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America at a Crossroads

By Chris Gibson and Daniel Lipinski

Introduction

As part of the Siena College Research Institute's American Values Survey (AVS) conducted this spring, a 40-year-old respondent, Asian, male, registered independent from California, said, "There's no middle. It's basically if you believe in conservative ideas and if you're conservative and you (also) believe some progressive ideas, your own party or your own people will bash you because you express those feelings. The same from the left side. If you (also) express some conservative ideologies, you want to be in the middle, they will bash you. People have to choose to be all the way to the right or all the way to the left. That's the issue."

This response is illustrative of a general trend we identified with the AVS. We live in perilous times in a country profoundly divided, where friendships among everyday Americans are increasingly strained and lost, and civility is on the decline. Given the searing experience of contemporary American politics, it is easy to forget that the "United States" was initially formed by uniting 13 very diverse states in a decidedly tenuous political marriage. At the same time, we should not underestimate this moment. After having survived 245 years together -- including one attempt to dissolve the union that was settled by the Civil War -- we could be headed towards divorce if we continue on our current path.

This story is complicated. On the one hand, it is concerning, sad, and frustrating. While most of us say we are proud to be American, many worry that some sort of civil war looms on our horizon. Yet, this story is also filled with thoughtful and constructive commentary from ordinary citizens still believing in "we the people." Indeed, part of this story, the part we the authors hold dear, is hopeful.

Given the predilection of many Americans today to go quickly to their partisan corners, some may discount the wisdom provided by more than 6,000 representative Americans who participated in the American Values Survey. That would be a mistake. What we found in this survey is of real value to us as a people and could very well provide the corrective we need to come together and renew our union.



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Some of the results are not surprising. Of voting survey respondents, 51 percent voted for President Biden while 47 percent voted for former President Trump (matching the 2020 popular vote totals). These Americans disagree on guns, abortion and immigration. Half think that much of the mainstream media is fake news and nearly a third say that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump. But - and this is very large but - they harmonize like a choir in wholeheartedly insisting that they are daily guided by our core American values of liberty, equality and progress.

Their vocal support of equality, justice, equal treatment regardless of race, the value of science, the presence of opportunity and our commitment to each other may be more aspirational than real, more like how each of us feels when we listen to an inspirational moral leader rather than in how we live our lives each day. But as our data shows, despite our current divisions, despite our partisan silos, despite name calling, stereotyping and hate speak, as Americans we share and claim to adhere to the core tenets of our Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and what philosophers sometimes call American common sense realism.

We must acknowledge up front some of the contradictory or at least ambiguous findings of our study. For example, most respondents describe our country as the "land of opportunity," while also believing that our system is rigged, especially against people of color and white Americans from the working class. Compounding this concern, our respondents believe that as a people, we lack sufficient levels of empathy and dedication to the common good, attributes and attitudes that have enabled us to overcome some of our most trying circumstances in the past. While our findings do reflect that most are still hopeful about our future, an alarming number of Americans see our political leaders as part of the problem, more concerned with preserving their own power than working to bring us together to solve hard problems. One survey respondent simply said, "the main problem is politicians. They divide and conquer."

Partisanship, despite shared values, colors so much for everyday Americans. Another respondent said, "I'm very hopeful, provided that the current administration is swept away, enough said." Yet, at the end of the day, this study finds that an encouragingly high percentage of Americans still share a professed set of beliefs that demonstrate a commitment to the core



values of *equality, liberty and progress*¹. So, there is hope. Hope in American resilience and faith in our founding creed, but not without significant challenge. An 82-year-old Republican from Kansas succinctly says, "I am somewhat hopeful, but I don't like the current trend."

What is needed is not only to live, but to govern consistent with our shared values on behalf of the people. We must ensure that we legislate to secure equal opportunity, equal treatment in the courts, and universal access to the ballot box in a manner we all can feel confident is verifiable. We must secure liberties that respect not only the rights of others, but simultaneously enliven our shared mutual commitment to the common good and to solving collective problems.

In the midst of all the partisan bickering, we believe there are examples of that in this Congress as legislators work to forge consensus. We see it in the Innovation and Competition Act of 2021 put forth by Todd Young (R-IN) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY), which sets out to increase government investment in technology and innovation. We also see it in the current bipartisan infrastructure bill. We need to see more of it.

These survey findings point to the need for the U.S. to take decisive legislative action now to reform our political process so that our social fabric and our faith in our ability to be self-governing can be restored. While many initiatives are rightfully underway across the country to celebrate and promote our diversity, *we must also honor and strengthen our union*. These two priorities must be balanced and that simply won't happen without leadership. The stakes couldn't be higher. Indeed, the future of these United States is in jeopardy. That is why we, as former members of the U.S. House of Representatives, are speaking out. In this piece, we explain the origins and methodology for the survey, then we report the findings with historical context before closing with specific recommendations for political reform and national healing.

Methodology - The American Values Survey (AVS)

The origins and motivations for this survey centered around one simple, yet profound question: beyond the obvious conflict we see across the country do Americans still share a common set of core values regardless of political allegiances, ideological views or demographic characteristics?

¹ American Values Survey. 2021. 34 indicators that Americans say they are guided by.



We thought that if the data affirmed this to be true, this country could rally around those values to find a pathway toward reconciliation.

The AVS measures Americans' belief in and commitment to the core values of equality, liberty and progress, as well as the degree to which they believe other people, our institutions and our culture embody those values. These are the values that imbued our founding political thought.

In early 1776, as the country contemplated whether or not to separate from England, Thomas Paine published *Common Sense*. It's hard to overstate the significance of this highly controversial and aspirational work. More than 120,000 copies were sold in three months in the American colonies, which represented about 10 percent of the population at the time. Paine urged the colonists towards independence and to start anew upon the principles of the Enlightenment: liberty, equality and progress.²

Several months later, when Thomas Jefferson led the committee drafting the Declaration of Independence, he justified separation from England on these very same principles, a natural right of birth from our Creator. With a few strokes of the pen, later forged in blood on battlefields across our land, we changed the course of human history. We helped usher in a new day where the divine right of kings made way for a society that acknowledged the natural rights from God of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." In view of this new reality, citizens create governments to secure these natural rights.

For all our challenges today, when it's become fashionable in some quarters to condemn America for its many imperfections, we should never lose sight of this remarkable achievement. We should never forget were it not for the United States of America we would not even be having these extended and contentious conversations about equality.

The AVS measures the extent to which we as a people still hold these values.

As part of the AVS, SCRI completed online interviews with a representative sample of 6,077 Americans, including respondents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Respondents indicated the degree to which they subscribe to, and are personally guided by, 34 beliefs

² Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (London: H.D Symons Patterson Row, 1792).



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(indicator statements) that during testing were submitted to factor analysis and found to load on the three factors of equality, liberty and progress. Additionally, respondents assessed other people and our institutions -- most specifically our government and our culture -- on three quintessentially American statements – one for equality, one for liberty and one for progress.

The survey also, in addition to demographics, asked respondents about their position on four current issues – voting rights, abortion, assault weapons regulation, and immigration – as well as their view of the media and their position on whether the 2020 election was or was not stolen from former President Donald Trump. Using cluster analysis to simultaneously consider every respondent’s answer to each of those six questions, we find three distinct groups of Americans. Thirty-five percent we identify as being left of center in that they support voting rights, abortion, a ban on assault weapons, and a pathway to citizenship, and they do not think the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump or that the mainstream media are fake news. We identify thirty-four percent as right of center in that they hold the opposite view on virtually all those issues, with the notable exception that they do not all oppose an expansion of voting rights. The remaining 31 percent we identify as centrists as they tend to hold a mix of left and right positions, although they generally lean more to the left on these issues with the exception of their appraisal of the media.

Data was collected online with respondents filling targets across nine census regions. Post data collection, the data was weighted by age, gender, education, region, race and 2020 vote choice to categorize and contextualize our findings.

We then went back to the field to do much more extensive follow-up interviews with a targeted group of respondents who were representative of the entire population of the survey. These were lengthy exchanges with a script of questions, but interviewers were empowered to ask follow-up questions to unexpected responses and to allow our respondents to take the interview in directions they deemed significant. These interview responses were very eye-opening experiences and helped fill out what we were seeing in the survey results. Excerpts from all our interviews are also available at the SCRI website.

The Findings in Historical Perspective

The findings confirm the conventional wisdom that we are indeed deeply divided. But as bad as that is, it's important to keep perspective. It's not Valley Forge when the success of the Revolution was clearly in doubt, nor the winter of 1942 when the Axis powers' significant war advantages made the specter of another global dark age real. It's also not the American Civil War of the 1860s (at least not yet). We were able to overcome all of those challenges with leadership that united people in common purpose. In the same way, we can overcome the challenges of the present day as well.

As we go forward, we should also remember that from the very beginning, the United States of America was something very different in human experience. We were exceptional at birth. As one American president stated, we are a people with a government, not the other way around. As previously mentioned, at the height of the Enlightenment, we were the first in the world to profess core beliefs in liberty, equality, and progress.

During the afterbirth of our nation as we struggled to gain our footing, we ultimately adopted a new Constitution to balance liberty and security. That document was animated with the guiding principle of limiting governmental powers to those absolutely necessary to "establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

In short, we completely changed the game and with it the entire arc of history for humankind. Before the U.S., if you were born a serf, you generally died one. With the birth of our nation, *at least in the ideal*, where you end up depends in large measure on you.

All of this was built upon a realistic perspective of human nature, which at the same time affirmed idealistic aspirations, the hope of humanity's "better angels." It was founded on the belief that such a design could promote virtuous citizenship with a commitment to the common good. To guard against the darker angels of our nature, the Constitution incorporated checks and balances and auxiliary measures to safeguard against centralization of power, which history had illustrated often led to abusive, tyrannical rule. Important to note, while our Founders

intentionally made political change hard and time consuming in an effort to protect liberty, it did not prevent it. But by design, for change to occur, *competing factions had to work together*.³

That design proved genius over time. It played an instrumental role in America rising from a backwater country of mostly farmers, to become a world superpower blessed with both liberty and prosperity. As we search for ways to heal, it's comforting to know our findings confirm Americans still hold liberty dear, and this is so across the ideological spectrum. For example, statements such as "each of us is free to follow our own unique path in life," "no one should tell me how to live, how to love or what to think," or "no one, not even the government, should be able to restrict another's pursuit of happiness," are cited as words that nearly 90 percent of Americans say that they live by each day. Interestingly, when we compute a liberty score based on those statements that factor as indicators of that central American theme, the collective score is nearly 80 out of a possible 100 and varies only slightly between Biden voters (77) and Trump voters (82).

One of the nation's first great compromises to come out of our new political process illustrates the virtue in such a design. Alexander Hamilton, a leader of the Federalists, wanted the country to establish a financial services sector and a new credit line for the U.S. to enable economic growth and progress. James Madison, a leader of the anti-Federalists (or Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans) wanted to move the nation's capital from New York City to something closer to the southern States. Neither side had the votes to get everything they wanted. A compromise was struck where both sides got what they wanted in principle, but they each had to accept something they did not prefer.⁴

Compromise remains central to the American character, whether we look hopefully to our leaders or realistically to the common sense of our people. Not only do our extended interviews call for finding the middle ground, but our quantitative data finds that regardless of party or vote

³ James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10: The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection," *New York Daily Advertiser*, 22 November 1787. Courtesy of the National Archives

⁴ Wilfred M. McClay, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story* (New York: Encounter Books, 2020).



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choice, most Americans concur and say that they live by the statement, "in order for us all to live together, each of us has to make concessions." Ideological inflexibility is not a value practiced by Americans. The Constitution and the political process it spawned requires collaboration and compromise. Our findings affirm that the American people still identify progress as a strongly held value and to get it, we simply must work together. The aforementioned Innovation and Competition Act and the Problem Solvers bipartisan infrastructure bill are solid examples of constitutionally facilitated progress.

To help gain more insight about the value of progress, across the political spectrum Americans in our interviews talked of the "Great Experiment" and argued in favor striving for "a more perfect union." Progress is a core American value whether understood individually or collectively. On the individual level our respondents support ideas like, "it is important to achieve something specific and measurable each and every day" or "success comes to those that dedicate themselves to making the most of their abilities." Moving forward, striving, seeking. One interview described the benefit in America of even being free to fail. We try, we look to always improve. Collectively, we adhere to a notion of the Enlightenment where through the application of reason and science coupled with hard work, we can overcome our problems. We agree that "every problem has a solution" and that "advances in areas like health, technology, business or personal development, rely on the careful application of science." We don't hope to stay the same, to repeat the last generation's life but rather both individually and collectively to ever improve.

Concerningly, however, over the past century the separation of powers has been altered, increasing the power of the presidency at the expense of the legislative branch. This has adversely impacted the degree to which political factions work together to achieve progress. Increasingly, political change comes by way of executive orders and actions, which is followed by the opposite party questioning the constitutionality of such change. This cycle of dysfunction has continued unabated and now we have open conflict about the legitimacy of our elections. For our government to continue to deliver progress, a strongly held value, we must repair our democracy. Indeed, for the U.S. to continue to operate as a republic, there must be political reform.



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We the authors also believe our country can learn important lessons from different periods in our history. For example, the 1850s failed to spawn effective leadership to peacefully resolve our differences over slavery and states' rights, while the 1950s witnessed artful presidential and congressional leadership that helped heal significant divisions in our country and make marked progress in advancing equality.

The initial progress we made advancing equality and reintegrating the South immediately after the Civil War during Reconstruction was cut short in early 1877 when the new President Rutherford B. Hayes, as part of a concession to the South to resolve the election dispute, agreed to withdraw federal troops despite his pledge during the campaign to see through the work of reconstruction. The result was the restoration of Southern antebellum political power and subsequently the implementation of Jim Crow laws.

When "separate but equal" policies were upheld with the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* U.S. Supreme Court decision, we essentially lost a century of opportunity to move towards the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence. It wasn't until the Supreme Court reversed itself in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, and thereafter when President Dwight Eisenhower committed federal troops to enforce it, that we were able to move forward.

In the context of the American Values Survey, it is worth expounding on Eisenhower's leadership style and the outcomes it secured, especially in contrast to the challenges the country faced a hundred years earlier in the 1850s when the abject lack of leadership from a series of failed presidents led to the Civil War.

Seizing that opportunity following the Supreme Court decision, the Eisenhower administration subsequently worked across party lines with the Congress to enact the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which helped set the stage for the much more significant Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. Significant to note for this piece, these were all bipartisan pieces of legislation that required much collaboration and compromise. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed in the Senate 73 to 27, and of those in favor 46 members were Democrats and 27 were Republicans.⁵ In the House of Representatives, it passed 289 to 126, with 153 Democrats and

⁵ "Hr. 7152. Passage. -- Senate Vote #409 -- Jun 19, 1964," GovTrack.us (GovTrack), accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/88-1964/s409>.

136 Republicans voting in favor of the bill.⁶ The Voting Rights Act was passed 77 to 19, with 47 Democrats and 30 Republicans voting in favor of the bill.⁷ The House passed the Voting Rights Act 333 to 85, with 221 Democrats and 112 Republican supporting the bill.⁸

The result of that work helped move us more towards the ideals of equality expressed in our Declaration of Independence. It must be noted, unlike in contemporary times, this significant positive political change did not come by way of executive orders and actions. We did it the old-fashioned way - legislation and rule of law - and that enhanced the legitimacy of these reforms among the American people, enabling us to move forward together.

The example of the Eisenhower leadership style and approach is illustrative of the possibilities that exist for collaboration and compromise within our constitutional system. Political scientist Fred Greenstein helped the country see more clearly President Eisenhower's leadership style and its impact on the political process. Greenstein's landmark *Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* helped dispel common perceptions that Eisenhower was detached and aloof from the legislative, administrative and political processes.⁹

Using careful archival research, Greenstein demonstrated that Eisenhower was actually highly engaged in all areas, although for political reasons he went to great lengths to conceal that reality. Serving as president in times of Democratic party ascendancy in Congress, Eisenhower viewed it in his (and the nation's) best interest to emphasize in public his non-partisan role as head of state rather than as the Republican party leader, while he worked strategically behind the scenes to orchestrate outcomes that helped the country make progress on a myriad of challenges facing the nation.¹⁰

In light of that, it's interesting to note that Eisenhower was actually courted by both political parties to run for president under their banner. Eisenhower ultimately chose the Republican

⁶ "H.R. 7152. Civil Rights Act of 1964. Adoption of a ... -- House Vote #182 -- Jul 2, 1964," GovTrack.us (GovTrack), accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/88-1964/h182>.

⁷ "To Pass S. 1564, the Voting Rights Act of 1965. -- Senate Vote #78 -- May 26, 1965," GovTrack.us (GovTrack), accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/89-1965/s78>.

⁸ "To Pass H.R. 6400, the 1965 Voting Rights Act. -- House Vote #87 -- Jul 9, 1965," GovTrack.us (GovTrack), accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/89-1965/h87>.

⁹ Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden Hand Presidency*. (New York: Basic Books, U.S., 1982).

¹⁰ Ibid

ticket because he believed he would do more good for the country by steering the GOP away from McCarthyism and the isolationist policies of Senator Robert Taft, who wanted the U.S. to withdraw from the United Nations and NATO and eliminate the New Deal.¹¹

Eisenhower, generally possessing a conservative Kansas farm boy temperament and political philosophy, nevertheless believed U.S. global leadership in multilateral organizations such as the U.N. and NATO were critical to avoiding a third world war. Eisenhower also saw merit in keeping parts of the New Deal, albeit in a tamed and better managed manner.

Over the course of his eight-year administration, Eisenhower was able to achieve much in the way of healing national divisions. He helped repair the social fabric of our country even as he championed civil rights, which were still highly controversial in parts of America. He did all that while presiding over massive growth in the economy, rising wages, and the burgeoning of the middle class. The federal budget was balanced and even ran surpluses. The Korean War ended, and we were kept out of the Vietnam War in his time. In short, we had peace and prosperity *and* progress on civil rights. None of that was a foregone conclusion as the country entered the 1950s.

Imagine if McCarthy's view of the future of the Republican party had won out? Or a hybrid of McCarthy and Taft? Might we have had World War III or a Civil War II? *Leadership makes a difference* and Eisenhower's commitment to the messy and sometimes disappointing approach of collaboration and compromise, in essence, the American way of government, enabled us to steer clear of these nightmare scenarios. We should take inspiration (and insight) from Eisenhower today.

What's Needed Now

The results of the American Values Survey provide hope, but we must not delay in taking decisive action to realize this potential. We simply need reform now to restore faith in our institutions and democracy itself. We, the authors, offer several legislative options below, although not everyone may be on board for all proposals. As such, they should be viewed as a starting point for a robust national conversation that must end with action.

¹¹ Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*.



First, we should build on the bipartisan work that is already taking place in Congress in the shadow of the partisan conflict that captures all the attention. In addition to the two bills already mentioned, the bipartisan House Problem Solvers Caucus continues to work to forge consensus. This serves as a starting point, a utilization of the legislative process the Founders envisioned to effect political change.

Second, we must repair the separation of powers that has been weakened over the past century. The executive branch did not steal its powers; Congress willingly gave them up, largely for political gain. Like anyone else, members of Congress want to be successful. They don't want to lose their next election. Taking hard votes on whether or not to go to war, enacting controversial policies in areas like the environment and immigration, and making cuts to budgets creates political opponents and increases the chances of electoral defeat. Better to hand-over those responsibilities to the president and criticize those decisions that wind up unpopular. However, the second order effect of this changing power dynamic has been the creation of an imperial presidency, where Americans are sent to war without the consent of the governed and where legislators are no longer required to work together to enact policy changes and routine budgets. These are all concerning developments, which the Founders consciously worked to avoid to keep the country together, united in common purpose. They were wise to do so.

The disturbing trends attendant to the imperial presidency have now morphed into a more nefarious reality. Legislators now actually gain political power by opposing *any* collaboration on legislation with the party-opposite, forcing political change into the executive realm where its legitimacy is sure to be questioned on constitutional grounds, and often rightly so. Hence, we need reform that helps empower Congress to restore balance to the separation of powers and new processes that facilitate collaboration. Bills such as the War Powers Reform Act and other legislation that reclaims Congress' power of the purse and its role as the central driver of political change in America.



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Regarding much needed political reform, to restore faith in the relationship between the people and our government, we offer several admittedly controversial proposals:

- A voting rights bill all Americans can get behind that encourages *all* citizens to do their patriotic duty to vote *and* ensures all Americans have full confidence in the election results.
- Amendments to the Constitution enacting independent redistricting processes, which will help send to Washington legislators who more closely represent the views of Americans found in our AVS survey.
- Bipartisan campaign finance reform aligned with the value of “one person, one vote.”
- One of the authors also supports term limits for members of Congress.
- Budget and filibuster reform.
- A balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

What all of these proposals share in common is a commitment to transparency and accountability in government so we can repair the relationship between our representatives and "we the people." These are all important actions to help restore trust in our institutions. Or, in the conventional parlance, help the American people drain the swamp.

Finally, to help strengthen our bonds of citizenship and national unity, we should consider national service initiatives and more emphasis on civics education. The history of our country is complicated, but in the past when Americans have been in crisis, we have banded together as a people to overcome our challenges. That shared sacrifice and experience has knitted a social fabric envied the world over. However, as we have painfully seen on display in recent years that fabric is fraying. National service initiatives would help restore it and provide common experiences from which to draw strength and inspiration in the difficult times that are ahead.

Although the Founders disagreed on a number of highly contentious issues, they all agreed that an educated and informed citizenry, capable of critical, independent thinking, was essential to the viability of the Republic and that our educational institutions should recognize and embrace their role in helping the country heal. The American Values Survey provides hope that our shared values of liberty, equality, and progress can help provide the



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common language we need to save the United States and experience our best century yet. We should not delay in addressing its findings.

Chris Gibson became the 12th president of [Siena College](http://www.siena.edu) in July 2020. He is a member of the Hoover Institution’s Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict, a visiting fellow with the Catholic University’s Center for the Study of Statesmanship, and a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee of the *Bipartisan Review*, a project with Cornell University’s Institute of Politics.

Dr. Gibson served district NY-19 in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2011-2017. He is the author of two books, including his most recent work *Rally Point: Five Tasks to Unite the Country and Revitalize the American Dream*. He is a 29-year decorated military veteran who commanded the 82nd Airborne Division’s 2nd Brigade.

In addition to a B.A. in history from Siena, Dr. Gibson holds an M.A., M.P.A. and Ph.D. in government, all from Cornell.

Daniel Lipinski grew up in the “bungalow belt” of blue-collar families on the southwest side of Chicago and went on to earn engineering degrees from Northwestern University and Stanford University, and a Ph.D. in political science from Duke University.

Dr. Lipinski taught American politics as an assistant professor before serving district IL-3 in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2005-2021, where he was known as a commonsense problem solver who brought people together and got things done. He is currently teaching, writing, and consulting at Lipinski Solutions. He also serves on the boards for [Lewis University](http://www.lewisu.edu) and [Empower Illinois](http://www.empowerillinois.org).

The **Siena College Research Institute (SCRI)** is a respected public opinion polling institute recognized both locally and nationally. The results of SCRI surveys have been published in major regional and national newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today* and *The New York Times*, as well as in magazines, scholarly journals, books and both print and web-based encyclopedias. SCRI has been featured on electronic media outlets such as MSNBC, Fox News, and CNN and NPR.



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In 2021, the SCRI earned an A rating overall, and an A+ for their political polling project with *The New York Times*, from Nate Silver and his 538.com website. SCRI is one of only six polling institutes across the nation to earn an A rating from the well-respected polling aggregator.

The SCRI is directed by **Don Levy, Ph.D.**, who has been instrumental in focusing Siena's polling not only on local, statewide and national politics but also on economic, social and cultural issues. Dr. Levy holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Connecticut and a B.A. from Yale University and is a charter member of the AAPOR (American Association for Opinion Research) Transparency Initiative.

While at Siena, Dr. Levy has conducted studies on civic health creating the Civic Health Index and is the principal investigator on several statewide community health and wellbeing studies that seek to measure the social determinants of health.



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