

THE STUDY CHARGE

At SHRM we believe civility is a cornerstone of workplace culture that allows people and business to thrive. Civility fosters respect, empathy, and the productive exchange of ideas and opinions. SHRM believes everyone can play a role in transforming workplaces to be more civil, one conversation at a time.

To understand the current state of civility and its impact across the United States, SHRM launched the Civility Index. This ongoing exploratory research initiative aims to track trends in civility within American society and workplaces.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1. Track Civility Trends:** Monitor civility trends across the nation.
- 2. Gain a Deeper Understanding of Civility:** Understand how civility and incivility manifest, who engages in them, and the factors that contribute to them.
- 3. Develop Actionable Insights:** Provide practical takeaways that business professionals and organizations can use to promote civility within their workplaces.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The Civility Index currently focuses on two key areas:

- 1. Society-level civility:** This examines civility in everyday life, both inside and outside of work.
- 2. Workplace-level civility:** This examines civility specifically during or at work.

MEASURING CIVILITY

The Civility Index is a pulse survey designed to gauge the prevailing levels of civility and incivility in the workplace and in society. Survey respondents indicate how often they have experienced or witnessed uncivil behavior over the past month. These experiences are assessed from both a societal and workplace perspective. Scores from each perspective are calculated separately and presented on a 100-point scale. Further, respondents provide detailed accounts of the number of uncivil acts experienced or witnessed to determine an average per day. Reported acts of incivility include instances where respondents experienced or witnessed incivility either directly or indirectly, not necessarily where they were the targets or perpetrators of any uncivil behaviors.

CIVILITY SCORING

When interpreting and scoring the Civility Index (both Society and Workplace levels), it is useful to create categories that represent placement and positioning for Civility Index scores. These categories (or zones) help transform a single score into a more actionable and insightful metric for businesses to understand and improve civility. We created these zones by analyzing the distribution of current scores, considering ease of interpretability, and ensuring the categories lead to differentiated outcomes. A five-zone system emerged as the most effective way to interpret and report Civility Index scores.

CIVILITY INDEX ZONES



KEY FINDINGS

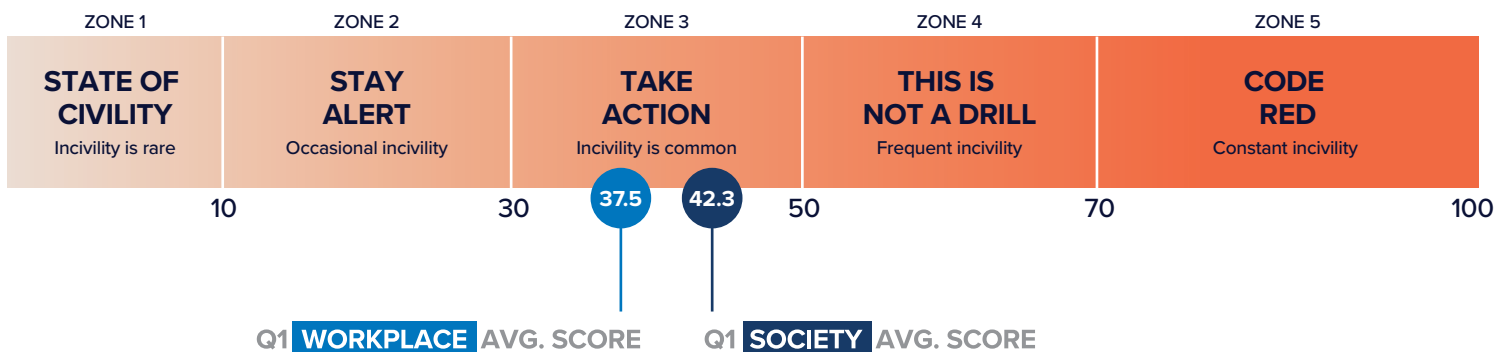
The initial data provides valuable insights into the current state of civility and reveals that incivility is not a rare experience among U.S. workers. The Civility Index is an evolving research study, however, and will continue to gather data over time to comprehensively understand civility’s role in today’s workplaces and society.

Q1 2024 CIVILITY INDEX SCORES

On average, U.S. workers scored a **42.3 out of 100** on the Civility Index when asked about incivility they experienced or witnessed **in their everyday lives** (i.e., both in and out of work) over the past month (Society-level).

When evaluated in the workplace, U.S. workers scored an average of **37.5 out of 100** on the Civility Index when asked about incivility they experienced or witnessed **while at work** over the past month (Workplace-level). This means that in general, workers rate their workplaces as more civil than what they otherwise experience in their everyday lives.

Both the Q1 Civility Index Society score of 42.3 and Workplace score of 37.5 fall in Zone 3, indicating incivility occurs to a moderate degree in workers’ everyday lives and while at work, on average. This signals a need for organizations to act to prevent incivility from rising to detrimental levels.



THE BUSINESS IMPACT OF CIVILITY INDEX ZONES

There are significant differences in work-related outcomes when civility scores move just from Zone 1 (the lowest possible zone) to Zone 3 (where both the average Civility Index Society-level and Workplace-level scores sit). This underscores the impactful role even small improvements in civility can play.

- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **over 3.5 times more likely to describe their organization's culture as poor** than workers in Zone 1 (22% versus 6%).
- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **over 2.5 times more likely to disagree that they feel included at their current organization** than workers in Zone 1 (21% versus 8%).
- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **significantly more likely to say they are likely to leave their current job in the next 12 months** than workers in Zone 1 (32% versus 18%).
- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **over twice as likely to disagree that they feel safe to voice disagreements or express concern at work** than workers in Zone 1 (27% versus 12%).
- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **over 3 times more likely to agree that they feel indifferent or do not care about doing a good job at work** than workers in Zone 1 (20% versus 6%).
- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **over 3 times more likely to say their job often causes them to have physical reactions (e.g., headaches, fatigue)** than workers in Zone 1 (36% versus 11%).
- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **over 2.5 times more likely to say they have a poor work/life balance** than workers in Zone 1 (22% versus 8%).
- U.S. workers in Zone 3 are **nearly twice as likely to say they are dissatisfied with their everyday life** than workers in Zone 1 (20% versus 11%).

Future research on the Civility Index will explore the impact of zone placement on more societal-level outcomes, such as the impact of zone placement on trust and the effect on conversations.

NUMBER OF UNCIVIL ACTS WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED

U.S. workers experienced or witnessed just over one act of incivility per day in their everyday lives (i.e., both at and outside of work) on average in the past month. This results in U.S. workers collectively having experienced or witnessed over 171 million acts or instances of incivility in their everyday lives per day, on average, in the past month. Additionally, workers have experienced or witnessed the following number of uncivil acts in their everyday lives per each time period over the past month:

- **Average per hour in everyday life:** 7,154,723 uncivil acts experienced or witnessed.
- **Average per minute in everyday life:** 119,245 uncivil acts experienced or witnessed.
- **Average per second in everyday life:** 1,987 uncivil acts experienced or witnessed.

At this rate, U.S. workers are projected to collectively experience or witness over 62.8 billion acts or instances of incivility in their everyday lives in 2024.

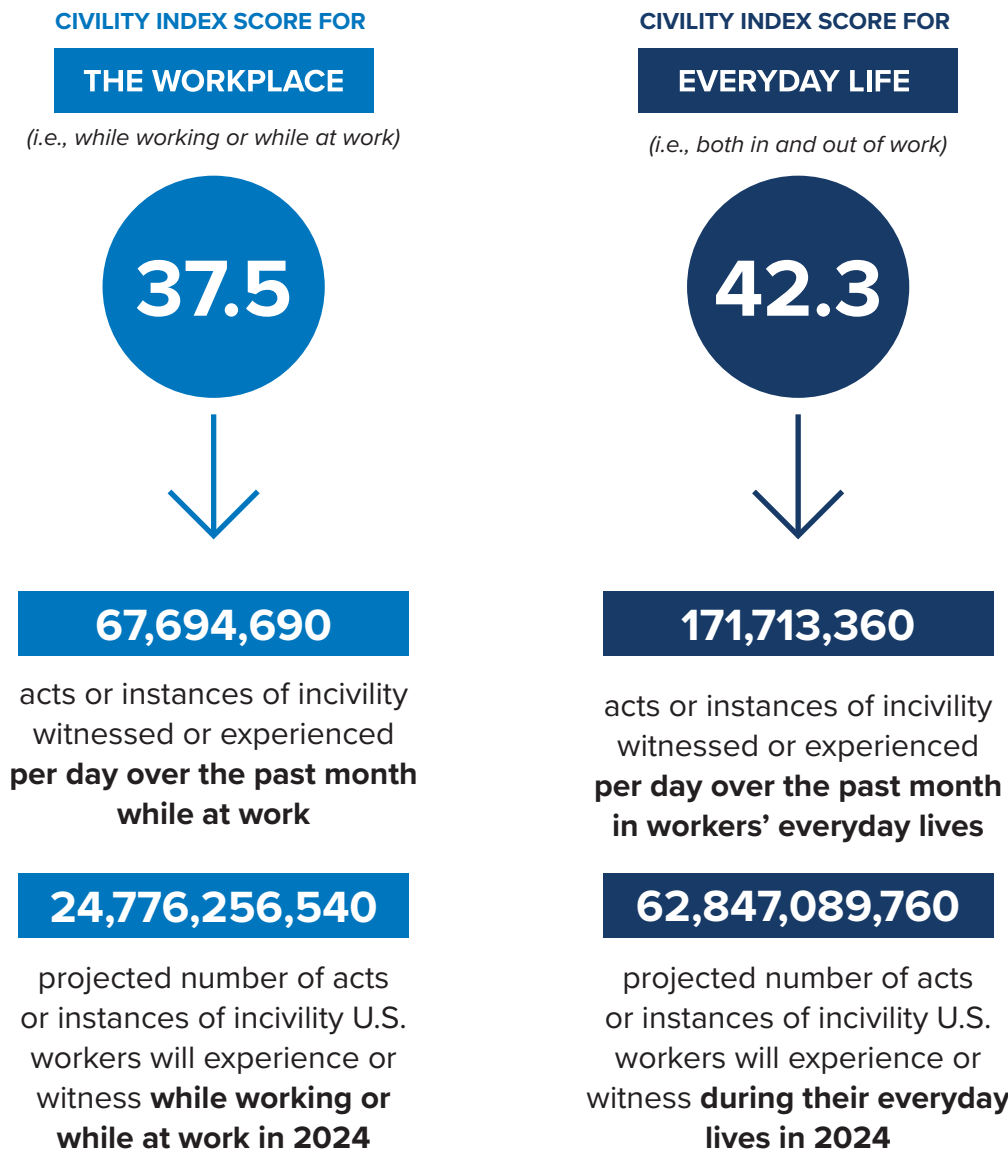
NUMBER OF UNCIVIL ACTS WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED

Of the more than 171 million acts or instances of incivility U.S. workers have collectively experienced or witnessed on average per day in the past month, about 39.4 percent of these occurred while they were at work. This results in U.S. workers having experienced or witnessed over 67.5 million acts or instances of incivility at work per day, on average, in the past month. Additionally, workers experienced or witnessed the following number of uncivil acts at work per each time period over the past month:

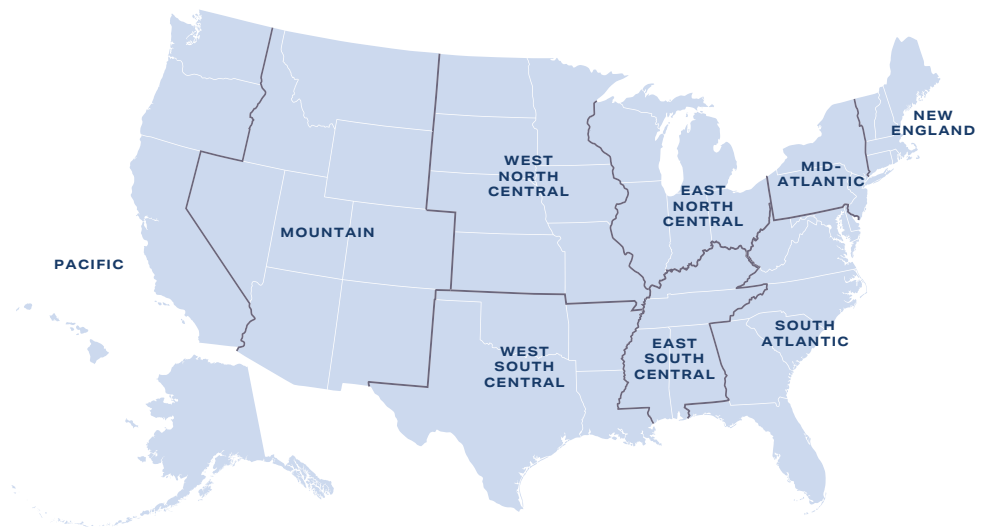
- **Average per hour at work:** 2,820,612 uncivil acts experienced or witnessed.
- **Average per minute at work:** 47,010 uncivil acts experienced or witnessed.
- **Average per second at work:** 784 uncivil acts experienced or witnessed.

At this rate, U.S. workers are projected to experience or witness over 24.7 billion acts or instances of incivility at work in 2024.

When connected to the Civility Index, these findings demonstrate that a score of 42.3 (everyday life) and 37.5 (workplace) can result in a notable number of uncivil acts or instances.



INCIVILITY ACROSS THE UNITED STATES



To gain a deeper understanding of civility, SHRM examined how the daily rate of incivility varies across regions. By analyzing incivility at the regional level, organizations can better understand the current state of civility in the regions where they operate. These insights could enable more tailored interventions and strategies to promote civility.

DAILY UNCIVIL EXPERIENCES IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND AT WORK ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Exploring the average number of uncivil acts witnessed or experienced per day in everyday life and in the workplace across the United States, workers from the East South Central portion of the country reported higher daily incivility than the rest of the country. Respondents from this area report experiencing or witnessing nearly twice the national average of incivility per day in their everyday lives (2.02 acts per day compared with national average of 1.04 per day) and over three times the national average of incivility at work (1.26 acts per day compared with national average of 0.41 acts per day).

DIFFERENCES BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Politics and political affiliation are often cited as one factor that contributes to incivility. With 2024 being a presidential election year in the United States, many will be expecting politics to once again be at the center of arguments and other forms of uncivil acts.

Results from this research found differences between workers who are affiliated with the two major U.S. political parties across various portions of the country, including:

- Republican workers in the East South Central division experience or witness incivility in their **everyday lives** at over three times the national average (3.17 acts per day compared with national average of 1.04 acts per day), while Democrats in the same area experience or witness nearly four times less than the national average (0.28 acts per day compared with national average of 1.04 acts per day).
- Republican workers in the East South Central division experience or witness incivility **at work** at over five times the national average (2.16 acts per day compared with national average of 0.41 acts per day).
- Democratic workers in the South Atlantic division experience or witness incivility **at work** at more than twice the national average (0.87 acts per day compared with national average of 0.41 acts per day).

Note: Reported acts of incivility include instances where respondents experienced or witnessed incivility either directly or indirectly, not necessarily where they were the targets or perpetrators of any uncivil behavior.

PERCEPTIONS OF CIVILITY TODAY

More than half (58%) of U.S. workers believe that, in general, people in society are uncivil. What's more, 39% of U.S. workers say people are less or much less civil today than 1 year ago, and more than half of U.S. workers believe people in society are less or much less civil today than 3 years ago (53%), 5 years ago (55%), and 10 years ago (56%). When thinking about the workplace, however, nearly three-quarters of U.S. workers (74%) said they believe people in their workplace are generally civil today. Twenty-six percent of U.S. workers believe people in their workplace are generally uncivil.

WHO IS INVOLVED AND WHERE INCIVILITY TAKES PLACE

When asked about the people or groups involved in the acts or instances of incivility they experienced or witnessed in the past month, 80% of U.S. workers said that strangers in public spaces were involved, 46% said service providers or staff at a business they patronize were involved, and 44% said their co-workers or peers at work were involved.

Over half of U.S. workers (53%) who have experienced or witnessed incivility said it occurred in a store or while they were shopping, 45% said they experienced or witnessed incivility online or on social media, and 37% said they experienced or witnessed incivility at a restaurant or bar.

INCIVILITY IMPACT ON WORKPLACES

Nearly two-thirds of U.S. workers (66%) agree or strongly agree that incivility reduces productivity, and 59% agree or strongly agree that incivility causes employee morale to decline.

Fewer workers agree that their workplaces are well equipped to handle instances of incivility. In fact, just 25% of U.S. workers believe their manager or supervisor are effective at handling incivility in the workplace. Thirty-seven percent of U.S. workers agree or strongly agree that managers and supervisors often fail to address acts or instances of incivility in the workplace, and over one-quarter (26%) agree or strongly agree that managers and supervisors do not notice acts or instances of incivility at work. What's more, less than one-third of workers (31%) agree or strongly agree that respectful treatment is the norm in their workplace.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 1,611 U.S.-based workers was surveyed between March 6 to March 13, 2024, using a third-party online panel. For the purposes of this study, participants were required to be employed by an organization and be 18 years of age or older. Those who were self-employed, retired, or an independent contractor did not qualify to participate. Data is weighted to reflect the U.S. working population as of January 2024 on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity, age, full-time/part-time status, and location based on U.S. Census divisions.

Citation: SHRM Q1 Civility Index, April 2024.

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)