

SIGNALS



Understanding the
coronavirus crisis

Eighth Edition

June 2020

INTRODUCTION – SIGNALS EDITION #8

The defining event of 2020 is the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) across the world. Things moved quickly: the progression from outbreak to pandemic, the imposition of lockdowns in many countries and, now, the gradual re-opening of society and the economy.

The crisis sees governments, companies and individuals all having to respond to an unprecedented set of challenges, as they grapple with the implications of this “once in a century” event.

There are so many topics to watch and monitor over the coming weeks and months. Governments are under pressure to lead and act. Businesses – large and small – have to make the right decisions for their employees and their customers. Meanwhile, people’s behaviours will be changing, in ways which may have longer-term implications beyond the immediate circumstances of the crisis.

Ipsos is committed to helping our clients navigate with confidence our world of rapid change, and this digest has been prepared to help us all better understand the dynamics of the pandemic.

This eighth edition sees us bring together our latest research on coronavirus, drawing on the research and analysis of our teams around the world. We have sought to highlight our key learnings so far and started to identify how attitudes and behaviours are evolving. For these reasons, we have adopted *Signals* as our title. You can download previous editions from the [Ipsos COVID-19 home page](#); please email IKC@ipsos.com if you would like to subscribe to future editions.

You can also keep in touch with our latest research on the Ipsos website and via our social media channels; your regular Ipsos contacts are on hand to discuss how we can support you to better understand coronavirus and its implications for us all.

IN THIS EDITION:

PUBLIC OPINION ON CORONAVIRUS

Exploring awareness of how the virus spreads

Can the coronavirus be spread via children, animals or indeed through 5G technology? Our latest global survey asks people in 16 countries for their take on the transmission of COVID-19.

WHAT WORRIES THE WORLD

Coronavirus remains the world's top worry

Global concern about coronavirus is diminishing slightly as worry shifts towards unemployment – now at the highest level recorded in five years. However, COVID-19 remains the top issue in 18 of the 27 countries.

MAINTAINING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

The pandemic is also a social problem

Coronavirus has raised the challenge of not only the adoption, but also the long-term maintenance of new behaviours. Enjoyment, internalized motivation and building positive identities are key to making change stick.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE US

Coronavirus concerns rebound

While social distancing may be relaxing, Americans still see many 'normal' activities to be riskier than before. We review the latest polls on COVID-19, against the backdrop of the protests following the murder of George Floyd.

CLIMATE CHANGE & COVID-19: NOW WHAT?

What can we learn from two parallel crises

2019 may have been the year of climate emergency but 2020 is clearly the year of COVID-19. Our new report looks at how attitudes and behaviours have changed and examines the emerging mandate for a "green" recovery.

OUR CHANGING FOOD HABITS

The rise of the home chef

Spending more time in the kitchen during coronavirus has offered the opportunity for more creative cooking. Our study on food habits in the MENA region finds families are focusing on healthy eating.

SPOTLIGHT ON BRAZIL

A look at one of the countries worst hit by the crisis

Very few Brazilians will emerge from coronavirus unaffected as the general mood in the country turns increasingly sour. Currently, seven in 10 think the country is heading in the wrong direction.

SPOTLIGHT ON ITALY

Reopening with caution

The complete reopening of the country has been met with small rise in Italians concern about their personal safety. But a large proportion of the population are resuming old habits and think that the worst is now over.

PUBLIC OPINION ON CORONAVIRUS

We explore awareness of how COVID-19 spreads.

Our latest international survey covers a number of theories about the transmission of coronavirus and how infection can be prevented. It reveals a lack of detailed understanding about how the virus behaves and some differences in beliefs across countries.

We find that 55% overall and a majority in 11 of the 16 countries think it is true that COVID-19 can live on surfaces for up to three days. But one in four say that they do not know.

The public are confident that the theory that children cannot get COVID-19 is false. Eight in 10 across all countries say this is not true, higher still in the UK (93%) and Canada (91%). Mexico is the only country where nearly one in five (17%) say this is true.

Opinions on whether pets can transmit the virus to humans are more mixed. Those in Italy (83%), France (60%), Spain (59%), Mexico (58%) and Brazil (56%) are most likely to say this is false. Meanwhile, more than a third of respondents in China (40%), India (36%), South Korea (35%) and Japan (33%) believe it is true.

A majority in 15 of the 16 countries say it is not the case that eating garlic protects against infection.

Lastly, there is consensus that 5G mobile technology cannot spread COVID-19, with 75% across all 16 countries saying this isn't true.

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CLIMATE CHANGE & COVID-19: NOW WHAT?

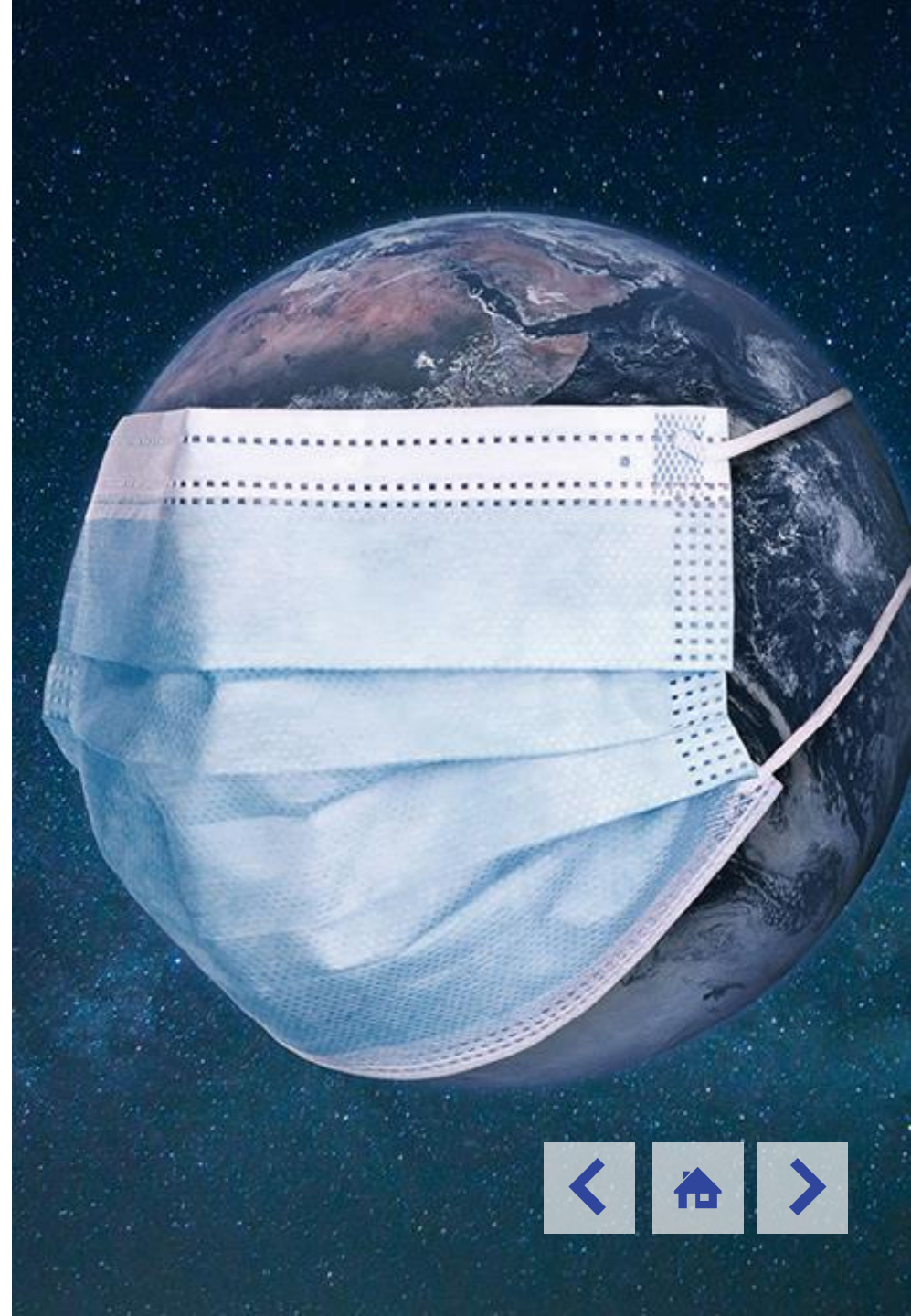
Global views on the parallel and intersecting crises.

While 2019 was the year of global concern for the climate crisis, 2020 is the year of COVID-19. But more than seven in ten people around the world think that climate change is as significant a threat as coronavirus in the long term. So where do we go from here?

Our [latest analysis](#) examines the data emerging from the COVID-19 period and presents five applicable learnings for climate change, including: (1) a need to listen to the experts, (2) preventative measures are as important as a mitigated response, (3) society coming together to protect the most vulnerable, (4) cross-sector collaboration as paramount for success, and (5) the public need for clear communication and direction.

The climate crisis sits in a different place in people's minds than more "urgent" crises like COVID-19 for many reasons, which means we often see a say-do gap across behaviours and attitudes. People want to live a more sustainable lifestyle, but six in 10 currently say they will go back to doing the things they did before the COVID-19 crisis – including vacations and travel.

The majority (65%) of people globally support a green recovery from COVID-19, and 68% say their government would be failing them if they did not act on environmental issues. But our [World Economic Forum survey](#) finds the public more divided on whether financial aid to revive the economy should be limited to "green" businesses.

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WHAT WORRIES THE WORLD?

Coronavirus still tops our global tracker but concern is beginning to shift more towards unemployment.

Since its inclusion in our *What Worries the World* survey in April 2020, the coronavirus pandemic has topped the table as the world's number one worry. But its prominence declined last month, as concern about unemployment rises in many countries.

In May 2020, 55% cite COVID-19 as one of the top concerns facing their country. This is down from the 63% seen previously, but still significantly higher than the other issues rounding out the top five: Unemployment (42%), Poverty & social inequality (31%), Healthcare (25%) and Corruption (24%).

Coronavirus is the top concern in 18 of the 27 countries surveyed (down from 24 countries the previous month). During this time, we have seen unemployment replace COVID-19 as the top concern in six countries: Argentina, Italy, South Africa, South Korea, Spain and Turkey.

Unemployment is up seven percentage points on last month and its 42% score is the highest level seen in five years. Concern about unemployment has also grown in all but three of the 27 countries surveyed. This issue is currently most prevalent in Spain (mentioned by 66%), Italy (65%), and South Africa (60%).

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OUR CHANGING FOOD HABITS

How have we responded to more time in the kitchen?

The disruption caused by coronavirus is prompting marked changes in how we eat and what we eat. Our new study on food habits in the MENA region finds 54% saying they are now eating more healthily, 52% consuming more “immunity boosting” food, and 45% taking more balanced meals.

One of the most striking effects of COVID-19 on the MENA family’s kitchen is how much more time they’re spending in it. Our study, carried out in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, KSA, and UAE, finds 57% saying they have been preparing their own meals, with many cooks getting creative. Some 81% say they have been trying new recipes and 49% are seeking inspiration from online and TV chefs. (For more on the rise of the home chef, see [this analysis](#) of social media conversation in English-speaking markets).

At this stage, there is some reluctance to return to how things were before and hesitancy to visit busy places, with 53% saying they are not keen to eat out at restaurants again.

Our report notes an acceleration in online shopping as a result of lockdown restrictions. The neighbourhood store has also been a big winner during this period, offering convenience and proximity when other channels were less accessible. They appear to have benefitted from giving consumers an experience that more closely resembles their prior shopping habits.

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MAINTAINING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

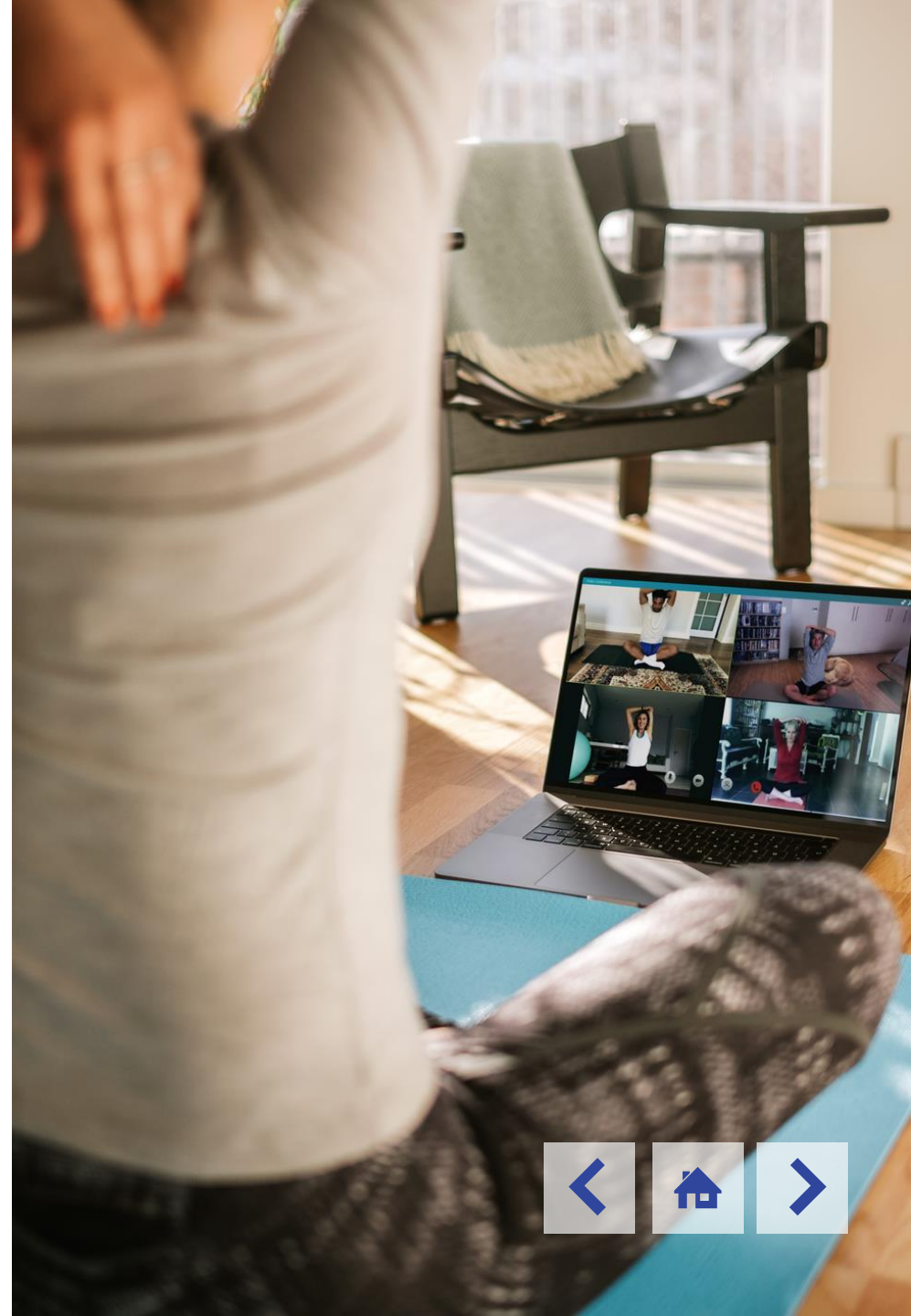
The social dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coronavirus has required people to make long-term behaviour changes. From both public health and commercial perspectives, it is important to understand how to motivate positive action and protective behaviours that last.

Our behavioural science guidance on how to encourage long-term behaviour change recommends the following:

- **Make activities enjoyable:** Long-term adherence requires more positive motivations than short-term precautions. People are likely to better engage with behaviours they enjoy.
- **Build internalized motivation:** Being obliged to do something only has short-term effectiveness. Highlight meaning and value in behaviour, such as social responsibility.
- **Build positive identities:** People are more likely to maintain behaviours that are consistent with how they see themselves. Associate actions with identities that people can relate to.
- **Monitor and regulate behaviour.** Help people to develop new routines and rituals.

Pandemics are a social problem as well as an immunological one, and many of the factors that underpin behaviour maintenance are social and cultural. In this way, channelling them can act as a “power-up” for behaviour maintenance strategies.

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SPOTLIGHT ON BRAZIL

We look at one of the countries worst hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

In Brazil, four in 10 (41%) have suffered anxiety as a consequence of COVID and very few Brazilians will exit the pandemic unharmed. Only 22% say they haven't been impacted in some way or another, putting Brazil on par with Mexico as the country most affected among the 16 surveyed in Ipsos' regular tracker.

Unsurprisingly, the top concern amongst Brazilians' is coronavirus, according to our *What Worries the World* survey, with 56% in May citing the pandemic as a major worry, up four percentage points on the previous month. Healthcare was the second highest worry, mentioned by 44% in this latest wave.

Until recently, public opinion in Brazil has been polarized, but the extent of the damages brought about by the coronavirus are now being felt even by those who were still optimistic last month.

Currently, 70% consider that the country is heading in the wrong direction, up 13 points from last month, and only 30% think Brazil is on the right track – the lowest level recorded since President Bolsonaro's inauguration in January last year.

Finally, while 85% of Brazilians support the idea that their government's post-COVID recovery efforts must prioritize the protection of the environment, 41% admit to not making environment one of their own priorities at the present time.

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SPOTLIGHT ON THE US

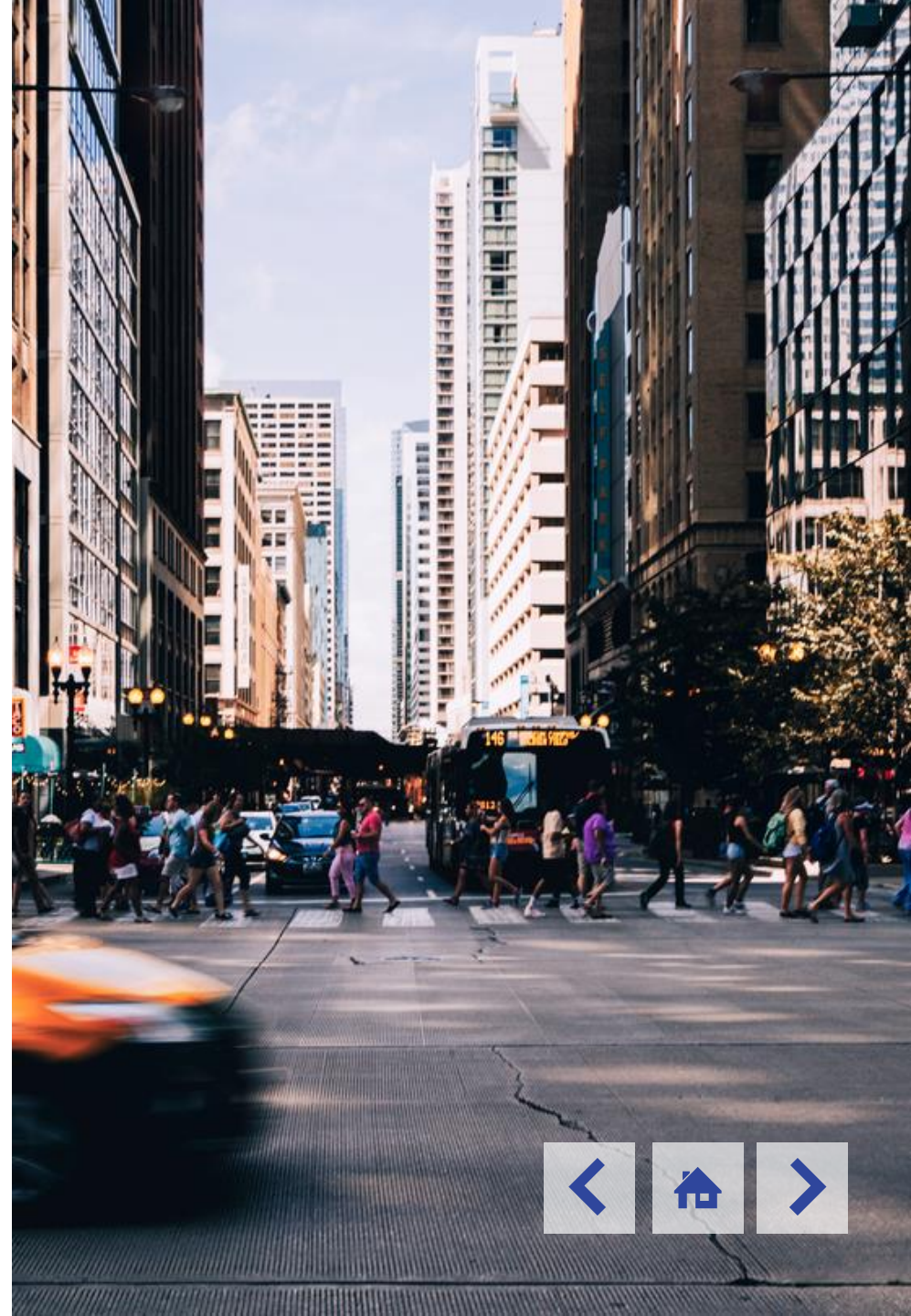
Concerns about coronavirus rebound as social distancing relaxes across America.

After three months of tracking America's response to the coronavirus pandemic, week 13 of our [Axios-Ipsos Coronavirus Index](#) finds that, while Americans are now increasingly engaging with each other outside the home, the perceived risks of regular activities are actually increasing.

The polling finds that, between 12-15 June, 54% of Americans reported being 'extremely' or 'very' concerned about the outbreak, up from the 48% recorded the previous week. A similar proportion (56%) also report high levels of concern about a second wave of infection. Almost two-thirds of the public (64%) think that returning to their pre-COVID life is risky right now, up from 57% last week.

Recent US studies about race in relation to coronavirus find that Black Americans have been hit much harder by the disease: They are three times as likely as white Americans to know someone who has died from the virus. And 75% of Black Americans say they're extremely or very concerned that coronavirus is doing greater damage to people of colour, compared to only 30% of white Americans, according to the [Axios-Ipsos Index](#).

Ipsos' analysis shows that approximately 2% of the population, or 5 million Americans, have gone to the street to call for reform after George Floyd's murder. This [round-up](#) presents the latest public opinion findings on COVID-19, and on the protests, as the country looks ahead to November's Presidential Election.

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SPOTLIGHT ON ITALY

The latest in public opinion as the country reopens.

Following the reopening of the country, our latest report from Italy records a small increase in the perceived threat of the virus for individuals and local communities and a rise in general uncertainty.

On the other hand, there is growing confidence that a new lockdown won't be necessary and some 47% think that the worst is now over: levels of threat remain stable or declining when people are asked about the country and indeed the world as a whole.

The public doesn't feel back to normality yet: one in ten say that life is back to how it was before COVID-19 while half have resumed some of their old habits. Some 7% remain in lockdown.

Among the more cautious, the main barriers for resuming life as it was are in equal measure the fear of infection and a feeling of unease around safety measures (distancing and using face masks).

Italians are not eager to travel abroad yet, as the majority report that they plan to spend leisure time either in their region (24%), in other Italian regions (31%) or close to where they live (10%), with another 30% planning to stay home. Among those who intend to travel, six in ten feel 'very' or 'fairly' safe doing so and one third feel annoyed by the need to comply with safety measures.

After some debate before it was launched, Italy's COVID-19 contact tracing app, Immuni, has now been downloaded by 4% of the population (2 million), while four in 10 remain opposed to it.

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SHORTCUTS

CHILDREN AND DIGITAL LEARNING

Digital schooling seems to have paved the way for a more independent form of learning, according to our report from seven countries across the Nordics and Baltics on how children's education has been affected by coronavirus.

The study was carried out by Ipsos for Children's Advisory Panel (CAP), an initiative by Telia Company in collaboration with child rights organizations and schools in the region to find out about the positive and negative experiences of children studying at home and online.

A majority of children report their ability to independently solve tasks has improved. This enhanced independence also includes planning and scheduling their studies and activities. Results have also improved for many.

Greater parent involvement has come at the cost of reduced support and interaction between classmates and school/teachers.

Noted disadvantages of home learning, in terms of mental and physical wellbeing, include feeling bored and tired, spending less time with friends and exchanging exercise and sports for screen time.

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UPDATES FROM THE COUNTRIES

Our latest [coronavirus polling in the UK](#) shows concern about the personal risk of coronavirus to be at its lowest since lockdown was imposed (66%) while more people are shopping online, upgrading media packages and wearing facemasks.

Traffic growth is accelerating in France as post-coronavirus normality resumes. [Our measurement study](#) finds the circulation of personal vehicles from 8-14 June to be up by 10-20% compared to the previous week in all French cities.

Looking at [life in the new normal in Singapore](#), 71% of the public are worried about contracting the virus, half don't intend to travel this year (even if it is allowed) and a majority intend to continue online shopping.

The third in our series of reports on the [healthcare industry in China](#) finds that, worried about a second wave of outbreak, China remains vigilant about COVID-19 control and the recovery of medical service in most regions in China has sped up.

Finally, our [team in Kenya](#) report that 65% of small businesses have laid off staff (or plan to) because of COVID-19, making it harder for them to operate.

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IPSOS WEBINARS ON CORONAVIRUS

We have launched a range of webinars to help our clients gain greater clarity on the moving picture that is the coronavirus pandemic. Visit [our dedicated page of upcoming webinars](#) and catch up on those that have already taken place.

Recent features include [How social insights are preparing brands for an unconventional summer](#), which looked at new habits and coping mechanisms developed during COVID-19 as well as discussing how people are handling derailed summer plans.

In [Now What? Climate Change and Coronavirus](#), our team in the UK looked at how attitudes to climate change and the environment have been affected by the pandemic.

[The Path Forward: Financial Services Post-COVID](#) discusses business recovery strategies as they relate to the future of financial services in Canada. This is part of a series of webinars from our Canadian team, which also looks at innovation, the new foodservice landscape and brand communication during the pandemic.

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All the information within this document is in the public domain – and is therefore available to both Ipsos colleagues and clients.

We will be producing further editions of this document over the coming period; please email IKC@ipsos.com if you would like to subscribe.

In the meantime our latest research will be shared on Ipsos' websites and social media channels; your regular Ipsos contacts are on hand to discuss how we can support you to better understand coronavirus and its implications for us all.

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