Health

COVID Monitor

Week 1: Lifestyles and Daily Living

John Boyle, PhD
Thomas Brassell, MA
James Dayton, MBA

ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

For questions, please contact:
Thomas.Brassell@icf.com

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icf.com/work/health

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Summary

Between January and the end of March 2020, the coronavirus outbreak changed lives in the United States in many ways. Nearly half of the adults in our national sample (49%) have cancelled or postponed travel plans as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, and seven out of ten (71%) have cancelled plans to attend large gatherings. Two thirds (68%) have stocked up on food, supplies and prescription medications, and 37% have worn or bought protective masks. But most impactful, 23% have themselves or someone else in their household lost a job, and 47% had their work hours reduced.

In looking at the past seven days, the pattern of daily life seems to have changed as well. Less than one in ten adults in this national adult sample report going to church or religious services, eaten out in a sit down restaurant or gone to a gym even one day in the past seven. They continue going to groceries, pharmacies and shopping for other things, but possibly less frequently in the past. They frequently do take out or restaurant delivery. And, about a third have worn a protective mask at least one day in the past seven, while 7% wore a protective mask every day. The rhythm of life has been changed by the coronavirus and our attempts to mitigate its spread in the population.

Business closures, social distancing and concerns about the availability of everyday supplies has caused some difficulties in finding the daily necessities of life in the United States. In our survey conducted in the last week in March, a substantial minority of adults reported having a lot of difficulty in finding toilet paper (47%) and cleaning supplies (32%) in the past seven days. A quarter of the sample reports a lot of difficulty in finding the groceries that they want (25%), but only 5% report a lot of difficulty in feeding their families adequately. One in ten respondents report a lot of difficulty in seeing a doctor or health professional in the past seven days, and these tend to be the sicker individuals.

Although almost no one in our survey had actually been diagnosed with COVID-19, nearly half (48%) reported that their lives had been disrupted a lot. Another 37% said that their lives had been disrupted a moderate amount. Only about one in seven reported that the coronavirus had disrupted their lives only a little (12%) or not at all (3%). However, the impact on daily life in the United States at the end of March for most adults seems more a matter of inconvenience than true privation. This is not true for those who have contracted the coronavirus, but their population prevalence is not sufficient to affect sample estimates. It is also not true for those who have lost their jobs and had their work hours reduced, who are more likely to be the ones having difficulty in obtaining day to day necessities.

Looking forward, survey respondents offer a wide range of estimates of when their lives will get back to normal, and 30% are simply not sure. The majority of respondents say that looking forward a year from now they expect the coronavirus will change their life in a very major way (19%) or a fairly major way (39%). But approximately the same proportions think that they will be better or worse off financially a year from now. Much has happened in the two months between the first confirmed COBID-19 case in the United States in January and our first survey at the end of March. At the moment, it appears that there is much uncertainty about how the virus outbreak and its mitigation will play, and when and if things will return to normal for most Americans.

Background

The COVID Monitor Survey is an internally funded research project of ICF* and Mfour** to conduct at least four national biweekly surveys of 1,000 adults about their attitudes toward and experiences with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The questionnaire examines the impact of the coronavirus on respondents' health, employment, and lifestyles since the onset in late January 2020, and during the seven days prior to the survey, as well as their concerns, attitudes and expectations related to the pandemic. The interview was conducted by web among a national sample of adults from a mobile panel, which is Census balanced by age, gender and race/ethnicity. The first survey was conducted between March 28 and April 1, 2020. We expect to complete three more surveys with much the same questionnaire every two weeks in April and May 2020. This will provide biweekly snapshots of American households during the period that health experts anticipate that cases and deaths from the virus will peak in the United States.

The first wave of this survey was launched on March 28, 2020 at the end of the tenth week since the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on January 21, 2020. At this point, there have been more than 116,000 cases confirmed in the United States and more than 1,900 deaths from COVID-19. The findings from the first weekly survey will be released in a series of daily reports on specific topics. The first two reports focused on health (Report 1) and employment (Report 2). This third will focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the lifestyles and the day to day living of Americans. Subsequent reports will focus on prevention/mitigation efforts and mental health, among other things.

Change in Behavior since January

The first case of COVID-19 was reported by China in December 2019. As more cases were identified in China, parts of Asia and Europe, travel advisories and subsequent travel bans were put in place by the United States and many other countries. The Centers for Disease Control recommended avoiding crowds and social distancing in public places. Some states began closing non-essential businesses to mitigate the spread of the disease. All of these policies and practices were designed to limit activities that might increase disease spread and promote activities that were likely to limit disease spread. As a result, we might expect to see some major changes in American behavior since January 21, 2020 when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the United States.

Consequently, our national sample of adults from the Mfour panel was asked about changes in their household behavior since that point. Specifically, they were asked: "Since January, as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak have you or someone in your household …?"

Nearly half of the sample (49%) reported that they or someone else in their household had cancelled or rescheduled travel since January as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. Seven out of ten (71%) reported that they had cancelled plans to attend large gatherings since January as a result of COVID-19. More than two thirds (68%) had stocked up on items such as food, household supplies or prescription medicine. Nearly two out of five (37%) reported that they or someone else in their household had bought or worn a protective mask since the COVID-19 outbreak in January.

The impact of the coronavirus outbreak on employment in the household was dramatic. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) reported the loss of a job by themselves or someone else in the household since January as a result of the outbreak. Closer to half of the respondents (47%) reported that employment hours had been reduced for themselves or someone else in the household since January as a result of COVID-19.

The coronavirus outbreak has also had a significant impact on routine medical care access for American households. Nearly half of respondents (48%) reported at the end of March that a medical appointment for themselves or another household member had been cancelled or postponed as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. A quarter (25%) reported that they or another household member had been unable to obtain a medical appointment as a result of the outbreak.

Table 1: Coranavirus Impact

Since January, as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak have you or someone in your household ……	Yes	No	Don't Know / Not Sure
Cancelled or rescheduled travel	49%	50%	2%
Cancelled plans to attend large gatherings	71%	27%	2%
Stocked up on items such as food, household supplies or Rx medicines	68%	30%	2%
Bought or wore a protective mask	37%	62%	1%
Lost a job	23%	75%	2%
Had your employment hours reduced	47%	50%	3%
Had a medical appointment cancelled or postponed	48%	50%	3%
Been unable to obtain a medical appointment	25%	67%	8%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

Behaviors in the Last Seven Days

In order to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) most states had advised non-essential businesses to close by the end of March. In states which had chosen not to close non-essential businesses and advised or required the population to stay at home, many local governments had done so. When the survey was conducted during the last week of March, 86% of respondents reported that their state or local government had closed non-essential businesses. The closure of many businesses by state and local governments, along with social distancing recommended by public health experts, was designed to limit the spread of the coronavirus disease. At the same time, these changes were likely to have a major effect on the way most Americans lived.

In order to track the effect of COVID-19 outbreak on the way Americans live, the national sample of adults from the mobile panel were asked: "In the past seven days, how many days have you ……… " done each of nine common behaviors. Only nine percent of the sample reported that they had eaten out at a sit down restaurant in the past seven days. Approximately eight percent reported that they had gone to church or other religious services in the past seven days. Only seven percent reported that they had gone to a gym in the last seven days. And only six percent reported that they had gone to court in the last seven days.

By contrast, 90% of the national sample of adults reported having gone to the grocery in the past seven days, usually several times. Almost two thirds (65%) report having take-out or restaurant delivery in the past seven days. Half (51%) report having gone to the pharmacy in the past seven days. And, 61% report having gone shopping for other things in the past seven days.

Nearly a third of adults in our sample (33%) reported at the end of March that they had worn a face mask in the past seven days. Many of these had worn a face mask only one (11%) or two (5%) days in the past seven days. However, 7% reported wearing a face mask every day in the past seven days.

Table 2: Behaviors over the past week

In the past seven days, how many days (0-7) have you…	None	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gone to the grocery.	10%	27%	24%	18%	9%	5%	2%	5%
Eaten out at a sit down restaurant	91%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Done take out or restaurant delivery	35%	20%	19%	12%	6%	4%	1%	4%
Gone to the gym.	93%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Gone to the pharmacy.	49%	31%	10%	5%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Gone shopping for other things	39%	22%	17%	10%	6%	3%	1%	3%
Worn a face mask	67%	11%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	7%
Gone to church or other religious service	92%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Gone to court	94%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

Difficulties in Obtaining Items in the Past 7 Days

Obtaining clean water can be a problem in many disasters when natural catastrophes, like hurricanes and earthquakes, can disrupt the water distribution system. Consequently, there is usually a run on bottled water supplies when disasters are expected. In the case of a pandemic, we would not necessarily expect a problem with obtaining clean water, and three quarters of our sample report no need (11%) or no difficulty (65%) in obtaining clean water in the past seven days. However, a quarter of respondents report little difficulty (12%), some difficulty (8%) or lot of difficulty (4%) in obtaining clean water in the past seven days. This may reflect bottle water shortages rather than clean water from all sources. Those with a lot of difficulty are disproportionately drawn from households with a job loss since January.

Most respondents report no need (4%) or no difficulty (58%) in feeding your household adequately in the past seven days. However, 18% report little difficulty, while 15% report some difficulty and 5% report a lot of difficulty in feeding your household adequately in the past seven days. Those who report difficulty in feeding their household adequately are disproportionately drawn from households where there has been a job loss since January.

Relatively few respondents report difficulty in filling prescriptions in the past seven days. Most report no need (27%) or no difficulty (53%) in filling prescriptions. About one in five adults in the sample report little (11%), some (6%) or a lot of difficulty (4%) in filling any prescriptions in the past seven days. Those who have had a lot or some difficulty in filling prescriptions are disproportionately drawn from those with a job loss.

Although feeding your household adequately is not a problem for most respondents, finding the groceries that they want in the past seven days has been a problem. The majority of respondents say that they have had little difficulty (25%), some difficulty (33%) or a lot of difficulty (25%) in finding the groceries that they want in the past seven days. Only 15% say that they have had no difficulty and 3% say that have had no need.

The majority of adults in the sample also report that they have had a least a little difficulty in routine shopping other than groceries. In the past seven days, 24% say that they have little difficulty, 23% say they have had some difficulty, and 13% say a lot of difficulty in routine shopping other than groceries. The remainder say that they have had no difficulties (21%) or no need (20%) for routine shopping other than groceries in the past seven days.

Seeing a doctor or other health professional has been difficult in the past seven days for about a third of the adults in the sample. The majority reports that they have had no need (39%) to see a doctor or had no difficulty in seeing a doctor (28%) in the past week. By contrast, 12% say that they have had little trouble, 11% report some trouble, and 10% report a lot of trouble in seeing a doctor or health professional in the past seven days. Those who have had a lot of difficulty in seeing a doctor in the past seven days are disproportionately in fair or poor health.

The survey finds that the most widespread problem reported in the survey is finding toilet paper. Nearly half of respondents (47%) report a lot of difficulty in finding toilet paper in the past seven days, while 14% report little difficulty and 18% report some difficulty. Eleven percent of respondent report no difficulty in finding toilet paper and 10% report no need.

The difficulty in finding toilet paper is closely paralleled by cleaning products. A little more than a quarter of the sample report no need (10%) or no difficulty (16%) in finding cleaning products in the past seven days. The majority report little difficulty (18%), some difficulty (24%), or a lot of difficulty (32%) in finding cleaning supplies in the past seven days.

Table 3: Difficulty over past seven days

In the past seven days, how much difficulty have you had in…?	No difficulty	Little Difficulty	Some difficulty	A lot of difficulty	No Need
Obtaining clean water	65%	12%	8%	4%	11%
Feeding your household adequately	58%	18%	15%	5%	4%
Filling any prescriptions	53%	11%	6%	4%	27%
Getting child care	25%	4%	3%	4%	63%
Finding the groceries you want	15%	25%	33%	25%	3%
Routine shopping other than grocery	21%	24%	23%	13%	20%
Seeing a doctor or health professional	28%	12%	11%	10%	39%
Finding toilet paper	11%	14%	18%	47%	10%
Finding feminine hygiene products	35%	12%	11%	5%	37%
Finding cleaning products	16%	18%	24%	32%	10%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

Most respondents report no need (37%) or no difficulty (35%) in finding feminine hygiene products in the past seven days. About a third report little (12), some (11%), or a lot (5%) of difficulty in finding feminine hygiene products in the past seven days.

Current Impact and Future Expectations about Impact on Day to Day Living

Two months into the coronavirus outbreak in the United States, the national sample of adults from our mobile panel was asked to rate the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. Specifically, they were asked: "Overall, how much if at all has your life been disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) --- a lot, a moderate amount, only a little, or not at all?" Although almost no one in our survey had actually been diagnosed with COVID-19, nearly half (48%) reported that their lives had been disrupted a lot. Another 37% said that their lives had been disrupted a moderate amount. Slightly less than one in seven reported that the coronavirus had disrupted their lives only a little (12%) or not at all (3%).

The national sample of adults was asked when they expected their life to return to normal. Only a very small proportion (4%) reported that their life had not been affected. Fifty-three percent said that they expected their life to return to normal by the end of September 2020. Four percent said that they expected their life to return to normal by the end of December 2020. Three percent said that they expected their life to return to normal by the end of April 2021, a year from now. One percent said that they expected their life to return to normal more than a year from now. Three out of ten adults in our sample (30%) said that they were not sure when their lives would return to normal.

In terms of future expectations, survey respondents were asked: "Looking ahead to a year from now, do you think that you (and your household) will be better off financially, or worse off, or just about the same as now?" The outlook is mixed. About the same proportion of respondents think they will be better off financially a year from now (29%) as the proportion who think that they will be worse off than now (26%). More than four out of ten (45%) expect that they will be just about the same as now. Since 23% of households have already lost jobs as a result of the coronavirus and 47% of households have had the work hours reduced, this does not constitute expectation of a recovery in the next year. Rather, it seems fairer to say that the survey respondents, on average, expect their financial situation to significantly worsen a year from now.

Our national sample was also asked what they thought the ultimate impact of the coronavirus outbreak would have on their day to day life in the future. "Looking ahead to a year from now, what, if any, impact do you believe the coronavirus will have on you and your family's day to day life, would you say it will change your life in a very major way, a fairly major way, only a small way, or will it not change your life in any way?" The majority of respondents say that they expect the coronavirus will change their life in a very major way (19%) or a fairly major way (39%). Only a third (33%) think the COVID-19 outbreak will ultimately affect their life in only a small way, and only 9% think a year from now it will not have changed their life in any way.

Research Methods

The target population for this study consisted of all U.S. adults ages 18 and over. Respondents for the survey were drawn from the MFour mobile panel comprised of approximately 2 million persons. People in the full panel had to be ages 13 and over, living in any of the 50 states or District of Columbia, own a smartphone with Android or iOS, and have registered to receive and respond to survey opportunities using MFour's Surveys On The Go® app. Individuals qualified for panel inclusion through a series of profiling questions and fraud detection measures. The panel does not provide a comprehensive population frame, or support probability samples for the general population, due to the selective nature of panel enrollment. Nonetheless, the overall panel is designed to provide national non-probability samples of adults that are comparable to the geographically and demographically distribution of the US adult population.

The MFour panel profile includes panel members' zip code, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education so it can be geographically and demographically balanced to Census estimates. Consequently, the panel methodology allows efficient targeting of a geographically and demographically representative sample from the total panel for the survey invitation. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to 3,000 adult members of a Census balanced (by age, gender and race) national sample of the mobile panel.

The initial survey invitation was sent via push notification to sampled panel members on their cell phone. Reminders were sent to non-respondents over a four-day period. Panel members were remunerated based on completed surveys in the form of a modest cash incentive which was three dollars for this survey. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed between March 28, 2020 and April 2nd, 2020. On average, it took participants just under 18 minutes to complete the survey. Respondents from 47 states[1] and the District of Columbia were represented in the final sample. The survey's participation rate is calculated as the number of completed interviews divided by the number of invitations (AAPOR RR 1 of 33.3%).

All analyses were conducted with SPSS Statistics 22 and SAS version 9.4. This study and processes within the study for protection of human subjects were reviewed and approved by the ICF Institutional Review Board.

[1] Three of the 4 smallest states in population, Alaska, Vermont and Wyoming. are not represented in the completed sample as a result of random sampling.

Appendix A – Items by Key Demographics

Since January, as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak have you or someone in your household…

	Cancelled Or Rescheduled Travel	Cancelled Plans To Attend Large Gatherings	Stocked Up On Items Such As Food, Household Supplied Or Rx Medicines	Bought Or Wore A Protective Mask	Lost A Job	Had Your Employment Hours Reduced	Had A Medical Appointment Cancelled Or Postponed	Been Unable To Obtain A Medical Appointment
Age								
18-24	50.4%	77.9%	38.5%	79.5%	31.1%	63.6%	45.1%	27.9%
25-34	55.0%	76.3%	30.5%	63.3%	26.0%	53.8%	43.8%	22.5%
35-49	51.1%	76.4%	36.2%	69.6%	23.9%	53.6%	47.8%	32.2%
50-64	48.6%	69.4%	38.4%	65.9%	19.2%	44.1%	52.4%	27.2%
65+	44.1%	60.1%	37.1%	68.5%	13.1%	27.3%	47.8%	15.2%
Gender								
Male	50.9%	70.5%	63.0%	36.4%	21.3%	47.0%	42.0%	23.9%
Female	48.9%	72.9%	72.7%	36.0%	22.4%	48.2%	52.3%	26.6%
Race / Ethnicity								
Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian	49.0%	71.0%	67.3%	32.1%	20.0%	43.9%	50.2%	24.3%
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	41.4%	73.9%	77.3%	53.4%	19.3%	53.6%	45.5%	28.4%
Non-Hispanic Asian	52.8%	80.6%	69.4%	60.0%	33.3%	52.8%	50.0%	33.3%
Hispanic	52.6%	73.2%	72.6%	38.4%	26.3%	53.4%	40.7%	28.4%
Other	60.7%	69.6%	55.4%	34.5%	27.3%	61.8%	50.0%	23.2%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

Overall, how much if at all has your life been disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) --- a lot, a moderate amount, only a little, or not at all?				
	A Lot	A Moderate Amount	Only A Little	Not At All
Age				
18-24	47.1%	39.7%	9.9%	3.3%
25-34	44.0%	37.3%	14.5%	4.2%
35-49	51.8%	32.8%	13.5%	1.8%
50-64	52.4%	34.6%	12.2%	0.8%
65+	43.3%	44.4%	10.7%	1.7%
Gender				
Male	46.2%	38.6%	12.6%	2.6%
Female	50.4%	35.7%	12.4%	1.6%
Race / Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian	48.4%	37.1%	13.7%	0.8%
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	46.0%	35.6%	11.5%	6.9%
Non-Hispanic Asian	47.2%	41.7%	5.6%	5.6%
Hispanic	49.5%	38.2%	8.1%	4.3%
Other	51.8%	30.4%	17.9%	0.0%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

Looking ahead to a year from now, what, if any, impact do you believe the coronavirus will have on you and your family's day to day life, would you say it will change your life in a....				
	Very Major Way	Fairly Major Way	Only A Small Way	It Will Not Change Your Life In Any Way
Age				
18-24	18.0%	37.7%	33.6%	10.7%
25-34	21.2%	37.0%	29.7%	12.1%
35-49	20.9%	37.3%	35.1%	6.7%
50-64	19.3%	47.4%	26.9%	6.4%
65+	12.6%	39.7%	39.1%	8.6%
Gender				
Male	15.6%	41.3%	34.0%	9.2%
Female	21.1%	39.8%	31.5%	7.6%
Race / Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian	14.8%	39.7%	36.2%	9.3%
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	34.1%	26.1%	33.0%	6.8%
Non-Hispanic Asian	13.9%	55.6%	25.0%	5.6%
Hispanic	25.0%	45.2%	22.9%	6.9%
Other	19.2%	42.3%	30.8%	7.7%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

Has your state or local government closed non-essential businesses?		
	Yes	No
Age		
18-24	79.0%	21.0%
25-34	83.2%	16.8%
35-49	87.5%	12.5%
50-64	90.0%	10.0%
65+	92.1%	7.9%
Gender		
Male	86.8%	13.2%
Female	87.7%	12.3%
Race / Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian	90.2%	9.8%
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	75.9%	24.1%
Non-Hispanic Asian	83.3%	16.7%
Hispanic	83.1%	16.9%
Other	87.5%	12.5%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

Looking ahead to a year from now, what, if any, impact do you believe the coronavirus will have on you and your family's day to day life, would you say it will change your life in a…

	…will be better off	…same	…will be worse off
Age			
18-24	31.1%	47.1%	21.8%
25-34	34.5%	41.8%	23.6%
35-49	26.8%	42.3%	30.9%
50-64	22.1%	45.8%	32.1%
65+	22.0%	53.2%	24.9%
Gender			
Male	30.2%	42.2%	27.6%
Female	24.0%	48.1%	27.9%
Race / Ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian	24.4%	46.4%	29.2%
Non-Hispanic Black/African American	37.6%	44.7%	17.6%
Non-Hispanic Asian	20.0%	57.1%	22.9%
Hispanic	26.4%	45.1%	28.6%
Other	38.2%	32.7%	29.1%

* Source: ICF COVID-19 Monitor Survey of U.S. Adults conducted by ICF/MFour March 28 – April 2, 2020.

For questions, please contact:

Thomas Brassell, MA
Thomas.Brassell@icf.com

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