



COVID-19 Survey Summary: February 18, 2022

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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Coronavirus vaccine uptake remains level in surveys this week, with the number of Americans receiving a first or booster dose down sharply from December. Among those still unvaccinated, distrust in the vaccines is up.

One study builds on evidence that doctors are an important pathway to vaccine uptake, finding higher rates of vaccinations in counties where primary care physicians are more prevalent. More broadly, the share of Americans expressing a great deal of confidence in medical scientists is down 14 percentage points from early in the pandemic.

Another report finds variability in the share of nursing home staffers who have been fully vaccinated, from 70 percent in Ohio to 99 percent in four Northeastern states. On another front, federal data show rising traffic fatalities in 2020 and 2021 alike.

As the Omicron surge continues to subside, just one in 10 Americans calls the coronavirus the most important issue facing the country today. Approval of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic remains depressed, albeit with a slight gain.

In K-12 results, most people say parents and school officials/teachers should have equal say in school policy on masks and remote learning. Among school district leaders, 68 percent reported a shortage of teachers last fall and 95 percent reported a shortage of substitute teachers.

This week's summary also includes international polls from Chile, South Korea, Russia and the Philippines.

Vaccine Uptake

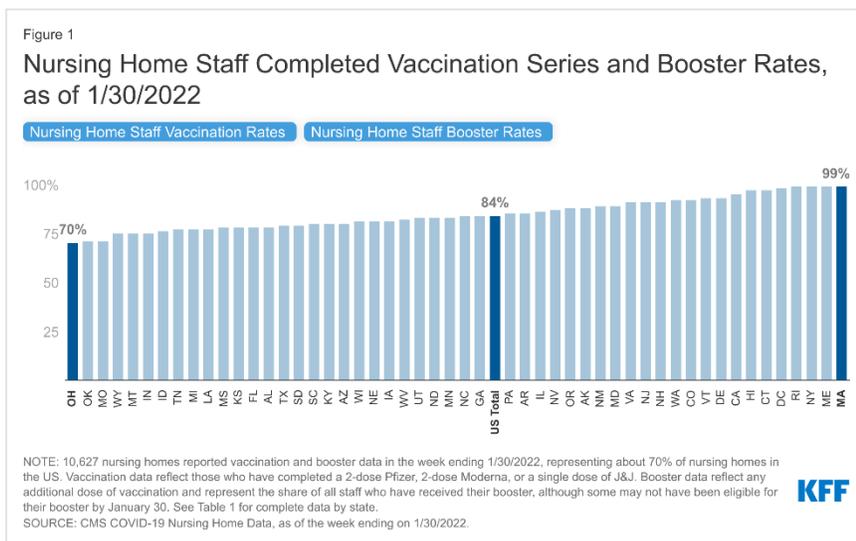
Regardless of difficulties with administrative records, federal data point to [falling](#) vaccination rates, with the seven-day average of Americans receiving a first dose down nearly 70 percent in the week ending Feb. 10 compared with the first week of December and the average number getting a booster shot down about 80 percent.

In one poll released this week, 85 percent of adults report having received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, unchanged in the past month. Among them, 58 percent say they’ve received a booster shot, up 7 points in a month and 19 points since mid-December. (Among the fully vaccinated, 61 percent say they’ve received a booster.) ([U.S. Census Bureau 1/26-2/7](#)). This survey typically has produced [higher estimates](#) of initial vaccine uptake than others.

As reported [last week](#), other recent surveys have found uptake leveling off at just fewer than eight in 10 adults, largely steady in the last few months, indicating that Omicron has had little effect on encouraging uptake.

Vaccine administration data also continue to produce higher estimates of uptake compared with most surveys, with the CDC placing it at [88 percent](#); it’s 85 percent in a survey that’s weighted to jurisdiction-level vaccine data reported to the CDC ([CDC 1/30-2/5](#)). The agency’s count of booster uptake is lower than survey estimates, at [46 percent](#) of fully vaccinated adults. The CDC says it’s not always able to link first, second and booster doses, potentially producing an overestimate of first doses and underestimate of subsequent doses.

An analysis finds that 84 percent of nursing home staff nationally were fully vaccinated as of Jan. 30, ranging from 70 percent in Ohio to 99 percent in Maine, Massachusetts, New York and Rhode Island. It was 89 percent in the 25 states and D.C. where staff were required to receive their first dose by Jan. 27, compared with 77 percent in the 25 states with February deadlines. (Data include facilities reporting complete data, accounting for about 70 percent of nursing homes.) ([KFF 2/17](#)).



Deterrents & Motivators

Among people who haven’t gotten vaccinated and don’t have immediate plans to do so, 44 percent don’t trust the coronavirus vaccines generally, compared with 41 percent in January and 35 percent in late June. Citing distrust in the government as a reason for not planning to get vaccinated is steady since January at 36 percent, compared with 28 percent in June.

Possible side effects remain the top concern among the vaccine-hesitant, cited by half. The share waiting to see if it’s safe has fallen by 25 points since the onset of the vaccine rollout to a quarter now. Reasons related to accessibility are rare, with only 2 percent apiece saying it’s hard for them to get a vaccine or they’re concerned about the cost ([U.S. Census Bureau 1/26-2/7](#)).

In terms of motivators, a study in 2,739 U.S. counties or county equivalents finds a positive association between vaccine uptake and the number of primary care physicians per 100,000 residents, controlling for demographic factors, urbanicity, socioeconomic status and political leaning. Adjusted for potential confounds, counties with the most PCPs per 100,000 residents were associated with a 5.5 percent higher vaccination rate compared with those in the lowest decile. Adding 10 PCPs per 100,000 people was associated with a 0.3 percent increase in uptake. The authors conclude that PCPs play a critical role in building vaccine acceptance in their communities, especially in more vaccine-hesitant regions ([Lo et al., 2022](#)).

A positive association between coronavirus vaccine uptake and doctor recommendations has been covered [previously](#). As of late January, 47 percent of adults said their healthcare provider recommended they get a coronavirus vaccine, up 4 points from early December and 10 points from early August. Vaccinated adults were 14 points more apt than the vaccine hesitant to say their healthcare provider had recommended they get a shot, 49 vs. 35 percent ([CDC 1/23-1/29](#)).

Trust

Twenty-nine percent of Americans in a December survey reported “a great deal” of confidence in medical scientists to act in the best interests of the public, down from 40 percent in November 2020 and 35 percent in pre-pandemic January 2019. Including those with a “fair” amount of confidence lifted the total to 78 percent, still down from 85 percent in November 2020 and a similar number in January 2019.

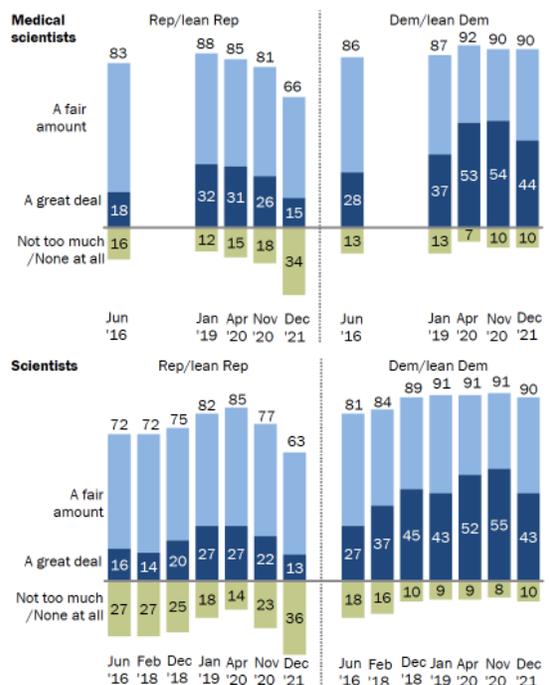
The decline occurred across political groups but was steeper among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents than their Democratic counterparts. As of December, 66 percent of Republicans and GOP leaners had a great deal or fair amount of confidence in medical scientists, vs. 90 percent of Democrats and Democratic leaners. A widening partisan divide in trust in scientists has been found in [previous](#) surveys.

Results were similar regarding confidence in scientists generally. Trust in the military, public school principals and police officers also was down since the onset of the pandemic ([Pew 11/30-12/12](#)).

Government Response

Democrats remain more confident than Republicans in medical scientists; ratings fall among both groups

% of U.S. adults who have ____ of confidence in the following groups to act in the best interests of the public



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 12, 2021.
“Americans’ Trust in Scientists, Other Groups Declines”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Forty-three percent of Americans approve of Joe Biden's response to the pandemic, up slightly from 39 percent in mid-January. More, 53 percent, disapprove, about the same as last month, 55 percent.

Ten percent call the coronavirus the most important issue facing the country today, vs. 16 percent in mid-October. Nearly three in 10 instead point to inflation ([Quinnipiac 2/10-2/14](#)).

Mandates

Eight in 10 say tensions surrounding coronavirus-related mandates have more to do with political disagreements than scientific ones, with broad consensus across most demographic groups. Thinking about the future, 43 percent expect tensions to stay the same as cases decline; fewer expect tensions to decrease (34 percent) or increase (20 percent) ([Quinnipiac 2/10-2/14](#)).

Work

Among the 39 percent of employed Americans who have a job that mainly can be done from home, six in 10 worked from home all or most of the time in late January, down from 71 percent in October 2020. Sixty-one percent in this group said this was their choice rather than their workplace being unavailable to them, 38 percent. Results were flipped from October 2020, when 36 percent worked from home by choice, 64 percent because their workplace was closed.

Most home-based workers whose office was open simply preferred remote work, with 76 percent calling this a major factor, up 16 points from October 2020. Forty-two percent cited concerns about the coronavirus, down 15 points; many fewer, 17 percent, said they had relocated away from their workplace, up 8 points.

Among the 22 percent of workers whose job could be done remotely but rarely or never worked from home, 64 percent said their employer disallowed it.

Twenty-two percent of those not working exclusively from home said their employer required them to get vaccinated; somewhat more, three in 10, favored an employer mandate. Forty-seven percent said it was encouraged but not required (four in 10 preferred this). Three in 10 said it was neither required nor encouraged; as many preferred that approach ([Pew 1/24-1/30](#)).

K-12 Education

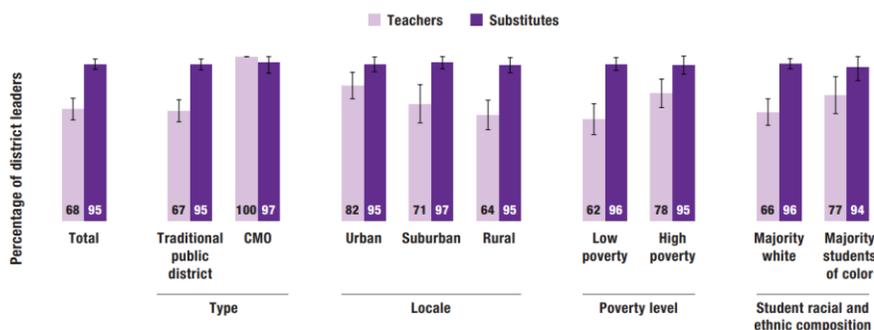
Sixty-three percent of adults overall say that the views of parents and those of teachers and/or school officials should be taken equally into account in determining school policy on virtual learning. The rest divide evenly between prioritizing parents' views (17 percent) vs. those of teachers and/or school officials (16 percent).

On mask policies, 53 percent favor equal input. Here, 24 percent say the views of teachers and school officials should be most important; 19 percent, parents'.

Among registered voters, 46 percent say education will be extremely important in their vote for Congress this year vs. 38 percent who say the same of the coronavirus ([CNN 1/10-2/6](#)).

Pandemic-related staff shortages were widely reported in a fall 2021 survey of 359 district leaders. Sixty-eight percent agreed that “the pandemic has caused a shortage of teachers” in their district, with reported shortages higher among urban and high-poverty districts compared with their counterparts.

Percentage of District Leaders Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That the Pandemic Has Caused Shortages of Substitutes and of Teachers



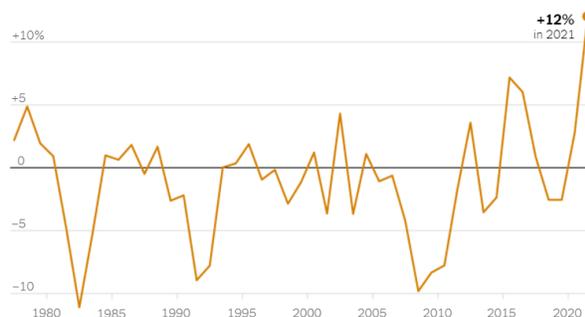
Nearly all district leaders, 95 percent, agreed that the pandemic had caused a shortage of substitute teachers. Most also reported shortages of bus drivers (74 percent), special education teachers (60 percent), paraprofessionals (60 percent) and high school teachers specifically (54 percent). Expanded hires were reported for substitute teachers (55 percent), paraprofessionals (53 percent), tutors (44 percent), school nurses (39 percent), virtual teachers (38 percent), classroom teachers (37 percent) and social workers (35 percent). Superintendents said they worked an average of 67 hours per week, compared with an estimated average of 59 hours in fall 2019. An estimated 13 percent of superintendents left their position in the previous year, similar to estimates in pre-pandemic studies ([RAND 10/25-12/10](#)).

U.S. Traffic Deaths

Traffic fatalities increased last year even though more people were [staying home](#). In preliminary data, 31,720 people died from vehicle crashes in the first nine months of 2021, the most in comparable data since 2006. Deaths were up 12.0 percent from the first nine months of 2020 and 17.7 percent from the same period in 2019, the largest percentage increases in data since 1975. The rate of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled rose sharply in April 2020 and has held above pre-pandemic levels ([U.S. Department of Transportation 2/1](#)).

U.S. traffic deaths per capita

Annual percent change ending in September of each year



Source: National Highway Safety Administration - By The New York Times

A secondary analysis finds that per-capita vehicle deaths rose 17.5 percent from the summer of 2019 to the summer of 2021, the largest two-year increase since World War II ([NYT 2/15](#)). The U.S. Department of Transportation [cites](#) riskier behavior such as extreme speeds and increased prevalence of alcohol and drugs among fatally injured drivers.

Booster Efficacy

A study suggests that coronavirus booster shot efficacy declines after four months but still offers substantial protection. During the Omicron surge, efficacy against coronavirus-associated emergency department or urgent care visits fell from 87 percent among those vaccinated within the previous two months to 66 percent among those vaccinated four months earlier. Efficacy against coronavirus-associated hospitalizations followed a similar trend, declining from 91 percent to 78 percent. Efficacy during the Delta surge was higher at all time points after vaccination than during the Omicron surge, but followed a similar declining trend. Data were from eight U.S. health care organizations in 10 states from August 2021 to January 2022. The authors stress remaining up to date with recommended coronavirus vaccines ([CDC 8/21-1/22](#)).

State & Local Results

A Washington, D.C., poll fielded before the city rescinded proof-of-vaccination requirements finds that three-quarters of residents supported them, peaking among higher-income residents, whites and seniors. Seventy-two percent give Mayor Muriel Bowser positive marks for her handling of the pandemic. Nine in 10 say they've been vaccinated ([Washington Post 2/2-2/14](#)).

International Results

In Chile, where cases are still on an Omicron-fueled [rise](#), concern about catching the coronavirus remains heightened, at 54 percent, compared with roughly four in 10 before the latest surge. Still, that's eased from 61 percent two weeks ago. Two-thirds continue to approve of the government's handling of the pandemic, off its peak of nearly eight in 10 in December ([Cadem 2/9-2/11](#)).

In South Korea, 45 percent assess the government's handling of the coronavirus positively, down 6 points in a month; 44 percent give negative ratings, up 4 points. Seventeen percent of those who rate the government's job positively say it's because South Korea has done a better job managing the virus than other countries, the top-cited reason in an open-ended question. Among those who think the government's done badly, 13 percent point to compulsory vaccinations and roughly one in 10 apiece cite an inconsistent response, inability to curb the spread of the virus and delayed response or excessive restrictions on economic activity. While the country has been successful in vaccinating a broad share of its public, the Omicron variant has caused the number of new daily cases to soar, with the cumulative number of confirmed cases now above 1 million ([Gallup Korea 2/8-2/10](#)).

Asked about their fears and apprehensions about the global situation, 42 percent of Russians say mass epidemics such as AIDS and the coronavirus are most concerning to them, topping a list of 13 items. Before the pandemic, about two in 10 called epidemics the most worrying issue ([FOM 1/28-1/30](#)).

In another Russian survey, 14 percent mentioned a pandemic-related event, such as vaccines and emergence of a new coronavirus strain, as one of the most memorable events within the previous

month. More cited events in Kazakhstan (22 percent) or around Ukraine (21 percent) in the open-ended question ([Levada 1/27-2/2](#)).

In a mid-December survey, 51 percent of Filipinos expected the pandemic to be over before the end of 2022, including 29 percent in the next six months; 45 percent thought it would take at least until 2023. Fifty-one percent agreed that mandatory vaccination for all adults is a proper response; as many agreed that unvaccinated employees should not be allowed to report for work unless they produce a negative test result every two weeks. Forty-nine percent agreed with a proposal to restrict indoor dining only to vaccinated adults ([SWS 12/12-12/16](#)).

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

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