

THE DELTA VARIANT & THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON LGBTQ HOUSEHOLDS IN THE U.S.

RESULTS FROM AN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021 NATIONAL POLL



This report was authored by:

Movement Advancement Project

MAP's mission is to provide independent and rigorous research, insight and communications that help speed equality and opportunity for all people. MAP works to ensure that all people have a fair chance to pursue health and happiness, earn a living, take care of the ones they love, be safe in their communities, and participate in civic life. For more information, visit www.lgbtmap.org.

Contact Information

Movement Advancement Project

1905 15th Street #1097
Boulder, CO 80306
1-844-MAP-8800
www.lgbtmap.org

MAP is very grateful to the following major funders, whose generous support makes it possible for us to do our work:

David Bohnett Foundation
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Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
Jim Hormel
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The Palette Fund
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Ronald W. Naito MD Foundation
Ted Snowdon Foundation
Tzedek Social Justice Fund
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Wild Geese Foundation

This report's findings are based on a survey called "Household Experiences in America During the Delta Variant Outbreak," conducted by NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (NPR/RWJF/Harvard). As reported by Harvard, interviews were conducted online and via telephone (cell phone and landline), August 2-September 7, 2021, among a nationally representative, probability-based sample of 3,616 adults age 18 or older in the United States. Data collection was conducted in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese by SSRS (Glen Mills, PA), an independent research company. The margin of sampling error, including the design effect, was ± 3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for national data. Findings from the series, as well as additional methodological information, are available at www.hsph.harvard.edu/horp/npr-harvard.

Of the total sample of 3,616 adults, 393 identified as LGBTQ. This report details the experiences of those LGBTQ individuals and their households. The Movement Advancement Project is grateful to NPR/RWJF/Harvard for conducting this poll and to Harvard staff for sharing these data on LGBTQ households.

Recommended citation for this report: Movement Advancement Project. November 2021. *The Delta Variant & the Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19 on LGBTQ Households in the U.S.* <http://www.lgbtmap.org/2021-covid-lgbtq-households>.

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COVID-19 DELTA VARIANT & ITS IMPACT ON LGBTQ HOUSEHOLDS IN THE UNITED STATES

RESULTS FROM AN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021 NATIONAL POLL



IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS...

\$ SERIOUS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

52% of LGBTQ households have had a serious financial problem in the past few months vs. 36% of non-LGBTQ households, including difficulty:

- Paying utilities like gas or electric
- Affording medical care
- Paying credit card bills, loans, or other debt

🏠 INCREASED CHALLENGES NAVIGATING WORKING & HAVING CHILDREN AT HOME

58% of LGBTQ households with children in K-12 last year reported their children fell behind a lot, vs. 35% of non-LGBTQ households with children

46% of LGBTQ households reported serious problems meeting both their work and family responsibilities vs. 23% of non-LGBTQ households

🏥 MORE CHALLENGES ACCESSING HEALTH CARE

28% of LGBTQ households have been unable to get medical care for a serious problem in the past few months, vs. 17% of non-LGBTQ households

77% of LGBTQ households have had serious problems with depression, anxiety, stress, or sleeping in the past few months, vs. 48% of non-LGBTQ households

64% of LGBTQ households with children say that their children have had serious problems with depression, anxiety, stress, or sleeping in the past few months, vs. 33% of non-LGBTQ households with children

👤 GREATER EMPLOYMENT DISRUPTION

61% of LGBTQ households experienced employment or income loss since COVID began, vs. 40% of non-LGBTQ households

91% of employed LGBTQ people say their employer does not require employees at their workplace to be vaccinated, vs. 74% of non-LGBTQ employed people

INTRODUCTION

For 20 months, COVID-19 has shaped the lives of people in the United States. Millions have personally had the disease, and, as of early November 2021, three-quarters of a million people have died in the United States alone.^a For nearly every person, the pandemic has shifted the way they work, the goods they purchase, how children are educated, and the connections they have with family and friends.

From March through June 2020, MAP released a series of Medium posts exploring the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on LGBTQ people and other vulnerable groups. In December 2020, MAP released an analysis of a nationally representative survey conducted by NPR, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (NPR/RWJF/Harvard) showing how LGBTQ people, particularly LGBTQ people of color and those raising children, experienced higher rates of economic insecurity, had difficulty accessing needed medical care, and struggled with work and education during the first summer of the pandemic.

More recently, in August-September 2021, NPR/RWJF/Harvard conducted a follow-up survey focused on the Delta variant and its continued impact on households in the United States. The poll included a question allowing respondents to identify as LGBTQ.

This report summarizes the key findings about the experiences of LGBTQ people and their households in this broader national poll and offers comparisons to the non-LGBTQ respondents.^b MAP is grateful to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health for sharing these data. All comparisons reported here between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ households are statistically significant differences.

The Delta variant and the ongoing uncertainty related to the pandemic continue to result in disproportionate impacts on LGBTQ people and their families. This includes significant economic challenges, health challenges from the pandemic (including not getting needed medical care), and struggling to manage work and childcare responsibilities—all at higher rates than for non-LGBTQ people.

CONTINUING ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

LGBTQ households continue to face economic instability during recent months of the pandemic, and they continue to face such instability at higher rates than their non-LGBTQ peers.

As shown in *Figure 1* on the following page, over half (52%) of LGBTQ households reported facing at least one serious financial problem in the past few months, compared to 36% of non-LGBTQ households. There is a sharp income divide in serious financial problems, as 68% of LGBTQ households with annual incomes below \$50,000 report facing serious financial problems in the past few months, compared with 27% of LGBTQ households with annual incomes of \$50,000 or more.

The most common serious financial problems facing LGBTQ households are paying credit cards (40% reported), affording medical care (30%), and paying utilities (29%). Over one quarter (26%) are struggling to afford food, and nearly a quarter (23%) are struggling to pay their rent or mortgage. Figure 1 shows that LGBTQ people are more likely to report all of these challenges compared to non-LGBTQ people.

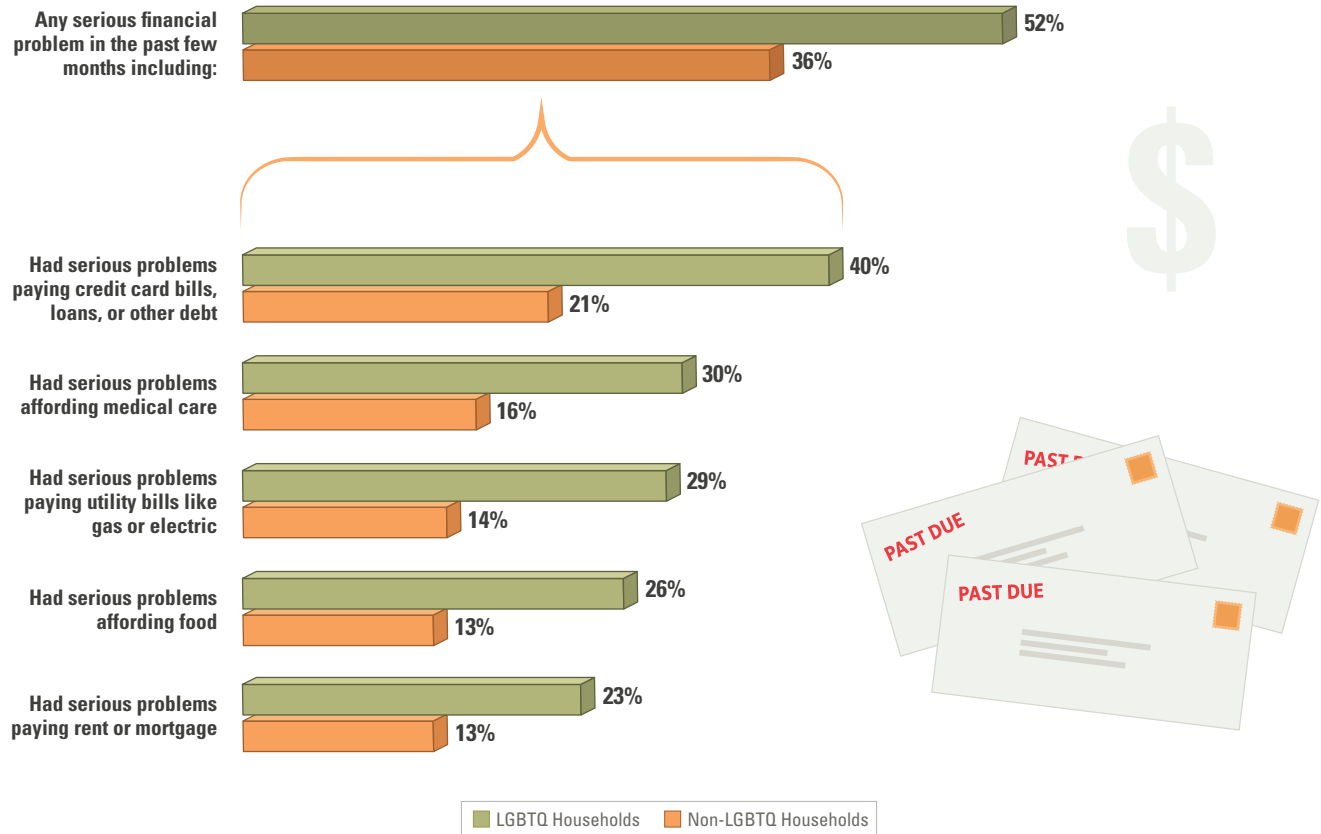
These higher rates of economic instability for LGBTQ households come despite the fact that three in five (60%) LGBTQ households have received financial assistance from the government in the past few months, with roughly the same share of non-LGBTQ households receiving such assistance.

LGBTQ households were more likely to describe their financial situation as worse compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic; 52% of LGBTQ households compared to 31% of non-LGBTQ households said their situation was worse than pre-pandemic. Over half (53%) of LGBTQ households said their current financial situation was only fair or poor compared to 36% of non-LGBTQ households.

When it comes to savings, LGBTQ households were less likely to have savings to fall back on right now, and they were more likely to have lost their savings during the pandemic. For example, 53% of LGBTQ households said they currently do not have any savings to fall back on compared to 36% of non-LGBTQ households. This includes 30% of LGBTQ households (compared to 18% of non-LGBTQ households) who report they had savings prior to the pandemic but lost all their savings during the pandemic.

^a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "COVID Data Tracker Weekly Review." November 5, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html>.

^b Respondents were asked both about their sexual orientation and gender identity. This report compares respondents who identified as LGBQ and/or transgender to those who identified as both heterosexual and cisgender (i.e., "non-LGBTQ").

Figure 1: Over Half of LGBTQ Households Have Experienced at Least One Serious Financial Problem In the Past Few Months

Source: NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Aug-Sept 2021. The Impact of Coronavirus on Households polling series. Data on LGBTQ households provided to MAP.

CONTINUING DISPARITIES IN JOB LOSS AND WORK SAFETY CONCERNS

As in the 2020 survey, in August and September 2021, LGBTQ people report higher rates of job loss and work disruption due to the pandemic than non-LGBTQ people. Overall, 61% of LGBTQ households say that since the start of the pandemic, they have lost or had to quit their job or had their income reduced, compared to 40% of non-LGBTQ households. Related, one-third (33%) of LGBTQ households say they now work for a different employer than they did before COVID began, compared to 21% of non-LGBTQ households.

LGBTQ people are more likely report working in a place that does not require its employees to be vaccinated against COVID: 91% of LGBTQ respondents with jobs say their employer does not require COVID vaccinations for employees, compared to 74% of non-LGBTQ respondents with jobs.

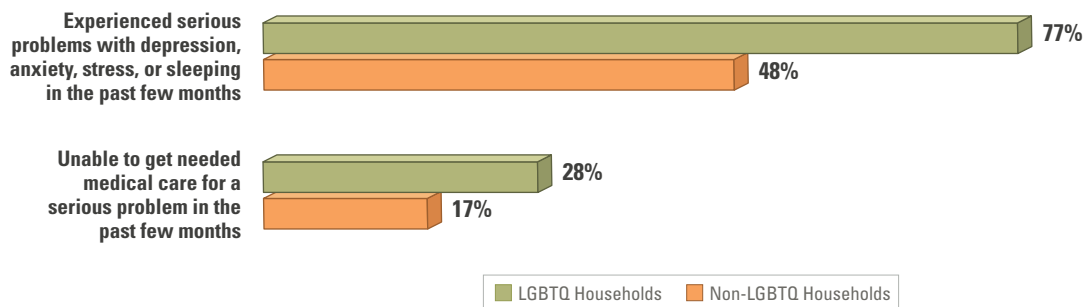
More than one-quarter (27%) of employed LGBTQ people report being dissatisfied with their current job, compared to 14% of non-LGBTQ people.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES WITH ACCESSING HEALTH CARE AND WITH MENTAL HEALTH

The pandemic has made it even more challenging for LGBTQ people to access competent health care, all while exacerbating already existing disparities in mental health.

As shown in *Figure 2*, 28% of LGBTQ people indicated they or someone in their households have been unable to get medical care for a serious problem in the past few months when they needed it compared to 17% of non-LGBTQ households. Of these households who could not access care when needed, 86% of LGBTQ people said they or someone in their household suffered negative health consequences as a result compared to 76% of non-LGBTQ people.

Figure 2: LGBTQ Households Report Serious Obstacles to Health and Accessing Health Care In the Past Few Months



Source: NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Aug-Sept 2021. The Impact of Coronavirus on Households polling series. Data on LGBTQ households provided to MAP.

More than three quarters (77%) of LGBTQ people said they or someone in their household had experienced serious problems with depression, anxiety, stress, or serious problems sleeping compared to just under half (48%) of non-LGBTQ households. LGBTQ parents were more likely to report that their children had experienced serious mental health challenges in the past few months than were non-LGBTQ parents (64% vs. 33%).

LGBTQ households were more likely to use telehealth in the past few months compared to non-LGBTQ households (62% vs. 40%), but they are less likely to report satisfaction with telehealth.

STRUGGLES NAVIGATING WORK, SCHOOL, CHILDREARING, AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

The pandemic continues to make navigating work, family, and parenting challenging.

LGBTQ people were twice as likely to say they or someone in their household has had serious problems meeting both their work and family responsibilities in the last few months (46% of LGBTQ households vs. 23% of non-LGBTQ households).

Among LGBTQ households with children, more than half (58%) said their children in K-12 schools fell behind a lot since the start of the pandemic, compared to 35% of non-LGBTQ households. LGBTQ parents were more likely to expect it to be difficult for their children to catch up on educational losses; one-third of LGBTQ parents said this, compared to 11% of non-LGBTQ parents.

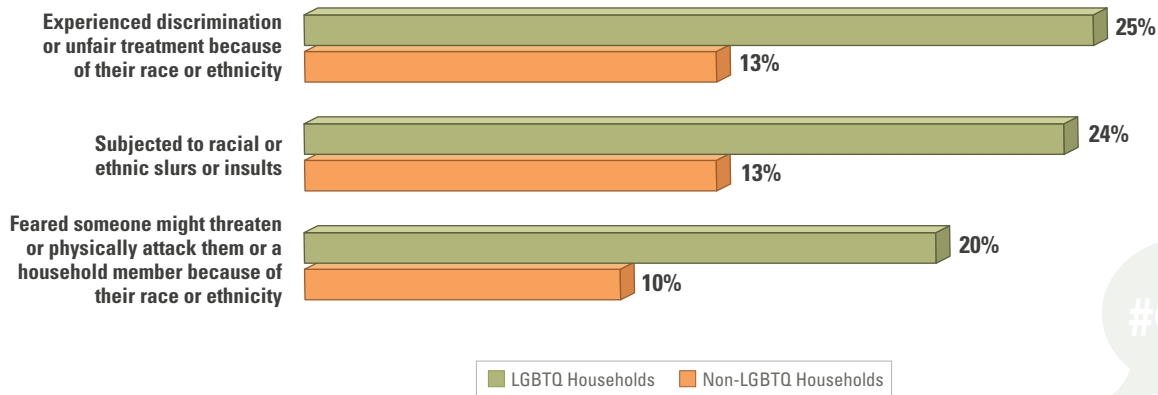
LGBTQ parents were also more concerned about their children's return to in-person schooling. Among households that planned to send their children to in-person schooling in fall 2021, 79% of LGBTQ parents said it would very or somewhat difficult for their children to cope with the return, compared to 41% of non-LGBTQ parents.

UNIQUE CHALLENGES FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE OF COLOR

Unfortunately, the survey's LGBTQ sample size was too small to allow for meaningful analysis of racial or other differences within the LGBTQ community. However, the 2020 survey clearly showed that LGBTQ households of color faced even higher rates of financial problems, employment or wage loss, and obstacles to accessing needed health care. As the pandemic approaches the end of its second year and the Delta variant continues to exacerbate already existing disparities, we should expect these same disproportionate impacts to continue, if not worsen.

Additionally, given the harassment and discrimination faced by many people of color—particularly Asian Americans—during the COVID pandemic, the 2021 NPR/RWJF/Harvard survey included questions about experiences of racial or ethnic discrimination in the past few months. Overall, LGBTQ households were more likely than non-LGBTQ households to report that they or someone in their household experienced racial or ethnic discrimination in the past few months, as shown in *Figure 3* on the following page. This highlights the unique vulnerability of LGBTQ people of color.

Figure 3: LGBTQ People Were More Likely to Report Experiencing Racial or Ethnic Discrimination in the Past Few Months



Source: NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Aug-Sept 2021. The Impact of Coronavirus on Households polling series. Data on LGBTQ households provided to MAP.

CONCLUSION

This new polling data from August and September 2021 show the continued negative impact of the pandemic on LGBTQ people and that LGBTQ people and their families are navigating particular challenges in terms of economic security, healthcare access, and balancing work and family. While this data set did not allow for examination of the LGBTQ respondents in terms of race and ethnicity or region of the country, past research suggests that LGBTQ people of color, in particular, continue to be vulnerable during the pandemic.



movement advancement project ▶

1905 15th Street #1097 • Boulder, CO 80306-1097
1-844-MAP-8800
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