



B k R e A y N s D

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**COVID-19 Quiz: Who (Or What) Do You Trust?**

**A Third of Americans Won't Trust COVID-19 Vaccine,  
Airlines and Public Transportation Exhibit Trust Meltdowns,  
Drive-Throughs Are Lifelines As Americans Search For Bicycles**

**NEW YORK, NY September 22, 2020** – More than one third of Americans (35%) have indicated that they have virtually no trust in a promised COVID-19 vaccine, and was the critical finding in the 9th wave of coronavirus-consumer research conducted by TheCustomer ([www.thecustomer.net](http://www.thecustomer.net)), Brand Keys ([www.brandkeys.com](http://www.brandkeys.com)) and Suzy ([www.suzy.com](http://www.suzy.com)).

“Unfortunately, lack of trust in a vaccine isn’t the only sector in which trust-erosion is showing up,” said Mike Giambattista, publisher of TheCustomer, the weekly newsletter covering the customer insight universe. “Complete trust for one category or brand is rare, but our most recent tracking has revealed what one can only call a ‘trust meltdown.’”

**The Worst Trust Levels Ever**

“‘Trust’ is the one value that exists in one form or another for every category and every brand,” noted Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys Inc., the New York-based brand loyalty and customer engagement consultancy. The two categories taking the greatest hits regarding trust levels are public transportation (51% indicating no trust) and airlines (31% indicating no trust).

Trust ratings generally correlate very highly with consumer behavior toward brands. “So, it’s not surprising that there’s been a major drop in use of public transportation,” said Passikoff. “Part of that was due to sheltering in and working from home, and while there’s scant evidence of major coronavirus outbreaks on buses or trains, commuters are loath to take the chance.” As further substantiation of lack of trust in public transportations, the United States is facing an unprecedented shortage of bicycles.

“Airlines and the aerospace industries will likely suffer an extended downturn,” said Giambattista. “Consumers have too many unanswered questions regarding what will and will not work preventing the spread of the pandemic. Sure, wearing masks helps, but consumers want to know how you socially-distance safely on an airplane? Given current trust levels, we are not predicting a fast recovery.”

**Somewhat Trustworthy**

There were five activities examined in the current wave of research that consumers rated “somewhat trustworthy.” They included:

- Department Stores (37%)
- Coffee shops (35%)
- Pizza Shops (35%)
- Fast Food (34%)
- Banks (32%)

“It’s interesting to note,” said Giambattista, “That three of the five sectors maintaining a reasonable level of trust are food-related. They were among the first sectors to have to find the right programs to institute regarding COVID-19 safety if they weren’t going to remain closed. Those lucky enough to have drive-throughs found lifelines for their stores.”

### **Consumers Prefer Arms-Length Control**

“Trust hasn’t entirely evaporated,” noted Passikoff. “Consumers would love a return to normalcy, but categories where consumers had ‘very high’ or ‘extremely high’ trust levels were categories that consumers felt they had control over and could participate on an arms-lengths basis from anything physically harmful to them.” Those categories included:

- Banks (31%)
- Computers (40%)
- Online retailer (43%)
- Smartphones (57%)

“If your immediate thought about that list was ‘sure, contactless,’ you’d be right on the money,” said Giambattista. “Given a great deal of confusion regarding the pandemic, personal control during the coronavirus pandemic is integrally linked to trust. And brand survival.”

### **Methodology**

The survey and analysis were conducted the week of September 14, 2020. This week’s Wave Nine findings are based on 3,100 total responses from a U.S. panel population, ages 17-70 with a 50/50 gender split.

### **About Brand Keys**

Brand Keys specializes in customer loyalty and engagement research, providing brand equity metrics that accurately predict future, in-market consumer behavior that correlates with sales and profitability. [www.brandkeys.com](http://www.brandkeys.com)

### **About Suzy**

Suzy helps you make better, faster, more data-driven decisions. Their platform combines advanced research tools with the highest quality audience to deliver trusted insights in minutes. [www.suzy.com](http://www.suzy.com)

### **About TheCustomer**

Launched in mid-2019, TheCustomer covers all of the disciplines within the customer engagement ecosystem, exploring the latest research, technologies and personalities driving the customer revolution. [www.TheCustomer.net](http://www.TheCustomer.net)

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