

COVID-19 Survey Summary: September 11, 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 (<u>SEAN</u>). Most surveys cited in this report are available in the <u>SEAN COVID-19 Survey Archive</u>.

<u>Sign up</u> for notice of these weekly summaries each Friday morning.

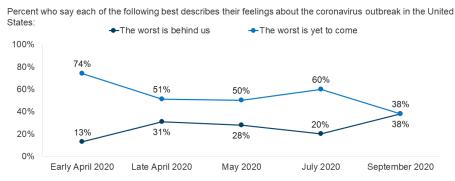
Views of the COVID-19 pandemic's trajectory in the United States continue to grow more positive, although concerns remain and many Americans express reluctance about a potential vaccine, especially if it is released before Election Day. Newly released surveys also show a drop in the number of Americans with symptoms of depression or anxiety, the most young people living with their parents since the Great Depression, declining trust in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and a surge in interest in voting early. One study shows disproportionate impacts of the pandemic in particular states; another explores challenges in households in the nation's four largest cities.

Contact and Concern

Americans now divide evenly on whether the worse of the pandemic is behind us or yet to come, a sharply less negative view than in July. The share who say the worst is yet to come has dropped

22 percentage points, from 60 percent to 38 percent, while those who say the worst is behind us has grown by 18 points, from 20 to 38 percent. An additional 19 percent don't see it as a major problem in the United States (KFF 8/28-9/3).

Fewer Adults Now Say The Worst Of The Coronavirus Outbreak Is Yet To Come



KFF

Asked another way, fewer than half (47

SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Polls. See toplines for full question wording

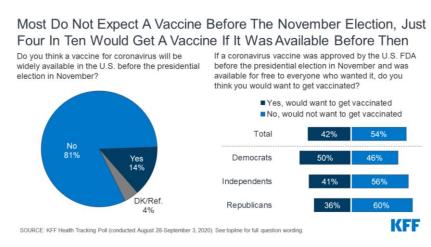
percent) now say the coronavirus situation in the United States is getting worse, down 14 points since mid-August and 26 points since mid-July. Three in 10 say it's getting better, double the number who said so in July, while about a quarter think it's staying the same, up from 12 percent in the same period (Gallup 8/17-8/30). (In a binary approach, reported last week, more say the worst is behind us than yet to come, 51 vs. 43 percent, also improved.)

The number who expect another surge in coronavirus cases in the next year has dropped from 69 percent in early June to 57 percent now. Four in 10 instead expect that the rate of new cases will continue to decline, up from 26 percent.

At the same time, 47 percent are very concerned about someone in their family becoming seriously ill from the virus, up 6 points since August to the most since April (Monmouth 9/3-9/8). Half continue to think the level of disruption to travel, school, work and public events will persist past this year, unchanged since mid-August while up sharply from 22 percent in early June, before the summer surge in cases (Gallup 8/17-8/30).

Vaccine and Treatments

Despite the CDC's notice to states to be prepared to distribute a coronavirus vaccine by November, 81 percent of Americans do not believe a vaccine will be widely available before the presidential election. If one were freely available to anyone who wanted it before Election Day, 54 percent say they would not want to get it (KFF 8/28-9/3).



That said, posing the question outside the election context, 61 percent say they would agree to be vaccinated if an FDA-approved vaccine were available right now at no cost, essentially unchanged since early August. It was 66 percent in late July (Gallup 8/17-8/30).

Mentioning the election may trigger concern about political influence in vaccine approval. Sixty-two percent are very (33 percent) or somewhat (29 percent) worried that political pressure from the Trump administration will cause the FDA to rush to approve a vaccine without ensuring that it is safe and effective.

More broadly, four in 10 think that "under the Trump administration" the FDA (39 percent) and CDC (42 percent) are paying too much attention to politics when it comes to reviewing and approving treatments for the coronavirus. A third say they're paying the right amount of attention to politics; two in 10 think they're not paying enough attention.

Forty-six percent say both organizations are not paying enough attention to the science, while 43 percent say they're paying about the right amount of attention in this regard. Fewer than one in 10 think they're paying too much attention to scientific considerations.



In partisan terms, 85 percent of Democrats express concerns about political pressure impacting the vaccine approval process, as do 61 percent of independents, compared with 35 percent of Republicans. Despite this, Democrats are more likely than independents or Republicans to say they'd get a vaccine if it were freely available before the election, 50 vs. 41 and 36 percent (KFF 8/28-9/3).

Reopening Schools

A slim majority of Americans – 52 percent – are satisfied with how their state has handled the reopening of schools, and unlike most coronavirus-related views, there is essentially no partisan division on this question. However, partisanship does inform attitudes on whether the federal government has provided enough guidance and assistance to states on reopening schools. Overall, 36 percent say the government has done enough, while 57 percent say it has not. Nearly six in 10 Republicans say the federal government has provided enough support, while 85 percent of Democrats say the opposite (Monmouth 9/3-9/8).

Daily Life

Americans' day-to-day activities have settled into something of a routine. For two months or more, 43 to 48 percent in daily tracking data say they've had visitors at their home or visited a friend, neighbor or relative's home in the past week; about two in 10 have attended gatherings of more than 10 people in the past week; and roughly one in 10 has visited a bar, club or gathering. About four in 10 say they're staying home except for essential activities or exercise, also largely unchanged in the past two months (USC UAS).

Health Impacts

According to the <u>National Center for Health Statistics</u>, the number of Americans showing symptoms of anxiety or depression has eased since mid-July; 36 percent now report such symptoms, down from 41 percent. A quarter of Americans show signs specifically of depression and 31 percent show signs of anxiety, both down by 5 points (<u>U.S. Census Bureau 8/19-8/31</u>).

Living with the Parents

The number of young adults living with their parents has reached a majority for the first time since the Great Depression. A Pew Research Center analysis of the <u>Current Population Survey</u> finds that in May, June and July, 52 percent of adults age 18-29 resided with one or both of their parents, up from 47 percent in February before the pandemic took hold. Before 2020, the most on record was from the 1940 census, when 48 percent of young adults lived with their parents.



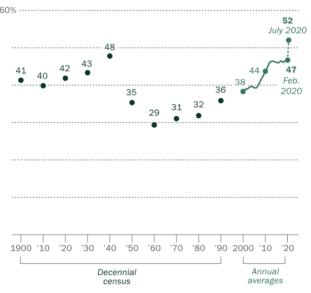
Since February, the share of young adults living with their parents increased across all major racial and ethnic groups, in metropolitan and rural areas alike and in all four census regions, though growth has been sharpest among white young adults and Southerners. The youngest adults, age 18 to 24, account for most of the change -71percent in this group live with their parents, up from 63 percent in February. This age group also has been more likely than any other to lose a job or take a pay cut during the pandemic. Indeed, the share of 16- to 24year-olds who are neither enrolled in school nor employed rose from 11 percent in February to 28 percent in June (Pew).

Coronavirus Misconceptions

An effort to measure knowledge finds that almost half of Americans (48 percent) report at least one misconception about the coronavirus. Among them:

Share of young adults living with parents rises to levels not seen since the Great Depression era

% of 18- to 29-year-olds in U.S. living with a parent



Note: "Living with a parent" refers to those who are residing with at least one parent in the household. 1900-1990 shares based on household population.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of decennial census 1900-1990; Current Population Survey annual averages 2000-2019; 2020 Current Population Survey monthly files (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- A quarter say hydroxychloroquine is an effective treatment for COVID-19.
- Two in 10 say wearing a face mask is harmful to their health.
- Sixteen percent do not say that wearing a face mask helps limit the spread of the virus.
- Fourteen percent say there is a cure for the coronavirus and 7 percent say an FDA-approved vaccine to prevent it exists.
- Eight percent do not say it's possible for children under age 18 to transmit the virus to other people.

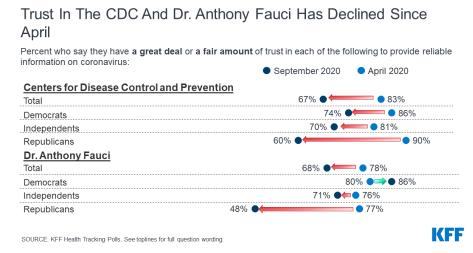
Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say wearing a face mask is harmful (36 vs. 7 percent) and does not limit the spread of the virus (32 vs. 3 percent). Half of Republicans say hydroxychloroquine – a drug praised by President Trump – is effective, compared with 8 percent of Democrats (KFF 8/28-9/3).

Government Response



Trust in the CDC and Dr. Anthony Fauci to provide reliable information about the coronavirus has declined since April – 67 percent now trust the CDC, down from 83 percent, and 68 percent

trust Fauci, down from 78 percent. Republicans in particular have lost trust in the CDC (down 30 points to 60 percent) and Fauci (down 29 points to 48 percent). Trust in Dr. Deborah Birx is lower overall at 53 percent, but includes 70 percent of Republicans, compared with 44 percent of Democrats. (It was not asked in April.)



Fewer overall – 40 percent – trust Trump to provide reliable information about the virus, down from 46 percent in April. Still, disapproval of Trump's handling of the coronavirus has eased from 62 percent in July to 55 percent now (KFF 8/28-9/3).

A similar 56 percent say Trump has done a bad job handling the outbreak, and an identical share express little to no confidence that Trump can put the country on the road to recovery from the pandemic. Both are essentially unchanged since August.

State governors fare better -61 percent say their governor has done a good job dealing with the outbreak. Half as many, 31 percent, say the American public has done a good job.

Overall, two-thirds of Americans think the country is on the wrong track while 27 percent think things are headed in the right direction. That's improved from a record low in late June, when just 18 percent felt things were going the right way (Monmouth 9/3-9/8).

The Presidential Election

Forty-six percent of registered voters say they're uncomfortable going to a polling place this fall and six in 10 would prefer to vote before Election Day, including 29 percent by mail, 17 percent early in person and 15 percent by ballot drop-off. That would be a flip from 2016, when almost six in 10 of those who voted said they did so in person on Election Day.

Seven in 10 Democrats and 65 percent of independents prefer to vote early, while 52 percent of Republicans prefer to vote on Election Day. Among those who are worried about someone in their family getting the coronavirus, 69 percent prefer to vote early.

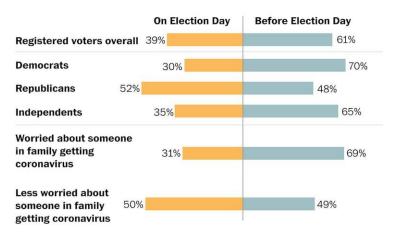


Despite the increased interest in voting by mail, just three in 10 are very confident that if they did so their ballot would be counted accurately. Twice as many – 62 percent – are very confident in the counting of inperson votes on Election Day. Half are very confident in an accurate count if they vote early in person.

More generally, 37 percent are very confident that the votes in their state will be counted accurately this year, with an additional 45 percent somewhat confident. Sixty-two percent are very (16 percent) or somewhat (46 percent) confident that votes will be counted accurately nationwide, similar to levels of confidence expressed in advance of the 2016 election (Post-UMD 8/24-8/31).

About 6 in 10 voters prefer to cast ballot before Election Day

Q: And would you prefer to vote on Election Day or before Election Day?



Note: "No opinion" not shown.

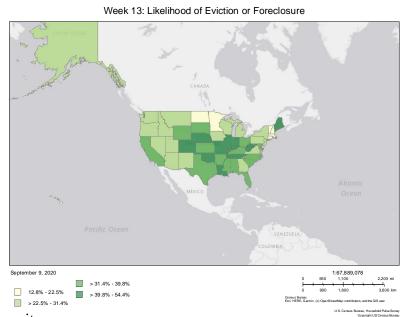
Source: Aug. 24-31, 2020, Washington Post-U. Md. poll among 1,672 registered voters with an error margin of \pm 7 percentage points. Error margin larger among subgroups.

JOE FOX/THE WASHINGTON POST

State Results

The second phase of the U.S. Census Bureau's <u>Household Pulse Survey</u> shows vast differences by state in the impact of the pandemic on the financial situation of American households:

• A third overall say it is at least somewhat likely that they will have to leave their home or apartment within the next two months because of eviction or foreclosure, including more than half of those living in Nebraska (54 percent) and the District of Columbia (51 percent). By contrast, just 13 percent in Vermont say so.



• Thirty-two percent overall say it has been somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses during the



pandemic, including roughly four in 10 in Louisiana (41 percent) and Florida (38 percent) compared with two in 10 in New Hampshire (21 percent).

- Louisiana also has the highest number of insecure households 13 percent in the state say they have not paid rent or mortgage this month or have little or no confidence that they can make next month's payment on time. Just 2 percent of households in Utah and North Dakota are similarly insecure.
- One in 10 households nationwide report often or sometimes not having enough food to eat in the past week, including 15 percent in Mississippi and 14 percent in Alabama, Oklahoma and Florida. Food insecurity is lowest in Vermont, New Hampshire and Utah, where 5 percent of households have not had enough food to eat in the past week.
- Forty-two percent in Hawaii and 35 percent in California expect that someone in their household will lose employment income in the next four weeks, compared with 26 percent nationwide and 16 percent in Wisconsin (U.S. Census Bureau 8/19-8/31).

Additional State Results

In Wisconsin, two-thirds of registered voters say they would definitely (35 percent) or probably (29 percent) get vaccinated for COVID-19 if a vaccine were freely available, while a third probably or definitely would not. Half are uncomfortable letting students return to school, little changed since August but up 13 points from June. Among parents of school-aged children, the number who are uncomfortable is up 9 points since August to 54 percent. Twenty-one percent overall are very worried about personally experiencing the coronavirus, down 6 points since August. Fifty-seven percent approve of how Gov. Tony Evers is handling the outbreak, essentially unchanged since June (Marquette Law School 8/30-9/3).

In New Hampshire, additional results from a poll included in <u>last week's summary</u> show that comfort engaging in several public activities has edged up, even as concern about contracting COVID-19 has risen. Sixty-five percent are very or somewhat worried about themselves or an immediate family member contracting COVID-19, up 7 points since June. Nonetheless, compared with July, more say they're comfortable going to a state beach on the ocean (+12 points to 74 percent), going to an inland state beach (+10 points to 72 percent), going to a movie theater (+10 points to 39 percent) and eating outside at a restaurant (+8 points to 79 percent).

Eight in 10 remain confident in the state government's ability to respond effectively to the outbreak, more than double the number who express confidence in the federal government's ability to respond (37 percent). However, trust in science agencies like the CDC as sources of information about the coronavirus continues to fall – now just 49 percent say they trust such agencies, down 11 points since July and 23 points since April. Nearly half (48 percent) know someone who has contracted COVID-19, unchanged since last month (UNH 8/28-9/1).

In Colorado, coronavirus concerns are cited as the top issue facing the state and three-quarters see the pandemic's harm to the economy as an extremely or very serious problem. In terms of policy preferences, half prioritize saving as many lives as possible, even if it negatively impacts



the economy, while four in 10 favor reopening the economy as quickly as possible, even if it means more lives are lost. Coloradans are evenly split when it comes to schooling during the pandemic – 46 percent are more concerned about re-starting in-person instruction too soon while 44 percent are more concerned about the consequences of prolonged remote learning; this rises to 54 percent of parents of school-aged children.

More than half in the state say they've experienced "increased mental health strain, such as anxiety, loneliness or stress," as a result of the coronavirus. Three in 10 have had their hours cut or wages reduced, 19 percent have been required to go to work even though they had health and safety concerns, 18 percent have been unable to pay for basic necessities and 13 percent have been laid off. Forty percent of parents say it's been difficult to handle childcare responsibilities during the pandemic. Majorities support free coronavirus testing (71 percent), vaccines (64 percent), and treatment (59 percent), as well as a mask mandate in places of business (59 percent). Two-thirds say that when a vaccine is available they would be likely to get it, while three in 10 would not (Colorado Health Foundation 8/5-8/24).

Election polls in Florida and Pennsylvania find that likely voters in both states think Joe Biden would handle the coronavirus better than Trump. The margin is wider in Pennsylvania (53 vs. 38 percent) than in Florida (49 vs. 40 percent) (NBC/Marist, FL 8/31-9/6; PA 8/31-9/7).

Coronavirus in the Four Largest U.S. Cities

Surveys conducted primarily in July in the nation's four largest cities, as well as nationwide, found that households in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston faced particular struggles with finances, healthcare and childcare. Among the key findings:

- Forty-six percent of households nationwide reported facing serious financial problems given the outbreak, compared with 50 percent in Chicago, 53 percent in New York, 56 percent in Los Angeles and 63 percent in Houston.
- The most commonly reported financial problems included using up all or most savings (34 to 41 percent in the four cities), problems paying credit card bills, loans or other debt (28 to 41 percent), problems paying for utilities (20 to 37 percent) and problems paying mortgage or rent (25 to 34 percent). In most cases, a greater share of households reported facing these problems in these cities than nationwide.

	National	New York	Los Angeles	Chicago	Houston			
Serious financial problems	46%	53%	56%	50%	63%			
Using up savings	31%	34%	35%	35%	41%			
Paying off credit card/debt	21%	28%	35%	28%	41%			
Paying rent/mortgage	19%	28%	28%	25%	34%			
Paying for utilities	18%	20%	28%	23%	37%			
Affording food	16%	19%	23%	17%	33%			
Affording medical care	15%	14%	15%	15%	30%			
Making car payments	14%	10%	20%	13%	31%			
Other serious problems	14%	17%	20%	17%	24%			
_		Data source	Data source: NPR/RWIF/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health					



- In Houston, one in three households reported problems affording food and 21 percent said they or someone in their home had serious problems not getting enough food to eat every day, more than double the national rates (16 and 7 percent, respectively). Houston households also were twice as likely as those nationwide to report trouble affording medical care (30 vs. 15 percent) and making care payments (31 vs. 14 percent).
- Across all four cities, serious financial problems were particularly common among Latino and Black households and those with annual incomes less than \$100,000. In Houston, the proportion of Black (81 percent) and Latino households (77 percent) facing serious financial problems was particularly high.
- Forty-six percent of households nationwide reported a job loss, being furloughed or having wages or hours reduced. It was 50 percent in New York, 51 percent in Chicago, 57 percent in Houston and 61 percent in Los Angeles.
- Two in 10 or more reported that someone in their household was unable to get medical care for a serious problem when they needed it during the pandemic, ranging from 19 percent in New York to 27 percent in Houston.
- Nationally, 6 percent said they or someone in their household lost health insurance since the start of the outbreak. It was 11 percent in Los Angeles.
- In Los Angeles, seven in 10 households with children reported having at least one serious problem caring for their children, as did six in 10 in New York and Houston and 51 percent in Chicago.

	National	New York	Los Angeles	Chicago	Houston
Serious childcare problems	59%	60%	69%	51%	60%
Keeping education going	36%	33%	52%	29%	35%
Helping children adjust	35%	29%	39%	33%	33%
Finding space for activity	21%	41%	38%	33%	40%
Getting care while working	18%	22%	18%	19%	25%
Taking care of children	10%	14%	19%	13%	15%
Data source: NPR/RW.IF/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Pub					

- More than half of households with children in Los Angeles reported difficulties keeping their children's education going (52 percent) compared with roughly a third in the other three cities (29 to 35 percent) and 36 percent nationally.
- Households with children in the four major cities were more apt to report serious
 difficulties finding space for children to get physical activity while maintaining a safe
 distance. A third in Chicago reported trouble with this, as did about four in 10 in Los
 Angeles (38 percent), Houston (40 percent) and New York (41 percent), compared with
 21 percent of households with children nationwide.
- With many students expected to engage in distance learning this fall, four in 10 or more households with children in each of the four cities reported difficulties with internet



connection or said they do not have high-speed internet at home, peaking at 54 percent in Los Angeles (NPR/RWJF/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health 7/1-8/3).

International Results

In Mexico, for the first time in five months the coronavirus no longer is named as the main problem facing the country; instead the economy has risen to the top of the list, mentioned by 35 percent, compared with 25 percent for the coronavirus. The number who say it is necessary to return to normal activities and reopen businesses has increased since mid-August, from 38 to 46 percent, while the number who think it's necessary to maintain isolation measures has dropped from 60 to 52 percent, a new low. Nearly three in 10 think the number of infections in Mexico is decreasing, up from 20 percent in mid-August, while 42 percent think the spread is still in the growth stage, down from 51 percent.

When asked about Mexico surpassing 60,000 deaths from the coronavirus, 44 percent say it's to be expected in a pandemic like this, four in 10 say it is high and that something went wrong and 14 percent say it could have been worse (El Financiero 8/28-8/30). Mexican independence day, normally a reason for many to take to the streets, may look different this year because of the coronavirus; most say they have little (30 percent) to no interest (40 percent) in celebrating the September holiday in public places (El Financiero 9/4-9/5).

In Chile, 62 percent say they're very or quite concerned about the possibility of being infected with the coronavirus. Forty-two percent approve of the government's response, a new high. Forty-two percent think the referendum planned for next month should be postponed because of the coronavirus, while a slim majority (52 percent) think it should take place as scheduled. More than eight in 10 agree with the suspension of military parades (85 percent) and the prohibition of mass events (84 percent) during the upcoming national holidays, 68 percent agree with a 9 p.m. curfew and 57 percent agree with the rule that meetings of up to 10 people are permitted (Cadem 9/2-9/4).

In Canada, seven in 10 are at least somewhat confident that the government has a plan to acquire and distribute a sufficient number of COVID-19 vaccines when they are approved to keep as many Canadians as possible safe (CTV/Nanos 8/31-9/3).

In Brazil, where the government recently announced it will halve the amount of coronavirus emergency aid, 57 percent disagree with the reduction, including 71 percent of those who benefit from the payments. Six in 10 say they've failed to pay any bills in the past month because of the pandemic, up 7 points in two weeks. A third expect their personal finances will improve in the next six months, 16 percent think they will get worse and 45 percent don't expect any change. More broadly, 45 percent think the situation in Brazil will improve in the next six months, 29 percent think it will remain the same and two in 10 think things will get worse. While the first round of elections has been postponed to Nov. 15, half of Brazilians think it is risky to vote in person (PoderData 8/31-9/2).

In Germany, where new coronavirus cases have increased at the <u>highest pace since April</u>, concerns nonetheless have eased – 26 percent say they're worried they could infect themselves



or family members with the coronavirus, down from 34 percent in mid-August. Still, 86 percent support the cancellation of carnival celebrations for autumn and spring and roughly two-thirds back limits on attendance for private parties (64 percent) and the closing of Christmas markets this year (64 percent). However, a majority of Germans oppose requiring masks at work (55 percent) or during school lessons (66 percent) (ARD 8/31-9/2).

In Great Britain, despite a <u>recent spike</u> in coronavirus cases, more are venturing out: Three in 10 say they met up with people in a public place in the past week, a share that's been gradually

increasing since late May, when just 13 percent reported having done so. Nearly four in 10 say they've gone to a restaurant, café, bar or pub, up from just 9 percent in mid-July, and the number who say they'd feel comfortable dining in at a restaurant has increased 8 points in two weeks to 51 percent. In England and Wales, where schools are starting to reopen, 97 percent of parents of schoolaged children say it is

Figure 1: Levels of socialising, eating out and travel increased through the summer

Great Britain, May 2020 to August 2020

Percentage

Percentage

Percentage

Percentage

To eat or drink at a restaurant, café, bar or pub
To visit an outdoor beauty spot or beach, landmark or heritage site
Travel within the UK for holidays or short breaks

Source: Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

likely their oldest child will return to school or college when the new term begins, but nearly half (46 percent) say their child has mixed feelings about returning and more than half (52 percent) personally are worried about it (Office for National Statistics 8/26-8/30).

In South Korea, where there have been discussions about the government issuing a second disaster support payment, 44 percent think the subsidy should be paid selectively depending on income level, a third think it should be paid to all citizens regardless of income level and two in 10 don't think it should be paid at all. Nearly all (99 percent) report having received the first emergency disaster subsidy (Gallup Korea 8/25-8/27).

Russians are split on whether or not they trust official information about the coronavirus situation, 46 vs. 47 percent, and whether they are or are not afraid of contracting the coronavirus, 50 vs. 48 percent. Fewer than half (48 percent) say they're following information about the coronavirus closely, down from 75 percent in early April (FOM 8/14-8/6). Three-quarters of those with children or grandchildren in school think their child's school will be able to provide sanitary safety measures and nearly eight in 10 think there is little (72 percent) to no (7 percent) risk of contracting the coronavirus in schools if sanitary safety measures are observed. Still, more



than six in 10 express at least some fear that their child may contract the coronavirus at school. Regardless, as reported <u>last week</u>, the vast majority (93 percent) think the return to traditional, face-to-face learning is better than a continuation of distance education (VCIOM 8/27).

In Sweden, a third of those who are now sick with COVID-like symptoms say they have been ill for more than 10 weeks. The most common symptoms are fatigue, runny nose, body aches and headaches. Overall, 13 percent of Swedes think they have had COVID-19 and an additional 2 percent have been diagnosed officially (Novus 8/10-8/23).

Additional U.S. and international poll results are available at the *COVID-19 Survey Archive*.

Summary for SEAN by Langer Research Associates.

