

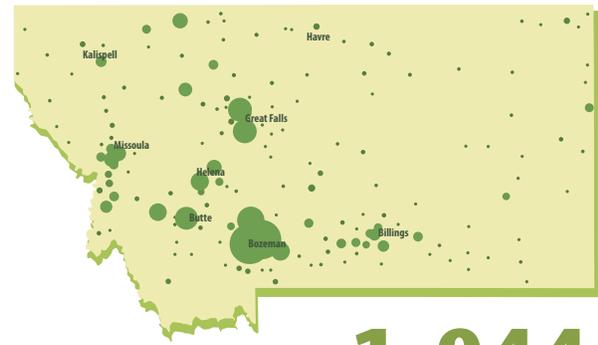
# The Impact of COVID-19 on the Health of Montanans

Carmen Byker Shanks PhD RDN, Michelle Grocke PhD, Justin D Shanks PhD, Eliza Weber MPH, Kimberley Scanlon BS

## Summary of Survey Results

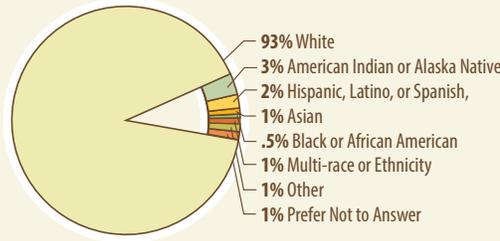
### Since COVID-19 Began...

- > Food insecurity substantially increased. Policy and programmatic support should be leveraged to promote food security.
- > Food availability declined, especially in more remote communities. Food systems should reorient to ensure adequate food supplies for all.
- > To ensure others had enough food, communities shared resources and federal food assistance became more flexible. These strategies should be formalized to ensure resiliency during any public health emergency.
- > Many more Montanans exhibited feelings of mental distress since COVID-19 began. Mental health improvement resources should be made readily available.
- > Clear, centralized, and trustworthy information should be readily available to Montanans.
- > COVID-19 has resulted in both positive and negative behavior changes across the domains of food, physical activity, financial, social, mental health, internet, and media access. Supports should be put in place to encourage individuals to continue with new positive habits and change negative habits.

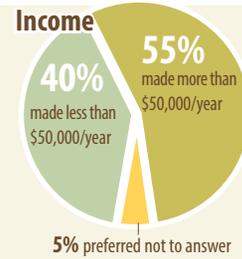


**1,944**  
respondents living in Montana completed a survey between late April and early September 2020

## Who Completed the Survey?

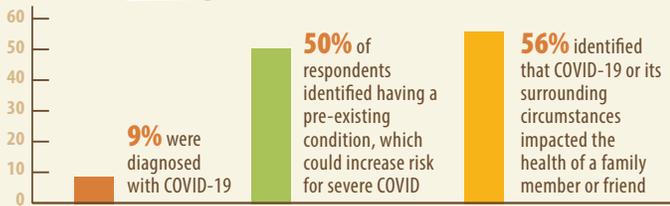


**[ 46 ]**  
MEAN AGE



Average of **1 adult and 1 child** in household since the pandemic began

## Experience with COVID-19



## Food Insecurity

Food security is defined as having consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.



Before COVID-19 11% of respondents were food insecure.

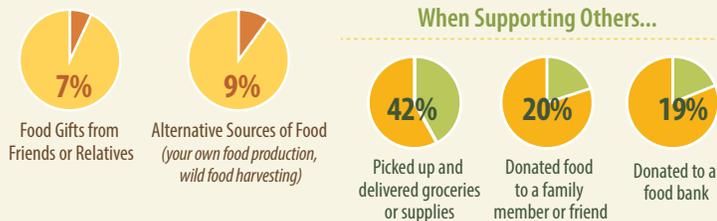


Since COVID-19 18% of respondents were food insecure.

## Nutrition Resource Support



### When Supporting Others...



## Food Availability

77% of respondents indicated that some of the foods they needed were unavailable when they shopped



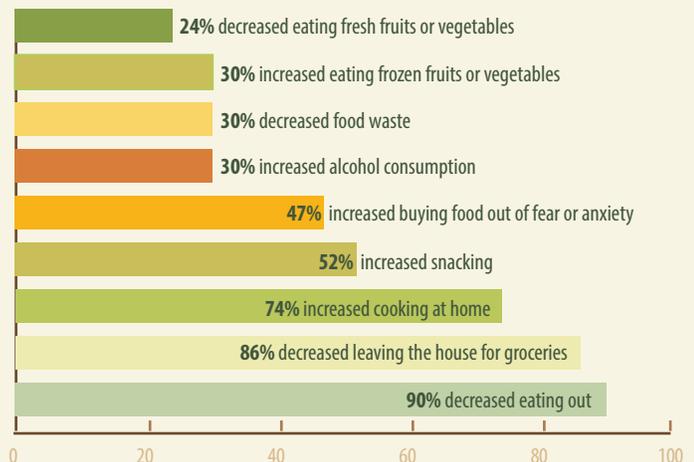
> Individuals identifying as food insecure before and/or since COVID-19 were more likely to report a higher prevalence of underlying health conditions (such as obesity, diabetes and/or asthma), which increased risk of developing severe complications from COVID-19.

> When asked about source of stress or anxiety, participants stated:

- "Having enough food & money for bills."
- "Working full time, teaching school to 3 children, keeping food made, housework the financial stress of having enough money for food, shelter and necessities plus trying to keep our family safe. Not to mention if I would still have a job when I arrive to work."

> Food insecure individuals experienced more economic hardship and were more likely to enroll in SNAP, WIC, and the school lunch program or rely on food banks pantries or food gifts from friends or family to feed their household.

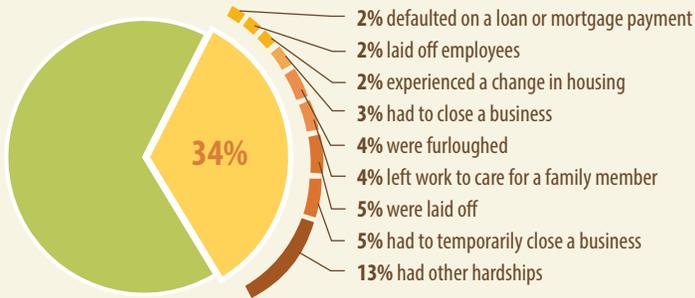
## Food Habits



## Financial Hardship

Financial hardship impacts food security and other health outcomes.

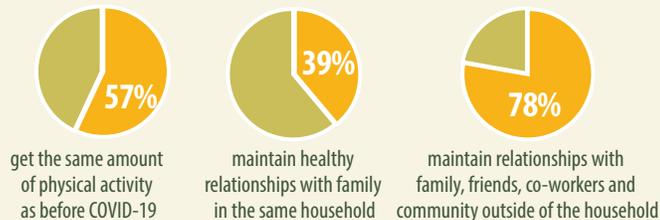
Of the 34% of people that experienced financial hardship due to COVID-19:



“Due to sheltering in place, two members have been either laid off or temporarily furloughed. It has impacted finances, which in turn increases stress.”

## Health Behaviors

Respondents indicated that it was more challenging than usual to:



Respondents indicated:



## Participants Requested the Following Food Resources

- Advice on how to support local food producers
- Advice on how to support local food businesses
- Advice on home gardening
- Centralized information about food availability in my area
- Food safety advice during COVID-19
- Advice on food preservation
- Advice on how to reduce/prevent food waste
- Nutrition advice on what to eat during COVID-19
- Online tools to help me access food or improve my diet
- Advice on actions I can take to ensure I have enough nutritious and healthy food
- Advice on actions I can take to ensure I have enough food
- Information about charitable food organizations
- Information about federal food assistance programs

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## COVID-19 and Its Impact on Montanan's Mental Health

Percentage of respondents that answered either 'all of the time' or 'most of the time' to the following mental-health related questions:

	Before the COVID-19 pandemic	Since the COVID-19 pandemic began
How often did you feel nervous?	2.4%	21.5%
How often did you feel hopeless?	.9%	5.5%
How often did you feel restless or fidgety?	1.9%	17.6%
How often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?	.9%	4%
How often did you feel that everything was an effort?	1.9%	14%
How often did you feel worthless?	1.1%	4.4%

These questions are taken from the validated K6 screening scale for psychological distress.

“Being home has allowed for getting out and exercising daily.”

vs.

“My time is taken up with trying to accomplish my own work, plus help my children with school work and it is difficult to carve out time for physical activity.”

## Examples of Positive and Negative Behavior Change due to COVID-19

54%

of respondents engaged in **POSITIVE** health behavior change since the start of COVID-19

37%

of respondents engaged in **NEGATIVE** health behavior change since the start of COVID-19

	Examples of Positive Change	Examples of Negative Change
Food/Beverage Related	<p>“Increased home cooked meals of unprocessed foods... [I'm] eating out much less”</p> <p>“Not wasting food/leftovers”</p> <p>“COVID-19 has re-upped my feeling for the need of LOCAL everything, especially food”</p>	<p>“Drinking more alcohol since the stay at home orders”</p> <p>“More fast food...easier than preparing a trip to the grocery store”</p> <p>“Stress eating...constantly snacking since I am stuck at home”</p>
Physical Activity	<p>“Going on more walks with my family”</p> <p>“I have started exercising everyday”</p>	<p>“More screen time on my phone”</p> <p>“Been a lot more lazy”</p>
Financial	<p>“I am budgeting my money better”</p>	<p>“[Unhealthy habits] until I have more secure finances and childcare”</p>
Social	<p>“The stay at home directive has shown me the importance of family engagement and togetherness”</p>	<p>“Less patience with my children”</p>
Mental Health	<p>“I have started meditating, which is a great strategy for managing stress!”</p>	<p>“Isolation has increased depressive behaviors”</p>