



COVID-19 Survey Summary: August 20, 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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Americans' risk perceptions of many daily activities have increased and growing shares are resuming precautions against the coronavirus in the face of the Delta surge, with more people social distancing and using masks and fewer visiting friends or dining out.

With hospitalizations of adults younger than 50 reaching pandemic highs, newly released polls this week find nearly two-thirds support for mask mandates in public places. A slim majority of workers favor workplace vaccination mandates, though just 16 percent say their employer has one in place.

As parents look to the school year ahead, seven in 10 support a mask mandate for everyone in schools. But many still hesitate when it comes to vaccinations, with fewer than six in 10 intending to get their child vaccinated once eligible.

Among other results, most Americans reject coronavirus misinformation, though with some uncertainty about evidence surrounding vaccines and masks in specific scenarios. Trust in the CDC and public health officials, while comparatively high, has waned in recent weeks.

Other analyses highlight the economic toll of the pandemic, particularly among households with children; suggest widespread learning loss among K-12 students; and point to the continued efficacy of vaccines against hospitalizations and deaths. We also include international results this week from Chile, Great Britain, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines and Russia.

Vaccines

Seventy percent of adults say they've received a coronavirus vaccine and 7 percent say they're likely to do so; the net of 77 percent is unchanged from two weeks ago ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)). The [CDC estimates](#) that 73 percent have had at least one shot, up 2 points over the week.

As in previous [polls](#), many parents of children younger than 18 express reservations about vaccinating their child. Eighteen percent say their child has received a shot and 38 percent say they'll do so once it becomes available to them ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)). The net, 56 percent,

shows no gain from the intended uptake estimate in a new released July poll, 57 percent ([RAND 7/16-7/29](#)).

Among parents of currently eligible children (i.e., 12 and older), 52 percent say they've gotten their child vaccinated. (The [CDC estimates](#) this at 55 percent among children 16-17 and 46 percent among 12- to 15-year-olds.)

As covered in recent weeks, parents' plans largely reflect their own vaccination status. In July, 79 percent of vaccinated parents said they'd get their child a shot, vs. 10 percent of unvaccinated parents. Among other groups, it was seven in 10 among parents with a college degree vs. about half of those without one; six in 10 among urban and suburban parents vs. 40 percent in rural areas; and 83 percent among Asian parents compared with 64 percent of Hispanic parents, 57 percent of Black parents and 51 percent of white parents ([RAND 7/16-7/29](#)).

Concerns & Risk Perceptions

As new cases return to their [highest rates](#) since winter, 74 percent overall are at least somewhat concerned about the outbreak, up 9 percentage points from its pandemic low in June; and 77 percent are concerned about the spread of the Delta variant in the United States, up 5 points from when it first was measured six weeks ago.

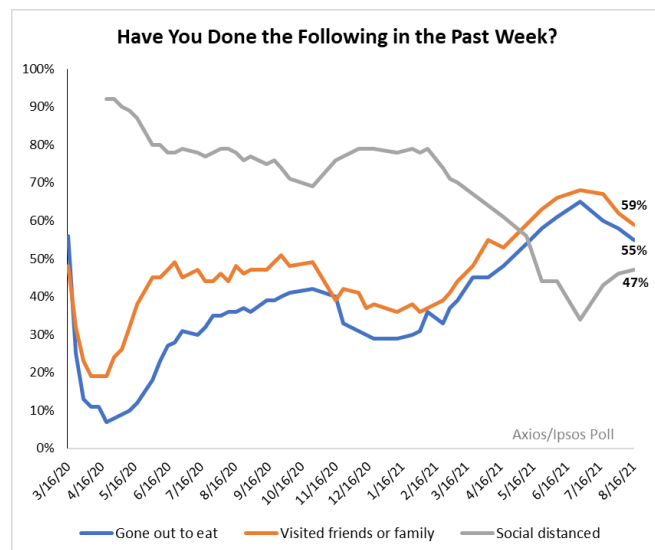
Fifty-three percent think that returning to their normal pre-coronavirus life would pose either a large risk or somewhat of a risk to their health and well-being, up sharply from 28 percent in late June to the most since early April.

More also see specific daily activities as potentially hazardous. Sixty-eight percent see traveling on an airplane or mass transit as a large or moderate risk, up 13 points since early June. It's 51 percent for attending in-person gatherings with friends and family outside the household, up a steep 23 points. Other activities have seen 15- to 18-point increases in perceived risk since June: dining in at a restaurant, now questioned by 48 percent; shopping at retail stores, 44 percent; and working indoors at an office, 42 percent (among employed people).

Daily Life

As concerns have grown, so have the shares of Americans taking precautions against the virus:

- While 55 percent have gone out to eat in the past week, that's down 10 points from its pandemic peak in late June.
- Fifty-nine percent visited friends and family in the past



week, down from a pandemic high of 68 percent in late June.

- Forty-seven percent say they've social distanced (i.e., stayed home and avoided others as much as possible), up from 34 percent in late June.

As noted in previous [surveys](#), concerns are higher among vaccinated than unvaccinated adults. Vaccinated people are 30 points more apt to be concerned about the pandemic overall and 19 points more apt to see risk in returning to their pre-coronavirus life. Despite those gaps, there's no difference in social behaviors, with roughly equal shares of vaccinated and unvaccinated adults saying they've dined out, spent time with people outside their household or social distanced within the past week ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)).

Mask Policy & Use

Sixty-three percent of Americans say they wear a mask at least some of the time when leaving home, up 11 points in a month. That includes a third who always wear a mask, up 9 points. Democrats, urban residents and vaccinated adults are 18 to 39 points more apt than Republicans, rural residents and unvaccinated people to say that they wear masks at least some of the time.

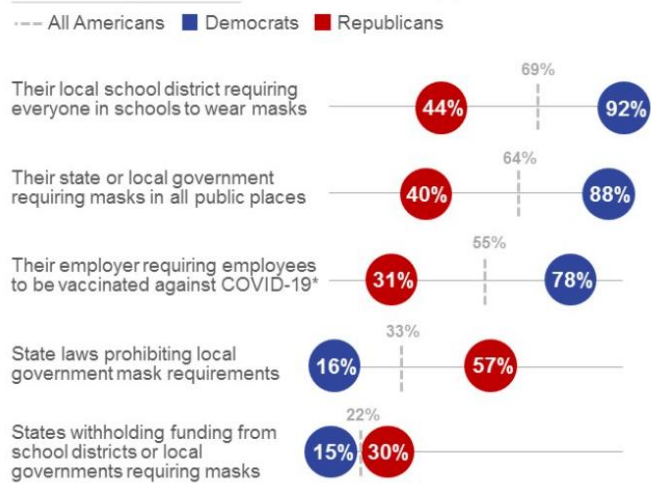
Sixty-four percent overall support their state or local government instituting a mask mandate in public places. Far fewer, 33 percent, say they've experienced such a mandate within the past few weeks. Two-thirds oppose state laws – such as those instituted in Florida and Texas – that would prohibit their local government from creating mask mandates. Partisan differences are sharp: Fifty-seven percent of Republicans support such laws, while 84 percent of Democrats and 66 percent of independents oppose them.

Opposition overall rises, to 77 percent, when it comes to state governments withholding funding for local school districts or governments that implement mask mandates. On this, bipartisan majorities agree – 70 percent of Republicans, 77 percent of independents and 85 percent of Democrats ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)).

K-12 Education

Americans by 69-30 percent support their school district requiring everyone in schools – teachers, administrators and students alike – to wear masks; it's almost identical just among parents. (In an early August poll reported [previously](#), a smaller majority, 55 percent, supported the CDC's updated recommendation for universal masking in schools.) More than nine in 10 Democrats favor school mask mandates, as do 67 percent of independents, compared with 44 percent of Republicans ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)).

Percentage of Americans who support...



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Half of parents in a July poll said they would support their child getting tested if there were free, weekly testing at their school. Three in 10 were opposed and 19 percent were unsure, unchanged since May. Just 27 percent of parents said they knew the specific safety measures their child's school was planning; six in 10 wished they knew more ([RAND 7/16-7/29](#)).

Four in 10 parents say a child of theirs has fallen behind academically because of the pandemic, including half of Hispanic parents and half of those with household incomes less than \$40,000 annually. Thirty-six percent say a child fell behind in social development and 29 percent report new mental health or behavioral problems.

Reports of falling behind academically are 21 points higher among parents whose children attended school mostly online or through a hybrid model last year, compared with those who attended mostly in person. The gap is 15 points on social and emotional development and 17 points in terms of mental health or behavioral problems ([KFF 7/15 -8/2](#)).

Pandemic and Work

Workers by 55-44 percent support their employer instituting a vaccine mandate ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)). Results are similar, 52-38 percent, in newly released data from July, up from 46-39 percent in May. Just 9 percent of workers said their employer was requiring them to be vaccinated to return to the workplace, up slightly from 5 percent in May ([Gallup 7/19-7/26](#)).

A more recent poll indicates that the share of employers requiring vaccines has risen, now reported by 16 percent of workers. Many more, 51 percent, say their employer has a workplace mask mandate ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)).

Newly released results from late May and early June – before the Delta surge – found workplace vaccine mandates supported by 62 percent of fully remote workers, vs. 54 percent of hybrid workers and 41 percent of those now working fully in person ([Gallup 5/26-6/9](#)).

Despite the surge, 82 percent of workers say their employer has not extended or returned to a work-from-home policy. The share who have worked remotely in the past week is at a pandemic low of 24 percent, down a slight 5 points in a month and 22 points from its peak in May 2020 ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#)).

Given a choice, six in 10 workers prefer to return to their workplaces all or most of the time when the pandemic is over. The rest are split between mainly wanting to work remotely (18 percent) or preferring an even mix of remote and on-site work (21 percent). Among those who do the bulk of their work on a computer (43 percent of workers), many fewer want to return to their workplaces all or most of the time, 38 percent, with six in 10 evenly divided between a fully remote or hybrid model.

When the pandemic ends, 22 percent of workers think their employer will allow them to telework more than they did before the pandemic, 45 percent about the same and 11 percent less. (Two in 10 volunteered that their work cannot be done remotely.) Among people whose job is

mostly done online, more, 36 percent, think they will be allowed to telework more than they did pre-pandemic.

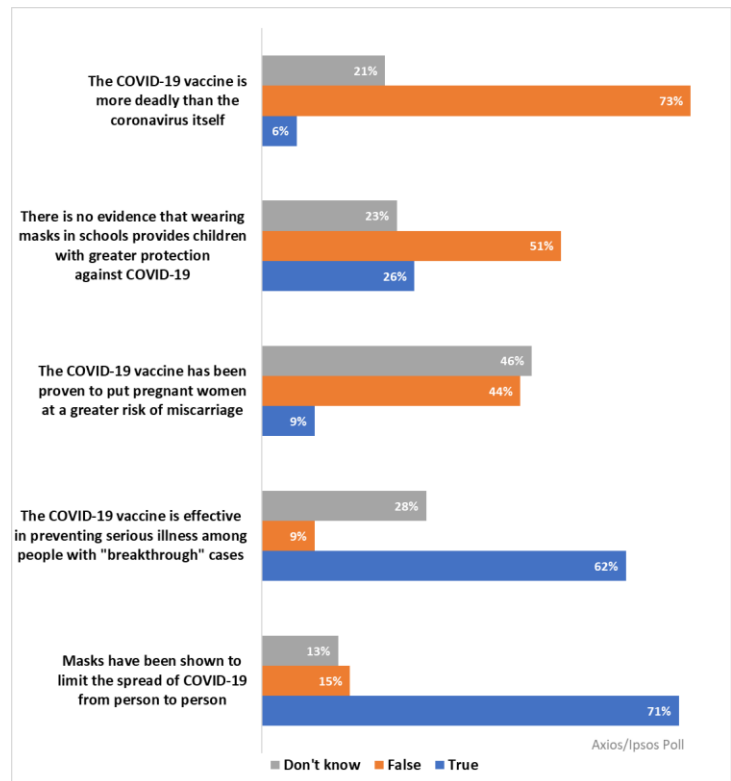
In another study, about two in 10 workers say they seriously have considered changing their occupation or field of work since the pandemic began, rising to 30 percent of those younger than 40. Twenty-eight percent overall seriously have considered moving, including 41 percent of under-40s. Seventeen percent say they've already moved during the pandemic, either temporarily or permanently, including 5 percent who say they moved specifically for pandemic-related reasons. Pre-pandemic comparisons for job-change and moving considerations weren't available ([Washington Post-Schar School 7/6-7/21](#)).

Misinformation

Few Americans accept misinformation surrounding the coronavirus, though there is varying uncertainty on items tested. In the largest misconception, 26 percent say it's true that "there is no evidence that wearing masks in school provides children with greater protection." Fifty-one percent call this false, with 23 percent unsure.

Among others, 6 percent say it's true that the vaccines are "more deadly than the coronavirus itself"; 73 percent reject this, with 21 percent unsure. Nine percent say it's true that vaccines "put pregnant women at a greater risk of miscarriage"; 44 percent call this false, with more unsure, 46 percent. Nine percent say it's false that the vaccines are effective in preventing serious illness in breakthrough cases and 15 percent say it's false that masks have been shown to limit the spread of the virus.

In terms of information sources, 62 percent place a great deal or fair amount of trust in the CDC to provide them with accurate information about the coronavirus, down 7 points since late June to a low in data since March 2020. Trust in national public health officials also has ebbed, down 5 points since late July to a low in data since July 2020. Both earn more confidence than Joe Biden and federal and state governments, each trusted by about half of Americans; and TV news or national newspapers, trusted by 37 to 45 percent. It's 32 percent for "conservative news." ([Axios-Ipsos 8/13-8/16](#))



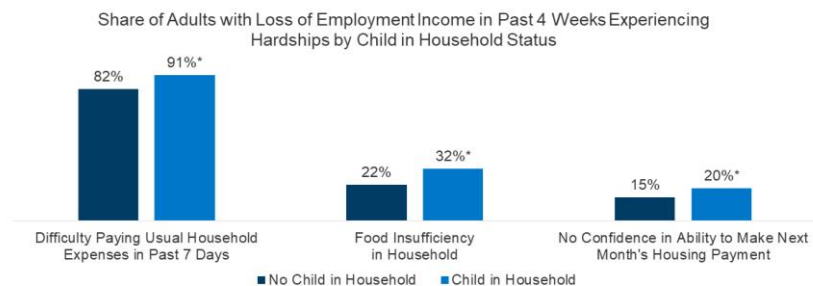
Economic Impacts

Households with children have suffered disproportionate economic hardships during the pandemic, with effects still lingering. As of early July, 23 percent of such households experienced a loss of employment income in the previous four weeks, compared with 15 percent of households without children. Among households with income loss, adults with children were 10 points more apt than those without children to report food

insufficiency, 9 points more likely to say they had difficulty paying household expenses in the past week and 5 points more apt to have no confidence in their ability to pay next month's housing payment ([KFF 8/17](#); [U.S. Census Bureau 6/23-7/5](#)).

Figure 4

Among households experiencing income loss, households with children are experiencing higher rates of hardship.



NOTE: *Indicates statistically significant difference from adults without a child in household at the p<0.05 level.
SOURCE: KFF analysis of Household Pulse Survey from June 23 – July 5, 2021.

KFF

Four in 10 parents of school-age children say they or someone in their household left a job or changed work schedules in the past year to care for their children. Among those who experienced employment disruptions, 54 percent have not yet returned to their pre-pandemic work schedule. Two in 10 say employment disruption has had a major negative impact on their level of stress, 17 percent on their family's finances and 12 percent on their mental health ([KFF 7/15 -8/2](#)).

Medicaid enrollment increased by 16 percent from February 2020 to March 2021, with 10.3 million new enrollees during the pandemic. Children's Health Insurance Program enrollment increased by 2.4 percent, or about 157,000 people, in the same period. In all, the number of people receiving CHIP or Medicaid benefits grew to 81.7 million after declines in 2018 and 2019, per data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Enrollment growth reflects job and income losses as well as changes in eligibility and enrollment introduced by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act ([KFF 8/16](#); [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#)).

Vaccine Effectiveness

Two studies assess the vaccines' continued effectiveness amid the Delta variant. In New York, May to July data indicate that effectiveness against infection slipped but protection against hospitalization remained stable. The three vaccines' overall age-adjusted effectiveness against infection declined from 91.7 to 79.8 percent among fully vaccinated adults; age-adjusted effectiveness against hospitalization held steady, from 91.9 to 95.3 percent ([CDC 5/3-7/25](#)).

A national study from March to July also finds lasting protection against hospitalization: In weeks two to 12 after the second dose, Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were 86 percent effective

against hospitalization; in weeks 13 to 24, 84 percent. Sustained effectiveness also was present among groups at higher risk for severe infection ([CDC 3/11-7/14](#)).

Another analysis estimates that increased vaccination rates could have prevented thousands of severe illnesses and deaths in Texas and Florida. Using a simulation model, the authors calculate the expected number of cases, hospitalizations and deaths through the end of July if vaccination coverage had reached 74 percent in each state. They find that a higher vaccination rate would have prevented 4,700 deaths and 70,000 hospitalizations ([The Commonwealth Fund 8/12](#)).

State and Local Results

In an open-ended question, 41 percent of New Jersey registered voters mention the pandemic as one of the most important issues facing the state, topping the list. (Next is property taxes, cited by 32 percent.) More trust Gov. Phil Murphy than his opponent Jack Ciattarelli to handle the pandemic, 46 vs. 21 percent, with 17 percent trusting both equally ([Monmouth 8/11-8/16](#)).

In Texas, 56 percent disapprove of the way Gov. Greg Abbott is handling the pandemic, up 13 points from last fall. Six in 10 don't trust Abbott to provide accurate information about the coronavirus. Large majorities support mask requirements in transit hubs such as airports and train stations (79 percent), sports stadiums and arenas (73 percent), grocery and retail stores (73 percent), K-12 schools (72 percent), offices or workplaces (71 percent) and restaurants and bars (69 percent). Just 39 percent agree that policymakers in Texas are making decisions about COVID-19 that are based on science; 46 percent disagree ([Spectrum News/Ipsos 8/6-8/13](#)).

International Results

With cases at a [new high](#) in Mexico, 80 percent know someone who has been infected with the coronavirus, with nearly half saying it was a family member. Sixty-three percent say they personally know someone who died from COVID-19; a quarter say that was a family member. The impacts are wide-ranging: Sixty-nine percent of Mexicans say the pandemic has negatively impacted their financial situation, 56 percent the health of their family, 47 percent their own health and 37 percent apiece their or their family's mental health. People have received support mostly from family (84 percent) and close friends or acquaintances (52 percent). Three in 10 apiece say they've gotten at least some support from churches or the government.

Sixty-two percent of Mexican adults have received a vaccine, a quarter say they'll get one as soon as possible and 7 percent each say they'll wait or will not get a shot. As cases rise, the number of people who say they wear face masks in public places is up 8 points since June, to 53 percent. Twenty-nine percent say the pandemic is the main problem facing the country, a steep 20-point jump since May, when just 9 percent said so ([El Financiero 8/13-8/14](#)).

In Chile, vaccinations have peaked at 90 percent, steady for five weeks. Approval of the government's handling of the pandemic continues to rise, hitting a high of 64 percent. Just fewer than half of Chilean adults are worried about catching the coronavirus, a low since mid-March 2020 ([Cadem 8/11-8/13](#)).

In Great Britain, positive sentiment toward the vaccines remains extremely high, at 97 percent. Ninety-three percent of adults have gotten at least one dose and eight in 10 have received two shots. Most legal restrictions in the country were lifted July 19; since then, the number of adults who've met up indoors with someone not in their household has risen steadily, to 64 percent this week, up from 47 percent the week before restrictions eased. Somewhat fewer, 27 percent, now say it'll take more than a year for life to return to normal, down from a third in mid-July ([Office for National Statistics 8/4-8/8](#)).

In Russia, 84 percent think migrant workers should be vaccinated on the same terms as Russian citizens. Among them, 35 percent say it's necessary to protect the country and reduce infections; a quarter say migrants should have the same rights as Russians and one in 10 says everyone should be vaccinated ([FOM 7/23-7/25](#)).

In newly released results from a late June survey in the Philippines, 68 percent said they had easy access to a vaccination site in their area, 3 percent said one was difficult to access and three in 10 had no access at all. Just 7 percent of Filipinos had received [at least one shot](#) of a vaccine; that's doubled to [15 percent](#) as of Aug. 18. Filipinos were split on the question of whether the country's vaccine rollout was too slow or about right, 50-45 percent ([SWS 6/23-6/26](#)).

In recently released results from an April-June poll, 82 percent of Kenyans were willing to be vaccinated if it were available at no cost. Of those unwilling, seven in 10 were worried about side effects and about a third thought the vaccine might not be safe. Ninety-four percent overall thought the vaccine would reduce their risk of infection. Compliance with preventive measures waned in fall and winter 2020 but rose after a new lockdown was announced last March: Ninety-seven percent were avoiding handshakes, 94 percent were handwashing and 83 percent were wearing face masks. Just a quarter, however, said they were staying home more often.

Though employment recovered after plummeting in the early months of the pandemic, with 76 percent employed (compared with 71 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019), financial issues and food insecurity persisted. The share of households receiving outside support more than tripled from the start of the pandemic, from 9 percent in May-June 2020 to 27 percent in April-June this year. Forty-two percent of households overall struggled with a lack of food, rising to nearly half in rural areas ([The World Bank 3/29-6/13](#)).

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

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