

FOR RELEASE AUGUST 6, 2020

# Most Americans Say State Governments Have Lifted COVID-19 Restrictions Too Quickly

*More attribute the rise in coronavirus cases to new infections, not just more testing*

**FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:**

Carroll Doherty, Director of Political Research

Jocelyn Kiley, Associate Director, Research

Nida Asheer, Communications Manager

Calvin Jordan, Communications Associate

202.419.4372

[www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

**RECOMMENDED CITATION**

Pew Research Center, August, 2020, "Most Americans Say State Governments Have Lifted COVID-19 Restrictions Too Quickly"

## About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. It does not take policy positions. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. It studies U.S. politics and policy; journalism and media; internet, science and technology; religion and public life; Hispanic trends; global attitudes and trends; and U.S. social and demographic trends. All of the Center's reports are available at [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org). Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

© Pew Research Center 2020

## How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to understand how Americans are continuing to respond to the coronavirus outbreak. For this analysis, we surveyed 11,001 U.S. adults in July and August 2020. Everyone who took part is a member of Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. Read more about the [ATP's methodology](#). Here are the [questions used for the report, along with responses](#), and its [methodology](#).

# Most Americans Say State Governments Have Lifted COVID-19 Restrictions Too Quickly

*More attribute the rise in coronavirus cases to new infections, not just more testing*

As a growing number of states grapple with a rise in [coronavirus cases](#), a sizable majority of U.S. adults (69%) say their greater concern is that state governments have been lifting restrictions on public activity too quickly. Fewer than half as many, just 30%, say their bigger concern is that states have been too slow to lift the restrictions.

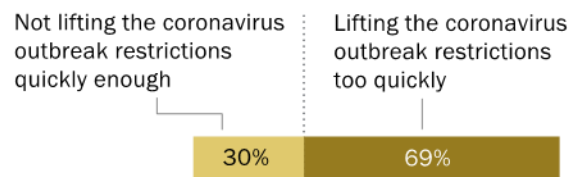
These views are similar to attitudes in April and May, when the question asked whether the greater concern was whether state governments *would* lift coronavirus-related restrictions too quickly or not quickly enough. [In May](#), 68% said their bigger concern was that state governments would ease restrictions too quickly.

With the U.S. economy reeling from the impact of the coronavirus, nearly three-quarters of Americans (73%) say the more effective way to help the economy recover is by significantly reducing the number of infections, so that more people feel comfortable going to stores, restaurants, schools and other workplaces. Only about a quarter (26%) say the more effective path to recovery is to reopen businesses and schools even if there hasn't been a significant decline in infections. (For more, see [“Republicans, Democrats differ over factors K-12 schools should consider in deciding whether to reopen”](#))

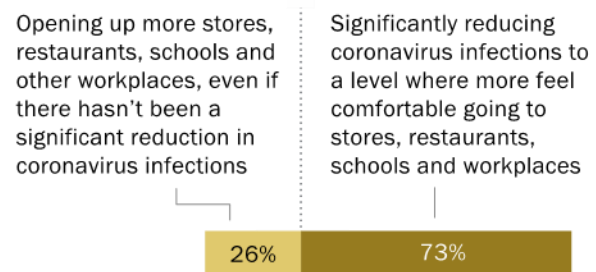
## Large share of Americans say COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted too quickly

% who say ...

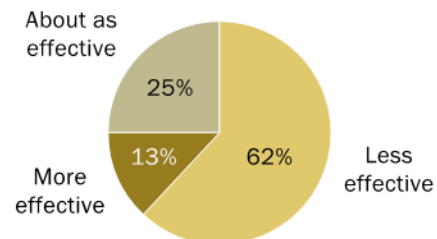
**Greater concern is that state governments have been ...**



**More effective way to help the U.S. economy recover is ...**



**Compared with other wealthy countries, U.S. response to the coronavirus outbreak has been ...**



Notes: See topline for full question wording. No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The new national survey by Pew Research Center, conducted July 27-Aug. 2 among 11,001 adults on the Center's American Trends Panel, finds broadly negative assessments of the overall U.S. response to the coronavirus outbreak – and increasingly critical evaluations of how Donald Trump, state and local government officials and public health officials have dealt with the crisis.

About six-in-ten Americans (62%) say the U.S. response to the coronavirus outbreak has been less effective when compared with other wealthy countries, while just 13% say its response has been more effective. A quarter say the U.S. has been about as effective as other wealthy countries.

Republicans and Democrats have divergent opinions about nearly all aspects of the coronavirus outbreak, and this includes views of the U.S. response compared with other affluent nations. Still, while more Republicans than Democrats offer positive assessments of the U.S. response, just 22% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say the U.S. has been more effective than other wealthy countries; a larger share (34%) say it has been less effective, while 42% say it has been about as effective. Democrats and Democratic leaners overwhelmingly view the U.S. response to the coronavirus as less effective compared with other wealthy countries (87% say this).

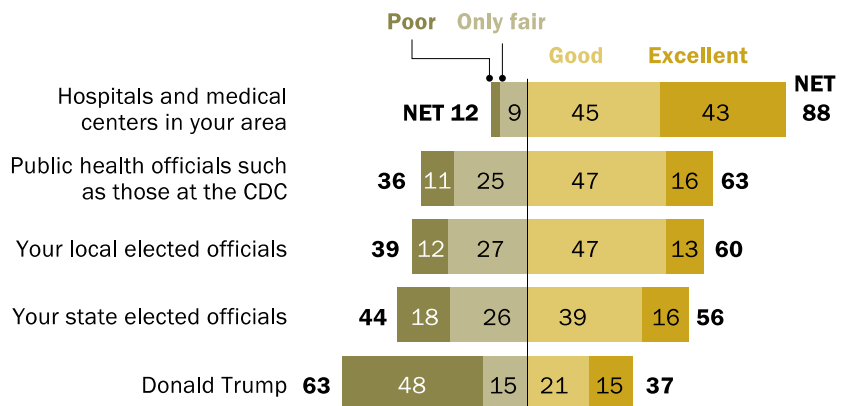
Trump's positive ratings for dealing with the coronavirus have fallen since the early weeks of the outbreak in March. Currently, 37% say he is doing an excellent or good job in responding to the coronavirus outbreak, while 63% say he is doing only a fair or poor job.

These views have changed only modestly since May, when 41% gave him positive ratings, but the share saying he is doing an excellent or good job with the coronavirus has declined 11 percentage

points, from 48%, since late March. Nearly half of Americans (48%) currently rate Trump's response to the outbreak as "poor," up 16 points since March.

### Majority of Americans are critical of Trump's response to COVID-19; nearly half say he is doing 'poor' job

% who rate the job each of the following is doing responding to the coronavirus outbreak as ...



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Positive views of the performance of public health officials also have declined significantly: 63% now say public health officials, such as those with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are doing an excellent or good job in responding to the coronavirus outbreak, down from 79% in March.

This shift has come almost entirely among Republicans; only about half of Republicans (53%) give CDC officials and other public health officials positive ratings for their response to the outbreak, 31 points lower than in late March (84%). About seven-in-ten Democrats (72%) say public health officials have done an excellent or good job in responding to the coronavirus, little changed since March (74%).

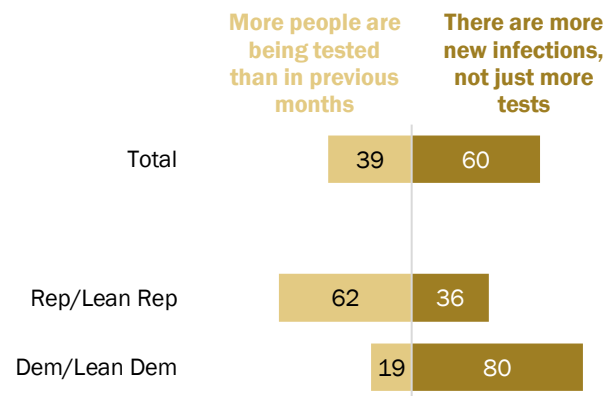
Positive evaluations of how state (from 70% to 56%) and local government officials (from 69% to 60%) are responding to the coronavirus outbreak have also declined since March. However, the public continues to express overwhelmingly positive views of the response of local hospital and medical centers (88% rate them as excellent or good), which are unchanged over the past few months.

The survey finds that a majority of Americans (60%) say the primary reason that the number of confirmed coronavirus cases is increasing is because there are more new infections, not just more testing for the disease. About four-in-ten (39%) say cases are rising primarily because more people are being tested than in previous months.

Democrats overwhelmingly attribute the rise in coronavirus cases primarily to more infections, not just more testing (80% say this). A smaller majority of Republicans (62%) say the primary reason is because more people are being tested.

### Majority says COVID-19 cases have risen primarily because of more new infections, not just more testing

% who say the **primary** reason there are increasing numbers of confirmed cases of coronavirus in the U.S. is that ...



Notes: See topline for full question wording. No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

While most Americans express concern that states have been too quick to lift COVID-19 restrictions, three-quarters say a major reason the coronavirus outbreak has continued is that too few people are abiding by guidelines about social distancing and mask-wearing. A smaller majority (58%) says that lifting restrictions too quickly in some places is a major reason for the continued outbreak.

About half of Americans (53%) say an inadequate response by the federal government is a major reason the outbreak has continued, while nearly as many (49%) cite a lack of timely testing. Smaller shares point to unclear instructions about how to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (40%) and that it is not possible to do much to control its spread (28%) as major reasons.

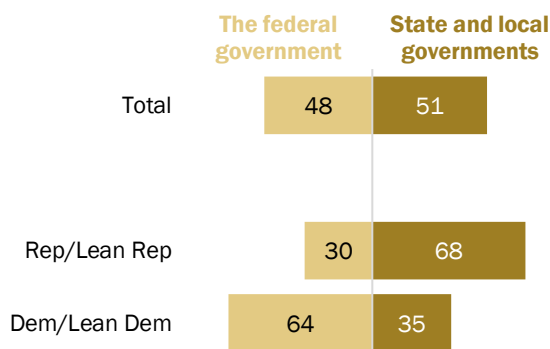
Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say most of these factors are major reasons the outbreak has continued. The widest partisan differences are on whether the federal government response is inadequate – 82% of Democrats view this as a major reason the outbreak has continued, compared with 21% of Republicans – and lifting COVID-19 restrictions too quickly (82% of Democrats, 31% of Republicans).

Republicans and Democrats also have very different attitudes on a fundamental issue related to the nation's efforts to address the coronavirus outbreak: whether the federal government or state and local governments are primarily responsible for developing and executing policies to limit the spread of the disease.

The public overall is almost evenly divided: 51% say this responsibility rests mostly with states, while 48% say the federal government should be primarily responsible. Partisans express contrasting views: While 68% of Republicans say state and local governments should be primarily responsible for developing and implementing policies to limit the spread of the coronavirus, 64% of Democrats say the federal government bears most of the responsibility.

### Public divided over which level of government is primarily responsible for policies to limit the spread of COVID-19

Which should be *mainly responsible* for developing and executing policies to limit the spread of the coronavirus? (%)



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

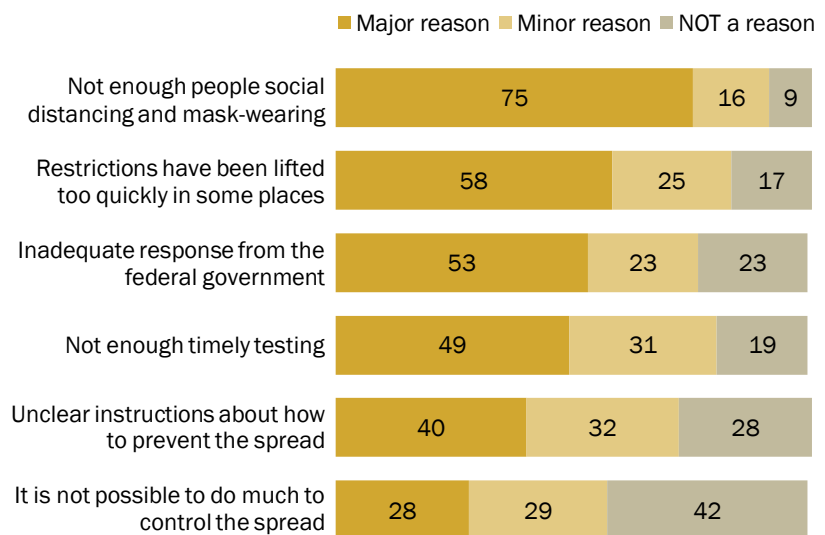
## 1. Public assessments of the U.S. coronavirus outbreak

Three-quarters of Americans say that “not enough people following social distancing and mask-wearing guidelines” is a major reason the coronavirus outbreak has continued in the United States – the most commonly cited major reason among the six asked about in the survey. Roughly six-in-ten (58%) also say a major reason for the continued spread is that “restrictions on businesses and individuals have been lifted too quickly in some places.”

About half of Americans (53%) say an inadequate federal government response is a major reason for the continuation of the outbreak, while nearly as many (49%) point to a lack of timely testing. Four-in-ten say a lack of clarity in instructions for how to prevent the spread is a major reason it has continued. Just 28% of Americans say a major reason is that it is “not possible to do much to control the spread.”

### Most Americans cite insufficient social distancing as a major reason COVID-19 outbreak has continued

*How much of a reason, if at all, is each for why the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. has continued? (%)*



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27- Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



About nine-in-ten Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents say insufficient adherence to social-distancing and mask-wearing guidelines is a major reason for the continued coronavirus outbreak.

This reason also tops the list among Republicans and GOP leaners of the six asked about in the survey, though a narrower majority (57%) considers this a major reason for the continued spread of the virus.

The partisan gap is widest on two other reasons: 82% of Democrats point to some places being too quick to ease restrictions as a major reason for the outbreak continuing, while just 31% of Republicans say this (about the same share of Republicans – 32% – say this is *not at all* a reason for the continuation of the outbreak). And while 82% of

Democrats say an inadequate federal response is why COVID-19 has continued in the U.S., just 21% of Republicans say this (with nearly half – 45% – saying this is not a reason).

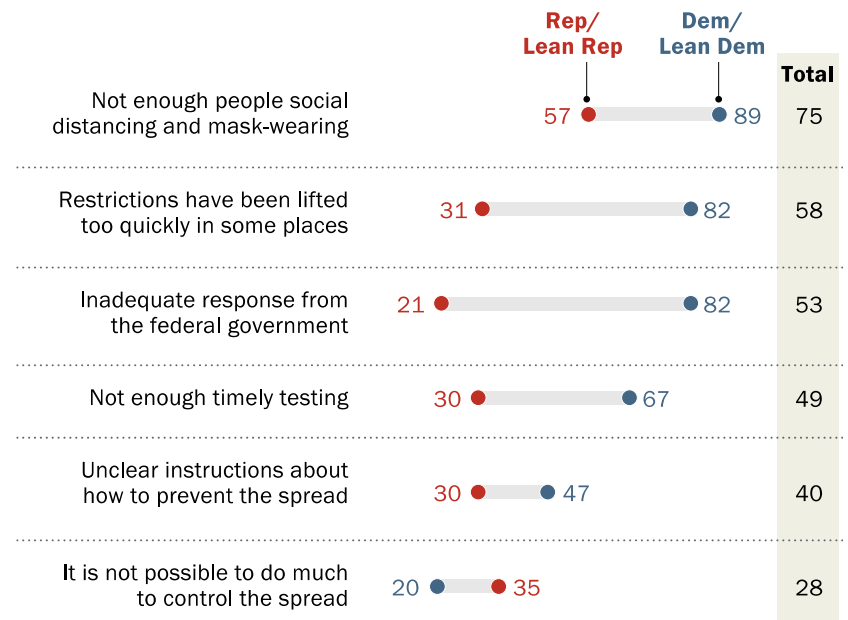
Two-thirds of Democrats also say “not enough timely testing” is a major reason for the coronavirus outbreak continuing in the U.S., while fewer than half as many Republicans (30%) say the same.

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say a major reason for the outbreak continuing is that it isn’t possible to do much to control the spread; still, just 35% of Republicans and 20% of Democrats say this.

In [a separate survey](#) conducted earlier this summer, Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say the Chinese government’s initial handling of the outbreak was to blame “a great deal” for the global spread of the coronavirus (73% vs. 38%), though wide majorities in both parties (90% of Republicans, 74% of Democrats) said this.

## Majorities of both partisan coalitions say ‘not enough’ social distancing a major reason outbreak continues

% who say each is a **major reason** why the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. has continued



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Partisan divide over primary reason for rise in confirmed COVID-19 cases

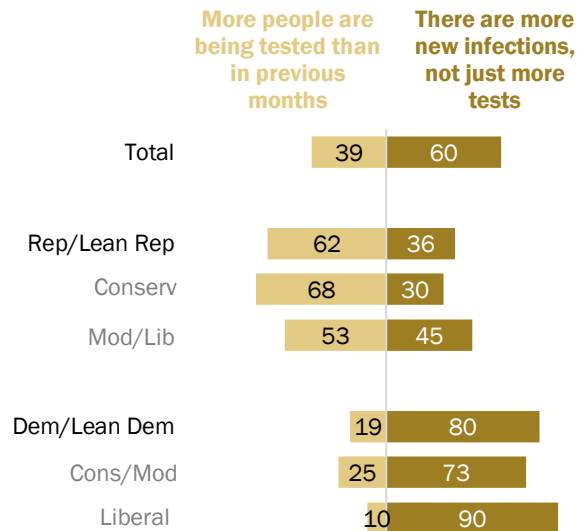
By 60% to 39%, most Americans attribute the rise in confirmed coronavirus cases more to rising infections than to a rise in testing, with a wide partisan divide in these views.

A 62% majority of Republicans say that “the increase in confirmed coronavirus cases is primarily a result of more people being tested than in previous months,” with 36% taking the view that “while more people are being tested compared with earlier in the outbreak, the increase in confirmed coronavirus cases is primarily because of more new infections, not just more tests.” About two-thirds of conservative Republicans attribute the growth in confirmed cases mostly to increased testing, while views among moderate and liberal Republicans are more divided (53% say it is mostly because of increased testing, 45% mostly because of increased infections).

By contrast, Democrats overwhelmingly hold the view that increased case counts are mainly the result of increased infections – 80% say this. Although this is the clear majority view across the party, liberal Democrats are more likely than conservative and moderate Democrats to say this (90% vs. 73%).

### Roughly two-thirds of conservative Republicans say more testing is primary reason for rise in coronavirus cases

% who say the **primary** reason there are increasing numbers of confirmed cases of coronavirus in the U.S. is that ...



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Public more concerned COVID-19 restrictions on public activity are being eased too quickly rather than too slowly

With most states having eased restrictions since the early months of the outbreak, nearly seven-in-ten Americans (69%) say they are more concerned that state governments have been lifting restrictions on public activity

too quickly; 30% express more concerns that these restrictions have not been lifted quickly enough. This balance of opinion is similar to the public’s concerns in May, when many states were still under stay-at-home orders, [about what states would do](#).

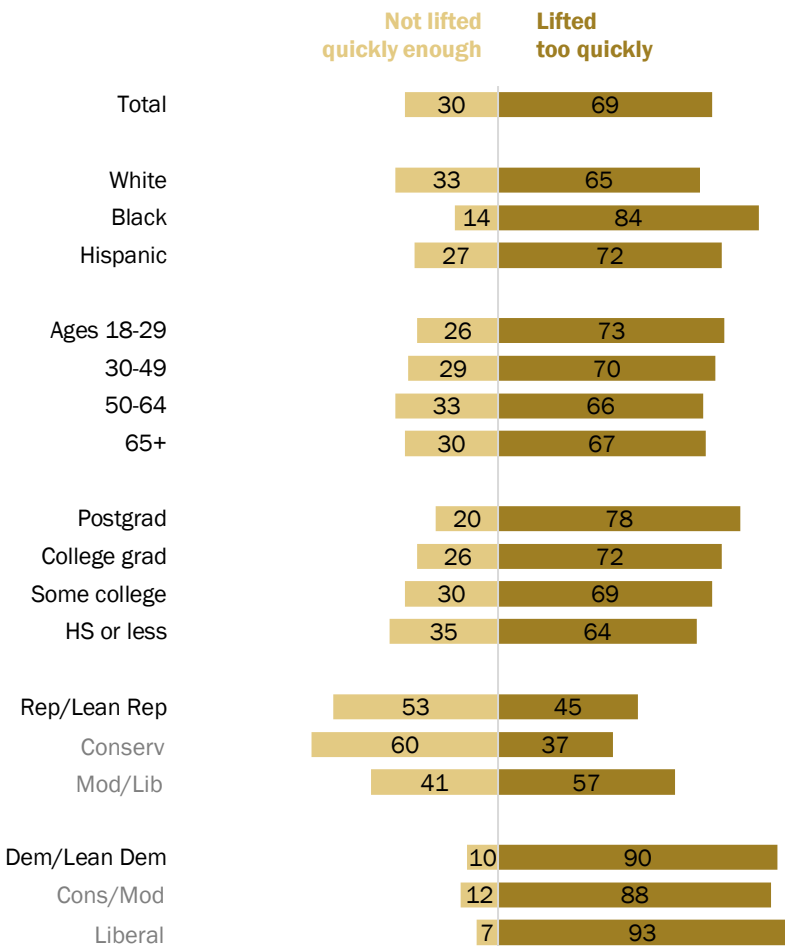
While majorities in most groups say they are concerned that states have been opening up too quickly, there are differences by race and ethnicity, educational status, and partisan affiliation.

About eight-in-ten Black adults (84%) and seven-in-ten Hispanic adults (72%) are more concerned states have been lifting restrictions too quickly. A narrower majority of white adults – still nearly two-thirds (65%) – also express this view.

Overall, adults with higher levels of education are more likely than those with less education to say they are concerned about state

### Majority of Americans concerned states have been lifting restrictions on public activity too quickly

*% who say their greater concern is that restrictions on public activity imposed by state governments in response to the virus have been ...*



Notes: White and Black adults include those who report being one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. No answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

governments lifting restrictions too quickly. For example, 78% of adults with a postgraduate degree say they are concerned restrictions are being eased too quickly, compared with 64% adults with a high school diploma or less education.

Republicans are relatively divided on this question, though somewhat more say their greater concern is that restrictions have not been lifted quickly enough (53%) rather than that they have been lifted too quickly (45%). While six-in-ten conservative Republicans say their concern is that state restrictions are not being lifted quickly enough, a similar share of moderate and liberal Republicans (57%) express more concern that restrictions have been lifted too quickly.

Overwhelming shares of both liberal Democrats (93%) and conservative and moderate Democrats (88%) say they are more concerned that state restrictions on public activity have been lifted too quickly.

## What is the most effective way to an economic recovery?

Nearly three-quarters of Americans think that the most effective way to fix the U.S. economy is by reducing coronavirus infections to a level where people feel comfortable returning to stores, schools, restaurants and other workplaces. About a quarter (26%) say the more effective path to economic recovery is by opening up more of these workplaces and businesses even if infections have not yet been reduced.

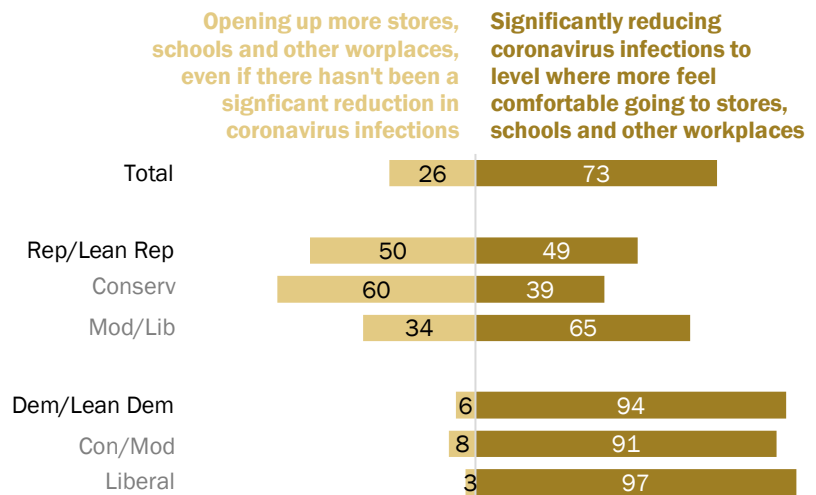
Democrats overwhelmingly say that the best way for the economy to recover is to reduce the number of coronavirus infections so that the public feels comfortable going to businesses (94% say this).

GOP views are divided: 50% say the more effective path to recovery is by opening up more businesses and workplaces even if infections haven't been reduced, while about as many (49%) say reducing cases so people feel comfortable going to these places is the more effective path.

About two-thirds of moderate and liberal Republicans (65%) say that reducing coronavirus cases to the point where people are comfortable engaging in in-person work and other economic activity is the more effective path to U.S. economic recovery. By contrast, six-in-ten conservative Republicans say opening up businesses and other workplaces, even if there hasn't been a reduction in coronavirus infections, is the most effective way to economic recovery.

### Most say path to economic recovery is through reduction in coronavirus infections

*% who say the more effective way to help the U.S. economy recover is ...*



Notes: No response not shown. See topline for full question wording.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Public gives the country's handling of the pandemic negative marks

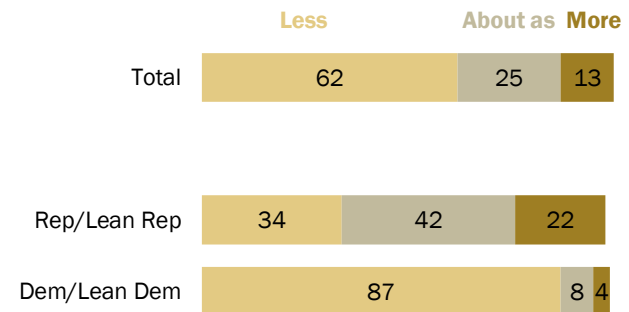
A majority of Americans say the nation's response to the pandemic compares poorly to how other affluent countries have responded: 62% say the U.S. has been less effective than other wealthy countries in responding to the coronavirus outbreak, a quarter say the U.S. response has been about as effective as these other nations and just 13% of Americans say the U.S. response has been more effective than that of other wealthy countries.

Democrats overwhelmingly say the U.S. has lagged behind other wealthy countries in its response, with 87% saying the nation's response has been less effective.

Only about a third of Republicans (34%) say the U.S. response has been a less effective than that of other wealthy countries, with a plurality of Republicans saying that the nation's response has been about as effective as these other countries. About a quarter of Republicans (22%) say the U.S. response has been more effective than that of other wealthy nations.

### Americans say U.S. handling of COVID-19 has trailed other wealthy nations

*% who say the U.S. response to the coronavirus outbreak, compared with other wealthy countries, has been \_\_\_ effective*



Note: No response not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

*CORRECTION (Aug. 6, 2020): In the chart "Americans say U.S. handling of COVID-19 has trailed other wealthy nations," the "Rep/Lean Rep" column has been edited to correct the "% who say the U.S. response to the coronavirus outbreak, compared with other wealthy countries, has been more effective" to 22%. The following sentence was also updated to reflect this, "About a quarter of Republicans (22%) say the U.S. response has been more effective than that of other wealthy nations." The changes did not affect the report's substantive findings.*

## Partisan divides on COVID-19 attitudes far greater than differences linked to local health impact

As has been the case throughout the coronavirus outbreak, partisan divides in opinions about the pandemic and policies to address it continue to be far wider than the differences in opinion between those who live in the places of the country where the health impacts have been higher and those who live in places that have seen less of an impact.

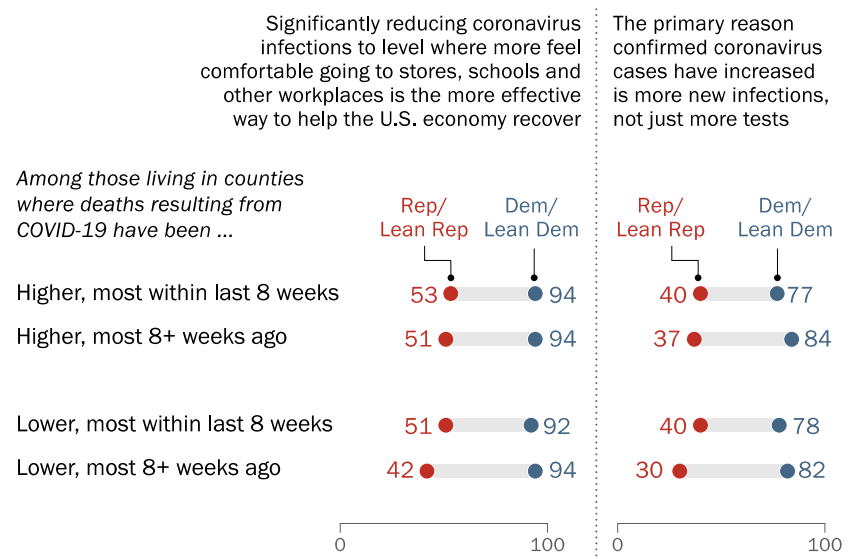
For instance, Republicans and Republican leaners living in places that have relatively low death rates and have not seen new deaths rise in recent months are 10 percentage points less likely than Republicans who live in other parts of the country to say that the most effective way forward for the nation’s economy is to reduce infection rates so that people feel comfortable going to stores, restaurants, schools and other workplaces (42% compared with 52%). This geographic difference is far more modest than the differences between Republicans and Democrats in those same areas.

Similarly, when asked about whether the recent increases in reported cases of the coronavirus is mainly the result of growing infections or an increase in testing, Republicans living in these less hard-hit parts of the country are slightly less likely than those living in other areas to say that the increase in cases is due to more infections rather than just more testing (30% compared with 39%).

But again, these small geographic differences are overshadowed by partisan differences – at least three-quarters of Democrats, regardless of the COVID-19 impact in their area – attribute the rise in confirmed cases more to rising infections.

### Partisan differences swamp geographic differences on attitudes about the coronavirus outbreak

% who say ...



Notes: “Higher” is defined as counties experiencing 25 deaths or more per 100,000 residents. See appendix for details. See topline for full question wording for both questions. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## 2. Views of COVID-19 response by Trump, hospitals, CDC and other officials

Majorities of the public say hospitals in their area, public health officials and state and local government officials are doing an excellent or good job in responding to the coronavirus outbreak. However, positive assessments of the performance of public health officials and state and local government officials have declined since March.

In addition, Donald Trump gets lower ratings for his response to the outbreak than he did in March. Trump’s overall job approval also is lower than in March, though it is effectively unchanged since June.

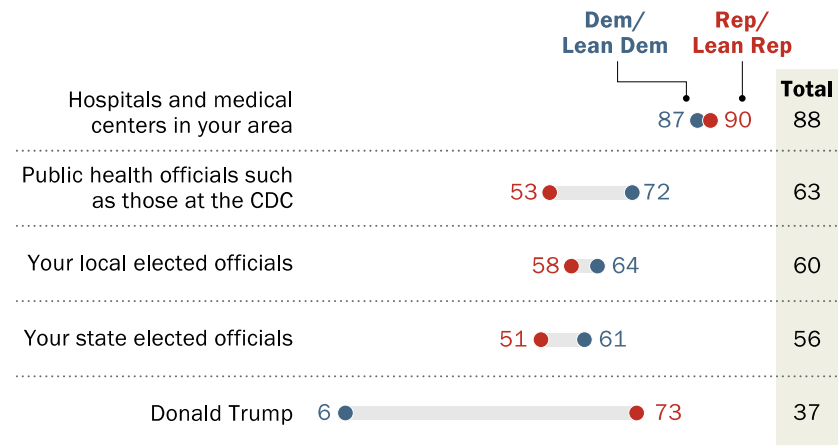
A large majority of Americans (88%) – and similarly high shares of Republicans and Democrats alike – say hospitals and medical centers in their area are doing an excellent or good job in responding to the coronavirus outbreak.

There are much wider partisan differences in views of how public health officials, such as those with the CDC, are responding to the outbreak. Currently, 72% of Democrats and those who lean to the party say public health officials are doing well in responding to the coronavirus, compared with about half of Republicans and Republican leaners (53%).

Democrats also are more likely than Republicans to give positive ratings to their state and local government officials for how they have responded to the coronavirus outbreak.

### Positive views of hospitals’ response to COVID-19 cross party lines; wider differences on other officials, Trump

*% who rate \_\_\_ as doing an excellent/good job responding to the coronavirus outbreak*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Ratings of Trump’s response to the coronavirus are deeply divided by partisanship. Nearly three-quarters of Republicans (73%) say Trump is doing an excellent (33%) or good job (41%) in responding to the outbreak. Just 6% of Democrats say he is doing an excellent or good job; more than nine in-ten Democrats (94%) say Trump is doing only a fair (11%) or poor job (82%).

Trump’s rating from the U.S. public overall for his response to the coronavirus has declined 11 percentage points since March, from 48% to 37%. The declines have been comparable among Republicans and Democrats.

The share of Democrats who rate Trump’s response as “poor” has risen steeply since then. In March, 56% of Democrats said Trump’s response to the coronavirus was poor; today, 82% do so.

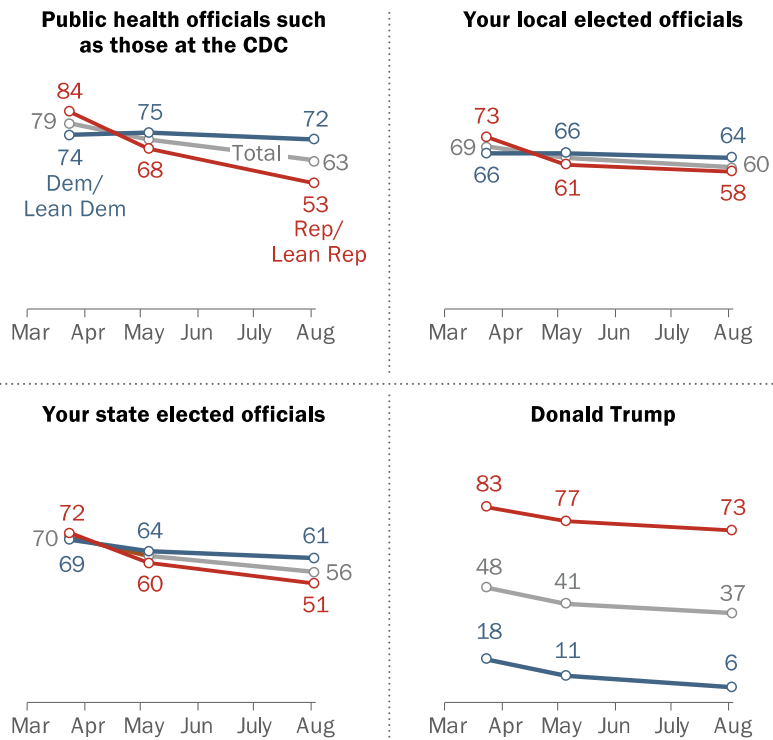
The public also is less positive about how public health officials are responding to the coronavirus, with virtually all of the decline in positive assessments coming among Republicans.

The share of the public that says public health officials such as those at the CDC are doing an excellent or good job has decreased 16 percentage points since March (from 79% to 63% today).

Since then, the share of Republicans who rate public health officials positively has fallen 31 points, from 84% to 53%. Democrats’ views are largely unchanged over that time period (74% in March, 72% today).

### Sharp decline in share of Republicans who say public health officials are doing well in handling coronavirus

% who rate \_\_\_ as doing an **excellent/good job** responding to the coronavirus outbreak



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Positive assessments of how state government officials and local government officials are responding to the outbreak also have slipped since March, by 14 points and 9 points, respectively. The declines in approval of state and local officials have been steeper among Republicans than among Democrats.

By contrast, the public's views of local hospitals and medical centers' response to the outbreak are unchanged since May, when 88% said they were doing an excellent or good job (this question was not asked in March).

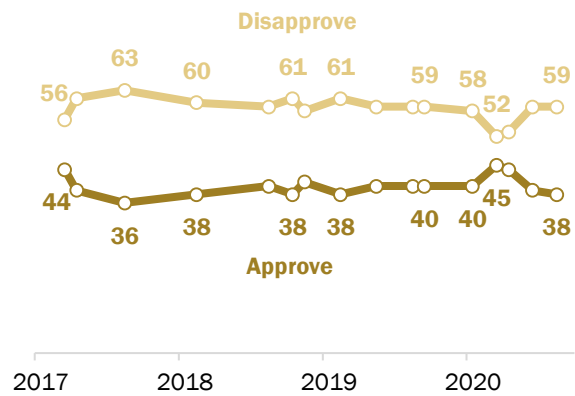
## Trump approval lower than in March, virtually unchanged since June

Currently, 38% of Americans approve of Donald Trump’s performance as president, while 59% disapprove. Trump’s job rating is virtually unchanged since June (39% approved), though it is lower than in March (45%) or April (44%).

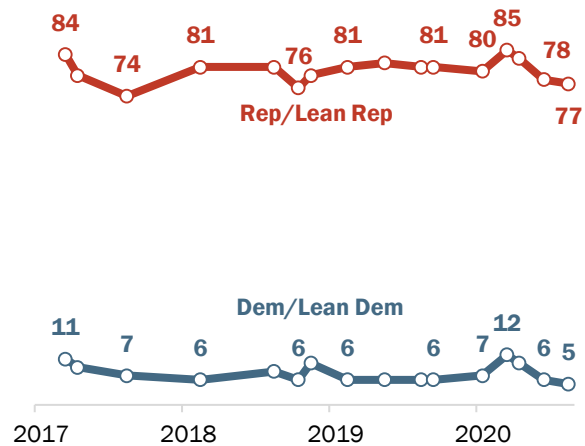
Views of Trump’s job performance continue to be deeply divided along partisan lines. Among Republicans and Republican leaners, 77% currently say they approve of Trump’s performance; only 5% of Democrats and Democratic leaners say the same.

### Trump’s job approval holds steady after declining in June

*% who \_\_\_ of the way Trump is handling his job as president*



*% who approve of the way Trump is handling his job as president*



Note: No answer responses not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In addition, there continue to be substantial differences across demographic and educational groups in views of Trump’s performance.

White non-Hispanic adults are roughly split in their views: 47% say that they approve of Trump’s handling of his job as president, while 50% say they disapprove.

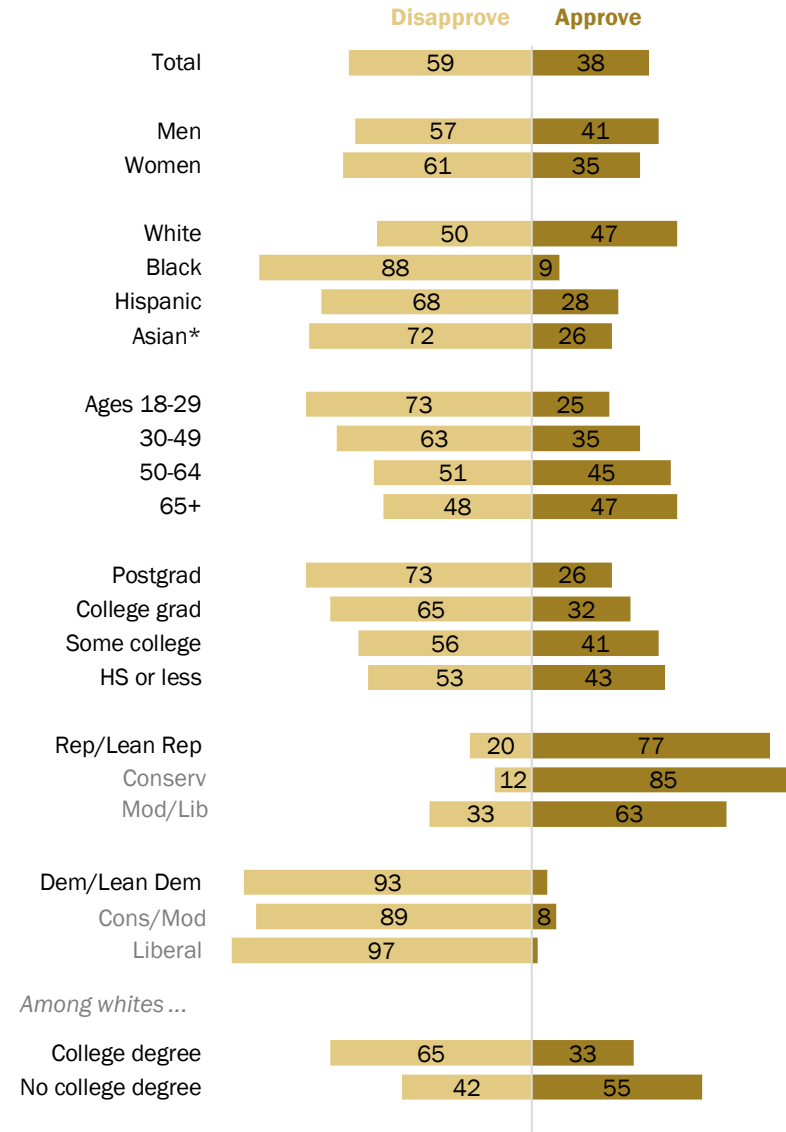
Similar shares of Hispanic (68%) and Asian Americans (72%) say they disapprove of Trump’s performance, while an overwhelming majority of Black adults say the same (88%).

Younger Americans remain much more likely to say they disapprove of Trump’s job performance. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of those ages 18 to 29 disapprove of how Trump is handling his job. Adults 65 and older are about as likely to say they approve (47%) as disapprove (48%) of Trump’s job as president.

As has long been the case, Trump draws much higher job approval ratings among white adults who have not completed college (55% approve) than among those with a four-year degree (33%).

### Race, age, education differences evident in Trump’s job approval

% who \_\_\_ of the way Trump is handling his job as president



\*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.  
 Notes: No answer responses not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include only those who report being one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

## Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

### Research team

Carroll Doherty, *Director, Political Research*  
Jocelyn Kiley, *Associate Director, Political Research*  
Andrew Daniller, *Research Associate*  
Bradley Jones, *Research Associate*  
Hannah Hartig, *Research Associate*  
Amina Dunn, *Research Analyst*  
Hannah Gilberstadt, *Research Assistant*  
Ted Van Green, *Research Assistant*  
Vianney Gomez, *Research Assistant*

### Communications and editorial

Nida Asheer, *Communications Manager*  
Calvin Jordan, *Communications Associate*  
David Kent, *Senior Copy Editor*

### Graphic design and web publishing

Peter Bell, *Design Director*  
Sara Atske, *Associate Digital Producer*  
Carrie Blazina, *Associate Digital Producer*

### Methodology

Nick Bertoni, *Senior Panel Manager*  
Arnold Lau, *Research Analyst*  
Sono Shah, *Computational Social Scientist*

## Appendix: Categorization of COVID-19 county health impact

This report uses the number and timing of deaths attributed to COVID-19 in each respondent's county as a measure of the scale of the health impact of the outbreak for each individual in the survey. These numbers are then adjusted for differences in county population (per 100,000 residents). Counties are categorized as having a higher or lower rate of COVID-19 deaths. In addition to the number of deaths in the county, counties were classified according to when the majority of deaths occurred (either in the past eight weeks or prior to the past eight weeks).

Counties are classified as "higher" if they had more than 25 deaths per 100,000 people as of July 26, 2020. "Lower" counties had 25 or fewer deaths per 100,000 people. Counties that have recorded fewer than five deaths overall since the beginning of the pandemic are classified as "Lower/prior to the past 8 weeks."

Data for deaths attributed to COVID-19 by county are taken from the 2019 Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 (2019-nCoV) Data Repository maintained at John Hopkins University (downloaded on Aug. 3, 2020). These data are supplemented with data from the New York City Health Department (also downloaded on Aug. 3) to break out the individual boroughs within New York City, which are not reported separately in the Johns Hopkins data. Similarly, data from New York Times coronavirus reporting (also downloaded Aug. 3) is used to separate out Rhode Island counties that are not separately reported by Johns Hopkins.

---

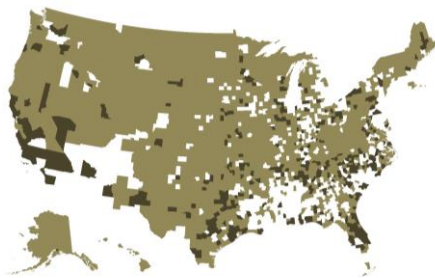
### Categorization of COVID-19 death rate by county

*Counties where COVID-19 has had a \_\_\_\_\_ impact on county health (as of July 26)*

**Counties with 25 or fewer deaths per 100,000 residents**

**Most 8+ weeks ago**

**Most within the last 8 weeks**



**Counties with more than 25 deaths per 100,000 residents**

**Most 8+ weeks ago**

**Most within the last 8 weeks**



Note: COVID-19 county health impact based on number of deaths per 100,000 people reported in each county as of July 26, 2020. Counties with fewer than five deaths total are included in the "25 or fewer deaths per 100,000/Most 8+ weeks ago" category.

Source: John Hopkins University 2019 Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 (2019-nCoV) Data Repository.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

## Methodology

### The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted July 27 to Aug. 2, 2020. A total of 11,001 panelists responded out of 14,407 who were sampled, for a response rate of 76%.

This does not include 10 panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 4.2%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1.3%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 11,001 respondents is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

#### American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,303
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,335
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	684
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	6,403
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS/web	5,900	4,720	4,681
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35,014</b>	<b>23,440</b>	<b>15,406</b>

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to

go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. The same recruitment procedure was carried out on August 19, 2019, from which a total of 5,900 were invited to join the panel and 4,720 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 23,440 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 15,406 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.<sup>1</sup> The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

---

<sup>1</sup> AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#)."



## Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original selection probability. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table.

Sampling errors and test of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

---

## Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2018 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Asians	
Country of birth among Hispanics	
Years lived in the United States	
Home internet access	
Region x Metropolitan status	2019 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total US adult population.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

---

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 survey:

---

*Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27- Aug. 2, 2020*

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	11,001		1.5 percentage points
Half sample	At least 5,500		2.1 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	4,507	45	2.2 percentage points
<i>Half sample</i>	At least 2,230		3.1 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	6,132	51	2.0 percentage points
<i>Half sample</i>	At least 3,033		2.8 percentage points
<i>COVID-19 county health impact as of July 26</i>			
Higher, most deaths within last 8 weeks	2,968	22	3.2 percentage points
Higher, most deaths over 8 weeks ago	3,049	29	2.7 percentage points
Lower, most deaths within last 8 weeks	2,469	24	3.0 percentage points
Lower, most deaths over 8 weeks ago	2,515	25	2.9 percentage points

---

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

© Pew Research Center, 2020

**2020 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL**  
**WAVE 71 July 2020**  
**JULY 27-AUGUST 2, 2020**  
**N=11,001**

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

SATIS All in all, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>No answer</u>
July 27-August 2, 2020	12	87	1
June 16-22, 2020	12	87	1
Apr 7-12, 2020	31	68	1
Mar 19-24, 2020	33	66	1
Oct 29-Nov 11, 2019	31	69	1
Oct 1-13, 2019	28	71	1
July 22-Aug 4, 2019	27	72	1
Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	34	65	1
Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018 <sup>2</sup>	36	63	1
Feb 28-Mar 12, 2017 <sup>3</sup>	32	68	0
Sep 27-Oct 10, 2016	23	75	2
Jun 7-Jul 5, 2016 <sup>4</sup>	19	80	1
Sep 15-Oct 3, 2014	25	75	0

**ASK ALL:**

POL1DT Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No answer</u>
July 27-August 2, 2020	38	59	3
June 16-22, 2020	39	59	2
Apr 7-12, 2020	44	53	3
Mar 19-24, 2020	45	52	2
Jan 6-19, 2020	40	58	1
Sep 3-15, 2019	40	59	1
July 22-Aug 4, 2019	40	59	1
Apr 29-May 13, 2019	40	59	1
Feb 4-17, 2019	38	61	1
Nov 7-13, 2018	41	58	1
Sep 24-Oct 7, 2018	38	61	2
Jul 30-Aug 12, 2018	40	59	2
Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018	38	60	2
Aug 8-21, 2017	36	63	1
Apr 4-18, 2017	39	61	1
Feb 28-Mar 12, 2017 <sup>5</sup>	44	56	1

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

<sup>2</sup> In W31 and previous surveys, question was called SATISF.

<sup>3</sup> The W24.5 Mode Study survey was administered by web and phone. Results reported here are from web mode only.

<sup>4</sup> SATISF in the W18 survey was asked to a random half of the sample assigned to Form 2 [N=2,366].

<sup>5</sup> The W24.5 Mode Study survey was administered by web and phone. Results reported here are from web mode only.

**ASK FORM 1 [N=5,500]:**

COVIDEGFP How would you rate the job each of the following is doing responding to the coronavirus outbreak? **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Donald Trump					
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	15	21	15	48	*
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	20	21	17	42	1
Mar 19-24, 2020	23	25	19	32	*
b. Your state elected officials					
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	16	39	26	18	*
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	21	41	25	13	*
Mar 19-24, 2020	21	49	22	8	1
c. Your local elected officials					
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	13	47	27	12	1
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	17	47	27	9	1
Mar 19-24, 2020	17	52	22	7	1
d. Public health officials such as those at the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)					
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	16	47	25	11	*
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	24	48	21	7	1
Mar 19-24, 2020	30	49	17	4	*

**No items E-F**

g. Hospitals and medical centers in your area					
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	43	45	9	3	1
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	47	42	8	3	1

**ASK FORM 2 [N=5,501]**

COVID\_FDRLSM Which do you think should be mainly responsible for developing and executing policies to limit the spread of the coronavirus? **[RANDOMIZE]**

July 27-Aug 2, 2020	
48	The federal government
51	State and local government
1	No answer

**ASK FORM 2 [N=5,501]**

COVIDUSCOMP All in all, compared with other wealthy countries, would you say the United States' response to the coronavirus outbreak has been... **[RANDOMIZE]**

July 27-Aug 2, 2020	
13	More effective
62	Less effective
25	About as effective
1	No answer

**ASK FORM 1 [N=5,500]**

COVIDECONOPEN2 Thinking about the restrictions on public activity because of the coronavirus outbreak, is your greater concern that state governments have been... **[RANDOMIZE]**

July 27-  
Aug 2,  
2020

69	Lifting the restrictions too quickly
30	Not lifting the restrictions quickly enough
1	No answer

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

COVID\_ECONOPEN Thinking about the decisions by a number of state governments to impose significant restrictions on public activity because of the coronavirus outbreak, is your greater concern that state governments will... **[RANDOMIZE]**

Apr 29-  
May 5  
2020

68	Lift the restrictions too quickly
31	Not lift the restrictions quickly enough
1	No answer

Apr 7-12  
2020

66
32
1

**ASK FORM 2 [N=5,501]**

COVIDCONPATH Which of these is the more effective way to help the U.S. economy recover? **[RANDOMIZE]**

July 27-  
Aug 2,  
2020

73	Significantly reducing the number of coronavirus infections in the U.S. to a level where more people feel comfortable going to stores, restaurants, schools and other workplaces
26	Opening up more stores, restaurants, schools and other workplaces, even if there hasn't been a significant reduction in coronavirus infections
1	No answer

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

**ASK ALL:**

COVID\_REASON How much of a reason, if at all, is each of the following for why the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. has continued? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

	<u>Major reason</u>	<u>Minor reason</u>	<u>NOT a reason</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Not enough timely testing for the coronavirus July 27-Aug 2, 2020	49	31	19	*
b. Not enough people are following guidelines about social distancing and mask wearing July 27-Aug 2, 2020	75	16	9	*
c. Inadequate response from the federal government July 27-Aug 2, 2020	53	23	23	1
d. Unclear instructions about how to prevent the spread of coronavirus July 27-Aug 2, 2020	40	32	28	*
e. Restrictions on businesses and individuals have been lifted too quickly in some places July 27-Aug 2, 2020	58	25	17	*
f. It is not possible to do much to control the spread of the coronavirus July 27-Aug 2, 2020	28	29	42	1

**TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

COVID\_SCI5 Do you think each of the following is or is not a reason why there are new cases of coronavirus in the U.S.? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

	<u>Yes, this is a major reason</u>	<u>Yes, this is a minor reason</u>	<u>No, this is NOT a reason</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. There is not enough testing for coronavirus Apr 29-May 5, 2020	58	25	17	<1
b. Not enough people are following social distancing measures Apr 29-May 5, 2020	57	30	12	<1
c. Coronavirus spreads more easily than other infectious diseases Apr 29-May 5, 2020	68	21	11	1

**ASK ALL:**

COV\_NEWINFECT

Which of these comes closer to your view about why there are increasing numbers of confirmed cases of coronavirus in the U.S.? **[RANDOMIZE]**

July 27-

Aug 2,  
2020

39	The increase in confirmed coronavirus cases is primarily a result of more people being tested than in previous months
60	While more people are being tested compared with earlier in the outbreak, the increase in confirmed coronavirus cases is primarily because of more new infections, not just more tests
2	No answer

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics today, do you consider yourself a:

**ASK IF INDEP/SOMETHING ELSE (PARTY=3 or 4) OR MISSING:**PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to...<sup>6</sup>

<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Something else</u>	<u>No answer</u>	<u>Lean Rep</u>	<u>Lean Dem</u>
28	29	27	14	1	17	21

---

<sup>6</sup> Party and PartyIn asked in a prior survey.