

RESEARCH

Consumers feeling lowest COVID-19 anxiety level: Deloitte

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Consumers are reporting feeling less anxiety regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in the wake of vaccination rollouts and fewer cases. Image credit: Getty

By KATIE TAMOLA

After one full year of living amid the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers are reporting their lowest anxiety levels since April 2020, while still feeling that several of their pandemic-era practices will stay intact.

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According to the latest Deloitte "[Global State of the Consumer Tracker](#)" survey, anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is steadily decreasing for consumers globally in the wake of case declines and vaccination rollouts. As consumers feel safer about returning to work, restaurants and possibly travel destinations, experts are hoping with continued improvement will come increased positive attitudes and spending.

"We will have to see how the vaccine roll out progresses in different countries around the globe, as well as monitor the effect of different viral variants, but the [anxiety decreasing] trend looks to be improving," said Stephen Rogers, executive director of Deloitte Insights Consumer Industry Center, [Deloitte LLP](#). "This won't affect the luxury consumer as much, but financial concern may replace COVID-19 as a driver of anxiety as the health crisis abates.

"Consumers will continue to navigate uncertainties such as protocols for the vaccinated and unvaccinated, levels of reopening, etc. but they're starting to see the light at the tunnel and feeling closer to a return to normal," he said.

The survey was conducted between Feb. 26 and March 3 in 18 countries where at least 1,000 consumers per country were polled.

Better days ahead?

In the United States, overall anxiety levels have declined by 10 percent in the last month. Worldwide, anxiety regarding the pandemic is at its lowest level since April 2020.

Consumers are beginning to feel safer, with more than half the surveyed consumers, 53 percent, reporting that they feel safe going to stores. In the U.S., the number of consumers feeling comfortable in stores increased from 51 percent in late December to 64 percent.



Anxiety levels are down from the start of the pandemic. Image credit: Chopard

With COVID-19 cases declining in some markets and additional vaccination rollouts, anxiety among those surveyed declined across most regions, with the United Kingdom, Japan and the U.S. faring best, reflecting a 10 percent decrease of anxiety in the last month. More 51 percent of global respondents and 64 percent in the U.S. feel safe returning to work.

However, COVID-19 continues to be the leading driver of anxiety for those surveyed in most countries with financial stress. These countries note financial stress and employment the second and third most anxiety-inducing subjects, at 46 percent and 36 percent, respectively.

The latest cycle of the survey indicated that vaccinations and the U.S. stimulus package are encouraging some consumers to start spending more. Three in four U.S. consumers surveyed plan to spend the same or more on apparel and restaurants in the coming weeks.

Consumers who have received vaccinations are also reporting increased interest in traveling and staying in hotels in the next three months. In the U.S., vaccinated consumers are 35 percent more likely to plan a flight than those who are not vaccinated.

About three in 10 consumers reported feeling safe to fly and 37 percent reported feeling safe staying in a hotel. Globally, however, consumers' net expectations are to fly and stay in hotels less post-pandemic than they did pre-pandemic.

Although travel intent seems to be rising, one in three consumers surveyed stated that they are waiting until after the pandemic to take a vacation.



In the U.S., vaccinated consumers are 35 percent more likely to plan a flight than those who are not vaccinated. Image credit: JetSmarter

While consumers may be considering more shopping and travel, behaviors across the world like avoiding crowds with strangers and eating at home may remain post-pandemic.

Globally, 55 percent of consumers surveyed plan to continue cooking more at home than pre-pandemic and 38 percent of respondents plan on ordering more takeout or delivery than pre-COVID, rather than eat in-person at a restaurant.

What may remain

Certain habits that emerged as a result of the pandemic may be here to stay, including increased online shopping. Roughly 50 percent of consumers surveyed indicate they will be doing more shopping online compared to 2019.

Online spending during the pandemic has increased across sectors.

Online car shopping has become so popular amid the pandemic that nearly one in four buyers says his or her experience with it makes them less likely to shop in person in future, according to [J.D. Power's](#) 2020 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index study ([see story](#)).

Recent changes at Saks Fifth Avenue and the upcoming ecommerce relaunch of Lord & Taylor are the latest indications that the future of the U.S. department store is online. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and advancements in technology, ecommerce tools and digital offerings have accelerated tremendously within the fashion and retail space ([see story](#)).

Brands should also continue to prioritize safety measures to continue assuaging consumer anxiety.

"Retailers should be transparent and explain the safety measures put in place," Mr. Rogers said. "They should be authentic in their brand positioning and empathetic to their consumers situation and aspirations. and luxury brands in particular need to be conscious of the K-shaped recovery and how their consumers want to show up in a context where some people will be exiting the pandemic in worse financial shape."

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