



COVID-19 Survey Summary: May 20, 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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Pandemic polls this week find a backslide in the share of Americans who think the country should move toward reopening, with fewer now than in April saying federal, state and local governments should lift all coronavirus restrictions. Perceptions that cases are rising in one's state have more than doubled from a month ago.

At the same time, despite rising cases, concerns about the virus, mask use and social distancing hold at or near pandemic lows, while the share of Americans returning to normal pre-coronavirus activities reached new peaks. Vaccinations and initial booster uptake have flatlined.

Opposition to specific mask, social distancing and vaccine requirements at the state and local levels has been steady in the last two months. Most people continue to oppose vaccine mandates to enter stores and restaurants. The public divides on whether the federal government should require masks on airplanes, though most say they'd wear a mask regardless.

Surveys differ on positive assessments of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic: Fifty-nine percent approve in one (a yearlong high) while 46 percent say he's doing a good job in another. Seven in 10 see the pandemic as a major contributor to inflation; half say the same for government stimulus spending. The public divides on whether the federal government has spent too much money combating the virus.

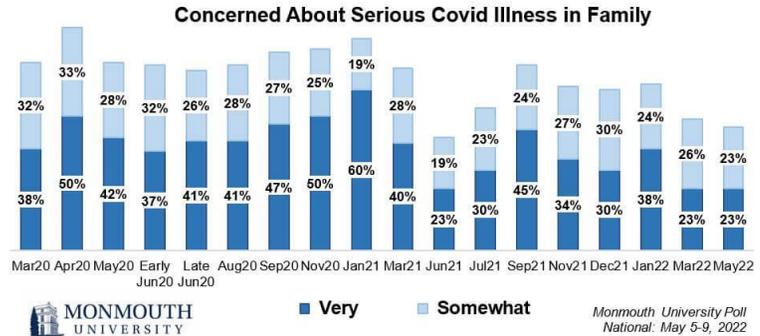
Newly released analyses document a rise in vaccine uptake among nursing facility staff once mandated; another estimates that nearly 320,000 coronavirus deaths could have been prevented in the United States; and a third finds a sharp rise in interstate highway shootings during the pandemic, a component of the overall rise in gun homicides during this time.

International results from Chile and Canada also are included.

[Concerns & Risk Perceptions](#)

Nationwide new daily cases are up nearly 70 percent since the beginning of the month and are four times their level two months ago. Hospitalizations also are on the rise, while deaths linked to the virus hold at a comparatively low level ([CDC](#)).

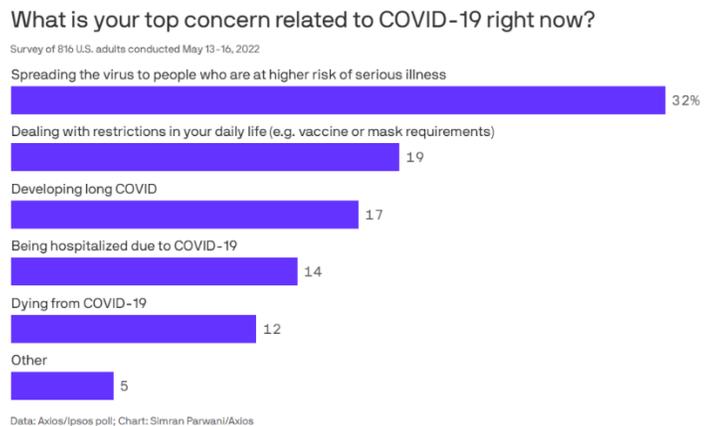
Even with rising cases, concerns generally remain low and steady. Twenty-three percent are very concerned about a family member becoming seriously ill from the virus, matching pandemic lows from March and June 2021 and down from a peak of 60 percent in January 2021 ([Monmouth 5/5-5/9](#)). In another survey, 41 percent are very or moderately concerned about personally catching the coronavirus, similar to the end of April and still far short of its Omicron peak, 55 percent ([CDC 5/1-5/7](#)). Six in 10 are at least somewhat concerned about the coronavirus outbreak generally, steady the past month after falling from 77 percent in January.



Risk perceptions similarly remain subdued, with 36 percent seeing a large or moderate risk in returning to their normal pre-coronavirus life, steady since mid-March after dropping from 59 percent in late January ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

The pandemic remains low on the public’s priority list. Just 11 percent select the coronavirus as one of the most worrying topics to them personally, 11th out of 18 items. Fifteen percent see it as one of the most important issues facing the country; more than three times as many, 52 percent, pick inflation as a top issue ([FiveThirtyEight-Ipsos 4/27-5/5](#)). Just 2 percent called it the single most important issue facing the country, last on a list of nine issues ([NBC 5/5-5/7, 5/9-5/10](#)).

Asked their top coronavirus-related concern, just more than four in 10 say they’re most worried about personally experiencing adverse outcomes from the virus, including developing long COVID (17 percent), being hospitalized (14 percent) or dying (12 percent). Thirty-two percent are chiefly concerned about spreading the virus to high-risk populations, while 19 percent point to dealing with coronavirus restrictions such as masks or vaccine requirements.



Nearly half think personally contracting the coronavirus would be a large (13 percent) or moderate (34 percent) risk to their health and well-being. Sixty-four percent of black Americans and 57 percent of Hispanic adults see it as at least a moderate risk, compared with 39 percent of

whites. Risk perceptions also are higher among Democrats, those living in urban or suburban areas and vaccinated people compared with their counterparts.

Half overall agree with the statement “the media is overexaggerating the threat COVID-19 causes” ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

Perceptions of Cases & Hospitalizations

The share saying coronavirus cases are increasing in their state is up 22 points in the past month, albeit just to 36 percent. Twenty-six percent think cases are decreasing, down 28 points. About one in five thinks cases are staying about the same; as many are unsure. At the time of the survey, [nearly all states](#) were experiencing rising cases.

Regarding hospitalization rates, 20 percent think they’re increasing in their state, up 14 points since mid-April; 32 percent say they’re decreasing, down 29 points. About a quarter say they’re staying the same and as many are unsure. Just ahead of the survey, [41 states](#) were reporting increases of 10 percent or more in coronavirus-related hospital admissions, though hospitalizations remained far below their Omicron peak.

Asked more generally about the state of the coronavirus in the United States, 71 percent say it’s a manageable problem, with the rest splitting between seeing it as a serious crisis (14 percent) or not a problem at all (14 percent). Thirty-one percent agreed that the pandemic is over, ranging from 59 percent of Republicans to 10 percent of Democrats ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

While assessments of case and hospitalization rates have shifted, a disconnect between perception and reality persists even as most, 54 percent, say they’ve seen “a lot” about the coronavirus in the news within the past month ([FiveThirtyEight-Ipsos 4/27-5/5](#)).

Pandemic Policy

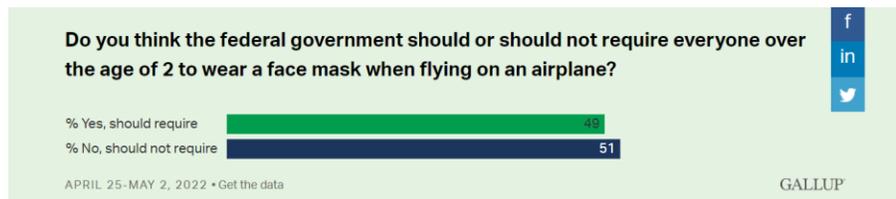
Fewer now support federal, state and local government lifting all coronavirus restrictions than did a month ago, 59 vs. 51 percent. Similarly, the share who thinks we should either fully return to life as usual (27 percent) or move toward reopening with some precautions (40 percent) has declined in the past month, from 76 to 67 percent ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

Other results indicate continued opposition to coronavirus restrictions. Nearly two-thirds oppose instituting or reinstituting mask and social distancing guidelines in their state, up from 45 percent in January to a pandemic high in data since July 2021 ([Monmouth 5/5-5/9](#)). Fifty-seven percent oppose their state or local government requiring masks in all public places, up from 32 percent in January to a new high. A majority, 61 percent, also continues to oppose businesses requiring customers to show proof of vaccination to enter stores or restaurants ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

Views on mask requirements in public transportation are sharply divided, with Americans breaking 49-51 percent on whether the federal government should or should not require everyone over the age of two to wear a face mask when flying on an airplane. (Last week, one poll found

[57 percent](#) in support of a mask requirement on airplanes and public transit, while an [earlier](#) poll found a more even split for airplane travel.)

Regardless of whether it's required, six in 10 say they personally would wear a face mask if they were traveling by airplane, similar to previous [results](#) ([Gallup 4/25-5/2](#)).



In terms of restrictions in the workplace, 56 percent of all adults oppose requiring workers to show proof of vaccination ([Monmouth 5/5-5/9](#)). Among employed people, there's a 51-48 percent split on employer-led vaccine mandates. Most employed adults are opposed to their employer requiring masks for all employees and customers, 54-46 percent.

Americans overall favor steps to continue tracking the coronavirus: Sixty-two percent support local news broadcasts reporting daily on coronavirus rates in their area and 57 percent support the federal government creating a single, national coronavirus monitoring system ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

Daily Life & Precautions

Four in 10 Americans say they've fully returned to their normal pre-coronavirus life, up from 15 percent in early January to a new pandemic high. Among specific activities:

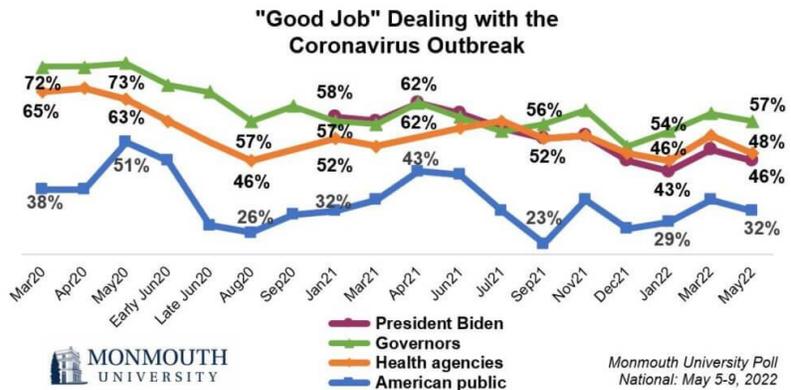
- A pandemic-high 69 percent visited friend or relatives in the past week, up gradually from 50 percent in early February to numerically surpass the previous peak of 68 percent in June 2021.
- Sixty-five percent have gone out to eat in the past week, matching its pandemic high reached last month and in June 2021. That's up from 46 percent in early January during the Omicron surge.
- Forty-three percent always or sometimes wear a mask when leaving their home, down 30 points since late January to a low in data since April 2020. A third say they never wear masks, up 22 points since January to a pandemic high.
- A pandemic-low 31 percent say they social distanced in the past week (i.e., stayed at home and avoided others as much as possible), down 5 points since mid-March and 26 points from its Omicron peak ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

Government Response

In one poll, 59 percent approve of Biden's handling of the coronavirus, up 8 points since March to its highest since April 2021; 35 percent disapprove, down 11 points ([NBC 5/5-5/7](#), [5/9-5/10](#)).

Another finds many fewer, 46 percent, saying Biden has done a good job dealing with the coronavirus outbreak. It was similar, 49 percent, in March.

The same poll finds positive ratings for federal health agencies down 5 points since March, to 48 percent. Fifty-seven percent say their state’s governor has done a good job handling the outbreak, essentially unchanged; and 32 percent say the American public has done a good job ([Monmouth 5/5-5/9](#)).



Coronavirus & Inflation

Seven in 10 say the pandemic has had a major or significant impact on price increases in the past year. More see supply chain breakdowns as a driving factor, 78 percent. About half, 51 percent, think government spending on the coronavirus has had major or significant impacts on inflation ([FiveThirtyEight-Ipsos 4/27-5/5](#)).

The public divides on the federal government’s response in terms of spending: Thirty-three percent think it spent too much money combating the virus, 31 percent not enough and 35 percent the right amount ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

Vaccines

Roughly three-quarters of adults, 74 and 77 percent in two polls, say they’ve received at least one vaccine dose, each largely steady since September and in line with results from [previous](#) probability-based surveys ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#), [Monmouth 5/5-5/9](#)). A third, with [historically](#) higher estimates of vaccine uptake, places it at 84 percent ([U.S. Census Bureau 4/27-5/9](#)).

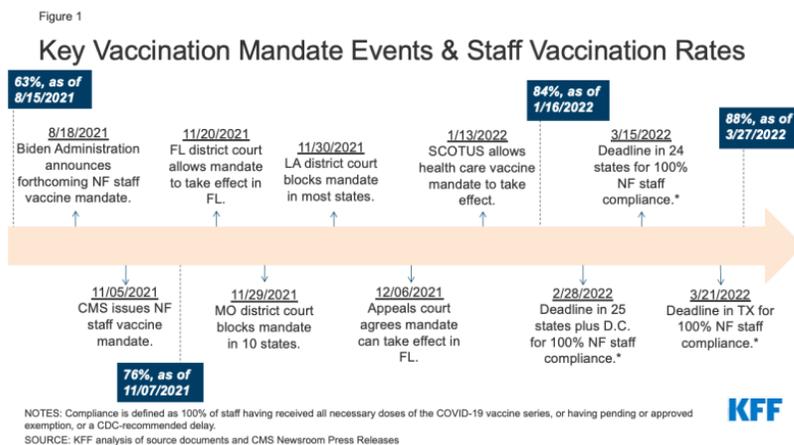
Fifty-four percent in one poll and 49 percent in another say they’ve received at least one booster shot, corresponding to approximately two-thirds to seven in 10 adults who are at least partially vaccinated. The initial uptake of boosters largely has leveled off since March ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#), [Monmouth 5/5-5/9](#)). That said, the share of vaccinated adults who say they’ve received a second booster is up 7 points in month to 16 percent ([Axios-Ipsos 5/13-5/16](#)).

The [CDC’s estimate](#) of initial uptake among adults remains higher than most survey estimates, at 89 percent, while the share of partially vaccinated adults who have received at least one booster is lower, at 43 percent. The CDC has trouble linking first, second and booster doses.

Vaccine Uptake Among Nursing Facility Staff

Vaccination rates for nursing facility staff increased by 25 points, to 88 percent, from August 2021, when a national vaccine mandate for all nursing facility staff was [announced](#)), to March 2022. While the analysis does not directly attribute increases in vaccinations to the mandate, the authors stress that it likely played a role.

Rates differed widely by state. By the end of March, 95 percent or more of staff had been vaccinated in 12 states, including 99 percent in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia. It was fewer than eight in 10 in Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma and Wyoming. The gap was wider in booster uptake: Forty-four percent overall received a booster shot by late March, ranging from 93 percent in Massachusetts to one in four in Mississippi ([KFF 5/16](#)).



Coronavirus Deaths

The United States passed [one million coronavirus deaths](#) this week, according to death certificate data from the CDC. (Other estimates [previously indicated](#) that the country had passed this milestone).

An analysis indicates that if states had continued to vaccinate to 100 percent coverage, nearly 320,000 coronavirus deaths could have been prevented nationally, including half the deaths sustained after vaccines became available. The researchers published a [dashboard](#) detailing state-level per capita preventable deaths ([Brown School of Public Health](#)).

Gun Violence

Interstate highway shootings spiked during the pandemic, rising from 540 incidents in 2019 to 846 in 2021, up 57 percent. The I-10 in the New Orleans area, the I-94 around Chicago, the I-240 in the Memphis area, the I-35 near Austin and the I-70 in the St. Louis area were the most violent interstate highways in terms of gun incidents ([ABC 5/18](#); [Gun Violence Archive](#)). The report follows the release of data from the CDC finding a [35 percent](#) increase in gun homicides during the pandemic to a 25-year high.

International Results

In Chile, 30 percent are highly worried about catching the coronavirus, up 6 points in a week, albeit still half the number at the peak of the Omicron wave. Nearly all adults, 97 percent, report having received at least one vaccine dose, including 43 percent who have received one booster dose and 44 percent a second. Sixty-two percent approve of the measure to block [“mobility](#)

[passes](#)” for people who have not received a fourth dose of the vaccine six months after their previous dose ([Cadem 5/11-5/13](#)).

In Canada, just 5 percent mention the coronavirus as the national issue of most concern in an open-ended question, down from about a third in January and as many as half in the first year of the pandemic ([Nanos 5/13](#)).

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

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