

Mental Health and Well-being amid the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Learnings from Qualitative and Quantitative Formative Research

As the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed over the year—and Americans have had to socially distance, struggled financially, and been continuously exposed to distressing information about the pandemic—reports of mental and behavioral health concerns have increased.

About *How Right Now*

- ▶ The *How Right Now* initiative aims to help people facing stress, worry and anxiety amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ *How Right Now* provides research-based information, resources and coping tools in English and Spanish.
- ▶ The initiative was made possible with support from the CDC Foundation and with technical assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- ▶ *How Right Now* is partnership-based and directs information to people disproportionately affected by COVID-19:



Adults over 65 years of age and their caregivers



People experiencing violence



People with preexisting mental and physical health conditions



People experiencing economic distress

The following highlights our findings from the formative research that was conducted to better understand COVID-related mental health challenges and inform the development of the initiative.

Research Methods Included:

- ▶ eScan/Data Distillation
- ▶ Social Listening
- ▶ Partner Needs Assessments
- ▶ Partner Listening Sessions
- ▶ Online Focus Groups
- ▶ Omnibus Survey

What We Learned

Urgent Mental/ Behavioral Health Concerns



- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Loneliness
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Helplessness
- ▶ Family tension
- ▶ Substance use
- ▶ Experiences with violence, trauma, and/or abuse
- ▶ Suicidal ideation
- ▶ Grief

41%

people reported at least one mental health or behavioral condition

Resilience



To be resilient, audiences reported needing:

1. Social support
2. Access to health care
3. A sense of community
4. Adults over 65 years were feeling more resilient compared to others

20%

of people experiencing economic distress reported low confidence in their ability to be resilient

What People Need and Who They Trust

To help mitigate the emotional health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, audiences are seeking culturally and linguistically appropriate information about self-care and coping strategies, as well as reassurance that they are not alone.

Across all audiences, people trust national nonprofit and community organizations, local public health authorities, faith-based organizations and federal and global health organizations such as the CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO).

These needs and trusted information sources varied by priority audience group.



While individuals aged 65 and older reported trusting faith-based communities, caregivers expressed trust in mental health professionals.



Individuals with preexisting conditions reported trusting celebrities.



People experiencing violence leaned towards peers in similar situations or local crisis organizations.

61%

of audiences sought emotional support from family, partners or friends

34%

reported looking to government or social service organizations for information

Learn more at www.HowRightNow.org or www.QueHacerAhora.org. For questions about the *How Right Now* initiative, contact Dr. Amelia Burke-Garcia at BurkeGarcia-Amelia@norc.org. If interested in partnering with *How Right Now*, contact partners@howrightnow.org.