



COVID-19 Survey Summary: August 6, 2021

The following is a summary of social, behavioral and economic survey research on COVID-19 released in the past week, as compiled for the Societal Experts Action Network ([SEAN](#)). Most surveys cited in this report are available in the [SEAN COVID-19 Survey Archive](#).

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Polls this week find a sharp rise in public concern about the coronavirus pandemic as the Delta variant continues its rapid spread, with the share of Americans who rule out getting vaccinated edging to a new low. Broad majorities of unvaccinated people, however, continue to doubt the vaccines' safety and efficacy, a continuing barrier to broader uptake.

The public's outlook has pivoted negatively, with more saying the coronavirus situation is getting worse rather than better for the first time since January. Americans – particularly those who are vaccinated – have grown more concerned about catching the virus and report taking increased precautions while halting their re-emergence. The share who see a risk in resuming their pre-pandemic activities nearly has doubled since late June.

Nearly all have heard of the CDC's updated mask guidance and two-thirds describe it as clear. At the same time, six in 10 feel they've received conflicting messages from the agency over time. As infections rise, crowding hospitals, Americans give lower marks to Joe Biden and their state's governor for their handling of the pandemic, and ratings of the economy have taken a hit.

Other surveys find that three-quarters of parents expect their child to return to a normal pre-pandemic school schedule in fall, detail impacts of the pandemic on Medicare recipients' well-being and analyze breakthrough cases in 24 states and the District of Columbia, finding minimal hospitalizations or deaths among fully vaccinated adults.

In international results, surveys from 17 advanced economies find that, in many, those on the ideological right are more apt to think there should be fewer coronavirus restrictions. Additional international coverage includes surveys from Chile, Great Britain, Mexico and Russia.

Vaccines

CDC data indicate that the pace of new vaccinations has ticked up in recent weeks, though remains far below its springtime level. In all, the [CDC estimates](#) that 70 percent of adults were vaccinated against the coronavirus as of Aug. 2.

New surveys match the CDC estimates. Most recently, 70 percent of adults say they've gotten at least one dose of a vaccine ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)); it's 66 to 69 percent in other polls done from mid- to late July ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#); [Gallup 7/19-7/26](#); [Monmouth 7/21-7/26](#); [Marist 7/21-7/29](#)).

Depending on the question, 14 to 24 percent say they're unlikely to get vaccinated or rule it out entirely. Twenty-two percent are unlikely in the latest survey, down from 30 percent in April to a new low ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)). It's about the same, 23 percent, in another, the fewest since July 2020 ([Gallup 7/19-7/26](#)). A third poll finds 24 percent saying they won't get a shot, matching its low since vaccinations began, but with little clear trend since March ([Marist 7/21-7/29](#)).

Polls that offer a "wait and see" option find slightly lower outright resistance: Seventeen percent in one say they'll never get vaccinated, a low since January. In another, 14 percent say they definitely won't get a shot and an additional 3 percent say they will only if required ([Monmouth 7/21-7/26](#); [KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).

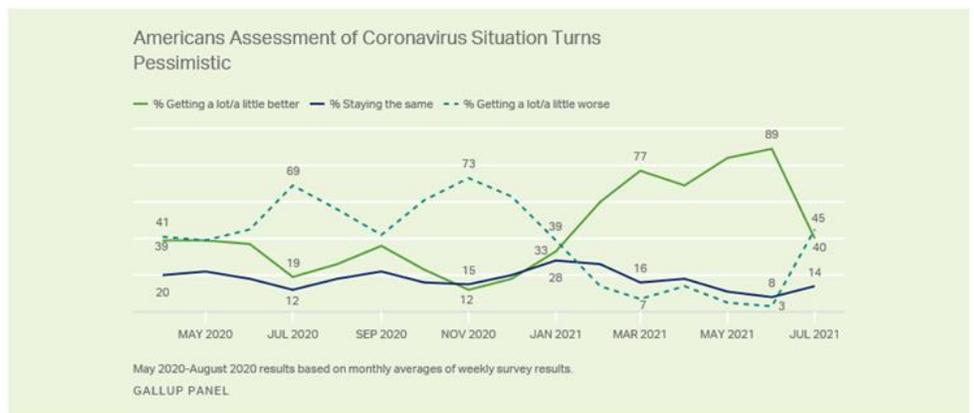
Among those open to getting vaccinated, few are inclined to act quickly. In one survey, 2 percent say they'll get a vaccine as soon as possible while 9 percent prefer to "see how it goes." Three percent in another say they'll get a shot immediately while 10 percent want to wait and see how it's working. Fewer than half of those in the wait-and-see camp (45 percent) say they'll act before year's end ([Monmouth 7/21-7/26](#); [KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).

In studies without a wait-and-see a choice, fewer than one in 10 Americans indicate that they're currently unvaccinated and likely will get a shot - 7 percent in one and 8 percent in two others ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#); [Gallup 7/19-7/26](#); [Marist 7/21-7/29](#)).

Concerns and Outlooks

Concerns are on the rise in tandem with the Delta surge. Seventy-eight percent are concerned about the spread of the new variant, including half extremely or very concerned, up 6 points since late June. Three-quarters are concerned about the pandemic overall, up 10 points to return to its springtime level ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)).

Forty-five percent say the situation is getting worse, up sharply from 3 percent in June and surpassing the share who think things are getting better, down 49 points to 40 percent. It's the first time since January that pandemic pessimism exceeds optimism ([Gallup 7/19-7/26](#)).



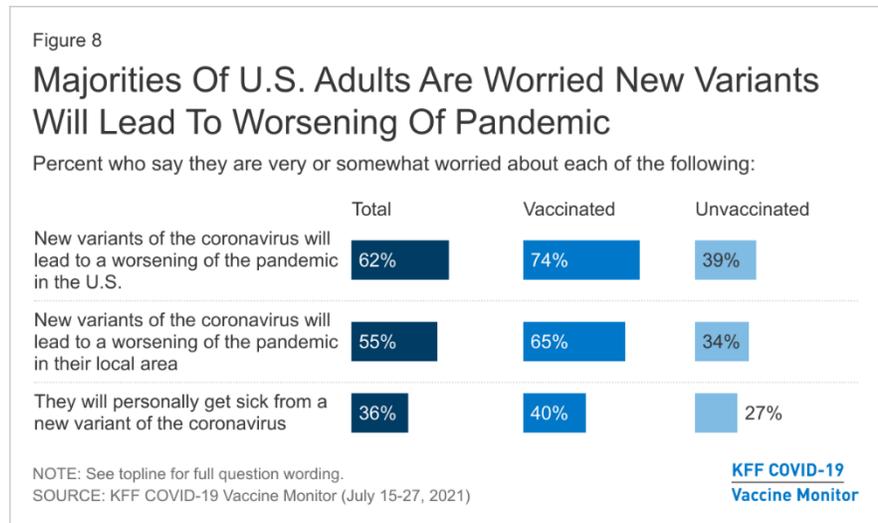
Fifty-two percent think that returning to their normal pre-pandemic life poses at least a moderate risk to their health, up 13 points in two weeks and 24 points since late June ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)). Fifty-three percent are very or somewhat concerned that they or someone in their family may become seriously ill from the virus, up from 42 percent in June ([Monmouth 7/21-7/26](#)).

Assurance in one’s ability to avoid infection has slipped. Thirty-eight percent are very confident they can protect themselves, down 13 points from its high in May. An additional 52 percent are somewhat confident, with the rest, 10 percent, lacking confidence ([Gallup 7/19-7/26](#)).

In interviews before last week’s escalating [warnings](#) about the transmissibility of the Delta variant, 62 percent were very or somewhat worried that new variants would lead to a worsening of the pandemic in the United States. (Among the rest, 28 percent were not worried and 10 percent had not heard of the variants.) Concerns increased slightly in interviews July 19-26.

Fifty-five percent are worried that new strains could lead to a deterioration of the pandemic in their area specifically and 36 percent worry they would personally get sick from a new strain ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#)). Another survey finds more, 48 percent, at least somewhat concerned about personally catching one of the new variants, up from 42 percent in June ([Monmouth 7/21-7/26](#)).

Consistent with previous data, worries are far higher among vaccinated vs. unvaccinated adults. Those who’ve been vaccinated are 35 points more likely than their counterparts to be worried about the pandemic worsening nationally, 75 vs. 39 percent; 31 points more worried about deterioration in their own area, 65 vs. 34 percent; and – despite their vaccination status – 13 points more worried that they themselves might catch a new strain, 40 vs. 27 percent ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).



Coronavirus Precautions

Given these concerns, Americans’ return to pre-pandemic activities has lost ground, with more reporting taking protective measures:

- Sixty-two percent have visited friends and family in the past week, down 5 points in two weeks to return to its late-May level.

- Fifty-eight percent have gone out to eat, down 7 points from its pandemic peak in late June.
- Nearly half, 46 percent, have stayed at home and avoided others as much as possible, up 12 points from its low a month ago.
- Seventy-one percent have (at least sometimes) maintained a distance of at least six feet from other people when outside their home, up 8 points since mid-July.
- Fifty-seven percent report wearing a mask all or some of the time when leaving their home, up 5 points since mid-July. That's far below its level last spring, nine in 10 ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)).

Fifty-four percent of people who've heard of the Delta variant (90 percent) say it makes them more likely to wear a mask in public and avoid large public gatherings.

As with concerns, increased likelihood of taking precautions is led by the vaccinated: Sixty-two percent of vaccinated adults say they're more likely to wear a mask, vs. 37 percent of the unvaccinated, and 61 percent are likelier to avoid large gatherings, compared with 40 percent of the unvaccinated. About one in five unvaccinated people, 22 percent, say they're more apt to get vaccinated because of the Delta variant ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).

Information Sources

Nearly all, 95 percent, have heard of the CDC's [updated guidelines](#) recommending universal indoor masking in areas with high rates of transmission, including among vaccinated adults. Two-thirds think the guidelines are clear, though just a quarter call them very clear ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)). Six in 10 think the CDC's new recommendation is a good idea, while a third call it a bad idea ([Quinnipiac 7/27-8/2](#)).

Still, the public divides, 49-44 percent, on how the CDC is handling mask guidelines overall ([Quinnipiac 7/27-8/2](#)). And in interviews before the agency posted the new guidance, 59 percent said federal health agencies such as the CDC had been giving mixed messages about the risks of the virus; 39 percent thought they largely had been consistent ([Monmouth 7/21-7/26](#)).

At the same time, 66 percent trust the CDC a great deal or fair amount to provide them with accurate information about the virus, essentially unchanged in the past few months and still the most-trusted source out of seven listed. Sixty-two percent trust national public health officials; roughly half trust Joe Biden, the federal government, and network TV news (ABC, CBS, NBC); and four in 10 trust national newspapers and cable news ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)).

Blame for the Surge

Fifty-eight percent of Americans blame the current surge of cases and spread of new variants on unvaccinated people. Seventy-nine percent of those who are vaccinated say so, compared with 10 percent of those who have not gotten a shot.

Blame on others trails substantially. Thirty-two percent overall blame people from other countries traveling to the United States and 25 to 28 percent blame Donald Trump, conservative media and Americans traveling internationally. Fewer blame mainstream media (18 percent), Biden (14 percent), the CDC (12 percent) or national public health officials (10 percent). (Multiple responses were accepted.)

Unvaccinated Americans are most apt to blame foreign travelers (37 percent), the mainstream media (27 percent), Americans traveling internationally (23 percent) and Biden (21 percent) ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)).

Vaccine Effectiveness

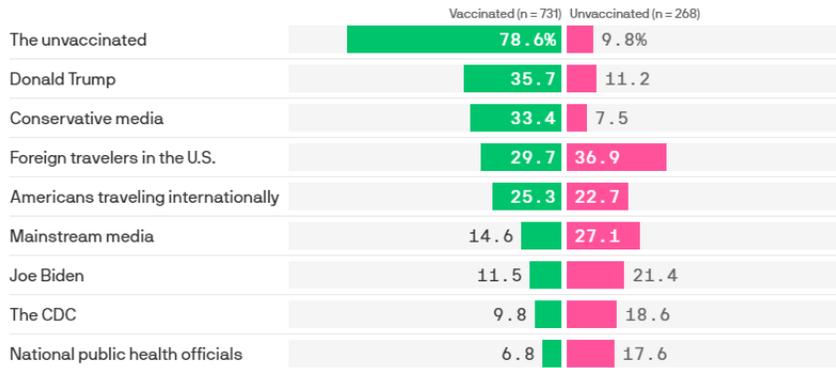
Half of vaccinated people think the vaccines are highly effective at preventing the spread of breakthrough infections; just one in 10 unvaccinated Americans agrees. Confidence rises in other aspects of the vaccines: More than eight in 10 overall think they are at least somewhat effective at preventing death, serious illness or hospitalization and infection. Fewer, 55 to 48 percent, see the vaccines as highly effective at these. On each measure, vaccinated adults are about 50 points more apt than unvaccinated adults to see the vaccines as extremely or very effective ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).

Another poll finds seven in 10 adults at least moderately confident that the vaccines will protect people from new variants, though only 14 percent are very confident. This includes 87 percent of vaccinated adults vs. 21 percent of those who don't plan to get vaccinated ([Gallup 7/19-7/26](#)).

Interviews for both polls were conducted before a CDC report last Friday that

Who is to blame for rising COVID-19 cases, by vaccination status

Percentage attributing blame to each group when asked "Which of the following people or groups, if any, do you blame for the rising COVID-19 cases and spread of new variants in the U.S.?"

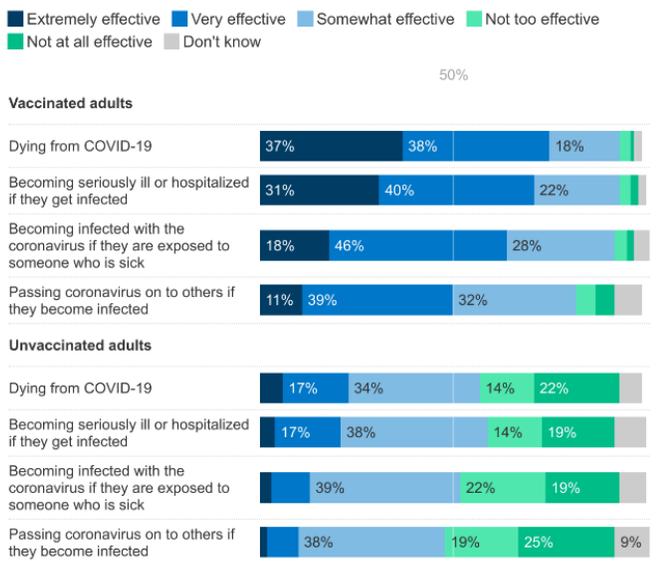


Data: Axios/Ipsos Poll; Chart: Connor Rothschild/Axios

Figure 13

Majorities Of Vaccinated Adults See COVID-19 Vaccines As Effective, Especially At Preventing Death And Hospitalization; Unvaccinated Adults Less So

As far as you know, how effective are the COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the U.S. at preventing vaccinated individuals from...?



NOTE: See topline for full question wording. SOURCE: KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (July 15-27, 2021)

KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor

detailed infections among 469 people in Barnstable County, Massachusetts, July 3-17, after multiple large public events. Of those infections, 346 were among fully vaccinated people, with the vast majority of infections caused by the Delta variant. Measurements of how much virus an infected person carries were similar among vaccinated and unvaccinated people, suggesting that vaccinated adults who contract the variant may be as apt to transmit the virus as those who are unvaccinated ([CDC 7/3-7/17](#)).

Booster Shots

Eight in 10 adults have heard at least a little about the possibility that booster shots might be needed for some people to keep them protected; a quarter say they've heard a lot about this. Among vaccinated adults who've heard of the potential need for boosters, 24 percent say this causes them to worry about not being well-protected against the virus; 75 percent are not worried. Hispanic (44 percent) and Black (36 percent) adults are more apt than white people (17 percent) to express this concern ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).

Vaccine Safety

Perceptions of vaccine safety have held steady since April, with 74 percent very or somewhat confident that the vaccines available in the United States are safe. About seven in 10 say this for the Pfizer (72 percent) and Moderna (68 percent) vaccines specifically. Far fewer, 47 percent, are confident in the safety of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, similarly unchanged.

While more than nine in 10 vaccinated people express confidence in the vaccines, those who have not gotten a shot remain deeply skeptical. About two-thirds of unvaccinated adults lack confidence in vaccines that are currently available. About eight in 10 are not confident in the safety of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine specifically.

More unvaccinated adults think getting the vaccine would be a bigger risk to their health than getting infected with the coronavirus, 53-34 percent, with 11 percent unsure. Among people who say they definitely will not get a shot, three-quarters think getting the vaccine is a bigger risk to their health ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).

Vaccine Policy

In a poll overlapping Biden's [announcement](#) of new vaccination rules for federal workers, 53 percent support vaccine requirements for government employees, with 42 percent opposed. The same survey finds 60-35 percent support for vaccine mandates for healthcare employees. Support for general businesses requiring their employees get a vaccine drops to 45 percent, with 50 percent opposed ([Quinnipiac 7/27-8/2](#)).

An earlier poll finds a 51-45 percent division on whether or not the federal government should recommend that employers require their employees to get vaccinated unless they have a medical exception. Support ranges from 68 percent among vaccinated people to 16 percent of those who are not vaccinated ([KFF 7/15-7/26](#)).

It's unclear how much employer-led vaccine mandates and incentives may move the dial. A third of employed unvaccinated adults say they'd be likely to get a vaccine if their employer required it; a quarter if their employer gave them a raise or bonus; 18 percent if they could get it at their workplace and 15 percent if their employer gave them paid time off to get it. Substantial majorities in each case are not receptive ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)).

Americans oppose requiring customers at restaurants to show proof of vaccination, 59-37 percent. They divide 52-45 percent on a vaccine mandate for airline passengers and 49-47 percent on requiring attendees of large sport and entertainment events to show proof of a shot ([Quinnipiac 7/27-8/2](#)).

Again, these mandates may have only moderate effects. About two in 10 unvaccinated people said they'd be likely to get a shot if it were required to attend large public events or to travel on an airplane or by train ([Axios-Ipsos 7/30-8/2](#)).

Government Response

Fifty-three percent approve of Biden's response to the coronavirus, down sharply from 65 percent in May ([Quinnipiac 7/27-8/2](#)). A similar 55 percent in another poll say Biden has done a good job dealing with the outbreak, down 4 points in a month and 7 points from its peak in April to a low since he took office.

Fifty-four percent say their state's governor has done a good job, down 8 points from its high in April to a low in data since March 2020. A declining share also rate their fellow Americans positively, with 32 percent saying they've done a good job, down 10 points since June.

In interviews before the latest CDC guidelines, Americans split on instituting or reinstating social distancing guidelines in their state, 52-46 percent. Eighty-five percent of Democrats supported such guidelines while 73 percent of Republicans were opposed ([Monmouth 7/21-7/26](#)).

Economic Sentiment

Americans' ratings of the national economy have taken a hit in the latest surge. Forty-seven percent say the economy is in excellent or good shape, down 4 points from its pandemic high in mid-June, its largest setback since January. Still, personal finance ratings are on the mend, and employment numbers from July are robust, albeit in pre-surge data ([CCI 7/6- 8/1](#), [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 7/2021](#)).

K-12 Education

Despite the new wave of infections, three-quarters of parents of school-age children think their child will return to their pre-pandemic school schedule (e.g., five days a week in-person) in the fall. Seventeen percent are unsure and 7 percent do not expect a return to normal ([Gallup 7/19-7/26](#)).

By 55-41 percent, the public supports the CDC's recommendation for universal indoor masking for teachers, staff and students in K-12 schools, regardless of their vaccination status. Results are similar among parents ([Quinnipiac 7/27-8/2](#)).

Specifically for unvaccinated teachers and staff in K-12 schools, support for a mask mandate rises to 67 percent overall (and six in 10 parents). Sixty-four percent of all adults, and 57 percent of parents, also support requiring unvaccinated students to wear masks.

Six in 10 adults favor requiring high school students to get vaccinated; 56 percent say the same for middle school students, each up slightly since May. Fewer K-12 parents favor such mandates, whether for high school students (47 percent) or middle school students (43 percent).

Support for vaccine mandates differs by vaccination status. Among parents with vaccinated children, three-quarters or more favor vaccine mandates for high school and middle school students, dropping to two in 10 or fewer among parents whose children are eligible to get vaccinated but have yet to do so. (Per the latest [CDC estimates](#), four in 10 children age 12-15 and half of 16- to 17-year-olds have received at least one dose of a vaccine.)

Support for requiring face masks for unvaccinated students and staff follows a similar pattern, with more than eight in 10 parents of vaccinated students in favor, vs. 35 percent of parents of eligible yet unvaccinated children ([Gallup 7/19-7/26](#)).

Pandemic Impacts Among Medicare Recipients

Preliminary data from a newly released survey conducted in March and April document impacts on mental health, financial security and health care among Medicare recipients. Forty percent felt less socially connected to family and friends as a result of the pandemic, 38 percent were more stressed or anxious, 22 percent felt more lonely or sad and 13 percent felt less financially secure.

Seven percent said they did not seek out health care for a non-COVID related health issue because of the pandemic, with dental care and treatment for an ongoing condition the most common types of forgone care. Results largely were unchanged from a [previous wave](#) of the survey in October and November.

Broad majorities of Medicare beneficiaries acknowledged the severity of the coronavirus. Ninety-six percent agreed that it is important for everyone to take precautions to prevent the spread of the virus, 82 percent agreed that it's more deadly than the flu and 79 percent agreed that it's more contagious than the flu.

At the time of interview, 64 percent had received at least one dose of a vaccine. Among Medicare beneficiaries who had not yet received a vaccine, about six in 10 said they definitely or probably would get one, 17 percent were unsure, and a quarter said they probably or definitely would not get vaccinated. Top reasons for not wanting to get a vaccine were concerns about safety and potential side effects (44 percent) or general distrust in government information about the vaccines (29 percent). ([MCBS 3/1-4/25](#))

Breakthrough Cases

An analysis of publicly available data from 24 states and the District of Columbia assesses the prevalence of breakthrough cases, hospitalizations and deaths. It's low: Among fully vaccinated people, the share infected ranged from 0.01 percent in Connecticut to 0.54 percent in Arkansas; hospitalizations, from effectively zero in seven states and D.C. to 0.06 percent in Arkansas; and deaths, effectively zero in all but two states, Arkansas and Michigan, both 0.01 percent. Overall, the share of cases occurring among those not fully vaccinated ranged from 94.1 percent in Arizona to 99.85 percent in Connecticut; hospitalizations, 95.02 percent in Alaska to 99.93 percent in New Jersey; and deaths, 96.91 percent in Montana to 99.91 percent in New Jersey. Data mostly are from January through early to mid-July ([KFF 7/30](#)).

International Results

New analysis of surveys in 17 advanced economies conducted from February to May finds sharp differences by political ideology and age in views of restrictions imposed during the pandemic. Overall, majorities in all 17 countries thought restrictions on public activity were either about right or that there should have been more of them. Still, the share who preferred fewer restrictions ranged widely, from 4 percent in Taiwan to 43 percent in Greece.

In political gaps, in 10 countries, people on the ideological right were 7 to 45 points more apt than those on the left to think there should have been fewer restrictions. The opposite held in one country, Greece, where those on the left were 21 points more apt to prefer fewer restrictions. By age, in six countries, 18- to 29-year-olds were 12 to 33 points more apt than those age 65 and older to think there should have been fewer restrictions on public activity. By contrast, younger adults in the United States and South Korea were 11 and 12 points less apt than older adults to say the same ([Pew 2/1-2/7, 3/12-5/26](#)).

In Chile, 90 percent of adults report having received at least one dose of a vaccine and 88 percent report having gotten two shots. Fifty-seven percent approve of the government's handling of the pandemic, nearly matching its high ([Cadem 7/28-7/30](#)).

Russians are split about holding major sporting events, with 48 percent saying they should not be held vs. 42 percent who think they should. When it comes to the Olympics, there's a shift; half of Russians approve of the decision to hold the Games this summer ([FOM 7/23-7/25](#)).

In Great Britain, 92 percent of adults have received at least one dose of a vaccine, up 2 points in the past week; 74 percent have received two doses, up 4 points. Following the lifting of legal restrictions July 19, 55 percent of adults say they met up indoors with someone not in their household, up from 20 percent in early May. Despite easing restrictions, a third think it will take more than a year for life to return to normal, essentially matching the pandemic high in late October. Vast majorities, about nine in 10, continue to say that wearing a face covering while shopping and maintaining social distance from those not in their household is important ([Office for National Statistics 7/21-7/25](#)).

In Mexico, 68 percent say the government has done a good job in its vaccination campaign, up 6 points since June, with just two in 10 giving it bad marks on this front. More also say the government has done a good rather than bad job on addressing the health crisis overall, 51 vs. 33 percent ([El Financiero 7/8-7/10, 7/23-7/24](#)).

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

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