



COVID-19 Survey Summary: December 17, 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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With COVID-19 cases back on the rise, more Americans see returning to their pre-coronavirus life as risky, vaccine resistance has eased and mask wearing is up. Still, overall concerns about the pandemic are little changed, social activities continue and about seven in 10 plan to see family or friends outside their household for the upcoming winter holidays.

Frequent mask use rose moderately in two polls this week and majorities continue to support state or local mask mandates in public places. Adults' reluctance to get vaccinated reached new lows in several surveys, and roughly half of vaccinated adults report having gotten a booster shot, many more than in CDC estimates.

Americans' views of Joe Biden's handling of the pandemic have reached career lows, along with lessened approval for governors and federal health agencies. Polls differ, though, on Biden's level of support, as well as on opinions of his vaccinate/testing mandate for larger employers.

Among other results, the cost of living rivals the coronavirus in views of the biggest problem facing the country, nearly half say their view of the U.S. healthcare system worsened during the pandemic and six in 10 adults age 50 and older used some form of telehealth since the pandemic began, with most of them saying they'll seek it out again in the future.

Other reports confirm the decline in college enrollment of 2020 high school graduates, finding that few ended up taking a gap year; show a drop in reported illicit drug use among adolescents, but moderately higher stress; and find that that vaccine lotteries increased vaccine uptake in six states, but not in others. International results from Brazil, Chile, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Russia and South Korea also are included in this week's report.

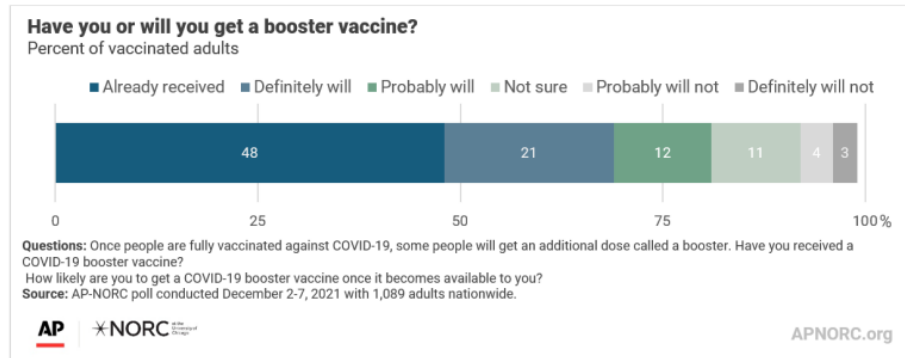
Vaccines

Eighty-five percent of adults have received at least one vaccine dose, up 1 percentage point in the past week and 9 points since mid-September, per the [CDC](#). It's 83 and 81 percent in two surveys that weight to the CDC estimate ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#), [CDC 11/28-12/4](#)) and 78, 78, 77

and 71 percent, respectively, in four that don't ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#), [Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#), [Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#), [CNBC 12/1-12/4](#)).

The share of adults who lean against getting vaccinated continues to wane; it's 15 and 14 percent in two surveys, down from about a quarter in the summer to new lows ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#), [AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)) and 11 percent in a third, down from 19 percent in early June, also to a new low ([CDC 11/28-12/4](#)). Another estimate finds intentions largely steady since September, with 14 percent ruling it out and 5 percent saying they'll wait and see ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)).

The [CDC](#) estimates that 31 percent of fully vaccinated adults have received a booster shot, up from about one in five two weeks ago. Survey-based estimates are much higher, at 46 to 50 percent, in three polls ([CNN 12/8-](#)



12/12, [Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#), [AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)). Notably, in reporting from [Kaiser Health News](#), CDC officials said they're not always able to differentiate between initial vaccination doses and booster shots, potentially resulting in an overestimation of first doses and underestimation of boosters.

In another estimate, 81 percent of vaccinated adults say they have received a booster shot or are likely to do so ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)). Among those vaccinated but not yet boosted, 36 percent say the Omicron variant makes them more likely to get a booster; 59 percent say it makes no difference (and 5 percent, less likely) ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

Concerns & Outlooks

Risk perceptions have increased given news of the Omicron variant and a [30 percent](#) rise in cases nationwide in the past two weeks. At the same time, with one exception, new surveys indicate relatively little impact on direct public concerns about the virus, or on precautionary measures.

Fifty two percent of Americans see returning to their pre-coronavirus life as a large or moderate risk to their health or well-being, up from 44 percent in late November. Risk perceptions of specific activities also are up:

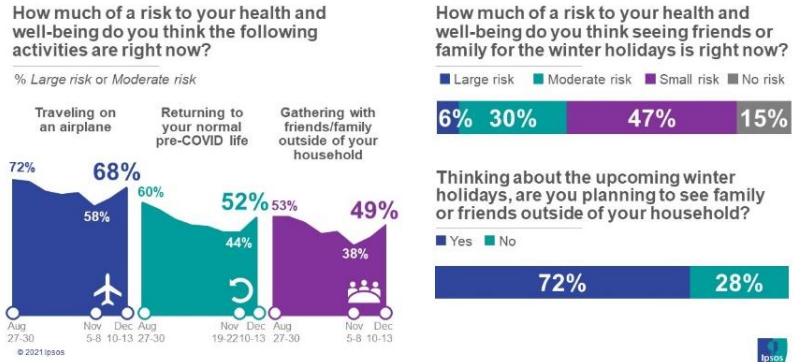
- Sixty-eight percent see traveling on an airplane as a large or moderate risk, up from 58 percent in early November.
- Forty-nine percent see gathering with family or friends outside their household as risky, up from 38 percent.

- As many, 49 percent, see dining in at a restaurant as at least moderately risky, also up 11 points since early November.

Fifty-seven percent see traveling for the upcoming holidays as a risk to their health or well-being, down sharply from 77 percent at this time last year. Fewer, 36 percent, think seeing friends or family for the holidays is risky, though that's up 5 points since late November.

Perceptions of risk around certain activities on the rise again

Despite this, most Americans plan to travel and see people outside of their household for the holidays



Thirty-one percent expect to not be able to return to their normal pre-coronavirus life for more than a year, up 6 points since early November to a high in data since January. Fifteen percent think life never will return to normal ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)). In a late October poll, 48 percent said it would take more than a year for their community to return to how it was before the coronavirus outbreak; 19 percent thought it would never return to normal ([Pew 10/18-10/24](#)).

At the same time, direct concerns about infection or the pandemic overall are level in most estimates, and in some measures have eased:

- Sixty percent are concerned that they or someone in their family will become seriously ill from the virus, including 30 percent very concerned, unchanged since early November ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)).
- Seventy-three percent of adults in one poll and 68 percent of registered voters in another are concerned about the coronavirus outbreak more generally, each largely steady since October ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#), [Fox News 12/11-12/14](#)).
- Sixty-two percent are worried about the coronavirus in the community where they live, down from 70 percent in August and early September, as cases were on a Delta-fueled rise ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#)).
- Fewer than half, 46 percent, say they're personally concerned about catching one of the new coronavirus variants, similar to results in July, when the Delta variant was first identified ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)).
- Among parents of school-age children, 45 percent are very or somewhat worried their child will get infected by the coronavirus, down 8 points since September. Parents' worries about catching the virus themselves is steady at 37 percent ([Gallup 11/29-12/5](#)).

The exception is a poll in which 36 percent say they're extremely or very worried about themselves or someone in their family becoming infected by the coronavirus, up 11 points since late October ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)).

Asked to consider risk and severity, 50 percent of Americans in mid-November said they were worried about contracting cancer, 44 percent about heart disease or a heart attack, 41 percent about the coronavirus, 35 percent about stroke and 31 percent about diabetes ([Gallup 11/1-11/16](#)).

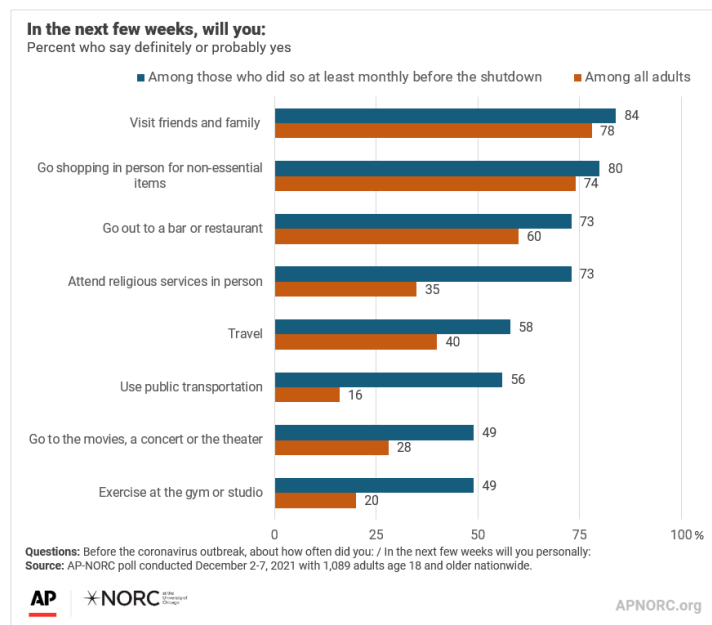
Daily Life

Despite heightened risk perceptions, Americans' participation in various social activities is little changed. Sixty-four percent say they've visited a retail store in the past week, numerically the most since late June. Six in 10 visited friends or relatives, steady since August.

One activity has seen a small drop off since identification of the Omicron variant: Fifty-four percent say they've gone out to eat in the past week, down 6 points since early November to its lowest since mid-September, when cases were at a Delta-fueled peak ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

Looking ahead, another survey finds plans to participate in various social activities essentially unchanged since mid-June, when concern about catching the coronavirus was at a pandemic low.

Majorities plan to visit friends and family in the next few weeks (78 percent), go shopping for non-essential items (74 percent) or go out to a bar or restaurant (60 percent). Among those who regularly attended religious services before the pandemic, 73 percent plan to go to a religious service in person in the next few weeks, similar to the share who said so in mid-June.



One activity, use of public transportation, has become more popular since the summer. Fifty-six percent of adults who used public transit at least monthly before the pandemic say they plan to travel by bus or subway in the next few weeks, up from 44 percent in June.

Mask use (see next section) is moderately up, but other precautionary behaviors match mid-June levels despite increased risk perceptions. Fifty-seven percent say they always or often stay away from large groups because of the pandemic, 53 percent say the same for avoiding nonessential travel and 41 percent for avoiding other people as much as possible, each largely steady since

mid-June ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)). Forty-five percent say they've stayed at home and avoided others as much as possible, essentially unchanged since mid-September ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

Relatively little change in behavior may reflect coronavirus fatigue. Six in 10 adults say they feel worn out by the pandemic and the changes they've had to make to their daily lives because of it, including 36 percent who feel worn out a lot ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)).

Seventy-two percent plan to see family or friends outside of their household for the winter holidays. Among them, 39 percent anticipate seeing people who do not regularly wear masks in public places, who are unvaccinated (31 percent) or who are less strict about coronavirus safety than they are (21 percent). One in five plans to see someone who is considered high risk for contracting the coronavirus ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

Mask Use and Policies

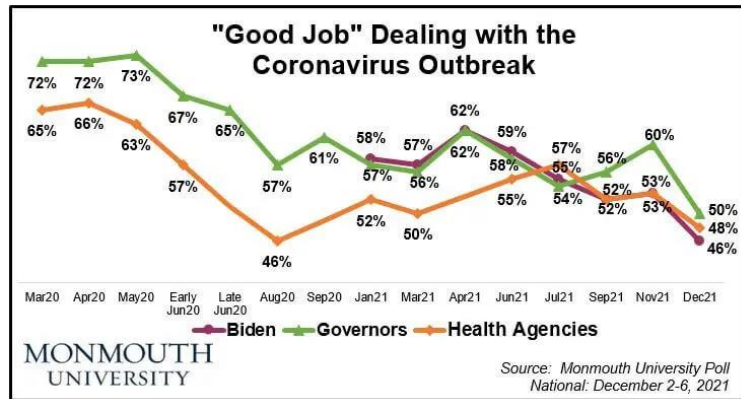
While other behaviors largely are unmoved, two polls this week find increased mask use. In one, 38 percent say they wear a mask at all times when leaving their home, up 5 points since early November ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)). (Sixty-nine percent say they wear a mask at least some of the time, steady since late August.) In another, 57 percent say they always or often wear a mask when around other people outside their home, up 6 points since mid-August ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)).

Sixty-four percent support their state or local government requiring masks to be worn in all public places, largely steady compared with mid-August ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)). Asked another way, 55 percent support instituting or reinstating face mask and social distancing guidelines in their state, down from 63 percent in September, when Delta was surging ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)). A third poll finds Americans more evenly divided, with 49 percent saying everyone should be required to wear a mask in public, indoor settings where they live, while 51 percent think people should be able to choose ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#)).

While at least half favor mask mandates, fewer, 39 percent, say their state or local government has such requirements in place ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)). Thirty-four percent favor stricter mask mandates, 27 percent less strict, 38 percent as-is ([ABC News-Ipsos 12/10-12/11](#)).

Government Response

Approval of Joe Biden’s handling of the pandemic varies in polls this week, ranging from 46 percent to 57 percent. It’s 46 percent in two and 47 percent among registered voters in a third, all career lows ([CNBC 12/1-12/4](#), [Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#), [Fox News 12/11-12/14](#)). Two have it at 53 or 54 percent, both also lows ([ABC News-Ipsos 12/10-12/11](#), [CNN 12/8-12/12](#)). One has the president’s approval rating steady since mid-July, at 57 percent ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)).



Fifty percent say their governor has done a good job handling the pandemic, down 10 points since November to a new low. Forty-eight percent rate the response of federal health agencies positively, down from 53 percent in November and 57 percent in July ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)).

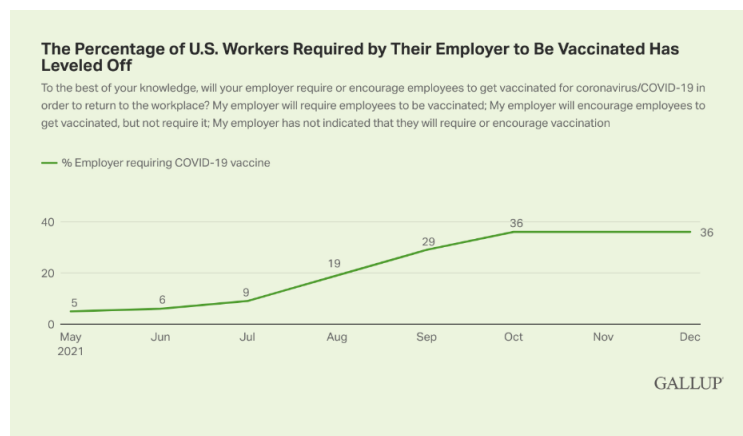
Thirty-four percent think the U.S. government is doing too little to control the spread of the virus, surpassing the 25 percent who say it’s doing too much. Forty-one percent, think it’s doing about the right amount ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#)).

Vaccine Requirements

One poll finds 60 percent support for the federal regulation requiring businesses with more than 100 employees to institute a vaccination/testing requirement, with 40 percent opposed ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#)). But the public is roughly split on the rule, 51-47 percent, support-oppose, in a separate survey ([ABC News-Ipsos 12/10-12/11](#)). [Previous surveys](#) also have been mixed, with some finding majority support and others finding the public evenly divided.

More generally, 46 percent support requiring workers to show proof of vaccination to work in person, down from 53 percent in September; 50 percent are opposed ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)). Similarly, 45 percent in a mid-November survey said employers should require vaccinations, down from 50 percent in early September; 51 percent thought employers should not do so, rising to 57 percent among employed people ([Marist 11/16-11/19](#)).

That said, two other polls find 55 or 54 percent of workers favoring vaccination requirements at their workplace. Employer-led vaccine mandates consistently have earned majority support among working adults since the summer in these two polls ([Gallup 11/29-12/5](#), [Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).



The share of adults who say their employer requires vaccinations to return to the workplace has remained steady since late October, at 36 percent ([Gallup 11/29-12/5](#)). It's 33 percent in another survey, up from 16 percent in mid-August, albeit with growth slowing considerably since late September ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

An estimated 25 percent of workers are unvaccinated. Among them, 20 percent say their employer requires vaccinations, corresponding to 5 percent of workers overall. About half in this group plan to get vaccinated, leaving 3 percent of U.S. workers at risk over policy disputes with their employer ([Gallup 11/29-12/5](#)).

More generally, 54 percent of adults overall think that requiring proof of vaccination for everyday activities outside of the home, such as going to work, shopping or dining out is an acceptable way to increase the vaccination rate; 46 percent see this as an unacceptable infringement on personal rights ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#)).

Economic Impacts

Sixty-five percent view the coronavirus specifically as a major problem for the nation's economy. More, about eight in 10 each, see rising costs of food and everyday items, supply chain disruptions and increased housing costs as major problems ([CNN 12/8-12/12](#)).

Asked the most important issue facing the country, 23 percent selected the coronavirus out of a list of eight items, about even with cost of living, selected by 22 percent, up 9 points since July ([CNBC 12/1-12/4](#)).

These are not isolated issues: Seventy-eight percent of registered voters think the coronavirus pandemic is at least somewhat responsible for recent rising prices, though that's down from 86 percent in mid-August ([Fox News 12/11-12/14](#)).

Nine in 10 are at least somewhat concerned about the costs of basic household goods rising, including about six in 10 who are highly concerned about this ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)). Similar shares were concerned about the cost of living in a mid-November survey ([Rutgers-Heldrich Center 11/19-11/21](#)). Fewer, though still 71 percent, are concerned about the U.S. economy collapsing during the coronavirus outbreak, compared with 80 to 90 percent who said so at various points in 2020 ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

Compared with pre-pandemic holiday shopping, 46 percent say it's more common for the items they want to be out of stock in stores, 41 percent say the same for items online and 34 percent say shipping delays or lost packages are more frequent. Fewer than one in 10 says each of these has occurred less often ([Monmouth 12/2-12/6](#)).

While inflation concerns are on the rise, views on the job market have improved substantially from one year ago. In mid-November, 73 percent said it was a good time to find a quality job, up sharply from 28 percent in December 2020. Forty-six percent said they were concerned about the job market for those looking for work, down from 88 percent in December 2020; 54 percent

were concerned about job security for workers, compared with 83 percent in late 2020; and 61 percent were concerned about the unemployment rate, vs. 85 percent in December of last year ([Rutgers-Heldrich Center 11/19-11/21](#)).

Asked the biggest reason for the recent worker shortage, 33 percent of registered voters point to expanded government unemployment benefits and stimulus checks. Fewer blame concerns about coronavirus health risks (19 percent), low wages (17 percent) or vaccine mandates (16 percent) ([Fox News 12/11-12/14](#)). Still, 57 percent are concerned that mask or vaccine requirements are negatively impacting the economy ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

Information Sources

Two-thirds of Americans say it's very or somewhat easy to find factual information about when people can get booster shots, 64 percent say the same for coronavirus vaccines more generally and 58 percent think it's easy to find factual information about vaccines for children. Few, 12 to 17 percent, say finding factual information about these things is difficult.

There are partisan differences. Seventy-six percent of Democrats think it's easy to find factual information about the coronavirus vaccines, compared with 55 percent of independents and 52 percent of Republicans. Seventy-one percent of Democrats say the same for vaccines for children, vs. 47 percent of independents and Republicans alike ([AP-NORC 12/2-12/7](#)).

Sixty-five percent express a great deal or fair amount of trust in the CDC to provide accurate information about the coronavirus. Six in 10 trust their friends and family, half trust the federal government or their state government and 45 percent trust Biden. Just 14 percent trust social media, down from about a quarter in March 2020 ([Axios-Ipsos 12/10-12/13](#)).

Views of the U.S. Healthcare System

In results from late September and October, nearly half of Americans say their view of the U.S. healthcare system has gotten worse during the pandemic. Four in 10 say it hasn't changed and 7 percent say it's improved. Fifty-eight percent of younger adults say it's worsened, declining to 42 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds and 38 percent of those 65 and older.

Though 83 percent say their own ability to pay for healthcare has stayed the same through the pandemic, 15 percent say this has worsened. Forty-five percent say the government is worse at controlling the cost of healthcare compared to the years just before the pandemic; as many say the pandemic has caused them to worry more about the cost of prescription drugs.

Six in 10 say they are more concerned than previously that some Americans have unequal access to healthcare. Concern about unequal access is highest among Black Americans (74 percent), Hispanics (68 percent) and women (67 percent) ([West Health-Gallup 9/27-9/30, 10/18-10/21](#)).

Telehealth

In a mid-November survey, 62 percent of adults age 50 and older said they'd used some form of telehealth since the beginning of the pandemic. Among them, more than half reported telehealth care for non-urgent concerns (58 percent) or a prescription or medication consultation (52 percent).

Nearly two-thirds of those who received telehealth care were at least somewhat likely to say they'll seek it after the pandemic, albeit with many fewer, 27 percent, extremely or very likely to do so. Thirty-six percent said ease of finding an appointment was a major reason they'd seek telehealth care and 35 percent apiece said it was easier to meet with their preferred provider or to get an immediate response that way. Twenty-eight percent said avoiding exposure to the coronavirus was a major reason for seeking telehealth ([SCAN-AP-NORC 11/12-11/15](#)).

Community Impacts

The pandemic may have modestly impacted Americans' preferences on where to live. In a newly released October poll, 19 percent said they preferred to live in an urban area, down from 23 percent in 2018. Instead, 46 percent preferred a suburban area, up from 42 percent in 2018. Thirty-five percent preferred rural areas, unchanged.

Urban residents were more apt than suburban and rural dwellers to call the economic impact of the coronavirus a major problem in their community, 45 vs. 31 and 33 percent. They also were more likely to say the health impacts of the pandemic have been a major problem locally, 37 vs. 23 and 24 percent.

Regardless of where they live, 47 percent overall say the pandemic has driven people apart in their local community. Just 13 percent say it's brought people closer together ([Pew 10/18-10/24](#)).

College Enrollment

Looking further into the decline in college enrollment by high school graduates in 2020 vs. 2019, a new report finds that the drop was steepest, from 52 to 46 percent, among graduates from high-poverty high schools. It also finds that only 2 percent of high school graduates who did not enroll in 2020 went on to enroll in fall 2021, similar to pre-pandemic gap year enrollment ([National Student Clearinghouse Research Center 12/1](#)).

Substance Use and Mental Health among Adolescents

The share of adolescents reporting substance use dropped significantly in 2021, the largest one-year decrease in illicit drug use reported in data since 1975. At the same time, 8th, 10th and 12th graders alike reported moderate increases in feelings of boredom, anxiety, depression, loneliness,

Preference for cities has declined, while a growing share now favors suburbs

% expressing a preference for each community type

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
2021	19	46	35
2018	23	42	36

Note: Figures are based on respondents in each type of community who say they would not want to move as well as those who say they would move if they could and would want to move to/stay in each community type. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 18-24, 2021. "Americans Are Less Likely Than Before COVID-19 To Want To Live in Cities, More Likely To Prefer Suburbs"

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worry, difficulty sleeping and other negative mental health indicators since the beginning of the pandemic ([National Institute on Drug Abuse February-June 2021](#)).

Vaccine Lotteries

A study of 11 U.S. states with vaccine lotteries finds that lottery programs increased vaccine uptake in six states and decreased it in three. Increases are reported in Oregon (+6.6 percent), Maryland (+6.4 percent), Ohio (+5.4 percent), Washington (+3.8 percent), California (+2.5 percent) and Colorado (+2.2 percent). The study finds no effect in New Mexico or New York, and a negative association between lottery programs and uptake in Arkansas, Kentucky and West Virginia. Results translate to an estimated 1.67 million additional adults getting vaccinated during the study period. The authors analyzed data from Census Household Pulse Survey from March 17 to July 5 and compared states with vaccine lotteries to 28 states with no such program; Illinois and Delaware were excluded because they had additional major incentives to increase vaccine uptake ([Acharya and Dhakal, 2021](#)). (A study [covered previously](#) found no evidence that large cash lotteries tied to coronavirus vaccination boosted uptake.)

International Results

In Chile, 72 percent approve of the government's handling of the coronavirus, a pandemic high. Just two in 10 disapprove. Forty-four percent say they are very or somewhat worried about catching the coronavirus, down 8 points since late October but still 10 points above its pandemic low of 34 percent in early October ([Cadem 12/9-12/10](#)).

In South Korea, where cases continue to [rise](#), approval of the government's handling of the pandemic fell 13 points in a month to 44 percent, with 47 percent disapproving. That's just 4 points from the pandemic low in late February 2020. Forty-six percent don't expect to ever return to their maskless, pre-coronavirus lives. Twenty-three percent think normality will return in the next year and two in 10 think it'll be the following year.

As the country [struggles](#) with hospital capacity, the government is expanding a system of in-home medical treatment for patients with mild or asymptomatic cases. Twenty-nine percent think this effort will be successful; majority, 62 percent, doesn't expect it to succeed. Older people are less likely to have faith in the at-home system than younger adults ([Gallup Korea 12/7-12/9](#)).

Half of Brazilians are very concerned about the Omicron variant and a third are somewhat concerned. Nearly all, 96 percent, say they are vaccinated or plan to be. Nine in 10 say they're opposed to their cities hosting Carnival parties and eight in 10 don't plan to travel for the holidays. The 16 percent who do plan to travel is up from eight percent last year. Just a quarter say they'll go to holiday parties ([Poder360 12/6-12/8](#)).

A quarter of Russians name the coronavirus the most notable event of the year, both in Russia and around the world, topping a list, although half gave no answer to either ([FOM 12/4-12/5](#)).

In the Netherlands, half say the decision to get vaccinated must remain a free choice, down from 64 percent in October. Still, 43 percent oppose a vaccine mandate; 36 percent support it, with 19

percent neutral. Eighty-eight percent say they have gotten at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine. While just half support vaccinations for 5- to 11-year-olds, that compares with 19 percent in a question that asked about 4- to 11-year-olds in June, before the European Union [recommended](#) it.

After dropping sharply in November, support for the Dutch government's coronavirus policy has leveled at 40 percent, with 59 percent disapproving. Forty-six percent wish the government would impose stricter measures, up from a third; preference for more relaxed measures fell 10 points to 18 percent. Just 12 percent say they experience more solidarity around them because of the crisis, down from 54 percent at the start of the pandemic. A third feel lonely because of the pandemic; it was 38 percent a year ago. Loneliness peaks among young people: Two-thirds of 18- to 24-year-olds say they feel lonely ([I&O Research 12/3-12/6](#)).

A September survey in the Philippines found recoveries in employment numbers since 2020, though a quarter of the adult labor force remained unemployed. As [previously](#) reported, the Philippines was first on a list of seven countries where more than half reported a job loss during the pandemic. Unemployment in September 2021 eased by 13 points from its 2020 average of 37 percent, but still was 5 points shy of its 2019 pre-coronavirus average. From June to September 2021, joblessness rose by 3 points among those age 25-34, but fell among other groups, including people over 35, women, rural residents and non-elementary and elementary school graduates alike ([SWS 9/12-9/16](#)).

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

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