



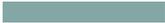
# MISSOURI INFORMATION CORPS

MARSHALL, MO CASE STUDY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID-19 is a viral illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus. The virus can be spread through close personal contact and through the air by coughing and sneezing. Since the virus is a novel one, news and best practices regarding COVID-19 are rapidly changing as health officials discover more about the virus. Public trust in news media has long been on the decline, and this is more evident than ever in the public response to COVID-19 news.

The goal of this market research is to learn more about the climate surrounding local COVID-19 news. This information can guide Missouri news coverage to better serve the needs of Missourians, and hopefully be one step on the way to repairing the broken relationships between the news and the people.

We are targeting all residents of Marshall, Mo which includes all genders and age groups above 18.

With these insights, we created recommendations not only for Missouri Information Corps but also for the other media outlets in Marshall and other Missouri towns.



# Objectives

The communication objective of this research is to rebuild trust between the residents of Marshall, Mo and news outlets.

The business objective of this research is to increase media engagement, COVID-19 awareness and community responsibility regarding COVID-19.

# RESEARCH PLAN

**Problem Statement:** Missouri Information Corps wants to spread accurate, relevant and timely news regarding COVID-19. Secondary research helped us understand the demographic breakdown of Marshall, Mo, media outlets and the current COVID-19 numbers and city-specific information. Primary research showed us the residents' COVID-19 viewpoints, media usage and media trust, and precautions taken for COVID-19.

**Research Objective:** Missouri Information Corps conducted secondary, quantitative and qualitative research to discover the residents' view on COVID-19 as a virus, where they seek their news, how trusting of the news they are and how cautious they are. We wanted to gain insight into the importance of the changing guidelines as it relates to COVID-19 news. Second, we wanted to find out where residents go to get their news and how diligent they are when it comes to fact-checking information, especially if it is from social media or by word-of-mouth. Finally, we wanted to see how seriously the residents are taking COVID-19.

SECONDARY

RESEARCH



When deciding where to conduct the study, Missouri Information Corps chose to focus on Marshall, Missouri as we wanted to get an accurate representation of what a typical town in Missouri looks like.

According to World Population Review, Missouri has a population of 6,169,270 with a median age of 38.3. Missouri is 82.24% White, 11.57% Black or African American, and 2.55% Two or more races. According to Zillow, the median home value in Missouri is \$165,650 with a home ownership rate of 66.8%.

Although these numbers are not spot on, they are pretty close for one city in Missouri. In addition to this, we look to conduct research in Marshall, Missouri because they have a heavy healthcare field.

According to Data USA, as of 2017 Marshall, Mo had a population of 12,900 people with a median age of 32.4. Marshall's ethnic breakdown of this population is 72.2% White (Non-Hispanic), 6.72% White (Hispanic), 6.58% Other, 6.51% Black or African American, 2.51% Two or More Races.

The median property value in Marshall, Mo is \$98,900 with a homeownership rate is 61.6%. The median household income is \$38,679.

The Marshall, Mo economy employs 5,970 people with Healthcare and Social Assistance being the leading line of work in Marshall, Mo. Manufacturing and Educational Services are the next two leading lines of work in Marshall, Mo.

Marshall, Mo is a relatively health-conscious city with 91% of the population having health coverage. The breakdown of this coverage is 48.9% employee plans, 14.1% Medicaid, 11.6% Medicare, 14.9% non-group plans and 1.42% Military or VA plans. Marshall, Mo has a 1,661 to 1 patient to primary care physician ration which is one of the lowest ratios for a county in Missouri.



SURVEY

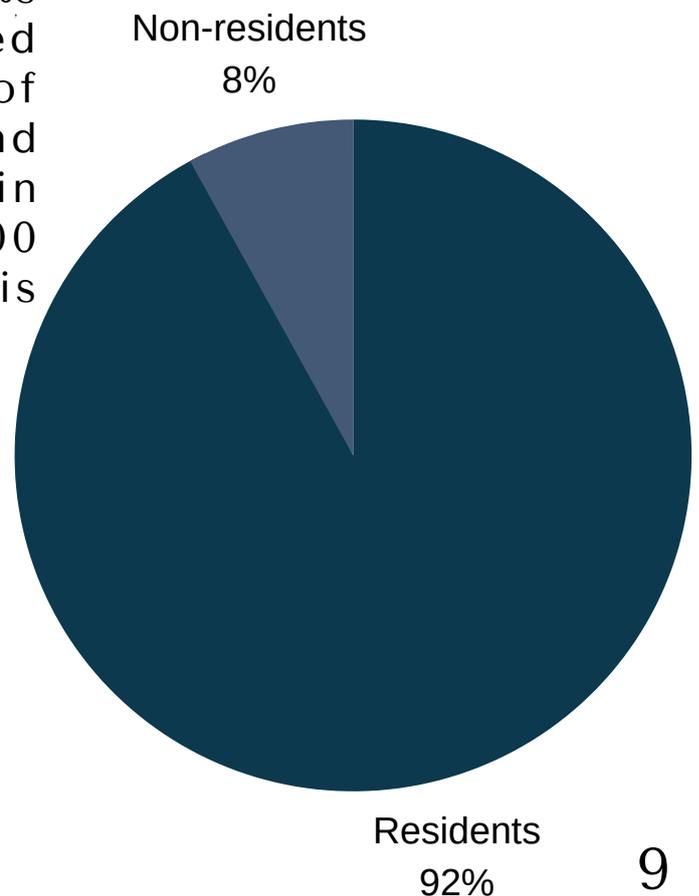
RESEARCH

# SURVEY DISTRIBUTION METHOD

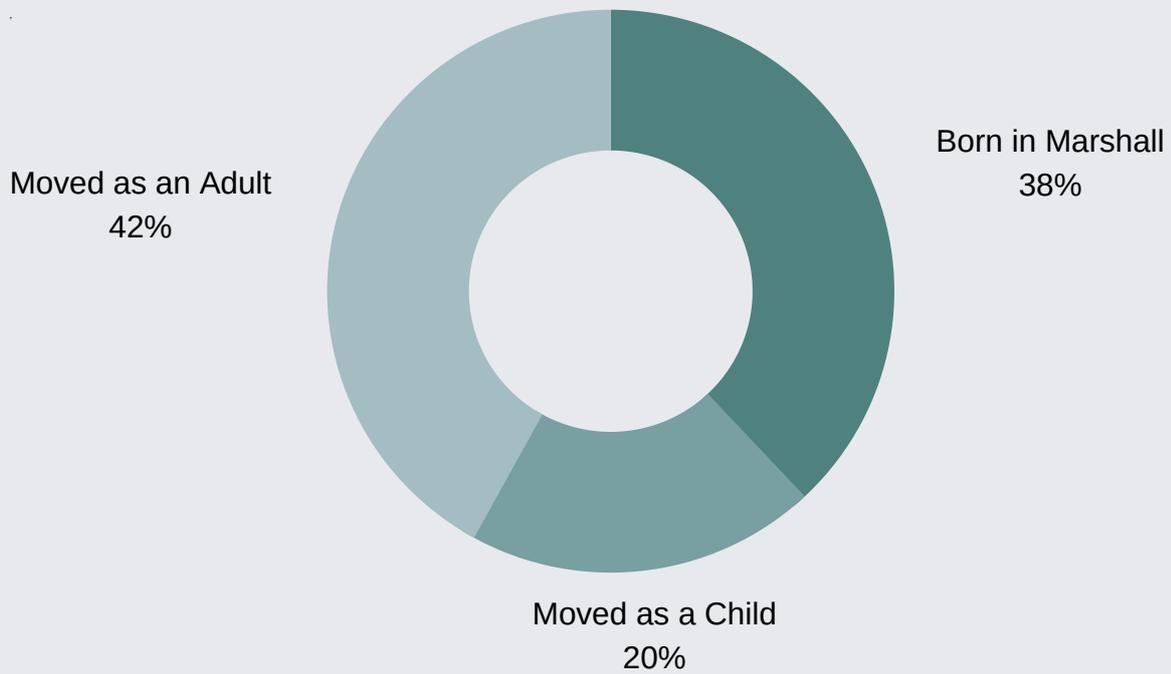
Missouri Information Corps distributed the survey via social media, primarily Facebook. The survey was placed in Marshall, Mo Facebook groups about community health or about the community in general. The residents were incentivized with a raffle to win a \$25 gift card and were encouraged to share the survey with other family members and friends. Due to the survey being anonymous, the sharing of the survey can not be neither confirmed nor denied.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

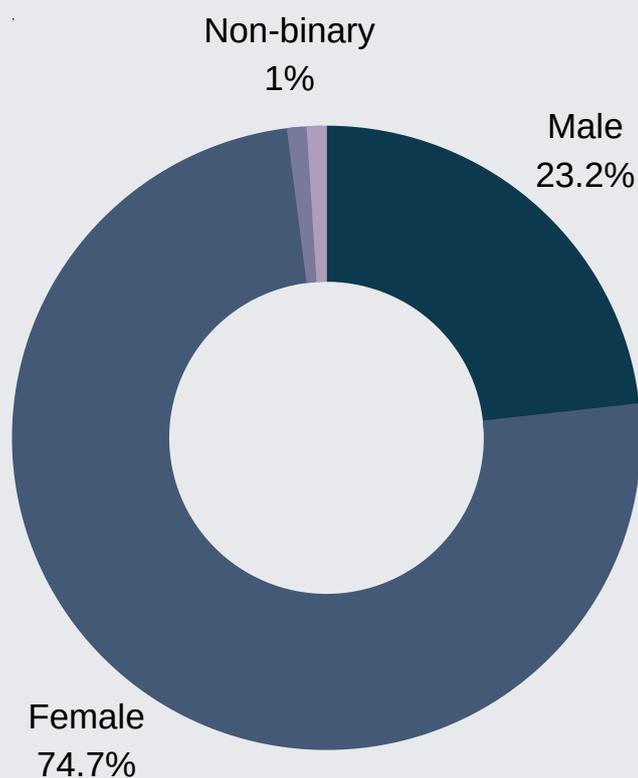
Missouri Information Corps' survey targeted all residents of Marshall, Mo. We aimed to get an even coverage of age groups, genders and number of years spent in Marshall. We surveyed 100 Marshall residents, here is the breakdown:



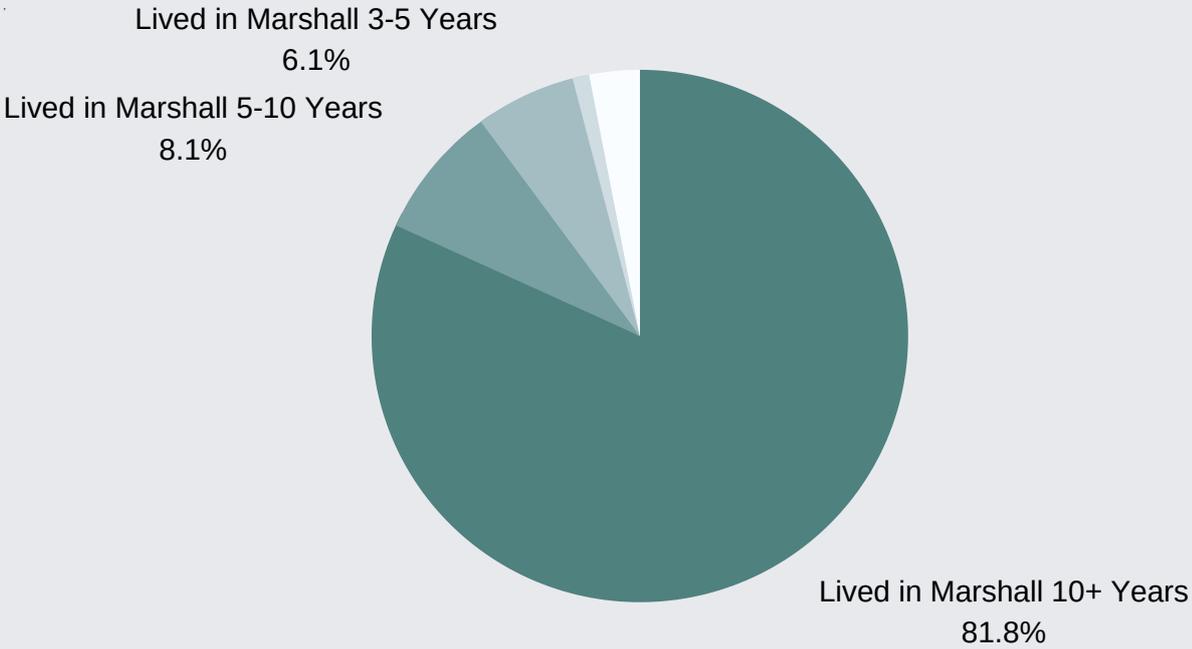
# MOVED TO MARSHALL



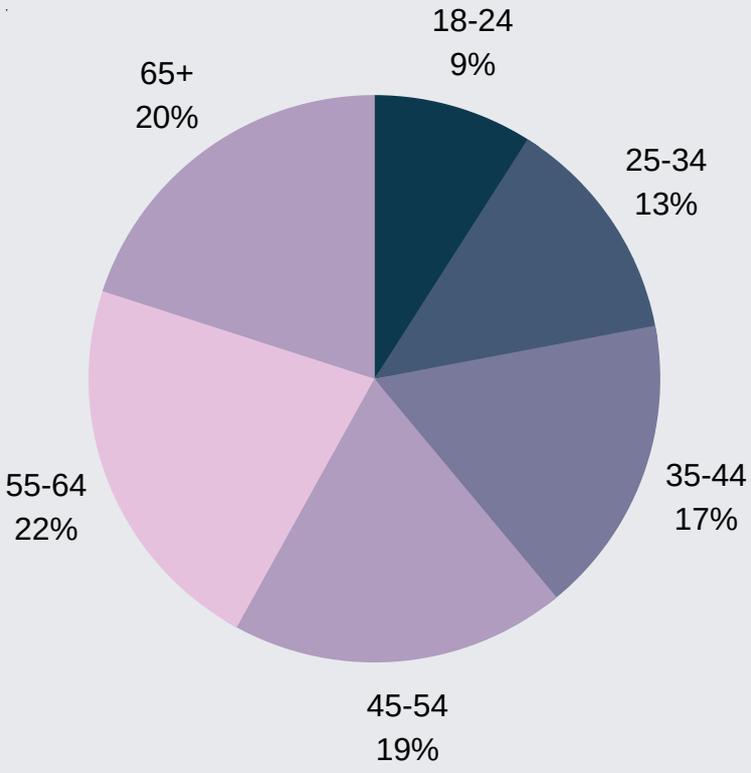
# GENDER



# LIVING IN MARSHALL

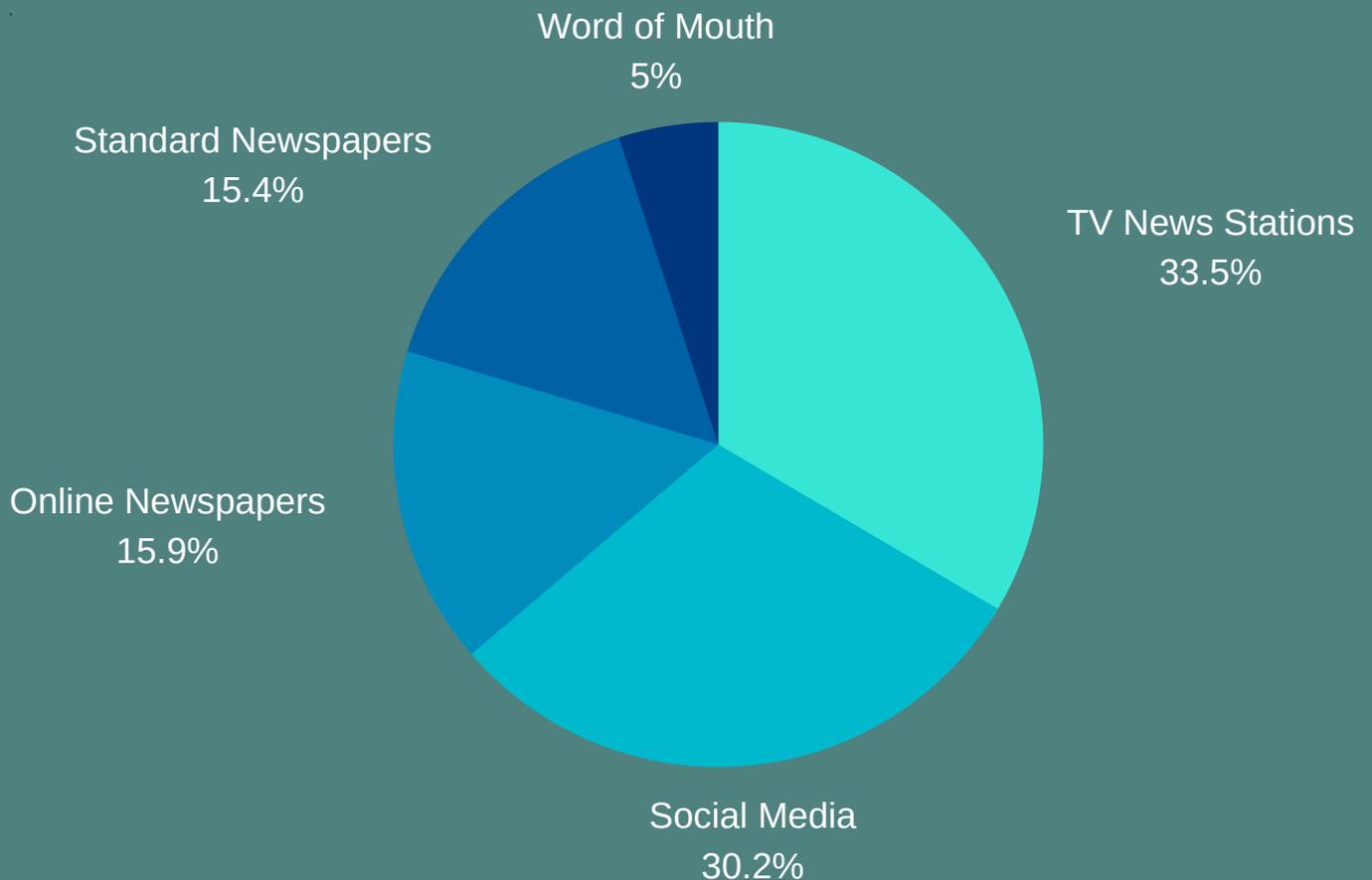


# AGE



# NEWS CONSUMPTION

Our research showed us that 87% of respondents consume news regarding COVID-19. Of these 87 respondents, the top three methods of news consumption are TV News Stations, Social Media and Online Newspaper.



The residents that consume news via social media use their Facebook feed as their main method of getting news with a respondent rate of 56%. The second-largest method of news consumption is through Facebook Group Pages with a response rate of 29%.



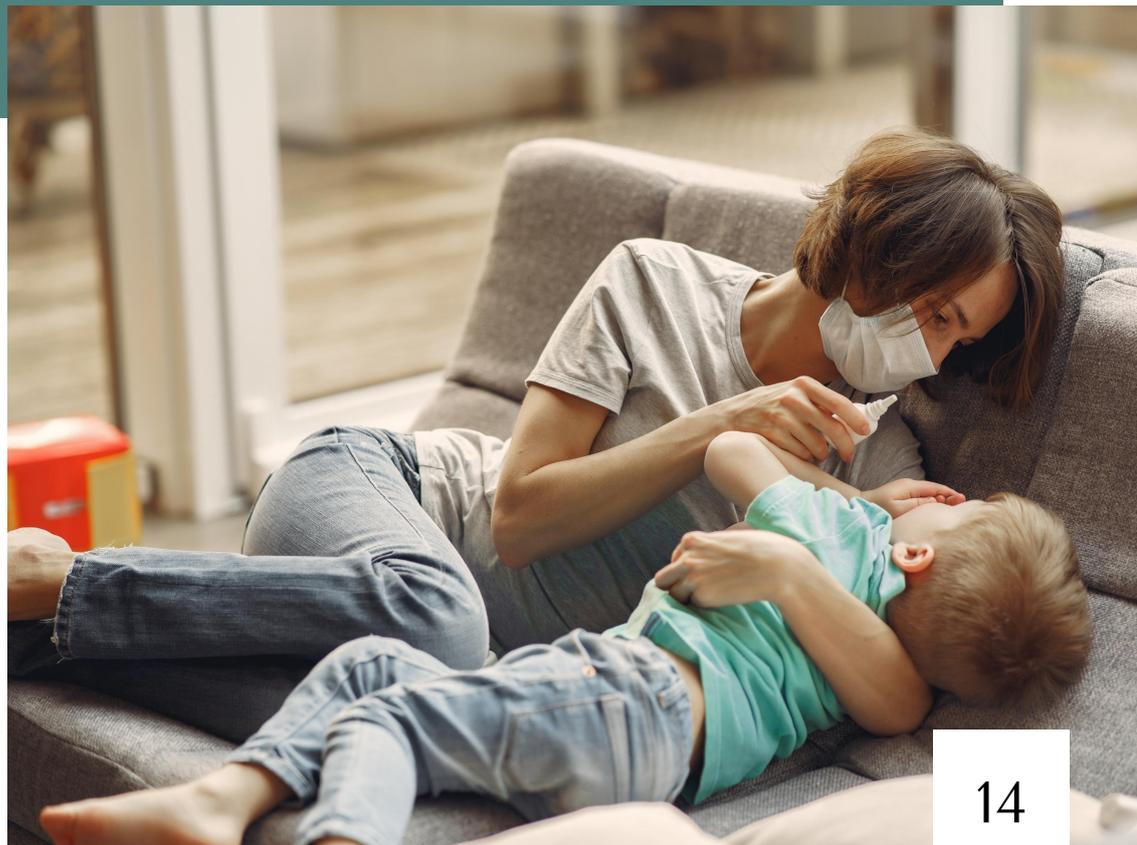
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## MEDIA PERCEPTION

Although the COVID-19 news consumption rate is high, 48% of respondents stated that they do not trust the news that they receive regarding COVID-19. 60% of survey respondents stated that the reason they do not trust the news is due to them finding information that is not consistent across sources and media mediums. 30% of respondents noted that they feel as though the media lies with the other 10% stating that they see a lot of memes regarding COVID-19 which leads them to believe the information is not based on science. To determine how to make the media trustworthy to the residents of Marshall, Mo, we asked what makes a news source reliable. From this data, we found that 60% stated that they trust news that they see the same facts across multiple news sources. 13% of respondents said they trust news sources with a recognizable name, 9% said they trust national sources and 7% said they trust local news sources. When it comes to spotting misinformation, we found that 72% of respondents believe that they can spot COVID-19 misinformation. Because many of the respondents noted that they believe they can spot misinformation, it is no surprise that 55% of respondents said they always fact-check their news, while 43% said they fact-check whenever they read something from a source they deem unreliable. Only 1% of the respondents selected that they don't fact-check at all.

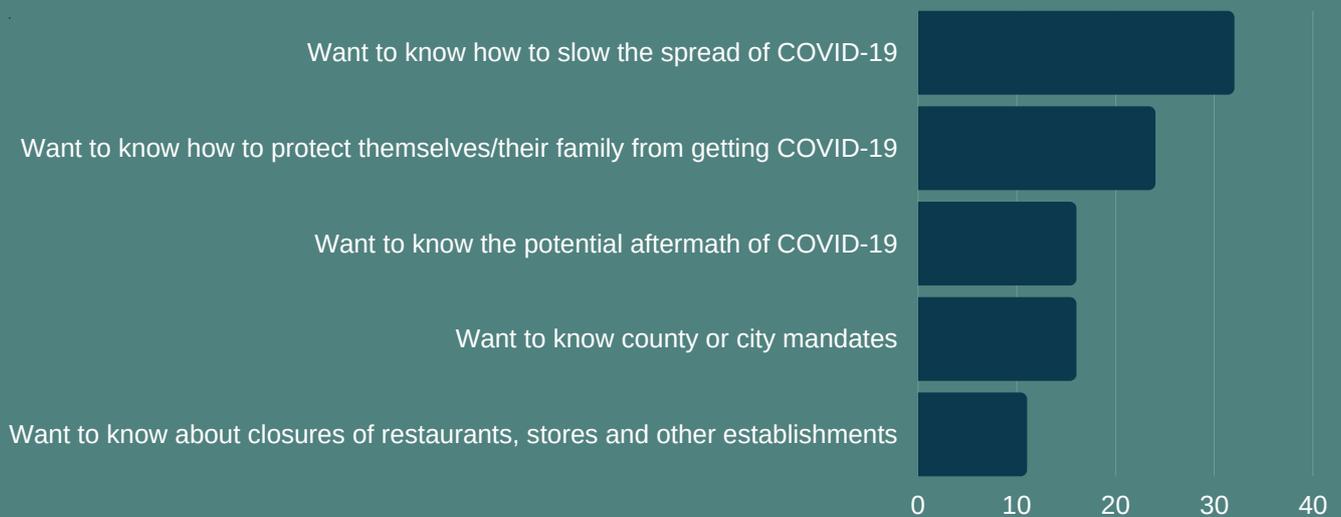
# COVID-19 RESIDENT PRECAUTIONS

When asked "Do you believe COVID-19 is a danger to you or your loved ones" 59% of respondents noted yes and that they are doing everything they can to avoid contracting the virus. 30% of respondents noted that they believed the virus is a danger, but that there isn't anything they can do to avoid contracting it. 6% stated they weren't worried at all and 1% stated they do not believe that the virus is real. Although a collective 89% of survey respondents believe the virus is a danger, only 54% of respondents reported always wearing a mask. The rest of the results are broken down into 36% occasionally wearing a mask and 10% never wearing a mask. Of the 10% that never wear a mask, 38% claim that they don't wear a mask because they are uncomfortable, 25% of respondents do not believe that they should have to wear a mask, 13% do not believe masks are effective and the other 25% wrote in their reasons. The answers included "I think COVID-19 is more made up than real" and "It feels like I can't breathe."



# COVID-19 AND NEWS

The survey respondents noted that the news most important to them is as follows.



# IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Missouri Information Corps interviewed six Marshall, Mo residents. These residents were chosen out of the survey respondents who agreed to speak with us about their personal experiences regarding COVID-19 in Marshall, Mo. There were three key takeaways from the interviews that were conducted.

1. When out in public, they see only about 60-70% of people are wearing masks. Although this number is a relatively high number for a city, scientists say it is not as high as it needs to be in order to help stop the spread of COVID-19.
2. Many of the residents are sharing the responsibility of staying up to date with the news among several family members. Families are sharing news with each other so that the burden doesn't fall on one individual, however they are not sure if other family members are fact-checking their news or share the same viewpoints as them.
3. Many residents understand that the news can be trustworthy depending on where it comes from, but they are frustrated by how often the news and guidelines are changing. Several interviewees acknowledged the fact that they know COVID-19 is a new virus, therefore news changes as new information surfaces, but that it's still a source of frustration.



FUTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS

## MAKE THE NEWS ACCESSIBLE ACROSS MULTIPLE PLATFORMS

Post the news story across multiple of your owned platforms including print, website and social media to increase credibility. Marshall residents trust information when they see it multiple times in multiple different ways.

### POST YOUR NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

28% of respondents get their news strictly from social media, more specifically Facebook. If there is a story that is particular just to Marshall, post the article in Facebook groups to reach all categories of people. Selection bias could have affected this response, since we used Facebook groups to find survey respondents.

### BE SURE TO STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH HEALTH OFFICIALS

Research shows that the rapid changes to COVID-19 guidelines have made people skeptical of news media, so be sure to point directly to what the health officials are stating. Also, note what has changed and why it has changed to increase credibility. Acknowledge that the information has changed and clearly direct people to the new and accurate information.

### KEEP NEWS RELEVANT AND CLEAR

Eliminate any fluff regarding COVID-19. Keep news straight to the point and timely to maintain engagement with the virus updates. COVID-19 is consuming a lot of time and many people are sick of seeing it everywhere. To increase the probability of people reading and adhering to the guidelines, keep it short, sweet and to the point.

# SURVEY QUESTIONS

Are you a resident of Marshall Missouri?

- Yes
- No

Which statement best describes you?

- I was born in Marshall
- I moved to Marshall as a child
- I moved to Marshall as an adult

How long have you lived in Marshall?

- 0-1 Year
- 2-3 Years
- 3-5 Years
- 5-10 Years
- 10+ Years

What age group do you fall into?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

What gender do you identify as

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

How do you prefer to consume news?

- Social Media
- Radio
- TV news stations
- Newspapers
- Online Newspapers
- Word of Mouth
- Other

Do you consume news regarding COVID-19?

- Yes
- No

Do you trust the COVID-19 news that you receive?

- Yes
- No

Why do you not trust the news regarding COVID-19?

- You feel as if it is propaganda
- You feel as though the media lies
- You find information that is not consistent
- Other

What makes a news source reliable to you?

- Recognizable name
- The information is the same across multiple platforms
- The source is local
- The source is national
- Other

What information do you believe is most important regarding COVID-19?

- How to slow the spread of COVID-19
- How to protect yourself/your family from getting COVID-19
- How COVID-19 is affecting your community
- The potential health aftermath of COVID-19
- Closures of restaurants, stores and other establishments
- County or city mandates

Do you believe that you can spot misinformation regarding COVID-19?

- Yes
- No

When you read news regarding COVID-19 do you check multiple sources?

- Yes, I always check what I read
- Yes, but I only check when I get the news from a source I feel is unreliable
- No, I believe what I read
- Other

Do you wear a face mask?

- Yes, whenever I leave the house
- Yes, inside enclosed spaces
- Yes, when I remember to bring it with me
- No

Why do you not wear a mask?

- It is uncomfortable to wear
- I do not believe it is effective
- I do not believe that I have to or should
- Other

Do you believe COVID-19 is a danger to you or your loved ones?

- Yes, but I do not feel as though I can stop myself or others from getting it
- Yes, I am doing everything that I can do to prevent us from getting it
- No, I believe we will be fine if we get the virus
- No, I do not believe that we will be affected by the virus
- No, I do not believe the virus is real
- Other

# WORKS CITED

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
- <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/marshall-mo>
- <https://www.zillow.com/mo/home-values/>
- <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/missouri-population>



