

RISE/Engagys COVID-19 Response Survey Results

Overview

The pandemic has caused a seismic shift in how we as a healthcare industry interact with our members. Members are feeling fear, uncertainty, and confusion. An intentional communications response is important to help members navigate their healthcare through these turbulent times.

RISE and Engagys collaborated to reach out to health plans and others to help industry peers leverage one another's experience during this challenging time. We designed a brief survey to query industry professionals regarding their current communications tactics.

The instrument focused on communications prioritization and channels, messaging and focus, and ongoing communications strategies. As promised, the results of the survey have been consolidated and are summarized here for your review.

In this Summary Document

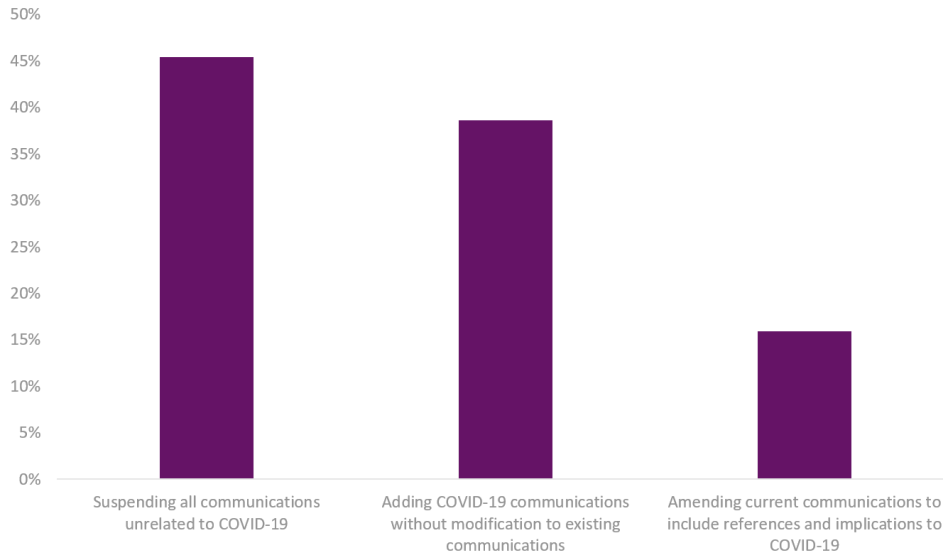
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Methodology

The survey instrument was open for respondents from March 24-27, 2020. RISE and Engagys surveyed plans across the country. A mix of regional and national plans responded. Participants included executives from plans that spanned engagement and experience, operations, clinical and administrative.

Consolidated Survey Results

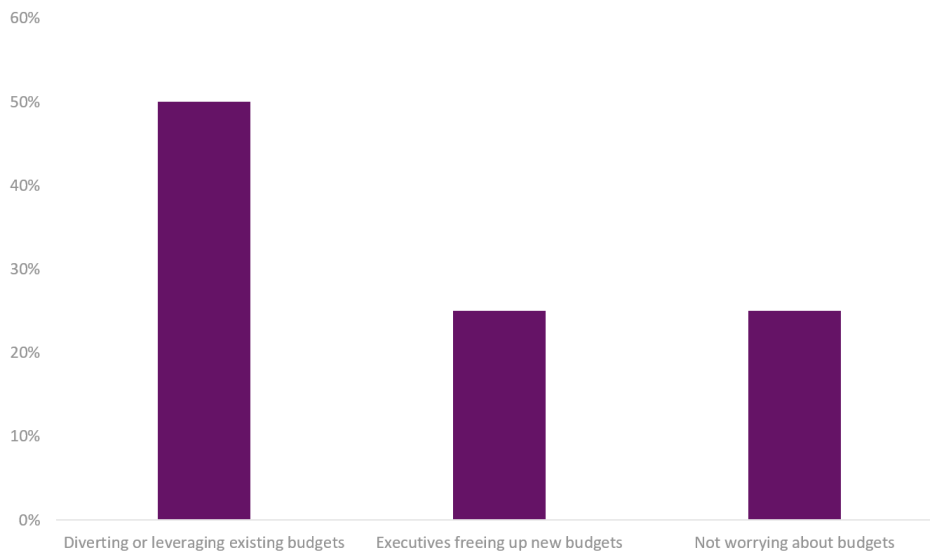
1. How are you prioritizing COVID-19-related communications versus other member communications?



Interestingly, 46% of respondents are suspending all member communications unrelated to COVID-19. By halting all or some portion of non-COVID-19 related communications, health plans are responding with a focus on immediate needs.

Engagys Insight: By halting some or all non-COVID-19 related communications, plans are helping to ensure members are receiving the important COVID-19 related communications.

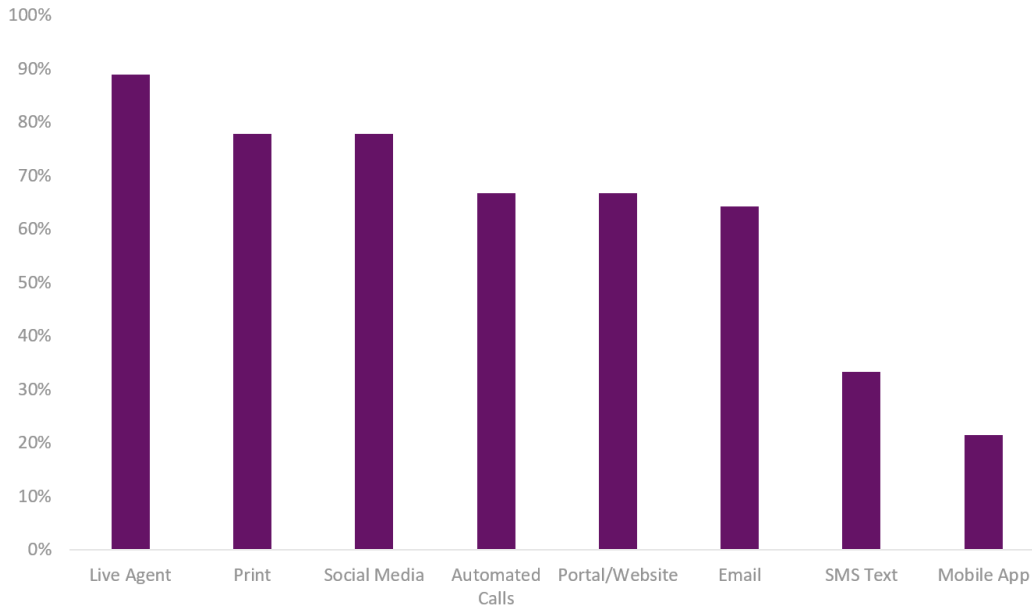
2. How are you funding communications activity related to COVID-19?



Roughly half of respondents indicate that existing budgets are being diverted.

Engagys Insight: Diverting or leveraging existing budgets to manage COVID-19 provided a quick solution to pivot to. Post COVID-19, diverted investment budgets will need to be re-funded or re-examined.

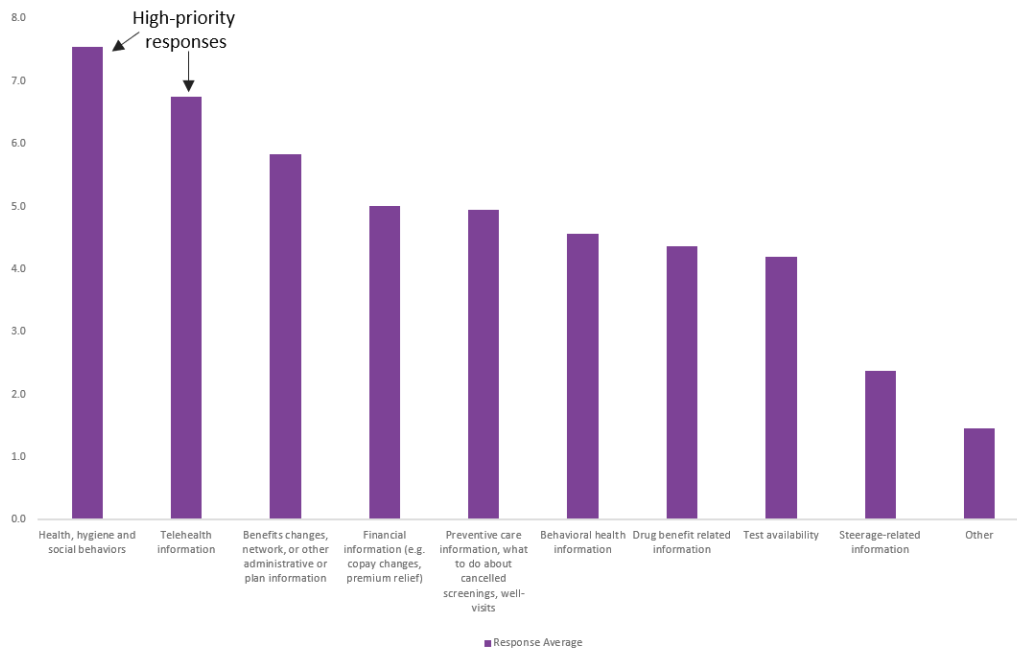
3. By what outbound channels are you communicating to members information regarding COVID-19? Please check all that apply.



Respondents noted a high use of live agent outreach followed closely by both print and use of social media channels. SMS text and mobile applications are being used least frequently.

Engagys Insight: The pandemic has shown, more than ever, the time is now for collecting and managing digital preferences. Sending a time-sensitive print communication or one on an unrelated topic during a pandemic seems tone deaf. Putting in place infrastructure to support immediate digital communications is critical to address fast-changing message priorities.

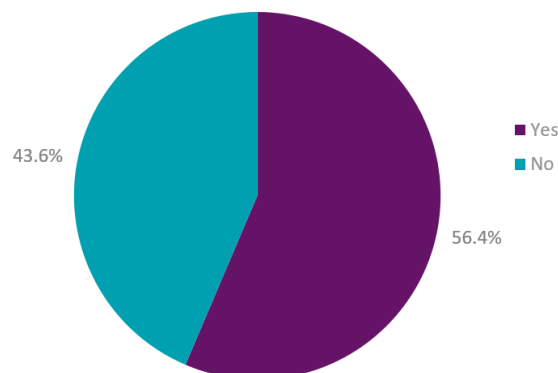
4. What are the most important messages that you are prioritizing as part of your COVID-19 communications? Please rank in order.



Respondents noted that high-priority COVID-19 communications included information related to health, hygiene and social behaviors with steerage-related and test availability information deprioritized.

Engagys Insight: This chart highlights how quickly the messages that are front and center can shift. The focus on hand washing seems to have faded in the last two weeks, and, anecdotally, messages concerning social determinants of health appear to have increased in importance. In our work with plans we have found that agility to modify communications priorities is lacking—this is an area that requires investment.

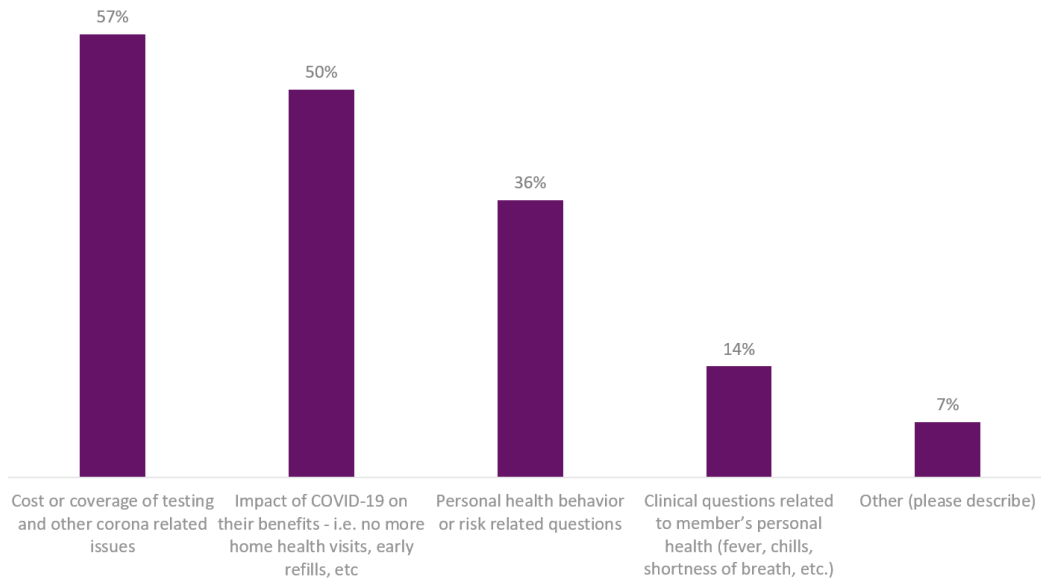
5. Have you seen an increase in overall call center activity in the last 30 – 60 days?



Only a little over half of the respondent's report increased call center volume.

Engagys Insight: Plans, in some cases, report reduced consumer call center volume due to the reduction of non-essential procedures.

6. Have you seen significant inbound call volume related to the following COVID-19 related topics? Please check all that apply.



Cost and benefits clarifications are the most common COVID-19-related reasons members are contacting their plan proactively.

Engagys Insight: These findings, when compared with Question 4 on what plans are sending out, show a disconnect between what plans are providing versus members demonstrated concerns. Question 4 shows that plans are prioritizing the following messages in this pandemic (most important is 1):

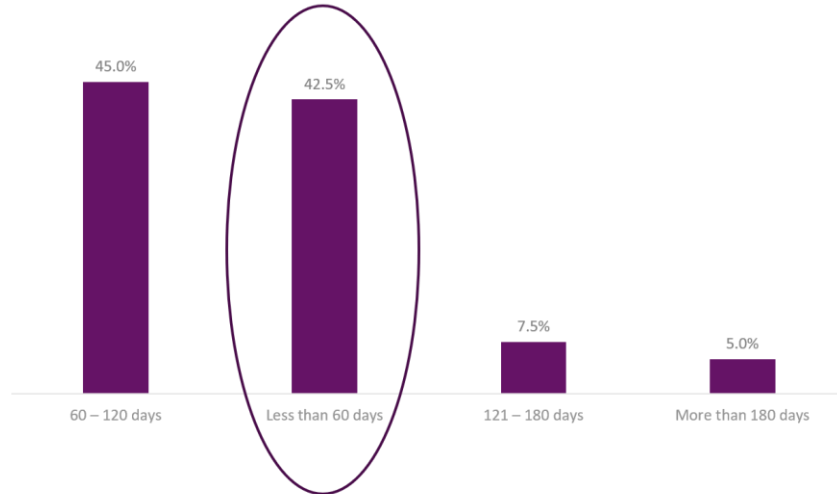
1. Health, hygiene and social behaviors
2. Telehealth information
3. Benefits changes, network, or other administrative or plan information

And yet members who call member services for assistance are interested in:

1. COVID-19 testing coverage and related benefits
2. Member specific benefit changes (i.e., home health visits, etc.)

Supplying timely information on topics consumers care about can help build trust.

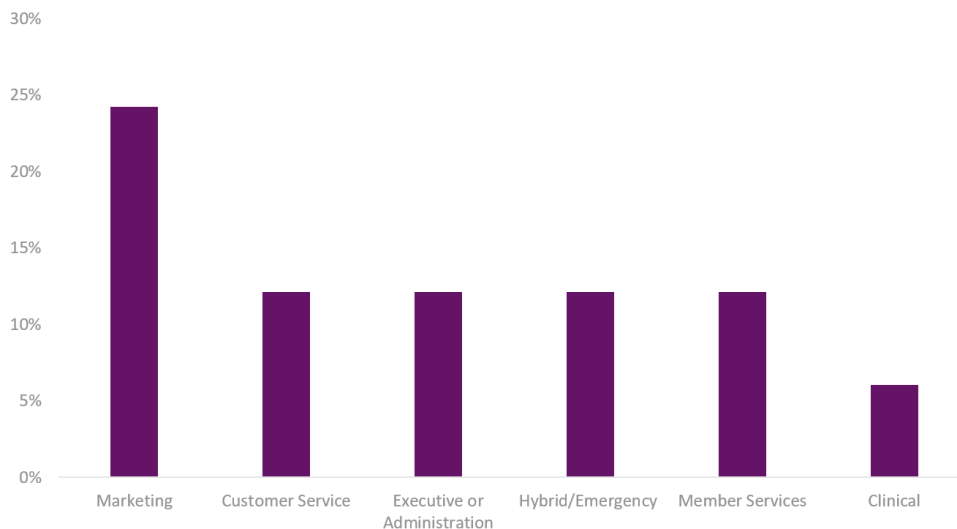
7. What is the duration of your current COVID-19 response plan?



Only 12% of respondents have a COVID-19 response plan in place that spans 121 days+, with 45% implementing a 60-120-day plan and 42% planning near-term only for 60 days or less.

Engagys Insight: The importance of a long-term plan is critical as the landscape across the country continues to shift. Soon, different regions will be under varying degrees of lockdown, and plans can be prepared now to improve personalization and effectiveness of communications to address preventive care, non-essential procedures and screenings in the context of COVID-19 concerns.

8. What department(s) in your organization owns the majority of the COVID-19 response to members?



Primary responsibility for COVID-19 related communications varies significantly across plans, with only a plurality relying primarily upon the marketing team.

Engagys Insight: The pandemic has highlighted the challenges of coordinating across internal silos within health plans. Centralized governance processes and technology investments should be under consideration as part of the adjustment to a potentially “new normal”.

Summary and Next Steps

These results show that in the early stages of the pandemic, health plans responded to members’ most immediate and pressing needs through standard communication channels. Changes in the day-to-day landscape are unfolding at an incredible pace. Finding ways to remain agile are critical—the time for messaging around hand washing and social distancing is passing quickly. Plans must now be prepared to address more complex questions surrounding access to care for acute care unrelated to COVID-19, preventive screenings, and the needs of the newly uninsured. And to make it more challenging, some messaging may need to be targeted very narrowly as lockdowns around the country are lifted in a patchwork manner.

Engagys helps clients develop communications strategies that demonstrate a path forward for members. For your reference, we have developed a framework to assist you in balancing your efforts and investments—through the lens of consumer communications: **Resolve—Ready—Reimagine**. [Please feel free to access this document here](#). We are here to help. Please contact us if you require assistance.

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PS—Want to be part of a COVID-19 engagement discussion group with peers from other plans? If so, please email me directly.

The Engagys Team

Engagys is a healthcare consumer engagement advisory firm offering services to health plans, providers, and other healthcare enterprises. Our services include engagement strategy and design, technology selection and program management, and research and benchmarking. Our research practice delivers Engagys Insights through quantitative and qualitative consumer surveys, competitive benchmarking, focus groups, journey-mapping, and other projects.



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