



## COVID-19 Survey Summary: September 24, 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](#).*

*[Sign up](#) for notice of these weekly summaries each Friday morning.*

Views that the coronavirus pandemic is “not at all under control” have tripled since May, a sign of continued rising public concern in the Delta surge. Economic optimism is down sharply, the share of small businesses expecting a return to normal operating levels has fallen since July and confidence in Joe Biden to handle the health impacts of the pandemic has dropped.

That said, most Americans continue to approve of Biden’s work on the pandemic overall, including majority support for his vaccine/testing mandate for large employers. Most people also support vaccine mandates for federal employees or contractors, as well as for teachers. Two-thirds favor universal masking in K-12 schools, echoing previous results.

One poll released this week shows sharp political polarization in views of vaccines and masking. Another adds evidence of the disproportionate economic impact of the pandemic on Black and Hispanic Americans. A third finds majority approval of public schools’ pandemic response and confidence in their ability to address learning loss and social-emotional impacts in year ahead.

Other studies extend evidence of the vaccines’ continued effectiveness at preventing hospitalization and death and find increased protection among older adults from booster shots.

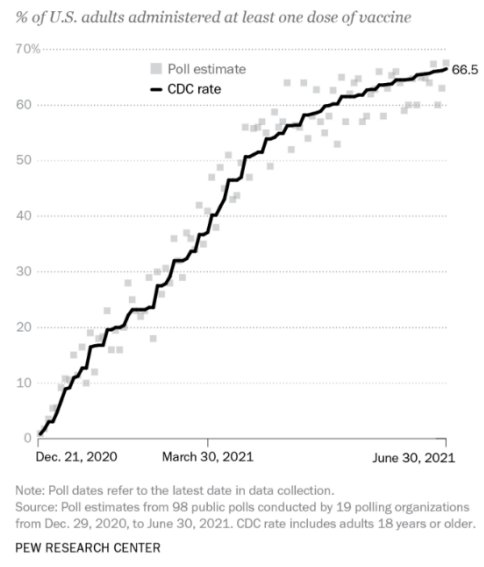
In addition to national polls, this week’s summary includes surveys in California, Iowa, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Virginia, as well as international polling from Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Greece and Turkey.

### Vaccines

The [CDC reports](#) that 77 percent of adults have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, up 1 percentage point in the past week. An analysis of 98 polls from 19 organizations from December to June finds that polling on vaccine uptake has aligned, on average, with CDC estimates – within 2.8 points of the CDC figure on the day the poll concluded, with about one in five polls differing by less than 1 point ([Pew 12/29/20-6/30/21](#)).

The analysis did not include the U.S. Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey, a large-sample survey that consistently has overestimated uptake compared with CDC data, as examined in a previous [study](#). This week, the Census survey estimates that 83 percent of adults have received at least one dose ([U.S. Census Bureau 9/1-9/13](#)).

**Polls on COVID-19 vaccination closely track CDC data**

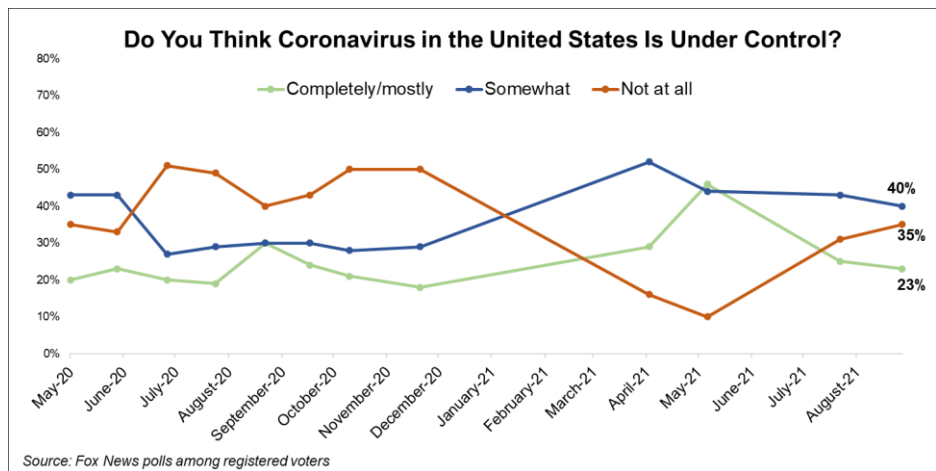


Concerns & Outlooks

Seventy-four percent of registered voters are extremely or very worried about the pandemic, up 5 points since early August, rising mainly among Republicans (+14 points) and men (+8 points). These groups remain less apt to express worry overall: It’s 63 percent among Republicans compared with 87 percent of Democrats and 71 percent among men vs. 77 percent of women.

Thirty-five percent overall say the pandemic is not at all under control, up from 10 percent in late May to the most since December. The share who think it’s completely or mostly under control is half its peak – 23 percent now, down from 46 percent nearly five months ago ([Fox News 9/12-9/15](#)).

Twenty-eight percent of Americans have experienced symptoms of anxiety disorder, such as frequent worry or nervousness, in the past two weeks, up 3 points from its low in late June and early July. Still, that’s well below the pandemic peak of 37 percent last winter ([U.S. Census Bureau 9/1-9/13](#)).



Vaccine & Mask Requirements

Registered voters support Biden’s mandate for businesses with 100 or more employees to require vaccinations or weekly testing, 56-41 percent. Most also support a federal employee mandate, 58-40 percent, and for businesses in general to mandate their employees get vaccinated, 55-42 percent. All are similar to polls last week ([Fox News 9/12-9/15](#)).

Eleven percent of small businesses (defined as those with fewer than 500 employees) say they're requiring their workers to show proof of vaccination before coming to work, up from 6 percent in mid-July ([U.S. Census Bureau 9/13-9/19](#)).

In terms of everyday activities:

- Two-thirds of registered voters support businesses requiring masks for employees and customers, ranging from 89 percent of Democrats to 65 percent of independents and 41 percent of Republicans.
- Fifty-four percent support cities and towns requiring proof of vaccination for admission to indoor activities such as restaurants, gyms and performances; it was 50 percent in August.

Overall, 69 percent affirm that wearing face masks helps reduce the spread of the virus and 65 percent see the vaccines as safe and effective. When combined, 55 percent endorse face masks and the vaccines alike; 11 percent think only face masks are effective, 10 percent only vaccines and 17 percent don't think either is effective.

These views are highly polarized. Eight in 10 Democrats see masks and the vaccines alike as effective, compared with half of independents and three in 10 Republicans ([Fox News 9/12-9/15](#)).

### Government Response

Registered voters approve of Biden's handling of the pandemic by 55-44 percent, similar to early August and down from 64-34 percent in June, as in [previous](#) surveys. It surpasses his approval on the economy (50 percent) and Afghanistan (36 percent) ([Fox News 9/12-9/15](#)).

Among all adults, there's a sharper loss of confidence in Biden's ability to handle the public health impact of the outbreak, down from 65 percent in early March to 51 percent now ([Pew 9/13-9/19](#)).

Registered voters divide on Biden's overall job performance, 50-49 percent. Among those rating him positively, a quarter cite his coronavirus response, topping the list of open-ended answers. Among disapprovers, 8 percent mention his coronavirus response (or vaccine mandate), trailing the top items, poor leadership (22 percent) and the situation in Afghanistan (19 percent) ([Fox News 9/12-9/15](#)).

### Economic Impacts

Newly released March to June data further document disproportionate economic impacts of the pandemic. In surveys from April to June, 56 percent said the coronavirus was a threat to their personal finances, including 21 percent who called it a major threat. Renters, Black people and Hispanic adults were twice as apt as homeowners and whites to call the pandemic a major threat

to their finances. It also was far higher (naturally) among temporarily unemployed Americans vs. those working full time, 48 vs. 18 percent.

Among those who reported a threat to their finances, 29 percent in an open-ended question cited a loss of employment income, followed by roughly one in 10 apiece who reported family issues, difficulties paying bills, loss of a small business or a loss of assets ([MOSAIC 3/11-6/13](#)).

More recent results indicate that the share of Americans experiencing financial hardship has stabilized since hitting pandemic lows this spring. Twenty-eight percent have had difficulty paying for usual household expenses in the past week, steady late March after falling from a peak of 38 percent in December. Nine percent did not have enough to eat at least sometimes in the past week, largely steady since March and down from 14 percent in December. Seven percent were housing insecure, again mainly stable since March after easing from a peak of 10 percent in December ([U.S. Census Bureau 9/1-9/13](#)).

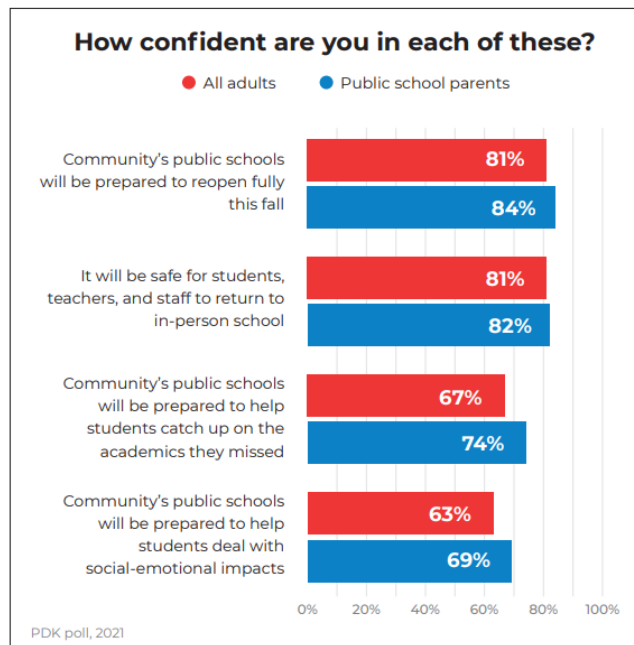
Seven in 10 Americans in another survey rate their personal finances as excellent or good, 16 points better than its pandemic low in May 2020 and essentially matching its level before the pandemic. Still, more people say the economy is getting worse rather than improving, a sharp shift from the summer. Twenty-seven percent say economy is getting better, down 11 points since mid-August in its largest monthly drop in nearly 13 years. Forty percent say it's getting worse, up 7 points to the most since January ([CCI 8/24-9/19](#)).

Small businesses are wary. Four in 10 say it will take more than six months for their business to return to its normal operating level, up from a third in mid-July. Ten percent think their business never will return to its normal level of operations ([U.S. Census Bureau 9/13-9/19](#)).

### K-12 Education

Reflecting surveys last week, a sizable majority of registered voters support mask requirements for students and teachers in schools, 67-31 percent. Support peaks at 90 percent among Democrats vs. 63 percent of independents and 42 percent of Republicans. Sixty-one percent overall favor schools requiring teachers to be vaccinated ([Fox News 9/12-9/15](#)).

In a newly released data from late June to early July, 67 percent of public school parents gave their local public school teachers an A or B grade for their response to the pandemic, as did 64 percent of all adults. Most adults, 54 percent, gave A or B ratings to how their community's public schools responded



overall, rising to 63 percent among public school parents.

Looking to the school year ahead, 47 percent of adults thought catching up academically would be the biggest challenge for public school students, followed by readjusting to regular school schedules (31 percent) and dealing with social-emotional impacts (22 percent). Results were nearly identical among parents.

Parents were slightly more apt than adults overall to be very or somewhat confident that their community's public schools would be prepared to help students catch up academically, 74 vs. 67 percent; most, 69 percent of parents and 63 percent of adults, were confident they'd be prepared to help students deal with social-emotional impacts.

Before the latest surge in cases, roughly eight in 10 adults and public school parents alike in the mid-summer survey were confident that it would be safe to return to in-person school in the fall and that their community's public schools would be ready to reopen fully ([PDK 6/25-7/5](#)).

### Vaccine Efficacy

A CDC analysis of 3,689 adults who were hospitalized at 21 sites in 18 states from mid-March to mid-August finds that the coronavirus vaccines offer high but varying levels of protection. Effectiveness at preventing hospitalization was highest for the Moderna vaccine (93 percent), followed by Pfizer (88 percent) and Johnson & Johnson (71 percent). The Pfizer vaccine's effectiveness declined from 91 percent in the initial four months to 77 percent after that. In contrast, there was no significant change in Moderna's effectiveness over time. Too few patients received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to allow for over-time analysis ([CDC 3/11-8/15](#)).

Another study assesses the impact of booster injections of the Pfizer vaccine in Israel during July and August. The authors measure outcomes among adults age 60 and older who had received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine at least five months prior, comparing those who received a third injection at least 12 days before with those who had not. The rate of confirmed infection was lower among the booster group than in the non-booster group by a factor of 11.3; the rate of severe illness was lower by a factor of 19.5 ([Bar-On et al., 2021](#)).

### Reduced Mental Distress After Vaccination

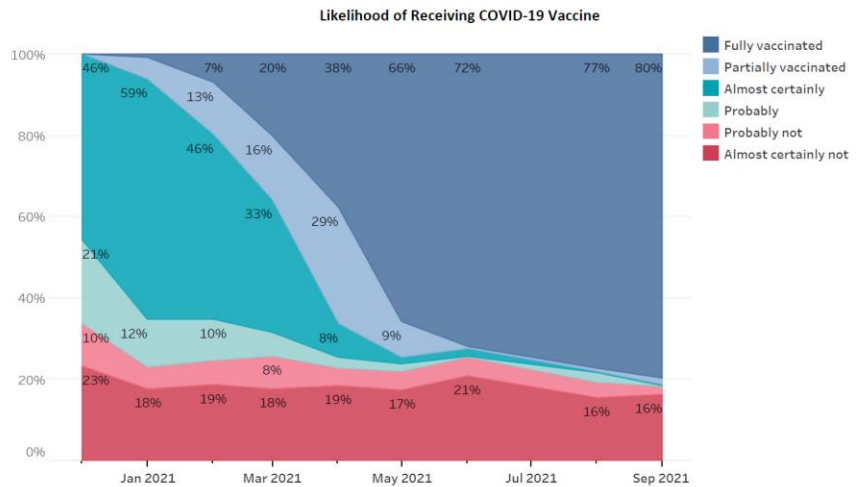
A new analysis of data from USC's Understanding America Study finds that vaccination was associated with improved short-term mental health. The authors analyzed results from 8,003 adults who completed at least two waves of the longitudinal study from March 2020 to March 2021. Using a fixed-effects regression model, they found that symptoms of anxiety and depression decreased significantly after respondents received at least one dose of a vaccine. The shift was particularly sharp for symptoms of severe depression ([Perez-Arce et al., 2021](#)).

### State Results

In New Hampshire, 60 percent approve of Gov. Chris Sununu's handling of the coronavirus, down from 76 percent in July to a new low. Fewer, 48 percent, give positive marks to Biden's

handling of the situation, down 11 points since June, also to a low. Residents divide on Biden’s vaccine/testing mandate for large businesses, 48-45 percent, support-oppose. Majorities support requiring employers to provide paid time off for employees to get vaccinated (58 percent) and mandating vaccines for health care workers at places that receive Medicare or Medicaid funds (54 percent). Half support requiring vaccines for all federal employees and contractors, with 42 percent opposed.

Eighty percent of adults indicate they’ve received a vaccine, with fewer than 1 percent still likely to do so. Among unvaccinated people, 91 percent say they’d leave their job if their employer required them to get vaccinated, up steeply from 47 percent in August. Just 2 percent say the FDA’s approval of the Pfizer vaccine makes them more likely to consider getting vaccinated. Lack of trust in the vaccines’ safety and effectiveness top a list of reasons for not wanting to get a shot ([University of New Hampshire 9/16-9/20](#)).



In New Jersey, 62 percent of registered voters think Gov. Phil Murphy has done a good job handling the pandemic, more than double the share who disapprove, 27 percent. More trust Murphy to handle the pandemic than his Republican challenger Jack Ciattarelli, 50 vs. 23 percent. About half say the measures the state has taken to curb the virus have been appropriate, up from 45 percent in August. Seventy percent are concerned about someone in their family becoming seriously ill from the virus, up 7 points since May, and 61 percent support reinstating mask and social distancing guidelines.

At the same time, looking back, 82 percent think the state’s coronavirus restrictions have hurt small businesses a lot and 53 percent think it was possible to handle the pandemic without this harm. As many, 53 percent, think the Murphy administration is at least partially to blame for COVID-19 deaths in the state’s nursing homes ([Monmouth 9/16-9/20](#)).

In Minnesota, 43 percent of registered voters say the coronavirus restrictions in their area are about right, with the rest splitting between saying they go too far (30 percent) or not far enough (26 percent). Six in 10 support mask requirements for K-12 teachers and students. Half or fewer support vaccine mandates for various activities, ranging from 49 percent for attending crowded events like concerts or movies to 44 percent for going to bars or restaurants and 43 percent for employees to return to workplaces. Eight in 10 say they’ve received at least one dose of the vaccine ([StarTribune/MPR News/KARE 11/Frontline 9/13-9/15](#)).

In Iowa, residents narrowly oppose the Biden vaccine/testing rule, 52-45 percent. It’s a similar 53-44 percent on businesses requiring their employees to receive a vaccine. Iowans split 51-45



percent, approve-disprove, on Gov. Kim Reynolds' handling of the pandemic, and 46-50 percent, favor-oppose, on the state Legislature's ban on vaccine passports. Sixty-five percent say they've been vaccinated and 5 percent plan to get a shot ([Des Moines Register/Mediacom 9/12-9/15](#)).

In Virginia, 17 percent of registered voters say the pandemic is the most important issue in their choice in the upcoming election for governor; more, 25 percent, cite the economy. More voters trust Democrat Terry McAuliffe to handle the coronavirus than his Republican opponent Glenn Youngkin, 44 vs. 35 percent. Seven in 10 support school districts requiring teachers, staff and students to wear masks, two-thirds support requiring teachers and staff to be vaccinated and six in 10 are in favor of school districts requiring high school athletes to get a shot. A smaller majority, 55 percent, supports businesses requiring their employees be vaccinated to go to the workplace, while voters oppose a vaccine requirement to eat in restaurants, 51-44 percent ([Washington Post-Schar School 9/7-9/13](#)).

In California, a newly released analysis of 2020 data assesses the pandemic's impact on access to health care. Sixty-eight percent of adults in the state reported having a preventative health care visit in 2020, down 3 points from 2019 to a low since 2013. The share saying they delayed or didn't receive necessary medical care held essentially steady at 14 percent. Still, in this group, 22 percent cited the pandemic as the main reason for delaying or skipping care, doubling to 44 percent among those 65 or older. Just 45 percent overall reported having a dentist appointment within the past six months in 2020, down 10 points from 2019 ([UCLA Center for Health Policy Research 9/22](#)).

### International Results

In Greece, 72 percent have received at least one dose of the vaccine and 2 percent have made an appointment to do so. Among the unvaccinated, 9 percent say they'll get a shot as soon as possible, down from 16 percent in July; 13 percent say they'll get one after a few months, 23 percent much later than that and 53 percent never. Among vaccine refusers, four in 10 say they're concerned about side effects, by far the most cited reason. Forty-six percent of all adults think another lockdown is unlikely, while 40 percent think it probably or certainly will occur ([PulseRC 9/19-9/21](#)).

In Chile, 66 percent approve of the government's handling of the coronavirus, a pandemic high. Ninety-four percent of adults report being vaccinated, 90 percent have gotten two doses and a fifth have had a booster dose. Three-quarters of parents of school-age children say they'd allow their child to be vaccinated at school. The country splits on whether the current state of emergency should be ended, 50-48 percent; it's 53-46 percent on ending the country's curfew. Far more, 73 and 78 percent, respectively, say foreigners should not be allowed to enter the country and quarantining after traveling abroad should remain mandatory ([Cadem 9/14-9/16](#)).

Thirty-eight percent of Brazilians say their mental health is worse than at the beginning of the pandemic. Young people age 16 to 24 (53 percent) and the highly educated (55 percent) are particularly apt to say they've been impacted, and it's 12 points higher among men than women, 44 vs. 32 percent. Two in 10 say they have fewer friends than before the pandemic; this peaks at 29 percent among middle-aged adults, those 45 to 59 ([PoderData 9/13-9/15](#)).

In Turkey, about seven in 10 support the return of students to in-person school. Fifty-four percent say the current requirement for teachers to show proof of vaccination or undergo semi-weekly PCR testing isn't sufficient; instead, three-quarters support mandatory vaccination for teachers and staff. Fifty-five percent say children of unvaccinated parents should not attend school in person ([Istanbul Economic Research 9/9-9/13](#)).

In Bulgaria, about a quarter have had at least one dose of the vaccine and 22 percent plan to be vaccinated, leaving 45 percent who reject a shot. Young adults and those in marginalized communities are among those most likely to refuse ([Gallup International Bulgaria 9/2-9/10](#)).

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

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