

Evaluating COVID-19 Public Health Messaging in Italy: Self-Reported Compliance and Growing Mental Health Concerns

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April 13, 2020



COVID-19 is a communication crisis

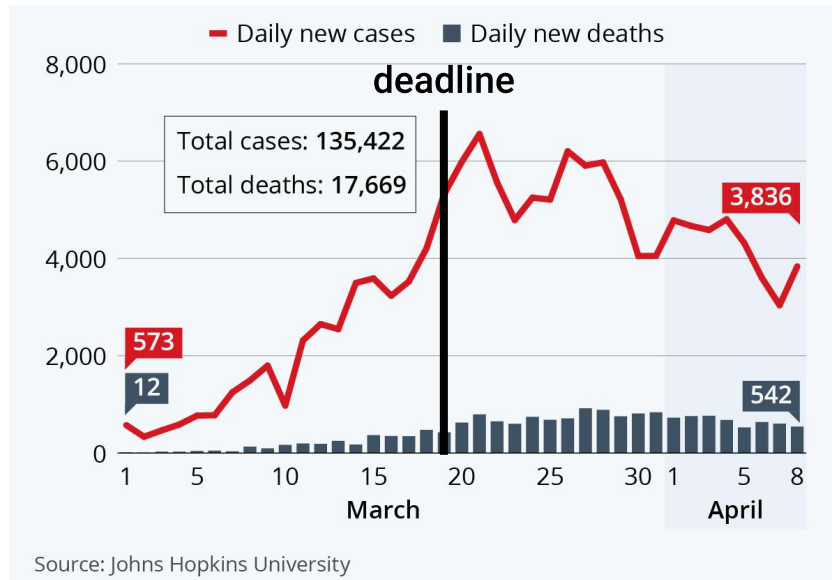


COVID-19 is a communication crisis
→ social scientists can help governments



Case: Evaluating compliance messaging in Italy

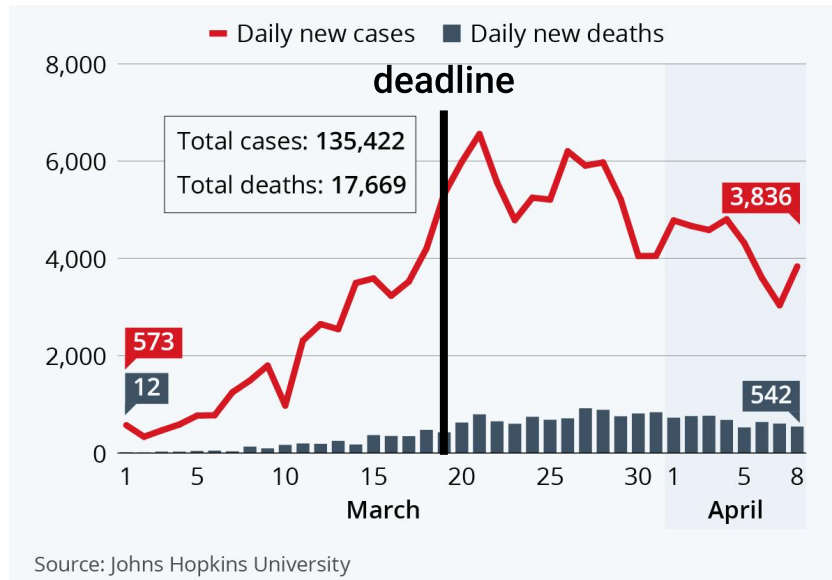
Case: Evaluating compliance messaging in Italy



Italian Health Ministry launching public health communication campaign

→ Rome behavioral science office assembled the **COVID-19 International Behavioral Science Working Group**

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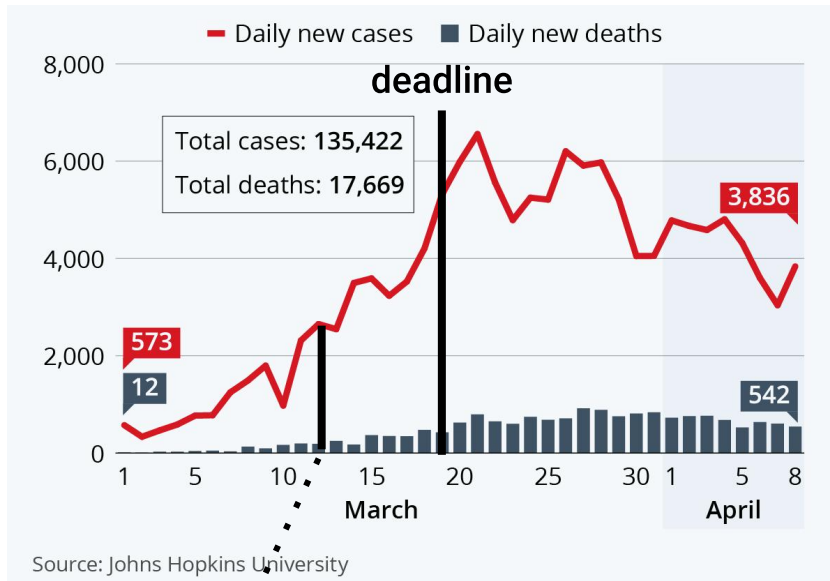


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RQ: What is the best message to maximize intent to comply with COVID-19 health recommendations?

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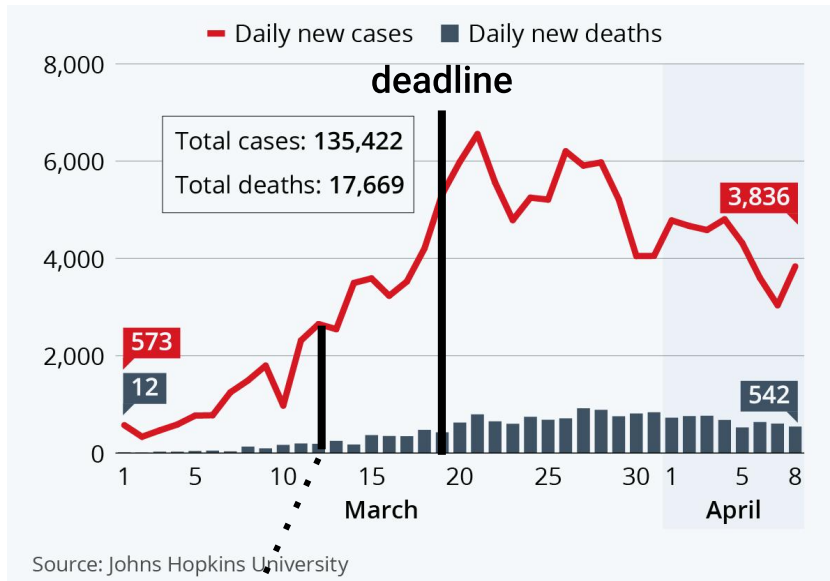
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MAR 12 PILOT (n=2,500)

control	pro-sociality	norms
<p>Rimani a casa</p> <p>“stay home”</p>	<p>È arrivato il momento di fare la tua parte. Proteggi te, i tuoi cari e i vicini dal Nuovo Corona Virus.</p> <p>Rimani a casa</p>	<p>La maggior parte degli Italiani di tutte le età crede che la minaccia del Nuovo Corona Virus debba essere presa molto seriamente.</p> <p>Rimani a casa</p>
<p>social externalities</p> <p>Se vieni contagiato anche se ti senti bene puoi causare l'infezione di 45 persone in 2 settimane e 2,000 persone in un mese. 8 di queste potrebbero morire.</p> <p>Rimani a casa</p>	<p>expert source</p> <p>L'Associazione Italiana Medici ricorda agli Italiani di tutte le età di rimanere a casa.</p> <p>Rimani a casa</p>	<p>healthcare externalities</p> <p>NONNO Se non entravi a casa, il Sistema Sanitario non potrà salvare tutti quelli che potrebbero essere salvati.</p> <p>YEPPIE! Se rimani a casa, il Sistema Sanitario avrà abbastanza risorse per trattare quelli che ne hanno bisogno.</p> <p>Rimani a casa</p>

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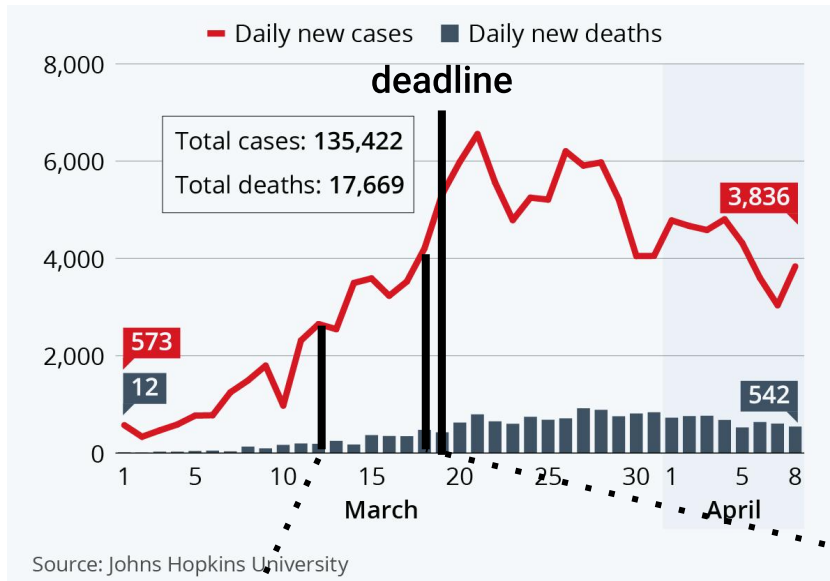
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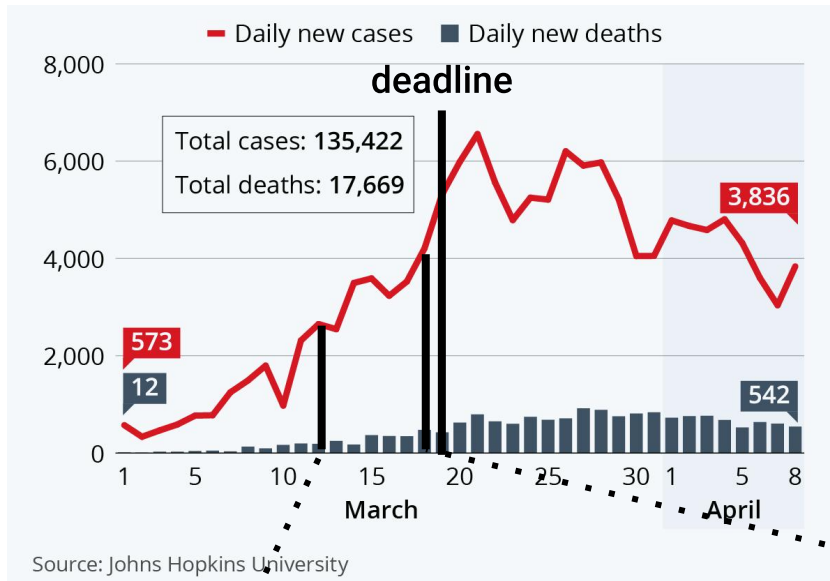
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social externalities	expert source	healthcare externalities
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Rimani a casa	Rimani a casa	Rimani a casa

MAR 18 EXPERIMENT (n=3,452)

social externalities + reflection	social externalities + naming
Se vieni contagiato anche se ti senti bene puoi causare l'infezione di 45 persone in 2 settimane e 2,000 persone in un mese 8 di queste potrebbero morire.	Se vieni contagiato anche se ti senti bene puoi causare l'infezione di 45 persone in 2 settimane e 2,000 persone in un mese 8 di queste potrebbero morire.
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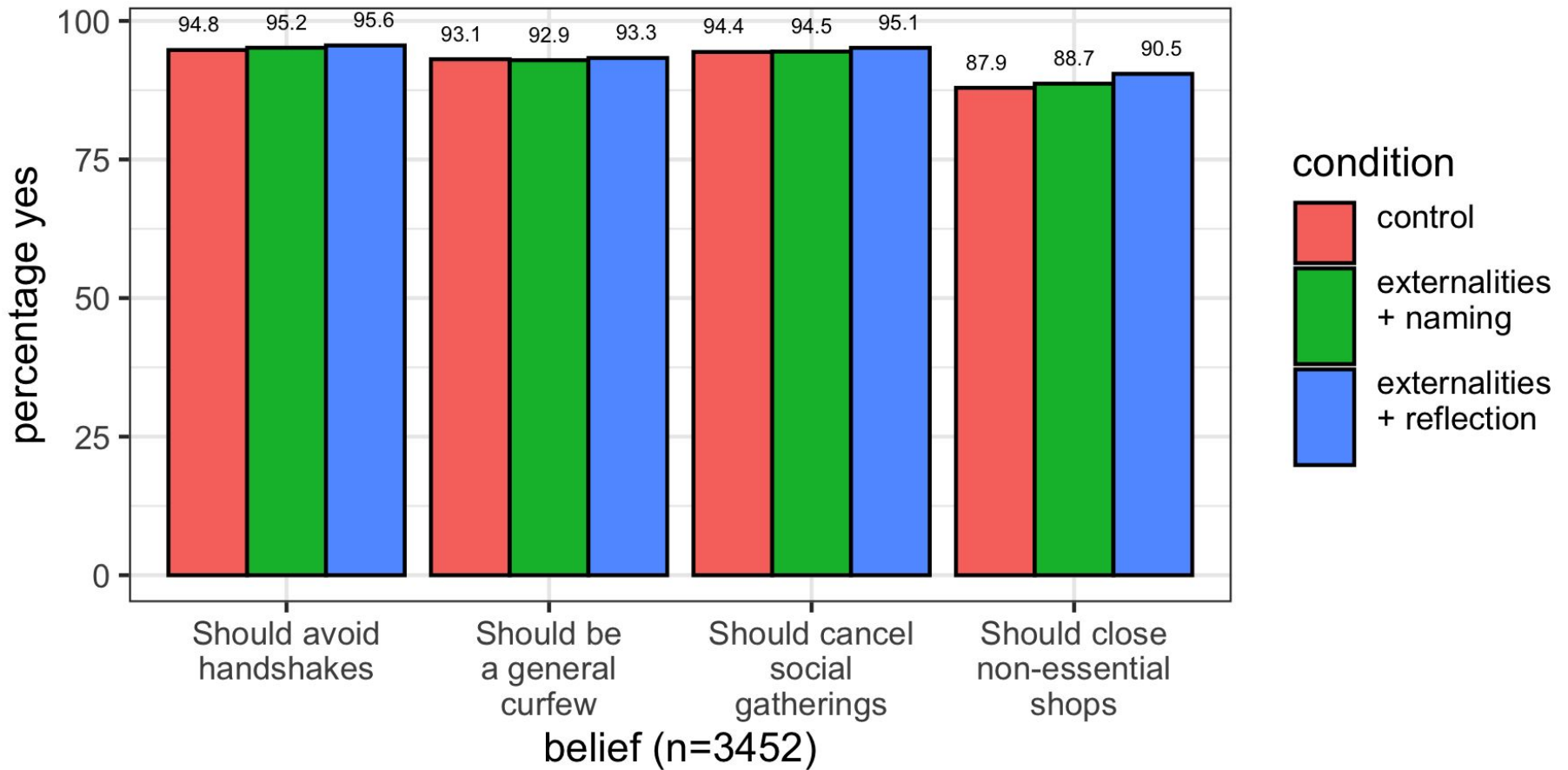
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Massive ceiling effects of nudges...

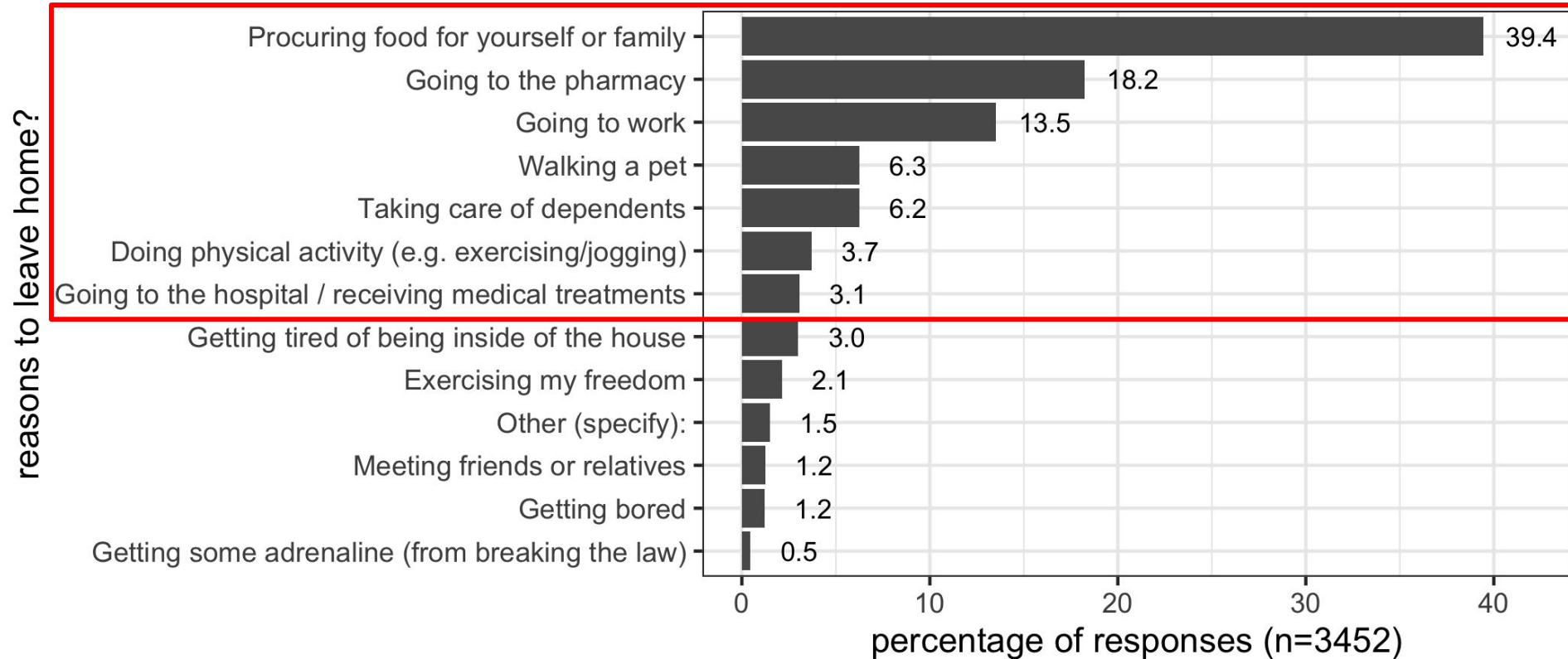
Massive ceiling effects of nudges...

Because everyone already believed in health measures' efficacy:



Massive ceiling effects of nudges...

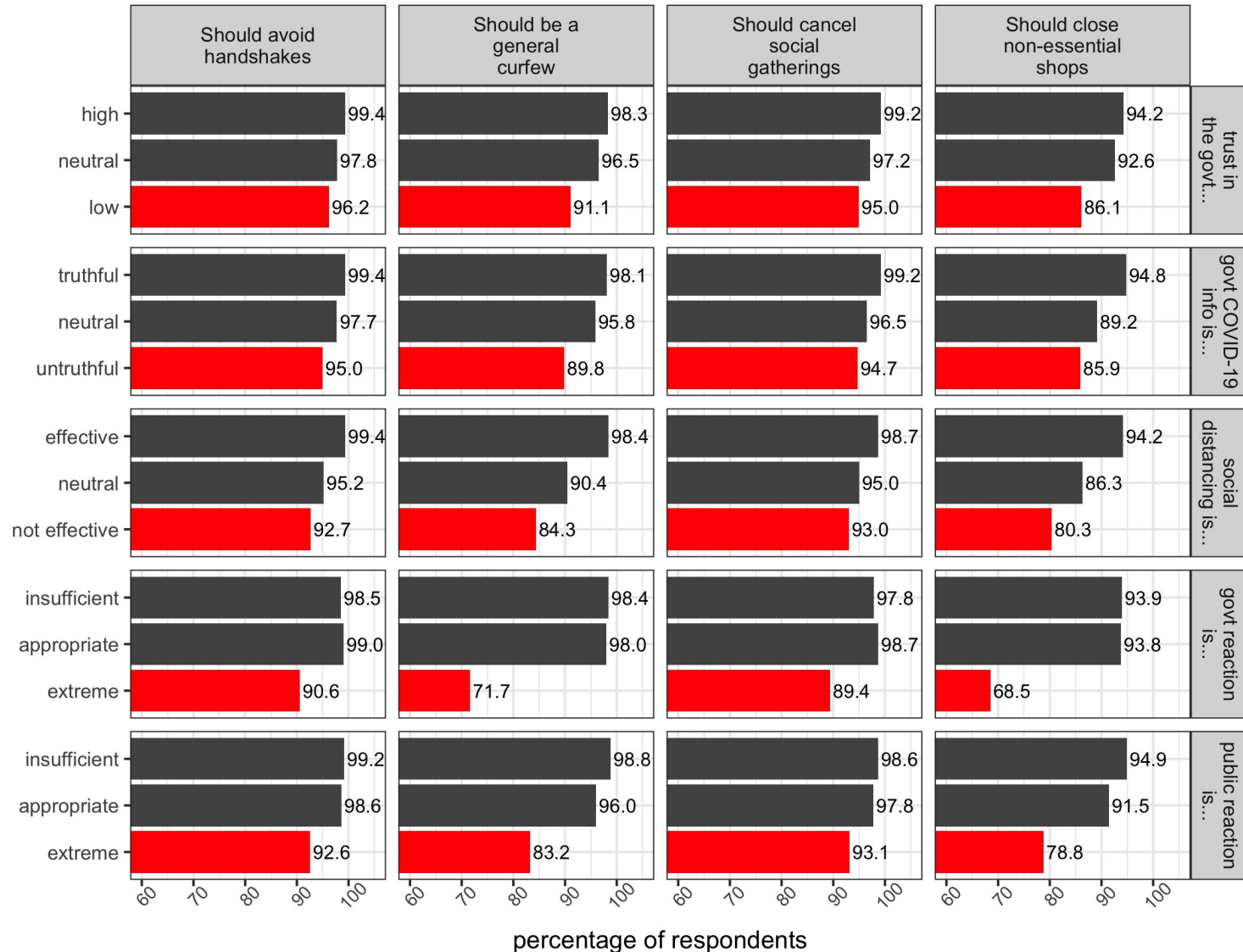
Because everyone still needed to “defect” for essential reasons:



...but some interesting insights

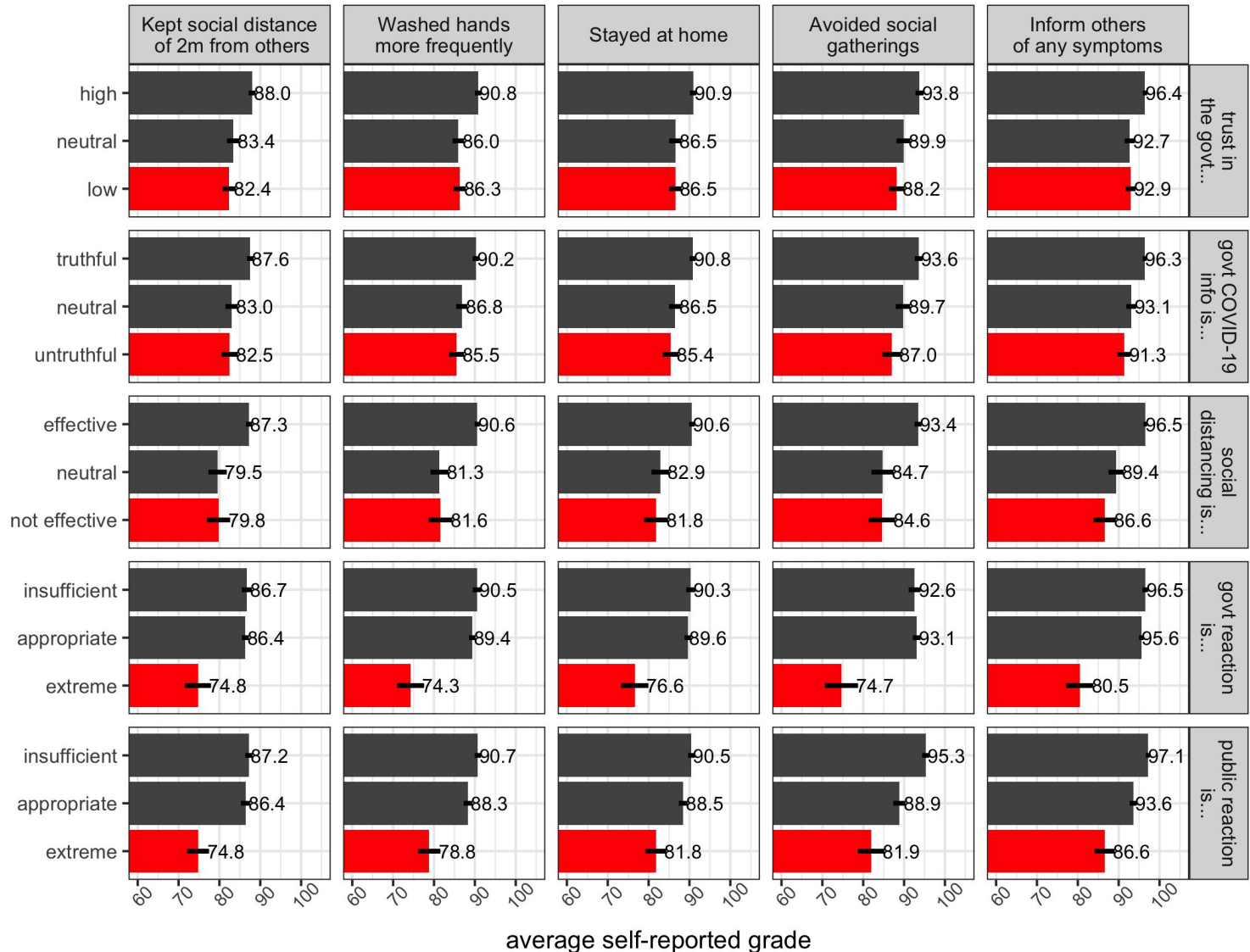
...but some interesting insights

Even the skeptics (**red**) largely believed in pro-health measures:



...but some interesting insights

Even the skeptics (**red**) were largely complying with practices:



...but some interesting insights

Vulnerable (old / infirm) more often **unable to comply** because they have dependents and need to go to pharmacy.

...but some interesting insights

Vulnerable (old / infirm) **more anxious** than young people.

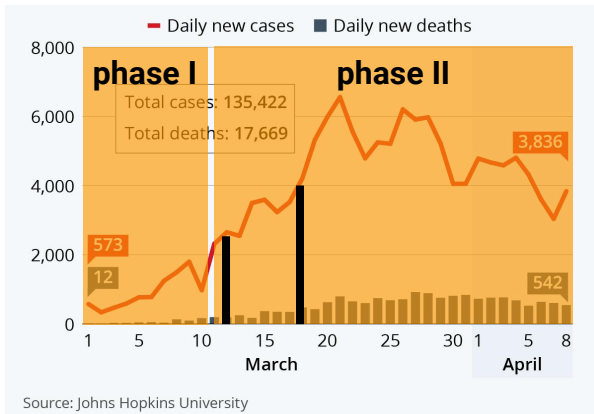
...but some interesting insights

Some **age-specific** struggles w/staying at home (home-schooling, lost income), but **mental health stressors** (lack of freedom, fresh air, boredom, loneliness) strongest and common to all.

Takeaway:



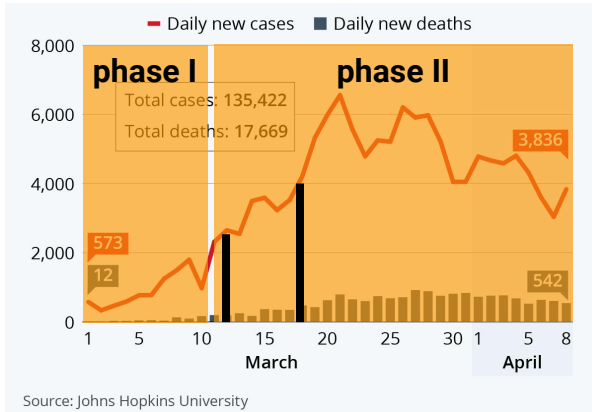
Takeaway: *why* → *how* messages



Minimal Effects of “*why* you should stay home” messaging beyond phase I

Need to transition to “*how* you can (healthily) stay home” messaging (personalized if possible)

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#IFEELGOOD

VADE MECUM

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS



If you feel disheartened, stressed, disoriented or upset, don't worry. It is completely normal. Speaking to the people you trust will help. **Share your thoughts and considerations** with your family and discuss your views with your friends over the phone or on social media.

KEEP FIT



Complying with restrictive measures in force is necessary to protect public health. Stay at home and **keep a healthy lifestyle**. Stick to a healthy diet and exercise regularly, avoid or reduce alcohol consumption and cigarettes.

ASK FOR SUPPORT



If you experience anxiety, contact your doctor or a psychotherapist. You may want to call the Red Cross hotline number **800.065510**, or visit the website of the **National Council of the Order of Psychologists** (<https://www.psy.it/>) and book a free telephone consultation.

STAY INFORMED



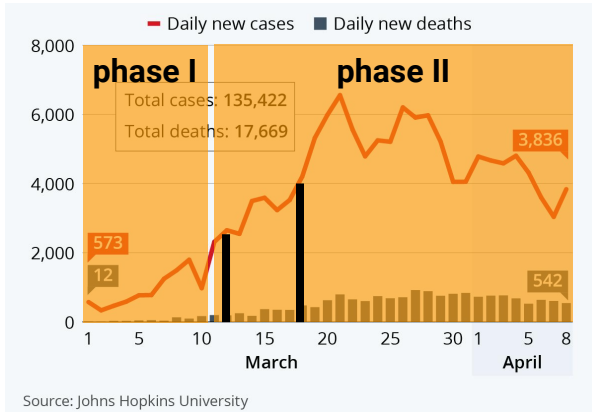
To keep yourself up to date with the latest developments of the pandemic, refer to reliable scientific sources such as the **Ministry of Health** or the **World Health Organization** websites.

COPE WITH YOUR EMOTIONS



Keep in mind how you handled adversity in the past. Your personal experience is a great resource to cope with your emotions and **overcome difficulties** in this emergency.

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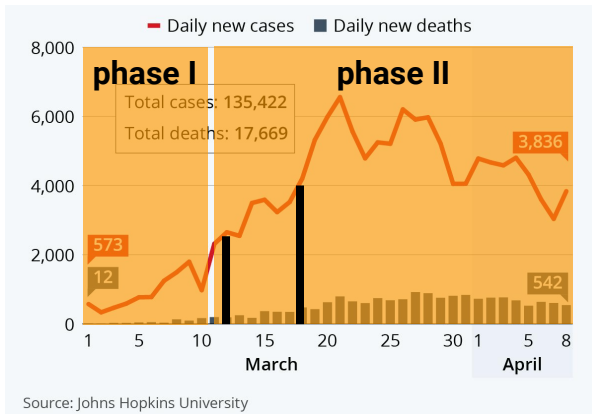
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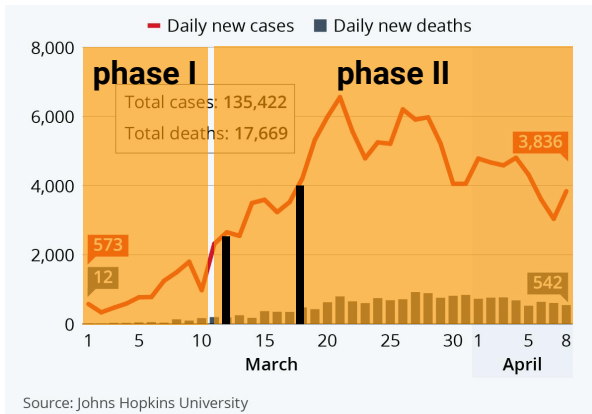
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Read more:

[GaryKing.org/covid-italy](https://garyking.org/covid-italy)

Stay tuned on Twitter:

[@Covid19_Behave](https://twitter.com/Covid19_Behave)

Collaborate/stay in touch:

sbarari@g.harvard.edu

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