

2021-22 Winter Weather Outlook: December to February

Seasonal outlook from the world's most accurate forecaster¹ to help brands make more informed marketing decisions.

Weather Summary

- The winter forecast is more complicated than usual due to the return of La Niña and the potential for a weak polar vortex that could impact how much of the US is expected to have a cold versus mild winter.
- These contrasting weather scenarios could cause significant differences in consumer behavior this winter.
- Below-average temperatures are expected in the north. Mild to above-average temperatures are expected in the south and east. If the polar vortex weakens, cooler temperatures will expand further into the US.
- Above-average precipitation is likely in the northwest, parts of the midwest and the plains. Average precipitation is forecast for most of the rest of the country.

What does this mean for marketers?

- Marketers should prepare for a potentially sudden shift from mild to very cold temperatures that could lead to demand for seasonal products, foods and beverages, apparel items and health products. Given the state of the pandemic, the ability to be outdoors later into the season is likely to benefit consumer spend as time outdoors enables socializing, dining, recreational activities and commerce.
- Marketers should consider product promotion, offers and creative imagery that address needs and utilize empathy as very cold temperatures – especially in the north – could put additional strain on consumers already stressed from COVID, product shortages and an energy crunch.
- Sudden weather shifts could cause a disconnect between consumer needs and messaging. Campaign strategies should utilize agile tactics to weatherproof their media and messaging.
- Regional seasonal demand is likely to be more significant in the north and more modest in the south and east if mild temperatures dominate. Marketers should consider a regional approach to campaigns and strategies for increased effectiveness.

45%

of consumers use weather information to decide what to buy over the next day.²

52%

use weather information to decide what to buy in the next 2 – 10 days.²

Stay informed to learn more about how to help protect and improve your campaign performance.

Monthly weather outlook

Monthly outlook: [December](#) | [January](#) | [February](#)

December outlook

Figure 1: December 2021 temperature versus average

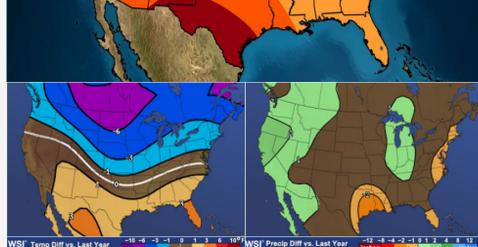


Figure 2: Temperature year-over-year

Figure 3: Precipitation year-over-year

Forecast

In December, the north is likely to be colder than average and colder than in 2020. The south is forecast to be warmer than average and close to or slightly warmer than in 2020.

Precipitation is likely to be greater than last year in the west and midwest, both of which had below-average levels in 2019. Precipitation is forecast to be similar to last year in the rest of the country.

January outlook

Forecast

In January, the north is likely to be colder than average and colder than in 2021. The south is likely to be warmer than average with temperatures similar to 2021.

Precipitation is likely to be greater than the very dry 2021 levels in the northeast and similar to 2021 levels elsewhere. Precipitation is forecast to be above average in the northwest and the southern plains.

Figure 1: January 2022 temperature versus average

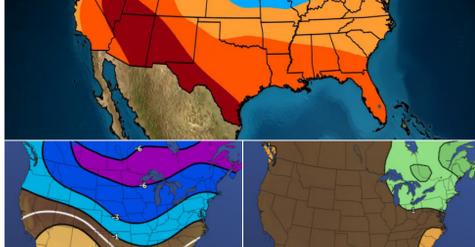


Figure 2: Temperature year-over-year

Figure 3: Precipitation year-over-year

February outlook

Figure 1: February 2022 temperature versus average

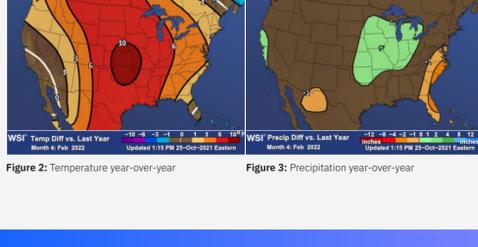


Figure 2: Temperature year-over-year

Figure 3: Precipitation year-over-year

Forecast

February is likely to bring the first feelings of spring weather in the south and east where temperatures are forecast to be warmer to much warmer than average. Most of the country is likely to experience a warmer February than in 2021.

Precipitation levels are likely to be similar to 2021 with a wet northwest and dry south. In the midwest, levels should be greater than last year and closer to average.

Industry impact

Industry: [Retail](#) | [CPG](#) | [QSR](#) | [Health](#)



Retail

Weather-driven considerations for retail marketers this season

- Anticipate strong winter seasonal activity and sales in the north in December and January with a potential tapering in February. Southern and eastern regions may need additional prompting and incentives for seasonal sales.
- Cold, snowy, stormy weather tends to increase stress for consumers, leading to more responsible and preparation-oriented mindsets. This may lead to stocking-up behaviors for consumers in the north and occasionally the rest of the country.
- Activate spring campaigns and strategies for the south and east in February when spring-like temperatures are likely. The north and northeast may also see early spring weather, but it is less likely in those regions until after February.

[Contact us](#) to learn more about recommended retail weather triggers to help protect and improve your campaign performance.

29%

of people say checking the weather is more important now than before COVID because they put more thought and planning into shopping trips.³

>1000%

A home-improvement retailer achieved >1000% click-through rate performance over benchmark by utilizing winter seasonal [IBM Watson Advertising Weather Targeting](#).



Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG)

Weather-driven considerations for CPG marketers this season

- **Food and beverage:**
 - Seasonal sales of foods and beverages should be in full swing in the north in December and remain strong into February. Southern and eastern regions may see more periodic spikes in demand on cooler weather days.
 - Cold, snowy, and stormy weather could lead consumers to alleviate stress with foods that are comforting or nostalgic.
- **Alcohol:**
 - Cold and stormy weather could increase demand for and consumption of beer, wine and spirits as consumers alleviate stress. If the polar vortex weakens and colder weather moves south, that could also have a positive impact on demand.
 - Consider introducing and incentivizing trials of new products in February in the south as seasonal transitions inspire consumers to try new products.
- **Home care and personal care:**
 - Increased time spent indoors over the winter – especially in the north – along with increased concern for germs and viruses could increase demand for cleaning products and disinfectants.
 - Early demand for spring home-cleaning products may also occur in the south and east if early feelings of spring weather occur in February.
 - Dry, cool weather can increase the demand for lotions and moisturizers.

[Contact us](#) to learn more about recommended CPG weather triggers to help protect and improve your campaign performance.

27%

of people spend more money at the start of a new season.²

+26%

An ice-cream brand increased product sales by 26% with [IBM Watson Advertising Weather Targeting](#).



Quick-Service Restaurant (QSR)

Weather-driven considerations for QSR marketers this season

- Seasonal transitions can increase social activity. Consumers are more likely to dine in restaurants and shop in-store. These can be important moments to drive and capture on-premises dining activity.
- Seasonal transitions are also when consumers start new health routines, including eating healthier foods. Consider campaigns around healthier menu items as spring is likely to emerge during February in the south and east.
- Cold, snowy, and stormy weather can lead to the consumption of richer, comforting, nostalgic foods to help alleviate increased stress levels. Demand may be greater and earlier in the north and west given the timing and strength of cooler temperatures but there can still be cold days in the south and east.

[Contact us](#) to learn more about recommended QSR weather triggers to help protect and improve your campaign performance.

51%

of people agree that they are more social during seasonal transitions.²

+23%

A quick-service restaurant increased sales by 23% by anticipating consumer demand ahead of time with [IBM Watson Advertising Weather Targeting](#).



Health

Weather-driven considerations for health marketers this season

- Seasonal transitions can inspire new health routines. The start of winter could lead to spikes in sales of health-related products, vitamins and self-care items.
- Winter weather will lead people to spend more time indoors, potentially increasing concern for the spread of germs and viruses. This could increase health-oriented mindsets and purchases of related products.
- The potential for an early spring in the south and east could mean an early start to allergy season in those regions.
- Consumer health and health-related product needs and purchases could shift as winter weather factors solidify, increasing the importance of an agile and predictive marketing strategy.

[Contact us](#) to learn more about recommended health weather triggers to help protect and improve your campaign performance.

84%

of health-actively consumers use weather information to actively manage at least one medical condition.³

+300%

A cold and flu brand improved click-through rates by 300% and increased social lift by 71% by using [IBM Watson Advertising Weather Targeting](#) to connect with consumers as they researched symptoms and conditions.

Learn more about the power of AI and Weather Targeting.

[Learn more](#) →

Sources:

1. "Global and Regional Weather Forecast Accuracy Overview, 2017-2020," ForecastWatch <https://www.forecastwatch.com/AccuracyOverview2017-2020>, commissioned by IBM
 2. Results based on IBM Spring Retail Survey, Feb 2022 (published internally)
 3. AI Health and Weather Impact Study," Clare Clifford, IBM Watson Advertising included in the Adweek article "In a Cookieless World, Weather Data Can Perform a Connection Between Marketing and Consumers," Aug 2020 <https://www.adweek.com/partner-articles/in-a-cookie-less-world-weather-data-can-forge-a-connection-between-marketers-and-consumers>

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