



Future of Money Study

TRACKING QUAL THROUGH THE PANDEMIC



May 2021
KNow Research

Background

From April 2020 to April 2021, KNow Research joined forces with the quantitative financial insights experts at Logica Research to contribute qualitative insights to their ongoing [Future of Money study](#). Together we completed 4 rounds of research, strategically scheduled at key moments since the beginning of the pandemic.

KNow stepped into complement Logica's study by providing a qualitative picture of how people were financially affected by the effects of this pandemic year. The goal was to provide color on how people:

1. Make money
2. Spend money
3. Save or invest money
4. Engage with financial brands

How We Did It

It was a year of change to put it mildly, and as a digital-first qualitative consultancy, we leaned into our strengths to complement the ongoing study at a time where it was difficult for researchers to conduct in-person research.

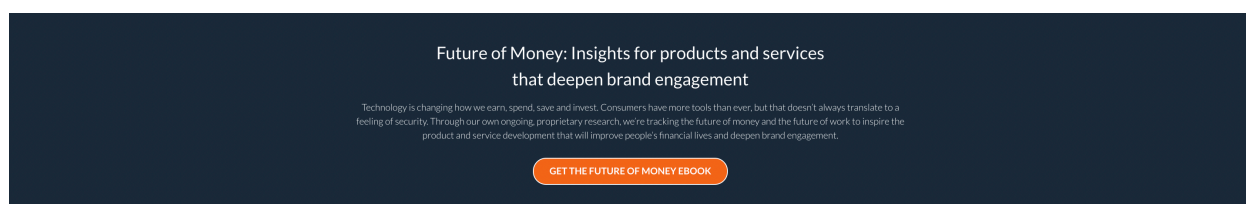
We spoke to all research participants in **online webcam discussions**. Participants were sourced from Logica Research's quantitative survey, enabling us to pair their quantitative feedback with their qualitative context and stories. This **quant-to-qual recruiting process** also allowed us to efficiently schedule participants, when the memory of taking the survey was still fresh in their minds.

Timing	Methodology	Summary	Methodology Benefits
Spring 2020	Dyads	Participants were reeling from the initial impacts of	Many people were sheltering in place together who in "normal

		COVID, but before most had received loan assistance and/or their stimulus check. In this phase, we chose to interview pairs (couples of parents and/or children) as households sheltered in place together	times” might not have. Dyads took advantage of this, allowing us to talk to almost every pair while they were in the same location.
Summer 2020	Booth® Insights	We had so much interest in the Spring 2020 findings that we conducted another wave of research in the summer, this time in the form of our virtual intercept approach, Booth® Insights pop-ups, which allow us to hear from 20+ people in one day	We wanted to understand many perspectives in a short amount of time and the pop-up allowed us to scale, bringing many different people together in a serendipitous way
Fall/Winter 2020	One-on-one Interviews	To capture what holiday shopping in 2020 and financial planning for 2021 looked like, we reached out again – this time complementing the survey with in-depth interviews to understand the repercussions of the rocky year on participants’ spending and saving habits	We had specific questions about certain hypothesis that we wanted to explore in depth; the one-on-one interviews allowed us to do deep dives, one participant at a time
Spring 2021	Dyads	This round of fieldwork was done almost exactly one year after the first pandemic	Dyads brought us full circle and allowed us to compare to the dyads in the first wave

		<p>wave. We again interviewed pairs of people to understand how things were the same or different compared to a year ago, focusing on what was next for them, given the rollout of the COVID vaccine and businesses re-opening to in-person visits</p>	<p>We also noticed it was also a lot tougher to schedule our participants as people went back to working outside the home and on different schedules!</p>
--	--	--	---

Output from all phases of the work included compilation highlight reels, reports, blog posts, and support for [Logica's e-books](#).



What We Learned

By adapting the technique to the changing times, we brought the quantitative insights to live in the key four areas.

1. How people make money

- The Spring 2020 wave focused much on **uncertainty of participants' lives** – how were their jobs affected, would they have stable jobs and for how long, lost, and furloughed jobs, difficulties filing for unemployment – and how all this would impact their current and future finances.
- By the Summer 2020 wave the focus was less on the uncertainty and more on the present situation **and how to deal with the effects**.

-
- In Fall/Winter 2020, we spoke to many participants who had **multiple side gigs or part-time work** that allowed them to treat their family at the holidays and look towards the new year with optimism.
 - By Spring 2021, our focus shifted to look forward to a future that seems more stable. Many recognize that while financial security is not a sure thing, and they're **open to exploring – and demanding – more options to feel financially secure**.

2. How people spend money

- **Technology** impacted this category more than the others. In Spring 2020 we spoke to a mother and adult daughter who were living together again after the daughter moved back home after her college campus sent everyone home for the time being. The daughter spoke about teaching her mother and neighbors how to pay for things using their phones – with the focus on touching as few things as needed.
- As more and more people throughout the year started relying on their **mobile wallets** more, we spoke to people about the rise of other online payment structures – such as “Buy Now, Pay Later” services and the widening usage of PayPal.

3. How people save or invest money

- We saw the rise of **crypto** and widespread usage of **trading apps** such as Robinhood and Coinbase. Everyone and their mom (literally!) were using these apps to dip their toes into investing, spurred by current events and/or a need for entertainment after a year cooped up inside.
- Who “gets” to invest looks different now and people are more than happy to take part in shaping the markets for years to come.

4. How people engage with financial brands

- At the beginning of the pandemic, we heard from many participants who wanted financial brands to cut them some slack and help them

tangibly (waived fees, discounts) as well as **communicate to them mindfully about the pandemic**.

- As time went on and the economy didn't collapse, the focus turned to the future. Consumers relied on technology to get them through the pandemic and are **delighted by brands that know how to savvily connect with them**. They are more than happy to put their dollars towards something that makes them feel better.
- In April 2021, we heard much more of what we have heard before now that things are “opening up” again – *stay tuned to the next eBook from Logica to learn more about what our latest group of participants wanted in terms of rewards, customer service, and how to help them prepare for the future!*

Project Take-Aways

1. **Start with a “digital first” mindset.** Technology allowed us to peek into people's lives when the world was at a standstill. There was a time in the not-so-distant past where people were hesitant to open up to strangers online. But this year, we saw people readily embrace online communication (and get savvier with their webcams!). The ability to get somewhere physically used to be a barrier in doing research. Now the only barrier that needs to be overcome is one's mindset (and possible Zoom fatigue).
2. **Finances aren't so taboo.** Personal finances, anxieties, and fears around money have historically been difficult topics to get participants to open up and discuss freely during research. However, this year we noticed that the topics were less taboo to discuss despite (or because) of the physical distance between moderator and interviewee. We also believe that the emphasis in the news on finances and the economy have enabled people to talk about these topics more freely overall, good news for our financial service clients!

-
3. **Design for the question first and the methodology will follow.** As seen above, while all the methods we used may be grouped as ‘digital qualitative’ each methodology has its particular strengths and specific uses. When we wanted to talk to as many people as possible around a specific topic in an informal manner, we leveraged our Booth® Insights approach. When we knew we needed to go deep on a specific topic we lengthened the interviews and made them one-on-one. When we were interested in the two sides of one situation, we scheduled dyads with people who had some sort of relationship with each other. They were able to prompt each other and helped us do our job of moderating! Lastly, we were able to compare and contrast April 2020 and April 2021 easily with the vignettes into people’s everyday lives.
 4. **It’s a win-win to recruit from quant to qual.** It is sometimes frowned upon to recruit people who take surveys into qualitative follow-ups. Researchers worried: Who were these people? Will we be disappointed? Would they be revealed as liars? Professional survey takers? Or worse...robots? But in our case our participants were eloquent, engaged participants (which was in no small part due to the careful cleaning of survey responses by the team at Logical!). We spoke to Bitcoin enthusiasts who took surveys to be paid in Bitcoin. We had a 20-year-old who funded his Nintendo Switch pandemic purchase with funds solely from taking online surveys. We peeked behind the survey curtain and were relieved to find people like you and me, eager to share their opinions in the form of a conversation.
 5. **Despite the turmoil of the past year some things never change.** The world still needs research. Just because we were stuck at home doesn’t mean we stop being curious. We get creative. We keep having conversations – one of the oldest, low tech ways to do research – online, using the most cutting tools available to us. While we may have a little Zoom fatigue from the past year, we will never tire of insights!



Above: The KNow Research team flexing their #digitalqual muscles throughout the pandemic