



COVID-19 Survey Summary: March 25, 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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Polls this week find gains in assessments of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic, lasting impacts on American life from work patterns to religious practice and broad agreement that the United States needs to be better prepared for the next outbreak.

As cases have subsided, missing work due to illness has eased, as have pandemic-related childcare hassles.

Internationally, a survey in more than 100 countries finds higher stress, worry and sadness in 2020 even as overall life evaluations held steady in 2020 and 2021 alike. Countries with higher institutional trust in 2019 data suffered fewer coronavirus deaths per capita subsequently.

Another study estimates worldwide excess mortality at 18 million people in 2020 and 2021, far higher than the roughly 6 million reported coronavirus deaths globally. Here at home, an analysis documents a sharp rise in alcohol-related deaths since the onset of the pandemic.

In the workplace, as of last summer, one in five private-sector jobs involved telework at least some of the time, with a vast range by sector – from about two-thirds of information services jobs to 2 percent in accommodation and food services. Increased telework was associated with reduced workspace and business relocation.

In terms of religious practice, in-person attendance at services plateaued in the past six months; among those who attend regularly, one in five reports doing so only virtually in the past month. And in the schools, in data from last spring, fewer than half of secondary teachers reported having needed curricula and professional development to support students with disabilities in remote or hybrid settings.

Individual surveys from Chile and Great Britain also are included this week.

[Government Response](#)

With cases sharply down, one poll finds 53-46 percent approval of Biden's handling of the pandemic, with approval up 8 percentage points since mid-January ([AP-NORC 3/17-3/21](#)). It's a similar 53-47 percent in another, with approval up 6 points since mid-February ([Gallup 3/1-3/16](#)). A third survey has it at 47-44 percent, and it's 50-48 percent among registered voters in a fourth, vs. 46-52 percent in mid-January ([Grinnell College 3/15-3/20](#), [Fox News 3/18-3/21](#)).

Looking ahead to the 2022 congressional elections, 33 percent of registered voters say the coronavirus will be very important in their vote, last on a list of 15 items. Topmost is the economy, at 78 percent ([Pew 3/7-3/13](#)).

Thirteen percent say the coronavirus is one of the most worrying topics to them personally, vs. 42 percent for inflation. A quarter mainly blame the pandemic for rising housing and food costs, second to the number who blame Biden. Fewer blame the pandemic for higher gas and fuel costs, 4 percent ([NPR-Ipsos 3/18-3/21](#)).

In a mid-February survey, 83 percent agreed that America needs to be better prepared for the next pandemic ([PhRMA-Ipsos 2/11-2/16](#)).

Vaccine & Antiviral Treatments

Sixty-eight percent are confident coronavirus vaccines are safe for them personally, steady since September ([CDC 3/6-3/12](#)). Seventy-one percent in February agreed that the vaccines are effective at preventing hospitalization, death or serious illness; 65 percent agreed that vaccines and improved treatments have reduced mortality. Fewer, 56 percent, agreed that antiviral treatments represent "a massive breakthrough" resulting from government/industry cooperation ([PhRMA-Ipsos 2/11-2/16](#)).

Childcare & Employment Disruptions

Childcare and some employment disruptions have eased since the height of the Omicron surge. Among adults with children younger than 5 in the household, 28 percent say their child was unable to attend daycare or another childcare arrangement in the last four weeks because it was closed, unavailable, unaffordable or because of safety concerns, down sharply from 42 percent in late January and early February.

Among non-retired adults who did not work for pay in the past week, 6 percent said it was because they were sick with the coronavirus or caring for someone who was, down from 14 percent in late January and early February. At the same time, there was no change from early February in the numbers who were laid off or furloughed because of the coronavirus (5 percent) or whose employer closed temporarily or was permanently out of business because of the virus (3 percent each) ([U.S. Census Bureau 3/2-3/14](#)).

Telework

A new analysis of a July-to-September survey finds that 78 percent of U.S. private sector jobs rarely or never involved telework, while 13 percent involved telework full time and 9 percent some of the time - with vast differences across sectors.

Teleworking at least some of the time peaked at 68 percent for jobs in the information sector. It was 46 percent in the professional and business services sector and 45 percent in “financial activities.” The fewest telework jobs were in retail trade (7 percent), natural resources and mining (6 percent) and accommodation and food services (2 percent).

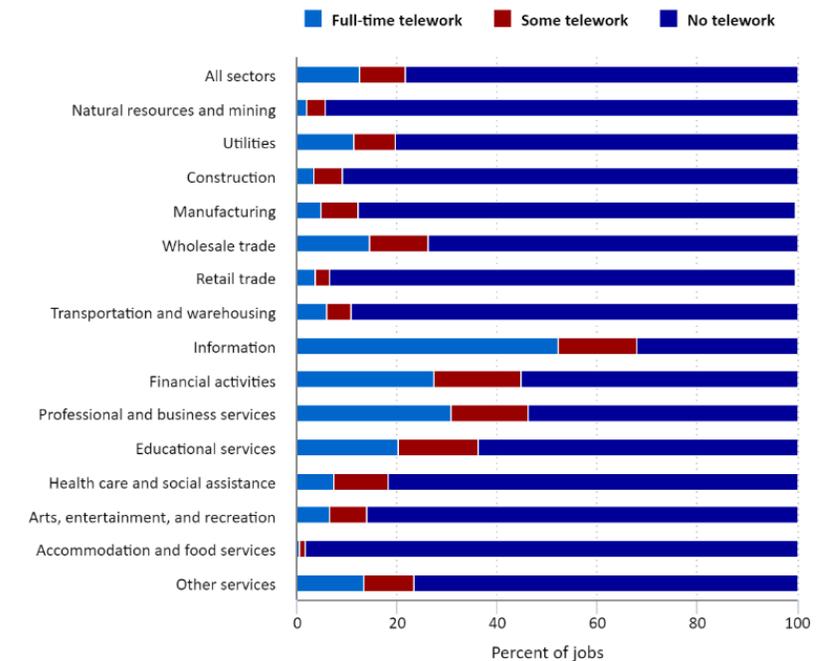
Within sectors, establishments with higher average wages were more apt to offer telework at least some of the time and to have increased it in the pandemic.

Six percent of private-sector establishments reported reducing the square footage of their workplace since the start of the pandemic and an additional 4 percent planned to do so within the next 12 months. Among businesses that reduced their square footage, 63 percent increased telework, twice the rate among establishments that didn’t cut space and had no plans to do so.

Increased telework also was associated with relocation. Among the 6 percent of businesses that relocated since the start of the pandemic, 58 percent increased telework, again nearly twice the rate among those that did not relocate. An additional 4 percent of business had plans to relocate within the next 12 months, with 50 percent in this group reporting increased telework.

The report builds on a February [summary](#) in which a quarter of private-sector companies reported making at least one pay increase because of the pandemic, affecting nearly half of private-sector workers. Among businesses that increased pay, 84 percent had jobs that rarely or never involved telework, vs. 74 percent among business that did not raise pay ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 7/27-9/30](#)).

Chart 1. Telework patterns by industry



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
 Note: Definitions of industry sectors correspond to codes from the 2017 North American Industry Classification System.
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021 Business Response Survey to the Coronavirus Pandemic.



Among small businesses (defined as those with fewer than 500 employees) 10 percent say the number of hours employees worked from home has decreased over the past six months, while 5 percent say it’s increased. Most, 85 percent, report no change ([U.S. Census Bureau 3/14-3/20](#)).

K-12 Education

In a new report from a survey conducted a year ago, fewer than half of secondary school teachers said they had sufficient access to curricula and materials (46 percent) or professional development (40 percent) to support students with disabilities in remote or hybrid learning settings ([RAND 2021](#)). Remote schooling was widespread at the time; in April 2021, just [48 percent](#) of parents reported sending their child to school for in-person classes in the past week.

Religious Attendance

Among adults who attend religious services, nine in 10 say their house of worship is open for in-person services, essentially unchanged since September. Many fewer, 43 percent, say services are being held in the same way as before the pandemic, but that's up 14 points since September and 31 points in the past year. Forty-seven percent instead report pandemic precautions, down 12 points since September. Five percent say their congregation is closed for in-person worship.

Twenty-seven percent of adults overall say they attended a service in person in the past month, steady since September after rising from 13 percent in July 2020. Among those who say they typically attend services monthly, 67 percent report having attended an in-person service within the past month, also unchanged after rising from a third in July 2020. Twenty-one percent of regular attendees say they watched a service online or on TV but did not attend in person. (In a survey covered [last week](#), self-reported in-person religious attendance was down and watching virtual services was up compared with before the pandemic.)

Among regular attendees, in-person attendance peaks among evangelical Protestants (75 percent), mainline

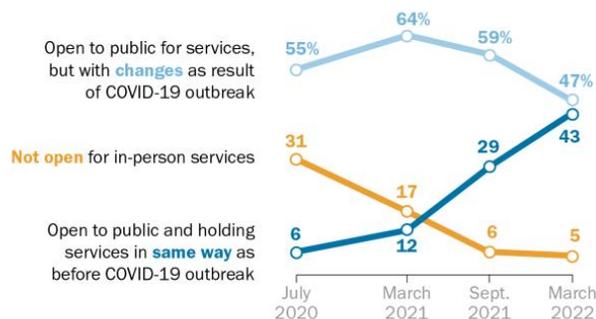
Protestants (68 percent) and Catholics (69 percent) compared with Protestants in the historically Black tradition (48 percent). Conversely, 73 percent of Protestants in the historically Black tradition say they've attended a service virtually, compared with 64 and 56 percent of evangelical and mainline Protestants and 40 percent of Catholics ([Pew 3/7-3/13](#)).

Alcohol-related Deaths

A new analysis of 2020 U.S. death certificate data finds that deaths linked to alcohol (as an underlying or contributing cause) rose 26 percent from 2019 to 2020, from 78,927 to 99,017. The age-adjusted death rate linked to alcohol also increased by 26 percent, from 27.3 to 34.4 per 100,000 people, surpassing the relative increase in rate of deaths from all causes during this

Share of churches and other houses of worship operating as they did pre-pandemic continues to rise

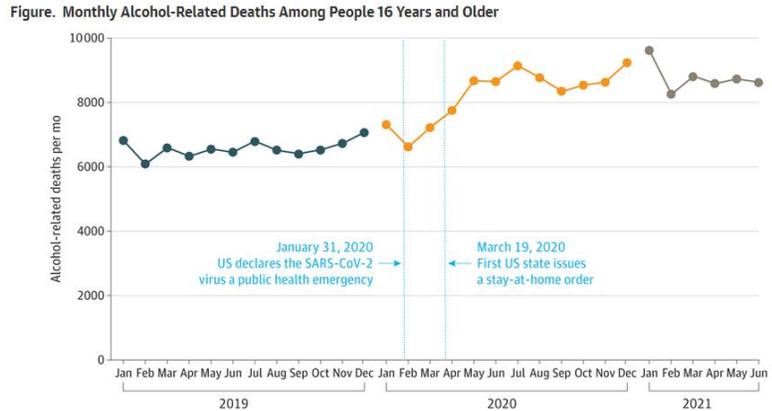
Among U.S. adults who typically attend religious services at least monthly or attended in person in the past month, % who say the house of worship they attend most often is currently ...



Note: Those who said "not sure" or declined to answer the question are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted March 7-13, 2022, among U.S. adults.

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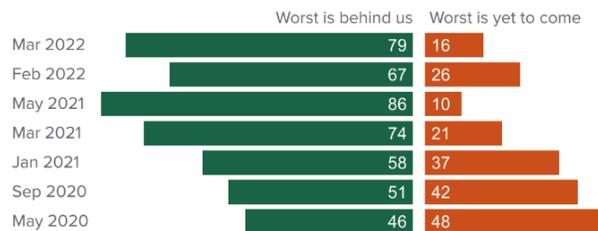
period (16.6 percent). The sharp increase in alcohol-related deaths occurred shortly after initial stay-at-home orders were announced in spring 2020 and have remained elevated in the half of 2021, according to provisional data. Before the pandemic, the alcohol-related death rate rose much less quickly, at an average increase of 2.2 percent year-over-year from 1999 to 2017 ([White et al., 2022](#)).



State Results

In California, 79 percent think the worst of the pandemic is behind us, up 12 points since February to the most since May. Nearly two-thirds favor controlling the spread of the coronavirus, even if it means having some restrictions; 32 percent instead favor having no restrictions on normal activities, even if it hurts efforts to control the spread of the virus. Fifty-seven percent favor requiring proof of vaccination to enter large outdoor gatherings or some indoor spaces, such as restaurants, bars and gyms, down a slight 4 points from September ([PPIC 3/6-3/17](#)).

Most Californians are optimistic about where the US stands with COVID-19



SOURCE: PPIC Statewide Surveys, 2020–2022.

Global Excess Mortality

An analysis finds 18.2 million excess deaths worldwide from Jan. 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2021, far more than the 5.94 million reported coronavirus deaths. The gap is largest in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The authors used reports from 74 countries, 266 subnational locations and 12 states in India. They say more research is needed to distinguish deaths that were directly and indirectly caused by the pandemic ([COVID-19 Excess Mortality Collaborators, 2022](#)).

Other International Results

A report on surveys from more than 100 countries in 2020 and 2021 finds no significant change in average life evaluations in either year compared with 2017-19. This is despite increased sadness, worry and stress, increased unemployment and lower household incomes in 2020. Sadness, worry and stress eased in 2021 – only sadness remained significantly higher than pre-

pandemic; unemployment also eased but remained significantly higher than pre-pandemic; and loss of household income worsened further. Positive emotions, such as laughter and enjoyment, were essentially unchanged and more than twice as prevalent as negative emotions.

On average, the share of individuals who reported helping strangers rose 13.5 points to 61.9 percent in 2021 compared with before the pandemic, making donations rose 5.9 points to 35.8 percent and volunteering rose 4.0 points to 22.9 percent.

Separately, using a sample of 154 countries, the analysis finds that those with higher institutional trust in 2019 suffered fewer coronavirus deaths per capita in the pandemic, with the association growing stronger in 2021. The trust index included measures of confidence in the government, the judicial system, the honesty of elections and the local police force, as well as perceived corruption in businesses ([Gallup 3/18](#)). Results align with findings from a [previously covered](#) study, in which higher levels of government and interpersonal trust were linked to lower infection and fatality rates at the country level.

In Chile, 41 percent are worried about personally catching the virus, steady the past two weeks and down from a high of 61 percent in January ([Cadem 3/16-3/18](#)).

In Great Britain, a third are worried about the effect of the coronavirus on their lives right now, down from two-thirds in early January to the fewest in data since March 2020. Precautionary behaviors similarly have decreased: Three-quarters say they wore a mask when outside of their home in the past week, down from 95 percent in late January; 38 percent report having taken a rapid coronavirus test in the past week, down from 61 percent in mid-January; and 28 percent always or often maintained social distancing, down 16 points since late January to the fewest in data since September 2020. Six in 10 working adults exclusively worked in-person in the past week, up 4 points in two weeks to a new pandemic high ([Office for National Statistics 3/3-3/13](#)).

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

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