Let’s Talk About Health Equity

Nicole Bronzan, Senior Communications Officer
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Health equity means that everyone in America has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.
Equality vs. Equity Illustration

**Equality**

- Two individuals on bicycles of different heights.
- One individual is on a standard bicycle, while the other is on a modified bicycle for a person with a disability.

**Equity**

- Two individuals on bicycles of different heights, with the one on the modified bicycle now on a standard bicycle.
- The individual on the standard bicycle is now on a modified bicycle for a person with a disability.

© 2017 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. May be reproduced with attribution.
Talking about health equity is hard.
1. Know your audience.
2. Speak your passion.
Message Testing

- **RWJF’s Core Audiences (Spring 2016)**
  - 25 interviews / online survey of 1,227 people

- **Community-Based Organizations/Liberals (Fall 2016)**
  - 9 interviews / informal focus group / online survey of 418 people

- **Conservatives (Spring/Summer 2017)**
  - Arizona, Indiana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina
  - 40 interviews / online survey of 1,500 GOP voters

- **Rural Communities (In the Field)**
  - Appalachia, Heartlands, Deep South, U.S./Mexico Border Region
• What resonated?
  ■ “The choices we make depend on the choices/opportunities we have available to us.”
  ■ “Everyone should have the opportunity to live a healthier life.”

• What didn’t?
  ■ Linking “personal responsibility” and “behavior.”
  ■ “Policies and practices at every level have created stubborn obstacles to good health.”
  ■ “Being a person of color in America – whatever your economic status – can be bad for your health.”
Takeaways From Conservatives

• **What resonated?**
  - Messages about increasing “opportunity” and “access.”

• **What didn’t?**
  - Nods to race, racialized discrimination, and systemic change/government intervention.

• **Biggest influence on health:**
  - Education level, schools, economy

• **Biggest health challenges**
  - Obesity, sedentary lifestyle; opioids (PA and IN respondents)
What Works

Conservatives

“Personal responsibility.”

References to economic factors/outcomes.

Ensuring everyone has “equal opportunity” and “equal access” to health.

Community Based Organizations (Majority Liberal)

Relatable stories.

Data to back up claims about disparities.

Solutions and examples of communities working together.

Nod to “creating opportunity.”

Explicit references to discrimination.

Visual language describing inequities (e.g. “more liquor stores than grocery stores”).

“Making health a shared value.”
Messengers Matter
24:1 Community, St. Louis County, MO
24:1 Community, St. Louis County, MO
Shifting the Conversation

Disparities → Equity
Problems → Solutions
Deficits → Opportunities
Despair → Hope
Key Takeaways

- shared value
- fairness
- personal responsibility
- health equity
- real stories
- opportunity
- real communities
- data
- solutions children
Questions?
Comments?
Suggestions?