

# Three Minute Read™

## Insights from the Healing American Healthcare Coalition™

June 2021-1



**From the Editor:** More than 65% of American adults have received one vaccine dose and evidence is growing that booster shots may not be needed. The articles summarized in this issue discuss breakthrough infections, coronavirus immunity and newly released state rankings. To access each article, just click on the headline.

**Harvard  
Business  
Review**

[The Fastest-Growing U.S. States Have the Worst Health Care](#), by David Blumenthal and David C. Radley, Harvard Business Review, 6/2/21

**TMR Topline™** - The op-ed by David Blumenthal and David Radley of the Commonwealth Fund summarized the Fund's annual state rankings, finding that the U.S. states with the fastest-growing population score worst when it comes to the quality of their residents' health and access to care. The fastest-growing states in terms of population over the last decade, including Texas (42), Florida (41), and Georgia (46), consistently [rank last when it comes to health and health care](#). Low-ranking states have large numbers of uninsured adults, high levels of premature death from treatable conditions, less investment in public health, too many people with mental illness unable to get the care they need, and residents facing mounting insurance costs. Texas has the highest uninsured rate in the U.S. and the largest number of residents who said they skipped health care they needed due to cost. Georgia has one of the highest rates of premature death from treatable conditions and one of the highest rates of infant mortality. The authors argue that the subsidies included in the American Rescue Plan should be made permanent, stating that health insurance

coverage is the most important determinant of access to health care.



[Healthiest states in the U.S. during the 2020 pandemic were in the Northeast](#), by Kerry Breen, NBC News, 5/25/21  
**TMR Topline™** - Digital health company Sharecare's Community

Well-Being Index looks at social determinants of health like access to health care, food, housing, transportation and personal health risk factors including physical health, community and social bonds, financial management skills and strength of purpose in daily life. For the first time in several years, Hawaii didn't top the list, finishing second after Massachusetts, followed by New Jersey, Maryland and New York. Residents in the top-ranked states have lower-than-average individual health risk factors and say that they enjoy supportive relationships with other people, have the tools to manage and increase their financial security regardless of income, and have access to high-quality health care and jobs. For the second year in a row, Mississippi finished last, ahead of Arkansas, New Mexico, West Virginia and Kentucky. Researchers from Sharecare and Boston University's School of Public Health assessed 450,000 respondents from 50 states.

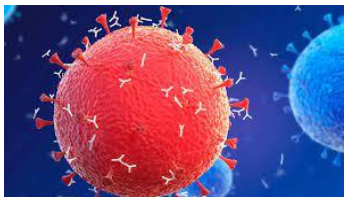
**TMR Take** – The ranking criteria differ but Mississippi was last in both. **TMR** is proud that Sharecare ranks its home state of New Jersey third in the U.S. Sandwiched between New York and Philadelphia, the Garden State's robust healthcare system and social services safety net often is overlooked. In an intriguing anomaly, 9 of Sharecare's top 10 states voted for Biden; 9 of the bottom 10 voted for Trump in the 2020 Presidential election.



['Breakthrough' infections are rare, and just 2% result in COVID-19 deaths.](#)

[CDC says](#), by Melissa Healy, Los Angeles Times, 5/26/21

**TMR Topline™** - During a four-month span when more than 100 million Americans were vaccinated, 10,262 post-vaccination infections were reported and 160 – all between the age of 71 and 89 – died, less than 2% of those with “breakthrough” infections. Asked about the vaccines, Vanderbilt University epidemiologist Dr. William Schaffner stated: *“It gives them an A, if not an A-plus. It shows that infections among vaccinated people are, first of all, unusual. And second, that there are very few among these infections that are linked to deaths.”* Even when breakthrough infections occurred, the vaccines likely prevented severe disease, hospitalizations and deaths in those who got them. The study also found that variants were not more likely to cause breakthrough infections. Dr. Schaffner concluded: *“The vaccines are working,”* adding that we have *“to see how long vaccines’ protection lasts. And we have to keep monitoring for those variants. We must remain on alert.”*



[Immunity to the Coronavirus May Persist for Years, Scientists Find](#), by

Apoorva Mandavilli, New York Times, 5/26/21

**TMR Topline™** - Two recent studies report that immunity to the coronavirus lasts at least a year and possibly a lifetime, improving over time especially after vaccination. These findings may reduce fears that protection against the virus could be short-lived. Indications are that most people who have recovered from Covid-19 and who later were immunized will not need boosters. Those who were vaccinated but never infected likely will need booster shots. A small number of those infected who did not have a large immune response may also need booster shots.

Cells that retain a memory of the virus are in the bone marrow and may produce antibodies in response to an infection of the virus at any time according to the study [published on Monday](#) in the journal Nature. The second study, posted online at BioRxiv, found that memory B cells [continue to mature and strengthen](#) for at least one year after the infection. *“The papers are consistent with the growing body of literature that suggests that immunity elicited by infection and vaccination for SARS-CoV-2 appears to be long-lived,”* said Scott Hensley, an immunologist at the University of Pennsylvania who was not a part of these research projects. Dr. Michel Nussenzweig, an immunologist at Rockefeller University in New York who led the study on memory maturation said, *“People who were infected and get vaccinated really*

*have a terrific response, a terrific set of antibodies,”* He also said. *“I expect that they will last for a long time.”*

**TMR Take** – Fully vaccinated Americans can breathe a sigh of relief - they have little to fear from breakthrough infections. It’s likely that booster shots may be needed in future years, similar to the seasonal flu shots. Recovered Covid patients may not need them.



[Democrats in both chambers launch public option effort](#), by Mary Ellen McIntire, ROLL CALL, 5/26/21

**TMR Topline™** - Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chair Patty Murray, D-Wash. and House Energy and Commerce Chair Frank Pallone Jr., D-N.J., recently issued a request for information asking for input on a public option, which would establish a government-run health plan to compete with private insurers. *“Our goal in establishing a federally administered public option is to work towards achieving universal coverage, while making health care simpler and more affordable for patients and families,”* they wrote. Democrats in both chambers have proposed different bills that would establish a public option, but Murray and Pallone indicated they would develop a new proposal. They will have a difficult time passing legislation to enact a public option because Democrats have a very slim majority in Congress. Although the Senate Democrats could use the reconciliation process to pass public option legislation without Republican support, it would require no defections among Senate Democrats.

Senators Tim Kaine, D-Va. and Michael Bennet, D-Colo. said, *“We are glad to see a public option gaining momentum in the Senate. Over the last five years, we have worked to draft the Medicare-X Choice Act, which we believe is the best public option proposal available. We look forward to working with the Biden Administration and our Senate leadership and colleagues in moving a public option forward to bring us one step closer to achieving universal health care in this country.”*

**TMR Take** – TMR agrees that the passage of a public option is the important next step towards universal coverage in America since it will foster competition for subscribers. The insurance lobby is funding the [Partnership for America's Health Care Future](#) to fight public option proposals in Colorado and Connecticut. Why? They don't want a new competitor that might disrupt their profitable insurance market.