



## COVID-19 Survey Summary: October 15, 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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Public concerns about the coronavirus pandemic and perceptions of the risk of daily activities have eased as the Delta surge subsides, and one new survey this week finds a decline in vaccine acceptance among parents for their minor children.

Still, concerns remain far above midsummer levels. Nearly half of Americans see a risk in returning to their pre-pandemic life and nearly two-thirds think it will be at least six months before they can do so, if ever – up sharply from June.

Pandemic-related polls this week also find less trust in Joe Biden, the media and state and local governments to provide accurate information about the coronavirus, extending declines since the summer. While most continue to support Biden's vaccine/testing mandate for large employers, Americans divide on consequences for noncompliant employees.

Demonstrating the pandemic's toll, a survey finds that four in 10 Americans personally know someone who has died from the coronavirus. One new analysis suggests that vaccines could have prevented 90,000 deaths since June. Another indicates an increase globally in the prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders during the pandemic.

Other surveys measure financial and economic impacts and explore views on remote work. With job openings near record highs, a third of small businesses report trouble hiring in the past week. One in five adults has had serious trouble getting childcare when someone in their household needed to work recently; a quarter, serious problems meeting work and family responsibilities.

International results in the week's summary include polls from Canada, Chile, Germany, Great Britain, Mexico and the Philippines.

### Vaccines

Seventy-nine percent of adults have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine in the latest [CDC estimates](#), up 1 percentage point from last week. In the only survey to estimate uptake this week, 73 percent say they've gotten vaccinated and 5 percent are likely to do so, leaving 21

percent unlikely. They share who've been vaccinated or are likely to do so has held essentially steady since late August after rising 6 points with the Delta surge ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)).

The CDC also estimates that 63 percent of 16- to 17-year-olds and 56 percent of 12- to 15-year-olds have been vaccinated ([CDC 10/14](#)). Among parents of minors, 57 percent say they have gotten their child vaccinated or intend to do so once they become eligible – down from a peak of 68 percent in August to return to its midsummer level ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)). (A poll [two weeks ago](#) found a small rise in intended uptake among parents of 5- to 11-year-olds.)

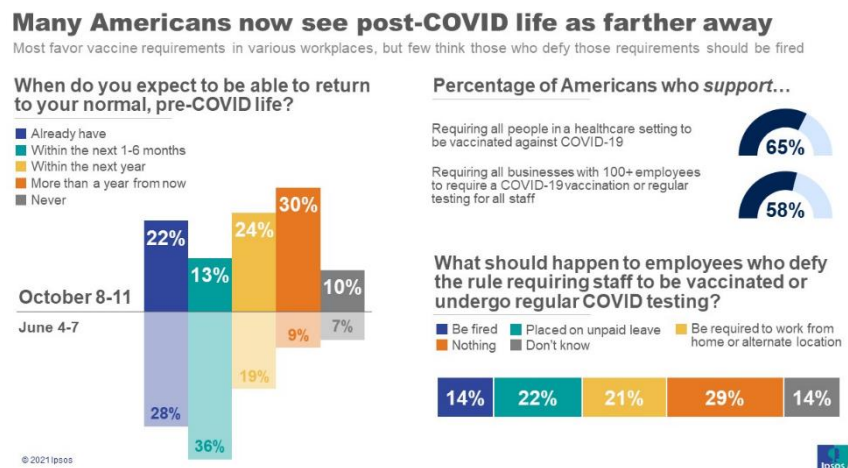
Newly released results from a survey conducted from March to June further explore stated reasons for vaccine hesitancy. Among those disinclined to get vaccinated, 21 percent in an open-ended question cited safety or side effects and as many were anti-vaccine in general. Sixteen percent thought coronavirus vaccine development was rushed and 13 percent reported a general distrust of these vaccines, with other mentions in the low single digits ([MOSAIC 3/11-6/13](#)).

### Concerns & Outlooks

Seventy-two percent overall are very or somewhat concerned about the outbreak, down from 78 percent in late August. A similar 75 percent are concerned specifically about the Delta variant, largely steady since July.

Forty-eight percent think returning to their pre-pandemic life poses a large or moderate risk to their health and well-being, down from 60 percent in late August. That's still far higher than in late June, 28 percent.

Pessimism about a return to normality has grown with the surge. Thirty percent expect it to take more than a year before they can return to their usual pre-pandemic life, up 21 points from early June to the most since early February. An additional 24 percent think it'll take six months to a year, up 5 points since early June. Thirteen percent think it will take fewer than six months, down from 36 percent four months ago. Twenty-two percent say they've already returned to their pre-pandemic life.



On specific activities, 55 percent say they spend time with friends and family outside their household about as often now as before the pandemic. The rest anticipate returning to something like normal once everyone in their immediate circle is vaccinated (15 percent), when local or national officials say it's safe (11 percent) or once they themselves are vaccinated (3 percent), with the rest unsure.

A similar 59 percent overall say they dine in at restaurants about as often as pre-pandemic. Fewer, 36 percent, attend in-person events or conferences about as often; it's 32 percent for traveling on airplane or mass transit. Roughly a quarter apiece are waiting for local or national officials to say it's safe before resuming their pre-COVID participation in these activities; about one in 10 is waiting for vaccinations (either for themselves or people in their immediate circle), while the rest again are unsure ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#))

### Coronavirus Information

Trust in media and government entities to provide accurate information about the coronavirus continues to wane:

- A third trust cable news to provide them with accurate coronavirus information, down 6 points in a month and 19 points in seven months to a low in data since March.
- Forty-three percent trust network TV news (ABC, CBS, NBC), similarly down 6 points since late August and 14 points in seven months to a low in data since March.
- Forty-two percent trust Biden to provide accurate information about the pandemic, down 10 points since early August to a new low.
- Forty-six percent trust the federal government to provide accurate information about the coronavirus, down 8 points in a month to a low since early January.
- Forty-nine percent trust their state government to provide accurate information, down 5 points in a month and 28 points since March 2020 to a pandemic low.

About six in 10 continue to trust national public health officials (58 percent) and the CDC (63 percent) to provide accurate information, though these are far lower than at the onset of the pandemic ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)).

### Vaccine Mandates

Majorities continue to back requirements announced by Biden in early September. Fifty-nine percent support the vaccine mandate for federal employees and 58 percent support the federal vaccine or testing requirement for businesses with 100 or more employees, each unchanged in the past month. More, 65 percent, support requiring vaccines for all people in healthcare settings.

Most workers, 55 percent, support their own employer requiring all staff to be vaccinated, essentially unchanged since mid-August. Fewer, 27 percent, say their employer has a vaccine mandate in place, steady since late September but up 11 points from mid-August.

Americans divide on what should happen to workers who “defy or break” their employer’s vaccination or testing rules. Nearly six in 10 (57 percent) favor one of three repercussions: A requirement to work at home or an alternate location (21 percent), placement on unpaid leave (22 percent) or losing their job (14 percent). Three in 10 say there should be no repercussions.

As more [municipalities](#) institute vaccine mandates for indoor activities, 6 percent of Americans say they know someone with a fake vaccine card ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)).

### Coronavirus Impacts

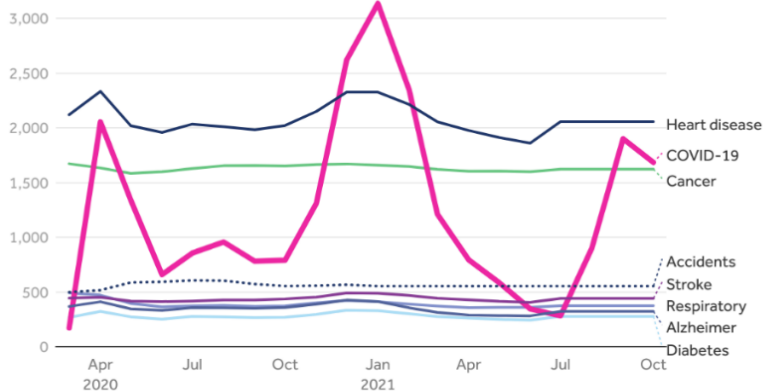
Asked about the 700,000 coronavirus deaths in the United States, the public divides on whether the true number is about the same (37 percent), higher (20 percent) or lower (33 percent). In May 2020, more, 44 percent, thought the actual toll was higher.

Eighty-three percent of Americans say they know someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus, a new high. Fifty-nine percent themselves have been tested; 16 percent think they may have had COVID-19 but never were tested or tested negative at the time ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)). Thirteen percent say they haven't gotten a COVID-19 test at some point in the past 12 months because of the cost ([KFF 9/23-10/4](#)).

Forty-two percent personally know someone who has died from the virus, up from a third in mid-July. This includes 53 percent of Hispanic adults, 46 percent of Black people and 41 percent of whites ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)).

An analysis of [monthly provisional](#) death counts from the CDC finds that COVID-19 was the second leading cause of death in the United States in September, accounting for an average of 1,899 deaths daily, surpassed only by heart disease. COVID-19 had dropped to seventh on the list in July, before the Delta surge. The authors estimate that vaccinations could have prevented 90,000 COVID-19 deaths since June, assuming 91 percent effectiveness ([KFF 10/13](#)).

Average daily deaths in the United States, by cause (March 2020 - October 2021)



Notes: October 2021 COVID-19 deaths are through October 7, 2021. For accidents in 2021, the 2020 daily average is plotted. Respiratory disease represents chronic lower respiratory disease. For all other diseases except COVID-19, July and August values are the average of daily death averages from January to June 2021.

Source: KFF analysis of CDC mortality and KFF COVID-19 tracker

Peterson-KFF  
**Health System Tracker**

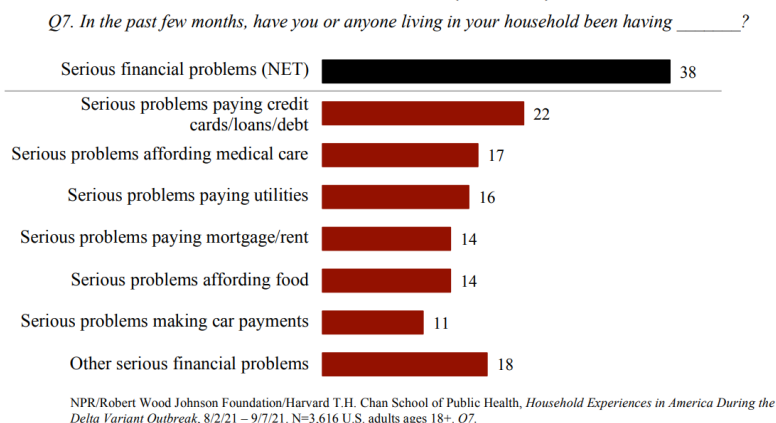
Further underscoring the pandemic's health impacts, the National Law Enforcement Museum reports that 62 percent of law enforcement line-of-duty deaths in 2020 were caused by COVID-19 ([National Law Enforcement Office Memorial Fund 10/11](#)).

### Financial Impacts

In a survey conducted in August and early September, more Americans said their financial situation had worsened rather than improved during the pandemic, 32 vs. 19 percent. Forty-nine percent said it was about the same. Results align with a [previously reported](#) June poll, when 34 percent reported having less money saved than before the pandemic, vs. 17 percent more.

Thirty-eight percent in the new poll reported serious financial problems in the past few months, including serious trouble paying their rent or mortgage, utilities, car payments, medical care, credit card bills, loans or food. The same share, 38 percent, said they had no savings to fall back on, with half in this group (19 percent of adults overall) saying they were not in this position before the pandemic began. (Most interviews were conducted before the expiration of enhanced unemployment benefits Sept. 5 and the end of the CDC’s eviction moratorium in late August. Among renters, 27 percent reported serious problems paying their rent in the past few months ([NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 8/2-9/7](#)).

**Figure 4. Serious Financial Problems Among U.S. Households in the Past Few Months (in Percent)**



A late September survey similarly finds that 25 percent of renters are just slightly or not at all confident in their ability to make next month’s rent payment, unchanged from late July ([U.S. Census Bureau 9/15-9/27](#)).

While government aid is [estimated](#) to have decreased poverty by 2.6 points in 2020, many remain vulnerable. Two-thirds of Americans said they’ve been helped by financial assistance from federal and state government programs in the past few months, including stimulus payments, expanded unemployment benefits, grants and loans; among all adults, 23 percent said such aid helped them a lot ([NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 8/2-9/7](#)).

Consumer sentiment took its sharpest one-week fall of the year this week to a six-month low. Positive ratings of personal finances are down 6 points from nearly a 35-year high in August. Views of the national economy and the buying climate also are down, comporting with rising inflation (including gasoline prices), weaker job growth and a slump in stocks ([CCI 9/14-10/10](#)).

### Employment Impacts

In interviews mostly in August, 42 percent said they or someone in their family had lost a job or had their income reduced at some point during the pandemic, even if temporarily.

Among employed people, 21 percent said they work for a different employer compared with before the pandemic. As many, 21 percent, said their job situation was better compared with pre-pandemic, while 24 percent said it was worse. (Most, 55 percent, said it was about the same.)

**Figure 8. U.S. Workers Rate Their Job Situation Now Compared to Before the COVID-19 Outbreak (in Percent)**

*Q16. How would you describe your job situation now compared to before the COVID-19 outbreak? Is your job situation now better, worse, or about the same as it was before the COVID-19 outbreak?*



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, *Household Experiences in America During the Delta Variant Outbreak*, 8/2/21 – 9/7/21. N=2,123 U.S. adults ages 18+ who are currently employed.

Among the four in 10 adults who were not working for pay at the time of the survey, 40 percent wanted a job. Among part-time workers, 35 percent preferred a full-time position.

Barriers to employment persisted. In households with children, 20 percent reported serious problems getting childcare when they or someone else in the household needs to work. Twenty-four percent said they’d had serious problems in the past few months meeting work and family responsibilities ([NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 8/2-9/7](#)).

A new report finds that 4.3 million Americans quit their jobs in August, for a “quit rate” of 2.9 percent, the highest in monthly data since December 2000. (The quit rate is the number of employees who left their jobs voluntarily in the month as a percentage of total employment.) Job openings decreased from a high in July of 11.1 million to 10.4 million, their second highest and nearly double the level a year ago ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 10/12](#)).

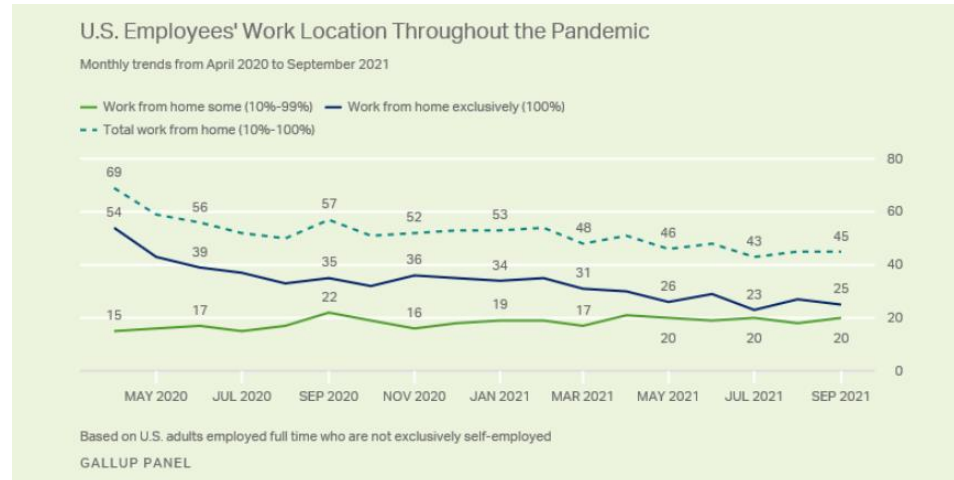
Separately, 34 percent of small businesses report difficulty hiring paid employees in the past week, essentially steady since the question first was asked in mid-August ([U.S. Census Bureau 10/4-10/10](#)).

### Telework

Twenty-eight percent of employed adults say they’ve worked remotely in the last few weeks, largely steady in recent months and down from a peak of 46 percent in April 2020 ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)). The September jobs report found that fewer, 13 percent, teleworked at any time in September specifically because of the pandemic, unchanged since July while down from a high of 35 percent in May 2020 ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 10/8](#)).

Another survey finds that 45 percent of employees worked from home all (25 percent) or part of the time (20 percent) in September, unchanged from July and August ([Gallup 9/13-9/19](#)). Asked

another way in a study done mostly in August, 17 percent of employed adults said they worked completely remotely and 20 percent did a mix of in-person and remote work.



Seventy-three percent of workers liked their current mode of work, while a quarter preferred something different. Among them, 62 percent preferred a hybrid model, 28 percent fully remote work and 8 percent wanted to work entirely outside the home.

Among those who did at least some of their work from home, 14 percent were worried that working remotely will hurt their future job prospects or career ([NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 8/2-9/7](#)).

An analysis of data from Earth-observing satellites finds that sudden declines in traffic emissions during lockdowns in spring 2020 led to sharply reduced nitrogen dioxide pollution across U.S. cities. Even after restrictions were lifted, traffic emissions remained about 20 percent lower compared with pre-COVID levels in West Coast cities, though returned to near-normal levels on the East Coast. The authors conclude that continuing remote work policies may be an option to extend improved urban air quality experienced during the pandemic ([Kondragunta et al., 2021](#)).

### K-12 Education

Forty-five percent of parents of school-age children see a large or moderate risk in sending their child to school, down from 55 percent two weeks ago ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)). In mostly August data, one-third felt the children in their household would be unsafe from COVID-19 at school ([NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 8/2-9/7](#)).

Fourteen percent of adults say their local school district has closed because of a COVID-19 outbreak in the past few weeks, similar to two weeks ago.

In terms of precautions, 65 percent support requiring everyone in school to wear masks ([Axios-Ipsos 10/8-10/11](#)). The public divides 54-45 percent on a vaccine mandate for students age 12 and older to attend public school; among parents of children age 12-17 it's 49-51 percent. ([Politico/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 9/28-10/3](#)). Results largely are in line with [polls](#) covered two weeks ago.

Eight percent overall say they've gone to a public meeting or demonstration, contacted a school or public official or written an op-ed or letter to the editor to express their views about school vaccine mandates. It's about the same among those with pro- and anti-mandate views ([Politico/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 9/28-10/3](#)).

Sixty-nine percent of adults with K-12 schoolchildren in the household said the child fell behind in learning last year because of the pandemic. Forty-seven percent said the quality of education the child received was excellent or good, while 52 percent said it was only fair or poor. Among those who reported a child falling behind, seven in 10 thought it would be difficult for them to catch up this school year ([NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 8/2-9/7](#)).

### State Results

In New York, 55 percent approve of how Gov. Kathy Hochul is handling the pandemic; 36 percent disapprove and 9 percent are unsure. That about matches former Gov. Andrew Cuomo's approval rating last February, but more, 43 percent, disapproved of his work ([Marist 10/4-10/7](#)).

### International Results

A review of studies from Jan. 1, 2020 to Jan. 29, 2021, estimates that cases of major depressive disorder increased by 27.6 percent in that period because of the pandemic, for an additional 53.2 million cases globally, and that prevalence of anxiety disorders rose by 25.6 percent, or 76.2 million cases. Increase were higher in countries with high infection rates and with more people at home, and about 6 points higher among women than men ([The Lancet 10/8](#)).

In Chile, with one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, 96 percent of adults say they've received at least one vaccine dose and 28 percent have received a booster shot. Worry about catching the virus has fallen 18 points in a month to 34 percent, a low since March 2020. Sixty-eight percent approve of the government's job handling the pandemic, near its pandemic high last week ([Cadem 10/6-10/8](#)).

In Germany, 42 percent of voters are concerned that infections will rise in the coming weeks, down from 62 percent three months ago. Still, a steady 60 percent call current restrictions appropriate; 25 percent say they go too far, 13 percent, not far enough. At the same time, 57 percent support ending mandatory masking in schools, rising to 71 percent of parents ([Infratest Dimap 10/4-10/6](#)).

In Canada, 84 percent of adults are at least somewhat interested in getting a booster shot, ranging from 90 percent of those 55 and older to 76 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds ([CTV News/Nanos 9/30-10/3](#)). About six in 10 think vaccine requirements to go to indoor public places (63 percent) or to go to work in person (60 percent) are appropriate; 22 percent in each case say these requirements aren't strict enough, while 14 percent say they go too far. Sixty-four percent support health care workers refusing treatment to unvaccinated patients who are threatening or disrespectful ([CTV News/Nanos 9/30-10/3](#)).



In Great Britain, 71 percent of parents with a 12- to 15-year-old said their child was likely to receive a coronavirus vaccine; an additional 4 percent already have been vaccinated. Four in 10 adults say they always or often maintain social distancing when outside the home, down 5 points from mid-September. Eighty-six percent wear a face covering outside their home, down 2 points. Sixty-seven percent of employed adults reported traveling to work at least some of the time, essentially steady ([Office for National Statistics 9/22-10/3](#)).

Newly released results from early September indicate that 1.1 million Britons living in private households –1.7 percent of the population – were experiencing COVID-19 symptoms persisting longer than four weeks. Of them, 77 percent suspected they were infected at least 12 weeks previously; 37 percent, at least a year. Two-thirds said symptoms adversely affected their day-to-day activities; substantial shares reported fatigue (56 percent), shortness of breath (40 percent), loss of smell (32 percent) and trouble concentrating (31 percent). Long COVID peaked among 35- to 69-year-olds, women, people in disadvantaged areas, healthcare workers and those with activity-limiting conditions ([Office for National Statistics 8/9-9/5](#)).

In newly released results from a September poll in Mexico, 78 percent of adults reported having received at least one vaccine dose, with an additional 11 percent saying they'd do so as soon as possible. Half were very concerned about the coronavirus, unchanged since August but down from a high of 67 percent in February. Forty-eight percent thought infections still were on the rise in the country, down from 60 percent in July, while 32 percent thought they were decreasing, up from 12 percent. Fifty-three percent said restrictions and isolation measures should be maintained ([El Financiero 9/10-9/11](#)).

In the Philippines, also last month, 91 percent of adults were worried a great deal or somewhat that someone in their immediate family might catch the coronavirus, up 4 points from June to match its pandemic high in November. Six in 10 feared the worst of the pandemic was yet to come, up 21 points from June to a high; 38 percent said the worst had passed ([SWS 9/12-9/16](#)).

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

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