

COVID RAPID RESPONSE SURVEY FINDINGS

# HEALTH PROMOTING BEHAVIORS IN DETROIT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

AUGUST 2020

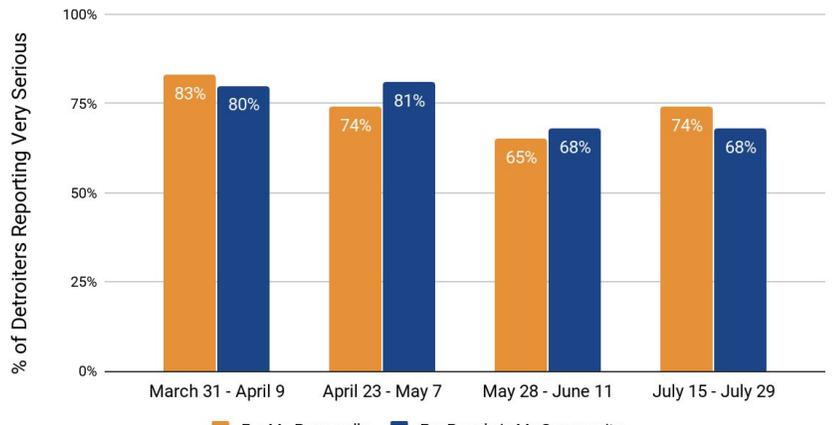
In Spring 2020, DMACS invited 1,880 panelists to participate in rapid response surveys about how Detroiters are being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Between March and July, four surveys were fielded to better understand how the pandemic has shaped Detroit residents’ health, behaviors, employment, and financial conditions. Results have been weighted to reflect the population of the City of Detroit. See [full results from DMACS surveys here](#).

### Perceptions of the Seriousness of the Pandemic and Behavior Change in Detroit Over Time

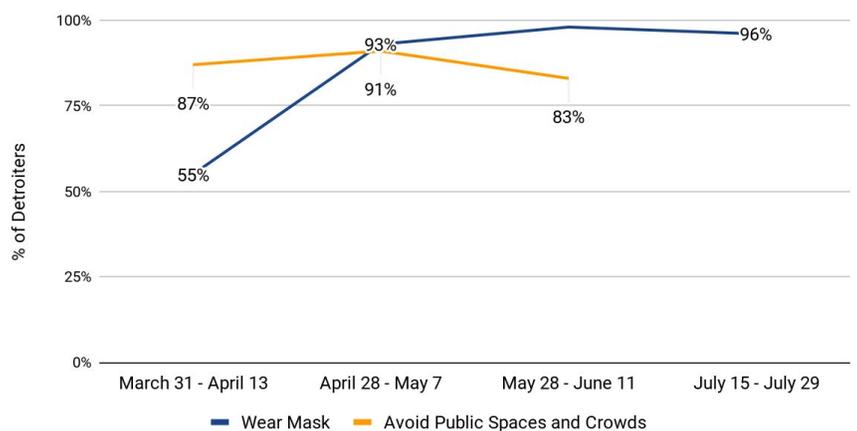
Since late March Detroiters have consistently felt that the pandemic is very serious, with the majority (65%-83%) reporting that the pandemic is very serious for themselves and their community. Detroiters’ sense of seriousness of the pandemic likely impacted their behavior change and adherence to recommended behaviors to protect public health. The most striking example of this is that **by late July nearly all Detroiters were wearing masks**.

There was a dramatic increase in Detroiters wearing masks from early April to early May, and this higher rate of mask wearing was essentially sustained through July. In early April just over half (55%) of Detroiters reported wearing a mask in the past 7 days. The proportion of Detroiters wearing masks rose sharply to 93% in early May, and increased to a high of 98% in early June before falling slightly to 96% by late July. Older residents (age 76 and older) were consistently less likely to wear a mask April through June. Differences by race are described below.

Perceptions of Seriousness of the Pandemic



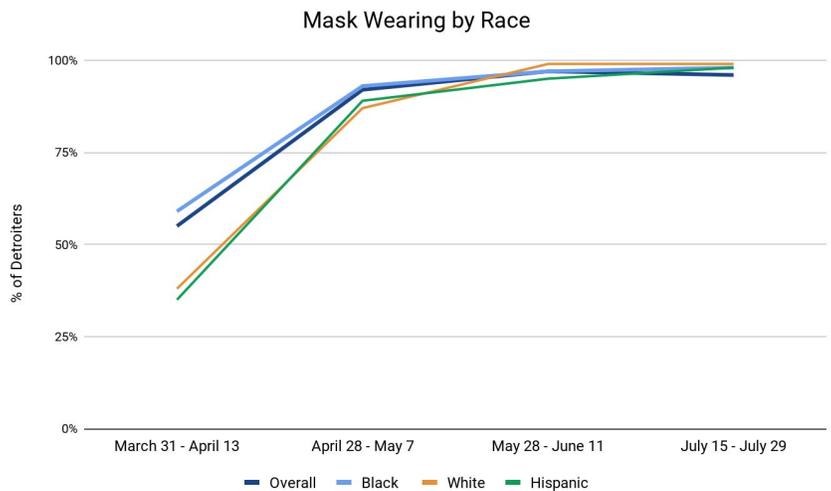
COVID-19 Behavior Changes Over Time



A high proportion of Detroiters also reported avoiding public spaces and crowds during the first few months of the pandemic. 87% of Detroiters avoided public spaces and crowds in early April, a slightly higher proportion (91%) did so in early May, followed by a slight decrease (83%) in early June. Note that the timing of the early June data collection coincided with some of the large public demonstrations against police violence in the city, so the drop in social isolation might reflect participation in those demonstrations, as well as an easing of social distancing requirements statewide, a drop in motivation to social distance, or some combination of those factors.

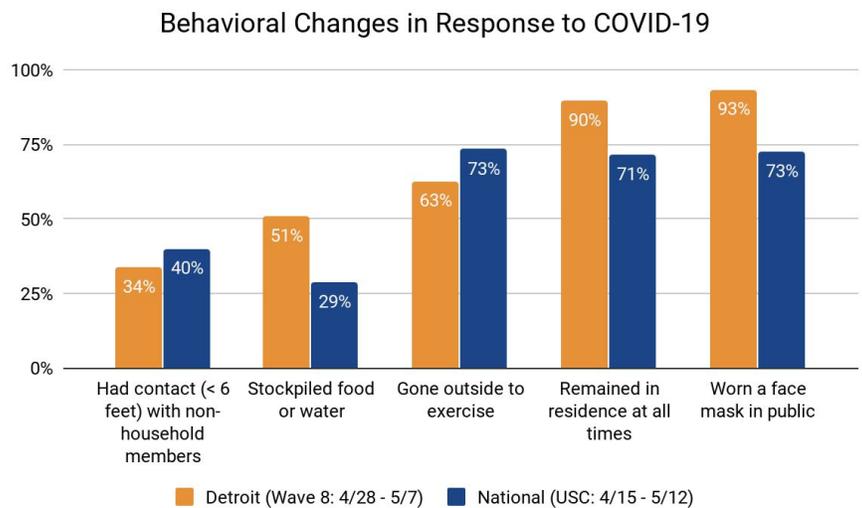
### **Mask Wearing by Race**

Contrary to reports in the media suggesting that the outsized impact on the Black community is driven by looser adherence to public health guidelines, DMACS results indicate that **Black Detroit residents were earlier adopters of these safety measures than white and Latinx residents.** For example, early in the pandemic, 59% of Black residents wore masks compared to 38% of white residents and 35% of Hispanic residents. This difference was no longer apparent by early May and widespread mask use has continued through July.



### **Behavior Change in Response to COVID-19**

Based on the high rate of COVID-19 infection in Detroit early in the pandemic, reports in the media suggested that Detroiters were not taking adequate measures to keep themselves and their communities safe. DMACS survey results from early May show that **Detroiters' behaviors were less risky** than those of the broader American public during approximately the same period (late April to early May of 2020), as measured by the University of Southern California's Understanding America Study ([UAS Wave 3 Methodology & Topline Report](#)).



Results from our second rapid response survey (4/23-5/7/20) show that nine out of ten Detroiters remained in their residence at all times except for essential activities during the past 7 days compared to approximately 7 out of 10 people nationally. A smaller proportion of Detroiters, roughly one-third (34%), reported having close contact with non-household members than Americans nationwide (40%). Detroiters were also more likely to have worn a face mask in public in the past 7 days (93%) than the average American (73%).