FM3 RESEARCH | OPINION RESEARCH & STRATEGY

TO	The California Endowment
FROM	Dave Metz, Lucia Del Puppo, and Denny Han FM3 Research
RE:	Public Opinion on COVID-19 Vaccine in California
DATE	January 6, 2021

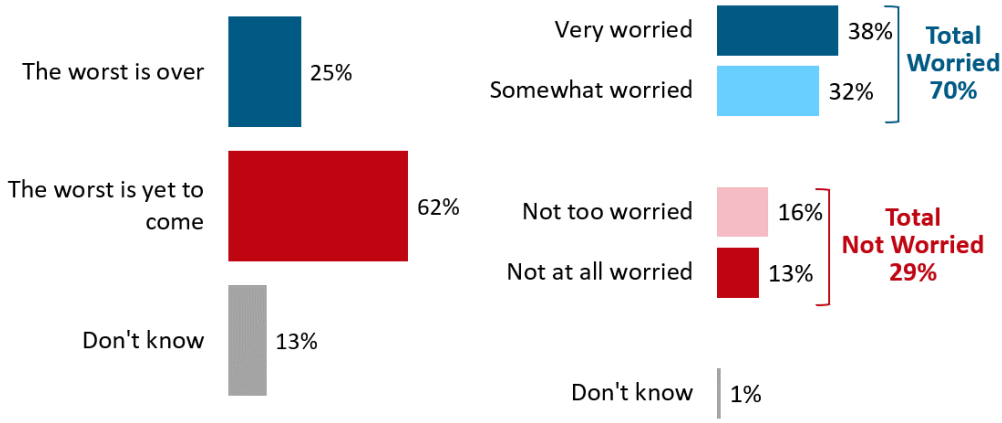
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of 881 Californians belonging to the demographic groups most vulnerable to COVID-19 to assess views of the impacts of the pandemic, perceptions of the newly-available vaccines and willingness to take them, and reactions to themes for communications that might promote vaccine acceptance.[i] The results show that a majority of respondents are concerned about the health impacts of COVID-19 and will likely take the vaccine when it becomes available to them. Nevertheless, there are concerns about potential side effects and lack of due diligence in ensuring the safety of the vaccine. Communications that leverage healthcare professionals as messengers and emphasize the safety measures in vaccine production and administration could serve to reassure the public.

Key specific findings of the survey include:

- **At least three in five respondents believe the pandemic will get worse and are worried about getting sick from COVID-19.** As shown in **Figure 1** below, 62% of respondents believe the worst of the pandemic is "yet to come," while seven in ten say they are worried about getting sick from COVID-19.

Figure 1: Expectations for the Pandemic and Fear of Infection

*When it comes to the pandemic, do you think that the worst is over; **OR** the worst is yet to come?; How worried are you about getting sick from COVID-19?*



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The percentage of respondents who believe the worst of the pandemic is yet to come has increased by seven points since April 2020, as shown in **Figure 2** below.

Figure 2: Comparison of Pandemic Expectations

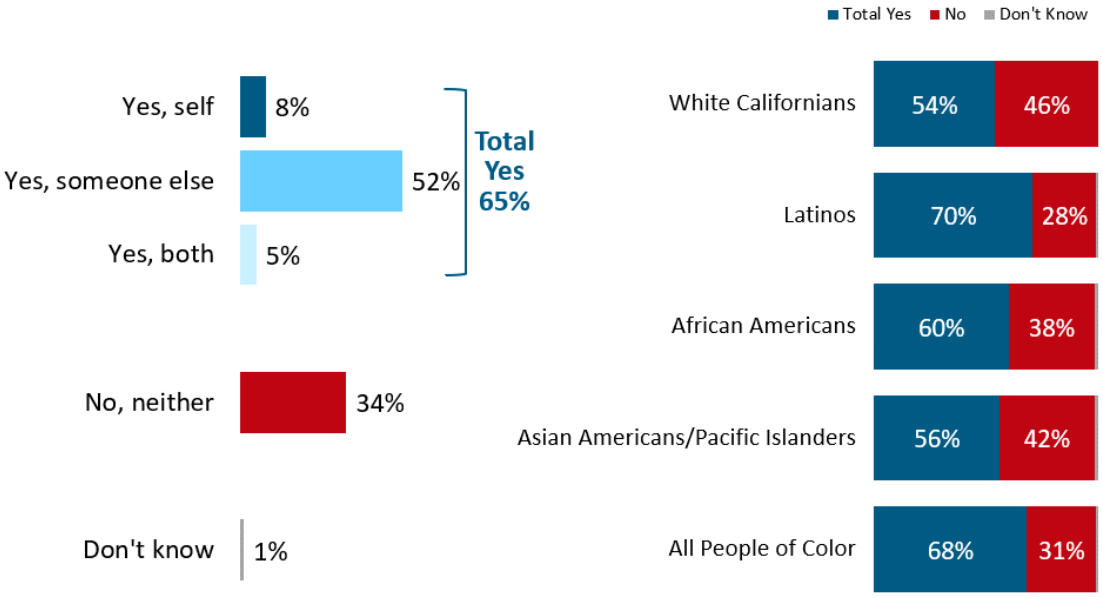
*When it comes to the pandemic, do you think that the worst is over; **OR** the worst is yet to come?*

	April 2020	December 2020
The Worst is over	30%	25%
The worst is yet to come	55%	62%
Don't know	15%	13%

- **Respondents of color, particularly Latinos and African Americans, are more likely than white Californians to have either been infected or know someone who has been sick with COVID.** As seen in **Figure 3**, 65% of all respondents said they, or someone they know, have had COVID-19. However, connections to people who have been infected are much higher among Latinos (70%) and African Americans (60%) than among Whites (54%).

Figure 3: Percentage of Respondents Who Have Been Infected or Know Someone Who Has

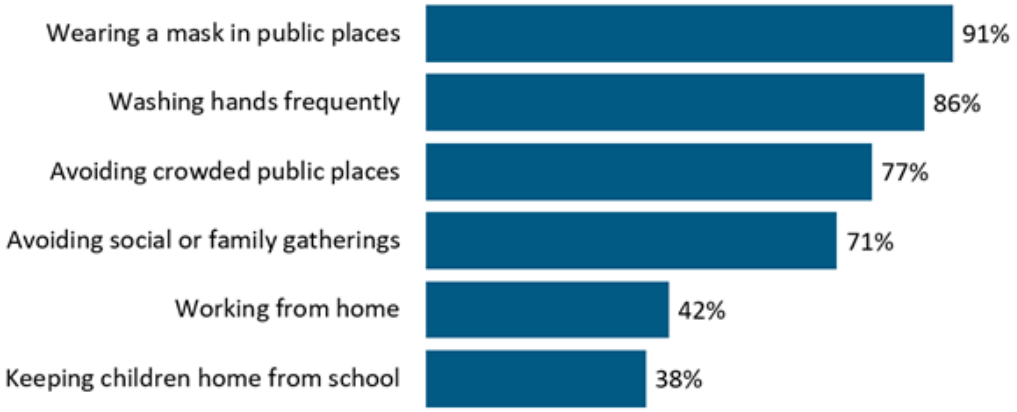
Have you or someone you know had COVID-19?



- **While a majority of respondents are taking a range of necessary actions to avoid COVID, they are more diligent about some tasks than others.** Avoiding crowded public places and social gatherings are noticeably less common methods of avoiding COVID than are mask-wearing or frequent hand-washing. As shown in **Figure 4** below, while at least four in five Californians say they wear masks in public spaces (91%) and frequently wash their hands (86%) to avoid catching COVID, there is a noticeable drop in compliance when it comes to avoiding crowded public spaces (77%) and social gatherings (71%).

Figure 4: Actions Taken to Avoid Catching COVID

Here is a list of actions people are taking to avoid catching COVID-19. Which ones have you taken?

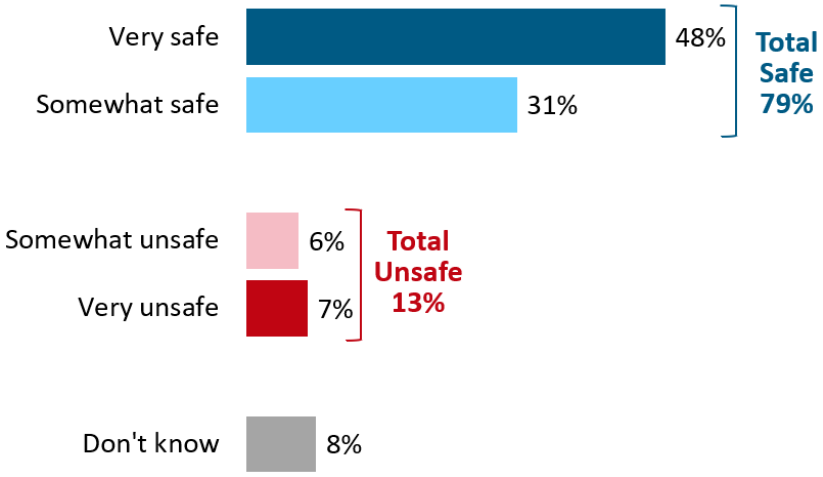


- **A large majority of respondents believe that vaccines in general are safe.** As shown in **Figure 5** on the next page, four in five residents believe most vaccines for diseases other than COVID are generally either "somewhat safe" or "very safe." Among the respondents who believed that vaccines are "somewhat unsafe" or "very unsafe," 30% attributed their distrust to potential negative health impacts. Eighteen percent believed vaccines were unsafe due to perceived linkages to diseases and disorders such as autism;15% said they did not trust the government; and 10% believe there has not been enough research time for the vaccine.

  Respondents most likely say vaccines are "somewhat" or "very unsafe" are more likely to come from the following demographic groups: residents in Sacramento County and California's rural north, uninsured respondents, respondents with only a high school education, and African-American respondents.

Figure 5: Views on Vaccine Safety in General

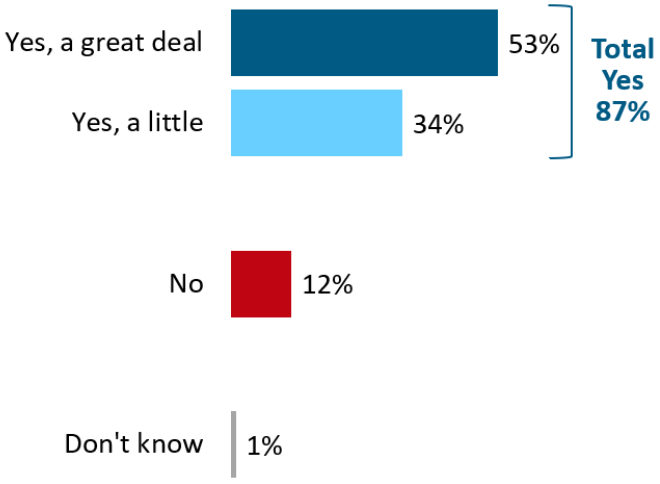
In general, do you think most of the vaccines for diseases other than COVID-19 available today are safe or unsafe?



- **More than half have heard "a great deal" about production of a COVID vaccine.** As shown in **Figure 6**, nearly nine in ten have at least heard something about COVID vaccine production, with 53% having heard a great deal. Demographic groups most likely to report that they have heard "a great deal" tend to be more highly-educated and older – as is the case on most public policy issues.

Figure 6: Vaccine Awareness

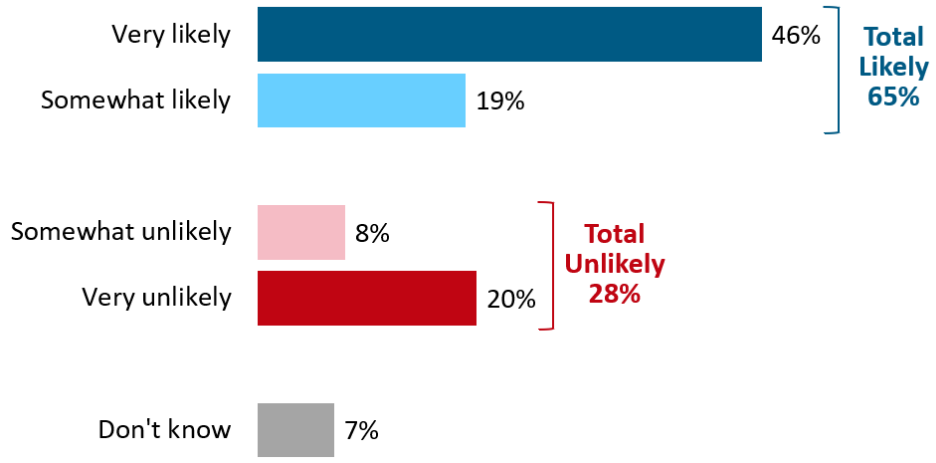
Have you heard, seen, or read anything about production of a COVID-19 vaccine recently?



- **Two-thirds say they are likely to take the vaccine once it becomes available to them.** This includes nearly half of all respondents who are "very likely" to take a vaccine and one on five who are "very unlikely" to do so (as seen in **Figure 7** below).

Figure 7: Likelihood of Getting a Vaccine

Are you likely or unlikely to take a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to you?;



Notably, African American respondents were much less likely than respondents of other ethnic background to say they are likely to take the vaccine – with 54% indicating they are likely to get vaccinated compared to 64% of Latinos, 67% of Whites, and 77% of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Uninsured Californians are also less likely to report they will take the vaccine (55%) compared to those with private or public insurance (66%).

Those who say they are likely to take the vaccine include:

- ✓ 68% of men and 61% of women;
- ✓ 63% of Californians age 18-49, 67% of those 50-64, and 67% of those 65 and older;
- ✓ 67% of those with yearly household incomes below $30,000, 60% with incomes $30,000-$50,000, 65% with incomes $50,000-$100,000, and 69% with incomes above $100,000;
- ✓ 75% of Bay Area residents, 66% of LA County residents, 64% of San Diego County residents, 63% of respondents from Sacramento County and the rural north, 62% of residents in the Central Valley and Central Coast, and 61% of residents in the counties surrounding LA; and
- ✓ 76% with a higher education attainment and 60% of non-college graduates.

The most common reasons given for why respondents are likely to take a vaccine include a desire for protection from COVID (37%), the general necessity of vaccination (15%), and trust in the FDA and science (13%). Among respondents who said they were unlikely to take the vaccine, the most common reasons given

for their skepticism include concerns for side effects and allergies (29%), lack of perceived personal health risks (27%), and belief that there is insufficient medical research for the vaccine (22%).

- **When prompted with a list of possible concerns, potential side effects and insufficient research were top vaccine concerns for all respondents.** As shown in **Figure 8**, 55% of respondents said they were either "extremely" or "very concerned" that the vaccine may have dangerous side effects, and 48% said they were concerned the vaccine may have "uncomfortable" side effects. Half were concerned that the vaccine was too new to fully understand it.

Figure 8: Concerns About the Vaccine

Here are some concerns some people in California have mentioned about the COVID-19 vaccine. Please tell me whether this is something you personally are extremely concerned about, very concerned about, somewhat concerned about, or not too concerned about.

Concern	% Extremely/ Very Concerned
The vaccine may have dangerous side effects	55%
The vaccine is too new and we don't know enough about it	50%
The vaccine may have uncomfortable side effects	48%
The vaccine was rushed and developed too quickly	40%
The vaccine will not be effective in preventing COVID-19	39%
I don't trust the vaccine	38%
The vaccine will cost too much	37%
I will have to share too much personal information to access the vaccine	31%
I don't trust pharmaceutical companies who are developing the vaccine	30%
The vaccine will give me the virus	29%
Vaccines cause autism	28%

- **Seven in ten believe the vaccine will be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19, and a majority say they would encourage their friends and family to get the vaccine.** As shown in **Figure 8** below, 69% of respondents agreed that the vaccine will help curb the spread of COVID and 62% said they would encourage those close to them to obtain the vaccine. However, only 54% of parents surveyed would want their child to receive it.

Figure 8: Attitudes Toward the Vaccine

Next, here are some statements about the vaccine. After hearing each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

Statement	Total Agree	Total Disagree
The vaccine will be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19	**69%**	19%
I would encourage my friends and family to get the COVID-19 vaccine	**62%**	30%
I wany my children to receive the COVID-19 vaccine *(Parents Only)*	**54%**	36%
The U.S. government doesn't care if COVID-19 hurts people like me	**52%**	43%
The U.S. government doesn't care if the vaccine hurts people like me	45%	45%
People with my background have historically been taken advantage of and deceived by doctors working with the government	44%	43%
The vaccine will cause more problems than the disease it is trying to prevent	35%	**53%**

African-American respondents were more skeptical of the coronavirus vaccine; they were slightly less likely to agree that "the vaccine will be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19" (62%) than were other ethnic groups, and were less likely to encourage friends and family to get it (50%). Among parents, 46% of African-American respondents said they'd want their children to receive the vaccine (as shown in **Figure 9** on the next page). African-American respondents were also more likely than other groups to agree that the U.S. government does not care about the impact of COVID on their communities (60%), and that the vaccine will cause more problems than the disease itself (44%). Additionally, over two-thirds (68%) of African American respondents identified with the statement highlighting their communities' historical mistreatment by medical professionals working with the government.

Figure 9: Perceptions of Vaccines by Ethnic Group

Next, here are some statements about the vaccine. After hearing each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

(Total % Agree)

Statement	Whites	Latino	African Americans	Asian/Pacific Islanders	*All Respondents of Color*
People with my background have historically been taken advantage of and deceived by doctors working with the government	31%	47%	68%	35%	*47%*
The vaccine will be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19	73%	68%	62%	73%	*68%*
The U.S. government doesn't care if COVID-19 hurts people like me	45%	56%	60%	38%	*54%*
I would encourage my friends and family to get the COVID-19 vaccine	60%	63%	50%	71%	*62%*
I wany my children to receive the COVID-19 vaccine	60%	53%	46%	57%	*53%*
The vaccine will cause more problems than the disease it is trying to prevent	35%	35%	44%	29%	*35%*
The U.S. government doesn't care if the vaccine hurts people like me	41%	47%	42%	45%	*46%*

- **Over a quarter of respondents say that uncomfortable side effects from the vaccine would make them less likely to take it.** As shown in **Figure 10** on the next page, 27% of respondents said they would be "somewhat" or "much less" likely to take the vaccine upon learning that the vaccine may come with side effects such as chills, body aches, and fever. Taking the vaccine in two dosages across several weeks was also a source of discouragement among some respondents , with 17% saying the two-dose requirement makes them less likely to take the vaccine. On the other hand, information that emphasizes stopping the spread of COVID-19; the rigorous standards of health officials in approving and administering the vaccine; and that vaccination has no cost to the recipient was effective in encouraging people to take it.

Figure 10: Impact of Vaccine Information on Likelihood to Take It

Next, here are some facts about the vaccine. After hearing each one, please indicate if knowing this fact makes you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to take it. If it makes no difference you can tell me that too.

Statement	Total More Likely	Total Less Likely
The vaccine will help prevent the spread of COVID-19	**63%**	9%
In addition to FDA approval, California state health officials and researchers are studying the vaccines to ensure they are safe	**59%**	8%
The vaccine has to be administered by a healthcare professional	**59%**	11%
The vaccine will be reviewed for safety and side effects by the FDA, the agency that is in charge of evaluating the safety of all vaccines	**59%**	11%
The vaccine will be free	**57%**	10%
Californians will need to continue to wear masks and maintain social distancing for some time after the vaccine becomes available to the public	47%	10%
The vaccine comes in two doses, which need to be taken several weeks apart	35%	17%
The vaccine has uncomfortable side effects which can include chills, body aches, and fever	29%	27%

When presented with each piece vaccine information, African-American respondents were mostly split on whether they would be more likely to take the vaccine. Asian-American and Latino respondents, on the other hand, were the most likely to be encouraged upon hearing about the vaccine's free availability; the FDA's involvement in reviewing it; and its administration by healthcare professionals. More highly-educated respondents reacted more favorably to information about the vaccine than did those with lower levels of formal education.

- **Healthcare professionals are the most trustworthy sources of vaccine information.** As seen in **Figure 11** below**,** respondents' personal doctors (78% trustworthy), doctors in general (75%), and nurses (73%) rank as the most trustworthy sources of information on the vaccine. Among those viewed with the least confidence on this issue are news personalities and young people.

Figure 11: Trust in Organizations/People

Now I am going to read you a list of people and organizations that may speak out to encourage people to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Please tell me if you would generally trust or be suspicious of what each one says about the vaccine; if you have never heard of them, please tell me that too.

Person/Organization	Total Trust	Total Suspicious
Your doctor	78%	14%
Doctors	75%	19%
Nurses	73%	17%
Scientists	71%	22%
Your local department of public health	70%	23%
The California Department of Public Health	68%	24%
People who have had COVID-19	57%	22%
Grandmothers	56%	26%
Your local mayor	49%	36%
Neighbors in your community	47%	37%
Local faith leaders	46%	37%
Your school district's superintendent	41%	33%
Young people	37%	42%
News personalities	29%	53%

Taken together, the findings of the survey show that Californians who are highly vulnerable to COVID-19 remain intensely concerned about the health impacts of COVID-19, and a majority is likely to take the vaccine once it becomes available to them. However, there is a distinct concern among Californians when it comes to potential side effects and due diligence in ensuring the safety of the vaccine. The findings suggest that a messaging campaign that emphasizes the safety of the vaccine, its thorough testing and its administration by qualified healthcare professionals could serve to boost trust among key target populations.

[i] **Methodology:** From December 11-17, 2020, FM3 completed 881 online and telephone (landline and wireless) interviews with Californians vulnerable to COVID-19. To qualify for the survey, respondents had to have a household income under $50,000, be a person of color, or be a Spanish-speaker. The survey included oversamples among African American Californians and in the Central Valley. The survey was conducted in English and in Spanish. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.