Politics, Polarization and Purpose

January 2021
Credibility of the U.S. Presidential Election

U.S. General Public*

- Credible: 67%
- Moderately Credible: 13%
- Not credible: 20%

*Includes 166 respondents who believed Trump would be inaugurated on 1/20
Election Impact on Polarization

Polarization will stay the same or increase

84% U.S. General Public
84% Journalists
86% PR Professionals
## Impact on U.S.

### U.S. General Public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Stay Same</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to affordable healthcare</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College tuition</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer confidence</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation between Republicans and Democrats in the U.S. Congress</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinformation or fake news</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth of the U.S. economy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun ownership</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration to the U.S.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ+ rights</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum wage</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarization of opinion on social issues</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious freedom</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. cases of COVID-19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. stock market values</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. trade with other countries</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's rights</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Impact on Beliefs

**U.S. General Public**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Stay Same</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My personal commitment to social change</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My engagement in the political process</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My involvement with activist groups</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My participation in public protests</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My consumption of news media</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My engagement on social media</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interest in learning about other ethnic groups</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My empathy toward people who disagree with me</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My willingness to listen to different points of view</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My patriotism for the U.S.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My desire to move to another country</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My trust in government</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My belief in science</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My support of brands who share my values</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My confidence in law enforcement</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My faith in the democratic process</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My faith in religion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My charitable giving</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My standard of living</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My desire to travel to other countries</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My commitment to wearing a mask in public places</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Impact on Global Affairs

- Reputation of the U.S.: 85 PR Professionals, 83 Journalists
- Trade relationships with the U.S.: 76 PR, 74 Journalists
- Initiatives to address climate change: 89 PR, 82 Journalists
- Efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19: 828 PR, 82 Journalists
- Political stability: 7270 PR, 70 Journalists
- Trust in government institutions: 5957 PR, 5754 Journalists
- Growth of activism: 6768 PR, 67 Journalists
- Support for immigration: 4943 PR, 43 Journalists
- Reputation of U.S. corporations: 6667 PR, 67 Journalists
- Civil discourse: 6667 PR, 67 Journalists

USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations
### Impact on Media

**Journalists**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Stay Same</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer consumption of traditional news</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility of the news media</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility of the White House Communication team</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of news dedicated to politics</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer engagement on social media</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of social media for political purposes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread of fake news or disinformation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proliferation of conspiracy theories</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced news coverage of societal issues</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation of social media platforms</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impact on Communication Industry

% of PR Professionals Who Expect an Increase

- Diversity of the communications workforce: 66%
- Ability to attract global talent to the communications industry: 37%
- Corporate investment in PR vs. Advertising: 37%
- Employment opportunities in the communications industry: 33%
- Growth of the US communications industry: 32%
Impact on Business

% of PR Professionals Who Expect an Increase

- Activist demands placed on business: 72%
- Employee expectations of company role in society: 70%
- Consumer expectations of business role in society: 63%
- Public focus on CEO's character: 60%
- Consumer purchase decisions based on company values: 60%
- Gov't regulation of business practices: 60%
- CEOs taking a public stand on societal issues: 59%
Impact on Purpose

% of U.S. PR Professionals Who Expect an Increase in Activism

Conducting diversity and inclusion training: 60%
Hiring more diverse staff: 60%
Developing purpose-driven communication campaigns: 55%
Communicating company values: 49%
Communicating with greater transparency: 39%
Listening to the opinions of employees: 39%
Promoting a message of national unity: 37%
Taking a public position on social issues: 36%
Encouraging employee activism: 30%
Partnering with activist organizations: 29%
Impact on Activism

% of U.S. PR Professionals Who Expect an Increase in Activism

- Climate change: 86%
- Racial equality: 82%
- Police reform: 80%
- Affordable healthcare: 78%
- Immigration: 68%
- Income equality: 63%
- LGBTQ+ rights: 63%
- Gender equality: 60%
- Minimum wage: 53%
- Education: 48%
- Legalization of marijuana: 48%
- Gun ownership: 45%
- Abortion: 42%
- Homelessness: 41%
- Freedom of speech: 34%
- Right to privacy: 32%
- Religious freedom: 28%
- Fracking: 25%
- Crime: 21%
Impact on Company Causes

U.S. PR Professionals: % Where Company Will Take a Public Stand

- Racial equality: 59%
- Gender equality: 38%
- LGBTQ+ rights: 35%
- Education: 26%
- Climate change: 26%
- Affordability of healthcare: 21%
- Income equality: 16%
- Freedom of speech: 15%
- Immigration: 15%
- Homelessness: 10%
- Right to privacy: 9%
- Police reform: 9%
- Minimum wage: 8%
- Religious freedom: 6%
- Legalization of marijuana: 5%
- Crime: 4%
- Abortion: 3%
- Gun ownership: 3%
- Fracking: 3%
- None: 21%
Impact on Personal Outlook

U.S. General Public

- Negative Outlook
- Neutral Outlook
- Positive Outlook

Left
- Negative Outlook: 15%
- Neutral Outlook: 9%
- Positive Outlook: 76%

Overall
- Negative Outlook: 23%
- Neutral Outlook: 15%
- Positive Outlook: 63%

Right
- Negative Outlook: 42%
- Neutral Outlook: 12%
- Positive Outlook: 46%
Impact on Unity vs. Civil Unrest

General Public
- Civil Unrest: 23%
- Neither/Both: 48%
- National Unity: 29%

PR Professionals
- Civil Unrest: 22%
- Neither/Both: 37%
- National Unity: 40%

Journalists
- Civil Unrest: 25%
- Neither/Both: 35%
- National Unity: 40%
Impact on Mutual Respect Between Professions

% Who Expect a Positive Impact As An Election Outcome

39% PR Professionals

37% Journalists