- NIC’s Skilled Nursing COVID-19 Tracker (Tracker) featuring the latest CMS data update for the week ending December 27 show that the newly confirmed cases among residents reached unprecedented levels in the West as 4.20% of residents tested positive during the week ending December 20th. This was the highest rate recorded across all four U.S. regions since CMS began reporting nursing homes COVID-19 data in late May. The South reported the second highest rate at 3.00%, followed by the Midwest (2.88%), and Northeast (2.20%).

- The share of total new COVID-19 confirmed cases was highest in the South at 37%, the equivalent of 11,418 new residents within 5,320 skilled nursing properties. Roughly 1 in 3 of those properties reported new confirmed cases during the week ending December 20th.

- For the week ending December 20th, the Tracker showed that California had the highest per-resident rate of new COVID-19 infections. Data from John Hopkins University also showed that California had the highest number of cases in the U.S. over the same period with 44,824 new confirmed cases reported on December 19.
- Earlier in the pandemic, the number of new cases followed a similar pattern as the number of fatalities - The higher the infection rate, the higher the fatality rate. By December 2020, the trends showed a different pattern. The Midwest reported the third highest infection rate (2.88%), however, properties there reported the highest fatality rate at 0.74%.

- For the week ending December 20th, 38% of overall new fatalities occurred in the Midwest, the highest share across all four U.S. regions with 2,078 new fatalities within 4,633 skilled nursing properties. In contrast, the South reported the second highest share of total new fatalities (29%).

- Four out of the twelve states in the Midwest (Iowa, Kansas, Indiana and Ohio) reported a fatality rate as a share of residents above 0.80%.

- There is no single explanation to the high or low fatality rate, but a host of contributing factors, including safety protocols, medical procedures, state restrictions and mask mandates, understanding of what is effective response from prior experience, staffing shortages... etc.
-While the share of total properties in California accounted for half of the West, NIC’s Skilled Nursing COVID-19 Tracker Data show that about 15% of overall new cases occurred in California during the week ending December 20th, nearly three times that of all other states in the respective region.

-California reported the third highest share of total new COVID-19 fatalities in the U.S. at 7.2%. Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio states (Midwest region) accounted for over 20% of all new COVID-19 fatalities in the U.S.

-Pennsylvania accounted for 8.43% of overall new fatalities, the highest share in the Northeast and the second highest share in the U.S.
About 30% of properties in the Midwest reported high shortages of aides and nearly 29% were critically short on nursing staff for the week ending December 20. Staffing shortages continue to be a serious concern and a contributing factor driving the high number of cases and fatalities across the U.S. four regions, particularly, in the Midwest.

While fatality rates reached new records in the Midwest, South and West regions in December 2020, the Northeast’s fatality rates remain below the high points seen earlier in the pandemic. In late May, skilled nursing properties in the Northeast reported the highest number of fatalities, the highest number of cases among residents, and the highest number of cases among staff/personnel, however, since July 5th, the northeast have had the lowest infection rates and fatality rates as a share of residents compared to other regions of the country.