Key Findings


- People are highly engaged in COVID, with 57% paying attention very closely or extremely and another 33% somewhat closely.

- However, they are having mixed results finding reliable information. 30% say it is difficult to find factual information on COVID and 37% say it has gotten harder since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Americans are split on how easy it is to know if information about COVID is true or not. Information about treatments and schools reopening is the hardest to come by.

- People are hearing information from places they don’t trust, and they rarely consult the most trusted sources. The media is the top source of COVID information (46% get information at least once a day), but only 18% place high trust in COVID info from them.

- Meanwhile, the most trusted sources—people’s doctors and federal health officials—are consulted daily by only 5% and 21% of the population, respectively.
Are Americans Paying Attention to COVID-19?
More than half of Americans are closely paying attention to information about COVID-19.

How closely do you pay attention to information about COVID-19?

![Circle chart showing distribution of responses to how closely respondents pay attention to information about COVID-19.]

- **Extremely/Very closely:** 57%
- **Somewhat closely:** 33%
- **Not too/Not closely at all:** 10%

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.

Next, how closely do you pay attention to information about each of the following topics? [COVID-19]
How Easy Is It to Find Information on COVID-19?
About a third of Americans say finding information about COVID-19 is difficult.

How easy or difficult is it to find information on COVID-19?

- **Very/Somewhat easy**: 30%
- **Neither easy nor difficult**: 43%
- **Somewhat/Very difficult**: 27%

Source: AP-NORC/USAFACTS poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Americans are split on whether information is getting easier or more difficult to find since the start of COVID-19.

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, has factual information become easier or more difficult to find?

- Easier to find: 37%
- Neither easier nor more difficult: 27%
- More difficult to find: 36%

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Those who say finding factual information on COVID-19 is easy say it has gotten easier, but those who say it is hard feel more in the dark than before.

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, has factual information become easier or more difficult to find?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFACTS poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Americans are split on how easy it is to figure out if information about COVID-19 is true or not.

How difficult is it to do each?

- Understand the difference between fact and opinion about COVID-19:
  - Very/Somewhat easy: 48%
  - Neither easy nor difficult: 26%
  - Somewhat/Very difficult: 26%

- Know if information about COVID-19 is true or not:
  - Very/Somewhat easy: 35%
  - Neither easy nor difficult: 29%
  - Somewhat/Very difficult: 36%

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Republicans are more likely to say figuring out if information about COVID-19 is true or not is difficult.

How difficult is it to do each?

How easy or difficult is it for you to...

Source: AP-NORC/USAFACTS poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Americans think it easier to find information on wearing a mask and getting tested for infection than the safety of treatment and reopening schools.

How easy or difficult is it to find information to make each decision?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Very/Somewhat Easy</th>
<th>Neither Easy nor Difficult</th>
<th>Somewhat/Very Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wearing a face mask</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When and how to get tested for infection with the virus</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The safety of gathering in groups of more than 10 people</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The safety of eating indoors at a restaurant</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The safety of reopening schools</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The safety and effectiveness of treatments for the virus</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*When it comes to making decisions about the following issues related to COVID-19, how easy or difficult is it for you to find the information you need?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
How Much Do Americans Trust Information on COVID-19?
While more than half of Americans get daily information on COVID-19 from the news media, less than 2 in 10 trust it.

**How much do you trust information about COVID-19 from each of these sources?**

Regardless of how often you get information from these sources, how much do you trust information from them about COVID-19?

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.

*Regardless of how often you get information from these sources, how much do you trust information from them about COVID-19?*
Most Americans who trust news media, social media, and search engines about information on COVID-19 get information from those sources daily.

How often do you get information about COVID-19 from…

Thinking about some of the ways you get information about COVID-19 these days, how often, if at all, do you get information from… / Regardless of how often you get information from these sources, how much do you trust information from them about COVID-19?

Source: AP-NORC/USAfacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
There is a sharp partisan divide on what sources to trust for COVID-19 information.

How much do you trust information about COVID-19 from each of these sources?

Regardless of how often you get information from these sources, how much do you trust information from them about COVID-19?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFACTS poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Nearly half of Americans have low trust in information about COVID-19 from the federal government.

How much do you trust information from the federal government about COVID-19?

- 47% A great deal/Quite a bit
- 23% A moderate amount
- 30% Only a little/Not at all

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.

How much do you trust information from the federal government about the following topics? [COVID-19]
Accuracy, full information, and an explanation of how the information was gathered are the factors most often associated with trustworthy sources.

How important is each factor to how trustworthy COVID-19 information is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Extremely/Very important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not too/Not important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is accurate</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It provides all relevant information</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It explains the way the information was gathered</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It does not include opinions</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It provides more than one viewpoint on the subject</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has a high quality presentation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It includes information I agree with</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thinking about the sources you consider trustworthy when it comes to information about COVID-19, how important is each of the following factors?

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Where Are Americans Finding Information on COVID-19?
The news media is the most frequently used source of COVID-19 information.

### How often do you get information about COVID-19 from...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Several times a day/Once a day</th>
<th>At least once a week</th>
<th>Less often/Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The news media</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your state or local government</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other online information</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A search engine such as Google or Bing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal health officials at agencies like the CDC or FDA</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your family and friends</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your doctor or health care provider</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thinking about some of the ways you get information about COVID-19 these days, how often, if at all, do you get information from...

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Americans aren’t necessarily getting information most often from the sources they trust the most.

How often Americans get information about COVID-19 from each source compared to how much they trust the information that source.

- **The news media**: 46% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 18% get news at least daily.
- **Social media**: 26% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 6% get news at least daily.
- **Your state or local government**: 26% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 26% get news at least daily.
- **Other online information**: 24% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 12% get news at least daily.
- **A search engine such as Google or Bing**: 24% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 12% get news at least daily.
- **Federal health officials at agencies like the CDC or FDA**: 36% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 21% get news at least daily.
- **Your family and friends**: 17% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 19% get news at least daily.
- **Donald Trump**: 16% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 16% get news at least daily.
- **Your doctor or health care provider**: 53% trust a great deal or quite a bit, 5% get news at least daily.

*Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.*
Democrats get information on COVID-19 from the media and federal health officials more often than Republicans, Republicans get it more often from Donald Trump.

How often do you get information about COVID-19 from...

Thinking about some of the ways you get information about COVID-19 these days, how often, if at all, do you get information from...

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.
Methodology

State of the Facts Poll 2020

- Poll conducted by The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and funded by USAFacts
- Nationwide poll of 1,043 adults conducted September 15-25 using the AmeriSpeak Panel®
  - AmeriSpeak is NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of all U.S. households.
  - 966 via the web and 77 via telephone
  - Interviews conducted in English and Spanish
- Margin of error +/- 4.1 percentage points
- AAPOR Response Rate 3 of 5.4%