

# Cultural Research Center

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## *America's Values Study: Report #2*

### A National Moment of Truth: Whose Vision and Values Will Prevail?

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With the midterm election only a few weeks away—and early voting about to begin in some states — recent national research by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University offers insights into the kind of government and types of elected leaders Americans desire.

According to the *America's Values Study*, Americans are longing for a return of integrity, character, and public service in our nation's government. They also desire a government that protects and expands individual freedom, while promoting stability rather than continual change and systemic upheaval.

In fact, the research shows that Americans say they want political leaders who are forward-thinking, demonstrate strong character, view public office as a means of serving the public rather than their personal interests, and have a track record of proving their values instead of merely talking about them. And people want leaders whose values reflect their own.

A regular stream of national surveys by a variety of pollsters indicates the American people have lost confidence in their government and its political leaders. They believe most elected officials are corrupt and that neither of the major political parties adequately represents the public. They see the United States moving in the wrong direction, and that the health of the nation's democracy is in jeopardy.

It is in that context of public concern—perhaps even fear—that the Cultural Research Center survey reports that the public officials the American people covet are those who demonstrate high character, reflect the people's values, behave in harmony with those values, and possess the same political priorities as the public. The research that follows provides a deeper dive into those dimensions.

At the same time, Americans want their government to support and protect the people—sometimes from the government itself—and to provide stability to American society and individual lives. The notion of significantly changing the institutions and systems that have made the United States a unique success for more than two centuries does not sit well with a large share of the voting populace.

### **Describing Desirable Leaders**

The research, commissioned by AmericasOne to learn more about who Americans are as a people and how that translates into the lifestyles and political preferences of our evolving nation, explored the types of individuals the country's adults seek to lead the nation.

One of the most widespread perspectives is surprisingly simple in its substance. More than three out of four adults (76%) said they want leaders who are honest, courageous, and hard-working. They want leaders who are in politics to serve the people rather than themselves and who believe their success is determined by acting in the best interests of the nation.

**The Least Compelling Values of Americans in 2022**  
**Percentage of Adults Who Are More Likely to Vote for Such Candidates**

Description of Desired Political Leaders	More Likely
Overcoming today's challenges requires honest, courageous, and hard-working leaders who are in politics to serve the people, not for personal gain. The only candidates worthy of your support are those who believe success is acting in the best interests of the nation.	76%
To restore peace and unity we need leaders to model kindness and understanding, even with people they strongly disagree with. Leaders must show the way forward.	75%
Political leaders cannot only focus on today. They must anticipate what's coming and consider long-term possibilities in order to prepare us to successfully address future challenges.	74%
Our country is a nation of laws. Justice is fairly and consistently applying those laws to everybody. Candidates who do not vow to uphold our laws without prejudice should not hold office.	73%
We must find ways to continually monitor and assess the integrity of public leaders. Identifying foolproof ways of measuring integrity is crucial to restoring public trust in our system and its leaders.	72%
Our political system is not broken; it is being abused by people who are in politics for their own benefit or personal interests. The system still works but it requires officials who will protect our freedoms by applying Constitutional principles rather than changing the system to satisfy personal preferences or ideological ideals.	71%
Many candidates say what you want to hear. To really know who they are and what kinds of decisions they will make on your behalf, you need evidence that their values are similar to yours, or that they will always consider and truly respect your values, even if they disagree with them.	70%
Source: <i>America's Values Study</i> , commissioned by AmericasOne, conducted by Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, July 2022; N=1,500 adults.	

Americans also desire public leaders who have identifiable integrity. Almost three-quarters of adults (72%) said it is important to continually monitor and assess the integrity of leaders to restore and retain public trust in our system and its leaders.

Seven of 10 adults (70%) said they want leaders who provide clear statements and credible evidence of the values that will drive their decision-making on behalf of the public, and that the evidence shows those values to be similar to their own or, if not, that the leader will genuinely respect people who hold different values.

Building on that concept, nearly two-thirds (64%) contend that they will not support public officials or candidates unless they describe the morals and values that are the foundations of the leader's decision-making and policy positions.

In practice, three-fourths of all adults (75%) indicate that those values look like "leaders [who] model kindness and understanding, even with people they strongly disagree with," in an effort to restore peace and unity.

A supermajority of adults (74%) say it is crucial that leaders anticipate the future and respond in light of long-term possibilities and situations. Such forward-thinking behavior by leaders was especially important to people 50 or older (82%), those with a graduate-level degree (83%), people who have a biblical worldview (90%), and individuals who are ideologically passionate (either liberal or conservative – 84%). Among the people least concerned about leaders anticipating the future were people in their 20s (64%), blacks (66%), individuals who do not believe in God (68%), and political moderates (69%).

The survey identified a strong commitment to the idea that our country is a nation of laws. Almost three-quarters (73%) of the survey respondents agreed that justice can be described as fairly and consistently applying those laws to everyone, and candidates or public officials who do not vow to uphold our laws without prejudice should not hold office.

Similarly, a large majority of citizens (72%) are looking for leaders who contribute value to the lives of others, demonstrating generosity and compassion in order to advance the common good.

Meanwhile, about three out of four Americans (73%) are looking for candidates and leaders who “vow to uphold our laws without prejudice,” because they value impartial justice and believe ours is “a nation of laws.”

The Cultural Research Center’s study further found that more than seven out of 10 adults (71%) believe that “our political system is not broken; it is being abused by people who are in politics for their own benefit or personal interests.”

The candidates and officials that appeal to voters are those “who will protect our freedoms by applying constitutional principles rather than changing the system to satisfy personal preferences or ideological biases.” Black adults were noteworthy for their relative indifference to this perspective: a smaller majority of them agreed (60%) than was found among whites (75%), Asians (69%), or Hispanics (68%).

Across the board, people 50 or older were more likely to identify these leader characteristics as being important than were people under the age of 30, with those 30 to 49 years of age falling in between. In most cases, individuals with graduate-level degrees were also more likely than lesser-educated adults to rate these attributes as desirable.

Surprisingly, a majority of political conservatives, moderates and liberals held the same views regarding the kinds of public leaders they are seeking on all but two of the matters examined. Slightly less than half of liberals (49%) were more likely to vote for leaders who limited government regulation of the private sector. A plurality of liberals (45%) were also more likely to support leaders who seek to reduce the scope of government to simply pursuing the services originally intended by the founders (i.e., security and safety).

In short, Americans say they want political leaders who are forward-thinking, demonstrate strong character, view public office as a means of serving the public rather than their personal interests, and have a track record of proving their values instead of merely talking about them. People want leaders whose values reflect their own.

## **Desirable Government**

Perhaps the startling political events of the past decade are pushing Americans to clarify what type of government they want. The Cultural Research Center survey paints a clear portrait of the activities and boundaries the nation’s adults are seeking in their government these days.

Decision-making power is a significant consideration. Three-quarters of the adult public (76%) unambiguously affirmed their desire to make their own decisions, without government interference.

An example of that preference of keeping government under control related to healthcare. Almost three out of four adults (73%) expressed their belief that the broken healthcare system can be fixed by getting the government out of the process and allowing doctors and patients to make the relevant decisions.

There were three instances in which more than seven out of 10 adults indicated their clear preference for government that pursues societal stability rather than continual change and systemic upheaval.

For instance, 73% stated that we “do not need new laws, or a new social and political system but rather require fair and rational behavior to ward everyone to build trust and allow the existing system to work.” Adding to that need for stability, 72% said government is spending recklessly and instead must act responsibly by living within a budget and containing the inflation that such excessive government spending has caused.

According to 71% the system is still viable, but requires the pursuit of consistency and steadiness to restore stability to our system, institutions, and ways of life.

Stated differently, two-thirds of adults (66%) rejected socialism in favor of responsible government that supports and expands freedom. These adults reflected a widespread desire for freedom wielded by government by and for the people, rather than the application of totalitarian control by a government run by elites.

<b>Government That Americans Want Percentage of Adults More Likely to Support Such a Government</b>	
<b>Description of the Government Americans Want</b>	<b>More Likely to Support</b>
Individuals should have the rights and freedom to make legitimate choices rather than having the government make those choices for them.	76%
It does not matter what religion an American citizen embraces. Their right to believe as they chose and to practice their faith – within the boundaries of the law – cannot be compromised by the government.	75%
We can start to fix healthcare in America by putting patients and doctors in charge instead of insurance companies and government agencies.	73%
It’s time for government to act responsibly by living within a budget to get inflation under control and make it more affordable to live and to raise a family.	72%
The future success of the United States depends on restoring stability to our system, institutions, and ways of life. We need consistency and steadiness rather than changes that redefine the character and goals of America.	71%
The world needs the U.S. to be a trustworthy, strong and predictable superpower to keep the “bad guys” in check. Strengthening our military, clarifying what we stand for, and being willing to fight for freedom around the world is who we are. That should not change.	69%
Source: <i>America’s Values Study</i> , commissioned by AmericasOne, conducted by Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, July 2022; N=1,500 adults.	

A consistent, substantial majority of between two-thirds to three-quarters of adults identified what their ideal government would look like. Among those traits were:

- Protective of religious freedom for all Americans, regardless of which religion they embrace (75%)
- Strengthening the economy by lowering taxes, creating desirable jobs, and helping small businesses grow (77%)
- Maintaining a strong global presence by bolstering the military, clearly defining what America stands for, and protecting freedom wherever it is threatened (69%)
- Preventing big tech companies from ignoring the law by censoring free speech, distorting information, and canceling law-abiding citizens (67%)
- Having the courage and commitment to the law to deport violent criminals who are not U.S. citizens (66%)
- Investing government resources in facilitating the personal growth of Americans (65%)

### **Values Provide the Political Context**

If Americans are searching for leaders who reflect, respect and will fervently represent their values, what are those values?

An [earlier report](#) based on the same survey revealed that the dominant, core value of Americans is family. Eight out of 10 adults said they are willing to fight or even die to protect and preserve their family and the place of the family in society, or to sacrifice personal resources to retain the centrality of family in our nation.

In addition to advancing the best interests of family, other core values included their pursuit of happiness; personal character and goodness; opportunities for personal growth and expression; freedom, independence, and justice; and stability and trust. The report also underscored the widespread interest in moderation and stability rather than radical, continual cultural and structural change, or policy extremes.

Most adults contend that neither party appears to understand the public's real desires, preferring instead to move ahead with plans and policies that are neither in the people's best interests nor building on the existing common ground that would unite rather divide the population.

### **What Applied Values Looks Like**

Unfortunately, with the candidates on the ballot for the midterm election in November, it may be too late for voters to use the coming election an opportunity to reset the balance of power in ways that will better represent who Americans are and what they want for the future.

"Sometimes, people need permission to execute significant changes in cultural processes," explained George Barna, who directed the research for the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University. "Presently, millions of Americans assume they cannot change the momentum of the political parties and leaders who are poorly representing the hopes and dreams of the public."

Barna continued, "To restore the heart of the nation according to the values of the people will take a willingness to get more deeply involved and to reject the unpalatable vision that the major parties and most powerful political leaders are foisting upon the people."

He explained that the kind of nation Americans want is not so much a "cutting edge, push-the-envelope" version that implements radical transformation of the nation's vision, systems, institutions,

and policies. The survey underscored the popular desire for the United States to restore its emphasis and reliance upon a more conventional sense of personal character, traditional values, and basic democracy.

“The people hunger for political officials and systems to serve the people rather than the leaders themselves,” Barna commented. “The policy prescriptions the people seek are those that protect families and display decency and consistency. They want control over their own lives rather than ceding that authority to the government. They envision a nation of which they can be proud because it stands for the same things they personally care about and work to promote.”

“The Pandemic Period has divided the population into three distinct segments,” according to Barna. “There are those who have seized the opportunity to reshape America to serve their own best interests and desires. A second group is that which realizes that a small, narrow-minded coalition of elites is striving to redefine the country and enslave its people around their oppressive, extremist vision. That second group is committed to fending off the attack of the elites. The third, and largest group, is composed of citizens who continue to sleepwalk through daily life and play the role of victim, either unaware of the culture war around them or simply unwilling to take part in the battle.”

Cognizant of the role played by those three segments, the bestselling author issued a call to action. “The widely rejected elitist vision for our future will continue to gain ground unless the voting public asserts itself and its vision within the political process. That may mean people with no political experience running for office. It will require many people engaging in various forms of grassroots-level political participation. It will encompass previously ‘invisible’ citizens consistently and unambiguously championing their needs and desires in the years to come.”

“Unless the American people stand firm in representing themselves, they will continue to see an elite, professional class of politicians and bureaucrats eliminate long-held freedoms,” he continued. “Americans need more than mere awareness of the battle around them; we must insert ourselves in the midst of that battle. Otherwise, those with a more selfish and autocratic vision for the nation will prevail. In the famous words of Benjamin Franklin, what we have is a republic, if we can keep it. Now is the time when Americans must arise and do what is necessary to keep it.”

According to Marc Nuttle, founder of AmericasOne, “The *America's Values Study* is unique in its breadth and insight into the American character. The results will certainly be relevant through the 2024 election, and can serve as a benchmark for measuring how well we are identifying leaders who really understand the heart of the people.”

Nuttle said, “Regardless of who wins the midterms, many of the issues on American's minds today will be the same issues that must be addressed in the next Presidential cycle—and these research findings provide a pathway forward. Citizens must now, more than ever, stand up to protect values in which they believe if they want America to lead the world. The authority to lead their own families as they see fit is at stake.”

## **About the Research**

This report is based upon data from a pair of companion surveys commissioned by AmericasOne that were conducted in July 2022. The first of those surveys, among a nationally representative sample of 2,275 adults, was administered online and took respondents an average of 21 minutes to complete. The second survey, administered to an online sample of 1,500 respondents, took an average of 22 minutes to complete. The sample for both surveys employed geographic quotas to replicate the population incidence in each of the nine Census divisions.

Among the factors studied in the surveys were reactions to 48 values. Each respondent was asked which of five responses best described their attitude toward the value in question, whether they:

- were willing to fight for/die to protect/preserve that value in your life
- were willing to sacrifice personal resources to retain that value
- were willing to argue in support of that value
- did not feel strongly one way or the other about that value
- or were not willing to defend that value

Reports related to that survey are accessible at [www.CulturalResearchCenter.com](http://www.CulturalResearchCenter.com).

AmericasOne is a community of values-driven individuals who are seeking to grow their families and businesses and would like to share their ideas and challenges in a supportive and trusted environment. AmericasOne is committed to equipping and engaging individuals and families who want meaningful, thoughtful reform that puts principles, not politicians, first. Members get the resources needed to advance the cause of freedom, free economic choice, and the core values that make America exceptional.

AmericasOne was founded by Marc Nuttle, a lawyer, author, consultant, and businessman. Nuttle has represented and advised presidents of the United States, leaders of foreign countries, state officials, and corporations. He has worked on government policy and is an expert at understanding, analyzing, and predicting economic and cultural trends. For more information on AmericasOne and the America's Values research project, visit [www.AmericasOne.com](http://www.AmericasOne.com) or visit the [AmericasOne Facebook](#) page.

### **About the Cultural Research Center**

The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University in Glendale, Arizona, conducts the annual *American Worldview Inventory*, other nationwide surveys regarding cultural transformation, and worldview-related surveys among the ACU student population. The groundbreaking ACU Student Worldview Inventory is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration is undertaken among students just prior to their graduation, enabling the University to track and address the worldview development of its students.

CRC is guided by George Barna, Director of Research, and Tracy Munsil, Executive Director. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. The Center works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Access to the results from past surveys conducted by CRC and information about the Cultural Research Center is accessible at [www.CulturalResearchCenter.com](http://www.CulturalResearchCenter.com). Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at [www.ArizonaChristian.edu](http://www.ArizonaChristian.edu).