

Americans' trust in institutions to handle COVID-19 is fading

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According to the latest results from an ongoing survey of Americans' opinions about the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans' trust is fraying in their institutions' ability to respond—especially with regard to the police,

in whom trust has fallen by 8 percent since April.

The survey, conducted by Northwestern University political scientist James Druckman as part of a consortium of four universities that includes Northwestern, Harvard, Northeastern and Rutgers, spanned the period both before and after the start of protests against police brutality over the death of George Floyd.

"The survey fielding period started before [mass protests](#) began, but ended once the protests had spread though the nation and world. We, thus, are able to pinpoint the effects of the protests," said Druckman, associate director of the University's Institute for Policy Research. "The results make clear that the protests lead individuals to become more suspect of police, even with regards to the ability of the policy to handle COVID-related issues. We also find differences, predictably, across different groups."

Indeed, overall trust in the police in the second half of May was lowest among African-Americans, with just 54% saying they have "some" or "a lot" of trust, compared to 75% of [white respondents](#), 65% of Hispanic respondents, and 73% of Asian American respondents who said the same.

There are significant differences among age groups, as well. Only 55% of Americans age 18 to 24 report trusting the police, compared to 64% for ages 25 to 44, 76% for age 45 to 64; and 83% for those 65 and older. There are also partisan differences, with 79% of Republicans and 68% of Democrats saying they trust the [police](#).

The researchers found significant effects of the pandemic on mental health, as well. Nationally, 27% of respondents describe symptoms in a range that would be considered moderate or severe depression. Those levels are more than 3 times what has been observed prior to COVID-19

in large U.S. surveys like the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Confidence in medical professionals and scientists remains high, at over 90%, but there has been a decrease of six percentage points from April to May in [trust](#) in both state governments and President Donald Trump. More highlights of the survey data are below.

- Only 15% of survey respondents say that the country should be reopened for business right away, a 4-percentage point increase from the response to that question in early May.
- Partisan differences in attitudes towards reopening continue to grow, with 30% of Republicans now in favor of immediate reopening compared to 4 percent of Democrats.
- Almost a third of the respondents (31%) say that they would avoid going to restaurants for as long as possible, even after stay-at-home restrictions are lifted.
- There was a 10-percentage point increase from late April to late May of respondents who report following mask-wearing guidelines "somewhat closely" or "very closely" (73% to 83%).
- Most Americans continue to pay attention to media coverage of the pandemic, with 83% saying they follow the news about COVID-19 "somewhat" or "very" closely.
- Over 73% of white participants in the survey got a financial relief payment, compared to 57% of African-American, 55% of Asian American and 56% of Hispanic respondents.

More information: The complete report is available online: [www.ipr.northwestern.edu/docum ... vey-police-trust.pdf](http://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/docum...vey-police-trust.pdf)

Provided by Northwestern University

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