



Covid-19 Audience Outlook Monitor

Qualitative Research Tools

Guidelines for Recruiting Virtual Focus Groups with “**Vaccinated and Reluctant to Return**”

Prepared by Surale Phillips

March 22, 2021

Checklist for Recruiting Your Virtual Focus Group

1. Establish eligibility parameters
2. Determine your incentive
3. Pull your email contact list
4. Create your screener survey
5. Extend invitation via email
6. Screen respondents
7. Recruit respondents
8. Confirm respondents
9. Send reminder message

Topic Introduction

This topic is a general discussion with arts audiences who feel they are not yet ready to return to cultural events even though they have been vaccinated. It is geared toward understanding what is driving people's behavior and their concerns, both short term and long term.

Step-by-Step Recruitment Details

1. Establish eligibility parameters

Limit participation to patrons who've been active with you within the past 18 months, or roughly within a year before Covid-19 dominated the landscape. This may include subscribers, members, ticket-buyers, or other event attendees. The more you can do on your end to pre-screen your recruits through your database, the fewer questions you'll need to ask them on your screener survey.

2. Determine your incentive

Offering an incentive is important to ensuring that people show up. It also respects their time. Typical incentives include Visa or Amazon gift cards of \$50, which can be [delivered electronically](#). If you cannot budget for gift cards, you may offer a voucher for future performance tickets, or a free membership, or a similar premium. Bear in mind that organizational incentives tend to bias the pool of respondents towards those with stronger ties to your organization.

3. Pull your email contact list

After you've established who will be invited to your focus group and what you will offer as an incentive you can pull your contact list. We recommend segmenting your list into random batches of 50 contacts and deploying them until you have adequately filled your groups. This approach minimizes the number of people you'll need to reject.

4. Create your screener survey

The most efficient way to recruit your focus group is to deploy a simple survey using SurveyMonkey or other online survey tool. If you do not



have survey software you can use Google Forms to create a pre-registration form, but you'll need to adapt these questions to collect information and follow up with your respondents one by one to either confirm or disqualify them for the group. You should embed your survey link into the email invitation and track respondents' email addresses automatically if you have that capability. Regardless, you'll need to collect contact information in your screener survey, if they express interest in participating. Including optional demographic questions will help you populate a diverse group. A sample survey is provided in the Appendix.

5. Extend pre-recruitment invitation via email

Subject line #1: Please join our video discussion group

Subject Line #2: Special request from [Organization]

Message Content:

Dear [Name],

I'm contacting you because at some point over the past few seasons you've [attended one or more programs] offered by [Organization].

We are reaching out to ask if you'd be willing to participate in a small video discussion group to share your thoughts about **returning to cultural events**. The group will be moderated by a member of our staff and be no larger than six participants. You must have a webcam to participate from a quiet location. As a token of our appreciation for your time, discussion group participations will receive a [\$50 Visa gift card].

This is strictly research. No sales or fundraising is involved.

[Organization] is part of an international study of arts audiences to understand how people feel about **returning to cultural events** during and after the Covid-19 pandemic so we can best meet their needs.

Two time slots are offered:

[Date and time of discussion #1]

[Date and time of discussion #2]

If you are interested in participating, please [click here] [embed link to screener survey/form] to be considered for a slot. Only five slots are available for each time. If the hyperlink is not active, cut and paste this hyperlink into your browser: [Insert full link to screener survey/form]

Thanks so much for your consideration. Your participation would be enormously helpful to [organization].

If you are selected, we will send you detailed instructions for joining the video discussion.

Sincerely,

[Name of Sender]

6. Screen your respondents

Once you have closed your screening survey process and have a sufficient number of replies, use the data you have collected on your survey to choose participants. Try to populate each group with as much diversity as possible or as reflects your general audience demographics (e.g. age, gender).

Disqualify anyone who works for your organization including board members.

7. Recruit the qualified respondents

Example outbound message for individual recruitment emails:

Subject Line: Invitation to Video Discussion Group: [Date and Time]

Dear [Name],

We are delighted you are interested in being part of our video discussion group on [Date from start time to end time]. If you are still available, I'd like to confirm your participation, and send you the video-conference details. [Name] will be moderating the discussion. We look forward to your reply. As a token of our appreciation, you'll receive [describe incentive] if you participate in the meeting.

Regards,

--

[Sender's name]

8. Confirm respondents

Immediately upon receiving an affirmative acceptance, send the second confirmation message:



Subject Line: Confirmation: Video Discussion Group: [Date and Time]

Fantastic, [Name]. Here are the details. I'll also send you a calendar appointment with the same information, in case that is helpful.

We look forward to your participation in the discussion on [Date and time] via [videoconference platform]. If you're not familiar with the [videoconference] software, you might want to join the meeting a few minutes early. My cell phone is [Number] in case you need to reach me beforehand for any reason.

[Name]

Video Discussion Group re: [Going out to cultural events during and after Covid-19 pandemic]
Moderator: [Name of Moderator]
[Date and time]

Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

[Insert hyperlink to videoconference]

9. Send reminder message

Send a reminder to each participant by email 24 hours in advance of the session.

Appendix: Sample Screening Survey for Vaccinated and Still Reluctant to Return

Online Survey Welcome Page

Thanks so much for your interest in participating in our video discussion about going out to cultural events after vaccination.

This online registration form will allow you to indicate your availability for the 60-minute meeting.

Participation is limited to six people. If you are selected, a staff member of [Organization] will contact you personally in a few days to confirm your participation. If you do not hear from us, it means we have filled the group. But there should be other opportunities like this one in the future!

This is strictly research - no sales or fundraising is involved.

[next page button]

Online Survey - Page 1 - Screen for Eligibility

Have you been vaccinated for COVID-19?

No, I've not been vaccinated [use survey logic to disqualify]

Yes, I've been partially vaccinated [use survey logic to continue]

Yes, I've been fully vaccinated [use survey logic to continue]

Now that you've been vaccinated, which statement best reflects how you feel about going out to cultural events?

I'm ready now or will attend as soon as you open [use survey logic to disqualify]

I'm not ready to return even though I've been vaccinated [continue and qualify]

Online Survey - Page 2 - Background

This page is for qualified respondents. The remainder should be skipped to the disqualification page. Please program your survey logic on the following questions accordingly.



Now, please tell us just a few things about yourself.

Are you a practicing artist?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe your artistic practice. [open-ended/comments box]

[You may or may not wish to screen out professional artists. If you wish to exclude artists, use your survey logic here to move them to the disqualifications page.]

Do you work as a full time or part time staff member for a nonprofit performing arts organization?

Yes

No

[We recommend screening out people who are arts professionals. If you wish to exclude arts professionals, use your survey logic here to move them to the disqualifications page.]

How many times have you attended live performances at the following organizations or venues over the past two years?

Response Options: None; 1 or 2 times; 3 or more times

[Organization]

[Other Organization]

[Other Organization]

[Add as many other organizations as you'd like; this will give you a sense of the breath of the individual's participation profile]

[add any demographics you wish to include here]

Online Survey - Page 3 - Request for Cooperation and Contact Information

This page is for qualified respondents based on your inclusion/exclusion criteria on page 2.

Thank you so much for your interest in our video discussion group about **going out to cultural events** during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Each discussion will last 60 minutes and will be held via [Zoom or another videoconference platform that you use].

Please indicate your availability for the follow dates and times:

I'm available on [Date and Time #1]

I'm available on [Date and Time #2]

Please provide your name, email address, daytime phone number, and any additional comments or instructions for how and when to reach you.

Name: [Comments Box]

Email: [Comments Box]

Daytime phone: [Comments Box]

Please share any instructions for how best to reach you: [Comments Box]

Since participation is limited, we will follow up with you personally if you are confirmed to participate. THANK YOU! If you do not hear from us, please consider this group to have been filled.

[End]



Disqualification/Thank You Page

Your survey logic should be programmed to bring disqualified to this page before exiting.

Thank you for your interest, but we will not be able to confirm you for this group. We hope to provide you with a future opportunity to participate.





Audience Outlook Monitor Research

Vaccinated but Reluctant to Return: Testing Audience Feelings about Returning to Arts Programs

Before starting

- Introduce yourself
- Introduce other members of your team and explain that they'll be taking notes, but won't participate in the discussion
- Require participants to use their webcam during the discussion (a pre-condition that should be communicated in advance)
- Go around the virtual meeting space and let participants introduce themselves, introducing a simple ice-breaker question related to your organization (e.g., "How long have you been attending our programs?" and "What other arts programs do you attend?")

Introduction

Before we start, I'd like to give you just a little background on why we're here today.

[Participating Organization] is interested in better understanding how people who've been vaccinated feel about returning to live programs.

Your responses are confidential and will only be shared within our organization. With that assurance, please be as candid as possible with your responses. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions.

I promise to not keep you longer than one hour. Afterwards, we have a [describe incentive (e.g., a \$50 Visa gift card)] for you, as a token of our appreciation for your time today.

Discussion Guide

1. *First I'd like to discuss the types of activities you've resumed doing since you've been vaccinated. What sorts of out-of-the-house activities have you started doing again? Can you give me any examples? [prompt, if necessary: shopping, exercising, going to religious services, visiting friends; not focusing here on cultural programs]*

Probe: How about restaurants? Now that you're vaccinated, how do you feel about going out to restaurants? Are you equally comfortable at all types of restaurants, or are you more comfortable in certain kinds of spaces?

What makes you more or less comfortable in different types of spaces?

Probe: *Do you think of theatres as more or less risky than restaurants? [If “more risky” probe further] What makes going to a theatre more risky than going to a restaurant?*

2. [Written exercise] *Now let’s talk about going out to theaters and concert halls – indoor venues. We’ve learned from our survey that many people who are vaccinated are not yet ready to go out. Take a moment to write down on a piece of paper a few of the issues or concerns that factor into your thinking about buying tickets and going out again to theatres and concert halls. In other words, what questions or concerns come to mind when you think about going out to a theatre or concert hall? [pause approx. 1 minute for written exercise]*

[Discussion] *Please tell me about your #1 concern.* [working quickly around the table; then run a series of probes corresponding to the major concerns the mention, and that we know about; **this is the heart of the protocol. Ask each person to name their top concern and with a show of hands, ask the group if this concern was on their list.**]

Continue discussion with these probes if not mentioned above.

Probe: *How many of you are concerned that others in your family or friendship circle are not yet vaccinated? [show of hands]*

Probe: *How many of you are concerned about your own immunity – that you might not have achieved immunity, and might still contract the Covid-19 virus?*

Probe: *How many of you are concerned about how long your immunity will last, and when you’ll need a booster shot?*

Probe: *How many of you are concerned about the new variants – how they might be impacting infection rates in your area?*

Probe: *How many of you are concerned that even though you’re vaccinated, you might still carry the virus and infect someone else?*

Probe: *How many of you are concerned that events you purchase in advance might be canceled? – Does refund policy enter into your decision to buy tickets to future events?*

Probe: *What are the health safety procedures at venues that you are most concerned about?*

Of anything we just discussed, what specifically would stop you from buying subscription tickets for programs that are well into the future?

3. *What role do overall infection rates in your area play in your thinking about going out again, if any? Do you keep track of infection rates?*

Probe: *At what level will you feel the infection rates are low enough that it’s safe to go out again, given that you’re vaccinated?*

4. *How comfortable or uncomfortable are you with the idea that Covid-19 will mostly likely be with us for years, if not in perpetuity, and that there may always be a risk that you might sit next to someone who is contagious?*

Probe: *Would you feel comfortable sitting next to someone who you knew to be contagious?*

5. *Do you trust [our organization] to do the right thing in terms of taking appropriate precautions and implementing necessary health safety measures?*

Probe: *What advice would you give us about communicating with audience members about coming back to our venue?*

Probe: *When it comes to information about our venue's health and safety measures, which of the following would best describe you: I'm going to read three descriptions and then I'll ask for a show of hands for each one. (For each group, follow up with a probe such a "what makes you say that" or "tell me more".)*

I'm a skimmer – someone who wants to glide on the surface and get basic information.

I'm a swimmer – someone who wants to splash around through different types of information of most interest to them

I'm a diver – someone who wants to jump into the deep end and thoroughly peruse the information details

Wrap-Up

- Thanks so much for your time today.
- Explain fulfillment of honorarium

