



LOCAL HEALTH MATTERS



Understanding Differences in Americans' Attitudes and Behaviors Toward the CDC and Local Health Departments to Aid in Extension Risk Communication During a Crisis

Introduction & Purpose

People are more likely to trust and have favorable perceptions of local government agencies or organizations compared to federal government organizations (Edelman, 2020; Gao, 2013).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most Americans reported that they felt the **federal government should be responsible** for response efforts to the pandemic, but rated **local elected officials as doing a better job** responding to the pandemic than public health officials on the federal level (Pew Research Center, 2020).

The purpose of this study was to compare Americans' **attitudes and behaviors toward the CDC and local health departments** (LHDs) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

A survey was conducted between **April 23 and May 7, 2020**. Respondents included **1,538 adults age 18 or older** in the United States. The instrument used for this study was an original questionnaire developed by the researchers. **Attitude** toward the CDC and attitude toward local health departments were measured using a three-item, five-point semantic differential scale. **Behavior** related to the CDC and behavior related to LHDs were assessed using a three-item, five-point Likert-type scale.

Results

Attitudes and Behaviors toward CDC and LHDs (N = 1,538)

	CDC		LHDs		Mean Difference
	M	SD	M	SD	
Attitude	3.67	1.27	3.65	1.65	.741
Behavior	3.52	1.29	3.63	1.23	-4.44*

Note. Mean scores are based on 5-point scale.

* $p < .01$

Conclusions

Despite there being **no significant differences between respondents' attitudes** toward the CDC and local health departments, there was **a significant difference in respondents' behavior** toward the CDC and local health departments.

