



One Year On: Reliable & Objective Statistics to Inform Our COVID-19 Milestone Discussions

Government statistics deliver a reliable, objective starting point for understanding the impact of COVID-19. After the outbreak, many of the nation's 13 principal federal statistical agencies made [important pivots](#) to capture the economic and societal impact of the pandemic. Here are some milestone statistics that can provide context for journalists, policymakers, and anyone seeking objective, professionally gathered information between now and when COVID-19 became a reality in the United States in early 2020.

The American Statistical Association – through its Count on Stats public outreach initiative – is a valuable resource to enhance public awareness of the importance, reliability and trustworthiness of government data and the nation's data infrastructure.

Bureau of Economic Analysis

- The GDP [shrank by 3.5 percent](#) in 2020, compared with a 2.2 percent increase in 2019. The decline reflects decreases in consumer spending, exports, and business investment that were partially offset by increases in housing investment and government spending.
- This was the first yearly economic contraction since 2009, when the GDP shrank by 2.5 percent during the Great Recession.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

- According to The Employment Situation, the February 2021 [unemployment rate](#) of 6.2% is well above the pre-pandemic February 2020 level of 3.5%.
- Nearly all U.S. cities saw higher [year-over-year unemployment](#) rates in December 2020.
- The [Consumer Price Index](#) rose 1.7% over the last 12 months.
- **Additional Info:** The BLS [COVID-19 Resource Page](#) explains the pandemic's impact on various surveys, including unemployment statistics and the consumer price index.

National Center for Health Statistics

- 81 percent of people who died from COVID-19 were [at least 65 years old](#), compared with 2.5 percent of COVID-19 deaths from people under age 45.
- **Additional Info:** NCHS continues to provide the [most recent data](#) available on deaths, mental health and access to health care, loss of work due to illness, and telemedicine from the vital statistics system, the NCHS Research and Development Survey, and through a partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau.

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

- Daily trips are up roughly [twelve percent](#) since last March and roughly twenty percent in the last few months. The 1.2 billion daily trips are approaching the pre-pandemic levels of January 2020.
- **Additional Info:** BTS' dashboards for [weekly](#) transportation statistics allow for comparison of pre-COVID-19 and current numbers for a wide range of travel methods, such as [state-level mobility](#).

Census Bureau

- [More than 25 percent](#) of U.S. adults have received a COVID-19 vaccine, according to the latest Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.
- More than [45 percent](#) of small business owners surveyed at the end of 2020 felt it would take more than 6 months for their business to return to a normal level of operation relative to one year ago, according to the most recent Census Bureau's Small Business Pulse Survey. By comparison, 31 percent of small business owners indicated the same time frame when the weekly survey launched last April.
- [10.5 percent](#) of U.S. adults said their household sometimes or often didn't have enough to eat in the last seven days, according to the latest Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.
- **Additional Info:** The Census Bureau's [COVID-19 Data Hub](#) provides interactive demographic and economic data and analysis for the nation, states and counties.

Energy Information Administration

- The [11% decline](#) in energy-related CO2 emissions in 2020 is the largest decline in percentage and absolute terms since EIA started tracking in 1949. The decline was the result of less energy consumption related to economic contraction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economic Research Service

- Grocery store food prices increased by [3.5%](#) in 2020 compared with 2019. The increase was higher than the 20-year food price inflation level of 2%. Food price increases in 2020 were primarily a result of shifts in consumption patterns and supply chain disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Additional Info:** The ERS annual [Rural America at a Glance](#) examines the pandemic's effects on demographic and economic conditions in rural areas.

Statistics of Income Division

- In 2020, nearly [170 million people](#) filed a tax return. The 9% increase from 2019 includes returns filed to get Economic Impact Payments from those who would not usually file income tax returns.

Objective government statistics are important elements of constructive dialogue and evidence-based policymaking. They provide a reliable and free snapshot of important aspects of our society—on topics ranging from health and safety, to the economy, to education. Its resources provide key information for geographical regions ranging from national to neighborhoods, and for time periods ranging from monthly to multi-year periods.

Government statistics are the gold standard of data because of the scientific rigor with which the data are collected, analyzed and shared. Help [Count on Stats](#) ensure public trust in government statistics is robust, and that the agencies have the resources they need to do their job effectively and efficiently.

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