



L. Penny Rosenblum, PhD

Director of Research

American Foundation for the Blind

Future of Vision Treatment and Research, Flatten Inaccessibility:

Adults Share Their Concerns About COVID-19 and Its Impact on Healthcare and Transportation

The Background

- Troy Otilio, CEO of Aira initiated the idea for the survey.
- Survey was open April 3-13, 2020.
- Survey had dedicated site: <https://flatteninaccessibility.com/>
- Survey contained 11 sections to gather data to answer:

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the lives of adults with vision loss in the United States?

The Demographics

- 1,921 participants ages 18-75+
- Representing all US States, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico
- 59% congenitally visually impaired
- 74% white
- 63% female
- 42% over age 55
- 45% reported having one or more additional disabilities or health concerns

Concern Statements

- 17 Likert-scale concern statements
- Rated from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)
- 17 healthcare concern statements
- 11 transportation concern statements

The quantitative data and the qualitative data did not always align in regards to the concerns.

Access to COVID-19 Testing

I am concerned that because I do not drive, I will not be able to get myself or a family member to a COVID-19 test center.
(n = 1,115, M = 4.24, SD = 1.06)

“I am not sure how I would get to a mobile testing site. I wouldn’t feel comfortable using public transportation or ride share services for fear of backlash or spreading [COVID-19].” —congenitally visually impaired Black or African American female age 35-44 years with no additional disabilities

Access to Prescriptions

I am concerned that I am not able to get to the pharmacy to get needed healthcare supplies/prescriptions. (n= 926, M=3.31, SD=1.30)

“I take one medication that is a controlled substance for sleep. It has to be picked up from the pharmacy. I asked if there was any way it could be delivered since I am totally blind. They said I could come to the drive-through. I’m not sure what car they think I will drive.” — congenitally visually impaired White female age 65-74 with additional disabilities

Being Hospitalized with COVID-19

I am concerned that if I am hospitalized with COVID-19 that I will not be allowed to have a caregiver with me who would normally assist me with accessibility issues in a hospital setting. (n=812, M=3.68, SD=1.31)

“It would be terrifying for me to be hospitalized alone, especially because I know people don't value my life because they think my quality of life is less than theirs. Without someone to assist me and advocate for me, I'd feel like I was fighting the virus and a system that doesn't want me.” —congenitally visually impaired Hispanic female age 18-24 years with additional disabilities

Ability to Maintain Eyecare Regiment

I am concerned that I will not be able to maintain my eye care regiment (e.g., eye drops, injections, eye pressure checks, eye care appointments) during the COVID-19 pandemic. (n=586, M=3.46, SD=1.33)

“My eye appointment (which I feel is critical) has been postponed until further notice. In the meantime, my eyesight continues to get worse.” —adult-onset visually impaired White female age 35-44 years with additional disabilities

Transportation Policies

I am concerned that when I use public transportation I am being required to enter and/or exit at the rear of the bus (n = 740, M = 3.34, SD = 1.21).

“We do have to enter and exit at the rear of the city bus, which can be difficult. They tell you not to touch the railing, but I have to hold the railing in order to try to gauge depth perception since I use a dog rather than a cane.” —adult-onset visually impaired White female age 35-44 years with no additional disabilities

Social Distancing

Due to practicing social distancing, I am concerned about asking someone to touch my hands/allow me to touch their hands, for example when using tactile sign language or being shown how to do something using hand-over-hand (n=726, M=3.97, SD=1.153).

“People are practicing social distancing and some are unwilling to offer an elbow for sighted guide travel.... The social safety net I rely on during normal times has been disrupted. It's humbling.” —adult-onset visually impaired White female age 55-64 years with no additional disabilities

Feelings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, I have increased anxiety, fear, or concern about my health and wellbeing. (n=990, M=3.66, SD=1.133)

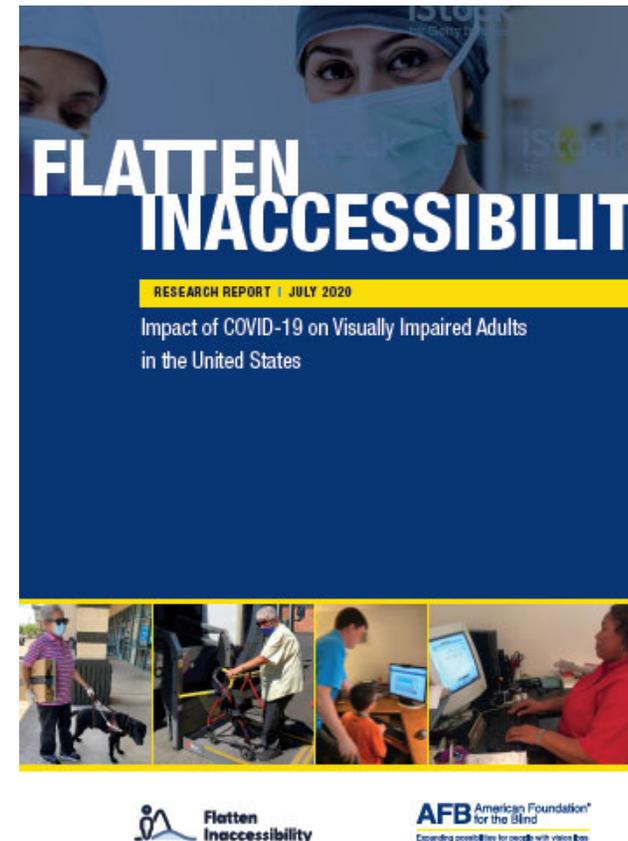
“I need physical touch to connect with people. I need handshakes and hugs that Sunday always brought from going to church. I was waiting on a counselor to be available to get me through a [crime I experienced] before COVID-19.... Now we are supposed to stay home and keep at least 6 feet from others. I’ve been alone with my own thoughts since mid-February. Depression has set in, my PTSD hasn’t been put back in check from the [crime], and neither has anxiety. I’m just a wreck.” — adult-onset visually impaired Multi-racial female age 35-54 with additional disabilities

We Have an Opportunity

“We keep thinking we can outwit this thing, and that things will ‘go back to normal’. Let's overwrite ‘normal’ and use this opportunity to make it BETTER for us. Lemons to lemonade.” —congenitally visually impaired White female age 55-54 years with additional disabilities

Next Steps

- Report will be posted later in July at [AFB.org/FlattenInaccessibility](https://www.afb.org/FlattenInaccessibility)
- Advocate for change:
 - Policy makers
 - Companies
 - Healthcare workers
 - Consumer organizations





Focus on Eye Health National Summit

AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

Submit Your Questions Through



