Pew Research Center

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Public Trust in Scientists and Views on Their Role in Policymaking

Trust moves slightly higher but remains lower than before the pandemic

BY *Alec Tyson and Brian Kennedy*

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Alec Tyson, Associate Director, Science and Society Research
Haley Nolan, Communications Manager
202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

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About Pew Research Center

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to understand how Americans view scientists and their role in making public policy. For this analysis, we surveyed 9,593 U.S. adults from Oct. 21 to 27, 2024.

Everyone who took part in the survey is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), a group of people recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses who have agreed to take surveys regularly. This kind of recruitment gives nearly all U.S. adults a chance of selection. Surveys were conducted either online or by telephone with a live interviewer. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. Read more about the ATP's methodology.

Here are the questions used for this report, the topline and the survey methodology.

Public Trust in Scientists and Views on Their Role in Policymaking

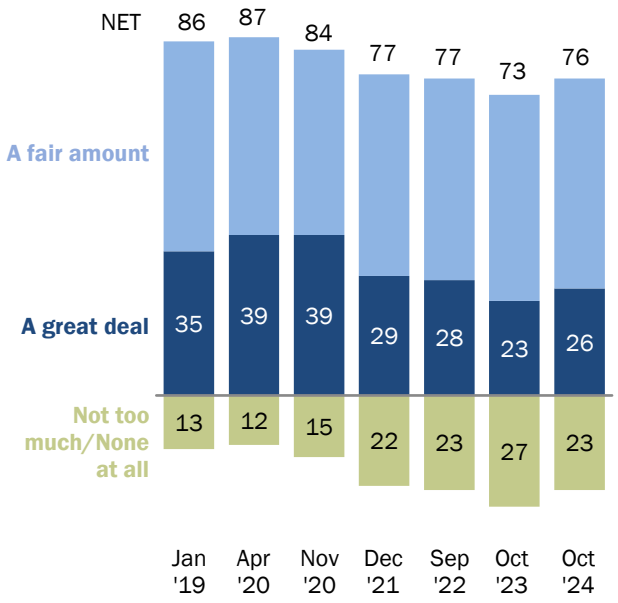
Trust moves slightly higher but remains lower than before the pandemic

A majority of Americans say they have confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interests. Confidence ratings have moved slightly higher in the last year, marking a shift away from the decline in trust seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new Pew Research Center survey of 9,593 U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024, takes a close look at the public image of scientists, who serve as one potential source of information for Americans navigating complex policy debates and everyday decisions around things like their personal health and wellness.

Confidence in scientists up slightly but remains lower than before pandemic

% of U.S. adults who have ___ of confidence in scientists to act in the best interests of the public



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
"Public Trust in Scientists and Views on Their Role in Policymaking"

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Key findings

76% of Americans express a great deal or fair amount of confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interests.

This is up slightly from 73% in October 2023 and represents a halt to the decline seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Scientists continue to enjoy strong relative standing compared with the ratings Americans give to many other prominent groups, including elected officials, journalists and business leaders.

Majorities view research scientists as intelligent (89%) and focused on solving real-world problems (65%).

In addition, about two-thirds (65%) view research scientists as honest and 71% view them as skilled at working in teams.

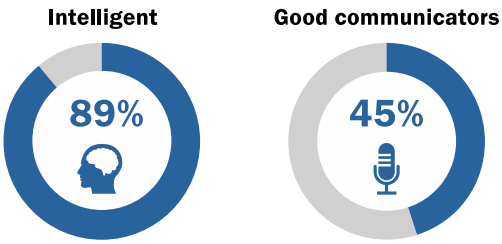
Communication is seen as an area of relative weakness for scientists.

Overall, 45% of U.S. adults describe research scientists as good communicators. A slightly larger share (52%) say this phrase does not describe research scientists well.

Another critique many Americans hold is the sense that research scientists feel superior to others; 47% say this phrase describes them well.

Most Americans see research scientists as intelligent, while fewer say they're good communicators

% of U.S. adults who say each of the following statements describes most research scientists well



Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown. Refer to the topline for full list of traits.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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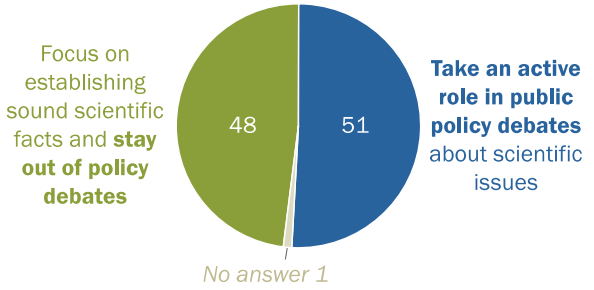
Americans are split over scientists' role in policymaking.

Overall, 51% say scientists should take an active role in public policy debates about scientific issues. By contrast, nearly as many (48%) say they should focus on establishing sound scientific facts and stay out of public policy debates.

Americans also aren't convinced scientists make *better* policy decisions on science issues than other people – just 43% think this is the case.

Do Americans want scientists to be involved in making policy?

% of U.S. adults who say scientists should ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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Democrats continue to express more confidence than Republicans in scientists, but ratings within the GOP have edged higher in the last year.

A larger majority of Democrats than Republicans express confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interests (88% vs. 66%).

Though the partisan gap in trust remains sizable, Republicans' overall level of confidence in scientists is up 5 percentage points compared with a year ago – the first uptick in trust among Republicans since the start of the pandemic.

Partisans also differ over scientists' role in policy debates, with Democrats far more supportive than Republicans of active engagement in making policy on scientific issues.

Trends in trust in scientists

In recent years, the scientific community has engaged with the public's declining trust directly, and there are multiple organizations working on ways to support trust in science and improve communication with wider audiences.

About three-quarters of Americans say they have either a great deal (26%) or a fair amount (51%) of confidence in scientists to act in the best interests of the public. This share is up slightly since last year. Still, levels of confidence in scientists remain lower than in April 2020 – at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, 87% expressed at least a fair amount of confidence in scientists, including 39% who said they had a great deal of confidence.

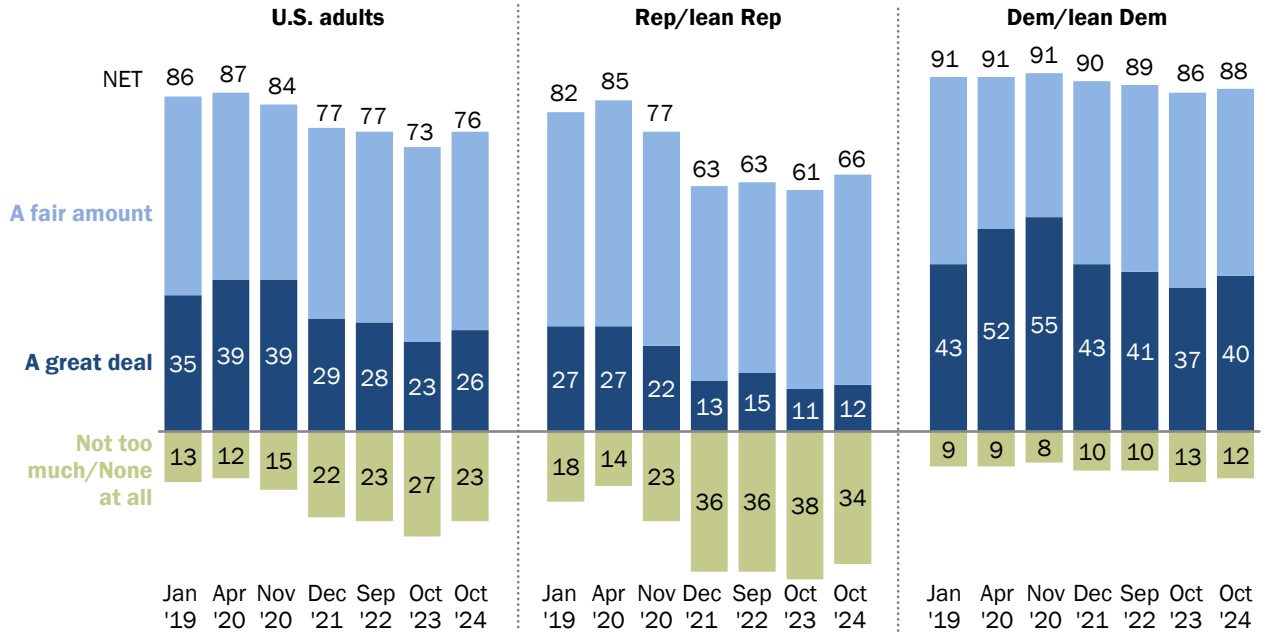
Trust in scientists compared with trust in other groups

In an era of low public trust in institutions, scientists continue to be held in higher regard than several other prominent groups we've asked about, including journalists, elected officials, business leaders and religious leaders. Confidence ratings for scientists are even slightly higher than those for public school principals and police officers – two groups that receive positive overall ratings.

Go to the Appendix for more detailed views of these groups. The Appendix also includes views of *medical* scientists, whose ratings are very similar to those for scientists generally.

Confidence in scientists remains higher among Democrats than Republicans

% who have ___ of confidence in scientists to act in the best interests of the public



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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Differences in confidence by party

Roughly nine-in-ten Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (88%) express a great deal or fair amount of confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interests. The share of Democrats with at least a fair amount of confidence in scientists is similar to levels seen prior to the pandemic.

However, the share of Democrats who express *a great deal* of confidence in scientists stands at 40%, significantly below the peak in strong trust seen during the pandemic's first year. In April 2020, 52% of Democrats expressed a great deal of confidence in scientists, and in November 2020, that share reached 55%.

Republicans' views follow a different pattern. Two-thirds of Republicans and Republican leaners say they have a great deal or a fair amount of confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interest. About a third (34%) express *distrust*, saying they have not too much or no confidence at all in scientists. In April 2020, an 85% majority of Republicans said they had a great deal or fair amount of confidence in scientists, compared with just 14% who had little or no confidence.

While GOP ratings of scientists remain much lower than they were before the pandemic, there has been a slight improvement in trust over the last year. The share with a great deal or fair amount of confidence is up 5 points since October 2023, from 61% to 66%.

Differences in confidence by race and ethnicity

Overall, White, Black and Hispanic adults express similar levels of confidence in scientists. For instance, 78% of White adults have either a great deal (26%) or fair amount (52%) of confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interests; among Black adults, 77% express either a great deal (26%) or fair amount (51%) of confidence.

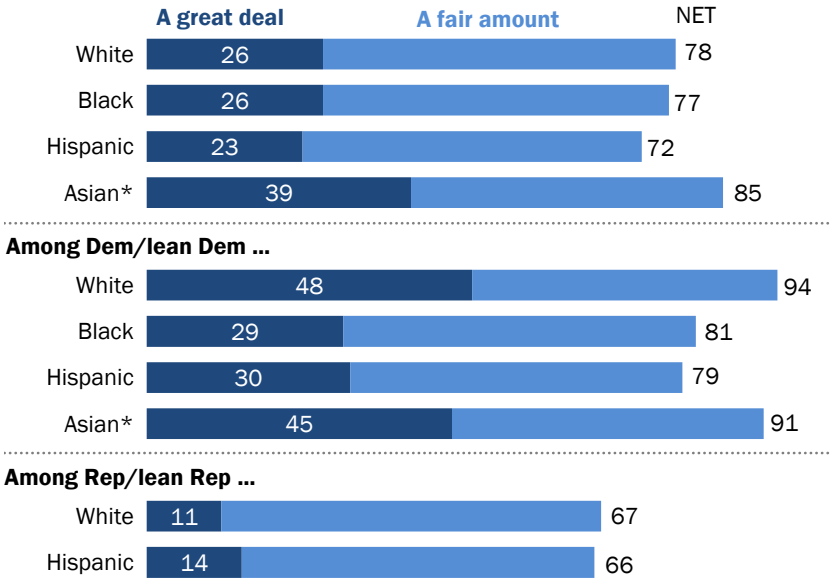
Asian adults hold the most positive views of scientists across racial and ethnic groups: 85% have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in them.

In the years prior to the pandemic – and in early 2020, during the first few months of the coronavirus outbreak – White adults expressed somewhat higher levels of confidence in scientists than Black adults.

This gap has closed primarily due to a *decline* in trust among White Republicans – driving overall levels of trust among White adults lower – rather than an increase in trust among Black adults.

Confidence in scientists to act in public's best interests, by race and ethnicity

% who have ___ of confidence in scientists to act in the best interests of the public



* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.
Note: Sample sizes for Black and Asian Republicans are too small to analyze separately. Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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Differences in trust by race and ethnicity are apparent when taking partisan affiliation into account. For example, White Democrats (48%) and Asian Democrats (45%) are more likely than Hispanic Democrats (30%) and Black Democrats (29%) to have *a great deal* of confidence in scientists. These patterns are consistent with Center surveys conducted over the last several years.

Differences in confidence by education

There are also some differences in trust by Americans' level of education. Strong trust in scientists is higher among four-year college graduates than among those without a college degree (34% vs. 22%).

This gap is primarily driven by differences among Democrats. Democrats with a college degree are 17 points more likely than Democrats without a college degree to say they have *a great deal* of confidence in scientists (51% vs. 34%). By contrast, among Republicans, similar shares of those with and without a four-year degree have strong confidence in scientists (15% vs. 11%).

For more detailed views by education and party, refer to the Appendix.

Public perceptions of scientists' traits and characteristics

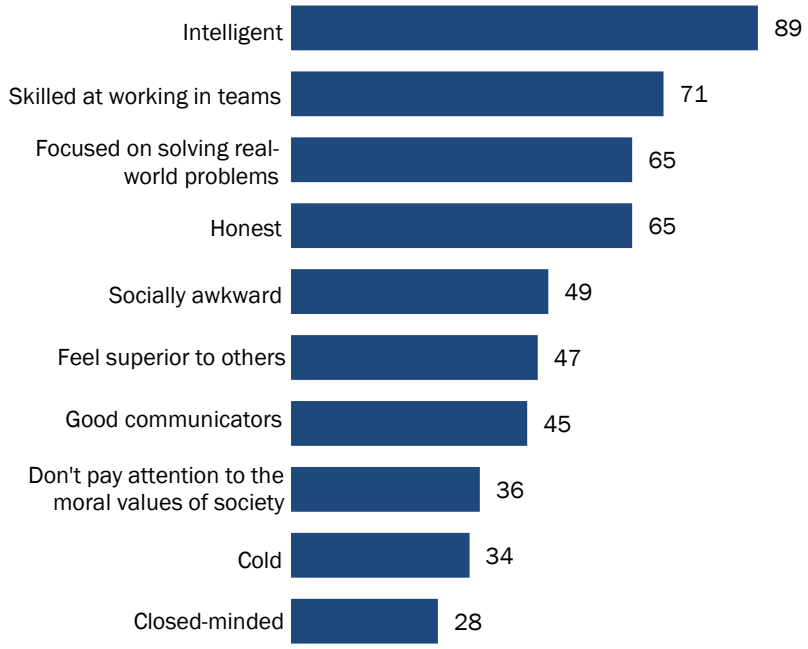
Americans associate research scientists with a number of positive characteristics – including intelligence, honesty and concern for real-world problems – which underscore the relatively high confidence ratings scientists receive.

Nearly nine-in-ten U.S. adults (89%) say "intelligent" describes most research scientists well. Majorities also view research scientists as skilled at working in teams (71%), focused on solving real-world problems (65%) and honest (65%).

Research scientists are rated less positively on their communication abilities. Fewer than half of Americans (45%) view research scientists as good communicators. This share is 9 points lower than it was in 2019.

Scientists widely seen as intelligent; fewer than half view them as good communicators

% of U.S. adults who say each of the following statements describes most research scientists well



Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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Communication was point of frustration during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022 surveys, Americans gave public health officials mixed ratings for their communication efforts and 60% said they felt confused about shifting health guidance.

Some negative traits also register with many Americans in their assessments. About half of Americans (49%) say "socially awkward" describes most research scientists well, and 47% have the impression that scientists feel superior to others. Smaller shares view research scientists as cold, closed-minded or inattentive to the moral values of society.

Views of scientists' traits by party

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to assess research scientists positively on their traits and characteristics. This is consistent with the different levels of confidence Democrats and Republicans have in scientists generally.

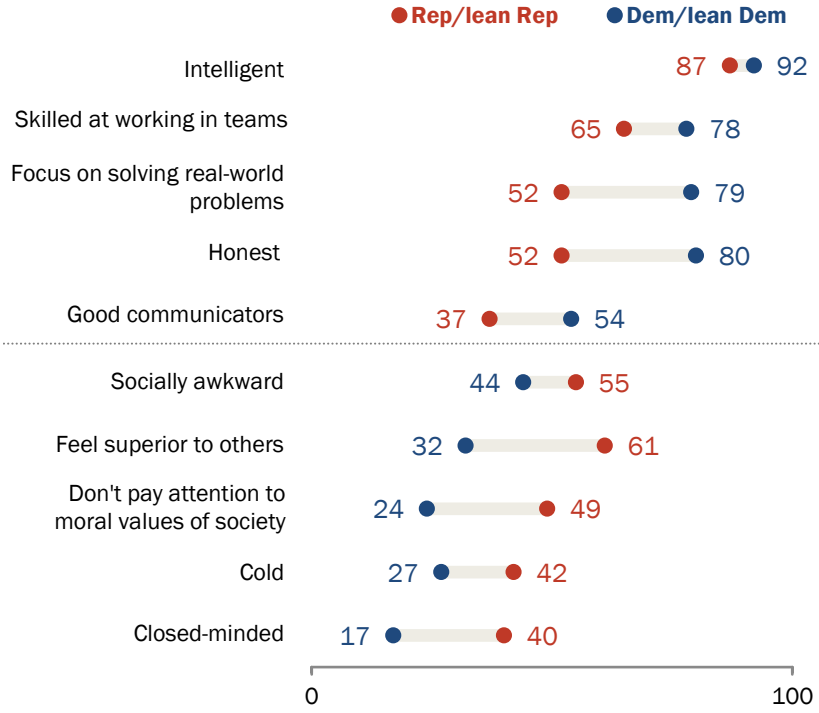
For instance, 80% of Democrats view research scientists as honest, compared with 52% of Republicans.

While Democrats have a broadly positive view of research scientists across most traits we asked about, communication is an area where impressions are less glowing. Slightly more than half of Democrats (54%) view research scientists as good communicators; 44% do not.

Within the GOP, the sense that research scientists feel superior to others registers with a 61% majority. Of the positive traits in the survey, communication ability ranks the lowest among Republicans, with just 37% viewing research scientists as good communicators. Republicans also express mixed views on whether research scientists are focused on solving real-world problems: 52% say this phrase describes them well, while 46% say it does not.

Republicans and Democrats differ in views of research scientists' traits, including honesty

% who say each of the following statements describes most research scientists well



Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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Across several traits, ratings among Republicans are more negative today than in 2019. For instance, there's been a 17-point decline in the share of Republicans who view research scientists as focused on real-world problems (69% to 52%).

Views on scientists' judgment and role in policymaking

Americans are divided over how active they want scientists to be in public policy debates over scientific issues. And Americans are not convinced that scientists make better policy decisions on science topics than other people, or that they are less biased in their decision-making.

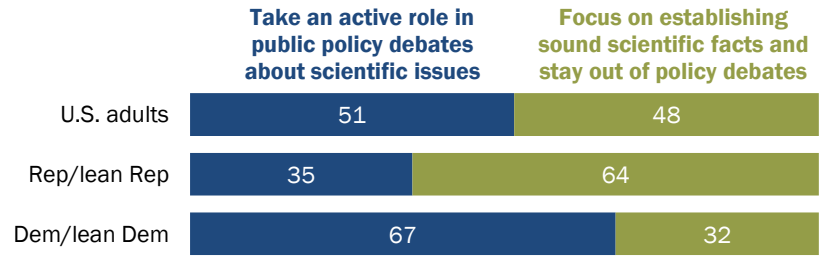
Overall, 51% say scientists should take an active role in public policy debates about scientific issues, compared with 48% who say instead that they should focus on establishing sound scientific facts and stay out of policy debates.

When it comes to scientists' current level of engagement, views are mixed: 41% say they don't have enough influence in policy debates, while 37% think they have about the right amount of influence and 20% say they have too much.

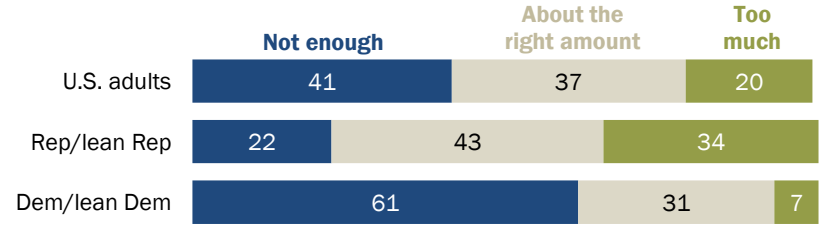
Two-thirds of Democrats say scientists should be active in policy debates on scientific issues, and 61% say they currently don't have enough influence in shaping policy.

Americans are divided over the role for scientists in scientific policy debates

% who say scientists should ...



% who say scientists have ___ influence in public policy debates



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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By contrast, Republicans express a much more limited view for scientists' policy engagement: 64% say they should stay out of policy debates. And more say they currently have *too much* rather than not enough policy influence (34% vs. 22%). Another 43% describe their influence as about right.

Public support for scientists' playing an active role in policy remains lower than it was in surveys from 2019 and early 2020. In both of those surveys, 60% of Americans said scientists should take an active role in public policy debates about scientific issues. That share fell to 48% in September

2022 – well into the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current survey marks a slight uptick (+3 points) in the share who support an active policy role for scientists.

For more detailed information on this question over time, go to the Appendix.

Should public opinion play a role in science policy?

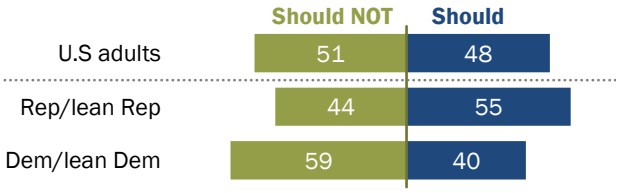
In addition to debate about experts' role in policymaking, there's no consensus over how much public attitudes should inform science policy.

Overall, 48% say public opinion should play an important role guiding policy decisions about scientific issues; 51% say public opinion should *not* play an important role because scientific issues are too complex for the average person to understand.

More Republicans say public opinion should than should not play an important role guiding science policy (55% vs. 44%). Democrats lean in the opposite direction: 59% say public opinion should *not* guide policy on scientific issues, while 40% say it should.

Americans are split over whether public opinion should shape policies on scientific issues

% who say public opinion ___ play an important role to guide policy decisions about scientific issues



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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Views on the quality of scientists' policy judgments

Americans offer reserved assessments of the quality of scientists' policy decisions.

Fewer than half of Americans (43%) think scientists are usually better than other people at making good policy decisions on scientific issues; 46% think they are neither better nor worse than others in this regard, and 10% view them as worse at making science policy than other people.

More generally, half of Americans say scientists make judgments based solely on the facts, while nearly as many (49%) take the view that scientists' judgments are just as likely to be biased as other people's.

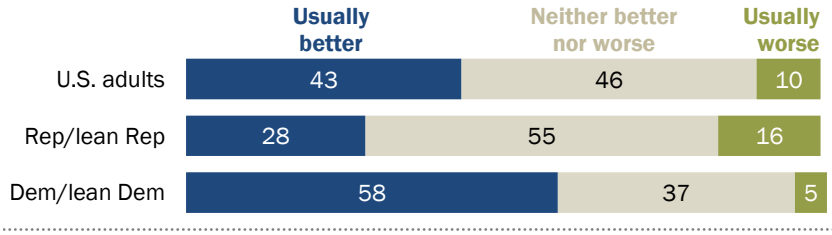
As with scientists' policy role, Republicans and Democrats express contrasting views of scientists' judgment.

Among Democrats, 64% view scientists as making judgments based solely on the facts, and 58% think they are generally better than other people at making policy decisions about scientific issues.

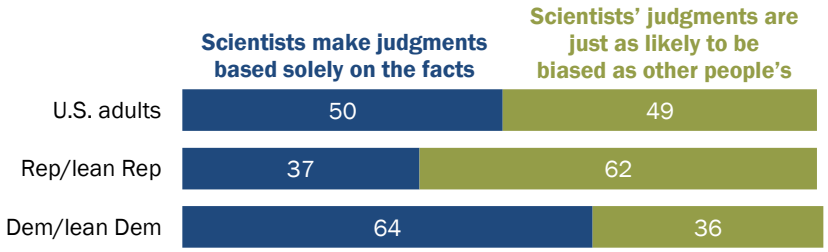
Republicans are much more skeptical: 62% say scientists' judgments are just as likely to be biased as other people's, and only 28% think they generally make better science policy decisions than other people.

Mixed views of scientists' judgment and the quality of their scientific policy decisions

% who say scientists are ___ at making good policy decisions about scientific issues than other people



% who say ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
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Primary research team

Eileen Yam, *Director, Science and Society Research*
Alec Tyson, *Associate Director, Science and Society Research*
Brian Kennedy, *Senior Researcher*
Giancarlo Pasquini, *Research Associate*
Emma Kikuchi, *Research Assistant*
Isabelle Pula, *Research Assistant*

Editorial and graphic design

Anna Jackson, *Editorial Assistant*
Kaitlyn Radde, *Associate Information Graphics Designer*

Communications and web publishing

Haley Nolan, *Communications Manager*
Mithila Samak, *Communications Associate*
Reem Nadeem, *Digital Producer*

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

Data in this report comes from Wave 158 of the American Trends Panel (ATP), Pew Research Center's nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. The survey was conducted from Oct. 21 to 27, 2024. A total of 9,593 panelists responded out of 10,612 who were sampled, for a survey-level response rate of 90%.

The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 9,593 respondents is plus or minus 1.3 percentage points.

SSRS conducted the survey for Pew Research Center via online (n=9,320) and live telephone (n=273) interviewing. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the ATP, read "About the American Trends Panel."

Panel recruitment

Since 2018, the ATP has used address-based sampling (ABS) for recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Computerized Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover 90% to 98% of the population.[1] Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is selected to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.[2] Prior to 2018, the ATP was recruited using landline and cellphone random-digit dial surveys administered in English and Spanish.

A national sample of U.S. adults has been recruited to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an "oversample") to improve the accuracy of data for underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Sample design

[1] AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."
[2] Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the United States. All active panel members were invited to participate in this wave.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with SSRS. The web program used for online respondents was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the SSRS project team and Pew Research Center researchers. The SSRS project team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or gift code to Amazon.com, Target.com or Walmart.com. Incentive amounts ranged from $5 to $20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Oct. 21-27, 2024. Surveys were conducted via self-administered web survey or by live telephone interviewing.

For panelists who take surveys online:[3] Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset on Oct. 21.[4] Survey invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Oct. 21. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled online panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Oct. 22.

[3] The ATP does not use routers or chains in any part of its online data collection protocol, nor are they used to direct respondents to additional surveys.
[4] Postcard notifications for web panelists are sent to 1) panelists who were recruited within the last two years and 2) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

Invitation and reminder dates for web respondents, ATP Wave 158

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	Oct. 21, 2024	Oct. 22, 2024
First reminder	Oct. 24, 2024	Oct. 24, 2024
Final reminder	Oct. 26, 2024	Oct. 26, 2024

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Panelists participating online were sent an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages were sent an SMS invitation with a link to the survey and up to two SMS reminders.

For panelists who take surveys over the phone with a live interviewer: Prenotification postcards were mailed on Oct. 18. Soft launch took place on Oct. 21 and involved dialing until a total of seven interviews had been completed. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled phone panelists' numbers were dialed throughout the remaining field period. Panelists who take surveys via phone can receive up to six calls from trained SSRS interviewers.

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, Center researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, four ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the panel survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of recruitment into the panel. These weights are then calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and 99th

percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed) Age x Gender Education x Gender Education x Age Race/Ethnicity x Education Race/Ethnicity x Gender Black (alone or in combination) x Hispanic Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans Years lived in the U.S. Census region x Metropolitan status	2022 American Community Survey (ACS)
Volunteerism	2021 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2020 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Frequency of internet use Religious affiliation Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity Party affiliation among registered voters	2024 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 158

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	9,593	1.3 percentage points
Form 1	4,785	1.9 percentage points
Form 2	4,808	1.9 percentage points
Rep/lean Rep	4,440	1.9 percentage points
Dem/lean Dem	4,952	1.9 percentage points
White	6,600	1.5 percentage points
Black	933	4.4 percentage points
Hispanic	1,057	4.1 percentage points
Asian*	548	5.6 percentage points

* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.
Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. Read the Sample design and Weighting sections for more details.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 158

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	9,593
Logged in (web) / Contacted (CATI), but did not complete any items	2.11	194
Started survey; broke off before completion	2.12	64
Never logged on (web) / Never reached on phone (CATI)	2.20	757
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Other noninterview	2.30	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.90	4
Total panelists sampled for the survey		**10,612**
Completed interviews	I	9,593
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	258
Noncontact	NC	757
Other	O	4
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		**10,612**
AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		90%

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Cumulative response rate, ATP Wave 158

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	73%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 158	35%
Response rate to Wave 158 survey	90%
Cumulative response rate	**3%**

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

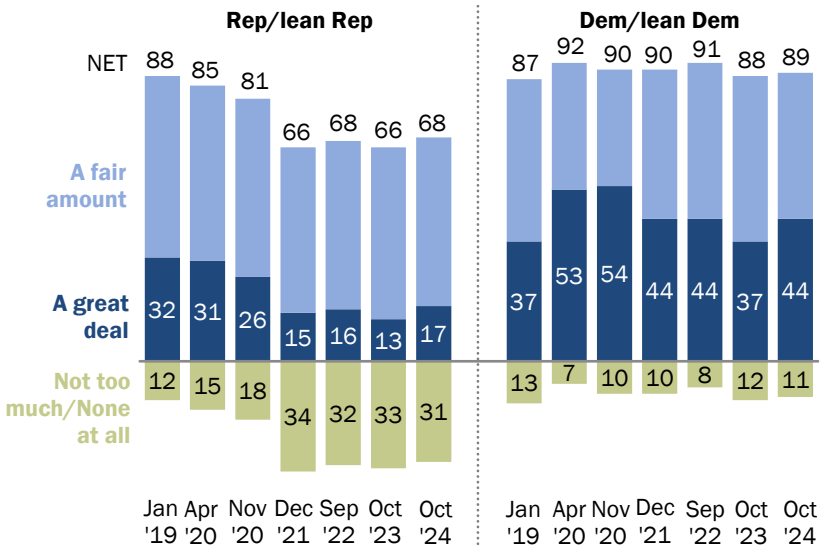
A note about the Asian adult sample

This survey includes a total sample size of 548 Asian adults. The sample primarily includes English-speaking Asian adults and, therefore, may not be representative of the overall Asian adult population. Despite this limitation, it is important to report the views of Asian adults on the topics in this study. As always, Asian adults' responses are incorporated into the general population figures throughout this report.

Appendix: Detailed charts and tables

Republicans' and Democrats' confidence in medical scientists to act in the public's best interests

*% who have ___ of confidence in **medical scientists** to act in the best interests of the public*

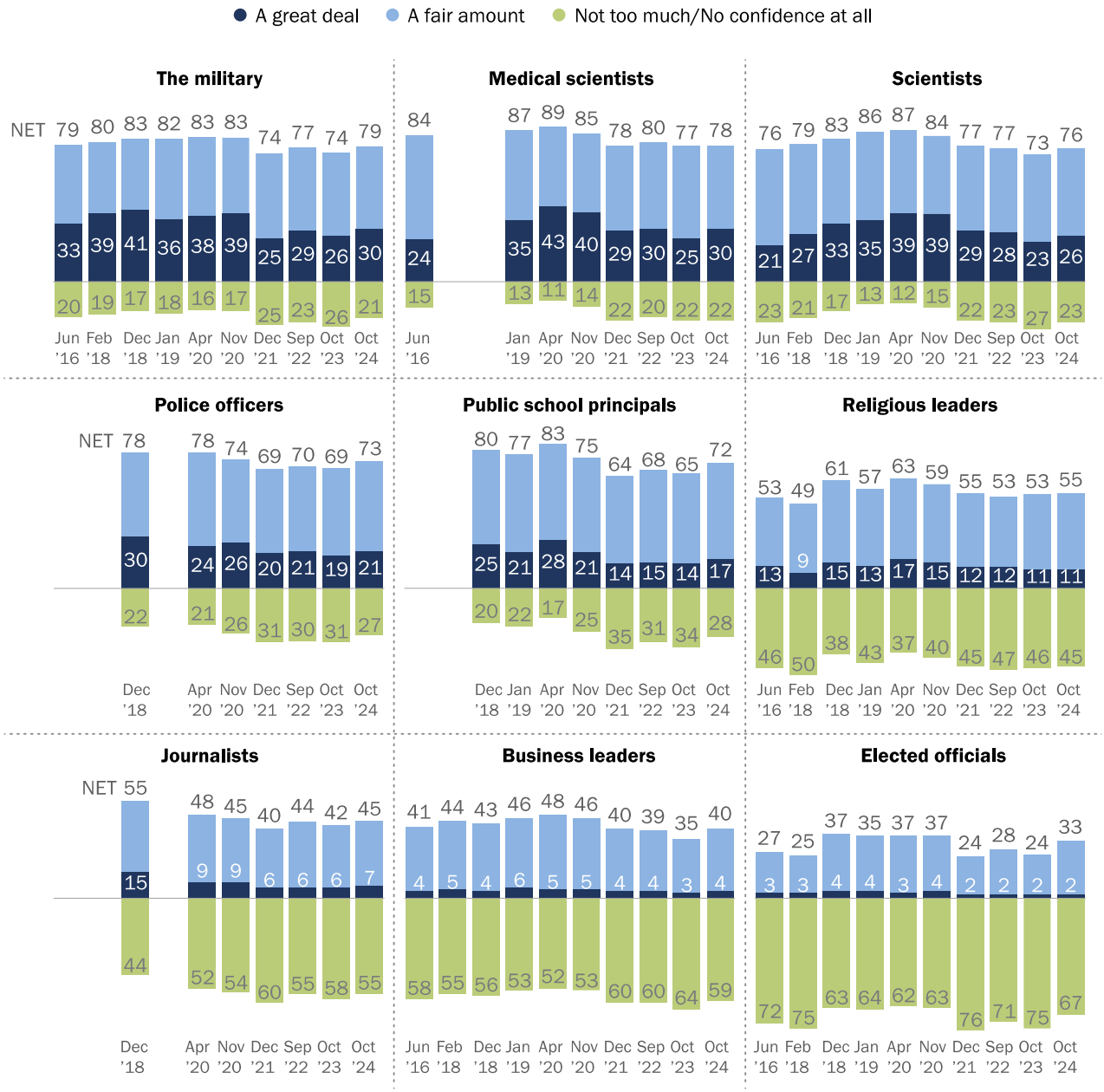


Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
"Public Trust in Scientists and Views on Their Role in Policymaking"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Public confidence in prominent groups to act in the public's best interest

% of U.S. adults who have ___ of confidence in the following groups to act in the best interests of the public

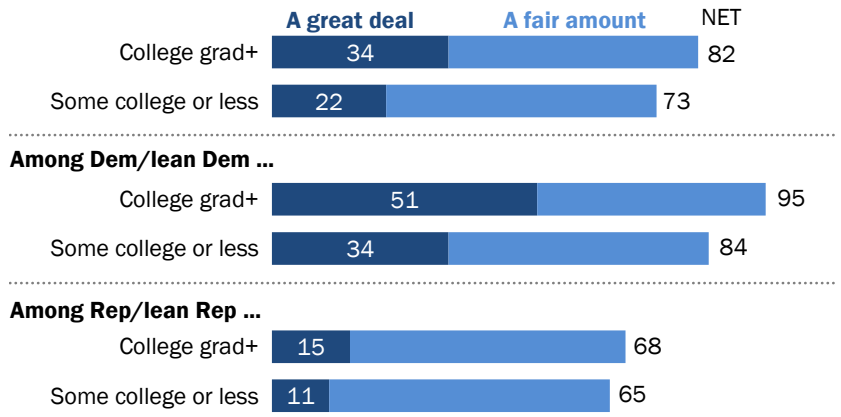


Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
"Public Trust in Scientists and Views on Their Role in Policymaking"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Confidence in scientists by education and party affiliation

*% who have ___ of confidence in **scientists** to act in the best interests of the public*

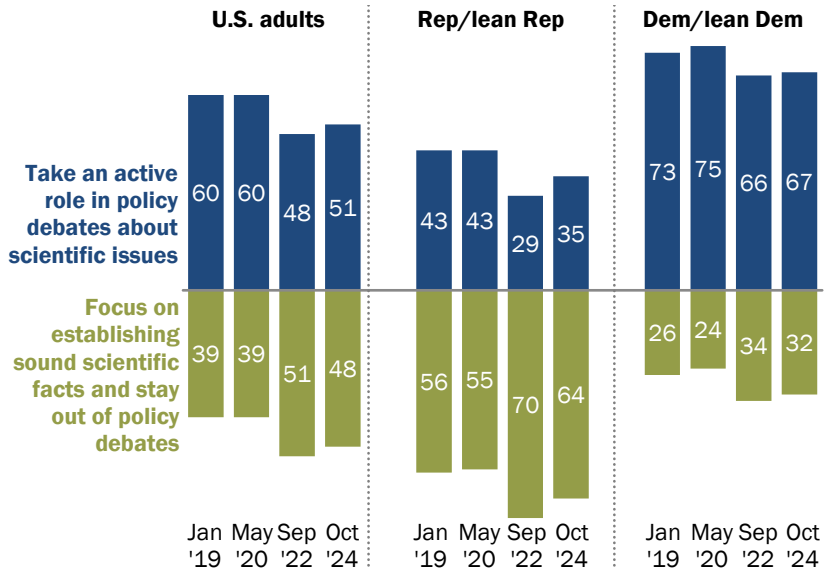


Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.
"Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
"Public Trust in Scientists and Views on Their Role in Policymaking"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Support for scientists playing an active role in public policy debates is lower now than in 2020

% who say scientists should ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 21-27, 2024.
"Public Trust in Scientists and Views on Their Role in Policymaking"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2024 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
W158 – SCIENCE TOPLINE
OCT 21-27, 2024
N=9,593

Note: All numbers are percentages unless otherwise noted. Rows/columns may not total 100% due to rounding. The questions presented below are part of a larger survey conducted on the American Trends Panel.

"No answer" includes web respondents who do not answer the question as well as telephone respondents who refuse to answer or who say they don't know how to answer. In cases where "Not sure" was offered as an explicit option to web and telephone respondents, the "no answer" category includes only web skips and telephone refusals.

This survey was conducted primarily online, with some interviews conducted by live telephone. This topline shows the programming language for online administration. For details on how questions were slightly modified for phone administration, visit the questionnaire.

American Trends Panel surveys conducted between October 2016 and June 2024 were conducted fully online (with tablets and data plans provided to adults without home internet). American Trends Panel surveys conducted prior to October 2016 were conducted primarily online, with some respondents completing by mail. For additional details, visit the methodology.

PN = Programming note

	Sample size	Margin of error at 95% confidence level
U.S. adults	9,593	+/- 1.3

CONF
ASK ALL:
[PN: RANDOMIZE ITEMS ACROSS TWO SCREENS.]

How much confidence, if any, do you have in each of the following to act in the best interests of the public?

		A great deal of confidence	A fair amount of confidence	Not too much confidence	No confidence at all	No answer
a.	Elected officials					
	Oct 21-27, 2024	2	31	51	15	<1
	Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	2	23	52	23	<1
	Sep 13-18, 2022	2	26	50	21	<1
	Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	2	22	52	23	<1
	Nov 18-29, 2020	4	32	47	15	1
	Apr 20-26, 2020	3	33	49	14	1
	Jan 7-21, 2019	4	32	50	14	<1
	Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	4	33	48	15	<1
	Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018	3	22	52	23	<1
	May 10-Jun 6, 2016	3	24	54	19	1
b.	Journalists					
	Oct 21-27, 2024	7	38	37	19	<1
	Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	6	36	37	21	<1
	Sep 13-18, 2022	6	38	36	19	<1
	Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	6	34	36	24	1
	Nov 18-29, 2020	9	37	31	23	<1
	Apr 20-26, 2020	9	39	33	19	<1
	Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	15	41	28	16	<1
	TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
	The news media					
	Jan 7-21, 2019	*9*	*38*	*34*	*19*	*<1*
	Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	*10*	*38*	*33*	*19*	*<1*
	Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018	*8*	*32*	*35*	*25*	*<1*
	May 10-Jun 6, 2016	*5*	*33*	*40*	*21*	*1*
c.	The military					
	Oct 21-27, 2024	30	48	16	5	<1
	Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	26	48	19	6	<1
	Sep 13-18, 2022	29	48	17	6	<1
	Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	25	49	18	7	1
	Nov 18-29, 2020	39	44	13	4	<1
	Apr 20-26, 2020	38	45	13	4	<1
	Jan 7-21, 2019	36	46	14	4	<1
	Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	41	41	12	4	1
	Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018	39	41	15	4	<1
	May 10-Jun 6, 2016	33	46	15	5	1

CONF CONTINUED …

		A great deal of confidence	A fair amount of confidence	Not too much confidence	No confidence at all	No answer
d.	Religious leaders					
	Oct 21-27, 2024	11	44	30	14	<1
	Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	11	43	31	15	1
	Sep 13-18, 2022	12	41	31	16	<1
	Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	12	43	30	15	1
	Nov 18-29, 2020	15	45	29	12	<1
	Apr 20-26, 2020	17	46	26	11	1
	Jan 7-21, 2019	13	44	30	12	<1
	Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	15	47	27	11	1
	Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018	9	40	34	16	1
	May 10-Jun 6, 2016	13	39	32	14	1
e.	Business leaders					
	Oct 21-27, 2024	4	36	46	13	<1
	Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	3	32	48	16	<1
	Sep 13-18, 2022	4	35	46	14	<1
	Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	4	36	45	15	1
	Nov 18-29, 2020	5	41	41	12	<1
	Apr 20-26, 2020	5	43	41	11	1
	Jan 7-21, 2019	6	40	43	11	<1
	Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	4	39	43	14	<1
	Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018	5	40	42	13	<1
	May 10-Jun 6, 2016	4	37	44	14	1
	ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=4,798]:					
f.	Medical scientists					
	Oct 21-27, 2024	30	48	18	4	<1
	Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	25	53	17	5	<1
	Sep 13-18, 2022	30	50	16	4	<1
	Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	29	49	17	5	<1
	Nov 18-29, 2020	40	45	12	2	<1
	Apr 20-26, 2020	43	46	9	2	<1
	Jan 7-21, 2019	35	52	11	2	<1
	May 10-Jun 6, 2016	24	60	12	3	1
	ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=4,795]:					
g.	Scientists					
	Oct 21-27, 2024	26	51	19	4	<1
	Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	23	50	22	5	1
	Sep 13-18, 2022	28	49	18	5	1
	Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	29	49	17	5	1
	Nov 18-29, 2020	39	45	13	3	<1
	Apr 20-26, 2020	39	48	10	2	1
	Jan 7-21, 2019	35	51	11	2	<1
	Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	33	49	14	3	<1
	Jan 29-Feb 13, 2018	27	52	17	5	<1
	May 10-Jun 6, 2016	21	55	18	4	1

CONF CONTINUED …

	A great deal of confidence	A fair amount of confidence	Not too much confidence	No confidence at all	No answer
NO ITEM H					
i. Public school principals for grades K-12					
Oct 21-27, 2024	17	55	22	7	<1
Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	14	52	26	8	<1
Sep 13-18, 2022	15	53	23	8	<1
Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	14	51	26	9	1
Nov 18-29, 2020	21	54	19	6	<1
Apr 20-26, 2020	28	55	14	3	<1
Jan 7-21, 2019	21	56	18	4	1
Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	25	55	16	4	<1
TREND FOR COMPARISON: *Public school principals and superintendents for grades K-12*					
Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	*22*	*55*	*17*	*5*	*1*
May 10-Jun 6, 2016	*13*	*53*	*27*	*7*	*1*
j. Police officers					
Oct 21-27, 2024	21	52	21	7	<1
Sep 25-Oct 1, 2023	19	50	22	8	1
Sep 13-18, 2022	21	49	22	8	<1
Nov 30-Dec 12, 2021	20	49	22	9	<1
Nov 18-29, 2020	26	48	19	7	<1
Apr 20-26, 2020	24	54	17	4	<1
Nov 27-Dec 10, 2018	30	48	16	5	<1

POLICY1
ASK FORM 1 [N=4,798]:
[PN: RANDOMIZE ORDER OF POLICY1/POLICY1B AND POLICY2. ROTATE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-2/2-1.]

Which of these statements comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right?

	Scientists should take an active role in public policy debates about scientific issues	Scientists should focus on establishing sound scientific facts and stay out of public policy debates	No answer
Oct 21-27, 2024	51	48	1
Sep 13-18, 2022	48	51	1
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	60	39	2
Jan 7-21, 2019	60	39	1

POLICY1B
ASK FORM 2 [N=4,795]:
[PN: RANDOMIZE ORDER OF POLICY1/POLICY1B AND POLICY2. ROTATE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-2/2-1, HOLDING 3 LAST.]

Do you think scientists have…

	Too much influence in public policy debates	Not enough influence in public policy debates	About the right amount of influence in public policy debates	No answer
Oct 21-27, 2024	20	41	37	1
Sep 13-18, 2022	19	45	35	1

POLICY2
ASK ALL:
[PN: RANDOMIZE ORDER OF POLICY1/POLICY1B AND POLICY2. DO NOT RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS.]

Which of these statements comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right?

	Public opinion should play an important role to guide policy decisions about scientific issues	Public opinion should not play an important role to guide policy decisions about scientific issues because these issues are too complex for the average person to understand	No answer
Oct 21-27, 2024	48	51	1
Sep 13-18, 2022	49	49	2
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	43	55	2
Jan 7-21, 2019	54	44	1

TREND FOR COMPARISON:
Pew Research Center survey conducted by telephone: Which of these statements best describes your views, even if neither is exactly right?

Aug 15-25, 2014	
60	*(One) Public opinion should play an important role to guide policy decisions about scientific issues, [OR]*
35	*(Two) Public opinion should NOT play an important role to guide policy decisions about scientific issues because these issues are too complex for the average person to understand*
2	*Neither/Both **(VOL.)***
2	*Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)***

POLICY3
ASK ALL:
[PN: DO NOT RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS.]

In general, would you say scientific experts are…

	Usually better at making good policy decisions about scientific issues than other people	Usually worse at making good policy decisions about scientific issues than other people	Neither better nor worse at making good policy decisions about scientific issues than other people	No answer
Oct 21-27, 2024	43	10	46	1
Sep 13-18, 2022	41	10	47	1
Apr 29-May 5, 2020	47	7	45	1
Jan 7-21, 2019	45	7	48	1

SCM5
ASK ALL:
[PN: RANDOMIZE ITEMS.]

In general, how would you say each of the following statements describes most research scientists?

		Describes research scientists well	Does not describe research scientists well	No answer
	ASK FORM 1 [N=4,798]:			
a.	Intelligent			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	89	9	2
	Jan 7-21, 2019	89	9	2
	ASK FORM 1 [N=4,798]:			
b.	Good communicators			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	45	52	3
	Jan 7-21, 2019	54	43	3
	ASK FORM 2 [N=4,795]:			
c.	Focused on solving real-world problems			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	65	33	2
	Jan 7-21, 2019	75	23	2
	ASK FORM 1 [N=4,798]:			
d.	Closed-minded			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	28	70	2
	Jan 7-21, 2019	26	71	3
	ASK FORM 1 [N=4,798]:			
e.	Don’t pay attention to the moral values of society			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	36	61	3
	Jan 7-21, 2019	32	65	4

SCM5 CONTINUED…

		Describes research scientists well	Does not describe research scientists well	No answer
	ASK FORM 2 [N=4,795]:			
f.	Honest			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	65	32	3
	Jan 7-21, 2019	71	26	3
	ASK FORM 2 [N=4,795]:			
g.	Skilled at working in teams			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	71	26	3
	Jan 7-21, 2019	72	25	3
	ASK FORM 1 [N=4,798]:			
h.	Cold			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	34	63	3
	Jan 7-21, 2019	29	67	5
	ASK FORM 2 [N=4,795]:			
i.	Socially awkward			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	49	48	3
	Jan 7-21, 2019	43	53	4
	ASK FORM 2 [N=4,795]:			
j.	Feel superior to others			
	Oct 21-27, 2024	47	51	2
	Jan 7-21, 2019	43	53	4

SCM3
ASK ALL:
[PN: ROTATE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-2/2-1.]

Which of these statements comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right?

	Scientists make judgments based solely on the facts	Scientists' judgments are just as likely to be biased as other people's	No answer
Oct 21-27, 2024	50	49	1
Jan 7-21, 2019	55	44	1

PARTY In politics today, do you consider yourself a:
ASK IF INDEP/SOMETHING ELSE (PARTY=3 or 4) OR MISSING:
PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to…[5]

Republican	Democrat	Independent	Something else	No answer	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
29	28	29	13	1	19	19

OTHER QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

[5] Party and Partyln asked in a prior survey.