



COVID-19 Survey Summary: March 19, 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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About seven in 10 Americans have gotten or plan to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, unchanged recently, with significant hesitancy in particular among evangelical Christians, conservatives, Republicans and Black people. Among those who do intend to get the shot, moreover, a substantial number plan to wait before doing so.

New COVID-19 studies also show disparities among groups in who has received the vaccine so far, with coverage generally lower in counties with high social vulnerability and stark differences in self-reported uptake by race/ethnicity, education and income.

Still, amid the vaccination progress, results released this week also find that more Americans are socializing, the climate for small businesses has improved and there's been a slight drop in the number who are experiencing psychological distress compared with early in the pandemic.

Additional studies describe the effect of the pandemic on the workplace, show how teens and the LGBT community have been affected, demonstrate the stark economic toll compared with pre-pandemic times, explore impacts of remote learning and compare governors' political affiliation and state COVID-19 outcomes.

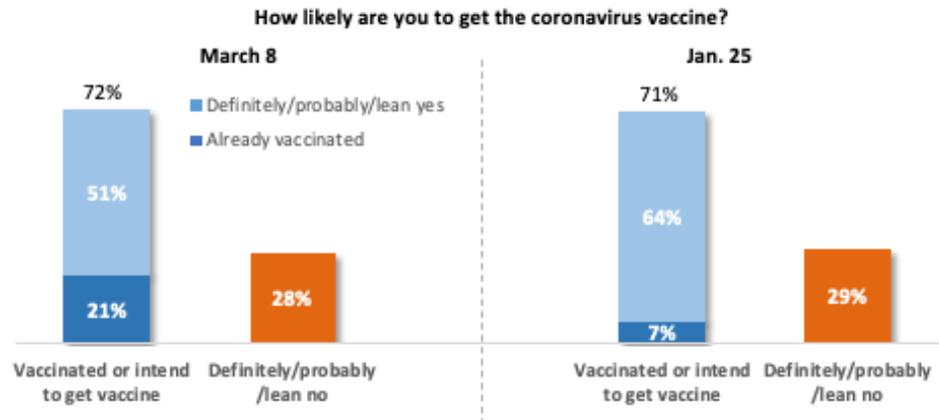
Vaccinations

Americans' overall intentions to get vaccinated have flattened, with roughly seven in 10 saying they have or will get the shot – though the share who have actually done so continues to grow:

- In one poll, 72 percent say they've been vaccinated or likely will, essentially unchanged since late January. That includes 21 percent who report having gotten the shot, including 57 percent of seniors, in interviews completed March 8 ([COVID Collaborative 2/26-3/8](#)).
- Similarly, daily tracking finds that since mid-February, roughly seven in 10 say they have either already been vaccinated or are very or somewhat likely to do so ([USC UAS](#)).

Vaccine hesitancy is especially prevalent in certain groups. The share who've gotten vaccinated or may do so is comparatively low among evangelical Christians (57 percent), those less worried

about catching the virus (57 percent), people who've had the virus (58 percent), Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (61 percent), conservatives (63 percent), Black people (64 percent), those in rural areas (64 percent) and those without college degrees (65 percent).



Even among those who intend to get vaccinated, nearly half say they'll wait and see before doing so, including nearly four in 10 who intend to wait a few months (16 percent) or longer (21 percent). Intention to wait peaks in groups that are generally vaccine-hesitant, including, again, evangelicals (61 percent), Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (60 percent), Black people (60 percent) and those without a college degree (54 percent).

Among those who intend to wait, 57 percent say it's mainly because they want to see if the vaccines are safe or effective in other people. Seven in 10 say having more information on the vaccine's safety and effectiveness would be very or somewhat persuasive in encouraging them to get the vaccine as soon as they're eligible, rather than waiting. Sixty-three percent say having more information on how vaccines were developed and tested would be persuasive. Fifty-six percent say the same of advice from their doctor or healthcare provider telling them not to wait.

While vaccination rates are rising, disparities in who has gotten a shot continue. Self-reported uptake included a quarter of white adults, compared with 16 percent of Black people and 14 percent of Hispanic adults. ([KFF](#) provides a regularly updated analysis of racial/ethnic disparities in vaccination rates based on available state-reported data and the [CDC](#) provides this information nationally.) Those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more were 12 percentage points more likely to say they'd been inoculated than those with incomes less than \$50,000, 27 vs. 15 percent.

There also are stark education gaps. Thirty-seven percent of those with a graduate degree had received a vaccine, compared with 23 percent of those with some college or a bachelor's degree and 14 percent of those with a high school education or less. This may reflect differing access to information – 38 percent of those without a college degree say they've had challenges finding out if they're eligible, compared with a quarter of those with a degree. College graduates instead are more likely to cite finding out how to get an appointment (18 vs. 9 percent) or actually getting one (43 vs. 30 percent) as the main barriers they face.

There have been some shifts in underlying attitudes. Sixty-one percent trust that the vaccines are effective, up 5 points since January, and six in 10 say they're safe, up 4 points. There's been an 11-point increase among Black people in trust that the vaccines have been adequately tested

specifically among Black Americans. But other attitudes – including the view that vaccination is a community responsibility – have not changed, and there’s been a 6-point advance in the share who think side effects are likely.

As in January, key predictors of vaccine intentions include trust that the vaccine is safe and effective, recognition that others want you to get vaccinated and a view that vaccination is a community responsibility rather than a personal choice. Emphasizing these factors, and providing more information about the vaccines in general, may be key to increasing uptake ([COVID Collaborative 2/26-3/8](#)).

A separate analysis finds that college campuses aren’t immune from vaccine hesitancy, with the same attitudes that threaten to limit coronavirus vaccine uptake in the general public prevalent among college students, faculty, staff and administrators ([COVID Collaborative/ACHA, 2/26-3/8](#)).

A substantial share of frontline healthcare workers, too, express reservations. Overall, a poll conducted Feb. 11 through March 7 found just more than half (52 percent) of those who work in a healthcare setting in direct contact with patients or their bodily fluids had received at least their first dose and 19 percent were scheduled to receive a shot or were planning on it. However, three in 10 either were not planning to get vaccinated (18 percent) or had yet to decide (12 percent). As in the general population, vaccination intentions were particularly low among Black healthcare workers, those in lower-paying jobs and those with less education.

Matching concerns in the general population, 36 percent of frontline healthcare workers overall lacked confidence that the vaccines were sufficiently tested for safety and effectiveness. Among those who did not plan to get vaccinated or who were undecided, roughly eight in 10 apiece said concerns about side effects were a major factor (82 percent) and that they wanted to wait and see how it works for other people (81 percent). Two-thirds said a major factor was a lack of trust in the government to make sure the vaccine is safe and effective.

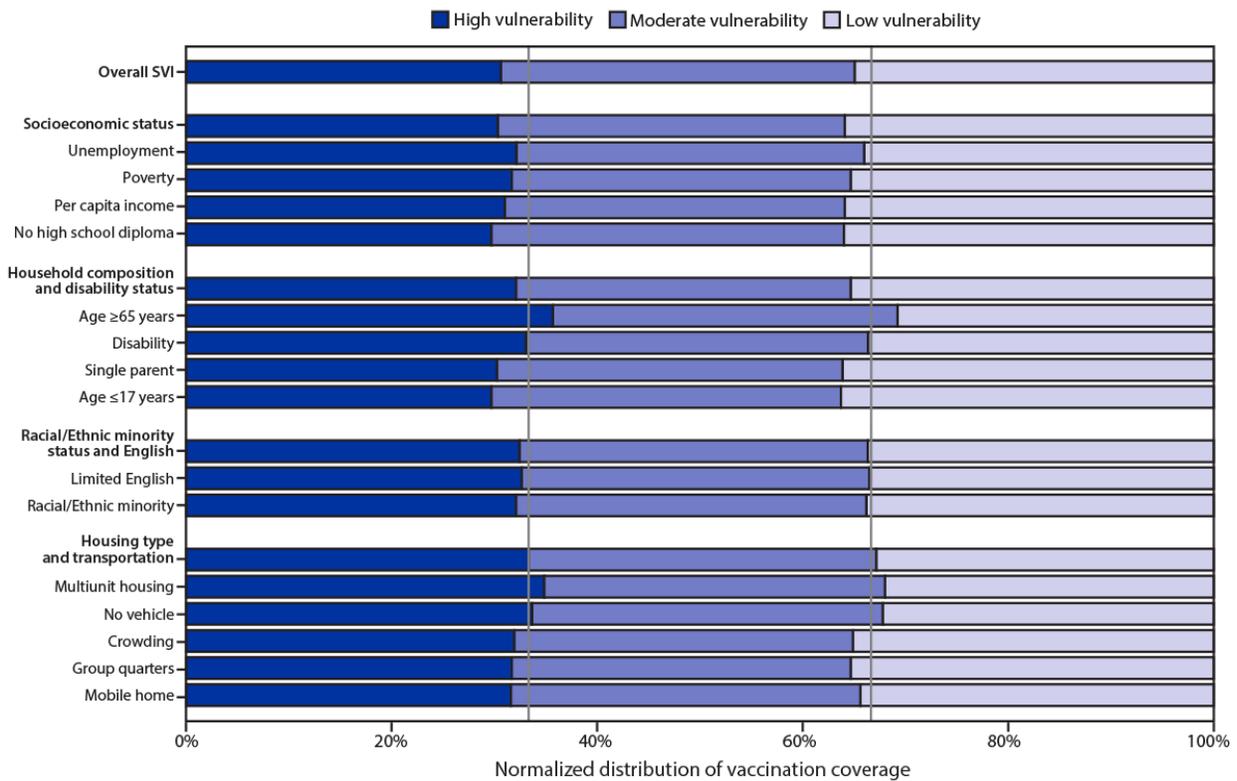
In general, 58 percent of healthcare workers who are not self-employed say they would support their employer requiring all employees who work with patients to become vaccinated; 42 percent oppose this. Among Americans who are not healthcare workers, support for requiring those who work with patients to be vaccinated is higher, 70 percent. Among healthcare workers who do not plan to get vaccinated or have yet to decide, two-thirds say they would leave their job if their employer required them to be vaccinated ([KFF/Post 2/11-3/7](#)).

Vaccination Coverage and Social Vulnerability

A new CDC report finds that during the first two-and-a-half months of the vaccination rollout in the United States, counties with high social vulnerability had lower vaccination coverage than those with low social vulnerability. In counties with high social vulnerability, 13.9 percent of residents had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine from Dec.14 to March 1, vs. 15.8 percent in those with low social vulnerability.

The analysis is based on vaccine administration data for the close to 50 million U.S. residents in 49 states and the District of Columbia who received at least one vaccine dose in the study period and for whom county of residence was recorded. Social vulnerability was assessed using the CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), a composite measure of community susceptibility to adversity based on U.S. Census Bureau data that includes subindices assessing socioeconomic status, household composition, racial/ethnic minority status and language proficiency and housing type/transportation. Counties were grouped as low, medium and high vulnerability on the overall SVI, each of its four subindices and all 15 individual indicators in the index.

Echoing polling results showing differences in vaccination by education and income, the greatest disparity in county-level vaccine coverage occurred on the socioeconomic subindex, with coverage in high-vulnerability counties 2.5 points lower than in low-vulnerability counties. Within that subindex, the largest discrepancy occurred in the indicator assessing the percentage of adults without a high school diploma, with coverage 2.8 points lower in high- vs. low-vulnerability counties.



By contrast, equal vaccination coverage in counties with low and high social vulnerability was found for indicators assessing the percentage of people who speak English less than well and those with a disability. As expected, higher coverage occurred in counties with larger proportions of older adults. Unexpectedly, coverage also was higher in counties with more multi-unit housing and a lower percentage of households with a vehicle available.

The analysis found variability by state. Using the overall SVI, in 31 states, the pattern matched the national trend, with coverage lower in high vs. low vulnerability counties. However, in five

states (Alaska, Arizona, Minnesota, Montana and West Virginia), the opposite held, with vaccination coverage higher in high- rather than in low-vulnerability counties ([CDC 12/14-3/1](#)).

Second Doses

Another CDC report indicates that from Dec. 14, 2020 to Feb. 14, 2021, 88 percent of the close to 12.5 million people who were reported to the CDC to have received a first dose of a vaccine and for whom sufficient time had passed also had received a second dose. Roughly 9 percent had not yet received their second dose but were still within the allowable time interval (up to 42 days) and 3.4 percent had missed the second dose. Among the 54.1 percent of cases with race/ethnicity data recorded, American Indian and Alaska Natives were the least likely to have completed the series (83.7 percent had received both doses).

In a second analysis, among the more than 14 million people who had received a second dose by Feb. 14, 95.6 percent had received the dose within the recommended time interval, 1.5 received it earlier than recommended and 2.8 received it after the recommended interval, but within the allowable time frame. Just 0.1 percent received the dose after the allowable time frame. Demographic differences in the timing of the second dose were minimal ([CDC 12/14-2/14](#)).

Vaccinations in Nursing Homes

A new analysis using Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services data suggests that vaccinations are having an impact in nursing home settings. It finds that the number of new weekly COVID-19 cases among nursing home staff members fell 83 percent from the first week of the vaccine rollout in mid-December to the week ending Feb. 14 – from 28,802 cases to 4,764. Among nursing home residents, new COVID-19 infections fell 89 percent in that period. This compares with a drop of 58 percent in the general population during that time ([KHN](#)).

Daily Life

Echoing results reported [last week](#), daily tracking data shows an increase in the number of Americans who are engaging in social activities. Nearly half say they've had visitors to their residence in the past week, up from roughly four in 10 in late February, and 44 percent say they've visited a friend, neighbor or relative, up from 36 percent in the same time period.

Twenty-one percent say they've attended a gathering with more than 10 people in the past week, up from 13 percent in early March. Seventeen percent say they've visited a bar, club or other gathering place, up from about one in 10 in late February and early March.

Overall, 37 percent say they've stayed home except for essential activities or exercise, the fewest since November ([USC UAS](#)).

Impact on Work

Results of a poll conducted in February indicate that nearly eight in 10 workers were still making changes in how they do their job in order to avoid exposure to the coronavirus, about the same as

have said so since April. That includes 36 percent who said the changes were making it harder to do their job and 41 percent who said the changes did not make their job harder.

Nearly six in 10 said they always or sometimes were working remotely to avoid catching or spreading the virus, a share that has held relatively steady since last spring.

Asked about the recent impact of the coronavirus on their job, roughly four in 10 of those who were not primarily self-employed strongly agreed that their supervisor has kept them informed about what is going on in the organization (37 percent) and has communicated a clear plan of action (44 percent). Both are essentially unchanged since November, but down from their levels last spring. Similarly, 37 percent strongly agreed that their organization cares about their overall well-being, down from 48 percent last spring ([Gallup 2/14-2/21](#)).

In a different February poll that focused on women's experiences in the workplace, nearly a third of employed women said they personally know a woman who has voluntarily left the workforce during the pandemic because of caregiving responsibilities. Twenty-seven percent of employed women with caregiving responsibilities said their professional development has been stifled during the pandemic, compared with 10 percent of employed men. Forty-four percent of employed adults overall agreed that, because of the pandemic, being successful in the workplace is more challenging for women with caregiving responsibilities ([SHRM/NORC 2/11-2/15](#)).

Mental Health Impacts

A mid-February poll found that about a fifth of Americans were experiencing high levels of psychological distress according to a five-item index that asks about anxiety, sleeplessness, depression, loneliness and physical symptoms of distress. That's down slightly from 24 percent in March 2020, when lockdown measures first were implemented, driven largely by a decline in reported frequency of feeling nervous, anxious or on edge.

Among those who said the coronavirus outbreak was a major threat to their personal financial situation, 34 percent fell into the high distress group. Distress also was more common among those with lower incomes (31 percent) or whose finances are in poor shape (44 percent).

Thirty-two percent of young adults (age 18-29) indicated high levels of distress, more than any other age group, with distress particularly high among lower-income young adults (39 percent), young women (36 percent) and unmarried young adults (35 percent).

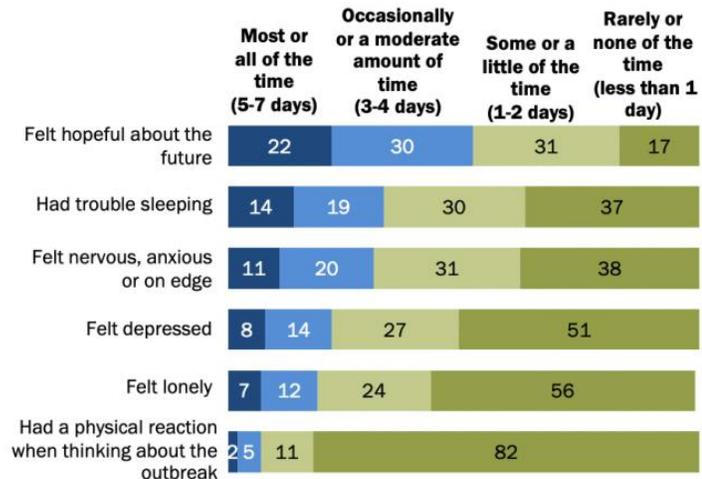
Among the individual items that make up the measure of distress:

- Roughly a third indicated that in the past seven days they had had trouble sleeping occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days) or most or all of the time (5-7 days), essentially the same as said so last March.
- Three in 10 said they had felt nervous, anxious or on edge at least a moderate amount of the time, including 45 percent of young adults. Last March, more than four in 10 overall reported feeling this way.

- Twenty-two percent felt depressed a moderate amount or most or all of the time, essentially unchanged.
- Seventeen percent said they rarely or never felt hopeful about the future, and an additional three in 10 only felt hopeful on one or two of the past seven days, again about the same as said so last March.
- In a separate item not included in the composite measure, 7 percent indicated they had had a physical reaction when thinking about the outbreak at least three or four days of the past week and 11 percent had a physical reaction thinking about the outbreak on at least one day. This also is little changed since last March ([Pew 2/16-2/21](#)).

About one-third of U.S. adults report at least occasional sleeplessness, anxiety in past week

% saying that in the past seven days they have ...



Note: Questions adapted from GAD-7, CES-D, Impact to Event Scale-Revised. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 16-21, 2021.

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Impacts on Teens

In a newly released report based on a January poll, 46 percent of parents of 13- to 18-year-olds said they have noticed a new or worsening mental health condition for their teen since the start of the pandemic. Parents of teen girls were more apt to report an increase in some mental health symptoms than parents of teen boys, including anxiety/worry (36 vs. 19 percent) and depression/sadness (31 vs. 18 percent). About two in 10 reported negative changes in their teen's sleep, regardless of gender, and roughly one in 10 apiece noted their teen had withdrawn from the family or had been more aggressive.

Among those who'd noticed a negative change in their teen's mental health, 52 percent said they tried relaxing family COVID-19 rules to allow their teen to have more contact with friends; 81 percent said it helped. Forty-seven percent tried relaxing family rules about social media; 70 percent said it helped. A third talked with teachers or school counselors and 57 percent said this helped, while 29 percent sought help from a mental health provider, with three-quarters saying it helped. One-third said they looked for information on the internet and a quarter encouraged their teen to try a web-based mental health program or app; roughly six in 10 apiece said these helped.

Nearly three-quarters of parents said that COVID-19 has negatively impacted their teen's ability to interact with their friends. Asked how their teens were connecting with friends, 64 percent said they'd been texting every day or almost every day, 56 percent reported frequent social

media use, 43 percent reported they were frequently connecting through online gaming, and 35 percent said they were talking on the phone with friends daily or almost every day. By contrast, fewer than one in 10 said their teens were frequently getting together in person with friends either indoors (9 percent) or outdoors (6 percent) ([CS Mott Children's Hospital](#)).

School Instruction and Well-Being

A newly released poll of parents of children age 5-12 conducted last October and November explores child and parent experiences and well-being during the pandemic and how these relate to the child's mode of instruction in school.

Overall, 46 percent of parents reported that their child was receiving virtual instruction only, 31 percent in-person only and 23 percent using a hybrid approach. Parents of children enrolled in public school were more apt than private school parents to say their child was receiving virtual instruction only, 48 vs. 20 percent. Hispanic (66 percent), multiracial (64 percent) and Black parents (55 percent) were more likely to say their child was in virtual instruction only, compared with white parents (32 percent).

In modeling that controlled for the child's age and parent's race/ethnicity, sex and household income, parents with children in virtual-only or hybrid instruction scored less positively on 11 of 17 indicators of stress and well-being. Among the individual items:

- Compared with parents of children receiving fully in-person instruction, those with children in virtual-only instruction were:
 - Roughly twice as likely to report that their child experienced decreased physical activity (63 vs. 30 percent), time spent outside (58 vs. 27 percent) and virtual time with friends (24 vs. 13 percent).
 - More likely to say their child experienced decreased in-person time with friends (86 vs. 70 percent) and worsened mental or emotional health (25 vs. 16 percent).
 - More likely to report their own emotional distress (54 vs. 38 percent), loss of work (43 vs. 31 percent), job stability concerns (27 vs. 15 percent), difficulty sleeping (22 vs. 13 percent), conflict between working and providing childcare (15 vs. 8 percent) and childcare challenges (14 vs. 7 percent).
- Parents with children in hybrid instruction were more likely than those whose children were receiving fully in-person instruction to say their child experienced decreased physical activity, time spent outside, in-person time with friends and worsened mental or emotional health; and to report loss of work and conflict between working and providing childcare.

The authors conclude that virtual instruction might present more risks than in-person instruction to child and parental mental, emotional and physical health and therefore these parents and children may need additional community support. They stress the importance of community-wide actions to reduce COVID-19 incidence and support mitigation strategies in school to support students' return to in-person learning ([CDC/NORC 10/8-11/13](#)).

Impacts on the LGBT Community

Follow-up analysis of December and January polling data found some disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on LGBT people, as well as differing views of vaccination:

- Three-quarters of LGBT people said stress and worry from the pandemic had negatively impacted their mental health, including 49 percent who said it was a major impact. Many fewer non-LGBT people, 49 percent, reported an overall negative impact, 23 percent said it was major.
- Fifty-six percent of LGBT adults said they or someone in their household had experienced a job loss due to the pandemic, compared with 44 percent of non-LGBT adults.
- Although LGBT people reported wanting to get vaccinated at the same rate as non-LGBT people, they were more apt to see vaccination as part of everyone's responsibility to protect the health of others (75 vs. 48 percent), and less apt to view it as a personal choice (24 vs. 49 percent) ([KFF 11/30-12/8; 1/11-1/18](#)).

Economic Impacts

A new U.S. Census Bureau analysis details the magnitude of the economic impacts of the pandemic, with 2017 data for comparison. Among the results:

- From March 2020 to February 2021, roughly 115 million Americans experienced a loss of employment income. (In a different indicator, given for comparison, in 2017, roughly 30 million experienced an end of employment or reduction in work hours, including both voluntary and involuntary terminations.)
- About 37 million people qualified for unemployment insurance (UI) between March and February, roughly 10 times the number who collected UI in 2017.
- In March and April 2020 alone, 8.3 million people lost hospitality jobs, which includes jobs in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services. That compares with roughly five million who lost hospitality jobs in all of 2017.
- In the second half of February 2021, an estimated 26 million households reported receiving benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in the previous week. That compares with about 16 million in 2017 ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)).

Small Business Impacts

Despite the economic toll, there are hopeful signs for small businesses, with several indicators showing continued improvement. Forty-seven percent say their current operating capacity is about the same as it was before the pandemic, the most in available data since August. Just 13 percent report a decrease in the total number of hours worked by paid employees, down from 24

percent in early January to a low in data since late April. Similarly, just 8 percent report a decrease in the number of paid employees in the past week, also a new low.

Forty-two percent think it'll take more than six months to return to their normal level of operations relative to one year ago, but that's the fewest since late June. Twenty-one percent say that in the next six months they will need to obtain financial assistance or additional capital, down from 34 percent in early January to a low in data since August.

Twenty-seven percent say their operating revenues decreased in the past week, down 5 points in the past week to a low in available data since late April. Still, just 9 percent report an increase in revenues in the past week ([U.S. Census Bureau 3/1-3/7](#)).

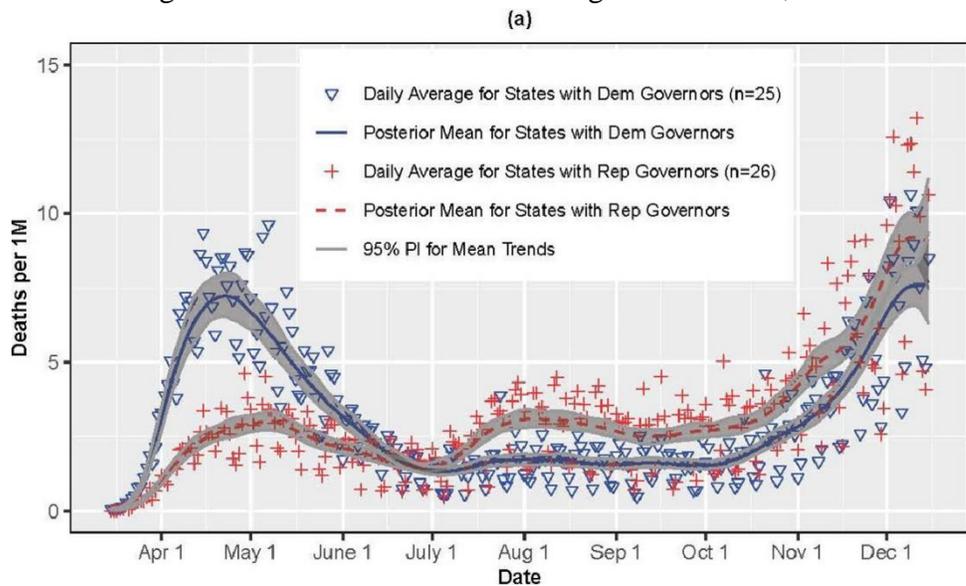
Another study finds positive results in consumer sentiment, with Americans' optimism about the economy's direction reaching its highest level since before the pandemic began and indications of possible gains ahead as stimulus checks land and COVID-19 restrictions lift ([CCI 3/14](#)).

Governors' Political Affiliation and COVID-19

A new analysis examines the relationship between state governors' political affiliation and COVID-19 cases, deaths and testing rates from March 15 to Dec. 15, 2020. The analysis uses longitudinal modeling that adjusts for state population, density, rurality, Census region, age, race, ethnicity, poverty, number of physicians, obesity, cardiovascular disease, asthma, smoking and presidential vote preferences in 2020. Among the results:

- From March to early June, states led by Republican governors had lower COVID-19 incidence rates compared with those led by Democrats. On June 3, this flipped, and Republican-led states had higher incidences than Democratic-governor states, and this trend persisted through the end of the study period in mid-December.

- A similar pattern was found for mortality rates – early in the pandemic, Republican-led states had fewer COVID-19 related deaths, while starting July 4, those with Democrats in charge had lower death rates, and this persisted through mid-December.



- Testing rates were similar in Republican- and Democratic-led states through the fall, but by the end of November, the testing rate was substantially lower in Republican-led states. Test positivity rates were lower in Democratic-led states from May 30 through mid-December.

The authors suggest that early in the pandemic, the greater incidence of COVID-19 in states with Democratic governors likely reflects the fact that the initial ports of entry for the virus occurred in states with Democratic governors (e.g., New York, New Jersey), but that the subsequent trends may indicate that party affiliation influenced policies with downstream consequences for COVID-19 outcomes. However, as with all observational studies, they caution that causality cannot be inferred ([Neelon et al., 2021](#)).

State Results

In New York, nearly three-quarters say they have either been vaccinated (38 percent) or are willing to be vaccinated (36 percent). Forty-four percent think the pace or reopening schools in their community is about right, while a third think it is not happening quickly enough and 16 percent say it's happening too quickly. Fifty-eight percent think Gov. Andrew Cuomo deliberately tried to conceal the number of nursing home deaths during the pandemic last spring. Fifty-four percent approve of the way he is handling the response to the pandemic overall, well down from the 81 percent who approved last spring. More – 69 percent – approve of how President Biden is handling the response ([Quinnipiac 3/16-3/17](#)).

In Iowa, 47 percent approve of how Gov. Kim Reynolds has addressed the pandemic, well down from the 59 percent who approved back in June. More – 57 percent – approve of the job President Biden has done dealing with the pandemic ([Des Moines Register/Mediacom 3/7-3/10](#)).

International Results

In Japan, a third say their financial situation has gotten worse in the year since the pandemic began; 65 percent say it is unchanged and 3 percent say it's gotten better. Nearly eight in 10 plan to continue to incorporate anti-coronavirus measures in their daily lives, while 18 percent intend gradually to take a relaxed approach and 2 percent already have been relaxing measures. Forty-five percent think the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics should be held as scheduled – 9 percent as planned, 21 percent without spectators allowed from overseas and 15 without any spectators. Thirty-two percent think they should be canceled and 17 percent favor another postponement ([Mainichi Shimbun 3/13](#)).

In Mexico, concern and frequent mask wearing both are down. Fifty-five percent say they wear a mask at all times in public places, down from 66 percent in February. (Twenty-seven percent say they wear one most of the time, up from 21 percent.) Six in 10 are very concerned about the coronavirus, down from 67 percent in February. However, six in 10 think the restrictions and isolation measures currently in place should be maintained, up from 52 percent. Twenty-two percent plan to go on vacation during the Easter holiday and two-thirds think there will be a post-Easter increase in COVID-19 cases. Seven in 10 personally know someone who has had the

virus and roughly a third know someone who has died, essentially unchanged from last month ([El Financiero 3/12-3/13](#)).

In Chile, three in 10 say they have been vaccinated, up 10 points in two weeks. Eighty-seven percent positively evaluate the government's mass vaccination plan, up 7 points from last week to a new high. Fifty-two percent approve of how the government is handling the outbreak overall, unchanged since last week but well above 33 percent in late January ([Cadem 3/10-3/12](#)).

In Great Britain, more are venturing out of the house for a variety of reasons – 21 percent say they left their home in the past week to visit a local park or green space, up from 14 percent in mid-January; 14 percent left to collect take-out, up from 9 percent; and 10 percent went out to shop for things other than necessities, up from 5 percent. Two in 10 have met up outdoors with someone outside their household or support bubble, up from 14 percent in mid-February.

Overall, 48 percent say they stayed at home or only left for work, exercise, essential shopping or medical needs, down from 54 percent last week. Ninety-three percent say they've either received a vaccine or are likely to get it if offered, essentially unchanged since last week ([Office for National Statistics 3/3-3/7](#)).

In Canada, 71 percent say they will definitely get vaccinated when it becomes available, essentially unchanged since December. Six in 10 think the vaccines are very safe and an additional quarter think they're somewhat safe. Using a 0-10 scale, more rate the job the provincial and federal governments are doing with the vaccine rollout positively than did so in January ([Nanos/CTV News 2/28-3/4](#)).

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

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