#VACCINE TWITTER INFLUENCERS:
IS IT JUST ABOUT REACH AND FOLLOWERS?
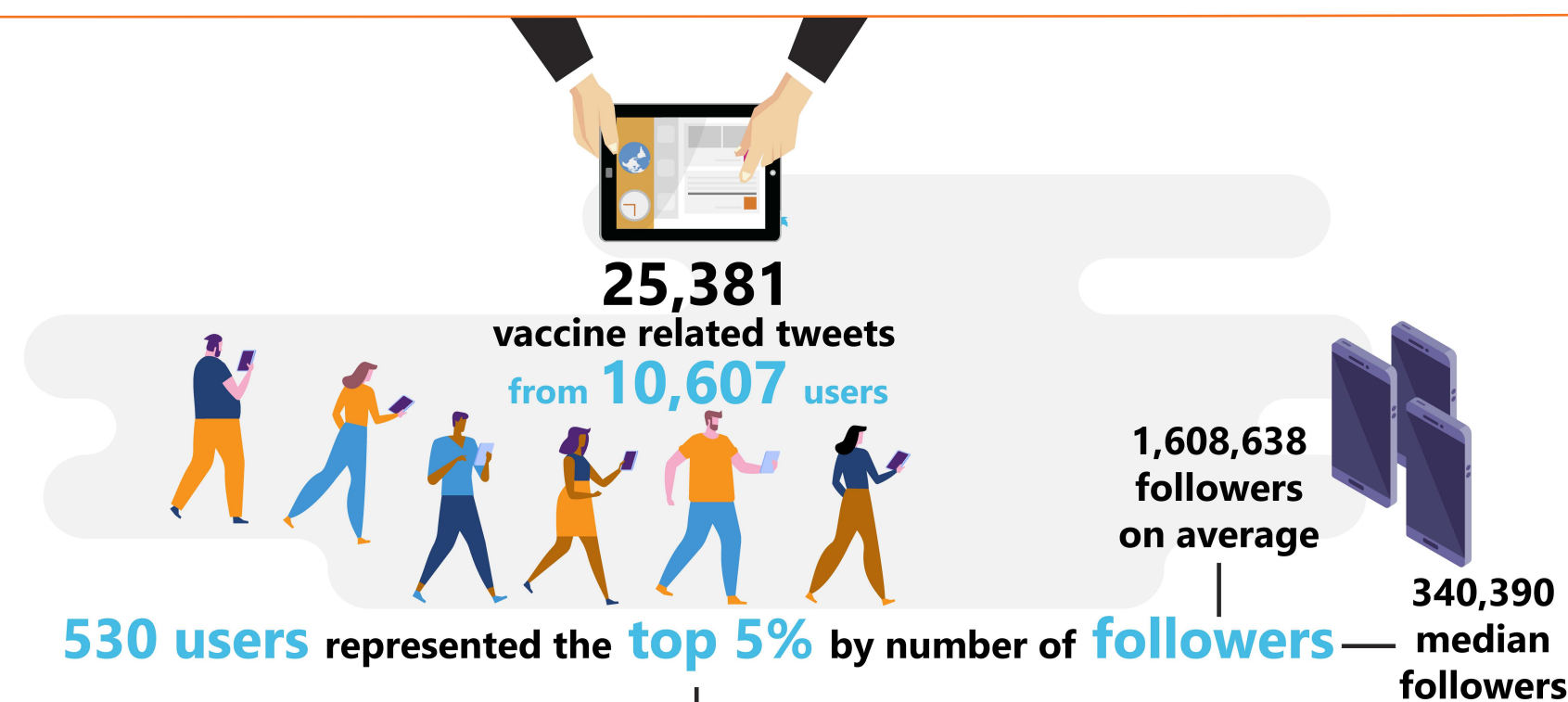
T Caputi[1], J Ayers[2], M Dredze[2], J-E Poirrier[3], S Poston[4]*, C Hogea[4]

[1]Formerly working for Good Analytics, Chula Vista, CA, USA, [2]Good Analytics, Chula Vista, CA, USA, [3]Formerly working for GSK, Philadelphia, PA, USA, [4]GSK, Philadelphia, PA, USA,
*Presenting author: Sara Poston - sara.x.poston@gsk.com

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

➡ A small number of popular users ("influencers") dominate conversations on social media platforms. Beyond simple metrics (number of tweets, retweets...) little is known about how these influencers shape online narratives about vaccines.

➡ Our goal was to describe influential Twitter accounts that are driving conversations about vaccines and better understand their role in shaping conversation sentiment.

METHODS

Publicly available data from Twitter (1% sample)

Top 5% of accounts tweeting about vaccines with the most followers*

automated classifiers

Pro-vaccine versus anti-vaccine*

from 1-1-2016 to 31-12-2018

Location[1]

*identified by a statistical machine learning classifier

RESULTS

25,381 vaccine related tweets from 10,607 users

1,608,638 followers on average

340,390 median followers

530 users represented the top 5% by number of followers

Tweet Content

56% unclassified

anti-vaccine content 10.4%
55 accounts

33.6% pro-vaccine content
178 accounts

Account location

19 18
18

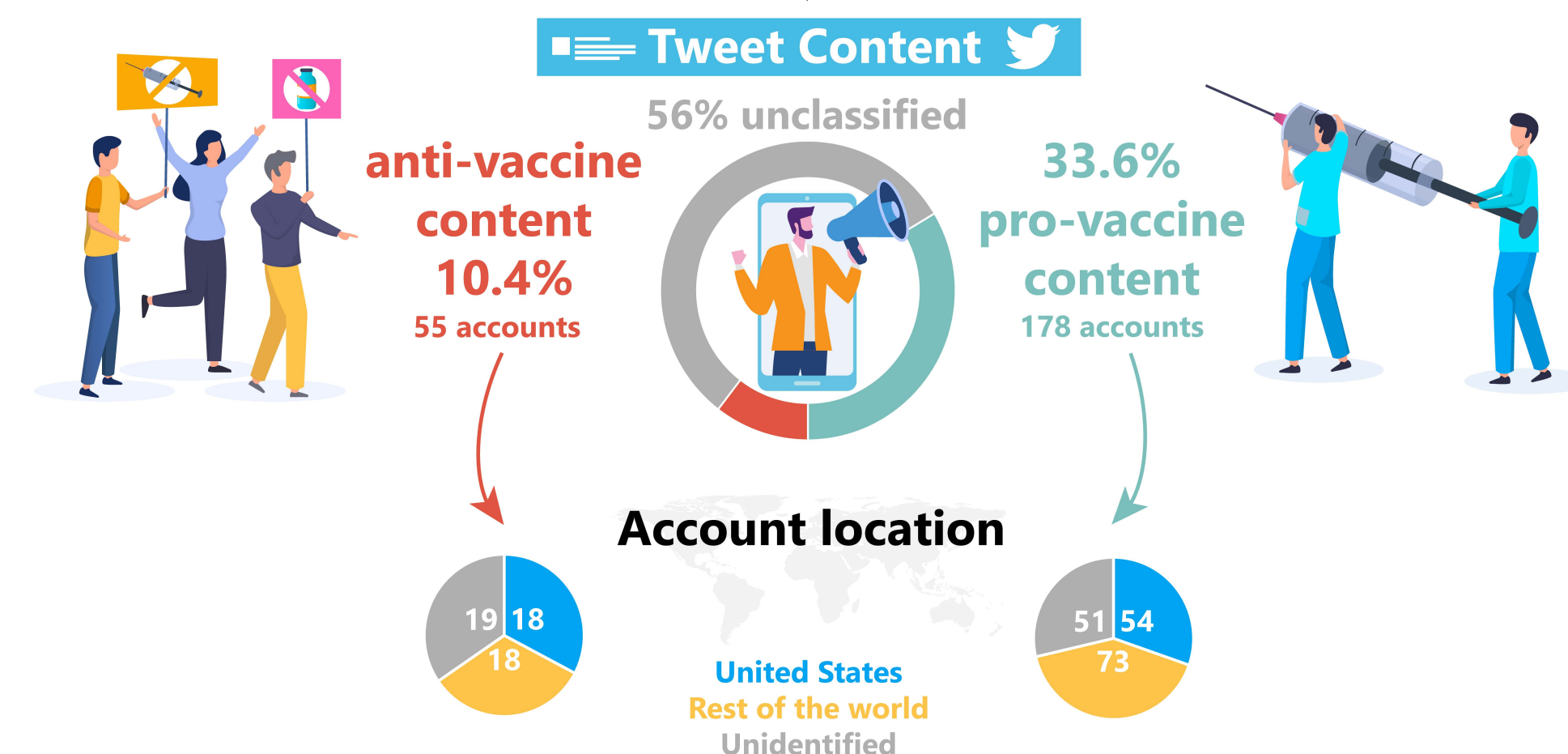51 54
73

United States
Rest of the world
Unidentified

CONCLUSIONS

➡ This study showed that only a small proportion of Twitter accounts (A) post about vaccines and (B) have a high follower count and post anti-vaccine content.

➡ Further analysis of these users may help researchers and policy makers understand how to amplify pro-vaccine social media messages.

Plain Language Summary

Relatively few Twitter users post vaccine content, and only few of these users have large followings. Future research on these top users may help public health officials find better ways to communicate about vaccines.

Scan for more details

PDF

IDWeek 2020 – 21-25 October – Virtual congress