



What people think,
feel and do

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Opinium US

Reactions to government handling of Coronavirus



Key findings

24 April 2020

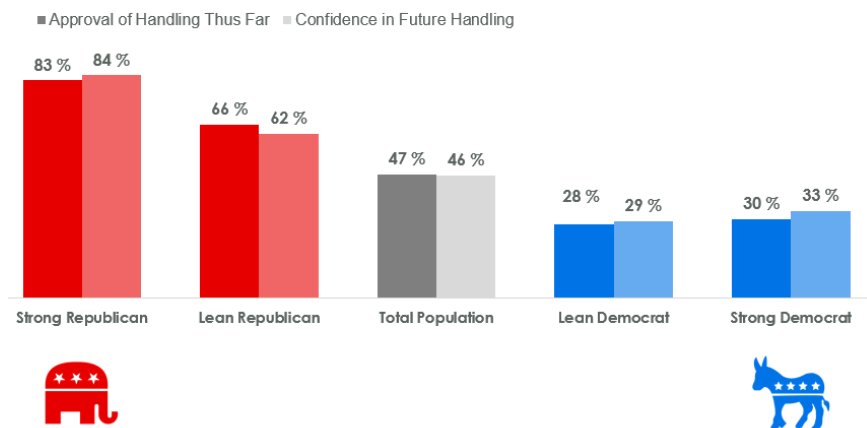
To keep a pulse on the public's perceptions of the government's handling of the Coronavirus situation, Opinium polled 2,000 US adults 18+ between April 9th and 15th. The survey was conducted online. Here's what we found—

Approval of government response

Approval ratings of the Federal Government's response are stagnant despite stimulus

Despite [the signing of the \\$2.2tn stimulus package at the end of March](#), which 72% of Americans approved of, approval for the government's handling of the crisis has remained stuck at a relatively low 47% since [our last poll on March 25th](#). While this still exceeds the share of the population that disapproves of the government's handling (35%), it reflects the deep divisions in the US public. As previously observed, approval of government handling is starkly split along party lines with 74% of those that identify as Republicans approving compared to only 29% of Democrats.

PERCEPTIONS OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF CORONAVIRUS SITUATION, BY POLITICAL LEANING

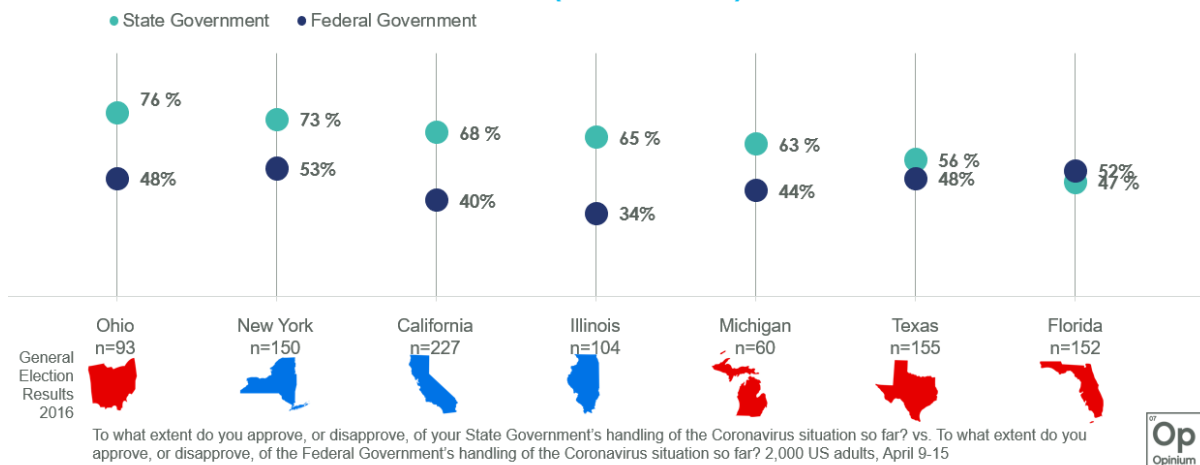


To what extent do you approve, or disapprove, of the Federal Government's handling of the Coronavirus situation so far? To what extent do you have confidence in the Federal Government's ability to handle the Coronavirus situation as it continues to develop? Base: 2,000 US adults, April 9-15

Americans approve of their State's response more than the Federal Government's

Americans look more favourably on their local State Government's response to the Coronavirus (with 61% approval) compared to the Federal Government's (47% approval). Among the swing states analysed, this holds true in Michigan and Ohio, while Floridians buck the trend, showing greater support for the Federal Government, though the numbers are neck and neck. Florida's Governor, Ron DeSantis, has been [widely critiqued for his delayed stay-at-home order](#). Meanwhile, approval for the State Government's reaction is particularly high in New York (73%), the epicentre of the outbreak in the US, where [Governor Andrew Cuomo has been praised for his bold and decisive response to the crisis](#).

**APPROVAL FOR GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF THE CORONAVIRUS SITUATION SO FAR
STATE GOVERNMENT VS. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (% WHO APPROVE)**



As concern grows, Americans get on board with stricter measures

Over the past few weeks, Americans have become more concerned about the Coronavirus situation, as it has become clear that there is no return to 'normal' around the corner. An additional 5% of Americans now say they are *very* worried about the pandemic, climbing from 44% to 49%. As concern has intensified, so too has support for, and compliance with, the most stringent measures taken to control the virus thus far: Seventy six percent of Americans now agree that banning all non-essential activity outside the home is necessary, up from 70% a few weeks ago.

Who is most likely to question the necessity of stay-at-home measures?

Those who have been furloughed or laid off due to the crisis are more likely to say these measures are unnecessary, as they are bearing the brunt of the downsides—18% say stay-at-home measures are unnecessary compared to only 11% of the general population and only 8% of those still able to go in to work. Younger generations are also more likely than most to think these measures are unnecessary (16% of 18-34s say so compared to only 8% of over 55's). Republicans are also more likely to find these measures unnecessary (14% vs. only 8% of Democrats).

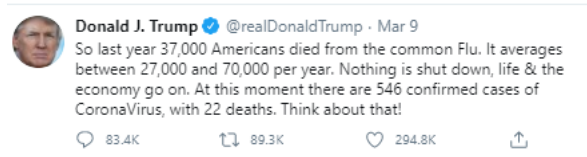
The Trump Effect

Though pandemics and national crises often have the effect of unifying the population as they come together against a common threat, this does not seem to be the case in the US as the public's perception of the crisis seems heavily influenced by party affiliation. Predictably, those who strongly identify as Republican are more likely to hold views that echo President Trump's commentary on the pandemic, pointing to his continued influence on his base in matters that extend beyond those traditionally classified as conservative or liberal.

Face Coverings

With the [new CDC recommendation that Americans wear face coverings in public](#), an additional third of the population say they have started wearing face masks in public—41% total compared to only 8%

a few weeks back. Most of the population (70%) agrees that everyone should follow the CDC's recommendation to the extent possible. A sizeable minority, however, (22%) say people should only follow this recommendation if they *want to*, [echoing President Trump's stance and choice not to use a face covering despite the CDC's guidelines](#). This position is, not surprisingly, more popular among those who strongly lean Republican (30%) and among those who voted for Trump (27%), compared to those who consider themselves Democrats (19%) or voted for Hilary Clinton (16%).



Same as the flu?

Similarly, those who strongly lean Republican are almost twice as likely to believe that COVID-19 is very similar to the flu (20% vs. only 12% of the general population) echoing some of [Trump's early statements on the virus](#).

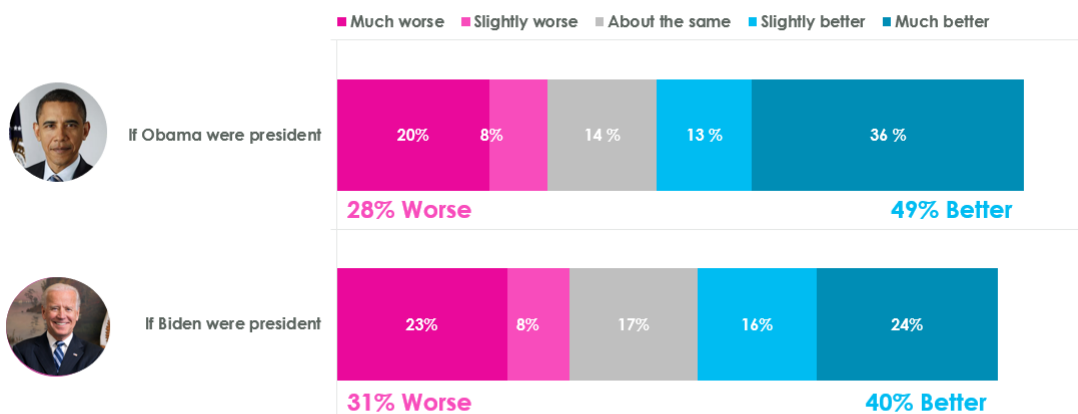
As of April 15th, nearly half of Americans (46%) continue to say they distrust the information on Coronavirus provided by President Trump, compared to 40% who do trust it. Dr Anthony Fauci [remains the most trusted spokesperson](#) on the Coronavirus by the American public, with 70% saying they trust the information he provides, up from 65% at the end of March.

Sights on November

With the general election looming, pundits are beginning to speculate how the President's handling of the crisis will impact his head-to-head with Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee. As things stand, more Americans think the pandemic would have been better handled by Biden if he were President. The public is even more confident that we'd be better off with Obama at the helm—About half of the population (49%) thinks his administration would have handled the situation better.

Those who have been furloughed, made redundant, or laid off due to the pandemic express much lower approval of Trump's handling of his job as President—38% approve of his performance compared to 43% of the general population. Only 27% of the minority of voters who are currently undecided about which candidate they will vote for in November approve of Trump's performance in office.

WOULD THE PANDEMIC HAVE BEEN HANDLED BETTER OR WORSE IF OBAMA OR BIDEN WERE PRESIDENT?



Thinking about the way the federal government has responded to the coronavirus pandemic, Do you believe things would have been handled better or worse if Barack Obama were still president rather than Donald Trump? Do you believe things would have been handled better or worse if Joe Biden had been president rather than Donald Trump?
Base: 2,000 US adults, April 9-15



About Opinium

OPINIUM is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think**, **feel** and **do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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