

May 2021

Education/Economic Mobility Survey Summary

Produced by [Langer Research Associates](#)

The following is a summary of random-sample U.S. survey research on K-12 and post-secondary education and economic mobility released from January to mid-May 2021. The four and a half-month scope of this summary makes for a lengthy report; subsequent single-month summaries will be more concise. This project is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Key Takeaways

EL, K-12, and PS Education

Most parents think their K-12 child is on track or ahead of where they should be in school despite the pandemic, even while large shares express concern about the potential of their child falling behind ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#)). Concerns are especially acute among public school teachers: Eighty-two percent say it's been a problem for their students to keep up academically ([Digital Promise 1/5-1/19](#)).

In April, 54 percent of parents reported sending their child to school in person, a majority for the first time in data since August ([Axios-Ipsos 4/16-4/19](#)). About two-thirds of all adults, and seven in 10 public school parents, thought in-person K-12 classes were safe ([Quinnipiac 4/8-4/12](#)).

A variety of proposals designed to help students recover from the impact of the pandemic receive majority support, including in-person tutoring in targeted problem areas, in-person catch-up courses and structured social, emotional and mental health support ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#)).

The pandemic has impacted post-secondary education: Seven in 10 households with an adult who'd planned on taking post-secondary classes in the fall reported that those plans have been cancelled or changed in some significant way ([Census Household Pulse Survey 3/17-3/29](#)).

Further, nearly two-thirds of parents of children age 11 to 25 say their child faces or faced one or more barriers to their ideal post-high school plans. A plurality (34 percent) cited a lack of financial resources, but others mentioned the pandemic, their child's grades, poor academic preparation from their school or a lack of guidance. ([Carnegie-Gallup 11/9-12/8](#))

In terms of early childhood education, two-thirds of adults support a government-funded policy to make preschool available to all 4-year-olds to better prepare them for kindergarten ([UChicago Harris/AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#)). Among state results, roughly half in **California** see attending preschool as very important to a student's success, and about three-quarters in **Texas** see a lack of resources and support around early childhood development best practices as a barrier to learning for low-income students ([PPIC 4/1-4/14](#), [Raise Your Hand Texas 10/9-10/20](#)).

Economic Mobility

Americans' ratings of their personal finances crossed the line in mid-May to full recovery from last year's pandemic plunge, coming within striking distance of their all-time high in 35 years of weekly data. Broader consumer confidence reached a pandemic peak and optimism about the economy's future reached a 15-month high ([Consumer Comfort Index 4/20-5/16](#)).

To be sure, the past year has taken a toll: Fifty-three percent report a layoff, a cut in work hours, unpaid time off, a wage or salary reduction or having quit a job ([AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#)).

Unemployment aid is welcome; two-thirds support the stimulus bill increasing and extending unemployment benefits ([Monmouth 2/25-3/1](#)). More than six in 10 would support a large spending plan to expand access to health care and child care and provide paid leave and college tuition support ([Monmouth 4/8-4/12](#)).

Detailed results follow.

K-12 Education

On Track or Falling Behind?

In a February survey, about four in 10 parents of school-age children were extremely or very concerned about their child falling behind academically and socially and losing activities such as school sports or other extracurriculars because of the pandemic. Thirty-three percent were that concerned about in-person school instruction leading to additional coronavirus infections. Fewer, about one in six, were concerned about their child losing other services such as school lunches or counseling and lacking access to technology for online learning. ([UChicago Harris/AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#))

Nonetheless, also in February, majorities said their own child was on track, or ahead, on reading and writing, math and science, mental health/emotional well-being, socialization/communication and time management skills. About one in four said their child was behind on time management, about two in 10 said they were behind on socialization/communication and math and science alike and 17 percent apiece said they were behind on mental health/emotional well-being and reading and writing ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#)).

In a different measure in an April poll, however, about half of parents said their oldest child had fallen behind in their social and emotional development (13 percent), academically (10 percent) or in both (29 percent). Forty-six percent said they'd been able to keep up in both areas ([NBC News 4/17-4/20](#)). Nearly half of parents of children who played sports before the pandemic said disruptions or cancellations of organized youth sports had a negative impact on their performance in school ([Washington Post-UMD 3/12-3/18](#)).

Teachers expressed particular concern: In January results, 82 percent of public school teachers said it was a problem for their students to keep up academically during the pandemic. Two-thirds said their own ability to work with students' individual learning needs had worsened. And public

school parents, by a 3-1 margin, were more apt to report their partnership with their child's teachers was weaker rather than stronger.

Sixty-three percent of parents reported that their child's school was doing an excellent or very good job ensuring their child had computer, internet and software access and support as needed. (An additional 28 percent credited their school with a good job on this.) On communicating about how it was operating in the pandemic, 56 percent gave their school high marks; on managing the transition to online instruction as needed, 48 percent. ([Digital Promise 1/5-1/19](#))

A mid-year analysis of Star Assessments analyzed student progress compared to what would have been expected in the absence of the pandemic. Overall, median fall-to-winter Student Growth Percentile scores were 46 in reading and 48 in math; a score of 50 indicates typical or expected performance.

Some groups were at greater risk of falling behind: Black, Hispanic and American Indian students, those with disabilities, English-language learner students and those attending urban or Title 1 schools were more likely to exhibit below-typical rates of learning growth in reading and math alike. In contrast, expected growth was at or above the median for reading and math among rural, town and suburban students and those attending Catholic and other private schools. ([Renaissance Learning Winter 2020-2021](#))

Learning Modes

Ongoing monthly data from schools with fourth and/or eighth grades detail learning modes during the pandemic. In March results, 38 percent of students were learning fully in person, 23 percent in a hybrid model and 37 percent fully remote. ([Institute of Education Sciences 4/14-4/27](#))

There were broad racial and ethnic gaps. Half of white students were in fully in-person classes, vs. three in 10 Black and Hispanic students and just 15 percent of Asian students. Just two in 10 white students were learning fully remotely, compared with half of Black and Hispanic students and two-thirds of Asian students. ([Institute of Education Sciences 4/14-4/27](#))

In further gaps, a survey of school district leaders found that 42 percent of rural districts were offering fully in-person instruction in February, compared with 17 percent of urban districts. These gaps mattered: Thirty-eight percent of districts offering any remote instruction had shortened the school day and 24 percent reduced instructional minutes, compared with 11 and 5 percent of fully in-person districts, respectively. ([RAND Corporation 1/21-3/5](#))

Overall, just 35 percent of students learning remotely in March received five or more hours of live instruction on average each day; 38 percent, three to four hours; 13 percent, 1 to 2 hours; 5 percent, less than one hour; and 6 percent, none at all ([Institute of Education Sciences 4/14-4/27](#)).

Among public school parents, though, about three in 10 want their children learning via a hybrid model (16 percent) or remotely (13 percent) in the next school year ([POLITICO-Harvard 3/16-](#)

[3/21](#)). Twenty-nine percent of parents of school-age children say it's at least somewhat likely for them to have their child in remote learning indefinitely ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#)).

Reopening

In mid-April, 54 percent of parents of children under age 18 reported sending their child to school in-person, a majority for the first time in data since August ([Axios-Ipsos 4/16-4/19](#)).

Changes were not uncommon: In February, 43 percent of parents reported that their child's schooling plan has shifted since the school year started ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#)). Regardless, in March, approval for local public schools' handling of the pandemic was high – 65 percent among adults overall and 70 percent among public school parents ([POLITICO-Harvard 3/16-3/21](#)).

Similarly, in April, seven in 10 people with schoolchildren in their household said their child's school had struck the right balance in reopening, with the rest divided evenly between saying the school had opened too quickly or too slowly ([NBC News 4/17-4/20](#)). That was a sharp improvement from early March, when, among all adults, just a third said the pace was about right, a third thought schools were re-opening too quickly and a third too slowly ([ABC News-Ipsos 3/5-3/6](#)).

By early to mid-April, about two-thirds of adults and seven in 10 public school parents thought it was safe for students to attend K-12 schools in person. That included about eight in 10 Republicans and seven in 10 independents, vs. 46 percent of Democrats. It was 71 percent among men vs. 59 percent among women ([Quinnipiac 4/8-4/12](#)).

In early March, given a list of five issues related to the pandemic, 21 percent of adults called reopening schools their top priority, second to vaccine distribution, 43 percent. (Others were financial relief to small businesses, 15 percent; direct payments to individuals, 13 percent; and extended unemployment benefits, 5 percent.) ([NPR-PBS NewsHour-Marist 3/3-3/8](#)).

Asked in February about criteria for deciding whether K-12 schools should reopen, academic needs topped the list. Six in 10 adults said the possibility of students falling behind academically without in-person instruction should be given a lot of consideration. That was followed by negative impacts on students' emotional well-being and parents being unable to work (54 percent apiece) and the risk to teachers (48 percent) and students (45 percent) of getting or spreading the coronavirus. Fewer, three in 10, said the financial cost to school systems of following public health guidelines should be given a lot of consideration. ([Pew 2/16-2/21](#))

Next Steps for Schools

A February survey found broad support among parents of school-age children for proposals “for helping students recover from the impact of COVID-19” that “would be provided by the school district or federal government.” More than eight in 10 supported in-person tutoring in targeted problem areas, in-person catch-up courses offered to all students and additional services for students who receive special education or are in IEPs. Roughly eight in 10 favored structured

social, emotional and mental health support and additional research on the pandemic's impact on educational progress.

Majorities also supported in-person full-time classes as soon as teachers are vaccinated (68 percent) and intensive academic assessments for each student before returning to the classroom (64 percent). About half supported in-person, full-time summer school. ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#))

In another poll, in March, half of public school parents favored extending the school year through summer “to address the needs K-12 students may have as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak” ([POLITICO-Harvard 3/16-3/21](#)). Tested another way, far more – eight in 10 adults overall – strongly (49 percent) or somewhat (32 percent) supported government-funded summer school or tutoring for students who'd fallen behind ([UChicago Harris/AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#)).

There are mixed results on promoting students if they haven't met current benchmarks. In one poll, 57 percent of adults and 54 percent of public school parents favored “holding back students who do not meet grade-level benchmarks” ([POLITICO-Harvard 3/16-3/21](#)). Support for holding students back was lower, four in 10 adults, when given the response option “pre-pandemic grade level requirements should be strictly maintained, even if many students need to repeat a grade.” (This study included a preface, “During the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers expect that *many* students will have not learned as much as is expected during this school year.”) ([NORC AmeriSpeak 1/28-2/1](#)). Regardless, 64 percent of adults overall and public school parents alike favor resuming standardized testing requirements ([POLITICO-Harvard 3/16-3/21](#)).

COVID-19 Mitigation

Six percent of parents in February said a student, teacher or faculty member in their school district died from COVID-19 ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#)). Vaccination intention is low, however: In comparatively recent data, half of parents of children under 18 are very (27 percent) or somewhat (21 percent) likely to have their child get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it's available for their age group ([Axios-Ipsos 5/7-5/10](#)).

In March, three-quarters of public school parents and two-thirds of adults overall favored requiring all public school teachers to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work ([POLITICO-Harvard 3/16-3/21](#)). In February, six in 10 adults said schools should wait to reopen until all teachers who want vaccine have received it. (Four in 10 favored reopening as soon as possible, even if “many” teachers who want the vaccine haven't received it) ([Pew 2/16-2/21](#)).

Also in February, two-thirds said teachers and students at their child's school generally wore masks and practiced social distancing all or most of the time, vs. just 5 percent who said they sometimes or never did so. (Sixteen percent said it wasn't applicable.) ([NPR-Ipsos 2/3-2/10](#))

CDC Studies

Studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention find that K-12 in-school transmission may be minimized with proper mitigation strategies. One study of 17 in-person K-12 schools in rural Wisconsin found COVID-19 incidence in schools using distancing measures and mask

mandates was 37 percent lower than in the surrounding community ([CDC 8/31-11/29](#)). A study of 20 elementary schools with in-person instruction in Salt Lake City found similar results, with strong student mask usage and a median distance between desks of 3 feet ([CDC 12/3-1/31](#)).

K-12 schools in Springfield, Missouri, implemented a modified quarantine policy, allowing students who were in close contact with an infected person to continue in-person learning if they met masking requirements during exposure. During a two-week study, 42 students were allowed to continue in person under this policy; of 21 tested, none tested positive. The modified policy resulted in an estimated 240 in-person school days saved. ([CDC 12/7-12/18](#))

In-person schools with weaker mitigation strategies fared less well. A study of eight public elementary schools found nine clusters of three or more virus cases at six of the schools. Each cluster was linked to poor physical distancing and five involved inadequate student mask usage. ([CDC 12/1-1/22](#))

School athletics in high-contact sports without masks also were linked to virus transmission. One study investigated the impact of an infected high school wrestler who attended two tournaments on back-to-back days. (Mask wearing is not advised in wrestling due to a choking hazard.) Of 130 wrestlers, coaches and referees in attendance, 54 were tested; 38 tested positive. An additional 95 out of 446 household and in-school close contacts were tested; 41 were positive. Resulting quarantines led to a loss of roughly 1,700 in-person school days. ([CDC 12/4-1/7](#))

Vaccine Passports

Fifty-five percent support their state issuing printed or digital certificates that people can use to show businesses, employers and schools that they have been vaccinated, while 42 percent are opposed ([ABC News-Washington Post 4/18-4/21](#)). Half of adults agree that people should be required to show proof they have been vaccinated before they can attend school or college; 23 percent disagree, with 18 percent neutral ([Consumer Reports 3/4-3/15](#)).

The Broader K-12 Picture

Overall, just about a third of adults were satisfied with the quality of public education in the nation in January, with 64 percent were dissatisfied. That includes four in 10 very dissatisfied, compared with 12 percent very satisfied. ([Gallup 1/4-1/15](#))

More recently, in April, about eight in 10 rated the quality of public K-12 schools as at least a moderately big problem, including four in 10 calling it a very big problem ([Pew 4/5-4/11](#)).

Education and schools rank in the top tier of issues Americans would like the federal government to address; in January, 35 percent called this extremely important and about half, very important. Similarly important issues were jobs and unemployment, domestic terrorism and hate groups, the pandemic and health care. ([Monmouth 1/21-1/24](#))

Edtech

About half of adults think the use of technology to teach children has made the quality of education at least somewhat better. Twenty-eight percent think it's made it at least somewhat worse; 17 percent don't see much of a difference.

At the same time, half of adults think the use of technology in teaching has at least somewhat increased inequalities in education between high- and low-income children. Seventeen percent think it's at least somewhat decreased inequalities; three in 10 don't see much impact.

Seven in 10 adults say they would support a government-funded policy to provide students with laptop or tablet computers in order to help them complete their schoolwork at home. Just 9 percent oppose this measure, with 21 percent neutral. ([UChicago Harris/AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#))

Activism

Six in 10 think it's inappropriate for high school or youth athletes to kneel during the national anthem to protest racial inequality in the United States ([Axios-Ipsos 3/4-3/11](#)).

Nonetheless, slightly more than half think it's appropriate for teachers to take a public stand on political or social issues in the U.S. About two-thirds think teachers make a positive impact doing so "when it comes specifically to speaking out on issues around racial inequality." ([Axios-Ipsos 3/4-3/11](#))

State Results on Education

California. In April data, more than eight in 10 Californians say children are falling behind academically during the pandemic. About as many express concern specifically that students in lower-income areas and English-language learners have been more likely to fall behind.

That reflects general perceptions of lower-quality education for these groups. About eight in 10 Californians are concerned that K-12 public school students in lower-income areas are less likely than other students to be ready for college. A similar share is concerned that these schools have a shortage of good teachers compared with schools in wealthier areas. Seven in 10 are concerned about improving outcomes for English-language learners.

To address these issues, three-quarters support local schools in lower-income areas providing additional training and professional development to teachers, even if it costs the state more money. About two-thirds say such schools should pay higher salaries to attract and retain teachers, and 61 percent, more generally, say current salaries for teachers in their community are too low. Forty-two percent see teacher shortages as a big problem in California's K-12 public schools; 28 percent say the same about teacher quality. An additional 42 and 52 percent, respectively, call these somewhat of a problem; the rest, "not really a problem."

Given a choice (again as of early to mid-April), 36 percent of K-12 parents in the state would want their child learning fully remotely; the rest would want them attending either hybrid (24

percent) or fully in-person (37 percent) class. Looking forward, two-thirds were concerned that California's K-12 schools will not be open for full-time in-person instruction in the fall. ([PPIC 4/1-4/14](#))

Texas. Seventy-two percent of Texas public school parents last fall said that missing social interactions at school or with friends was a problem for their child in the pandemic. Majorities also cited missing a personal connection with their teachers (64 percent) and missing sports, music, arts or other after-school activities (55 percent).

Fewer than half, though still substantial numbers, reported problems for their child staying occupied during the day (46 percent), keeping up academically (43 percent) and having issues with their emotional health and well-being (39 percent). About three in 10 said the same for not having access to special education services and two in 10 for lack of access to food and school support services.

Half of public school parents in the state with a child in in-person or hybrid learning described the approach as very effective, vs. 19 percent of those in fully remote learning.

Forty-six percent supported establishing or adding charter schools in their community even if it “meant reducing the amount of funds distributed to your local school”; 53 percent were opposed. Fifty-five percent, similarly, opposed a voucher program that “allows parents to use tax money to partly pay for tuition at private and religious schools, with no state educational oversight.” ([Raise Your Hand Texas 10/9-10/20](#))

New York. In a mid-February poll, 58 percent of New Yorkers called it a good idea to fully reopen public schools with in-school instruction this year; 35 percent thought it was a bad idea ([Marist Poll 2/15-2/17](#)). In March, 33 percent in the state said the pace of school reopenings in their community was not happening quickly enough, vs. 16 percent too quickly. A plurality, 44 percent, thought the pace was about right. ([Quinnipiac 3/16-3/17](#))

Post-secondary Success

The pandemic has significantly impacted post-secondary education plans. Nationally, in March, seven in 10 households with an adult who'd planned on taking post-secondary classes in the fall said those plans have been cancelled or changed in some significant way. While high, that was a low in data since mid-August. ([Census Household Pulse Survey 3/17-3/29](#))

Americans split on universities requiring their students to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, 49-48 percent in one poll ([Quinnipiac 4/8-4/12](#)) and 50-47 percent in another ([ABC News-Washington Post 4/18-4/21](#)). Support for such a requirement was higher among Democrats, women and college graduates vs. their counterparts. Adults 65 and older also were more apt than those 18 to 34 to support requiring vaccination for college students ([Quinnipiac 4/8-4/12](#)).

In a long-term analysis, from 2010 to 2018, the number of STEM bachelor's degrees awarded rose by 62 percent, vs. 20 percent for all degrees in the United States. The share of Hispanics earning a bachelor's degree in a STEM field rose from 8 to 12 percent while the share of Black

students doing so was little changed. Both groups remained underrepresented among STEM degree recipients.

In other metrics, Hispanic workers made up 17 percent of the total workforce, vs. 8 percent of STEM workers. Black workers made up 11 percent of the workforce and 9 percent of STEM jobs. Pay gaps were evident: Black full-time year-round workers age 25 and older in STEM fields earned just 78 percent the median earnings of their white counterparts; Hispanic STEM workers, 83 percent. ([Pew Research Center 4/1](#))

State Results

California. About eight in 10 California parents are worried about being able to afford a college education for their youngest child (35 percent very worried; 43 percent, somewhat) ([PPIC 4/1-4/14](#)).

Pathways

In results late last year, 54 percent of parents of children age 11 to 25 said that if there were no barriers to doing so, they would prefer or would have preferred that their child pursue a four-year college degree after high school. An additional 8 percent preferred a two-year degree for their child and 16 percent a non-college training program, with the rest citing other pathways.

Roughly two-thirds of parents said their child faced one or more barriers to their ideal post-high school plans. This included about a third of parents who cited financial resources as a barrier, the most-cited issue by far. Seven to 15 percent instead cited the pandemic, their child's grades, poor academic preparation from the school, a lack of information/guidance, a lack of exposure to work or careers or a lack of available options.

Compared with parents who preferred four-year colleges, parents who preferred training programs for their child were twice as apt to cite insufficient information/guidance as a barrier and nearly seven times as likely to say these programs were not available to them. Parents of Black children were twice as likely as parents of white children to cite a lack of information or availability of their preferred option as barriers.

Asked how well particular pathways prepare young people to be successful in their careers, about four in 10 rated both apprenticeships and vocational/technical training as excellent, dropping to 34 percent for four-year colleges and 20 percent for two-year colleges. ([Carnegie-Gallup 11/9-12/8](#))

State Results

California. Just 7 percent of Californians think their local public schools prepare students "very well" for a good-paying job in today's economy. About four in 10 think they do so somewhat well; four in 10, not too well; and one in 10, not well at all.

Just 7 percent also say their community's public schools do an excellent job preparing students for college, with an additional 55 percent saying they do a good job at this, leaving roughly a third who give their schools negative marks in this regard.

Value in technical training is broadly seen: About nine in 10 say it's at least somewhat important that their local public schools include career technical or vocational education as part of the curriculum. Fifty-five percent call this very important.

About eight in 10 California parents of children age 18 or younger hope their youngest child will earn at least a four-year degree, including 41 percent looking for a graduate degree. Just one in 10 aims for a two-year community college degree or career technical training. ([PPIC 4/1-4/14](#))

Early Learning

In February, two-thirds of adults nationally strongly (39 percent) or somewhat (27 percent) supported a government-funded policy to make preschool available to all 4-year-olds to better prepare children for kindergarten. Twelve percent were opposed, with two in 10 neutral. ([UChicago Harris/AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#))

State Results

California. About half of Californians say attending preschool is very important to a student's K-12 success; another three in 10 call this somewhat important. Majorities express concern that children in lower-income areas and students who speak English as a second language are less likely than others to be ready for kindergarten.

Two-thirds think the state government should fund voluntary preschool programs for all four-year-olds in California. Roughly four in 10 call the affordability of preschool education a big problem; 46 percent chose the midpoint, somewhat of a problem, while 14 percent say it's not much of a problem. Fewer are concerned about the quality of preschool education in the state: Seventeen percent call that a big problem while almost twice as many say it's not much of a problem. ([PPIC 4/1-4/14](#))

Texas. In Texas, a broad 77 percent see a lack of resources and support around early childhood development best practices as a barrier to learning for low-income students, including 43 percent who call it a significant barrier ([Raise Your Hand Texas 10/9-10/20](#)).

Economic Mobility

Financial Situation

Sixty-nine percent of Americans rated their personal finances positively in mid-May, back to pre-pandemic levels for the first time. Consumer confidence more broadly reached a pandemic peak and 34 percent said the economy was improving, a 15-month high. ([Consumer Comfort Index 4/20-5/16](#))

Such views are tied closely to household income. Three-quarters of those with annual incomes of \$100,000 or more rate their financial situation positively, compared with one-quarter of those making less than \$40,000. ([Gallup 4/1-4/21](#))

In another poll, two-thirds in late February described their financial situation as very or somewhat good, but a third called it very or somewhat poor ([AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#)), and 30 percent said it was getting worse ([Gallup 4/1-4/21](#)). In a similar measure, 56 percent in late March said they were moving closer to their hopes for their personal finances, while 31 percent were moving farther away ([Grinnell 3/24-3/28](#)).

Three in 10 households in February said their current income was lower than it was before the pandemic ([AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#)). In March, 34 percent reported that they or someone in their household had lost a job or income as a result of the pandemic ([NPR-PBS NewsHour-Marist 3/3-3/8](#)).

In two other studies, one in March and one in April, about a quarter reported a loss of income ([Consumer Reports 3/4-3/15](#), [Gallup 4/19-4/25](#)). In another, also in April, 22 percent said their family's financial situation has worsened in the pandemic, vs. 14 percent who say it's better now than before. Thirty-one percent of those with annual household incomes less than \$50,000 report worse finances, compared with 12 percent of those with \$100,000-plus incomes. ([ABC News-Washington Post 4/18-4/21](#))

In another measure, 17 percent say their household income is "significantly" lower than a year ago, 6 points more than in February 2020, just before the pandemic was beginning to take hold in the United States. Two in 10 report significantly higher incomes, down 11 points ([Fannie Mae National Housing Survey 4/1-4/27](#)). Fourteen percent expect someone in their household to have a loss in employment income in the next four weeks, although this has improved recently ([Census Household Pulse Survey 4/28-5/10](#)).

In December, 43 percent reported experiencing at least one negative economic effect of the pandemic in their household, defined as temporary or permanent layoffs, pay cuts, collecting unemployment benefits, required furlough days or job loss. About two-thirds of those who've had at least one economic hardship were worried about their ability to financially support their families, vs. 42 percent of others. ([Rutgers Heldrich 12/4-12/14](#))

In February, three in 10 said they were better off financially in the past year, 15 percent worse off. Reflecting sharply unequal impacts, large shares of those who were worse off live in metropolitan areas (86 percent), do not have a college degree (77 percent) and are racial or ethnic minorities (49 percent). ([Impact Genome/AP-NORC 2/12-3/3](#))

There are carry-on impacts. People whose finances have worsened are more apt also to say their personal relationships have gotten weaker rather than stronger; those who report better finances are more likely to say their relationships are stronger. In a regression analysis, having worse finances independently predicts having weaker personal relationships, controlling for demographic variables. ([ABC News-Washington Post 4/18-4/21](#))

Forty-four percent think their personal finances will get better in the next year, 7 points below its pre-pandemic level ([Fannie Mae National Housing Survey 4/1-4/27](#)). More generally, though, about seven in 10 are optimistic about their financial future, while one in four is pessimistic ([Quinnipiac 4/8-4/12](#)).

Employment

In late February, a quarter reported a pandemic layoff in their household; three in 10, a cut in work hours; two in 10, unpaid time off; and 14 percent quit a job ([AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#)). At the individual level, 10 percent of all adults say they were temporarily laid off, 4 percent permanently let go and 14 percent had their hours cut ([Gallup 4/19-4/25](#)).

A third of people in households that experienced a loss of employment income say such changes have had a major impact on the current financial situation in their household; about half reported a minor impact and just 13 percent no impact. Of those who experienced an impact, 37 percent said it would take their household more than a year to recover, 38 percent 6 months to a year and a quarter less than 6 months. ([AP-NORC 2/25-3/1](#))

In an education-related impact, 13 percent of working parents reduced work hours and 7 percent quit or took leave from their job to help children with at-home learning ([Gallup 2/14-2/21](#)).

People who were unemployed in January divided about evenly between being optimistic or pessimistic that they'd find a job in the near future. Two-thirds in this group reported that they seriously considered changing their occupation or field of work. ([Pew 1/19-1/24](#))

Additional employment hardships persist. In mid-April, 9 percent reported being temporarily furloughed or suspended from work in the past few weeks, 8 percent were laid off and 7 percent had their place of business shut down completely. (Percentages here are among those employed, laid off or furloughed.) ([Axios-Ipsos 4/16-4/19](#))

Roughly eight in 10 call unemployment a very big or a moderately big problem. Three-quarters say the same about economic inequality ([Pew 4/5-4/11](#)). In December, pre-recovery, about three-quarters called it a bad time to find a quality job ([Rutgers Heldrich 12/4-12/14](#)).

Government Action

Sixty-four percent would support a “large spending plan” to expand access to health care and child care, provide paid leave and offer college tuition support. A slim majority says this is equally as important as an infrastructure plan; the rest split about evenly between the two. ([Monmouth 4/8-4/12](#))

Provisions in the coronavirus relief package receiving the broadest support are funding for grants and low-interest loans for small businesses (80 percent), funding for vaccine distribution and testing (78 percent) and funding for schools to reopen safely (76 percent). Six in 10 or more also approve of sending \$1,400 payments to eligible Americans, providing mortgage and rent

assistance, expanding child and earned income tax credits and extending the moratorium on evictions and foreclosures.

Slightly more than half think the law does too little for low-income households and about half say it does too little for small businesses. About half think it does the right amount for middle-income households and them personally; a third say it does too little for those groups. ([AP-NORC 3/26-3/29](#))

Two-thirds support the stimulus plan increasing additional unemployment benefits from \$300 to \$400 per week and extending them through the summer. That includes majorities across age groups and income levels, peaking at three in four of those earning less than \$50,000 a year ([Monmouth 2/25-3/1](#)). Asked another way, about six in 10 approve extending unemployment insurance payments of \$300 a week until September 6th ([AP-NORC 3/26-3/29](#)).

As noted, three in four approved of the provision in the coronavirus relief package that provided funding for schools to reopen safely ([AP-NORC 3/26-3/29](#)). When the bill still was being considered, 77 percent favored “providing nearly one hundred and thirty billion dollars to K-12 schools to help students return to the classroom” ([CNN 3/3-3/8](#)).

In terms of future government action, about seven in 10 favor expanding financial help for people who buy their own health insurance and three-quarters favor providing more federal funding to states if they expand their Medicaid program to cover more low-income adults ([KFF 2/15-2/23](#)).

Six in 10 support the federal government canceling \$10,000 in college debt for anyone with an outstanding federal student loan. That drops to 45 percent for canceling \$50,000 ([Monmouth 2/25-3/1](#)). In another measure, 27 percent support forgiving student debt in all cases; 39 percent support it only for people in need ([Grinnell 3/24-3/28](#)).

Long-term Economic Impacts

One third of adults in April were very or somewhat worried that they will experience severe financial hardship as a result of the pandemic, down from a peak of about half last spring ([Gallup 4/19-4/25](#)). Among those employed or previously employed, 36 percent thought the pandemic would have a negative long-term impact on their career ([SSRS 3/2-3/7](#)).

In December, vast majorities were very or somewhat concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on the economy (93 percent), the job market for those looking for work (87 percent), the current unemployment rate (84 percent) and job security for those currently working (83 percent). Fifty-seven percent thought the pandemic was causing the U.S. economy to experience fundamental and lasting changes rather than a temporary downturn. ([Rutgers Heldrich 12/4-12/14](#))

In February, eight in 10 saw the pandemic as a major threat to the U.S. economy; that included eight in 10 Democrats and Republicans alike. About three-quarters thought that a large majority of Americans getting a coronavirus vaccine would help the economy a lot (51 percent) or a little (25 percent). ([Pew 2/16-2/21](#))

State Results

California. Roughly half of Californians in January rated their personal financial situation as “only fair” (37 percent) or poor (16 percent). About four in 10 were concerned that they or someone in their family would lose their job in the next year and 5 percent volunteered that they already had done so. Many more, about two-thirds, were at least somewhat worried about being able to afford the cost of their health care in the next few years. ([PPIC 1/21-1/31](#))

In mid-November to mid-January data, majorities of Californians were very or somewhat worried about unexpected medical bills (62 percent), out-of-pocket medical costs (60 percent) or affording treatment for COVID-19 (54 percent). Two in 10 reported that they or someone in their family had problems paying or an inability to pay medical bills in the past 12 months. Half had skipped or delayed at least one kind of health care because of its cost.

In terms of state legislative priorities, about six in 10 cited addressing COVID-19 as extremely important. Other top priorities include making health care more affordable (50 percent), improving public education (47 percent), attracting and retaining businesses and jobs (45 percent), addressing homelessness (41 percent) and making housing more affordable (37 percent). ([CHCF 11/19-1/12](#))

In March, half were at least somewhat concerned about not being able to afford their rent or mortgage. Six in 10 called housing affordability in their area a big problem. Roughly four in 10 said the cost of housing made them seriously consider moving. ([PPIC 3/14-3/23](#))

This summary serves as a resource for organizations and individuals interested in current survey research on issues in K-12 and post-secondary education and economic mobility. Producers of probability-based surveys on these topics are invited to contact us at info@langerresearch.com for inclusion of their material in future reports.