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THE STATE OF THE NATION:
A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY
REPORT #6: UPDATE ON THE APPROVAL
OF EXECUTIVE PERFORMANCE DURING COVID-19

USA, July 2020

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Report of July 29, 2020, v.2

[Corrected approval numbers for governors DeSantes & Kemp on p.5]

From: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

A joint project of:

Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

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COVER MEMO

Summary Memo—July 29, 2020

The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

Partners: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

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From July 10 to 26 we conducted the seventh wave of a large, 50-state survey, some results of which are presented in this report. This is the sixth report published by the consortium. You can find previous reports online at www.covidstates.org.

Note on methods:

We surveyed 19,052 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted on 10-26 July 2020 by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on the other waves, see covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the seventh in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors regarding COVID-19 in the United States.

Note that this report uses a new set of national and state weights that take into account whether respondents live in rural, urban, or suburban areas. The numbers presented here may therefore differ from those included in previous charts and reports.

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Executive approval of COVID-19 management

The latest update to our executive approval series reveals a mix of continuity and change. **The most obvious difference in the circumstances confronting the nation's executives in the latest wave (July 10-26, 2020, N=19,052) compared to the prior wave (June 12-28, 2020) is that far more states are seeing increases in COVID cases than in early June.** For instance, [in the Northeast in our late June wave, all but one state \(New Jersey\) were trending downward in COVID cases relative to our early June wave.](#) In late July, all but two states in the region are trending *upwards* in COVID cases. (New Jersey, ironically, represents one of the two improving states, with the second being Maine). Despite these worsening trends, many governors in the Northeast (excepting Maine, where Democratic Governor Mill's approval rating stands at a middling 54%) remain quite popular, and have seen their approval ratings remain relatively stable (e.g. Massachusetts and Vermont) or increase (e.g., Rhode Island and Maine). Two governors in the region — Governor Murphy (D) of New Jersey and Governor Sununu (R) of New Hampshire — have faced substantial erosion in public support for their management of the pandemic since June, by 6 and 8 percentage points, respectively.

Across much of the South we see a tight coupling between approval of the president's handling of the pandemic and approval of the governor's performance during the pandemic. The exceptions — where governors retain notably higher support for their management of the pandemic than the president (by 10 points or more) — are, in all but two cases (West Virginia, Delaware), either Republican-leaning or "purple" states with Democratic governors (North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and Louisiana), or in one case a Democratic-leaning state with a Republican governor (Maryland). Governors in three of the latter five states (North Carolina, Kentucky, and Louisiana) have also seen declining ratings, though they started from higher baselines than their Republican counterparts in the region and so remain more popular than the president. In Louisiana, for instance, Governor Edwards has seen his approval rating on COVID fall from 67% in April to 50% in our late July survey, as cases in the state have surged.

That said, **the overall trends reported in late June remain similar.** Approval of Trump's handling of COVID-19 edged lower by 2 points (10 points since April), and of the average governor by 2 points (13 since April). Some Republican governors of states that reopened early — and that have faced surges in COVID-19 — continue to see declining approval ratings, fairly closely mirroring President Trump's pandemic-related approval in those states. Examples include Governor Abbott of Texas, whose management of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to suffer declining support in late July and is now approaching that of President Trump (38% for Abbott, compared to 32% for Trump). Approval ratings of

Governor DeSantis of Florida and Governor Kemp of Georgia's handling of COVID-19 (40 and 36 percent, respectively) are now quite similar to the corresponding approval ratings in those states for the president (39 and 38 percent, respectively).

Also worth noting, support for the pandemic management of Governor DeWine of Ohio — a Republican governor in a Republican-leaning state [who shut down the state's economy relatively early in the pandemic](#) and has [mandated mask wearing](#) — has continued its slide. DeWine's approval rating in April was the highest in the nation, at 81%. In our latest survey it has fallen to 58%. This nonetheless remains considerably higher than the 35% corresponding approval rating for President Trump.

Interestingly, [in two states confronting resurgences of COVID-19 in June and July — California and Washington](#) — support for the governors' handling of the pandemic has stabilized at fairly high levels (58 and 57 percent, respectively, in our late July survey), with President Trump's approval lagging far behind. This suggests that where citizens perceive their governors as having taken decisive actions to stem the spread of COVID-19, their citizens may be less likely to blame them for subsequent surges in COVID-19 cases, at least in the short term.

In only four states, in turn, Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, and Missouri are the governors less popular than President Trump in our late July poll. Only in Arizona is this gap substantial (38 vs. 30 percent for Governor Ducey and President Trump, respectively). **Overall, America's governors continue to enjoy a 19 percentage point advantage over the president in public support for their handling of the pandemic (51% vs 32%).**

Finally, in eight states (Maine, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wyoming, and Virginia) governors are more popular than in the prior, late June poll. Of these, only Maine has seen a decline in cases since late June. This suggests that these governors are not currently being held accountable for the rise in cases their states are experiencing. Similarly, President Trump's approval has ticked upwards in thirteen states (Alabama, Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, and Vermont.)

The figure¹ and tables below summarize these data.

¹ We gratefully acknowledge Brennan Klein for his development of this graphic template and his assistance in adapting it for Figure 1.

Figure 1: Approval of state governors and President Trump for every state (individual state results in the appendix)

[\(Download high-resolution image\)](#)

Table 1: Do you approve or disapprove of the way your state governor is handling the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?

(Approve + Strongly approve, margin of error is in parentheses)

State	Late April	Early May	Late May	Late June	Late July
National	64 (1)	59 (1)	54 (1)	53 (1)	51 (1)
AK	61 (14)	53 (10)	48 (13)	50 (11)	47 (11)
AL	60 (6)	52 (6)	46 (7)	48 (6)	47 (6)
AR	65 (6)	61 (7)	52 (7)	47 (7)	41 (7)
AZ	56 (6)	57 (7)	41 (5)	33 (5)	30 (7)
CA	70 (5)	67 (4)	58 (4)	58 (4)	58 (6)
CO	64 (5)	54 (6)	52 (6)	52 (6)	51 (7)
CT	66 (6)	66 (6)	64 (8)	59 (6)	59 (6)
DE	69 (7)	62 (4)	53 (5)	54 (6)	51 (6)
FL	46 (5)	46 (5)	50 (6)	43 (4)	40 (6)
GA	53 (5)	33 (9)	35 (8)	43 (5)	36 (7)
HI	36 (8)	36 (6)	41 (7)	43 (6)	39 (6)
IA	52 (6)	36 (6)	37 (6)	37 (6)	28 (6)
ID	64 (6)	54 (5)	50 (5)	49 (6)	42 (6)
IL	63 (5)	54 (6)	52 (6)	58 (5)	52 (7)
IN	71 (5)	59 (6)	56 (8)	56 (6)	50 (6)

KS	68 (6)	58 (5)	57 (7)	51 (7)	50 (6)
KY	79 (4)	71 (6)	63 (7)	62 (6)	59 (7)
LA	67 (6)	67 (4)	60 (5)	64 (7)	50 (6)
MA	80 (4)	77 (5)	72 (6)	70 (5)	70 (5)
MD	78 (5)	72 (6)	69 (6)	69 (5)	76 (7)
ME	67 (6)	57 (5)	50 (5)	50 (6)	54 (6)
MI	62 (5)	62 (6)	59 (6)	69 (5)	67 (6)
MN	71 (5)	62 (5)	59 (6)	54 (5)	52 (6)
MO	60 (5)	49 (7)	42 (9)	44 (5)	38 (7)
MS	56 (7)	53 (7)	54 (11)	50 (7)	42 (7)
MT	59 (8)	62 (5)	57 (5)	56 (7)	53 (6)
NC	60 (5)	60 (9)	52 (9)	49 (5)	48 (9)
ND	66 (11)	54 (8)	63 (10)	64 (9)	58 (6)
NE	63 (7)	53 (5)	51 (6)	50 (6)	41 (6)
NH	74 (6)	71 (5)	68 (5)	72 (5)	64 (7)
NJ	65 (5)	67 (10)	58 (11)	66 (5)	60 (8)
NM	64 (13)	67 (6)	54 (7)	42 (9)	53 (7)
NV	60 (6)	60 (4)	55 (4)	51 (6)	47 (5)
NY	70 (5)	70 (4)	69 (5)	64 (4)	71 (5)

OH	81 (4)	77 (7)	69 (7)	66 (4)	58 (7)
OK	51 (6)	48 (5)	44 (5)	45 (7)	34 (6)
OR	61 (5)	53 (5)	54 (5)	48 (6)	47 (6)
PA	57 (5)	56 (6)	52 (9)	48 (4)	52 (6)
RI	74 (6)	72 (6)	66 (6)	63 (6)	71 (6)
SC	51 (6)	49 (8)	46 (9)	44 (6)	44 (8)
SD	43 (9)	44 (6)	40 (6)	54 (7)	54 (6)
TN	62 (5)	51 (5)	50 (5)	46 (6)	44 (6)
TX	61 (5)	52 (7)	48 (8)	44 (4)	38 (6)
UT	60 (6)	57 (5)	56 (5)	49 (7)	44 (6)
VA	59 (5)	54 (7)	54 (8)	49 (5)	59 (7)
VT	72 (8)	75 (5)	74 (5)	75 (7)	75 (6)
WA	70 (6)	65 (5)	53 (6)	58 (6)	57 (5)
WI	56 (5)	56 (6)	50 (9)	48 (5)	46 (7)
WV	78 (5)	73 (13)	67 (11)	65 (7)	54 (10)
WY	65 (11)	54 (10)	59 (13)	55 (10)	60 (11)

Table 2: Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Trump is handling the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?

(Approve + Strongly approve, margin of error is in parentheses)

State	Late April	Early May	Late May	Late June	Late July
National	42 (1)	40 (1)	34 (1)	34 (1)	32 (1)
AK	55 (14)	41 (10)	35 (13)	37 (10)	32 (10)
AL	54 (6)	52 (6)	42 (7)	45 (6)	46 (6)
AR	55 (6)	51 (7)	46 (7)	40 (7)	39 (7)
AZ	42 (6)	43 (7)	34 (5)	35 (5)	38 (7)
CA	32 (5)	34 (4)	27 (4)	25 (4)	30 (5)
CO	42 (6)	37 (6)	34 (6)	31 (5)	27 (6)
CT	34 (6)	32 (6)	31 (8)	26 (5)	22 (5)
DE	37 (7)	38 (6)	30 (7)	28 (6)	24 (7)
FL	42 (5)	42 (4)	38 (5)	40 (4)	39 (5)
GA	46 (5)	42 (5)	35 (6)	42 (5)	38 (6)
HI	31 (7)	30 (8)	20 (6)	23 (5)	20 (6)
IA	43 (6)	39 (6)	34 (7)	29 (6)	29 (6)
ID	51 (7)	46 (6)	42 (6)	36 (6)	36 (6)
IL	36 (5)	36 (5)	34 (4)	28 (4)	26 (5)
IN	50 (6)	49 (6)	39 (6)	37 (6)	30 (6)
KS	48 (6)	44 (6)	38 (8)	36 (6)	35 (6)
KY	52 (5)	47 (6)	44 (7)	47 (6)	45 (6)

LA	50 (6)	50 (7)	45 (7)	49 (7)	38 (7)
MA	35 (5)	34 (5)	27 (5)	24 (5)	26 (5)
MD	38 (6)	27 (5)	24 (5)	30 (5)	22 (5)
ME	46 (6)	37 (6)	34 (6)	33 (6)	31 (6)
MI	36 (5)	34 (5)	29 (5)	26 (5)	30 (6)
MN	44 (5)	39 (6)	33 (6)	33 (5)	36 (6)
MO	50 (5)	47 (5)	36 (5)	42 (5)	39 (6)
MS	46 (7)	50 (7)	48 (9)	48 (7)	37 (7)
MT	49 (8)	49 (8)	38 (11)	40 (7)	35 (7)
NC	48 (5)	46 (5)	40 (5)	35 (5)	36 (6)
ND	53 (11)	42 (8)	45 (9)	52 (9)	36 (8)
NE	54 (7)	49 (8)	38 (10)	40 (6)	39 (6)
NH	39 (6)	34 (5)	26 (5)	30 (5)	30 (6)
NJ	37 (5)	37 (5)	30 (4)	29 (5)	28 (6)
NM	42 (13)	30 (10)	35 (11)	26 (8)	26 (7)
NV	39 (6)	37 (6)	31 (7)	31 (6)	34 (6)
NY	34 (5)	35 (4)	34 (4)	29 (4)	31 (5)
OH	51 (5)	45 (5)	41 (5)	38 (4)	35 (5)
OK	50 (6)	49 (7)	42 (7)	43 (7)	32 (7)
OR	35 (5)	36 (5)	33 (5)	35 (6)	34 (6)
PA	39 (5)	40 (4)	37 (4)	36 (4)	36 (6)
RI	39 (7)	31 (6)	17 (7)	25 (6)	26 (6)

SC	49 (6)	50 (6)	43 (6)	40 (6)	40 (6)
SD	43 (9)	41 (8)	42 (9)	41 (7)	43 (8)
TN	52 (6)	50 (6)	50 (6)	44 (6)	44 (6)
TX	44 (5)	38 (5)	36 (5)	37 (4)	32 (6)
UT	45 (6)	48 (7)	39 (8)	37 (7)	32 (6)
VA	42 (5)	39 (5)	35 (5)	33 (5)	33 (6)
VT	30 (8)	33 (7)	22 (7)	27 (7)	33 (8)
WA	30 (6)	30 (5)	26 (4)	30 (5)	32 (5)
WI	38 (5)	32 (5)	29 (5)	30 (5)	28 (5)
WV	57 (6)	58 (7)	44 (9)	51 (7)	44 (7)
WY	61 (11)	67 (12)	52 (11)	52 (10)	50 (10)