

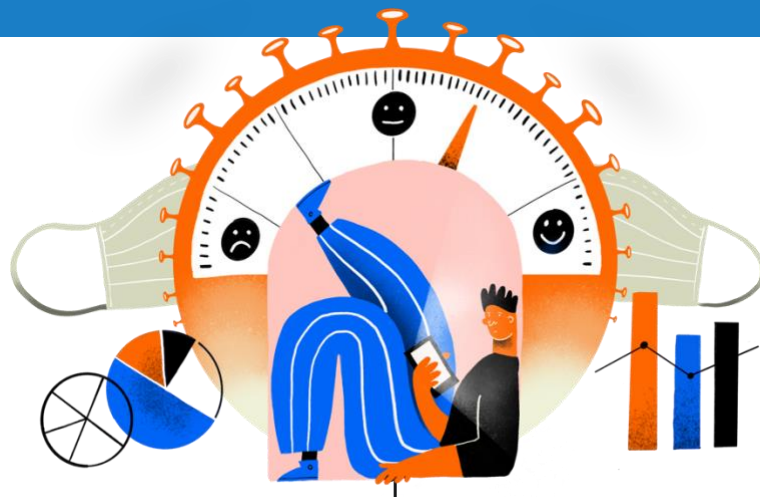
REPORT 4

Voluntary motivation for the collective marathon is dwindling: the leadership compass as a guide to motivational communication

The Motivation Barometer

Authors (in alphabetical order): Sofie Morbée, Bart Soenens, Maarten Vansteenkiste, Branko Vermote, Joachim Waterschoot

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Marathon runners prepare thoroughly for a race. Not only physically, but mentally as well: they have psychological strategies to get through difficult moments. They also have a tactical plan: they profoundly schedule their race based on their knowledge of the route and the competition. At this moment, the entire population has been running a collective marathon for more than 5 weeks now. It was not prepared for this extraordinary event: no physical training, no mental support for the race, no tactical plan on how to persevere to the finish. While a marathon runner is on his own and needs to motivate himself, scientists and politicians can take the lead in motivating and directing the population. This is an advantage. Motivational leadership is needed today more than ever, as motivational support among the population has been shrinking rapidly over the past ten days. This is shown by the results of the Motivation Barometer study at Ghent University. In order to sharpen the motivational intuition of scientists and politicians, we compiled a checklist with 18 recommendations for motivational communication.

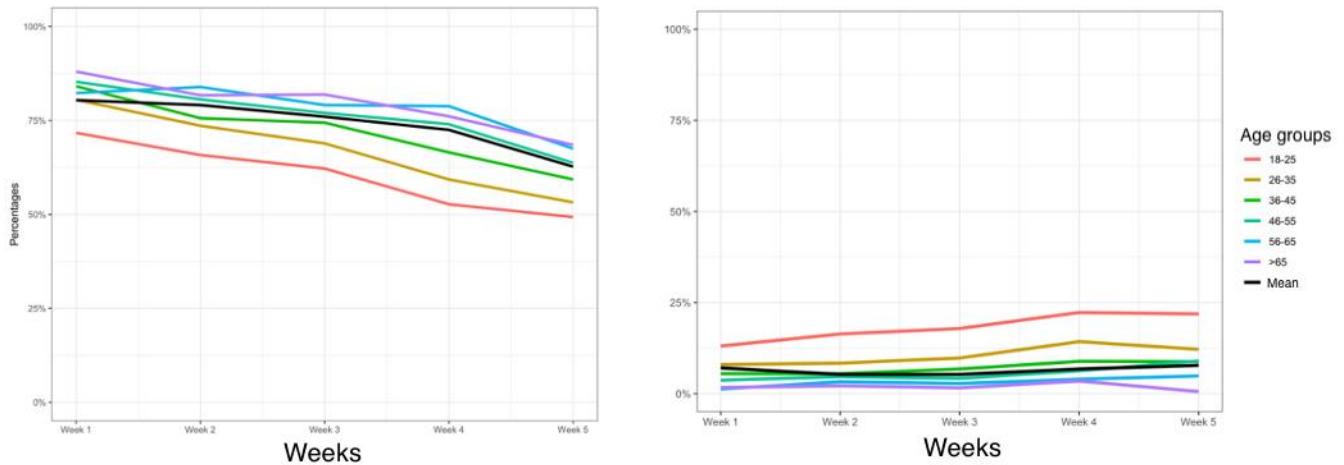
Persuasion drops noticeably

Since March 19, 2020, the start of the lockdown, people's motivation to adhere to the measures has been measured daily. A total of 18476 participants (74% women) completed an online survey measuring their motivation, resilience, and well-being. The results of this motivation barometer are important because the motivation of the population reflects the willingness for the lockdown measures and indicates to what extent the population remains willing to adhere to the measures. In this regard, more motivation is not necessarily better. There are different types of motivation. In order to adhere to the measures voluntarily, it is particularly crucial that the population remains fully convinced of the necessity of the measures. Multiple studies in motivational psychology indicate that this voluntary motivation is a much stronger predictor of conscientious adherence to the measures as opposed to 'must-ivation'. With this latter type of motivation, the population feels obligated to comply to the measures (e.g., to avoid a fine or criticism from others). Similarly, in the current study, the presence of voluntary motivation in the population predicts greater adherence to the measures. 'Must-ivation' does not and even seems to be associated with defiance.

For nearly 5 weeks, both types of motivation were measured. The results of the shift in both types of motivation are shown in Figures 1a and 1b. In the first week, 81% of the population strongly supported the measures. Although this dropped slightly to 76% in the third week (see Report 2), three quarters of the population still identified with the measures. In the past 10 days, however, this support decreased rapidly to 63% (see black line). No age group appears immune to this decline. Especially among young adults, motivational support is at a low level as it drops below 50% for the first time. At the same

time, a slight increase is noticeable in the percentage of citizens who score high on 'must'-ivation.

Figure 1. Evolution of voluntary motivation and 'must'-ivation



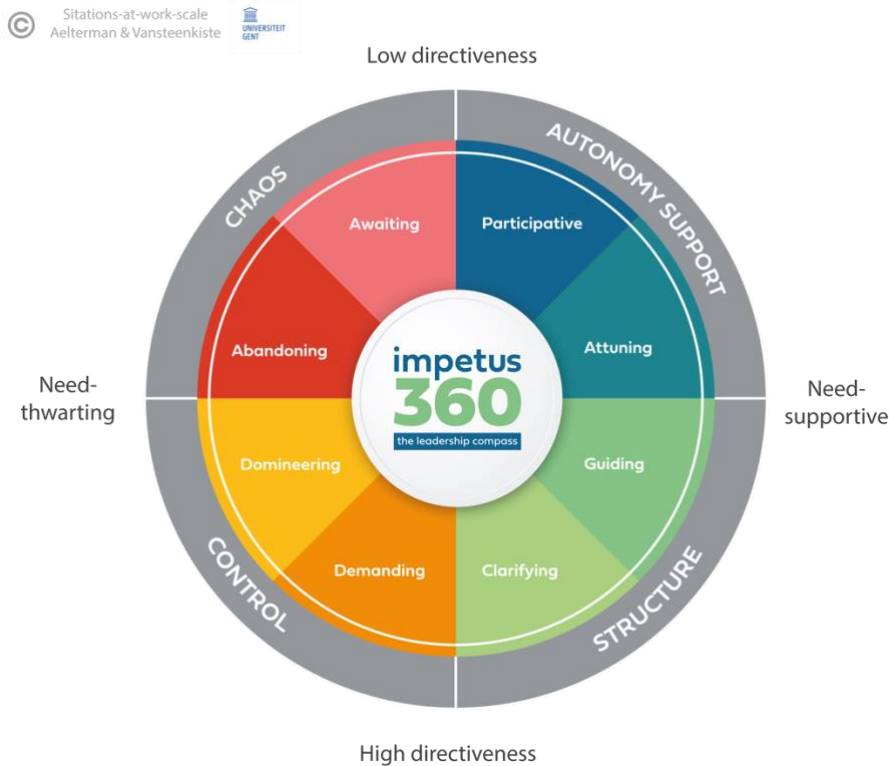
Although the 'must'-ivation has not yet prevailed over voluntary motivation, these figures are nonetheless worrying. They are a precursor to an increasing negligence in the population. In the current results, the percentage of participants who claim to consistently adhere to the measures is dropping slightly. However, the large number of interventions by the police suggests that we are becoming more nonchalant. An online questionnaire elicits socially desirable response behavior. Older generations are the most conscientious in following the measures precisely because they show a greater degree of voluntary motivation.

Motivational leadership

Questions as how to keep everyone in line are arising. Since it is impossible for law enforcement officers to have a complete overview on people's behavior, it is very crucial to continue to invest in the voluntary motivation of the population. This requires motivational leadership from politicians and scientists. The way the government and politicians communicate determines to a large extent whether the population finds it worthwhile to continuously making an effort or starts neglecting the rules. The leadership compass in Figure 2 gives direct indications of this.

Motivation cannot be taken for granted in the current situation, because the measures intervene in the personal lives of the population. As the lockdown period has been going on for a long period of time, it appears to be a delicate act of balance. The trick, then, is to communicate the measures (which, in the figure, are included as structure [bottom right]) in such a way that the population keeps recognizing its value and thus comply voluntarily.

Figure 2. Leadership compass with motivating and demotivating communication styles.

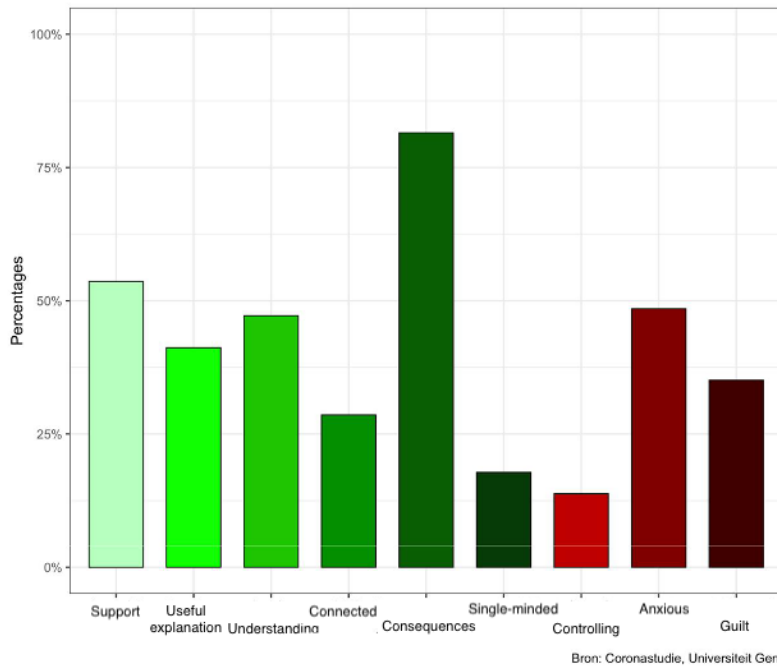


To do so, an autonomy-supportive communication style is crucial (top right). When citizens increasingly violate the measures, there is a risk that policymakers and law enforcement officers will begin to communicate in a more coercive and controlling way (bottom left). By increasing the pressure, they hope to quickly get everyone back in line. In reality, pressure often exacerbates resistance, leaving us back at the start.

Table 1 contains a comprehensive communication checklist with 18 recommendations. For each zone within the leadership compass, communication guidelines are given with concrete examples listed in the third column. The different overarching styles in Figure 2 (autonomy support, structure, control, chaos) are each broken down into two zones. The circle in Figure 2 really functions as a compass here: there is a desirable direction, being the combination of structure and autonomy support. The colors in the table refer to green communication guidelines as desirable communication strategies because of their motivating effect, while red communication guidelines refer to undesirable communication strategies because of their purely 'must'-ivating or even demotivating effect.

In the past few days of the ongoing study, participants (N = 1124) were asked to report their thoughts on the governmental communication. The percentage of participants who feel that the government uses a particular communication strategy to a great extent is shown in the right column and is depicted in Figure 3. Overall, the findings indicate that

Figure 3. Communication strategies by government.



most citizens perceive government communication as rather motivating. However, the scores for motivational communication are not much higher than those for demotivational communication, and many differences between people appear. This indicates some potential for improvement in the area of communication.

Empirical evidence was found for the model in Figure 2 in various life domains, such as education, sport and work. Students, athletes and employees all benefit from teachers, sports coaches and leaders who provide structure and support, and do so in a participatory and attuned manner. The results from the current study point out a similar pattern in the population.

Sharpening Motivational Intuition

In the coming weeks, communication will be one of the important factors to successfully guide the population through this crisis. Although scientists and politicians today do their utmost to communicate in a motivational way, they are - logically - guided by their own motivational intuition. Using motivational psychology, this intuition can be further sharpened. In order to help scientists and politicians do so, we compiled this checklist. Today, we explicitly encourage everyone to take these communication strategies to heart. Scientists and politicians can go through these before addressing the population or answering journalists' questions. This checklist can also help the exit committee to make well-considered choices and to communicate these in a motivating way.

References

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CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Principal Investigator:**
Prof. Dr. Maarten Vansteenkiste (Maarten.Vansteenkiste@ugent.be)
- **Conservation and dissemination questionnaire:**
Dra. Sofie Morbee (Sofie.Morbee@ugent.be)
- **Data and Analytics:**
Drs. Joachim Waterschoot (Joachim.Waterschoot@ugent.be)

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Table 1. Do's and don'ts of motivating and demotivating communication

Zone	Checklist	Explanation and example	%
Participative	Do you properly test willingness for a measure?	Measures will only be complied with if there is willingness. For example, the possibility of visiting elderly in residential care centers was not sufficiently discussed with the sector, so the measure had to be reversed.	53.6%
	Do you pick up and listen to signals from various sectors?	Various sectors (e.g. garden centers, tennis federations) are pushing / for a relaxation of the measures and are creating their own inventive solutions while respecting the measures. Listening to their voice is crucial.	
Attuning	Do you provide a meaningful and logical explanation for introducing, maintaining, or (partially) relaxing a measure?	The more the population understands why a measure must be introduced (cf. discussion about the park benches) or maintained, the greater the willingness to comply (cf. speech by Angela Merkel). Do not underestimate the population. If relaxing different measures will be done at different tempos, a logical explanation for those who remain imposed to adhere is much needed.	41.2%
	Do you show understanding of the people's efforts?	Try to be grateful for the burden the people are carrying today. Recognize that much is being asked of people and that times are tough. By explicitly showing your gratitude for the efforts, you are acting empathetically. In this way, the population feels more understood and remains more willing to keep up the requested efforts.	47.2%
	Do you work connectively by pointing out solidarity and the collective interest?	Helping others, doing something for society, caring for each other / are important values that almost everyone concerns. Emphasize that perseverance is an act of altruism.	

	Do you use recognizable imagery ?	A picture often says more than words. If a metaphor is used, the population feels understood. The image of the collective marathon is recognizable, with similarities and differences helping to inform the population.	/
Guiding	Do you provide concrete and clear guidelines ?	Formulate very concrete expectations when introducing new measures or formulating recommendations. The more clearly formulated (e.g. via a step-by-step plan), the greater the chance that the population will adhere. If there is no clarity yet about the modalities, wait to communicate (cf. mouth masks) .	28.6%
	Do you validate the effort of the population?	Positive feedback has a motivating effect. The confidence of the population grows that we can handle this crisis together. Make a direct link between the population's efforts and concrete results and visualize this. Just as healthy eating and exercise only lead to weight maintenance, it may seem that our current efforts do not produce visible results.	/
	Do you foresee intermediate steps ?	Each marathon runner formulates specific intermediate goals and motivates him- or herself to work toward the next intermediate goal. This gives courage because an intermediate goal is attainable. When people achieve an intermediate goal, it provides a motivational boost. The belief to run the lockdown marathon grows. An intermediate goal is a specific, crucial indicator of progress, such as the number of hospitalizations.	/

Clarifying	Do you communicate at set times ?	The population is becoming impatient. The uncertainty of whether or not the measures will be relaxed is becoming demanding. Providing a fixed, weekly communication moment about the lockdown measures gives the population a straw to clutch at. For example, journalists will no longer daily ask if and when the lockdown measures will be relaxed.	/
	Do you point out the consequences of adhering or not adhering?	It is crucial to inform the population about the consequences of adhering and not adhering to the measures. The best way to do this is to provide information so that the population's understanding increases. You ensure transparency and communicate honestly. A good example are graphics showing how hospitalizations number would evolve if the measures were completely abandoned.	81.5%
	Do you communicate in unison ?	Unity makes strong. By communicating in a unified way as a government, the population can emulate this. A lack of unanimity creates confusion (cf. measure concerning residential care centers).	17.8%
	Are you putting too much pressure on the population?	The current measures require a great deal of effort from the population, especially from single people and younger groups. Try to be reasonable in the demands you continue to make. If the population gets geared up, they will go into resistance and there is little chance that they will persevere.	/

Demanding	Do you communicate in a compelling way ?	Try to pay attention to your language. Words such as “must” or “require” evoke ‘must’-ivation (e.g., “you must persevere”). Replace these with more inviting but non-committal language, such as ‘ask’ or ‘want’ (e.g., ‘we are asking everyone to persevere’).	13.8%
Domineering	Are you capitalizing on fear in the population?	Fear is not a good advisor. Referring to a worst-case scenario and inducing fear may incite momentary action, but comes with <i>collateral damage</i> . The population becomes more insecure and more prone to anxiety and depression. A message of hope works much more stimulating.	48.5%
	Are you talking the population into guilt ?	Encouraging the population does not mean that we have to hold them accountable by loading them with guilt. If you instill a sense of guilt in the population, this may work temporarily, but it does not constitute a sustainable solution. By communicating in a motivational way, responsibility and citizenship preferably arise spontaneously, as opposed to directly pointing citizens to their duties.	35.1%
Abandoning	Are you sending out negative signals yourself?	Although difficult, it is crucial that scientists and the government continue to lead by example. Any signal of desperation has a contagious effect on the population. At the same time, this does not mean that we should lie to the population. People would see through this.	/

Awaiting

Do you take a wait-and-see attitude or do you communicate **proactively**?

A marathon runner knows that the finish line is at 42km. Although it is a matter of conjecture how long this corona crisis will last and you yourself want to wait and see how the situation evolves, this wait-and-see attitude can provoke exasperation and uncertainty. Some perspective can presumably be offered, for example, by bringing forward priorities in relaxing the measures or by communicating the phases in the broader strategy. This will give groups of people a better idea of the next steps and when it is their "turn".