

COVID RAPID RESPONSE SURVEY FINDINGS

BILL PAYING IN DETROIT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

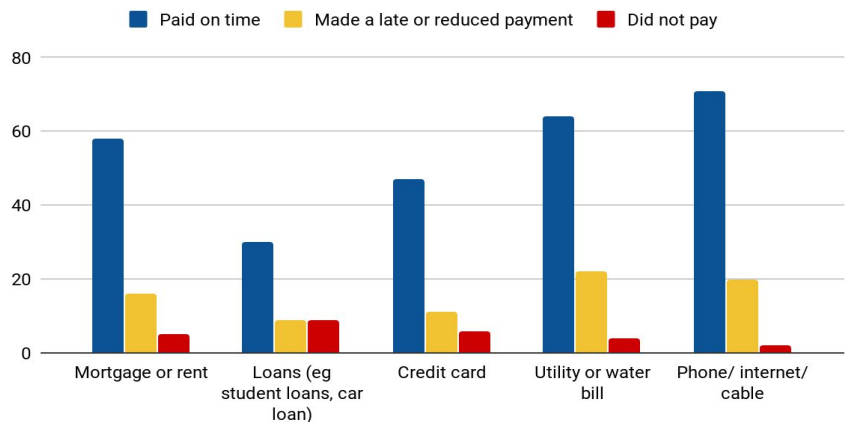
AUGUST 2020

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](#).

Bill Paying During COVID-19

Detroiters have been hard-hit by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with nearly half of Detroiters who were working at the onset of the pandemic (i.e., in early March, 2020) reporting losing their jobs within the following month (see DMACS COVID-19 Survey #1). These high rates of unemployment led many in the media and government to call for rent relief and billing relief measures. Based on the most recent DMACS survey results, we see that many Detroiters were able to pay their bills on time, though significant numbers report making only partial or late payments, and small but not-insignificant numbers did not pay some of their bills at all.

Bill Payment During COVID-19

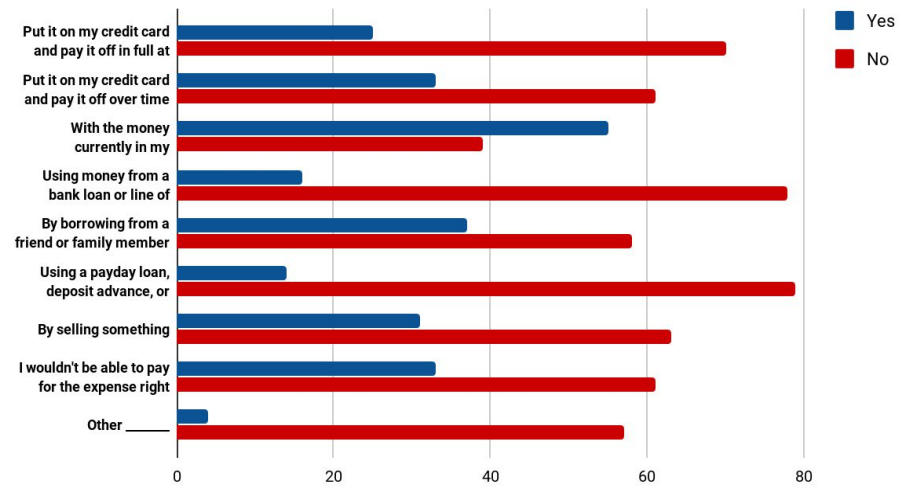


Specifically, while 58% were able to make a full mortgage or rent payment in the last month, 17% made a partial or late payment and 6% did not pay their mortgage or rent at all. Similarly, a majority of Detroiters were able to pay their utility bills (62%), and phone/ internet/ cable bills (70%) in full, while 26% and 22% made partial, late, or no payment on their utility and phone bills, respectively.

Emergency Expenses

People in Detroit were also asked about how they would pay for an emergency expense of \$400 based on their current financial situation. When asked about specific types of ways to pay, most were hesitant to respond that they would be able or willing to use a credit card to make the payment. Likewise only 16% indicated they would get money from a bank loan. The only payment method that a majority supported was using their own savings or checking account balance to pay.

How Would People Pay For a \$400 Expense

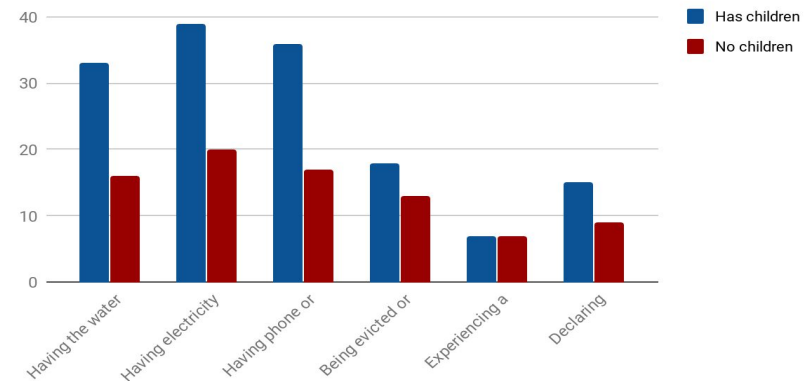


Based on their answers, it seems that a majority of Detroiters want to remain independent of interest payments while in the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, even opting to not ask family members or friends to help with the expense.

Concerns About Future Shutoffs

A majority of Detroiters are not concerned about experiencing water or utility shutoffs in the coming months, even though utility shut-offs have been a major ongoing problem in Detroit since [2014](#). This renewed confidence is possibly encouraged by the fact that employment has gone up since the low point in April and May, with 61% working for pay in the last month, or by the reassurance that businesses are beginning to slowly reopen.

Have Concerns About Future Utility Shutoffs



65% of Detroiters indicated that they are not at all concerned that their water will be shut off in the next few months, and 64% are not at all concerned about having their electricity or gas shut off.

Although most Detroiters seem confident about facing future uncertainty, those that have children are more concerned about utility and service shutoffs. While schools across the state are open with some or all instruction online, households with children may become increasingly concerned about losing the ability for their school age kids to connect to the internet to attend class and receive work. This fear, coupled with

how quickly it can turn to winter in Michigan, may account for why those with children are more worried about having water, electricity, and phone services shutoff.