

COVID-19 causing more stress in America than other nations, survey shows

August 6 2020, by Dennis Thompson, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Americans are faring much worse mentally and

financially during the COVID-19 pandemic than citizens of other high-income countries around the world, according to an international analysis.

One-third of U.S. adults say they've experienced unbearable stress, anxiety and sadness during the [pandemic](#) and more than 30% have faced [economic hardships](#), the Commonwealth Fund report revealed.

"Data from our research demonstrates that U.S. adults, when compared to people in eight other high-income countries, face greater [mental health](#) and financial consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic," said Reginald Williams II, a [vice president](#) at Commonwealth Fund, a private foundation that studies health care issues. "It is also notable that few U.S. adults believe that national leadership has done a [good job](#) of managing the pandemic when compared to other countries."

Only one-third of Americans said President Donald Trump has done a "very good" or "good" job in handling COVID-19—a lack of faith in government not shared by most people in other developed nations, the survey found.

"It's no secret that at a time when countries around the world are reopening, ours is still struggling to return to work and daily life," said Dr. David Blumenthal, president of the Commonwealth Fund.

"As the number of confirmed COVID cases and deaths in the U.S. continue to climb, we need to start implementing [public health measures](#) that we know work, like mask-wearing, social distancing, and robust testing and tracing that can help us stop the spread of COVID-19 as so many others have effectively accomplished," he said.

The Commonwealth Fund has been comparing [health systems](#) around the world for decades, but the COVID-19 pandemic presents a rare instance

in which every nation surveyed is facing the same crisis at the same time, Blumenthal said.

Between March and May, the organization interviewed more than 8,200 adults in nationally representative samples from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The results were not flattering to the United States, which has lost quite a bit of international stature due to its COVID-19 response:

- 33% of Americans reported emotional problems related to the pandemic, compared with between 10% in Norway and 26% in the United Kingdom and Canada.
- 31% of U.S. adults said they were able to get the [mental health care](#) they needed, compared with 47% in Canada and 54% in Australia.
- 31% of Americans said they were unable to pay for basic necessities and were either draining their savings or borrowing money to get by, compared with between 6% in Germany and 24% in Canada.
- Americans are the least pleased with their government's response to COVID-19, with only 33% saying Trump is meeting the challenge and 51% praising their state or local government leaders. In all other countries, at least half of people are happy with their nation's response.

The crisis has revealed weaknesses in the United States' approach to health care compared with other industrialized nations, said Dr. Eric Schneider, senior vice president for policy and research.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is revealing and amplifying the health

challenges related to low income and poverty," he said. "In light of this, we see five general features of the other countries' health systems that may be blunting the mental health and economic challenges experienced by people of other countries and may be useful to the U.S. as it responds to the pandemic and looks to improve its resilience for future health disasters."

Schneider said these features include:

- Universal insurance coverage, including the elimination of underinsurance that exposes Americans to high out-of-pocket costs.
- Providing everyone access to a reliable primary care physician.
- Guaranteeing social support systems that will help people through rough times, including paid sick leave, unemployment insurance and child care assistance.
- Avoiding politicization of public health crises by basing decisions on science and expertise.

"As the pandemic continues to challenge all of our nations at different times, we will, for better or worse, have a chance to learn more from other countries about ways to strengthen our U.S. [health](#) system," Schneider said.

More information: The Commonwealth Fund has more about [its new international survey](#).

Copyright © 2020 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: COVID-19 causing more stress in America than other nations, survey shows (2020, August 6) retrieved 20 September 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-covid-stress-america-nations-survey.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.