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Second COVID-19 Panel Survey in the Municipality of Anchorage: Highlights

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Key Findings

A panel survey of 309 Municipality of Anchorage residents was conducted via phone June 2-4, 2020. This survey was a follow-up to both a representative survey conducted May 6-10 and a panel survey conducted May 20-22. Although most Anchorage businesses have opened, the second panel survey showed that:

- **Most** respondents (64%) **did NOT have physical contact** with people not in their household.
- **Most** (70%) **wore a mask** most or all of the time outside their home.
- **Most** reported being **not worried or only slightly worried** in many aspects of their life, having **good or very good morale** in their household (70%), and having **low or moderate stress** in their household (62%).
- **Perceived threat** of COVID-19 **significantly increased** from the second to third survey.

COVID-related risk behaviors remained high for certain groups including **men, younger people (<45 years), those who identified as Republican, and those with children**. These groups had **lower** perceived threat of COVID-19, **lower** knowledge of the COVID mandates and MOA Emergency Orders, and **lower** level of clarity regarding Municipality policies related to COVID compared to their counterparts. However, caution should be taken when interpreting findings related to political affiliation given that it is a complex concept that may be an indicator for other factors, including individuals' ideology, which was not asked about in the survey. These findings mirror national research showing that ideological and political differences may play a role in perceptions and behaviors related to COVID-19⁹. In order to help increase perceived threat of the virus and decrease COVID-related risk behaviors, messaging from those in the same ideological and political group could help with receptiveness of the message.

KEY RECOMMENDATION: Messaging as a whole should continue to focus on the continued threat of COVID-19, personal responsibility to reduce risk, and Alaskans' ability to succeed in defeating the virus.

Background and Context

The respondents on this third survey were demographically representative of the first two surveys, and representative of the Anchorage population based on gender, geographic distribution, and race/ethnicity. On each of these surveys, more than half of respondents had college degrees, close to 70% were employed, and over half had incomes >\$80,000 (median household income in Anchorage was \$83,000 on the U.S. Census, verified to 2019). This is a brief summary of highlights from these surveys. One additional panel survey is being conducted the week of June 15th. Each panel survey will be followed by a brief summary of highlights, and a detailed report will be created after all surveys have been completed.

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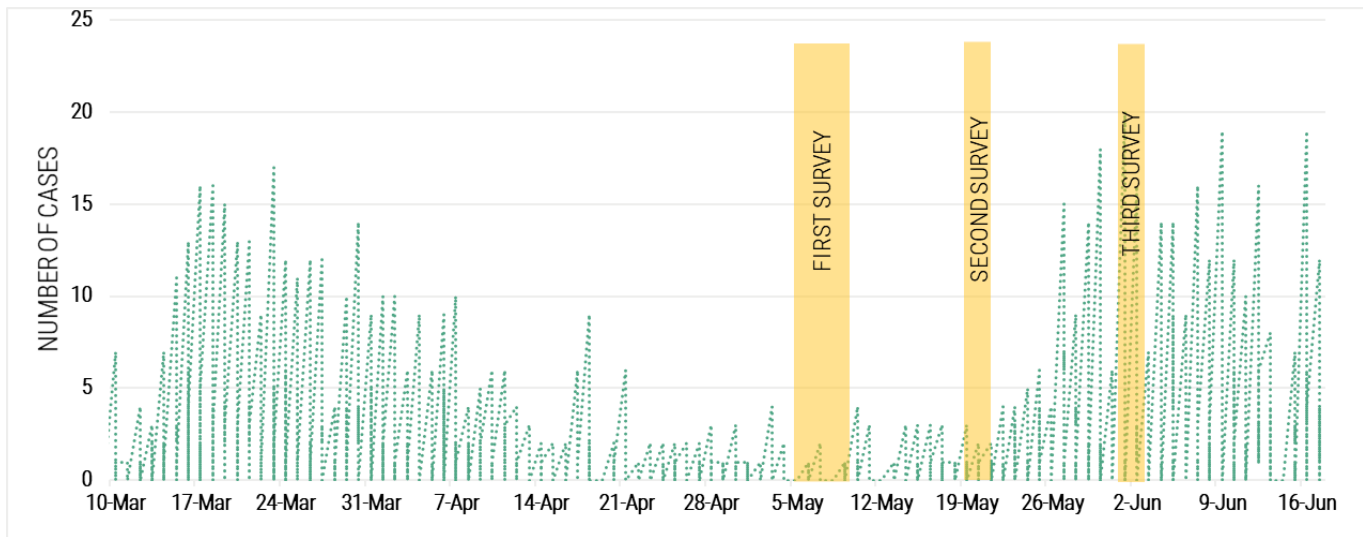
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⁹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/311408/republicans-skeptical-covid-lethality.aspx>

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3569098



The first survey was conducted by phone May 6-10, 2020, the second survey was conducted May 20-22, and the third survey was conducted June 2-4, 2020.

Google analytics mobility data¹⁰ indicates that residents of Anchorage have become more mobile over the past month, although are still below pre-COVID-19 mobility levels for workplaces and transit stations:

Anchorage

Retail & recreation

-2% compared to baseline



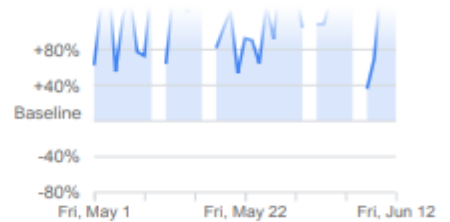
Grocery & pharmacy

+10% compared to baseline



Parks*

+176% compared to baseline



Transit stations

-14% compared to baseline



Workplaces

-34% compared to baseline



Residential


+7% compared to baseline



¹⁰ https://www.gstatic.com/covid19/mobility/2020-06-12_US_Alaska_Mobility_Report_en.pdf

Results

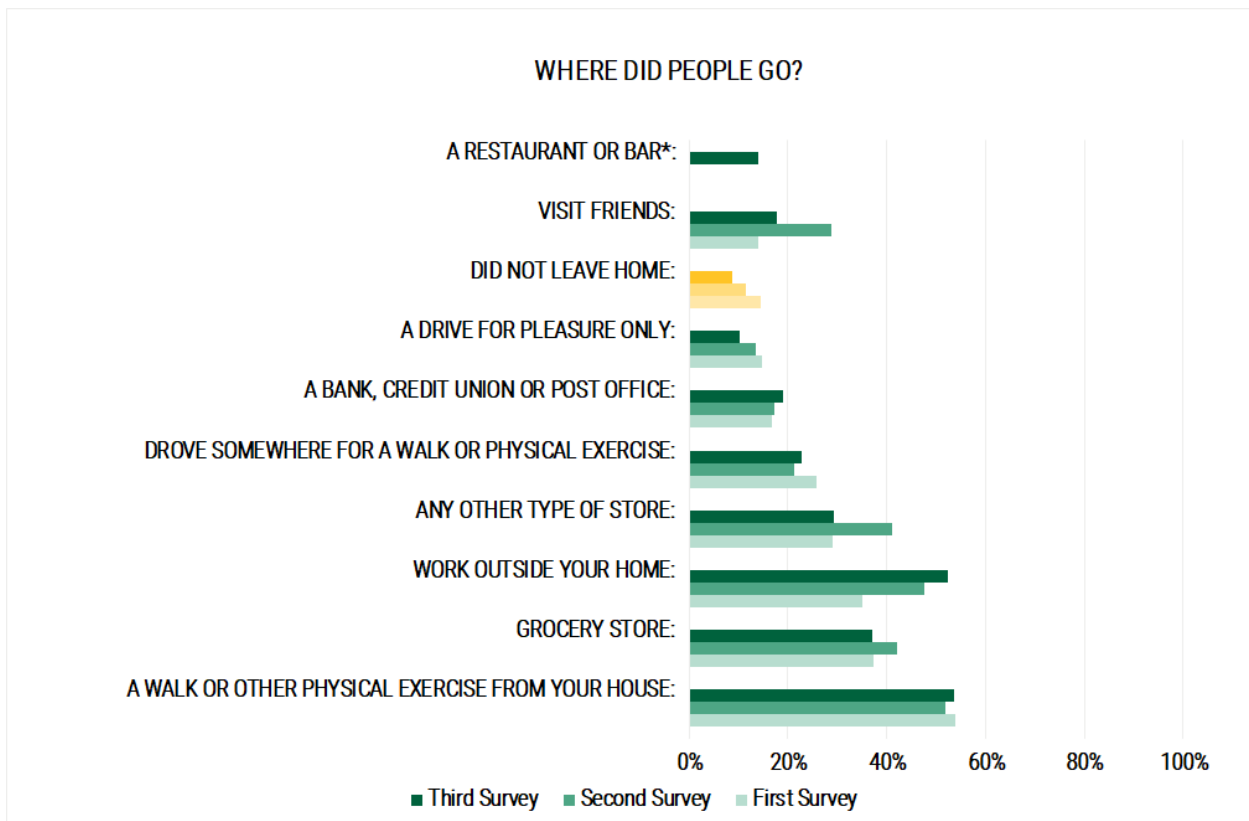
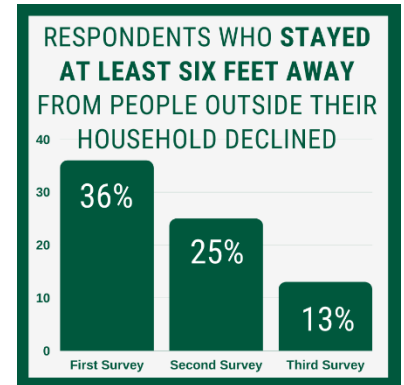
PHYSICAL DISTANCING

64% 

Did not have physical contact with anyone outside their household

- Most respondents (64%) didn't have physical contact with people not in their household. This is similar to 65% who didn't have physical contact with those outside their homes May 20-22, but is a decline from 83% of those surveyed May 6-10.

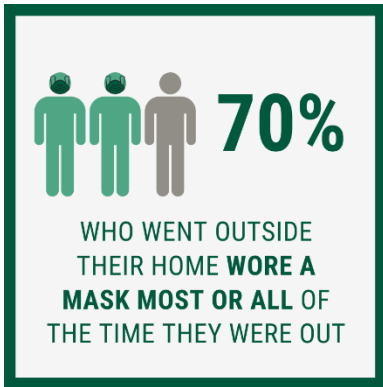
- The percentage of respondents who reported staying at least six feet away from people outside their household significantly declined from 36% on the first survey to 25% on the second survey to 13% on the third survey.



*Question asked only on the third survey

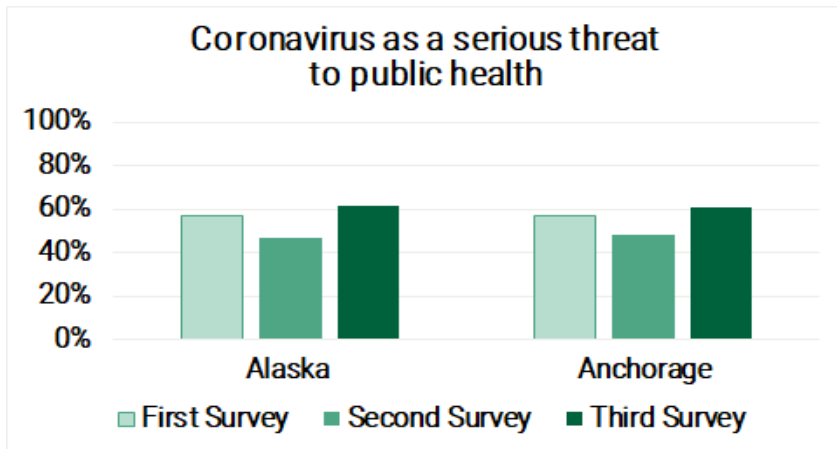
- Most respondents didn't visit friends the day before the survey (82%), similar to the first (86%) and second (75%) surveys.
- Most did not receive visitors (76%), although this declined from 81% on the first survey and 77% on the second survey.

HYGIENE



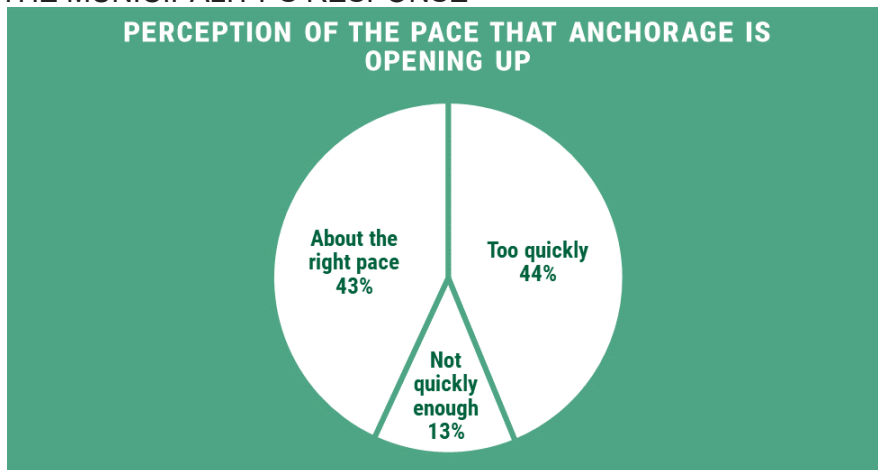
- 70% reported wearing a mask all or most of the time when they went outside their home, a slight increase from the first (68%) and second (65%) surveys.

PERCEIVED THREAT OF COVID-19



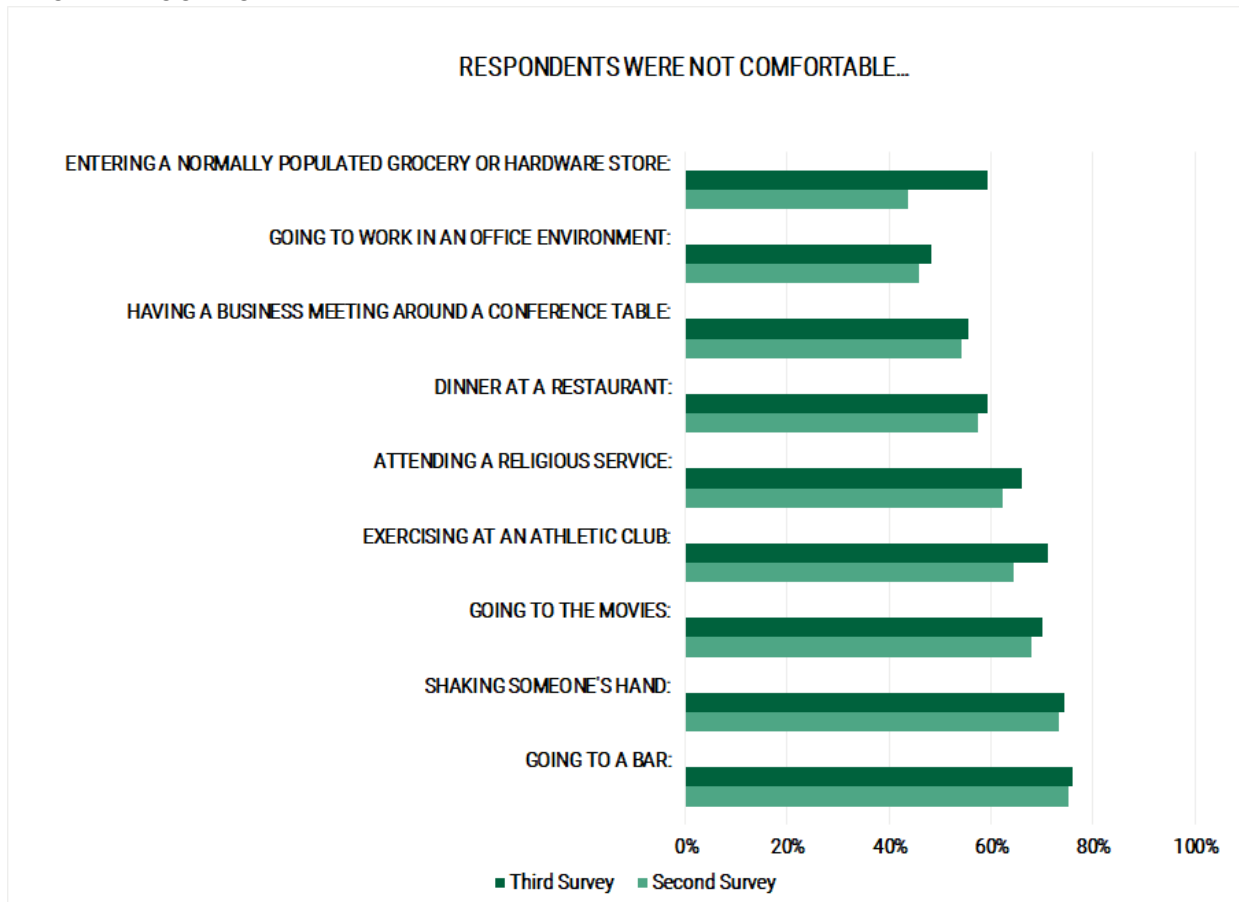
- 62% felt that COVID-19 was a serious threat to public health in Alaska on the first survey, which was 57% on the first survey and 47% on the second survey.
- 61% felt that COVID-19 was a serious threat to public health in Anchorage on the first survey, which was 49% on the first survey and 57% on the second survey.

PERCEPTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY'S RESPONSE



- 44% felt that Anchorage was opening up **too quickly**, which was a significant increase from the last survey (34%).
- Most (73%) reported they were **not** very knowledgeable about State mandates (73%) and MOA emergency orders (77%).
- About 44% felt that Anchorage is opening up at the right pace, while 31% felt that Anchorage was opening up too quickly and 16% felt it wasn't opening up quickly enough.
- The majority of respondents (76%) ranked the MOA's response to COVID-19 as good to very good (a score 5 or above on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good). This was a slight decrease from the first (88%) and second (82%) survey.

ACTIVITY COMFORT LEVEL



These questions were not asked on this first survey. An increasing majority of the panel respondents were not comfortable returning to at least some activities that had been previously limited, such as:

- 76% not comfortable going to a bar (compared with 74% on the second survey)
- 74% not comfortable shaking someone's hand (compared with 73% on the second survey)
- 70% not comfortable sending their children to school (this question was asked for the first time on this third survey)
- 70% not comfortable going to the movies (compared with 67% on the second survey)
- 71% not comfortable exercising at an athletic club (compared with 63% on the second survey)
- 66% not comfortable going to a religious service (compared with 60% on the second survey)
- 59% not comfortable going to dinner at a restaurant (compared with 56% on the second survey)
- 56% not comfortable having a business meeting around a conference table (compared with 54% on the second survey)
- 48% not comfortable going to work in an office environment (compared with 45% on the second survey)
- 43% not comfortable going into a grocery or hardware store (compared with 43% on the second survey)

MENTAL HEALTH

Worry was generally low, and had declined, among Anchorage residents.

- Most (80%) were not worried or slightly worried about their finances due to COVID-19, as compared with 68% on the first survey and 74% on the second survey (5 or lower on a scale of 0-10 where 0 was not worried and 10 was extremely worried).
- Most (82%) were not worried or slightly worried, about losing employment due to COVID-19, an increase from 74% on the first survey and 80% on the second survey (5 or lower on a scale of 0-10 where 0 was not worried and 10 was extremely worried).
- Most (76%) were not worried or slightly worried about not being able to connect with family and friends [68% survey 1, 74% survey 2]
- Most (89%) were not worried or slightly worried about transportation [88% survey 1, 91% survey 2]
- Almost all (95%) were not worried or slightly worried about not having enough to eat [90% survey 1, 94% survey 2]

The level of morale in households was moderately high among Anchorage residents, although the percentage of households who felt their morale was good or very good has declined:

- Most (70%) felt their household morale was good or very good, a decrease from 90% on the first survey and 85% on the second survey (5 or greater on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good).

The level of stress/anxiety among Anchorage residents in their household was generally low, although the percentage of households with low stress has declined:

- About 62% reported having low or moderate stress in their household, similar to the 70% on the first survey and 69% on the second survey (5 or less on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is not stressed and 10 is very stressed).
- A majority (57%) reported being worried or very worried that their self or members of their household being infected by coronavirus.[61% survey 1; 64% survey 2]

AREAS OF INTEREST

Men, younger people (<45 years), those who identified as Republican, and those with children reported engaging in significantly **more** COVID-related risk behaviors than their counterparts. COVID-related risk behaviors included having a visitor at home, having physical contact with someone from outside their household, getting within six feet of someone outside their household, touching things others may have touched, and not wearing a mask most or all of the time when leaving home. Men, younger people, those who identified as Republican, and those with children engaged in an average of **3 COVID-related risk behaviors**. Our previous addendum report showed that these risk behaviors were significantly associated with low perceived threat to COVID and that low perceived threat to COVID was significantly associated with low levels of knowledge about and clear understanding of COVID-related policies. Incidentally, the aforementioned four groups also had **lower** perceived threat to COVID than their counterparts. Moreover, men, younger people, and those who identified as Republican had **lower** knowledge of the COVID mandates and MOA emergency orders and were less clear on MOA policies related to COVID compared to their counterparts. It should also be noted that those who identified as **Republican** had one of the **lowest** mean perceived threat scores, knowledge scores, and policy clarity scores. This demographic also had one of the **lowest** average lengths of time spent on accessing COVID-related information and talking about it. Consequently, this same group also had one of the **highest** mean numbers of COVID-related risk behaviors. These areas of interest offer insight from the most recent data set; however, the category of political affiliation itself is complex and influenced by a number of factors.

Recommendations

Results from this survey showed an increase in the perceived level of threat of COVID-19, which corresponds with the increase in cases in Alaska. Most survey respondents reported low worry about finances or employment, and overall moderately high morale. However, many respondents did worry about being infected and continued to follow recommended hygiene and physical distancing behaviors. For groups exhibiting COVID-related risk behaviors, analysis showed that ideological and political differences may factor into perceptions and behaviors related to COVID-19. The findings from this survey indicate health messaging and communication strategies could include the following:

- Focus on the continued threat of COVID-19, personal responsibility to reduce risk, and Alaskans' ability to succeed in defeating the virus
- Lower perceived barriers for engaging in behaviors that mitigate COVID-19 and increase self-efficacy in personal mitigation strategies to reduce communal risk
- Avoid messaging specifically to a political affiliation. Rather, communication strategies could take findings into account and incorporate messaging from those in the same ideological and political group to potentially help with receptiveness of the message for groups engaging in COVID-related risk behaviors
 - Remind opposition to COVID-19 guidelines that the enemy is the virus, not each other
 - Include Alaskan imagery, stories of connectedness and triumph to heighten sense of unified goal
- Targeted messaging for places identified as high risk for COVID-19 (bars, gyms, etc.)
- Acknowledge and empathize with restrictions and the possibility of quarantine fatigue while emphasizing communal benefit
- Explain MOA response and the metrics for renewed lockdown, public health procedures for testing, contact tracing, compliance with quarantine and isolation guidance, etc. and how each case represents an increasing toll on Alaska's public health system, which is close to capacity
- Use visual imagery language to put numbers into an Alaska context
 - Rather than "cases," consider using language that humanizes individuals, such as; "Alaskans who tested positive for COVID-19"
 - As of June 18, 117,860 total deaths were reported from COVID-19 in the United States, which is more than the entire population of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (108,317) and close to half the Municipality of Anchorage's population (288,000).