



COVID-19 & ADULTS WITH VISION DISABILITIES: HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE ACCESS

ONLINE SURVEY REPORT

American Association on Health & Disability

Acknowledgements

This report was produced with funding from the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation to the American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD). The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation.

Support Provided by:



American Association on Health & Disability
110 N. Washington Street, Suite 407 Rockville, MD 20850
www.aahd.us

Dedicated to health promotion and wellness for people with disabilities

© AAHD

Suggested Citation:

Drum, C.E., Oberg, A., Cooper, K., & Carlin, R. (2020). COVID-19 & Adults with Vision Disabilities: Health and Health Care Access Online Survey Report. Rockville, MD: American Association on Health and Disability.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgements..... | i |
| A. Introduction | 1 |
| Organization of the COVID-19 & Disability Survey | 1 |
| B. Methodology..... | 1 |
| C. Results | 2 |
| Main Disability | 2 |
| Age | 2 |
| Gender..... | 3 |
| Race and Ethnicity | 3 |
| Geographic Location..... | 4 |
| Health Insurance | 4 |
| Access to Regular Health Care & Services | 5 |
| Use of Direct Care Workers & Impact of COVID-19..... | 5 |
| Safe Distance Practices and Direct Care Workers..... | 6 |
| Access to Regular Health Care Treatment During the Pandemic | 6 |
| Access to Prescription Medications | 7 |
| New Challenges to Health | 7 |
| COVID-19 Information & Impact | 8 |
| COVID-19 Information Sources..... | 8 |
| Following COVID-19 Recommendations | 9 |
| COVID-19 Testing | 9 |
| Why No COVID-19 Testing?..... | 10 |
| Anxiety & Depression..... | 11 |
| D. Discussion..... | 11 |
| Demographics | 11 |
| Access to Regular Health Care & Services | 12 |
| New Challenges to Health | 12 |
| COVID-19 Information & Impact | 12 |
| Limitations | 13 |
| E. Conclusion..... | 13 |

References14

A. Introduction

The purpose of the COVID-19 & Disability (C-19 & D) Survey was to conduct a rapid, real-time online assessment of the coronavirus pandemic's impact on access to health care and on adults with a range of disabilities, including people with vision disabilities. Online data-collection technologies permit efficient, rapid assessments that, despite limitations, are useful to begin understanding public health issues. People with disabilities experience unique risks during emergencies, disasters, epidemics, and pandemics that can impact health and health care. *Yet, at this time, we do not know the full impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities.*

Organization of the COVID-19 & Disability Survey

The online self-report survey includes demographic questions, including disability identifiers, gender, ethnicity, race, geographic area, and type of health insurance. A Summary Report combining all disability responses was issued by AAHD on May 8, 2020. This report focuses on results among persons with vision disabilities.

To ease respondent burden, we asked respondents for their *primary* disability, knowing that a substantial minority of respondents experience multiple disabilities. The vision disability identifier used in the survey is based on the US Census Bureau and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) definition: Blind or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses (Vision).

The survey includes a set of questions on access to regular (non-COVID-19) health care and services, including access to needed health care treatment, prescriptions, and the use of direct care workers.

The survey also includes questions regarding COVID-19 information and impact, including sources of information about the Coronavirus pandemic, adherence to public health COVID-19 recommendations, testing, and access to emotional supports during the pandemic.

B. Methodology

We reviewed existing COVID-19 surveys and either modified existing items or created new ones consistent with our areas of interest. Print, electronic and social media platforms were used to solicit responses from people with disabilities on AAHD's dissemination networks. AAHD also distributed the survey through existing partnerships

and requested that other organizations and individuals distribute the survey. The survey was available online from April 17, 2020, until May 1, 2020.

C. Results

A total of 2,469 adults with disabilities responded to the survey of which 193 experienced a hearing disability. The survey completion rate varied by item, ranging from a low of 86% to a high of 100%. The overall completion rate was 93% (exclusive of skip patterns). Specific results are described below. All results are rounded.

Demographics

Main Disability

As displayed in Table 1, 193 of respondents experienced a vision disability or 8% of the total sample.

Table 1. Respondents with Vision Disabilities (N = 193)

| Disability | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| Blind or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses (Vision) | 193 | 8% |

Age

As displayed in Figure 1, respondents with vision disabilities selected from the following age groups: a) 18 to 44; b) 45-64; or c) 65 and above. The majority of the respondents were 45-64 (40%); followed by adults that were 18-44 (32%), and adults 65 and older (28%).

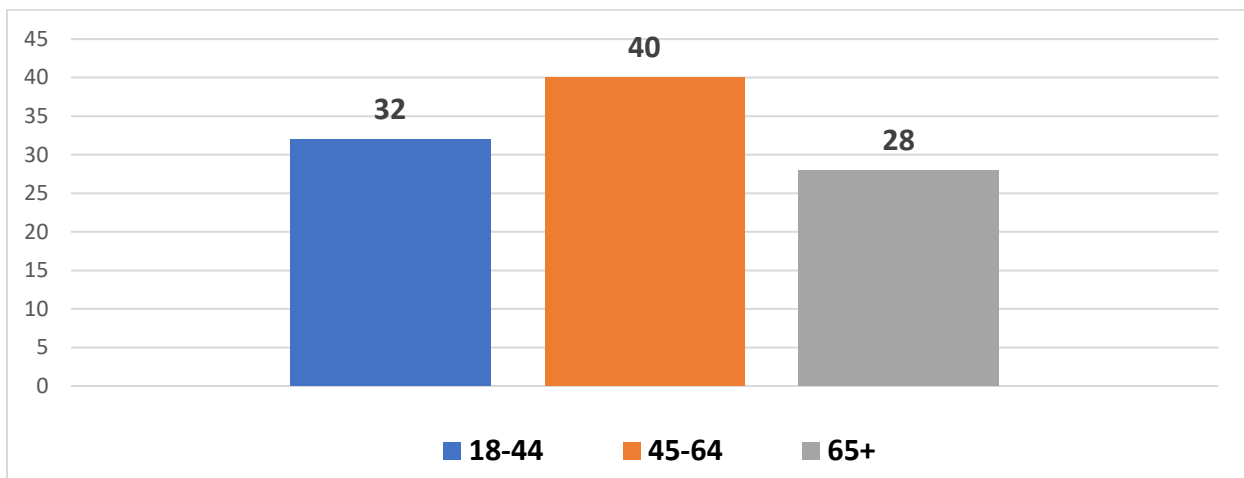


Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents by Age Group (N = 193)

Gender

As displayed in Table 2, the majority of adult respondents reported being either Female (65%) or Male (32%), with Gender Variant/Non-Conforming at 1%, Other at 1%, and Transgender Male (0%) and Transgender Female (0%). One percent of the sample preferred not to answer.

Table 2. Gender of Respondents (N=191)

| Gender | Percentage | Number |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Female | 65 | 125 |
| Male | 32 | 62 |
| Transgender Female | 0 | 0 |
| Transgender Male | 0 | 0 |
| Gender Variant/Non-Conforming | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 1 | 1 |
| Prefer Not to Answer | 1 | 2 |

Race and Ethnicity

We combined an ethnicity identifier (Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin) with race for the results, as shown in Figure 2. The sample was primarily White (87%), followed by Black or African-American and Hispanic (6%), American Indian or Alaska Native (5%), Asian (3%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (1%). Five percent of respondents preferred not to answer.

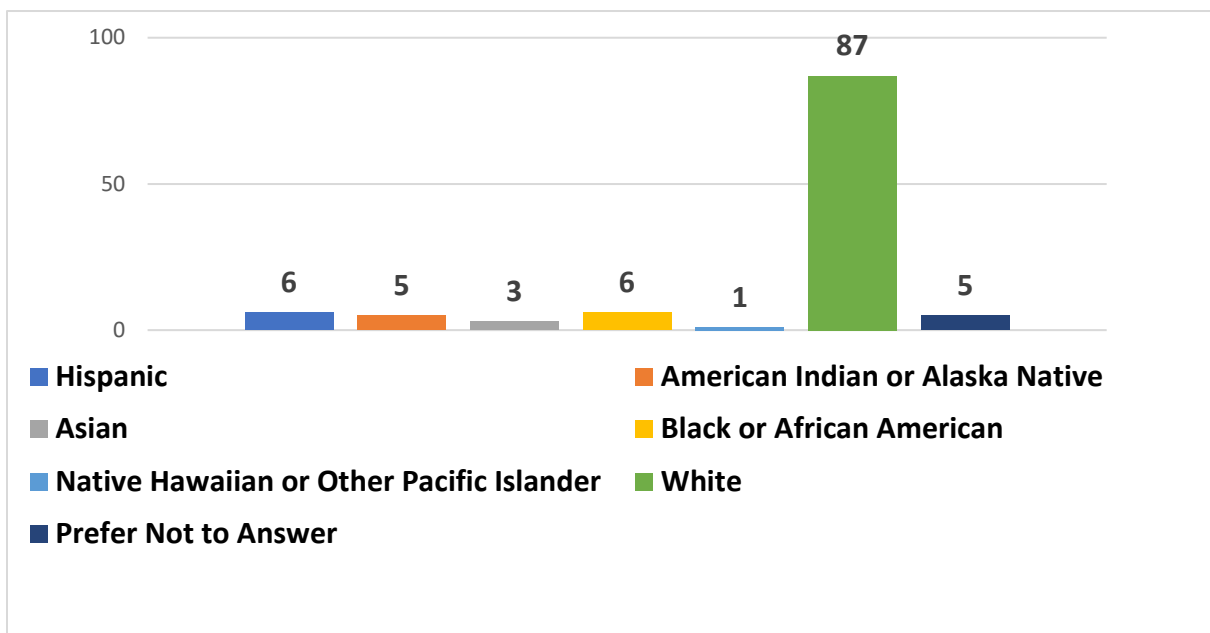


Figure 2. Percentage of Respondents by Ethnicity & Race (N = 191)

Geographic Location

Respondents selected their location as Urban, Suburban, Rural, or Frontier. As shown in Figure 3, the largest percentage of respondents were in Urban locations (45%), followed by Suburban (41%) and Rural (14%), and Frontier (0%) locations.

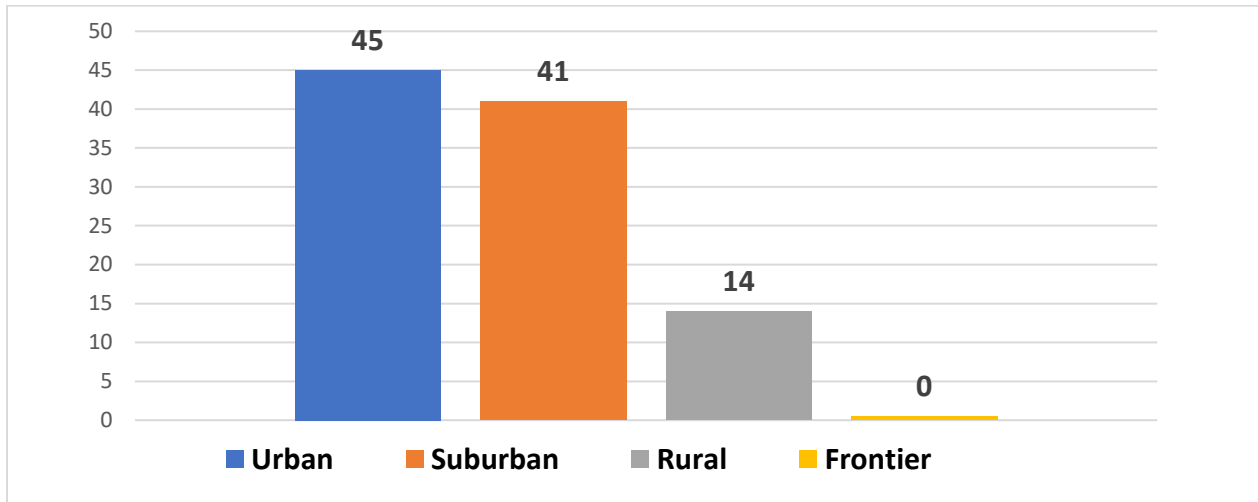


Figure 3. Percentage of Respondents by Geographic Location (N = 190)

Health Insurance

As displayed in Figure 4, the largest percentage of respondents with vision disabilities reported having Medicare (55%), followed by Private Insurance (41%), Medicaid/CHIP (28%), Other (9%), and VA/Government insurance (5%). Respondents were allowed to select "all that apply." Two percent of respondents had no insurance.

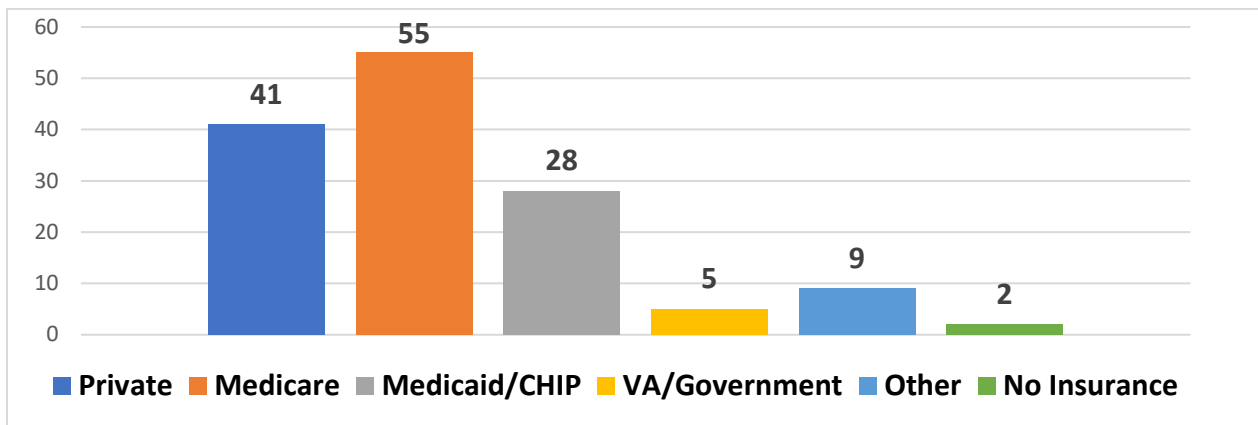


Figure 4. Percentage of Respondents by Type of Health Insurance (N = 188)

Access to Regular Health Care & Services

We developed a set of questions to determine if the coronavirus pandemic was impacting access to non-COVID-19 (regular) health care and services, including access to needed health care treatment, prescriptions, and the use of direct care workers.

Use of Direct Care Workers & Impact of COVID-19

Respondents were asked if they used a Direct Care Worker (e.g., Home Health Aide, Personal Care Aide, or Unpaid Family Caregiver), if their Direct Care Worker was continuing to provide care, and if respondents had been able to maintain a safe distance from their Direct Care Worker (e.g., six feet).

Twenty-two percent of respondents reported having a Direct Care Worker in their home, while 78% did not (see Figure 5). As shown in Figure 6, among respondents with a Direct Care Worker, 78% of respondents continued to receive these home services, while 22% of respondents were no longer receiving these services.

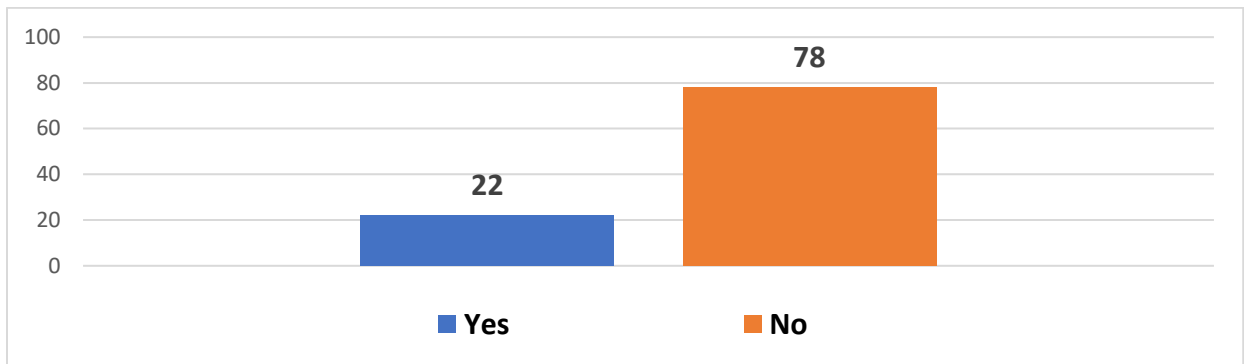


Figure 5. Percentage of Respondents Who Use a Direct Care Worker (N = 169)

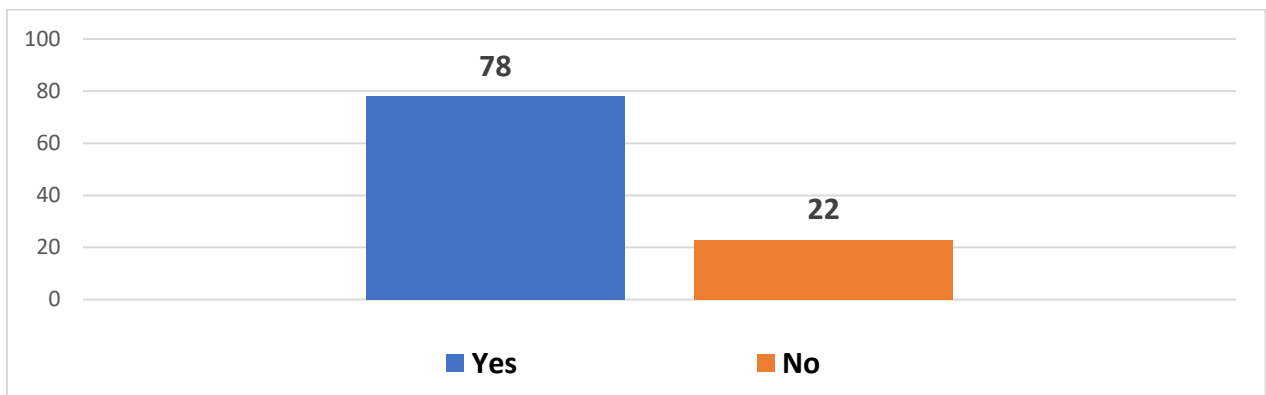


Figure 6. Percentage of Respondents with Direct Care Worker Home Visits During COVID-19 (N = 40)

Safe Distance Practices and Direct Care Workers

Respondents receiving Direct Care Worker services during the COVID-19 pandemic were asked if they were able to maintain a safe distance from their provider. As displayed in Figure 7, 61% of respondents reported that they were unable to maintain a safe distance from their Direct Care Worker, while 39% of respondents were able to maintain a safe distance.

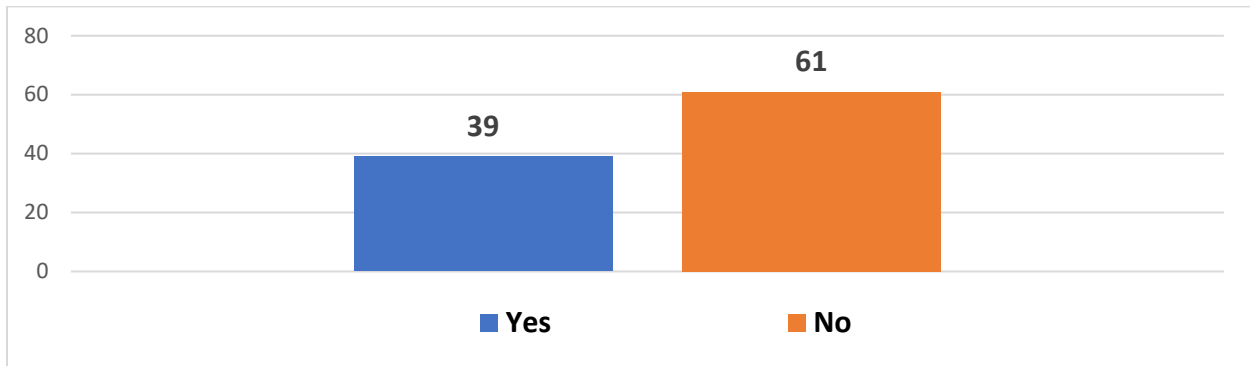


Figure 7. Percentage of Respondents Maintaining A Safe Distance from Direct Care Worker (N = 28)

Access to Regular Health Care Treatment During the Pandemic

Respondents were asked if they were able to get regular health care treatment during the COVID-19 outbreak. Forty-four percent of respondents did not need regular health care. Among respondents who needed regular health care, 51% reported that access had not been affected and 49% reported access had been disrupted (see Figure 8).

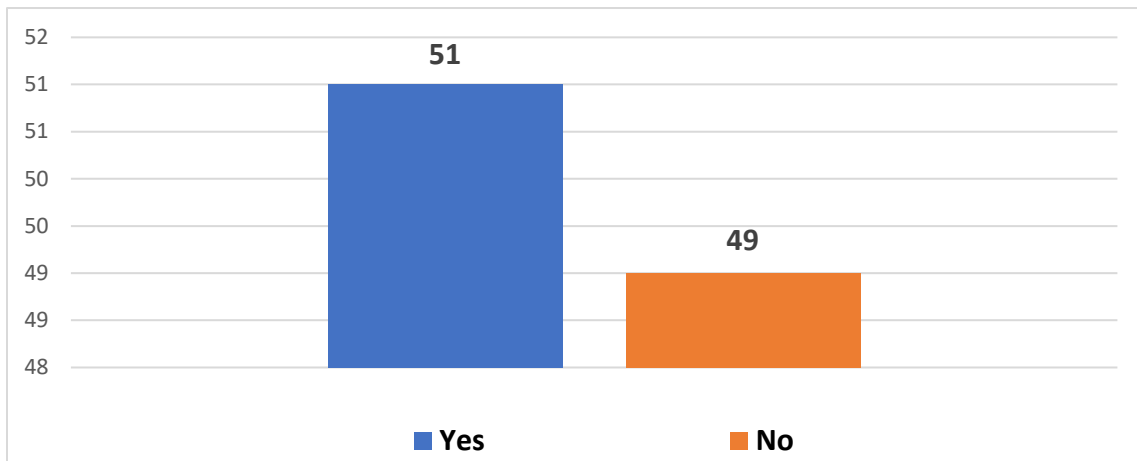


Figure 8. Percentage of Respondents Able to Access Regular Health Care (N = 94)

Access to Prescription Medications

Respondents were asked if they were able to obtain prescription medications during the COVID-19 outbreak. Thirteen percent of respondents were not receiving prescriptions. Among respondents taking prescriptions, 97% reported that access had not been affected and 3% reported access had been disrupted (see Figure 9).

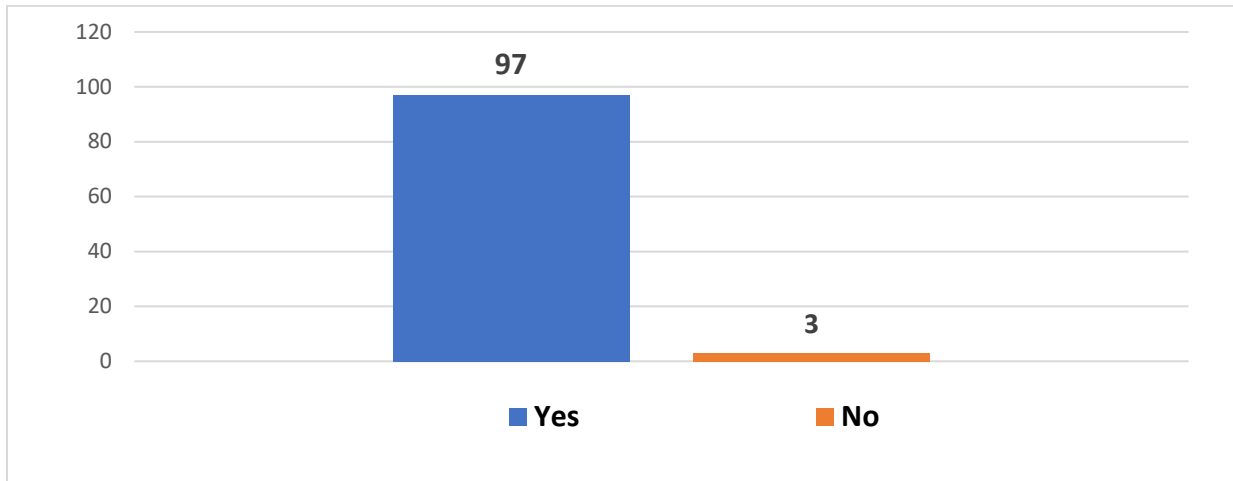


Figure 9. Percentage of Respondents Able to Access Prescriptions (N = 146)

New Challenges to Health

Respondents were asked if they were experiencing new challenges to obtaining health care treatment, health care access, and/or prescriptions during the COVID-19 outbreak. Forty-two percent of respondents reported experiencing new challenges, while 58% reported that they had not experienced new challenges (See Figure 10).

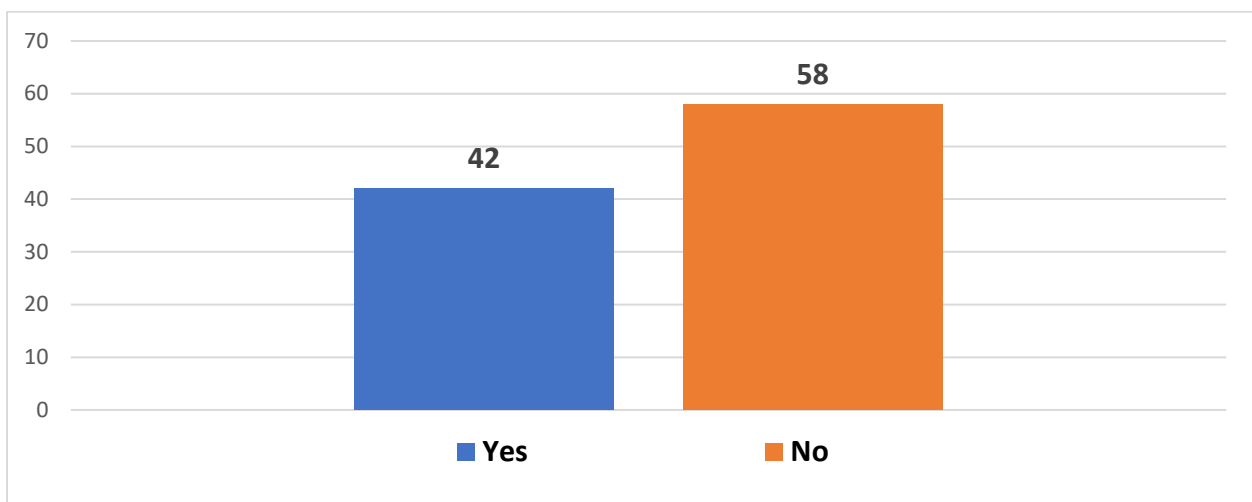


Figure 10. Percentage of Respondents Experiencing New Challenges to Accessing Health Care (N = 167)

COVID-19 Information & Impact

The survey includes a number of questions about the impact of COVID-19, including where respondents obtained information about the Coronavirus pandemic, adherence to COVID-19 public health recommendations, testing, and access to emotional supports during the pandemic.

COVID-19 Information Sources

Respondents were asked to rank their three most important sources of information about COVID-19 out of nine options. As displayed in Table 3, among the nine information sources, 33% of respondents identified the most important source as Television, followed by the Internet (28%), and Radio at (15%). Social Media and Health Care Providers / Health Systems were both at 7%, followed by Relatives, Friends, and Other (all at 3%), and Print Media (1%).

Most respondents identified the Internet (26%), Television (20%), and Social Media and Radio at 11% as the second-most important sources of information. Other second-most important sources of information were Print Media (10%), Relatives (7%), Health Care Providers (6%), Other (5%), and Friends at (3%).

Most respondents identified the Internet (16%) as the third-most important source of information, followed by Health Care Providers (13%) and the Television (12%). Other sources endorsed as the third-most important source of information, included Relatives and Social Media (11%), Friends (10%), Radio and Other (9%), and Print Media (8%).

Table 3. Most Important Sources of COVID-19 Information (N=174)

| | HCP/HS | Internet | TV | Radio | Social Media | Print Media | Friends | Relatives | Other |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|-----|-------|--------------|-------------|---------|-----------|-------|
| Most Important | 7% | 28% | 33% | 15% | 7% | 1% | 3% | 3% | 3% |
| Second Most Important | 6% | 26% | 20% | 11% | 11% | 10% | 3% | 7% | 5% |
| Third Most Important | 13% | 16% | 12% | 9% | 11% | 8% | 10% | 11% | 9% |

Following COVID-19 Recommendations

Respondents reported high levels of compliance with COVID-19 public health recommendations. As shown in Figure 12, 97% of respondents reported following recommendations and 3% reported they were not following recommendations.

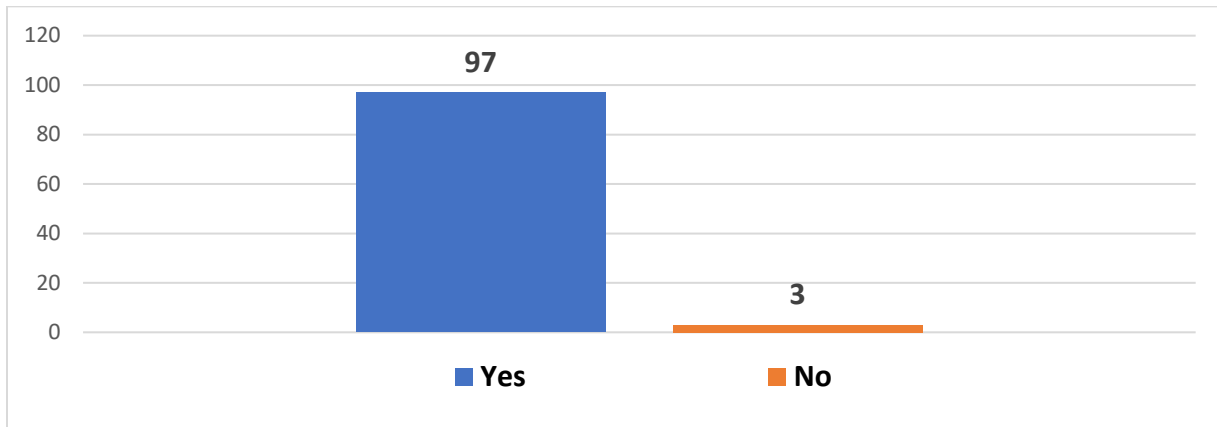


Figure 11. Percentage of Respondents Following COVID-19 Recommendations (N=172)

COVID-19 Testing

We were interested in whether people with disabilities were being tested for COVID-19, if not, why not, and if insurance was covering testing. As shown in Figure 12, 2% of respondents had received a test for COVID-19 and 98% had not received testing. Among respondents that had been tested, 50% reported the test had been covered by insurance, 0% reported it had not, and 50% were not sure if the test was covered (see Figure 13).

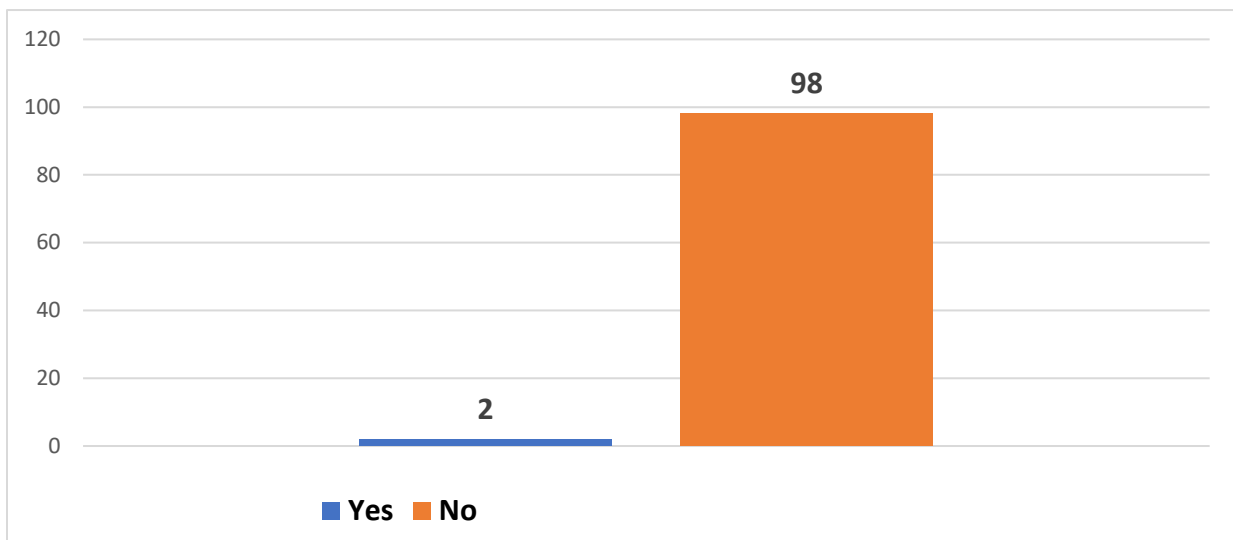


Figure 12. Percentage of Respondents Receiving COVID-19 Testing (N = 172)

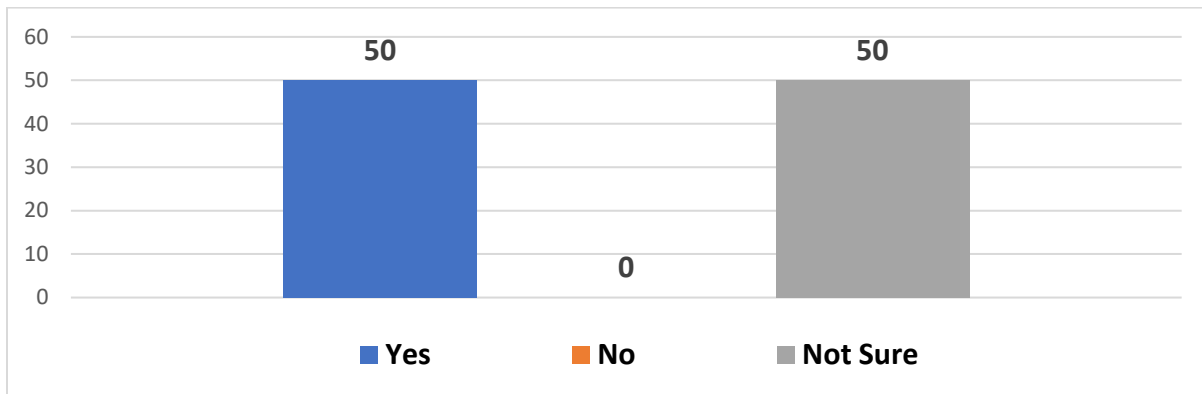


Figure 13. Percentage of COVID-19 Test Takers Covered by Insurance (N=4)

Why No COVID-19 Testing?

Respondents who had not received a COVID-19 test identified a range of reasons why they were not tested. As shown in Table 4, the largest percentage was among respondents who said they didn't need a test (83%). Among respondents who did need a test, reasons for not receiving the test included the test was unavailable (11%), followed by Lacked transportation to site (10%), Information about testing was not accessible or available in alternative formats(5%) and Health Care Provider would not approve testing (5%), Other (4%), Site was physically inaccessible (3%), , Cost/insurance wouldn't cover (1%), the site did not have sign language interpreters, and the site lacked accessible parking both was at 0%. Respondents were able to identify multiple reasons.

Table 4. Reasons for Not Obtaining COVID-19 Test (N = 166)

| Reason | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Didn't Need Test | 83 |
| Test Was Unavailable | 11 |
| Lacked transportation to site | 10 |
| Information about testing was not accessible or available in alternate formats | 5 |
| Health Care Provider would not approve testing | 5 |
| Other | 4 |
| Site was physically inaccessible | 3 |
| Cost/Insurance wouldn't cover | 1 |
| Site did not have sign language interpreters | 1 |
| Site had no accessible parking | 0 |

Anxiety & Depression

We asked respondents if they were feeling anxiety or depression as a result of COVID-19 and, if so, were they able to receive emotional support or services. Forty-three percent of respondents were not feeling anxious or depressed. As displayed in Figure 14, among respondents feeling anxiety or depression, 85% reported having access to emotional support or services and 15% reported not having access.

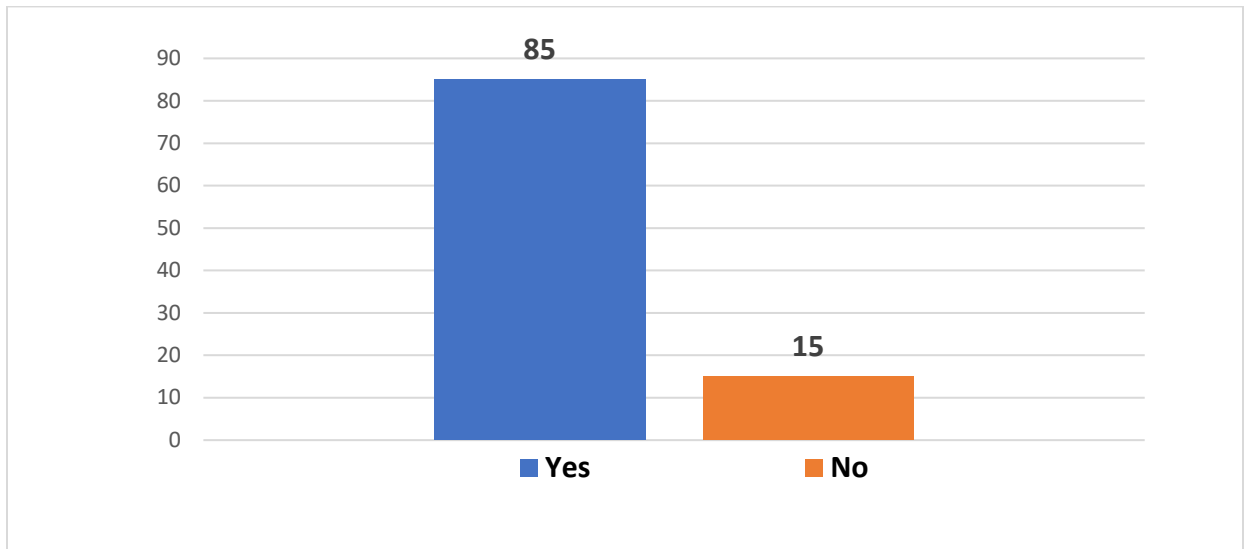


Figure 14. Percentage of Respondents with Access to Emotional Support/Services (N = 97)

D. Discussion

One of the limits of using a convenience sample is that results cannot be generalized to a larger population, although they can be informative for planning and quality purposes (Bethell, et al, 2004). Below, we discuss observations about the survey results in relation to the sample's demographics and responses to the COVID-19 Information and Impact and Access to Health Care and Prescriptions questions.

Demographics

The COVID-19 and Disability (C-19 & D) Survey sample is atypical from population-based disability samples on a number of dimensions. For example, the sample differs from many population-based results in age (40% of the sample are persons 45-64), predominately female (65%), White (87%), and have some type of insurance (only 2% of respondents reported not having insurance).

Access to Regular Health Care & Services

A relatively small proportion of the sample used Direct Care Worker (DCW) services (22%), and, while a majority of those respondents (78%) continued to receive these services during the pandemic, nearly one-quarter (22%) had lost critical care services. For the respondents that maintained DCW services, maintaining safe distances from their Direct Care Worker was impossible for nearly two-thirds of the respondents (61%).

Of concern is that 49% of respondents who were scheduled to receive regular health care treatment services had those services disrupted during the coronavirus pandemic. In contrast, 97% of respondents taking medications reported that they could access their prescriptions. Yet, for the 3% of the sample who had prescription medication access disrupted, this represents a potentially life-threatening situation.

New Challenges to Health

In many ways, the novel coronavirus pandemic is presenting unfamiliar and unanticipated challenges for persons with and without disabilities. A key difference is that persons with disabilities already encounter documented disparities in accessing health care treatment and services and involvement in emergency planning programs and activities. Of considerable concern is that 42% of the sample reported experiencing new challenges to obtaining health care treatment, health care access, and/or prescriptions. An analysis of the open-ended responses as to why these new barriers exist is underway.

COVID-19 Information & Impact

Several unexpected findings emerged from the information and impact survey questions. While the Internet is the most, second-most, and third-most important source of information, Television plays a more significant role than any other sources. Interestingly, Health Care Providers and Health Systems are playing a less significant information role to the sample.

While several national polls report varying levels of endorsement for COVID-19 guidelines, the COVID-19 & Disability survey sample overwhelmingly reported high levels of compliance (97%) with these guidelines. This suggests that the respondents are taking the risks of the coronavirus pandemic very seriously. Echoing national findings, only a very small percentage (2%) of respondents had received a COVID-19 test and there was significant uncertainty if health insurance would cover this cost (50%).

Notably, 11% of respondents not receiving a COVID-19 test reported that the test was unavailable and 10% reported that they lacked transportation.

Forty-three percent of the sample were not experiencing anxiety or depression during the pandemic. Among persons that were experiencing anxiety or depression, a small percentage (15%) were not receiving emotional support or services.

Limitations

The findings in this report are subject to at least six limitations. First, the survey data are self-reported and may be subject to reporting or recall bias. Second, the responses represent a snap shot between April 17, 2020, until May 1, 2020, and the coronavirus pandemic situation may have changed since these responses were given. Third, persons without internet access were unable to access and complete the survey introducing a systematic bias in the sample. Fourth, the survey completion rate among adults ranged among items (86% - 100%), suggesting the presence of some response bias. Fifth, because of the use of a convenience sample, the results are not generalizable to the overall population of persons who are Blind or with Low Vision. Sixth, persons with multiple disabilities may not be accurately identified since we asked for a person's "main" disability.

E. Conclusion

The results of this survey provide insight into a challenging moment in time during the coronavirus pandemic for persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The issues contained within the results reflect a strong need for confirmation through population-based efforts, including longitudinally. Moreover, the intricacies and changing dynamics of the pandemic establish a critical need for reviewing the need for additional policy and programmatic responses to this extraordinary health and public health challenge.

References

Bethell, C., Fiorillo, J., Lansky, D., Hendryx, M., & Knickman, J. (2004). Online consumer surveys as a methodology for assessing the quality of the United States health care system. Journal of Medical Internet Research, 6(1), e2. <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.6.1.e2>.