

Poll: Lack of Civility Problematic Before Arizona Shootings

✖ While some are moving to politicize the Arizona shootings, others are simply trying to understand it how everyday Joes feel about the way America discusses politics.

A new poll reveals that the public viewed the lack of civility in American politics as a serious problem even before the Tucson shootings.

The PRRI/RNS Religion News Survey found that a whopping 80 percent of Americans say the lack of civil or respectful discourse in our political system is a “serious problem”—and Americans across the religious and political spectrums share this view. Nearly half of Americans (49 percent) said that the lack of civility was a “very serious problem.”

“These survey findings suggest that renewed calls for civility by President Obama and other political and religious leaders will find broad support among Americans across political, religious, and ideological lines,” says Dr. Robert P. Jones, CEO of PRRI.

Fifty-nine percent of Americans believe that people are more divided over politics than they used to be. More specifically, 41 percent of Americans believe the 2010 election was generally more negative than past elections. With Democratic candidates facing significant losses at the ballot box in November, self-identified Democrats were significantly more likely than Republicans to say that the election was more negative, 51 percent and 26 percent respectively, the poll finds.

“Though so many Americans view the lack of civility and

respect as a serious problem, few see evidence that America's political leaders are working to overcome differences," says Daniel Cox, Director of Research for PRRI. Only 21 percent of Americans believe national political leaders work well together to get things done despite differences.

What's your take? Have political discussions crossed the civility line in America?