

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Data for Progress & Guarding Against Pandemics
DATE: January 21, 2022
RE: Support for Supplemental Pandemic Spending

Voters Equally Concerned by the Omicron Variant and Future Pandemics, Support Supplemental Pandemic Spending

Executive Summary

As part of a January 2022 national [survey](#) of 1,293 likely voters, Data for Progress and Guarding Against Pandemics conducted research into attitudes regarding concern about both the Omicron variant of the coronavirus and future pandemic similar to or worse than the coronavirus pandemic. We also measured voter sentiment toward areas of the government's public health response to the pandemic, a potential supplemental funding bill to combat the impacts of Omicron, and a potential supplemental funding bill targeted both at combating Omicron and preparing for future pandemics.

Overall, we find that voters are equally concerned by the national surge in coronavirus cases driven by Omicron and by potential future pandemics similar to or worse than the ongoing one, are supportive of authorizing additional funding that combats Omicron, and are even more supportive of authorizing funding that combats Omicron **and** prepares for future pandemics.

69% of voters are concerned by Omicron and by the threat of potential future pandemics. 71% support supplemental pandemic spending that would combat Omicron and prepare for future pandemics.

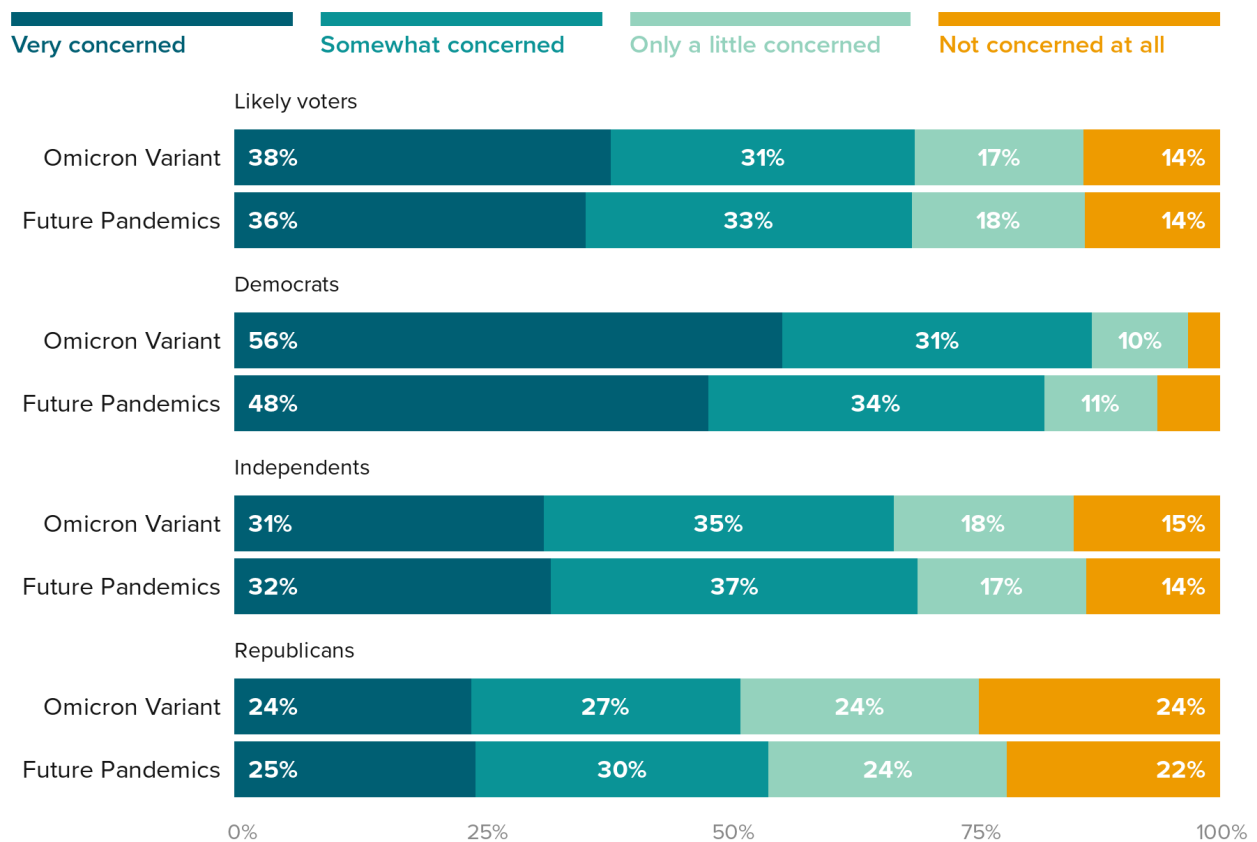
When asked how concerned or not concerned they were about a future pandemic similar to or worse than the coronavirus pandemic, more than two-thirds of likely voters (69 percent) say they are concerned (36 percent very concerned, 33 percent somewhat

concerned). This trend varies across partisan self-identification: 82 percent of Democrats, 69 percent of Independents, and 55 percent of Republicans say they are concerned about a potential future pandemic.

Additionally, when asked about the recent increase in cases caused by Omicron, likely voters expressed equal levels of concern. Sixty-nine percent say they are concerned (38 percent very concerned, 31 percent somewhat concerned). Across party, 87 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of Independents, and 51 percent of Republicans say they are concerned about the Omicron-led surge in coronavirus cases.

A Majority of Voters Are Equally Concerned by the Omicron Variant and Future Pandemics

Voters were asked how concerned or not concerned they are by a future pandemic similar to or worse than the coronavirus pandemic, and then by the recent increase in cases caused by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.



January 14–17, 2022 survey of 1,293 likely voters

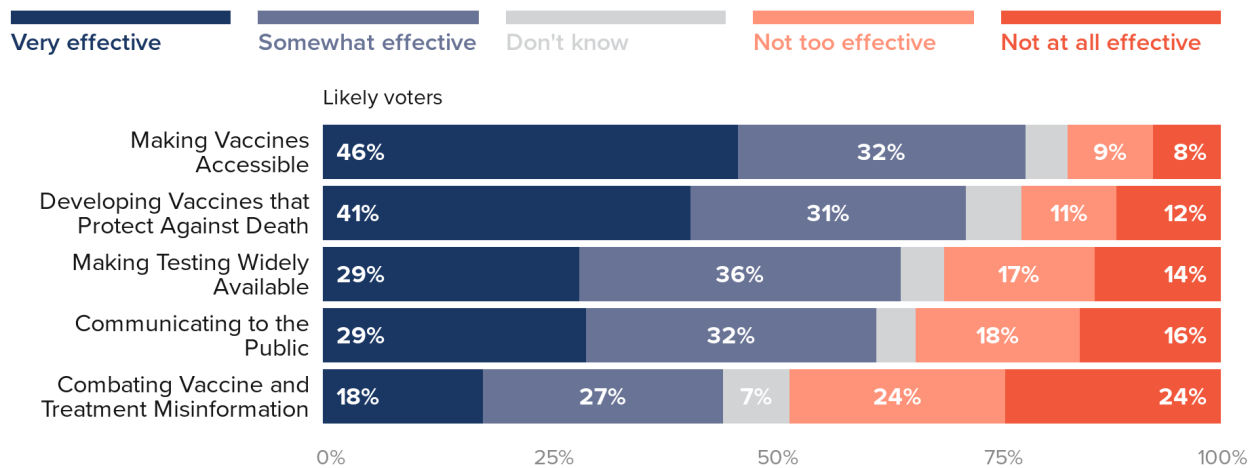
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We then asked voters whether certain areas of the government’s public health response to the ongoing pandemic were effective or not effective. The two areas ranked effective

by the most voters are making coronavirus vaccines widely available and easy to access (78 percent), and developing coronavirus vaccines that protect against hospitalization or death (72 percent). Meanwhile, 65 percent rate the government's efforts effective in making coronavirus testing widely available and easy to access, and 61 percent of voters consider the government's communication to the public about the coronavirus effective. Combating misinformation about the coronavirus vaccines and treatments is rated last, with 45 percent of voters saying the government's response was effective.

A Majority of Voters Rank Vaccine Development and Access Most Effective Among the Government's Coronavirus Responses

Below is a list of some areas of public health response to the coronavirus pandemic. For each, say how effective or not effective you think the federal government's response has been.



January 14–17, 2022 survey of 1,293 likely voters

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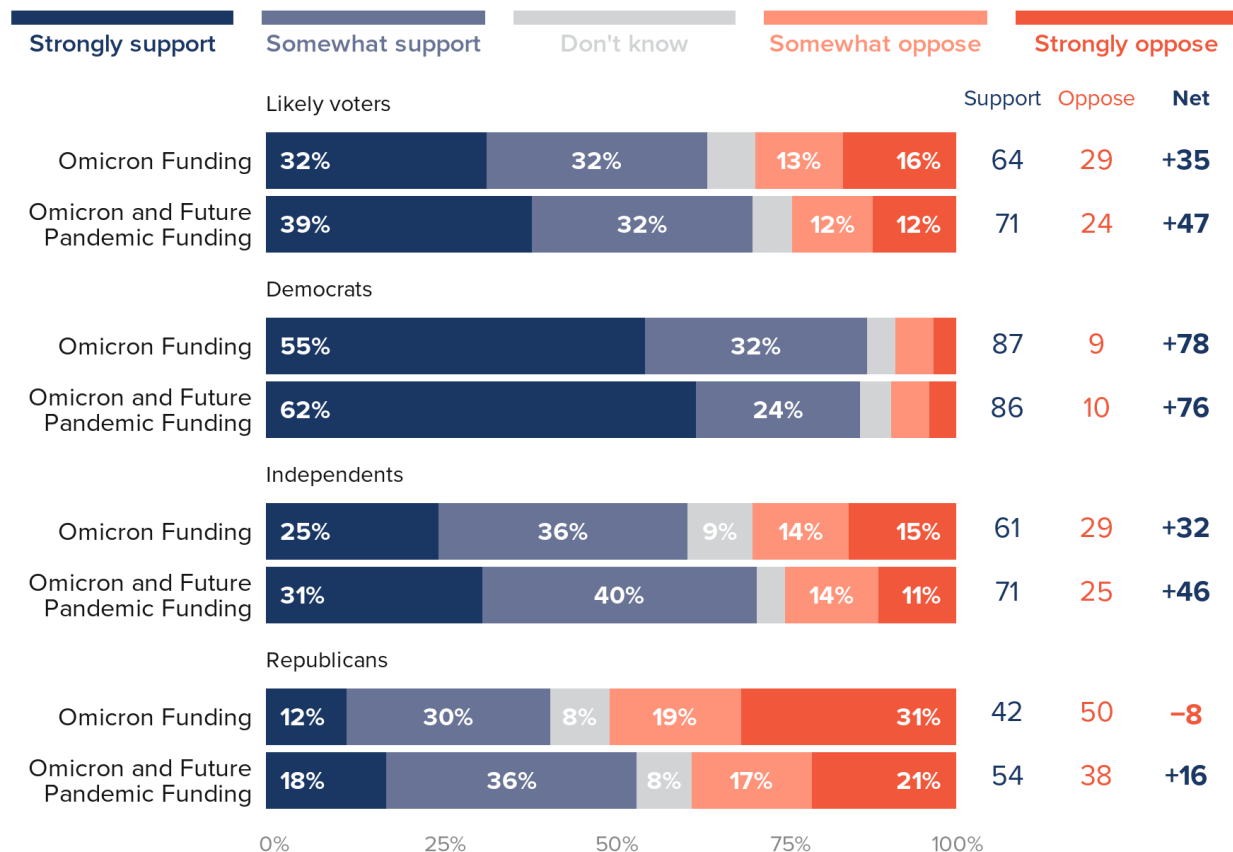
Voters were also told that some members of Congress were considering authorizing additional spending to combat Omicron, and were asked whether they supported or opposed that proposal. By a +35-point margin, respondents approve of the proposal. Democrats and Independents support it by margins of +78 and +32 points, respectively. Republicans, meanwhile, oppose it by -8 points.

They were then asked whether they supported or opposed authorizing additional spending that would both combat the impact of Omicron and go toward preparing for and preventing future pandemics similar to or worse than the coronavirus pandemic. Likely voters support such spending by a +47-point margin (71 support, 24 percent oppose). This support includes majorities across partisan lines, as Democrats, Independents, and Republicans back the proposal by margins of +76 points, +46 points, and +16 points, respectively. These findings imply that voters not only want to address

the ongoing pandemic but want to ensure the country has adequate response systems that can mitigate the impact of any future pandemics.

A Majority of Voters Support Additional Funding to Combat the Omicron Variant and Prepare for Future Pandemics

Voters were first asked whether they supported or opposed Congress authorizing new federal spending to combat the recent increase in cases caused by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, and then asked if they supported or opposed authorizing new federal spending to combat Omicron and prepare for and prevent future pandemics similar to or worse than the coronavirus pandemic.



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Next, we sought to test how support for pandemic preparedness would change when presenting voters with a statement in support of this investment and a statement opposing it. The supporting statement emphasizes that being unprepared for the coronavirus pandemic is why we are currently experiencing inflation and that preparing for future pandemics is a responsible investment. The opposing statement, meanwhile, bills this investment as an example of government spending that will increase our national debt and drive up inflation.

We find that support for pandemic preparedness spending is robust to negative messaging around inflation and the national debt. Likely voters support this investment by a +33-point margin, and Democrats and Independents back the proposal by margins of +74 points and +25 points, respectively. Meanwhile, Republicans oppose this proposal by a -6-point margin.

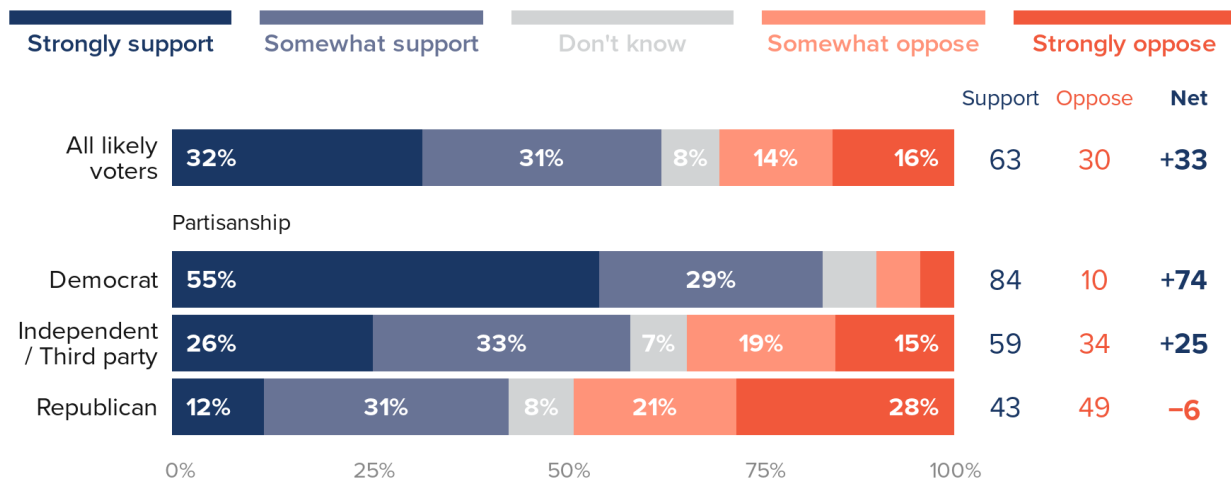
Funding to Prepare for Future Pandemics Enjoys Majority Support that is Robust to Negative Messaging

Some lawmakers in Congress are proposing authorizing additional funding to prepare for and prevent pandemics similar to or worse than the coronavirus pandemic.

Supporters say that being unprepared for the pandemic is why we are experiencing inflation. We need to pass new funding to prepare for future pandemics because it is the responsible thing to do.

Opponents of this proposal say this is just another example of out-of-control government spending that will drive up inflation and increase our national debt. We should not spend any more money on pandemic relief.

Knowing what you know now, do you support or oppose authorizing federal funding to prepare for and prevent future pandemics?



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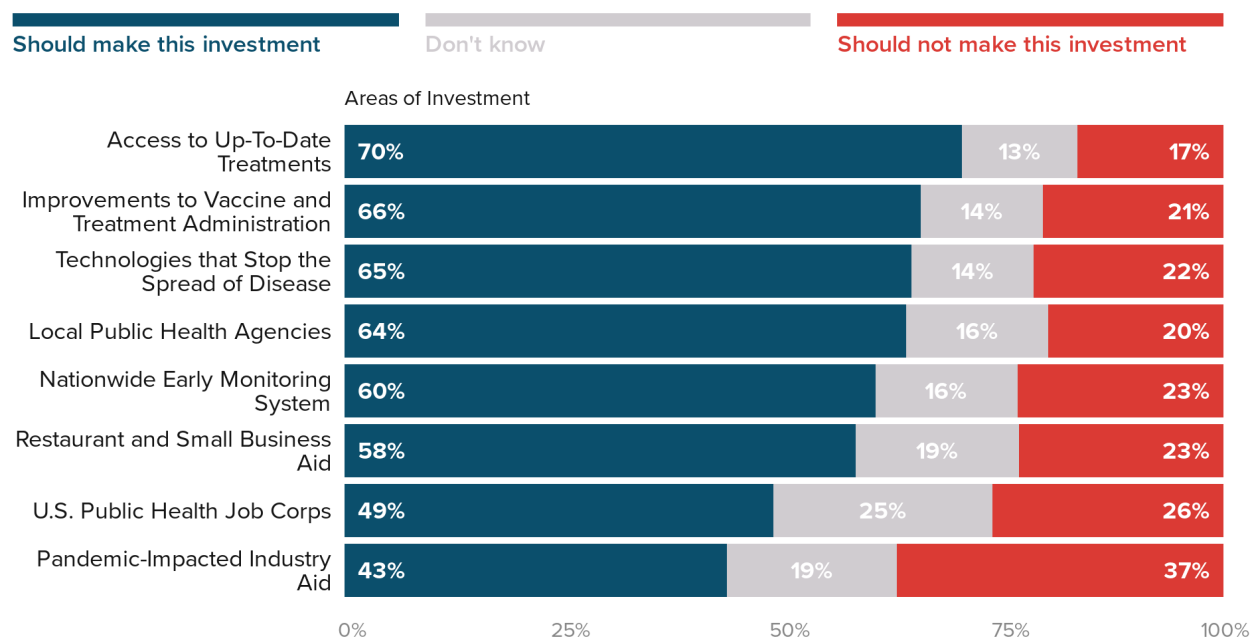
We then presented voters a list of specific investments that could be made if Congress were to pass additional pandemic spending, and asked them whether those investments should or should not be made. Of the eight possible investment areas, four enjoy over or around two-thirds support. The two most popular investments involve making coronavirus treatments widely available, easily accessible, and up-to-date with new variants (70 percent support); and funding research to improve vaccine and medication administration and storage (66 percent support). Investments in technologies to stop the spread of diseases, in local public health agencies, and in a nationwide early warning and

monitoring system to identify new coronavirus variants and future virus threats are all largely popular as well, with at least 60 percent support. Furthermore, 58 percent of respondents say Congress should invest in restaurant and small business aid, while 49 percent and 43 percent, respectively, support investing in a U.S. public health job corps, and in industries impacted by Omicron, such as airlines and hospitality.

A Strong Majority of Voters Support Investments in Including Early Monitoring Systems and Improved Access to Vaccines and Therapeutics, Among Other Potential Investments That Would Accompany Additional Pandemic Spending

Below is a list of key investments that could be made if Congress votes to pass additional spending to combat the omicron variant and prepare for and prevent possible future pandemics.

For each, say whether or not you think Congress should make this investment.



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Conclusion

As we near the two-year mark since coronavirus cases were first reported in the United States, a majority of voters are concerned by the ongoing surge in cases caused by the Omicron variant and by the threat of a future pandemic similar to or worse than the current pandemic. While voters think the federal government’s efforts to develop vaccines and make them widely available have been effective, there is an appetite for

more action to combat the impacts of the pandemic. Investing in pandemic relief to both combat Omicron and prepare for future pandemics is a broadly popular proposal that enjoys bipartisan support. Furthermore, it offers a way for Democrats in Congress to boost their overall job approval rating while enacting meaningful policy tackling current and future threats.

Read the topline [here](#).

Methodology

From January 14 to 17, 2022, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,293 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.