



The Associated Press-NORC  
Center for Public Affairs Research

# PANDEMIC DISRUPTS DEMAND FOR GIG ECONOMY AMIDST SAFETY CONCERNS



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While the use of ride-hailing transportation services has plummeted since the coronavirus outbreak, many Americans continue to use grocery and restaurant delivery services despite safety concerns for themselves and workers.

A new UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll shows that the number of Americans saying they use food and grocery delivery services has held steady at around 40% since the outbreak, including 16% who are using these services more often now than before and 12% who are using them less frequently.

In contrast, the number who report using ride-hailing transportation services fell from 42% to 16%, though most expect their demand to increase again. Seventy-one percent of those using ride-hail services before the coronavirus outbreak say they are likely to use them again within a year.

The survey reveals most Americans are uncomfortable using both ride-hail and delivery services during the coronavirus outbreak, and more people are extremely or very comfortable picking up food from a restaurant than they are with having it delivered (57% vs. 27%).

## Three Things You Should Know

About the UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll

Among American Adults:

- 1) 63% of those who had ever used a ride-hail service before the coronavirus pandemic have not done so since the outbreak began.
- 2) 26% 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.
- 3) 35% favor regulations to increase wages and benefits for ride-hail and delivery service drivers. Support falls to 22% when those regulations mean a 25% cost increase for users.

Many Americans lack confidence in the safety of working conditions for ride-hailing and delivery service workers, but the public views the safety risks of these jobs as similar to that of public transit or restaurant employees.

However, the public is ambivalent about government regulations to boost wages or benefits for these drivers and delivery workers, and support drops if such regulations lead to a large cost increase for customers.

The nationwide poll was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from July 16 to 20, 2020, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,002 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.3 percentage points.

Other key findings from the study include:

- Americans who are extremely or very worried about contracting the coronavirus 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% of 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.
- Democrats are more likely to support government regulations to improve wages and benefits for ride-hail and delivery service drivers than are Republicans when there is no mention of cost (44% vs. 28%), and are more than three times as likely as Republicans to support such regulations with a 5% increase in cost (64% vs. 18%).

## **SIGNIFICANTLY FEWER AMERICANS ARE USING RIDE-HAIL SERVICES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK.**

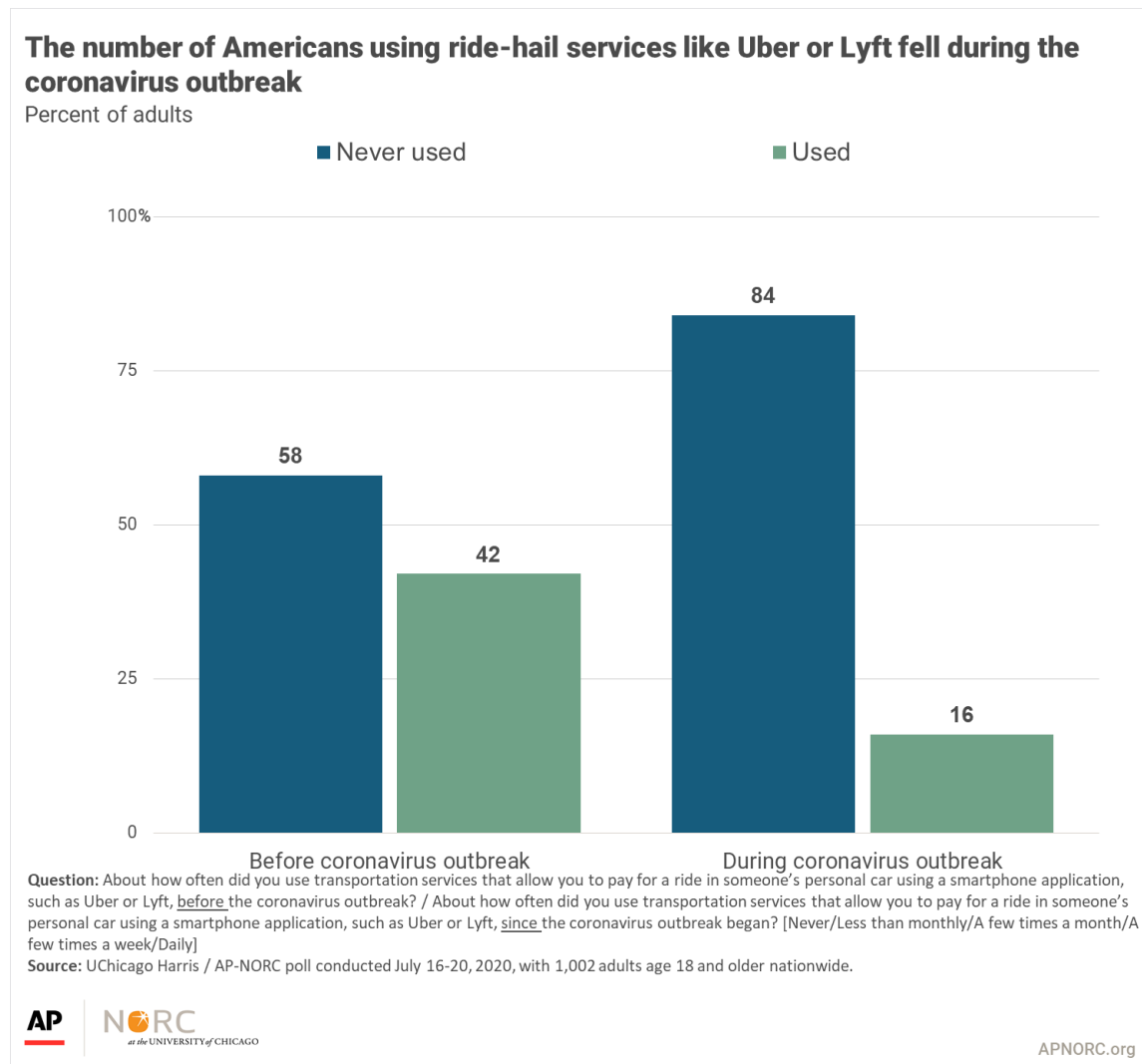
The share of Americans who use ride-hail services, such as Uber or Lyft, that allow for users to request, track, and pay for a ride using their smartphone increased in recent years but has dropped dramatically since the coronavirus outbreak.

In 2015, 20% of Americans reported using ride-hailing services.<sup>1</sup> That more than doubled by 2020, with 42% reporting they were using these services prior to the start of the coronavirus outbreak. However, just 16% report using a ride-hailing service during the pandemic.

Just 37% of those who reported use before the coronavirus outbreak have used a ride-hail service since the outbreak began.

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<sup>1</sup> Results of an AP-NORC survey that was conducted August 26 to September 10, 2015, with 2,978 adults on the AmeriSpeak Panel. The survey question was: "Have you personally ever used a transportation service that allows you to schedule and pay for a ride in someone's personal car using a smartphone application like Uber or Lyft or not?"

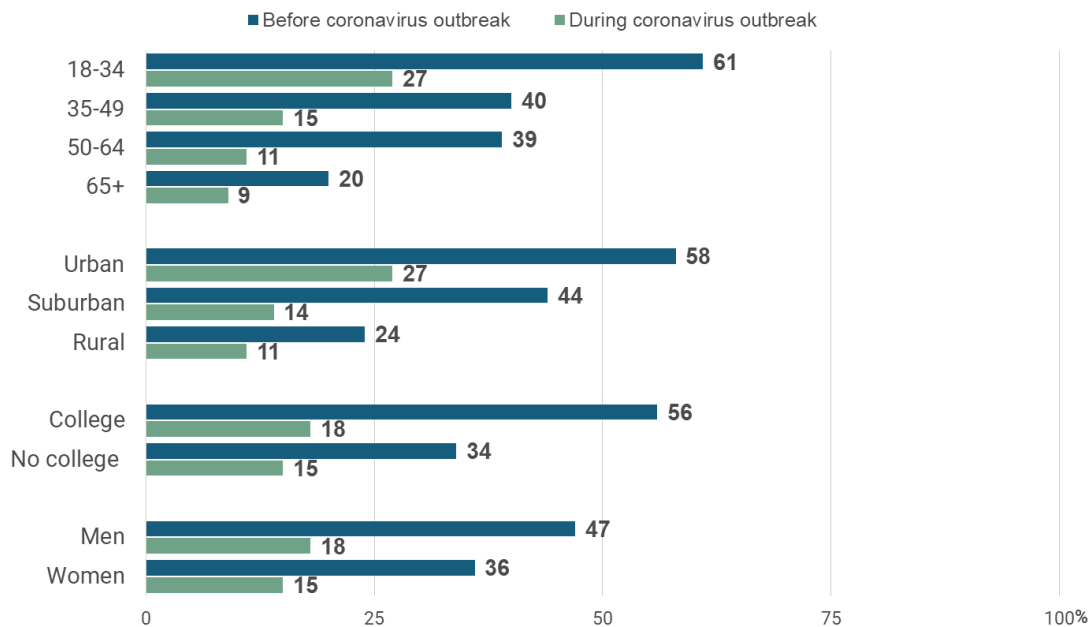


Americans who used ride-hail services before the pandemic tend to be younger, live in the cities, be college educated, and be male. For example, more than half of Americans between the age of 18 and 34 (61%) used a ride-hail service. In comparison, under half of those age 35 to 49 (40%) and 50 to 64 (39%) say the same.

However, ride-hailing use decreased across all demographic groups during the coronavirus outbreak. While more than half of urban Americans (58%) report using ride-hail services before the coronavirus outbreak, just 27% say the same now. Similarly, just 14% of suburban Americans used a ride-hailing service during the outbreak, while almost half (44%) did so before the coronavirus outbreak.

## Ride-hailing use decreased across demographic groups during the coronavirus outbreak

Percent of adults who have ever used ride-hail services



**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak? / About how often did you use each of the following services since the coronavirus outbreak began?



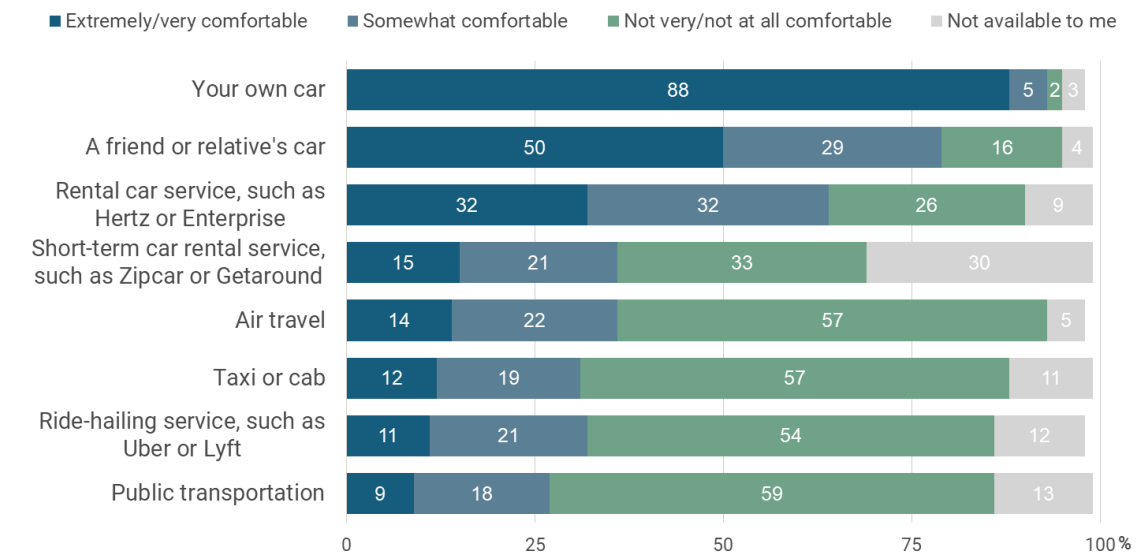
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Overall, 63% of those who report use before the coronavirus outbreak have not used a ride-hail service since the outbreak began. Americans say that safety (44%) or changing needs (38%) are major reasons they stopped using them. In contrast, few cite availability (8%) or cost (6%) as a major reason for why they stopped using them.

A majority of adults do not feel comfortable using a ride-hailing service during the coronavirus outbreak, preferring to use their own cars for travel. Public comfort with ride-hail services is similar to comfort with taxis, public transportation, and air travel.

## Few Americans are comfortable traveling in ride-hailing services like Uber or Lyft during the coronavirus outbreak

Percent of adults



**Question:** If you had to go somewhere today that required taking transportation, how comfortable would you be using each of the following options? If the option is not available to you, you can indicate that too.

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

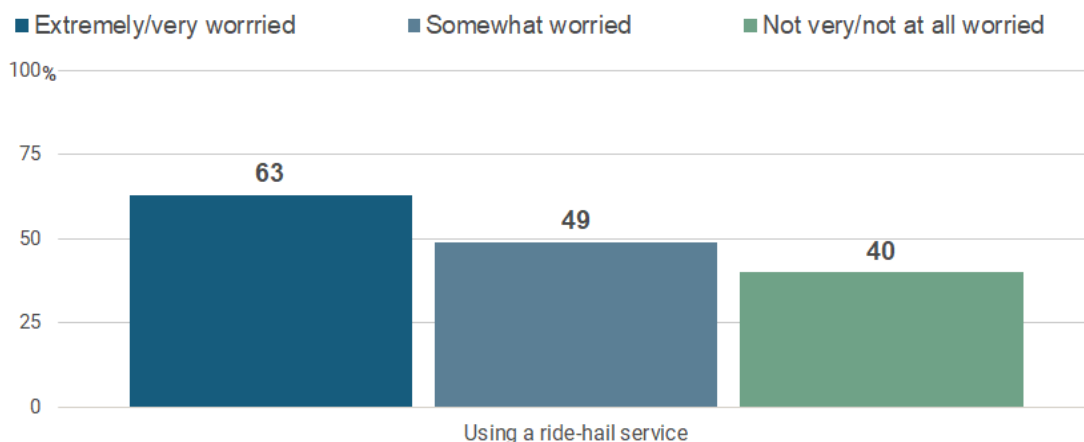


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Americans concerned about contracting the coronavirus are more likely to be uncomfortable using ride-hailing services today. Nearly two-thirds of those who are extremely or very worried about this (63%) say they would be uncomfortable. In comparison, just 40% of those who are not very or not at all worried say the same.

## Americans concerned about contracting the coronavirus are less likely to be comfortable using ride-hail services like Uber or Lyft

Percent of adults who would be uncomfortable using ride-hail services today



**Question:** How comfortable are you doing each of the following activities these days? If the option is not available to you, you can indicate that too. / How worried are you about you or someone in your family being infected with the coronavirus?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

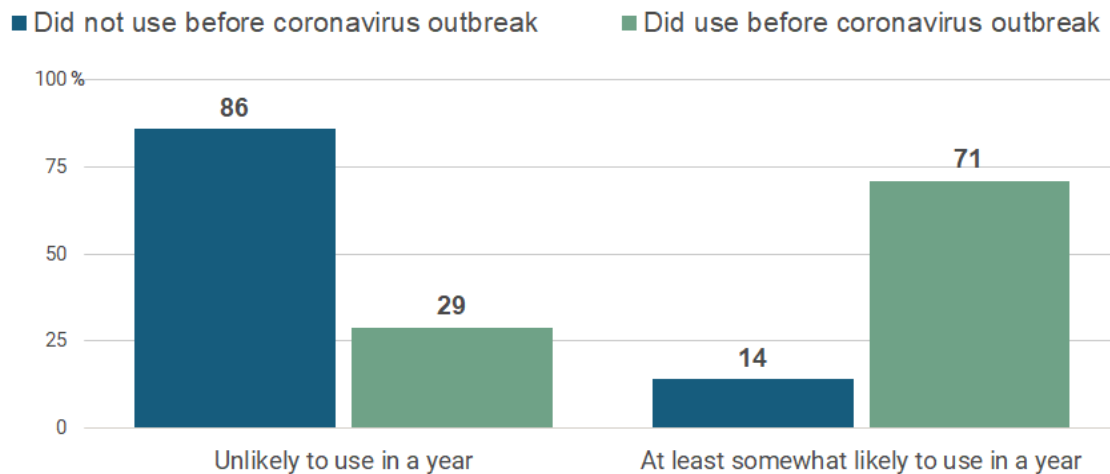


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A majority of adults (71%) who used ride-hail services before the coronavirus outbreak expect to use these again a year from now. In comparison, just 14% of those who didn't use ride-hail services before the outbreak are likely to use them in the future.

### Most Americans who used ride-hailing services before the coronavirus outbreak are likely to use services again a year from now

Percent of adults



**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak? / A year from now, how likely do you think it is that you will use each of the following services?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



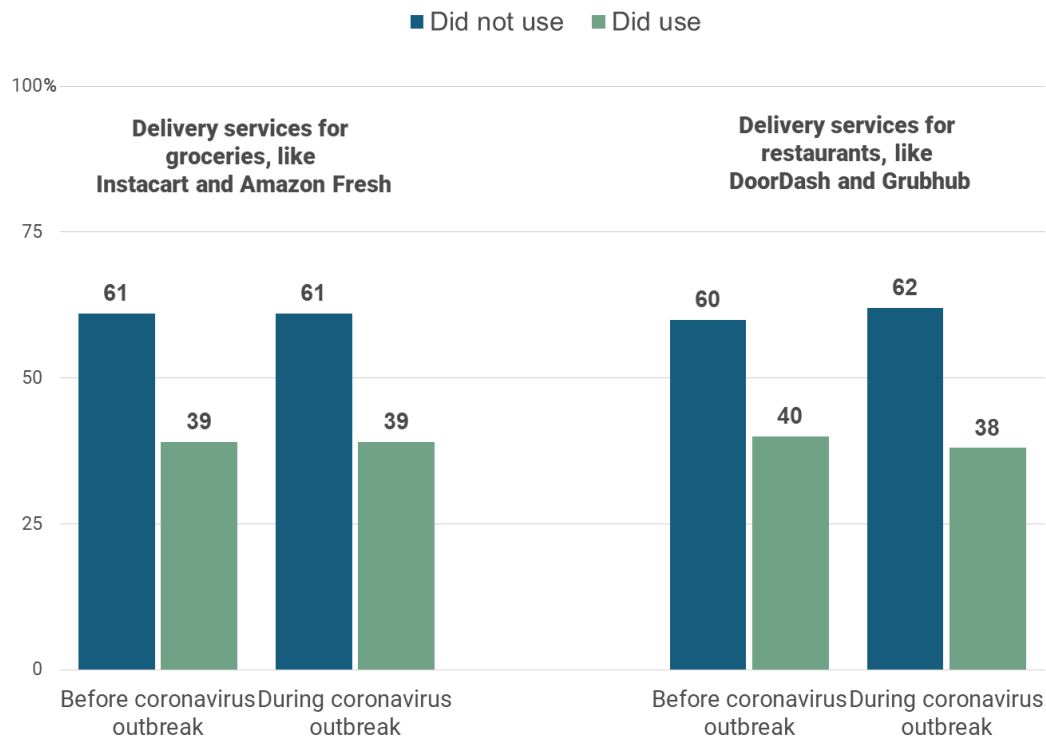
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## MANY AMERICANS CONTINUE USING DELIVERY SERVICES FOR GROCERIES AND RESTAURANT FOOD DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK.

The share of Americans who use delivery services, like Grubhub, DoorDash, Instacart, or Amazon Fresh that allow users to request, track, and pay for either prepared food from restaurants or groceries, has remained steady during the coronavirus outbreak. Americans have been about as likely to have started using these delivery services as to have stopped using them since the outbreak.

## The number of Americans using delivery services for groceries and restaurants remained steady during the coronavirus outbreak

Percent of adults



**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak? / About how often did you use each of the following services since the coronavirus outbreak began?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



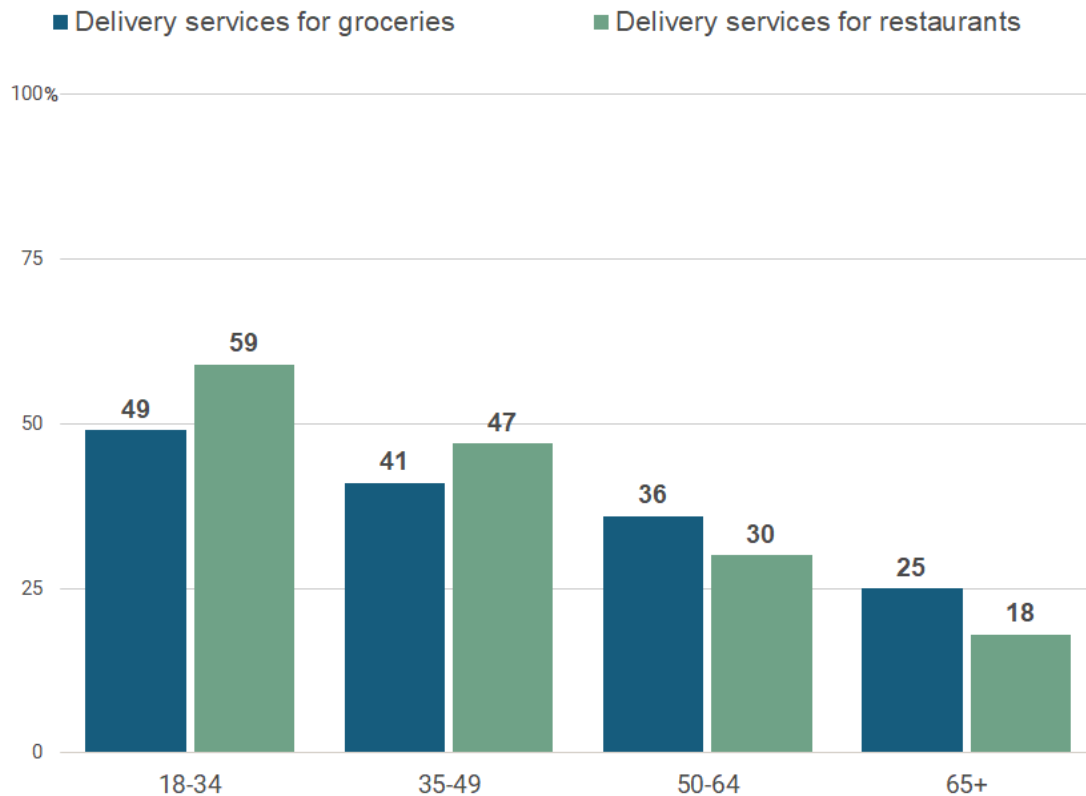
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Americans who used delivery services before the pandemic tend to be younger. For example, 59% of adults under the age of 35 used a service like DoorDash, Grubhub, Postmates, or UberEats to deliver prepared food from a restaurant. In comparison, just 30% of those between 50 and 64 years old and 18% of those 65 and older say the same.

Americans living in cities are also more likely to use delivery services for restaurant food. Fifty percent of urban adults have done so while just 45% of suburban and 24% of rural adults say the same.

## Younger adults are more likely to use delivery services for groceries and restaurant food

Percent of adults who used each service before the coronavirus outbreak



**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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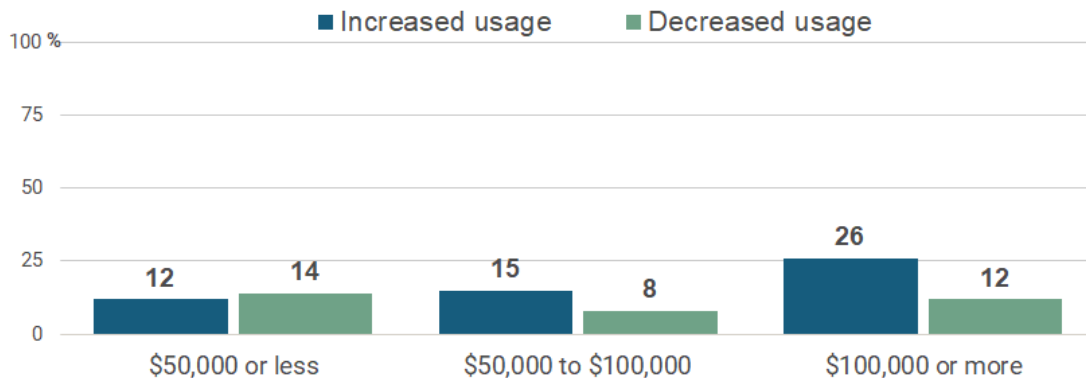
While use of delivery services for both groceries and restaurant food remained steady overall, there are demographic shifts in use. Six percent of Americans stopped using these services since the coronavirus outbreak, 7% began using them for the first time, 44% continued to use them, and 41% did not use them before or since the outbreak.

In particular, 16% increased their frequency of use of grocery delivery services, and 12% decreased their frequency of use.

People with higher incomes are more likely to report increasing their use of delivery services since the pandemic. In particular, Americans with household incomes of at least \$100,000 are more than twice as likely to have increased their use of grocery delivery services, like Instacart or Amazon Fresh, than Americans with household incomes under \$50,000 (26% vs. 12%).

## Wealthier Americans are more likely to have increased their usage of delivery services of groceries during the coronavirus outbreak

Percent of adults who increased usage of delivery services for groceries



**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak? / About how often did you use each of the following services since the coronavirus outbreak began?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

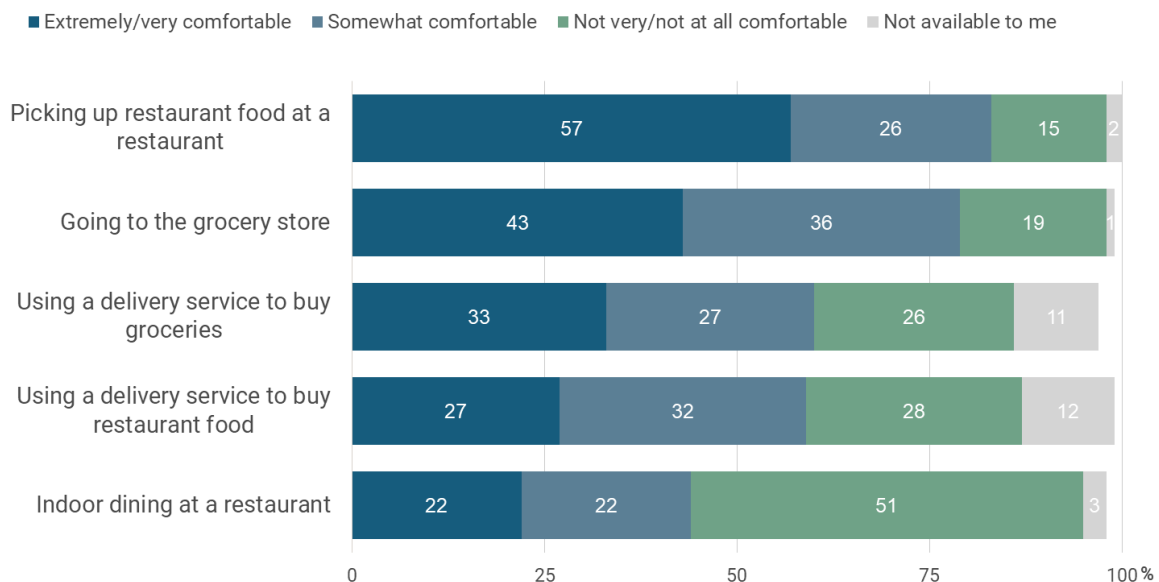


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Despite use of both types of delivery service remaining steady during the coronavirus outbreak, few Americans say they are very comfortable using either service. More Americans report comfort with going to a grocery store or picking up food from a restaurant themselves than using these delivery services.

## Few Americans are very comfortable using a delivery service to buy groceries or prepared food from restaurants during the coronavirus outbreak

Percent of adults



**Question:** How comfortable are you doing each of the following activities these days? If the option is not available to you, you can indicate that too.

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



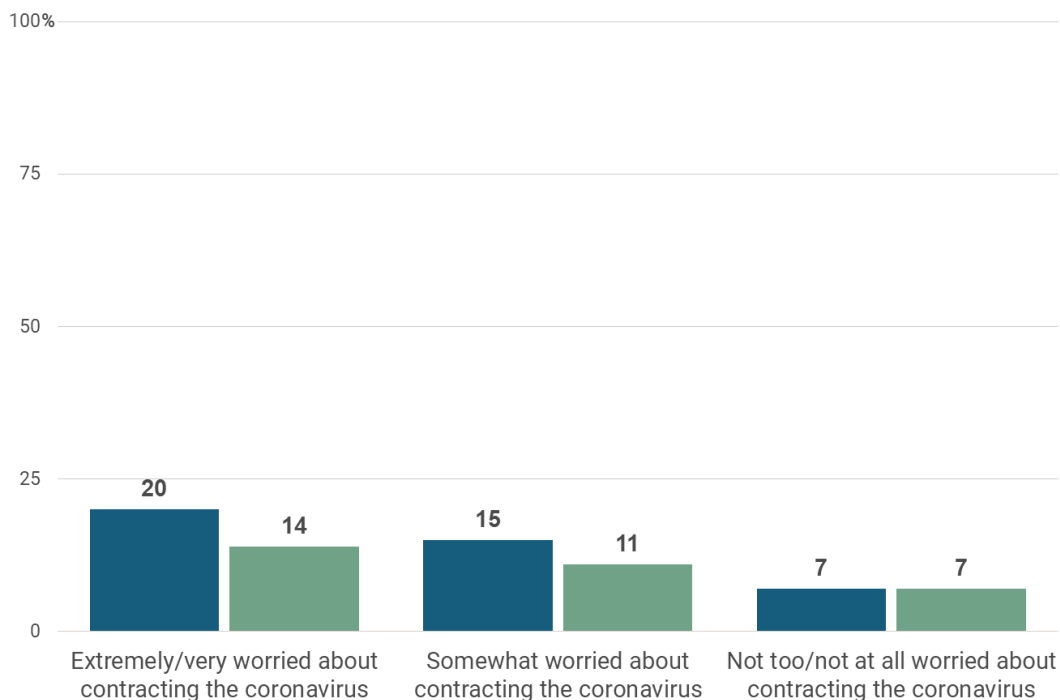
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Americans more concerned about contracting the coronavirus are using grocery delivery services more. Twenty percent of those who are most worried about contracting the coronavirus for them or their families report using grocery delivery services more. In comparison, just 7% of those who are least worried say the same.

### Increase in use of grocery delivery service is higher among Americans most concerned with coronavirus

Percent of adults

■ Increased use of delivery service for groceries ■ Decreased use of delivery service for groceries



**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak? / A year from now, how likely do you think it is that you will use each of the following services? / How worried are you about you or someone in your family being infected with the coronavirus?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



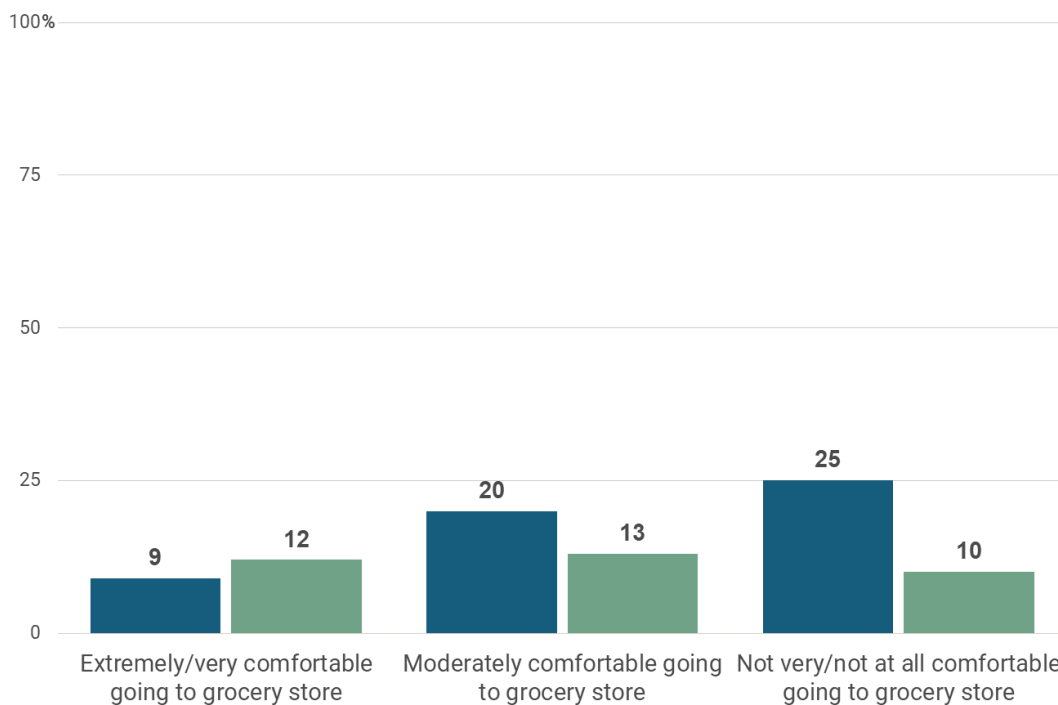
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Twenty-five percent of those who are not very or not at all comfortable going to the grocery store have increased their use of grocery delivery services. In comparison, just 9% of those who are extremely or very comfortable going to the grocery store say the same.

## Americans uncomfortable with going to the grocery store during the coronavirus outbreak are using grocery delivery services more

Percent of adults

■ Increased use of delivery service for groceries ■ Decreased use of delivery service for groceries



**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak? / A year from now, how likely do you think it is that you will use each of the following services? / How comfortable are you doing each of the following activities these days? If the option is not available to you, you can indicate that too. [Going to a grocery store to buy groceries]

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



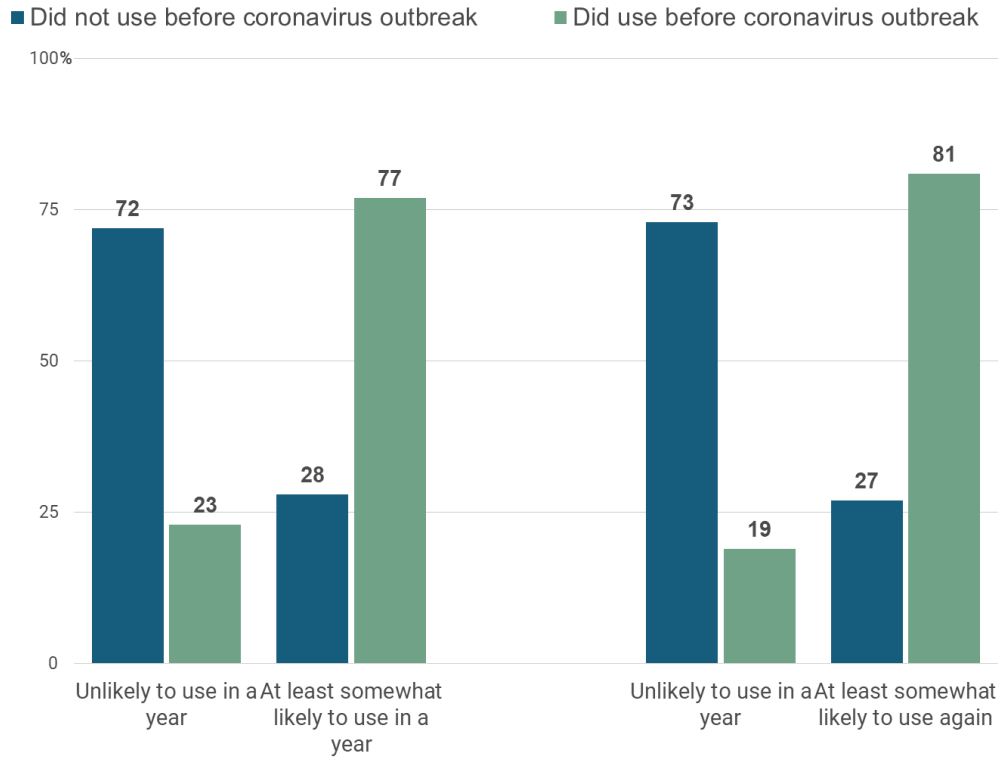
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Overall, Americans expect to use both delivery services a year from now at similar rates to their current use. Forty-seven percent are likely to use a delivery service to order groceries in a year, and 49% say the same about delivery services for prepared food.

Those using delivery services before the coronavirus outbreak are more likely to expect to continue to use them a year from now. For example, 77% of those who used grocery delivery services before the outbreak say they are likely to do so again in a year.

## Most Americans who used delivery services before coronavirus are likely to use them in the future

Percent of adults



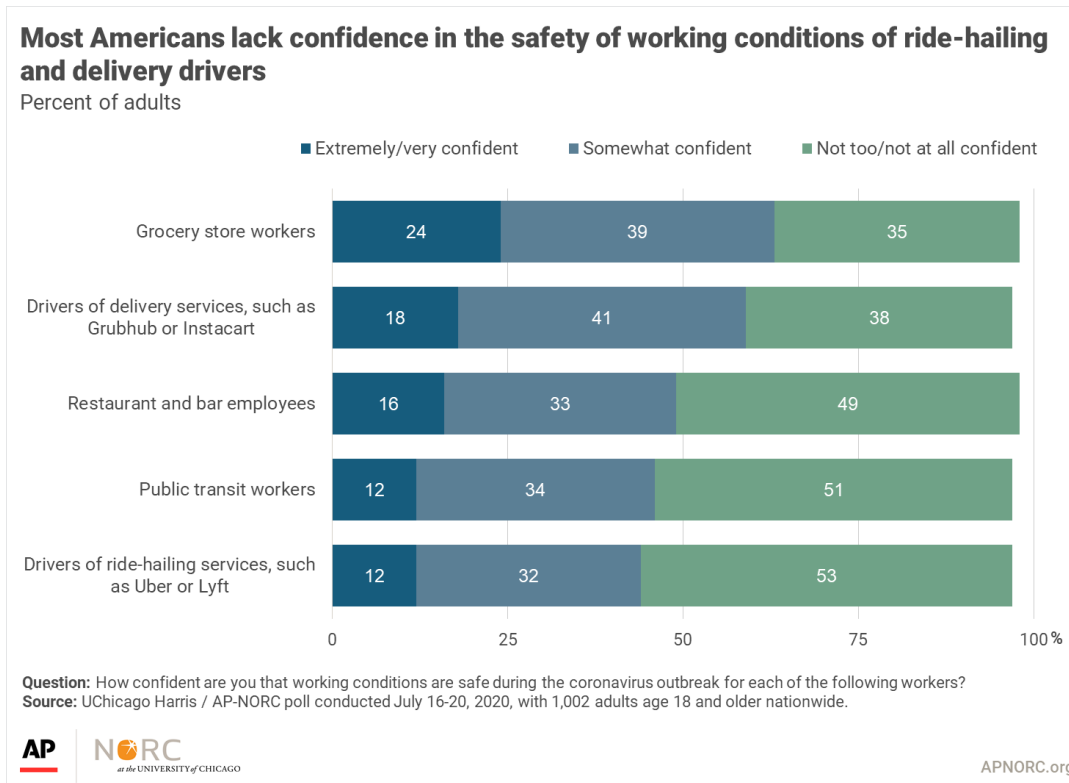
**Question:** About how often did you use each of the following services before the coronavirus outbreak? / A year from now, how likely do you think it is that you will use each of the following services?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

## MOST AMERICANS LACK CONFIDENCE IN SAFETY CONDITIONS FOR DRIVERS, BUT FEW SUPPORT INCREASING PRICES TO SUPPORT HIGHER WAGES AND BENEFITS.

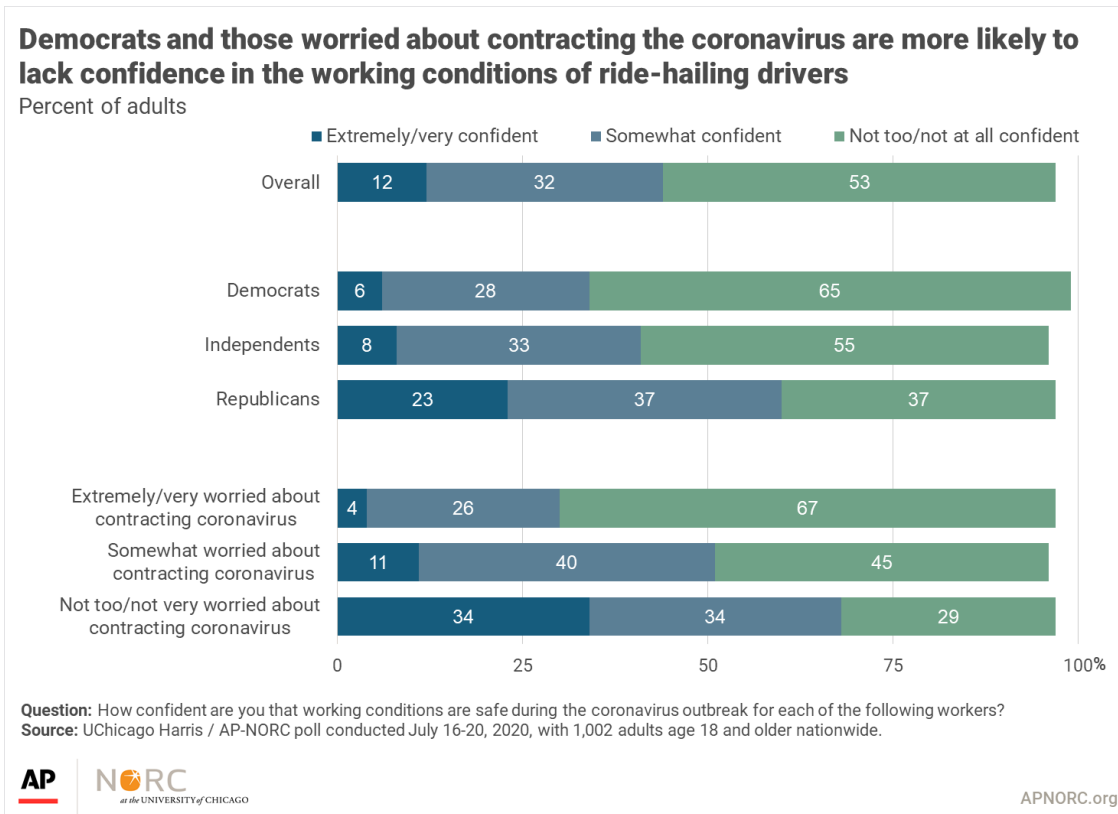
Few Americans are very confident in the safety of working conditions of ride-hailing drivers or delivery drivers, who are frequently referred to as “gig” workers and who use their own vehicles.

The public views the safety of these workers during the coronavirus outbreak as similar to public transportation workers and employees of restaurants and bars.



While about half of Americans (53%) lack confidence in the working conditions of ride-hail service drivers, Democrats and those worried about contracting the coronavirus are most likely to lack confidence.

For example, while 65% of Democrats say they are not too confident or not confident at all in the safety of working conditions for these drivers, just 37% of Republicans and 55% of independents say the same.



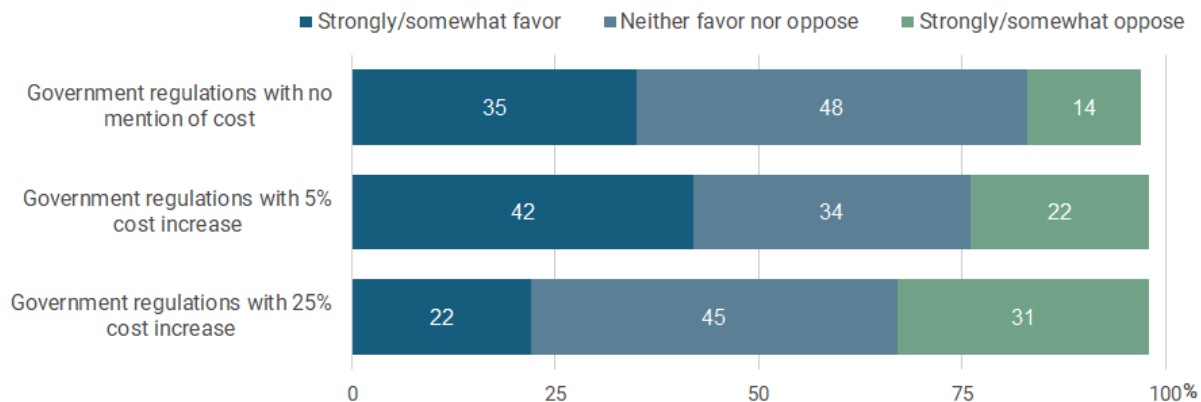
Many in the public neither favor nor oppose government regulation to increase wages and benefits for drivers of ride-hailing and delivery services, and support for such regulation declines if it would impact the costs for users.

This study featured a survey experiment in which respondents were asked about their support for government regulations to increase wages and benefits for ride-hailing and delivery drivers. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three groups—one group without any mention of cost impacts of the regulation and two groups that saw a different price that would be passed on to the customer as a result of the regulations at either 5% or 25%.

While 35% of people support regulations when there is no mention of an increase in cost, just 22% say the same if there is a 25% increase in cost for customers.

## Public is less likely to support increased wages and benefits for drivers of ride-hailing and delivery services if it leads to a larger increase in cost

Percent of adults



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose government regulations to increase wages and benefits for drivers of ride-hailing and delivery services?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

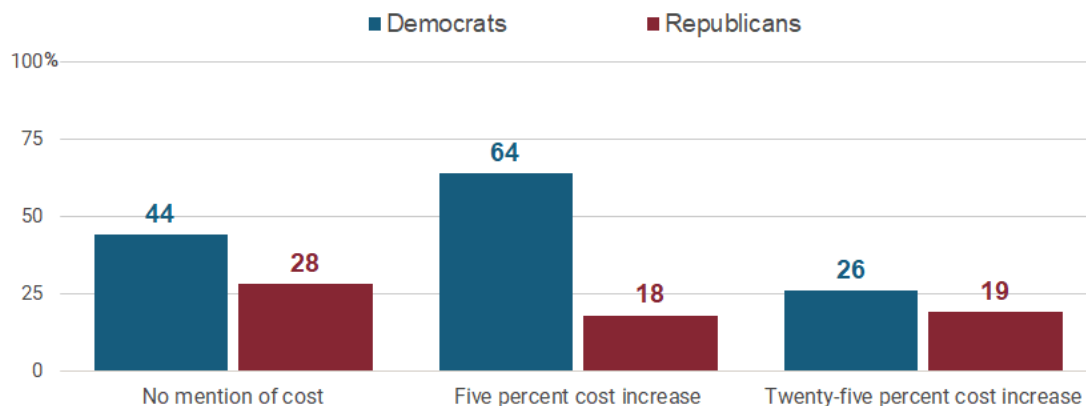


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Democrats are more likely to support these regulations than Republicans when there is no mention of increase in cost (44% vs. 20%).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Democrats are more than three times as likely as Republicans to support regulations when there is mention of a 5% increase in cost (64% vs. 18%).

## Democrats are more likely to favor increased wages and benefits for drivers when there is a significant price impact for customers

Percent of adults



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose government regulations [to increase wages and benefits for drivers of ride-hailing and delivery services] / [to increase wages and benefits for drivers of ride-hailing and delivery services that would lead to a 5% increase in the cost of rideshare or delivery services for consumers] / [to increase wages and benefits for drivers of ride-hailing and delivery services that would lead to a 25% increase in the cost of rideshare or delivery services for consumers]?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,002 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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<sup>2</sup> There are too few independents in each of the three respondent groups to make reliable comparisons.

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey 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. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

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 15.11%, the weighted household panel response rate is 23.6%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 84.8%, for a cumulative response rate of 3.02%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.32 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2020 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

For more information, email [info@apnorc.org](mailto:info@apnorc.org).

## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

One of the largest graduate professional schools at the University of Chicago, Harris Public Policy has been driven by the belief that evidence-based research, not ideology or intuition, is the best guide for public policy. For more than three decades, our exceptional community of scholars, students, and alumni have applied this exacting perspective to the world's most pressing problems using the latest tools of social science. Through our undergraduate and graduate programs, we empower a new generation of data-driven leaders to create a positive social impact throughout our global society. For more information visit <https://harris.uchicago.edu/>.

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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.

- The Associated Press is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. Online: [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org).
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

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