COVID-19 CONSUMER RESEARCH WAVE 116 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 2 - 4, 2022

The Harris Poll
Harris Insights & Analytics LLC, A Stagwell Company
STAGWELL

Stagwell 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 Stagwell Family
Global Chief Marketing Officer, EVP


WAVE 116

WAVE 116 INTRODUCTION

The following research was conducted between **September 2 - 4, 2022** by The Harris Poll. Fielded among a nationally representative sample of **2,025** U.S. adults, the newest research demonstrates how consumers' perceptions are rapidly shifting as new developments emerge.

Section:

01

Topic:

A LONELY SUMMER FOR AMERICA'S INTERNS: BLOOMBERG-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

One undiscussed downside of remote working is the effective management of young people. This was brought into stark contrast in a new Harris Poll with Bloomberg showing that young workers found it difficult to make connections, get feedback, and learn company culture while encountering half-empty offices, absent managers, and sporadic networking opportunities.

- **Remote work makes for lonely young workers:** More than half of Gen Z interns/newly hired workers said working remotely makes it **difficult to establish connections. In contrast** (55%) said they feel like they're **missing out on an essential step into adulthood** because of how the pandemic affected office culture.
- Two-thirds of respondents said that **understanding corporate office culture is essential to their career. Still, remote** and hybrid work models **make it difficult** to understand and participate in their workplace culture (56%).
- And for those in fully remote or hybrid roles, (37%) said they feel like they're **falling behind** their counterparts who work in the office full time.
- **A disconnect in working arrangements is part of why:** While (46%) of interns worked remotely, over a third said their managers were in the office. And for the (33%) of interns who worked in-person, nearly a quarter said their managers worked remotely.

Implication:

In all the debate about the return to the office, we're overlooking what the future of work means—our collective role as managers of future talent. We forget we're dealing with an interrupted generation—first at school —and now at work. And if this past Summer is any indication, young people have lost faith in us as managers to mentor, listen and create a workplace where they can launch their careers. Remote work doesn't mean remote management.

Section:

02

Topic:

AMERICANS BLAME INFLATION ON A FAILURE IN LEADERSHIP

Introduction:

As spending data shows, Americans took the Summer to YOLO, indulging in revenge travel, concerts, and rescheduled weddings. But as they go back to work, persistent inflation is damping their outlook, according to new September Harris polling:

- 7 in 10 (71%) say rising inflation is **negatively impacting their ability to afford their monthly budget**, leaving (69%) to say they are likely **to cut back on spending** right now and more than half (56%) to **adjust the rest of their 2022 financial plans.**
- This is because less than a third of Americans (32%) feel confident in their finances and turn, feel **upset that leaders aren't doing enough for the economy** (55%), and **angry** that they don't know when economic upheaval will end (44%), and even regret in **missing out on experiences that they can't afford** to participate in now (40%).
- Less than half of Americans (48%, +4%-pts from March 2022) think inflation will likely **taper off** by 2023. (Younger Americans are more optimistic: Millennials and Gen Z think it's likely to taper off (58%, 53% v. Gen X: 46%, Boomer: 41%).

Implication:

Inflation is now like another more powerful variant of COVID, aiming at Americans' budgets and lifestyles. But leaders steeped in the economic numbers and talking points forget that inflation is highly personal: Rising prices mean painful tradeoffs and people missing out on things they want to do and experience, making this all feel like the third year of a seemingly never-ending interrupted life. The midterms could be a referendum on whom Americans feel most likely to give them back control over personal happiness.

Section:

03

Topic:

BACK TO WORK AND STAYING PUT

Introduction:

Earlier in the year, all talk was of The Great Resignation. Then Harris Poll data found The Great Regret: Job-switchers who found the grass was not greener. And now, as Americans return to work, six-in-ten are saying they are settling back into their jobs, regardless of whether they want to.

- Four in ten Americans feel their **overall financial health is worse**, and nearly 3 in 5 (59%) say the current economy has killed their **confidence in their finances**, according to a recent survey with NerdWallet.
- **A rocky economy is keeping employees where they are**: A recent Harris survey with Bloomberg found that (62%) of employees said current economic conditions are a key reason why they plan to stay at their current jobs and that companies have more leverage in the job market these days than employees (58%).
- It doesn't mean those choosing to stay are happy with their pay, as a recent survey with CareerBuilder, featured in BizWomen, found that less than half of employees (46%) report **that fair compensation is what attracts them most** to their current roles.

Implication:

The Great Resignation is suddenly now The Great Lay-Low. But don't count on employers to have the upper hand for long. Akin to Harris polling on Quiet Quitting, employers must recognize their employees might be staying put, but not because they love their jobs. If the pendulum swings, those not willing to risk their job security for the unknown in this economic climate might be the first out the door. Complacent managers using the economy as a crutch for talent management will be the first to find this out.

Section:

04

Topic:

THE ECONOMY IS CHANGING, AND SO IS PHILANTHROPY: FORTUNE-HARRIS POLL

Introduction:

According to my good friend and co-CEO Will Johnson's latest op-ed in Fortune, when it comes to philanthropy, Americans rose to the occasion during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there were distinct differences between Americans in time and money given.

- **Younger Americans give their time; older Americans give their money**: (49%) of adults under 45 **volunteered** in the last year (v. ages 45+: 31%) and more often attended a fundraiser, rally, or other supporting events, yet those 45 and up more often **made a financial contribution.**

- Younger Americans were more likely to **give financial contributions to educational charities** than their older counterparts (28% v. 15%), perhaps because of their recent school experiences, their school-aged children, and their support of government action on student loan debt.

- **Women have more brand loyalty to specific organizations, while men are more cause-oriented:** While women report being more likely to **support a particular organization** for their charitable contributions, men are more motivated by donating **to a cause** they want to help.

Implication:

Charitable organizations will need to be wary of potential dips in charitable donations as inflation continues to undercut American finances and their generosity. Johnson writes that "nonprofits must shift the focus of their messaging as they appeal for support in this inflation-battered economy. If charitable dollars become scarce, nonprofits should step up their appeals to younger Americans who are more inclined toward in-kind contributions of their time and skills."

Section:

05

Topic:

HOW INFLATION IS CHANGING OUR DIET

Introduction:

First, COVID created shortages at the grocery store, and now the highest inflation in forty years is prompting people to shift their eating habits again, according to recent Harris Poll data.

- More than three-quarters (76%) of Americans say that **grocery prices** are where they feel inflation most in their daily lives, and over 4 in 10 (42%) say they think it in **eating/drinking out at restaurants**.
- **But inflation is also changing eating habits**: Back in May, a Harris/Alpha Foods study covered by CNBC found 4 in 10 Americans (40%) reported **entertaining at home more than going out** to combat food inflation.
- **Going out less:** We also found that a third of Americans (33%) are still **willing to spend on eating out** given the state of the economy, and 3 in 10 (29%) would rather spend money on local experiences such as **trying a new restaurant** (v. travel experiences: 37%, physical products: 34%).
- It's **all about convenience and experience**. As we found in our latest Harris Brand Platform data, consumers were **more likely to purchase from Panera** (usage +8.9) and **recommend the restaurant (+5.1)** after the company focused on convenience, dining experience, and even their logo in their rebranding efforts.

Implication:

Inflation is tightening American budgets and causing Americans to be more mindful of where and when they spend their money, especially regarding restaurant meals. Companies must be cognizant of their advertisements, promotions, and overall experience to keep consumers interested and coming back.

Questions?

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