

COVID-19 Attitudes, Practices and Perceptions

Jiawen Shou, Victoria Sevilla, Thomas O'Neill, Tanesha Brewster
GPH-GU 5210 - Spring 2023

OBJECTIVE

March 2023 marks three years since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. COVID -19 has impacted people all over the world in numerous ways. There were many misconceptions about the COVID vaccine and mask wearing due to rampant misinformation, causing vaccine hesitancy and public mistrust. The information collected can help determine the best course of action in future pandemics. Additionally, knowing what prevention methods the public is more likely to utilize, gives public health practitioners an idea of areas that need improvement. Lastly, gaining the trust of the public and having a safe space with accurate information, all play a vital part of keeping the public safe.

METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted using a preformatted NYU Qualtrics survey to collect information on individuals' attitudes, public health compliance, and future perceptions towards COVID-19 and future pandemics. The survey was distributed virtually through QR codes and anonymous links. Each team member was responsible for collecting data from at least 10 participants during the enrollment period during March, 2023. The survey consisted of a series of YES/NO questions, multiple choice, and Likert-type scale ratings. Demographic information was collected as part of the survey, but all responses were anonymous. Answers were recorded as percentage and counts. 53 out of the 54 respondents fully completed the survey. Quantitative data was collected and summarized into tables.

RESULTS

A total of 54 responses were collected between March 8, 2023 to March 22, 2023. Respondents were primarily 25 - 34 years old (47%, n=25), Asian (46%, n=24), and women (85%, n=45) (Table 1). Participants were predominantly from California (35%, n=17) and New York (35%, n=17). Most respondents were highly educated, with either a Bachelor's degree (38%, n=20) or a Master's degree (30%, n=16).

Most respondents knew someone who had been hospitalized due to infection with COVID-19 (54.72%, n=29, Question 3) (Table 2). Almost half (47.17%, n=25) personally knew someone who had died due to complications of COVID-19 (Question 4). Nearly all (96.23%; n=51) respondents had been vaccinated with at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, with 2 people marking "don't remember" (Question 6). A large proportion (88.68%; n=47) of respondents had been vaccinated with one or more COVID-19 vaccine boosters, while 5 indicated that they had not received any boosters, and 1 marked "don't remember" (Question 7). The most common public health recommendations that respondents continued to follow to protect themselves from infection included: "washed hands / used hand sanitizer after making physical contact" (n=43) and "wore face masks / coverings" (n=42) (Question 9). When asked to rate their overall compliance with public health recommendations to limit the spread of COVID-19, respondents felt they were "above average" (47.17%, n=25) or "excellent" (37.74%, n=25)

(Question 10). It was interesting to note that most respondents were “not at all confident” (37.74%, n=20) or “somewhat confident” (52.83%, n=28) that the U.S. government is currently prepared for another pandemic (Question 14). When asked if they thought individuals in the U.S. would take another pandemic seriously, responses were primarily “not at all confident” (35.85%, n=19) or “somewhat confident” (49.06%, n=26) (Question 15).

DISCUSSION

The most important finding from the survey that stood out was the generally low level of trust the participants had with respect to the government’s ability to handle another pandemic. Almost half the participants said that they were “not at all confident” in the government’s ability, with the majority of respondents stating that they were only “somewhat confident.” No participants responded that they were “very confident” or “extremely confident” in the government. Interestingly, when asked where they obtained their public health information, the majority of the respondents stated “the Center of Disease Control” and “local health departments.” This is a difficult paradox to explain - that people both do not trust the government but also look to them for guidance! The trust the public has in itself is also stronger than it is in the government, with more people feeling confident in the public taking another pandemic seriously and 6 people saying “very confident.” One possible source of bias in our study was with respect to the question of whether or not a person has been vaccinated or not. The large percentage of the respondents are currently NYU students, and in order to attend NYU, proof of vaccination is required, thus the high response rate of “yes” is most likely skewed.

It is interesting to note that the majority of people still view COVID-19 as the disease they are most scared of, even at the end of the pandemic, and many are still concerned about getting it. Most of the respondents reported that they had tested positive for COVID-19, but the testing methods ways differed. Fewer people said that they had tested positive as the result of a health professional telling them than by finding out their status via a home test. This shows how important the home tests were. If people trusted the home tests as much as a professional, it seems that if test kits were even more widely available and at no cost, it might result in more people likely to opt stay at home (and not spread the disease). If another survey were to be conducted, a question about when during the pandemic did, they test positive. It may reveal that some of the people who tested positive found out via a health professional telling them because they had been told before home testing was widely available.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on survey results, COVID-19 vaccines’ acceptance rate was high, and the majority of the population surveyed understood the importance of vaccine in terms of disease prevention. Many continued to express concerns over COVID-19, even though we are now in the 3rd year of the global pandemic. Respondents gained new hygienic practices with respect to infectious diseases through the pandemic, and many developed routine health hygiene practices such as mask wearing and hand sanitizing. Our results indicate that more work remains to build up pandemic related trust between the government and the public. The public's lack of trust in the government’s ability to deal with another pandemic would actually make the government less qualified to prepare for another pandemic. The public should continue to pay attention to

emerging threats from infectious diseases and the government should invest in public health infrastructure to prepare for the future.

Table 1: Respondent Demographics

	%	n
Age		
Under 18	1.89%	1
18 - 24	16.98%	9
25 - 34	47.17%	25
35 - 44	18.87%	10
45 - 54	9.43%	5
55 - 64	5.66%	3
Race		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.92%	1
Asian	46.15%	24
Black or African American	21.15%	11
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0
White	21.15%	11
Prefer not to answer	9.62%	5
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	18.87%	10
Not Hispanic or Latino	69.81%	37
Prefer not to answer	11.32%	6
Gender		
Man	13.21%	7
Woman	84.91%	45
Other	1.89%	1

State of Residence		
California	35.42%	17
Connecticut	2.08%	1
Illinois	4.17%	2
New Jersey	8.33%	4
New York	35.42%	17
Oregon	2.08%	1
Maryland	4.17%	2
Massachusetts	2.08%	1
Minnesota	2.08%	1
Wisconsin	4.17%	2
Educational Level		
High School Diploma or GED	15.09%	8
Associate's Degree	9.43%	5
Bachelor's Degree	37.74%	20
Master's Degree	30.19%	16
Doctoral Degree or Equivalent	5.66%	3
Prefer not to answer	1.89%	1

Table 2: Covid-19 Related Survey Responses

Q2 - Have you ever been informed, either by a health professional or home testing kit, that you had or showed symptoms of COVID-19?	%	n
Yes - by a health professional or clinic	18.87%	10
No	30.19%	16
Don't remember	0.00%	0
Yes - via a rapid / PCR home testing kit	26.42%	14
Yes - both	24.53%	13

Q3 - Do you personally know anyone who was hospitalized due to infection with COVID-19?	%	n
Yes	54.72%	29
No	45.28%	24
Don't remember	0.00%	0
Q4 - Do you personally know anyone who died due to complications of COVID-19?	%	n
Yes	47.17%	25
No	52.83%	28
Don't remember	0.00%	0
Q5 - Before the COVID-19 vaccine was available in the U.S., what public health recommendations did you follow to protect yourself from infection? (Please select all that apply)	%	n
Distanced from others	23.49%	39
Washed hands / used hand sanitizer after making physical contact	28.31%	47
Wore face masks / coverings	25.90%	43
Avoided crowds	21.08%	35
Other*	1.20%	2
* Took supplements		
Q6 - Have you been vaccinated with at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?	%	n
Yes	96.23%	51
No	0.00%	0
Don't remember	3.77%	2
Q7 - Have you been vaccinated with any of the COVID-19 vaccine boosters?	%	n

Yes	86.68%	47
No	9.43%	5
Don't remember	1.89%	1
Q8 - Over the course of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, do you believe that wider availability of rapid/PCR viral testing and vaccine administration was a contributing factor to receive the vaccine and/or booster?	%	n
Yes	90.57%	48
No	9.43%	5
N/A - I have not received a COVID-19 vaccine	0.00%	0
Q9 - As the COVID-19 vaccines became more widely available in the U.S., what public health recommendations did you continue to follow to protect yourself from infection? (Please select all that apply)	%	n
Distanced from others	18.32%	24
Washed hands / used hand sanitizer after making physical contact	32.82%	43
Wore face masks / coverings	32.06%	42
Avoided crowds	16.79%	22
Other	0.00%	0
Q10 - How would you rate your overall compliance with public health recommendations to limit the spread of COVID-19?	%	n
Excellent	37.74%	20
Above Average	47.17%	25
Average	13.21%	7
Below Average	1.89%	1
Q11 - At this time, how concerned are you about getting infected with COVID-19?	%	n

Not at all concerned	20.75%	11
Somewhat concerned	56.60%	30
Concerned	13.21%	7
Moderately concerned	9.43%	5
Q12 - Which of the following communicable diseases do you currently view as the biggest threat to your health in 2023?	%	n
COVID-19	50.94%	27
Ebola	1.89%	1
Measles	0.00%	0
Seasonal Influenza (Flu)	22.64%	12
I do not feel threatened by any of these diseases	16.98%	9
Other**	1.89%	1
Monkeypox	5.66%	3
**Common cold		
Q13 - Who are your most trusted sources for public health information? (Please select all that apply)	%	n
My healthcare provider	21.72%	28
Friends & family	9.30%	12
The centers for diseases control and prevention (CDC)	27.91%	36
A federal government health official (e.g., Dr. Anthony Fauci)	16.28%	21
Community of religious leader	0.00%	0
Local public health department	17.83%	23
One or more celebrities and/or media personalities	0.78%	1
One or more politicians	0.00%	0
Personal social media and/or knowledge research (e.g., Google)	6.20%	8

Q14 - How confident are you that the U.S. government is currently prepared for another pandemic?	%	n
Not confident at all	37.74%	20
Somewhat confident	52.83%	28
Confident	9.43%	5
Very confident	0.00%	0
Extremely confident	0.00%	0