

COVID-19— Delaying Services

Fielded December 2020

Every month, IBM Watson Health® conducts a health poll that surveys approximately 3,000 Americans to gauge attitudes and opinions on a wide range of healthcare issues.

This health poll is powered by the IBM Watson Health PULSE® Healthcare Survey, an independently funded, multi-modal (land line, cell phone, internet) survey that collects information from approximately 80,000 U.S. households annually.

The results depicted in this report represent responses from 3,004 survey participants interviewed from December 1–13, 2020, with a margin of error of +/- 1.8%.

Executive summary

This health poll asked Americans about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how it may affect decisions to delay or cancel healthcare services.

Of all respondents:

34%

said they had delayed or cancelled healthcare services in the last three months. In a February 2020 health poll¹, 20% of respondents said the same, and the difference is statistically significant.

48%

said the reason for postponing healthcare services was COVID-19, and Cost (5.7%) was the second most frequently stated reason. In a February 2020 health poll, COVID-19 was not given as a reason and Cost was the most frequently stated reason (15%).

65%

said they are either Comfortable or Very Comfortable visiting a doctor's office, while 15% said they are either Not At All Comfortable or Not Comfortable. When comparing to responses to this question in a June 2020 health poll², the change is not statistically significant.

50%

said that they are either Comfortable or Very Comfortable visiting an urgent care or walk-in clinic, while 26% said they are either Not At All Comfortable or Not Comfortable.

47%

said they are either Comfortable or Very Comfortable visiting a hospital for non-surgical care. 29% said they are either Not At All Comfortable or Not Comfortable, which represents a statistically significant increase from 18% of respondents to a June 2020 health poll.³

Source:

1. The PULSE February health poll reflects responses from 3,000 survey participants interviewed between Feb 1–16, 2020 with a margin of error of +/- 1.8%.
2. The PULSE June health poll reflects responses from 3,000 survey participants interviewed between June 1–14, 2020, with a margin of error of +/- 1.8%.
3. Ibid.

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Question 1: Not including dental services, in the past 3 months, have you [or anyone in your household] had to postpone, delay or cancel healthcare services?

Note: Bolded figures are statistically significant.

Note: Red figures are statistically significant between years

	December		February	Difference
	Yes	No	No	Feb - Dec
<35	39.5%	56.5%	23.7%	15.8%
35 - 64	38.2%	60.8%	23.6%	14.6%
65+	21.1%	78.7%	10.9%	10.1%
Total	33.9%	64.7%	20.3%	13.6%
HS or Less	30.2%	68.2%	18.8%	11.4%
Some College/Associate	35.7%	62.6%	23.2%	12.5%
College+	35.1%	63.7%	19.3%	15.8%
Total	33.9%	64.7%	20.3%	13.6%
Silent Generation	17.5%	82.3%	7.4%	10.2%
Baby Boomers	26.8%	72.7%	14.3%	12.5%
Generation X	38.6%	60.3%	23.2%	15.4%
Millennials	40.4%	56.2%	25.5%	14.9%
Total	33.9%	64.7%	20.3%	13.6%
<\$25k	34.0%	63.9%	22.2%	11.8%
\$25k - \$49.9k	37.5%	61.6%	20.4%	17.2%
\$50k - \$99.9k	30.2%	68.2%	18.4%	11.8%
\$100k+	37.3%	61.7%	21.3%	16.0%
Total	33.9%	64.7%	20.3%	13.6%

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Question 2: What was the main reason for postponing, delaying or canceling healthcare services (Note: Small sample size on all categories except COVID-19)

Note: Care should be taken when interpreting Q2 due to small sample sizes.

	COVID-19	Cost	Lack of time/ appointment inconvenient/ time or work conflict	Appointment availability	No health insurance
Total	47.8%	5.7%	5.1%	4.9%	4.1%
	Other	Fear	Illness	Injury/ illness/pain	No transportation
Total	4.1%	3.5%	2.7%	2.5%	2.5%
	Time inconvenient	Family res- ponsibilities/ obligations/ death in the family	Didn't feel treatment was necessary	Forgot to go	Insurance restrictions
Total	2.2%	2.1%	2.0%	1.9%	1.7%
	Waiting for referral	Distance too far	Weather/ bad weather	Location inconvenient	
Total	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.4%	

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Question 3: Currently, how comfortable would you be visiting a doctor's office for medical care?

	December				
	1 - Not At All Comfortable	2	3	4	5 - Very Comfortable
<35	5.2%	11.9%	23.9%	28.5%	29.9%
35 - 64	7.3%	8.8%	20.0%	26.2%	37.4%
65+	5.0%	4.0%	14.4%	23.5%	53.0%
Total	6.2%	8.5%	19.7%	26.2%	39.1%
HS or Less	8.7%	10.5%	19.7%	26.0%	34.6%
Some College/Associate	6.9%	6.1%	22.6%	24.9%	39.0%
College+	4.1%	8.9%	17.7%	27.1%	42.1%
Total	6.2%	8.5%	19.7%	26.2%	39.1%
Silent Generation	6.5%	3.3%	9.0%	17.7%	63.0%
Baby Boomers	4.9%	5.0%	17.8%	26.0%	46.1%
Generation X	8.0%	9.7%	20.3%	27.0%	34.6%
Millennials	5.1%	11.4%	23.1%	27.3%	32.5%
Total	6.2%	8.5%	19.7%	26.2%	39.1%
<\$25k	9.0%	8.0%	21.8%	21.8%	39.0%
\$25k - \$49.9k	5.3%	12.0%	20.7%	29.4%	32.2%
\$50k - \$99.9k	6.5%	7.7%	21.5%	26.9%	37.0%
\$100k+	2.0%	6.5%	15.0%	25.9%	50.5%
Total	6.2%	8.5%	19.7%	26.2%	39.1%

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Question 3: Currently, how comfortable would you be visiting a doctor's office for medical care?

June

	1 - Not At All Comfortable	2	3	4	5 - Very Comfortable
<35	6.6%	9.6%	24.1%	35.9%	19.8%
35 - 64	3.7%	7.2%	20.6%	30.7%	34.1%
65+	7.7%	2.7%	15.5%	29.9%	42.4%
Total	5.4%	6.8%	20.4%	32.0%	32.0%
HS or Less	9.8%	4.8%	18.1%	29.0%	29.2%
Some College/Associate	3.8%	4.9%	21.1%	32.1%	34.7%
College+	4.4%	9.0%	21.0%	33.3%	31.5%
Total	5.4%	6.8%	20.4%	32.0%	32.0%
Silent Generation	6.8%	0.5%	12.5%	28.8%	48.3%
Baby Boomers	6.3%	6.6%	17.5%	28.3%	37.4%
Generation X	4.2%	6.5%	18.8%	32.5%	35.2%
Millennials	5.7%	8.5%	25.7%	35.0%	21.4%
Total	5.4%	6.8%	20.4%	32.0%	32.0%
<\$25k	8.4%	6.2%	20.1%	29.0%	30.3%
\$25k - \$49.9k	5.6%	6.5%	21.2%	33.9%	27.9%
\$50k - \$99.9k	5.7%	6.2%	19.2%	35.7%	30.4%
\$100k+	2.9%	8.6%	23.2%	28.9%	36.0%
Total	5.4%	6.8%	20.4%	32.0%	32.0%

The PULSE June health poll reflects responses from 3,000 survey participants interviewed between June 1–14, 2020, with a margin of error of +/- 1.8%.

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Question 4: Currently, how comfortable would you be visiting a hospital for non-surgical care?

	December				
	1 - Not At All Comfortable	2	3	4	5 - Very Comfortable
<35	14.1%	16.7%	24.2%	22.3%	21.8%
35 - 64	15.8%	14.5%	21.4%	21.8%	25.3%
65+	15.4%	10.0%	22.1%	15.4%	36.2%
Total	15.2%	14.0%	22.3%	20.4%	27.0%
HS or Less	19.1%	13.2%	19.9%	20.8%	25.7%
Some College/Associate	16.7%	14.2%	25.0%	17.6%	25.6%
College+	11.8%	14.4%	22.0%	22.1%	28.8%
Total	15.2%	14.0%	22.3%	20.4%	27.0%
Silent Generation	16.1%	6.2%	15.9%	13.1%	47.0%
Baby Boomers	14.9%	13.3%	24.5%	17.5%	28.7%
Generation X	16.9%	14.9%	20.3%	22.8%	24.2%
Millennials	13.5%	15.4%	24.2%	21.9%	24.0%
Total	15.2%	14.0%	22.3%	20.4%	27.0%
<\$25k	18.3%	13.5%	19.0%	20.7%	27.7%
\$25k - \$49.9k	15.7%	17.1%	23.9%	19.3%	23.3%
\$50k - \$99.9k	15.1%	15.4%	23.4%	20.8%	24.2%
\$100k+	9.3%	10.9%	21.9%	22.4%	34.1%
Total	15.2%	14.0%	22.3%	20.4%	27.0%

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Question 4: Currently, how comfortable would you be visiting a hospital for non-surgical care?

	June				
	1 - Not At All Comfortable	2	3	4	5 - Very Comfortable
<35	8.1%	14.6%	29.7%	22.1%	19.2%
35 - 64	7.4%	7.4%	20.5%	29.0%	27.0%
65+	8.8%	9.6%	23.7%	21.8%	30.1%
Total	7.9%	10.0%	23.8%	25.4%	25.5%
HS or Less	9.2%	9.0%	29.7%	15.2%	23.7%
Some College/Associate	6.4%	8.9%	22.8%	27.2%	25.4%
College+	8.3%	11.1%	21.6%	29.2%	26.5%
Total	7.9%	10.0%	23.8%	25.4%	25.5%
Silent Generation	7.3%	6.4%	25.8%	19.6%	36.5%
Baby Boomers	9.1%	11.7%	21.4%	22.7%	25.8%
Generation X	6.5%	6.1%	20.6%	29.8%	29.2%
Millennials	8.5%	12.9%	28.4%	24.5%	19.8%
Total	7.9%	10.0%	23.8%	25.4%	25.5%
<\$25k	8.7%	12.1%	26.1%	19.4%	25.3%
\$25k - \$49.9k	6.4%	9.6%	22.7%	26.7%	23.1%
\$50k - \$99.9k	10.5%	7.5%	24.9%	26.6%	24.2%
\$100k+	6.4%	10.6%	22.7%	29.2%	28.9%
Total	7.9%	10.0%	23.8%	25.4%	25.5%

The PULSE June health poll reflects responses from 3,000 survey participants interviewed between June 1–14, 2020, with a margin of error of +/- 1.8%.

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Question 5: Currently, how comfortable would you be visiting an urgent care or walk-in clinic for medical care?

	December				
	1 - Not At All Comfortable	2	3	4	5 - Very Comfortable
<35	9.6%	18.0%	24.1%	24.9%	22.8%
35 - 64	13.1%	13.2%	22.5%	24.6%	25.9%
65+	12.0%	13.1%	21.2%	19.2%	33.0%
Total	11.9%	14.5%	22.6%	23.4%	26.8%
HS or Less	17.2%	15.1%	21.5%	21.4%	23.7%
Some College/Associate	12.3%	15.0%	26.1%	22.6%	23.2%
College+	8.3%	13.7%	20.8%	25.2%	31.2%
Total	11.9%	14.5%	22.6%	23.4%	26.8%
Silent Generation	14.0%	7.9%	14.8%	19.2%	41.1%
Baby Boomers	12.5%	16.7%	23.3%	20.2%	26.2%
Generation X	13.3%	12.4%	22.6%	24.7%	26.6%
Millennials	9.3%	16.3%	23.8%	25.6%	24.2%
Total	11.9%	14.5%	22.6%	23.4%	26.8%
<\$25k	15.4%	15.5%	21.6%	21.3%	25.3%
\$25k - \$49.9k	12.1%	17.4%	26.1%	23.3%	20.3%
\$50k - \$99.9k	12.4%	15.8%	23.3%	22.4%	25.3%
\$100k+	6.9%	7.9%	16.9%	28.7%	38.7%
Total	11.9%	14.5%	22.6%	23.4%	26.8%

Learn More

Explore other PULSE Health Polls here:
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