

COVID-19 economic data tracker

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Week 48 – December 6, 2021

The Truist COVID-19 Economic Tracker will not be published every week during the month of December. It will return to a weekly schedule in January 2022.

Trend watch and what's new this week

The omicron variant appears to be more transmissible than prior strains, but the symptoms are reportedly milder. Still, concerns about the omicron variant have caused several countries to reinstate some social distancing rules, mostly in Europe and the United Kingdom.

Meanwhile, virus trends in the U.S. have sharply increased nationally (slide 3) and regionally (slide 6), which we cautioned was likely due to artificially depressed testing because of the Thanksgiving holiday, resulting in fewer cases identified. While the omicron variant has been spotted in at least 16 states, the delta variant remained at 99% of new U.S. infections through November 27.

We've seen West coast port congestion has improved in past few weeks (slide 8). This combination of fewer inbound container ships, which appears to have peaked in September, and better throughput at the ports. Ultimately, clearing the logjam of container

ships at these ports should help reduce the supply shortages that have fanned some of the inflationary pressure in recent months.

Bottom line

Overall activity levels are consistent with recent trends and seasonal norms. By that, overall economic activity has gradually declined, while shopping and freight volumes continue to ramp higher and should crest in mid-December and taper off quickly near year-end.

More importantly, current vaccines appear to blunt the severity and greatly decrease the death rate of all strains of COVID-19. Nearly 70% of all Americans are fully vaccinated and over one-quarter of adults have already received a booster (slide 4).

Our base case remains that the lockdowns will not happen in the U.S., similar to last summer's surge due to the delta variant. That said, we wouldn't rule out regional or localized restrictions by certain cities or states. As we've repeatedly mentioned here, COVID-19 isn't going away anytime soon, but the world does seem to be managing it better.

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U.S. COVID-19 economic data tracker matrix

Indicator	Relative trend	What we're watching
U.S. state reopenings	▲	Air travel spiked around the Thanksgiving holiday and quickly declined, which is typical. Similarly, overall economic activity ebbed in late November. Holiday activities, including shopping, should continue to ramp up in early to mid December, though gatherings will likely remain muted compared to pre-pandemic levels. Overall activity levels are consistent with recent trends.
TSA air passenger throughput	▲	Weekly passengers fell 8.7% WoW, snapping a 4-week streak, to 13.2 million. Passenger counts are -18.2% below the 2019 weekly average of 16.1M and -18.3% compared to the same week in November 2019.
OpenTable restaurant bookings	▲	Slumped to -11.3% from -4.0% in the prior week. Top positive states were led by Rhode Island (+35%); bottom was Minnesota (-36%). Top city was Nashville (+39%); bottom were Minneapolis (-65%) and Portland (-45%).
Google mobility	↔	Activities normalizing after the Thanksgiving holiday. 7-day averages relative to 2020: Parks -4%, Transit -18%, Grocery/Pharmacy -1%, Residential +5%, Retail/Restaurant/Recreation -8%, Workplaces -20%.
Hotel occupancy	▲	Occupancy is in a seasonally weak period at 53.0%. The average daily rate rose to \$128.41, up 14.3% from the same week in November 2019, while revenue per available room was \$68.00, up 19.6% from November 2019.
Apartment rent payments	▲	Payments through November 6 slipped to 78.2% from 78.4% in October. Full month rents for October '21 rose to 93.0% from 92.9% in September, but were down from 94.8% in October '19.
Freight	▲	Rail carloads fell 15.2% WoW during the holiday week. Shipping container counts in October rose 1.9% and were up 20% YTD compared to 2020.
Staffing index	▲	Climbed to 108.7, a fresh new all-time high since this index began in 2006. But we expect it to jostle around during the holiday season as it has historically. The low for this cycle was 59.6 set in April 2020.

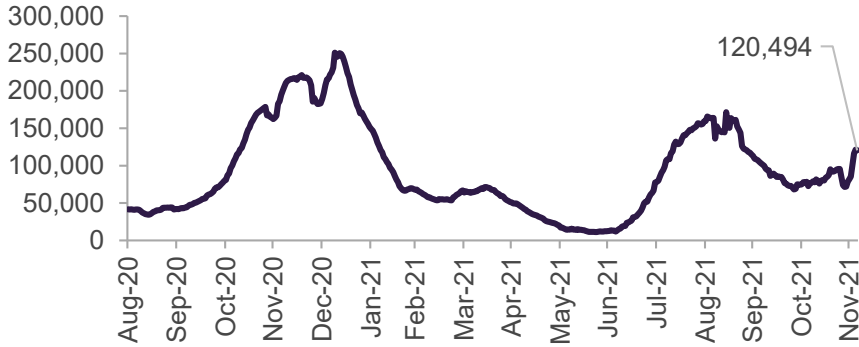
Trend relative to whether it is favorable for economic growth:

▲ Positive ▼ Negative ↔ Neutral / Mixed

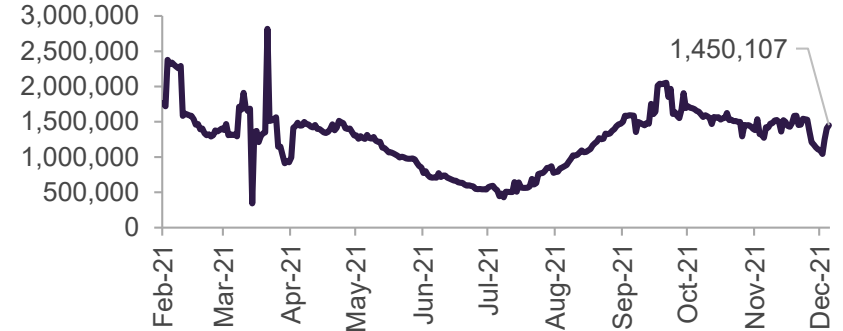
Data sources: Truist IAG, Bloomberg, Our World in Data, Transportation Security Administration, OpenTable, Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Report, STR/CoStar, National Multifamily Housing Council Rent Payment Tracker, American Staffing Association. Week-over-week and year-over-year change are abbreviated as WoW and YoY, respectively.

U.S. cases, hospitalizations, and death rate trending higher nationally

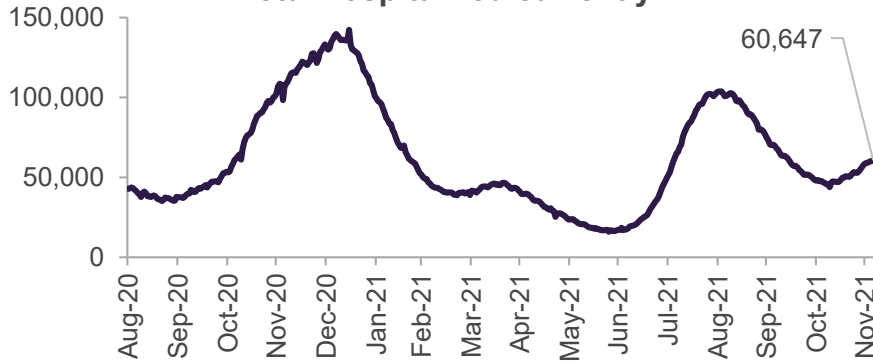
New confirmed cases 7-day moving average



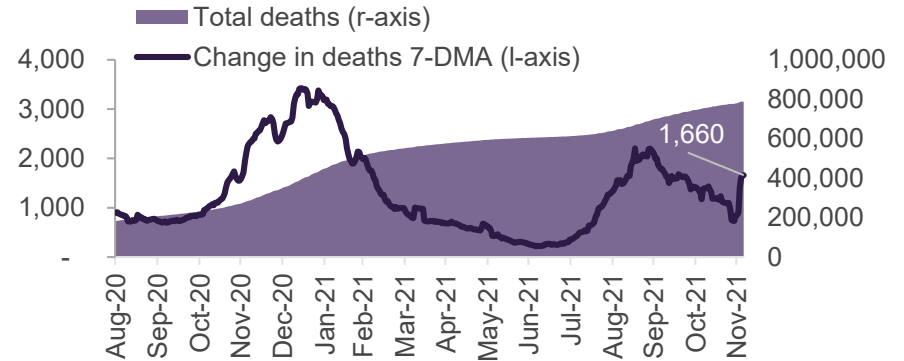
Tests performed 7-day moving average



Total hospitalized currently

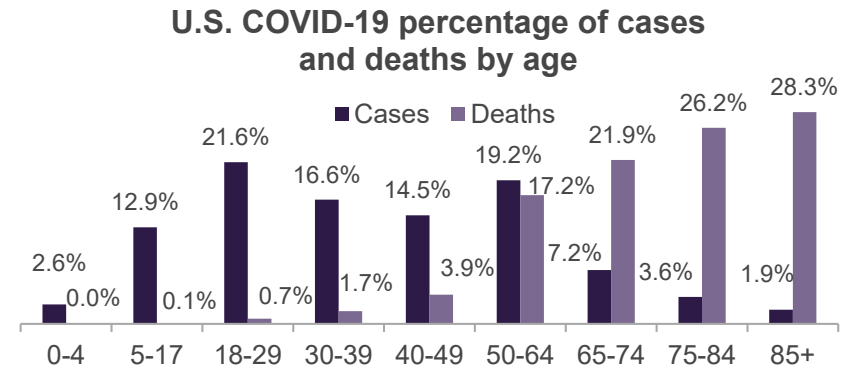
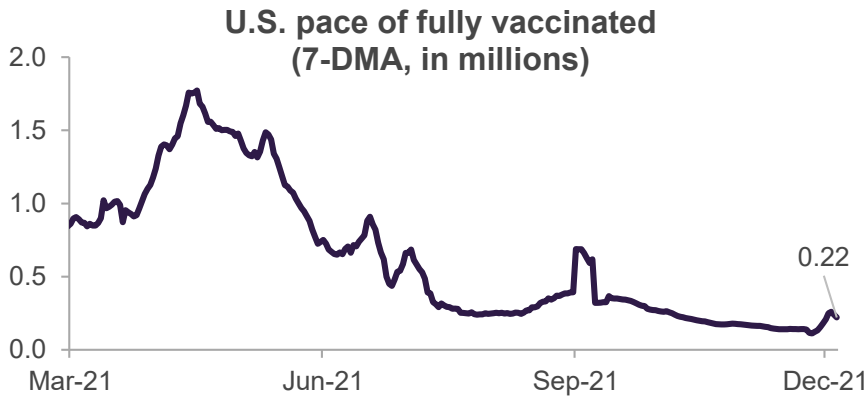
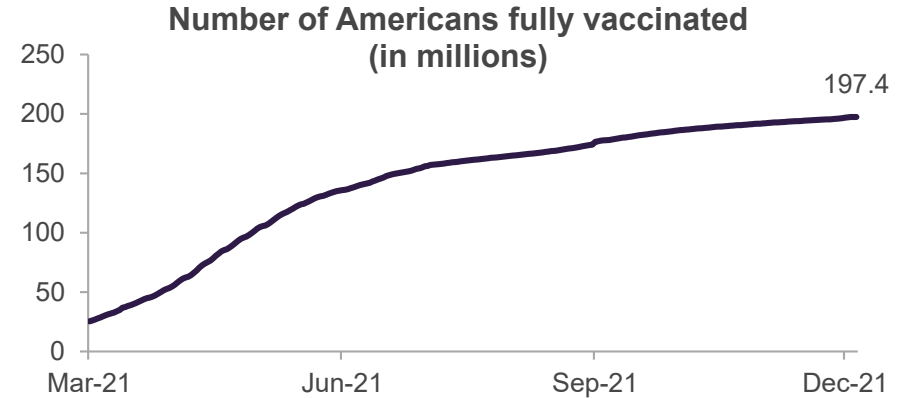
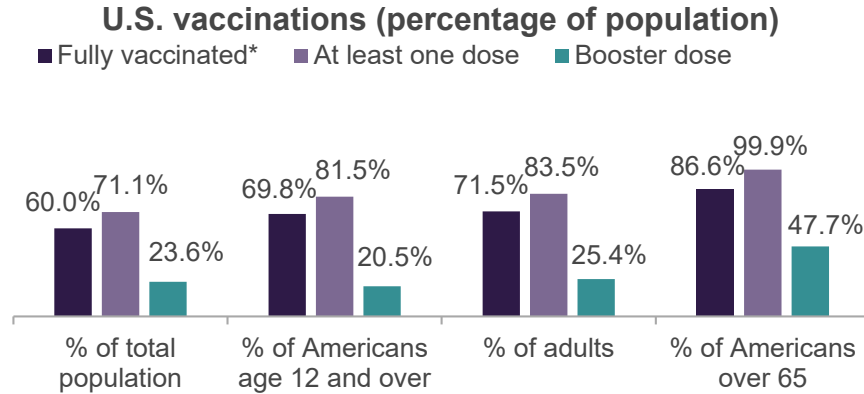


U.S. COVID-19 deaths



Data sources: Truist IAG, Bloomberg, Johns Hopkins University through December 5, 2021. Data for 50 U.S. states plus American Samoa, Washington D.C., Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands. 7-day moving average (DMA).

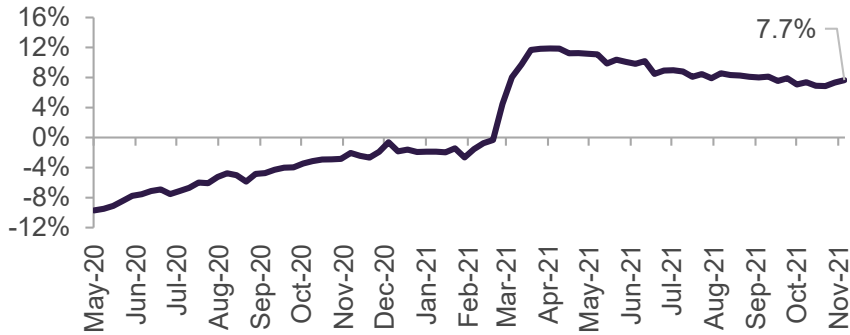
Two thirds of all Americans are fully vaccinated, over one-quarter of adults have already received a booster



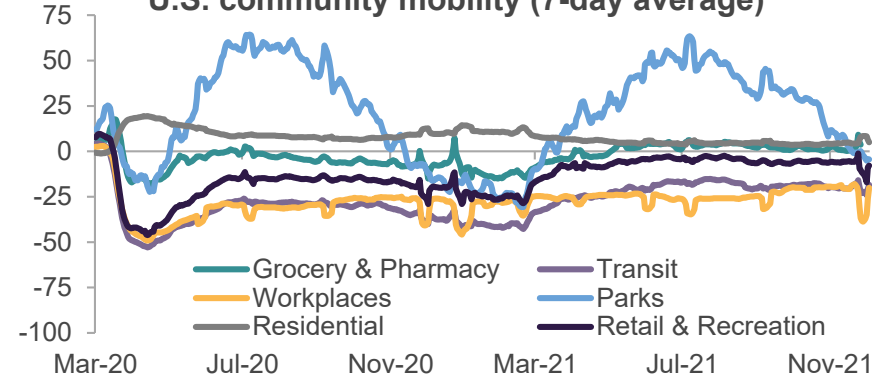
Data sources: Truist IAG and the following additional sources respectively: Top left, bottom right: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), through December 6, 2021. Top right, bottom left: Our World in Data, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), through December 5, 2021. U.S. figures includes all 50 states plus Washington D.C., U.S. military installations and territories. *Fully vaccinated is defined as receiving two doses on different days (regardless of time interval) of the two-dose mRNA series or receiving a single-dose vaccine regimen.

Thanksgiving holiday has shifted activity-based trends recently

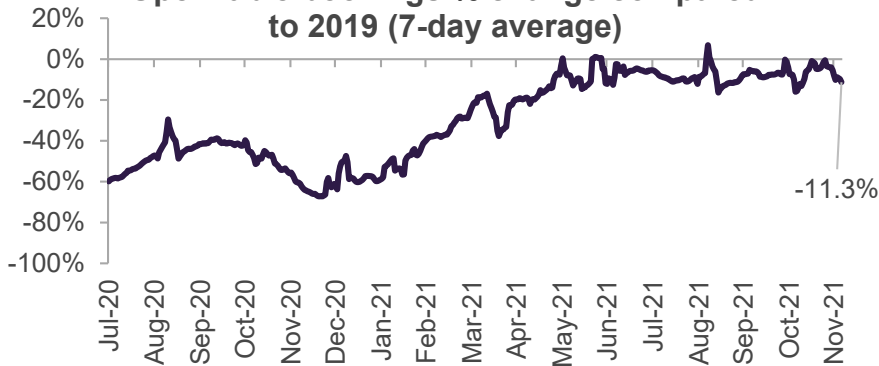
NY Fed weekly economic index



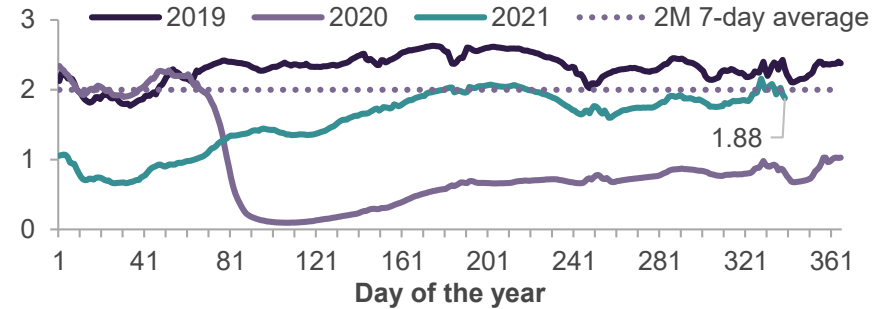
U.S. community mobility (7-day average)



OpenTable bookings % change compared to 2019 (7-day average)



TSA checkpoint traveler throughput (7-day average, in millions)

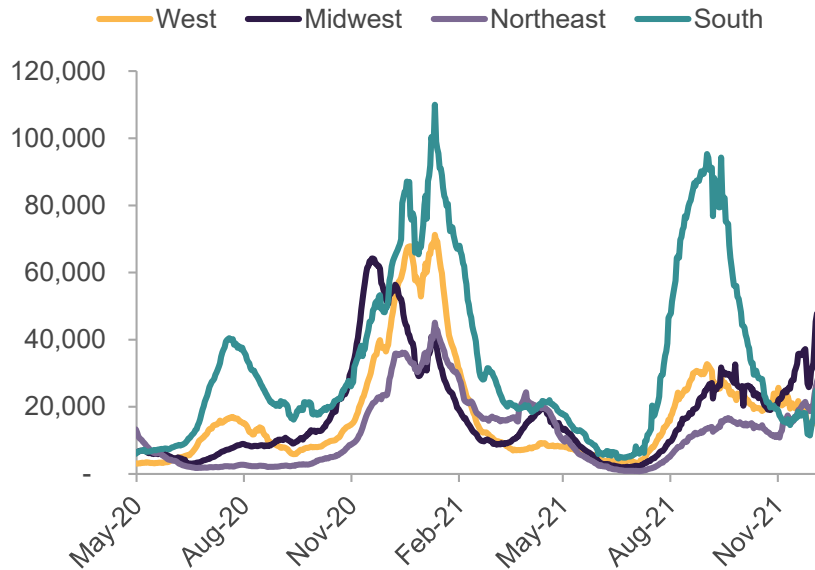


Data sources: Truist IAG and the following additional sources respectively: Top left: Bloomberg, NY Federal Reserve Weekly Economic Index through November 27, 2021. Top right: (U.S. Community Mobility) Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports 7-day average through December 3. Bottom left: Bloomberg, OpenTable 7-day average through December 5. Bottom right: Bloomberg, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) 7-day average through December 5.

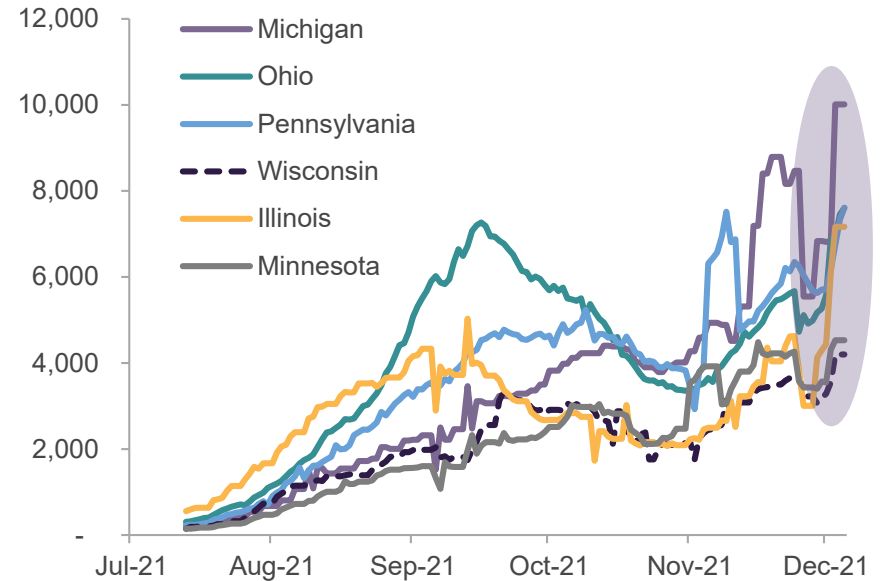
U.S. COVID-19 cases climbing again in Midwest and regionally

After falling in late November, new infections have surged again. New cases jumped in the Midwest, particularly in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. There's also been a marked increase in the South and Northeast.

**COVID-19 new cases by region
(7-day moving average)**



**COVID-19 new cases – select Midwest states
(7-day moving average)**



Data source: Truist IAG, Bloomberg, Johns Hopkins University, data through December 5, 2021.

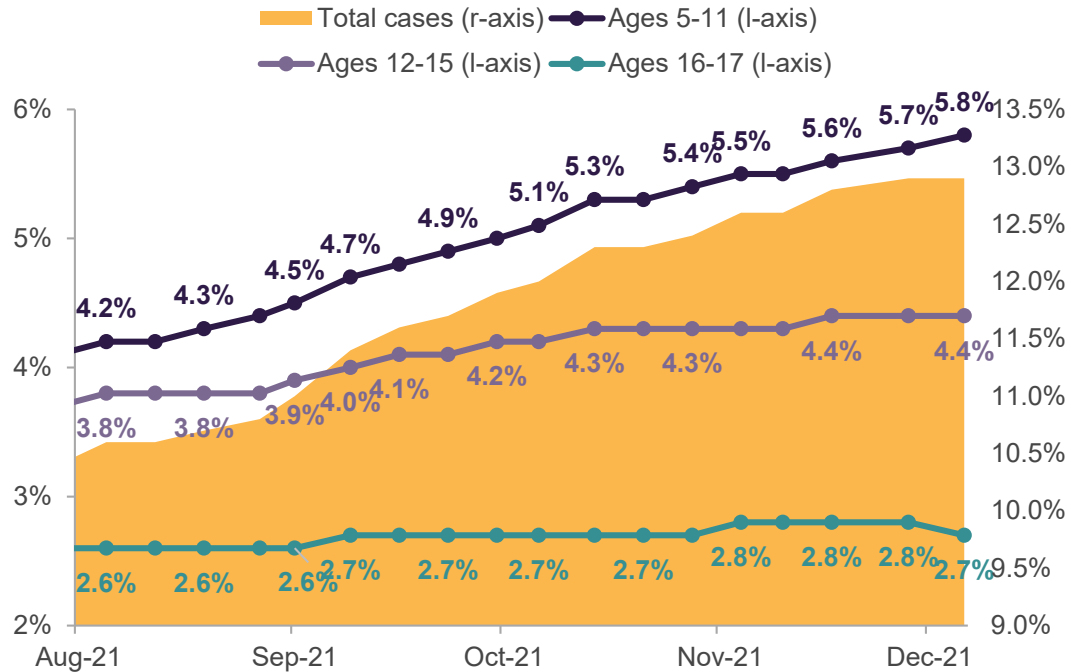
Elementary school cases still climbing, but overall U.S. school-aged new cases steady

The total number of new COVID-19 cases of school-aged children held steady at 12.9% of all new U.S. cases.

However, new cases in the 5-11 age group continued to climb, up to 5.8% in the past week. Meanwhile, the 12-15 age cohort remained at 4.4% for the third straight week and the 16-17 age group dipped to 2.7%.

There have been 668 deaths in school-aged children during the entire pandemic, or 0.1% of all U.S. COVID deaths.

New COVID-19 cases of school-aged children as a percentage of total new U.S. cases

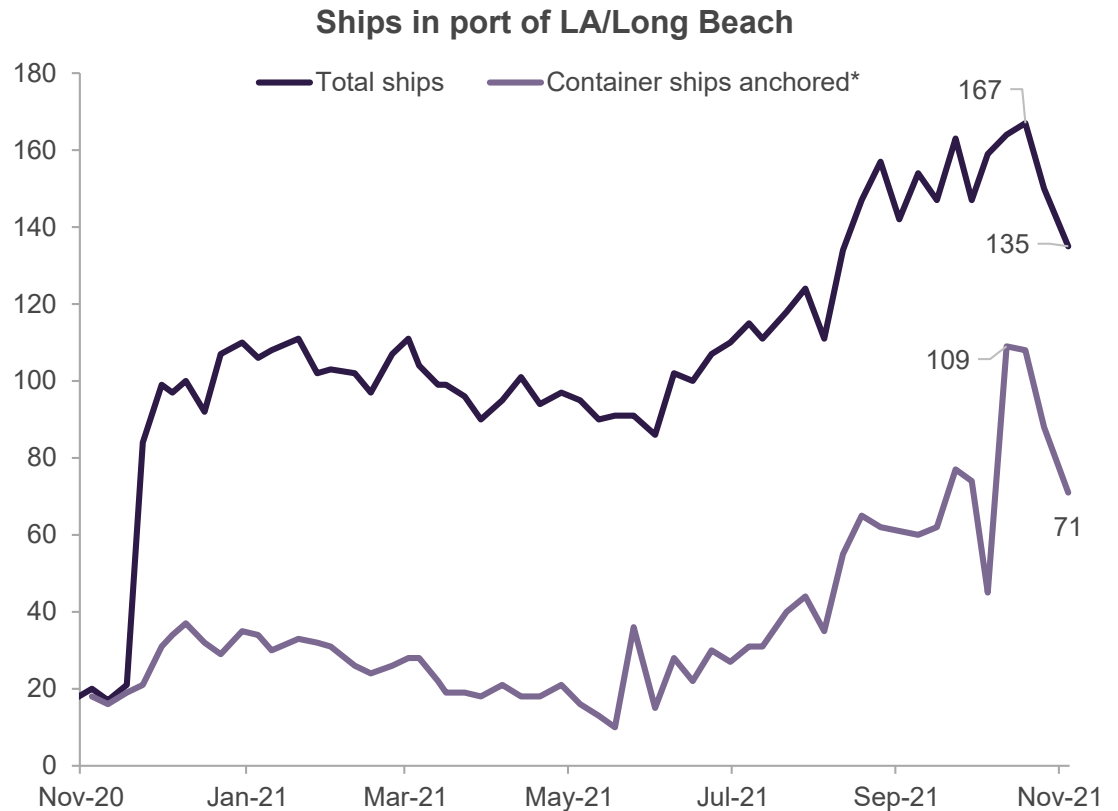


Data sources: Truist IAG, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). Data from July 29, 2021 through December 6, 2021.

West coast port congestion has improved in past few weeks

The two largest U.S. ports—Los Angeles and Long Beach—share San Pedro Bay. Prior to late 2020, most ships never anchored in San Pedro Bay aside from rare occasions due to storms, maintenance, or an accident, and it would be a handful of ships if it did occur.

In 2021, an average of 38 container ships carrying cargo have been anchored* per day and a high of 109 in early November. As of December 3rd, the number of container ships anchored* dropped to 71, the fewest since mid-October, while the total number of ships in-port dipped to 135, the fewest since early September.



Data sources: Truist IAG, Marine Exchange of Southern California; data from November 12, 2020 through December 3, 2021.

* Container ships anchored includes anchored, loitering or in designated drift areas.

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