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UNH Finds COVID-19 Impacts Granite Staters' Social Activities and Telehealth

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DURHAM, N.H.— A new survey by the University of New Hampshire highlights changes in activities of Granite Staters during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the impact included shifts in social activity, with over 72% of residents altering their plans to avoid crowds, and a decrease in medical, behavioral health and dental office visits, with over 37% of patients transitioning their appointments to telehealth.

“It didn’t matter what age group or demographics, we found that the pandemic caused many New Hampshire residents to modify the way they lived their lives from losing a job to cancelling travel plans and even shifting the way they get medical, dental and behavioral health services” said Jo Porter, director, UNH’s Institute for Health Policy and Practice (IHPP).

The recent survey (<https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=ihpp>), conducted by UNH’s IHPP, looked at three key areas of impact - social activities, medical, behavioral health and dental services, and employment. Along with avoiding large crowds, other significant social impacts included over 57% of residents cancelling planned trips. The effect on healthcare across all groups showed a range of 29% to 51% of appointments moved to telehealth. Almost half, or 46%, of survey respondents reported that they or someone in their household either lost or experienced reductions in employment due to COVID-19 since January, with the range being 29% for people 65 and older to 58% for people ages 35-44.

Looking forward to next year, many N.H. residents thought COVID-19 would continue to impact their health, jobs and other aspects of their lives. Across all demographic groups, over 20% to almost 50% of respondents think their life will change in a major way.

Researchers leveraged the UNH Survey Center’s Granite State Panel to conduct a survey of 1155 N.H. adults to understand some of the immediate impacts of COVID-19 since January 2020. The survey was conducted from April 16-20.

Co-authors on the survey include Amy Costello, director of Health Analytics and Informatics at UNH’s IHPP and Lucy Hodder, director of Health Law and Policy at UNH’s IHPP and a professor at Franklin Pierce School of Law.



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