



COVID-19 Survey Summary: September 10, 2021

The following is a summary of social, behavioral and economic survey research on COVID-19 released in the past week, as compiled for the Societal Experts Action Network ([SEAN](#)). Most surveys cited in this report are available in the [SEAN COVID-19 Survey Archive](#).

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Polls this week find coronavirus vaccine resistance easing after holding steady for months, with eight in 10 Americans now saying they've gotten vaccinated or will do so.

Impacts of the Biden employer mandate are an open question. In a sign of possible resistance, nine in 10 unvaccinated adults oppose employer-led workplace vaccine mandates, and, among unvaccinated workers, fewer than two in 10 say they'd comply with one.

Other headwinds are evident. About seven in 10 unvaccinated adults lack confidence in the vaccines' safety and effectiveness, nine in 10 see getting vaccinated as a personal decision rather than a broader responsibility and few have been encouraged by those close to them to get a shot.

Pandemic-related polls this week also find Americans' risk perceptions about catching the virus up since mid-June, with declines in the prevalence of restaurant dining and meeting with family/friends but not in other public activities.

On the policy front, two-thirds support state or local mask mandates in public places and six in 10 favor vaccine requirements for air travel or to attend large public events. In schools, two-thirds support universal mask mandates, six in 10 favor vaccine requirements for staff and a smaller majority favors requiring vaccines for eligible students.

One analysis documents a sharp spike in infections and hospitalizations among children and adolescents since the Delta variant became dominant, with new weekly cases among children their highest since the pandemic began. Others detail economic effects of the Delta surge, show worsening assessments of government officials in their communications about the pandemic and find that food scarcity remained unchanged in 2020 given increased government aid.

Vaccines

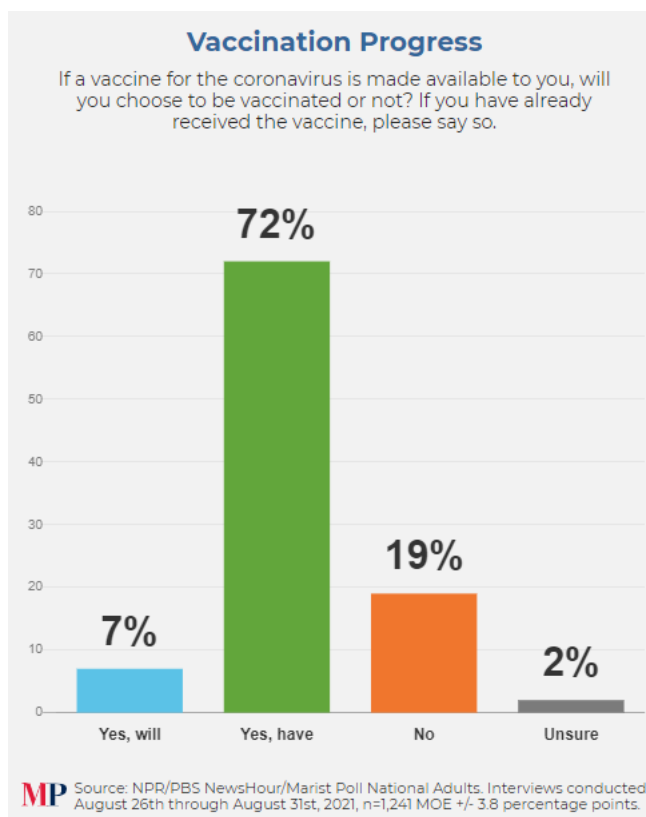
The [CDC estimates](#) that three-quarters of adults have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, essentially unchanged the past week. Survey estimates, for their part, range from 69 to

82 percent ([Gallup 8/16-8/22](#), [NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#), [ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#), [U.S. Census Bureau 8/18-8/30](#)).

Evidence of broader vaccine acceptance extends results from [last week](#). Eighty percent of adults in one poll say they've received a shot or likely will do so, up 17 points since January. It's 79 percent in another, likewise up 17 points this year, including 5 points in the past month.

On the flipside, the share saying they won't get a vaccine is down to 17 percent in one poll (half its level in January) and 19 percent in another, after holding at about a quarter since March ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#), [NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#)).

The vast majority of fully vaccinated Americans, 81 percent, say they will get a booster shot (or have done so already) ([NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#)).



Motivators & Deterrents

Among unvaccinated Americans, majorities express continued skepticism about the vaccines. Seventy-three percent are not confident that they're safe and 69 percent lack confidence in their effectiveness. Nearly all are unmoved by pro-social arguments; nine in 10 see getting the vaccine as a personal choice rather than as a responsibility to protect the health of others. By comparison, most vaccinated adults, 62 percent, see getting a shot as a responsibility to others.

In all, 48 percent of all adults see vaccination as a responsibility to others, while 50 percent think it's a personal choice ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)). Results differ somewhat, 53-43 percent, in another study, little changed since February ([NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#)).

Only 16 percent of unvaccinated adults say most people who care about them have encouraged them to get a shot, compared with 58 percent of those who are vaccinated. Most unvaccinated people say those close to them have stayed out of it (61 percent) as opposed to actively discouraging them (14 percent).

These factors matter. In a regression analysis, views of vaccine safety and effectiveness and the sense that getting a shot is needed to protect others (i.e., a moral norm) are key predictors of vaccine uptake. Other predictors include a sense that those who care about you want you to get vaccinated (a social norm) and one's level of worry about getting infected.

In terms of another potential motivator, just 16 percent of unvaccinated people say the FDA’s approval of the Pfizer vaccine makes them more likely to get a shot ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)).

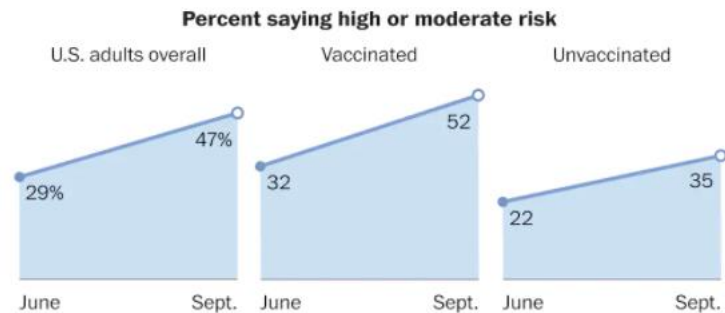
Daily Life

Risk perceptions have risen with the spread of the Delta variant. Forty-seven percent think they have a high or moderate risk of getting sick from the coronavirus, up 18 points since late June. Risk perceptions jumped 20 points among vaccinated adults, to 52 percent, and 13 points among the unvaccinated, to 35 percent.

In another gauge, 39 percent are very or somewhat worried about getting sick ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)). That matches the share in a Gallup poll [last week](#), up 22 points since June.

Americans rate their level of coronavirus risk higher now than in June

Q: How would you rate your level of risk of getting sick from the coronavirus – would you say you’re at high risk, moderate risk, low risk or no risk?



Note: "Low risk," "No risk" and "No opinion" not shown.
Source: Aug. 29-Sept. 1, 2021, Washington Post-ABC News poll of 1,006 U.S. adults with an error margin of +/- 3.5 percentage points. Error margins larger among subgroups. June poll conducted June 27-30.
MADISON DONG/THE WASHINGTON POST

There’s been movement on two behavioral items: A 6-point decline since July in the number of Americans who dine out or are willing to do so, now 72 percent; and a 9-point drop in visiting friends and family even if unvaccinated, 66 percent.

Despite increased concern, other items have changed little if at all since July. These include traveling by train or other shared transportation or being ready to do so (48 percent), attending religious services in person or being willing to do so (44 percent), attending or being ready to attend live concerts and sporting events (36 percent) and going out to bars (30 percent). ([NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#)). (Polls [last week](#), asking specifically about action taken within the past seven days, found increases in several precautionary behaviors since June.)

Vaccine & Mask Requirements

There’s movement on some policy fronts. Fifty-three percent favor a vaccine requirement to dine in at a restaurant, up 13 points since April; as many support requiring vaccines to stay in a hotel, up 9 points. Two others are essentially unchanged: Six in 10 favor vaccine mandates to travel by airplane, 58 percent to attend events with large crowds ([Gallup 8/16-8/22](#)).

The public broadly supports state or local orders requiring masks indoors in public places 67-32 percent ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)). A smaller majority also supports a national mandate; that’s 56-42 percent, support-oppose ([NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#)).

One poll finds 56-44 percent support for businesses requiring employees to show proof of vaccination to work onsite. It's 52-45 percent in another, with results essentially flipped among employed adults, 45-53 percent ([Gallup 8/16-8/22](#), [ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)).

Among employed people, 18 percent in one poll, and 19 percent in another, say their employer requires vaccination to return to work. The latter is up 10 points in month. An additional 55 percent say their employer encourages vaccinations but doesn't mandate them ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#), [Gallup 8/16-8/22](#)). Among small businesses, 9 percent say they require employees to show proof of vaccination to work onsite ([U.S. Census Bureau 8/23-8/29](#)).

As noted, employer mandates face pushback. Three-quarters of unvaccinated workers say they'd quit their job (42 percent) or seek a religious exemption (35 percent) if a vaccine mandate were imposed at their place of work; just 16 percent say they'd get vaccinated. If exemptions were not an option, a net of 18 percent say they'd get a job, while a net of 72 percent say they'd quit ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)).

K-12 Education

As in previous [surveys](#), Americans largely are supportive of mask requirements in schools for teachers, staff and students alike. One finds 65-32 percent support; it's 67-30 percent in another. Results in the latter are similar among public school parents ([NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#), [ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)).

The public by 59-39 percent also supports school districts requiring teachers and staff to be vaccinated. It's 54-44 percent for eligible students, shifting to 47-51 percent among public school parents ([ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)).

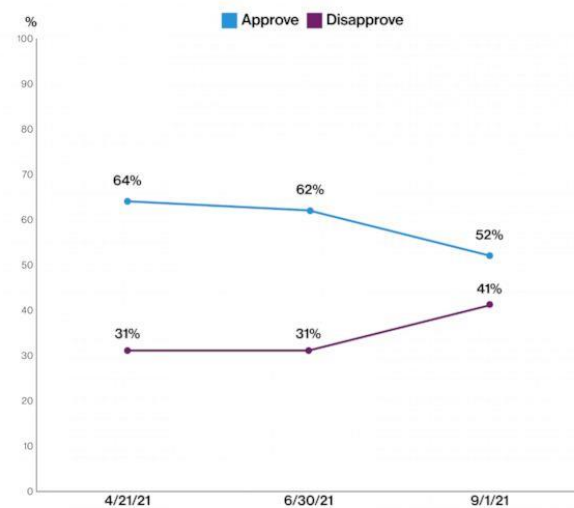
Currently, 88 percent of parents of school-age children say they're sending their child to in-person classes ([NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#)).

Government Response

Surveys continue to find waning approval of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic. It's 55 percent in one, down from 64 percent in late June; and 52 percent in another, down from 62 percent, also since late June ([NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 8/26-8/31](#), [ABC News/Washington Post 8/29-9/1](#)).

Americans divide, 40-42 percent, on whether they agree that Biden has communicated a clear plan of action in response to the coronavirus, his worst rating on this gauge. It's 41-35 percent for

Biden's Approval on Handling the Pandemic



SOURCE: ABC News/Washington Post polls

NEWS

governors, with positive ratings down 10 points since June.

Fewer still, 32 percent, agree that the CDC has conveyed a clear plan of action, also down 10 points, while 41 percent say it has not done so ([Gallup 8/16-8/22](#)).

Economic Impacts of the Delta Surge

Job gains slowed sharply in August, up by 235,000 compared with 1.1 million in July, in one of the weakest months of job growth since the pandemic recovery began. The number unable to work for pandemic-related reasons rose by about 400,000, to 5.6 million. Among those not in the labor force, 1.5 million said they didn't look for work because of the pandemic.

Even with the slowdown, the unemployment rate fell to 5.2 percent, down from 5.4 percent in July. Compared with its level before the pandemic, 5.3 million fewer workers hold a job ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)).

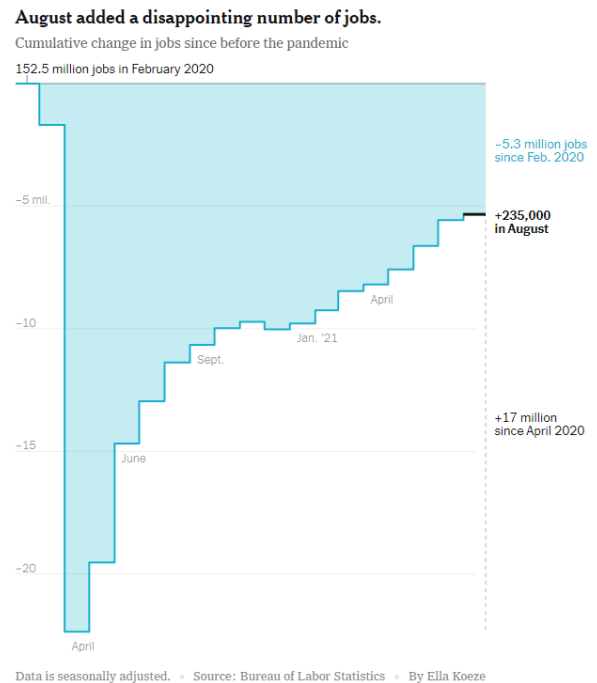
Disruptions among small businesses are increasing after months of improvement, coinciding with the Delta surge:

- A quarter of small businesses report decreased revenues in the past seven days, up from 18 percent in early July.
- Fourteen percent decreased hours worked by paid employees in the past week, up 4 points since mid-July.
- Twelve percent cut the number of employees on their payroll, up 3 points since mid-July.
- Supply chain disruptions remain elevated: Forty-two percent experienced domestic supplier delays, compared with three in 10 in April; and 18 percent had delays from foreign suppliers, up from 12 percent five months ago.

Four in 10 expect it to take more than six months before their business returns to its normal level of operations, up from 33 percent in mid-July ([U.S. Census Bureau 8/23-8/29](#)).

Food Insecurity

In a newly released December survey, 10.5 percent of households reported difficulty providing enough food for all members of their home during at least some part of 2020, including 3.9



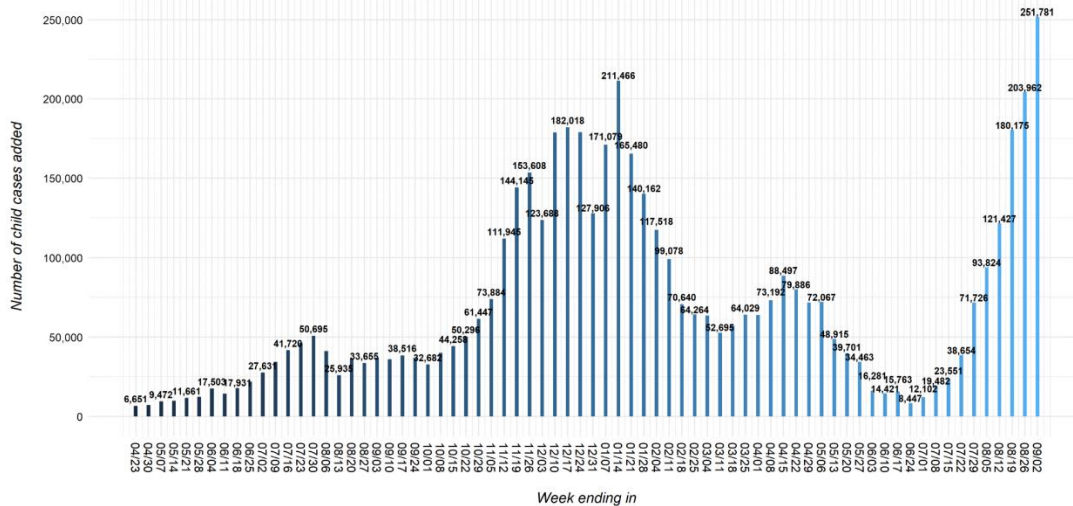
percent who ate less because of a lack of resources. Both were essentially unchanged from 2019, given increased government aid countering sudden job loss at the start of the pandemic.

While the share who experienced food insecurity was unchanged overall, it rose among households with children, Black people and Southerners – groups disproportionately affected before the pandemic. The shifts widened disparities among racial and ethnic groups, with 7.1 percent of white household experiencing food insecurity, vs. 17.2 percent of Hispanic households and 21.7 percent of Black households ([U.S. Department of Agriculture 12/13-12/19](#)).

Infections Among Children & Adolescents

In the week ending Sept. 2, the United States reported 252,000 new coronavirus cases among children, the most since the pandemic began. Weekly cases were nearly 300 times their level in the week ending June 24, just over 8,400. Severe illness remains rare, with 0.1 to 1.9 percent of child cases resulting in hospitalization in the two dozen states with available data ([American Academy of Pediatrics/Children's Hospital Association 9/2](#)).

Fig 6. United States: Number of Child COVID-19 Cases Added in Past Week*



Separately, a CDC report documents a sharp rise in hospitalizations of 0- to 17-year-olds since Delta became dominant, with weekly rates up nearly fivefold, from 0.3 per 100,000 in late June to 1.4 per 100,000 in mid-August. Hospitalization rates were 10 times higher among unvaccinated adolescents than vaccinated ones. The proportion experiencing severe outcomes, such as ICU admission, was similar to pre-Delta levels. The authors say the rise in hospitalizations may reflect the highly infectious nature of the Delta strain rather than its causing more severe illness in children, but call for more research ([CDC 3/1-8/14](#)).

Another CDC analysis finds that hospitalization rates among children and adolescents from Aug. 14-27 were 3.7 times higher in the quartile of states with the lowest vaccine coverage, compared with those in the highest quartile. Emergency department visits were 3.4 times higher. The

authors say community vaccination is critical to protecting young people, particularly those who are ineligible to get the vaccine ([CDC 8/1/20-8/27/21](#)).

State Results

Virginia registered voters split on whether schools should be open fully for in-person instruction or offer a mix of in-person and remote instruction, 43-41 percent. Just 12 percent say schools should be fully remote. Parents of children younger than 18 are more apt to say schools should be open fully in person (49 percent) than hybrid (38 percent). Two-thirds overall (including about as many parents) support a school mask requirement; 58 percent overall approve of a vaccine requirement for children 12 and older, declining to 49 percent of parents. Fifty-three percent approve of the University of Virginia policy disenrolling students who refuse to report their vaccine status or apply for an exemption, with 43 percent disapproving.

Seventy-seven percent of registered voters report having gotten at least one shot, with 6 percent saying they'll wait and see and 12 percent saying it's likely they'll never get vaccinated. Six in 10 approve of Gov. Ralph Northam's handling of the coronavirus. Nearly two-thirds would support reinstating mask and social distancing guidelines lifted in May ([Monmouth 8/24-8/29](#)).

International Results

In Chile, 91 percent of adults say they're vaccinated and 14 percent have gotten a booster shot, the latter up 9 points in a week. Half are at least somewhat concerned about the possibility of catching the coronavirus and 53 percent are fearful specifically about the Delta variant. Six in 10 approve of the government's response to the pandemic ([Cadem 9/1-9/3](#)).

In Germany, 18 percent of voters say the coronavirus is the most important issue facing the country, about the same as in June. More, a third, say environmental issues are paramount; 22 percent pick immigration, 16 percent social injustice, and 15 percent pensions ([Infratest dimap 8/30-9/1](#)).

In Sweden, just 18 percent think that wearing face masks is very good at preventing the spread of the coronavirus. That compares with seven in 10 for hand washing, 56 percent for standing two meters away from others indoors, half for covering up coughs and sneezes and 46 percent for cleaning frequently touched surfaces. Twenty-one percent think increasing ventilation is very good at stopping the spread; it's 16 percent for wearing face visors and 8 percent for using disposable dishware at restaurants ([Novus 8/26-9/1](#)).

A third of Russians say they're vaccinated and 14 percent are ready to get a domestic vaccine. Fifty-two percent don't want to be vaccinated, down 10 points from April. Forty-three percent are afraid of catching the coronavirus, 55 percent not, steady this year ([Levada 8/19-8/26](#)).

Additional U.S. and international poll results are available at the [COVID-19 Survey Archive](#).

Summary for SEAN by [Langer Research Associates](#).