

## COVID-19 Survey Summary: July 24, 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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COVID-19 surveys released in the past week indicate deteriorating conditions on a range of issues related to the pandemic. For the first time since March, a majority of Americans say stress and worry about the situation is negatively impacting their mental health. Worry about catching the disease is up 17 percentage points to its highest since March. Views that the situation is worsening have more than doubled since early June, from 31 to 66 percent. Confidence that lost jobs will be recovered has dropped from 78 percent in April to 52 percent now. Trust in information about the pandemic from the federal government has fallen from 53 to 35 percent. Teachers are broadly concerned, and parents conflicted, about vexing back-to-school choices.

## Back to School?

Seventy-one percent of Americans think public schools in their area need more resources to comply with public health recommendations for reopening (KFF 7/14-7/19). Specifically in terms of reopening K-12 schools for in-person instruction, most see a variety of measures as essential, including:

- Requiring daily disinfecting throughout the building (81 percent);
- Requiring all students and staff wear face masks (69 percent);
- Requiring students and staff to have their temperature checked daily before entering (66 percent);
- Rearranging classrooms to allow students to be six feet apart (63 percent); and
- Using a combination of in-person and virtual learning to reduce the number of students in the building at one time ( 60 percent) (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

Given the range of scenarios, results on whether and how schools should reopen depend to some extent on how options are posed and subsequently grouped.

In one question, 55 percent of Americans oppose public schools in their community reopening with in-school instruction in the fall, while 44 percent support reopening. Among parents with children who typically attend school, 44 percent say they're willing to send their child to school (ABC/Ipsos 7/22-7/23).

In another gauge, 63 percent say "it is better to open schools later to make sure the risk of getting coronavirus is as low as possible, even if this means some students will fall behind academically or miss out on other services that schools provide and some parents will not be able to return to work," while about half as many, 32 percent, say "it is better to open schools sooner so parents can work and students won't miss out on learning and other services schools provide, even if there is some risk of students,

The public views a number of measures as essential in order to reopen schools Percent of adults


Question: How important are each of the following measures for reopening K-12 schools for in-person instruction? Source: AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,057 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

AP NORC teachers, and staff getting coronavirus" (KFF 7/14-7/19).

Given more options, 15 percent of registered voters say their local public schools should "reopen fully in-person as usual" this fall, 21 percent think schools should "open in-person with social distancing and masks," 31 percent want a mix of in-person and remote learning and a quarter think schools should be fully remote. This is summarized as "two-thirds want children to attend public schools this fall in person, to some extent" (Fox News 7/12-7/15).

In another question with multiple response options, among all adults, 8 percent say $\mathrm{K}-12$ schools should open for in-person instruction as usual, 14 percent say they should open "with minor adjustments," 46 percent would open "with major adjustments" and 31 percent don't think they should open at all for in-person instruction. This is summarized as a "majority of Americans think K-12 schools should either open with major adjustments, or not open at all" (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

Concern among teachers has grown sharply. Fifty-seven percent of K-12 teachers say they're very concerned about being exposed to coronavirus at their place of work, up from 29 percent in May. For comparison, among all other workers, 21 percent are very concerned about exposure, up from 13 percent in the same time period. Three-quarters of teachers say they would prefer to work remotely as much as possible once restrictions on businesses and school closures are lifted, up from 57 percent in June (Gallup 6/29-7/12).

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If schools do reopen in-person, broad majorities of parents with children enrolled in school say they'd be at least somewhat worried about teachers and staff getting sick from the coronavirus ( 79 percent), children not complying with physical distancing practices ( 73 percent) and their child's school not being able to comply with recommendations for sanitizing and social distancing ( 66 percent). Seven in 10 say they would worry about their children or other family members getting sick with the virus.

At the same time, if schools do not reopen for in-person learning in the fall, two-thirds of parents say they would be at least somewhat worried about their children falling behind in social or emotional development ( 67 percent) or academically ( 65 percent). Roughly half would worry about losing income because they can't go to work outside the home ( 51 percent) or not being able to pay enough attention to their kids while working from home ( 47 percent). Four in 10 would worry about their child not getting needed social services that they normally get at school, 31 percent about not having access to the technology needed for online learning and a quarter about their child not having enough food to eat.

Parents of color are particularly worried about each of these concerns. For example, compared with white parents, they're 36 points more likely to be worried about their child getting sick with coronavirus if schools reopen ( 91 vs .55 percent) and 24 points more likely to be worried about losing income if schools don't open their doors in the fall ( 65 vs. 41 percent).

Nearly half of parents of color are worried about not having the technology needed for online learning and 44 percent are worried that their child won't have enough to eat, compared with 17 and 9 percent of white parents. Despite this, parents of color are 25 points more likely than white parents to think it's better to open

## Most Parents, Especially Parents Of Color, Think It Is Better To Wait To Open Schools

AMONG PARENTS OF A CHILD WHO NORMALLY ATTENDS SCHOOL: Which comes closer to your view? schools later to reduce the risk of coronavirus spread (76 vs. 51 percent) (KFF 7/147/19).

Like most coronavirus-related attitudes, views about reopening schools differ by partisanship:

- Seventy-nine percent of Republicans support reopening public schools in their area for in-person instruction in the fall, while a virtually identical 78 percent of Democrats oppose it (ABC/Ipsos 7/22-7/23).

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- Nearly nine in 10 Democrats and six in 10 independents think it's better for schools to open later to minimize the risk of coronavirus while six in 10 Republicans think it's better for schools to open sooner so parents can work and students won't miss out on learning and other services schools provide (KFF 7/14-7/19).
- Republican registered voters are far more likely than Democrats to think their local public schools should reopen to some extent, 84 vs. 55 percent, while Democrats are nearly four times as likely to think they should be fully remote, 38 vs. 10 percent (Fox News 7/12-7/15).
- About 9 in 10 Democrats say requiring students and staff to wear masks is essential to reopening K-12 schools, compared with about half of Republicans; and Democrats are about twice as likely as Republicans to think using a mix of in-person and virtual instruction to reduce the number of students in buildings is essential for reopening, 77 vs. 39 percent (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).


## Health Impacts

For the first time in data since March, a majority of Americans, 53 percent, say stress or worry related to the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health - up 14 points since May. Twenty-six percent say it's had a "major" negative impact, up from 12 percent.

More than half, 52
percent, also say
they have
experienced at least
one of six stress-
related problems
because of their worries about the pandemic in the past two months, including difficulties sleeping (36 percent), poor appetite or

Adults Increasingly Report That Worry And Stress Related To Coronavirus Has Had A Negative Impact On Their Mental Health
Percent who say they feel that worry or stress related to coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health:

80\%


SOURCE: KFF Heath Tracking Polks. See topine for full question wording
overeating ( 32 percent), difficulty controlling their temper ( 18 percent), frequent headaches or stomach aches ( 18 percent), increased alcohol or drug use ( 12 percent) or worsening chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure ( 12 percent).

Younger adults, women, Blacks and those who've had difficulty paying household bills in the past three months are particularly apt to report that stress and worry related to the pandemic has taken a toll (KFF 7/14-7/19).

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Recently released results from a late June/early July survey illustrate ways in which economic burdens brought about by the pandemic are adversely impacting mental and emotional wellbeing. For example:

- Americans who have lost their job because of the coronavirus are more likely than others to say they sometimes feel isolated from others ( 60 vs. 44 percent) and lack companionship (54 vs. 39 percent).
- Four in 10 of those who had to delay paying bills because of the pandemic say they are "not too happy," as do 36 percent of those who have lost savings, 32 percent of those who have lost a job and 30 percent of those who have lost income. Fewer than a quarter of those who have not experienced these hardships say the same.
- Those who've had to risk exposing themselves to the virus at work are 11 points less likely than others to say they often felt things were going their way in the past four weeks, 35 vs . 46 percent.
- Those who have had to delay bill payments, who risked exposure at work or who lost income or savings are more likely than others to report that they felt unable to control the important things in life and that difficulties were piling so high they couldn't overcome them (NORC 6/227/6).

Delaying paying bills, risking exposure, and losing income or savings are associated with more stress.
Percent of American adults who say they often or very often...


## Contact and Concern

Forty-six percent of Americans now say they know someone in the United States who has tested positive for the coronavirus, up 5 points in the past week. Fourteen percent know someone who has died from the virus, essentially unchanged since last week, while 17 percent have been tested themselves, up 6 points in a month (Axios-Ipsos 7/17-7/20).

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Half of Americans are extremely or very worried that they or someone in their family might contract the coronavirus, up 17 points in the past month to levels last seen in late March (APNORC 7/16-7/20). Two-thirds view the outbreak as a major threat to the health of the U.S. population as a whole (Pew 7/13-7/19). Sixty-six percent also say the coronavirus situation is getting worse, up from 31 percent in early June (Gallup 7/6-7/12).

Six in 10 think the worst of the pandemic still is yet to come, up 10 points since May and triple the number who say the worst is behind us (KFF 7/14-7/19). Half of registered voters think the coronavirus is "not at all" under control in the country, up 18 points since last month (Fox News 7/12-7/15).

## Daily Life

Three-quarters think most Americans are behaving in ways that are making the country's recovery from the pandemic worse. Indeed, despite rising cases, some behavior has not changed lately: Forty-four percent say they've visited friends and relatives in the past week, 32 percent have gone out to eat and 16 percent have visited a salon, barbershop or spa. All are about the same as in the past few weeks (Axios-Ipsos 7/17-7/20).

Similarly, the number who say they're avoiding certain activities because of the coronavirus has held level. Seventy-three percent say they've avoided travel in the past week, 62 percent avoided going to public places such as stores and restaurants, 52 percent avoided small gatherings and 44 percent say they're largely isolating themselves from non-household members. All are essentially unchanged since early June, despite the sharp rise since then in perceptions that the situation is getting worse (Gallup 7/6-7/12).

Willingness to engage in a variety of public activities is likewise little changed since late June, including going to work ( 78 percent), getting a haircut at a barber or salon ( 67 percent), eating at a restaurant ( 54 percent), attending church ( 51 percent), going to a mall ( 51 percent), staying at a hotel (51 percent), flying on an airplane ( 33 percent), going bowling ( 31 percent), going to the gym or health club ( 28 percent), going to the movies and going to a bar ( 27 percent alike), attending a sporting event in a large stadium ( 22 percent) and attending a protest ( 17 percent). However, willingness to fly on an airplane, stay in a hotel or go to a movie theater, bar, largestadium sporting event or bowling alley have all declined at least slightly since mid-June, before the current surge in cases ( $\mathrm{ABC/Ipsos} 7 / 22-7 / 23$ ).

In addition, after two months of increases in the number of people who feel safe getting together with others, feelings of safety have slipped. For example, the number who felt safe (a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) getting together with one other person climbed from 38 percent in mid-April to 67 percent in early June, but has now dropped back to 59 percent (SSRS 7/6-7/12).

Perhaps reflecting this greater unease, the number who favor requiring Americans to limit gatherings to 10 people or fewer has increased after dropping to a low last month. Two-thirds now favor this restriction, up from 59 percent last month, though still well below the 84 percent who favored it in late March (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

Asked at what point they might feel safe enough to attend large public events such as sporting events, concerts, theme parks or festivals, a late June poll found 18 percent of Americans were ready to go "right now," 19 percent said they'd be willing to go when the number of cases decline, 36 percent said only after a vaccine, 21 percent when the virus is gone and 6 percent said never again (SSRS 6/23-6/29).

## Masks and Distancing

Eighty-six percent say they're wearing a mask when leaving home in response to the outbreak, up from 73 percent in May and 68 percent in April. At the same time, fewer are avoiding other people as much as possible -67 percent, down from 72 percent in May and 84 percent in April (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

Eight in 10 registered voters say they wear a mask all or most of the time when they're out in public, up from 72 percent in May. Ninety percent of Democrats and 71 percent of Republicans usually wear a mask in public. Just 6 percent of Republicans say they never wear a mask, down from 14 percent (Fox News 7/12-7/15).

However, only a third of Americans who have gone to a bar, club or other gathering place say they wore a mask when they did so, and roughly half as many say they wore a mask when visiting other people's homes or having others visit their home. Reported mask usage is most common when traveling on public transportation ( 76 percent), attending gatherings of more than 10 people ( 70 percent), shopping at grocery stores ( 68 percent) and at religious gatherings ( 58 percent). Mask wearing has increased particularly among rural residents, to 81 percent, up from 72 percent in late June (USC UAS 6/24-7/21).

In another poll, 18 percent of those who visited with friends or relatives in the past week (44 percent of all Americans) say they wore a mask at all times, and fewer than a quarter (23 percent) always maintained six feet of distance. Overall, 62 percent say they wear a mask at all times when leaving the house and 55 percent say they always maintain a distance of at least six feet from other people.

Among parents, half say their children are wearing a mask at all times when they leave the home and an additional 27 percent say they sometimes do this. Forty-five percent say their kids always maintain a distance of at least six feet from other people; 31 percent say that sometimes happens (Axios-Ipsos 7/17-7/20).

## Work Life

Four in 10 employed adults say all or nearly all of their fellow workers are currently working on site at their place of work, up from 28 percent in April. Similarly, the number of workers who say they always work remotely to avoid catching the coronavirus has declined from 52 to 38 percent, and there's been a 12-point increase in the number who say their organization is doing business with clients or customers on site, from 39 to 51 percent.

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Despite the increased on-site activity, concern about being exposed to the coronavirus on the job has held steady since May, with 47 percent of workers at least moderately concerned about this. The fact that concern has not grown may reflect a rise in safety precautions:

- Two-thirds of workers at companies doing on-site business say their employer always provides them with personal protective equipment (PPE), up 20 points since April.
- Fifty-eight percent of workers say they always wear PPE, up 15 points in the same time period.
- Fifty-one percent now say their employer is always screening customers and employees for symptoms of COVID-19 like fever and cough, up from 35 percent.

However, the number who say their company always engages in new or more frequent cleaning procedures - roughly seven in 10 - has held steady since April. And there have been slight declines in the share who say they always try to maintain six feet of distance, from 63 to 58 percent, or that their employer always enforces social distancing for employees and customers, from 55 to 51 percent (Gallup 6/29-7/12).

## Economic Impacts

More than half of Americans (53 percent) say they've experienced some sort of income loss because of the pandemic (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20). Four in 10 say someone in their household has had problems paying bills or affording medical care or basic expenses in the past three months; 22 percent say this was a direct result of the pandemic (KFF 7/14-7/19).

Relief may not be on the near horizon; results from a longitudinal survey suggests the job growth seen in May and June has stalled (USC UAS 6/24-7/21). Indeed, new unemployment claims were up this week for the first time since late March (BLS 7/127/18). And among those who say they or someone in their household has been laid off because of the pandemic, fewer now think they're likely to get those jobs back once it is over - 52 percent now


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think that person definitely or probably will be able to return to their job (or already has), down from 63 percent in June and a peak of 78 percent in April (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

A poll conducted in late June and early July further documents the disparate impact of the pandemic on communities of color. Compared with whites, Hispanic and Black people are more likely to report they have lost income ( 21 vs. 42 and 32 percent), lost savings ( 23 vs. 39 and 33 percent) or delayed bill payments ( 14 vs. 38 and 35 percent) because of the coronavirus. In addition, Hispanics are more likely than whites to say they've had to risk exposure at work because they couldn't afford to stay home ( 31 vs. 19 percent).

Those with children under 18 at home also are more apt than others to report adverse impacts of the pandemic, including being more likely to have had to change their work routine ( 36 vs .24 percent), lose savings ( 35 vs .24 percent), put themselves at risk of exposure to the virus at work ( 31 vs. 18 percent) and having had to delay bill payments ( 30 vs. 17 percent) (NORC 6/22-7/6).

Reopening
Seventy-two percent of Americans want their community to use restrictions to reduce the spread of the coronavirus even if it hurts the economy, while 27 percent prioritize reopening the economy. However, support for one such restriction - requiring bars and restaurants to close continues to wane; 54 percent now favor this, down from 62 percent in May and three-quarters in March and April.

Partisanship dominates these views - 92 percent of Democrats favor restrictions to reduce the spread of the virus while 53 percent of Republicans prefer removing restrictions to help the economy. Three-quarters of Democrats favor closing bars and restaurants, compared with 45 percent of independents and a third of Republicans (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

Given competing demands, 45 percent think their state is moving at about the right pace in easing social distancing restrictions and reopening businesses; three in 10 think their state is moving too
quickly and 22 percent say it's opening too slowly. Again, the partisan gaps are vast, with Democrats almost three times as likely as Republicans to think their state is moving too quickly (43 vs. 16 percent), while

Nearly Half Of Adults Say Their State Is Moving At About The Right Pace In Easing Social Distancing Restrictions


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Republicans are three times more likely to think their state is moving too slowly ( 31 vs .10 percent).

In states deemed coronavirus hotspots as of July 18 (see criteria), four in 10 think their state is reopening too quickly, compared with 24 percent in non-hotspot states (KFF 7/14-7/19).

## Government Response

Fewer than three in 10 ( 28 percent) rate the federal government's response to the pandemic positively, with nearly half saying it's been "poor." About four in 10 Republicans rate the federal government's response as fair or poor, rising to 73 percent of independents and 91 percent of Democrats. State and local governments fare better, but still fewer than half overall (46 and 48 percent, respectively) rate their response to the pandemic positively (KFF 7/14-7/19).

Similarly, about half approve of how their city or local government ( 52 percent) and state government (48 percent) are handling the coronavirus outbreak, falling to 24 percent for the federal government and 15 percent for leaders in Congress (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

Thirty-five percent of Americans have at least a fair amount of trust in the federal government to provide accurate information about the coronavirus, down from 53 percent in early April. Fiftyseven percent trust the information their state government provides, down from 72 percent, and seven in 10 trust the CDC, down from 85 percent (Axios-Ipsos 7/17-7/20).

In another example of eroding trust, three in 10 think the number of Americans dying from the coronavirus is lower than the official number reported. That's up from 23 percent in May. Thirty-one percent think the official tally is about correct; 37 percent think it's an undercount, down from 44 percent in May.

Six in 10 Republicans think the official death count is overinflated, up from 40 percent in May. Thirty-one percent of independents share this view, up from 24 percent, as do 9 percent of Democrats, essentially unchanged. By contrast, six in 10 Democrats think the official number underrepresents deaths from the virus (Axios-Ipsos 7/17-7/20).

Given possible actions Congress could take to address the pandemic, 72 percent of Americans say it should be a top priority to increase federal funding for efforts to limit the spread of the coronavirus, such as testing, contact tracing and personal protective equipment for essential workers. It's the highest-ranked option tested, and the only one on which majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents agree.

Among other items, 55 percent say Congress should make it a top priority to increase federal funding to state and local governments to help schools safely reopen, and roughly half think Congress should prioritize increasing financial assistance to those who do not get health insurance through their jobs ( 52 percent) or have lost jobs ( 49 percent) so they can pay for coverage (KFF 7/14-7/19).

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On other possible federal actions, six in 10 registered voters favor a national stay-in-place order for everyone except essential workers and 71 percent back a national mask-wearing order for indoor spaces (Fox News 7/12-7/15). Another poll similarly finds three-quarters of Americans overall support a face mask requirement (AP-NORC 7/16-7/20).

Sixty-two percent of registered voters favor continuing the extra $\$ 600$ a week in unemployment benefits currently set to expire at the end of the month, including 78 percent of Democrats and 46 percent of Republicans (Fox News 7/12-7/15). Similarly, 66 percent of all adults think extending these benefits should be an important ( 27 percent) or top priority ( 39 percent) for Congress. More, 72 percent, say a second round of stimulus checks should be an important or top priority for Congress (KFF 7/14-7/19).

## Increasing Federal Funding For Coronavirus Testing, Contact Tracing, And PPE Seen As Top Priority For Congress



## Election

In response to the pandemic, 63 percent of registered voters favor letting Americans vote by mail in the upcoming presidential election if they want to, including 82 percent of Democrats, six in 10 independents and 43 percent of Republicans. Sixty-two percent think candidates should only hold virtual events right now, while 28 percent think it's OK to campaign in front of crowds (Fox News 7/12-7/15).

## State Results

In Texas, one of the current hotspots in the country, two-thirds of registered voters personally know someone who has been diagnosed with the coronavirus, a number that's nearly doubled since early June. Three-quarters call the spread of the virus in the state a serious problem and nearly two-thirds say it's "out of control." Seven in 10 are at least somewhat concerned about the state's hospitals running out of space.

Eight in 10 approve of Gov. Greg Abbott's recent order requiring most Texans to wear a face mask in public. Fifty-three percent do not think Abbott should issue a stay-at-home order for the state, but 68 percent think he should allow local officials to issue stay-at-home orders in their areas.

Fifty-two percent think that Abbott reopened the economy too quickly; a third think he moved at about the right pace and 13 percent think he was too slow. All in all, Texans are split on the governor's handling of the coronavirus response - 47 percent approve, 48 percent disapprove. In early June, it was 56-36 percent (Quinnipiac 7/16-7/20).

In Florida, another hotspot, approval of Gov. Ron DeSantis' handling of the coronavirus response among registered voters has dropped from 50 percent in April to 38 percent now. Six in 10 think he reopened the economy too quickly, vs. 31 percent who think he acted at about the right pace. (Six percent say he moved too slowly.)

While DeSantis has resisted calls for a mask mandate, eight in 10 registered voters - including majorities across demographic groups - think people in the state should be required to wear face masks in public. Despite his push to resume in-person classes, 62 percent think it will be unsafe to send students to K-12 schools and 57 percent think it will be unsafe for students to return to colleges in the fall. Also, by 62-34 percent, most said it would be unsafe to hold the (nowcanceled) Republican National Convention in Jacksonville in August. Among Republicans, however, seven in 10 thought it would be safe.

Floridians split evenly on whether DeSantis should issue a stay-at-home order, 49-48 percent.
Overall, 83 percent say the spread of the coronavirus is a serious problem in Florida, and seven in 10 think it's "out of control." Six in 10 personally know someone who has been diagnosed with the coronavirus and three-quarters are at least somewhat concerned about hospitals running out of space (Quinnipiac 7/16-7/20).

## International Results

In Japan, two-thirds think preventing the spread of coronavirus infections should be prioritized over economic activity, while 15 percent think the economy should have priority. Sixty-four percent think the government should declare another state of emergency in specific regions over the resurgence of the virus, and 20 percent favor this move for the entire country. Six in 10 say they do not plan to travel across prefectural boundaries this summer. Just 17 percent rate Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration's response to the outbreak positively, down 9 points since June (Mainichi Shimbun 7/22).

In Great Britain, six in 10 of those who have left their home in the past week report wearing a face covering, up from 52 percent last week. Two-thirds say they met up with other people to socialize in the past week; among them, 55 percent say they always maintained social distancing while doing so. Although restrictions are easing in many areas, few of those who left the house in the past week went shopping for non-essential items ( 21 percent), went to a restaurant, café, bar or pub (10 percent) or visited a barber or hair salon ( 9 percent). Twenty-seven percent say

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they'd be comfortable eating indoors at a restaurant, up from 20 percent last week (Office for National Statistics 7/8-7/12).

Additional U.S. and international poll results are available at the COVID-19 Survey Archive.
Summary for SEAN by Langer Research Associates.

