

# Wellness in a Post-COVID World

A 2020 report examining how the pandemic has sparked Americans' new hygiene behaviors and demands.

# Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed everything.

Many businesses and public spaces have shut down for the foreseeable future to keep people safe and prevent the disease from spreading. While Americans are anxious to return to their “normal daily life,” the scary reality is that life won’t be the same moving forward.

So what does our “new normal” look like? Will Americans be more aware of the spread of bacteria and disease and how to prevent transmission? Will businesses take more steps to improve cleaning protocols, to keep employees and customers healthy?

To answer these questions, we polled 1,000 U.S. residents over the age of 18 about their concerns and how their “normal daily life” behavior will change after the pandemic.

Our findings show that Americans have heightened awareness and growing concerns about spreading and contracting germs in public settings. The good news is that they are willing to make drastic changes - and demanding businesses do the same - to create a safer, healthier life for themselves, their families and the community.

82%

Are more aware or concerned with cleaning tools and protocols used in public spaces

58%

Have less confidence in their peers’ cleaning and hygiene practices

40%

Will only visit public spaces when it’s absolutely necessary following COVID-19

# Germ Concerns Peak

The swift spread of COVID-19 forced Americans to seriously reevaluate their cleaning habits and has caused many to consider new safety practices and tools to keep them healthy.

## Taking Extra Safety Precautions

Americans are itching to ditch social distancing and get back to normal life, but the truth is: germ concerns are higher than ever. Most will wait before they return to public spaces even after they're deemed "safe" by the government. In fact, 34% will wait a few weeks, 26% will wait 1-2 months, and 16% are unsure they will ever feel comfortable in these spaces again.

In addition to concerns with being out in public, the majority of Americans are worried about bringing items (groceries, packages, mail) into their homes. Over half 57% say they regularly clean these items before they enter their home and another 25% have concerns about these items, but don't know how to properly disinfect them.

## Investing in New Cleaning Tools

When it comes to boosting cleaning practices, Americans are most interested in purchasing chemical cleaners and disinfectants (83%). Younger Americans (ages 18-34), however, have a heightened appetite for innovative tools like air purifiers/filters (43%) and even UV light sanitizers (21%). Across the board, Americans are interested in smarter ways to automate home cleaning:

**52%**

---

Express interest in purchasing technology that automates household disinfection

**64%**

---

Of those interested in automated disinfection tech would pay more to live in a place that employs "smart" cleaning

# Holding Businesses Accountable

Americans aren't just holding themselves accountable for better cleaning practices. They expect businesses across every industry to do the same to create a safer world.

76%

Will hold brands accountable for how they clean their spaces

51%

Will stop doing business with brands that don't discuss cleaning protocols

In fact, they're willing to pay more to businesses that are implementing stricter safety and cleaning protocols. The majority of Americans say they will pay more for travel (56%), dining (54%) and retail (52%) experiences that include enhanced cleaning tools and protocols. This makes sense as over a third (35%) of Americans say restaurants or retail stores are the public space they are most concerned about, and another quarter (27%) are most worried about public transportation.

## Restoring Customer Trust

Americans are willing to pay more for safer experiences with businesses, but what investments will business need to make? According to our survey, they expect businesses to make sanitizer available, increase cleaning staff and invest in new technology.

92%

Want businesses to make hand sanitizer publicly available at customer touchpoints

78%

Think businesses should increase the number of cleaning staff

61%

Want businesses to invest in automated cleaning technologies (such as disinfecting lights and cleaning robots)

# Making Working & Learning Safer

Americans also want changes made to the spaces and places where they spend most of their time throughout the week, including their workplace.

## Prioritizing Workplace Health

Following the pandemic virtual workspaces may continue to be seen as the safer option, even after offices and other workspaces reopen. Americans are hesitant to go back into the office with 17% planning to wait a few weeks to go back to the office once it's deemed "safe", 11% planning to wait 1-2 months, and another 11% saying they will work from home indefinitely.

Americans want employers to focus on protecting workers from harmful germs. One in four (25%) say they would even leave their job if their employer doesn't make investments in cleanliness, and this is even higher for Millennials (31%).

28%

Worry offices aren't cleaned regularly

23%

Worry staff isn't aware of good hygiene practices

22%

Worry coworkers won't stay home when sick

Beyond in-office improvements, Americans want businesses to prioritize employee safety during business travel. In fact, 43% expect employers to pay more for business travel to book with brands that make investments in enhanced cleanliness.

## Creating Safer Schools

Similar to the heightened concerns with workplace safety, Americans are worried about germ spread in school and daycare settings. Once schools and daycare centers reopen, over a quarter (27%) of parents say they will wait a few weeks and another quarter (24%) will wait up to 2 months before sending their children back to school.

The majority of Americans (81%) expect schools to make new investments in cleaning protocols to protect students, and many would pay more for schools (41%) or childcare centers (40%) that prioritize new cleanliness practices.

# Adapting to the “New Normal”

So how do these findings inform our new normal?

## **We Must Set New Distancing Standards**

Typical American social etiquette is sure to evolve following the pandemic - from shaking hands before a business meeting, to packing public trains and buses, and even standing in a crowded pit at a concert. We expect close contact interactions will change for the foreseeable future - and that's okay. Americans should be prepared to implement new “distancing” standards in their daily lives. For businesses, making customers and employees feel safe may require limiting the number of people in a building or ensuring that workers' desks are spaced at a comfortable distance away from others.

## **We Must Invest in “Smarter” Cleaning Methods**

Our survey shows that chemical cleaners and disinfectants continue to be the primary means for keeping surfaces free of germs. However, there's now a growing demand for innovative tools that supplement current intermittent cleaning practices, both by individuals as well as public spaces and businesses. Leveraging automated technology - such as antimicrobial LED lights - ensures surfaces are continuously cleaned and sanitized between regular scrubbing.

## **We Must Prioritize Communication & Education**

To keep the public safe from COVID-19 and any other infectious disease, education is critical. It's easy to become overwhelmed by hype on the news and social media conversations; but it's difficult to separate fact from fiction. Americans must take the time to understand, at a high level, how germs spread and concrete steps they can take to better protect themselves. From a business perspective, communicating new protocols and standards they've put into place will be essential to creating safer public spaces and easing Americans' concerns.

# THANK YOU

For more information about this survey and Vital Vio, please visit [www.vitalvio.com](http://www.vitalvio.com).

To receive more insight or executive commentary on the survey findings, please contact Vital Vio at [VitalVio@SHIFTcomm.com](mailto:VitalVio@SHIFTcomm.com).