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### Title

Understanding the Impact of of COVID-19 on Minority Groups: Exploring Factors Contributing to Disparities

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Understanding the Impact of of COVID-19 on Minority Groups: Exploring Factors Contributing  
to Disparities

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## Abstract

This research paper explores the multifaceted impact of COVID-19 on minority groups, focusing on two key aspects: vaccination rates and public trust in the government. Through a comprehensive literature review, the vaccination rates within various minority groups are examined, revealing disparities particularly prevalent among African Americans and refugees. Factors contributing to these disparities, including distrust in the government, are identified and analyzed. Additionally, the paper investigates the influence of public health policies on political trust both domestically and internationally. By studying different policies implemented during the pandemic, the research aims to assess their effectiveness in fostering public trust and enhancing the overall welfare of the population. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between COVID-19, minority communities, vaccination rates, public trust, and governmental policies, offering valuable insights for future policy-making efforts.

*Keywords:* minorities, covid-19, public trust

## Introduction

The virus SARS-CoV-2 has caused a global pandemic since the end of 2019. The virus targets the ACE2 receptor that is widely spread in the somatic cells, and primarily enters the body through the respiratory system and causes complications including internal bleeding and organ failure (Harrison et al. 2020). To prevent this highly contagious and fatal disease from inflicting more casualties, from the onset of the disease, December 2019, countries around the

world started to adopt certain lockdown or quarantine measures, which do not only lead to the emergence of new public health policies, but also changes of current policies affect other aspects of society. As a result, it is crucial to understand the interplay between health policies and the virus's spread, to unfold the gaps existent in policy and the influence on the trajectory of covid-19 within different communities. It is significant to understand the nuanced relationship between health policy and increased vulnerability experienced by diverse socioeconomic groups, as there is a prominent connection tied to systemic factors which affect the impact of the virus. This paper will first shed light on the political trust and transition to vaccination rate in the United States as well as other countries as both can serve as an indicator of the interplay between the public and institutions, including the government.

Political trust refers to the confidence people have in their government and the extent to which they see their government as trustworthy, credible, fair, and competent (Davies, B., Lalot, F., Peitz, L. et al, 2021). Scholars have suggested that similarly, citizens seek the support of authority figures, and several large-scale international surveys found positive associations between political trust at the individual level and the adoption of health-protective behavior (Davies, B., Lalot, F., Peitz, L. et al, 2021). Public trust is important as it leads to higher levels of cooperation between the public and the government, allowing for more compliance, lower mortality rates, and increased communication and transparency enabling the nation to operate smoothly. There are various factors contributing to the level of public trust in each country, including how involved each nation was during the lockdown and how well they supported their own people and their safety. Overall, more accountability, transparency, and responsiveness from the government can help better prepare for the next pandemic.

Aside from public trust, there are other factors that may either encourage or dissuade individuals from getting vaccinated in general. For example, individuals may not perceive the virus as deadly enough to require protection, or have personal opinions and conspiracies from outside sources that may impact their opinions. Lastly, there may be constraints that are out of peoples' controls that prevent them from getting vaccinated (Betsch, et al. 2018). Bestch listed many possible reasons for patients to hesitate when it comes to receiving vaccines. Out of the listed reasons, one factor that can result in individuals being unvaccinated was entirely out of individuals' control, which is caused by constraints and hindrances. An example of a group who face many barriers, like socioeconomic status, which may then prevent them from receiving vaccines include minority groups, as they lack resources for medical care that would allow them to afford these vaccinations. In fact, black residents only make up 32% of Louisiana's population, yet have a COVID-19 death rate of 72% in the state (Andraska 2021). Similarly, African Americans represent 50% of the COVID-19 cases, when only representing 30% of the actual Chicago population (Alcendor 2020). Additionally, undervaccination in minority populations is specifically prominent when it comes to refugees compared to non-immigrants. In the research conducted by Brandernberger (2023), it appears that refugee children in Ontario, Canada experienced undervaccination compared to non-refugee immigrants and nonimmigrants. To better understand how COVID-19 and vaccination against the virus impact various minority groups, a literature review will be conducted to understand the effect of this pandemic and these communities. Statistics and conclusions from various studies will be analyzed and compared to fully understand the impact.

## Methods

Data collection on the topics of public and government trust are done with the keywords “Government trust AND COVID-19” on Google Scholar. We selected \_ papers with inclusion of quantitative measurement of government trust of different ethnic or minority groups during COVID-19 published during or after 2020. Within the discussion of vaccination rates in different countries and groups, the key word input in the search bar is “Vaccine AND minority AND policy”. It was crucial to account for all of these keywords because the purpose of the paper was to examine how all of these factors correlated with each other. Out of all papers that appeared as a result of the search, we selected 10 papers that include the vaccination rate based on population groups in one country. For the analysis of this paper, from the papers we picked, a few minority groups will be selected and the vaccination rate statistics of these chosen groups (ex: people of color, lower socioeconomic status populations, etc.) will be analyzed and compared. The methodology will be a literature review between these statistics, and no new data will be collected nor will any new experiments be conducted. Last but not least, we selected three papers with comparable measurements on vaccination rate and government trust with reference to different minority and ethnic groups in both the United States and the United Kingdom, the data from which will be presented in figure 1 and 2.

### Government and Public Trust

Trust in government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic was shaped by various factors, including perceptions of corruption, political influence in healthcare, past negative experiences, and communication transparency. Lower-income individuals often exhibit high levels of trust, relying on government assistance, while wealthier counterparts demonstrated less compliance.

Over the course of the pandemic, political trust fluctuated, initially low but increasing as governments implemented programs and stricter measures, leading to reduced mortality rates and heightened trust levels. Education level also influenced trust, with better-educated individuals showing greater confidence in government actions, particularly when authorities demonstrated responsiveness, accountability, and transparency (Reichmuth, 2023). This section will be broken down to analyze factors including corruption, socioeconomic status, education, government involvement, economic impact, and media freedom in their contribution in the measurement of governmental and public trust. Nonetheless, when multiple such factors such as education, socioeconomic status, media freedom is weighted for the analysis, government trust remains having significant correlation with COVID-19 mortality (Zaki et al. 2022, Oksanen et al. 2020, Rieger and Wang 2021, Parsons and Wiggins 2020, Nielsen and Lindvall 2021, Lovari 2020, Bosworth et al. 2023).

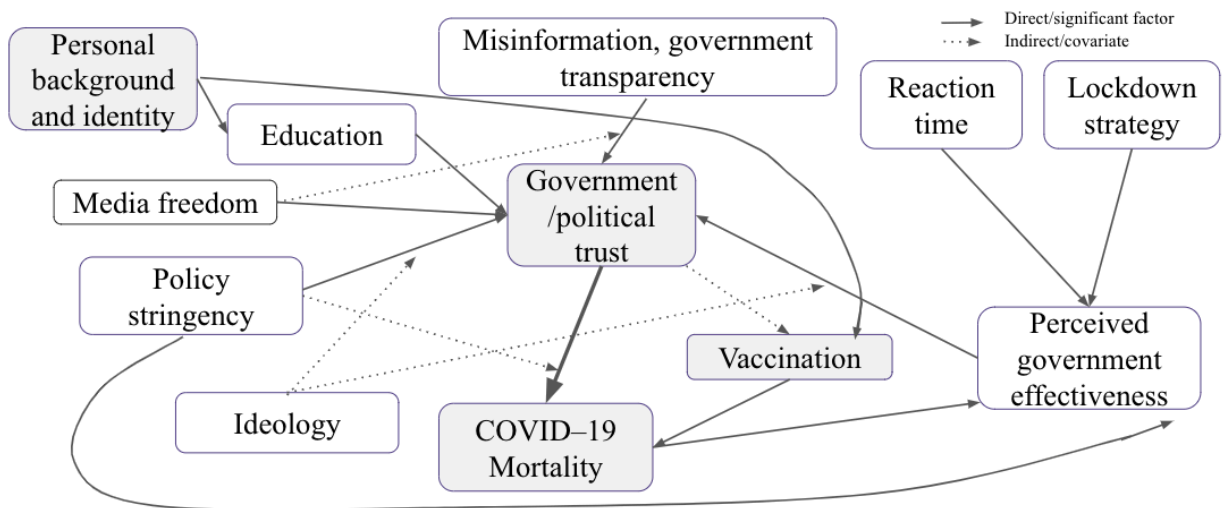


Figure 1, factors that affect government/political trust, vaccination and COVID-19 mortality with reference to Zaki et al.(2022), Oksanen et al. (2020), Rieger & Wang (2021), Parsons & Wiggins(2020), Nielsen & Lindvall (2021), Lovari (2020), and Bosworth et al. (2023).

## Corruption and Transparency

A significant source of low trust in government is corruption, which can decrease the public's confidence in political institutions. ScienceDirect shows how Latin America has the highest rates of inequality and leads to corruption which is why political trust is driven by social protection in regards to public health which has a negative correlation. High-scale countries where average education levels are higher tend to have higher levels of political trust but Latin America is more middle-income and has many differences in political trust. Corruption, less political trust, experience with bribes, and inconsistent execution of offers encourage to comply more because of the risk of bro bibs for noncompliance if caught breaking mobility restrictions showing how there is a lot of disparity in political trust but Latin America is progressing and showing increased levels of political trust as Latin America is instituting more social programs to reduce poverty (Bird 2023). Corruption can come in many forms, such as bribery, political influence in healthcare, and lack of transparency in governmental actions where governments are perceived as corrupt or untrustworthy and tend to have lower levels of political trust and compliance with public health measures.

## Socioeconomic Status and Education

Socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in shaping political trust. Research indicates that lower-income individuals tend to have higher trust in the government, as they rely more on social support systems and public services. In contrast, wealthier individuals may have lower



compliance rates because they are less dependent on government assistance. Education also has a significant impact on political trust; individuals with better education generally trust the government more, especially when it demonstrates accountability and transparency in decision-making. For example, Bird restates how high-income countries where average education levels are higher have higher levels of political trust (Bird 2023). This shows how Latin America exhibits higher levels of political trust as they are progressing towards higher studies and have increased social protection which is the main driver for political trust in Latin America. NIH shows how higher levels of education are associated with higher government trust and a lower tendency to judge government reactions as extreme as they are knowledgeable and well-versed in how the system works. Schools present an idealized picture of foundations and this leads to the cultivation of social norms of trusting the political system showing the positive relationship between trust and education (Rieger and Wang 2021).

#### Government Involvement and Communication

Trust in government generally increased over the pandemic as authorities became more involved in managing the crisis and implemented stricter laws to control the spread of the virus. Programs such as lockdowns, free health facilities, financial assistance, and monetary funds contributed to increased trust, as they were seen as evidence of government commitment to public welfare.

Effective communication also played a role in building trust. Transparent governments, provided timely information, and engaged in open communication with the public tended to have higher levels of trust. In Pakistan, there was a higher level of trust among citizens in the

government showing two-way communication on social media empowering the public to have an insight into the relevant information provided by the agency and connecting the public directly with the government while providing their feedback (Mansoor 2021). Cambridge Core shows how lack of transparency and accurate communication in government has been identified as a major element that has caused the decline of trust in government and how clear information and effective communication are important in terms of maintaining public trust (Cambridge Core 2021). Nature reveals how citizens seek the support of scholars showing how education plays a major role in the political trust levels. Higher trust in the government regarding COVID-19 control was significantly associated with higher adoption of health behaviors (handwashing, avoiding crowded spaces, and self-quarantine (Cambridge Core 2021).

#### Economic Impact and Government Support

Public health policies like lockdowns and restrictions on businesses had significant economic repercussions. Trust in government was influenced by how well authorities managed the economic fallout, including providing support to affected individuals and businesses. Perceptions of government competence and empathy in handling the economic impact affected overall trust.

Government involvement measured in stringency in COVID-19 can greatly impact public perception of the government. According to Rieger & Wang (2021), the average stringency after the first death due to COVID-19 positively contributes to public perception of the government. However, the current stringency without the temporal factor provides a slight negative impact on the trust from the public to the government. In addition, perception of the governmental policy can have significant impact as same policy with different populations perspective can lead to

different level of policy compliance: In Sweden and Denmark, where both are using similar public policy and governmental organization during COVID-19, Swedish residents on average have a lower governmental trust than the Danish residents due to their different ideology of the country from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Nielsen and Lindvall 2021).

Governments that provided robust economic support and implemented effective recovery strategies generally enjoyed higher levels of trust. ScienceDirect also shows how differences in social and political trust have been connected to per capita income and long-term economic growth as low-income people are more likely to trust the government as they need assistance and financial support the most (Bird 2021). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2017) pointed out that reliability, responsiveness, openness, better regulation, fairness, and inclusive policy making are key areas for governments to gain public trust (Cambridge Core 2021). PubMed reveals how The interlaced psychological dynamics between health and economic concerns in emotional coping with the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to a decrease in trust in health authorities, scientific research, and health professionals (Milbank 2021).

#### International Cooperation and Media Freedom

Trust in governments was also influenced by their participation in global efforts to combat the pandemic. Cooperation with other countries, sharing resources, and supporting international organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) could enhance trust in government responses. Conversely, countries that pursued isolationist policies saw declines in international trust. ScienceDirect reveals how in recent years many international laws have been passed and this combined with media freedom has underscored access to information

about government policymaking and provided open access to data as to where resources and funds are being used and how authorities are functioning and can give the perception of accountability and responsibility. This has led to a positive association between the perception of government responsiveness among the citizens and PGRC (Mansoor 2021). Nature reveals how several large-scale international surveys found positive associations between political trust at the individual level and the adoption of health-protective behavior showing increased trust in government, vote intentions for leading parties, and satisfaction with democracy increased after the start of a national lockdown across 15 European countries (Nature 2021).

Media freedom emerged as a significant factor affecting government trust. Higher levels of media freedom were associated with increased political knowledge and participation, leading to higher government trust. However, in countries with restricted media freedom, such as China and Russia, censorship appeared to establish trust in government actions. ScienceDirect shows the benefits of social media while communicating with citizens on a larger scale, how good governance influences citizens' attitudes and promotes public trust through moderating information on social media and how there's a positive association between the two. The Pakistan government has started using social media platforms to broadcast important information regarding decisions at the state level and after the outbreak of COVID-19, the prime minister of Pakistan has appeared many times on social media platforms to announce various important measures to make timely measures and important decisions during the pandemic. The open data has led to a perception of accountability and citizens who presume that their government often interacted with them on various platforms, enforced SOPs to combat the spread of the virus, and provided the best healthcare facilities possess greater trust

in the government. The agency's provision of quality information on social media positively and significantly enhanced public trust among citizens. The provision of quality information by APP on social media in Pakistan expressively boosts their followers' acuity regarding the agency's responsiveness. It resulted in a higher level of trust among citizens in government, providing two-way communication on social media, i.e., empowering the public to have an insight into the relevant information provided by the agency and connecting the public directly with the government while providing their feedback (Mansoor 2021).

### Government trust and vaccination Rates

Using governmental and public trust as an indicator of public behavior and compliance to COVID-19 guidelines like vaccination, we aim to assess the level of validation of the governmental trust and the vaccination rates. We used data from two papers done on the population of the United Kingdom separately on governmental trust and vaccination rate during COVID-19 pandemic. There is not enough data to generate linear regression as separate papers use different measurement methods with different targeted populations, so figure 2 is indicating a possibility of correlation only. Nonetheless, black, Asian, and minority groups has both less average vaccination rate and governmental trust than their white counterparts in the United Kingdom.

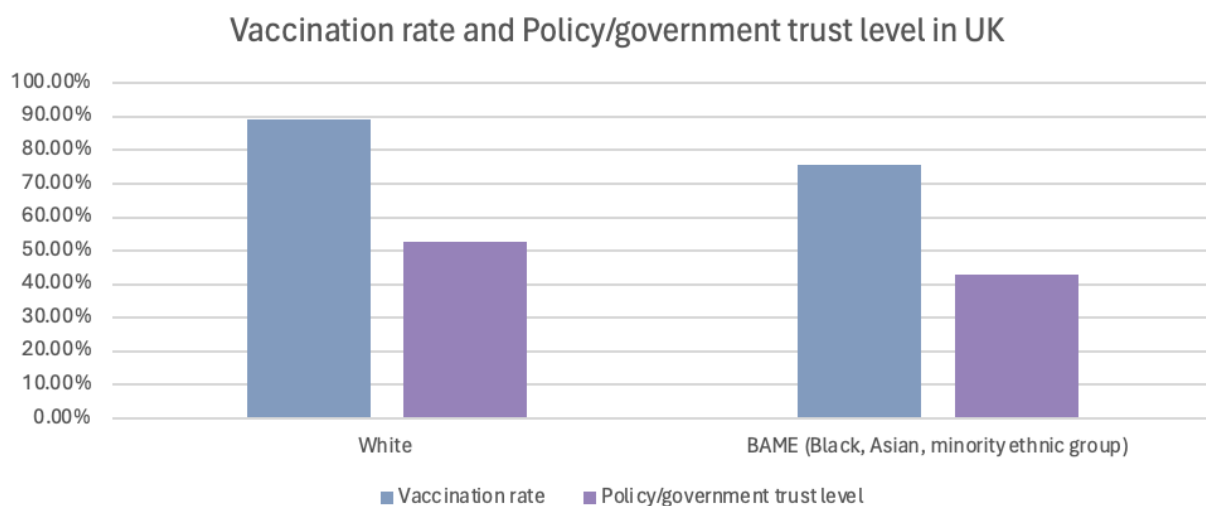


Figure 3, vaccination rate and government/policy trust in the UK are positively associated with each other. And BAME group tend to have lower rate on both measurement (Parsons & Wiggins, 2020; Bosworth et al., 2023). Vaccination rates of BAME is calculated by taking the average of the vaccination rate of Bangladeshi, black African, Black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Mixed, and Pakistani from Bosworth et al. (2023). Vaccination rate of white is calculated by taking the average of vaccination rate of White british and White other from Bosworth et al. (2023).

### Vaccination Rates

Minority groups like refugees experienced lower vaccination rates, which in turn leads to higher risk of spreading the Covid-19 virus and higher death rates. Since most refugees live in poverty, they lack proper health care systems, and specifically during the economic recession during the peak of the pandemic, had difficulty finding stable incomes for their families. Refugees also have difficulty trusting the government due to the government's inability to provide adequate sanitation and housing for refugees who are in very impoverished situations. As the World Health Organization began encouraging governments to distribute vaccines to civilians, many governments choose to not include refugees in the vaccination distributions. For example, Colombia even excluded refugees from the vaccine provisions, and its national policies made it even more difficult for undocumented refugees to receive vaccinations (Bohnet 2021). In fact, in Ontario, the difference in vaccination rates between refugees and non-immigrants was clear in children. Children who were from an non-immigrant background had a 54.3% vaccination rate, while the vaccination rate among refugee children was 27.7% (Brandenberger 2023).

Moreover, the African-American populations in the United States also experienced

negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in minimal vaccination rate for members of the black community. During the pandemic, it was evident that COVID-19 disproportionately affected the black community, since they are more at risk to health conditions such as cardiovascular, respiratory, or autoimmune diseases (Andraska 2021). Furthermore, Black patients and minorities were also more likely to be essential workers and prone to higher-density living environments, putting them more at risk. On top of these factors, the black community has had distrust towards the medical field as a response to the history of racist actions and policies that have negatively put this marginalized group in a vulnerable and cautious place (Andraska 2021). Because of the higher rate of skepticism and mistrust the black community has towards both the government and the field of medicine, it resulted in limited testing and vaccination of COVID-19 in the black community. In fact, members of the black community have had the lowest vaccination rate out of all other groups, according to a survey conducted by the Household Pulse Survey. This survey was sent biweekly to participants from July to October 2021, and the results show that among 18-29 year old black participants, the vaccination rate was 31.1%, with a 95% confidence interval of 25.7-37.1 (Zhang 2022).

Comparing internationally between the United States and the United Kingdom, the vaccination rate of black identifying individuals are both lower than the vaccination rate of the white counterparts of the same country (Bosworth et al. 2023, Zhang et al. 2022). As a result, it is evident that members of low-income and lower socioeconomic status are at large risk of COVID-19 due to lower vaccination rates, mistrust in the government, and disparities within access to quality healthcare.

## Conclusion

Within minority groups, it is evident that there exist prominent demographics that experience more health inequalities, systemic racism, and barriers, making them more skeptical and hesitant to become vaccinated (Mishi 2023). With diverse populations having a lack of entrustment of the government, it is only one of many factors that contribute to a smaller vaccination rate within the minority population. Additionally, transparency is important for individuals to have the ability to trust their government and have the ability to hold them accountable for their actions. Without transparency, individuals will feel misguided and will not feel knowledgeable of their surroundings, causing them to mistrust the government and lose hope in the government's current and future actions.



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## Appendix: Interview transcript

Subha: Of which nation are you a citizen? Where in the US are you from? Speaker 1: Hi, my name is Speaker 1. I'm a citizen of the US. I'm from San Diego, California.

Subha: During the pandemic, how safe and secure did you feel?

Speaker 1: During the pandemic, I felt very safe and secure in my house as my parents were very protective. We didn't go out anywhere and when my parents did go out to get groceries they would wear a mask and use curbside pickup which was contactless and wash the vegetables and fruits 2 times with soap outside our house before bringing them ensure COVID or any other strain wasn't contaminating the food we ate. I felt very safe in my house as we had no outside contact and had no way of getting COVID.

Subha: How much did you trust the government during the pandemic?

Speaker 1: I didn't trust the government as much because on the news they kept saying they would take action and come out with a vaccine and it took them forever. There were a lot of statistics and information they kept from the public like the actual number of cases reported which made it even harder to believe them as we didn't know how many people were being affected and how many undocumented cases there were.

Subha: What made you trust the government?

Speaker 1: I think when the government said they came out with a vaccine and the other collaborations they made with CDC and other institutions with high credibility, it made me

believe in the government more. Also when the cases started to go down, I felt more trust and believed in the government that they were finally handling the situation.

Subha: Which healthcare policies affected you, or helped/ didn't help you feel more safe/secure?

Speaker 1: The vaccine, mask mandate, and home order helped me as those helped me feel safe and away from contracting the virus. I think quarantine, 6 feet distance also helped as these were protocols that finally helped decrease the spread of the virus and were crucial to the process.

Subha: To what extent did the government protect you from the pandemic and what role do you think politics played?

Speaker 1: The government protected me from the pandemic heavily as without the enforcement of the protocols and the mandates, the virus would not have stopped spreading and this helped me and other individuals feel safe and healthy. I think politics played a huge role in the government's action as each party reacted in a way that aligned with their political views.

Subha: How did your family/community react to the healthcare policies made during the pandemic?

Speaker 1: My family and community reacted in a good way as this helped the general welfare and kept us all healthy and safe in a time of crisis. Since we were all very scared, we were confined in our houses and abided by all the mandates and protocols to be safe. My family trusted the government and followed their rules.

Subha: How much do you trust the government now if there were to be another pandemic?

Speaker 1: I trust the government a lot more as I've seen their plan of action when it comes to a pandemic and what steps they took to target it, how successful it's been and how safe and secure I've felt after they took action. I think they would handle another pandemic well.

Subha: What helped you trust and believe in the government?

Speaker 1: Their actions and how everything played out in terms of lower COVID cases helped me trust and believe in the government more seeing their plan actually worked out and how everyone else also trusted them to make sure their plan would follow through as it did. The protocols and mandates they made and enforced played a huge role in reducing the cases and this helped me trust the government more.

Subha: Do you think trust levels in the US government are higher or lower?

Speaker 1: I think higher after COVID.

2:

Subha: Of which nation are you a citizen? Where in the US are you from? Speaker 2:

Hi, my name is Speaker 2. I'm a citizen of the US. I'm from Austin, Texas.

Subha: During the pandemic, how safe and secure did you feel?

Speaker 2: During the pandemic, I felt safe but I had recently moved from Baltimore and wasn't sure if I felt safer there. My parents were very protective and I didn't go out anywhere and always followed the mask mandate.



Subha: How much did you trust the government during the pandemic?

Speaker 2: I didn't trust the government as much because they weren't very transparent with the whole issue and weren't giving us updates and hid the number of COVID cases which made it untrustworthy and suspicious.

Subha: What made you trust the government?

Speaker 2: I think when the government said they came out with the vaccinations.

Subha: Which healthcare policies affected you, or helped/ didn't help you feel more safe/secure?

Speaker 2: The vaccine, mask mandate, and home order helped me as well as the quarantine.

Subha: To what extent did the government protect you from the pandemic and what role do you think politics played?

Speaker 2: The government protected me from the pandemic heavily to stop the spread and their heavy involvement in social programs.

Subha: How did your family/community react to the healthcare policies made during the pandemic?

Speaker 2: My family and community reacted positively and this helped us stay safe and healthy.

Subha: How much do you trust the government now if there were to be another pandemic?

Speaker 2: I trust the government a lot more and I think they would handle another pandemic

well.

Subha: What helped you trust and believe in the government?

Speaker 2: The protocols and mandates they made and enforced played a huge role in reducing the cases and this helped me trust the government more.

Subha: Do you think trust levels in the US government are higher or lower?

Speaker 2: I think higher after COVID.

3

Subha: Of which nation are you a citizen? Where in the US are you from? Speaker 3: Hi, my name is Speaker 3. I'm a citizen of India. I'm from Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Subha: During the pandemic, how safe and secure did you feel?

Speaker 3: During the pandemic, I didn't feel very safe as the cases in India were spreading very rapidly and it was scary. The government wasn't honest and transparent about the vaccine and it was very scary.

Subha: How much did you trust the government during the pandemic?

Speaker 3: I didn't trust the government at all as they kept hiding the number of cases, barely took action, and weren't transparent with their actions. Also when they finally released the vaccine it wasn't even free which made it even worse.

Subha: What made you trust the government?

Speaker 3: When they started talking about the vaccines, support programs, mask mandates, and other social programs that would promote general welfare.

Subha: Which healthcare policies affected you, or helped/ didn't help you feel more safe/secure?

Speaker 3: The vaccine, mask mandate, and stay-at-home order helped me as well as the quarantine.

Subha: To what extent did the government protect you from the pandemic and what role do you think politics played?

Speaker 3: The government didn't help protect me from the pandemic as much as the rules were very loose and confusing. I was very scared and wasn't sure if the situation would get any better as many of my relatives were dying off.

Subha: How did your family/community react to the healthcare policies made during the pandemic?

Speaker 3: My family and community were also very scared and were praying for the best. The healthcare policies were helpful but everything wasn't enforced properly. Subha: How much do you trust the government now if there were to be another pandemic? Speaker 3: I trust the government a bit more as they handled the situation but it could have definitely been better as everyone was very scared as no one has seen a pandemic like this before. The rules and regulations could have been enforced better and the government could have been more transparent and considerate by making vaccines free like other countries.

Subha: What helped you trust and believe in the government?

Speaker 3: The protocols and mandates and police enforcement for the stay-at-home order.

Subha: Do you think trust levels in the Indian government are higher or lower?

Speaker 3: I think a bit higher after COVID.