2021 CONSUMER INTEL REPORT

THE CAUTIOUS RETURN TO A NEW WORLD

/ Socializing & Lifestyle

/ Health & Wealth

/ Brands & Shopping

VERICAST

/ CONTENTS

Generation (Gen) Z: born 1997–2003 / **Millennial**: born 1981–1996 / **Generation (Gen) X**: born 1965–1980
Baby Boomer: born 1946–1964 / **Parent**: has child(ren) under age 18 in HH

Except where otherwise noted, year-over-year changes are significantly higher or lower (95% confidence level)

THIS IS A PARTICULARLY FASCINATING YEAR

/ FOR OBVIOUS REASONS

As usual, we've surveyed people from different generations & income brackets across the United States. What's less usual is understanding these groups through the lens of a world emerging from a pandemic.

We asked questions about their shopping habits, home lives, work lives, financial situations, and how COVID has impacted it all.

We looked beyond COVID too, and asked consumers how they feel about the future as they move closer toward a post-pandemic world.

This is the result — an ultra-high resolution snapshot of how consumers are feeling and behaving at a critical inflection point at the end of a historically disruptive period.

"Cautious optimism" is the best way to describe what we're seeing. People can see a light at the end of the tunnel — and while they're pretty sure it's not a train, they're walking on the edge of the track just in case.

They want to go out, explore, and see loved ones again, but they're still a bit nervous about what that looks like. They want to spend money and experience life again, but they're still economically scarred and cautious of things slipping backward. They want to be excited and careful.

This is an exploration of how cautious optimism is manifesting in consumers' lives. At the end, we've created four steps marketers can take to harness cautious optimism to build better brands and generate stronger, more authentic engagement.

LET'S GO.

01

HOW WE ARE SOCIALIZING

In 2020 unprecedented lifestyle changes were thrust upon the public with very little warning. So it's not surprising that there are some deep societal scars & potentially long-lasting changes to our behavior & expectations.

These changes have affected the way we relax, dine, work, exercise, shop, and socialize. And, for the foreseeable future at least, it appears some of the changes are here to stay.

But one thing that remains the same is our need for human connection — and no amount of Zoom or FaceTime will be able to fully replace that. People miss their family and friends; reconnecting with them is a major priority.

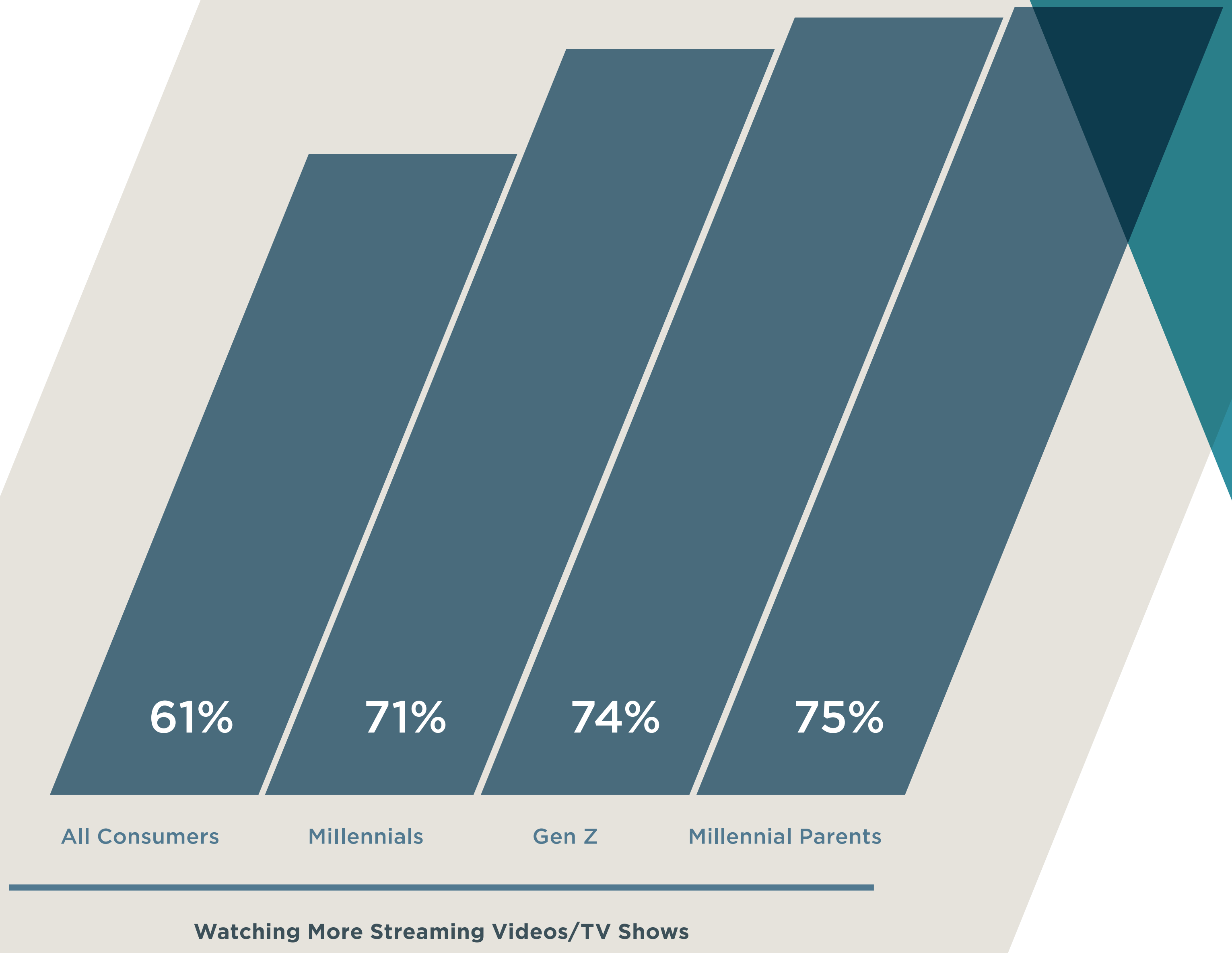
The threat of COVID is still a concern for many people and they've got clear ideas of what's safe and what to prioritize.

/ HOMELIFE IS LIFE

After a year of staying in, it makes sense that people would be eager to get outside. But they've become more acclimated and comfortable with life at home.

Not surprisingly, streaming videos and TV shows are on the increase, with 61% of consumers agreeing that they're watching more. Millennials (71%), Gen Z (74%), and millennial parents (75%) are all significantly above that average.

This is good news for marketers. Our previous research[1] into Connected TV (CTV) found that 64% of 25–34-year-olds are willing to view ads on their streaming TV service for a lower monthly subscription cost. And 69% of 35–44-year-olds consider products advertised on streaming TV to be more relevant than those advertised on traditional cable. Your most interested audience just became more engaged.



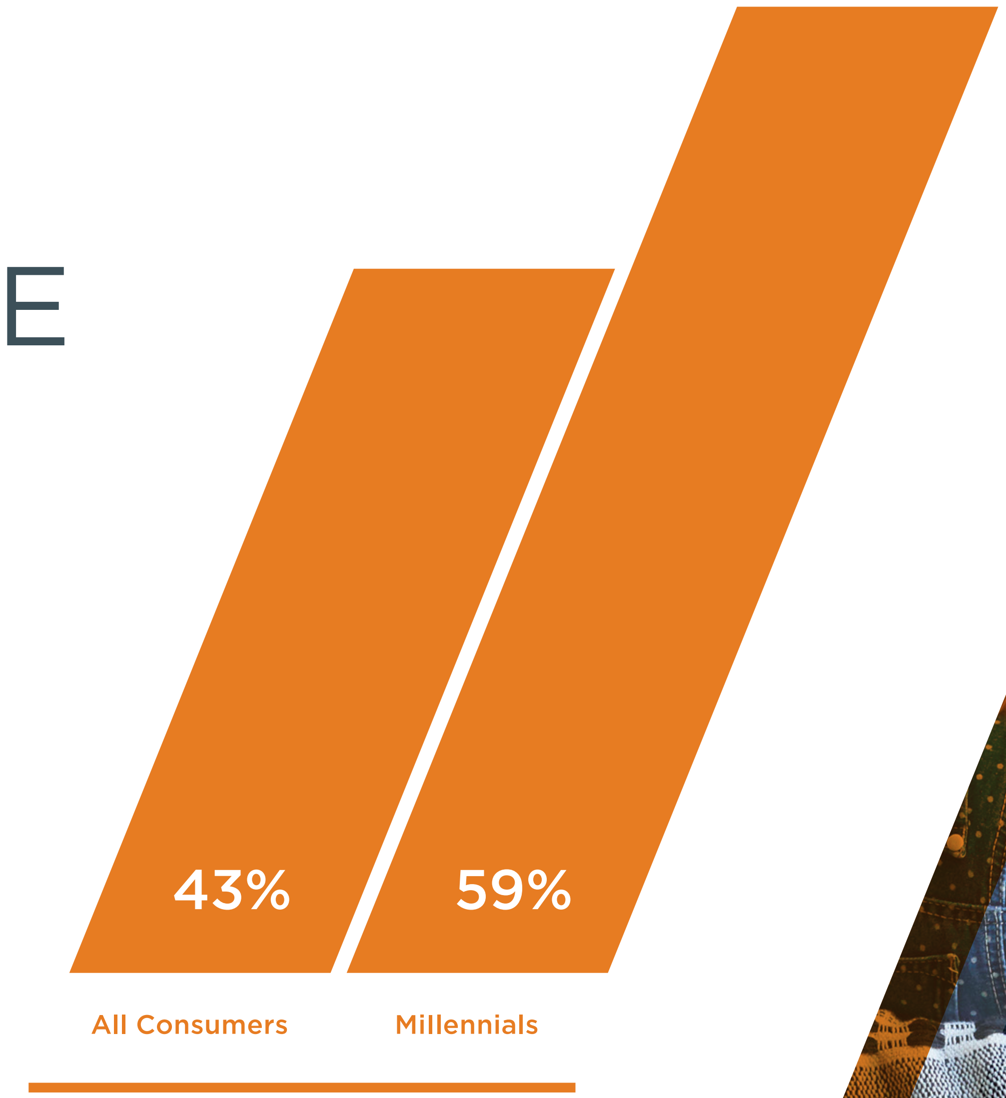
Source 1: Valassis consumer survey conducted February 2021, n = 1,000 respondents

/ HOMELIFE IS LIFE

Sourdough may have been the social media darling of the pandemic, but cooking in general increased across the board. Sixty-three percent of consumers said they have been cooking dinner at home more in the past year and our data shows this is going to continue in the future.

The percentage of consumers who'll be cooking dinner at home more often significantly overshadows those who will be getting takeout, eating prepared, frozen, or packaged foods, picking up ready-to-eat meals, or ordering delivery more often, all of which are below 20%.

Consumers don't just want to stay home, they want to make a home, and you can see this trend in their purchasing behavior. We explore this shopping behavior further in chapter 2.



Plan To Cook Dinner More Often In The Next Six Months

“ 43% OF CONSUMERS SAID:

They'd be cooking dinner at home more often.

I am content with staying home more.

63% All Consumers

69% Millennials

71% Millennial Parents

VERICAST

/ AGE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Like most public social activities, there is still a degree of caution among consumers about returning to restaurants. But there's some good news for restaurateurs.

First, dining out performs better than most other leisure activities when ranked for its comfort level. Second, it's safe to say that the reluctance to dine at restaurants is linked to COVID and will pass. And third, there's a lot that can be done now to increase sales and get people in seats.

The numbers are a little bit closer for dining indoors at a restaurant — 49% of millennials vs. 43% of Gen Z are comfortable with this — but there is a smaller percentage of Gen Z than millennials who are comfortable.

IN CONTRAST, **66% OF MILLENNIALS** AGREED WITH THE STATEMENT:

> **"They would not dine at restaurants as often due to COVID fears.**

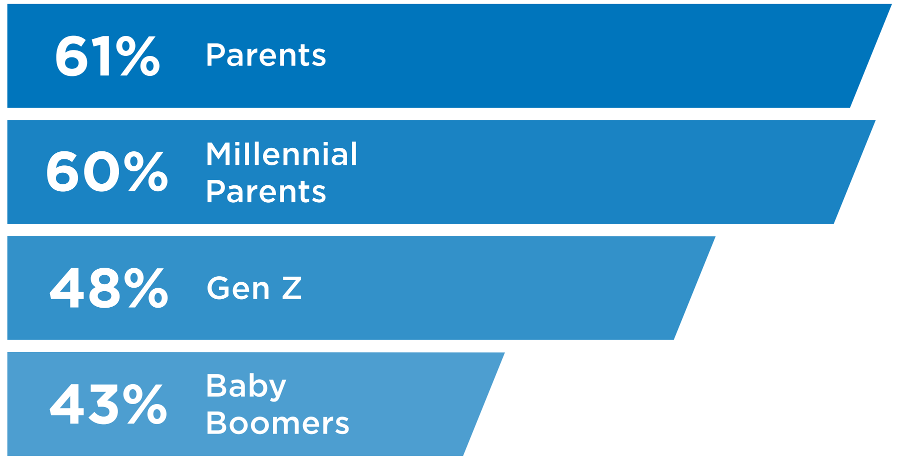
Compared to 46% of Gen Z who say the same

/ RESTAURANTS MUST ADAPT

Restaurateurs need to adjust and promote their services and offerings for those who are still uncomfortable. Sixty-three percent of consumers say they are much more comfortable ordering carryout or delivery than dining inside at a restaurant. This is especially true for millennials and parents.

Supporting local restaurants and exercising COVID caution aren't mutually exclusive. Millennials, parents, and millennial parents represent the highest number of consumers comfortable with restaurant dining. Local advertising targeting millennials and family promotions seems to be the strongest approach.

Comfortable Dining Outside At A Restaurant



/ EDUCATION TAKES PRIORITY

There's a hierarchy of activities consumers will leave the house for — and kids' education is near the top. Most people want to see (and are comfortable with) a return to things like in-person learning & sports for children.

Sending kids to school for in-person learning was tied for first place with going to the doctor's office as the activity to which people are most comfortable returning. In second place is allowing children to participate in sports or social events outdoors.

AND IT'S NOT SURPRISING WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT 75% OF RESPONDENTS ARE EXTREMELY OR SOMEWHAT CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION.

Compare that to only 60% who are concerned about its impact on their own health.

VERICAST

SO WHAT?

Marketers can capitalize on this by targeting family activities.

Stores with school supplies could consider an out-of-season “back-to-school” campaign for students who are returning to in-person learning.

/ FRIENDS & FAMILY MATTER

While people are more content with entertaining themselves at home, they still crave human interaction.

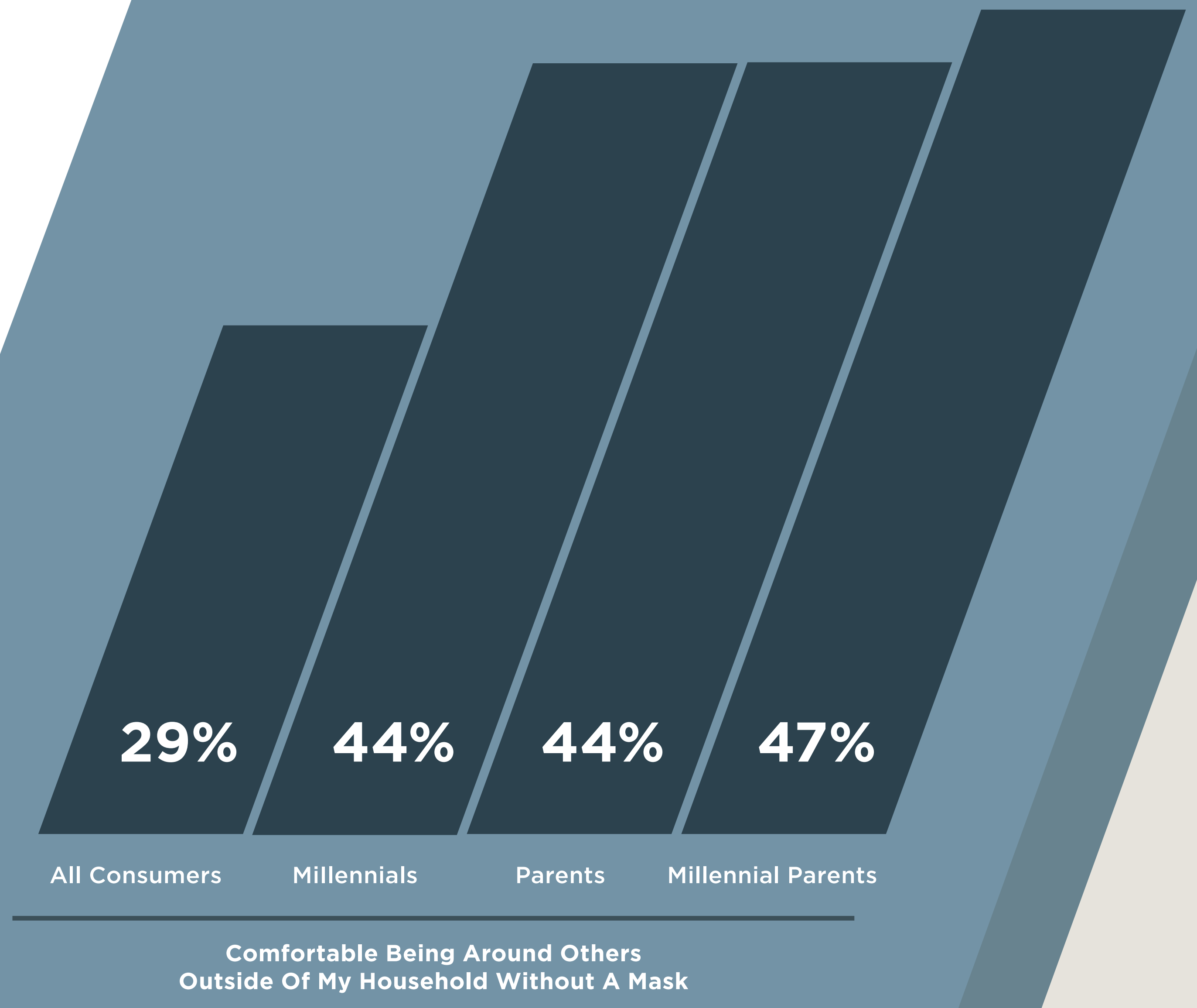
The biggest impact of COVID on consumers' lives was that they miss family and friends. Seventy-three percent of consumers strongly or somewhat agree with this. Baby boomers were particularly hard hit by this as 80% of them agree with this statement.

As with other activities, millennials trend much higher with 60% of them saying they're comfortable gathering outdoors with friends.

Marketers should consider offering discounts that address gatherings of families and friends, targeting millennials to capitalize on these trends.

51% OF CONSUMERS

are comfortable gathering outdoors with friends.



/ LESS COMFORT WITH INDOOR ACTIVITIES

Comfort levels with indoor activities are lower. But millennials, parents, and millennial parents buck the trend by being more comfortable than average with almost every indoor activity.

Parents and millennial parents trend highest for indoor activities, and in some cases are 20 percentage points higher than the average. Marketers can capitalize on this by running family activities and promotions to drive uptake of indoor activities.

Among those who indicated they are uncomfortable with some indoor activities, consumers planning to get the vaccine were more likely to be comfortable with a range of activities once they'd gotten the vaccine.

28% of consumers are comfortable going to a concert, theater, or other indoor event, while 43% of millennials, 46% of parents, and 51% of millennial parents feel the same.

30% of consumers are comfortable going to an indoor gym, but 47% of mIllennials, 48% of parents, and 53% of millennial parents are comfortable with it.

36% of respondents are comfortable attending an indoor church or religious service.

36% who've had the vaccine are comfortable attending indoor sporting events, compared to 28% of all consumers, nearly a 10-percentage point difference.

41% of those who have been vaccinated are comfortable going to an indoor gym compared to 30% of all consumers. The number of those comfortable after a vaccine is still relatively low, but the jump is notable.

Very + Somewhat Comfortable

/ SHOPPING HAS CHANGED

Shopping indoors performs better than most other indoor activities for comfort level among respondents.

During the pandemic, shopping became a functional rather than leisure activity. However, it remained part of daily life, so consumers are ready to re-engage.

Shopping is one of the few indoor activities where millennials don't have the highest numbers; 54% of them are comfortable with indoor shopping and this is the same as Gen Z.

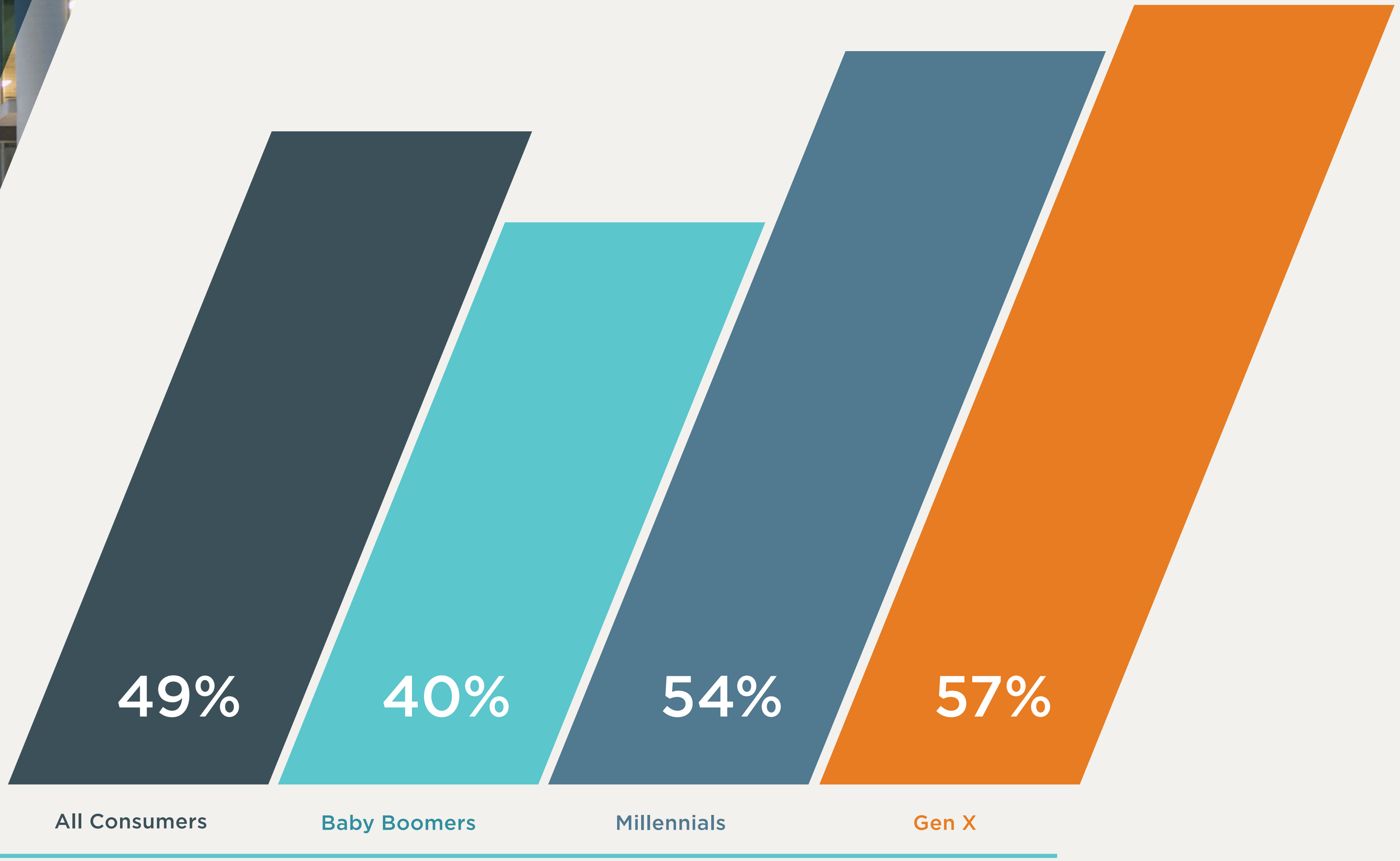
Among those who weren't comfortable with some of the indoor activities listed in our survey, shopping indoors was the activity they'd be most comfortable returning to once more people in the community are vaccinated.

Fifty-three percent of consumers say they shop at retailers such as dollar stores, drugstores, or convenience stores, because they can quickly find what they need. This is up from 43% in 2019.

THIS INDICATES THAT SHOPPERS PREFER, AND ARE GETTING BETTER AT, "MISSION SHOPPING" — GETTING IN & GETTING OUT.

The in-store experience is going to become more critical than ever as we adjust to new habits. We look more closely at this in the next chapter.

52% OF CONSUMERS who have been vaccinated are currently comfortable shopping in stores.



Very Comfortable + Somewhat Comfortable Shopping Inside Stores

02

HOW WE ARE SHOPPING

On paper, shopping indoors is the activity least impacted by COVID.

But that's not to say consumer behavior hasn't changed — shoppers are more thoughtful about their choices and more aware of what they want and need.

/ BUILDING & BUYING NESTS

Homebodies are building (and buying) their nests. We see a boom in consumers relocating, upgrading, or getting on the property ladder, and a drive to make home a better place to spend time.

52% OF CONSUMERS INTEND TO PURCHASE HOME COMFORT ITEMS (E.G., COOKING ITEMS, HOME OFFICE OR ORGANIZATION, HOME FURNISHINGS) DURING THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

Within this category, home remodeling products had the highest percentage of consumers indicating an intent to purchase.

Retailers and marketers should adapt to this new attitude toward homelife, and promote home improvement items and run deals on housewares. Channel planners need to consider how to reach people not just at home, but in their nest, which means greater empathy and less intrusion.

There is also an opportunity to take advantage of the real estate boom by targeting new homeowners and people who are moving with highly localized “welcome to the neighborhood” offers, and incentives to get out and explore the area.

Have Purchased Home Comfort Items Within The Last Six Months

Have Purchased Home Tech In The Same Time Frame

Sixty-eight percent of millennials intend to purchase home comfort items over the next six months.

Compared to 71% of parents and 73% of millennial parents

55% OF MILLENNIALS, **59%** OF PARENTS,
AND **63%** OF MILLENNIAL PARENTS SAID:

> “They’re spending more time or money improving their home.

/ ONLINE SHOPPING PEAKED

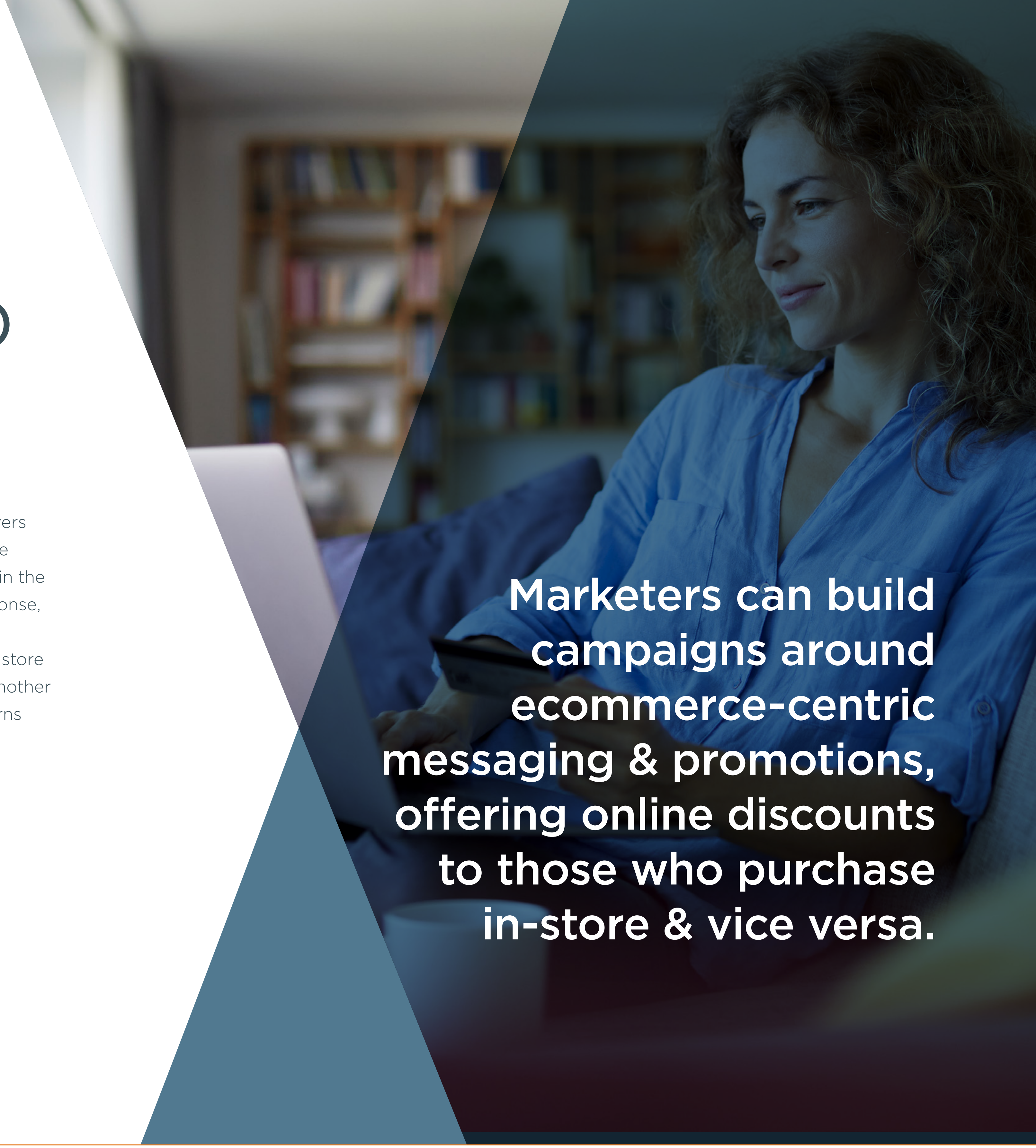
Online shopping increased significantly across food, household goods, and health and beauty care products in 2020.

And has almost gone back to 2019 levels. This could indicate that people want a reason to go out and choose shopping, with which they are more comfortable.

Sixty-four percent of consumers who identify as online grocery shoppers are now doing nearly all or most of their purchases online. This is down from 67% in 2020 and not much higher than the 58% in 2019.

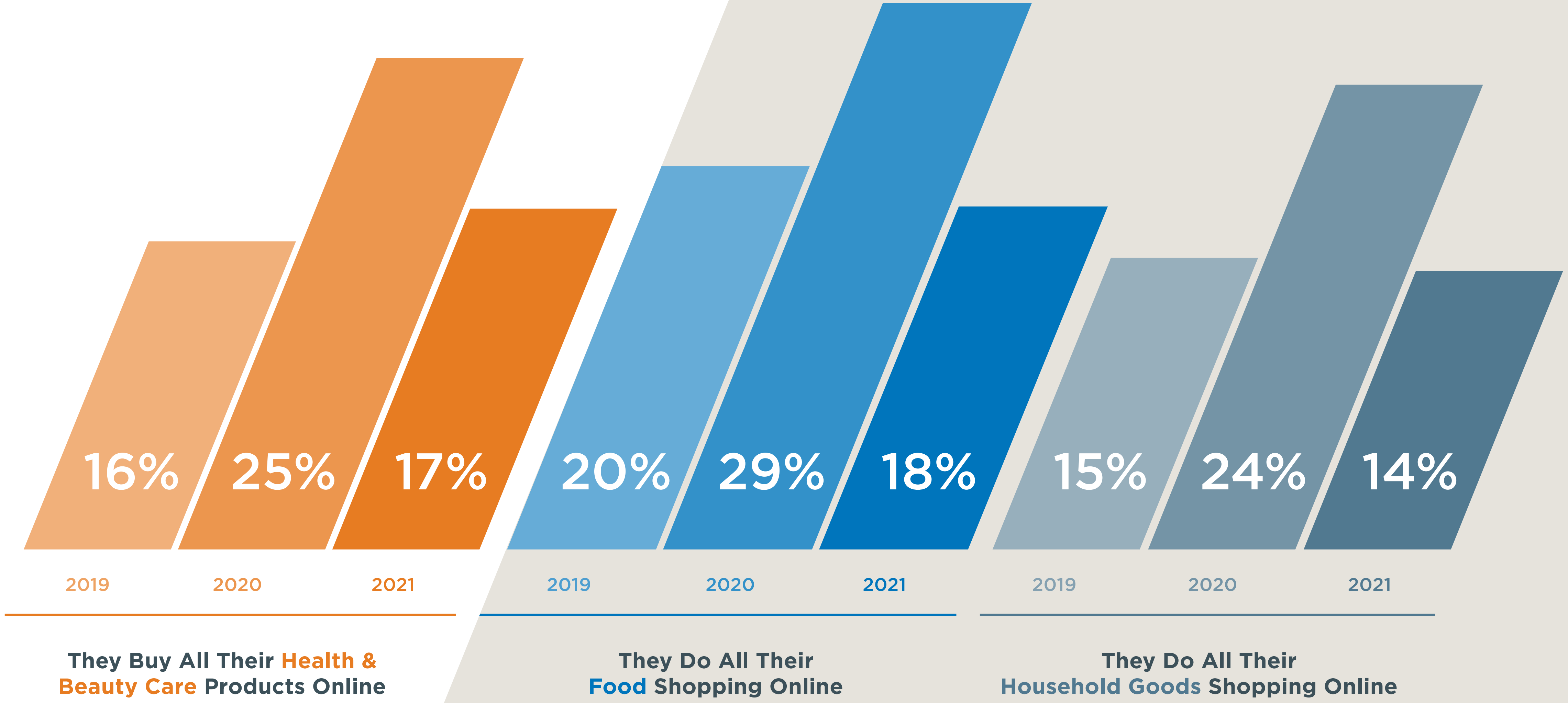
The dip back to 2019 figures for online shopping across these three categories indicates that the online shopping boost was largely driven by COVID. However, it did generate first-time online shoppers and that creates new behaviors which exposes new opportunities.

This is an opportunity for new players to expand their reach by joining the ecommerce market — particularly in the home improvement sector. In response, established stores and brands also need to elevate their online and in-store experiences to complement one another and adapt to new consumer patterns and preferences.



/ ONLINE SHOPPING PEAKED

“ Consumers say ...



Ordered groceries directly from a local grocery store online for delivery for the first time because of COVID.

40% Parents

37% Millennials

46% Millennial Parents

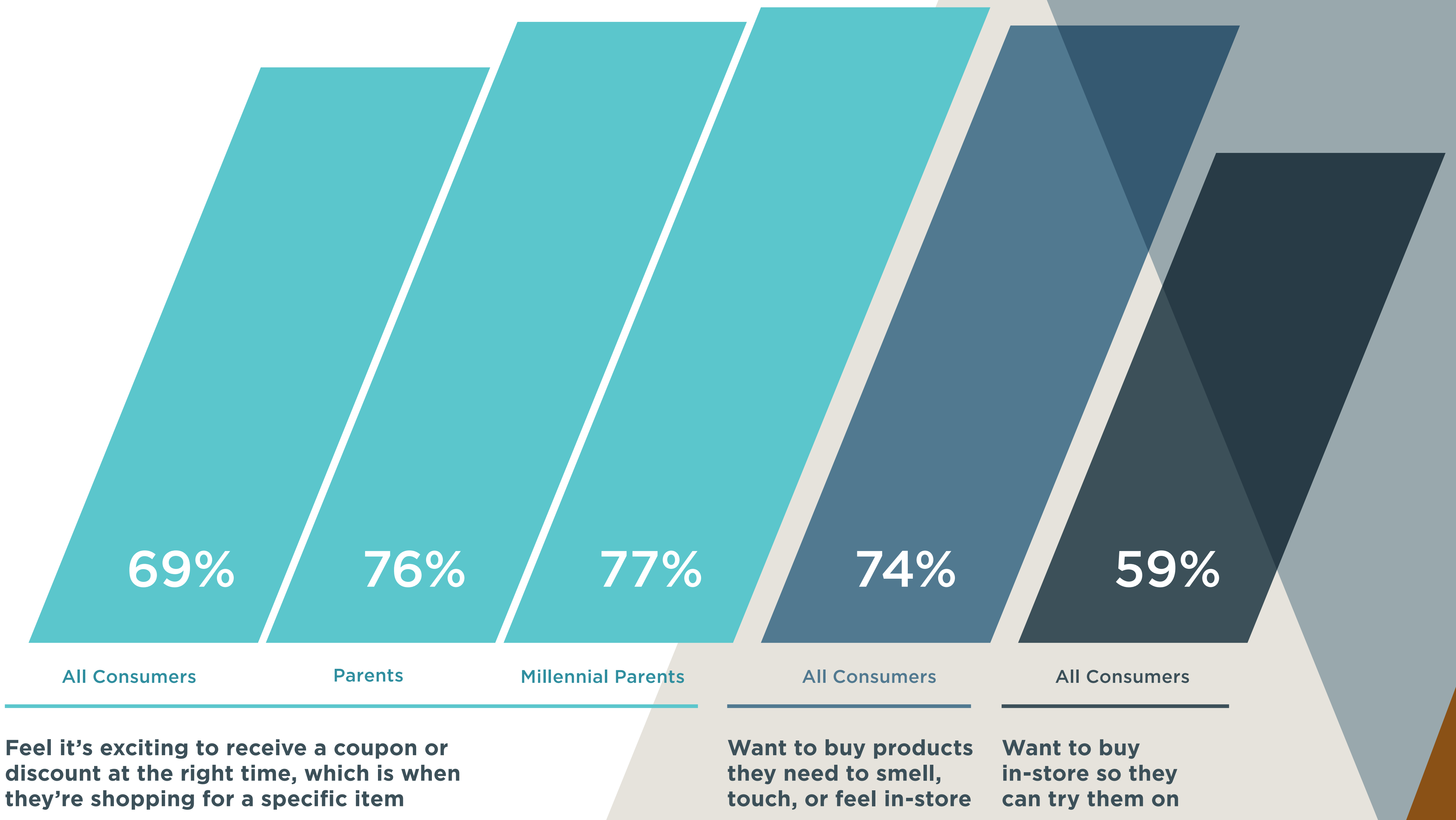
/ IN-STORE IS STILL IN FASHION

The in-store shopping experience is critical. People are eager to return and engage more closely with the brands they buy from.

Engaging shoppers in-store is fruitful. More consumers now make in-person impulse purchases because they received a notification on their mobile device. Eight percent of consumers said they'd do so in 2019 and 12% said they would in 2021.

To create opportunities in this new landscape, retailers need to curate their SKUs more thoroughly and give shoppers real choices. Optimize for the items people like to buy in-store — versus those they want to purchase online — and help them find and buy those items more efficiently.

Engage consumers with timely notifications and be conscious of the fact that they want to be in-and-out. Get as granular with the timing of notifications as possible.



/ FAMILIARITY MATTERS

People are looking for stability & familiarity and this can be seen playing out in their shopping preferences.

There's a significant increase from 2019 to now in consumers' preference for qualities like familiarity, consistency, trustworthiness, and transparency.

Brands need to provide a consistent customer experience, marketing message, and image — to connect with consumers and make them feel comfortable.

AUTHENTICITY AND TRANSPARENCY ARE IMPORTANT TOO.

Marketers need to be authentic and relatable to engage effectively. Brands should own who they are and where they sit in the market; false promises won't just get exposed, they'll push people away.

Sixty-one percent of consumers prefer to shop at local, neighborhood stores. And the number of consumers who say that they plan their in-store shopping with recommendations from family and friends is up from 14% in 2019 to 21% this year. Brands need to win over entire families in local areas, which means neighborhood- and household-level targeting for campaigns.

/ FAMILIARITY MATTERS

Relatable brand messages and the values they convey are important to making real connections with consumers.

2019	2021	Sentiment
71%	76%	more likely to buy from a brand or store they trust.
60%	67%	prefer a brand or store that provides a consistent experience.
47%	56%	typically purchase from brands they're familiar with because of their brand communications.
38%	47%	more likely to purchase a brand that shares reviews from users.
36%	42%	more likely to purchase from a brand or store whose ads feature people like them.

Strongly + Somewhat Agree

/ THE CONSCIOUS CONSUMER

CONSUMERS SAID:

They are more likely to be loyal to a brand or store that shares its efforts to be environmentally responsible.

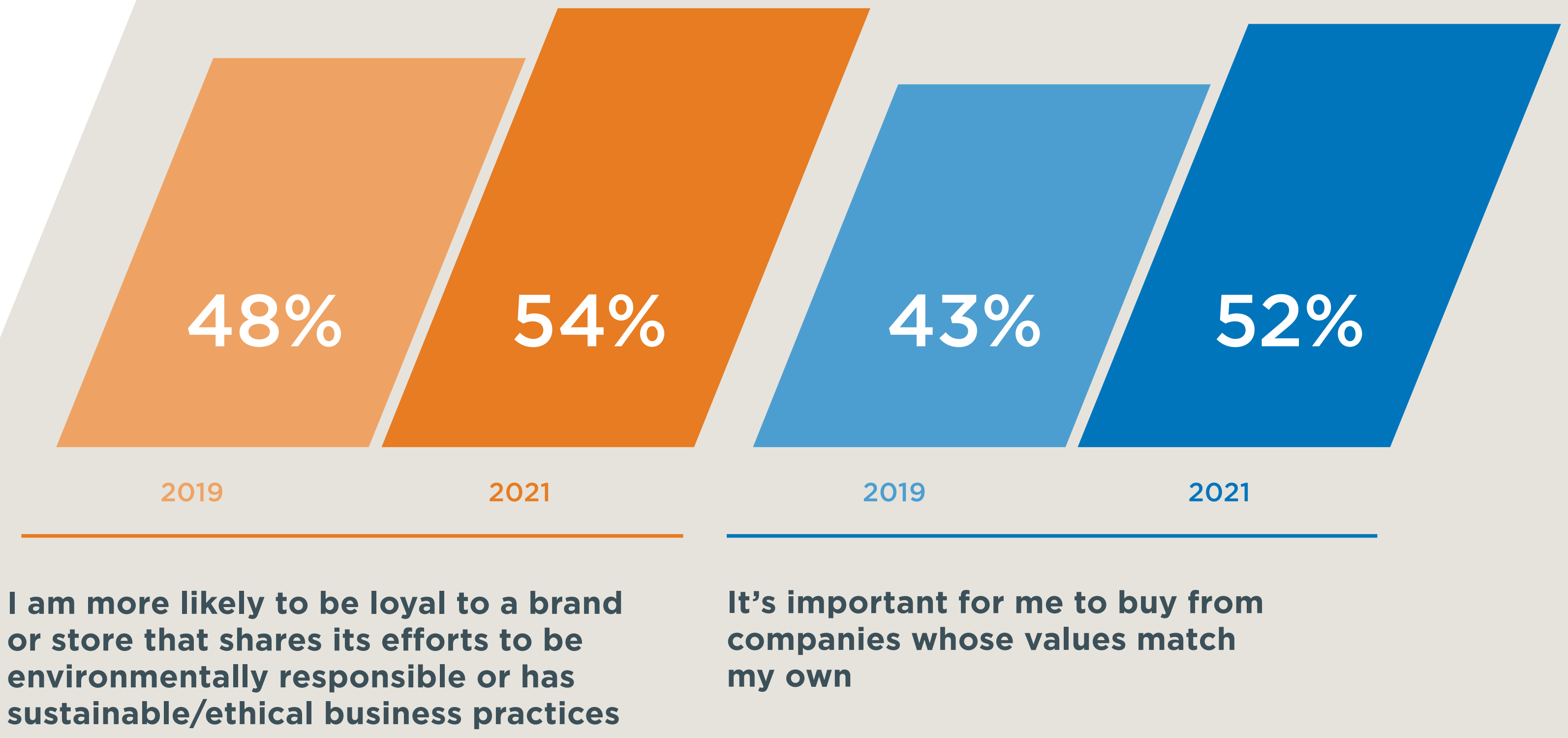
After a year punctuated by social unrest & widespread tragedy, people are more sensitive about what they buy and who they buy from. They want to support local shops & buy from brands that demonstrate socially responsible behavior.

Forty-five percent of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products — the same as 2019, but notable that these principles haven't slipped during a time of economic hardship for many.

All these figures are highest among millennials, parents, and millennial parents. Seventy-two percent of millennial parents are more likely to be loyal to a brand or store that shares its efforts to be environmentally responsible, or has sustainable/ethical business practices. Sixty-three percent of millennials are willing to pay more for sustainable products.

It's clear that people want brands that are reactive to the massive changes and social shifts that have happened over the last two years.

And brand messaging needs to reflect this. There has been an increase in the number of consumers indicating that messaging about fair employment practice and diversity and equality will influence a purchase decision.



/ SAVING IS STILL KING

While consumers are becoming more socially conscious, we cannot discount the economic impact of 2020 and its long-term effects on spending habits.

When it comes to budgeting, essential needs take priority as people make more practical and budget-conscious purchases.

Messaging and promotions must be nuanced. It is clear brands that move to socially responsible messaging now will get a head start with consumers moving that way, but it must be balanced with the financial needs of today's consumers.

2021	Sentiment
18%	of consumers are looking for more opportunities to treat themselves and/or others in their household.
5	percentage point increase in the number of consumers who are looking for ways to save money from 2020 to 2021.

82% OF CONSUMERS SAID:

> "The most important thing when shopping for grocery products is to save the most money by going to a store with the lowest prices.

70% of those whose income was impacted in 2020 expect this to remain the case in 2021.

72% OF CONSUMERS SAID:

> “They increased their saving behaviors during COVID, with **82% planning to continue.**

03 HOW WE ARE MESSAGING

There are a lot of new variables for people to adjust to, and not as much money to do so. In trying times, savvy, price-sensitive consumers are shopping smarter.

Challenging economic conditions mean consumers will gravitate toward brands offering deals and discounts. Loyalty is up for grabs ... and the best deal will win.

FRUGALITY MIGHT ALLEVIATE TOWARD THE END OF 2021, BUT IT WILL TAKE TIME FOR NEW HOUSEHOLD BUDGET CONTROLS TO RELAX.

/ DEALS NEED TO WORK HARDER

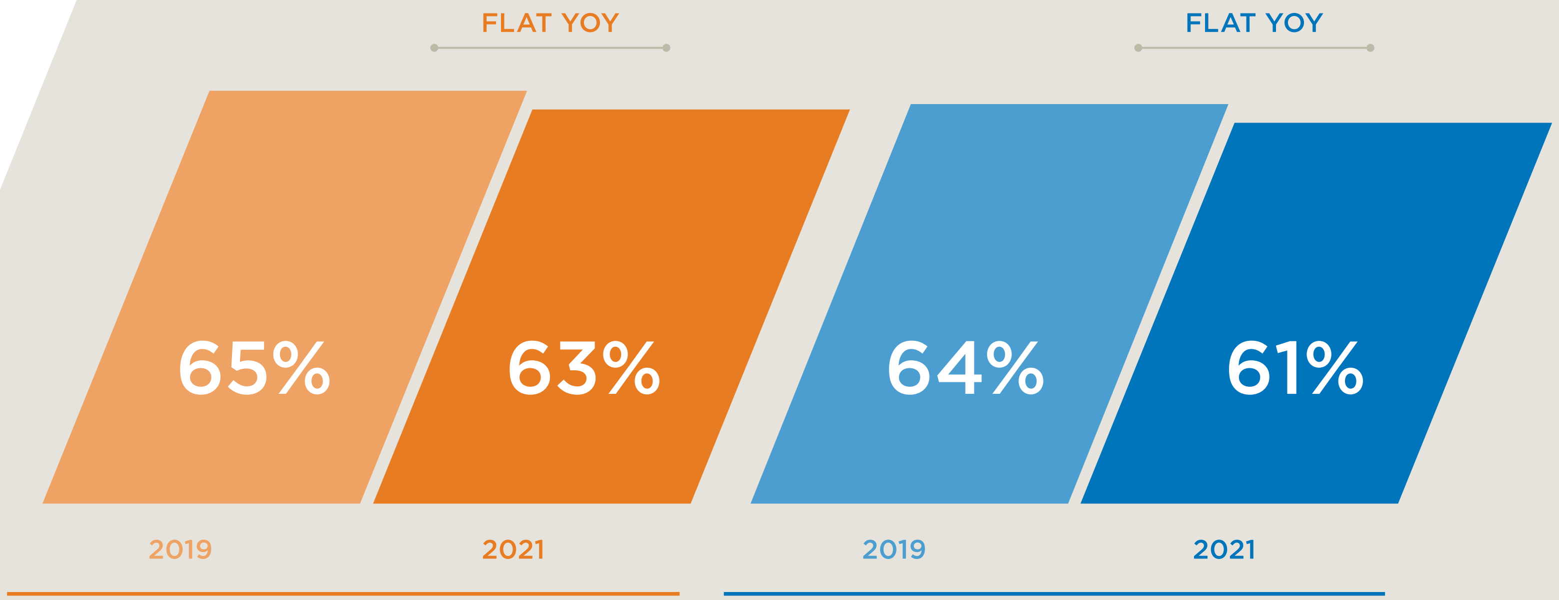
Sensitivity to deals and deal messaging remains the same despite consumers being more price-conscious due to the economic impact of COVID on household income.

A deal is still highly effective at driving an impulse or unplanned purchase.

Affordability and deals are essential to driving purchases, but they won't be enough on their own. What you offer, where you place deals, and how you serve them will need to take into account new sentiments and behaviors.

Fifty-one percent of shoppers agree that a relevant and engaging brand message can get them to try a new product (up five percentage points from 2019).

The power of a deal has held steady the past couple of years, as consumers are redefining what it means to be a smart shopper.



I feel like a smarter shopper when using coupons or discounts

Messages about affordable prices make me more likely to purchase a specific brand

52% OF CONSUMERS SAID:

> A sale will drive an impulse purchase.

37% OF CONSUMERS SAID:

> Messages offering coupons or discounts make them more likely to purchase a specific brand.

/ ADS AND COUPONS WORK

Consumers still love a deal, even if they're savvier to the messaging, and this will be true in the future as economic scars persist.

When planning their shopping, a higher percentage of millennials, parents, and millennial parents use paper coupons from print sources such as the mail and the newspaper. But overall use for all these formats is high across all generations.

Advertisers have a real opportunity to influence behavior while shoppers are in the planning stage. Deals and promos will dictate what goes on to the "must-buy" list.

When it comes to having a set objective such as a list of what they want to buy and where they want to shop >

74% OF CONSUMERS SAID:

"They can be swayed by advertised promotions & sales.

/ ADS AND COUPONS WORK

There is a significant increase in price consciousness, and this is evident in both consumers whose incomes have been negatively affected by COVID and affluent consumers with a household income over $100K.

And it's not just shopping — 45% of consumers are using coupons, discounts, or offers at least half the time when ordering from restaurants. Sixty-one percent of millennials, and 67% of parents and millennial parents are doing the same.

71% of consumers ranked saving the most money by "using coupons and discounts" as the second most important thing when going grocery shopping.

Affluent consumers love coupons and get excited by using them.

79% Use coupons when planning their shopping

79% Say it's exciting to discover a coupon or discount on a product they were already thinking of buying

64% Say a coupon or discount speeds up their decision to purchase

/ DIGITAL COUPON INSIGHTS

The growth of digital and mobile technology for savings and discounts is in line with digital adoption across most industries. We haven't seen the end of the paper coupon, but many consumers prefer both digital and paper formats so they don't miss savings. And more consumers are expecting to be engaged on their mobile phones.

Millennials, parents, and millennial parents are all significantly higher for this sentiment. Ninety-three percent of millennial parents and 92% of parents are using digital coupons. Sixty-one percent of consumers use a savings app from a grocery, drugstore, mass merchant or supercenter once a month or more often — that figure rises to 80% of millennials, 86% of parents, and 90% of millennial parents.

71% of consumers use digital coupons/discounts (including on mobile/smartphone, discount or promo codes, or downloaded onto loyalty cards)
Always + Very Often + Sometimes

51% prefer to receive them on their smartphone or mobile device; up six percentage points from 45% in 2019

73% of Millennials
76% of Parents
81% of Millennial Parents

SO WHAT?

Saving is a top priority for consumers, alongside convenience.

>

That means they’re choosing coupons not by medium but by value and ease of use. An omnichannel approach is still completely necessary but marketers can choose which channel to dial up based on the generation they’re targeting.

Consumers using a savings app from a grocery store, drugstore, mass merchant or supercenter once a month or more often.

61% All Consumers

80% Millennials

86% Parents

90% Millennial Parents

/ FEEL-GOOD ADS FEEL GOOD

The backdrop of the pandemic made positive and authentic messages a welcome relief — people needed to connect with what they'd lost.

Seventy percent of consumers were interested in ads with a message about supporting local businesses. This aligns with the previous finding that consumers now place more importance on supporting local businesses.

Sixty-eight percent of consumers prefer messages that are uplifting, 73% of Gen X and parents feel this way. And 69% of consumers prefer humorous ads, while 63% dislike political messages.

And it's clear that health and welfare are in the zeitgeist. Sixty-four percent of millennials, 70% of parents, and 72% of millennial parents are interested in ads that focus on health and wellness.

04

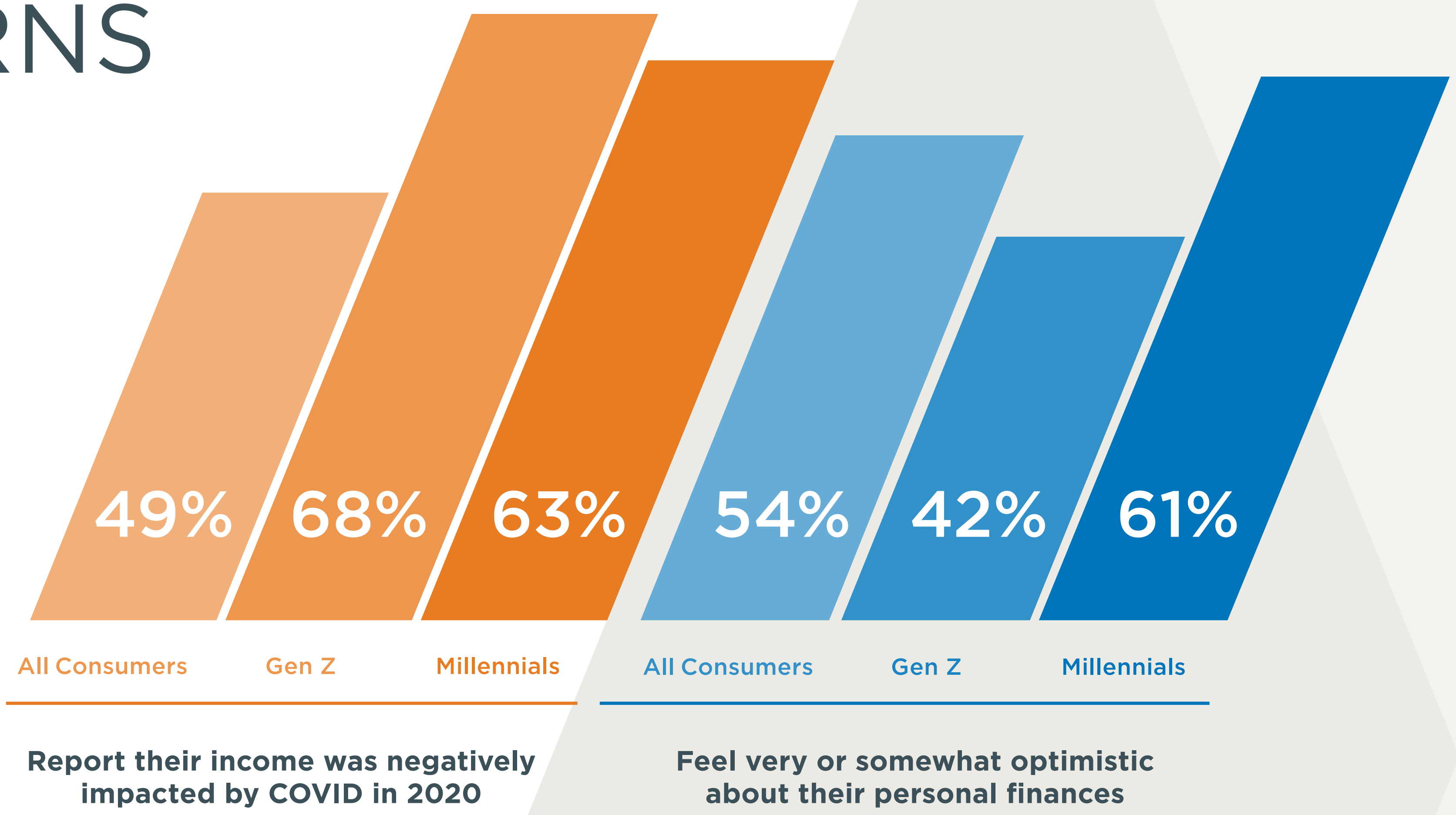
HOW WE ARE FEELING

Optimism about the future is multidimensional — the economic outlook and personal and public health were big dictators of sentiment. For a deeper dive into consumer sentiment, read our 2022 Consumer Outlook.

/ ECONOMIC HEALTH CONCERNS

The deep economic disruption of 2020 left its mark on the overall optimism outlook. People will feel the impact to their income for some time.

THERE IS CREEPING ECONOMIC OPTIMISM AT A PERSONAL & MACRO LEVEL, BUT IT'S CLEAR **THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS WERE HARDEST HIT.**



44% of consumers are optimistic about the economic health of their local city/state.

39% are optimistic about the national economy.

VERICAST

/ WORK-LIFE BALANCE HAS IMPROVED

The shift to remote (and mostly, home) working and learning impacted mental health, professional standing, homelife, & personal relationships.

From 2019 to 2020 the number of consumers who felt time-pressured increased four percentage points. As our public lives slowed down, our private lives sped up. Work and school pressure likely increased as people worked longer days in shared spaces.

Given that not much changed between 2020 and Q1 of 2021 consumers might have become more resilient (or at least acclimated to change) rather than having actually struck a good work-life balance.

The evidence of increased resilience with working from home opens up opportunities for retailers, marketers, and businesses offering self-care and home care products.

05

FOUR STEPS FOR MARKETERS

TO HARNESS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

There's no getting around the fact that consumers' habits, perceptions, and expectations have changed.

But there's real opportunity to capitalize on this inflection point and amplify consumers' optimism while tempering and addressing their caution. People want to go out, spend money, see loved ones, shop and discover new things. And you can help them.

YOUR MARKETING AND MESSAGING MUST TAKE THEM FROM "MEH" TO "YEAH" WITH POSITIVITY, OPTIMISM, AND ENGAGEMENT.

And there's no need to reinvent the wheel. Existing marketing methods are still as relevant as ever; they simply need to be reimagined in some areas and repurposed for others.

The four steps on the following pages will show how messaging should be rethought and updated for the new paradigm. It needs to overcome new concerns, engage empathetically with new sentiments, and express shifting attitudes.

/ 01: GET YOUR MESSAGING RIGHT

People have a pent-up desire to move forward after a tough year of stagnation. There's a big opportunity for marketing & messaging that conveys forward momentum & situates the worst of the pandemic in the rearview mirror.

This will take some nuance. You should zoom into how sentiment varies between different segments — across regions, verticals, and demographics — and understand the emotional arc of consumers throughout the pandemic.

Flexibility and agility are important too. The situation is still fluid — new behaviors and attitudes are forming and changing unpredictably. Listening to near real-time data will be a key differentiator, but only if you can pivot how you engage (and what you say) based on what you hear.

Likewise, appealing to optimism is important, but you should accommodate caution too. The challenge is to be transparent and respectful without diminishing the drive to act — while even the most cautious consumers are ready for a change, too much urgency signals that you prioritize selling over safety.

Revitalize traditional marketing methods for this new era. Incentives like coupons and discounts still work, and consumers love them. Use them to coax the cautious (and cheerlead the optimistic) to try out exciting new products and experiences.

And don't be afraid to reach out in experimental new ways. Brands lost touch with consumers during the pandemic as they were forced further away from their audience. The good news is that means lots of new space to build connections.

> **What you say is as important as who you say it to and targeting at neighborhood and household level will be critical for creating the nuance needed to tackle this tricky time.**

/ 02: PROMOTE YOUR SAFETY MEASURES

Personal health and safety will be a real concern for the foreseeable future and it needs to be a serious consideration for all indoor activities.

EVEN INDOOR SHOPPING, WHICH MOST CONSUMERS ARE COMFORTABLE WITH, WILL HAVE AN ADJUSTMENT PERIOD.

Messaging and promotions for indoor activities should address concerns and highlight the precautions taken. Consumers want to support local businesses, so advertising that promotes a safer community will pay dividends.

Target is an example of a retail brand that's making sure shoppers feel safe by providing free masks, proper shopping cart cleaning, and hand sanitizing stations.

As measures like these become commonplace, the difference will come down to how they're positioned and communicated to customers. For instance, a campaign that celebrates the deep cleaning crew would highlight your efforts, give your store a community feel, and promote your socially aware mindset.

Millennials, parents, and millennial parents are generally the segments most comfortable with indoor activities, so they are your low-hanging fruit for targeting.

If you're organizing or promoting activities such as indoor gyms, sporting events, or concerts, millennials are most likely to engage.

Highlighting COVID-secure guidelines will still be necessary as comfort levels are still low.

/ 03: DEMONSTRATE A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

People want to shop local and reward the stores & restaurants that have suffered. But it's also clear they want to buy from brands that demonstrate fair practices, environmental consideration, and a social conscience.

Messages that recognize the negative effects of the pandemic but offer hope and optimism are popular with consumers. They want authenticity, transparency, and optimism.

Ben and Jerry's is an example of a brand that's embraced the demand for greater social justice and awareness. They're not afraid to let their product stand for what they believe is right and they've demonstrated this by introducing flavors that address sensitive issues.

When creating campaigns around social issues, be sure that what you're communicating reflects your target audience's feelings and will resonate with their beliefs. But it needs to be authentic and true to your brand.

CORRECT, LOCALIZED DATA & INSIGHT GIVE YOU A BETTER CHANCE OF STAYING IN YOUR LANE WHILE MEETING THE CONSUMER'S EXPECTATION OF BRANDS WITH A MESSAGE.

/ 04: BUILD REWARDING IN-STORE EXPERIENCES

While people are still unsure about indoor activities, shopping is a notable exception — many won't take much convincing to return.

In-store promotions, deals, and discounts still rank as the most persuasive form of messaging for most consumers. Targeting consumers on mobile devices at the point of decision-making will generate great results.

Shoppers still want a physical interaction when purchasing across several different categories. Retailers should build that into the in-store experience, and consider new opportunities for experiential elements. Have assistants on hand to direct shoppers and assure them that they can still interact with products in a COVID-secure way.

Touch-free interactions — supported by QR codes, AR experiences, and "endless aisle" capabilities — will sidestep discomfort around pre-COVID behaviors while elevating the in-store experience into something worth coming back for.

At home, circulars and catalogs remain a powerful way to create brand connections by driving engagement through omnichannel campaigns.

Circulars and catalogs can also be used to improve the in-store experience long before the consumer leaves their home. By driving shoppers online to find more coupons — and pulling them into the brand ecosystem — helping them plan how to shop in advance, physical mail inspires action, addresses caution, and augments the in-store experience.

Print media has evolved to work synergistically with digital, and our data shows consumers choose physical or digital coupons based on the best deal, not the platform.

06

THE VERTICAL SNAPSHOT

Here you'll find some key stats for various verticals so you can see, at glance, how consumers feel about your industry.

/ THE VERTICAL SNAPSHOT

CPG

64%	of online grocery shoppers are doing nearly all or most of their purchases online. This is down from 67% in 2020 and not much higher than the 58% in 2019.	52%	prefer purchasing products they need to try out in-store.
52%	have done more online purchases for CPG over the past year, but this was due to COVID concerns.	49%	are very comfortable or somewhat comfortable shopping indoors.
45%	of millennials ordered groceries directly from a grocer for pickup because of COVID in the last year and 57% of parents did the same.	18%	do all food shopping online in 2021 compared with 29% in 2020.
17%	do all HBC products shopping online compared to 25% in 2020 and 16% in 2019.	14%	do all HH goods shopping online compared to 24% in 2020 and 15% in 2019.

/ THE VERTICAL SNAPSHOT

RESTAURANT

71%	of those who got the vaccine say they are much more comfortable with ordering carryout or delivery than they are dining inside at a restaurant.	65%	say it's important to support local restaurants.
63%	say they are much more comfortable ordering carryout or delivery than dining inside at a restaurant.	59%	say they will not dine at restaurants as often due to their COVID-19 concerns.
55%	of millennials are comfortable dining outdoors.	49%	of millennials are comfortable dining indoors.
46%	of Gen Z agreed with the statement that they would not dine at restaurants due to COVID fears.	29%	of baby boomers are comfortable dining indoors.

/ THE VERTICAL SNAPSHOT

ENTERTAINMENT

61% agree they are watching more streaming videos/TV shows.

36% are very or somewhat comfortable going to outdoor sporting events.

28% are very or somewhat comfortable going to a concert, theater, or other indoor event.

28% are very or somewhat comfortable going to indoor sporting events.

/ ABOUT THE STUDY

The study was fielded 02/18 – 03/04/2021 in conjunction with a global, third-party market research firm with proficiency in internet surveys. The sample is nationally representative and was derived from an online consumer opinion panel, and all participants were at least 18 years of age and living in the contiguous United States. The survey was closed once 1,004 completed responses had been reached.

About Vericast

Vericast is reimagining marketing solutions one business-to-human connection at a time. By influencing how over 120 million households eat, shop, buy, save and borrow, Vericast fuels commerce, drives economic growth and directly accelerates revenue potential for thousands of brands and businesses. While its award-winning portfolio of products, technology and solutions are part of the Vericast story, its people are the true differentiators; trailblazers in data intelligence, marketing services, transaction solutions, campaign management and media delivery.