



COVID-19 Survey Summary: February 26, 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 have eased to their lowest since early summer amid rising vaccination rates and declining case counts, but Americans are conflicted about how best to reopen schools safely and boost the pandemic-damaged economy.

Coronavirus-related polls this week also find that roughly one in five Americans has gotten vaccinated and many more are eager to get their shot, albeit with a substantial wait-and-see group and about two in 10 outright refusers.

Other newly released analyses show variability in vaccine uptake and intentions by state, document outbreaks in exercise facilities despite distancing precautions and describe partisan shifts in views of pandemic news reporting last year. New results from polling in Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Germany, Great Britain, Iran, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Korea and Sweden also are included in this week's summary.

Coronavirus Concerns

As cases and hospitalizations decline, 69 percent of Americans are now extremely, very or somewhat concerned about the possibility of getting sick from the coronavirus, down from 74 percent two weeks ago to the fewest since early June. More, 77 percent, are concerned about new strains of the virus that may be more transmissible or dangerous, but that's declined from 83 percent in late January.

Perhaps reflecting the declining concerns, the number who say they've social distanced in the past week (i.e., "stayed at home and avoided others as much as possible"), 74 percent, is down from 79 percent two weeks ago to the fewest since late October ([Axios/Ipsos 2/19-2/22](#)).

Reopening Schools

Six in 10 Americans say K-12 schools that are not currently open for in-person instruction should wait to reopen until all teachers who want the coronavirus vaccine have received it. Four in 10 instead think schools should reopen as soon as possible, even if teachers who want the vaccine have yet to get it.

There's a sharp partisan divide – eight in 10 Democrats think schools should wait to reopen until teachers can be vaccinated, while 65 percent of Republicans think schools should reopen as soon as possible regardless. In addition, large majorities of Black (80 percent), Asian (72 percent) and Hispanic (69 percent) adults think schools should wait until teachers can be vaccinated, vs. half of white adults.

At the same time, more Americans say academic concerns should be a top consideration when deciding when to reopen K-12 schools, while fewer place a high priority on concerns about teachers and students catching or spreading COVID-19. Sixty-one percent now say the possibility that students will fall behind academically without in-person instruction should be given a lot of consideration, up from 48 percent in July. Fewer than half think the risk to teachers (48 percent) or students (45 percent) of getting or spreading the virus should be given a lot of consideration, down from six in 10 in both cases.

Fifty-four percent think parents not being able to work if their children are at home should be given a lot of consideration in school reopening decisions, up from 49 percent in July. In a new item, 54 percent also say the possibility that students' emotional well-being will be negatively impacted if they don't attend school in person should be a key consideration. Fewer – three in 10 – say the same about the financial cost to school systems of following public health guidelines for safe reopening.

Black, Hispanic and Asian adults remain more likely than white adults to stress the risks to students and teachers of getting or spreading the coronavirus, as do lower-income adults and Democrats compared with higher-income adults and Republicans, respectively ([Pew 2/16-2/21](#)).

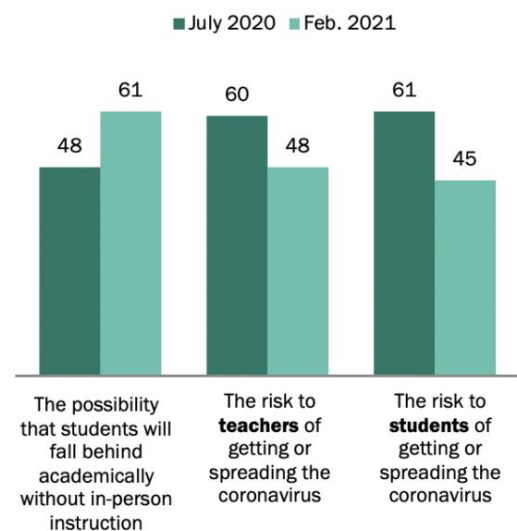
Vaccines

Polls this week find that one in five Americans has gotten at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and many more are eager to get theirs once it's available. Uptake estimates range from about seven in 10 to as high as more than three-quarters, depending on how the question is asked and how categories are combined.

- Fifty-five percent in one study say they have received at least one dose of the vaccine (18 percent) or will get it as soon as they can (37 percent). That's up from 47 percent in mid-January and 34 percent in early December. Twenty-two percent want to wait and see how

Academic concerns now seen as a more pressing factor than health risks when it comes to reopening schools

% saying each of the following should be given a lot of consideration as K-12 schools that are not currently open for any in-person instruction decide whether to reopen



Note: In July, the question asked about K-12 schools deciding whether to reopen for in-person instruction in the fall.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 16-21, 2021.

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the vaccine is working for others, down from 31 percent in January. One in five will not get vaccinated or will do so only if required ([KFF 2/15-2/23](#)).

- Similarly, in another study, 53 percent say they'll get the vaccine as soon as it's available to them (35 percent) or already have gotten it (19 percent), essentially unchanged from two weeks ago but up from 43 percent in early January. In a more detailed wait-and-see measurement, 17 percent say they'll get it a few weeks or months after it becomes available, for a near-term total of 70 percent; an additional 11 percent plan to wait a year or more. Eighteen percent don't plan to get it at all ([Axios/Ipsos 2/19-2/22](#)).
- In Census Bureau data, two in 10 say they've received a COVID-19 vaccine, up from 13 percent in late January. Of those yet to receive it, 55 percent say they definitely will get it once it becomes available to them, essentially unchanged. The total is about two-thirds; additionally, just more than two in 10 of those not yet vaccinated say they probably will get the shot ([U.S. Census Bureau 2/3-2/15](#)).
- In a fourth approach, daily tracking data finds that nearly seven in 10 adults are very or somewhat likely to get a coronavirus vaccine if available, or already have received at least one dose ([USC UAS](#)).

Vaccine Safety

A CDC report finds that during the first month of the vaccine rollout nearly 13.8 million doses were administered, with just 6,354 reports of adverse events, 91 percent of which were classified as nonserious. Most common symptoms included headache, fatigue and dizziness. Anaphylaxis occurred rarely (62 cases in total). While 113 deaths were reported, including 78 at long-term care facilities, no causal link between vaccination and death was found. The report says these initial findings should reassure health care providers and vaccine recipients about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines ([CDC 12/14-1/13](#)).

Vaccine Hesitancy

A newly released analysis of a December poll explores vaccine hesitancy among adults age 18-64. At that time, more than a third of non-senior adults said they would definitely or probably not get a COVID-19 vaccine. This included nearly half of Black non-senior adults compared with a third of white and Hispanic/Latinx non-senior adults, and 47 percent of Republicans compared with a quarter of Democrats.

In addition to concerns about side effects and effectiveness, 57 percent of vaccine-hesitant non-senior adults cited not thinking they need the vaccine as an important reason for not getting it. A slim majority of those expressing vaccine hesitancy (51 percent) said they would trust their usual healthcare provider for information about the vaccines, far more than said they would trust public health officials or community leaders on the topic. As with other studies, this suggests the importance of engaging healthcare providers to deliver information about vaccine safety, efficacy and utility in order to combat hesitancy ([Urban Institute 12/8-12/30](#)).

Economic Impacts

Indicators of economic distress remain below their early winter peaks. Twenty-three percent expect someone in their household will lose employment income in the next four weeks, down from 31 percent in November and December. Thirty-five percent report having at least some difficulty paying for usual household expenses, compared with 38 percent in December. Eleven percent are food insecure, vs. 14 percent in December, and 8 percent have insecure housing, vs. 10 percent in December ([U.S. Census Bureau 2/3-2/15](#)).

Small Business Impacts

Small businesses also are faring a bit better. While a third say their revenue has decreased in the past week, that is down from 40 percent in early January. Twenty-four percent say that in the next six months they will need to obtain financial assistance or additional capital, down from 34 percent in the same period. Nineteen percent report a decline in total hours worked by paid employees, down from 24 percent.

In new questions, one in 10 small businesses in the past week required employees to test negative for COVID-19 before physically coming to work and 2 percent required proof of vaccination. Two in 10 indicated they did not have employees physically come into work in the past week; the rest did not require testing or proof of vaccination.

Business travel impacts are expected to continue. Forty-three percent expect that in the next six months they will not have business travel expenditures; 27 percent say they will and 31 percent say their business normally does not have these expenses ([U.S. Census Bureau 2/15-2/21](#)).

Economic Recovery Priorities

A report from a survey in late October and early November says top preferences for an economic recovery plan were that it generates income for people who are struggling financially (75 percent), improves the U.S. economy (64 percent) and creates more jobs (62 percent). Perceived barriers to getting people back to work included health and safety concerns (cited by 57 percent), lack of access to quality childcare (46 percent) and a lack of available jobs (also 46 percent).

To help people who lost jobs or income during the pandemic, 46 percent picked “providing paid work opportunities to people who are unemployed” as most important. Twenty-five percent favored direct income or financial support (e.g., stimulus checks); 13 percent, federally funded options for people to gain education or skills training; and 11 percent, expanding unemployment benefits ([Gallup/Carnegie Corporation of New York 10/21-11/5](#)).

Official Death Toll

With the nation passing 500,000 deaths from COVID-19, the public remains split on whether they believe the official count is accurate. Thirty-five percent think the actual number of deaths is higher than what’s been reported, 31 percent think it’s lower and a third think the reported number is accurate ([Axios/Ipsos 2/19-2/22](#)).

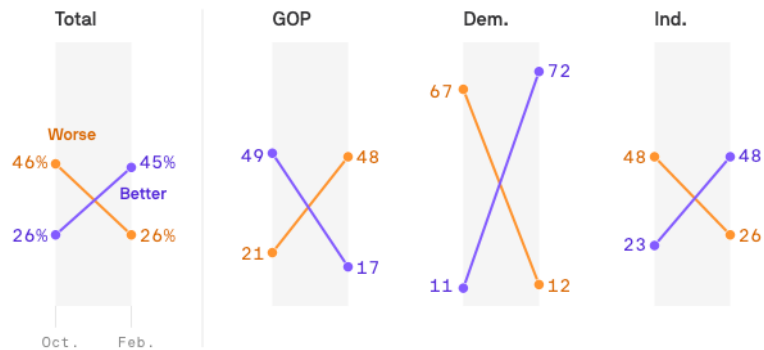
Government Response

By a 19-point margin, more people think the federal government has gotten better than worse at handling the COVID-19 outbreak compared with the first few months of the pandemic, 45 to 26 percent. This is a flip from late October, when 46 percent felt the government was doing worse vs. 26 percent better. (Nearly three in 10 at both times saw no change.)

Not surprisingly, Democrats have grown significantly more positive in their views of the government response since October, while Republicans have become less so. Independents make the difference – 48 percent think the federal government has gotten better at handling the pandemic, up from 23 percent in October; 26 percent think it's gotten worse, down from 48 percent ([Axios/Ipsos 2/19-2/22](#)).

Has the federal government gotten better at handling the COVID-19 pandemic?

Survey of 1,029 U.S. adults; Feb. 19-22, 2021



Two-thirds approve of President Biden's handling of the response to the coronavirus overall, including 95 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of independents and 34 percent of Republicans ([Gallup 2/3-2/18](#)).

Sixty-three percent are at least somewhat confident in the Biden administration's ability to make the COVID-19 vaccine widely available, and 58 percent are similarly confident it can distribute vaccines quickly. At the same time, 72 percent express at least some concern about the government's handling of the rollout, though that's declined from 78 percent two weeks ago.

Fifty-six percent are confident in the administration's ability to get K-12 students back to school in person, but an identical share are at least somewhat concerned about schools in their community reopening too soon ([Axios/Ipsos 2/19-2/22](#)).

Partisanship in Views of News Coverage

An analysis of survey data collected throughout 2020 shows how views of news coverage related to the pandemic grew increasingly partisan over time. For example, in March, news of the pandemic was being followed very closely by similar numbers of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (53 percent) and Republicans and Republican leaners (48 percent). By late November, 47 percent of Democrats still were paying close attention to pandemic coverage, but this had fallen to 28 percent in the Republican group.

Similarly, while Republicans held a more negative view of media coverage of the pandemic from the beginning, their views grew more negative, while those among Democrats held steady. In March, eight in 10 Democrats and six in 10 Republicans said the media were covering the outbreak very or somewhat well. By September that had fallen to 45 percent of Republicans, with essentially no change among Democrats.

Partisan divisions also grew in opinions on whether the outbreak was being exaggerated. Views among Republicans that the outbreak was “made a bigger deal than it really is” jumped from 47 percent in April to 63 percent in June and 66 percent in September before dropping slightly to 58 percent in November. Far fewer Democrats shared this view, and their numbers held relatively steady, at fewer than two in 10 ([Pew](#)).

State and Local Results

Statewide estimates from the Census Bureau’s [Household Pulse Survey](#) continue to show that Alaska (32 percent) and Hawaii (29 percent) have the highest vaccine uptake, up from 23 percent in both states two weeks ago. New Mexico comes in third, with 26 percent saying they’ve gotten vaccinated, up from 20 percent in the same period.

At the other end of the spectrum, just 16 percent in the District of Columbia say they’ve been vaccinated, as do 17 percent apiece in Vermont, Tennessee, Colorado and Idaho.

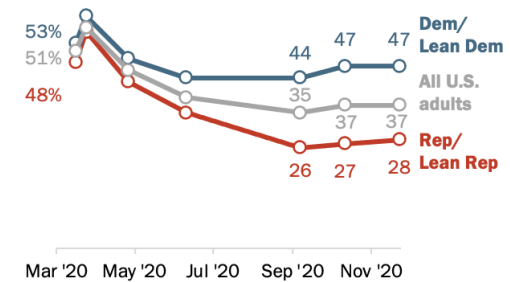
When it comes to uptake intentions among those not yet vaccinated, roughly seven in 10 in Vermont (70 percent), Massachusetts (70 percent) and the District of Columbia (68 percent) say they’ll definitely get the shot when it’s available to them, compared with just 36 percent in Wyoming and 39 percent in Mississippi ([U.S. Census Bureau 2/3-2/15](#)).

In New York, nearly six in 10 (58 percent) now say it’s a good idea to fully reopen public schools with in-school instruction, up from 40 percent in July. Among parents of school-aged children, seven in 10 say reopening schools is a good idea, compared with 53 percent of those without school-aged kids.

Two-thirds overall say they plan to or already have received the coronavirus vaccine, while 28 percent do not plan to get vaccinated. Seven in 10 are optimistic that the pandemic in the state will get better, up from 47 percent in July. Still, by a 20-point margin, 57-37 percent, more think the state should prioritize limiting the spread of the virus even if that hurts the economy than think restarting the economy should be prioritized even if it hurts efforts to contain the virus.

Partisan divide in attention to news about the pandemic grew over time

*% of U.S. adults who were following news about the coronavirus outbreak **very closely***



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 18-29, 2020. “How Americans Navigated the News in 2020: A Tumultuous Year in Review”

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Six in 10 think Gov. Andrew Cuomo did something wrong in his handling of nursing homes during the pandemic, including 19 percent who think he did something illegal and 41 percent who think he acted unethically but not illegally. Fifty-four percent approve of how he is handling the pandemic overall, down from 72 percent in July ([Marist Poll 2/15-2/17](#)).

In New Hampshire, 43 percent view COVID-19 as the most important problem facing the state, still the most cited problem by far, albeit down from 48 percent in November. Seven in 10 approve of how Gov. Chris Sununu has handled COVID-19 in the state and 58 percent approve of Biden's handling of the pandemic, essentially unchanged since January ([UNH 2/18-2/22](#)).

In Georgia, a CDC investigation of elementary schools in one school district suggests that educators can play a significant role in school-associated outbreaks. The report identified nine clusters of three or more COVID-19 cases from Dec. 1 to Jan. 22 involving 13 educators and 32 students at six of eight elementary schools. Eight of the identified clusters involved at least one educator and probable educator-to-student transmission. Four clusters involved probable student-to-student transmission and three involved probable student-to-educator transmission. Two of the clusters involved probable educator-to-educator transmission followed by educator-to-student transmission in classrooms, resulting in 15 of the 31 school-associated cases.

During the investigation period, approximately 2,600 students and 700 staff members attended elementary school in person in the district. Sixty-nine household members of school-associated cases were tested and 18 received positive results.

All nine transmission clusters were found to involve "less than ideal" physical distancing (e.g., although plastic dividers were placed on desks, students sat fewer than three feet apart and many classes involved small-group instruction in which educators worked in close proximity to students). Five clusters were found to involve inadequate mask use by students.

Because the results indicate educators may play an important role in in-school transmission, the report says COVID-19 vaccination for teachers should be considered as an additional mitigation measure, when available. It also stresses the importance of minimizing in-person adult interactions at school, ensuring universal and correct mask use and physical distancing (especially when mask use is not possible, such as during lunch time) and promoting COVID-19 precautions among educators and students even outside of school ([CDC 12/1-1/22](#)).

In Chicago, a CDC report describes 55 positive COVID-19 cases identified among 91 attendees of indoor high-intensity exercise classes at a single facility from Aug. 24 to Sept. 1, including 49 confirmed and six probable cases. (For 10 attendees, testing data were not available.) Twenty-two of the attendees who ultimately tested positive indicated they had participated in classes on or after the day they started having symptoms, including three who attended on the same day or after receiving a positive test result. All classes were held at 25 percent capacity or less and exercise stations were six feet or more apart. Masks, temperature checks and symptom screenings were required on entry; however, patrons were allowed to remove masks during exercise, and many who attended the classes reported inconsistent mask use ([CDC 8/24-9/15](#)).

Similarly, in Hawaii, another CDC report documents 21 COVID-19 cases linked to a single fitness instructor. This included an infection of a second instructor which led to some of these cases. Combined across the two instructors, 20 of 21 fitness class participants exposed to an instructor less than a day before symptom onset ultimately tested positive. Positive tests fell to one of eight of those exposed one or two days before instructor symptom onset, and none of the 33 people who were exposed more than two days prior. This aligns with previous evidence that people with COVID-19 are most infectious from two days before to seven days after symptom onset. Many (but not all) exposures occurred in classes with exercise stations placed six feet or more apart; however, mask use was not required at any of the facilities involved and neither instructor wore a mask during the fitness sessions linked to positive test results ([CDC 6/28-7/16](#)).

The two reports conclude that to reduce COVID-19 transmission, fitness facilities should enforce consistent and correct mask use for instructors and attendees alike, including during high intensity activities and even when exercise stations are six feet or more apart. In addition, they say facilities should ensure physical distancing at all times, improve ventilation and remind staff members and patrons to stay home and isolate when feeling ill or awaiting test results. Outdoor and virtual exercise also can help mitigate COVID-19 transmission risk.

International Results

In Chile, roughly three-quarters plan to get a vaccine as soon as it's available or already have done so (16 percent, up from 10 percent last week). Fifteen percent plan to wait and 11 percent do not plan to get vaccinated. Eighty-three percent evaluate the government's mass vaccination plan positively, up from 72 percent two weeks ago, and 53 percent approve of the government's handling of the pandemic, up from 41 percent.

Seven in 10 agree that schools should open March 1 and that parents should decide whether or not to send their children. However, when provided with multiple options, just 8 percent agree that face-to-face classes should return March 1; instead 21 percent pick April 11 (after the spring elections), 34 percent think classes should remain online only and 36 percent think that only some students or levels should return face-to-face and the rest should stay online. Sixty-five percent agree that students from areas where there is no coronavirus can return in person and 55 percent agree that university students can return; fewer say the same of middle (47 percent), elementary (25 percent) and preschool students (21 percent) ([Cadem 2/17-2/19](#)).

In South Korea, seven in 10 say they probably or definitely will be vaccinated, two in 10 probably or definitely will not and 10 percent are unsure. Seventy-three percent are at least somewhat worried about COVID-19 infection, down from 78 percent last month to the fewest since October. Sixty-two percent think there is at least some possibility they will be infected, unchanged since last month. Fifty-eight percent think the government is doing a good job in its response to COVID-19, unchanged in recent months but down from 72 percent in November ([Gallup Korea 2/16-2/18](#)).

In Germany, 54 percent consider existing restrictions to be appropriate. However, with infections declining, 27 percent now think they go too far, up 5 percentage points from earlier in the month, and 16 percent do not think they go far enough, down 8 points. Nearly six in 10 support the

gradual reopening of schools for face-to-face learning that is set to begin next week. Of the rest, 22 percent think schools should be fully reopened and 16 percent think they should stay fully closed ([ARD/Infratest Dimap 2/15-2/17](#)).

In Brazil, 78 percent intend to get vaccinated, up from 71 percent two weeks ago to return to its mid-January level. Sixty-four percent say that in the past month they failed to pay a bill because of the pandemic, up from 58 percent two weeks ago, and 69 percent say their job or income has suffered as a result of the pandemic, up from 63 percent to match the high set in May. Sixty-eight percent say they or someone close to them has gotten sick with the coronavirus, a new high. Eight in 10 think it is too soon to allow fans to return to stadiums ([PoderData 2/15-2/17](#)).

In the Netherlands, 83 percent say they certainly or probably will get vaccinated, up sharply from 60 percent in November. Support for easing lockdown restrictions has nearly doubled since the end of January, from 21 to 45 percent, with an additional one in 10 saying the lockdown should be lifted entirely. Support for tightening lockdown dropped from 29 to 9 percent. This seems to reflect both declining cases and pandemic fatigue – a third overall say they feel worse now than before the pandemic, up from a quarter in November. Among adults younger than 25, 56 percent say they feel worse. More than half the public agrees that the first relaxation of coronavirus restrictions should be aimed at young people.

Overall, 68 percent support the coronavirus measures taken by the government, down from 75 percent at the end of January. Support for the vaccination policy is lower, at 51 percent, and just 15 percent say the way in which vaccination has been organized and carried out in the country has been excellent or good ([I&O Research 2/12-2/15](#)).

In Great Britain, 26 percent of adults report having received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, up from 22 percent last week. Ninety-five percent of those age 70 and older report having received at least one dose, up from 78 percent last week. Overall, 91 percent say they're either very or fairly likely to get the vaccine when offered or already have received it, essentially unchanged from last week but up from December, when 78 percent indicated they would be likely to accept the vaccine if offered ([Office for National Statistics 2/10-2/14](#)).

Nine in 10 parents of school-age children in Great Britain report that their child has been learning from home in the past seven days because of the pandemic, with 52 percent of men and 67 percent of women saying they personally homeschooled their child. Among parents who had personally homeschooled, 63 percent agree it is negatively affecting their child's well-being, up from 43 percent in April, and half agree it is negatively affecting their own well-being, up from 28 percent. Sixty-nine percent say their child accessed real-time interactive online learning provided by schools, up from 25 percent in May, and 45 percent reported that their child spent 21 hours or more in the previous week using resources provided by their school, up from 18 percent. Thirty-eight percent say their child struggled to continue their education at home, down from 52 percent ([Office for National Statistics 1/13-2/7](#)).

In Sweden, 54 percent now say they use face coverings at least sometimes when indoors in public places, up from 23 percent in late December. This follows a recommendation from authorities to wear face coverings on public transportation ([Novus 2/1-2/14](#)).

In Mexico, 54 percent say want to get a vaccine as soon as possible, up from 48 percent in January; 3 percent already have done so. Thirty-six percent prefer to wait and 7 percent do not want to get vaccinated. One in 10 has been contacted by the government about the vaccine. Two-thirds say they wear a face mask at all times in public places, up from 42 percent in December. Eighty-two percent agree the use of masks in public places should be mandatory. Seven in 10 disapprove of the fact that President López Obrador prefers not to wear a mask.

Despite a recent decline in cases, seven in 10 say they're very concerned about the coronavirus, up 7 points since last month to a new high. However, support for the lockdown dropped from a high of 71 percent last month to 52 percent now; 45 percent instead back reopening businesses and activities. Seventy-three percent personally know someone who has been infected with the coronavirus, 57 percent know someone who has died from it and a quarter say they personally have been tested; all are new highs ([El Financiero 2/12-2/13](#)).

In Bulgaria, 27 percent say they will get vaccinated and 1 percent indicate they already have, but 48 percent say they will not get vaccinated and 24 percent are unsure. Sixteen percent say they've had the coronavirus, including one in 10 saying it was severe ([Gallup Bulgaria 2/4-2/12](#)).

In Iran, 59 percent say they definitely will get a vaccine if it becomes available and is approved by the Ministry of Health; an additional 23 percent probably will. Nine in 10 say they wear a mask when going out in public, including 57 percent who always do. A quarter say they or someone in their household has lost employment because of the pandemic, up 6 points since October. However, six in 10 continue to think the government should do what it can to prevent the spread of the virus even if it might damage the economy, nearly double the share who think the economy should come first. Two-thirds think schools should remain closed for in-person classes.

Seventy-nine percent personally know someone who has gotten sick from COVID-19, up 20 points since October; half know someone who has died, up 12 points. Overall, 77 percent think Iran has done a good job dealing with the outbreak ([IranPoll/University of Maryland CISSM 1/26-2/6](#)).

In Australia, vaccine hesitancy significantly increased from August to January. In January, 22 percent said they would probably or definitely not get a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine, up from 13 percent in August. Longitudinal data indicates that three times as many Australians became less willing to get vaccinated during that period than became more willing, 32 vs. 10 percent. This includes 19 percent who shifted from being definitely willing to get vaccinated to only probably willing. Australians who said too much is being made of COVID-19, who had low confidence in hospitals and the health care system and who were not optimistic about the next 12 months were particularly apt to show a decreased willingness to get vaccinated. In addition, women, Indigenous Australians, non-English speakers and those with less formal education all became less willing to get vaccinated ([Australian National University 1/18-2/1](#)).

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

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