

Trends in Public Confidence in Science & Opportunities for Progress

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Trends in Public Confidence

- The paper draws from publicly accessible surveys that meets AAPOR transparency standards.

Public Confidence in Science is Relatively High

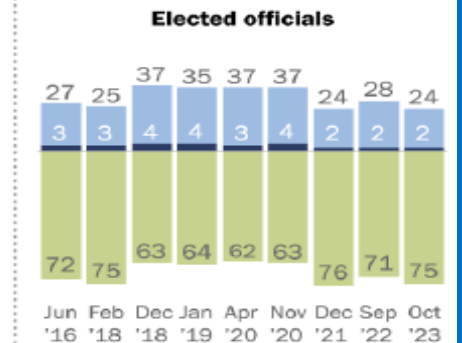
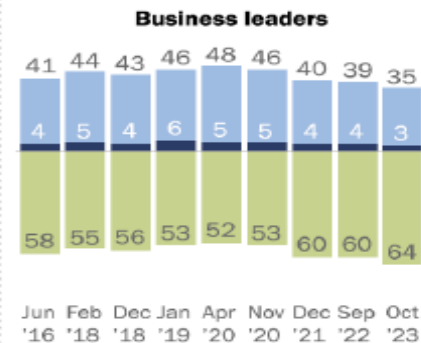
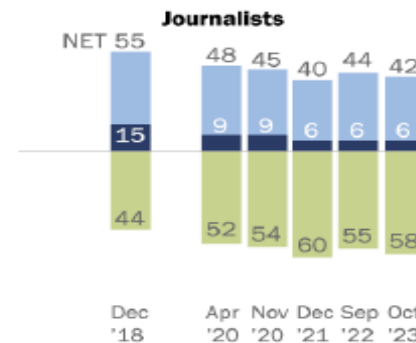
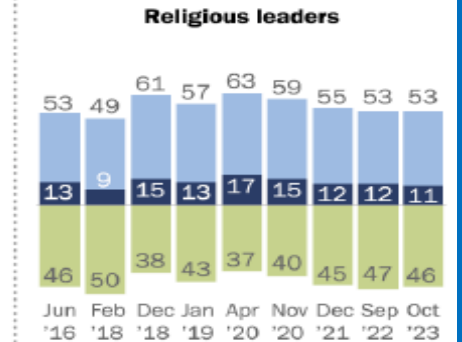
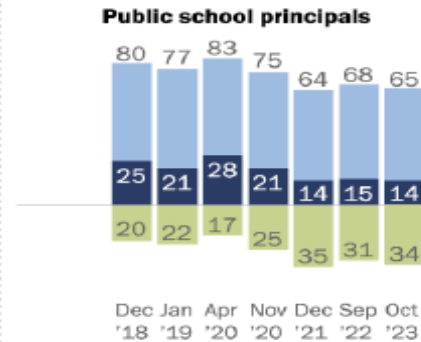
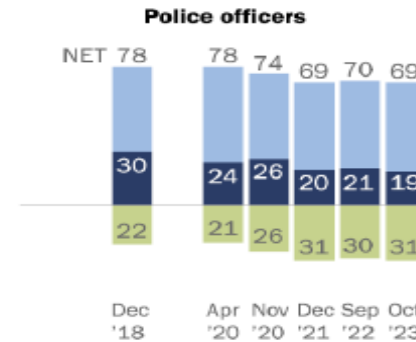
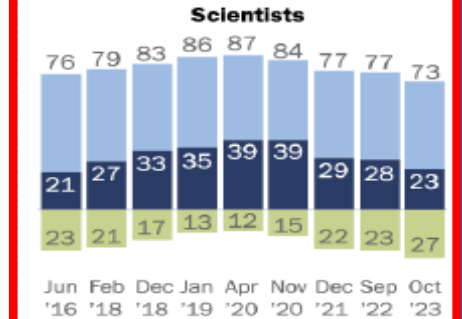
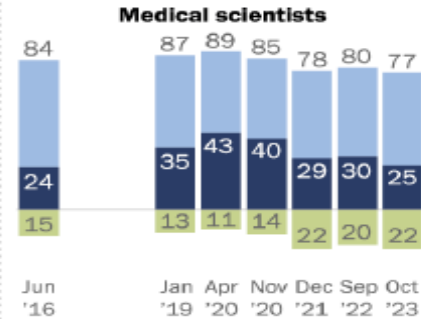
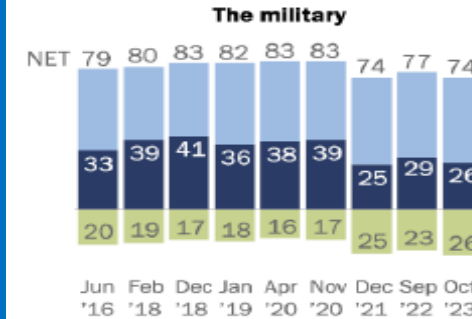
- Public confidence in science is **high relative to confidence** in most other civic institutions that the surveys measure regularly.
- Only the military earns similar levels of public confidence.

Pew Research Center (2023)

Majorities of Americans say they have at least a fair amount of confidence in scientists, but ratings have fallen since early in the coronavirus outbreak

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

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Not too much/No confidence at all



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 25-Oct. 1, 2023.

"Americans' Trust in Scientists, Positive Views of Science Continue to Decline"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Science's Confidence Decline is Not Unusual

- Public confidence in science has fallen in recent years.
- Public confidence in all measured groups has fallen.

Underlying Factors

Annenberg Science Knowledge Survey (ASK)

- Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania
- Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Director
- A proprietary online national probability panel drawn from a larger online SSRS national probability panel of U.S. adults aged 18 and older.
- The individuals in this survey have been empaneled by APPC since March 30, 2021, and unexposed to surveys from non-APPC groups during that time.
- Data collection: February 22 – February 28, 2023
 - 1,638 respondents in English (1,608) and Spanish (30).
 - 1,589 responded online, and 49 responded by telephone.
 - Data are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population.

Main Findings from the “ASK” Survey

- An overwhelming majority of the American public agrees on fundamental things that scientists should be doing.
- They disagree about whether scientists are actually doing them.
- Q: What can we do to improve public confidence?

Annenberg Science Knowledge Survey (2023)

- Percentage of Americans who “agree” or “strongly agree” from the with the statement...
 - Scientists in general are competent **81%**
 - Scientists in general are trustworthy **70%**
 - Scientists in general are honest **68%**
 - Scientists in general are ethical **65%**

ASK (2023)

“Scientists in general..”

- Share my values 42%
- Feel superior to others 36%
- Are likeable 42%

ASK (2023)

- “Scientists...”
 - Are able to overcome their human and political biases **42%**
 - Do whatever it takes to get grants and publish, even if it means cutting corners **41%**

Lupia et al 2024. PNAS.

When you are deciding whether to believe a scientific finding, how important or unimportant is it to you that the scientists who authored the study...	% Very Important	% Somewhat Important	Net Important	% Neither Important nor Unimportant	% Somewhat Unimportant	% Very Unimportant	Net Unimportant
Disclose their funders							
Are open to changing their minds based on new evidence							

Lupia et al 2024. PNAS.

When you are deciding whether to believe a scientific finding, how important or unimportant is it to you that the scientists who authored the study...	% Very Important	% Somewhat Important	Net Important	% Neither Important nor Unimportant	% Somewhat Unimportant	% Very Unimportant	Net Unimportant
Disclose their funders	58	26	84	9	3	4	7
Are open to changing their minds based on new evidence	66	25	92	4	1	2	4

Lupia et al (2024) “Trends in US Public Confidence in Science & Opportunities for Progress.” *PNAS*.

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- Q: What can we do to improve public confidence?



Science as service

Greater Transparency Means Clarity about

HOW WE CHOSE
WHAT TO
OBSERVE.

HOW WE CHOSE
TO RECORD WHAT
WE OBSERVED.

HOW WE CHOSE
TO CATEGORIZE
WHAT WE
RECORDED.

HOW WE CHOSE
TO ANALYZE WHAT
WE CATEGORIZED.

HOW WE CHOSE
TO INTERPRET
WHAT WE
ANALYZED.

HOW WE COULD
BE WRONG.

Thank you!

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