

December 2020

# KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor: December 2020

*The KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor is an ongoing research project tracking the public's attitudes and experiences with COVID-19 vaccinations. Using a combination of surveys and focus groups, this project will track the dynamic nature of public opinion as vaccine development unfolds, including vaccine confidence and hesitancy, trusted messengers and messages, as well as the public's experiences with vaccination as distribution begins.*

## Key Findings

- With the launch of the KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor, a new KFF survey finds an increase in the share of the public saying they would definitely or probably get a vaccine for COVID-19 if it was determined to be safe by scientists and available for free to everyone who wanted it. This share now stands at 71%, up from 63% in a [September survey](#) conducted in partnership with ESPN's The Undeclared. Following on the heels of the presidential election and promising news about several COVID-19 vaccine candidates, the new survey finds an increase in the share who say they would get vaccinated across racial and ethnic groups, and among both Democrats and Republicans (willingness to get vaccinated among independents has not changed).
- About a quarter (27%) of the public remains vaccine hesitant, saying they probably or definitely would not get a COVID-19 vaccine even if it were available for free and deemed safe by scientists. Vaccine hesitancy is highest among Republicans (42%), those ages 30-49 (36%), and rural residents (35%). Importantly, 35% of Black adults (a group that has borne a [disproportionate burden](#) of the pandemic) say they definitely or probably would not get vaccinated, as do one third of those who say they have been deemed essential workers (33%) and three in ten (29%) of those who work in a health care delivery setting .
- Among those who are hesitant to get a COVID-19 vaccine, the main reasons are worries about possible side effects (59% cite this as a major reason), lack of trust in the government to ensure the vaccines' safety and effectiveness (55%), concerns that the vaccine is too new (53%), and concerns over the role of politics in the development process (51%). About half of Black adults who say they probably or definitely won't get vaccinated cite as major reasons that they don't trust vaccines in general (47%) or that they are worried they may get COVID-19 from the vaccine (50%), suggesting that messages combatting particular types of misinformation may be especially important for increasing vaccine confidence among this group.
- A large majority (71%) of the public believes a vaccine will be widely available for anyone who wants it in the U.S. by the summer of 2021. This includes about three in ten who believe it will be

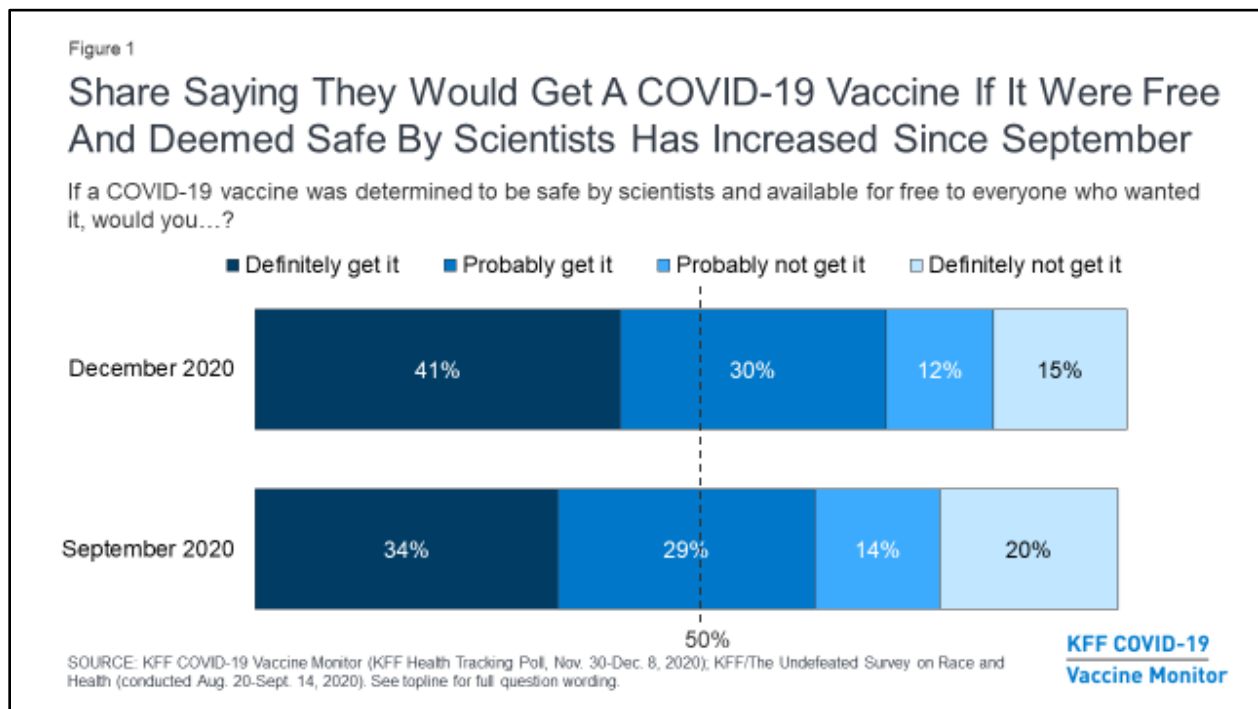
available sooner, either by the end of 2020 or early in 2021. Despite promising news about vaccines by both Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, expectations may need to be tempered for this group, given the small number of initial doses available and the hurdles to producing and distributing enough vaccine doses to cover everyone in the United States.

- A critical question that has already begun to face policymakers is how to prioritize different groups and ensure equitable distribution of the vaccine. On this question, the public's confidence has increased markedly over the past several months, particularly among Black Americans. Two-thirds of the public now say they are at least somewhat confident that when a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, it will be distributed in a way that is fair, up from about half (52%) in September. Among Black Americans, the share has nearly doubled, from 32% to 62%. Still, concerns remain about whether the needs of people of color are being accounted for in the vaccine development process. About half (48%) of Black adults say they are not confident that the development of a COVID-19 vaccine is taking the needs of Black people into account, and over a third (36%) of Hispanic adults say the same about the needs of Hispanic people.
- Understanding who the public trusts for reliable vaccine information will be critical for any COVID-19 vaccination outreach effort. The survey finds that, as with many health topics, people's personal health care providers are the most trusted source for information on COVID-19 vaccines, with 85% saying they trust their own doctor or health care provider at least a fair amount for reliable vaccine information. Some local, state, and national messengers – including the CDC, FDA, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and state and local health officials – are trusted by majorities of the public as well, but trust in these government-affiliated sources divides somewhat on partisan lines, with Democrats tending to express higher levels of trust than Republicans.
- The KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor is also tracking the public's enthusiasm for getting vaccinated and identified four groups of individuals that may require different communication strategies when it comes to a COVID-19 vaccine. These include: the “as soon as possible” group (34% of the public) who say that when a vaccine is approved and widely available, they will get it as soon as they can; the “wait and see” group (39%) who say that they will wait to see how the vaccine is working for other people before getting vaccinated themselves; the “only if required” group (9%) who say they will only get vaccinated if it is required for work, school, or other activities; and the “definitely not” group (15%) who say they definitely would not get a vaccine, even if it was free and determined to be safe by scientists. This last group is likely to be the hardest to convince, given that they have low trust in public health messengers, very low rates of flu vaccination, and high rates of believing misinformation about other public health measures, like mask-wearing.

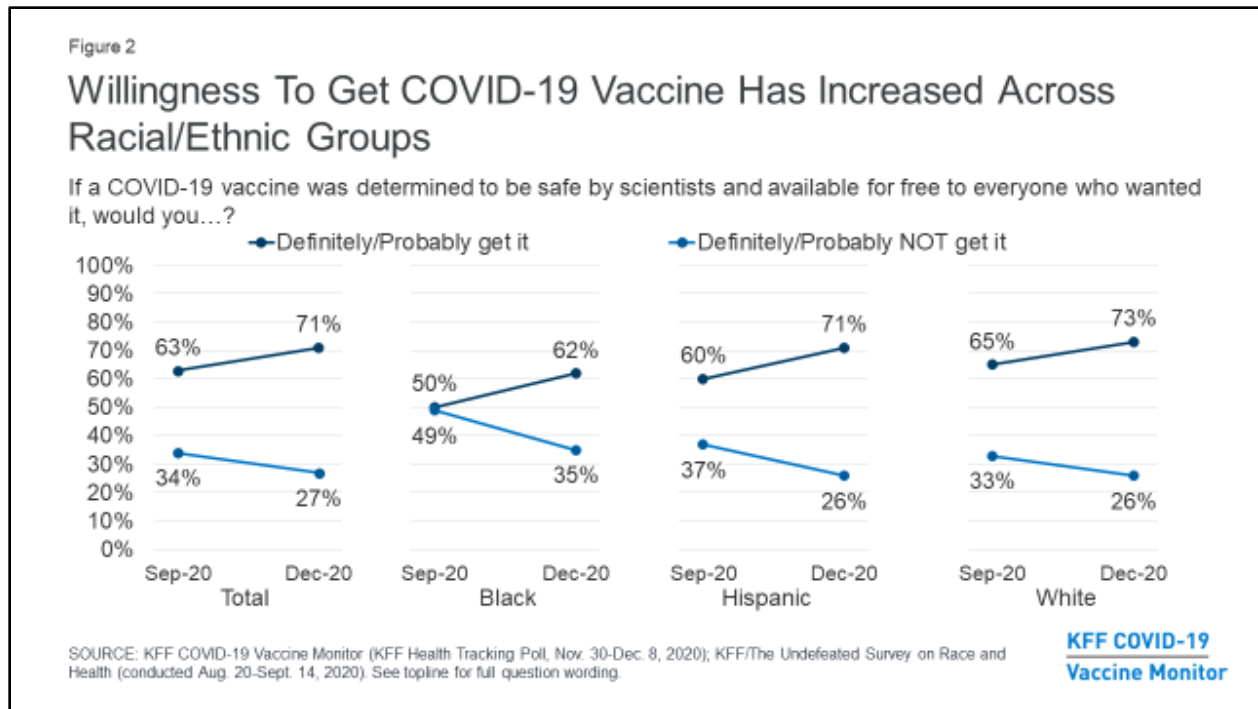
## COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy: Trends, Reasons, And Subgroups

### Share Of Public Willing To Get Vaccinated For COVID-19 Has Increased

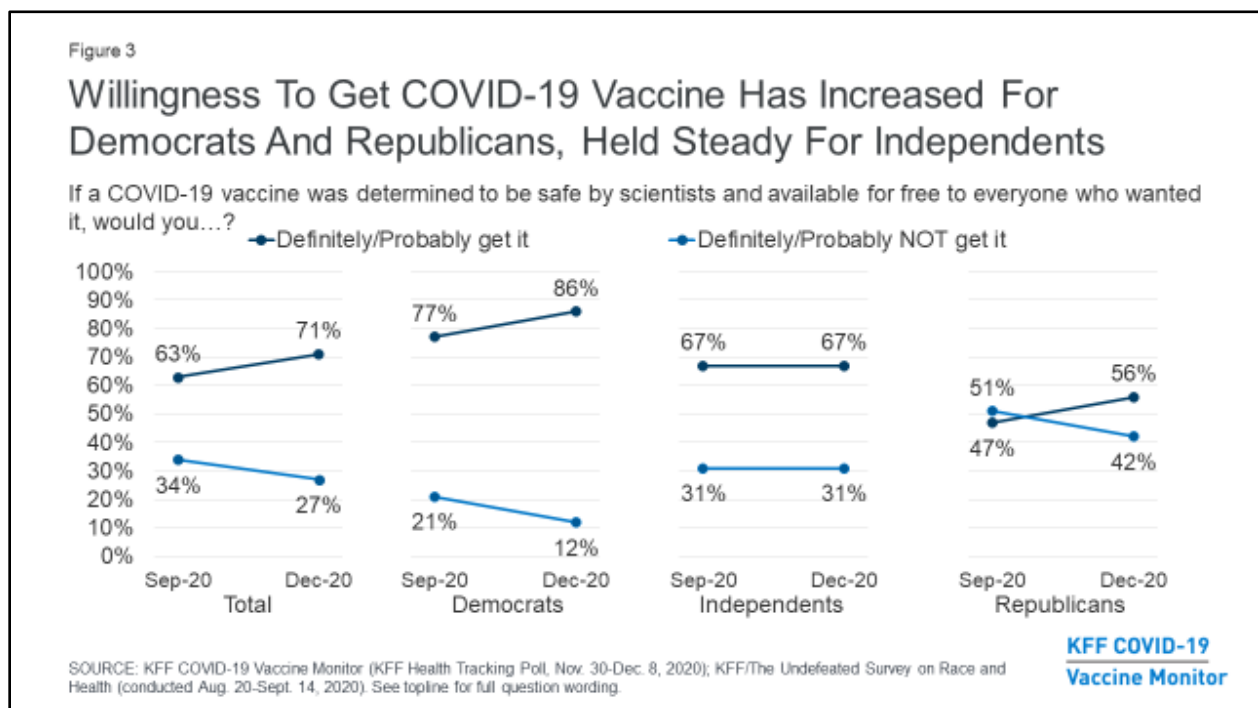
The KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor finds that the share of the public saying they would definitely or probably get a vaccine for COVID-19 if it was determined to be safe by scientists and available for free to everyone who wanted it has increased modestly since September, following the results of the presidential election and promising news about several COVID-19 vaccine candidates. In the new survey, seven in ten (71%) say they would definitely (41%) or probably (30%) get such a vaccine, while about a quarter (27%) say they would probably (12%) or definitely (15%) not get it. The share saying they would definitely or probably get vaccinated is up 8 percentage points from a KFF survey conducted in September in partnership with ESPN's The Undeclared (from 63% to 71%), while the share saying they would definitely or probably not get vaccinated is down 7 percentage points (from 34% to 27%).



Looking across racial and ethnic groups, there has been an increase in vaccine willingness among Black, Hispanic, and White adults alike. The change is perhaps most dramatic among Black adults, among whom willingness to get vaccinated increased from 50% in September to 62% in December. While Black adults were about evenly split in September on whether or not they would get a COVID-19 vaccine that was free and determined to be safe by scientists, they are now almost twice as likely to say they would get vaccinated as to say they would not (62% vs. 35%).

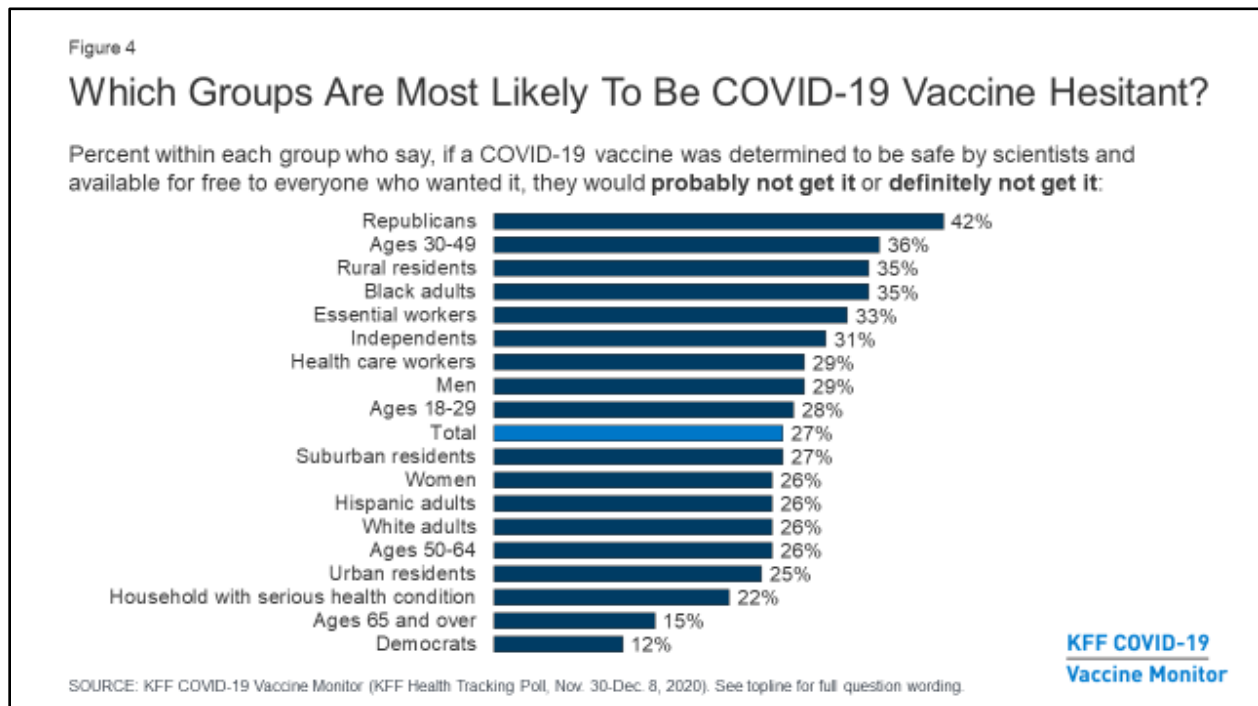


While a large partisan gap remains, willingness to get vaccinated for COVID-19 has increased for both Democrats (from 77% in September to 86% in December) and Republicans (from 47% to 56%), but has remained the same among independents (67%).



## One-Quarter Remain Hesitant To Get A COVID-19 Vaccine, Including Four In Ten Republicans

About a quarter (27%) of the public remains vaccine hesitant, saying they probably or definitely would not get a COVID-19 vaccine even if it were available for free and deemed safe by scientists. Vaccine hesitancy is highest among Republicans (42%), those ages 30-49 (36%), and rural residents (35%). Importantly, 35% of Black adults (a group that has borne a disproportionate burden of the pandemic) say they definitely or probably would not get vaccinated, as do one-third of those who say they have been deemed essential workers and three in ten (29%) of those who work in a health care delivery setting.



## Different Groups Have Different Reasons For COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy

Among those who are hesitant to get a COVID-19 vaccine, the main reasons are worries about possible side effects (59% cite this as a major reason), lack of trust in the government to ensure the vaccines' safety and effectiveness (55%), concerns that the vaccine is too new (53%), and concerns over the role of politics in the development process (51%). About four in ten cite as reasons that the risks of COVID-19 are being exaggerated (43%) or they don't trust vaccines in general (37%), while about a third say they don't trust the health care system (35%), and smaller shares say they are worried they may get COVID-19 from the vaccine (27%) or they don't think they're at risk of getting sick from the virus (20%).

Among the vaccine hesitant, members of different racial groups have somewhat different reasons for not wanting to get vaccinated. For example, Black adults who are vaccine hesitant are more likely than White

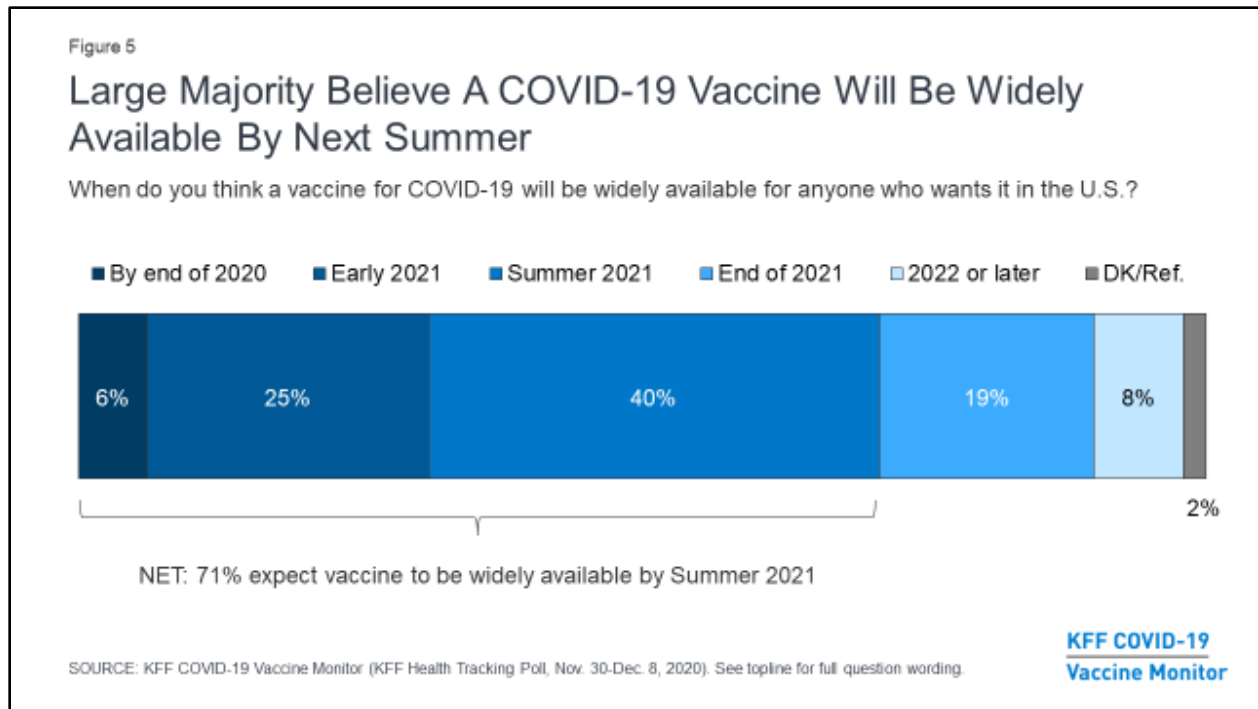
adults to cite concerns about side effects (71% vs. 56%) and the newness of the vaccine (71% vs. 48%) as major reasons for not wanting to get vaccinated. Importantly, about half of Black adults who say they probably or definitely won't get vaccinated cite as major reasons that they are worried they may get COVID-19 from the vaccine (50%) or that they don't trust vaccines in general (47%), suggesting that messages combatting particular types of misinformation may be especially important for increasing vaccine confidence among this group.

Reasons for vaccine hesitancy also differ somewhat by partisan identification. Among Republicans who say they won't get vaccinated, a top reason is that they think the risks of COVID-19 are being exaggerated, named as a major reason by 57% of Republicans who are vaccine hesitant (24% of all Republicans).

<b>Table 1. Reasons For Vaccine Hesitancy By Party Identification, Age, and Race/Ethnicity</b>							
<u>AMONG THOSE WHO WOULD DEFINITELY NOT OR PROBABLY NOT GET VACCINATED:</u> Percent who say each of the following is a <b>major reason</b> why:	<b>Total</b>	<b>Party ID</b>		<b>Age</b>		<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
		<b>Independent</b>	<b>Republican</b>	<b>18-49</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>White</b>
Worried about possible side effects	59%	59%	54%	58%	63%	71%	56%
Do not trust the government to make sure the vaccine is safe and effective	55	52	56	55	53	58	54
Vaccine is too new and want to wait and see how it works for other people	53	54	41	57	46	71	48
Politics has played too much of a role in the vaccine development process	51	46	53	47	59	54	49
The risks of COVID-19 are being exaggerated	43	40	57	40	51	33	49
Don't trust vaccines in general	37	43	31	37	38	47	36
Do not trust the health care system	35	34	36	32	42	28	36
Worried that they may get COVID-19 from the vaccine	27	30	18	26	26	50	21
Don't think they are at risk of getting sick from COVID-19	20	18	23	18	26	20	19
Note: Sample size too small to report separately among Democrats and Hispanics who say they definitely or probably won't get vaccinated. See Appendix A for tables based on total.							

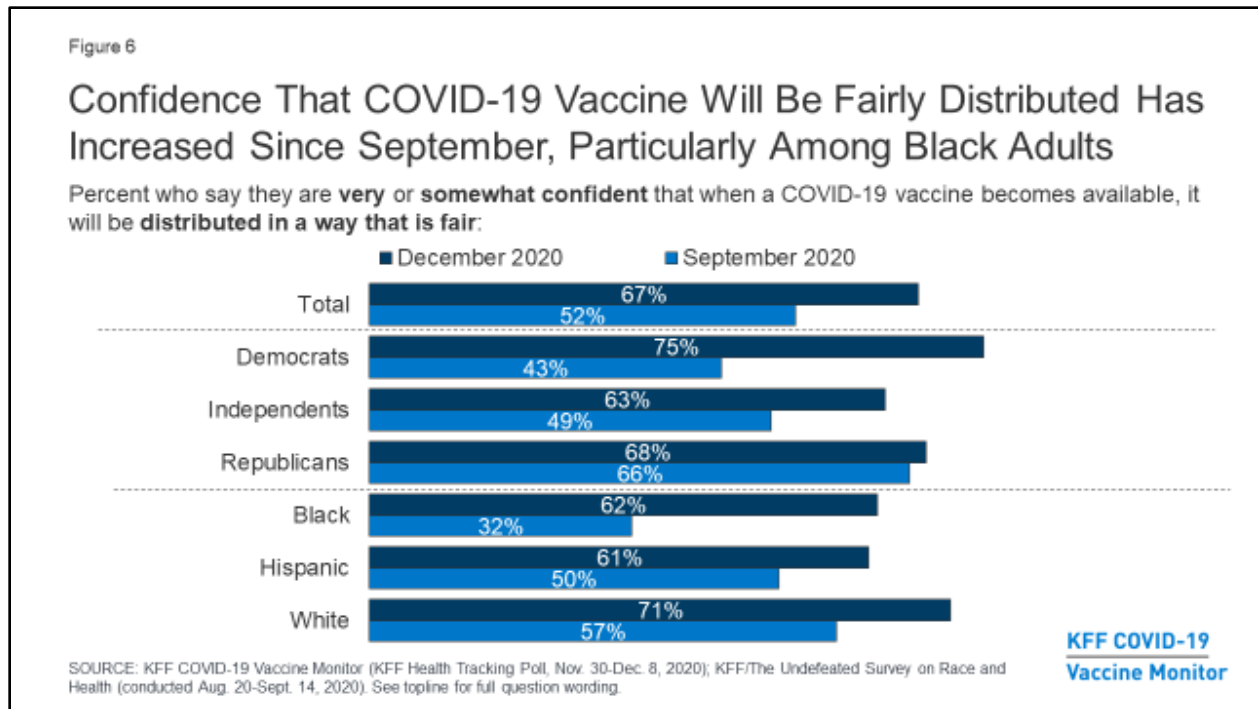
## COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence And Expectations

A large majority (71%) of the public believes a vaccine will be widely available for anyone who wants it in the U.S. by the summer of 2021. This includes about three in ten who believe it will be available sooner, either by the end of 2020 or early in 2021. About a quarter (26%) of the public is more skeptical, expecting that a vaccine won't be widely available until the end of 2021 or sometime in 2022.

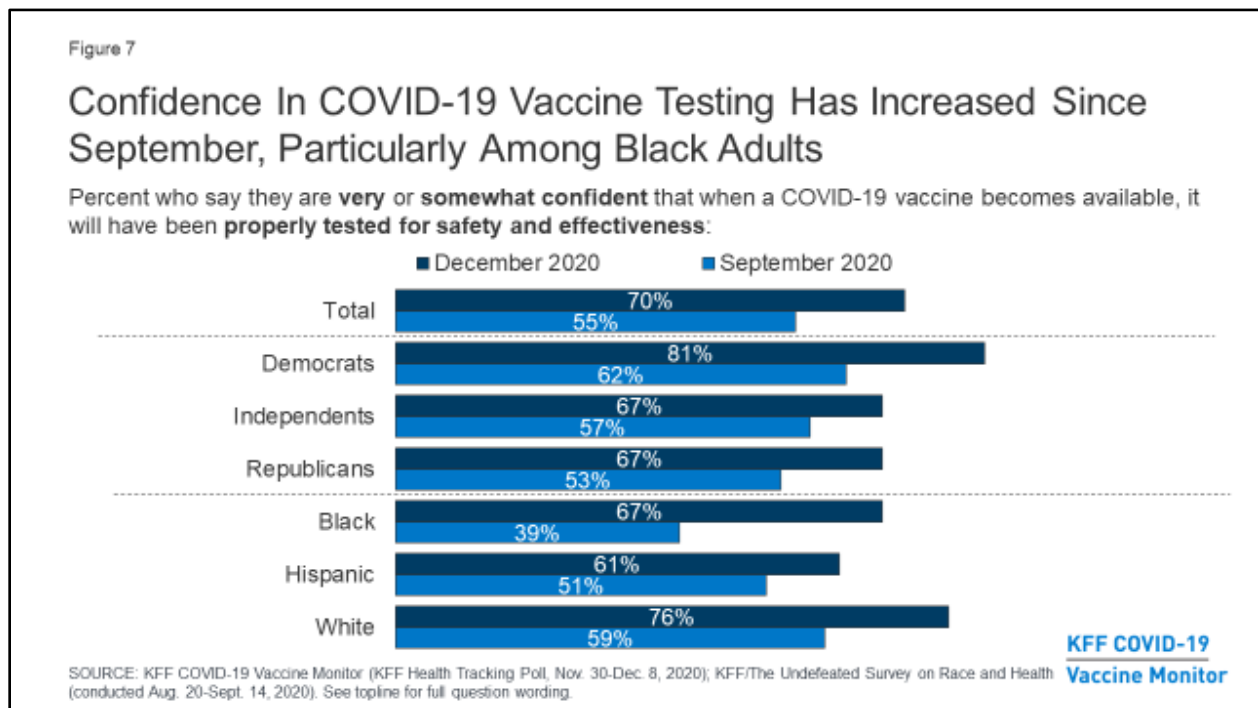


A critical question that has already begun to face policymakers is how to prioritize different groups and ensure equitable distribution of the vaccine. On this question, the public's confidence has increased markedly over the past several months, particularly among Black Americans. Two-thirds of the public now say they are at least somewhat confident that when a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, it will be distributed in a way that is fair, up from about half (52%) in September (before the presidential election and positive news about several vaccine candidates). Among Black Americans, the share has nearly doubled, from 32% to 62%.



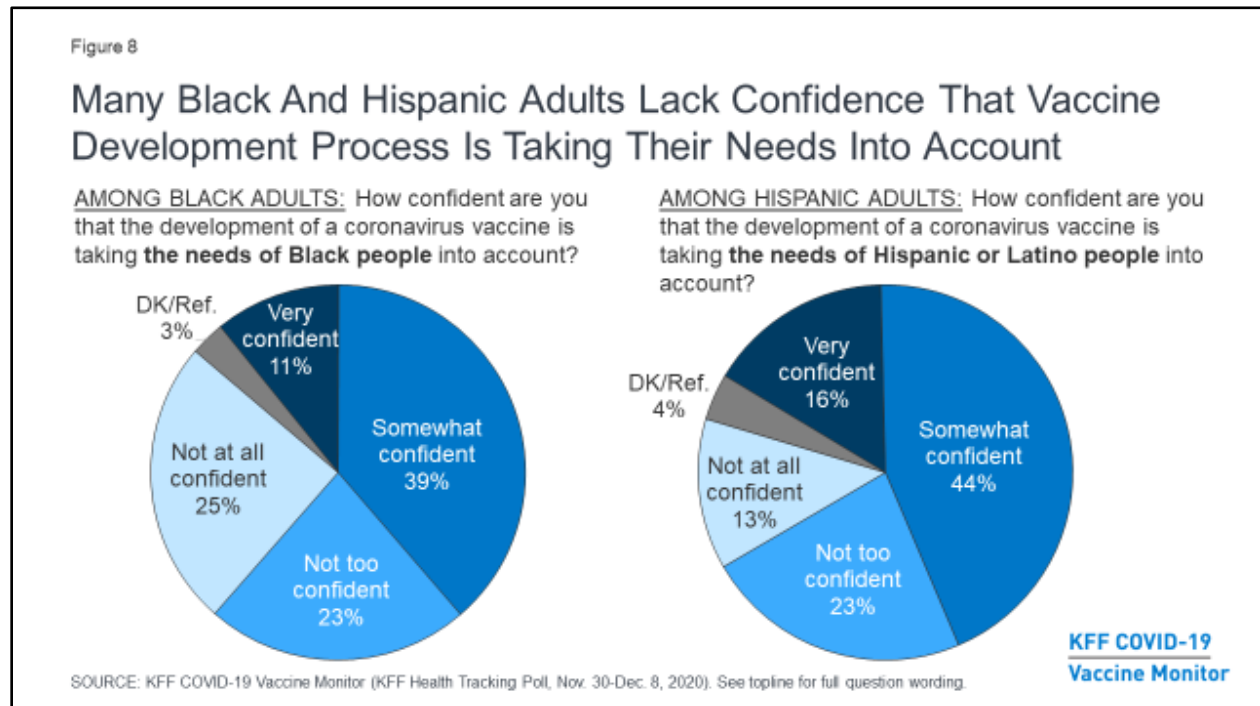


Similarly, a larger share of the public now compared to September say they are very or somewhat confident that when a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, it will have been properly tested for safety and effectiveness (70%, up from 55% in September). Again, the increase was most pronounced among Black Americans (67%, up from 39%).



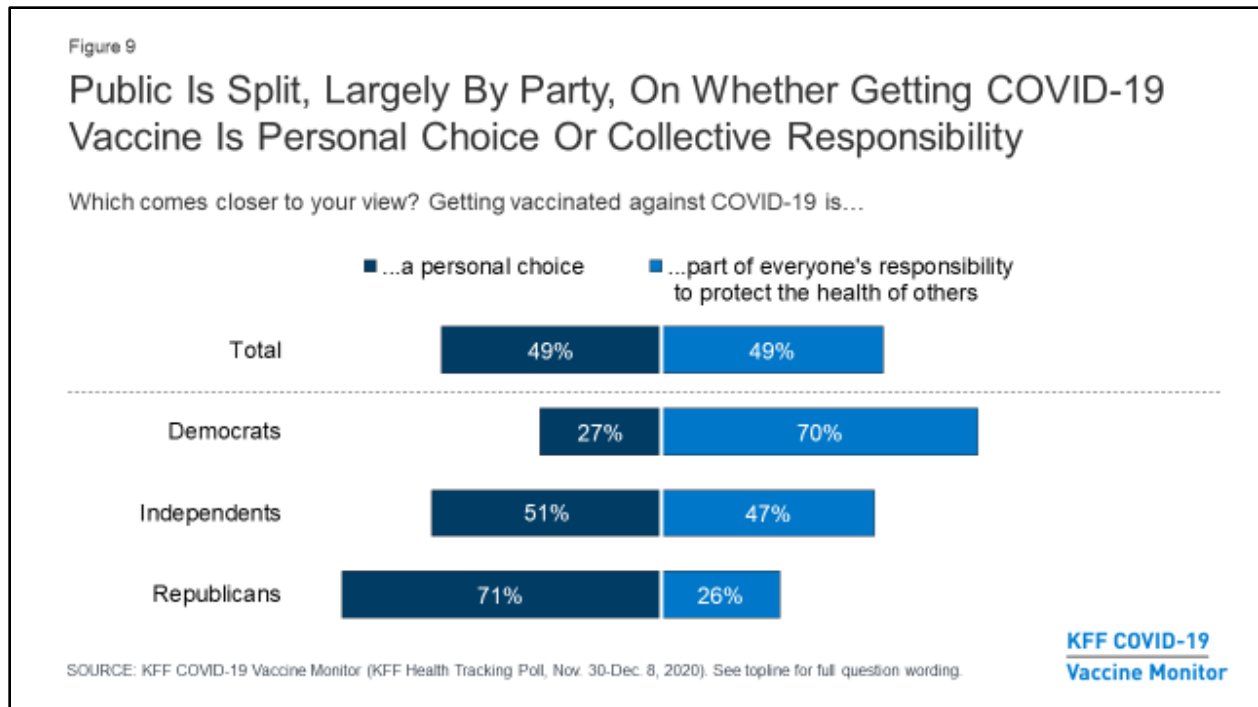


Still, concerns remain about whether the needs of people of color are being accounted for in the vaccine development process. About half (48%) of Black adults say they are not confident that the development of a COVID-19 vaccine is taking the needs of Black people into account (down from 65% in September), and over a third (36%) of Hispanic adults say the same about the needs of Hispanic people.

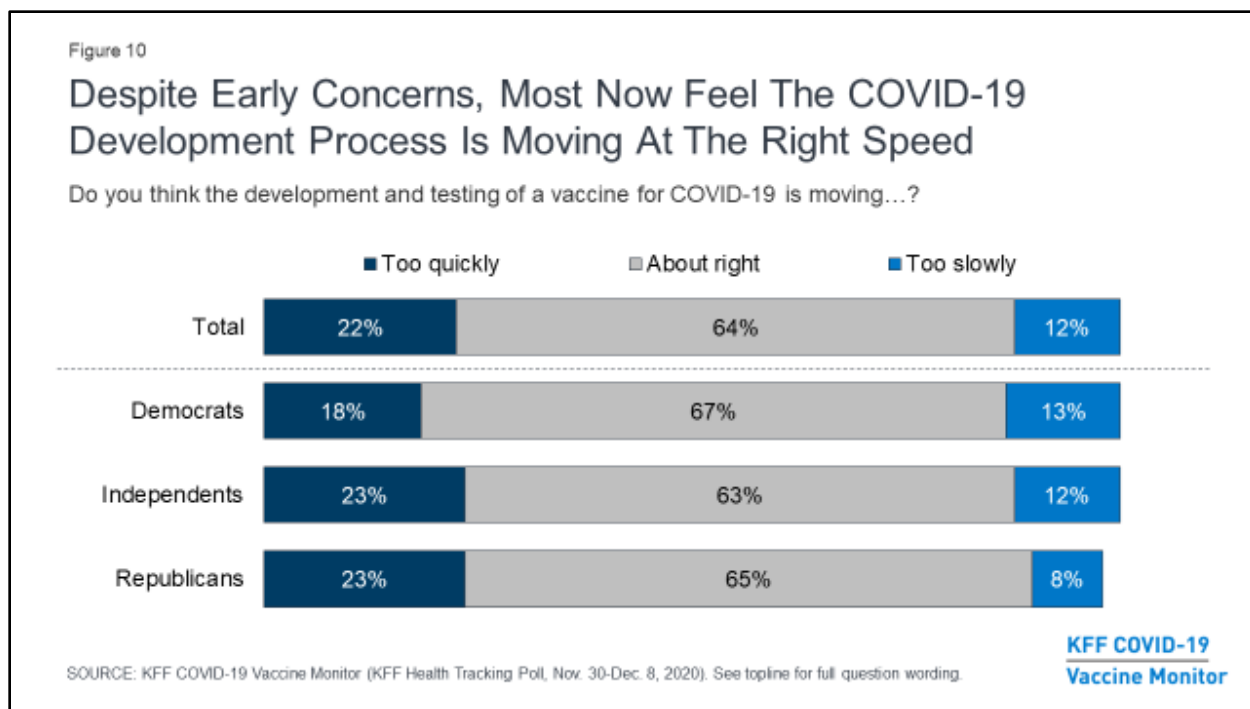


## Other COVID-19 Vaccine Attitudes

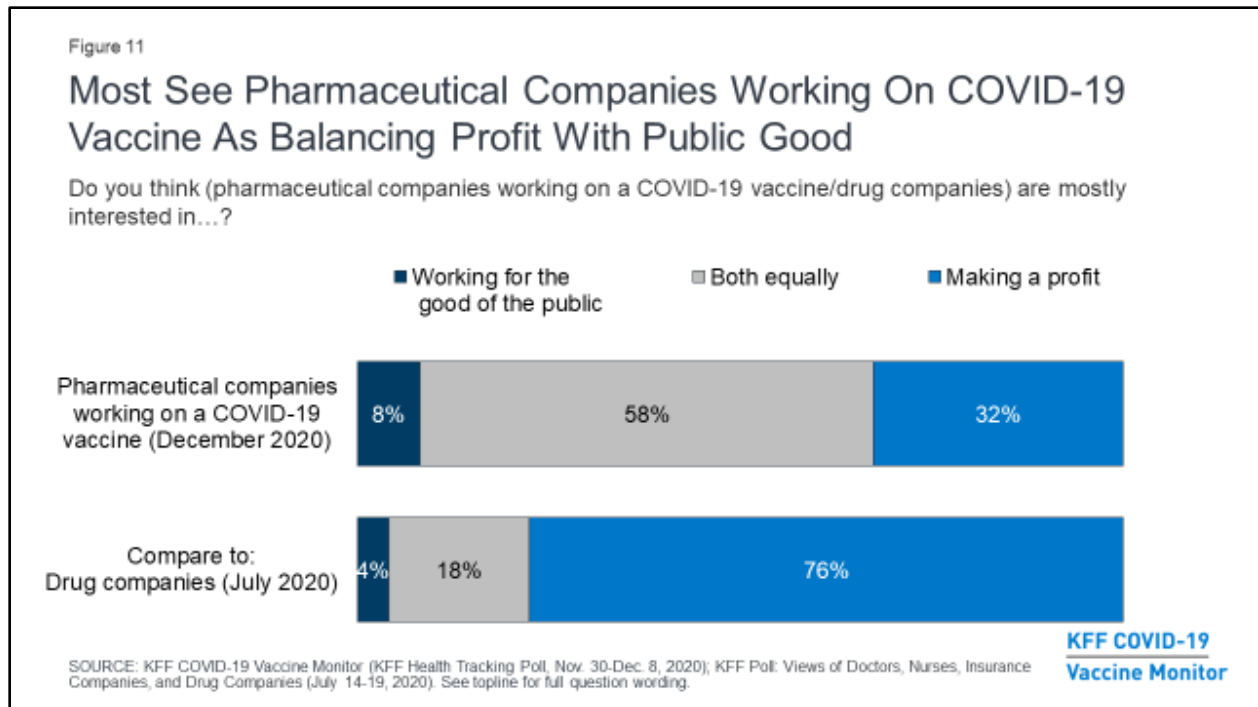
The KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor is also tracking other attitudes related to vaccination and examining the relationship of these attitudes to vaccine hesitancy. One question that has implications for vaccine messaging is whether people think getting vaccinated is more a matter of individual freedom or one of collective responsibility. The latest survey finds the public evenly divided, with about half (49%) saying that getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is “a personal choice” and the other half (49%) saying it is “part of everyone’s responsibility to protect the health of others.” Partisans diverge on this question, with seven in ten Democrats saying getting vaccinated part of everyone’s responsibility to protect public health, and a similar share of Republicans (71%) saying it is a personal choice. As will be shown below, these attitudes are related to people’s personal plans to get a COVID-19 vaccine when one becomes available.



With the name “Operation Warp Speed” given to the U.S. COVID-19 vaccine development effort, there were early concerns that the public would lack trust in a vaccine they might view as being rushed to market. In fact, KFF polling in [September](#) and [October](#) found that many U.S. adults were concerned that the FDA would rush to approve a vaccine under political pressure from the Trump White House. The latest survey, however, finds that about two-thirds of the public (64%) – including similar shares of Democrats, Republicans, and independents – feel that the development and testing of the vaccine is moving at about the right speed, while small shares say it is moving too quickly (22%) or too slowly (12%).



The financial motivations of pharmaceutical companies have also been raised as a potential barrier to gaining the public's trust in a COVID-19 vaccine. The survey suggests that the public's typically harsh views of these companies' profit motives may be somewhat softened in light of the pandemic. A KFF survey earlier this year that asked about "drug companies" in general found that three-quarters (76%) of the public thought these companies were mostly interested in making a profit, while smaller shares said they were mainly interested in working for the good of the public (4%) or about equally motivated by both profits and the public good (18%). The December survey asked more specifically about "pharmaceutical companies working on a COVID-19 vaccine" and found that most (58%) said these companies were equally interested in working for the public good and making a profit, while the share who saw profit as their main motivation was much smaller (32%).



## Profiles Of The Public By Vaccine Enthusiasm Levels

The KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor also gauged the public's enthusiasm for getting vaccinated and identified four groups of individuals that may require different communications strategies when it comes to a COVID-19 vaccine. (See Appendix B for more details about the demographics of each of these groups.)

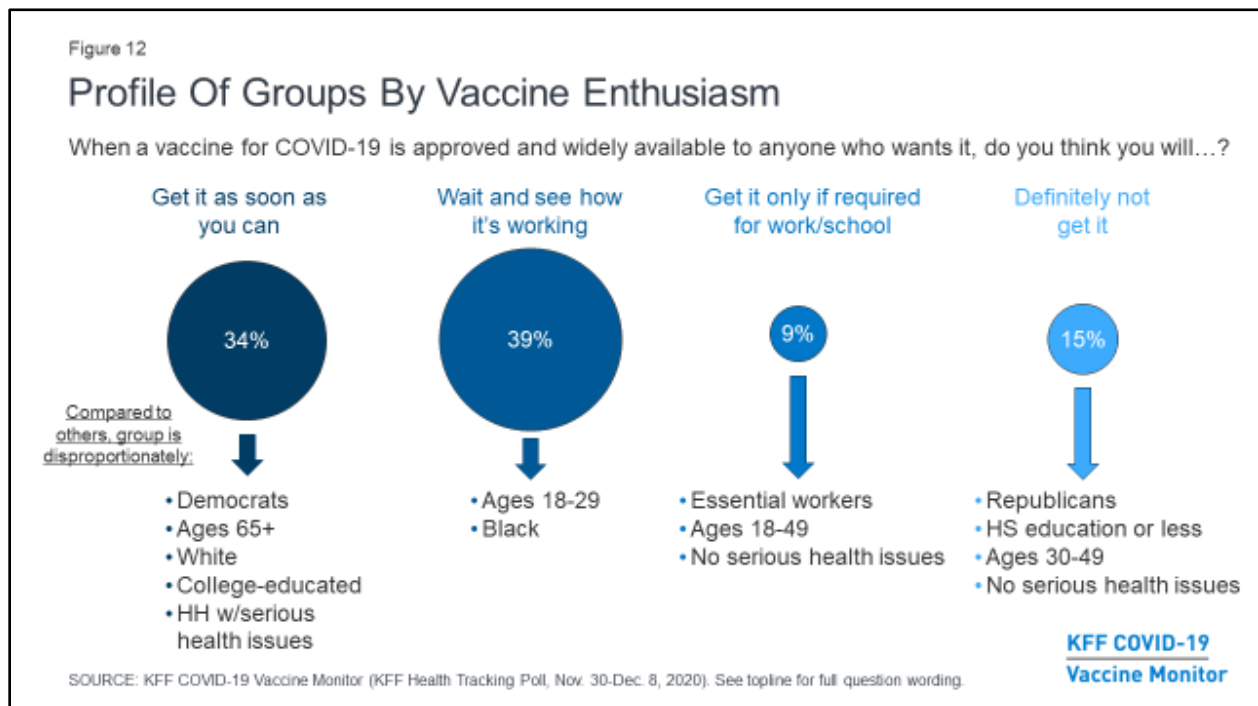
About a third of the public (34%) belong to the “as soon as possible” group who say that when a vaccine is approved and widely available, they will get it as soon as they can. This group is disproportionately made up of Democrats (43% vs. 32% of the public overall), adults ages 65 and over (33% vs. 21%), White adults (71% vs. 61%), those with college degrees (39% vs. 31%), and those who have a serious health condition or live with someone who does (52% vs. 46%). Given their eagerness to get vaccinated, some people in this group may be frustrated with the pace of vaccine distribution if they do not fall into one of the priority groups for early vaccination. Messages emphasizing the reasons why different groups are prioritized may be important for this group.

About four in ten (39%) of the public belong to the “wait and see” group. These individuals are a mix of those who say they definitely or probably will get vaccinated and those who say they probably will not – but all say that when a vaccine becomes widely available, they will wait until it has been available for a while to see how it is working for other people before getting vaccinated themselves. This group looks a lot like the general public, but it somewhat overrepresents young adults ages 18-29 (28% vs. 21% of the general population) and Black adults (16% vs. 12%). Ultimate willingness to get vaccinated among this

group will depend a lot on news coverage of events that unfold during the early rollout of the vaccine with priority populations. What they hear and learn about side effects, efficacy, and access to the vaccine will be important in shaping their ultimate decisions about whether and when to get vaccinated. This group is also likely to be the most dynamic during the early stages of rollout, potentially shifting their responses between “probably will” and “probably won’t” get vaccinated as the narrative around the COVID-19 vaccine changes.

The smallest group – representing 9% of the public – says they will only get vaccinated if it is required for work, school, or other activities. This group is somewhat younger than the general population (74% are under age 50, compared with 54% of all adults). Importantly, about six in ten within this group (61%) say they have been classified as an essential worker, meaning they are required to work outside their home during the pandemic. Though small, the fact that such a large share of this group is in a category at high risk for coronavirus exposure makes them an important group for increasing vaccine confidence.

Finally, 15% of the public falls into the group that is most resistant, those who say they definitely would not get a COVID-19 vaccine, even if it were deemed safe by scientists and available for free. This group is disproportionately made up of Republicans (41% vs. 25% of the general public) and those with no additional schooling beyond high school (53% vs. 38%). It also somewhat overrepresents people ages 30-49 (46% vs. 33%). This group is the most skeptical, and may be the hardest to reach with pro-vaccine messaging.



Looked at another way, the share of the public that falls into each of these groups differs by partisanship and racial and ethnic background. For example, about half of Black adults (52%) fall into the “wait and

see” group, compared to about four in ten Hispanic adults (43%) and just over a third of White adults (36%). By contrast, White adults (40%) are more likely than Black adults (20%) or Hispanic adults (26%) to be in the “as soon as possible” group.

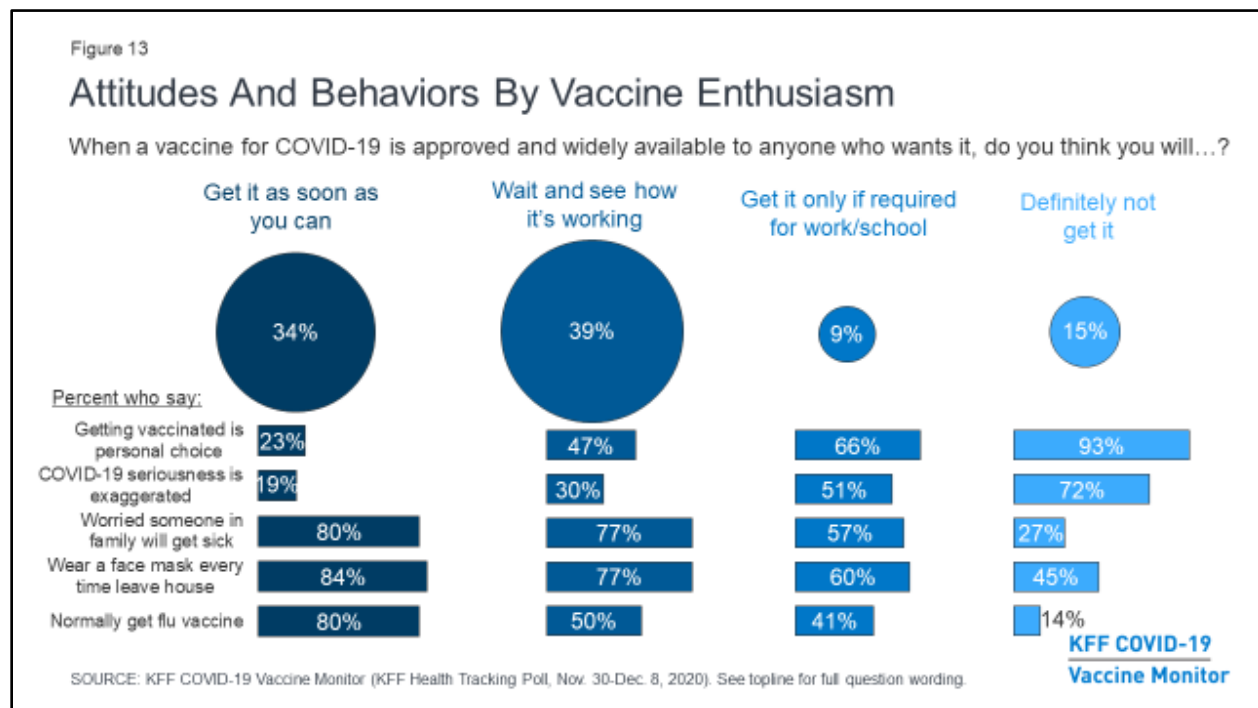
Looking across partisan groups, nearly half of Democrats (47%) are in the “as soon as possible” category, compared to about three in ten independents (30%) and Republicans (28%). And while majorities across partisan groups are in one of the first two categories, a quarter of Republicans and 17% of independents say they definitely won’t get the vaccine, much higher than the share among Democrats (5%).

Table 2. COVID-19 Vaccine Enthusiasm By Party Identification And Race/Ethnicity							
Percent who say, when a vaccine for COVID-19 is approved by the FDA and widely available to anyone who wants it, they will:	Total	Party ID			Race/Ethnicity		
		Dem.	Ind.	Rep.	Black	Hispanic	White
Get the vaccine as soon as they can	34%	47%	30%	28%	20%	26%	40%
Wait until it has been available for a while to see how it is working for other people	39	41	38	33	52	43	36
Only get the vaccine if they are required to do so for work, school, or other activities	9	5	11	10	10	11	7
Definitely not get the vaccine	15	5	17	25	15	18	15
Don't know/Refused	3	2	4	4	3	2	3

Besides differing in their demographics, these groups also differ in many of their attitudes and behaviors. For example, the vast majority (93%) of those who say they definitely won’t get vaccinated and two-thirds (66%) of those who say they’ll only get vaccinated if required to do so for work or school view getting vaccinated for COVID-19 as a personal choice, compared to about half (47%) of the “wait and see” group and just a quarter (23%) of the “as soon as possible” group. The more hesitant groups are also much more likely than the more enthusiastic groups to say that the seriousness of COVID-19 is generally exaggerated in the news. Conversely, about eight in ten in both the “as soon as possible” (80%) and “wait and see” groups (77%) say they are very or somewhat worried that they or someone in their family will get sick with COVID-19, compared to about six in ten in the “only if required” group (57%) and just a quarter (27%) of the “definitely not” group.

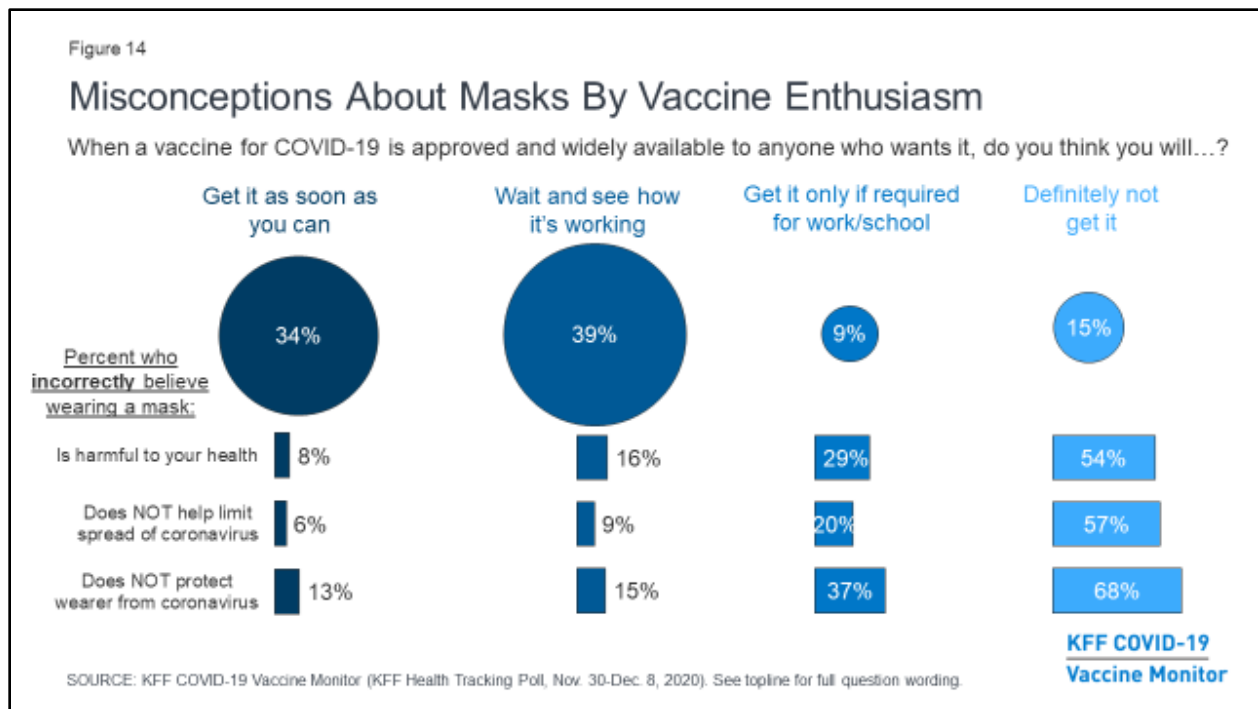
Behaviors around non-coronavirus vaccines and other protective measures also differ among these groups. For example, about eight in ten in the more vaccine-accepting groups say they wear a face mask every time they leave the house and might be in contact with other people, compared with about six in ten in the “only if required” group and fewer than half (45%) in the “definitely not” group. There is also a linear

relationship between vaccine enthusiasm and the share who say they normally get a flu vaccine each year, ranging from 80% in the “as soon as possible” group to just 14% in the “definitely not” group.



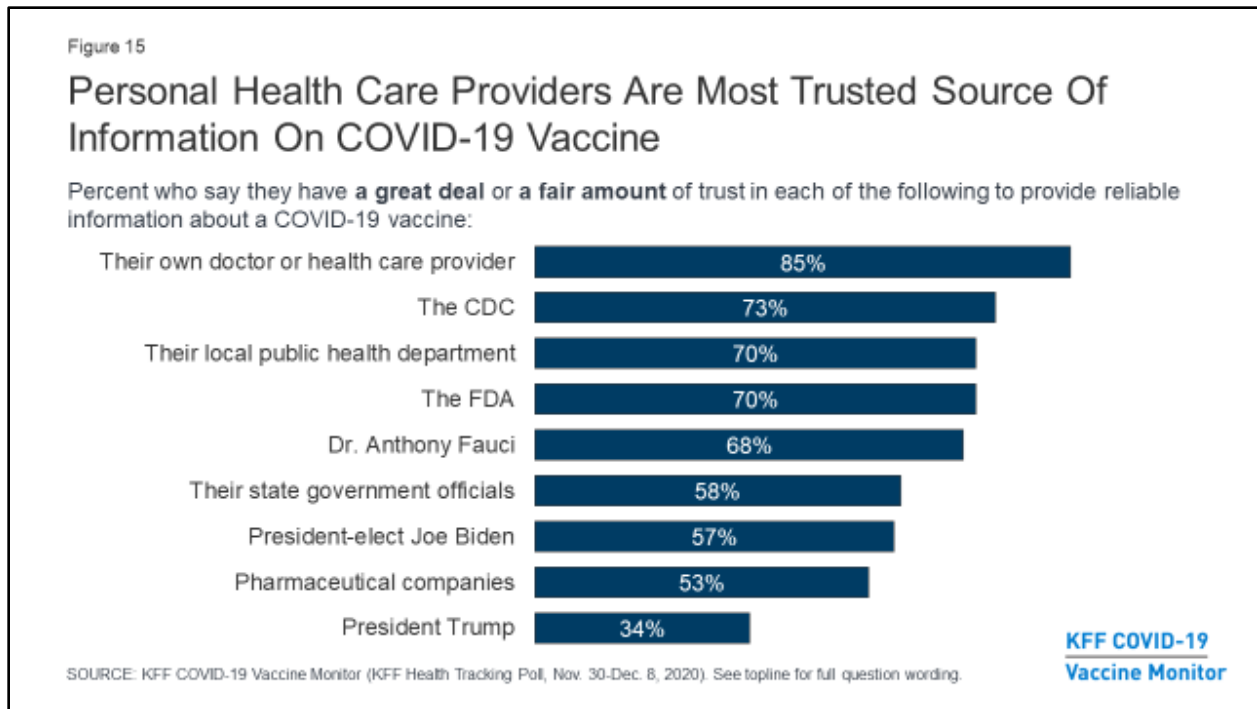
Importantly, the survey also suggests those who are more hesitant to get vaccinated for COVID-19 are also more likely to harbor misconceptions about other important public health measures. For example, about two-thirds (68%) of those who say they definitely won't get vaccinated and nearly four in ten (37%) of those who say they'll only get it if required believe that wearing a face mask does not help protect the wearer from coronavirus. Similarly, over half (54%) of the “definitely not” group and three in ten (29%) of the “only if required” group believe that wearing a face mask is harmful to one's health. Given that the basic public health messaging about the benefits of mask-wearing has not broken through for many of these individuals, novel strategies may be necessary to connect with them with during vaccination outreach efforts.





## Trusted Messengers

As vaccination efforts continue to roll out, the KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor will be tracking which messengers are the most trusted sources of vaccine information for the public. The latest survey finds that, as with many health topics, people's personal health care providers are at the top of the list, ahead of any national, state, or local messengers. More than eight in ten (85%) say they trust their own doctor or health care provider "a great deal" or "a fair amount" to provide reliable information on a COVID-19 vaccine. About seven in ten also trust national messengers like the U.S. CDC (73%), FDA (70%), and Dr. Anthony Fauci (68%), as well as their local public health department (70%). Somewhat fewer, but still a majority, put at least a fair amount of trust in their state government officials (58%), president-elect Joe Biden (57%), and pharmaceutical companies (53%), while just 34% say they trust President Trump.



Trust in personal doctors for vaccine information is universally high across partisan identification and race/ethnicity. However, when it comes to government-affiliated sources of information such as the CDC and even local public health departments, a much larger share of Democrats compared with Republicans say they trust each to provide reliable information about a COVID-19 vaccine, with independents generally falling in the middle. Predictably, trust in President-elect Biden and President Trump falls sharply along partisan lines.

Table 3. Trust In Sources Of COVID-19 Vaccine Information By Party Identification And Race/Ethnicity							
Percent who say they trust each of the following a <b>great deal</b> or a <b>fair amount</b> to provide reliable information about a COVID-19 vaccine:	Total	Party ID			Race/Ethnicity		
		Dem.	Ind.	Rep.	Black	Hispanic	White
Their own doctor or health care provider	85%	93%	84%	81%	85%	75%	87%
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC	73	88	70	57	78	71	73
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA	70	81	67	62	74	66	71
Their local public health department	70	87	67	56	79	65	70
Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases	68	90	67	47	77	62	68

Their state government officials	58	77	53	47	65	53	60
President-elect Joe Biden	57	93	52	23	76	58	54
Pharmaceutical companies	53	67	48	45	58	50	54
President Trump	34	7	30	78	12	26	41

Trusted messengers also differ among the different profile groups according to vaccine enthusiasm. The easiest group to convince – those who say they'll get the vaccine as soon as they can – place a high level of trust in each type of messenger asked about, with the exception of President Trump. The “wait and see” and “only if required” groups both place the highest level of trust in their own health care providers, but majorities of both of these groups also say they trust a variety of national and local messengers including the CDC, FDA, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and their local public health departments. The “only if required” group is somewhat more divided politically, with about four in ten (43%) saying they trust President-elect Biden at least a fair amount for reliable vaccine information and a similar share (46%) saying they trust President Trump.

The group that says they definitely will not get vaccinated may be the hardest to reach with any traditional public health messengers. Very few say they place much trust in most of the messengers asked about at the national, state, or local level. Only two messengers are trusted by at least half the people in this group: their own doctor or health care provider (59%) and President Trump (56%), suggesting that individual health care practitioners will be one of the only avenues for reaching this group with accurate and timely vaccine information.

Table 4. Trust In Sources of COVID-19 Vaccine Information By COVID-19 Vaccine Enthusiasm					
Percent who say they trust each of the following <b>a great deal</b> or <b>a fair amount</b> to provide reliable information about a COVID-19 vaccine:	Total	Get it as soon as you can	Wait and see	Get it only if required	Definitely will not get
Their own doctor or health care provider	85%	96%	87%	82%	59%
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC	73	89	78	68	26
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA	70	86	75	66	26
Their local public health department	70	84	76	67	28
Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases	68	87	73	64	16
Their state government officials	58	72	61	57	22

President-elect Joe Biden	57	77	62	43	14
Pharmaceutical companies	53	70	53	46	20
President Trump	34	26	28	46	56

Appendix A. Shares Who Say They Are Vaccine Hesitant And Reasons Why, By Party Identification, Age, and Race/Ethnicity									
	Total	Party ID			Age		Race/Ethnicity		
		Dems	Inds	Reps	18-49	50+	Black	White	Hisp.
Percent who say they would definitely or probably not get vaccinated for COVID-19:	27%	12%	31%	42%	33%	21%	35%	26%	26%
Percent say they would probably or not get vaccinated and each of the following is a <b>major reason</b> why (based on total):									
Worried about possible side effects	16%	10%	18%	23%	19%	13%	25%	14%	15%
Do not trust the government to make sure the vaccine is safe and effective	15	8	16	23	18	11	21	14	13
Vaccine is too new and want to wait and see how it works for other people	15	10	17	17	19	10	25	13	16
Politics has played too much of a role in the vaccine development process	14	7	14	22	15	12	19	13	12
The risks of COVID-19 are being exaggerated	12	3	13	24	13	11	12	13	9
Don't trust vaccines in general	10	5	13	13	12	8	17	9	9
Do not trust the health care system	10	5	11	15	11	9	10	9	7
Worried that they may get COVID-19 from the vaccine	7	5	9	8	8	5	17	6	6
Don't think they are at risk of getting sick from COVID-19	6	2	6	10	6	5	7	5	7

Appendix B. Demographic Profiles Of Vaccine Enthusiasm Groups					
	"As soon as possible"	"Wait and see"	"Only if required"	"Definitely won't get it"	Percent of total public
<b>Percent of total</b>	34%	39%	9%	15%	100%
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	49%	46%	53%	53%	49%
Female	51	53	47	47	51
<b>Party ID</b>					
Democrats	43%	33%	18%	11%	32%
Independents	27	30	38	34	30
Republicans	20	22	28	41	25
<b>Age</b>					
18-29	13%	28%	28%	18%	21%
30-49	26	30	47	46	33
50-64	28	23	21	23	25
65+	33	19	5	11	21
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
White, Non-Hispanic	71%	56%	47%	58%	61%
Black, Non-Hispanic	7	16	14	12	12
Hispanic	12	18	20	19	16
Other	8	7	16	7	9
<b>Essential worker status</b>					
Employed and essential worker	30%	34%	61%	44%	37%
Employed and not essential worker	21	20	11	14	18
Not employed (includes those who are retired or students)	49	45	27	42	44
<b>Health care worker in household</b>					
Health care worker in household	13%	16%	21%	16%	16%
Respondent is a health care worker	5	6	14	3	6
Other household member is a health care worker	7	9	6	11	8
Respondent and another household member are health care workers	1	0	1	2	1
No health care worker in household	86	84	79	84	84
<b>Serious health condition in household</b>					
Someone in household has a serious health condition	52%	48%	33%	34%	46%
No one in household has serious health condition	47	50	67	65	53
<b>Community Type</b>					
Urban	38%	35%	33%	35%	36%
Suburban	51	53	53	49	51
Rural	11	12	14	16	12
<b>Education</b>					
High school or less	30%	41%	31%	53%	38%
Some college	30	30	38	28	30
College+	39	29	31	19	31
<b>Household income</b>					
<\$40K	33%	37%	31%	35%	35%
\$40K-<\$90K	27	32	27	26	28
\$90K+	33	21	36	29	28
Don't know/Refused	7	9	6	10	9

December 2020 | Poll Findings

# KFF Health Tracking Poll – December 2020: COVID-19 and Biden's Health Care Agenda

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## Key Findings

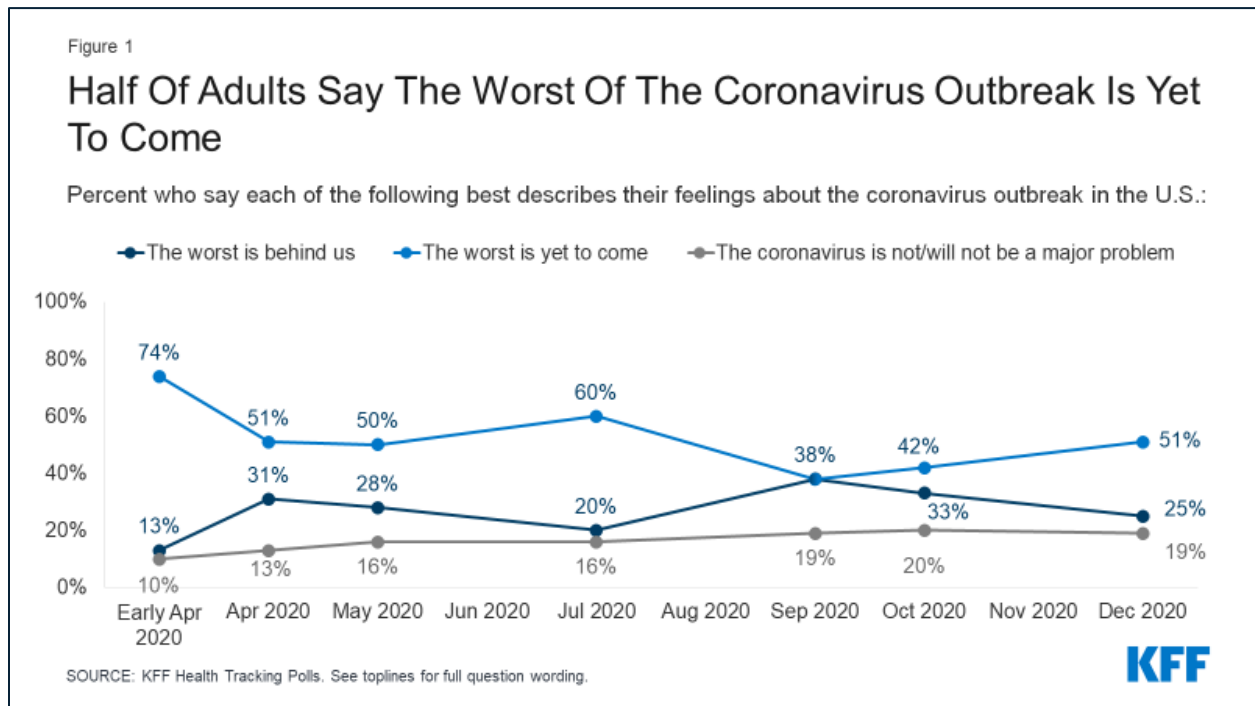
- As the country hits record numbers of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, pessimism about the trajectory of the coronavirus pandemic continues to increase. Half of adults now say the worst is yet to come, returning to levels measured in May. Moreover, the share of the public who say they are worried that they or someone in their family will get sick from coronavirus is at its highest point since KFF began tracking this question in February (68%).
- With a COVID-19 vaccine on the horizon, most adults (70%) say they can continue adhering to social distancing guidelines for six months or more, or until a vaccine is widely available. As some states and localities impose new stay-at-home orders and place restrictions on some businesses in efforts to limit the spread of coronavirus, about four in ten adults think their state has about the right amount of restrictions on businesses and on individuals. About half of Democrats (49%) say their state does not have enough restrictions on businesses, while half of Republicans (50%) say their state has too many restrictions.
- Compared to May, a larger share now say they wear a mask every time they leave home (73%, up 21 percentage points since May, including increases across partisans and age groups).
- Reflecting the large share who say they consistently wear face masks, most of the public think wearing a mask to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 is part of everyone's responsibility (73%), though Republicans are more divided with half saying it is everyone's responsibility to help protect the health of others and 45% saying it is a personal choice.
- Majorities of the public want the incoming Biden administration and Congress to either build on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or keep it as it is (62%), though partisans differ. There is bipartisan support for President-elect Biden's proposal to allow the federal government to negotiate with drug companies to get a lower price on medications (89%). While majorities of the public favor guaranteeing health insurance coverage to lower-income people whose states have not expanded their Medicaid program (76%), establishing a public option (71%), expanding government financial help for those who buy their own insurance on the marketplace (66%) and lowering the Medicare eligibility age to 60 (65%), fewer Republicans are supportive of these proposals.



## Growing Pessimism About The Coronavirus Outbreak

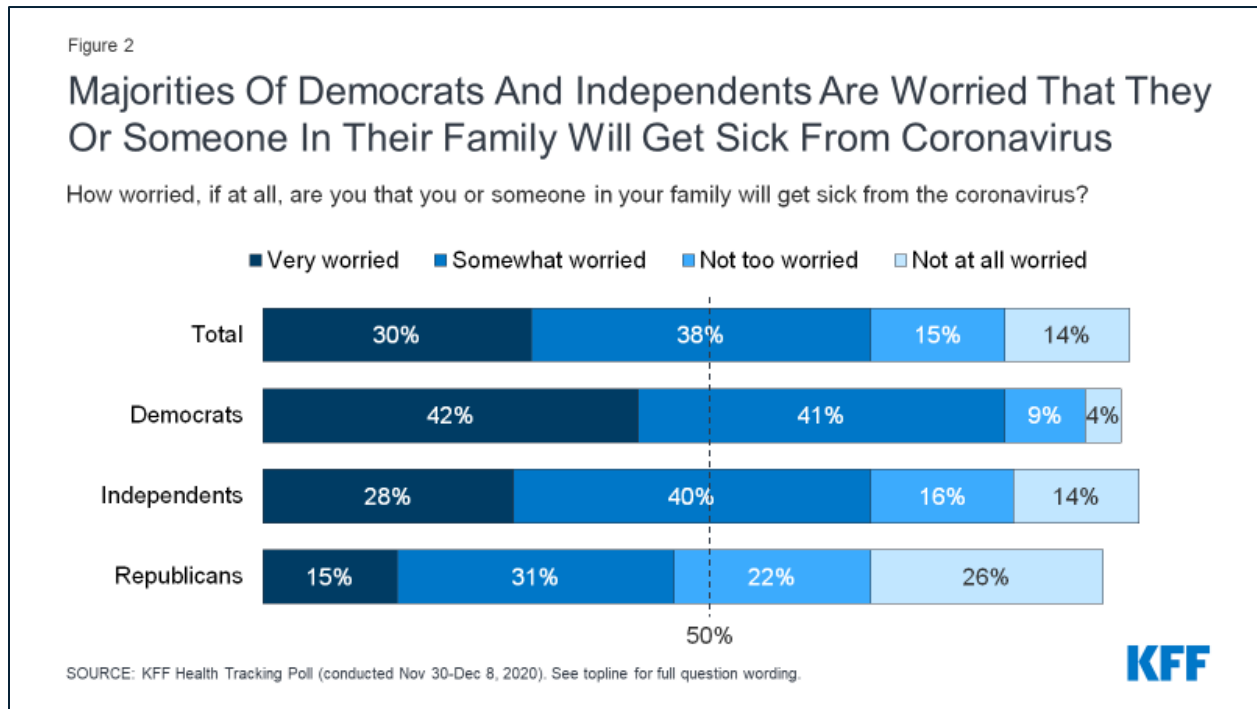
With coronavirus cases and hospitalizations at record highs across the country, the latest KFF Health Tracking Poll finds the public feeling increasingly negative about the trajectory of the pandemic. Half of adults (51%) think the worst is yet to come – an increase from September and October when about four in ten thought the worst was still ahead. One quarter of the public (25%) say the worst of the outbreak is behind us and about one in five say they do not think coronavirus is or will be a major problem in the U.S. (19%).

Among partisans, seven in ten Democrats (72%) say the worst is yet to come. Notably, about a third (32%) of Republicans now say the worst of the pandemic is yet to come, twice as many as in October (15%). Among independents, half say the worst of coronavirus is yet to come (50%) while 28% say that the worst is behind us. About six in ten Black adults (62%) – a group that has been disproportionately affected by coronavirus – say the worst of the coronavirus outbreak is yet to come while about half of White adults (53%) and four in ten Hispanic adults (41%) say the same.

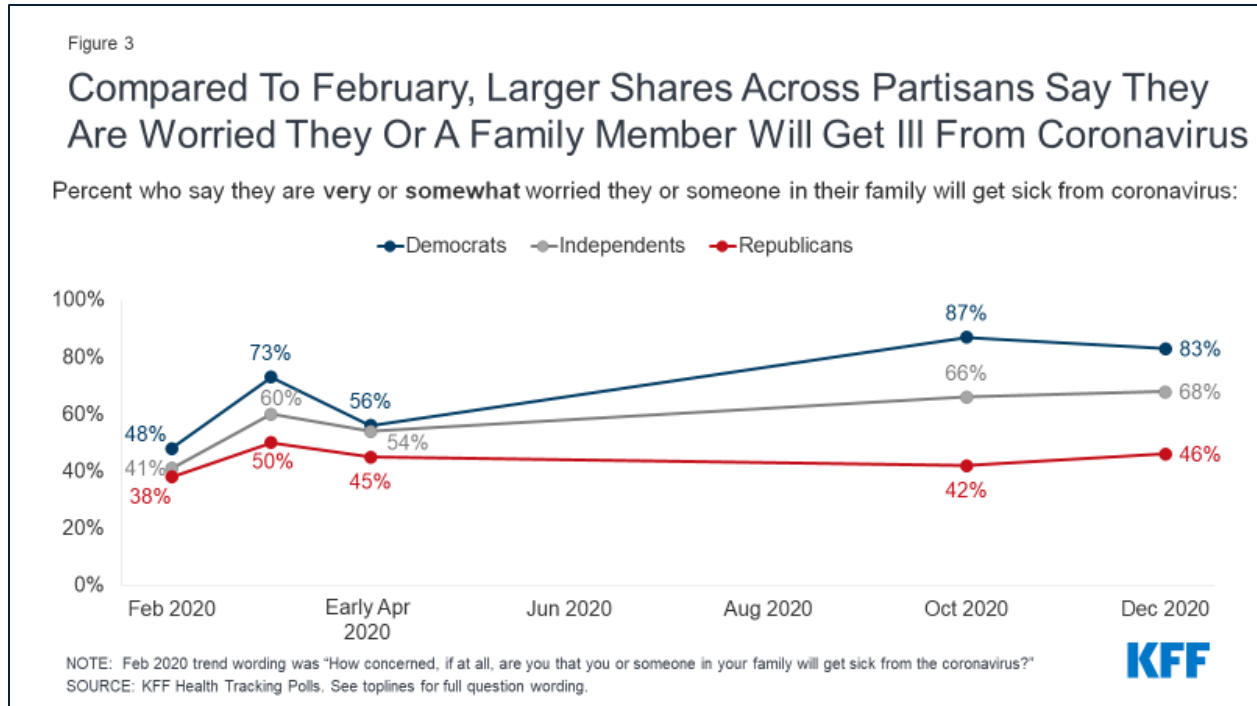


The U.S. recently hit a COVID-19 daily death record, with more than 3,000 people dying from the disease in a single day. Three in ten adults say they are “very worried” they or a family member will get sick from coronavirus and a further 38% say they are “somewhat worried”. About eight in ten Democrats say they are worried they or a family member will get sick, including 42% who are “very worried”. While a majority of independents (68%) say they are at least “somewhat worried” that they or a family member will get sick from coronavirus, fewer than half of Republicans express this concern (46%).

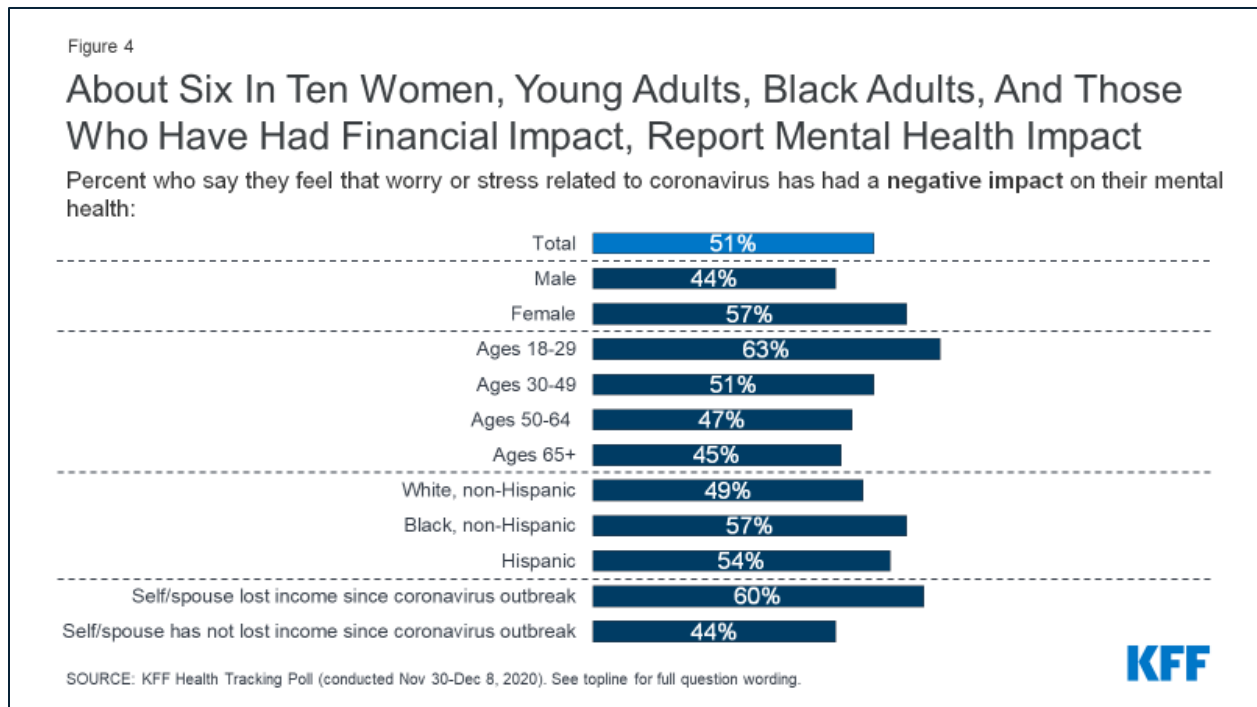
Notably, about three in four Black adults (75%) and Hispanic adults (77%) say they are worried they or a family member will get sick from coronavirus while about two in three White adults (64%) express this concern.



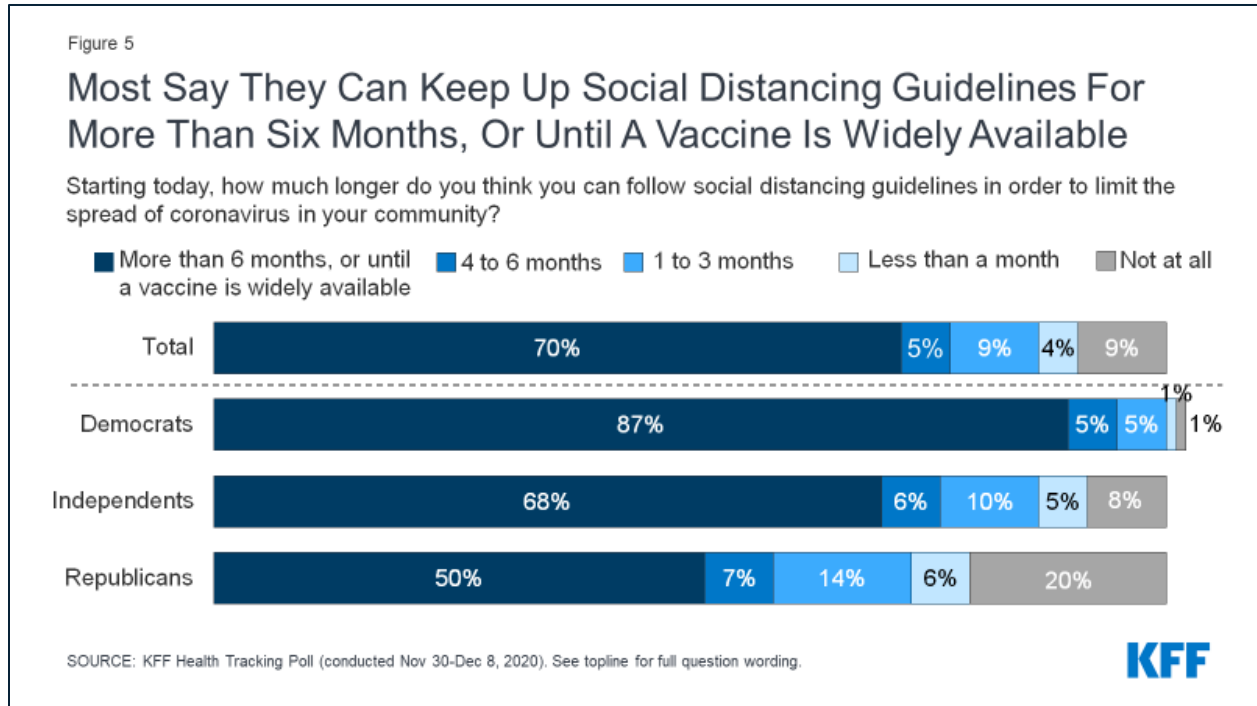
Amidst the worsening outbreak, the share of the public who say they are “very worried” or “somewhat worried” that they or someone in their family will get sick from coronavirus is at its highest point since KFF began tracking this question in February, with 68% now saying they are worried. The share of Democrats and independents who say they are worried they or a family member will get sick was similar in October but lower in April when slight majorities said they were worried (56% of Democrats, 54% of independents). Since early April, fewer than half of Republicans have said they are worried they or a family member will get sick from coronavirus.



Ten months after coronavirus began spreading through the country, half of adults (51%) say worry or stress related to the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health, including one in four who say it has had a major impact. This is similar to the share in July who said pandemic-related stress and worry had a negative impact on their mental health (53%), and higher than the share who said the same in May (39%). Women are more likely than men to say their mental health has been negatively impacted by the coronavirus outbreak (57% vs. 44%). Similarly, younger adults ages 18 to 29 are more likely than their older counterparts to say stress and worry about the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health. The economic impacts of the pandemic are also taking a toll as six in ten adults whose household lost a job or income due to the pandemic say stress and worry related to coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health.



With the promise of a vaccine on the horizon, seven in ten adults say they can continue to follow social distancing guidelines for more than six months or until a vaccine is widely available. Majorities of Democrats (87%) and independents (68%) say they can keep following social distancing guidelines for another six months or longer or until a vaccine is available, and half of Republicans say the same. Notably, one in five Republicans say they cannot follow social distancing guidelines at all.

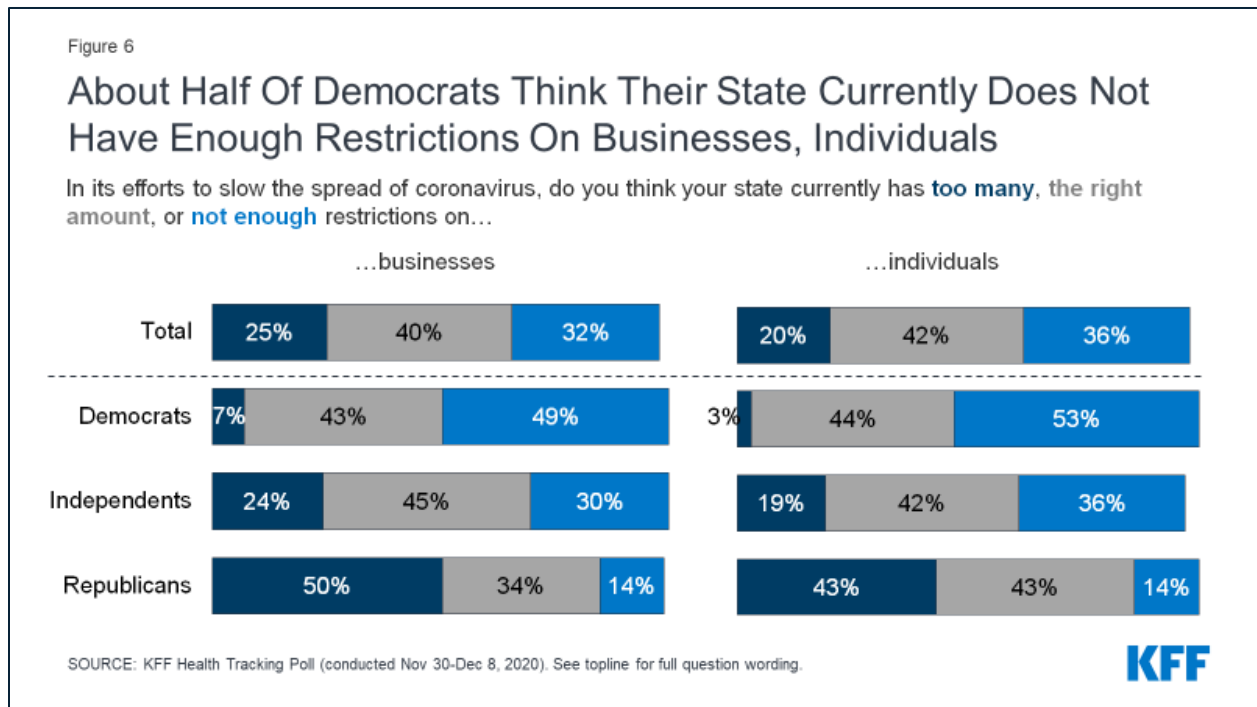


The reluctance of some Republicans to follow social distancing guidelines may stem from the perception that the seriousness of coronavirus is being exaggerated. Overall, the public is divided on whether news coverage of coronavirus is exaggerating its seriousness (35%) or presenting it correctly (36%), while one in four think the seriousness of coronavirus is underestimated (25%).

## Partisans Are Divided On State Restrictions For Businesses, Individuals

In response to rising cases, [some states and localities](#) have instituted stay-at-home orders and placed restrictions on some businesses in an attempt to slow the spread of coronavirus. Four in ten adults say their state has about the right amount of restrictions on businesses (40%) and on individuals (42%) in its efforts to slow the outbreak. However, about a third of the public think their state does not have enough restrictions on businesses (32%) and individuals (36%), while one in four say their state has too many restrictions on businesses and one in five say there are too many restrictions on individuals.

There is a stark partisan divide on this issue. While about half of Democrats (49%) say their state does not have enough restrictions on businesses, a similar share of Republicans (50%) say their state has **too many** restrictions. Similarly, while a slight majority of Democrats (53%) say their state does not have enough restrictions on individuals in its efforts to limit the spread of coronavirus, about four in ten Republicans (43%) say their state has too many restrictions. Among independents, pluralities say their state has about the right amount of restrictions on businesses (45%) and on individuals (42%).



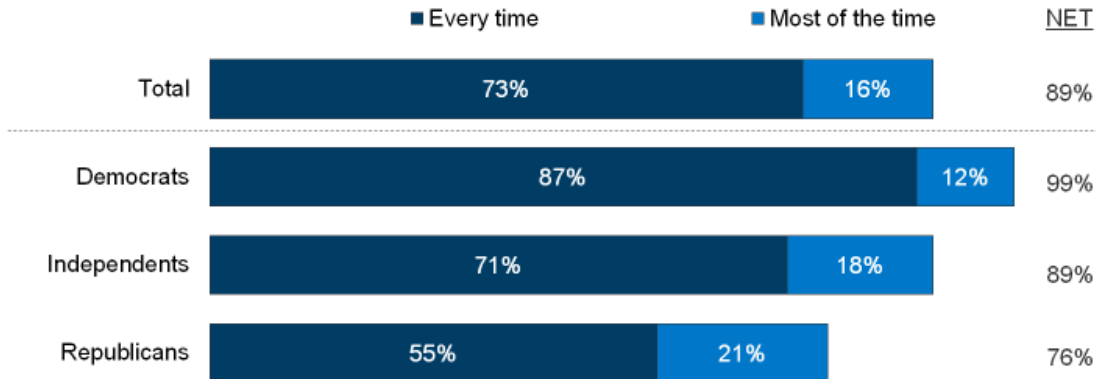
## Larger Shares Of The Public Now Wearing Masks Every Time They Leave Home Than in May

[Recent media coverage](#) has highlighted the politicization of face mask use. Overall, about three in four adults say they wear a protective mask every time they leave their house and may be in contact with other people (73%). While large majorities across partisans – including three in four Republicans (76%) – say they use a mask at least “most of the time” they leave home, large shares of Democrats (87%), and independents (71%) say they wear a protective mask **every time** they leave their house, compared to fewer Republicans (55%).

Figure 7

## Majorities Across Parties Say They Wear A Protective Mask Every Time They Leave Their House

Percent who say they wear a protective mask...when they leave their house and might be in contact with other people:



SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Poll (Nov 30-Dec 8, 2020). See topline for full question wording.

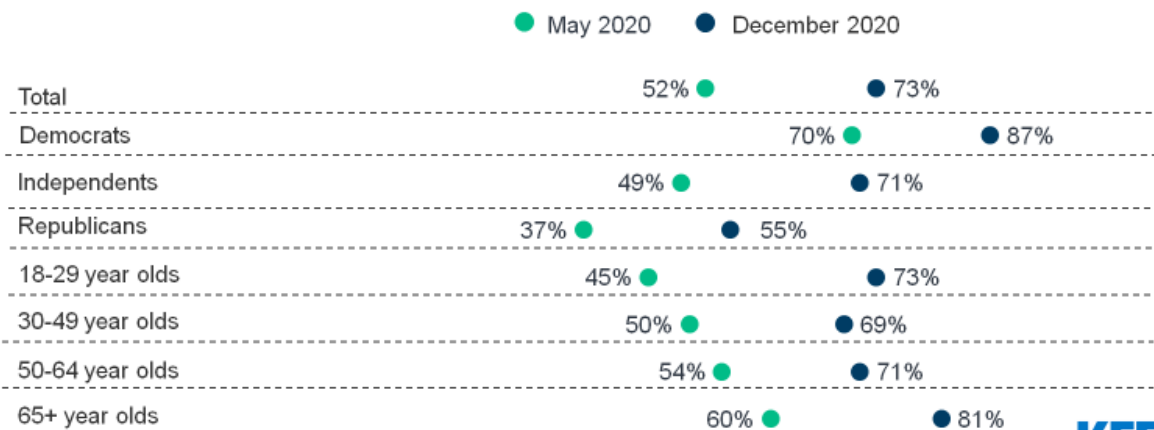
KFF

Compared to May, there has been a marked increase in the share of the adults who say they wear a mask every time they leave home. About three in four adults now say they wear a mask every time, up 21 percentage points since May. The share who say they wear a protective mask every time they leave home has increased by double digit percentage points across partisans and across age groups since May.

Figure 8

## Compared to May, Public Is Now Much More Likely To Say They Wear A Mask Every Time They Leave Home

Percent who say they wear a protective mask **every time** when they leave their house and might be in contact with other people:



SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Polls (conducted May 13-18, 2020 and Nov 30-Dec 8, 2020). See topline for full question wording.

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### Who is not regularly wearing face masks?

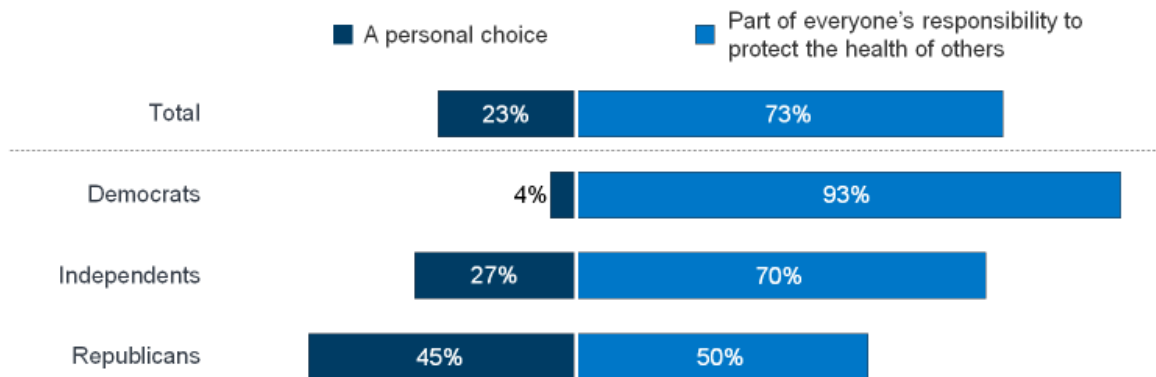
With mask mandates in place in many parts of the country, most of the public say they are wearing masks at least most of the time they leave home and may be in contact with other people. However, a small minority of the public (11%) say they wear protective masks only some of the time or never. This group is disproportionately White (70%), male (65%), and Republican (54%), and is more likely to have no college education compared to those who report wearing masks more consistently.

The reported increase in consistent mask use reflects the attitude held by 73% of adults that wearing a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is “part of everyone’s responsibility to protect the health of others.” While an overwhelming majority of Democrats (93%) and a large majority of independents (70%) say wearing a mask is everyone’s responsibility to protect public health, Republicans are more divided on this issue with half (50%) saying it is everyone’s responsibility and a similar share saying it is a personal choice (45%).

Figure 9

### About Seven In Ten Say Wearing A Mask Is Part Of Everyone’s Responsibility To Prevent The Spread Of COVID-19

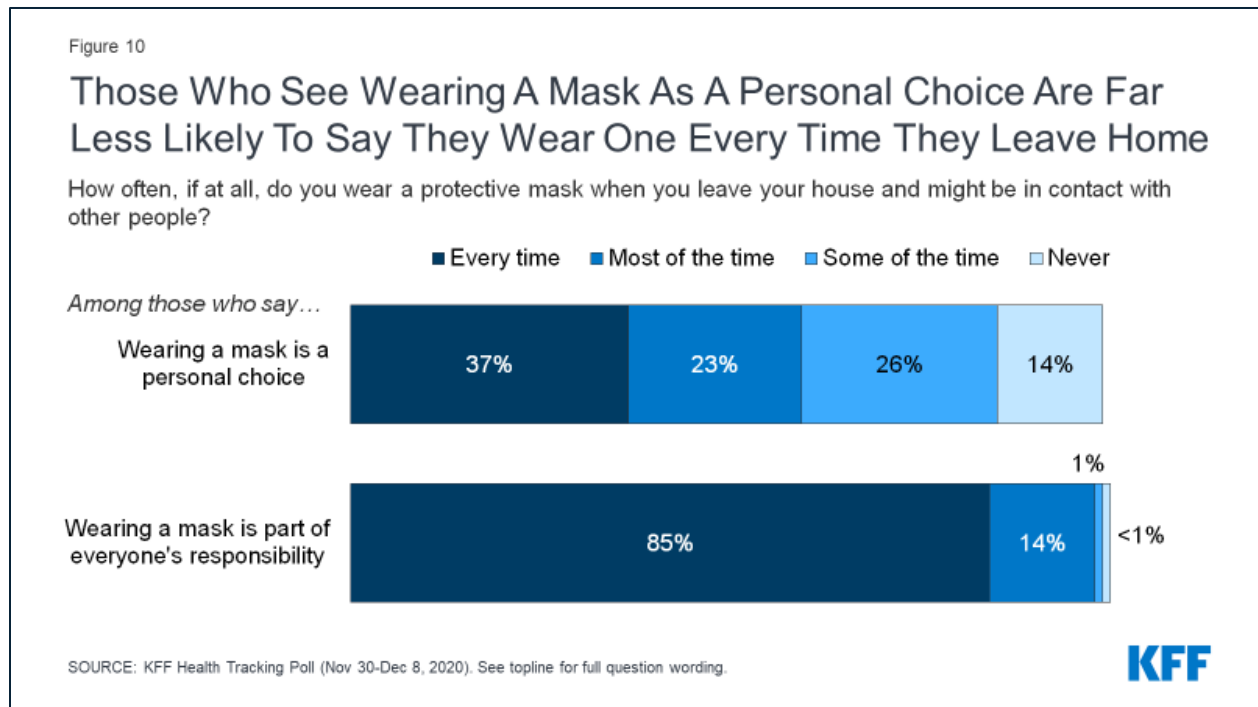
Which comes closer to your view: wearing a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is a personal choice or wearing a mask is part of everyone’s responsibility to protect the health of others?



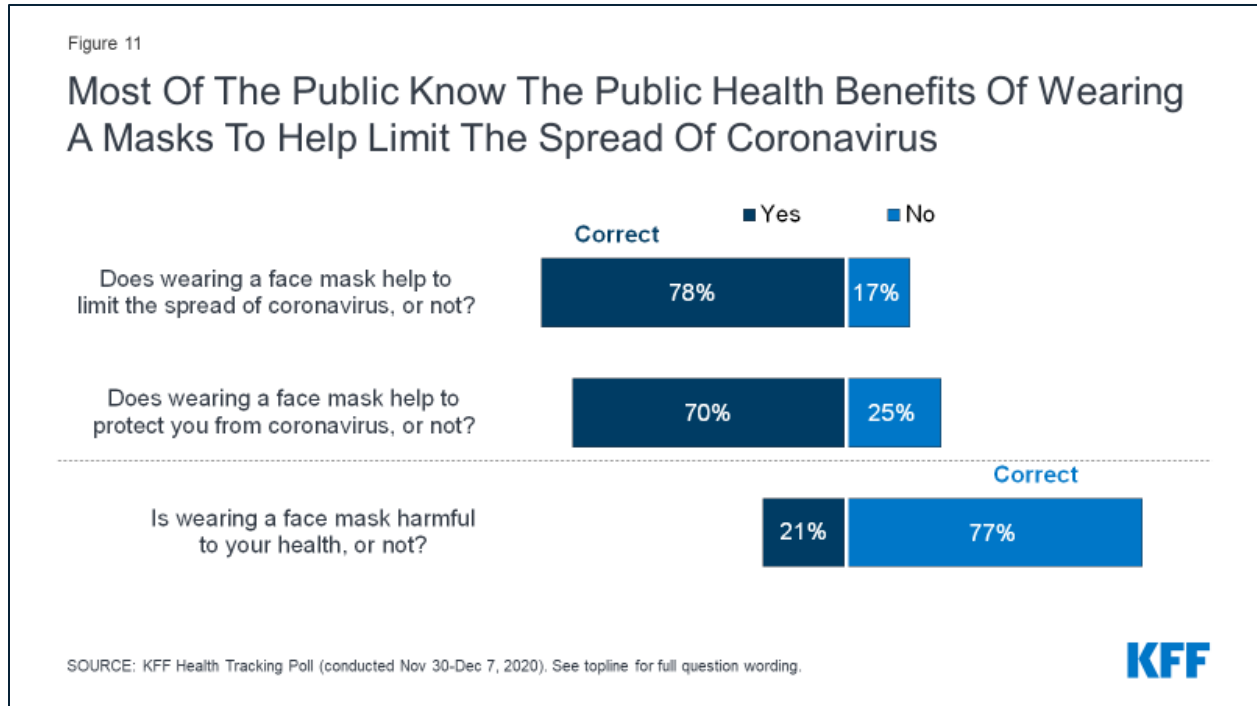
SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Poll (Nov 30-Dec 8, 2020). See topline for full question wording.

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The view of mask wearing as a personal choice or a part of everyone’s responsibility appears related to personal mask use. Those who think wearing a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is everyone’s responsibility are more than twice as likely as those who think it is a personal choice to say they wear a mask **every time** they leave their house and may come in to contact with others (85% vs. 37%).



Most of the public correctly knows that wearing a face mask can help limit the spread of coronavirus (78%) and that wearing a face mask is *not* harmful to your health (77%). Last month, the Centers for Disease Control [stated](#) that wearing a mask can help provide protection from the coronavirus for the wearer. Most adults think that is indeed the case with 70% saying a face mask helps protect them from coronavirus.



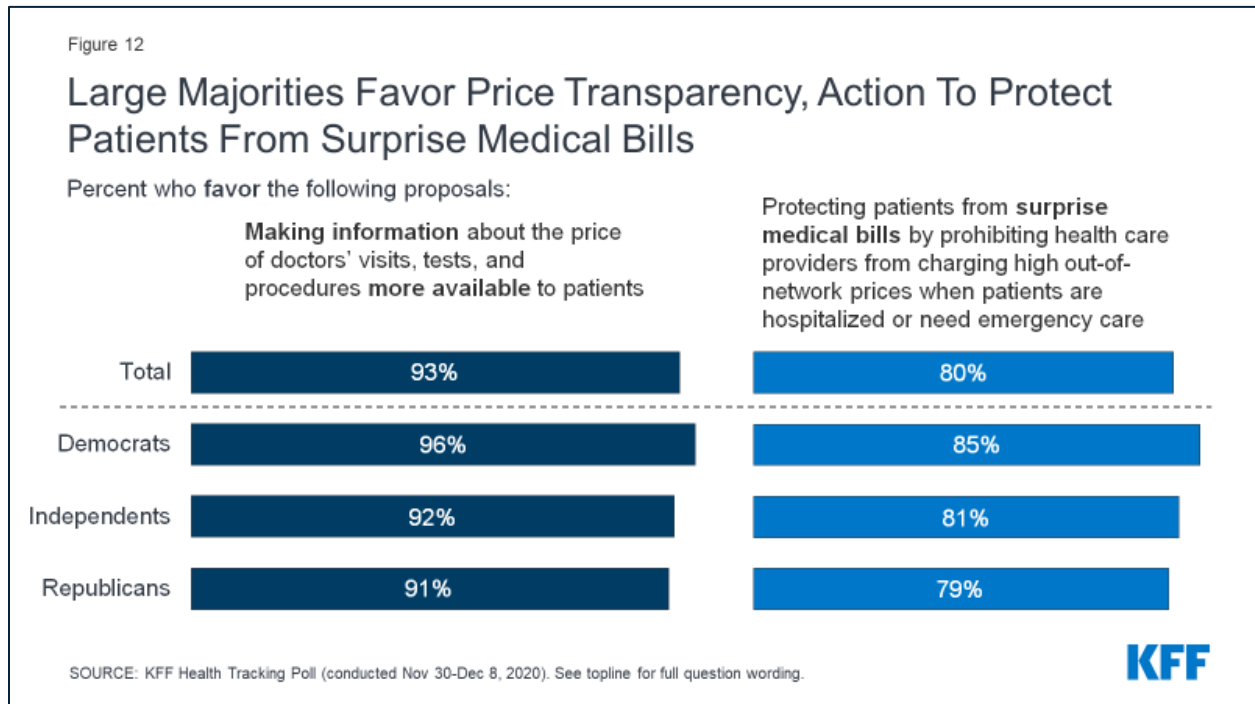
Nonetheless, though most of the public knows these key facts about face mask use as a preventative measure against coronavirus, a third hold at least one misconception. Notably, a majority of Republicans (54%) hold at least one misconception about face masks, including 44% who say wearing a face mask does not help protect you from coronavirus. Among adults who believe at least one misconception about face masks, six in ten (61%) say they think the seriousness of coronavirus is being exaggerated and half say wearing a mask is a personal choice (50%).

Table 1: Misconceptions of Coronavirus Face Mask Use by Party Identification				
	Total	Party ID		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans
<b>Percent who believe in at least one misconception:</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Percent who say:</b>				
...wearing a face mask <i>does not</i> help protect you from coronavirus	25	6	29	44
...wearing a face mask is harmful to your health	21	8	22	34
...wearing a face mask <i>does not</i> help limit the spread of coronavirus	17	4	19	33

## President-Elect Biden's Potential Health Care Agenda

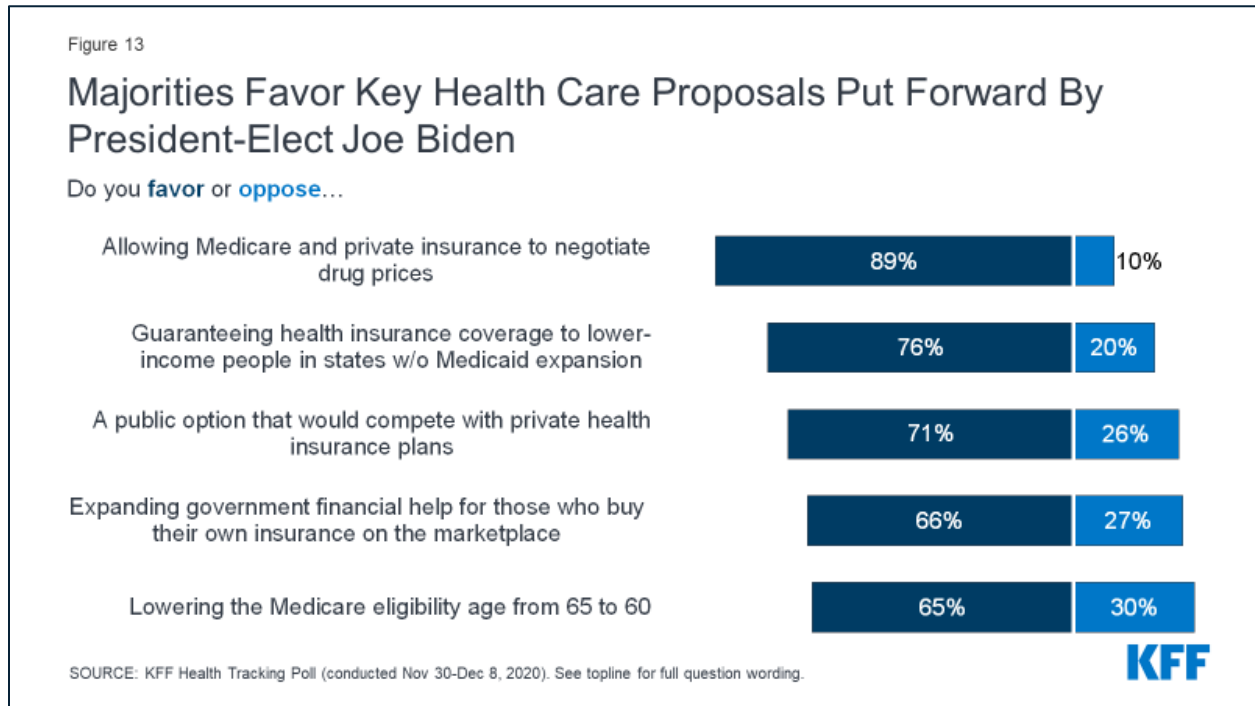
While addressing the pandemic will undoubtedly be a top priority for the incoming Biden administration, there are other health care proposals – some of which have bipartisan support – that may also serve as cornerstones in Biden's health care agenda.

Two health care priorities that have bipartisan support are price transparency and legislation aimed at curbing surprise medical bills. President Trump recently [announced](#) new transparency requirements which will require employer-based group health plans to disclose price and cost-sharing information to enrollees, and congressional leaders have [recently agreed](#) on a bi-partisan bill to protect patients from surprise out-of-network medical bills. There is hope that the legislation to address surprise bills will pass Congress before the end of the year. The latest KFF polling finds large majorities of the public – including majorities across partisans – favor making information about the price of doctors' visits, tests, and procedures more available to patients (93%) and favor legislation aimed at protecting patients from high out-of-network surprise medical bills (80%).



Majorities of the public also favor many of the key health care proposals put forth by President-elect Joe Biden including large shares that favor allowing the federal government to negotiate with drug companies to get a lower price on medications that would apply to both Medicare and private insurance (89%). Support is high across partisans with more than eight in ten Democrats (97%), independents (87%) and Republicans (84%) supporting this proposal. A majority across partisans also favor guaranteeing health insurance coverage to lower-income people whose states have not expanded their Medicaid programs (76% overall, 95% of Democrats, 74% of independents, and 54% of Republicans). Overall, a majority also

favor other aspects of President-elect Biden's health care agenda asked about including about seven in ten overall who favor having a government-administered health plan available as a public option to all Americans (71%), and about two-thirds who favor expanding government financial help for those who buy their own insurance on the marketplace (66%), and lowering the age when people become eligible for Medicare from 65 to 60 (65%).



However, Democrats and Republicans diverge on Biden's proposals that are aimed at expanding health care coverage. While an overwhelming majority of Democrats (95%) favor guaranteeing health insurance coverage to lower-income people whose states have not expanded their Medicaid program, a smaller majority of Republicans (54%) support this proposal. Likewise, more than nine in ten Democrats support a public option compared to less than half of Republicans who say the same (92% vs. 45%).

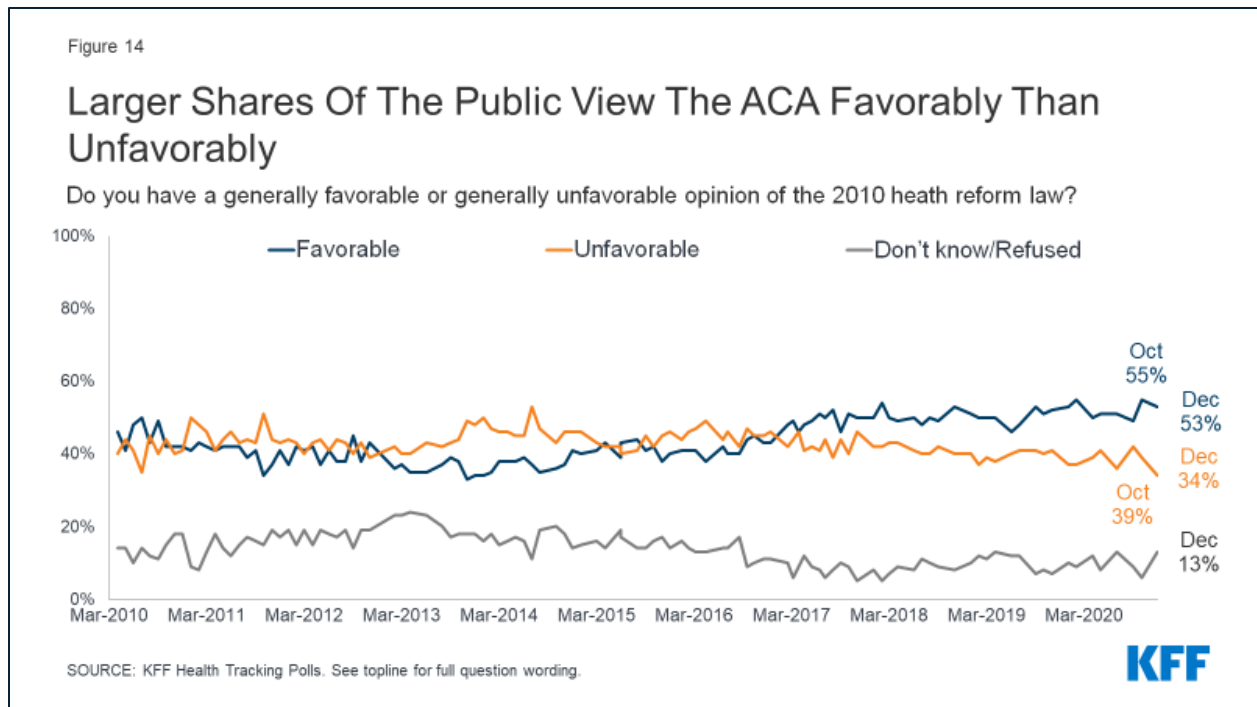
Currently, most adults only qualify for Medicare health care benefits once they reach the age of 65. Nearly two-thirds of adults – including majorities of Democrats and independents and half of Republicans – favor Biden's proposal to lower the age when people become eligible for Medicare from 65 to 60. While seven in ten adults ages 18 to 64 (70%) support lowering the Medicare eligibility age to 60, fewer than half of adults 65 and over (46%) favor this proposal.

Table 2. Support for President-Elect Biden's Proposed Health Care Policies				
Percent who say they <b>favor</b> each of the following <b>health care proposals</b> :	Total	Party ID		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans

Allowing the federal government to negotiate with drug companies to get a lower price on medications that would apply to both Medicare and private insurance	89%	97%	87%	84%
Guaranteeing health insurance coverage to lower-income people whose states have not expanded their Medicaid program	76	95	74	54
Having a government-administered health plan, sometimes called a public option, that would compete with private health insurance plans and be available as an option to all Americans	71	92	71	45
Expanding government financial help for those who buy their own insurance on the marketplace	66	84	64	48
Lowering the age when people become eligible for Medicare from 65 to 60	65	79	61	51

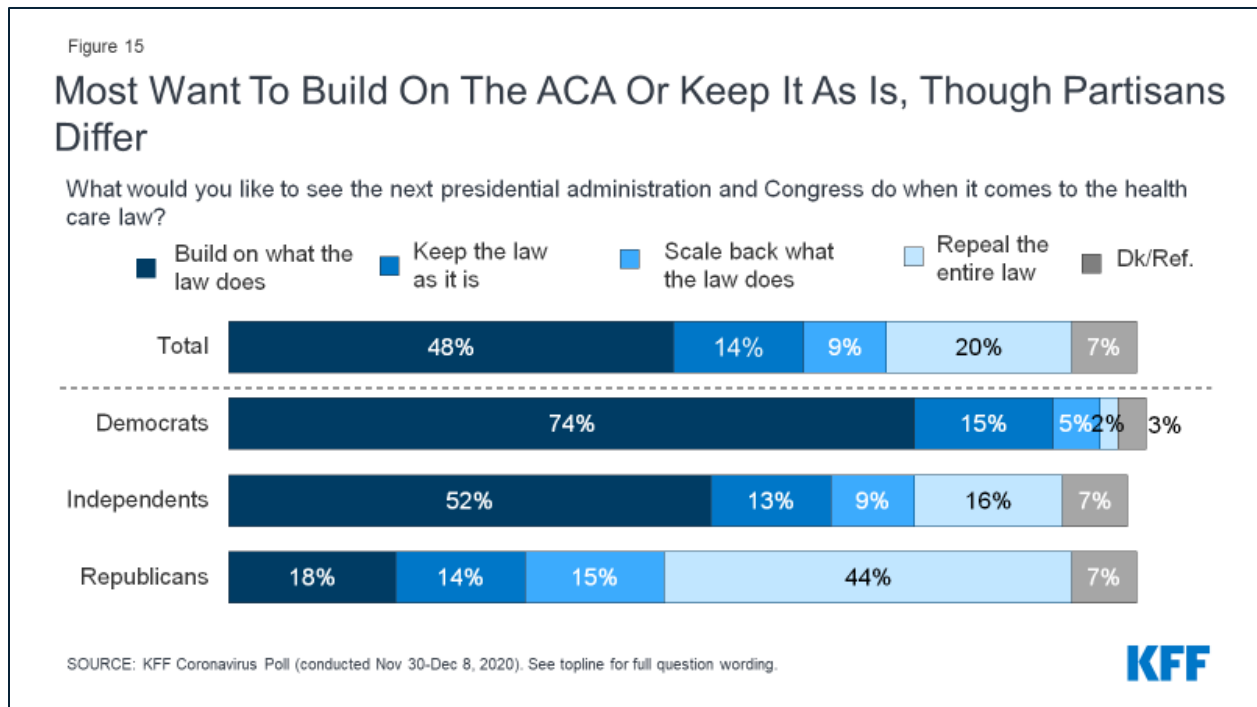
## **Most Want To Build On The ACA Or Keep It As Is**

In November, the Supreme Court heard arguments in the *California v. Texas* case challenging the constitutionality of the 2010 Affordable Care Act. The Trump administration submitted a brief in this case asking the Supreme Court to overturn the law. President-elect Joe Biden repeatedly voiced his support for the Affordable Care Act during his campaign and recently selected California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who has been a strong defender of the ACA in court, as his pick for Secretary of Health and Human Services. The latest KFF Health Tracking poll finds about half of the public (53%) have a favorable view of the ACA while 34% have an unfavorable view of the law.



Building on the ACA has been a focal point for Joe Biden's presidential bid, as he has proposed creating a government-run public option health care plan that will compete with private insurers and be available for all Americans. Nearly half of adults want the incoming presidential administration and Congress to build on what the ACA does (48%). A smaller share want to keep the law as it is (14%) and about three in ten want to either scale back what the law does (9%) or repeal it entirely (20%). Partisans differ on these approaches, with three in four Democrats wanting the incoming administration and Congress to build on what the law does (74%) and six in ten Republicans wanting the law to be scaled back (15%) or repealed entirely (44%).



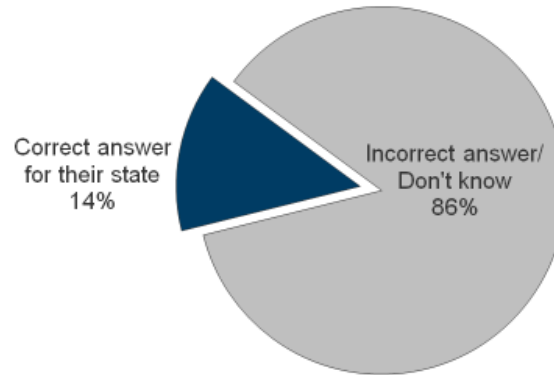


The Trump administration both shortened the open enrollment period for the ACA marketplaces and decreased funding for marketing and outreach efforts that publicize the enrollment period, eligibility, and process. With the enrollment deadline in many states having just recently passed and in other states quickly approaching, the latest KFF Health Tracking poll finds that just one in seven adults under age 65 who either buy their own insurance or are uninsured, and thus likely the target for ACA marketplace plans, are aware of the correct closing date for enrollment (14%). A possible action the incoming Biden administration may take to help further strengthen the ACA would be to restore funding for marketing and outreach to help Americans who want to buy their own insurance through the ACA marketplaces.

Figure 16

## Few Know The Marketplace Deadline For Signing Up For Their Own Health Insurance

AMONG THOSE UNDER 65 YEARS OLD WHO BUY THEIR OWN INSURANCE OR ARE UNINSURED:  
Do you happen to know the deadline for individuals to sign-up for health insurance?



NOTE: The deadlines for individuals to sign up for health insurance in each state are: MA: Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>, MN: Dec 22<sup>nd</sup>, CO, NV, PA, WA: Jan 15<sup>th</sup>, CA, DC, NJ, NY: Jan 31<sup>st</sup>. All other states: Dec 15<sup>th</sup>.  
SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Poll (conducted Nov 30-Dec 8, 2020). See topline for full question wording.

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