How should the government's crisis measures be communicated? Through frequent repetition[1]

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Brief summary

- About three weeks after the first case of COVID-19 infection in the Czech Republic was confirmed, i.e. on 20th - 21st March, we carried out a survey to find out how the way government measures are communicated affects residents' willingness to abide by them. Our main findings were published in **IDEA anti COVID-19 study # 7**. We supplemented our questionnaire with an experiment in which we provided five different pieces of information about the government measures to five randomly selected groups of people. This study focuses on presenting the results of that experiment.

- **Simple reminders about the government's orders substantially increase the share of the population willing to follow them.** This is true even when the people in question had already previously received information about the orders. Reminders of the government's orders, in any form:

    o make people more willing to limit the time they spend outdoors, especially in their longer-term personal plans,

    o make people more willing to stay at home even for months, if necessary,

    o motivate people to react to those who do not wear face masks (reminding them that they should wear one).

- **Rules and recommendations must be conveyed repeatedly** throughout the time that they remain in force, and their current wording should be easy to find in a commonly known place.

- **Measures must be carefully prioritized** and a small number of the most important of them selected and **simplified as much as possible** before being clearly communicated.[2]

- **In order to achieve voluntary compliance with government directions, public confidence in the measures adopted is fundamental.**[3] People who believe that the government measures will help successfully manage the current situation are much more willing to follow the government's orders and react positively to being reminded about them.

- The institutions in question should **pay extra attention to awareness among older people** to ensure, directly or indirectly (through family members), that they are sufficiently well informed. Information and reminders raise willingness among those over the age of 65 to abide by government requirements.

- **Appealing to swiftly changing societal norms and emphasising that those who behave in accordance with the government's directions are behaving normally** (*"it's normal to stay at home", "people usually wear face masks when they go out",* etc.) seems to be an effective way of communicating.

- Most age groups react very similarly to the various different kinds of information. Young people (between 18 and 24 years of age) constitute an exception: in this group, information that appeals to societal norms or describes health risks leads to greater acceptance of government directions than other forms of communication. People who live with someone from a high-risk group (i.e. elderly or unwell) also express greater willingness to stay at home. Communication of the government's instructions and reminders about them do not have any effect on willingness to stay at home among those who perceive becoming infected with the coronavirus as a low risk.

*The data were collected on a panel of 1 250 **Behavio Labs** regular respondents on Friday (20. 3. 2020) and Saturday (21. 3. 2020). The sample was representative of the on-line population in the Czech Republic aged 18 years and above (gender, age, income, education, settlement size, region, economic activity).*
Data description: [Policy Communication in the Time of Covid-19 (popis dat)](#)[4]

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[2] For further recommendations from behavioural economics for communication in the current situation, see study [# 9](#)
[3] See [WHO Outbreak](#) communication guidelines.
[4] See https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AbOj0exXyJ2jZjBC0h9amha0iTVaigWWcm7gjb1HBG4/edit?usp=sharing