

Public Health Communications in a Changing Landscape

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OCT 2025



“When public health works it’s invisible”



*“Public health saved your life
today and you didn’t even know it”*



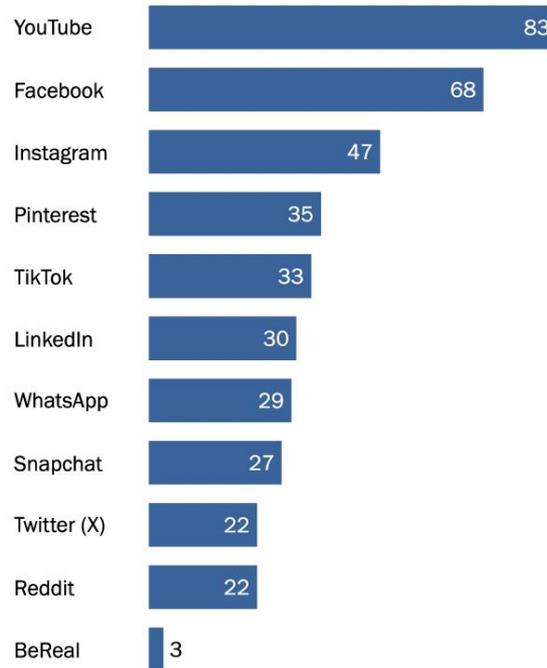


New information landscape

90 percent of Americans use
social media

Most U.S. adults use YouTube and Facebook; about half use Instagram

*% of U.S. adults who say they **ever** use ...*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 19-Sept. 5, 2023.
"Americans' Social Media Use"

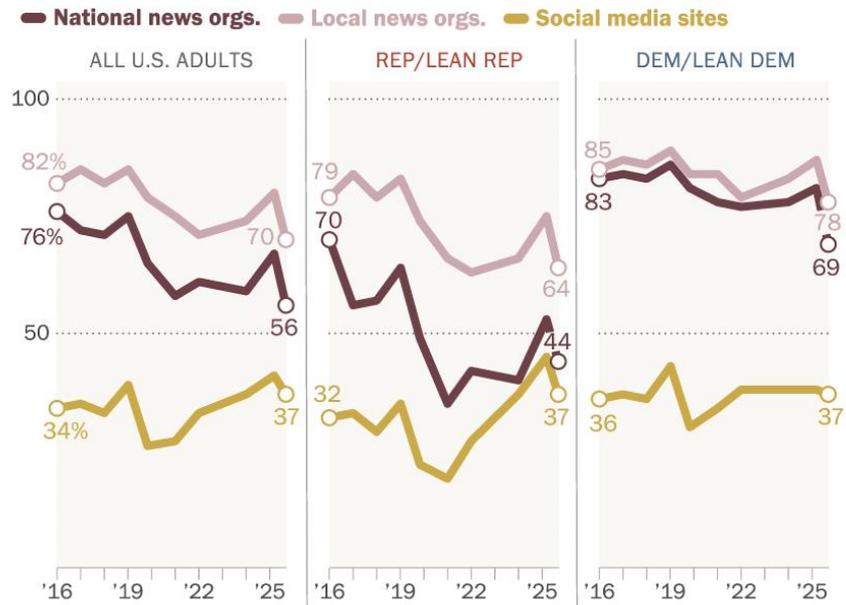
PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Declining trust in news media

National and local news,
Democrat and Republican

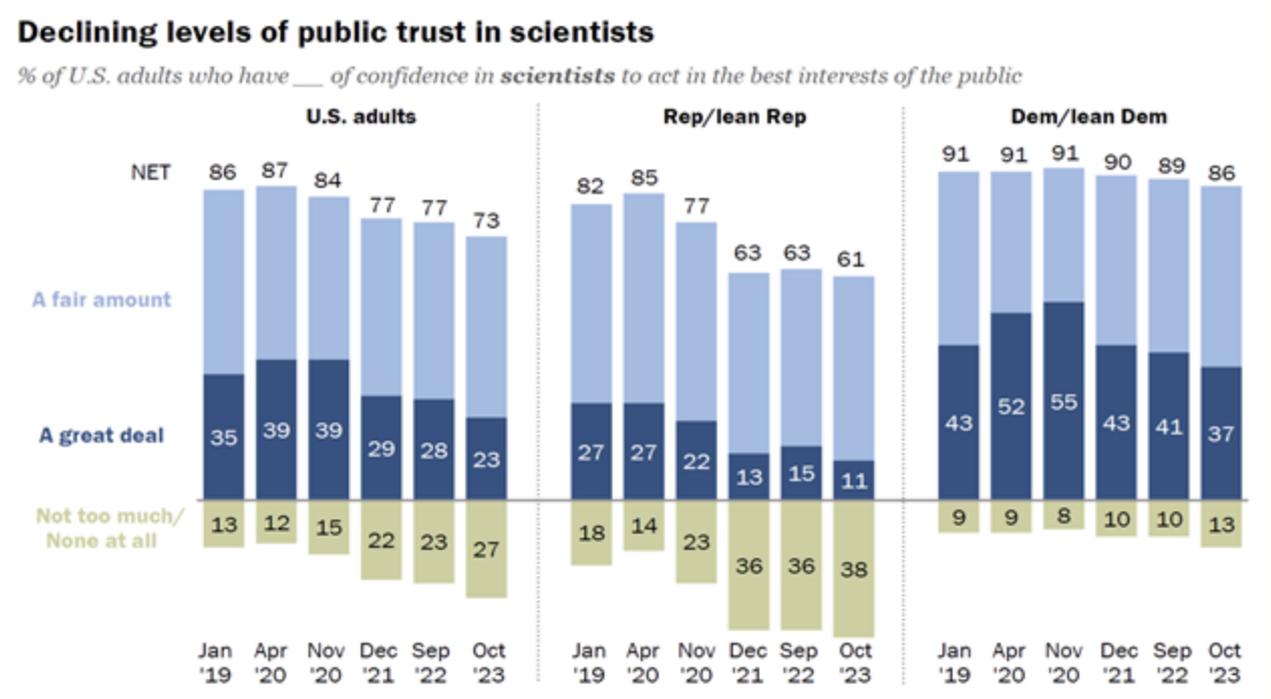
% of U.S. adults who say they have **a lot of/some trust** in the information they get from ...



Note: Data from 2016 based on only internet-using U.S. adults. Question wording has changed over time. For more detail, refer to the topline.

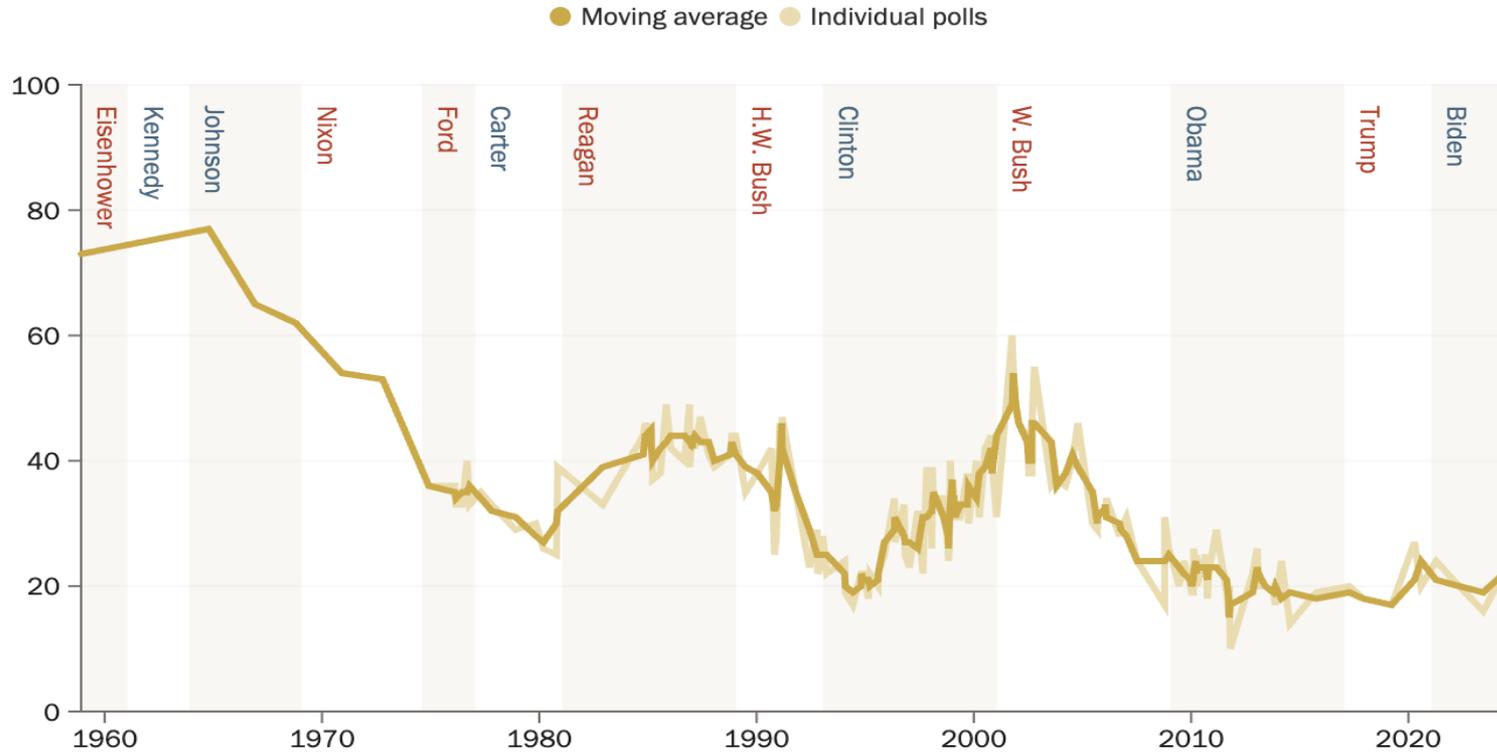
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 8-14, 2025. For dates of other surveys, refer to the topline.

Declining trust in institutions:



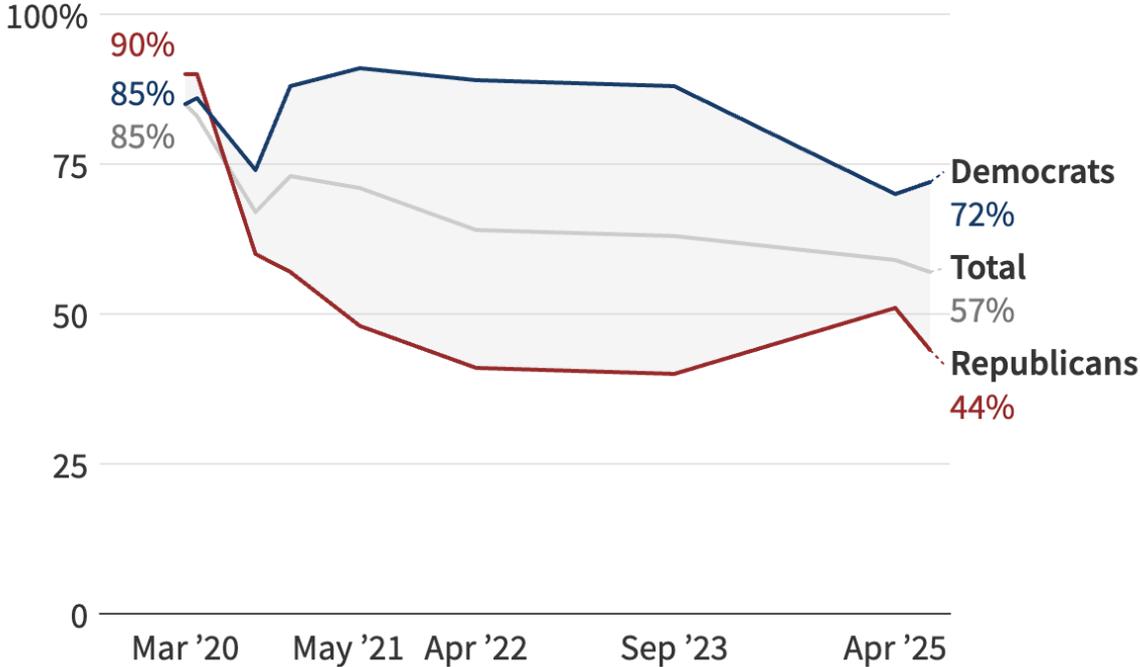
Declining Trust in Government

% who say they trust the government to do what is right just about always/most of the time



Declining Trust in CDC

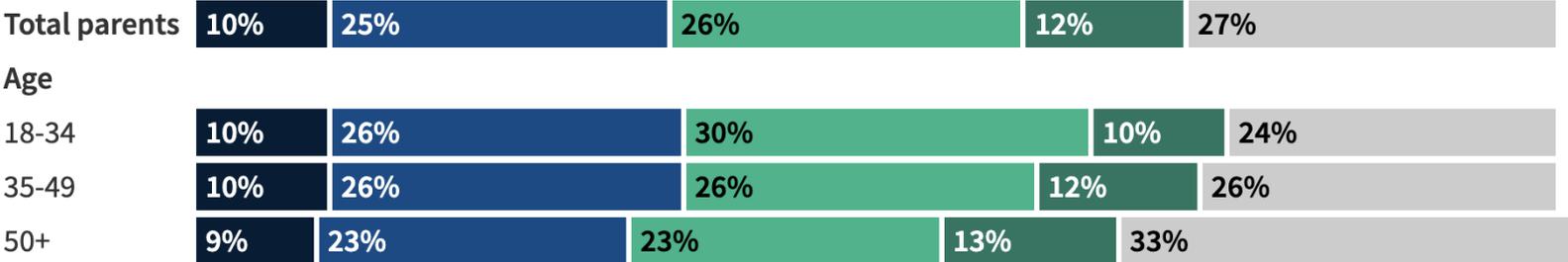
Percent who have a **great deal** or **fair amount** of trust in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide reliable information about vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines, and coronavirus



Unsure About “Wellness Influencers”

How easy or difficult is it for you to know what advice to trust when it comes from health and wellness influencers that you see on social media?

■ Very easy ■ Somewhat easy ■ Somewhat difficult ■ Very difficult ■ I don't see information from health and wellness influencers on social media



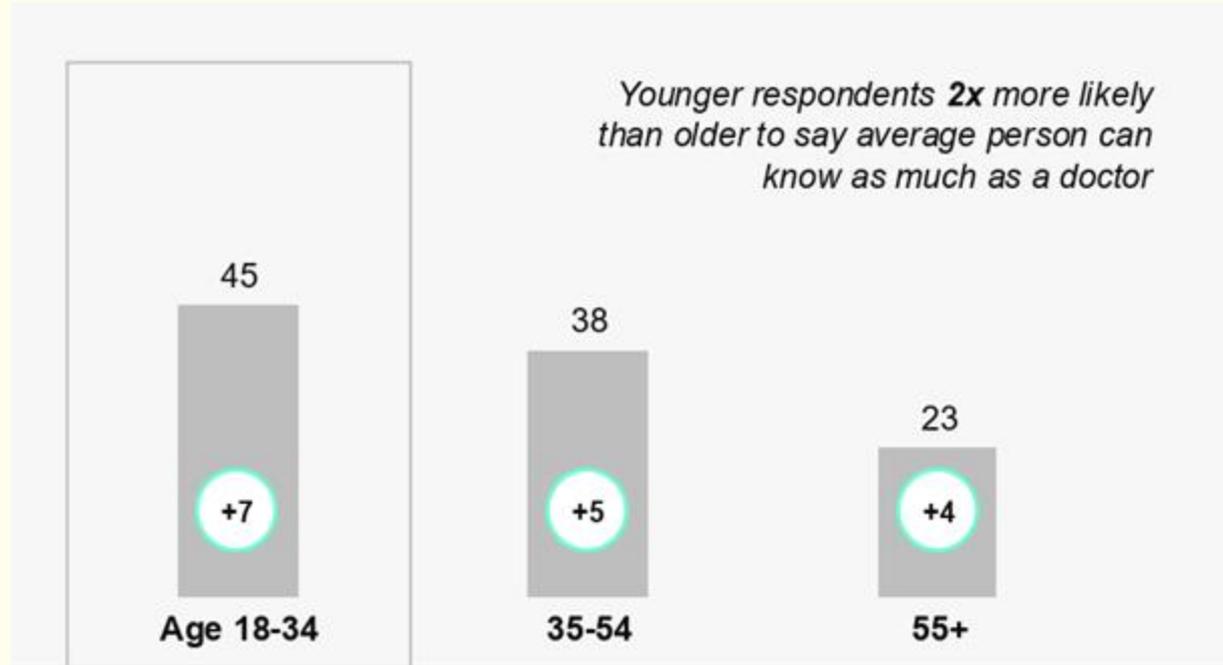
Note: Among parents of children under age 18. See topline for full question wording.

Source: KFF/The Washington Post Survey of Parents (July 18-August 4, 2025) • [Get the data](#) • [Download PNG](#)

KFF | The Washington Post



Rise in Curiosity Driven Class: Answer to any question at your fingertips



Paradox

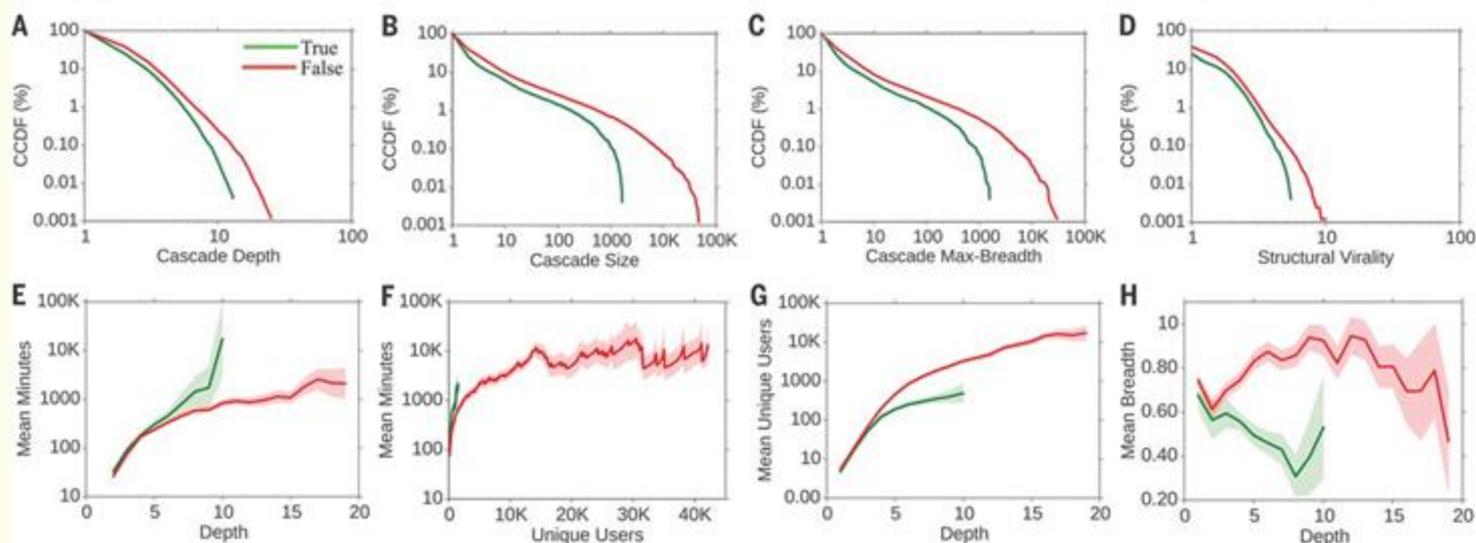
More information = less certainty

Falsehoods' social media advantage

reached far
more people

more people
retweeted

spread through
peer-to-peer



six times faster
at spreading

diffused more
broadly



Falsehoods' social media advantage

Truth

Goal: describe nature

- Takes time, research
- Often inconvenient
- Incomplete and evolving
- Narrated by nerds like us
- Held more formally
 - Institutions
 - Medical journals, Government reports

Falsehood

Goal: attract followers

- Instant, anyone can invent
- Simple
- Attractive
- Multiple versions; pick your favorite
- Narrated by influencers
- Held informally



The Dairy Industry doesn't want you to know about **this secret health enzyme** that boosts your natural gut healing power 🤔



♥️ 💬 📍 2,000,000+ views

HTST Pasteurization Process effectively inactivates the H5N1 avian influenza virus in milk



♥️ 💬 📍 52 shares



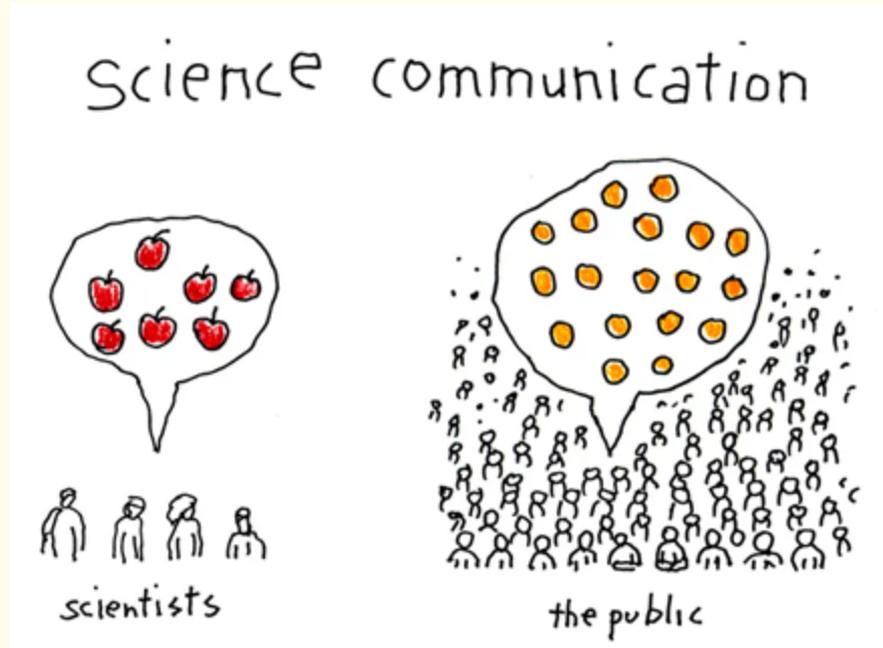


Science isn't
finished until it's
communicated.

- MARK WALPORT

konstantiaachilleos.com

Plain language builds bridges



“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.”

-Albert Einstein



Battle Against Misinformation

Murphy, Luján Reintroduce Legislation To Combat Public Health Misinformation

February 15, 2023

HEALTH TECH

'Truth is losing the battle': FDA commissioner on grappling with a wave of health misinformation

By Ben Brody March 9, 2023

STAT

How Finland Is Teaching a Generation to Spot Misinformation

The Nordic country is testing new ways to teach students about propaganda. Here's what other countries can learn from its success.

Libraries Primed to Play Integral Role in Preventing the Spread of Health Misinformation

Six local libraries work collaboratively to create a toolkit that addresses the public health crises caused during the pandemic – and in general – by health misinformation



Misinformation is the tip of the iceberg



Falsehoods

Concerns, questions, confusion

Engagement: Building Bridges



Braver Angels Conference,
Kenosha, WI, June 2024

- “What are the reasonable limits of Public Health authority?”
- *Bhattacharya v Willis*



Great Barrington Declaration

- October 2020; Stanford, Harvard, Oxford epidemiologists; 934,000 signatures
- One page
- “Focused protection”: Protect the most vulnerable, and “let it rip” for young healthy people
- Epidemiologically and societally possible?
- Federal response: “There needs to be a quick and devastating take down...”



What I Learned from Jay

Perceived refusal to consider
alternative views

His words:

- Dismissed
 - Excluded
 - Censored
 - Shut down
 - Labeled anti-science
 - Attacked
 - Black listed
-

About 4 in 10 Americans think there should have been fewer restrictions during the pandemic

% of U.S. adults who say that thinking back on COVID-19 restrictions on public activity, there should have been ___ restrictions in their area



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.

Transparency

- What do you know?
- What do you NOT know?
- How are you finding answers?

Empathy

Consistency

Transparency

Here's why Facebook, YouTube, and more are removing that dumb Plandemic video

Coronavirus : 9 réactions absurdes des humains face à l'épidémie

'Absolutely insane': Anti-vaxxers promote coronavirus conspiracies

A bizarre conspiracy theory puts Bill Gates at the center of the coronavirus crisis — and major conservative pundits are circulating it

Coronavirus y conspiración: historia de las teorías absurdas durante las pandemias

Alors que l'épidémie continue de gagner du terrain, les théories fumeuses sur l'origine du coronavirus fleurissent sur internet. Petit florilège.

Empathy



connect the measles it spells out 'My parents are idiots.'"

Consistency

Transparency

Empathy

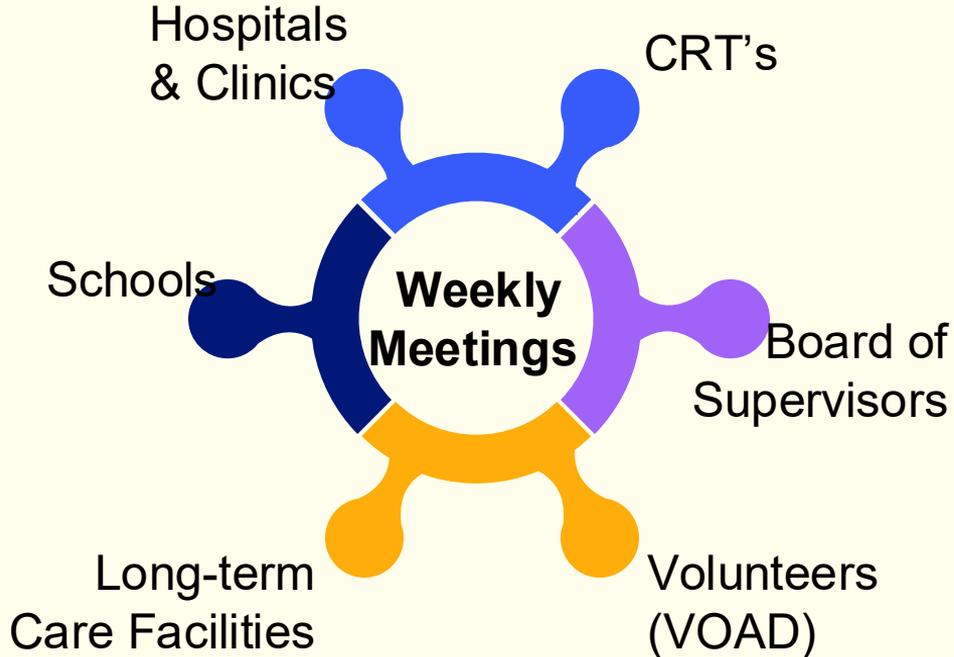
Consistency



- Actual person. A face.
- Credible voice
- Consistent voice
- Reliable cadence
- Structure

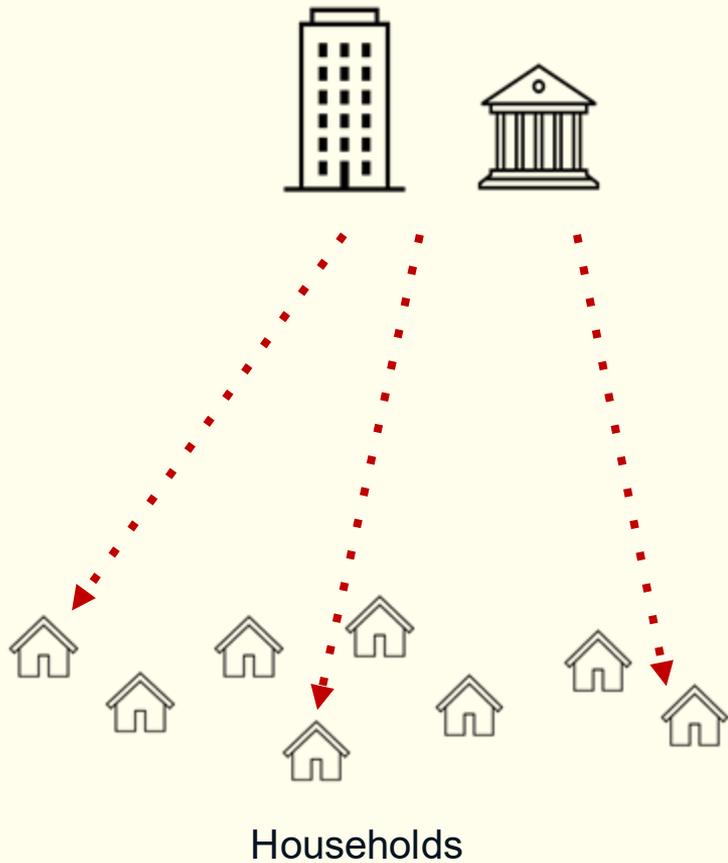
Local Pandemic Response Example

FREQUENT, CONSISTENT COMMUNICATIONS

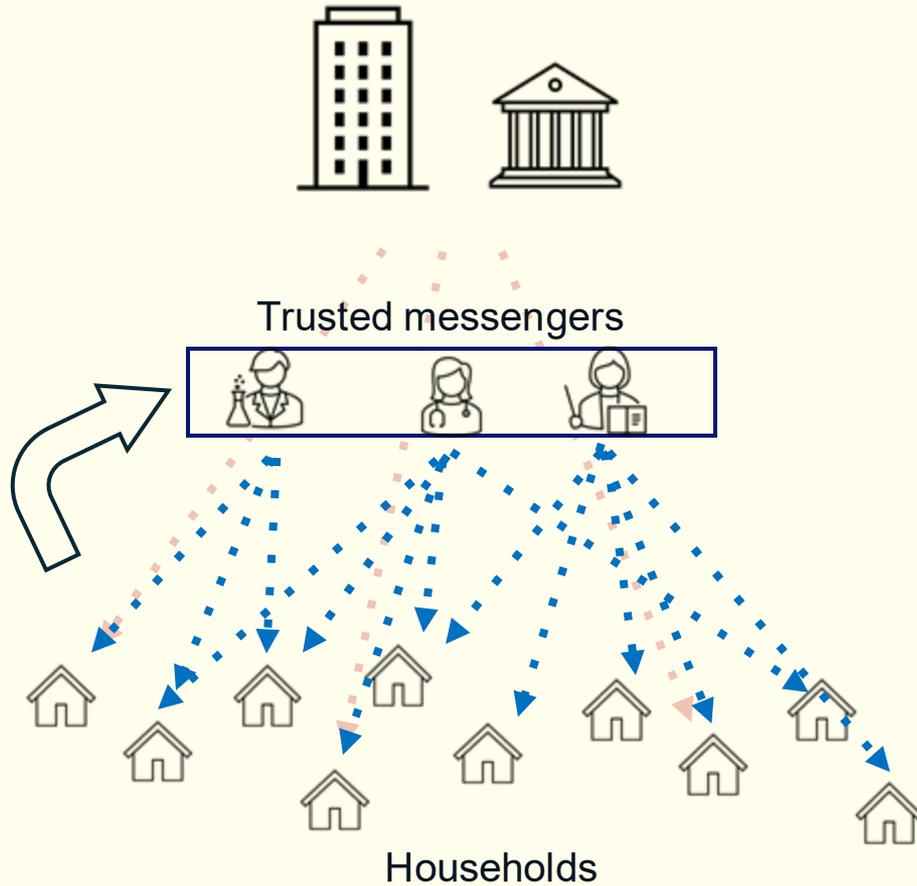


- Daily PH status updates (1000+)
- Videos (200+)
- Press releases
- Open media access
- Website
- Social Media

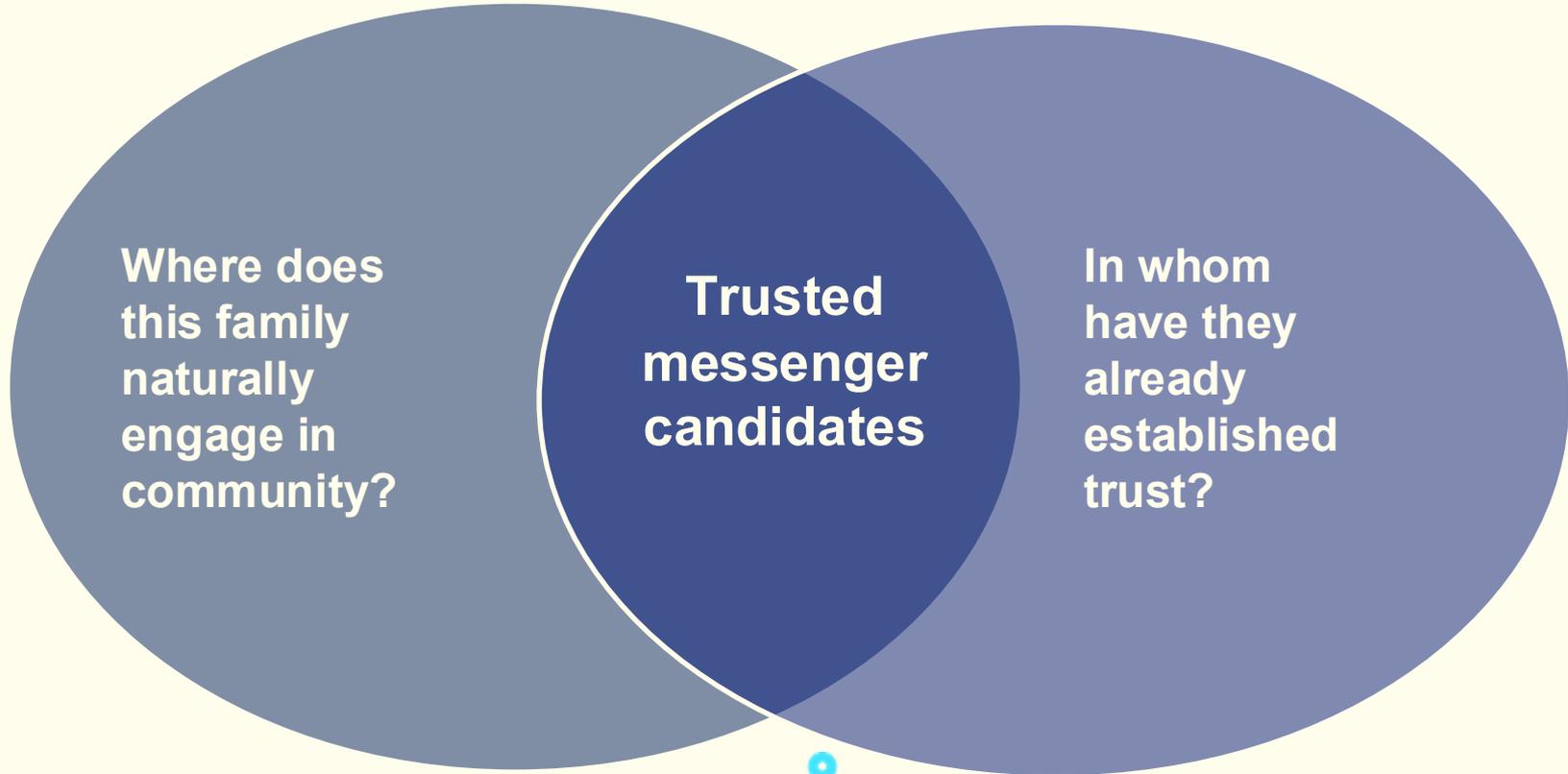
Historic Model



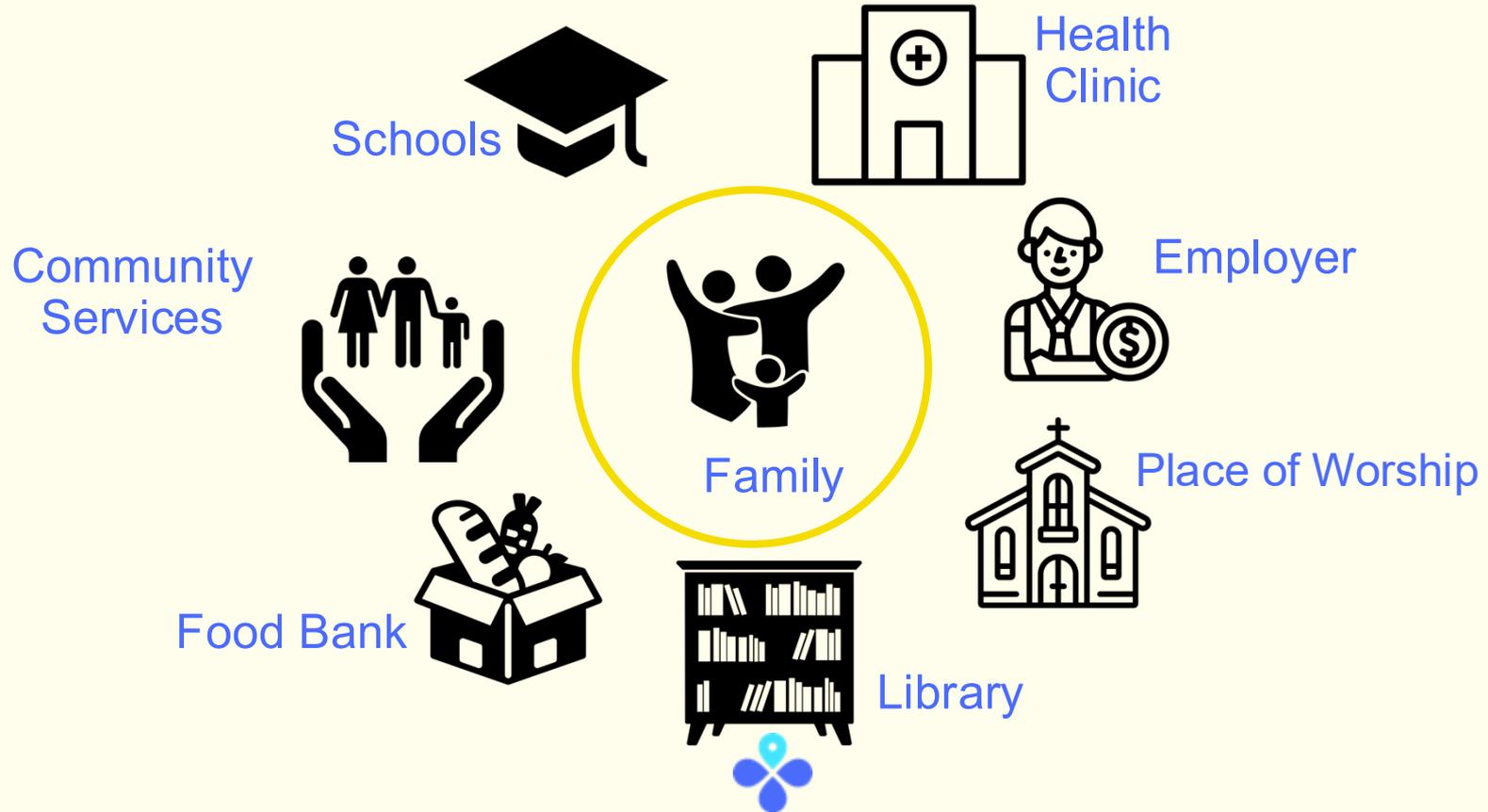
Emerging Model



Identifying Trusted Messengers: Two Questions



Family's "circle of trust": Example



Messengers



Local example:

- Rhett Krawitt
- Marin 8 year old with leukemia
- Put a face to “community responsibility”
- Policy champion to eliminate PBE’s (SB 277)

- Healthy today!





Messengers

“Me puse la vacuna de refuerzo para que el COVID no me impidiera continuar colaborando con mi comunidad.”

¡Reforcemos la inmunidad de nuestra comunidad: obtenga la vacuna de refuerzo de COVID!



VacuneseMarin.org



Jorge M.
Residente de West Marin

File Message Help Acrobat Tell me what you want to do

Ignore Delete Archive Reply Reply Forward More - Meeting Keep Teams Email To Manager Done Create New Move Actions - Mark Categorize Follow Translate Find Related - Read Zoom Report

Delete

Wed 3/18/2020 9:38 AM

Jetelina, Kate
RE: Resources and h

To: Bela, Bjel A; George, Vinay S; Barnes, Jane; Thakur, Sarsha; Turner-Little, Montgomery; Jackson, Sherry D; Long, Dorsey K; Hanes,

You replied to this message on 3/18/2020 1

our daily data driven update...

There is a lot of uncertainty around si
SLOWED after the quarantine was pu

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No thanks >

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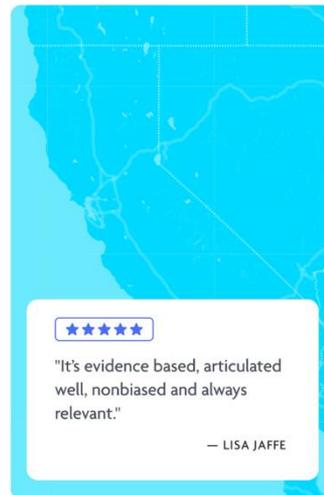
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"It's evidence based, articulated well, nonbiased and always relevant."

— LISA JAFFE



YLE California



- Launched August 2025
 - Weekly newsletter, videos, SM
 - PH news and guidance
 - 20K-25K readers across state
 - Growing

 - Personal, quick
 - Looks more casual than it is
-

Thank you!



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