



AMERICAN CONSUMER COUNCIL

A Non-Profit Consumer Information Organization

## *Consumer News & Views*



### *October 2020*

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## Health, Safety and Economic Issues Top Consumer Concerns Amid November Presidential Election.

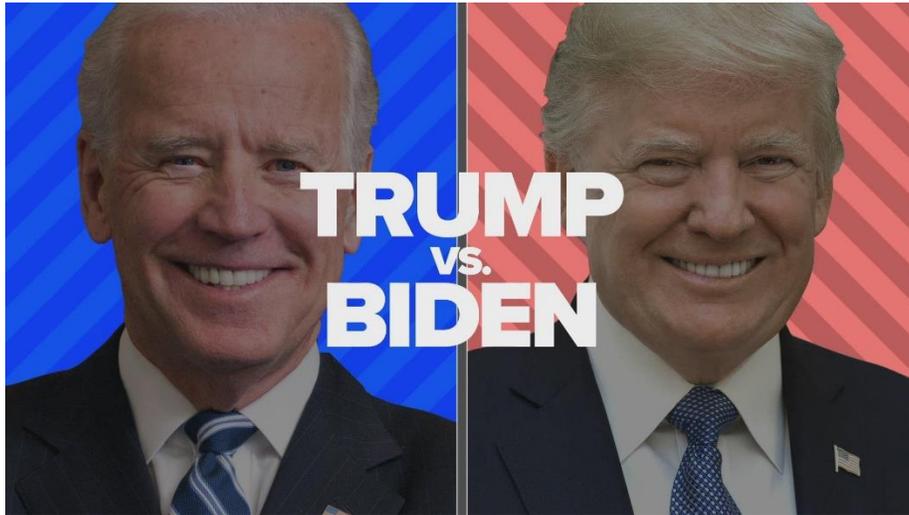
With the 2020 presidential election just weeks away, the Commonwealth Fund polled U.S. adults about which of three health care issues would matter most in their vote and about which candidate — President Donald Trump or Former Vice President Joe Biden — they think is more likely to address each of them. Between August 25 and September 20, 2020, the survey research firm SSRS interviewed 7,442 adults age 18 and older, including 5,655 likely voters. In 10 battleground states 5,493 adults were polled, including 4,220 likely voters. Among likely voters, the survey had an overall margin of error of  $\pm 1.9$  percent. The margin of error in battleground states among likely voters was: Arizona ( $\pm 6.7\%$ ), Florida ( $\pm 6.3\%$ ), Georgia ( $\pm 6.1\%$ ), Michigan ( $\pm 6.1\%$ ), Minnesota ( $\pm 6.8\%$ ), North Carolina ( $\pm 6.4\%$ ), Ohio ( $\pm 6.5\%$ ), Pennsylvania ( $\pm 5.7\%$ ), Texas ( $\pm 6.7\%$ ), and Wisconsin ( $\pm 7.3\%$ ).

- In considering which health care issues will matter most in their vote for president, likely voters were split nearly evenly on two: addressing the public health needs and economic costs of COVID-19 (40%) and protecting insurance for people with preexisting health conditions (39%). A third issue, lowering the cost of health care, was the most important factor for 20 percent of voters.
- A majority of voters in nine of 10 battleground states said Former Vice President Joe Biden is the more likely of the two candidates to address both COVID-19 and its economic costs. In Ohio, President Trump has the edge on the issue (48% vs. 45%), but the gap between the two candidates was within the margin of error.
- In each of the 10 battleground states, a majority of likely voters said Biden is more likely to protect insurance coverage for people with preexisting conditions. Likely voters favor Biden over Trump on this issue by between 6 percentage points in Ohio to 33 percentage points in Georgia.
- Fewer than half (48%) of likely voters said they would feel very safe voting in person if the election were held today. Just one-third are very confident that people who vote by mail will have their vote counted.



The four major issues voiced by American consumers that will determine how they vote in November are: (1) a realistic solution to the COVID-19 pandemic including a vaccine and the

end of mass deaths; (2) getting millions of American back to work and restoring jobs lost as a result of the pandemic, especially in the hospitality and food-and-beverage industries; (3) social justice issues that result in a decrease of black male deaths at the hands of law enforcement, prison reform and protecting voting rights among minorities; (4) protecting social security and Medicare benefits for seniors.



As the election heats up, candidates who are running for Congress and their state legislatures, are shifting their positions to address these issues in the hopes of winning more votes. But, what will ultimately decide the election, especially in the battleground states, is the economic fortunes of consumers. As of Labor Day, our surveys reveal that President Trump is cornered between a rock and a hard place because there is no viable solution to the pandemic without a vaccine, and, without a solution, businesses and schools cannot successfully reopen without running the risk of creating further widespread infection. The same holds true for professional and collegiate sports teams. It's a very disturbing scenario for any elected official. The longer the pandemic persists, the more negative voters will get, and this will hurt incumbents because without a solution, consumers' despair and anger will replace any rationale decision-making in the voting booth.

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## **When Will the COVID-19 Pandemic Be Over?**

The \$64,000 question is this: When will the Covid-19 Pandemic be over? Here's a summary of research conducted by McKinsey & Company that attempts to answer this serious question. One thing is clear. Until there is a proven vaccine for the virus and wide distribution, large populations around the world are vulnerable and the economic fortunes of millions of consumers and businesses remain in jeopardy. This report summary was authored by: Sarun Charumilind, Matt Craven, Jessica Lamb, Adam Sabow and Matt Wilson.

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In 1920, a world wearied by the First World War and sickened by the 1918 flu pandemic desperately sought to move past the struggles and tragedies and start to rebuild lives. People

were in search of a “return to normalcy,” as Warren G. Harding put it. Today, nearly every country finds itself in a similar position.

More than eight months and 900,000 deaths into the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>1</sup> people around the world are longing for an end. In our view, there are two important definitions of “end,” each with a separate timeline:



- *An epidemiological end-point when herd immunity is achieved.* One end-point will occur when the proportion of society immune to COVID-19 is sufficient to prevent widespread, ongoing transmission. Many countries are hoping that a vaccine will do the bulk of the work needed to achieve herd immunity. When this end point is reached, the public-health-emergency interventions deployed in 2020 will no longer be needed. While regular revaccinations may be needed, perhaps similar to annual flu shots, the threat of widespread transmission will be gone.
- *A transition to a form of normalcy.* A second (and likely, earlier) end point will occur when almost all aspects of social and economic life can resume without fear of ongoing mortality (when a mortality rate is no longer higher than a country’s historical average) or long-term health consequences related to COVID-19. The process will be enabled by tools such as vaccination of the highest-risk populations; rapid,

accurate testing; improved therapeutics; and continued strengthening of public-health responses. The next normal won't look exactly like the old—it might be different in surprising ways, with unexpected contours, and getting there will be gradual—but the transition will enable many familiar scenes, such as air travel, bustling shops, humming factories, full restaurants, and gyms operating at capacity, to resume.

The two ends are related, of course, but not linearly. At the latest, the transition to normal will come when herd immunity is reached. But in regions with strong public-health responses, normalcy can likely come significantly before the epidemiological end of the pandemic.

The timeline to achieve the ends will vary by location. In this article, we'll explain the criteria that will be key factors in determining when each is reached. In the United States and most other developed economies, the epidemiological end point is most likely to be achieved in the third or fourth quarter of 2021, with the potential to transition to normalcy sooner, possibly in the first or second quarter of 2021. Every day matters. Beyond the impatience that most feel to resume normal life, the longer it takes to remove the constraints on our economies, the greater will be the economic damage.



## **Consumer Confidence Climbs as Consumers Adjust to the Covid-19 Pandemic's “New Normal.”**

The Conference Board *Consumer Confidence Index*<sup>®</sup> increased in September, after declining in August. The Index now stands at 101.8 (1985=100), up from 86.3 in August. The Present Situation Index – based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions – increased from 85.8 to 98.5. The Expectations Index – based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions – increased from 86.6 in August to 104.0 this month.

The monthly *Consumer Confidence Survey*<sup>®</sup>, based on a probability-design random sample, is conducted for The Conference Board by Nielsen, a leading global provider of information and analytics around what consumers buy and watch. The cutoff date for the preliminary results was September 18.



"Consumer Confidence increased sharply in September, after back-to-back monthly declines, but remains below pre-pandemic levels," said Lynn Franco, Senior Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board. "A more favorable view of current business and labor market conditions, coupled with renewed optimism about the short-term outlook, helped spur this month's rebound in confidence. Consumers also expressed greater optimism about their short-term financial prospects, which may help keep spending from slowing further in the months ahead."

Consumers' appraisal of current conditions rebounded in September. The percentage of consumers claiming business conditions are "good" increased from 16.0 percent to 18.3 percent, while those claiming business conditions are "bad" decreased from 43.3 percent to 37.4 percent. Consumers' assessment of the labor market also improved. The percentage of consumers saying jobs are "plentiful" increased from 21.4 percent to 22.9 percent, while those claiming jobs are "hard to get" decreased from 23.6 percent to 20.0 percent.

Consumers were also more optimistic about the short-term outlook. The percentage of consumers expecting business conditions will improve over the next six months increased from 29.8 percent to 37.1 percent, while those expecting business conditions will worsen decreased from 20.7 percent to 15.8 percent. Consumers were more positive about the outlook for the labor market. The proportion expecting more jobs in the months ahead increased from 29.9 percent to 33.1 percent, while those anticipating fewer jobs decreased from 21.2 percent to 15.6 percent. Regarding their short-term income prospects, the percentage of consumers expecting an increase improved from 13.0 percent to 17.5 percent, while the proportion expecting a decrease declined from 16.0 percent to 12.6 percent.



**ACC Expands Financial Education Services to Help Consumers During COVID-19 Pandemic.** The American Consumer Council and several state and local chapters have joined forces to expand their offering of virtual webinars and meetings to help consumers access more financial services amid the COVI-19 pandemic.

ACC chapters in Cleveland and Los Angeles, Tampa and Newark, New Jersey are offering a series of financial education services to help consumers who are struggling to pay bills and deal with economic hardships caused by the COIVD-19 pandemic.



In September, a new series began that focuses on three key consumer concerns:

1. Getting Financial Assistance to Reopen Your Small Business.
2. How to Access State and Federal Unemployment Benefits during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
3. How to Stay Safe and Be Viewed as a Valued Employee When Working from Home.

For specific information on how to access these programs from the American Consumer Council, email us at: [info@americanconsumercouncil.org](mailto:info@americanconsumercouncil.org)

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## **Financial Education Series:**

### **ACC Video Focuses on “How to Ask Your Boss for A Raise!”**

The American Consumer Council has released a new video as part of its financial education series. The latest video, which targets Millennials and Gen Z’ers, is entitled, *“How to Ask Your Boss for a Raise!”* Members can view it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjkREP03-GU>



ACC also released three other videos as part of its series to help Millennials feel more confident about their financial dealings.

Those videos are: "**How to Have a Great Vacation... on the Cheap!**" Members can view it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJo0UjLINKk&feature=youtu.be> The second video is entitled, "**Money Topics Every Couple Must Discuss.**" It can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsGb3Gr1aMY&feature=youtu.be> The third video is "**What Consumers Should Know About Time Shares Before Signing on the Dotted Line.**" It can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2OX0hnFq8k>

ACC's financial education video series is designed to help consumers, especially Millennials, better manage their finances and get access to financial services. The free series is available online at

<http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/videos.asp> and features certified financial planner and author, Kimberly Curtis, who is a popular author, speaker and the CEO of *The Wealth Legacy Institute* in Denver, Colorado.

The video series has been well received by Millennials (18-30 year old) and has encouraged over 8,900 Millennials to join credit unions since September 1, 2016.

The other video topics include: [Paying for the Cost of College](#); [Paying Off Debt While Building Wealth](#); [Home-Buying Mistakes to Avoid](#); [Goals to Reach by Age 30](#); [Money Mistakes Everyone Makes](#); and, "How to Prevent Identity Theft."

Click on any of the links to watch these videos.

The American Consumer Council's president Thomas Hinton, stated "Millennials (ages 18-30) want timely information delivered through short videos to help them better manage their money and debts. This series answers many of their questions and encourages Millennials to seek out



the services of credit unions that are skilled at providing a broad range of financial services at very competitive rates."

According to ACC's research, there are over 75 million Millennials in the United States and nearly 42% have not established any financial services relationship with an insured financial institution.

The American Consumer Council is currently promoting a series of financial education videos for Millennials that will be continue into 2020. ACC expects a strong response to the video series given the number of inquiries ACC has received from its 290,000+ members.

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## **ACC's *Friend of the Consumer Award* Recognizes Outstanding Businesses.**

Is your business consumer-friendly? Does your business deserve greater recognition for its service to consumers? If so, you should apply for the American Consumer Council's Friend of the Consumer Award. Now is the time to apply!

Throughout the year, ACC presents its "Friend of the Consumer" Awards. This prestigious award recognizes manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses that produce or sell products in the United States that meet or exceed federally mandated standards and are touted by consumers as "consumer friendly."



Each year, ACC awards numerous "Friend of the Consumer" Awards to deserving companies and organizations because they have "demonstrated a commitment to American consumers by

providing a specific product or service that fosters consumer confidence and market acceptance."

To apply for the "Friend of the Consumer" Award, complete the online application and return it to ACC with the application fee. Applicants will be notified within 5 days of receipt of their application. Thereafter, a panel of independent judges will review your application and make a formal recommendation within 20 days of receipt of your award application.

For more information, visit: <http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/awards.html>



### **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification Accepting Applications for Winter 2020 Cycle:**

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification**. Applications for the Winter 2020 application cycle are now being accepted through December 1, 2020.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.

All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: [www.americanconsumercouncil.org/green](http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/green)



For more information, please call ACC at 1-800-544-0414 or visit ACC's website by [clicking here](http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org). To become a member of the American Consumer Council, visit us at: [www.americanconsumercouncil.org](http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org)

