



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 29, 2020

20-046

Department of Health survey shows that most Hawai'i residents recognize COVID-19 as a serious concern and adhere to social distancing guidelines

HONOLULU -- According to a statewide survey recently commissioned by the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), the majority of Hawai'i residents—93 percent—consider COVID-19 to be a “very serious” or “somewhat serious” health concern, and three quarters (75 percent) believe it poses a real danger or threat to themselves or others living in their household. However, only 44 percent of respondents say they are practicing social distancing guidelines suggested by government officials and healthcare professionals “all of the time.”

The 25 percent of respondents who say they do not feel threatened by COVID-19 cited reasons for their belief: They are following CDC guidelines, believe they are healthy and unlikely to get sick, do not venture outside their home much, or do not trust reports about the severity of the disease.

There were notable differences in perceptions between the neighbor islands and O'ahu, with 81 percent of neighbor islanders saying they consider COVID-19 to be a “very serious” concern, versus 69 percent of O'ahu residents surveyed.

“The findings provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of our efforts to educate our community about the disease. This is especially important as we begin to reopen parks, businesses and other places where people congregate,” said Bruce Anderson, Director of Health. “For our state to fully reopen and start the road to economic recovery, all of our residents must recognize the seriousness of the pandemic and be willing to make necessary lifestyle changes to prevent a second wave of increased cases.”

The survey results validate that the DOH is reaching a majority—or 95 percent—of Hawai'i residents with its messages related to COVID-19 mitigation practices. Respondents who were able to recall DOH's public health messaging are more likely to adhere to social distancing guidelines “all of the time.” Those who remembered a public service announcement featuring Frank De Lima—part of the DOH's “Stay Healthy, Stay at Home” campaign—are more likely to recognize COVID-19 as a threat to their households and to correctly identify symptoms associated with the virus.

Statewide, nearly half (44 percent) of those polled believe they are following social distancing guidelines “all of the time,” while slightly more than half (51 percent) say they do so “most of the

time.” Still, when presented with a list of suggested actions, 26 percent of those polled say they are not standing six feet or farther apart “all of the time.” Among those who are not routinely following social distancing guidelines, 21 percent do not recall DOH messages.

“These findings underscore the importance of outreach and education, especially now during this time of uncertainty and changing recommendations,” Anderson said. “We will continue to invest in public health education and assess the effectiveness of our efforts as we head into the state’s recovery and reopening phase.”

DOH’s COVID-19 campaigns include public service announcements on television, radio, digital and print that promote everyday prevention, physical activity, connectedness, mental health, and family strengthening. Additional efforts are underway focusing on younger audiences and other groups with lower levels of awareness and compliance with social distancing guidelines. Public service announcements can be viewed at [HawaiiCOVID19.com/Resources](https://hawaiiCOVID19.com/Resources).

DOH commissioned Anthology Research to conduct a quantitative study of Hawai’i residents using both phone interviews and online surveys. A total of 545 surveys were conducted from April 17 to 23, 2020. Respondents were screened to ensure they were at least 18 years of age and a full-time Hawai’i resident. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 4.20 percentage points with a 95 percent confidence level. View the [Executive Summary here](#).

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