

Anxiety rising amid virus surge, poll finds

By JAMES ANDERSON
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Associated Press

DENVER — Anxiety in the United States over COVID-19 is at its highest level since winter, a new poll shows, as the delta variant rages, more states and school districts adopt mask and vaccination requirements and the nation's hospitals once again fill to capacity.

The poll from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research also finds that majorities of American adults want vaccination mandates for those attending movies, sports, concerts and other crowded events; those traveling by airplane; and workers in hospitals, restaurants, stores and government offices.

The poll shows that 41% are "extremely" or "very" worried about themselves or their family becoming infected with the virus. That is up from 21% in June, and about the same as in January, during the country's last major surge, when 43% were extremely or very worried.

"I wouldn't have said this a couple of years ago, but I'm not as confident as I was in America's ability to take care of itself," said David Bowers, a 42-year-old business analyst in the Phoenix suburb of Peoria.

Bowers, a Democrat, and his wife, a public school teacher, got vaccinated early. But they fret once again about



Ben Gray/Atlanta Journal-Constitution

People in favor of and against a mask mandate for Cobb County schools gather and protest ahead of the school board meeting on Thursday in Georgia.

their daughters, ages 7 and 9, attending school in a state where Republican Gov. Doug Ducey signed a law to block school districts from mandating masks, let alone vaccines.

A brief summer respite from COVID-19 fatigue included a family trip to New York. "COVID was pretty much out of mind," Bowers said. "Now it feels like we're going backward."

Close to 6 in 10 Americans say they favor requiring people to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to travel on an airplane or attend crowded public events. Only about a quarter of Americans oppose such measures.

Roughly 6 in 10 also sup-

port vaccine mandates for hospital or other health care workers, along with government employees, members of the military and workers who interact with the public, such as in restaurants and stores. Support is slightly lower for requiring vaccinations to go out to a bar or restaurant, though more are in favor than opposed, 51% to 28%.

Nearly 200 million people, or just over 60% of the U.S. population, had received at least one vaccine dose as of Thursday, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Just over half of the population was fully vaccinated. Hospitals across the U.S.

had more than 75,000 coronavirus patients as of last week, a dramatic increase from a few weeks ago but still well below the winter surge records. Florida, Arkansas, Oregon, Hawaii, Louisiana and Mississippi have set records for COVID-19 hospitalizations in recent weeks, and the surge in the delta variant, combined with low vaccination rates, has produced a scramble to find beds for patients.

The poll suggests that despite increasing cases and greater concern about the virus, Americans have not stepped up their own precautionary behavior since June, though at least half still say they always or often wear a

mask around other people, stay away from large groups and avoid nonessential travel.

Confidence in vaccines to withstand virus variants has not waned, either, as U.S. health officials this week announced plans to dispense booster shots to all Americans to shore up their protection. The doses could begin next month.

Carla Jones, 37, of Lafayette, Louisiana, is a paraplegic with immunity problems and uses a wheelchair after she was severely injured in a car accident. Because of her health, she has been told by her doctor she cannot get the vaccine. She gets anxious visiting the doctor or when her grandchildren visit.

"I see someone next to me at the doctor's without a mask, it makes my heart rapidly beat faster," Jones said.

Jones, a Democrat, strongly favors vaccination and mask mandates, and not just for herself. "For the good of all," she said. "I don't have the shot, but I definitely wouldn't want to pass it on to anyone else."

The poll shows that 55% support requiring Americans to wear masks around other people outside their homes, while 62% support mask mandates specifically for workers who interact with the public, such as at restaurants and stores. Eighty-five percent of Democrats and 39% of

Republicans are in favor of mask mandates for public-facing workers.

Robbie Allen, a 63-year-old retiree from Clifton, Texas, is fully vaccinated and will wear a mask when required by stores or other places. But the self-described independent who leans Republican insists it is a matter of personal choice, and he sees mandates as taking the joy out of life.

"The COVID is not going away very quickly, but I don't think people should live in fear," said Allen, who motorcycled with his girlfriend to this month's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, which attracted hundreds of thousands to the South Dakota city. "People are going to die, but if we all hunker down, life gets miserable."

Partisan gaps are also wide on vaccination requirements. In Arizona, Bowers has already taken time off work to pick up his daughter from school after she developed a high fever. They spent hours last week looking for a drive-thru COVID-19 testing site that wasn't overcrowded. She tested negative. But the worries persist.

"My thinking is, the people who don't want mandates are the people who need to be regulated," Bowers said. "There's a slim majority in this country making the right decisions. If it wasn't for a slim majority as a country, we'd be in trouble."

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Biden orders nursing home staff to get vaccinated

By ZEKE MILLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden announced that his administration will require that nursing home staff be vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition for those facilities to continue receiving federal Medicare and Medicaid funding.

Biden unveiled the new policy in a White House address earlier this week as the administration continues to look for ways to use mandates to encourage vaccine holdouts to get shots.

"If you visit, live or work in a nursing home, you should not be at a high risk for contracting COVID from unvaccinated employees," Biden said.

The new mandate, in the form of a forthcoming regulation to be issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, could take effect as soon as next month.

Hundreds of thousands of nursing home workers are not vaccinated, according to federal data, despite those facilities bearing the brunt of the early COVID-19 outbreak and their workers being among the first in the country to be eligible for shots.

It comes as the Biden administration seeks to raise the costs for those who have yet to get vaccinated,

after months of incentives and giveaways proved to be insufficient to drive tens of millions of Americans to roll up their sleeves.

In just the past three weeks, Biden has forced millions of federal workers to attest to their vaccination status or face onerous new requirements, with even stricter requirements for federal workers in frontline health roles, and his administration has moved toward mandating vaccines for the military as soon as next month.

Biden has also celebrated businesses that have mandated vaccines for their own workforces and encouraged others to follow, and highlighted local vaccine man-

dates as a condition for daily activities, like indoor dining.

The new effort seems to be paying off, as the nation's rate of new vaccinations has nearly doubled over the past month. More than 200 million Americans have now received at least one dose of the vaccines, according to the White House, but about 80 million Americans are eligible but haven't yet been vaccinated.

Mark Parkinson, the president and CEO of the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living, praised the Biden decision, but called on him to go further.

"Vaccination mandates for health care personnel should be applied to

all health care settings," he said. "Without this, nursing homes face a disastrous workforce challenge."

Last year the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services used similar regulatory authority to prohibit most visitors from nursing homes in an effort to protect residents.

VOLUNTEER
PICK OF THE WEEK



Sookie
2 1/2 year old
Torti Blend

The good life is found in small things. Most of these have four feet and whiskers. Sookie is unserious, cozy and fun.

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August 21, 1982

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I put my trust in you.
- Psalm 56:3

Love always, forever
and ever and ever -Dadio

Class of 1980's 41st Class Reunion

Saturday, October 2nd, 2021



Elks Lounge

5:00pm Cocktails (no host bar)
and 6:30 dinner
(\$35.00 per plate to be paid at door)

Prior and after classes, including
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to help celebrate.

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The family of **Charles "Scott" Parker** would like to express their greatest appreciation for the incredible kindness graciously given by so many during the past few months.

We were blessed to be surrounded by such sincere caring and loving people when we needed it most. Thank you for all the beautiful flowers, plants, cards, and heartfelt messages. We express our deep gratitude to Dr. Curti and the staff at the Providence Cancer Institute, the doctors and staff at St. Vincent's Hospital and Dr. Sasaki and staff in Astoria. A very special thank you to the wonderful doctors, nurses and staff at Providence Seaside Hospital and the Providence Home Health team for their wonderful care and support of Scott and our family. Thank you to the friends and family who called, checked in, brought food, visited, and shared hours with Scott telling the best of the best stories, good and bad, old and new, of their amazing once in a lifetime experiences. We wish to thank Brian and Pam Dutton of Ocean View for their exceptional care and Father Oruko and St. Mary Star of the Sea church for the wonderful service. Special thank you to Frank Tuimato, Ronnie Williams, Willis Van Dusen, Steve Fick, Parker Riser, Justin Grafton, Danny Riser, and Sign One for your incredible support and assistance. We also thank each one of you who planned, created, donated to, organized, supported, volunteered, and just said yes when asked to help make everything come together. Thank you all so very much for attending Scott's services and the wonderful afternoon spent celebrating his life. We will hold the memory of this beautiful day in our hearts forever.

Blessings to all from the Parker Family.