

# COVID-19 CONSUMER RESEARCH WAVE 87 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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November 24 - 28, 2021

**Stagwell** and **The Harris Poll** have partnered to conduct research to monitor the pulse of the American Consumer.

The executive summaries on the pages that follow provide insight into current consumer attitudes and behavior and can be used to help navigate the changing industry landscape. We hope this information proves useful to you and your team as you address these changes in real time and strategize for your next moves.

As always, we are here to help. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.

Positively,

**Ryan Linder + The Stagwell Family**

Global Chief Marketing Officer, EVP





# WAVE 87

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## WAVE 87 INTRODUCTION

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The following research was conducted between **November 24 - 28, 2021** by The Harris Poll. Fielded among a nationally representative sample of **2,416** U.S. adults, the newest research demonstrates how consumers' perceptions are rapidly shifting as new developments emerge.

Section:

# 01

**Topic:**

## MAKING OUR WAY THROUGH THE GREEK ALPHABET TO OMICRON

**Introduction:**

While much is still unknown about Omicron's severity and transmissibility, many Americans are already concerned about its potential impact – but aren't panicking quite yet. Here's what we found in this weekend's polling:

- **A stark difference in awareness across vax status:** While close to seven-in-ten (69%) of vaccinated people are familiar with Omicron, only 44% of unvaccinated people are.
- Of those familiar, over three-quarters (78%) of Americans are concerned that it **will evade existing vaccines**, a fear among vaccinated (81%) and even unvaccinated (61%) Americans.
- Yet despite these stated concerns, overall **fear of new variants remains unchanged** from prior weeks this weekend at (73%), as does fear of a surge in new cases (70%), and those who believe the worst is behind us (56%).
- **Though uncertainty about what Omicron may bring remains**, nearly nine in ten (87%) think it is likely that this new variant will **lead to new surges in cases and restrictions** (vaccinated: 88%, unvaccinated: 78%).
- **Cause for (cautious) optimism:** Yesterday, [Wall Street Journal reported](#) BioNTech CEO Ugur Sahin said the new variant "could lead to more infections among vaccinated people but they will most likely remain protected from a severe course of illness."

**Implication:**

Americans are cautiously concerned about what may lie ahead in the next stage of the pandemic. In the wake of Delta, consumer confidence and activity ahead of the holiday season will likely remain stable until we know more about Omicron. But right now the variant isn't as big an existential threat as say, inflation. But watch this space...



Section:

# 02

**Topic:**

## AMERICA GETS BOOSTED

**Introduction:**

In mid-November, the [CDC expanded eligibility](#) for all Americans to qualify to receive a booster shot. Nearly 9 in 10 vaccinated Americans tell us they have either received a booster (33%) or are likely to get one (54%). However, interest in boosters vary across demographics:

- **What does it mean to be “fully vaccinated?”** Now that boosters are recommended for all, half (50%) consider **vaccination plus booster** to be “fully vaccinated.” However, only 38% of Republicans and 38% of unvaccinated Americans agree.
- While **over half (55%) of Americans believe everyone should receive a booster**, 21% of Americans - including 55% of those unvaccinated - say they aren't necessary for anyone at all. One-quarter (25%) of Americans say they are only necessary for those who are at-risk or interact with someone high-risk.
- **Why get boosted?** Among those who already received their booster, 78% say they got the extra shot to **remain as protected as possible**; 56% because it is recommended by health experts; and 33% due to concern that their initial antibodies are wearing off.
- Nearly six in ten (58%) Americans support boosters to be included in any **vaccination requirements for public activity**. But age and political divides exist: 73% of Democrats support vs only 42% of Republicans; and 63% of Boomers support vs 55% of Gen Z.
- **Boomers and boosters:** More than half (55%) of Boomers said they have received a booster - more than younger generations (Gen Z: 9%, Millennials: 20%, Gen X: 23%).

**Implication:**

While we wait and see what the Omicron variant means for vaccinated Americans, many are getting the message that booster shots are the most effective way for people to protect themselves from severe illness and the ability to live as normally as possible during the seemingly never-ending pandemic. (Or should we just call it an endemic at this point?)



Section:

# 03

## Topic:

# OPEN BORDERS TO VAXXED FOREIGN TRAVELERS: CDC- HARRIS POLL

## Introduction:

In early November, the U.S. government began allowing non-U.S. travelers to enter the states if they were both fully vaccinated and tested negative for COVID. In order to see how Americans felt about the latest travel update, we partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to find out. Here is what we found:

- Nearly half (49%) of Americans were at least somewhat aware of the latest travel orders.
- **Grab your vaccine passport:** Three-quarters (76%) of Americans support requiring non-U.S. travelers to be fully vaccinated, with 84% of Democrats and 71% of Republicans in agreement. Even unvaccinated Americans (57%) support the latest policy update (vaccinated: 82%).
- Even before Omicron was detected in South Africa, three-quarters (75%) were concerned that expanded international travel **increases the risk** of new variants entering the U.S.
- Along with new variants, 74% of Americans fear opening our borders will lead **to increased COVID outbreaks.**
- Yet, even with the previous concerns, close to three-quarters (72%) of Americans believe we are **entering a “new normal”** where testing and vaccination requirements are routine, a notion held by both vaccinated (75%) and unvaccinated (61%) Americans.

## Implication:

The expanded travel policy holds the potential to repair the [bruised tourism](#) sector that was hit significantly by the pandemic. However, the economic potential could be threatened if opening borders leads to higher case numbers and new variants causing chaos in the U.S.



Section:

# 04

Topic:

## THE ECONOMICS OF ENTERTAINMENT: CRAIN'S-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

More investment in nightlife could help Chicago attract residents and businesses. As leaders plan for future growth, they should examine opportunities to keep residents going out - and staying local, [according to Harris Poll co-CEO Will Johnson's latest op-ed in Crain's](#). Here is what else he has to say:

- **A city that snoozes:** More residents describe Chicago as “boring” (49%) compared to those who deem it “up and coming” (37%).
- **Chicago After Midnight:** While 70% of Chicagoans believe their city is attracting new businesses and residents, only 28% think leisure and nightlife options contribute to this growth – lower than the 37% viewed by other major metro residents about their cities.
- **What makes a “good” city?** When rating their cities, 44% of Americans factor in the presence of restaurants, roughly one-third include entertainment options, and one-in-four cite arts and culture organizations.
- **Time for a second act:** Johnson advises Chicago leaders to look at what's unfolding in nearby metros as 45% of Detroit and 40% of Indianapolis residents say that their cities' entertainment options attract new people and businesses.

Getting better?

Percent of Chicago-area residents who say Chicago has changed for better in last 5 years



Implication:

Chicago was once known for its thriving nightlife. As Chicago leaders plan for future growth, they should examine opportunities to increase investment in the city's leisure and entertainment to keep residents going out – and staying local.



Section:

# 05

Topic:

## 43% OF ADULTS HAVE FINANCIALLY CHEATED ON THEIR PARTNER: NEFE-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

Some (43%) of adults with combined finances in a relationship said they've committed an act of financial deception – lying about money or hiding cash, bills, and purchases – according to our new poll in partnership with the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) and [featured in CNBC](#). Here is what else we learned:

Committed a financial deception



Hid a purchase, bank account, statement, bill or cash



Lied about finances, debt or earnings



Source: Survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of the National Endowment for Financial Education among 2,073 U.S. adults in June '21.



- **Most deceptions happen for a few main reasons:** Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) felt that some aspects of money should remain private, (34%) had discussed finances but felt their partner would disapprove, and (33%) were too afraid or embarrassed about their finances to speak with their partners.
- **It's not better to ask for forgiveness than ask for permission:** Of the couples who had experienced financial deception, (42%) said that it resulted in a fight, while others said it eroded trust and privacy, led to separate finances, or ended the relationship entirely.
- However, there were a lucky few who were discussing the financial infidelity made their relationship closer (19%) and led to **more proactive communication** later (16%).

Implication:

If you have committed financial infidelity, it's probably best to come clean to your spouse or partner as soon as you can, and clearly discuss how finances should or shouldn't be combined.



# Questions?

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**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

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