

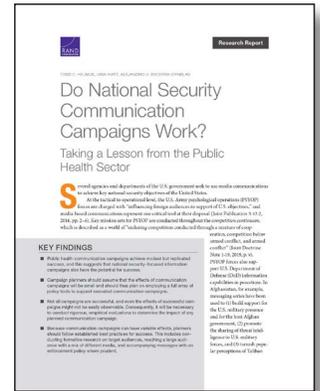


# Do National Security Communication Campaigns Work?

## Taking a Lesson from the Public Health Sector

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[www.rand.org/t/RR766-1](http://www.rand.org/t/RR766-1)



Through a systematic review of 41 meta-analytic studies of public health communication campaigns, the authors identified insights relevant to national security communication campaigns, such as the inform, influence, and persuade campaigns conducted by the U.S. Army’s psychological operations forces. The authors explored whether the attitudes and behaviors of target audiences changed and the components of successful campaigns.



### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How effective are communication campaigns?
- How consistently do communication campaigns produce measurable effects?
- What factors contribute to improved outcomes?



### KEY FINDINGS

- Effect sizes of the reviewed studies were consistently small.
- Compared with medium or large effect sizes, small effects are difficult to detect through casual observation but can represent significant changes when applied at a population level.
- In the reviews examined for this study, reviewers deemed approximately three-quarters of the studies “effective,” suggesting that communication campaigns do not always hit their mark in influencing target audiences.
- Because the effects of communication campaigns are small, they might have beneficial effects at the population level, but those effects might still not be easily observable.
- The modest and replicated success of public health communication campaigns suggests that such campaigns might also be successful in the national security sector.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Campaign planners should assume that the effects of communication campaigns will be small and thus should plan on employing a full array of policy tools to support executed communication campaigns.
- Planners should conduct rigorous empirical evaluations to determine the impact of any planned communication campaign because effects may not be easily observable.
- Planners should continue to follow established best practices in communication: Conduct formative research and analysis that seeks to understand the perspective of target audiences; employ a mix of communication modalities and reach a large share of the target audience; and incorporate enforcement messages to the extent that they are relevant.

