

IBM Study: Most U.S. Consumers Remain Unsettled About the Economy, Visiting Public Spaces and Returning to the Workplace Amidst COVID-19

ARMONK, N.Y., July 27, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- The most recent findings from an ongoing IBM (NYSE: [IBM](#)) Institute for Business Value (IBV) survey of U.S. consumers show that Americans remain concerned about returning to the workplace in the face of the ongoing pandemic, and expect further outbreaks of COVID-19 in the fall. The July research revealed a slight contrast in consumer attitudes compared to June, when there were emerging signs of public optimism about the direction of the pandemic and the economy.

IBM surveyed more than 7,000 Americans in July to understand how COVID-19 has affected their perspectives on issues including the economy, opportunities for remote work and the return to the workplace, and how they will visit businesses, use transportation, and more.

"The results from our ongoing survey underscore that consumer attitudes continue to shift as the effects of the virus fluctuate around the country, and consumers are preparing themselves for more permanent changes in behavior," said Jesus Mantas, senior managing partner, IBM Services. "These new behaviors define the new preferences that business leaders need to be able to deliver to meet consumers where they are. This is no longer a question of competitive advantage, it's a matter of business survival."

Noteworthy findings from the July survey include:

Most expect the pandemic and economic uncertainty to remain for some time

Even as parts of the country cautiously reopen, the percentage of Americans surveyed who are concerned about personal and public health continues to rise. In July, 72% report that COVID-19 has made them more concerned about the safety and health of themselves and their families (68% in June). The same percentage of respondents also said they worry about a second wave of COVID-19 later in 2020 (65% in June), and 66% expect to see more global pandemic-like events in the future (60% in June). Only 13% of consumers surveyed believe that the economy will bounce back to where it was prior to COVID-19, a 3 percentage point drop from the previous month.

People are comfortable working remotely at least some of the time, and remain concerned about COVID-19 in the workplace

Once employees can return to their offices, 84% of respondents indicated that they would still like to work remotely at least occasionally, up 3% from June. A growing majority also said they want employers to take clear and active measures to protect them from exposure to the virus when they return to the workplace, while providing flexibility to help ensure mental health and well-being. 63% said there needs to be clear communication from employers about what is being done to sanitize the workplace (54% in June), and 58% say that employers should maintain social distancing protocols in the workplace (49% in June). 41% feel strongly that their employer should provide special accommodations for individuals to address childcare needs – up 6 percentage points since the previous month.

Americans are resuming some daily activities, but most public places and businesses remain empty

Americans are increasingly getting out of the house. 27% of respondents surveyed have already visited restaurants and bars (compared to 21% in June). There's been a moderate increase in consumers who have

already visited a salon or barber shop – 1 in 4 have visited a salon or barber shop in July (up from 17% in June).

However, there's a growing number of Americans who have not visited public places or large venues during COVID-19, and likely will not visit for the remainder of 2020. 35% don't plan on going to shopping centers or malls this year (compared to 27% in June). 66% said they would not visit an amusement park (up from 59% in June), and 64% won't attend a live sporting event this year (55% June).

Telemedicine is on the rise

40% of consumers have already taken advantage of telemedicine services to seek remote care for less urgent issues in July (up 6 percentage points from June) – and 60% plan to keep using these services beyond the pandemic (50% in June), despite the fact that only 19% of those surveyed sought virtual treatment before. Meanwhile, about one-third indicated they have visited medical offices amidst pandemic restrictions.

Other findings:

- **Transportation:** Consistently across June and July, consumers said that they planned to reduce their use of – or forgo entirely – ridesharing and public transportation. 53% said they will use public transportation like buses, subways or trains less or no longer at all (55% in June), and three out of ten said they would exclusively use their personal vehicle (26% in June). 70% of those without a vehicle said they would purchase one, up 6 percentage points from June.
- **Urban life:** Despite the pandemic and recent social unrest, more than half of those surveyed indicated they want to stay in an urban area, the same percentage as polled in June. But for some, living in urban areas has become less desirable. Approximately 1 in 5 urban residents indicate they plan to move or will consider moving to non-urban areas as a result of COVID-19, similar to June.

The IBV has surveyed more than 54,000 U.S. consumers since April and plans to continue polling the public on these topics and more in the months ahead.

For further information on IBM's Institute for Business Value, please visit: <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/>

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