April 2021
State of the Consumer, Mattresses, and Recalls

Part of the **American Experiences Survey**:
A Nationally Representative Multi-Mode Survey

Prepared by CR Survey Research Department

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INTRODUCTION

In April 2021, Consumer Reports conducted a nationally representative multi-mode American Experiences Survey. NORC at the University of Chicago administered the survey from April 9-19, 2021 through its AmeriSpeak® Panel to a nationally representative sample of 2,514 adult U.S. residents.

This monthly survey, while it often contains questions on COVID-19, also measures consumer attitudes on subjects besides coronavirus. This month, there were three non-COVID sections. (Note: Results for the full April AES survey, including State of the Consumer items that are somewhat related to COVID-19, can be found in the tabs.) ***This report includes the following topics:***

— State of the Consumer (non-COVID)
— Mattress Recycling
— Product Recalls

STATE OF THE CONSUMER

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

We asked Americans about their confidence in eleven different areas.

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT . . .

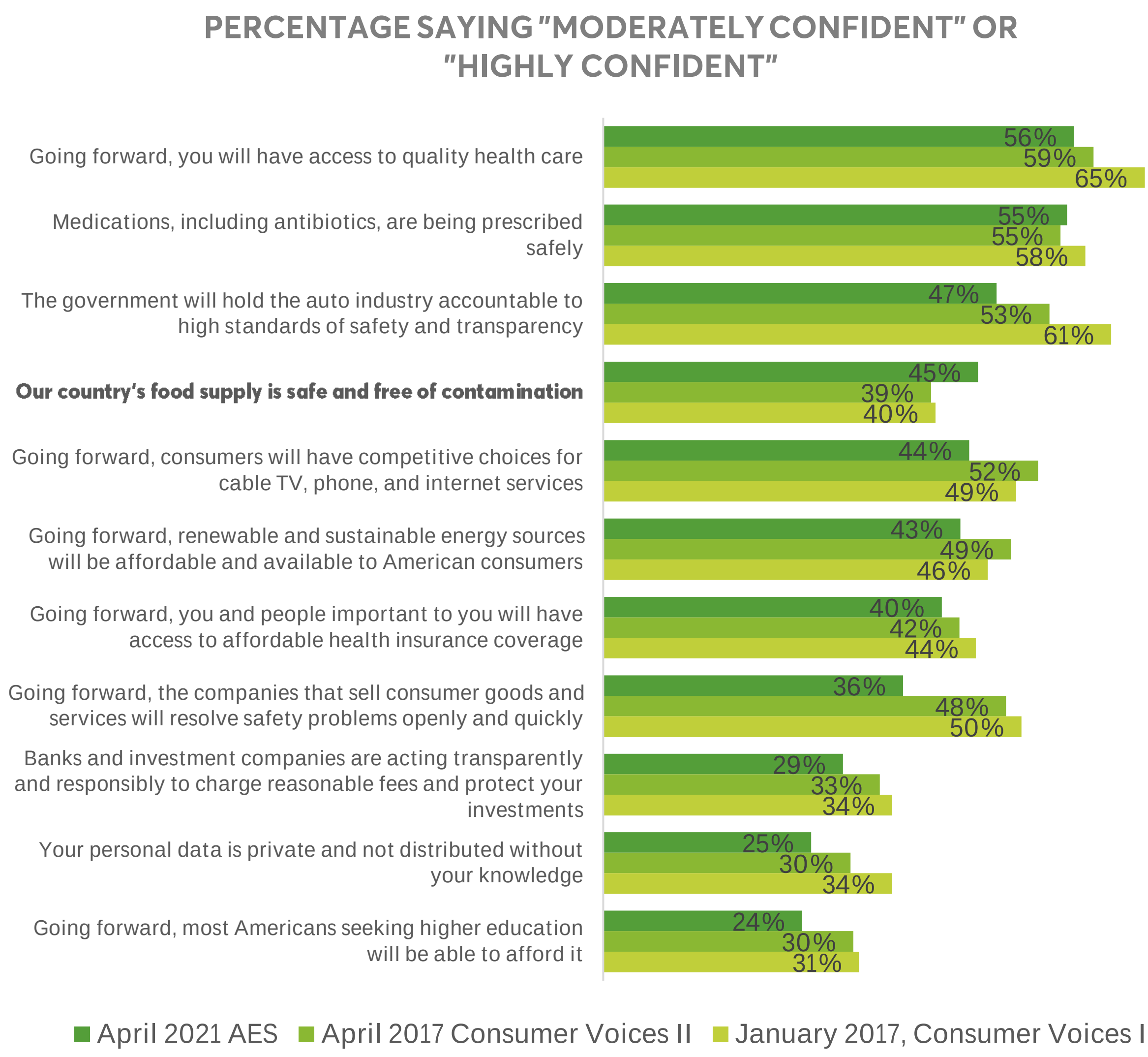
Base: All respondents. Question wording is shortened to fit; see tabs for full wording.

A majority of Americans are moderately or highly confident about topics related to health care: 56% are moderately or highly confident that they will have access to quality health care going forward, while 55% are moderately or highly confident that medications are being prescribed safely. Americans are least confident in the affordability of higher education (24% moderately or highly confident) and in the privacy of their personal information (25%).

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE TRENDS

These questions were based on a set of questions asked in Consumer Reports' Consumer Voices I and II surveys in 2017. Confidence in most of these areas has fallen since then, although this could be due in part to a change in the way the questions were presented or the switch from a phone-only survey to a primarily web-based survey; the apparent increase in confidence in the nation's food supply may also be due to a wording change in that item.[1] The most dramatic drops in confidence are in accountability for the auto industry and the resolution of safety problems. For a full listing of demographic differences and trending data, please see the tabs.

CONFIDENCE OVER TIME



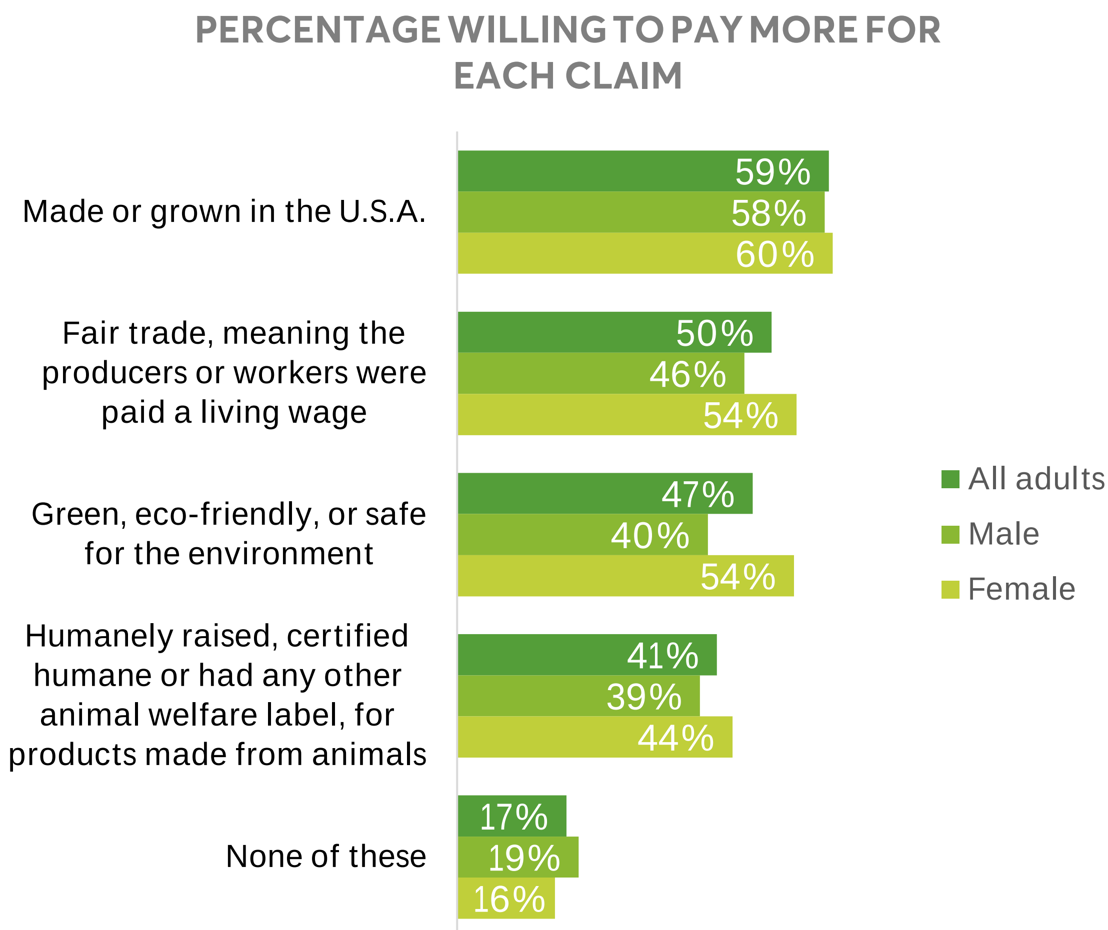
Base: All respondents. Question wording is shortened to fit; see tabs for full wording.

[1] In the Consumer Voices surveys, the items were presented as separate questions rather than a grid. The "how confident are you" was at the beginning of each item, except for items that included a "going forward," which began "Going forward, how confident are you…." The Consumer Voices wording for the item about food was "…safe, free of contamination, and produced without unnecessary antibiotics?"

SUSTAINABILITY AND PRODUCT CLAIMS

We told Americans, "Below are several claims that might be put on a product. Please indicate if you would generally be willing to pay more for a product with that claim." Respondents could select all that applied out of four options, or "none of these." Women are more likely than men to be willing to pay extra for an eco-friendly product, a fair trade product, and a humane product, while men were more likely to say "none of these."

PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU WOULD GENERALLY BE WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR A PRODUCT WITH EACH CLAIM (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY).



Base: All respondents.

In addition, white Americans are significantly more likely to be willing to pay extra for products made in the U.S.A. (66% compared to 53% of Hispanics, 48% of Blacks, and 42% of English-speaking Asians). English-speaking Asian Americans are the most likely to be willing to pay more for fair trade products (61%, compared to 50% of Hispanics, 49% of whites, and 46% of Blacks); for eco-friendly products (64% of English-speaking Asians compared to 51% of Hispanics, 49% of Blacks, and just 43% of whites); and for humane products (53% of English-speaking Asians compared to 42% of whites, 39% of Hispanics, and just 32% of Blacks). These differences were significant even controlling for income.

MATTRESS RECYCLING

MATTRESS DISPOSAL INCIDENCE

To explore how much Americans recycle their mattresses, we first asked, “In the last ten years, have you gotten rid of a mattress?” We asked Americans to not include waterbeds, futon mattresses, or portable mattresses (like blow-up mattresses and mats).

IN THE LAST TEN YEARS,

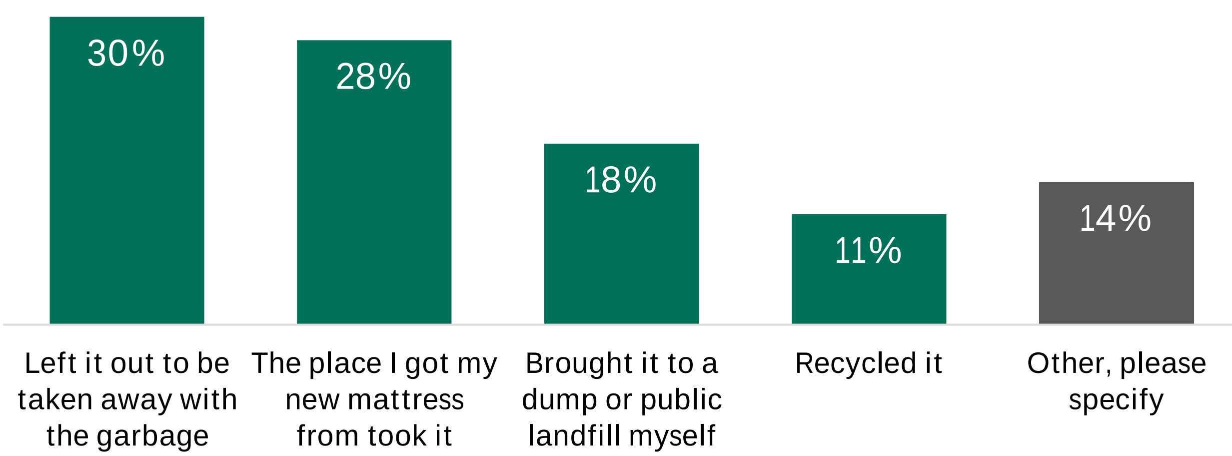
65%

OF AMERICANS
HAVE DISPOSED OF A MATTRESS

DISPOSAL METHODS

Recycling is the least common method of disposal that we asked about, with just 11% of Americans who have disposed of a mattress in the last ten years saying they recycled the most recent mattress they disposed of. More than one in four (28%) said that the place they got a new mattress from took it; some of these may have been recycled later.

WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE MATTRESS THAT YOU GOT RID OF MOST RECENTLY?



Base: Americans who disposed of a mattress in the last ten years.

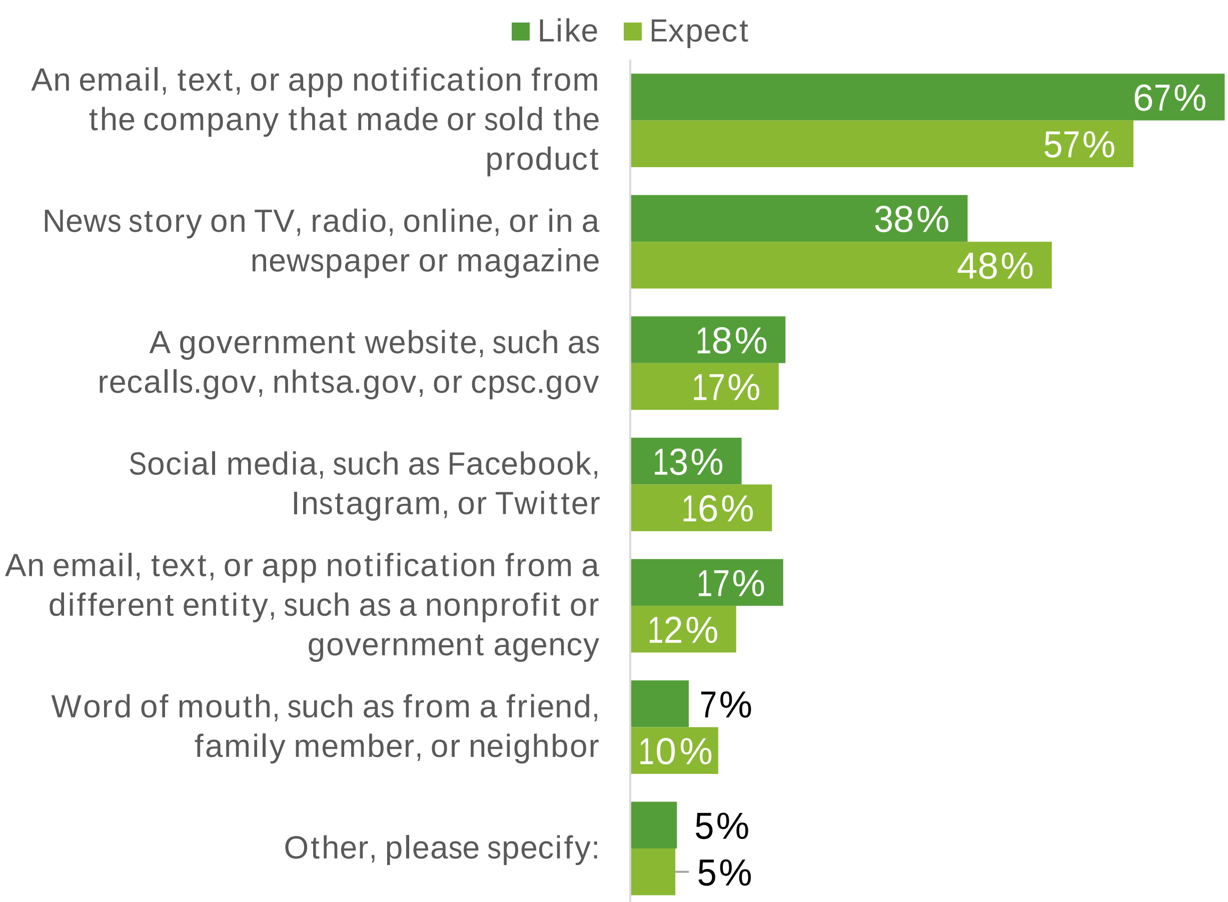
Common “other” write-ins include donating it, giving it away, selling it, and burning it; see tabs sheet labeled “MATTRESS2_OE” for full responses.

PRODUCT RECALLS

We asked Americans two nearly identical questions about product recalls. For both, we asked Americans to *"Imagine that a defect has been identified in one of the products you own and it has been recalled."* Then we asked them to select up to two options for how they would *expect* to learn about the recall and how they would *like* to learn about the recall, randomizing which one was shown first. Response options showed in the same order for both questions.

As this chart shows, Americans generally expect that they would hear about a recall in about the same ways as they would like to hear about one, but with an especially strong preference for direct contact by the manufacturer or seller. The overall takeaway is that there is more interest in than expectation of direct contact by email, text, or app, from companies or from other entities.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE/EXPECT TO LEARN ABOUT THE RECALL? (SELECT UP TO TWO.)



Base: All respondents.

Nearly all the "other" write-ins for both expected and desired methods of contact involve physical mail. One person wrote that this actually happened to them. A few others mention a phone call from a company.

A majority of Americans (57%) would *expect* to be directly contacted by the company that made or sold the product that was being recalled, while almost half (48%) say they would expect to hear about the recall from a news story. All other responses were much less common.

The order of responses for *desired* method of contact was nearly the same as for expected method of contact, but with a clear most popular choice: two in three Americans (67%) would *like* to be directly contacted by the company that made or sold the product that was being recalled. More than one in three (38%) would like to learn about it from a news story. Interestingly, given that direct contact by the manufacturer or seller is so popular, relatively few people would like to be directly contacted by any other organization.

METHODOLOGY

This multi-mode survey was fielded by NORC at the University of Chicago using a nationally representative sample. The survey was conducted from April 9-19th, 2021. Interviews were conducted in English (*n* = 2,246) and in Spanish (*n* = 42), and were administered both online (*n* = 2,190) and by phone (*n* = 98).

A general population sample of U.S adults age 18 and older was selected from NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel for this study. Funded and operated by NORC at the University of Chicago, AmeriSpeak® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the US household population. Randomly selected US households are sampled using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame. These sampled households are then contacted by US mail, telephone, and field interviewers (face to face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. While most AmeriSpeak households participate in surveys by web, non-internet households can participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by telephone. Households without conventional internet access but having web access via smartphones are allowed to participate in AmeriSpeak surveys by web. AmeriSpeak panelists participate in NORC studies or studies conducted by NORC on behalf of governmental agencies, academic researchers, and media and commercial organizations.

In total NORC collected 2,288 interviews, 2,190 by web mode and 98 by phone mode. The margin of error for the sample of 2,288 is +/- 2.92 at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins. Panelists were offered the cash equivalent of $3 for completing the survey.

Final data are weighted by age, gender, race/Hispanic ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, education, and Census Division to be proportionally representative of the U.S. adult population. Key demographic characteristics (after weighting is applied) of this sample are presented below:

- 52% female
- Average age of 48 years old (median also 48)
- 57% white, Non-Hispanic
- 36% 4-year college graduates
- 56% have a household income of $50,000 or more