

COVID-19 CONSUMER RESEARCH WAVE 58 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 7 - 9, 2021

MDC and **The Harris Poll** have partnered to conduct research to monitor the pulse of the American Consumer.

The executive summaries on the pages that follow provide insight into current consumer attitudes and behavior and can be used to help navigate the changing industry landscape. We hope this information proves useful to you and your team as you address these changes in real time and strategize for your next moves.

As always, we are here to help. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.

Positively,

Ryan Linder + The MDC Family
Global Chief Marketing Officer, EVP



WAVE 58

WAVE 58 INTRODUCTION

The following research was conducted between **May 7 - 9, 2021** by The Harris Poll. Fielded among a nationally representative sample of **2,062** U.S adults, the newest research demonstrates how consumers' perceptions are rapidly shifting as new developments emerge.

Section:

01

Topic:

IS AMERICA READY FOR NORMAL?

Introduction:

As vaccination numbers continue to climb, COVID cases around the U.S. are steadily declining signaling the return to normal is near. But after a year of quarantine and virtual gathering, getting back to real-life in person interactions feels like a foreign concept, are we ready?

- End in sight: Today two-thirds (67%) believe that the worst of the pandemic is behind us, a staggering comparison to just (33%) at the end of 2020. Boomers and GOP members (74%) are particularly optimistic compared to Gen Z (50%) and Democrats (64%).
- Cautious optimism: Although the approval rating for the vaccine rollout is high (76%), two-thirds (65%) say they still fear a new wave, down from (70%) in the beginning of April. And only less than half (46%) feel comfortable visiting family or friends without a mask today, even with the new CDC guidelines.
- With an end in sight, anxiety about returning to normal is setting in: Today, (61%) of Americans say they're anxious about returning to normal public activities and socialization, which is highest for Millennials (69%) (vs 59% Boomers for comparison). And while bars and restaurants are opening up, less than a quarter (22%) of Americans tell us they would feel comfortable socializing with a stranger at a bar.

Implication:

Returning to "normal" might be a little awkward as documented in last weekend's SNL skit Post-Quarantine Conversations. Thankfully, the folks at The New York Times curated a guide to re-entering society.

Section:

02

Topic:

HOT SPOTS STILL A LITTLE TOO HOT: USA TODAY-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

The latest data from Harris Poll shared exclusively with USA Today finds that even with bustling airports again, more than half of Americans aren't ready to travel internationally. Some more insights:

- Travelers ready to go today skew younger as (62%) of Millennials and (60%) of Gen Z want to pack their bags, while just (26%) of Boomers say the same.
- Among the majority of Americans who say they aren't open to traveling internationally today, (58%) say they aren't sure if or when they will ever be ready.
- Despite America being in 'revenge travel' mode (67% say "the worst of the pandemic is behind us" vs. (33%) in January), nearly three-quarters say "fear of different variants" has impacted their interest in traveling abroad. Yet among those who will grab their passport (23%) are not deterred by the variants.

Implication:

"Travel is still considered a high-risk activity for a number of people even though it's starting to take off," John Gerzema, CEO of The Harris Poll said, "and international travel, is amplified, obviously."

Section:

03

Topic:

THREE WAYS BRANDS CAN BUILD TRUST FOR THE POST-COVID WORLD: AD AGE-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

Trust can make or break a brand, and it's especially critical during times of change, Will Johnson, CEO of The Harris Poll, says about our latest survey in partnership with Ad Age. More about the data behind building brand trust:

- Risks have never been higher: two-thirds (63%) of Americans state that a brand that loses its trust cannot earn it back.
- A strong majority of Americans (60%) said that well-known brands taking stands on social issues is more important than in the past. Gen Zers and Millennials overwhelmingly share this stance (70% each).
- Why do consumers feel this way? A majority (53%) say that companies have "more platforms and tools at their disposal to speak to and influence a large number of people."
- More than three-quarters (76%) said that they expect companies to follow through on the stances they take, and (50%) said that they should donate money to causes they profess to support to back up their words.

Implication:

"We're at a turning point in the pandemic, where expectations, needs and desires are evolving rapidly," Will Johnson says. "Smart CEOs should be taking steps now to build, maintain or augment consumer trust for the long haul."

Section:

04

Topic:

DESPITE EVERYTHING, MOST OLDER MILLENNIALS ARE CONTENT WITH HOW THEIR LIVES TURNED OUT: CNBC-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

This week in our partnership series with CNBC “Middle-Aged Millennials,” we take a look at the psyche of the Older Millennial and determine their level of content with life so far and what contributes to making them feel that way.

- Our survey explored a variety of topics — including health, technology usage, families, and future ambitions — and found that (78%) of Older Millennials said they were satisfied with their lives.

- Money matters: Those Older Millennials whose household income is above \$150,000 a year are nearly universally content (94% who were “somewhat” or “very much” content), while those bringing in less than \$50,000 a year are less content (63% in the same categories).
- Where you live may have only a slight effect on happiness: (80%) of Older Millennials who live in a major city with more than 4 million people said they were very content with their lives, and (76%) of those in the suburbs said the same.

Implication:

Despite obstacles like student loans and entering the workforce on the heels of the Great Recession, most Older Millennials are content with the way their life has turned out thus far.

Section:

05

Topic:

APPLE IOS 14.5 USERS MIGHT BE MORE AMENABLE TO BEING TRACKED BY BRANDS: AD AGE- HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

Apple's system update has kept the ad world on edge as iOS 14.5 now requires users to opt in to sharing data and being tracked by apps. But according to our new Ad Age-Harris Poll, while consumers are concerned about data collection, most aren't taking steps to actively avoid it.

- Nearly half (47%) of iPhone users on the most recent iOS update would allow Facebook to track and share iPhone data, compared to just (19%) of users not on iOS 14.5.
- Millennials tend to be more security minded than their Gen Z counterparts: Millennials (42%) are more likely to have done research to understand how the data collected by apps is used, compared to (31%) of Gen Z users and (29%) of all U.S. adults.
- Concern about personal data collection remains high, with (70%) of U.S. adults at least somewhat concerned about personalized internet ads. Gen Z users are reportedly the least concerned age group, with only (53%) somewhat concerned about personalized ads.

Implication:

Although Apple's new feature is a win for users and a step in the pro-privacy protection direction, apps like Facebook, that take in billions in revenue from targeted ads, are putting up a fight and argue that the changes are self-serving to Apple, and don't actually protect consumer privacy.

Questions?

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