

# **New Meredith Corporation Study Reveals Divergent Reactions Among Women to Life Amid COVID-19 And Predicts Lasting Impact of Pandemic on Consumer Behavior**

**21% of women burned through much of their savings during the pandemic, while 54% saved money**

**39% of women said their mental health declined during pandemic, with half experiencing symptoms of depression**

**Women are split on wanting to see advertising focused on pandemic, with 49% opposed to it**

**Differences in consumer responses are captured in 7 mutually exclusive segments with unique implications for brands and marketers**

NEW YORK, Feb. 17, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- [Meredith Corporation](#) (NYSE: MDP), the leading multi-platform media company reaching 95 percent of American women across every stage and every day of their lives, today announced findings from its landmark study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on female consumers revealing that the pandemic will have a lasting effect on the outlook, behavior and psychology of women across the country, with more than half (56%) of women reporting that the pandemic has made them realize what is really important, namely family relationships and health. The multi-phase research study, titled, "**The Post-Normal Consumer: Navigating an Uncertain Present & Future**," combines qualitative and quantitative research to identify how women have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The report reveals divergent changes in women's interests, lifestyles, values and shopping behaviors in response to the pandemic, as well as common themes, including an overall decline in mental health, a tighter focus on savings and a desire for positive messaging from brands.

"The pandemic has not affected all women in the same way. In addition to factors such as age, race, and politics, psychological characteristics have played an important role in shaping the experiences and reactions of different groups of women," said Dr. Joshua Ackerman, Associate Professor of Psychology and Marketing at the University of Michigan, who partnered with Meredith to produce the study. "Brands will face the need for a targeted strategy in reaching consumers to be successful in this 'post-normal' world."

Among the report's top findings is that 7 in 10 women will make changes in the way they live post-pandemic, with 24% planning to make significant changes to the way they lived pre-pandemic. Additional highlights are summarized below.

## **Relationships and Health Rise as Key Values**

- The Top 5 values that became more important for women because of the pandemic are:  
1) having close family relationships; 2) leading a healthy, active lifestyle; 3) being dependable

and trustworthy for friends and family; 4) continuing to learn and grow; and 5) treating every person in the world equally and justly.

### **Increased Focus on Financial Savings**

- 21% of women have burned through much of their savings during the pandemic, whereas 54% actually saved money.
- 52% of women say the pandemic made them realize they should save more for unexpected circumstances; rates were higher among Millennials (55%) and Gen Z (57%).

### **Ecommerce to Remain Popular Post-Pandemic**

- 22% of women will continue to shop online more post-pandemic, with the highest rates among Millennials (25%) and Gen Z (29%).
- 51% spent money on things to make their increased time at home more enjoyable, with 34% focused on home improvement.
- 77% of women can't wait for their usual brands to be more readily available than they are right now, but 58% say they will continue to purchase new brands they tried during the pandemic after the pandemic is over.

### **Women Seeking Positive Messages from Brands**

- Female consumers seek positive messages from brands, including advertising that focuses on how we are all united as Americans (78%) and how we all can emerge from the pandemic even stronger (68%).
- The vast majority of female consumers are more interested in buying from companies that are implementing safety measures (90%) and that focus on the well-being of their employees (87%).
- Female consumers are split on wanting to see advertising focused on the pandemic, with 49% opposed.

### **Physical Health Maintained While Mental Health Declined**

- Only 14% of women said their physical health declined during the pandemic, but 39% of women said their mental health declined during the pandemic, with about half experiencing symptoms of depression in the past two weeks (the rate was higher among Gen Z at 70% and Millennials at 52%).
- 42% of women say they have enjoyed the slower pace of life.
- More than half of women (52%) said they can spend less on things they don't need and still be happy.

Although common themes emerged, the study uncovered stark differences among various segments of the female population when it comes to economic and health attitudes and behaviors, as well as what they want to see from brands. Assessing demographic factors, psychological tendencies and consumer preferences, the study identified seven distinct segments of women, ranging from "Conservative Virus Skeptics," whose lives have changed the least, to "Young & Vulnerables" and "Diverse and At-Risks," whose lives have been affected the most by the pandemic.

The seven segments of female consumers identified in the report have been modeled onto Meredith's database of consumers and will be available for print and digital activation by advertisers.

"The segments allow marketers to better understand where their consumers fall within the spectrum," said Britta Cleveland, SVP of Research Solutions at Meredith. "By identifying these differences and activating them across our network of sites, we're making it possible for advertisers to reach and engage the women who are most receptive to their messages."

Meredith will be hosting a by-invitation-only webinar **The Post-Normal Consumer: A Forecast for Navigating an Uncertain Future** taking place Wednesday, February 24 from 9:30 – 11 am EST. The Meredith Research Solutions team and Dr. Ackerman will discuss the results and implications of this ambitious, national study on American women. In addition, futurist J. Walker Smith, Chief Knowledge Officer, Brand & Marketing of Kantar Media will offer an urgent forecast: "Disruption is the New Normal." To find out more about attending this event, click [here](#).

The findings in the report come primarily from a general population survey of 2,004 U.S. women ages 18–69 conducted in September 2020 and in-depth, online discussions with 88 American women about their experiences during the coronavirus pandemic in July 2020. The study was produced in

partnership with Associate Professor of Psychology, Dr. Joshua Ackerman, from the University of Michigan.

### **ABOUT MEREDITH CORPORATION'S NATIONAL MEDIA GROUP**

Engaging 95 percent of American women across every stage and every day of their lives, Meredith Corporation's National Media Group is home to 40+ iconic brands, including PEOPLE, Better Homes & Gardens, Allrecipes, Southern Living, REAL SIMPLE and Magnolia Journal. The company provides trusted content and experiences that resonate with a massive, highly receptive audience, reaching consumers where they are across digital, magazines, social platforms, video, audio and connected home assistants. Meredith's powerful brands have enabled the company to become the No. 2 licensor globally, including more than 3,500 SKUs of branded products at [Walmart](#). Meredith's businesses also include leading affinity marketer [Synapse](#), award-winning creative content studio [Foundry](#) and the Meredith Data Studio, whose proprietary first-party data and insights are leveraged for National Media Group offerings.

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