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LSC

Dietram Scheufele
Investigator - Morgridge

TRUST, VALUES, AND COMMUNICATION



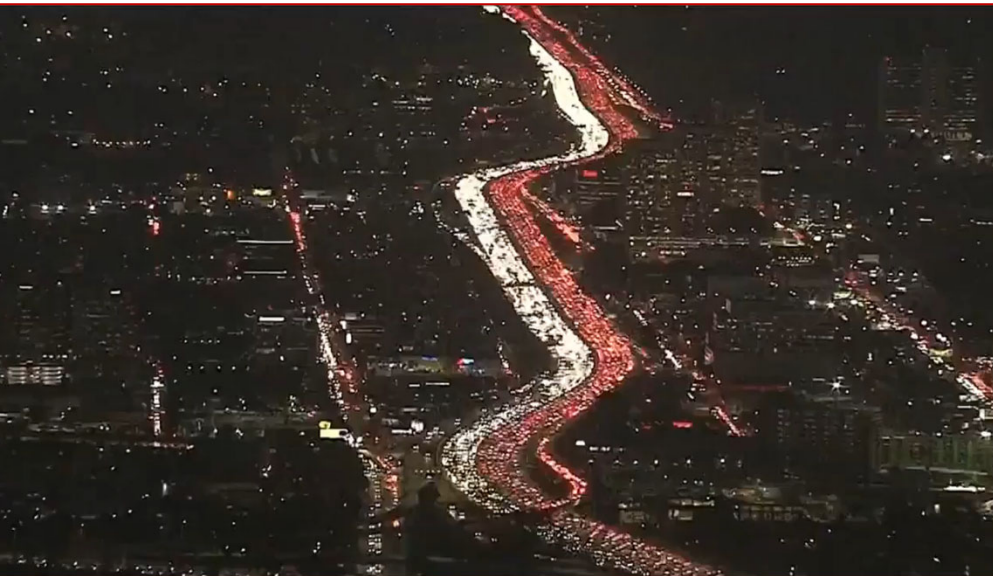
- A new era for science?
- Policy as an amalgam of facts and values
- A few unique windows of opportunity ...

TRUST, VALUES, AND COMMUNICATION



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“WICKED PROBLEMS” – POLICY DILEMMAS THAT SCIENCE CAN INFORM BUT NOT SOLVE

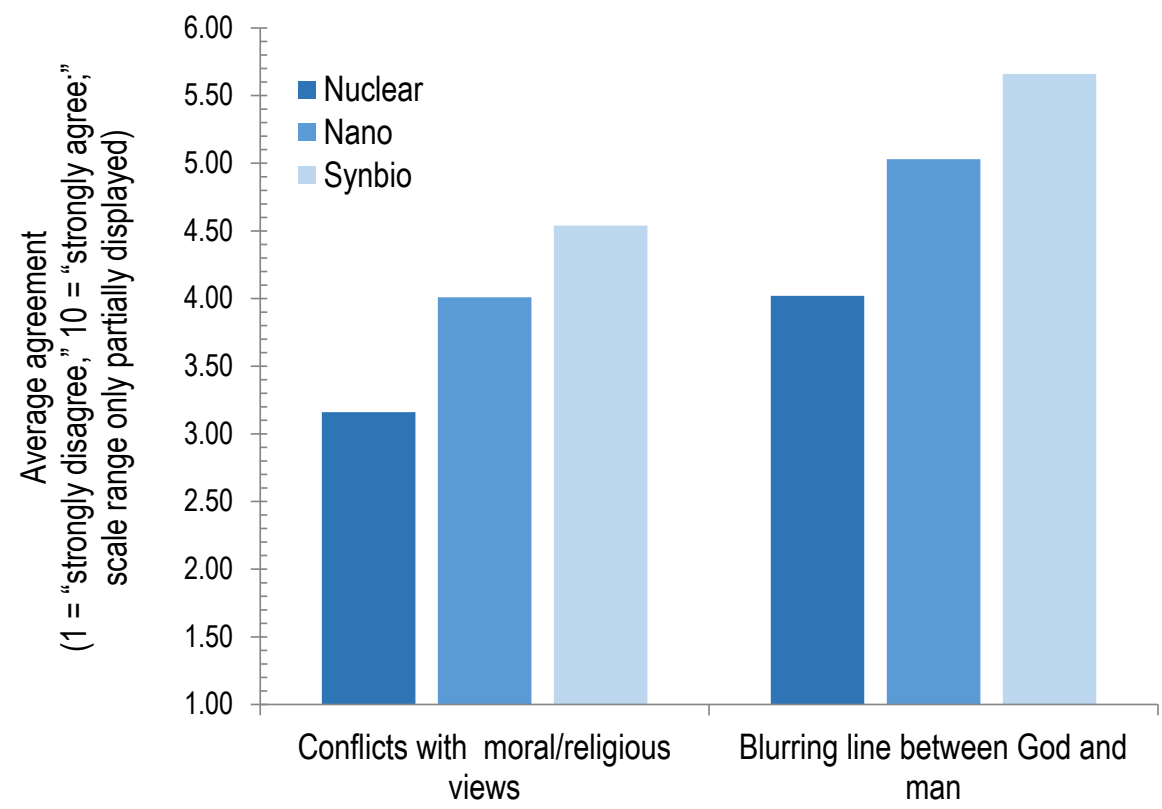


TRUST, VALUES, AND COMMUNICATION



- A new era for science?
- **Policy as an amalgam of facts and values**
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TECHNOLOGIES SEEN THROUGH VALUE LENSES



THAT'S WHY IDENTITY POLITICS IS KRYPTONITE FOR SCIENTISTS

Bill Nye Spends Most of His New Netflix Show



Neil deGrasse Tyson
@neiltyson

Follow

126.6K 380 23

On this day long ago, a child was born
by age 30, would transform the world.
Birthday Isaac Newton b. Dec 25, 1642

9:38 AM - 25 Dec 2017

77,781 Retweets

2.5K



Michael E. Mann
@MichaelEMann

This is why nobody with an "R"
name is safe to have in congress



Jonathan Cohn
@CitizenCohn

Murkowski says health care won't stop her from voting for
[huffingtonpost.com/entry/lisa-mur...](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/lisa-murkowski)

8:47 AM - 22 Nov 2017

54 Retweets 136 Likes

5

54

136



Richard Dawkins
@RichardDawkins

Follow

With respect to those meanings of "human"
that are relevant to the morality of abortion,
any fetus is less human than an adult pig

4:42 AM - 13 Mar 2013

456 Retweets 246 Likes

205

456

246

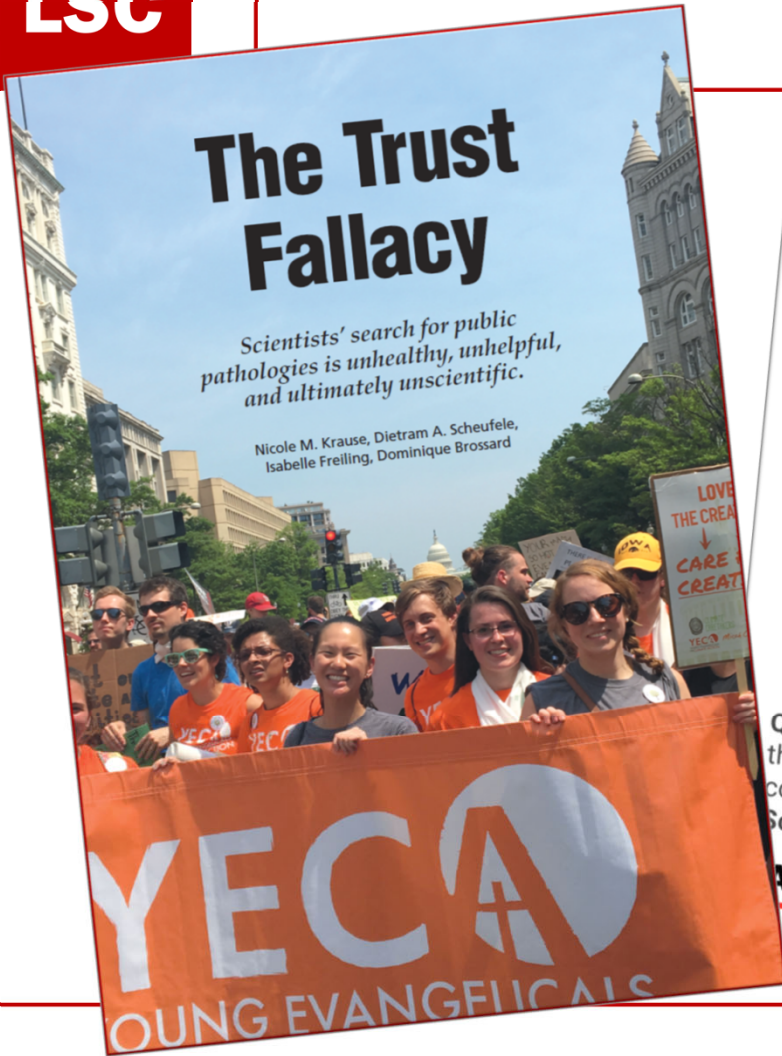
GI

Bro

If you're skeptical about human-caused climate change or the safety of

<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abo0668>

IS SCIENCE AT RISK OF BECOMING JUST YET ANOTHER INSTITUTION WE DON'T TRUST?



Large partisan gap on confidence in the scientific community remained as Republicans continued to lose trust.
Percent of adults who had a great deal of confidence



Question: [Scientific community] I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?
Source: General Social Survey, the latest conducted May 5 - December 20, 2022.

APNORC.org

Krause, N. M., Scheufele, D. A., Freiling, I., & Brossard, D. (2021). The trust fallacy. *American Scientist*, 129(1), 40-45.

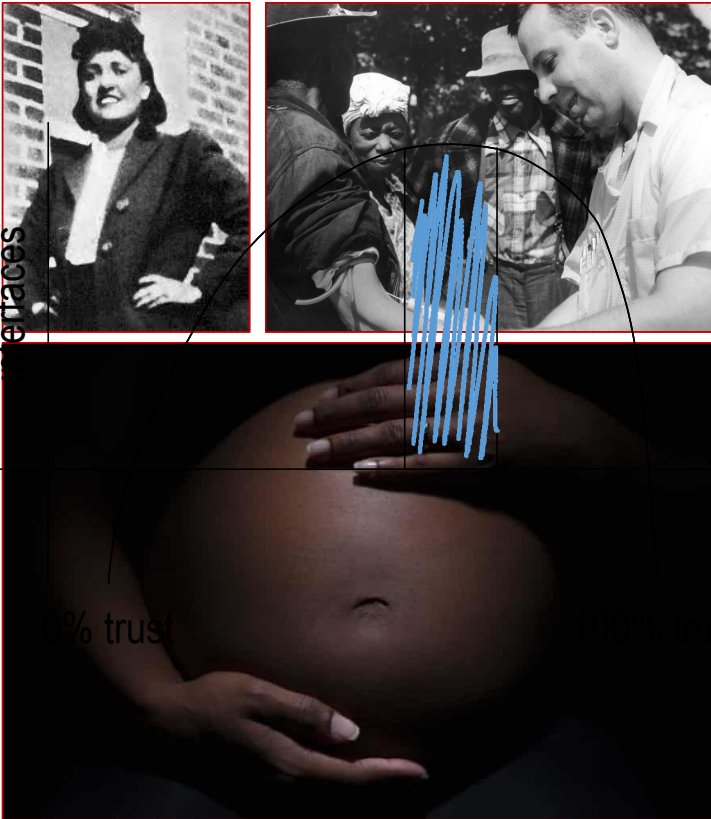
TRUST, VALUES, AND COMMUNICATION



- A new era for science?
- Policy as an amalgam of facts and trust
- **A few unique windows of opportunity ...**

FIRST, A FULLY TRUSTING CITIZENRY IS DEMOCRATICALLY UNDESIRABLE

Health of
science-society
interfaces



- How much trust in science is democratically desirable?
- How much distrust should we reasonably expect from communities?
- Listening is key, but ...

BUT HOW MUCH ARE WE WILLING TO LISTEN? AND WHAT IF COMMUNITIES ACTUALLY SAY NO?

GOALS

Avoid potential
controversy

Educate
the public

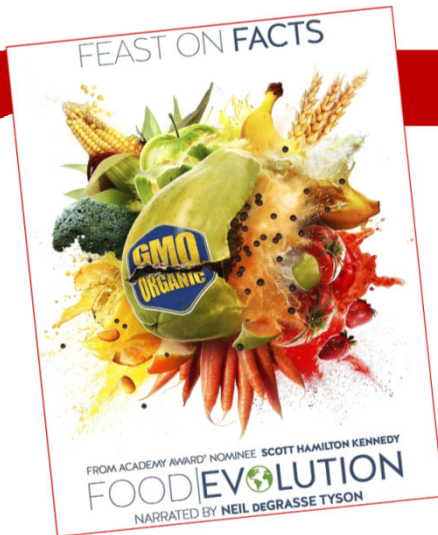
Build democratic
capacity through
deliberation

Widen
representation
of voices

Solicit input
on value
debates

Enable
responsible
innovation

Shape
policy



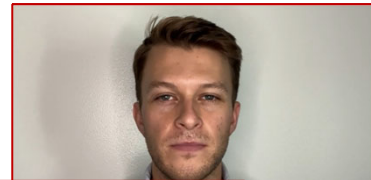
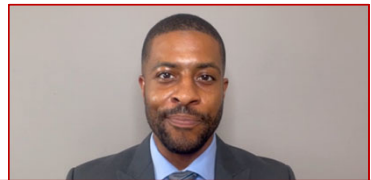
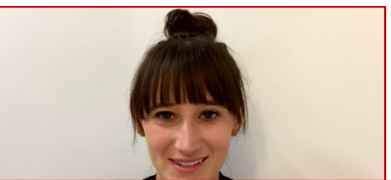
PRINCIPLES

Legitimate voices



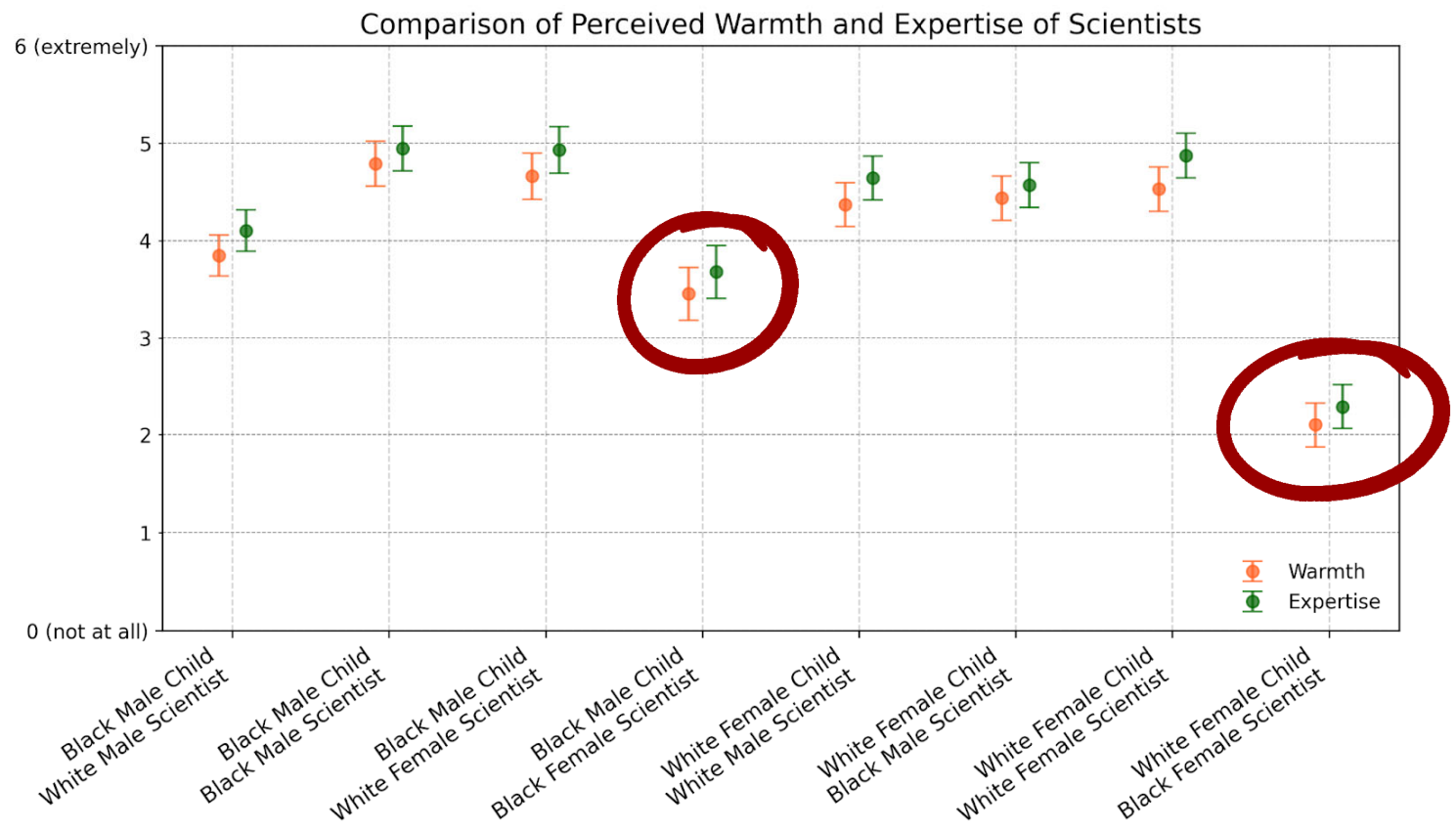


SECOND, FINDING TRUSTED MESSENGERS IS A LOT HARDER THAN IT MIGHT SEEM



Eom, D., Molder, A., Tosteson, H. A., Howell, E. L., DeSalazar, M., Kirschner, E., Goodwin, S. S., & Scheufele, D. A. (2025). Race and gender biases persist in public perceptions of scientists' credibility. *Scientific Reports*, 15, 11021.

INTERSECTIONALITY AT ITS WORST?



Eom, D., Molder, A., Tosteson, H. A., Howell, E. L., DeSalazar, M., Kirschner, E., Goodwin, S. S., & Scheufele, D. A. (2025). Race and gender biases persist in public perceptions of scientists' credibility. *Scientific Reports*, 15, 11021.

THIRD, LANGUAGE OFTEN MATTERS MORE THAN THE SCIENCE IT DESCRIBES ...



- Language matters ... early on
- Once a frame is established in public discourse, it's virtually impossible to change
- And sometimes we activate mental stories inadvertently with well-meaning messages ...

... OR TO 'FRAME' THINGS MORE POSITIVELY

Tewksbury, D., & Scheufele, D. A. (2009). News framing theory and research. In J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed., pp. 17-33). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.



- Framing is an integral part of how we all process information
 - why we should pay attention
 - why new technologies are worth investment or risk (or not)
 - connect emerging science to what we know and what matters to us (values, beliefs, priorities, etc.)

THANK YOU



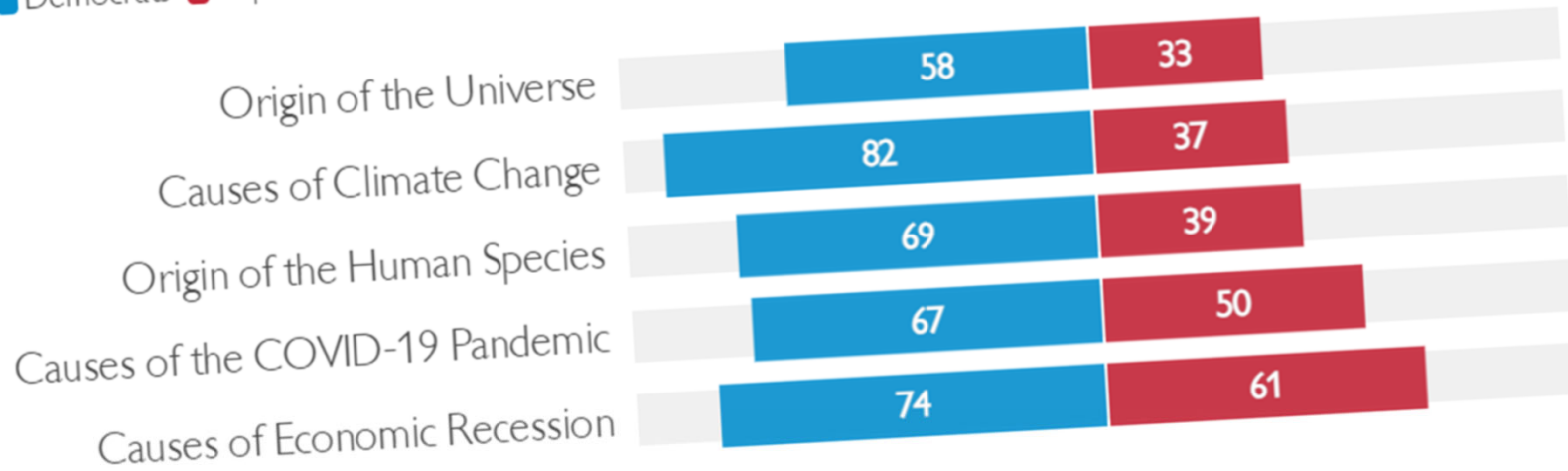
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SCIENCE AND THE PUBLIC: A SOMETIMES DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Percentage of Americans who think scientists and researchers understand the following very or fairly well

■ Democrats ■ Republicans



Note: Figures may not total 100 percent due to rounding.
Survey of US adults (N=5,050).
Source: American Perspectives Survey, May 2023.

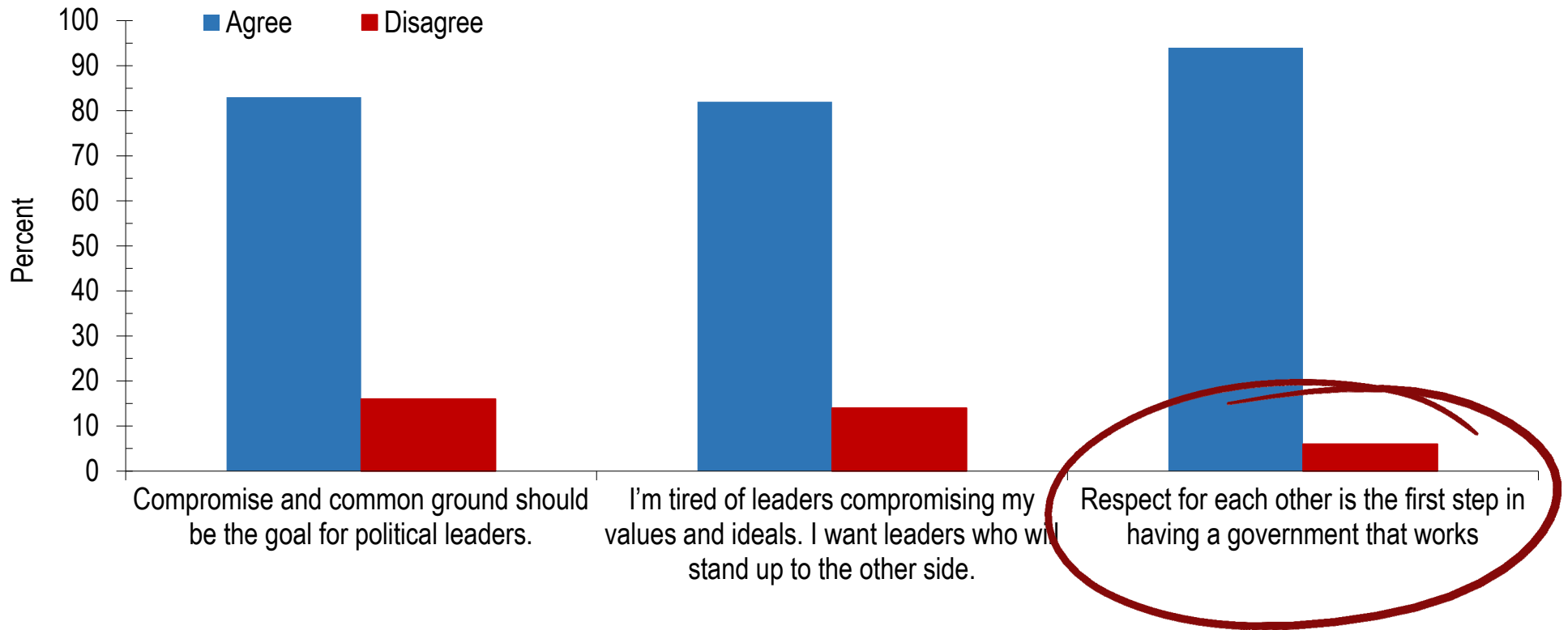


COVID-19 AS THE PERFECT STORM ?



- Need to inform policy in real time with
 - science surrounded by uncertainties, and
 - under immense public scrutiny
- Political realities of deeply disruptive interventions
- Blurring lines between expertise and advocacy

IN FACT, COMPROMISE MEANS THAT “OUR SIDE” DOESN’T ALWAYS “WIN”



OUR “JUST FOLLOW THE SCIENCE” RESPONSE AS AN UTTERLY UNPRODUCTIVE MANTRA



WHY WE ALL LOOK AT THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY

Scheufele, D. A. (2014). Science communication as political communication. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(Supplement 4), 13585-13592. doi:10.1073/pnas.1317516111

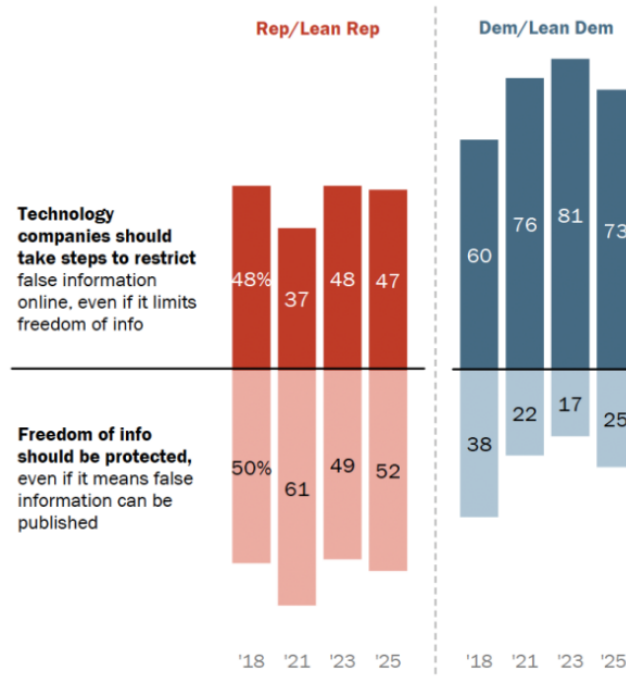


- Motivated reasoning
 - (Dis)confirmation biases
 - Biased assimilation
 - Identity protection
- The same piece of (scientific) information means different things to all of us ...

IS SCIENCE AT RISK OF BECOMING JUST YET ANOTHER INSTITUTION WE DON'T TRUST?

Democrats less likely than in 2023 to support tech firms taking steps to limit false information online

% of U.S. adults who say ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 24-March 2, 2025.

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