



Gallup-Bentley University Survey Finds Majority of Americans Believe Business Has Positive Impact on People's Lives

More than seven in 10 young Americans say they would switch jobs to work at an organization that has a greater positive impact on the world

Washington, D.C. – Oct. 17, 2022 – A new survey conducted by Gallup and Bentley University finds that 55% of Americans say businesses have an “extremely” or “somewhat” positive impact on people’s lives. The [Bentley University – Force for Good Report](#) explores how Americans feel about the potential of businesses, large and small, to make a positive impact on society and the areas in which they fall short.

Americans draw a sharp distinction between large and small businesses, the survey found. They are twice as likely to say small businesses positively impact people’s lives (82%) as they are to say the same about large businesses (41%).

The survey also found that Americans are very optimistic about businesses’ potential to improve society. About nine in 10 (89%) say businesses and companies have “a great deal of” or “some” power to make a positive impact on people’s lives, similar to the percentages who say the same about state and federal government (90% and 88%, respectively). Charitable and advocacy groups are seen as having less potential, with 71% of people saying they have a great deal of or some power to make a positive impact.

However, when it comes to actual performance, Americans say businesses are falling short in some areas. The survey found that 53% of Americans say businesses in general have a negative impact on the

environment, with this number rising to 65% for large businesses. Pay inequality is another area where Americans believe businesses are falling short. Most say it is extremely important to offer fair wages to all workers (82%) and avoid major pay gaps between CEOs and average employees (55%). But in each case, far fewer say businesses are excellent or good at doing so (30% and 13%, respectively).

The job search is no longer just about the paycheck

The survey was conducted at a time of turmoil in the U.S. labor market, when many workers have been reevaluating their career direction and questioning the types of companies for which they would work. More than 93% of Americans say if they were applying for a job, it would be “somewhat” or “extremely” important for the company to make money in ethical ways. More than 73% say it’d be somewhat or extremely important for the company to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. Despite these expectations, only 32% of Americans say businesses are “excellent” or “good” at making money in ethical ways, and only 41% say companies are excellent or good at promoting diversity, equity and inclusion.

Overall, 55% of employed Americans say they would switch jobs to work at an organization that has a greater positive impact on the world, including 71% of employees aged 18 to 29.

“These data reveal that Americans believe doing good is good business. People expect more from companies than simply increasing profits and meeting shareholder goals, and this is especially true among Gen Z and millennials – the future of our nation’s workforce and consumer base,” said Bentley University President E. LaBrent Chrite. “These changing expectations should matter a great deal to every company and employer in America. If you want to continue to grow and attract future customers and employees, you’ll need to show your commitment to your community, account for your environmental impact, and adopt and promote values that today’s workers embrace.”

As companies think about how they can more visibly demonstrate their values, many have started speaking out about timely issues in society. The study found that the country is divided on whether businesses should take a public stance on current events — 48% say yes, while 52% say no. Democrats (75%) are much more likely than Republicans (18%) to believe businesses should take a public stance on current issues.

Doing good vs. making a profit. A false dichotomy?

While some may argue that businesses’ efforts to make positive social change may cut into their profit margins, most Americans don’t see businesses’ financial goals and commitment to making a positive social impact as competing priorities. About seven in 10 (69%) believe businesses that prioritize making a positive impact on society are just as profitable (47%) or more profitable (22%) than their competitors. In fact, the study found that people who say they have a lot of experience owning, leading or managing a business are more likely than Americans overall to say businesses that prioritize making a positive impact are at least as profitable as their competitors.

“This research confirms that Americans expect, and believe businesses can, make a positive impact on the world,” said Stephanie Marken, Education Division partner at Gallup. “And yet in the areas they view as most important – showing respect for their employees and earning profits in an ethical way – Americans feel as if businesses are falling far short, so the business community has more work to do to inspire confidence among their customers.”

About the Survey

The Bentley University - Gallup Force for Good survey is based on a Gallup Panel web survey completed by 5,757 adults, aged 18 and older, conducted June 8 to 19, 2022. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults whom Gallup selects using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landline and cell phones. Gallup also uses address-based sampling methods to recruit panel members. The

Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel. The sample for this study was weighted to be demographically representative of the U.S. adult population, using the most recent Current Population Survey figures. For results based on this sample, the maximum margin of sampling error is plus or minus 1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error are higher for subsamples.

About Bentley University

Bentley University is more than just one of the nation's top business schools. It is a lifelong-learning community that creates successful leaders who make business a force for positive change. With a combination of business and the arts and sciences and a flexible, personalized approach to education, Bentley provides students with critical thinking and practical skills that prepare them to lead successful, rewarding careers. Founded in 1917, the university enrolls 4,000 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate and PhD students and is set on 163 acres in Waltham, Massachusetts, 10 miles west of Boston. For more information, visit [bentley.edu](https://www.bentley.edu).

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.