



## **THE TRUTH ABOUT CULTURE AND COVID-19: JAPAN LOSS OF FAITH IN GOVERNMENT**

***Anxiety at a record high with priorities in mental wellness.***

***Raising expectations to brands' role to cheer people up and spread happiness***

**TOKYO (2, March 2021)** — McCann Worldgroup's thought leadership unit, McCann Worldgroup Truth Central, conducted its ninth wave of research on people's attitudes toward the COVID-19 pandemic titled "Truth About Culture and COVID-19 Wave 9" from December 15, 2020 to January 6, 2021. This was the ninth of a series of surveys conducted regularly since early March of last year, with approximately 11,300 respondents in 18 countries around the world, including Japan, participating in the current round of research.

The study has now been expanded to also include an additional 7 Asia Pacific markets: Australia, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia and South Korea, providing a breadth of insights specific to this region. Subsequent global averages reflect the total of all markets (G25).

During mid-December to January, when this survey was conducted, Japan was experiencing the third wave of infection where we saw daily increase in new cases exceeding 4,000 yet the government was slow in putting a halt to its "Go to Travel" "Go to Eat" subsidy campaigns which began in October. There were also a number of incidents that led to distrust to the government. It was also time when UK, US and Canada rolled out the COVID-19 vaccination.

### **Below are some of the key findings:**

- One third of Japanese people (33%) think their government has let them down in the handling of the pandemic
- 56% of people in Japan believe that the world has been forever changed by the pandemic
- Worry about the COVID-19 outbreak has rebound to 67%, along with the third wave COVID-19 spread
- 45% of Japanese said "I feel more anxious than I did before," 10 point increase from early-November to mid-December
- Increasing expectations to brands to "cheer people up and spread happiness" as the pandemic prolongs

Hiroaki Mori, President & CEO of McCann Japan commented, "This study helps provide valuable insights into ongoing shifts in global consumer attitudes regarding Coronavirus. We are seeing deep-rooted trends manifest, set against a backdrop of cultural values, norms and expectations, that will shape the economy this year and beyond. Leveraging these insights we will strive to provide clients with meaningful solutions for their brands."

### Trust in Government Record Low

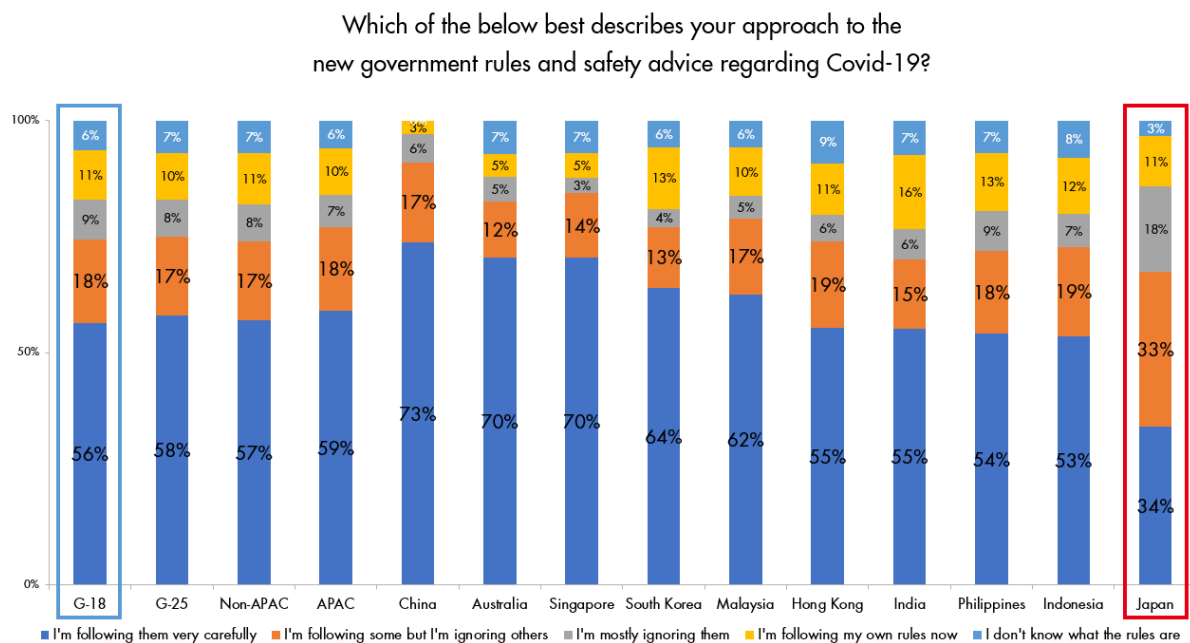
One third of Japanese people (33%) think their government has let them down in the handling of the pandemic, compared with 27% of respondents globally. This is the greatest lack of faith in government amongst markets surveyed in APAC; for example only 9% of people in China and Singapore feel let down.

Additionally, when asked to rate how prepared their country was to deal with the coronavirus outbreak, globally markets polled at 39% of people thinking their country was 'prepared', versus Japan, where only 13% of people believe the country was prepared.

Correspondingly, when asked to consider which groups or institutions people have lost trust in during the pandemic, Japan scored the highest in loss of faith in governments and politicians at 55% (vs the global average of 49%.) This outranked loss of trust in mainstream news media (34%), loss of trust in people from other countries (16%) and loss of trust in businesses and brands (10%), for example.

Consequently, there is a lower level of trust in government-issued guidelines. When asked "describe your approach to government rules and safety advice regarding COVID-19", only 34% of Japanese people polled said they were "following the rules very carefully" as compared to 58% globally. Another 33% of Japanese said they were "following some but ignoring others," the highest portion among markets surveyed. [CHART 1]

[CHART 1]



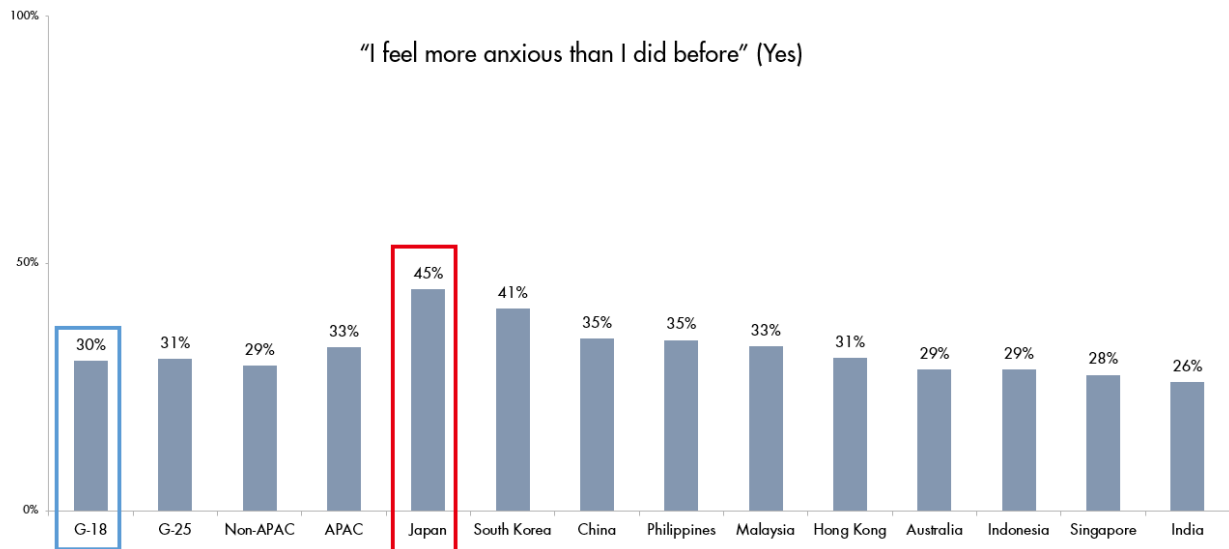
### Economic Concerns & High Anxiety

The APAC region faces a shared concern about the state of the economy with 57% of people in APAC concerned that their economy will suffer and 39% of people in APAC worried that they will lose their job or struggle financially (compared with 31% globally). The number rises to 50% of people in Japan worried that they will lose their job (the second highest of any market in APAC, after China).

Perhaps reflecting the lack of faith in the government, 58% of Japanese people believe that governments should work with brands to help solve the crisis. This is the highest figure in APAC.

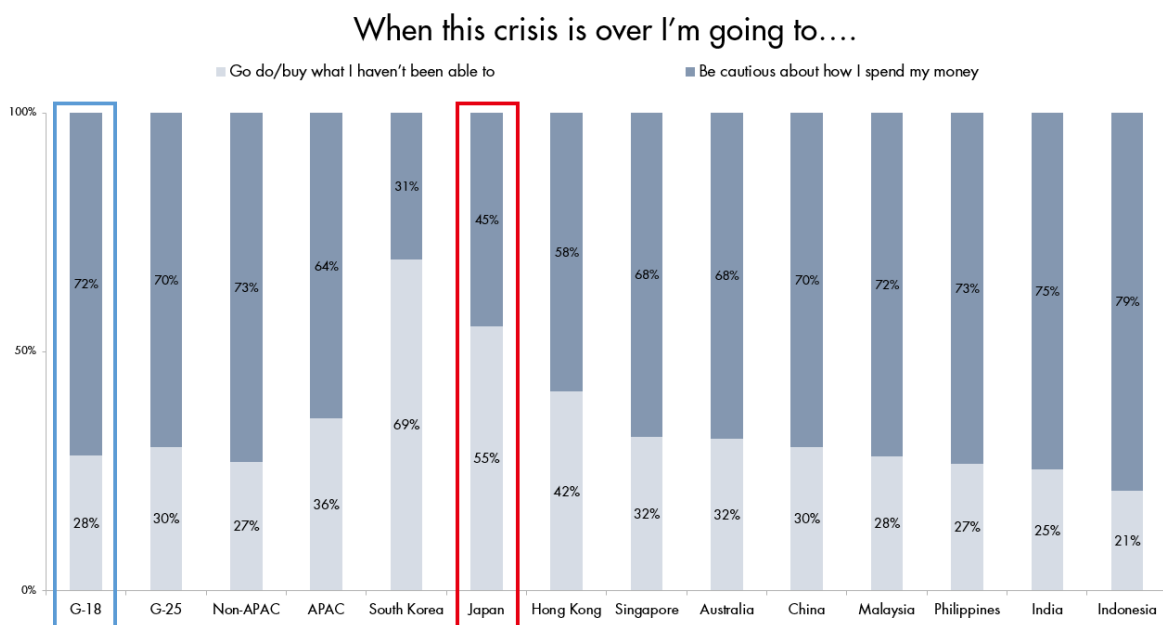
With only 9% of people believing they would “be ok” if they catch Covid, it’s no surprise that anxiety levels are at a record high. 45% Japanese people have reported feeling more anxious than they did before the pandemic – the highest out of any market surveyed. [CHART 2] Moreover, it has increased 10 point in mid-December as the cases surged again.

[CHART 2]



However, in a more positive note, 55% of people say that “after the crisis I’m going to buy/do” what I haven’t been able to. Globally, markets are much more conservative, with most people saying they’ll be cautious about how they spend their money [CHART 3]. Finally, 44% of people in Japan believe that the crisis will inspire new innovations.

[CHART 3]



In terms of expectations towards brands, in the latest survey 44% of Japanese said that the best things brands and businesses can do to help in the crisis is to “cheer people up and spread happiness”, which represents 12 point increase from the results in last April, showing that there is increasing needs in care of mental wellness and positive navigation towards life with new normal.

“It is very clear that Japanese people are expecting brands to step up and do more to help in this difficult time. Their levels of concern are among the highest globally, and they believe brands have an obligation to play a role in lifting spirits. This demonstrates why careful navigation and deeper engagement has become vital for governments and brands”, commented Richard McCabe, Chief Strategy Officer, McCann Worldgroup Asia Pacific

“Through this series of global research, it is clear that the Japanese consumers take the pandemic as a time to re-evaluate their ways of working, shopping, and maintaining personal wellbeing. Their expectations towards brands’ innovations remain high, and also expecting brands to cheer people up and spread happiness. These also mean chances for brands to earn a meaningful role in people’s lives,” commented Irin Ko, planning manager of McCANN Tokyo.

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Key global stats can be found [here](#) and more information on the APAC/Japan cut is available on request.

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#### **About McCann Worldgroup Truth Central**

McCann Truth Central is McCann Worldgroup’s global intelligence unit, with representation in more than 100 countries around the world. Truth Central’s mission is to create original research that unearths the macro level truths driving people’s attitudes and behaviors about life, brands and marketing. For more about Truth Central or to access previous Truth Studies, visit: <http://www.mccannworldgroup.com/about/truth>

#### **About McCann Worldgroup**

McCann Worldgroup, part of the Interpublic Group (NYSE: IPG), is a leading global marketing solutions network with over 20,000 employees united across 100+ countries by a single vision: To help brands play a meaningful role in people's lives. In 2019, McCann Worldgroup was selected as Adweek magazine’s “Global Agency Of The Year,” was recognized as Network of the Year by the Cannes Lions, and was named by the Effies as the world's most creatively-effective marketing services company for the second year in a row. The network comprises McCann (advertising), MRM (science/technology/relationship marketing), Momentum Worldwide (total brand experience), McCann Health (professional/dtc communications), CRAFT (production), Weber Shandwick (public relations) and FutureBrand (consulting/design). More about McCann Worldgroup Japan <https://eng.mccannwg.co.jp/>

### **Methodology Details**

This survey is a standalone piece of research exploring the impact of COVID-19 amongst APAC markets building on McCann Worldgroup Truth Central's ongoing Truth About Culture & COVID-19 research. The Truth About Culture & COVID-19 is a monthly piece of research fielded in 18 markets globally. For more information on this global study, please click [here](#).

#### **Truth About Culture and Covid-19: G18**

18 Markets [n=11,349], in field from 12/15/20 to 1/6/21:

Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Spain, UK, US, Brazil, China\* [Rep.]  
Argentina, Chile, Colombia, India, Italy, Turkey, Russia, South Africa [Conv.]

#### **Truth About Culture and Covid-19: APAC 7**

7 Markets [n=3,850] in field from 12/17/20 to 1/19/21:

Australia [Rep.]

Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea [Conv.]

The data presented in this work was collected using the Google Surveys 360 platform\*. Wherever possible, we used a representative sample based on local age, gender, and geographic quotas to minimize sampling bias. However, certain markets could only be completed with a convenience sample which included respondents of any age, gender, or geographic region. In these cases, the large sample size of 1,000 responses per market allows us to reach more reliable conclusions. For more information on the validity of this platform, please refer to this [link](#).

In order to maintain an accurate read of the situation as it evolves, we are re-fielding the survey on a regular basis and tracking the changes in data over time. The same methodology has been used in successive waves of the research. Below we've included the dates for when surveys ran and closed. Due to the rapid nature of COVID-19, we recognize that cultural mentalities and government responses are changing day by day and this data is a snapshot of a moment in time.

\*Data in China was collected through a traditional market research supplier with representative sample.