

CIVILITY IN AMERICA 2012

Two years ago, Weber Shandwick and Powell Tate, in partnership with KRC Research, released their first annual *Civility in America: A Nationwide Survey*. The survey was conducted months before Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was shot; actor Charlie Sheen's rants went viral; harassed Rutgers student Tyler Clementi took his life; Lady Gaga called for anti-bullying laws; and South Carolina representative Joe Wilson yelled "You lie!" when President Obama spoke before the nation about health care.

Little did we realize at the survey's inception that the topic of civil discourse in America would run so deep in our political circles and public squares. Non-profit organizations such as the National Institute for Civil Discourse, the Institute for Civility in Government and CiviliNation have worked hard to keep citizens aware of the harmful effects of incivility and their rights to be treated with respect.

Since June 2010 when we released our first study, there has been a 140% increase in online mentions of "civility." These figures may rise even further in the months ahead as the political season gets underway and civility takes a front seat on our national stage.

Yet, despite all the discourse about civil discourse, and some encouraging signs of slight improvements in civility, there remains ample data demonstrating that our society, especially our political environment,

remains rife with destructive behavior. And anecdotal evidence as well: The founder of an effort to promote civility in politics, the Civility Project, called it quits when only three elected members of Congress agreed to sign a rudimentary "Civility Pledge."

"Now is the time for Americans to be standard bearers for civil discourse. We need to demonstrate to the next generation that people can hold different points of view, reach compromise and treat opponents with dignity. To maintain our democratic and open society, we must find common ground."

Jack Leslie
Chairman of Weber Shandwick

Weber Shandwick and Powell Tate are interested in providing insights to help Americans, government and its institutions take greater responsibility for their communications and interactions online and offline. We regularly conduct research on topical issues and leverage our findings to inform strategies that address our clients' most pressing communications challenges. The third wave of *Civility in America* was conducted by KRC Research in late April 2012 using an online survey to research 1,000 U.S. adults.

Due to the upcoming 2012 presidential election, we chose to do a deeper exploration of civility in politics and government this year. For that reason, we highlight similarities and differences by party affiliation.



Civility In America By The Numbers Of Americans Surveyed...



believe we have a major civility problem in America



expect civility in America to get worse



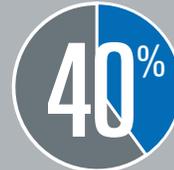
of those who expect civility to worsen blame politicians



believe incivility in our government is harming America's future



think incivility in politics deters qualified people from going into public service



accept incivility as an inherent part of the political process



say a candidate's tone or level of civility will be an important factor in the 2012 presidential election



expect the upcoming presidential election to be uncivil



have defriended or blocked someone online because of uncivil behavior

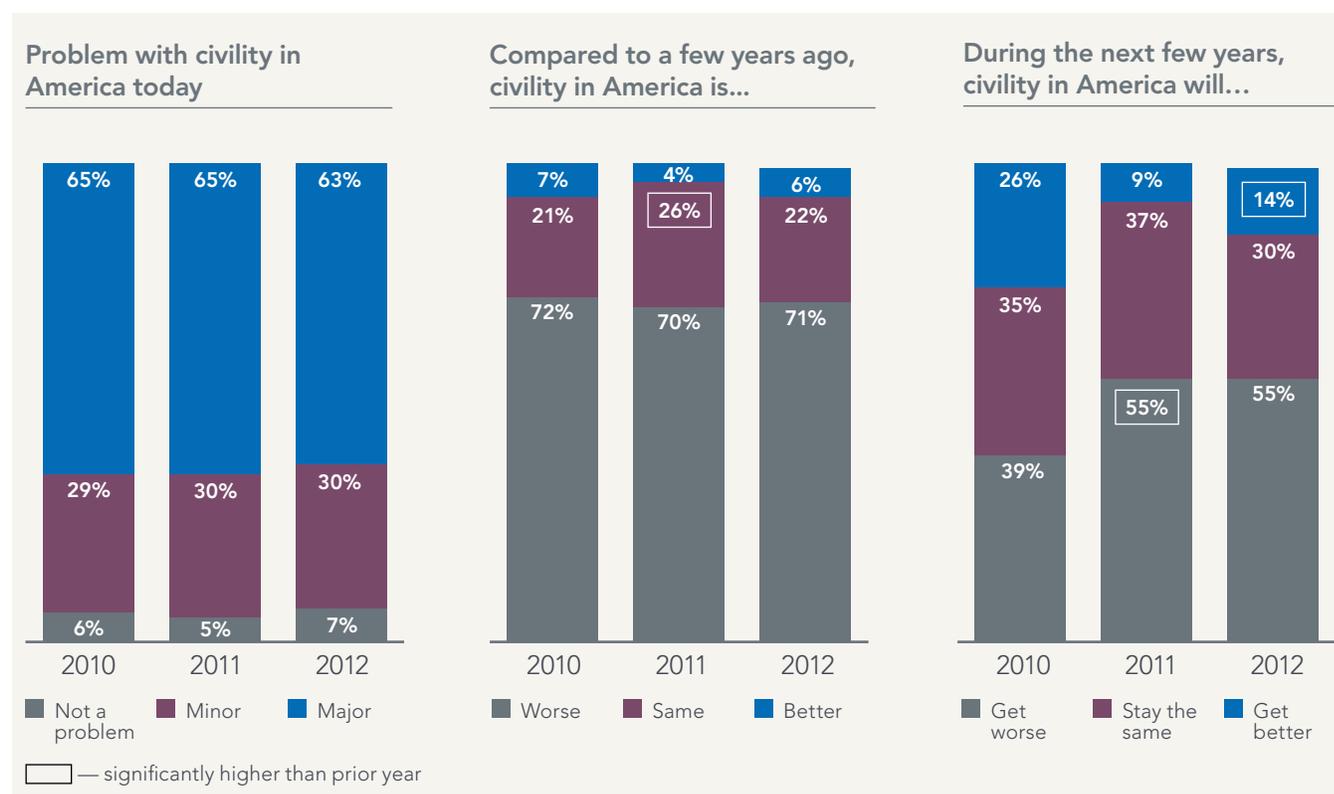


have personally experienced cyberbullying or incivility online

The Civility Crisis In America: We've Got Work To Do

Overall, attitudes about the state of civility in America have not changed since 2010—roughly two out of three Americans believe that we have a major civility problem today and approximately seven in 10 believe it has deteriorated over the past few years.

Americans of all political persuasions agree that civility is a major problem today (65% of Republicans, 63% of Democrats and 62% of Independents). However, Democrats are somewhat more likely to believe civility has improved over the past few years and will continue to get better. Republicans and Independents expect civility to get worse.

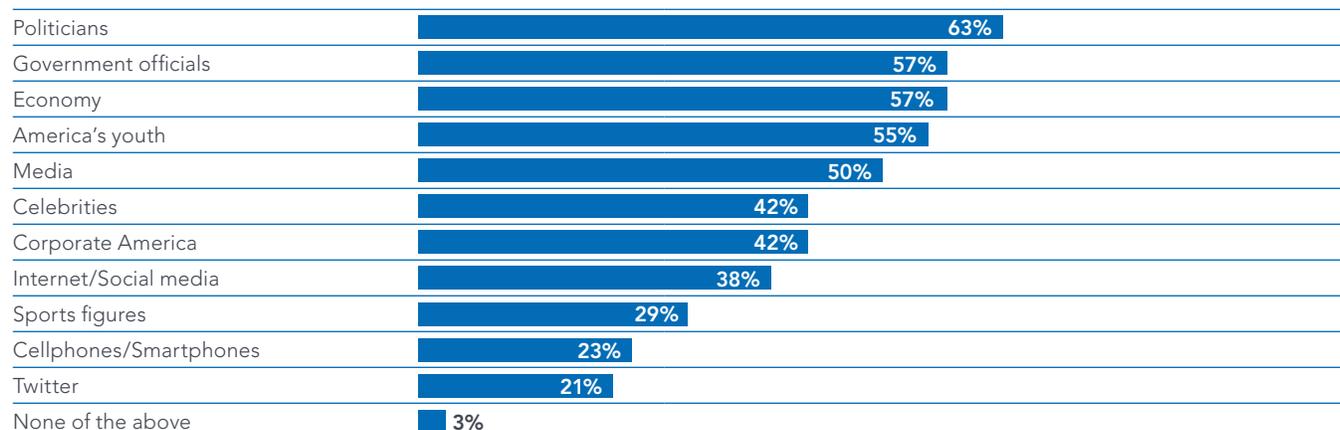


Who's Most To Blame? Politicians Top The List

Among those who say that civility will worsen in the coming years, the blame is placed squarely on the shoulders of politicians, followed by government officials and the economy. Politicians are cited by Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike as the most responsible parties for the nation's harsh discourse and heated debates.

Compared to the blame pointed at politicians, government officials and the economic downturn, corporate America (42%) is less often faulted for making civility worse. Notably, the Internet and social media are also less likely to be mentioned as causing our current uncivil state of affairs.

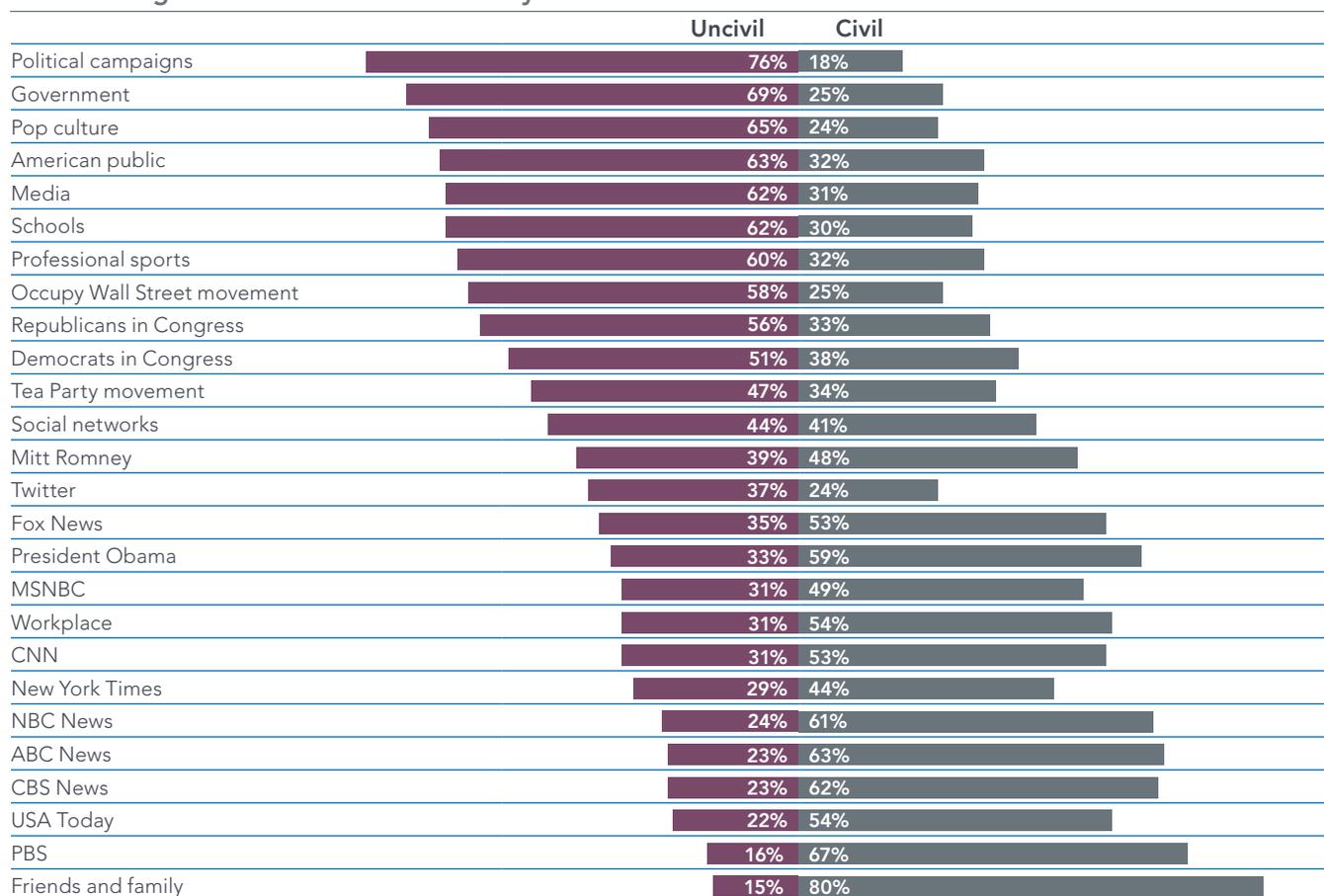
What is making civility worse? (among the 55% who believe it will worsen)



Americans were also asked to rate the general tone and level of civility of a broad range of groups, media outlets and individuals. Political campaigns were rated as having the highest level of incivility (76%). Sixty percent or more of Americans also

rated government, pop culture, the American public, media, schools and professional sports as uncivil. By comparison, PBS and friends and family are rated the most civil.

What is the general tone and level of civility of...?

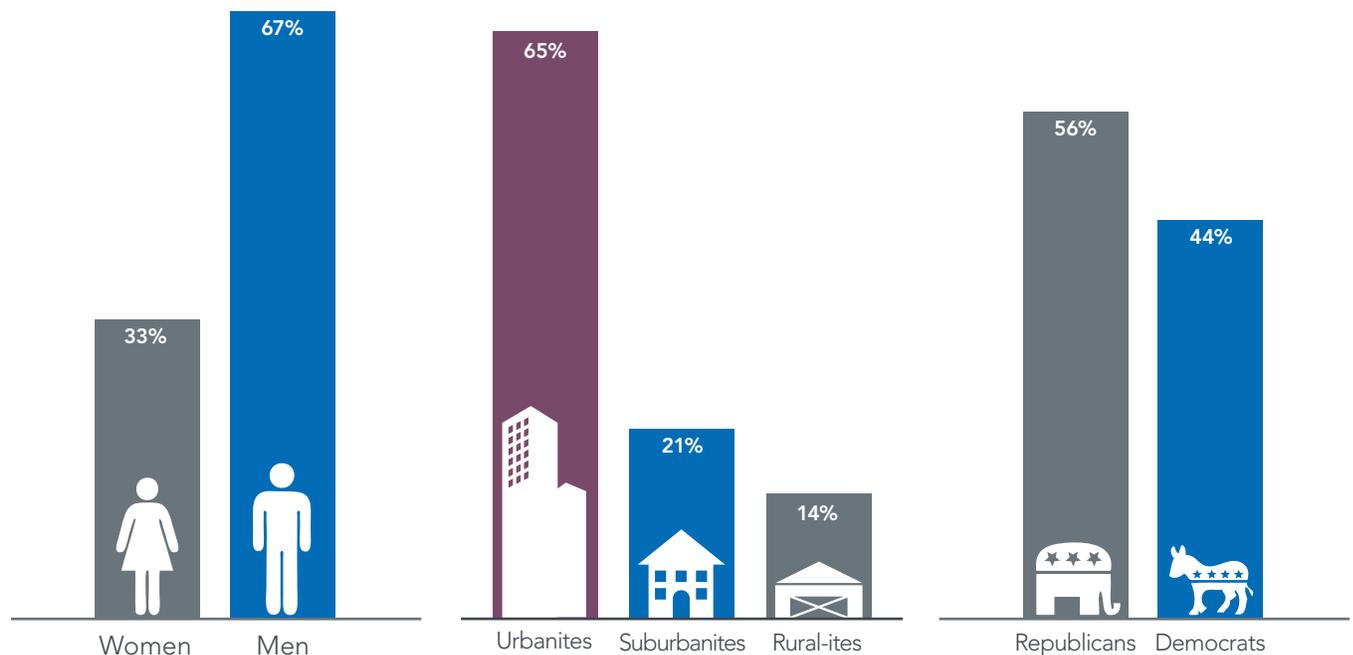


“The increasingly uncivil tone of our public dialogue is hurting our ability to deal with issues and discouraging people from participating in the discussion and entering public life. We are suffering from a national civility disorder that is leading us down an unhelpful and unhealthy political path.”

Pam Jenkins
President of Powell Tate

This year we asked Americans who they thought was more uncivil by gender, political affiliation and residence. The results are fairly stark. Americans report that men, urbanites and Republicans are more uncivil than their counterparts, namely women, suburban or rural dwellers and Democrats. Men and women are in agreement on these general perceptions. As expected, party perceptions break along party lines with Republicans more likely to name Democrats as uncivil (79%) and Democrats more likely to point their fingers at Republicans as uncivil (85%). Independents are more likely to name Republicans (58%) than Democrats (42%) as uncivil.

Which of the following people are more uncivil?



Political Incivility Is The New Normal

The vast majority of Americans believe that politics is becoming increasingly uncivil and having a detrimental effect on America’s future wellbeing. Over eight in 10 Americans in both 2011 and 2012 report that politics is increasingly uncivil (85% and 84%, respectively) and is harming our nation’s future (85% and 81%, respectively).

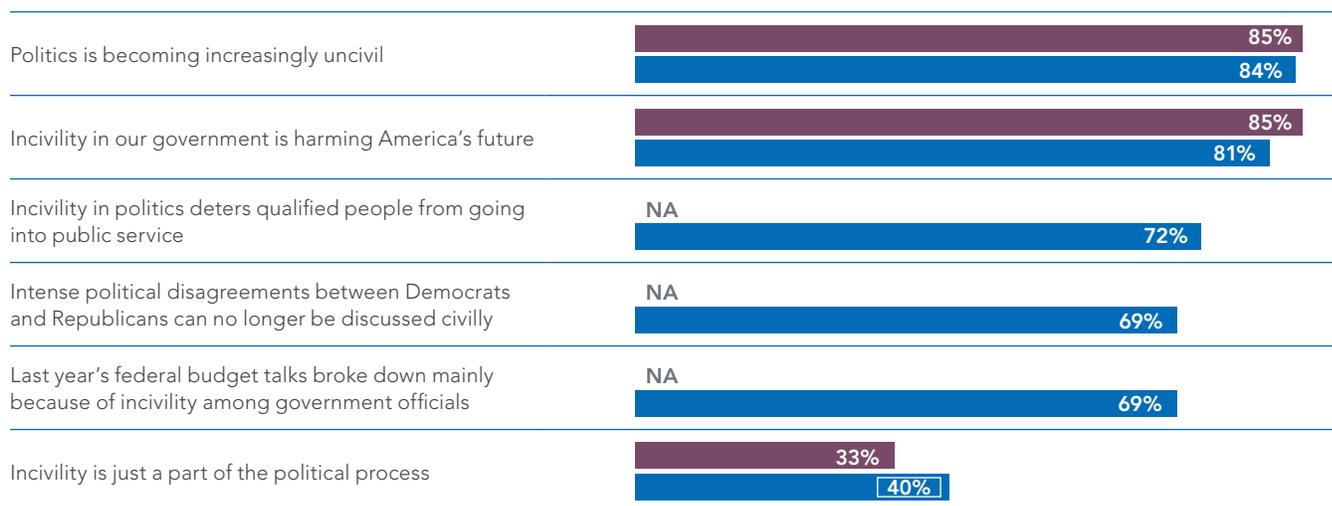
Nearly seven in 10 have lost hope that our political parties can discuss matters civilly (69%) and blame government officials’ incivility for causing last year’s federal budget talks to break down (69%). These widely held perceptions are fueling Americans’ beliefs that our future is being compromised.

There is a real cost to this ongoing political incivility. Nearly three-quarters of Americans (72%) say that this deep vein of rude discourse is deterring our

most promising citizens from going into public service. It seems to be working both ways today — partisan bickering is causing some politicians to not seek re-election, such as Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME).

The widespread recognition of political incivility today appears to be creating a growing and unfortunate acceptance by the American people that incivility is an inevitable part of public life. We may be approaching a “new normal” of political incivility. Compared to one year ago, acceptance of incivility as an inherent part of the political process has significantly increased (from 33% in 2011 to 40% in 2012). This acceptance is held regardless of political affiliation. Thus, the shock value of contentious and uncivil discourse may be wearing off.

Attitudes toward incivility in government and politics (% completely/mostly agree)



■ 2011 ■ 2012

▭ — significantly higher than prior year

NA — not asked in 2011

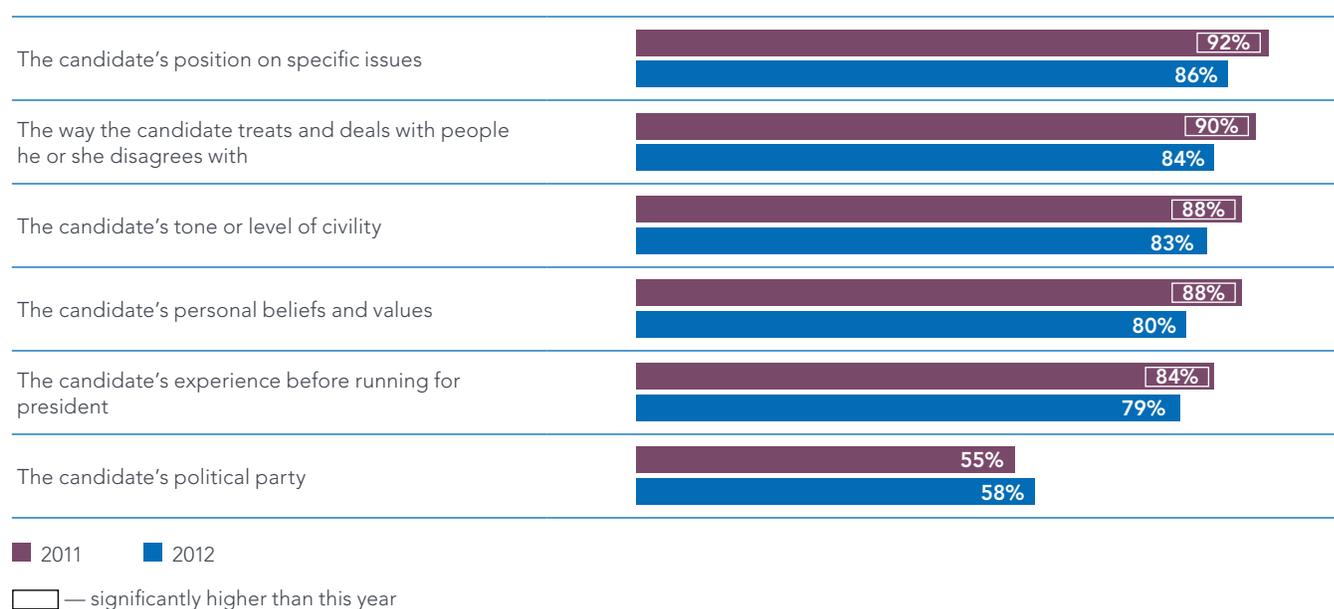
Civility Is A Major Factor In The 2012 Presidential Election

With November approaching, nearly seven in 10 Americans expect the 2012 presidential election to be uncivil (67%).

Americans were asked how civility will impact their vote in the 2012 presidential election. While nearly everyone agrees that the candidate's positions

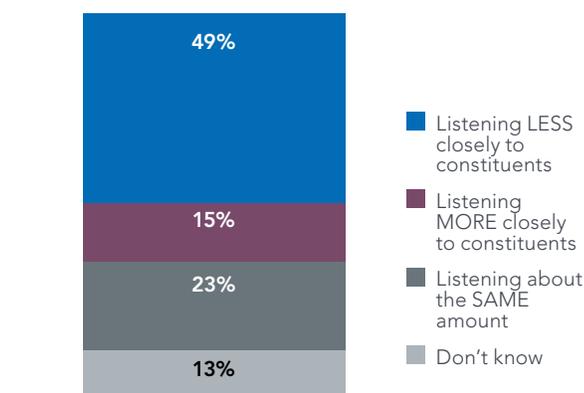
on the issues will have the greatest influence, approximately nine in 10 report that the candidate's level of civility will play a significant role in some way in November. Although the figures are somewhat less than they were in 2011, these numbers still remain very high.

Civility's political influence on 2012 voting decision (% very/somewhat important)



Incivility is not only a problem for presidential candidates. As they say, all politics is local. America's government leaders are perceived to be listening less closely to constituents than they were four years ago (49%). According to the National Institute for Civil Discourse, who contributed this insightful question to our survey, there is a growing and precarious gap between leaders and their constituents. Americans also believe that their government representatives pay too much attention to their most uncivil constituents (52%) and too little attention to the ones who express themselves civilly (48%).

Compared to four years ago, America's government leaders today are...



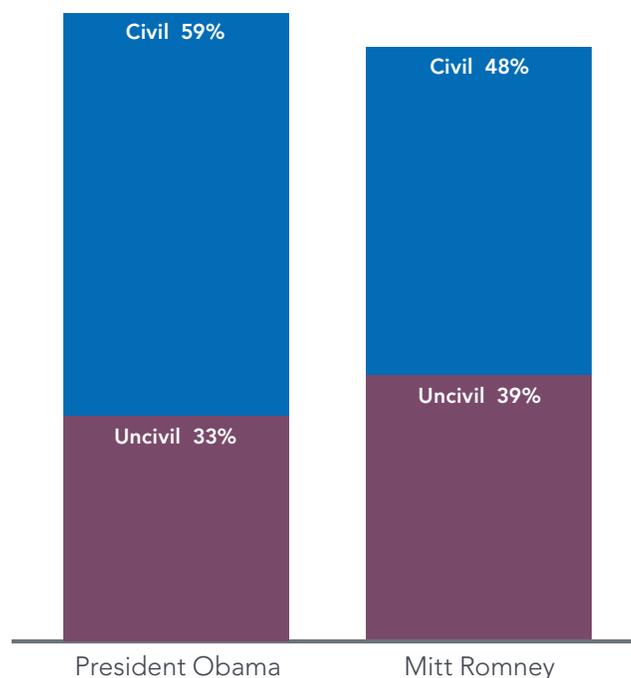
President Obama And Governor Romney

By a 59%-33% margin (+26%), Americans consider President Obama more civil than uncivil. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is also viewed as more civil than uncivil (48% vs. 39%, +9%). While these numbers potentially represent good news for the President, the survey was conducted toward the end of the contentious Republican primary season — which may have contributed to Governor Romney’s weaker numbers.

President Obama’s incivility ratings are higher now than they were in previous surveys. Perceptions of President Obama as uncivil increased — from 25% in 2010 to 33% in 2012. This year-over-year rise in perception of President Obama as uncivil is driven more by women, Americans over 65, Republicans, Independents and those living in the Northeast.

By party affiliation, Republicans are more likely than other party affiliates to consider Occupy Wall Street, Congressional Democrats and President Obama to be uncivil while Democrats are more likely to view Congressional Republicans, the Tea Party and Mitt Romney as uncivil.

What is the general tone and level of civility of...?



Incivility perceptions by party affiliation (% very/somewhat uncivil)

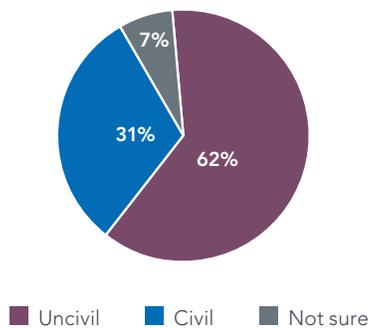
	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Political campaigns	80% (#1)	73% (#1)	76% (#1)
Government	72% (#2)	65% (#3)	69% (#2)
Republicans in Congress	38%	68% (#2)	58% (#3)
Occupy Wall Street movement	70% (#3)	51%	54%
Democrats in Congress	68%	31%	55%
Tea Party movement	28%	61%	48%
Mitt Romney	21%	55%	39%
President Obama	60%	8%	33%

 — significantly higher than other party affiliation(s)

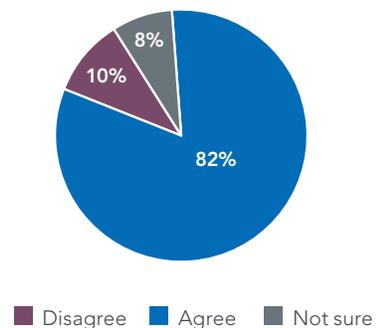
Media Plays A Role In The Uncivil Public Square But Some Change Is Afoot

The media receives low grades in the incivility wars. A considerable 62% called out the media as uncivil in this year's survey. While this is considerably lower than last year's incivility rating of 74%, it ranks among the top five most uncivil aspects of American life. A contributing reason to that perception may be that the vast majority of Americans agree that the media is more interested in controversy than facts (82%).

What is the general tone and level of civility of the media?

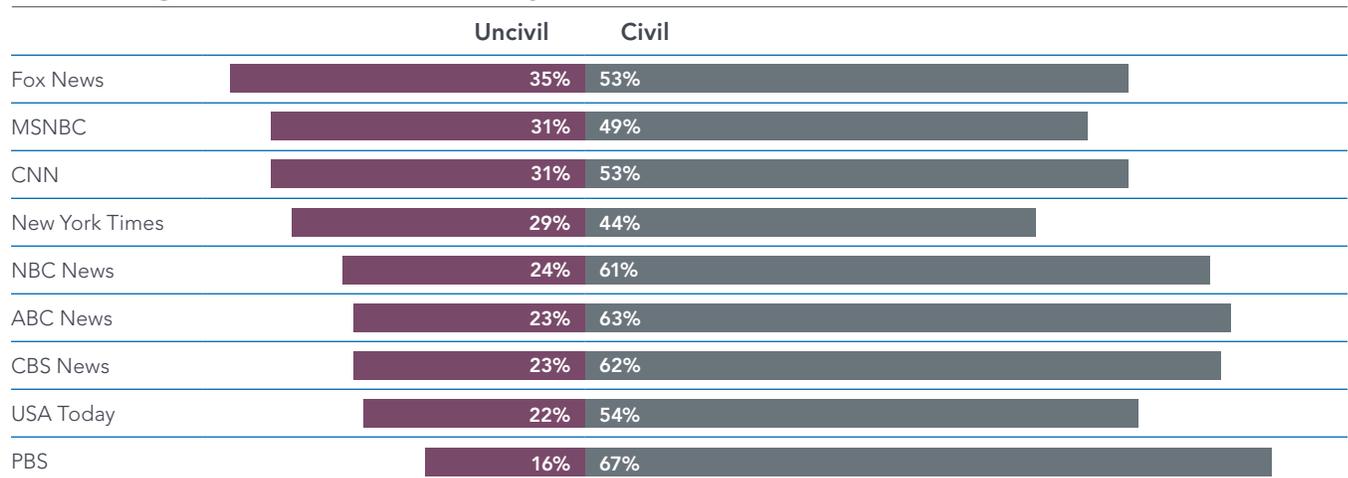


"The media is more interested in controversy than facts" (% completely/mostly agree)



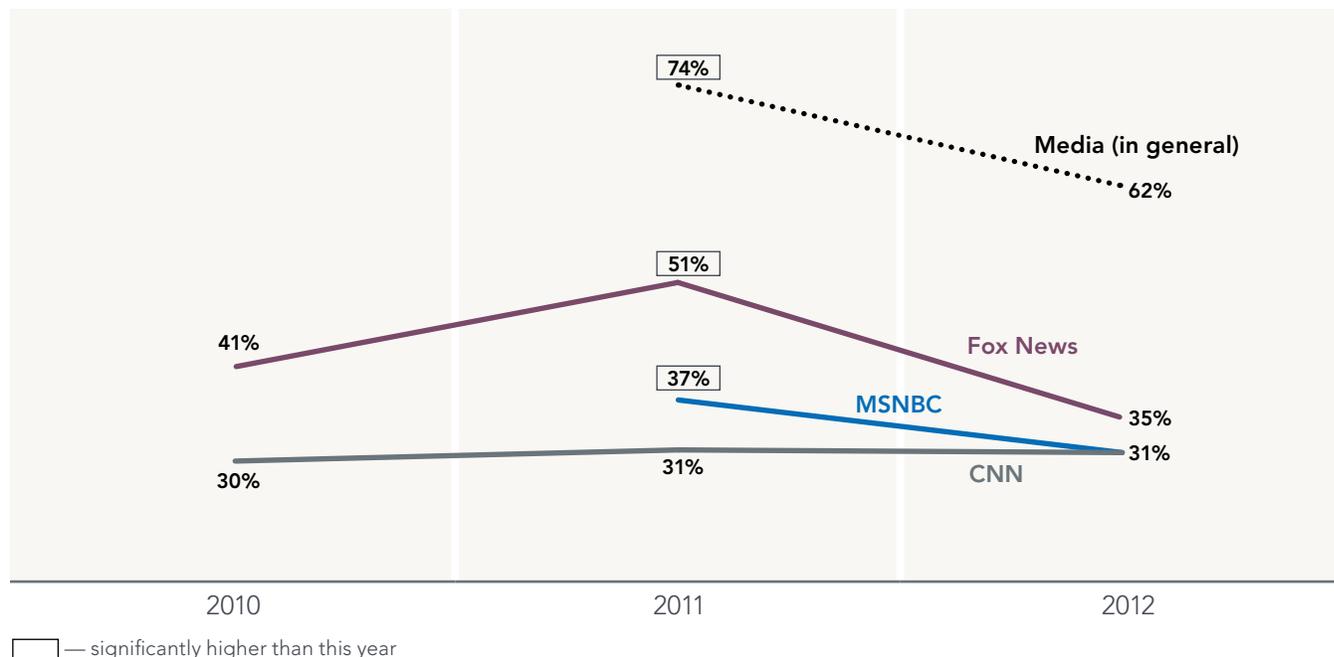
While the media is generally perceived to be uncivil, not a single outlet measured in our study is held in such low esteem. Each media outlet is perceived more civilly than uncivilly. Americans tend to rate the civility levels of similar TV outlets alike — cable news channels such as Fox News, MSNBC and CNN are perceived similarly as are broadcast news networks such as NBC News, ABC News and CBS News. Regardless, cable news outlets are considered more uncivil than their broadcast counterparts.

What is the general tone and level of civility of...?



There is no doubt that the American public views the overall media as uncivil. But the numbers suggest that change could be on the horizon. The survey revealed considerable declines in perceptions of uncivil discourse on Fox News and MSNBC, commonly cited outlets for partisan bickering.

Media incivility trend (% very/somewhat uncivil)



Incivility Is Causing Americans To Tune Out

Americans continue to disengage from our political process and the media due to incivility. Two-thirds report that incivility is inciting them to tune out of political advertising (66%) and more than one-half are tuning out of politics (58%), government (55%) and election coverage (54%). Slightly less than one-half are avoiding op-eds and editorials (49%) and news coverage and reporting (45%) this year.

Interestingly, the tune out rate this year is significantly lower than it was last year for politics (58% vs. 67%, respectively), government (55% vs. 62%) and news

coverage and reporting (45% vs. 55%). The reasons may be three-fold. First, Americans may be more resigned to incivility in politics, government and news coverage since they believe that it just comes with the territory of the political process today. Second, Americans may have been more willing to tune into news coverage in 2012 when they started to view the media as less uncivil than they did one year earlier. Third, a presidential election year, especially one in which the stakes are so high, is likely to generate more interest in political events than would a non-presidential election year.

% Americans turning out of...because of incivility

	2011	2012
Political advertising	NA	66%
Politics	67%	58%
Government	62%	55%
Election coverage	NA	54%
Opinion pieces or editorials	52%	49%
News coverage and reporting	55%	45%
Twitter	NA	36%
Social networking sites	38%	35%

— significantly higher than this year

NA — not asked

On The Minds Of Americans: Cyberbullying & School Incivility

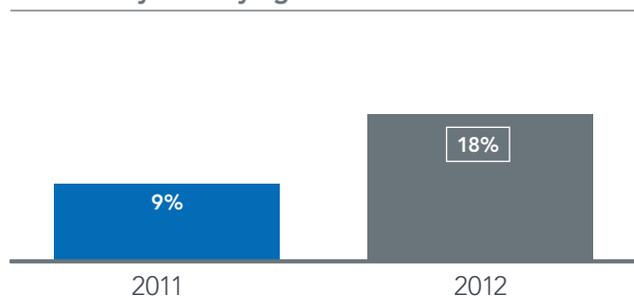
Cyberbullying in our society is getting worse, according to 66% of Americans and an alarming 51% of parents report that their children have experienced incivility at school. These high incidences are the same as one year ago.

When it comes to personal experience with cyberbullying, the survey reveals that the incidence has doubled from one year ago (9% to 18%). Not surprisingly, experience with cyberbullying is significantly higher among younger people between the ages of 18 and 34 years (29%) compared to those 35 years and older. This form

of online harassment is also more likely to be cited by men and Hispanics.

A hefty three-quarters of Americans worry a great deal or at least somewhat about children being bullied online. Just as disturbing, our survey found that an alarming 14% of parents report having transferred children to different schools because of incivility, either online or off. Other research confirms that cyberbullying is truly a growing national problem. The Cyberbullying Research Center estimates that approximately one in five youth have experienced cyberbullying.

% Americans personally experienced incivility online or cyberbullying

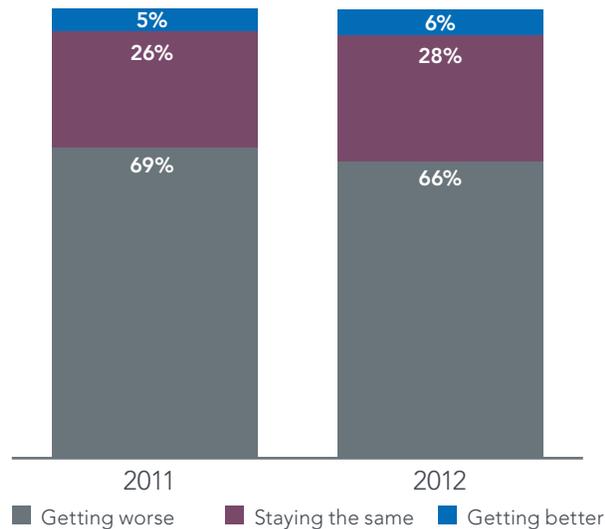


— significantly higher than last year

Age 18-34	29%
Age 35-49	17%
Age 50-64	13%
Age 65+	6%
Men	21%
Women	16%
White	17%
African American	11%
Hispanic	38%

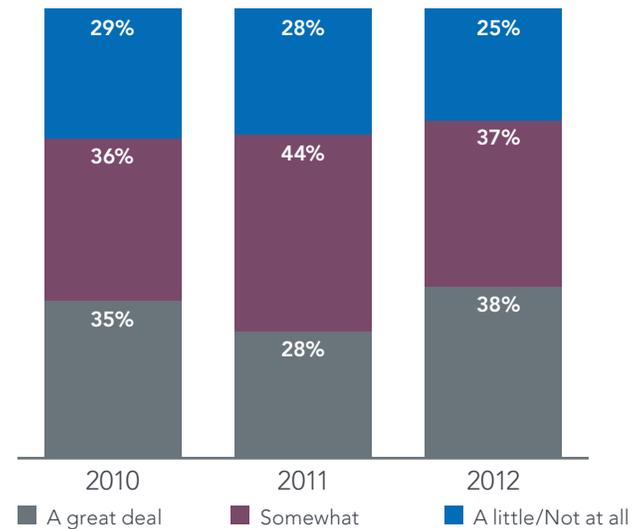
— significantly higher than comparative sub-group(s)

Cyberbullying in society is...



To combat cyberbullying and promote online safety among younger people, a sizeable 74% agree that there should be civility training in schools. Several college campuses have acknowledged the need for such education. For example, University of Nevada-Las Vegas approved a Statement of Civility that “promotes the rights, safety, dignity, and value of every individual.” Rutgers University launched a two-year initiative called Project Civility which was already in the works when student Tyler Clementi jumped to his death from the George Washington Bridge. George Mason University offers an elective called Professionalism and Civility.

% Americans worry about children being cyberbullied...



Despite these findings on cyberbullying, the Internet is not blamed for incivility in America. Americans are more likely to blame politicians, government and the media for uncivil discourse and behavior than they are to blame the Internet or social media. In fact, there has been a decline in perceptions that the Internet encourages uncivil behavior (from 70% in 2011 to 61% in 2012). Only 38% of those who see civility getting worse in the future blame the Internet/social media and even fewer (21%) blame Twitter. Perhaps because individuals can easily ignore social media if they want to by not engaging online, there is less of a sense of blame attached to those activities. Self-selection appears to be a major factor in keeping perceptions of the Internet and social media as more civil compared to political activities.

Are Americans Standing Up Against Incivility?

In 2012, few Americans (17%) report being untouched by incivility. Americans say that their most frequent encounters with incivility occur while driving (60%) and shopping (49%). About one-third or less report confronting rude discourse or behavior at work (34%) or in their immediate neighborhood (28%).

However, when comparing results for 2011 and 2012, there is some reason to be optimistic. Fewer Americans are mentioning that they are experiencing these acts of incivility while driving, shopping, working or in their neighborhoods compared to one year ago.

% Americans personally experiencing...

	2011	2012
Incivility on the road	72%	60%
Incivility while shopping	65%	49%
Incivility at work	43%	34%
Incivility in the neighborhood	35%	28%
Incivility at school	27%	26%
Incivility online or cyberbullying	9%	18%
Have not experienced incivility	14%	17%

 — significantly higher than other year

This glimmer of hope that people are experiencing less incivility in their lives was seen in other results from the survey. Approximately four in 10 Americans have ended a relationship because another person was uncivil (44%) or have defriended or blocked someone online because of their uncivil commentary (39%). Over two out of 10 (23%) have quit a job because of incivility in the workplace and one in 10 (13%) have moved residences because of an uncivil neighbor. Although these are all unpleasant things to have to do, Americans appear more willing to take charge of eradicating incivility in their day to day lives.

There is little Americans can do to change the political climate of incivility. However, they can control the incivility in their own lives. The research may be demonstrating this shift in empowerment.

% Americans who...

Ended a friendship or other relationship with someone because he or she was uncivil	44%
Defriended or blocked someone online because their comments or behaviors were uncivil	39%
Quit a job because it was an uncivil workplace	23%
Transferred their child to a different school because he or she was treated uncivilly	14%
Moved from a residence because of an uncivil neighbor	13%

In Closing...

This year's survey on *Civility in America* found that Americans continue to recognize that incivility is eroding our national culture and political promise. Political collaboration and compromise are not being rewarded as they should but are too often being looked at as politically risky. Of equal concern, although Americans may not like the rising incivility in our public squares and federal and state plazas, they may be thinking it is just part of the political process in this country. Regrettably, Americans are wary of running for office at a time when we need talent and solutions the most.

The good news is that the topic of civility is being hotly discussed, debated, researched and dealt with. We found some positive signs that fewer Americans are tuning out news coverage and are taking greater responsibility for cancelling out incivility in their

daily lives. Furthermore, grass roots organizations are coming together to provide training on civility in schools, workplaces and online. Universities are offering civility workshops and websites are devoting space to the topic. The National Institute for Civil Discourse is one such group that was established in 2010 at the University of Arizona after the shooting of Gabrielle Giffords. The Institute has many prominent Americans on its board and is chaired by former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. They recently held a workshop at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. to begin a national effort to improve the level of civility in politics. They call on Americans to "honor the central role that civil discourse has played in the history of our democracy by recommitting to participate in a thoughtful national dialogue."

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