

# Cross-Agency Collaboration in the Rapid Development of COVID-19 Questionnaire Items for the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS)

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## FCSM Conference

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# Overview

- 01 Impact of COVID-19 on the MCBS

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- 02 Collaborative Process for Designing and Testing Items

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- 03 Data Products and Findings from the MCBS COVID-19 Community Supplements

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# Impact of COVID-19 on the MCBS

The Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) is a continuous, multi-purpose longitudinal survey.

- The MCBS represents the population of Medicare beneficiaries aged 65 and over and beneficiaries aged 64 and under with certain disabling conditions living in the United States.
- The MCBS collects data in two main components:
  - **Community:** Survey of beneficiaries residing in non-institutional, residential settings
  - **Facility:** Survey of beneficiaries residing in facilities such as long-term care nursing homes
- The MCBS serves as the leading source of information on the Medicare program and its impact on beneficiaries, including health care utilization, barriers to care, health care expenditures, and physical, emotional, and financial well-being.

Given the rapidly changing nature of the pandemic, there was an urgent need for data to shed light on its impact on the Medicare population.

- On January 31, 2020, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) determined that a Public Health Emergency (PHE) existed for the United States to aid the nation's health care community in responding to COVID-19.
- Older people and people of all ages with severe chronic medical conditions — like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example — seemed to be at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.<sup>1</sup>
- By using the MCBS, CMS was uniquely positioned to collect timely and vital information on how the pandemic was impacting the lives of Medicare beneficiaries.

<sup>1</sup>Public Health Emergency Declarations". U. S. Department of Health & Human Services. Last reviewed September 3, 2021. <https://www.phe.gov/emergency/news/healthactions/phe/Pages/default.aspx>.

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# Collaborative Process for Designing and Testing Items

CMS and NORC implemented three COVID-19 Community Supplements starting in Summer 2020.

- Rather than modify the main MCBS instruments, stand alone supplemental surveys were developed to get into the field as quickly as possible.
- These rapid response surveys asked about topics such as preventive care, forgone care, availability of telemedicine services, and impact to beneficiary well-being.
- Content such as COVID-19 vaccine utilization was updated as the pandemic evolved to meet emerging data needs.
- Starting in Summer 2021, the COVID-19 Supplement content was incorporated into the main MCBS for subsequent interviews as appropriate.

Incorporating items from other surveys facilitated rapid development of the first MCBS COVID-19 Community Supplement in Summer 2020.

Source Adapted From	Content Area
American Community Survey (ACS)	Access to computers and internet
National Center for Health Statistics Research and Development Survey (NCHS RANDS)	Ability to access basic needs during the pandemic
	Availability and use of telemedicine
	Autoimmune disease prevalence
	COVID-19 care
	Forgone health care as a result of the pandemic
	Impact to financial and mental health
	COVID-19 preventive measures
	Public health guidance
NCHS RANDS and National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)	Utilization of COVID-19 testing
March 2020 Associated Press (AP)-NORC Center Poll	Sources of COVID-19 information
March 2020 AP-NORC Center Poll/ University of California Irvine's COVID-19 Outbreak Study	Knowledge and perceptions of COVID-19



NORC conducted a field test of the MCBS COVID-19 Community Supplement in Summer 2020 under the MCBS Generic Clearance.

### COVID-19 Summer 2020 Supplement Test



#### Field Period

June 10 to July 15, 2020

Simultaneous to main MCBS data collection

#### Sample

Existing MCBS sampled beneficiaries who were continuously enrolled in Medicare from the beginning of 2020 and were alive and living in the community, eligible for and enrolled in Medicare at the time of their interview in Summer 2020

#### Questionnaire

15-minute standalone telephone survey

#### Data Collection

11,114 completes

78.9% response rate

- The field test was conducted at approximately the same time as testing of similar COVID-19 items by other agencies, such as NCHS
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved the field test under the MCBS Generic Clearance (0938-1275) on May 7, 2020
- Goal was to assess administration of standalone design in parallel with main MCBS data collection (never done before)

Based on the success of the Summer 2020 field test, CMS requested emergency OMB clearance to conduct the COVID-19 Fall 2020 Community Supplement.

- Strong item performance and data collection results from the Summer 2020 test laid the groundwork for requesting OMB Emergency Clearance (0938-1379) to use the same standalone survey design in Fall 2020.
- CMS collaborated with stakeholders to update items in the COVID-19 Fall 2020 Community Supplement to remove outdated topics and measure new areas of interest.

New Items	Removed Items
COVID-19 testing (i.e., wait time for test results, out-of-pocket cost of testing)	Lack of access to COVID-19 tests
Likelihood of getting a COVID-19 vaccine (items drafted by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC))	

During review of the emergency request, OMB facilitated further cross-agency collaboration.

- OMB requested that CMS realign the MCBS COVID-19 Fall 2020 Community Supplement with NCHS RANDS and NHIS COVID-19 items, which had been recently tested and revised.

Source Adapted From	Content Area*
ACS	Access to computers and internet
NCHS RANDS	Ability to access basic needs during the pandemic
	Availability and use of telemedicine
	Autoimmune disease prevalence
	COVID-19 care
	Forgone health care as a result of the pandemic
	Impact to financial and mental health
	COVID-19 preventive measures
	Public health guidance
NCHS RANDS and NHIS	Utilization of COVID-19 testing
March 2020 AP-NORC Center Poll	Sources of COVID-19 information
March 2020 AP-NORC Center Poll/ University of California Irvine's COVID-19 Outbreak Study	Knowledge and perceptions of COVID-19
CDC	Presumptive vaccine uptake ( <i>new topic in Fall 2020!</i> )

\*Content areas revised during the OMB review process to realign with other federal surveys are highlighted in orange.

CMS revised the MCBS Clearance (0938-0568) to continue fielding COVID-19 items as part of the MCBS in 2021 and beyond.

**Emergency OMB Clearance**  
(0938-1379)

**Main MCBS Clearance**  
(0938-0568)

**Integration of COVID-19 Items into  
Main Community Questionnaire**

**COVID-19 Fall 2020  
Community Supplement**

- Fielded Oct. 5 to Nov. 15, 2020
- 9,686 completed interviews
- Response rate: 72.6%

**COVID-19 Winter 2021  
Community Supplement**



- Fielded March 1 to April 25, 2021
- 11,107 completed interviews
- Response rate: 79.6%

**Summer 2021 Community  
Questionnaire**

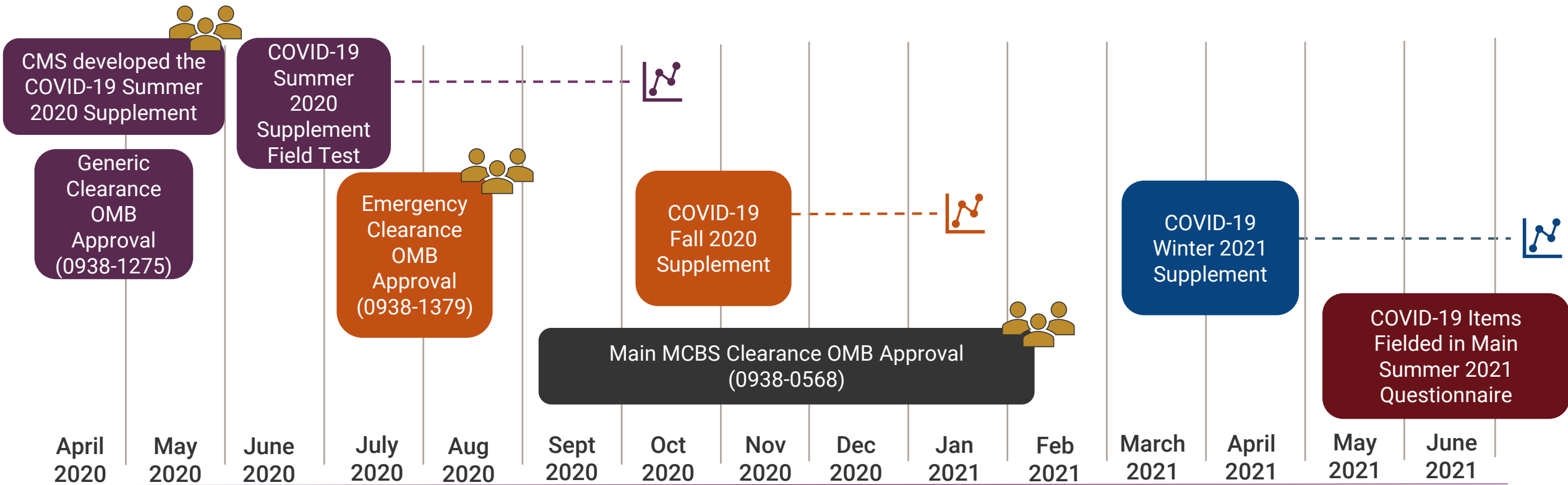
- Starting in Summer 2021, certain COVID-19 Supplement items were incorporated into the main MCBS for subsequent interviews.

**Fall 2021 Community  
Questionnaire**



CMS worked with CDC to add items about COVID-19 vaccine utilization starting in Winter 2021.

This process allowed CMS and NORC to field three Supplements in a 12-month period, creating an opportunity to track the course of the pandemic.



 Collaboration points between CMS and other federal agencies

 Date of data release (color coded by Supplement)

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# Data Products and Findings from the MCBS COVID-19 Community Supplements

Public Use Files (PUF) and Data Snapshots were publicly released two months after the close of data collection for each Supplement.

## COVID-19 PUFs:

- <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Downloadable-Public-Use-Files/MCBS-Public-Use-File>

## Data Snapshots:

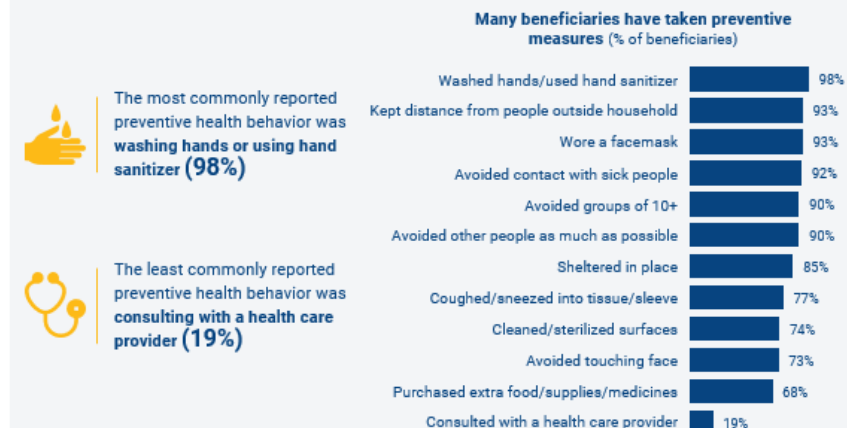
- Summer 2020 Supplement: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-current-beneficiary-survey-summer-2020-covid-19-data-snapshot>
- Fall 2020 Supplement: <https://www.cms.gov/research-statistics-data-systems/mcbs-public-use-file/medicare-current-beneficiary-survey-fall-2020-covid-19-data-snapshot>
- Winter 2021 Supplement: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/medicare-current-beneficiary-survey-covid-19-data-snapshot-infographic-winter-2021.pdf>

## COVID-19 Experiences Among the Medicare Population

Summer 2020

This infographic presents information related to Medicare beneficiaries' experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. It uses preliminary data from the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) COVID-19 Summer 2020 Supplement and preliminary 2019 MCBS data.

### COVID-19 PREVENTIVE HEALTH BEHAVIORS

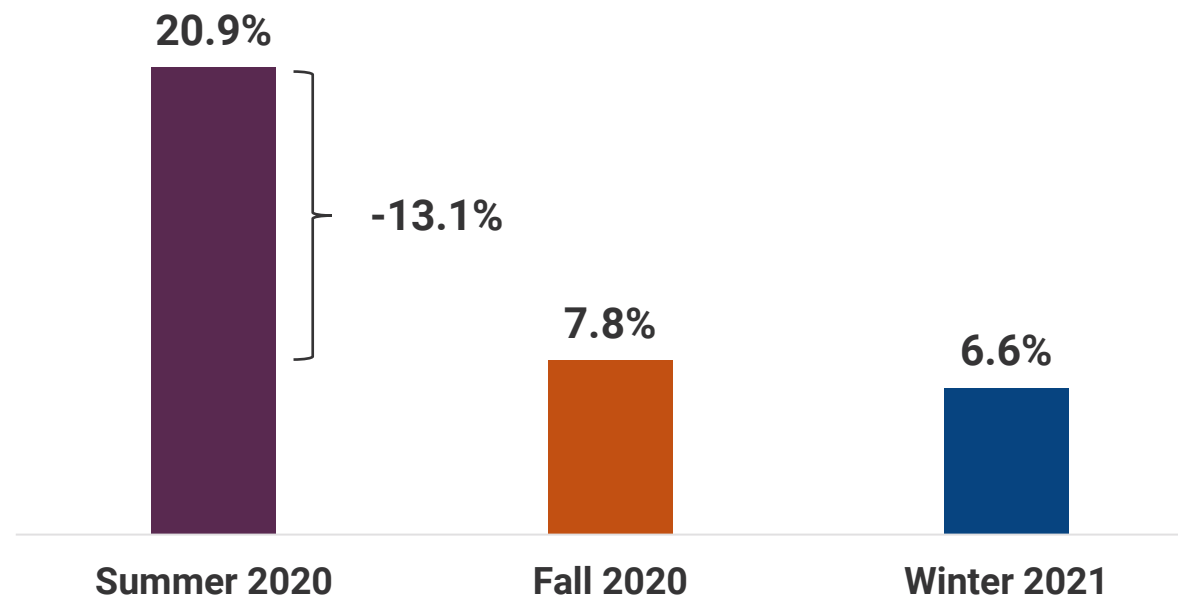


### IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON DAILY LIFE



## Forgone Care, Summer 2020 to Winter 2021

### Proportion of Beneficiaries Living in the Community Reporting Forgone Care Due to COVID-19



For details about analytic steps, view the **MCBS Advanced Tutorial on the COVID-19 Supplement Data**: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Data-Briefs>

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey COVID-19 Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Winter 2021 PUFs

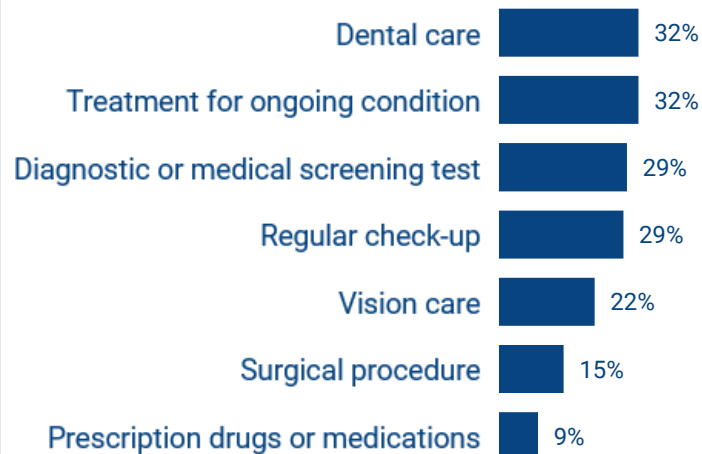
NOTES: Estimates are representative of beneficiaries who were continuously enrolled in Medicare from the beginning of 2020 and still alive, living in the community, and eligible and enrolled in Medicare at the time of their COVID-19 Summer, Fall, or Winter Supplement interview. Beneficiaries living in the community answered questions themselves or by proxy. In Summer, respondents were asked "At any time since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, did you need medical care for something other than coronavirus, but not get it because of the coronavirus outbreak?" In Fall, respondents were asked "Since July 1, 2020, did you need medical care for something other than coronavirus, but not get it because of the coronavirus pandemic?" In Winter, respondents were asked "Since November 1, 2020, did you need medical care for something other than coronavirus, but not get it because of the coronavirus pandemic?" Weights used for these estimates are preliminary weights and these estimates should therefore be interpreted with caution.



# Forgone Care, Winter 2021

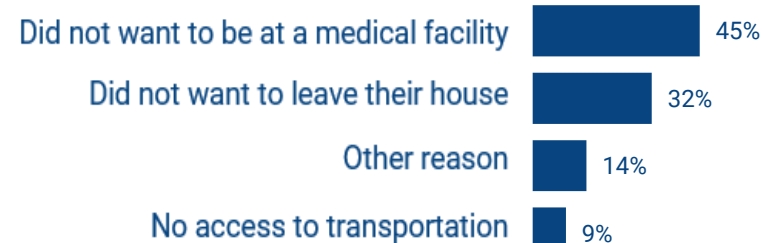
*Among beneficiaries who reported forgone care since November 2020...*

**The type of forgone health care varied<sup>1</sup>**  
(% of beneficiaries)

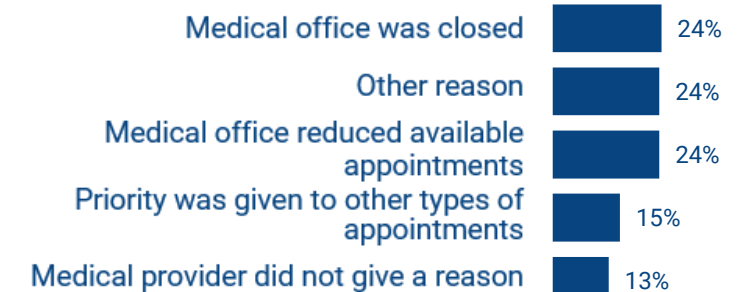


<sup>1</sup> Respondents were able to select more than one type

**Beneficiaries decided to forgo care for various reasons**  
(% of reasons)



**Health care providers rescheduled appointments for various reasons**  
(% of reasons)

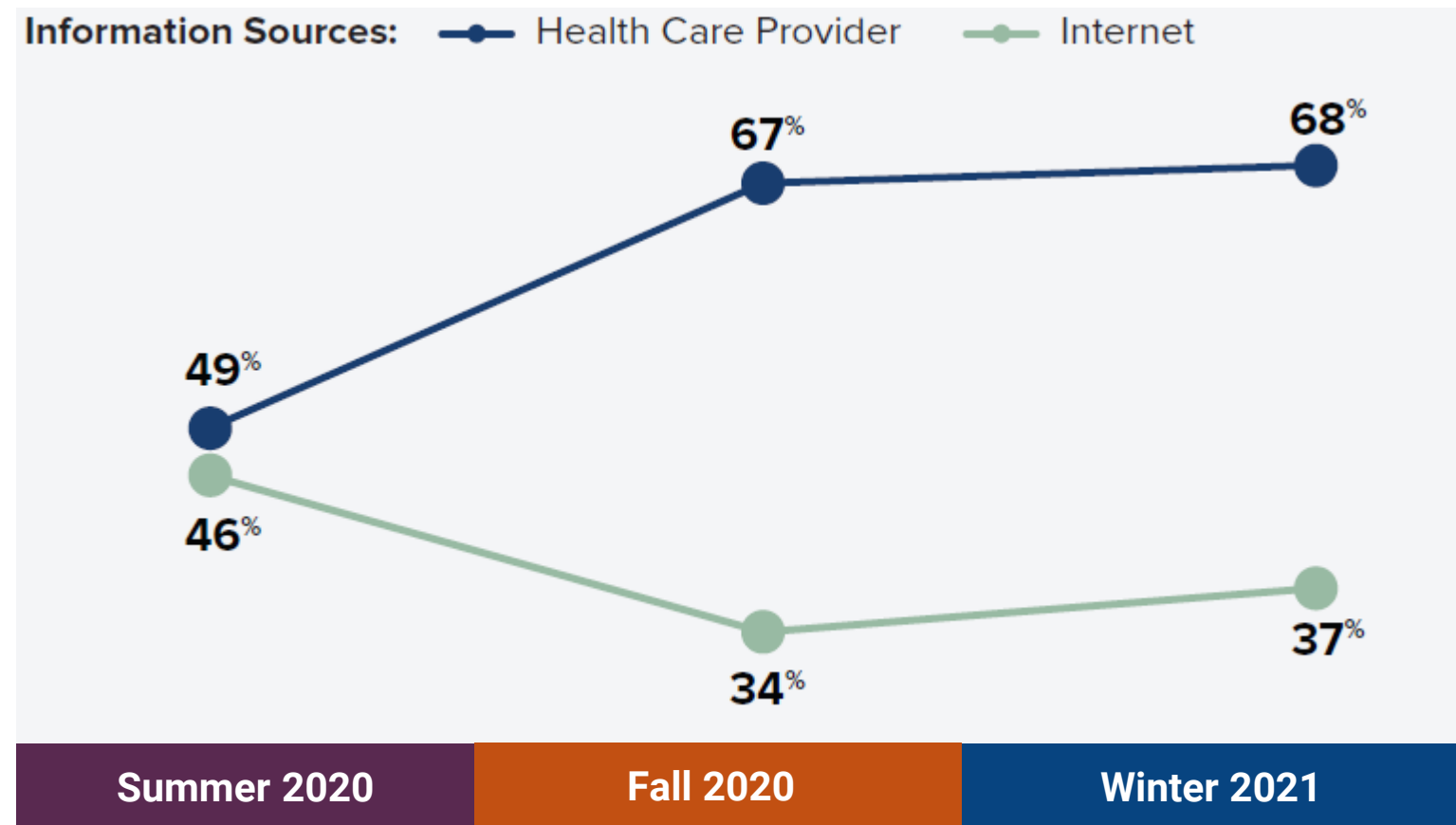


SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Preliminary Data from the Survey File, 2020.

NOTES: Estimates are representative of beneficiaries who were continuously enrolled in Medicare from the beginning of 2020 and still alive, living in the community, and eligible and enrolled in Medicare at the time of their COVID-19 Winter Supplement interview. Weights used for these estimates are preliminary weights and these estimates should therefore be interpreted with caution.

## Sources of COVID-19 Information, Summer 2020 to Winter 2021

**More Medicare Beneficiaries relied on health care providers for information about COVID-19. Fewer relied on the Internet as the pandemic evolved.**



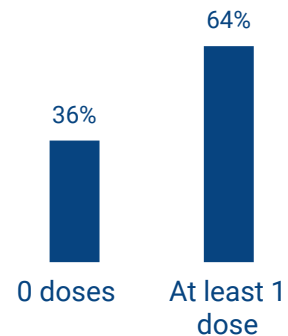
SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey COVID-19 Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Winter 2021 PUFs

# COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake, Winter 2021

Since December 2020...

**64%** of beneficiaries reported receiving at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine during their interview

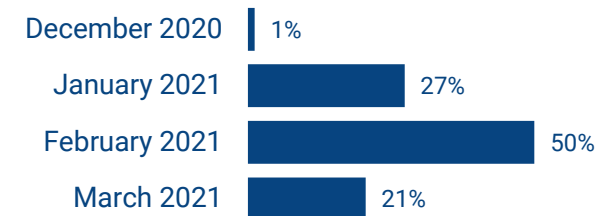
(% of beneficiaries)<sup>1</sup>



**70%** of older beneficiaries have received at least one vaccine dose compared to **24%** of beneficiaries under 65<sup>3</sup>



**Month of first dose**  
(% of beneficiaries who received at least one dose)<sup>1,2</sup>



**67%** of white beneficiaries have received at least one vaccine dose compared to **53%** of non-white beneficiaries<sup>4</sup>

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Preliminary Data from the Survey File, 2020.

NOTES: Estimates are representative of beneficiaries who were continuously enrolled in Medicare from the beginning of 2020 and still alive, living in the community, and eligible and enrolled in Medicare at the time of their COVID-19 Winter 2021 Supplement interview. Weights used for these estimates are preliminary weights and these estimates should therefore be interpreted with caution.

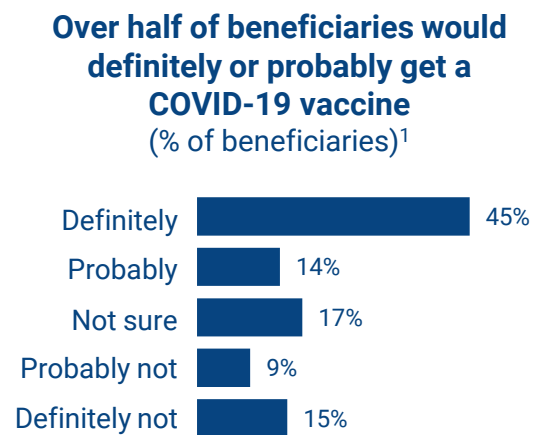
<sup>1</sup> Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding and/or missingness

<sup>2</sup> The percentage of beneficiaries who received their first dose in April 2021 has been suppressed

<sup>3</sup> Eligible for Medicare due to disability

# Presumptive COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake, Winter 2021

*Among beneficiaries who have not received any doses of a COVID-19 vaccine...*



## Among beneficiaries who would definitely or probably get a vaccine...

The two most common reasons reported for not having received a vaccine during their interview were **lack of availability (64%)** and **not belonging to a priority group (13%)**



## Among beneficiaries who would probably not or definitely not get a vaccine...

The two most common reasons reported for not having received a vaccine during their interview were **concerns about vaccine safety or potential side effects (44%)** and **distrust of what the government says about the vaccine (29%)**

SOURCE: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, Preliminary Data from the Survey File, 2020.

NOTES: Estimates are representative of beneficiaries who were continuously enrolled in Medicare from the beginning of 2020 and still alive, living in the community, and eligible and enrolled in Medicare at the time of their COVID-19 Winter 2021 Supplement interview. Weights used for these estimates are preliminary weights and these estimates should therefore be interpreted with caution.

<sup>1</sup> Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding and/or missingness

Early and ongoing collaboration across federal agencies ensured rapid implementation of standardized COVID-19 items on the MCBS COVID-19 Community Supplements.

#### Limitation:

- Despite fielding similar items across the MCBS COVID-19 Community Supplements and the NCHS RANDS and NHIS surveys, benchmarking estimates is challenging due to differences in the surveys' respective designs.

#### Future research:

- CMS continues to review opportunities for potential realignment with COVID-19 items from other surveys.
- Are there ways to improve rapid cross-agency collaboration during a crisis so that consistent measures are used across surveys?

# Questions?

## Other Resources:

### MCBS COVID-19 Advanced Tutorial:

- <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Data-Briefs>

### MCBS COVID-19 Data Tool:

- <https://mcbs-interactives.norc.org/>



# Thank you!

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