THE SHIFTING TIDES OF RACE & DIVERSITY

November 01, 2020
THE 2020 PANDEMIC: U.S. HISPANIC IMPACT

Abstract

Daily Life

Health, Work, and Finances

Access to Spanish-Language Resources

Opportunities for Brands to Take Action

Sources
Similar to most people, COVID-19 took Hispanics by surprise, impacting the very core of Americans’ daily lives. Yet, unlike most people, Hispanics are most likely to be even more negatively impacted by COVID-19 as seen through their higher number of pay cuts and job losses as well as their lower access to healthcare, lack of health insurance, minimal access to in-language information, and beyond. While the world works together to slow the spread of the virus, brands, government officials, advocacy groups, and community members have many opportunities to lend a helping hand, even from a distance, to more directly help Hispanics both now and in the coming months.
Even during stay-at-home orders, Hispanics are more likely than Whites and Blacks to engage in leisure activities that disregard social distancing recommendations such as dining out, going to the movies, and entertaining at home.\textsuperscript{11}

Digital media consumption has increased substantially due to stay-at-home orders, and Hispanics are no exception. They are more likely than Whites and Blacks to watch digital streaming, such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime, and social media platforms.\textsuperscript{11}

Hispanics are more likely than the U.S. overall to perceive the virus outbreak as a major threat to the health of the U.S. overall, their personal health, and their personal finances.\textsuperscript{14}

Hispanics and Blacks are significantly more likely than Whites to be unable to work from home. Already, Hispanics have recorded higher incidences of they, or someone in their households, being laid off/losing their job, taking a pay cut, or both.\textsuperscript{16, x}
With lower or loss of their incomes, Hispanics are likely to reduce their discretionary spending on personal treats, dining out, and entertainment, which are perceived to be very social activities for Hispanics.\textsuperscript{xiii}

The $2 trillion stimulus package put into law on March 27 does not include undocumented and/or unauthorized workers. DACA recipients with undocumented parents are unable to be claimed as dependents to receive $500 for their households. These guidelines also apply to individuals seeking to apply for unemployment assistance.\textsuperscript{xy}

Federal, state, and local government has been slow to provide COVID-19 information in Spanish. Advocacy groups and Spanish-language media have stepped in to fill in the gaps. The Center for Disease Control and World Health Organization are the best health organizations to receive Spanish-language information and updates. The Texas Department of Health and Human Services has been recognized as another good resource but is more pertinent to Texans than U.S. Hispanics.\textsuperscript{xvii, xx}
“The virus is an equal-opportunity crisis … but the impact and the burden of it is not going to be shared equally. Like most things in society, it’s going to be regressive. It’s going to be felt disproportionately by the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized, and obviously that falls down in this country on communities of color.”

Dr. Ashwin Vasan, public health expert and assistant professor at Columbia University in New York City
Russell Research has conducted over 4,000 online interviews each week of March to assess public concern, likelihood of engaging in leisure activities, and changes in media consumption amid COVID-19.

As of the first week of research at the start of March, two-thirds of Hispanics were somewhat or very concerned about COVID-19. Over the course of just a few weeks, a majority of participants across the surveyed ethnicities cited similar levels of concern over COVID-19, with Hispanics holding a slight lead in being somewhat or very concerned in Weeks 2 and 3.

As of the last week of March, over 90% of all Americans are somewhat/very concerned. Hispanics are at par with Blacks in being the most concerned.

Nearly all U.S. Hispanics are somewhat or very concerned about COVID-19.

<table>
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<td>Week 4</td>
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The survey probed the types of activities participants are less and more likely to do as governments put stay-at-home or self-quarantine orders in place. At the time of writing this report on April 2, about 90% of Americans are under stay-at-home orders, including 32 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.  

Over the four weeks of the study, numbers skyrocketed among participants expressing their unwillingness to engage in activities that once dominated daily life. Overall, three-fourths of all participants in Week 4 were less likely to go to a shopping mall or go to the movies. Two-thirds of all participants were less likely to go to the gym or dine out at a fast-food restaurant.

In reviewing the ethnic differences, Whites were more likely than Blacks and Hispanics to avoid most any activity that would put them in proximity of others. Hispanics were slightly more likely not to go to the supermarket. In some cases, Hispanics were more likely to engage in the very activities that Whites would prefer to distance from, such as dining out at a fast food, fast-casual, or sit-down restaurants; entertaining at home; and attending a religious service, all of which social activities for Hispanics.

Being a highly social segment, Hispanics are likely to be having a more difficult time social distancing.
Hispanics and Blacks have been more resistant in curtailing daily activities due to COVID-19.
Since the inception of this study, more Americans have been using more online services and digital platforms. Compared to Whites and Blacks, Hispanics are slightly more likely to have groceries delivered; entertain at home; stream TV shows or movies; and play video games. Hispanics are at par with Whites for ordering takeout/delivery.

Another effect of staying home is increased media consumption, with digital media shining through. 59% of all participants cited paying somewhat or more attention to the Internet/Web. Streaming TV, such as Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc., traditional TV, and social media have continued to rise over the course of the study.

Hispanics are at par with Whites for ordering takeout or delivery.
Diving into ethnic differences, Hispanics are more likely than Whites and Blacks to pay somewhat or much more attention to social media, Youtube, and streaming TV. Blacks are more likely to be attuned to email, traditional TV, and radio. Both Hispanics and Blacks are at par in paying somewhat/more attention to podcasts.ii
Communities of color are more likely than Whites to have severe health conditions, such as higher susceptibility to asthma, obesity, and heart disease, making them potentially more vulnerable to complications stemming from COVID-19.

“The virus is an equal-opportunity crisis … but the impact and the burden of it is not going to be shared equally,” said Dr. Ashwin Vasan, a public health expert and assistant professor at Columbia University in New York City. “Like most things in society, it's going to be regressive. It's going to be felt disproportionately by the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized, and obviously that falls down in this country on communities of color.”

While advocates and civil rights organizations have pushed for local, state, and federal lawmakers to direct their attention and resources to communities of color, the COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder of the inequities that remain.

Long before the pandemic, disparities in access to healthcare and insurance have ravaged communities of color.
“Extra resources will help relieve some of the disparities in access to testing, access to physicians, and care.”

Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-Calif), an emergency room physician, said there’s a significant need to put money and resources into local communities and underfunded programs. The extra resources “will help relieve some of the disparities in access to testing, access to physicians, and care.”

Without clear signs of symptoms like influenza, Ruiz noted that this community engagement is even more important, especially if it is communicated in a way that is culturally relevant and in a language that one understands.

A Pew Research survey conducted March 10-16 found that Hispanics are more likely than all Americans to perceive the coronavirus outbreak as a major threat to the health of the U.S. population as whole and to their personal health.
% of adults who say the coronavirus outbreak is a ___ threat to the health of the U.S. population as a whole

March 10-16

Hispanics view COVID-19 to be a greater threat.
Pew Research conducted another survey a little more than a week later, finding that Hispanics and Blacks were more likely to perceive the outbreak as a major threat to their personal health than Whites.\textsuperscript{v}

One possible factor for this disparity in perception is Hispanics being less likely to have medical coverage. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) 2018 National Health Interview Survey, 21\% of U.S. Hispanics and 12\% of Blacks under the age of 65 are uninsured. The only racial/ethnic population with a higher rate of incidence of lacking health insurance under 65 is Native Americans, with 29\% being uninsured. Of Hispanics over the age of 65, 4\% are uninsured, the highest rate of incidence across U.S. races and ethnicities.\textsuperscript{vi}

Hispanics and Blacks are more likely to perceive the outbreak as a major threat to their personal health.
UnidosUS, the nation’s largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization, states that nearly 10 million Hispanics are living without health insurance. As such, they have a bigger burden of higher medical bills and are more likely to choose not to seek medical attention – despite feeling sick – for fear of the high associated costs.\textsuperscript{vii}

The state of the economy and Americans’ personal finances are as concerning, if not more so, than the impact on one’s health and the health of the U.S. population overall. Both Hispanics and the U.S. overall perceive the coronavirus outbreak as a major threat to the U.S. economy. Where they differ is in Hispanics’ perception of the outbreak being more of an impact on their personal financial situation.

Nearly 10 million U.S. Hispanics are living without health insurance.
Two-thirds of employed Hispanic adults noted that they would not get paid if coronavirus caused them to miss two or more weeks of work. This includes nearly half of Hispanics who mentioned that it would be difficult to meet expenses at this time.\textsuperscript{viii}

Already, one-third of Americans have come out to say that at least one individual in their household has been laid off, lost a job, or has been required to take a pay cut. Hispanics were most likely of the surveyed ethnic groups to have one or both consequences occur for someone in their households.\textsuperscript{ix}

Hispanics have already been financially impacted more than other segments.
This data follows a few days after the Economic Policy Institute published an article citing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that less than 30% of Americans would be able to work from home or telework, an option that varies greatly by race and ethnicity. In fact, less than one in five Black workers and less than one in six Hispanic workers are able to work from home.

Construction, Wholesale and Retail Trade, Agriculture, Forestry, Mining, and Hunting are just a few of the industries where workers are most unlikely to work from home. They are also the industries that employ high concentrations of immigrant and undocumented workers.

Nearly three-fourths of agricultural workers are undocumented and contribute $9 billion to the fruit and vegetable industry alone each year. Additionally, immigrants make up nearly one-fourth of direct care workers as well as nearly a quarter of all restaurant industry workers.

Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-Tex), chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said “If just 16% of Latinos are able to work from home, that means that the vast majority of Latino workers are either being forced to risk their health and keep working through the crisis, or have lost their income or their job.”
On March 27, the President signed into law a record-breaking $2 trillion stimulus package to provide relief to American workers and a worsening economy. Individuals who make less than $75,000 per year will receive a $1,200 check with an additional $500 per child. Overall payments scale down as one’s income rises. The stimulus package also expands unemployment insurance, creates a federally backed small business loan program, provides loans for bigger, industry-specific businesses such as airlines and hotels, and gives assistance to hospitals and healthcare systems around the country. 

Rep. Castro and advocacy groups like United We Dream had called on Congress to include undocumented immigrants in the stimulus package.

Should Hispanics lose their source of income, they are most likely to decrease their discretionary spending on personal treats, dining out, and entertainment. As noted in the previous section, Hispanics were seen as more likely than other participants to continue to dine out during the crisis. If Hispanics lose their sources of income as Rep. Castro noted, then Hispanics may join Whites and Blacks in limiting their dining out expenses.
However, only people who are authorized to work in the United States may qualify to receive the individual payments under the stimulus package, provided they meet the income thresholds. Under the plan signed into law, unauthorized immigrants who pay federal taxes using what is known as an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, which is about 4.4 million people, do not qualify for the cash payments.

Additionally, if a parent is unauthorized, they are unable to declare their child a dependent to receive the $500. For instance, a DACA recipient who files taxes as a dependent of an undocumented parent.

The same rules apply in order to receive unemployment assistance. But it gets tricky for individuals in the U.S. with temporary visas, whose status depends on their employment.xv

Yet, for COVID-19, there are no “distinction[s] between citizens, permanent residents, visa holders, and people who are undocumented. COVID-19 thinks we are all Americans,” writes Ali Noorani, in a Medium article.

“There are no distinction[s] between citizens, permanent residents, visa holders, and people who are undocumented. COVID-19 thinks we are all Americans.”

“If these vulnerable populations that are part of the backbone of our economy are healthy, that means we all will be safer,” Noorani continues.xvi
“Some of these families — because of their immigration status — may not qualify for relief under the upcoming federal stimulus packages. In total, our communities of color may bear the brunt of the economic impact of this crisis and will lose any sense of financial security for years. The way the federal government responds now could determine wealth disparities for the next generation of Americans. That’s why we must ensure all families receive the assistance they need to get through this crisis and get back on their feet as soon as possible.”

Representative Joaquín Castro (D-Tex)
Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus
Government officials are primarily communicating information in English, potentially alienating millions of Americans who aren’t proficient in English and keeping them from knowing what they need to know to stay healthy.\textsuperscript{xvii} COVID-19 updates in Spanish are a mixed bag in the U.S. 2017 Census data shows that 72\% of U.S. Hispanics speak a language other than English at home.\textsuperscript{xviii}

On March 17, the website Latino Rebels called out the CDC for its lack of Spanish-language COVID-19 information and resources. The CDC published it three days later. It contains valuable information such as how the virus spreads, symptoms, prevention, treatment, and updated travel restrictions. The site also has links to videos, infographics, and social media posts to share on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. (Link to espanol.cdc.gov)

It’s hit or miss when it comes to whether states and cities are sharing COVID-19 information, resources, and updates in Spanish.

Florida has held many of its state-official-led news conferences in both English and Spanish. The Florida State Health Department noted that they have Spanish-speaking agents available around the clock at their coronavirus call center. In El Paso, where 80\% of residents are Hispanic, authorities have conducted news conferences in both English and Spanish.
In New Mexico, an Associated Press reporter asked the governor’s office about a lack of Spanish language on the state health department’s website. The site went live the next day, gaining some traction when the governor tweeted its link, but it’s otherwise difficult to find on one’s own.

Spanish-language media have stepped up to fill the language gaps where government has been unable. Telemundo and Univision, the largest Spanish-language networks, have integrated more airtime into COVID-19 coverage, with Telemundo expanding its morning show and midday newscast to include segments on the virus. Both of their websites include the most current coronavirus news from the U.S. and abroad.xix

Hispanic advocacy organizations are also taking charge. UnidosUS has a webpage dedicated to tackling frequently asked questions, including symptoms, treatment, risks, and social distancing regulations.

Spanish-language media have stepped up to fill the language gaps where government has been unable.
United We Dream shared what all immigrants should know about the closing of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services on their Facebook page. Immigrants Rising has a multi-page Google document with Spanish-language community guidelines, information on how to apply for financial aid, and activities to do with children during stay-at-home protocols.

Even some doctors have taken to YouTube to get the message out, such as Dra. Jackie of UCSF Family and Community Medicine and Dr. Pablo Moreno Franco from the Mayo Clinic.

Although limited in quantity, there are a handful of organizations and publishers that are proving to be the best collections of Spanish-language COVID-19 information and news:

- Google
- World Health Organization
- Centers for Disease Control
- Texas Health and Human Services
- AARP en Español
- Telemundo
- Univision

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5 COSAS QUE DEBES DE SABER SOBRE EL CORONAVIRUS EN ESPAÑOL

Este verano, la agencia USCIS ha anunciado que está suspendiendo ciertas actividades de la ciudad en todo el país para permitir que los ciudadanos de todo el país se beneficien de la pandemia de COVID-19. A continuación, te presentamos las organizaciones y medios de comunicación que están ofreciendo información en español.

1. Google
2. World Health Organization
3. Centers for Disease Control
4. Texas Health and Human Services
5. AARP en Español
6. Telemundo
7. Univision

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The 2020 Pandemic: U.S. Hispanic Impact
Viruses are not racist; they just seek proliferation without agenda. All things being equal, they prosper by infecting any human being regardless of their social status, income, education or ethnicity.

Regrettably, we have shared significant evidence that because of the United States’ social and political conditions, communities of color are more adversely affected by COVID-19 and its devastating consequences.

This is a national emergency and brands should take action too. Brands are entities with significant resources, reach, and influence and, as social agents, they do not operate in a vacuum. They have a responsibility – right now, any brand should become a public service brand. It is a moral imperative, and it also happens to be a wise business decision.

After the COVID-19 emergency ends – because it will, eventually – we will face a recession. There might be an argument on its length but not on its occurrence. In order to avoid the worst of it, brands must act now, taking into account the long-term consequences of their actions (or inactions).
The good news is we have been there before. This will not be our first recession and we have studied the previous ones at length. Brands that maintained their advertising spend during a recession came out faster and stronger than those who made cuts. This was true during the Great Depression, in 1974, 1990 and 2008. Consider this graphic:
BrandZ™ is the largest global brand equity research platform, covering over 100,000 brands. In 2006, Kantar put together an investment portfolio to put their research to the test. Since then, the BrandZ portfolios have outperformed the two leading stock market indexes, proving that investing in brand equity resulted in significant returns.

However, looking even more closely at the data during the last great recession, the portfolios show that the top-performing brands in terms of brand equity had less losses and, more importantly, recovered faster. xxii

All through the last great recession, the portfolios with top-performing brands in terms of brand equity had less losses and, more importantly, recovered faster. xxiii

This has been a constant for all U.S. market recessions in the past. For example, Frankenberger and Graham, two Oregon professors, studied 2,662 firms over the period from 1970 to 1991, concluding that firms that advertised during a recession increased in value and got more marketing bang for their buck... in some cases for up to three years after the recession had ended. xxiv

This holds true for any type of brand, not just cool and iconic totems like Apple or Nike. The same research shows brands like Jif and Kraft Salad Dressing experienced sales growth of 57% and 70%, respectively, after increasing their advertising during the recession. xxiii In the 1990-91 recession, while McDonald’s decided to pull its advertising budget, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell continued promoting their brands. As a result, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell sales grew by 61% and 40%, respectively, whereas McDonald’s sales dropped by 28%. xxiv
Cutting down your advertising investment is a bad idea. And when in panic, marketers might be tempted to cut what they consider ancillary first: multicultural efforts (mainly Hispanic). As a result, your Hispanic dollars will count more and by virtue of just maintaining your budgets, your share will grow and your Hispanic customers will feel your presence (and not your abandonment) during uncertain times.

The best immediate course of action for any brand that aspires to win amongst multicultural audiences is insistently investing in brand equity and becoming a dynamic social actor in favor of equality. That means taking action (facts before words) and having a vocal and active point of view on social issues.

Where should we build that strong brand equity during these uncertain times? For Hispanics, activities that are social in nature used to dominate leisure time. However, stay-at-home orders and social distancing policies have largely taken away those options. Now, Hispanics are more attuned to traditional TV, digital streaming, social media, and apps. This gives brands a chance to create social opportunities through these channels, which will better position brands as additional resources of encouragement and support and remain top-of mind.
The spotlight is on brands to step up and be pillars of empathy and trust and sources of solutions for today’s Hispanics. It will be the brands that are united with Hispanics in weathering today’s storms that will become their brands of choice once the waters once again regain their calm. The COVID-19 emergency is a precious opportunity to rethink government policies and brand strategies. It is a lesson. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, our governments and a significant number of companies have largely dismissed Hispanics. The country (and also your brands) just cannot afford that anymore.

If you do not know where to start in order to come out stronger from this crisis, please give us a shout. We are here to help.
“Secon, Holly, and Aylin Woodward. “About 90% of Americans have been ordered to stay at home. This map shows which cities and states are under lockdown.” Business Insider, Business Insider, 1 Apr. 2020, www.businessinsider.com/us-map-stay-at-home-orders-lockdowns-2020-3.

“Russell Research, March 6-23.


