



COVID-19 Survey Summary: August 21, 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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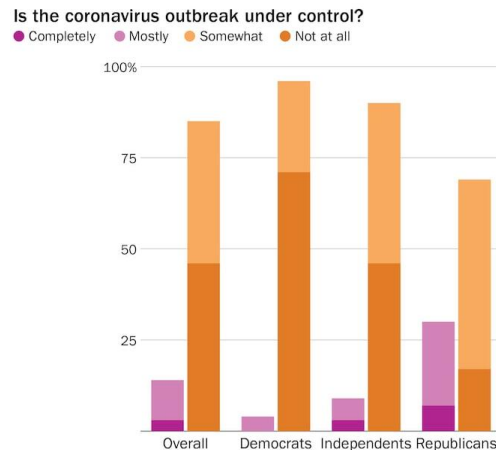
COVID-19 polls this week show declining pessimism about the coronavirus pandemic and easing perceptions of the risk of some activities, but also continued concerns about schools reopening, a rise in views that the economy is in a downturn, broad discontent with the government response and widespread worries about the upcoming election. New analyses also find that nearly half of Americans are at increased risk for coronavirus complications and further demonstrate the racial and ethnic disparities in the pandemic’s toll.

Contact and Concern

For the first time, a majority of Americans, 53 percent, know someone who has “tested positive” for the coronavirus, up 7 percentage points in two weeks to a new high ([Axios/Ipsos 8/14-8/17](#)). In a different measure, two-thirds say they know someone who has “been diagnosed” with the virus, up sharply from 40 percent in early June ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)). Two in 10 know someone who has died from it, essentially unchanged since mid-July ([Axios/Ipsos 8/14-8/17](#)).

After rising dramatically in mid-June and July amid a surge in cases, pessimism about the coronavirus situation overall declined for a second week. While a majority, 60 percent, think the situation in the United States is getting worse, that’s down 13 points since mid-July. Twenty-two percent think the situation is improving, up from 15 percent ([Gallup 8/3-8/9](#)).

At the same time, just 14 percent think the pandemic is completely or mostly under control ([ABC/Post 8/12-8/15](#)), and 55 percent think the worst of it is yet to come ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)). As with most coronavirus views, there’s a wide partisan gap on these measures. Still, though, just 30 percent of Republicans say the virus is completely or mostly under control, dropping to 9



Source: Post-ABC News polling, August 2020

percent of independents and 4 percent of Democrats ([ABC/Post 8/12-8/15](#)).

Personal worries about the virus remain widespread: Sixty-five percent are at least somewhat worried they or someone in their family may catch it, unchanged in recent months ([ABC/Post 8/12-8/15](#)). Fifty-five percent are worried that they personally will get the virus, also mostly unchanged recently ([Gallup 8/3-8/9](#)).

With daily coronavirus case counts falling from their July peak, concerns about the health care system's capacity have eased. Forty-two percent are worried about the availability of hospital supplies and services in their area, down from 49 percent in mid-July, and 38 percent are worried about the local availability of coronavirus tests, down slightly from 42 percent ([Gallup 8/3-8/9](#)).

Back to School

Nearly three-quarters remain at least somewhat concerned about schools in their community reopening too soon ([Axios/Ipsos 8/14-8/17](#)), and the public by 57-39 percent does not think K-12 schools in their area should be open for in-person instruction this fall ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).

Among parents, views are more divided – 47-52 percent on whether schools in their area should or should not open ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)). Similarly, about half of registered voters with a child in their household say they're at least somewhat comfortable sending their child to day care or school this month, with a similar share at least somewhat uncomfortable ([NBC/WSJ 8/9-8/12](#)).

Regardless, about a third of parents say their child already has gone back to school in some form. Twenty-one percent say their child is doing all-virtual learning, 11 percent have kids in an in-person setting and 2 percent report a mix of the two ([Axios/Ipsos 8/14-8/17](#)).

Schools' reopening decisions can impact mothers' employment status. An analysis using the U.S. Census Bureau's [Current Population Survey](#) estimates that working mothers with school-aged children in states with early stay-at-home orders and school closures (i.e., those that shut down the week of March 12th or earlier) were 53 percent more likely to take a leave of absence from their jobs than working mothers in states where closures happened later.

More broadly, the Census Bureau's [Household Pulse Survey](#) finds that among parents age 18 to 64 who weren't employed for pay in mid-July, 18 percent said it was because COVID-19 disrupted their childcare arrangements. That includes 24 percent of women, compared with 9 percent of men ([U.S. Census Bureau/Federal Reserve](#)).

Vaccines and Masks

In a troubling result for public health professionals, intent to get a coronavirus vaccine (if widely available at a low cost) has dropped from 66 percent in May to 56 now. The decline has occurred especially among those who plan to vote for President Trump in November. In May, 51 percent of Trump supporters said they'd try to get vaccinated; now 38 percent say so.

Forty-two percent of Republicans say they'd try to get vaccinated, as do 51 percent of independents compared with 76 percent of Democrats. Whites remain more apt to say they'd try to get vaccinated than racial and ethnic minorities, 60 vs. 49 percent, and those with a college education are more likely to say so than non-graduates, 69 vs. 50 percent.

Sixty-two percent overall are at least somewhat confident that vaccine trials are properly balancing speed and safety, but just 19 percent are very confident in this ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)). (See [last week's summary](#) for additional vaccine results.)

On masks, eight in 10 registered voters say they always wear one to go shopping, to work or be around other people outside of their house, up from 74 percent in July and 63 percent in June. However, about one in 10 of those who report always wearing a mask also admit to having forgotten to wear it in those situations sometime in the past week ([NBC/WSJ 8/9-8/12](#)).

Coronavirus Complications

Using data from the 2017 [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#), the CDC estimates that 45 percent of non-institutionalized U.S. adults (those not living in nursing homes, assisted living facilities or correctional facilities) are at increased risk for complications from the coronavirus because of underlying conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, hypertension or cancer.

The share of people at increased risk of complications increases with age, from 20 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds to 81 percent of those 80 years or older. It includes 36 percent of Hispanics, 48 percent of whites and 52 percent of Black people. In some states more than half of non-institutionalized adults are estimated to be at increased risk for COVID-19 complications, including West Virginia (59 percent), Alabama (54 percent), Arkansas and Kentucky (both 53 percent), Mississippi (both 52 percent), and Oklahoma and Tennessee (both 51 percent) ([CDC](#)).

Racial/Ethnic Disparities

Analyses of federal and state data demonstrate the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on communities of color, especially Black and Indigenous Americans. Using state data, one report finds that as of Aug. 3, relative to their share of the population, Black people accounted for more coronavirus cases in 30 of 49 states reporting racial breakdowns of case data and more coronavirus deaths in 34 of 44 states reporting mortality rates by race ([KFF](#)).

Another analysis of state-reported data through Aug. 18 finds that the death rate for Black people is more than twice as high as the rate for whites and Asians. The rates are 88.4 deaths per 100,000 people among Blacks, 73.2 among Indigenous Americans, 63.9 among Pacific Islanders, 54.4 among Latinos, 40.4 among whites and 36.4 among Asians. Adjusting the data for age widens the racial and ethnic gaps further, indicating that coronavirus is killing people of color at younger ages than it's taking the lives of whites ([APM Research Lab](#)).

Contrasting county-level coronavirus case counts through the end of June with demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau, a third analysis finds that:

- While 22 percent of counties in the country have a predominately Black population, those counties accounted for nearly half (47 percent) of all COVID-19 cases and more than half (54 percent) of all COVID-19 deaths.
- Counties that are more than 93 percent white reported the lowest rate of COVID-19 cases, with just 188 per 100,000 residents. By contrast, counties that are less than 60 percent white averaged 914 cases per 100,000 residents.
- During the recent surge in the South and West, cases increased most in counties with the fewest white residents. The recent decline in infection rates in the Northeast and Midwest primarily reflected a drop in cases in racially diverse counties.
- Racial disparities were found both before and after states began reopening their economies and occurred regardless of region or metropolitan status ([amfAR](#)).

Daily Life

After rising in June amid a second surge in coronavirus cases, perceptions of the risk of some everyday activities have eased in recent weeks:

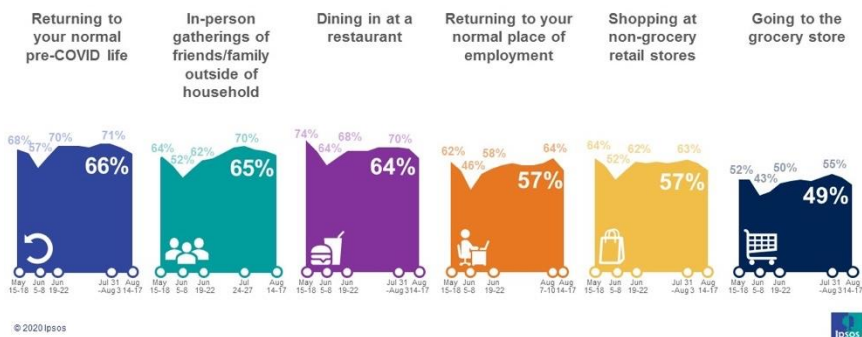
- Generally, two-thirds think returning to their pre-coronavirus life would be a large or moderate risk to their health, down 5 points from two weeks ago ([Axios/Ipsos 8/14-8/17](#)). In another measure, 52 percent say they're not comfortable returning to their regular routines right now, given what they know about the outbreak in their area. That includes a quarter who definitely don't think they'll feel comfortable resuming their routine any time this year. More than eight in 10 Republicans say they're comfortable returning to their routine now, compared with 18 percent of Democrats ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).
- In terms of specific activities, 65 percent see attending in-person gatherings of friends and family outside the house as a large or moderate risk, down 5 points in two weeks. It's 64 percent for dining in at a restaurant, 57 percent for shopping in a retail store and 49 percent for going to the grocery store, each down 6 points.

Risk perceptions of some 'typical' activities softening

Perceived risk of various activities has fallen over the last few weeks

How much of a risk to your health and well-being do you think the following activities are now?

% Large risk or Moderate risk



When it comes to interacting with others, 36 percent see close contact with family from outside their household as at least a moderate risk and 38 percent say the same about people who they saw often before the pandemic began. More see risk in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, people with kids in day care or school (both 53 percent), essential workers or those who work outside the home (56 percent) and people who travel for work (59 percent) ([Axios/Ipsos 8/14-8/17](#)).

Following high-profile outbreaks on some professional sports teams, Americans divide, 45-49 percent, on whether professional leagues should or should not be playing games this year ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).

Sleep Health

While there's evidence of increased mental health issues related to the pandemic (see our [July 31 summary](#)), a late July poll finds no rise in general stress and no damage to the nation's sleep health overall. Half the public reported at least moderate personal stress in the past seven days, essentially unchanged from December, before the pandemic struck. While stress is strongly related to sleep health, perceiving the pandemic as a crisis was only minimally related, and the overall Sleep Health Index held at its pre-pandemic levels. This study also found eight in 10 seeing the pandemic as a crisis, including 68 percent who called it a major crisis; and 80 percent following news and information about the outbreak very or somewhat closely ([National Sleep Foundation 7/17-7/27](#)).

Economic Impacts

Six in 10 Americans say the pandemic has had severe economic impacts in their community. Fewer – three in 10 – report severe economic impacts on their own personal financial situation. That rises to about four in 10 Blacks, Hispanics, lower-income Americans and young adults ([ABC/Post 8/12-8/15](#)).

Half say the coronavirus outbreak has caused some level of financial hardship for them or their household. That includes 13 percent who say it's been a severe hardship that affects their ability to maintain their standard of living. More, 36 percent, report a moderate hardship that does not jeopardize their standard of living.

Many don't think the country is out of the economic woods: Forty-three percent think the economy still is in a downturn caused by the coronavirus and conditions are continuing to worsen, up 7 points since early June. Three in 10 think conditions have stabilized but a recovery has not started yet. A quarter think the recovery has begun ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).

Ride Hailing and Food Delivery

A mid-July survey found a sharp drop in use of ride-hailing services during the pandemic, broad discomfort with this and other forms of public transportation and skepticism about safety for drivers. There was little change in use of food delivery services, and greater comfort picking up directly from a restaurant than having meals delivered.

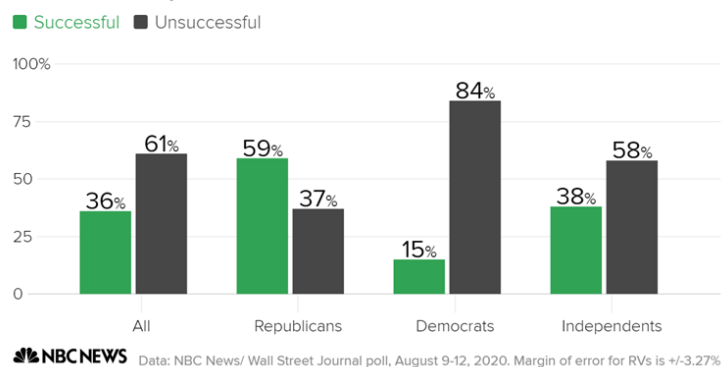
Among the results:

- Just 12 to 18 percent were extremely or very confident in the safety of working conditions for ride-hail drivers, public transport workers, restaurant and bar employees or delivery service drivers.
- Sixteen percent said they'd used a ride-hailing service such as Uber or Lyft since the pandemic began, compared with 42 percent who said they'd used them before. Among those who previously used these services, 63 percent had not done so since the outbreak began. Seventy-one percent expected to use them again a year from now.
- Just 9 to 12 percent said they were extremely or very comfortable traveling via a ride-hailing service, taking a taxi or cab or using public transportation. Discomfort peaked, naturally, among those most concerned about contracting coronavirus.
- About four in 10 said they'd used a delivery service for groceries (such as Amazon Fresh) or prepared food (such as DoorDash or GrubHub) since the pandemic began, essentially the same as said they'd used these services before. While overall use held steady, higher-income Americans were more apt than those with lower incomes to have increased their use of grocery delivery services.
- People were far more comfortable picking up food from a restaurant, 57 percent, than having it delivered, 27 percent. By a closer margin, more were comfortable going to the grocery store than using a grocery delivery service, 43 vs. 33 percent. ([UChicago Harris/AP-NORC 7/16-7/20](#)).

Government Response

Sixty-eight percent say the United States' response to the coronavirus outbreak makes them feel more embarrassed than proud ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)) and 61 percent of registered voters think the response has been unsuccessful ([NBC/WSJ 8/9-8/12](#)). The partisan gulf is wide, with 93 percent of Democrats embarrassed about the response and 84 percent viewing it as unsuccessful, while 61 percent of Republicans are proud of the U.S. response and 37 percent say it's been unsuccessful ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#); [NBC/WSJ 8/9-8/12](#)).

America's response to the coronavirus been ...



About six in 10 overall disapprove of how President Trump is handling the pandemic, essentially unchanged since last month ([ABC/Post 8/12-8/15](#); [CNN 8/12-8/15](#); [NBC/WSJ 8/9-8/12](#)). Sixty-

two percent think Trump could be doing more to fight the outbreak, up from 55 percent in April ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).

November's Election

Forty-seven percent of registered voters say the coronavirus outbreak will be extremely important in their vote, including seven in 10 of Joe Biden's supporters vs. a quarter of Trump supporters. As many say the economy will be extremely important in their vote, including 57 percent of Trump's supporters versus 37 percent of Biden's ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).

By a 22-point margin, more think that if Biden were president the country's response to the pandemic would be better than it is now than say it'd be worse, 46 vs. 24 percent. A quarter think it would be about the same ([ABC/Post 8/12-8/15](#)).

Head-to-head, Biden leads Trump on dealing with the coronavirus, 49-33 percent, while Trump leads on handling the economy, 48 vs. 38 percent. Nearly twice as many name the economy as one of the top two issues in deciding their vote as pick the coronavirus, 51 vs. 27 percent ([NBC/WSJ 8/9-8/12](#)).

Fifty-six percent are at least somewhat confident that the votes for president will be accurately cast and counted in this year's election. Just 22 percent are very confident, compared with 35 percent in 2016. If the winner can't be determined on election night because of vote-counting delays, 36 percent say this would make them less confident in the result, vs. 19 percent more confident. Forty-three percent say it would have no effect ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).

Half of Americans think it's at least moderately risky to their health and well-being to vote in person ([Axios/Ipsos 8/14-8/17](#)). Sixty-four percent are at least somewhat concerned that it will be too hard for eligible voters to cast ballots safely. Fifty-nine percent are concerned that changes made in response to the pandemic will make it too easy for people to cast fraudulent ballots.

Given these competing concerns, if they had to choose now, 43 percent of registered voters say they'd vote in person on Election Day, a third would vote by mail and 22 percent would vote early at a polling place ([CNN 8/12-8/15](#)).

International Results

In India, where new cases are rising [faster than in any other country](#), strong fears about the virus nonetheless have declined. A third strongly agree that they're afraid that either they or someone in their family may catch the coronavirus, down 10 points since late July to the fewest since early June. Fifty-two percent agree that the threat is exaggerated, vs. 47 percent at the end of July. Seventy-eight percent agree that the Indian government is handling the coronavirus well, up from 71 percent at the end of July. Nearly 4 percent report seeing flu-like symptoms in themselves, a family member or someone in their neighborhood, the most since early April ([CVoter 8/12](#)).

In Chile, where lockdowns are being lifted slowly, fear of the coronavirus is its lowest since mid-March. Fifty-six percent are worried about the possibility of being infected, down 6 points in the

past week and 18 points since mid-June. There's a 44-47 percent split in agreement with the government's plan to lift quarantine restrictions gradually. More broadly, just a third approve of the government's management of the crisis, down 5 points since last week ([Cadem 8/12-8/13](#)).

In Brazil, where the death toll recently passed 100,000, nearly half (47 percent) say President Jair Bolsonaro is not to blame for the number of deaths. Forty-one percent say he's one of the culprits, but not the main one; one in 10 calls him the main reason. More generally, half think the country did not do what was necessary to prevent this many deaths. A quarter think what was necessary was done and 22 percent think nothing could have been done.

Forty-four percent say they're leaving home to work and do other activities, but being careful, up from 34 percent in June. Forty-three percent are leaving only when necessary, down from 51 percent. Nine percent are self-isolating and 6 percent are living normally. This coincides with less dire views of the situation – 46 percent say things are improving, up 18 points since June; 43 percent say they're getting worse, down from 65 percent. Negative ratings of Bolsonaro's handling of the pandemic also have eased, from 49 to 43 percent. Approval of his administration more generally is its highest since the beginning of his term ([Datafolha 8/11-8/12](#)).

In Great Britain, fewer than three in 10 say they're likely to go on holiday in the United Kingdom this year, and just one in 10 says they're likely to go on holiday abroad, well down from levels of travel reported in 2019. Sixty-two percent say they're very unlikely to travel abroad on holiday if it means they have to self-isolate at home for two weeks when they return. One in five says they've already cancelled travel plans abroad because of the possibility of having to self-isolate, and 14 percent say they decided to holiday in the United Kingdom instead ([Office for National Statistics 8/5-8/9](#)).

A report using longitudinal data estimates that 19 percent of Britons likely were experiencing some form of depression in June, almost double the rate before the pandemic (10 percent in July 2019 to March 2020). The analysis indicates that 13 percent developed moderate to severe depressive symptoms during the pandemic. Six percent continued to experience these kinds of symptoms and 4 percent saw an improvement. Young adults, women, the disabled and those who were unable to afford an unexpected expense were the most apt to experience some form of depression during the pandemic ([Office for National Statistics 6/4-6/14](#)).

In Costa Rica, confidence in the government to manage the pandemic has declined dramatically since April, from 75 to 46 percent. Positive views of the economic and health decisions made by the government also have dropped sharply (from 71 to 27 percent and 94 to 69 percent, respectively). More than half (53 percent) say they or someone in their family have lost their job, up from 46 percent in April, and two-thirds report a reduction in working hours, up from 52 percent. Costa Ricans split on the greatest concern facing the country, with 28 percent saying it's unemployment, 25 percent the coronavirus and 19 percent the cost of living and economic situation ([CIEP-UCR 8/3-8/11](#)).

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

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