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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Update:
Wednesday, September 29

Mothers & Educators On The
Coronavirus Pandemic



Methodology

On September 21, 2021, GBAO conducted three focus groups online with respondents that varied across demographics—age, party, and race/ethnicity.



Florida mothers who oppose DeSantis' rules on masks in schools



Texas educators (men & women)



Nevada mothers who oppose Sisolak's rules on masks in schools

Key Takeaways

- Eighteen months in, people see the country through the lens of COVID-19.
- Parents and teachers face regular trauma and anxiety of managing kids during the age of COVID-19.
- Most struggle with a lack of trust and the inconsistency in COVID-19 advice, information, and policies.
- Even Trump voters in Texas and Florida feel Governors Abbott and DeSantis have let them down.

The State Of The Country Is Largely Seen Through The Lens Of COVID-19

Some see COVID-19 as a driver of creativity and flexibility.

"I think people are learning how to be more flexible. So that's really great. As far as working from home and the virtual doctor's appointments and virtual meetings and stuff, and I think people have really adapted well to being flexible, making it happen." – FL, Trump voter

"So last year we did nothing hand-based. We got a lot of work with our foot skills. I'm like your foot skills are going to be phenomenal because we had to think on the fly, we had to make up, I think I was a very creative teacher because we still made fun lessons." – TX, Trump voter

Others fear stagnation around COVID-19 or aggressive mask or vaccine requirements.

"That would take a little bit to think about because there aren't a lot of things that are going well." – NV, Biden voter

"I don't feel too much is going well in this country right now. It's just too much negativity and there's too much... There's just too much going on. Nothing good." – NV, Trump voter

"The vaccination, which I am adamantly not for that vaccine. Also, I know somebody personally who received their complete doses and they caught COVID within six days of their second shot." – NV, Trump voter

Parenting And Teaching During COVID-19 Produces Trauma, Guilt, Fear, And Anxiety

*"I feel guilty because I mean, it's nice to have my son going back to school, but that's all he does. He goes to school. He comes home. He has no social interaction with anybody. He doesn't have any friends at the age of seven. **He doesn't even know what friends are...**We don't do anything that can make him excited about being a child." – FL, Trump voter*

"I feel like it's playing the lottery every time she goes [to school], because it's the same here. Nobody wears masks." – FL, Biden voter

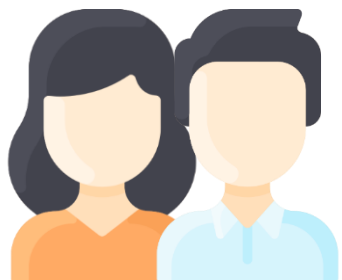
*"It's terrifying. We lost a family member on my husband's side, so he understands, but he goes to school and he goes to Boy Scouts and nobody's wearing masks, and **sometimes I think he gets really frustrated, and I just have to say, "Buddy, I'm sorry." I feel like the burden falls on him [...]** because my husband works from home. I'm working from home. So he's the one that's out the most. And I feel like the burden does fall on him, which sucks. But that's how it is. I need him to wear a mask for us." – FL, Trump voter*

*"It's very, very difficult. This is my 16th year in education and **last year and this year are the most difficult years I've ever experienced,** just because we're dealing with so much having to prepare all of our lessons and have it digitally, virtually for our quarantine students and making it interactive with some type of way for the students to use on their devices and not be in close contact [...] at the same time dealing with the traditional grades, communication with parents, admin." – TX, Biden voter*

*"It's definitely stressful. Especially with the children at my age group of kids, six, five, and four, they don't understand it. **It's not as easy to explain to children of that age the severity of what's going on, and you don't want them to feel that necessarily. There's just so much confusion...**my anxiety is through the roof." – NV, Trump voter*

Across The Board, People Are Bombarded With Alerts About Exposures At School

"And we got calls four days in a row, and then that was when they decided to stop even calling because they just had too many [cases], so we don't even know what's going on... I just tell them [my kids], 'You're exposed every day. Even if we're not getting that call or you don't know exactly, just act like you're being exposed every day.'" – FL, Trump voter



*"So, I have kids that I get from every class, and bring them to my room. And I don't get the notifications because I'm not the classroom teacher, and I don't get the notifications that they've been exposed or that they're out. **The only way that I know is when I go to pick them up the next time and they're not there.**" – TX, Trump voter*

"There's also that fear always that you may get COVID because you have kids always getting it in your class, you're getting notifications." – TX, Biden voter

*"I have a kid in preschool, and every day I'm getting the same message that **somebody had tested positive, and my kid's four.**" – NV, Biden voter*



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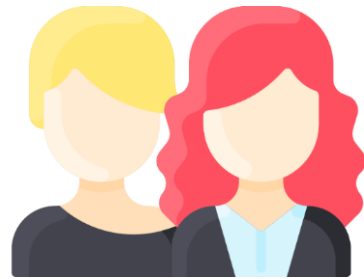
In Nevada, Anti-Mask Moms Balance Strong Views With COVID-19 Fears And Social Pressure

"I will never get my kids the shot nor myself. Not enough testing. It's giving people permanent disability. Just not a chance. And I'll take my kid out of school before they try to force it on him... I already gave him a plan in case they try. He knows where to run and what to do and who to hit and everything, so, no." – NV, Trump voter

"I really didn't want to get it because I know it's so new and who knows what's in it, and what's going to happen? But at the same time in the back of your head, you're also thinking, what if we do get it and what if we do get really sick, or my 13-year-old, he's got asthma, what if he gets really sick? So, I think it was more of a fear push." – NV, Biden voter

"So, I too got vaccinated but I had a peer pressure from my daughter. I don't believe in the shots either. My son didn't get vaccinated. My daughter, I would never let her get vaccinated... The conspiracy that's out there where they're saying after so many years, you're going to get crippled or you're going to die off or whatever, stuff like that. So, I think there's something in there to make the population die off later on in the future." – NV, Trump voter

*"It doesn't align with what I believe that I would like to do for myself or my family, and like I said, my husband had to get it for his job. He was forced."
– NV, Trump voter*



"Normally I don't wash my kids' hands like that. Let them have an immune system. I agree with it. But the only reason why I'm the way I am right now is because I have a newborn. She can't have medicine, so I'm kind of in the predicament of yeah, I agree it's totally like a common cold, most people will get over it unless you have a serious illness or you are older. Most people do get over it. It is bad, but they do usually get over it." – NV, Biden voter

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Most Struggle With A Lack Of Trust In Medical Guidance And COVID-19 Facts

"They're getting mixed messages and the same thing sometimes within the district, they give you different protocols. For example, last year if the students were exposed, they were all quarantined. But now if they're exposed, but not showing symptoms, they get docked a day. Well, what do you expect me to do? Keep my child at home, or I'm just going to send them to school." – TX, Biden voter

"So now if you're a person who's just listening, it's a little hard to know what you want to trust. Because even like right now, when you hear about like, oh, right now from surfaces, you don't get the virus, but before it was so, but again, it goes back and forth." – TX, Biden voter

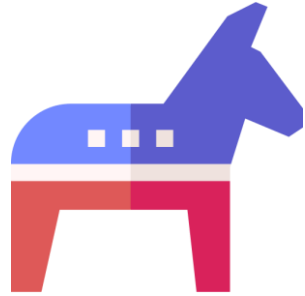
"I think a lot of social media and some of information and misinformation that's being spread out there...You read one thing and then it's the complete opposite in the next sentence. It's a lot of misinformation. And I don't know that anybody knows who to trust because you're getting this information from all over the place." – TX, Trump voter

"Whenever they say hospitals are full and then you see people online saying that it's not full and that they work there or whatever, then, I mean, who's telling the truth?" – NV, Trump voter

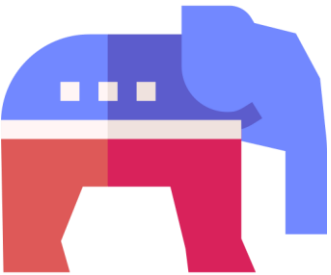
"They [masks] don't do anything. There's been so many doctors come out and tell you it does absolutely nothing. Right on the box it tells you it doesn't protect you. What's the point, then? I don't understand why people live in that kind of fear..." – NV, Trump voter

Some Try To Explain The Link Between Party Views And COVID-19 Views

"A lot of people in Texas, I'm born bred Texan, you hear everything is bigger in Texas. And we have a lot of individuals in Texas who just think, well, I'm bigger. I'm badder. I can beat it. This is just a little virus. And there's very polarizing opinions about it in Texas. There's a lot of people, it's my right to wear a mask, not wear a mask. It's my right to get a vaccine, not get a vaccine. And they're not necessarily seeing the big picture." – TX, Trump voter



"I had an argument with my father. Actually, I've had it more than once. And when I complain about the Governor, and I talk about the schools, and my dad doesn't really know what's going on in the schools. And he says, 'Well, the Republicans tend to side on freedom, blah, blah, blah.' And I said, 'Don't I have the freedom to send my son to school and feel like he's safe?' And my dad didn't have an answer for that. I thought that's just so silly. That has no place here right now. I think it should be safety. If it were guns or any of that stuff, it would be a completely different story." – FL, Trump voter



*"I guess, just that the policy and the party that people want to vote for is who they want to listen to the information from even if it's misinformation. That's who they want to vote for. So they're going to listen to that person and what they have to say about COVID."
– FL, Biden voter*

Texas And Florida Respondents Rail Against Abbott And DeSantis

TX voters on Abbott



"I feel like **he's just throwing us out to the wolves**. We're on our own....The districts are looking at the data, they're listening to recommendations by medical professionals and all these recommendations to try to control it, and the governor is just saying, you can't make anybody do it, even though that may help a lot." – TX, Trump voter

"I think he's thinking about **people-pleasing, big corporations and businesses**, and if he ignores it, it will go away." – TX, Biden voter

"**Selfish.**" – TX, Biden voter

"**Flippant.**" – TX, Trump voter

"**Careless.**" – TX, Trump voter

"**Evasive.**" – TX, Biden voter

"**Weak.**" – TX, Biden voter

FL voters on DeSantis



"He's just on a **power trip... Vindictive.**" – FL, Biden voter

"He's **hotheaded. Rude. Disrespectful...** I think his motivation is to be the contender in the next presidential election. I don't understand his thought process."
– FL, Trump voter

"I do like the governor, but I **disagree with him on the mask issue**. I think he is trying to appeal to people that are saying, 'Hey, we're the parents. We're the ones that need to make that decision,' but in the school environment, **it's very harmful** because these are kids."
– FL, Biden voter

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About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO along with an advisory committee, including: Andrea Purse, progressive strategist; Arkadi Gerney, The Hub Project; Joel Payne, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; Delvone Michael, Working Families; Felicia Wong, Roosevelt Institute; Mike Podhorzer, AFL-CIO; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

About the Study

GBAO conducted online focus groups on September 21, 2021, with voters in three states: Florida (mothers who opposed DeSantis' rules on masks in schools), Texas teachers/educators, and Nevada (mothers who opposed Sisolak's rules on masks in schools). Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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