

JUNE 8, 2021

# Adolescent & Young Adult COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign

## Research Report



*This report was prepared by Ashley Sever, Donna Than and Nikki Work.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH) Communications Team is developing a strategic social marketing campaign as an intervention to increase COVID-19 vaccine rates among adolescents and young adults ages 16-29 in Jefferson County. Based on current data, there is an identified need for this campaign because this population currently has a lower vaccination rate compared to other age groups in the county. Additionally, available research indicates this age group is more likely to “wait and see” about getting a COVID-19 vaccine (Kaiser Family Foundation COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor Survey, April 2021), which presents an opportunity for public health to help them across the finish line.

The Communications Team will implement a research based, targeted marketing campaign informed by the Health Belief Model to increase vaccine uptake by:

- Increasing perceived benefits to getting vaccinated
- Reducing perceived barriers to getting vaccinated
- Increasing access to reliable vaccine information and resources (e.g., vaccine safety and efficacy, where and how to get a vaccine)

To inform the campaign development — including creative, messages and marketing strategies — the Communications Team conducted an online survey as well as hosted an input session with members of the target audience. Overall, research findings suggest that among adolescents and young adults ages 16-29, protecting personal health and safety, protecting others/the community’s health and safety, being afraid of getting COVID-19 and a desire to return to normal are important motivators for getting vaccinated. Conversely, top barriers to getting vaccinated among this age group are concerns with vaccine safety and side effects, low perceived susceptibility and severity related to COVID-19 (not feeling at risk for COVID-19 or severe illness), as well as perceived barriers to access including cost and proximity to a vaccine provider.

When considering communications strategies for disseminating COVID-19 resources, research suggests that using a variety of channels will be most effective with this age group, with a focus on channels that adolescents and young adults use most including TV, traditional radio, social media and websites.

## FINDINGS

### Online Survey

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The Communications Team conducted a short online survey among adolescents and young adults ages 16-29 in Jefferson County (See Appendix A for the complete survey). The purpose of the survey was to better understand attitudes about COVID-19 vaccines, specifically motivators and barriers around getting a vaccine. Additionally, the survey included questions about the best ways to reach this audience with COVID-19 vaccine messages. The survey was open for two weeks, from May 6-May 21, 2021, and was promoted through JCPH’s online communications channels (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, community newsletter, blast email to partners), as well as via partners who already engage young adults in Jeffco (i.e., Jeffco Public Schools, Red Rocks Community College, School of Mines, Jefferson County Communities That Care, tobacco programs serving youth, as well as communications and outreach staff at Jeffco cities and municipalities). As an incentive to complete the survey, participants could enter to win

a \$50 Amazon gift card. Overall, after removing responses that did not meet the survey criteria or were clearly spam, there were 6,702 total responses to the survey.

**Age and City of Residence**

There were respondents from cities across the county, with the most reporting they live in Arvada (18.68%), Lakewood (12.22%), Edgewater (12.70%) Conifer (11.68%) and Golden (11.19%).

What city do you live in?	Count	% Total
Arvada	1252	18.68
Lakewood	819	12.22
Edgewater	851	12.70
Conifer	783	11.68
Golden	750	11.19
Evergreen	667	9.95
Lakeside	530	7.91
Morrison	452	6.74
Westminster	364	5.43
Wheat Ridge	163	2.43
Other (Littleton, Unincorporated Jeffco)	38	0.57
No Response	33	0.49
<b>Total</b>	<b>6702</b>	<b>100</b>

The average age of respondents was 23.53 years. The minimum age of respondents was 16 years, the median was 24 years and the mode was 25 years.

What is Your Age?	Count	% Total
25	997	14.88
26	757	11.30
23	739	11.03
22	667	9.95
20	607	9.06
24	594	8.86
21	552	8.24
28	504	7.52
27	363	5.42
19	324	4.83
29	233	3.48
18	231	3.45
17	83	1.24
16	51	0.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>6702</b>	<b>100</b>

### Vaccination Status

The majority of respondents reported that they have received a COVID-19 vaccine (74.96%), with about a quarter reporting they had not yet received a vaccine (24.80%).

Have you received a COVID-19 vaccine?	Count	% Total
Yes	5024	74.96
No	1662	24.80
No Response	16	0.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>6702</b>	<b>100</b>

When assessing vaccine status by location, those living in Edgewater (15.29%), Arvada (14.30%) and Lakewood (12.27%) reported they had not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine most often.

City	Count *	% Total
Edgewater	248	15.29
Arvada	232	14.30
Lakewood	199	12.27
Evergreen	197	12.15
Golden	192	11.84
Conifer	183	11.28
Lakeside	151	9.31
Morrison	119	7.34
Westminster	85	5.24
Wheat Ridge	38	2.34
Other	11	0.68
No Response	7	0.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>1622</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Total respondents who answered "no" to "Have you received a COVID-19 vaccine?"

Of those who had not yet received a vaccine, 72.50% said "yes" and 26.59% said "no" when asked if they planned to get a vaccine in the future.

Are you planning to get the COVID-19 vaccine?	Count	% Total
Yes	1205	72.50%
No	442	26.59%
No Response	15	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1662</b>	<b>100</b>

The survey also asked respondents if they believed their peers would get a COVID-19 vaccine; the large majority of respondents said “yes” (89.59%).

Do you think your peers will get a COVID-19 vaccine?	Count	% Total
Yes	6111	89.59
No	569	8.34
No Response	22	0.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>6702</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Motivators for Getting Vaccinated**

Respondents that reported they had received a COVID-19 vaccine were asked, “What motivated you to get a COVID-19 vaccine?”, with an opportunity to add an open-ended response. A total of 5,809 open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized into reoccurring themes. Some responses included multiple themes. The most common themes were:

- To keep oneself healthy/safe: 41.13%
- To keep others and/or the community healthy/safe: 37.91%
- Being fearful/scared of getting COVID-19: 16.25%
- Desire to return to normal: 6.04%
- Because it is required: 3.03%
- Advice from others: 9.56%
- Incentives (including the vaccine being free): 4.34%

### **Examples of responses:**

- *“COVID-19 has had devastating impacts on many people over the past year and I wanted to have immunity to the virus to benefit myself and the people I encounter daily.”*
- *“To protect others who are more at risk and to help us get back to normal quicker.”*
- *“I don’t want to get or spread COVID. The way to end this pandemic is to get vaccinated.”*
- *“I didn’t want to get sick or die from preventable disease.”*
- *“I’m scared of COVID-19. I need to be healthy.”*
- *“Because the epidemic has not gone away, I’m afraid of catching the virus.”*
- *“Such a terrible condition, if there is a vaccine to prevent it of course would be the best.”*
- *“Doing my part to keep my family and community safe. Also I’d like to get back to in person learning for school as soon as possible.”*
- *“It was available and having it reduces my risk and the chance of me giving to someone else. Also it is the best way to help society to return to some normalcy.”*
- *“Going back to the gym, being less paranoid when I go for grocery shopping, preventing dangerous variants, etc.”*
- *“Keeping my parents safe, being able to not quarantine at school, college looking more normal next year, protecting myself and my friends, being able to go mask-less with sports, to eat at a restaurant, to see my grandparents and family again, to have others come in my car, and to go to concerts, and to travel.”*
- *“To go to large occasions at ease, not afraid of infection.”*
- *“You can have peace of mind and contact with your family without fear of infection.”*
- *“Not getting COVID, being able to see family and friends, not being a terrible person.”*
- *“I’m so ready to be done with this whole mess. Getting enough people vaccinated is the best way to put this behind us.”*

- *“The threat of the virus prevented me from going out and playing with my friends.”*
- *“So I wouldn't have to wear a mask and so that I could live my life normally again without people getting upset with me.”*
- *“So that I can start to hang out with friends with no masks again. The only reason I can think to not get the vaccine is that we don't really know the long term effects, if any. So I am waiting a little longer than everyone else so that the bugs are ironed out.”*
- *“I am an Indian National. My parents were diagnosed with COVID-19 in April 2021 with all the major symptoms. Given the current state of affairs in my home country and the difficult patch my family's going through, the availability of the vaccine is nothing less than a blessing to me. So, I decided to take it.”*

The survey also asked if respondents believed their peers would get vaccinated for COVID-19, and those who responded “yes” were asked to share why they believed their peers would get vaccinated. A total of 2,149 open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized into reoccurring themes. Some responses included multiple themes. The most common themes were:

- To keep oneself, others and/or the community healthy/safe: 56.22%
- Being fearful/scared of getting COVID-19: 15.94%
- Advice from a peer/peer pressure: 5.48%
- Desire to return to normal: 2.84%
- Because it is required: 2.48%

Please note 16.66% of respondents did not provide a response to the question. Some respondents (0.32%) simply used the open-ended question as an opportunity to share anti-vaccine views, and additional 11.60% of responses were not understandable.

### ***Reasons for Not Getting Vaccinated***

Respondents that reported they had not received a COVID-19 vaccine were asked, “Why would you not get a COVID-19 vaccine?” with an opportunity to add an open-ended response. A total of 288 open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized into reoccurring themes. Some responses included multiple themes. The most common themes were:

- Concerns with vaccine safety: 39.69%
- Felt no need/ambivalent (especially common was belief of age protecting them): 19.85%
- Perceived barriers to access (especially common were beliefs the vaccine was expensive or that they lived too far away from a vaccine provider): 22.17%
- Having anti-vaccine views in general: 5.41%
- Still deciding: 3.35%

Please note 11.86% of respondents did not provide a response to the question.

### ***Examples of responses:***

- *“I don't want to be part of an clinical trial and I'd rather build a strong immune system then injecting myself with toxic materials. Plus there's no benefit, one still gets sick and can transmit.”*
- *“I am very afraid that vaccines are not safe.”*
- *“Yeah, I think the vaccine has side effects and I'm afraid to try it.”*
- *“It is not yet tested and approved by the FDA. It is an emergency vax. If/when FDA tested and approved, I will receive the vaccine.”*
- *“It felt like the vaccine had a lot of side effects, and people around me had reactions.”*

- *“Although I would like to be able to avoid infection, I am afraid that the vaccine is not safe enough.”*
- *“How do I know long term effects? How do I know if I get multiple boosters in the future it won't cause a ‘war’ in my immune system. Does the mRNA fade way and only leave antibodies in my immune system?”*
- *“I think the vaccine will have side effects, after all, the vaccine is not mature yet.”*
- *“The safety of the vaccine is still uncertain so I want to wait.”*
- *“Because there are a number of people around are not, so want to wait for a period of time to see.”*
- *“I'm in good health and don't need to be vaccinated.”*
- *“I do not think COVID is enough risk to me and for how I live my live to get the vaccine. Also, why would I get a vaccine when vaccinated people can't do anything different than unvaccinated? It's a scam from the government.”*
- *“I feel young and strong.”*
- *“Because I am a healthy young individual; I am not in a high risk group for the virus. I do not feel okay using MRC-5 without a legitimate medical reason. Abortion is murder, and even the unfortunate events these days where people feel it's ok, it's not.”*
- *“There's too much risk and too little benefit. The manufacturers are immune to liability and so far the VAERS system has reported two orders of magnitude higher percentage of deaths due to the COVID vaccines in a few months than the flu vaccine had for over a decade.”*
- *“Don't have the money to buy it.”*
- *“I don't know where I can get it.”*
- *“It's far from my local area.”*

The survey also asked if respondents believed their peers would get vaccinated for COVID-19, and those who responded “no” were asked to share why they believed their peers would not get vaccinated. A total of 335 open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized into reoccurring themes. Some responses included multiple themes. The most common themes were:

- Concerns with vaccine safety: 31.86%
- Felt no need/ambivalent (especially common was belief of age protecting them): 27.66%
- Perceived barriers to access (especially common were beliefs the vaccine was expensive or that they lived too far away from a vaccine provider): 9.07%
- Having anti-vaccine views in general: 8.41%
- Still deciding: 1.99%

Please note 26.33% of respondents did not provide a response to the question.

### Communications Channels

All respondents were asked, “Where are you most likely to see or hear information about COVID-19 vaccines?” Overall, adolescents and young adults report using a wide variety of communications and media, both traditional media and online. When looking at specific channels, the most frequently selected channels were TV (45.20%), radio (45.09%), social media (36.62%) and websites (29.27%). The channels selected less frequently were music streaming platforms (9.83%) and from organizations in my community (14.68%).

Where are you most likely to see or hear information about COVID-19? (Select all that apply.)	Count	% Total
TV	3029	45.20
Radio	3022	45.09
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc.)	2454	36.62
Websites	1962	29.27
Through my school	1930	28.80
From my doctor/health care provider	1684	25.13
From friends and family	1489	22.22
Through organizations in my community	984	14.68
Music streaming platforms (e.g., Spotify, Pandora, iHeartRadio)	659	9.83
Other	25	0.37

Those who selected “social media” were asked to provide examples of specific social media platforms where they would be most likely to see or hear information about COVID-19 vaccines. Among those who provided a response, the platforms mentioned most frequently were Facebook (54.47%), Twitter (18.65%), Instagram (10.68%) and TikTok (10.25%).

Platforms	Count	% Total
Facebook	622	54.47
Twitter	213	18.65
Instagram	122	10.68
TikTok	117	10.25
Google	20	1.75
WhatsApp	17	1.49
Other	14	1.23
Snapchat	8	0.70
YouTube	5	0.44
Reddit	3	0.26
Discord	1	0.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>1142</b>	<b>100</b>



## Input Session with Young Adults

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On Thursday, May 20, the JCPH Health Communications Team facilitated a 1.5 hour input session over Zoom with 20 adolescents and young adults in Jefferson County. The purpose of the session was to discuss attitudes about COVID-19 vaccines among this population, as well as to obtain input on draft campaign messages/creative and the best ways to reach adolescents and young adults with vaccine messages. The session was hosted and promoted through the Jefferson County Communities that Care program, and all participants earned a gift card for their time.

As part our efforts to ensure the campaign is informed by the target audience and participatory in nature, we reviewed preliminary online survey data and research with our target audience. Overall, the participants discussed motivators and reasons for not getting the vaccine that were similar to what we learned in the online survey. Additionally, participants noted the importance of social norming to encourage and influence more young people to get a vaccine. Parental consent for people under age 18 was also mentioned as a potential barrier.

See Appendix B for the sample creative discussed during this session. Overall, participants liked the draft campaign ads and thought the messages would resonate with the target audience. Generally, participants liked that that the ads were positive and had a clear message.

Participants provided feedback for ways to improve the draft message and ads, including:

- To further amplify young people's agency to make a difference and make the message more direct, change the campaign tagline from "We can be the reason" to "You can be the reason."
- Consider messages that demonstrate how one person can make a difference.
- Use images that more clearly show the benefits of getting vaccinated. Being able to more safely participate in large events and gather in larger groups (both indoors and outdoors without masks) were noted as compelling motivators for getting vaccinated. For example, participants suggested using images that show young people together at a football game with no masks, groups of people gathered together at Red Rocks, and students in a classroom indoors without masks.
- Make sure images show a strong connection to COVID-19 vaccines at a quick glance.
- Ensure images show people's faces so you can see their emotion.
- Ensure text included in the ads is easy to read, and simplify the ads with less text where possible.
- Do not use a hashtag unless there is a specific purpose behind it.

Participants also provided input on ways to promote the ads to effectively reach adolescents and young adults. Specifically, social media sites like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok were noted as channels young adults use frequently.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings from the online survey and feedback from the input session, the Communications Team has the following recommendations for development of the adolescent and young adult COVID-19 vaccine campaign:

- **Use messages that emphasize the top motivators/benefits for getting vaccinated, including to keep oneself healthy/safe, to keep others healthy/safe and to return to normal. Additionally, address the most commonly reported reasons/barriers for not getting a vaccine, such as concerns with safety as well as perceived challenges related to access.** Additional considerations:
  - Many respondents reported being fearful of getting COVID-19. Use empowering language that puts agency in the hands of the audience to combat their fears by getting a vaccine.
  - Leverage messages that demonstrate how getting vaccinated can keep both individuals and their communities safe and healthy, and that one person getting vaccinated can have an impact on the entire community.
  - Many respondents noted concerns with the COVID-19 vaccines not being “fully approved” by the FDA. This presents an opportunity to explain the EUA process. Additionally, there were many concerns related to the vaccine being “too new,” which is an opportunity to explain the history around the current vaccine platforms and safety.
  - Explain that COVID-19 vaccine side effects do not mean the vaccine is unsafe; instead, side effects are a normal immune response and are usually mild.
  - Consider ways to increase self-efficacy with messages and examples of how getting a vaccine can prevent COVID-19.
  - Where possible, include messages and data that show young adults are susceptible to COVID-19 and severe illness.
- **Provide resources and reliable information about COVID-19 vaccines**, including where and how to get a vaccine in and around Jefferson County. Be sure to include resources/messages that address confusion related to commonly reported perceived barriers, such as costs (e.g., the vaccine is free) and distance from vaccine providers (e.g., there are many locations across the county and no appointment is necessary).
- **Revise the draft creative/ads to incorporate feedback from the input session**, including making sure they have a clear visual connection to COVID-19 vaccines, using more effective imagery that demonstrates motivators (e.g., being in a crowd without a mask) and reducing text/copy. Use more direct language that puts ownership and agency on young adults (e.g., change “We can be the reason” to “You can be the reason”).
- **Place ads where young adults will be most likely to see them.** Based on our research, a surround-sound approach is likely to be the most effective, with an emphasis on most commonly used channels including traditional radio stations that young adults listen to, websites and social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok.
- **When possible, increase ad frequency in cities where respondents were less likely to have already received a COVID-19 vaccine.** Based on survey results, this could

include Edgewater, Arvada and Lakewood. Additionally, review vaccine data in Jefferson County to further verify and identify communities where vaccine coverage among adolescents and young adults is particularly low, and therefore, increased outreach is needed.

- **The large response rate to the online survey was in part due to the reach and influence of our partners, such as education settings and community organizations, who already serve the target audience.** Work with these partners again — and identify additional partners — to help disseminate the campaign. Make it easy for them by providing ready-to-use tools and materials.
- **In addition to the research for our 16-29 audience, we had a number of younger teens participate in the input session. This group mentioned parental consent and support as a potential barrier for young people getting vaccinated.** Find ways to address this in this campaign when possible for those 16-18, and consider this finding for future communications surrounding expanded vaccine availability for young people ages 12 and older.

## APPENDIX A: YOUNG ADULT SURVEY

### Attitudes among adolescents and young adults ages 16-29 about the COVID-19 vaccine

The purpose of this survey is to understand motivators and barriers when it comes to young adults ages 16-29 getting a COVID-19 vaccine. The survey information is anonymous and information collected will be used to inform Jefferson County Public Health public information messages for this population. If you would like to provide an email address, participants will be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 Amazon gift card. You can also provide your email address if you interested in receiving updates on JCPH's young adult communications efforts around COVID-19 vaccines. (If you do provide an email address, your information will be kept confidential).

#### 1. Do you live in Jefferson County?

- If no, "Thank you for your interest in completing this survey. At this time, we are only accepting responses from Jefferson County residents."
- If yes, What city do you live in?
  - i. Arvada
  - ii. Conifer
  - iii. Edgewater
  - iv. Evergreen
  - v. Golden
  - vi. Lakeside
  - vii. Lakewood
  - viii. Morrison
  - ix. Wheat Ridge
  - x. Other, please list:

#### 2. What is your age?

#### 3. Have you received a COVID-19 vaccine?

- If yes, what motivated you to get a vaccine? [open answer]
- If no, why have you not received a COVID-19 vaccine? [open answer]

#### 4. Do you think your peers will get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Yes
  - i. Why? [open answer]
- No
  - i. Why not? [open answer]

#### 5. Where are you most likely to see or hear information about COVID-19 vaccines?

- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc.)
  - i. Which platforms? Please list all that apply.
- Websites
- Radio
- Music streaming platforms (e.g., Spotify, Pandora, iHeartRadio)
  - i. Which platforms? Please list all that apply.
- TV
- Through my school
- Through organizations in my community

i. Which organizations?

- From my doctor/health care provider
- From friends and family
- Other, please explain:

**6. Would you like to get updates on JCPH's communications efforts about COVID-19 vaccines for young adults?**

- Yes: Please provide your email address.
- No.

**7. If you'd like to be entered to win a \$50 Amazon gift card, please enter your email address. [open answer]**

## APPENDIX B: SAMPLE CREATIVE

WE CAN  
**Be The Reason**  
*we can do the things we love.*

JEFFERSON  
COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH

**#BeTheReason**

Young people have led the greatest movements of our time. Join the thousands of young adults across Jeffco who have already gotten their COVID-19 vaccine and help end the pandemic.  
**Sign up today at: [www.jeffco.us/covid-vaccine](http://www.jeffco.us/covid-vaccine)**

What do you think of this ad?

NOTHING is off limits - we want to hear your reaction.

- Colors?
- Image choice?
- Main text (we can be the reason...)
- Supporting text/call-to-action (young people have led....)

How does this ad make you feel?

When you look at this ad, do you want to get a COVID-19 vaccine so you can participate in this kind of activity?

Where can you imagine seeing this kind of ad or hearing these messages (ex. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, flyers, TV ads, etc.)?

What would you change about this ad?

WE CAN  
**Be The Reason**  
*we can do the things we love.*

JEFFERSON  
COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH

**#BeTheReason**

Young people have led the greatest movements of our time. Join the thousands of young adults across Jeffco who have already gotten their COVID-19 vaccine and help end the pandemic.  
**Sign up today at: [www.jeffco.us/covid-vaccine](http://www.jeffco.us/covid-vaccine)**

What do you think of this ad?

NOTHING is off limits - we want to hear your reaction.

- Colors?
- Image choice?
- Main text (we can be the reason...)
- Supporting text/call-to-action (young people have led....)

How does this ad make you feel?

When you look at this ad, do you want to get a COVID-19 vaccine so you can participate in this kind of activity?

Where can you imagine seeing this kind of ad or hearing these messages (ex. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, flyers, TV ads, etc.)?

What would you change about this ad?

WE CAN  
**Be The Reason**  
*college experiences are back.*

**#BeTheReason**

Young people have led the greatest movements of our time. Join the thousands of young adults across Jeffco who have already gotten their COVID-19 vaccine and help end the pandemic.  
**Sign up today at: [www.jeffco.us/covid-vaccine](http://www.jeffco.us/covid-vaccine)**

What do you think of this ad?

NOTHING is off limits - we want to hear your reaction.

- Colors?
- Image choice?
- Main text (we can be the reason...)
- Supporting text/call-to-action (young people have led....)

How does this ad make you feel?

When you look at this ad, do you want to get a COVID-19 vaccine so you can participate in this kind of activity?

Where can you imagine seeing this kind of ad or hearing these messages (ex. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, flyers, TV ads, etc.)?

What would you change about this ad?