

# CRISIS AVERTED?

## COVID-inspired Lessons For Brands

7 July 2020

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# Welcome to our webinar!

**Today's presenters:** Ready to provide fact-based guidance on brand communications in crises



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# We are here today to discuss two crises that compel brands to learn in the moment

- There are consistent lessons to be drawn by brands from both crises
- As well as some important differences to recognize
- Both have prompted big changes in consumer attitudes and actions



Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

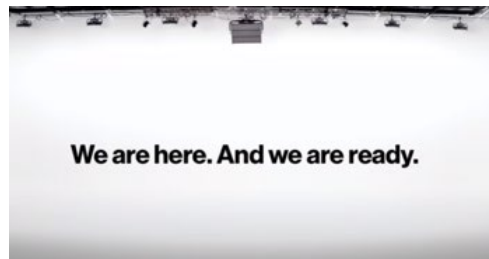
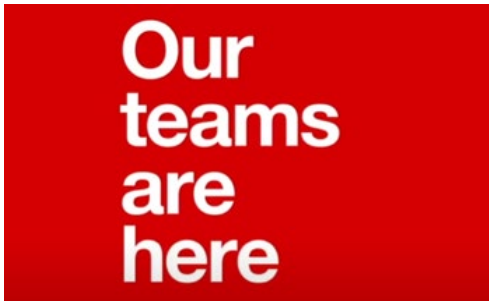
***Actively controlling  
their health risk***



**41%**

***Taken some form of action  
for racial justice***



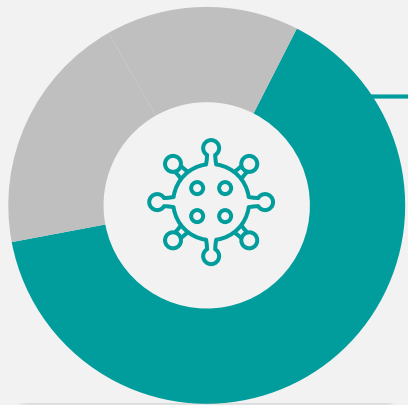


## At COVID outset brands rose to the crisis

“

*We are here to help...  
These are unprecedented times...  
We thank you for all that you do...  
Together...we'll get through this...*

# Which produced a sea of sameness



**65%**  
have seen  
coronavirus  
related advertising

**<20%**  
Connect this to a  
specific company  
or brand



I have seen **multiple ads that acknowledge the epidemic** and speaking directly about what they are doing to protect their employees and customers as well as what services they are continuing to offer.



I've seen several ads saluting front line and essential workers but **I can't remember the companies that made them.**



Frankly, I'm tired of the sad-sac music playing along each ad. Tired of desperate looking people waving from dark windows. **Stop the "we're here for you" lies...**



An excessive number of brands are reiterating the "we're in this together" theme. **It's overdone and cliched.**

# Consumers are looking to brands for help in adapting beyond simply offering support



**69%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*I want to hear from brands and companies on what they have to offer*



**67%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*I want to hear how brands/products are useful in my situation now*



**50%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*I am tired of seeing brands just offer solidarity and support*



And desired tone switches  
from sympathetic and solemn  
to light-hearted



**-24%**

SOLEMN OR SERIOUS



**-19%**

SYMPATHETIC



**+11%**

LIGHT-HEARTED



# Consumers want positivity & security from advertising

Power - 6%

↓ 2%

They want to feel empowered with factual information and confident and sense of control to take on the crisis

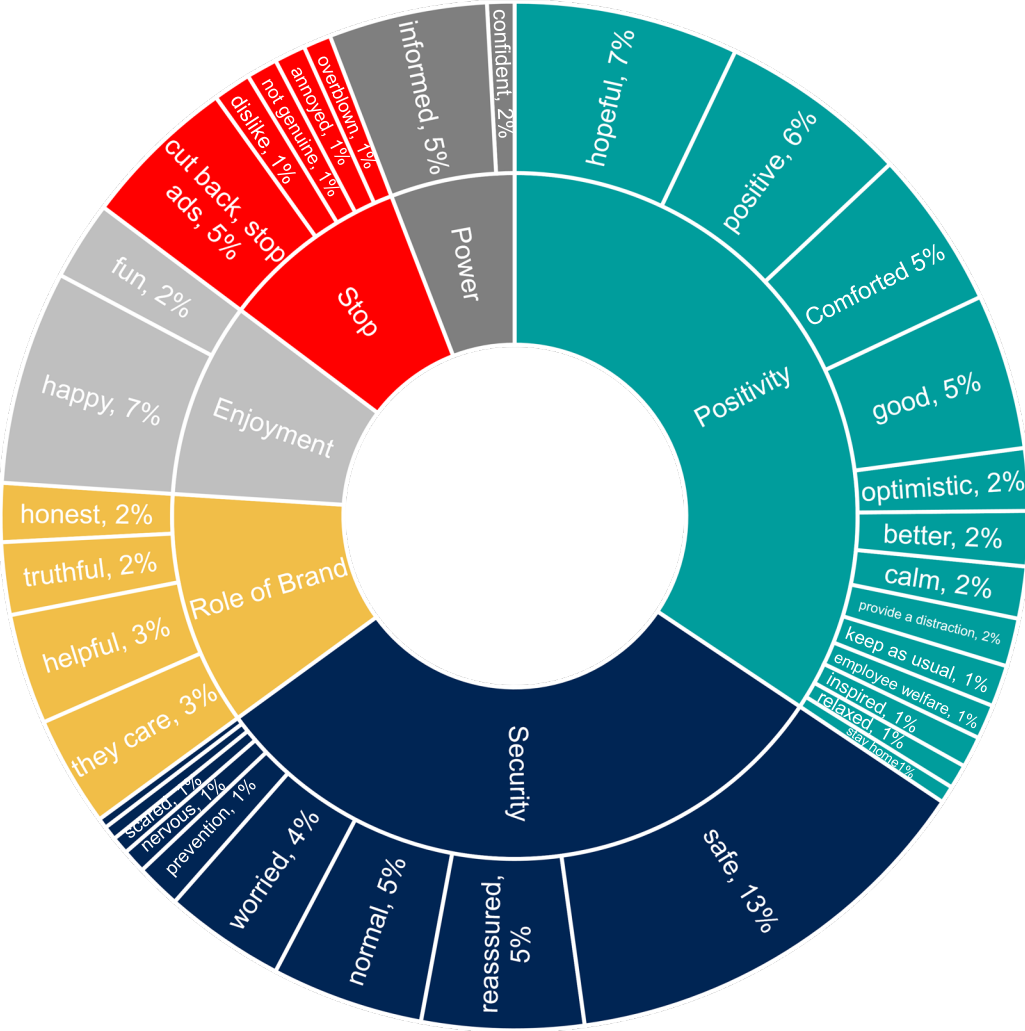
Enjoyment - 9 %

↓ 1%

Ads should fun, entertaining, make them feel happy, so they can forget about all the crisis and stress in the world

Role of Brand - 11%

They want to feel that the brand is helpful, can be trusted, really care, messaging is honest



Positivity - 34%

↓ 2%

They want to feel good again and improve their well-being. They want to feel calm, comforted, relaxed, hopeful, positive, optimistic

Security - 31%

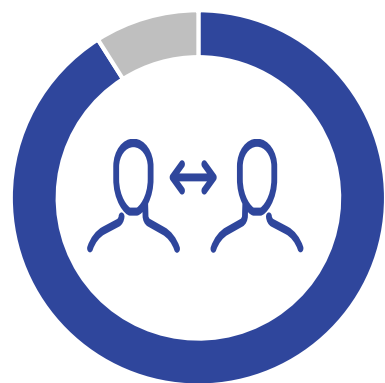
↑ 1%

People want to feel safe and secure again. They want to be reassured that things will return to normal. There is no need to be afraid. There is no need to panic.



# Our changed world leads to consumers actively addressing new needs

How actively are you doing the following?



**91%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*Controlling your health risk (activity limits, distancing)*



**84%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*Finding ways to make change comfortable*



**81%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*Making ways to connect, socially*



**80%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*Reconsidering what matters (money, values, habits)*

# New creative is tapping into these consumer NEEDS

## Control



Keep control



**Walmart:** 'Keep America moving. Safely'  
**Dunkin':** 'Safety All Protocols'

## Comfort



As comfortable as possible



**Best Buy:** 'Your Home'  
**Domino's:** 'Bright Side'

## Connection



Meaningful connections



**Budweiser:** 'Wassup'  
**Heineken:** 'Connections'

## Change



New solutions to new situations

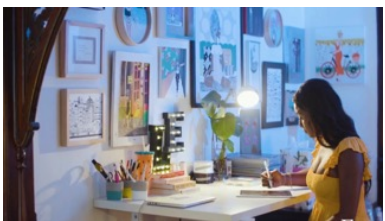


**Match.com:**  
'Dating while Distancing'  
**Jared:** 'Love Can't Wait'

## Create



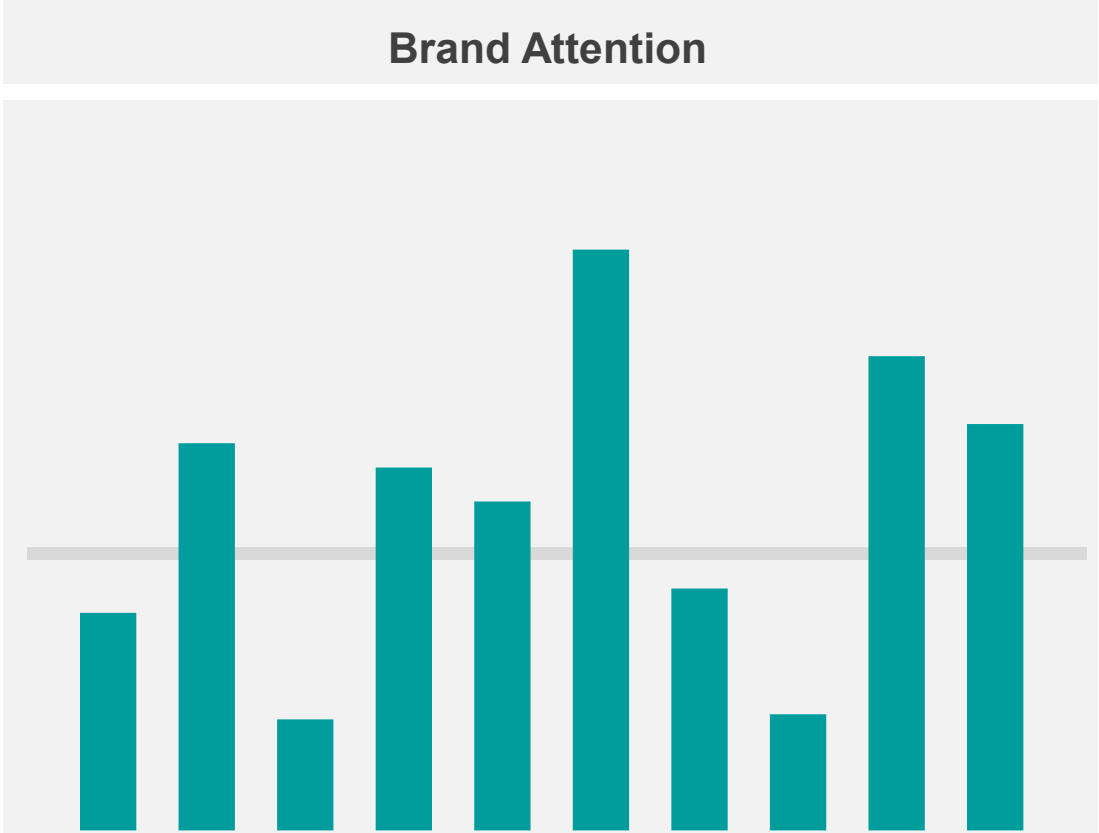
Be creative



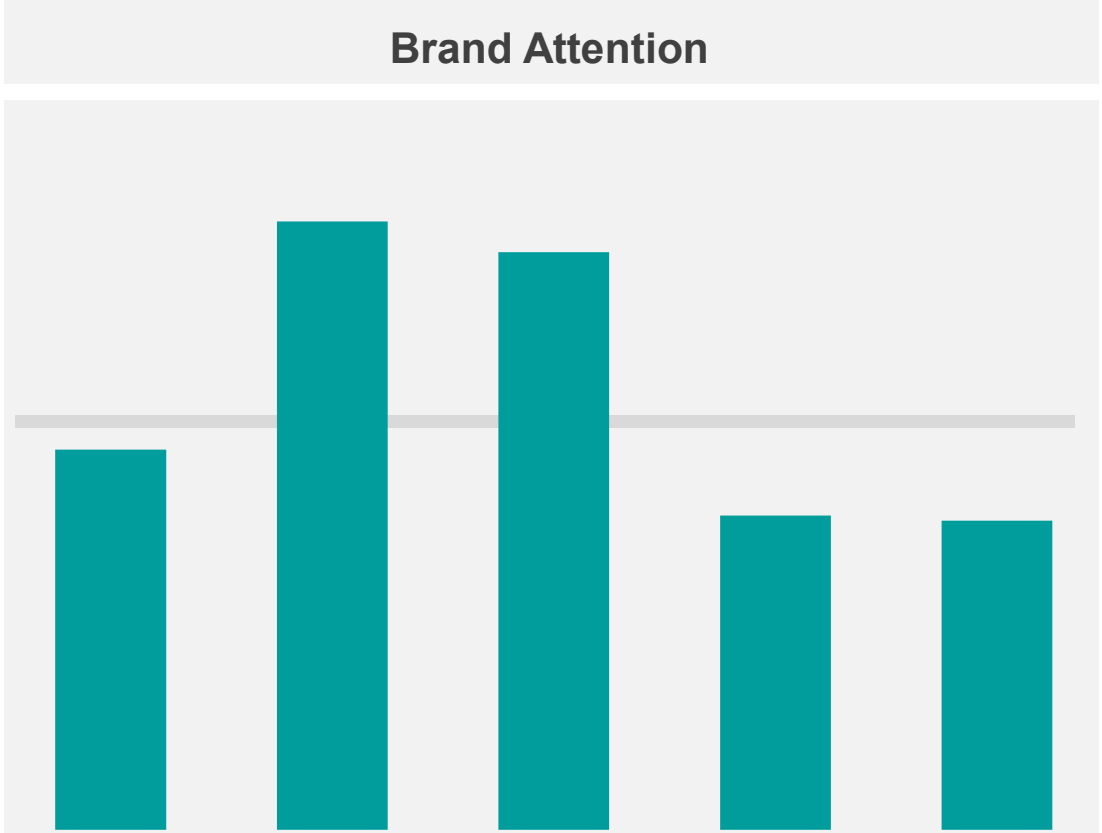
**Lowe's:**  
'Summer is Open'  
**Etsy:** 'Always Open'

# And new strategies are driving more consistent branded attention

Two Months Ago



Now



Average

Brand attention results among COVID-themed ads tested by Ipsos



# What drives success? Relevance, well branded



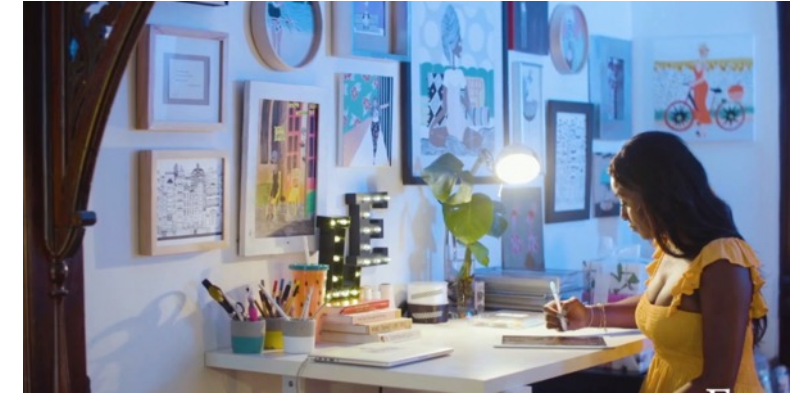
**Dunkin':** Very well branded with smart use of animated distinctive assets – colors, symbols, products. Clearly and directly communicates their health and safety protections. Judged credible and informative

<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/nb3i/dunkin-safety-all-protocols>



**Jared:** Uses consumer-generated content effectively to deliver high intensity of emotional engagement. Uses its equity in the wedding industry to connect and address new needs in the space, driving dependability and trust

<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/nZ3i/jared-love-cant-wait-virtual-wedding-song-by-johann-pachelbel>



**Etsy:** Repurposes live action footage to deliver a compelling and unique message that improves brand perceptions. Uses positioning as an online curator of independent, artisan creations to connect to new needs of enhancing our environment and finding new outlets of joy

<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/nwhq/etsy-always-open>

# The challenges? Convincing brand role reflective of positioning



**Domino's:** People know it's for Domino's, thanks to good use of brand assets, but a compelling role for the brand is missing. This produces poor results for potential to change behavior

<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/n5Tf/dominos-mix-and-match-deal-look-on-the-bright-side>



**Heineken:** Working in a similar way this ad showcases the relevant 'virtual' struggles of our new lives, which drives positive sentiment. The Heineken brand however has an incidental role which limits potential for behavior change

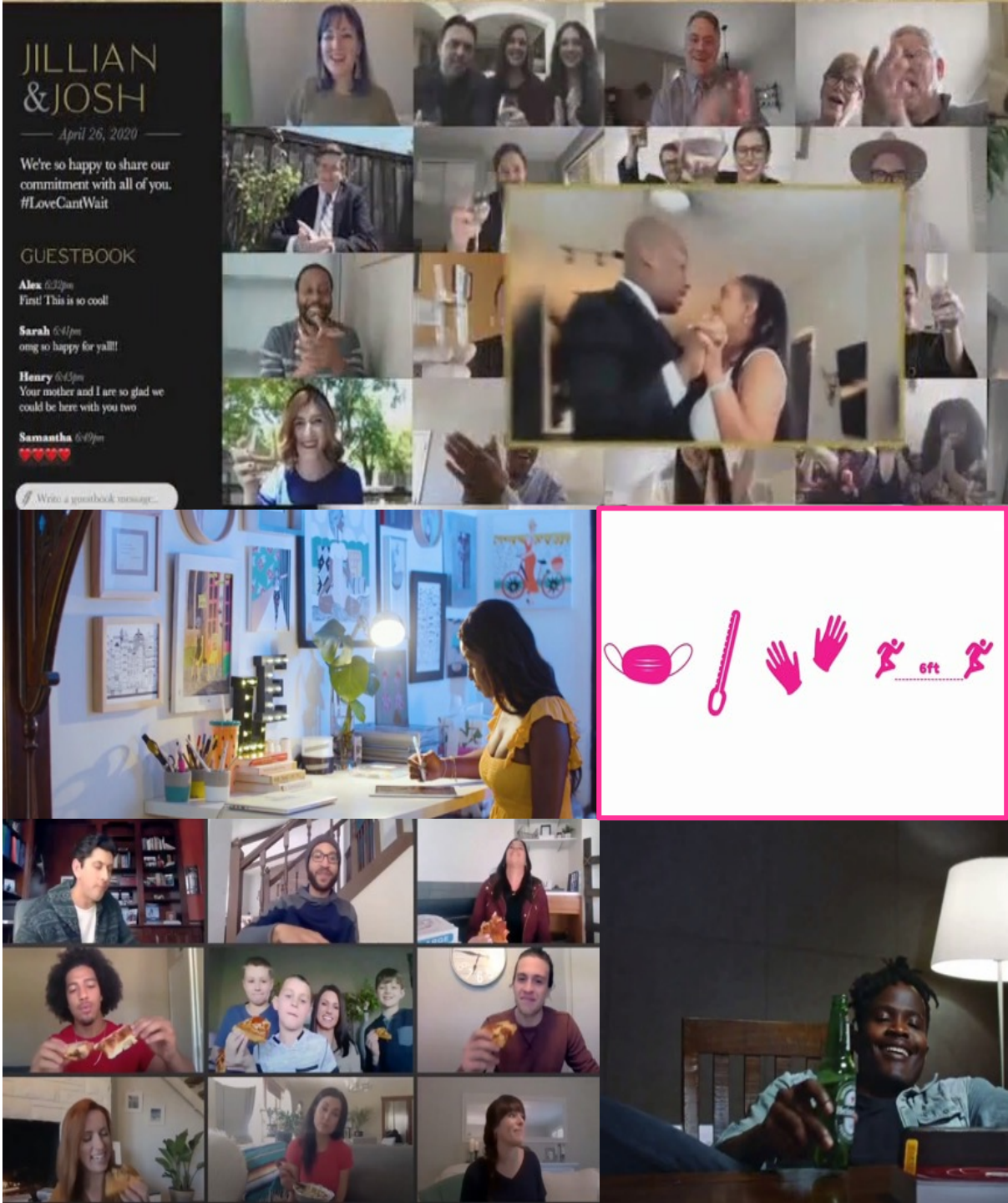
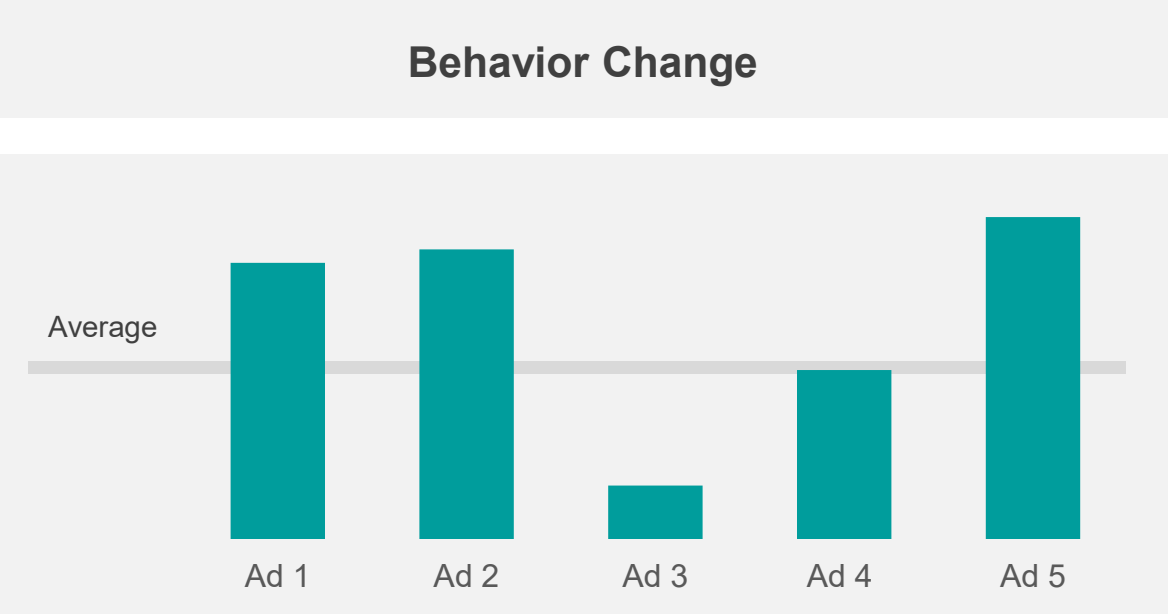
<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/nbC7/heineken-connections-song-by-dante-marchi>

# 56%

*Consumers feel  
that brands  
are trying too  
hard to make  
a connection  
with them at  
this time*

# Branding, especially now, must be more than skin deep

Holding up a mirror to consumers' reality is not enough to drive behavior change. Brands must use their positioning and equity to find a distinct role that is compelling to consumers





# COVID-19 Lessons learned by brands

**Brands jumped into advertising during COVID without tailoring their messaging – and this failed.**

They all sounded alike and their messages did not link back to their brand equities.

**People want messages that are relevant to brands and mention specific actions.**

Nothing was accomplished by brands putting out feel-good ads that didn't link back to their essence.

People also yearned for lighter-hearted content to provide a break from reality.

**But how should a brand communicate when there is no way to make light of a situation?**

# Racial Injustice Response — Spans Generations, Regions and Race

% of people who have taken ANY action

**59%**  
*Of Black Americans*

**34%**  
*Of White Americans*

**65%**  
*Of 18-34 Year Olds*

**38%**  
*Of 35-54 Year Olds*

**25%**  
*Of 55+ Year Olds*

**50%**  
*Of Urban-Dwellers*

**43%**  
*Of Suburban-Dwellers*

**27%**  
*Of Rural-Dwellers*

Base: Total (n=1113) | Q. Following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, have you taken any of the following actions?

# But for many people who have not taken action, they don't know what they need to do



\*\*\*Note: For clear visualization, only associations greater than 2% are shown

“

*I am not sure how I can be a good ally. I work too often to do much in the little spare time that I have. I am not sure if my money would go toward a cause 100%.*

“

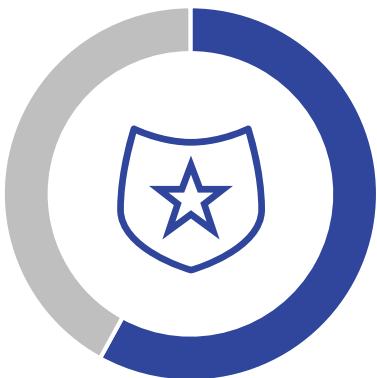
*I don't know what I could do because I definitely have no plans to participate in any sort of protest. I personally do my best to treat everyone I meet equally and have no hatred.*

Source: Ipsos SMX Online Communities: June 4 – 8, 2020



# Most people think it's appropriate for *any* brand to take a stance on racial justice

18-34-year olds, urban residents, and Blacks are more in favor of brands speaking out.



**58%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*It is appropriate for any brand to take a stance on racial justice*



**53%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*Brands with a strong Black following should speak out about racial justice*



**34%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*Only brands with a good record of diversity should advertise about racial justice*



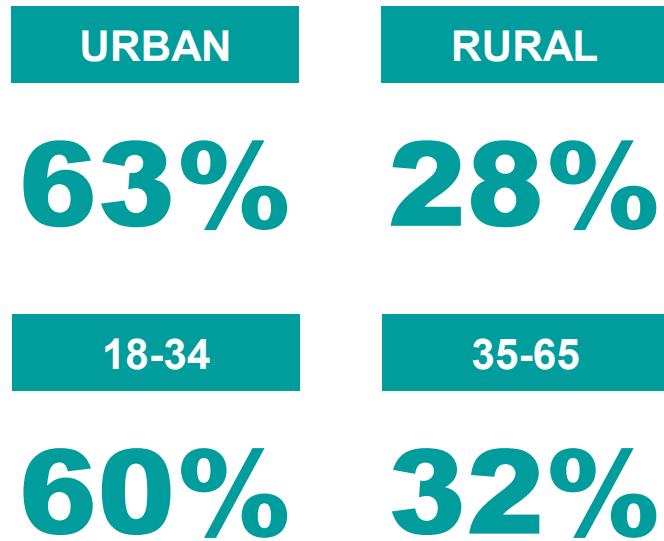
**39%**

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

*Brands should not get involved in advertising about issues such as racial justice*

# But a wide spectrum of consumer opinion exists

With young urban dwellers at one end and older rural dwellers at the other



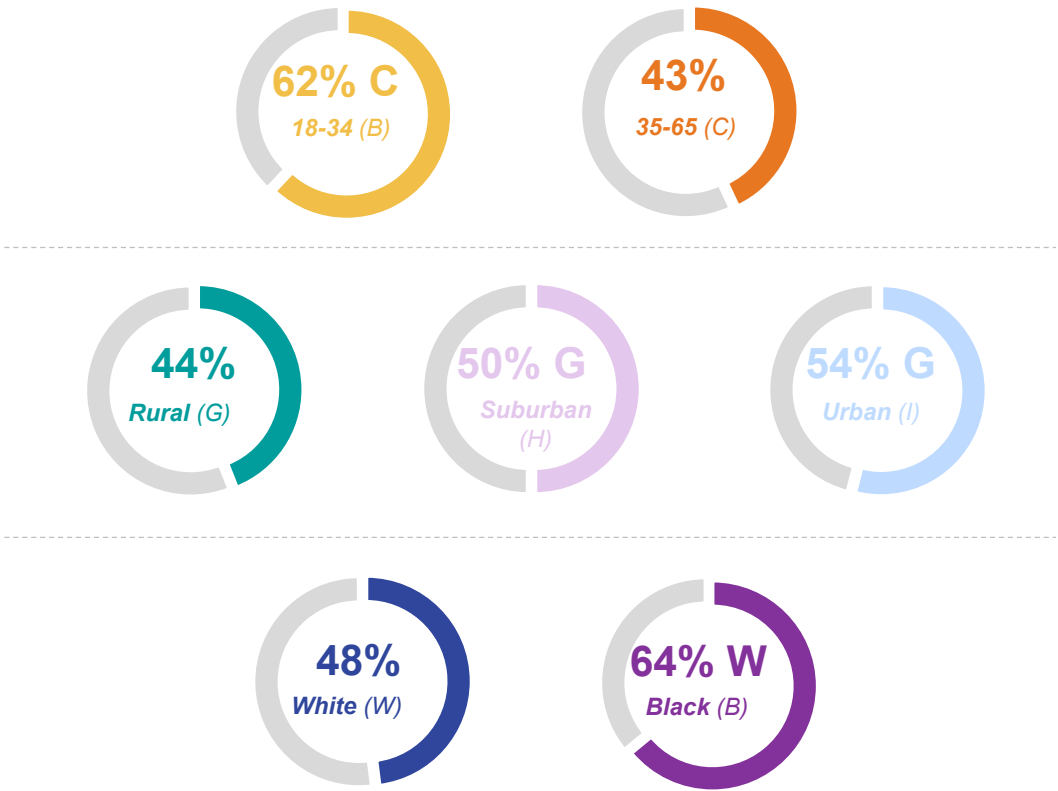
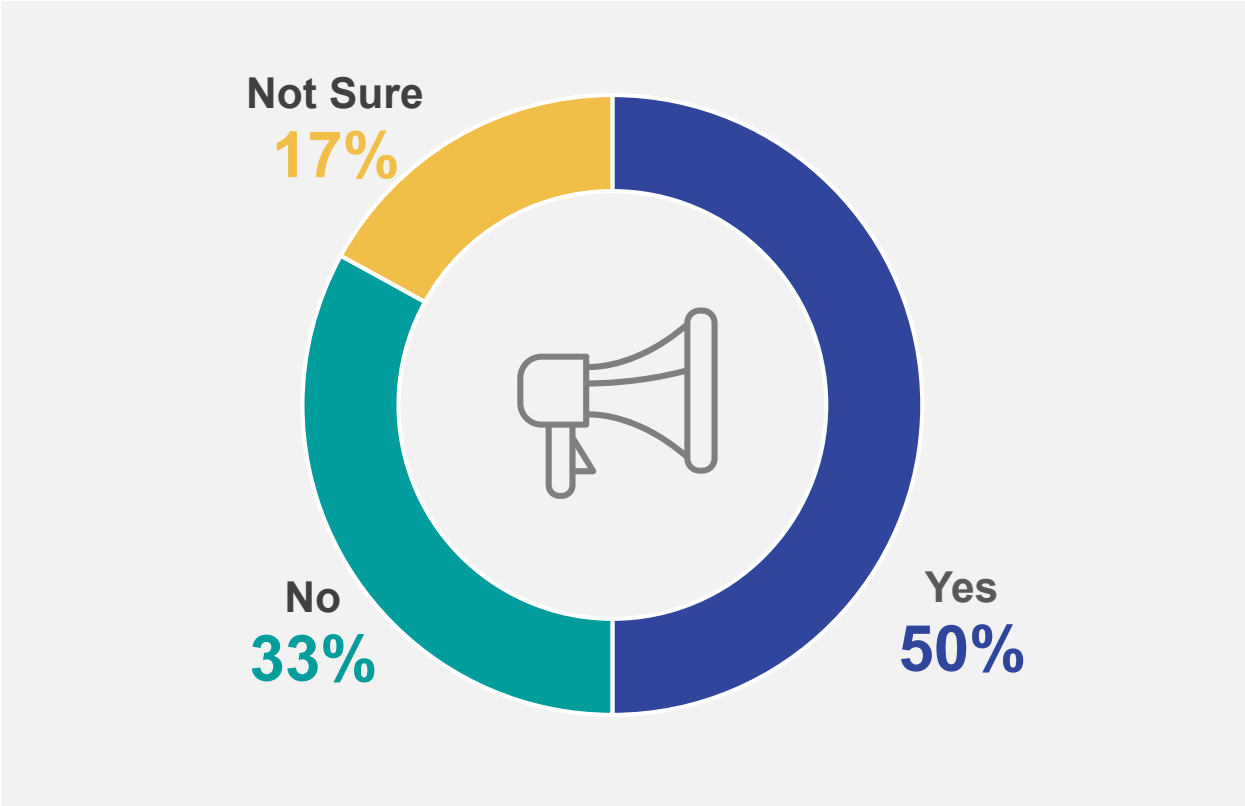
consider it important for brands to communicate about racism

*Base: 18-34 (n=540), 35-65 (n=960), Rural (n=382), Urban (n=352)*



# People are taking note of brands' responses in advertising

## Aware of Racial Justice Advertising





**FEW Brands received positive credit, rather, many brands fell into trap of sameness (again!)**



“

None in particular as most companies have sent communications related to the current protests.

“

All brands are coming out regarding racism. They have jumped on the band wagon.

“

I don't remember the specific brands.

“

Just about every brand I do business with and many others as well, even though I cannot remember any names off the top of my head.

“

Many. None in specific –  
that's all you see now  
everywhere.

# Examples of good practice



## WHAT THEY GET RIGHT

**Not opportunistic:** Multi-year effort to combat racial inequality.

**Action:** Including launch of flavor variants, support for reparations legislation

**Words:** Speaks about 'dismantling white supremacy'. In-depth copy, not superficial message.



## WHAT THEY GET RIGHT

**Not opportunistic:** High profile support of Kaepernick in 2018 campaign Dream Crazy signaled public stance

**Action:** Did not cave to backlash from some segments, donating \$40m over 4 years to promote racial justice

**Branding:** Smart integration of key brand asset to message – 'Do It' to 'Don't Do It'.

**Words:** Makes it clear that white people are instrumental in change



## WHAT THEY GET RIGHT

**Not opportunistic:** P&G can stand on previous communications 'The Talk' and 'The Look' in which they addressed systemic problems that the Black community faces

**Action:** TakeonRace program active in advancing action in corporate America. Newly donated \$5m to partner NGOs

**Words:** Speaks to broad issue of endemic racism



## Meaningful action consumers want from brands

60%

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

**Educate the community on systemic racism**

58%

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

**Making a statement against racism and showing what they have done to increase diversity in their companies**

55%

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

**Calling on political figures to enact change**

53%

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

**Making donations/contributions to organizations fighting racism**

52%

Completely/somewhat agree (T2B)

**Making pledges about diversity within their own companies**



# The issue is impacting purchase intent

Is equality of opportunity across gender and ethnicity a top 3 factor in decision to purchase or engage with brands in this current climate?

17%



Gen Pop

22%



18-34 Year Olds

23%



Urban-Dwellers

24%



Black Americans



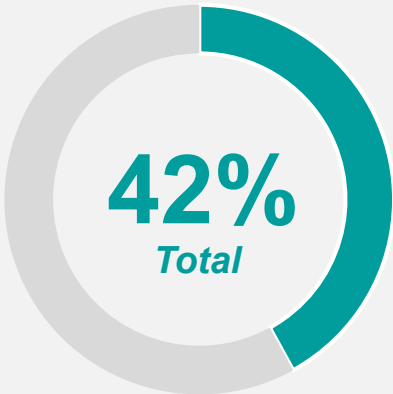
**Up by 35%  
in the last  
2 weeks!**

*"I have stopped supporting and spending my money with certain brands because they support hate and prejudice, and they deserve to lose their business, if that is what they support!!"*

*Ipsos Community Member*

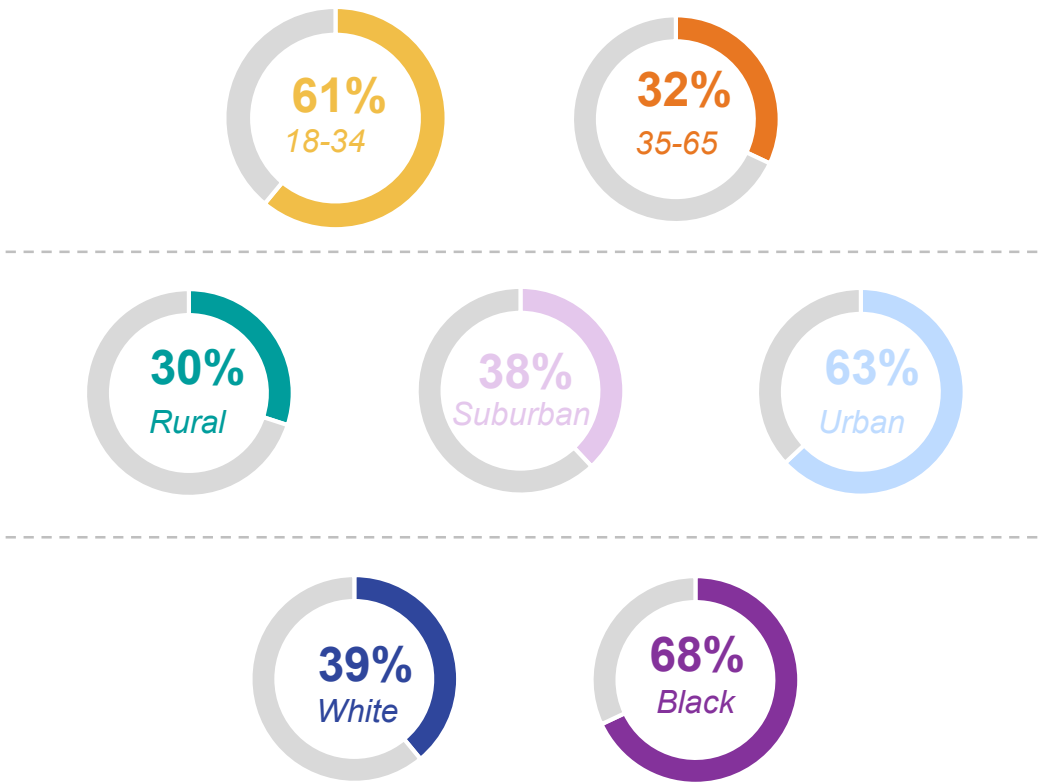
# Young, Urban, and Black consumers are more likely to check what brands actually do

Very/Somewhat Likely (T2B)



*“Brands need to be true and not just want to do something because of all that is going on now. A lot of people/companies are getting on the bandwagon because “it seems the thing to do”. I don’t feel that a lot of these people/brands are doing it for the right reasons.”*  
- Ipsos Community Member

Apps and sites make it easy to check: [www.didtheyhelp.com](http://www.didtheyhelp.com); [www.goodonyou.eco](http://www.goodonyou.eco);



# Lessons for brands from BOTH crises

## Messaging Alone Doesn't Work

It is not enough for brands to acknowledge a problem, and 'stand in solidarity.' This response to BLM once again led to a **sea of sameness**. While the message is important, it **alone** is not effective for a brand.

## Authenticity is Now a Necessity

The most effective responses are **authentic to a brand**. While brands that have previously taken action to support an issue are credible, new brands must first demonstrate their commitment. Consumers have no tolerance for platitudes devoid of action.

## Brands Must Do, Then Say

With racial injustice, brands are seen as part of the system that prolongs it. Brands must define how they are helping society or reforming themselves, including admitting past faults and publicly taking corrective actions.

## Actions Must be Maintained

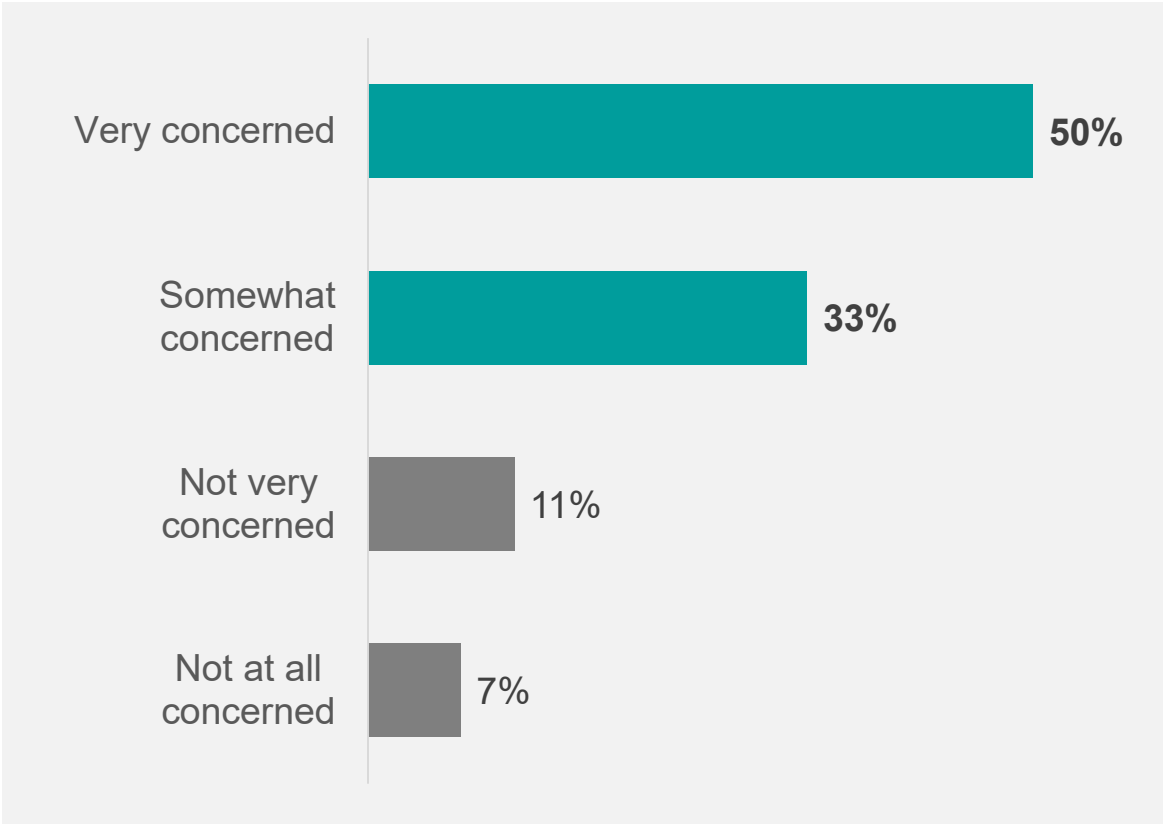
Actions will be continuously monitored and brands will be called out if they go off the path they have promised. And for the first time, consumers are also using their wallets to do the talking. The do-say gap is lessening.



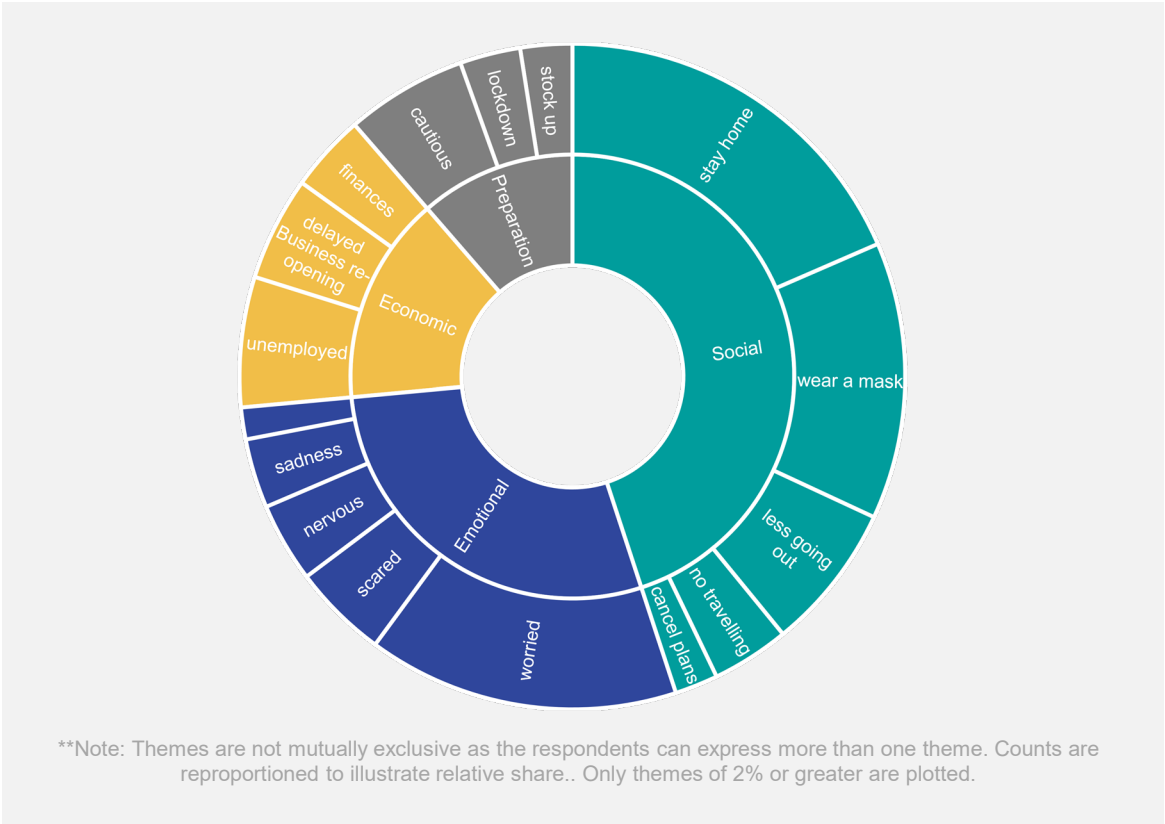
# WHAT NOW?

# COVID-19 is top of mind for most today and the pandemic continues to affect consumer wellbeing

Levels of Concern with the Resurgence of COVID-19 (N=799)

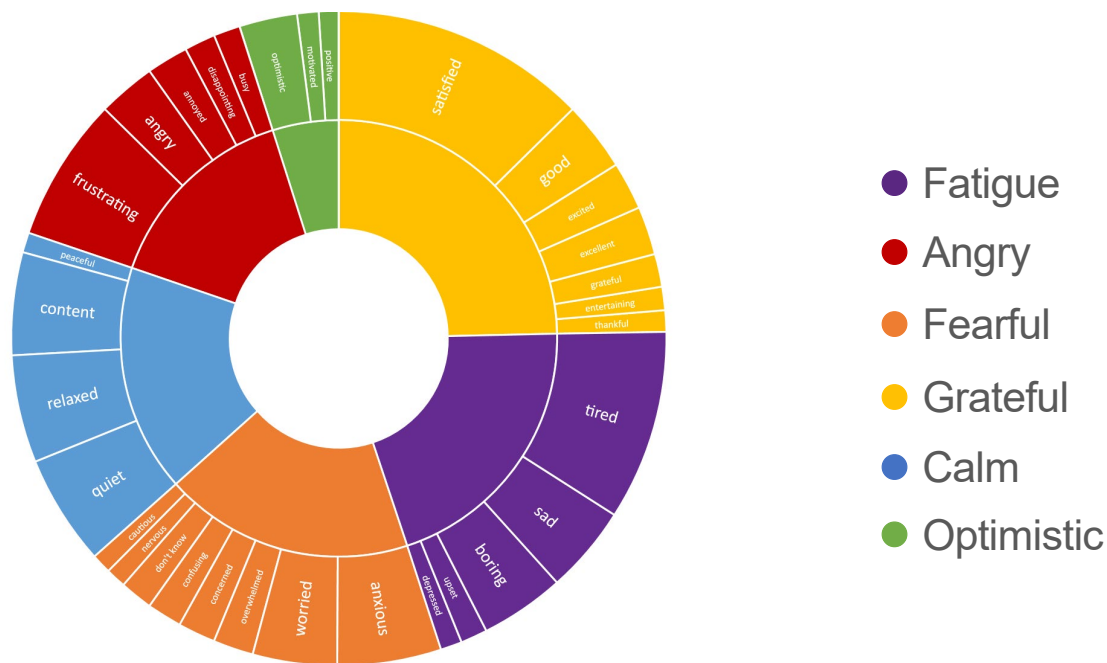


Impacts of COVID-19 Resurgence (n=285)  
Share of buzz broken out via AI text analytics processing



# But while concern is high with rising cases and going back into quarantine, fatigue and boredom is surpassed by gratitude and calm

How do you feel this week? (6/26-6/29)  
Share of buzz broken out via AI text analytics processing (n=799)



\*\*Note: Themes are not mutually exclusive as the respondents can express more than one theme. Counts are reproporioned to illustrate relative share. Only mentions of 1% or greater included.

Alright July, I have survived the first half of 2020. What do you have planned for me?

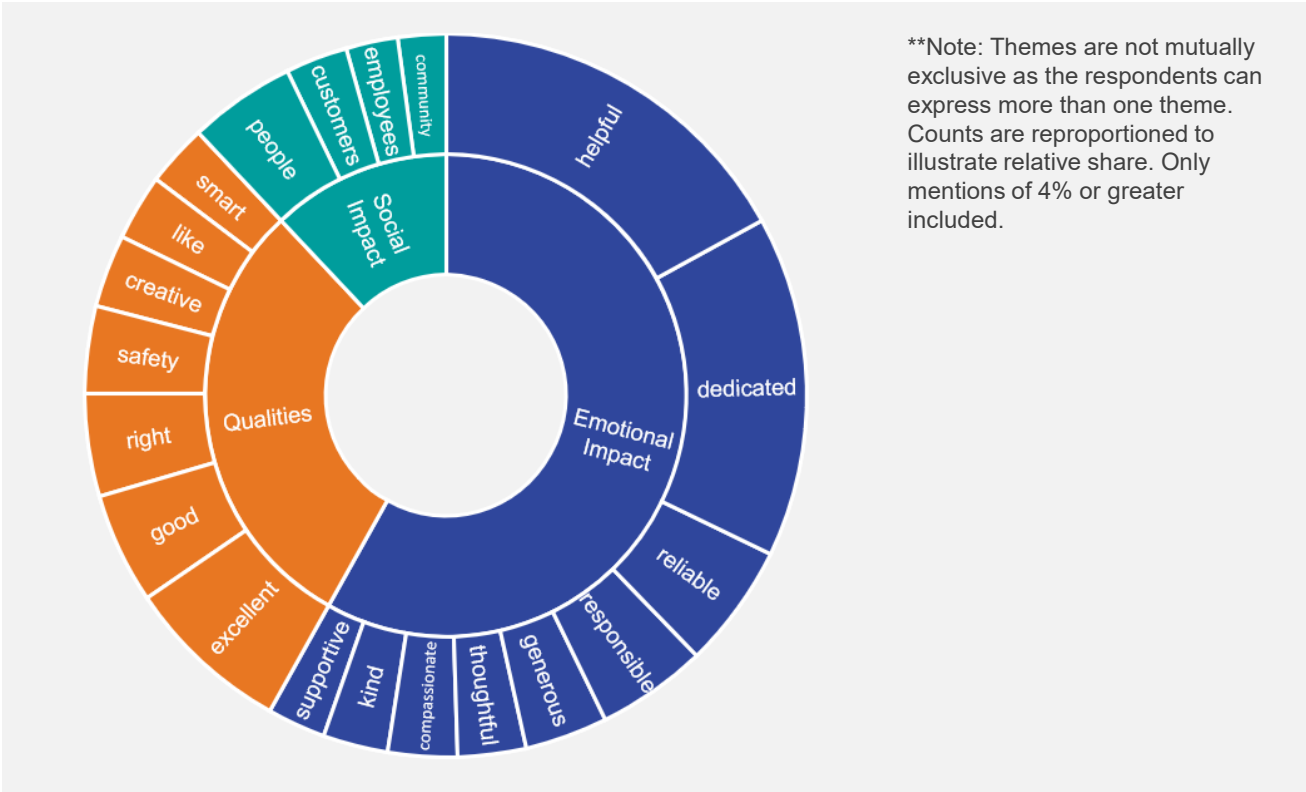




# Consumers are also more “woke” than ever and expect brands to provide helpful commitments and authentic dedication

## Why Brands Stand Out For Doing The Right Thing Right Now

Share Of Buzz Broken Out Via AI Text Analytics Processing (N=658)



They are all doing something to help out in this crazy time in our lives, after this is over, the brands that helped out will be the top brands I consider purchasing from first.

COVID-19 woke you up to taking care of your health. Shelter-in-place woke you up to appreciating the life you have. The recession woke you up to the importance of saving your money. The Black Lives Matter movement woke you up to the power of taking action. You're awake now, and it will take a conscious decision and intentional work to stay awake. Don't let them rock you back to sleep...

@mandelash

# Consumers expect authentic, tangible actions from brands and are quick to call out perceived hypocrisy



*Said it once...important to say again with examples...don't just respond... ask, LISTEN, respond and ACT. Be prepared to act with purpose and intention. Be committed to acting for the long haul. Make #brands be part of the #change not a distraction.*



**Brands need to be true and not just want to do something because of all that is going on now.**

A lot of people/companies are getting on the bandwagon because "it seems the thing to do". I don't feel that a lot of these people/brands are doing it for the right reasons. They are doing it so people see what they are doing.

Why didn't all these people/brands/companies do something before? It really annoys me to see celebrities/companies donating money to these certain causes now when no one seemed to care before.

It seems we go through the same things all the time. Something goes on-people get in an uproar and "rich" people, companies make donations and then things seem to go back to the way they were. It needs to be a continual thing-not just "in a crisis" thing.



I think that the volume on the issue will make for long-term changes. Some things will drift back some, but overall there will be progress that stays. One step at a time.



It has to be. These current events aren't a one-off sort of thing. People of color should be treated and seen as equal. There needs to be social justice reform and education reform for everyone.

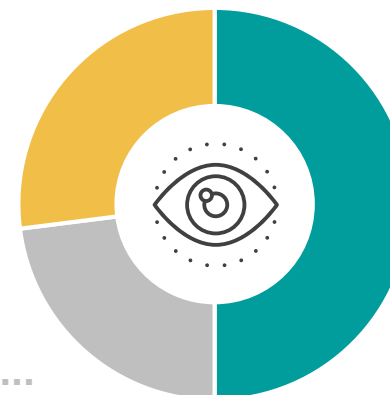
## Brands are on notice to keep inequality issues in their sights and continue the conversation

**Only 25%**

Think Changes Will Be Long Term

Yes, this will be long-term...

I don't think this will be long-term...



I'm not sure if this will be long-term...

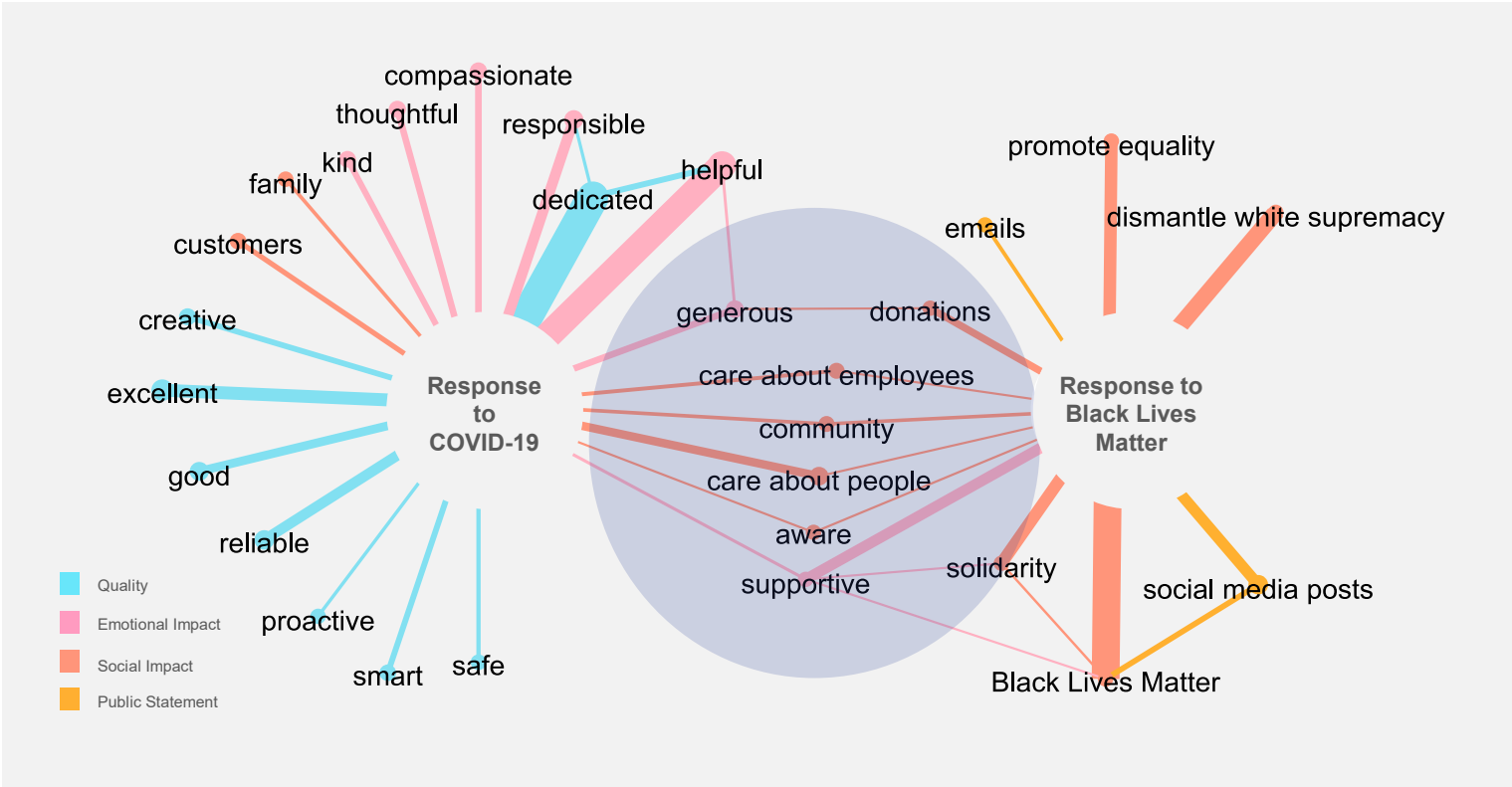
Source: Ipsos SMX Online Communities: June 11 – 15, 2020 (n=825); Q: And in general, thinking of your own personal actions and those of others, as well as brands, do you think these changes will be long-term?



# With the pandemic sharpening the focus on inequality, it is imperative for brands to show their humanity and help even more

## WHY BRANDS STAND OUT RIGHT NOW

Share of buzz broken out via AI text analytics processing  
Response to COVID-19 (n=658) | Response to Black Lives Matter (n=376)



“ They are all doing something to help out in this crazy time in our lives, after this is over, the brands that helped out will be the top brands I consider purchasing from first.  
**-on Brands’ Responses to COVID-19**

“ They came out with a powerful statement even knowing that it would likely cost them some support from people who disagree with their stance.  
**-on Brands’ Responses to Black Lives Matter**

# So, what should brands do?



## Assess themselves honestly.

Understand how consumers see them and what they stand for. Acknowledge if they have previously supported the current issue. Publicly? Determine what role they can now play.



## Address any weaknesses or inequities.

Brands must first get their own houses in order before they start to “talk the talk.” Otherwise they will be publicly called out if people believe they don’t also “walk the walk.”



## Communicate in a brand-appropriate manner.

Be true to their brand equities when sharing their message with the world. Make sure that any communications are “on brand” and can not be replicated by others.



## Stay on the path they have forged.

Support any messaging with continuous visible steps to social progress. Consumers are now watching closely and brands that join the dialogue must be committed to staying on the path.

# THANK YOU

GAME CHANGERS

