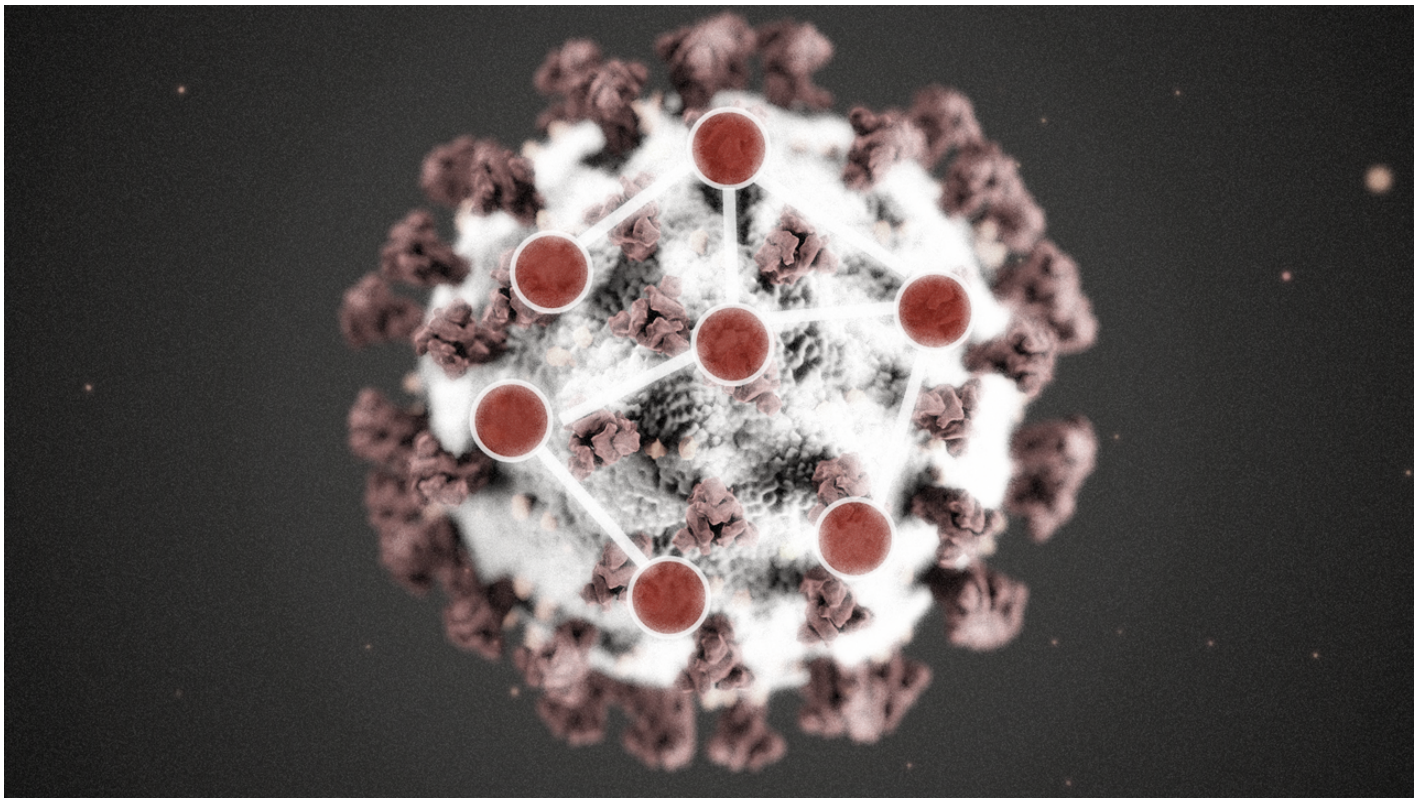


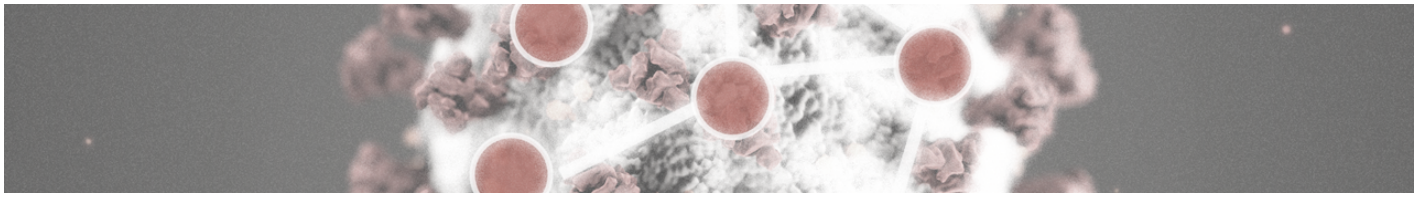
www.covidstates.org

THE COVID STATES PROJECT:
A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY
REPORT #33: UPDATE ON COVID-19 TEST TURNAROUND TIMES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

USA, January 2021

Hanyu Chwe, Northeastern University
Alexi Quintana, Northeastern University
David Lazer, Northeastern University
Matthew A. Baum, Harvard University
Katherine Ognyanova, Rutgers University
Matthew Simonson, Northeastern University
Ata A. Uslu, Northeastern University
James Druckman, Northwestern University
Roy H. Perlis, Harvard Medical School
Jon Green, Northeastern University
Mauricio Santillana, Harvard Medical School
Adina Gitomer, Northeastern University
Jennifer Lin, Northwestern University

netSI | Northeastern University Network Science Institute
HARVARD Kennedy School SHORENSTEIN CENTER on Media, Politics and Public Policy
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
RUTGERS THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
Northwestern University



Report of January 15, 2021, v.1

The COVID States Project

***From*:** The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

A joint project of:
Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

Authors: Hanyu Chwe (Northeastern University); Alexi Quintana (Northeastern University); David Lazer (Northeastern University); Matthew A. Baum (Harvard University); Katherine Ognyanova (Rutgers University); Matthew Simonson (Northeastern University); Ata A. Uslu (Northeastern University); James Druckman (Northwestern University); Roy H. Perlis (Harvard Medical School); Jon Green (Northeastern University); Mauricio Santillana (Harvard Medical School); Adina Gitomer (Northeastern University), and Jennifer Lin (Northwestern University)

This report is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under grants SES-2029292 and SES-2029297. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

This research was partly supported by a grant from the *Knight Foundation*.

We also received generous support from the *Russell Sage Foundation*.

Our data collection was supported in part by *Amazon*.

COVER MEMO

Summary Memo — January 15, 2020

The COVID States Project

***From**: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States*

Partners: Northeastern University, Harvard University/Harvard Medical School, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

Authors: Hanyu Chwe (Northeastern University); Alexi Quintana (Northeastern University); David Lazer (Northeastern University); Matthew A. Baum (Harvard University); Katherine Ognyanova (Rutgers University); Matthew Simonson (Northeastern University); Ata A. Uslu (Northeastern University); James Druckman (Northwestern University); Roy H. Perlis (Harvard Medical School); Jon Green (Northeastern University); Mauricio Santillana (Harvard Medical School); Adina Gitomer (Northeastern University), and Jennifer Lin (Northwestern University)

From April 2020 through January 2021, we conducted multiple waves of a large, 50-state survey, some results of which are presented here. You can find previous reports online at covidstates.org.

Note on methods:

Over seven survey waves, we polled 108,561 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The data was collected from July 2020 to January 2021 by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on other waves, see covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This data collection was part of a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors regarding COVID-19 in the United States.

Contact information:

For additional information and press requests contact:

- David Lazer at d.lazer@neu.edu
- Roy H. Perlis at rperlis@mgh.harvard.edu
- Matthew A. Baum at matthew_baum@hks.harvard.edu
- Katherine Ognyanova at katya.ognyanova@rutgers.edu
- Mauricio Santillana at msantill@fas.harvard.edu
- James Druckman at druckman@northwestern.edu

Or visit us at www.covidstates.org.

Update on COVID-19 test turnaround times across the country

Key Takeaways:

1) **Average wait times for COVID-19 test results continue to fall steadily (from 3.9 days in March to 2.2 days in December).**
2) **Racial disparities still exist in testing times: in December, Hispanic and Black respondents waited 0.7 and 0.4 days longer than white respondents, respectively.**
3) **In December, the average respondent waited 2.4 days between seeking a test and obtaining a test. They waited another 2.2 days to receive test results.**
4) **Testing is still too slow to support effective contact tracing.**

Rapid delivery of COVID-19 test results are essential for the nation's pandemic response. Our 50-state survey results reveal that testing times are decreasing, albeit slowly (see Figure 1).[1] **For respondents whose last nasal swab COVID-19 test was in March, the average result turnaround time was 3.9 days (with a median of 3.0 days); in December, the average time was 2.2 days (median of 2.0 days**).[2] Unfortunately, racial disparities still exist in testing times; in December, Hispanic and Black respondents waited 0.7 and 0.4 days longer than white respondents, respectively.

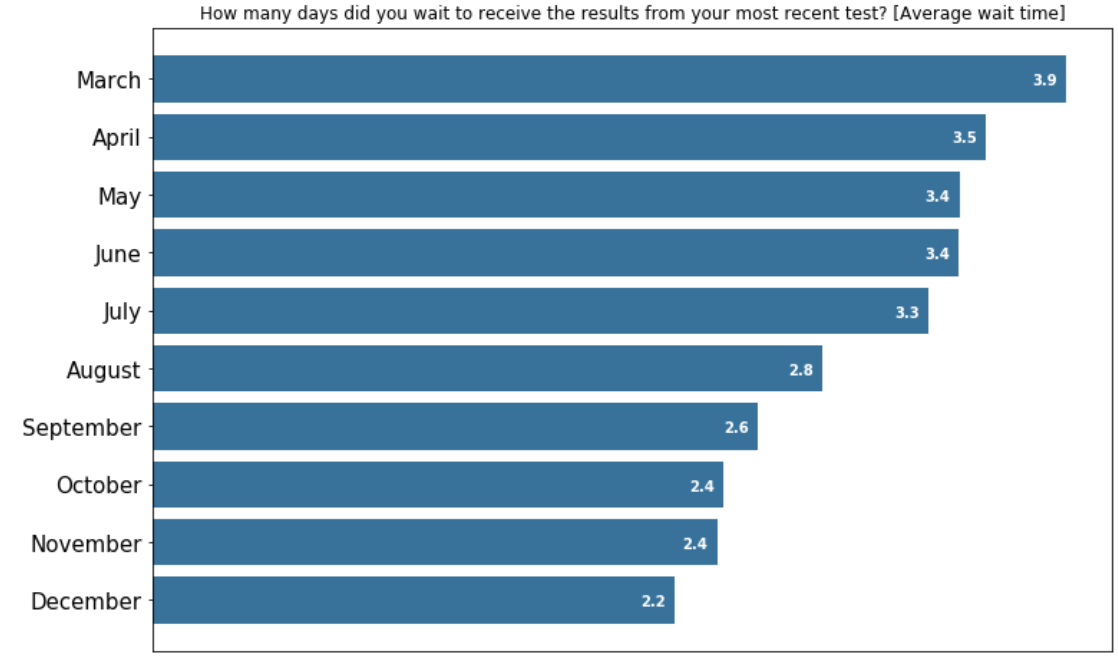
We also measure respondents' access to COVID-19 testing by asking, "How many days did you have to wait between the time you decided on a test and the day you were tested?" (Figures 2 and 3). Responses indicate that difficulty in obtaining COVID-19 tests has decreased somewhat, although race and ethnicity matter again: in December, Asian, Hispanic, and Black respondents had to wait 1.5, 1.4, and 0.9 days longer than white respondents (average wait time of 2.0 days) to receive a test.

Despite an overall trend of increased access and reduced result times, as of December, the average time between the decision to get tested and the actual test (2.4 days) plus the average time to receive test results after getting tested (2.2 days) remains too long to support effective contact tracing.

[1] In this analysis, we do not ask respondents to distinguish between antigen and PCR tests.

[2] Some respondents say it took more than two weeks to receive results; when calculating testing times, we code this response as 15 days. Additionally, in our July wave, we did not let respondents specify that test results came on the same day as the test. This is unlikely to bias wait time in either direction—respondents surveyed in July who report taking tests in June, for example, are unlikely to report drastically different results than respondents surveyed in August that also report taking tests in June.

Figure 1. Testing Delays Have Decreased Over Time



Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States. For more information, see covidstates.org.

Figure 2. Testing Access Has Increased Between September and December

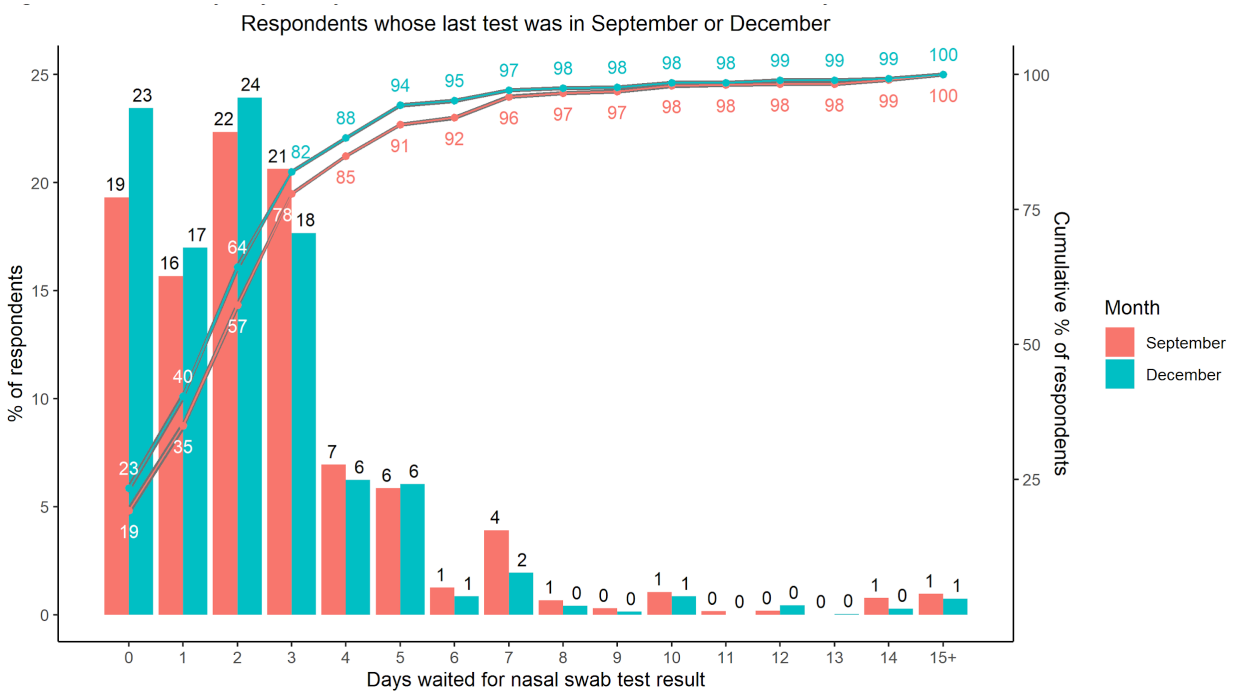
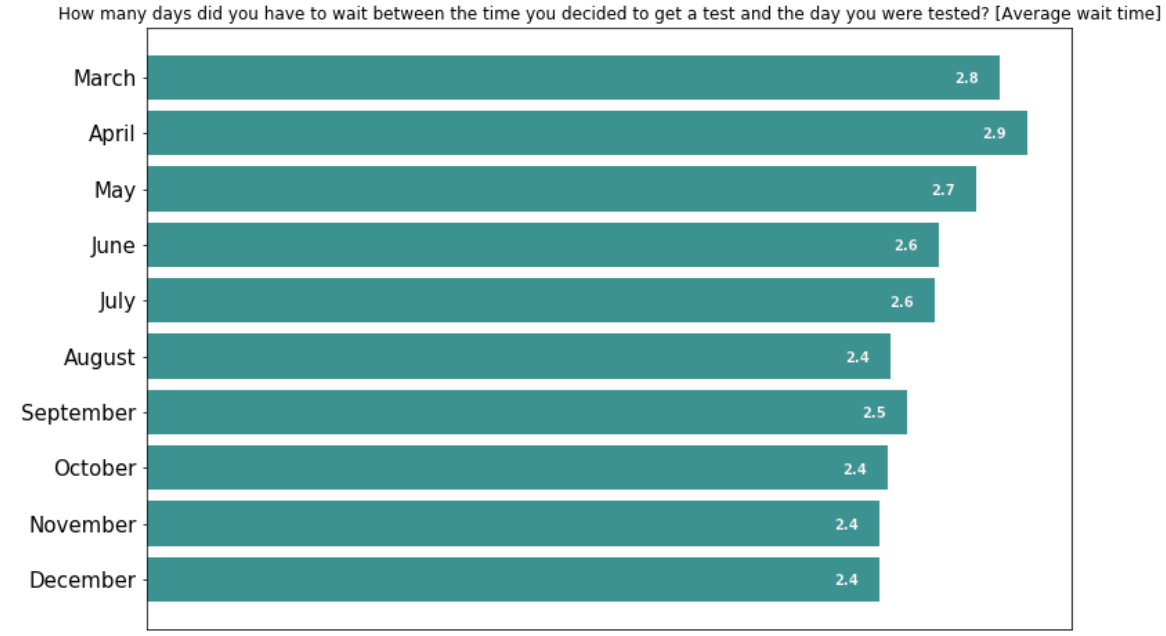


Figure 3. Access to Testing Remains Constant in Recent Months



Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States. For more information, see covidstates.org.