



## COVID-19 Survey Summary: September 17, 2021

*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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Polls this week find majority support for Joe Biden's employer vaccine mandate, albeit at differing levels and with worsening views of his handling of the pandemic overall. With cases still elevated, reported mask use is at a five-month high and public views are dark, with more than half saying the worst of the pandemic is yet to come.

About eight in 10 are concerned about the outbreak generally and seven in 10 are concerned about serious illness in their family, both up sharply since midsummer. Views that the country never will fully recover has jumped from 9 percent in March to 22 percent.

Attitudes on vaccine mandates vary. Six in 10 in one survey and 53 percent in another approve of Biden's requirement that businesses with more than 100 employees mandate vaccines or regular testing for all workers. Among workers, 57 percent support a workplace mandate. About six in 10 adults overall support mandatory shots for health care workers, K-12 school staff and federal government employees. Majorities oppose mandated vaccination for retail or grocery shopping.

About six in 10 or more support mask requirements in indoor public spaces and as many as seven in 10 in one poll favor universal masking in K-12 schools. At the same time, the public splits on whether showing proof of vaccinations for everyday activities is an acceptable way to increase the vaccination rate or an infringement on personal rights.

A majority, in any case, agrees that coronavirus restrictions have been worth the cost.

Other new studies examine the personal and economic toll of the pandemic, with one showing positive impacts of federal aid in stabilizing incomes and another estimating \$5.7 billion in preventable hospitalizations of unvaccinated adults. Three CDC analyses find continued effectiveness of the vaccines against hospitalization and death amid the new Delta variant.

[Vaccines](#)

Seventy-six percent of adults have received at least one dose of the vaccine, up 1 percentage point in a week, per [CDC estimates](#). Polls generally align, at 73 to 75 percent ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#), [Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#), [Pew 8/23-8/29](#), [CNN 8/3-9/7](#), [CDC 8/29-9/4](#)).

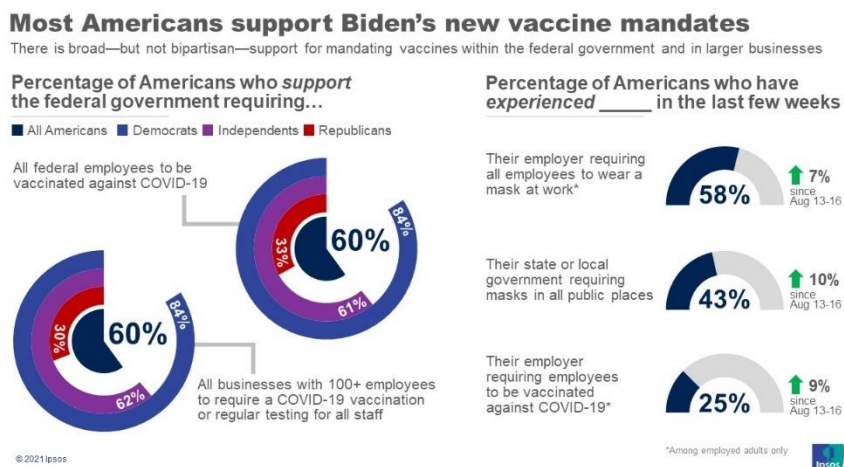
Including intended uptake, several surveys show a rise in vaccine acceptance. Two find that 77 percent have received a shot or plan to do so (in one, “as soon as possible”); one is up 9 points since late July and 12 points since mid-April ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)); the other, up 6 points since late April ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)). It’s 79 percent in a third survey, unchanged from two weeks ago but up 9 points since mid-April and 19 points since January ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)). A fourth places actual or intended uptake at 73 percent, essentially unchanged from late May, while up 5 points from mid-April ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).

A large majority of vaccinated adults, 80 to 85 percent, say they’re likely to get a booster shot once available ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#), [Pew 8/23-8/29](#), [Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

### Vaccine Requirements

As noted, 60 percent in one poll support Biden’s employer mandate, including 42 percent who “firmly” support it ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

Another finds a narrow majority for the rule, 53 percent, and a division on whether it’s either about right or doesn’t go far enough, 49 percent, or goes too far, 48 percent. This poll also finds a division when describing a plan by Biden “to mandate COVID-19 vaccines for millions of Americans in the public and private sectors,” 48-51 percent, approve-disapprove ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).



In a more general question, 53 percent say proof of vaccination should be required to work in settings with other people ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)). Similarly, in a poll conducted before Biden’s announcement, 54 percent supported requiring vaccinations for office workers to return to the workplace ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)). Another poll finds a 50-49 percent split on businesses requiring their employees get vaccinated; a return to the workplace wasn’t mentioned ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).

Among employed adults, 57 percent favor their employer requiring all staff be vaccinated (again, a return to the workplace wasn’t specified). Twenty-five percent say their workplace currently has such a mandate, up from 16 percent in mid-August ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

In terms of other measures Biden outlined last week, 63 percent in one poll and 57 percent in another support requiring vaccinations for health care workers. About six in 10 support requiring vaccines for all federal employees and 55 percent for government contractors. It's 53 percent in another poll asking about federal government employees and contractors ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#), [Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#), [Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).

Employer mandates may persuade some. Twenty-three percent of unvaccinated employed adults say it's very or somewhat likely that they'll get the vaccine. That rises to 39 percent if their employer were to require it ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

In terms of views on other possible vaccine requirements:

- Two polls find about six in 10 support for requiring vaccines to travel by airplane ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#), [Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)). It's 53 percent in another ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).
- One survey finds majority support for a vaccine mandate to attend public colleges or universities, 57-42 percent ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)). Another (not specifying public institutions) finds a 50-48 percent split ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).
- Fifty-five percent support a vaccine requirement to attend a sporting event or concert held in an indoor arena, dropping to 46 percent for outdoor venues ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)). In polls that did not specify venue type, one finds 57 percent support for vaccine requirements at sports events and concerts; another, a 50-48 percent division ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#), [Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).
- Two polls find divisions on requiring vaccines to eat inside a restaurant (50-50 percent in one, 46-51 percent, support-oppose, in another) ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#); [Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)). A third, which doesn't specify indoor dining, finds majority opposition to restaurants requiring proof of vaccination, 57-42 percent ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).
- Among other activities, Americans are divided on whether vaccines should be mandated to go to a gym, 50-49 percent. Fifty-four percent oppose a vaccine mandate to shop inside stores and businesses; six in 10 oppose it to enter a grocery store ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#), [CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

Overall, 51 percent of Americans think that requiring proof of vaccination for everyday activities outside of the home is an acceptable way to increase the vaccination rate, while 49 percent see this as an infringement on personal rights. Views are strongly associated with vaccination status and political partisanship ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

### Vaccine Attitudes

Seventy-three percent say their own views are well described by the statement, "Vaccines are the best way to protect Americans from COVID-19." Six in 10 say the same for the phrase, "People who choose not to get the COVID-19 vaccine are hurting the country." Seventy-two percent

express confidence in the research and development process for the vaccines, including 39 percent who have a great deal of confidence, up from 19 percent a year ago.

Still, skepticism persists. Sixty-one percent align themselves with the statement, “We don’t really know yet if there are serious health risks from the COVID-19 vaccines,” including 54 percent of vaccinated adults and 88 percent of the unvaccinated. Fifty-four percent overall say public health officials are not disclosing all they know about the vaccines. Again, 88 percent of unvaccinated people say so.

Additionally, 51 percent say there’s too much pressure on Americans to get a vaccine – rising to nine in 10 unvaccinated people – and 55 percent overall say it’s hard to make sense of all the information about vaccines ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

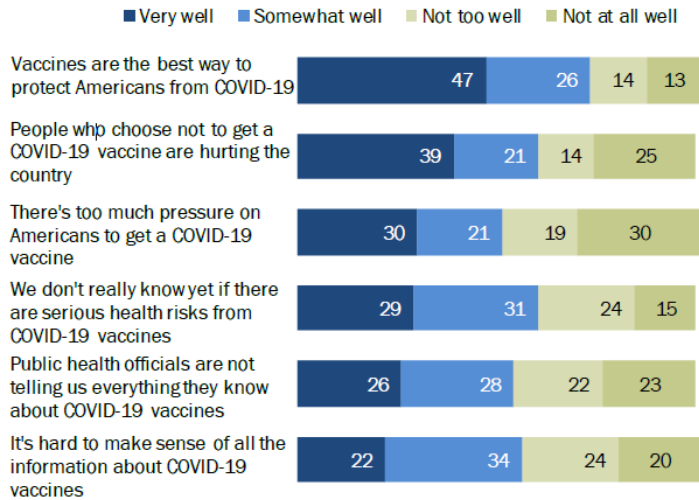
### Concerns & Outlooks

Sixty-nine percent are concerned that someone in their family will become seriously ill from the coronavirus, including 45 percent very concerned. The latter is up 22 points since June to the most since January ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)).

Seventy-eight percent are very or somewhat concerned about the outbreak generally, up 13 points since late June to the most since April ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)). Seventy percent are worried about the pandemic specifically in the community where they live ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)). Fifty-eight percent express concern they might unknowingly spread the virus to others, essentially the same as in February, before vaccines were widely available ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

### Positive sentiment toward vaccines – as well as some concerns – resonate with majorities of U.S. adults

% of U.S. adults who say the following statements describe them ...



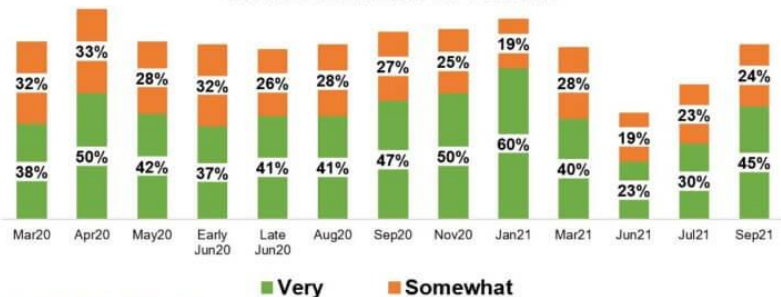
Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Aug. 23-29, 2021.

“Majority in U.S. Says Public Health Benefits of COVID-19 Restrictions Worth the Costs, Even as Large Shares Also See Downsides”

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### CONCERNED ABOUT SERIOUS COVID ILLNESS IN FAMILY



MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Source: Monmouth University Poll National: September 9-13, 2021

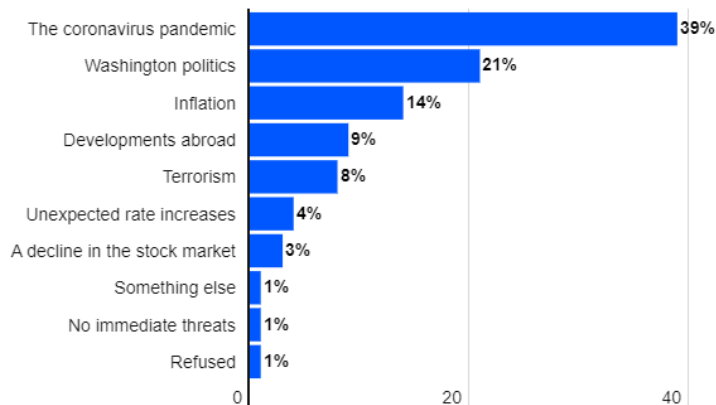
Eighty-six percent don't consider the pandemic to be over in the United States ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)). Only about one in 10 sees a return to normal this year; 34 percent think it will take into 2022, 28 percent longer than that. Twenty-two percent say the country never will return to normal, up from 9 percent in March ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)). In another poll, 54 percent say the worst of the pandemic in the United States is yet to come ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

Four in 10 see the pandemic as the biggest threat to the U.S. economy, topping a list of seven items. More than six in 10 are concerned that these threats could impact their job or income in the next six months ([Bankrate 8/24-8/29](#)).

In another poll, 36 percent in an open-ended question say the coronavirus is the most important issue facing the country today, again the most-cited issue. Second is the economy, at 20 percent, with all others in the single digits ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

#### Americans cite pandemic as biggest threat to economy

We asked: Which of the following do you think poses the biggest threat to the U.S. economy over the next 6 months?



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Less than .50 percent selected "Don't know."  
Source: Bankrate Biggest Threat to the Economy survey, Aug. 24-29, 2021

#### Mask Use & Requirements

Americans' mask use is at a five-month high, with 71 percent saying they wear a mask at least some of the time when outside their home, up 19 points since mid-July. That's short of its level before vaccines were widely available, roughly nine in 10 ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

In another survey nearly three-quarters report having worn a mask at least some of the time when in stores or other businesses during the previous month, including 53 percent all or most of the time. Frequent mask use is down 35 points from February, with a particularly sharp drop among Republicans ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

Sixty-five percent overall in one poll support their state or local government requiring face masks to be worn in all public places ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)); 63 percent in another support instituting or reinstating face mask and social distancing guidelines in their state, up 11 points since July ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)). A third finds 57 percent support for mask mandates in indoor public spaces ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).

Far fewer, 43 percent, say their state or local government currently has a mask mandate in place, though that's up 10 points since mid-August. Fifty-eight percent of employed adults say their employer requires masks in the workplace, up 9 points ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

In a question that did not specify a mandate, eight in 10 say wearing masks on airplanes or public transit is necessary to curb the spread of the virus ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

## K-12 Education

Polls find substantial support for mask requirements in K-12 schools – 70 percent in one, 66 percent in another and 63 percent in a third ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#), [Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#), [Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)). It's also 63 percent in another question specifying masks for students only, including 57 percent of parents of school-age children ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

Sixty percent of adults overall also support requiring teachers and staff to get vaccinated. Views on a requirement for children are mixed. Fifty-one percent support requiring vaccinations for students age 12 and older in one survey, with 44 percent opposed; its 48-49 percent in another. ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#), [Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).

The public divides on whether it's necessary to close K-12 schools to in-person learning in order to prevent the spread of the virus, 48-51 percent ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)). Sixty-nine percent think schools should continue offering a remote learning option for students even after cases have dropped to a manageable level ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

## Daily Life

Sixty-four percent say it's still necessary to take extra precautions to protect against the coronavirus in everyday life, while 36 percent feel safe enough to return largely to their pre-pandemic behaviors ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)). In a similar question, 56 percent see at least a moderate risk in returning to their normal pre-coronavirus life, just off its peak of 60 percent two weeks ago but still nearly double its level in late June ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

Half say they always adhere to CDC guidance regarding the coronavirus and an additional 38 percent sometimes comply with it; 13 percent reject CDC recommendations ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

The share of adults who've gone out to eat in the past week is down 5 points in two weeks to 51 percent, a low since April. Thirty-three percent say they always maintain a distance of at least six feet from other people when outside their home, up 8 points since July to the most since early May.

Other activities have stabilized in recent weeks after large shifts in July. Fifty-eight percent have visited friends or relatives in the past week, largely unchanged the past month but 10 points off its peak in late June. Half have stayed at home and avoided others as much as possible, also steady the past month but up from 34 percent in late June ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

## Pandemic Impacts

Nine in 10 Americans say restrictions on public activity the past year and a half have hurt businesses and economic activity and kept people from living their lives the way they want. At the same time, about seven in 10 say the restrictions have helped slow the spread of the virus and helped prevent hospitalizations and deaths. Most think the public health benefits have been worth the costs, 62 vs. 37 percent.

Seventy-two percent personally know someone who has been hospitalized or died from the virus, peaking at 82 percent of Black adults and 78 percent of Hispanic people, as well as 70 percent of whites and 64 percent of Asian adults ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)). Thirty-nine percent overall personally know someone who has died from the it, a new high ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

Sixty-eight percent think the recent rise in coronavirus deaths was preventable, including 89 percent of Democrats, 69 percent of independents and half of Republicans ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)).

In terms of financial impacts, not counting government aid, median household incomes fell by 2.9 percent from 2019 to 2020, the first meaningful decline since 2011, and the poverty rate rose by 1 point to 11.4 percent. But incomes increased by 4.0 points when stimulus payments and government tax credits are factored in. And the supplemental poverty rate, an alternative measure of poverty that reflects post-tax income and stimulus payments, decreased by 2.6 points ([U.S. Census Bureau 9/14](#)).

Four in 10 Americans think the economy is still in a downturn from the pandemic and conditions are worsening, while a third think the economy is starting to recover from pandemic impacts and 3 percent say it's fully recovered. An additional 23 percent think the economy's recovery has yet to begin, but conditions have stabilized ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

### Government Response

Fifty-two percent say Biden has done a good job dealing with the outbreak, down 7 points since June and 10 points since April ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)). Another poll finds a 48-49 percent split, compared with 65-30 percent approval in late May ([Quinnipiac 9/10-9/13](#)). In late August data, 47 percent rated Biden's response positively, down 7 points from March ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)). A poll with a monthlong field period (mostly in August), found 56 percent approval, down 10 points from April ([CNN 8/3-9/7](#)).

Eighty-five percent say their local hospitals and medical centers have done an excellent or good job responding to the outbreak, steady throughout the pandemic. Positive assessments of other groups are essentially unchanged from March, still down sharply from their levels at the start of the pandemic: Sixty percent for public health officials overall, 56 percent for local elected officials and 50 percent for the elected officials in one's state ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

Sixty-one percent say federal health agencies such as the CDC have been giving mixed messages about the risks of the coronavirus; 36 percent think they've largely been consistent ([Monmouth 9/9-9/13](#)).

The public holds mixed views of shifting public health guidance. Fifty-one to 55 percent have had negative reactions, saying it's confused them, made them wonder if officials were holding back important information or lowered their confidence in the recommendations. At the same time, 61 percent say evolving guidelines made sense as scientific knowledge is updated and 51 percent feel reassured that officials are staying on top of new information ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

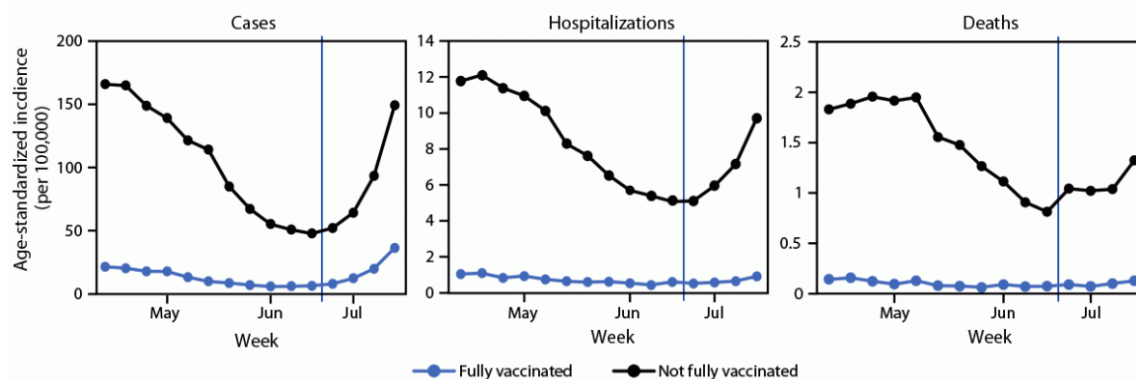
In terms of its vaccine priorities, 38 percent think the federal government should be redoubling its efforts to get unvaccinated Americans a shot, 28 percent prioritize providing booster shots and 19 percent select providing vaccines to people in developing countries. (Twelve percent pick another priority.) ([Axios-Ipsos 9/10-9/13](#)).

Just 26 percent correctly say that “very few” adults in developing countries can get a vaccine if they want one. Seventeen percent think it’s about half and 26 percent think most have vaccine access. A plurality, 32 percent, is unsure ([Pew 8/23-8/29](#)).

### Vaccine Effectiveness

CDC analyses confirm the vaccines’ effectiveness in preventing serious illness and death. One finds that after the Delta variant accounted for most cases, unvaccinated adults were 10 times as likely as vaccinated people to be hospitalized from the virus and 11 times more likely to die from it, both little changed over time. Vaccine effectiveness declined moderately, with unvaccinated adults five times more likely to get infected than vaccinated adults after Delta became dominant, compared with 11 times more likely before the Delta surge ([CDC 4/4-7/17](#)).

FIGURE 2. Weekly trends in age-standardized incidence\* of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations,<sup>†</sup> and deaths,<sup>§</sup> by vaccination status<sup>¶</sup> — 13 U.S. jurisdictions,\*\* April 4–July 17, 2021



In another study, data from 187 hospitals and 221 emergency departments and urgent care clinics in nine states finds that the vaccines were 86 percent effective at preventing hospitalizations adjusting for age, region, virus circulation and time. Effectiveness was significantly higher among fully vaccinated Moderna recipients (95 percent) than among those who received the Pfizer (80 percent) or Johnson & Johnson (60 percent) vaccines. The overall effectiveness of the vaccines at preventing hospitalization was similar to its pre-Delta level, though differences emerged by age: Efficacy among adults 75 and older was significantly lower than among younger adults, 76 vs. 89 percent ([CDC 07/2021-08/2021](#)).

An analysis of vaccine effectiveness in five Veterans Affairs Medical Centers from February to August finds that mRNA vaccines were 87 percent effective against hospitalization overall, with similar protection before (Feb. 1-June 30) and during (July 1- Aug. 6) the Delta surge. As in the study described above, vaccine effectiveness was lower among adults age 65 and older (80 percent) compared with younger adults (95 percent). It’s unknown whether moderately lower



effectiveness among older adults reflects waning vaccine effectiveness over time or the severity and widespread circulation of the Delta variant ([CDC 2/1-8/6](#)).

### Cost of Hospitalizations

There were 287,000 preventable COVID-19 hospitalizations of unvaccinated adults in the United States from June 1 to Aug. 31, including 32,000 in June, 68,000 in July and 187,000 in August, at an estimated cost of roughly \$5.7 billion, according to an analysis based on CDC and HHS data. The analysis accounts for patients with comorbidities that may have led to hospitalization without COVID-19 and the fact that the vaccines don't prevent all hospitalizations ([KFF 6/1-8/31](#)).

### State Results

In exit poll results from California's recall election Tuesday, 32 percent of voters called the pandemic the most important issue facing California, topping a list. Among them, 81 percent voted against recalling Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Overall, more said the coronavirus situation in California is getting better rather than worse, 39 vs. 24 percent, with three in 10 saying it's staying the same. Two-thirds called Newsom's pandemic policies about right (47 percent) or not strict enough (18 percent); three in 10 called them too strict (30 percent). Seventy-two percent supported mask requirements for students.

Per CDC data, 84 percent of California adults have received at least one dose of a vaccine, among the top 10 states in vaccine uptake. More California voters saw getting vaccinated as a public health responsibility rather than a personal choice, 65 vs. 32 percent ([ABC News 9/14](#)).

In another California poll, a third call the coronavirus the state's main problem, down from 50 percent in October. Homelessness (39 percent), climate change/natural disasters (36 percent) and affordable housing (36 percent) now top the list. (Up to three choices were accepted from a list of 16 items.)

Six in 10 approve of the way Newsom is handling COVID-19 overall; it's 55 percent specifically for his back-to-school efforts. Large majorities support mask requirements in transit hubs such as airports and train stations (86 percent) and in grocery and retail stores (82 percent). Two-thirds support their local government requiring proof of vaccination to enter bars, restaurants, concert venues or theaters and gyms.

Three-quarters of parents say their child is vaccinated (26 percent) or that they're very or somewhat likely to have them vaccinated as soon as it's available for their age group ([Spectrum News/Ipsos 8/26-8/31](#)).

### International Results

In the Netherlands, 63 percent support the country's coronavirus policies in general and 56 percent back its plan to lift many restrictions Sept. 20. More broadly, about six in 10 support relaxing (41 percent) or entirely dropping (21 percent) restrictions ([I&O Research 9/10-9/13](#)).

In South Korea, with vaccine rollout sequential by age, self-reported uptake ranges from 96 percent of those in their 60s to 48 percent in their 20s. With vaccinations increasing but cases near their highest of the pandemic, 54 percent approve of the government's handling of the pandemic, down 10 points since June but up seven points since mid-August.

Eighteen percent plan to travel home for Chuseok, a major harvest festival at the end of September – similar to last year but far lower than the typical 30 to 40 percent in data since 1989. Forty-seven percent plan to meet with relatives they don't live with, up nine points compared with 2020 but down sharply from 80 percent in 2016 ([Gallup Korea 9/7-9/9](#)).

As the fall semester begins in Mexico City, 55 percent of adults and essentially the same share of parents disagree with the Education Ministry's decision to return to in-person classes for the first time in 17 months. That's eased from 62 percent in August ([El Financiero 9/3-9/4](#)).

In Great Britain, nearly all adults have received at least one dose of a vaccine (96 percent) and about as many fully vaccinated adults say they're likely to get a booster shot if one is offered to them. Fewer, about six in 10, say they're likely to get a winter flu vaccine. About one in 10 has been asked to provide proof of vaccination or a negative coronavirus test to enter a venue. About half of adults with dependent children are worried about their child returning to school; of them, 58 percent are concerned about their child catching the coronavirus ([Office for National Statistics 8/27-9/5](#)).

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

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