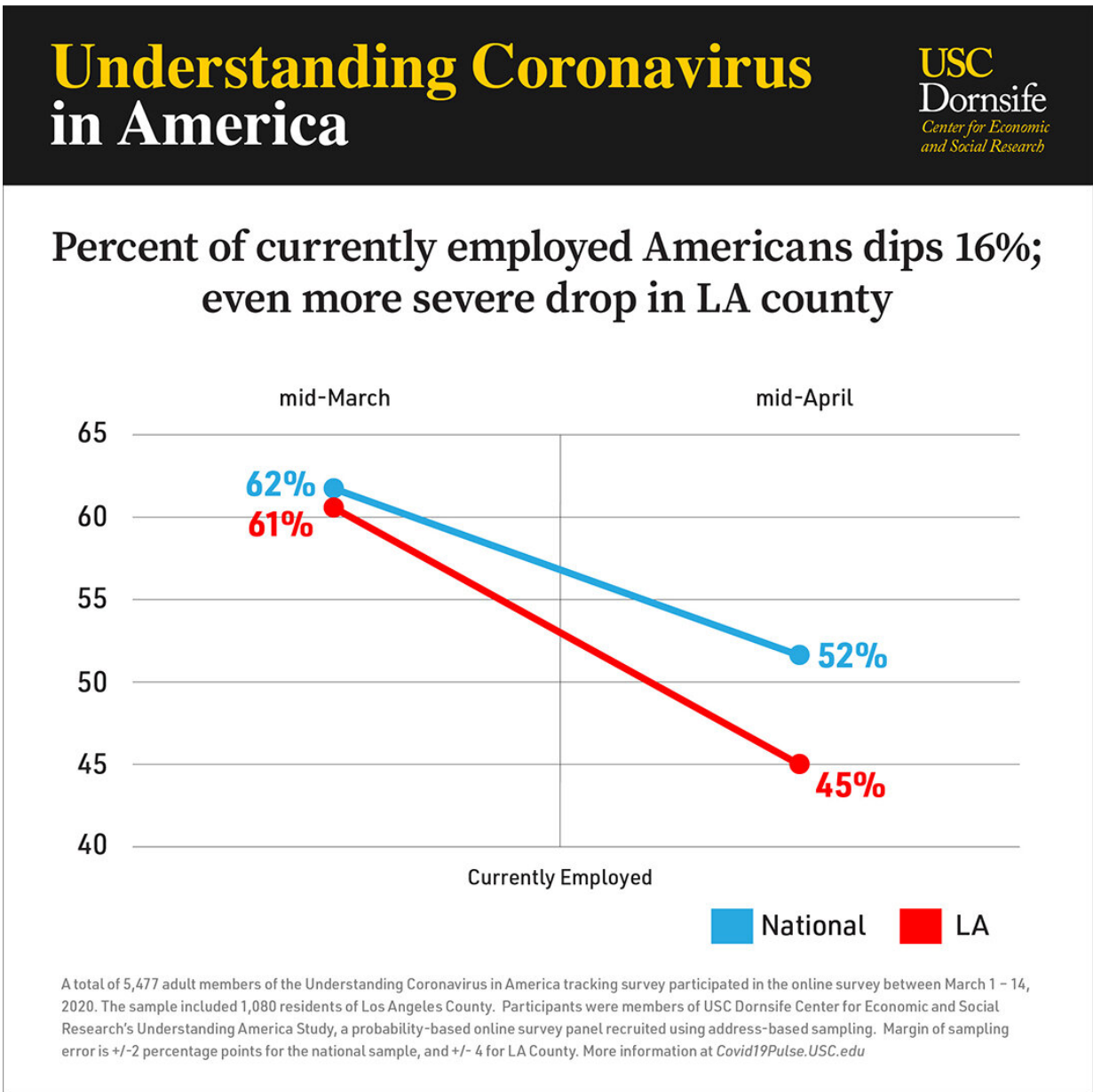


Survey reveals extent of coronavirus-related job loss, outsized impact on blacks and Latinos

April 20 2020



Credit: University of Southern California

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 that an estimated 25.5 million jobs have been lost in the United States since mid-March. It also shows that Americans are experiencing greater economic insecurity, limited access to unemployment benefits and increased psychological distress.

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 (CESR) and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USC, surveys nearly 5,500 adult residents of the U.S. about their perceptions and attitudes regarding coronavirus and how it's impacting their lives. Data from the study is updated daily and available to researchers and the public at COVID19pulse.usc.edu.

The latest survey, conducted April 1–14, compares findings from a similar survey conducted March 10–31.

"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.

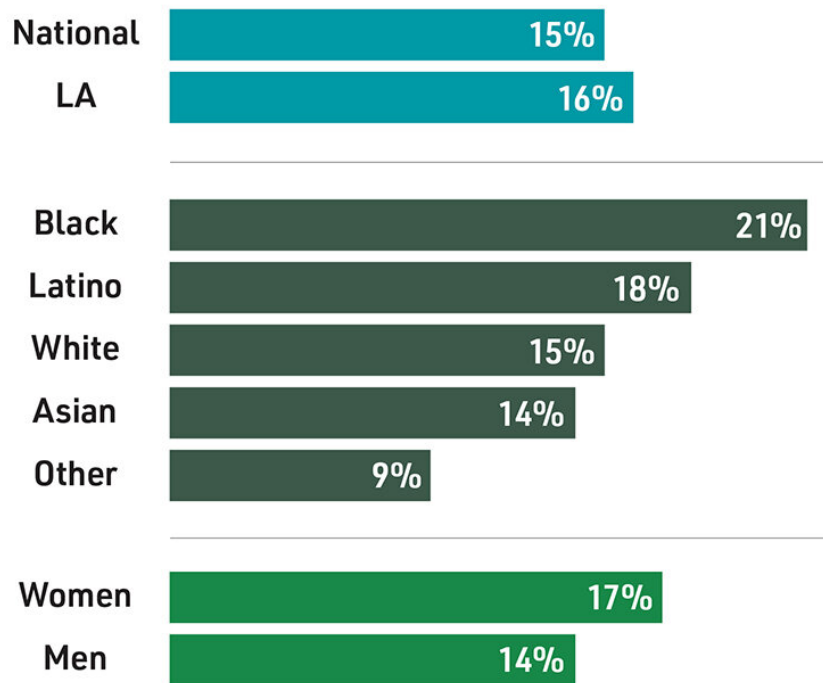
Job losses mount

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

Understanding Coronavirus in America

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and Social Research*

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://www.usc.edu/research/centers/dornsife-center-for-economic-and-social-research/understanding-america-study)

Credit: University of Southern California

Job losses among Angelenos are significantly higher than the national average. Less than half of area residents still held a job, compared with

about 60% in mid-March—a decline of about 1.3 million jobs. Nationally, the number fell 10 percentage points to 52%.

People of color, especially African Americans, are more likely to have lost their jobs. Nationally, 21% of African Americans and 18% of Latinos said they had lost their jobs, compared to 15% of whites.

Of people with no more than a high school education, just two in five still had a job, compared with about half in the earlier time period.

Job losses nationally were more pronounced among women, with 17% reporting a job loss since March compared to just 14% of men.

However, about two-thirds of job losses 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 one-quarter living in Los Angeles have received the benefit.

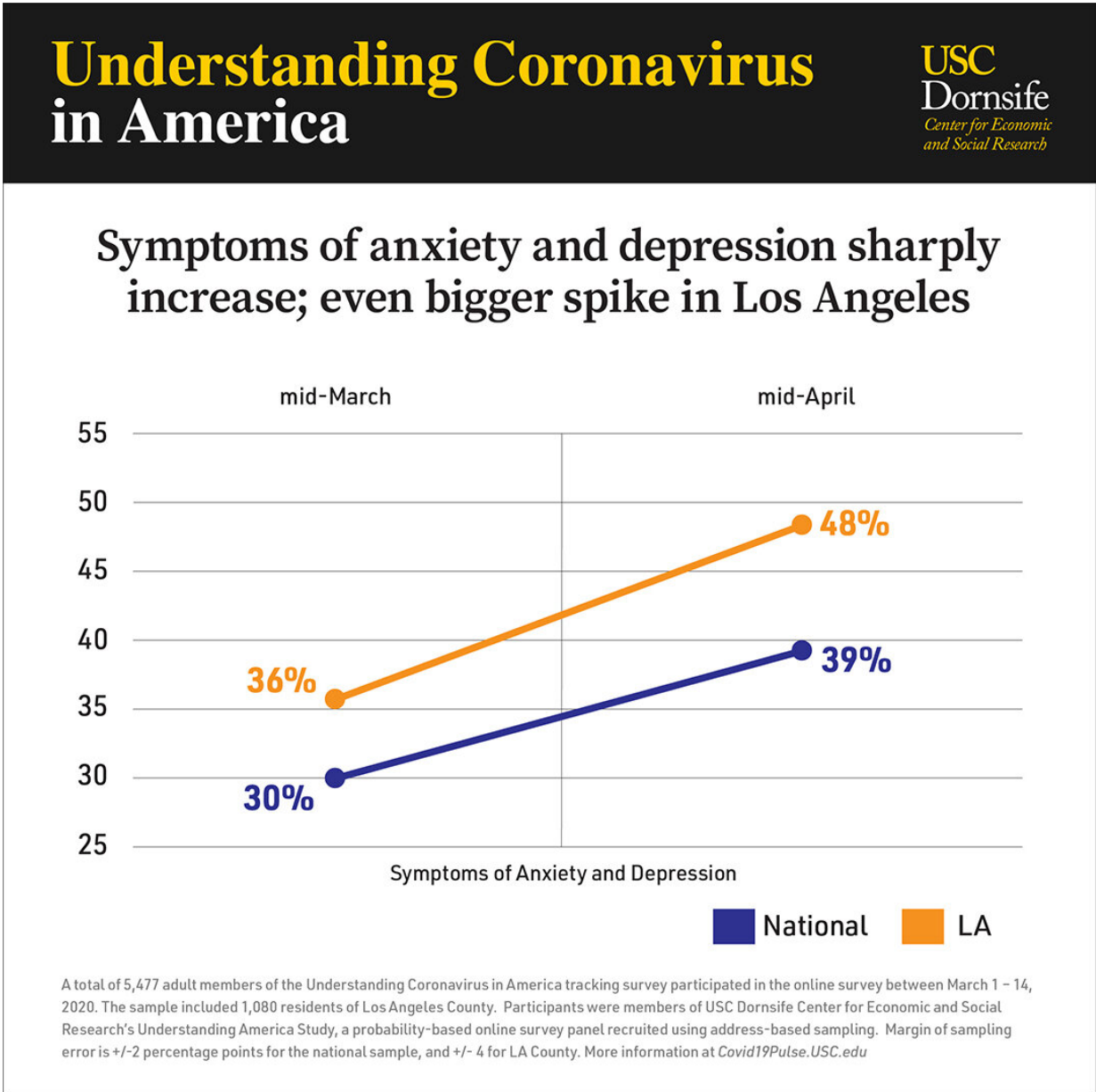
"Under normal circumstances, losing a job without access to benefits would be bad enough, but in the current situation, the chances of finding a new job are likely to be close to nonexistent. These changes are nothing less than catastrophic for those affected," said Arie Kapteyn, director of CESR.

Lack of access to [unemployment benefits](#) is particularly pronounced among African Americans, Asian Americans and people with a lower level of education. Across these groups, 40% to 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.

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%.



Credit: University of Southern California

In L.A. County, those same measures jump to 33% and 22%, respectively.

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

Anxiety is spreading

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 CESR and a member of the survey team.

Nationally, the number of people reporting mild to severe symptoms of depression or anxiety rose 9 percentage points to just under 40% 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 nearly half.

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.

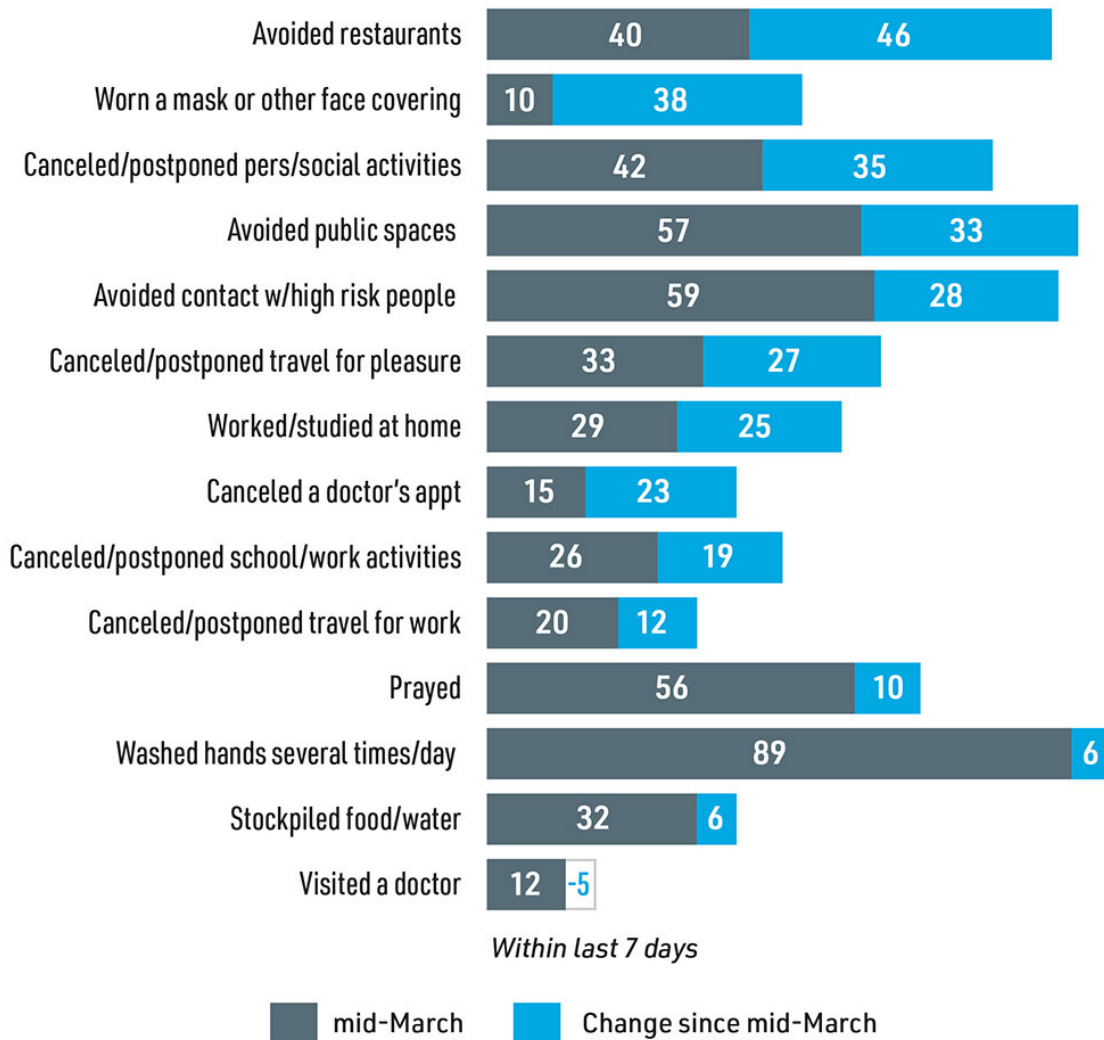
Mental health issues increased considerably among women, from 34% in March to 45% in the latest survey. Men experienced a smaller increase, from 25% to 33%.

When it comes to 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.

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Since mid-March, Americans have dramatically increased protective behaviors to stay safe from coronavirus



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Credit: University of Southern California

Nationally, people estimate a 1 in 4 chance of dying from the virus if they are infected, up 10 percentage points from the earlier period.

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, but they believe they are more likely to die from it if they do get infected.

Protective measures on the rise

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, more than 85% 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 nearly half are doing so. In L.A. County, the figure jumped from 18% to 77%.

The number of Americans avoiding public spaces increased dramatically, up 57 percentage points since March to 90%. In L.A. County, 94% are doing so, compared with just under 70% previously.

More information: The probability-based internet panel survey was conducted by the Understanding America Study at the 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>.

Provided by University of Southern California

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