

[www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org)

**THE COVID STATES PROJECT:  
A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY**  
**REPORT #34: UPDATE ON HOLIDAY GATHERINGS  
IN DECEMBER 2020**

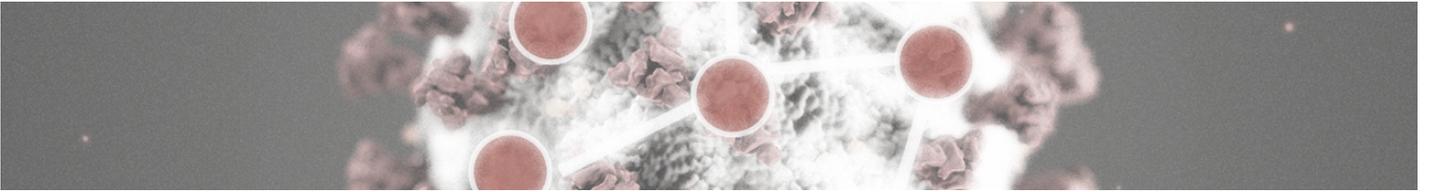
USA, January 2021

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



Northeastern University  
Network Science Institute





## Report of January 25, 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:** David Lazer (Northeastern University); Alexi Quintana (Northeastern University); Matthew A. Baum (Harvard University); Katherine Ognyanova (Rutgers University); Adina Gitomer (Northeastern University); Jon Green (Northeastern University); James Druckman (Northwestern University); Matthew Simonson (Northeastern University); Jennifer Lin (Northwestern University); Roy H. Perlis (Harvard Medical School); Mauricio Santillana (Harvard Medical School), and Hanyu Chwe (Northeastern 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*.



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

# COVER MEMO

Summary Memo — January 25, 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:** David Lazer (Northeastern University); Alexi Quintana (Northeastern University); Matthew A. Baum (Harvard University); Katherine Ognyanova (Rutgers University); Adina Gitomer (Northeastern University); Jon Green (Northeastern University); James Druckman (Northwestern University); Matthew Simonson (Northeastern University); Jennifer Lin (Northwestern University); Roy H. Perlis (Harvard Medical School); Mauricio Santillana (Harvard Medical School), and Hanyu Chwe (Northeastern 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](https://covidstates.org).

### **Note on methods:**

Between December 16, 2020 and January 11, 2021, we surveyed 25,640 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on the other waves, see [covidstates.org](https://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 was the latest in 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](mailto:d.lazer@neu.edu)
- Roy H. Perlis at [rperlis@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:rperlis@mgh.harvard.edu)
- Matthew A. Baum at [matthew\\_baum@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:matthew_baum@hks.harvard.edu)
- Katherine Ognyanova at [katya.ognyanova@rutgers.edu](mailto:katya.ognyanova@rutgers.edu)
- Mauricio Santillana at [msantill@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:msantill@fas.harvard.edu)
- James Druckman at [druckman@northwestern.edu](mailto:druckman@northwestern.edu)

Or visit us at [www.covidstates.org](https://www.covidstates.org).

## Update on holiday gatherings in December 2020

---

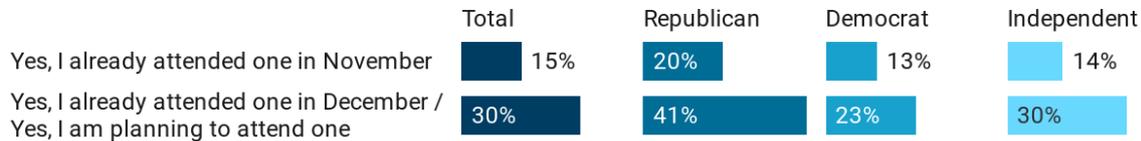
Public health officials have expressed concern that multi-household holiday gatherings might have driven a January surge of COVID-19 cases. As noted in [report 31](#), social distancing behaviors have generally been improving since late October, including in our most recent wave conducted over the holidays. However, the scope of our data collection regarding social distancing, which focused on proximity to others in the 24 hours preceding survey response, might have missed important spikes in proximity around Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year. Therefore, here we evaluate the responses from a survey conducted between December 16th and January 10th, to a separate question asking whether people had gathered for the holidays in November and December.

How many people attended holiday gatherings with others who live outside of their households in December? As is shown in Figure 1, 30% of respondents reported attending a December holiday gathering, or (relevant to respondents early in the wave) planning to attend; for comparison, 15% reported attending a holiday gathering in November. The strongest predictor of holiday gatherings was partisanship, with 41% of Republicans having reported attending/planning to attend a December holiday gathering, compared to 30% of Independents and 23% of Democrats (Figure 1). There were also substantial divides with respect to racial/ethnic and urban/rural population groupings, as can be seen in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. White respondents reported far higher levels of holiday gatherings, at 34%, than African American (20%), Asian American (22%) and Hispanic (26%) respondents. Rural (34%) and suburban respondents (32%) reported higher levels of holiday gatherings than their urban counterparts (25%). Age demonstrated a fairly strong inverse relationship to participation in holiday gatherings (Figure 4), with 36% of the youngest cohort (ages 18-24) reporting participation, compared to only 26% of the oldest cohort (65+). Education and income were found to be minimally related to holiday gatherings. Figures 1-4 show that November holiday gathering patterns were similar, if at lower levels.

Finally, we note that geographically, frequency of holiday gatherings is highest in the Midwest and the South; and lowest in the Northeast and the West Coast (Figure 5).

## Figure 1: Partisanship and holiday gatherings in November and December

Did you attend or do you plan to attend a holiday gathering with people who live outside of your household?



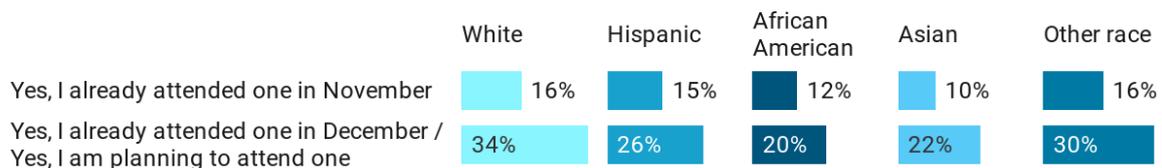
National Sample, N = 20,389 Time period: 12/16/2020 - 1/10/2021

Source: Source: 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) [www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org)

• Created with Datawrapper

## Figure 2: Race and holiday gatherings in November and December

Did you attend or do you plan to attend a holiday gathering with people who live outside of your household?



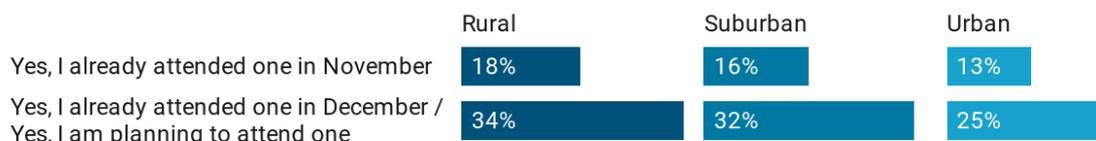
National Sample, N = 20,389 Time period: 12/16/2020 - 1/10/2021

Source: Source: 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) [www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org)

• Created with Datawrapper

## Figure 3: Urbanicity and holiday gatherings in November and December

Did you attend or do you plan to attend a holiday gathering with people who live outside of your household?



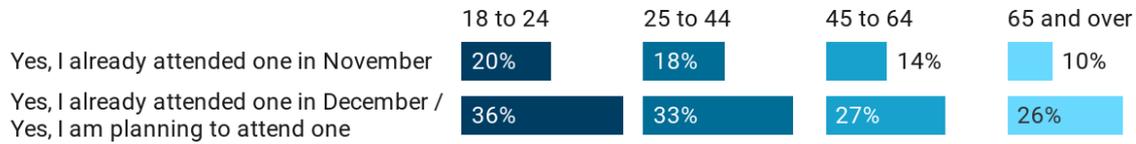
National Sample, N = 20,389, Time period: 12/16/2020 - 1/10/2021

Source: Source: 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) [www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org)

• Created with Datawrapper

## Figure 4: Age and holiday gatherings in November and December

Did you attend or do you plan to attend a holiday gathering with people who live outside of your household?



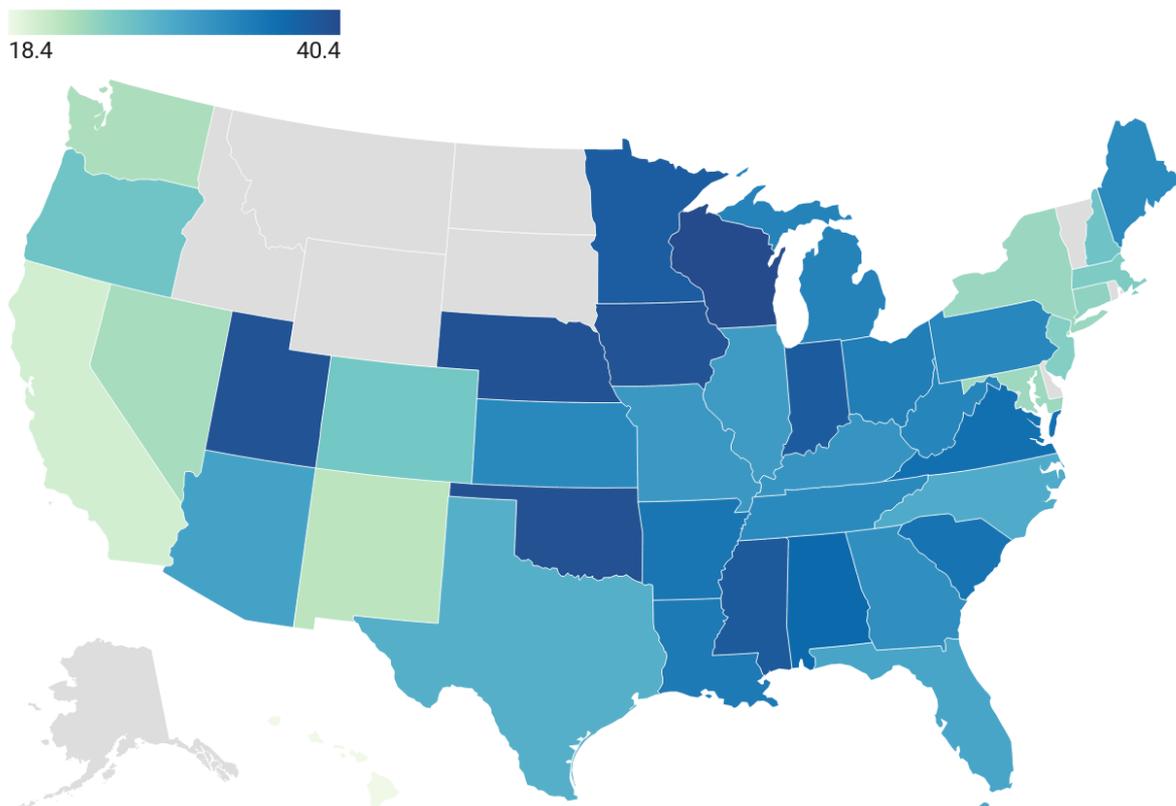
National Sample, N = 20,389, Time period: 12/16/2020 - 1/10/2021

Source: Source: 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) [www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org)

• Created with Datawrapper

## Figure 5: Did you attend or do you plan to attend a holiday gathering with people who live outside of your household ?

Percentage of respondents answering "Yes, I already attended one in December" or "Yes, I am planning to attend one". States with sample size below 100 respondents are in grey.



National Sample, N = 20,389, Time period: 12/16/2020 - 1/10/2021

Source: 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) [www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org)

• Created with Datawrapper