

As vaccines start rolling out, here's what our research says about communication and coronavirus | Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

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The coronavirus situation represents both a health crisis and a communications emergency - especially as we enter the vaccination phase. With a significant minority expressing a degree of hesitancy about receiving a coronavirus vaccine, clear and effective communication about the benefits and risks (or lack of) will undoubtedly be important for maximising uptake. At the same time, many familiar communication challenges - such as convincing people of the need to limit social contact, to wear face coverings, and to wash their hands - will be just as important for much of 2021 as they were in 2020. Perhaps more so, if the vaccine rollout is accompanied by a sense of complacency about taking basic precautions.

Here, I will describe some of the empirical findings from our UK COVID-19 News and Information project to highlight what we learned about communication and coronavirus in 2020, and what it means for the vaccination phase. As such, the focus is on audience research through nationally representative online surveys, and this is not a comprehensive record of all communications research on coronavirus that exists, but I will draw on other studies to expand the scope of the findings.

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