

Weapons of Mass Discussion: Crucial Conversations about Politics

METHODOLOGY:

The survey was conducted via online poll from June 25th to July 9th by the authors of the bestseller, *Crucial Conversations*.

Survey respondents: 712

Margin of error is approximately 3%

Source: *Crucial Conversations* online poll

SURVEY:

Survey Statistics	
Viewed	966
Started	712
Completed	635
Completion Rate	89.19%

- 1) Have you ever had a political discussion lead to a verbal attack, insults, name calling, etc? (select all that apply)

Answer	Count	Percent
1) No	402	52.21%
2) Yes, I've found myself attacking, insulting, or name calling	75	9.74%
3) Yes, I've been attacked, insulted, or called names	293	38.05%
Total	770	100%

- 2) How does it feel when someone attacks your views on a political issue that you care deeply about?

Answer	Count	Percent
1) I enjoy it	53	7.63%
2) I don't feel anything	42	6.04%
3) I feel mildly angry, resentful, or annoyed	478	68.78%
4) I feel very angry, resentful, or annoyed	122	17.55%
Total	695	100%

- 3) How skilled are you at navigating a tough political discussion? Please select the challenges you are confident you can master during a tough political discussion.

Answer	Count	Percent
1) I'm confident I can get an angry person to calm down.	196	9.70%
2) I'm confident I can get a quiet person to open up.	223	11.04%
3) I'm confident I can get quiet or angry people to share their full and frank views	159	7.87%

4) I'm confident I can express my full and frank views without getting upset.	311	15.40%
5) I'm confident I can express my full and frank views without causing the other person to get angry or shut down.	191	9.46%
6) I'm confident I can maintain control of my emotions even when the other person has become offensive or insulting.	341	16.88%
7) I'm confident I can remain in frank and honest dialogue even when the other person has become offensive or insulting.	208	10.30%
8) I'm confident I can find common ground even when the other person has become offensive or insulting.	263	13.02%
9) I'm confident I can get the person to listen to and respect my point of view even when he or she strongly disagrees with it.	128	6.34%
Total	2020	100%

4) Have you ever had a political discussion hurt a relationship?

Answer	Count	Percent
1) No	372	58.03%
2) Yes, but the relationship quickly recovered	177	27.61%
3) Yes, and it took a long time for the relationship to recover	43	6.71%
4) Yes, and the relationship has never truly recovered	49	7.64%
Total	641	100%

5) How often have you had a political discussion hurt a relationship?

Answer	Count	Percent
1) Never	334	52.19%
2) Once or twice	255	39.84%
3) Several times	46	7.19%
4) Fairly often	3	0.47%
5) Often	2	0.31%
Total	640	100%

6) When you consider the candidates running for president and the different hot issues (i.e. the economy, the war in Iraq, the war on terrorism, healthcare costs, the price of gasoline, immigration, etc...), would you say that the current political environment is more or less controversial than the recent past?

Answer	Count	Percent
1) Much less controversial	8	1.26%
2) A bit less controversial	28	4.42%

3) About the same level of controversy	177	27.96%
4) A bit more controversial	206	32.54%
5) Much more controversial	214	33.81%
Total	633	100%

7) Do you try to avoid discussing politics?

Answer	Count	Percent
1) No	151	23.85%
2) Yes, to some extent	423	66.82%
3) Yes, at all costs	59	9.32%
Total	633	100%

8) Do you avoid discussing politics now more than in the past?

Answer	Count	Percent
1) No	376	59.40%
2) Yes, I avoid political discussions a bit more than in the past	158	24.96%
3) Yes, I avoid political discussions a lot more than in the past	77	12.16%
4) Yes, I avoid political discussions at all costs	22	3.48%
Total	633	100%

9) I find myself discussing politics most often with my:

Answer	Count	Percent
1) Coworkers	54	8.57%
2) Family members	330	52.38%
3) Friends	176	27.94%
4) Neighbors	7	1.11%
5) People at church	9	1.43%
6) People in my community	12	1.90%
7) I avoid discussing politics with anyone	42	6.67%
Total	630	100%

ANALYSIS: Authors survey analysis that contributed to press release data:

- 41% of people say they avoid discussing politics more now than ever before
- 66% say the current political race is more controversial than in recent elections
- 45% of people report that their political discussions lead to attacks, or controlling behavior. 48% say they've had a political discussion hurt one of their relationships.
- 77% of people try to avoid discussing politics; 10% of people say they avoid it "at all costs."
- 11% of people don't know how to talk politics rationally – they find themselves getting emotional, resentful, or annoyed

- 8% of people have had political discussion ruin relationships for good

These political discussions involve skills, which have two dimensions (confirmed by factor analysis).

- The first factor is emotional control—the person’s ability to control his or her own temper. Only 28% felt they could remain in frank and honest dialogue when the other person has become offensive or insulting.
- The second factor is the ability to manage the other person’s strong emotions—to move them from silence or violence into dialogue. Only 23% felt they could get a quiet or angry person to share their full and frank views.
- These two skills together predict whether a person enjoys a political discussion, whether they’ve had a political discussion hurt a relationship, and whether they will avoid discussing politics. No wonder people more than three-quarters avoid these discussions! They lack the skills to have them.