



COVID-19 Survey Summary: December 24, 2021

The following is a summary of social, behavioral and economic survey research on COVID-19 released in the past week, as compiled for the Societal Experts Action Network ([SEAN](#)). Most surveys cited in this report are available in the [SEAN COVID-19 Survey Archive](#).

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Concerns about getting sick from the coronavirus increased sharply in one poll this week, while newly released surveys conducted earlier in the month found social distancing behaviors largely unchanged and pre-pandemic levels of Americans planning to celebrate the holidays with others – leaving open the question of whether these have shifted, as well.

One survey suggests the highly contagious Omicron variant is likely to accelerate booster uptake among vaccinated adults but unlikely to sway the unvaccinated. Other polls investigate acceptance of conspiracy theories and misinformation, check whether religious attitudes have changed and document how K-12 public schools responded to the pandemic last fall.

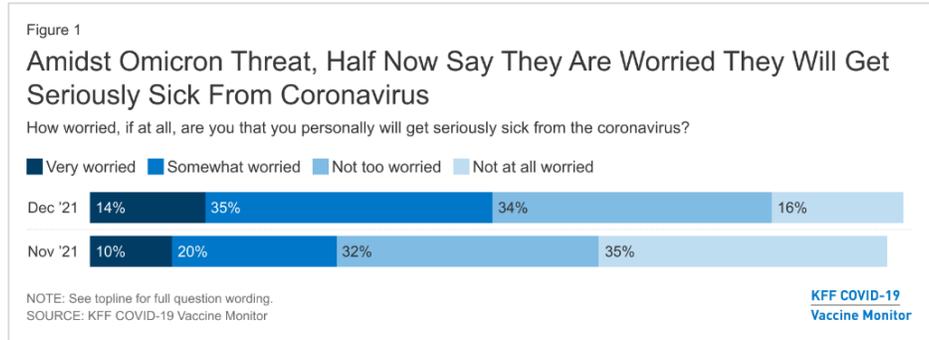
New studies also investigate the effects of Test to Stay strategies in K-12 schools, look at factors associated with vaccine uptake and document wage increases during the pandemic. Finalized CDC data confirm that life expectancy in the United States fell by almost two years in 2020 and a separate analysis finds that U.S. population growth in the past year was its slowest on record.

State polls from New Hampshire and Tennessee are included in this week's summary, as well as international surveys from Chile, Great Britain, Japan and Russia.

Concerns & Outlooks

The Omicron variant quickly has become the dominant strain in the United States since its Dec. 1 detection here. In the week ending Dec. 18, it accounted for [73 percent](#) of new cases in the country, up from 13 percent the week prior. The United States has averaged about 176,000 new coronavirus cases per day in the past week, more than doubling since the beginning of the month. The average of 1,200 daily deaths from the virus is largely steady since early December.

In the latest data, half of adults are worried that they personally will get seriously sick from the coronavirus, up sharply from 30 percent in November ([KFF 12/15-12/20](#)). That compares with an earlier but newly released survey, done from late November to early December, in which worry about the contracting the virus was essentially unchanged, at 38 percent ([Gallup 11/29-12/5](#)). In results covered [last week](#), most other polls conducted in the first half of December also found concerns about the coronavirus largely unchanged compared with pre-Omicron. The latest results may reflect updated views as evidence of its transmissibility builds.

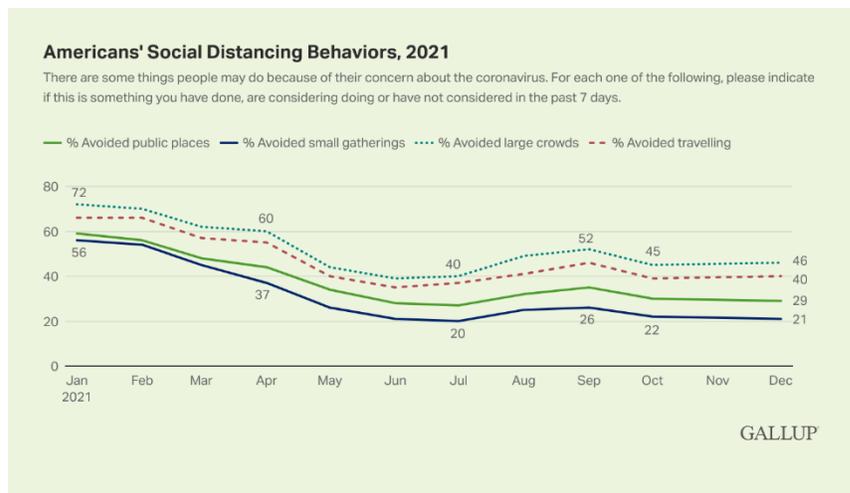


Worry about becoming infected is highest among Hispanic adults, at 64 percent, falling to 52 percent among Black people and 43 percent among whites. As with many pandemic-related attitudes, partisanship plays a role: Fifty-seven percent of Democrats are worried about getting sick, compared with 46 percent of independents and 39 percent of Republicans. Worry is higher among vaccinated than unvaccinated people, 52 vs. 42 percent ([KFF 12/15-12/20](#)).

Another gauge finds that pessimism about the coronavirus situation in the United States was growing even early this month. Thirty-five percent said the situation was getting worse, double the number from October, when cases were in decline nationwide. Thirty-one percent thought it was getting better, down from 51 percent in October ([Gallup 11/29-12/5](#)).

Coronavirus Precautions

Social distancing behaviors were largely unchanged as of early this month. Forty-six percent said they avoided large crowds in the previous week and 40 percent avoided travelling, both unchanged since May apart from a small increase in September at the height of the Delta surge. Twenty-nine percent said they've stayed away from public places and 21 percent avoided small gatherings, each largely steady since May. Polls [last week](#) similarly found precautionary behaviors steady since summer.



Seven in 10 said they've worn a mask in the past week, steady since August ([Gallup 11/29-12/5](#)). In a poll [last week](#), the share of Americans who report wearing a mask remained steady, but frequency of mask use was moderately higher.

Holiday Celebrations

An early December poll found Americans' plans to celebrate with friends, family or coworkers back to pre-pandemic levels, with 69 percent saying they planned to spend time with others, up from 53 percent last year. It was 67 percent in pre-pandemic 2019 ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)).

In another survey, also completed early this month, 52 percent said they'd gather mostly with people who are vaccinated to celebrate the holiday season, while 42 percent said they'd disregard other people's vaccination status. Two-thirds of Northeasterners said they'll gather mostly with other vaccinated people, compared with roughly half of people in the South (51 percent), West (48 percent) and Midwest (46 percent) ([Marist 11/30-12/6](#)).

Vaccines & Boosters

The [CDC estimates](#) that 85 percent of adults have received at least one vaccine dose, unchanged in the past week. It's 84 percent in one poll (with 2 percent still likely to do so) and 80 percent in another ([U.S. Census Bureau 12/1-12/13](#), [KFF 12/15-12/20](#)).

As in three polls released [last week](#), about half of vaccinated adults, 49 percent, say they've received a booster dose, compared with 34 percent in [CDC](#) data ([KFF 12/15-12/20](#)). Another survey finds that 39 percent of vaccinated adults say they've received three or more doses ([U.S. Census Bureau 12/1-12/13](#)). A new report, echoing one last week, has [state officials](#) warning that the CDC may be overcounting partial vaccinations and undercounting the number of people who are fully vaccinated and who have received booster shots.

Among vaccinated adults who have yet to receive a booster, 54 percent say news about the Omicron variant makes them more likely to do so. If everyone in this group were to receive an additional dose, three-quarters of vaccinated adults would have received a booster shot.

Omicron seems unlikely to sway many unvaccinated Americans, however. Just 12 percent in this group say news of the variant makes them more likely to get a vaccine, corresponding to 2 percent of adults overall. About half of unvaccinated adults say nothing would convince them to get vaccinated. Twelve percent point to more research or transparency, 6 percent say it would take a vaccine requirement and 5 percent propose a monetary incentive ([KFF 12/15-12/20](#)).

Sixty-three percent of 12- to 17-year-olds and 22 percent of 5- to 11-year-olds are at least partially vaccinated per the [CDC](#). Among adults with 5- to 17-year-olds in their household, 52 percent say at least one eligible child is vaccinated and 14 percent say this likely will happen. Eight percent are unsure and 21 percent say their child definitely or probably won't get a shot ([U.S. Census Bureau 12/1-12/13](#)).

Misinformation & Conspiracy Theories

Large majorities of Americans continue to see the vaccines as safe (82 percent) and effective against severe disease and hospitalization (76 percent) ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#)). Similarly, in pre-Omicron results, 79 percent said the vaccines definitely or probably were safe and 73 percent called them effective.

Most people in that pre-Omicron survey rejected conspiracy theories about the pandemic. Buy-in was highest on two items, both political in nature: Thirty-one percent thought it was true that China created the coronavirus as a biological weapon and 27 said it was true that some health officials at the CDC exaggerated the danger posed by the pandemic to damage the Trump presidency. Acceptance of other conspiracy theories was in the single digits.

Ten to 18 percent endorsed misinformation – that ivermectin is an effective treatment for the coronavirus (18 percent, up 8 percentage points since September); that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines contain fetal tissue (15 percent); that the vaccines cause infertility (10 percent) and that they change people’s DNA (10 percent) ([Annenberg Public Policy Center 11/3-11/9](#)).

Few Latino adults say it’s true that the vaccines are more dangerous than the coronavirus (9 percent) or that the pandemic is a hoax (7 percent) ([Axios-Ipsos/Telemundo 12/2-12/14](#)).

Seventy-seven percent of all adults correctly say the CDC has recommended that all adults receive a booster shot. Nineteen percent are unsure. Just 4 percent erroneously say it’s not true ([KFF 12/15-12/20](#)).

Motivators & Deterrents

Trust in health authorities informs initial vaccine acceptance, while a shift to acceptance is informed by knowledge about vaccination, flu vaccination history and patterns of media reliance more than by coronavirus-specific views, a new study reports. Belief in coronavirus conspiracy theories plays a role, albeit to a lesser extent. The study was conducted among a panel of more than 8,000 people drawn from probability-based samples in five states – Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin – and interviewed from April 2020 to March 2021. The authors stress the importance of building trust in scientific institutions and spokespeople to increase general knowledge about vaccination and counteract misinformation ([Jamieson et al., 2021](#)).

The share of adults saying their healthcare provider recommended a coronavirus vaccine rose from 35 percent in late April and May to 41 percent in September. Among them, 78 percent received at least one dose, vs. 62 percent of others. Provider recommendations were associated with higher uptake particularly among adults younger than 40, rural residents and American Indians or Alaska Natives.

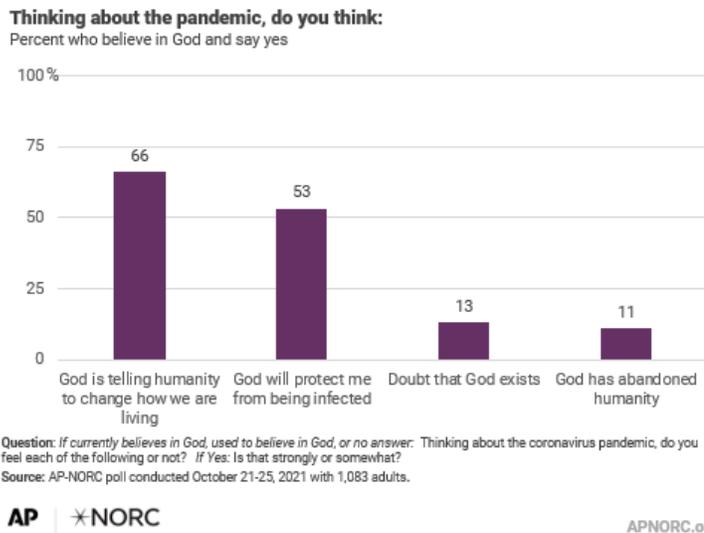
Overall, people who said their doctor recommended vaccination were more apt to believe that the vaccines are an important way to protect oneself and that they are very or completely safe, as well as to have greater concern about contracting the virus and to perceive that more of their

family and friends received a shot. The authors note that recommendations from healthcare providers can increase vaccine confidence and uptake ([CDC 4/22-9/25](#)).

Religion in the Pandemic

A survey conducted in October – before the latest surge in cases – found in-person church attendance slowly recovering, with 21 percent saying they attended in-person religious services at least once a week, up from 5 percent in May 2020. Fewer watched live-streamed services compared with early in the pandemic, 14 vs. 27 percent.

Seventy-two percent said the pandemic did not affect their faith or spirituality. Of the rest, 24 percent said it made their faith stronger, 4 percent weaker. Among believers, 66 percent saw the pandemic as a sign that God is telling humanity to change how it lives. Few said the pandemic caused them to doubt that God exists (13 percent) or to think God has abandoned humanity (11 percent). Fifty-three percent thought God would protect them from being infected ([AP-NORC 10/21-10/25](#)).



K-12 Education

As of September, all public schools (in a survey of about 170) offered in-person instruction. Thirty-four percent also offered remote instruction. Nearly all fourth- and eighth-grade students attended school full-time in-person, with no differences between majority white schools and those with majorities of students in other racial and ethnic groups.

In terms of coronavirus precautions, one in five schools offered on-site vaccinations for eligible students. Three-quarters either required or requested students to stay home after possible exposure. Thirty-nine percent reported that more than three-quarters of their staff had been vaccinated; 24 percent didn't know.

To address pandemic-related learning loss, 48 percent of public schools reported offering before- or after-school programs, 85 percent offered classes last summer and 51 percent had academic camps. Forty-two percent hired new staff to focus on students' social, emotional and mental well-being and 59 percent offered teachers professional development training in this area ([NCES 09/2021](#)).

In an open-ended survey question from October, more than four in 10 parents mentioned school mandates and/or compliance with coronavirus precautions as one of the primary issues facing schools at that time. About a third each pointed to concerns about social interactions for students

and fears about contracting the virus. Two in 10 mentioned the “missed year” students experienced ([MOSAIC 10/11-10/20](#)).

Two CDC analyses investigated the efficacy of Test to Stay strategies in K-12 public schools. One looked at TTS outcomes in 90 K-12 public schools in Lake County, Illinois from Aug. 9-Oct. 29. Unvaccinated students, teachers and staff members who were exposed to someone with the coronavirus could test to remain in school and participate in school-related activities as long as they remained asymptomatic, practiced consistent mask wearing, maintained physical distancing and were tested regularly. Only 1.5 percent of students (16 of 1,035) who came into contact with a student with the coronavirus ended up testing positive, with none of these students transmitting the virus to other school-based contacts. (Nine household contacts of the 16 secondary contacts tested positive.) Assuming eight missed school days for every 10-day quarantine period, the authors estimated that TTS saved up to 8,152 in-person learning days for the 90 schools ([CDC 8/9-10/29](#)).

Another study evaluated TTS in 432 schools in Los Angeles County from Aug. 16-Oct. 31. Unvaccinated students who were exposed to someone with the coronavirus were eligible to be tested twice weekly and remain in school if both the infected person and the exposed student correctly wore masks at the time of exposure and remained asymptomatic. The study found that schools did not experience increases in coronavirus incidence after adopting TTS and that no TTS-eligible students spread the virus to other contacts. LAC schools that did not participate in TTS lost an estimated 92,455 in-person school days during this time, compared with no lost days among quarantined students in TTS schools ([CDC 8/16-10/31](#)).

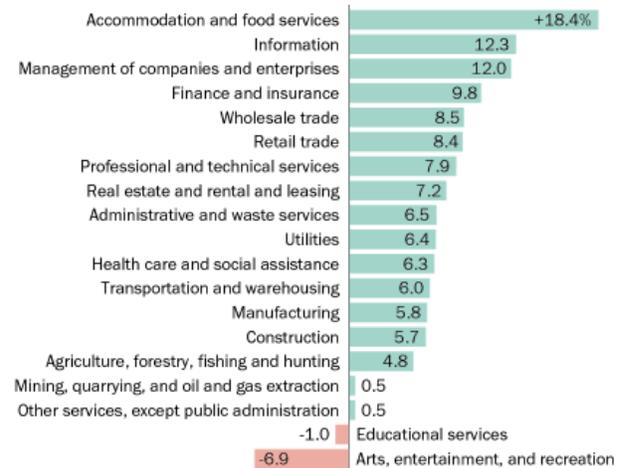
Wage Growth

Sixty-four percent of private-sector workers are employed in industries that saw at least a 5 percent increase in average weekly wages from Q2 2020 to Q2 2021. The largest wage increase was in the accommodation and food services sector (e.g., restaurants, bars and hotels), up 18.4 percent to an average of \$482 a week. Wages in this sector more than recovered from their 4.9 percent decrease from spring 2019 to spring 2020.

Other large gains were seen in the information sector, with average weekly wages up 12.3 percent; and management, up 12 percent. Wages decreased in some other sectors, such as educational services and arts, entertainment and recreation ([U.S. Census of Labor Statistics](#); [Pew Research 12/22](#)).

Since lockdown spring of 2020, hospitality sector wages have risen the most of all industries

% change in average weekly wage for private sector workers between second quarter of 2020 and second quarter of 2021



Note: Jobs unclassified to any industry or sector not shown.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

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Mortality, Life Expectancy & Population Growth

Updating provisional data, a new federal report confirms the largest annual decrease in life expectancy in the United States since World War II, down from 78.8 years in 2019 to 77.0 years in 2020. Deaths attributed to the coronavirus were the primary cause, with 10.4 percent of all deaths in 2020 (approximately 350,000 deaths) tied to the virus. Other factors, such as increased deaths due to diabetes and drug overdoses, also played a role ([CDC 12/22](#)). (Coronavirus deaths in 2021 have [surpassed](#) those in 2020.)

Separately, newly released Census estimates show that the U.S. population grew by 392,665 people, or 0.1 percent, in the past year, the slowest rate of growth since the nation's founding. The decreased growth rate extends a longer trend, though was accelerated by the pandemic. It's largely attributable to decreased international migration, lower birth rates and increased mortality from the coronavirus ([U.S. Census Bureau 12/21](#)).

State Results

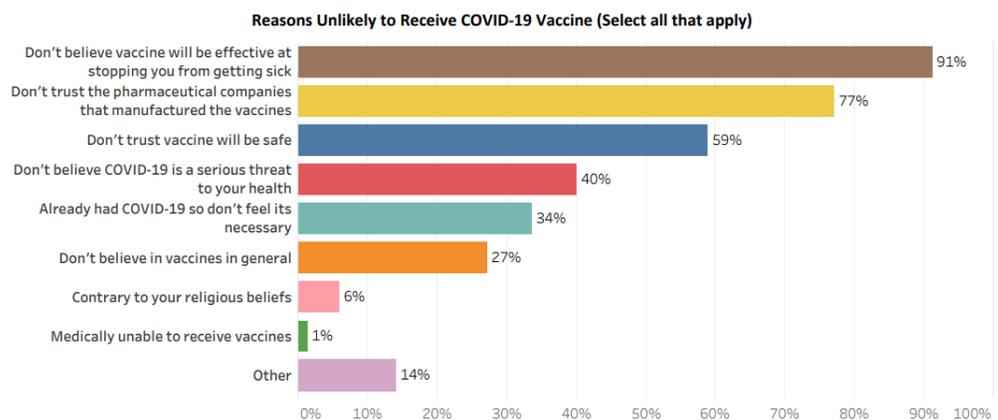
In New Hampshire, 80 percent of adults say they've received at least one vaccine dose, including 69 percent in this group who report having received a booster shot. An additional 24 percent of vaccinated adults

plan to get one. Of the one in five who are unlikely to receive an initial vaccine, 91 percent don't think it's effective, up from 76 percent in September; 59 percent don't trust its safety, down from 79 percent; and 77 percent don't trust the pharmaceutical companies that manufacture the vaccines. Nearly all unvaccinated adults, 99 percent, say the spread of the Omicron variant does not make them any more likely to get a shot.

Overall, 59 percent are concerned about the possible spread of Omicron. Only 7 percent think the coronavirus situation will get better in the next month, rising to 23 percent in the next three months, 54 percent in six months and 57 percent within the next year.

About half of Granite Staters (52 percent) approve of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic, up 5 points since October; 46 percent disapprove, down 4 points. Conversely, Gov. Chris Sununu's pandemic approval is worsening, with 57 percent approving, down from 65 percent in October; 42 percent disapprove, up 10 points ([UNH 12/16-12/20](#)).

In Tennessee, 72 percent of registered voters say they've received a vaccine and 1 percent plan to do so. Twenty-five percent are worried about contracting the coronavirus vs. 66 percent a year



ago. Just 9 percent say it should be the state government's top priority, down from 37 percent in December 2020. More point to the economy (29 percent) and education (20 percent).

Forty-two percent are satisfied with Biden's handling of the pandemic. More, 59 percent, are satisfied with Gov. Bill Lee's response; 69 percent are satisfied with the response by their local mayor or council members and 63 percent are satisfied with the response by their school district. More disapprove than approve of a state law prohibiting private companies from requiring their employees to be vaccinated, 47 vs. 37 percent ([Vanderbilt University 11/16-12/6](#)).

International Results

In Japan, 51 percent approve of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's response to the pandemic while 36 percent disapprove, a low since he took office. Kishida's approval exceeds the best for his two predecessors, Shinzo Abe and Yoshihide Suga ([Asahi Shimbun 12/18-12/19](#)).

Another survey finds 73 percent of Japanese fearful of the spread of the Omicron variant. Sixty-five percent hope to receive a booster shot as soon as possible; 21 percent prefer to wait. Just 26 percent plan to travel for the holiday season ([Mainichi Shimbun 12/18](#)).

In Chile, 76 percent approve of the government's handling of the pandemic, up 13 points in a month to a new high. Forty-three percent are very or somewhat worried about catching the virus, down from about half in late October and early November. Chile is one of the [most vaccinated](#) countries in the world ([Cadem 12/15-12/16](#)).

Use of face masks is up in Great Britain following a [Nov. 30](#) mask mandate for public transit, shops and other businesses. Ninety-four percent say they wore a face mask in the past week, up 10 points since late November. This includes 88 percent who always or often did so while shopping (+17 points since) and 84 percent say they wore masks the entire time on public transit (+14 points). Forty-seven percent say they observed everyone or almost everyone wearing a mask while shopping, up from 19 percent in late November. It's similar for observed mask use on public transit.

Forty-six percent of U.K. adults are fully vaccinated and have received a booster, up from 34 percent in late November. Among the fully vaccinated who have yet to receive a booster, nine in 10 say they'd be likely do so if offered; only 5 percent call it unlikely. Sixty-two percent planned to visit family or friends at their homes on Christmas and 48 percent planned to host others. Eight in 10 would stay home if they felt unwell ([Office for National Statistics 12/1-12/12](#)).

In Russia, 42 percent of adult says say they've received at least one vaccine dose and 27 percent plan to do so; three in 10 say they won't. Fifty-four percent feel positively about the mass vaccination of Russians against the coronavirus. Sixty-one percent are worried that they or a loved one will be infected; 12 percent say it's already happened ([VCIOM 12/12](#)).

Additional U.S. and international poll results are available at the [COVID-19 Survey Archive](#).

Summary for SEAN by [Langer Research Associates](#).