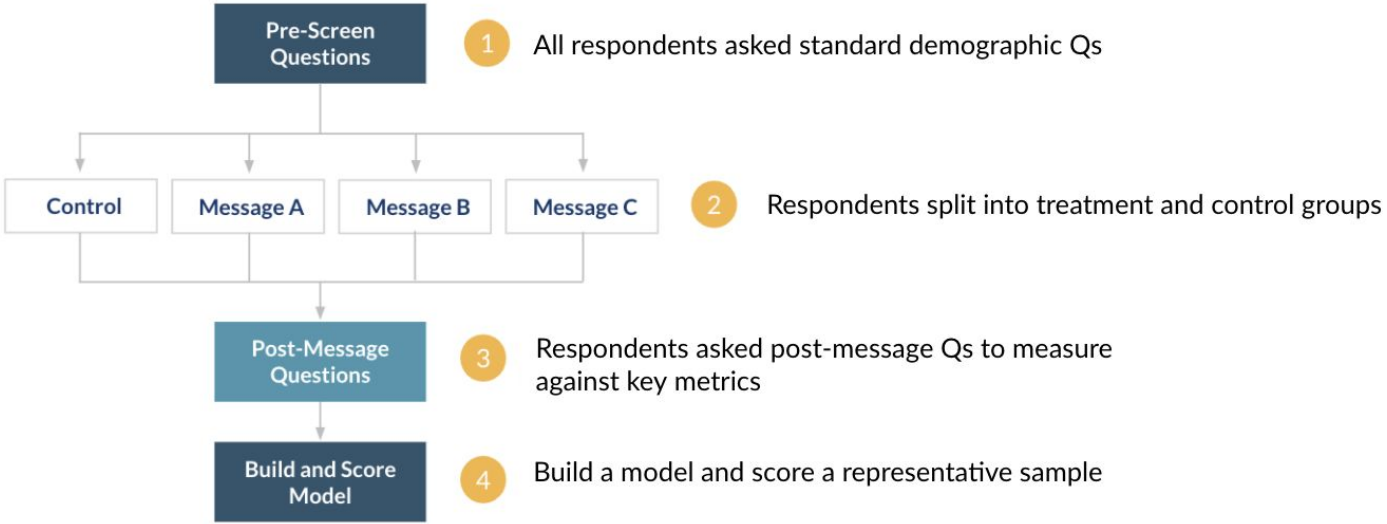
The State of Illinois' COVID-19 vaccination campaign was informed by two sets of research: a message test and survey research.

Methodology: Message Test

A message test (see diagram below) was fielded the week of November 30, 2020, reaching 2,512 adults in the State of Illinois. Respondents were divided into 6 groups: one of 5 'treatment' messages (see next slide) were shown randomly to respondents and a control group was shown no message. The outcome measured was willingness to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it becomes available.



Message Themes Tested

Effective **In fighting the virus, the COVID-19 vaccine is proven to work**

This pandemic has brought a lot of uncertainty into our lives. There's so much about COVID we don't know, but the one thing we do is that the vaccine is effective in protecting you from the virus.

Normal **Getting vaccinated gets us back to normal faster**

This pandemic has changed so much about our daily lives, making us miss school, work, church and even the little things like going to a movie or coffeeshop. Getting vaccinated helps us get back to our routines and living life with peace of mind.

Healthy **The COVID-19 vaccine keeps us safe today, and tomorrow**

The COVID-19 vaccine protects you and your loved ones from the virus, and ensures we stay safe and healthy for the future. Because more than ever, health is wealth.

Together **Getting vaccinated gets us back together faster**

This pandemic has created distance from each other. We miss our family and friends, celebrating holidays and milestones together, and the simple gesture of a hug. Getting vaccinated helps us get back to the ones we love.

Science **Doctors trust the COVID-19 vaccine to end the pandemic**

We all want this pandemic to end and getting vaccinated is the way we do it. The vaccine is built by science, backed by testing and supported by national public health agencies.

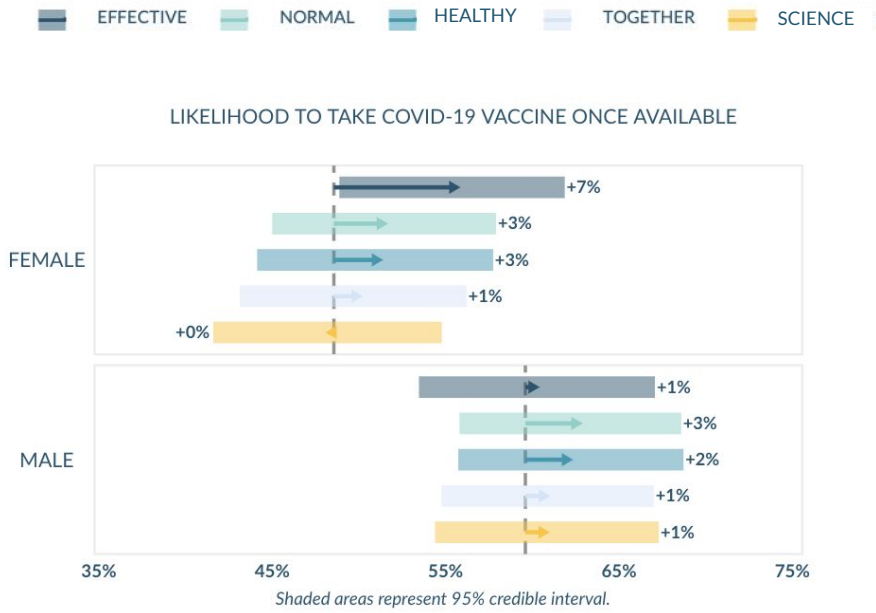
Highlighting that the vaccine works is most persuasive

Messages that emphasize that the vaccine offers protection from COVID-19 and an opportunity to get back to normal are most effective overall. "Effective" was the best performing message, followed by "Normal" and "Healthy."

- The "effective" message persuasion effects were larger for women (+7%, see chart at right), Latino/a adults (+10%), and adults aged 35-49 (+6%).

Talking about the science behind the vaccine and support from doctors and national public health agencies may actually reduce willingness to get the vaccine.

- The "Science" message had the highest probability of reducing willingness to get the vaccine.



Methodology: Survey Defining the 'Movable Middle'

A survey of 2,067 adult Illinois residents that was fielded between December 14-22, 2020. Responses are weighted to be representative of the State of Illinois. The margin of error is +/- 4.3%.

- We sampled larger numbers of rural residents and Black and Hispanic adults to facilitate more robust comparisons across urbanicities and racial groups.

We categorized adults in Illinois as either **'Likely Takers,' 'Likely Refusers,' or 'Movable Middle'** based on responses to the following question:

- If an approved vaccine for Coronavirus (COVID-19) became available to you, how likely would you be to get it?

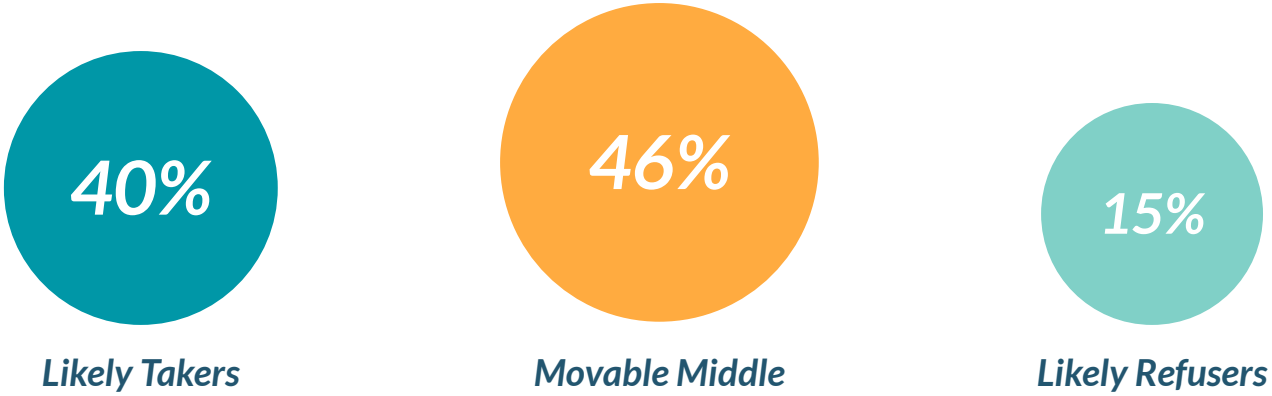
We categorized the responses as follows:

- **Likely Takers**: adults who say they are **'very likely'** to get the vaccine
- **Likely Refusers**: adults who say they are **'very unlikely'** to get the vaccine
- **Movable Middle**: adults who say they are either **'somewhat likely', 'neither likely nor unlikely', or 'somewhat unlikely'** to get the vaccine

Nearly half of adults in Illinois are 'Movable' and are key targets for vaccine messaging

Based on stated willingness to get the COVID-19 vaccine, we consider adults in Illinois as either 'Likely Takers,' 'Likely Refusers,' or 'Movable Middle':

- ***'Likely Takers'*** will likely get the vaccine regardless of messaging
- ***'Likely Refusers'*** will likely refuse to get the vaccine regardless of messaging
- ***'Movable Middle'*** are uncertain about whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine and are most likely to be influenced by vaccine messaging



The movable middle skews more towards young adults, women, lower-income individuals, and Black adults compared to the general population of Illinois

Compared to the general population, 18-34 year olds (+4.9%), women (+3.6%), those earning under $25,000 (+3.3%), and Black adults (+2.2%) are proportionally overrepresented in the movable middle.

Demographic Group	Percent of General Population	Percent of Movable Middle	Difference
18-34	29.9%	34.8%	+4.9%
Women	52.6%	56.2%	+3.6%
Under $25,000	14.7%	18.1%	+3.3%
Black	14.5%	16.7%	+2.2%

- The movable middle largely mirrors the general population in terms of urbanicity and essential worker status, with no differences larger than 2.0%.

For the movable middle, protecting others and oneself in addition to getting back to normal are the most cited reasons for getting the COVID-19 vaccine

A quarter (25%) of those in the movable middle say that the vaccine's ability to protect and save the lives of people in their community is the most important reason to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Other commonly-cited reasons to get the vaccine include preventing infection (17%), preventing severe illness (16%), and getting back to normal daily life (13%).

The most important reason to get the COVID-19 Vaccine	**25%**	**17%**	**16%**	**13%**
	*The vaccine **will protect and saves the lives of people in my community***	*The vaccine **will prevent me from getting the virus***	*Even if I do get COVID-19, the vaccine **will prevent me from getting seriously Ill***	*The vaccine **will allow me to get back to my normal daily life faster***

- This is consistent with findings from the message test, where the most effective messages emphasized the vaccine's ability to protect oneself and others and getting back to normal.

The movable middle is less trusting of doctors and public health experts compared to likely takers of the vaccine, so relying on other messengers, such as people who have experienced COVID-19, may be beneficial

- For the movable middle, the three most trusted sources of accurate and useful information about COVID-19 are doctors (63%), public health experts (59%), and people who have experienced COVID-19 (49%).
- Less than 20% of the movable middle say they trust other sources, such as friends and family (18%), government officials (15%), their employer (10%), religious leaders (6%), and school administrators (5%).

However, the movable middle is **less trusting** of doctors and public health experts **compared to likely takers** of the vaccine. Given this pattern, relying on **people who have experienced COVID-19** as messengers could be a promising alternative.

Most trusted sources of information about COVID-19:

	Likely Takers	**Movable Middle**
Doctors	80%	63%
Public Health Experts	80%	59%
People who have experienced COVID-19	46%	49%

To reach the movable middle, vaccine messaging should use trusted messengers to highlight the benefits of vaccination

Likely takers tend to have the most positive attitudes toward vaccines in general and the COVID-19 vaccine in particular, while likely refusers have the most negative attitudes. Members of the movable middle tend to fall somewhere in between these two groups, and their views are often split.

This suggests that **reaching the movable middle will require attention to the nuances of vaccine attitudes within this group** - the movable middle will be more receptive to vaccine messaging compared to likely refusers but less receptive than likely takers, **so focusing on this group's most trusted messengers and most salient motivators for vaccination will be key to avoiding backlash.**

To reach the movable middle, vaccine messaging should focus on:

- Utilizing a variety of **trusted messengers**, such as people who have experienced COVID-19 in addition to public health experts and doctors.
- Highlighting **salient motivators**, such as the vaccine's ability to **protect against infection or serious illness, and get back to our daily lives.** In our message test, messages that highlighted the vaccine's ability to protect against the virus were among the most effective.