

# COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights Report

Report 20 | December 20, 2021 | Date Range: November 9 – 29, 2021



## Summary

**Findings.** Consumers and news outlets had questions and concerns about the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant. The COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights Rapid SARS-CoV-2 Omicron Variant Report was published on December 10, 2021, and is available here: [COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights SARS-CoV-2 Omicron Variant Rapid Report](#). Additionally, the public continued to have questions and expressed frustration about vaccine guidance. Consumers also expressed growing interest in using alternatives to the COVID-19 vaccines, such as therapeutics and infection-acquired immunity. Finally, consumers continue to have questions and concerns about COVID-19 vaccines for children and COVID-19 vaccine booster doses.

**Ways to take action.** Federal, state, and local partners should continue to work together to explain the rationale for updated guidance, respond to gaps in information, and confront misinformation with evidence-based messaging. The goal of these efforts is to increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccines and expand vaccine uptake more broadly. To increase vaccine confidence and optimize clinical encounters, continue to disseminate messages about the safety of receiving the COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same appointment for adults and children. Finally, partner with trusted messengers, especially pharmacists, vaccine champions, and healthcare workers, to increase their knowledge regarding the safety of receiving the COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same appointment and communicate this to the public.



## Contents

- 2 [Aims and Methods](#)
- 3 [Major Themes](#)
- 3 [Consumers and news outlets had questions and concerns about the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant.](#)
- 3 [Consumers continue to have questions and frustrations related to vaccine guidance.](#)
- 4 [Continuing and Evolving Themes](#)
- 5 [Appendix: Inputs and Sources](#)





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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## Aims and Methods

By rapidly reviewing and analyzing numerous sources and inputs (see [Appendix](#)), the biweekly COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights Report emphasizes major themes influencing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and uptake. These are characterized by the level and type of threat to vaccine confidence, degree of spread, and directionality. In addition, by examining how consumers think and feel, social processes, and the practical issues around vaccination, the Insights Report seeks to identify emerging issues of misinformation, disinformation, and places where intervention efforts can improve vaccine confidence across the United States.

The information in this report is only a snapshot, and certain populations may be underrepresented. Images and quotes are illustrative examples and are not meant to comprehensively cover all content related to the highlighted themes.

How do you classify this theme/information?			
High risk	Moderate risk	Low risk	Positive sentiment
			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May lead to vaccine refusals and decreased uptake</li> <li>Wide reach, pervasive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential to trigger hesitancy to vaccination</li> <li>Moderate reach, modest dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerning, but low risk to vaccine confidence</li> <li>Limited reach, limited dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could increase vaccine confidence, intent, or motivation</li> <li>Variable reach and dissemination</li> </ul>

How has this theme/idea changed over time (since last report or over the course of multiple reports)?		
		
<p><b>Increasing</b> Information spreading rapidly</p>	<p><b>Stable</b> Information remaining constant at prior level</p>	<p><b>Decreasing</b> Information is not gaining further traction and there has been no indication of additional activity</p>

## Major Themes<sup>a</sup>



### Consumers and news outlets had questions and concerns about the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant.

On December 10, 2021, the CDC published the COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights Rapid SARS-CoV-2 Omicron Variant Report. The report is available here: [COVID-19 State of Vaccine Confidence Insights SARS-CoV-2 Omicron Variant Rapid Report](#)



### Consumers continue to have questions and frustrations related to vaccine guidance.

Consumers expressed questions about CDC guidance on quarantine measures for vaccinated individuals after exposure to COVID-19.<sup>1,2,3</sup> CDC-INFO also received calls from individuals asking if it was safe to visit family for the holidays.<sup>b</sup> Moreover, social media users pointed out discrepancies in CDC guidance and quarantine practices and similar guidance and quarantine practices in schools and public areas.<sup>4,5</sup>

Additionally, consumers questioned whether people could donate blood or blood plasma after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>b,6</sup> These questions may have been driven by reports on social media that the Red Cross had implemented guidelines that people should wait to give blood donations after getting a COVID-19 vaccine or booster doses.<sup>7,8,9</sup> However, the American Red Cross confirmed that “As long as donors are symptom-free, feeling well and can provide the vaccine manufacturer’s name, there’s no waiting period required after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine currently authorized in the U.S.”<sup>10</sup>

Consumers also continued to discuss vaccine requirement policies.<sup>11</sup> While many recent news articles have supported vaccine requirements,<sup>12,13</sup> the issue continues to polarize along political party lines.<sup>14,15,16</sup> News stories that have emerged during this reporting period have outlined legislative efforts in some states to outlaw vaccine requirements for other vaccine-preventable diseases.<sup>c,17</sup> The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit’s order that OSHA suspend the vaccine requirements for businesses received traction on web searches<sup>d,e</sup> and news reports<sup>18</sup> with online searches from some consumers asking whether vaccine requirements were legal.<sup>d</sup> The court ruling was seen as a legal victory for anti-vaccine groups<sup>19</sup> and may amplify public anti-vaccine sentiments.<sup>20,21,22,23</sup>

#### Ways to act:

- Create and disseminate messages related to the official guidance for quarantine measures for vaccinated individuals.
- Create and disseminate messages about the safety of receiving the COVID-19 and flu vaccines during the same appointment for adults and children.
- Partner with trusted messengers, especially pharmacists, vaccine champions, and healthcare workers, to increase their knowledge on the safety of receiving the COVID-19 and flu vaccines during the same appointment and communicate this to public.
- Create and disseminate messages that confirm the safety of blood donations from vaccinated individuals to the American Red Cross, and that the American Red Cross does not have a restriction on donating blood after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine primary series or booster dose.

<sup>a</sup>Citations in this report are illustrative examples and are not the total number of instances of the corresponding themes.

<sup>b</sup>[CDC-INFO](#)

<sup>c</sup>ProjectVCTR

<sup>d</sup>Google Trends

<sup>e</sup>SEMRush

## Continuing and Evolving Themes

The themes below have been noted in previous reports and continue to undermine vaccine confidence. The information highlighted below focuses on what is new or different from previous reports. For additional context and previous recommendations on these themes, see previous [Insights Reports](#).

**Consumers express growing interest in using alternatives to the COVID-19 vaccines, such as therapeutics and infection-acquired immunity.** Overall, consumers are evaluating,<sup>24</sup> pursuing<sup>25</sup> or condemning<sup>26</sup> using alternative treatments instead of getting the COVID-19 vaccines. In reference to the high number of cases occurring among the unvaccinated,<sup>27</sup> some openly accepted the elevated risk associated with electing not to vaccinate.<sup>28</sup> Some claimed that the emphasis on vaccines instead of alternative approved therapeutics might lead some to seek therapies approved for human use but not recommended for treating COVID-19 (i.e., fluvoxamine, hydroxychloroquine, and ivermectin).<sup>29,30,31</sup> Anticipation of Merck's FDA Advisory Committee hearing on Molnupiravir may have elevated conversations related to COVID-19 vaccines alternatives.<sup>32</sup> Some consumers<sup>33</sup> and political leaders<sup>34,35</sup> continued to voice concerns that vaccination requirements did not include considerations of infection-induced immunity.

**Consumers continue to have questions and concerns about COVID-19 vaccines for children.** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use in children 5 through 11 years of age on October 29, 2021.<sup>36</sup> Since then, some consumers, especially parents, have been concerned about adverse events and unknown long-term side effects of the vaccine, citing incomplete and rushed trials as the cause of their apprehension.<sup>37,38,39</sup> Some of these worries may have been made worse by reports that vaccine clinics across the country accidentally administered the higher adult dosage, rather than the pediatric dosage to children 5-11 years of age.<sup>40,41,42</sup> However, scientists and public health professionals have said that these higher doses will not negatively affect children's health.<sup>43,44</sup> Lastly, many consumers wanted to know when COVID-19 vaccines for children under five would be available.<sup>45,46,47</sup>

**Consumers continue to have questions and concerns about COVID-19 booster doses.** On November 19, 2021, CDC expanded the eligibility for COVID-19 booster doses to all adults.<sup>48</sup> On December 9, 2021, CDC also recommended boosters for teens ages 16 - 17 years old.<sup>49</sup> Information regarding this decision will be analyzed in the next State of Vaccine Confidence Report. Generally, consumers reacted positively to expanding eligibility for booster doses.<sup>50</sup> However, some social media users continued to express their concerns and frustrations about needing to get booster doses.<sup>51,52,53,54</sup> Vocal vaccine opponents used this opportunity to falsely claim that evidence supporting brand mixing was contradictory to current research and politically motivated.<sup>55</sup> Online searches related to booster doses initially declined during this reporting period until the announcement of the discovery of the Omicron variant.<sup>f</sup> Many viewed the decision to introduce booster doses as a timely response to the emergence of the Omicron variant,<sup>56,57</sup> while others lamented that the decision had taken too long.<sup>58</sup> Consumers continued to display confusion regarding the safety and effectiveness of mixing the type and brand of the primary series COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses in addition to accessing vaccines from different manufacturers at a vaccination site.<sup>9,59,60,61</sup> Web searches explicitly related to "mix and match boosters" spiked during this reporting period.<sup>h</sup> Some consumers described unpleasant side effects from their booster shot and attributed these to brand mixing.<sup>62</sup> Other users expressed that they intended to receive only the same brand of booster dose as their primary series.<sup>63,64</sup>

<sup>f</sup>Google Trends

<sup>g</sup>CDC-INFO

<sup>h</sup>Google Trends

## Appendix: Inputs and Sources

Type	Input	Cadence	Sources	Tactics for Utilization
<b>Social Media Listening &amp; Media Monitoring</b>	<a href="#">Communication Surveillance Report</a>	Daily on weekdays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Google news</li> <li>Meltwater</li> <li>CrowdTangle</li> <li>Native platform searches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share of voice topic analysis to identify themes</li> <li>Emerging topics</li> </ul>
	Meltwater	Daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook, Twitter, Instagram</li> <li>Blogs</li> <li>News media</li> <li>Online forums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share of voice topic analysis</li> <li>Emerging theme topics</li> <li>Identify high reach/velocity topics</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">OADC (Office of the Associate Director of Communication) Channel COVID-19 Post metrics</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sprout Social</li> <li>Native OADC account analytics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze # of posts, topics</li> <li>Success of messages, # of impressions, reach, # engagements</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">OADC Channel Comment Analysis</a>	Daily on weekdays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Native platform searches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentiment analysis</li> <li>Identify message gaps/voids</li> </ul>
<b>Direct Reports</b>	<a href="#">CDC-INFO Metrics</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CDC-INFO inquiry line list</li> <li>Prepared response (PR) usage report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-compare PR usage with inquiry theme analysis</li> <li>Sentiment analysis</li> <li>Identify information gaps/voids</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">VTF Media Requests</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media request line list</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leading indicator for news coverage</li> <li>Identify information gaps/voids</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">Web Metrics</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Top pages</li> <li>Google search queries</li> <li>Top FAQs</li> <li>Referring domains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify information gaps/voids,</li> <li>Identify keywords/search terms, changes in web traffic</li> </ul>
<b>Research</b>	<a href="#">Poll Review</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harris Poll, PEW research, Gallup Poll, KFF</li> <li>New data related to vaccine hesitancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify socio-behavior indicators related to motivation and intention to vaccinate</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">Literature Review</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PubMed, LitCovid, ProQuest Central, Altmetric</li> <li>New data related to vaccine hesitancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify current vaccination intention</li> <li>Identify barriers to vaccination</li> </ul>
<b>Third Party Reports</b>	<a href="#">Tanaq Social Listening +Media Monitoring Report</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meltwater</li> <li>Sprout Social</li> <li>First Draft</li> <li>Native platform searches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trending topics</li> <li>Demographic and geographic conversation monitoring</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">CrowdTangle content insights report</a>	Biweekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Top pages (voices), groups</li> <li>General trends/sentiment analysis</li> <li>News analysis through posts</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">First Draft News Vaccine Misinformation Insights Report</a>	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proprietary methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media trends analysis</li> <li>Emerging threats and data deficits</li> <li>Online vaccine narratives</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">Project VCTR</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proprietary methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National and regional trends in negative attitudes toward vaccination</li> <li>Conversations around Legislation</li> </ul>
	<a href="#">Virality Project</a>	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proprietary methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mis- and disinformation trends related to COVID-19 vaccine</li> </ul>