

## **Socially Responsible Spending Holds Firm in U.S. Amidst Onslaught of Uncertainty, According to 13th Annual Conscious Consumer Spending Index**

*This year's Index matched 2024 results, even as consumer sentiment on the state of the world soured and economic and political uncertainty dominated headlines.*

(Los Angeles and Nashville, Tenn. – In a year that has featured economic challenges, global conflict, concerns about rapid advancement of AI technology and a record-breaking shutdown of the federal government, U.S. consumers remain committed to socially responsible brands, according to the most recent Conscious Consumer Spending Index (CCSIndex).

This year, the CCSIndex held its ground with a score of 50 (on a 100 point scale), matching 2024 results. In its first six years, the Index hovered between a low of 45 and a high of 48. After back-to-back scores of 39 in 2019 and 2020, the Index has posted a score of 50 or better in four of the last five years.

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, charitable giving and earth-friendly practices.

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.

Reflecting the turbulence of the past year, more than half of Americans (51%) said the world is getting worse, the highest level since the Index began measuring consumer attitudes about the state of the world in 2019. That year, only 36% of respondents said the world was getting worse. This is the first time a negative outlook was registered by more than half of Americans. As in previous years, those with a negative outlook posted a lower Index score than those who think the world is improving.

“In a year of headwinds, it's a very positive sign to see we are holding the ground we've gained,” said Heath Shackleford, founder of Good.Must.Grow. “It appears we have established a higher watermark for the do good movement in the past five years that is resilient to external pressures. Lots of work left to do, but we should have confidence that we're headed up from here.”

In this year's findings, 67% of Americans felt it was important to support socially responsible brands, which is all-time high. Additionally, 63% confirmed they had purchased do good products or services in the past year, and 34% said they planned to spend more with socially responsible companies in 2026. Meanwhile, charitable donations and earth-friendly practices also held firm year over year.

In 2024, the success rate for socially responsible intentions fell to 55%, which was an all-time low for the Index. This means only a little over half of Americans who planned to increase socially

responsible spending followed through with their intentions last year. This year's findings show a big rebound to 79%, which outpaces the average success rate of 66%.

### **Nonprofit Giving Has Trailed Conscious Consumerism Since 2017**

For the first time ever, Index scoring was applied to nonprofit giving trends to determine how charitable giving has performed relative to socially responsible spending. When charting year by year performance from the Index's inception in 2013, nonprofit giving has not outperformed conscious consumerism since the year 2017. After experiencing the same massive decline during the early stages of the Covid pandemic, charitable giving has not been able to rebound to previous levels. In 2025, the Index score for charitable giving was 45. After averaging a score of 48 from 2013-2015, charitable giving declined to an average score of 44 from 2016-2018 before bottoming out at an average of 39 from 2019-2021. In the four years since, charitable giving has been capped at an average of 44.

### **Youth Movement Favors Socially Responsible Spending Over Charitable Donations**

Younger consumers are more likely to support socially responsible brands, while their older counterparts lean toward charities when they are doing good. For Americans ages 18-34, 31% prefer to give back by buying socially responsible products and services, compared to 27% of those who are 35-54, and 17% of Americans who are 55 or older. The younger cohort posted a CCSIndex score of 58, compared with 53 and 41 for the older groups, respectively. On the flip side, Americans in the 18-34 bracket were the least likely to have contributed financially to a charity in the previous year.

### **Avoiding Brands on Purpose is Becoming More Popular**

One third of consumers reported boycotting specific companies or brands because they were not socially responsible, and 31% said they had encouraged family or friends to avoid a company or product because it was not socially responsible.

### **Consumers Want Purposeful Brands to Take Stands**

When asked if socially responsible brands should take a public stand on cultural and political issues, 36% said yes. Another 34% said it depends on the specific situation. Only 21% percent of respondents believed do good companies should avoid weighing in on key issues, while 9% had no opinion on the matter. Those who want brands to choose sides represent the most conscious of consumers. More than half (55%) plan to increase their spending on socially responsible goods and services in 2026.

### **Politics Fueling Negative Outlook for Americans**

As stated earlier, more than half of Americans feel the world is getting worse. When asked to select factors that contribute to their outlook, 84% cited the current political environment, while 66% flagged the economy. Following close behind was violence and crime (60%) and social and civil unrest (58%). Less often, consumers cited social issues like hunger and poverty (53%) and the health of the environment (52%). Interesting 21% still say the pandemic is contributing to their

attitude. Respondents were far less likely to link their own wellbeing to their negative view, with only 17% citing this as a factor.

## Top 20 Good Company Poll

This year marked the Index's 11th 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.

Amazon tops the list for the seventh straight year, but its stranglehold is weakening. Patagonia continued its rapid climb, landing at number two after entering the top five for the first time in 2024. Ben & Jerry's enjoyed a massive jump into the top five, up nine spots from last year.

TOMS also continued a rebound by climbing one spot, after falling out of the top 20 for one year in 2022. UNICEF and Greenpeace exited, while LEGO and Costco joined the party. Costco, once a staple on the list, re-entered with a bang at number 13.

This year's top 20 are as follows:

1. Amazon
2. Patagonia
3. American Red Cross
4. Walmart
5. Ben & Jerry's
6. Google
7. Apple
8. Microsoft
9. Goodwill
10. Starbucks
11. TOMS
12. Salvation Army
13. Costco
14. Bombas
15. Tesla
16. Coca Cola
17. Target
18. St. Jude
19. Habitat for Humanity
20. LEGO

For only the second time in Index history, respondents were also asked to name one company or organization who was **not** socially responsible. The results reveal polarizing opinions from consumers as seven organizations from the Top 20 Good Company poll also ranked for being not

socially responsible. This includes Amazon, who placed first on both lists and Walmart who was top five on both lists.

When asked to name companies or organizations who are not socially responsible, oil companies were well represented. Meta, Nike and Chick-fil-A all made the top ten on the naughty list after spending time on the good company list in years past.

### **Top 20 NOT Socially Responsible List**

1. Amazon
2. Walmart
3. Exxon
4. Target
5. Tesla
6. Nike
7. Meta
8. Nestle
9. McDonald's
10. Chick-fil-A
11. BP
12. Starbucks
13. Shell
14. Chevron
15. Coca Cola
16. Apple
17. Temu
18. Pepsi
19. Wells Fargo
20. Monsanto

### **About the Study**

Conducted annually each fall since 2013, the CCSIndex is an ongoing benchmarking study that gauges momentum for conscious consumerism and charitable giving. In total, 1,012 Americans were surveyed (margin of error is +/- 3%). Sampling was provided by Dynata. For more information on the Conscious Consumer Spending Index, please visit [www.goodmustgrow.com/ccsindex](http://www.goodmustgrow.com/ccsindex)

### **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 three-time Best for the World company. Learn more at [goodmustgrow.com](http://goodmustgrow.com)