

# COVID-19 CONSUMER RESEARCH WAVE 59 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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April 8 - 21, 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 59

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## WAVE 59 INTRODUCTION

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The following research was conducted between **April 8 - 21, 2021** by The Harris Poll. Fielded among a nationally representative sample of **42,935** 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?

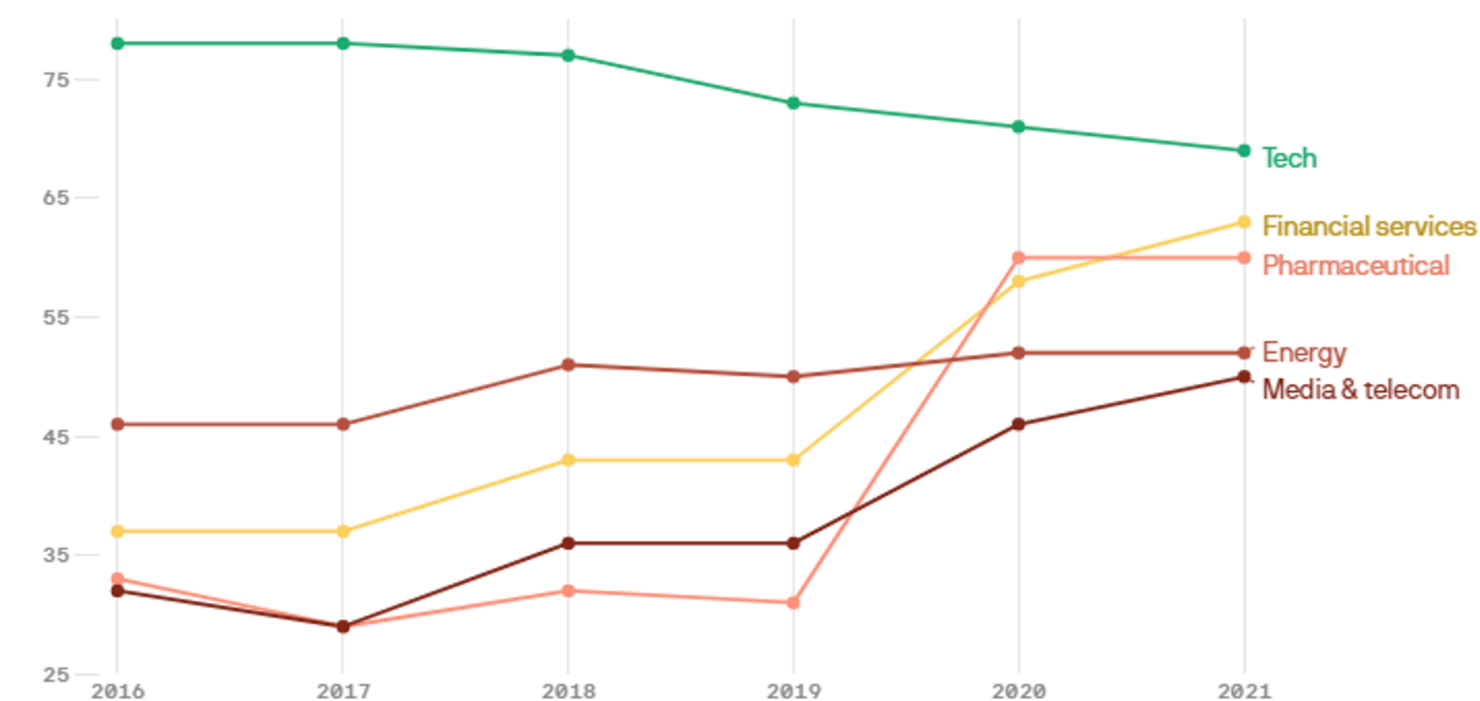
Introduction:

The financial services, telecom, and pharmaceutical sectors all gained ground with the public this year, [while the biggest tech companies saw their reputations erode](#).

- **Financial services companies** like JPMorgan Chase & Co., State Farm Insurance, Goldman Sachs, Mastercard, and others **saw huge gains in response to the role they helped play in the [country's financial recovery](#)**.
- **Pharma's reputation score got a big boost thanks to the addition of Moderna to the reputation 100 list and Pfizer's improving score**. The sector would've probably been even higher this year, if it weren't for Johnson & Johnson's flat year-over-year performance.
- **Media and telecom companies** like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T **saw strong gains as people became [more reliant on broadband](#)**. Streaming firms like Netflix and Hulu saw some declines, in response to streaming fatigue.

Harris 100 industry reputation scores

Industry average scores 2016-2021



Industries are colored by their 2021 score of [Excellent](#), [Very good](#), [Good](#), [Fair](#) or [Poor](#)

Implication:

Even though Americans were hyper-connected to their devices throughout the pandemic, their relationship with many of the world's biggest tech firms has continued on a downward trend, suggesting that people see their products as necessary evils.



Section:

# 02

Topic:

## A DIVIDED NATION FLOCKS TO PARTISAN BRANDS

Introduction:

After a tumultuous election season, [brands with clear partisan identifications are becoming more popular](#). Americans want to use and support brands that align with their values, not just their budgets.

- **Patagonia is the top brand in America.** The brand, which in 2017 sued the Trump Administration to protect national monuments, took a further turn left last year, by sewing a clear (and profane) message in its clothing ahead of the election.
- **Several prominent conservative brands performed well, too.** Chick-fil-A moved up in the rankings, Hobby Lobby appeared on the list for the first time, as did Goya, which became a political lightning rod [after the company's CEO praised then-President Trump](#).
- Americans listed MyPillow and the Trump Organization among **the companies they're most aware of**, but both have strongly negative reputations. The Trump Organization came in last place in this year's rankings.

2021 RANK	COMPANY	TREND 2016-20	2021 SCORE	CHANGE IN RANK
#1	Patagonia		82.7	↗ 31 +
#2	Honda Motor Company		81.6	↗ 14 +
#3	Moderna		81.3	- +
#4	Chick-fil-A		81.1	↗ 7 +
#5	SpaceX		81.1	- +
#6	Chewy		80.9	- +
#7	Pfizer		80.2	↗ 54 +
#8	Tesla Motors		80.2	↗ 10 +
#9	Costco		80.1	↘ 2 +
#10	Amazon.com		80.0	↘ 7 +
#11	REI		79.9	- +
#12	USAA		79.2	↗ 9 +
#13	Wegmans		79.2	↘ 7 +
#14	Subaru		79.2	- +
#15	Unilever		79.2	↗ 20 +
#16	Apple		79.1	↗ 11 +

Implication:

This year's reputation rankings reflect a [return to normalcy](#) in the business world. While many of the most polarizing companies are doing better than last year, they aren't necessarily the most visible companies.



Section:

# 03

Topic:

## PFIZER, MODERNA REPUTATIONS SOAR POST- VACCINE

Introduction:

2021 is the year for [vaccine producers](#), at least reputationally. Moderna and Pfizer shot up the ranks this year. Moderna is Americans' third-favorite company this year, and Pfizer came in at 7th — up from #61 a year ago.

- CVS climbed 13 spots since last year **but Johnson & Johnson isn't getting the same bounce from its [coronavirus vaccine](#)**. It fell four spots, slipping to #72 on this year's list — considered a "good" but not "excellent" or "very good" corporate reputation.
- Both Pfizer and Moderna **scored 10 to 20 points higher across all measures when compared to last year's results**. Pfizer rose 54 places on the list, [while Moderna did not make the 2020 top 100 at all](#).
- **Something to keep in mind:** A year ago, when Americans were still sanitizing our groceries and figuring out how to live in a state of lockdown, Clorox was America's favorite company. Instacart, Peloton, and Zoom leapt onto the list for the first time in 2020. **None of these companies made the top 100 this year.**

Implication:

America's affections have shifted away from the companies that helped us manage pandemic life and toward the vaccine manufacturers that are helping to end it.



Section:

# 04

Topic:

## BIG TECH'S REPUTATION TAKES A PANDEMIC PLUNGE

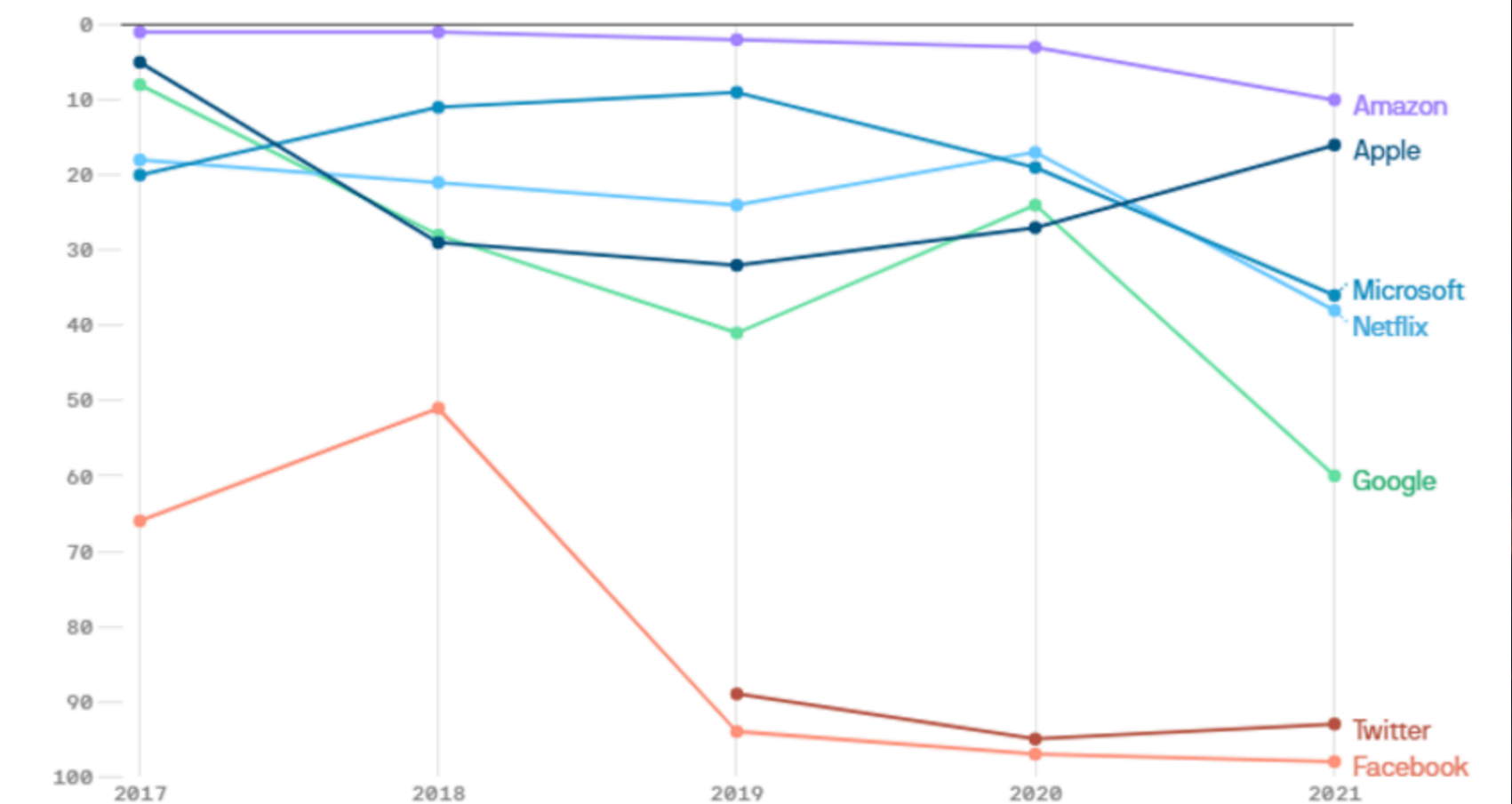
Introduction:

Despite their role in helping users stay connected through pandemic-era isolation, Americans have fallen further out of love [with Big Tech](#).

- **The biggest loser** among tech giants was Google, which faced PR headwinds in 2020 as the government sued it for [monopolistic practices](#).
- However, Apple, which spent the last year making record profits and [touting its privacy protections](#), was the **only tech giant to substantially improve its reputation score**.
- Companies that **sell products and services to businesses and individuals** — like Microsoft, Apple, Sony, and HP — **fared much better than ad-supported social media and information tech companies** like Facebook, Google, Twitter, TikTok, and Reddit.
- Social media leaders Facebook and Twitter **failed to improve their standing near the bottom of the list**. Both social media platforms find themselves in the bottom 10 ranking for every reputation dimension.

Harris 100 tech company rankings

2017-2021



Companies are colored by their 2021 score of [Excellent](#) [Very good](#) [Good](#) [Fair](#) or [Poor](#)

Implication:

Although tech's reputation does not compare favorably to other industries in our poll, the [Big Five still found a way to win the pandemic](#) monetarily - which is probably also why Americans do not view them with a sympathetic lens.



Section:

# 05

Topic:

## THE REHABILITATION OF WELLS FARGO

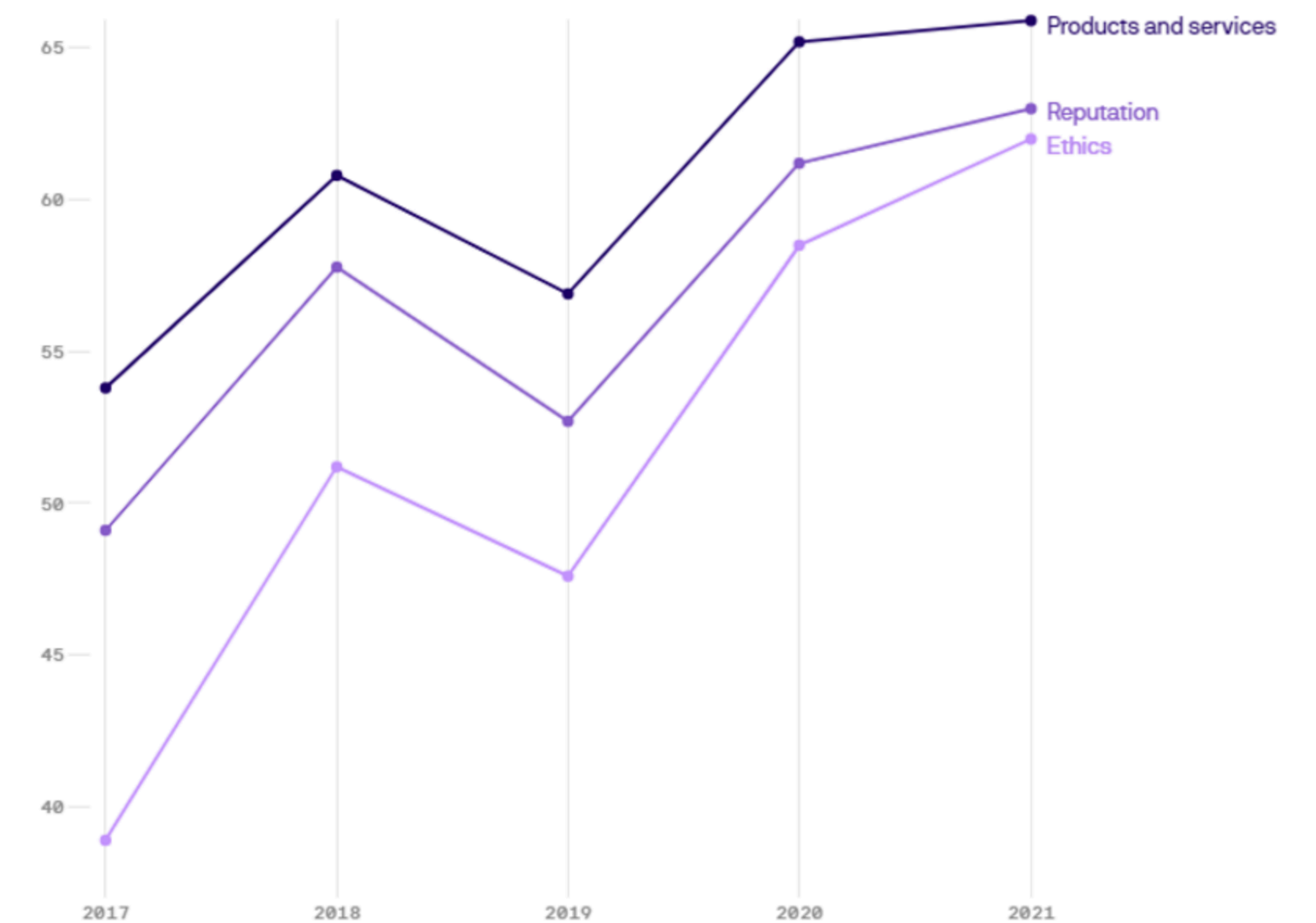
Introduction:

The bad news started with the revelation in 2016 that the bank had created millions of fake accounts and opened them without the account holders' permission or knowledge. It didn't end there — a series of scandals followed, tarnishing Wells Fargo's reputation — and that of its former CEO. But now, Wells Fargo is no longer viewed as the [least ethical big company in America](#).

- Overall, Wells Fargo's reputation score of 63.0 in 2021 **puts it well ahead of Facebook**, tied with TikTok, and slightly behind Comcast.
- Wells Fargo's Ethics score of 38.9 in 2017 was **by far the lowest in the history of the study**. This year, it has recovered to 63.0 — a big jump, even if it's still in the bottom five.
- **Other banks have also been improving**. The reputation score for Bank of America, for instance, increased from 59.7 to 70.5 between 2017 and 2021.
- **Banks are generally unloved**, with the notable exception of USAA, which has outperformed in every year of the survey. And **Wells Fargo remains at the bottom of the banking pack**. That said, the **sector as a whole is improving**.

Wells Fargo Harris 100 scores

2017-2021



Implication:

After hitting extreme Axios-Harris lows in 2017, Wells Fargo embarked upon a massive [public rehabilitation campaign](#) in 2018. It seems to have worked.



# Questions?

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**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

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