



World Health Day: Special Report

by The Harris Poll

Introduction

In recognition of World Health Day, The Harris Poll reflects on a year's worth of public opinion polling data to understand what we've learned about our own health and signals of change for the future. The events of 2020 evolved and reprioritized consumer views of mental and physical health unlike any year that has preceded and these evolutions will have lasting impact.

Learnings

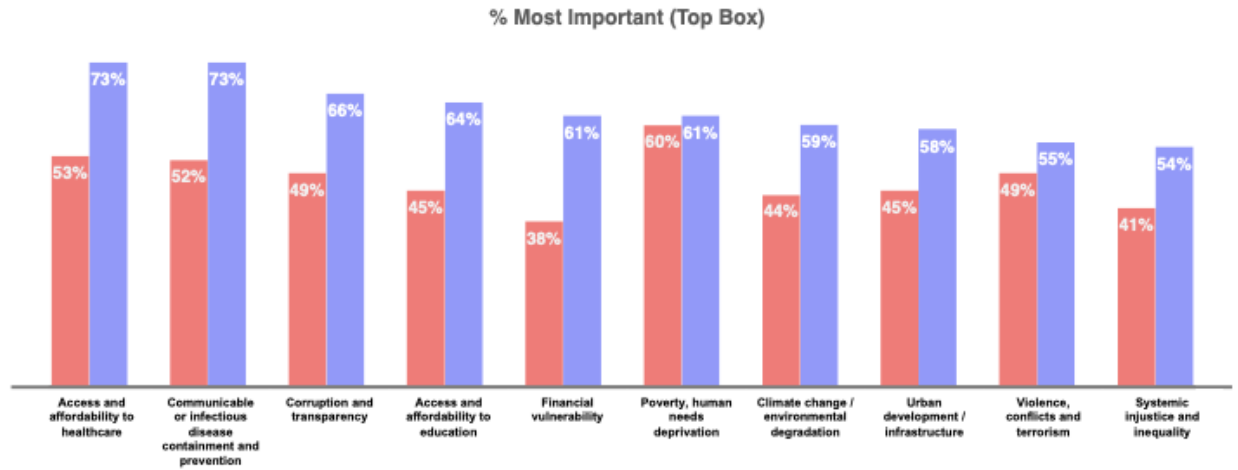
Global Re-prioritization of Issues Brought Healthcare To The Forefront

Insights from [The Harris Poll Milken Institute Listening Project](#), a global survey of over 30,000 people across 27 nations, showed a dramatic shift in global priorities focused on healthcare. The two part research project asked citizens across 27 nations to identify their most urgent social and economic priorities; respondents were polled before and during the pandemic to track the impact of COVID-19 on global human needs.

In February of 2020, just weeks before the pandemic became a reality for many, poverty and deprivation of human needs was the number one human issue, yet seven months later, access and affordability to healthcare and communicable/infectious diseases became tied at the top. As a revealer of the lack of basic access and protections that most people face, there seems to be a reckoning that the systems in many countries aren't working to protect the public's health.

Healthcare, infectious diseases and transparency rise in importance

● FEBRUARY 2020
● SEPTEMBER 2020



Global Fear Gave Rise To A Mental Health Crisis With Gen Z At The Center

During the pandemic, our global data from the Listening Project indicated that people globally experienced a loss of hope and confidence in their country; (71%) of people globally told us “This is the lowest point in my country’s history that I can remember,” and without a clear pathway to restore order, people are suffering emotionally; nearly three quarters are experiencing anxiety (71%), and over half (54%) feel lonely.

COVID’s fear around the world September 2020

	AUS	BR	CH	IND	IT	JP	MAL	MEX	NG	PHIL	UK	US
Fear of a global recession	91%	88%	77%	85%	86%	91%	90%	85%	82%	90%	87%	80%
Country will be in a recession in 6 months	41%	28%	5%	27%	39%	36%	22%	42%	44%	24%	51%	33%
Fear of losing a job	58%	66%	57%	76%	59%	61%	84%	82%	67%	87%	58%	57%
Changed life in a major way	52%	90%	42%	83%	58%	44%	77%	83%	78%	93%	56%	65%
Lowest point in country history	78%	72%	55%	76%	65%	70%	83%	64%	68%	76%	76%	74%
Fearful and anxious	58%	78%	62%	79%	69%	79%	80%	68%	70%	84%	65%	63%

In the U.S. alone, Gen Z adults (46%) were the most likely generation to say that their mental health has worsened compared with before the pandemic, followed by Gen Xers (33%), Millennials (31%), Boomers (28%), and older adults (9%), according to the 2021 [APA/Harris Poll Stress in America survey](#).

In addition, according to our research in consultation with the CDC, more than two-thirds (72%) say “More people my age are suffering from mental health issues now compared to before COVID-19.” Today, three quarters of young people (75%) are stressed about being in limbo and the uncertainty of their future, (68%) are stressed they can’t socialize, (66%) fear missing out on key milestones, and without school events and traditions to anticipate, students say they are struggling to stay motivated (40%).

Americans’ Personal Health Suffered Outside Of The Virus During The Pandemic

According to our latest [Harris Poll COVID-19 Tracker](#) data, only half (50%) of Americans told us they are in good health today while (42%) say they are in “relatively decent” health. In fact, our new [APA Harris Poll Stress in American report](#) found that (61%) of adults reported experiencing undesired weight changes since the start of the pandemic, with more than 2 in 5 (42%) saying they gained more weight than they intended. Of this group, adults reported gaining an average of 29 pounds (with a typical gain of 15 pounds, which is the median). What’s worse is that nearly half of Americans (47%) said they delayed or canceled health care services since the pandemic started.

Despite Hardships, Americans Found Both Inner Strength and Community

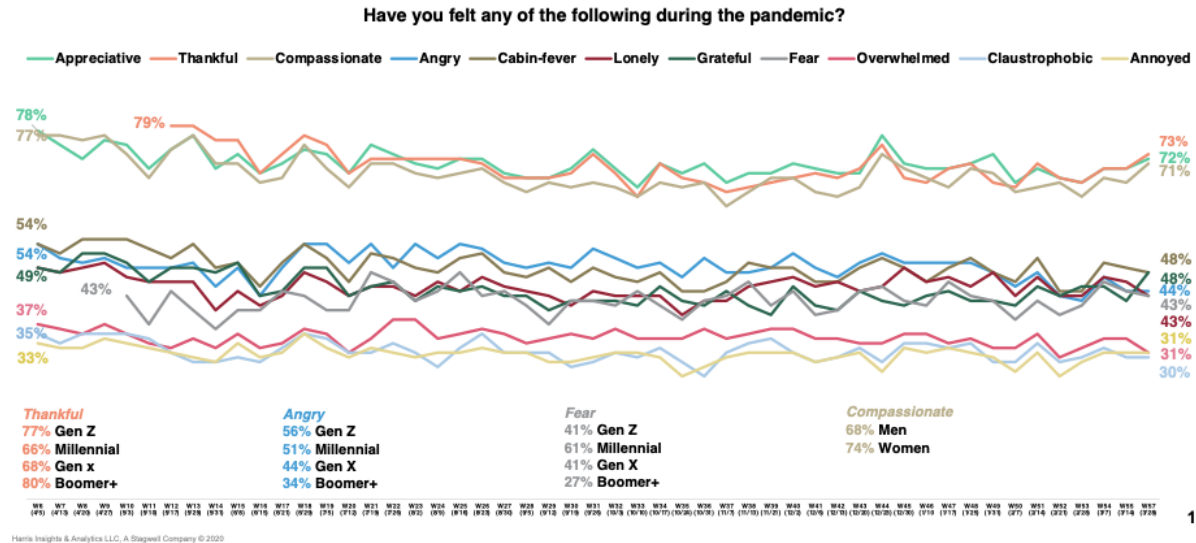
Amid the struggle, Americans began a reappraisal of life and priorities. Nearly three quarters (73%) say they are thankful for their families, relationships and the sacrifices that the Americans have made for coronavirus and (71%) are compassionate and taking the time to check in with the people they care about.

And when we asked Americans what the past year taught us about ourselves, the importance of friends and family, determination to persevere, and a focus on personal and mental health were common themes. A central area of agreement among Americans is that they found an inner-strength. One-third (32%) said, “I am mentally and emotionally stronger than I thought I was,” while a similar percentage (33%) said “I learned how to be more self-sufficient and independent.”

This build-back better mentality also applied to our relationships. The majority of Americans (53%) said “I learned how to live better with more people in my household,” while (45%) said, “I became closer with my neighbors.”



Beneath Anxiety, There Is a National Reappraisal “On Life”



Signals for the Future

Youth Dispel Mental Health Stigmas → shift towards a new mental health movement defined by transparency and empathy

Despite the swirling of emotions, where (53%) of Gen Z say they are overwhelmed and (52%) are lonely, the same amount say they are grateful (53%) and our data signals they’re leading a new movement on mental health. According to our research with the United Nations Foundation Girl Up, seven in ten (70%) say “There is not enough awareness for how COVID-19 is affecting the mental health of people my age” and (75%) agree “We need new resources to address mental health issues during COVID-19 because current resources are not enough.” Our APA-Harris Poll data also shows that Gen Z adults are nearly four times as likely as older adults to say they could have used more emotional support than they received since the pandemic started (Gen Z adults: 79%, Millennials: 75%, Xers: 54%, Boomers: 40%, older adults: 21%). But in lieu of new resources, our Harris Poll tracking data shows Gen Z are coping by trying to focus on school (44%), learning new hobbies (36%), and talking to their friends about what they are struggling with (27%).

The betterment boom, for all

While our data shows the public endured great suffering over the past year, it also shows signs for a holistic wellness rebound; this is what we’re calling “the betterment boom,” where one’s own wellness includes others, too. Our data shows that Americans are adopting lifestyle changes to serve their own betterment and that of society; (76%) will continue to support charities they donated to this year due to the pandemic in the future, (43%) plan to stay more connected to friends and family after the pandemic, and (42%) plan to stay more physically active. In addition, (38%) are prioritizing creating a safe and

healthy home environment; and (27%) are prioritizing their work/life balance. And what's more is that (88%) say the focus of healthcare needs to shift to preventative care and wellness

Digital Acceleration and Innovation For Better Health Outcomes

The pandemic forced consumers to be more reliant on and savvy in digital, and one example of pandemic migration is that many people used telehealth for the first time. Our data found the majority (65%) plan to continue to use it in the future. This potentially-permanent shift in how Americans have traditionally received healthcare signals a disruption in the primary care doctor-patient relationship with on-demand telehealth services. Overall, more than one-third (35%) of the general public would consider replacing primary care doctors for qualified doctors on-demand via telehealth. Gen Z and Millennials index even higher with half (50%) considering to replace their primary care doctor for telehealth. BIPOC communities, who (rightfully so) have higher degrees of mistrust in the traditional healthcare system, are also more likely to embrace telehealth as a replacement for their primary care doctor (52% Hispanic, 43% Black, and 40% Asian vs. only 32% of White Americans).

Primary care doctors aside, telehealth is setting out to digitally transform healthcare post-COVID. Even older generations are embracing digital healthcare services with nearly half (48%) of all Seniors 65+ saying they will likely use telehealth after the pandemic. Nearly half of all Americans say telehealth appointments are good for “Asking medical questions” (53%), “Reviewing lab test results” (48%) or “Get a sign-off for prescription refills” (46%), but only (34%) say they use it if they are actually sick and even less (15%) when their child is sick. This means the human interaction is still of utmost importance as (76%) say they would miss in-person visits if their primary care physician moved mostly to telehealth. Like many other services post-COVID, expect a hybrid approach to start, (42%) say they prefer to use ‘a mix of both telehealth and in-person’ to start.

In fact, healthcare is among the top three industries rated for doing the best job at digitally adapting their products and services to the evolving needs of consumers (e.g., online shopping experience, digital customer service; use of contactless payment; in-app experience). Looking ahead, consumers want even more digital innovation to increase better health outcomes; (74%) support Use of AI in healthcare research purposes for detection of diseases, and chronic condition management.

Implications

COVID-PTSD - the lingering psychological effects of COVID-19 will shape new consumer behaviors and values well past the pandemic itself with **heightened importance on health, safety and space.**

Touchless-frictionless commerce isn't just about convenience but health and wellness as Americans cautiously re-enter the marketplace.

- (82%) believe “safety” has a broader definition now than it did just six months ago—(48%) don't want to touch cash anymore, (43%) started using contactless transactions more, and (28%) Gen Z/Millennials prefer to shop at stores that offer self-check out or app payments
- (54%) say “I would be happy to never shake someone's hand again”
- (43%) are still today making fewer trips to the store and stock up on items as much as they can when they do go
- (35%) are prioritizing buying products that “protect me and my family's health”

Impact on health, wellness and safety is new factor of trust and reputation

Over the course of the pandemic, trust in healthcare and the pharmaceutical industry has risen dramatically. For instance, prior to COVID-19, only one-third (32%) of Americans had a positive opinion of the pharmaceutical industry. After vaccines brought the end of the pandemic within reach, the number of Americans with a positive opinion nearly doubled to (62%). And nearly half (44%) of Americans say their opinion of the industry has improved since the start of the pandemic — because of the actions the pharma industry has taken.

While the pharmaceutical industry came to the rescue, this past year exacerbated our social dilemma with social media. Firstly, just over one-third (34%) of Americans say social media has a negative impact on their health, higher than any other industry tested. Gen-Z (39%) and Baby Boomers (37%) were more likely than Millennials (27%) and Gen-Xers (34%) to name social media as a health stressor. Pair that with growing mistrust where a large majority of Americans (69%) say they do not trust social media, which is less trusted than Congress at (56%), the president (55%), and national media (52%). In our Axios-Harris Poll 100 from July 2020, Twitter and Facebook were ranked #95 and #97, respectively, with poor reputations. The COVID-19 has highlighted a fundamental reputation problem: (57%) do not trust information about the COVID-19 vaccine they see on social media.

About The Harris Poll Covid19 Tracker

In early March 2020, as America was grasping the extent of the pandemic, The Harris Poll began the COVID-19 Tracker to continuously monitor public sentiment through weekly polling to understand how the virus was reshaping life across the nation. The weekly polling was conducted as a service to public health and the American public at-large, and soon became a critical resource for journalists, universities, healthcare institutions, and businesses. Today, The Harris Poll has stood up the single largest comprehensive data set on life amid the pandemic.

Contact:

Tawny Saez

tawny.saez@harrisinsights.com

Andrew Higham

Andrew.higham@harrisinsights.com