UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

March 14, 2023
COVID-19 Survey

Summary: Researchers at the University of South Florida conducted a nationwide survey of 2,500 American adults to measure attitudes related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including opinions about vaccination, exposure to/belief in vaccine-related misinformation, and concerns about potential future outbreaks. This report provides topline results, including key differences based on political affiliation. The survey included a representative sample of 2,500 American adults, fielded between February 27th and March 9th, 2023. Results are reported with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 1.96.

Three years after the start of the pandemic, COVID-19 remains a significant concern for many Americans. While only 10% of Americans now say that COVID-19 poses a "high risk" to the general public, another 44% say that it does pose at least a "moderate risk". More than half (58%) say that they are at least "somewhat concerned" about new variants of the virus, while 61% are concerned about the possibility of a new surge in COVID-19 cases. Nearly two-thirds (61%) say that they are concerned about the potential for experiencing "long-COVID" symptoms if they contract the virus.

Misinformation about the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines remains widespread after two years. A significant number of Americans express some degree of belief in several statements classified as "False" by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The list below shows the percentage of respondents who said that each statement was either "probably" or "definitely true":

- Getting sick with COVID-19 builds better immunity than getting a vaccine – 55%
- COVID-19 vaccines are causing new variants of the virus to emerge – 43%
- COVID-19 vaccines contain a "live strain" of the virus – 42%
- Vaccines can cause you to get sick with COVID-19 – 35%
- A COVID-19 vaccine will cause you to temporarily test "positive" for the virus – 34%
- COVID-19 vaccines can cause infertility – 24%
- COVID-19 vaccines contain microchips – 13%

Roughly a third of Americans say that they are still not confident in the safety of COVID-19 vaccines or the guidance provided by public health officials. Just under a third of respondents (31%) say that they are either "not very" or "not at all confident" that COVID-19 vaccines are safe. Additionally, 36% say that they are "not very" or "not at all confident" in "the COVID-19 guidance provided by the CDC and public health officials".

Attitudes about the pandemic – including vaccination – continue to be sharply divided based on political identity/affiliation. There were sharp differences in opinion across political groups, with Democrats expressing greater confidence in public health guidelines and vaccine safety/efficacy. In contrast, Republicans were less likely to express concern over the pandemic and were more distrustful of public health officials and vaccine safety/efficacy. A few examples include:

- COVID-19 poses a "high" or "moderate risk" to the public: Democrats = 71%; Independents = 50%; Republicans = 40%
- "Very" or "somewhat confident" that COVID-19 vaccines are safe: Democrats = 88%; Independents = 67%; Republicans = 49%
- "Very" or "somewhat confident" in public health guidance: Democrats = 89%; Independents = 62%; Republicans = 43%
- "Very" or "somewhat concerned" about a new surge in cases: Democrats = 81%; Independents = 58%; Republicans = 47%
- "Very likely" to receive regular COVID-19 booster shots: Democrats = 61%; Independents = 35%; Republicans = 25%

A slight majority of Americans believe that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective for children. 57% of respondents say that children's vaccines are necessary to prevent COVID-19, while 54% say that they are effective and 55% believe that they are safe.

Most respondents who tested positive for COVID-19 did NOT share/discuss their diagnosis on social media, but those who did say that they felt more "connected and supported" as a result. Among active social media users who tested positive for COVID-19, only 27% chose to share/discuss their diagnosis on social media. However, among this group, 82% say that doing so made them "feel more connected and supported" when they had COVID-19.

Most respondents who tested positive for COVID-19 say that it was helpful to read about other people's experiences on social media, but many say that doing so made them more worried. Among this same group, 34% reported using social media to learn what other people who tested positive had experienced. Among those who did, 94% say that doing so was at least "somewhat helpful", though 36% say that they felt "more worried" about having COVID-19 after reading about it on social media, while 34% said they felt "less worried".

Topline Results

In your opinion, how much of a risk is COVID-19 to the general public now?

	Frequency	Percentage
High Risk	245	9.8
Moderate Risk	1,106	44.2
Low Risk	979	39.2
No Risk at All	170	6.8

(n=2,500)
**(% High Risk + % Moderate Risk: Democrats = 71%; Independents = 50%; Republicans = 40%)*

Have the COVID-19 vaccines been more effective, less effective, or about as effective as you expected them to be?

	Frequency	Percentage
LESS effective than I expected	684	27.4
About as effective as I expected	1,481	59.2
MORE effective than I expected	335	13.4

(n=2,500)

How confident are you that COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Confident	819	32.8
Somewhat Confident	866	34.6
Not Very Confident	395	16.8
Not at All Confident	420	15.8

(n=2,500)
**(% Very + Somewhat Confident: Democrats = 88%; Independents = 67%; Republicans = 49%)*

How confident are you in the COVID-19 guidance provided by the CDC and public health officials?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Confident	766	30.6
Somewhat Confident	843	33.7
Not Very Confident	432	17.3
Not at All Confident	459	18.4

(n=2,500)
**(% Very + Somewhat Confident: Democrats = 89%; Independents = 62%; Republicans = 43%)*

Note: According to the CDC and other public health officials, there has been a significant amount of misinformation circulated about COVID-19 vaccines, particularly in online/digital spaces. In order to better understand how this has impacted public perceptions of vaccines and their safety/efficacy, respondents were asked to indicate whether they believed that each of the statements below were True or False. These statements were drawn from the CDC's public guidance on vaccine-related misinformation and included a mix of statements classified by the CDC as both True and False. Statements classified as "False" by the CDC are highlighted in red below. (The survey included a quality control test with these questions, which ensured that respondents were removed from the survey if they were not carefully reading each prompt.)

To the best of your knowledge, are each of the following statements True or False?	**Total True**	**Definitely True**	**Probably True**	**Total False**	**Probably False**	**Definitely False**
COVID-19 vaccines are safe	**73.4**	35.1	38.3	**26.6**	15.2	11.4
Getting sick with COVID-19 builds better immunity than getting a vaccine	**55.2**	18.4	36.8	**44.9**	29.7	15.2
COVID-19 vaccines are causing new variants of the virus to emerge	**43.4**	12.6	30.8	**56.6**	33.5	23.1
Vaccines help prevent the spread of COVID-19	**67.8**	35.4	32.4	**32.2**	18.5	13.7
COVID-19 vaccines alter your DNA	**25.6**	5.8	19.8	**74.4**	31.4	43.0
COVID-19 vaccines contain a "live strain" of the virus	**41.5**	9.8	31.7	**58.5**	29.2	29.3

COVID-19 vaccines contain microchips	**12.5**	2.5	10.0	**87.4**	22.8	64.6
COVID-19 vaccines can cause infertility	**24.1**	3.9	20.2	**75.9**	36.0	39.9
Vaccines can cause you to get sick with COVID-19	**34.7**	9.7	25.0	**65.3**	29.0	36.3
Vaccines reduce the risk of dying from COVID-19	**76.7**	43.4	33.3	**23.3**	14.8	8.5
Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will cause you to temporarily test "positive" for the virus	**33.9**	5.2	28.7	**66.2**	42.6	23.6

(N= 2,500)

In your opinion, how effective are each of the following in protecting people from COVID-19?
COVID-19 Vaccines

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	1,073	42.9
Somewhat Effective	751	30.0
Not Very Effective	357	14.3
Not at All Effective	319	12.8

(n=2,500)
**(% Very + Somewhat Effective: Democrats = 91%; Independents = 73%; Republicans = 55%)*

How concerned are you about new variants of COVID-19 (such as XBB.1.5)?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Concerned	442	17.7
Somewhat Concerned	1,003	40.1
Not Very Concerned	733	29.3
Not at All Concerned	322	12.9

(n=2,500)
**(% Very + Somewhat Concerned: Democrats = 77%; Independents = 45%; Republicans = 42%)*

How concerned are you about the possibility of suffering from "long COVID" symptoms if you become infected with COVID-19?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Concerned	576	23.0
Somewhat Concerned	948	37.9
Not Very Concerned	684	27.4
Not at All Concerned	292	11.7

(n=2,500)
**(% Very + Somewhat Concerned: Democrats = 76%; Independents = 58%; Republicans = 49%)*

How concerned are you about the possibility of a new surge in COVID-19 cases?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Concerned	545	21.8
Somewhat Concerned	1,003	40.1
Not Very Concerned	684	27.4
Not at All Concerned	268	10.7

(n=2,500)
**(% Very + Somewhat Concerned: Democrats = 81%; Independents = 58%; Republicans = 47%)*

How likely would you be to receive regular COVID-19 booster shots (i.e. ever year) if they were recommended by public health officials?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Likely	971	38.8
Somewhat Likely	566	22.6
Somewhat Unlikely	316	12.6
Very Unlikely	647	25.9

(n=2,500)
**(% Very Likely: Democrats = 61%; Independents = 35%; Republicans = 25%)*

For which of the following reasons would you NOT be willing to receive an annual COVID-19 booster shot?

	Frequency	Percentage
I don't think that the vaccines work to prevent COVID-19	586	38.3
I don't think that a booster shot is necessary	453	29.6
I am no longer worried about COVID-19	442	28.9
I had COVID-19 and it wasn't that bad	312	20.4
I had side effects from an earlier COVID-19 vaccine	272	17.8
I am concerned about the potential costs of future booster shots	247	16.2
Regular booster shots would be an inconvenience	229	14.9

(n=1,529 respondents who did NOT select "very likely" for the previous question.)
**Responses total to >100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple reasons.*

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about the children's COVID-19 vaccine: ***The children's vaccines are necessary to prevent COVID-19.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	755	30.2
Agree	672	26.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	440	17.6
Disagree	261	10.4
Strongly Disagree	372	14.9

(n=2,500)

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about the children's COVID-19 vaccine: ***The children's vaccines are effective at preventing COVID-19.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	672	26.9
Agree	679	27.2
Neither Agree nor Disagree	561	22.4
Disagree	250	10.0
Strongly Disagree	338	13.5

(n=2,500)

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about the children's COVID-19 vaccine: ***The children's vaccines are safe.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	685	27.4
Agree	696	27.8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	650	26.0
Disagree	194	7.8
Strongly Disagree	275	11.0

(n=2,500)

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about the children's COVID-19 vaccine: ***I am worried about the possible side effects of the children's vaccine.***

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	596	23.8
Agree	626	25.0
Neither Agree nor Disagree	564	22.6
Disagree	441	17.6
Strongly Disagree	273	10.9

(n=2,500)

How heavily have you relied on social media to stay up-to-date and informed about the COVID-19 pandemic?

	Frequency	Percentage
A Great Deal	314	14.1
A Little	633	28.4
Not Much	575	25.8
Not at All	705	31.7

(n=2,227 active social media users)

Did you share and discuss your COVID-19 diagnosis on social media?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, I shared my diagnosis when I had COVID-19	167	17.7
Yes, I shared my diagnosis after my COVID-19 had passed	85	8.9
No, I did not discuss or share my COVID-19 diagnosis on social media	694	73.4

(n=946 social media users who tested positive for COVID-19)

Did sharing your diagnosis on social media help you to feel more connected and supported when you had COVID-19?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, a great deal	118	46.8
Yes, but only a little	88	34.9
No	46	18.3

(n=252 social media users who shared/discussed their COVID-19 diagnosis on social media).

When you were fires diagnosed with COVID-19, did you use social media to learn more about what other people who tested positive had experienced when they were sick?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	319	33.7
No	627	66.3

(n=946 social media users who tested positive for COVID-19).

How helpful was it to read about other people's experience with COVID-19 on social media?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Helpful	123	38.6
Somewhat Helpful	178	55.8
Not Very Helpful	17	5.3
Not at All Helpful	1	0.3

(n=319 respondents who used social media to learn about other people's experiences with COVID-19 after they tested positive).

To the best of your memory, did the things you learned on social media make you feel more or less worried about your own COVID-19 diagnosis?

	Frequency	Percentage
More worried	115	36.1
Neither	96	30.1
Less Worried	108	33.9

(n=319 respondents who used social media to learn about other people's experiences with COVID-19 after they tested positive).

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Survey Information

2,500 American adults were surveyed via an online web-panel (Prodege MR). The survey was fielded from February 27th through March 9th 2023, and the results are reported with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 1.96. Respondents were selected via stratified, quota sampling to ensure a representative sample. Balanced quotas for gender, age, race/ethnicity, education and party affiliation were determined based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Quotas were stratified by Census region for geographical representativeness.

Sample Comparison

	USF Survey Sample	U.S. Demographics*
Gender		
Female	49.9%	50.5%
Male	49.1%	49.5%
Non-Binary/Other	1.0%	-
Age		
18-24	11.8%	11.6%
25-44	34.1%	34.3%
45-64	33.1%	32.7%
65+	21.0%	21.4%
Race		
Black/African American	13.7%	13.6%
White/Caucasian	74.9%	75.8%
Asian	6.3%	6.1%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.4%	1.3%
Other	3.6%	2.9%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	19.4%	18.9%
Non-Hispanic	80.6%	81.1%
Education		
Less than 4 Year Degree	65.7%	66.3%
4 Year Degree (or higher)	34.3%	33.7%
Political Affiliation (registered voters only, n = 2,180)		
Democrat	33.8%	33.0%
Independent	34.5%	34.0%
Republican	30.0%	29.0%
Other	1.7%	4.0%
Census Region		
Northeast	16.9%	17.1%
Midwest	20.7%	20.6%
South	38.8%	38.6%
West	23.6%	23.6%

About our Research Team

Feng Hao (PhD, Washington State University, 2015) is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of South Florida. Dr. Hao has three major areas of research. One is to study public opinion and behavior about the environment. The second involves examining anthropogenic drivers of climate change and renewable energy deployment. The third is to address the pandemic and understand American's response to COVID-19 (e.g., mask-wearing, vaccine uptake, etc.). For additional information please visit his **USF faculty page**. Dr. Hao can be contacted by email at fenghao@usf.edu

Stephen Neely (PhD, North Carolina State University, 2013) is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. He is coordinator of the School's undergraduate program in *Leadership and Public Service*. His areas of specialization include survey research, quantitative data analysis, and public policy. He is a faculty researcher on the Sunshine State Survey project and has conducted survey research on behalf of local governments in the Tampa Bay region. For additional information please visit his **USF faculty page**. Dr. Neely can be contacted by email at srneely@usf.edu

About the University of South Florida

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