

April 17, 2020

WEEKLY SENTIMENT ON COVID-19 - POLL HIGHLIGHTS

With COVID-19 and concern spreading around the world, Brunswick Insight gathers the **latest global sentiment polls**. Please therefore find below this week's highlights, with links allowing easy access to the detailed findings of each of these polls and publications.

IN A HURRY?.....3 KEY FACTS OF THE WEEK

1. The public expect businesses to make a positive contribution during COVID-19. [\[LINK\]](#)

This reiterates that Corporate responsibility is more important than ever in a time of global crisis. People are judging how companies behave. Those which make a meaningful contribution to the community will earn trust and support, now and in the future.

2. The majority (64%) approve of how their employers have handled the crisis. [\[LINK\]](#)

Yet only 28% strongly approve. This demonstrates the importance of frequently communicating to employees in a clear, helpful and flexible manner and show genuine interest in their concerns. How companies respond to the crisis, will set the tone for the way employees view their relationship with the business and the people who lead it.

3. US financial leaders are making tough decisions on costs as they navigate the virus- impacted economy. Sixty-seven percent of CFOs are considering deferring or cancelling planned investments. [\[LINK\]](#)

It is therefore crucial, while business leaders are designing their companies' economic recovery plans, to think long, not short term, and communicate clearly, frequently and honestly with their stakeholders, including employees. By being transparent about the rationale behind those decisions and how employees and investments will be affected will help to build trust among all stakeholders.

GLOBAL

Fear surrounding COVID-19 remains high but plateaus, with public's minds increasingly moving onto when the crisis will be over and what this means for them.

(according to YouGov's 26 country tracking data up to 15 April). [\[LINK\]](#)

- In Asia/Pacific, most countries have seen static scores over the past week, in terms of fear of catching COVID-19, but concern remains high at circa 75%. Concern is lowest among Australians (55%).
- Canada and the US report static scores (69% and 60% respectively).
- There is more differentiation in Europe with Sweden (53%) and Norway (47%) reporting a rise versus noticeable drop in Denmark (44%). Fear has now plateaued in Italy (71%), France (67%), UK (60%), Spain (49%), Germany (44%).

The public is divided in terms of when the COVID-19 will end, with most willing to sacrifice some rights to help.

(according to a survey conducted by Gallup with 24,652 general public in 28 countries around the world in March, 2020.) [\[LINK\]](#)

- The public is divided in terms of the virus situation in the coming month: 39% say the worst is yet to come while 34% believe things will start to improve. 25% think the situation will remain the same. European countries are most pessimistic, including UK (82% getting worse), Netherlands (77%), France (70%), Austria (68%), Germany (54%), and Switzerland (52%).
- 75% of the global public, except Japan (48% disagree) say they are willing to sacrifice some of their human rights if it helps to prevent the spread of the virus.

Majority feel their government is handling COVID-19 well.

(according to a survey conducted by Gallup with 24,652 general public in 28 countries around the world in March, 2020.) [\[LINK\]](#)

- 62% of the public agree that their government is handling the crisis well. Strongest support comes from Austria (88%), Palestine (80%), Netherlands (79%), Malaysia (77%), Korea (74%) and Italy (72%). Conversely weakest support for government comes from Thailand (where only 20% of the public feel that the government is handling COVID-19 well), along with Japan (23%), US (42%) and Germany (47%).

The public expect businesses to make a positive contribution during COVID-19.

(according to a survey conducted by GlobalWebIndex across 13 countries: Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Philippines, South Africa, Singapore, Spain, UK, and US between 16 - 20 March, 2020.) [\[LINK\]](#)

- One-in-four strongly approve of how local shops/businesses have handled the COVID-19 outbreak, with a further 47% somewhat approving; only 10% disapprove and 19% are neutral. The strongest approving rating is in Spain (47%) and Italy (43%); the lowest Japan (where just 4% strongly approve).
- People are most in favor of brands responding to the outbreak by providing flexible payment terms (83%), offering free services (81%), closing non-essential stores (79%) and helping to produce essential supplies (67%). All of these scores are significantly higher than the 37% who think brands should carry on advertising as normal.

The majority approve of how their employers have handled the crisis, according to the same Globalwebindex study. [\[LINK\]](#)

- Twenty-eight percent strongly approve of how their employers have handled the COVID-19 outbreak, with a further 38% somewhat approving; only 11% disapprove and 13% are neutral. The strongest approving rate is in Spain (38% strongly approve) and France (36%); the lowest is in Japan (where just 5% strongly approve), Singapore (18%) and UK (20%).

In the global fight against COVID-19, most of us are staying at home.

(according to a survey conducted by Ipsos among 28,000 adults aged 18-74 in Canada and the United States and 16-74 in Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Vietnam and the United Kingdom, from 2 - 4 April) [\[LINK\]](#)

- The majority of those surveyed are staying at home to stop the spread of COVID-19. Top countries include Spain (95%), Vietnam (94%), France (90%), Brazil (89%), Mexico (88%), Russia (85%), the United States and India (84%).
- We see the biggest increase in Russia (+23 percentage points), Vietnam (+16), Australia (+11), and Mexico (+8).
- Only 15% of Japanese surveyed are self-isolating.

Following the sun...a brief summary of the perceptions from around the world:

MIDDLE EAST

UAE:

- **Majority believe the economy will grow to become “just as strong or stronger” than prior to the pandemic**, according to a McKinsey poll. [\[LINK\]](#)

EUROPE

Germany:

- **Employers have a pessimistic outlook of the future due to COVID-19**, with 83% of companies experiencing disruptions to their production, according to a poll conducted by the employers' federation. [\[LINK\]](#)
- **35% of Germans want to support companies and brands that have actively helped** people during the crisis, according to a poll conducted by Wavemaker. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Many German employees **lack faith in their company's leadership's ability to manage emerging challenges** (only 47% confident vs. 35% disagree) as well as how much they **care about the employees' wellbeing** (49% think leadership care vs. 35% disagree). [\[LINK\]](#)

Italy:

- **Many Italians consider the reopening of firms as necessary** for alleviating the economic impact of the crisis, and smart working solutions could be crucial to reach this goal. [\[LINK\]](#)
- According to the BVA Doxa research **smart working solutions have shown a good level of efficacy** during the crisis, with only one-in-five workers unable to continue working. [\[LINK\]](#)

UK:

- **The public are already judging how businesses behave during this period**, with 85% of Britons stating that 'it is now more important than ever that brands support their local communities', according to research from Populus (2,093 adults). [\[LINK\]](#)

NORTH AMERICA

US:

- **US investors expect more companies to pursue acquisitions and for an increase in activism**, as revealed in the Boston Consulting Group's latest research. [\[LINK\]](#)
- **US financial leaders are making tough decisions on costs as they navigate the virus-impacted economy** according to a PwC survey. Sixty-seven percent of financial leaders are considering deferring or cancelling planned investments. Top investments to be put on hold include facilities/ general capital expenditures, workforce, operations and IT. One-in-five are anticipating layoffs in the coming months. [\[LINK\]](#)
- With U.S. unemployment rates skyrocketing, **Americans are less optimistic** now, about the economy and their jobs, than after 9/11 and the 2008 Recession, according to a CNBC All-America Economic Survey. [\[LINK\]](#)
- **Americans blame China for the virus**, with seven-in-ten saying that American companies should pull back manufacturing in China and strong support for a tougher trade policy, according to a Harris poll. [\[LINK\]](#)

ABOUT BRUNSWICK

Brunswick is a strategic advisory firm focused on helping companies navigate critical issues. Along with a worldwide team of experts, we have a deeply experienced team across China who can advise on capital markets related implications of the COVID-19 outbreak. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

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