

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Mindy Wright
mindy@intesacom.com
619-376-5505

6th Annual National Disaster Preparedness Poll: Racial, Demographic, and Regional Disparities Inform Critical Need to Increase Community Readiness Efforts across the US

Washington, D.C. – June 29, 2021 – Socioeconomic disparities are exacerbating a lack of preparedness for the next disaster or pandemic among people of color and vulnerable communities as shown in a national poll released today by [Healthcare Ready](#). Each year, the national nonprofit organization, which focuses on health preparedness and response, surveys the nation to provide insight into the most concerning disaster types and levels of preparedness across US regions for emergencies.

Healthcare Ready's [sixth annual "National Domestic Preparedness Survey"](#) provides invaluable information on factors that contribute to the uneven impact of unplanned events on communities of color, low-income individuals, the medically fragile, and other vulnerable constituencies who are more likely to live in at-risk environments. The poll was administered via an online survey to 1,270 adults (age 18+) residing in the US, with fieldwork conducted by YouGov between May 19-20, 2021.

"The path forward following COVID-19 is being written in this moment and the months ahead. How the public and private sectors work to eliminate disparities highlighted throughout the pandemic and last year's catastrophic natural disaster seasons can be measured by the investments made today towards preparedness initiatives at the community level," said Nicolette Louissaint, PhD, Executive Director of Healthcare Ready. "Protecting communities in this next stage of emergency preparedness is about building resilience and capacity between events. These findings show that there is significant opportunity to partner with one another to improve preparedness at household and community levels, especially as we brace for the 2021 hurricane season."

Results from the 2021 poll suggest that the fear of the pandemic is settling, with the percentage of Americans citing the outbreak of an exotic disease as the disaster of greatest concern dropping by 12 percentage points (from 19% to 7%). In 2021, respondents cited natural disasters as the disaster type of greatest concern (32% of respondents). Responses to questions on preparedness behaviors, such as keeping a bag packed with emergency supplies (practiced by about 29% of respondents in 2021) or knowing all of one's prescription medications, along with their dosage and the doctor who prescribed them (which 35% of respondents report being able to do in 2021), appears to remain about the same as last year, signaling opportunities for improved investments towards individual and community preparedness initiatives.

This year's survey was conducted in May during the country's second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, when cases were at some of the lowest rates since the previous summer, and included the following insights:

- **Fifty-seven percent of Americans think a major disaster is likely to impact them or their family in the next five years. However, less than half (42%) have an emergency plan in place.**

- The South had the highest proportion of respondents who believe it is likely that a major disaster will impact their community (61%). The Midwest had the lowest proportion (50%).
- **Americans are less aware of their medical information in 2021 compared to 2019:** Thirty-five percent said they could list all their medical information, including the type of prescription, the doctor who prescribed them, and the dose. This is a slight decrease from 40% in 2019.
 - When stratified by race, only one quarter (24%) of Black respondents can list all information related to their medications or medical supplies. Comparatively, 40% of White respondents, 27% of Hispanic respondents, and 29% of Other respondents report that they can list this information.
 - Older respondents were most aware of their medical information. Forty-eight percent of those 55+ years, 32% of those 34-55 years, and 21% of those 18-34 years can list all information related to their medications. (Note: statistically significant.)
- **Forty percent of Americans can go one week or less without their prescribed medications or medical devices before facing a personal medical crisis, a slight increase from 37% in 2020.**
 - Older respondents could go the least amount of time without their prescription medicines. Forty-two percent of those aged 55+, 37% of those aged 34-55, and 40% of those aged 18-34 could go a week or less without their medicines. (Note: Statistically significant.)
- **Only 38% of Americans believe that local community organizations near them are prepared and resourced to assist their community in the wake of an emergency.**
 - The South (41%) and the Northeast (41%) were most likely to agree that local community organizations have the resources they need to assist community member during an emergency and the Midwest was least likely (30%).
 - Black communities (42%) and Hispanic communities (47%) were most likely to agree that local community organizations have the resources they need to assist their communities.
- **Mistrust in the vaccine is the highest barrier to getting vaccinated – up to four times higher than other barriers.**
 - For respondents who have not yet received the vaccine, only 1 in 4 are somewhat or very willing to receive it. Barriers to receiving the vaccine among those who have not done so, in addition to mistrust (with 49% saying they don't trust the vaccine), include not knowing where to get the vaccine (5%), not trusting the healthcare provider who would administer it (8%), or not being able to choose which vaccine they will get (10%), among others.
 - Those living in the Northeast region were the most willing to receive the vaccine (36%), versus the Midwest (23%), South (23%) and West (25%).
 - Respondents in the 55+ age group were the least willing to receive the COVID-19 vaccine (71% of those not yet vaccinated describe themselves as not very or not at all willing to do so) followed by 35-54 (63%) and 18-34 (41%).

The 2021 survey also highlighted clear disparities in preparedness behaviors between racial groups, as seen in previous years. Noting the impact of COVID-19 on the country and the disproportionate devastating effect of the virus on communities of color in particular, this data indicates that some groups are significantly less prepared to withstand disasters than others.

Across the nation, American residents are more likely to keep cash on hand (with 45% saying they do this now) than emergency supplies (29%) or copy of medical records (38%). When stratified by race, Black (39%) and those who identify as Other (39%) respondents are less likely to currently be keeping cash on hand compared to White (48%) and Hispanic (43%) respondents.

On the practice of keeping a copy of one's medical records stored in a safe place: Most respondents indicated that they already do so (38%) or will be likely to be picking up the practice, soon (31%) – nearly three-quarters (73%) of both the youngest category of respondents (age 18-34) and oldest category (age 55+). In contrast, respondents from the middling age category (age 35-54) represented the highest group of respondents likely to indicate that they did not have plans to take up this practice soon, or, that they would never do so. Black respondents are least likely to keep a bag packed with emergency supplies (20%) compared to Whites (28%), Hispanics (34%), and Other (36%). Furthermore, the proportion of Blacks who report keeping a bag packed with emergency supplies decreased by 6 percentage points since 2019.

Unsurprisingly, respondents in higher income brackets (over \$40k per year) are more likely to keep cash on-hand (average 48%) than those who earn less than \$40k per year (41%). The majority of respondents across all income brackets indicate they already keep cash on hand in the case of emergency (45%), but of those respondents who do not already do so, those in the lowest income bracket (less than \$40k per year) show the highest intent to do so, soon (38% of those earning less than \$40k per year, compared to an average of 28% of those earning at least \$40k per year).

Below are additional ways communities can prepare for an emergency:

- **Bookmark resources** to know the status of pharmacies and other healthcare resources during a crisis. Healthcare Ready's Rx Open tool can help individuals find open, nearby pharmacies and other health facilities, including dialysis centers. Visit: <https://www.healthcareready.org/rxopen> or <https://www.rxopen.org>
- **Prepare an emergency kit** with protective gear (such as masks, gloves), food, water, flashlights, batteries, clothing, and medical supplies for either sheltering-in-place, or if you must evacuate.
- **Discuss evacuation plans, meeting points, and support facility members and neighbors**, especially the medically fragile, who may need help. For more information on hurricane season see our [blog](#).
- **Talk to your healthcare provider** about specific preparedness actions you should take to manage health conditions (including chronic conditions) during a disaster.
- **Keep a written list of prescriptions**, including dosage information, in a safe space. Healthcare Ready has a free printable card to help keep track of prescription information at <https://healthcareready.org/rx-on-the-run/>.

For more details on poll results, please visit our community resilience page for a [full summary and findings of the 2021 National Domestic Preparedness Survey](#).

The poll was conducted by international polling firm YouGov, on behalf of Healthcare Ready, a Washington, DC-based national nonprofit public-private partnership focused on meeting the needs of patients and communities before, during, and after disasters.

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About Healthcare Ready

Healthcare Ready is a nonprofit organization established in 2007 to help strengthen the US healthcare system and assist communities in planning for, responding to, and recovering from disasters and disease pandemics. It serves as a linkage point between industry, and local, state, and federal governments to help build resilient communities and safeguard patients before, during, and after public health emergencies. For more information, visit www.healthcareready.org or find us on [Twitter @HC_Ready](https://twitter.com/HC_Ready).

About the YouGov survey

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,270 adults.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 19– 20 May 2021. The survey was carried out online.

The figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+).

New COVID-19 vaccine questions were included in the 2021 Domestic Preparedness Poll in which the total sample size was 2,538 adults. Online fieldwork was undertaken between May 19-21, 2021, and figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+).