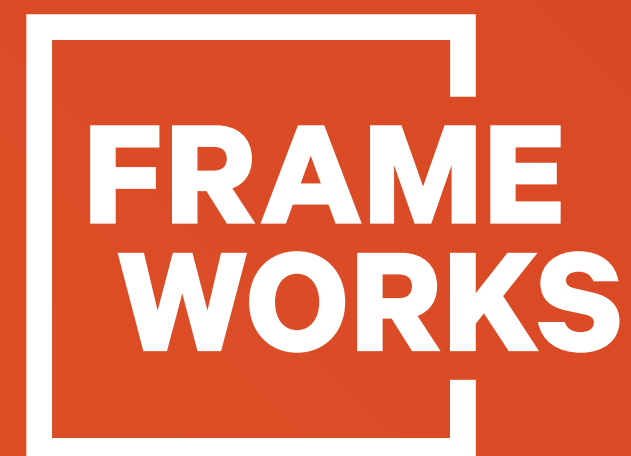


How to Counter Public Health Myths and Elevate Science Now

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December 5, 2024

As voices for public health, we can...

- **Understand the mindsets** that are being sparked and reinforced by the national political conversation on health.
- **Avoid communications “traps,”** or habits of communication that fall flat or even backfire.
- **Use tested, effective strategies** for explaining newly prominent, politicized health topics.
- **Manage misinformation** with proven and promising practices.
- **Cooperate and coordinate** on efforts to elevate public discourse and communicate effectively.

1. Understand public mindsets

What do these topics have in common?

Vaccines

Food additives

Fluoridated water

Ozempic

Raw milk

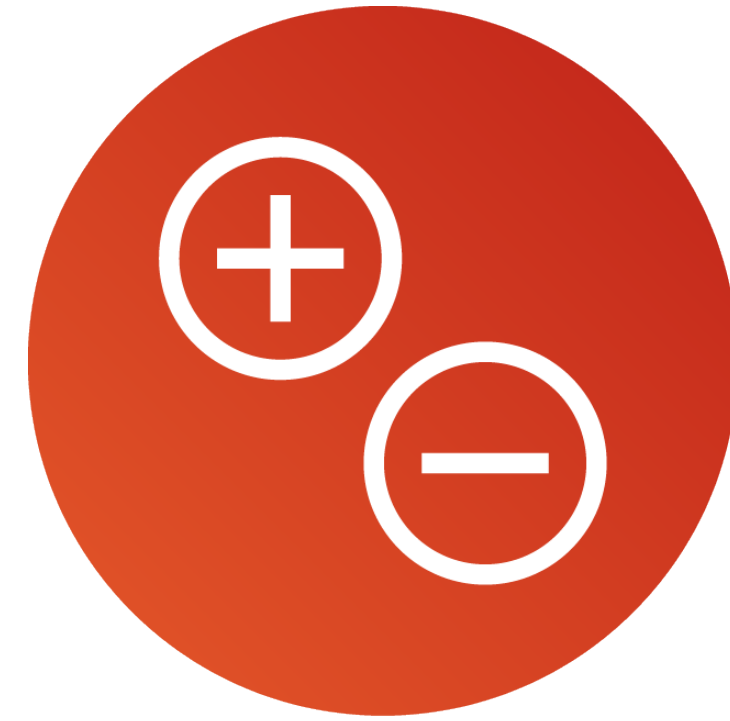
cultural models/mindsets



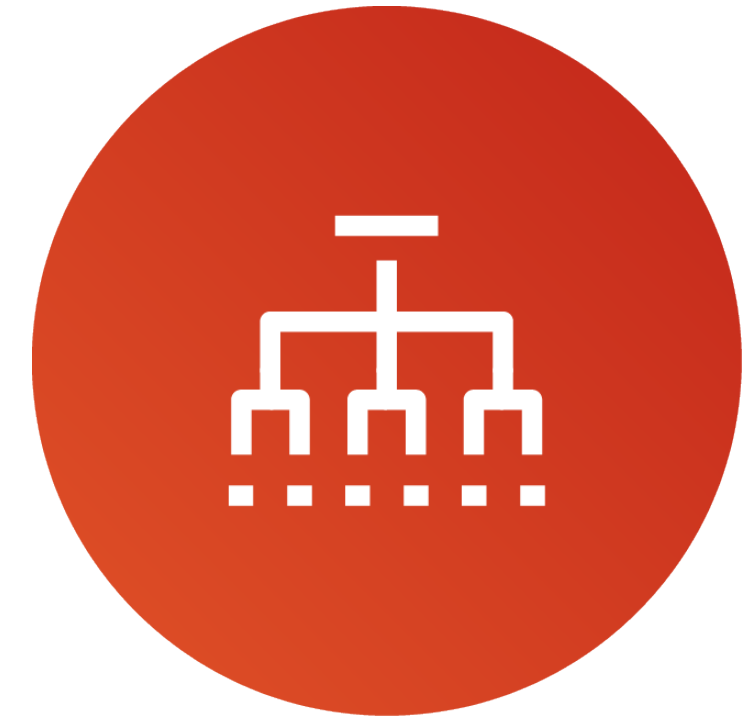
Deep



Widespread



Contextual



Structuring

How do cultural models/mindsets work?



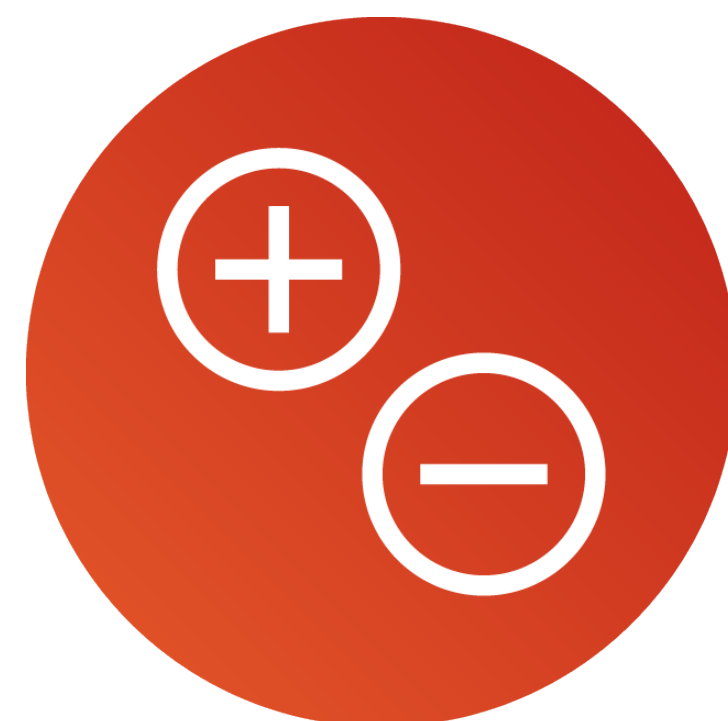
*Consumerism:
We get what we need through
commercial transactions —
buying and selling.*



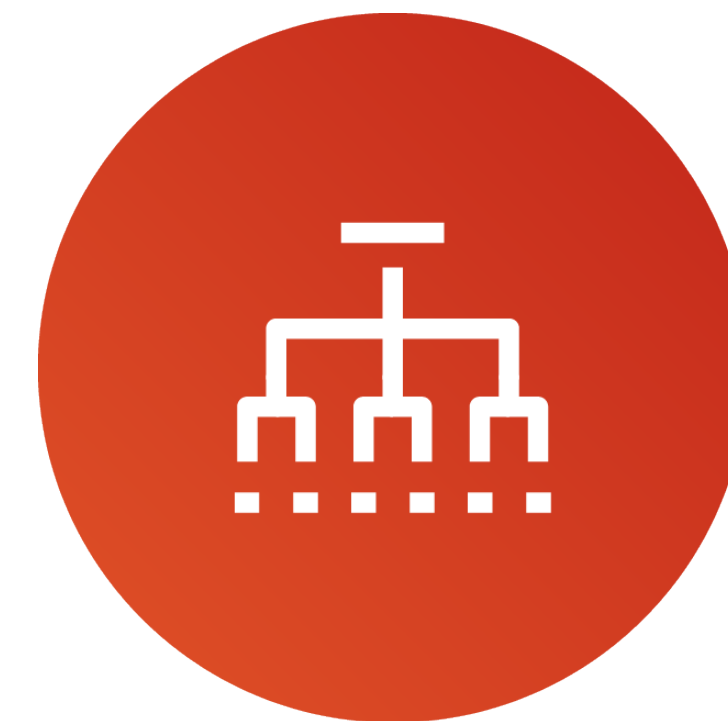
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Widespread

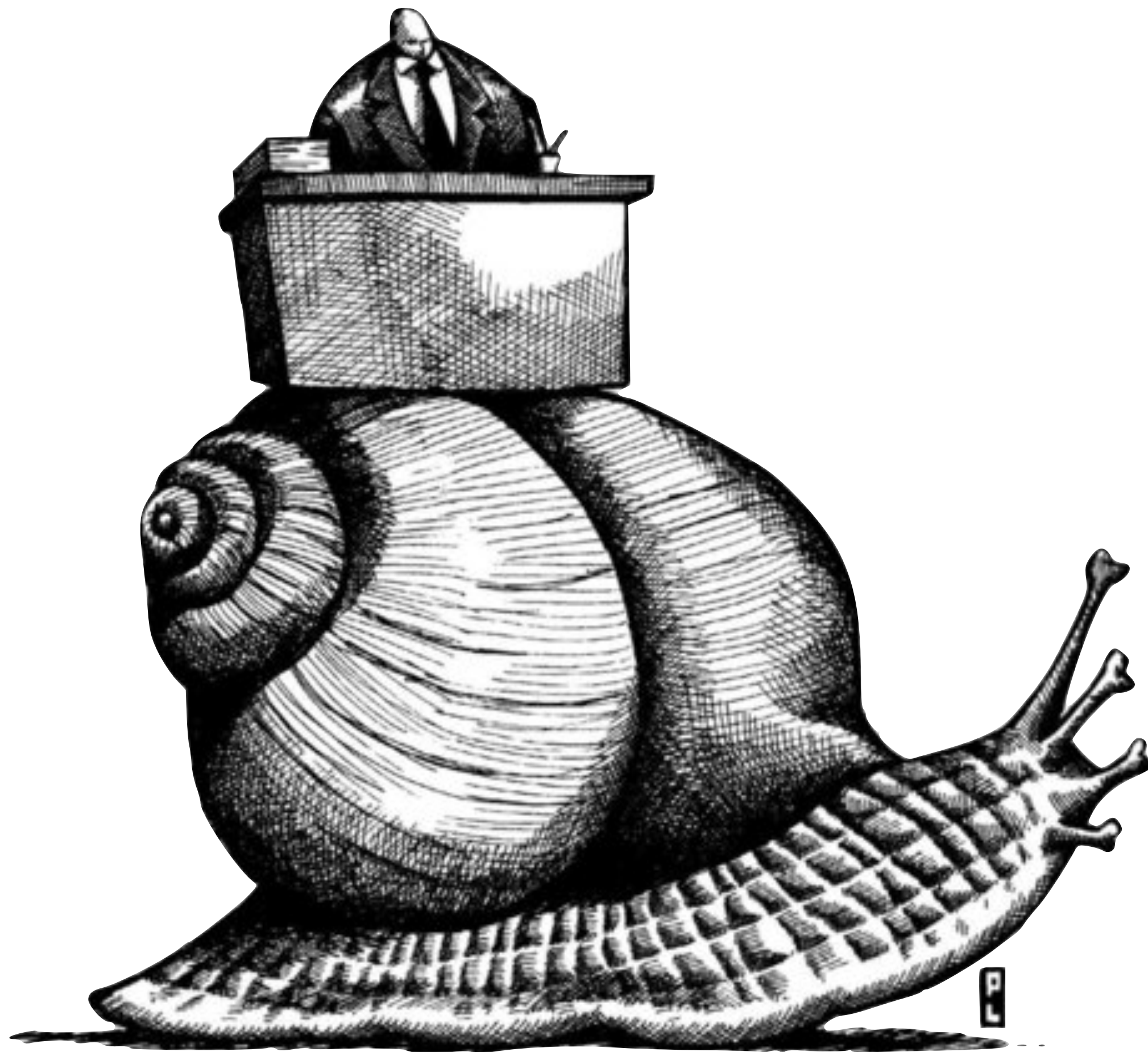


Multiple



Structuring

Understanding underlying cultural models helps us make sense of opinions that differ from ours



Cultural model: *Government as monolith*: government is a nameless, faceless entity impervious to change.

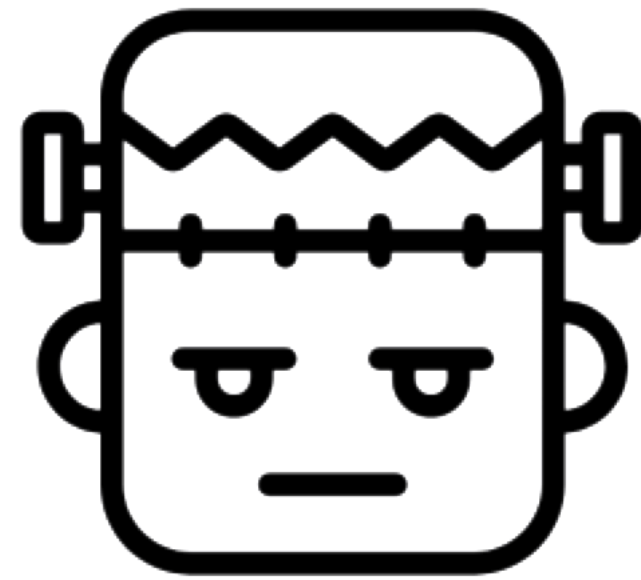
Implications: Government is big, formal, impersonal. It moves by inertia.

Opinions: Government should respond to actual people. Elevating recognizable personalities to high office is reassuring, perhaps even inspiring.

Many recent unorthodox or unsupported policy ideas cue and connect these mindsets



Natural > Artificial



Threat of Modernity



Purity



Bodily Autonomy

System is Rigged

People in power

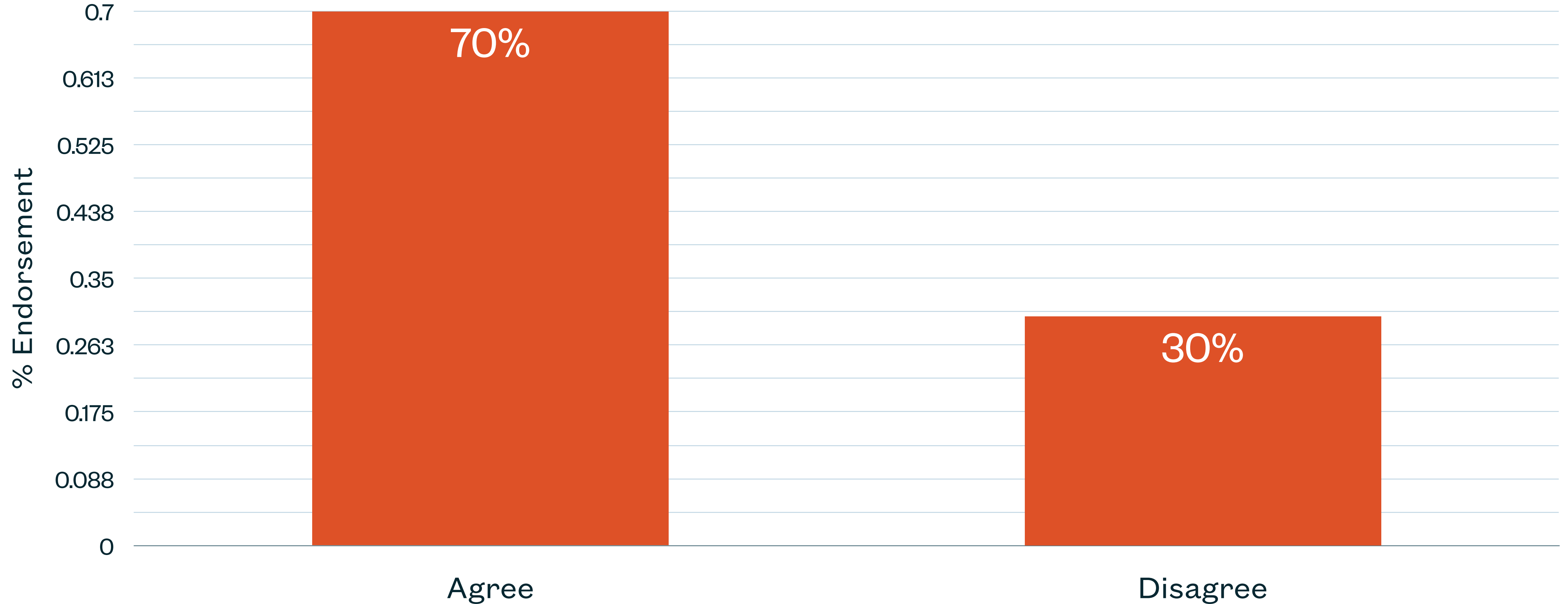


“Regular” people get a raw deal

“The system”

The majority of Americans think the system is rigged.

*Selected results of FrameWorks' national 'culture change' tracking survey,
February 2024*



What fills in the blanks?

People
in power



“Regular”
people get
a raw deal

“The system”

Incredibly powerful

Systemic

Systems paradox

Open to manipulation

Political discourse and public mindsets

- People can easily understand and readily agree with messages that resonate with or reinforce what they already think.
- Cultural models — like train models or airplane models — are simplified representations of how things work. They may be incomplete or outdated, but they are recognizable and plausible.
- Messengers who “fill in the blanks” in cultural models, or who tap into several connected models at once, are often judged as insightful and credible.

2. Avoid communications “traps.”

Communications traps

Traps are plausible, logical ways of talking about a social issue that - upon investigation - turn out to fall flat, or do more harm than good.

Traps are often habits of a field. They can go unnoticed until someone points them out.



Avoid these traps

Direct rebuttals of partisan figures

Framing with scientific authority

Framing with “it’s a matter of public health”

Forgetting that “we” are not our audience



3. Use tested, effective strategies to talk about health topics

You can access findings on mindsets and frame effects on many health topics

Child and youth health

- ACEs/childhood adversity
- Adolescent development
- Child abuse and neglect
- Child development
- Child mental health
- Immunization
- Maternal & infant health
- Obesity
- Parenting

Social Determinants of Health

- Built environment/community design
- Food/nutrition/obesity
- Geographic health drivers
- Housing
- Connectedness
- Racism as public health threat

Chronic Disease Topics

- Aging
- Alcohol policy issues
- Oral health
- Substance use prevention
- Tobacco-related health disparities

Injury & Violence Topics

- Child abuse & neglect
- Gun violence prevention
- Elder abuse

Cross-cutting

- Value of public health
- Climate change & health
- Health equity

Health Care/Health Systems

- Patient Safety
- Public health informatics
- Systems of care

Reconsider well-worn talking points on politicized issues

- *“Fluoridation reduces cavities by up to 25%.”*
 - Public Mindset Insight: People think that cavities are a minor, personal health issue
 - Framing Insight: Explanations of how oral health affects overall health are “new news” for most people.
 - Messaging Advice: Talk about how untreated oral disease can spread to major organs and how few people have access to dental care. Fluoridation is one prevention measure.
- *“Vaccines are safe and effective.”*
 - Public Mindset Insight: People think risks are a real factor that should drive personal decision making.
 - Framing Insight: Persuasive techniques on the ‘risk’ side of thinking have little effect. ‘Reward’ framing can help.
 - Messaging Advice: Talk about how widespread childhood vaccination keeps schools healthy, and keeps kids learning, playing, etc.

**We need a fresh approach
to explaining the value of public health**

Telling

Public health works to prevent health and safety issues by taking a four-step approach grounded in the scientific method: define the problem; identify risk and protective factors; develop and test prevention strategies; and assure widespread adoption.

Showing

To improve safety at a broad scale, public health looks for ways to prevent injuries. One example is restricting new drivers from the most dangerous situations – like driving at night – until they have gained experience.

4. Manage misinformation

1. Avoid restating harmful ideas, even to debunk them.
2. Instead, say what is true. Make it clear and compelling.
3. Don't be polarizing.
4. Don't play in "their" frame.
5. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Potentially polarizing

Despite growing vaccine skepticism based on misinformation and debunked studies, scientists who conduct research on vaccines overwhelmingly agree that immunizations make children safer, not less so.

Reframed with 'let's talk about it'

Whether we tend to vote red or blue, we all agree that schools should be safe, healthy places where kids can focus on growing, playing, and learning.

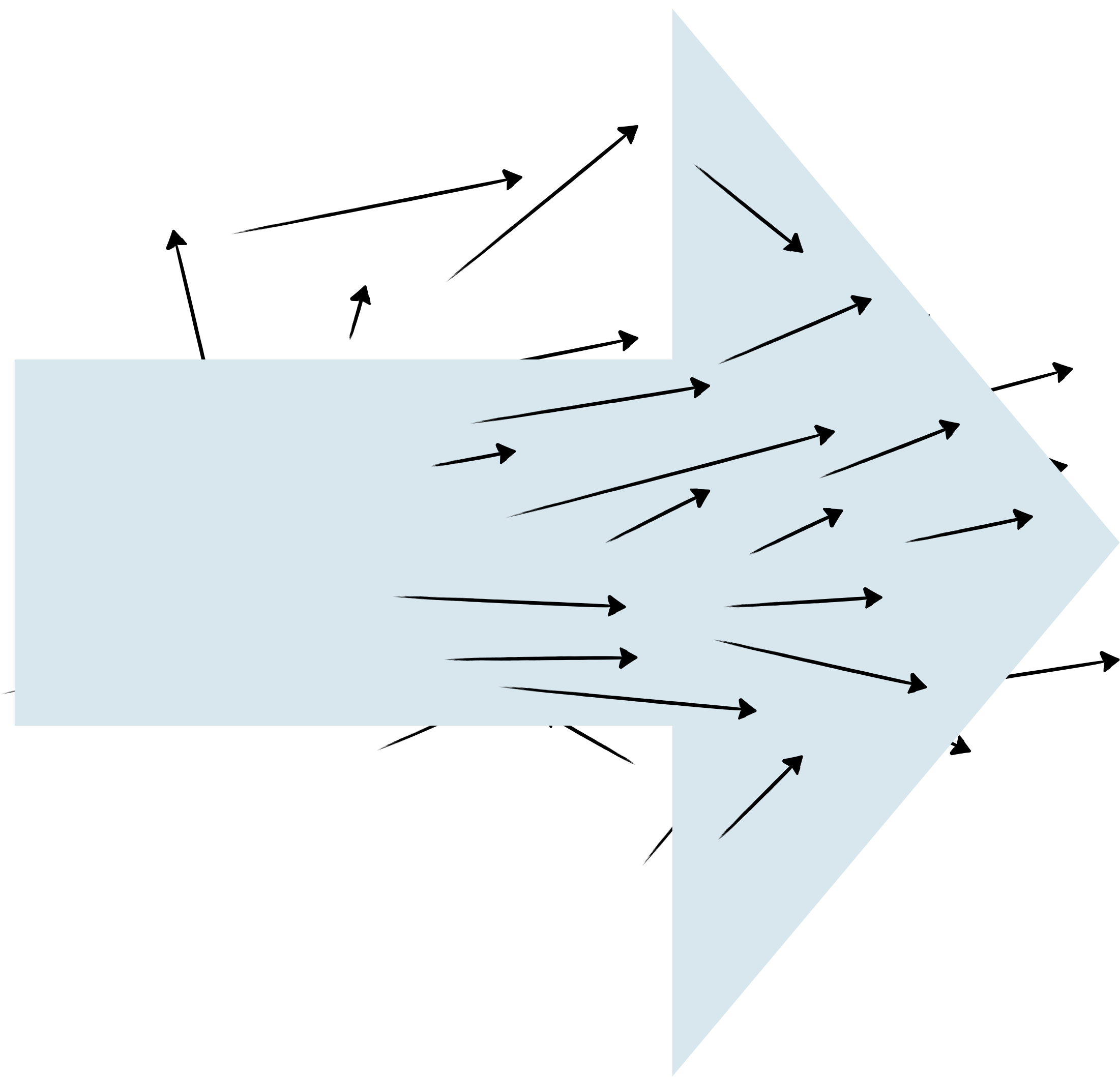
Chasing misinformation

Across the nation, health care providers are getting more and more questions from families about whether vaccinations are safe for their children. Doctors, nurses, and researchers agree: the answer is yes, in general, vaccinations are safe and effective. (Some children have severe allergies or immune system conditions that make them the rare exception to the rule.)

Advancing a new narrative

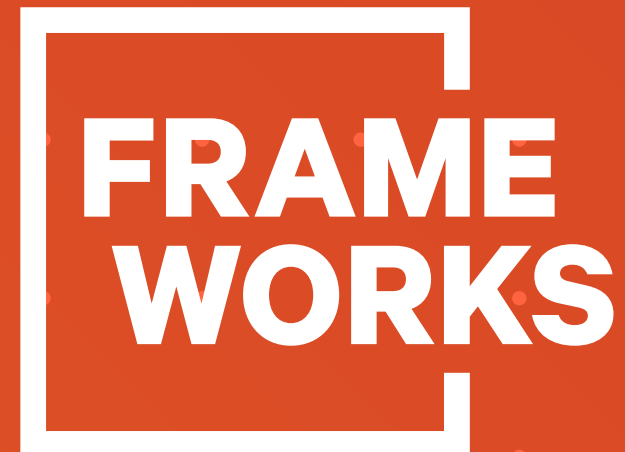
Across the nation, health care providers are hearing more and more stories from families about practical difficulties in keeping up or catching up on routine immunizations. Issues range from a lack of insurance coverage to the ability to attend multiple appointments. We have a responsibility to make vaccinations for children affordable and accessible.

5. Cooperate and coordinate



Thank you!

Let's continue the conversation.



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About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis[®], offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks[®], toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Learn more at www.frameworksinstitute.org

Studies and samples

- **Culture change.** Ongoing tracking & analysis project launched August 2020. Over 35,000 Americans included to date.
- **Childhood immunization.** Data collected in 2020, 2021, and 2024. Over 9500 Americans included. In partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- **Farming and food.** Data collected between 2018 and 2022. Over 3350 Americans included.
 - Builds on research FrameWorks conducted in the early 2000s.
- **Oral health.** Data collected between 2015 and 2017. Over 7000 Americans included.
 - Builds on research FrameWorks conducted in the early 2000s.