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UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Study Finds Demand for Grocery and Food Delivery Remains Strong While Use of Ride-Hailing Services Plummet during Pandemic

Many Americans lack confidence in the safety of working conditions for ride-hailing and delivery drivers, and few are comfortable using such services since the coronavirus outbreak.

CHICAGO, August 19, 2020 – Although the coronavirus has led to sharp declines in the use of ride-hailing services, there has been little change in the number of Americans using grocery and restaurant delivery services, according to a new study from the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

The survey shows the overall number Americans saying they use food and grocery delivery services has remained around 40% since the outbreak began. However, that includes 16% of people who are using food and grocery delivery services more frequently and 12% who are using them less often.

In contrast, the number who report using ride-hailing transportation services has fallen from 42% to 16%.

Few Americans are confident in the safety of working conditions for ride-hailing and delivery services workers, and the public views the safety risks of these jobs as similar to that of public transit or restaurant employees.

Although many Americans say they are not very comfortable using ride-hailing services, 71% of those who used ride-hailing services before the coronavirus outbreak expect to use them in a year.

“The poll shows people are concerned about their own health and safety, as well as worker health and safety, and this has led to dramatic changes in the gig economy,” said Dmitri Koustas, assistant professor at Harris. “On one hand, ride-hailing demand has largely collapsed, although a silver lining is that most people expect to use these services again in the future. On the other hand, demand for delivery services has expanded among those most concerned about the virus. This is a clear example of the dynamism of the U.S. economy, and underscores an important challenge facing policymakers as they seek to address both the real safety concerns of gig workers and the benefits these services provide consumers.”

Twenty percent of people who say they are extremely or very worried about contracting the coronavirus report using grocery delivery services more since the pandemic while only 7% of those who are not too or not at all worried about contracting the virus report such an increase.

Increased demand for delivery services is especially likely among Americans with higher household incomes. In particular, 26% of Americans with household incomes of \$100,000 or more have increased their use of delivery services for groceries during the pandemic compared with 12% with household incomes under \$50,000.

With the coronavirus outbreak, many Americans are not completely comfortable using delivery services, and more people are very comfortable picking up food from a restaurant than having it delivered (57% vs. 27%).

Despite the Americans' safety concerns for themselves and gig workers, the public is relatively ambivalent about government regulations to boost wages or benefits for these drivers and delivery workers. In addition, support for such regulations drops if they lead to a large cost increase for customers.

Only 35% of Americans favor regulations to increase wages and benefits for ride-hail and delivery service drivers, while 14% oppose such regulations and 48% neither favor nor oppose it. Public support to increase wages and benefits for such drivers falls to 22% when the proposal includes a mention that those regulations would mean a 25% cost increase for users.

There is a stark partisan divide on the issue. Democrats are almost twice as likely to support government regulations to improve wages and benefits for ride-hail and delivery service drivers as Republicans, even when there is no mention of cost (44% vs. 28%).

"The study shows the coronavirus has not alleviated the significant partisan divisions in attitudes toward government regulations of wages and benefits," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "The lack of strong public support for greater wages and benefits for gig workers during a time of heightened concern about the safety of their working conditions highlights the challenges facing proponents of such reforms."

Among the key findings from the report:

- Sixty-three percent of those who had ever used a ride-hail service before the coronavirus pandemic have not done so since the outbreak began.
- Americans that are extremely or very worried about contracting the coronavirus outbreak are more likely to be uncomfortable using ride-hail services during the outbreak than those who are not very or not at all worried (63% vs. 40%).
- Fifty-nine percent of adults under the age of 35 say they have used a service to deliver prepared food from a restaurant. In comparison, 30% of those between 50 and 64 years old and 18% of those between 65 or more years old say the same.

- Only 12% Americans are very confident in the safety of the working conditions of ride-hail drivers and only 18% say the same about drivers of delivery services.

About the Study

This study was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. Interviews for this survey were conducted between July 16 and 20, 2020, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,002 completed the survey—949 via the web and 53 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 15.1 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 23.6 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 84.8 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 3.0 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

A full description of the study methodology for the survey can be found at the end of the report.

The proper description of the survey’s authorship is as follows: This study was conducted jointly by the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

About the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy

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About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

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