



# Pandemic's Economic Impacts and Floyd's Death Both Weighing on Americans' Well-Being

The coronavirus continues to cause significant economic hardships for many Americans, and these negative impacts are closely tied to poor mental health, according to new data from NORC at the University of Chicago.

Findings from the second wave of the COVID Response Tracking Study show that a majority of Americans are experiencing strongly negative emotions in response to the death of George Floyd, a Black man who died while in police custody on May 25. The results indicate that the responses to Floyd's killing and the economic hardships faced by Americans are having independent effects on health and well-being.

Economic impacts of the pandemic are widespread, with 20% or more of Americans reporting hardships such as job loss, delayed bill payments, lost income, or negative impacts on investments. Adults living with children, younger adults, Black Americans, and Hispanic Americans are among those most likely to report economic or financial difficulties due to the pandemic.

These economic hardships are closely linked with poorer mental health. For example, Americans who have had to delay bill payments are unhappier, more stressed, and feel isolated and left out more often than those who have not.

But the pandemic isn't the only tragedy that Americans are grappling with. A month after his death, 71% of Americans say they are deeply



## Three Things You Should Know

About the NORC Survey of American Adults:

- 1) Compared to white Americans, Hispanic and Black Americans are each more likely to report that they have lost income (21% vs. 42% and 32%), lost savings (23% vs. 39% and 33%), or delayed bill payments (14% vs. 38% and 35%) because of the coronavirus.
- 2) Americans who have lost their job are more likely to at least sometimes feel isolated from others (60% vs. 44%) and lack companionship (54% vs. 39%), compared to those who have not lost their job.
- 3) Hispanic Americans are more likely than white Americans to report that they had to put themselves at risk of exposure to the coronavirus because they couldn't afford to stay home and miss work (31% vs. 19%).

angered by the killing of Floyd by the police. Black Americans, more educated Americans, and Democrats are more likely than others to say they are deeply angered by Floyd's killing. In addition, 68% of Americans are worried about the rioting and looting that broke out in many cities, and older adults and Republicans are more likely to be worried about such actions.

Feelings about the killing of Floyd and the subsequent rioting and looting are also related to well-being. Those who are deeply angered by Floyd's killing but are not worried about rioting and looting are more stressed and rate their mental health as poorer compared to those who are more worried about rioting and looting and not angered by the killing.

The nationwide poll was conducted June 22 to July 6, 2020, using the AmeriSpeak® Panel, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 2,012 adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.0 percentage points.

Other key findings from the study include:

- Twenty-two percent of Americans say that they or someone in their household has lost employment income since late May.
- The three most commonly reported economic impacts of the coronavirus include: negatively impacted investments such as retirement or college savings (34%), lost savings (27%), and changes to work routine such as working from home (27%).
- The 21% of Americans who recently put themselves at risk of coronavirus exposure at work are more than twice as likely to report often feeling like difficulties are piling up so high that they cannot overcome them (23% vs. 10%).
- Adults living with children under 18 are more likely than those who do not live with children to report changing their work routine (36% vs. 24%), losing savings (35% vs. 24%), having to put themselves at risk of exposure at work (31% vs. 18%), and having to delay bill payments (30% vs. 17%) because of the coronavirus.
- The vast majority of Democrats are deeply angered by Floyd's killing (84%), compared to 61% of independents and 58% of Republicans.
- Eighty percent of Black Americans are deeply angered by the killing of Floyd, compared to 70% of white and 64% of Hispanic Americans.
- Thirty-nine percent of Americans are not deeply angered by the police's killing of Floyd nor are they very worried about rioting and looting; 19% are both deeply angry and very worried; 26% are deeply angered but are not very worried; 17% are not deeply angered but are very worried.
- Americans who are deeply angered by Floyd's killing but not worried about rioting are twice as likely to say they often feel like difficulties are piling up so high that they cannot overcome them compared to those who are neither angry nor worried (18% vs. 9%).

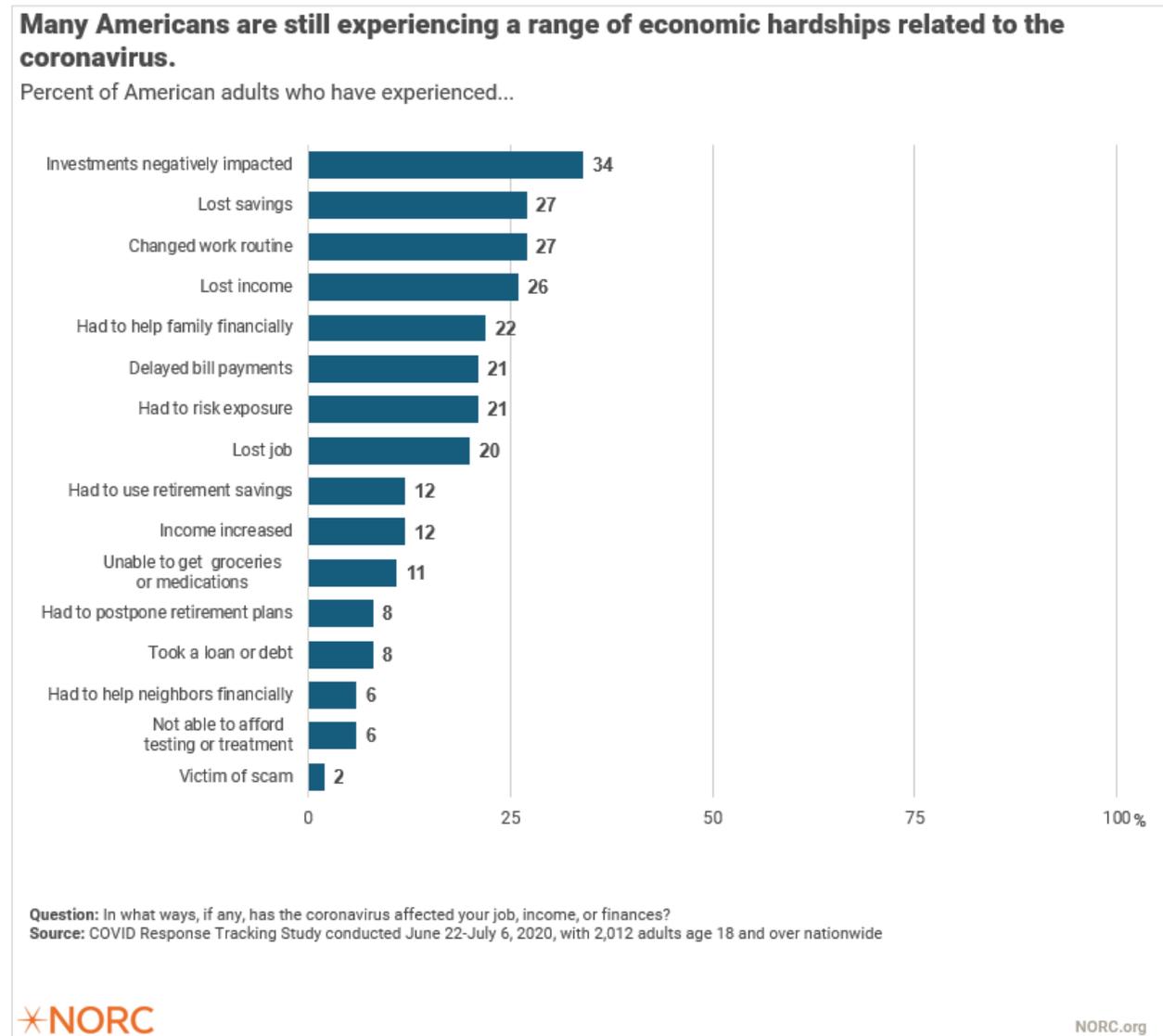
## **The pandemic continues to have significant negative economic impacts on many Americans.**

Although various sectors of public life started to reopen across the United States in June and early July, Americans continue to feel adverse economic impacts of the coronavirus outbreak. Since the beginning of the pandemic on March 13, 2020, 41% of Americans report that they or someone in their household have

experienced a loss of income, including 22% who experienced a loss in the past 30 days. In addition, 16% expect that they or someone in the household will lose income in the next four weeks.

Fifty-two percent of adults report receiving pay for their work in the past week, including 61% of adults 18-64 years old. In comparison, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates about 62% of all adults and 74% of adults 18-64 were employed in 2019<sup>[1]</sup>.

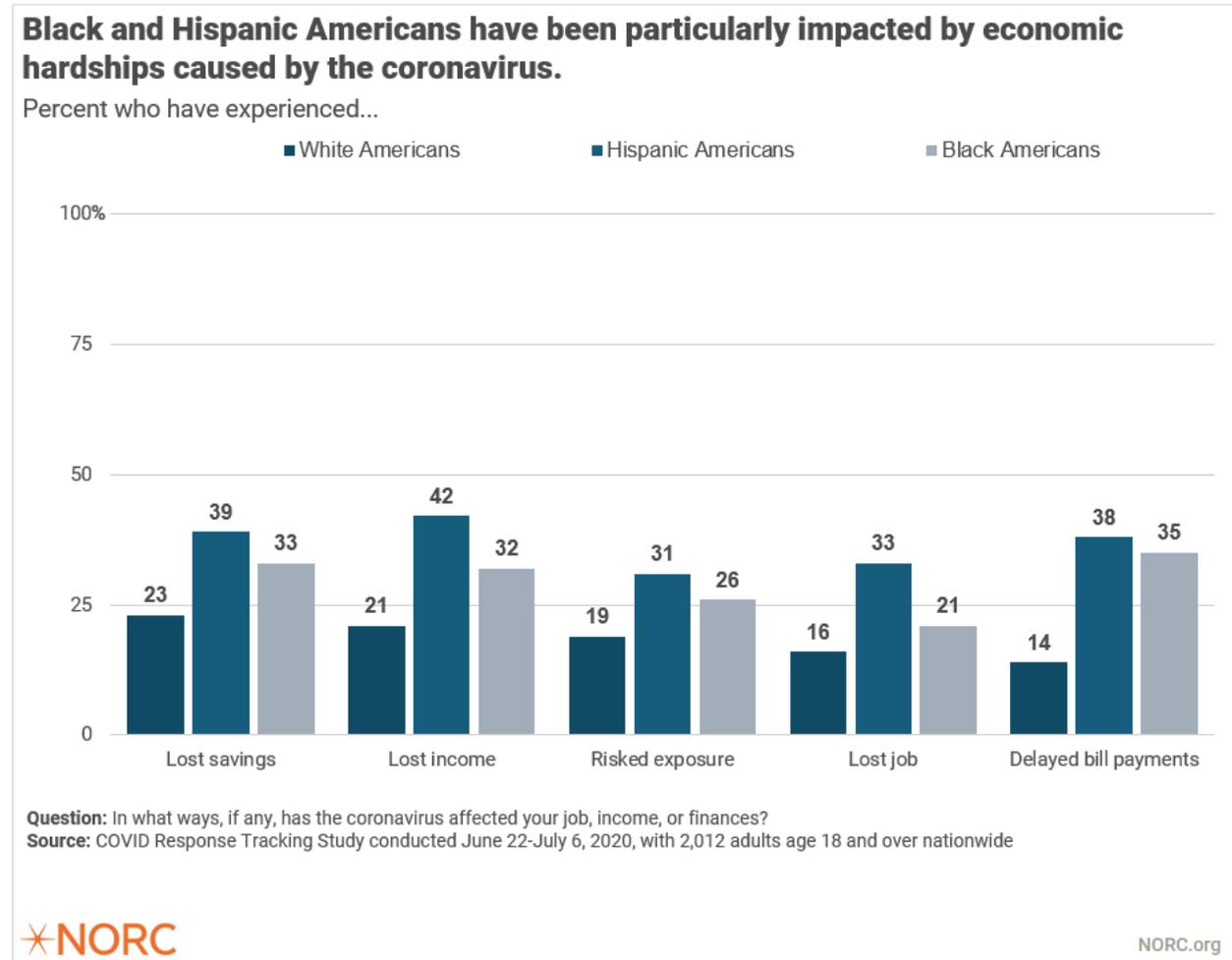
Americans have faced a wide variety of economic difficulties since the outbreak began. All adults report experiencing at least one of the economic hardships asked about, with Americans reporting an average of three of the 15 economic or financial impacts. At the same time, 46% report their income was not impacted at all, and 12% report their income increased due to the coronavirus.



<sup>[1]</sup> Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: <https://www.bls.gov/cps/tables.htm#empstat>

## Economic impacts are particularly acute among Hispanic, Black, and young Americans, as well as those living with children.

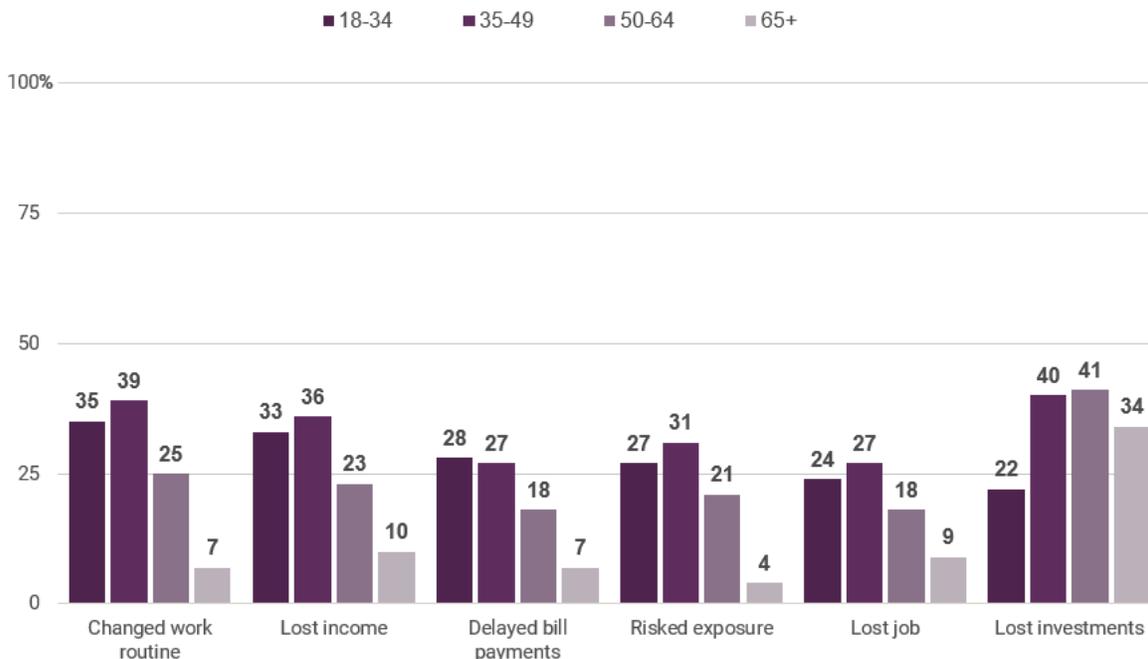
People of color have been particularly hurt by the economic impacts of the pandemic. Hispanic and Black Americans are more likely than white Americans to have lost income, more likely to have lost savings, and more likely to have delayed paying bills. Additionally, Hispanics are more likely than whites to have put themselves at risk at work and are also more likely to have lost a job.



While many older Americans are retired and therefore less likely to face employment-related hardships, various economic impacts of the coronavirus differ depending on age. Younger Americans are more likely than older adults to report lost income, job loss, putting themselves at risk of exposure, and delaying paying bills. Older Americans, on the other hand, are more likely to have lost investments. Younger Americans are also more likely to have changed their work routines than older Americans.

## Younger Americans are more likely to experience economic hardships, although older Americans are more likely to have lost investments.

Percent who have experienced...



**Question:** In what ways, if any, has the coronavirus affected your job, income, or finances?

**Source:** COVID Response Tracking Study conducted June 22-July 06, 2020, with 2,012 adults age 18 and over nationwide



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Americans who have at least some college education are more likely than those with a high school diploma or less to report changing their work routine (36% vs. 12%) and losing investments (40% vs. 23%), while less educated Americans are more likely to report delaying paying bills (29% vs. 16%). Similarly, 36% of Americans making more than \$50,000 report changing their work routines, and 46% report losing investments, compared to just 19% and 21% who say the same among those making less than \$50,000.

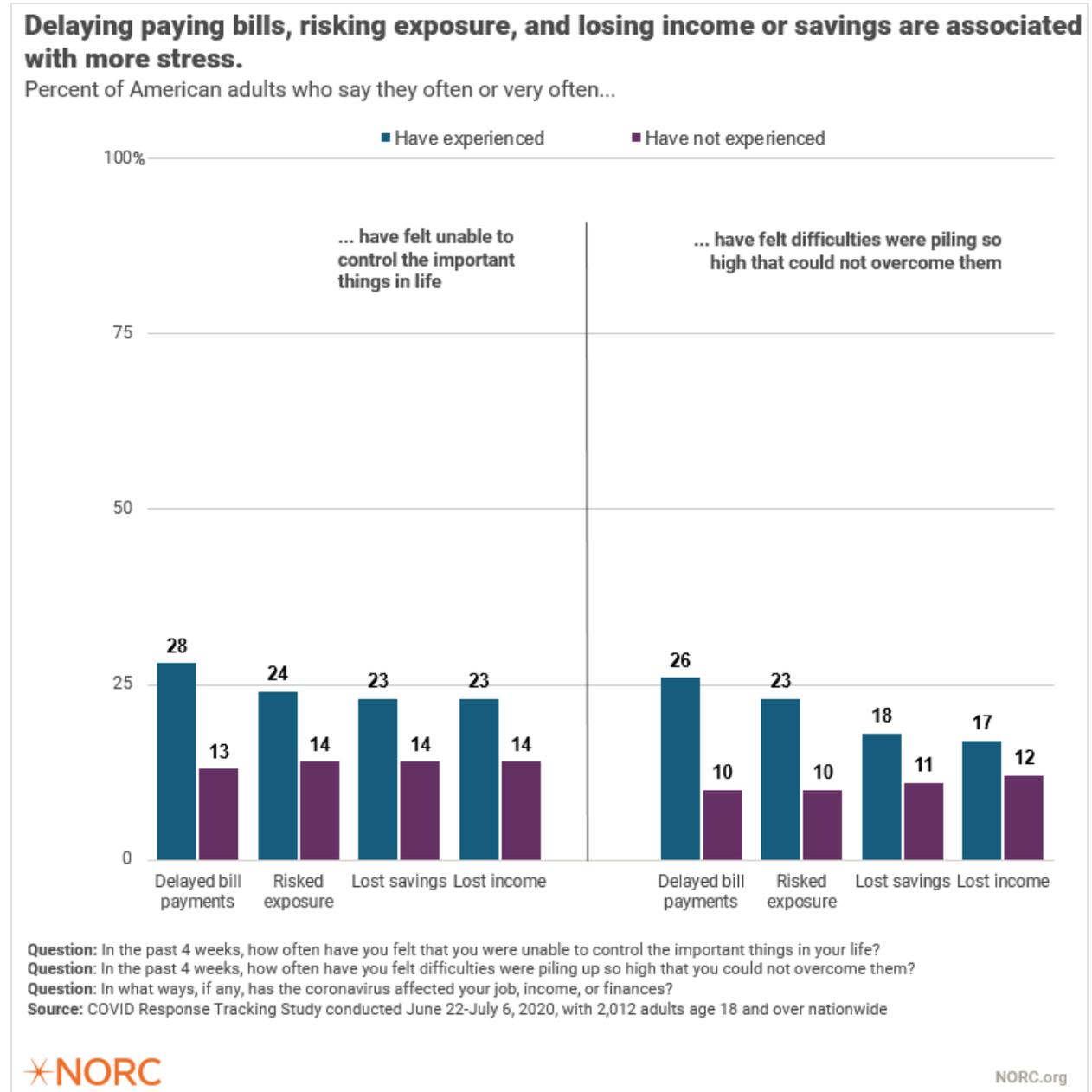
The pandemic has also had a particularly negative economic impact on Americans living in households with children. Adults living in households with children under 18 are more likely to report changing their work routine (36% vs. 24%), losing savings (35% vs. 24%), having to put themselves at risk of COVID-19 exposure (31% vs. 18%), and having to delay bill payments (30% vs. 17%).

The economic hardships from the pandemic have hurt Americans living in all types of communities. There are no significant differences between the economic impacts on people living in urban, suburban, and rural areas except for when it comes to changing work routines. Thirty-one percent of Americans living in urban areas say they have changed their routine, compared to 14% and 19% of those in suburban and rural areas, respectively.

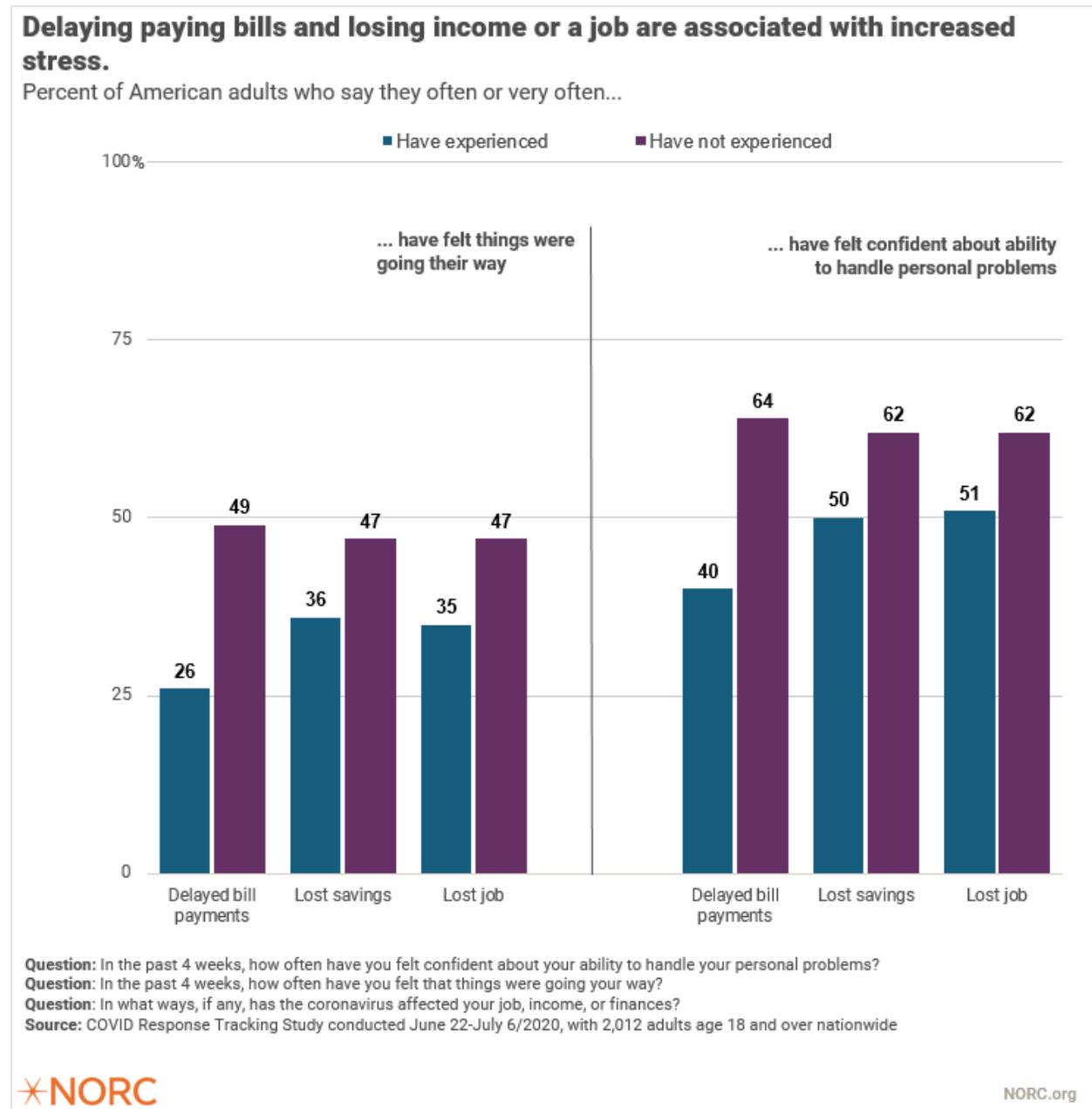
## Negative economic impacts from the pandemic relate to stress, loneliness, and unhappiness.

Economic hardships are associated with higher stress and loneliness, even when controlling for other factors such as demographic characteristics, exposure to the virus, and reactions to the Floyd killing and protests.

Americans who had to delay bill payments, who risked exposure at work, or who had lost income or savings are more likely to report that they have often felt unable to control the important things in life and often felt difficulties were piling so high they couldn't overcome them.



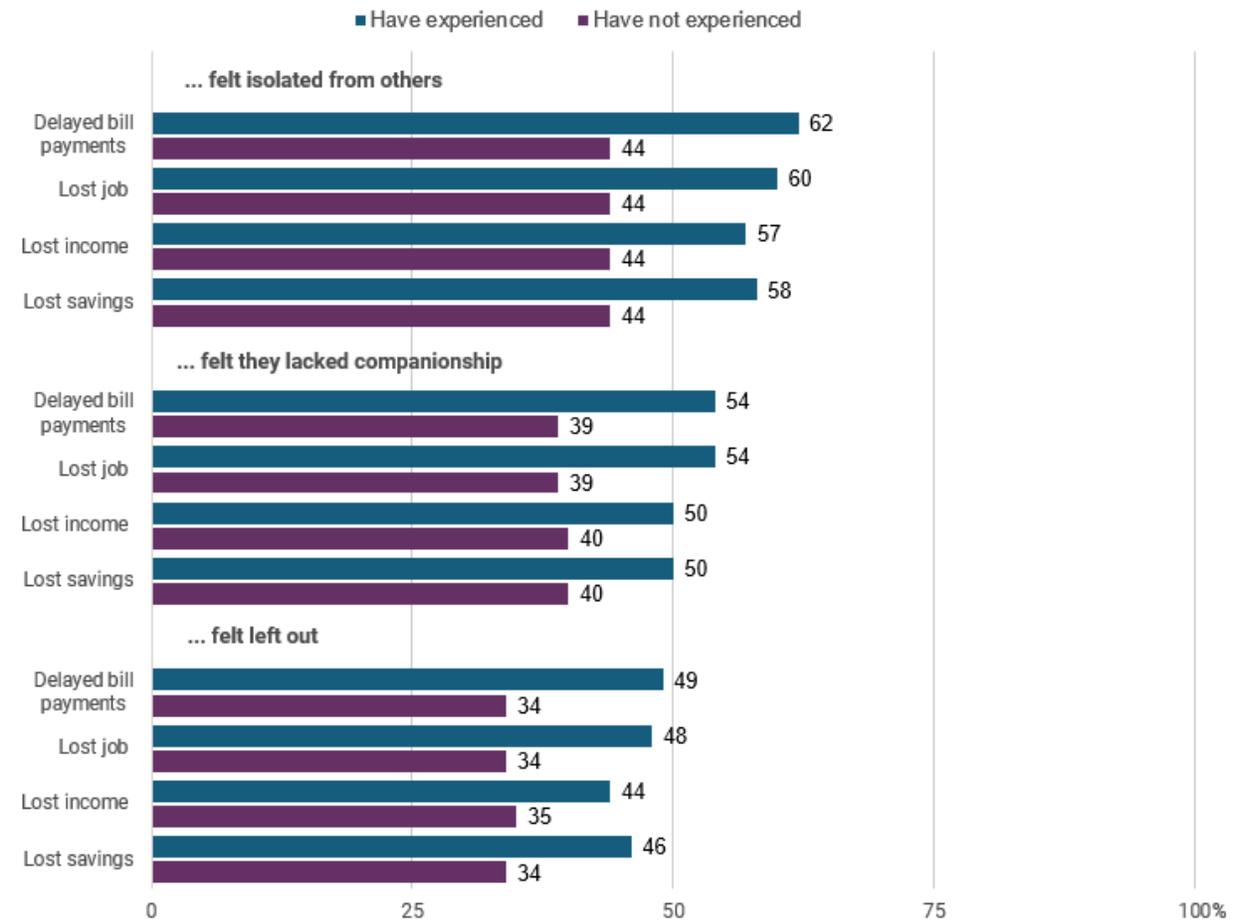
Those who report delayed bill payments, lost savings, or job loss are less likely than others to say things often were going their way or that they often felt confident in their ability to handle personal problems. Just 35% of those who risked exposing themselves to the virus at work often felt things were going their way, compared to 46% among those who did not risk exposure.



Americans report they have felt they lack companionship, felt isolated from others, and felt left out more often if they have delayed bill payments or lost income, a job, or savings. Additionally, 47% of those who had risked exposure felt left out compared to just 35% of those who have not.

### Delaying bill payment and losing job, income, or savings are each correlated with increased loneliness.

Percent of American adults who say they at least sometimes...



**Question:** In the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt isolated from others?

**Question:** In the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt you lacked companionship?

**Question:** In the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt left out?

**Question:** In what ways, if any, has the coronavirus affected your job, income, or finances?

**Source:** COVID Response Tracking Study conducted June 22-July 06/2020, with 2,012 adults age 18 and over nationwide



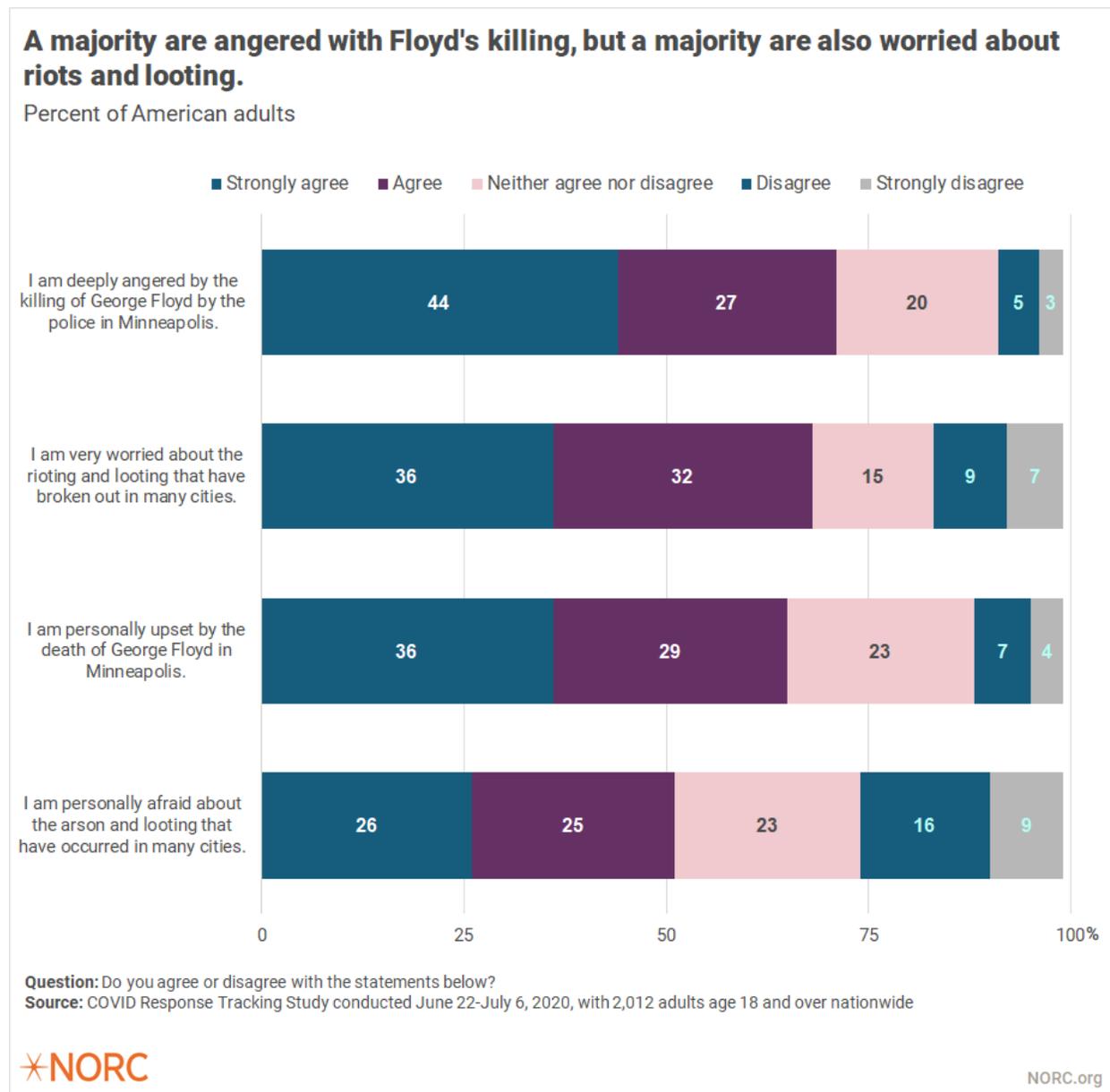
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Experiencing economic hardship because of the pandemic is also associated with greater unhappiness. Forty percent of Americans who have had to delay paying bills say they are not too happy, along with 36% who have lost savings, 32% who have lost a job, and 30% who have lost income. Less than a quarter of those who have not experienced those hardships say the same.

## A majority of the public is angry about the police killing of Floyd, and a majority is also worried about rioting and looting.

While Americans feel the mental and financial toll from the COVID-19 pandemic, they also are experiencing various emotions in response to the May 25 killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers and the nationwide demonstrations that occurred in the following weeks. This survey, conducted about a month after Floyd's killing and the initial demonstrations, finds a majority report they are angry and personally upset with his killing, but a majority are also worried about and fear the riots, looting, and arson that have followed.

Overall, 71% are deeply angered by the killing of Floyd and 65% are personally upset with his death. Sixty-eight percent are worried about riots and looting that have occurred, and 51% feel personally afraid of the arson and looting that have taken place.



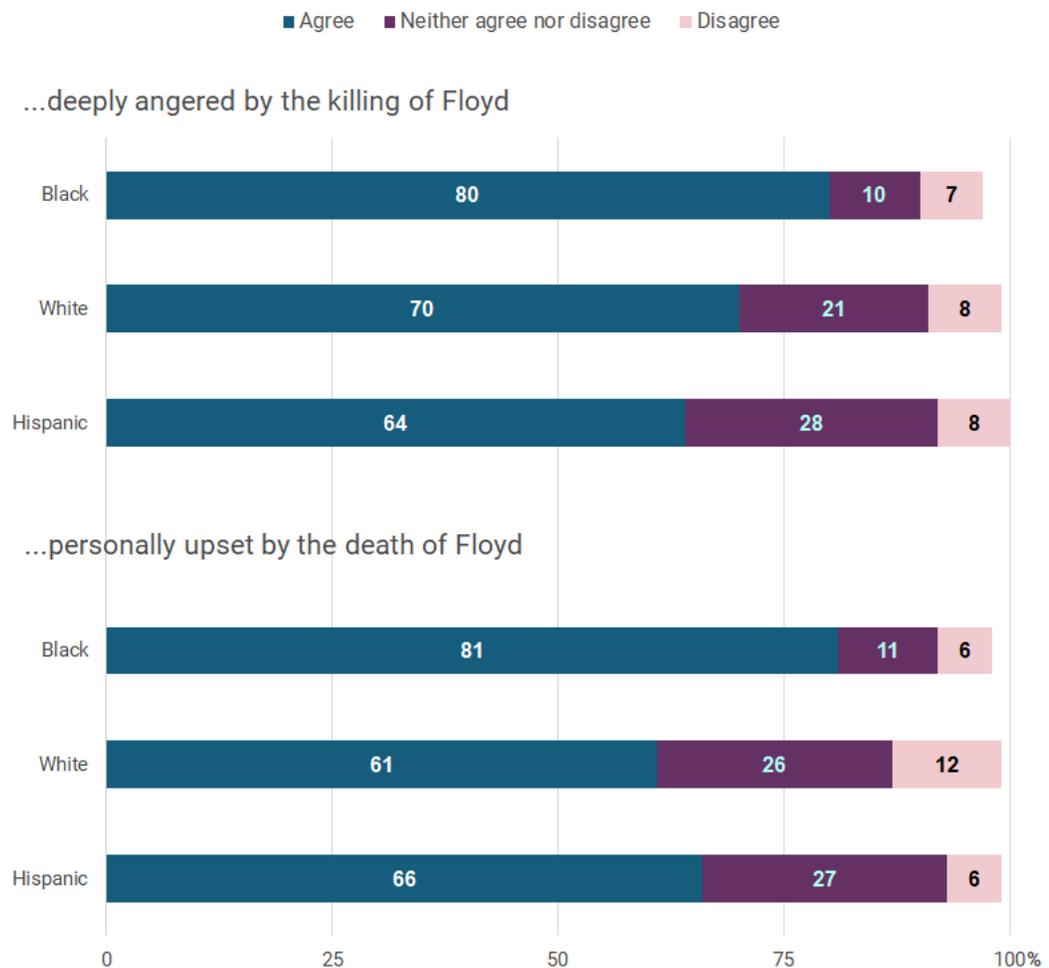
## Black Americans, more educated Americans, and Democrats are more likely to say that they are deeply angered or upset by Floyd's killing.

While majorities are angry about Floyd's killing and worried about riots, emotions tend to differ depending on people's race and ethnicity, education, political affiliation, and age.

Black Americans are most likely to agree with feeling angered by Floyd's killing. Eighty percent of Black Americans agree or strongly agree that they are deeply angered, compared to 70% of whites and 64% of Hispanics. Eighty-one percent of Black Americans are personally upset, compared to 61% of white and 66% of Hispanic Americans.

### Black Americans are more likely to feel deeply angered and personally upset with Floyd's killing.

Percent of American adults who are...



**Question:** [I am deeply angered by the killing of George Floyd by the police in Minneapolis. / I am personally upset by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.] Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

**Source:** COVID Response Tracking Study conducted June 22-July 6, 2020, with 2,012 adults age 18 and over nationwide

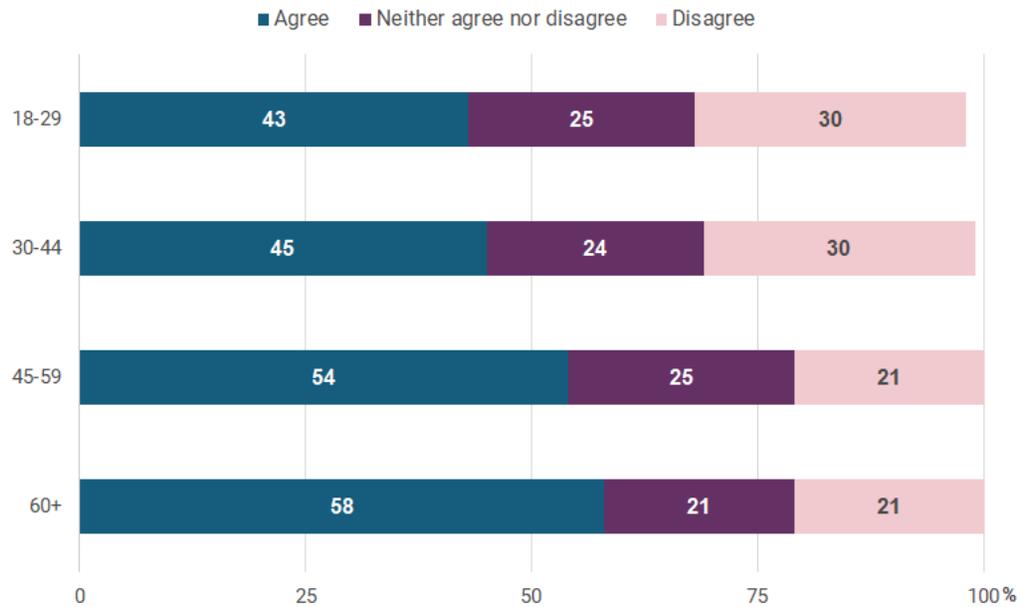
Feelings about Floyd's killing vary by educational attainment as well. Seventy-eight percent of those with a bachelor's degree are deeply angered and 73% are personally upset, compared to fewer of those who have some college experience (67% and 61%) or a high school degree or less (67% and 62%).

Emotional reactions also differ by political party. Democrats are more likely to feel angered by Floyd's killing (84%) than independents (61%) and Republicans (58%), and Republicans tend to be more worried about looting and riots (80%) than independents (61%) and Democrats (60%).

Worries and fears of riots, looting, and arson also increase with age. Fifty-four percent of those age 18 to 29 are worried about looting and riots, compared to 62% of those age 30 to 44, 74% of those age 45 to 59, and 76% of those age 60 and older. Fifty-six percent of those age 45 and older personally fear arson and looting, compared to 44% of younger adults.

**A majority of those age 45 and older are personally afraid of looting and arson occurring.**

Percent of American adults



**Question:** [I am personally afraid about the arson and looting that have occurred in many cities.] Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

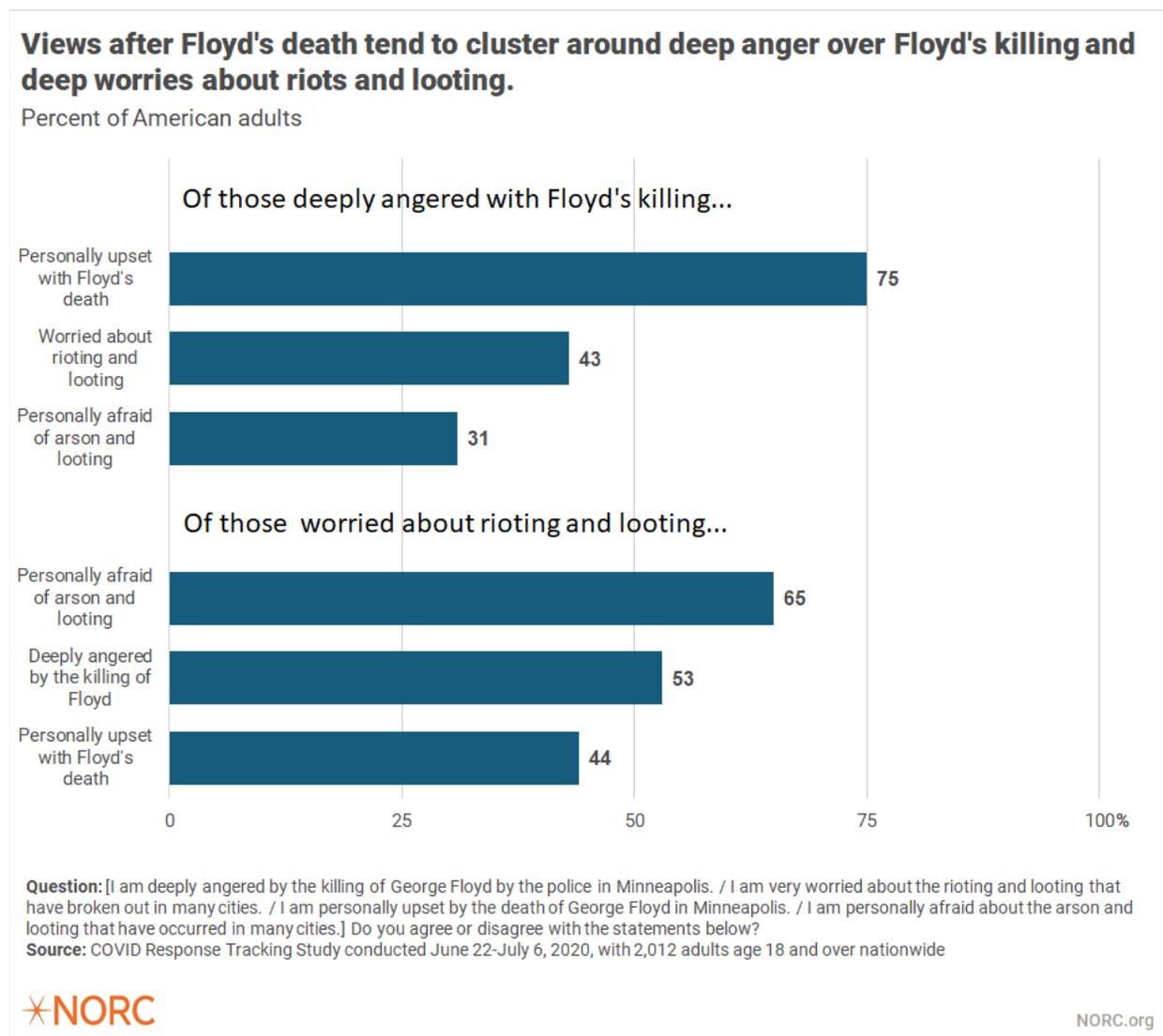
**Source:** COVID Response Tracking Study conducted June 22-July 6, 2020, with 2,012 adults age 18 and over nationwide



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## Public opinion largely clusters into two sets of beliefs: feeling angry and upset about Floyd's death or feeling worried and afraid about riots and looting.

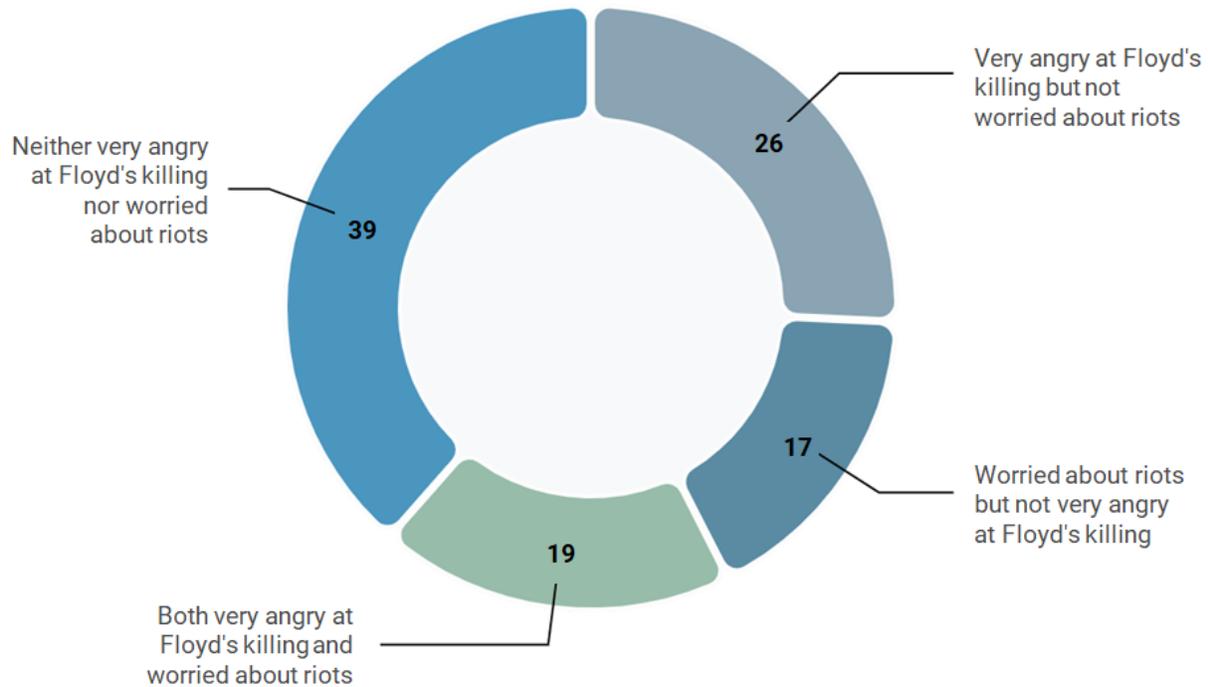
While majorities of Americans express some anger at Floyd's death and some worry about riots and looting, views tend to cluster around two main issues. Those who are most angry about Floyd's killing tend to also be upset about it, but they are less likely to be worried about or afraid of riots and looting. Likewise, those who are worried about riots tend to also personally be afraid of arson and looting, but fewer are angered or upset by Floyd's death.



In order to better assess these two clusters, Americans' reactions to the police killing of Floyd and the subsequent rioting can be grouped into four categories. Twenty-six percent of Americans are deeply angry about Floyd's killing and are less concerned about riots and looting, while 17% are worried about riots and looting, but are not deeply angered by Floyd's death. Nineteen percent are both deeply angry about Floyd's death and strongly worried about riots and looting, while 39% are not angry about Floyd's death nor worried about riots and looting.

## Americans can be grouped into four categories regarding their emotions felt surrounding Floyd's death

Percent of American adults



**Question:** [I am deeply angered by the killing of George Floyd by the police in Minneapolis. / I am very worried about the rioting and looting that have broken out in many cities. / I am personally upset by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. / I am personally afraid about the arson and looting that have occurred in many cities.] Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

**Source:** COVID Response Tracking Study conducted June 22-July 6, 2020, with 2,012 adults age 18 and over nationwide



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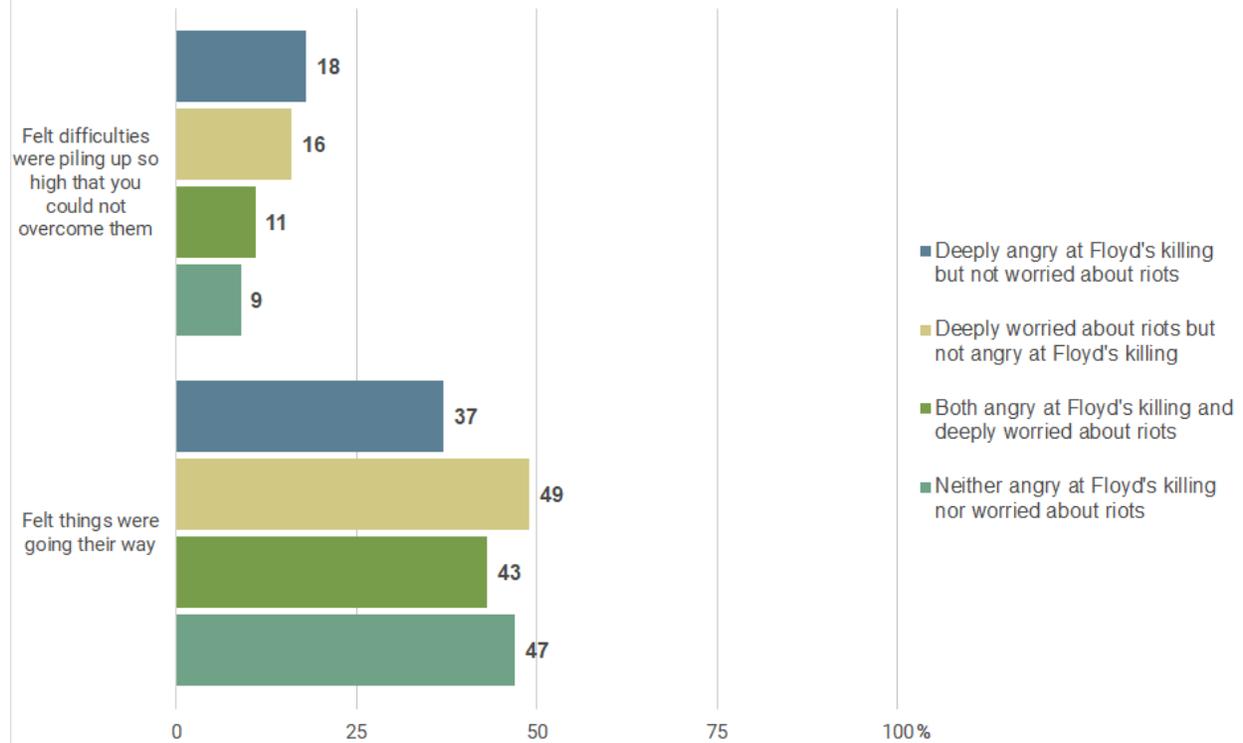
These four groups tend to report different emotions and stress levels about four weeks after the police killing of Floyd and initial protests, even when controlling for other factors such as individual demographics, exposure to COVID-19, and personal economic impacts from the virus.

Those who are deeply angered by the killing but not concerned about looting are less likely to report being very happy (9%), compared to those who are very worried about riots but not deeply angered by the killing (17%), those who are both deeply angered by the killing and worried about riots (16%), and those who are neither very angry about Floyd's killing nor very worried about riots and looting (15%).

Americans who are angry at Floyd's killing but are not worried about looting tend to show higher stress than other groups. For example, 18% say that they often feel like difficulties are piling up so high they cannot be overcome, compared to 11% of those of other groups combined. Thirty-seven percent say they often feel like things have been going their way, compared to 46% of other groups combined.

### Those who are angry with Floyd's killing but not worried about riots experience higher levels of stress.

Percent of American adults who say fairly or very often



**Question:** In the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?/In the past 4 weeks, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

**Question:** [I am deeply angered by the killing of George Floyd by the police in Minneapolis. / I am very worried about the rioting and looting that have broken out in many cities. / I am personally upset by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. / I am personally afraid about the arson and looting that have occurred in many cities.] Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

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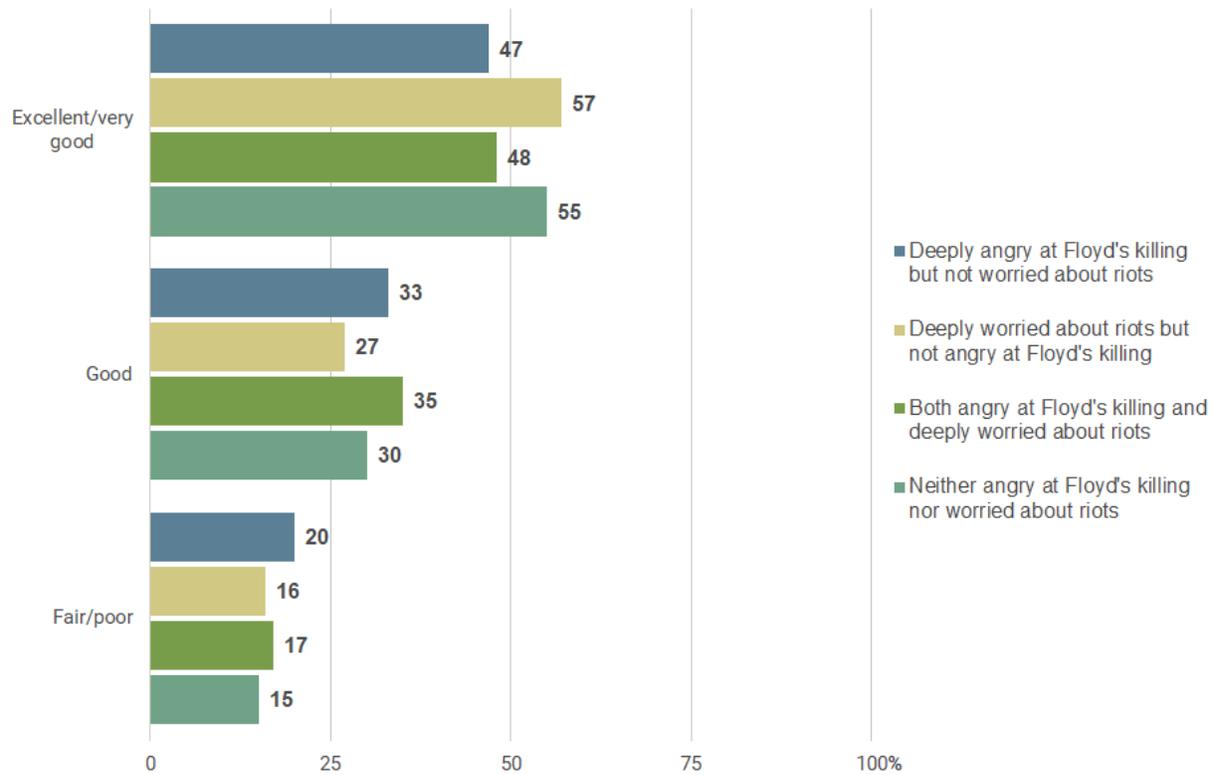


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Those who are angered with Floyd’s killing but not worried about looting and those who are both angered and worried tend to rate their mood and mental health more poorly than those who are most concerned about looting and those who worry less about both the killing and potential looting.

## Those who are angry with Floyd's killing rate their overall mental health worse than others.

Percent of American adults



**Question:** In general, how would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?

**Question:** [I am deeply angered by the killing of George Floyd by the police in Minneapolis. / I am very worried about the rioting and looting that have broken out in many cities. / I am personally upset by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. / I am personally afraid about the arson and looting that have occurred in many cities.] Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

**Source:** COVID Response Tracking Study conducted June 22-July 6, 2020, with 2,012 adults age 18 and over nationwide



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## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This COVID Response Tracking Study is an effort to examine the social, psychological, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on American society. This is the second wave of the tracking study, which includes re-interviewing respondents at various points following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from the National Science Foundation.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak® Panel, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for the second wave of this study were conducted between June 22 and July 6, 2020, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members for the first wave were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak. All 2,279 panelists who completed Wave 1 were invited to complete Wave 2, and 2,012 (88.3% of Wave 1 respondents) completed this second survey—1,854 via the web and 158 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. The final stage completion rate is 88.3%, the weighted household panel response rate is 23.6%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 84.8%, for a cumulative response rate of 17.7%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/-3.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2020 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95% level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5% (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

A topline with full question wordings is available at [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org). For more information, email [info@norc.org](mailto:info@norc.org).