Ireland - but the research shows that the rabbit hole is much shorter than one might expect. ³

Another reason for this research is the fact that we are in a global pandemic, the only route out of which is a vaccinated population. Indeed, we also need our communities to be open to further vaccination if booster shots are required to achieve sustained suppression of the virus. ⁴

According to our research, 15.6% of the Irish population are extremely vaccine skeptical, and it is not yet known exactly the percentage of people we'll need fully vaccinated to achieve herd immunity or sustained suppression. Add this figure to the fact that Anti-Vaxxers are 500% more effective at recruitment than pro-vaccine advocates and we have something serious to worry about.

- 1 The Centre for Countering Digital Hate The Anti Vaxx Industry
- 2 ihid

^{3 &#}x27;Constituent Covid-19 apocalypses: contagious conspiracism, 5G, and viral vaccinations' & https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/storming-capitol-conspiracy-theory-5322471-Jan2021/

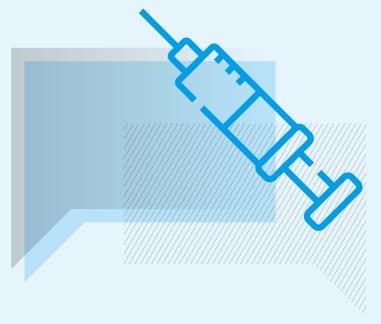
⁴ The Long Road Toward COVID-19 Herd Immunity: Vaccine Platform Technologies and Mass Immunization Strategies

Anti Vaxx propaganda poses a serious danger to our communities on these two fronts. The first being the radicalisation of our community members towards extreme white nationalist, anti LGBTQIA+, and other conspiratorial views, and the second being the threat of an under vaccinated population while COVID-19 is still endemic.

That's why it was so imperative that we find the right strategy - a community work response that is based in expressing and sharing shared values with members of our community who are vulnerable to the recruitment efforts of extremists and charlatans.

We believe that effective messaging is the best way to build resilience in communities who are targeted for recruitment by the far right. We also believe that the best way to encourage vaccine -skeptical people to take the vaccine, so that we can achieve herd immunity, is through positive messaging from trusted messengers.

We want to provide a play-book for those campaigning and organising to build communities that are resilient and inoculated against the recruitment attempts of the far right. Thus, while this messaging research is focused primarily on vaccines, there are fundamental principles which are applicable across a number of 'culture war' areas where the far right is trying to find salience and recruit; such as sex education, LGBTQIA+ rights, migration and housing.



Language Framing and Research Principles

It's imperative that we speak to people in a way that allows them to hear us. However, this doesn't mean that we 'have to start where people are at'. According to messaging researcher and strategist Anat Shenker Osorio⁵, in her 2012 book 'Don't Buy It: the Trouble With Talking Nonsense About the Economy' this is because there actually is no place where people are. To put it bluntly, people are all over the place. We are a mix of messy values and are persuaded by the message that makes us feel the best, not the one that presents the most logical argument.

This understanding of persuasion explains the fact that Anti-Vaxxers have a 500% greater recruitment rate than pro-vaccine advocates. How often does being bombarded with facts and figures, by someone who has an air of condescension and snark make you feel good? How likely are you to listen - rather than react out of a need to defend yourself?

Much of our theoretical underpinning comes from the neurological theory of the 'Fast Brain, Slow Brain' as described by Daniel Kahneman in his 2011 text 'Thinking Fast and Slow' and through 'Metaphors We Live By' by Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnsonn published through The University of Chicago in 1980 and of course, Lakoff's seminal later work 'Don't Think of An Elephant'.

Both Kahneman and Lakoff present us with an essential understanding of how the human brain processes language to create mental models of the real world and evoke powerful values and emotions through the use of metaphors. We are not, as the enlightenment scholars would have us believe, neutral tabula rasas or particularly logical creatures – and that's ok.

What isn't ok is for us to continue to lose members of our communities to malicious far right actors because we can't figure out the right way to talk to them about what's going on.

As such, drawing on the theoretical frameworks above; our research principles abide by key language and linguistic principles of Shenker-Osorio, Kahneman and Lakoff, such as;

THE FRAME YOU INVOKE IS THE ANSWER YOU GET.

Frames are like mental models of the real world. Our brains construct frames from early childhood so we don't have to re-learn what a restaurant is or what we might expect to find there every time someone invites us out for dinner. I say restaurant and your restaurant frame is invoked; you're thinking waiters, plates, menus, wine lists, food, maybe family, friends and connection. You might even start salivating unconsciously. You could start feeling warm and happy from the memories you've had in restaurants over the years. You're very unlikely to be thinking about a nuclear reactor when you're in the frame of 'restaurant'. It doesn't fit in the frame.

WHEN YOU NEGATE A FRAME, YOU INVOKE IT.

DON'T think of an Elephant! See? Negations like 'Stop Climate Change', 'Stop Brexit' and 'Asylum is not a Crime' do harm to our social movements by giving our opposition's frames free air time. When people hear 'Seeking Asylum is Not a Crime' - they just hear 'Asylum' and 'Crime'. They are in the 'Crime' frame i.e. prisons, weapons, danger and fear - they feel a need for security. Asking people to access

⁵ Anat Shenker Osorio - Don't Buy It

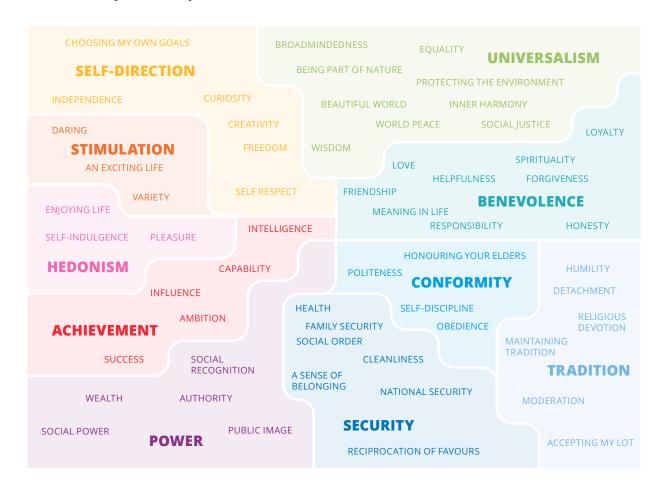
⁶ Daniel Kahneman - Thinking Fast and Slow

solidarity, mutual respect and empathy when they are in the 'Crime' frame is a completely useless endeavor.

WHEN ONE COMES UP, THE OTHERS COME DOWN.

The following values map, originally plotted by Schwartz, S.H. (2006) demonstrates the complex and interdependent relationships values have with each other. When we pull people towards the values of wealth, by using terms like 'invest in children's education', we're actually scoring an own goal. Invest pulls people towards frames and values associated with achievement and power - actually dialling down the values of social justice and benevolence.

Value Surveys and Maps⁷



⁷ CCF - Values and Frames Map

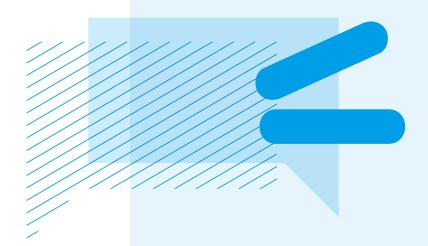
METAPHORS ARE POWERFUL BECAUSE THEY ARE INVISIBLE.

In the words of Lakoff, 'our fundamental conceptual system...is metaphorical by nature \(^8\). We are physical creatures, and the part of our brain that processes physical sensation is vastly more powerful than the part of our brain that grapples with concepts and ideas. So the brain has found a way around this - it links abstract concepts with physical sensations in order to understand them.

MRI scans have shown vastly more engaged brain activity when someone thinks about grasping an apple vs grasping a theory. ⁹ Think about how often you use metaphors to describe your day to day life. Did someone give you the cold shoulder recently? Why do we imagine conspiracy theorists going down a rabbit hole?

Metaphors are powerful, because they largely go unnoticed in everyday life. However, advertising companies and right wing media use them constantly in order to manipulate how we think about the world. Remember Nigel Farage's 'Breaking Point' or Esso Oil's 'Put a tiger in your tank'?

In order to find ways to break through to loved ones who've gone down the metaphorical rabbit hole, we must first analyse the metaphors they are being manipulated by. Then, we must find better metaphors to communicate our point of view.



- 8 Metaphors We Live By, George Lakoff
- 9 Your Brain On Metaphors Michael Chorost

Research Methodology

We used a variety of research methodologies to first analyse the frames and metaphors at play in Anti-Vaxx messaging, Pro-Vaccine Advocate messaging, and the frames and metaphors that show up in the way the Irish media speak about vaccines.

LANGUAGE TOKEN COLLECTION

- 1 We collected hundreds of language 'tokens' (i.e. key sentences, phrases and messages) from a variety of sources between January 1st and February 15th 2021.
- We first focused on Anti Vaxx influencers, discourse from Anti Vaxx Facebook groups, Anti Vaxx comments on mainstream media articles on vaccines and published reports from Anti Vaxx 'medical' practitioners.
- 3 We then collected language tokens from a variety of pro-vaccine sources - such as The World Health Organisation, The Irish Health Service Executive, Government bodies, and pharmaceutical companies.
- 4 Finally, we collected tokens from mainstream Irish news sources such as The Irish Times, The Independent, Journal.ie, Daily Mail etc.

FRAME CODING

Each token was coded using a framing and metaphor analysis. We searched for dominant frames such as 'Tyranny', 'Health', 'Disease', 'Choice', 'You Take It First' etc.

A maximum of 3 Frames per token were coded in order to keep the analysis focused on the most dominant frames.

REPRESENTATIVE SURVEYING

We used a trusted panel aggregator to assemble a sample of n=1002 people, a representative sample of the population of Ireland.

We asked key demographic and experiential questions, as well as asking a series of questions about Covid-19 and vaccination to help us code people into three groups; Pro Vaccine Base, Persuadable Population and Vaccine Skeptical.

DIAL TESTING OF ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

Dial testing is a methodology which asks participants to continuously rate an audio message by dialling up and down as the message plays.

We asked participants to continually rate four messages based on how much they agreed or disagreed with it. The sampling was randomised so that participants heard the messages in randomised order.

The messages were played to a representative sample of n=1002 people living in the Republic of Ireland aged 18+.

POST DIAL TESTING SURVEYING

After each message, participants were asked to answer in open text fields what they felt the message was saying, and what they liked and disliked about each message.

Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to get the vaccine after each message and also how likely they would be to share the message - two key variables in terms of assessing the message's efficacy.

HERE ARE THE TRANSCRIPTS OF THE FOUR AUDIO MESSAGES WE TESTED:

Eradication:

Vaccines are one of the best inventions in the history of humankind. Through science, we have collectively eradicated dangerous diseases like Polio, Measles and Rubella. The COVID-19 vaccine has been safely developed by scientists, and while some people may experience side effects, this is to be expected and normal. But still, some people refuse to do their research or understand that vaccines are safe, with others pushing conspiracies and misinformation. We can trust science and scientists. The truth is, most people will feel fine after their vaccine, and will be at a much lower risk of contracting a serious case of COVID-19.

Hugs:

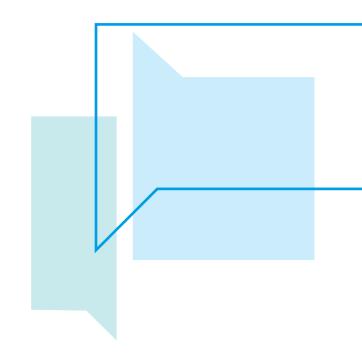
Most of us can't wait to give the loved ones we've been isolated from a big hug when the COVID -19 pandemic is over. If enough of us take the vaccine this year, there is real hope on the horizon. The Covid vaccine offers us the chance to get back to a life of connection, family and community once more. It means we'll be able to hug our loved ones, that children and their grandparents will be able to spend time together again - safe in the knowledge that we are all protected and vaccinated.

Caring Communities:

In Ireland, we care about each other. Over the course of this pandemic, we've pulled together to keep eachother safe. We've kept our distance, worn masks, and supported each other by dropping up shopping, making phone calls and connecting online. Now, we have a big opportunity to keep eachother safer than ever and end this pandemic for good. When the vaccine is rolled out across our communities, we'll have the opportunity to protect ourselves, our families and our loved ones - making it safe for everyone to live life to the fullest once more.

Hope - 'Roaring Twenties':

If we're really honest, the social isolation, monotony and boredom of the pandemic has been hard for us to cope with. But there is hope on the horizon. Once enough of us are vaccinated, so all of us are safe - the future can be bright and exciting again. We can be spontaneous and free to enjoy all life has to offer; our favourite restaurants, live music, theatre, sports matches, dancing and travel. Even popping in for an unplanned pint on the way home from work. When our Ireland's immunity to Covid is established thanks to the vaccine - we'll have our own roaring twenties to look forward to, and that's exciting.



FINDINGS

Language Analysis Results

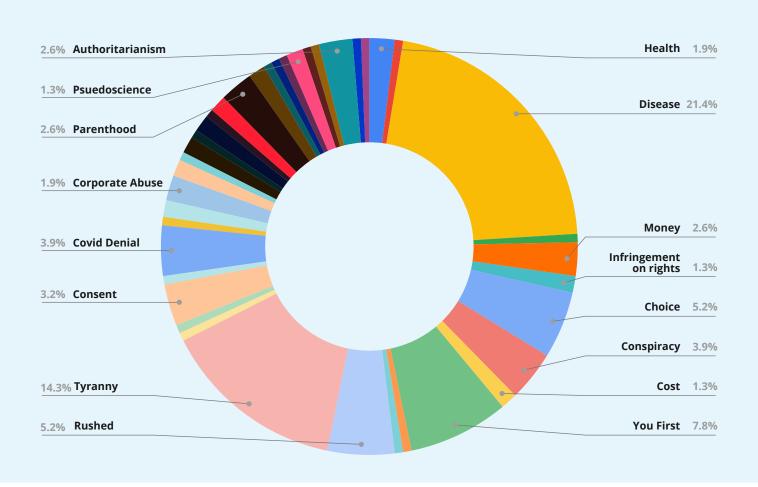
What Frames are Anti-Vaxxers using?

There is a clear framing schema at play in the world of Anti-Vaxx discourse, as the below diagram illustrates. Out of over 150 language frames collected as part of our discourse analysis on Anti-Vaxx rhetoric, 21.4% used the frame of 'Disease' when talking about vaccines.

A significant percentage also used the frame of 'Tyranny' when speaking about vaccines, in particular the enforcement of vaccine use.

The 'You First' frame also constituted 7.8% of the language samples collected, showing that vaccine skepticism and a 'wait and see' approach is significant in terms of anti-Vaxx discourse.

Count of Anti-Vaxx Frames



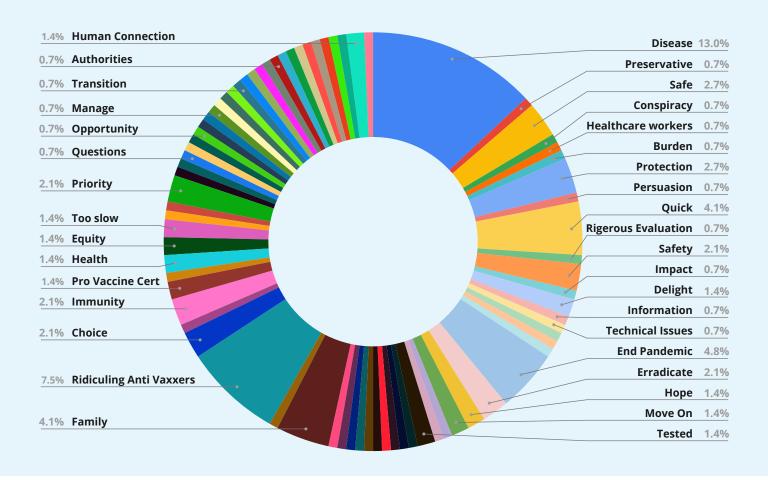
What Frames are Vaccine Advocates Using?

Astonishingly, when we look at Pro -Vaccine discourse, 'Disease' is also the most common frame invoked by advocates when talking about vaccines. Though much of the discourse negated the original frame of disease i.e. 'you won't get a disease', this still strengthens the original proposition of disease, as when you negate a frame, you invoke it.

Ridiculing Anti-Vaxxers constituted 7.5% of the sample, while frames such as 'Family' constituted 4.1% and 'Connection' just 1.4%.

Comparatively, 'Health' frames constituted 1.4% of the sample and 'Immunity' just 2.1%.

Count of Advocate Frames



How is this playing out in the Irish Media?

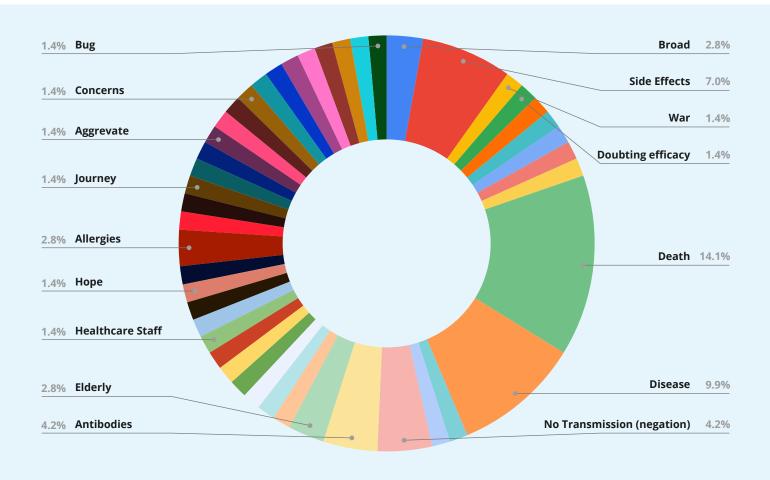
The data collected from media tokens should be treated with some caution, as the tokens were collected in early February, when the first reported side effects and deaths were reported in relation to the extremely rare instances of blood clotting as a side effect, perhaps explaining the high instance of the 'Death' frame as shown in the diagram.

However, unsurprisingly, 'Disease' shows up as 9.9% of the overall sample, which makes

sense considering that it is the dominant frame used by both Anti-Vaxxers and Pro-Vaccine Advocates.

Side effects are also widely discussed at 7% of the overall sample.

Count of Frames in Irish Media



SURVEY RESULTS

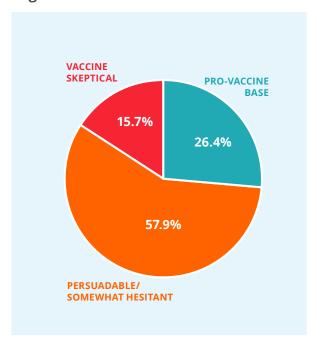
Our pre-dial testing survey revealed some worrying insights into vaccine hesitancy, skepticism and explicit AntiVaxx sentiment in the Republic of Ireland.

As previously stated, we used two criteria to assess vaccine hesitancy amongst our sample.

How likely are you to get the vaccine when it becomes available to you? (1-10 scale)

When the vaccine becomes available to you, how long will you wait to get it? ('Immediately'-'Never' Scale)

Segment Breakdown



Vaccine Skeptical - 15.68%

0-4 likelihood to get the vaccine when it becomes available, and 'Never' answer to 'how long will you wait to get the vaccine.

Persuadable - 57.78%

5-8 scale on likelihood to get the vaccine and will wait more than 1 month when the vaccine becomes available to them.

Pro-Vaccine - 26.34%

9-10 likelihood to get the vaccine and 1 month or less wait when the vaccine becomes available to them.

WINNING MESSAGES

Our winning message would make Vaccine Skeptics more likely to get the vaccine, making them less likely to recruit 'Persuadables' (over 58% of the sample), and would motivate our Pro Vaccine base to spread the message to the Persuadable and Skeptical people in their lives.

When assessing the results, we asked two questions;

- 1 Did this message make Vaccine skeptics more likely to get the vaccine?
- Will our Pro-Vaccine base be motivated to share this message with their persuadable family and friends?

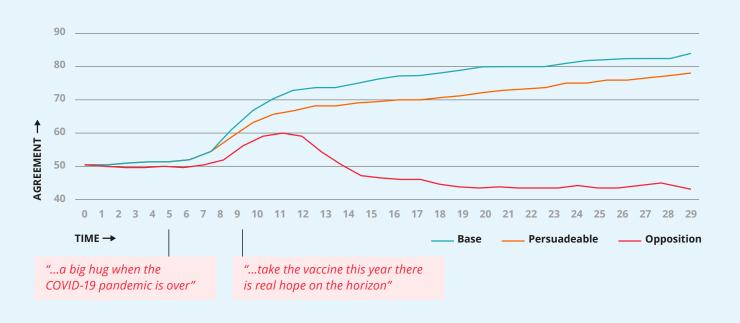
There were two clear winners; hugs and eradication.

Hugs

The moment to moment dial results reveal that this message had the best average overall result between all segments. Everyone liked the idea of hugging their loved ones again.

However, we can see vaccine skeptics begin to drop off as soon as 'vaccines' are mentioned, but rise again when we speak of grandparents hugging their grandchildren, and return to community and connection once more, and another slight uptick when the word 'protected' was mentioned.

Hugs



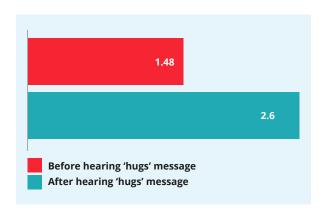
002	Most of us can't wait to give the loved ones we've been isolated from a big hug when the COVID-19 pandemic is over
009	If enough of us take the vaccine this year, there is a real hope on the horizon
013	The COVID vaccine offers us the chance to get back to a life of connection, family and the community once more.
019	It means we'll be able to hug our loved ones, that children and their grandparents will be able to spend time together again –
024	safe in the knowledge that we are all protected and vaccinated.

Overall, this message performed extremely well in terms of persuading Vaccine Skeptics to take the vaccine - making them almost twice as likely to get the vaccine after being pulled into the frame of 'Hugs' by our message.

Vaccine Skeptical Persuasion After 'Hugs' message.

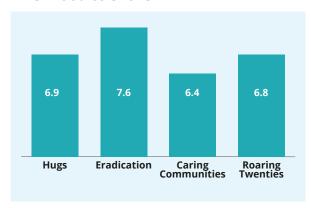
Q. How likely are you to get the vaccine when it becomes available to you?

Before Hearing Hugs Message and After Hearing Hugs Message



This message also performed second best in terms of shareability amongst our Pro-Vaccine base.

Likelihood to Share



What people liked about this message

"I see the silver lining with the vaccines being invented. I cannot wait for lives to go back to normal."

— Persuadable Group Participant

"I liked the mention of grandparents/ grandchildren as this is an area that has been so impacted by the pandemic."

— Vaccine Advocate Participant

"I like how they are trying to cheer people up by saying they will get to see their loved ones and friends if people get vaccinated"

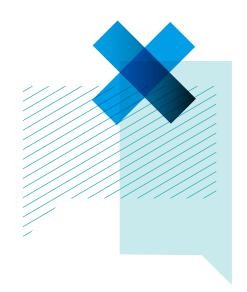
— Vaccine Skeptical Participant

Eradication

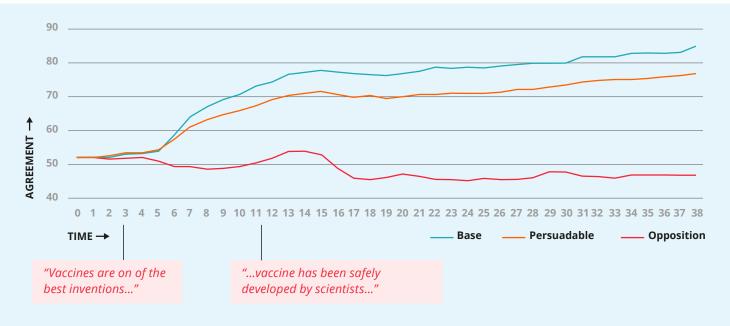
While this message didn't have as high an average score as 'Hugs', it was the best performer in terms of our two main evaluation criteria of persuading our most skeptical participants and being rated as highly shareable by our Pro Vaccine base.

Again, people most in opposition to vaccines, dropped down when the word 'vaccine ' was mentioned. There was also a drop in our base and persuadables when side effects were mentioned.

Also notably, the vaccine skeptical group dialled down when we said 'some people refuse to do their research' however rose slightly again when we pointed to 'conspiracies and misinformation' as the reason for vaccine hesitancy - and rose when we said 'we can trust science and scientists'.



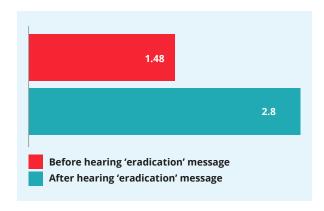
Eradication



003	Vaccines are one of the best inventions in the history of humankind.		
007	Through science, we have collectively eradicated dangerous diseases like Polio, Measles and Rubella.		
012	The COVID-19 vaccine has been safely developed by scientists,		
016	and while some people may experience side effects, this is to be expected and normal.		
020	But still, some people refuse to do their research or understand that vaccines are safe, with others pushing conspiracies and misinformation.		
028	We can trust science and scientists.		
031	The truth is, most people will feel fine after their vaccine, and will be at a much lower risk of contracting a serious case of COVID-19.		

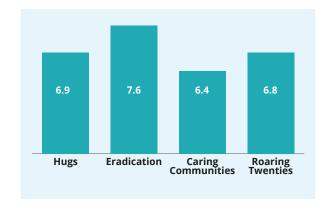
Q. How likely are you to get the vaccine when it becomes available to you?

Vaccine Skeptical before Hearing 'Eradication' Message vs After Hearing 'Eradication' Message



This message was the clearest winner in terms of shareability, with our Pro-Vaccine base rating it 7.6 out of 10.

Likelihood to Share



What people liked about this message

"The reassurance that the vaccine is safe and it's ok to have a little side effect from it."

— Persuadable Group Participant

"It puts emphasis on how vaccines are safe and are widely tested before hitting the public."

— Vaccine Advocate Participant

"It backed up vaccines with examples of how they have worked before"

— Vaccine Hesitant Participant

Recommendations

DO

Talk about hugs and connection, especially intergenerational connection.

The idea of seeing and embracing our loved ones again when we end this pandemic through our vaccination programme is a winning message. Tell your family and friends you love them, that you can't wait to see them and embrace them again. Talk about family parties, making up for lost time, and the enjoyable, joy filled times ahead once everyone is protected through vaccination.

Talk about eradication but avoid pulling people towards the frame of disease.

The idea that we have collectively beaten pandemics and epidemics before through safe vaccines developed by hard working scientists is a popular one - and will persuade people to take this vaccine. However, focusing too much on the specific diseases and the horrors they inflicted, will only pull people further into the frame of disease - the frame that Anti Vaxxers use to recruit people. It's better to talk about public health, and eradication than it is to focus on the actual diseases.

Use 'Social Proofing'

Human beings are much more likely to do something, if they know that the people around them are also going to do the same thing.¹⁰ People are much more likely to take the vaccine if they hear of other people they know and trust getting it. In fact, they're much more likely to listen to Mary from three houses down than they are The World Health Organisation, Politicians, NGOs, and even social media influencers.¹¹

DON'T

Don't ridicule

Climb off that high horse. Remember that Anti-Vaxx recruiters are 500% more effective at recruiting than their Pro-Vaccine counterparts. They have laid complex traps to ensure our loved ones fall in, and part of their success hinges on how they make people feel validated, informed, and intelligent. If we show up armed with nothing but ridicule and then try to convince people who have been sucked in by conspiracy theories - who do you think they're more likely to move toward? Who are they more likely to listen to?

Don't bring facts to a frame fight

Facts bounce off of frames. If a loved one has been brought into the frame of disease by Anti-Vaxx influencers, meeting them there, armed with facts and figures will only further push them into that frame, and make them much more likely to disagree with you. How many times have we heard 'well I've done my own research' when we show our loved ones concrete proof that vaccines are safe and effective. When we are 'Thinking Fast' i.e. emotionally, we cannot slow down and engage the more logical parts of our brain. People are much more likely to respond positively if we introduce a different frame instead - one that makes them feel good.

Don't talk about responsibility

It's worth noting that our 'Caring Communities' message performed the worst across all the criteria. While this may seem disappointing and even concerning on the surface, given the context of the past year, it makes sense. People have been asked to make huge sacrifices for the welfare of others for well over a year now. It makes sense that reminding people of the joy they can have again, rather than reminding them once more of their responsibilities, is much more likely to motivate them to get the vaccine.

¹⁰ Sherif, M (1935). "A study of some social factors in perception". Archives of Psychology. 27: 187.

¹¹ MBRI - Veracity Index - Who Do we Trust

Cheat Sheet: Embrace/Replace

EMBRACE	REPLACE	REASON
Vaccines protect us	Vaccines prevent disease	Doesn't pull people into the frame of disease
Vaccines keep us healthy	Vaccines prevent disease	Doesn't pull people into the frame of disease
Protected by the vaccine	Vaccinated	Lead with the frame of protection, not vaccination
Vaccines will help us see family and share our lives again.	Vaccines will stop us from dying from deadly diseases like COVID-19	Doesn't pull people into the frame of disease or death
l can't wait until we can meet again and hug.	You need to get vaccinated for the good of your community. It's all of our responsibility.	Tell people about the great results they'll have as a result of vaccination, don't focus on responsibility. People are fatigued, they need hope.
The vaccine means we can eradicate COVID-19 for good, just like we've done with big pandemics and epidemics before.	Polio, Measles, Rubella - these diseases were horrific, killing and severely disabling thousands of people. That's why we all must take the vaccine.	Focuses on the frame of eradication, not disease.
It's going to be great when the vaccine has protected everyone, young and old - so that grandparents and grandchildren can embrace again.	We need to vaccinate the vulnerable and socially isolated to prevent severe disease and death.	Talking about intergenerational connection, rather than focusing on the vulnerable makes the idea of collective vaccination more appealing.
The vaccine has been safely tested and protects us, keeps us healthy and protects against COVID-19.	There will be side effects, but it's worth it to beat COVID-19.	Focus on what the vaccine brings i.e. health and protection not the side effects.

EMBRACE	REPLACE	REASON
I know several people who got the vaccine and are so happy they're protected now.	You don't want to get this virus, it's a terrible disease.	Focus on what the vaccine brings i.e. health and protection not disease/ill health.
There are corporations deliberately spreading lies about vaccines so they can make money from advertising, it's easy to get sucked in. They're trying to manipulate us.	You're foolish for believing Anti-Vaxx conspiracy theories. The facts don't lie, vaccines are safe.	Gives people a path out of believing misinformation that doesn't humiliate them.
We all need to be careful about what we believe on social media. At the end of the day, there are big corporations who benefit from us being afraid. It's very easy to get sucked in.	You need to be more careful about what you engage with online. You should have some common sense.	Doesn't blame the individual, but rather places the focus on the anti-vaxx influencers and the corporations responsible for allowing misinformation to spread.

Acknowledgements

A massive thank you to Nathan Feeney, Ellie Mae O' Hagan, Anat Shenker Osorio, Jillian Marcellus, and the wonderful team at Dialsmith - for all the support and guidance along the way.



