

Stress of Current Events Is Generating Apathy Among Americans Says Fifth Annual Conscious Consumer Spending Index (#CCSIndex)

Optimistic Consumers More Socially Responsible But In the Minority, Charlotte Named Most Socially Responsible City, Red Cross Tops Good Company Poll

LOS ANGELES and NASHVILLE, Nov 8 – Nearly half of Americans (47%) believe the world is becoming a worse place to live, according to the fifth annual Conscious Consumer Spending Index (#CCSIndex). In total, 1,019 Americans were polled this year for the ongoing benchmarking study, which is conducted by Good.Must.Grow. (GmG), a socially responsible marketing consultancy.

The 2017 study found that Americans' outlook on the state of the world has an impact on their socially responsible actions. Those with a negative outlook were less likely to purchase products from social enterprises or "do good" companies, less likely to donate time and money to nonprofits and less likely to report being green in the past year.

Those with a neutral outlook were the least engaged. Individuals who said the world was about the same were 19 percent less likely to support socially responsible companies, 16 percent less likely to financially support a charity and 16 percent less likely to volunteer, than those with a positive outlook.

Almost 30 percent of consumers said they don't pay attention to whether they are shopping responsibly. Meanwhile, 40 percent of consumers said they didn't know where to find socially responsible products or how to determine which companies to support.

"I remain incredibly excited about the state of socially responsible spending in this country, but we do need address the obstacles of awareness and apathy that are momentarily slowing our opportunities for growth in this area," said Heath Shackleford, founder of Good.Must.Grow. "We've endured a lot as a society this year: political unrest, natural disasters and unspeakable tragedies. It's more important than ever for business to be a force for good. Fortunately, we see the demand from consumers. We feel the energy. Good is continuing to grow. We just need to continue feeding the movement."

Despite the prevailing pessimism among Americans, the 2017 #CCSIndex showed a slight rebound from 46 to 47 on a 100-point scale after experiencing the first drop in its history in 2016. The #CCSIndex score is calculated by evaluating the importance consumers place on purchasing from socially responsible companies, actions taken to support such products and services, and future intent to increase the amount they spend with responsible organizations.

In total, 30 percent of Americans are planning to spend more with companies who are socially responsible in the year ahead. Meanwhile, 61 percent confirmed the importance of buying from socially responsible companies, and 61 percent reported making purchases from socially responsible companies, while 27 percent of Americans report directing at least 50 percent of their purchases toward socially responsible products and services.

“It is encouraging to see an uptick versus a dip, but there’s still work to be done,” said Shackelford. “There is a core group of consumers who have raised their hands but not yet taken action. We have to figure out how to shift them out of neutral if we want to drive the level of change that is required.”

In addition to the core benchmarking study, this year’s #CCSIndex also featured a separate analysis of the top 50 DMAs across the United States. A sampling of 5,096 Americans was used to identify the country’s most socially responsible big cities. The study analyzed responses to a battery of questions focused on purchasing habits, nonprofit giving and environmental practices.

Charlotte came out on top as America’s most socially responsible city. Long Beach, Oakland, Virginia Beach and Seattle rounded out the top five. In specific categories, Long Beach ranked highest for earth friendly practices and had the most conscious consumers, while Virginia Beach was the nation’s most charitable big city. Charlotte’s second place finish in all three categories propelled it to the top spot overall.

America’s Most Socially Responsible Big Cities

1. Charlotte
2. Long Beach
3. Oakland
4. Virginia Beach
5. Seattle
6. Kansas City
7. Boston
8. Atlanta
9. Minneapolis
10. San Antonio
11. Chicago
12. Raleigh
13. Louisville
14. New Orleans
15. San Jose
16. Dallas
17. Denver
18. Austin
19. Washington DC
20. Sacramento
21. Colorado Springs
22. Cleveland
23. Los Angeles
24. San Francisco
25. Columbus
26. Houston
27. Phoenix
28. Las Vegas
29. Omaha
30. Indianapolis

31. Memphis
32. Wichita
33. Miami
34. Tucson
35. Milwaukee
36. Oklahoma City
37. San Diego
38. New York
39. Portland
40. Mesa
41. Philadelphia
42. Tulsa
43. Baltimore
44. Nashville
45. Jacksonville
46. Detroit
47. Fort Worth
48. Fresno
49. El Paso
50. Albuquerque

Top 20 Good Company Poll

This year marked the #CCSIndex's third annual top 20 "Good Company" poll, compiled by responses to the question, "What company or organization do you think of first when you think of socially responsible companies/organizations?" Based on unaided recall by respondents, organizations were ranked based on how frequently they were named.

For the first time in three years, TOMS was not the top vote getter, falling to number seven. The American Red Cross headlines this year's rankings. Walmart surged to number two, while Amazon climbed nine spots to crack the top ten, after entering the poll at number in 2016. For the third-straight year, almost one-third of respondents (30%) failed to name a socially responsible organization. Rankings are as follows:

1. Red Cross
2. Walmart
3. Google
4. Goodwill
5. Starbucks
6. Whole Foods
7. TOMS
8. Salvation Army
9. Amazon
10. Microsoft
11. Ben & Jerry's
12. Apple
13. United Way
14. Trader Joes
15. Facebook
16. Costco
17. Greenpeace
18. Honest Co
19. Target
20. Newman's Own

Additional Findings

- Americans continue to rank individuals as more effective in creating positive change in our society than nonprofits, social enterprises or major corporations. The least effective entity, according to respondents, was the federal government. Only 38 percent rated the government as effective in driving change, down from 43 percent in 2016.
- This year's index study saw a slight uptick in charitable engagement over 2016 with more people contributing financially to charities (63%), volunteering time to charities (42%) and donating clothes or household goods (80%). Despite the increase, nonprofits are still seeing a reduction in contributions of time and money within the last three years.
- People are more likely to use personal research (32%), product packaging (29%) and news reports (27%) to determine which organizations are socially responsible as compared to family and friends (19%) social media (15%) and influencers (10%).

About the Study

This study was conducted in partnership with Supportive Research Solutions and What They Think Research. Sampling was provided by Research Now. Data was collected Oct 4–12, 2017. In total, 1,019 Americans were surveyed for the annual index comparisons (margin of error is +/- 3%). An additional 5,096 surveys were fielded across the top-50 DMAs for the first annual top 50 socially responsible cities analysis. For more information on the Conscious Consumer Spending Index, please visit www.goodmustgrow.com/ccsindex

About Good.Must.Grow.

Good.Must.Grow. provides strategic marketing support for socially responsible businesses, nonprofit causes and organizations that are focused on health + wellness. We want to be part of a revolution that drives societal change by sparking increased charitable giving and community involvement as well as unprecedented levels of corporate social responsibility. Proud to be a Certified B Corp. See how we're #GrowingGood at <http://www.goodmustgrow.com>.