

The Role of Communication in Public Health

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Arkansas Immunization Summit

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Objectives



- Public Health Values
- Public Health Competencies
- Public Health Leadership

First Value





Story #1

Story #1



The best predictor of patient adherence to their treatment regimen was whether or not the patient perceived that the people in the clinic cared about them.



Story #2

Story #2



What do you think the most frequent response was?

Story #2



Compassion

Second Value



Truth at all costs

Not the same thing as “being right”

Values in Public Health



Truth at All Costs

- Humility
- Accuracy
- Honesty
- Transparency
- Courage

Compassion

- Inclusion
- Respect
- Responsiveness
- Generosity
- Curiosity

Trust in Public Health



- Intention
- Competence

The Attributes of Public Health Leadership



- Initiative
- Curiosity
- Broad view
- Recognize opposition
- Speak truth to power
- Be confident
- Uphold values

McKee M. Seven goals for public health training in the 21st century. 2012.
European Journal of Public Health. Vol 23. No. 2: 186-187.

The Attributes of Public Health Leadership



- Initiative
- Curiosity
- Broad view
- Recognize opposition
- Speak truth to power
- Be confident
- Uphold values
- Communicate

McKee M. The attributes of public health leadership. 2025. European Journal of Public Health Vol. 35: Supplement 2, p. ii1-ii4.

Public Health Competencies



Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSAs)

Broad knowledge base

- Public health sciences
- Social sciences
- Economics

Public Health Competencies



Collaborative Approach

- Academic & practice
- Clinical & public health systems
- Governing & private organizations

Public Health Competencies



Systems Infrastructure

- Financial
- Information technology
- Data analysis and management
- Facilities

Public Health Competencies



Spoken Communication

- Interpersonal communication
- Presentation communication
 - Academic
 - Public
- Multi-media communication

Public Health Competencies



Written Communication

- Academic audiences
- Public audiences
- Specific audiences
- Numeracy
- Data display

Public Health Competencies



Communication Environment

- Information Access
- Media Literacy
- Misinformation
- Language and Culture

Infodemiology



- A new public health discipline that studies the spread of information with the goal of improving health
- **Infodemiology.com**
 - Dashboards
 - Infodemiology Training Program
 - For public health
 - For health care
 - In-person training
 - Additional Trainings
 - Other Resources

New Generation of Public Health Leaders



- 7 Public Health Leadership Capability Themes
- Communicate: Build Trust and Accountability
 - Crisis Leadership Skills
 - Beginning with the ability to communicate effectively, clearly, and authentically with key stakeholders
 - From that basis, trust and accountability are formed, strengthened, and sustained

Helm-Murtagh S and Erwin PC. Building a new generation of public health leaders forged in a public health crisis. American Journal of Public Health. 2024.114(6):626-632.

Public Health Leadership Development



- Not just for “leaders”
- Necessary for career development
- If a person would lead others, they must first learn to lead themselves.

- [illegible]

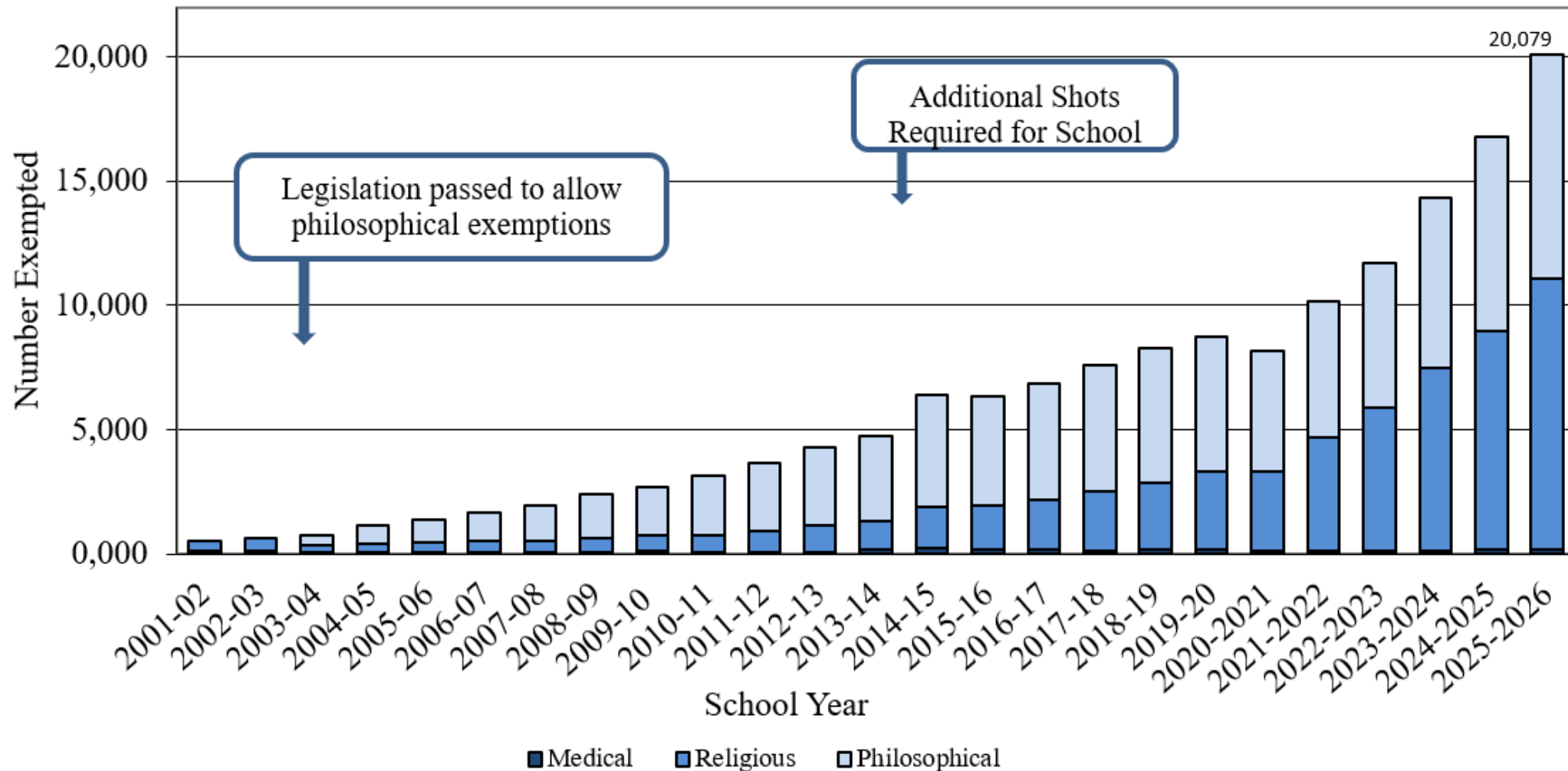
AZ: Religious exemption for childcare only, personal belief exemption for school (K-12) only
CO: Religious and personal belief exemptions combined under category of "nonmedical exemption"
DC and VA: Personal belief exemption for HPV only
MO and NE: Personal belief exemption for childcare only
WA: Personal belief exemption not allowed for MMR
WV: The disputed status of religious exemptions to requirements awaits further guidance from the state Supreme Court.

- Medical Only
- Medical, religious
- Medical, personal belief
- Medical, religious, personal belief

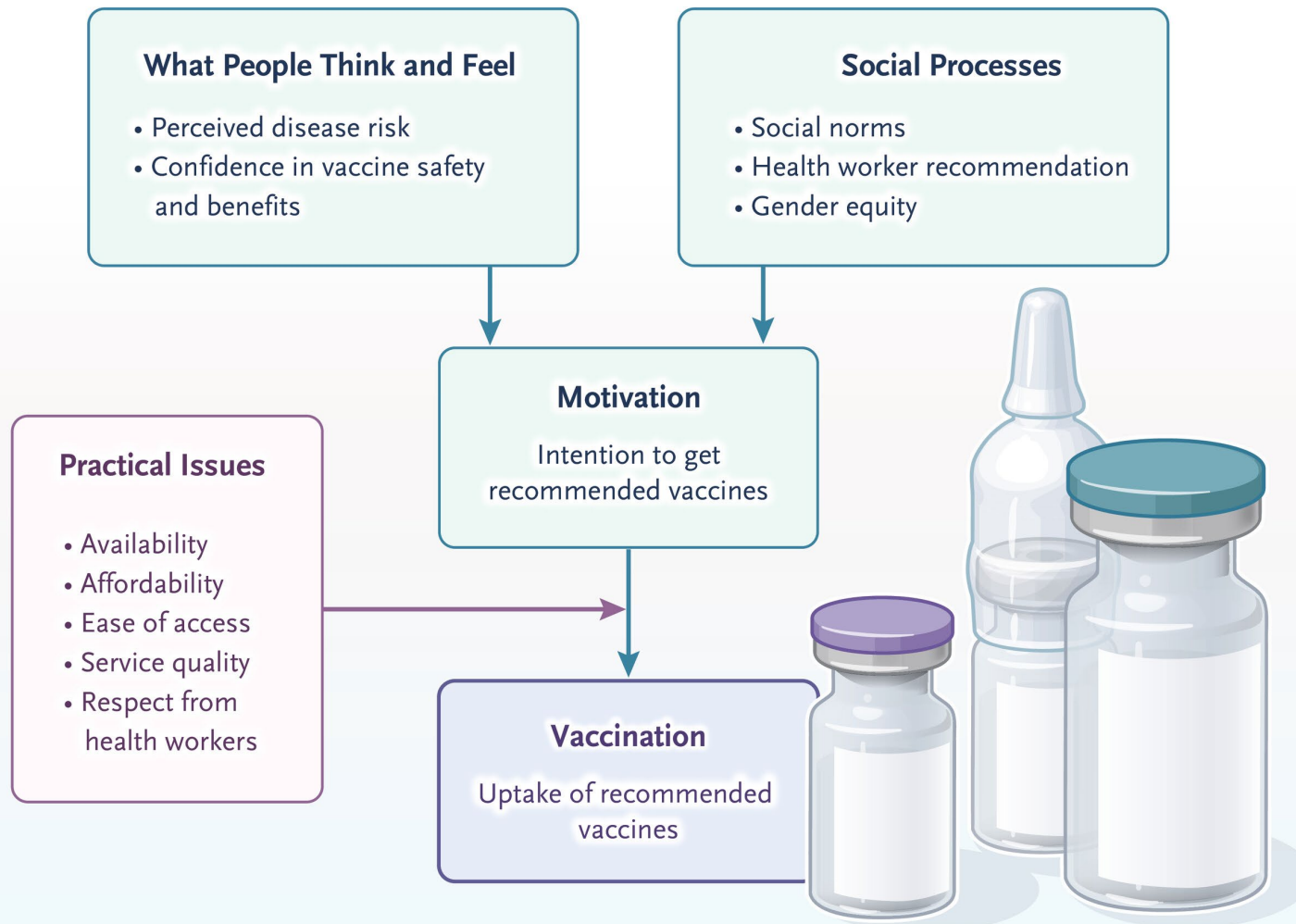
Immunization Exemption Report



Total Immunization Exemption by Type, Arkansas 2001-2026



Childhood Vaccine Hesitancy



Trusted Professionals

- In the context of declining institutional trust
- Nurses ranked as the most trusted professionals in the U.S.
- Varies little according to political affiliation
- Saad, Lydia. GALLUP Social & Policy Issues, January 13, 2025
- <https://news.gallup.com/poll/655106/americans-ratings-professions-stay-historically-low.asp>

Joseph P, Frank MO, Devine R, McCabe J, Capili B. Nurse Scientists as Trusted Voices in Health Communication. NEJM. 2026. 394: 1459-1461

2025 Honesty and Ethics of Professions Ratings

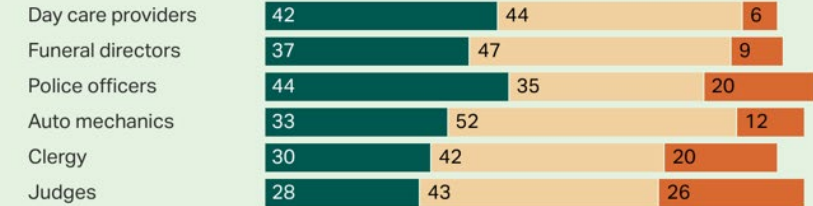
Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields -- very high, high, average, low or very low?

■ % High/Very high ■ % Average ■ % Low/Very low

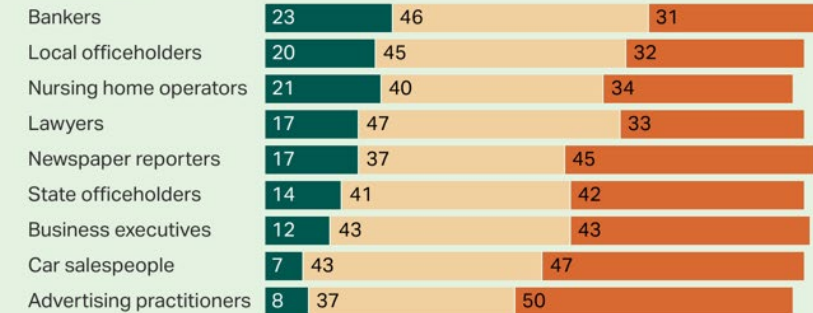
Majority positive



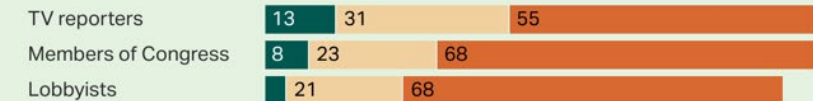
Net positive



Net negative



Majority negative



Professions are listed in order of net % high (% high/very high minus % low/very low).
% No opinion is not shown.

Dec. 2-18, 2024

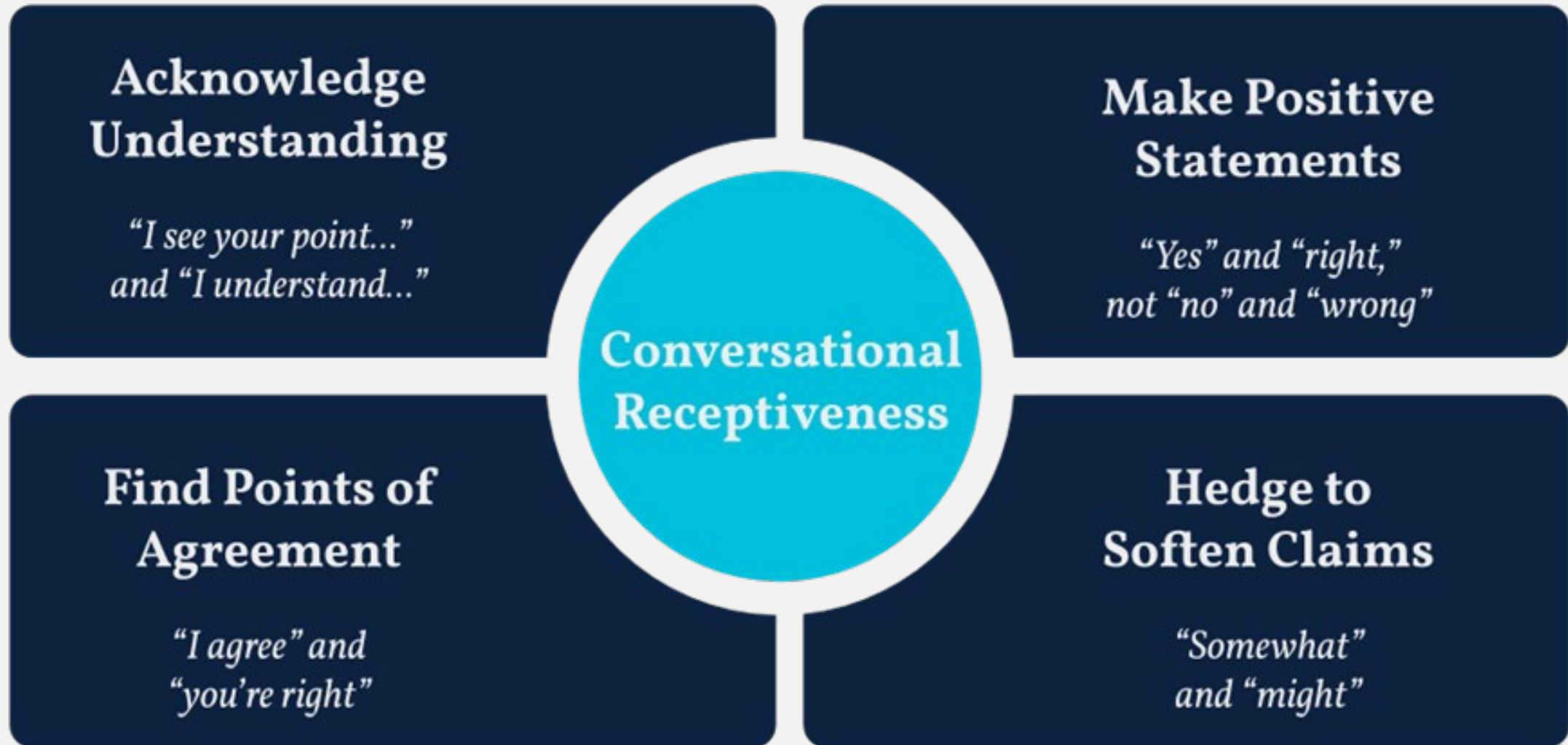
GALLUP



Conversational Receptiveness

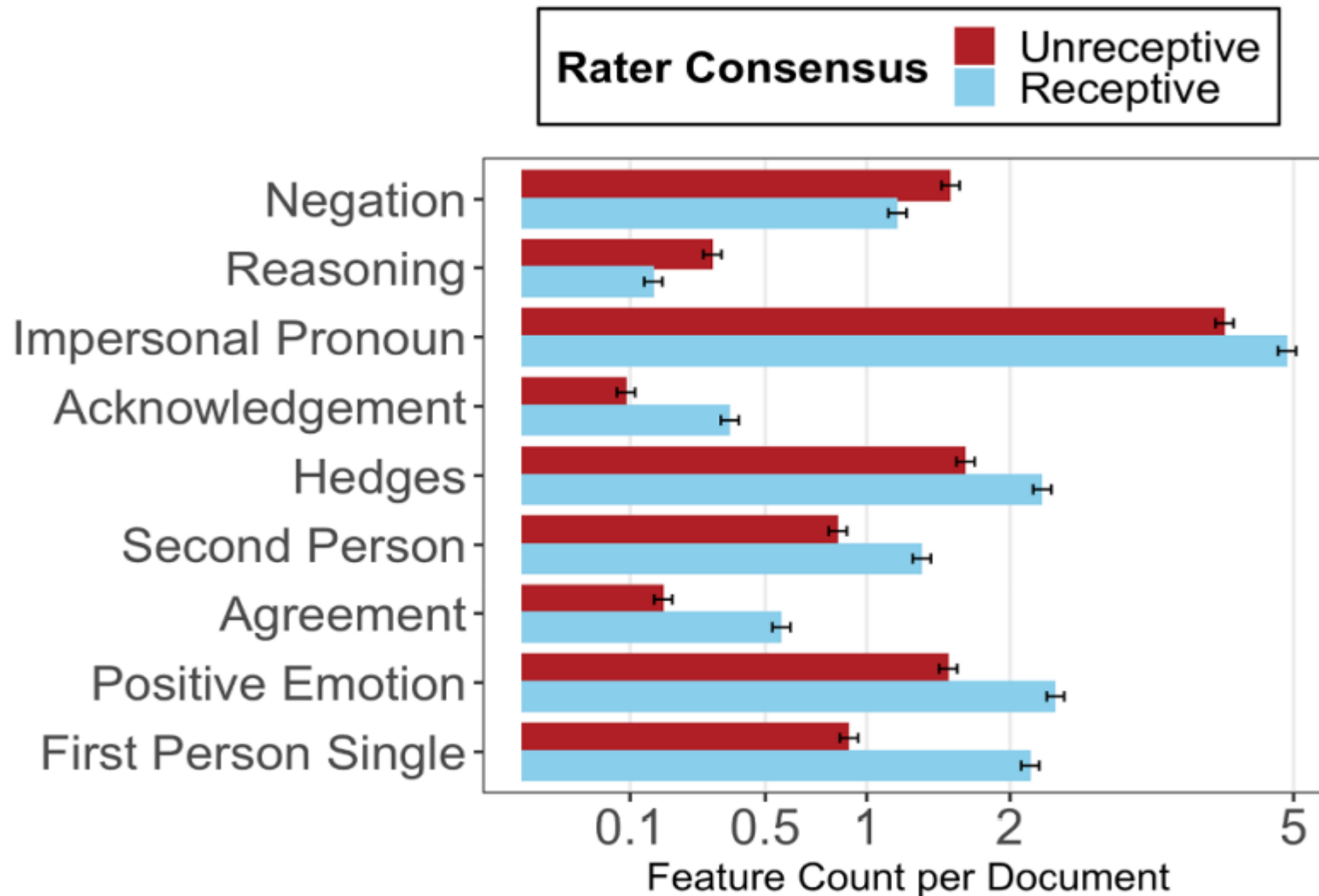


- The use of language to communicate one's willingness to thoughtfully engage with opposing views
- Defined by the use of specific words and phrases
- Strongly predicts conflict outcomes
- Yeomans M, Minson J, Collins H, Chen F, and Gino F. Conversational receptiveness: Improving engagement with opposing views. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 160 (2020) 131-148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp/2020.03.011>



Adapted from: Yeomans, M., Minson, J., Collins, H., Chen, F., & Gino, F. (2020). Conversational receptiveness: Improving engagement with opposing views. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 160, 131-148.

Model of Receptiveness



Using Conversational Receptiveness to Enhance Physician-Patient Interactions



- The Yale Customer Insights Conference 2022
- Julia Minson, social psychologist at Harvard Kennedy School
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6cxtzVwhyU>

Goals in Physician-Patient Interactions



- Changing beliefs/behavior
- Maintaining patient trust in provider/science
- Saving time
- Decreasing provider stress
- Maintaining ongoing clinical relationship

Outcomes from the Use of Conversational Receptiveness



- Vaccine-hesitant persons perceive receptive writers as being more reasonable and more trustworthy, and they would want additional opinion from them in the future
- The writer has more positive views of the vaccine-hesitant person: intelligent, reasonable, knowledgeable, trustworthy
- Improves conversants' evaluations of each other
- Increases willingness to interact in the future
- Increases consumption of accurate vaccine information
- It is easy to use

Leadership in Vaccine Confidence



- Not just for “parents”
- Needed for health professionals, too
- If a person would lead others, they must first learn to lead themselves.

Closing Discussion on Parental Anxiety



“That is precisely the function of a leader within any institution: to provide that regulation through his or her non-anxious, self-defined presence.”

- A Failure of Nerve. Edwin H. Friedman. Page 160.

Resources for Addressing Vaccine Questions



- Your Local Epidemiologist
- [VaccinateYourFamily.org](https://www.vaccinateyourfamily.org)
- [Immunize.org](https://www.immunize.org)
- [VaccineInformation.org](https://www.vaccineinformation.org)
- [LogicalFallacies.org](https://www.logicalfallacies.org)
- [ImmunizeAR.org](https://www.immunizear.org)

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Questions?
Comments?



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