COPING WITH COVID-19
WHAT AMERICANS NEED, FEEL AND FEAR ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

SPECIAL REPORT: LOW-INCOME MINORITY AMERICANS APRIL 28, 2020

RESEARCH BY ad COUNCIL POWERED BY C+R RESEARCH

Introduction

Since early spring 2020, the virus known as COVID-19 has ravaged the United States and the world. At the time of this report, the global number of confirmed coronavirus cases is over 3 million, with nearly 200,000 deaths worldwide[1]—figures that have increased exponentially each week since January. The United States has topped the list of confirmed cases for some time now, and now totals over 1 million (a number that is potentially much higher, due the lack of widespread available testing).

As more information becomes available about the virus, it has become evident that certain populations are at a higher risk than others: people who are 65+, and/or those who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility. People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, like chronic lung disease or asthma, heart conditions, obesity, diabetes, kidney or liver disease, or who are otherwise immunocompromised.[2]

Recently, the infection and fatality rates of specific populations have seen a sharp increase, pointing to an additional risk factor: **race/ethnicity**.

In mid-April 2020, the CDC released new data that revealed almost 34 percent of COVID-19 patients are African American[3]—even though African Americans make up around 13 percent of the US. population.[4] Hispanic/Latinx patients account for approximately 23 percent of COVID-19 cases, despite this population making up about 18 percent of the population in the U.S.

Why such disparities, and what makes these populations seemingly more vulnerable to COVID-19?

Experts, like those at the NIAID, have long recognized that racial and ethnic differences affect susceptibility to infection and disease.[5] Economic inequality also plays a contributing role: one in five African Americans (22%) and Hispanic Americans (19%) live in poverty, compared to one in 10 (9%) of white/Caucasians.[6] And as of the fourth quarter of 2019, African American workers had the highest unemployment rate nationally (5.7%), followed by Hispanic workers (4.1%), with white/Caucasians at 3 percent.[7]

In a relatively short time frame, it has become clear that COVID-19 is causing additional burdens on Americans already considered vulnerable—and the impact of the pandemic will only continue over the coming weeks and months.

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1. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/world/coronavirus-maps.html
2. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html
3. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html
4. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219
5. https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/minority-health
6. https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-raceethnicity/
7. https://www.epi.org/indicators/state-unemployment-race-ethnicity/

Purpose

This research study is an ongoing exploration into the ever-changing conversations, questions and fears around the COVID-19 pandemic. As the crisis continues across the country and the world, it's becoming clear that certain populations within the U.S. are more at risk of being impacted—physically, financially and otherwise—than others.

Leaders from federal and local governments, issues experts and leading scientists are making daily appeals to the American public. The Ad Council's research began in early April to address a fundamental question: **Are the resources and reassurances they're providing really meeting the nation's needs?**

Through social listening analysis and a weekly quantitative survey, this ongoing study seeks to discover what Americans really need—by directly asking them about those needs as well as identifying where they are getting information about COVID-19 to address their own mental, social and economic challenges.

The goals of this research are to:

- Identify areas of greatest need as expressed in social media conversations/posts and as reported by a survey sample representing the American public;
- Clarify the correlation and connection between social media conversations and the real needs of the American public;
- Provide weekly guidance to issue experts, brands, foundations, the media and causes about the American public's greatest needs;
- Identify outlets, entities and influencers where the American public is getting their information regarding COVID-19; and
- Provide insights to stakeholders in order to make strategic decisions regarding how and where to reach Americans with messages that address their needs and concerns.

This special report looks at the impact and needs of Americans who are quickly becoming the most affected by COVID-19: lower-income Americans (earning $49,999 and below household income) overall, and lower-income people of color (African American and Hispanic adults earning $49,999 and below household income).

Methodology

The findings in this report are based on a mixed-method research approach: 1) social listening; and 2) quantitative online survey.

Method 1: Social Listening

Objective: This research method will uncover the ongoing COVID-19 conversations taking place online across the nation in order to identify the areas of greatest need and hone in on shifting social trends.

Details: Online conversations are captured on a weekly basis, starting on January 1, 2020, by way of Talkwalker, a leading social listening and analytics platform. Through a weekly review of query topics defined within the areas of focus, the ongoing analysis seeks to uncover the sentiment and expressions behind American needs and interests.

Method 2: Quantitative Online Survey

Objective: This research method is designed to identify the areas of greatest need as expressed by Americans. The survey also sought to uncover how Americans are feeling amid the pandemic, what they're specifically worried about, what information they need, where they're getting COVID-19 information, and more.

Methodology (continued)

This phase was also designed to validate findings from the social listening phase by clarifying the correlation and connection between the social conversation and the real needs of Americans.

Details: In partnership with C+R Research, a leading independent full-service marketing insights agency, the Ad Council surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,000 English-speaking adults ages 18+ across the United States online. The first online survey was fielded between April 3 and April 5, 2020. The Ad Council then surveyed a second, non-overlapping sample of 1,000 adults from April 10-12, 2020. From April 10-12, 2020, the Ad Council also surveyed oversamples of n=100 African American adults 18+ with household incomes (HHI) under $50,000, and n=100 English-speaking Hispanic respondents with HHI under $50,000, to augment existing sample of low-income African American and Hispanic respondents already present in the general sample. Net base sizes for low-income African American and Hispanic respondents totaled n=173, for each group.

The 10-minute survey was administered online, and the age, gender, ethnicity, region, household composition and income of respondents were matched to U.S. Census statistics. (Note: The margin of error for a sample of 1,000 respondents is +/- 3.1 percentage points at 95% confidence).

Demographic Profile

N= 1,000 respondents (per week); plus augment interviews of n=100 African American adults 18+ with HHI under $50,000, and n=100 English-speaking Hispanic adults 18+ with HHI under $50,000.

Find details of the subgroups targeted at:
http://covidresearch.adcouncilkit.org/

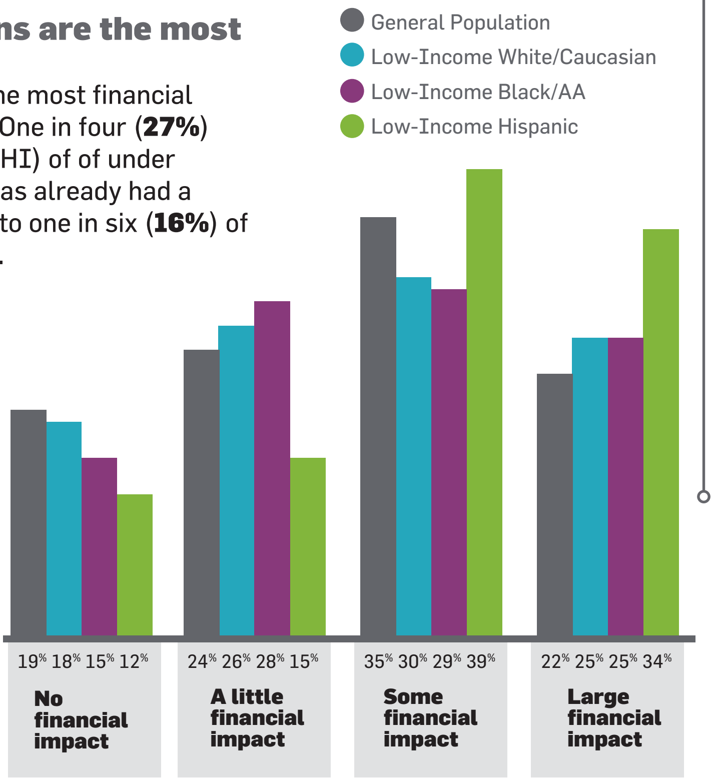
Finding 1:

Low-income Hispanic Americans are the most financially impacted.

In general, the COVID-19 crisis has had the most financial impact to date on low-income Americans. One in four (**27%**) Americans earning a household income (HHI) of of under $50,000 a year report that the pandemic has already had a large financial impact on them, compared to one in six (**16%**) of Americans earning a HHI of $100k and up.

In a span of a single week (4/16/ - 4/22), nearly 34,000 Americans discussed living paycheck to paycheck on social media, and over 256,000 discussed the inability to afford everyday expenses.

When looking at the impact by race/ethnicity, the impact is the greatest on low-income Hispanic adults: One in three (**34%**) report a large financial impact, compared to African American and white/Caucasian respondents (**25%** each) in the same income bracket.



Finding 2:

Low-income Hispanic and African American adults have greater immediate needs.

Compared to those with higher HHI, lower income populations also have much greater immediate needs. Among low-income respondents, African American and Hispanic adults have even greater needs than low-income white/Caucasian adults. For example, getting PPE like gloves and/or masks tops the list as the item all populations most need—though the need is much greater for low-income people of color.

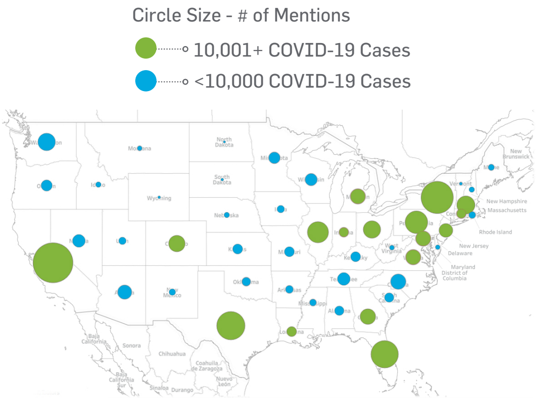
Need Assistance with Getting Protective Equipment	**30%**	General Population
	27%	Low-income White/Caucasian
	40%	Low-income African American
	40%	Low-income Hispanic

Low-income African American and Hispanic adults also report needing significantly more help than the general public with numerous other items, including:

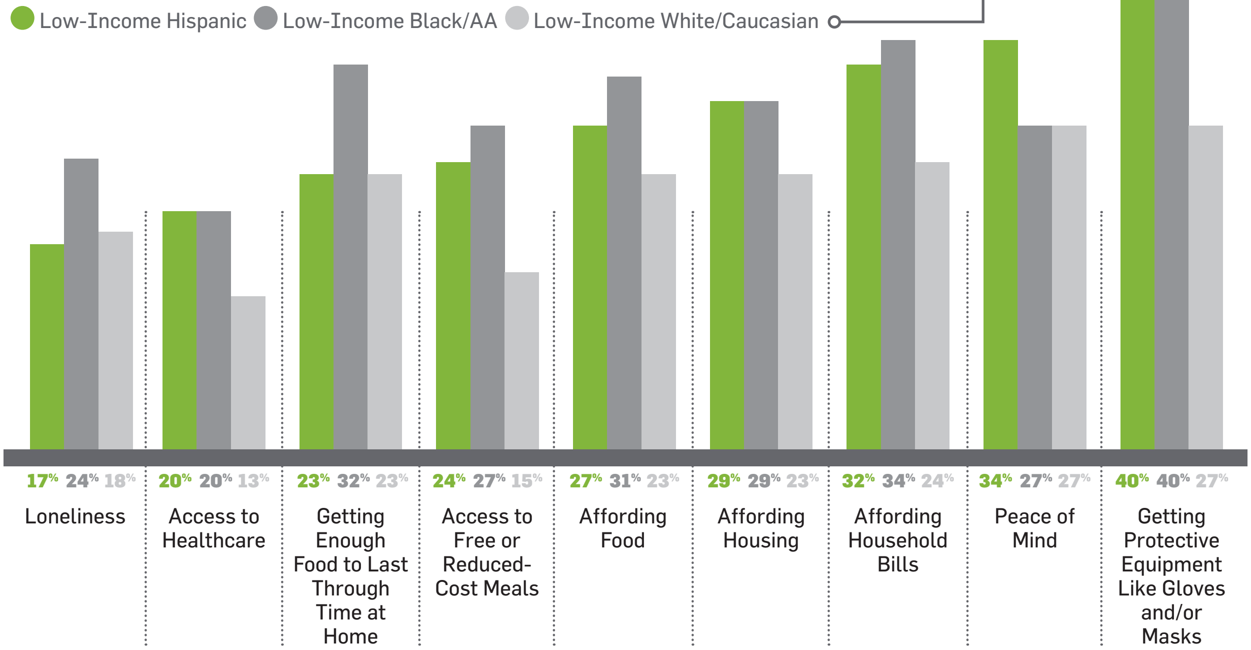
- Access to free or reduced-cost meals
- Access to healthcare
- Affording food
- Affording household bills
- Affording housing

Low-income Hispanic respondents are also more likely than the general population to report needing help with employment and general financial assistance, while low-income African American respondents are more likely to need help getting enough food to last, and battling loneliness.

Across the nation, thousands of people turned to social media to share their struggles in finding face masks, gloves and PPE. In the nearly 20,000 posts emerging online over the past 30 days, an alarming 94% of mentions stemmed from those states hit the hardest by COVID-19.[8]



How much assistance is needed?



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[8] According to the CDC's latest numbers of reported cases in the U.S. from states with 10,001+ confirmed cases.

Finding 3:

Low-income Hispanic adults are more worried than the general population.

Three items top the list of worries for all Americans: the economy, the health of medical and other frontline workers, and people not taking COVID-19 seriously—though higher income respondents are more worried about the economy and the health of frontline workers than those with lower incomes.

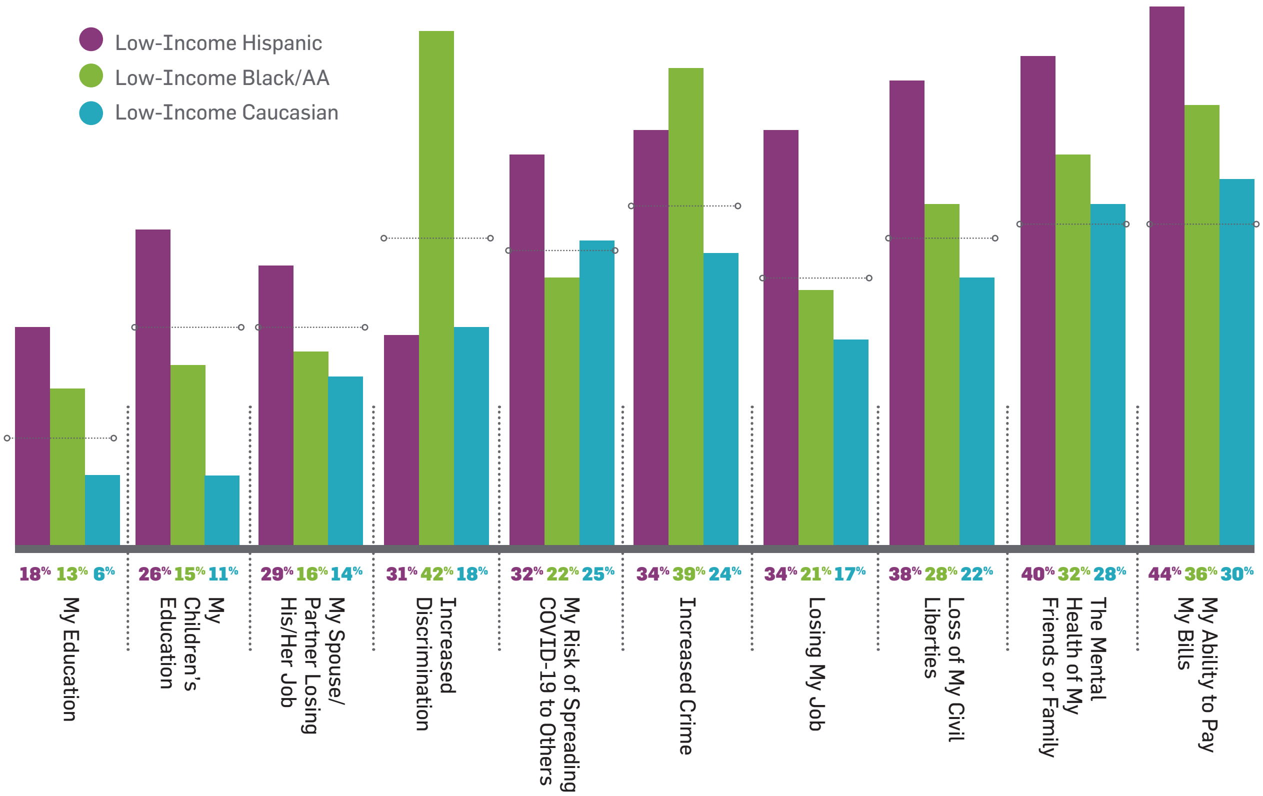
Low-income adults overall are much more worried than the general public about increased crime, increased discrimination, losing their job, ability to pay bills, being furloughed, a loss of civil liberties, their own health, and their mental health and that of friends/family.

The economy:
71% high income; 63% low income

The health of medical and other frontline workers:
68% high income; 62% low income

People not taking the pandemic seriously:
62% each

How much, if at all, are you currently worried about each of the following as a result of the COVID 19 outbreak?



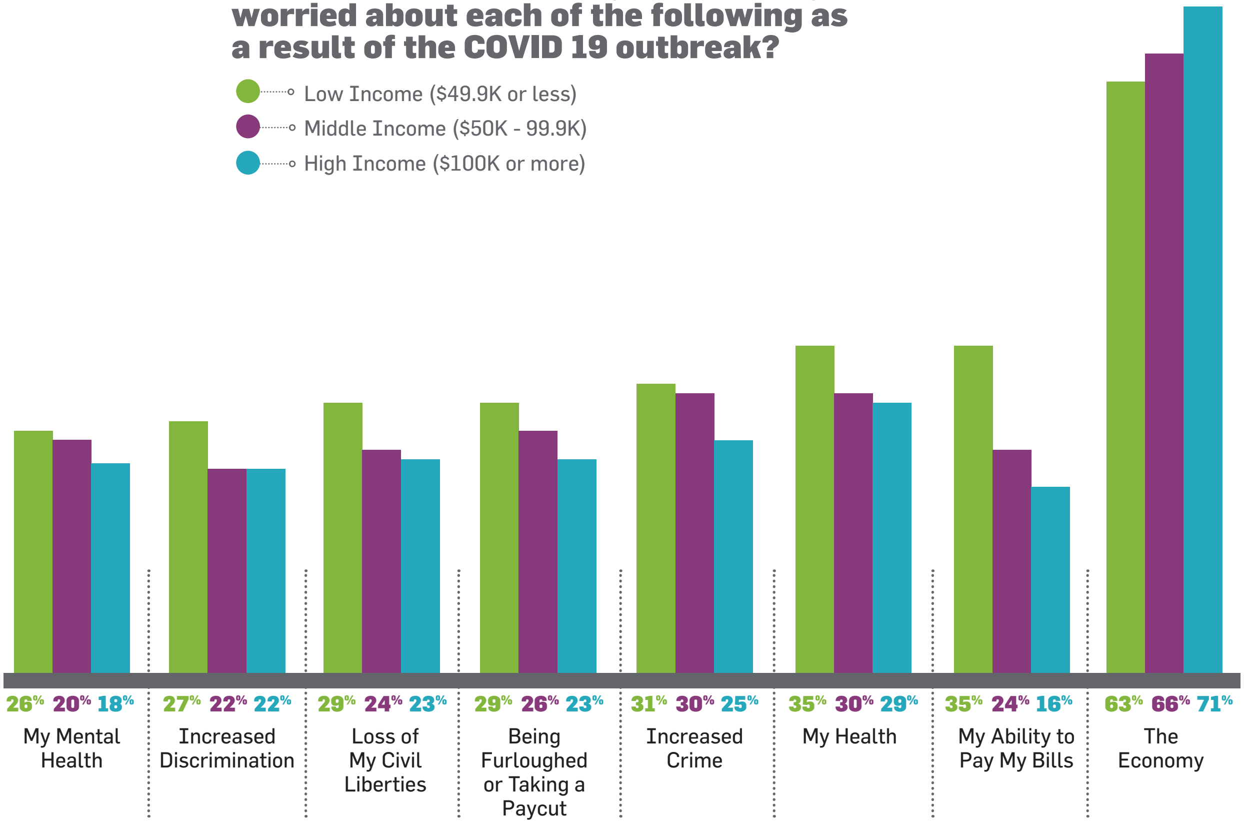
Finding 3 (continued):

Low-income Hispanic and African American adults are significantly more worried than the general public about topics like increased crime, increased discrimination (reported significantly more by African American respondents than Hispanic) and the ability to pay bills.

Low-income Hispanic respondents are much more worried than the general population on topics like:

- A spouse losing their job
- Losing their own job
- Long-term effects of the pandemic on their children
- The health and/or mental health of friends or family
- Their own health
- The risk of spreading COVID-19 to others

How much, if at all, are you currently worried about each of the following as a result of the COVID 19 outbreak?



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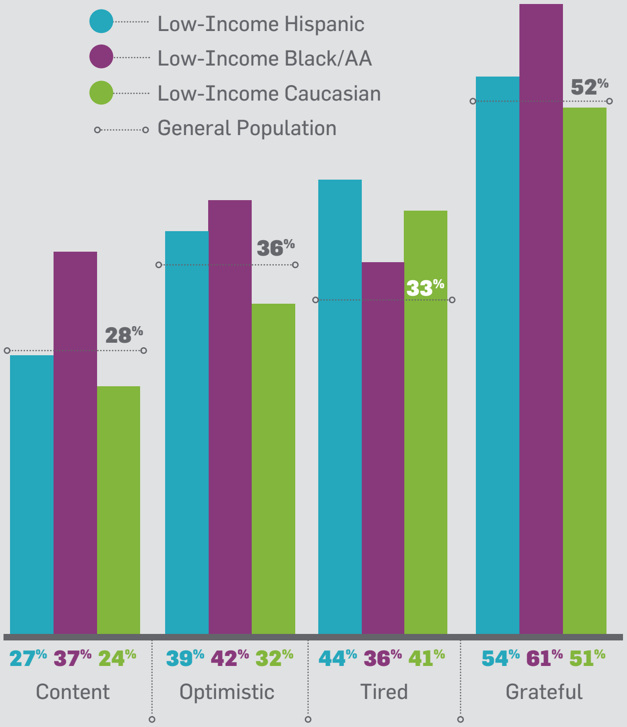
Finding 4:

Low-income African American adults feel the most positive, while low-income Hispanic adults are the most tired. Gratitude and hopefulness continue to be the top emotions reported by Americans.

Low-income African American adults much more than other demographics groups are feeling positive emotions versus negative ones. Compared to the general population, low-income African American respondents are more likely to be feeling grateful (61% vs. 52%), optimistic (42% vs. 36%) and content (37% vs. 28%). They're also feeling much more content than low-income Hispanic Americans (37% vs. 27%). Hispanic respondents are more likely than both low-income African Americans (36%) and the general public to feel tired (44% vs. 33%).



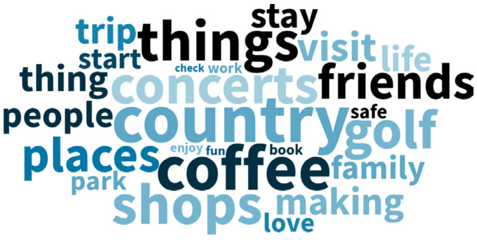
How low-income people are feeling

Previous reports as part of this study have found that the financial impact caused by COVID-19 is closely correlated with having positive or negative feelings. However, additional factors could also impact a respondent's emotions, such as:

Coping methods. One in four (25%) of low-income African American adults report a large financial impact, but they're also the most likely group to report feeling positive emotions. Of those reporting negative emotions, African Americans were most likely of all racial and ethnic groups to cite 'religious, faith or spiritual practice or connection' as a way to cope when feeling down.

Social connections. Low-income Hispanic and African American respondents are more socially connected at the time of this report versus a week ago, compared to low-income white/Caucasian respondents. Low-income Hispanic adults were especially likely to say they're more in touch with family.

The importance of connections are reinforced on social media as well. In addition to an incredible influx in video conferencing mentions, many users have also been including visiting family and friends in post-quarantine bucket lists.

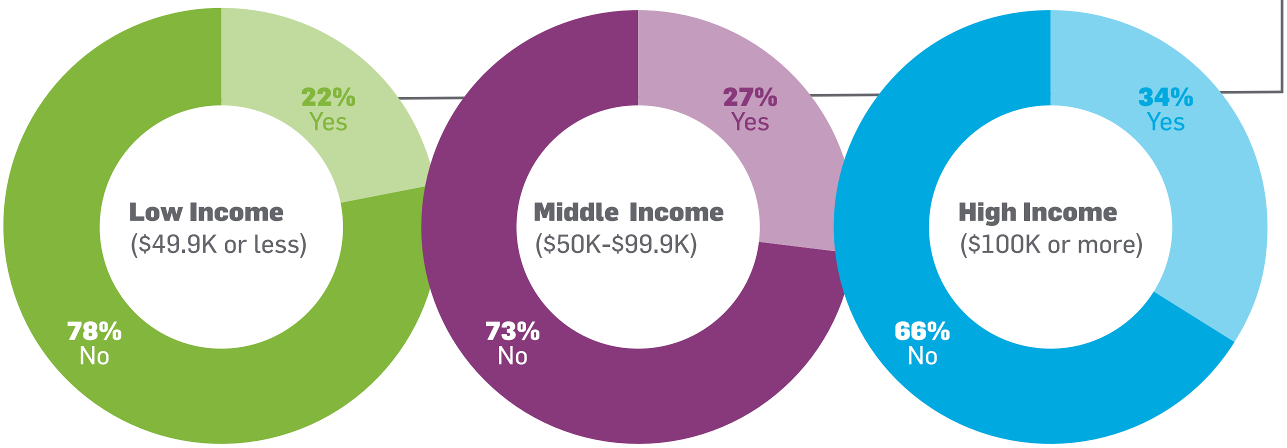


Finding 5:

Americans with higher incomes are much more likely to know someone who has/had COVID-19.

Respondents with higher incomes are much more likely to know someone who has/had COVID-19: One in three (34%) of those earning $100k+ report knowing someone with COVID-19, compared to one in four (22%) of those earning under $50,000.

People who know someone who has/had a COVID-19 Infection



Higher-income African American and Hispanic respondents are more likely to report knowing someone with COVID-19 than respondents with lower incomes. For example, 36 percent of African American and Hispanic respondents earning a HHI of $50k+ said they know someone with COVID-19, versus 25 percent of low-income African American and 24 percent of low-income Hispanic respondents.

Conclusion

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, uncertainties abound for Americans across the country.

Low-income Americans, especially those who are African American or Hispanic, are feeling the impact of the virus more than others. And while these populations report positive emotions, they have real, tangible needs that aren't being met.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, low-income Americans—especially those who are African American and Hispanic—were already at a higher health risk. They already face financial inequalities, and they're being hit even harder financially due to the pandemic. They need help making ends meet, and they're worried about their families and loved ones.

This research is designed to uncover the needs and worries of the most vulnerable Americans during this crisis, and to help brands, the media, causes and foundations understand how they can adequately address these needs. Now is the time for these leaders and organizations to step up and support these Americans when they need it most.

This is a special research brief from the Ad Council that highlights the top findings among low-income African American and Hispanic respondents during this time. Find additional information and news on forthcoming reports at **http://covidresearch.adcouncilkit.org**.

About The Ad Council

The Ad Council has a long history of creating life-saving public service communications in times of national crisis, starting in the organization's earliest days during World War II to September 11th and natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Sandy. Its deep relationships with media outlets, the creative community, issue experts and government leaders make the organization uniquely poised to quickly distribute life-saving information to millions of Americans.

The Ad Council is where creativity and causes converge. The non-profit organization brings together the most creative minds in advertising, media, technology and marketing to address many of the nation's most important causes. The Ad Council has created many of the most iconic campaigns in advertising history. Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk. Smokey Bear. Love Has No Labels.

The Ad Council's innovative social good campaigns raise awareness, inspire action and save lives. To learn more, visit AdCouncil.org, follow the Ad Council's communities on Facebook and Twitter, and view the creative on YouTube.

About C+R Research

C+R Research is an independent full-service marketing insights agency with 60 years of experience delivering great research, deep perspective and committed client service. C+R is nationally recognized for its best-in-class quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and expertise with specific populations, including shoppers, youth & family, multicultural consumers, business professionals, and global communities. C+R is privately held and headquartered in Chicago, IL. For additional information, please visit www.crresearch.com.