

How to monitor public opinion



How to use this document

This document presents inspiration for monitoring public opinion on immunization.

Monitoring public opinion and perceptions is an important element in preventing crisis, or limiting the damaging impact of a crisis, as it gives you an opportunity to understand your audiences better, interfere if new misconceptions arise and shape your communication accordingly.

Use the document as a starting point for internal discussions and planning regarding monitoring of public opinion.



How was this document developed?

This document is part of a WHO series of supporting documents concerning events that could erode confidence in vaccination. Such events can be related to vaccine safety, adverse events following immunization, changes in the vaccination programme, negative public debate, outbreaks or pandemics.

All documents were developed based on scientific evidence, laboratory research and fieldwork within psychology, social and behavioural science and communication and lessons learnt in countries. For an introduction to the theoretical background and evidence, refer to the WHO publication *Vaccination and trust*, available here: www.euro.who.int/vaccinetrust.

The supporting documents are intended for use by national

- ministries of health
- centers for disease control
- immunization programmes
- regulatory authority institutions.



**World Health
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Monitoring public opinion on immunization can help prevent a crisis, and during a crisis it can help you respond more efficiently.

Monitoring public opinion is also an important element in the ongoing effort to build resilience against vaccine safety scares.

It gives authorities an opportunity to:

- understand audiences better,
- interfere if new misconceptions arise,
- adjust the communication and crisis communication plan,
- shape communication and messages accordingly.

Tools for monitoring public opinion

How public opinion may be monitored depends on resources available, how the health system and media system are structured, and how people exchange opinions on immunization.

Some suggested activities include the following.

Conduct surveys



Obtain an understanding of knowledge levels and attitudes to vaccination, service provision and health authorities through a survey. The survey can be questionnaire-based and /or include qualitative studies such as focus groups. Ongoing surveys allow you to detect changes in attitudes and to shape your strategies and messages accordingly.

Gather information from a public information hotline or chat



Establish a telephone or chat information hotline for questions from the public. Register questions and analyse the outcome to understand: Which questions are more common? Are there any new types of questions that show an emerging concern or indicate new misperceptions? Who asks questions (who are the most concerned) in terms of age, gender, geographical location?

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Gather information from frontline health workers



Ask health workers to report back to you about questions asked by parents and beneficiaries. Especially if new kinds of questions are being asked, and new misperceptions seem to be taking a hold.

Monitor media



Monitor media, including printed, web and social media. Subscribe to services that offer searches (internet and/or printed media) and receive a daily report of news items published via e-mail. Make a directory of web pages and social media and check them regularly to keep track of the debate on vaccines and immunization. Consider engaging medical students to do this work.

Use your network



Ask your colleagues, partner organizations, friends, families and relatives about their opinions and perceptions, and ask them to inform you if they hear of any rumors circulating.

To **READ MORE** refer to:
• *Stakeholder management*
euro.who.int/vaccinetrust