



COVID-19 Survey Summary: March 11, 2022

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

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Public attitudes toward the pandemic have improved sharply in surveys this week and behavior is shifting, with fewer Americans avoiding large crowds, public places or small gatherings. But optimism is cautious: most worry about new strains of the coronavirus and two-thirds expect disruptions through the end of the year.

New analyses document disproportionate impacts of the virus, finding higher death rates in rural and pro-Trump counties compared with urban and pro-Biden counties and among Black and Hispanic adults compared with whites and Asians. Vaccine uptake lags in red and rural areas.

Two polls explore the impact of the pandemic on employment. One finds that about four in 10 workers had to miss work because of the virus during the Omicron surge alone, with lower-income workers disproportionately affected. And one in five adults (excluding retirees) reports having quit a job at some point in 2021; among them, three in 10 say the coronavirus was a reason and one in five specifically points to employer vaccine mandates.

Among other surveys, one finds widespread reports of teacher and/or staff vacancies at public schools, with six in 10 school principals agreeing that the pandemic has increased vacancies. With cases subsiding rapidly, another finds an advance in approval of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic.

Several state polls are included this week, as are international surveys in Brazil, Chile, Great Britain and Mexico.

Concerns & Outlooks

New coronavirus cases have fallen to the fewest since last summer and deaths are down nearly 60 percent from their Omicron peak, though still averaging around [1,200 each day](#).

The public's outlook is its best since June. Sixty-three percent say the coronavirus situation in the United States is getting better, up sharply from 20 percent in January. Just 12 percent think it's getting worse, down from 58 percent ([Gallup 2/15-2/23](#)).

Sixty-four percent say it's time to learn to live with the virus; 36 percent instead prioritize stopping its spread. Americans were split 51-48 percent on this question in January and early February ([CNN 2/23-2/26](#)).

At the same time, two-thirds think disruptions to travel, school, work and public events will continue through the end of 2022 or longer – a substantial majority, but down from 85 percent last fall. Just a third think disruptions will end in a few months.

Fifty-five percent are worried about new variants of the virus spreading, down 7 points since early December. Half are worried about people in their area not getting vaccinated, down 7 points. Three in 10 alike are worried about a lack of social distancing and hospital capacity and 19 percent are worried about a shortage of tests, up 9 points since early December.

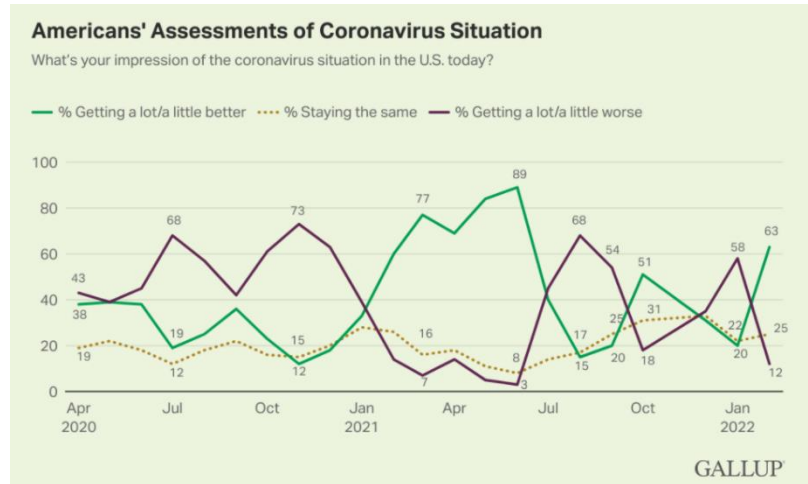
Thirty-four percent are very or somewhat worried about contracting the virus, down from 50 percent in January to return to its pre-Omicron level. More parents, 45 percent, express worry about their child catching the virus, similar to early December ([Gallup 2/15-2/23](#)).

Sixty-four percent see the spread of infectious diseases throughout the world as a critical threat to the vital interests of the United States, back to its pre-pandemic level. One year ago, 72 percent thought so. It was 63 percent in 2016 ([Gallup 2/1-2/17](#)).

Coronavirus Precautions

Fewer Americans are refraining from public activities compared with January and social distancing is near its pandemic low:

- Forty-one percent say they've avoided events with large crowds in the past week because of the virus, down 15 points since January to the fewest since July.
- Twenty-eight percent are avoiding public places such as stores or restaurants, down from 41 percent in January and similarly its lowest since July.
- One in five avoided small gatherings with friends or family because of the coronavirus, down 13 points since January to essentially match its pandemic lows in October and July.

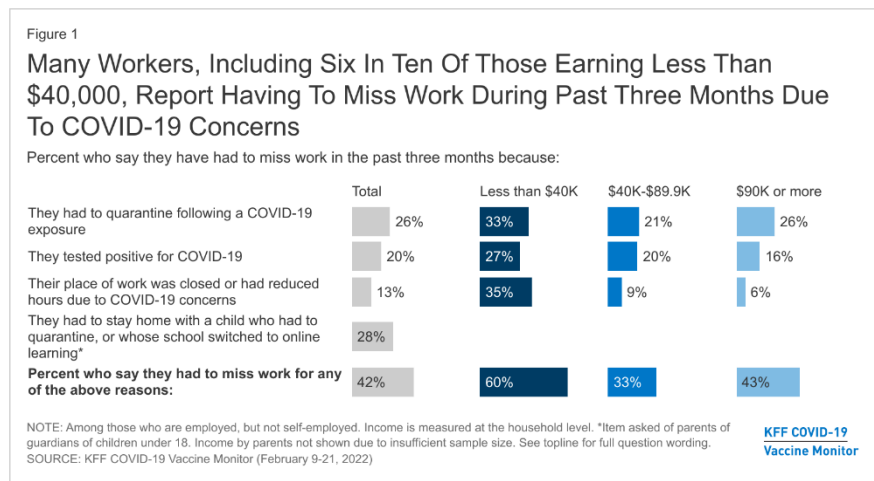


- Twenty-two percent are completely or mostly isolating from non-household members, similar to a pandemic low of 18 percent in June and July and steady since October. Thirty-four percent are partially isolating or isolating a little, while 44 percent report making no attempts to do this, just 3 points off its pandemic high this summer.

Sixty-eight percent say they've worn a face mask when outside their home in the past week, essentially steady since August in this poll ([Gallup 2/15-2/23](#)). In a poll covered last week, 62 percent reported wearing a mask at least sometimes when leaving their home, a [9-point drop](#) from early to late February.

Employment

In a mid-February survey, 42 percent of workers said they had to miss work at least once in the previous three months because of a coronavirus-related concern or sickness. This includes 26 percent who had to quarantine following an exposure, 20 percent who tested positive for the virus and 13 percent whose place of work was closed or reduced its hours because of coronavirus concerns. Six in 10 of those with household incomes less than \$40,000 had to miss work, compared with less than four in 10 higher income workers. Among employed parents, 28 percent missed work because they had to stay home with a quarantining child or their child's school went online.



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Fifty-two percent of workers said their employer offers paid time off if they get sick from the coronavirus. Fewer offer paid time for quarantining following exposure (44 percent) or if parents need to stay home because their child can't attend school (35 percent). Despite higher rates of missed work because of the virus, lower-income workers are less likely to received paid time off if they get sick from the coronavirus or need to quarantine.

Eleven percent of workers say they've gone to work when they had coronavirus symptoms or had been exposed to the virus because they couldn't afford to take time off, rising to three in 10 of those earning less than \$40,000. It's 15 percent among those without paid time off if they get sick from the virus, compared with 6 percent of those who do have paid time off in this case.

Among those who had to miss work within the past three months, 62 percent said it impacted their family's stress and 44 percent said it impacted their family's finances. About two in 10 in each case reported major impacts ([KFF 2/9-2/21](#)).

The pandemic has spurred a sharp rise in resignations. The number of people who quit their job reached a more than two-decade high of 4.5 million in November; it remained elevated, at 4.3 million, in January. Those who quit may have other options: The number of job openings in the U.S. held at 11.3 million in January according to preliminary data, just off its record of 11.4 million in December. That compares with 7.0 million in pre-pandemic February 2020 ([BLS 3/9](#)).

In a mid-February survey, 19 percent of non-retired U.S. adults said they quit a job at some point in 2021, peaking at 37 percent of those younger than 30.

Among them, 31 percent cited reasons related to the coronavirus generally. More cited low pay (63 percent), lack of opportunities for advancement (63 percent) or feeling disrespected at work (57 percent). Nearly half of those with children cited childcare issues as a reason for quitting. Thirty-five percent were moving to a different area.

Eighteen percent said their employer requiring vaccination was a major (8 percent) or minor (10 percent) reason for their resignation, last on a list of 10 reasons. This ranged from 27 percent of people in racial and ethnic minority groups to 10 percent of white workers. It also was higher among those without a four-year college degree than among those with one, 21 vs. 8 percent.

Nearly eight in 10 workers who quit a job in 2021 were employed full-time (55 percent) or part-time (23 percent) as of mid-February. Among those who found a new job, 56 percent said were earning more money and 53 percent apiece said they have more opportunities for advancement and an easier time balancing work/family responsibilities ([Pew 2/7-2/13](#)).

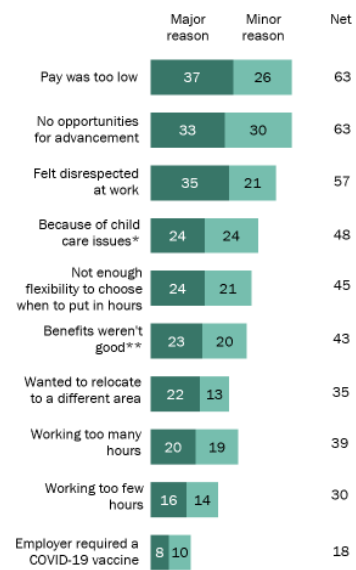
Overall, 71 percent of employed adults say the pandemic has caused a disruption in the work they do for pay, including 25 percent who call it a major disruption ([CNN 2/23-2/26](#)).

Coronavirus Deaths

As the country approaches [1 million](#) coronavirus deaths, a new analysis documents the uneven toll of the virus. From March-June 2020, deaths caused by the coronavirus were more than nine times greater in the decile of Americans living in the country's most densely populated counties compared with the decile in the least densely populated counties. This relationship flipped in subsequent waves of the virus, with the least densely populated counties consistently suffering higher death rates than the most densely populated areas. As of late February, the overall death toll was slightly higher in the least densely populated counties (averaging 15 monthly deaths per 100,000 residents) than in the most densely populated ones (13 deaths per 100,000). ([Pew 3/3](#))

Top reasons why U.S. workers left a job in 2021: Low pay, no advancement opportunities

Among those who quit a job at any point in 2021, % saying each was a ___ why they did so



*Among those with children younger than 18 living in the household.

**Question provided health insurance and paid time off as examples.

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-13, 2022.

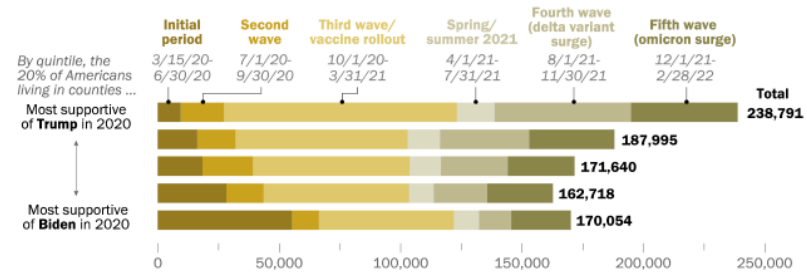
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Vaccination rates differ as well. As of January 2022, the share of people age 5 and older who had received at least one vaccine dose was 17 points higher among urban than rural residents, 75 vs. 59 percent, with the gap more than doubling since April 2021. Rural populations also are more apt to be older, uninsured, have underlying medical conditions and live farther from medical facilities, placing them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes ([CDC 3/4](#)).

Early in the pandemic, counties that were most supportive of Biden in the 2020 election suffered far higher death rates than those that went heavily for Donald Trump, with this relationship reversing by the third wave of the virus in fall 2020. As of the end of February, the death rate in all counties that Trump won in 2020 was 326 per 100,000, compared with 258 per 100,000 in Biden counties ([Pew 3/3](#)). As noted in a previous [summary](#), people living in Biden counties were 13 points more apt than those living in Trump counties to be fully vaccinated as of Jan. 11.

Initially, deaths from COVID-19 were concentrated in Democratic-leaning areas; the highest overall death toll is now in the 20% of the country that is most GOP-leaning

Total number of reported coronavirus deaths in groups of counties representing 20% segments of the U.S. population, by support for Trump or Biden



Notes: Counties are grouped into quintiles by the share of the two-party general election vote won by Trump and by Biden. Each quintile represents 20% of the total U.S. population. Excludes Alaska (1,127 deaths), where election results are not reported at the county level. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of COVID-19 data collected by The New York Times as of Feb. 28, 2022. See methodology for details.

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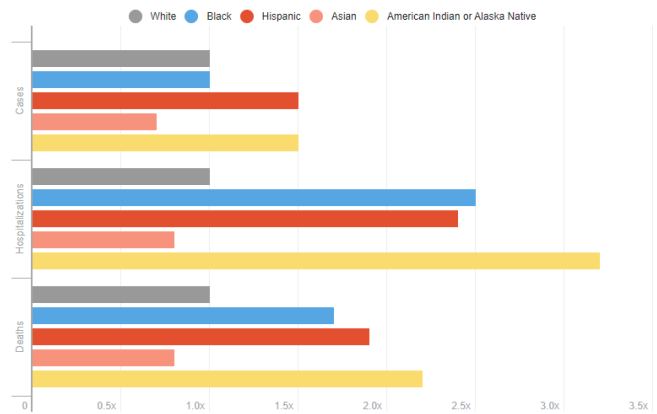
Disparities also emerge by race/ethnicity. As of early February, the age-adjusted death rate was 2.2 times higher among American Indian/Alaska Native people than among whites. Hispanic and Black people were 1.9 and 1.7 times more likely to die from the virus than whites. Asians fared moderately better than whites ([CDC](#); [KHN 3/7](#)).

In data from 42 states, roughly equal shares of white (62 percent) and Hispanic people (64 percent) received at least one vaccine dose as of March 7, compared with 57 percent of Black people. Far more Asians, 84 percent, received at least one dose. While uptake among black and Hispanic people lagged that of whites in the initial months of the vaccine rollout, these gaps have narrowed. (These estimates are among all Americans, not just adults.) ([KFF 3/9](#))

Another study assesses factors driving disparities in county-level COVID-19 mortality during the first year of the pandemic, before vaccines were widely distributed. The authors identify counties both in the top quintile of mortality rates

People of color in the U.S. were generally hit harder by the pandemic

Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans mostly had higher rates of cases, hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 than whites did. Asian Americans fared slightly better than whites. Chart shows racial disparities in rates.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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for at least 100 nonconsecutive days from Jan. 22, 2020, to Feb. 28, 2021, and in the top quintile in the share of Black, Hispanic or white adult populations. They say that high-mortality Black counties had a larger share of adults older than 65 or disabled, higher income inequality, more uninsured people, more preventable hospital stays, fewer households with internet access and lower scores in an index of socioeconomic advantage, compared with the national median. High-mortality Hispanic counties were more urbanized, had larger shares of uninsured people, higher rates of severe housing problems and rated lower in the socioeconomic advantage index. High-mortality white counties were less urbanized, had a larger share of adults age older than 65 or disabled and fewer households with internet access ([Lin et al., 2022](#)).

K-12 Education

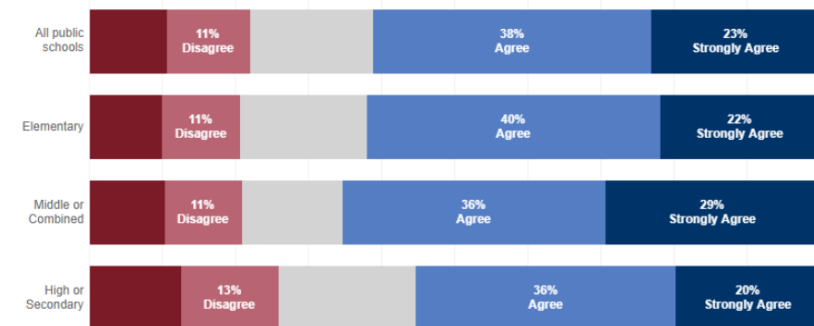
Nearly all public schools, 97 percent, offered full-time in-person instruction to all students in January. Forty percent offered full-time remote learning to at least some students and 7 percent offered hybrid instruction.

Ninety-seven percent had a formal quarantine policy in place. Among them, 97 percent required students to stay home if they tested positive, 82 percent if they had symptoms and 80 percent in cases of potential exposure.

Most, 57 percent, did not have a way of tracking which students are vaccinated.

Forty-four percent of schools reported having at least one full- or part-time teaching vacancy and nearly half reported vacancies for non-teaching staff. Six in 10 of those with teacher and/or staff vacancies agreed that the pandemic has increased vacancies in their school ([NCES 1/11-1/24](#)).

Percentage of public schools by the extent to which they agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of teacher and staff vacancies in their school and by school level: January 2022



NOTE: Results are presented only for schools reporting teacher and/or staff vacancies.

Government Response

Fifty-five percent approve of Biden’s handling of the pandemic while 43 percent disapprove. It was a closer 47-49 percent in mid-February ([NPR-PBS-Marist 3/1-3/2](#)).

More, 62 percent, disapprove of the way the U.S. government overall has handled the pandemic. Ninety-two percent say the pandemic has caused changes in their lives; among them, 34 percent say the federal government has provided the support they needed to deal with those changes and 29 percent say the same of their local government. Most point to their spouse or partner (86 percent) or close friends and family (67 percent) as supports ([CNN 2/23-2/26](#)).

Gender Impacts

Broad majorities of women and men, 76 and 85 percent, say the pandemic has been equally difficult for both genders. Twenty-two percent of women think it has been more difficult for women than for men; 12 percent of men say the same. Only 2 percent of women and 3 percent of men say the pandemic has been more difficult for men.

Women are more apt than men to say the pandemic has impacted their mental health, 72 vs. 60 percent. Roughly equal shares of women and men report impacts on their financial stability (59 and 56 percent), relationship with close friends or family (77 and 72 percent) and plans for the future (74 and 76 percent). ([CNN 2/23-2/26](#))

State Results

Likely Republican primary voters in Georgia, Ohio and Pennsylvania rank coronavirus policies behind the economy, immigration and social issues in importance to their vote in their state's U.S. Senate primary. Still, 54 to 58 percent call it extremely or very important that candidates share their views on pandemic policies such as mask and vaccine mandates ([Fox News GA 3/2-3/6](#), [Fox News OH 3/2-3/6](#), [Fox News PA 3/2-3/6](#)).

In New Jersey, roughly two-thirds agree with the decision to end the statewide mask mandate for students and employees at K-12 schools and childcare settings March 7. As the state pulls back mandates, 54 percent feel very comfortable returning to some sense of their normal daily life; an additional 33 percent feel somewhat comfortable. Thirty-five percent report always wearing a mask in indoor public places, vs. 62 percent last June. Sixty percent feel they personally have less risk of contracting the virus now than in spring 2020. Sixteen percent think New Jersey should be doing more in terms of increasing mask mandates and vaccine requirements, while 49 percent think it's doing the right amount and 34 percent think it should do less. Roughly half give Gov. Phil Murphy an A (30 percent) or B (22 percent) grade for handling the pandemic.

Eighty-four percent of adults in the state have received at least one vaccine dose, 81 percent are fully vaccinated and 52 percent have received a booster. Of those who have received at least one shot, 55 percent would probably be willing to get a booster shot about every six months if public health officials recommended it ([Rutgers-Eagleton 2/25-3/4](#)).

In Pennsylvania, about a third of registered voters rate the Biden administration's response to the "epidemic" as excellent or very good, 18 percent average and 46 percent below average or failing. In an open-ended question, 3 percent call it the state's most important problem ([Franklin & Marshall College 2/21-2/27](#)).

International Results

In Chile, three in 10 say they've had the coronavirus. Forty-two percent are worried about catching it, down 11 points in a week. Sixty-seven percent approve of the government's handling of the pandemic, up 4 points ([Cadem 3/2-3/4](#)).

Two-thirds of Brazilians say the pandemic is less serious now than a month ago, up from 39 percent in early February. Just 10 percent say it's more serious, down 19 points, and 18 percent say it's the same ([PoderData 2/27-3/1](#)).

Forty-one percent of British adults say they are worried about the impacts of the coronavirus on their life, a pandemic low. A third say they always or often maintain social distance, a low since September 2020. Seven in 10 say they always or often wore a face covering while shopping in the past week and as many did so on public transit for the entirety of the trip, down from more than three-quarters in early February. The number who worked from home is down 11 points from mid-January, to 15 percent.

Eight in 10 say their cost of living has increased, up from 62 percent in November. Most point to rises in the price of food (92 percent), gas and electricity bills (80 percent) and fuel (76 percent) ([Office for National Statistics 2/16-2/27](#)).

In Mexico, 46 percent say they are very happy – lower than the pre-pandemic level (57 percent in March 2020), but up from 40 percent this time last year and lows of 29 percent in August and December 2020 ([El Financiero 2/11-2/13, 2/18-2/19](#)).

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

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