

The Coronavirus Pandemic: Attitudes Among the 50+ Population

Jefferson County, Kentucky



ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in the Winter of 2020, older residents of Jefferson County Kentucky, like all Americans, have adapted their lifestyles, relationships with others, beliefs, and expectations for the future. The coronavirus pandemic is one of those few events that affects every person and many aspects of life. This survey was conducted to assess how they are coping with the pandemic, how it has changed their everyday behaviors, and what new demands it has made on their lives. Specific topics included concerns about the coronavirus, behavior changes because of the virus, personal experience with the virus and its impact on employment, volunteering, caregiving, and charitable contributions.

AARP Kentucky is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. Based in Louisville with nearly 450,000 members throughout Kentucky, AARP Kentucky is active in strengthening communities and advocating for the concerns that matter most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

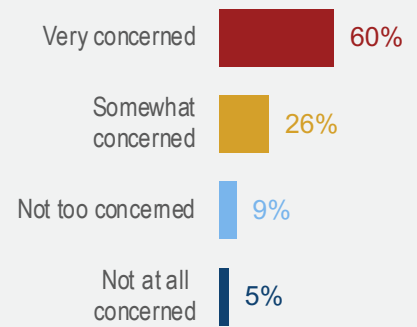
This AARP survey of older residents of Jefferson County was conducted in collaboration with the Health Enterprises Network's (HEN) Healthcare Fellows, the region's only healthcare focused professional development program. The Fellows program spotlights innovation and thought leadership in Louisville's vast health care ecosystem through monthly sessions with community leaders while fulfilling HEN's mission of growing the region's health-related economy and promoting Louisville as the location of choice for health-related businesses, researchers, educators and investors.



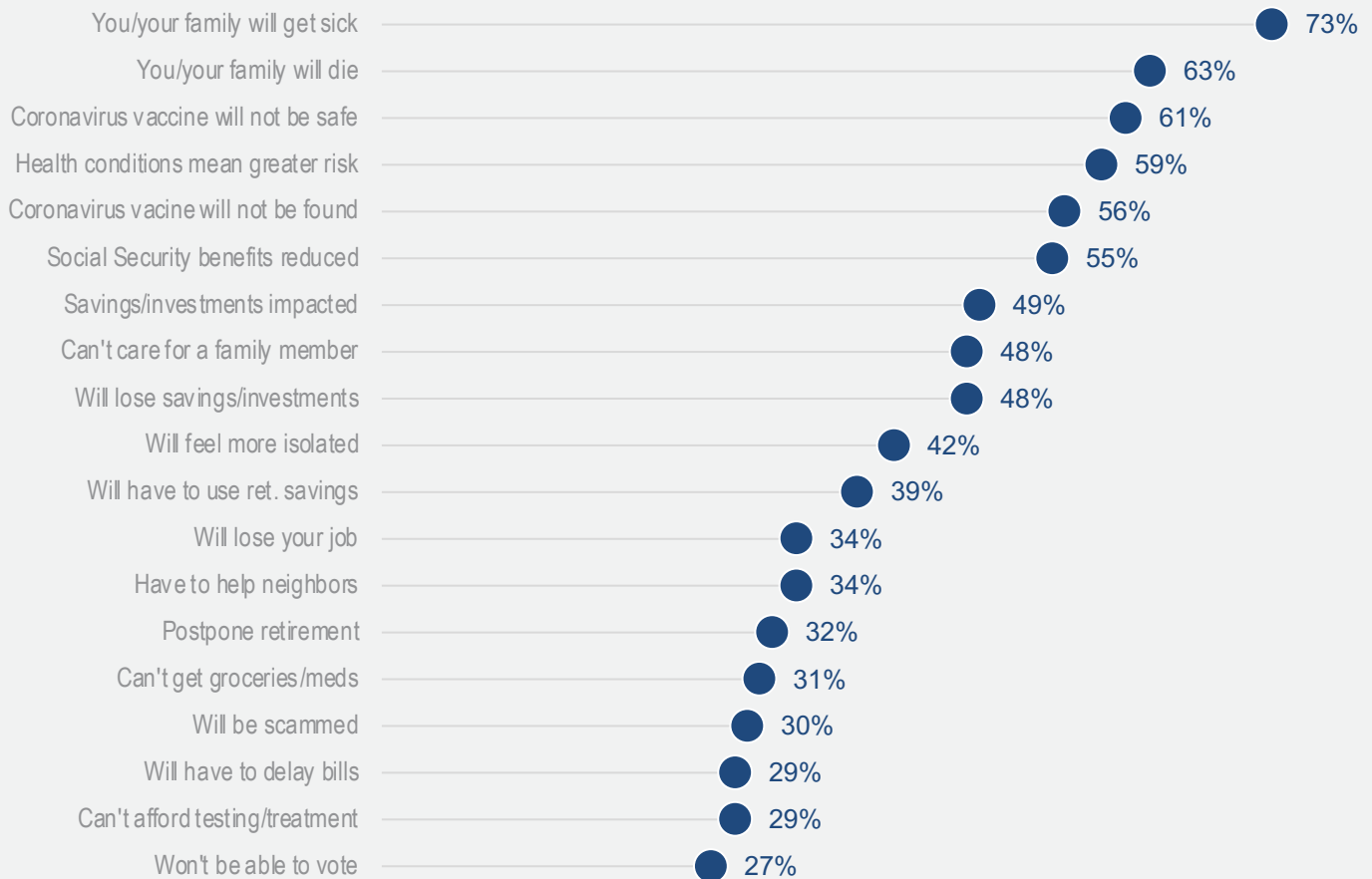
KEY FINDINGS

A large majority of older residents of Jefferson County are concerned about the coronavirus. Eighty-six percent are very or somewhat concerned about the coronavirus, and almost six in ten consider themselves at risk of contracting the virus (57%). Concern with the coronavirus is consistent across all age groups in the survey. Topping the list of their concerns is fear that they or someone in their family will contract the virus (73%), or that they or someone in their family will die from COVID-19 (63%). Over half are concerned that a vaccine will not be found in the next year (56%), or that the vaccine will not be safe (61%). Almost six in ten are concerned that pre-existing conditions will put them at greater risk for getting the virus (59%).

Level of concern about the Coronavirus



Worries because of the pandemic



Very few respondents report symptoms associated with COVID-19. Only about one-third of respondents have been tested for the coronavirus (32%), with those aged 50 to 64 slightly more likely than those 65 and over to say they have been tested. When asked about common symptoms of COVID-19 only ten percent or less report difficulty breathing, chest pain or pressure, confusion, or bluish lips or face. But about one-quarter report feeling isolated (26%) or depressed (24%). Younger respondents (aged 50 to 64) are more likely to report feelings of loneliness or depression.

Older residents of Jefferson County are taking precautions to avoid contracting the virus. Significant majorities are sheltering at home (73%), washing their hands often (92%), or wearing a face mask (96%). About half have cancelled travel plans, or plans to attend large gatherings (53% and 54%, respectively), or are working from home (53%). Less than one-quarter are having trouble dealing with the pandemic (23%) or getting essential food and medicines (11%). See the annotation for the full list of behavior changes due to the pandemic.

The coronavirus pandemic has not caused a significant number of employed older Jefferson County residents to change their retirement plans. Only thirteen percent say the pandemic has caused them to consider retiring early, while 20% say they will retire later than planned.

Significant numbers of older employed Jefferson County residents have had to change their work arrangements due to the pandemic. Over half (52%) have changed how they work in order to avoid exposure to the virus and 37% have changed their work because their job has changed. Fewer have changed work arrangements because their children are attending school virtually (10%), or because they have to provide care for someone (14%).



Almost 4 in 10 older Jefferson County residents are providing unpaid care for a friend or family member, and 11% are caring for someone due to the coronavirus. Of the thirty-six percent who say they are providing unpaid care, almost half (43%) are caring for an aging parent or parent-in-law. About one-quarter (23%) are caring for a spouse or partner while 18% are caring for another relative, and 16% are caring for a friend or neighbor. As expected, likelihood of caring for another declines with age with 43% of those aged 50 to 64, 36% of those 65 to 74 and 22% of those 75 or over providing care.

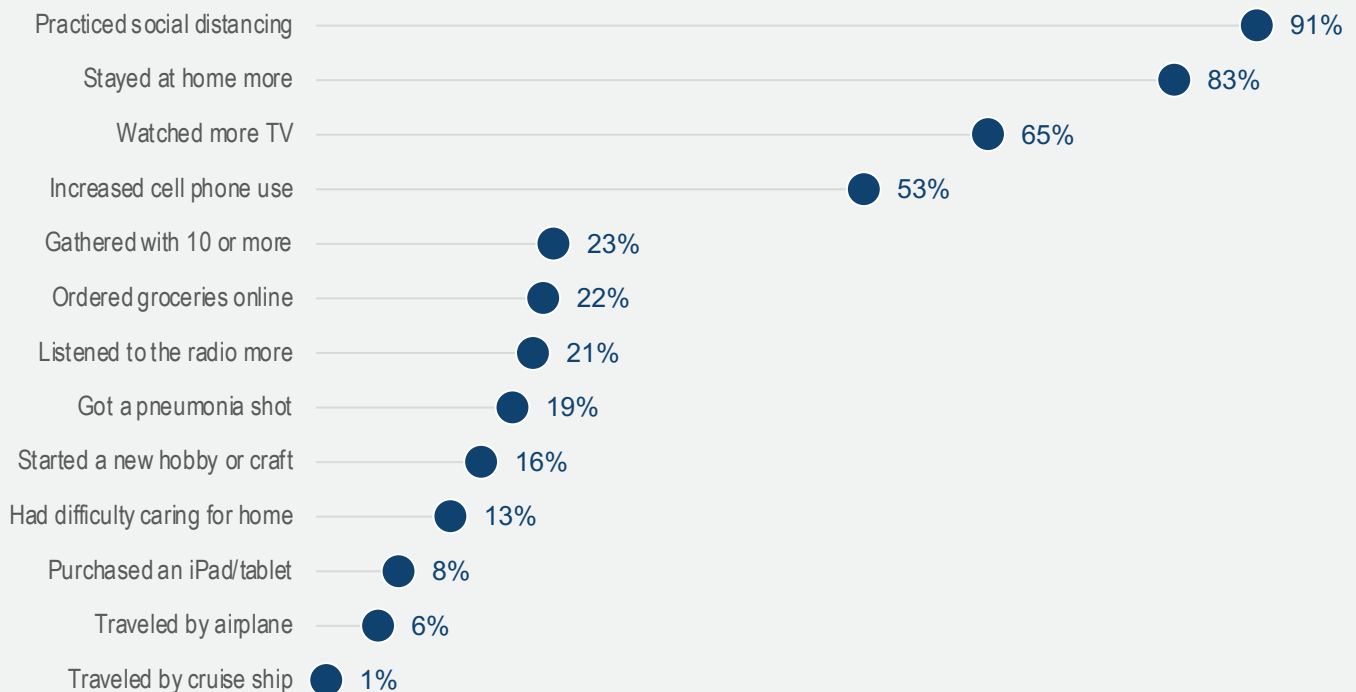
Older Jefferson County residents are very involved in helping others during the pandemic. Almost 7 in 10 have contacted friends in order to keep in touch, while 42% have secured food or medicine for someone, and 35% have helped someone financially. Thirty-seven percent say they have increased their communications with friends and family since the coronavirus outbreak began.

Despite reports early in the pandemic suggesting shortages of some items, at this point in time, respondents do not report significant trouble in locating food, protective equipment, or other household items. The only items more than one-third report having some trouble locating are household staples such as toilet paper, tissues, or paper towels.



But the pandemic has clearly restricted many activities and increased others. Large majorities report practicing social distancing (91%) or staying at home more than usual (83%). Sixty-five percent report watching more television, and 53% have increased their use of cell phones. Only about one-fifth have attended gatherings of more than ten people (23%), ordered groceries on-line (22%), or listened to the radio more often. (21%).

Changed behaviors since the start of the pandemic



IMPLICATIONS

The coronavirus pandemic is an event that has disrupted every aspect of American life. From changes in work life to how Americans shop, interact with others, or plan simple events, nothing has been spared the impact of the virus.

Among older residents of Jefferson County, concern with the virus is high, and most are taking appropriate precautions. Respondents are practicing new behaviors as well as modifying old behaviors.

The pandemic has created a less social, less mobile, life for almost all older residents. Less social life and less mobility may mean a greater focus on family and close associates, and perhaps a greater regard for communities and how individuals can help each other.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted by ANR Market Research. Landline and cell phone sampling were used for this research, with the sample drawn randomly from a list of residents age 50+ in Jefferson County, Kentucky, purchased from Aristotle. A total of 22,424 records were utilized. The list of 272,124 total residents was randomly divided into 2,830 replicates of 1,000 records for telephone dialing. Initially, 20 replicates were released for calling, with additional replicates being opened as necessary. In all, 23 replicates representing a total of 22,424 resident records were dialed to complete this study.

The survey was launched on August 24, 2020 and closed on September 4, 2020. The total sample of 1,008 respondents yields a maximum statistical error of $\pm 3.1\%$ at the 95% level of confidence. (This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would be within ± 3.1 percentage points of the results obtained had everyone in the population been interviewed.)

All data have been weighted by age and gender according to 2018 U.S. Census Bureau 5-year ACS statistics for Jefferson County. Note that race/ethnicity was also assessed; the distribution of respondents is within the margin of error of 2018 5-year ACS statistics, and race/ethnicity was thus excluded from weighting parameters.



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