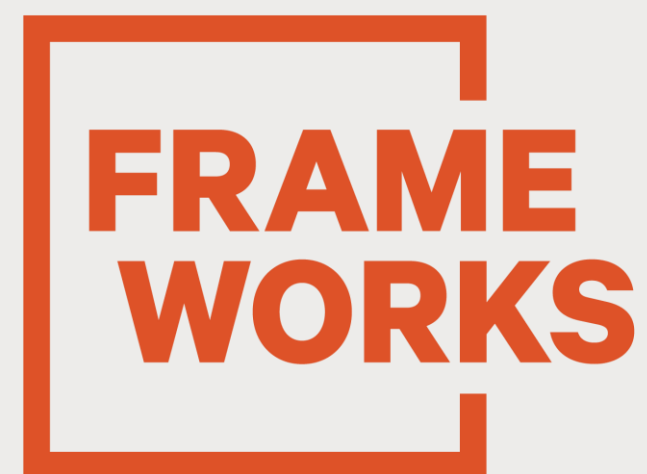


Boosting the public discourse

Strategies that change the conversation

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In partnership with

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



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FrameWorks is on a mission...

to help advocacy organizations **frame the public discourse**
and **build public will** for progressive social change.

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Classical persuasion isn't built for today's world

- **Media Fragmentation:** The shift from a few major news sources to countless specialized ones means there are fewer shared spaces for collective, public meaning-making.
- **Partisan Media:** Outlets catering to a specific political ideology harden in-group beliefs.
- **Social Media:** False ideas can spread more rapidly than ever before. Algorithms prioritize engagement, which amplifies negativity and misleading content.
- **Affective polarization:** Growing emotional and social distance between people who identify with different political affiliations limits receptivity to “outside” information.

Some reasons trust matters (beyond individual uptake)

- Trust is the foundation for collective action and infrastructure.
- Trust allows our ideas to get a hearing despite a noisy, fragmented, and saturated information environment.
- Without trust, evidence-based positions aren't just ignored; they can be misinterpreted as proof of a hidden agenda or that "the system is rigged."

Grounding communications in mindsets research offers a strategic advantage

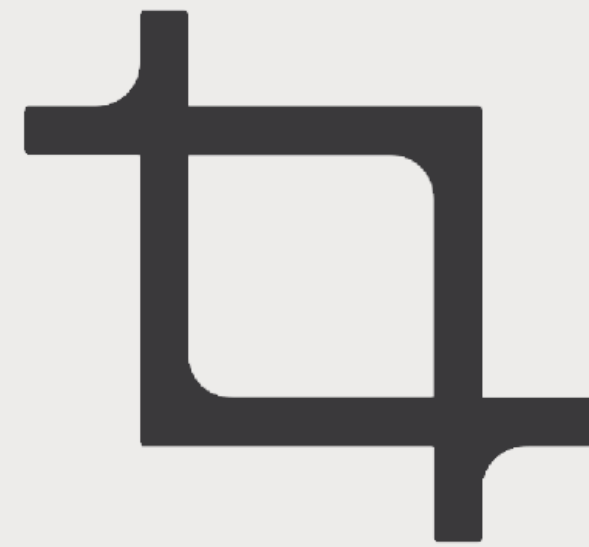


MINDSETS/MENTAL MODELS

What mental models shape reasoning?

Which are productive for our goals?

Which get in the way?



FRAMING

How can we reduce activation of unproductive mental models?

How can we increase activation and strength of productive mental models?



MESSAGING

How can we make sure our ideas land with the right people in the right way?

Our multi-method approach has queried over 13K people

Mindsets research

Individual interviews
representative sample (n=48)
2021

Peer discourse sessions
Spanish-dominant sample (n=36)
2025

Peer discourse sessions
Rural sample (n=48)
2024

Peer discourse sessions
Black parents of kids 0-6
Forthcoming (2026)

Framing research

Rapid frame testing
representative sample (n=48)
April 2022

Survey experiment
representative sample (n=9000)
April & June 2022

Peer discourse sessions
representative sample (n=48)
August 2022

Survey experiment
Spanish-dominant sample (n=2700)
2025 (2026)

Message testing

Values & metaphors
Rural sample (n=48)
2024

“Trusted partner” messages
Hesitant parents 0-6 (n=18)
October 2025

“Misinformation” messages
Hesitant parents 0-6 (n=18)
November 2025

Message testing with
Black parents of kids 0-6
Forthcoming (2026)

**The reframes
we've developed
are designed to
change the
“surround
sound”**



**We didn't test
these framing
strategies for use
in clinical
settings**



The US Public Has 3 Different Ways of Mentally Modeling How Vaccines Work

Mindsets

- War. The vaccine is a weapon or shield against a disease.
- Medication: The vaccine is a consumer product to be used when sick.
- Instruction: The vaccine teaches the body how to fight the disease.



Attitudes

- If “war”: Am I likely to be attacked? Seems like this “armor” isn’t strong enough.
- If “medication”: Will “too many” vaccines overwhelm a child’s body?
- If “instruction”: Learning is good. How do I feel about the teacher?



Framing Implications

- Avoid “fighting” words.
 - 💡 “vaccines fight the disease”
 - 💡 “shielding us against contagious diseases”
- Redirect lay comparisons of vaccinations to medicine or vitamins. These play into “too much too soon” thinking and focus attention on “natural” remedies.
- Explain and illustrate how immunity develops in response to well-timed vaccines.

These mindsets do not reflect three competing opinion segments. Individuals can (and do) hold all three different models in mind, relying on one or another at different times.

Reframe: Immune system as a learner

- When audiences mentally model the immune system as a learner, they reason more like scientists on vaccination issues.
- Talk about children's immune systems as “born to learn” and vaccines as giving them critical information.
- Immune systems learn to “read” or “understand” a virus, staying ahead of preventable diseases.
- “Just as children learn to crawl, walk, then run, children's immune systems develop in stages. Pediatricians recommend immunizations at the time when the child's immune system is ready to learn and will respond best.”
- “The most important ingredient in any vaccine is the information it gives a child's immune system about a serious, preventable disease.”

Reframe: From fear to thriving

- Dwelling on worst-case scenarios (e.g. child death) can backfire.
- Recenter on the "ultimate why": We vaccinate so kids can stay in the "flow" of childhood.
- Focus on the "doing" – visiting grandparents, going to school, being part of the community.
- "Vaccines keep our kids in the classroom and on the playground. They ensure that childhood is defined by growth and discovery, not by preventable interruptions."
- "Since 1994, vaccines have prevented more than 500 million cases of childhood illness. Think about what that means in terms of kids being kids: going to school, making it to basketball practice or the birthday party, being in community instead of sick at home or in the hospital."

Reframe: From risk to reward

- “Weighing the odds” messaging invites people to focus on risks.
- Side effects feel tangible and immediate. The benefits, in contrast, are invisible and abstract.
- Don’t message in ways that invite a risk vs. reward calculation. Instead, focus on making the benefit (healthy kids) tangible and easy to visualize.
- “When immunization is widespread, our schools, childcare centers, birthday parties and soccer games can go on without interruption from outbreaks of preventable diseases.”
- “On-time routine immunization keeps kids healthy, so they can focus on growing, playing, and learning.”

Reframe: From individual to collective

- Never imply that collective concerns outweigh individual autonomy. But do lean toward a common good frame.
- Simply stating "this is a public health issue" is underpowered – people don't really get it.
- Say "widespread vaccination" or "community immunity" instead of "herd immunity."
- "Widespread vaccination is part of our system of collective caregiving for our children and our communities."
- "When immunization is widespread, it's harder for contagious diseases to get a foothold in the networks of our schools, hospitals, and communities."

We recruited parents who were “persuadable skeptics”

Recruitment Screening Question

When it comes to childhood vaccinations, which statement best matches your thinking?

- I strongly believe that all children should be vaccinated. (Reject)**
- I mostly believe in the benefits, but I have concerns. (Accept)**
- I don't have any beliefs about vaccination for kids. (Accept)**
- I am mostly skeptical, but I want more information. (Accept)**
- I strongly believe that children should not be vaccinated. (Reject)**



Winning messages: Partnership

As a parent, you know your child and what they need to thrive. Your pediatrician has medical training, specialized knowledge, and scientific evidence about how to support children's health. Working together, you can create a plan for what's best for your child. If you have questions about your child's immunization, have a conversation with your pediatrician.



Framed with “trust the science”

- Research tells us...
- Numerous studies show that...
- Consistent with the literature...
- Consensus among experts is...

Reframed with “let’s look at the science together”

- We were curious about that, too — so we looked into it. We were surprised to find...
- That’s a great question. Can I share what I’ve learned about it?
- There was this cool study that explored that question in the most interesting way...



AAP



Less of this

Like many of my pediatric colleagues across the country, I'm getting more and more questions from parents about whether vaccines are safe. Sometimes parents want to skip or delay certain shots. As hesitancy grows, vaccine coverage is declining. This is why we're seeing outbreaks of measles, for example. We need to reinforce that life-saving vaccines are not only safe, they are highly effective.

More of this!

Like many of my pediatric colleagues across the country, I'm concerned that scary-sounding myths are sparking unnecessary fear around vaccines. I love it when parents are curious and I'm happy to talk through their concerns. But today I'm focused on what unfounded fears mean for policy. At the state level, we need strong requirements for school enrollment, so contagious diseases don't spread through school networks.

Key framing shifts we recommend

Deeply personal choice



Benefits to community

Vaccine as “shield”



Immune system as learner

“Their” low rates of uptake



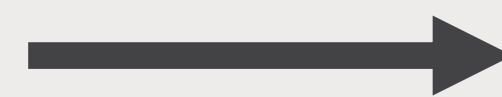
Our responsibility for access

Benefits outweigh risks



Benefits to child development

Polarizing takes on disinformation



Information overload? We can help.

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a black top and large hoop earrings, is seated in an office. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background shows a typical office environment with a desk, a printer, a filing cabinet, and a door. A text overlay is present at the bottom of the image.

**After exposure to the
Literacy metaphor**

AAP's Vaccine Confidence Campaign Strategies



All guided by robust framing and communications research

Reframe: From “us vs. them” to “here’s why”

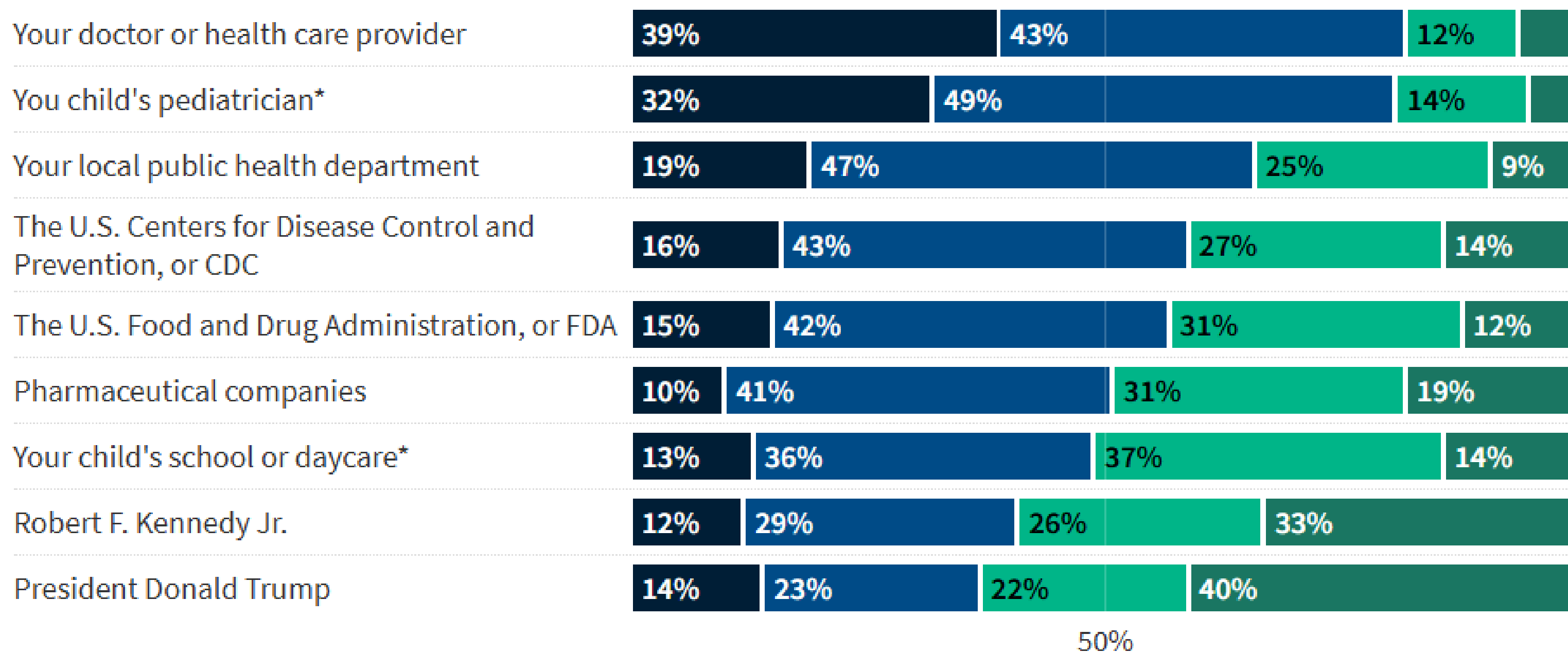
- Don’t talk about CDC vs. AAP schedules in polarizing ways.
- The concept of “the schedule” is widely misunderstood (“government mandate” or “one-size-fits-all”)
- Focus on reframing the schedule, not defending it. Center on the ultimate why: optimal timing, based on how children’s immune systems develop.
- The timing and pacing of vaccines recommended by AAP protects children’s immune systems when the body is ready to learn and respond best.”
- “For example, the HPV vaccine is recommended for ages 9-11 because at that age, the body will mount twice as strong an immune response than it will after puberty.”
- “On-time routine immunization keeps kids healthy, so they can focus on growing, playing, and learning.”

Americans see pediatricians as trustworthy

Doctors and Pediatricians Are the Most Trusted Sources of Vaccine Information Among the Public and Parents, While Fewer Than Half Trust Trump or RFK Jr. on Vaccines

In general, how much do you trust each of the following to provide reliable information about vaccines?

■ A great deal ■ A fair amount ■ Not much ■ Not at all



Note: *Among parents or guardians of a child under the age of 18 living in their household. See topline for full question wording.

Source: KFF Tracking Poll on Health Information and Trust (April 8-15, 2025) • [Get the data](#) • [Download PNG](#)

KFF

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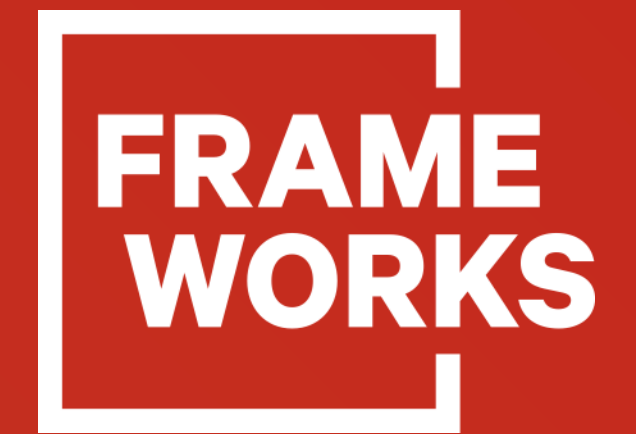
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Thank You!

Let's continue the conversation.

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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.

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