

Health Communications in an Era of Pandemics

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- “It will take a lot of good communication so that people understand what the risks are and feel comfortable going back to work or school.”
- Bill Gates
 - April 23, 2020

THREE YEARS, TWO PANDEMICS

<https://tinyurl.com/mpoxcomms>

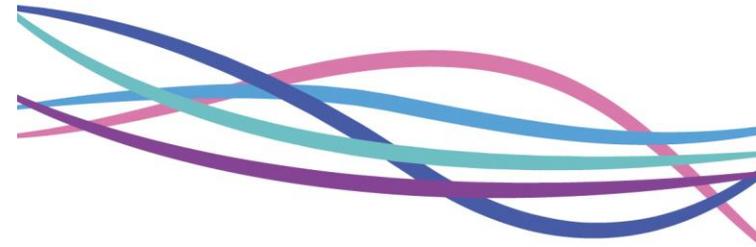
<https://tinyurl.com/coronaviruscomms>



 THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
School of Public Policy and Global Affairs
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**Democratic Health
Communications during Covid-19:
A RAPID Response**

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BC, Ontario, Canada, Senegal, Taiwan,
New Zealand, South Korea, Germany,
Norway, Sweden, Denmark

The RAPID Principles of Democratic Public Health Communications



Rely on Autonomy, Not Orders



Attend to Values, Emotions, and Stories



Pull In Citizens and Civil Society



Institutionalize Communications



Describe it Democratically

RELY ON AUTONOMY

 **Recovering from monkeypox at home**

If you think you might have monkeypox, self-isolate and contact a health worker immediately. If they advise that you isolate at home, keep in touch with them and seek immediate advice if your rash becomes more painful, shows signs of being infected (such as fever, redness or pus), if your fever, nausea or vomiting get worse, if you are unable to eat or drink, have difficulty breathing or if you feel dizzy or confused.

How to take care of yourself if recovering at home:

Keep hydrated, eat well and get enough sleep. Use medication for pain and fever if needed.

Take care of your rash:

- Don't scratch
- Clean your hands before and after touching lesions
- Keep your rash dry and uncovered
- Keep rash clean with sterilized water/antiseptic
- Rinse lesions in your mouth with salt water
- Take warm baths with baking soda/Epsom salt
- Use paracetamol to manage the discomfort of lesions, if needed

Take care of your mental health:

- Do things you find relaxing/enjoyable
- Stay connected
- Exercise if you feel well enough and can do so while isolating
- Ask for support if needed

How to protect others if you are isolating at home:

Avoid contact with anyone until all of your lesions have scabbed over, fallen off and a fresh layer of skin has formed. Ask friends or family to deliver supplies.

If you live with other people:

- Isolate in a separate room
- Use a separate bathroom, or clean and disinfect (with household disinfectant) after each use
- Clean hands frequently using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects with soap and water and household disinfectant
- Avoid sweeping and vacuuming
- Use separate dishes, cups, bedding, towels and electronics such as phones
- Do your own laundry. Put everything in a plastic bag before carrying it to the washing machine. Use soap and water > 60 degrees
- Open windows

If you can't avoid being in the same room as someone else:

- Cover rash with clothing/bandages
- Avoid touching each other
- Wear well-fitting medical masks
- Open windows
- Clean hands often

18/07/2022

1) Clear guidelines and hygiene measures (e.g. mask-wearing, distancing) over implementing a full lockdown

2) Trust in the population and rapport-building over shaming and blaming

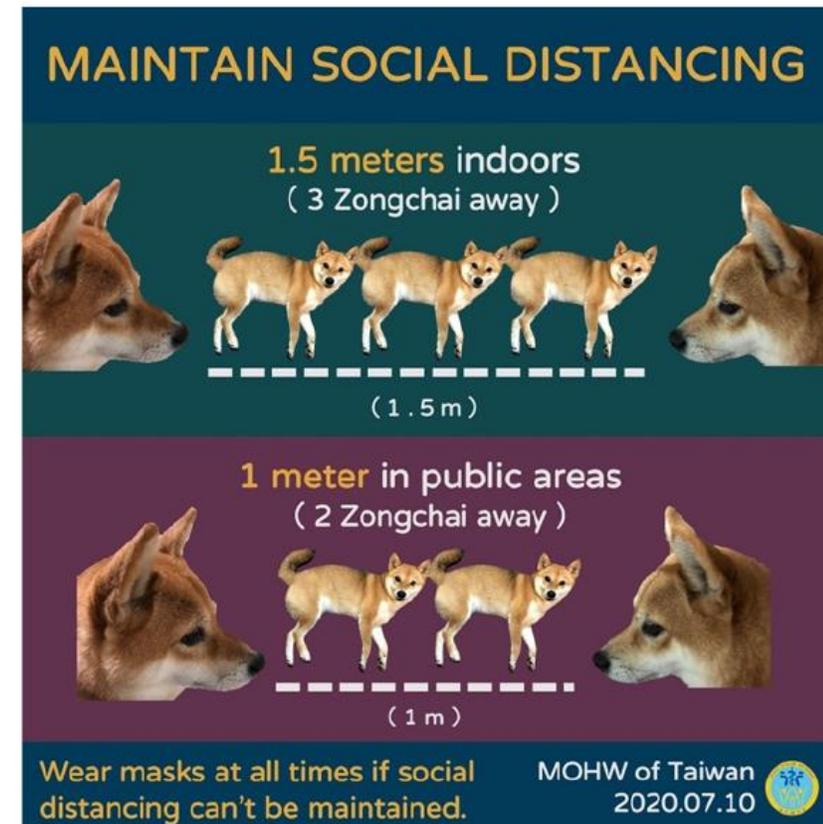
3) High trust = high autonomy

ATTEND TO VALUES, EMOTIONS, AND STORIES

Conversations through Covid



Humour over Rumour



PULL IN CITIZENS AND CIVIL SOCIETY



- Learnt from Ebola
- Religious leaders
- Rap songs
- Graffiti artists (RBS) in Dakar

A blue poster for the Mpox vaccine. It features a man with a beard and a bandage on his arm. The text reads "MPOX VACCINE it takes 2" with a yellow arrow pointing to the number 2. A QR code is visible, along with the URL "checkhimout.ca/Mpox" and the logo for "HiM HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR MEN".

Get your second dose of the Mpox vaccine in time for pride season.

[checkhimout.ca/Mpox](https://www.checkhimout.ca/Mpox)

HiM HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR MEN
www.checkhimout.ca

INSTITUTIONALIZE COMMUNICATIONS

- Reforms post-SARS in Taiwan
- Legal and institutional reforms post-MERS in South Korea



“RADICAL TRANSPARENCY” (Audrey Tang, Digital Minister, Taiwan)



DESCRIBE IT DEMOCRATICALLY

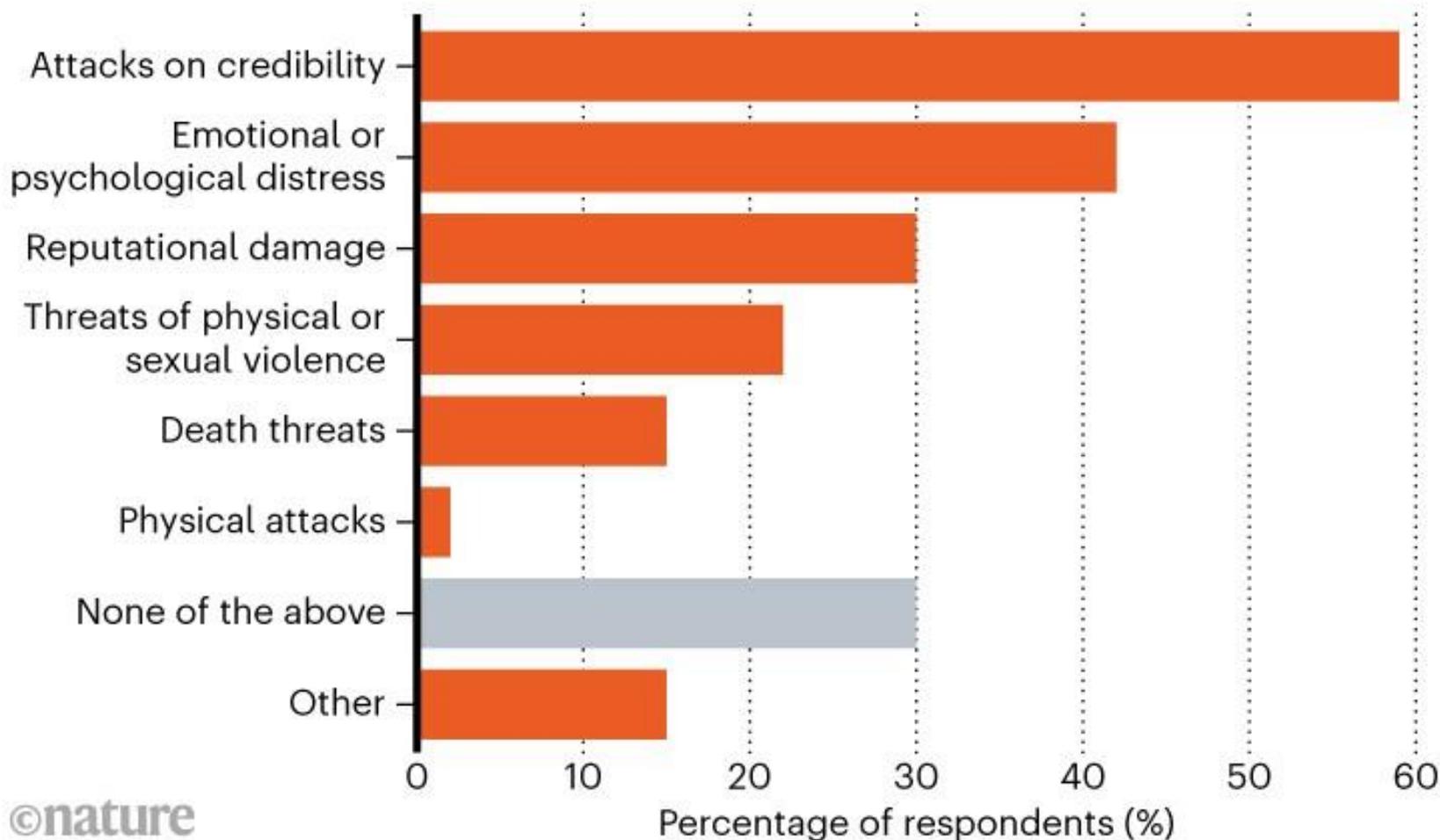


- “Relay race” (South Korea)
 - 2020 April Elections had highest voter turnout of 66% in 28 years
- “Team of five million” (NZ)
- Hurricanes, wildfires (BC)
- Avoiding military metaphors

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

In a *Nature* survey of scientists who have commented about COVID-19, 15% of 321 respondents said they had received death threats.

Question: Have you experienced any of the following negative impacts after speaking about COVID-19 to the media, or posting on social media? (You may select multiple options.)



Types of Problematic Communication

- **Threats**
 - Often ambiguous, assessment is difficult (e.g., “Nuremberg trials”)
- **Hate speech / identity-targeted**
 - Anti-Asian, antisemitic, sexist, transphobic, etc., and hate group discourse
- **Conspiracies about pandemic and responses**
 - Themes: ‘Sinister origins,’ ‘Corrupt Elites,’ ‘Injury or death,’ ‘Freedoms lost’
- **Accusations of incompetence**
 - Vigorous criticism vs. hostile attacks on reputation
 - Comes from both sides, including “letting children die”

Consequences

- **Safety**
- **Psychological health and wellbeing**
- **Professional security**
- **Ability or willingness to communicate**
 - Cleaning up “pollution” of online spaces
 - Intense politicization of health policies
 - Playing the platforms’ game

Conclusion



“What provides hope is that in this age of unparalleled scientific tools, instant communication, and fresh lessons to apply from this pandemic, the world has a real opportunity to make COVID-19 the last pandemic of such devastation.”



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