

COVID-19 Survey Summary: July 17, 2020

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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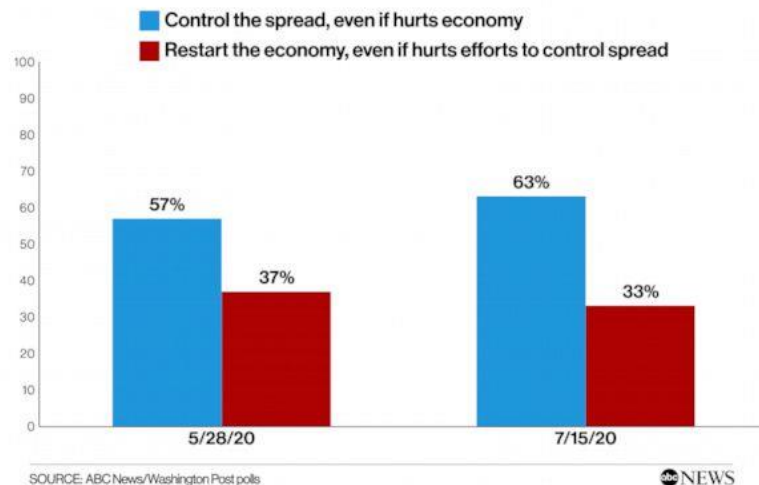
Grappling with the Surge

As coronavirus cases surge across much of the country, concern about reopening the economy and resuming normal activity continued to grow this week amid rising perceptions of risk.

Americans by a broad 63-33 percent think it's more important to control the spread of the coronavirus than to restart the economy, a gap that's widened from 57-37 percent in late May, when cases were on a downward trajectory ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)).

Seven in 10 think returning to their pre-coronavirus life right now would be at least a moderate risk to their health and well-being, including 38 percent who think it would be a large risk, up 10 percentage points in the past month to match its high in mid-April.

Pandemic Priorities



Moreover, May and early June increases in the number of people who reported engaging in a variety of once-normal activities outside the home have stalled, with more now seeing such behaviors as highly risky:

- Forty-seven percent report visiting friends and relatives in the past week, essentially unchanged since mid-June after previous growth. A third now view in-person gatherings of friends and family outside their home as a large risk to their health and well-being, up 6 points in two weeks.

- Three in 10 say they've gone out to eat in the past week, also flat since mid-June. Thirty-seven percent see dining in at a restaurant as a large risk, up 10 points in two weeks.
- Forty-five percent have visited a non-grocery retail store and 17 percent have visited a salon, barbershop or spa in the past week, again little changed after earlier increases. Three in 10 see going to a salon, barbershop or spa as a large risk, up 8 points in two weeks. Nineteen percent think shopping at retail stores is a large risk, up a slight 4 points.
- Twenty-seven percent of employed adults see returning to their normal place of work as a large risk to their health, up 7 points in two weeks ([Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)).

Just 13 percent of registered voters say people should be going to large gatherings right now, 18 percent think people should be going to bars and a third say people ought to be dining indoors at restaurants ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)).

Partisanship remains a major factor in these views. Republicans are a vast 56 points more likely than Democrats to think it's more important to reopen the economy than contain the spread of the virus, 63 vs. 7 percent; 52 points more apt to think people should be dining indoors at restaurants at this time, 64 vs. 12 percent; and 29 points less apt to think it would be a large risk to return to their pre-coronavirus life, 23 vs. 52 percent ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#); [Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#); [Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)).

Contact and Concern

More than half of registered voters, 53 percent, say they or someone they personally know has been infected by the coronavirus, up 9 points since last month to a new high ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)). Fewer, 41 percent of Americans, know someone in the United States who has tested positive for the virus, up a slight 4 points from two weeks ago. Fourteen percent have been tested themselves, and 16 percent know someone who has died from the virus ([Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)).

Racial and ethnic disparities persist. Two-thirds of Black registered voters say they personally know someone who has had the virus (or have had it themselves), compared with 53 percent of Hispanics and half of whites ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)). Twenty-three percent of Blacks and 21 percent of Hispanics know someone who has died from it, vs. 13 percent of whites ([Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)).

Using national survey data collected from 2014 to 2018, an analysis of possible reasons for the racial and ethnic disparities in coronavirus hospitalizations and mortality among non-institutionalized adults (those not living in nursing homes, long-term care or correctional facilities) estimates that Blacks at high risk of severe illness are 1.6 times as likely as whites to live in households with people who work in the health sector (and therefore are at higher risk of exposure). The study also finds that 65 percent of Hispanic adults at high risk of severe illness likely live in households with at least one person who has to leave the house for work, compared with 57 percent of Blacks and 47 percent of whites ([Selden & Berdahl, 2020](#)).

Concern about contracting the virus remains high: Two-thirds of Americans are at least somewhat worried that they or someone in their immediate family might become infected with the coronavirus, and an additional 5 percent say this already has happened ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)). In another poll, 48 percent of registered voters say they are very concerned that they or someone they know will be infected; this is up 12 points since mid-June ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)).

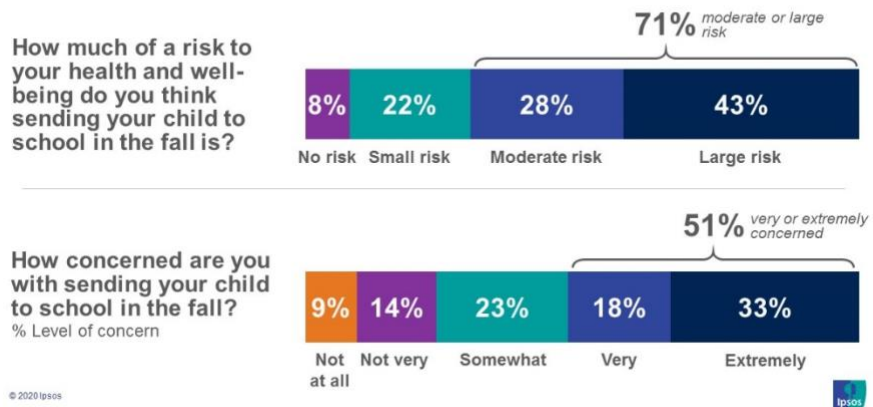
These concerns also continue to be tied to partisanship, with Democrats and those who lean Democratic 30 points more likely to be very or somewhat worried that they or someone in their family will be infected than Republicans and GOP leaners, 80 vs. 50 percent ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)).

Back to School

Just three in 10 registered voters think it will be safe to send K-12 students back to school in the fall and a third think it will be safe to send students to college, both down 9 points since mid-May. Six in 10 Republicans think sending students back to school will be safe; a third of independents and about one in 10 Democrats agree ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)).

Among parents of school-aged children, three-quarters are at least somewhat concerned about sending their child back to school in the fall, including a third who are extremely concerned about this. Seven in 10 see it as a large or moderate risk ([Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)).

Parents see sending children to school in the fall as risky; half are either very or extremely concerned at the prospect



The challenge of reopening schools extends beyond students. Using 2018 data from the [National Health Interview Survey](#), the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that a quarter of all teachers, nearly 1.5 million, are at increased risk of serious illness if infected with the coronavirus (KFF). Additionally, using data from the [American Community Survey](#), KFF estimates that about 3.3 million seniors (a high-risk group) lived in a household with a school-aged child as of 2018 (KFF).

Mask Use

Eight in ten Americans say they wear a mask all or most of the time when they're around other people outside their home, including 57 percent who do so all the time without exception ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)).

In a different question, three-quarters of registered voters say they always wear a mask “to go shopping, to work, or be around other people outside of your house,” up 11 points in the past month ([NBC/WSJ 7/9-7/12](#)). In a third approach, 62 percent say they wear a mask at all times when they leave the home, up 9 points in two weeks to a new high ([Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)).

Reported mask use is up especially among young adults (under age 30), to 61 percent, vs. 43 percent two weeks ago ([Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)). At the same time, fewer young adults, 42 percent, say they always wear a mask without exception when around other people outside the home, compared with 61 percent of their elders ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)).

Two-thirds of those living in suburban areas say they’re always wearing a mask when they leave home, up 13 points in the past two weeks. Among urban dwellers, 64 percent say they always wear a mask (+6 points from two weeks ago); it’s 47 percent in rural America (+3 points).

Regionally, mask use remains lowest in the Midwest, where fewer than half – 46 percent – report always wearing a mask when they leave home, but that’s up from 38 percent two weeks ago. Sixty-four percent in the South say they always wear a mask outside the home, up 11 points; it’s 66 percent in the West (+7 points) and 72 percent in the Northeast (+9 points).

Mask use has increased across partisan groups. Among Republicans, 45 percent say they always wear a mask, up from 35 percent two weeks ago. It’s 58 percent among independents (+6 points) and 78 percent among Democrats (+7 points).

Regardless of their personal use, eight in 10 say a face mask should be worn at all times within a grocery or retail store. Fewer think one always should be worn in a busy outdoor space or park (55 percent); when socializing with friends and family outside the house (44 percent), and while walking outdoors (17 percent).

Republicans are less apt than Democrats to think masks always should be worn in each of these situations. The gap is larger on wearing a mask in a busy outdoor space or park (37 vs. 72 percent) or when socializing with friends and family outside the house (27 vs. 61 percent) than it is on wearing a mask in a grocery or retail store (65 vs. 91 percent) or walking outdoors (7 vs. 26 percent) ([Axios-Ipsos 7/10-7/13](#)).

Seventy-one percent of registered voters say everyone should be required to wear a face mask in public, up 7 points since May. Ninety-five percent of Democrats back this, as do 72 percent of independents, vs. 41 percent of Republicans. Seventy-three percent think President Trump should wear a mask in public, up 6 points, with similar partisan gaps ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)).

Eight in 10 overall believe masks or face coverings are effective in slowing the spread of the coronavirus, including 59 percent of Republicans, and rising to 83 percent of independents and 94 percent of Democrats ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)). Instead, reluctance to wear a mask is more tied to concern about catching the virus – among those who are very worried that they or someone in their family might become infected, 81 percent always wear a mask around others outside their home, compared with 22 percent of those who are not at all worried ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)).

Economic Impacts

Half of all U.S. households report having lost employment income as a result of the pandemic, a numerical high. Although that's little changed from 48 percent in mid-June, it's been creeping up the past three weeks. Moreover, for the second week in a row, 35 percent expect a loss of employment income in the next four weeks, up from a low of 31 percent in mid-June before the recent surge took hold. Areas where expectations of income loss hit a high this or last week include many of those experiencing a record number of cases, including Florida, Texas, Alabama and Montana, as well as the greater Houston, Phoenix and San Francisco metro areas ([U.S. Census Bureau 7/2-7/7](#)).

Health Care Attitudes

In a late June poll conducted for an association of hospitals, fewer than four in 10 registered voters said hospitals have what they need "to battle the coronavirus crisis," vs. 55 percent who said they do not yet have the materials and technology they need. Three-quarters supported \$100 billion in federal relief funding for hospitals and health care providers to help offset the costs associated with the pandemic, including 89 percent of Democrats, 76 percent of independents and 60 percent of Republicans. Among other proposals tested, majorities supported providing financial assistance to help badly impacted businesses continue to provide health insurance to their employees (92 percent); tax-free child care, housing, transportation and education benefits to health care providers working in hospitals who are caring for coronavirus patients (85 percent); "protecting health care providers... from lawsuits related to the coronavirus" (79 percent); and "protecting hospitals from lawsuits related to shortages of equipment or personnel during the pandemic" (68 percent) ([Coalition to Protect America's Healthcare 6/25-6/28](#)).

Government Response

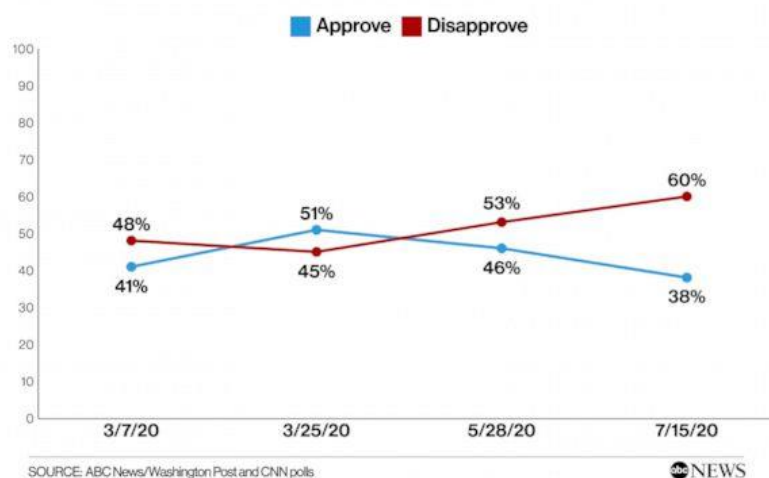
Several polls this week show approval of Trump's handling of the pandemic at new lows.

In one, 38 percent of Americans approve of his response, down from 46 percent in late May and 51 percent in late March ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)).

In another, 35 percent of registered voters approve of his handling of the coronavirus response, down 7

points in the past month to a new low. Fewer, 29 percent, approve of how he is handling the reopening of schools. Sixty-two percent think Trump is hurting rather than helping efforts to slow the spread of the virus, and nearly as many, 59 percent, think presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden would do a better job ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)). A third poll, similarly, has

Trump's Handling of the Coronavirus Outbreak



approval of Trump’s handling of the coronavirus at 37 percent among registered voters, down 6 points in a month ([NBC/WSJ 7/9-7/12](#)).

Just 34 percent place a great deal or good amount of trust in what Trump says about the pandemic; nearly half (46 percent) don’t trust what he says at all ([ABC/Post 7/12-7/15](#)). Trust in the information Trump provides is a similar 30 percent among registered voters in another poll, compared with 65 percent trust in the information Dr. Anthony Fauci provides and 61 percent trust in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control ([Quinnipiac 7/9-7/13](#)).

While governors generally have fared better than Trump in ratings of their handling of the outbreak, these assessments fell during the past month, driven mostly by worsening views of the performance of Republican governors:

- The number who agree (4 or 5 on a 5-point agreement scale) that their governor cares about the safety and health of their community is down from 64 percent in early June to 59 percent now. Agreement that the governor has communicated a clear plan of action, or keeps the public informed about the pandemic, likewise is down by 5 points apiece, from 56 to 51 percent and 55 to 50 percent, respectively.
- In the 26 states led by a Republican, the number who agree that their governor has communicated a clear plan of action declined by 11 points, from 54 to 43 percent. This view did not change in states led by Democratic governors (57 percent in early June, 58 percent now). Similarly, the number who agree that their governor cares about the safety and health of their community dropped 8 points in Republican-led states, from 61 to 53 percent, while holding steady in states led by Democrats (where 65 percent agree).
- Declining ratings of Republican governors are notable among independents, with the number who agree that their GOP governor keeps residents informed, has communicated a clear plan of action and cares about the safety of their community falling 20, 19 and 13 points, respectively ([Gallup 6/29-7/5](#)).

When it comes to the election in November, 57 percent of registered voters say they’re more likely to vote for a congressional candidate who focuses more on controlling the spread of the coronavirus, vs. a quarter who say they’re more likely to vote for a candidate who focuses more on reopening businesses ([NBC/WSJ 7/9-7/12](#)).

State Results

In New Jersey, a poll conducted in the second half of June found residents divided on school policy – 46 percent said K-12 schools should reopen “with protective measures in place” while 42 percent said online learning should continue until a treatment or vaccine becomes available. At the same time, just about a quarter, 23 percent, said they would visit a movie theater as long as a coronavirus vaccine and/or treatment remains unavailable; 39 percent said they would visit a house of worship, 45 percent an indoor mall, 51 percent a personal care businesses that provides hair services or massages and 59 percent a restaurant, including those that offer outdoor dining.

When a vaccine becomes available, half said schools and colleges should make it mandatory for all students; 44 percent said it should be a matter of personal choice.

Fifty-six percent said it's acceptable for the state to borrow money through bonds and federal loans to mitigate the record budget deficit caused by the pandemic. Fifty-two percent said reducing the number of state employees would be acceptable. Fewer than half viewed other options as acceptable, including consolidating school districts to reduce education spending (38 percent), reducing state contributions to the public worker pension system (31 percent) and cutting services (29 percent) ([Fairleigh Dickinson 6/18-6/30](#)).

Overall, two-thirds of New Jersey residents approved of Gov. Phil Murphy's managing of the state's response to the coronavirus, while 36 percent approved of Trump's managing the nation's response ([Fairleigh Dickinson 6/18-6/30](#)). In neighboring Pennsylvania, two-thirds of registered voters think Gov. Tom Wolf has done a good job handling the outbreak, compared with 42 percent who say Trump has done a good job ([Monmouth 7/9-7/13](#)).

International

In Brazil, which trails only the United States in number of cases, a vast majority – 85 percent – say they would get a vaccine if it were available to them. Nearly half (47 percent) think the situation has become more serious in the past two weeks, while just 18 percent say it has become less serious (and 28 percent say it has remained the same). Fifty-one percent do not feel safe going to public places, up slightly from 47 percent at the end of May. The number who say they or someone close to them has contracted COVID-19 has edged up 4 points in two weeks to 42 percent.

For the fourth month in a row, more than six in 10 Brazilians say they have not paid any bills in the past month because of the pandemic. Sixty-four percent say their income has been negatively impacted, although this is down from 72 percent in late April. In contrast with President Jair Bolsonaro, who has said the economic consequences of the coronavirus may be more harmful than the health risks, 66 percent say it's more serious that people are sick and at risk of dying as opposed to losing their jobs and income. Still, the poll – which started data collection the day Bolsonaro announced he'd contracted COVID-19 – finds no change in assessments of his administration; four in 10 approve and 47 percent disapprove ([DataPoder360 7/6-7/8](#)).

In hard-hit Mexico, support for reopening businesses and returning to normal activities fell from 44 to 37 percent in the past month. Almost half, 46 percent, think the virus still is in the growth stage in the country, vs. 30 percent who think it's at its peak now and 19 percent who think it's on its way out. Forty-seven percent personally know someone who has been infected with the virus, including 18 percent who say someone in their family has contracted it. Thirty-two percent know someone who has died; 11 percent say it was a family member. While the number who report knowing someone with the virus is little changed since late June (+4 points), the number who report knowing someone who has died increased 7 points in the same period.

Fifty-six percent of Mexicans say they wear a face mask in public places all the time and an additional 27 percent do so most of the time. Eighty-seven percent agree that masks should be

made mandatory. Thirty-six percent rate President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's government positively when it comes to handling the pandemic, 35 percent rate it negatively, and 28 percent say it's neither good nor bad – but just 17 percent believe the information the government gives about the number of people infected “a lot”, 39 percent believe it somewhat and 43 percent believe it little or not at all ([El Financiero 7/10-7/11](#)).

In Chile, which ranks sixth in coronavirus cases, just a third approve of the government's handling of the crisis, essentially unchanged in the past week. Seven in 10 say they've had to face significant decreases in household income and three-quarters think their social position is at risk because of the economic crisis. Four in 10 are not earning enough to make ends meet; as many have received economic assistance from the state or expect to ([Cadem 7/8-7/10](#)).

Worries have rebounded sharply in Greece, which recently opened its borders. Concern about the virus peaked at 78 percent in April, fell to 63 percent in May and dropped further to 44 percent in June. It's now up 20 points, to 64 percent ([Pulse RC 7/6-7/8](#)). Majorities also express fears about the economic consequences of the pandemic – 75 percent are very fearful that companies will face serious financial problems and 56 percent are very fearful that the pandemic could lead to serious fiscal measures (e.g., austerity, wage cuts, pension reductions). Fifty-seven percent are pessimistic about the Greek economy and half are pessimistic about their personal financial situation ([Pulse RC 7/2-7/6](#)).

In Great Britain, 52 percent of those who've left the house say they've worn a face covering, up 9 points in the past week. Despite the gradual lift in lockdown restrictions, just 13 percent say they'd be comfortable going to a movie theater at this time and two in 10 would be comfortable eating indoors at a restaurant (more, 37 percent, would be comfortable dining outdoors). A quarter say they're likely to go on holiday in the United Kingdom, while just 9 percent say they're likely to go abroad ([Office for National Statistics 7/2-7/5](#)).

In Kazakhstan, concerns were down in a poll conducted in early to mid-June; 45 percent were afraid of getting infected, vs. 59 percent in April. Three-quarters had their family income reduced during the pandemic. Still, three-quarters said the government has handled the situation well, seven in 10 thought the spread of the virus was under control and nearly two-thirds thought life in Kazakhstan would return to normal by the end of the year ([BISAM 6/8-6/15](#)).

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

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