



— NATIONAL —
MINORITY QUALITY
— F O R U M —

COVID-19 Vaccine Sentiment in the Digital Age

A National and Local Perspective



Introduction

National Trends & Local Insights



Phoenix



Mesa



New Orleans

Reporting Period: December 1, 2024 – March 4, 2025

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to fade from daily headlines, the conversation around vaccines remains active—and, in many cases, emotionally charged. This report explores public sentiment and key narratives related to COVID-19 vaccines across national and city-specific levels. Using Meltwater social listening data, we examined how people are engaging with vaccine-related content, where skepticism is rising, and what emotional undercurrents are driving the conversation.

From late December 2024 through early March 2025, the national conversation surrounding COVID-19 vaccines continued to evolve—becoming quieter in terms of volume, yet louder in emotional resonance. Across news outlets, social media platforms, and community forums, what was once a widespread public health campaign has transformed into a deeply polarizing subject tied to politics, mistrust, and personal identity.

While national-level mentions of COVID vaccines declined slightly, social engagement surged—particularly around posts that were critical, emotional, or conspiratorial. Conversations that cast doubt on the safety, efficacy, or purpose of vaccines often gained the most traction. At the same time, neutral or factual posts—many stemming from public health sources—were present but largely unamplified.

Amid this national backdrop, localized conversations in cities like Phoenix, Mesa, and New Orleans offer a sharper, more intimate view into how public sentiment varies across communities.

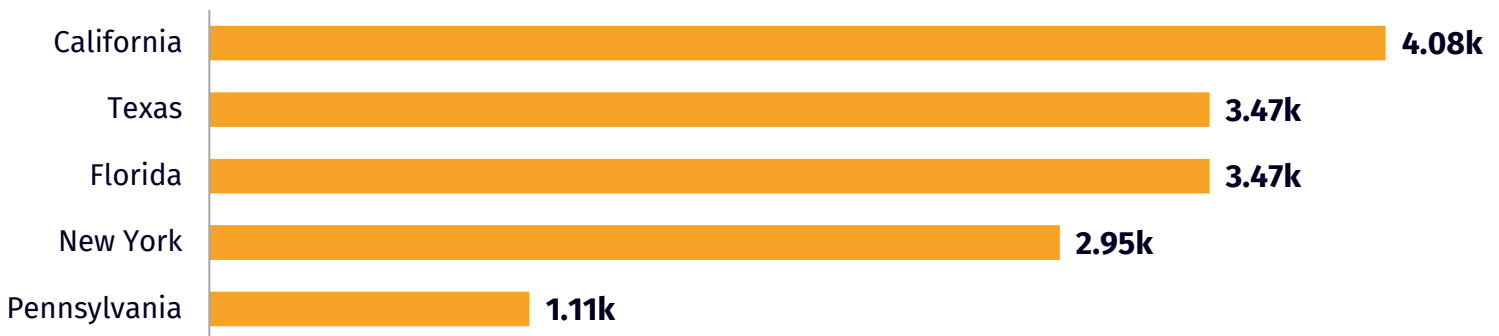
National Minority Quality Forum regularly monitors and surveils ongoing social conversation about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccination efforts among minoritized communities in the United States. The following data reflects social conversations from December 2024 to March 2025. COVID-19 vaccine sentiment among minoritized populations in the United States continues to be influenced by a mix of historical medical mistrust, systemic healthcare disparities, and the increasingly sophisticated reach of vaccine misinformation, particularly on social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter).

National Reach and Sentiment

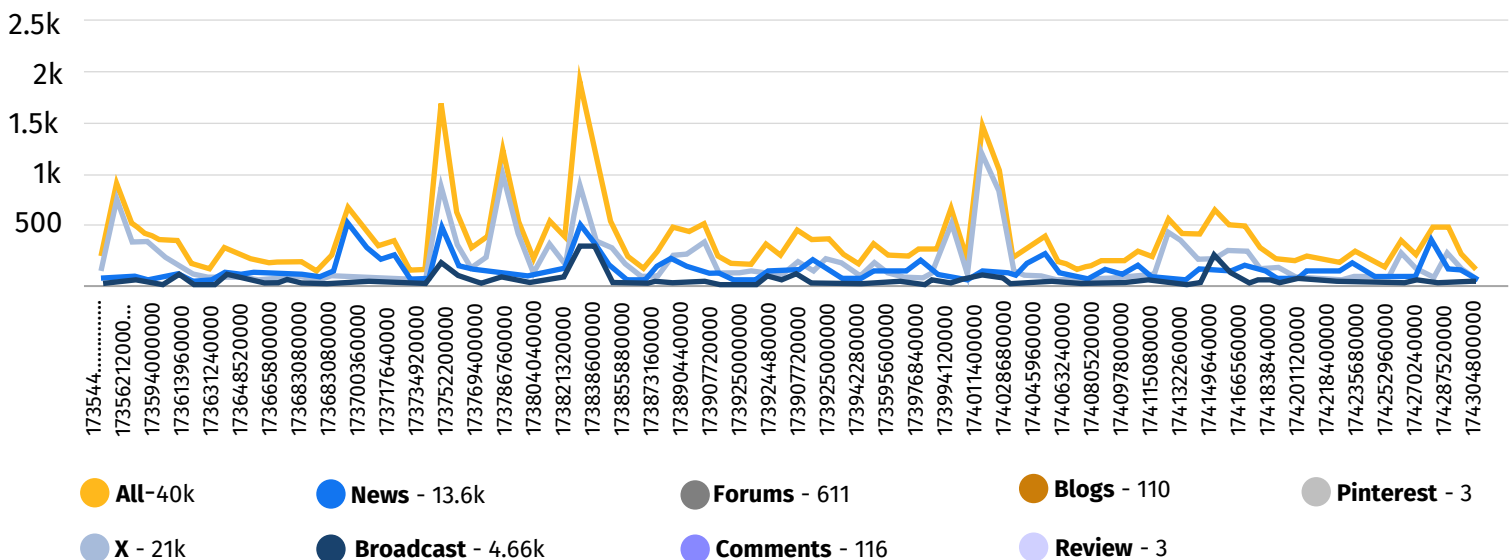
Despite progress in vaccine uptake, hesitancy lingers - especially among African American men—where culturally resonant disinformation campaign have targeted insecurities around government surveillance, bodily autonomy, and medical experimentation. Influencers such as Myron Gaines, co-host of the controversial Fresh & Fit podcast, as an example have contributed to misinformation from individuals presenting as scientists or doctors to cast doubt on vaccine efficacy and amplify anti-establishment narratives that resonate with disaffected male audiences of color.

Top Locations

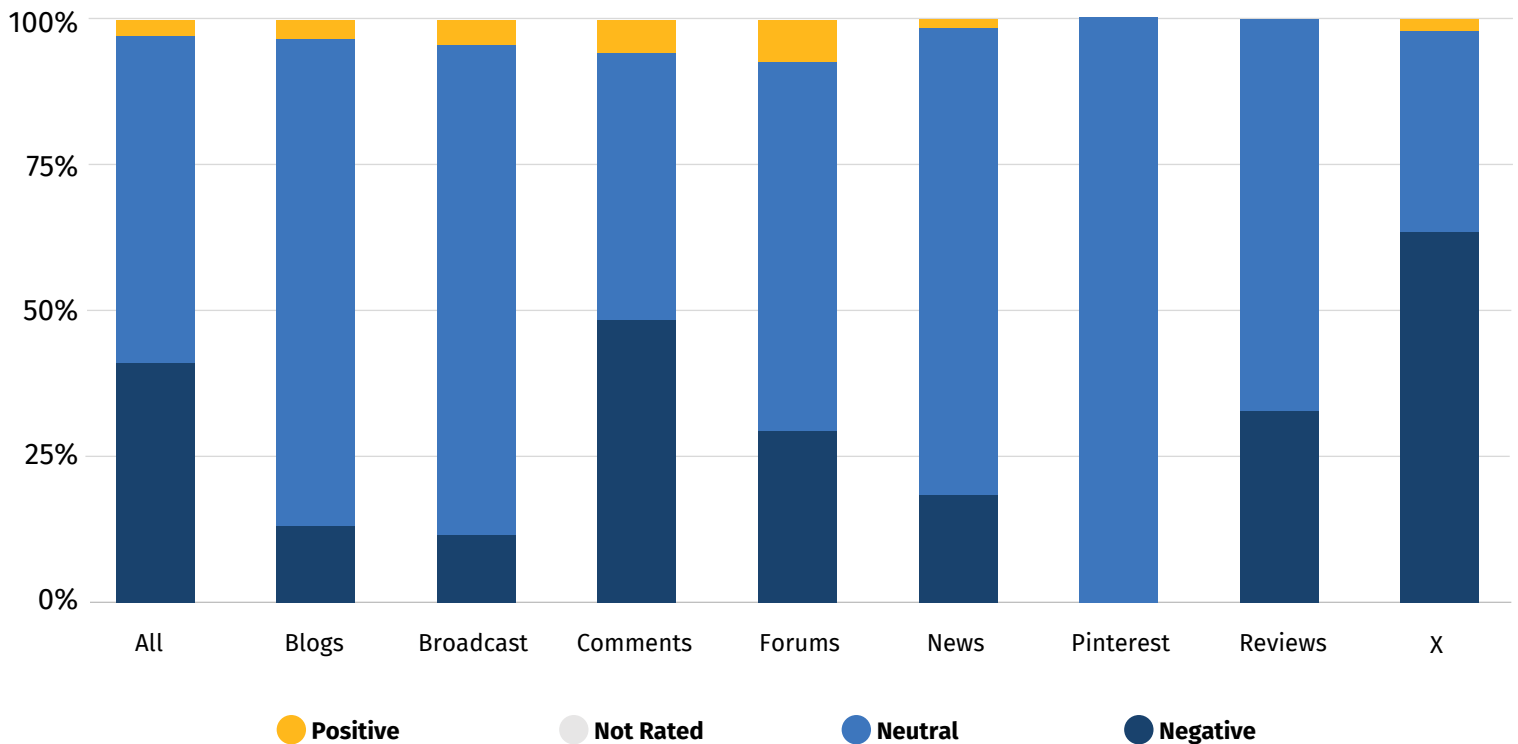
State/Province ▼



Mentions Trend by Source Type



Sentiment By Source



Top Keyword Sentiment





Conversation Drivers

On X, misinformation spreads rapidly and algorithmic amplification often favors sensationalist or contrarian takes, disproportionately exposing users to anti-vaccine content. Posts that distort data, question the legitimacy of public health efforts, or promote conspiracy theories frequently go viral—particularly when shared by personalities with large, loyal followings. This has been compounded by the erosion of trusted, countervailing voices. The cancellation or scaling back of shows like The Reid Out hosted by Joy-Ann Reid—one of the few nationally televised platforms that consistently elevated Black public health experts and debunked misinformation—has left a void in trusted, culturally competent pro-vaccine messaging in the mainstream media landscape.

AI-Powered Clusters

❖❖❖	Dr. Susan Monarez, the acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was nominated for the permanent role, replacing David Weldon, whose nomination was withdrawn because of senators' opposition.	254
❖❖❖	The norovirus is a type of virus that causes acute gastroenteritis, a condition that sees the stomach or intestines become inflamed.	232
❖❖❖	As the colder winter weather settles in, rates of respiratory illnesses like flu, COVID-19 and RSV can rise. Here are some expert tips for older adults and caregivers.	207
❖❖❖	Si su hijo tiene congestión nasal, tos, dolor de cabeza o dolores corporales, está vomitando o tiene diarrea, lo más probable es que se deba a un virus.	172
❖❖❖	Sen. John Fetterman, who was thought to be open to voting for Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s nomination to head the Department of Health and Human Services, now says the nominee is in serious trouble after his rocky confirmation hearing.	164
❖❖❖	“Telelactation” support is effective in promoting breastfeeding among new mothers, according to a new report published Feb. 27 in JAMA Network Open.	89
❖❖❖	A new study shows that the disparity between the life expectancies of different populations has nearly doubled since 2000.	87

Top Keywords and Entities

joy reid joe biden cnn cdc
 nueva york estados unidos méxico trash show
 california Head online mobs 🚨 blm nih pentagon
 vaccines covid trump disease biden
 gobierno america rfk Jr. washington ap u.s.
 centers for disease control and prevention
 research china tears donald trump

● Keyword ● Hashtag ● Product ● Person ● Organization ● Location ● Emoji



Most Engaged Content



Rob Smith  @robsmithonline

Twitter | US | Feb 24 3:21 PM

Joy Reid: Pushed **COVID**, Trump Collusion, and BLM Hoaxes on the American Public SMEARED **Black** Republicans and led online mobs AGAINST us

 458k

 50.4k

 534k

Negative 



Charlie Kirk  @charliekirk11

Twitter | US | Mar 8 2:49 PM

[QT]
Ben at the altar because he didn't have an opinion on **Black** Lives Matter or the **COVID** vaccine, and because his church was too "traditional"

 4.81M

 48.6k

 2.61M

Neutral 



Myron Gaines  @myrongainesx

Twitter | US | Feb 12 5:12 AM

[QT]
With file on Jeffrey Epstein UFOs/UAPs, the 9/11 attacks & the origins of **COVID 19**--and you're **black**-pilling?
<https://t.co/tUrhsiBrs9>

 241k

 44.4k

 2.2M

Neutral 

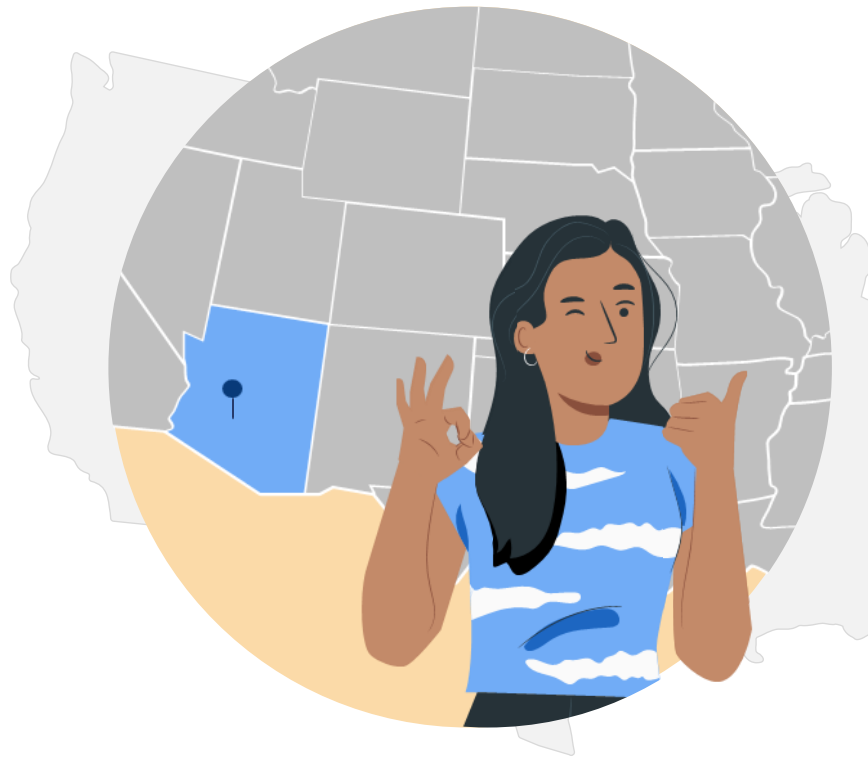


Phoenix, AZ

Where Skepticism Meets Social Commentary

In Phoenix, vaccine conversations reflected a complex mix of political commentary, identity expression, and cautious skepticism. While not as intensely negative as other cities, the sentiment leaned neutral to negative. Much of the content blended vaccine references with broader concerns about race, freedom of choice, and government overreach.

Emotionally, the city's tone was sometimes sarcastic and humorous—suggesting a degree of pandemic fatigue and resignation rather than full-scale opposition. **Posts with light irony or satire engaged users who may feel disillusioned but not necessarily hostile toward public health efforts.**



Sentiment Snapshot

Top Keywords

- online
- racist slurs
- abortion
- identities
- gran tribulación

Emotional Tone

Leaned toward **joy and love**, though these were often sarcastic or ironic in context.

Trends

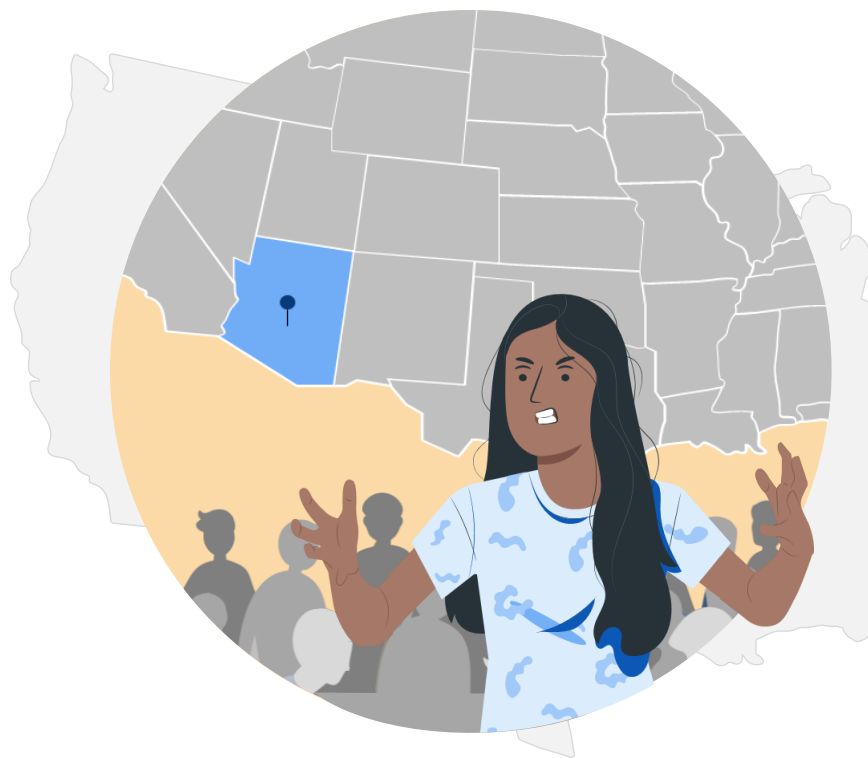
- Discourse was often entangled with broader sociopolitical issues rather than strictly medical or health-related concerns.
- Some engagement tied to skepticism around pandemic restrictions, not just vaccines.

Mesa, AZ

Anger, Conspiracies and Deep Distrust

Mesa stood out for its high volume of emotionally charged and conspiratorial content. Here, COVID-19 vaccine discussions were frequently accompanied by accusations of government betrayal, military control, and pharmaceutical corruption. Terms like “**criminal Joe Biden,**” “**bio-weapons,**” and “**covid jab**” were common among top keyword mentions.

The dominant emotion was anger. Posts didn’t just express skepticism—they rejected the credibility of institutions altogether. Content often framed vaccines as a threat rather than a protective tool, which helped misinformation thrive and spread quickly.



Sentiment Snapshot

Overall Sentiment: Largely negative with sharp, emotionally driven posts.

Top Keywords

- bio-weapons
- criminal joe biden
- covid jab
- clusterfk leadership

Emotional Tone

Dominated by **anger**, with minimal positive emotions expressed.

Trends

- Misinformation and conspiracy-heavy posts were common.
- Several high-engagement tweets tied vaccine concerns to military/political distrust.
- Public discourse reflected **deep-seated skepticism and cynicism** about leadership and vaccine development.

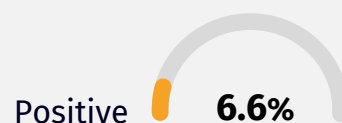
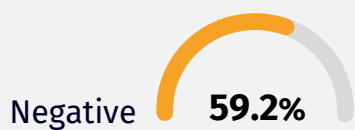
New Orleans, LA

Echoes of Mistrust and Racial Inequity

In New Orleans, vaccine sentiment was more nuanced but equally critical. Of all three cities, **it had the highest percentage of negative mentions — 59.2%** — paired with a relatively small proportion of positive sentiment (6.6%). Much of the local discourse reflected deep-rooted mistrust, particularly among Black residents who linked vaccine skepticism to past injustices and ongoing systemic inequities.



Sentiment Snapshot



Top Negative Keywords

- toxic drugs
- biggest mass murderer
- aids crisis
- trash show

Emotional Tone

High levels of **fear, anger,** and **disillusionment**, particularly among Black voices reacting to systemic neglect.

Trends

- COVID vaccine mentions intersected heavily with racial justice, public funding misuse, and historical medical mistreatment.
- Notable mentions highlighted vaccine hesitancy in Black communities and deep mistrust of the health system.



Key Insights & Recommendations

Across the U.S., public sentiment toward COVID-19 vaccines is no longer just about health. It's about trust - who has it, who lost it, and whether it can be rebuilt.

Misinformation thrives where trust is thin

In Mesa and New Orleans, we saw how mistrust opens the door for conspiracy theories. Posts accusing the vaccine of being a “bio-weapon” or part of a depopulation scheme were not uncommon—and often, they were highly shared. Health communications must directly address misinformation while avoiding condescension. Use empathy and trusted messengers to disrupt false narratives.

Neutral messaging doesn't break through

Nationally, neutral mentions still make up a large part of the conversation, but they are drowned out by more emotionally engaging content. If public health messaging is to regain ground, it must do more than inform—it must resonate. Pair data with emotion. Storytelling that speaks to real community experiences can make public health messages more relatable and shareable.

Culture and context matter

The same message won't land the same way everywhere. In New Orleans, messages that don't acknowledge historical harm fall flat. In Mesa, anti-government sentiments mean any messaging perceived as “top-down” is likely to be dismissed or mocked. Local voices, culturally attuned messages, and emotionally intelligent storytelling will be essential to future vaccine communication efforts.

Understanding the Social Media Landscape on COVID-19 Vaccination

Declining Volume, Intensifying Emotion

Across Phoenix, Mesa, and New Orleans, the volume of posts related to COVID-19 vaccination is trending downward. However, when people do engage, they're doing so with more emotion—particularly anger, fear, and sarcasm.

- **In Phoenix**, posts often carry a tone of disillusionment or fatigue, using sarcasm and irony to reflect broader frustrations about health man dates and politics.
- **In Mesa**, emotional intensity is much higher. Conversations are dominated by anger and defiance, often rejecting vaccine credibility altogether.
- **In New Orleans**, emotion is more reflective and community-oriented. Posts convey deep-seated mistrust rooted in historical experiences with the healthcare system, especially among Black residents.



**Disillusionment
and Fatigue**



**Anger and
Defiance**



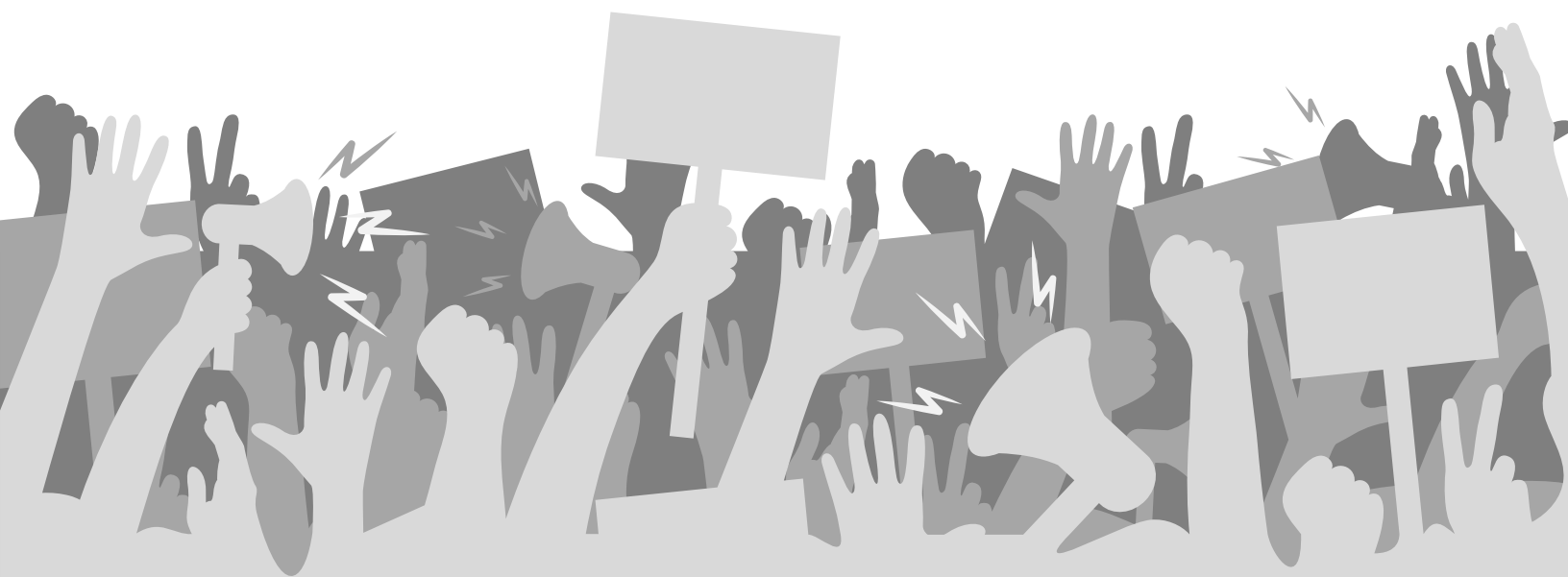
Mistrust

Fewer people are talking about COVID-19 vaccines—but when they do, they're speaking from a **place of skepticism, fear, or lived trauma.**

Negative Narratives and Conspiracy Thinking are Driving Engagement

One of the clearest patterns across all three cities is that negative content—especially emotionally provocative or conspiratorial posts—gets the most attention.

- **In Mesa**, misinformation thrives. Top-performing posts accuse the government of deception and frame the vaccine as a tool for control or harm, using terms like “bio-weapons” and “criminal Joe Biden.”
- **In New Orleans**, vaccine skepticism is often framed through a historical lens: posts draw parallels to past medical neglect or experimentation, reinforcing a narrative of systemic betrayal.
- **In Phoenix**, criticism is more diffuse—less overtly conspiratorial, but shaped by cultural frustration and identity-based skepticism (e.g., government overreach, parental rights).



Misinformation doesn't succeed just because it spreads—it succeeds because **it validates real fears or mistrust that aren't being addressed by traditional health messaging.**

Platform-Specific Trends are Shaping the Local Narrative

Phoenix

Platforms like X and Instagram feature more culturally layered commentary, often blending humor with critique. Posts in Spanish and English reflect cross-border political concerns as well.



Mesa

Facebook groups and X threads are hotspots for deeply conspiratorial content. The tone is combative and distrustful, and users often share long chains of politically charged misinformation.



New Orleans

TikTok and Facebook are used to share community stories, commentary on health disparities, and emotional responses. There's a stronger emphasis on racial equity and lived experience.



The dominant platform in each city influences not only how people communicate—but which narratives rise to the top. **One strategy won't work across all platforms or cities.**



Culture and History Are Driving Message Reception

While the vaccine is technically the same everywhere, the meaning of vaccination varies dramatically across communities.

- **In Mesa**, rejection of vaccination is often linked to libertarian ideals, anti-government sentiment, and broader political polarization. Messages from federal or scientific authorities are likely to be dismissed or mocked.
- **In New Orleans**, skepticism is grounded in generational experiences of exclusion and harm. There is deep emotional memory associated with public health failures—and vaccine hesitancy reflects that reality.
- **In Phoenix**, sentiment is more mixed. The city's diversity creates layered discourse where vaccine acceptance exists alongside political critique, racial identity narratives, and cultural pride.

Effective communication in these cities requires more than translation or outreach—it requires understanding the roots of emotion and trust.

What This Means for Public Health

Across Phoenix, Mesa, and New Orleans, COVID-19 vaccine discourse has shifted from science to symbolism. For many, the vaccine isn't just a health decision—it's a statement about belief, power, and identity.

What we're seeing

- **Emotion > Information**
The most visible content appeals to feelings, not facts.
- **Mistrust is Localized**
Vaccine skepticism reflects different underlying issues in each city.
- **Misinformation has a Home**
In all three cities, conspiratorial content is tailored and persistent.
- **Neutral Messaging is not Enough**
Content that lacks emotional relevance fails to engage.

Conclusion

Public sentiment around COVID-19 vaccines is increasingly fragmented, shaped less by clinical facts and more by cultural, emotional, and political forces. This analysis reinforces the need for locally grounded, emotionally resonant, and trust-based communication strategies. National messaging sets the stage, but local engagement determines the outcome.





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