

LEADING IN A TIME OF CRISIS: CORPORATE AMERICA AND COVID-19

Americans are calling on corporate America to step up and take action during this crisis. How and whether companies respond will have a lasting impact on their reputation...and their bottom line.

Part of GSG's Business & Politics Series,

in partnership with POLITICO Audience Solutions

AS AMERICANS NAVIGATE THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES, THEY ARE LOOKING NOT JUST TO GOVERNMENT, BUT TO CORPORATIONS TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE.

But while Americans are inclined to give corporations credit for their good work, they are skeptical: companies are fighting against deeply engrained perceptions that they are focused only on their bottom lines and will get more than their fair share of taxpayer stimulus dollars.

As partners in helping companies communicate their purpose, GSG and POLITICO Audience Solutions conducted a survey to understand Americans' expectations of companies during this global crisis and the reputational and economic risks companies may face for failing to act.

KEY FINDINGS:

Tell people what you are doing to help.

Many corporations have stepped up in this critical moment and those that are aiding in the nation's response are being recognized for their efforts. Google, Amazon, and General Motors are among the companies seen as having a real impact in the nation's response to COVID-19 and are viewed more favorably as a result. *The impact is more than reputational – a plurality of Americans say a company's actions during this time will have a major impact on whether they buy that company's products and services in the future.*

Be present. Focus on the health and well-being of your employees today.

While the economics of the pandemic will come into view in the months and years to come, at this moment, Americans are focused squarely on the safety, health and well-being of their family, their friends, their communities, and the country at large and corporations must do the same. CEOs must buck the existing perception that they are focused most on the bottom line and work to support their employees and beyond by providing important benefits like paid leave, producing needed equipment and materials, and working in close cooperation with the government to respond to the pandemic. *Americans trust corporations in this moment and corporations can and must deliver.*

Stimulus dollars come with the responsibility to demonstrate real purpose and support for those who need it most.

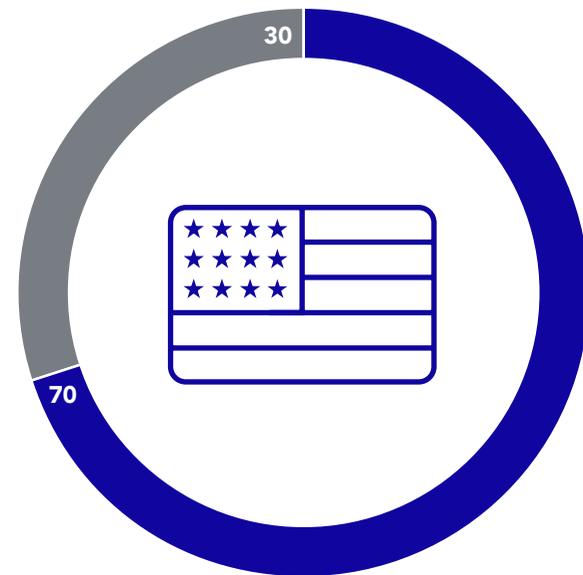
Americans believe that corporations will get more than their fair share, leaving corporations and the wealthiest to benefit rather than middle- and working-class Americans. Companies need to tell the story of what they are doing – and who they are helping - with the stimulus dollars they receive to overcome negative perceptions. *Companies will be defined later by what they do now, and the reputational costs could be high.*

AMERICANS ARE FOCUSED ON THE HEALTH IMPACT OF THE CRISIS AND WANT TO KNOW THAT COMPANIES ARE FOCUSED ON THE SAME.

The Immediate Crisis is Fueled by Concerns Around the Health Impact of COVID-19

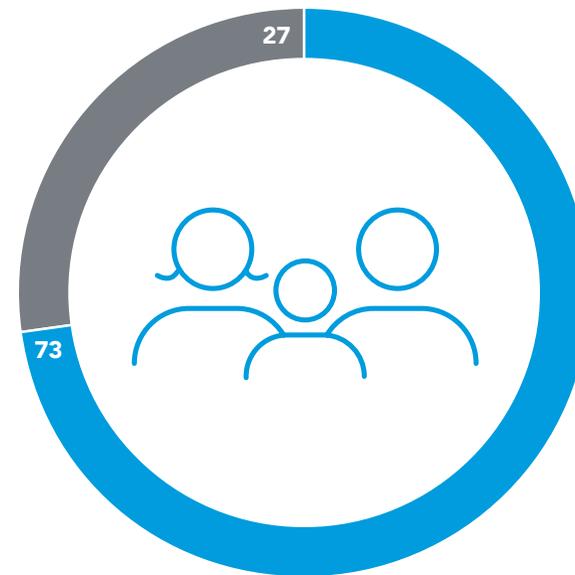
In thinking about the impact of coronavirus on the country, which are you more worried about...

- The impact of coronavirus on people's health and well-being
- The impact of coronavirus on the economy



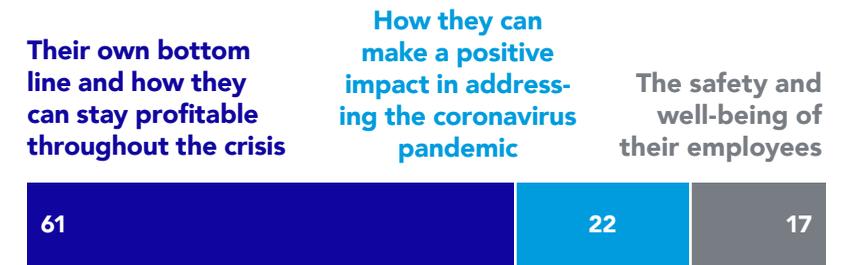
In thinking about the impact of coronavirus on you personally, which are you more worried about...

- You and your family's health and well-being
- You and your family's financial situation

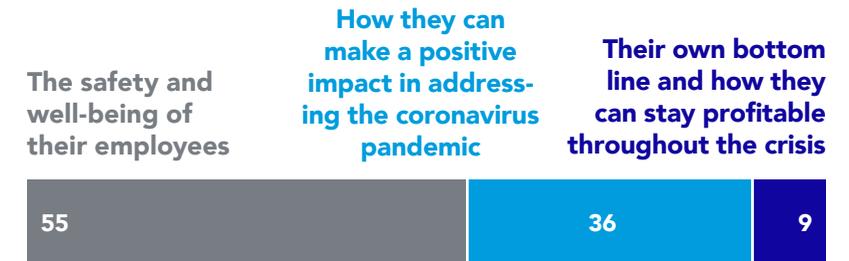


CEOs Must Work to Ensure Health and Well-Being of Their Employees

Do you believe CEOs are more focused on...



Regardless of what you believe CEOs are focusing on, what do you think they *should be* focusing on throughout the coronavirus pandemic?



AMERICANS PLACE DEEP TRUST IN CORPORATIONS AND WITH THAT TRUST COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

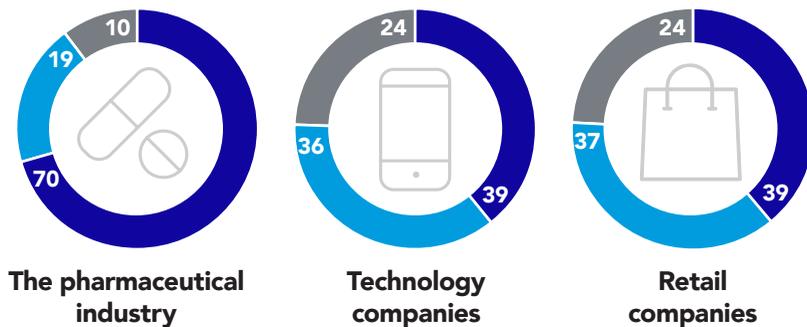
There is a Mandate for Corporations to Respond to the Pandemic

Agreement with the statement "Companies have a responsibility to respond to the coronavirus pandemic."



How much responsibility do you think each of the following groups or people have to address the coronavirus pandemic?

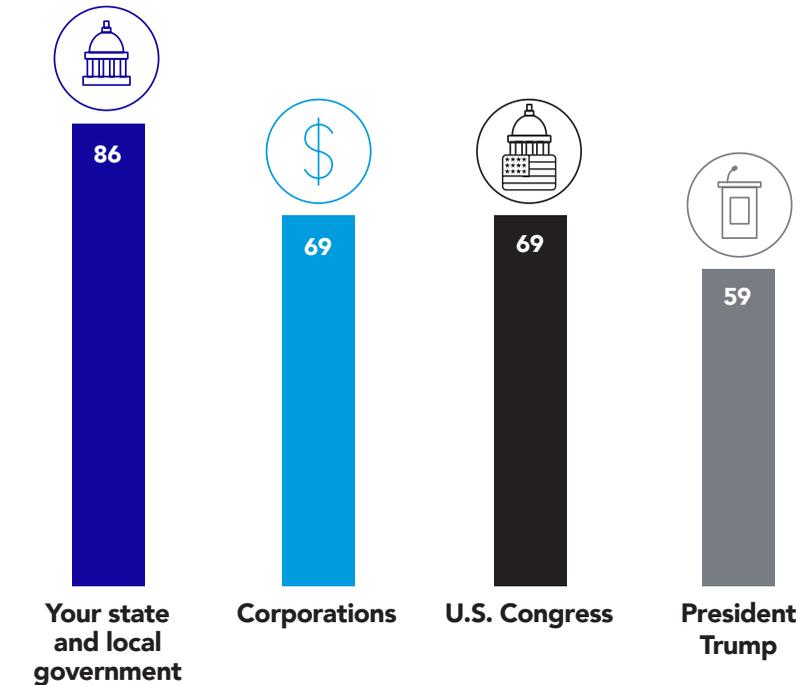
A great deal Some Not responsible



Americans Have Deep Trust in Corporations' Ability to Handle the Crisis

Please indicate how much you trust each to handle the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

% Trust

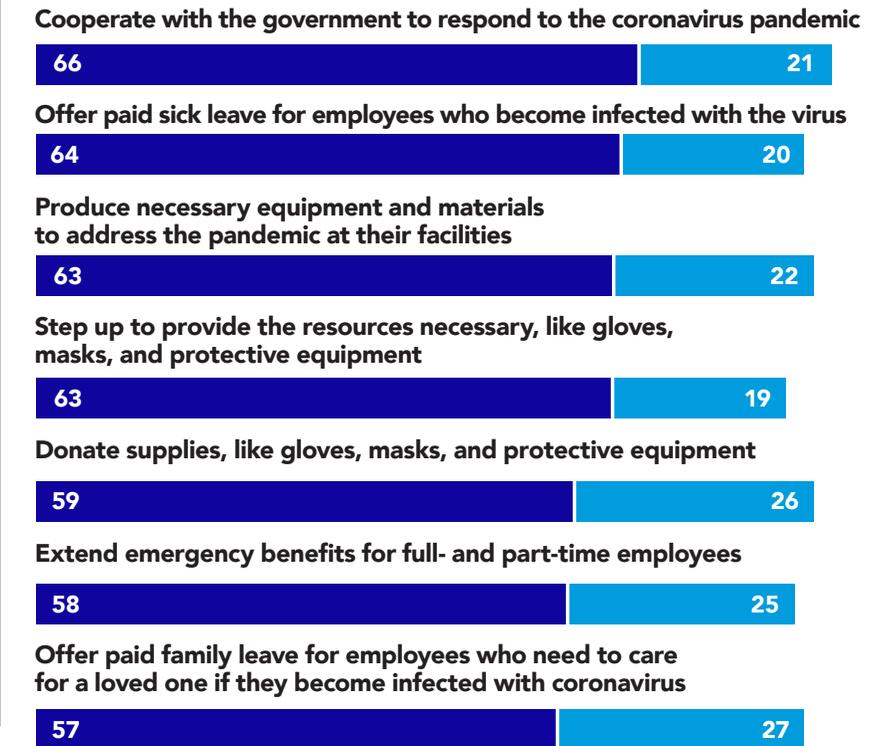


There Are Many Valuable Ways Corporations Can Help

Please indicate how important it is to you personally for a corporation to take each of the following actions:

Extremely important

Very important



COMMUNICATE YOUR EFFORTS. THEY WILL NOT GO UNNOTICED, AND THEY WILL HAVE LASTING IMPACT.

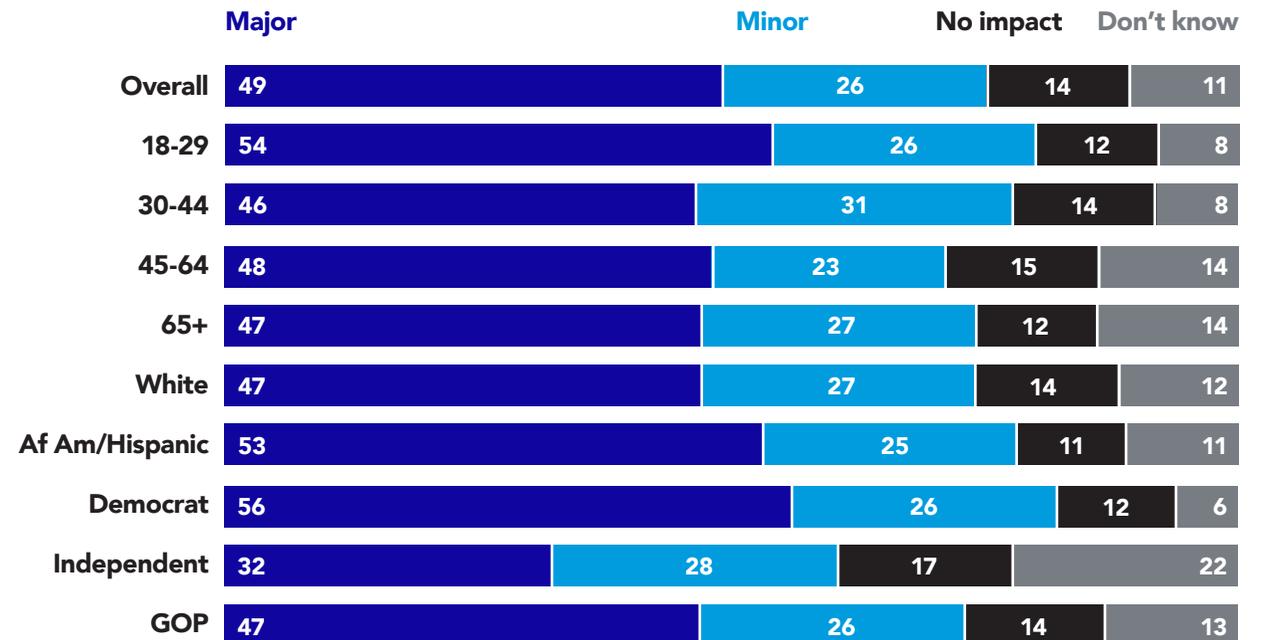
Americans Recognize Those Companies That Have Played a Leading Role in the COVID-19 Response

Please indicate how much of an impact you think each company is currently having in helping to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.



How Corporations Act Today Will Have a Lasting Impact

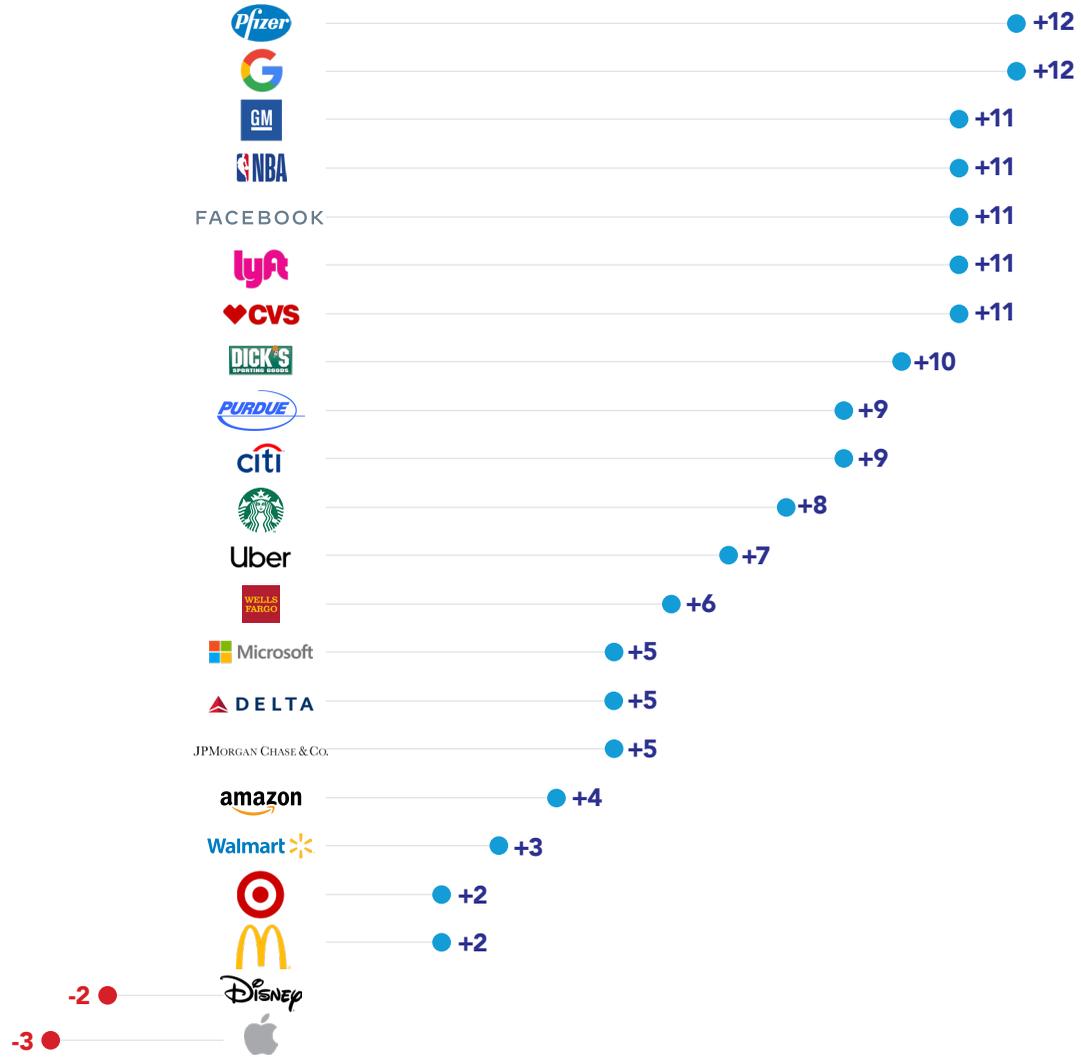
In general, would you say that how a company chooses to respond to the coronavirus pandemic has a major impact, minor impact, or no impact on whether you choose to buy that company's services or products?



Companies at the Forefront of the Response are Viewed Most Favorably

Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each:

Net Favorable Shift December 2019 to April 2020



NOW IS THE TIME FOR COMPANIES TO COMMUNICATE AND EDUCATE AMERICANS ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE DOING, ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT ARE RECEIVING STIMULUS MONEY.

Any organization receiving taxpayer support will need to effectively communicate how and where that money was spent or risk serious reputational harm. There is still room to educate Americans about what corporations are doing.

Americans Are Primed to Believe Corporations and the Wealthiest Stand to Benefit Most

Thinking about the federal government's response to the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, who do you think the federal government's policies will favor most?

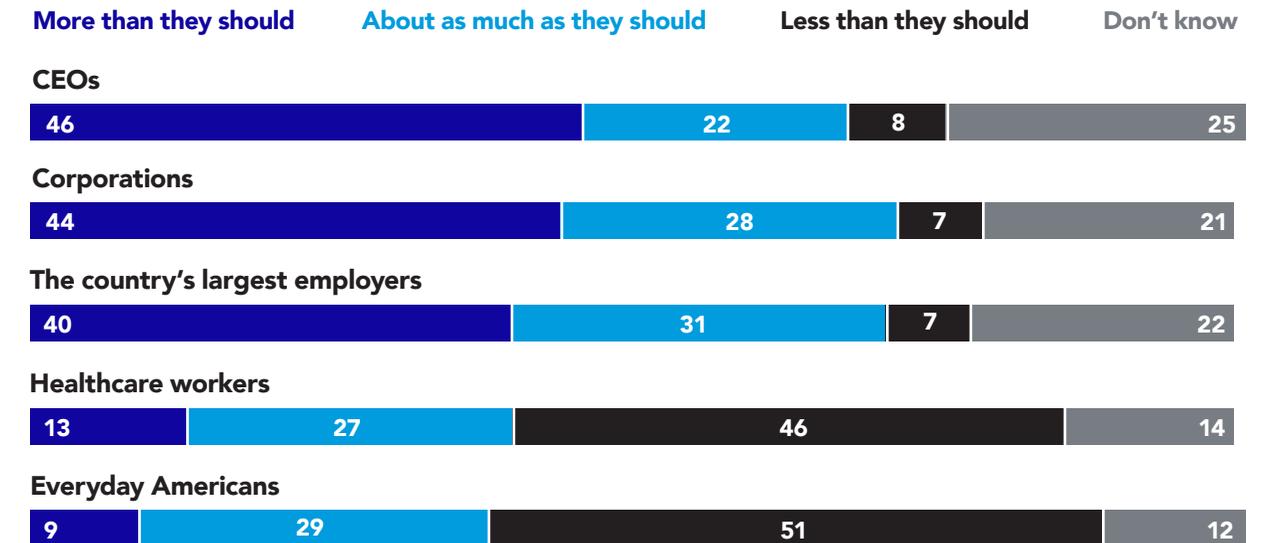


And who do you think will face the greatest economic hardships as a result of the federal government's response to the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic?



Corporations Must Work to Support Everyday Americans and Health Care Workers on the Frontlines

Based on what you know, please indicate how much you think each of the following groups will receive as part of the stimulus package





About GSG

GSG is the go-to public affairs, communications, and research partner for companies, causes, and campaigns. We work with our clients to build their reputations, tackle big challenges, create positive change, and win.

About POLITICO Audience Solutions

POLITICO's Audience Solutions team leverages the platforms and audiences created by the largest global newsroom covering policy and politics to help leading corporations effectively engage the most influential people.

About the Study

Global Strategy Group's Business & Politics study has become the authoritative voice on the role that companies play in the political and social discourse and how this impacts brand perception.

GSG and POLITICO Audience Solutions conducted a public opinion survey among 800 adults between April 2nd and 5th, 2020. The survey was conducted online recruiting respondents from a leading opt-in panel vendor. Special care was taken by GSG to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of the adult population on a series of demographic variables including age, gender, region, ethnicity, income, educational attainment, partisan affiliation, and political ideology. This study may be downloaded at globalstrategygroup.com.