

Civility in America 2011  
August 2, 2011



## Today's Agenda

- Rise of civility as an issue
- *Civility in America* study background
- Key study findings
- Implications and remedies



# Civility in America is a Long-Standing Concern

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"And we will not always agree on what is right. There's a great deal of scar tissue that has built up on both sides of the aisle. We cannot ignore that, nor should we. My belief has always been, we can disagree without being disagreeable." -- Speaker of the House Acceptance Speech, January 2011

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“

"We can't expect to solve our problems if all we do is tear each other down. You can disagree with a certain policy without demonizing the person who espouses it. You can question somebody's views and their judgment without questioning their motives or their patriotism." -- University of Michigan Commencement Speech, May 2010

”

“

"I think it's a healthy thing in a democracy to have people disagreeing, but if you're screaming or demonizing, then the very people you want to reach — which is those who don't agree with you — can't hear you." -- First Anniversary of Clinton's Presidential Library, 2005

”



“

"America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us goodwill and respect, fair-dealing and forgiveness." -- First Inaugural Address, January 20, 2001

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**WEBER SHANDWICK**  
Advocacy starts here.

# Civility, or Lack Thereof, Has Taken on Increased Prominence in the United States

The logo for Civility Project.org is displayed in a blue-bordered box. It features the word "CIVILITY" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, with "PROJECT.ORG" in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font below it.

**Take the Civility Pledge**

- will be civil in my public discourse and behavior.
- will be respectful of others whether or not I agree with them.
- will stand against incivility when I see it.

**Civility: if we agree on nothing else, let's agree on this . . .**



# Civility in America Study Background

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POWELL TATE

KRC RESEARCH

## CIVILITY IN AMERICA

A NATIONWIDE STUDY

Two-Thirds of Public Believe American Society Is Uncivil; Even Larger Majority Think Behavioral Problem Worsening

Tuesday, June 22, 2010

This graphic features a blue header with the Weber Shandwick logo and tagline, and a green header with the Powell Tate and KRC Research logos. The main title 'CIVILITY IN AMERICA' is in large blue letters, with 'A NATIONWIDE STUDY' in orange below it. A white box contains the headline and date.

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KRC RESEARCH

## CIVILITY IN AMERICA 2011

Poll Finds Politics Increasingly Uncivil

Monday, June 20, 2011

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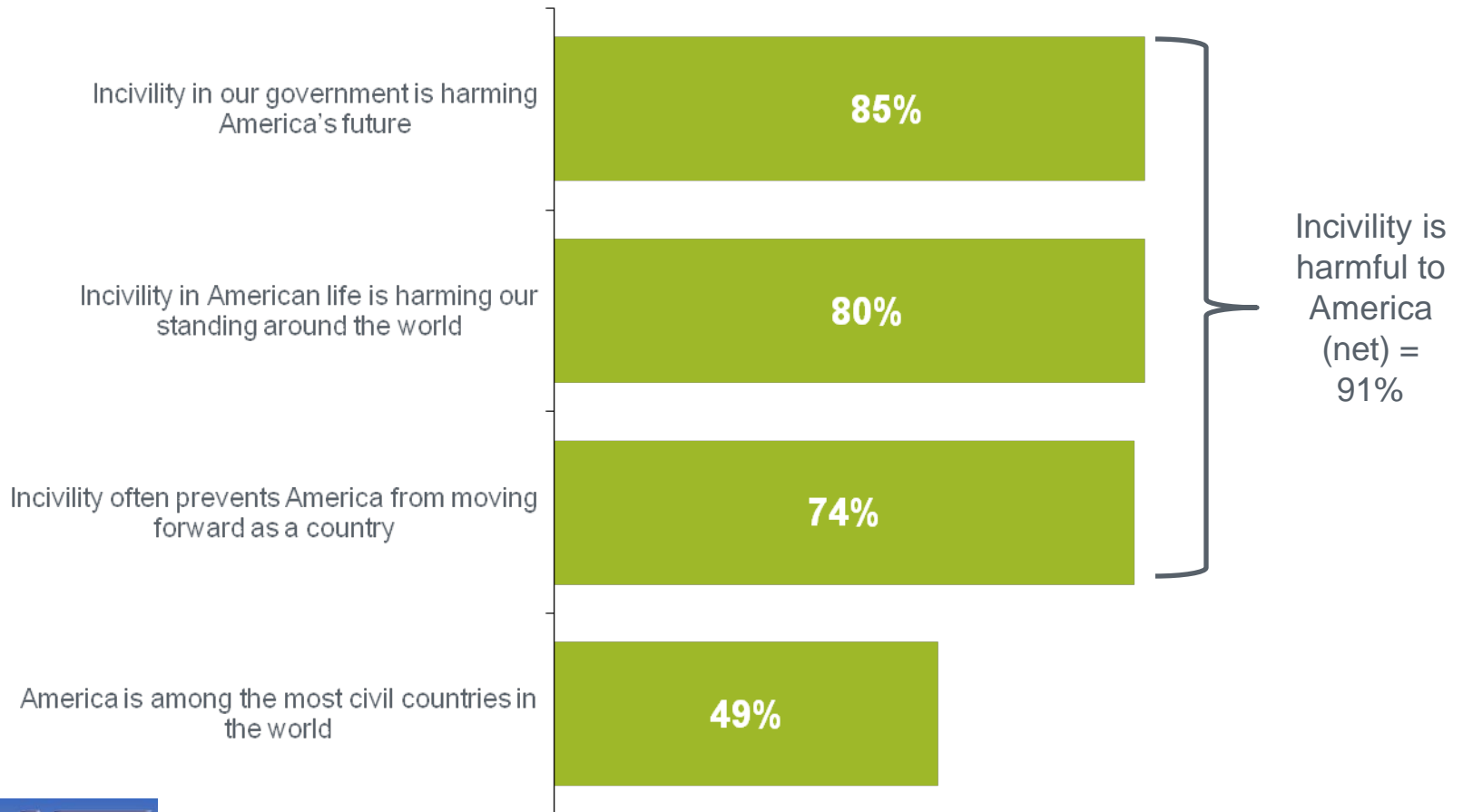
## Key Findings

- Nearly every respondent in our survey believes that incivility has negative consequences for America as a country.
- American attitudes toward incivility continue to worsen and hope for relief is fading.
- Politicians and the media are most frequently blamed for civility erosion.
  - A large majority of citizens believe that politics is becoming more uncivil and many believe that the media exaggerates the problem of incivility.
- Perceptions of incivility in our government, in the media and among the public cross party lines.
- The incivility problem goes beyond politics and government. Americans lives are affected by incivility in the workplace, in education, in their use of social media and in their patronage of businesses.



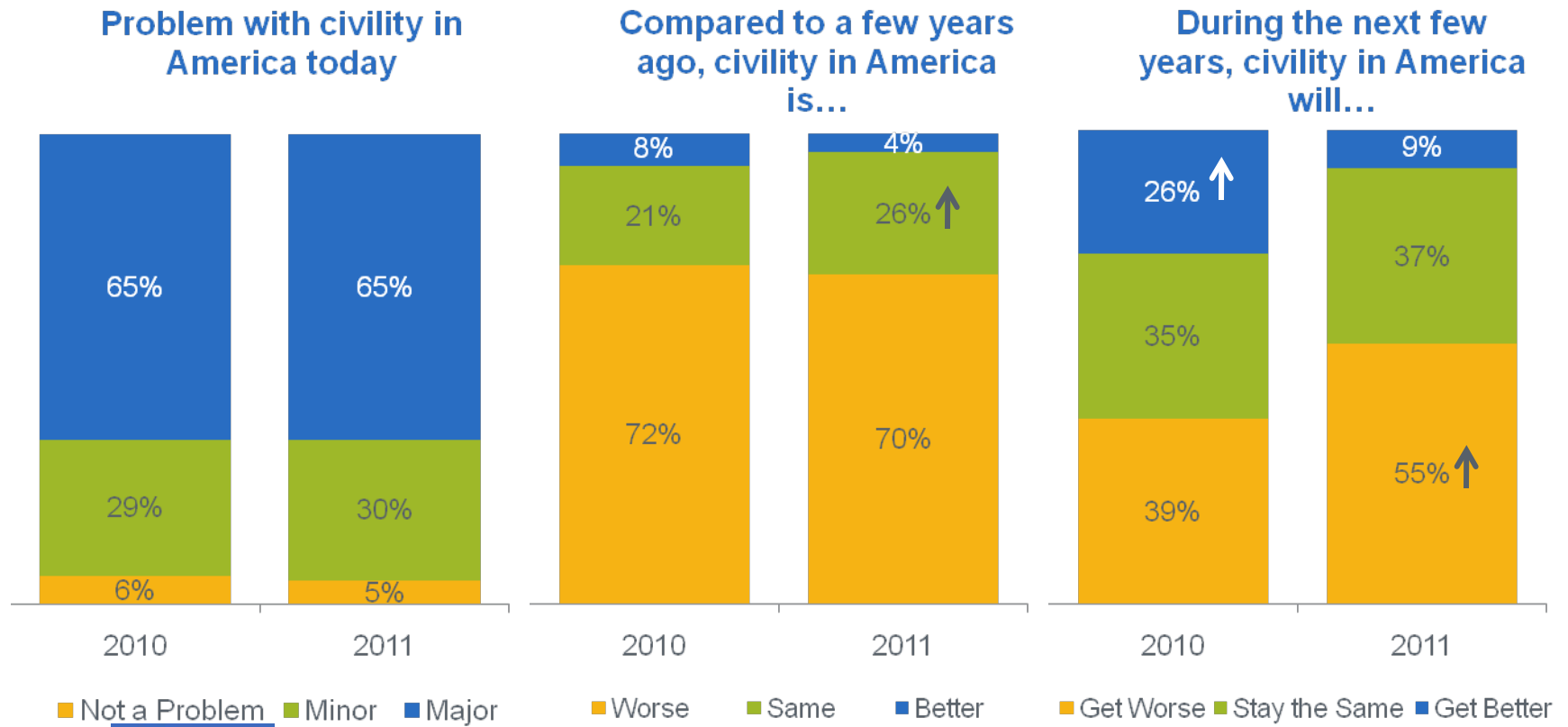
Most Americans (91 percent) agree that incivility has negative consequences for America.

Completely/Somewhat agree that...





Attitudes about the state of civility in America among US citizens have not changed since 2010. However, Americans increasingly expect civility to erode.

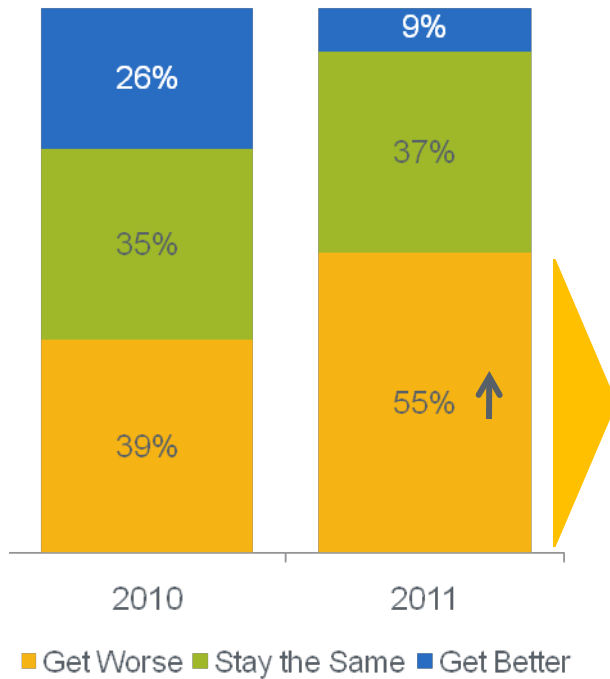


↑ Significantly higher with 90% confidence

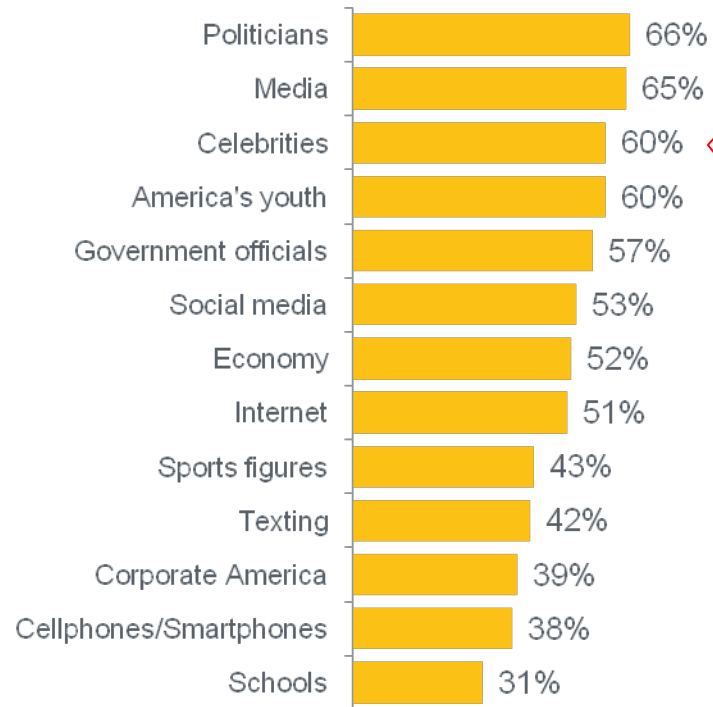
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The 55 percent of Americans who expect civility to erode are most likely to blame politicians and the media.

### During the next few years, civility in America will...



### What is making civility worse?



Westerners are the least likely to cite celebrities (49%)

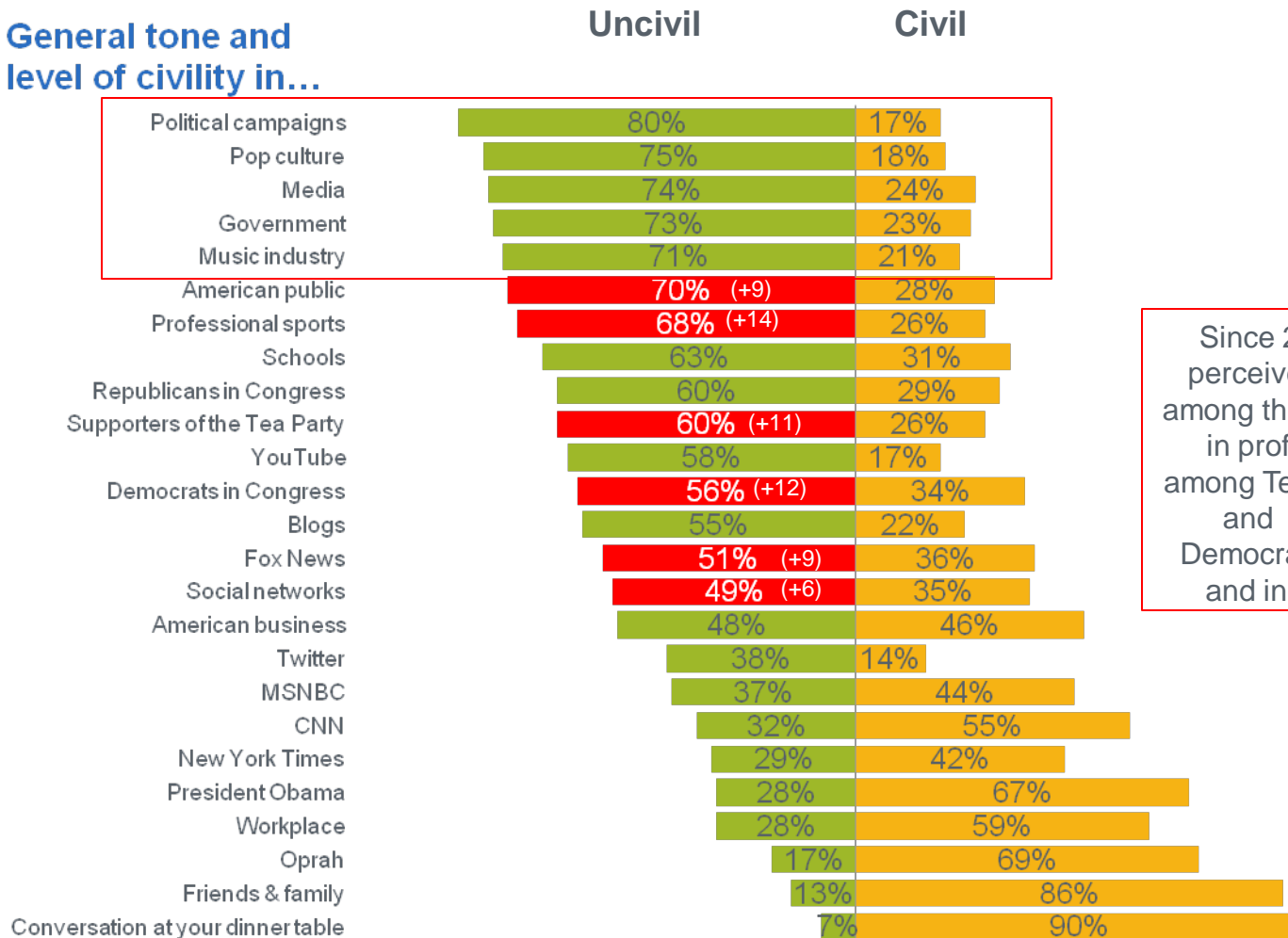


↑ Significantly higher with 90% confidence

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# Political campaigns, pop culture, the media, government and the music industry are considered uncivil by more than 70 percent of Americans.

## General tone and level of civility in...



Since 2010, Americans perceive greater incivility among the American public, in professional sports, among Tea Party supporters and Congressional Democrats, on Fox News, and in social networks

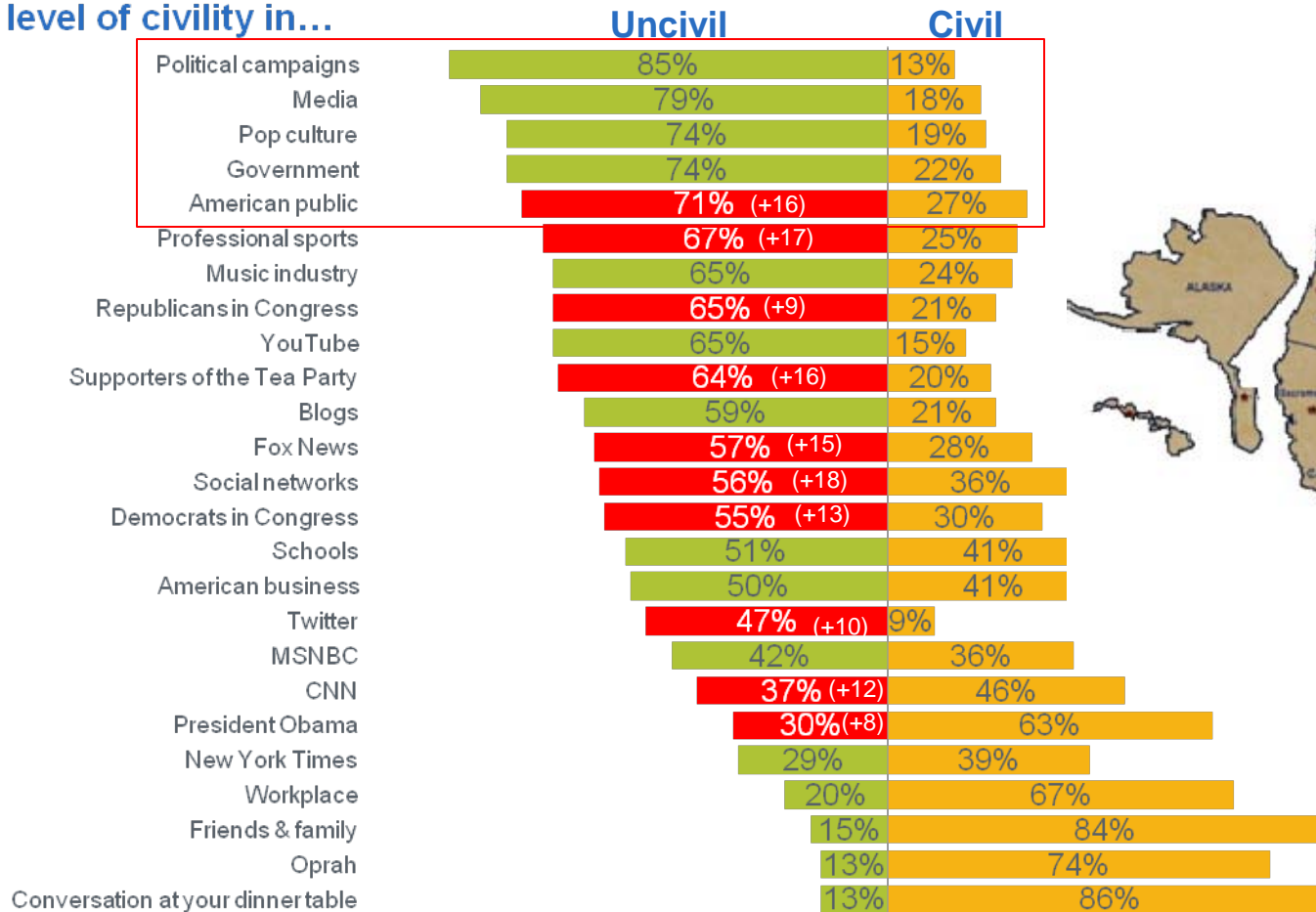


Significantly more uncivil since 2010 with 90% confidence. Percentage point increase in parentheses. Note: not every item in list was included in 2010 survey and therefore not able to be compared to 2011

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Westerners are significantly more likely than they were last year to view Congressional Republicans, CNN and President Obama as uncivil.

General tone and level of civility in...

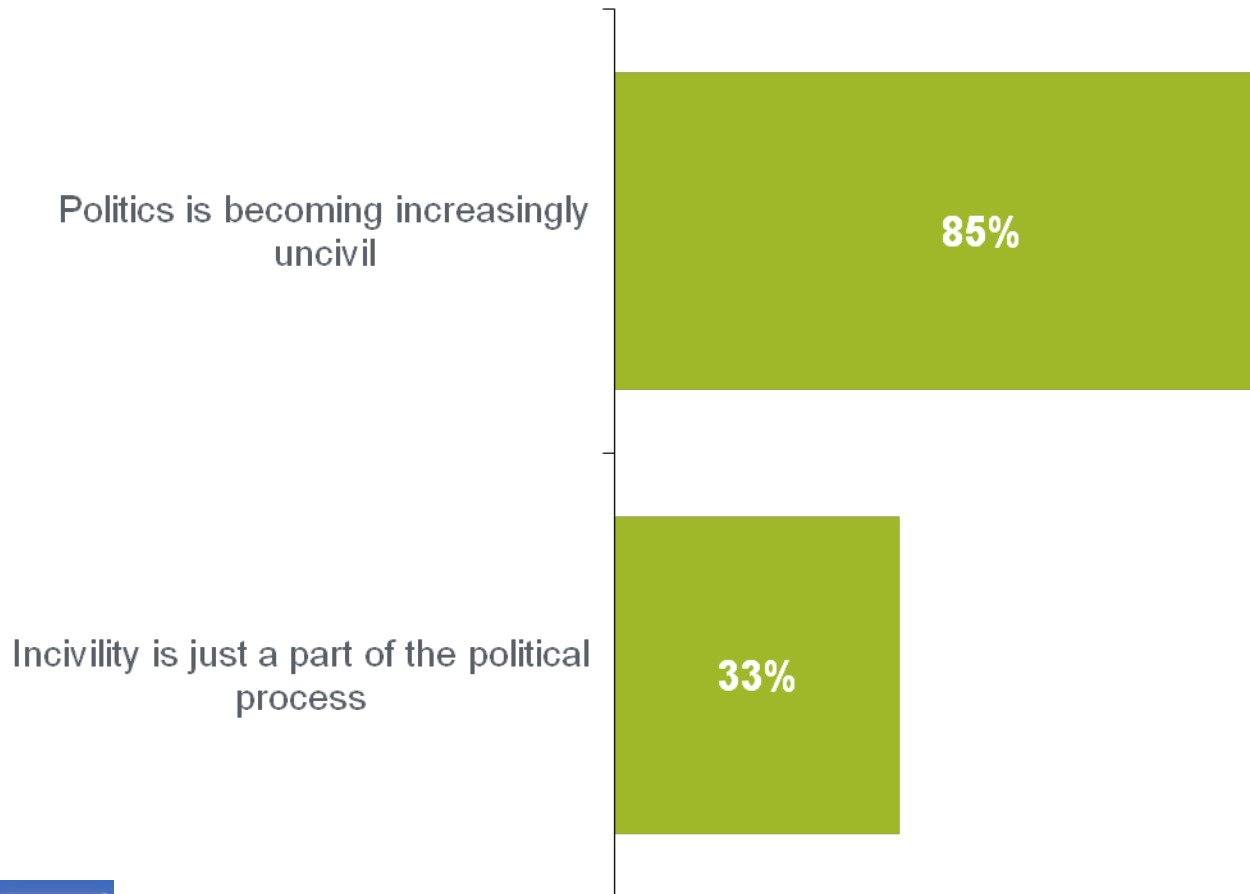


Significantly more uncivil since 2010 with 90% confidence. Percentage point increase in parentheses. Note: not every item in list was included in 2010 survey and therefore not able to be compared to 2011

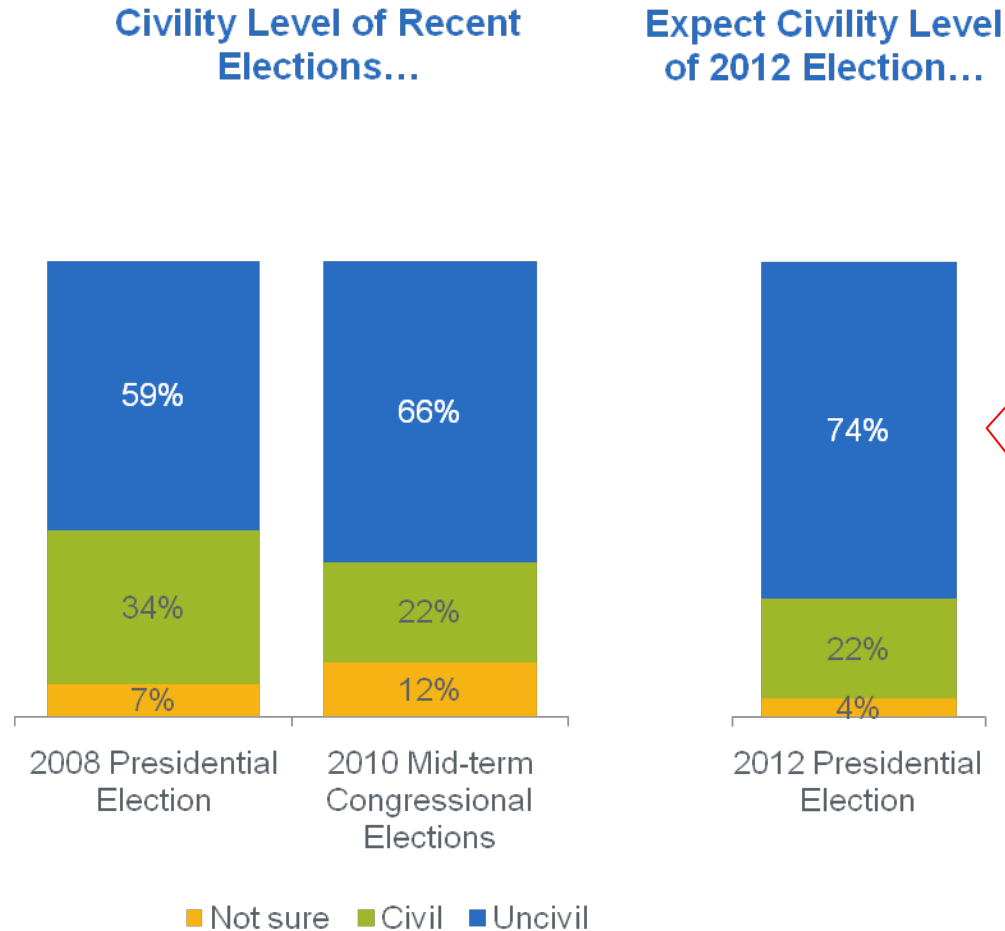
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A large majority of Americans (85 percent) believe that politics is becoming increasingly uncivil. However, only one-third of Americans accept incivility as part of the political process.

### Completely/Somewhat agree that...



Americans perceived greater incivility during the 2010 Congressional elections than in the 2008 Presidential election and they expect even greater incivility during the 2012 Presidential election.

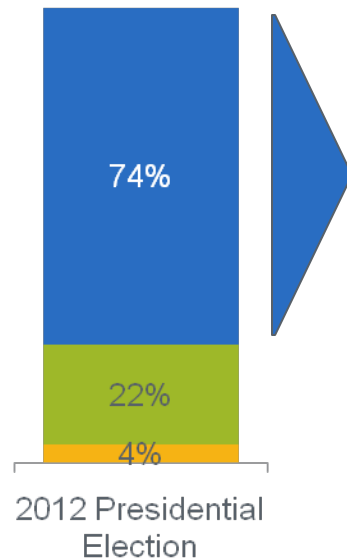


Pessimism of Westerners is significantly higher than that of residents of other regions (86%)

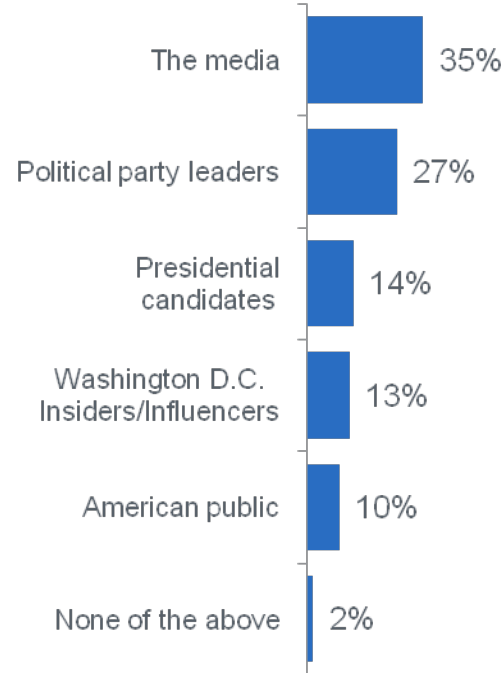


Accountability for incivility during next year's presidential race is expected to be placed on the media and political party leaders.

### Expect Civility Level of 2012 Election...



### Who will be most responsible if the next Presidential election is uncivil?



Westerners are the most likely to cite the media (46%)

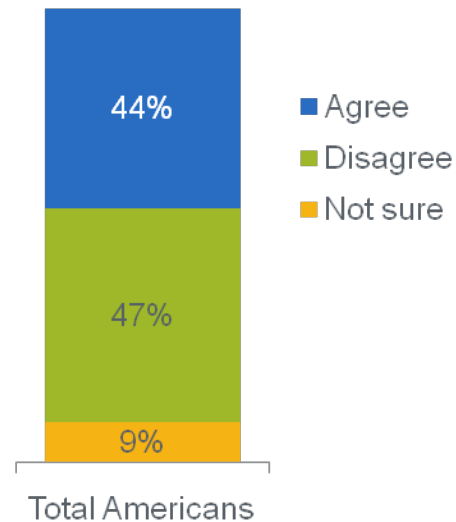


■ Not sure ■ Civil ■ Uncivil

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More than 4 in 10 Americans feel that the media exaggerates the problem of incivility which may enhance the perception that it is partially to blame for driving election incivility.

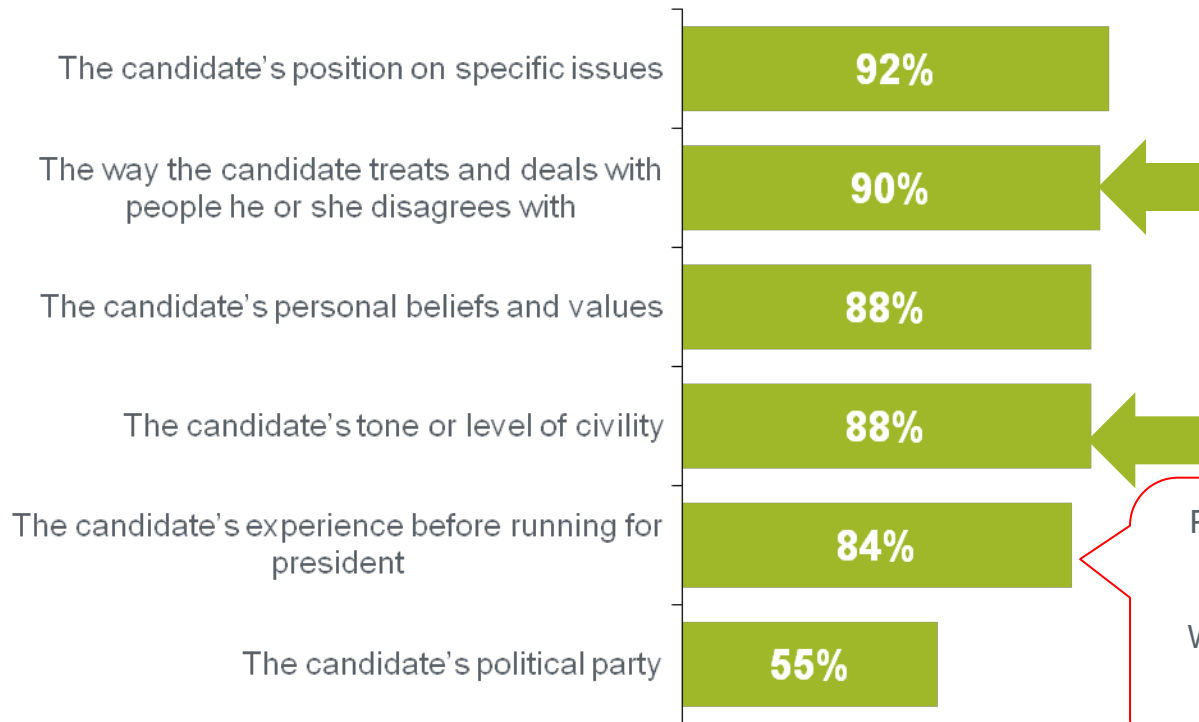
“The media exaggerates the problem of incivility in America”





Presidential candidate civility has been a voting factor in the past and will be again in 2012.

**Very/Somewhat important in determining who you will vote for in the 2012 Presidential election...**



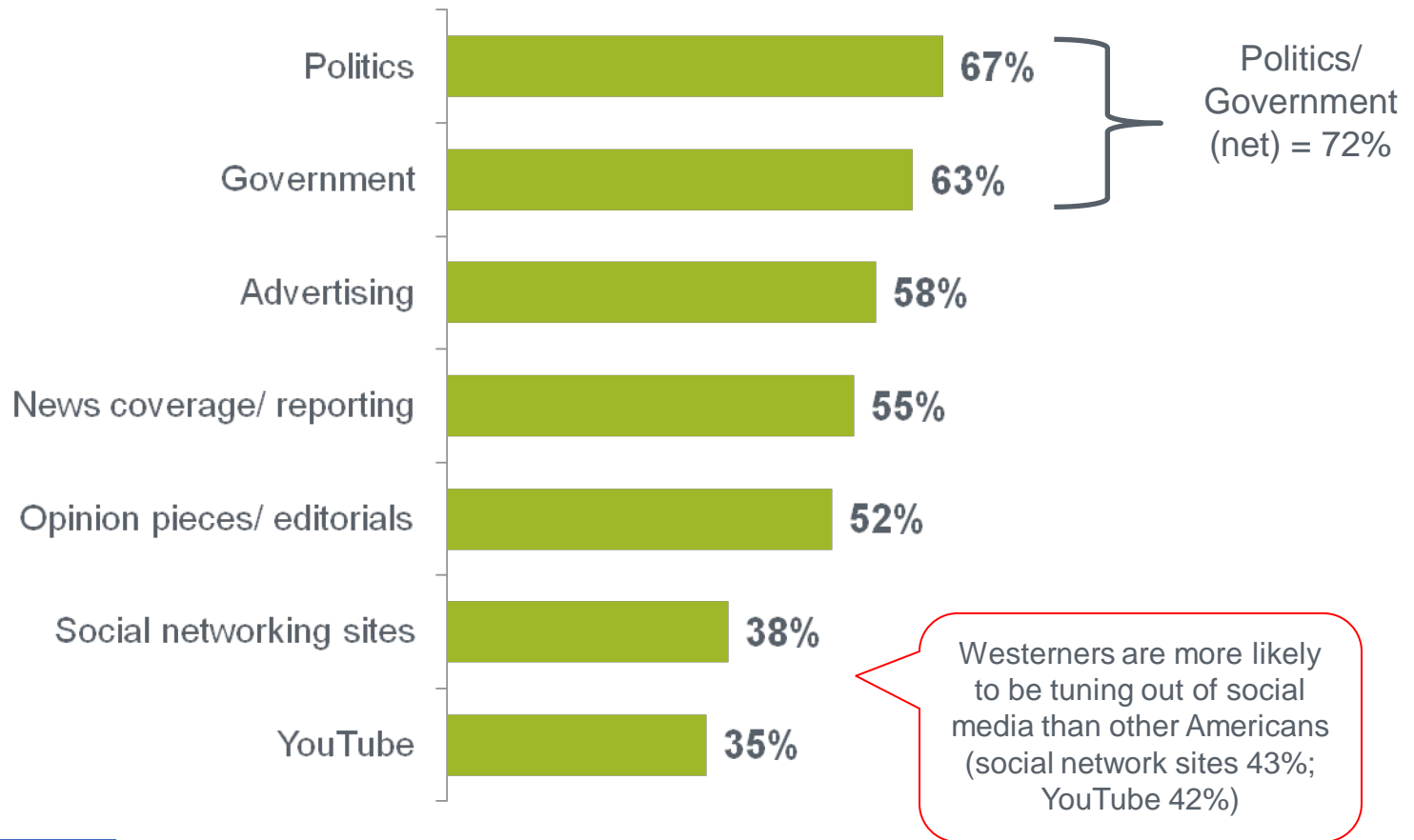
**67 percent of Americans report deciding not to vote for a candidate in the past because they felt the candidate acted or spoke uncivilly**

Prior experience is significantly less important to Westerners than to residents of other regions (74%)



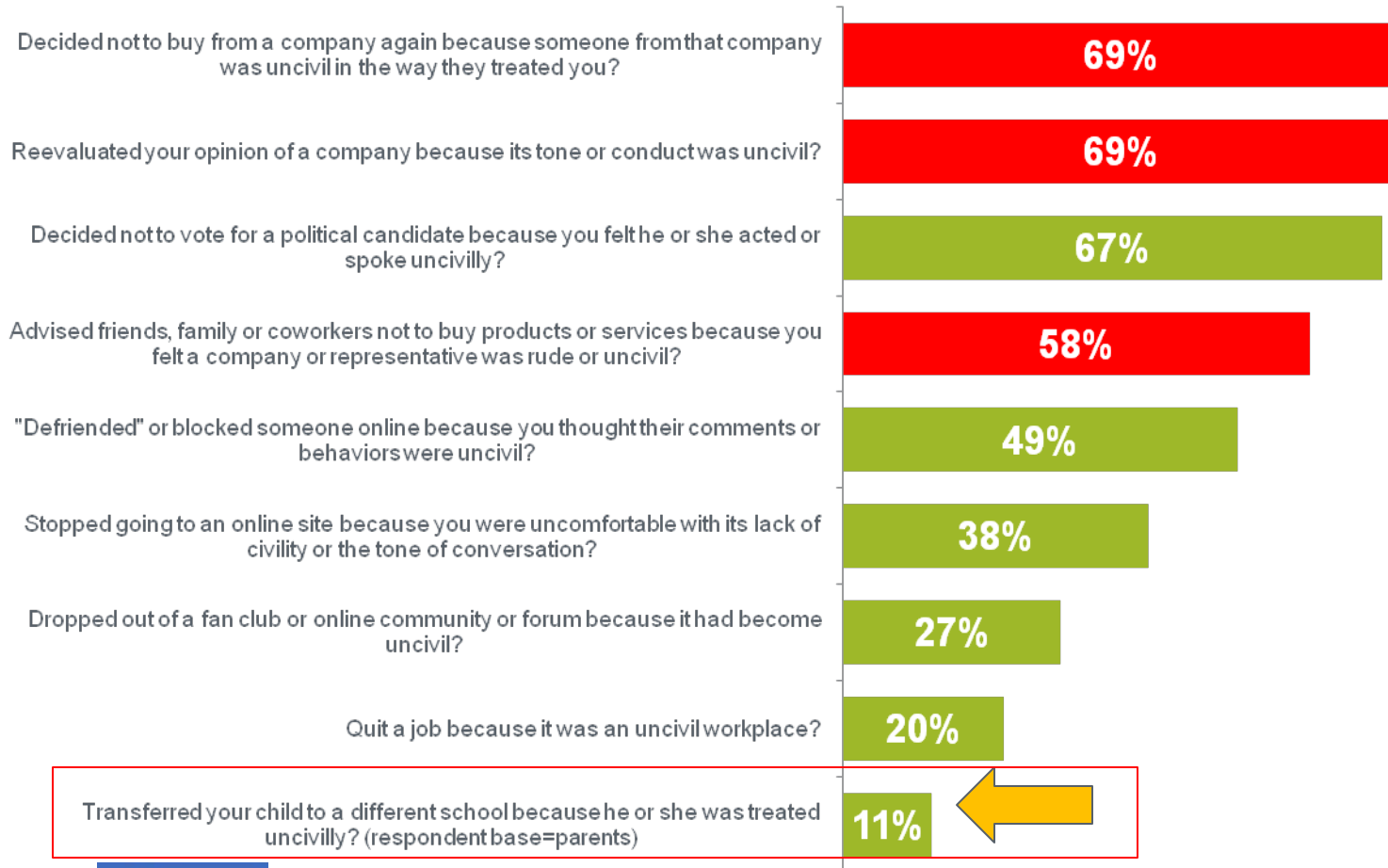
Incivility has driven many Americans to “tune out” of an interest or activity. Politics and/or the government have been the primary victims.

### Tuning out of ... because of incivility



**Incivility also has far-reaching consequences on business, social media engagement, employee turn-over and education.**

## Have you ever ... because of incivility

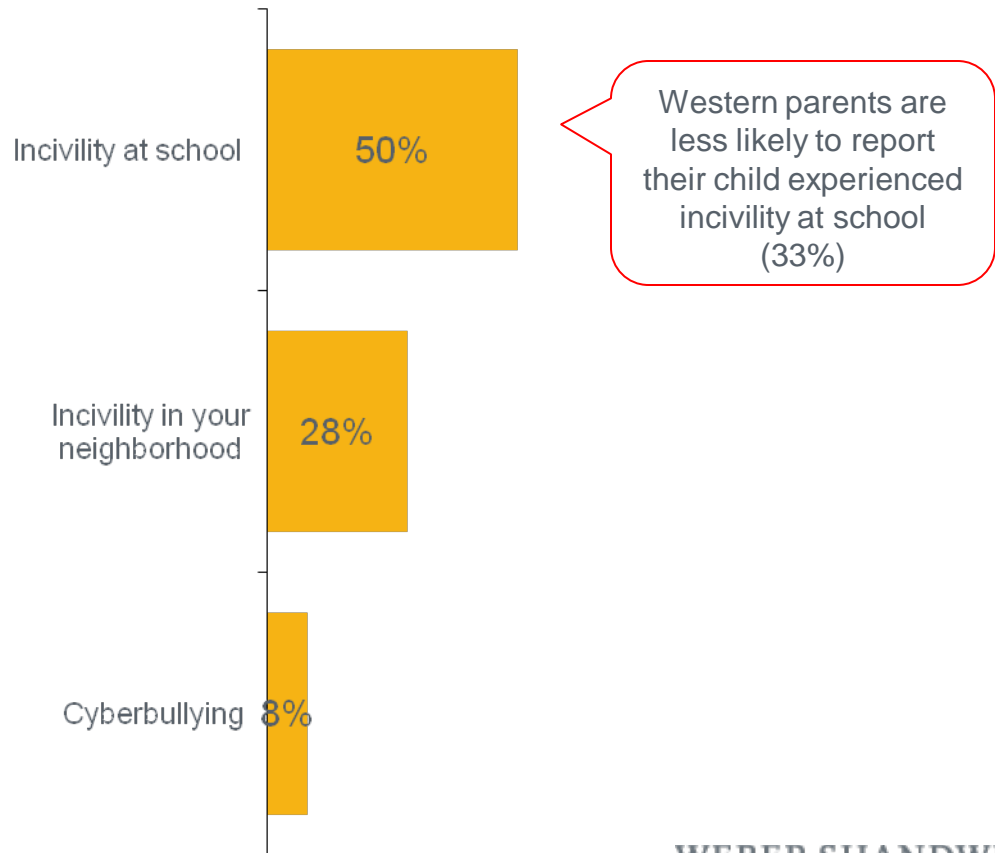


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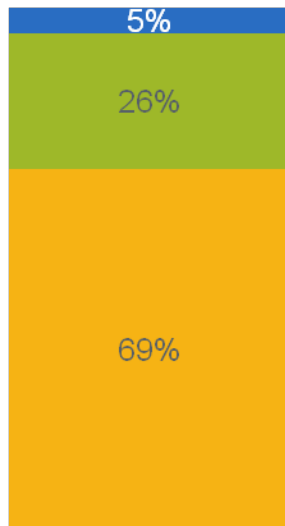
An alarming 50 percent of parents report that their children have experienced incivility at school.

### Your child experienced...

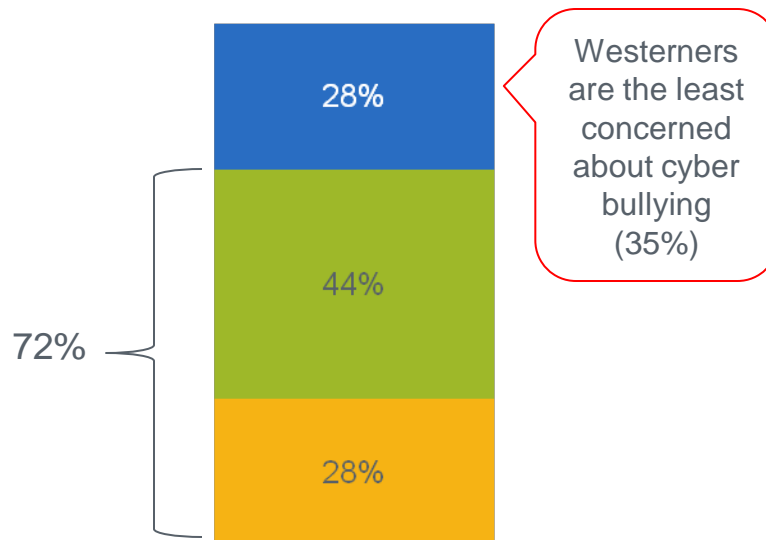


Cyberbullying is a great concern among Americans. Most believe it is getting worse and worry about kids being cyberbullied. Nearly half report they would be afraid to be a teen today because of it.

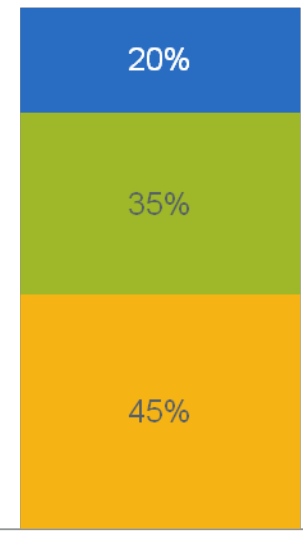
Cyberbullying in society is...



Worry about children being cyberbullied...



Afraid to be a teen today because of cyberbullying...



Among 20+ Year Olds

■ Getting Worse    ■ Staying the Same  
■ Getting Better

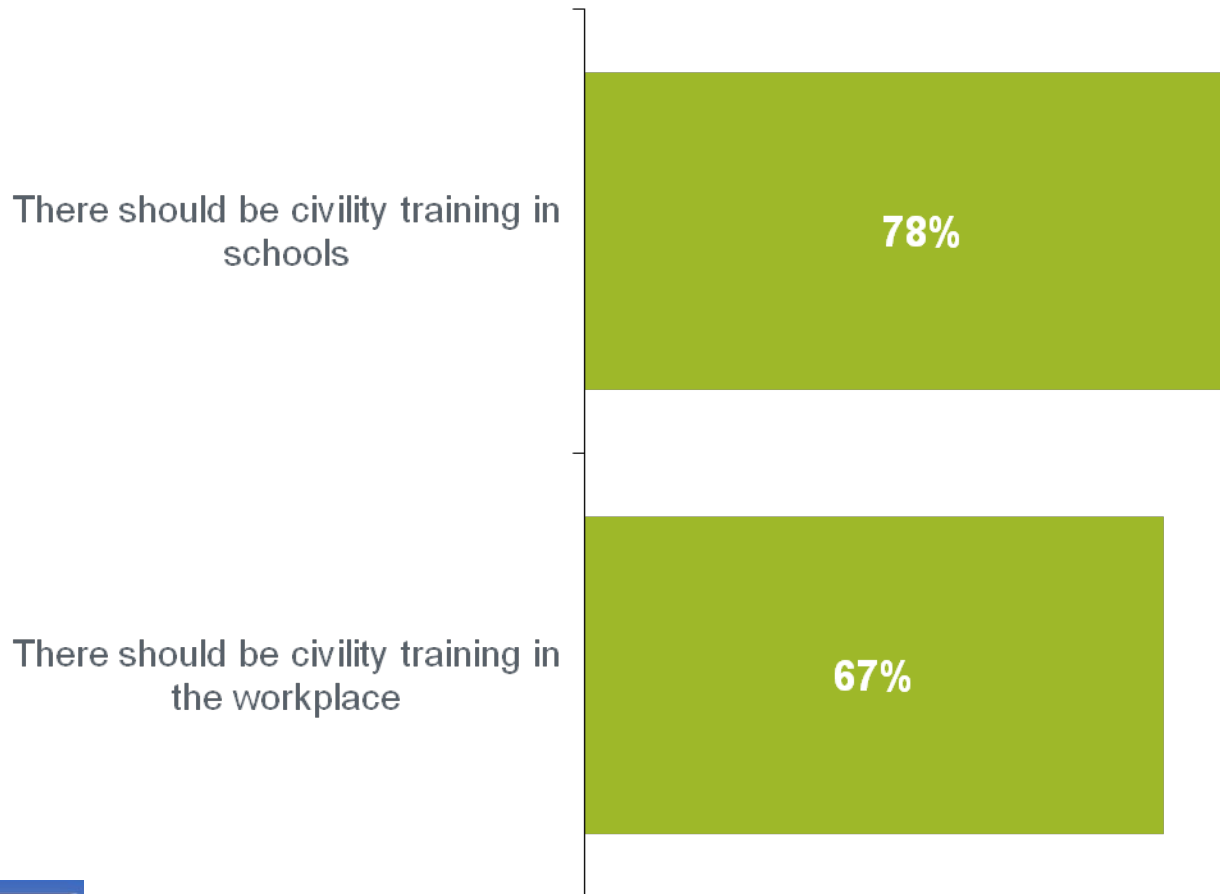
■ A great deal    ■ Somewhat  
■ A little/Not at all

■ Yes    ■ No    ■ Not Sure



Most Americans see a need for civility training, either in schools or in the workplace.

Completely/Somewhat agree that...



# Implications & Potential Remedies

- Incivility has a negative impact on every aspect of life explored in our study – government and politics, the media, education, business and social media.
- A step toward restoring civility might begin with a national public education campaign endorsed by political leaders, schools, PTAs and corporate America and distributed through the media.
- Political candidates should call on their party campaign committees and other independent expenditure committees to focus on substantive differences on the issues, and refrain from engaging in inappropriate personal attacks and characterizations.





Thank you

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