

# “Celebrate Safely” Concept Testing Study

Policy, Advocacy and Communication

## COVID-19



# Presentation Agenda

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- Introduction and Study Objectives
- Methodology
- Key Findings
- Learnings for Future Campaigns

# Background

- To lower the risk for the spread of COVID-19, Americans are being advised to “celebrate safely” during the holidays this year—either virtually or with members of their own household.
- This message needs to be reinforced while also recognizing that non-household members (e.g., children returning from college) will come together and will need to take extra precautions.
- To strengthen approaches that address this in the U.S., Vital Strategies proposed to develop and test messages for a mass media campaign entitled “Celebrate Safely”.

# Study Objectives

- Assess comprehension, acceptability, and potential effectiveness of ads under consideration for the campaign.
- Determine to what extent the ads meet the campaign's objectives and what modifications can be made to more closely align them.
- Identify effective messaging styles for continued communication about COVID-19.

# Methodology

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# Methodology

**Study Design:** National online survey

**Sample:** U.S. general population, ages 18 and older (N=453).

**Materials Tested:** 15 ads with 6 different messaging styles, split across samples and randomly ordered for testing.

**Measures:** Quantitative ratings and ranking of ads; open-ended feedback.

**Primary outcomes:**

- Comprehension
- Relevance
- Concern
- Behavioral intention (motivation)
- “Talkability”

## Demographic Data

- Age
- Gender
- Geographic Location
- Race and Ethnicity
- Education

# Messaging Styles and Ads Tested

## 1. Emotional: Fear – Fear/consequence of not heeding holiday precautions

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Stay home for the holidays or you may be planning a funeral.  |
| 2 | You may not die from COVID, but it can make you sick, very sick. Stay home for yours and your families' health. |
| 3 | COVID is worse than ever. Don't risk getting sick. Celebrate at home or remotely this holiday.                  |

## 2. Emotional: Love – Displays consideration and responsibility for family and others by staying home

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 | Sometimes the hardest thing to do is nothing. This year, keep your loved ones safe. Stay home.   |
| 5 | Get closer together by staying apart this holiday season. Protect your loved ones, celebrate online this year.   |
| 6 | Remember you are loved. It's been a tough year, but you can still celebrate virtually. Be patient and do your best to keep everyone who matters to you safe. |

## 3. Aspirational: Future – Encourages practicing behaviors now/today that will yield benefits in the future

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 7 | Save tradition by breaking it. Celebrate the holidays online together this year, keep your family safe for next year. |
| 8 | A small dinner with those you live with will allow us to celebrate together for years to come.                        |

## 4. Testimonial – Messages delivered by a credible messenger

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 9  | [Young adult/ teen] "Let's try a different holiday tradition this year: We'll cook and eat the same meal together over video chat."   |
| 10 | [Adult son/daughter on the phone, with a child nearby] "Mom, we love you but we're staying home with the kids this holiday. I'd never forgive myself if we brought COVID to you and Dad." |
| 11 | [Grandma] "Give your gift of love by staying home."   |

## 5. Humorous – Messages delivered with a light, humorous tone or sarcasm

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 12 | It might feel strange wearing a mask at a family holiday. Upside? You can smirk without anyone knowing. |
| 13 | Best excuse to stay in your pajamas this year? Staying home for the holiday.                            |

## 6. Instructional – Encourages adherence by explaining cause and consequences with a straight-forward delivery - possibly for church goers, others giving up important traditions.

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 14 | Be the one to keep your congregation healthy: Large family gatherings can spread COVID. Celebrate at home. |
| 15 | Zoom. Skype. FaceTime? Get closer together by staying apart this holiday season.                           |

# Creative Materials Tested: Emotional Fear



Stay home for the holidays or you may be planning a funeral.

01



You may not die from COVID, but it can make you sick, very sick.  
Stay home for yours and your families' health.

02



COVID is worse than ever. Don't risk getting sick.  
Celebrate at home or remotely this holiday.

03

# Creative Materials Tested: Emotional Love



Sometimes the hardest thing to do is nothing.  
This year, keep your loved ones safe. Stay home.

04



Get closer together by staying apart this holiday season.  
Protect your loved ones, celebrate online this year.

05



06

Remember you are loved.  
It's been a tough year, but you can still celebrate virtually.  
Be patient and do your best to keep everyone who matters to you safe.

# Creative Materials Tested: Aspirational / Future



Save tradition by breaking it.  
Celebrate the holidays online together this year,  
keep your family safe for next year.

07



A small dinner with those we live with  
will allow us to celebrate together for years to come.

08

# Creative Materials Tested: Testimonial



“Let’s try a different holiday tradition this year:  
We’ll cook and eat the same meal together over video chat.”

09



“Mom, we love you but we’re staying home with the kids this holiday.  
I’d never forgive myself if we brought COVID to you and Dad.”

10



“Give your gift of love by staying home.”

11

# Creative Materials Tested: Humorous



It might feel strange wearing a mask at a family holiday.  
Upside? You can smirk without anyone knowing.

12



Best excuse to stay in your pajamas this year?  
Staying home for the holiday.

13

# Creative Materials Tested: Instructional



14

Be the one to keep your congregation healthy:  
Large family gatherings can spread COVID. Celebrate at home.



15

Zoom. Skype. FaceTime?  
Get closer together by staying apart this holiday season.

# Key Findings

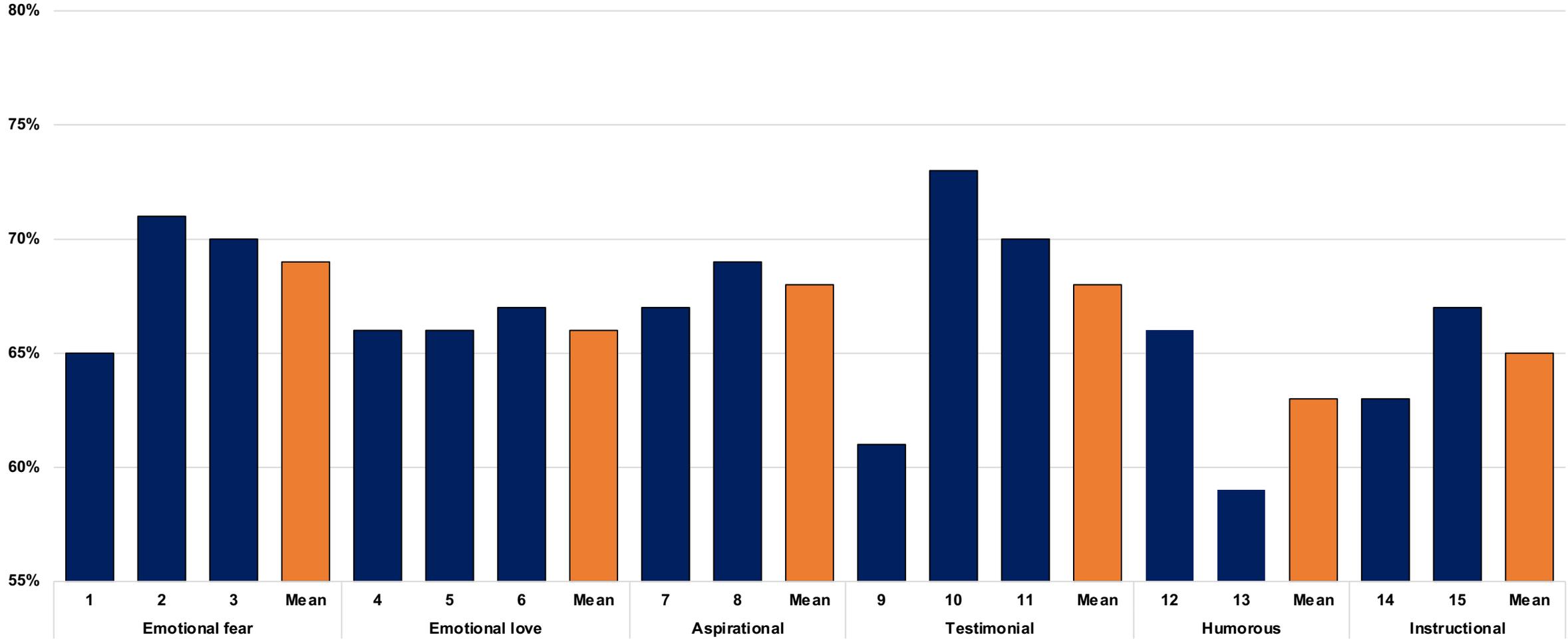
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# Individual Concept Reactions

Ad number	Message style	Easy to understand	Relevant to me personally	Makes me more concerned	More motivated to celebrate safely	Likely to talk to others	Average score across parameters
3	Emotional fear	91%	71%	67%	70%	60%	72%
2	Emotional fear	88%	65%	72%	71%	55%	70%
6	Emotional love	89%	71%	65%	67%	54%	69%
11	Testimonial	89%	66%	64%	70%	55%	69%
8	Aspirational	87%	74%	60%	69%	54%	69%
10	Testimonial	87%	65%	63%	73%	55%	69%
4	Emotional love	84%	68%	64%	66%	56%	68%
7	Aspirational	85%	64%	63%	67%	53%	66%
15	Instructional	86%	63%	59%	67%	54%	66%
14	Instructional	88%	63%	63%	63%	51%	66%
12	Humorous	85%	61%	61%	66%	50%	65%
5	Emotional love	80%	65%	60%	66%	50%	64%
1	Emotional fear	85%	49%	65%	65%	52%	63%
9	Testimonial	82%	54%	53%	61%	48%	60%
13	Humorous	78%	53%	52%	59%	43%	57%

# Behavioral Intention by Ad Number and Messaging Style

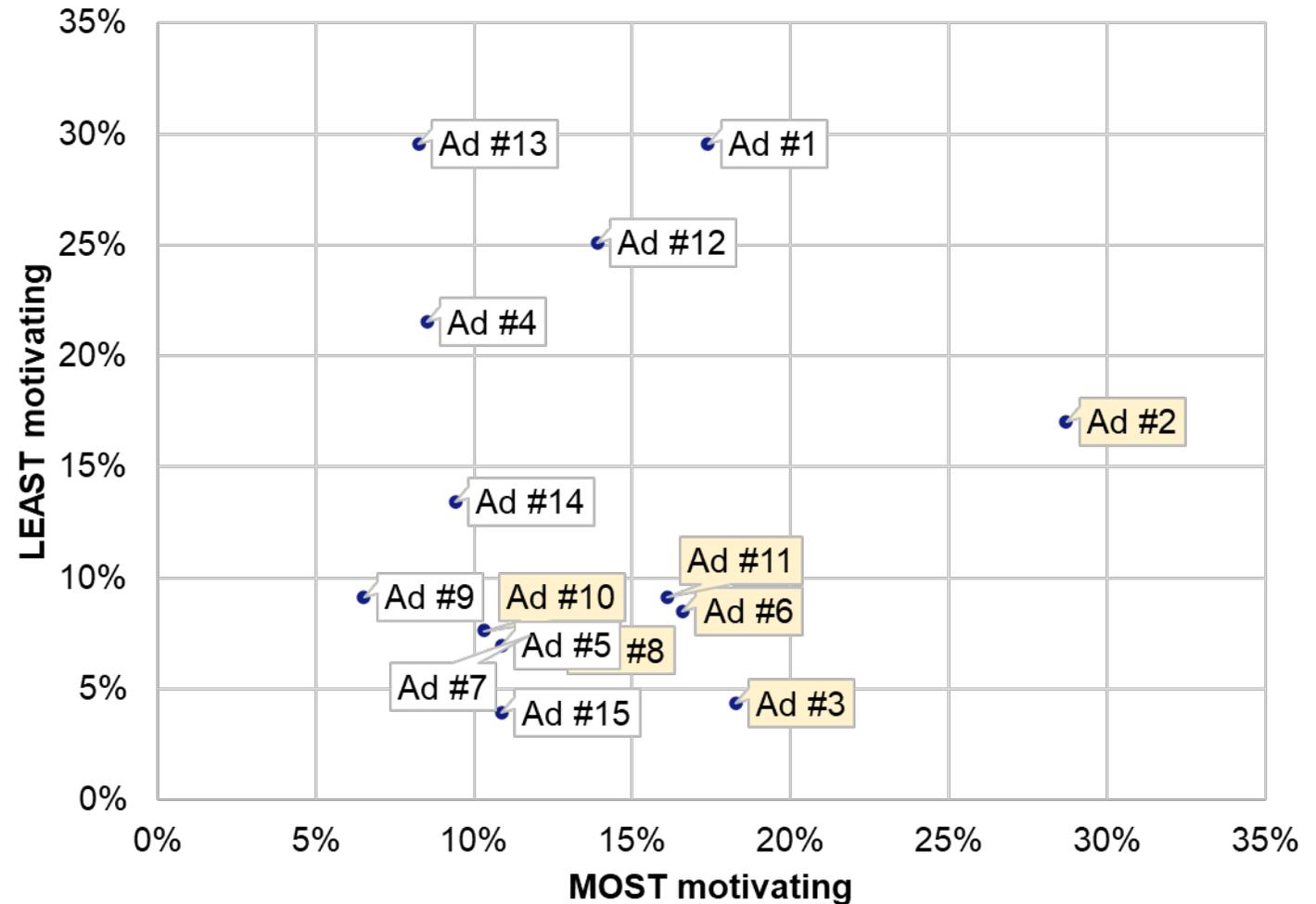
Percentage more motivated to celebrate safely by ad number and messaging style



# Most vs. Least Motivating by Ad Number

## Key

- Ad #1: Emotional Fear
- Ad #2: Emotional Fear
- Ad #3: Emotional Fear
- Ad #4: Emotional Love
- Ad #5: Emotional Love
- Ad #6: Emotional Love
- Ad #7: Aspirational
- Ad #8: Aspirational
- Ad #9: Testimonial
- Ad #10: Testimonial
- Ad #11: Testimonial
- Ad #12: Humorous
- Ad #13: Humorous
- Ad #14: Instructional
- Ad #15: Instructional



# Open-ended Feedback to Ads: Top-rated Ads

Ad and Messaging Style	Open-ended Feedback	Ad Image
Ad #3 / Emotional fear	<p>“The characters are older...and the virus is more dangerous to seniors. So the images showing them zooming or whatever program they're using to stay at home and visit virtually is motivating”.</p> <p>“It is positive but assertive at the same time”.</p>	 <p>COVID is worse than ever. Don't risk getting sick. Celebrate at home or remotely this holiday.</p>
Ad #6 / Emotional love	<p>“Shows how you can be together but celebrate apart”.</p> <p>“It touched my heart, that is what everyone should do, talk on video but stay home. You can still enjoy the holiday”.</p> <p>“Because it shows a family safely celebrating with the other family that may not live with them”.</p>	 <p>Remember you are loved. It's been a tough year, but you can still celebrate virtually. Be patient and do your best to keep everyone who matters to you safe.</p>
Ad #11 / Testimonial	<p>“It shows our elders in our loving families are staying safe whilst using this tool to do so - very touching”.</p> <p>“It is the simplest and most relatable. Most people have or had grandparents who they would want to protect”.</p> <p>“It makes you think of others instead of your own feelings. The safety of others is often more motivating since many think they will be fine if they get COVID”.</p>	 <p>“Give your gift of love by staying home.”</p>

- For top-rated ads 3, 6, and 11, participants said they selected these ads as **MOST** motivating to celebrate safely because they were clear, understandable, and relatable.
- Also, participants noted they selected these ads as **MOST** motivating because they touched on vulnerability of and risk to loved ones/family and elderly and emphasized the need to protect loved ones/family and elderly.

# Open-ended Feedback to Ads: Opinions Are Divided

Ad and Messaging Style	Open-ended Feedback	Ad Image
Ad #2 / Emotional fear	<p>Why MOST motivating:</p> <p>“It is honest and bold. Doesn't beat around the bush. It is a worse-case scenario”.</p> <p>“It really speaks to me about the seriousness of staying home for the holidays this year”.</p> <p>“It's a very dark and relevant message and worried me”.</p> <p>Why LEAST motivating:</p> <p>“Very threatening”.</p> <p>“Too much of a scare tactic”.</p> <p>“Not very uplifting message”.</p>	 <p>You may not die from COVID, but it can make you sick, very sick. Stay home for yours and your families' health.</p>

- Participants had mixed reactions for ad 2.
- Some participants noted they selected the ad as **MOST** motivating because it was honest and serious.
- But others selected the ad as **LEAST** motivating because it was threatening and not positive.

# Open-ended Feedback to Ads: Underperforming Ads

Ad and Messaging Style	Open-ended Feedback	Ad Image
Ad #9 / Testimonial	<p>“Mixed message - cook and eat separately but the picture shows them together”.</p> <p>“This was just my least favorite. Just a lack of anything to make me feel special”.</p>	 <p>“Let's try a different holiday tradition this year: We'll cook and eat the same meal together over video chat.”</p>
Ad #13 / Humorous	<p>“Too immature - least serious of ads”.</p> <p>“It's just a little vague. It doesn't give off the impression that it's about COVID”.</p>	 <p>Best excuse to stay in your pajamas this year? Staying home for the holiday.</p>

- **Participants ranked ads 9 and 13 as LEAST motivating because they had mixed messages and were boring/dull, less serious, and vague.**

# Comparisons of ad performance across demographic groups

- **Top rated ad:**
  - ***Ad #3 [emotional fear]:*** Across demographic groups, the ad performed well in motivating people to celebrate safely, with significantly **higher motivation levels reported for people with higher levels of education.**
- **Opinions Are Divided:**
  - ***Ad #2 [emotional fear]:*** Hispanic/Latinos are significantly **more likely to report they are motivated to celebrate safely**, compared with non-Hispanic/Latinos.
- **Underperforming ad:**
  - ***Ad #13 [humorous]:*** Black/African American participants were significantly **less motivated to celebrate safely**, compared with Whites.

# Summary of Findings

- Ads with emotional appeals, including testimonial-style ads, generally performed better than other styles.
- Even within these styles, ads with tones of humor (e.g., testimonial ad #9) or death (e.g., emotional-fear ad #1), performed more poorly.



Stay home for the holidays or you may be planning a funeral.

01



“Let’s try a different holiday tradition this year:  
We’ll cook and eat the same meal together over video chat.”

09

# Summary of Findings

- The highest performing ads – #3, #6, #8, #10, #11 – depict loved ones, evoke the vulnerability of and risk to loved ones, and emphasize the need to celebrate safely to protect loved ones.



COVID is worse than ever. Don't risk getting sick.  
Celebrate at home or remotely this holiday.

03



06 Remember you are loved.  
It's been a tough year, but you can still celebrate virtually.  
Be patient and do your best to keep everyone who matters to you safe.



08 A small dinner with those we live with  
will allow us to celebrate together for years to come.

08



"Mom, we love you but we're staying home with the kids this holiday.  
I'd never forgive myself if we brought COVID to you and Dad."

10



"Give your gift of love by staying home."

11

# Summary of Findings

- The depiction of disease – e.g., ad #2 – was ranked as highly effective by just as many as ranked it least effective.
- These emotional appeals are consistent with the literature on persuasive messaging on health prevention and likely to apply to campaigns beyond the holiday period.



You may not die from COVID, but it can make you sick, very sick.  
Stay home for yours and your families' health.

02

# Learnings for future campaigns

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# Learnings

- **Consistent with the literature, findings from our study demonstrate media campaigns and other public health communication strategies on COVID-19 should depict loved ones, evoke the vulnerability of and risk to loved ones, and amplify the need to celebrate safely to protect loved ones, with application beyond the holidays.**

# Thank you!

## COVID-19

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Visit [PreventEpidemics.org](https://www.PreventEpidemics.org) for more. Prevent Epidemics is a project of Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies.