

# COVID-19 CONSUMER RESEARCH WAVE 66 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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July 2 - 4, 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 66

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## WAVE 66 INTRODUCTION

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The following research was conducted between **July 2 - 4, 2021** by The Harris Poll. Fielded among a nationally representative sample of **2,000** U.S. adults, the newest research demonstrates how consumers' perceptions are rapidly shifting as new developments emerge.



Section:

# 01

Topic:

## THE DISRUPTION OF THE LABOR MARKET

Introduction:

The U.S. has added 850,000 new jobs in the month of June, but the number of people in the labor force is still on par with October 2020. We unpack why these jobs are not being filled and future talent values and expectations.

- **Where have the workers gone? Home.** Among unemployed Americans, a quarter (24%) say that having to **stay home to care for their family** has prolonged their job search, including (31%) of parents. In addition, (69%) say **lack of childcare is holding people back** from being able to apply for/accept jobs, including (72%) of parents..
- [The New York Times](#) writes about mothers bearing the burden when childcare facilities closed because of COVID - ultimately leading to a high number of women dropping out of the workforce and contributing to a “She-cession.”
- **No one wants to settle:** Although there are many jobs available, (66%) say they are **low-wage and not enticing**. In addition, (72%) say that pandemic unemployment insurance provided **low-wage workers the opportunity to hold out for a better paying job**.
- In fact, **competitive salary (61%) is the top deciding factor** to work at a company - except for Gen Z, among whom only (30%) say competitive salary would be a deciding factor. Instead, **Gen Z value flexibility over money:** (40%) want flexible working hours and (36%) the ability to work from home.

Implication:

Those currently looking for new job opportunities have the ability to be selective, meaning companies need to consider this new pandemic-created landscape when pitching what their company [can offer](#).



Section:

# 02

Topic:

## AMERICANS ARE SLACKING IN SOCIAL SECURITY KNOWLEDGE: NATIONWIDE-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

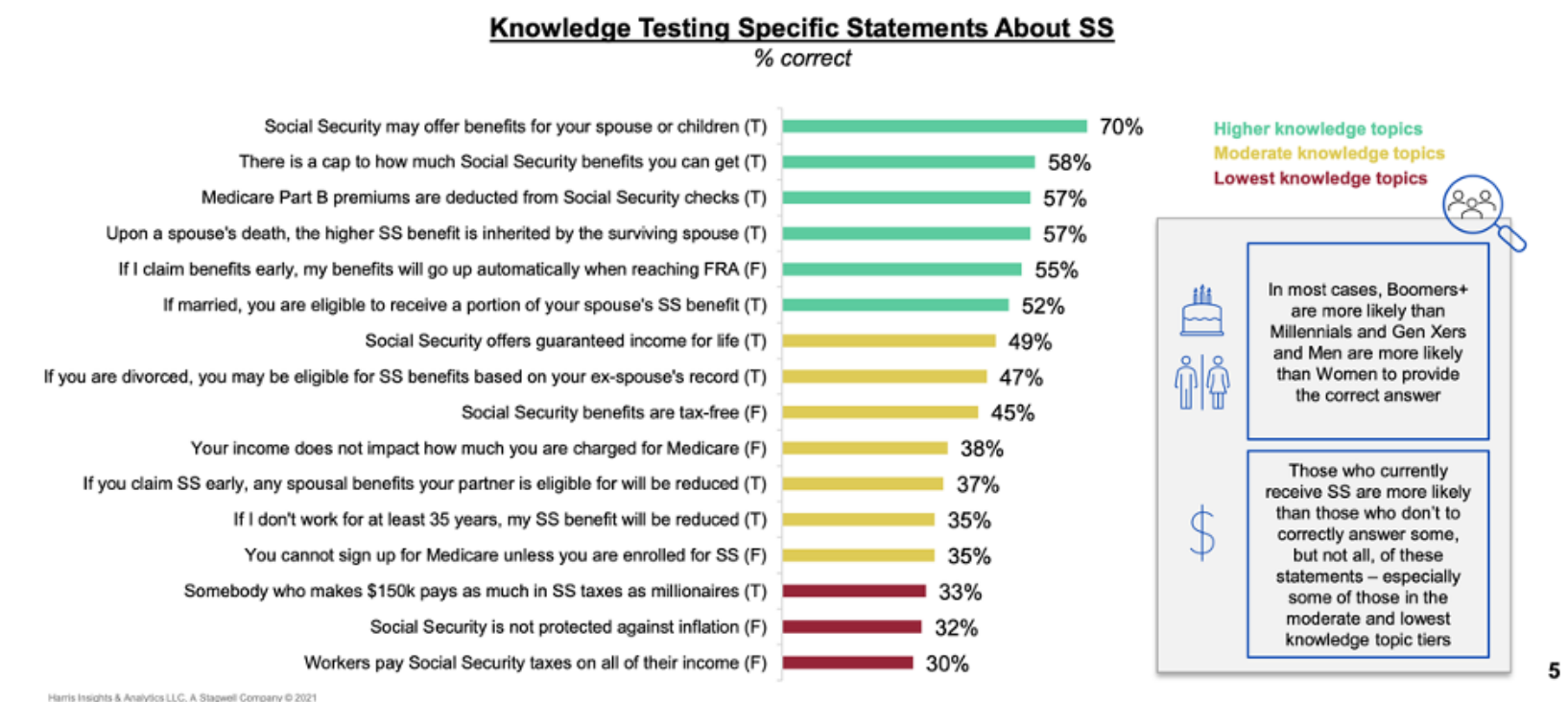
Nationwide Retirement Institute partnered with Harris Poll to gauge American's knowledge regarding Social Security and found that many people have a high level of confidence about their knowledge, but there are a lot of specifics they don't know. Here are five things Americans don't know. Read more in the [2021 Social Security Consumer Survey](#).

- **Eligibility age:** Two in five (39%) don't know the eligible age to receive full benefits.
- **Payments:** Half of those not already receiving Social Security (51%) don't have a clear sense of how much they will receive in [Social Security](#) income.
- **Spousal/child benefits:** One in three (30%) don't know that Social Security may offer benefits for spouses and children.
- **Inflation protection:** More than a third (37%) incorrectly believe that Social Security benefits are not protected against inflation.
- **No adjustments:** Nearly half (45%) mistakenly believe if they claim early, their benefits will go up automatically when reaching full retirement age or don't know this is false.

KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

### But When Tested About Specifics, Clear Gaps in Knowledge Exist

For all but one statement, less than two-thirds provided the correct response



Implication:

“This survey shows us that Social Security is too complex for many Americans to navigate alone, which creates the need for trusted financial professionals to help them determine the best plan for them,” said Tina Ambrozy, senior vice president of Strategic Customer Solutions at Nationwide.



## Section:

# 03

### Topic:

# OFFICE CLEANLINESS IS ON THE MINDS OF AMERICAN WORKERS AS THEY RETURN TO THE OFFICE: ESSITY-HARRIS POLL

### Introduction:

We partnered with [Essity](#), a global health company, to better understand the sanitization issues that are of greatest concern to employees transitioning back to the office, here's what we found:

- A majority (84%) of Americans intend to **continue the enhanced hygiene practices they adopted during the pandemic**, even as more Americans become vaccinated against COVID-19.
- However, employees question whether **their workplace will maintain cleanliness protocols**—with (65%) of employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19 expressing concern about the cleanliness of the space before going back to the office.

- Six in 10 (59%) of employed Americans who worked in an office prior to COVID-19 have **at least some concern about being around coworkers**.
- **Heightened expectations:** More than half would like to see employers and building operators provide resources such as hand sanitizing stations (58%), more frequent cleaning and sanitizing (58%),

### What hygiene measures make employees feel confident and safe returning to the workplace?

A recent survey of U.S. workers offers insights to stepped-up hygiene and cleanliness expectations for office and public spaces in post-pandemic life.



65% of employed Americans who went into an office prior to COVID-19 are/were concerned about the cleanliness and hygiene of the office upon their return.



84% of Americans are likely to continue the enhanced hygiene protocols they adopted due to the pandemic.

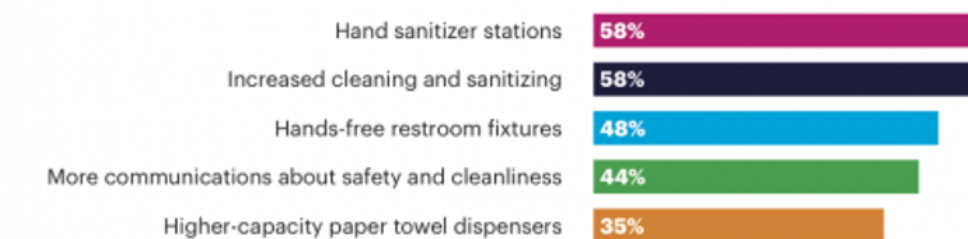
86%+ of American adults still believe increased cleaning and sanitizing are important in public places.

- 90% Doctors' offices/healthcare facilities
- 89% Restaurants
- 88% Hotels
- 88% Theaters
- 87% Fitness centers
- 86% Retail stores
- 86% Entertainment facilities (stadiums/museums)

Old habits can be changed as those who have already returned to the office are noticing some new coworker behaviors:



### What do employees want to see in the workplace?



Source: Results of an online survey conducted within the United States by the Harris Poll on behalf of Essity, from May 5-7, 2021, among 2,064 adults ages 18 and older. <https://www.essityusa.com/media/us-news/2021/backtobusiness.html>



### Implication:

As companies ask employees to return to the office, employers should ask themselves if they are ready to welcome them back by gauging their feelings and concerns - if they're not, they need to take time to assess their plans and guidelines to ensure employees always feel safe.



Section:

# 04

**Topic:**

## COVID FEARS TICKING BACK UP AS DELTA VARIANT SPREADS

**Introduction:**

As the Delta variant of COVID-19 continues to spread across the globe, COVID-related fears are rising here in the U.S. Americans reported lower levels of fear over the last few months but now our tracker shows its creeping back up.

- **Americans' fear of a new COVID wave** is up 7-points from all-time low on May 16th (63% vs. 56%), in addition to **fear of ventilator shortages** (55% vs. 48%).
- Fear of **returning to public activity** is also up 8-points since May 16th (54% vs. 46%), with comfortability of **going out for dinner and drinks** dropping slightly by 3-points over the last week.
- **"The worst is behind us"** mentality is down from June 6th (76% vs. 70%). White Americans (72%) are more optimistic compared to Hispanics (61%) and Black Americans (58%).
- More than one in 10 (13%) say they will continue **to wait and see before getting vaccinated** and new data about the Pfizer vaccine's efficacy against the Delta variant may delay them longer.
- [The Wall Street Journal](#) details how about half of adults infected with the Delta variant in Israel were fully vaccinated, prompting the Israeli government to reimpose some precautions as concern grows.

**Implication:**

The Delta variant may be causing more confusion and skepticism around the efficacy of the vaccines currently available, right after America missed the 70% herd immunity goal set by President Biden for July 4th.



Section:

# 05

**Topic:**

## **PATRIOTIC MARKETING WON'T WIN OVER GEN Z: AD AGE-HARRIS POLL**

**Introduction:**

If marketers are hoping to win over young consumers with patriotic plays, they might be disappointed in the results - more about our latest survey with [Ad Age](#):

- **Gen Zers are ambivalent:** (36%) say they are neither more nor less **likely to buy from a brand that uses patriotism in their advertising**. (32%) said they would be less inclined, while only (12%) said they'd be much more likely.
- **A generational contrast:** Positive feelings towards brands who celebrate the U.S. in their ads grows as respondents get older with (39%) of Millennials, (49%) of Gen Xers, and (50%) of Boomers saying they would be more inclined to make a purchase.
- Nearly half (48%) of Gen Zers would want to see brands **advocate for equality in their ads, followed by open-mindedness** (47%), while all other generations ranked family values in their top spot.
- More than half (54%) of Gen Zers said they were **more likely to shop with a brand that took a stand on social justice issues**. Millennials (48%) are also highly responsive to socially conscious campaigns compared to Gen X (38%) and Boomers (35%).

**Implication:**

“On the whole, we see that Americans value themes like family, equality and localism that tie into the Fourth of July holiday,” said Harris Poll CEO Will Johnson. “That said, we’re seeing an emerging trend among Gen Z consumers, who are less likely to buy from brands that embrace these values—so it’s key for brands to segment messages to their core audiences, especially around holidays like Fourth of July.”



# Questions?

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