

## COVID-19 Survey Summary: October 1, 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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Pandemic polls this week find coronavirus vaccine acceptance at a high, with the Delta surge and its impacts contributing to increased uptake. But barriers persist, with unvaccinated people expressing broad doubts about the vaccines' effectiveness and resistance to workplace mandates.

Seven in 10 unvaccinated Americans see the need for boosters as an indication that vaccines aren't working as effectively as advertised. Two-thirds say the same for breakthrough infections. And most unvaccinated workers say they're unlikely to get a shot if their employer mandates it.

Partisanship remains one of the largest factors in vaccine resistance. Uptake rates are lower and coronavirus death rates are higher in states and counties won by Donald Trump last year. And hesitancy continues among parents of younger children, with many in wait-and-see mode.

At the same, most polls find that majorities of Americans overall continue to support Joe Biden's workplace vaccine requirements. Three in 10 workers say their employer has a vaccine mandate in place, three times its level in July. K-12 school mask mandates continue to win broad support in most surveys, and two new studies find further evidence of their effectiveness.

Worries about the virus remain elevated, but, with nationwide cases on the decline, have eased in some measures. Fewer now than a month ago see returning to normal pre-pandemic life as risky or are highly worried that they or a family member will become infected, and fewer parents see sending their child to school as highly risky than did a year ago.

While a majority of Americans approve of Biden's handling of the pandemic, more now distrust than trust him to provide accurate information about the coronavirus. Trust in other entities likewise is down; it's highest in information from the CDC and national public health officials.

## Vaccines

The CDC reports that 77 percent of adults have received at least one vaccine dose, unchanged the past week but up from August. Estimates in new surveys generally align, ranging from 72 to 77 percent. (Some are weighted to the CDC figure.) (KFF 9/13-9/22, Gallup 9/13-9/19, Axios-

Eighty percent in one survey and 82 percent in two others are vaccine acceptant - meaning they've been vaccinated or are likely to get vaccinated - each its highest since the vaccine rollout began (Gallup 9/13-9/19, Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27, AP-NORC 9/23-9/27). Posed another way, 74 percent in a fourth survey say they've gotten a shot or plan to do so as soon as possible, with an additional 7 percent preferring to wait and see (KFF 9/13-9/22).

With vaccinations up, one study indicates that gaps by race and ethnicity have been virtually eliminated. Similar shares of Hispanic (73 percent), white ( 71 percent) and Black people (70 percent) say they've gotten a shot.

Other gaps remain. Ninety percent of Democrats say they've gotten vaccinated, compared with 68 percent of independents and 58 percent of Republicans. Uptake also is higher among older adults, college graduates, urban and suburban residents, insured adults and higher-income Americans, compared with their counterparts (KFF 9/13-9/22).

Underscoring the relationship between vaccine uptake and partisanship, a new analysis finds that nearly all states that Biden won in the 2020 election have higher vaccination rates than those won by Trump. Coronavirus deaths also are more prevalent in states that voted for Trump. The relationship strengthens using county-level data (The New York Times 9/27).


Intended uptake for children younger than 12 remains tepid, with 55 or 56 percent of parents saying they're likely to get their child vaccinated once eligible (Gallup 9/13-9/19, ABC News/Ipsos 9/24-9/28). Gallup's 55 percent figure is essentially the same as in July and August. In a third survey, with a wait and see option, just 34 percent of parents of 5- to 11-year-olds say they'll have their child vaccinated immediately once eligible, though that's up from 26 percent in July; about as many prefer to wait (KFF 9/13-9/22). (Pfizer announced Sept. 20 it would pursue FDA approval for emergency use among children 5-11.)

In an additional group difference, new analysis of a June survey finds that adults with disabilities were less likely than those without a disability to report having received a shot - even though those with disabilities reported more concern about becoming infected and were more apt to see vaccines as important in protecting against the virus. Unvaccinated adults with disabilities were more apt than others to report difficulties getting to a vaccination site, not knowing where to get vaccinated, getting an appointment online or dealing with inconvenient hours at vaccination sites. (Results were adjusted for age.) (CDC 5/30-6/26)

## Motivators \& Deterrents

Thirteen percent of adults received their first vaccine dose after June 1. Among them, 35 to 39 percent cite the Delta variant, local hospitals filling up, knowing someone who became seriously ill or died or vaccine requirements for public activities as major factors. Fewer, 15 to 19 percent, cite an employer mandate, social pressure or the FDA's approval of the Pfizer vaccine.

Further highlighting the impact of the Delta surge, people in the highestcaseload counties as of mid-September are 9 points more apt than those in the lowest-caseload counties to have been vaccinated after June 1, 24 vs. 15 percent. Results are similar based on death rates (KFF 9/13-9/22).

Among demotivators, 5 percent of adults say they don't intend to get a vaccine because they already had COVID-19 or have antibodies. Four percent report concern about the timeline for developing the vaccines; 3 percent apiece don't trust vaccines generally or don't think they'd face serious illness from the coronavirus; and 2 percent each are concerned about allergic reactions or want to wait and see. One percent say
 they're waiting for FDA approval, down from 5 percent in August (Gallup 9/13-9/19).

## Booster Shots

Most vaccinated adults continue to say they'll get a booster shot if recommended, varying from 85 percent in one survey (among fully vaccinated adults) to seven in 10 in another (including those partially vaccinated) (KFF 9/13-9/22, AP-NORC 9/23-9/27). Fifty-four percent of vaccinated adults think getting a booster is very important to protect themselves; an additional 25 percent say it's moderately important (AP-NORC 9/23-9/27). Among all adults, 3 percent have received a booster shot; that's 4 percent of fully vaccinated people (KFF 9/13-9/22).

Three-quarters overall say they're familiar with the FDA's approval of Pfizer boosters for people 65 and older or those at high risk of severe illness. Two-thirds think booster shots should be made available to any vaccinated American who wants one regardless of risk or age, while 31 percent agree with the current guidelines (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27).

Sixty-two percent think news that some people may need boosters shows that scientists are continuing to find ways to make the vaccines more effective, while 33 percent think this indicates the vaccines are not working as well as promised. Among unvaccinated adults, 71 percent see a need for boosters as a sign that vaccines are not as effective as advertised.

Results are similar in terms of news about breakthrough infections. Overall, 68 percent say the vaccines are working because most breakthroughs don't require hospitalization, while 26 percent instead say breakthroughs mean the shots don't work. Among unvaccinated people, however, these numbers essentially are reversed (KFF 9/13-9/22).

## Concerns \& Outlooks

With nearly 2,000 daily deaths for more than a week, 76 percent of Americans are at least somewhat concerned about the coronavirus outbreak, essentially unchanged since August but up from 65 percent in June (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27). Sixty-eight percent think the current level of coronavirus cases in their state is a serious problem (Marquette University Law School 9/7-9/16).

Four in 10 are very or somewhat worried about personally becoming infected, unchanged since August but up from 29 percent in July and 17 percent in June (Gallup 9/13-9/19). In data more recent by a week 33 percent, are extremely or very worried that they or someone in their family will get infected, down from 41 percent in mid-August, though still 12 points above its low in June (AP-NORC 9/23-9/27).

Six in 10 say each of three factors is a major reason for the current high number of cases in the United States: People not taking enough precautions, people refusing vaccines and the infectiousness of the Delta variant (KFF 9/13-9/22). Another survey similarly finds 55 percent blaming unvaccinated Americans for the spread of new variants (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27). About half see local and state governments lifting restrictions too soon as major factors (KFF 9/139/22).

Among lower-level reasons, 37 percent think immigrants and tourists bringing the virus into the county are major factors for the country's high caseload (KFF 9/13-9/22). Three in 10 in another survey blame people from other countries traveling to the United States for the spread of the new variant and 24 percent blame Americans travelling internationally (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27). Roughly three in 10 apiece also say lower-than-expected vaccine efficacy, the spread among children who are not yet eligible for a vaccine and Donald Trump and conservative media are major factors or deserve blame (KFF 9/13-9/22, Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27).

Eight in 10 Americans - including 82 percent of vaccinated adults and 73 percent of the unvaccinated - think it's likely the coronavirus will continue at a lower level in the United States, turning into something that the country will manage like the seasonal flu. Just 14 percent think COVID-19 will largely be eliminated like polio.

If the coronavirus were to resemble the seasonal flu, with annual vaccinations but also with some people still getting sick and dying from the disease, 41 percent say they'd feel satisfied about the
outcome, including 5 percent who'd be enthusiastic. Half would be angry ( 15 percent) or dissatisfied, but not angry (35 percent) (KFF 9/13-9/22).

## Daily Life

With nationwide coronavirus cases on the decline, risk perceptions of several daily activities have eased somewhat in recent weeks. Twenty-seven percent think traveling on an airplane or mass transit is a large risk to their health or well-being, down 8 points in two weeks; 13 percent say the same for in-person gatherings with friends and family, down 6 points since late August; and 12 percent view dining in at a restaurant as highly risky, down 5 points in two weeks.

Overall, 51 percent think returning to their normal pre-pandemic life poses at least somewhat of a risk to their health, 9 points fewer than its late August level but still up 23 points from late June.

Fifty-seven percent say they've gone out to eat in the past week, up 6 points in two weeks. But reduced risk perceptions show little effect on other activities. Fifty-nine percent say they visited friends or relatives in the past seven days, essentially unchanged since August (but down from 68 percent in late June). The shares who visited retail stores ( 59 percent) and who stayed at home and avoided others as much as possible (46 percent) also are essentially unchanged since early August (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27).

## K-12 Education

The CDC estimates that 96 percent of public and private schools have remained open for full inperson learning as of Sept. 17. That leaves an estimated 1,800 schools that closed because of coronavirus outbreaks (CDC 8/1-9/17).

Thirteen percent of adults say their local school district has closed schools in the last few weeks because of an outbreak (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27). Among parents with children attending inperson school, 23 percent say their child has had to quarantine because of possible COVID-19 exposure (KFF 9/13-9/22).

Just more than half of parents are worried their child will catch the coronavirus. That includes 56 percent of those whose child is not yet eligible for vaccination, vs. 46 percent of parents of 12 - to 18-year-olds (Gallup 9/13-9/19).

Still, fewer parents see a large risk in sending their child to school than did in August 2020, 19 vs. 32 percent (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27). Sixty-six percent of parents with a child attending inperson school say the school is doing about the right amount to limit the spread of the virus. Twenty-one percent think it's not doing enough; 11 percent, too much (KFF 9/13-9/22).

Roughly six in 10 support requiring vaccinations for teachers and staff in K-12 schools (KFF 9/13-9/22, Gallup 9/13-9/19). Fewer, 52 percent, think K-12 schools should require vaccinations among all eligible students (KFF 9/13-9/22).

Regarding mask mandates, 56 percent in one survey say all students and staff should be required to wear masks regardless of vaccination status; an additional 10 percent support a mask rule only for the unvaccinated (KFF 9/13-9/22). Support for universal masking is lower in another poll, 47 percent for students and 49 percent for teachers and staff; 12 percent support a mask mandate only for unvaccinated students, 14 percent for unvaccinated staff (Gallup 9/13-9/19). In surveys that didn't differentiate by vaccination status, support for K-12 universal mask mandates reaches 67 and 69 percent (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27, Marquette University Law School 9/7-9/16).

In terms of current policies, 63 percent of parents say their child's school is requiring masks for all students regardless of their vaccination status, 2 percent only for unvaccinated students; 35 percent say there is no mask mandate in place. Reported mask policies are similar for teachers and staff (Gallup 9/13-9/19). Sixty-nine percent in another survey say their child's school requires all students and staff to wear masks, 1 percent only for unvaccinated people; 28 percent report no mask requirement (KFF 9/13-9/22).

Counties without K-12 school mask mandates saw larger rises in pediatric COVID-19 cases after the current school year began, compared with counties that had such mandates in place. In those with school mask requirements, cases rose by an average of about 16 per 100,000 children per day from the week before school began to the second week of the school year. It was twice that, nearly 35 per 100,000 children per
 day, in counties without school mask requirements. The analysis included data from 520 counties (CDC 7/1-9/4).

Another CDC report analyzes the association between school mask policies and schoolassociated COVID-19 outbreaks from July 15-Aug. 31 in K-12 non-charter public schools in Arizona's Maricopa and Pima Counties. Accounting for confounding factors, the odds of a school-associated COVID-19 outbreak in schools without a mask requirement were 3.5 times higher than at schools with a universal mask mandate when the school year began. (A schoolassociated outbreak is defined as two or more confirmed COVID-19 cases among students or staff within a 14-day period and at least seven days after the school year began. The two counties included in the study account for more than three-quarters of the state's population and the data cover 98 percent of the counties' K-12 public non-charter schools.) (CDC 7/15-8/31)

## Vaccine \& Mask Requirements

Consistent with other surveys released in the past two weeks, four polls this week find majority support for Biden's vaccine/testing mandate for businesses with 100 or more employees, including 56 percent in one survey, 58 percent in two others and 59 percent in a fourth (KFF 9/13-9/22, Gallup 9/13-9/19, Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27, NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 9/20-9/26). A
fifth, with a neutral option, finds 51 percent approve, with 34 percent disapproving and 14 percent neutral (AP-NORC 9/23-9/27).

Seventy-eight percent support the federal requirement that larger employers offer paid time off for their staff to get vaccinated and recover from side effects (KFF 9/13-9/22). Support is lower, though still 68 percent, in a survey that identifies this as a Biden policy (Gallup 9/13-9/19).

Sixty-two percent in one survey and 64 percent in another say workers in hospitals and other health care facilities should be required to get vaccinated (KFF 9/13-9/22, NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 9/20-9/26). A similar share, 63 percent, favor Biden's plan to require hospitals and healthcare facilities that receive Medicare or Medicaid funds to have all their employees vaccinated (Gallup 9/13-9/19).

Majorities in four polls - 55 to 61 percent - support the federal government requiring its employees get vaccinated (KFF 9/13-9/22, Gallup 9/13-9/19, Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27, NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 9/20-9/26). Fewer, 51 percent, support vaccine requirements for all federal contract workers (NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 9/20-9/26).

Fifty-four percent support state and local governments requiring their employees get a shot (KFF 9/13-9/22). Forty-three percent say their state or local government currently requires its employees or teachers to be vaccinated, up from 34 percent in mid-August (Axios-Ipsos 9/249/27).

Separate from Biden's employer mandate, the public splits 48-50 percent in one poll and 48-46 percent in another on whether businesses should require their employees to get vaccinated (KFF 9/13-9/22, NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist 9/20-9/26). Among workers themselves, however, 58 percent in two polls support their employer instituting a vaccinate mandate. In one that's up 12 points since May to a new high (Gallup 9/13-9/19, Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27).

Twenty percent of unvaccinated workers say it's very or somewhat likely they'll get a vaccine, rising to 29 percent if their employer required it (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27). In another poll, 34 percent say they'd get a shot if their employer required it (KFF 9/13-9/22).

However, if given an option of weekly testing, just 12 percent of unvaccinated workers would agree to vaccination. Fifty-six percent say they'd take the testing option; 30 percent say they'd quit (KFF 9/13-9/22).

About three in 10 employed adults say their employer has a vaccine mandate in place, including 29 percent in one poll, up 10 points since mid-August, and 28 percent in another, up 12 points (Gallup 9/13-9/19, Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27).

Vaccine uptake among employed adults about matches that among adults generally. It's highest among workers in the education field, 90 percent, followed by about eight in 10 white-collar and healthcare workers alike and 62 percent of bluecollar workers (Gallup 9/13-9/19).

Views on other vaccine


Based on U.S. adults employed full or part time
GALLUP PANEL mandates vary. Americans are split 49-49 percent on state and local governments mandating that indoor businesses such as gyms, restaurants and movie theaters require proof of vaccination for all staff and customers. At the same time, 56 percent oppose state and local laws prohibiting businesses from requiring vaccinations on their own (KFF 9/13-9/22). Sixty-four percent support requiring students at public universities to be vaccinated (Marquette University Law School 9/79/16).

When it comes to masks, 64 percent support their state or local government requiring masks to be worn in public places. Fewer, 42 percent, say their state or local government currently has such a mandate in place (Axios-Ipsos 9/24-9/27).

## Government Response

Most Americans, 56 percent in one poll and 57 percent in two others, approve of Biden's response to the coronavirus. One is down 7 points since late August, corresponding to recent declines in previous polls, while another finds a slight 3-point increase since mid-August (ABC News/Ipsos 9/24-9/28, Marquette University Law School 9/7-9/16, AP-NORC 9/23-9/27).

At the same time, in a first in his presidency, more Americans distrust rather than trust Biden to provide accurate information about the coronavirus, 53 vs. 45 percent. Results were essentially flipped four months ago, when 55 percent trusted him, 44 percent not.

Waning trust is not unique to Biden: Half trust their state government to provide them with accurate information about the coronavirus, down 9 points since late June to a pandemic low; 49 percent trust the federal government, down 5 points in two weeks to match its lowest since January; 41 percent trust national newspapers, down 6 points in a month, also to a pandemic low; 34 percent trust cable news, down sharply from 53 percent in late March; and 26 percent trust conservative news, down 6 points in two weeks.

Trust is highest, at 64 and 60 percent, in information from the CDC and national public health officials, though with both near pandemic lows from mid-August. Trust is lowest, at about 20
percent, for Tucker Carlson and Gov. Ron DeSantis, including less than half of Republicans (AxiosIpsos 9/24-9/27).

Forty-two percent say the U.S. response to the pandemic has decreased their trust in the federal government, vs. 15 percent who say it's increased their trust. Four in 10 say the pandemic hasn't made a difference in this.

More registered voters trust the Democratic Party over the Republican Party to handle the pandemic, 40-31 percent, with 17 percent volunteering that they distrust both. Still, voters split on how the pandemic might influence their vote, with about a quarter saying they'd be more likely to support Democratic and Republican candidates alike. Half say the pandemic makes no difference in their candidate preference (KFF 9/13-9/22).

## Pandemic Effects Among Older Adults

In an August poll among adults 50 and older, 36 percent were extremely or very worried that they or someone in their family will get infected with the coronavirus, double its level (17 percent) in June. An additional 31 percent were somewhat worried.

Those with high levels of concern were 34 to 40 points more apt than others to take precautionary measures, including staying away from large groups, wearing face masks, avoiding nonessential travel and avoiding others as much as possible. They were less apt than others to give excellent or very good ratings to their mental or emotional

Those age 50 and older who are most worried about COVID-19 are social distancing more
 health, 50 vs. 66 percent; their social relationships and activities, 37 vs .52 percent; or their overall quality of life, 47 vs .63 percent.

About a quarter of adults age 50+ said their social relationships and emotional health have gotten worse in the past year, vs. 15 percent who say these have improved. Among those highly worried
about the coronavirus, one in five felt a lack of companionship or social isolation over the past month, compared with 7 percent of others.

During the course of the pandemic, most adults age 50+ have used telehealth services, up 7 points since March to 63 percent. More report talking on the telephone ( 45 percent), using email ( 25 percent) or text messaging ( 20 percent) since March, each up 8 points. Fifty-one percent of those who used telehealth are at least somewhat likely to continue doing so once the pandemic is over (SCAN Foundation/AP-NORC 8/20-8/23).

## Perceptions of Hospitalization Risk

In August data, 92 percent of Americans overestimated the risk of hospitalization for unvaccinated people who contract the coronavirus and 62 percent did the same for the risk of hospitalization among vaccinated people. Still, adults overall did relatively well at estimating the effectiveness of vaccines at preventing hospitalization, with a median response of 80 percent.
Democrats were more apt than Republicans to overstate the hospitalization rate among unvaccinated adults, while Republicans were more apt than Democrats to overestimate the hospitalization rate among the vaccinated population, though not to the same extent (Gallup 8/16-8/22).


## State Results

In Texas, registered voters divide on Gov. Greg Abbott's handling of the pandemic, 46-50 percent, approve-disapprove; approval is down 7 points from June. Views of Biden's pandemic handling are a similar 44-49 percent, with approval down 14 points. A plurality of adults ( 47 percent) think Abbott is hurting efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Texas; 38 percent think he's helping and 15 percent are unsure. Sixty-four percent think the state's recent rise in COVID-19 deaths was preventable.

Majorities support local officials being able to require masks in indoor public spaces if they think it's necessary ( 64 percent); requiring students, teachers and staff to wear them in schools ( 60 percent); and requiring everyone to wear them in indoor public spaces ( 53 percent). By a 2-1 margin, Texans think it's a bad idea for Attorney General Ken Paxton to sue districts that require students to wear masks, 63-29 percent. Majorities also support vaccine mandates for healthcare
workers ( 57 percent) and teachers ( 54 percent); fewer, 45 percent, support businesses requiring employees to get vaccinated (Quinnipiac 9/24-9/27).

In Virginia, about six in 10 registered voters support reinstating face mask and social distancing guidelines in the state and having a statewide vaccine mandate for people in certain professions such as healthcare workers and teachers. Thirty-two percent call the pandemic the first or second most important issue in their vote for governor, behind jobs and the economy ( 39 percent) among seven items offered and essentially even with education and schools ( 31 percent). Forty-one percent trust Democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe more on handling the pandemic, 28 percent trust Republican candidate Glenn Youngkin more and 18 percent trust both equally (Monmouth 9/22-9/26).

## International Results

In Chile, reported vaccine uptake among adults is steady at 93 percent, with 23 percent saying they've received a booster shot. Half are worried about catching the coronavirus, near the fewest since the onset of the pandemic, and 55 percent fear the Delta variant specifically. Sixty-four percent approve of the government's handling of the virus, essentially unchanged the past month and near the highest of the pandemic (Cadem 9/23-9/24).

In Great Britain, 65 percent of employed adults are traveling to work at least some of the time, up 8 points since late August and early September. Substantial shares of adults overall report that shortages prevented them from buying non-essential food items ( 25 percent), essential food items ( 18 percent), medicine or fuel (4 percent alike) in the past two weeks. About nine in 10 wear face coverings when outside the home and 45 percent always or often maintain social distance from others, both steady (Office for National Statistics 9/8-9/19).

In the Netherlands, a newly released early June poll finds that 36 percent of informal caregivers felt less happy because of the coronavirus crisis, rising to 43 percent among care recipients. Main reasons included fear of infection, limited contact with others and participating in fewer activities. Four in 10 informal caregivers rated the difficulty of providing care during the pandemic as at least a six on a 1-10 scale; three in 10 said it was as difficult before the pandemic. About four in 10 caregivers and care recipients alike said providing help has become easier through technology such as video calling and a third cited increased flexibility, e.g. in working from home (I\&O Research 6/2021).

In a late April to early May poll in Sweden, 60 percent of adults said the main reason for getting vaccinated was to help stop the spread of the virus, compared with 36 percent who said it was to avoid becoming seriously ill. Just 4 percent at the time of the survey said they did not want to get vaccinated. As of Sept. 24, 83 percent of eligible Swedes had received at least one vaccine dose, according to the Public Health Agency of Sweden (Novus 4/26-5/9).

Additional U.S. and international poll results are available at the COVID-19 Survey Archive.

## Summary for SEAN by Langer Research Associates.

