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

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Key Findings

A panel survey of 316 individuals was conducted from May 20 to May 22, which was a follow-up to the phone survey conducted two weeks prior. Based on the results of the panel survey, the **overall risk of infection** by COVID-19 **significantly increased** in Anchorage. Additionally, surveyed individuals were **more likely** to have physical contact with those outside their household, practiced **less** physical distancing, touched things outside their home **more often**, and had **decreased** perceived threat to COVID-19. However, the **majority of respondents were still engaging in behavior that limited transmission**, such as refraining from physical contact with those outside their household, wearing masks some or all of the time they were out, and avoiding visiting or receiving friends. **About half of respondents** reported that Anchorage was opening up at about the right pace, while about a third felt Anchorage was opening up too quickly. Despite Anchorage opening up, **most respondents also reported feeling uncomfortable engaging in activities that had been previously restricted**, such as going to a bar, going to the movies, or exercising at an athletic club. While the findings from these surveys are informative, **this survey does not fully capture the needs and perspectives of Anchorage's marginalized communities**. Consequently, the UAA team is currently conducting a needs assessment of Anchorage's marginalized communities, with results anticipated in early July.

As Alaska and Anchorage continue to open, particularly with increasing protests around systemic racial inequity, the community could be reminded to give each other SPACE⁹ to continue to prevent further transmission of COVID-19. This document is a brief summary of panel survey highlights. Two more panel surveys of Anchorage residents are planned to track changes in behaviors, perceptions of COVID-19, and mental health as the situation continues to change.

Background and Context

Between May 6-10, 2020, a representative sample of 996 adults in the Municipality of Anchorage completed a cell phone survey (first survey) designed to assess knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to the epidemic locally. A panel of 316 individuals from the phone survey was surveyed again May 20-22 (second survey). Consequently, this panel survey was conducted prior to Memorial Day, the recent protests against racial inequity, lifting of restrictions on May 25, and the recent increase in cases that began being reported about May 30. The demographics of the panel members were representative of the first survey sample, so the results are comparable. On both surveys, gender, geographic distribution, and race/ethnicity are representative of Anchorage. On both surveys, more than half of respondents had college degrees,

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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. Additional surveys of the panel are planned for the beginning and middle of June. 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.

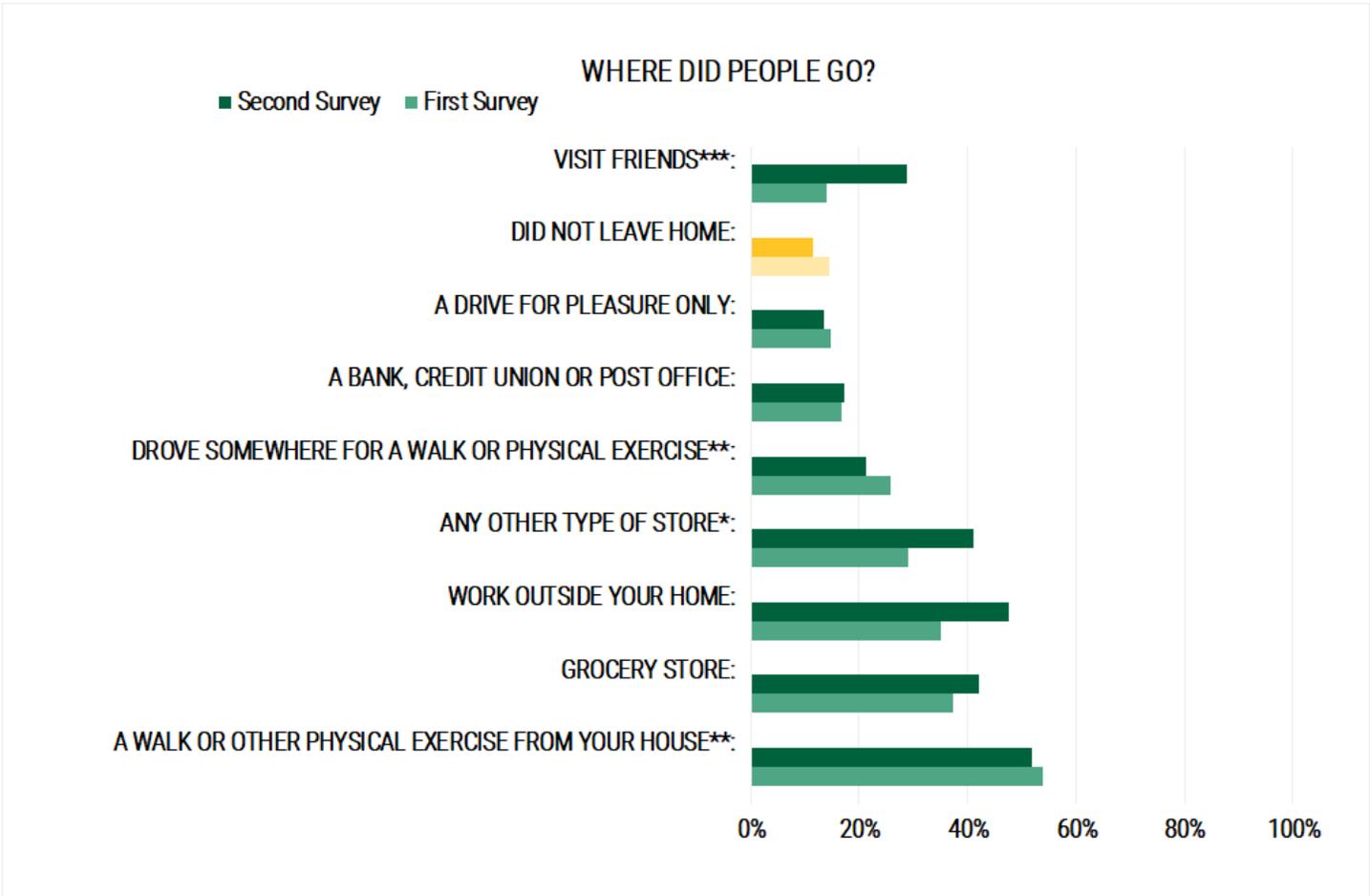
Results

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

65% 

Did not have physical contact with anyone outside their household

- Most (65%) didn't have any physical contact with people not in their household, although this declined from 83% on the first survey.
- About a quarter of respondents (26%) stayed at least six feet away from people outside their household the day before the survey, declining from 36% on the first survey



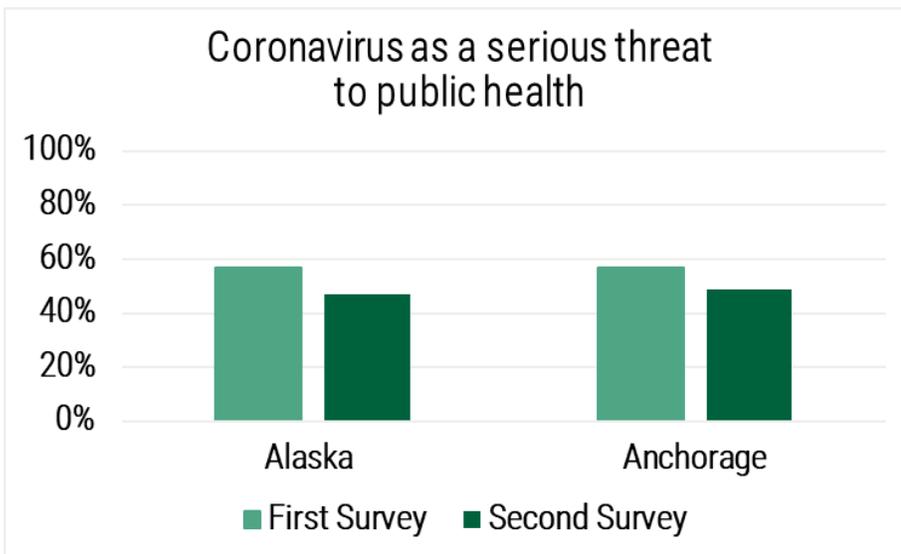
- Most (77%) did not receive visitors, although this declined from 81% on the first survey.
- Most didn't visit friends the day before the survey (75%), although this declined from 86% on the first survey.

HYGIENE



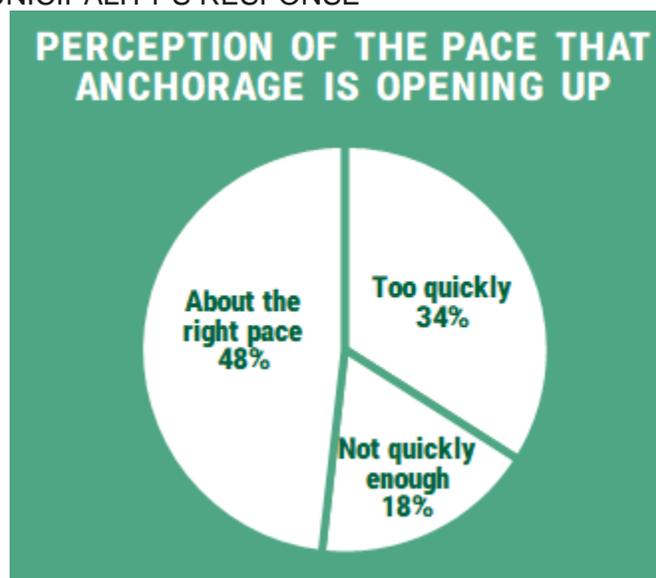
- As in the first survey, two in three people (65%) who went outside their home wore a mask most or all of the time they were out.

PERCEIVED THREAT OF COVID-19



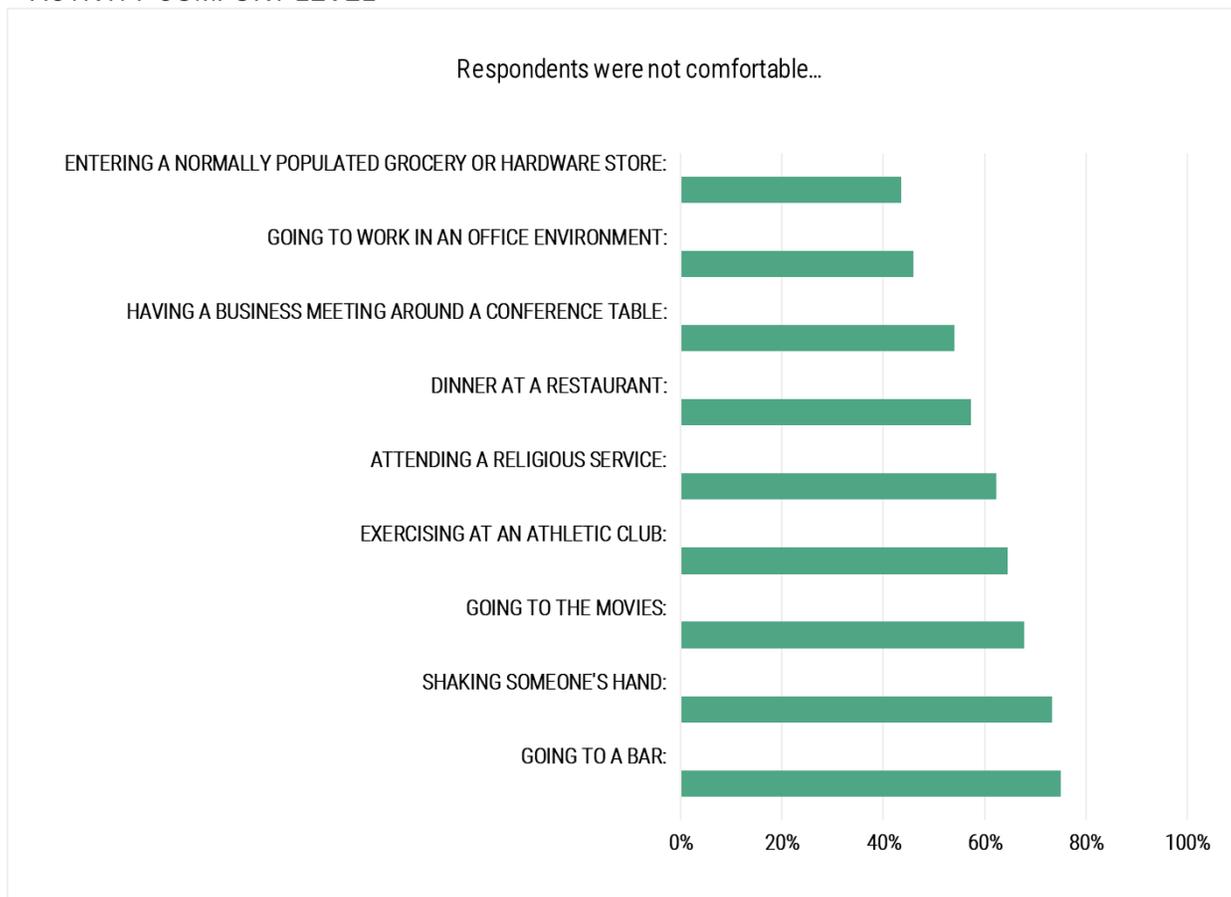
- 57% felt that COVID-19 was a serious threat to public health in Alaska on the first survey, decreasing to 47% on this survey.
- 57% felt that COVID-19 was a serious threat to public health in Anchorage on the first survey, decreasing to 49% on this survey.
- There was no significant difference in perceived threat of COVID-19 among racial/ethnic groups.

PERCEPTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY'S RESPONSE



- About 48% felt that Anchorage is opening up at the right pace, while 34% felt that Anchorage was opening up too quickly and 18% felt it wasn't opening up quickly enough.
- A majority of panel respondents were either very knowledgeable or somewhat knowledgeable about state mandates (95%) and MOA emergency orders (91%) related to COVID-19.
- The majority (80%) of respondents ranked the MOA's response to COVID-19 a 5 or above on a scale of 0-10 (where 0 is very bad and 10 is very good).

ACTIVITY COMFORT LEVEL



A majority of the panel respondents were not comfortable returning to at least some activities that had been previously limited, such as:

- 74% not comfortable going to a bar
- 73% not comfortable shaking someone's hand
- 67% not comfortable going to the movies
- 63% not comfortable exercising at an athletic club
- 60% not comfortable going to a religious service
- 56% not comfortable going to dinner at a restaurant
- 54% not comfortable having a business meeting around a conference table
- 45% not comfortable going to work in an office environment
- 43% not comfortable going into a grocery or hardware store

MENTAL HEALTH

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

- Three in four (74%) were not worried or slightly worried about their finances due to COVID-19, an increase from 68% on the first survey (5 or lower on a scale of 0-10 where 0 was not worried and 10 was extremely worried).
- Most (80%) were not worried or slightly worried, about losing employment due to COVID-19, an increase from 74% on the first survey (5 or lower on a scale of 0-10 where 0 was not worried and 10 was extremely worried).

The level of morale in households was moderately high among Anchorage residents.

- Most (85%) felt their household morale was good or very good, a decrease from 90% on the first 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.

- About 69% report having low or moderate stress in their household, similar to the 70% on the first survey (5 or less on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is not stressed and 10 is very stressed).

AREAS OF CONCERN

- Some demographics were less likely to report being knowledgeable about state mandates and MOA emergency orders on COVID-19. These included respondents who were younger, of lower income level, and those with fewer than three members in their household.

Recommendations

Given the data related to increased risk of infection and lowered perceived threat from COVID-19, messaging could continue to emphasize personal responsibility and reducing risk through SPACE⁹. Another layer to this messaging could also focus on the notion of "*the power of ONE*." This messaging reminds people about the exponential growth of the virus and their ability to either stop the spread of infection or to accelerate it.

For example, R0 could be used to emphasize the *power of ONE* and the concept of exponential growth. R0 is the estimated number of people each person positive for COVID-19 will infect. An R0 of 1 means the disease is spreading at a stable rate, while anything above 1 means a potentially unsustainable spread that could overwhelm Alaska's hospital capacity. As of May 30, R0 for Anchorage was estimated at 1.12; with a surge in cases this week, R0 is predicted to increase. The goal is to bring the R0 to less than 1. Since reopening, the number of cases has gone up. While this increase was expected, it's important to remind people how quickly exponential growth can turn a few cases into a big problem. Messaging could focus on:

1. Continue with SPACE
2. Precautions, not panic
3. Courtesy, not control
4. Detail what a rising R0 number means for the Anchorage population and explain the thin margin between a lockdown and a return to normalcy

Suggested messaging could also incorporate empowerment and heightened awareness of individual action to influence social and systemic issues. Through collective individual action, the current health and economic pain can be mitigated as well.

⁹https://www.canva.com/design/DAD82QIkjLE/4Glc9VpSFgn_IYN42CBAcg/view?utm_content=DAD82QIkjLE&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink

We need **SPACE** to manage the virus

S

SOCIAL DISTANCE

Stay at least **6** feet away from others who are not part of your household. Stay home and get tested if sick.

P

PRACTICE KINDNESS

A

AVOID CROWDED, ENCLOSED, OR POORLY VENTILATED PLACES

C

COVER WITH MASKS



E

ENGAGE IN FREQUENT HANDWASHING

And cleaning and sanitizing of frequently touched surfaces