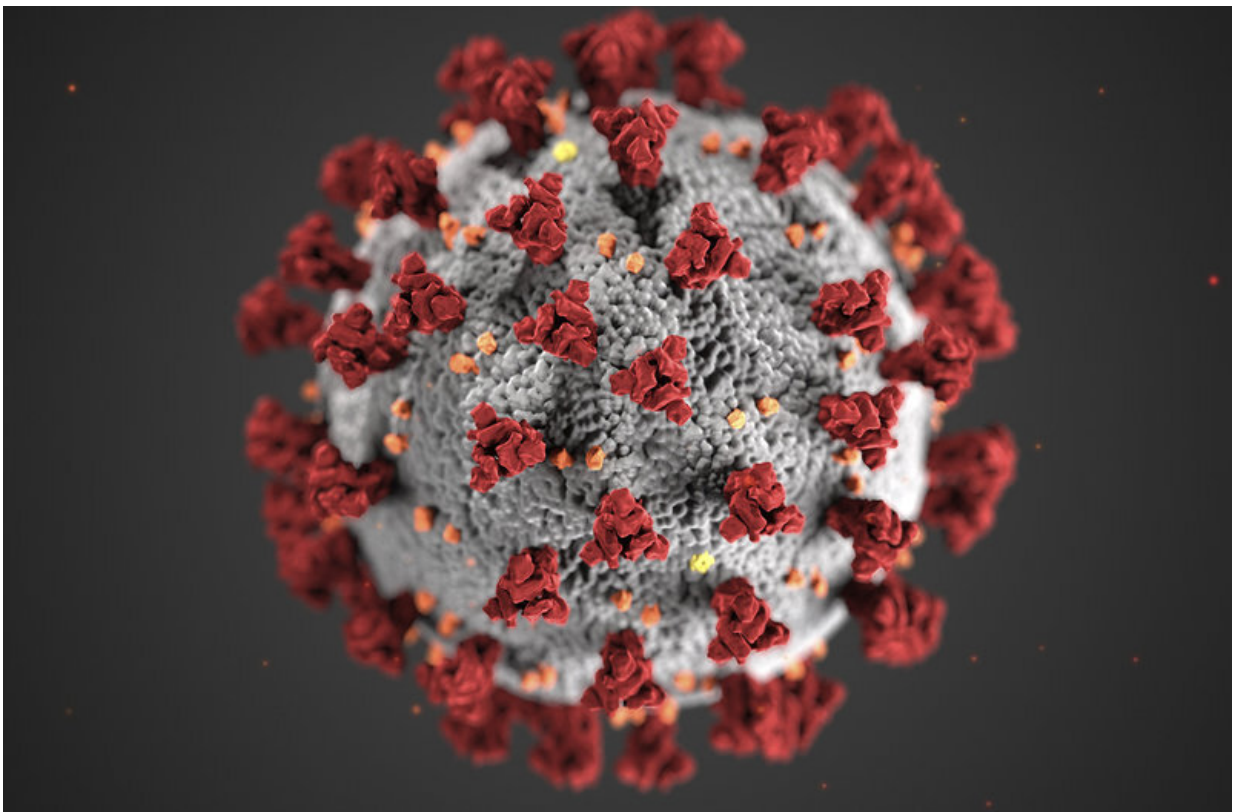


More than 25% of Americans believe they have little chance of being infected with coronavirus

March 19 2020, by Jim Key



A new study by researchers at the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR) and at the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics found that many Americans believe they're unlikely to contract COVID-19. Credit: CDC/ Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan Higgins, MAMS

As the rate of COVID-19 infections in the United States continues to grow, slightly more than a quarter of all U.S. residents believe they have a near zero chance of becoming infected, and 92% of people have received the message that handwashing and sanitizing are effective safety measures, according to a recent USC survey.

The findings are from an ongoing national survey of more than 5,400 adult U.S. residents regarding perceptions and attitudes related to the novel [coronavirus](#), COVID-19. The study was conducted March 10–16 by researchers at the Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR) at USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and at the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics. The researchers hope to ask [survey respondents](#) the same questions at periodic intervals throughout the duration of the pandemic to track how their lives and beliefs have changed.

Daniel Bennett, assistant professor (research) of economics at USC Dornsife, and Wändi Bruine de Bruin, Provost Professor of Public Policy, Psychology, and Behavioral Science, led the study with the goal of helping public health and policy leaders identify gaps in information and understand how the virus has affected everyday life.

Will I get infected?

On a scale of zero to 100, people were asked to rate their chances of becoming infected with the coronavirus in the next three months.

- Slightly more than one in four believe they've got a less than 1% chance of becoming infected
- More than 40% rated their odds of infection at less than 10%.
- 13% believe they've got a 50% to 60% chance of getting the virus in the next three months
- Only 6% rated their odds of infection at being greater than 60%

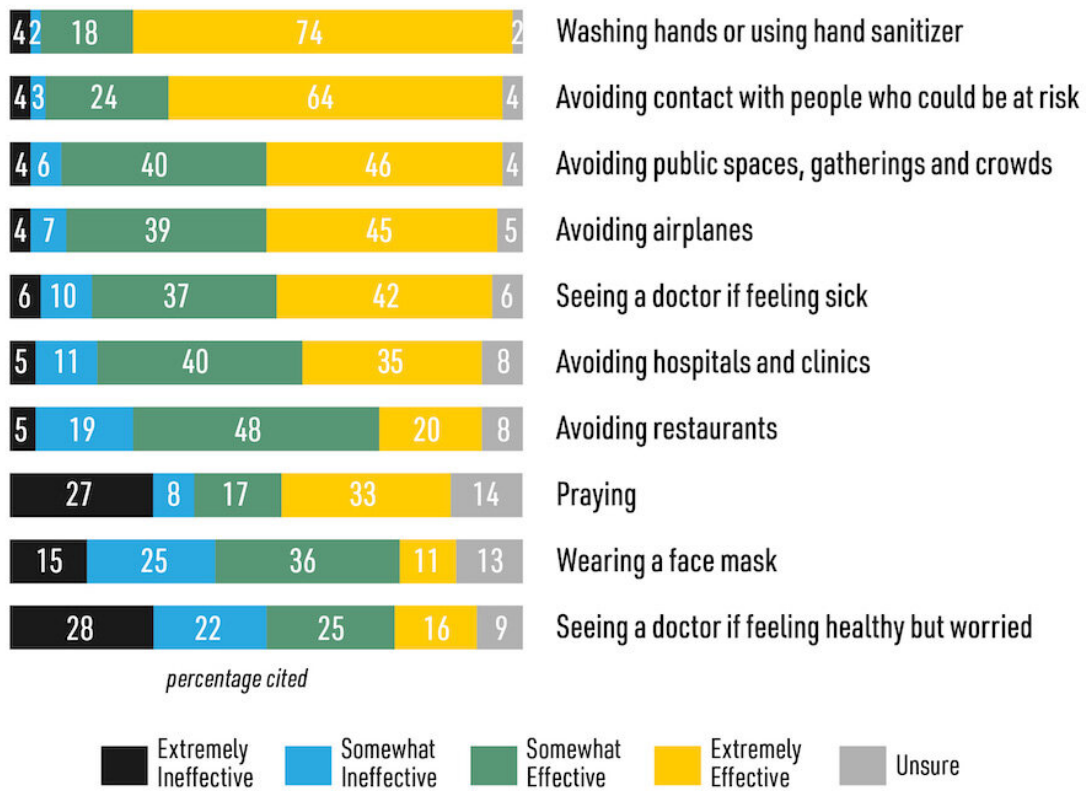
CORONAVIRUS PERCEPTIONS

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Hand washing and sanitizing: nearly all Americans recognize its effectiveness in keeping them safe from infection



Q: How effective are the following actions for keeping you safe from coronavirus?

Probability-based internet panel survey conducted March 10 -16 2020 by the Understanding America Study at USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research. Margin of sampling error is +/-2 among the sample of 5,414 adult residents of the U.S.. Question text, topline, and data files available at <https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/COVID-19+Corona+Virus>

Credit: University of Southern California

"We've been collecting this data during a week of rising infection rates, breaking news related to COVID-19 and new official recommendations. Even during this week, we've already recorded shifts in perceptions" said Bennett, an economist at CESR. "Our survey offers a valuable baseline for future analysis."

Bennett, Bruine de Bruin and colleagues have shared further analyses on The Evidence Base blog, a collaboration between the USC Schaeffer Center and CESR.

Value of safety measures

Almost all Americans recognize the value of handwashing and using sanitizer to protect themselves. More than 90% of respondents cited this as being either extremely effective or somewhat effective at keeping themselves safe. Nearly two-thirds said that avoiding contact with high-risk people was extremely effective, along with nearly a quarter who said it was somewhat effective.

Roughly 85% cited the value of avoiding airplanes and public spaces or crowds as being effective safety measures.

Nearly four out of five said that seeing a doctor when feeling sick is an effective safety measure, while half cited prayer as somewhat or extremely effective.

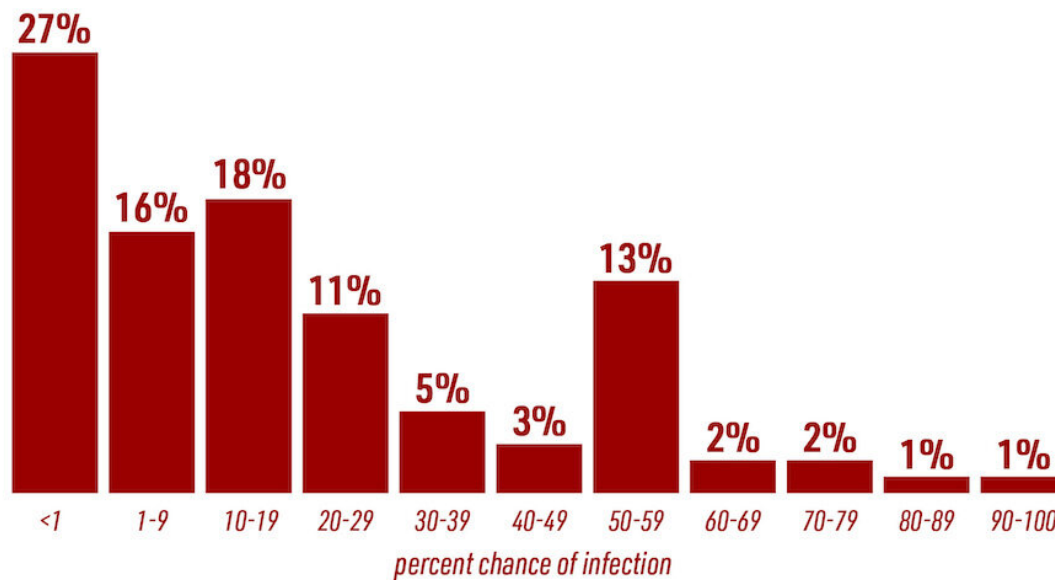
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**Chance of infection in next 3 months?
Slightly more than 1 out of 4 Americans believe it's zero**



Q: On a scale of 0 to 100 percent, what is the chance that you will get the coronavirus in the next three months?

Probability-based internet panel survey conducted March 10 -16 2020 by the Understanding America Study at USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research. Margin of sampling error is +/-2 among the sample of 5,414 adult residents of the U.S.. Question text, topline, and data files available at <https://uasdata.usc.edu/page/COVID-19+Corona+Virus>

Credit: University of Southern California

"Although there might initially have been uncertainty about effective safety precautions, people seem to be getting the message to step up their hand hygiene and implement social distancing measures" said Bruine de Bruin. "As news developed over the week the survey was in the field, we

actually saw an uptick in the percentage of people who recognized the effectiveness of important safety measures."

The wide-ranging survey also asked respondents about how likely it is the coronavirus will cause them to be quarantined, lose their job, and run out of money. Among other questions, it also asked whether people experienced symptoms, whether they would take a vaccine, and their belief regarding the likelihood that people who become infected will die.

[The Understanding America Study](#) is making the data immediately available to other researchers who are studying the public's responses to the pandemic.

About the survey

The probability-based internet panel survey was conducted March 10–16, 2020, 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 5,414 adult residents of the U.S.

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

Provided by University of Southern California

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