



# Understanding America Study COVID-19 Selected Results Waves 1 and 2



# **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: Investigating Central Themes**



**Jobs and  
Economy**



**Children  
and Care**



**Mental  
Health and  
Coping**



**Health and  
Behavior  
Change**



# ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: Disaggregating by Demographic Groups



Gender



Age



Race

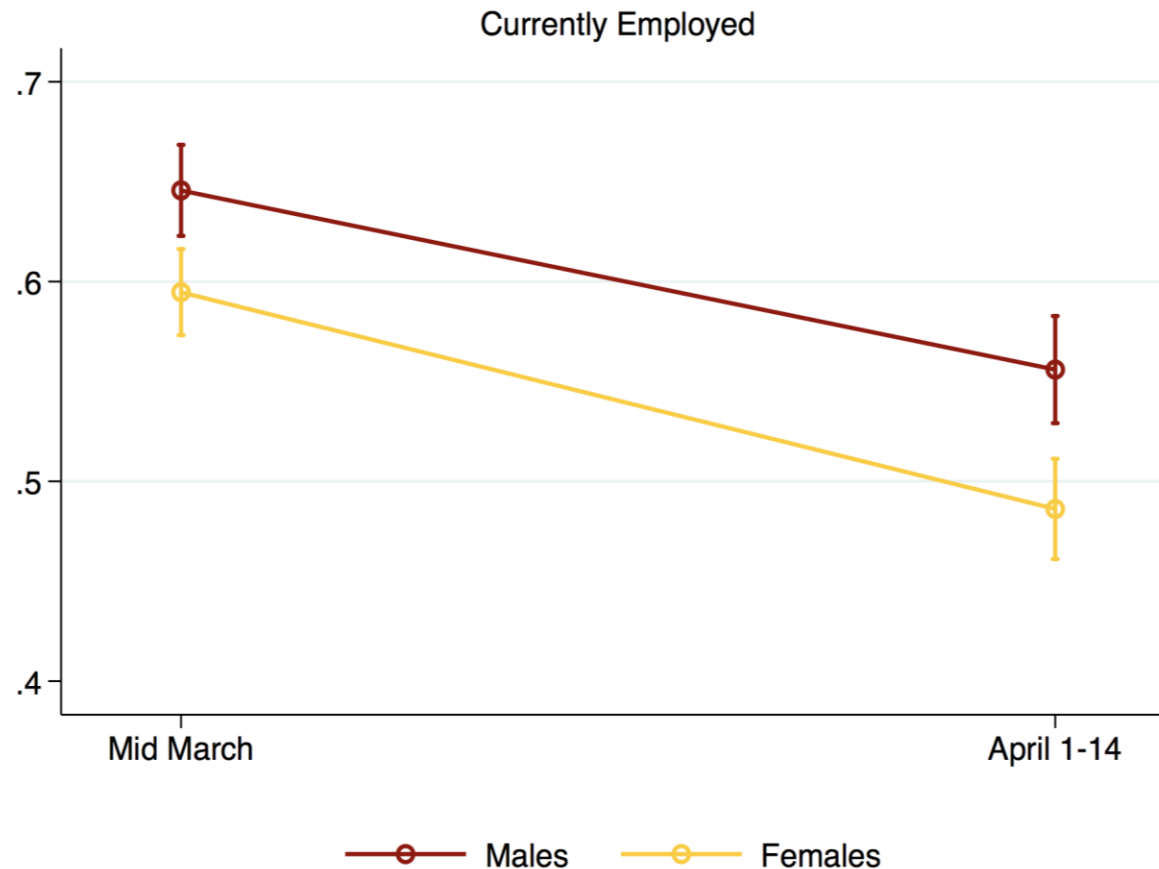


Education and  
Socioeconomic  
Status



# **Jobs and the Economy**

# Rapid, Massive Economic Shock Felt by Both Genders



## Overall Effects:

**9.9** percentage point

decline in share on the job over course of 2-3 weeks

**25** million adults stopped work

Closely tracks unemployment claims over same period<sup>1</sup>

# Vulnerable Groups Have Suffered the Most



By mid-April, **15.8%** of March workers were no longer on the job



**20%**

of African American  
workers

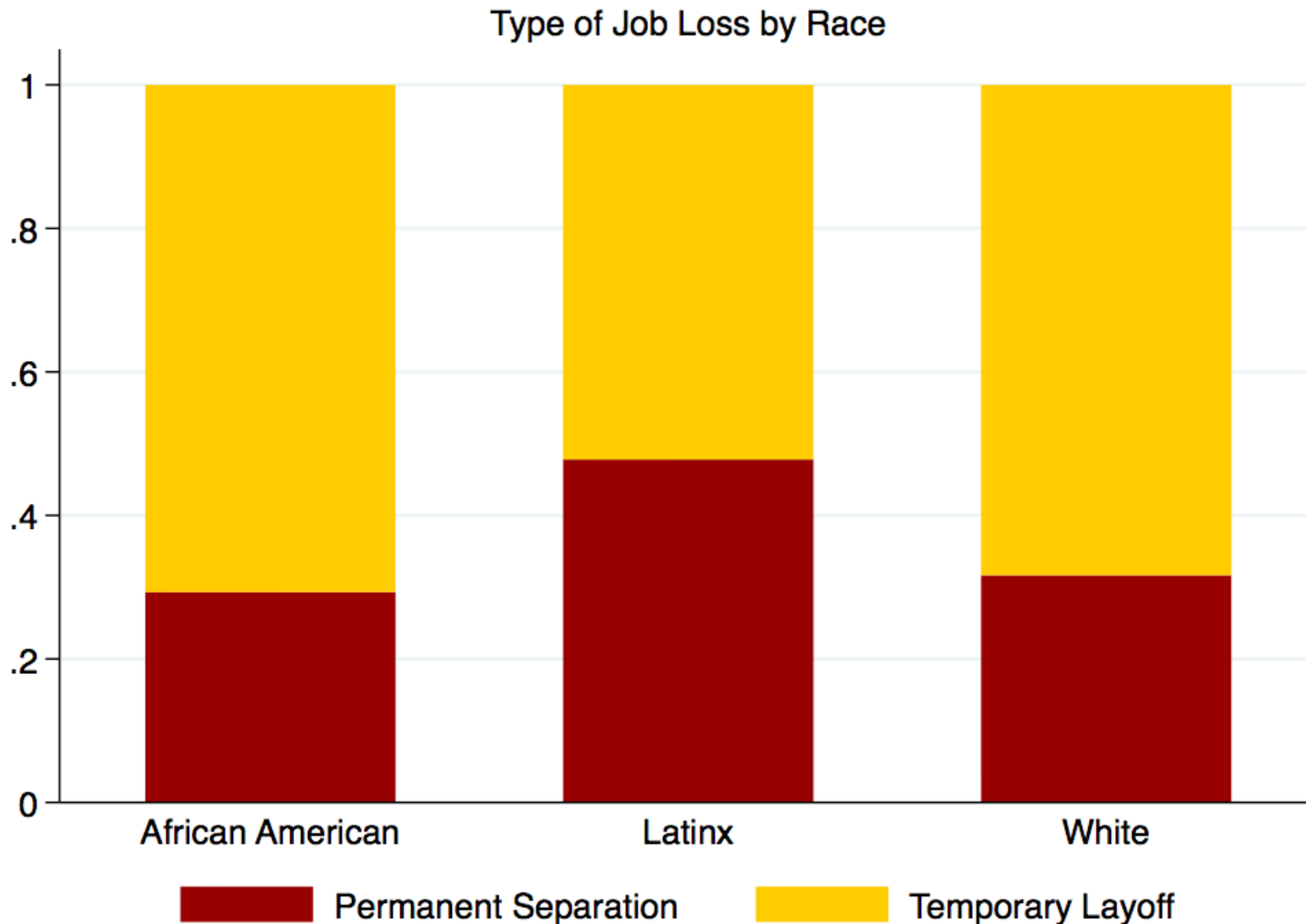
**18%**

of Latinx workers

**19%**

of workers without  
a college education

# Bright Spot: A Large Fraction of Losses May Be Temporary



Latinx workers  
more than **1.5x**  
**as likely** to  
suffer a  
permanent  
separation

Temporary  
suspensions may  
become  
permanent:  
**tracking is**  
**critical**

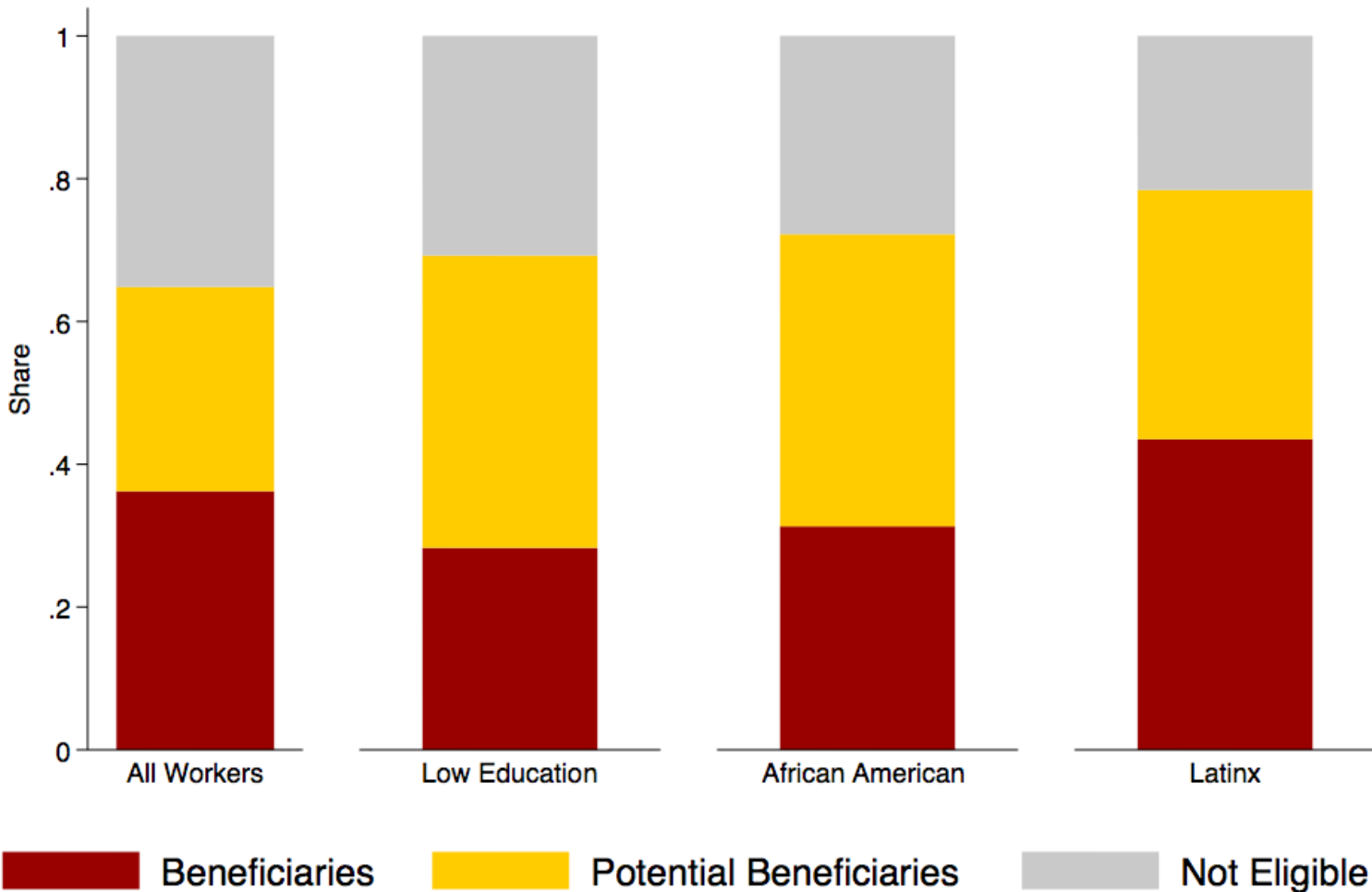
# Unemployment Benefits Yet to Reach Many



Just **32%** of African Americans and **29%** of low education workers suffering job loss are receiving or approved for UI

Large share of *potential beneficiaries* who don't know how to apply, have pending applications

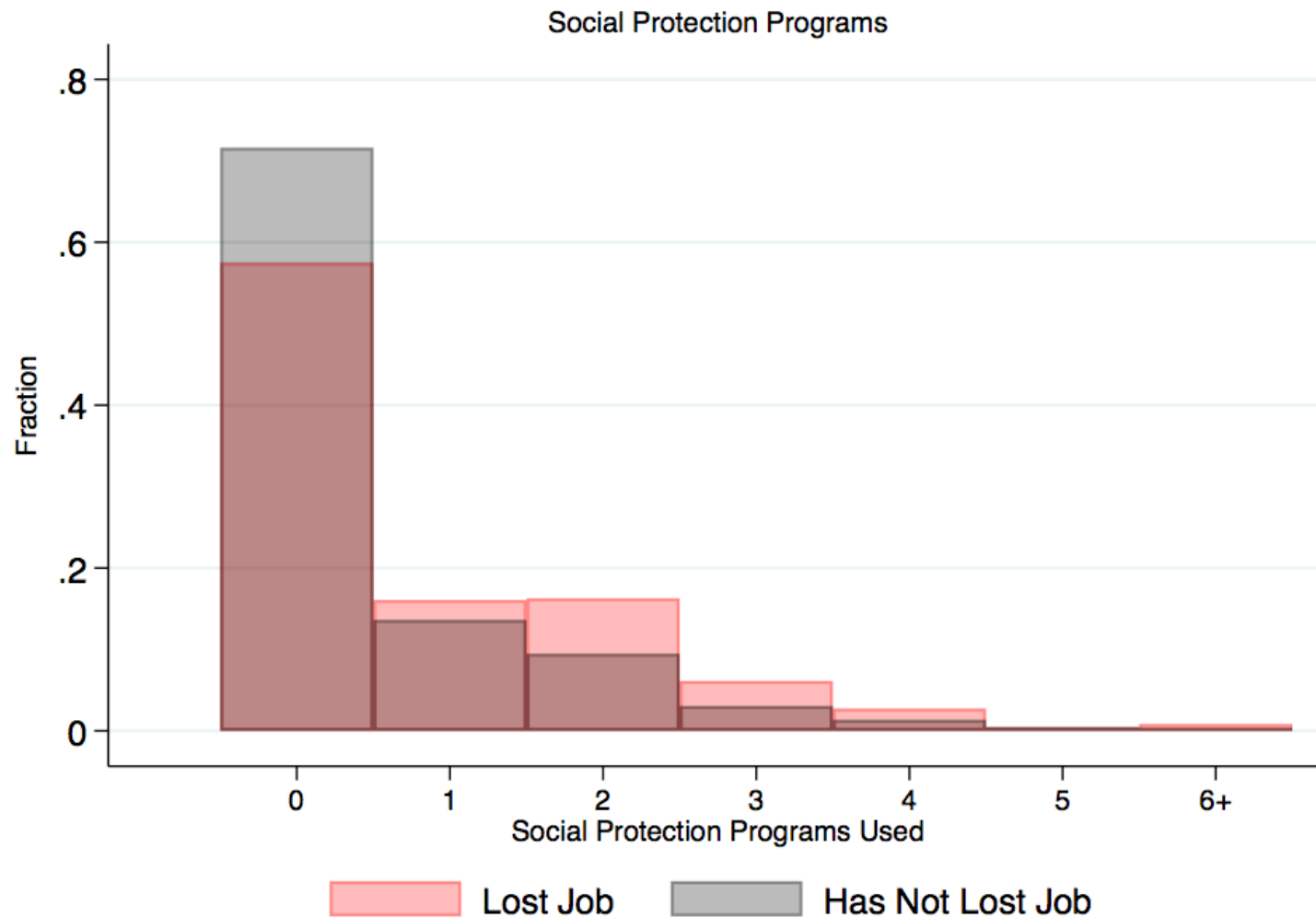
Status of Unemployment Benefit, by Worker Type



Sample includes recently laid off workers. Low education are individuals with an high school degree or less. Eligibility is self-reported.



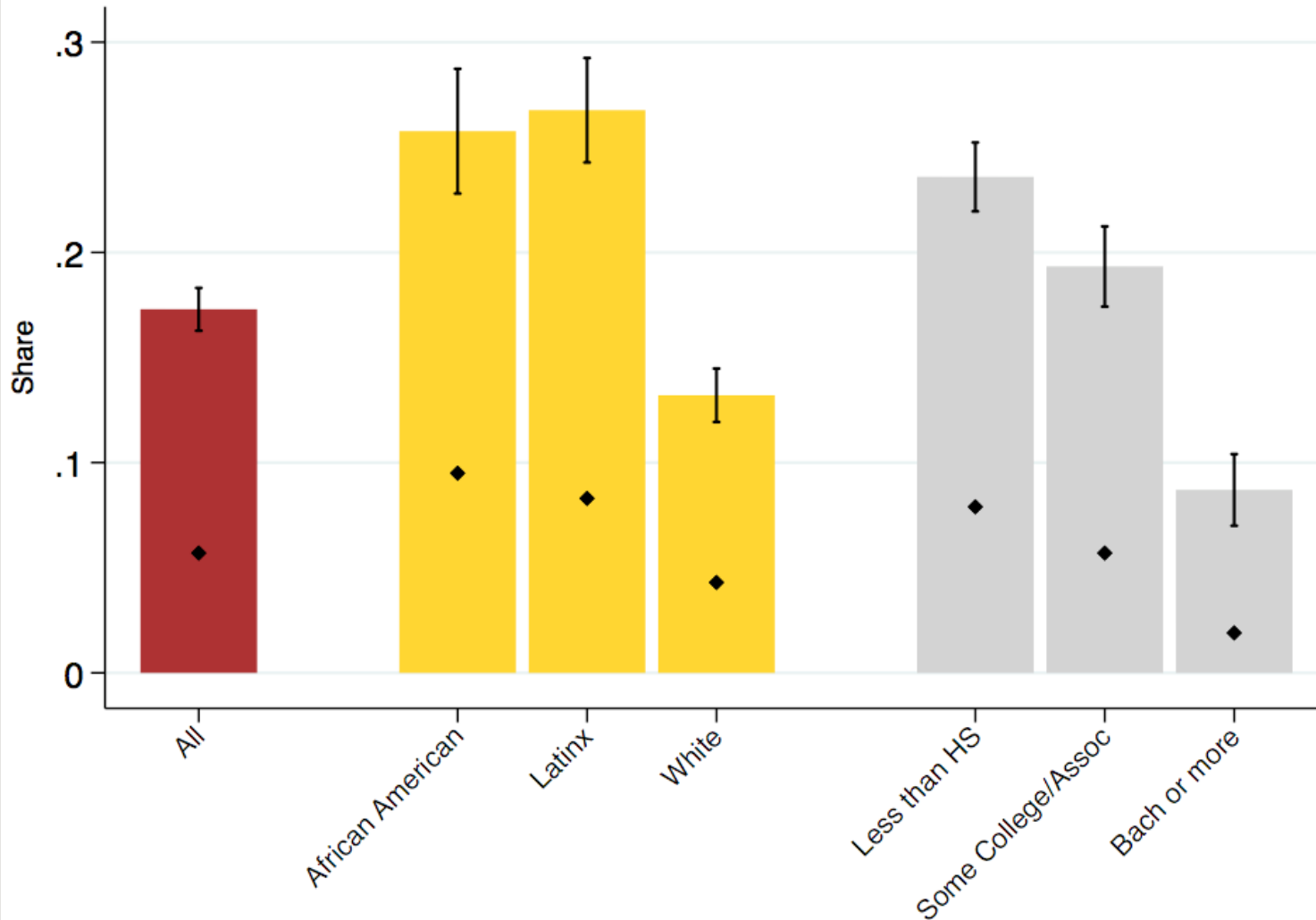
# Receipt of Other Social Protection Programs



Over **43%** of those who have lost a job are benefitting from at least one social protection program (including COVID-specific aid)

But few benefit from more than one program

# Food Insecurity Follows Economic Insecurity



Black diamonds report analogous monthly rates of food insecurity for December 2018, per the CPS.



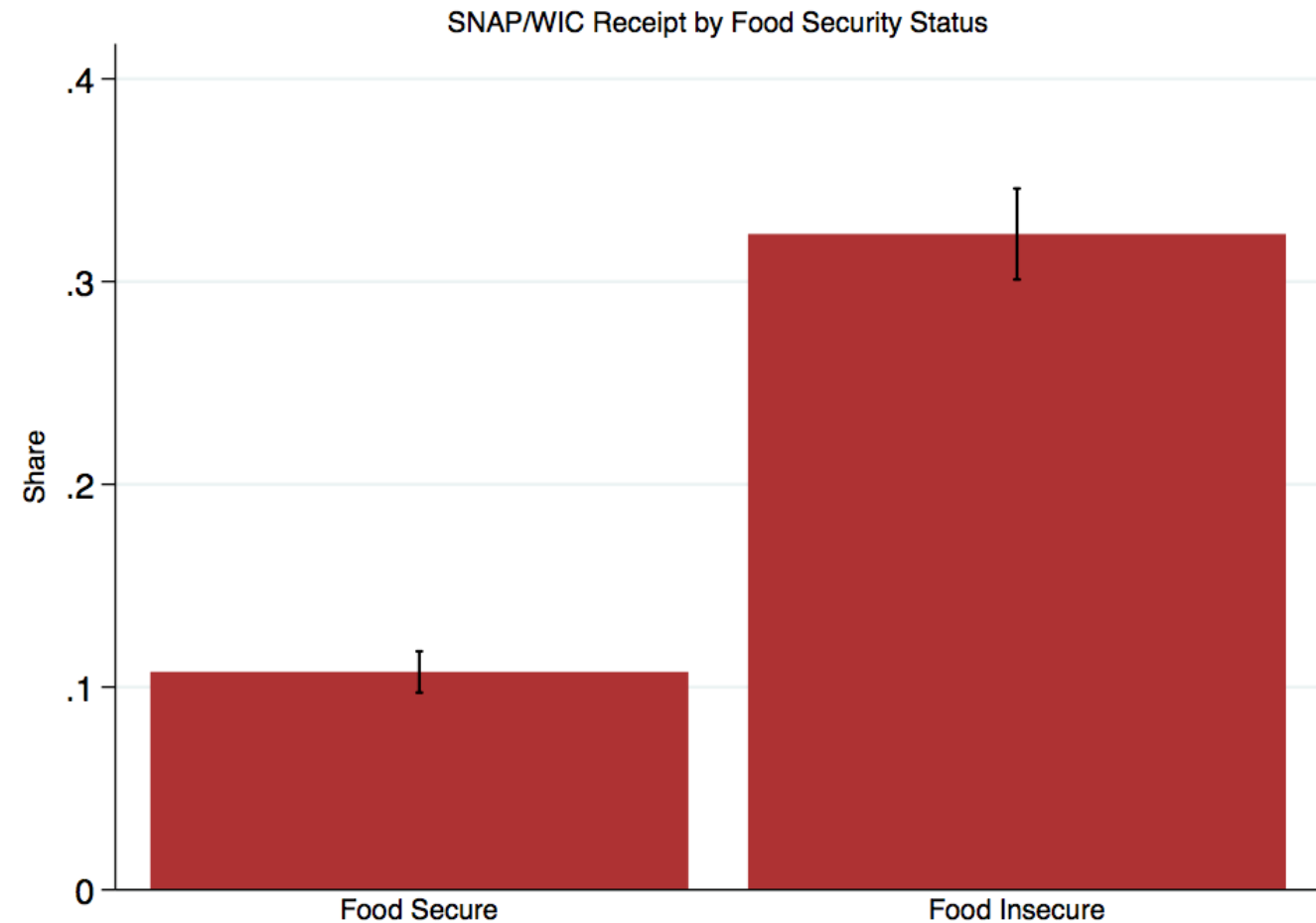
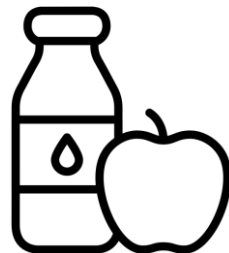
More than **25%** of people of color report **some form of food insecurity** in the past week

# Many Vulnerable Households Do Not Receive SNAP, WIC



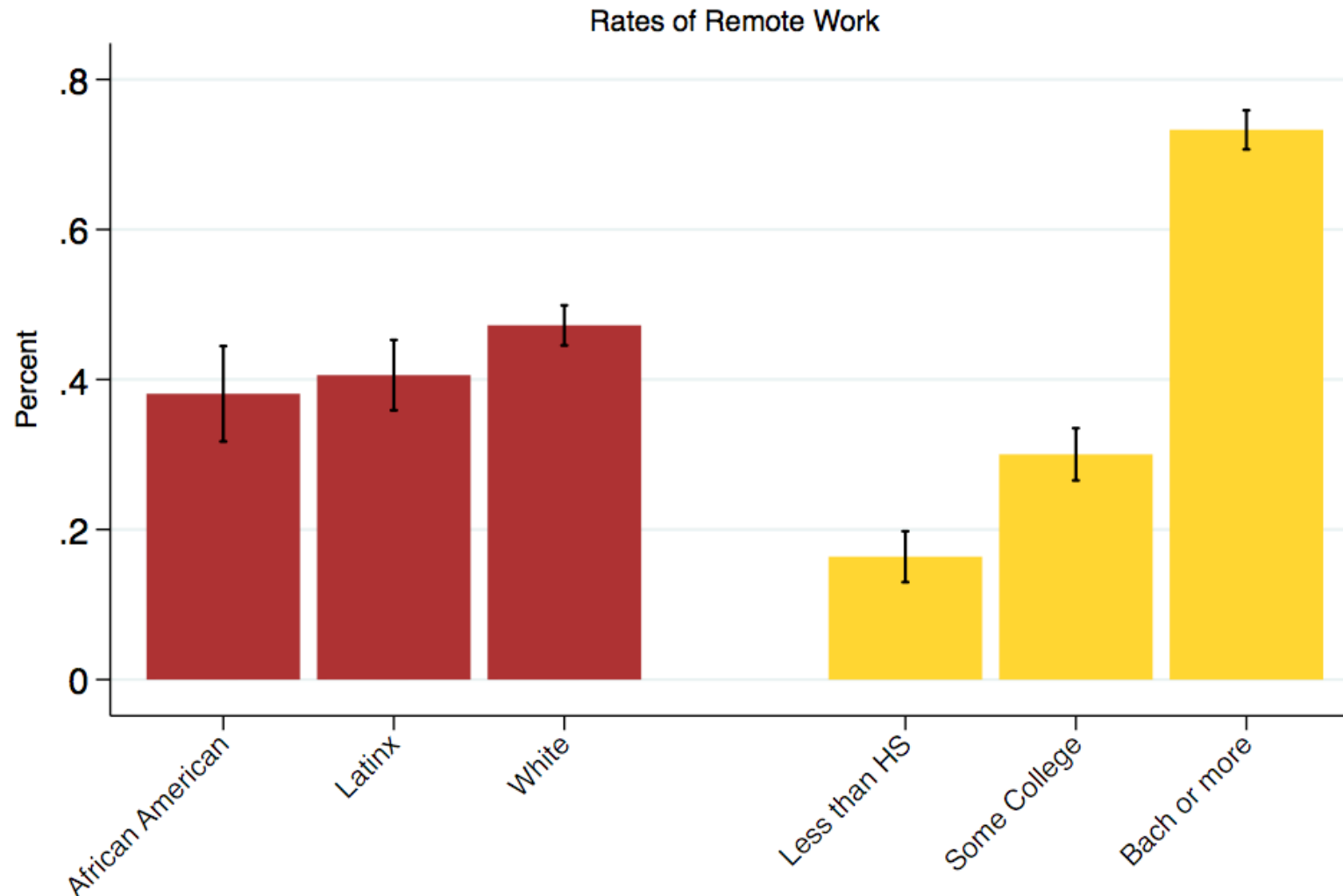
Nearly **two thirds** of food insecure households are not SNAP or WIC beneficiaries

**98%** of respondents on SNAP or WIC report they are **able to use their benefits**





# Low SES Workers Bear Significantly More Health Risk

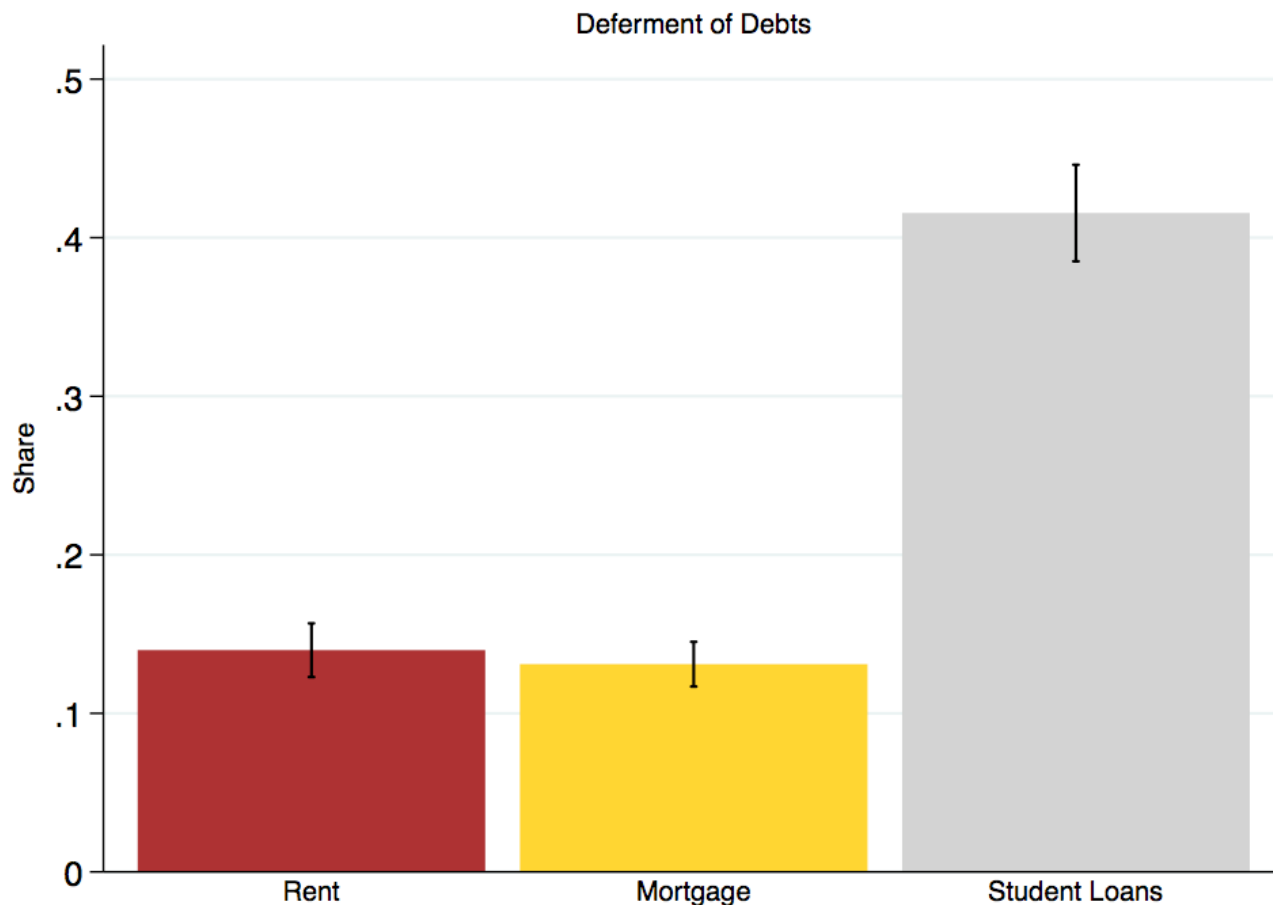


Includes only individuals who retained their job between the two waves of the survey

Less educated, people of color significantly less likely to engage in remote work

Four-year college grads are **20 percentage points** more likely to have paid sick leave

# Few Mortgages, Rents Have Permission for Deferment



Student loan debt most common type of debt allowed to be deferred.

Only **14%** of renters  
**13%** of mortgage  
payers report **having  
permission** to delay or  
reduce payment

**12%** of renters,  
**6%** of mortgage  
payers, and **32%** with  
students loans  
reported **missing or  
paying less** in the past  
month



# **Childcare and Education**

# School Closures Likely Challenge Low-SES Families Most



**88%** of school-age children have had **school cancelled**



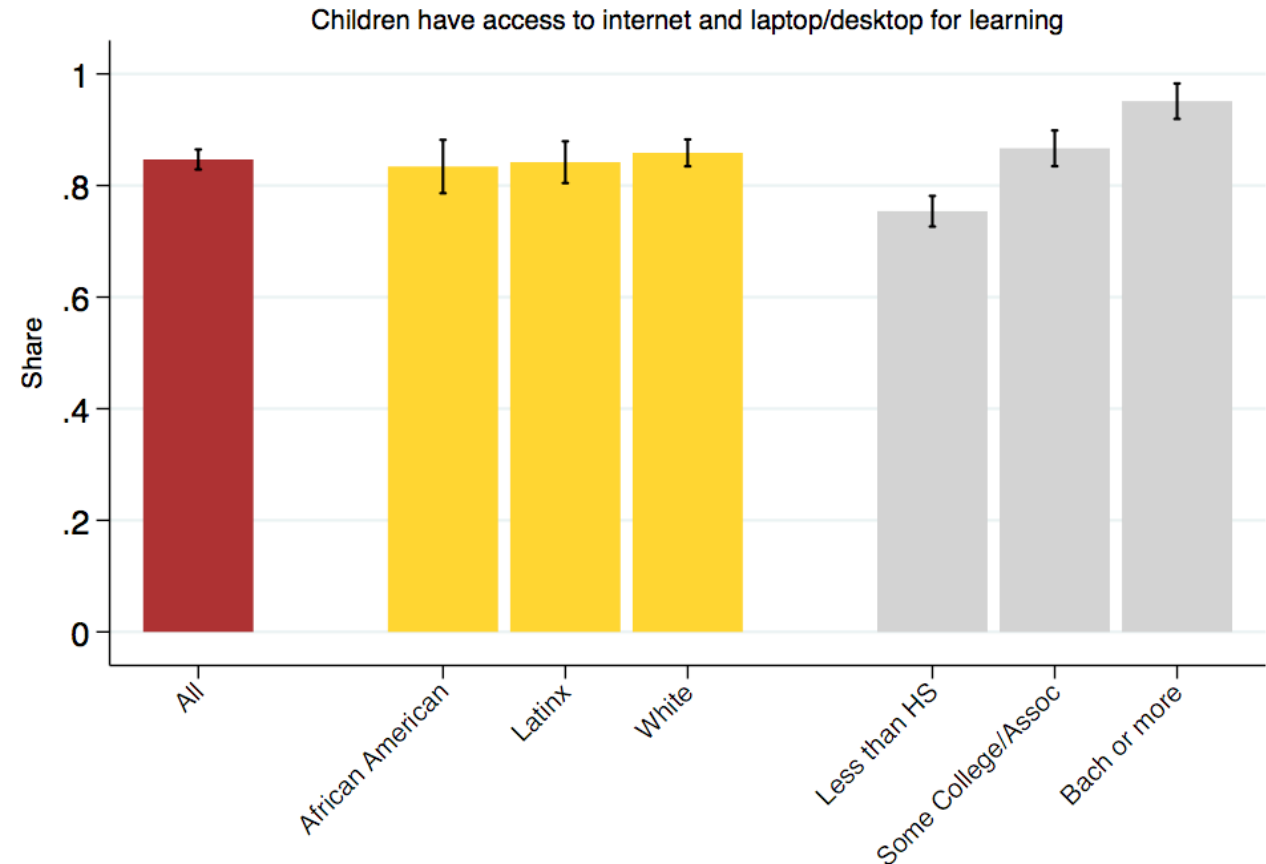
**87%** of children with school cancelled **participate in at-home education**



**78%** of parents are satisfied with **school communication supporting learning**



Among children with school cancelled, those from **low-education households** are **15 percentage points** less likely to have access to Internet and a laptop for learning



# Caregiving and Childcare is a Gendered Burden



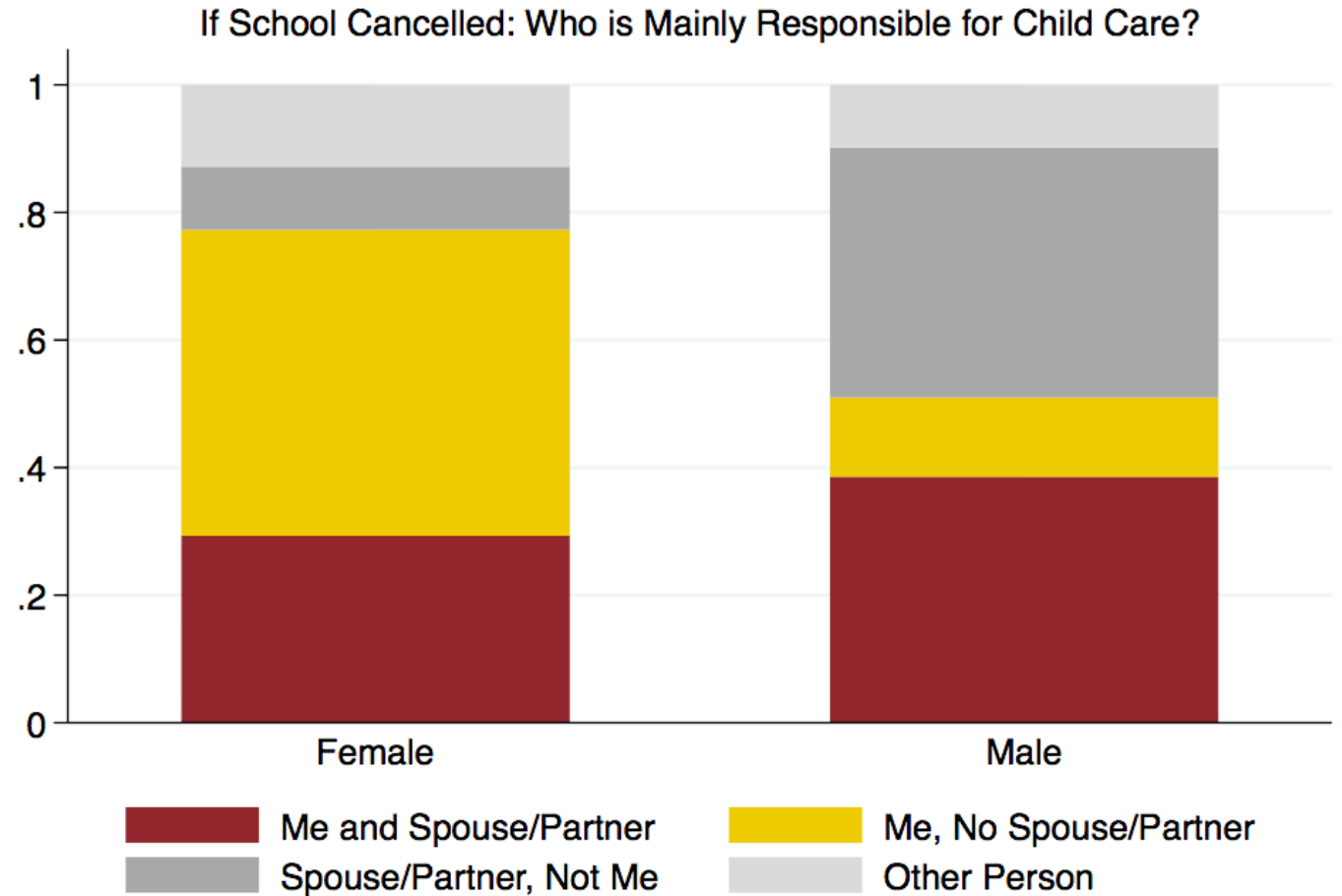
**Misaligned perceptions:** while only **29%** of married women report childcare is shared with a spouse/partner, **39%** of men report the same



**Women do more:** **49%** of married women report they are mainly responsible, **39%** of men report their wives are mainly responsible



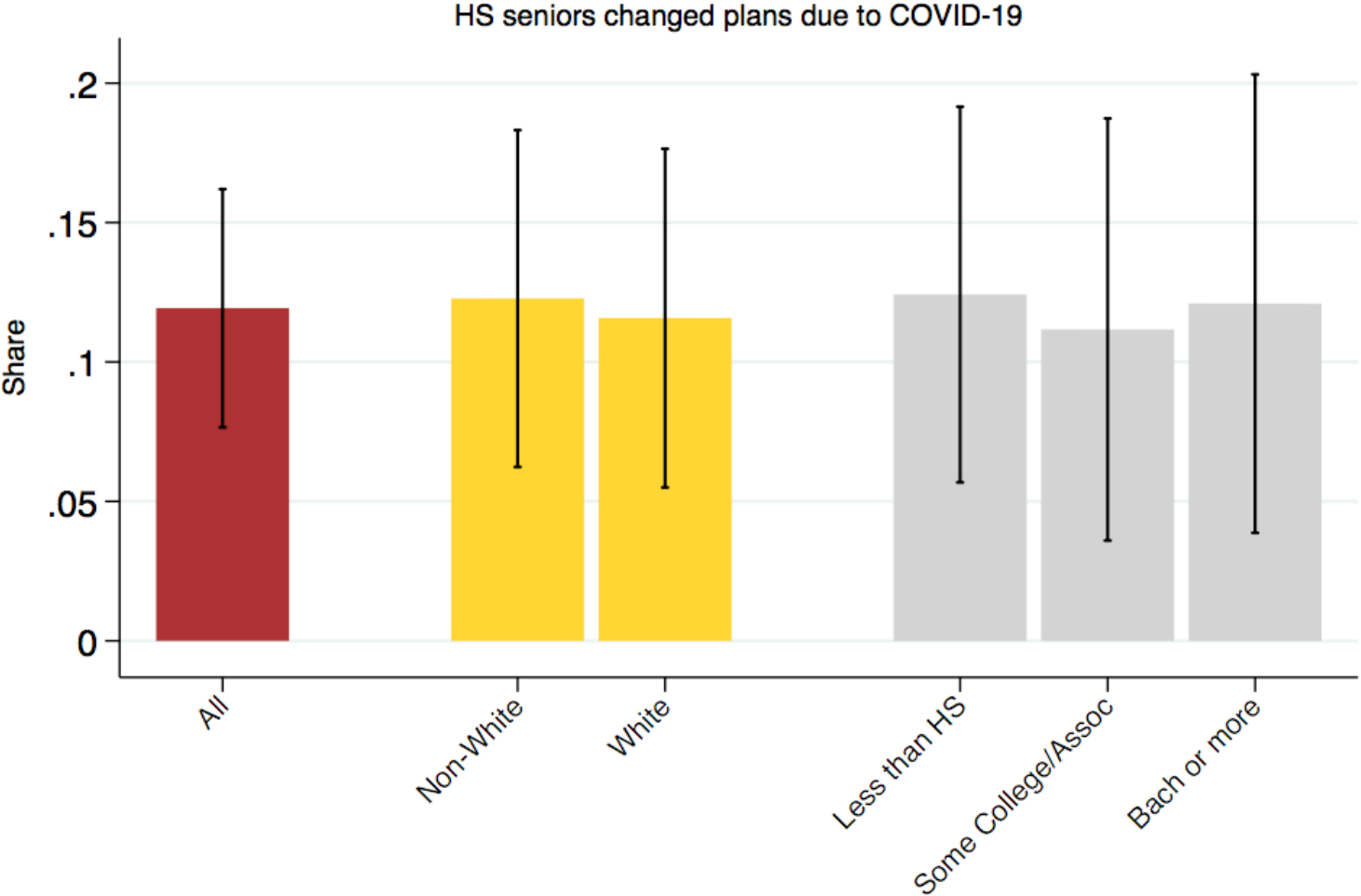
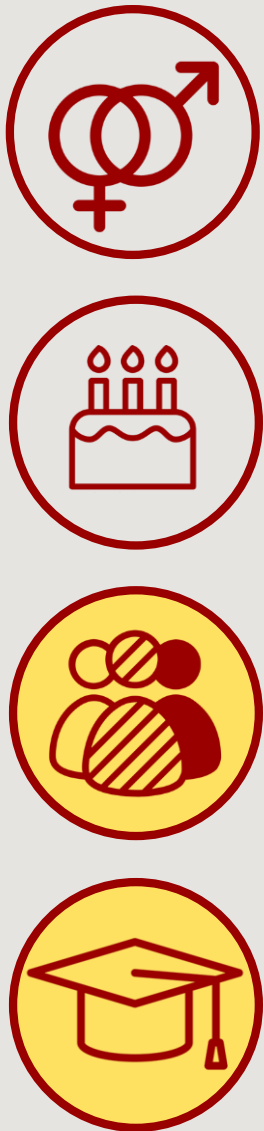
**Work is disrupted for all:** Roughly **40%** of men and women report work is disrupted due to closure-induced childcare burdens



Note: Estimates weighted to be nationally representative. Wave 2, married individuals with coresident spouse only.



# Most Students Keeping Up College Plans



Due to sample sizes, we have pooled all non-white students

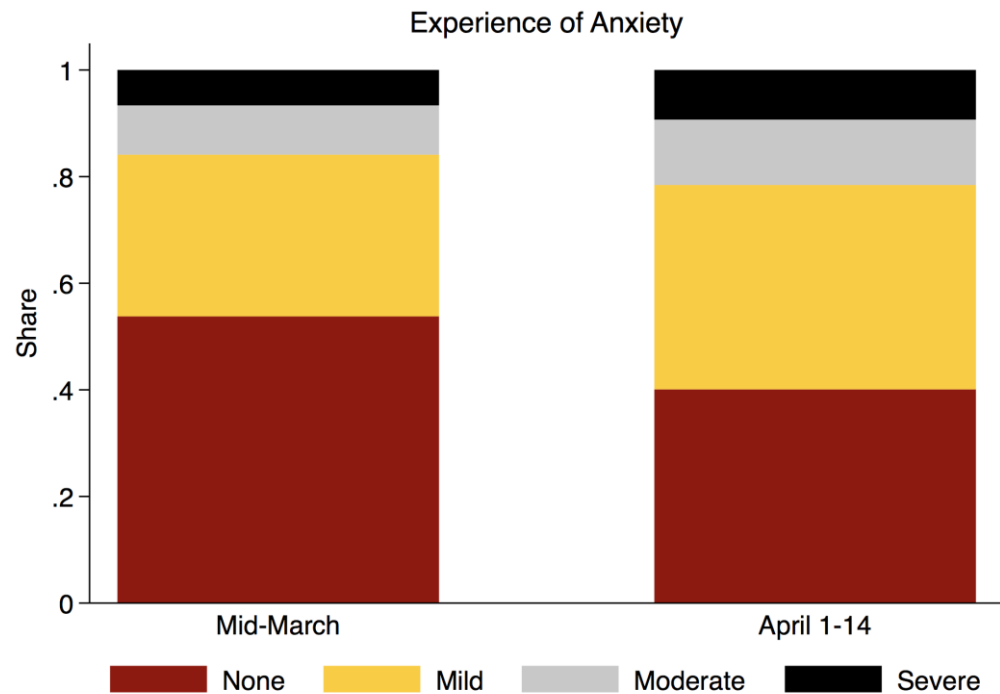
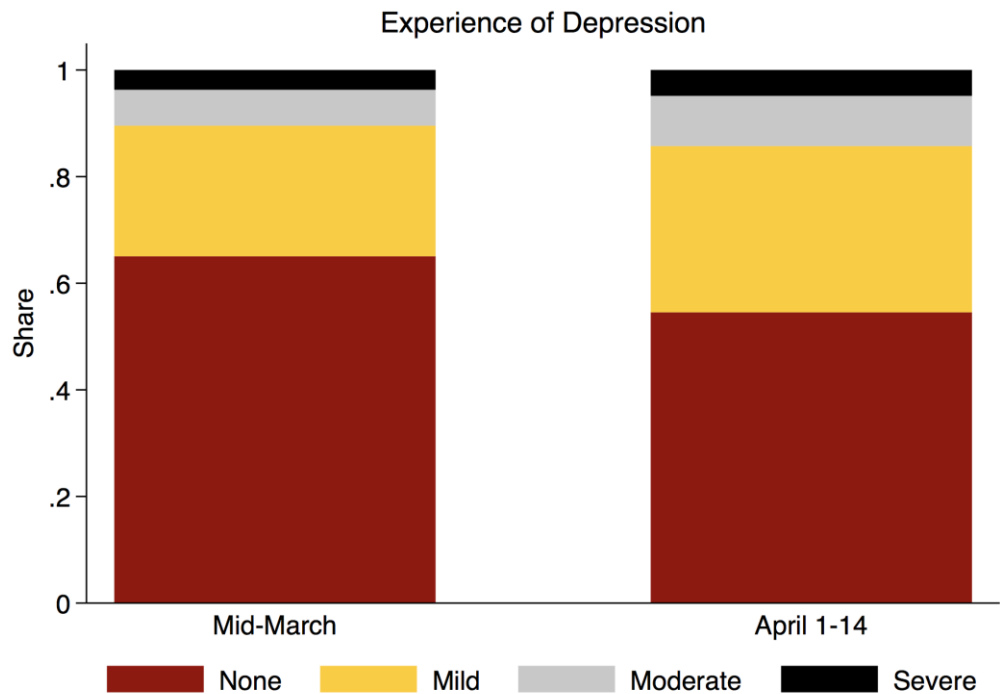
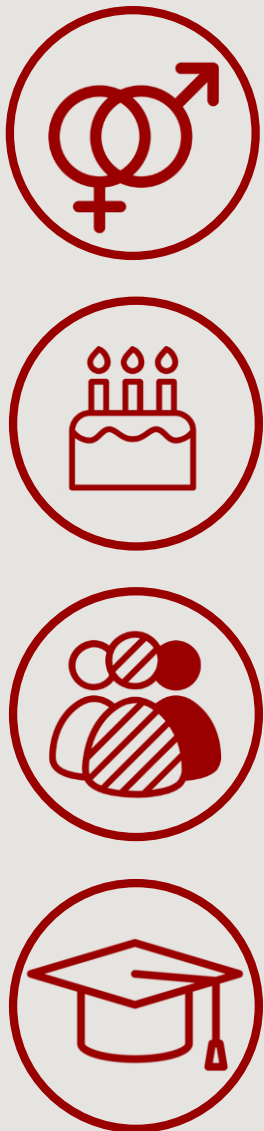
**12%** of high-school seniors have **changed post-graduation plans** due to **COVID-19**

Patterns do not differ by race or education-level of the student’s parent/guardian



# **Mental Health and Coping**

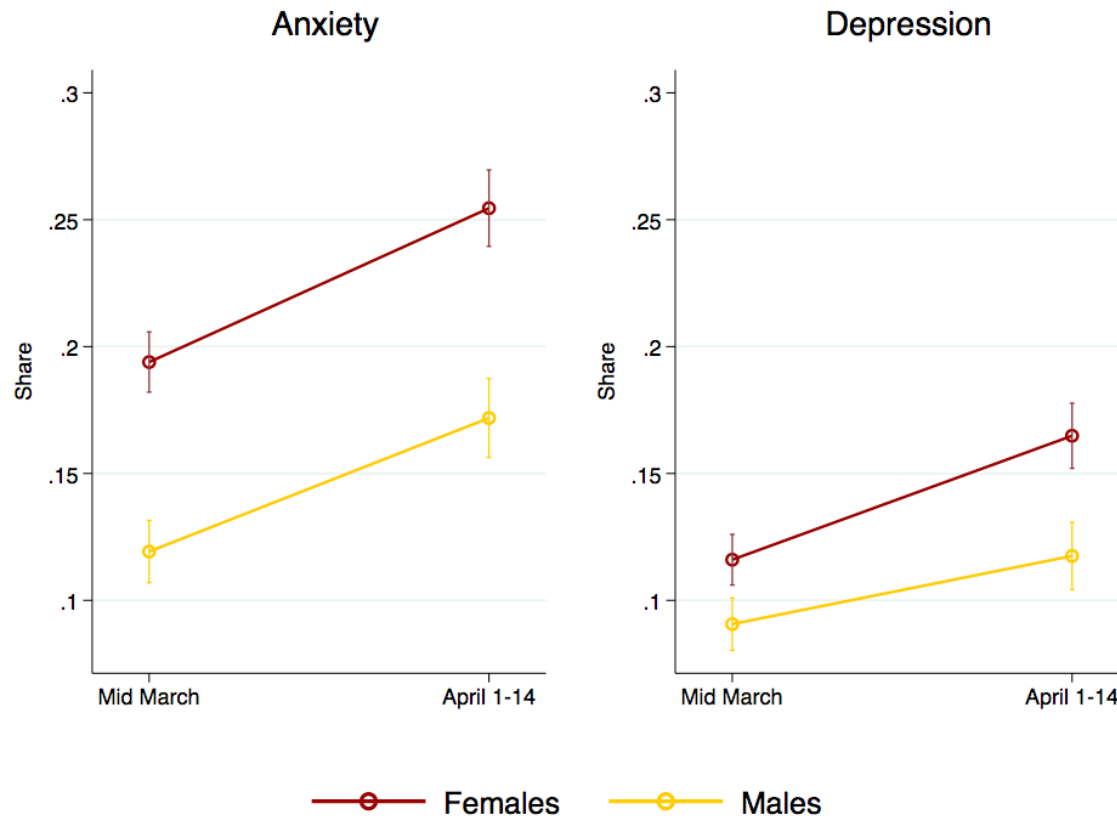
# Depression and Anxiety on the Rise



Experiences of depression and anxiety symptoms are on the rise, as more individuals score mild, moderate, or severe on PHQ4 sub-scales

Source: USC Center for Economic and Social Research - Coronavirus Tracking Survey Waves 1 & 2. Contact [uas-l@usc.edu](mailto:uas-l@usc.edu) for more information.

# Depression: Women Differentially Affected



Women exhibit a differential increase in **depression symptoms\*** (significant at 5 percent level)

Over **25%** of women exhibit signs of anxiety\* by the second survey wave

\* Symptoms of depression and anxiety are assessed using a validated [PHQ4](#) screening instrument. We focus on threshold that indicates additional clinical followup

# Growth in Substance Use



Significant **increase in alcohol consumption** between waves

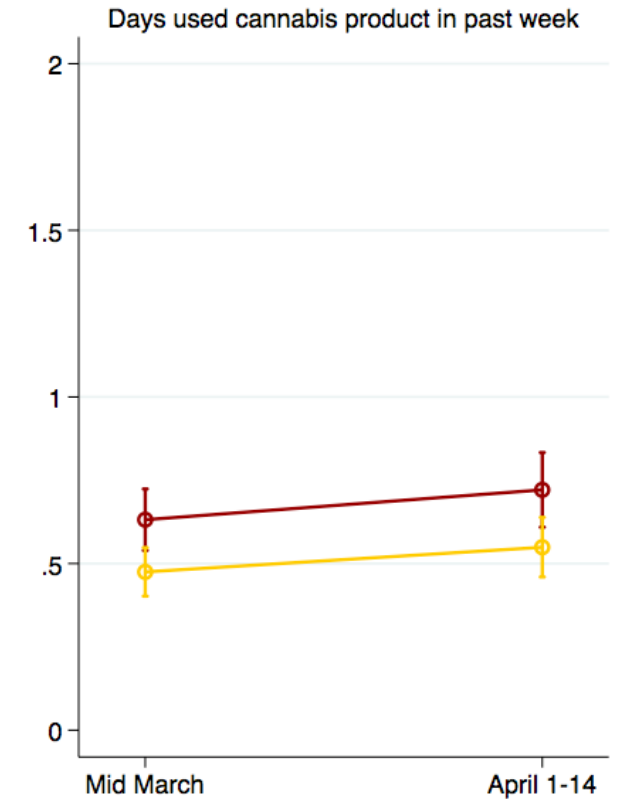
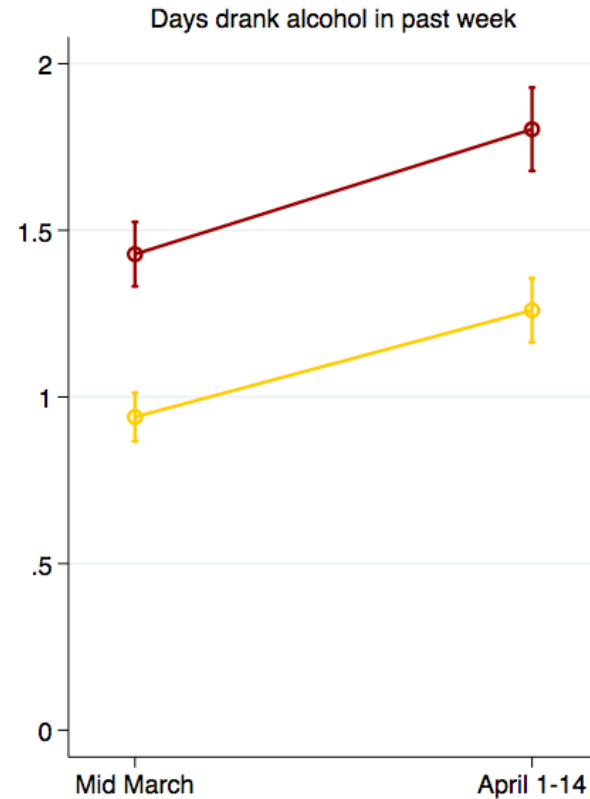
► *Risk factor for domestic violence*



Men report slight increase in cannabis consumption



No significant differential trends by gender

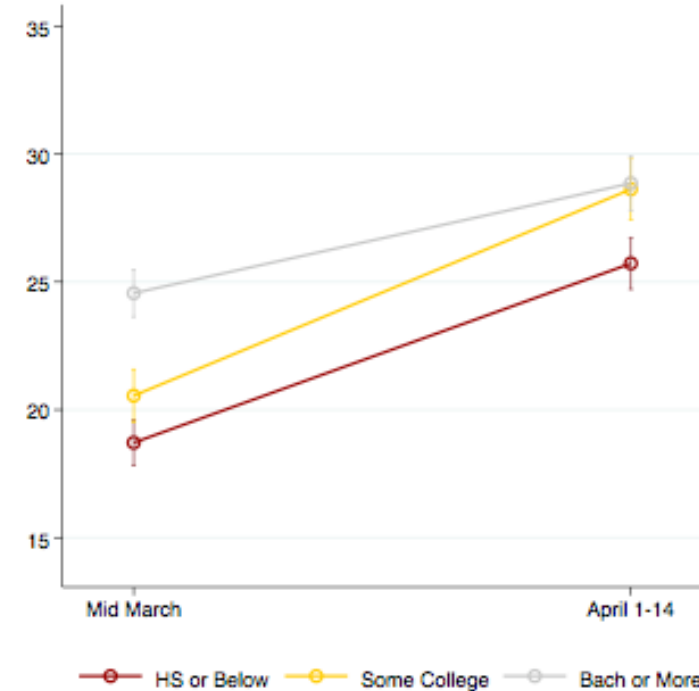
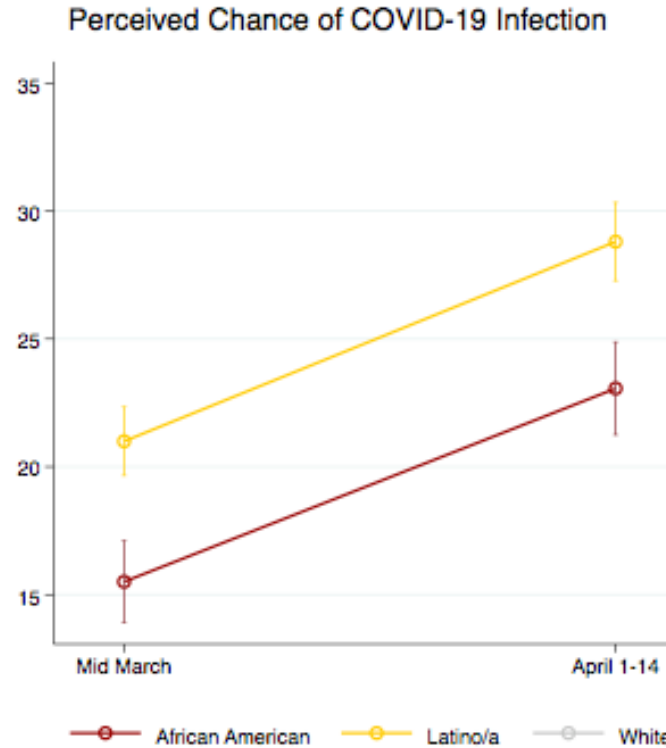
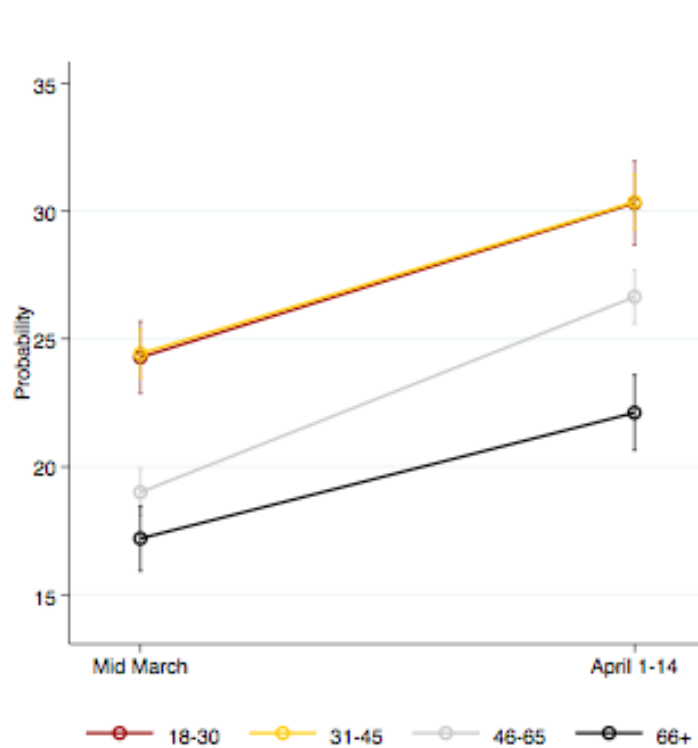


—●— Males —●— Females

A faint, light gray line drawing of a person's head and shoulders, facing forward. The person is wearing a face mask that covers their nose and mouth. The drawing is composed of simple, rounded lines, giving it a stylized, almost cartoonish appearance. It serves as a background for the text.

# **Health and Behavior Change**

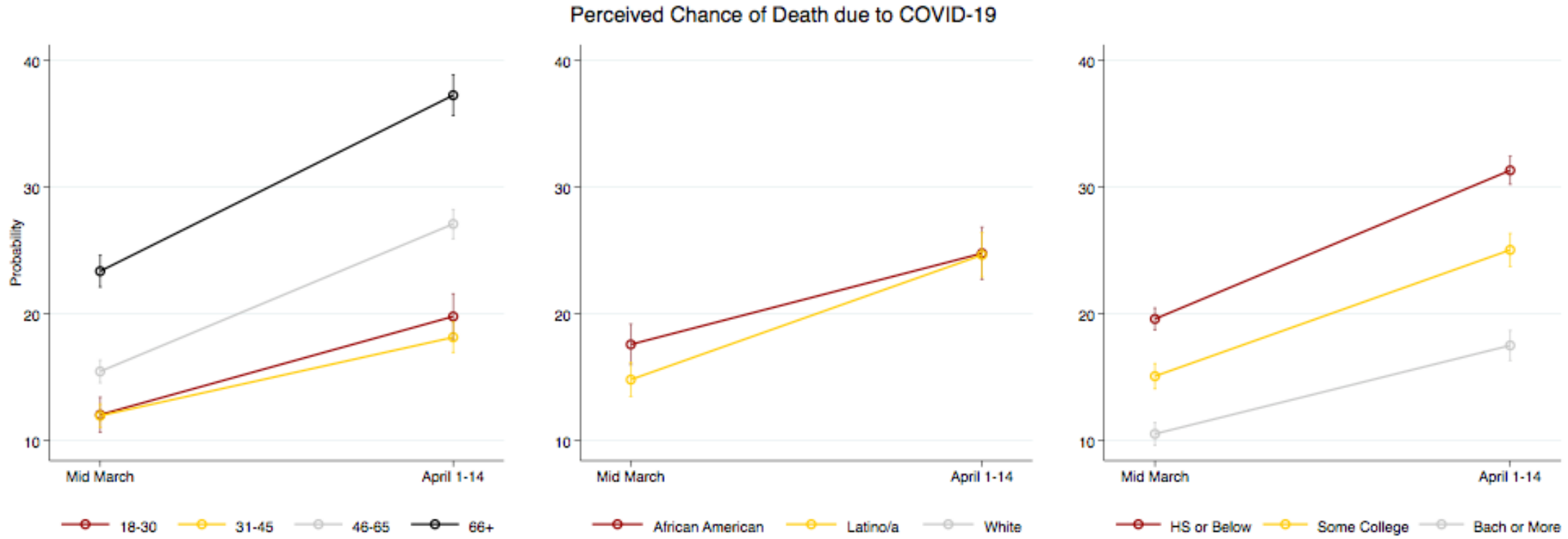
# Rapid Rise in Perceived Risk of Infection



**Seniors and black Americans perceive a lower risk of COVID-19 infection** than other age groups, though they bear the greatest costs of the disease

All demographic groups are **revising the estimated risk of infection up**

# Rapid Rise in Perceived Risk of Death

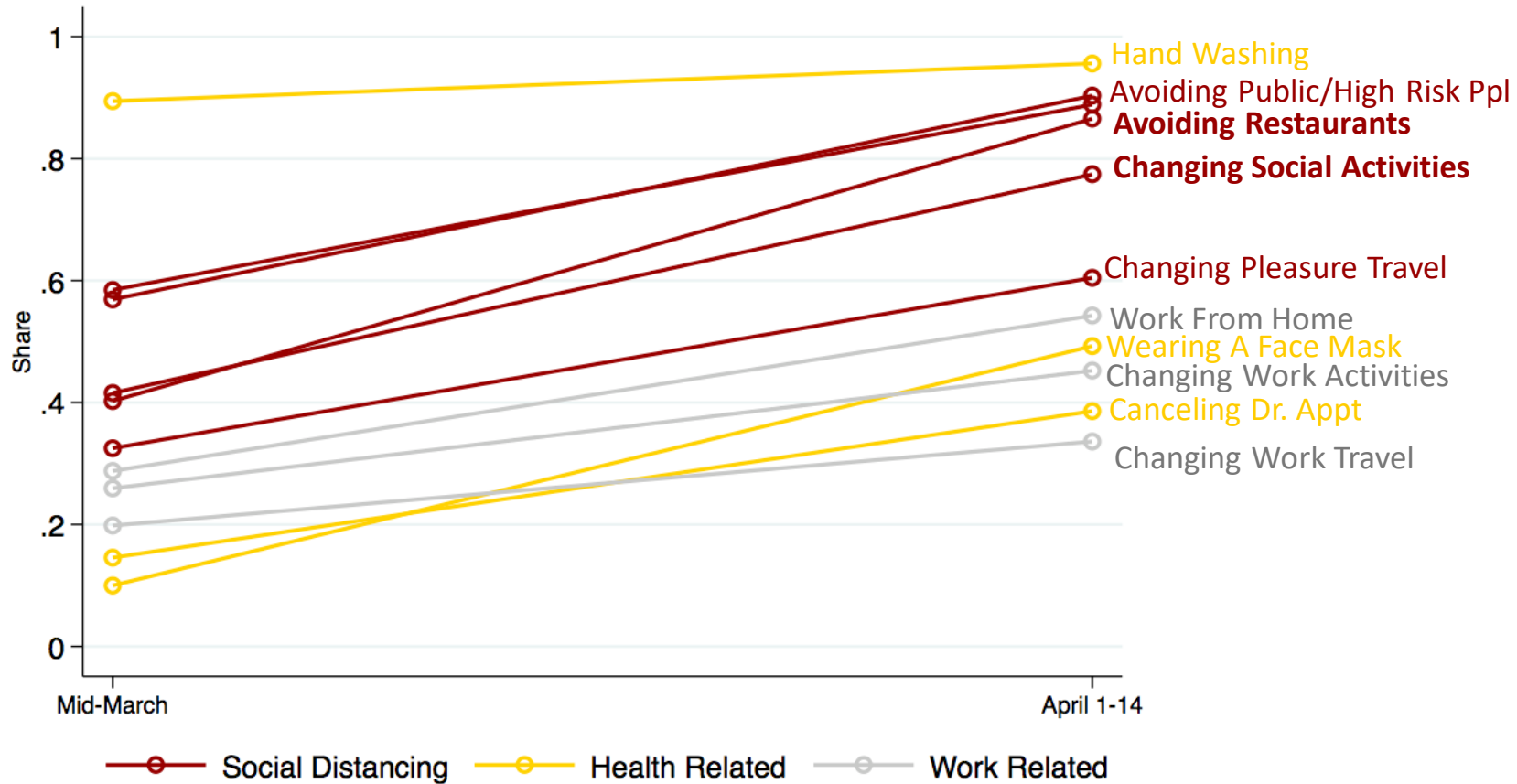


**Seniors perceive the highest risk of COVID-19 mortality**, followed by those 45-65

Those with high school education or less perceive the highest risk of COVID-19 death



# Rapid Growth in Social Distancing



Some behaviors, such as hand washing, have changed very little

Other behaviors, such as **avoiding restaurants** and **changing social plans** are being rapidly adopted

# Less Educated Report Fewer Avoidance Behaviors



	Type of Behavior			
	Social	Work	Health	Total
High School or Less	3.9	1.1	1.8	6.4
Bachelor's or Higher	4.2	1.6	1.9	7.4

Those with a high school degree or less are on average engaging in **one less avoidance behavior** than those bachelor's degrees or higher

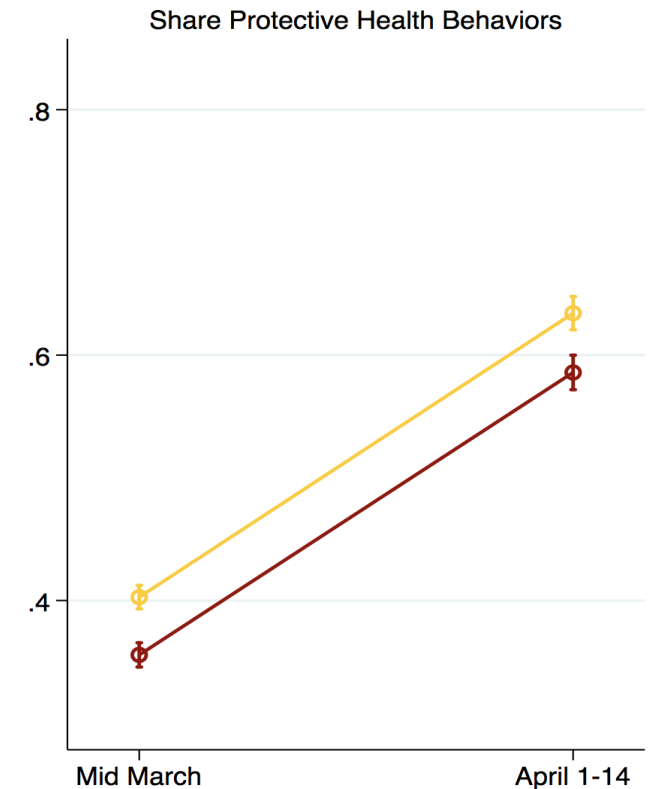
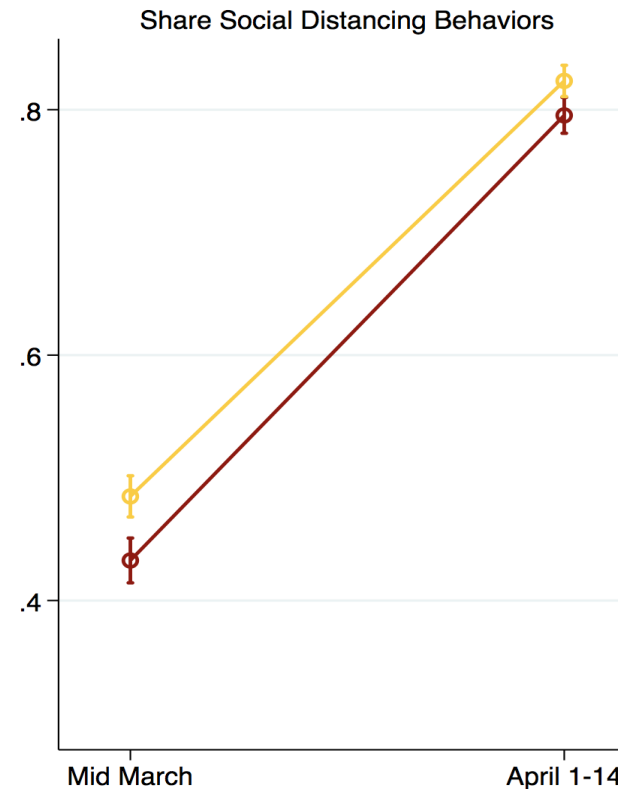
Avoidance behaviors differ significantly by education level for all three categories of behavior

# Both Genders Have Rapidly Increased Distancing



**Social Distancing:** on average, respondents report **adopting 80%** of five measured behaviors

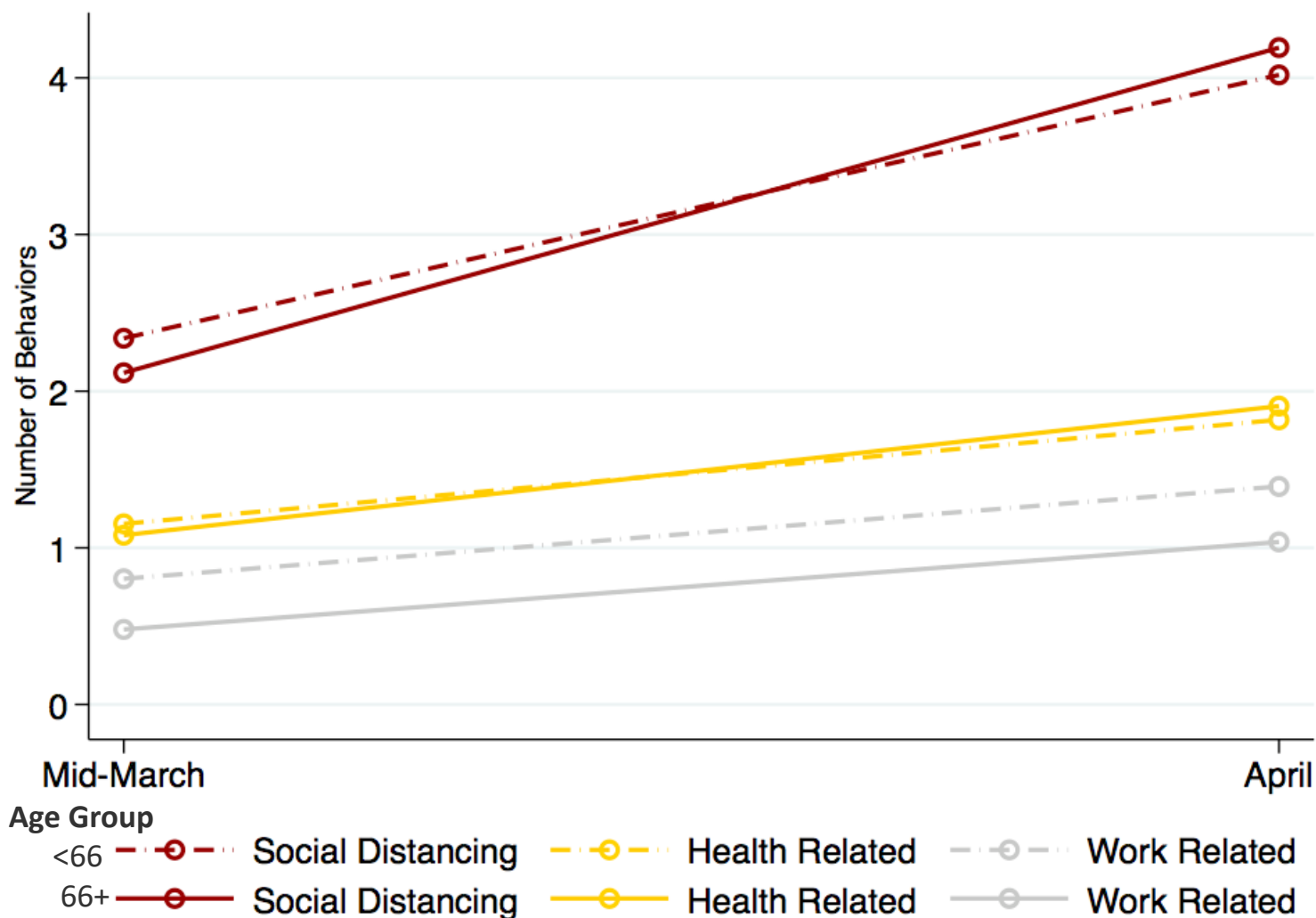
**Health Behavior Adoption:** growth driven by **increased use of face masks**



—●— Males —●— Females



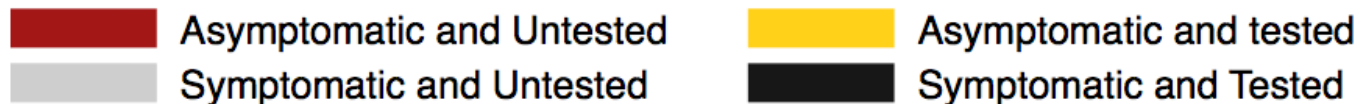
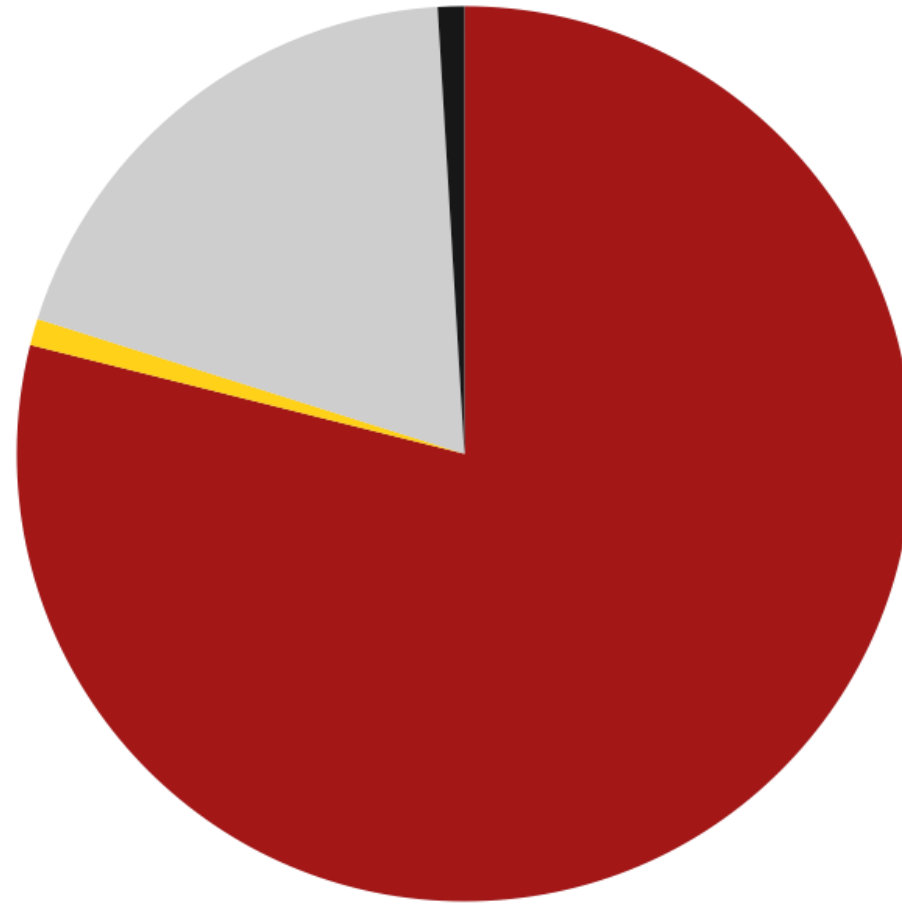
# Minimal Differences by Age, Except for Work Behaviors



Comparisons of those aged 66+ (solid line) and all those under age 65 (dashed line) suggest **differences in health behaviors across age groups are largely attributed to work behaviors**

Work behaviors do not apply to many elderly respondents, who are typically retired

# Symptoms / Reported Illness



**One in five** individuals report experiencing the CDC-identified primary symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, and shortness of breath), **4.7%** have been tested

The low testing rates relative to reported symptoms may reflect **limited available testing capacity**

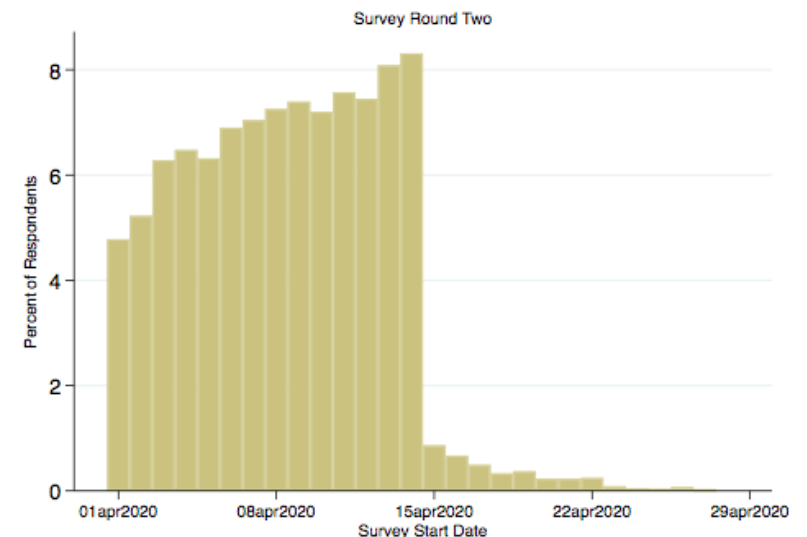
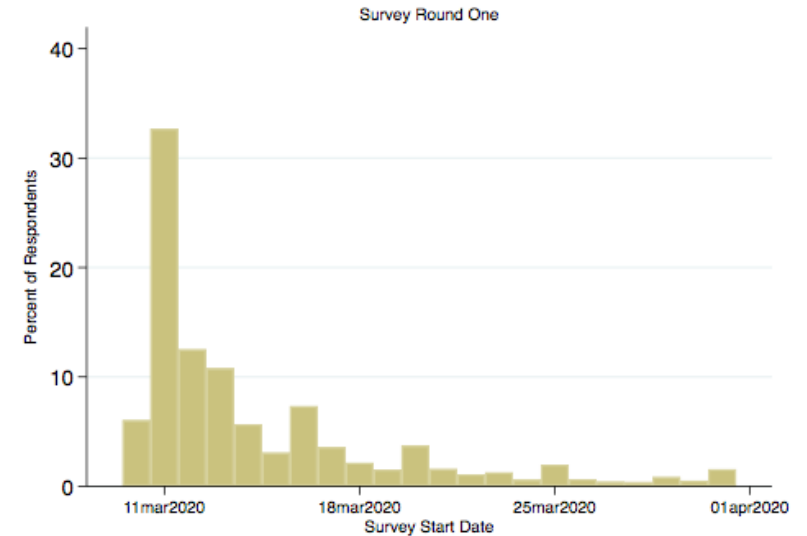


# Survey Details



Data included in this presentation are from a probability-based internet panel survey conducted by the [Understanding America Study](#) at USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research. Data were collected in two waves – first between March 10-31 (i.e. UAS230 or wave one), and second between April 1-15 (i.e. UAS240 or wave two). Approximately 3% of the UAS240 sample responded after April 15. Respondents are adult residents of the U.S.

Our analyses include a total of 6,933 respondents in wave one, out of 8,815 invited to participate, and 5,666 respondents in wave two, out of 5,891 who had consented to participate in a series of COVID tracking surveys in time for wave two. In wave two, respondents were randomly assigned an interview start date between April 1-14, and received a monetary bonus for completing the survey on their assigned day. Surveys were not assigned on specific days in wave one.



# Acknowledgements



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**USC**Dornsife  
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and Social Research*

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