

Coping with COVID-19:

The Impact of Coronavirus on Mental and Physical Wellbeing



Key findings

22 April 2020

The impact on mental wellbeing

We are social animals, so [many have pointed out](#) that with unprecedented levels of social isolation, our collective mental health is at risk. That is not to mention the added anxiety, economic pressure, and hardships coming from millions of jobs lost and tens of thousands of projected deaths in the US.

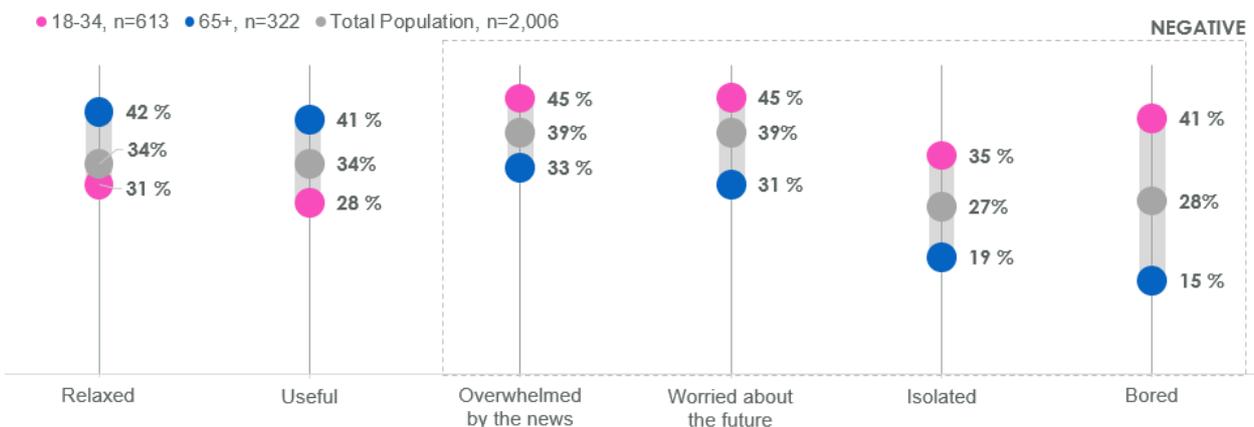
To understand the initial effects of COVID-19 on mental and physical wellbeing in the US, Opinium surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2,006 U.S. adults aged 18+ between March 20th and 25th. The survey was conducted online. Here's what we heard.

Over half of US respondents (53%) already feel COVID-19 has impacted their mental wellbeing in some way. Nearly two in five (39%) say they have felt regularly overwhelmed by the news or worried about the future and 27% report regularly feeling isolated, with an additional third saying they've felt isolated on occasion (34%).

Younger respondents report a more negative impact on their wellbeing

Though the virus is known to pose a greater health risk to the elderly, the situation seems to be taking more of a negative toll on the wellbeing of *younger* generations by every measure. In fact, those aged 65+ report feeling more relaxed and more useful in the midst of the crisis than those aged 18-34. Younger respondents also report feeling isolated, bored, worried about the future, and overwhelmed by the news at consistently higher rates than their elders. This may be because younger populations are more concerned for the impact on their future careers and job prospects. Older cohorts are also more likely to be retired and therefore already more used to spending time at home with less structured schedules. This is also not their first rodeo as far as global crises go, reducing their sense of alarm.

HOW US ADULTS HAVE BEEN FEELING OVER THE PAST WEEK, BY AGE GROUP (% WHO SELECTED OFTEN OR ALL OF THE TIME)



Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please select the answer option that best describes your experience of each statement over the last week. 2,006 US adults

Is self-isolating alone really worse for mental wellbeing?

Those who are self-isolating alone have been flagged as particularly vulnerable to a dip in mental wellbeing. Seventeen percent in the US are self-isolating alone while the majority (61%) say they are isolating with others in their household. Those riding this out alone report regular feelings of isolation (41%) and boredom (38%) at higher rates than those isolating in groups (28% and 27%, respectively). And yet in many regards, they are feeling the same or better than those that are quarantining with others. For instance, nearly half (45%) of those isolating alone report feeling regularly relaxed, compared to less than a third (31%) of those isolating with those in their household. This is likely the impact of parents suddenly having to keep children occupied and active full time, making relaxation in quarantine rather difficult. One mom explains:

“My kids are home from school, so I am now a teacher and kind of home schooling them. Our house is small, so we are bored because it is too cold to go outside so all of this is stressful”

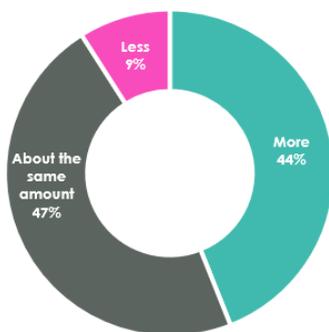
45-54 year-old woman, self-isolating with others in her household.

Those isolating solo are also slightly less likely to worry about the future and just as likely to feel overwhelmed by the news. Though not dramatically so, they are actually *more* likely to rate their current mental wellbeing as ‘good’—65% vs. 57% of those isolating as a household. In order to cope, those isolating alone have ramped up communications with friends and family more than the rest—54% say they are speaking to family and friends more than before the outbreak compared to 45% of those isolating with their household. Still, it remains to be seen whether these short-term advantages hold as orders of social distancing are prolonged.

A silver lining?

We’re communicating *more* with loved ones.

HOW MUCH US ADULTS ARE SPEAKING TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY COMPARED TO BEFORE THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

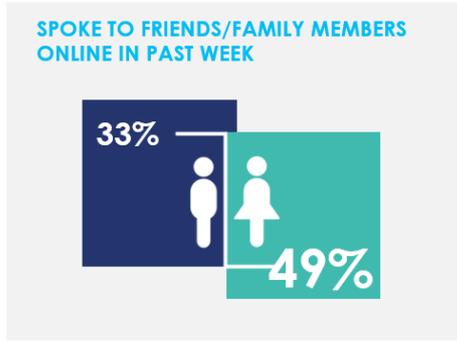
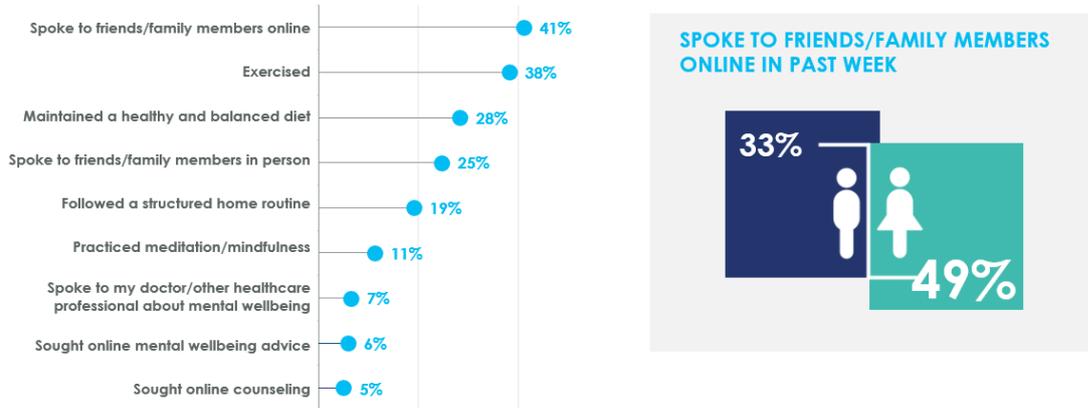


The pandemic may be causing us to physically separate from loved ones, but in other ways it is bringing us closer together. Speaking to friends and family is the top method Americans report using in the past week to improve their mental wellbeing and 44% say they are speaking to friends and family *more* now than before the Coronavirus outbreak, even considering previous face-to-face interactions.

Thinking about the past week, have you spoken to friends and family more or less than you typically would have before the Coronavirus outbreak? Please think about speaking to people through any method, e.g. face-to-face, phone calls, text messages etc. 2,006 US adults

There is a notably large difference between men and women, however, with women being much more likely to lean on their family for support than men (49% vs. 33%).

HOW US ADULTS HAVE IMPROVED THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING IN THE PAST WEEK

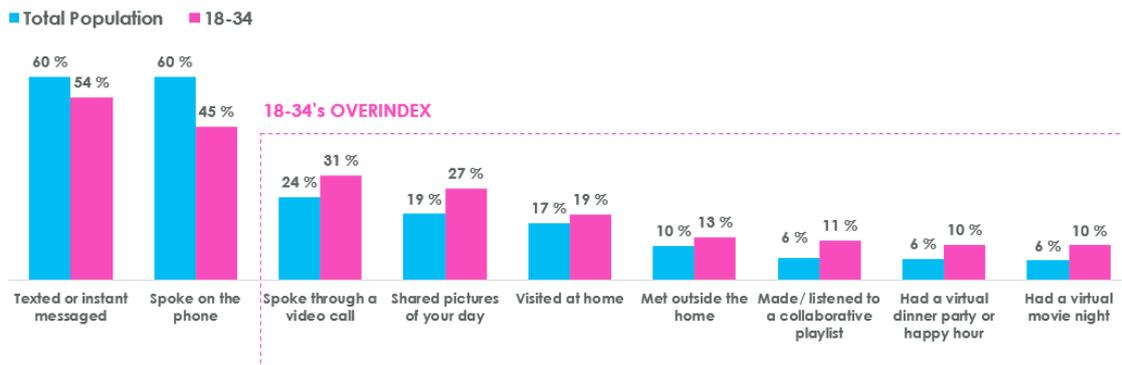


Which of the following methods, if any, have you used to improve your mental wellbeing within the past week? 2,006 US adults



Though we are seeing an increase in communication across age groups, the phenomenon is more pronounced among 18-34's, over half of which (51%) say they are speaking to friends and family more than before. Younger cohorts are also more likely than older generations to take full advantage of the spectrum of digital solutions at their fingertips. One in ten 18-34's have had a virtual dinner party, happy hour, or movie night in the past week.

HOW US ADULTS ARE KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS & FAMILY



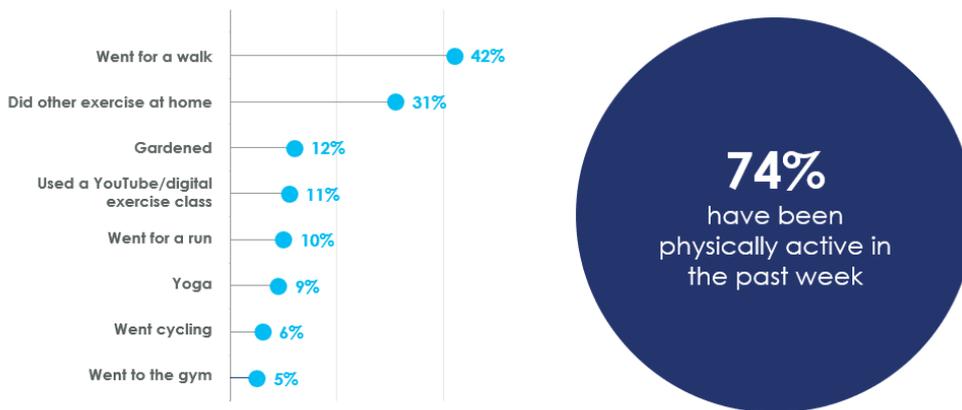
Which of the following have you done in the last week to connect with your friends/ family? 2,006 US adults



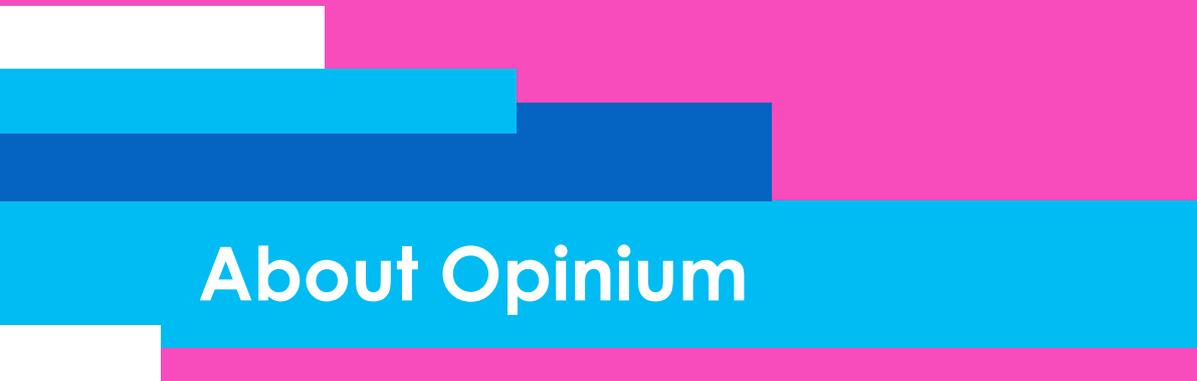
Going for walks has never been more popular

It is heartening to see that three fourths of Americans (74%) report being physically active in the past week despite, and perhaps *thanks to*, the drastic shift in their lifestyles. Two in five are relying on walks for physical activity, nudged by the enticing prospect of getting out of the house. Nearly a third of Americans (31%) are now exercising inside the home while only 5% are still going to a gym.

HOW US ADULTS HAVE BEEN STAYING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE IN THE PAST WEEK



Which of the following, if any, have you done within the past week in order to stay physically active? Please select all that apply. 2,006 US adults



About Opinium

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