

# National Leadership Index 2005: A National Study of Confidence in Leadership

prepared for: U.S. News & World Report &  
Center for Public Leadership,  
John F. Kennedy School of Government,  
Harvard University



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# Study Objectives and Methodology

- *U.S. News & World Report*, along with the Center for Public Leadership, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, commissioned TSC, a division of Yankelovich, Inc. to conduct a public opinion poll among American adults about the state of leadership in the country today, their views on what is important in good leadership, and their confidence in various leaders.
- Survey results were obtained through telephone interviews among a representative sample of adults 18 years of age or older.
  - Random-digit dialing was used to ensure that all individuals with unlisted numbers as well as listed numbers would be included.
  - U.S. Census data were used to weight the study on key demographic dimensions to make certain it was representative of the US population of adults.
- The interviews took place between September 13 - 23, 2005, with a total of 1,374 interviews completed, including an oversample of 172 adults 18 to 24 years of age.

# Study Highlights

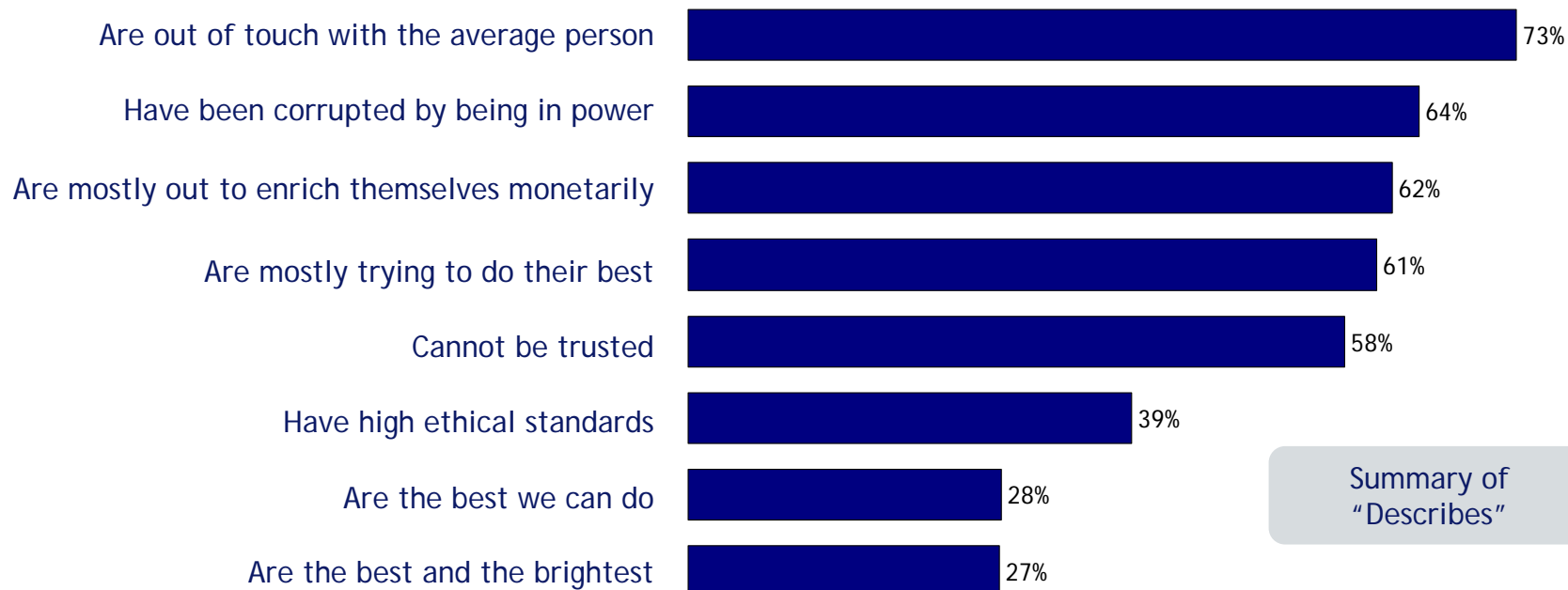
- Americans Are Highly Critical of the State of Leadership in the Country
- Confidence in Specific Leadership Groups Is Mixed - Index Is Highest for Military and Medical Leaders; Lowest for the Press, Executive Branch, and Congress
- Americans Most Often Look for Honesty and Integrity in Their Leaders
- Americans See Themselves as Part of the Leadership Problem for Not Being Better Informed
- Americans Have Some Optimism about the Future of American Leadership
- Americans Feel the Country Will Be Better Off with More Women in Leadership Positions
- Americans Have Reservations about Government's Emergency Response
- Older Americans Are the Most Critical of the Nation's Leaders
- Americans Often Respond to Leadership Issues along Partisan Lines

# Main Findings

# Americans Are Highly Critical of the State of Leadership

- The American public is highly critical of the current state of leadership in the country. Most Americans see their leaders as being out of touch with the average person (73%), believe their leaders have been corrupted by being in power (64%), think their leaders are mostly out to enrich themselves (62%), and view their leaders as people who cannot be trusted (58%).
- In contrast, relatively few Americans perceive their leaders as being among the “best and brightest” (27%), as the best we can do (28%), or having high ethical standards (39%).

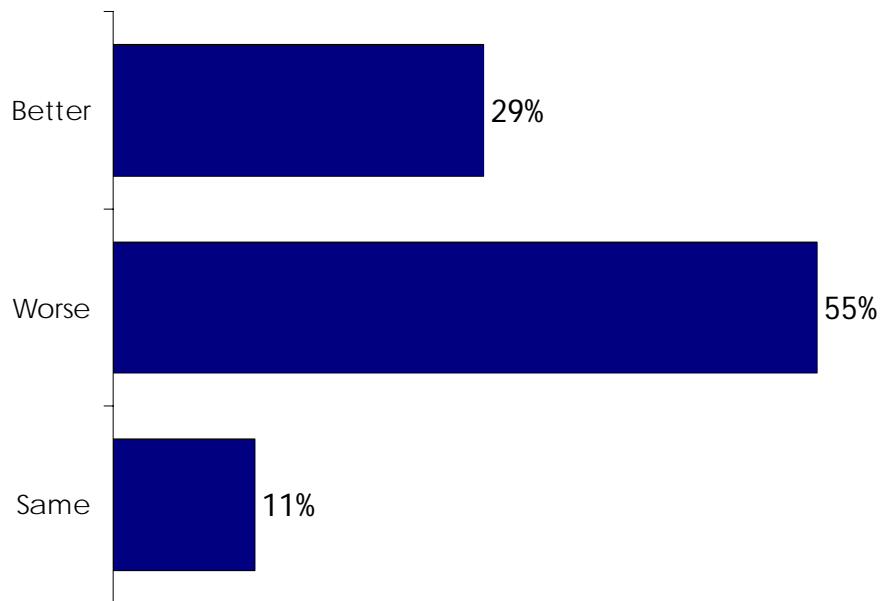
In your view, do each of the following phrases describe or not describe most leaders in this country today?



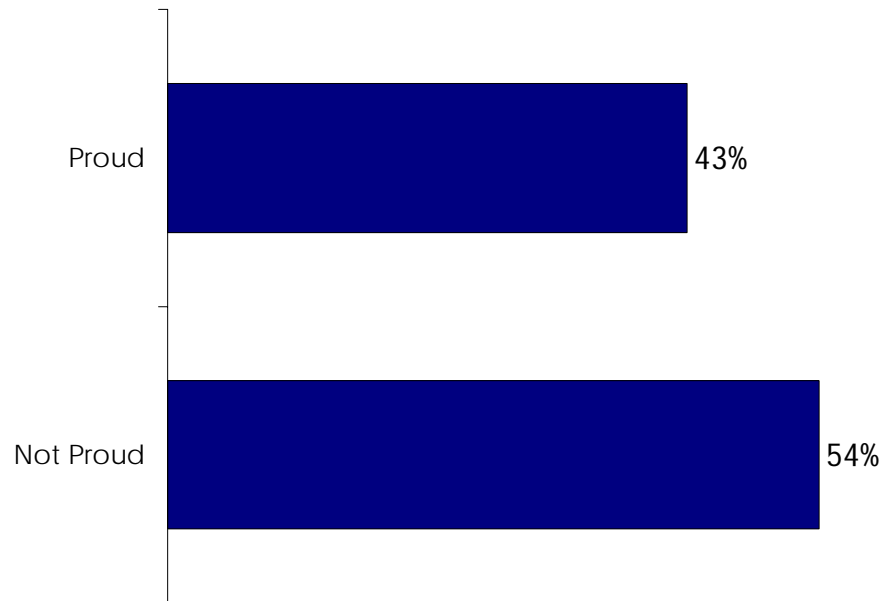
# Americans Are Highly Critical of the State of Leadership

- Americans' trust and confidence have been in a long-time decline, but appear to be at an especially low state today.
  - Sixty-six percent of Americans believe we have a leadership crisis in the nation today.
  - Fifty-five percent of Americans think we have worse leaders today compared to 20 years ago; only 29% feel we have better leaders.
  - Fifty-four percent say they are "not proud" of most leaders in the country today.

Compared to 20 years ago, do you think we have better leaders today or worse leaders today?

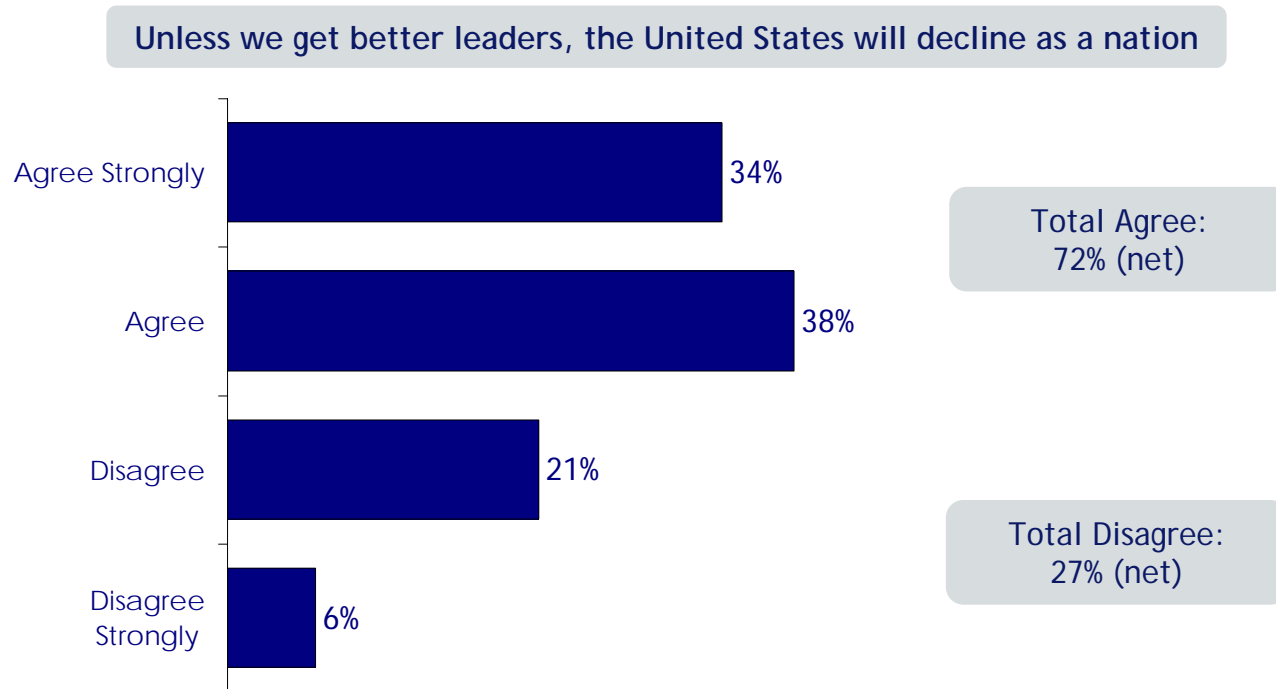


In general, are you proud or not proud of most leaders in this country today?



# Americans Are Highly Critical of the State of Leadership

- The American public sees grave consequences for the nation if leaders do not improve: 72% believe the United States will decline as a nation unless we get better leaders.



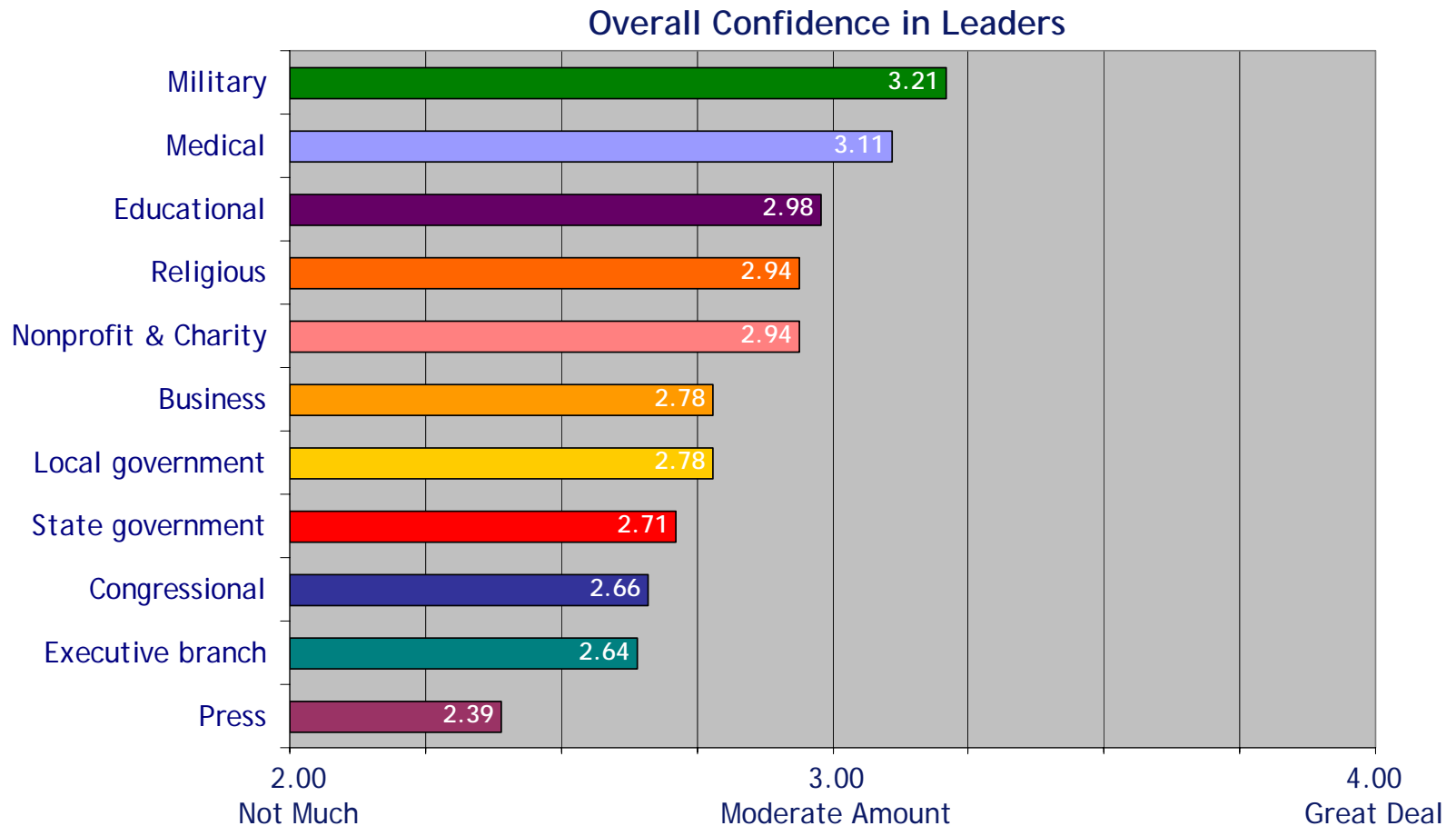
# Confidence in Specific Leadership Groups Is Mixed

How much confidence do you have in the following leaders?

	Great Deal (4.00)	Moderate Amount (3.00)	Not Much (2.00)	None At All (1.00)
Military	40%	43%	9%	5%
Medical	30%	54%	12%	3%
Executive branch	29%	28%	21%	22%
Educational	27%	49%	17%	6%
Religious	27%	46%	16%	9%
Nonprofit & Charity	23%	53%	14%	7%
Congressional	14%	47%	26%	11%
Local government	17%	52%	19%	10%
State government	17%	49%	21%	12%
Business	14%	56%	21%	8%
Press	10%	39%	30%	20%

# Confidence Index Is Highest for Military and Medical Leaders; Lowest for Press, Executive Branch, and Congress

- The National Leadership Index 2005 (NLI) was created by assigning a value to each level of confidence measured, ranging from 1 (none at all) to 4 (a great deal). Index values shown below are the mean of these summations for each item.

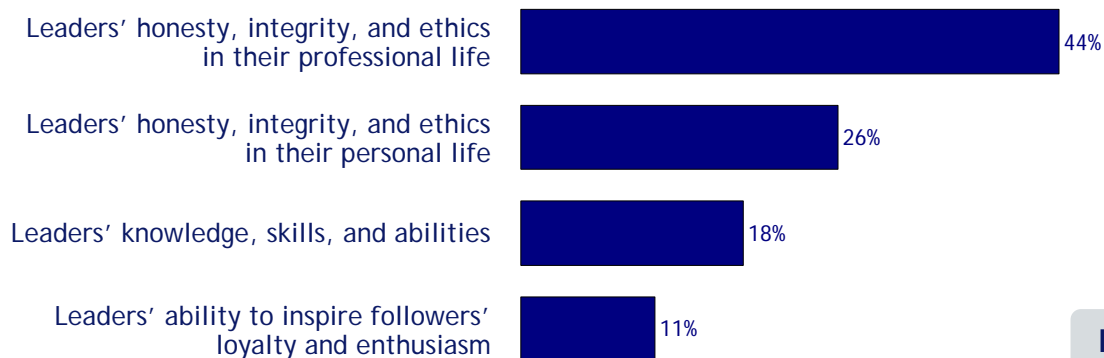


# Americans Most Often Look for Honesty and Integrity in Their Leaders

- What Americans want most from their leaders is honesty and integrity. Ninety-five percent say honesty and integrity is extremely important (53%) or very important (41%) in being a good leader - tops in a list of eleven leadership traits.
- Honesty and integrity are in fact rated substantially higher than having the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be a leader. Americans are looking for honesty and integrity both in leaders' professional and personal lives, but more often the former. Asked which of four factors are most important in having confidence in leaders, 44% name honesty, integrity, and ethics in leaders' professional life; 26% cite honesty, integrity and ethics in leaders' personal life.
- Americans also place a high premium on leaders' ability to communicate. Ninety-three percent regard ability to communicate as being extremely (47%) or very (45%) important in being a good leader - second only to honesty and integrity.
- Other traits most often looked for in leaders are taking charge, cooperating with others, intelligence, open mindedness, vision, and decisiveness.

# Americans Most Often Look for Honesty and Integrity in Their Leaders

Of the following four factors, which one is the most important to you in having confidence in leaders?

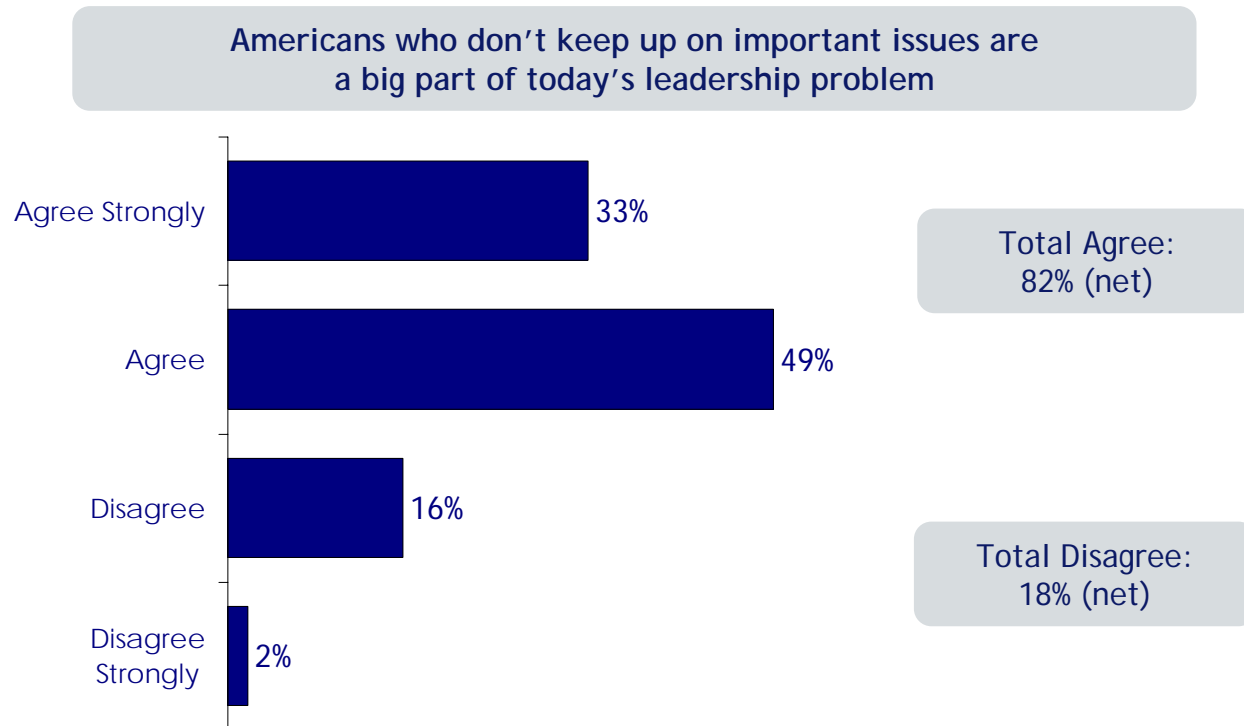


## Importance of Traits in Being A Good Leader

	Extremely	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not At All
Honesty and integrity	53%	41%	4%	1%	0%
Ability to communicate	47%	45%	6%	1%	0%
Taking charge	39%	45%	12%	3%	1%
Cooperating with others	37%	48%	13%	2%	0%
Intelligence	35%	48%	15%	2%	0%
Open mindedness	35%	48%	14%	3%	1%
Vision	35%	45%	16%	3%	0%
Decisiveness	33%	49%	13%	3%	1%
Empathy with others	33%	43%	18%	5%	1%
Optimism	25%	47%	21%	6%	1%
Building consensus	16%	41%	30%	5%	2%

# Americans See Themselves as Part of the Leadership Problem

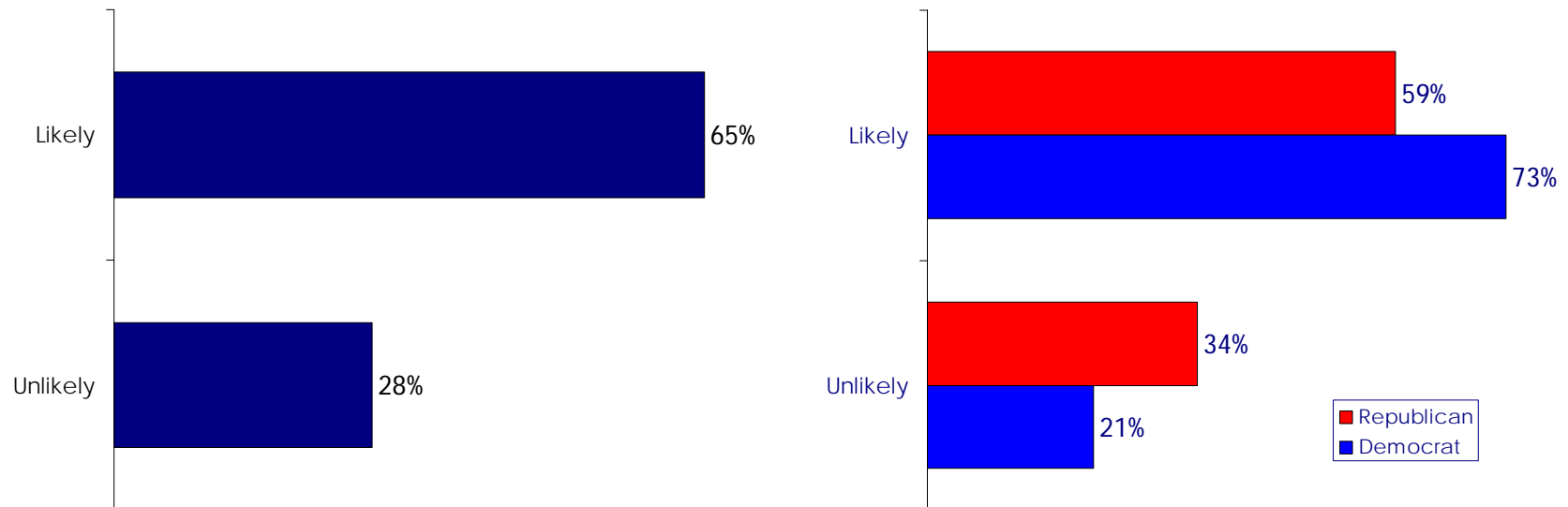
- A large majority of Americans feel the public shares the blame for the leadership crisis in the country today. Eighty-two percent (82%) agree that “Americans who don’t keep up on important issues are a big part of today’s leadership problem.”



# Americans Have Some Optimism about the Future of Leadership

- Though they feel leadership has declined, Americans remain hopeful about the future. Sixty-five percent say it is likely that the country will have better leaders in the future.
  - However, this belief tends to follow partisan lines, with more Democrats feeling better leaders are likely in the future.

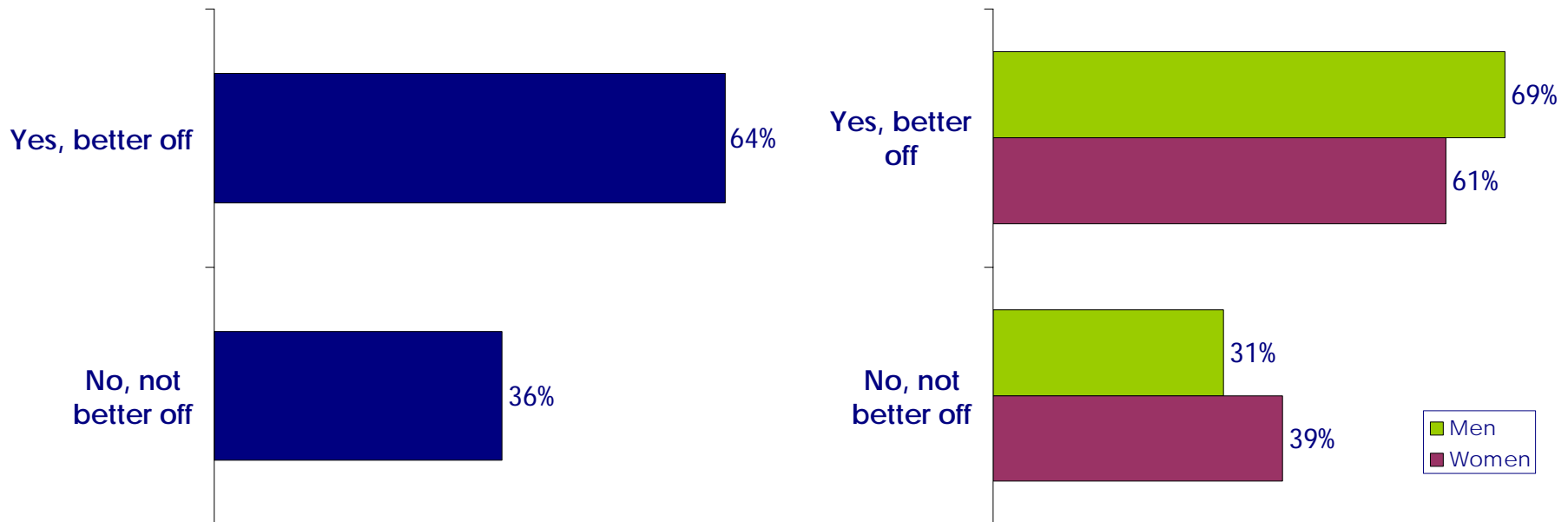
Do you think it is likely or unlikely that this country will have better leaders in the future?



# Americans Feel Country Would Be Better Off with More Women in Leadership

- Sixty-four percent of Americans who responded to the question believe that the country would be better off if there were more women in positions; 36% disagree.
- While both genders see more female leadership as a positive, men feel this way more than women.
  - Men believe the country will be better off with more women as leaders by a 69% to 31% margin, while women believe this to be the case by a 61% to 39% margin.

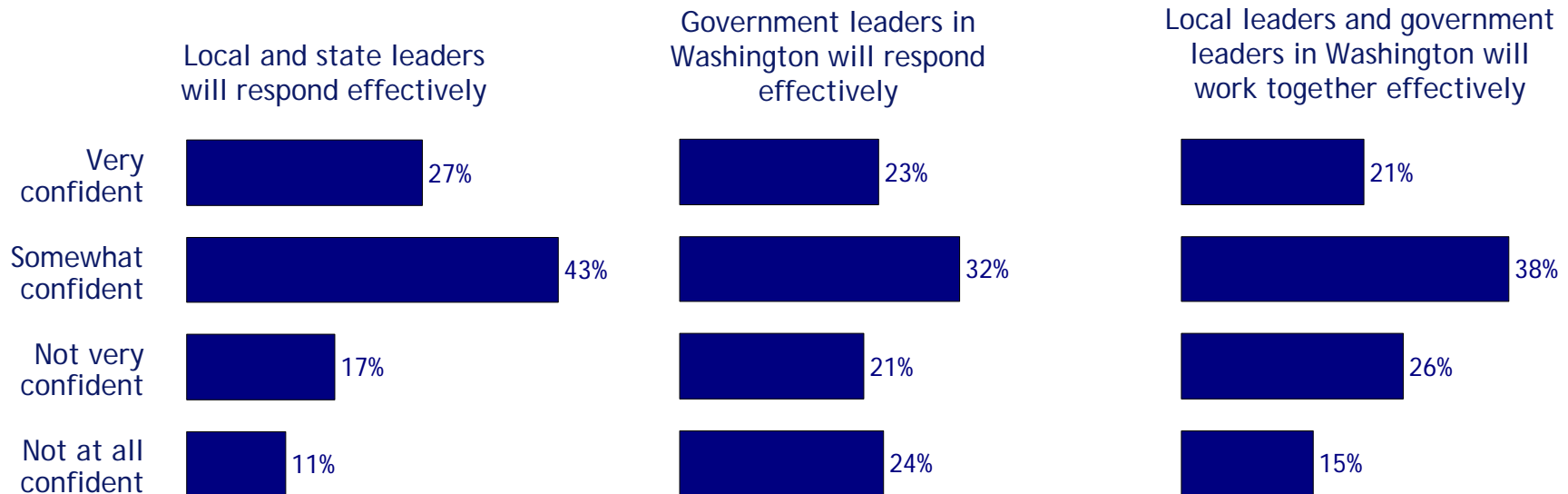
Do you think this country would be better off if there were more women in leadership positions, or don't you feel that way?



# Americans Have Reservations about Government's Emergency Response

- In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, Americans have reservations about the effectiveness of emergency response from government leaders in Washington D.C. Nearly half of Americans (45%) lack confidence in the ability of federal government leaders to respond effectively in an emergency crisis in the community where they live. Only 28% lack confidence in effective emergency response from their local and state leaders.
- Forty-one percent (41%) lack confidence that government leaders in Washington and local and state leaders will work together effectively in an emergency crisis.

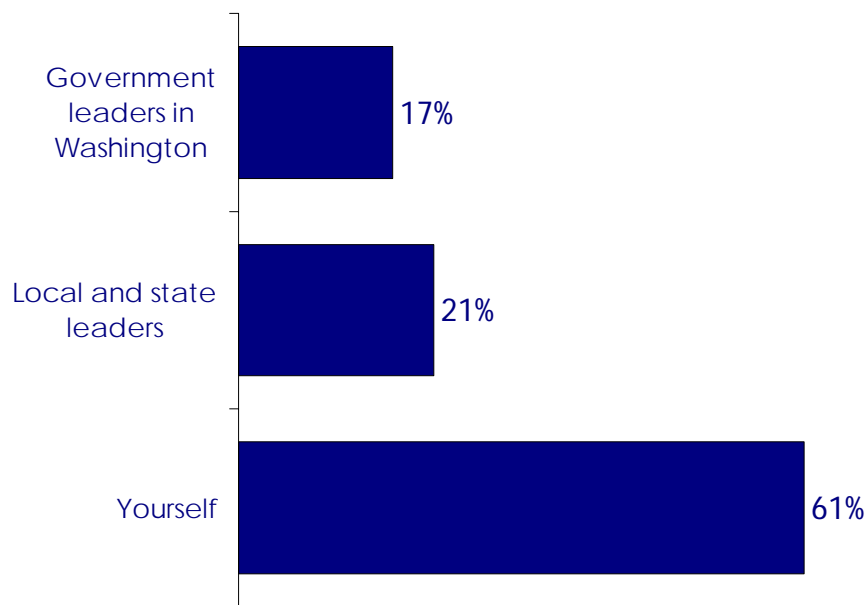
How confident are you that the following things will happen in an emergency crisis - such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack - in the community where you live?



# Americans Have Reservations about Government's Emergency Response

- Perhaps due to their reservations about federal, state, and local governments' response in an emergency crisis, the majority of Americans (61%) believe the responsibility for ensuring their safety in a crisis rests on their own shoulders.

In the event of an emergency crisis, such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack, who has the greatest responsibility to ensure your personal safety?



# Older Americans Are the Most Critical of the Nation's Leaders

- A lack of confidence in the nation's leaders is shared by Americans of all types. Little difference, for example, exists between men and women or within different regions of the country. For the most part, however, it is older Americans who are most critical of the nation's leaders and younger Americans who are the least critical.

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Leaders today are <u>worse</u> than leaders 20 years ago	55%	48%	45%	54%	63%	59%
Today's leaders...						
Are out of touch with the average person	73%	67%	73%	69%	79%	74%
Have been corrupted by being in power	64%	65%	67%	64%	67%	58%
Are mostly out to enrich themselves monetarily	62%	63%	64%	59%	61%	65%
Are mostly trying to do their best	61%	62%	72%	63%	50%	60%
Cannot be trusted	58%	56%	56%	54%	64%	59%
Have high ethical standards	39%	46%	49%	39%	30%	37%
Are the best we can do	28%	29%	31%	25%	24%	32%
Are the best and the brightest	27%	31%	40%	27%	21%	22%

# Americans Often Respond to Leadership Issues along Partisan Lines

- American politics has increasingly become polarized between Republicans and Democrats, and this same pattern is often found in their assessments of leadership issues.

	Total	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Leaders today are:				
<u>better</u> than leaders 20 years ago	29%	49%	22%	18%
<u>worse</u> than leaders 20 years ago	55%	32%	61%	71%
Today's leaders...				
Are out of touch with the average person	73%	56%	77%	81%
Have been corrupted by being in power	64%	45%	69%	78%
Are mostly out to enrich themselves monetarily	62%	44%	66%	74%
Cannot be trusted	58%	40%	60%	69%
Have high ethical standards	39%	53%	35%	31%
Unless we get better leaders, the United States will decline as a nation (Total Agree)	72%	52%	75%	86%
We have a leadership crisis in this country today (Total Agree)	66%	37%	69%	87%

# Americans Often Respond to Leadership Issues along Partisan Lines

- As would be expected, these partisan responses are most often true of questions related to the executive branch of government.

Confidence in the executive branch, including the president, vice president, and advisors  
(Summary of a great deal/a moderate amount)

	Total	Republican	Independent	Democrat
General confidence in the executive branch	57%	91%	52%	32%
Confidence in the honesty, integrity, and ethics in their professional life	61%	90%	53%	42%
Confidence in the honesty, integrity, and ethics in their personal life	63%	87%	57%	48%
Confidence in their knowledge, skills, and abilities	63%	90%	57%	44%
Confidence in their ability to inspire followers' loyalty and enthusiasm	62%	90%	56%	43%

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