



## Back to Normal Barometer WAVE 16 BIG STORIES:

### NUMB TO THE VIRUS AND READY TO MOVE ON

As we moved into holiday mode, America was ready to put 2020 and COVID 19 behind them. The presence of the virus and its impact on society and people's expectations remains, but increasing numbers are moving on and moving forward. Let's begin to unpack this.

Our most current look at the respondent profile in terms of those activities that people overall, have engaged in both in the past twelve months and most recently, showed a number of activities hitting 9-month highs for recent engagement, including taking a commercial flight, attending a sporting event, and eating at a restaurant. Essential activities like retail and health care remain unobstructed for the preponderance of Americans.

The overall confidence Barometer remained consistent at 34% for the third consecutive wave, going back to late October. While those attitudinal statements that focus on current conditions receded slightly in December, future expectations were moving in a positive direction.

Our matrix of concerns showed all components slightly abating. Interestingly, the macro economy remained more concerning than the public health crisis, yet on a personal level, health matters created slightly more angst. Overall stress leveled off from their pre-election highs. Social and election related unrest were the least significant of the concerns measured, though the latter is the only one that saw an increase in December as we moved towards inauguration and resolution of Senate control. Clearly the events of the past week will likely have an impact on these measures in wave seventeen which is presently in the field and will be released in late January

- **Activities Hitting 9 Month Engagement Highs:** 13% have taken a commercial flight in the past month, equaling a Barometer high. Other activities hitting highs included attending sporting event at 20%, with the South (23%) showing highest regional incidence, eating at a restaurant (46%)
  - Ready to go at all time highs for : hotel stays, attending a sporting event, visiting a theme park, retail, touring a home listing, attending a conference or convention, visiting the dentist
- **Improving Conditions, optimism and greater clarity:** More people see America and their neighbors as being better off now than they were four years ago:--41% and 39% respectively, up from 33% and 29% back in September. There's a big gap between Democrats (51%) and Republicans (26%) who see the country as better off. Agreement also rises linearly with HHI level.
  - 43% of Americans strongly agree that we are in recession, a 9 month low point
  - Strong concern that COVID will require additional event cancellations and lockdowns within the next six months is at its lowest level (54%) since wave 6 back in June.



- People's optimism about having enough to retire in comfort has surpassed 50% for the first time since the inception of the Barometer
- We see the fewest % of Americans feeling that we are getting mixed messages about avoiding COVID from both government and media since we began asking this question in June
- 42% plan to spend just as much or more money on travel in the next year as they did in the past year—highest since Barometer inception
  
- **COVID is Less Concerning and it's time to move on**
  - 30% strongly agree that if they catch COVID, it's not a big deal (Though 38% strongly disagree) and 41% strongly agree that the prospect of catching COVID is not as scary to them as it was at the start of the pandemic—27% strongly disagree.
  - A Barometer high 47% of Americans strongly agree that "It's time for the country to open for business again, while a survey low 40% strongly feel that we are moving too quickly in opening up businesses in the U.S.
  - Less than half are very concerned about a surge of COVID overwhelming hospitals in their area. It is most acute among older Americans, Democrats (63% vs 36% of Republicans) those living in urban areas and those in the NorthEast
  - Those much more concerned about an outbreak in their community relative to a month ago has fallen to 44% from 50% in November's wave 15
  - More than a third have "no clue" what the local hospitalization rates for COVID are in their area
  - 71% believe that their state or locality has imposed new COVID related restrictions over the past month, and while a majority feel that these are appropriate, 30% feel that these are too harsh vs. only 8% who feel that they are not enough (11%)
  - 59% are eager to return to their workplace relative to three months ago
  
- **Half the Country is Clamoring for the Vaccine; with distinct differences among segments of the population:** While we still see only 51% strongly agreeing that they will get the vaccine, 71% of those who do, will attempt to get it as soon as possible.—80% of men vs. 57% of women; 87% of those aged 45-64; 76% of Democrats vs 64% of Republicans, 75% of whites (vs. 43% of blacks) and 77% of those in the NorthEast.
  - Those who are more likely to seek a vaccination:
    - Men--61%
    - Those age 35-44 (58%) and those age 65+ (70%) Only 25% of those under age 25
    - 59% of Ds; 41% of Rs; 69% of those who are very Liberal vs. 38% of those somewhat conservative



- 60% of those in the NE and 59% of those in the West (Only 40% in the MidWest)
  - 55% of whites; 42% of blacks
  - Likelihood linearly increases with HHI--From 35% of those earning under \$25k HHI to 64% of those earning \$95k+
  - 53% of college grads and 63% of those with advanced degrees
  - 58% of those with children in the household vs. 39% of those without
  - 63% of those in urban areas...significantly more likely than rural (39%)
  - Interestingly no real variance among the four assurance segments
- **And the Vaccine has people thinking about traveling again:** Nearly 2/3 of respondents are planning, thinking or making reservations. 60% believe that now is a good time to book Summer travel.
  - **Yet, a significant increase in the #'s of Americans have personally seen the Impact of COVID:** Since we last asked these questions in late August, the %age of those who know someone personally who died of COVID has grown from 33% to 42%. 57% personally know someone who suffered seriously from the virus; up significantly from 46% in August.
  - **COVID Surcharges Are Being Felt by a Majority of Americans:** ..And more than ¾ attribute these surcharges to the businesses on their own, rather than the government.