

To: Interested Parties
From: Navigator Research & NextGen America
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Navigator Special Report: The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Younger Americans

Welcome to NAVIGATOR – a project designed to better understand the American public’s views on issues of the day and help advocates, elected officials, and other interested parties understand the language, imagery, and messaging needed to make and win key policy arguments.

This is a dynamic time, and as a result, Navigator has transitioned to a daily tracking poll on the coronavirus crisis. This report focuses on the impact of the pandemic on younger Americans, and features findings from a combined data set of 6,085 registered voters, including 1,555 registered voters aged 18 to 34, conducted as part of the daily tracking poll from March 20-April 11, 2020.

Key takeaways:

- Younger Americans are more personally touched by the pandemic than the nation overall when it comes to knowing someone has gotten infected, lost a job, or had their hours at work cut.
- As a result, Americans aged 18 to 34 express the highest anxieties about the pandemic of any age group, and are more likely to be worried about the impact on their personal financial situations, particularly compared to older Americans.
- While the public overall has been split on the Trump administration’s response to the pandemic, younger Americans are far more critical, but express confidence in their state and local government’s response.

Younger Americans are experiencing the coronavirus pandemic more personally than other groups from both economic and health perspectives.

Like the rest of the country, Americans aged 18 to 34 see the pandemic as a crisis and think the worst is yet to come, but are more likely to know someone personally impacted. Nearly three-quarters of younger Americans characterize the coronavirus pandemic as a major crisis (72%) and the same percentage say that “the worst is yet to come,” both aligned with the overall public (77% and 74%, respectively). However, they are also more likely to know someone directly impacted by the pandemic. This includes:

- 14% have a household member that has wanted to get tested for coronavirus (compared to 8% of Americans overall);
- 24% know someone who has been infected (versus 16% of overall);
- 24% personally report having lost their job (versus 14% overall);
- 64% know someone who has lost their job (versus 53% overall); and,
- 74% know someone who has had hours cut (versus 65% overall).

The impact on younger people’s economic outlook may be largely driven in part because they are more likely to be in jobs in the service industry (29%, compared to 21% overall) that have been deeply affected by stay-at-home orders across the country.

Younger Americans are also more likely to report feeling economic impacts as a result of social distancing. For example, 30% report having begun to spend some of their savings (compared to 20% overall), 22% have applied for unemployment insurance or nutritional assistance (compared to 14% overall), and 15% have put off payments toward student loans (compared to 8% overall). Among younger communities of color, the rates of starting to spend savings and applying for unemployment or nutritional assistance tend to be even higher (34% and 24%, respectively).

While younger Americans share high levels of concern about the health impacts of the pandemic with other age groups, they are more likely to have pronounced economic worries, especially compared to seniors.

When it comes to many worries Americans have about the impact coronavirus will have on their personal health or public health infrastructure, younger Americans align with the overall public. In Navigator’s daily tracking, the largest concerns that most Americans have expressed tend to be primarily focused on the health of themselves and their family and friends, and those aged 18 to 34 express concerns at comparable levels, including:

- Someone close to you getting coronavirus (81% overall; 83% among 18-34 year olds);
- The economy falling into a recession (84% overall; 83% among 18-34);
- Being unable to visit a sick family member (68% overall; 73% among 18-34);
- There won’t be room in hospitals or available doctors if you get sick from coronavirus (71% overall; 73% among 18-34);
- Personally contracting coronavirus (65% overall; 66% among 18-34); and,
- Being unable to get a coronavirus test if you or someone in your family needs one (64% overall; 69% among 18-34).

Yet when it comes to economic worries about the impacts of the pandemic, 18 to 34 year old Americans have significantly heightened anxieties. This is true both relative to the country overall but in particular, when juxtaposed to older Americans 65 years of age.

Issue	Total	Younger Americans (18 to 34)	Older Americans (65 or older)
You or your family members losing income from reduced hours at work	65%	75%	49%
You or your family members losing their job	61%	75%	45%
The mental health of a family member or friend	61%	75%	46%
Falling behind on bills	56%	68%	32%
Being unable to afford an emergency medical expense	55%	68%	38%

Americans aged 18 to 34 are highly critical of Trump's preparedness and response to the pandemic while also trusting their state and local government.

While President Trump has earned split ratings on approval of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, younger Americans are far more disapproving. Across all the interviews conducted in Navigator's daily tracking to date, Trump's approval rating on handling the pandemic is about even (49% approve – 48% disapprove), but among younger Americans, his net disapproval rating is -14 (41% approve – 55% disapprove). They are also more likely to say that Trump's response to coronavirus did not take seriously enough the threat of the pandemic (64%, compared to 60% overall), and just 52% think that Trump's current response to the pandemic is getting it about right (compared to 47% overall).

Younger women are especially critical of Trump's preparedness and current response (69% didn't take it seriously enough / 58% not doing enough), as are younger people of color (66% didn't take it seriously enough / 57% not doing enough).

Navigator has previously highlighted the trend that state governors are receiving a higher rating when it comes to handling the pandemic than they are giving President Trump, and that is even more pronounced among younger Americans. 70% of Americans approve of their governor compared to Trump's 49% approval rating, while the difference in rating governors and Trump is wider among 18 to 34 year olds: 68% approve of their governor while just 41% approve of Trump's handling. Moreover, when asked whether more trust is placed in local governments versus Trump and the federal response, state and local government is trusted more by a 30-point margin (58% to 28%), significantly higher than the 18-point margin among the overall public.

Finally, Navigator has tracked how Americans are evaluating who is benefitting most from the economic policies responding to the pandemic. Among the public overall, 48% say that the wealthy and big corporations have been the biggest winners versus 36% who say middle and working class people, but among 18 to 34 year olds, the percentage saying the wealthy and corporations are the primary beneficiaries rises to 27 points over working Americans (56% to 29%) which corresponds to how they have the highest economic anxieties of any age group.

About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO along with an advisory committee, including: Andrea Purse, progressive strategist; Arkadi Gerney, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; Delvone Michael, Working Families; Felicia Wong, Roosevelt Institute; Mike Podhorzer, AFL-CIO; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.