



NEW INTERNATIONAL SURVEY: Americans Face Greater Mental Health, Economic Challenges from COVID-19 Than People in Other Wealthy Nations

Survey of High-Income Countries Shows People in United States Are Faring Much Worse During COVID-19 and Are Less Likely to Approve of How Government Has Handled Pandemic

Compared to residents of nine other high-income countries, people in the United States are experiencing greater mental health and economic challenges from COVID-19, and they are less happy with their national leaders, according to a new report from the Commonwealth Fund.

The analysis, *Do Americans Face Greater Mental Health and Economic Consequences from COVID-19? Comparing the U.S. with Other High-Income Countries*, is the newest of the Commonwealth Fund's [cross-national health care comparisons](#). It provides country-specific data on people's experiences during the early months of COVID-19 (March–May) in the U.S., Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Among the findings:

- ▶ **Americans are more likely to report mental health concerns since the start of the pandemic.** One-third (33%) of U.S. adults reported stress, anxiety, and great sadness that was difficult to cope with by themselves, compared to about a quarter or less in other countries.
- ▶ **Americans are the most likely to report negative economic consequences because of the COVID-19 pandemic.** More than 30 percent of U.S. respondents said they have struggled economically and were unable to pay for basic necessities, used up all their savings, or borrowed money, a significantly greater percentage than in any other country. Rates were also high in Canada (24%) and Australia (21%) but were low in Germany and the Netherlands, where only 6 percent to 7 percent of respondents reported the same.
- ▶ **Americans are the least likely to have a positive opinion of the national government's pandemic response.** Only 33 percent of U.S. adults said President Trump has done a "good" or "very good" job of handling the coronavirus pandemic. In the other countries, between 49 percent and 95 percent of respondents approved of how their president or prime minister has dealt with the crisis. People in all the countries surveyed appreciated health care workers' response to the pandemic, with 78 percent to 96 percent saying that hospitals, nurses, and doctors had done a good or very good job.

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The Commonwealth Fund is a private, nonprofit foundation supporting independent research on health policy reform and a high-performance health system.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS STUDY

To examine the early impacts the pandemic has had on the well-being of adults in the U.S. and abroad, the Commonwealth Fund contracted SSRS, a survey research firm, to interview nationally representative samples of adults in the U.S. and nine other high-income countries that participate in the Fund's annual [International Health Policy Survey](#). A total of 8,259 adults were interviewed between March and May 2020.

The full report will be available after the embargo lifts at: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2020/aug/americans-mental-health-and-economic-consequences-COVID19>

ADDITIONAL PERTINENT RESEARCH

The 2020 International Profiles of Health Care Systems:
A Useful Resource for Interpreting Country Responses to the
COVID-19 Pandemic

How the U.S. Compares to Other Countries in Responding to
COVID-19: Populations at Risk, Health System Capacity, and
Affordability of Care

Mental Health Conditions and Substance Use: Comparing U.S.
Needs and Treatment Capacity with Those in Other High-Income
Countries

International Health News Brief: COVID-19 Special Edition

What Can the U.S. Learn from Innovative Strategies Used in Other
Countries to Respond to COVID-19?

FROM THE EXPERTS:

Reginald D. Williams II, lead author of the study and Commonwealth Fund Vice President for International Health Policy and Practice Innovations

“What we learn from this study is that in the U.S., the pandemic has taken a greater toll on people’s well-being when compared to other high-income countries. As the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in the U.S. continues to increase, policymakers — at all levels of government — should look abroad for innovative solutions. There are valuable lessons we can learn, particularly around improving access to mental health services, and addressing socioeconomic needs exacerbated by the pandemic.”

David Blumenthal, M.D.,
Commonwealth Fund President

“As our country struggles with the surging number of cases and the economic havoc that the pandemic is wreaking, people in other countries are living a different, better, reality. Americans should realize that our country can do better, too. We can start by ensuring everyone can get and afford the health care they need, and by implementing public health measures, like mask-wearing, social distancing, and robust testing and tracing that can help us stop COVID-19 as so many other have effectively accomplished.”