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COVID-19 Survey in the Municipality of Anchorage, August 25-27: Highlights

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Key Findings

A total of nine COVID-19 related surveys have been conducted by the Municipality since May 2020. This brief report highlights findings from the most recent survey, conducted August 25-27, 2020. The respondents to this survey were from a panel of people who had participated in the population-based cell phone survey July 16-18. When appropriate, the findings from the most recent survey have been compared with previous surveys.

Areas of Strength

- **Most** (74%) reported they were **willing** to get a **flu shot**.
- **Most** (75%) reported that they were **willing** to receive the **COVID-19 vaccine** that has been approved for safety and efficacy.
- Despite changes in Municipality emergency orders over the past six months, **most** respondents have consistently reported engaging in **physical distancing behaviors and good hygiene**
- **Most** respondents were **not worried or only slightly worried** about household finances, losing employment, not being able to connect with friends and family, transportation, and not having enough to eat.
- **Most** respondents reported having **good to very good morale** in their household.
- **Most** respondents reported that the Municipality's policies related to COVID-19 were **clear or very clear**.

Areas of Concern

- **Less than 20%** reported that they, or members of their family, had **not** been recipients of Municipality or State COVID-related resources. The three most common reasons respondents did not use Municipality/State resources were:
 - They didn't need any resources (58%)
 - They didn't think they qualified (43%)
 - They didn't know what resource were available (29%)
- In June 16 - June 18, about **32%** of respondents said they knew someone infected with coronavirus, while in this survey (August 25 - August 27), **56%** said they knew someone who had been infected.
- **Most** respondents, from June 30 - July 2 until this most recent survey (August 25 - August 27), reported being **worried or very worried** that their friends, their family, themselves, or members of their household would be infected with coronavirus.
- Some demographics were **less likely** to report that they were willing to **get a flu shot**, including:
 - Those without a college degree
 - Those who were employed
 - Those who were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
 - Those with smaller households (1-2 members)
 - Those with children
 - Those with one to two members in their household

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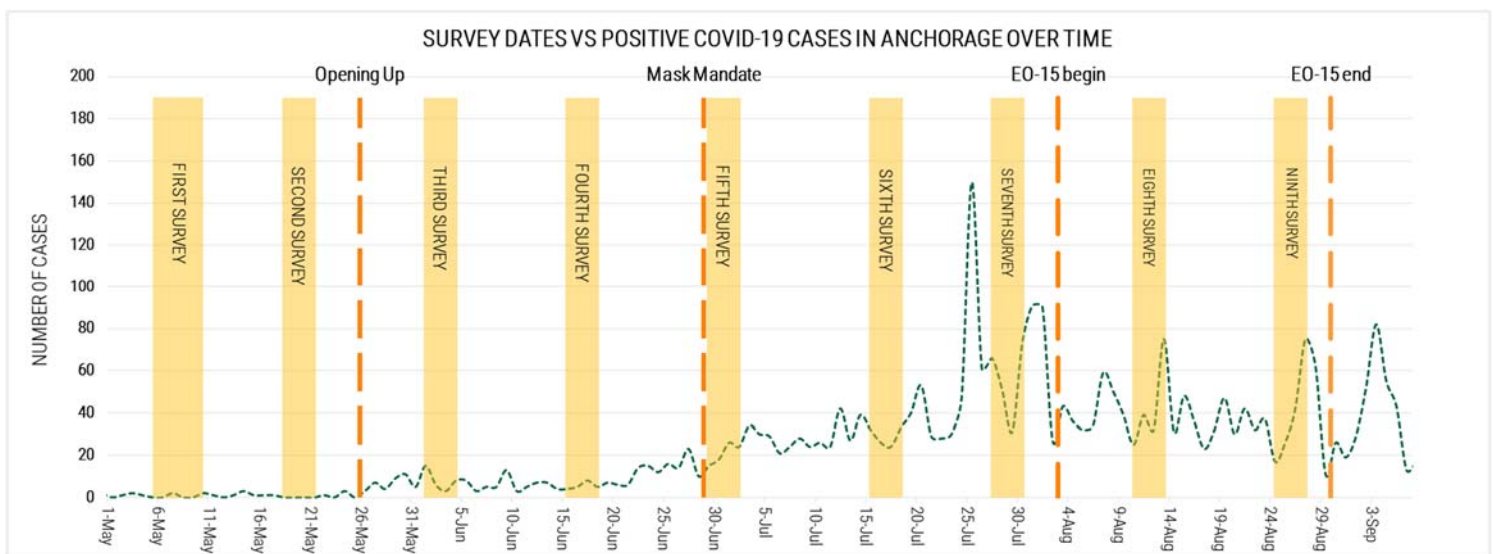
- Those with children
- Some demographics were *less likely* to report that they were willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine that has been approved for safety and efficacy, including:
 - Those who were employed
 - Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
 - Those with smaller households (1-2 members)
 - Those with children

KEY MESSAGING:

- Messaging related to municipal/state COVID-19 assistance and resources could focus on clearly describing qualification criteria, an inventory of existing resources, and how someone could access available resources.
- Messaging related to the flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine could use survey data to target audiences. Framing could include appeals to protect their family and the broader community.

Background and Context

The Municipality has conducted a total of nine surveys (see figure below). The first survey was a population based cell phone survey of Anchorage residents conducted May 6-10, which was followed by four panel surveys done at two-week intervals. After the fourth panel survey, another population-based cell phone survey was conducted July 16-18, which was followed by three panel surveys done at two-week intervals. The demographics of the respondents of the most recent survey were not significantly different from the previous surveys in terms of gender, geographic distribution, and race/ethnicity.



Results

Vaccine

- 74% of the respondents in the most recent survey reported that they were willing to get a flu shot.
 - Those who were significantly LESS willing to get a flu shot were:
 - Those without a college degree (37%) than those with a college degree (19%)
 - Those who were employed (31%) than those who were not employed (13%)
 - Those whose income was less than \$80,000 (25%) than those whose income was greater than \$80,000 (13%)
 - Those with smaller households (1-2 members) (25%) than those with larger households (3+ members) (13%)
 - Those with children (24%) than those with no children (14%)

- 75% of the respondents in the most recent survey reported that they were willing to get a COVID-19 vaccine that has been approved for safety and efficacy.
 - Demographic groups who were significantly LESS willing to get a COVID-19 vaccination were:
 - Those who were employed (30%) than those not employed (14%)
 - Those with children (37%) than those with no children (18%)

Physical Distancing

- Since the first survey...
 - More than 70% reported having no visitors at their home.
 - More than 60% reported having no physical contact with someone who doesn't live with them.
 - More than 60% reported coming within 6 feet of someone who doesn't live with them.
 - More than 65% reported wearing a mask in when coming within 6 feet of people they don't live with (since this question was introduced on the sixth survey).

Hygiene

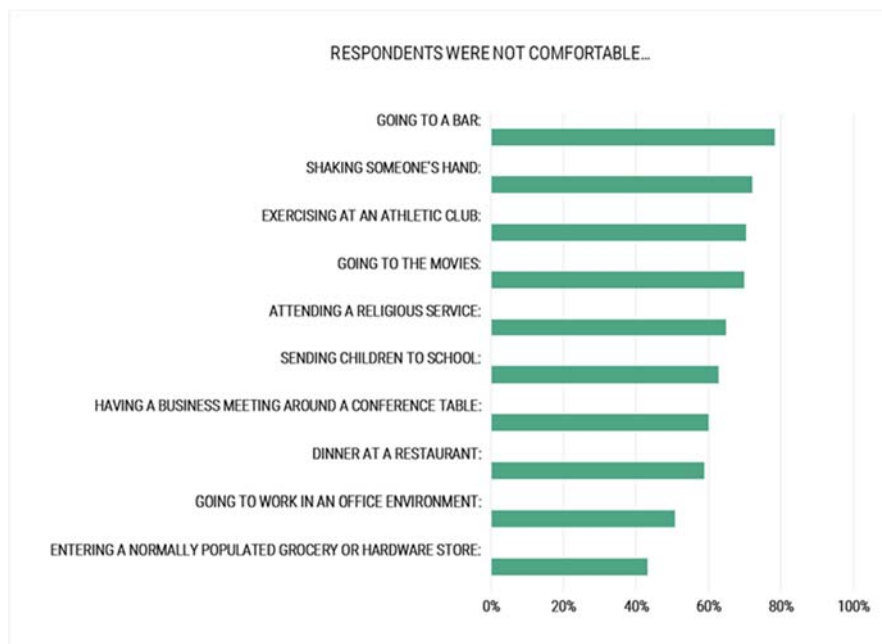
- Since the first survey...
 - The percentage of respondents wearing a mask has significantly increased, from 68% to 83%.
 - About 70% of respondents reported touching things outside their home that may have recently been touched by others.
- Since the fourth survey (when this question was first asked), more than 60% reported washing or sanitizing their hands every time, or most of the time, they touched things outside their home.

Accessing Municipality or State Resources Related to COVID-19

- 19% of respondents Aug. 11-13 reported that they or members of their family had been recipients of Municipality or State resources related to COVID-19. Respondents said they did not use Municipality or State resources because:
 - They didn't need resources (58%)
 - They didn't think they qualified (43%), including:
 - 56% of respondents from Downtown/Spenard/Turnagain area, 44% from University/Mountainview/East Anchorage area, 39% from Sandlake/Bayshore/Oceanview area, 37% from Lake Otis/Hillside area, and 38% from Eagle River/Chugiak area.
 - They didn't know what resources were available (29%), including:
 - 41% of respondents from Sandlake/Bayshore/Oceanview area, 35% from Downtown/Spenard/Turnagain area, and 32% from Eagle River/Chugiak area
 - They didn't know how to apply (13%), including:
 - Around 20% of respondents from Downtown/Spenard/Turnagain area, Sandlake/Bayshore/Oceanview area, and Eagle River/Chugiak area

Activity Comfort Level

- Even if Anchorage became completely open and "back to normal" today, **most** respondents were **not** comfortable with:
 - Going to a bar (78%)
 - Shaking someone's hand (72%)
 - Exercising at an athletic club (70%)
 - Going to the movies (70%)
 - Going to religious service (65%)
 - Sending children to school (63%)
 - Having a business meeting around a conference table (60%)
 - Going to dinner at a restaurant (59%)
 - Working in an office environment (50%)
 - Going to a grocery or hardware store (43%)



There is a positive relationship between comfort level and risk taking behaviors. That is, those who were *more comfortable* going to a bar, restaurant, shaking someone’s hand, etc. were significantly *more likely* to report:

- **Not** wearing a mask when they were outside their home
- **Not** being willing get a flu shot
- **Not** being willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine that has been approved for safety and efficacy.

Mental Health

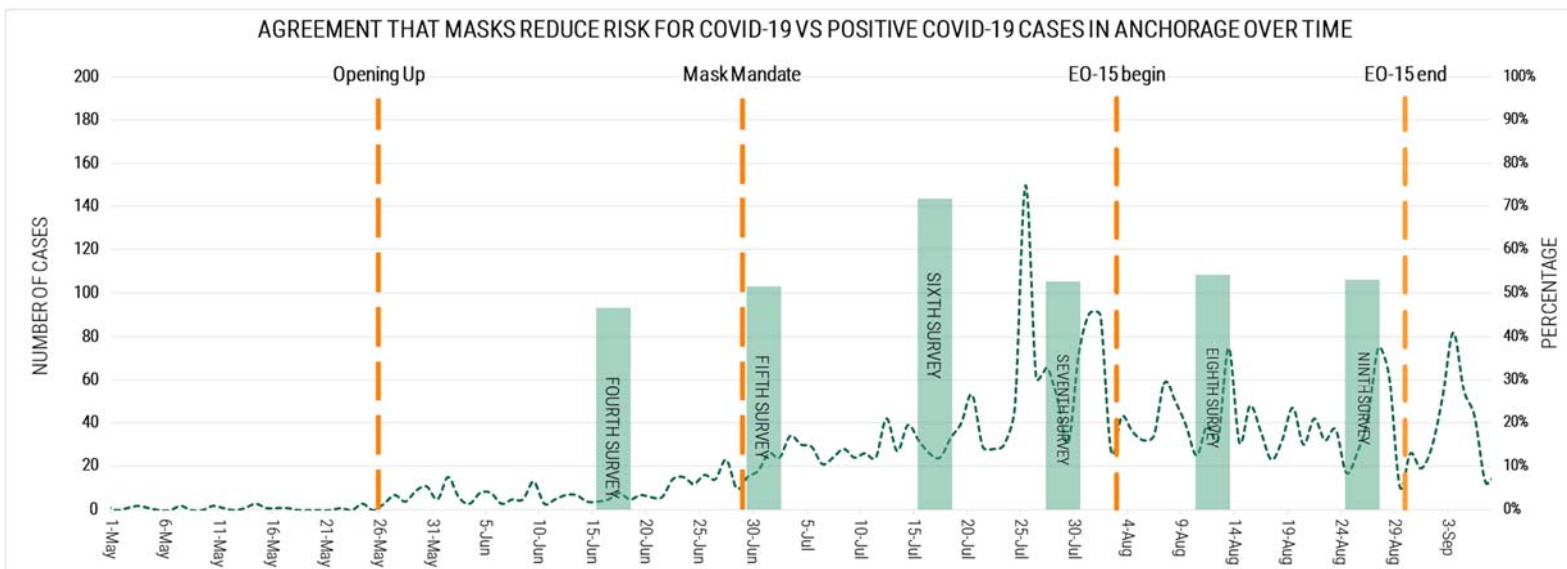
- **Most** respondents were *not worried or only slightly worried* about:
 - Transportation (92%)
 - Having enough to eat (92%)
 - Losing employment (81%)
 - Household finances (78%)
 - Not being able to connect with friends and family (61%)
- **Slightly more than half** reported being *worried or very worried* about
 - Sending children back to school (54%)
 - Having themselves, or members of their households, infected with coronavirus (52%)
 - Friends and other family members becoming infected with coronavirus (51%)
- **Most** reported having *good/very good morale* in their household since the first survey. However, the proportion of respondents reporting having good/very good morale has **decreased**, from 78% in the first survey to 69% in the most recent survey.
- Since the first survey, between **45% and 53%** of respondents reported having *low or moderate stress*.
- Those significantly *more likely* to report being *stressed or very stressed* included:
 - Those without a college degree (63%) than those with a college degree (51%)
 - Those who were employed (59%) than those who were not employed (47%)

Perceptions of Municipality’s Response

- Most (65%) rated the municipality’s response to the outbreak as good to very good. However, this was a significant decrease from the first survey (88%).
- Most (75%) felt that the municipality’s COVID-19 policies were clear or very clear.
- About 40% felt that Anchorage has been opening up at about the right pace and 27% felt that Anchorage is opening up too quickly.
- On surveys done between June 30 and July 30, more than 90% of respondents reported that they mildly or strongly supported the municipality’s mask mandate. This question was only asked on those surveys.

Perceived Benefits of Wearing a Mask

- Most (53%) strongly agreed/agreed that masks reduced their risk for COVID-19, a decrease when compared to the sixth survey (72%) but an improvement when compared to the first time this question was asked in the fourth survey.
- Since June 16-18, more than 70% of respondents have strongly agreed/agreed that masks reduce others’ risk of COVID-19.
- Since June 16-18, more than 70% of respondents have strongly disagreed/disagreed that wearing a mask isn’t necessary if they are not sick.



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Perceived Threat of COVID-19

- The percentage of respondents who thought that COVID-19 was a very serious/serious threat to public health in Alaska increased from the first survey to the most recent survey (57% vs. 64%).
- The percentage of respondents who thought that COVID-19 was a very serious/serious threat to public health in Anchorage increased from the first survey to the most recent survey (58% vs. 67%).

Perceived Susceptibility to COVID-19

- Most (52%) were very worried or worried that they, or members of their household, could become infected with COVID-19, a significant increase from June 16-18 (44%).
- Most (51%) were very worried or worried that their friends and family could become infected with COVID-19, a significant increase from June 16-18 (46%).
- Most (54%) were very worried or worried about spreading COVID-19 to others, similar to June 16-18 (52%).

Self-Efficacy of Wearing a Mask and Cleaning Hands

- Most (74%) washed or sanitized their hands when they touched things that people outside their household might have touched, a significant increase from June 16-18 (65%).
- Most (65%) respondents from July 16-18 did not forget to bring their mask when they went out, a significant increase from June 16-18 (46%).

Recommendations

- Establish or enhance a MOA COVID-19 resources website so that it clearly describes qualification criteria for municipal/state COVID assistance, and outlines the process needed to access those resources.
- Use earned media to briefly explain qualification criteria for individual municipal/state COVID-19 assistance
 - For example: "You qualify for assistance if you (list three criteria). Please go to (site) or call (number) for more information."
- Use paid media placements to reach qualified applicants for municipal/state COVID-19 assistance through text/SMS, search engine ads, digital and social media (LinkedIn, Facebook targeted ads, etc.) direct mail, grocery store fliers, and a varied media mix. Incorporate messaging related to qualification criteria, resource availability and how to access those resources. Refer to data on specific Anchorage neighborhoods to inform targeting.
- Leverage Anchorage School District and other partner communication channels to reach families who may qualify for municipal/state assistance and resources.
- Leverage Anchorage School District and other partner communication channels to prepare communications related to flu vaccination and mitigation of intra-household transmission.
- Refer to data on flu and COVID-19 vaccines to help frame and target messages. Flu vaccine, along with COVID vaccine messaging could feature those in the 20-29 age demographic getting flu shots to help protect their families or those in their household and their community. Vaccine messaging could also utilize harm reduction framing to emphasize how vaccines could lessen infection or disease impact.
- Consider "strength in numbers" message framing and imagery using flexed arms with bandages to tie into existing campaigns emphasizing Alaskans working together. This appeal could be used to target specific demographics, especially men.
- Consider mobile or "pop up" vaccine clinics in close proximity to places most frequented by those willing to engage in COVID risk activities.

Limitations

Note that only surveys 1 and 6 are population-based cell phone survey that can be generalizable to Anchorage residents with cell phones. The other surveys are from a panel that may not necessarily be representative of the Anchorage population, but they may still serve as a good indicator for the community. Finally, all surveys are cross-sectional, so each survey is only measuring a single point in time.