



COVID-19 Survey Summary: April 29, 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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As the country approaches one million coronavirus deaths, analyses this week underscore the vast reach of the pandemic, with one finding that six in 10 Americans had been infected as of February and another reporting that the virus was the third leading cause of death in the United States for a second year.

Sharp disparities by race and ethnicity continue to mark the loss of life, with a range from 548 coronavirus deaths per 100,000 people among Indigenous Americans to 263 among whites.

Despite a recent rise in cases nationwide, three-quarters overall view the coronavirus as under control. Marking the nation's turn toward normality, just one in five K-12 public schools had a mask mandate in March and the number of students and staff missing school to quarantine fell sharply.

One new poll finds a narrow majority opposed to mask requirements on public transportation, a shift since a federal judge in Florida struck down that nationwide mandate. Still, most say they'll continue wearing masks on shared transportation even if not required.

The public divides on Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic and trust in the CDC remains lukewarm. Other studies document the sharp decline in retail employment in the pandemic's first year and indicate a decline in migrant expulsions at the U.S.-Mexico border under Title 42 from the Trump to the Biden administration.

State results in California and Wisconsin are included this week, as are international results in Australia, Chile, Bulgaria and South Korea.

Mask Mandates

In a poll done after a federal judge [struck down](#) the CDC's nationwide mask mandate on public transportation, the public by 54-43 percent says people riding buses, subways and trains should

not be required to wear masks. It's a closer 51-46 percent for travel on airplanes ([Quinnipiac 4/21-4/25](#)). Just before the ruling, [56 percent](#) favored requiring masks on public transportation.

Two-thirds say they'd feel comfortable on mass transit without a mask requirement. Regardless of a mandate, 56 percent say they'd wear a mask if they traveled on an airplane; 53 percent say they'd do so on a bus, subway or train ([Quinnipiac 4/21-4/25](#)).

Concerns & Outlooks

New daily coronavirus cases have nearly doubled nationwide since the beginning of the month and hospitalizations have increased moderately – though each remains near levels unseen since last summer. Deaths associated with the virus continue to fall, averaging about 300 per day in the past week, the fewest since last summer ([CDC](#)).

Even with rising cases, 74 percent of Americans think the spread of the coronavirus in the United States is under control, including at least seven in 10 across political party lines ([Quinnipiac 4/21-4/25](#)). Thirty-nine percent overall are very or moderately concerned about catching the virus, down from 55 percent in early January to hold at the fewest since summer ([CDC 4/10-4/16](#)).

Just 3 percent call the coronavirus the most urgent issue facing the country out of a list of 11 items; 31 percent cite inflation ([Quinnipiac 4/21-4/25](#)). Similarly, 4 percent cite the coronavirus (and/or other diseases) in an open-ended question about the most important problems facing the country, steady since March after falling from 20 percent in January ([Gallup 4/1-4/19](#)).

Government Response

The public splits 50-49 percent on Biden's handling of the coronavirus in one poll and 46-48 percent in another. Each has stabilized over the past month after moderate improvements from career lows in January ([AP-NORC 4/14-4/18](#), [Quinnipiac 4/21-4/25](#)).

CDC

Little changed in data since September 2020, 28 percent report a great deal of confidence in people running the CDC, 43 percent only some confidence and 28 percent hardly any confidence at all. Fewer have a great deal of confidence in those running the Supreme Court (18 percent), the executive branch (16 percent) or Congress (4 percent) ([AP-NORC 4/14-4/18](#)).

K-12 Education

In a newly released March survey, 31 percent of K-12 public schools reported having at least one student quarantining at home because of exposure to the coronavirus, down sharply from 94 percent in January. Eight percent said at least one teacher or staff member was quarantining at the time of the survey, compared with 32 percent in February. (Data reported in this section are described as “experimental” and to be “interpreted with caution.”)

Nearly all schools, 99 percent, offered in-person learning in March. A third offered remote instruction for at least some students, down from 40 percent in January; 8 percent offered hybrid instruction. One in five said they were prohibited by state or local laws from changing learning modes in response to coronavirus-related issues.

Twenty-two percent of schools had mask requirements for students, down from 58 percent in February. Mandated masking for any staff members fell from 62 to 23 percent.

Fifty-eight percent of schools surveyed said staff members were extremely concerned about getting their students to meet academic standards. Forty-six percent were highly concerned about the lack of substitute teachers; 37 percent, about students' social, emotional and mental health ([IES 03/2022](#)).

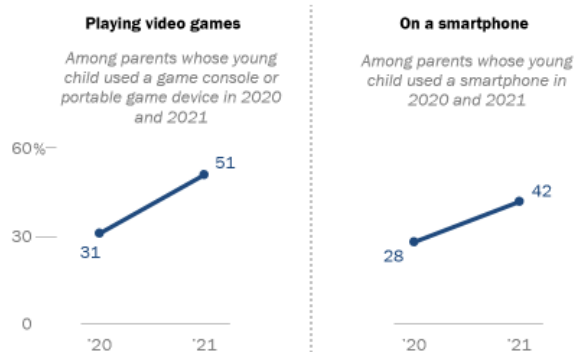
Technology Use Among Children

Reported technology use among young children rose in the first year of the pandemic, as did parents' concerns about screen time, according to an analysis of two surveys among parents with a child 11 or younger, one at the onset of the pandemic in May 2020 and another in April 2021.

The study reports a 13-point rise in the share of parents who said their child ever used a tablet or computer, from 68 percent in May 2020 to 81 percent in April 2021; an 8-point rise in smartphone use, to 71 percent; and a slight 6-point increase in the share whose child used a game console or portable game device, to 51 percent. There also were reported increases in social media use, e.g., the share of parents who said their child had ever used TikTok rose from 13 to 21 percent.

Over first year of pandemic, growing shares of parents of young tech users said their child was spending too much time on video games, smartphones

Among U.S. parents of a child who was age 11 or younger in March 2020, % who said that their child spent too much time overall ...



Note: Parents answered questions about the same child in both the March 2020 survey and the April 2021 survey. See "How we did this" for more details. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 12-18, 2021.

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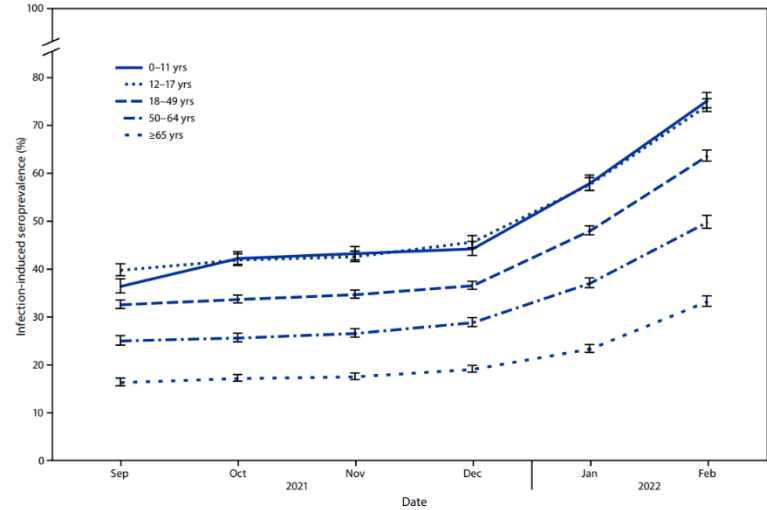
In April 2021, 51 percent of parents whose child used a game console or portable game device were concerned that their child spent too much time playing video games, up from 31 percent at the onset of the pandemic. Similarly, 42 percent of parents whose child used a smartphone were concerned about too much screen time in April 2021, up from 28 percent in March 2020 ([Pew 4/28](#)).

Coronavirus Infections

The CDC estimates that 58 percent of Americans had been infected with the coronavirus by February, up from a third in December. That's based on the proportion that tested positive for coronavirus antibodies, ranging from approximately three-quarters of children and adolescents to a third of those age 65 and older, all up sharply in the Omicron surge. The estimates are based on

a convenience sample of de-identified clinical blood specimens submitted to commercial laboratories nationally for reasons unrelated to the coronavirus. From 65,000 to 81,000 blood samples were tested every four weeks from September 2021 to January 2022, and about 46,000 in February 2022. The results were weighted by age and sex to match distributions from the American Community Survey ([CDC 4/26](#)).

FIGURE. Seroprevalence of infection-induced SARS-CoV-2 antibodies,* by age group — United States, September 2021–February 2022



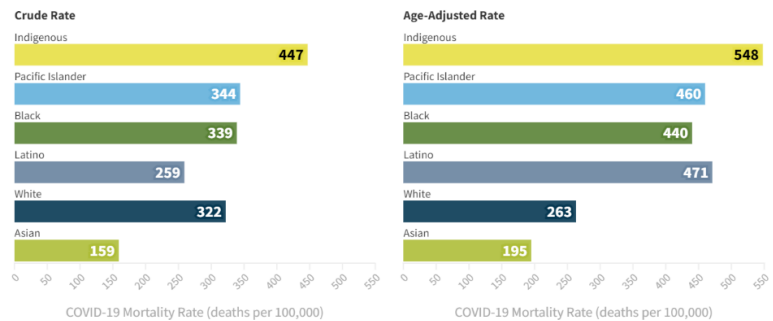
Coronavirus Deaths

Nearly a million U.S. deaths are linked to the coronavirus, reaching a cumulative [990,208](#) as of April 27. The coronavirus was associated with 460,513 deaths in 2021, or 13.3 percent of all deaths last year. It was listed as the underlying cause for 90 percent of those deaths (415,399), making it the third leading cause of death in 2021, behind heart disease (693,021) and cancer (604,553). It was the second consecutive year in which the coronavirus was the third leading cause of death ([CDC 4/22](#)).

As [previously](#) noted, the pandemic has had disproportionate impacts by race and ethnicity, with the cumulative age-adjusted death rate peaking among Indigenous Americans, at 548 deaths per 100,000 people as of April 6. The age-adjusted rate also is higher among Latinos (471 per 100,000), Pacific Islanders (460 per 100,000) and Black people (440 per 100,000) compared with whites (263 per 100,000) and Asian Americans (195 per 100,000) ([APM Research 4/12](#)).

Indigenous Americans have the highest COVID-19 mortality rates in the U.S.

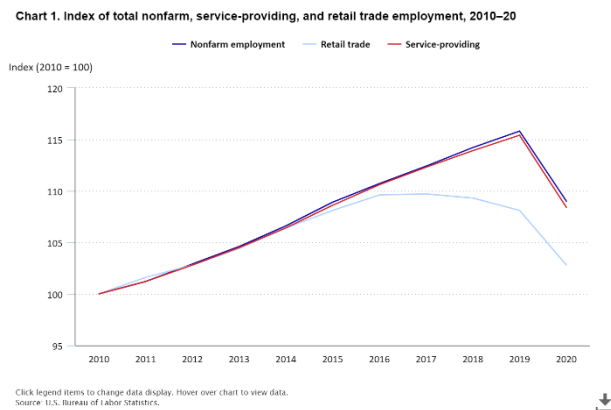
As of April 6, 2022



While disparities remain, there were significant decreases in age-adjusted death rate ratios by race and ethnicity across most groups from 2020 to 2021. Compared with multiracial Americans (the group with the lowest age-adjusted death rate), ratios fell most among Black (-40.2 percent), Asian (-37.6 percent), Hispanic (-37.1 percent) and American Indian or Alaska Native people (-34.0 percent). Ratios also fell 14.0 percent among whites, while there was essentially no change among people of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander descent ([CDC 4/22](#)).

Retail Trade & E-Commerce Employment

A newly released report says nearly 800,000 jobs were lost in the retail sector during 2020, roughly four times the number from 2017 to 2019. Clothing and accessories stores, health and personal care stores and furniture and home furnishings stores contributed most to the decline. Stores primarily selling essential goods and services, such as warehouse clubs and supercenters, experienced an increase in employment from 2019 to 2020, partially offsetting declines in other retail subindustries.



There also was a rise in e-commerce jobs amid the pandemic, accelerating pre-pandemic trends. Courier and messengers, warehousing and storage industries added about 300,000 new jobs from 2019 to 2020, matching employment gains from 2017 to 2019. The shift towards e-commerce is expected continue, resulting in a projected loss of 600,000 jobs in the retail sector from 2020-30 ([BLS, 2022](#)).

Immigration

The CDC invoked [Title 42](#) in March 2020, allowing Border Patrol agents to expel migrants entering the country, including those seeking asylum, to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. A new report finds that there were 2.9 million migrant encounters on the U.S.-Mexico border from April 2020 to March 2022, with 61 percent of them resulting in migrants being expelled under Title 42. Eighty-eight percent of expulsions over this period were among single adults; families made up 11 percent of expulsions, unaccompanied minors, 1 percent. Six in 10 migrants expelled under Title 42 were from Mexico, 15 percent from Guatemala, 14 percent from Honduras and 5 percent from El Salvador. During the Trump administration, eight in 10 or more migrant encounters resulted in expulsion; use of Title 42 has decreased under the Biden administration, with 51 percent of all encounters resulting in expulsion in March 2022 ([Pew 4/27](#)).

State Results

In California, 46 percent of public school parents say their child has fallen behind academically during the pandemic, either a little (26 percent) or a lot (20 percent). Forty-five percent think catching up academically will be the biggest challenge for public school students in their community in the 2022-23 school year, while 40 percent cite dealing with social-emotional impacts and 14 percent pick adjusting to new schedules. Roughly three-quarters of public school parents and six in 10 adults overall support the state’s decision to lift the mask requirement in California schools, including majorities of Republicans and Democrats alike. About seven in 10 adults and public school parents agree that coronavirus vaccines should be required for teachers and about two-thirds each say the same for students ([PPIC 3/30-4/13](#)).

In Wisconsin, about half of registered voters are at least somewhat concerned about the coronavirus pandemic, including 22 percent very concerned, last on a list of five issues. Six in 10 approve of the way Gov. Tony Evers has handled the pandemic, up 7 points since October to the most since August 2020 ([Marquette 4/19-4/24](#)).

International Results

A newly released analysis finds that pandemic lockdowns were associated with a modest decline in mental health ratings in Australia. The researchers compared responses to the five-item Mental Health Inventory, which assesses symptoms of anxiety and mood over a four-week period, before (2010-2019) and amid (2020) the pandemic. They also compared ratings in the state of Victoria, which went into lockdown in 2020, to residents in the rest of Australia, who were under few coronavirus restrictions. Mental health ratings decreased more steeply in Victoria (-3.0 points to 69.9, with inventory items summed and transformed to a range of 0-100) than in the rest of Australia (-2.4 points to 70.8), corresponding to a small but significant effect of lockdowns. The effect was more pronounced among women (-2.2 points) than among men (-0.6 points) and was particularly steep among women with children younger than 15 (-4.4 points). The authors note that while lockdowns are important for suppressing transmission, more research is needed to understand their social and mental health implications ([Butterworth et al., 2022](#)).

In Chile, 26 percent are worried about catching the coronavirus, down from 61 percent in January to the fewest in data since March 2020 ([Cadem 4/20-4/22](#)).

In South Korea, most pandemic restrictions, excepting indoor mask requirements, were lifted entirely [April 15](#). Sixty-four percent think the move was appropriate ([Gallup Korea 4/19-4/21](#)).

In Bulgaria, 58 percent approve of abolishing mask requirements, including in indoor public spaces and public transit; 29 percent disapprove ([Gallup Bulgaria 3/31-4/8](#)).

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

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