

# News Release



## **National Survey Reveals Extent of Coronavirus-Related Job Loss and Outsized Impact on Blacks, Latinos; Sharp Spike in Anxiety, Economic Insecurity**

*USC Dornsife's Understanding Coronavirus in America Study tracks changes in perceptions and experiences of Americans related to coronavirus and how its impacting lives. Daily updated data is made available to researchers and the public.*

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New findings from one of the few probability-based national tracking surveys to measure the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the lives of Americans reveals, among other things, that an estimated 25.5 million jobs have been lost since mid-March. Americans are experiencing greater economic insecurity, limited access to unemployment benefits and increased psychological distress. And along all dimensions, people of color have been disproportionately impacted.

The Understanding Coronavirus in America Study, led by the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USC, has been surveying a panel of nearly 5,500 adult residents of the U.S. about their perceptions and attitudes regarding coronavirus and how it's impacting their lives, since mid-March. Data from the study is updated daily and available to researchers and the public at: [covid19pulse.usc.edu](https://covid19pulse.usc.edu)

The latest survey was conducted from April 1 to April 14 and compares findings from a similar survey from March 10-31, 2020.

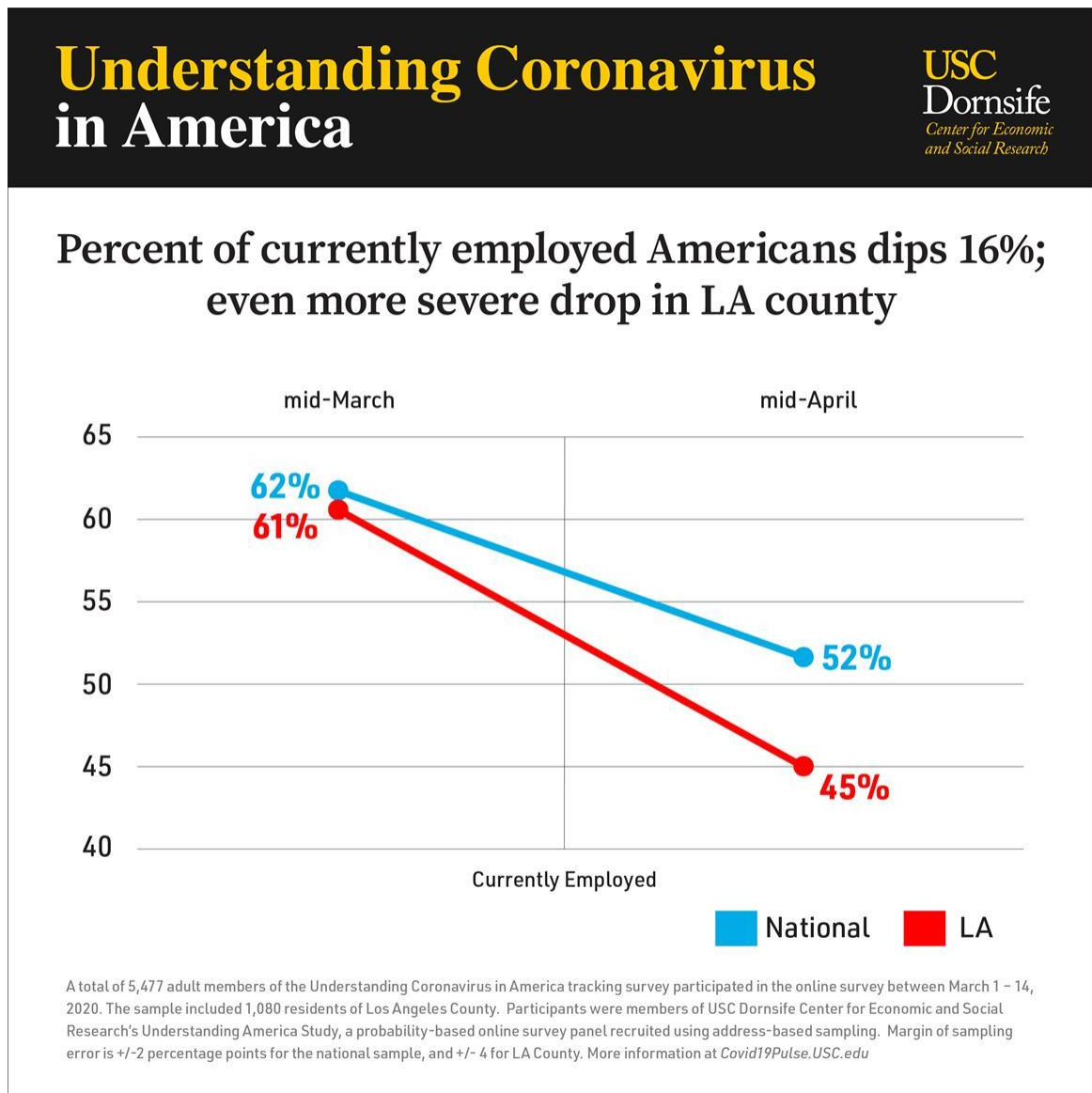
"Because our panel members fill out questions in the tracking survey on a daily basis, we are able to pick up any changes in behavior or attitudes that may occur as a result of the pandemic," said Jill Darling, survey director for the Understanding America Study online panel that provides the sample for the tracking survey. "Since the same people respond to each wave of the survey, we can detect real shifts in the impact the pandemic is having on people's financial and personal lives."

Americans are increasingly suffering from financial setbacks and mental distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they're also taking much greater care to protect themselves from infection, according to the survey.

Financial and mental health challenges fell disproportionately on people of color, women, and those with lower levels of education, with Los Angeles County residents often reporting greater difficulties than the national average.

Nationally and locally, an increasing number of respondents believe they are likely to contract the virus and die from it, which may explain why an increasing percentage are adopting social distancing and other health behavior measures.

## Job Losses Mount



Nationally and locally, the survey showed a continuing loss of jobs – especially in L.A. County.

- The survey suggests that 25.5 million jobs have been potentially lost across the U.S. since mid-March.
- Job losses among Angelenos are significantly higher than the national average. Less than half of area residents (45%) still held a job, compared with 61% in mid-March – a decline of 16 percentage points, or an estimated 1.3 million jobs. Nationally, the number fell 10 percentage points, from 62% to 52%.
- People of color, especially African Americans, are more likely to have lost their jobs since mid-March. Nationally, 15% of whites said they had lost their jobs, whereas 18% of Latino and 21% of African Americans reported job losses.
- Only 40% of people with no more than a high school education still had a job, compared with 51% in the earlier time period.
- Job losses were more pronounced among women. Nationally, 17% of women reported a job loss since March, compared to 14% of men.
- However, a significant majority of job losses (67%) are were reported as temporary layoffs. Despite the steep job losses, only 36% of the recently unemployed have received unemployment insurance since mid-March, and fewer than 25% living in Los Angeles have received the benefit.

“Under normal circumstances, losing a job without access to benefits would be bad enough, but in the current situation, the chances of finding a new job are likely to be close to non-existent. These changes are nothing less than catastrophic for those affected,” said Arie Kapteyn, Director of the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research, which administers the tracking survey.

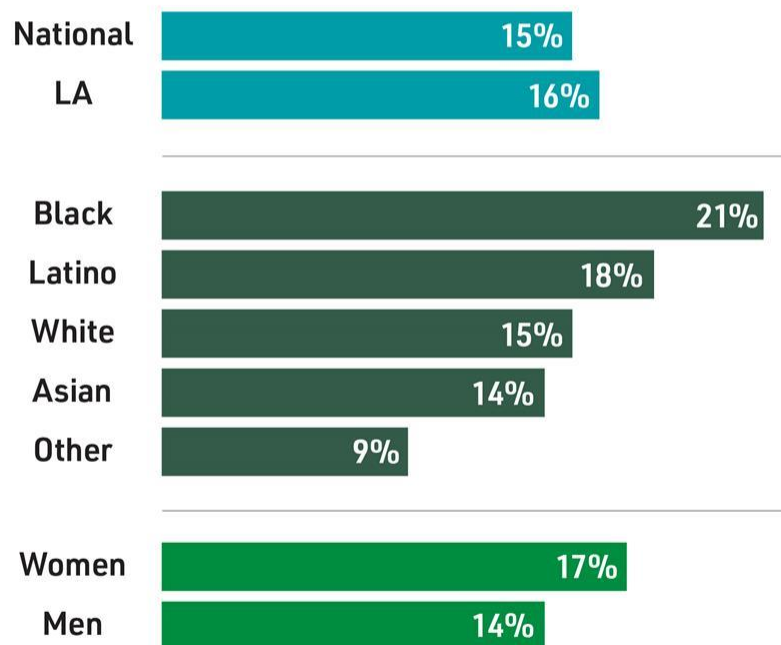
Lack of access to unemployment benefits is particularly pronounced among African Americans, Asians and people with a lower level of education. Across these groups, 40-55% are potentially eligible but are not receiving the benefit because they have not filed, are unsure of how to apply, or have applications pending.

## Rates of job loss

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## Higher rates of job loss experienced by Women, African Americans and Latinos



% of Previously Employed Who Lost Job Since Mid-March

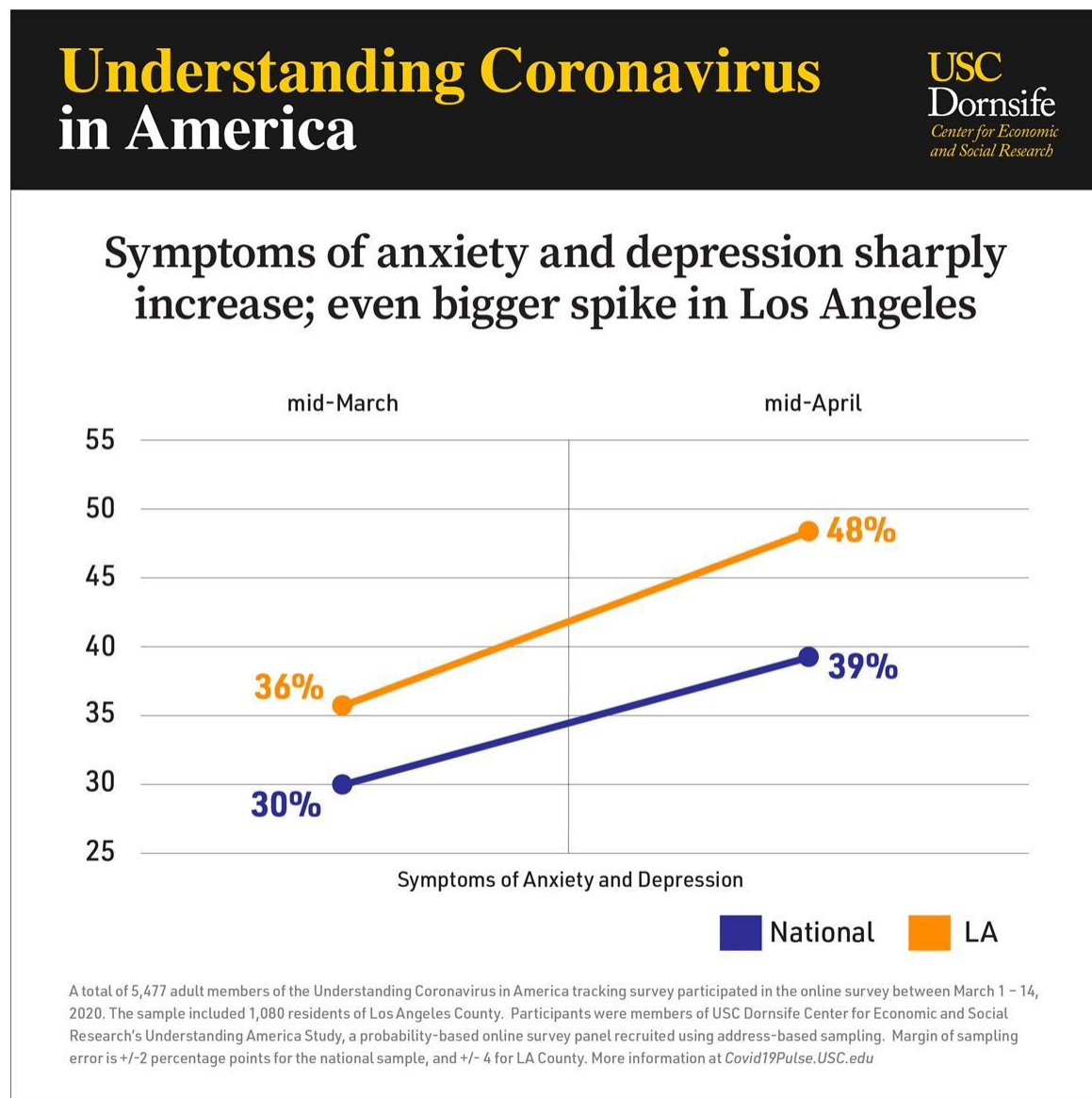
A total of 5,477 adult members of the Understanding Coronavirus in America tracking survey participated in the online survey between March 1 – 14, 2020. The sample included 1,080 residents of Los Angeles County. Participants were members of USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research's Understanding America Study, a probability-based online survey panel recruited using address-based sampling. Margin of sampling error is +/- 2 percentage points for the national sample, and +/- 4 for LA County. More information at [Covid19Pulse.USC.edu](https://Covid19Pulse.USC.edu)

Across America, and especially in L.A. County, a growing number of people fear losing their jobs and running out of money.

- Nationally, people estimate their chance of running out of money within the next three months at 22%, and people who currently have a job estimate their chance of job loss in the next three months at 15%.
- In L.A. County, those same measures jump to 33% and 22%, respectively.

Nationally, Latinos are the least confident about their job security, but, since mid-March, African Americans report the steepest increase in their likelihood of running out of money in the next three months, from a 23% likelihood to a 32% likelihood.

## Growing Anxieties



The pandemic is increasingly taking a toll on mental health and increasing fears of becoming infected.

“In the face of the pandemic, longstanding social and economic disparities and limited social protections have left large swaths of our population vulnerable to greater psychological and

economic hardship,” said Kyla Thomas, Sociologist at the USC Center for Economic and Social Research and a member of the survey team.

#### *Anxiety and Depression*

- Nationally, the number of people reporting mild to severe symptoms of depression or anxiety rose nine percentage points to 39% of the population. Latinos and Asians reported the greatest increases in mental health issues.
- In L.A. County, the proportion of people suffering from psychological distress rose 12 percentage points to 48%.
- Younger adults, between the ages of 18 and 34, were the most likely to suffer from psychological distress. They were also the most likely to believe they were going to lose their jobs and run out of money within the next three months.
- Mental health issues increased considerably among women, from 34% in March to 45% in the latest survey. Men experienced a smaller increase, from 25% to 33%.

#### *Fear of Infection and Death*

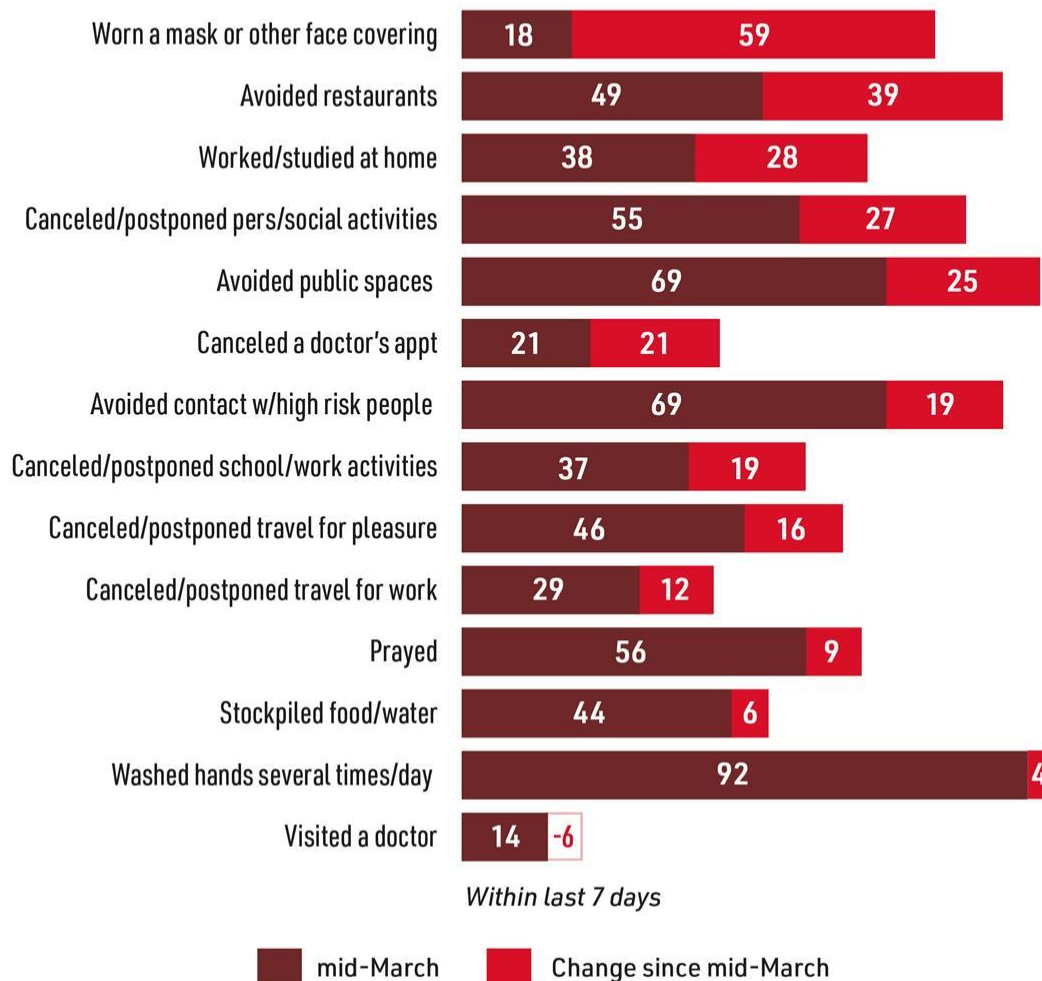
- Americans estimate a 28% chance of contracting COVID-19 within the next three months, up from 21% previously. The percentages are similar for Angelenos.
- Nationally, people estimate a 25% chance of dying from the virus if they are infected, up from 15% in the earlier period.
- Whereas people with no more than a high school education believe they are less likely to contract the virus than those with at least some college education, they believe they are more likely to die from it if they do get infected.

## Protective Measures on the Rise

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**In LA county, social distancing and mask-wearing has become much more common since it became required**



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Some of the most pronounced changes over the two time periods relate to the measures Americans are taking to prevent the spread of the virus.

- As an increasing number of restaurants close their doors to sit-down customers, 86% of Americans now report avoiding restaurants, an increase of 46 percentage points since March.
- Whereas only 10% of Americans wore face masks in March, now 48% are doing so. In L.A. County, the figure jumped from 18% to 77%.
- Ninety percent of Americans now avoid public spaces, up 57 percentage points since March. In L.A. County, 94% are doing so, compared with 69% previously.

### **About the survey**

The probability-based internet panel survey was conducted by the Understanding America Study at USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research. The margin of sampling error is +/- 2 percentage points among the sample of 5,477 adult residents of the U.S.

The survey questions, topline data, and data files are available at  
**<https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/COVID-19+Corona+Virus>**.

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