



COVID-19 Survey Summary: December 10, 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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While seven in 10 Americans are concerned about the Omicron variant, that's no more than expressed concerns about the coronavirus pre-Omicron, and new polling finds that comparatively few plan to stop dining, traveling or socializing with people outside their household. Majorities support some restrictions to slow the spread of the virus, but not temporary lockdowns.

Results from pre-Omicron data find that vaccine uptake among children age 5-11 has slowed considerably since Thanksgiving, with seven in 10 parents of children in this age group preferring to wait or refusing outright. Most say they don't have enough information about the vaccines' safety or efficacy in children, and concerns about side effects are substantial.

Parents place a high degree of trust in their pediatrician to provide accurate information about the vaccines, but only four in 10 have spoken with them about it. Among them, a third to four in 10, depending on the age group, say the doctor did not recommend coronavirus vaccinations for their child.

Newly released polls also investigate Americans' views on face masks, school vaccine policies and religious exemptions for coronavirus vaccines. One finds a decline in trust of doctors among Republicans while another finds some buy-in for telehealth even after the pandemic.

New studies also document a decline in international student enrollment during the pandemic and summarize experiences of unemployment in 2020. International results from Canada, Chile, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Russia also are included in this week's summary.

Omicron Variant

The Omicron variant doesn't appear to have heightened worries. Among those who've heard of it, about seven in 10 are at least somewhat concerned, including 37 percent very or extremely so. This essentially matches the [69 percent](#) who expressed some concern about the coronavirus two weeks ago, before word of the new variant, including an identical 37 percent with higher-level worries.

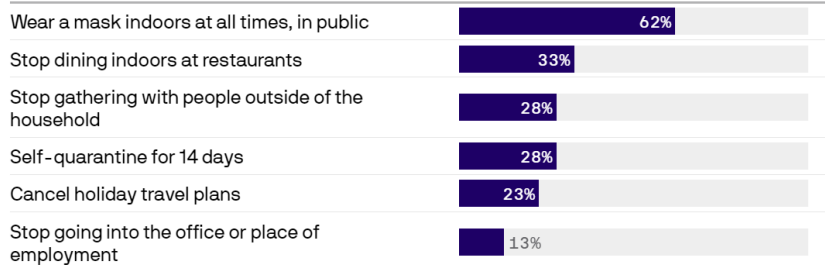
Nearly all Americans, 94 percent, have heard of Omicron, though fewer than half say they're very (7 percent) or somewhat familiar (40 percent) with it. Sixty-two percent say that in response to the new variant they're very or somewhat likely always to wear a mask indoors in public, ranging from 82 percent of Democrats to 38 percent of Republicans.

Fewer, a third, say they're likely to stop dining indoors at restaurants; 28 percent apiece say they're likely to stop gathering with people outside their household or to self-quarantine for 14 days; 23 percent, to cancel holiday travel plans; and 13 percent, to stop going to work in person. This includes 7 to 13 percent very likely to carry out any of these precautions.

Americans' response to the Omicron variant

Survey of 1,021 U.S. adults from Dec. 3-6, 2021

Percentage of respondents likely to...



Data: Axios/Ipsos poll; Note: The last question only includes 589 employed respondents; Chart: Kavya Beheraj/Axios

Sixty-three percent oppose temporary lockdowns and local business closures to try to control the Omicron variant's spread in the United States; 35 percent are in support. Less drastic measures win majority support. Sixty-nine percent back individual businesses in their area requiring customers to wear masks indoors. Two-thirds apiece support city or local governments issuing mask mandates for indoor public places, airlines requiring proof of vaccination to fly and the United States issuing travel bans forbidding entry by people from other countries.

Fifty-six percent of workers support their employer requiring all staff to be vaccinated to try to curb the spread of the variant. Again, though, this matches results from late November, before Omicron was identified as a variant of concern ([Axios-Ipsos 12/3-12/6](#)).

In another poll since the Omicron discovery, 18 percent mention the coronavirus as the biggest concern facing their family, essentially unchanged since July and down from 57 percent at its peak in March 2020. More point to everyday bills and groceries (15 percent) or inflation specifically (14 percent) in this open-ended question ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)).

Coronavirus cases are up nationwide, with an average of nearly [120,000 a day](#) in the past week, up from 70,000 in early November, and about 1,100 deaths daily, off a peak of about 1,900 in the Delta surge. Despite the [appearance](#) of the Omicron variant in the United States, the Delta strain still makes up the vast majority of cases in the country.

Face Masks

In additional post-Omicron data, 54 percent of Americans say a person always should wear a face mask when in a busy indoor space, such as a sports arena or concert venue. About as many (52 percent) say the same for shopping at a grocery or retail store.

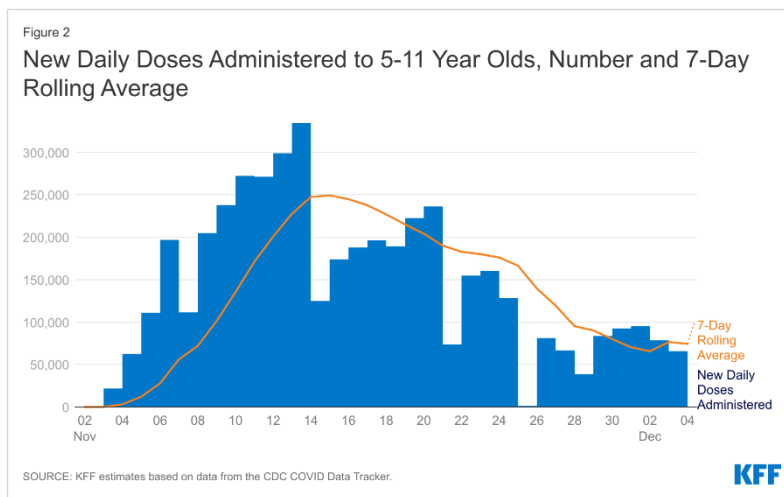
Fewer think masks always are needed in other situations: Thirty-six percent, while dining indoors at a restaurant (except to eat or drink); 30 percent, when socializing with people outside one's household; 24 percent, when in a busy outdoor space or park; and 21 percent, when socializing exclusively with vaccinated people outside one's household ([Axios-Ipsos 12/3-12/6](#)).

Vaccines

As of Dec. 10, the [CDC](#) reports that an estimated 18 percent of children age 5-11 have received at least one vaccine dose, up 1 percentage point in a week. An analysis of the agency's data finds that uptake among children in this age range has slowed considerably from an initial surge after its Nov. 2 authorization ([KFF 12/8](#)).

In results before Omicron was identified as a variant of concern, three in 10 parents of 5- to 11-year-olds said their child was vaccinated (16 percent) or would be right away (13 percent). The rest preferred to wait and see (32 percent), said they would act only if required (7 percent) or ruled it out (29 percent).

The [CDC](#) estimates far higher uptake among 12- to 17-year-olds, 62 percent, though the pace similarly has leveled off. In mid-November, 49 percent of parents of children in this age group said their child had received a shot, steady the past two months. Just 1 percent said they'd get their child vaccinated right away. Thirteen percent wanted to wait and see, 4 percent would take action only if required and 30 percent ruled it out ([KFF 11/8-11/23](#)).



A late October to early November poll – again pre-Omicron – looked at uptake intentions among parents of all children younger than 18. Fourteen percent said their child had been vaccinated and 28 percent planned to get their child a shot right away once eligible; the total, 42 percent, was up from 35 percent in June. Twenty-three percent preferred to wait, 10 percent would act only if required and another 23 percent – unchanged since June – ruled it out ([PRRI-IFYC 10/18-11/9](#)).

Among adults, 84 percent have received a shot, per [CDC](#) figures. Estimates are similar, at about eight in 10, in two polls this week, including one that uses the CDC result as a weighting

adjustment ([Axios-Ipsos 12/3-12/6](#), [CDC 11/21-11/27](#)). It was 74 percent in a late October/early November poll, with 4 percent saying they'd do so right away ([PRRI-IFYC 10/18-11/9](#)).

The share of adults preferring to wait and see fell from 19 percent in March to 5 percent in early November (pre-Omicron). Outright refusal held steady, at 13 percent ([PRRI-IFYC 10/18-11/9](#)). In an analogous result, asked another way, 13 percent say they definitely or probably won't get vaccinated, unchanged since mid-August ([CDC 11/21-11/27](#)).

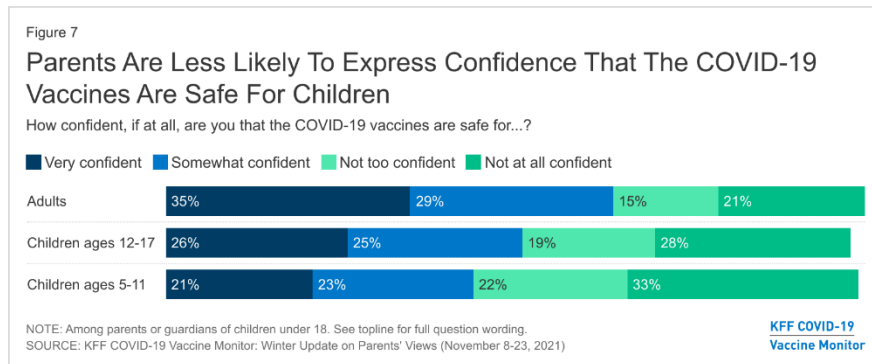
An article we covered in [late August](#), assessing the accuracy of “unrepresentative big surveys” in estimating vaccine uptake, has been published in the peer-reviewed journal Nature ([Bradley et al., 2021](#)).

Vaccine Perceptions Among Parents

Again in pre-Omicron data, parents with children under 18 continued to express considerable vaccine skepticism. Sixty-three percent were at least somewhat confident in the vaccines' safety for adults, dropping to 52 percent for 12- to 17-year-olds and 43 percent for children age 5-11.

Roughly six in 10 parents felt they didn't have enough information on vaccine side effects (63 percent), safety (61 percent) or effectiveness

(58 percent) in children. Among parents who were hesitant to get their eligible child vaccinated, about two in 10 cited the need for more information, tests and research as their main reason, topping responses in an open-ended question ([KFF 11/8-11/23](#)).



In another study, 65 percent of parents were very or somewhat worried that, for children, long-term effects are unknown; 59 percent, that the vaccines are not as safe as advertised; and 54 percent, that they're not as effective as they are said to be. Sixty-one percent of parents were worried that their child might experience serious side effects ([PRRI-IFYC 10/18-11/9](#)).

Among parents with an unvaccinated 5- to 11-year-old, 69 percent were at least somewhat worried that their child would experience serious side effects from the vaccine. It was 65 percent among parents with an unvaccinated adolescent.

That said, substantially more parents said that becoming infected with the coronavirus posed a larger risk to their child than getting vaccinated – 57-39 percent among those with children age 12-17, similar among those with 5- to 11-year-olds. More saw getting a child vaccinated as a parent's personal choice rather than as a responsibility to protect others, 65 vs. 34 percent. ([KFF 11/8-11/23](#)).

Vaccine Information Sources Among Parents

When it comes to providing reliable information about coronavirus vaccines for children, 77 percent of parents said they have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the child’s pediatrician or healthcare provider; 60 percent, in their local public health department; and 57 percent, in the CDC (down 9 points since July). Fewer than half, 45 percent, trusted their child’s school or daycare and a third said they trust other parents.

Four in 10 parents with vaccine-eligible children said they’d talked to their child’s pediatrician or healthcare provider about the vaccines, up 10 points since July. Among them, majorities said the provider recommended that their child get vaccinated, including 60 percent of parents with teens age 12-17 and 53 percent of parents with 5- to 11-year-olds. Still, that leaves considerable shares, 34 and 41 percent, respectively, whose provider did not recommend vaccinations.

About eight in 10 parents with children age 5-17 said their child’s healthcare provider was able to answer all or most of the questions they had about the vaccine for children. After the interaction, 37 percent were more willing to get their child vaccinated vs. 9 percent less. Most, 54 percent, said it did not have an impact on their decision ([KFF 11/8-11/23](#)).

Religious Exemptions

Thirty-one percent of unvaccinated Americans in October to November said they’d asked for a religious exemption from getting a vaccine, or planned to do so. This ranged from 41 percent of evangelical white

Protestants to 19 percent of the religiously unaffiliated.

Among parents with children under 18, 20 percent planned to seek a religious exemption for their child.

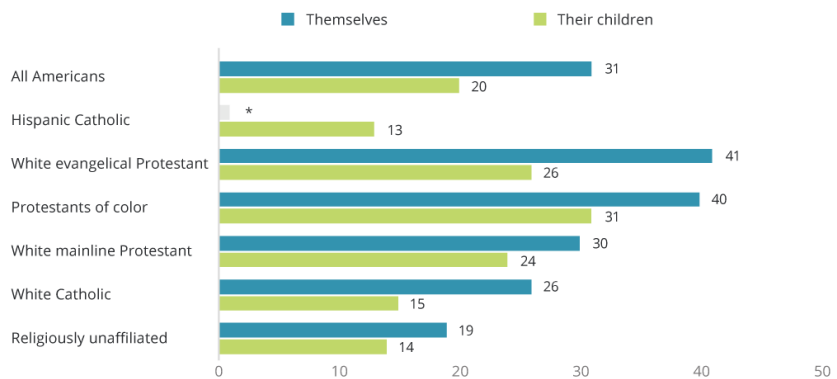
Americans divided, 51-47 percent, favor-oppose, on whether individuals should be allowed to refuse a COVID-19 vaccine requirement if it violates their beliefs. Fewer favored

allowing religious exemptions for children, 44 percent, with 54 percent opposed.

Six in 10 apiece agreed with statements saying there are no valid religious reasons to refuse a vaccine and “too many people are using religion as an excuse to avoid COVID-19 vaccination requirements.”

FIGURE 1.2 Some Americans Plan to Ask for Religious Exemptions to COVID-19

Percent who will ask for a religious exemption for:



* Sample size too small to report.

Source: PRRI-IFYC November 2021 Survey.

Fifty-eight percent said exemptions should be allowed for those who hold a sincere belief that receiving a coronavirus vaccine is against the teachings of their religion. Still, many fewer, 39 percent, agreed with an exemption for anyone who simply makes this claim. More agreed that religious exemptions should be granted if a person has a record of refusing other vaccinations because of their religious beliefs (55 percent), a record of belonging to a religious group that has previously refused other vaccinations (57 percent) or a document from a religious leader certifying coronavirus vaccinations are against their religious beliefs (51 percent) ([PRRI-IFYC 10/18-11/9](#)).

K-12 Education

Half of parents with children age 5-17 said their child's school has provided them with information about how to get a coronavirus vaccine for their child; 44 percent said the school has encouraged them to do so. Among parents of 12- to 17-year-olds whose school has encouraged vaccinations, 60 percent said they've gotten their child a shot, vs. 42 percent of those whose school did not encourage vaccinations. It's 28 vs. 8 percent among parents of children age 5-11.

Among all parents with school-age children, 67 percent opposed vaccine requirements for eligible students to attend school in person. Few, 9 percent, said their child's school has such a rule. Just 20 percent said their school had asked about their child's vaccination status.

More broadly, 73 percent of parents reported a negative impact of the pandemic on their child's education, including 35 percent who say it's had a major negative impact. Four in 10 said the pandemic has negatively impacted their ability to care for their children ([KFF 11/8-11/23](#)).

Government Response

Fifty-seven percent of Americans in one poll approve of Joe Biden's handling of the coronavirus, steady since mid-August but down from 73 percent in late March ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)). Another finds fewer approving, 50 percent, down from 55 percent in September and 66 percent in May to a new low ([NPR-Marist 11/30-12-6](#)).

Employment

A newly released analysis finds that 26.4 million people experienced unemployment at some point during 2020, vastly more than in 2019, 12.9 million. About 2.9 million looked for a job but did not work last year, up from 2.0 million the year before.

The share of those age 16 and older who worked at some time during the year decreased from 64.9 percent in 2019 to 63.5 percent in 2020. The share of workers who worked full-time, year-round, fell from 70.2 percent to 63.1 percent ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 12/9](#)).

Trust in Doctors

Twenty-two percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents have less trust and confidence in their doctor than they did a year ago, vs. 13 percent with more confidence. (Most,

64 percent, report no change.) Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents report more rather than less confidence by 19-8 percent, with seven in 10 saying there's been no change.

Similarly, 60 percent of Republicans and Republican learners are confident in the accuracy of important medical advice from their doctor, down 13 points from its last measurement in 2010. More Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents have confidence in their doctor, 71 percent, essentially unchanged ([Gallup 11/1-11/16](#)).

Pandemic Impacts

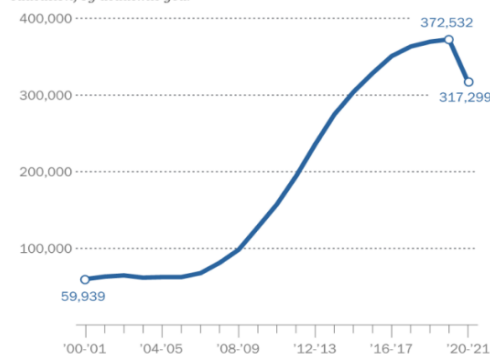
The U.S. surgeon general warned of a youth mental health crisis in a [report](#) this week, saying the pandemic had intensified already widespread mental health issues. Our previous summaries have covered a [sharp rise in suspected suicide attempts](#) among teenage girls in the United States, documented an increase in inpatient stays for [eating disorders](#) and reported that approximately [140,000 children](#) lost a caregiver due to coronavirus-associated deaths.

Decline in International Student Enrollment

The number of foreign students enrolled online or in person at U.S. universities fell by 15 percent from 2019-20 to 2020-21. The largest decreases were among students from South Korea (21 percent), China (15 percent) and India (13 percent). The total number of international students fell to fewer than one million for the first time since 2014-15. Chinese students alone paid an estimated \$15 billion in tuition in 2018-19 ([Pew 12/6](#)).

After growing sharply in recent decades, the number of Chinese students in the U.S. fell during the pandemic

Number of Chinese students studying at American institutions of higher education, by academic year



Note: Open Doors treats China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau as separate locations in their analysis.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of "International Student Totals by Place of Origin, 2000/01-2020/21." Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.opendoorsdata.org> on Nov. 11, 2021.

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Telehealth Usage

In a new study of March 2021 data, 45 percent of adults age 20 and older reported having at least one telehealth appointment in the previous year. Just 2 percent in this group were unwilling to do so again in the future. Thirty-four percent overall preferred that all of their care be in person after the pandemic, with the rest preferring some care through telehealth – a little (30 percent), some (26 percent) or as much as possible (10 percent). Asked to choose one or the other, if cost were not a factor, 53 percent preferred in-person visits vs. 21 percent, telehealth; 26 percent had no preference. Given a scenario in which their preferred method cost \$30 and the other option \$10, 62 percent of those preferring telehealth would switch to an in-person visit, while just 24 percent of those preferring in-person care would opt for telehealth instead ([Predmore et al., 2021](#)).

State Results

In one poll in Texas, 8 percent of registered voters call COVID-19 the most urgent issue facing the state, tied for fourth among 12 items offered ([Quinnipiac 12/2-12/6](#)). In another, accepting up to three choices, more place COVID-19 among the state's main problems, 23 percent, second

among 18 items tested, albeit down sharply from 47 percent in August ([Spectrum/Ipsos 11/16-11/26](#)). In both polls, about six in 10 oppose the state's ban on mask mandates and half oppose its ban on vaccine mandates.

In Pennsylvania, 74 percent in mid-November reported being vaccinated, with 76 percent of them planning to receive a booster shot. Among the unvaccinated, 49 percent said "personal liberties and choice" was their primary reason, followed by concerns about adverse health effects, 30 percent. Pandemic concerns overall were down in this pre-Omicron data, with 41 percent extremely or very concerned about the coronavirus, vs. 57 percent last March. A majority, 57 percent, thought the worst of the pandemic was behind us.

In terms of government response, 40 percent approved of Biden's handling of the pandemic, down from 55 percent in March. It was 35 percent for Gov. Tom Wolf's response, essentially unchanged. Pennsylvanians split 49-50 percent, agree-disagree, on whether employers should be allowed to require their employees get vaccinated. Most, 60 percent, agreed that public schools should require students to wear masks ([Muhlenberg College/Morning Call 11/15-11/22](#)).

International Results

In Chile, 72 percent approve of the government's handling of the coronavirus, a pandemic high. [Eighty-eight](#) percent of Chileans have gotten at least one vaccine dose. Forty-six percent of adults say they're worried about getting sick with the coronavirus, steady the last two weeks while down 5 points from mid-November ([Cadem 11/30-12/2](#)).

Just fewer than half of Russians (46 percent) report being vaccinated, with a steady decline in those who rule it out, to 36 percent. Forty-five percent fear contracting the coronavirus, unchanged in the past few months. Fifty-four percent oppose mandatory vaccination; among them, 37 percent say it would violate human rights. Two in 10 don't trust the vaccine because it's too new and needs more research. An electronic pass providing proof of vaccination is broadly unpopular; 76 percent feel negative about its use on public transit, 67 percent for restaurants, museums, shopping centers and big events ([Levada 11/25-12/1](#)).

Given four issues, 29 percent of Canadians say they are most worried about the pandemic, trailing inflation and about even with climate change ([Nanos 11/27-11/29](#)).

In Great Britain, 96 percent of adults have gotten at least one dose of a vaccine and a third are both fully vaccinated and have gotten a booster shot, up 10 points since early November. Nine in 10 fully vaccinated adults who haven't gotten a booster say they'll likely do so when it's offered to them. Many say they're still taking precautionary measures such as often or always wearing a face covering outside the home (84 percent), while shopping (71 percent) or traveling on public transport (70 percent). Only about two in 10, however, say nearly everyone around them wears a face covering in stores or on public transit.

Two-thirds say their cost of living has risen in the past month and 36 percent report shortages of goods in the past two weeks. Increases are widely reported in the price of food (87 percent), gas

or electricity bills (77 percent) and fuel (76 percent). Seasonal variations in gas and electricity costs may have influenced responses ([Office for National Statistics 11/18-11/28](#)).

A study in the Netherlands finds that the availability of at-home coronavirus tests may double tests taken on the first day of symptoms, from 21 to 42 percent. The number who said they wouldn't expect to get tested immediately dropped from 47 to 34 percent given the option of an at-home test. Overall, 78 percent said they had at-home coronavirus tests. Among them, 66 percent say they had received them free of charge from the government, 30 percent bought them at a supermarket and 15 percent received them for free from a school or university ([I&O Research/RIVM 11/11-11/16](#)).

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

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