

# DIFFICULT AND POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

A research report exploring difficult and political conversations at work today, the influence of organizational culture, and how to have better discussions about these topics.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction and Purpose</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The State of Difficult and Political Conversations at Work Today</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>How Workers Describe Difficult and Political Conversations at Work</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Conversation Quality Driven by Civility and Psychological Safety</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Business Case for Effectively Managing Difficult and Political Conversations</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Beyond Civility and Psychological Safety: Training and the Manager’s Role</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>A Framework for Better Difficult and Political Conversations at Work</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>About SHRM</b>	<b>23</b>





# KEY FINDINGS

## POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS KEY FINDINGS

1. Nearly three-quarters of workers (71%) reported having political conversations at work, which mostly occurred in informal workplace settings (83%) or outside the workplace (35%).
2. Workers who rated their workplace highly on civility and psychological safety during political conversations were likely to remain with their current organization for nearly two years longer on average than those who rated their organization low on these areas. In addition, these workers were more likely to be satisfied with their job, have greater trust with their co-workers and managers, and agree that their workplace supports innovation.
3. About 3 in 5 workers (61%) rated their workplace culture during political conversations as highly civil and psychologically safe.
4. Workers tended to view political conversations as informative (46% agreed or strongly agreed), but few viewed them as productive (27%).
5. Compared to when civility and psychological safety are low, workers who rated their workplace highly on both during political conversations were:
  - a. Nearly 4 times more likely to describe political conversations as productive.
  - b. Over 3.5 times more likely to describe political conversations as informative.
6. When workers rated their workplace low on civility and psychological safety during political conversations, they were:
  - a. Nearly 6.5 times more likely to describe political conversations as frustrating.
  - b. Over 5.5 times more likely to describe political conversations as uncomfortable.
  - c. Over 5 times more likely to describe political conversations as pointless.
7. Organizations were more likely to provide resources for effective communication (60%) than formal guidance on how to handle political conversations (24%).

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS KEY FINDINGS

1. More than one-third of workers (39%) reported having difficult conversations at work weekly.
2. Unlike political conversations, workers tended to view difficult conversations as both informative (47%) and productive (43%).
3. Over two-thirds of workers (69%) rated their workplace culture during difficult conversations as highly civil and psychologically safe—slightly more than did so during political conversations.
4. During difficult conversations, workers who rated their workplace highly on civility and psychological safety were more likely to trust others in the workplace and were more likely to say their organization encourages new ideas.
5. Compared to when civility and psychological safety are low, workers who rated their workplace highly on both during difficult conversations were:
  - Nearly 5 times more likely to describe difficult conversations as productive.
  - Over 3 times more likely to describe difficult conversations as informative.

Reference SHRM's *Political Conversations Playbook* for a deeper dive into building out your team's framework: [shrm.org/civility](https://shrm.org/civility)



# INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The U.S. is experiencing deep divisions across political, social, and cultural lines, contributing to a polarized environment. These divisions are evident in debates over issues such as racial inequality, immigration, climate change, and health care, where stark ideological differences shape public opinion. Social media amplifies these divides, often creating echo chambers that reinforce individual beliefs and widen the gap between opposing views.

According to SHRM's Civility Index results from the third quarter of 2024, more than half of U.S. workers believe society today is generally uncivil, a sentiment that held steady throughout 2024. The Civility Index also revealed that workers collectively encountered nearly 190 million uncivil acts per day in their everyday lives in the third quarter of 2024, and 58% of those surveyed experienced or witnessed incivility while at work. This comes at a high cost, leading to over \$2 billion in daily losses due to reduced productivity and absenteeism.

In this challenging ecosystem, managers, HR professionals, and business leaders cannot avoid or eliminate difficult or political conversations occurring in the workplace even with policies established to address them. However, they can develop an organizational culture that empowers workers to navigate these conversations constructively. The success of such discussions, particularly those involving divisive or controversial topics, hinges on fostering a culture of civility and psychological safety, which also promotes longer employee tenure, higher job satisfaction, and stronger trust and innovation in the workplace. Given the current state of civility in the U.S., building such a culture within organizations is more important than ever.

To better understand the nature and dynamics of both difficult conversations (i.e., those about uncomfortable or complex topics for which the goal is to advance the business) and conversations about polarizing, political, or controversial topics, SHRM surveyed a representative sample of 1,971 U.S. workers. This research aims to investigate the influence of workplace culture on these conversations, assess the impact of these conversations on workplaces today, and provide actionable insights for business leaders and HR professionals on how to enhance workplace cultures that foster respectful, inclusive, and orderly discussions.



# THE STATE OF DIFFICULT AND POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS AT WORK TODAY

**More than one-third of workers and managers reported having a difficult conversation weekly.**

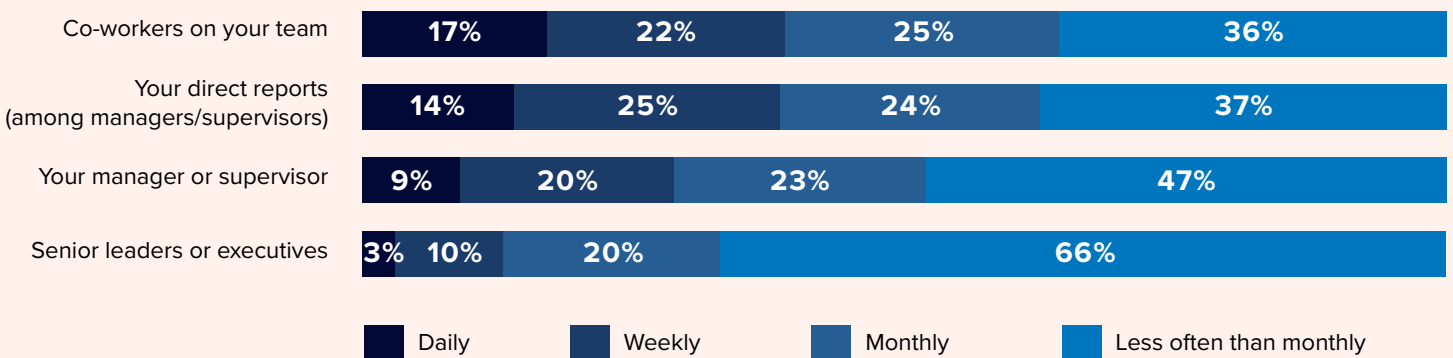
In nearly all businesses today, difficult conversations are almost unavoidable, yet essential for organizational progress. In fact, 39% of U.S. workers reported having a difficult conversation with a co-worker at least weekly, and the same percentage of managers and supervisors said they have a difficult conversation with their direct reports just as often. The rarest group for U.S. workers to engage in difficult conversations with are senior leaders or executives. However, one-third of U.S. workers (33%) still reported having a difficult conversation with senior leaders at least monthly. These conversations, while challenging, may be crucial for organizational success.



*Difficult conversations can be thought of as any type of discussion in the workplace that addresses uncomfortable or awkward topics, negative experiences, or conflicts where the goal is reaching a conclusion or finding a resolution. These conversations can take many forms, such as addressing a colleague's consistently late arrivals, discussing performance concerns with a direct report, or exploring strategies to respond to complex challenges facing the organization.*

## FREQUENCY OF U.S. WORKERS ENGAGING IN DIFFICULT WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS WITH DIFFERENT GROUPS

(N/As removed)







**Nearly three-quarters of workers reported having conversations about polarizing, political, or controversial topics at work.**

Unlike difficult conversations, political conversations<sup>1</sup>—those about politics or other morally charged topics—are not necessarily essential for advancing most businesses. However, these conversations still happen in workplaces. Nearly three-quarters of U.S. workers (71%) said they have had a conversation about political topics with a member of their work team in the past. Men are more likely than women to have these conversations in the workplace, with 74% of men saying they have had these conversations, compared to 67% of women.

Among those who have had political conversations, 43% said they have these conversations either daily or weekly and one-third (33%) said they have these conversations monthly. One-quarter of these workers (25%) said they have political conversations less often than monthly.

**FREQUENCY OF U.S. WORKERS ENGAGING IN POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE**



**Political conversations occurred more frequently than difficult conversations.**

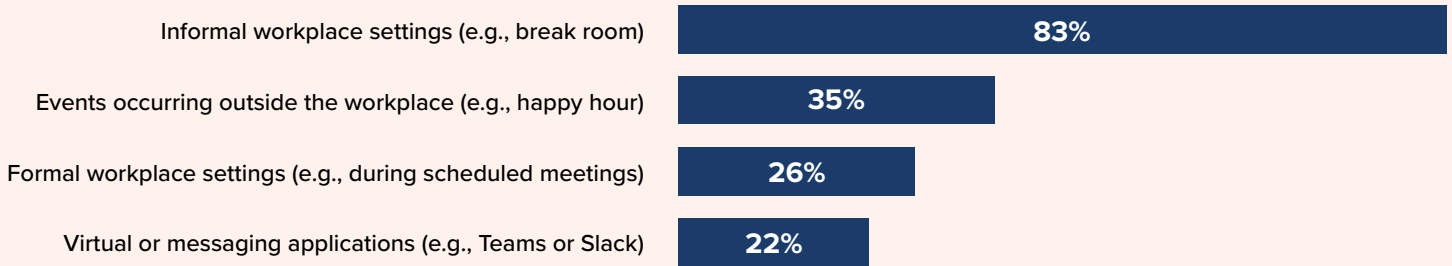
Workers who engage in political conversations are having them more often on a weekly basis than workers have difficult conversations. In fact, U.S. workers who had or witnessed political conversations were asked to provide exactly how many times they and/or people on their work teams engage in these conversations at work. On average, these workers reported that they and/or people on their work team talk about these topics approximately three times per week (2.84). This results in these workers being involved in or witnessing an average of 148 political conversations at work per year (147.81).

<sup>1</sup>This research explored “conversations about polarizing, political, and controversial topics” in the workplace. References to these conversations are shortened to “political conversations” for reporting purposes.

**Political conversations occurred most often in informal settings, involved multiple people, and centered around political themes.**

Political conversations are not only common, but they also take place in informal settings and involve multiple people. In fact, U.S. workers who had or witnessed these conversations at work said that between four and five people were typically part of these conversations on average (4.54). What's more, many of these workers said the conversations happen in informal workplace settings, such as during break room discussions. Over one-third of these workers (35%) said political conversations happen during social events outside of the workplace, such as happy hour. Around one-quarter of workers said these conversations happen in formal workplace settings (26%) or through virtual forums such as Teams or Slack (22%).

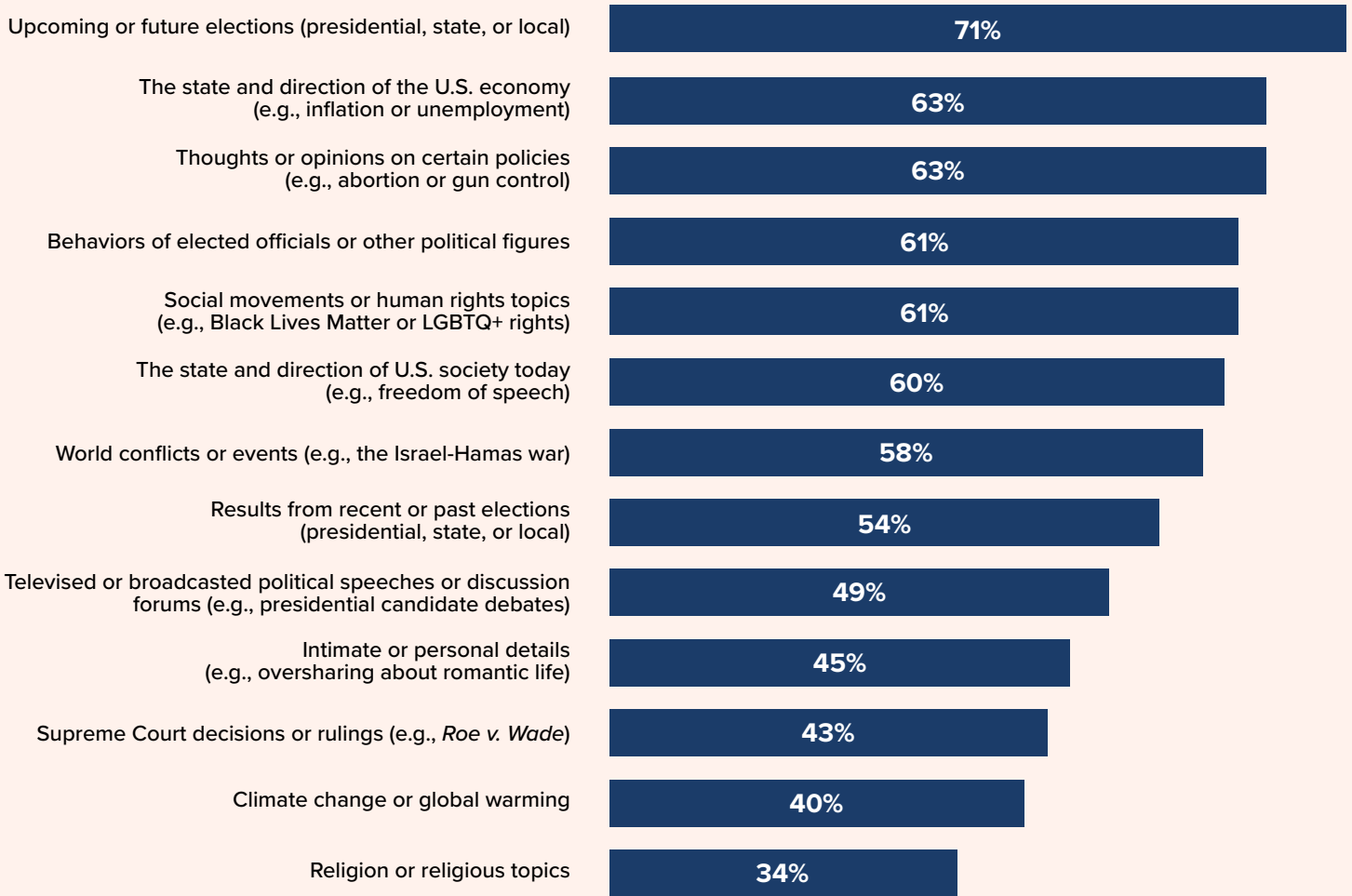
**WHERE U.S. WORKERS REPORT HAVING POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS**  
*(Survey respondents could select more than one option)*





Unsurprisingly, many of the topics reported by workers who engaged in political conversations were centered around political themes, such as upcoming elections, the state and direction of the U.S. economy, and policy stances.

## TOPICS U.S. WORKERS REPORT TALKING ABOUT DURING POLARIZING, POLITICAL, OR CONTROVERSIAL CONVERSATIONS AT WORK (Survey respondents could select more than one option)





# HOW WORKERS DESCRIBE DIFFICULT AND POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS AT WORK

**Many workers found difficult and political conversations informative, but opinions on their quality vary.**

Workers generally viewed difficult and political conversations as informative, with 47% and 46%, respectively, agreeing that these conversations provide valuable insights. However, a significant gap exists in perceived productivity: While 43% found difficult conversations productive, only 27% said the same about political discussions. This disparity may stem from the personal and polarizing nature of political topics, but also from those conversations more often being held recreationally.

To understand what makes political conversations both informative and productive, insights from 1,227 workers who said their conversations are informative or productive reveal four key factors:

- **Newfound insights**—these conversations lead to newfound insights and understandings either toward the political topic of conversation or about their co-workers' beliefs and thought processes.
- **Respect and common ground**—many workers cited the importance of respect and finding common ground during disagreements.
- **Empathy and understanding**—showing empathy and understanding are key contributors to having informative and productive political conversations.
- **Calm and level-headedness**—workers recognized the importance of remaining calm and level-headed during political conversations, which they felt leads to good conversations on these topics without getting too personal.

Despite the value of difficult conversations, they can be uncomfortable (39%) or frustrating (31%) for some, with political conversations eliciting discomfort and frustration in about half as many respondents (20% and 16%, respectively). However, only a small percentage of workers (13%) feel difficult conversations are pointless, underscoring the value workers see in these discussions.

A detailed analysis of 1,120 open-ended responses from survey respondents who described political conversations as any of these terms revealed key themes:

- **Frustration with closed-mindedness**—many workers cited frustration with those who constantly disagree or who are not open to changing their opinions, with many saying it is frustrating when others refuse to understand opposing views.
- **Lack of evidence or facts**—workers cited others' lack of evidence and facts to support their viewpoints, leading to political conversations that are pointless or otherwise negative.
- **Specific topics triggering frustration**—workers also pointed to feeling frustrated when it came to conversations about certain topics, such as U.S. Supreme Court rulings.



## Maintaining positive relationships amid disagreements.

Maintaining a positive relationship with co-workers who hold different political views can present challenges. In an analysis of 231 open-ended responses from workers with positive relationships despite political differences, several themes emerged about how to maintain these relationships:

- **Respectful and professional demeanor**—workers primarily pointed to maintaining a respectful and professional demeanor when conversing about political topics with co-workers who seldom agree with their opinion. In addition, these workers highlighted that mutual respect for one another’s viewpoints fosters a positive and collaborative work environment where these conversations can thrive.
- **Focus on common goals**—many of these workers cited that maintaining a focus on common goals and what unites them helps to enhance positive workplace relationships.
- **Avoiding contentious topics**—workers also admitted that avoiding certain topics helps maintain positive relationships with their co-workers, especially when it comes to topics for which it is clear that there will be strong disagreements.



These strategies—such as maintaining respectfulness, focusing on common goals, and avoiding contentious issues—are effective at the individual level, but addressing difficult and political conversations at the organizational level requires a more systemic approach. To elevate these practices across the organization, employers can create a culture that emphasizes these key elements.





# CONVERSATION QUALITY DRIVEN BY CIVILITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

**Highly civil and psychologically safe workplaces were common during difficult conversations, but less common during political conversations.**

With difficult and political conversations happening in workplaces today, organizations are faced with the challenge of effectively navigating these occurrences so that they result in informative and productive outcomes. Rather than attempting to address every individual occurrence, organizations can cultivate a workplace culture grounded in civility and psychological safety. By doing so, they create workplaces where such conversations are more likely to be effective and meaningful.

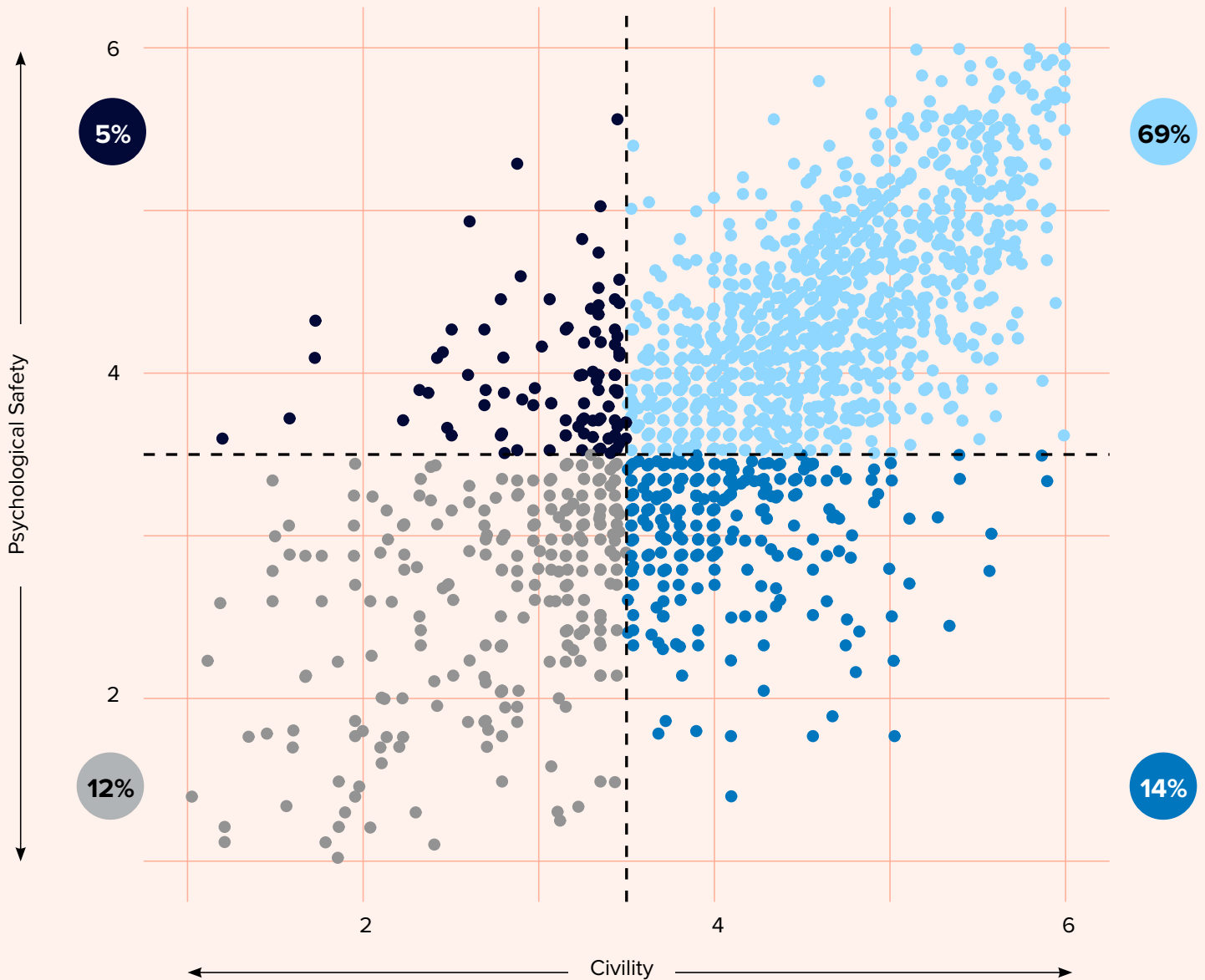
To measure how U.S. workers feel about difficult and political conversations, survey respondents were asked a series of questions<sup>2</sup> related to how they perceive these types of conversations in their workplace. Specifically, workers were measured on their perceptions of how civil (i.e., generally kind and respectful) and psychologically safe (i.e., generally accepting and safe for different opinions) their workplace is during difficult and political conversations.



<sup>2</sup>Survey respondents were assessed on their perceptions of how civil and psychologically safe their workplace is during difficult conversations and during political conversations using a six-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6) across a series of 10 statements used to measure both constructs. Scores were added together and averaged across both constructs before being placed on a scatter plot for reporting. Remaining consistent with the scale, average scores of 3.5 or lower were considered “low” and those above 3.5 were considered “high” to create four scoring quadrants.

Ratings of worker perceptions toward their workplace during **difficult conversations** revealed the following pattern:

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS—WORKER RATING QUADRANTS



### CULTURE RATINGS

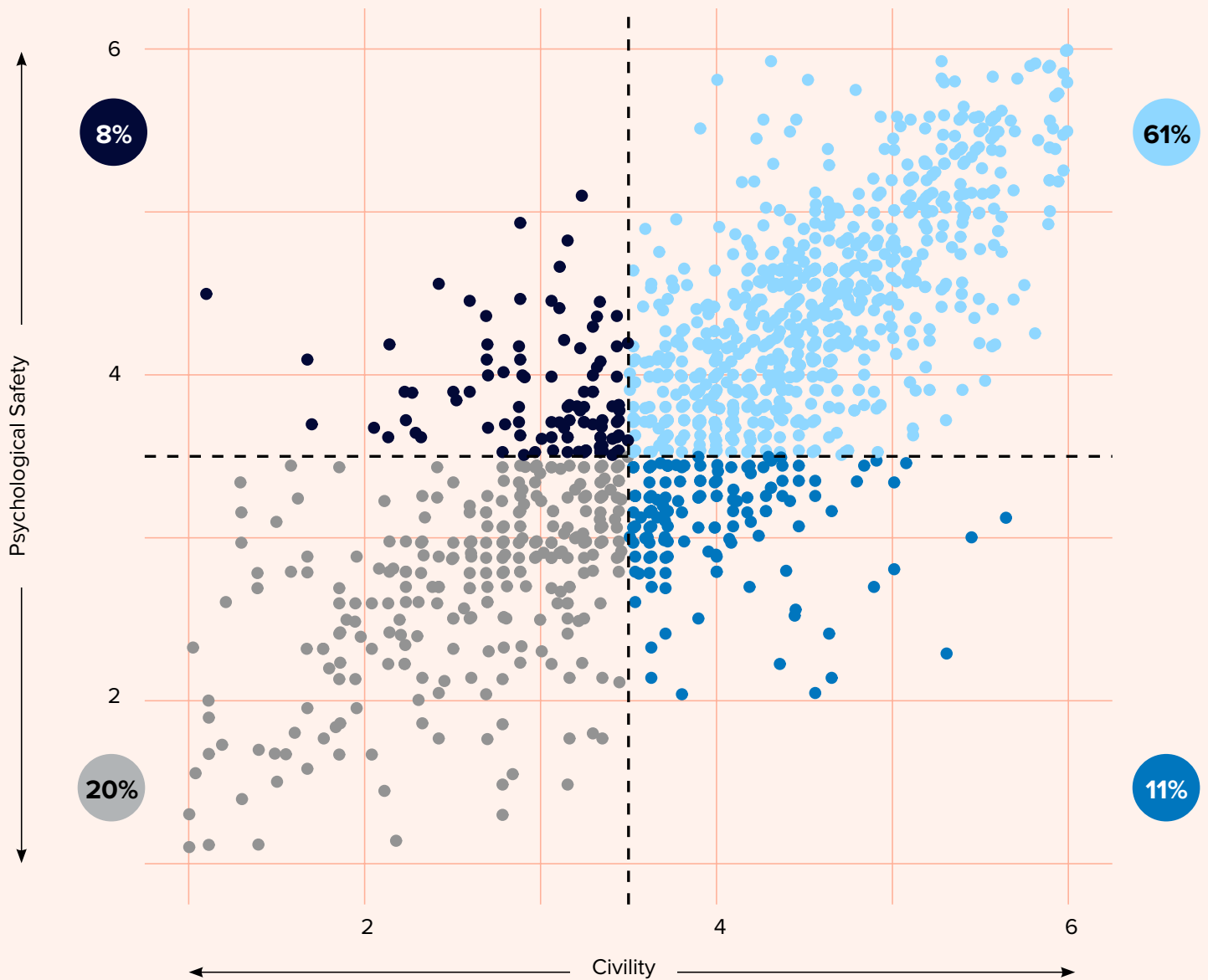
- High Civility/  
High Psych Safety
- High Civility/  
Low Psych Safety
- Low Civility/  
High Psych Safety
- Low Civility/  
Low Psych Safety

The majority of U.S. workers said they believe their workplace is civil and psychologically safe during difficult conversations, with few rating their workplace low on civility and/or psychological safety. Over two-thirds of U.S. workers (69%) said they believe their workplace is highly civil and psychologically safe during difficult conversations. On the opposite end, just 12% of workers perceived their workplace to be low on civility and psychological safety. About 14% of workers perceived their workplace to be highly civil but not psychologically safe during difficult conversations, while just 5% felt their workplace is not highly civil yet is still psychologically safe.



Evaluating workers' perceptions of their workplace during **political conversations** revealed the following pattern:

## POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS—WORKER RATING QUADRANTS



### CULTURE RATINGS

- High Civility/  
High Psych Safety
- High Civility/  
Low Psych Safety
- Low Civility/  
High Psych Safety
- Low Civility/  
Low Psych Safety

The results for political conversations were similar to those for general difficult conversations, but some notable differences emerged. First, although most workers still perceived their workplace as highly civil and psychologically safe during political conversations, the percentage was lower than it was for difficult conversations (dropping from 69% to 61%). In addition, more workers perceived their workplace as low on civility and psychological safety during political conversations than during difficult conversations (increasing from 12% to 20%). There was smaller movement among those who saw their workplace as highly civil but not psychologically safe (decreasing from 14% to 11%) and those who viewed it as psychologically safe but not highly civil during political conversations (increasing from 5% to 8%).

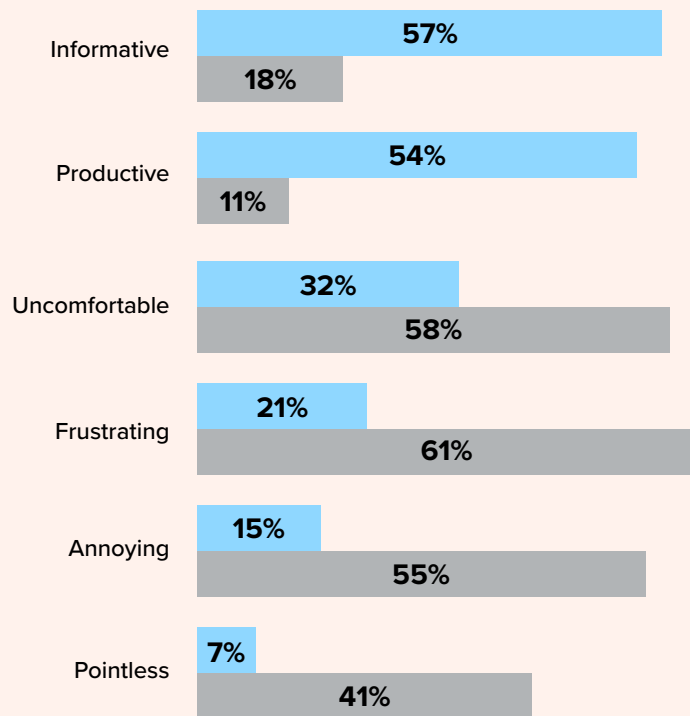
*When workers saw their workplace as civil and psychologically safe during difficult and political conversations, they were more likely to say that these conversations were informative and productive.*

When investigating how these culture ratings influence quality, organizational cultures that were highly civil and psychologically safe were more likely to have difficult conversations that workers feel are informative and productive. When cultures were not rated highly on civility and psychological safety, however, workers were more likely to rate difficult conversations as uncomfortable, frustrating, annoying, or pointless.

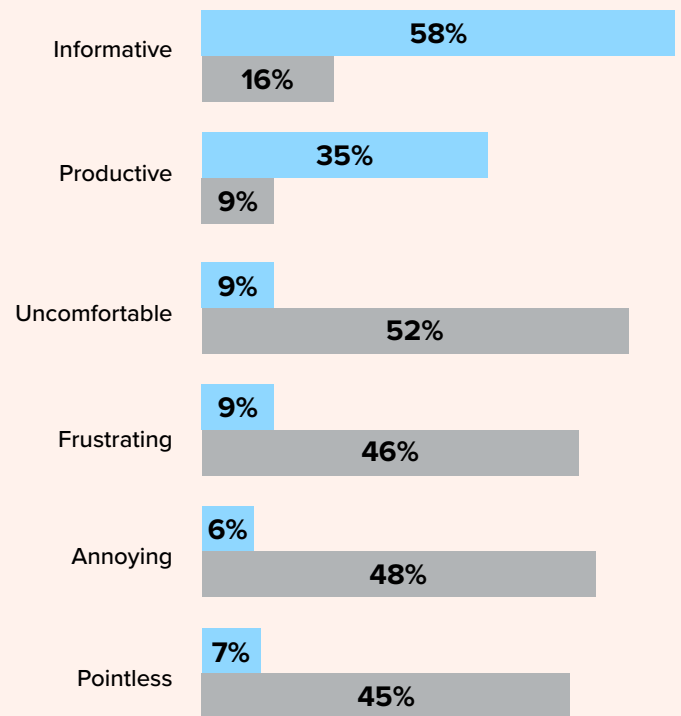
Like with difficult conversations, culture ratings also influenced how workers described political conversations in their workplace. When workers rated their workplace highly on both civility and psychological safety during political conversations, they were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that these conversations are informative and productive. On the opposite end, when workers rated their workplace low on both civility and psychological safety, they were more likely to agree or strongly agree that political conversations are uncomfortable, frustrating, annoying, or pointless.

### PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKERS WHO AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE THE FOLLOWING TERMS DESCRIBE DIFFICULT AND POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS THEY HAVE HAD ACROSS CULTURE RATINGS

#### Difficult Conversations



#### Political Conversations



■ High Civility/High Psych Safety
 ■ Low Civility/Low Psych Safety



# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EFFECTIVELY MANAGING DIFFICULT AND POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS

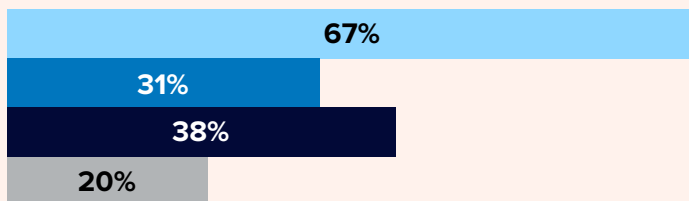
**Organizations with civil and psychologically safe cultures were more likely to have difficult conversations that contribute to organizational improvement and success.**

Fostering a civil and psychologically safe culture not only improves perceived outcomes of difficult conversations (e.g., informative or productive) but also ensures these discussions drive organizational success. Workers who rated their workplace as highly civil and psychologically safe during difficult conversations were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that these conversations are vital to their organization’s success. In fact, 67% of these workers agreed or strongly agreed that difficult conversations often address topics that ultimately benefit and improve their organization—significantly more than for other groups. In addition, 59% of these workers agreed or strongly agreed that their organization’s success is in large part due to handling difficult conversations well. Thus, when workplaces are highly civil and psychologically safe, workers were more likely to attribute their organization’s improvement and success to effective management of difficult conversations.

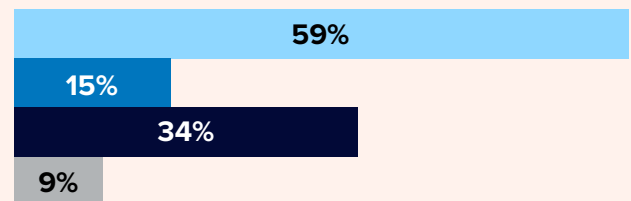


## PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKERS WHO AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS IN THEIR WORKPLACE ACROSS CULTURE RATINGS

Difficult conversations are often about topics that ultimately help my organization improve.



My workplace is successful in large part because we handle difficult conversations well.



High Civility/  
High Psych Safety

High Civility/  
Low Psych Safety

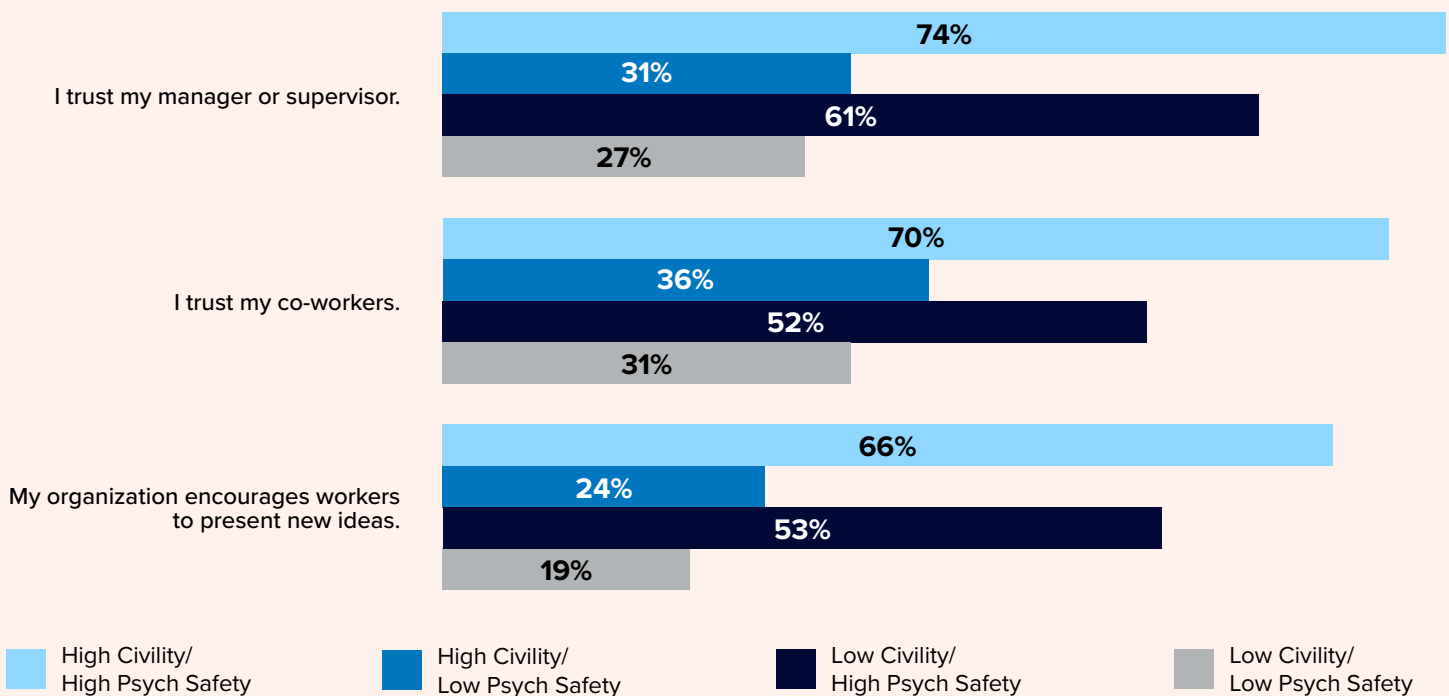
Low Civility/  
High Psych Safety

Low Civility/  
Low Psych Safety

**When civility and psychological safety were high, workers trusted others more often and were more likely to say their organization encourages new ideas.**

When workers viewed their workplaces as highly civil and psychologically safe during difficult conversations, they were more likely than other workers to show trust toward others and feel like they can present new ideas. Nearly three-quarters of U.S. workers who rated their workplace highly on civility and inclusion agreed or strongly agreed that they trust their manager or supervisor (74%) and their co-workers (70%). In addition, nearly two-thirds of these workers (66%) said that they agreed or strongly agreed that their organization encourages workers to present new ideas.

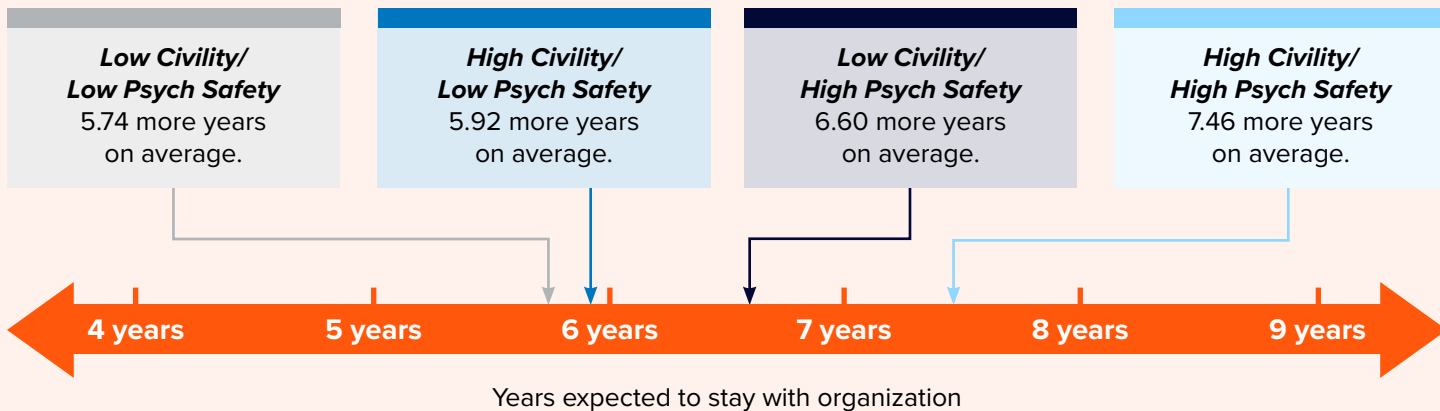
**PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKERS WHO AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS IN THEIR ORGANIZATION ACROSS CULTURE RATINGS**



**During political conversations, civil and psychologically safe workplaces saw longer employee tenure, higher job satisfaction, and stronger trust and innovation.**

Organizations may also benefit from favorable outcomes when their workers perceive their workplaces to be civil and psychologically safe during political conversations. For instance, workers who rated their workplace highly on civility and psychological safety during political conversations were likely to remain with their current organization for nearly two years longer on average than those who rated their workplace low on both constructs.

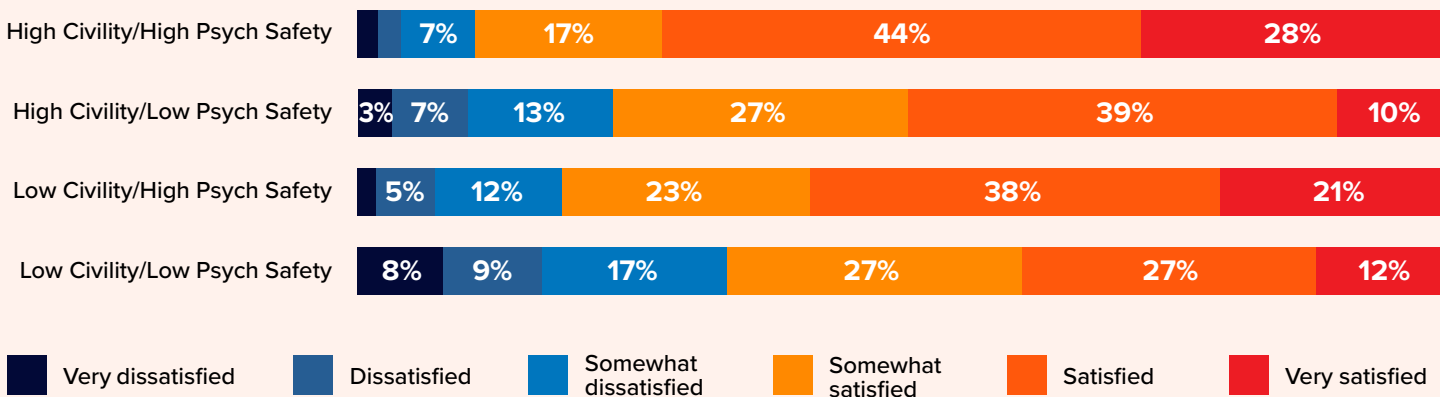
**U.S. WORKERS' INTENT TO REMAIN WITH THEIR CURRENT ORGANIZATION ACROSS POLITICAL CONVERSATION CULTURE RATINGS**



In addition, workers who rated their workplaces highly on both civility and psychological safety were more likely to report being satisfied in their job than workers who rated their workplaces low on both constructs during political conversations.



**U.S. WORKERS' JOB SATISFACTION RATINGS ACROSS POLITICAL CONVERSATION CULTURE RATINGS**

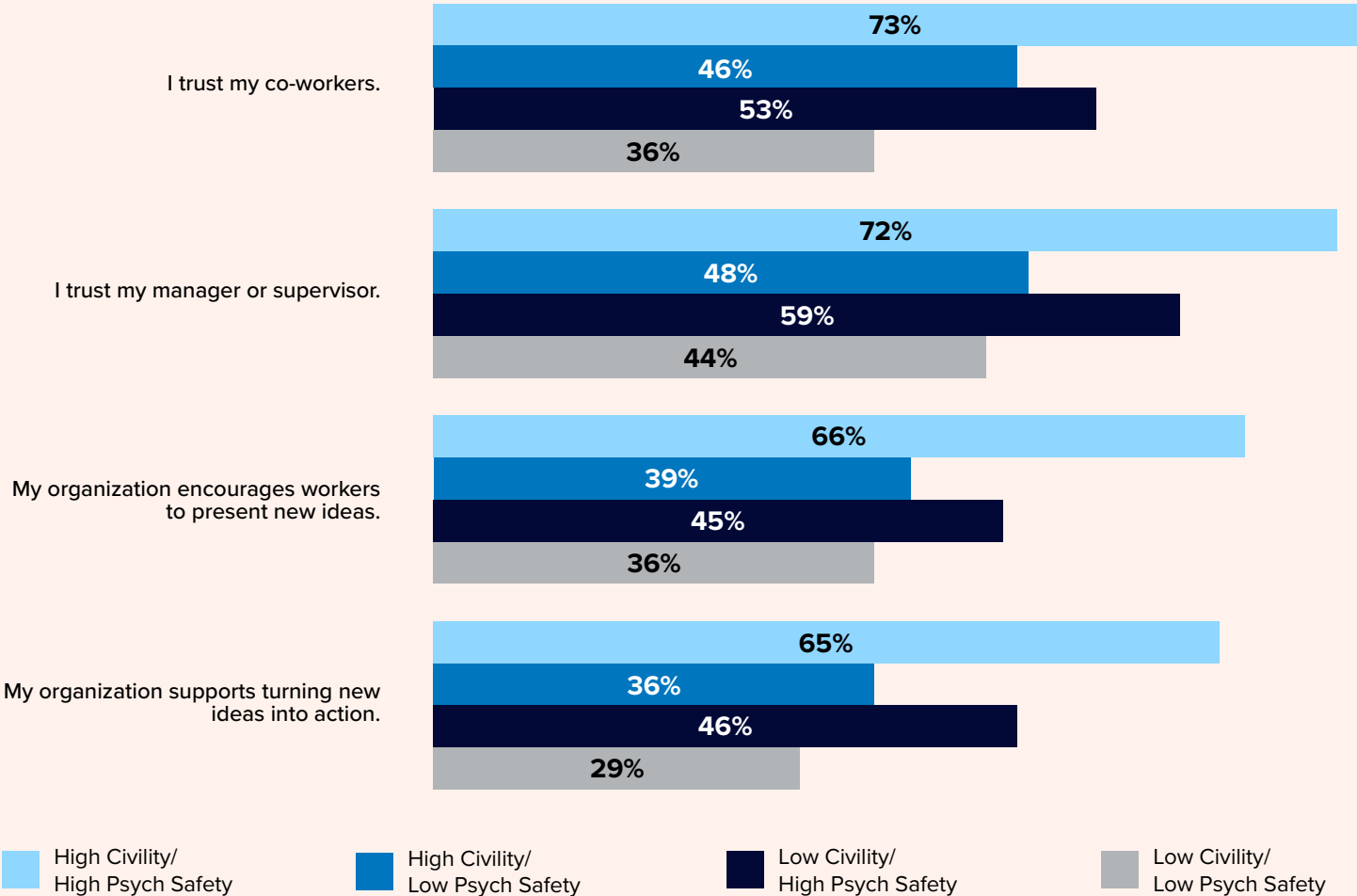






Higher ratings on civility and psychological safety during political conversations were also found to be related to stronger feelings of trust and behaviors related to innovation.

**PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKERS WHO AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT THEIR WORKPLACE ACROSS POLITICAL CONVERSATION CULTURE RATINGS**



# BEYOND CIVILITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY: TRAINING AND THE MANAGER'S ROLE

**Organizations were more likely to provide resources for effective communication than formal guidance on how to handle political conversations.**

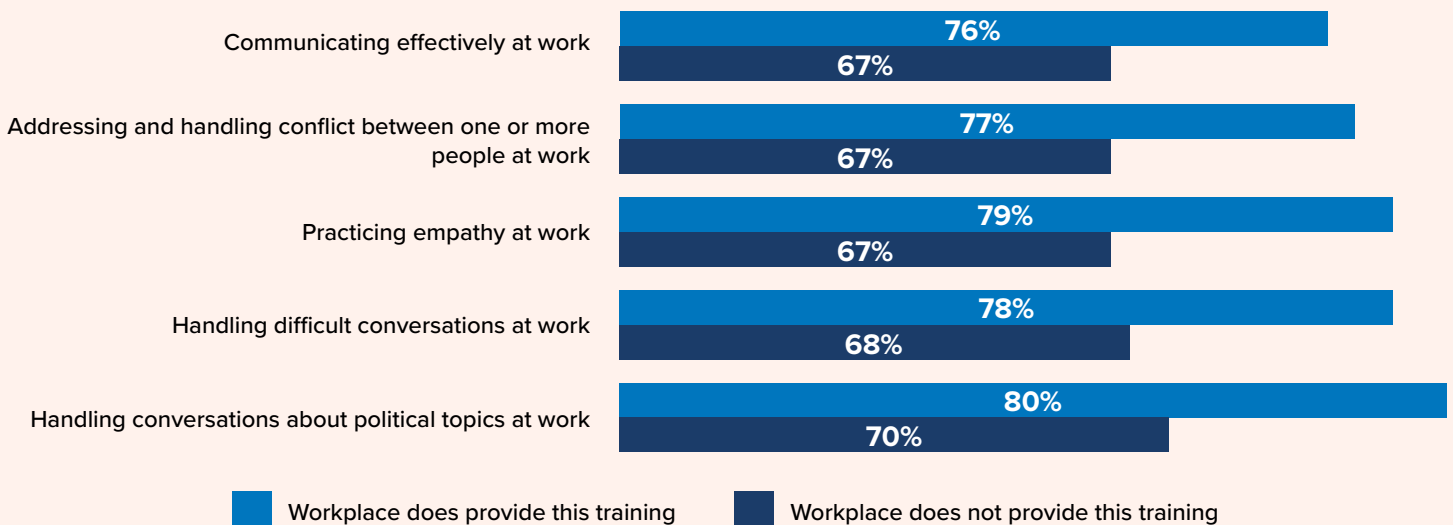
Beyond fostering a culture of civility and psychological safety, organizations can provide resources and training that address how to have better conversations at work. In fact, 60% of workers said that their workplace offers resources for communicating effectively at work and 53% said they are provided with guidance on addressing and handling conflict at work. Additionally, 44% of workers said their workplace offers resources on practicing empathy and 42% offer resources on handling difficult conversations at work. Just a quarter (24%) said their workplace offers formal guidance specifically on handling political conversations in the workplace.



**Workplaces that provided training were more likely to have workers who can handle difficult conversations effectively.**

Workers for organizations that offer training were significantly more likely to say their co-workers are well equipped to handle difficult conversations in the workplace. This may be because these workers are more likely to communicate effectively and practice empathy and can address and handle conflict between one or more people at work.

## PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKERS WHO RATE THEIR CO-WORKERS' ABILITY TO HANDLE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS AS GOOD OR VERY GOOD, GROUPED BY WHETHER THEIR WORKPLACE OFFERS EACH TRAINING TYPE

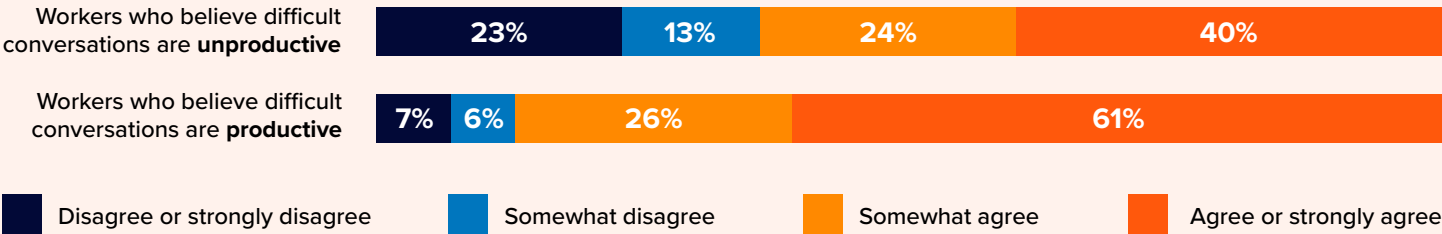




**Managers and supervisors had a significant influence on difficult conversation outcomes.**

As the keepers of organizational culture, managers and supervisors are critical to building a civil and psychologically safe environment, particularly because difficult conversations are often central to their responsibilities. Workers were asked to what degree their manager or supervisor contributed to whether they perceived difficult conversations as generally unproductive or productive. The results showed that among workers who found difficult conversations to be generally unproductive, 40% agreed or strongly agreed that their manager was the cause. On the flip side, 61% of workers who found difficult conversations to be generally productive said they agreed or strongly agreed that their manager or supervisor was the cause. These results highlight the difference managers can make in leading their workers through difficult conversations effectively, which benefits everyone involved.

**PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKERS WHO DISAGREE OR AGREE THAT MANAGERS OR SUPERVISORS CAUSE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS TO BE UNPRODUCTIVE OR PRODUCTIVE**





# A FRAMEWORK FOR BETTER DIFFICULT AND POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS AT WORK

When workers see their organization's culture as high in civility and psychological safety, difficult and political conversations alike are more meaningful and better managed. As a result, these workplaces are better positioned to face the challenges associated with these discussions. Even though this research found that many workers already see their workplace as highly civil and psychologically safe during these conversations, employers will always be working to overcome challenges in pursuit of making their workplaces better. This research supports a framework of five essential components that organizations can implement to create workplaces where workers are positioned to handle difficult and political conversations successfully.

## 1. CULTURE

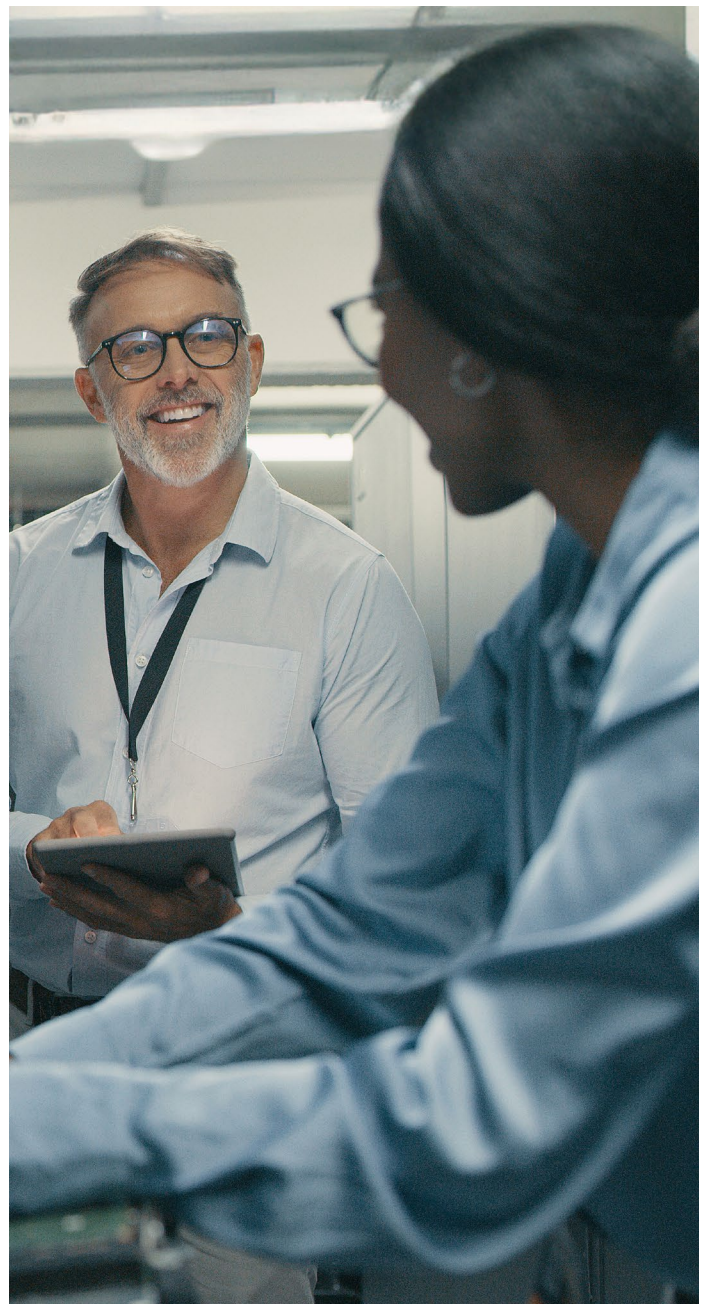
**Treat civility and psychological safety as nonnegotiable.**

When civility and psychological safety are seen as principal components to an organization's culture, organizations reap the benefits. Workers who rated their organization highly on civility and psychological safety during political conversations were likely to remain with their current organization for nearly two years longer than those who rated their organization low on these areas. In addition, these workers were more likely to be satisfied with their job, have greater trust with their co-workers and managers, and agree that their workplace supports innovation. What's more, workers who rated their workplace highly on both civility and psychological safety were nearly 4 times more likely to describe political conversations as productive and over 3.5 times more likely to say these conversations were informative compared to workers who rated their workplace low on these areas.

## 2. ROLE MODELING

**Leverage leadership to guide workers and to set a cultural example.**

Organizational leadership, especially managers and supervisors, plays a pivotal role in the success or failure of difficult conversations. When difficult conversations were productive, many workers attributed this success to their manager or supervisor. It is critical to leverage these leaders to shepherd workers through these discussions, emphasize leaders' importance in fostering a civil and psychologically safe culture, and equip leaders with the necessary resources to handle such occurrences effectively.



### 3. TRAINING

**Use training opportunities to practice having effective difficult and political conversations.**

More than half of organizations provided some type of training to address effective communication and conflict management in the workplace, but trainings that specifically address handling difficult or political conversations in the workplace were less common. By addressing these types of conversations through training and practicing effective conversational techniques, workers may feel better equipped to have meaningful conversations when these topics arise. Across all types of training surveyed, workers found their peers to be better at handling these conversations when training was available to them.

### 4. POLICY

**Set policies and guidelines that are rooted in civil conduct and psychological safety.**

Beyond providing training, employers can formalize their expectations for difficult and political conversations through policy guidelines. Establishing these policies will make clear what types of conduct are appropriate during these conversations and what behaviors are unacceptable. Additionally, when these policy guidelines emphasize civility as an expectation and support psychological safety throughout these conversations, it signals that these factors are cemented as part of the organization's cultural values.

### 5. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

**Learn and grow from challenging and contentious experiences.**

Even with a clear cultural message supported through policy, there is no way to guarantee that difficult or political conversations will be successful or that they will not escalate to the level of demanding heightened attention. When these situations do occur, it is important to obtain all the facts and determine the best path forward for the organization and all parties involved. Afterward, it is crucial to reflect on what led to these events to learn from them so workers and the organization are better equipped to handle these situations in the future. Plus, as highlighted from workers who successfully maintained positive relationships with those they often disagreed with, learning to identify certain polarizing topics to avoid conflict can be key to preserving productive workplaces where all individuals feel they belong.



# METHODOLOGY

A sample of 1,971 U.S.-based workers was surveyed between July 10 and July 22, 2024, using a third-party online panel. For the purposes of this study, participants were required to be employed by an organization. Those who were self-employed, unemployed, retired, or an independent contractor did not qualify to participate. The data was weighted to reflect the U.S. working population as of April 2024 on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity, and full-time/part-time work status.

# ABOUT SHRM

SHRM is a member-driven catalyst for creating better workplaces where people and businesses thrive together. As the trusted authority on all things work, SHRM is the foremost expert, researcher, advocate, and thought leader on issues and innovations impacting today's evolving workplaces. With nearly 340,000 members in 180 countries, SHRM touches the lives of more than 362 million workers and their families globally. Discover more at [SHRM.org](https://www.shrm.org).



Reference SHRM's *Political Conversations Playbook* for a deeper dive into building out your team's framework: [shrm.org/civility](https://www.shrm.org/civility)