



Americans' Expectations for COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness

December 2020

Findings:

- Confidence in what is being said about the seriousness of COVID-19 is divided along racial and ideological lines.
- Expectations related to what defines a safe COVID-19 vaccine vary significantly by race.
- There is broad acceptance that the need to continue with COVID-19 mitigation actions (e.g., masks and social distancing) will continue after the vaccines are being given.

Implication:

- Strategies for the successful control / elimination of COVID-19 must take into account differences based on ideology and race concerning the seriousness of the disease and the expectations of what defines a safe and effective vaccine.

This survey was conducted by ScienceCounts to assist public health authorities in acting on *Center for Disease Control and Prevention* and *National Institutes of Health* recommendations to develop COVID-19 vaccine communications that address the unique concerns of various communities.

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Americans' Conflicting Expectations for Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness

A new survey shows that Americans have conflicting expectations when a vaccine is deemed safe and effective by public health officials.

VACCINE SAFETY

Overall, one quarter of Americans (24%) expect a vaccine deemed safe to have **no** side effects. The prevalence of this view varies by race: 35% for Black Americans; 29% for Hispanic Americans; and 20% for White Americans.

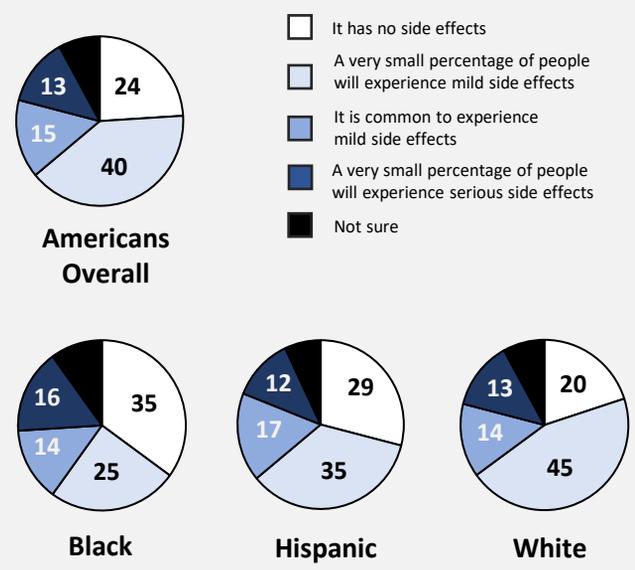
Two-thirds (68%) of the public expect a safe vaccine to have a risk of side effects, although views on the degree of risk and the severity of possible side effects vary. Among this group, 40% expect that a very small percentage of people will experience mild side effects, 15% expect mild side effects to be common, and 13% expect that a very small percentage of people will experience serious side effects. Eight percent are not sure.

VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

Americans are split on what is meant by an effective vaccine: 40% expect that it produces immunity and you will not get sick if exposed to the virus and 41% expect that it produces resistance and you have less chance of getting sick if exposed. Of the remainder, 11% expect that it reduces the severity of illness if you get sick and 8% are not sure. The distribution of responses remains the same across ideology, education, age, gender, and race.

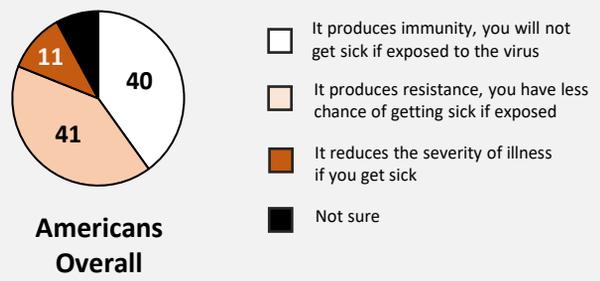
Over one-third of Black Americans expect a safe vaccine to have no side effects

Percentage of responses when asked "which statement comes closest to your expectation when a vaccine is called safe?"



Americans are split on whether an effective vaccine gives immunity or resistance

Percentage of responses when asked "which statement comes closest to your expectation when a vaccine is called effective?"



Americans' Confidence in Sources of COVID-19 Facts Divide Along Racial and Ideological Lines

A new survey shows that Americans' confidence in COVID-19 information from the mainstream media, medical professionals, and Dr. Fauci is divided by race and political ideology.

AMERICANS OVERALL

A majority of Americans (62%) believe COVID-19 is just as serious as they have been told by Dr. Fauci, medical professionals (56%), and the media (48%).

The rest of the public is split in their belief that COVID-19 is either less serious or more serious than reported by the mainstream media (25% less/27% more), medical professionals (16% less/28% more), and Dr. Fauci (20% less/18% more).

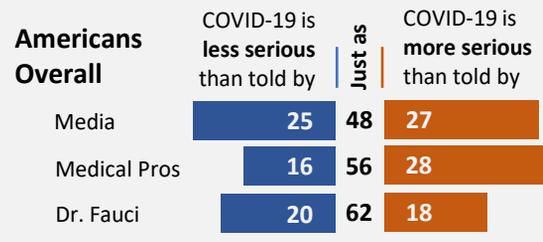
PERSPECTIVES BY RACE

Black Americans are twice as likely as white Americans to believe that COVID-19 is more serious than they have been told by the media (44% vs. 22%), medical professionals (53% vs. 22%), and Dr. Fauci (36% vs. 18%). The majority of Black Americans (53%) believe medical professionals are understating the seriousness of COVID-19.

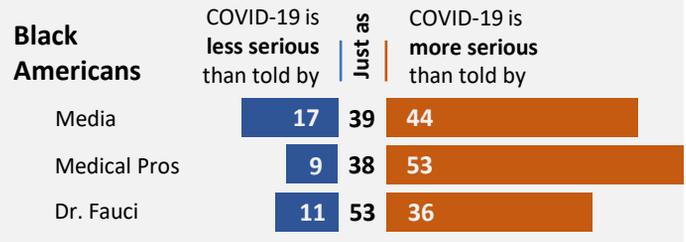
Hispanic and white Americans share similar views with small exceptions. Slightly more Hispanic Americans (68% vs. 61%) believe COVID-19 is just as serious as they have been told by Dr. Fauci. They also believe COVID-19 is more serious than reported by the media (32% vs. 22%) and medical professionals (30% vs. 22%). [cont. on next page]

More Americans agree with Dr. Fauci's view of the seriousness of COVID-19 than with medical professionals and the media

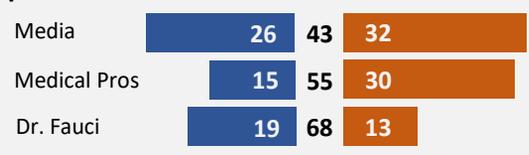
The public's beliefs about the seriousness of COVID-19 compared to what they have been told by the mainstream media (Media), medical professionals (Medical Pros), and Dr. Fauci.



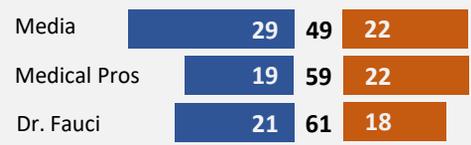
Black Americans are twice as likely as Whites to believe the seriousness of COVID-19 is being underreported



Hispanic Americans



White Americans



IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE

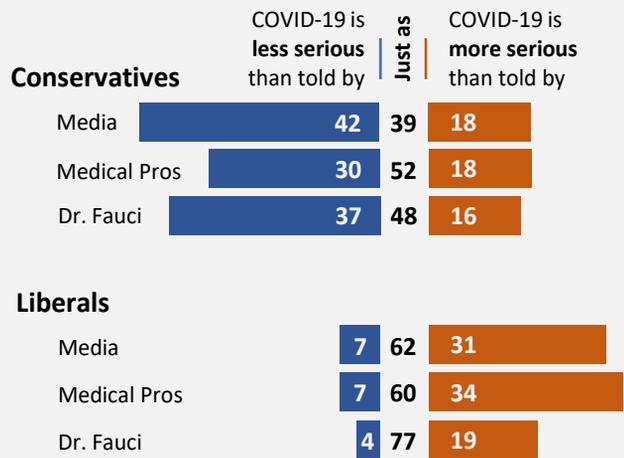
Americans are polarized along political lines in their views of the seriousness of COVID-19 compared to what they have been told by the media, medical professionals, and Dr. Fauci.

While about half of conservatives believe COVID-19 is just as serious as they have been told by medical professionals (52%) and Dr. Fauci (48%), a large number believe COVID-19 is less serious than they are being told by the mainstream media (42%), Dr. Fauci (37%), and medical professionals (30%).

In contrast, the majority of liberals believe COVID-19 is just as serious as they have been told by Dr. Fauci (77%), the mainstream media (62%), and medical professionals (60%). Of the remainder, four-fifths believe COVID-19 is more serious than they have been told.

While 96% of liberals believe the virus is as serious or more serious than conveyed by Dr. Fauci, 37% of conservatives believe he is exaggerating the seriousness of the disease

The public's beliefs about the seriousness of COVID-19 compared to what they have been told by the mainstream media (Media), medical professionals (Medical Pros), and Dr. Fauci.



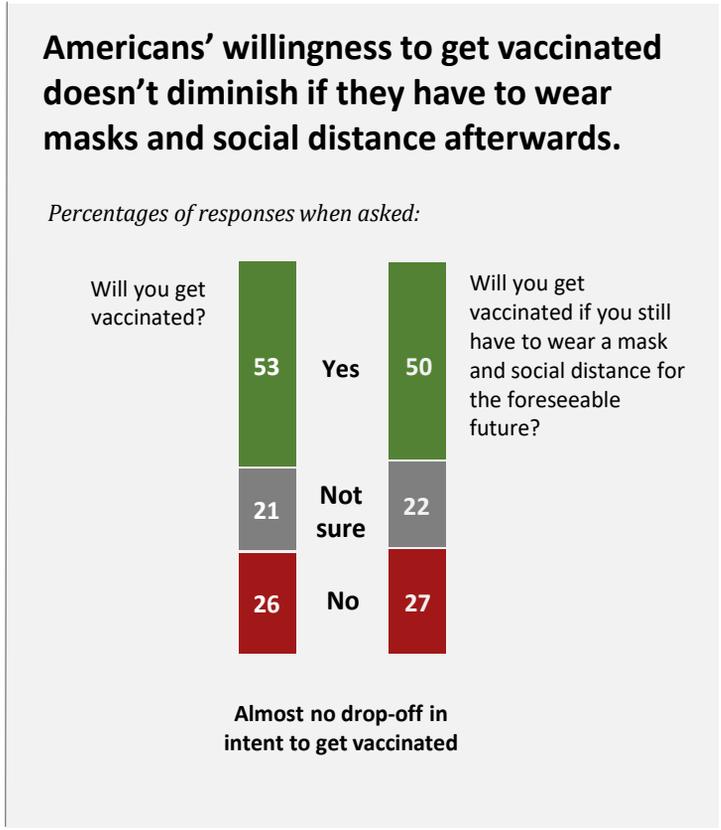
Vaccine Willingness Unaffected by Prospect of Continued Mask Wearing and Social Distancing

A new survey shows that Americans' willingness to get a COVID-19 vaccine is not diminished by the prospect of having to continue wearing face masks and engaging in social distancing for the foreseeable future after getting the vaccine.

A majority (53%) of survey respondents are definitely or probably willing to get vaccinated once a vaccine is available, with 26% definitely or probably not willing and 21% not sure.

In response to a subsequent question that asked "If a number of public health officials, including the director of the CDC, said that a vaccine will not eliminate the need to wear a mask and social distance for the foreseeable future, will you get vaccinated?", 50% responded "yes", 27% responded "no", and 22% responded "not sure".

Therefore, the drop-off in intent to get vaccinated is minimal, indicating that the prospect of having to wear masks and maintain social distancing after vaccination is *not* a deterrent to getting vaccinated.





SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

The survey was co-designed with, and administered by, Edge Research and fielded November 18-24, 2020. Sample was provided by Dynata, a leading online research panel provider. A national random sample was invited to participate in the survey and quotas by age, gender, race, ethnicity, and region were maintained to ensure the sample composition is representative of the US Adult 18+ population. Where needed, weighting was applied to the data to balance the sample for demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Sample size is 1,559. Uncertainties are $\pm 2.5\%$ at the 95% confidence level for data representing the whole sample, and no greater than $\pm 5\%$ for individual population segments.

ABOUT ScienceCounts

ScienceCounts is a nonprofit organization committed to support science and scientists in order to fuel American job creation, drive economic growth, improve health care, ensure national security, attain energy independence, foster environmental sustainability, and enhance quality of life for all. We conduct opinion research and science communication activities to advance our mission.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was made possible through the generous support of the following:



APPENDIX: QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

National Survey N=1559

Field Dates: Nov 18th, 2020 to Nov 24th, 2020

Methodology: *The survey was co-designed with, and administered by, Edge Research and fielded November 18-24, 2020. Sample was provided by Dynata, a leading online research panel provider. A national random sample was invited to participate in the survey and quotas by age, gender, race, ethnicity, and region were maintained to ensure the sample composition is representative of the US Adult 18+ population. Where needed, weighting was applied to the data to balance the sample for demographic and socio-economic characteristics.*

SCREENING FOR SAMPLE CONTROL

First, just a few questions to make sure we have a representative sample.

1. What is your age?

- | | | |
|---|-------------|------------------|
| 1 | Under 18 | TERMINATE |
| 2 | 18-24 | |
| 3 | 25-34 | |
| 4 | 35-44 | |
| 5 | 45-54 | |
| 6 | 55-64 | |
| 7 | 65-74 | |
| 8 | 75 or older | |

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559
Base: Total Respondents	1559
Under 18	-
18-24	10%
25-34	20%
35-44	17%
45-54	17%
55-64	16%
65-74	16%
75 or older	5%

2. Do you describe yourself as a:

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Man |
| 2 | Woman |
| 3 | In some other way |

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559
Base: Total Respondents	1559
Man	48%
Woman	52%
In some other way	*

3. In which state do you live?

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559
Base: Total Respondents	1559
Northeast	16%
Midwest	21%
South	39%
West	23%

4. And how do you identify? Are you:

Please select all that apply

- 1 Caucasian or white
- 2 African American or black
- 3 Hispanic or Latino/Latina
- 4 Asian or Pacific Islander
- 5 Native American
- 6 Other (please specify _____)
- 7 Prefer not to say [EXCLUSIVE]

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559
Base: Total Respondents	1559
White alone multi select	65%
Hispanic (alone or in combo)	18%
Afr-Amer (alone or combined with any other EXCEPT Hispanic)	12%
All Other	6%

Next some questions about medicines and preventative vaccines.

ROTATE NEXT 2 QUESTIONS

5. Which statement comes closest to your expectation when a vaccine is called "safe"?

- 1 It has no side effects
- 2 A very small percentage of people will experience mild side effects
- 3 It is common to experience mild side effects
- 4 A very small percentage of people will experience serious side effects
- 5 Not sure

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	1559	971	213	290	85
Base: Total Respondents	1559	1007	185	277	89

It has no side effects	24%	20%	35%	29%	30%
A very small percentage of people will experience mild side effects	40%	45%	26%	35%	30%
It is common to experience mild side effects	15%	14%	14%	17%	21%
A very small percentage of people will experience serious side effects	13%	13%	16%	12%	14%
Not sure	7%	8%	10%	6%	6%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	1559	465	545	459
Base: Total Respondents	1559	503	585	364
It has no side effects	24%	23%	25%	21%
A very small percentage of people will experience mild side effects	40%	42%	39%	44%
It is common to experience mild side effects	15%	15%	17%	13%
A very small percentage of people will experience serious side effects	13%	15%	11%	17%
Not sure	7%	6%	7%	4%

6. Which statement comes closest to your expectation when a vaccine is called “effective”?

- 1 It produces immunity, you will not get sick if exposed to the virus
- 2 It produces resistance, you have less chance of getting sick if exposed
- 3 It reduces the severity of illness if you get sick
- 4 Something else [DESCRIBE: _____]
- 5 Not sure

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	1559	971	213	290	85
Base: Total Respondents	1559	1007	185	277	89
It produces immunity, you will not get sick if exposed to the virus	40%	39%	40%	44%	40%
It produces resistance, you have less chance of getting sick if exposed	41%	43%	35%	38%	33%
It reduces the severity of illness if you get sick	11%	10%	11%	10%	20%
Something else [DESCRIBE:]	1%	*	-	1%	2%
Not sure	8%	7%	13%	7%	6%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	1559	465	545	459
Base: Total Respondents	1559	503	585	364
It produces immunity, you will not get sick if exposed to the virus	40%	40%	41%	40%
It produces resistance, you have less chance of getting sick if exposed	41%	42%	39%	45%
It reduces the severity of illness if you get sick	11%	11%	11%	11%
Something else [DESCRIBE:]	1%	-	1%	*
Not sure	8%	7%	8%	4%

Now we have some questions about COVID-19.

7. How likely are you get vaccinated for COVID-19 when a vaccine becomes available?

- 1 Yes definitely
- 2 Yes probably
- 3 Might or might not
- 4 No, probably not
- 5 No, definitely not

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	1559	971	213	290	85
Base: Total Respondents	1559	1007	185	277	89
Yes definitely	30%	31%	24%	30%	25%
Yes probably	23%	23%	19%	25%	21%
Might or might not	21%	18%	28%	23%	33%
No, probably not	12%	13%	12%	11%	14%
No, definitely not	14%	14%	17%	12%	7%
Sum of Yes, Definitely + Probably	53%	54%	43%	55%	46%
Sum of No, Definitely + Probably	26%	27%	29%	23%	21%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	1559	465	545	459
Base: Total Respondents	1559	503	585	364
Yes definitely	30%	31%	27%	38%
Yes probably	23%	22%	23%	26%
Might or might not	21%	18%	23%	21%
No, probably not	12%	14%	14%	10%
No, definitely not	14%	15%	13%	6%
Sum of Yes, Definitely + Probably	53%	53%	50%	64%
Sum of No, Definitely + Probably	26%	29%	27%	16%

SPLIT SAMPLE A

8. Which comes closest to your view? [SSA]
- 1 COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by medical professionals
 - 2 COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by medical professionals
 - 3 COVID 19 is more serious than we have been told by medical professionals

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	516	324	75	96	21
Base: SAMPLE A	514	340	61	90	22
COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by medical professionals	16%	19%	9%	15%	6%
COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by medical professionals	56%	59%	39%	54%	57%
COVID 19 is more serious than we have been told by medical professionals	28%	22%	53%	30%	37%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	516	137	200	149
Base: SAMPLE A	514	148	215	115
COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by medical professionals	16%	30%	11%	7%
COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by medical professionals	56%	52%	56%	60%
COVID 19 is more serious than we have been told by medical professionals	28%	18%	33%	34%

SPLIT SAMPLE B

9. Which comes closest to your view? [SSB]
- 1 COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci
 - 2 COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	522	329	60	97	36
Base: SAMPLE B	531	349	49	96	37
COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci	20%	21%	11%	19%	19%
COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci	62%	61%	52%	68%	66%
COVID 19 is more serious than we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci	18%	18%	36%	13%	15%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	522	165	167	163
Base: SAMPLE B	531	176	188	132
COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci	20%	37%	14%	4%
COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci	62%	48%	65%	77%
COVID-19 is more serious than we have been told by authorities like Dr. Fauci	18%	16%	21%	19%

SPLIT SAMPLE C

10. Which comes closest to your view? [SSC]
- 1 COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by the mainstream media
 - 2 COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by the mainstream media
 - 3 COVID-19 is more serious than we have been told by the mainstream media

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	521	318	78	97	28
Base: SAMPLE C	514	318	75	91	31
COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by the mainstream media	25%	29%	17%	26%	5%
COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by the mainstream media	48%	49%	39%	43%	73%
COVID-19 is more serious than we have been told by the mainstream media	27%	22%	44%	32%	22%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	521	163	178	147
Base: SAMPLE C	514	179	182	116
COVID-19 is less serious than we have been told by the mainstream media	25%	42%	20%	7%
COVID-19 is just as serious as we have been told by the mainstream media	48%	39%	46%	62%
COVID-19 is more serious than we have been told by the mainstream media	27%	18%	34%	31%

RESUME ASKING ALL

Now for some questions about a possible vaccine for COVID-19.

11. Do you think a COVID-19 vaccine is necessary for society to return to normal?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Not sure

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	1559	971	213	290	85
Base: Total Respondents	1559	1007	185	277	89
Yes	70%	72%	58%	73%	69%
No	15%	15%	15%	14%	18%
Not sure	15%	13%	27%	13%	13%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	1559	465	545	459
Base: Total Respondents	1559	503	585	364
Yes	70%	68%	68%	84%
No	15%	20%	16%	7%
Not sure	15%	13%	16%	9%

12. If a number of public health officials, including the director of the CDC, said that a vaccine will not eliminate the need to wear a mask and social distance for the foreseeable future. Will you

- 1 Get vaccinated anyway
- 2 Not get vaccinated
- 3 Not sure

	Total	White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other
Unweighted Base	1559	971	213	290	85
Base: Total Respondents	1559	1007	185	277	89
Get vaccinated anyway	50%	52%	39%	52%	55%
Not get vaccinated	27%	28%	30%	26%	21%
Not sure	22%	20%	31%	22%	24%

	Total	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Unweighted Base	1559	465	545	459
Base: Total Respondents	1559	503	585	364

Get vaccinated anyway	50%	48%	48%	63%
Not get vaccinated	27%	33%	27%	17%
Not sure	22%	19%	25%	20%

DEMOGRAPHICS

13. What is the highest level of education you have had the opportunity to complete?

- 1 Grade school
- 2 Some high school
- 3 High school graduate
- 4 Some college, no degree
- 5 Vocational training/2-year college
- 6 4-year college/bachelor's degree
- 7 Some postgraduate work, no degree
- 8 2 or 3 years of postgraduate work/master's degree
- 9 Doctoral/law degree
- 10 Decline to answer

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559
Base: Total Respondents	1559
Grade school	*
Some high school	4%
High school graduate	24%
Some college, no degree	25%
Vocational training/2-year college	13%
4-year college/bachelor's degree	21%
Some postgraduate work, no degree	2%
2 or 3 years of postgraduate work/master's degree	8%
Doctoral/law degree	2%
Decline to answer	*

14. What is your current employment situation?

- 1 Employed full-time
- 2 Employed part-time
- 3 Laid-off/Furloughed due to COVID
- 4 Homemaker
- 5 Full-time student
- 6 Retired
- 7 Unemployed/looking for work
- 8 Other

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559

Base: Total Respondents	1559
Employed full-time	31%
Employed part-time	11%
Laid-off/Furloughed due to COVID	4%
Homemaker	9%
Full-time student	3%
Retired	24%
Unemployed/looking for work	13%
Other	4%

15. When thinking about social issues, do you consider yourself to be...?
- 1 Very conservative
 - 2 Somewhat conservative
 - 3 Moderate
 - 4 Somewhat liberal
 - 5 Very liberal
 - 6 Other/My views cannot be expressed in this way
 - 7 Prefer not to say

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559
Base: Total Respondents	1559
Very conservative	15%
Somewhat conservative	17%
Moderate	38%
Somewhat liberal	13%
Very liberal	10%
Other/My views cannot be expressed in this way	4%
Prefer not to say	3%

16. In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent? If you are independent, do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?
- 1 Consider myself Democrat
 - 2 Lean Democrat
 - 3 Independent, don't lean either way
 - 4 Lean Republican
 - 5 Consider myself Republican
 - 6 Some other party
 - 7 Not sure

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559

Base: Total Respondents	1559
Consider myself Democrat	20%
Lean Democrat	12%
Independent, don't lean either way	25%
Lean Republican	14%
Consider myself Republican	21%
Some other party	3%
Not sure	5%

17. For statistical purposes only, please indicate which of the following categories best represents your total household income in 2018:

- 1 Less than \$25,000
- 2 \$25,000 but less than \$50,000
- 3 \$50,000 but less than \$75,000
- 4 \$75,000 but less than \$100,000
- 5 \$100,000 but less than \$150,000
- 6 \$150,000 but less than \$200,000
- 7 \$200,000 or more
- 8 Prefer not to say

	Total
Unweighted Base	1559
Base: Total Respondents	1559
Less than \$25,000	27%
\$25,000 but less than \$50,000	29%
\$50,000 but less than \$75,000	19%
\$75,000 but less than \$100,000	9%
\$100,000 but less than \$150,000	8%
\$150,000 but less than \$200,000	2%
\$200,000 or more	2%
Prefer not to say	4%

Thank you, that concludes our survey.