



COVID-19 Survey Summary: April 3, 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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In sum: Survey data find that Americans are taking the coronavirus seriously, broadly accept restrictions intended to reduce the spread of the disease, are adjusting to social distancing and express deep economic uncertainty.

Awareness and Acceptance

Almost all Americans (92 percent) are concerned about the outbreak, including more than six in 10 who report being extremely or very concerned ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)). Two-thirds feel the outbreak poses a major threat to the health of the U.S. population and a similar number call the outbreak a “significant crisis” ([Pew 3/19-3/24](#)).

Perhaps reflecting this broad concern, most Americans support various federal and local restrictions that have been put in place to limit the spread of the coronavirus. For example:

- Nearly nine in 10 favor of making U.S. citizens quarantine themselves when they return from traveling abroad and 82 percent favor banning travel into the U.S. for non-citizens.
- Eighty-four percent favor of requirements that limit gatherings to 10 people or fewer, 83 percent feel the same about closing schools and 76 percent favor of requiring bars and restaurants to close.
- Nearly eight in 10 (78 percent) favor requiring Americans to stay in their homes except for essential errands and 76 percent approve of travel restrictions within the United States.
- Fewer, but still 61 percent, favor postponing elections scheduled in the next two months ([AP-NORC 3/26-3/29](#)).

Indeed, nearly eight in 10 Americans say they would not yet resume their normal daily activities even if government restrictions were lifted. ([Gallup 3/27-3/29](#))

Changes to Daily Life

Clearly, everyday life has changed drastically for most Americans. The number of employed adults who report being told to work from home doubled from two weeks ago to 42 percent. Twenty percent report being furloughed or suspended, and 16 percent say their employer has shut down business completely ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).

These job-related changes have disproportionately disadvantaged less educated and lower income Americans who are less likely to be able to do their job online and more likely to report they've been furloughed or their business has closed entirely ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).

Shifts in work routines are far from the only changes Americans have made in the face of the pandemic. Among the many modifications to daily living:

- More than nine in 10 say they've taken a social distancing action ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#)).
- On staying at home, terminology appears to matter: In KFF data, 82 say they're sheltering in place, while in Axios/Ipsos data many fewer, 53 percent, say they're "stay[ing] at home and avoid[ing] contact with others for 14 days," up from 10 percent two weeks earlier ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#) and [Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).
- Eighty-nine percent have avoided shaking hands and 73 percent have canceled or skipped attending large gatherings ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).
- More than eight in 10 report washing their hands more frequently ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)), and six in 10 say they have stocked up on supplies, up from 35 percent earlier in March ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#)).
- Seventy-one percent say they or someone in their immediate family has had school or college classes cancelled or moved online, including almost all (93%) of those with a child under 18 living in the household ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)).
- Seven in 10 now say they have decided not to travel or changed travel plans, up from 42 percent earlier in March ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#)).
- Six in 10 report having had an event, conference or public meeting canceled due to coronavirus ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).
- Roughly half of all Americans, 48 percent, report having had a video call with friends or family in the past week, and nearly six in 10 employed adults have been told to use telephone or video conferences instead of in-person meetings, up from 34 percent two weeks ago ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).
- Just 13 percent report having dined out in the past week, down from 56 percent two weeks earlier. Visits to friends or relatives are also down, from 48 to 23 percent ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).

Sizable numbers of Americans are reporting restricted access to goods and services. Four in 10 say they've attempted to visit a store or business that was closed due to coronavirus. Forty percent report being unable to purchase disinfecting spray or wipes, 39 percent report having difficulty buying hand sanitizer in the past week, 34 percent have been unable to buy toilet paper and nearly two in 10 say they've been unable to buy basic foods. Reported difficulty purchasing each of these items has increased since mid-March ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).

Health Impacts

In terms of direct health impacts, as of March 25, 41 percent of Americans said someone in their own community had been diagnosed with the virus and 11 percent personally knew someone with the disease. Forty-four percent reported that there were people in their area who wanted a

test but couldn't get one, including 58 percent of those who reported COVID-19 cases in their community ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)).

At the same time, just 20 percent saw themselves as having a high risk of coming down with the disease, while more than four in 10 said they have a low risk or no risk at all. Perception of risk was higher among those who knew someone who has been infected and those living in high-infection states ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)). Polling conducted a few days later suggests the perception of risk may be increasing, with 32 percent saying that contracting coronavirus is a major threat in their life this year and just a quarter saying it's a low threat ([Grinnell 3/27-3/30](#)).

Indirect effects of the virus on health are widespread. Seventy percent report experiencing stress as a result of the pandemic, including 36 percent who say it's a serious stressor – exceeding even the highest level of stress reported during the Great Recession ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)). Half are extremely or very worried that they or someone in their family will become infected, up from 31 percent in mid-March ([AP-NORC 3/26-3/29](#)). Reflecting this increased stress, 30 percent report that their mental health has worsened in the past week ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).

Access to medical care unrelated to coronavirus has become more difficult amid the outbreak – nearly a third report that their ability to access care has worsened in the last week, up from just 9 percent two weeks ago ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)). About a quarter say they've been unable to get prescription medications as a result of the coronavirus outbreak ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#)).

Economic challenges in accessing care also are a concern – more than half of Americans report being worried that they will not be able to afford testing or treatment for coronavirus if they need it, including about eight in 10 uninsured adults ages 18 to 64 ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#)).

Economic Impacts

The economic impact of the virus is vast. Nearly four in 10 adults say they have either lost their job, lost income, or had their hours reduced without pay because of the outbreak. Six in 10 are worried that their investments will be negatively impacted for a long time ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#)).

Reflecting this new economic reality, three in 10 report being unable to pay a regular bill (9 percent) or expect that to happen soon (21 percent; [Grinnell 3/27-3/30](#)). Forty-three percent say the economic impacts on their own community are severe ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)).

More broadly, consumer confidence in the economy has plummeted in recent weeks, with a weekly measure of consumer sentiment sustaining the largest two-week decline in its 34-year history ([Bloomberg CCI 3/25-3/29](#)). Nearly all Americans (92 percent) say a recession is likely because of the outbreak and two-thirds think it will be as bad as the Great Recession, if not worse ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)).

Community Readiness/Response

In terms of community responses, seven in 10 (71 percent) say they're confident that the hospitals and medical centers in their area can handle the medical needs of the seriously ill

during the coronavirus outbreak ([Pew 3/19-3/24](#)). At the same time, amid recent widespread coverage of medical supply shortages, more-recent polling finds that just 15 percent think their local hospitals are extremely or very prepared to handle the outbreak, while nearly four in 10 feel they're not very or not at all prepared ([AP-NORC 3/26-3/29](#)). Almost half are very worried that their local hospital will run out of necessary equipment like beds or ventilators, and 62 percent express strong concern over health care workers' access to personal protective equipment more generally ([KFF 3/25-3/30](#)).

Three-quarters feel at least somewhat prepared to deal with a coronavirus infection if they or someone in their family were to contract the virus, up 8 percentage points since early March. Groups least likely to feel prepared including Latinos, those without health insurance, younger adults, lower-income Americans and those with less formal education ([CNN 3/24-3/29](#)).

Eighty-six percent of Americans think their local school system has reacted to the coronavirus outbreak appropriately, compared with 10 percent who feel they've overreacted and 4 percent who think they're not taking it seriously enough ([Pew 3/19-3/24](#)).

Government Response

Americans are divided in the government's response to the coronavirus overall – 48 percent say it has done a good job of preventing the spread of the virus, while 47 percent say it's done a poor job ([CNN 3/24-3/29](#)).

At the same time, there's broad support for many aspects of the economic recovery package approved by Congress – 90 percent support aid to small businesses, 86 percent back the cash payments to most Americans. Assistance for large corporations is less popular – 46 percent ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)).

After a modest bump in job approval earlier this month, President Trump's job approval seems to have returned to baseline, with 43 percent approving and 56 percent disapproving in the latest AP/NORC poll, exactly matching his rating a month previous. A similar 44 percent in that poll approve of his handling of the coronavirus outbreak ([AP-NORC 3/26-3/29](#)). An ABC/Post poll conducted a few days earlier finds the president's approval lower among those most impacted by the virus (e.g., those in high-infection states, who know someone who has caught the virus, or who report severe economic impacts in their community), and finds that 58 percent of Americans overall feel he acted too slowly in the early days of the outbreak ([ABC/Post 3/22-3/25](#)).

Other government officials are perceived more positively. Nearly eight in 10 rate U.S. public health officials' response to the outbreak positively. Seven in 10 rate their state elected officials' response to the outbreak as excellent or good, and local officials get a similar positive rating ([Pew 3/19-3/24](#)). Sizable majorities also trust state and local government officials as information sources, and to look out for the best interests of "you and your family," far exceeding trust in the federal government on both counts. ([Axios/Ipsos 3/27-3/30](#)).

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