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Americans Concerned about Second Coronavirus Wave... Nearly Two in Three Don't Expect "Normalcy" Before, At Least, Six Months

NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll

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This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

As states across the nation begin to reopen, more than three in four Americans (77%) express some degree of concern that a second wave of coronavirus cases will emerge. 23%, though, report they have little or no concern another surge of cases will occur.

Democrats (93%) and women (83%) are more likely than Republicans (57%) and men (70%) to be concerned about a second coronavirus wave. Among independents, 76% are worried that a large number of new coronavirus cases will emerge in the future.

"No sooner are Americans digging out from the country's initial bout with COVID-19 than concern about a resurgence weighs heavily on their mind," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "As steps are being taken to reopen the economy, people are far from confident that the U.S. is out of the woods."

As shelter-in-place and stay-at-home orders begin to be lifted and states reopen, nearly two in three Americans say it will take time before their lives will return to a sense of normal. 65% of residents report their daily routine will not reflect any kind of normal before, at least, six months. Included here are 25% who say they expect their life to get back to a new normal in about six months, 22% who say their expectation is in about a year, and 18% who say it will take longer than that. In contrast, 32% of residents report normal life will resume for them in the next month (11%) or within the next two to three months (21%).

Again, a deep partisan divide exists. Republicans (42%) are more than twice as likely as Democrats (20%) to report it will take, at most, two to three months for life to return to a sense of normal. In fact, 20% of Republicans say they expect their routine to return to normal in the next month. This compares with only 1% of Democrats who cite this timeframe. 78% of Democrats and 68% of independents say it will take about six months or longer to achieve a sense of what life was like prior to the pandemic. 55% of Republicans agree.

When thinking about November's elections, 50% of Americans say, if their state permits voting by mail-in ballot due to the coronavirus, they will cast their vote that way. 38% say they will go to the polls in-person, and 10% report they will not vote. Majorities of Democrats (61%) and independents (53%) prefer to mail in their ballot. Although a majority of Republicans (56%) would rather vote in person, a notable 42% say they will vote by mail.

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“Divergent views are most apparent when looking at the opinions of two critical groups in the 2020 presidential campaign,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “White men without a college education, the Republican base, are least likely to vote by mail, and white women with a college education, the Democratic base, are most likely to mail in their vote.”