

July 31, 2020

WEEKLY SENTIMENT ON COVID-19 - POLL HIGHLIGHTS

With COVID-19 and global concern about its impact continuing, Brunswick Insight gathers the **latest global sentiment polls**. Please find below this week's highlights, with links allowing easy access to the detailed findings.

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

1. Investors grow more bearish on the US economy and remain cautious.

(BCG's investor pulse survey conducted 17-19 July, in the US). [\[LINK\]](#)

- a. **Investors remain focused on liquidity and financial resilience**, with 72% of investors believing it is important for companies to intensely focus on preserving liquidity.
- b. Sixty-nine percent of investors **want companies to provide or revise guidance within the next 90 days**.
- c. **Investors remain focused on long-term advantage**, with 91% supporting the prioritization of building business capabilities, even at the expense of earnings per share (EPS).

2. Resetting normal: workers globally desire a hybrid working model & to be digitally upskilled.

(Adecco Group's study) [\[LINK\]](#)

- Three quarters of workers **desire a half-half mix of office-based and remote working**.
- **Two-thirds (69%) are looking for further digital up-skilling** in the post-pandemic era, including managing staff remotely (65%).

3. People feel well informed about COVID-19, yet disinformation permeates societies worldwide.

(Poll conducted by Kantar, 3-13 July, among circa 7,300 people in seven countries). [\[LINK\]](#)

- While the vast majority (94%) state they are "very well" or "rather well" informed about the pandemic, **54% find it difficult to distinguish between news and deliberate false reports**.
- **Forty-four percent believe that the media are hiding facts** about COVID-19.
- **Thirty-eight percent believe that COVID-19 is a Chinese bioweapon**.
- **Disinformation about Bill Gates is rife**: 50% of respondents worldwide think that Gates is calling for compulsory vaccination of all people; 39% say he has more power in their country than their respective government; 31% believe Gates wants to implant microchips in people to fight the virus; 20% are of the opinion that Gates has bought the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Connection between 5G and the epidemic continues** among one-in-five respondents.

GLOBAL

Severe global economic downturn expected for 2020; however, economic activity shows signs of recovery. (COVID-19 BCG Perspective Series, 21 July). [\[LINK\]](#)

- Sector activity in transportation and automotive are the most negatively impacted; however, manufacturing PMI (purchasing manager's index) indicates positive momentum globally.
- Retail goods sales are back to 2019 levels in the US, China and Japan, while other countries are ramping up; shift from offline to online sales continues.
- However, in only 4-out-of-15 of the world's largest economies, is mobility back to 85% of pre-crisis levels; workplace mobility and public transit are the most constrained.
- Companies must augment their capabilities to win; by building greater systemic resilience and developing demand-sensing capabilities (through high frequency data to sense demand and sentiment shifts).

Resetting normal: workers globally desire a hybrid working model & to be digitally upskilled.

(Findings from The Adecco Group's study, based on 8,400 office-based respondents across Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, Spain, UK, and USA). [\[LINK\]](#)

- Three quarters (74%) of workers surveyed globally say a half-half mix of office-based and remote working is the best way forward.
- Six-in-ten say their digital skills have improved during lockdown, while a further two-thirds (69%) are looking for further digital upskilling in the post-pandemic era, including managing staff remotely (65%), soft skills (63%) and creative thinking (55%).
- Companies have risen to the challenge of supporting their people during the crisis, and as a result, trust in corporations has increased. Eighty-eight percent say that their employer met or exceeded their expectations in adapting to the challenges of the pandemic.

People feel well informed about COVID-19, yet disinformation permeates societies worldwide.

(Poll conducted by Kantar, 3-13 July, commissioned by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, among circa 7,300 people in seven countries about their media use and false reports during the pandemic). [\[LINK\]](#)

- While the vast majority (94%) state they are "very well" or "rather well" informed about the pandemic, 54% find it difficult to distinguish between news and deliberate false reports.
- Forty-four percent believe that the media, under pressure from the government, are hiding facts about COVID-19.
- Thirty-eight percent believe that COVID-19 is a Chinese bioweapon.
- Disinformation about Bill Gates is rife: 50% of respondents worldwide think that Gates is calling for compulsory vaccination of all people; 39% say he has more power in their country than their respective government; 31% believe Gates wants to implant microchips in people to fight the virus; 20% are of the opinion that Gates has bought the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The connection between 5G and the epidemic continues among one-in-five respondents.

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

ASIA PACIFIC

APAC:

- **Forty percent of APAC employers plan to enhance their well-being programs as a result of COVID-19**, according to a new survey published 23 July by Willis Towers Watson (WTW). Almost two-in-five employers also plan to improve mental health services and stress or resilience management for their employees over the next six months. [\[LINK\]](#)

Australia:

- **One-third of Australians believe quarantine after overseas travel will last two years**, according to the latest Guardian Essential poll among 1,058 respondents (published 27 July), as the proportion saying they are very concerned about the threat of the pandemic jumps from 36% two weeks ago, to 43%. [\[LINK\]](#)

GULF

UAE and KSA residents expect property value and property rent to fall in the second half of 2020 as a result of both countries' economies slowing due to COVID-19. [\[Link\]](#)

- Seventy-four percent of UAE residents expect residential prices to fall in the second half of 2020.
- In Saudi Arabia, 40% expect rents and prices to fall in the second half of 2020.

EUROPE

Germany:

- **Majority of Germans suffer psychologically from pandemic.** [\[Link\]](#)
 - One-in-five are "frequently" stressed by the crisis, with 37% "sometimes" affected by stress.
 - Almost half (49%) stated that the reason for the stress was contact restriction, imposed by the government. 48% said that they lacked leisure activities.
 - Thirty percent cited working conditions (e.g. home or shift work) as reasons for stress.

Italy

- **Seventy percent of Italian public approves of the most recent EU policies**, with Italy set to receive €209bn over the next 3 years. [\[LINK\]](#)

UK:

- **More people think that the pandemic has been handled badly (42%) than well (36%).** [\(LINK\)](#)
- **One-in-five Brits say that they've 'done well' out of the pandemic.** A further 20% of Britons say that the outbreak has had no impact on them. [\(LINK\)](#)
- **The pandemic has damaged access to employment, especially for students.** [\(LINK\)](#)
 - 61% of employers say they have had to cancel work experience placements.
 - 39% of graduate employers say that they expect to make no, or fewer hires in the next 12 months.

NORTH AMERICA

US:

Stark partisan divides on business reopening processes and confidence in government leadership. [\[LINK\]](#)

- 42% of Republicans and 92% of Democrats trust their state governor to make business re-opening decisions, compared to 55% of Republicans and 3% of Democrats who say the same of President Trump.
- Two-thirds of U.S. adults (rising to 88% of democrats), say businesses reopening too quickly is a bigger concern than reopening too slowly.

Increasingly more Americans, particularly Republicans, deny the virus death toll. [\[LINK\]](#)

- Almost a third (31%) of Americans (rising to 59% among Republicans) believe the real death toll of the pandemic is less than the 135,000 number officially reported (as of mid-July). In May, 23% said the same.

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.

Business and Society	Business Resilience	Employee Communications	Investor Engagement	Healthcare	China
Meaghan Ramsey Partner, London	Paddy McGuinness Senior Advisor, London	Jonathan Dong Partner, Beijing	Amelia Pan Partner, London	Charis Gresser Partner, London	Yan Mei Senior Partner, Chair of China, Beijing
Stacey Chow Director, Hong Kong	Lisa Foley Asia Managing Partner, Hong Kong	Nick Howard Partner, London	Tim Daubenspeck Partner, New York	Will Carnwath Partner, Head of Singapore	St. John Moore Partner, Head of Beijing
Liz Dahan Director, Washington DC	Kate Holgate Partner, Head of Hong Kong	Rebekah Metts-Childers Partner, Chicago	Elaine Li Partner, Hong Kong	Yi Zhou Director, Hong Kong	
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