



COVID-19 Survey Summary: April 17, 2020

The following is a summary of social, behavioral and economic survey research on COVID-19 released in the past week, as compiled for the Societal Experts Action Network (SEAN). Surveys cited in this report are available in the [COVID-19 Survey Archive](#).

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Coronavirus Contact and Concern

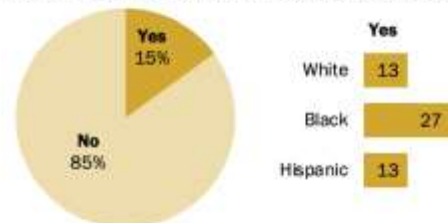
The number of Americans who know someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus continues to climb, now to 19 percent; an additional 14 percent know someone who sought testing but was turned away ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)). (As [noted](#) last week, more report knowing someone who has “been diagnosed with” the coronavirus rather than “tested positive” for it.)

Fifteen percent say they personally know someone who has been hospitalized or died as a result of coronavirus, including 27 percent of black Americans, compared with 13 percent of whites and Hispanics ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)). Many other results this week also illustrate differing impacts of the pandemic across groups.

Overall, about eight in 10 adults are at least somewhat concerned about the possibility of getting sick from coronavirus ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#); [ABC/Ipsos 4/15-4/16](#)), two-thirds are similarly concerned that they may get the virus and unwittingly spread it to others and more than half are worried they will require hospitalization because of the virus ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)).

Black Americans far more likely to know someone who has been hospitalized or died as a result of having COVID-19

Do you personally know someone who has been hospitalized or died as a result of having COVID-19? (%)



Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 7-12, 2020.

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These concerns are particularly acute among racial and ethnic minorities. Sixty percent of blacks and 51 percent of Hispanics are extremely or very concerned about the possibility of getting sick, compared with 39 percent of whites ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)). Half of Hispanics are very concerned they might unknowingly spread coronavirus to others, compared with 28 percent of whites, and 43 percent of Hispanics are very concerned they will require hospitalization, compared with 18 percent of whites. Concern among black adults falls in between – 38 percent are very concerned they might unknowingly spread the virus and 31 percent are that concerned they might need hospitalization ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)).

The public's overall outlook about the "coronavirus situation in the U.S. today" has eased; while 48 percent think things are getting worse rather than getting better, that's down from 62 percent a few days earlier ([Gallup 4/10-4/12](#)). However, looking ahead, nearly three-quarters of Americans think the worst is still to come ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)).

Changes to Daily Life

The number who expect coronavirus-related disruptions to travel, school, work and public events to last for a few more months has dropped from a high of 59 percent two weeks ago to 48 percent now. A quarter think disruptions will last only a few more weeks, up from 19 percent ([Gallup 4/10-4/12](#)). An additional 27 percent think disruptions will last for longer than a few months.

That said, when it comes to resuming "your regular daily routine," just 8 percent think this will happen by May 1st, an additional two in 10 more by June 1st and 16 percent by July 1st. Nearly a quarter, 23 percent, think it'll take until the end of the summer and 22 percent say it'll be longer than that. (One in 10 says their daily routine has not changed because of the outbreak.) The number who see a return to routine by or before June 1st has dropped from about four in 10 two weeks ago to fewer than three in 10 now ([ABC/Ipsos 4/15-4/16](#)).

As we reported [last week](#), the abrupt changes to daily life brought about by the pandemic have stabilized. Behaviors that once seemed normal now seem risky to most Americans:

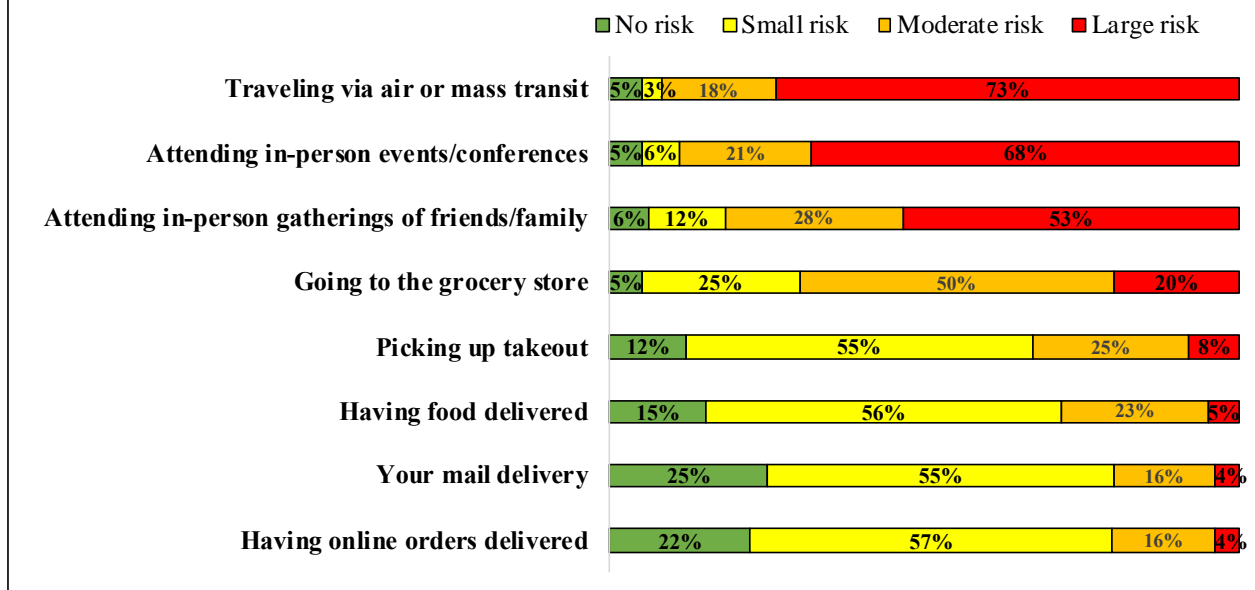
- Nine in 10 say that traveling by airplane or mass transit, or attending in-person events or conferences, poses at least a moderate risk to their health and well-being. Most – 73 and 68 percent, respectively – see these behaviors as large risks ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).
- Eight in 10 say that attending gatherings of friends and family outside of their home is at least a moderate risk to their health. More than half, 53 percent, call it a large risk. Men and adults younger than 30 are less apt than women and older adults to say so ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).

Further, among adults currently working outside the home, nearly six in 10 (57 percent) feel doing their job is at least a moderate risk to their health; just 13 percent of those working from home say the same. Black and Hispanic workers and those without a college degree are more likely than whites and those with a degree to say their job is at least a moderate risk ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).

Another essential (and formerly mundane) behavior – grocery shopping – is now perceived as a risk by most Americans. Seven in 10 overall say that going to the grocery store is at least a moderate risk to their health and well-being. Perhaps given accommodation efforts, seniors are less apt than younger adults to see grocery shopping as a high risk ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).

Pick-up and delivery are viewed as the safest of the tested behaviors, but still not without risk – about a third say picking up takeout poses at least a moderate risk, just shy of three in 10 say the same about food delivery, and two in 10 say the same about mail and package deliveries ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).

Perceptions of risk to personal health and well-being (Axios/Ipsos)



There are signs that online delivery is struggling to keep up with demand. Sixty-one percent say items they intended to purchase online have been unavailable or significantly delayed ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)). And 52 percent report that there are items they need right now that they can't find in store or online ([Monmouth 4/3-4/7](#)).

When Americans leave the house, about two-thirds say they're always maintaining a distance of at least six feet from other people and almost all the rest are saying they do so at least some of the time. More than half, 56 percent, say they're wearing a mask outside the home at least some of the time, including three in 10 who do so all the time. Fewer, 37 percent, report wearing gloves at least some of the time ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).

Regardless of frequency, 69 percent of Americans who have left the house in the past week say they've worn a face covering, up from 55 percent the previous week ([ABC/Ipsos 4/15-4/16](#)).

Women, seniors and Democrats are more likely than others to say they always maintain social distance and frequently wear masks and gloves. Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to say they frequently wear protective gear, and there are regional differences, with masks more common in the Northeast and West than in the South or Midwest ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).

Economic Impact

With [weekly jobless claims](#) soaring to unprecedented levels, consumer confidence tanking at [record-breaking speed](#) and [economic activity contracting](#) dramatically, the pandemic is not only a public health crisis, but an economic one:

- Positive ratings of the national economy have been cut by almost half in the past month, from 69 percent in early March to 37 percent now. Thirty-seven percent rate the buying climate positively, down 16 points in the same time period, and while 59 percent rate

their personal finances as excellent or good, that too has declined, from 68 percent in early March ([Bloomberg CCI 4/8-4/11](#)).

- Roughly half (48 percent) are at least somewhat worried that they will “experience severe financial hardship as a result of the disruption caused by coronavirus,” and that rises to six in 10 of those with household incomes less than \$36,000 ([Gallup 4/10-4/12](#)).
- Three in 10 report that someone in their household has been laid off from work because of the outbreak, with minorities, those younger than 55, and those without a college degree more apt to report someone in their house has lost work due to the virus ([Monmouth 4/3-4/7](#)).
- Twenty-two percent say they’ve struggled to pay their bills because of the outbreak, rising to 36 percent of those earning less than \$50,000 a year ([Monmouth 4/3-4/7](#)).

Asked about how they plan to spend the \$1,200 economic relief payment most Americans are to receive, half say they’ll use it to pay bills (35 percent) or purchase essential items (16 percent), and an additional three in 10 plan to save or invest it. Lower income Americans are particularly likely to say they’ll use the funds for bills or essential items ([Gallup 4/6-4/12](#)).

Health Impacts

The impact of the pandemic on mental health continues to be a concern. More than half of Americans, 55 percent, say their daily stress level has increased during the outbreak and a quarter report feeling more lonely ([Monmouth 4/3-4/7](#)). Roughly three in 10 say their mental health has declined in the past week, for the fourth week in a row ([Axios/Ipsos 4/10-4/13](#)).

While nearly seven in 10 (68 percent) say they can continue following social distancing practices and business/school closures for “as long as is necessary” before their physical health suffers, fewer than half (48 percent) say the same about their mental health. Fifteen percent report that their emotional or mental health is already suffering because of social distancing practices, and an additional 18 percent feel they can only tolerate a few more weeks of it without mental health consequences. Younger Americans, women and parents with minor children are more apt to already say their mental health is suffering ([Gallup 4/6-4/12](#)).

Government Response

Despite some increased calls to open up the U.S. economy, far more are concerned that state governments will lift restrictions on public activities too quickly than are worried that they will not do so quickly enough, 66 to 32 percent ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)).

There are partisan divisions in this view. Eighty-one percent of Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party are more concerned restrictions will be lifted too quickly, while it’s a nearly even split among Republicans and those who lean Republican – 51 percent are more concerned that state governments will act too quickly, 48 percent worry that restrictions won’t be lifted quickly enough.

The public is skeptical that the government could successfully use cellphone tracking to limit the spread of coronavirus, and divided over whether this kind of surveillance is acceptable:

- Just 16 percent think that if the government tracked people’s locations through their cellphone it would help a lot to limit the spread of the virus and 22 percent think it would help a little. Six in 10 think it wouldn’t make much of a difference.
- Fifty-two percent think it’s acceptable for the government to use people’s cell phones to track the location of people who have tested positive for coronavirus to understand how the virus is spreading; 48 percent say it’s unacceptable.
- Forty-five percent think it’s acceptable for the government to use cellphones to track people who may have had contact with someone who tested positive.
- Fewer still, 37 percent, think it’s acceptable for the government to use cellphones to ensure that people are complying with social distancing guidelines. About six in 10 call this unacceptable, including 43 percent who say it’s very unacceptable. ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)).

Nearly two-thirds of Americans (65 percent) think Donald Trump was too slow “to take major steps to address the threat to the U.S.” stemming from the coronavirus ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)); half as many think he was quick to take major steps. More say Trump was too slow than the 58 percent in a similar question March 25 ([ABC News/Washington Post 4/22-4/25](#)).

Early action aside, Trump’s overall approval rating for handling the coronavirus outbreak remains at 44 percent for a second week ([ABC/Ipsos 4/15-4/16](#)). The public divides 51-49 percent on whether the president is doing an excellent or good job addressing the economic needs of businesses facing financial difficulties. His ratings are weaker on addressing the financial needs of ordinary people who have lost jobs or income (46 percent positive), working with state governors (45 percent), responding to the needs of hospitals, doctors and nurses (45 percent) and “providing the public with accurate information about the coronavirus” (42 percent) ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)). More than half, 52 percent, think that in his public comments on the pandemic, Trump is making the situation seem better than it really is ([Pew 4/7-4/12](#)).

Summary for SEAN by [Langer Research Associates](#).