

# COVID-19 CONSUMER RESEARCH WAVE 60 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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May 21 - 23, 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 60

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## WAVE 60 INTRODUCTION

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The following research was conducted between **May 21 - 23, 2021** by The Harris Poll. Fielded among a nationally representative sample of **2,072** U.S adults, the newest research demonstrates how consumers' perceptions are rapidly shifting as new developments emerge.

Section:

# 01

Topic:

## IS THE CDC'S NEW MASK POLICY WORKING OUT? TIME-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

As demand for vaccinations drops nationwide, states are turning [to increasingly dramatic measures to convince people to get their shots](#). But perhaps the boldest incentive yet has come from the CDC, which last week said that fully vaccinated people can go mask-less, inside and out. More from our new survey in partnership with TIME featured in their [Coronavirus Brief newsletter](#):

- Nearly four in ten (37%) of people vaccinated in the last seven days said that the **CDC's new mask policy encouraged them to get a shot**.
- **But the data also reveal an arguably more interesting finding:** When asking those who'd been vaccinated in the last seven days why they'd gotten a shot, almost half (48%) said **they got vaccinated, at least in part, because they wanted to protect themselves around mask-less unvaccinated people**.
- Although the theme behind driving forces revolves around protecting oneself from the virus, more than half (53%) of those vaccinated in the last seven days **reported wanting to protect others who could not get the vaccine themselves**. This figure was also high for those who plan to get vaccinated (49%).
- Yesterday, [Colorado was the latest state](#) to introduce a lottery system to entice stragglers.

### Why Americans say they've recently gotten vaccinated, or plan to soon get vaccinated

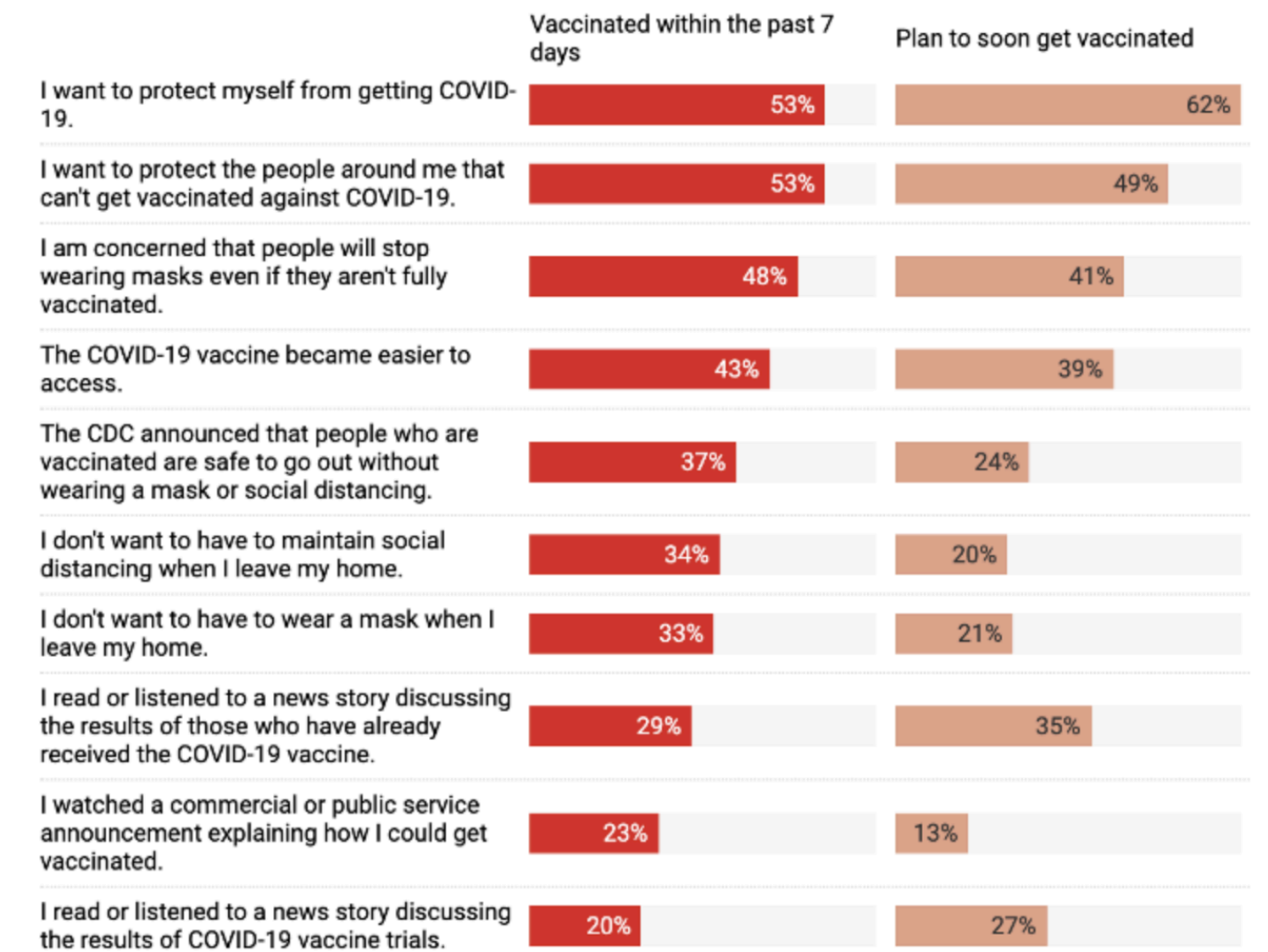


Chart: Elijah Wolfson for TIME • Source: TIME/Harris Poll

TIME

Implication:

Whether that was the CDC's intended result or not, it does seem that its mask policy is affecting people's decisions about vaccination. And with demand slowing, any uptick, regardless of reasoning, is a good sign.

## Section:

# 02

### Topic:

# PANDEMIC PETS: RASH DECISION OR LIFELONG FRIEND?

### Introduction:

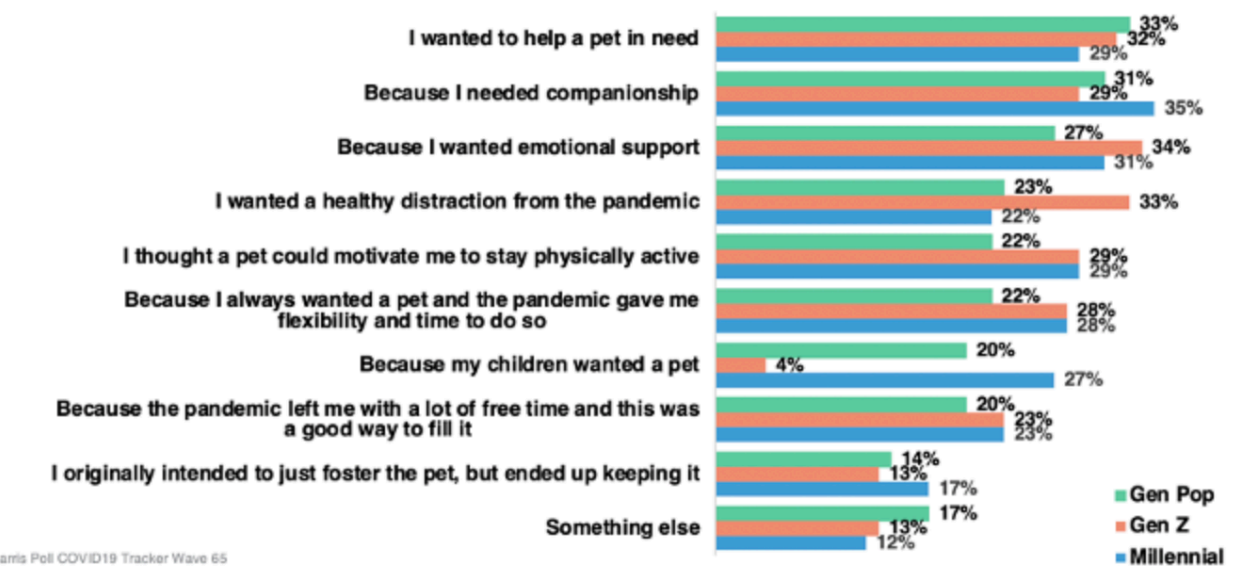
The lockdown in the early months of the COVID pandemic made Americans realize a harsh truth: they were lonely. Many resorted to adopting pets as a proxy for companionship and shelters couldn't keep up with the demand. Now that the country is returning to normal, some pets are being returned and shelters are facing potential overcrowding.

- Four in ten (44%) of Americans **took in a pet during the pandemic**, whether it be through adoption, buying from a breeder, or a foster fail. Nearly half (48%) consider themselves first time pet owners.
- **Altruism is to blame:** One third (33%) say they got a pandemic pet because they **wanted to help an animal in need**. For younger Americans, however, the **need for companionship** (35% Millennials), and the **emotional support of a pet** (34% Gen Z) were the driving factors behind bringing home a friend.
- Three-quarters (73%) of those who brought in a pandemic pet said they **never considered returning it**. Millennials, however, were most likely to say that **they at least considered it** (37%). Ironically, Millennials were one demographic most likely to get a pet (61%).
- Most Americans (40%) think owners **rushed their decision to get a pet**, which is why they are returning them. In terms of what Americans think is an acceptable reason to return a pet, one third (32%) say that **not being able to afford the pet is understandable**.

THE HARRIS POLL: COVID-19 IN THE U.S.

### Overall, Altruism Is Impetus for Getting Pandemic Pets; Younger Americans Look for Companionship and Emotional Support

Why did you decide to get a pet during the pandemic? Please select all that apply.  
Among those who got a pet during the pandemic



Source: Harris Pet COVID-19 Tracker Wave 65  
BASE: GOT A PET DURING PANDEMIC (n=4,773)  
RPP03 Why did you decide to get a pet during the pandemic? Please select all that apply.  
Harris Insights & Analytics LLC, A Bayview Company © 2020

### Implication:

Americans are returning to the office full-time but that doesn't mean your pet has to suffer with adjusting to not having their "pawrents" home. Consider the advice the [American Kennel Club](#) shares when it comes to transitioning your pet to being home alone.

Section:

# 03

Topic:

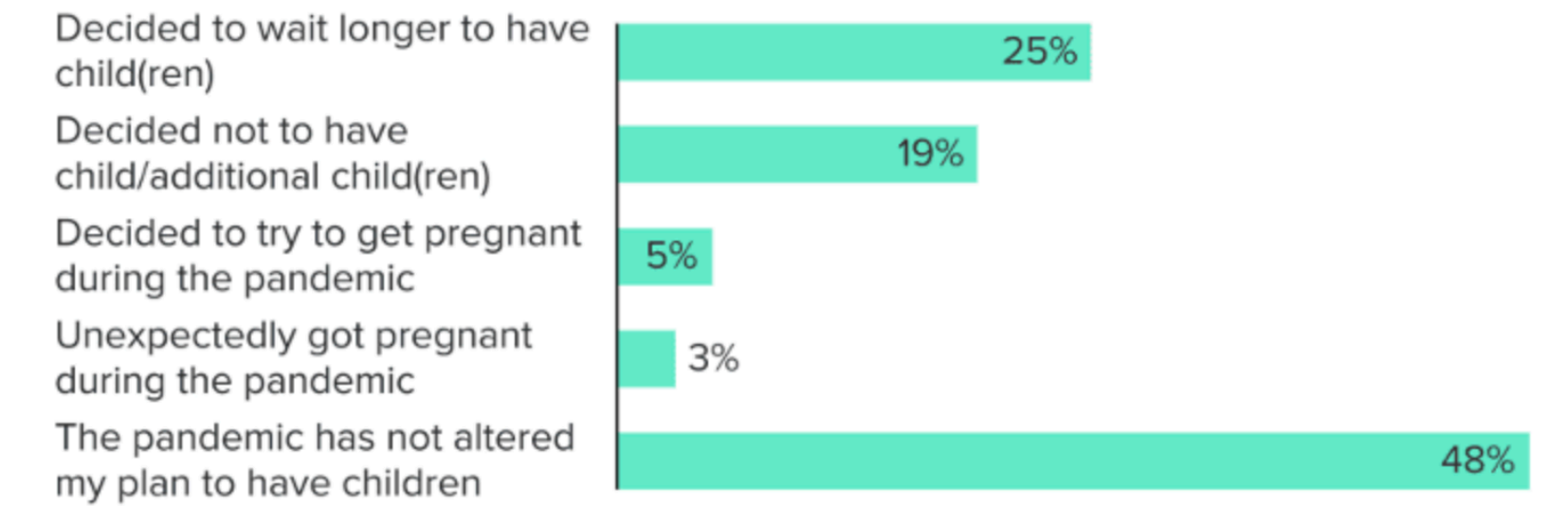
## OLDER MILLENNIALS UNCERTAIN ABOUT EXPANDING THEIR FAMILIES: CNBC- HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

[This week in our partnership series with CNBC "Middle-Aged Millennials,"](#) we take a look at the effect of two economic crises on the decision to have children.

- A quarter of Older Millennials (25%) say they decided to wait longer to have children because of the pandemic.
- **Some are avoiding having children altogether.** One in five (19%) of Older Millennials say they have **decided not to have a child or additional children at this time because of the pandemic.**
- Among those who find they want children less following the pandemic, the most common reason is that **they don't want to bring a child into the world right now, followed by uncertainty about the economy.**

Which of the following ways did the COVID-19 pandemic alter your plans to have children?



Source: The Harris Poll/CNBC survey of 1,000 older millennials ages 33-40 in March 2021.

The Harris Poll

Implication:

While it's too early to tell what impact the pandemic will have on birth rates specifically among Older Millennials, data indicates that Americans typically have fewer children during and immediately after economic downturns, says Phillip Levine, an economics professor at Wellesley College who has studied birth rates.

Section:

# 04

Topic:

## THE DNA OF WORK HAS CHANGED: USA TODAY-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

With the COVID-19 pandemic waning, a hybrid model that allows employees to work from home part-time seemed to be gaining favor among companies and workers, we find in our survey shared exclusively with USA Today.

- Four in ten (40%) of Americans prefer to **work from home full-time**, compared with (35%) who seek a **home-office hybrid** and (25%) who want to go **back to the office full-time**.
- Workers' top concern about returning to their cubicles is **losing the flexibility remote work provides** (36%). Many workers also point to social anxieties, too. (35%) are leery of **having to engage in small talk**; and (28%) of **having forgotten how to socialize**.
- Although most of those surveyed would like to work from home at least part-time, (36%) say their companies **expect all employees to be back in the office full time in the next four to six months** and another (29%) say they'll need to be back **by the end of the year**.
- Nearly half (47%) say their firms haven't surveyed employees or provided them a platform to express concerns to gauge their interest in returning to the office full-time.

Implication:

The wants of employees seem to be clashing against most U.S. businesses that want their workforce back in the office, but companies will likely need to find middle ground or be willing to lose workers.



Section:

# 05

**Topic:**

## WHOLE FOODS, STARBUCKS USE CRYPTO - SHOULD LOYALTY PROGRAMS BE NEXT? FORBES- HARRIS POLL

**Introduction:**

The current, post-pandemic environment is pretty near perfect for [cryptocurrency's spread](#). Consumers quickly adapted to a range of new technologies in the past year, so their appetite for change has been whetted. Forbes writes more about our survey conducted on behalf of [Couponcabin.com](#):

- Nine in ten (89%) of Americans have **at least heard of cryptocurrencies**, with seven in ten (71%) being familiar with **Bitcoin** - the world's largest crypto by market cap.
- **You can't hold loyalty in your hand:** (44%) of Americans are interested in receiving encrypted, digital currencies, such as Bitcoin, Ethereum and Dogecoin, as an alternative to traditional cash-back reward programs from retailers.
- More than three in ten Americans (31%) describe cryptocurrencies as the **"future of money."** Not surprisingly, **younger consumers are early adopters** – nearly (28%) of millennials own or have owned some form of cryptocurrency.

- **Some major retailers are now accepting the currencies:** [Starbucks](#) allows its rewards members to convert crypto to cash balances on their cards using an app called Bakkt. [Whole Foods, Nordstrom, Ulta, and Crate & Barrel](#) also accept the Spend app, which allows customers to use crypto for payment.
- [CNBC looks at](#) how brands are capitalizing on the popularity of the meme cryptocurrency Dogecoin.

**Implication:**

Cryptocurrencies are changing fast, and they are altering the financial industry with equal speed. If retail loyalty adopts them, it can expect the same. By tracking the successes and missteps of early adapters, retailers may get a real hold on crypto success.

# Questions?

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