



+ WUNDERMAN  
THOMPSON

Data

**+AnxietyIndex™**  
**COVID-19**

*March 20-23, 2020*

# Agenda

Executive Summary

Anxiety

What's specifically making us nervous?

Who's nervous?

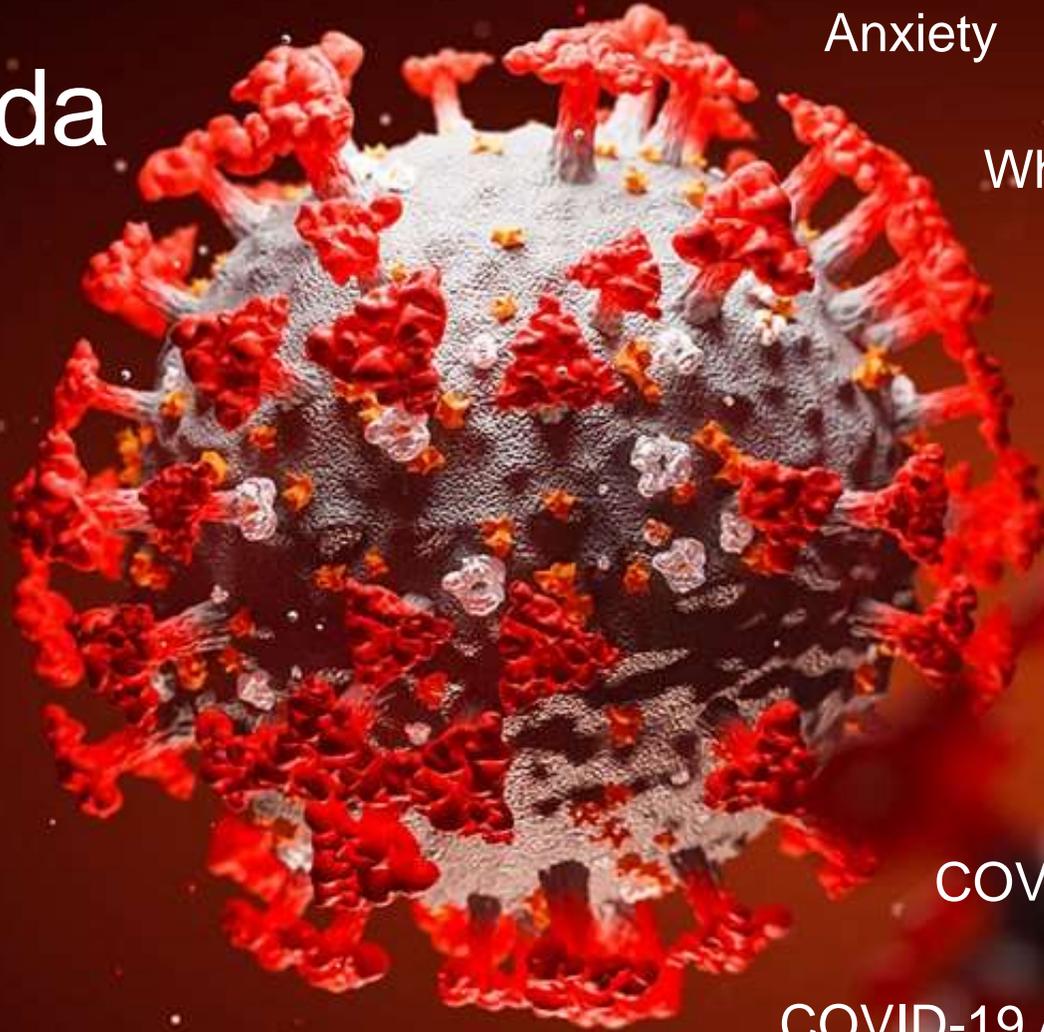
When do people think things are going to get better?

How does coronavirus stack up against other diseases?

COVID-19 Impact Anxieties

COVID-19 Attitudes & Behaviors

COVID-19 and Marketing





# Executive Summary

- As would be expected during such an unprecedented crisis, American anxiety levels **are at historic highs**. But it's hopeful to see that there's a significant group of Americans working to maintain an optimistic outlook.
  - Amid this backdrop and our post-truth world, many people are also **questioning the role that media plays in the anxiety** they're feeling.
- Through our **AnxietyIndex™** analyses over the years, we've observed that usually, only **one** type of anxiety spikes at any given time. And as one rises, another one falls – like a game of “whack-a-mole”. People have been telling us that they only have the emotional bandwidth for one major anxiety at a time.
  - Today is very different - we're seeing **three spikes: health, government, and economic**. It confirms what we already know – that we are in unique times – and suggests that predicting people's behavior today based on lessons learned from past crises may not be as easy as we'd hope.
- At the moment, **people's economic anxieties** are focused on the **macro level** – the **economy** and **stock market**. Americans have yet to pivot to what this is going to mean to their households and personal finances. Assuming the quarantines and business shut-downs continue through the coming weeks (and maybe months), the micro economic realities will begin to emerge as people feel the effects much more personally.

- The anxiety being felt in **High Impact States** (NY, NJ, California, Washington, and Michigan) is significantly higher than in other areas of the country. This high level of anxiety **is likely a portent of what the rest of the country will be experiencing as the virus continues its spread** in the coming weeks and months.
- Perhaps counterintuitively, **younger Americans are much more anxious than their older counterparts**, though it's not necessarily COVID-19 that's driving their anxiety. Rather, **it's the economic implications** from COVID-19: job prospects, cost of living, cost of goods, etc. If younger Americans continue to flout social distancing guidelines due to their sense of invincibility - as has been reported - perhaps messaging about the impact they're having on their economic future would be more impactful.
- **Political ideologies are clearly playing a significant role in anxiety today**, especially as it relates to COVID-19 and the government's ability to accomplish things during this time - people are concerned about politics getting in the way of what needs to get done during this crisis.

- There's **little agreement as to when this crisis will pass**, a symptom of the uncertainty being felt by Americans.
  - On average though, **Americans are girding for another 3-4 months**, putting the “end” in the June/July time period.
  - In terms of what the next 6 months will bring, **Americans are feeling pretty pessimistic**; the economy and stock market, politics, COVID-19, access to quality healthcare, and the government's ability to manage this crisis **are all expected to get worse**.
- **What's worrying people most about the impact of COVID-19?**
  - There's significantly more anxiety around **how long** the disruptions will last than the disruptions themselves...or said another way – another example of uncertainty driving anxiety. As a result, much of the focus today is **on the big picture, not the details**.
  - While people aren't feeling anxious about daily life disruptions today (food shortages, internet bandwidth problems, civil unrest, scheduled trips, school), they're clearly worried about the impact of what an extended period of disruptions will mean.

- At this point, **macro economic issues** (economy crashing) are a significantly larger concern than **micro economic issues** (losing investments, losing a job). But as the economic impact from the crisis continues, that will likely change.
- Outside of the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, the **Low Impact States appear to be significantly less concerned about the potential impacts from the crisis.**
  - At the moment, the **Moderate Impact States are more concerned** – likely having experienced enough cases to have a better understanding of what might happen next.
- Regardless of demographic, current health vulnerability, or even political ideology, actual physical proximity to COVID-19 drives anxiety. **As the virus expands from the coasts through the heartland of the country, anxiety levels are going to spike.**
- In addition to Americans believing that the U.S. government should be doing more to help stop the spread of COVID-19, Americans are **looking at themselves** as well, believing that citizens bear a responsibility to do more. **Americans appear primed for someone to lead a movement to help them mobilize into action.**

- Overall, Americans have an OK (not great) understanding of the facts surrounding COVID-19, **equal to about a C+.**
  - What's concerning is that their "grade" on true statements (a "B" average) is markedly higher than their "grade" on false statements (a "C" average). **It's concerning as many of these false statements are ones from notoriously fake COVID-19 internet memes.**
  - Women have a better understanding of COVID-19 than men.
  - Older Americans better than younger.
  - Suburbanites better than urbanites and people in rural areas.
  - And as much as both wings would like to believe, there's no difference in COVID-19 knowledge by political ideology.
- While Americans have a pretty good sense of what they should be doing to avoid contracting COVID-19, they've admittedly been less than diligent in acting accordingly – **real behavior change is challenging.**

- Not every brand needs to post information on their website regarding COVID-19 and how it impacts consumers.
  - Consumers are primarily looking for information from industries that have a **direct impact on consumer interactions with the company**.
  - This doesn't mean businesses with less direct consumer contact shouldn't address COVID-19 – which of course risks appearing unempathetic or tone-deaf – rather messaging needn't be about how their efforts are directly impacting their customers.

# METHODOLOGY



## WHAT

Quantitative research study conducted by  
**+Wunderman Thompson Data**



## WHO

n=500 (*statistical tolerance=+/- 3.7 percentage points @ 90% confidence*)  
US adults, Age 18+  
Representative of the US population



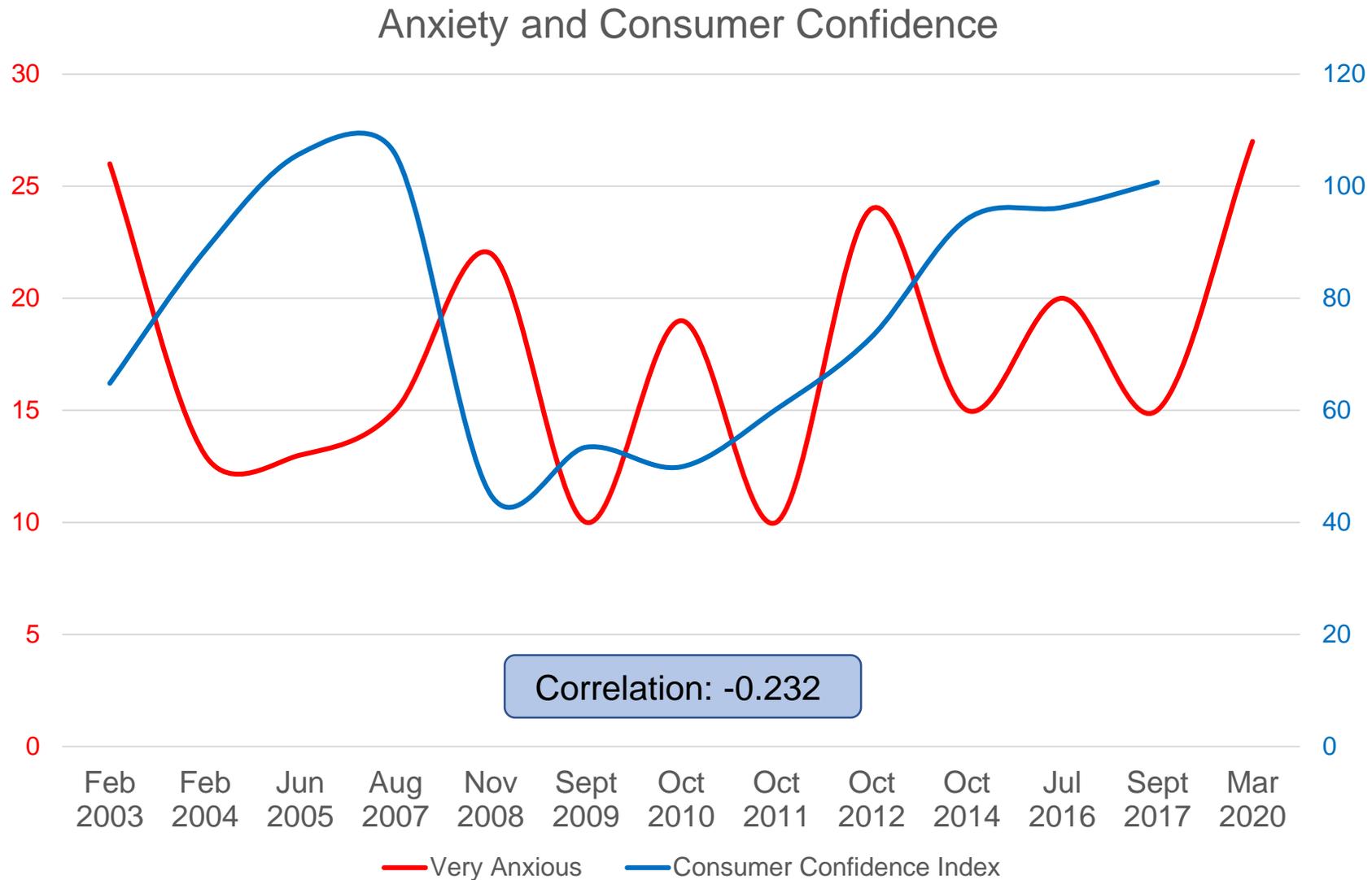
## WHEN

Data collected March 20<sup>th</sup> – March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

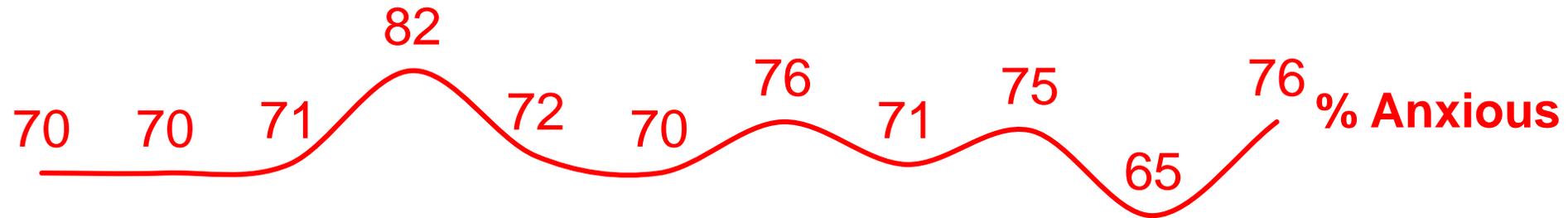


ANXIETY

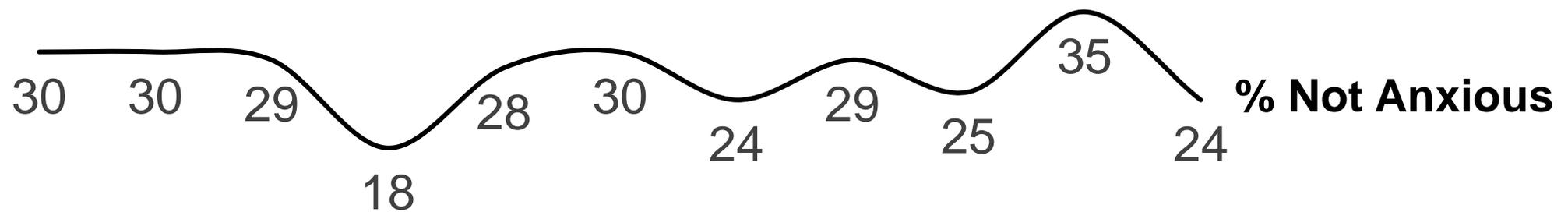
**Why do we track anxiety?** We've learned over time that **consumer anxiety** is *inversely related* to **consumer confidence**; as anxiety increases, consumer confidence decreases, and **spending patterns change**.



Americans are rarely at ease, always maintaining a fairly high baseline of anxiety.



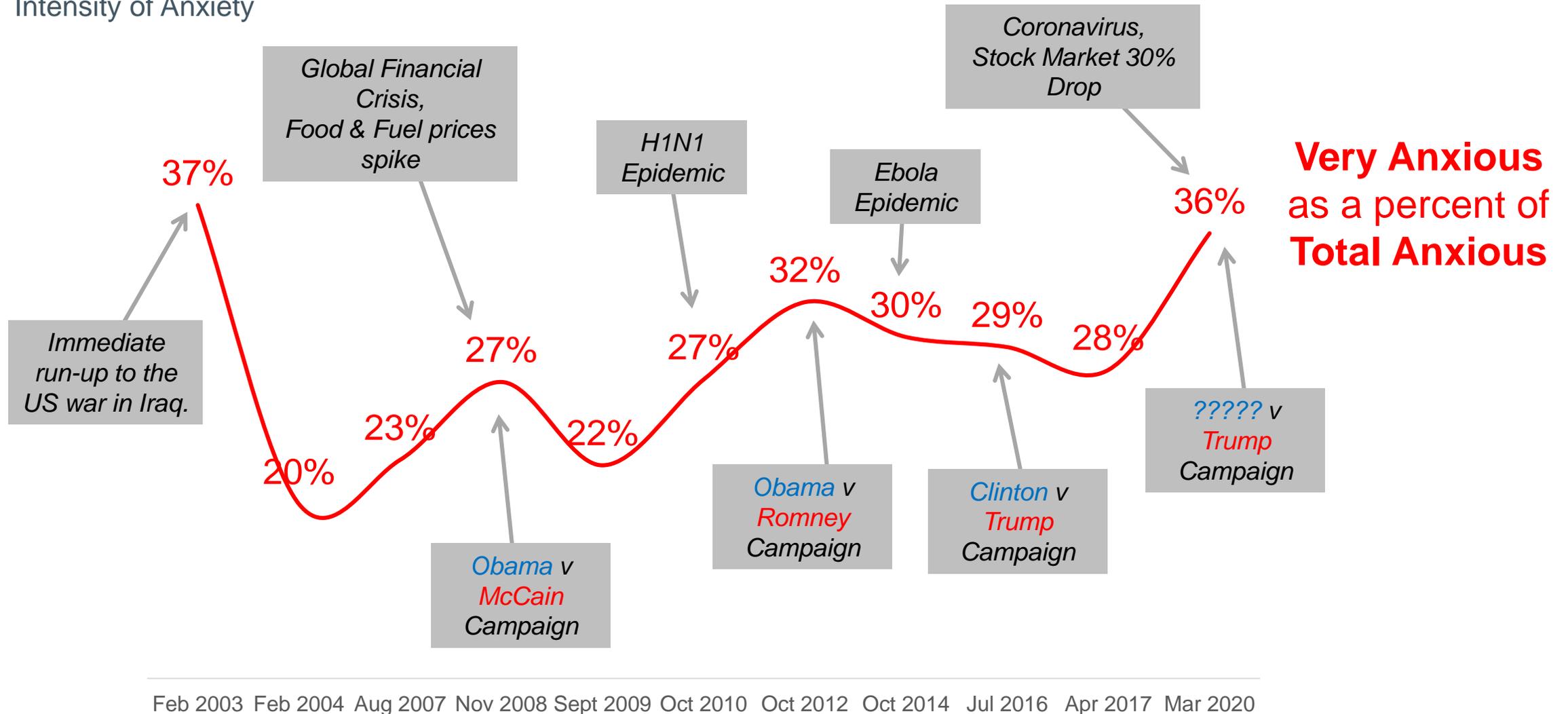
American's Overall Anxiety



Feb 2003 Feb 2004 Aug 2007 Nov 2008 Sept 2009 Oct 2010 Oct 2012 Oct 2014 Jul 2016 Apr 2017 Mar 2020

Where we see spikes is in the *intensity* of that anxiety, usually driven by global events and national political events.

### Intensity of Anxiety



It seems like the world is crazier today than ever before

85%

76%

It feels like the world is coming apart at the seams

62%

I am optimistic about the future

Things in the world are fine, people just need to calm down

49%

While most Americans are feeling that COVID-19 is creating an **unparalleled set of negative circumstances**, at least in recent memory, there's a significant group of people who remain **optimistic** and are **putting the crisis in perspective**.

In a post-truth world, many are also **questioning the role that media plays in the anxiety** they're feeling.

77%

I think the media plays a large role in making me feel anxious

I find myself being a bit obsessed watching and reading the news these days

58%



What's specifically  
making us nervous?

# Meet the **+AnxietyIndex™**

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$$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \% \\ \text{Anxious} \end{array} \div \begin{array}{c} \% \\ \text{Not Anxious} \end{array} \right] \times 100 = \text{+AnxietyIndex}^{\text{TM}}$$

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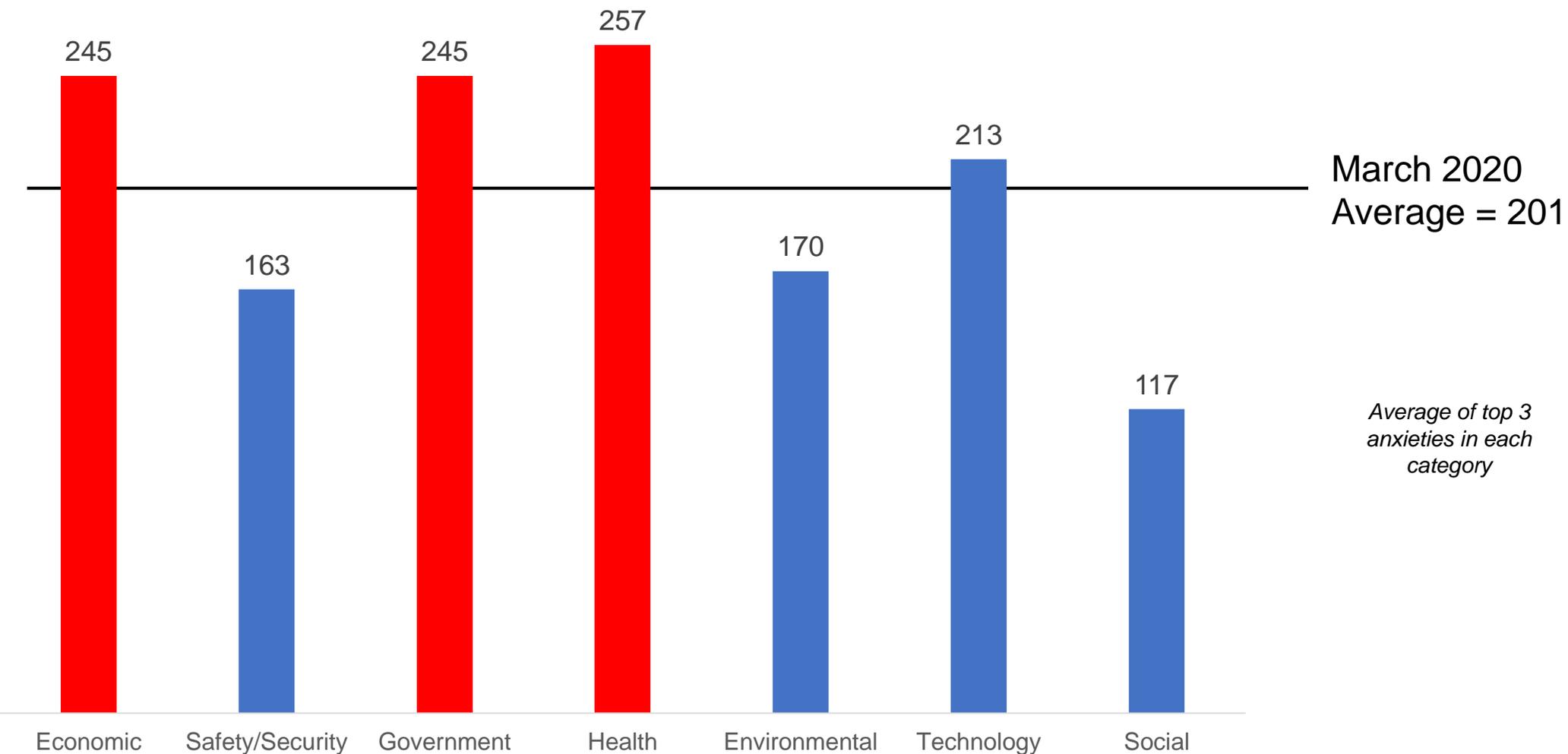
**+AnxietyIndex™ = 200** = There are 2X as many anxious people than there are people who are not anxious

**+AnxietyIndex™ = 100** = There are just as many anxious people as there are people who are not anxious

**+AnxietyIndex™ = 50** = There are half as many anxious people as there are people who are not anxious

In **AnxietyIndex™** analyses over the years, we've observed that usually, only *one* anxiety spikes at any given time. And as one rises, another one falls – like a game of “whack-a-mole”. People have been telling us that they only have the emotional bandwidth for one major anxiety at a time.

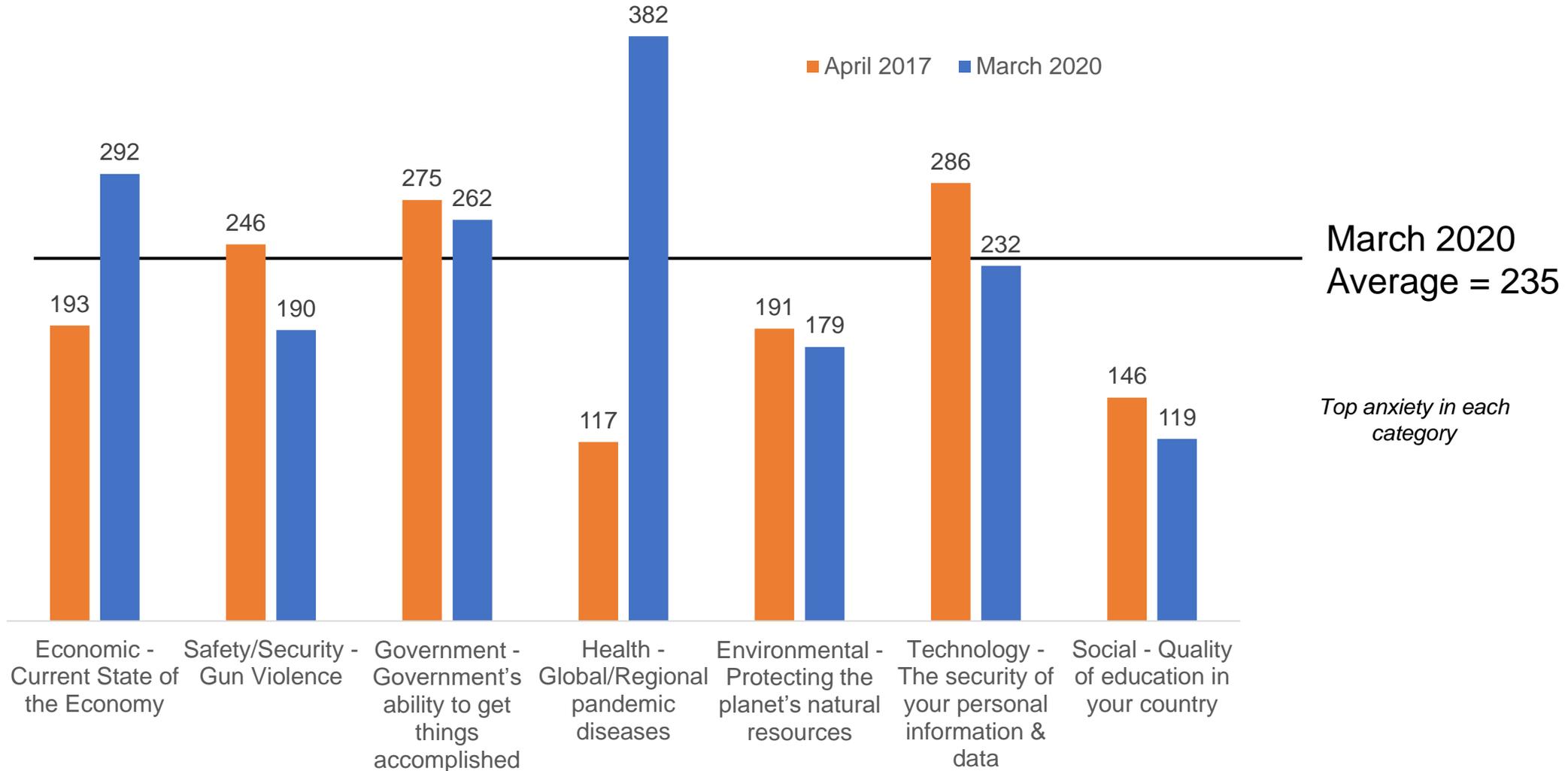
Today is very different - we're seeing three spikes: **health**, **government**, and **economic**. It confirms what we already know – that we are in unique times – and suggests that predicting people's behavior today based on lessons learned from past crises may not be as easy as we'd hope.



Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

When we dig deeper into these categories, the specific anxieties that are driving each category shed some additional light.

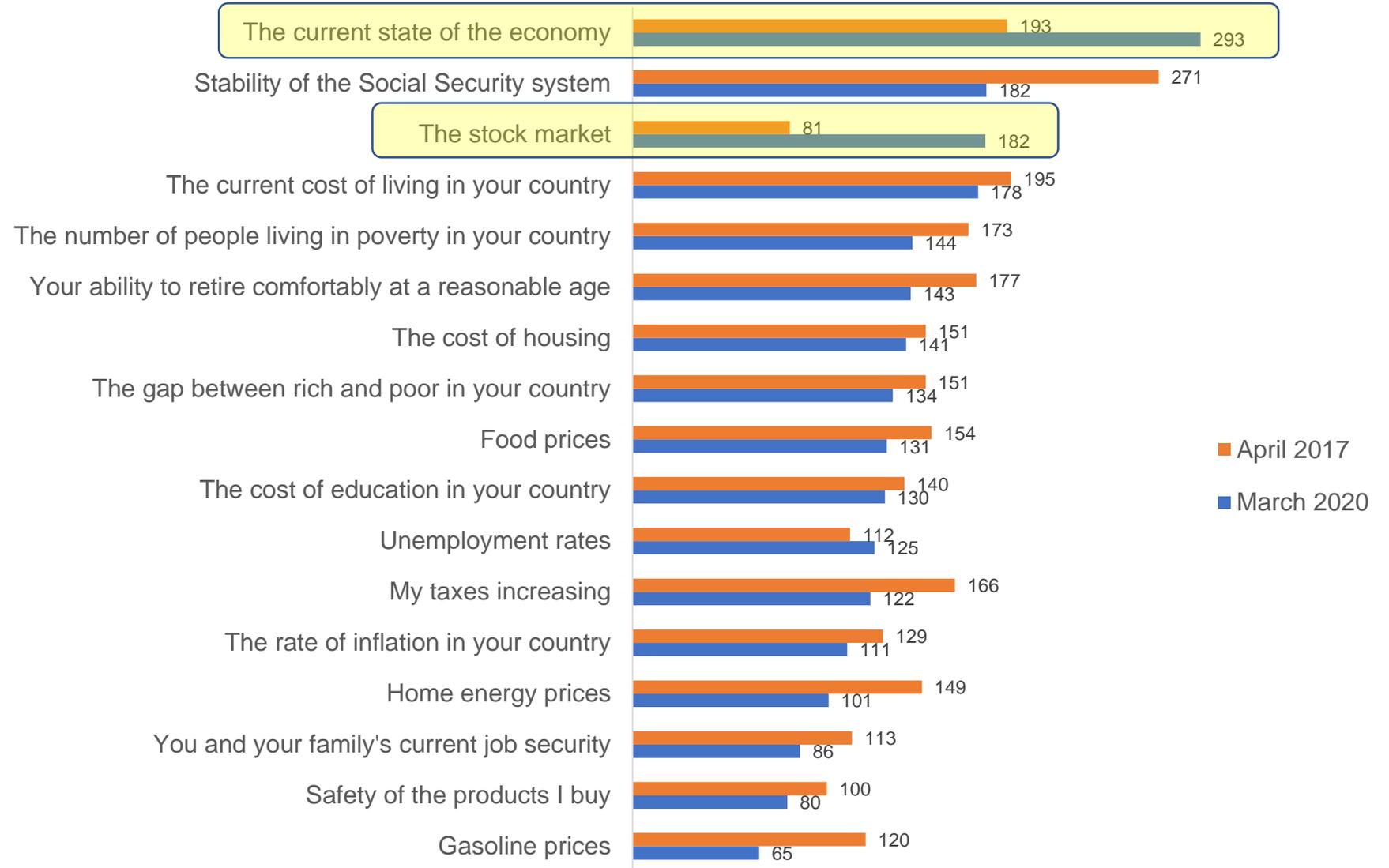
Obviously, **health** is about COVID-19, and the **economy** is about the macro economy, but interesting that **government anxiety** is about concerns that the government can actually put aside their differences and actually accomplish what's needed to get us through this crisis. Though government inaction isn't a new anxiety, it clearly has more significant implications today.



Economic anxieties are focused on the **broader economy** and the **stock market**. Nearly all other economic anxieties are in decline from three years ago – showing people focusing closely on the crisis at hand. The relatively lower levels of **cost of daily living expenses** suggests most Americans aren't looking too far ahead in this crisis, rather reacting to the issues of the moment.

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## Economic Anxieties

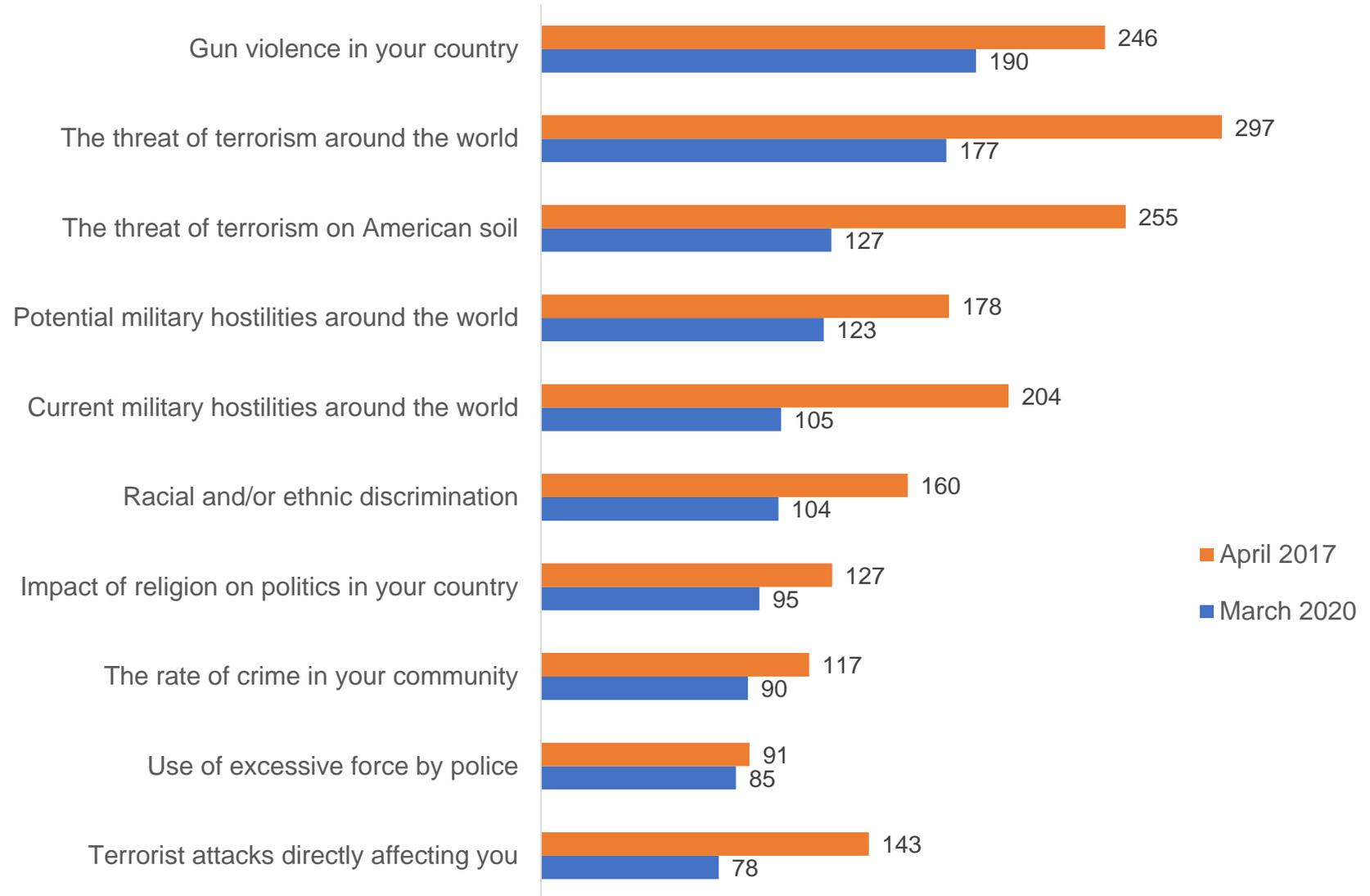


Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

Across the board, all concerns about **personal safety and security** have taken a back seat to the **concerns of COVID-19**.

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**Safety/  
Security  
Anxieties**

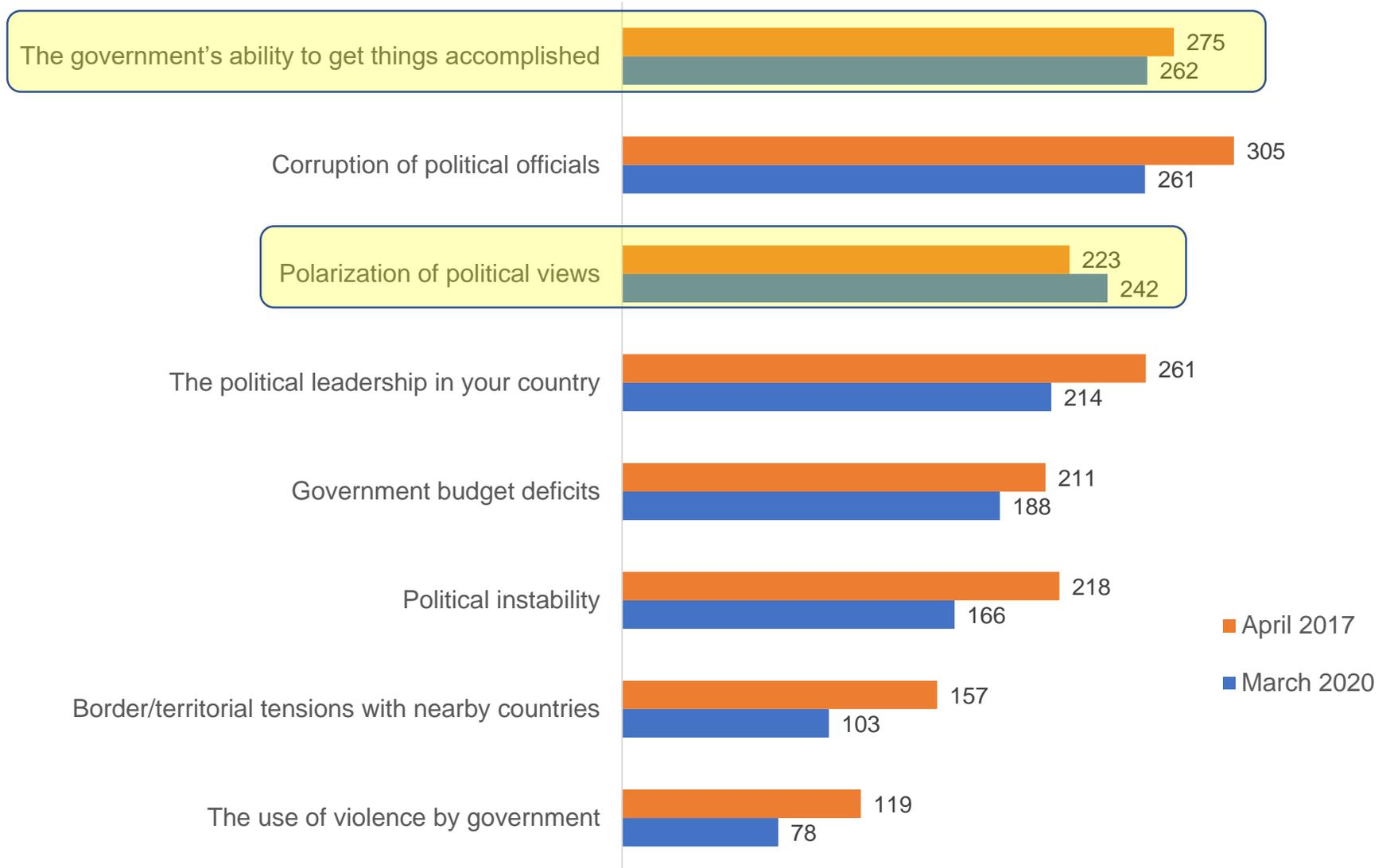


Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

Concerns about the U.S. government's ability to get things accomplished, especially during a period of hyper partisanship, remains a major concern among Americans, only slightly lower than levels reported in 2017.

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## Government Anxieties

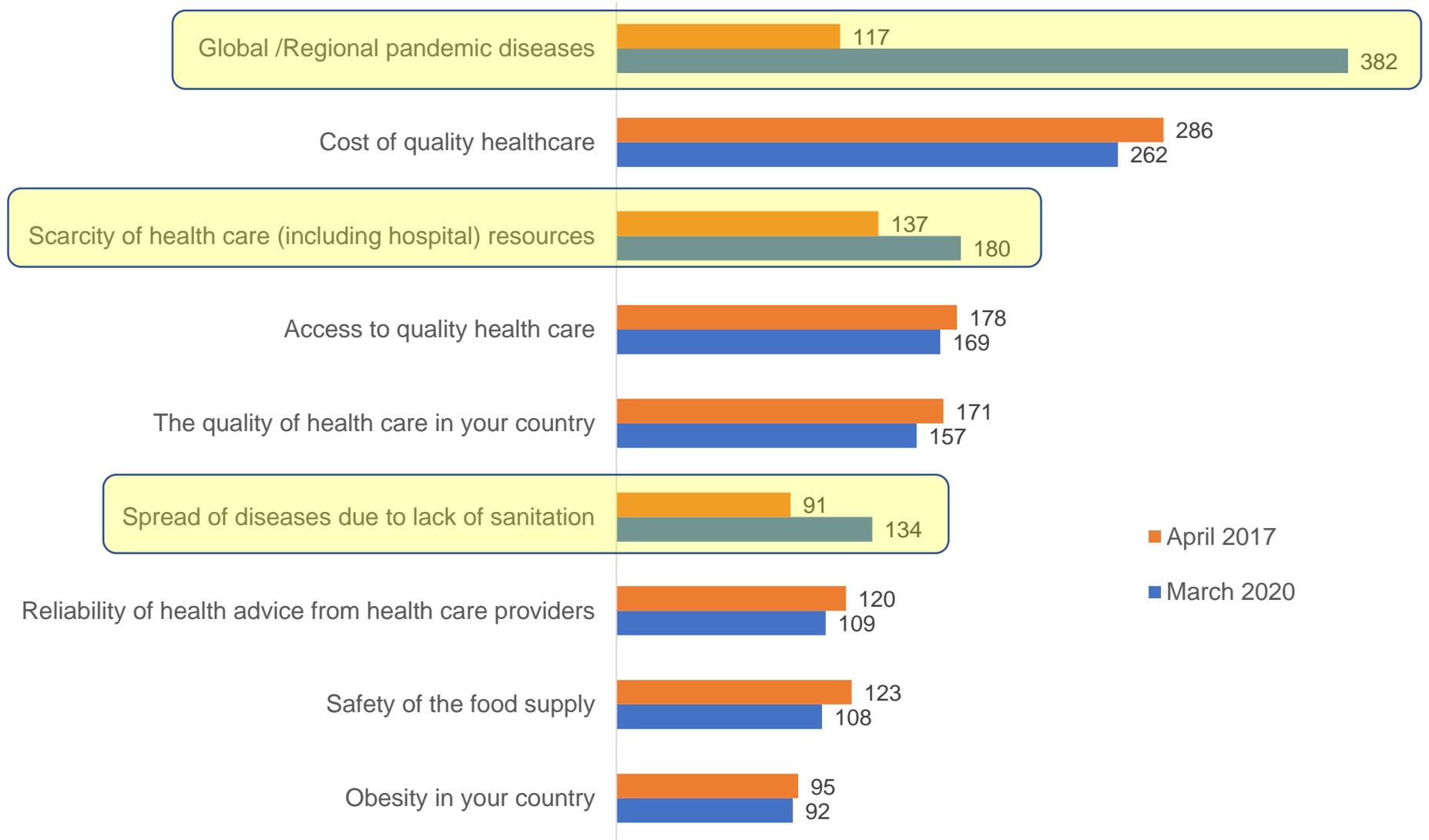


Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

While people are obviously **clearly focused on COVID-19**, Americans' broad concerns about the U.S. healthcare industry (cost, quality, access, and reliability) remain at levels similar to 2017 – a persistent are of concern, and one they're likely thinking about during the current crisis.

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## Health Anxieties



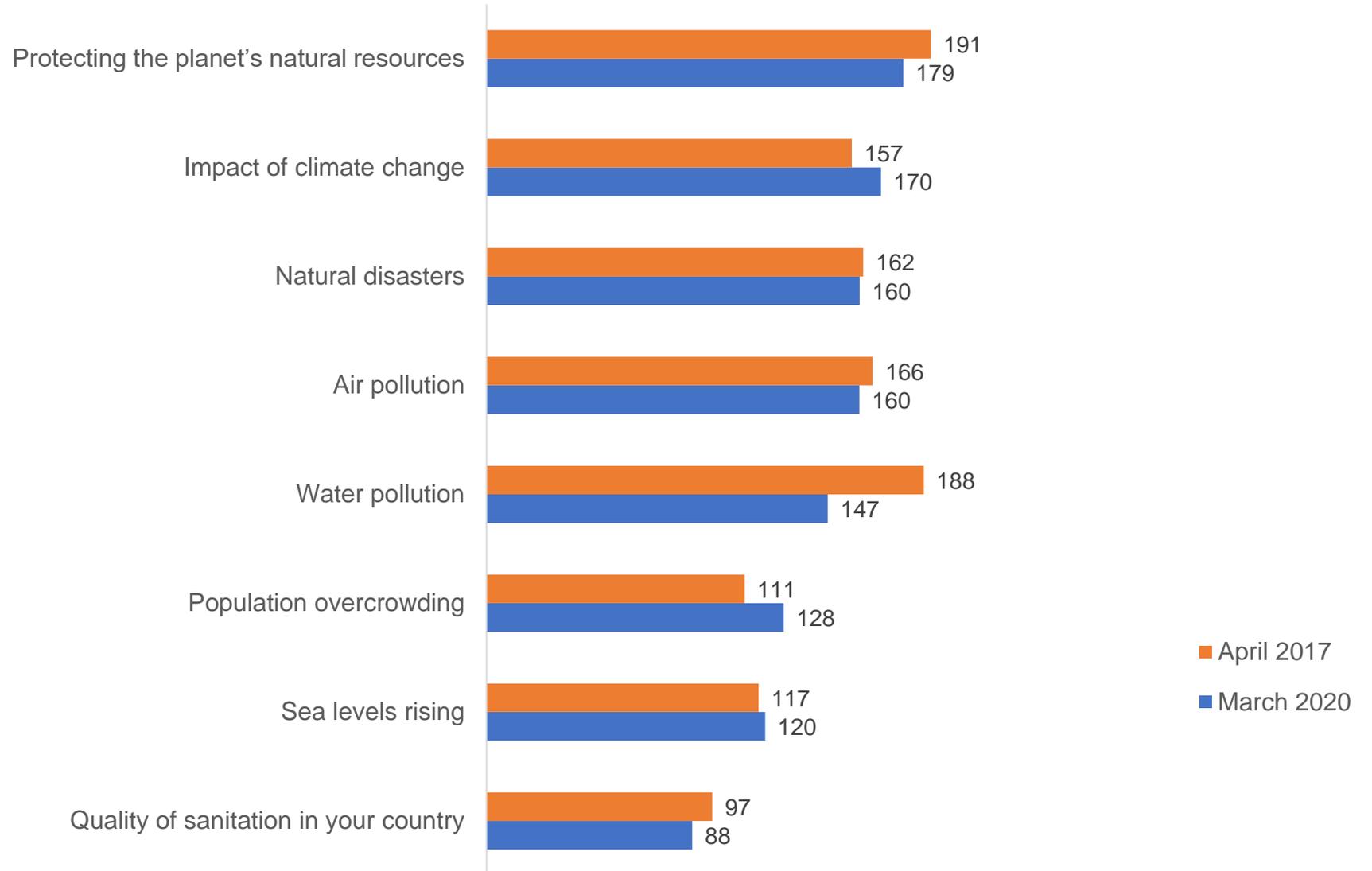
■ April 2017  
■ March 2020

Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

Despite the immediacy of the COVID-19 crisis, longer term concerns about the environment **remain surprisingly similar year over year.**

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## Environmental Anxieties



Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

With a more immediate threat in COVID-19, anxieties and concerns about technology have muted a bit.

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## Technology Anxieties

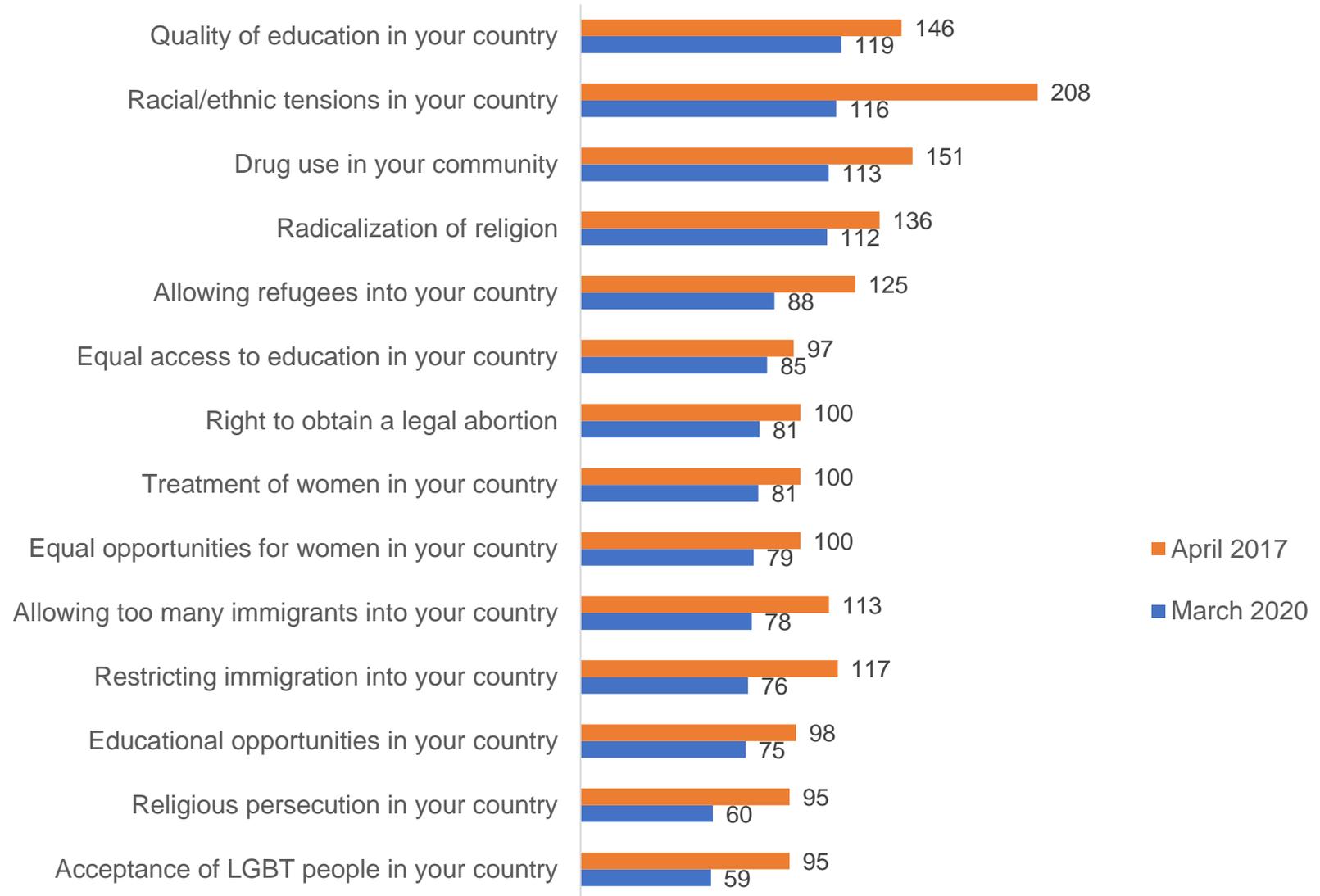


Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

Similar to technology anxieties, in the face of COVID-19, social concerns are more muted in Americans' minds.

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## Social Anxieties



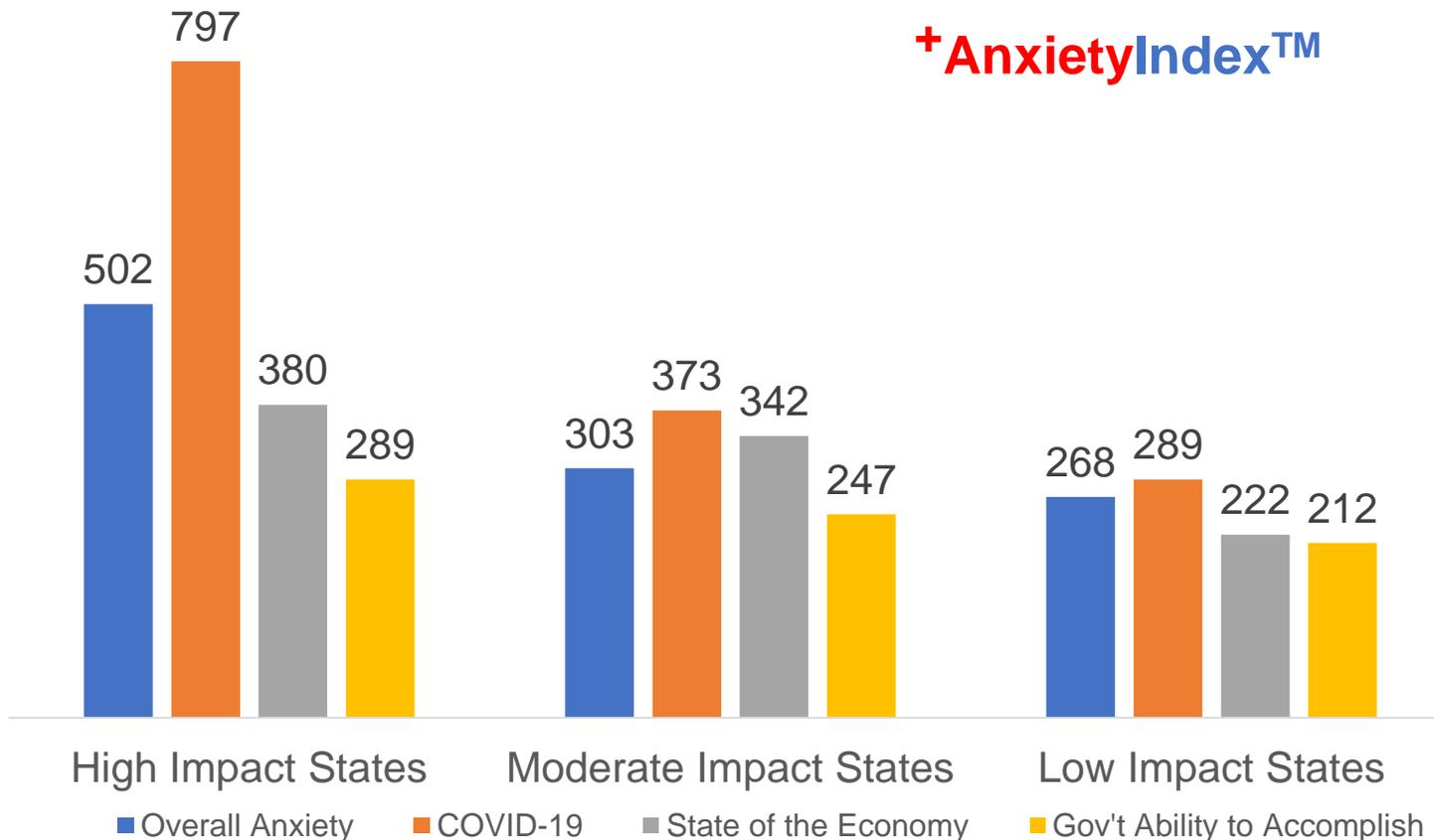
Q. Please indicate how nervous or anxious you currently are, or are not, about each of the following.

Who's nervous?



As would be expected, states with high numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases are demonstrating **significant higher anxiety** about the disease. This high level of anxiety is likely to be what lies in store for the rest of the country, assuming cases mount as they have in these handful of states.

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*As of March 20, 2020*

**High Impact States = 2,000+ cases:**  
New York, New Jersey, California, Washington State, Michigan

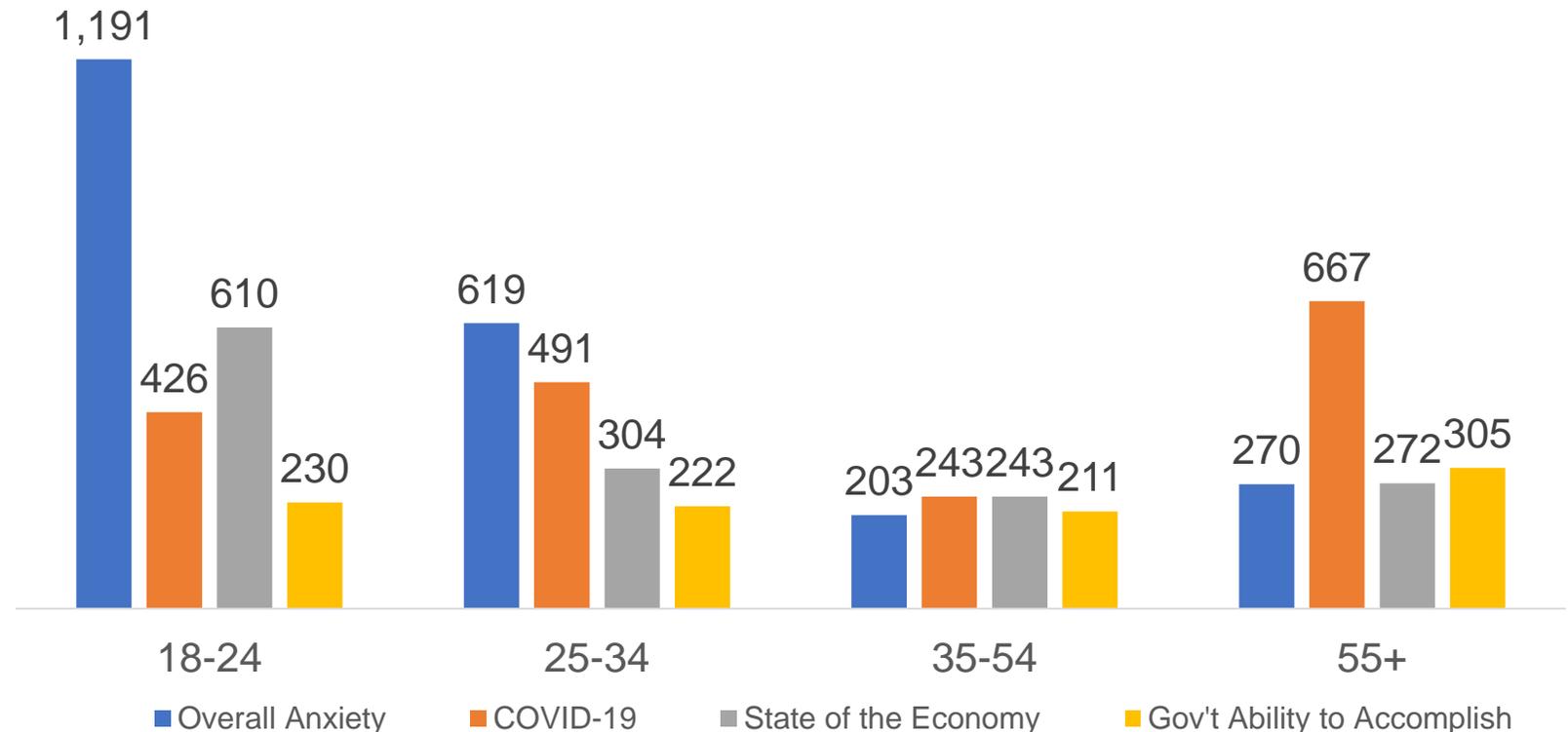
**Moderate Impact States = 800-1,999 cases:**  
Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Texas, Connecticut

**Low Impact States = Under 800 cases:**  
Tennessee, Ohio, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Indiana, Arizona, Alabama, South Carolina, Maryland, Nevada, Virginia, Mississippi, Missouri, Utah, Arkansas, Minnesota, Oregon, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Maine, Iowa, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Kansas, Vermont, Idaho, Delaware, New Mexico, Hawaii, Nebraska, Montana, Alaska, West Virginia, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota

## +AnxietyIndex™

Younger Americans are significantly more anxious than their older cohorts. But as news reports have suggested, among the youngest cohort (18-24), it's **not COVID-19** that's necessarily driving their anxiety – rather the implications of COVID-19 for their economic future; job prospects, cost of living, cost of goods, etc.

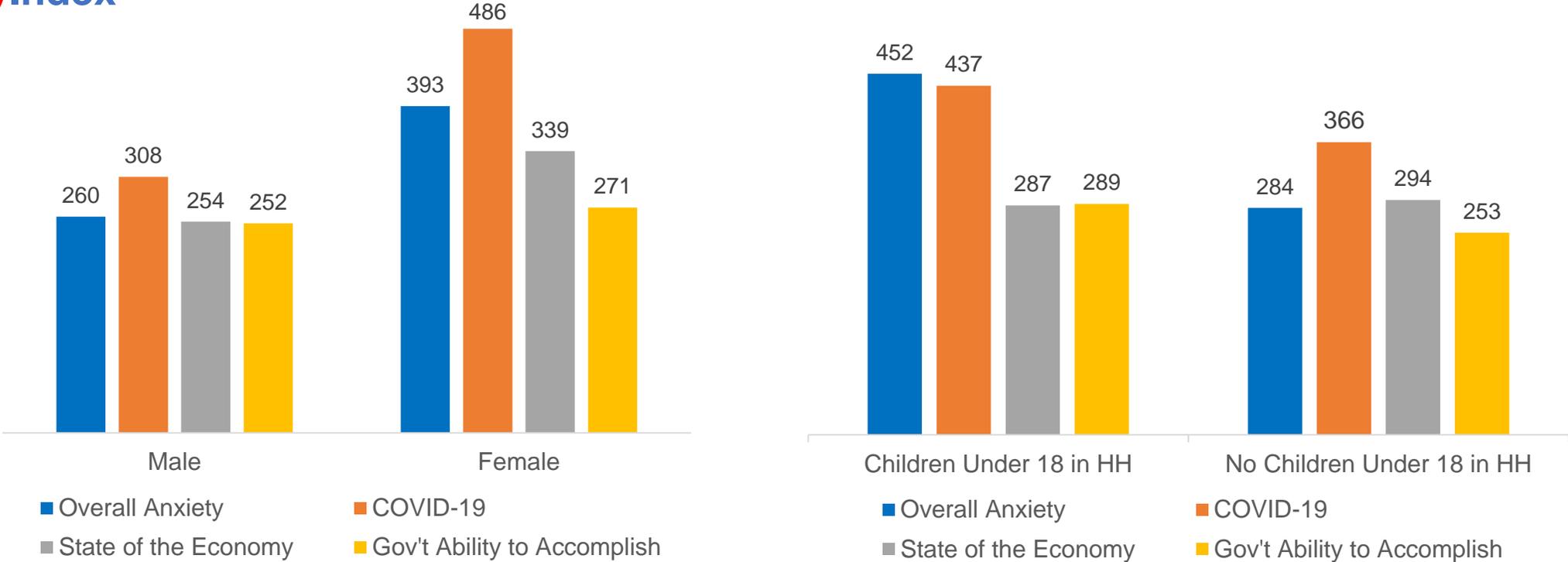
As expected, older Americans in the vulnerable target age group, are primarily anxious about COVID-19.



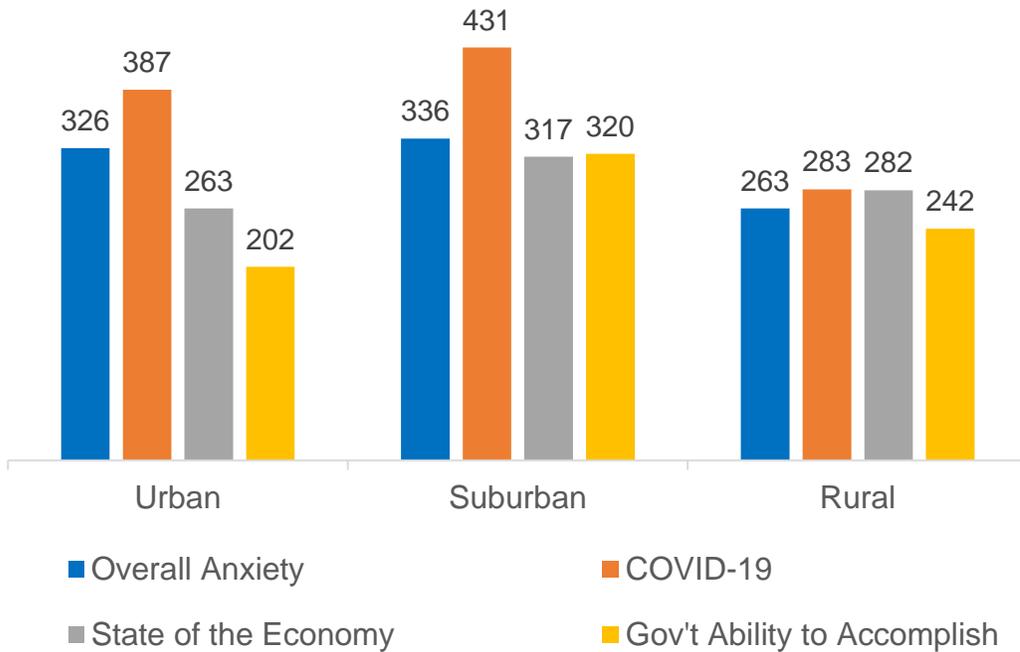
As we've observed in prior studies, **women are more anxious than men**, in general, but COVID-19 has women particularly anxious.

Similarly, **families are expressing significantly more anxiety**, driven largely by **COVID-19**.

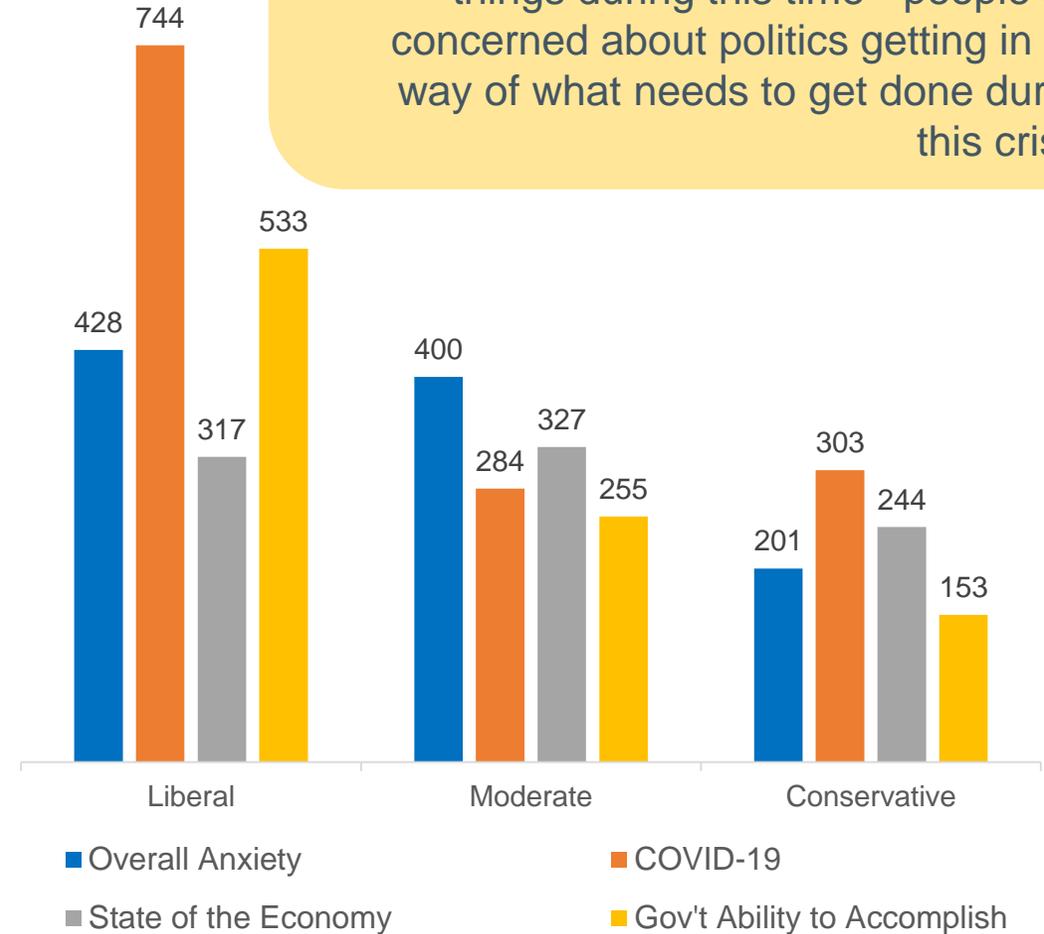
**+AnxietyIndex™**



Rural Americans, as may be expected due to lower population densities, are much less anxious about COVID-19.



Political ideologies are clearly playing a significant role in anxiety today, especially as it relates to COVID-19 and the government's ability to accomplish things during this time - people are concerned about politics getting in the way of what needs to get done during this crisis.



When do people  
think things are  
going to get  
better?

## Apr

1 2 3 4  
5 6 7 8 9 10 11  
12 13 14 15 16 17 18  
19 20 21 22 23 24 25  
26 27 28 29 30

## May

1 2  
3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10 11 12 13 14 15 16  
17 18 19 20 21 22 23  
24 25 26 27 28 29 30  
31

## Jun

1 2 3 4 5 6  
7 8 9 10 11 12 13  
14 15 16 17 18 19 20  
21 22 23 24 25 26 27  
28 29 30

## Jul

1 2 3 4  
5 6 7 8 9 10 11  
12 13 14 15 16 17 18  
19 20 21 22 23 24 25  
26 27 28 29 30 31

## Aug

1  
2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12 13 14 15  
16 17 18 19 20 21 22  
23 24 25 26 27 28 29  
30 31

## Sep

1 2 3 4 5  
6 7 8 9 10 11 12  
13 14 15 16 17 18 19  
20 21 22 23 24 25 26  
27 28 29 30

## Oct

1 2 3  
4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## Nov

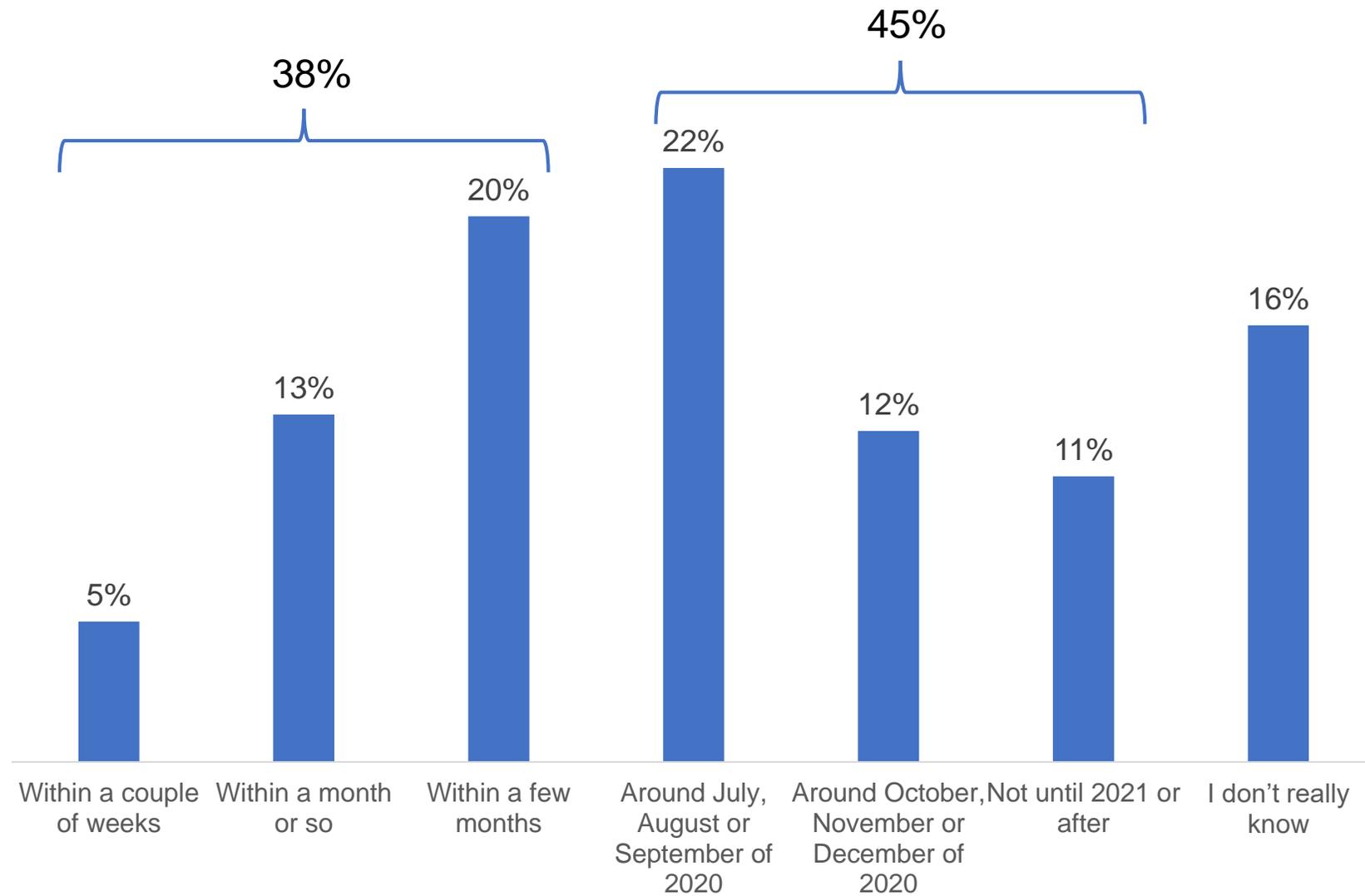
1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
8 9 10 11 12 13 14

## Dec

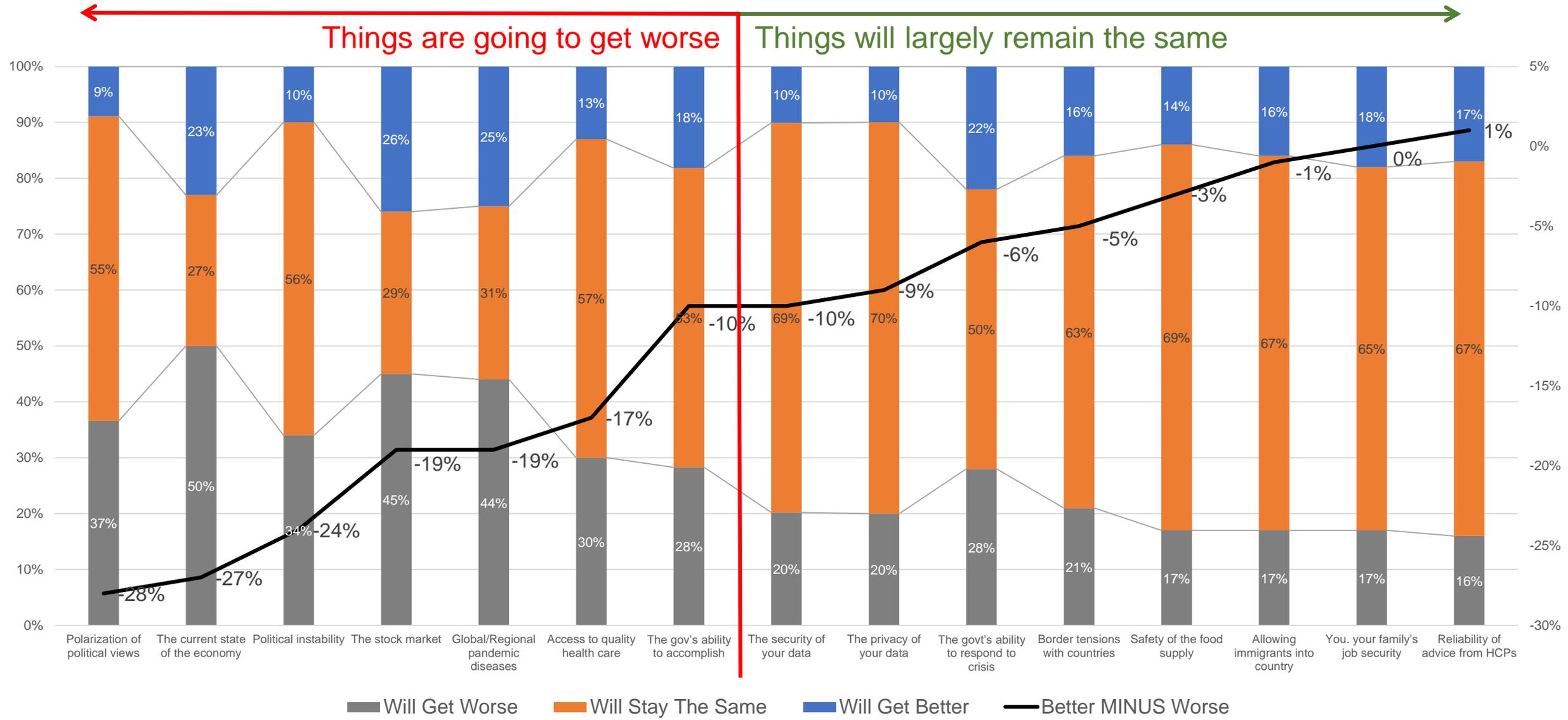
1 2 3 4 5  
6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Perhaps one of the most difficult parts of the current crisis is the **uncertainty** of how long the crisis will last.

On average, Americans are girding for another 3-4 months, putting the “end” in the June/July time period.



In terms of what the next 6 months will bring, **Americans are feeling pretty pessimistic**; the economy and stock market, politics, COVID-19, access to quality healthcare, and the government's ability to manage this crisis are all expected to **get worse**.



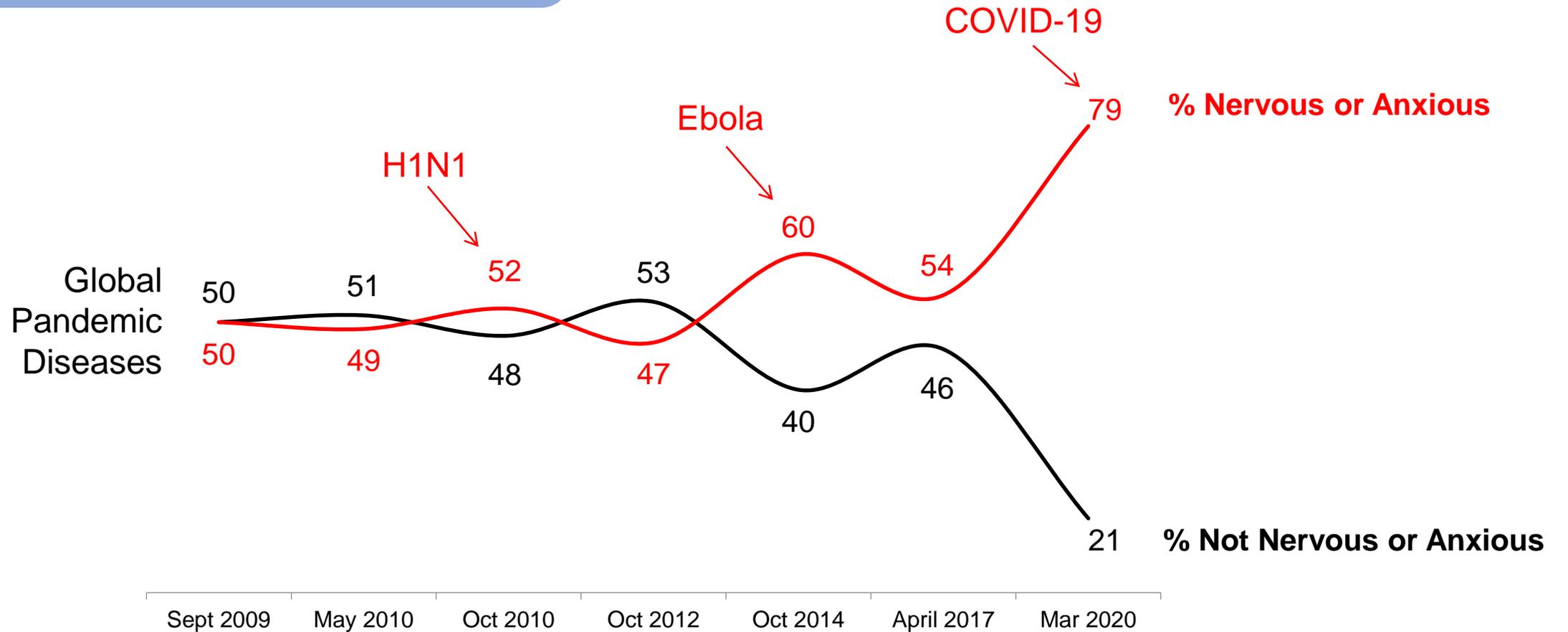
Q. And over the next 6 months, do you expect that each of the following will...?

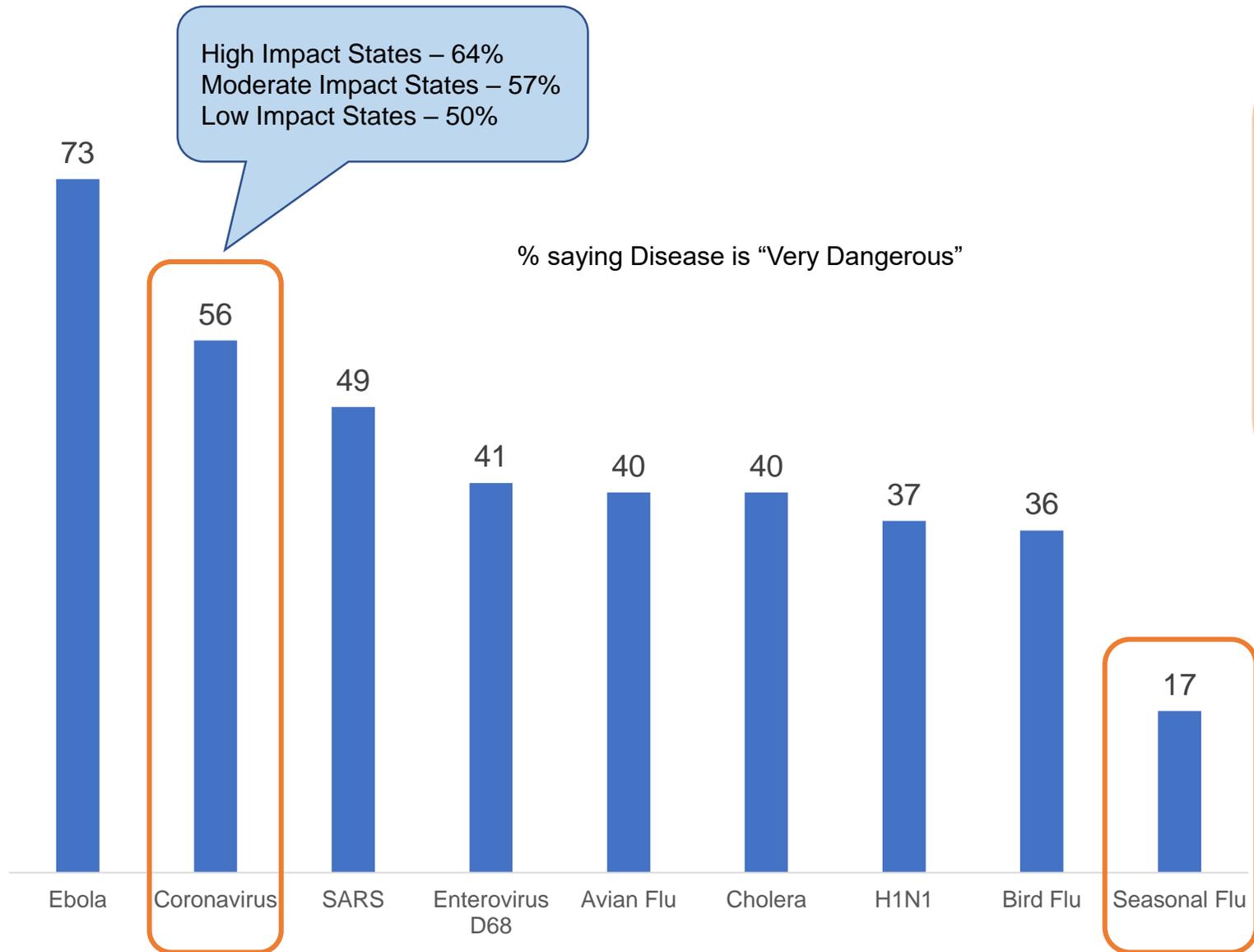
How does  
coronavirus stack  
up against other  
diseases?

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In terms of pandemic diseases, COVID-19 is **breaking new ground** in driving levels of anxiety.





Given all of the discussion comparing coronavirus to the seasonal flu, it's somewhat surprising to see just how much more dangerous Americans consider coronavirus to be compared to influenza (and even other recent viruses).



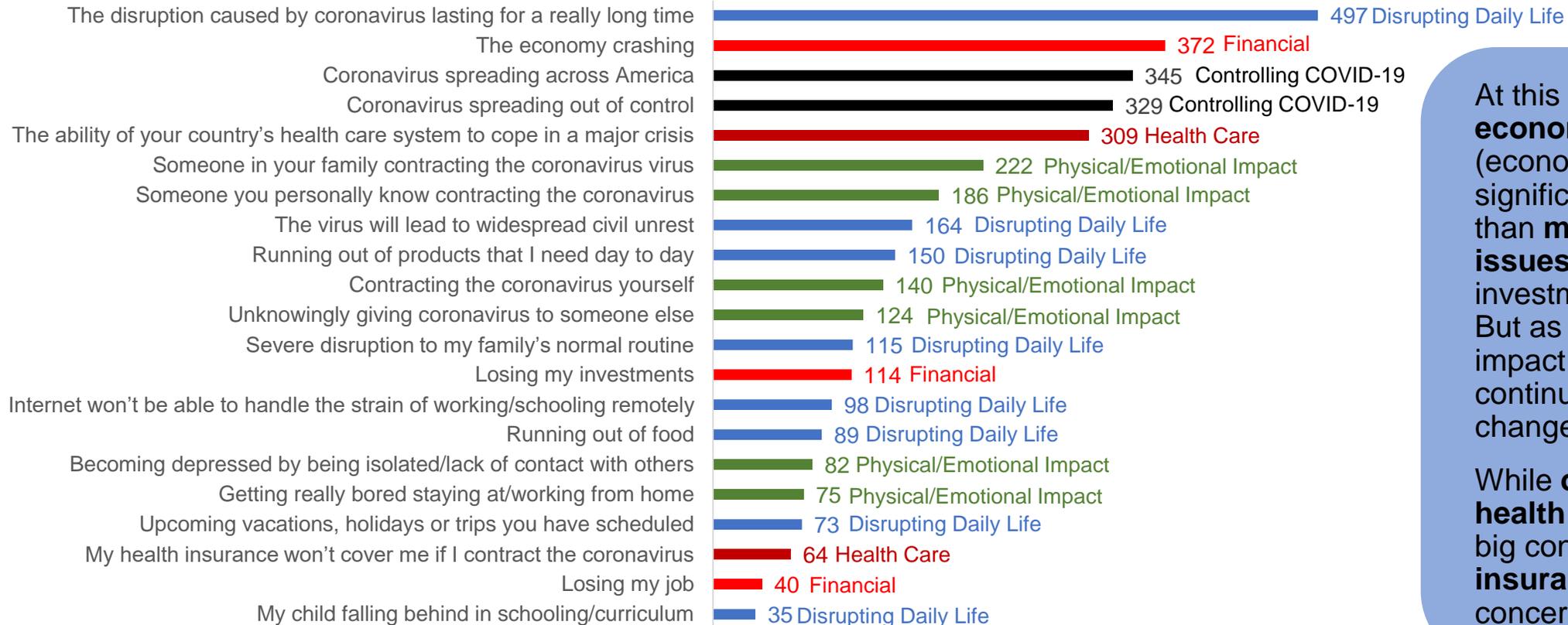
# COVID-19 Impact Anxieties

## What's worrying people most about the impact of COVID-19?

There's significantly more anxiety around **how long** the disruptions will last **than the disruptions themselves**...or said another way – **uncertainty is driving anxiety**. As a result, much of the focus today is on **the big picture, not the details**.

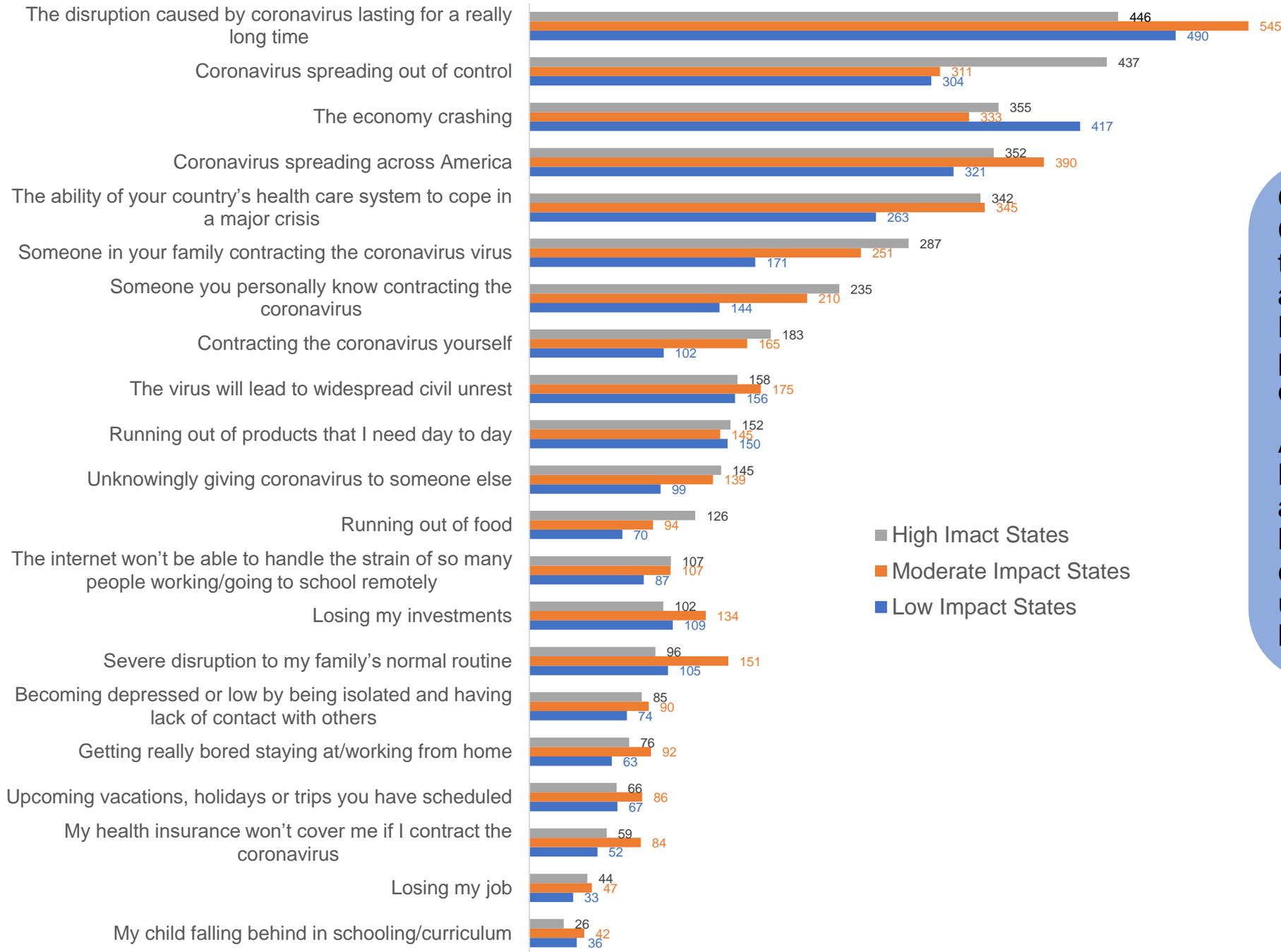
While people aren't feeling anxious about daily life disruptions today (food shortages, internet bandwidth problems, civil unrest, scheduled trips, school), they're clearly worried about the impact of what an extended period of disruptions will mean.

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At this point, **macro economic issues** (economy crashing) are a significantly larger concern than **micro economic issues** (losing investments, losing a job). But as the economic impact from the crisis continues, that will likely change.

While **overloading the health care system** is a big concern, **health insurance** issues are not a concern at all.



Outside of the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, the **Low Impact States** appear to be significantly less concerned about the potential impacts from the crisis.

At the moment, the **Moderate Impact States** are more concerned – likely having experienced enough cases to have a better understanding of what might happen next.

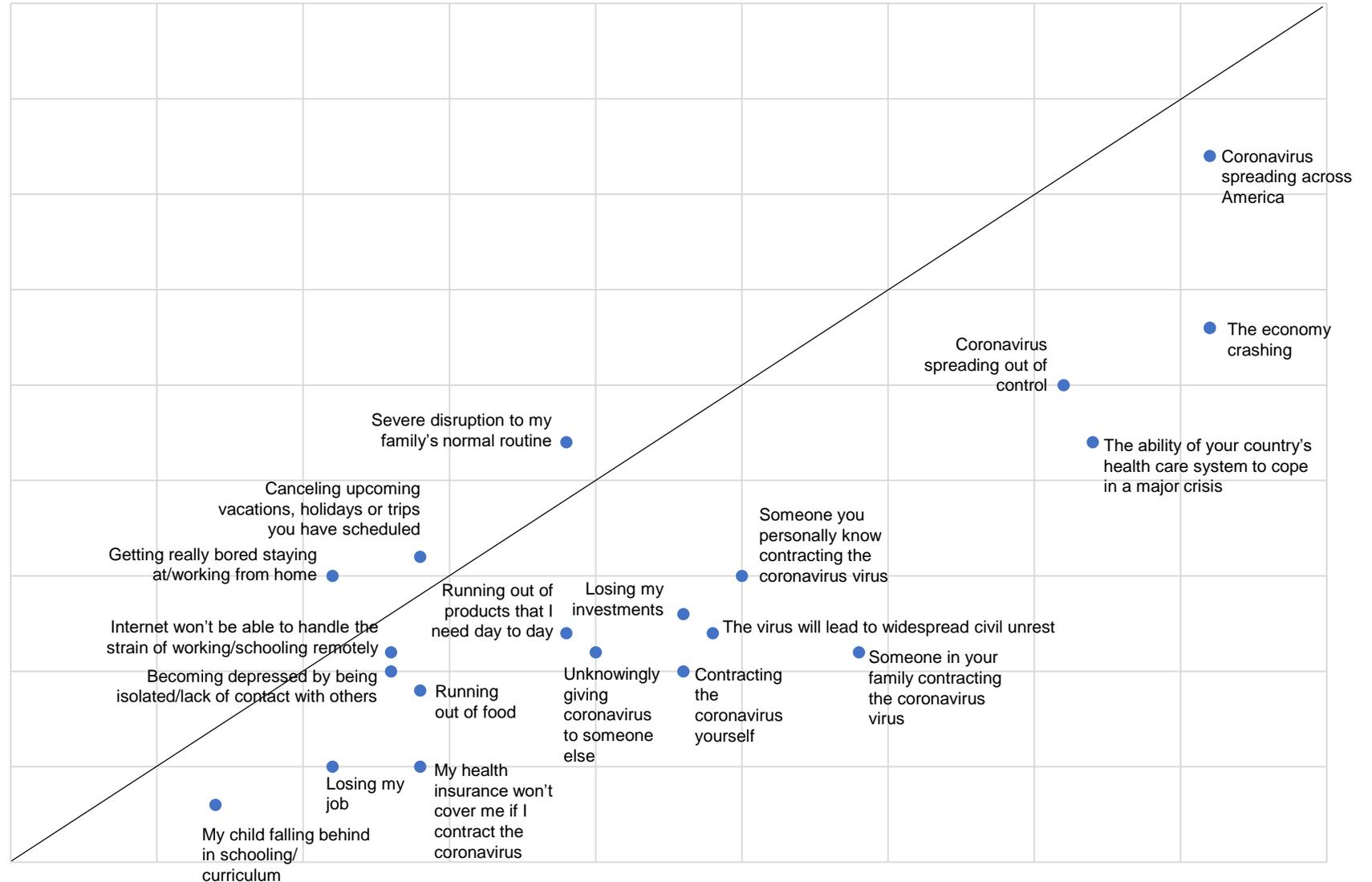
Americans are more nervous about COVID-19 impacts than they are about the likelihood these impacts will actually happen.

Perhaps it's **wishful thinking, simple uncertainty**, or more likely, a **projection of what they're currently experiencing**.

If the crisis worsens, as many experts predict it will, Americans appear emotionally unprepared for what's to come.

% Very Likely Will Happen in next 6 Months

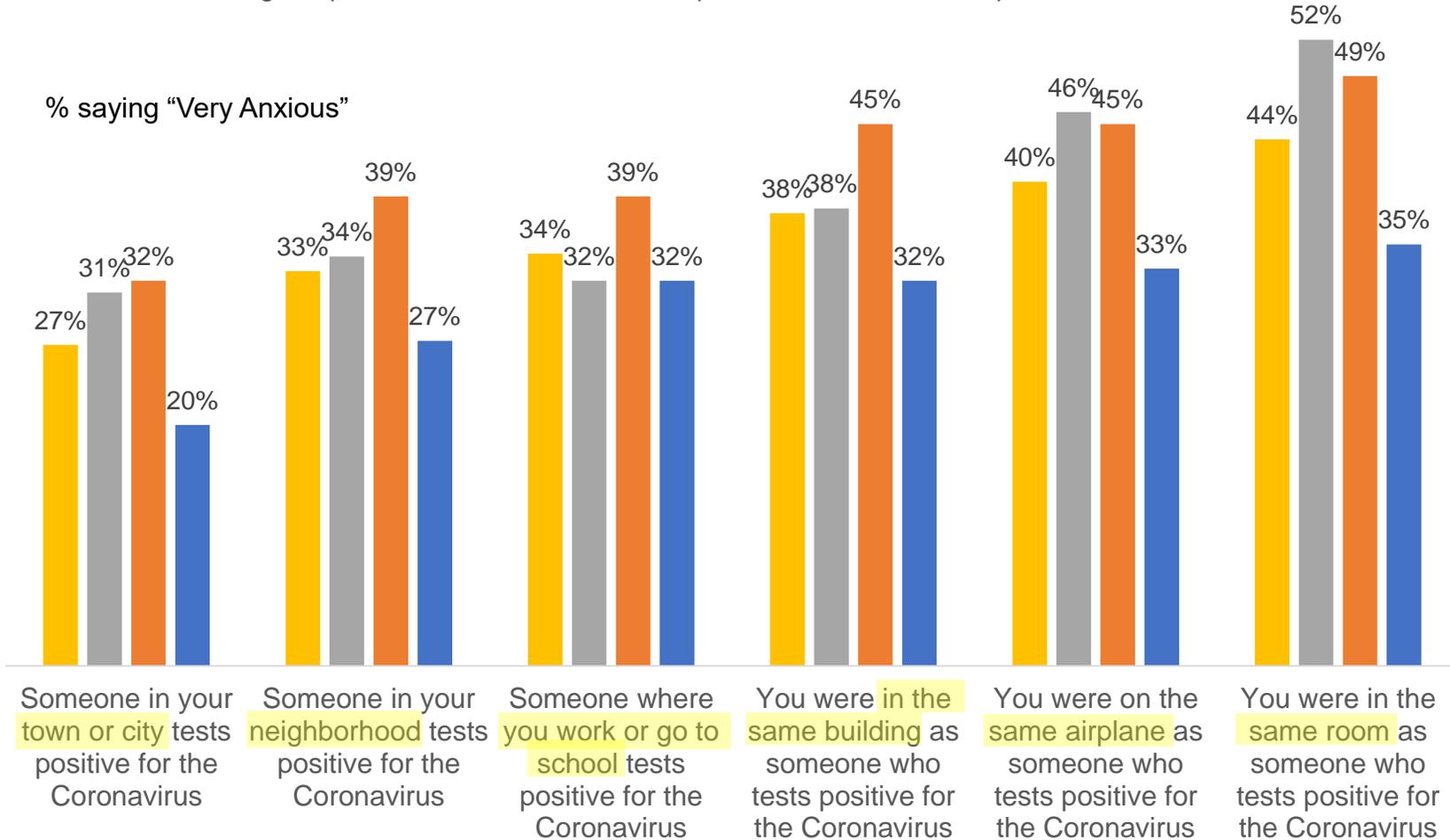
% Very Anxious Today



Q. How nervous or anxious would you say you currently are about each of the following?  
 Q. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that each of the following will happen in the next 6 months?

■ Total US ■ High Impact States ■ Moderate Impact States ■ Low Impact States

% saying "Very Anxious"



Regardless of demographic, current health vulnerability, or even political ideology, **proximity to COVID-19 drives anxiety.**

As the virus expands from the coasts through the heartland of the country, **anxiety levels are going to spike.**

Again we see the current Low Impact States expressing much less anxiety.

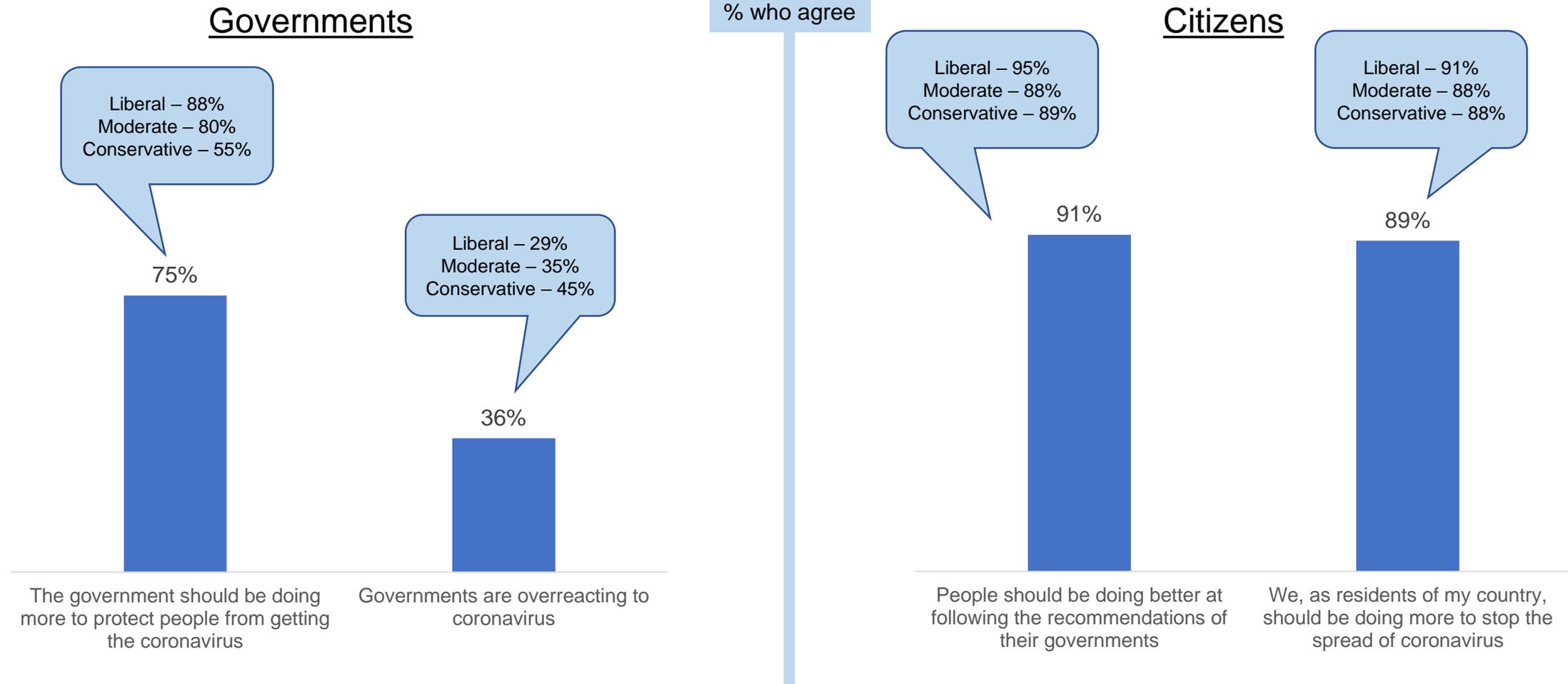


# COVID-19 Attitudes & Behaviors

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A majority believe the U.S. government should be doing more to help stop the spread of COVID-19 (although there are significant differences of opinion by political ideology). Americans are looking at themselves as well, believing that citizens also bear a responsibility to do more (and this agreement is across political ideologies).

Americans appear primed for someone to lead a movement to help them mobilize into action.

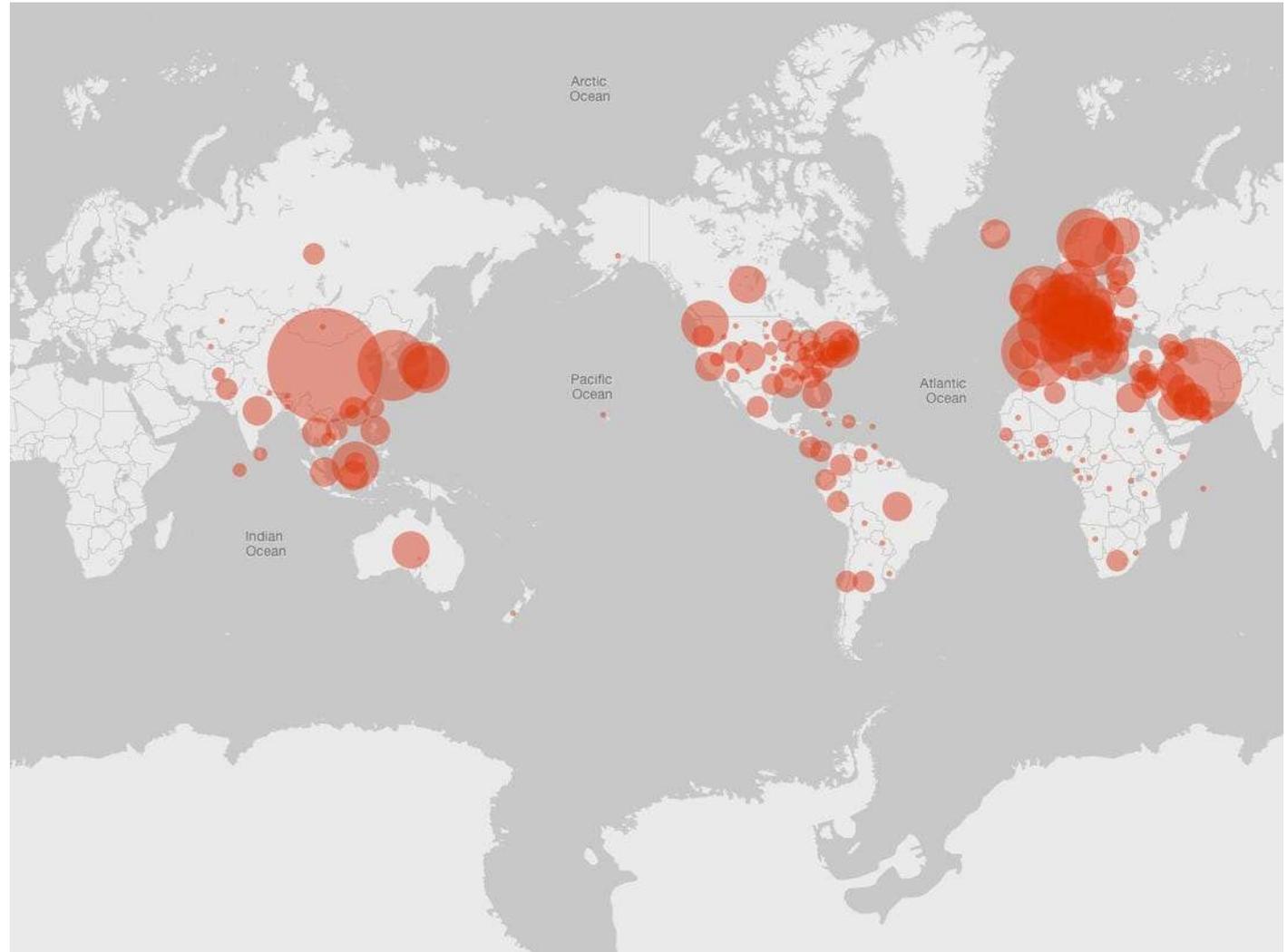
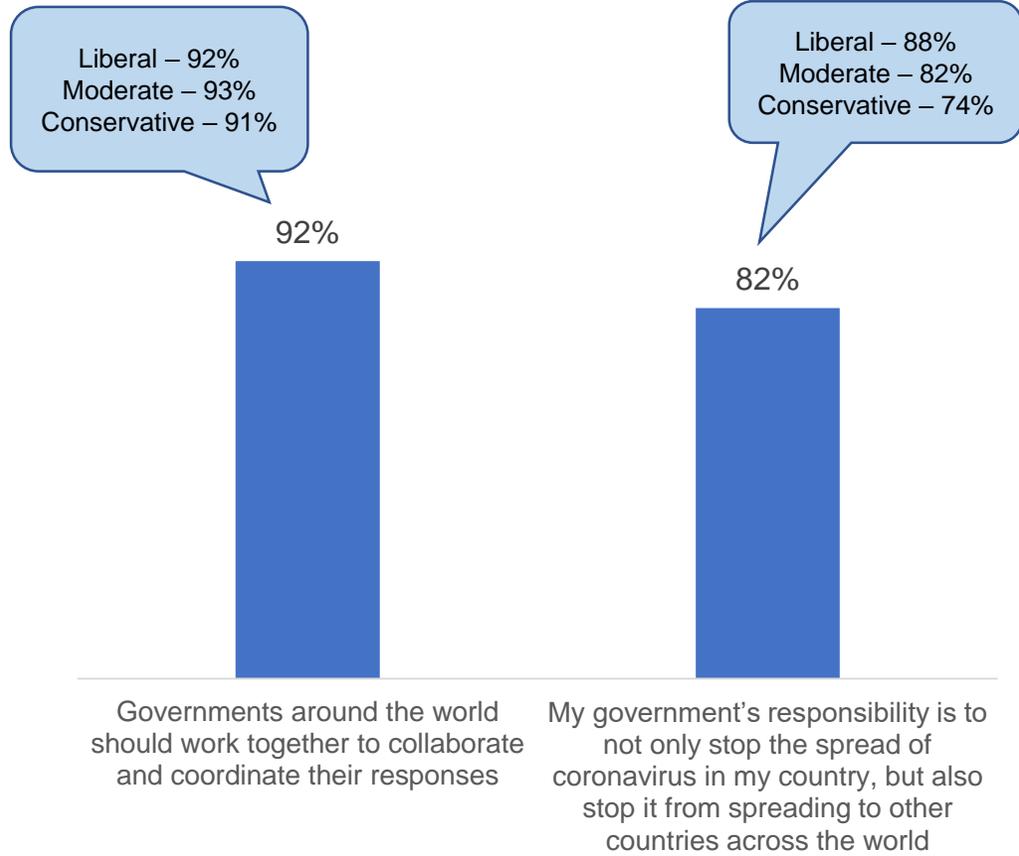


There's also a sense that there needs to be more international collaboration and coordination between governments in the fight against COVID-19 – with bi-partisan support.

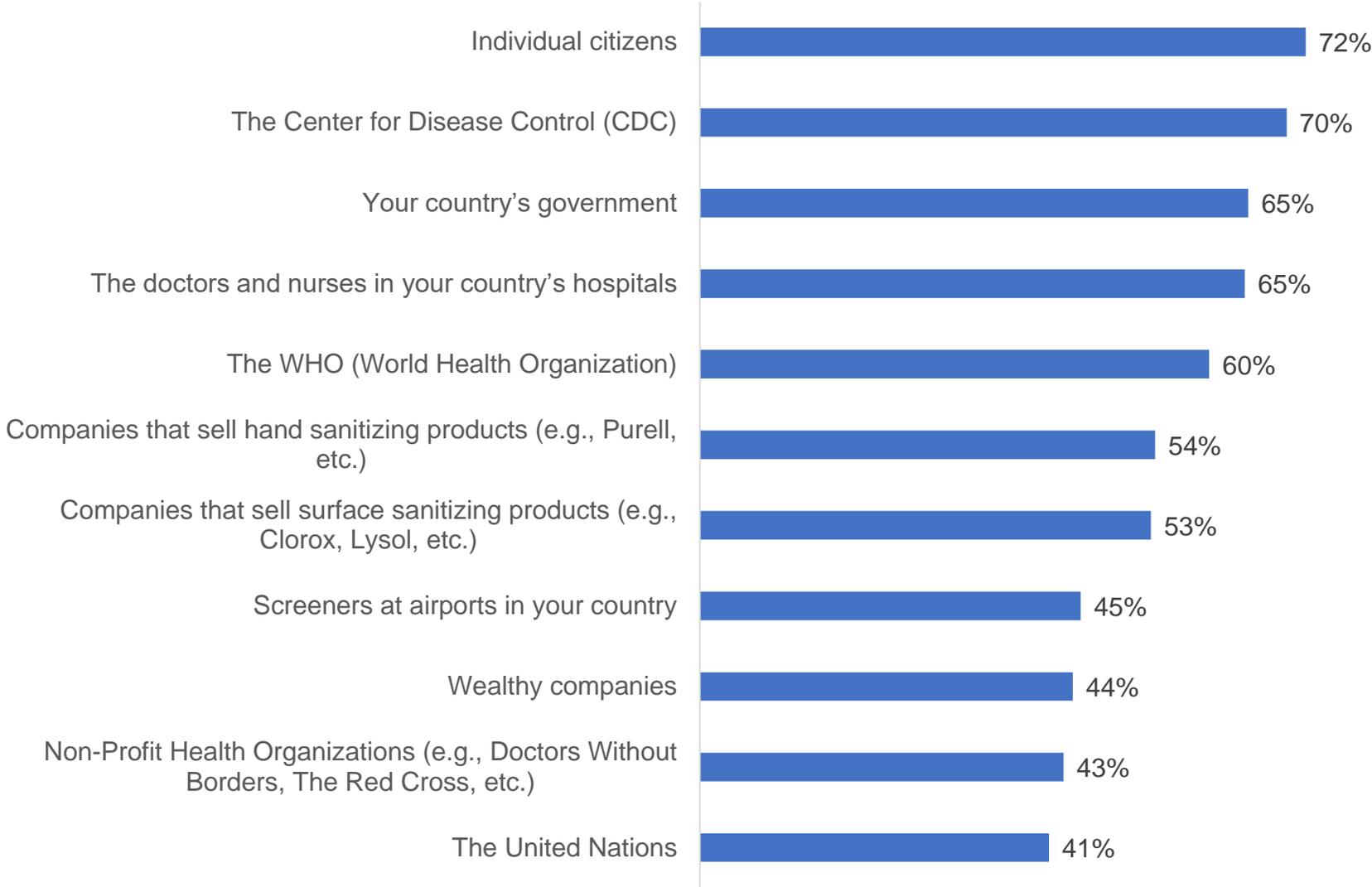
Having the U.S. lead that charge introduces some partisanship.

% who agree

### Global Cooperation



When compared side-by-side, there's a belief that in America, **individuals should be playing the biggest role in halting the spread of COVID-19**, along with the U.S. government, local HCPs, and companies that manufacture sanitizing products.

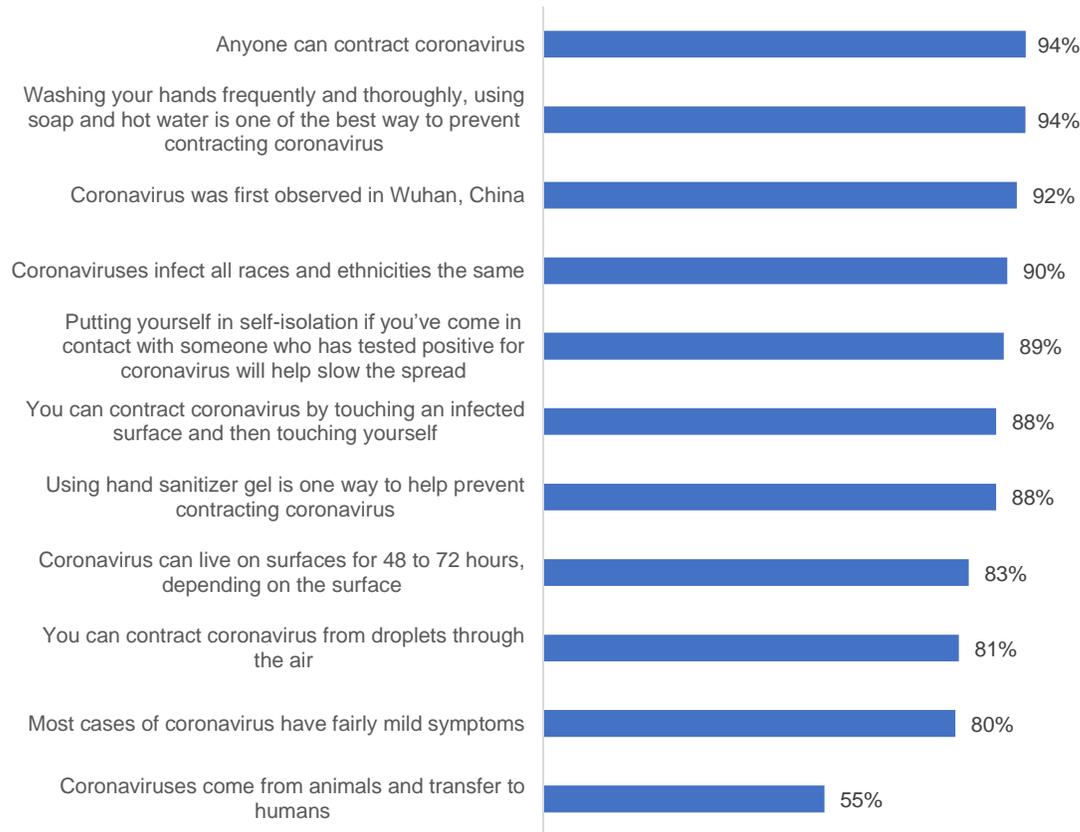


Overall, Americans have an OK (not great) understanding of the facts surrounding COVID-19, **equal to about a C+**.

What's concerning is that their "grade" on true statements (a "B" average) is markedly higher than their "grade" on false statements (a "C" average). It's concerning as many of these false statements are ones from notoriously fake COVID-19 internet memes.

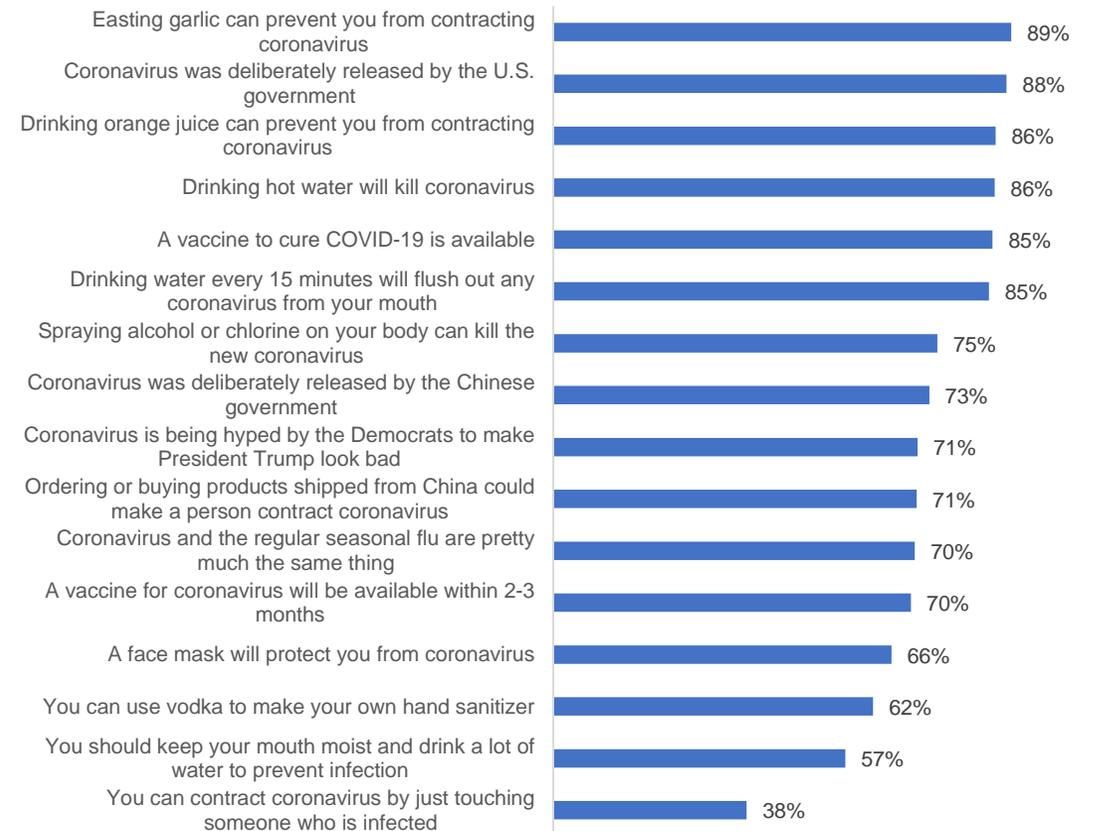
True Statements

% Correctly Answered as being "True"



False Statements

% Correctly Answered as being "False"



Q. Listed below are a number of statements about coronavirus. Some of these statements are true, while some of these statements are false. Please indicate which ones you think are true, and which ones you think are false? (Note: The order of true and false statements were randomized to survey respondents.)

And as one might expect, grades are not evenly distributed by demographic group:

**Women** have a better understanding of COVID-19 than **men**.

**Older** people better than **younger**.

**Suburbanites** better than **urbanites** and **rural people**.

There's **no difference** in COVID-19 knowledge by **political ideology**.

	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Sub-urban	Rural	Health Risks	No Risks	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Overall Grade	C+	C	B-	C	C+	B	C	B-	C+	C+	C+	C+	C+	C+
Grade on "True" Statements	B	B	B	B-	B	A-	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Grade on "False" Statements	C	D+	C+	D+	C	B-	D+	C+	C	C-	C	C	C	C

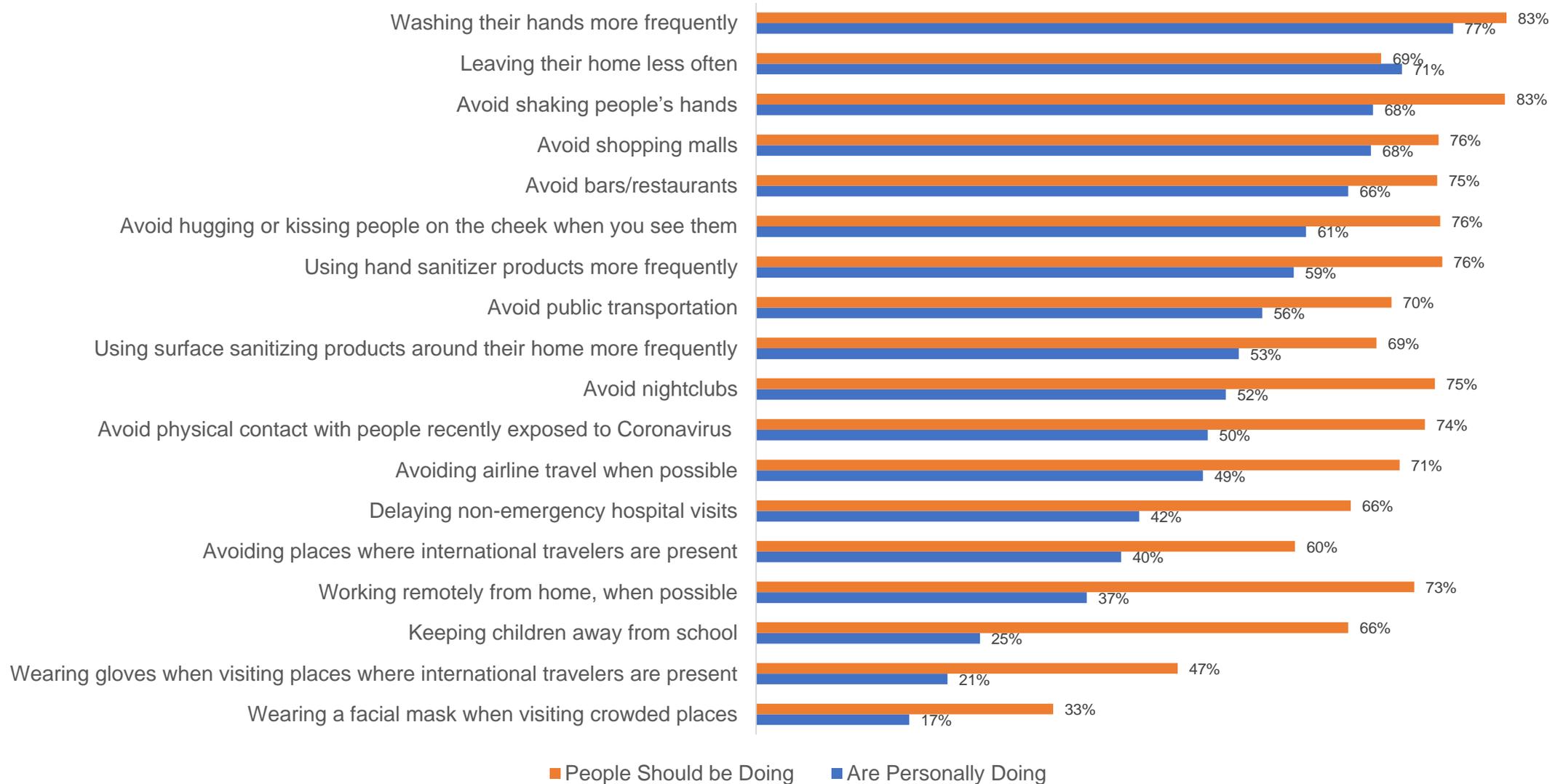
Does **being anxious** about COVID-19 force one to **become more informed** about it?

Or does **less knowledge** about COVID-19 allow one **to live free from worry**?

While causality is difficult to prove, the data below certainly suggest that being as well informed as one can be during this crisis is probably a good side on which to err.

	Total	<u>Anxious About COVID-19</u>	<u>Not Anxious About COVID-19</u>
Overall Grade	<b>C+</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C</b>
Grade on "True" Statements	<b>B</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>C+</b>
Grade on "False" Statements	<b>C</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C-</b>

While Americans have a pretty good sense of what they ***should be doing*** to avoid contracting COVID-19, they've admittedly been **less than diligent in acting accordingly** – real behavior change can be difficult.

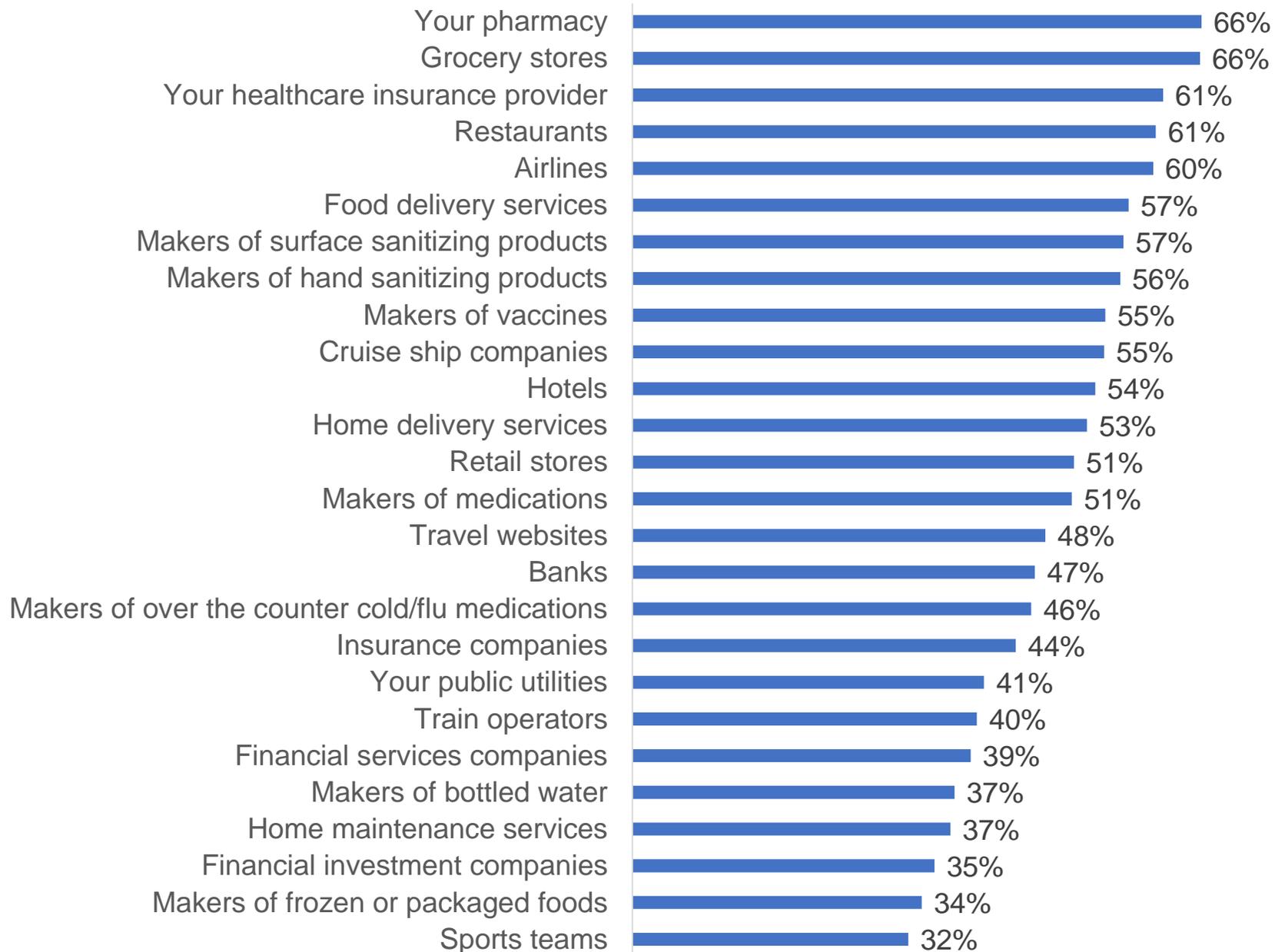


Q. Which of the following steps, if any, do you think **people in general** should be doing to **avoid contracting the coronavirus**?

Q. And which of the following steps, if any, have **you personally** started doing to **avoid contracting the coronavirus**?

COVID-19  
and  
Marketing





Not every brand needs to post information on their website regarding COVID-19 and how it impacts consumers.

Consumers **are** looking for information from industries **directly impacting consumer interactions** with the company.

This doesn't mean businesses with less direct consumer contact shouldn't address COVID-19— which risks appearing unempathetic or tone-deaf – rather messaging needn't be about how their efforts are directly impacting their customers.

Beyond messaging, this crisis is **an opportunity for brands to act**. While of course challenging given how many industries are facing their own challenges, brands that do take action on behalf of the American people will do well in **earning the goodwill and admiration of the people**. What's more, it's not just a desire, **people feel it is needed to get through the crisis**.

92%

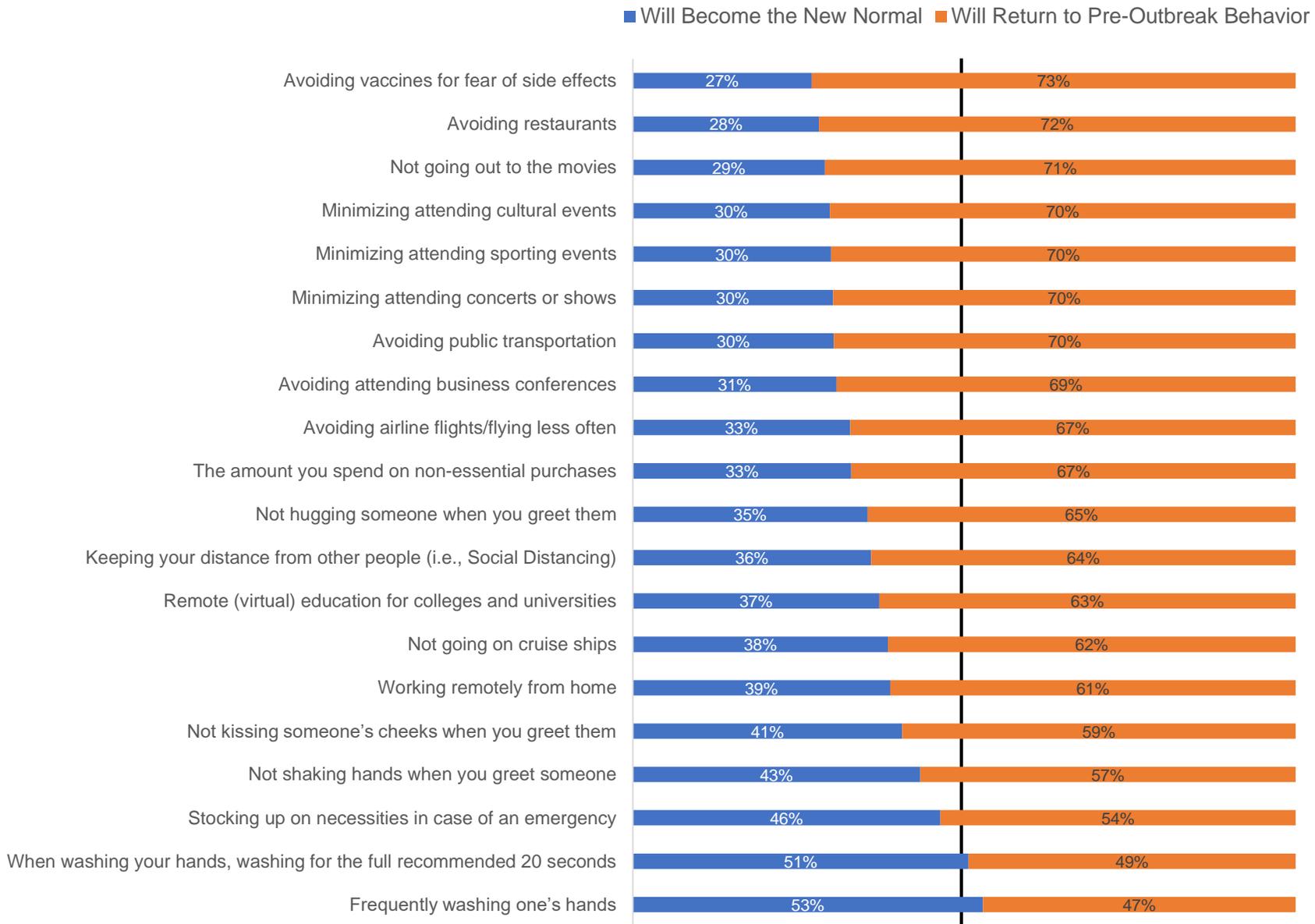
I admire companies that are taking action to help stop the spread of the coronavirus

92%

I admire companies that are taking action to alleviate the impact of coronavirus

89%

The government alone can't stop the spread, we need the companies to help out too



Regardless of how diligent people have been in adopting coronavirus-appropriate behaviors, **most people think that they'll revert back to the their post-crisis behaviors once the crisis is over.**

The behaviors that seem to have the most sticking-power are the **person-to-person social interactions behaviors.**

Three behaviors people believe will become a new normal that have implications for certain industries are **remote learning/working, and cruise ships, and grocery retail.**

+ WUNDERMAN  
THOMPSON

Data

+ **AnxietyIndex™**  
**COVID-19**

