

**Research Report**

**TEXANS CANNOT AFFORD  
TO WAIT FOR SENATE-CONFIRMED  
HHS SECRETARY**

**ACCOUNTABLE** 

## SUMMARY:

- **COVID-19 By The Numbers In Texas As Of Late January:**
  - **Total Case Count:** 2,251,646
  - **Daily Case Count Average:** 17,518
  - **Total Death Count:** 35,071
  - **Hospital ICU Occupancy Rate:** 92%
  - **Texans Completely Vaccinated:** 1%
  - **Texans Who Received At Least One Vaccine Dose:** 5.5%
  - **Percent Of Vaccine Supply Distributed:** 57%

## COVID-19 Continues To Devastate Texas As State Vaccination Efforts Lag Behind, Highlighting Need For Coordinated Federal Response

### What Texans Are Reading ...

- **KXAN HEADLINE:** “Likely Thousands Of Nursing Home Residents Still Waiting On Vaccines As Distribution Expands Across Texas” [KXAN, [1/7/21](#)]
- **Click2Houston HEADLINE:** “Record Days For Texas COVID-19 Hospitalizations Continue” [Click2Houston.com, [1/9/21](#)]
- **Texas Tribune HEADLINE:** “Texas Has A Problem With Its COVID-19 Vaccination Data, And The Stakes Are High. Now The State Is Scrambling To Solve It.” [Texas Tribune, [1/20/21](#)]
- **TexasMonthly HEADLINE:** “Millions More Texans Have Had COVID-19 Than We Like To Pretend” [TexasMonthly, [1/22/21](#)]
- **Texas Tribune HEADLINE:** “Facing A Crush Of COVID-19 Patients, ICUs Are Completely Full In At Least 50 Texas Hospitals” [Texas Tribune, [1/22/21](#)]
- **Fort Worth Star-Telegram HEADLINE:** “Why Some Rural North Texas COVID Vaccine Providers Are Still Waiting For First Doses” [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, [1/23/21](#)]

### Texas COVID-19 Cases Continue To Strain Hospital Capacity As Deaths Climb

*Texas Topped 2.25M Total COVID-19 Cases—Up Roughly 500,000 Cases From End Of 2020*

**As Of Dec. 31, 2020, Texas Had More Than 1.756M COVID Cases And Nearly 27,500 Deaths.** “As of Thursday, more than 1.756 million Texans have been diagnosed with COVID-19. [...] At least 27,437 Texans have died from COVID-19 complications.” [KENS, [12/31/20](#)]

**As of Jan. 25, 2021, Texas Had Reported 2,251,646 Total COVID-19 Cases With 35,071 Deaths.** [New York Times, accessed [01/25/21](#)]

- **Jan. 25: The Daily COVID Case Average For Last Seven Days In Texas Was 17,518.** “At least 191 new coronavirus deaths and 7,814 new cases were reported in Texas on Jan. 24. Over the past week, there has been an average of 17,518 cases per day.” [New York Times, accessed [1/25/21](#)]

*Texas Has Recorded Over 35,000 COVID-19 Deaths—Up Nearly 30 Percent From The End Of 2020.*

**As Of Dec. 31, 2020, Texas Had Nearly 27,500 COVID-19 Deaths.** “As of Thursday, more than 1.756 million Texans have been diagnosed with COVID-19. [...] At least 27,437 Texans have died from COVID-19 complications.” [KENS, [12/31/20](#)]

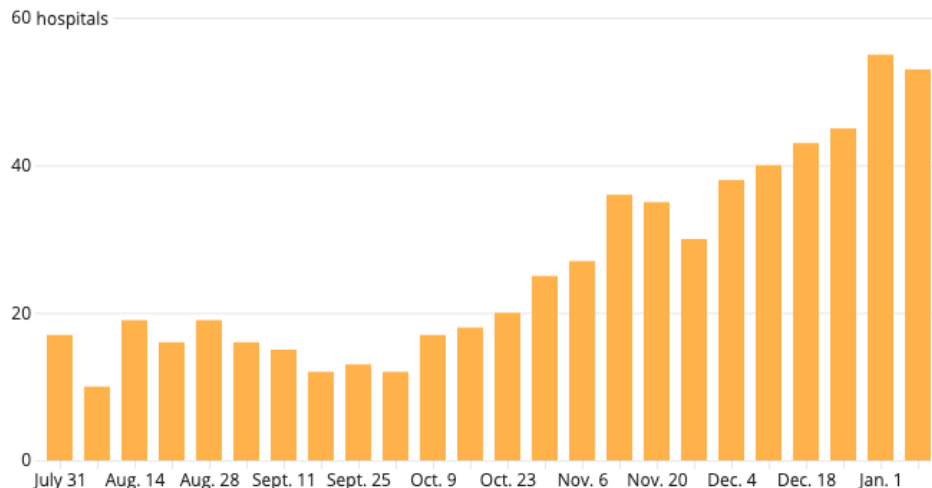
**As of Jan. 25, 2021, Texas Had Reported 35,071 COVID-19 Deaths.** [New York Times, accessed [01/25/21](#)]

*As Of Jan. 25, Texas ICU Occupancy Was At 92 Percent And As Of Jan. 12 There Were A Record 14,218 COVID Hospitalizations.*

**As Of Jan. 25, 2021, Texas ICU Bed Occupancy Was At 92 Percent.** [The New York Times, accessed [01/25/21](#)]

**As Of Jan. 12, 2021, Texas Had A Record 14,218 COVID Hospitalizations.** “According to data released Tuesday by the Texas Department of State Health, the number of people with COVID-19 that are hospitalized in the state has reached a record 14,218.” [KXAS, [1/12/21](#)]

**As Of Jan. 8, 53 Texas Hospitals “Reported That Their ICU Beds Were Filled To Capacity.”** See the graph below for more details. [Texas Tribune, [1/22/21](#)]



Note: Because data for hospitals with fewer than four patients or fewer than four staffed ICU adult beds is redacted, we cannot calculate the percentage of staffed ICU beds. About 200 out of the more than 400 Texas hospitals that reported data to the federal government have fewer than four staffed adult ICU beds at any given time.

Source: [Department of Health & Human Services](#)

Credit: Carla Astudillo

[Texas Tribune, [1/22/21](#)]

- **“Across Texas, Hospital Intensive Care Units Are Being Battered As COVID-19 Cases Continue To Rise In A Post-Holiday Surge.”** “Across Texas, hospital intensive care units are being battered as COVID-19 cases continue to rise in a post-holiday surge. Dozens of facilities have reported that their ICUs have been at or above 100% capacity for weeks, leaving staff overworked and stretched thin.” [Texas Tribune, [1/22/21](#)]

- **“Dozens Of Facilities Have Reported That Their ICUs Have Been At Or Above 100% Capacity For Weeks, Leaving Staff Overworked And Stretched Thin.”** “Across Texas, hospital intensive care units are being battered as COVID-19 cases continue to rise in a post-holiday surge. Dozens of facilities have reported that their ICUs have been at or above 100% capacity for weeks, leaving staff overworked and stretched thin.” [Texas Tribune, [1/22/21](#)]
- **“More Than 50 Texas Hospitals Are Currently Reporting That Their ICUs Are 100% Full Or Higher.”** “More than 50 Texas hospitals are currently reporting that their ICUs are 100% full or higher, and a dozen of them have been full for more than half of the 24 weeks since hospitals began reporting that information in July, according to a Texas Tribune analysis of data released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.” [Texas Tribune, [1/22/21](#)]
- **“A Dozen Of Them Have Been Full For More Than Half Of The 24 Weeks Since Hospitals Began Reporting That Information In July.”** “More than 50 Texas hospitals are currently reporting that their ICUs are 100% full or higher, and a dozen of them have been full for more than half of the 24 weeks since hospitals began reporting that information in July, according to a Texas Tribune analysis of data released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.” [Texas Tribune, [1/22/21](#)]

## **Texas Struggled To Vaccinate Even Most Vulnerable Populations, Leaving Next Phase Of Vaccine Distribution Uncertain.**

*As Of Late January, Texas Had Administered Little More Than Half Of Its Vaccine Supply, Completely Vaccinating Less Than 1% Of Its Population And Lagging Behind Nation By Giving Initial Dose To Only 5.5%.*

**As Of Jan. 25, Texas Had Administered Just 57% Of Vaccine Supply Had Been Allocated.** [New York Times – “See How the Vaccine Rollout Is Going in Your State,” accessed [1/25/21](#)]

**As Of Jan. 25, Just Over 270,000 Texans Had Been Fully Vaccinated, With Less Than 5.5 Percent (1,532,381 People) Of The Total Population, Receiving The First Dose.** “Texas has administered at least 1,532,381 first doses covering 82.1% of the prioritized population and 5.3% of the state’s population. At least 270,118 people have been fully vaccinated.” [Washington Post, [1/25/21](#)]

- **The US National Average For Vaccine Distribution By Population Was 5.8-Percent.** [Washington Post – “COVID-19 Vaccine Distributions,” accessed [1/26/21](#)]

**As Of Jan. 25, 1 Percent Of The Texas Population Had Been Fully Vaccinated.** [Washington Post, [1/25/21](#)]

- **The US National Average For Percent Of Population Fully Vaccinated Was 1%.** [Washington Post, [1/24/21](#)]

*Texas Struggled To Vaccinate All Elderly And Immunocompromised, Which Made Up Nearly Third Of Texas’s Population, Leading Local Expert To Predict It Would Be Months Before Others Could Be Immunized Against COVID.*

**A Member Of The Texas COVID-19 Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel Advised Texas Likely Wouldn’t Move To Vaccinating Most Texans Until May Or June.** “Dr. David Lakey is a member of the Texas COVID-

19 Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel — the scientific group that advises the Texas Commissioner on Health about who should get a vaccine when. A former Texas Commissioner on Health himself, he's an expert on disease outbreaks, and vice chancellor for health affairs and chief medical officer of the University of Texas System. [...] LAKEY: Everyone wants to know when they can get their vaccine. Again, I think we'll get through the 1B group — this is an approximation — come the end of May or June. Then we'll be able to get into other populations." [Houston Chronicle, [1/22/21](#)]

- **Expert: "This Is A Very Tough Situation. Right Now, The State Of Texas Gets About 330,000 Doses Per Week, But We Have 30 Million Texans. So That 330,000 Is Not What We Need."** [Houston Chronicle, [1/22/21](#)]
- **Expert: "We're Not Getting Enough Vaccine To Immunize" The Priority Groups, Including The Elderly And Immunocompromised, Which Accounted For "About A Third Of The Population Of Texas."** "The state is now trying to get those that are at highest risk of disease immunized: those that are older than 65, especially older than 75; and those that have chronic conditions. But we're not getting enough vaccine to immunize all those individuals. That group is over 9 million Texans — about a third of the population of Texas. We're not going to meet that demand for awhile with 330,000 doses a week." [Houston Chronicle, [1/22/21](#)]
- **Texas Tribune HEADLINE: "Health Officials Predict Most Texans Won't Have Access To COVID-19 Vaccine Until July At The Earliest"** [Texas Tribune, [10/19/20](#)]

**As Of Early January, The State Of Texas "Does Not Know Who Will Be In [The Next] Phase."** "Dr. Todd Bell, associate professor at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center said that it will be a while before the state of Texas enters Phase 1C. Dr. Bell said the state is still working on Phase 1C and as of this moment does not know who will be in that phase. Dr. Bell said that there is still a lot of people in Phase 1B that needs to be vaccinated across the state, so the state will not move to the next phase until they feel they have the vaccine availability to do so." [My High Plains, [1/5/21](#)]

- **As Of Jan. 26, The Texas State Covid-19 Vaccination Information Website Indicated That The State Was Still "Considering What Criteria Could Be Used For Later Stages Of Vaccine Distribution"** "After Phase 1, who gets the vaccine next and when? Spring 2021 is the best estimate of when vaccine will be available for the general public, but that may change. It depends on vaccine production and how quickly other vaccines become available. The Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel (EVAP) is considering what criteria could be used for later stages of vaccine distribution. This webpage will be updated when those decisions are completed." [Texas Department Of State Health Services, "COVID-19 Vaccine Information," Accessed [1/26/21](#)]

*Meanwhile Thousands Of Nursing Home Residents Waited On Vaccine Doses As Federal Government Struggled To Coordinate Facilities.*

**As Of Early January, CVS Had Distributed First COVID Vaccine Doses To Under 200 Of Texas's 1,200 Skilled Nursing Facilities.** "The data reveals 581 of the state's more than 1,200 skilled nursing facilities have partnered with CVS. So far, the pharmacy reports they have distributed the first dose to 199 of these facilities. 180 more facilities have been scheduled for their vaccination through next week." [KXAN, [1/7/21](#)]

- **"More Than 200 Skilled Nursing Facilities Are Still Waiting To Hear When Their Vaccines Will Arrive From CVS."** "However, more than 200 skilled nursing facilities are still waiting to hear when their vaccines will arrive from CVS." [KXAN, [1/7/21](#)]

- **Only 340 “Of The 1,431 Assisted Living Facilities And Other Long-Term Care Sites Working With CVS” Have “Completed Distribution Of The First Doses.”** “Of the 1,431 assisted living facilities and other long-term care sites working with CVS, only 340 have completed distribution of the first doses. 491 more have been scheduled through next week, leaving 600 long-term care facilities also waiting.” [KXAN, [1/7/21](#)]

## **Further Delays In Confirming Biden’s HHS Secretary Could Impede Administration’s COVID-19 Response.**

**Biden Nominee Xavier Becerra Faced Uphill Confirmation Battle, Based Not On Concerns Over Competency On COVID-19, But Republican Objections To His Pro-Choice Views And Support For Universal Health Care.** “Xavier Becerra, President-elect Joe Biden's pick for health and human services secretary, the Cabinet member tasked with overseeing vaccinating millions of Americans against the coronavirus as quickly as possible, faces an uphill confirmation battle. It won't be because of how he'll handle the pandemic, but over his support for abortion rights and universal health care, say Republicans who control the Senate and are already warning that he could be denied confirmation, or see the process take longer.” [NBC News, [12/28/20](#)]

**CNN: President Biden’s Administration “Inherit[ed] No Coronavirus Vaccine Distribution Plan To Speak Of From The Trump Administration.”** “Newly sworn in President Joe Biden and his advisers are inheriting no coronavirus vaccine distribution plan to speak of from the Trump administration, sources tell CNN, posing a significant challenge for the new White House. The Biden administration has promised to try to turn the Covid-19 pandemic around and drastically speed up the pace of vaccinating Americans against the virus. But in the immediate hours following Biden being sworn into office on Wednesday, sources with direct knowledge of the new administration's Covid-related work told CNN one of the biggest shocks that the Biden team had to digest during the transition period was what they saw as a complete lack of a vaccine distribution strategy under former President Donald Trump, even weeks after multiple vaccines were approved for use in the United States.” [CNN, [1/21/21](#)]

**NBC News: Regarding Becerra’s Confirmation As HHS Secretary, “A Delay Could Complicate Biden’s COVID-19 Response.”** “While Democrats remain confident that Becerra's confirmation is not in any real danger, a delay could complicate Biden's Covid-19 response.” [NBC News, [12/28/20](#)]

- **HHS Is A “Crucial Agency Amid The Pandemic That Will Be Tasked With Distributing Hundreds Of Millions Of Coronavirus Vaccines.”** “If confirmed, Becerra would become the first Latino to lead HHS, a crucial agency amid the pandemic that will be tasked with distributing hundreds of millions of coronavirus vaccines.” [Newsweek, [12/7/20](#)]