



COVID-19 & MASKS

AUDIENCE & MESSAGING INSIGHTS

WE'VE GOT AN UPHILL BATTLE

The coronavirus is surging across America.

- *Only 67% of Americans are masking up, when 95% compliance could save nearly 70,000 lives saved by March 2021 (IMHE).*

Pandemic fatigue is weighing on people, causing them to lower their guard.

- *This surge is large being driven by small, private social gatherings, such as dinner parties, game nights, or carpools (Washington Post).*

As the cold weather moves in and holidays fast approach, more people will be socializing indoors.

BUT WE KNOW WHAT WORKS

- Masks (+personal hygiene and social distancing) protect both the wearer and others from spreading the virus.
- Limiting indoor activity can reduce infections.
- Normalizing mask use and tailoring messages to different audience values are key to changing behavior.

KEY TARGETS



**ALL
AMERICAN
ADULTS (18+)**



**THOSE LEAST
LIKELY TO
WEAR MASKS**

- **CONSERVATIVE AMERICANS**
- **YOUNG ADULTS, GEN Z**



**THOSE
MOST
AT-RISK**

- **HIGH-RISK OF COMPLICATIONS**
- **GEOGRAPHIC “HOTSPOTS”**
- **BLACK AMERICANS**
- **HISPANIC AMERICANS**

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND EXPERT REVIEWS

Strategic & Audience Insights

- Ad Council tracking survey
- Axios/Ipsos poll
- Hart Research
- Pew Research
- Other external data sources

Creative Validation

- FeedbackLoop
- Suzy
- Ace Metrix
- Facebook Flights

Public Health / Academic

- Stanford University
- CDC/CDC Foundation
- Infectious Disease Society of America

HEALTH COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

- **Check your assumptions.**
 - What may work for us may not work for others.
 - Look for and design to avoid unintended consequences.
- **Lead with emotion.**
 - Find the emotional logic and then fold in the rational justification.
- **Speak to audience values and identity.**
 - Tap into their trusted messengers (not just on issue, but those who exemplify their values)
- **Be empathetic.**
 - Understand people's emotional arc; Acknowledge or be sensitive to the feelings and challenges they are facing.
 - Ensure message is culturally nuanced and speaks to the reality people are living in.
 - Avoid focusing on health disparities, which can be counterproductive and disheartening.
 - Use person-centered language.

HEALTH COMM BEST PRACTICES CONTINUED

- **Prime people to be open to receiving the message.**
 - Language matters. Beyond avoiding jargon, use language that resonates.
- **Create sense of empowerment.**
 - Help each viewer feel the weight of responsibility they have in making the right choice.
 - Avoid top-down tone.
 - Be positive without minimizing or exaggerating the seriousness of the situation.
 - Fear-framed messages could work if presented alongside a hopeful, solution-driven CTA.
- **Call to Action must be:**
 - Simple
 - Clear of what the benefit is to the viewer
- **Social norms and social proof are key determinants of behavior.**
 - Show them that their peers are doing the behavior.

ADULTS, 18+

Barriers

- Rampant misinformation
- Many Americans are confused about when to wear a mask, as mask compliance varies significantly by circumstance.
 - While a large majority of Americans always wear a mask to the grocery store, only a third always wear it when going to someone's home and a quarter when family/friends visit their homes.
- Only 58% believe masks are very effective in controlling spread.
 - Frequency of mask usage is correlated with perceptions about efficacy.

Motivators

- Key motivators for wearing a mask is to do their part so that we can return to “normal” and prevent the spread to vulnerable people, loved ones, and community.
- For many Americans, messages of caring for others (more so than protecting one's own health) and that we are all in this together resonated the strongest.
- These motivators carry across race/ethnicity



THE UNCOMMITTED

Those uncommitted to wearing face masks skew White, Republican, less educated, and live in non-urban areas.

Barriers

- View public health guidelines/regulations as government overreaction
- 45% don't wear masks because they're not an at-risk group.
- Many see a mask as an infringement on their rights.
- Do not want to be told what to do; Negative and shaming tone are least likely to motivate

Motivators

- More concerned about the economic impact of the outbreak than the public health impact.
 - Framing message about doing their part so that business can stay open works well.
- Often take recommendations seriously when they come from loved ones and medical professionals.
- Positive tone and language that makes them feel wearing a mask is a choice.
- Connecting to something they love (sports) and including patriotic visuals

Considerations

- Especially important to prime this audience to be open to masks, which may mean not even starting with a mask message.
- Critical to lead with emotion tied to values, as science and rational argument is not effective with this audience



BLACK AMERICANS

Barriers

- More likely to say they are not getting the vital timely COVID-related public information they need as well as work in essential jobs
- 5x likely to be hospitalized; Double the death rate
- Concerns being seeing as a threat by others, especially in a mask
- Concern about COVID and personal commitment to stopping the spread, including mask usage, is even higher than other groups
- Low trust in government, medical community and other institutions

Motivators

- The message must feel it was created by and for the Black community.
- Cultural nuance and relevance
- Reflect the reality that many Black Americans are living in (COVID and racial injustices)



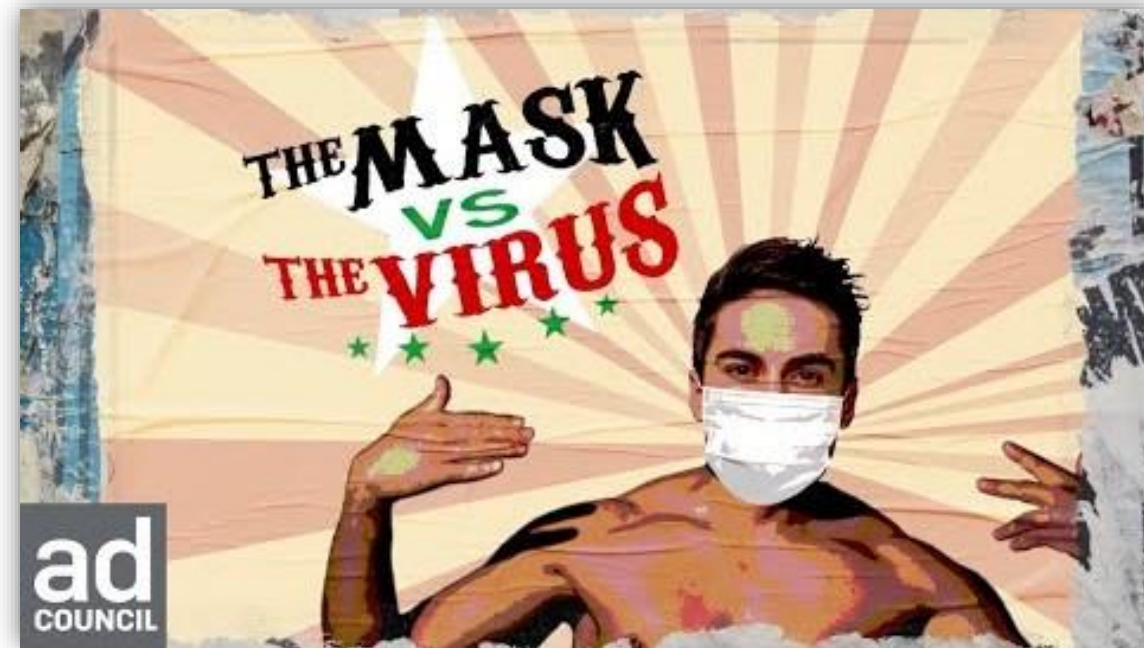
LATINX AMERICANS

Barriers

- Facing significantly higher levels of cases and hospitalizations

Motivators

- Culturally relevant tone and references to lucha libre
- Energetic and entertaining
- Framing as “the mask vs. the virus,” which pulls people away from an “us vs. them” reaction



YOUNG ADULTS, GEN Z

Barriers

- Assumptions of invincibility and/or easy recovery
- Heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and isolation
- More likely to engage in risky behaviors

Motivators

- Being able to continue doing the things you love and a mask doesn't hold you back



KEY AUDIENCE INSIGHTS RECAP

Gen Pop: caring for others, togetherness

Conservative Americans: economic impact, making the decision on their own

Gen Z: get back to the things they love to do, a mask won't get in the way

Black Americans: caring for own community, lack of trust in government

Hispanic Americans: connecting to cultural references and tone, fighting the virus

GOAL

**MOTIVATE AMERICANS TO WEAR MASKS
THROUGH TAILORED MESSAGING THAT
CONNECTS TO THEIR VALUES**

**NORMALIZE THE USE OF MASKS THROUGH
INFLUENCERS**

REINVIGORATE COMMITMENT TO MASK USE

Strategic idea

If we wear masks now, we can protect our circle and get back to what we know and love more quickly. Masks make that possible.

- Gen Pop: motivated by the promise of being together with loved ones (hugs, dinner parties, work, seeing grandparents)
- Conservative Americans: motivated by a strong economy and financial stability for all (supporting local businesses, eating in restaurants, being in the stands when your team scores a goal)
- Gen Z: motivated by getting back to doing the things we love to do (concerts, in school, bars, gaming conventions)

Call to action

Mask Up America

Considerations – Creative and Reasons to Believe

- Offer empathy to the fatigue and confusion/misinformation
- Normalize use through stories or real people/influencers
- Important to include visual references to social distancing, avoiding crowded/inside spaces where possible

**THANK
YOU**



MASK MESSAGING FOR ADVERTISERS

- Making masks central to the message of your creative runs the risk of coming off as insensitive to your audience on the matter, but when it is authentic and necessary to the story it can have a net positive effect
- When not the sole focus of the ad, mask inclusion remained a neutral aspect in terms of impacting effectiveness.
 - Interestingly, more subtle mask ads achieved scores in Ace Metrix, a creative testing platform, that were significantly above the recent all-industry norms, while ads without masks scored both significantly above and below norm. This may suggest the unconscious, positive effect of subtle mask ads.