

COVID-19 is top of mind again for many consumers, with sentiment regressing to that of last April

Article

The news: More than half (52%) of US adults said they believe it will take over a year before they can resume living the way they did before the pandemic—with some in this cohort believing that life will never go back to normal, **per** the January wave of an Axios and Ipsos tracking poll.

- This figure is the highest it's been since Axios and Ipsos began asking that question nearly one year ago.
- For many consumers, COVID-19 is back as an overriding concern, with the spread of omicron leading more people to scale down their activities to avoid exposure.
- This retrenching into a bunker mentality is a return, for many, to their way of life earlier in the pandemic.

Social distancing is back: The majority (57%) of respondents said they practiced social distancing in the week leading up to the survey, up more than 10 percentage points from last month and the highest reported figure since April 2021—when vaccines were just becoming available to adults.

- Also at its lowest point since April was the share of respondents who had gone out to eat in the past week, at 46%, down from 54% last month.

Commercial activity could be down given the dearth in testing: 14% indicated that they were unsuccessful at finding an at-home test over the past few weeks, and 10% said they couldn't find an appointment with a medical professional to get a test.

Behind the numbers:

- Approximately 9 in 10 respondents reported knowing someone who has contracted COVID-19.
- Among those fully vaccinated who have tested positive, 36% said they got COVID-19 after vaccination, compared with 22% in mid-December. Last summer, only 6% said the same.

The silver lining: Three in 10 unvaccinated respondents indicated that omicron has made them more likely to get vaccinated, up from less than 20% just one month ago.

The big takeaway: Expect brick-and-mortar retailers and travel and hospitality companies to have a rough Q1 2022. While sentiment is expected to rebound as the quarter progresses, it's hard to know exactly at what point that will occur.