BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS IN TIMES OF COVID-19

FRENCH BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS UNIT
DIRECTION INTERMINISTERIELLE DE LA TRANSFORMATION PUBLIQUE

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THE TEAM

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HOW BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS HAVE BEEN USED TO ADDRESS COVID-19? AN OVERVIEW

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION & INSIGHTS ABOUT BEHAVIOUR DURING COVID-19

• Confinement
• Deconfinement (support to mission Castex)
• Governmental website & communication

PROJECTS

• Nursing homes (EHPAD)
• Consumer protection: inform citizens about what to do to avoid new types of frauds that have emerged during COVID-19
• Physical activity: encourage French citizens to engage in physical activity at home
EXAMPLES

- Kits: education, transports, associations, work
- Elevators, summer holiday...
- Etc.

General recommendations & operational inspirations
IMPROVING COMMUNICATION & INSIGHTS ABOUT BEHAVIOUR DURING COVID-19 (2)

PRINCIPLES

- Use as many visual aids as possible
- Less information is more information
- Tell people what to do and what not to do
- Make the danger visible
- Call to duty rather than personal interest
- Inform about social norms especially less visible ones
- Don’t be reassuring if the situation isn’t
- Make peace with uncertainty and talk about it

- Stay humble
- Rely on the trust people have in science
- Rely of influencers and the power of communities
- Take into account differences in contexts
PROJECTS (1)

- **Nursing homes**: phone interviews in order to understand context in highly exposed nursing homes and avoid similar scenario in other nursing homes

**Interesting Insights:**

Overcommunication (attentional limitations):

- Send less information (only once or twice per week)... Yet less communication may be risky as it requires to arbitrate on what is vital and what is not → Risk aversion.
- **Alternatively:** put all information on a platform and occasionally send the most important elements

Habituation and cognitive fatigue:

- Cognitive and physical fatigues may impair decision-making and lead to more impulsivity and some complacency after many working hours.
- **Designate “ultra-vigilant” referents each day.**

Risk exposure and risk perception:

- Different groups are exposed to the virus and its risks to varying extents (e.g., healthcare practitioners are more exposed).
- When we go out, we do not see all the individuals who respect confinement guidelines.
- **Put more emphasis on what we do not see.**
• **Consumer protection**: inform citizens on how to avoid new types of frauds that have emerged during COVID-19

• **Physical activity**: encourage French citizens to practice physical activity at home
THE TEAM’S STRENGTHS

- Close ties with an ecosystem of researchers & experts (webinar)
- Close ties with other international behavioural insights teams
- French behavioural insights community
- Prioritisation of topics
- Team flexibility & reactiveness
COVID-19 SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

Structural challenges

• Masks, tests, etc.

Immediate response vs. scientific rigour:

• Difficult to perform randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in times of crisis, due to time constraints

• Consider scientific literature when possible: parallel research projects that have drawn evidence-based conclusions of what works and what does not

• Example: nursing homes → had to deliver interview synthesis within 2 days
  ▪ => phone interviews: less time-consuming for health workers than filling long questionnaires
  ▪ Allowed us to tackle sensitive and emotional topics in a diplomatic manner (avoid questionnaire ambiguity on touchy issues).
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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Slides adapted from Mariam Chammat (2020)