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As Pandemic Continues, More in U.S. and Europe Feel Major Impact on Their Lives

But most are optimistic about their country's ability to deal with future global health crises

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How we did this

This report analyzes public opinion in the United States and three major Western European nations: France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The U.S. has suffered [the most cases of COVID-19 in the world](#), though the election of Joe Biden has [renewed optimism](#) among the three European publics regarding U.S. policy toward tackling the virus. Each of the three European countries included here have recorded at least 2 million cases of COVID-19, and the virus has surged in the months since the first Center survey on this topic. Previous research showed the U.S. and UK publics are [especially polarized](#) on how their nations have dealt with the pandemic.

This report examines people's views of whether their country has handled the outbreak well, the degree of change in their daily lives due to the virus, attitudes toward government-mandated vaccines and optimism about future global health crisis responses.

For this analysis, we use data from nationally representative telephone surveys of 4,069 adults from Nov. 10 to Dec. 23, 2020, in the U.S., France, Germany and the UK.

Here are the questions used for the report, along with responses and the [survey](#).

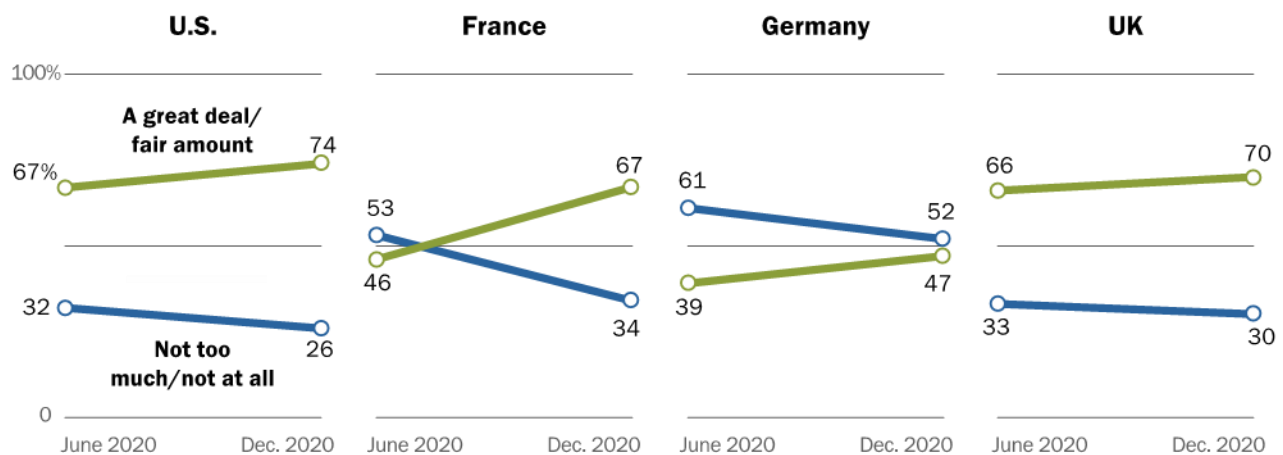
As Pandemic Continues, More in U.S. and Europe Feel Major Impact on Their Lives

But most are optimistic about their country's ability to deal with future global health crises

By Kat Devlin and Nicholas O. Kent

People increasingly say the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting their everyday lives

% who say as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, their life has changed ...



Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q15.

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The [novel coronavirus](#) continues to pose weighty challenges for people around the world. Significant shares of the public in the United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom say their lives have changed because of the outbreak, according to a new Pew Research Center survey conducted as [vaccines were first being approved for conditional use in the UK and U.S.](#) and [restrictions tightened in parts of Europe](#). And the shares who feel this way have grown notably since summer, when [the Center reported already-high levels](#) of impact in people's lives.

At the same time, as [coronavirus case counts soar](#) in each of these four nations, publics are largely split on whether their country has done a good job handling the outbreak. Ideology plays a role in people's assessments of their national coronavirus response, but this rings especially true in the U.S. and UK, where those on the political left are more critical. Those who feel better about their nation's economic situation are more likely to give positive reviews of how the virus has been handled thus far.

When looking toward the future, publics in each of the four countries share in the optimism that their nations are well-prepared should there be a future global public health crisis. Feelings of hope are especially strong among those who think their country is currently handling the coronavirus outbreak well, though the U.S. is an exception.

These are among the findings of a new Pew Research Center survey conducted from Nov. 10 to Dec. 23, 2020, among 4,069 adults in the U.S., Germany, France and the UK. The survey also finds that, prior to the coronavirus vaccine rollouts in each of the four nations surveyed, many in these countries did not support government-mandated vaccinations to stop the spread of COVID-19. This is especially true among those with lower levels of trust in their government.

Most say life changed due to coronavirus, a feeling that has increased since the summer

Of the four countries surveyed, majorities in three report their life has changed at least a fair amount due to the coronavirus. Nearly three-quarters of U.S. adults say their life has changed, including 44% who say it has changed a great deal. Across the Atlantic, no fewer than two-thirds of those in the UK and France also say their life has changed because of the outbreak.

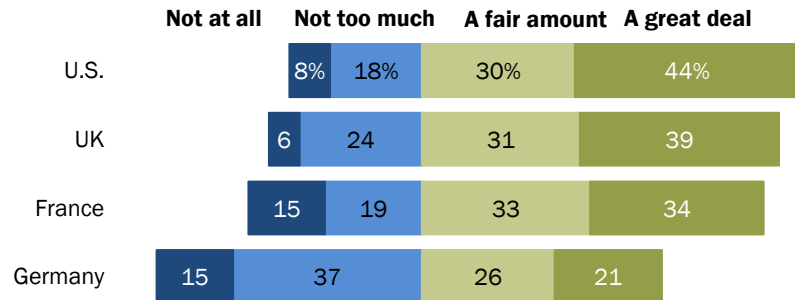
Only in Germany do fewer than half of those surveyed say the coronavirus has changed their life, while 52% say their life has not changed much or not changed at all.

However, in three of four countries, women are significantly more likely than men to report their life having changed due to COVID-19. This divide reflects studies that have shown that [women have lost jobs](#) at a rate disproportionate to men, while also continuing a trend that Pew Research Center previously [observed](#) over the summer. The disparity is largest in the U.S., where 79% of women say their life has been affected, versus 68% of men – a difference of 11 percentage points.

Since the Center last fielded this question in summer 2020, a larger percentage of publics in the U.S., France and Germany have come to say their life has changed in some capacity because of

Except in Germany, two-thirds or more say life has changed because of COVID-19

% who say their life has changed ___ as a result of the coronavirus outbreak



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

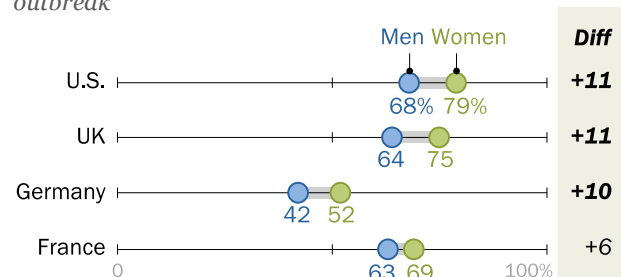
Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q15.

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Women continue to report life changes due to COVID-19 at higher rates

% of ___ who say their life has changed a great deal/fair amount as a result of the coronavirus outbreak



Note: Statistically significant differences shown in **bold**.

Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q15.

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the coronavirus outbreak. The largest increase was seen in France, where 67% now say their life has changed due to the coronavirus, an increase of 21 percentage points from June. Germany also saw an 8-point increase in those saying the pandemic has changed their life a great deal or fair amount.

Americans remain displeased with national response to combat COVID-19

Across the four nations surveyed, responses to the pandemic garner varying levels of approval. In Germany, nearly eight-in-ten say their country has done a good job handling the coronavirus outbreak. In France, more voice support for the national COVID-19 response than do not (54% vs. 46%, respectively).

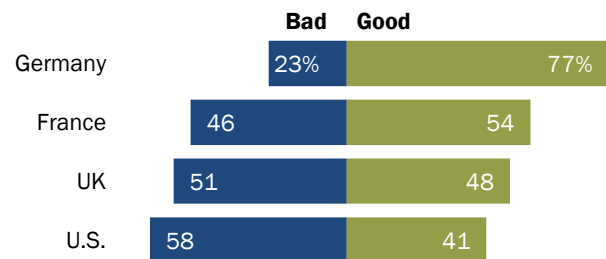
In the UK, opinion is split on whether their country is doing a good or bad job of dealing with the outbreak. And a 58% majority of Americans say the U.S. is doing a bad job of handling the pandemic.

The U.S. and Germany show waning confidence in their countries' handling of the pandemic. While 47% of Americans gave the U.S. response to COVID-19 a [positive review over the summer](#), just 41% hold that opinion in the current survey, a 6 percentage point drop from June to November. Over the same period, the share of Germans who say their country has done well handling COVID-19 dropped 11 points. Unlike in the U.S., however, Germans remain overwhelmingly in approval. Opinions in the UK and France stayed relatively stable.

Ideological leanings play a role in how people assess their nation's coronavirus response. In the U.S., 67% of those on the ideological right say the American handling of COVID-19 has been good, while just 13% on the ideological left say the same – a 54-point difference.

Germans most positive about national coronavirus response

% who say their own country has done a ___ job dealing with the coronavirus outbreak



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

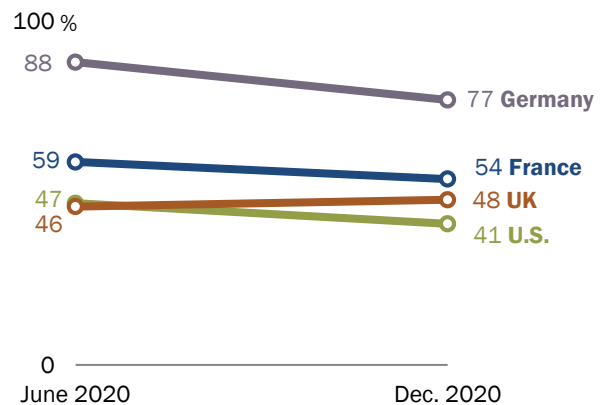
Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q16.

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In U.S. and Germany, favorable assessments of national COVID-19 response in decline

% who say their own country has done a **good job** dealing with the coronavirus outbreak



Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q16.

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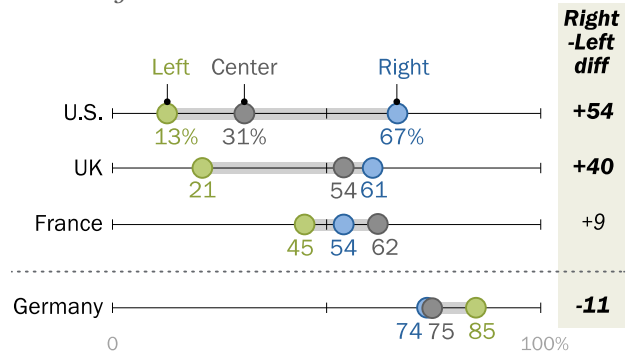
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A similar split appears in the UK, which like the U.S. had a right-leaning party in charge of national executive power at the time of the survey. In Germany, those on the left hold more favorable views of their nation's handling of the pandemic than those on the right, though nearly three-quarters or more still believe the response has been good, regardless of ideology.

Sentiment about the economy likewise relates to how people rate their national coronavirus response. In each of the four countries, those who think their current economic situation is good are significantly more likely than those who think the economy is bad to also believe their country is handling the outbreak well. In the U.S., for instance, while 60% of those who are positive about the economy say the American response to COVID-19 has been good, just 23% of those who think the economy is doing poorly share the same sentiment.

In the U.S. and UK, political left least pleased with national coronavirus strategies

% who say their own country has done a **good job** dealing with the coronavirus outbreak, among those on the ideological ...



Note: Statistically significant differences shown in **bold**. In U.S., ideology is defined as conservative (right), moderate (center) and liberal (left).

Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q16.

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Most feel optimistic about future public health emergency strategies in their country

Although assessments of their country's handling of COVID-19 vary, publics across the four nations appear hopeful about how their country would fare in future public health crises.

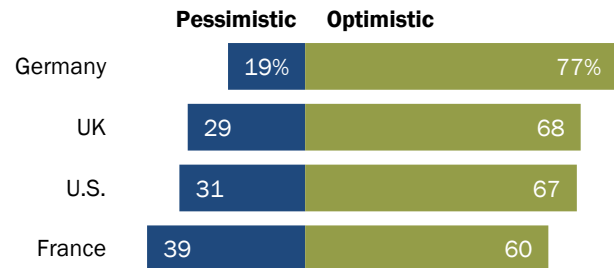
In Germany, about eight-in-ten say they feel generally optimistic about their country's ability to deal with future global health emergencies. In the other three nations, at least six-in-ten hold the same opinion.

Optimism in three of the four countries relates to how people assess their nation's handling of the coronavirus outbreak. For instance, 83% of French adults who think their country has done a good job in response to COVID-19 also voice optimism about France's ability to deal with future global health emergencies. Just 35% who think France's handling of the pandemic has been bad share this optimism for future situations, a 48-point difference.

This is not the case in the U.S., however, where nearly equal shares voice optimism regardless of what they think of the American response to the COVID-19 outbreak. And while Democrats (74%) are more likely to voice optimism for handling future health crises, a majority of Republicans (61%) also hold this view. (Republicans are also slightly less likely to answer this question.)

Optimism in four countries' ability to handle future health crises is high

% who say they feel generally ___ about their own country's ability to deal with future global health emergencies



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

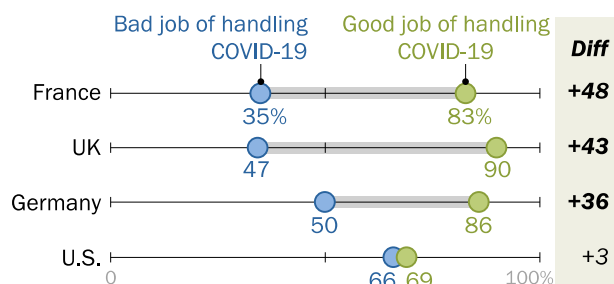
Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q31c.

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Those happy with national COVID-19 response more optimistic on handling future health crises, except in U.S.

% who say they feel generally **optimistic** about their own country's ability to deal with future global health emergencies, among those who think their own country has done a ...



Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**.

Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q31c.

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Few find it acceptable for governments to require coronavirus vaccine; UK the exception

[Previous Pew Research Center polling](#) shows that domestically, six-in-ten Americans intend to get a coronavirus vaccine. But most in France strongly oppose the idea of *requiring* a coronavirus vaccine, and majorities in the U.S. and Germany share this sentiment.

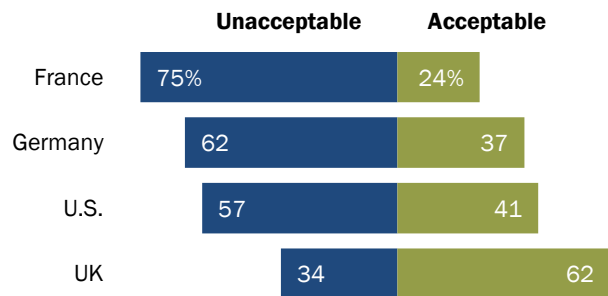
For example, only 41% of those surveyed in the U.S. say that if a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine is developed, it is acceptable for the national government to require people to get said vaccine. Those in France are even less willing; a full three-quarters of the French say it is *unacceptable* for the national government to mandate coronavirus vaccination.

Britons, on the other hand, are more willing to allow the government to instate such a program, with 62% of those surveyed saying it is acceptable to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations. (Vaccines were at various stages of approval in these four countries during the survey period, but no government in these four countries currently plans to require mandatory vaccinations at the national level.)

Trust in national government is associated with more acceptance of a government-required COVID-19 vaccination program. In both Germany and the UK, there is a difference of 17 percentage points on the issue between those who do and do not trust the national government to do what is right for their country. The U.S. and France also exhibit a similar pattern. While only one-third of

Most are against a government requirement to get a COVID vaccine, except in the UK

% who say if a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine is developed, it is ___ for the national government to require people to get the vaccine

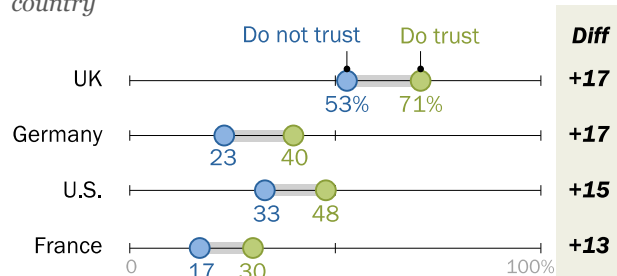


Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q18.
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Those more trusting of government are more likely to accept required vaccines

% who say if a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine is developed, it is **acceptable** for the national government to require people to get the vaccine, among those who ___ the national government to do what is right for their country



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant.
Source: Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q18.
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Americans who do not trust their government say it is acceptable to require vaccination, nearly half of Americans who do trust the national government say it is acceptable for the government to do so.

In the UK, France and Germany, views on nationally mandating the coronavirus vaccine do not vary across the political spectrum. In the U.S., however, large ideological differences arise. While 60% of liberals believe it acceptable for the national government to require Americans to get vaccinated, just 28% of conservatives share that opinion, a 32-point difference.

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Methodology

About Pew Research Center's Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Gallup and Abt Associates. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are [available here](#).

Topline questionnaire

Pew Research Center
Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey
February 3, 2020 Release

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see Methodology section and our [international survey methods database](#).
- The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the United States in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Weighted %	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1003		3.7 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	426	41	5.6 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	492	49	5.3 percentage points

- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- Not all questions included in the Fall 2020 Global Attitudes Survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.