

Gains in Social Responsibility from a Mid-Year Surge Have Been Erased Based on Eighth Annual Conscious Consumer Spending Index

*Charitable Donations Hit Rock Bottom While Being Green Makes a Comeback
Outlook on the World, Voting Behavior Are Key Indicators for Conscious Consumerism*

(Los Angeles and Nashville, Tenn. December 9, 2020) -- The eighth annual Conscious Consumer Spending Index (#CCSIndex) suggests that converging crises and ongoing uncertainty are causing a decline in conscious consumerism and charitable giving.

Back in May, a special release of the #CCSIndex showed that COVID-19 was having a radically positive impact on social responsibility as consumers reversed a three-year slide for a range of “do good” behaviors. But during the regular annual poll, that surge has slowed and purpose-driven behaviors are slipping.

Conducted annually each fall since 2013, the [#CCSIndex](#) is an ongoing benchmarking study. [Good.Must.Grow.](#), a socially responsible marketing consultancy, administers the Index to gauge momentum for conscious consumerism and charitable giving. After posting a record-low performance in 2019, the Index was up 15 percent in May. But as 2020 comes to a close and the pandemic rages on, the Index is back at its previous low (39 on a 100-point scale). This is down from 46 in May.

The Index 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. Based on the design of the Index’s algorithm, even a one-point change in overall score indicates meaningful movement of consumer sentiment.

“It’s unfortunate, and understandable, that we have lost momentum since this spring,” said Heath Shackelford, founder of Good.Must.Grow. “This has been an extraordinarily challenging year. Whether it’s productivity at work, compliance with social distancing guidelines or the resolve to put purpose first, we are seeing a collective fatigue from Americans. I think we will see a rebound in 2021, but in the short term we need to be patient as consumers recover from an emotionally and economically challenging year.”

For one third of Americans, 2020 has led to a reduction in household income. As a result, at least 30 percent of survey respondents have cut spending across a wide range of consumer goods, including food and dining, entertainment, clothing and hobbies. Meanwhile, 33 percent say they are increasing efforts to save money. These results indicate that the current state of consumers’ personal finances is at least partly to blame for the downward trend in purpose-driven purchases. Each year, the cost of socially responsible products and services is the number one obstacle Americans cite when explaining why they don’t spend more money with do good brands.

Being Green is Gaining Steam While Charitable Giving Is Falling Fast

In the latest Index, 80 percent of Americans reported “being green” in the past year by recycling, properly disposing of waste and favoring reusable products. Since hitting a high of 90 percent in 2015, this number had been on a steady decline. In 2019, only 77 percent said they had been green, and at the mid-year release this spring, 72 percent reported participating in environmentally friendly activities.

Meanwhile, charitable giving is falling on hard times. After a slight uptick earlier this year, the number of Americans who said they had donated to a charity in the past year fell to 48 percent. This is the first time since the Index’s inception that less than 50 percent of Americans were financially supporting charities.

View of the World, Political Orientation and COVID Diagnosis Are Larger Indicators of Social Responsibility than Gender, Income and Education

When examining a range of demographic and psychographic categories, an individual’s outlook on the world and political orientation were far and away the best predictors of that individual’s commitment to social responsibility. Those who said the world was getting better scored 58 on the Index, while those who said it was getting worse scored 42. Individuals who thought the world was staying the same scored the lowest with a mark of 34. The second largest variance came from how people voted in the 2020 Presidential Election. Survey respondents who voted for Joe Biden had an Index score of 53, which was 20 points higher than those who voted for Donald Trump (33) and those who said they didn’t vote (34).

A positive COVID diagnosis was also an influential trait. Those who had been diagnosed with COVID, or had an immediate family member contract the disease, scored 50 on the Index, compared with a score of 39 for those who had no direct contact with coronavirus. Meanwhile, gender (6 points) and education level (3 points) showed the least variance among the categories examined.

Safety First for Consumers When Pandemic Is “Over”

Americans say it’s more important for companies to protect their health and safety than to meet their needs as consumers. When asked which factors will be important when choosing companies or organizations to support once the pandemic is over, 76 percent said those who protect their safety, while 75 percent prioritized brands that meet their needs as consumers. Meanwhile, 74 percent said they would base their loyalty on whether organizations are trustworthy. This compares to 63 percent who prioritized a company’s purpose or mission and 67 percent who valued a company’s ability to make a positive impact on society and the environment.

Top 20 Good Company Poll

This year marked the #CCSIndex’s sixth 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, organizations were ranked by how frequently they were named.

For the first time in four years, the poll featured a repeat champion with Amazon defending its top spot. Not only did Amazon maintain its poll position, but it did so in dominating fashion, garnering twice as many votes as any other brand. Nike cracked the top-ten in its first appearance on the list, while Toms continued a three-year slide from the top spot, landing at number 14. This year’s top 20 rankings are as follows:

- 1 Amazon
- 2 Walmart
- 3 Apple
- 4 Google
- 5 Salvation Army
- 6 Microsoft
- 7 Goodwill
- 8 American Red Cross
- 9 Target
- 10 Nike
- 11 Starbucks
- 12 Ben and Jerry’s
- 13 Facebook
- 14 Toms
- t-15 Habitat for Humanity
- t-15 Patagonia
- t-15 Tesla
- 18 McDonalds
- 19 Costco

About the Study

This study was conducted in partnership with Supportive Research Solutions. Sampling was provided by Dynata. Data was collected November 10 -16, 2020. In total, 1,058 Americans were surveyed (margin of error is +/- 3%). For more information on the Conscious Consumer Spending Index, please visit www.goodmustgrow.com/ccsi

About Good.Must.Grow.

Doing good by any means necessary. That's our motto. We are obsessed with helping good organizations grow. We provide strategic marketing support for socially responsible businesses, nonprofit causes and individuals committed to making our world a healthier place. We also fuel our own initiatives aimed at specific causes, ranging from human trafficking to addiction to health and wellness. Proud to be a Certified B Corp and ranked as a Best for the World company. Learn more at goodmustgrow.com