Official Report on
The COVID-19 Pandemic

December 2020

Jan G. West, Ph.D. and Lisa Michelangeli, M.S.
National Business Research Institute, Inc.
2701 Dallas Parkway; Suite 650
Plano, TX 75093
(800) 756-6168
www.NBRII.com

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I. Abstract

We are in unprecedented times. Although numerous plagues have beset our planet in years past, none has impacted *every* individual in the United States as has COVID-19 due to the universal shutdown of American Society in response to the imminent threat of millions of deaths.

Never before has the U. S. Economy been 'paused' while workers were ordered to shelter-in-place ("SIP"), an act that compounded the effects of the virus with additional, negative health effects of being 'locked down,' and a massive, negative impact on most Americans' financial health. The present longitudinal study conducted by the National Business Research Institute quantifies the medical and economic effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on American society.

Notable Highlights

- ✓ The current study reached a Confidence Level of 95.1% with 5% Sampling Error for a population of over 45,000 of American Citizens.
- ✓ Participants represent both genders, all ages, nearly every State in the Union, and both the Democrat and Republican political parties.
- ✓ 95% never had COVID-19.
- ✓ 37% know someone who died of COVID-19.
- ✓ 5% know someone who died from sheltering-in-place.
- ✓ 74% were sheltering in place in April, 25% in June, and 8% in August and October.
- ✓ 78% of Companies were open for business in April, 89% in June, 93% in August, and 91% in October.
- ✓ 27% prefer to continue working remotely; 35% prefer to return to the office; and 38% prefer a combination of days in the office and days working remotely.

- ✓ 61% know someone who has gone out of business because of the Pandemic.
- ✓ 29% choose to 'keep their distance,' while 44% are 'OK with talking but not touching,' and 28% are 'OK with hugs & high fives.'
- ✓ 79% always wear a mask in public.
- ✓ 29% will continue to wear a mask after the Pandemic has passed.
- ✓ 61% will choose to take the COVID-19 vaccine, once available

Initial optimism that the Pandemic might be short-lived is being replaced with the realization that we will be in this for the long-term. The results paint a vastly different picture of life in the United States in October as compared to earlier in the year.

II. Methodology

The National Business Research Institute ("NBRI") is conducting a longitudinal study of the personal impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Online deployments were conducted in April, June, August and October 2020. The survey was expanded and additional items were included in October to provide a more comprehensive picture of the ever-evolving situation.

In April, 82,420 people were contacted via email invitation to the online survey, resulting in 575 participants. This represents a 0.7% response rate, and resulted in a 99% confidence level with 5% sampling error.

In June, 55,374 people were contacted, resulting in 670 participants. This represents a 1.2% response rate, and a 98.4% confidence level with 5% sampling error.

In August, 48,968 were contacted, resulting in 309 participants. This represents a 0.6% response rate, and a 92.2 confidence level with a 5% sampling error.

In October, 54,537 were contacted, resulting in 386 participants. This represents a 0.7% response rate, and a 95.1 confidence levels with a 5% sampling error.

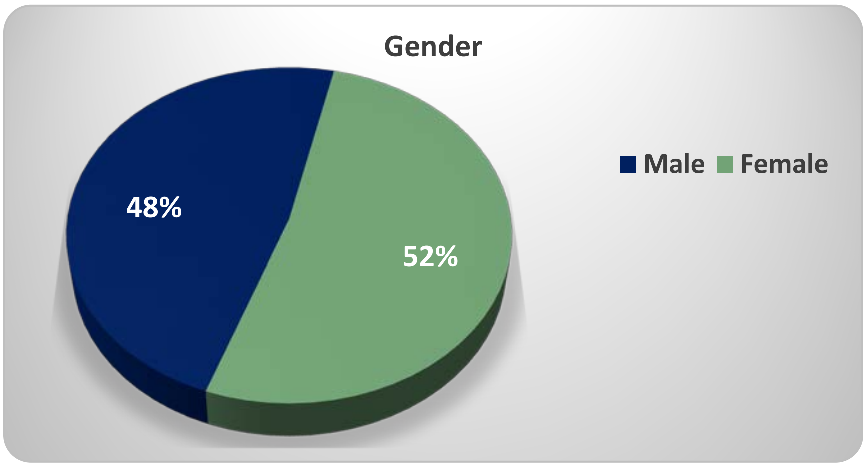
The results of this study are representative of the thinking of over 45,000 Citizens of the United States of America between April and October 2020.

III. Demographics

Participants represent both genders, ages 18 to over 65 years old, nearly every State in the Union, and the Democrat and Republican political parties.

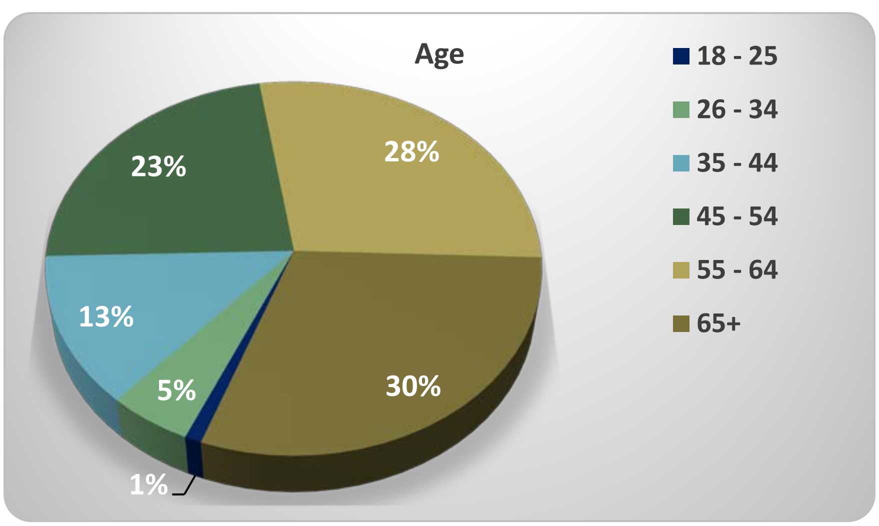
Gender.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of participants are Female and forty-eight percent (48%) are Male.



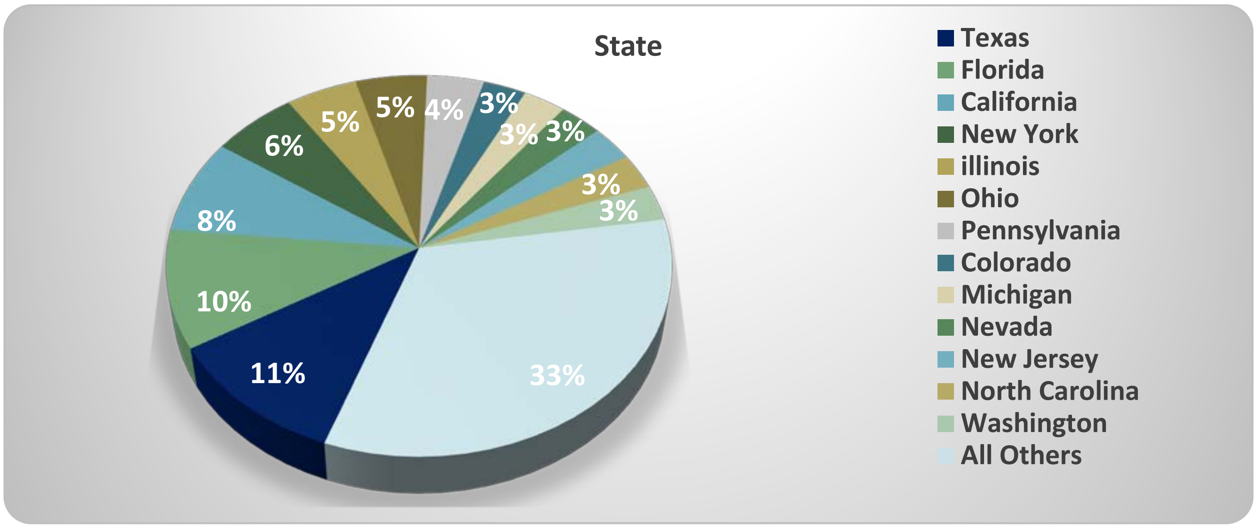
Age.

Thirty percent (30%) of participants are 65+, twenty-eight percent (28%) are 55 - 64, twenty-three percent (23%) are 45 - 54, thirteen percent (13%) 35 - 44, five percent (5%) 26 - 34 and one percent (1%) are in the 18 – 25 group.



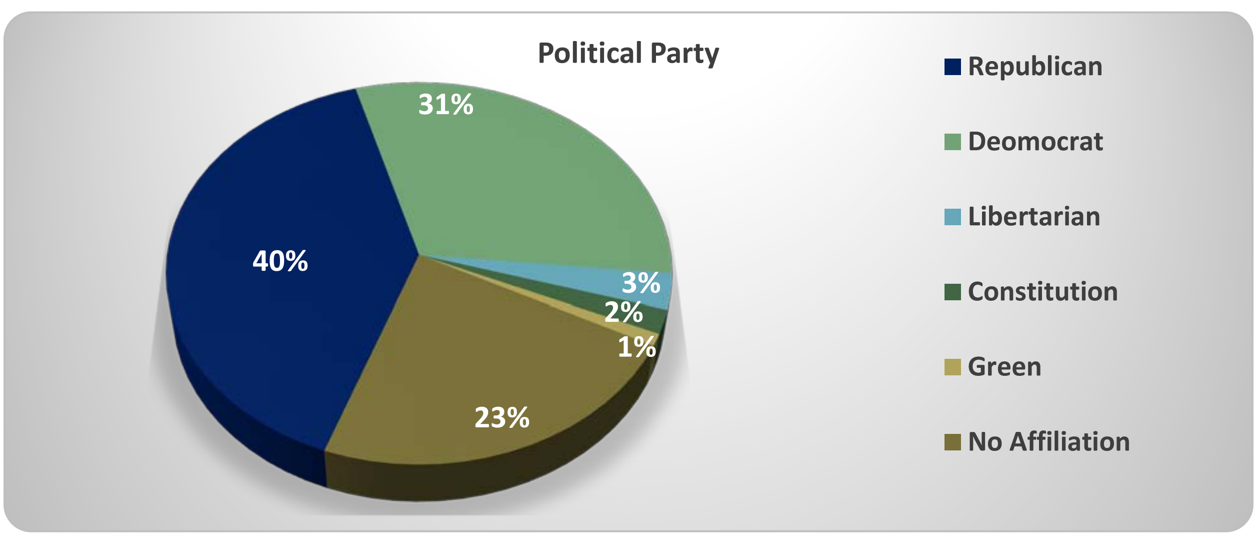
State.

Eleven percent (11%) of participants are in Texas, ten percent (10%) are in Florida, eight percent (8%) are in California, six percent (5%) in New York, five percent (5%) are each in Illinois and Ohio, four percent (4%) in Pennsylvania, and three percent are in each Colorado, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina and Washington. The remaining States each have two percent (2%) or less representation.



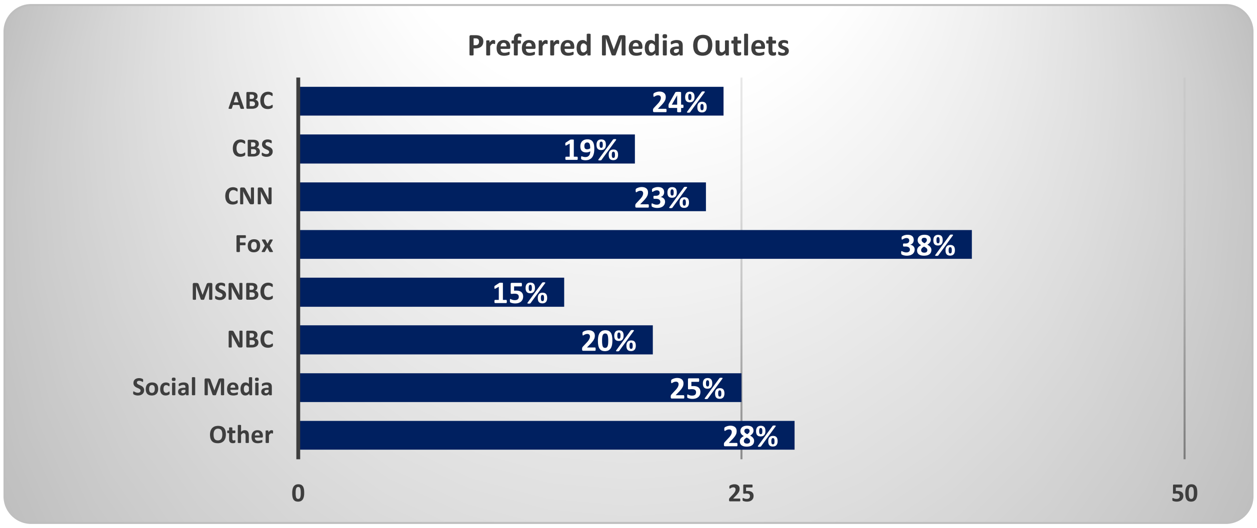
Political Party.

Forty percent (40%) of participants are Republicans, thirty-one percent (31%) are Democrats, three percent (3%) are Libertarian, two percent (2%) Constitution, and one percent (1%) are Green. Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents have no affiliation.



Preferred Media Outlets.

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of participants indicated that Fox is their preferred media outlet, twenty-five percent (25%) Social Media, twenty-four percent (24%) ABC, twenty-three percent (23%) CNN, twenty percent (20%) NBC, nineteen percent (19%) CBS, fifteen percent (15%) MSNBC and twenty-eight percent (28%) indicated other.



IV. Results

A. Physical Health Impact

Several questions were asked to ascertain the impact of the Pandemic on the physical health of participants and those around them. In the October deployment, two (2) additional items were added to the survey to gain greater insight into the health impact of this ongoing phenomenon. Sixty percent (60%) of participants indicated they have underlying pre-existing health issues and thirty-four (34%) know someone suffering mental health issues as a result of the Pandemic.

More than half of the participants (57%) were aware of an initial outbreak of COVID-19 in their immediate communities, and 37% were aware of a 'second surge.'

While only a small portion of participants (5%) tested positive for COVID-19, 37% knew of someone who died of COVID-19.

In addition, the number of participants with serious health issues from sheltering in place had increased from 11% in August to 17% in October.

In April, 74% of participants were under a government mandate to shelter-in-place. This decreased to 25% in June, and to 8% by August and October.

Once a vaccine becomes available, 61% of participants indicate that they will take it, and 39% indicate they will not. This represents a decline since August when 73% of participants indicated that they would take it.

B. Financial Health Impact

Several questions were asked to ascertain the impact of the Pandemic on the financial health of participants. In October, 83% of participants described themselves as having "the financial resources needed for the next 60 days."

In April, 78% of employers were open for business, in June, 89% were open, by August, 93% were open. In October, 91% of employers we open for business. Negative changes to individuals' employment status, including being fired, laid off, furloughed, or reduced pay or hours was at 36% in April. This did not change significantly over the summer and into fall, as 30% reported such changes in June, and 33% in both August and October.

In October, 51% described their company as being fully operational, with the majority of the remainder anticipating that this would happen in 2021. However, 61% of participants indicated that they knew someone that had gone out of business as a result of the Pandemic.

Recognizing that the Pandemic has affected employees' attitudes towards their employers, an additional item was added in October to better understand employees' levels of commitment towards their organization. Since March, 23% felt their commitment had increased, 10% declined, and 67% remained the same.

Similar patterns were identified in a corresponding additional item asking participants about the impact of the Pandemic on customer service at their company since March. The majority felt this had stayed the same (66%), 18% believed it had improved, and 15% felt it had declined.

The number of participants working remotely has reduced from 77% in August to 44% in October. When employers are fully open for business, the majority of participants (38%) would prefer to have a combination of days in the office and days working from home.

The vast majority of participants (83%) now believe that they will continue in their current jobs once the economy is fully recovered.

C. Masks & Social Distancing

As of October 2020, people continue to be somewhat cautious around others, with 79% of participants indicating that they <u>always</u> wear a mask in public.

It seems that even after that Pandemic life will not return to 'normal' with the results showing that 39% will continue to wear a mask and 26% will no longer shake hands with others. Fortunately, only a small proportion (15%) indicate that mask wearing is contributing to feelings of social isolation.

Many (65%) believe hand sanitizing, masks, and social distancing in crowded places will become the new normal and the majority (60%) believe that these practices should not be voluntary.

More broadly, fewer participants are now 'keeping their distance' (29%) and more are 'OK with talking but not touching,' (44%) and 'OK with hugs and high fives' (28%). The proportion of respondents that feel safe going to bars and restaurants has increased from 30% in August to 46% in October. Perceptions as to the safety of air travel are split with 51% describing it as safe.

D. Politics & the Media

As of October 2020, additional items were added to assess political attitudes during the Pandemic.

Attitudes towards the President are mixed with just under half of participants (47%) describing the Trump Administration's overall response to the Pandemic as good. More specifically, the results show that:

- The majority (64%) believe that President Trump saved lives by restricting international travel earlier in the year.
- The majority (59%) believe President Trump is ensuring that trusted American Pharmaceutical Companies will have a vaccine for the Pandemic quickly by removing bureaucratic red tape.
- Half of participants (52%) believe that Trump quickly replenished our national emergency medical supply.
- Just under half (47%) believe that he was effective in stopping the spread of the pandemic by providing the required medical supplies and resources.

Attitudes towards the media and their role in reporting during this period are also mixed at this time. The majority of participants (57%) believe that their political beliefs have been attacked, rather than tolerated by others. Most (65%) believe that the media has done a poor job of reporting on President Trump's political achievements, and skepticism of the media is widespread.

- The majority of participants believe that the media is dishonest for political purposes and just over half (53%) believe the media is dishonest with regard to the virus.
- Just over half (52%) believe that Facebook and Google censor free speech for political purposes.
- However, the majority (76%) did not believe that their own free speech had been censored by a social media platform.
- Just under half (47%) believe that monopolies like Facebook, Google and Amazon should be broken apart.

V. Discussion

Some of the most basic needs of life - physiological, safety, and belonging - came under attack by a virus that originated in Wuhan, China. Called 'COVID-19,' the name refers to Corona + Virus, and the year 2019. There are many types of human coronaviruses including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. But government officials declared a public emergency and convinced President Trump that shutting down the economy – never done before – would save 2.2 million lives.

At present, less than 300,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the United States. This may be compared to the seasonal flu which kills 65,000 per year despite our having a well-established vaccine, and to the 1918 Influenza Pandemic, which was the most severe Pandemic in recent history. The 1918 Pandemic caused 675,000 deaths in the United States, and 50 million deaths worldwide. Preventing 2+ million deaths and preventing our healthcare systems from being overrun required quick action from a President who stopped the influx of travelers from the Wuhan, China lab. And he was mocked for it.

Whether the virus was intentionally launched as a bio-weapon or accidentally released upon the world is a matter for the Governments of the World to ascertain. We have seen predictions that this would happen as early as 2016 from the CDC, Dr. Fauci, the WHO, and several other sources we relied upon to protect us. They did not.

For the first time in many of our lives, we saw bare grocery store shelves. We saw all traffic and travel stop. We were told to distance isolate ourselves from one another, even close family members, to 'stop the spread.' We were told to 'shelter-in-place' (SIP); close our businesses; keep our children home from school. Mentions of the virus have been censored by social media, as were all political comments leading up to the election.

As of October 2020, only 5% of the respondents to this study have contracted the illness personally. Thirty-seven percent (37%) know of someone who has died as a result of COVID-19. Twenty-eight percent (28%) are OK with hugs and high fives; 44% are OK with talking but not touching; and 29% keep their distance. Seventy-nine percent (79%) always wear masks in public. Most (65%) anticipate that these practices (including hand sanitization) will continue beyond the Pandemic, although 74% will shake hands with people once the pandemic is under control.

Fifty-one percent (51%) described their company as already fully operational, with the remainder anticipating this will take place later in 2021. Most of us (61%) know of someone who has gone out of business as a result of the Pandemic.

As many organizations transition back to ‘normal’ as anticipated, the proportion of home workers has declined from 77% in August to 44% in October. For many, traditional ways of working will never fully return to what they were prior to the Pandemic. Some (38%) prefer a combination schedule, including the ability to work both from the office and from home.

The financial situation of participants has improved steadily since the initial deployment in April. By October, 83% of participants believe they have the financial resources necessary to make it through the next 60 days, an improvement of nearly 20% since April. This improvement may undoubtedly be attributed to the introduction of Government Assistance programs which were not available until after the first deployment of this study.

Expectations as to what their employment status might look like when the economy is recovered are increasingly positive. In October, the vast majority (83%) plan to continue in their current jobs.

We have learned more about the harm of home schooling on children and society is fighting against it becoming the norm. Still, Companies may need to reimagine their facilities and offer onsite childcare and even group schooling to attract top talent. The challenge for employers will be ensuring that these impacts are minimized through policies and processes, and equally important, strong leadership.

As we strive to return to some degree of normalcy, it is essential to remember the lessons learned. Whether working 100% remotely, or working a combination schedule from home and the office, it is important to monitor and manage the psychological impact on employees of these new ways of living, interacting, and working.

The community we experience at work, which affords opportunities to look out for one another, may not exist for everyone in this new paradigm. Especially at risk are the 118 million single adults in the U.S., many of whom live alone. Taking care of employees’ mental health and broader financial and physical well-being will be critical to survival.

For decades, we have understood the critical link to business success: that engaged employees provide better customer service, and that great customer service and high levels of customer satisfaction are essential for business success.

So we must measure and monitor the thinking and behavior of our employees and customers to ensure high levels of satisfaction and loyalty, or to identify lapses and provide remedial interventions to ensure high levels are re-attained before customers or employees are lost forever.

What is clearly evident is that the ability of business to survive the Pandemic comes down to leadership and their response to the situation. Understanding employee engagement at this time is critical, as the amount of change is unprecedented and organizations need to understand how their employees are responding to it.

About NBRI

NBRI has given a voice to billions of employees and customers over its nearly 40-year history. NBRI conducts Employee, Customer, Market, and Political Research, and leverages the psychological data of the audience to make targeted improvements to organizational operations and strategies. With its extensive experience across all industries and markets, NBRI's research teams bring professional psychological research, deep industry knowledge, and expert advice to every Client. NBRI's mission is to help Clients set new standards of excellence in the engagement and loyalty of their employee, customer, and market audiences.

NBRI product offerings include the world's largest and highest quality benchmarking database with over 10.5 billion opinions, and deep, inferential analyses including regressions, random forest, and extensive artificial intelligence with machine learning. The best in class services provided by NBRI ensure Clients target the most impactful issues with best practice interventions.

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It is no small feat to move an entire Company's score a statistically significant amount, or to reach Stretch (75th) or Best in Class (90th) Performance levels within six to twelve months, but this is precisely what NBRI enables its Clients to do. 'Continuous improvement' is the mantra for NBRI and for the Clients we proudly serve.