

COVID-19 Black and Latinx Essential Workers Survey Findings

*Prepared by the Howard Initiative on Public
Opinion in the Graduate School & the Ronald
Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center
at Howard University*

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**Howard Initiative
on Public Opinion**



Executive Summary

Introduction

The findings presented in this report are from a national poll of Black and Latinx adults over the age of 18 on issues related to the impacts of COVID-19. The Howard University Initiative on Public Opinion (HIPO) conducted the poll, led by a team of interdisciplinary scholars. This report highlights the range of COVID-19 related concerns among Black and Latinx essential workers. It is important to note that this survey's focus on the Black and Latinx communities makes it unique. The large sample collected on these populations allows for an assessment of variation within the race and ethnic categories.

Methodology

The survey contained questions on the social, economic, and mental health impacts of the pandemic. A total of 1,654 completed surveys were obtained during two weeks in June 2020. The data were collected online through Qualtrics (Provo, UT), which used a series of techniques to capture online audiences for survey distribution (N=1,500), additional data were collected online by HIPO (N=154). The data used in this report focuses solely on people who identified as essential workers (N= 748).

The Sample

A sizable portion of the Black and Latinx respondents report that they have been declared essential workers, at 40.2% and 52.1%, respectively. Latinx respondents who say they are essential workers identify most commonly as Mexican (28.4%) or Puerto Rican (21.6%). The majority of the survey's essential workers are women (59.5%), and the great majority are under the age of 35 (71.4%). A little more than one-third of Black (37.3%) and Latinx (38.8%) respondents reported a household income of less than \$30,000.

Executive Summary

Key Findings

Overall, the findings show that a disproportionate number of Blacks and Latinx identify as essential workers. A large portion of the essential workers report working in the medical field (51%) (e.g., physicians, nurses, nurses' assistants) or the service industries (26%) (e.g., food service, grocery store clerk, public transportation). However, despite being identified as essential, this population is experiencing job loss at a higher rate than intuitively expected, with 26.7% saying they were furloughed or laid off.

Most disconcerting is that a sizable percentage of the unemployed did not apply for unemployment benefits, because they either didn't know how to apply or they think they were eligible for unemployment.

A majority (72%) of the sample consider themselves extremely or very informed about COVID-19, and over a third were tested for the virus. Among those tested, 34% of the Blacks and 36.1% of the Latinx tested positive for the virus. Among this population, close to 60% consider social media to be their most beneficial source. The findings indicated that a sizable amount of the essential workers rely on Black or Latinx oriented media outlets for their information on COVID-19, at 37% and 21%, respectively.



Black/Latinx Essential Workers: General Demographics

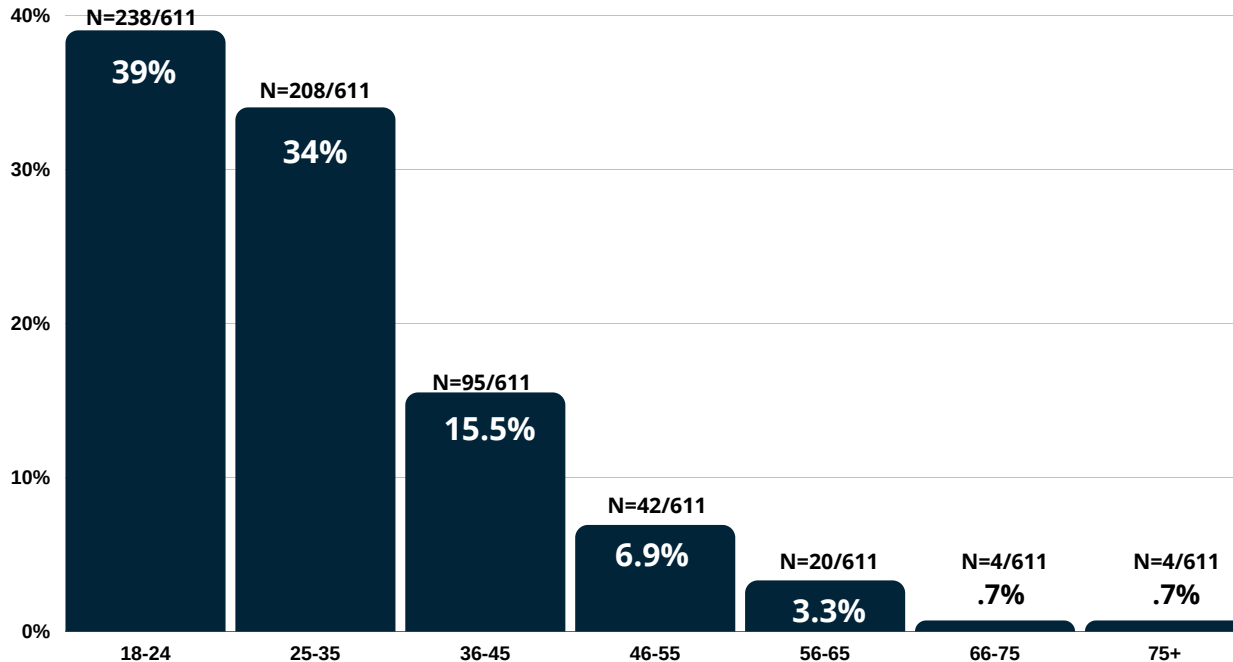


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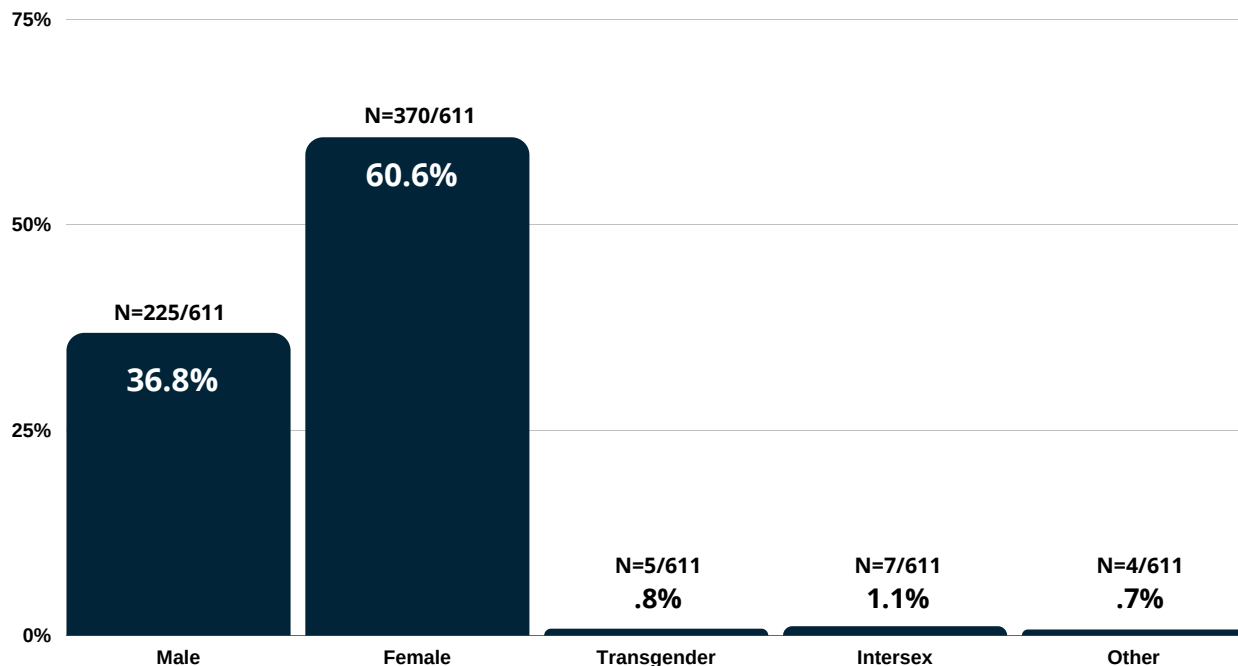
Age of Black/Latinx Essential Workers

39% of respondents indicated they are between the ages of 18-24.



Gender of Black/Latinx Essential Workers

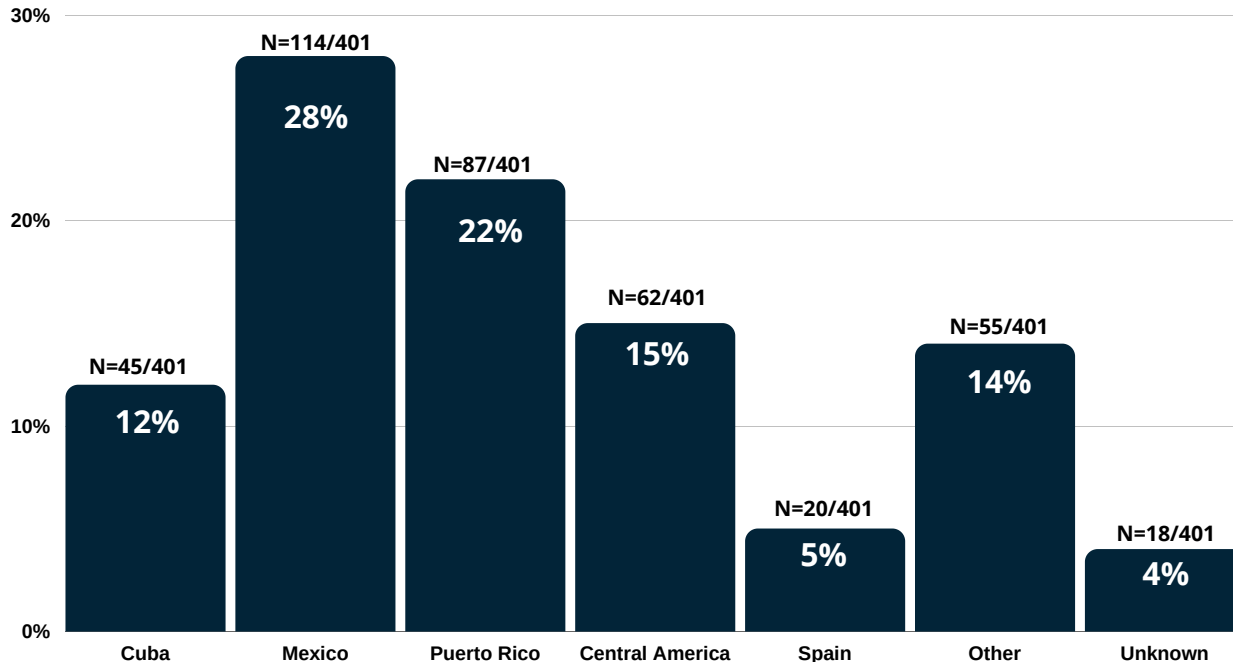
60.6% of respondents indicated they are female.



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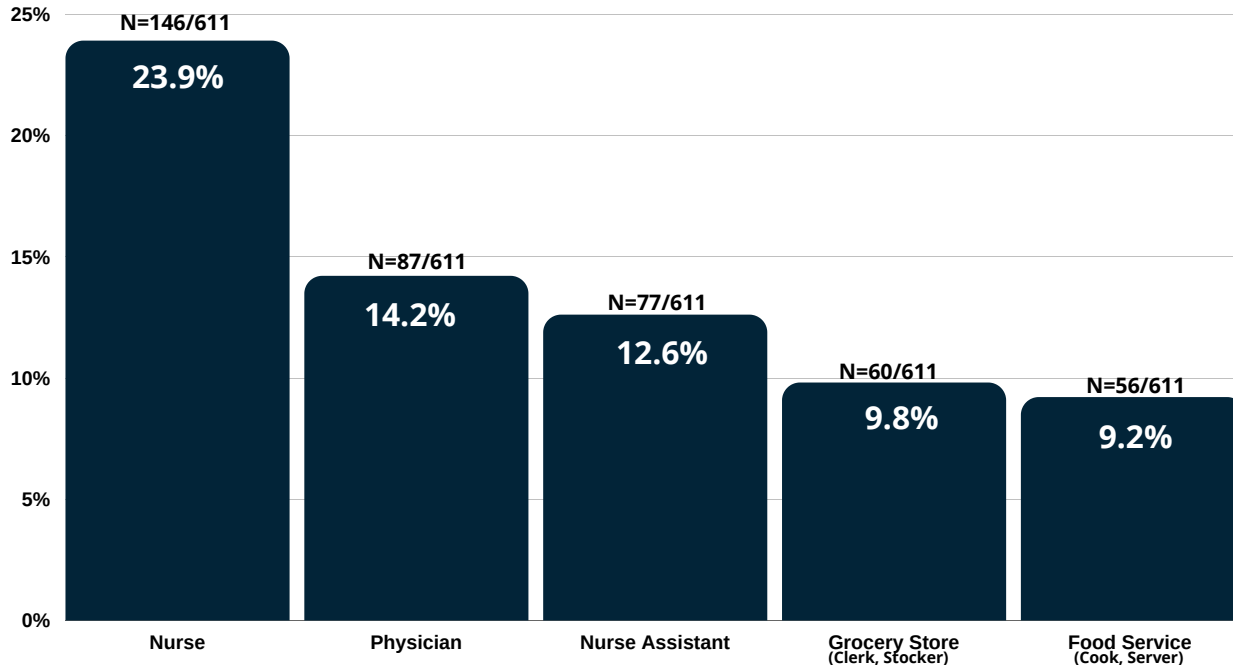
Latinx/Hispanic Essential Workers: Place of Origin

28% of respondents who identified they are Latinx/Hispanic indicated Mexico as their place of origin.



Top Five Black/Latinx Essential Worker Professions

*50.7% of respondents indicated they are in the
medical profession.*



Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Employment Impact

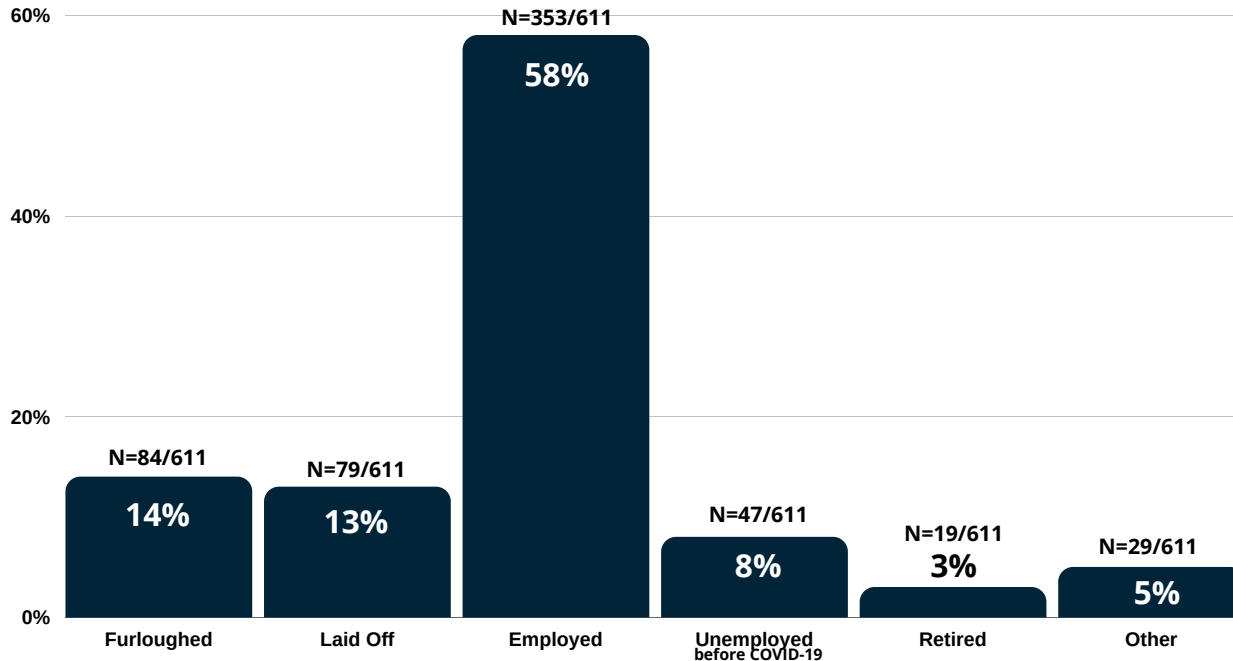


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COVID-19 Impact on Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Job Status

58% of respondents who identified as an essential worker are still employed.

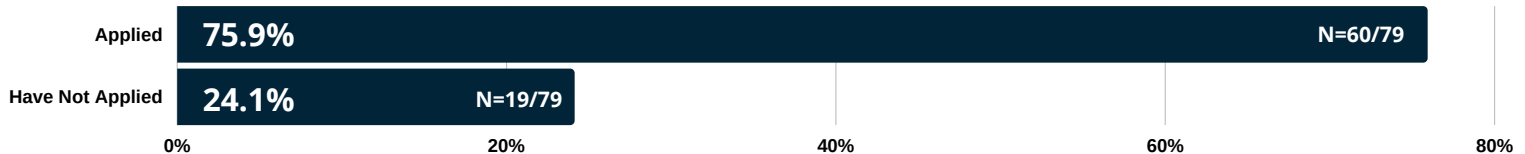


Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Unemployment Filings

65.5% essential workers who indicated they have been furloughed have applied for unemployment.



75.9% essential workers who indicated they have been laid off have applied for unemployment.



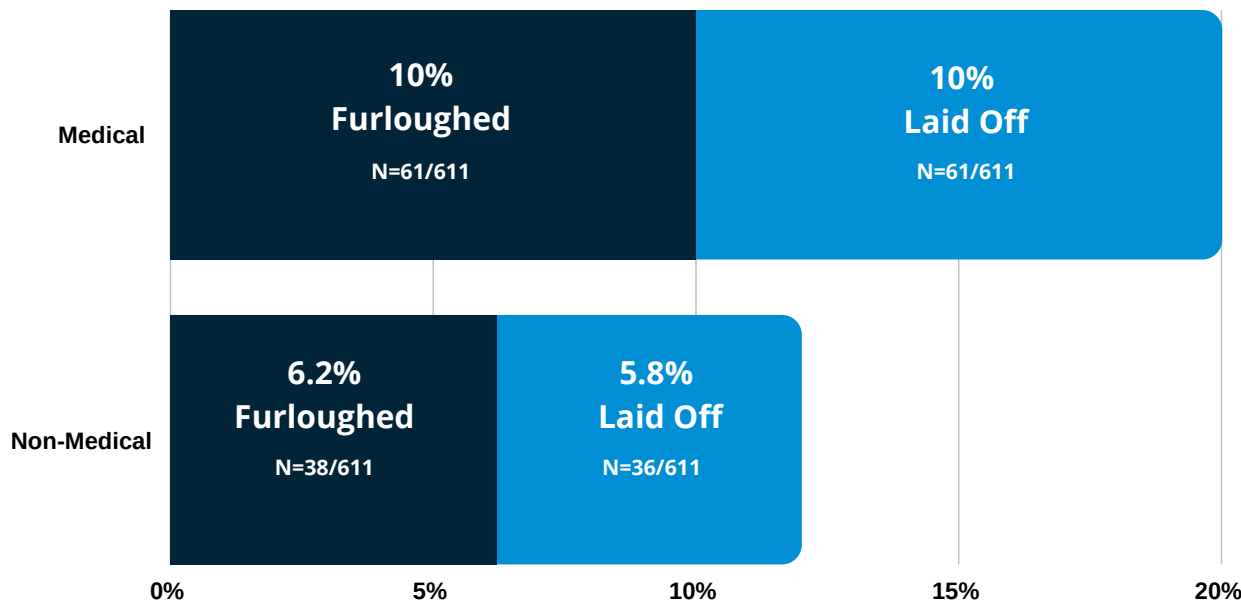
63.8% essential workers who indicated they were laid off before COVID-19 have applied for unemployment.



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Medical vs. Non-Medical Black/Latinx Essential Workers Furloughed or Laid Off

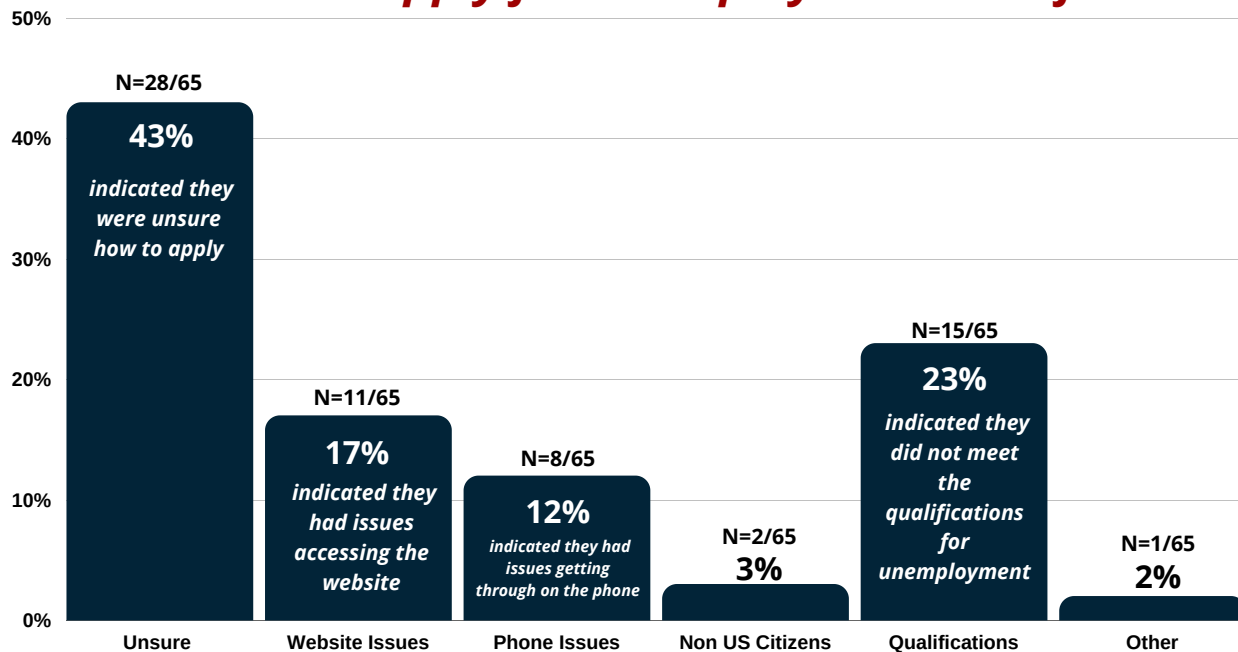
*20% of medical essential workers have been furloughed or laid off.
12% of non-medical essential workers have been furloughed or laid off.*



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers Who Have Not Filed for Unemployment

43% of essential workers indicated they were unsure how to apply for unemployment benefits.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Coping and Stress

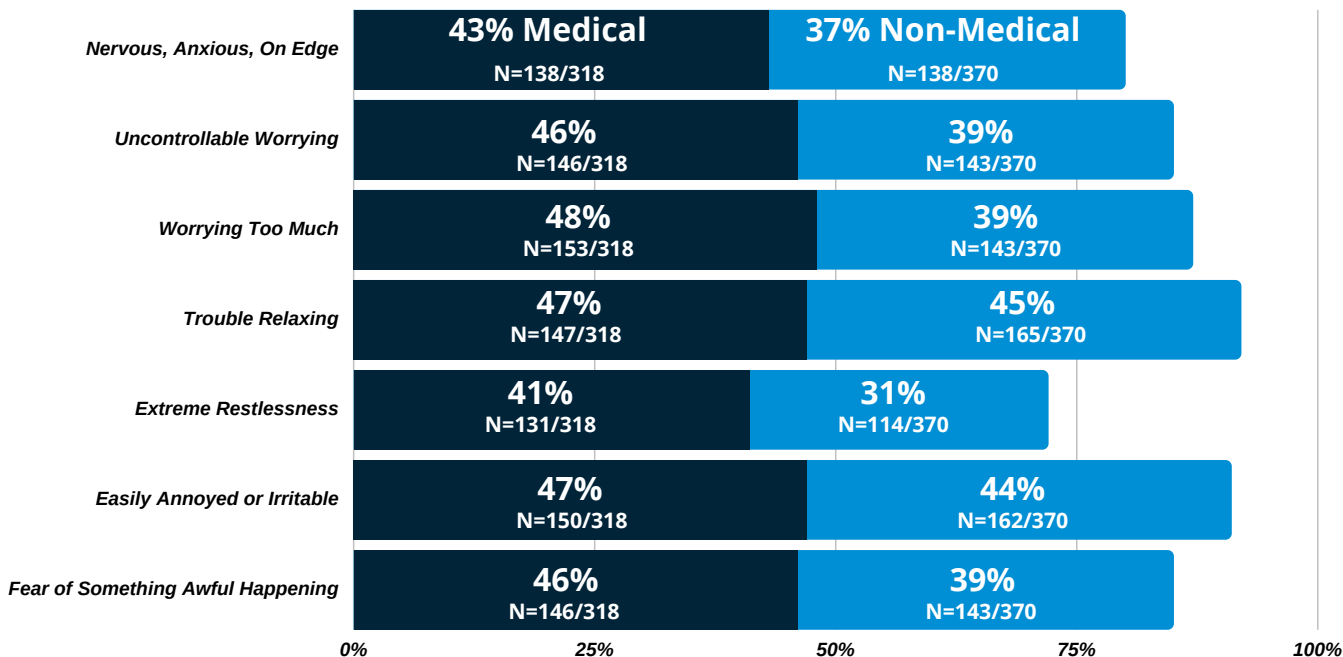


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Medical vs. Non-Medical Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Stress Symptoms

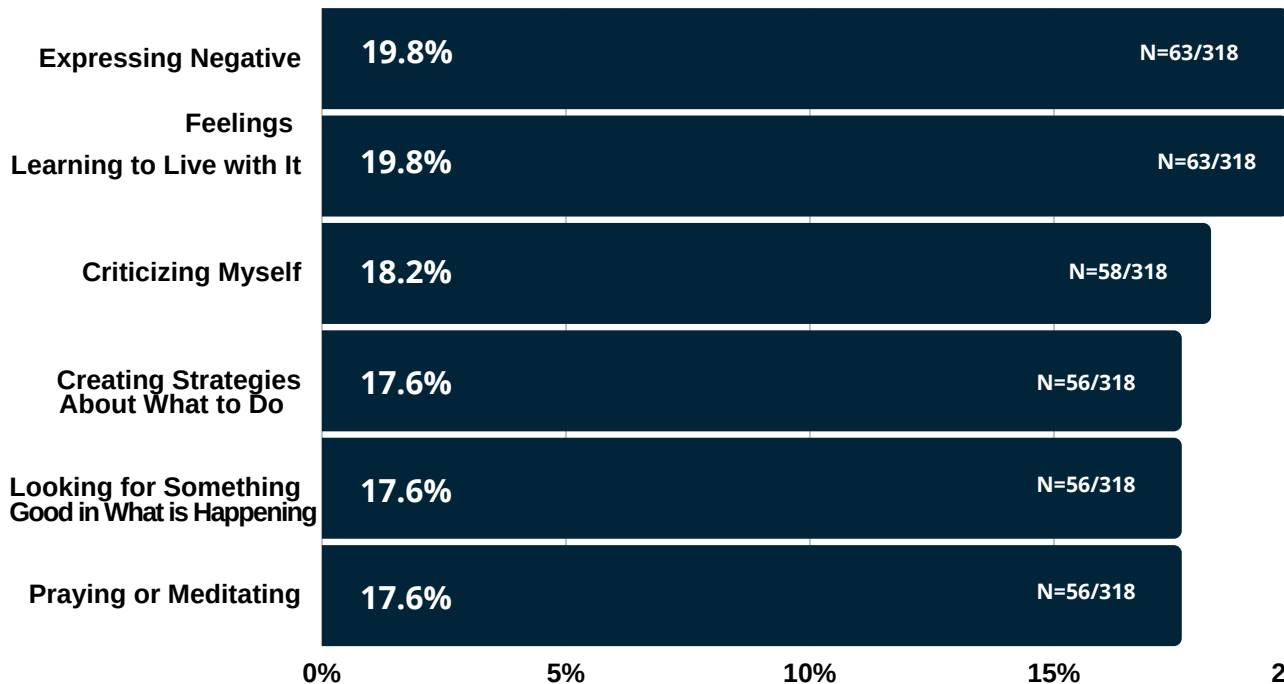
10% more medical essential workers than non-medical essential workers are experiencing extreme restlessness during COVID-19.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Coping

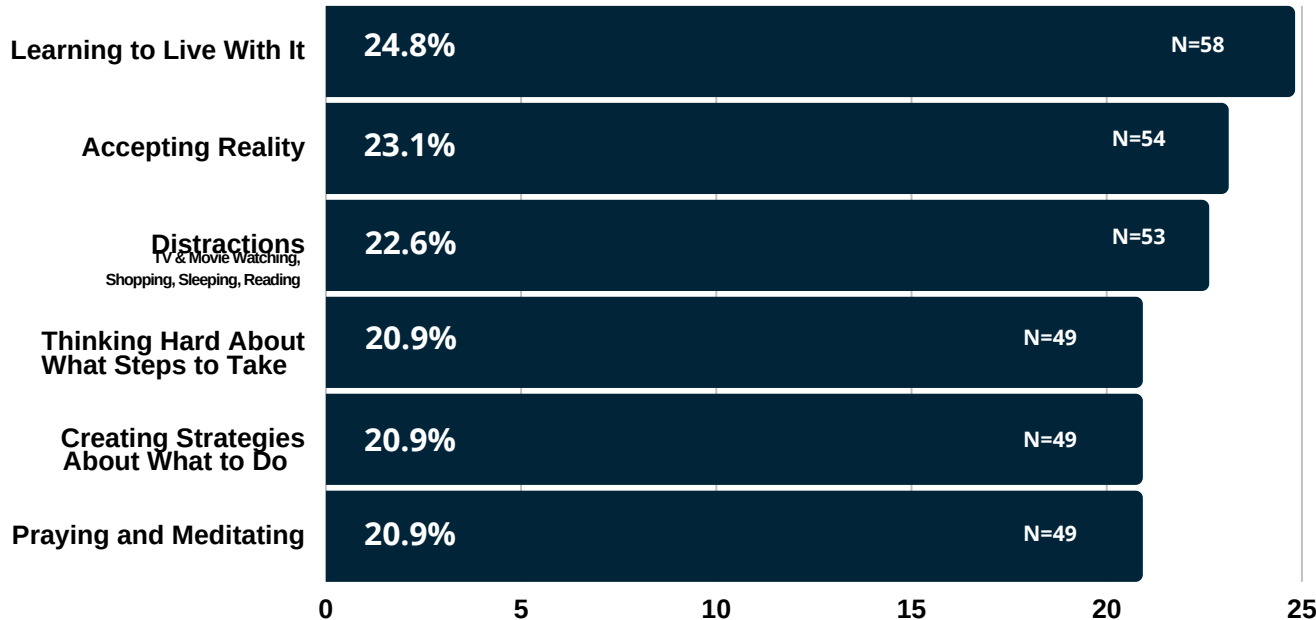
52.8% are creating strategies, looking for something good in what is happening, and praying/meditating to cope during COVID-19.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Income Levels and Coping

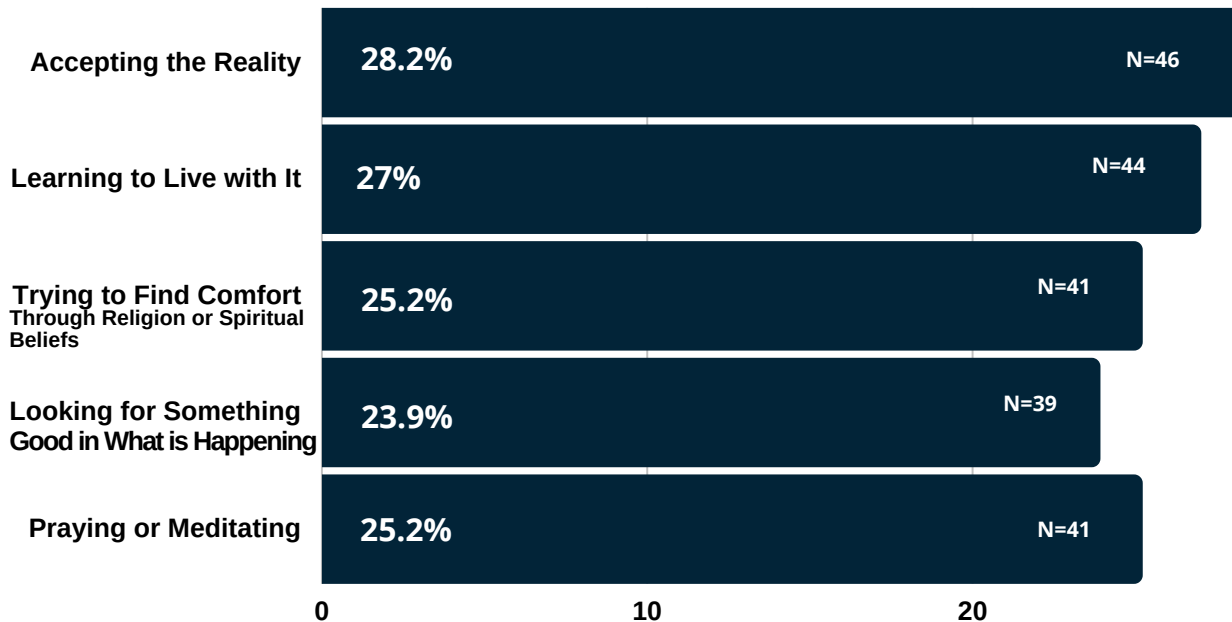
Lower-Income (\$0-\$29,000) Essential Workers
62.7% are thinking hard about next steps, creating strategies,
and praying/meditating to cope during COVID-19.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Income Levels and Coping

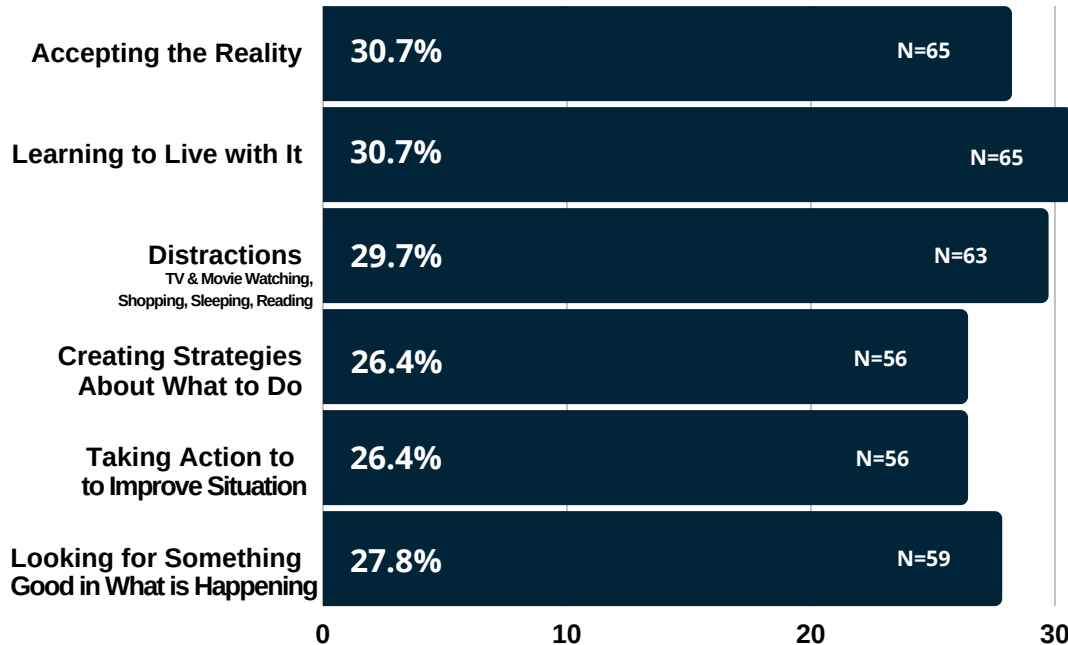
Mid-Income (\$30,000-\$59,000) Essential Workers
50.4% are trying to find comfort through religion/spiritual beliefs
and praying/meditating to cope during COVID-19.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Income Levels and Coping

High-Income (\$60,000 and up) Essential Workers
61.4% are accepting the reality and learning to live with COVID-19.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Information Awareness and Reliance

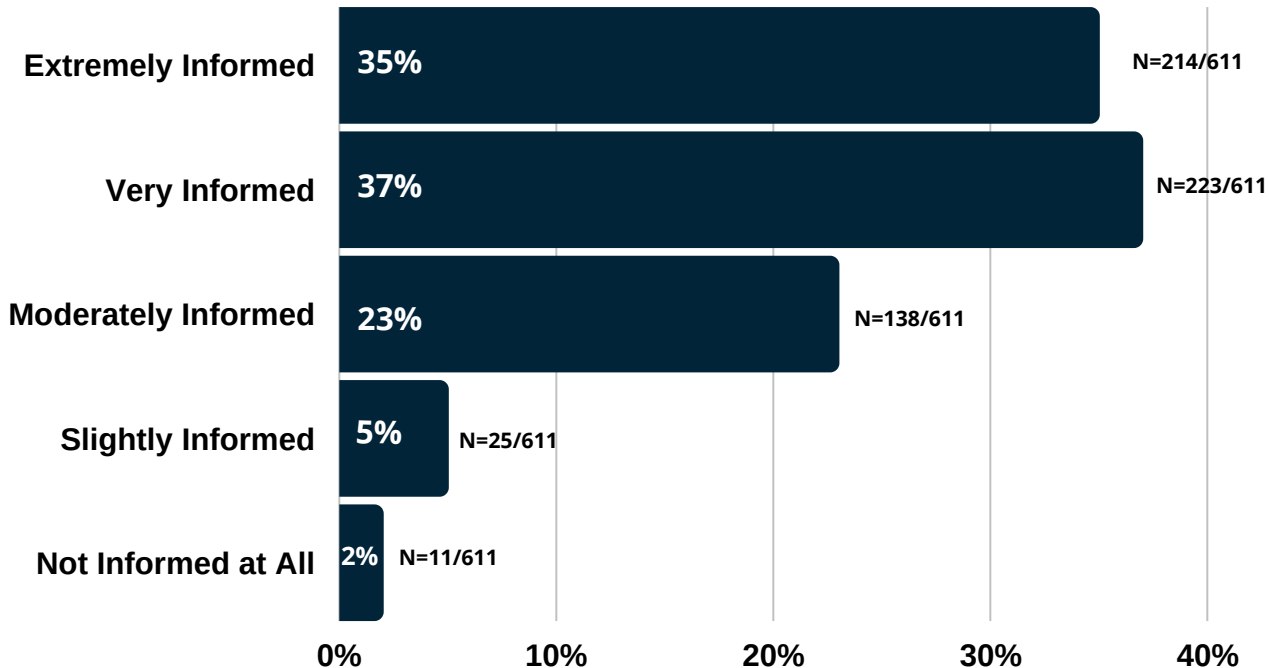


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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Level of Information Awareness

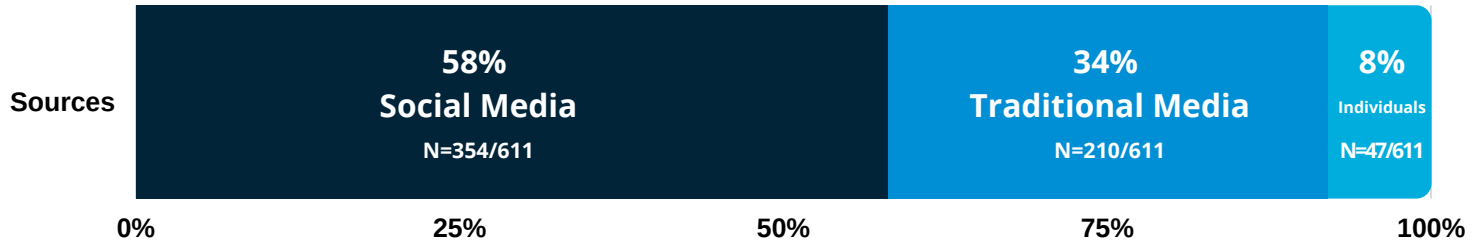
37% consider themselves to be very informed about COVID-19.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Sources of Information

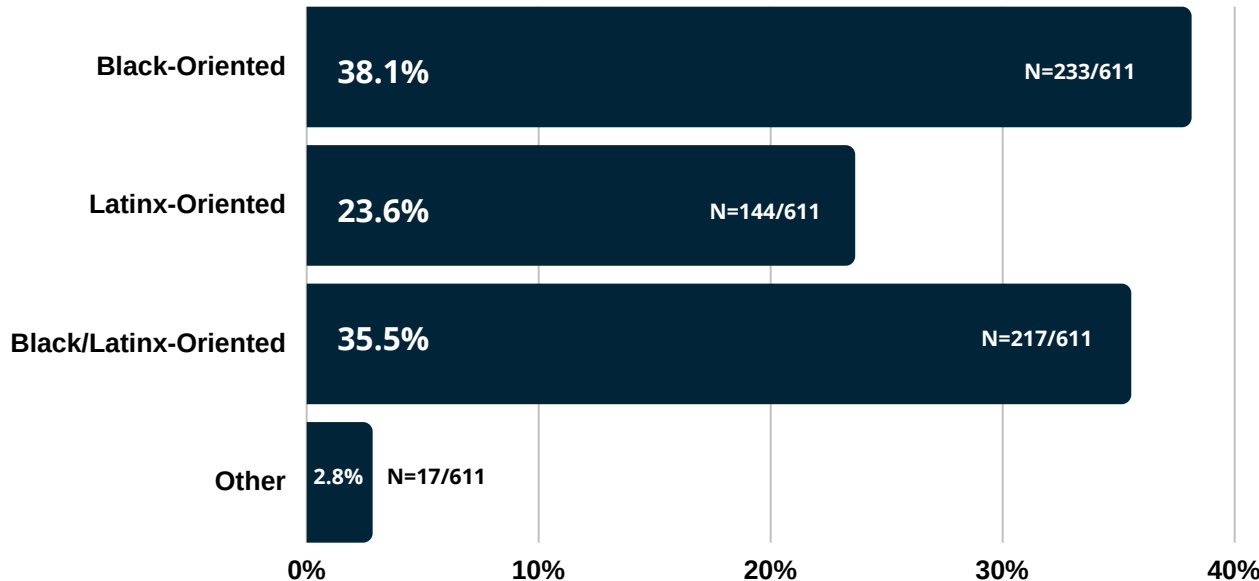
58% find social media to be the most beneficial source of information during COVID-19 pandemic.



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Black/Latinx Essential Workers: Media Reliance

*38.1% rely on Black-oriented media to get their
information about COVID-19.*



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About the Initiative



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About HIPO

As the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on black and brown communities becomes more apparent and awareness about the ways police brutality and systemic racism impact African Americans adversely grows, there is an urgent call for public opinion data that represents those affected. The university has a moral imperative to provide data and analyses that can lead to systemic change in policy and expand cultural understanding.

The Howard Initiative for Public Opinion interdisciplinary researchers carry out an ongoing program of research to monitor both shifts and continuities in the populations studied. HIPO is supported by the Howard University Graduate School and the Ronald Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center.

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Cover Photo: ©2020 Patricia Lafontant - Ms. Lafontant is an essential worker in the Washington, DC area and was featured in the Dove #CourageIsBeautiful Campaign. This photo is used with her permission.

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