



COVID-19 Survey Summary: May 28, 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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Vaccination rates and intentions are essentially stagnant in the latest survey data and mistrust of those beyond one's immediate circle to be honest about their vaccine status is widespread. Still, public life continues to resume, with risk perceptions at pandemic lows, virus concerns ebbing and, for the first time, fewer than half of Americans staying home and avoiding others.

Pandemic-related polls released this week also show sharp declines in the past two weeks in mask use and social distancing among people who've been vaccinated, reflecting the CDC's mid-May update to its mask use and distancing guidelines for vaccinated people.

Additional results describe Americans' travel patterns in the first half of 2021 and travel intentions for the next six months, document widespread concerns about discrimination against Americans of Asian descent amid the pandemic and indicate that breakthrough COVID-19 infections in fully vaccinated people remain exceptionally rare.

Vaccines

Polls this week show vaccination rates and intentions in the country largely have stabilized:

- In one, 65 percent say they've received a COVID-19 vaccine, essentially the same as two weeks ago (64 percent). Among the rest, 3 percent plan to get vaccinated as soon as possible, 6 percent plan to wait a few weeks or months, 7 percent plan to wait longer and 17 percent say they won't get it, all essentially unchanged ([Axios/Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)).
- Similarly, in longitudinal tracking, roughly three-quarters say they have or likely will get vaccinated, including 65 percent who have already gotten at least one dose. Both numbers basically have not budged in weeks ([USC UAS 5/26](#)).
- A third study finds that 62 percent have received at least one dose, up 6 percentage points since April (compared with a 24-point gain the previous month). The number who plan to get it as soon as possible dropped 5 points in the same period, to 4 percent. Twelve percent plan to wait and see how the vaccines work for others; it was 15 percent in April.

The share who say they definitely will not get vaccinated (13 percent) or will do so only if required (7 percent) has not changed in months ([KFF 5/18-5/25](#)).

- In a fourth, 72 percent say they have received a COVID-19 vaccine or plan to, while 23 percent do not. In mid-April, the split was 68-27 percent ([Quinnipiac 5/18-5/24](#)).
- A fifth finds that 59 percent of registered voters say they have been vaccinated, essentially the same as said so a month ago ([Fox News 5/22-5/25](#)).

Hesitancy Among Parents

Vaccine hesitancy particularly among parents is considerable. Just 46 percent of parents of children younger than 18 say they're likely to have their child vaccinated as soon as it's available for their age group or that their child already has received at least one dose. This essentially matches intentions earlier this month, before the CDC extended its authorization for the Pfizer vaccine down to age 12 ([Axios/Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)).

In a different poll, among those with children younger than 16, 42 percent are planning to have their child vaccinated once eligible and an additional 3 percent say they've already been vaccinated. Forty-four do not plan to have their child vaccinated ([Quinnipiac 5/18-5/24](#)).

Specifically among parents with children age 12-17, 41 percent say their child has received at least one dose (24 percent) or will get one right away (18 percent). Hesitancy rises among parents with children younger than 12: A quarter in this group say they will get their child vaccinated as soon as they are eligible, a third plan to wait and see how well it works for others, 14 percent will act only if required and 26 percent say they definitely will not get their child vaccinated.

Not surprisingly, vaccinated parents of children younger than 12 are far more likely than unvaccinated parents of children that age to say they'll get their child vaccinated right away, 46 vs. 8 percent ([KFF 5/18-5/25](#)).

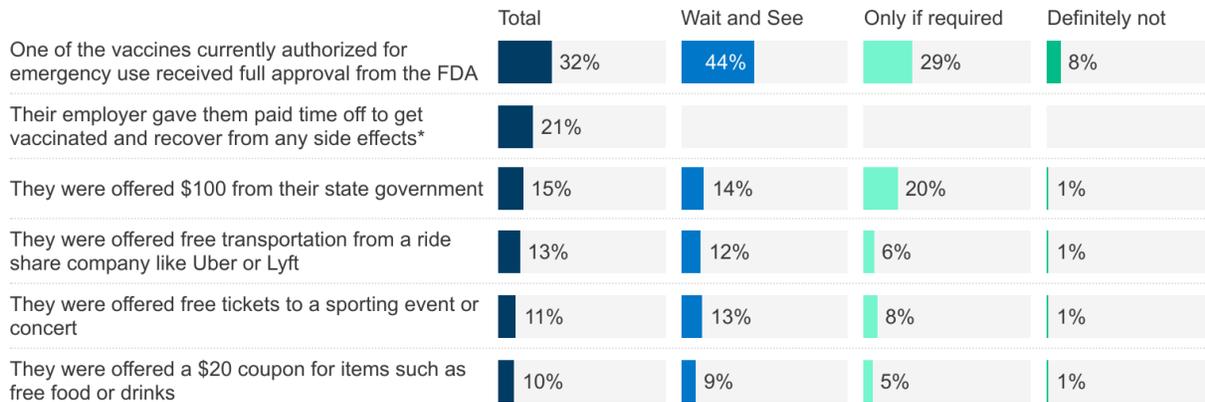
Reducing Vaccine Hesitancy

A third of unvaccinated adults, including 44 percent of those who are waiting to see how the vaccine works for others before getting it, say they would be more likely to get vaccinated if a vaccine received full FDA approval rather than the emergency authorizations currently in place for the three vaccines available in the United States. Among unvaccinated adults who are employed, 21 percent say they'd be more likely to get a vaccine if their employer gave them paid time off to get the shot and recover from any side effects.

Other potential incentives are less motivating, including \$100 from the state government (15 percent), free transportation from a ride-share company (13 percent), free tickets to a sporting event or concert (11 percent) or a \$20 coupon for food or drink (10 percent). However, these incentives are more motivating to lower-income Americans and Hispanic and Black adults, suggesting they may be useful in reducing socioeconomic disparities in vaccination rates.

Full FDA Approval Could Boost COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake, Particularly Among The "Wait And See" Group

Percent who say they would be more likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine if:



NOTE: Among those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19. "As soon as possible" group was too small for analysis. *Item was asked only employed individuals, excluding those who were self-employed. Subgroups too small to report. See topline for full question wording.

SOURCE: KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (May 18-25, 2021)

[KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor](#)

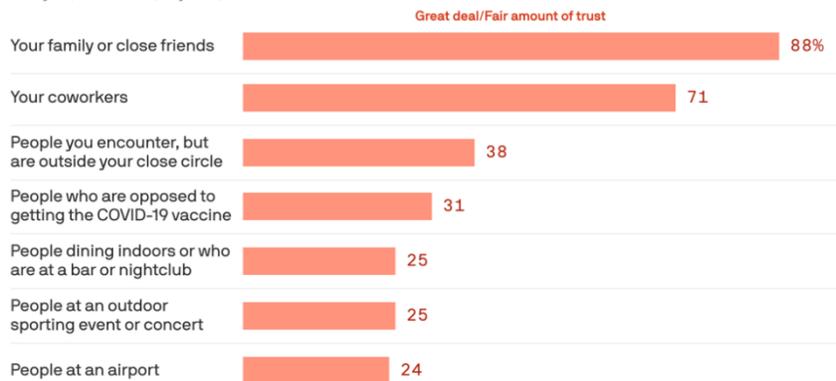
At the same time, there is some risk to persuasion efforts: Four in 10 vaccine-hesitant adults say they have felt unfairly pressured to get vaccinated, including half of those who say they definitely will not get vaccinated. Women and those with a college degree are more likely than men and those without a degree to have felt unfairly pressured ([KFF 5/18-5/25](#)).

Vaccine Status

Large majorities express a great deal or fair amount of trust in family and friends (88 percent) and co-workers (71 percent) to be honest about their vaccine status. But far fewer trust people they encounter who are outside their close circle (38 percent) or are opposed to getting the vaccine (31 percent), and just a quarter would trust people at an outdoor sporting event or concert, indoor restaurant or bar or in an airport.

Trust in people to be honest about their COVID-19 vaccination status

Survey of 1,102 U.S. adults, May 21-24, 2021



Data: Axios/Ipsos Poll; Note: 3.2% margin of error; Chart: Axios Visuals

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to trust others to be honest about their vaccination status. The gap is particularly wide in trust for people who are opposed to taking the vaccine – 47

percent of Republicans trust those in this group to be honest about their status, vs. 19 percent of Democrats. (This aligns with higher vaccine resistance among Republicans.) ([Axios-Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)).

Masks and Distancing

Nearly all Americans (96 percent) say they have heard of the CDC's recent updates to mask use and social distancing guidelines for people who have been vaccinated. Among them, 69 percent think the new guidelines are clear, although that includes just 19 percent who find them very clear. Three in 10 say they're not very or not at all clear ([Axios-Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)).

In a different question, 77 percent say they understand the federal government's guidance on when to wear a mask at least somewhat well ([Fox News 5/22-5/25](#)). However, a third poll finds perceptions of the clarity of the CDC guidance are more mixed – 54 percent say they're clear and easy to understand while 43 percent find them confusing and hard to follow, rising to 56 percent of Republicans ([KFF 5/18-5/25](#)). Overall, 49 percent approve of the way the CDC is handling mask guidelines while 44 percent disapprove ([Quinnipiac 5/18-5/24](#)).

Reflecting the shift in guidance, fewer than half (45 percent) say they're wearing a mask at all times when leaving their home, down sharply from 58 percent two weeks ago (prior to the change). A third say they're always maintaining a distance of six feet from others, down 8 points in the same time period. Both now are their lowest in more than a year.

Mask use and distancing have declined in particular among those who are vaccinated and older adults:

- Forty-seven percent of vaccinated people say they're wearing a mask at all times, down from 65 percent two weeks ago. Thirty-two percent are maintaining a distance of six feet at all times, down from 44 percent.
- Among those age 65 and older (a highly vaccinated group), 41 percent are wearing a mask at all times, down from 62 percent, and the share who are always maintaining six feet of distance has dropped from 35 to 25 percent.
- Consistent mask use and distancing also have declined steeply among those age 50-64, down 15 points in each case to 41 and 31 percent, respectively.

No significant changes were observed among unvaccinated people, a generally more mask- and distancing-resistant group. Among those who are unvaccinated, 42 percent report always wearing a mask, compared with 46 percent two weeks ago; and 32 percent report always distancing, vs. 35 percent two weeks ago ([Axios-Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)).

A different poll likewise finds a sharp drop in mask use – among registered voters, 42 percent say they're wearing a mask all the time when out in public, down from 63 percent last July. In this study, 67 percent express worry that given the new CDC guidance unvaccinated people will

go mask-free now too. Three-quarters think people stereotype or pass judgment on others based on whether or not they are wearing a mask ([Fox News 5/22-5/25](#)).

Among those who are unvaccinated, most – 85 percent – say the shift in the CDC’s guidance does not affect their likelihood of getting vaccinated; one in 10 says it makes them more likely to get vaccinated, 4 percent less likely ([KFF 5/18-5/25](#)).

Daily Life

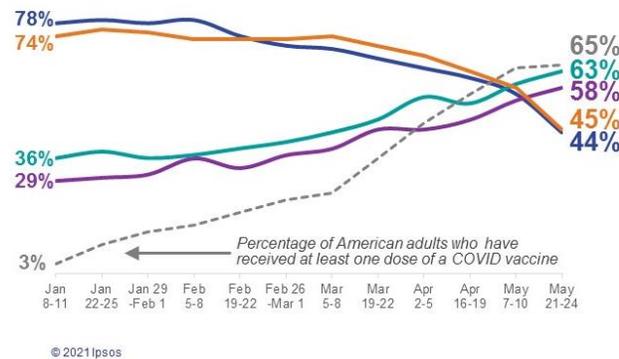
For the first time since the pandemic began, fewer than half of Americans (44 percent) say they stayed at home and avoided others as much as possible in the past week, down 12 points in two weeks. In tandem, the number who say they’re engaging in a variety of social activities continues to climb – 63 percent have visited friends or relatives in the past week and 58 percent have gone out to eat, both up 10 points since mid-April to new highs. Six in 10 have gone to a non-grocery retail store and 49 percent have visited a park, beach or other outdoor space, also highs in available data since last spring.

Thirty-eight percent now say that returning to their normal, pre-coronavirus life would be a large or moderate risk, down from 43 percent two-weeks ago and 52 percent last month, also to a new low. Three in 10 say they expect to return to something like their normal pre-COVID life within the next month or that they already have, up from 22 percent two weeks ago.

Perceptions of the risk of a variety of activities also hit new lows, including attending in-person gatherings of friends and family, dining in at a restaurant, going to the grocery store, shopping at retail stores and taking a vacation.

Percentage of Americans who have _____ in the last week

■ Social distanced ■ Visited friends or relatives
■ Gone out to eat ■ Worn a mask outside the home at all times



masks (27 percent). Two in 10 instead prefer a combination of in-person and remote learning; just 1 percent volunteer that they'd prefer schools to be fully remote.

Among parents who are registered to vote, 72 percent express concerns about schools mandating vaccinations, as many are concerned about teachers' unions making it difficult to return fully to the classroom and 69 percent are concerned about unvaccinated students and teachers not wearing masks. Still, seven in 10 are at least somewhat satisfied with the school experience being provided to children in their community ([Fox News 5/22-5/25](#)).

Coronavirus Concerns

Broader concerns about the coronavirus, while still widespread, continue to wane: Two-thirds say they are extremely, very or somewhat concerned about the COVID-19 outbreak, down 8 points from mid-April to another low ([Axios/Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)). Fifty-five percent call the pandemic a major threat to the stability of the United States, down from 67 percent in June 2020, and 46 percent think the virus is completely or mostly under control, up from 29 percent last month and 18 percent in December ([Fox News 5/22-5/25](#)).

Racial/ethnic differences in these concerns continue. For example, when asked which three of a variety of current issues they found most worrying, the coronavirus was selected by 47 percent of Asian people, 42 percent of Black people and 40 percent of Hispanic people, compared with just 23 percent of white people ([Axios/Ipsos 4/28-5/4](#)).

Discrimination

A variety of measures suggest that many think discrimination against Asians has increased amid the pandemic, and most are concerned about it:

- Two-thirds agree that Asian Americans have faced discrimination as a result of the pandemic in this country, rising to 82 percent of people of Asian descent themselves ([Axios/Ipsos 4/28-5/4](#)).
- Six in 10 – including majorities across racial and ethnic groups – say discrimination against Asian Americans is higher now compared with a year ago.
- Nearly eight in 10 are at least somewhat worried that incidents targeting Asian Americans have increased because of the pandemic, including 45 percent who are extremely or very worried about this. Two-thirds of Asian Americans are highly worried about these incidents ([AP-NORC 4/29-5/3](#)).

Travel Plans

Eight in 10 Americans do not plan to travel for Memorial Day weekend. At the same time, nearly three-quarters plan to spend it much like they did before the pandemic ([Quinnipiac 5/18-5/24](#)).

Four in 10 say that in the past six months they have taken a road trip (41 percent) or a trip to a city or urban areas (39 percent). Twenty-eight percent have stayed in a hotel, 18 percent have taken a trip to a remote or secluded area, 14 percent have taken a domestic trip by plane, 13 percent have gone on a beach vacation, 11 percent have stayed in a vacation rental where they wouldn't see other people and 7 percent have taken an international flight. Among vaccinated adults who indicated they had done at least one of these things, 44 percent say they did so before being vaccinated.

In terms of future plans, majorities plan to take a road trip (58 percent) or a trip to a city or urban area (51 percent) in the next six months. Nearly half plan to stay in a hotel (48 percent). About three in 10 plan to take a beach vacation (32 percent), a domestic plane trip (30 percent) or a trip to a remote or secluded area (30 percent). Two in 10 intend to stay in a vacation rental where they won't see others and 15 percent plan to take an international flight ([Axios/Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)). Six in 10 say they're unwilling to travel overseas at this time ([Quinnipiac 5/18-5/24](#)).

Among employed Americans, 11 percent say they've worked remotely from a vacation spot or travel destination in the past six months. Fifteen percent plan to do so in the next six months ([Axios/Ipsos 5/21-5/24](#)).

Breakthrough Infection Update

As of April 30, roughly 101 million people in the United States had been fully vaccinated. In that time, a total of 10,262 breakthrough infections – defined as a positive test result from a person who has had all doses of a COVID-19 vaccine for at least two weeks – were voluntarily reported to the CDC by 46 states and territories. Sixty-three percent of cases occurred in women, and the median patient age was 58. Twenty-seven percent of the reported infections were asymptomatic. One in 10 was known to be hospitalized; 29 percent of these were asymptomatic or hospitalized for a reason unrelated to COVID-19. Two percent of patients died, of whom 18 percent were asymptomatic or died from a cause unrelated to COVID-19 ([CDC 1/1/21-4/30/21](#)).

Government Response

Echoing results [reported last week](#), 65 percent of Americans approve of President Biden's handling of the response to the coronavirus ([Quinnipiac 5/18-5/24](#)). Among registered voters, it's a similar 64 percent, up 6 points since April ([Fox News 5/22-5/25](#)).

When it comes to the pandemic-related boost to unemployment benefits, more than half (54 percent) think states are doing the right thing in cutting off the additional \$300 in federal unemployment benefits early because the states believe it discourages work, including 89 percent of Republicans, compared with 32 percent of Democrats ([Quinnipiac 5/18-5/24](#)).

State and Local Results

In California, nearly three-quarters say they have been vaccinated (67 percent) or definitely will do so (6 percent), up from just shy of half in January. Despite the gains, there are disparities, with Black people (56 percent) and Latinos (60 percent) significantly less likely than whites (72

percent) and Asian Americans (80 percent) to say they have received a shot. Still, three-quarters overall positively evaluate the job the state government is doing distributing vaccines, up a steep 39 points since January.

Eighty-six percent say that the worst of the pandemic is behind the United States, up from 74 percent in March. Fewer than three in 10 are at least somewhat concerned that they will get COVID-19 and need to be hospitalized, down 19 points in the same period.

Seven in 10 approve of providing Californians with another round of stimulus checks; even more – 81 percent – approve of assisting residents who fell behind during the pandemic with money to pay overdue rent and utility bills. Three-quarters approve of how Biden is handling the pandemic and 64 percent approve of how Gov. Gavin Newsom is handling it ([PPIC 5/9-5/18](#)).

In New Hampshire, additional results from a poll [described last week](#) show that three-quarters in the state are at least partially vaccinated against COVID-19, but most of those who are not vaccinated do not plan to get the shot. Expectations about the state's economy have improved – 27 percent think it will recover to pre-pandemic levels within the next six months, up from 10 percent in February. While 44 percent think it'll take more than a year, that's down from 58 percent. Approval of how Gov. Chris Sununu is handling the pandemic has rebounded to 72 percent after dropping to 65 percent in April following his decision to lift the state's mask mandate. Six in 10 approve of how Biden is handling the pandemic, essentially unchanged ([UNH 5/13-5/17](#)).

In the District of Columbia, a CDC analysis reports that 24 percent of the 469 licensed childcare facilities reported at least one laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19 from July through December. Among the 319 total cases, 56 percent occurred among teachers or staff members. Twenty-seven facilities (6 percent) had an outbreak, which was defined as two or more cases in a 14-day period. Outbreak risks were greatest in facilities in operation fewer than three years, where symptomatic people sought testing three or more days after symptom onset or where someone had asymptomatic COVID-19 ([CDC 7/1/20-12/31/20](#)).

International Results

In Japan, half think the national government is greatly responsible for the confusion surrounding coronavirus vaccine appointments, while 13 percent call local governments highly responsible and a third think the confusion was unavoidable. Sixty-three percent say they will get vaccinated right away once they are able to do so, unchanged since last month. Three percent say they've been vaccinated, 28 percent plan to wait and see before getting a shot and 6 percent reject a shot.

Forty-five percent think there is a risk of a collapse in the health care system in the area where they live; 32 percent do not, with the rest unsure. Just 13 percent approve of the coronavirus countermeasures taken by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's administration, down 6 points since last month; 69 percent now disapprove. Six in 10 think a nationwide state of emergency should be called to tamp down infections; 20 percent prefer the current, more limited state of emergency and 12 percent think it should be lifted as soon as possible to keep the economy going.

Four in 10 think the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics should be canceled and 23 percent think they should be postponed again. While that's a smaller share than found in a different poll (and question) [reported last week](#), as in that poll, support for cancellation and postponement has increased sharply in the past month, up a net total of 15 points. Just two in 10 think a balance can be struck between the Tokyo games and coronavirus countermeasures; 71 percent think countermeasures should be prioritized ([Mainichi Shimbun 5/22](#)).

In Turkey, 55 percent think the three-week closure of the country that ended in mid-May was unsuccessful. Asked about gradual normalization, 62 percent say it is right to continue the weekend curfew restriction and 54 percent apiece think it is right that cafes and restaurants can serve only take-away or delivery and that places like coffee houses, tea gardens, cinemas and gyms are closed. However, two-thirds think the continuation of flexible work in public institutions is wrong and six in 10 say the same of a weekday curfew ([Istanbul Economics Research 5/19-5/21](#)).

In the Philippines, just 32 percent are willing to get a free approved COVID-19 vaccine, while 33 percent are unwilling and 35 percent are unsure. Just about half say they are confident in the government's evaluation of coronavirus vaccines; 17 percent are not confident and 31 percent are uncertain. Among those who are very confident in the government's evaluation, willingness to vaccinate rises to 58 percent. Sixty-three percent overall say that given the opportunity they would choose a vaccine from the United States, more than three times the number who prefer a vaccine from another country ([SWS 4/28-5/2](#)).

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

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