

Poll: Americans maintain virus precautions as states reopen

June 12 2020, by Tammy Webber and Hannah Fingerhut

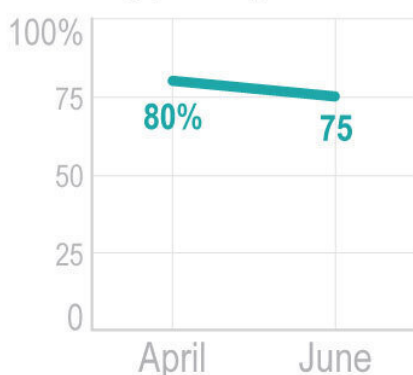
Most still taking steps against COVID-19

The latest COVID Impact survey finds majorities of Americans are still taking precautions to slow to spread of the coronavirus, although the numbers have declined slightly since April.

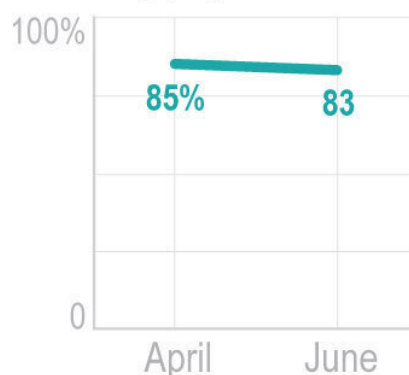
Which of the following measures are you taking in response to the coronavirus?

— Percentage of Americans that did each of the following

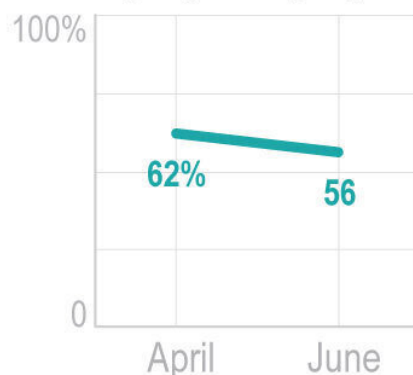
Avoiding public places



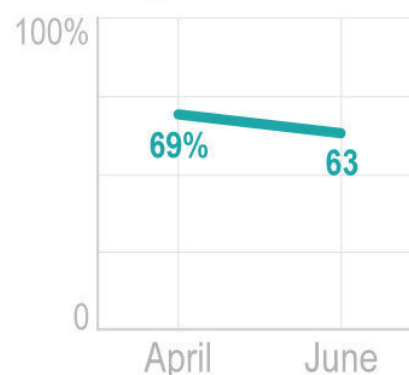
Practicing physical distancing



Avoiding high-risk people



Canceling social activities



The survey of 2,047 adults was conducted May 30–June 8 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Source: COVID Impact Survey.

Find more details at <https://www.covid-impact.org>.

The latest COVID Impact survey finds majorities of Americans still saying they are following cautionary measures in response to the coronavirus, though for some, the shares doing so have fallen slightly from April.;

Most Americans say they are wearing masks. They are still by and large avoiding restaurants. And the vast majority are still staying at least six feet from others when out and about.

Even as states and metropolitan areas throughout the country relax restrictions on social and economic life during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, a new poll finds that most Americans aren't yet ready to abandon the public health behaviors that help reduce the risk of themselves and the people around them contracting the virus that causes COVID-19.

"For us, it's about doing whatever we have to do to keep ourselves and our community safe," said Jody Hayden, who runs a chocolate shop with her husband in the tiny Lake Michigan town of Empire, about 265 miles northwest of Detroit. She said her family wears masks and keeps their distance while out—and they'll expect customers to do the same when the doors to their store, the Grocer's Daughter, reopen next Friday.

"We see people from all over the world at our shop and we really love that, but this summer puts us at risk from people traveling from hot spots," Hayden said. "We could anger some customers and lose money or not have all the safety measures and ... risk a life. We couldn't live with that."

Overall, 90% of Americans say they're wearing a mask, according to the new poll conducted by Memorial Day pool party at a bar in Missouri's Lake of the Ozarks—making headlines. This week, President Donald Trump moved his party's national convention to another state after officials in North Carolina balked at his desire to accept the Republican nomination in a packed basketball arena.



In this June 11, 2020 photo, Jody Hayden poses at the Grocer's Daughter chocolate shop which she owns with her husband in Empire, Mich. She said her family wears masks and keep their distance from others—and will expect their customers to do the same when they open the doors to their shop, next Friday, June. 19. Even as states and metropolitan areas relax restrictions on social and economic life amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, a new poll finds that most Americans aren't ready to abandon behaviors that protect themselves and the people around them. (AP Photo/John Flesher)

But majorities of Americans say they are still actively following the recommendations of public health experts. Sixty-three percent say they have canceled or postponed social or pleasure activities, down only slightly from 69% in April. Seventy-five percent say they are avoiding public or crowded places, down slightly from 80%. And 56% say they avoid contact with high-risk people, compared with 62%.

An overwhelming majority—83%—continues to say they are keeping six feet distance from those outside their household. And while many restaurants are opening their doors to in-person diners as restrictions are eased, 72% of Americans say they are avoiding them.

Indianapolis resident Sharon Alseth Bartholomew said she and her husband went to an outdoor bar on Memorial Day weekend "just to test the waters." But so far, they've drawn the line at dining inside.

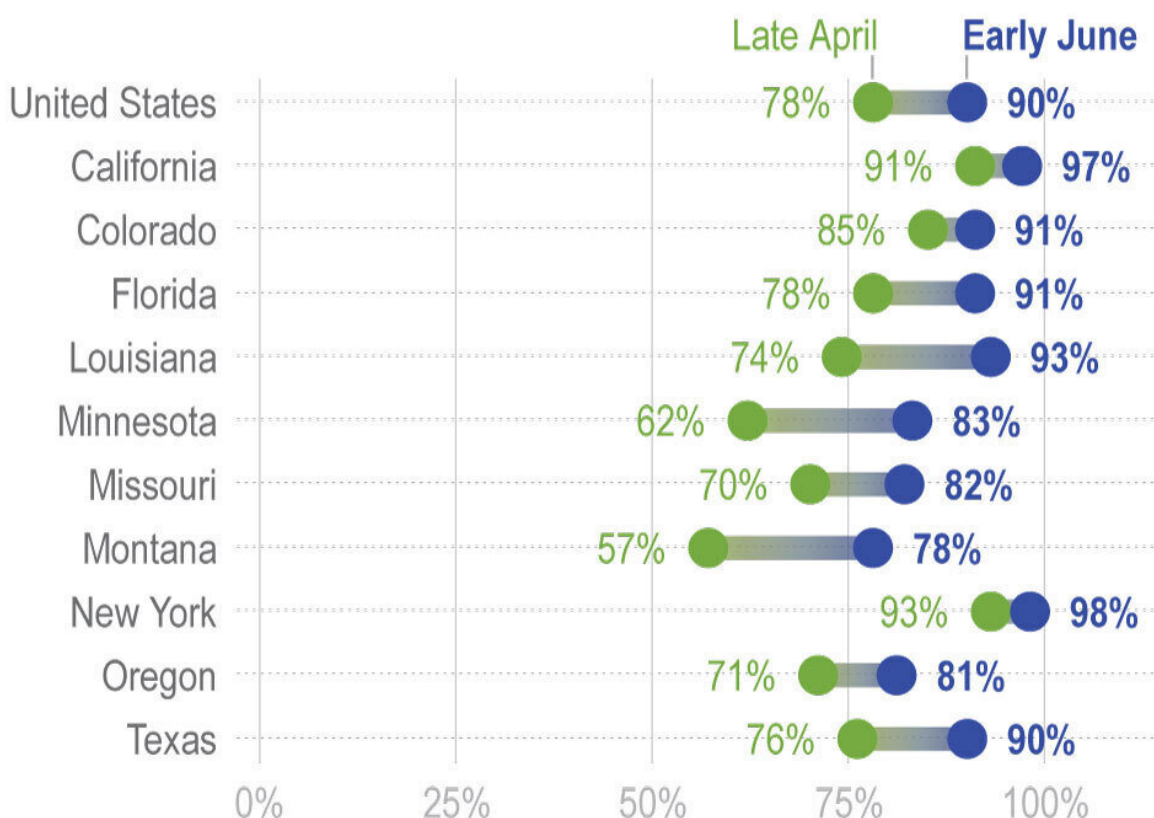
"Eating in a restaurant is not comfortable to us yet," said Bartholomew, who said they still wear masks inside stores, wipe down groceries and keep hand sanitizer nearby. She's concerned about the number of people who don't do the same.

"I think with the onset of summer, people are kind of shedding some fears and just saying, 'Oh, the hell with it, let's just get back to life,' and I firmly do not believe that is the way I want to go right now," she said.

Most Americans say they are wearing a mask to slow spread of coronavirus

The latest COVID Impact survey finds that Americans are more likely to report wearing a mask than they were in April.

Percentage who say they have worn a mask



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Source: COVID Impact Survey.

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The latest COVID Impact Survey finds that Americans are more likely to report wearing a mask in response to the coronavirus outbreak than they were in late April.;

Public health officials say it's important to remain vigilant. A recent Associated Press analysis found that cases of COVID-19 are again rising in nearly half of U.S. states, a trend that could intensify as people return to work and venture out during the summer.

"The narrative is that if the government is reopening, it's better and they can relax more," said Fernando Garcia, founder and executive director of the Border Network for Human Rights in El Paso, Texas, a group that has distributed thousands of masks to people who could not afford them.

Dr. Rachel Rubin, senior medical officer at the department of public health in Cook County, Illinois, said infections, hospitalizations and deaths have fallen sharply in the Chicago area but another wave is inevitable. Its severity could be lessened by actions people take now.

"People ... are not used to just listening to authority saying, 'This is what you need to do.' But from a public health perspective it's critical that we try to abide by these guidelines as best we possibly can," especially physical distancing of six feet or more, said Rubin.

Even if they are taking precautions, though, many Americans balk at the idea of contact tracing, which health officials say must be paired with testing to quickly extinguish outbreaks of new infections.



In this June 11, 2020 photo, Jody Hayden poses at the Grocer's Daughter chocolate shop which she owns with her husband in Empire, Mich, She said her family wears masks and keep their distance from others, and will expect their customers to do the same when they open the doors to their shop, next Friday, June. 19. Even as states and metropolitan areas relax restrictions on social and economic life amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, a new poll finds that most Americans aren't ready to abandon behaviors that protect themselves and the people around them. (AP Photo/John Flesher)

Roughly 6 in 10 say they would not be likely to install an app on their phone that tracks their location and sends notifications if they have been exposed. Comparable shares say they are unlikely to install an app that would ask questions about their symptoms and provide recommendations, or to use a website that would do the same.

Bartholomew said she probably wouldn't participate, "mainly because there's so little privacy in anything anymore ... and the term 'tracking device' is something that just doesn't make me feel good."

Seventy-six-year-old Frank Fazekas of New Hartford, New York, had similar qualms, even though he and his wife know they're more susceptible and still wear masks and avoid crowds: "It seems that when there's some crisis or emergency, we give up a little more of our privacy and freedom. And once it's gone, it's difficult to get back," he said.

More information: COVID Impact Survey: www.covid-impact.org

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