

evolveMKD

THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION

A SURVEY + REPORT BY EVOLVEMKD

Released May 2021

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FOREWORD

Communication is changing – how we communicate with others, with ourselves, and the impact of communication on us has shifted.

WHY WE DID THIS

Here at EvolveMKD, a communications and digital marketing agency, we have long believed that communication has seen a drastic shift over the last decade, in part due to the rise of social media use that is now skyrocketing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift has impacted more than just how we communicate, but also how we feel.

In an effort to explore this shift, EvolveMKD conducted proprietary research for our *Evolution of Communication* study to further understand this change in communication over the last decade and its full impact.

Our research not only proved our hypothesis, but also concluded that the impact is much more complicated than we originally believed.



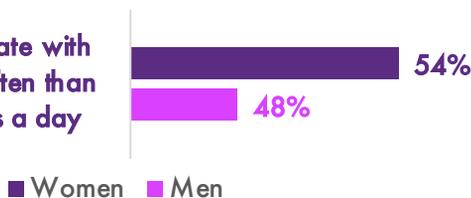
56%
of Americans

have changed the time they spend communicating in-person compared to 10 years ago

- For those who saw a change, **53% of Americans** are spending less time in-person than they were 10 years ago
- Additionally, **57% of Americans** have seen a change in the way they communicate with themselves

Surprisingly and despite the common belief that women are better communicators, our research revealed that, while women communicate more often than men, men are more likely than women to say their communication has improved over the last 10 years.

Women communicate with themselves more often than men multiple times a day



- Interestingly, men were more likely than women to say their self-communication has improved in the last 10 years

S1Q5. How often do you actively practice self-communication? Select one. S1Q8. Do you feel like your self-communication has gotten better, worse, or stayed the same over the last 10 years? N=1000, Women=526, Men=467

FOREWORD

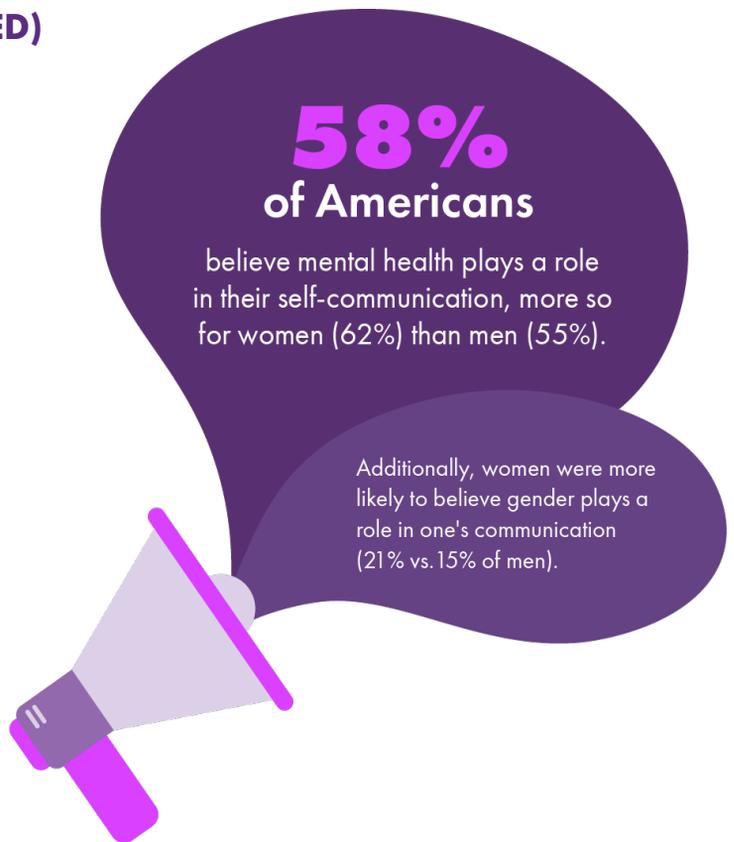
Our research concluded that communication and mental health are linked and that, for women in particular, the link is more complicated than we originally believed.

WHY WE DID THIS (CONTINUED)

Even more surprising, our research found a strong link between communication and mental health levels, a link that is felt more strongly in women than in men.

This revelation that there is a connection between mental health, gender, and communication motivated us at Evolve MKD to once again partner with Ipsos to field follow up research in order to better understand this connection.

The following report debunks the myth that women are better communicators, sheds light on the impact that communication forms on women's mental health, and offers best practices from communication and mental health experts on how to best communicate with ourselves and others to preserve our mental well-being.



S1Q11. Do you believe any of the following play a role in how well you self-communicate? Select all that apply. N=1000, Women=526, Men=467

INTRODUCTION

Research shows our communication has a profound impact on our mental health. Since communication methods have evolved, what has this meant for our mental well-being?

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IS SUFFERING

Despite many historic years for the positive advancement of women (i.e. #MeToo, the first woman Vice President), a negative shift has been the decline in mental health for women.

Of the women who reported a change in their mental health, 55% said it has declined over the last 10 years, compared to only 36% of men.

And 75% said it has been negatively impacted over the last year, compared to 49% of men.

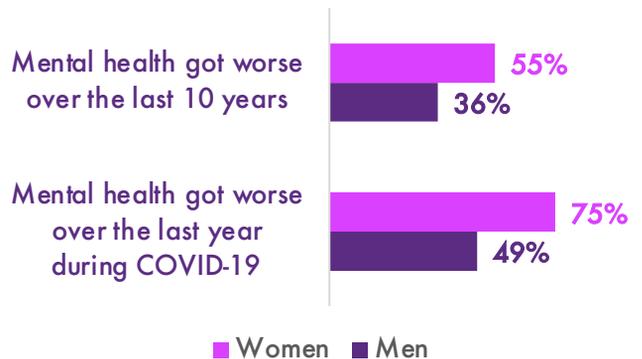
The decline in mental health, especially for women, is likely contributed to several factors, but one link is clear from our research - communication plays a role in mental health, and vice versa.

While women and men communicate differently, women have long been viewed as being better at it. However, the reality is women are experiencing greater declines than men in their mental health, even with the vast modes of communication available to them during the pandemic.

Of the Americans who reported a change in their mental health, more said it worsened during COVID-19 than in the last 10 years:



Of the Americans who reported a change in their mental health, more women said it worsened than men:



S2Q1. Over the last 10 years, do you believe that your mental health has gotten better, worse, or stayed the same, excluding COVID-19? S2Q2. During COVID-19, do you believe that your mental health has gotten better, worse, or stayed the same?

N=1000; Americans Whose Mental Health Changed in the Last 10 Years=549, Women Whose Mental Health Changed in the Last 10 Years=288, Men Whose Mental Health Changed in the Last 10 Years=261; Americans Whose Mental Health Changed in the Last Year=514, Women Whose Mental Health Changed in the Last Year=273, Men Whose Mental Health Changed in the Last Year=241

COMMUNICATION & MENTAL HEALTH

Women have a reputation for being stronger communicators. If good communication is tied to positive mental health, why is women's mental health suffering more than men's?

WOMEN ARE MORE IMPACTED BY INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS THAN MEN

Seven in 10 women say their mental health is tied to their communication with others. Since many women absorb the feelings of those around them, it can take a toll on their mental health.

Research shows that women are more impacted by those around them than men, with 7 in 10 (69%) women letting other people's emotions affect their own.

Of those whose mental health changed over the last 10 years...

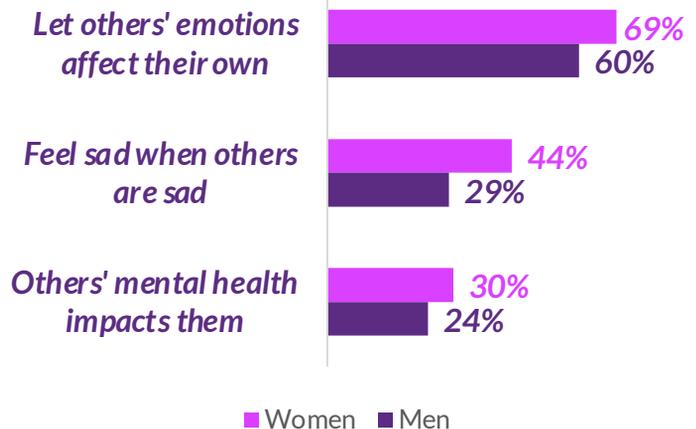


women were more likely to report it worsening than men.¹



7 in 10

Americans agree that mental health is tied to communication.²



S2Q9. Which of the following statements, if any, are truthful for you? Select all that apply.

N=1000, Women=526, Men=472; Women Whose Mental Health Changed in the Last 10 Years=288
¹S2Q1. Over the last 10 years, do you believe that your mental health has gotten better, worse, or stayed the same, excluding COVID-19?
²S2Q8. Which of the following statements, if any, are truthful for you?

COVID-19 IMPACT

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the ways in which we communicate, and women's mental health has suffered.

COVID-19 HAS HAD A GREATER NEGATIVE IMPACT ON WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH THAN MEN'S

As evidenced by our research, the way we communicate has changed drastically over the last 10 years. At no time has that been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prominent reasons for this include the new rules for socialization. The COVID-19 pandemic made in-person meetings strict in order for most Americans to abide by social distancing guidelines. Because of this, Americans shifted to new virtual and digital methods of communication.

While the impact of the pandemic has been largely negative for all Americans, especially related to their mental health, women are hardest hit – 75% of woman survey respondents said their mental health was negatively affected by COVID-19, compared to 50% of men.

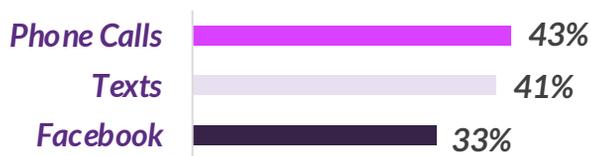
S2: N=1000, Women=526, Men=472; Women Whose Mental Health Was Affected by COVID-19=273, Men Whose Mental Health Was Affected by COVID-19=241

¹S2Q2. During COVID-19, do you believe that your mental health has gotten better, worse, or stayed the same?

S1: N=1000, Women=526, Men=467

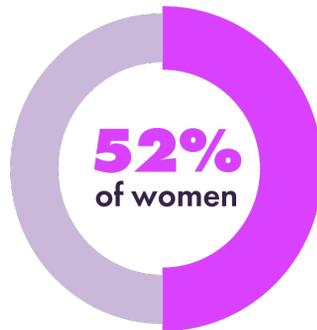
²S1. During COVID-19, what communication channels have you used more compared to pre-COVID-19?

³S1. Which of the following, if any, do you think will change post-COVID-19 compared to pre-COVID-19?



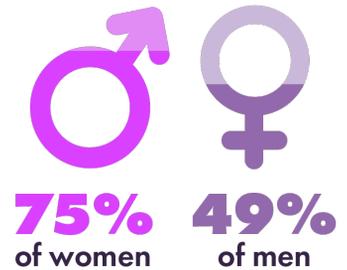
S1. During COVID-19, what communication channels have you used more compared to pre-COVID-19?

Women reported turning to phone calls, texts, and Facebook more during COVID-19 than prior to it

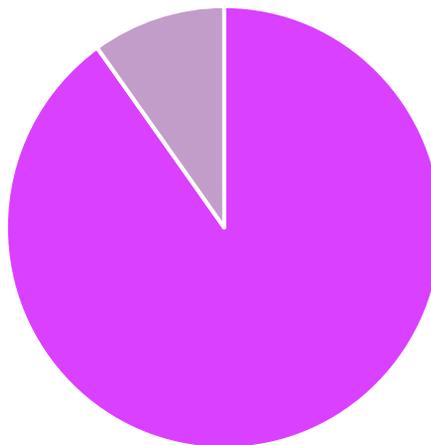


believe in-person communication will change after re-openings compared to pre-COVID-19.

Women were more likely than men to see their mental health worsen during COVID-19.



whose mental health changed during COVID-19 said it got worse.



- **91% of women** said COVID-19 impacted the way they communicate with others
- 35% of women said they have fewer opportunities to communicate due to COVID-19
- 1 in 4 (25%) women said their relationships deteriorated because of COVID-19

S1. During COVID-19, what aspects to communication have improved compared to pre-COVID-19?

SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

Overall, Americans agree that social media has had a positive impact on their mental health. However, more women are negatively impacted by social media than men.

HOW TIME IS SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA COULD BE A FACTOR INFLUENCING MENTAL HEALTH

Many studies have warned that social media use can contribute to depression, anxiety, and poor mental health.⁴ However, our study shows our relationship to social media is more complicated than good versus bad. While half of Americans said social media has no impact on their mental health, among those who say it *has* had an impact, 3 in 4 Americans believe it to be a positive one. However, more women than men say the impact of social media on their mental health is negative (30% of women whose mental health is impacted by social media vs. 18% of men).¹

This disparity could be driven by how women spend their time on social media. While men and women spend comparable time on social media, women are spending considerably more time scrolling through their feed than men (54% vs. 40%).²

Social media expert Natalie Zfat agrees that it is important to focus on quality over quantity when it comes to social media use. She shares the following three tips on how to use social media positively:

1. **Build a community around something you love**
2. **Be a resource and share tips with others**
3. **Add value to the lives of your followers**



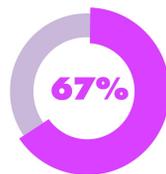
76%
of Americans



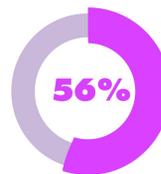
30% of women
18% of men

Of those who reported that social media had an impact on mental health, 76% of Americans said that impact was positive.¹

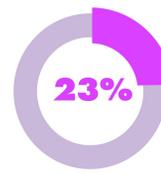
However, more women who reported social media had an impact on mental health said the impact was negative (30%) compared to men (18%).¹



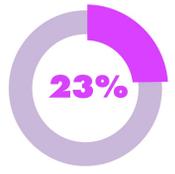
of women say they communicate differently on social media compared to other comms channels³



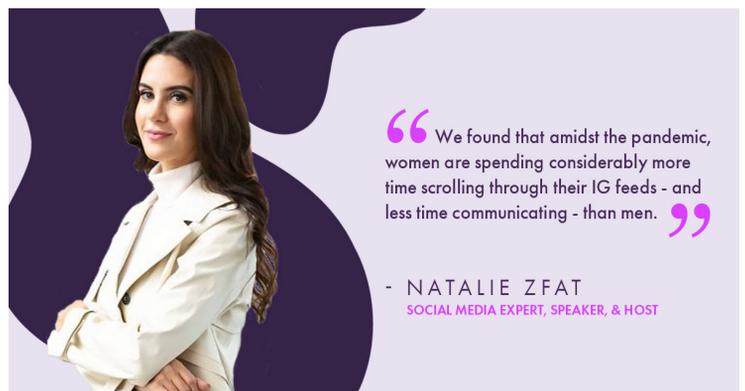
of women say social media has changed the way they communicate³



of women engage in negative conversation on social media³



of women use social media as their primary communication channel³



S2: N=1000, Women=526, Men=472; Americans Whose Mental Health Was Impacted by Social Media=505, Women Whose Mental Health Was Impacted by Social Media=260, Men Whose Mental Health Was Impacted by Social Media=245
¹S2Q31. What impact, if any, has social media had on your mental health?

S1: N=1000, Women=XX, Men=XX

²S1Q25. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being completely untrue, 5 being completely true, how truthful are these statements to you? | I communicate differently on social media compared to other communication channels; I engage in negative communication on social media; Social media has changed the way I communicate; I communicate more on social media than any other communication channels (i.e. text, face to face, calls, etc.)

⁴Seabrook, E. M., Kern, M. L., & Rickard, N. S. (2016). Social Networking Sites, Depression, and Anxiety: A Systematic Review. JMIR mental health, 3(4), e50. <https://doi.org/10.2196/mental.5842>

CONCLUSION

The Evolution of Communication study revealed that the ways we communicate with others has a profound impact on our mental health and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed our methods of everyday communication, and while men seemed to thrive under these circumstances comparably, women, even though they are known to be excellent communicators, suffered.

As the world starts to re-open in the wake of the pandemic, our communication methods will continue to change and adapt to new lifestyle needs. Knowing the importance of the link between communication forms and mental health, EvolveMKD plans to help current and potential clients tailor their campaigns to produce more meaningful content and personal connections.

EvolveMKD has an opportunity to spread awareness around the importance of communication on mental health. As a communications industry leader, we take that responsibility seriously, and are committed to making it a core part of our mission.

As a first step, EvolveMKD worked with Dr. La Keita Carter to develop tools for women to check in on their mental health before communicating ('Mental Health Checklist') and to further understand their own as well as others' communication preferences ('5 Communication Languages').

“

We want to help our clients meet their goals while also making a positive impact on the mental health of their consumer.

”

MEGAN DRISCOLL
CEO + FOUNDER OF EVOLVEMKD



MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST

Do a mental health self-check before having an important, serious, difficult, emotional, personal or professional conversation

As communication experts, we value the opportunity to spread awareness around mental health and help our clients communicate with empathy towards their consumers.

Below are some questions you can ask yourself that may help you navigate your mental health to best set you up for success before communicating.

1. ARE YOU ALREADY FEELING EXHAUSTED?

For a lot of women, in-person interactions are even more exhausting. Try to find ways to increase your energy before the important conversation takes place.

2. ARE YOU FEELING DISTRACTED?

Distractions can be mental, physical, or emotional. Try to figure out what distracts you and how you can mitigate it. For mental and emotional distractions, take deep breaths and try 5 minutes of meditation. For physical distractions, create a space free of technology, noise and other interferences.

3. DO YOU FEEL PREPARED?

Going into a conversation prepared with thought-out ideas and speaking points can ensure you get your point across.

4. DO YOU FEEL READY TO BE OPEN AND SUSPEND JUDGEMENT?

Quick judgements can hinder effective communication and complete understanding. Listen and reflect on what you hear. Be open and listen so that your responses are thoughtful and without judgement.

5. ARE YOU READY TO BE HONEST?

In difficult situations, women often may feel the need to hold back their emotions and not articulate how they truly feel. It is important to be straightforward in expressing the truth without being misleading to fully get your point across.

INTRODUCING THE '5 COMMUNICATION LANGUAGES'

Before having an important, serious, tough, emotional, or professional conversation, it is necessary to check in with yourself mentally.

For many Americans, women in particular, there are fundamental differences on the way they appreciate communication. These communication preferences, what EvolveMKD is naming the '5 Communication Languages', were developed to help women learn more about theirs and others' communication needs and why understanding those needs is important for their mental health.

LANGUAGE	WHO THEY ARE	DRAWBACKS	STATISTICS
THE MEET & GREETER	Wants face-to-face time. Feels really connected when they share physical space with loved ones. Will make special trips just to see you. They communicate with their mouth, facial expressions and hands. Very touchy-feely. Face-to-face is better than Zoom; Zoom is better than phone calls; phones calls are better than texts.	May feel dismissed or ignored if a loved one avoids meeting in-person. Loses connection when they can't share physical space with someone. When it comes to work, virtual communication may contribute to their feeling disconnected, especially if everyone has their camera off for Zoom meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 in 3 women prefer in-person for everyday communication (36%) • 63% of women said in-person builds deeper connections • 43% of women said in-person makes them happier than text/phone calls
THE OVER SHARER	Will tell you everything you need to know about them without you asking. Feels connected to others by being vulnerable. They really don't require you to share at the same depth, as long as you don't shut down how much they share.	They can overwhelm others who are more guarded. Others may not have the verbal space to communicate because they can take up a lot of it with their stuff. When it comes to work projects, they may get tangential and team members may have to pull them back on task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% of women prefer texting for everyday communication • 65% of women say they don't have enough time for in-person interactions • 28% of women say they have more honest conversations over the phone than in-person

INTRODUCING THE '5 COMMUNICATION LANGUAGES'

LANGUAGE	WHO THEY ARE	DRAWBACKS	STATISTICS
THE INITIATOR	Loves to talk, even if it's about superficial topics like the weather. Feeds off of others' verbal energy. Often feels bored when there is empty space in a conversation, even when it's with a loved one. Enjoys cocktail parties because they get to mingle with different types of people and start conversations that can evolve into interesting connections.	They can overwhelm others who are more guarded. Others may not have the verbal space to communicate because she can take up a lot of it with her stuff. When it comes to work projects, they may get tangential and team members may have to pull them back on task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33% of women prefer texting for everyday communication • 65% of women say they don't have enough time for in-person interactions • 28% of women say they have more honest conversations over the phone than in person
THE OBSERVER	Loves to listen and prefers to watch how conversation unfolds before jumping in. It's hard for them to initiate conversation because they like to wait to find meaningful connections. They won't dominate the conversation as they would rather learn about you than talk about themselves. They will often communicate things that others don't notice simply because they are heavily focused on the conversation.	Others may view their pulled back nature as shy, reserved, or even cold. Every observer isn't shy or introverted, however, they do like to understand others' roles before they jump in. Observation is their primary way of understanding others, so they can be overshadowed when working on a team because they don't talk as frequently as others. However, when they talk, others listen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47% of women say they have social anxiety during in-person interactions • 11% of women feel pressure to be their "best" selves when they communicate with others
THE PROTECTOR	Can find communication exhausting and draining. They protect themselves from being depleted by choosing when to engage, so it may take several hours, days, or weeks for them to respond. They really need to be in a mood to talk socially. May view talking as a means to an end and not a way to connect. Is perfectly comfortable with silence because emotional connection isn't always contingent upon words.	Others may read them as standoffish or even rude because they don't respond in a timely manner or force conversation. They generally don't like chit-chatting so gatherings can feel awkward for them. Others may feel dismissed or ignored by them. They may be seen as unreliable in situations because they are slow to respond. It may take time for others to figure them out, which can stall the connection process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of women communicate less with friends than they did 10 years ago • 29% of women feel exhausted after in-person gatherings • Only 16% of women talk to their friends every day

WHO WE ARE

EvolveMKD is an established public relations and digital marketing agency in New York that understands the ins and outs of the industry and marketing to women. As a firm founded by and comprised mostly of women, we lend a female perspective on how to reach our clients' key consumers. We felt it was important to gather this research because we have a responsibility to address what has been happening to women's mental over the last decade and the role communication plays in that decline.



Megan Driscoll
CEO + Founder

Megan is a sought-after strategic media and communications professional with nearly 17 years of experience in healthcare, aesthetics and dermatology, and prestige beauty. Key to her success is Megan's ability to always find a way. Megan finds potential in every opportunity for her clients through determination, relationships, agility, and sound strategy coupled with a creative spirit. Megan has cultivated relationships with physicians, consumers, key opinion leaders and tastemakers to gain her clients national level recognition. Megan wants to surround herself with smart, passionate people who value integrity – people who are serious about their work, but don't take themselves too seriously. This philosophy is at the heart of founding EvolveMKD.



Alex Christian
AVP, Research + Analytics

Alex has over 10 years of experience conducting research in global PR and communications agencies. Having worked on a breadth of research projects, from measuring and evaluating the impact of communications, developing data-based insights to inform brand and campaign strategies, conducting interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, creating surveys to generate media and consumer buzz, and executing global thought leadership initiatives, Alex combines her love of PR with the data that informs it.



Blake Brashear
Senior Analyst, Research + Analytics

Blake is an experienced researcher and performance analyst who believes successful brands and campaigns are driven by data. With experience across a span of projects – conducting consumer feedback research and surveys, developing data-driven insights, and measuring campaign success, she applies her knowledge to fine tune brand strategies with clients ranging from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies.

OUR PARTNERS

Since our expertise lies in communications, we partnered with mental health expert Dr. La Keita Carter to help unpack the data and better understand the link between communication and mental health. We also brought on social media expert Natalie Zfat to lend her perspective on how social media has contributed to changes in how we communicate and what the impact has been on mental health.



Dr. La Keita Carter
CEO & Owner of Institute
For Healing

La Keita D. Carter, PsyD is a licensed psychologist in Maryland who specializes in trauma. Born in Baltimore, MD, Dr. Carter completed her bachelor's degree at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA before completing her master's and doctoral degrees at Loyola University Maryland. In addition to being a licensed psychologist, Dr. Carter is also a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor-Supervisor (LCPC-S) and Licensed Clinical Alcohol & Drug Counselor (LCADC) in Maryland.

Affectionally known as "Dr. C" by her patients and students, Dr. Carter holds several certificates in psychology. She is a Diplomate in Rape Trauma (American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress) as well as a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional (CCTP). Through the [National Board of Certified Counselors](#), Dr. Carter is also an Approved Clinical Supervisor (ACS) and a Board-Certified Telemental Health Professional (BC-TMH).

Dr. Carter owns and operates the [Institute for HEALing, LLC \(iHEAL\)](#), a wellness agency based in Owings Mills, MD that specializes in the treatment of mental health disorders. iHEAL holds accreditation and licensure with the State of Maryland as an outpatient mental health clinic (OMHC), mobile treatment service (MTS), psychiatric rehabilitation program for adults (PRP), and alcohol education program. It is also certified as a Minority-Owned Enterprise (MBE) as well as a Small Business Enterprise (SBE).



Natalie Zfat
Social Media Expert

Natalie Zfat is a social media expert, speaker and host who has partnered with some of the most iconic brands in the world, including Samsung, Facebook, CNBC and LinkedIn. Curating original social media content, strategy and campaigns, Natalie gains millions of impressions for the brands she advocates for. When she's not with her clients, Natalie loves sharing her social media thought leadership in her Forbes column, on television and at conferences and universities, including the New York Times, CBS, Carnegie Mellon, NYU Stern School of Business, SXSW and CES.

RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY

EvolveMKD conducted this research in partnership with global market research firm Ipsos in two parts in August 2020 and March 2021. Each installment consisted of 15-minute online surveys, fielded to 1,000 adult Americans in the general population.*

A global leader in market research, Ipsos delivers reliable information and true understanding of Society, Markets and People.

**To achieve a balanced and representative sample in terms of age, gender, region, and nationality/ethnicity, additional weighting may be applied on the back-end, where needed.*

RESEARCH FOCUS AREAS

The initial survey conducted in August 2020 showed interesting insights about women vs. men and how they communicate by diving into the following topics:

- Self-communication
- Communication with others
- Social media communication
- The ways businesses use communication
- Communication during COVID-19

The second survey conducted in March 2021 further explored those differences between men and women and dug deeper into how they relate to mental health by touching on the following topics:

- Communication and mental health
- Mental health over time and during COVID-19
- Social media and mental health
- Communication shifts during COVID-19

Survey 1 (August 2020) sample size: N=1000, Men=472, Women=526
Survey 2 (March 2021) sample size: N=1000, Men=472, Women=526