



COVID-19 Survey Summary: April 1, 2022

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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Most Americans are optimistic that the worst of the pandemic is behind us, even as three-quarters anticipate another major wave, with half overall concerned about it.

One new study this week underscores widespread mental health challenges of the pandemic, in this case among adolescents: Thirty-seven percent of high school students reported continuous or frequent stress, anxiety or depression in the first year of the pandemic. Forty-four percent reported sadness and hopelessness that interfered with their usual activities; 20 percent reported suicidality. Academically, two-thirds found it more difficult to complete their schoolwork.

Today, with cases near summertime lows, public concerns about catching the coronavirus are down sharply, as are mitigation steps such as avoiding nonessential travel and social gatherings. Majorities now oppose employer vaccine mandates and reinstating mask or social distancing rules, though half want the government to adjust its guidelines in response to new variants.

Assessments of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic are up, as are positive ratings of governors, federal health agencies and the public. Job growth remains strong, with 400,000-plus monthly gains for the 11th month straight, the longest such advance in data since 1939.

Newly released polls also find skepticism toward the use of religious objections to avoid vaccination, show booster uptake leveling off since January and find that initial vaccine uptake has flatlined since the fall. Parents of K-12 children divide on whether school mask mandates are necessary, with more seeing masks as harmful to their child's education rather than helpful.

This week's summary also includes an analysis of county-level population changes in the first full year of the pandemic, documenting domestic migration patterns and finding that three-fourths of counties reported more deaths than births from mid-2020 to mid-2021.

International polls from Bulgaria, Chile, Russia and South Korea also are included.

[Concerns & Outlooks](#)

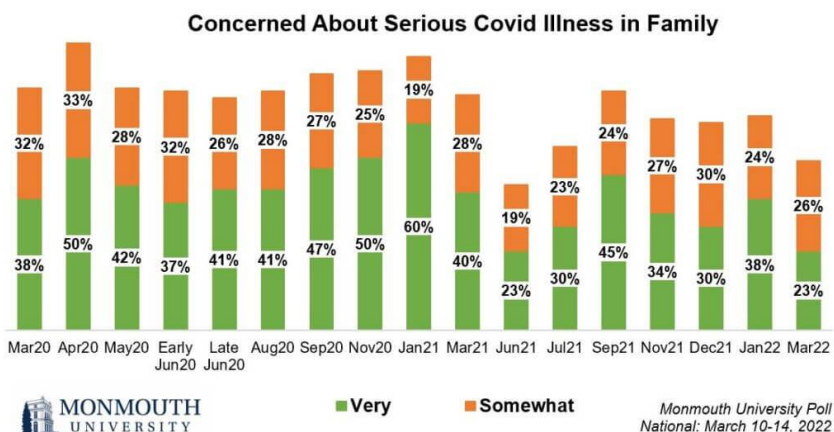
While new daily cases remain their lowest since summer, the rate of decline has slowed, with [increases](#) in several states in the Northeast and South in the past two weeks. Deaths linked to the virus continue to fall, down more than [40 percent](#) in two weeks to average about 630 per day.

With cases down sharply this year, 83 percent of registered voters think the coronavirus is at least somewhat under control, up 24 points since January and just shy of its pandemic high, 90 percent in May 2021. Still, just half as many, 42 percent, call it completely or mostly controlled.

One factor: Seventy-three percent of registered voters think it’s likely the United States will experience another major coronavirus wave within the next year ([Fox News 3/18-3/21](#)). After being told “there is a surge of COVID-19 cases in Asia and cases are also climbing in Europe,” 51 percent express concern about another surge in the United States ([Quinnipiac 3/24-3/28](#)).

Most are optimistic, nonetheless. Sixty-two percent think the worst of the coronavirus is behind us (and an additional 21 percent don’t consider it that major of a problem in the first place). Just 14 percent think the worst is yet to come, down from 31 percent in January to the fewest in data since March 2020 ([NBC 3/18-3/22](#)).

High-level concerns have eased, with 23 percent very concerned that they or someone in their family will become seriously ill from the virus, down from 38 percent in January to match its low last summer. (An additional 26 percent are somewhat concerned.) ([Monmouth 3/10-3/14](#)) A quarter in another poll are extremely or very worried about themselves or someone in their family becoming ill, steady the past month after falling from 36 percent in January. Thirty-two percent are somewhat concerned about this ([AP-NORC 3/17-3/21](#)).



In two surveys this week, just 3 percent select the coronavirus as the most important issue facing the country, tied for last out of a list of nine items in one poll and eighth on a list of 11 in the other ([NBC 3/18-3/22](#), [Quinnipiac 3/24-3/28](#)). Similarly, 3 percent in an open-ended question mention the coronavirus as the top problem, the fewest since the onset of the pandemic and down from 20 percent in January ([Gallup 3/1-3/18](#)). Six percent call it the biggest problem in a fourth poll, tied for last in a list of 5 items ([KFF 3/15-3/22](#)).

Transitions & Pandemic Policy

Given reduced concerns, 77 percent support the CDC’s relaxed recommendations on face masks and social distancing in areas with low infection rates.

Sixty-two percent oppose instituting or reinstating face mask and social distancing guidelines in their state, up from 45 percent in January and 34 percent in September. Fifty-five percent oppose requiring people to show proof of vaccination to work in an office or other setting around other people, steady since January while up from 45 percent in September ([Monmouth 3/10-3/14](#)).

The public splits 51-46 percent on whether the government should continue to require face masks on public transportation. Nineteen percent want to see such requirements in place for longer than six months, a quarter for six months or less ([NBC 3/18-3/22](#)). (The TSA extended the federal mask mandate for public transportation through [April 18](#); governors from [21 states](#) are suing the Biden administration to end it.)

Half want the government to continue to adjust coronavirus guidelines and mandates in response to variants as they arise. Fourteen percent prefer a consistent set of guidelines from this point forward; a third want no coronavirus regulations or mandates.

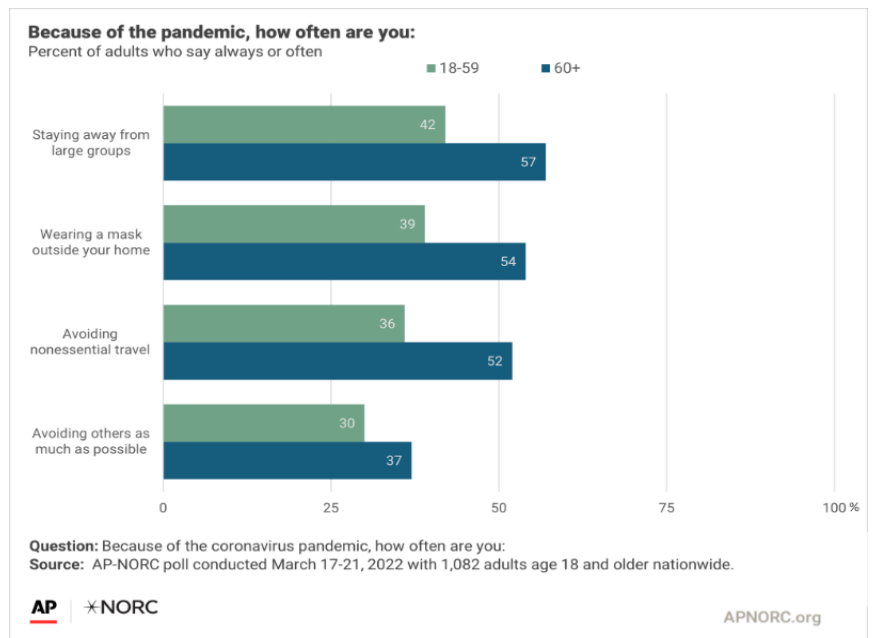
Seventy-three percent agree that “it’s time we accept that Covid is here to stay and we just need to get on with our lives,” similar to responses in January. Opinions differ on how to do so: Those who say we should “get on with our lives” split 42-42 percent on whether that means adjusting guidelines to address future variants or having no regulations at all. An additional 14 percent in this group want consistent guidelines going forward ([Monmouth 3/10-3/14](#)).

Half of registered voters believe the pandemic has changed permanently how we live in the United States. Forty percent think it’s changed things temporarily and 9 percent see no real change ([Fox News 3/18-3/21](#)).

Coronavirus Precautions

The shares of adults avoiding travel and gatherings with others are their lowest in data the past year, with frequent mask use down sharply since January.

- Nearly half, 47 percent, always or often are staying away from large groups because of the pandemic, down 18 points since mid-January to the fewest since December 2020.



- In data after the CDC relaxed its mask recommendations, 44 percent say they always or often wear a face mask when around other people outside their home, down 21 points since mid-January and fewer than half for the first time in data since March 2021.

- Four in 10 always or often are avoiding nonessential travel because of the pandemic, down 20 points since mid-January to the fewest in data since last March.
- Thirty-two percent always or often avoid other people as much as possible, down from 52 percent in mid-January, again to the fewest in data since March 2021.

More than half of adults age 60 and older continue always or often to stay away from large groups, wear a mask and avoid non-essential travel, compared with 36 to 42 percent of younger adults ([AP-NORC 3/17-3/21](#)).

Government Response

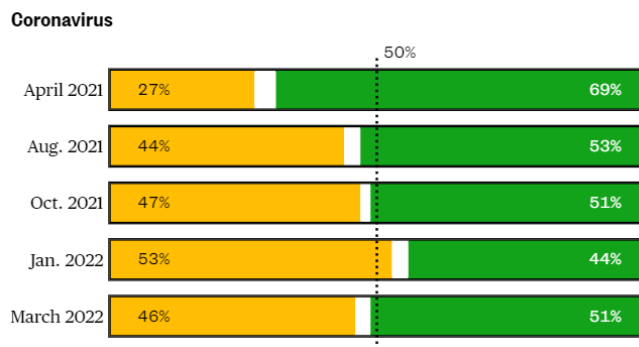
As in polls covered [last week](#), new surveys find improved assessments of Biden’s handling of the pandemic. It’s 51-46 percent, approve-disapprove, in one, up from 44-53 percent in mid-January ([NBC 3/18-3/22](#)). In another, 49 percent say Biden’s done a good job handling the outbreak, up 6 points since late January; 47 percent think he’s done a bad job, down 6 points.

Other ratings also have gained. Fifty-nine percent say their state’s governor has done a good job handling the outbreak, up 9 points since December. Fifty-three percent say the same for federal health agencies, up 6 points since January to match its highest since July. Thirty-five percent say the American public has done a good job, also up 6 points since January to match the most since June ([Monmouth 3/10-3/14](#)).

Biden’s handling of the issues

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Biden is handling these issues:

Disapprove Approve



Sixty-five percent think it’s important for Congress to provide more funding to continue the pandemic response in the coming months, though only a quarter call it a top priority. About as many, 63 percent, say it’s important for Congress to make permanent the additional financial help from the coronavirus relief bill for people who buy their own insurance; 21 percent say this is a top priority ([KFF 3/15-3/22](#)).

Looking abroad, 42 percent in mid-February said the United States was doing about the right amount to make sure people in other countries have access to coronavirus vaccines. Of the rest, more thought the United States wasn’t doing enough (28 percent) than too much (19 percent), with one in 10 unsure. As of [March 17](#), the United States had donated half a billion coronavirus vaccines to more than 110 countries.

Views on efforts to control the spread of the coronavirus in other countries by providing masks or rapid tests were similar. By contrast, a plurality (41 percent) said the United States was not

doing enough to combat misinformation about the coronavirus in other countries; 28 percent said it was doing about the right amount, 18 percent, too much ([KFF 2/9-2/21](#)).

Regarding the rising cost of goods and services, 28 percent chiefly blame the pandemic ([NBC 3/18-3/22](#)). In terms of the rise in gas prices specifically, just 5 percent mostly blame increased demand as the pandemic eases ([Quinnipiac 3/24-3/28](#)).

K-12 Education

In results from a sample of about 700 K-12 public schools, 5 percent in mid-February reported temporarily delaying the reopening of classes after winter break because of the coronavirus. Thirteen percent reported switching from in-person learning to remote learning at some point since returning from winter break. (Note, data reported in this section are described as “experimental” and to be “interpreted with caution.”)

Three-quarters said there were students quarantining at home because of the virus at the time of the survey, down from 94 percent in January. Fewer, 32 percent, reported having teachers or staff quarantining at home. Half of schools offered coronavirus testing for staff with symptoms and 37 percent did so for staff with no symptoms. About a quarter reported using the Test-to-Stay program.

Among other strategies, 80 percent increased how often surfaces were cleaned, 78 percent added additional handwashing or hand sanitizer stations, 64 percent spaced desks and seating at least three feet apart and 62 percent encouraged social distancing during recess or physical education. Fifty-eight percent required students to wear masks at the time ([IES 2/8-2/22](#)).

Separately, in early March, 42 percent of parents with children attending K-12 school in person said their child’s school required masks for students. An additional 42 percent said the school required masks earlier in the school year, but not at the time of the survey.

Among the more than eight in 10 parents whose child experienced mask requirements at some point during the school year, views were split, 51-47 percent, on whether or not masks were necessary to keep children safe from the coronavirus and its variants. Seventy-one percent of Democrats viewed masks as necessary vs. 27 percent of Republicans.

Forty-six percent said wearing a mask at school hurt their child’s social learning and interactions, 41 percent said the same about their child’s general school experience, 39 percent their mental and emotional health and 34 percent their education more generally. Just one in 10 thought masks helped their child in any of these aspects, while the rest thought they had no impact.

Twenty-two percent of parents whose child was required to wear a mask during the school year said they’d gone to a public meeting or demonstration, contacted a school official or other public official or written an op-ed or letter to the editor to express their views about the rule ([Politico-Harvard 3/1-3/7](#)).

Adolescent Mental Health

A survey conducted in the first six months of 2021 finds that 37 percent of high school students reported experiencing poor mental health (i.e., stress, anxiety or depression) always or most of the time during the pandemic. Forty-four percent reported that they felt so sad or hopeless nearly every day for at least a two-week period that they stopped doing some usual activities. One in five seriously considered attempting suicide, including 9 percent who said they had attempted it in the previous 12 months. Students who felt close to people at school or who were virtually connected with others were significantly less apt to have experienced poor mental health and suicidality. Male students also were less apt to experience these thoughts than female students and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, other or questioning.

Among other results, two-thirds of high school students found it more difficult to complete their schoolwork since the beginning of the pandemic. Fifty-five percent said a parent or guardian swore at them, insulted them or put them down at some point during the pandemic and 11 percent suffered physical abuse from a parent or guardian. Prevalence of emotional abuse reached 74 percent, and physical abuse 20 percent, among students who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual ([CDC, 2021](#)).

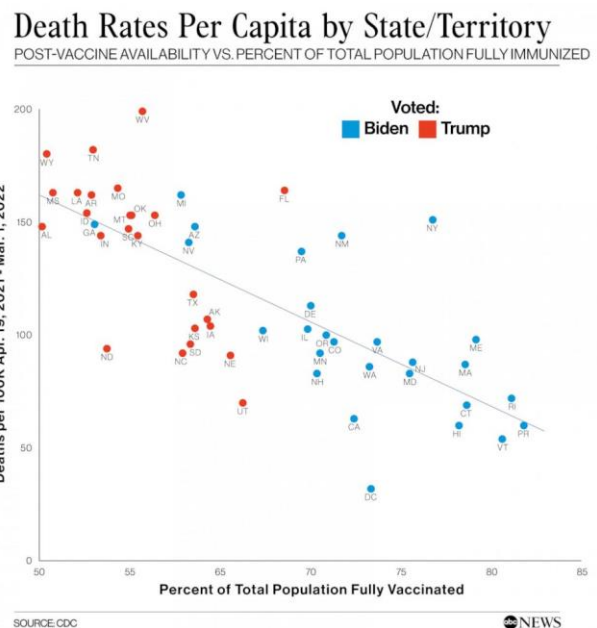
Vaccines

Vaccine uptake among adults remains flat at 78 percent in one survey and 76 percent in two others, each unchanged since fall ([Monmouth 3/10-3/14](#), [AP-NORC 3/17-3/21](#), [NBC 3/18-3/22](#)).

Two polls find that about half of adults overall, 48 and 51 percent, have received a booster shot, corresponding to approximately 62 and 66 percent of those who have received at least one dose ([Monmouth 3/10-3/14](#), [NBC 3/18-3/22](#)). Booster uptake has risen moderately since January, up a slight 3 points among all adults in one poll and 6 points in another ([Monmouth 3/10-3/14](#), [NBC 3/18-3/22](#)).

The CDC's estimate of overall uptake among adults is far higher, [88 percent](#). At the same time, the agency estimates that 41 percent of partially vaccinated adults have received a booster dose. Challenges linking first, second and third doses are a [noted](#) problem. (On March 29, the [FDA authorized](#) a second booster dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for adults 50 and older and some immunocompromised people.)

The 10 states with the lowest vaccination rates had an average of 153 coronavirus deaths per 100,000 residents from April 19, 2021, to March 1, 2022, compared with 82.2 in the 10 states with the highest vaccination rates. The states with the highest rates all



voted for Biden in 2020, while nine of the 10 with the lowest vaccination rates voted for Donald Trump ([ABC News 3/18](#)).

Religious Exemptions

Two-thirds of Americans think most people who claim religious objections to a coronavirus vaccine “are just using religion as an excuse to avoid the vaccine,” while 31 percent think people with religious objections “sincerely believe getting a COVID-19 vaccine is against their religion.” Regardless, 65 percent say employers should allow workers with religious objections to keep their jobs even if they don’t get vaccinated ([Pew 3/7-3/13](#)).

Employment

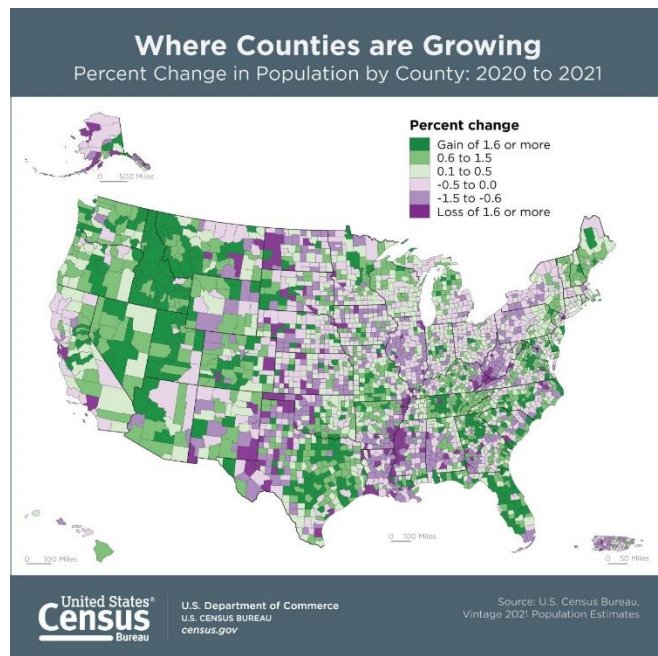
Employment remained strong, with the economy adding 431,000 jobs in March, pushing the unemployment rate down 0.2 points to 3.6 percent in preliminary data. Six million people were unemployed last month, approaching the 5.7 million in pre-pandemic February 2020. It marks the 11th consecutive month of job growth above 400,000, the longest stretch in data since 1939.

Other work-related pandemic impacts are waning. The share of workers saying they teleworked because of the pandemic is down 3.0 points in a month, to 10.0 percent. The number who were unable to work because their employer closed or lost business because of the pandemic fell from 4.2 million in February to 2.5 million last month. Fewer were prevented from looking for work because of the pandemic, down from 1.2 million to 874,000 ([BLS 4/1](#)).

County-level Deaths & Migration

According to newly released data from the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly three-fourths of counties in the United States (2,297) reported more deaths than births from July 2020 to July 2021, up from 55.5 percent in 2020 and 45.5 percent in 2019. The agency notes that increased mortality from the coronavirus exacerbated longer-term trends such as lower fertility rates and an aging population.

The data also point to shifts in domestic migration patterns. Two-thirds of counties experienced positive domestic migration from mid-2020 to mid-2021, offsetting natural population decreases in these areas and contributing to overall population growth in 58 percent of counties. There was a general shift from more populous counties to medium and small counties, with U.S. micro areas (i.e., those with a core city of less



than 50,000 residents) growing slightly faster than U.S. metro areas, bucking pre-pandemic trends.

Counties with the largest positive domestic migration were Arizona's Maricopa County (46,866), Riverside County, California (31,251), and Collin County, Texas (30,191). Los Angeles County had the most net domestic migration loss (179,757), followed by New York County (i.e., Manhattan) (113,642). ([U.S. Census Bureau 3/24](#)).

International Results

In Chile, 29 percent are worried about catching the coronavirus, down 12 points this week and 32 points since January to the fewest since early March 2020 ([Cadem 3/23-3/25](#)).

In South Korea, 38 percent approve of the government's response to the coronavirus, down 7 points since mid-February to the fewest in data since February 2020. In an open-ended question, those rating the response negatively are most apt to cite lack of control over the spread (23 percent), insufficient regulations (20 percent), inconsistency (9 percent) and responding late (8 percent) ([Gallup South Korea 3/22-3/24](#)).

In Bulgaria, 21 percent of adults who have yet to get a coronavirus vaccine say it's because they've already been infected with the virus. Nineteen percent apiece think the vaccines may be harmful, are unsure about its side effects or say they don't trust the vaccines at all, in an open-ended question. Among those who did get the vaccine, the top-cited reasons are protection from the coronavirus (27 percent), caring for family and others (18 percent) or faith in science and medicine (14 percent). Most vaccinated adults, 61 percent, say they'd probably get additional boosters in the future ([Gallup Bulgaria 2/24-3/1](#)).

In newly released February results, the share of Russians ruling out vaccination held essentially steady since November, 35 percent. Fifty percent reported having been vaccinated, up 4 points. Thirty-two percent were afraid of contracting the coronavirus, down 13 points. More, 49 percent, were concerned about getting infected or infecting others through touching and kissing; 45 percent continued to restrict physical contact such as handshakes and hugs ([Levada 1/17-2/21](#)).

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

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