

# The Social Impact of COVID19 in the United States, Wave 1 Report

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**Applied Social and Economic Research**  
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## Executive Summary

Based on the most recent nationally representative survey data about social life during COVID-19, this report systematically documents the impact of the pandemic on American social life. It empirically analyzes how lives and attitudes have been affected by the pandemic by the end of October 2020, and how the impact varies across social groups such as gender, religion, race, birth cohort, education, political affiliation, and region.

## Summary

- The pandemic in the United States is quite severe. By the end of October 2020, about 3% of U.S. adults were infected with the virus. Nearly half reported that friends and co-workers who did not live in the same community had also been infected. However, only 60% wore a mask every time they went out in public. Another 11.74% wore a mask less than half the time when out in public, meaning that nearly 30 million adults were putting themselves (and others) at risk of infection.
- Patterns of infection and adoption of antiviral means vary considerably by social groups. Women, Blacks and Hispanics, Democrats, Catholics, and those with higher education were all more likely to take antiviral measures such as wearing masks and to support state-level stay-at-home orders. However, the first three groups tended to have higher infection rates, while the latter two tended to have lower infection rates.
- The pandemic has severely affected individuals' lives, but its impact varies across social groups. Blacks and Hispanics, younger cohorts, those with less education, and Democrats were all more likely to lower their dietary standards, lose their jobs, have their workplaces close, and experience household-level economic hardship. Blacks and Hispanics, younger cohorts, and Democrats were more likely to work from home for regular pay. Women, Whites, middle-aged individuals, the highly educated, and Democrats had higher rates of homeschooling for their children.
- The pandemic has largely affected individuals' physical and mental health. Nearly a quarter (23.82%) of U.S. adults reported a reduction in the quantity or quality of diet due to financial hardship. On average, Americans did not feel isolated, but they described their mental stress as occasionally feeling nervous or shaky inside. Women, younger individuals, and Democrats tended to have higher levels of stress and loneliness. Catholics tended to have higher levels of stress but lower levels of loneliness than Protestants.

- Social and political trust has changed as a result of the pandemic. On average, Americans' trust in their neighbors had increased slightly, but trust in both federal and local government had declined. Trust in neighbors among blacks declined, but increased among Republicans and the less educated. Democrats and the more educated tended to blame the federal government and support local governments, while Republicans and the less educated reported the opposite.
- The pandemic has affected the way American citizens view their country. Blacks, younger cohorts, and the highly educated were less likely to think that America is doing well during the pandemic. They were also less likely to express American nationalist sentiments. In addition, nearly 90% of strong Democrats had a negative view of the Trump administration's response to the pandemic, but more than 80% of strong Republicans had a positive view. Most Republicans had strong nationalist sentiments in contrast to Democrats.
- The pandemic has also changed the American people's perceptions of China. Blacks, youth, the highly educated, and Democrats were more likely to hold a positive view of China. Conversely, Whites, older cohorts, high school graduates, and Republicans generally expressed strong negative attitudes toward China. Republicans, in particular, strongly disliked China and strongly supported sanctions against China for the viral outbreak and the handling of Hong Kong's autonomy.
- The pattern of the pandemic's impact on U.S. society varies by state and region. Residents of solid Democratic states were more likely to wear masks in public, experience unemployment, support stay-at-home orders, and feel stressed and isolated than residents of solid Republican states. Political trust and attitudes also differed by state-level partisan leanings. Geographically, Southerners had the highest infection rates, the highest average trust in their neighbors, the smallest decline in trust in the federal government, and the largest decline in trust in local governments. The opposite was generally true in the Northeast.

### **Important Findings**

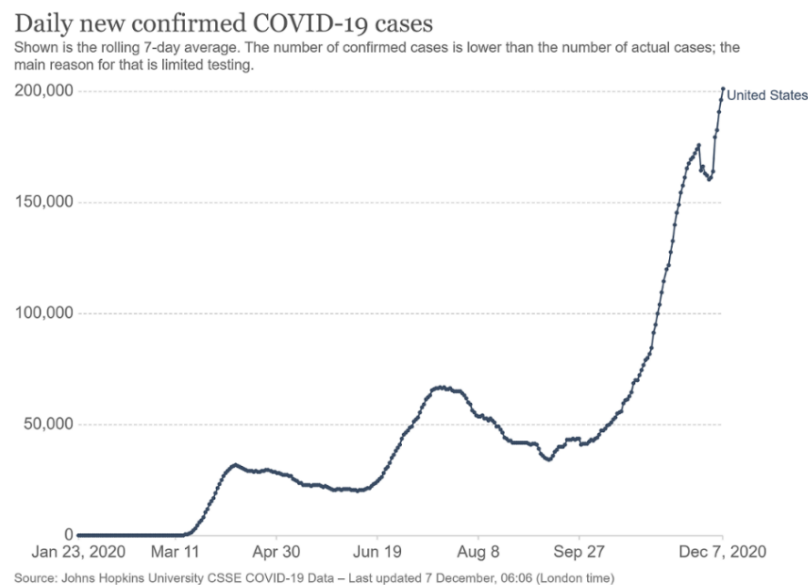
- Different social groups have been affected differently by the pandemic. The social groups mostly affected by the pandemic are women, Blacks and Hispanics, younger age groups, less educated individuals, and Democrats.
- There is a strong correlation between political affiliations and the impact of the pandemic, suggesting a deep sociopolitical divide in the United States.

## The Social Impact of COVID19 in the United States, Wave 1 Report

### 1. Introduction

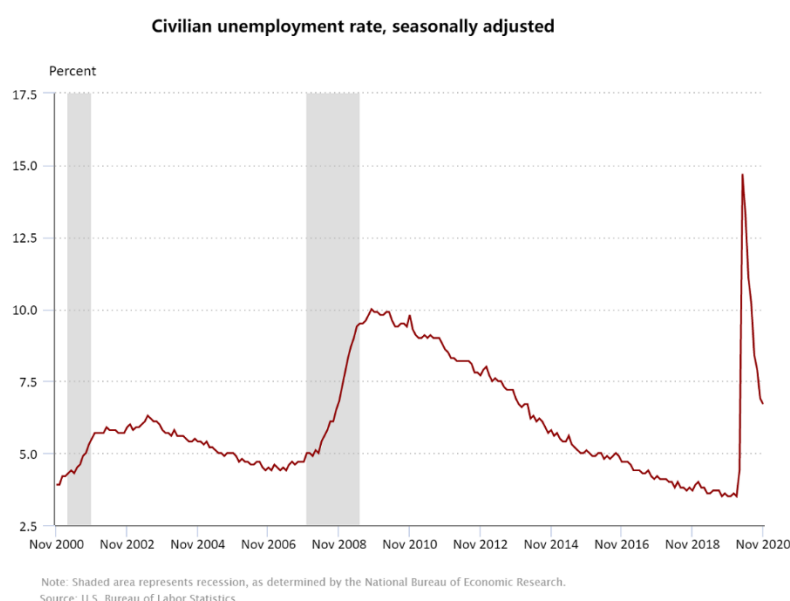
Beginning in mid-September 2020, a third wave of the COVID-19 outbreak occurred in the United States. According to the latest official data (CDC, 07/12/2020), nearly 15 million people have been diagnosed with the virus, and more than 281,000 have died. As Figure 1.1 shows, newly confirmed cases per day exceeded 40,000 in late September, but have risen to over 200,000 in early December.

Figure 1.1. Newly Confirmed COVID-19 Cases per Day in the US



With the rapid and wide spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across America, many aspects of life have changed dramatically. A large number of Americans have been infected, hospitalized, and even died. Many households have experienced or will experience financial hardship. A significant number already report reducing the quantity or quality of food they eat. The pandemic also bring about sudden job losses and abrupt changes in working conditions. As shown in Figure 1.2, the unemployment rate jumped to a historic high of 14.7% in April 2020 and was still as high as 6.7 % in November (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Of those who still have jobs, many have seen their workplaces close, forcing them to work from home. In addition, the closure of schools and childcare centers has increased the demand on parents to care for and even educate their children while continuing to work. Many are experiencing physical and mental health issues due to the uncertainty of resolving the public health crisis and economic fallout (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Robinson & Daly, 2020). In addition, the pandemic has significantly affected the way Americans think about social and political issues.

Figure 1.2. The Unemployment Rate in the United States 2000-2020



To determine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected American society, this research examined data from the first wave of the “Social Life During COVID-19” survey.<sup>1</sup> A nationally representative sample of 4,407 U.S. adults over the age of 18 were interviewed from October 8 to October 27, 2020. The survey collected extensive information about the impact of the pandemic on individuals’ work, attitudes, family, and community life. To the best of our knowledge, the survey provides the first up-to-date micro-level social survey data with a national probability sample. A follow-up survey of the same respondents is planned for March of 2021.

This report documents demographic patterns of social life and attitudes in the United States during COVID-19. It also analyzes the pandemic’s impact on the lives of individuals, families, and communities in the United States by social group, such as gender, religion, race, birth cohort, education, political orientation, and region. In particular, the report shows that the pandemic’s impact is closely tied to individuals’ political affiliations, revealing a deep divide in American society.

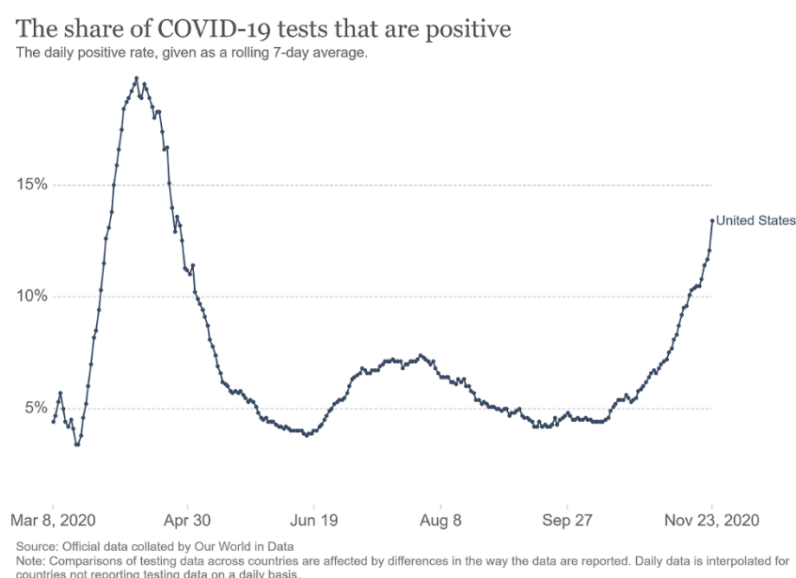
<sup>1</sup> The survey is jointly sponsored by the Center for Applied Social and Economic Research (CASER) at NYU Shanghai (PI, Xiaogang Wu) and the Center for Advanced Social Science Research at NYU Washington Square (PI, Mike Hout) with additional funding support from NYU Faculty of Arts and Science and NYU Shanghai Provost Office in New York. To ensure national representation, the study used the AmeriSpeak® Panel of the NORC at the University of Chicago as the sample source. A benchmark comparison of the national demographics (from the Current Population Survey) with the demographics of the sample respondents shows that the sample closely represents the demographics of the overall population. For more information about the AmeriSpeak Panel, please visit <https://amerispeak.norc.org/>.

## 2. The COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States

### 2.1 Test, Infection, Hospitalization, and Death

The data show that, by the end of October, about one-third (32.13%) of U.S. adults had been tested for the novel coronavirus, and 9.10% of them tested positive. As shown in Figure 2.1, this percentage is about the same level as the percentage (6%) who tested positive for COVID-19 given by official data on October 27, 2020. Overall, the unweighted and weighted rate of infection among respondents is 3.62% and 2.92%, respectively. This indicates that approximately 3% of U.S. adults are infected with the virus, which is close to the official figure.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2.1. Positive COVID-19 Tests in the United States

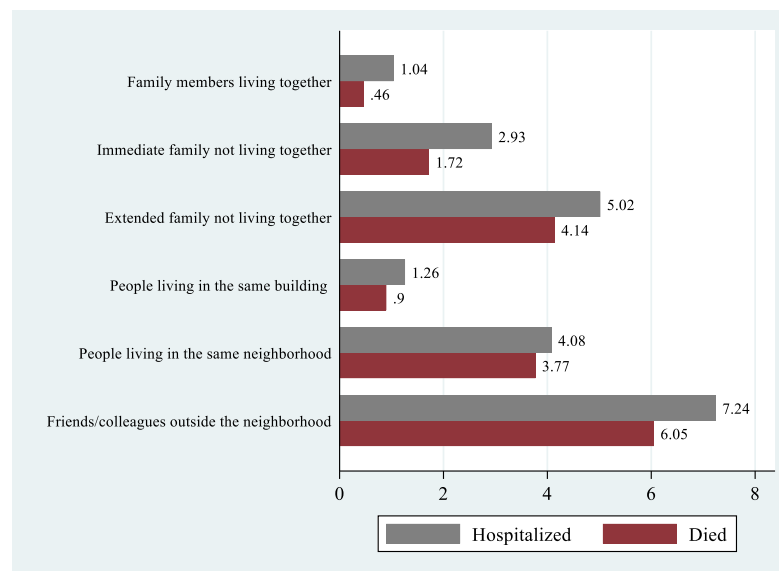


In an effort to “flatten the curve,” families and communities have been urged by the federal and local governments to forego or limit contact to reduce the chance of spreading the virus. Even so, 6.77% of respondents indicated that they had family members living together infected. Nearly a third of respondents (32.87%) reported that their immediate or extended family members who did not live with them had positive test results. In the community, 6.47% of respondents indicated that residents living in the same building were infected with the virus, and 25.78% lived near neighbors with the virus. Beyond communities, the virus was also widespread. Nearly half of the sample (47.58%) reported that they had friends, colleagues, or acquaintances who were positive for the virus but lived outside the immediate community.

<sup>2</sup> On October 27 the cumulative number of confirmed cases in the United States was 8.77 million, which corresponds to an infection rate of 2.65% in the whole U.S. population (according to the PBS News, the 2020 U.S. population is 331 million). Our weighted infection rate is slightly larger than in the population, as our population is American adults only (accounting for about 78% of the U.S. population).

Figure 2.2 shows the percentage of known individuals that respondents reported as hospitalized or dead. While the rates of hospitalization and death were relatively low for family members living together and immediate family members not living together, they were much higher among extended family members such as siblings, nephews, and in-laws. Hospitalization and mortality rates were about 4% among those living in the same community but more than 6% among friends and co-workers.

Figure 2.2. The Percentage of Known Individuals Hospitalized or Dead



## 2.2 Test and Infection by Social Group

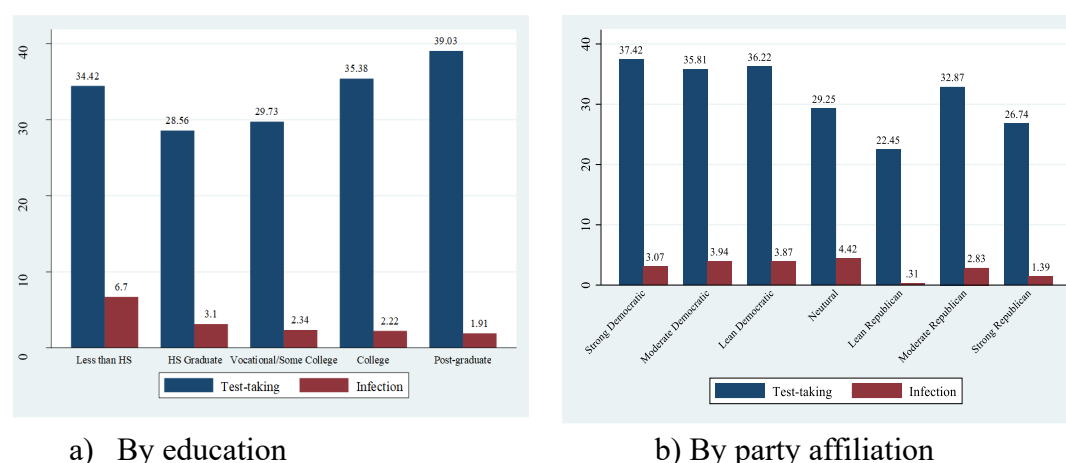
The result of infection varies considerably by social group (Kim & Crimmins 2020). Although men and women were tested at similar rates (31.63% vs. 32.52%), women had higher rates of infection than men (3.44% vs. 2.37%). In addition, Protestants were less likely than Catholics to be tested (30.69% vs. 36.32%), but they had a higher prevalence of infection, 4.43% vs. 2.08% for Catholics. Furthermore, while 27.95% of Whites tested for COVID-19, the rates were much higher for Blacks and Hispanics at 42.62% and 40.07%, respectively. However, Whites were far less likely to be infected than Blacks and Hispanics. Among those who took the test, Whites had a 5.13% rate of infection, compared to 12.08% and 17.18% for Blacks and Hispanics, respectively. In the adult population as a whole, Whites had an infection rate of 1.43%, but Blacks and Hispanics had much higher infection rates of 5.12% and 6.80%, respectively.

The percentages of test participation and infections also vary by birth cohort. Compared with older cohorts, younger cohorts had a higher rate of COVID-19 testing and a higher probability of infection. The infection rate was less than 1% among those born before 1960, but more than 4% in middle-aged (41-50 years) and younger cohorts (18-30 years). Thus, unlike the prevailing perception, it is not the older population that is more susceptible to infection, but rather the middle-aged and younger populations.

Figure 2.3. Percentages of Test-taking and Infection by Education and Political



## Party Affiliation



Figures 2.3 further shows the differences in testing and infection rates by education level and political party affiliation.<sup>3</sup> Figure 2.3a shows that individuals with higher education had higher rates of testing and lower rates of positive results. For example, the infection rate for those with a bachelor's degree or higher was about 2 %, while the infection rate for those with less than a high school education was 6.70 %, three times higher than the rate for those with higher education.

Figure 2.3b shows the testing behavior of different parties. On average, Democrats tested at a higher rate and had a higher percentage of positive results than Republicans. Strong Democrats had a 37.42% testing rate compared to only 26.74% for Strong Republicans. In addition, 3.07% of Strong Democrats and 3.84% of Moderate Democrats were infected, compared to 1.39% of Strong Republicans and 2.83% of Moderate Republicans. The differences in testing behaviors and patterns of infection outcomes among individuals with different party identities imply that politics play an important role in the impact of the pandemic.

## 2.3 Mask-wearing, Drug-taking, and Relocation

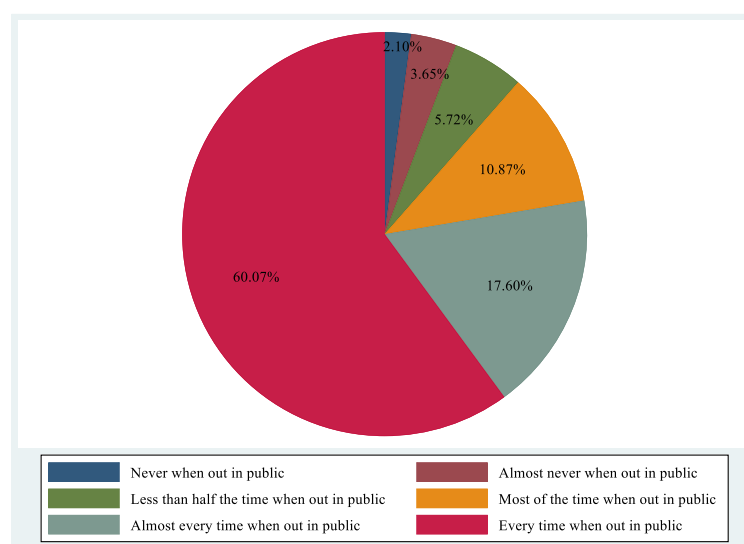
In order to prevent oneself from being infected by the virus, various precautions have been suggested. These include wearing a mask in public, using drugs/equipment/herbs, and moving to another residence. Figure 2.4 depicts the pattern of mask-wearing among American adults. The figure shows that only 60% of respondents wore masks every time they went outside. Even with the current pandemic, 5.75% of adults reported never or almost never wore a mask when going out in public.

<sup>3</sup> The survey asked respondents to answer three questions to determine their party affiliations. First, it asked respondents whether they considered themselves to be Democrats, Republicans, Independents, or none. Then, among those who identified themselves as Democrats or Republicans, the survey asked whether they were strong Democrats or strong Republicans. Those with no clear party preference were asked whether they lean more toward the Democratic or Republican party. In this way, party identification is a seven-category variable that measures individual political leanings.

This number predicts that an estimated 14.89 million adults in the overall U.S. population do the same. An additional 5.72% of respondents wore a mask less than half the time when out in public, which indicates that 14.8 million adults in the general population behave in similar fashion.

The question is, who chooses to wear or not wear a mask in public? Results show that women are more likely than men to wear masks in public every time (65.36% vs. 54.55%). They are also less likely to never wear a mask in public. Among individuals who never or almost never wore a mask in public, 9.42% were women and 13.61% were men. In addition to gender, respondents were divided along religious affiliations: Catholics were more likely than Protestants to always wear a mask in public (64.77% vs. 54.93%).

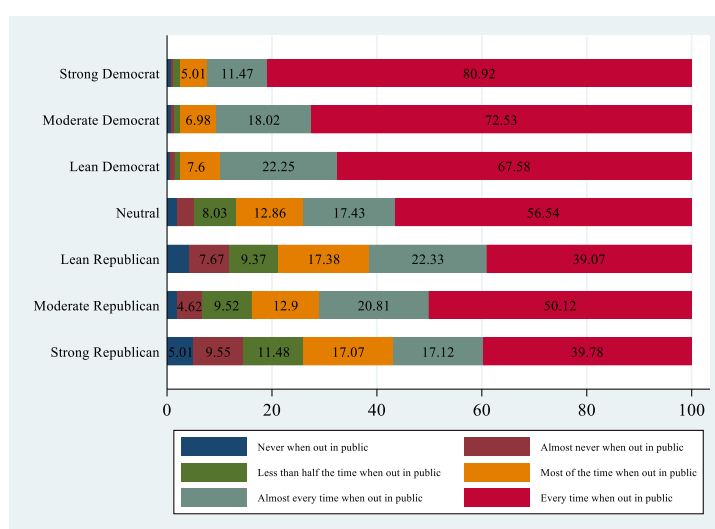
Figure 2.4. The Distribution of Mask-wearing in Public



Mask-wearing patterns also varies by race, birth cohort, education level, and partisanship. Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to wear masks in public places compared to Whites. A majority of Blacks (76.76%) and Hispanics (66.04%) wore a mask every time they went out, compared to 54.79% of Whites. The percentage of Whites who did not wear a mask in public (7.36%) was much higher than both Blacks (2.28%) and Hispanics (3.75%).

In addition, younger cohorts reported wearing masks in public at lower rates than older cohorts. Individuals born after 1990 were the least likely to wear a mask every time in public and had the highest rate of never or almost never wearing a mask in public. Older individuals seem to be more cautious than youth. More than 75% of them wore a mask every time they were in public, and only 1.02% never wore a mask.

Figure 2.5. The Percentages of Mask-wearing in Public by Party Affiliation



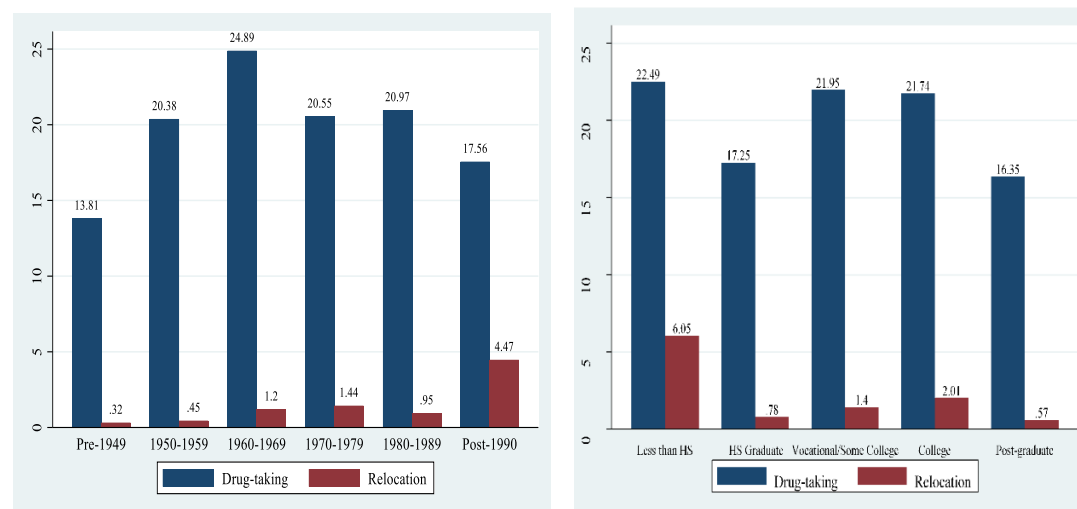
There are further differences in mask-wearing behavior by level of education. Individuals with higher education tended to wear masks in public more often than those with less education. A higher percentage of the less educated never or almost never wore masks in public: 6.95% for those with less than a high school education and 8.45% for high school graduates, compared to 4.44% for college graduates and 0.59% for graduate students.

Finally, Figure 2.5 shows that Democrats were much more likely than Republicans to wear masks in public. 80.92% of Strong Democrats wore a mask every time they went out in public and 1.16% of Democrats never or almost never wore a mask, compared to only 39.78% of Strong Republicans who wore a mask every time they went out in public and 14.56% who never or almost never wore a mask.

In addition to mask-wearing, respondents also reported taking medications or supplements prophylactically and even relocating to prevent contacting the virus. In the data, 951 respondents (19.86%) reported taking medications and 60 (1.69%) reported having moved to new locations due to the pandemic. The empirical data also showed that 22.87% of women used medications and 1.80% relocated due to the outbreak, compared to 16.71% and 1.56% of men, respectively.

Again, patterns of drug use and relocation to prevent disease vary by social group. Blacks and Hispanics had higher rates of drug use and relocation than Whites, with Hispanics having the highest rate of relocation (3.06%). The youngest and oldest cohorts had lower rates of drug use than middle-aged adults, and those born after 1990 had the highest rate of relocation due to the pandemic (4.47%), as shown in Figure 2.6a. Figure 2.6b show that the rate of relocation because of COVID-19 was particularly high for those with less than a high school education (6.05%). In general, Democrats had higher rates of using antiviral means; they had relatively higher rates of drug use and relocation than Republicans.

Figure 2.6. Percentages of Drug-taking and Relocation by Birth Cohort and Education

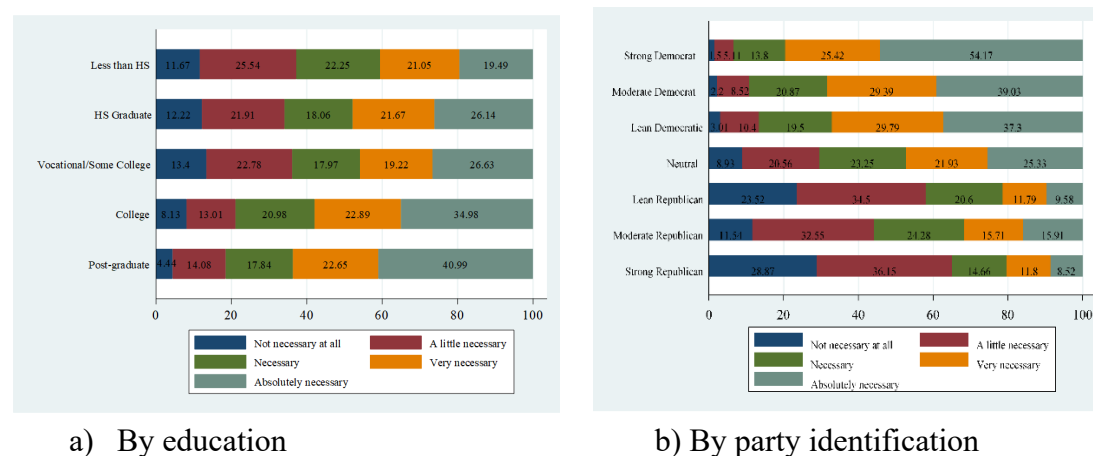


## 2.4 Policy Attitude: Necessity of Stay-at-Home Orders

In addition to antiviral tactics at the individual level, many states implemented stay-at-home orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, urging residents to stay in their homes and leave only for necessities such as food and medical care. How do Americans evaluate the need for stay-at-home orders in the fight against COVID-19? Results shows that by late October 30.56% of respondents still believed that a stay-at-home order was only “a little necessary” or “not necessary at all.” The percentage who thought the policy was “absolutely necessary” or “very necessary” was about 50%.

The attitude toward the necessity of state-level stay-at-home orders varied across social groups. Protestants were less likely than Catholics to believe that a state-level stay-at-home order was absolutely or very necessary (40.49% vs. 53.31%). In addition, 68.47% of Blacks and 54.97% of Hispanics believed that state-level enforcement of stay-at-home orders was either very necessary or absolutely necessary, but only 43.82% of Whites felt the same way. The youngest cohort was only slightly less likely to support the policy than the oldest cohort (27.22% vs. 30%), but youth were more likely to disapprove of the policy (29.44% vs. 24.21%). Figure 2.7a shows that the higher the level of education, the higher the support for the policy. The percentage of those who thought the policy was absolutely necessary or very necessary was more than 56% in the college-educated group, but only about 40% in the least educated group. Figure 2.7b further shows that the policy attitude differed primarily by political affiliation. In general, Democrats strongly approved of the policy, while Republicans strongly disapproved. For example, nearly 80 % of Strong Democrats thought the policy was absolutely or very necessary, but more than 65 % of strong Republicans thought the policy was only a little necessary or not necessary at all.

Figure 2.7. Percentages of Thinking Stay-at-home Order Necessary by Education and Party Identification



## 2.5 Summary

By the end of October in the week before the U.S. Presidential Election, about one-third (32.13%) of American adults had been tested for the novel coronavirus, and 9.10% were positive. Overall, 2.65% to 3% of U.S. adults were infected with the virus. Nearly half of the survey sample (47.58%) reported that friends, co-workers, and acquaintances living outside their communities had tested positive. However, only 60% of these respondents wore a mask every time they went out in public. A much smaller percentage, 5.75%, reported never or hardly ever wearing a mask when going out in public. Another 5.72% wore a mask less than half the time.

Although women were more likely than men to wear masks and pursue antiviral means such as medication and relocation to prevent themselves from contacting the virus, they were infected at higher rates than men. Protestants were less likely than Catholics to always wear a mask in public and believe that a state-level stay-at-home order was absolutely or very necessary, and they had higher rates of infection than Catholics. Compared to Whites, Blacks and Hispanics both had higher rates of wearing masks in public, taking antiviral drugs or supplements, moving residences, and viewing stay-at-home orders as necessary. They were also more likely than Whites to take the COVID-19 test but had a higher proportion of positive results. Compared to the older cohorts, the younger cohorts were less likely to wear masks in public. Youth also had higher rates of COVID-19 testing and were more likely to be infected. Highly educated individuals were more likely than less educated people to wear masks in public; they also tended to rate stay-at-home orders as necessary. In addition, they had higher rates of taking the test and lower rates of positive results. Democrats were more likely than Republicans to wear masks in public and to favor stay-at-home orders. They also had higher rates of testing and positive results.

### 3. The Pandemic's Impact on Personal Life

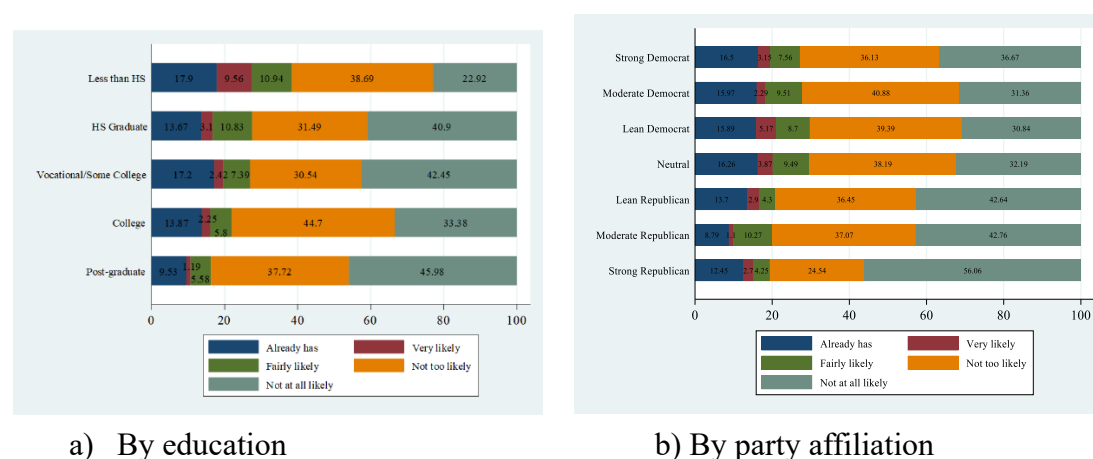
#### 3.1 Employment and Job loss

As a result of the pandemic and subsequent economic insecurity, 14.35% of U.S. workers have lost their jobs.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 17.90% of those currently employed believe they are likely to lose their jobs in the coming 12 months. Overall, more than a quarter (25.25%) of survey respondents had actual or expected job loss.

Women were more likely to lose their jobs than men (e.g., CNS 2020). Among survey respondents in the working population, 16.60% of women and 12.21% of men have lost their jobs. Of those still employed, 20.41% of women and 15.76% of men expected to lose their jobs or be laid off within a year.

The distribution of respondents' actual and expected job losses vary by race, birth cohort, education, and political partisanship. While 21.40% of Whites have lost their jobs or expect to, comparable percentages are 28.82% for Blacks and 33.26% for Hispanics. About 20% of the 51-70 age group and 35 % of the 31-50 age group have lost or expect to lose their jobs, while the figure for those ages 18-30 was more than 40%. Figure 3.1a shows that education helped secure jobs during the pandemic: 38.40% of the less educated and 16.30% of those with a graduate degree suffered unemployment. Figure 3.1b shows that, in general, Democrats were more likely to be unemployed than Republicans: about 27 % of Democrats and 20 % of Republicans were actually or expected to be unemployed.

Figure 3.1. Distribution of Actual and Expected Job Loss by Education and Party Identification

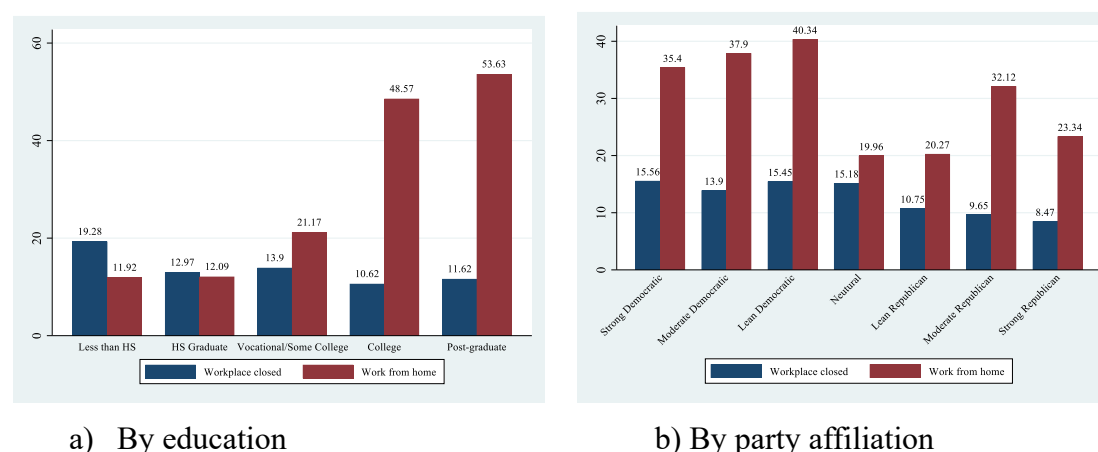


<sup>4</sup> The working population is defined as individuals in the labor market based on employment status and includes both employed and temporarily unemployed job seekers. Another definition is the population ages 18-65. The actual and expected unemployment rates calculated from these two definitions are very close.

### 3.2 Work Patterns

The pandemic has also changed work patterns. Of those currently working, 12.85% reported that their workplaces have closed due to the pandemic, and 30.54% said they worked from home.

Figure 3.2. Distribution of Work Patterns by Education and Party Affiliation



Among those currently employed, women were more likely than men to have their workplaces close (16.45% vs. 9.77%), but they were slightly less likely to work from home (29.59% vs. 31.35%). Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to have their workplaces close and to work from home. While 35.72% of Blacks and 31.33% of Hispanics reported having to work from home for regular wages, the figure for Whites was 27.88%. Younger age groups were more likely to have their workplaces close and to work from home than older age groups. The highest percentage of individuals working at home was in the 31-40 age group (37.2%), compared to 32.03% in the 18-30 age group and about 17% in the 60+ age group. Figure 3.2a shows that work patterns vary significantly by level of education. About 20% of the least educated group had closed workplaces compared to about 10% of the more educated group. In addition, slightly more than 10% of those with a high school education or less reported working from home, while about half of those with a college/graduate education worked from home for regular wages. Figure 3.2b shows that, on average, Democrats were more likely to experience workplace closures and work from home. 15.56% of Strong Democrats had their workplaces close, compared to 8.47% of Strong Republicans. To earn a regular wage, 35.4% of Strong Democrats and 23.34% of Strong Republicans had to work from home.

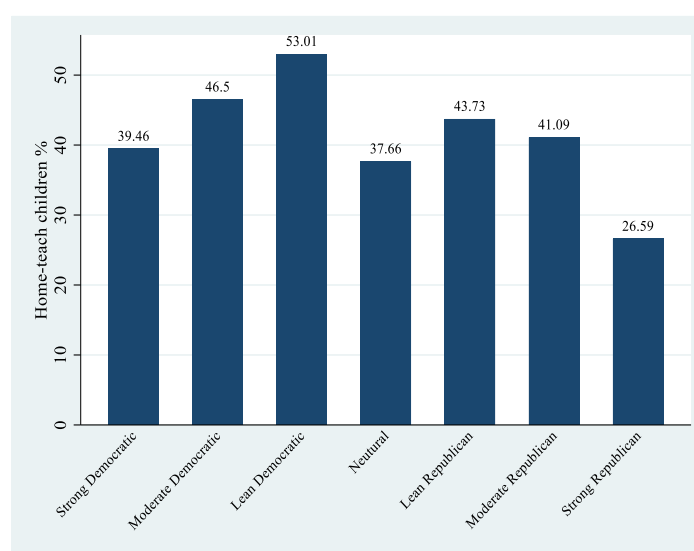
### 3.3 Parenting Patterns

The pandemic has affected the way children are educated. Of those with at least one child under the age of 18, 40.22% said they had to teach their school-age children at home due to school closures. This burden falls disproportionately on the mother (see

also Zamarro & Prados 2020): 47.37% of women and 31.94% of men in the sample took on the teaching responsibilities.

The pattern of children's education during the pandemic also varies by ethnicity, parental education, and political party affiliation: 33.30% of Blacks and 39.83% of Hispanics reported teaching their children at home, compared to 41.15% of Whites. Also, assuming the role of teacher were 52.83% and 49.14% of respondents ages 31-40 and 41-50, respectively, compared to only 27.26% of the post-1990 cohort. 32.81% of those with less than a high school degree homeschooled their own children, as did 39.61% of those with a college degree and 55.19% of those with a graduate degree. Finally, as Figure 3.3 shows, overall, Democrats homeschooled their children at a higher rate than Republicans. The percentage was 39.46% for Strong Democrats and 26.59% for Strong Republicans.

Figure 3.3. The Percentage of Respondents Homeschooling Children by Political Party Affiliation



### 3.4 Physical Health

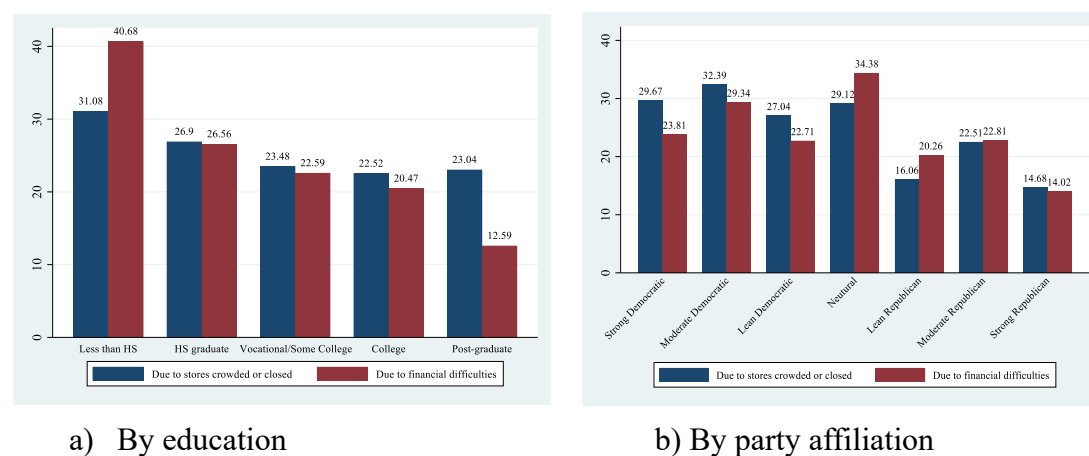
The pandemic has severely affected the quantity and quality of food some Americans are consuming. Our data show that a quarter of respondents (24.99%) have reduced their dietary standards because grocery stores were too crowded or closed, and 23.82% have lowered the amount or the quality of food due to financial difficulties.

Approximately 29% of women have reduced food quantity or quality either due to overcrowded or closed grocery stores or due to economic hardship, but this figure is about 20% for men. More than 30 percent of Blacks and Hispanics have lowered their dietary standards, while about 20% of Whites have done the same. Younger age groups were more likely to be affected by the pandemic: about 30% of those under 50 reported lowering their food standards due to economic hardship, compared to only about 9% of



respondents older than 70 and about 20% of those ages 51-70. Figure 3.1a further shows that the higher the level of education, the less likely a respondent was to lower food standards due to economic hardship: more than 40 % of respondents with less than a high school education reported lowering food quantity or quality for economic reasons, but only 20.47 % of college graduates and 12.59 % of post-graduates reported this. Figure 3.1b shows that Democrats were generally more likely than Republicans to reduce their food standards either due to crowded or closed stores or financial difficulties.

Figure 3.4. The Percentages of Reduced Dietary Standards by Education and Political Party Affiliation



### 3.5 Mental Health

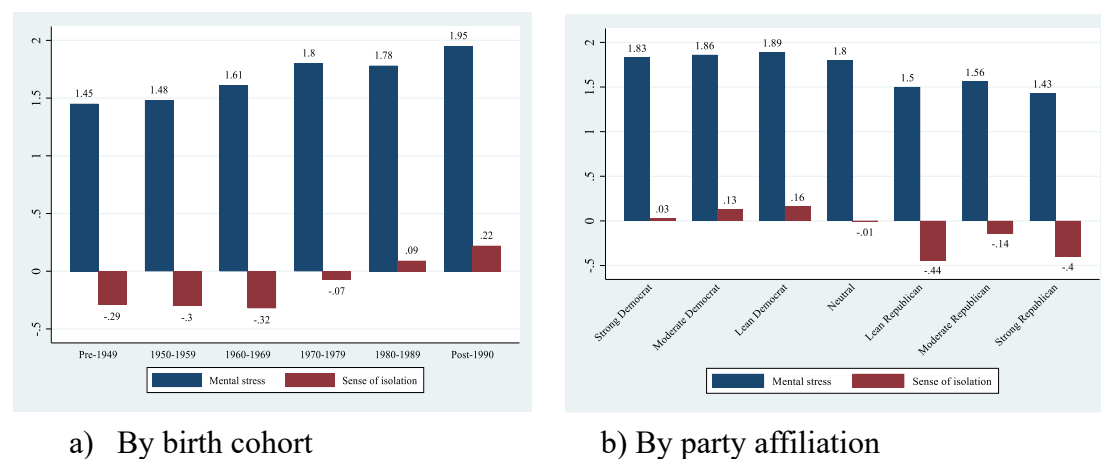
The pandemic has brought mental stress and loneliness to Americans (Daly et al. 2021; McGinty et al. 2020; Salari et al. 2020). To measure mental stress, the survey used a 5-point Likert scale known as the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL-5). The HSCL-5 is a validated and widely used assessment of anxiety and depressive symptoms (Schmalbach et al., 2019). It consists of five questions about the frequency of several emotions in the past week: nervousness or shakiness inside, feeling fearful, feeling blue, worrying too much about things, and feeling hopeless about the future. The response categories are rarely (<1 day), occasionally (1-2 days), often (3-4 days), and always/usually (5-7 days). The survey also asks respondents whether they feel very isolated or wish to talk to people more often to measure their feelings of isolation.

Our data show that about 13% of respondents reported feeling nervous, shaky, or fearful inside more than 3 days in the past week, 19.02% often or always felt blue, 27.66% often or always worried too much about things, and 18.83% often or always felt hopeless about the future. In addition, about one-third of respondents (32.44%) agreed that they felt very isolated and more than one-third (37.78%) wished they could talk to people more often.

We then averaged the five HSCL-5 measures on a scale of 1 to 4 (rarely=1, always/usually=4) and the two measures of isolation on a scale of -2 to 2 (strongly disagree=-2, strongly agree=2). The mean level of mental stress is 1.71, suggesting that the average American occasionally feels tense or shaky. The mean level of sense of isolation is -.08, indicating that Americans on average did not feel lonely.

Comparisons between groups show that women tended to have higher levels of stress than men (1.82 vs. 1.58). They also had higher feelings of loneliness than men (-0.02 vs. -0.15). Catholics tended to have higher levels of stress (1.68 vs. 1.47) and lower levels of isolation than Protestants (-.16 vs. -.21). Hispanics tended to have higher levels of stress and loneliness than Whites and Blacks. Their average level of loneliness was 0.11, compared to -.16 for Whites and -.17 for Blacks. Younger cohorts were more likely to experience stress and loneliness compared to older groups, as shown in Figure 3.5a. Those born after 1990 had the highest mean levels of stress (1.95) and loneliness (.22). Further, less educated groups were generally more likely to experience stress and loneliness than more educated groups. Those with less than a high school education had higher mean levels of stress (1.85) and loneliness (.19) than any other educational group. Finally, Figure 3.5 shows that Democrats tend to have higher levels of stress and loneliness compared to Republicans: their average levels of loneliness were all above 0, indicating that they tended to feel somewhat lonely during the pandemic, whereas Republicans did not.

Figure 3.5. The Mean Levels of Mental Stress and Sense of Isolation by Birth Cohort and Political Party Affiliation

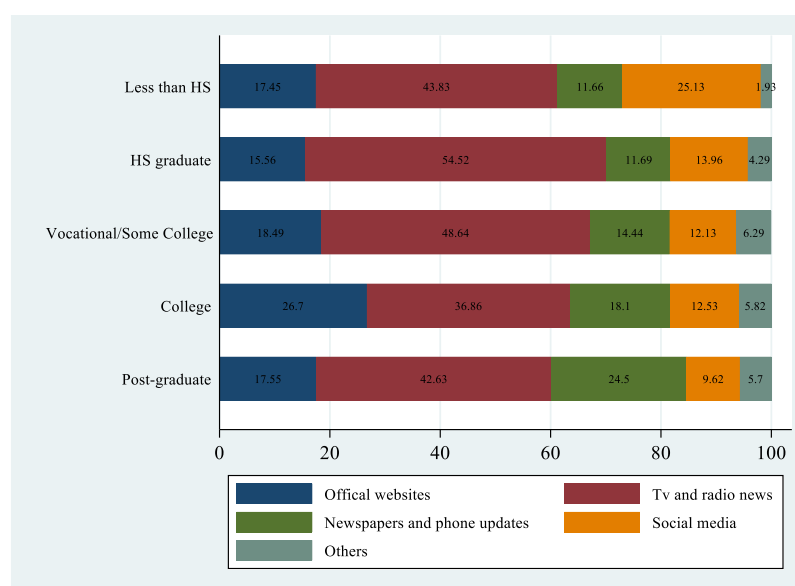


### 3.6 Source of COVID-19 Information

Where do individuals get most of their information about the COVID-19 pandemic? Results show that 18.97% of respondents obtained information from government websites or local health department websites, 46.86% from TV or radio news, 15.37% from newspapers and smartphone updates, and 13.69% from social media.

More women than men got their information from official websites (20.19% vs. 17.69%) and social media (14.77% vs. 12.56%). Compared to Whites and Hispanics, Blacks had the lowest percentage of obtaining information from official websites (10.46%) and social media (9.93%), but the highest percentage from TV or radio news (52.81%). In addition, as shown in Figure 3.7, the higher the level of education, the more likely individuals were to get information from newspapers and phone updates, and the less likely they were to get information about the outbreak from social media. Strong Democrats were more likely than Strong Republicans to obtain information from traditional media such as television, radio news, and newspapers (71.08% vs 61.46%), and slightly less likely to obtain information from social media (9.75% vs 11.75%). This pattern contradicts a previous finding based on online survey data that the most utilized sources of COVID-19 information are social media platforms (Ali et al., 2020).

Figure 3.6. The Distribution of Source of COVID Information, by Education



### 3.7 Summary

Our data show that a quarter of respondents (24.99%) reduced their dietary standards because grocery stores were too crowded or closed, and 23.82% reduced the quantity or quality of food due to economic hardship. Women, Blacks and Hispanics, younger cohorts, those with less education, and Democrats were more likely to be affected by the pandemic in terms of lowering dietary standards.

Among the working population, 14.35% had lost their jobs, and 17.90% of those currently employed believed they would likely to lose their jobs in the next 12 months. Another 12.85% of workers reported that their workplaces were as a result of the pandemic, and 30.54% reported that they needed to work from home to receive regular

pay. Women, Blacks and Hispanics, younger cohorts, those with less education, and Democrats were more likely to report having lost or expecting to lose their jobs in the next 12 months. In addition, they were more likely to have their workplaces close. Blacks and Hispanics, younger cohorts, Democrats were more likely to work from home for regular pay, but women and less educated individuals were not.

Among those with at least one child under the age of 18, 40.22% reported educating school-age children because of school closures. This burden was more likely to fall on mothers: 47.37% of women and 31.94% of men in the sample took on teaching responsibilities. Whites, middle-aged groups, and the highly educated had higher rates of homeschooling their children. In general, Democrats were more likely than Republicans to educate their children at home.

In terms of mental health, on average, Americans occasionally felt nervous or shaky, but did not feel alone. Women were more likely than men to report higher levels of stress and loneliness. Catholics tended to have higher levels of stress but lower levels of loneliness than Protestants. Younger cohorts were more likely to report stress and loneliness than older cohorts. Those with less than a high school education had higher levels of stress and loneliness than any other educational group. Democrats tended to have higher levels of stress and loneliness compared to Republicans; they tended to feel lonely during the pandemic, whereas Republicans generally did not.

Finally, in terms of primary sources of pandemic information, slightly more women than men relied on official websites and social media. Blacks were more likely to rely on television or radio news and least likely to obtain information from official websites and social media. Those with higher education placed more emphasis on getting information from newspapers and phone updates and were less likely to get information from social media. Strong Democrats were more likely than Strong Republicans to get their information from traditional media rather than social media.

## **4 The Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life**

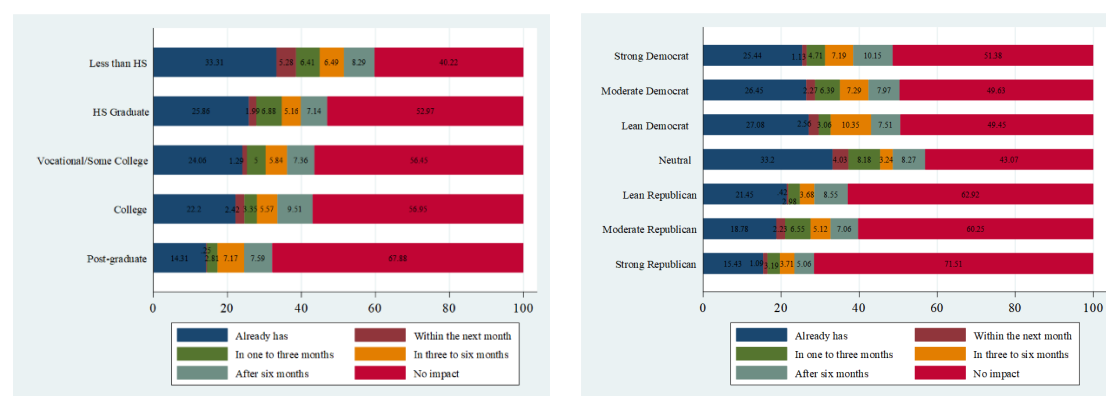
### **4.1 Family Financial Difficulties**

The pandemic, combined with the recession, has caused much financial hardship. Among respondents, 23.87% reported that their families were experiencing financial difficulties due to the pandemic, 12.88% expected to experience economic hardship in the next six months, and another 7.82% expected to experience financial difficulties six months from now.

Women were more likely than men to report that their household had experienced economic hardship (28.21% vs. 19.36%). Blacks and Hispanics (both about 29%) were more likely than Whites (20.8%) to have experienced economic hardship at the household level. They were also more likely (13.74% and 16.18%, respectively) than

Whites (11.07%) to expect family economic hardship in the near future. Families in younger age groups were more likely to be affected by the pandemic than older age groups. Approximately 30% of those ages 18-50 actually experienced household financial hardship, and less than half (44.02%) were unaffected by the current pandemic. Figure 4.1a shows that the highly educated were less likely to be affected by the pandemic in terms of household finances as 56.95% of those with a college degree and 67.88% of those with a graduate degree reported no current financial difficulties, compared to 40.22% of those with less than a high school education. Figure 4.1b shows that Democrats were more likely than Republicans to experience financial hardship in their households. About half of Democrats were not affected by the pandemic, but this number exceeded 60% for Moderate Republicans and those leaning Republicans and 70% for Strong Republicans.

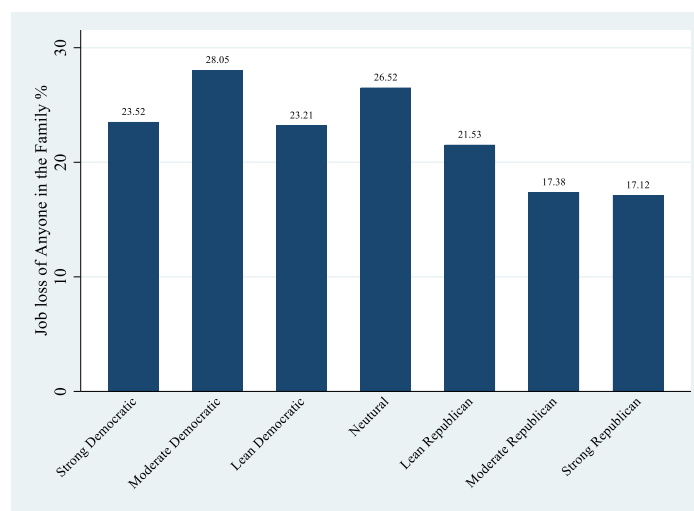
Figure 4.1. The Distribution of Actual and Expected Family Financial Difficulties by Education and Political Party Affiliation



## 4.2 Job Loss among Family Members

The data show that 7.18% of respondents had a spouse or partner who lost a job during the pandemic. In addition, 22.50% of respondents indicated that at least one family member was unemployed.

Figure 4.2. The Distribution of Job Loss at the Family Level by Political Party Affiliation

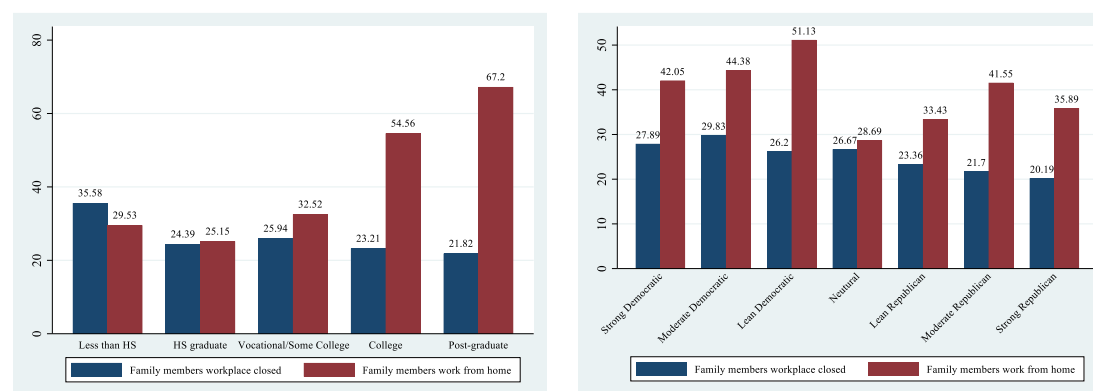


Job loss in households also varies by social group. Women were slightly more likely than men to report job loss among family members (23.57% vs. 21.38%). A third of Hispanics (35.04%) and 23.10% of Blacks reported losing a job at the family level, while only 18.03% of Whites did so. Younger cohorts were more likely than older cohorts to have a family member experiencing job loss: 32.39% for the post-1990 cohort and less than 20% for the pre-1960 cohort. The less educated group tended to have higher job loss rates at the household level: 35.24% for those with less than a high school degree in contrast to 17.09% for those with a graduate degree. Finally, as shown in Figure 4.1, Democrats tended to have a higher rate of family-level job loss than Republicans. The rate was more than 23% for Democrats, but about 17% for moderate and strong Republicans.

### 4.3 Work Patterns of Family Members

Of respondents currently in the labor market, 25.41% reported that the workplace of at least one member of the household was closed, while 39.66% reported that at least one member of the household worked from home. A slightly higher percentage of females than males reported that at least one family member experienced a workplace closure (27.78% vs. 23.02%), but a higher percentage of males than females reported that at least one family member worked from home (42.75% vs. 36.61%).

Figure 4.1. The Distribution of Job Loss at the Family Level by Education and Political Party Affiliation



Hispanics (36.63%) were more likely than Whites and Blacks (21.31% and 23.05%, respectively) to have a family member with a closed workplace. They were also more likely than Whites and Blacks (37.04% and 39.51%, respectively) to have a family member working from home (42.28%). In addition, younger cohorts were more likely than older cohorts to have a family member whose workplace was closed and to have a family member who worked from home. More than half (52.42%) of respondents ages 31-40 and 46.15% of those ages 18-30 had at least one family member working from home, compared to less than 30% of those ages 60 and older. Figure 4.3a shows that those with less than a high school degree had the highest percentage of family members with a closed workplace (35.58%), but those with a graduate degree had the highest percentage of family members who worked from home (67.2%). Figure 4.3b shows that, in general, Democrats were more likely than Republicans to have a family member whose workplace was closed or who worked from home.

#### 4.4 Parenting Patterns of Family Members

Of the respondents with at least one child under the age of 18, 57.43% (60.48% of females and 53.89% of males) reported that at least one family member homeschooled their child or children, and 22.71% identified a spouse or partner as the one assuming teaching responsibilities. The percentages were higher for Hispanics (58.41%) and Whites (57.24%) and lower for Blacks (52.41%). A higher percentage of the 31-40 age group (67.43%) had at least one family member educating their children at home than other age groups. In addition, 57.12% of college graduates and 65.65% of post-graduates reported having a family member homeschooling their children, compared to 52.92% of those with less than a high school education. About 60% of Democrats reported a family member teaching their school-age children at home, but the figure for Strong Republicans was lower at 44.61%.

## 4.5 Summary

Almost a quarter (23.87%) of households reported experiencing economic hardship due to the pandemic, and 12.88% expected to experience economic hardship in the next six months. The percentage of respondents indicated that at least one member of their household experienced job loss was 22.50%. Among labor market respondents, 25.41% reported that the workplace of at least one member of the household had closed, and 39.66% reported that at least one member in the family worked from home. Of those respondents with at least one child under the age of 18, 57.43% reported having a family member who homeschooled the child or children.

Women were more likely than men to report that their households had experienced financial hardship, unemployment, workplace closures, and home schooling of children, but men were more likely than women to report that at least one family member worked from home. Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than Whites to experience family-level economic hardship, job loss, workplace closures, and working from home. Families in younger age groups were also more likely to be affected by the pandemic in these aspects than in older age groups. Highly educated individuals were less likely to be affected by the pandemic in terms of household finances and unemployment, but they were more likely to work from home. Democrats were more likely than Republicans to experience financial difficulties and unemployment at the household level. They were also more likely than Republicans to have a family member whose workplace was closed or who worked from home.

## 5 The Impact of the Pandemic on Community Life

### 5.1 Mask Wearing in the Community

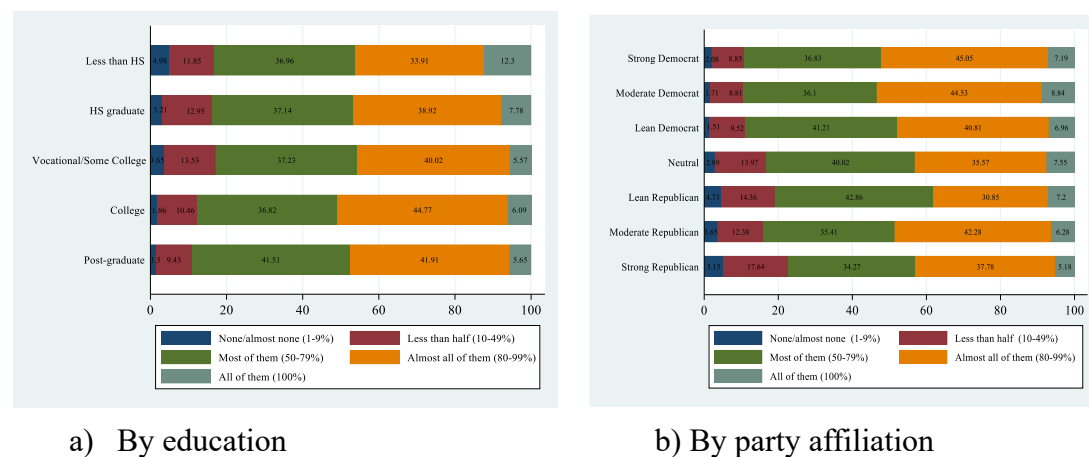
The pandemic has also affected people's community life. According to survey data, 87.43% of respondents said that their cities or towns had non-essential stores closed due to the pandemic. Regarding the wearing of masks in the community, 3.03% of respondents indicated that less than 10% of their community wore masks. Another 12.08% of the respondents reported that less than half of the people in their community wore masks when they went outside. While most community residents reported wearing masks in public, only 6.97% of respondents reported that all residents in their communities wore masks when they went out in public.

Patterns of mask wearing in the community vary by social group. Women were more likely than men to report that 100% of the individuals in their communities wore masks (8.5% vs. 5.4%). Catholics were more likely than Protestants to say that nearly all or all residents in their communities wore masks (53.43% vs. 46.85%). About 13% of Blacks and Hispanics indicated that everyone in their community wore masks when went outside, while only 4.31% of Whites said this. A greater proportion of the youngest cohort than the oldest cohort reported that residents in their communities never or



almost never wore masks when they were out in public (15.33% vs. 8.95%). Figure 5.1a shows that compared to the highly educated, a larger percentage of those with less than a high school education reported that everyone or less than 10% of individuals in their communities wore a mask in public. Figure 5.2b further shows that a larger percentage of Republicans believed that residents of their communities rarely wore masks in public (10.93% of Strong Democrats said this, compared to 22.77% of Strong Republicans).

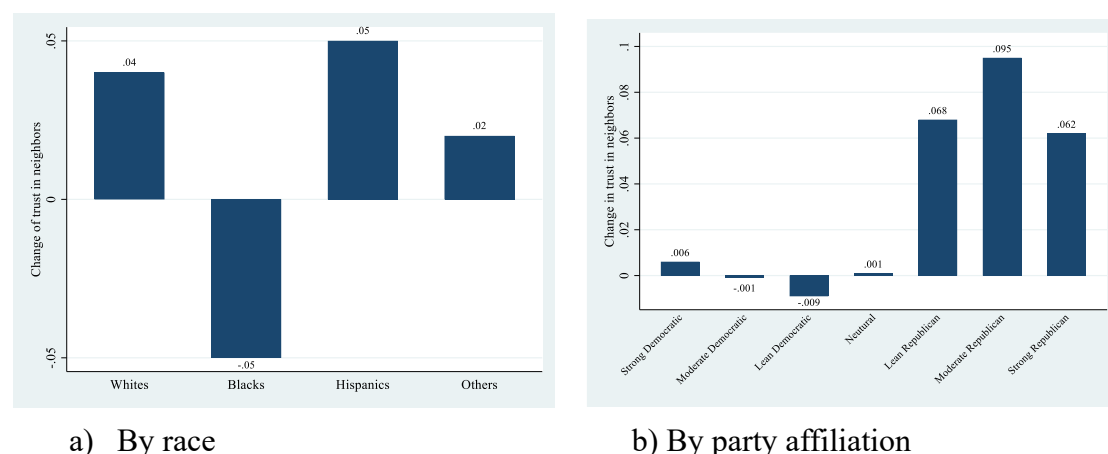
Figure 5.1. The Distribution of Mask-wearing among Community Residents by Education and Political Party Affiliation



## 5.2 Trust in Neighbors

How has trust in neighbors changed during the course of the pandemic? The results show that since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic last spring, 9.96% of respondents increased their trust in neighbors, and 7.04% decreased their trust. On a scale of -1 to 1 (decrease=-1, increase=1), trust in neighbors averaged 0.029, meaning that Americans' average trust in their neighbors has increased.

Figure 5.2. Change of Trust in Neighbors by Race and Party Affiliation



A slightly higher percentage of women than men reported increased trust in their neighbors (10.81% vs. 9.06%), and 13.40% of Hispanics trusted their neighbors more, compared to 9.64% of Whites and 7.56% of Blacks. As Figure 5.2a shows, on average, Blacks' trust in their neighbors declined. Across birth cohorts, those in their 30s had the greatest increase in trust in their neighbors (0.048) than other age groups. Trust in neighbors also increased the most among those with less than a high school education (.048), even more than among those with higher education (.041). Figure 5.3b shows that during the pandemic, Democrats' trust in their neighbors changed only slightly on average, while Republicans' mean trust in their neighbors increased substantially.

#### 5.4 Summary

While most residents wore masks in their neighborhoods, 15.11% of Americans said that less than half of those living in their community wore a mask in public. Larger percentages of women, Catholics, older cohorts, Blacks and Hispanics stated that nearly all or all residents of their communities wore masks. By contrast, larger percentages of Whites, younger cohorts, highly educated individuals, and Republicans found that their neighbors rarely wore masks in public.

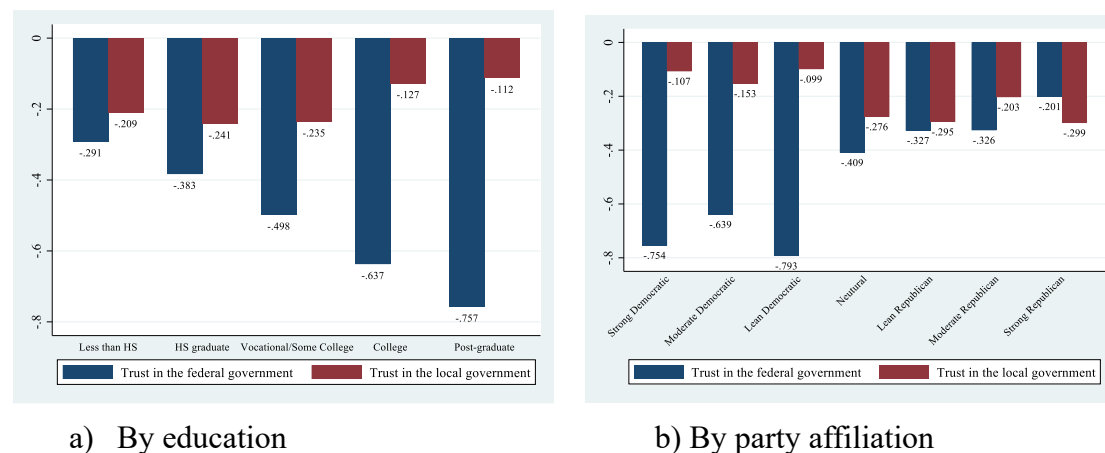
On average, Americans' trust in their neighbors increased slightly. Women were a little more likely than men to increase trust in their neighbors. Blacks' trust in their neighbors, however, declined. Those with less than a high school education increased trust in their neighbors the most, even more than those with higher education. Democrats' trust in their neighbors changed only slightly, while Republicans' trust in their neighbors increased considerably.

## 6 The Impact of the Pandemic on Political Trust and Attitudes

### 6.1 Trust in Federal and State Governments

Overall, trust in both the federal and state governments tended to decline, and the decline was greater in the former than in the latter. 56.19% of Americans decreased their trust in the federal government and 33.02% trusted state governments less than they did before the pandemic's onset. Only 5.78% and 13.25% of Americans increased their trust in the federal government and local government, respectively. On a scale of -1 to 1 (decrease = -1, increase = 1), average trust in the federal government was -.504, and the average trust in state government was -.198.

Figure 6.1. Change of Trust in Federal and Local Government by Education and Party Identification



The average trust in the federal government was  $-.497$  for women and  $-.511$  for men, indicating that men's trust in the federal government declined slightly more than that of women. Conversely, women's average trust in state government was  $-.204$  compared to men's  $-.191$ , implying that trust in local government has declined slightly more for women than for men.

In addition, Blacks' average trust in federal and local governments declined more than that of Whites and Hispanics. Their average trust in the federal government was  $-.625$ , compared to  $-.487$  for whites and  $-.421$  for Hispanics. Across age groups, those in their 40s experienced the greatest decline in trust in the federal government ( $-.544$ ), while those in their 50s declined most in trust of local government ( $-.256$ ). In general, the higher the level of education, the greater the decline in trust in the federal government and the smaller the decline in trust of local government. As Figure 6.1a shows, the average trust in the federal government was  $-.637$  for those with a college degree and  $-.757$  for those with a graduate degree, but the figure was  $-.291$  for those with less than a high school education. Figure 6.1b shows that Democrats had the largest decrease in trust in the federal government and the smallest decrease in trust in local government, while Republicans reported the opposite. Descriptive statistics show that 79.33% of Strong Democrats reduced their trust in the federal government, and 30.15% lowered their trust in local government. The figures for Strong Republicans were 30.31% and 39.06%, respectively. This pattern suggests that Democrats tended to blame the Trump administration and support local government, while the opposite was true for Republicans.

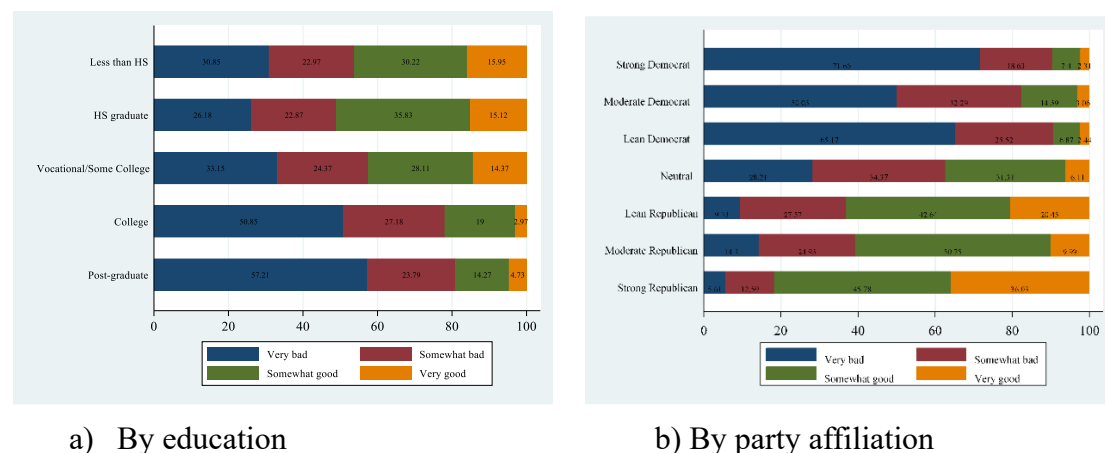
## 6.2 Rating the Government's Response to the Pandemic

How do Americans evaluate the U.S. government's response to the pandemic? Our data show that, by the end of October 61.59% of Americans had a negative view of the Trump administration's response to the pandemic. 37.35% of Americans thought the

U.S. is doing a very bad job, and another 24.25% thought it's doing somewhat badly.

This view differs little by gender, but varies by race, birth cohort, education, and political party affiliation. Blacks (82.05%) were much more likely than whites (54.04%) to have a negative view of the U.S. response to the pandemic. Younger generations were less likely to think the United States is doing a good job than older generations. More than 70% of those in the 18-30 age group had a negative view of the U.S. government's response to the pandemic, compared to about 55% of those older than 50. Figure 6.2a shows that the higher the level of education, the greater the dissatisfaction with the government's efforts to combat the pandemic. Most (78.03%) college graduates and 81.0% of those with graduate degrees reported that the United States was doing very badly or somewhat badly. Only half of those with a high school education or less thought so. Figure 6.2b shows that this view also varies largely by political party affiliation. Nearly 90% of Strong Democrats held a negative view of the Trump administration's response to the pandemic, but more than 80 percent (81.81%) of Strong Republicans had a positive view. Again, beliefs about the pandemic are differentiated by partisanship.

Figure 6.2. Rating America's Response to the Pandemic by Education and Political Party Affiliation



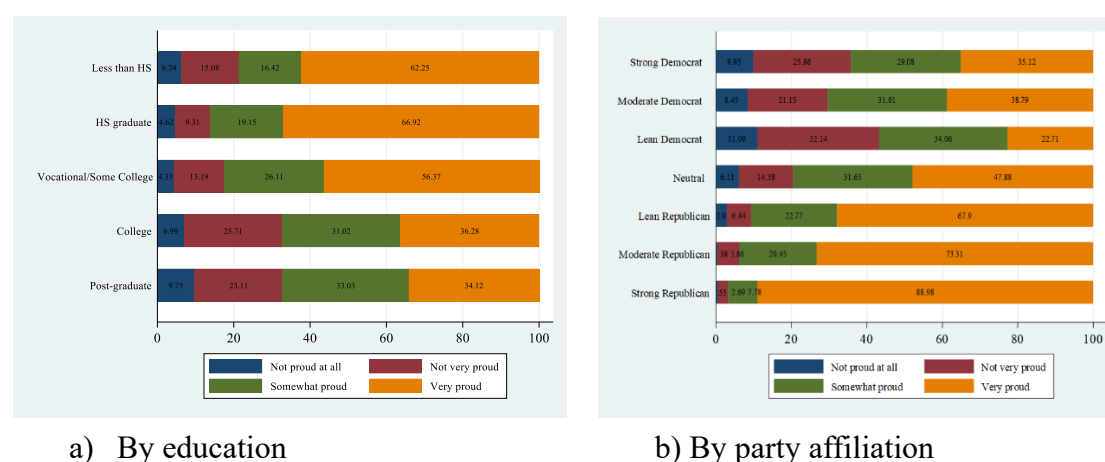
### 6.3 American Nationalism

Given the current situation in the United States and the rise of nationalism, we asked respondents how proud they feel of their country. The survey indicates that 78.37% of Americans had strong nationalist sentiment: 53.47% of respondents said that they were very proud of being an American, and an additional 24.90% were somewhat proud of their American identity.

Gender differences were insignificant on this item. However, Blacks showed less nationalist sentiment than Whites and Hispanics. Only 43.37% of Blacks felt very proud to be American, compared to 57.11% of Whites and 54.33% of Hispanics. Younger

cohorts showed lower nationalist sentiment: 38.71% of those in the 18-30 age group were not very or not at all proud of being an American, compared to less than 15% of those over 50. Figure 6.3a shows that about 32% of those with a college degree or higher were not proud to be American, compared to 13.93% of high school graduates and 21.32% of those with less than a high school degree. Figure 6.3b shows that this issue is again divided by partisan leanings. Most Republicans were very proud to be an American, but Democrats favored the American identity much less. 35.81% of strong Democrats were not proud to be American, but only 3.42% of strong Republicans felt this way.

Figure 6.3. Percentages of Proud to be an American by Education and Political Party Affiliation



## 6.4 Summary

Handling of the pandemic has adversely affected Americans' trust in government as 56.19% of Americans said their trust in the federal government has decreased, and 33.02% reported that their trust in state government has fallen. While 78.37% of respondents were still proud to be Americans, 61.59% had a negative view of the Trump administration's response to the pandemic.

On average, men's trust in the federal government declined slightly more than that of women, but women's trust in local government declined slightly more than that of men. Blacks' trust in federal and local government declined more than that of Whites and Hispanics. In general, the higher the level of education, the greater the decline in trust in the federal government and the lower the decline in trust in local government. Blacks, younger cohorts, and the highly educated were less likely to think that America is doing well and less likely to feel proud to be Americans.

Attitudes are shaped by partisanship. Democrats tended to blame the Trump administration and support local government, while Republicans did the opposite. In

addition, nearly 90 % of Strong Democrats had a negative view of the Trump administration's response to the pandemic, but more than 80 % of Strong Republicans had a positive view. Most Republicans took great pride in being American, but Democrats expressed lower nationalist sentiment.

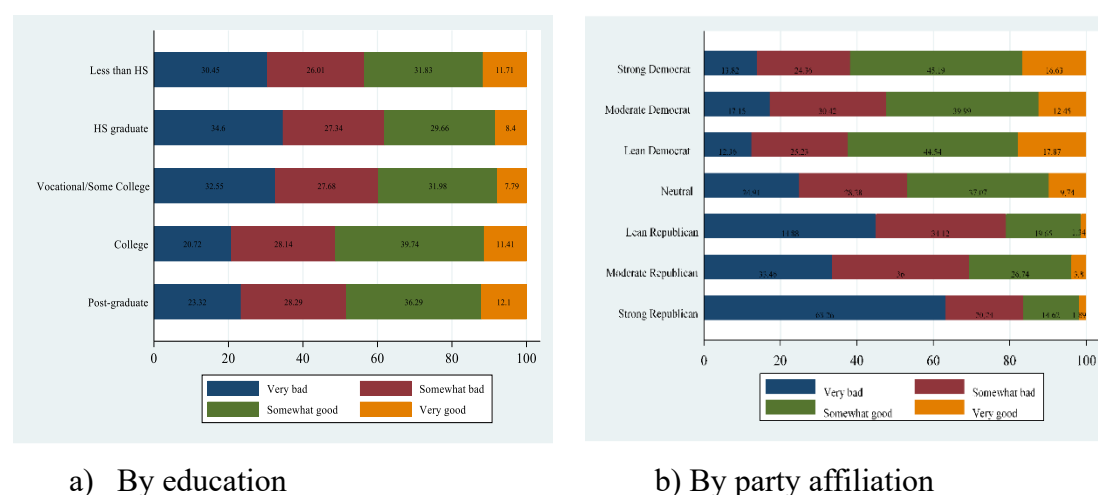
## 7 The Impact of the Pandemic on Political Attitudes toward China

### 7.1 Rating China's Response to the Pandemic

Only 42.91% of Americans were positive about China's response to the pandemic, including 33.31% of respondents who reported that China did a somewhat good job and 9.60% who thought the country did a very good job.

Again, gender differences were insignificant, but perceptions of China differed by socioeconomic group and partisan identity. Blacks (59.55%) had a more positive view of China's response to the pandemic than Whites (36.83%) . Younger age groups were more likely to think China is doing a good job than older age groups. 55.44% of the 18-30-year-old had a positive view of China's response to the pandemic, compared to about 34% of those aged 50 and older. Figure 7.1a shows that about 50% of those with a college degree or higher believed that China is doing a good or somewhat good job, while less than 40% of those with a high school education thought so. Figure 7.1b shows that this view again varies largely by party identification. More than 50% of strong Democrats had a positive view of China's response to the outbreak, but only 16.15% of strong Republicans held this view.

Figure 7.1. Percentages of Rating China's Response to the Pandemic by Education and Political Party Affiliation

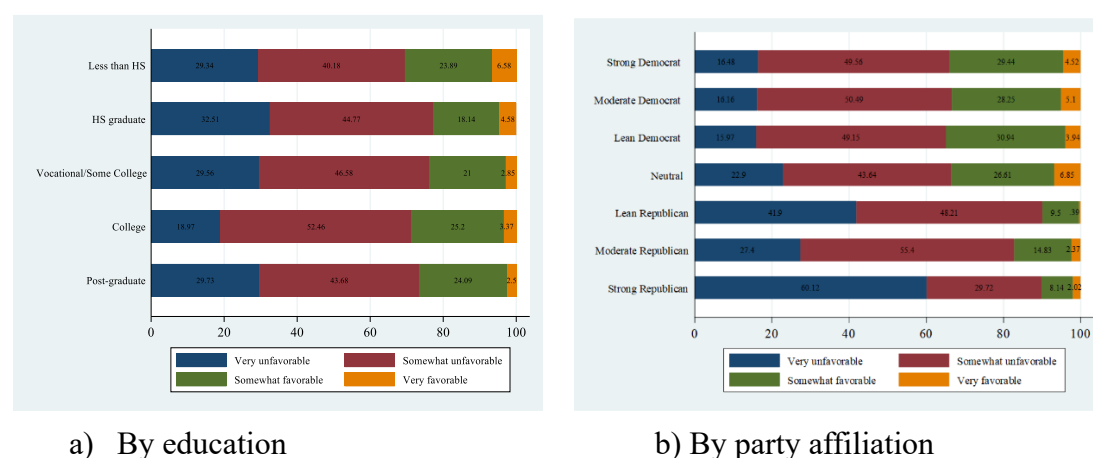


## 7.2 Views of China

The results show that only a quarter of Americans (25.34%) had a positive view towards China: only 3.78% of respondents favored China very much, while 21.65% had a somewhat favorable view of China.

Men were less likely than women to favor China (22.64% vs. 28.09%). Blacks favored China more (41.70%) than whites (18.92%) and Hispanics (32.28%). Younger age groups were more likely to favor China than older age groups: 36.43% of the 18-30 age group thought China is very or somewhat favorable, compared to 12.55% of those over 70 years old. Figure 7.2a shows that more than a quarter of those with a college degree or higher thought favorably of China, but those with a high school degree had the strongest negative view toward China: only 22.72% of them favored China. Figure 7.2b additionally shows that Republicans strongly disliked China: about one-third of Democrats thought China is very favorable or somewhat favorable, but only 9.89% of Republican leaners, 17.20% of moderate Republicans, and 10.16% of strong Republicans held this view.

Figure 7.2. Percentages of Favoring China among Americans by Education and Party Identification

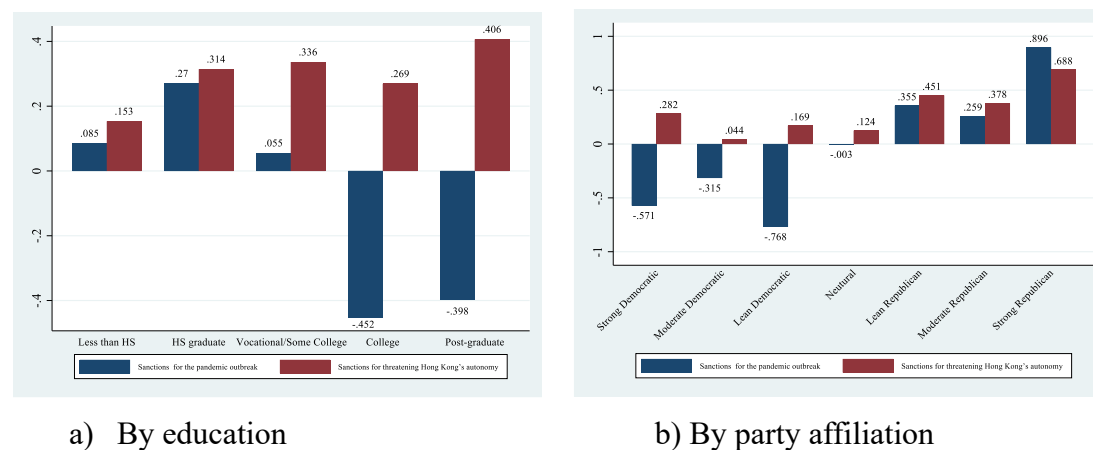


## 7.3 Sanctions Against China

To further understand Americans' attitudes towards China, the survey asked respondents whether they agree that the U.S. government should impose sanctions against China for America's economic loss due to the Covid-19 outbreak or for threatening Hong Kong's autonomy. Results show that respondents generally disagreed with sanctioning China for the pandemic but were more likely to agree with the imposition of sanctions for the Hong Kong issue. About one-third of Americans agreed to sanctions over the outbreak, but one-third were neutral, and one-third disagreed. Slightly more Americans (37.38%) agreed that China should be sanctioned for threatening Hong Kong's autonomy, while only 15.12% disagreed.

To see how opinions vary across demographics, we recoded the two items into a -2 to 2 scale (strongly disagree = -2, strongly agree = 2). The mean value is -.033 for pandemic sanctions and .308 for Hong Kong sanctions. We find that men were less in favor of sanctioning China over the pandemic than women (-.062 vs. -.006), but more in favor of sanctioning China for threatening Hong Kong's autonomy (.157 vs. .466). Blacks tended to disagree with sanctions against China over the outbreak (-.203), but Whites were more likely to agree with sanctioning China on both the pandemic and Hong Kong issues (.05 and .398, respectively). Older individuals were more likely than younger individuals to support sanctions for the pandemic outbreak and the Hong Kong issue. Data show that the mean for the first attitude of those ages 70 or older is 0.211, compared to -0.377 for those ages 18-30. The mean for the second attitude of those ages 70 or older is 0.532, compared to 0.148 for those ages 18-30. Figure 7.3a further shows that those with higher education did not favor sanctioning China over the pandemic but tended to favor sanctioning China over the threat to Hong Kong's autonomy. The mean of the first attitude is -.452 for those with a college degree and -.398 for those with a graduate degree, while the mean of the second attitude is .269 for those with a college degree and .406 for those with a graduate degree. Figure 7.3b shows that the Democrats were not inclined to agree with sanctions against China for the outbreak of the pandemic, but Republicans strongly supported sanctioning China over the pandemic outbreak and China's handling of Hong Kong's autonomy.

Figure 7.3. The Mean Levels of Sanctions against China by Education and Political Party Affiliation



## 7.4 Summary

Although 43.81% of Americans thought China was doing a good job in response to the pandemic, only 25.34% viewed China somewhat or very favorable. In general, respondents did not agree with sanctions against China for the pandemic, but tended to agree with the sanctions against China's for the handling of Hong Kong's autonomy.

Blacks, young cohorts, highly educated, and Democrats had a more positive view of China. They tended to think highly of China's response to the pandemic and favored



China more. They also tended to disagree with sanctions against China over the pandemic outbreak. Among them, highly educated and Strong Democrats tended to favor sanctions against China for the Hong Kong issue. Whites, older adults, respondents with a high school education, and Republicans generally expressed strong negative attitudes toward China. Republicans, in particular, strongly disliked China and strongly supported sanctions against China over the pandemic and Hong Kong.

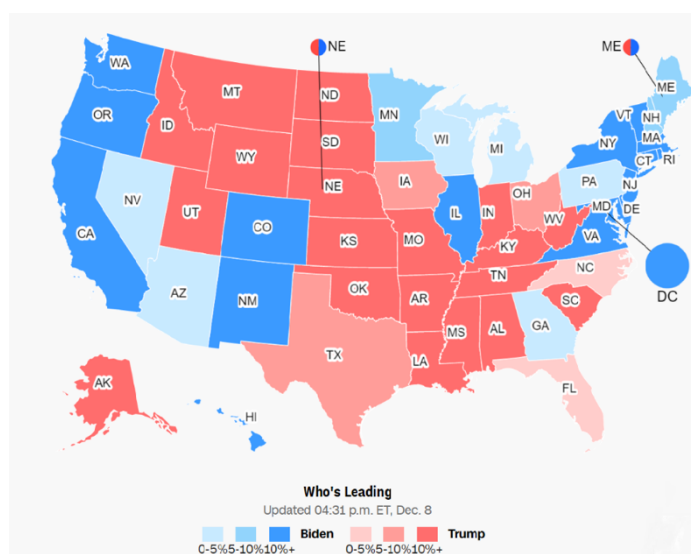
## 8 Regional Differences

### 8.1 Political Standings in the 2020 Election by states

Does the impact of the pandemic on American society vary by states? Since our data collection period was close to the 2020 American Presidential Election, we first recoded American states according to their political party preference during the election cycle. Following the election, but before the final tally was certified, we recoded states as Democratic or Republican states based on which party was ahead in the polls by at least 5%, as shown in Figure 8.1.

Results show that respondents from solidly Democratic states were more likely to wear masks in public than respondents from solidly Republican states (62.54% vs. 55.62%). They were also more likely to experience job loss during the pandemic (13.11% vs. 8.17%). Compared to residents of Republican states, they tended to feel that stay-at-home orders were very or absolutely necessary (54.44% vs. 45.53%). On average, they were slightly more likely to feel stressed (1.75 vs. 1.69) and lonely (.049 vs. -.194). In addition, 56.10% of those from solidly Democratic states reported that community members wore masks almost all the time or every time they were in public, compared to 34.60% of those from solid Republican states.

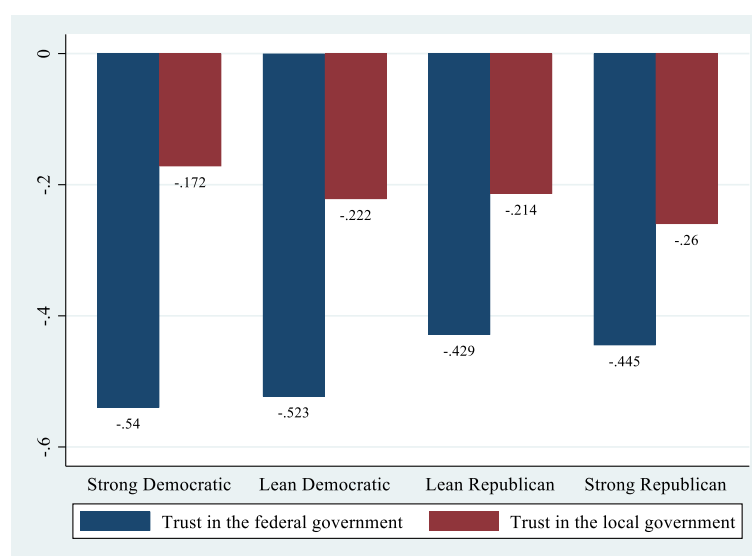
Figure 8.1. 2020 Presidential Election Results by State



Source: BBC News, 12/08/2020

Political trust and attitudes also varied by state-level party leanings during the 2020 election. Citizens from Republican states had slightly more trust in their neighbors than those from Democratic states (0.035 vs. 0.025). However, when it comes to trust in federal and local government, as shown in Figure 8.2, those from blue Democratic states were more likely than those from red Republican states to lower their trust in the federal government, but less likely to lower their trust in local government. The patterns are consistent with those previously illustrated in Figure 5.2 and Figure 6.1.

Figure 8.2. Change of Trust in Federal and State Government by States in the 2020 Election

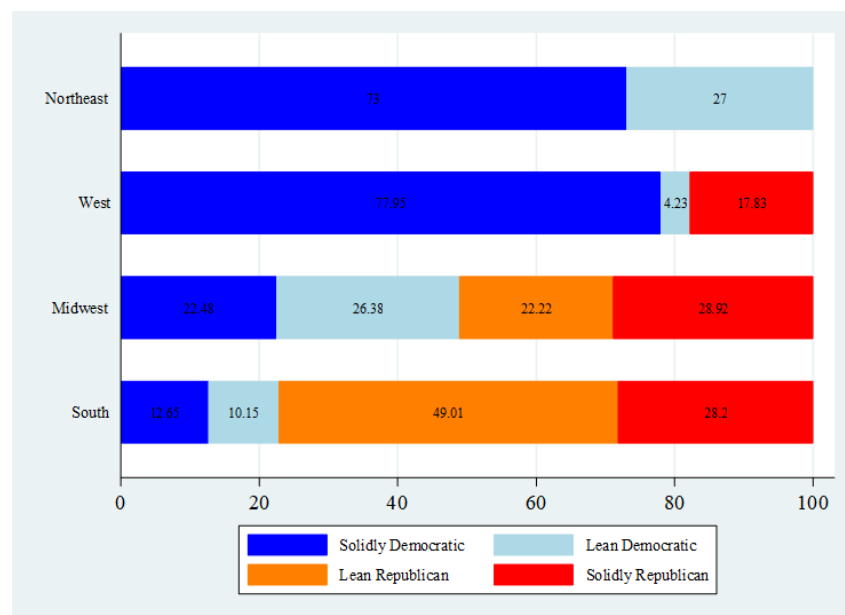


Moreover, similar to the effect of party identification, those from solidly Democratic states were less likely than those from solidly Republican states to think that the United States did very or somewhat well during the pandemic (34.81% vs. 42.45%). They were also less likely to feel very proud to be an American than those from solidly Republican states (48.46% vs. 58.77%). Democrats were more likely to have a positive view of China. They tended to think that China was doing a good job in dealing with the outbreak (46.09% vs. 41.38%), and they were more likely to favor China (27.92% vs. 20.77%). On China sanctions, they were less likely than those from solidly Republican states to support sanctions against China for the pandemic outbreak (27.63% vs. 34.51%), but slightly more likely to support sanctions against China for threatening Hong Kong's autonomy (39.03% vs. 34.56%).

## 8.2 Difference by Geographic Location

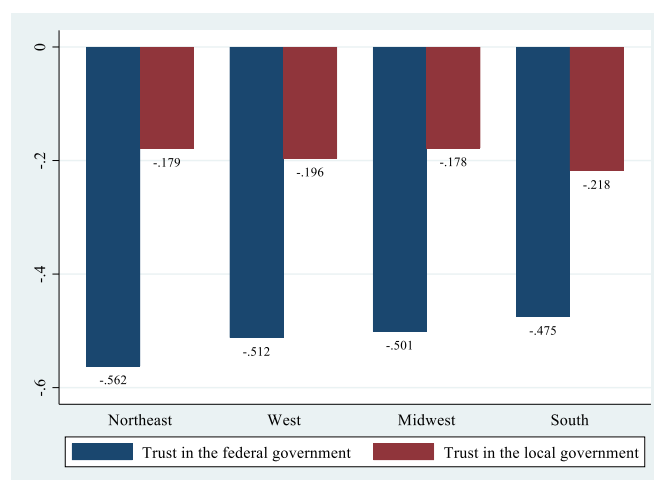
Another way to look at regional differences is to recode the states by geographic location (1=Northeast, 2=West, 3=Midwest, 4=South). Figure 8.3 depicts the distribution of blue and red states in the 2020 presidential election by geographic region. It shows that in 2020, the Northeast is pro-Democrat, while the South is predominantly pro-Republican.

Figure 8.3. The Distribution of Blue and Red States by Geographic Region



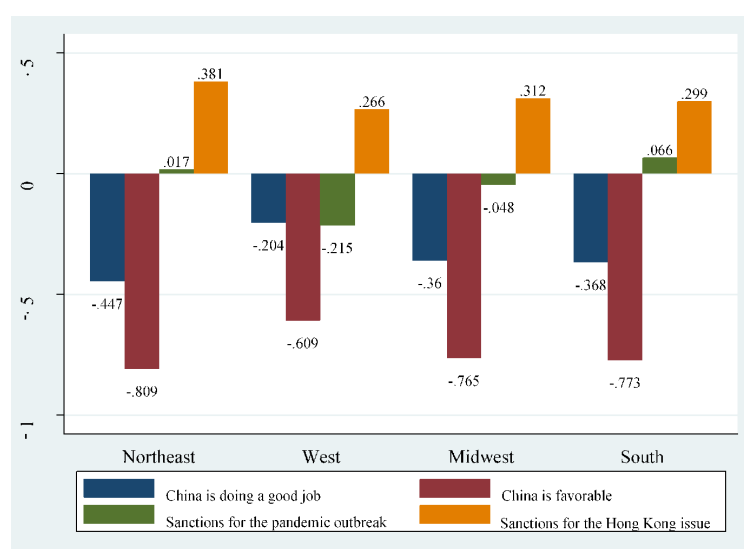
How does the pandemic's impact differ geographically? Our data show that individuals in the South had the highest Covid-19 infection rate (3.21%) compared to 2.52% in the Northwest, 2.57% in the Midwest, and 3.06% in the West. Individual-level patterns of mask-wearing behavior varied little by geographic region, but residents in the Midwest and South were significantly less likely to report that members of their community wore masks almost all of the time or every time they were in public (36.03% and 45.39%, respectively) than those in the Northeast (59.44%). Approximately 22% of individuals in the South and West reported being unemployed or expecting to have job loss in the next 12 months, but the figure for their peers in the Northeast and Midwest was about 18%.

Figure 8.4. Change of Trust in Federal and Local Government by Geographic Region



In terms of political trust and attitudes, those in the South had the highest average trust in their neighbors (.044), and Midwesterners had the lowest (0.012). Figure 8.4 further shows that individuals in the Northeast had the greatest decline in trust in the federal government (-.562) and almost the least decline in trust in local government (-.179), but the opposite was true for those in the South. Those in the West were least likely to believe that the United States did a good job during the pandemic (-.601) and feel proud of their American identity (.83), while those in the South were most likely to believe so (-.407 and 1.17, respectively). Finally, as Figure 8.5 shows, residents in the West tended to have the most favorable views of China compared to residents of other regions, but individuals in the Northeast generally held the most negative views.

Figure 8.5. Political Attitudes toward China by Geographic Region



### 8.3 Summary

The patterns of how the pandemic affected American society vary by state/region. Compared to those from solidly Republican states, individuals from solidly Democratic states were more likely to wear masks in public, experience job loss, support stay-at-home orders, feel stressed and lonely, and have more neighbors in their communities wear masks when going out. They were also more likely to reduce their trust in the federal government but less likely to reduce their trust in local government. They were less likely to think the Trump administration did a good job in the pandemic and to feel proud of being an American. Overall, however, they were more likely to have a positive view of China.

Geographically, those in the South had the highest rate of Covid-19 infection (3.21%), while those in the Northwest had the lowest rate (2.52%). In terms of political trust and attitudes, Southerners had the highest average trust in their neighbors. They also had the smallest decline in trust in the federal government and the largest decline in trust in local government, but the opposite was true for those in the Northeast. They were more likely to believe that the United States did a good job during the outbreak

and to be proud to be American. Finally, residents of the West tended to have the most favorable views of China, but those in the Northeast generally held the most negative views.

## **9 Summary and Conclusion**

This report systematically and quantitatively analyzes the impact of the pandemic on U.S. society based on the most recent nationally representative data about social life during COVID-19. Results show that while the pandemic in the United States is quite severe with an infection rate of about 3%, only 60% of American adults wear a mask every time they go out in public. Another 11.74% wear a mask less than half the time when out in public, leaving nearly 30 million adults at risk of infection and infecting others.

In addition, patterns of infection and adoption of antiviral means vary by social group. Women, Blacks, Hispanics, and Democrats had higher rates of wearing masks in public, taking antiviral drugs or supplements, moving residences, and viewing stay-at-home orders as necessary, but they were more likely to be tested and infected. By contrast, Catholics and the highly educated were also more likely to always wear a mask in public and believe state-level stay-at-home orders were necessary, but they tested at higher rates with lower rates of infection.

The pandemic has severely affected people's personal and social lives, and its impact varies by demographics. Blacks and Hispanics, younger groups, those with less education, and Democrats were more likely to lower their food standards, lose their jobs, have their workplaces close, and experience family-level economic hardship. Blacks and Hispanics, younger cohorts, and Democrats were more likely to work from home for regular pay, but women and less educated individuals were not. Women, Whites, middle-aged individuals, the highly educated, and Democrats had higher rates of homeschooling their children. In terms of mental health, women, younger groups, and Democrats tended to have higher levels of stress and loneliness. Catholics tended to have higher levels of stress but lower levels of loneliness than Protestants.

The pandemic has changed individuals' views and attitudes during the pandemic. We find that Blacks' trust in their neighbors decreased during the pandemic, while those with less than a high school education reported trusting their neighbors the most. Democrats' trust in their neighbors changed only slightly during the pandemic, while Republicans' average trust in their neighbors increased considerably. We also find that Blacks, younger groups, highly educated people, and Democrats were less likely to think the United States did a good job during the pandemic and less likely to feel proud of being an American. Democrats tended to blame the Trump administration and supported local government, while Republicans reported exactly the opposite.

Moreover, the pandemic has changed American people's perceptions of China. Results show that Blacks, the young cohorts, the highly educated, and Democrats were more likely to have a positive view of China. Conversely, Whites, older cohorts, high school graduates, and Republicans generally expressed strong negative attitudes toward China. Republicans, in particular, strongly disliked China and strongly supported sanctions against China for the pandemic outbreak and threat to Hong Kong's autonomy.

Finally, the patterns of how the pandemic has affected American society vary by region. We find that the effects of the pandemic differ widely depending on state-level political leanings in the 2020 presidential election and geographic location.

These findings suggest that the social groups most affected by the pandemic were women, Blacks, and Hispanics, younger age groups, less educated individuals, and Democrats. They suffered disproportionately from Covid-19 infection, unemployment, economic hardship, and emotional stress. They were more likely to have a negative view of the Trump administration and a positive view of China. These patterns are largely consistent across various dimensions of personal and social life in the United States.

Our findings also suggest that, in addition to socioeconomic status, political party affiliation is closely related to the impact of the pandemic on Americans' behavior and thinking. The impact of the pandemic has varied not only with party identification at the individual level, but also with partisan preference at the state level. Thus, individuals' political positions seem to influence not only their political views, but also their social behavior during the pandemic. In this sense, through systematic empirical evidence, this study contributes to the understanding of how the pandemic interacts with political stances to further shape the socio-political divide in the United States.

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