



Fear and Uncertainty in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Understanding the Mental Health Consequences for a U.S. Adult Population

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Overview

- Assessing Fear and Mental Health Consequences
- Project Design
 - Sampling
 - Measurement
- Describing Fear and Mental Health Consequences Across the U.S. Landscape
 - U.S.
 - Regions
 - States
 - Individual-Level

Fear Among Adults in the U.S.

- Fear and Uncertainty
- Fearful of What?
- Research & Opinion Polls
- Fear Varying across the Socially Vulnerable

ANXIETY

GENERALIZED
CLASSIFICATION
APPREHENSION
MEANING
PRESENT
IRRATIONAL
DISTINGUISHED
NIGHTMARES/BAD
EXPERIENCED
COG
ALTER
WITHO
UNEASINESS
PERCEPTION
OBSESSIONS
DETERMINES
OCCURRENCE
UNCONTROLLABLE
TRIGGERING
HEART
RESTLESSN
ALTHOUGH
INCREASED
SWEATING
MUSCLE
SIGNALS
FLOW
RELATED
ATTACK
RESPI
EFFECTS
WORD
STRESS
DIVIDES
PERSON
COME
PSYCHOLOGICAL
INCLUDE
BLOOD
EITHER
LIKE
CONSIDERED
PALE
STATE
DREAD
WHETHER
CONCENTRATION
CHARACTERIZI
VS
PHYSIOLOGICAL

Study Design Overview

- Nationally representative sample of adults (n = 10,368)
- Online platform; surveys executed by Qualtrics, Inc.
- Data were collected the 3rd week March 2020
- Data were post-strata weighted (income, gender, race/ethnicity, and geography) to ensure adequate representation and mirroring of the U.S. population per U.S. Census estimates
- Survey asked a range of questions regarding fear, perception, social and behavioral response, sociodemographics, etc.

Measurement Overview (Fear)

- Fear (Subjective)

- How Fearful are you of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)? (0-10) 8+ = 45%

- How worried are you that you or your family will get infected by the coronavirus? (Not at all to Extremely) Extremely = 21%

- What level of threat do you think the coronavirus poses for you and your family? (Very Low Threat to Very High Threat) High Threat = 14%

Measurement Overview (Response)

- Social and Behavioral Responses

- Specific steps to prepare (hand washing, physical distancing, avoidance, purchase behaviors, etc.) 0-11; Average = 7

- Specific steps in reaction to (buying extra food, household items, medical supplies etc.) 0-4; Average =1.2

- Travel restrictions (flying, driving, interstate, intercontinental, etc.)
75%+ limiting travel during that time

Measurement Overview (Mental Health)

- Mental Health Consequences & FEAR

- Depression (CES-D) $r = .20^{**}$

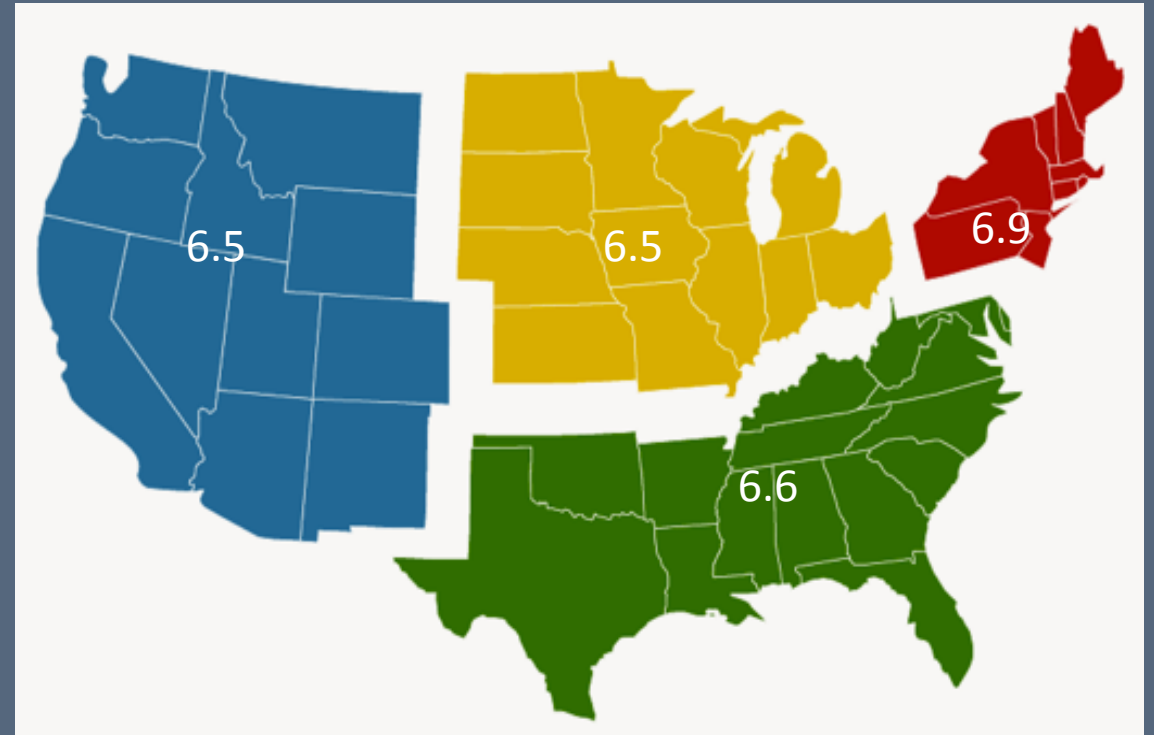
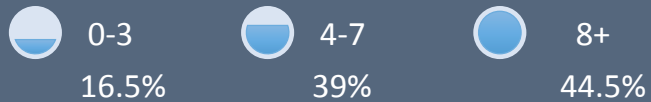
- Anxiety (GAD-7) $r = .05^*$

- Suicidality (SBQ-R) $r = .31^{**}$

- Life Satisfaction (5-item Likert) Very Unsatisfied to Very Satisfied $r = .02^*$

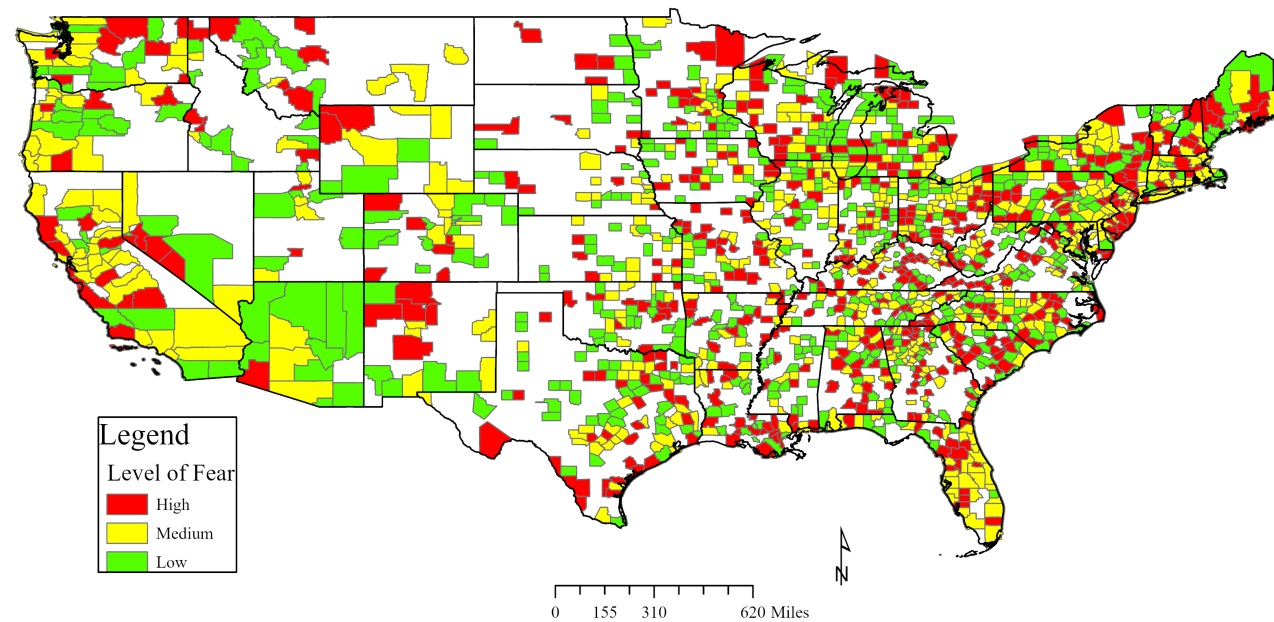
Average Fear Across U.S. Regions (Scale = 0-10)

Average Fear = Median & S.D= 7 ± 2.8



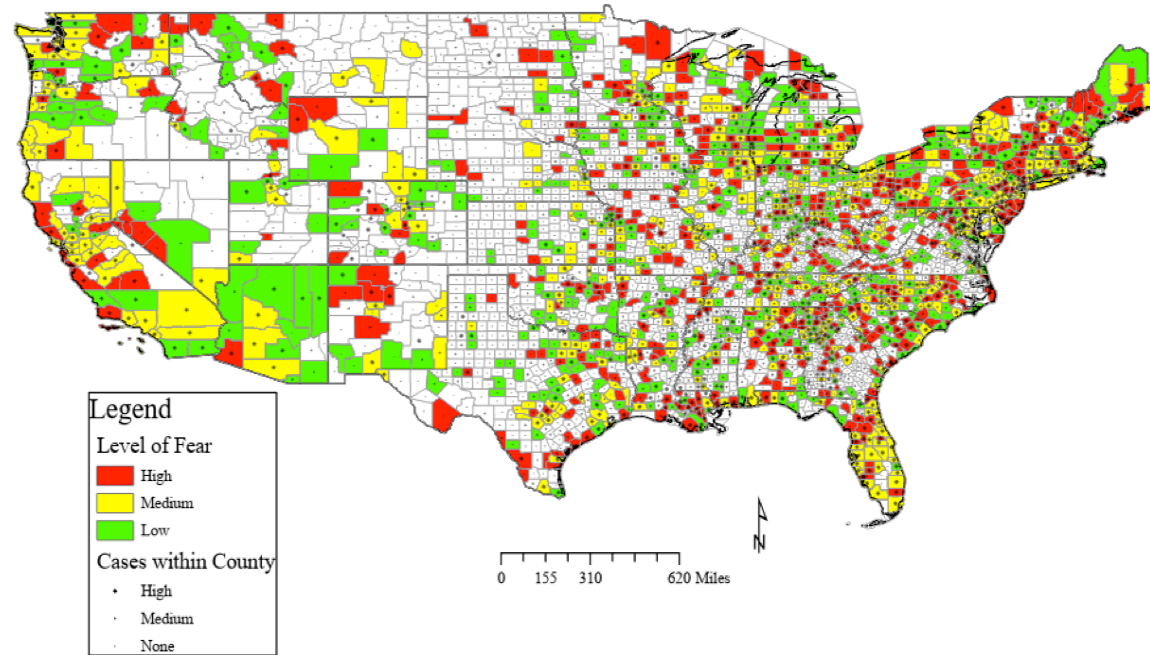
Fear Across States and Counties

County-Level COVID-19 Fear



Fear and COVID-19 Cases Across States and Counties

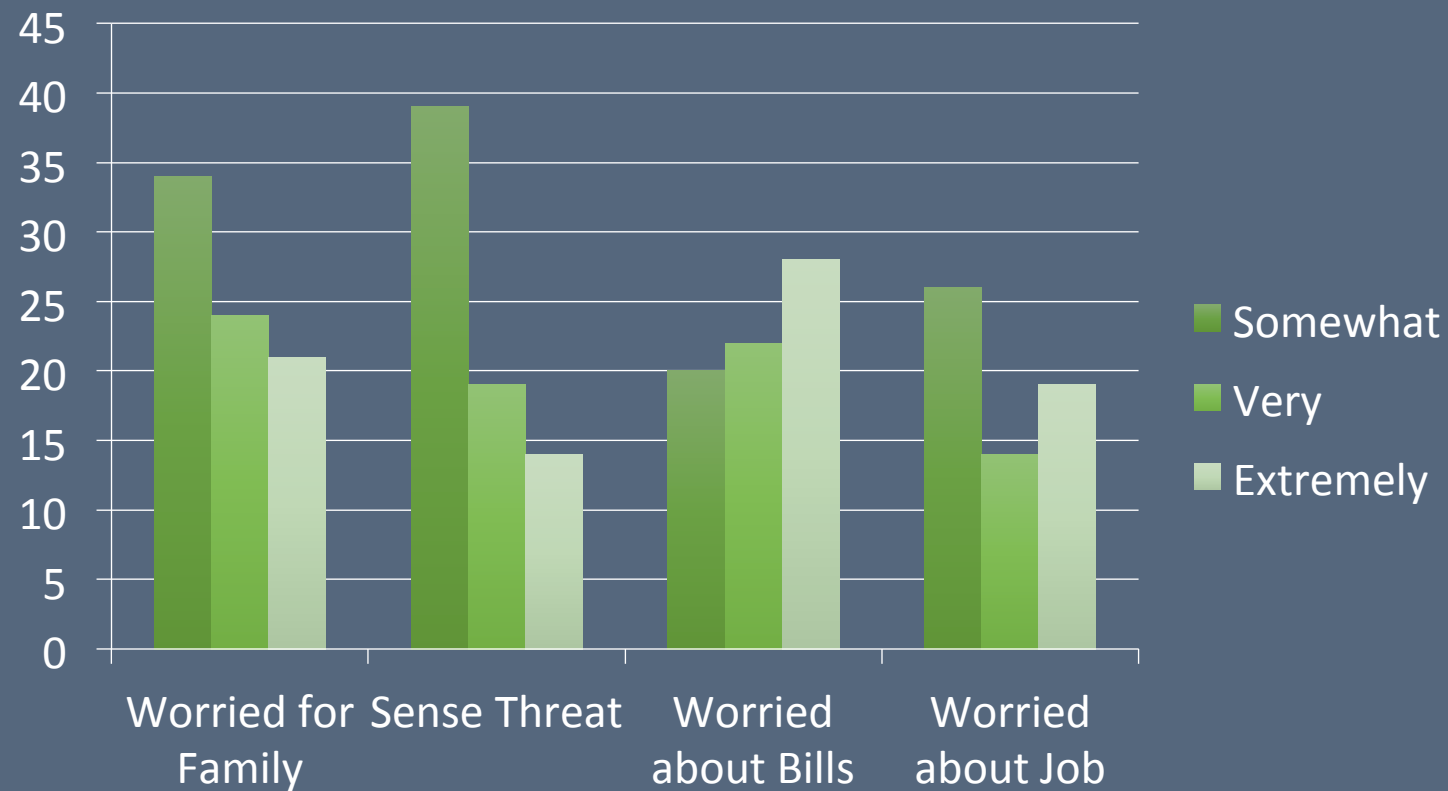
County-Level Average Level of Fear and
Confirmed COVID-19 Cases within each County by March 26th



State Level Fear (Aggregated Individual Response) (Top 10 Most Fearful States)

State	Percent Fearful (8+)	Total Number of Respondents
New York	53.0%	607
New Jersey	52.0%	280
Louisiana	51.7%	145
South Carolina	51.0%	164
Connecticut	50.9%	112
Massachusetts	49.0%	218
California	47.4%	1250
Missouri	47.2%	193
Florida	47.1%	688
Ohio	45.9%	368
Total	44.0%	10,368

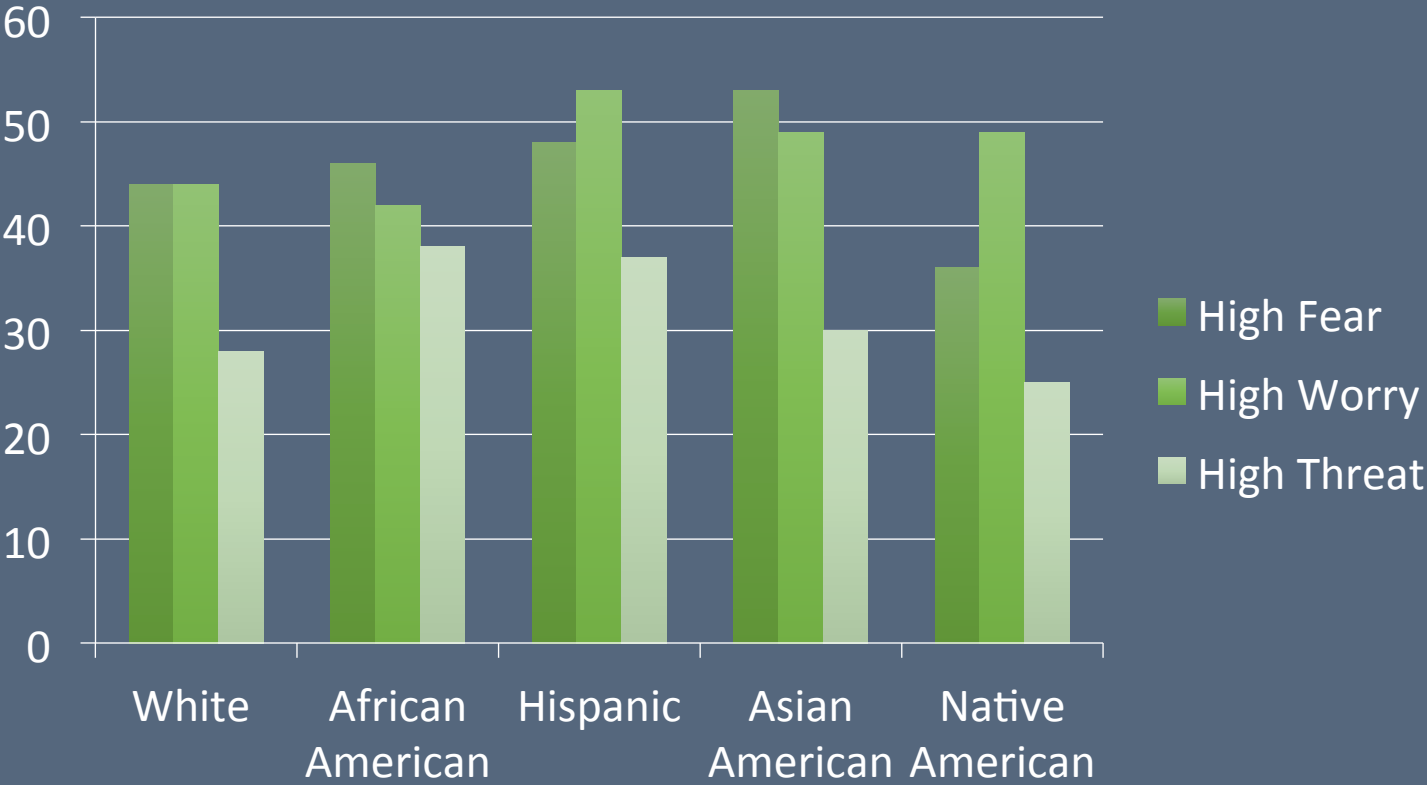
Individual Responses on Fear-Related Items (n = 10,368)



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Individual Responses on Fear-Related Items Across Race and Ethnicity (n = 10,368)



General Observations (Preliminary Findings)

- Fear is highest among vulnerable populations (Hispanics, African-American, Low-income, and Younger respondents)
- Fear is significantly correlated with measures of mental health (depression and suicidality)
- COVID-19 Fear (How would you rate your fear of COVID-19 currently on a scale of 0-10?) is significantly related to food insecurity
- COVID-19 Fear appears to be geo-spatially correlated with outbreak hotspots, aggregate and disadvantaged communities (Gini, % Nonwhite, Median Family Income, etc.)

Thank You! Questions?

Please feel free to cite this work and do not use it without permission from the author (Fitzpatrick)

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