

COVID-19 Mitigations in the U.S.

January 31, 2021





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January 16 – 31, 2021

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This report provides highlights of a weekly survey of practices regarding the mitigation of the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S. during the second half of January 2021 along with comparisons to prior half-month time periods. The survey asks about the degree to which the respondents perceive that people in their community are following 21 common mitigation practices. The responses are separated by state and compared to state level statistics regarding the level of COVID-19 infections from the Johns Hopkins COVID database for the same time period.

Executive Summary

A slight increase occurred in community mitigation practices across the country in the second half of January from 62.8% in the first half of January to 63.1% this week according to observations from 655 individuals in 49 states. At the same time, new COVID-19 infections fell sharply with 2.7 million new cases for the half month compared to the record 3.6 million in the first half of the month. This could be the start of a downward trend that may be able to persist with the help of the vaccination program.

Additional findings from the second half of January:

- ❖ The top mitigations practices held steady. Only three mitigations have compliance over 75%.
- ❖ Of the twenty-two states where we have significant data from this week, the worst three (Indiana, Georgia, and Tennessee) had average compliance in the 50's, while Florida moved out of the bottom three but not out of the 50's at 59%.
- ❖ "Visitors to senior living facilities to be restricted" was the mitigation practice that had the highest one week increase in compliance. This is happening as some states are moving quickly to vaccinate people living in those facilities.
- ❖ Only three states among the twenty-two with significant data that had average mitigation compliance over 70% - Virginia, Washington and Minnesota.

The full set of mitigations surveyed are included in the appendix to this report.

While all eyes are on the rollout of the vaccination program, it is estimated that immunities from vaccination total about 6% of the population, while immunities from people who have been infected and recovered are about 7%, with the vaccinated group growing at more than three times the speed of the recovered/immune group.

Mitigation Practices - National

Average percentage compliance with 21 COVID-19 mitigation strategies that are surveyed was 63.1% in the second half of January, up slightly from 62.8% in the first half of January. For the half-month, only two of the twenty-one mitigations practices had average compliance above 75%, five had average compliance below 50% and fourteen had average compliance between 50% and 75%.

Nationally the weighted average of compliance with these mitigations has gone from an average of 62.6% throughout the month of December to 62.8% in early January to 63.1% for late January. When mitigations are broken out into practices within states and regions of states, there is a far greater variance in mitigations as respondents observe the results of individual states implementing changes in COVID mitigations and Individuals react to their personal perceptions of the level of COVID danger locally.

Survey Details

Collects information from volunteers on perceptions of community compliance with 21 COVID Mitigation strategies. Participants answer between 0% and 100% that they see the strategy in use in their area. Participants are asked to fill out survey every week.

CHANGING MITIGATIONS

Throughout the past eight weeks, the six mitigations that our observers say have the highest average compliance have remained the same (with “Wearing a Mask in Public” shifting in and out of the Top 5). Results from the last four periods are presented below:

| Top Five Mitigations | Dec 1-15 | Dec 16-31 | Jan 1-15 | Jan 16-31 |
|---|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Special protection in hospitals areas that treat COVID patients | 81% | 82% | 83% | 84% |
| Visitors to senior living facilities to be restricted | 76% | 76% | 77% | 81% |
| Restaurants to have reduced seating | 78% | 75% | 75% | 75% |
| Hairdresser and barber to be open with restrictions | 72% | 70% | 73% | 73% |
| Wearing a mask in public | 71% | 72% | 71% | 72% |

In the last half of January four of these five practices were essentially the same as the prior period and one improved by 4%. The top mitigants have had an average compliance of 74% to 76% for the last two months. Active COVID cases across the country have been falling throughout January, it is a favorable sign that mitigation compliance here is holding steady.

Mitigation practices with the largest change are compared below.

| Mitigations with Largest Change | Jan 1-15 | Jan 16-31 | Change |
|--|----------|-----------|--------|
| Visitors to senior living facilities to be restricted | 77% | 81% | 3% |
| Schools (K-12) are closed or holding only remote classes | 55% | 52% | -3% |
| Colleges are closed or holding only remote classes | 60% | 58% | -2% |
| Limit large gatherings of people | 60% | 61% | 2% |

Over the past two months, almost half (10 out of 21 practices) experienced large changes. Increases greater than 5% were observed for five practices. Over the same period greater than 5% decreases in mitigation compliance were also reported for five practices.

With the recent decrease in number of infections we are currently experiencing, it appears that small changes in the mitigation compliance that are found in this study can be associated with significant swings in COVID transmission.

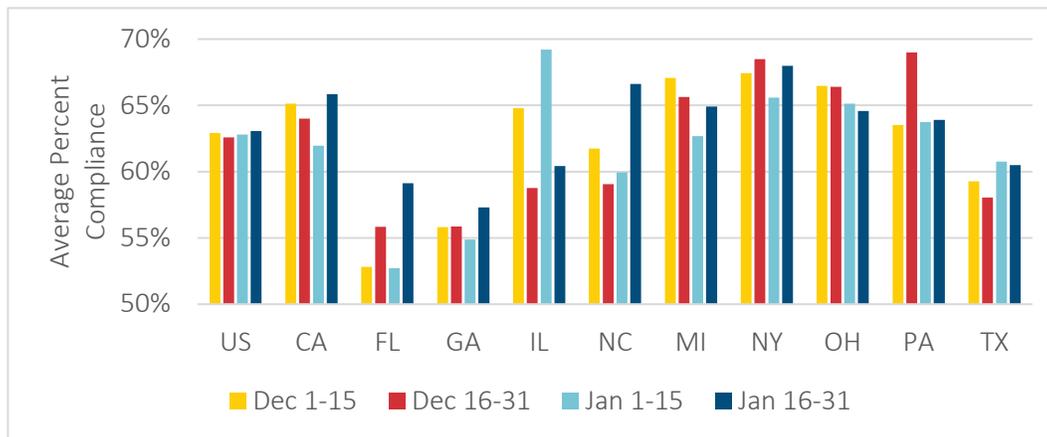
Mitigation Practices – State Level

Weighting Basis

Weighting is based on average compliance in states where COVID was under control during September.

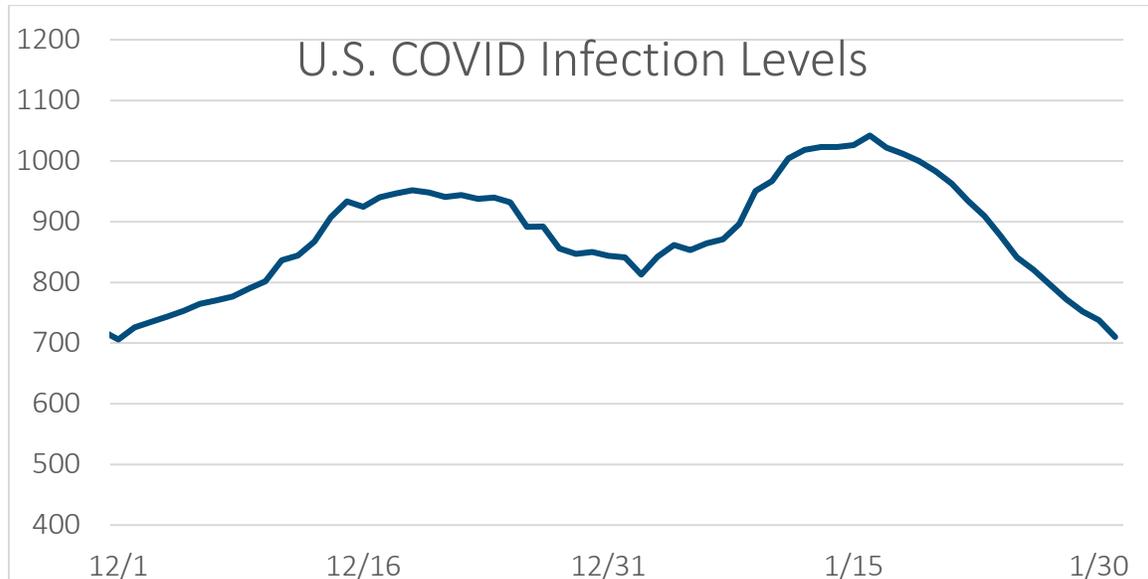
For the second half of January, the survey again had a credible number of responses from 22 states. The states from that group with the highest compliance were Virginia (71%), Washington (70%), and Minnesota (70%). The states with the lowest compliance were Indiana (50%), Georgia (57%) and Tennessee (56%). Florida went from worst to fourth worst (59%) with their seasonal influx of winter visitors who bring with them attitudes towards COVID mitigation from other states.

Focusing in on the ten most populous states, there is quite a bit of variability of compliance over the past two months, some of which is likely driven by the variety of opinions from the observers.



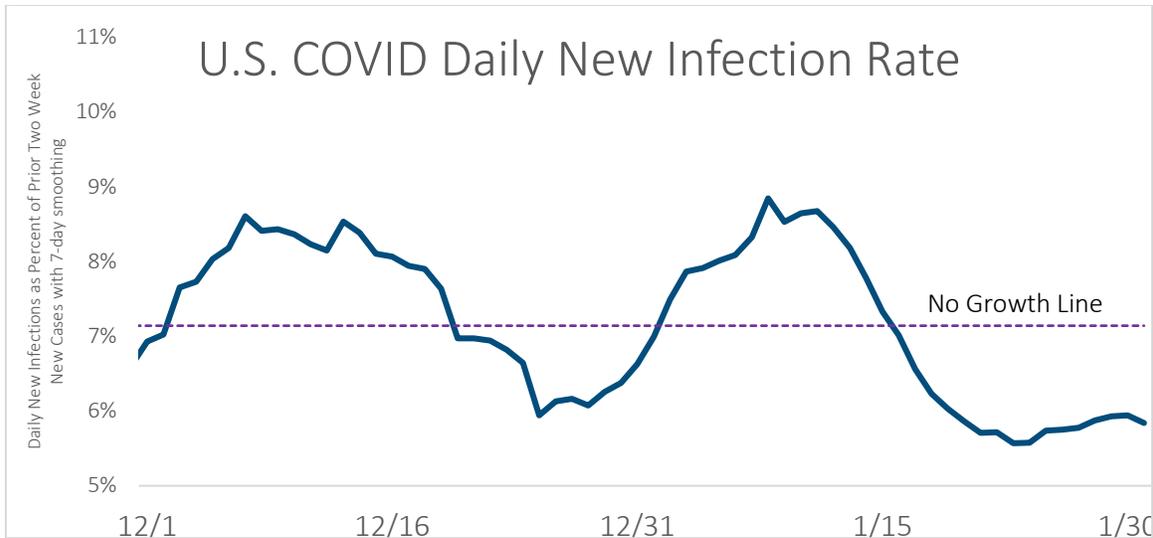
The large movements in compliance over the last month demonstrated above shows that even though the national picture has been static, individual states are constantly changing their practices to adapt to what individuals, corporate leaders, and political authorities are observing on the ground.

COVID-19 Spread of Infections – National

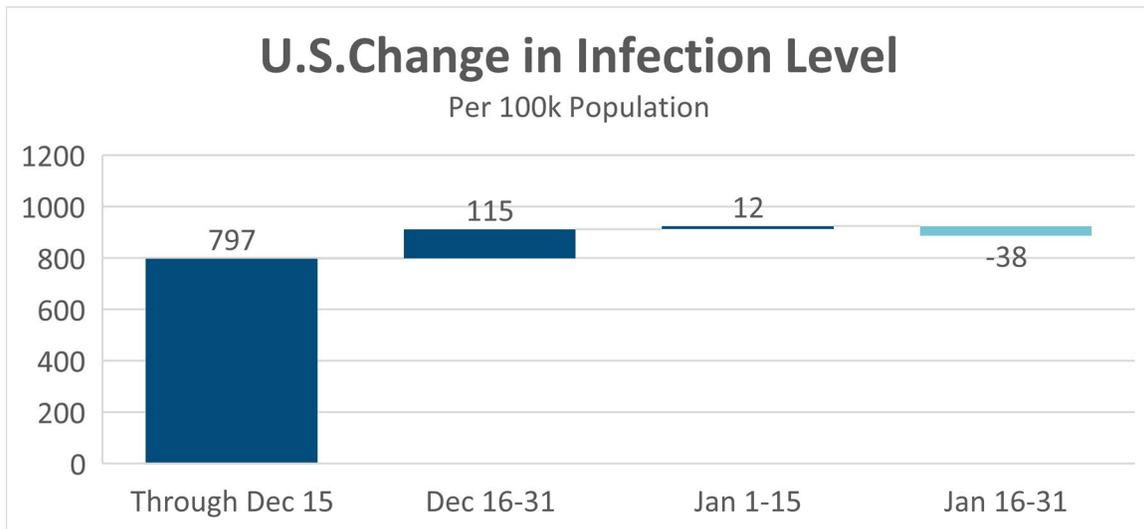


There were 2.7 million new cases of COVID-19 reported in second half of January. This is down from 3.6 million reported in the first half of the month. The reported infection level has now fallen to the point where it was at the start of December. The end of the holiday season as well as reactions to the surge in cases is having an impact here.

Infection Level
is the number of active infections per 100,000 people.

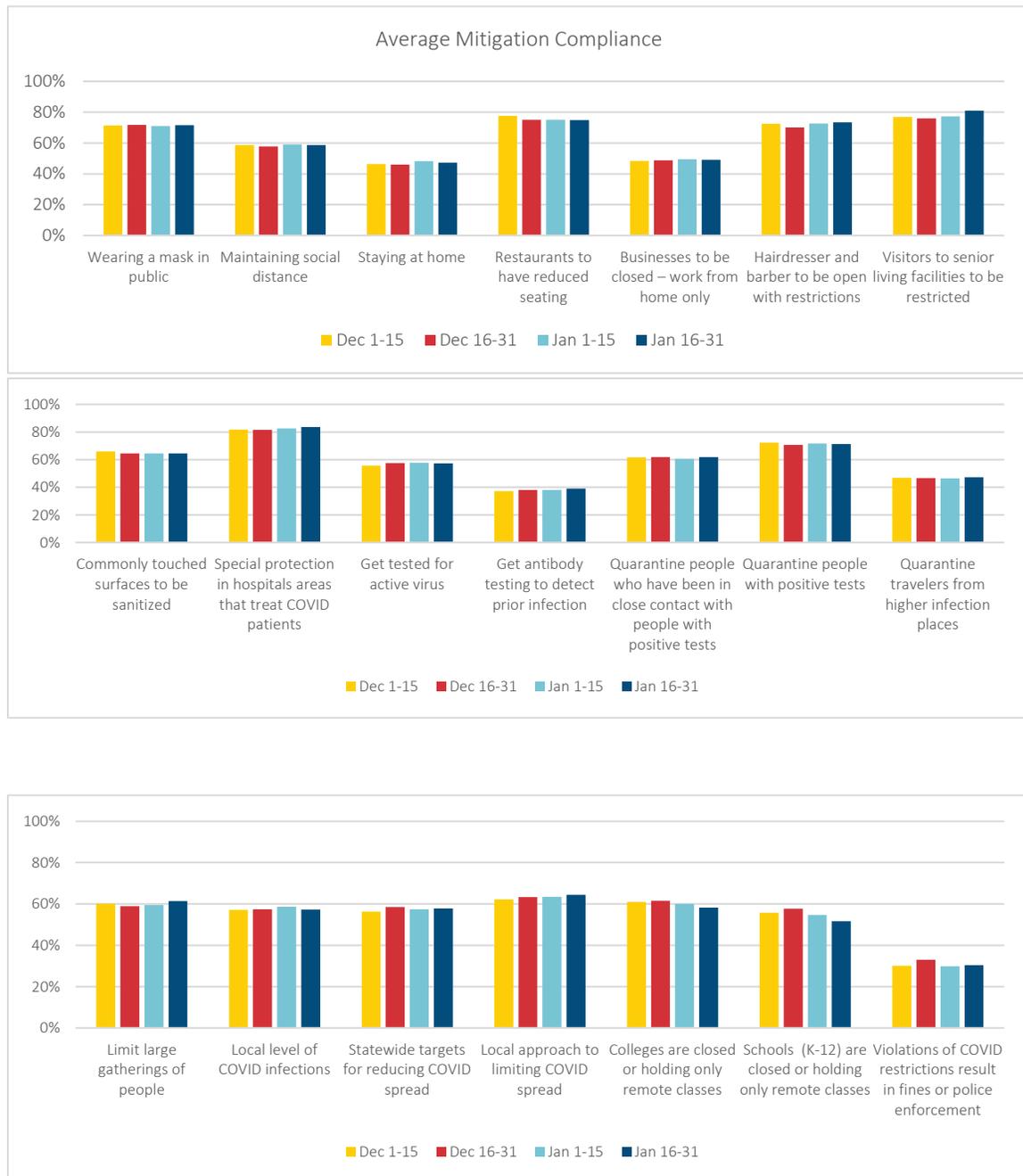


The rate of new infections started the second half of January right at the No Growth Line and has spent the entire half-month below that level. Ending the month below 6% suggests that there are likely to be continuing decreases in the Infection Level.



Mitigations Levels over Time

The following charts provide a perspective on the relative compliance levels of all 21 mitigations with each other as well as the trends over the past two months.



Impact of Immunities

The vaccination programs are moving forward fairly rapidly. An estimate of the potential impact of immunity gained from vaccinations and from recoveries from COVID infections shows that at this time, the impact of immunities on the spread of COVID is small but growing.

| | 1/24/21 | 1/31/21 | Increase |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Recovered Immune | 21.6 M | 23.2 M | 1.6 M |
| Vaccinated Immune | 15.1 M | 20.3 M | 5.2 M |
| Total Immune | 36.7 M | 43.6 M | 6.8 M |
| Pct of Population | 11.3% | 13.4% | 2.1% |
| Est. Impact on NIR | -0.71% | -0.92% | -0.2% |
| New Infections (1 week) | 1.24 M | 1.08 M | -0.16 M |
| Est. Reduction of New Infections | 0.16 M | 0.17 M | 0.01 M |

While the national average total percent immune is shown above to be 13.4%, at the state level, immune percentage ranges from a high of 21.6% in North Dakota to a low of 8.2% in Hawaii. These differences are mostly driven by the different levels of recovered immune people in the states with a lesser range of vaccinated immune.

Please note that these calculations are estimates based upon average reported efficacy of the vaccines and an assumption that people with immunity would face an average level of exposure to COVID infection. In addition, no adjustments were made to these figures to reflect the exact timing of the onset of immunity from vaccinations which varies by type of vaccine.

Acknowledgments

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Note on Mitigation Compliance Observations

The COVID mitigation information is collected via a SurveyMonkey survey. In that survey, observers are asked to say what they are seeing in their community regarding the percentage compliance with 21 specific mitigation activities. The observers are volunteers who were either recruited personally by the project team or who responded to a variety of solicitations for observers via Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and SurveyMonkey. This data is subject to self-selection and other biases. No adjustments have been made to the data that we have collected in order to respond to possible biases. Responses are aggregated and the average of multiple views are treated as true information about the mitigation activity in a state. The variance of the responses in a state has been examined and targets are set for a higher number of responses in states where there is a higher variance of responses.

Appendix List of Mitigations under Study

- Wearing a mask in public
- Maintaining social distance
- Staying at home
- Restaurants to have reduced seating
- Businesses to be closed – work from home only
- Hairdresser and barber to be open with restrictions
- Visitors to senior living facilities to be restricted
- Commonly touched surfaces to be sanitized
- Special protection in hospitals areas that treat COVID patients
- Get tested for active virus
- Get antibody testing to detect prior infection
- Quarantine people who have been in close contact with people with positive tests
- Quarantine people with positive tests
- Quarantine travelers from higher infection places
- Limit large gatherings of people
- Local level of COVID infections
- Statewide targets for reducing COVID spread
- Local approach to limiting COVID spread
- Colleges are closed or holding only remote classes
- Schools (K-12) are closed or holding only remote classes
- Violations of COVID restrictions result in fines or police enforcement

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