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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
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Good afternoon,

Last week’s inauguration brought a new administration to the United States, and with it, a new policy agenda. All four of the key priorities highlighted by the new administration—Covid-19, the economy, racial equity, and climate change—are inextricably linked to poverty. And with an [Executive Order](#) on evidence-based policymaking released just this Wednesday, there is a renewed opportunity to focus on evidence-based policies to tackle these challenges and support people experiencing poverty, especially as the pandemic continues to affect our communities.

This is why I am excited to share [new research](#) from J-PAL affiliated researchers on the importance of addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the impact of Covid-19 through improved public health messaging. As our country weighs how to best address climate change, I’ve also found it useful to revisit how our partners are finding innovative ways to [test practical climate action strategies](#) in the real world.

Reflecting upon what the future holds, I find myself coming back to the powerful words of National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman:

But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy
and change our children's birthright

This past year was one of immense pain and suffering. But amid these challenging times, the words of Amanda Gorman have instilled in me much-needed hope and optimism for what is to come.

Stay well,

Mary Ann Bates
Executive Director, J-PAL North America



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Informing state and local responses to climate change through rigorous research

State and local governments, attuned to how policy challenges manifest in their communities, are well-positioned to lead efforts around climate change adaptation and pollution mitigation. To discuss the vital role rigorous evidence can play to advance climate action, J-PAL North America recently convened a panel of representatives from academia and state and local governments. The discussion’s key theme was the need for evidence-informed action to address the impacts of a range of climate change-related hazards disproportionately experienced by low-income populations and communities of color. This [webinar recap](#) shares insights on developing climate change interventions through researcher-practitioner partnerships, leveraging data to shape climate policies, and centering marginalized communities within policy responses to climate change. Watch the full webinar recording [here](#).

Figure 1. Physician videos decreased Covid-19 knowledge gaps for all races

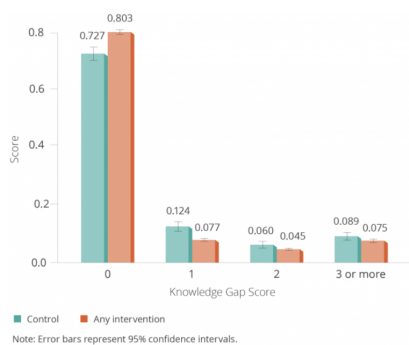


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Improved public health

messaging to communities of color can increase Covid-19 knowledge and information-seeking behavior

Due to a complex set of factors, including systemic racism and inequality in access to health services, Black and Latinx communities have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19. A [new randomized evaluation](#) shows that tailoring how and, in some cases, who communicates information about Covid-19 can help to address these disparities. In the study, Health Care Delivery Initiative Co-Chair Marcella Alsan and Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford of Massachusetts General Hospital, along with J-PAL Directors Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, and Ben Olken and co-authors, evaluated three different videos, assessing their impact on Covid-19 knowledge and health information-seeking behavior among Black and Latinx study participants. The videos varied in three ways: featured physicians' race or ethnicity, the degree to which specific concerns of Black and Latinx communities were addressed, and messaging about social perceptions around mask-wearing. Study results show that public health messages delivered by physicians increased Covid-19 knowledge for both Black and Latinx respondents. For Black respondents receiving video messages, messages delivered by a Black physician increased interest in health information-seeking.

J-PAL expands library of research resources for conducting randomized evaluations

J-PAL recently expanded our [library of research resources](#) featuring practical guidance on designing, implementing, and communicating about randomized evaluations. Structured around a project's lifecycle, the library draws from J-PAL's deep experience in implementing randomized evaluations and comprises over 300 pages of resources, including templates, checklists, and key lessons. In addition to these resources, J-PAL North America offers an [Administrative Data Catalog](#), which features data access procedures for over fifty key research-relevant data sets from the United States. The research resources are intended for anyone interested in how randomized evaluations are conducted, from researchers and research staff, to teachers and graduate students, to those who are brand new to randomized evaluations.

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J-PAL North America is a regional office of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), a global research center based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Anchored by a network of more than 225 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL draws on results from randomized impact evaluations to rigorously study what strategies meaningfully reduce poverty and translate research into action.



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