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Industry Position

In the context of the current pandemic, the construction industry is well placed in the eyes of US adults to help get the economy back on track with 84% saying that construction will play at least a medium or a large role.

Views of the building and construction industry are generally favorable – with 81% holding a positive view. However, Engineering (86%) and Architecture (84%) rank slightly higher in overall favorability, competing for the top spots with Technology (86%) and Hospitals (84%). The general public doesn't have particularly negative feelings about the building and construction industry that are out of line with others, with 19% saying they have an unfavorable opinion of the industry. By contrast, 42% hold a negative view of the oil and gas industry.

Compared to other policy issues, only 39% of US adults think increasing spending on roads, bridges and other infrastructure should be a top priority. It should be noted that even if many do not see infrastructure investment as a top priority, 84% do consider it at least important. This trend carries when asked about the importance of investing in infrastructure directly with 95% believing that it is important that the US continue investing in infrastructure, with the bulk believing that it is very important (59%).

Pandemic Effects

The global COVID-19 pandemic has touched all aspects of American life and the construction industry is no exception. When compared to the overall economy, small businesses and large businesses, US adults place their concern about the impact of the pandemic in areas outside of the construction industry. Concern about the impact of COVID-19 is highest for small businesses (89%) and the overall economy (88%), followed by large businesses (70%) and then the construction industry (67%).

There is strong support for overall construction to continue during the pandemic – 84% say it is important for construction to continue. More specifically, the public believes it is most important to continue construction at this time on hospitals (92%), followed by power (90%), road travel (87%), and environmental projects (86%). While still maintaining high levels of overall support, businesses (74%) schools/universities (75%) and houses/apartments (80%) fall in the bottom tier of construction projects to continue during the pandemic.

Education Priorities

A huge boon that the construction industry provides to society is good-paying jobs where a four-year degree is not required. When compared to other issues, there is broad support among the US public for the development of career opportunities that do not need a 4-year degree (81% top priority/important priority).

Further, a majority of the US public agrees (65%) that a 4-year degree is not needed to get a good job, with only 35% disagreeing. When asked about the existence of high-paying jobs that require shorter and less expensive training than a 4-year college degree, 78% of people believe that those jobs exist.

One especially bright spot is that a solid majority of the American public (90%) believes in the effectiveness of apprenticeships and credentialing programs as a pathway to good-paying jobs and career paths.

Q1: How would you rate your overall impressions of the following industries from very unfavorable to very favorable?

	Total Favorable	Total Unfavorable	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable
Building and construction	81%	19%	26%	54%	13%	6%
Engineering	86%	14%	35%	51%	10%	4%
Architecture	84%	16%	31%	53%	10%	6%
Agriculture	84%	16%	38%	45%	11%	5%
Pharmaceutical	61%	39%	19%	42%	25%	14%
Finance	68%	32%	20%	48%	24%	8%
Oil and gas	58%	42%	15%	44%	29%	13%
Technology	87%	13%	39%	47%	9%	4%
Hospitals	84%	16%	41%	43%	11%	5%

Q2: Thinking about how to improve the quality of life for future generations, what priority would you give to each of the following?

	Top or important priority	A top priority	Important, but not a top priority	A lower priority	Should not be done
Reducing the national debt	85%	43%	42%	13%	2%
Increasing spending for education	82%	44%	38%	12%	6%
Increasing spending for roads, bridges and other infrastructure	84%	39%	45%	14%	2%
Dealing with climate change	73%	43%	30%	18%	9%
Providing high-quality affordable healthcare to all Americans	89%	60%	29%	7%	4%
Reducing the gap between the rich and the poor	74%	40%	34%	17%	9%
Increasing military spending	57%	20%	37%	28%	15%
Developing more career opportunities for Americans that do not require a 4-year college degree	81%	36%	45%	15%	3%

Q3: Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
A 4-year college degree is not needed to get a good job in the United States	65%	35%	27%	37%	26%	9%
In America today there are high paid jobs which require shorter and less expensive training than a 4-year college degree	78%	22%	33%	45%	17%	5%
Apprenticeships and credentialing programs can lead to good paying jobs and career paths	90%	10%	48%	41%	8%	2%

Q4: How concerned are you about the following?

	Concerned	Not too/Not at all concerned	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned
impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the construction industry	67%	33%	26%	40%	27%	6%
overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the U.S. economy and outlook for growth in the coming years	88%	12%	55%	33%	9%	4%
impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on small businesses across the US	89%	11%	64%	25%	8%	3%
impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on large businesses across the US	70%	30%	34%	36%	25%	5%

Q5: How important is it for the US to continue to invest in its infrastructure (such as the power grid, roads and bridges)?

	%
Very important	59%
Somewhat important	36%
Not too important	5%
Not at all important	1%

Q6: How important is it to keep construction going during the pandemic?

	%
Very important	41%
Somewhat important	43%
Not too important	12%
Not at all important	3%

Q7: In particular, how important is it to continue construction on the following during the pandemic?

	Important	Not important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Roads, highways and bridges	87%	13%	54%	33%	10%	2%
Houses/apartments	80%	20%	30%	50%	16%	4%
Hospitals	92%	8%	68%	24%	7%	1%
Businesses (such as retail, restaurants and office buildings)	74%	26%	29%	46%	22%	4%
Schools/Universities	75%	25%	33%	43%	18%	6%
Environmental projects (such as hazardous waste removal)	86%	14%	48%	39%	11%	2%
Power and the energy grid	90%	10%	54%	36%	8%	1%

Q8: What role does construction play in getting the economy back on track?

	%
A small role	7%
A medium role	47%
A large role	37%
Not sure	9%

Age

	%
Under 13	0%
13-17	0%
18-24	12%
25-29	8%
30-34	9%
35-39	9%
40-44	9%
45-49	8%
50-54	10%
55 or older	34%
Prefer not to say	0%

Gender

	%
Male	49%
Female	51%

REGION

	%
Northeast	18%
Midwest	22%
South	38%
West	21%