



COVID-19 Survey Summary: December 4, 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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Public concerns that the worst of the pandemic lies ahead have surged since summer and two-thirds of Americans see it as a “major threat” to public health. Still, despite a record-breaking increase in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths, survey results this week show a rise in the number of people who socialized with friends and relatives during Thanksgiving week.

That said, the largest number since late July report staying at home except for essential activities. And intended vaccine uptake is up – though with a wait-and-see proviso for many.

Additional results show a better small business climate than last spring, but with a recent rise in the number reporting a decline in revenues and hours worked by paid employees and more small businesses saying they’ll need financial assistance in the next six months. The number of Americans who expect that someone in their household will lose employment income in the next four weeks also is up, as are reported difficulties paying for usual household expenses.

Newly released results also are available from 11 other countries, with a range of findings on issues from social distancing restrictions to intended vaccine uptake.

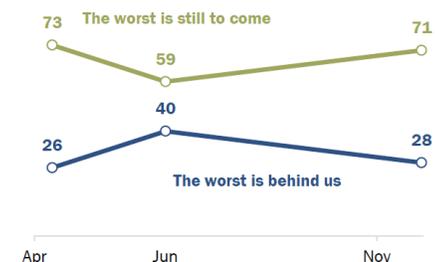
Contact and Concern

Seven in 10 Americans think the worst of the outbreak is yet to come, up from 59 percent in June to nearly match the number who said so back in April, when the pandemic still was in its early days. Fifty-four percent know someone who has been hospitalized or died from the virus, up from 39 percent in August.

Sixty-five percent view the outbreak as a major threat to the health of the U.S. population as a whole and more than half are very (23 percent) or somewhat (30 percent) concerned that they will get COVID-19 and require hospitalization.

71% of Americans say the worst of the coronavirus outbreak is ‘still to come’

% of U.S. adults who say, in thinking about the problems the country is facing from the coronavirus outbreak ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
 Source: Survey conducted Nov. 18-29, 2020.
 “Intent to Get a COVID-19 Vaccine Rises to 60% as Confidence in Research and Development Process Increases”

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The partisan gap in COVID-19 concerns remains vast, with nearly twice as many Democrats as Republicans viewing the outbreak as a major threat to public health, 84 vs. 43 percent, and expressing concern about getting sick and requiring hospitalization, 66 vs. 37 percent. However, there's bipartisan agreement that it is a major threat to the U.S. economy, with 86 percent of Democrats and 83 percent of Republicans alike holding this view ([Pew 11/18-11/29](#)).

Daily Life

After trending down most of November, there's a holiday bounce in the share of individuals who have had visitors at their residence, or visited a friend, neighbor or relative, in the past week. Two days before Thanksgiving, four in 10 said they'd had visitors at their residence and 37 percent had visited with others. A week later, it was 47 percent apiece.

Similarly, before Thanksgiving, 60 percent said they'd had close contact with people outside their household, the fewest since early June. A week later it was 68 percent.

At the same time, visits to bars, clubs or other gathering places continue down. At the beginning of November, 12 percent said they'd gone to this kind of gathering place in the past week; at the end of the month it was 7 percent. Indeed, for the past week, 44 percent stayed home except for essential activities or exercise, the most since late July ([USC UAS](#)).

Given the current situation, three-quarters would feel comfortable going to the grocery store and 65 percent say the same about visiting with a close friend or family member inside their home. Fifty-three percent say they'd be comfortable going to a hair salon or barbershop. Fewer than half, 44 percent, are comfortable eating out in a restaurant, and many fewer say the same about attending an indoor sporting event or concert (19 percent) or a crowded party (15 percent) ([Pew 11/18-11/29](#)).

Vaccines

Echoing results from [last week](#), daily tracking data show a rise in intended vaccine uptake. Two-thirds say they're at least somewhat likely to get vaccinated once a coronavirus vaccine is available, up from a low of 60 percent in late September and early October ([USC UAS](#)).

Asked slightly differently, six in 10 say they probably or definitely would get a COVID-19 vaccine if it were available today, up from 51 percent in September. This jump in intention is broadly based, occurring in almost all demographic groups and regardless of partisanship. However sizable differences remain, with Black adults, women, Republicans and those in lower socioeconomic groups less apt than their counterparts to say they'd get a vaccine.

Three-quarters overall now have at least a fair amount of confidence that the research and development process in the United States will produce a safe and effective vaccine, up 10 percentage points. However, 62 percent say they'd be uncomfortable being one of the first groups of people to get the vaccine once it is approved. Among those who say they'd definitely get a vaccine, just 17 percent express discomfort doing so early. This jumps to 64 percent of those who probably would get vaccinated, and nearly all of those who probably or definitely

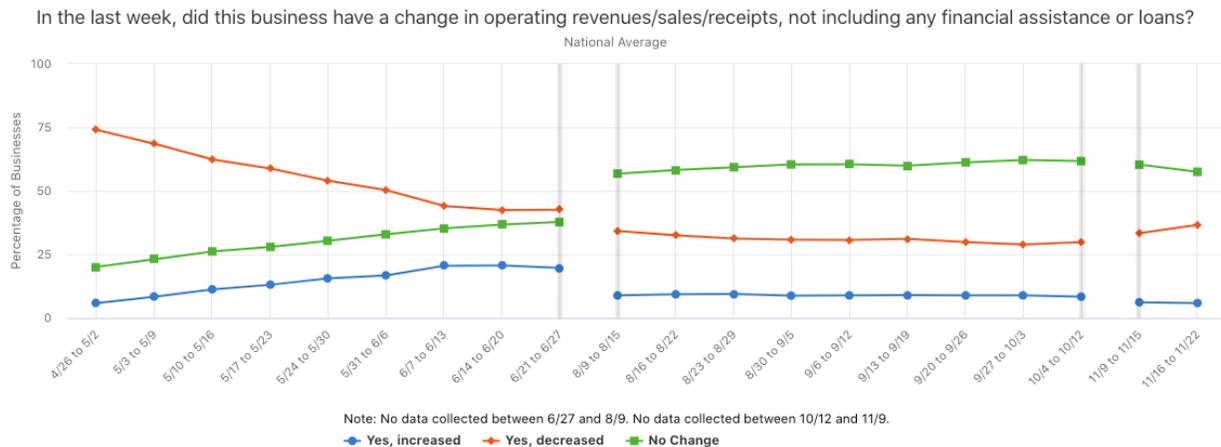
would not.

Among those who say they would not get a vaccine if it were available today, 46 percent say it's possible they would get it once others start getting it and there is more information. But 53 percent in this group – 21 percent of adults overall – say they're pretty certain they would not get the vaccine regardless ([Pew 11/18-11/29](#)).

Small Business Impacts

In data collected before the post-Thanksgiving holiday shopping weekend, three-quarters of small businesses said the pandemic had a large (30 percent) or moderate (45 percent) negative impact on their business, while about a quarter said it's had little or no effect (19 percent) or a positive impact (7 percent). That's been relatively stable in recent months but is an improvement from late April/early May, when nine in 10 businesses reported a negative impact, including 51 percent saying it was a large negative effect.

At the same time, 27 percent say that in the next six months their business will need to obtain financial assistance or additional capital, up from 22 percent in late September/early October. Thirty-seven percent say their revenues decreased in the previous week, up nearly 8 points from early October to the most in available data since June. Two in 10 said the total number of hours worked by paid employees had declined in the past week, up slightly from 15 percent in early October. Eleven percent reported fewer paid employees, essentially unchanged.



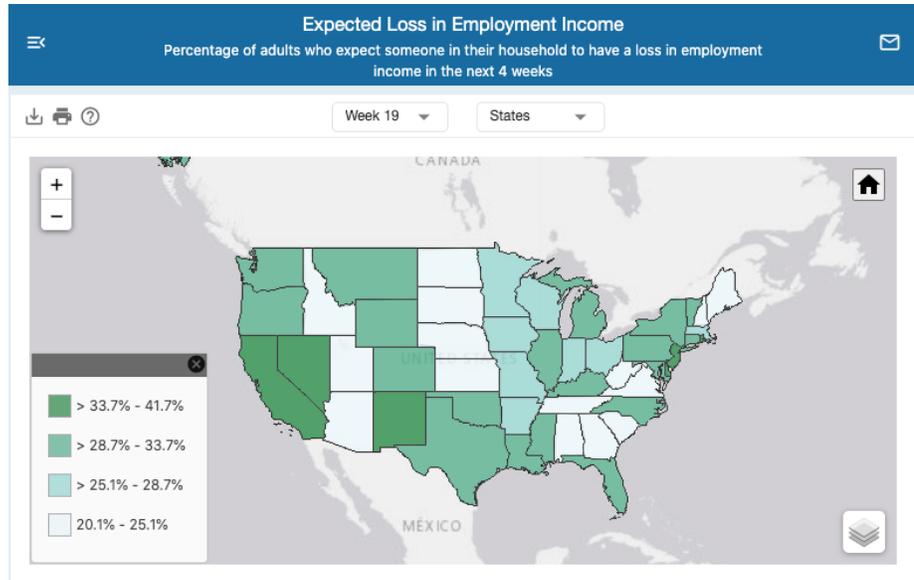
While some of these indicators have worsened in the past month, the outlook remains far better than in late April/early May, when three-quarters of small businesses reported a decline in revenue, half reported a decline in hours worked and 28 percent reported a decline in their number of paid employees ([U.S. Census Bureau 11/16-11/22](#)).

Other Economic Impacts

Echoing the small business survey, the most recent [Household Pulse Survey](#) shows a 5-point jump in the number of Americans who expect someone in their household to have a loss of employment income in the next four weeks. Thirty-one percent now say so, up from 26 percent

in late October/early November to the most in data since mid-August.

In the greater Los Angeles metro area, 43 percent expect that someone in their household will lose income in the next four weeks, up 11 points since late October/early November. It's 42 percent in Nevada, up 7 points, and 41 percent in New Mexico, up 12 points. Other notable jumps are in the Detroit metro area (+13 points to 37 percent), Oklahoma (+12 points to 31 percent), Delaware (+11 points to 35 percent) and Vermont (+10 points to 31 percent).



The share who say it's been at least somewhat difficult to pay for usual household expenses during the pandemic also has reached a numerical high in data since mid-August. Nationwide, 35 percent now say they've struggled to pay for usual expenses, including 42 percent in Texas and Louisiana and four in 10 in Mississippi, Nevada and New Mexico ([U.S. Census Bureau 11/11-11/23](#)).

Masks

Eighty-seven percent of Americans – including 91 percent of Democrats and 81 percent of Republicans – say they have worn a mask or face covering all or most of the time in stores or businesses during the past month, essentially unchanged since August.

Far more report being bothered when people around them in public places do not wear masks (72 percent) than say they're bothered when stores and businesses require customers to wear a mask for service (28 percent). Nearly two-thirds of Democrats (65 percent) say they're bothered a lot when people around them do not wear masks in public, compared with three in 10 Republicans, while Republicans are more apt to be bothered at least somewhat by mask requirements in stores, 36 vs. 20 percent ([Pew 11/18-11/29](#)).

Health Care

Nearly nine in 10 adults say hospitals and medical centers in their area are doing an excellent or good job responding to the outbreak. But 52 percent think hospitals in their area will struggle to handle the number of people seeking treatment in the coming months; 47 percent think they will be able to handle it.

Nearly eight in 10 think the effectiveness of treatments and drugs for the coronavirus has improved a lot (37 percent) or a little (41 percent) since the early stages of the outbreak ([Pew 11/18-11/29](#)).

Vaccine Readiness and Supplies

A Government Accountability Office survey of senior public health and emergency management officials found reported shortages of testing supplies and concerns about adequate supplies to conduct tests and administer vaccines in the future.

The study was done in 41 states (officials in nine did not respond), Washington, D.C., and the five U.S. territories. Officials in 17 states or territories were “completely” or “greatly” concerned about having sufficient vaccine-related supplies; those in 21 others were “moderately” concerned about this. Those in 24 states or territories reported shortages in rapid point-of-care tests in the past 30 days; other testing supply shortages include reagents (in 21), testing instruments (16), transport media (nine) and swabs (nine). Officials in 22 states or territories expected shortages in rapid point-of-care tests in the next 60 days, and in 20 expected shortages of reagents.

Most states and territories reported having a 30-day stockpile of face shields and goggles (41 of the 47 locales), N95 respirators (also 41), non-surgical masks (40), surgical gowns (39) and surgical masks (34). Fewer reported having 30-day stockpiles of nitrile gloves (25) and boot covers (22). Three-quarters (34) reported having obtained personal protective equipment from FEMA, suggesting difficulties obtaining adequate supplies on the commercial market.

Officials in 32 of the 47 states or territories felt “completely” or “greatly” confident they could fulfill requests in the next 60 days for face shields and goggles. This was the case in 31 locales for non-surgical masks, 26 for surgical masks and 26 for surgical gowns. Fewer felt as confident they could fulfill requests for N95 respirators (23), nitrile gloves (17) and boot covers (16) ([GAO 10/10-10/21](#)).

Overdose-Related Cardiac Arrests

A new analysis finds “a large-magnitude, national surge in overdose-related cardiac arrest during the initial months of the COVID-19 epidemic.” Using data from the National Emergency Medical Services Information System, a registry of more than 10,000 EMS agencies in 47 states that represents more than 80 percent of EMS activations nationally in 2020, the analysis finds that in early May, 74.1 out of 100,000 EMS activations were for overdose-related cardiac arrests, more than double the weekly average in 2018 and 2019. By the end of July, the share of activations for overdose-related cardiac arrests dropped to 48.7 out of 100,000, still 54 percent more than the 2018/2019 baseline. Overall, through Aug. 1, overdose-related cardiac arrests totaled 49.5 per 100,000 activations, a nearly 50 percent increase over the 2018/2019 baseline.

Overdose-related EMS activations more generally (i.e., not just those involving cardiac arrest) also were elevated in 2020 compared to 2018/2019; however, this was the case before mid-March as well as later, indicating that this increase is not related to the pandemic. Instead, the authors suggest that the pandemic accelerated fatal overdose trends that may reflect an increase

in people using drugs alone, reduced access to treatment and more toxic drug supply ([Friedman et al., 2020](#)).

Trust in Scientists

Four in 10 Americans express a great deal of confidence in scientists (39 percent) and medical scientists (40 percent) to act in the best interests of the public, essentially unchanged since April. This is up from pre-pandemic levels, when 35 percent apiece said they had a great deal of confidence in these groups.

Compared with pre-pandemic views, confidence in scientists has risen among Democrats but slipped among Republicans. Fifty-five percent of Democrats say they have a great deal of trust in scientists, up from 43 percent in 2019, while 22 percent of Republicans say the same, vs. 27 percent last year ([Pew 11/18-11/29](#)).

Impact on Education?

A review of standardized testing data from nearly 4.4 million students in grades 3-8 this fall finds little impact on reading performance and a moderately negative impact on math education in the pandemic. However, many of the most vulnerable students were not tested, casting doubt on the findings.

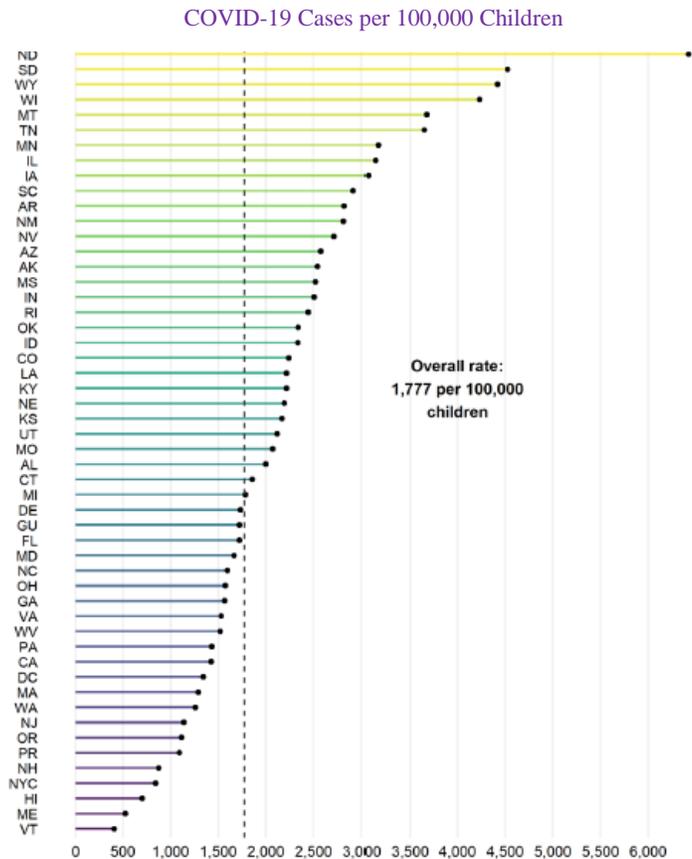
In preliminary data from a widely used standardized test (the MAP Growth assessment), fall 2020 scores in reading were nearly identical to the scores of same-grade students in fall 2019, while math scores were 5 to 10 percentile points lower. Longitudinal data found within-student improvements in performance from winter 2020 (pre-pandemic) to fall 2020 in reading and math across almost all grade levels, but student gains were smaller in math this year compared with a similar analysis of winter and fall 2019 data.

The authors note a significant caveat: Many schools, especially in lower socioeconomic areas, did not administer standardized tests in fall 2020, and in schools that did administer the tests, some individual students were not tested because of technological, economic, health or other factors. As such, the fall 2020 population of tested students was systematically different than those tested pre-pandemic, with students from disadvantaged groups (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities, students with lower scores in fall 2019 and students in lower socioeconomic schools) particularly apt to be missing. This difference makes comparisons fraught, and suggests that the data may underestimate the pandemic's impact on student learning ([NWEA](#)).

Children and COVID-19

More than 1.3 million children in the United States tested positive for the coronavirus as of Nov. 26, according to an analysis of state-level reports that include age information from 49 states (all but New York) plus data from New York City, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. Children make up 12 percent of all reported cases, with 153,608 new child COVID-19 cases reported in the previous week, the largest weekly increase since the pandemic began, a result in line with the increase in coronavirus cases more generally.

Using state-level population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, the report estimates 1,777 child COVID-19 cases per 100,000 children. In nine states – including North and South Dakota, Wyoming and Wisconsin – this rises to more than 3,000 cases per 100,000. The states with the largest cumulative number of child COVID-19 cases include California, Illinois, Tennessee, Florida and Wisconsin, while the states with the largest percentage of reported COVID-19 cases that are among children include Wyoming, Tennessee, South Carolina, Alaska, New Mexico and North Dakota ([American Academy of Pediatrics/Children’s Hospital Association 11/26](#)).



Rating the Response

Two-thirds say public health officials such as those at the CDC are doing an excellent or good job responding to the outbreak. Fifty-eight percent rate the response of their local elected officials positively and 54 percent say the same of their state elected officials. Far fewer – 36 percent – give President Trump positive marks. All are essentially unchanged since July ([Pew 11/18-11/29](#)).

State and Local Results

Approval of New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu’s handling of the coronavirus situation dropped 12 points since October, though it’s still high, 71 percent. This follows the recently re-elected governor’s statewide order Nov. 19 requiring masks to be worn indoors when social distancing is not possible. Approval dropped among independents (-18 points to 75 percent) and Republicans (-15 points to 80 percent), but also among Democrats (-9 points to 61 percent). Approval of Trump’s handling of the pandemic has held relatively stable since September, now at 42 percent.

With cases and hospitalizations [surging](#), 48 percent say COVID-19 is the most important problem facing New Hampshire, almost double the 26 percent who said so in October. More than half (53 percent) rate their stress level due to the pandemic as a 7 or higher on a 0-10 scale, up from 43 percent in October. Fifty-five percent say they trust science agencies such as the CDC as a source of information about the coronavirus, up from 48 percent in September, but well below the more than seven in 10 who trusted these agencies in March and April ([UNH 11/19-11/23](#)).

In Denver, a new CDC report finds that during the first seven months of the pandemic, 55 percent of adult COVID-19 cases, 62 percent of COVID-19 associated hospitalizations and 51 percent of COVID-19 related deaths were among Hispanic people, despite the fact that just 25 percent of the Denver population identifies as Hispanic. The report suggests larger household sizes and the fact that Hispanic adults were more apt to work in essential industries may have contributed to the disproportionate impact of the virus on their community ([CDC 3/6-10/6](#)).

International Results

Concerns and support for current restrictions have risen in Mexico. Fifty-five percent think coronavirus infections in the country are increasing, up from 46 percent two weeks ago; fewer think the outbreak is receding, from 20 to 12 percent. Sixty-four percent think restrictions in the country should be maintained, up from 52 percent in late September. Three in 10 think instead businesses should reopen and activities should return to normal, down from 43 percent. At the same time, seven in 10 think infections have not stopped mainly because people are careless or do not take precautions, vs. 27 percent who think it's mainly because government measures have been inadequate. Similarly, two-thirds think the best way to reduce infections is for everyone to take care of themselves, wear masks and wash their hands, while 27 percent think the government should create stricter social distancing measures.

Mexicans divide in their trust in a vaccine: Forty-seven percent say they have at least some trust in it, while 48 percent have little or no trust. Fifty-five percent would prefer to wait before getting vaccinated and see how others react to it. Three in 10 would prefer to be one of the first to get a vaccine, while one in 10 would prefer not to get vaccinated. Two-thirds personally know someone who has been infected with the virus and 23 percent have been tested, both new highs ([El Financiero 11/27-11/29](#)).

In Bulgaria, which recently imposed a lockdown on schools, restaurants, shopping malls and gyms until mid-December, 56 percent support the new measures while 42 percent do not. Vaccine hesitancy is substantial: Fewer than half, 43 percent, plan to be vaccinated against COVID-19 when there is an approved vaccine; 48 percent do not. Thirty-two percent think the coronavirus crisis will not end for more than one year, a major shift from early summer, when six in 10 felt things would return to normal by the end of this year ([Gallup Bulgaria 11/27-11/29](#)).

In Canada, 56 percent are very or somewhat confident that the government has a well-organized plan to deliver vaccines as quickly as possible, although just 16 percent are very confident. ([CTV/Nanos 11/26-11/29](#)). Seventy-eight percent are at least somewhat concerned that charities in Canada are at risk of closing because of fewer donations during the pandemic; this peaks among women and older Canadians ([Globe and Mail/Nanos 11/26-11/29](#)).

In Chile, 62 percent would get a coronavirus vaccine if it were available, while 36 percent say they would not. Just 10 percent think a vaccine will be available in the next three months; 39 percent expect it in the first half of 2021 and an additional 39 percent think it'll be in the second half of 2021. Six in 10 are concerned about the possibility of catching the coronavirus, essentially unchanged in recent weeks but up from 49 percent in late October. Three-quarters

think it is likely that Chile will face a resurgence of the virus like what has happened in Europe.

Seven in 10 agree with their commune lifting quarantine rules and starting the process of deconfinement, up 7 points since mid-November to most since mid-August. Still, nearly all (93 percent) agree with maintaining mandatory use of masks. On other specific measures, 51 percent agree with suspending the need to request interregional travel permits; fewer support ending the curfew (40 percent), allowing restaurants and bars to serve people in person (39 percent) or reopening borders so foreigners can enter the country (22 percent) ([Cadem 11/25-11/27](#)).

In Greece, 64 percent say they likely will get a vaccine when it is approved and available for free, three in 10 likely won't. Intended vaccine uptake ranges from 41 percent of adults under age 30 to 82 percent of those age 60 and older. Nearly eight in 10 overall are worried about the pandemic, the same as in April during the first wave. Three-quarters favor extending the country's lockdown; just 17 percent want to relax restrictions ([Pulse RC 11/24-11/26](#)).

In South Korea, where the government is considering a third coronavirus relief payment, three in 10 say such a subsidy should be paid to all citizens, 41 percent think it should be selectively paid based on income and a quarter think there should not be a payment. These are largely similar to opinions in late August ahead of the second subsidy ([Gallup Korea 11/24-11/26](#)).

In Brazil, 42 percent think the situation is more serious than it was two weeks ago, 26 percent less serious and 28 percent about the same. There are partisan differences; seeing the situation as more serious is 10 points higher among critics than among supporters of President Jair Bolsonaro, who has minimized the severity of the virus. Sixty-four percent say their source of income has been negatively impacted by the pandemic and 57 percent say they've failed to pay any bills in the past month because of it, both essentially unchanged. Fifty-five percent say they or someone close to them has had the coronavirus, also unchanged recently ([PoderData 11/23-11/25](#)).

Many are restricting their activities in Sweden, which like much of Europe is facing a surge in cases. Seven in 10 say they have limited their social contacts, up from 53 percent in late October. Sixty-one percent are not going to restaurants, up from 40 percent. Forty-nine percent have cancelled private parties or events, up from 28 percent; and 23 percent have canceled activities linked to their job, up from 10 percent. Forty-eight percent say they're using digital tools more to keep in touch with others, up from 37 percent ([Novus 11/17-11/23](#)).

In Russia, three-quarters think the cancellation of traditional New Year's events and festivities in some regions because of the coronavirus likely was the correct decision. Among those who think it was the right decision, half think New Year's events should be cancelled countrywide rather than just in certain regions. Overall, four in 10 think the cancellation of events will help a great deal in the fight against the epidemic, three in 10 think it will help a small amount and 23 percent don't think it will help at all ([FOM 11/20-11/22](#)).

In England, the share who report having left their home to meet other people dropped from 26 percent to 15 percent in the two weeks after a Nov. 5 lockdown. The share saying they'd gone to a restaurant, bar or pub to eat or drink dropped from 23 to 10 percent. Four in 10 felt comfortable

leaving their home, essentially unchanged, and the share who reported leaving home to go shopping for food or medicine or to exercise stayed relatively stable despite the lockdown ([Office for National Statistics 11/5-11/15](#)).

In a Ukraine poll conducted in October, 47 percent considered the coronavirus to be a great danger for everyone, up 15 points since September to a new high. An additional 31 percent said it was a danger for certain categories of the population. Just one in 10 said the danger was exaggerated, down from more than four in 10 in late May/early June.

Majorities supported a complete ban on mass events (65 percent), an introduction of fines for those who do not wear masks in public places (63 percent) and the closure of sports complexes and swimming pools (55 percent). Half apiece supported closing malls (except for the stores located in them) and restaurants. Fewer backed a “weekend quarantine” with stricter restrictions on weekends (38 percent), the closure of hairdressing and beauty salons (34 percent), a curfew (27 percent), stopping intercity travel (15 percent) or stopping local and suburban public transportation (14 percent) ([R&B Group 10/16-10/25](#)).

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

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