ICF next

# Consumer recovery report

## Retail, health, financial services and public sector findings from ICF Next's COVID-19 Monitor Survey

May 2021

All graphs in this report are built using Datawrapper

Since March 2020, ICF and ICF Next have been running a census-based survey of the U.S. population regarding their attitudes and behaviors around public health measures. As the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved, so has the survey. We have added questions to understand how individuals' personal finances and employment status have been impacted, along with media consumption habits, demographics, and adherence to evolving social distancing guidelines.

In the first refresh of our COVID-19 Monitor Survey since December, we surveyed 1,000 U.S. consumers with a series of newly-designed questions regarding the impact of the pandemic on their personal and professional lives. The focus is on pandemic consumer behaviors, anticipated future behaviors, and responses to vaccination efforts and public health measures—timed to the nationwide availability of COVID-19 vaccines to all adults.

Our survey focused on gauging consumer sentiment and behaviors with an emphasis on recovery across four key sectors: retail, health, financial services, and the public sector.

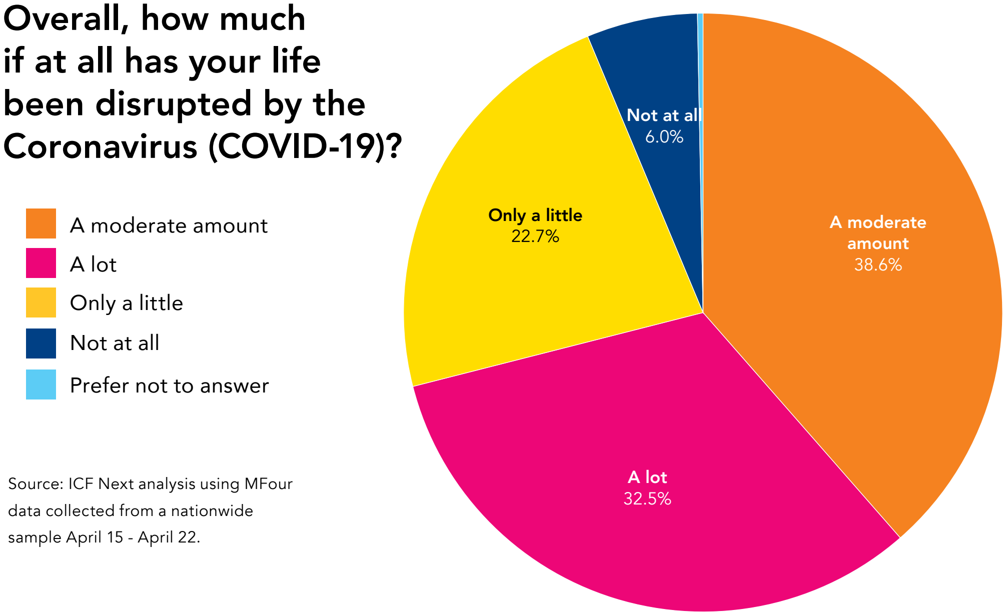
The results show a consumer population whose lives and behaviors have been heavily impacted by the pandemic, with anticipated future behaviors that are markedly different from how they behaved before the pandemic.

Some key findings outlined in the data that follows include:

- Large changes to consumer employment status and incomes.
- Large majorities of consumers also consider it "somewhat important" or "very important" that brands align with their personal values and demonstrate social responsibility.
- A consumer population in which many have reassessed their long-term financial plans since the start of the pandemic, and overall feel less secure and less confident in their financial futures and ability to manage their personal finances.
- Evolving grocery and retail shopping habits.
- Major changes to health consumption in a post-pandemic world and a decreased willingness to explore new health plan options.

- Respondents were drawn from a national, mobile, nonprobability panel of 2.5 million people in the U.S.
- The initial invitation for each survey was sent by app notification via cell phone to a census-balanced (age, gender, and race) sample of approximately 3,000 adult panel members each month.
- Three reminders via app push notification were sent to non-respondents over a period of a few days.
- Respondents received up to a $4 incentive for participation.
- The web-based interview was approximately 20 minutes.
- Survey response rates (AAPOR RR 1) varied from 21%-33%.

## Overall, how much if at all has your life been disrupted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

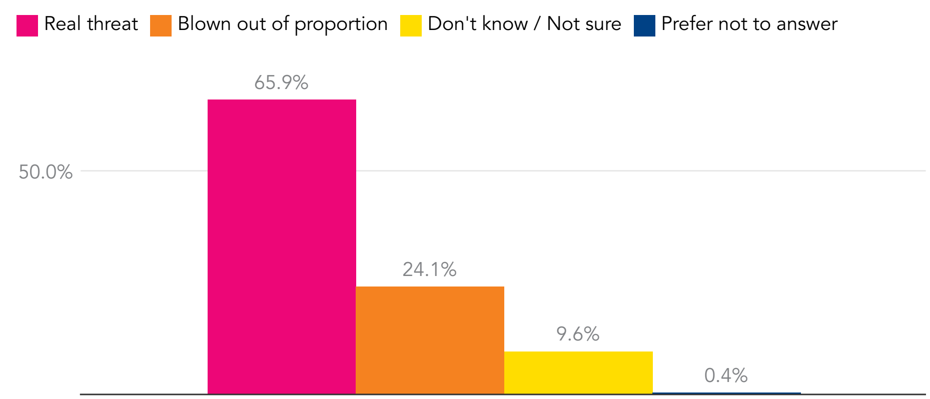



Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

## Pandemic impact and response

Consumers overwhelming feel that the pandemic has been a disruption to their life and that it is a "real threat."

## Do you think the coronavirus (COVID-19) is a real threat or blown out of proportion?

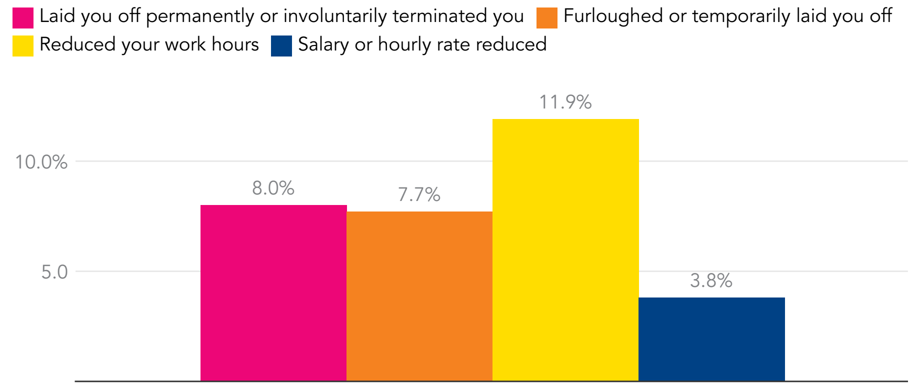



Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

Over a quarter of consumers have experienced changes to their employment status, salary, or work hours since the start of the pandemic.

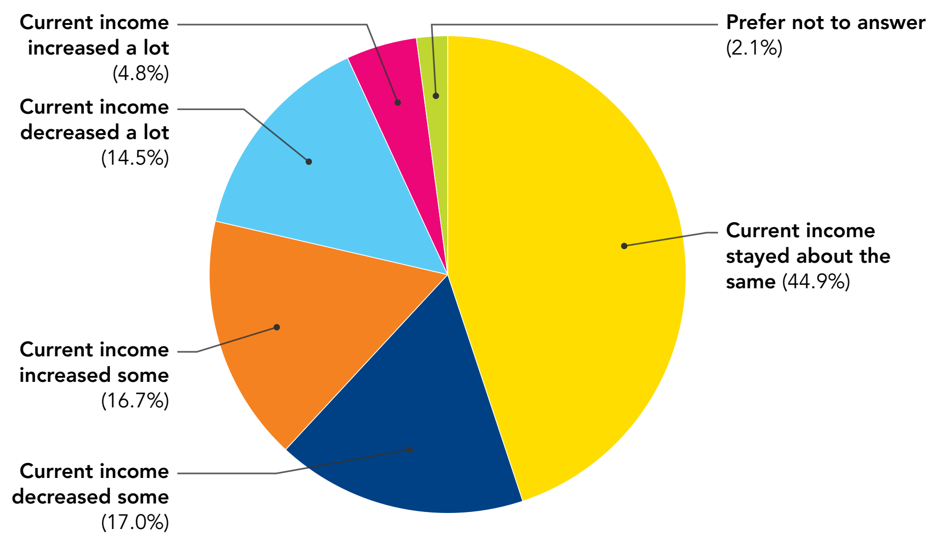
The result? 78.6% of consumers' income has "stayed about the same" or decreased since 2019.

## Since the beginning of the coronavirus, has your employer done any of the following?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

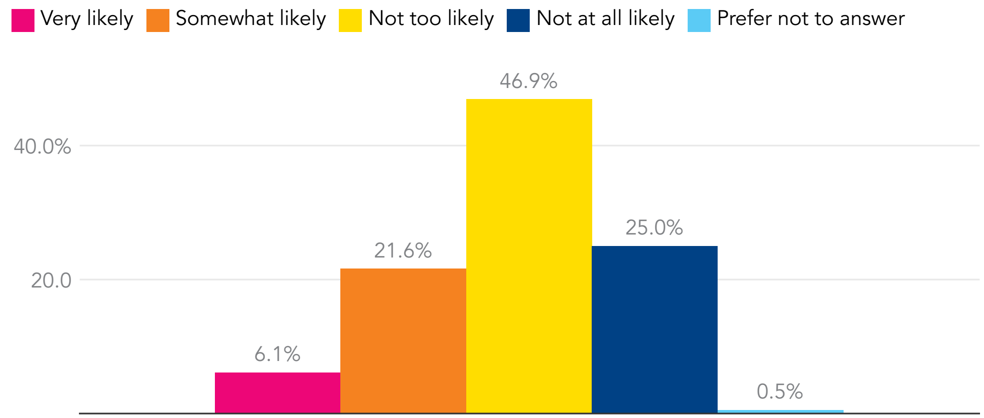
## Compared to the end of 2019, how has your current household income changed?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

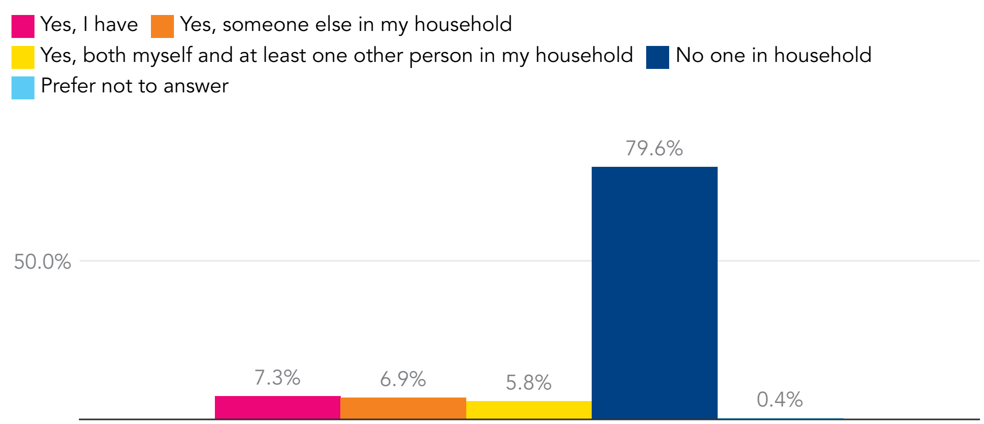
The vaccination campaign is clearly having an impact on consumers' fears of getting sick themselves. While 20% of consumers have had the virus or have had someone in their household contract the virus, almost 72% of consumers now believe that it is "not too likely" or "not at all likely" that they will get sick with the Coronavirus.

## How likely do you think it is that you, personally, will get sick with COVID-19?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

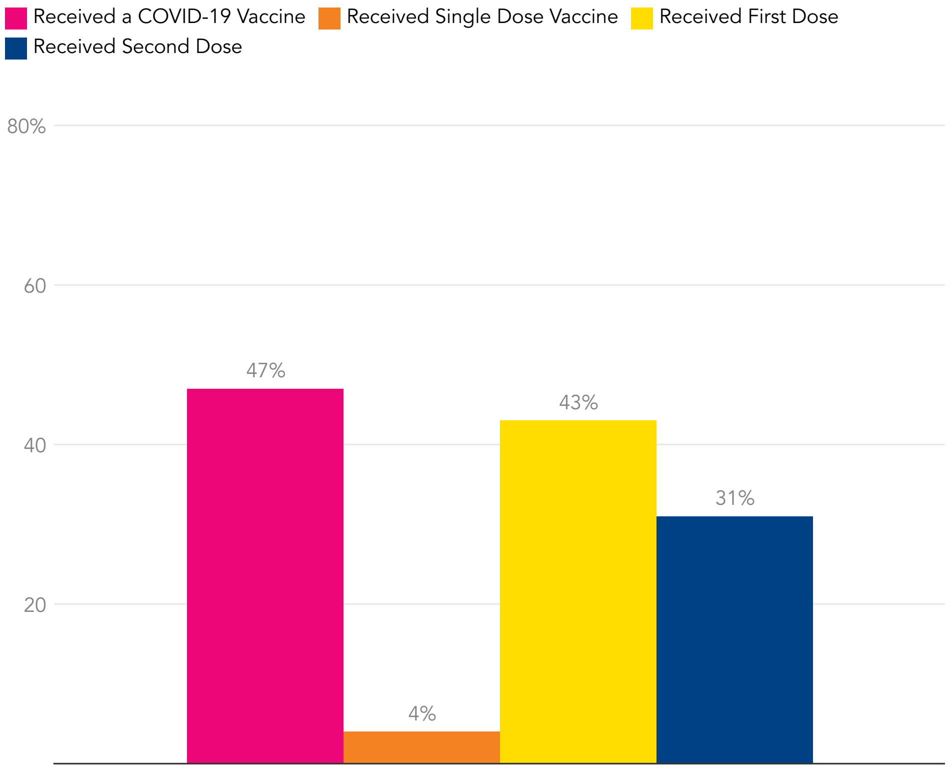
## Have any of the following household members been diagnosed as having COVID-19?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

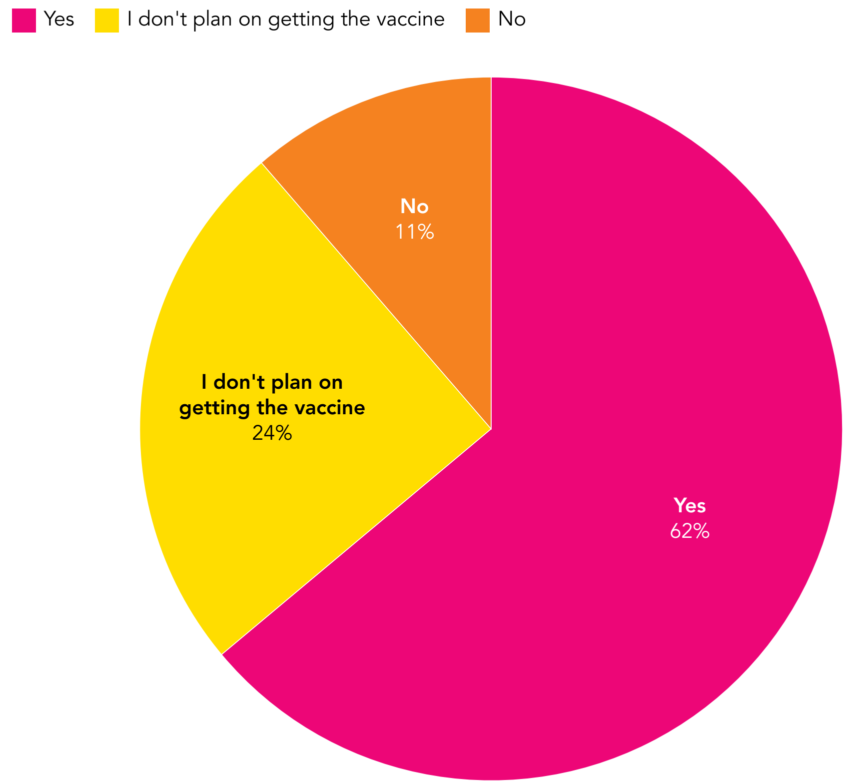
We found that as of April 22, 51% of our survey respondents had received a COVID-19 vaccination. 24% of respondents do not plan to get the vaccine, but an overwhelming majority of those that have or will receive the vaccine plan to continue to adhere to social distancing once vaccinated.

## Vaccination rates in April




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

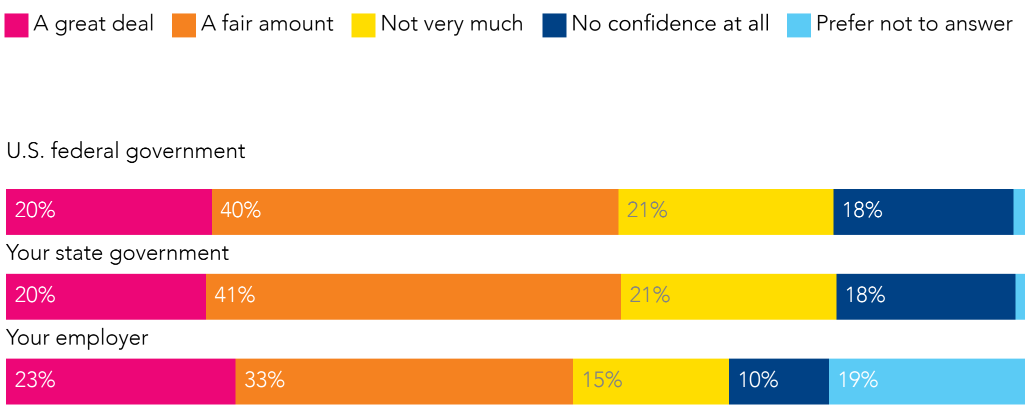
## Do you (or will you) adhere to social distancing once vaccinated for COVID-19?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

Confidence in the U.S. federal government response to the pandemic and confidence in the response of state governments are now roughly equal. When controlling for individuals who did not want to respond, confidence in the response of their individual employers is significantly higher than that in the governments' responses.

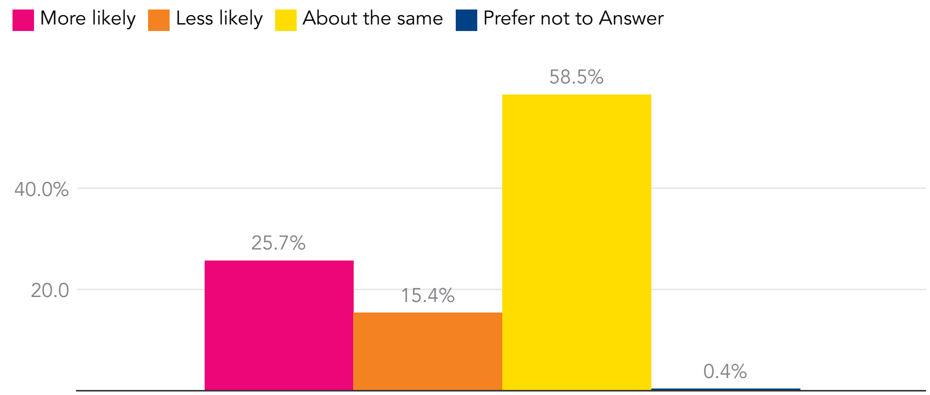
## How much confidence do you have in the following organizations to deal with the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19)?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22

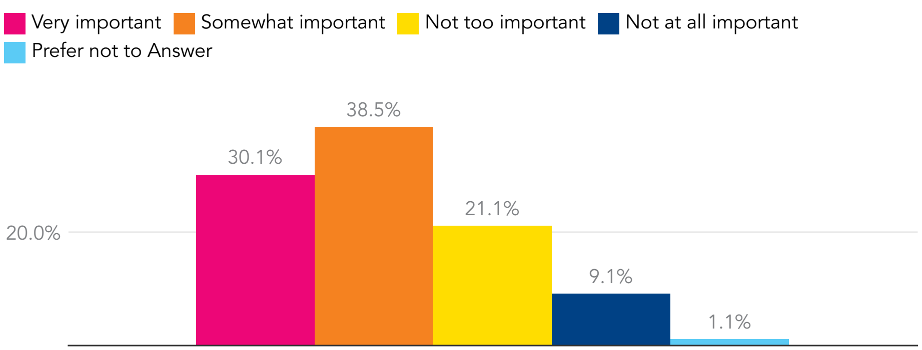
Coming out of the pandemic, consumers are expressing a surprising likelihood to try new products. Large majorities of consumers also consider it "somewhat important" or "very important" that brands align with their personal values and demonstrate social responsibility.

## Are you more, less, or as likely to try different products this year than last year?



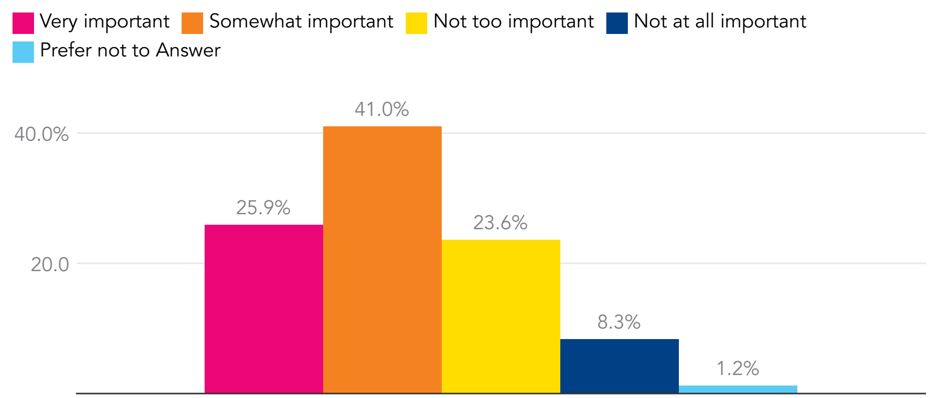

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

## When you are selecting or considering a new product, how important is it to you that brands demonstrate social responsibility?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

## How important is it that brands align with your personal values?



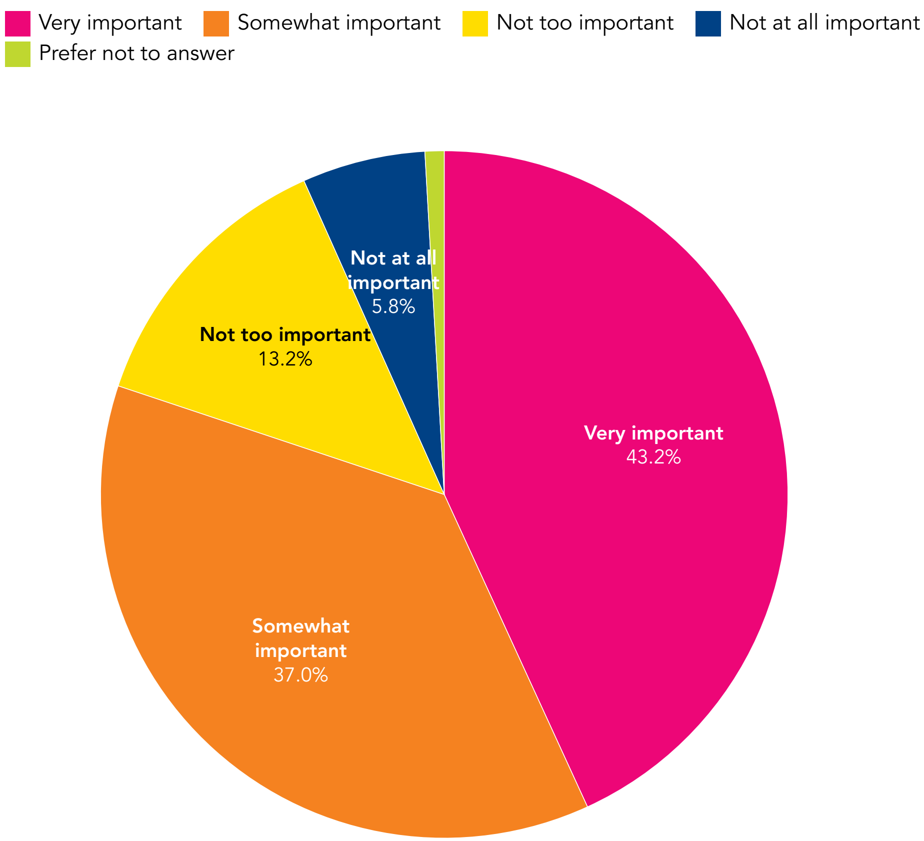

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

In the personal finance and financial services spaces, pandemic-era consumers have placed a high degree of importance on digital banking products. In the post-pandemic era, these trends look to continue with more consumers expecting to engage  digitally with financial professionals.

Many consumers have reassessed their long-term financial plans since the start of the pandemic, and overall feel less secure and less confident in their financial futures and ability to manage their personal finances.

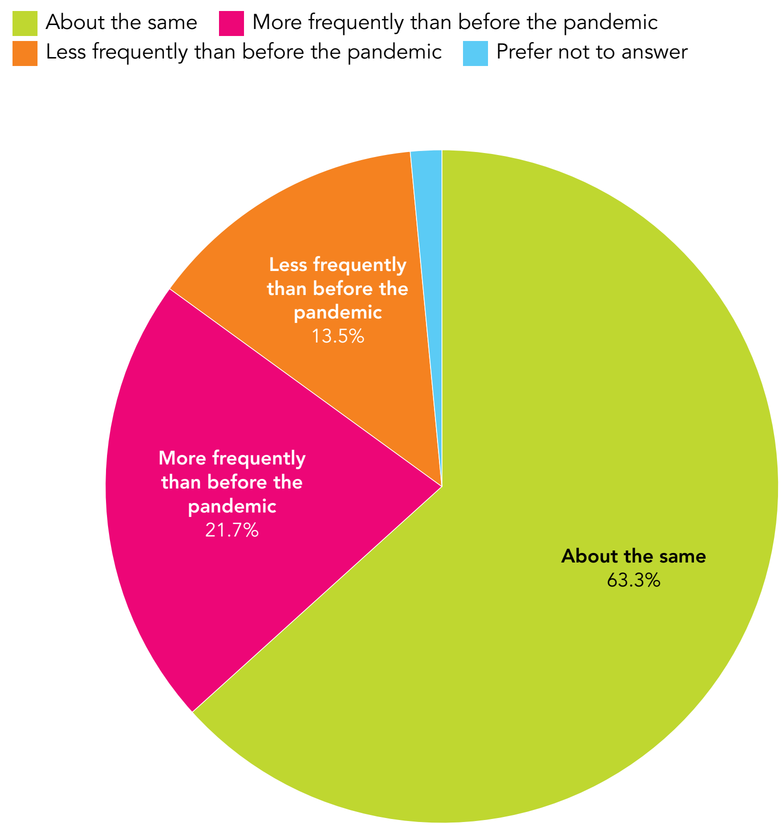
Finally, the pandemic has dramatically altered the payment methods consumers are using for their day-to-day transactions.

## How important are digital banking products to your everyday financial needs?



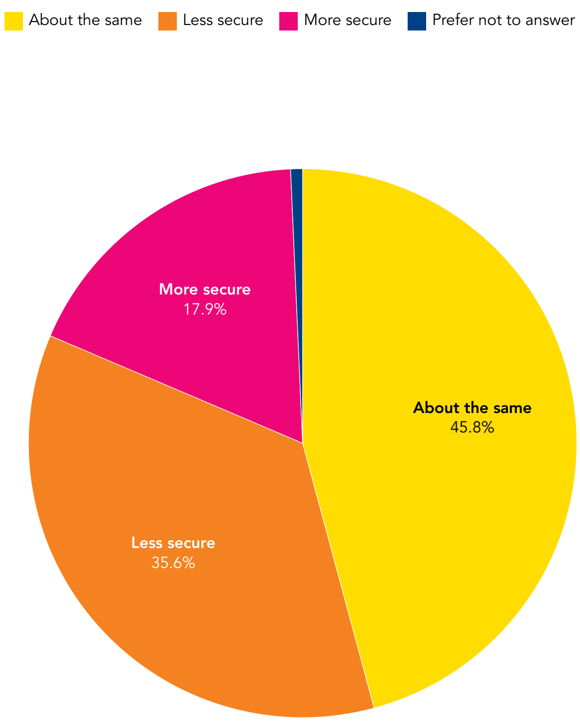

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

## Once the pandemic subsides and restrictions are lifted, do you expect to engage digitally with financial professionals:



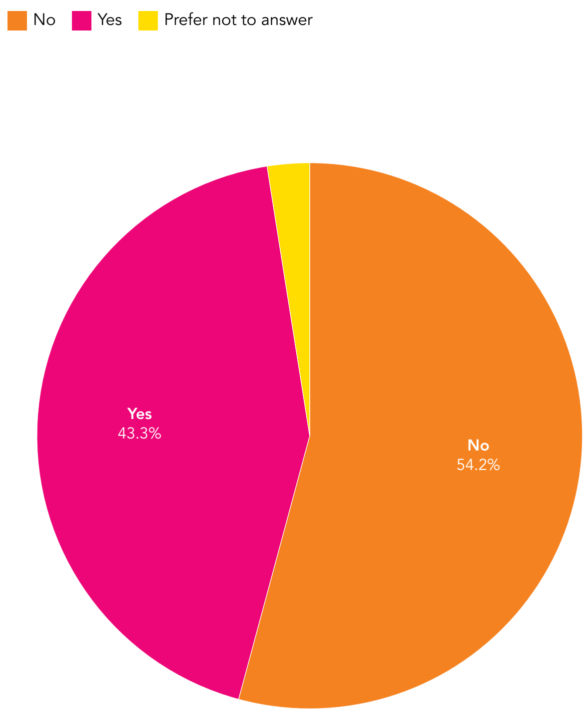

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

### Compared to March of last year (2020), do you feel more or less secure in your financial future?



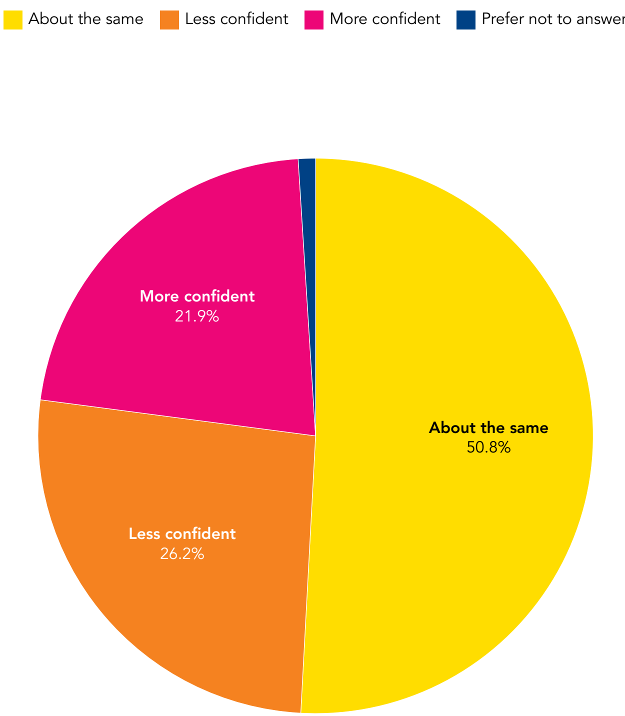

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

### Have you reassessed your long-term financial goals and plan since the beginning of the pandemic?



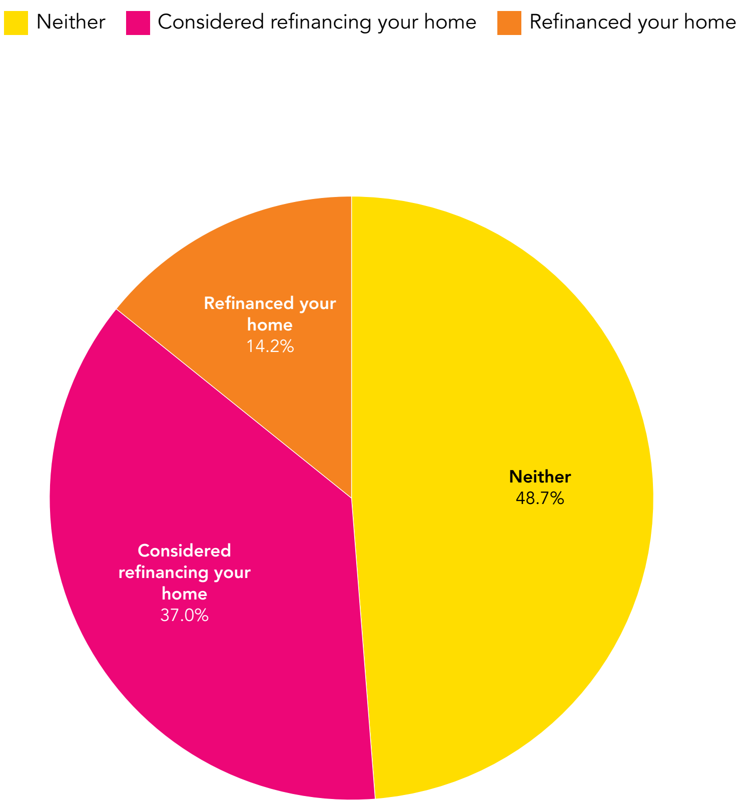

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22

### Compared to March of last year (2020), do you feel more or less confident in your ability to manage your personal finances?



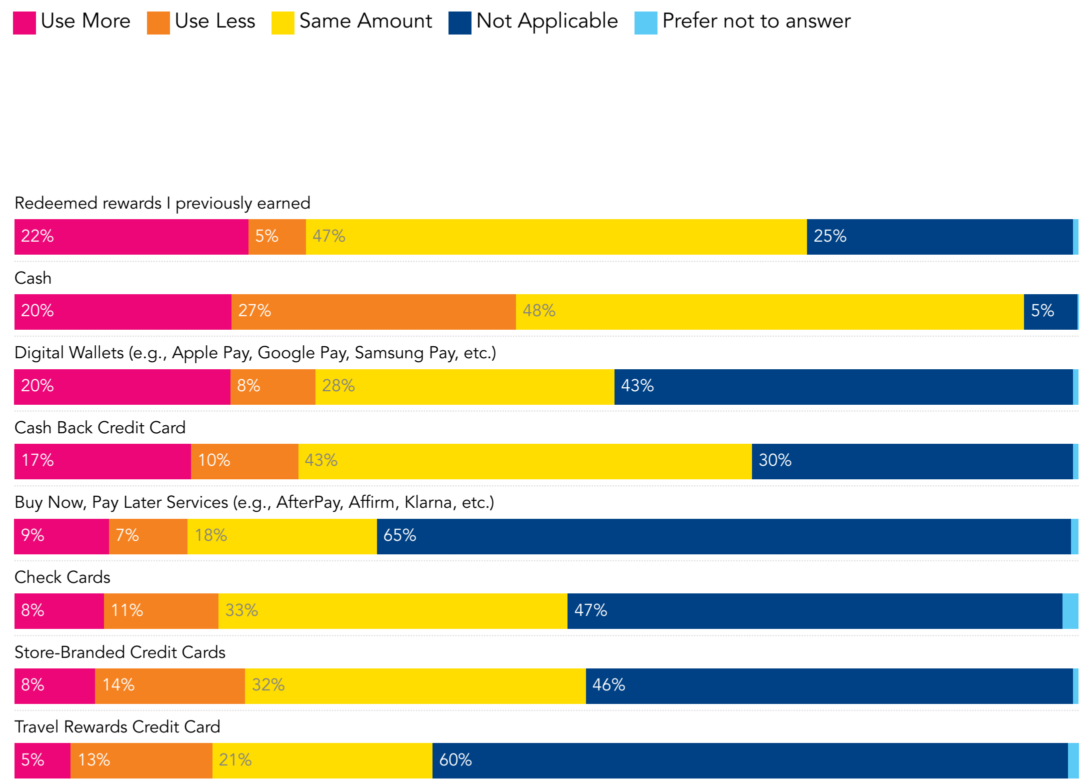

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

## Mortgage: Since the beginning of the pandemic have you...?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

## I use the following payment types more, less, or the same amount since the pandemic began:

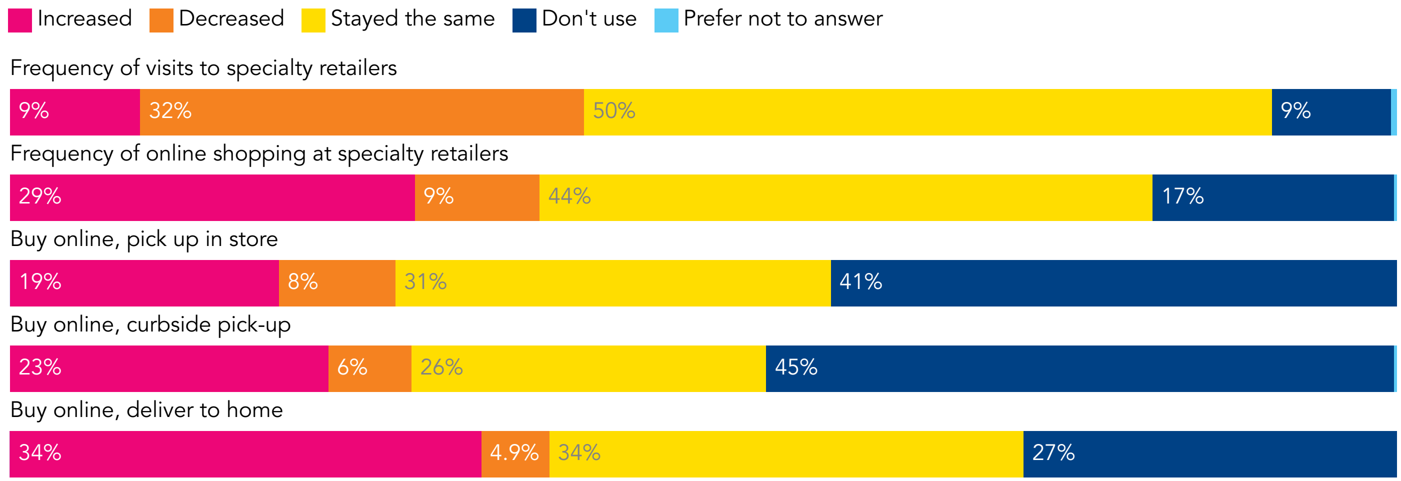



Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

Few categories have felt the impacts of the pandemic on their day-to-day operations more than the retail, grocery, and restaurant spaces. In our survey, consumers reported dramatic changes from their pre-pandemic shopping behaviors. While in some cases, consumers report plans to return to pre-pandemic habits once the crisis subsides, they also report that their behaviors around online and online/pickup grocery shopping will likely continue post-pandemic.

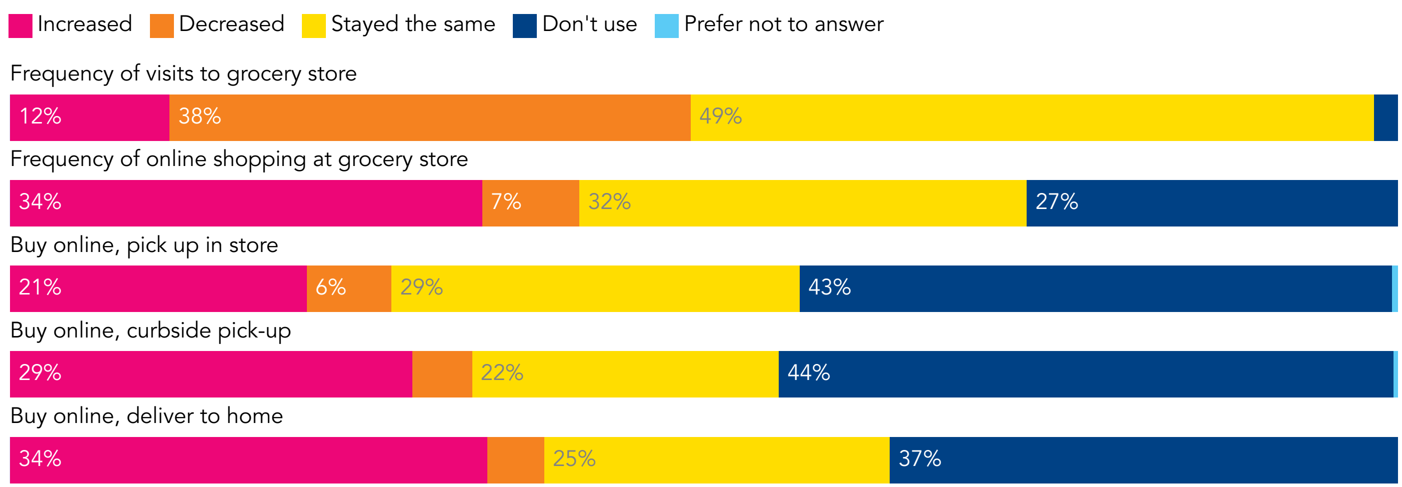
Consumers expressed a high degree of confidence in retailers and grocers to deal with the pandemic but markedly lower confidence in restaurants.

## Comparing your specialty retail purchase behavior today to before the pandemic, would you say that the following:



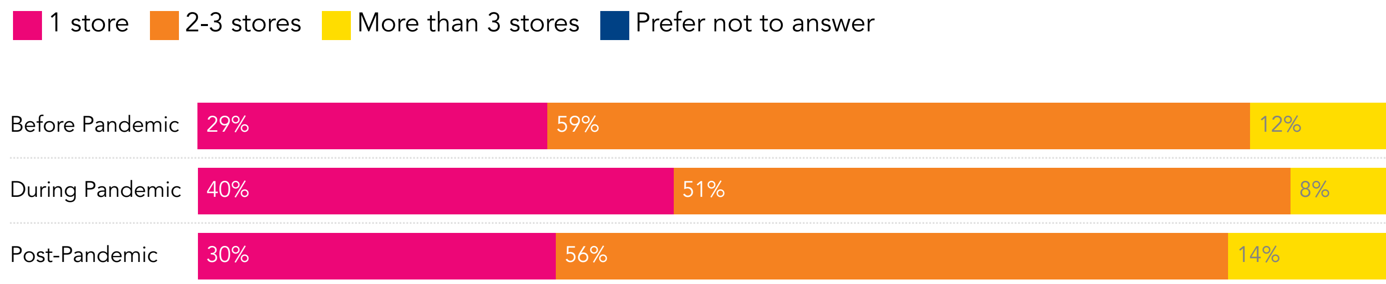

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

## Comparing your grocery purchase behavior today to before the pandemic, would you say that the following:



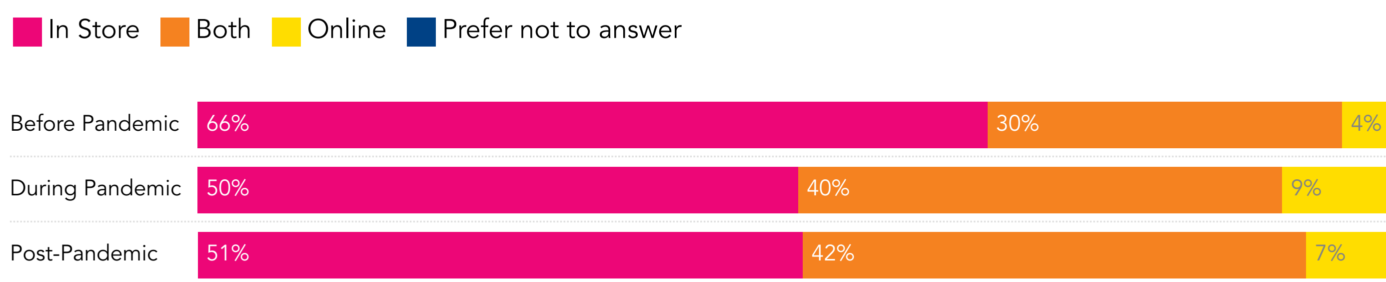

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

**Did/do/will you do your grocery shopping at multiple stores or consolidate all your shopping at one store?**



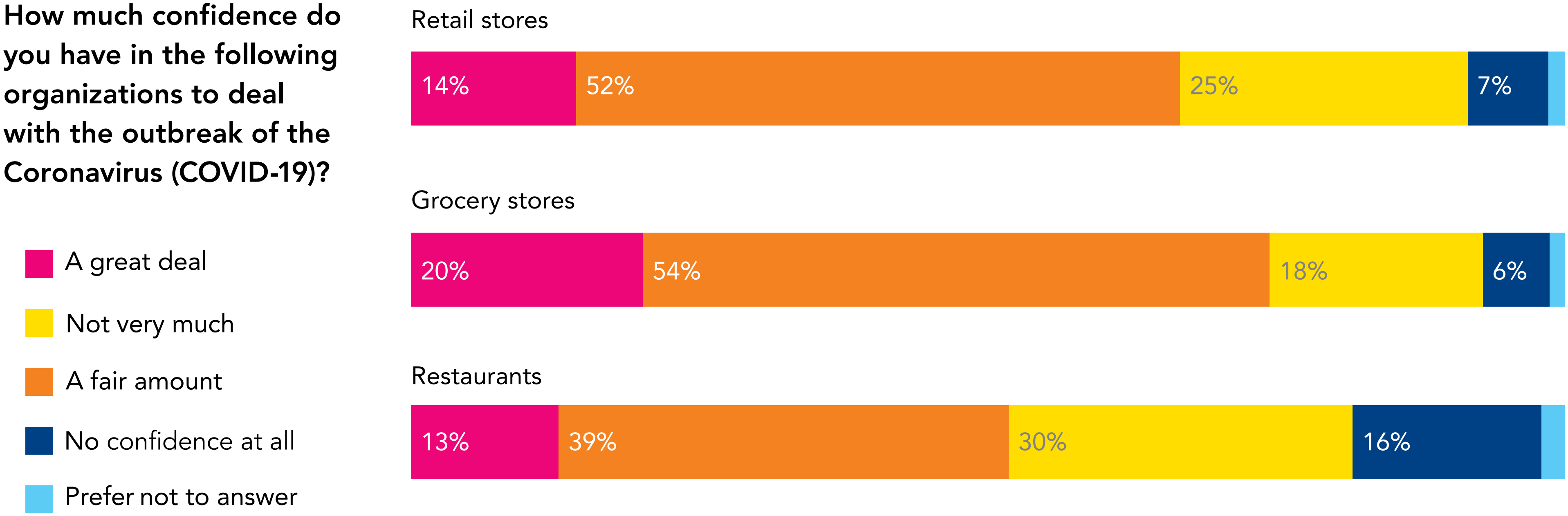

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

**Did/do/will you typically do your grocery shopping online, in store, or a combination of both?**



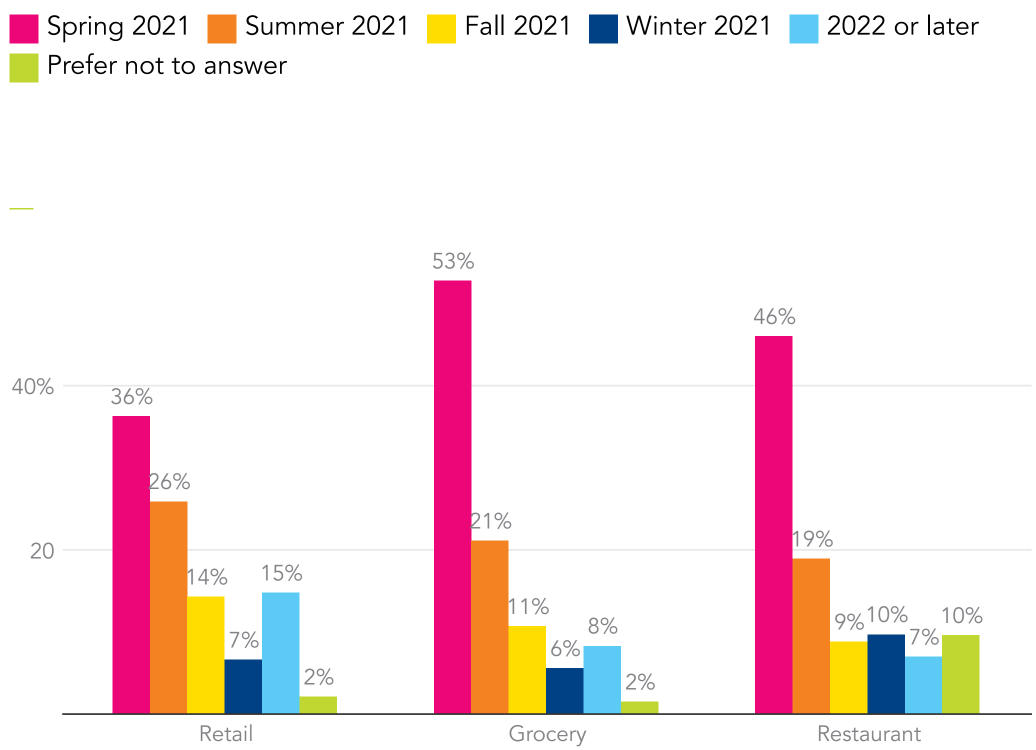

Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

**How much confidence do you have in the following organizations to deal with the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?**




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

# Given what you know today about the state of the pandemic, when do you anticipate returning to pre-pandemic levels of activity in...?

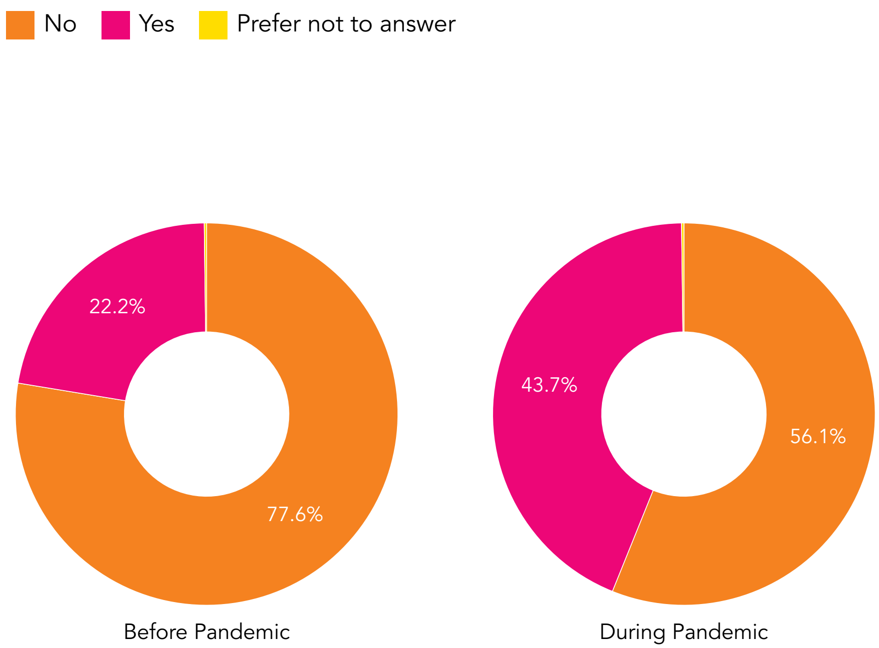



Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

Consumer behaviors in the health and healthcare space have experienced remarkable change during the pandemic. Telehealth solutions have experienced an enormous surge in use, with many first-time users embracing the experience. While some consumers expect to use less telehealth solutions in the post-pandemic future, these solutions will be here to stay, with over 76% of consumers reporting plans to use telehealth solutions more or about the same amount as today.

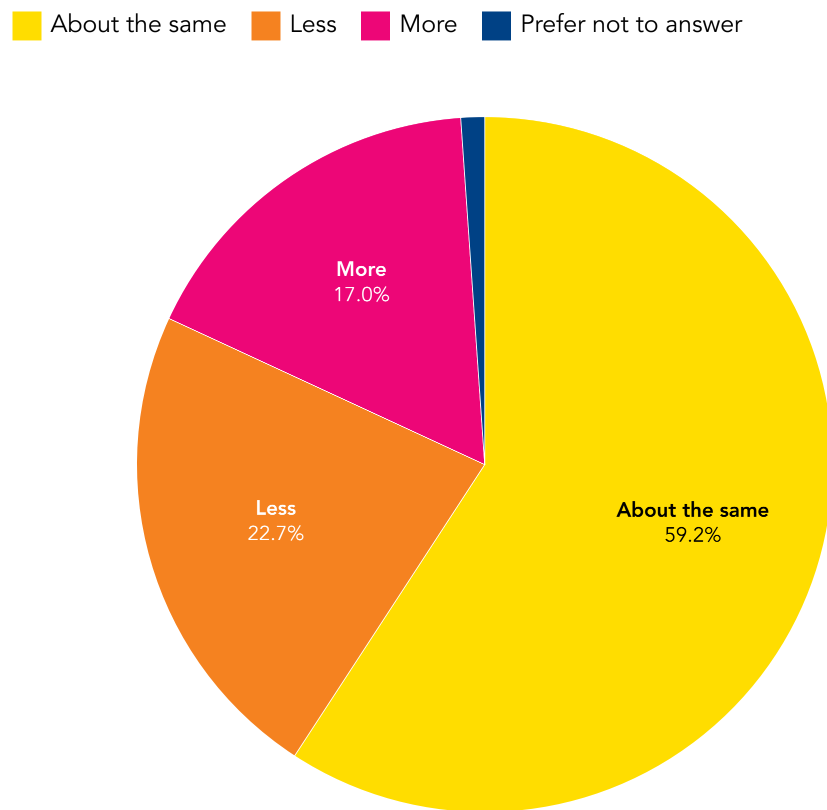
In the health insurance space, perhaps surprisingly, more consumers expressed that they were less likely to explore new healthcare plans once the pandemic is over than those who expressed they were more likely.

## Do you utilize telehealth or other digital health tools?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

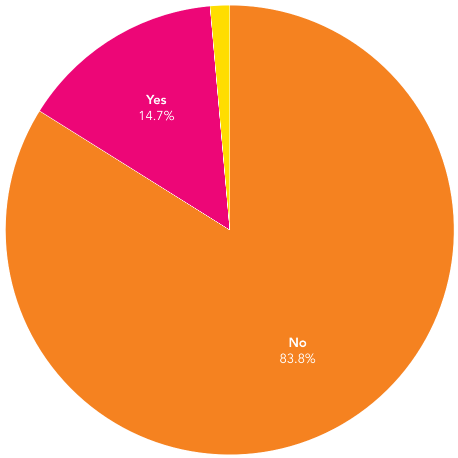
## Once the pandemic subsides, do you expect to use telehealth and other digital health tools more, less, or the same?




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

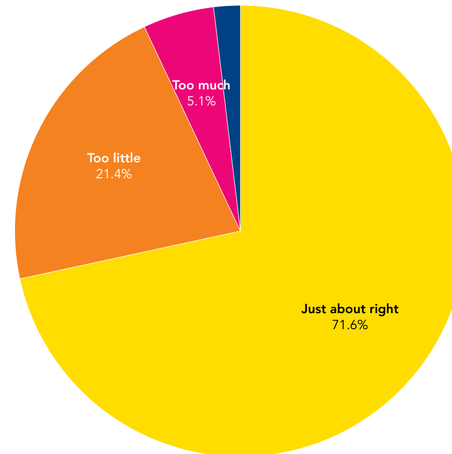
## Has the source of your health insurance changed since the onset of the pandemic?

No Yes Prefer not to answer



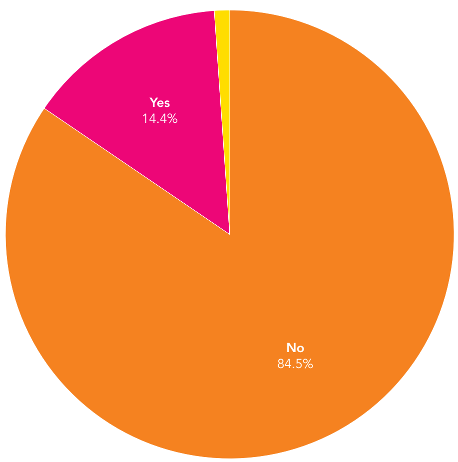

## Does your health insurance provider communicate with you too much? Too little? Just right?

Just about right Too little
Too much Prefer not to answer



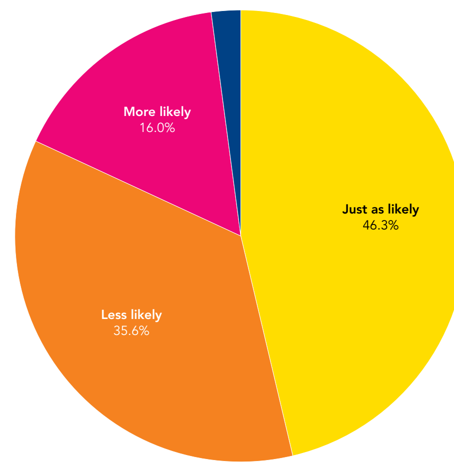

## Did you make health plan changes when enrolling for 2021 coverage?

No Yes Prefer not to answer




## Once the pandemic is over, are you more likely, less likely or just as likely to explore new health plan options?

Just as likely Less likely More likely
Prefer not to answer




Source: ICF Next analysis using MFour data collected from a nationwide sample April 15 - April 22.

Consumers' lives have been dramatically altered by the pandemic. As a result, their behaviors have shifted in myriad ways. Our survey illustrates that in almost every category we explored, consumers changed what, how, where, and when they engaged with brands as a result of the pandemic. What's more, it's clear that many of these consumer behaviors and habits that developed during the pandemic will be with us for years to come.

As the national vaccine rollout progresses and more states and municipalities update COVID restrictions, we will be refreshing our survey during the summer months with an eye towards tracking evolving consumer thinking and additional insights regarding anticipated post-pandemic consumer behaviors.

**For more information, contact:**

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## About ICF Next

ICF Next is a new breed: a consulting agency. We combine the deep creative capabilities that clients expect from a world-class agency with the expertise they require to navigate complex and business-defining milestones. Our team of mission driven strategists, marketers, technologists, and data scientists works every day to build experiences that deliver active participation from the people who most influence change for our clients. Our holistic approach to communications and marketing ensures we are moving customers and colleagues from a state of passive engagement to long-term brand loyalty, advocacy, and shared identity.

All graphs in this report are built using Datawrapper

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