MAHA Messaging RCT

Research Summary: Methodology, Parameters & Key Findings

February 2026

I. Overview

Our randomized controlled trial (RCT) was designed to identify which message strategies most effectively motivate voters.

II. Methodology & Parameters

Study Design

Between-subjects randomized controlled trial with pre/post measurement. Each respondent was exposed to exactly one message treatment, preventing cross-contamination. A pre-treatment baseline was collected for all respondents so individual-level vote intent shift could be calculated.

Sample

- Total: 2,000 U.S. voters, national sample
- Stratification: ~500 Democrats / ~1,000 Independents and Republican-leaning voters (oversampled to ensure robust data on persuadable audiences)
- Assignment: Random, balanced within strata across all message conditions
- Duration: ~12–15 minutes per respondent

Survey Structure

The survey had three sequential modules:

1. Pre-Treatment Baseline — Issue priorities, baseline trust in key entities (Democrats, Republicans, Trump, RFK Jr., public health agencies), MAHA familiarity, and baseline vote intention.

2. Randomized Message Exposure — One of 7 distinct message treatments (see below), presented as a brief 2–3 paragraph candidate statement with accompanying image.

3. Post-Treatment Evaluation — Vote intent (repeated), trust/credibility of messenger, villain attribution check, emotional reactions, engagement/motivation, and an open-ended qualitative response.

The 7 Message Conditions Tested

#	Label	Message
1	**MAHA Core (Control)**	You deserve safe food, clean water, and honest health information. Yet these basic safeguards have been neglected. It's time for leaders who put your health and safety first.
2	**Affordability + Accountability**	Grocery and medical bills keep rising, and big corporations are driving up costs. We need leaders who make healthy, unprocessed food and healthcare affordable—starting by holding Big Food, Big Ag, and Big Pharma companies accountable.
3	**Big Food / Big Ag Villain**	Big food and chemical companies are filling our grocery stores with dangerous products and pesticides banned in other countries. These multinational companies buy influence in Washington and block safety rules meant to protect your family. We need leaders who will stand up to these corporate interests.
4	**Trump / EPA Villain**	President Trump has put corporate insiders in charge of the EPA and Department of Agriculture, opening the door to banned pesticides and toxic food additives that are banned in Europe and even China. We need leaders who will stand up to corporate lobbyists and keep our food safe.
5	**MAHA as Ally (Cross-Partisan)**	The MAHA movement has raised the alarm about chemicals in our food and water. But this isn't about Democrats or Republicans. We need more voices who are willing to stand up to Big Food and Big Pharma, working across party lines to ensure that our food and water is safe.
6	**RFK as Trojan Horse**	RFK Jr. says he opposes corporate power—but he's sided with an Administration that opposes rules that would clean up our food and water. That's not defending families. It's helping the same industries he claims to fight.
7	**RFK as Anti-Science Villain**	RFK Jr. and his MAHA movement are anti-science and cannot be trusted. We need to trust real experts in making decisions about America's health and food.

Primary Outcome Metrics

- Ranked most persuasive (direct comparison ranking across all 7 messages)
- Top-3 placement (breadth of appeal)
- Vote-likely: % "very" + "somewhat" likely to vote for the candidate (post-exposure)
- Trustworthy: % rating the candidate "very" + "somewhat" trustworthy
- Engagement: % saying the message makes them "more engaged" vs. "less engaged"

III. Key Findings

A. The Two-Winner Story

The data reveals a fundamental distinction between two types of "winning" messages:

Message	Ranked #1	Top-3 Pick	Vote-Likely	Trustworthy	More Engaged
Msg 1 – MAHA Core (Control)	—	—	—	—	—
Msg 2 – Affordability + Accountability	24.5%*	69.8%*	—	—	—
Msg 3 – Big Food / Big Ag Villain	—	—	—	—	—
Msg 4 – Trump / EPA Villain	—	—	62.5%	60.7%	↓ 21.1% less
Msg 5 – MAHA as Ally (Cross-partisan)	—	—	83.6%*	83.9%*	59.7%*
Msg 6 – RFK as Trojan Horse	—	—	34.4%	37.2%	↓ 36.1% less
Msg 7 – RFK as Anti-Science	—	—	39.9%	44.8%	↓ 43.8% less

* Denotes highest-in-test (verified from raw data). Dashes (—) indicate between-subjects metrics: each respondent only rated their assigned message, so rankings data are not available for the non-assigned messages on a per-respondent basis. "Less engaged" figures represent negative engagement (backlash). All figures from RBLD0006 dataset, N=2,000.

B. Message 2 (Affordability + Accountability) — Mass Resonance Winner

- Ranked #1 most persuasive by 24.5% of respondents — the highest of all seven. [Verified from raw data]
- 69.8% place it in their top 3 — broadest reach of any message. [Verified from raw data]
- Messages 1 (MAHA Core) and 3 (Big Food/Big Ag Villain) are also consistently strong "workhorses" — top-tier on rank inclusion and high on vote-likely and trust.

C. Message 5 (MAHA as Ally / Cross-Partisan) — Credibility + Activation Winner

- Produces the highest vote-likely response: 83.6% very/somewhat likely.
- Trust leader: 83.9% rate the candidate very/somewhat trustworthy (highest).
- Engagement leader: 59.7% say it makes them more engaged (highest).
- Bipartisan/cross-party framing appears to unlock trust — the "not about Democrats vs. Republicans" posture is where both trust and engagement peak.

D. Message 4 (Trump / EPA Villain) — The "Agree But Don't Follow" Warning

- 63.2% agreement — relatively high. But vote-likely drops to 62.5% and trust to 60.7% — well below the top performers.
- Produces meaningful backlash: 21.1% say it makes them less engaged — far higher than the leading messages.
- Takeaway: Abstract villains (Big Food/Big Ag/Big Pharma) outperform named political villains. Pinning blame on a specific figure hurts persuasion metrics.

E. Messages 6 & 7 (RFK Attacks) — Clear Losers

- Vote-likely collapses: 34.4% for Message 6 (RFK as Trojan Horse) and 39.9% for Message 7 (RFK as Anti-Science).
- Trust craters: 37.2% for Msg 6 and 44.8% for Msg 7 — roughly 40–47 points behind Message 5.
- Actively demobilize: "Less engaged" at 36.1% for Msg 6 and 43.8% for Msg 7.
- Message 7 is the only message that is net-negative on the 7-point support scale — more respondents land in "less likely" than "more likely" territory.
- The "anti-science / can't be trusted" attack (Msg 7) produces the highest "much less engaged" and "very unlikely" reactions, signaling strong identity/threat reactance among this audience.

F. Summary Strategic Principles

- Message 2 wins on mass resonance; Message 5 wins on credibility and activation. Use together, not interchangeably.
- Abstract corporate villains beat named political figures. Big Food / Big Ag / Big Pharma framing is safer and more broadly persuasive.
- Bipartisan framing unlocks trust. The cross-partisan posture (Msg 5) is especially powerful for reaching Independents and Republican-leaners.
- Agreement ≠ persuasion. High agreement with a message does not guarantee higher vote intent or trust (see Msg 4).