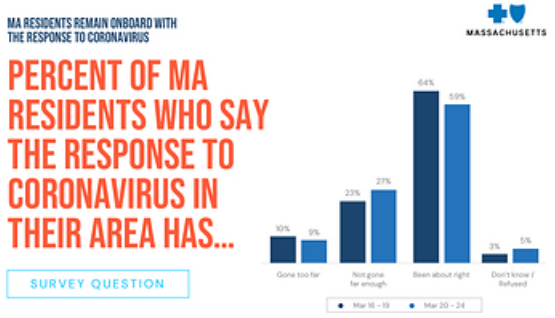
This Week's MassINC/Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Tracking Poll Finds Swift Changes in Public Behavior During Coronavirus Crisis

BOSTON, March 25, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- A tracking poll finds Massachusetts residents are rapidly changing social and shopping habits, amid increasing concern about the danger posed by the coronavirus pandemic. The key new findings are:



- Residents report a sharp increase in social distancing actions compared with the first survey period 3 days ago:
    - 60% say they are not seeing or visiting anyone, up from 46% a few days ago.
    - 82% report cancelling social plans, up from 72%
    - 74% say they are only going to stores if it is essential, and another 11% are not going at all.
- 16% of residents report losing a job since the crisis began earlier this month:
    - Job losses are concentrated among lower-income households -- 23% of those making $50,000 or less say they have lost a job. (The Massachusetts unemployment rate was 2.8% in January, before the outbreak began.)
    - 28% of those who report being currently employed say they have lost at least a portion of their paycheck, including 54% of part-time workers and 39% of hourly workers.
    - A majority of employed respondents said they are working remotely (55%, up from 48%).
- 59% say the response to coronavirus has been about right, but:
    - About a quarter of residents believe the state has not gone far enough in responding to the outbreak (27%), an increase of 4% since the prior poll
    - Only 9% think it has gone too far
    - Looking forward, residents remain braced for the long haul: 44% expect disruptions to last two months or more; another 28% see 1 to 2 months of disruption ahead.
- 65% of residents say the threat posed by the coronavirus is "very serious," compared to 58% last week. 25% say it is "somewhat serious."
- Awareness of the challenges is high:
    - 71% of residents say they are following news about coronavirus "very closely"
    - 70% know there is a lack of coronavirus tests
    - 75% know of the challenge hospitals are experiencing getting enough personal protective equipment for doctors and nurses.

"Tracking polls help monitor how key opinions and experiences are changing in real time," said Steve Koczela, president of The MassINC Polling Group, who is overseeing the poll. "We are seeing major changes even over the course of a few days as the public continues to grapple with this crisis."

The findings are part of the second wave of data from a statewide tracking poll (conducted March 20-23) on the coronavirus sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts and conducted by The MassINC Polling Group. The second wave wrapped up just before Gov. Charlie Baker's order closing non-essential businesses went into effect on March 24. The first wave, published March 21, covered March 16-19. The survey monitors key elements of public opinion and reaction and was commissioned as part of Blue Cross' broader efforts to support the community's response to COVID-19.

"It's vital that the public recognize the serious threat posed by coronavirus and how important it is to slow the spread," said Katherine Dallow, MD, MPH, vice president of clinical programs and strategy at Blue Cross. "Slowing the spread of a virulent virus, weeks after its emergence in the U.S., is not easy. In fact, as a society, it's a painful process. But it is literally a matter of life and death."

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Blue Cross has expanded coverage and access to care for its members, and launched

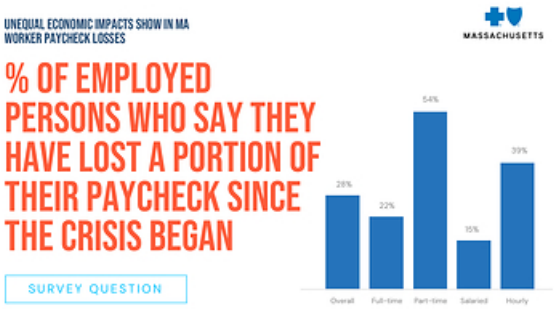
a regularly updated resource center that includes information about how to stay safe, a downloadable tip sheet for employers, a video featuring a Blue Cross physicians, and answers to frequently asked questions. In addition, Blue Cross' health news site, Coverage, produces timely, original news articles reporting what health consumers need to know about COVID-19.

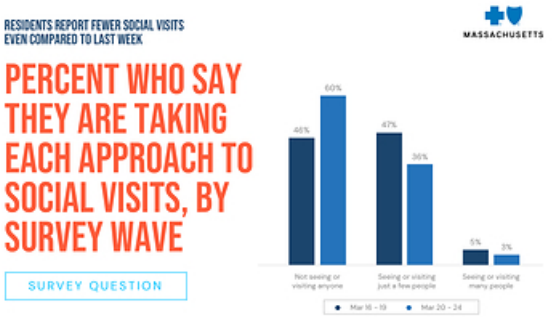
Full survey results can be found here and here.

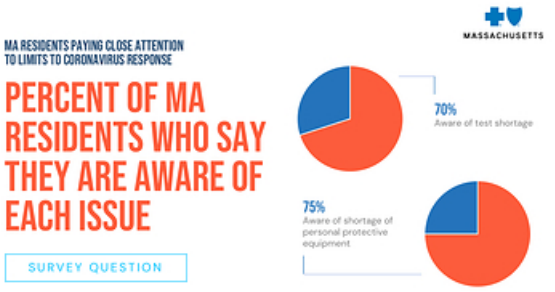
Methodology
These results are based on a statewide survey of 597 residents ofMassachusetts. Live telephone interviews were conducted March 20-23, 2020 via both landline and cell phone as part of a tracking survey. The final data was weighted to known and estimated parameters on gender, age, race, country, and education. The margin of sampling error is 4.0 percentage points with a 95 percent level of confidence.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.bluecrossma.com) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are committed to the relentless pursuit of quality, affordable health care with an unparalleled consumer experience. Consistent with our promise to always put our members first, we are rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

About the MassINC Polling Group
The MassINC Polling Group is a nonpartisan public opinion research firm serving public, private, and social-sector clients. MPG elevates the public's voice with cutting edge methods and rigorous analysis. Based in Boston, MPG serves a nationwide client base.







SOURCE Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

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