

## United States of Anxiety:

90% of Americans view coronavirus as serious, with 60% seeing workplace disruption in 2020

### Introduction

The coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is creating unprecedented social and economic upheaval globally. APCO Worldwide, a global advisory and advocacy communications firm, conducted U.S. public opinion research to understand how the viral outbreak is impacting businesses and what organizations can be doing to safeguard employees, operations and reputation. APCO will track Americans' attitudes and behaviors related to COVID-19 in a series of weekly polls with this first installment focused on overall feelings, prevention actions, information sources and workplace impacts.

### Most Americans view coronavirus as being serious, with a majority worried about contracting the virus

9-in-10  
view coronavirus as serious

with more than a third (38%) calling it "extremely serious" and more than a quarter (29%) "very serious."

The public is worried about getting coronavirus by a 3:2 margin

(60% worried, 40% not), and a quarter (24%) are "extremely worried."

People in the U.S. Northeast see coronavirus as most serious

(76% as "extremely" or "very serious"), with those in the Midwest seeing it as least serious (58% as "extremely" or "very serious").

Highest-income Americans see coronavirus as most serious

(83% as "extremely" or "very serious" among those with annual earnings of \$150,000 or more); those earning less than \$50,000 are less likely to see COVID-19 as serious (63% as "extremely" or "very serious").

### A majority of the U.S. public is relying on mainstream national media as a primary source of information about coronavirus, with few turning to the White House or their employers.

The national news media is the leading source of information about COVID-19 (58%),

doubling the next most likely sources of information, the CDC (28%) and social media (27%).

Employers are among the least common sources of COVID-19 information now (8%), on par with the White House (10%).

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**The American public is already taking action and generally willing to make sacrifices to prevent the spread of COVID-19**

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A majority of Americans are taking precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The most common actions currently being taken: frequent handwashing (86%), covering sneezes and coughs (83%), disinfecting surfaces (65%) and taking vitamins or supplements (63%).

About half of respondents (52%) have already stayed at home if they felt sick,

with another fifth (21%) willing to do in the next two weeks. And, similar but slightly lower rate will have stayed home to avoid others (45%) or will do so in the next two weeks (15%). Less than half of the public are or will wear protective gloves (40%), get a vaccine (36%) or wear a face mask (35%).

There is widespread willingness to curtail activities for a week or more to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Three-in-five people would not leave their home if showing signs of the flu (62%), not go to sports events, movies or concerts (60%) or not use mass transit (59%). About half would not attend gatherings of six or more (54%), not leave their neighborhood if a local outbreak is identified (49%) or work from home (48%).

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**Two-thirds of workers have seen precautionary actions taken in their workplace, with as many feeling COVID-19 will cause a disruption this year. Expectations of employers focus on prevention.**

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Employers are seen doing things to address the spread of COVID-19 by a 3:2 margin.

Among employed Americans, 61% say their employers have done "a lot" or "some," contrasted by 39% who have done "little" or "none."

Most working Americans see COVID-19 as likely to disrupt their workplace in 2020,

with 30% seeing a "big" disruption and 30% predicting "some" disruption.

The most common expectations worker have is their employers provide sanitation materials (47%) and instructions about precautions (43%). However, there is a lesser expectation for access to health experts (24%).

So far, less than a third of American workers

expect the way they perform their work to be affected, including by restricting work travel (31%), work from home policies — voluntary (30%) or mandatory (19%), or stopping meetings of six or more (19%).

Only about a quarter of workers expect to hear messages from company leaders (27%) related to COVID-19.

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APCO Worldwide is an advisory and advocacy communications consultancy helping leading public and private sector organizations build and protect organizational reputations, relationships and brands, and act with agility in handling dynamic marketplace and social issues. APCO has offices in more than 30 major cities throughout the world. More information can be found at [apcoworldwide.com](http://apcoworldwide.com).