

# WHAT THE FUTURE: INFLUENCE

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brands' most valuable media PAGE 8

How pro product reviews retain trust  
in the era of influencers PAGE 12

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change in a polarized future PAGE 16

What business can learn from faith leaders  
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**+** An influencer platform CEO, an expert  
reviewer, a political speechwriter, a  
corporate lobbyist and a bishop discuss the  
future of influence in the age of low trust,  
influencers and AI

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# How the art of influence will shift in a splintered future



89%

of Americans are open to changing their opinion or beliefs on which household products or goods to buy.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

In a 1980s debate, a Michigan state representative railed against a proposed law as “a pretty good lesson in mass hysteria created by a corporate-controlled media.”

The representative who introduced the legislation was trying to change a particularly dangerous behavior. But to do that, he had to change minds, which was going to be tricky.

The topic at hand was the incredibly divisive issue of *seat belt usage*. And this was Michigan, home of the biggest automakers on the planet and the people who assembled them. Only 14% of Americans were using seat belts then.

## The tools of influence and persuasion

So how were we, as a nation that is now 90% seat-belt bucklers, convinced? All the tools of influence came into play:

**Marketing:** “Click It or Ticket” campaigns are one example of widespread, public-opinion advertising over the generations.

**Facts:** A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study found that between 1960 and 2012 seat belts saved 330,000 lives.

**Experience:** How many stories have you heard of people who avoided serious injury by wearing seat belts or tragically didn’t because they didn’t?

**Policy:** Every state (except New Hampshire) has seat belt laws, and the federal government has required their installation in cars since 1968.

Those tools are all still useful, but how they get used and where, and to what scale are all changing. And for whatever your organization is trying to persuade people on there’s another group out there trying to persuade them differently. So how can you influence people to move toward the future you hope to achieve?

Part of the challenge of marketing is that we're living in what Ipsos Global Trends calls "Splintered Societies." The U.S. just came out of a bruising election where one party seized somewhat complete power, but by razor-thin margins. Billions of dollars were funneled into the election in efforts to influence the undecided voters to join one side, and the decided voters to actually show up.

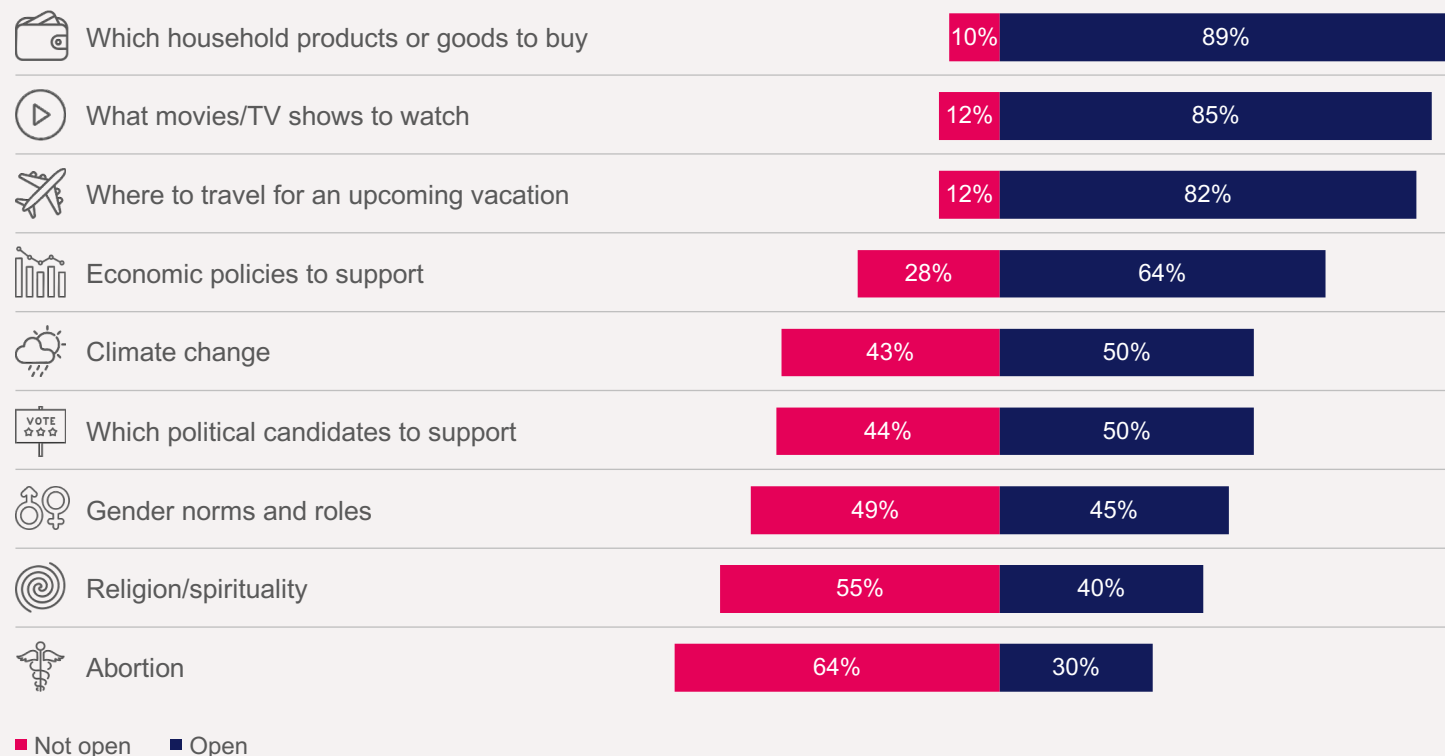
On commercial issues, we're malleable. On social issues, less so. And on economic policy, we're in between, mostly open to new ideas. Younger people are generally less set in their ways.

Politics is just one realm of influence, but the lines between political communication and brand communication have blurred, and the tools they both use are increasingly similar.

Dating back to Obama's reelection in 2012, political parties built large-scale data operations, conjoining voting data with data from social networks and other sources looking for levers to push with voting blocs, and ways to target advertising increasingly to specific people and their devices and screens. But these strategies were already in use by marketers with data from clearinghouses like Acxiom, MRI-Simmons and others.

## People are more open to change on products and services than on societal or economic beliefs

Q. How open, if at all, are you to changing your opinion or beliefs on the following topics? (% Total)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)



## For influence, go where your audience is

After that 2012 election, the Republican Party did a public postmortem. They realized they had a problem with younger voters among others. By 2024, President-elect Donald Trump's son Baron reportedly steered his father to appear on Joe Rogan's hugely popular podcast.

Meanwhile, famed Democratic pundit James Carville told the New Republic, "I'm 80.

To me, the whole world is the Times, the Post, the nets, cable TV. ... I just talked to a pretty active political consultant that did focus groups with Black voters in Milwaukee. They're on TikTok. I don't even know what TikTok is."

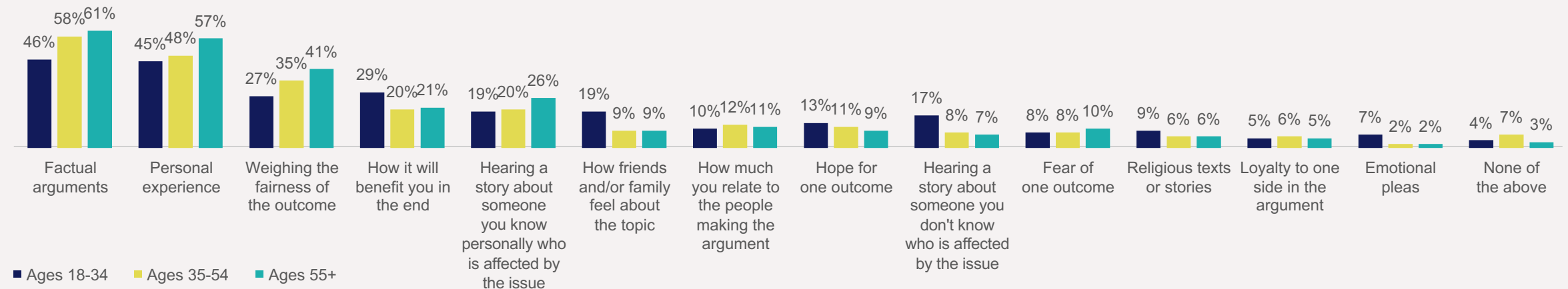
That's not saying Carville's level of being out of touch fully represents the Democratic leadership, but Trump gained share with just about every demographic.

## Facts matter: Information and disinformation

In our new AI-enabled world, we're already seeing how information and disinformation can scale. There was no shortage of disinformation in the election, including from foreign powers. A new "think tank" has popped up in Washington that appears to be staffed by fake personas generating AI-written content about supporting the Pakistani military. In 2020, just 18% of Americans polled by Ipsos said they were willing to call out disinformation they see. Now it's only 10%.

## Younger adults are less persuaded by facts than older adults for complex topics

Q. When making a decision about a complicated topic, which of the following factors, if any, do you find most persuasive?



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

## Connections matter, too

Ipsos' Future of Influence survey shows about four in ten adults think they themselves are influential; it also reveals people tend to trust people they know more than almost any other information source. Trust is key to influence. That's why it's easier to persuade people about low-stakes issues or unfamiliar topics like brands or restaurant choices.

In the Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index, few people say they trust social influencers, though younger folks are more trusting. Yet people buy billions of dollars' worth of merchandise on social platforms. Social influencers don't necessarily have specialized expertise in the topics they influence. But if they have built trust with their audience, those viewers will buy anything from fashion to health remedies that they recommend, which may or may not actually be healthy.

## Persuasion through policy

Often, persuasion precedes policy, as was the case with seat belt safety. But sometimes it just takes a leader to do *something*. The smoking ban that New York City enacted in 2004 wasn't popular, and there were predictions at the time that it would tank the restaurant and bar industry (it didn't). Sometimes when things change (seat belts and smoking bans), we as a society just get over it. The passage of time can be persuasive, too. Sometimes, we fight against the change and try to reverse it.

Foresight helps. Spending time thinking about the future that is best for your organization can help you understand who you need to persuade and what you want them to think or do and plan for what happens if you wind up in a different scenario.

Here are some pressing questions:

- How do you make wins stick and reinforce the positive outcomes that came from change?
- How are the tools of influence and persuasion evolving?
- What are the specific audiences you need to persuade and where are they influenced on information and opinions?
- How do you influence for the future that is best for your organization, knowing rivals are persuading on the other side?

Given disinformation and splintering, it's a hard time to be building trust, aligning values and persuading. So buckle up, and let's drive on into this issue.



**Matt Carmichael** is editor of *What the Future*.



# 56%

of U.S. adults say that factual arguments are among the most persuasive factors when making a decision about a complicated topic.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

# Shifts: Niche communities, generative AI and regulation



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**Niche communities:** Smaller, tight-knit communities and cultures (e.g. skater culture, Korean foodies, etc.) often foster strong shared identities and values, which can significantly impact trust and influence.

These communities may be more receptive to voices and trends that resonate with their specific cultural context, giving rise to micro-influencers with dedicated followings.

This shift could challenge the dominance of mainstream influences and create new avenues for niche interests and localized movements to gain traction.

**Generative AI:** With its ability to create realistic and engaging content, generative AI could significantly impact who and what we deem influential.

AI-generated content could make it difficult to discern human-created from machine-created content, further erode trust, facilitate the spread of disinformation and misinformation, and potentially elevate AI-driven narratives with little transparency into who is controlling them.

This could reshape how we perceive authenticity and influence, raising ethical questions about transparency and the potential for manipulation in an increasingly AI-driven digital landscape.

**Regulation:** Global regulators, particularly from the European Union, are likely to scrutinize AI and influencer marketing concerning transparency and disclosure practices in the coming years.

Regulations aimed at curbing the spread of misinformation and harmful content could effectively limit the reach of certain voices while simultaneously elevating others. This could potentially lead to a shift in the balance of influence across various sectors.

Stricter regulations on sponsored content disclosure could hold brands more accountable for promoting transparency and authenticity with their audiences.



# How influencers could become brands' most valuable media



Ryan Detert

CEO and founder, Influential

Spend any time on a social media platform and you can see how influencer marketing is outpacing social ad spending and challenging traditional TV's dominance. Ryan Detert, CEO of influencer marketplace platform Influential, expects the creator economy to eclipse the \$60 billion traditional TV ad spend in just a few years. Acquired in 2024 by Publicis Groupe, Influential matches brands with 4 million social media creators. As people increasingly watch content on social platforms, Detert believes influencer marketing gives brands more engaging and measurable ways to woo consumers.

# 66%

of Americans say they are confident that product reviews they receive or see from companies are truthful.

(Source: Ipsos surveys conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)



## What The Future interview with Ryan Detert

**Kate MacArthur:** What are the biggest changes you're anticipating for brands?

Ryan Detert: For brands, the biggest change will be the idea of a creator-first focus for getting their brand voice out. By doing so, brands can take advantage of the algorithms on the platforms, which perform better when a person-to-person connection happens rather than brand-to-person.

**MacArthur:** What about for metrics?

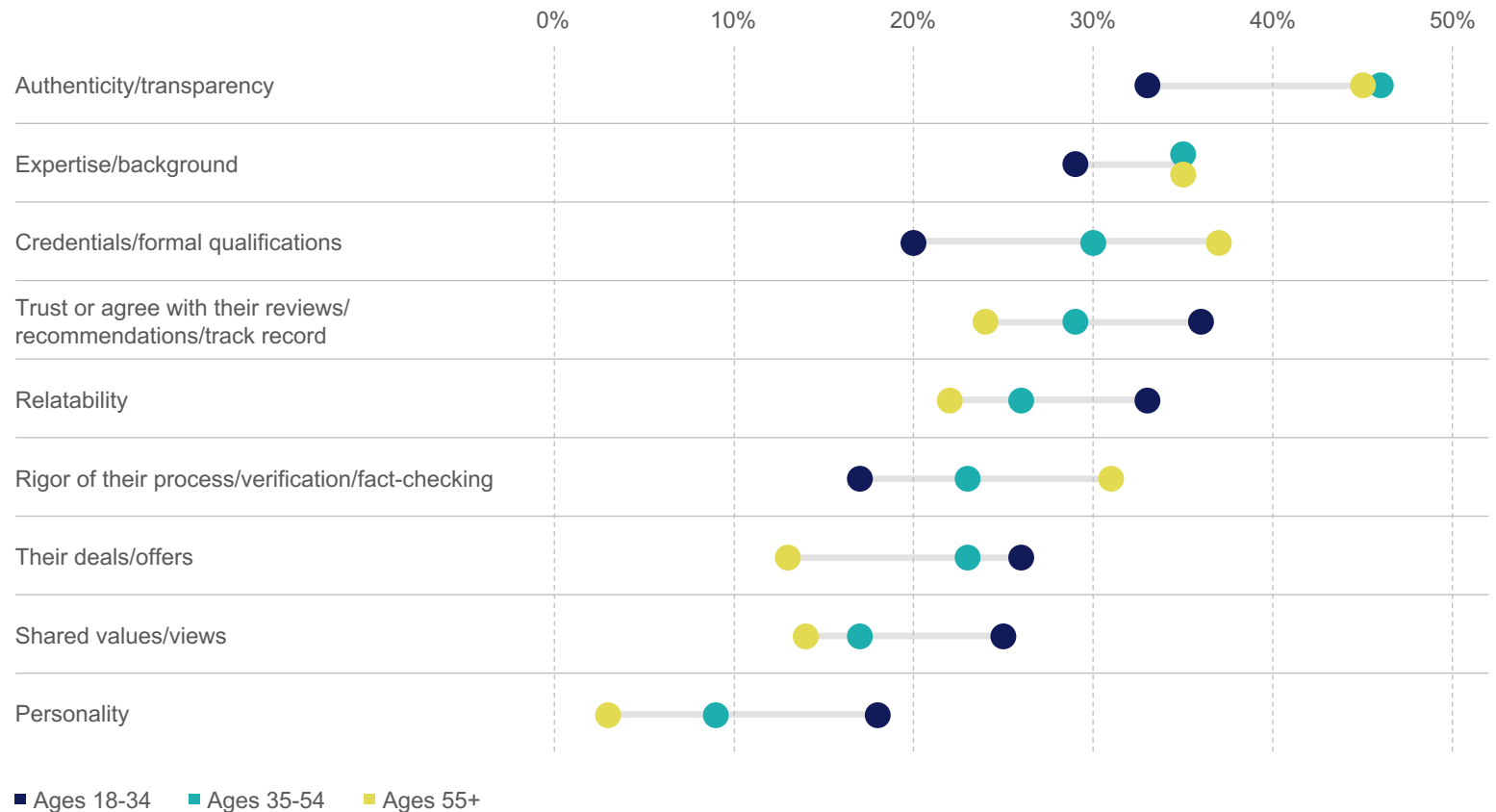
Detert: Metrics are where we've seen the biggest change. In the last five or six years, metrics focused on whether [content] drove online or offline sales or foot traffic to a location, or TV tune-in. These are now measurable through the name, image and likeness of a creator married to paid media, which is the amplification you'll see on your feeds from a brand.

**MacArthur:** What makes someone more influential in driving conversions?

Detert: In the last seven to 10 years, it went from the mass influencer, which is the biggest YouTube, Twitter or Instagram star, into the niche or micro-influencers that are the most believable, the most authentic in their audience. Those that usually have a majority of their audience specific to a certain interest perform better.

### Authenticity reigns for online reviews, but younger adults prefer a track record

Q. Which of the following matter most to you when looking online for product reviews and deciding who to trust?



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

**MacArthur: Will AI get smarter than people at persuasive techniques?**

Detert: As the technology gets indistinguishable between AI and humans, AI would have an unfair advantage of knowledge of what has performed in the past. That does not necessarily mean that's what we want, because a dopamine hit to your audience may be good for a video. But if you always do that, then you change the composition of your audience. It would have to level out over time where people would start thinking that it's just purely like junk food. You need to have a mix of your vegetables.

**MacArthur: As technology advances, what methods do you anticipate influencers will use to build trust?**

Detert: Whether that is AI-generated or AI-augmented is to be determined. But like the '90s revolution of reality television getting into someone's home to seeing reactions that are unfiltered, if you watch any influencer that has blown up today, they've taken down all the guardrails.

**MacArthur: Our research shows younger people are more influenced by stories about someone they don't know compared to older generations. Why is that?**

Detert: There is now an unlimited number of people that are "famous," depending on the vertical or niche.

So maybe there's kind of a face blindness at this point, and they simply just go toward whatever archetype fits well with what they care about.

**MacArthur: How will we measure and quantify influence in five to 10 years?**

Detert: If the way you consume content changes to headsets or more immersive scenarios, then it may be more view time. Maybe it's being more immersed in something and buying things in the app, which could make TikTok Shop's framework really helpful in the future. But I would imagine it will still be some level of views, clicks and conversions.

**MacArthur: What should brands consider for the future?**

Detert: Today, the smartest brands are creating a center of excellence to house all their talent, all their brands, and assess how they're performing. As they bring in new creators and vet them, or even if it's AI creators in the future, it's the same methodology. You have this baseline. You'll treat creators as media to hit an audience at scale and amplify them toward wherever your consumer journey needs to be. And then you ultimately measure it on a comparable basis.

*Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.*



**For brands, the biggest change will be the idea of a creator-first focus for getting their brand voice out."**



# How brands can ensure their influencers are influential

Whether conducting an influencer focus group or coordinating a campaign, brands need to be certain their online influencers are the real deal.

Social verification and validation tools like Ipsos' VEPP solve this problem by helping marketers understand influencers' niche and guarantee their reach.

In assessing nearly 1,000 self-identified creators, Ipsos found that 26% inflated their follower count and 37% did not own the accounts they claimed to own. Validating creators is crucial for brands aiming to amplify messages or develop creator-friendly services.

As Americans spend more time online, influencer marketing thrives but engagement is complicated by counterfeit creators who buy followers or fake engagement. Without verification, brands risk inaccurate research and reputational crises.

Tools like Ipsos' VEPP use diverse data sources to confirm influencers' legitimate followings and account ownership, enabling brands to cultivate genuine and relevant engagement.



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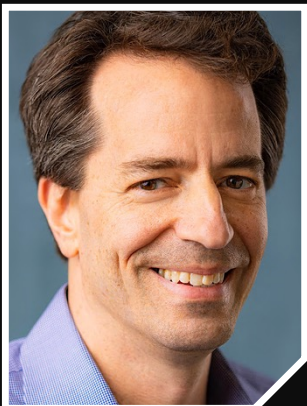
# 1 in 4

creators exaggerated their followers per a recent Ipsos social media assessment.

(Source: Ipsos VEPP creator wave, 2024.)



# How pro product reviews retain trust in the era of influencers



Evan Silverman

Chief operating officer of America's Test Kitchen

One hallmark of social media reviews is the jaw-drop moment where the influencer expresses shock at the effectiveness of a product. It's the face that launches a thousand sales, so to speak. America's Test Kitchen, one of the original brands in food media, has had its own share of shocking reveals that dethrone a past product test winner or recipe. Evan Silverman, chief operating officer of ATK, explains how scientific testing will always foster trust, especially as AI, influencers and social media reshape expertise and how we buy products.

14%

of Americans agree that they trust influencers on social media as much as expert reviewers.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)



## What The Future interview with Evan Silverman

### Kate MacArthur: How is America's Test Kitchen different from other cooking and review sites?

Evan Silverman: Consumers have trusted America's Test Kitchen for decades because of the company's rigorous testing processes. We've earned trust with recipes that work and rigorous, unbiased equipment reviews, born of hands-on testing.

### MacArthur: How do reviewers establish expertise?

Silverman: ATK equipment reviews utilize repeatable processes and tests grounded in science to measure objective criteria. That said, reviews do occasionally include some subjective evaluations. For example, how intuitive are the controls on an air fryer?

### MacArthur: Where do likability and relatability fit?

Silverman: Likability and relatability for any personality that represents a brand is important and helpful. But if the recipes or the equipment don't work, then that likability will ultimately go out the window.

### MacArthur: How might reviews evolve in 10 years?

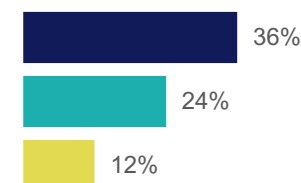
Silverman: AI will shape many aspects of industries dramatically. The power of AI is in analyzing large sets of data, drawing conclusions and sussing out themes. Equipment reviews require hands-on testing.

## A trust gap by age is growing between influencers and pro reviewers

Q. For each of the following pairs of statements, please select the one that comes closest to your view, even if neither statement is exactly right. (% Total)



I tend to buy products and services that are recommended by people I follow on social media



I tend to buy products and services that are recommended by professional reviewers (Consumer Reports, Wirecutter, etc.)



■ Ages 18-34 ■ Ages 35-54 ■ Ages 55+

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

### MacArthur: What do you wish you knew about the future of food media?

Silverman: There's an existential question around content on the internet, and one that will likely

only get worse with the rise of AI-powered content. There's a lot of junk on the internet, stating the obvious, and I'm extremely curious to see if it's possible for AI-powered content to not make that problem worse.



**MacArthur: How do you maintain superiority or authenticity compared to influencers?**

Silverman: I think a lot of companies publish equipment reviews, but very few of them have scientific, comprehensive approaches.

**MacArthur: How will the balance of influence among traditional review sites, social media and AI evolve?**

Silverman: I'm struggling to see how AI positively transforms the world of influencers in a way that benefits consumers. I believe AI can transform a lot of the backend workings of an influencer business. But I'm not sure what it brings to improve the situation of ultimately trying to solve the needs of a home cook who is looking for trusted guidance and also trying to differentiate between a trusted expert and an influencer. And even worse than that, someone who is just a fraud.

**MacArthur: How will AI-generated content shape expectations or how we're influenced?**

Silverman: It sounds like a dystopian world that is quite unfulfilling and potentially confusing for people who can't tell the difference. There are uses of AI that are mind-blowing and helpful and increase people's ability to process information and draw conclusions. AI will ultimately only be as good as the inputs and what the machine learning is trained on.

**MacArthur: How do you deal with potentially paid user reviews about products ATK has reviewed?**

Silverman: Look, user-generated comments can be incredibly helpful when they are authentic and grounded in actual use of the product. We take the feedback from customers extremely seriously when they raise questions or have opinions about our equipment reviews. We will often consider that feedback as we are reviewing products the next time.

**MacArthur: How can manufacturers use review information for innovation?**

Silverman: That is an area where I think AI can prove valuable. That ability to distill down themes across a breadth of inputs and feedback to me is currently the greatest strength of AI for a manufacturer to tap into.

**MacArthur: What do influencers' subscription success tell us about consumers' willingness to pay?**

Silverman: The ultimate arbiter is the consumer who says this content is good enough to pay for and is able to forge a long-term relationship with a creator such that he or she is excited to pay for that content for years to come. There are influencers who absolutely are worth paying for, and there are many who are not, and ultimately won't be in this game long term.

*Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.*



**The power of AI is in analyzing large sets of data, drawing conclusions and sussing out themes. Equipment reviews require hands-on testing.**

# What brands need to know before bringing AI assistants to e-commerce

Brands are all in on AI-powered tools in e-commerce, especially for customer service. But shoppers expect these AI agents to solve their problems rather than create new ones. Incorporating customer experience principles into AI-driven experiences can help AI make *everyone's* lives easier.

AI-powered shopping assistants have the potential to relieve strain on human agents and drive customer satisfaction, from improved recommendations to streamlined refunds. However, brands must do more than simply deploy a chatbot and expect success.

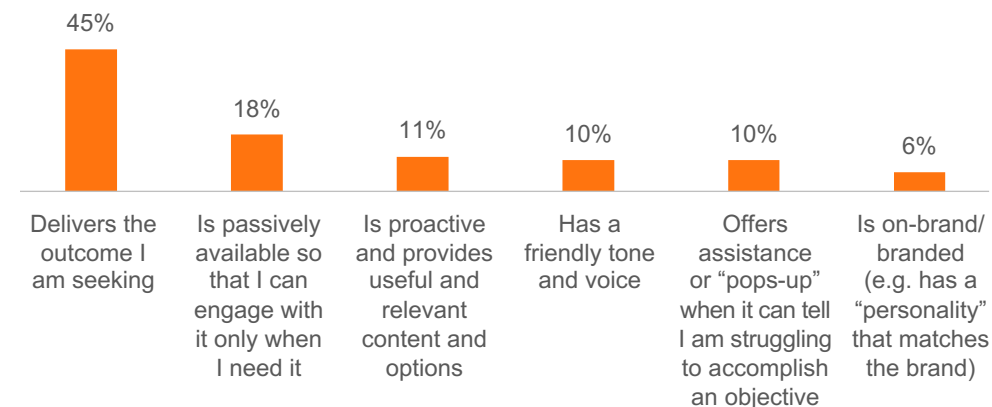
To empower shoppers, brands should make virtual assistants easy to use and unobtrusive. They should offer alternate contact options like email or phone. And brands must be transparent about their usage of virtual assistants — something 71% of consumers demand. CX testing can help brands balance competing business objectives while employees and customers can reap the benefits of AI, without conceding trust or convenience.



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## Americans prioritize results over personality in AI virtual assistants

Q. In a retail/e-commerce setting, please rank order the following attributes in terms of what contributes to a high-quality experience with an AI-powered virtual assistant (% Ranked 1)



(Source: Ipsos Customer Experience survey conducted May 7-8, 2024, among 1,005 U.S. adults.)



# How political and corporate speech will change in a polarized future



Kate Childs-Graham

Executive director, West Wing Writers

Kate Childs-Graham used to keep a Post-it note on her computer with Monroe's Motivated Sequence on it. Developed in the 1930s by Alan Monroe, it's a rhetorical pattern seen in speeches going back to biblical times. Some aspects of political speechwriting are timeless. Others are changing a lot. KCG, as most know her, writes for political and corporate leaders as executive director of West Wing Writers. When she thinks about the future, she's thinking about how to reach and influence today's and tomorrow's splintered audiences.

# 59%

of Americans think politicians generally are untrustworthy.

(Source: Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index, 2024)







## What The Future interview with Kate Childs-Graham

**Matt Carmichael: What's changing as people get used to content in shorter forms online rather than full-length speeches?**

Kate Childs-Graham: I don't know that it changes what I do, but it definitely changes what happens *after*. You have this whole speech, and as you're writing, you are thinking about different arguments, stories, elements and soundbites that could be pulled out and reused by the digital team online. You don't always know the line that's going to hit.

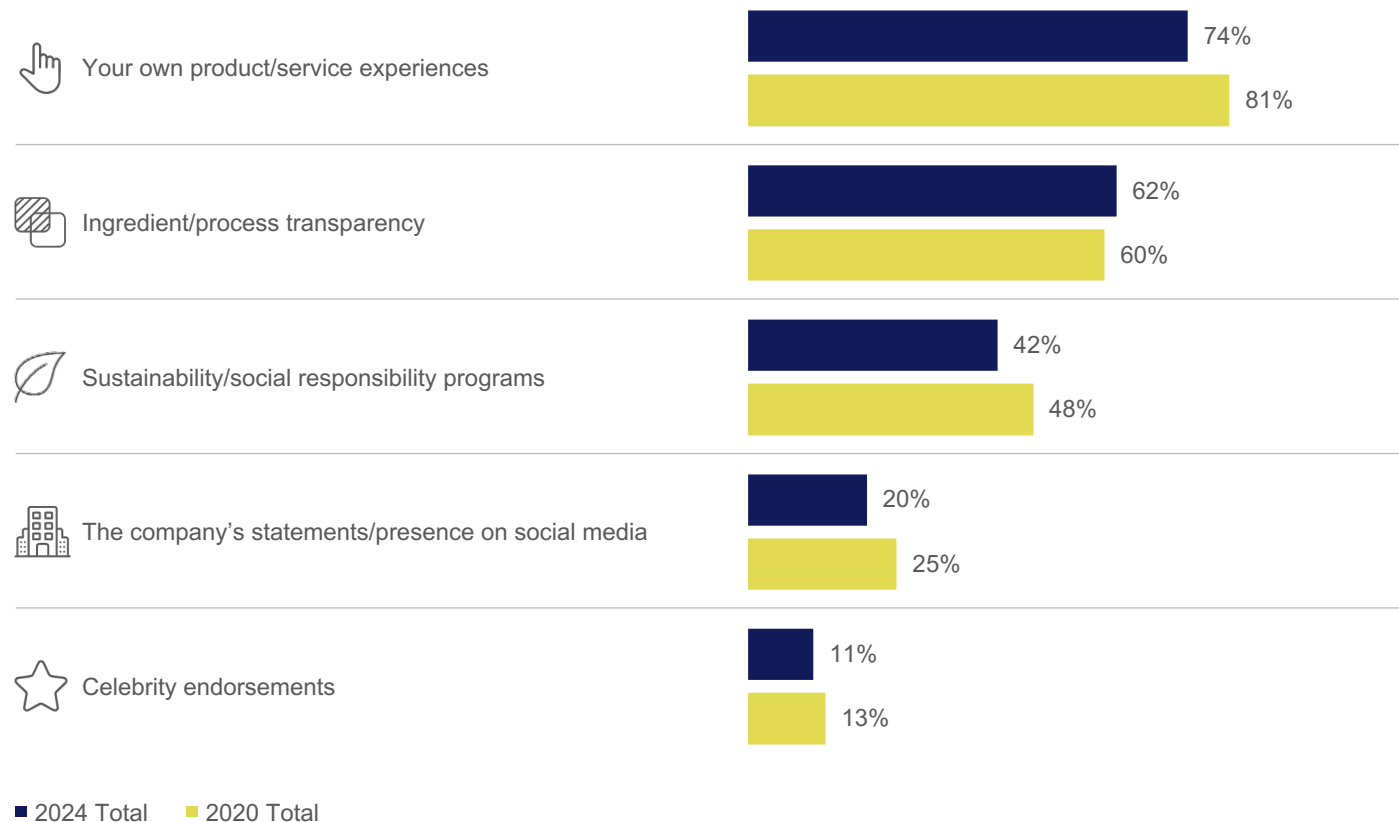
**Carmichael: What are some of the go-to tools in your tool kit as a political speechwriter?**

KCG: Professor Alan Monroe analyzed how historical speeches are they structured. How are they persuading folks? They all had these common elements: You get the audience's attention at the top. You talk about a need or a problem that needs to change. You talk about a solution. You have a call to action.

For millennia, orators and then speechwriters, as that became a profession, have been using this sequence. As the art of persuasion evolves, there are different ways and different kinds of tools in the toolbox to use. I often think about story, soundbites and statistics.

### People are relying less on traditional signals for company trust

Q. For each type of information you might see, read, or hear about a company, please indicate if that information makes you more or less likely to trust that company. (% More likely)



(Sources: Ipsos surveys conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults; and Aug. 25-26, 2020, among 1,003 U.S. adults.)

**Carmichael: What are some important considerations as you put together a speech?**

KCG: Knowing your audience is important — not at a surface level, but really a deep level. You're there to lay out a solution — and to do that, you need to know how they see the problem. That really informs the art of persuasion, by not phoning it in on that research. The best speeches know people deeply.

**Carmichael: Politicians are seen as untrustworthy. How do you overcome that as a speechwriter?**

KCG: I have been on a quest for 20 years to make sure that every fact in a speech has three sources. Every speech is run through a plagiarism checker to ensure that it's authentic and bulletproof. A key to building trust is honesty.

Another form of honesty is authenticity. The most important thing for authenticity isn't making sure that a speech *sounds* like a particular speaker. The most important thing is that it *thinks* like the speaker.

**Carmichael: How so?**

KCG: Everybody has a different way of forming an argument, whether they're a politician, a parent trying to persuade a child to do their homework, or a person at a community meeting trying to persuade neighbors that they need a stop sign.

**Carmichael: President Trump has a style he calls the “weave,” which doesn't follow any traditional techniques but is persuasive to his audience. How?**

KCG: That form of speaking doesn't speak to everyone. It speaks to some audiences, but not all audiences. The election proved we're a very divided nation. I also think of other recent political speakers like Bernie Sanders, who was able to hit a different chord and speak to similar audiences in a way that was unimpeachable but was really authentic.

**Carmichael: Is it different trying to persuade supporters versus a general or opposition audience?**

KCG: There's no such thing as a general audience anymore. We are so siloed and targeted. That being said, the strategy is basically the same. You meet people where they're at, and you take them where you need them to go. I think of it in terms of parenting. If I were to ask my child, who's 13, to do the taxes, that would be unreasonable. That's bringing him too far. But if I ask him to do his laundry, he can do that. You want to take the audience to where you need them to go, but where they can go *reasonably*.

*Matt Carmichael is editor of What the Future.*



**The best speeches know people deeply.”**

# How professions can regain public trust

Americans' trust in professions is eroding, a trend that demands urgent attention from corporate leaders and policymakers. Highlighted by Ipsos' Global Trust Index, this shift reveals the biggest swings in our most-regarded occupations like doctors, scientists and teachers.

While politicization, misinformation and evolving societal views may contribute to this dynamic, it would be shortsighted to blame declines on these factors alone.

Companies and policymakers need a more nuanced approach to address these issues effectively. To prevent a potential crisis in confidence, leaders need research to identify profession-specific issues. They should use technology and data to anticipate and respond to shifting public opinion and cultivate meaningful stakeholder engagement. Then they can develop targeted strategies to address problems and rebuild trust. Above all, they should embrace transparency and foster public understanding.

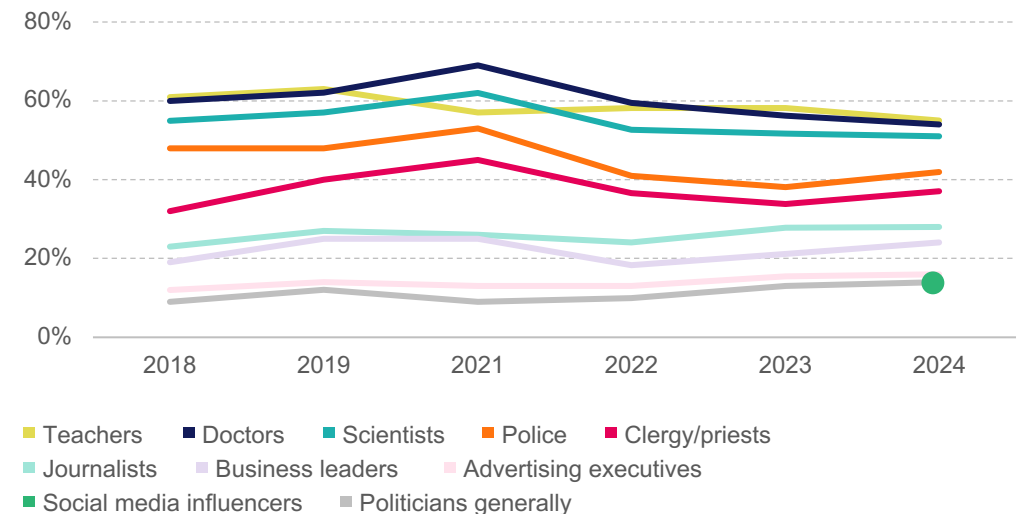
By acting now, leaders can shape a future where trust in these institutions is restored and strengthened.



**Chris Jackson** is a senior vice president leading U.S. polling at Ipsos.  
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## Trust erodes among Americans for traditional professions as media and political figures gain ground

Q. Please look at this list of different types of people. In general, do you think each is trustworthy or untrustworthy in your country? Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very trustworthy and 5 is very untrustworthy (% Trustworthy)



(Source: Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index, conducted May 24-June 7, 2024, among 1,000 U.S. adults.)



# How technology is shaping the future of political influence



Jack Quinn

Head of state government affairs policy and advocacy, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals

Jack Quinn's journey from the New York State legislature to Regeneron Pharmaceuticals reflects the evolving landscape of political persuasion. As lobbying shifts from smoke-filled rooms to social media platforms, Quinn explains how technology is democratizing advocacy while also complicating the path to legislators' ears. He sees a future where AI-powered lobbying competes with grassroots voices, leaving corporate interests and citizen advocates to navigate an increasingly crowded and complex political system.

# 31%

of Republicans and 23% of Democrats agree corporations should have a right to lobby and donate to political candidates.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

## What The Future interview with Jack Quinn

### Kate MacArthur: How will lobbying change in the next three to five years?

Jack Quinn: As technology continues to shift, it's going to flatten the opportunity to get into it. We were still using fax machines 14 years ago. And now when you think about how we do the job, it is much different. You are able to better get your message out.

You no longer have to be a professional lobbyist to be able to advocate and educate. The more technology or social media you have available allows everyday people to do the work.

### MacArthur: How has political persuasion evolved?

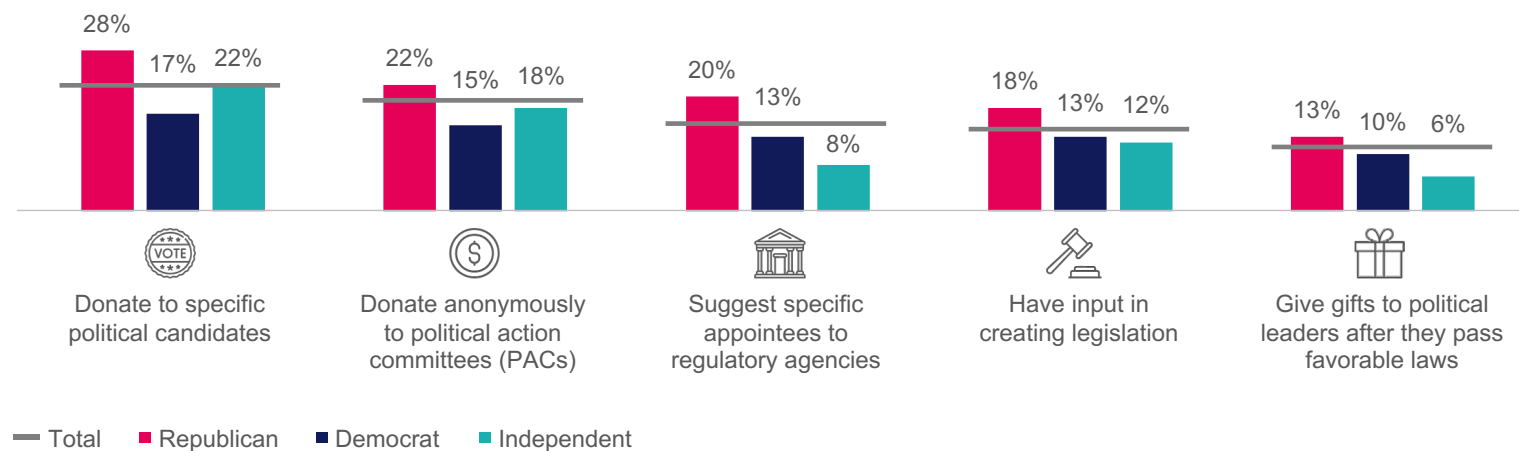
Quinn: Coalition work has become the way of the world. Nowadays, when you talk about advocacy, that involves the business community, it involves patients, patient advocates, caregivers, impacted industries like the small business community.

By bringing the right voices to the table, you're always trying to convince a legislator that the policy changes you want are good for their constituents.

### MacArthur: Could you briefly describe the progression of influence from directly hobnobbing with decision-makers to the current approach?

## Few Americans support corporate influence in politics across parties, though Republicans are more receptive

Q. To what extent, if any, do you think companies should be able to do the following?  
(% A great/some extent)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

Quinn: There was a time when it was industry meeting with legislators, and they were the only voice in the room. Nowadays, there are a variety of voices in the room, and you're building out an ecosystem that involves direct advocacy, social media advocacy and a very robust communications plan.

That can include letters to the editor, op-eds, whatever it may be. But instead of it being direct, now it's much more like an ecosystem. You're building out a 360-degree viewpoint of how we reach this legislator or regulator to help them understand all the pressure points.

**MacArthur: The key is still influencing legislators, but the path is more complex, right?**

Quinn: A guy in the legislature from Staten Island had a famous quip: “If I get one letter, that's someone else's problem. But if I get a dozen letters on an issue, that's my problem.” How do you get the attention of a legislator or a regulator? It's by volume. Now it's the variety of social media and geofencing. You can put a geofence around a capital and influence advertisements within a zip code. Everywhere that person turns, they're hearing about this issue. How do you ensure that they're hearing about your issue and that your issue is being prioritized? Sometimes they have to know that people care about it.

**MacArthur: Lobbying today is moving in-house at companies. What does that change?**

Quinn: The job of a lobbyist is not politics. It is the business of that organization. Politics is the instrument you use to achieve those ends. Your job is to find out what the business priorities are of the company and bend the policy curve in a way that benefits those priorities. Companies want experts at the table. Contract lobbyists are great, they can get you in the door, but they are never going to know more than in the in-house folks who have access to all the information.

**MacArthur: What core skills are becoming more important?**

Quinn: Building trust with legislators, staff, regulators and your coalition partners. The second is storytelling. That's an area where technological advancements are only going to make it that much better. The third is partnerships. It's a combination of both the right voices, but a diverse set of voices in the room. The last one is your ability to adapt to changes in technology, political change, whatever that may be.

**MacArthur: How do you navigate when technology changes become revolutionary instead of evolutionary?**

Quinn: That may be the one time when you truly are reactive. GLP-1 is a great example. The change there has been overnight. Our job is to predict what's going to happen next, to see around corners, to help business prepare for policy changes on the horizon or to actively work with business to make those policy changes.

**MacArthur: What is the biggest opportunity for the future for lobbying, advocacy and influence?**

Quinn: The ability to reach legislators and regulators in a better way than we ever have before. The flip side is it's a democratization of communication with a legislator. How do you cut through it and make sure they're hearing your message? That's the part we're all going to have to work a little bit harder on.

*Kate MacArthur is managing editor of What the Future.*



**How do you get the attention of a legislator or a regulator? It's by volume. ...You can put a geofence around a capital and influence advertisements within a zip code.”**



# Why AI will revolutionize how organizations engage stakeholders

From policy groups and nonprofits to global megabrands, every organization has one thing in common: They increasingly depend on diverse coalitions of stakeholders, customers, clients, investors, patients, supporters and everyday people.



# 48%

of Americans ages 18 to 34 consider themselves influential among their friends and family, compared with 43% of those ages 35 to 54.

(Source: Ipsos survey conducted November 14-15, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)

Leaders need to understand and serve the interests of these varied groups to succeed. This is no simple task, as no organization serves a monolithic base. Consequently, the insights informing every decision must be nuanced and current.

While reputation-monitoring tools have long offered insights, AI technology has supercharged these capabilities.

Tools like Ipsos' Reputation Intelligence for Strategic Evaluation (RISE) platform use sophisticated sentiment analysis and diverse data inputs including surveys and social media to help leaders map complex stakeholder networks. It also identifies key opinion-formers from online influencers to legislators, ensuring the right voices are included at the table.

By staying attuned to community priorities, organizations can anticipate challenges, identify opportunities and convert alignment into powerful advocacy.



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# What business can learn from faith leaders on shaping a changing world



Rev. Bonnie Perry

Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan

Clergy of all faiths try to steer their followers on a certain moral path. They are the OG influencers, and their influence echoes in other realms. Perry uses her pulpit to persuade people on the gospel of Christ, but also LGBTQ+ issues and to help create a sensible gun culture. When she thinks about the future, she's thinking about the importance of connecting with younger audiences.

37%

of Americans consider clergy/priests in the U.S. as trustworthy, higher than the global average (29%).

(Source: Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index 2024.)

## What The Future interview with Bishop Bonnie Perry

**Matt Carmichael:** Influence is about shaping the present, but also shaping the future, often among people on various sides of issues. How do we get to a future we want through persuasion?

Rev. Bonnie Perry: For context, if I'm thinking about the future I long for, it's a future influenced by gospel values like Matthew 25, about a world that is not about who's in and who's out, but how we include all. That's the world I'm looking for with God's help. If it's all on us and on me, then we're probably screwed. But if it's more than that, then we have some hope.

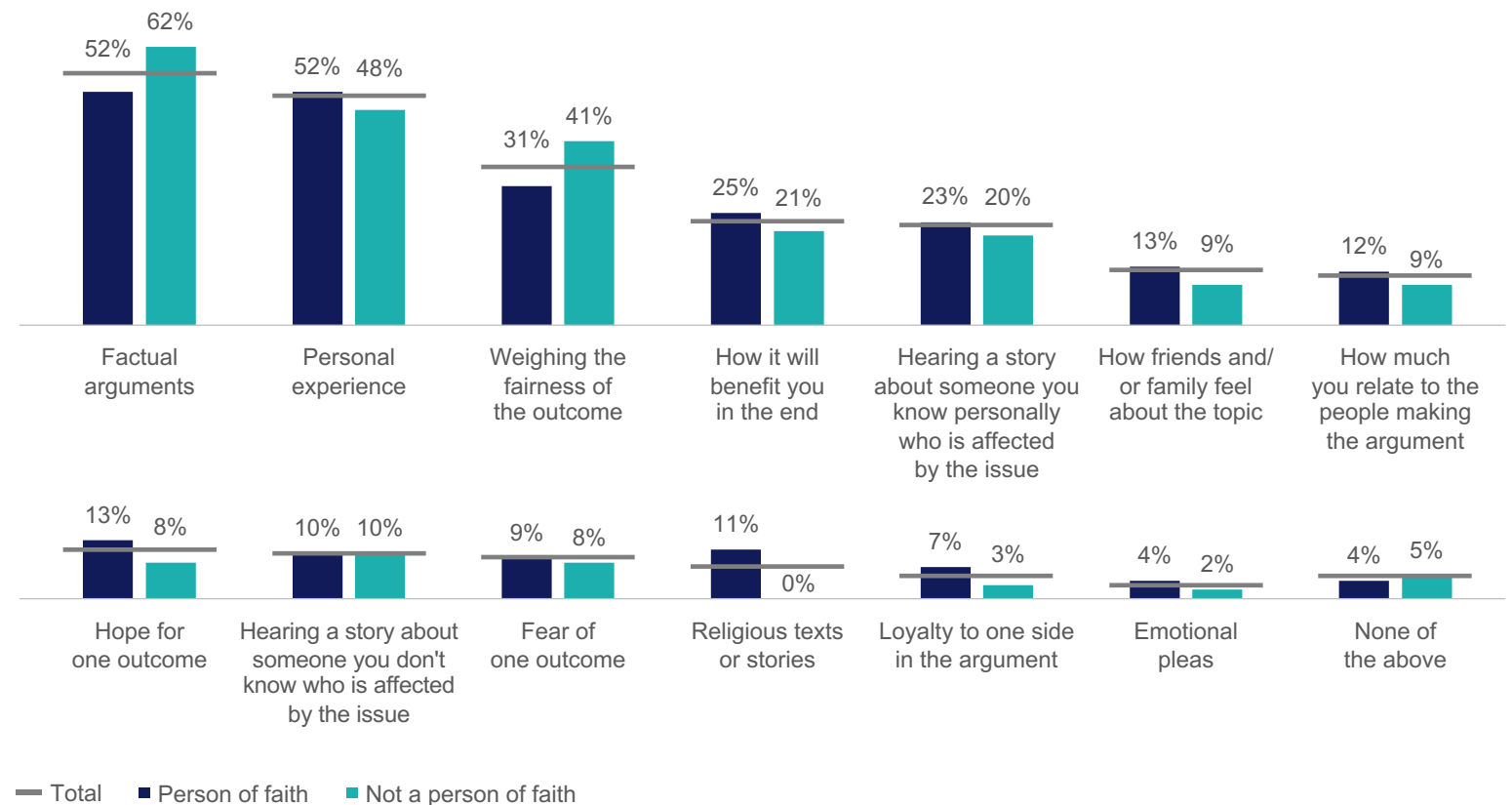
How do I do that? I think it's about relationships and mutual respect in those relationships. I think it's about a personal experience and then facts and perhaps an appeal to a higher authority. Not necessarily in that order or linear. But if you made a big Venn diagram with more than three circles, I bet those pieces would play in.

**Carmichael:** How does persuasion differ in the realm of faith versus fact versus opinion?

Perry: In terms of fact in the world of faith, I can come up with empirical evidence, but I'm not sure everyone's going to go for it. My fact would be when I approach someone with care and love, the fact of the matter is people respond much differently than if I approach them with disdain, arrogance and hate.

For religious Americans, faith influences decisions on complex topics

Q. When making a decision about a complicated topic, which of the following factors, if any, do you find most persuasive? (% Total)



(Source: Ipsos survey conducted Nov. 14-15, 2024, among 1,120 U.S. adults.)



**Carmichael: Religious centers and their leaders often weigh in and have influence on a wide variety of moral issues. How does influence extend from one sphere to another for you? For instance, you work on building a safer gun culture.**

Perry: I look at other areas that folks might say are not in the world of religion. But I worship a God, Jesus Christ, who came into the world of flesh and blood. So the matters of the world concern me. But I don't ever get to say, particularly in this country, "This is what you must believe." I can say, "This is how I act. This is what I care about. This is what I believe a just moral society entails."

**Carmichael: In our Future of Influence survey, people said that emotional appeals sway them way less than factual ones. Does that surprise you?**

Perry: I'm going to go back to my Venn diagram (and feel bad if a Venn diagram only gets three circles). In terms of relationships, say I have a connection with my cousin. I'm going to listen to that person because I have a relationship with them. Then there's personal experience. And if we think about LGBT issues, I have personal experience as someone who happens to be gay. I used to think that that was a horrible thing. But then I connect with someone who happens to be gay, and I look at their life and actually they're gracious, they're really good parents, they're a good coworker. I'm like, "Huh, I don't

see evidence of evil." Then in terms of facts, in the past, people conflated homosexuality with pedophilia but they're not the same thing. If you look at the facts, the vast majority of [pedophilia] is heterosexual men to girls. For the higher authority, scripture says, "Love one another as I've loved you," right? What does Jesus say about homosexuality? Absolutely nothing. There's nothing in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John that Jesus ever uttered on it.

**Carmichael: How much of persuasion to you is about building consensus, and how much is about bringing people around to your viewpoint?**

Perry: The middle view is probably what's going to move us forward. And I think it kind of depends on what it is. I mean, I'm happy to come to a middle view on ... tariffs?

**Carmichael: Are there generational differences in how you talk to audiences?**

Perry: There needs to be. Many of our communities of faith, certainly not all, have bored people to death for decades. In the '50s, we probably might not have been that interesting, but there was nothing else. Now there's a whole lot more. So for my money, we had better learn to speak to this generation. And more to the point, listen to this generation.

*Matt Carmichael is editor of What the Future.*



**In terms of fact in the world of faith, I can come up with empirical evidence, but I'm not sure everyone's going to go for it."**

Tensions that will drive change:

# How will polarization shape our beliefs?

The future is always in tension. We can measure those contradictions today with forced-choice questions. And we can plot them against each other in a classic 2x2 grid. That allows us to visualize where we are today, but also to imagine what the possible futures are if those tensions shift over time – and how far they would have to move to get us to a different future from our baseline.

ON MOST ISSUES, I AM OPEN TO NEW  
IDEAS OR BELIEFS

**In this corner, the fever breaks.** Somehow the tension diffuses and polarization relaxes. People can be reasoned with through logic or emotional appeals. This is a more wide-open future for brands and policymakers alike to work together on societal challenges. Trust is as important as always, but easier to earn. People's identities become more malleable, and they express themselves through purchases as well as actions.

**POLARIZATION IN THE U.S. WILL GET BETTER**

**If the polarized tension dissolves slowly,** but we are encamped in our beliefs, people aren't going to be influenced easily about tricky issues. But there's room for movement on smaller decisions like brand purchases and entertainment options and more. If polarization defrosts, we are likely to settle in rather than fight and debate. That could mean less need for virtue signaling and wearing our identities on our literal sleeves.

**In today's world,** we *claim* we're open to new ideas and think polarization will get worse. Polarization often entrenches beliefs, rather than changes them. As polarization gets worse, so will today's discord. In today's position, a lot would have to change to push us off this baseline. Disinformation and spin become the norm. Brands will continue to get caught in an unpredictable crossfire as opinion drifts to extremes.

**POLARIZATION IN THE U.S. WILL GET WORSE**

**Say we are open to more ideas;** though take that with a grain of salt. When asked today in detail about which ideas we're open to, we tend to say we're rather closed off on tricky sociopolitical issues. This world could get dark and intractable quickly. It's plausible that brands will have to appeal to smaller and smaller niches and be willing to write off large swaths of customers who don't feel that their brand signals the right values.

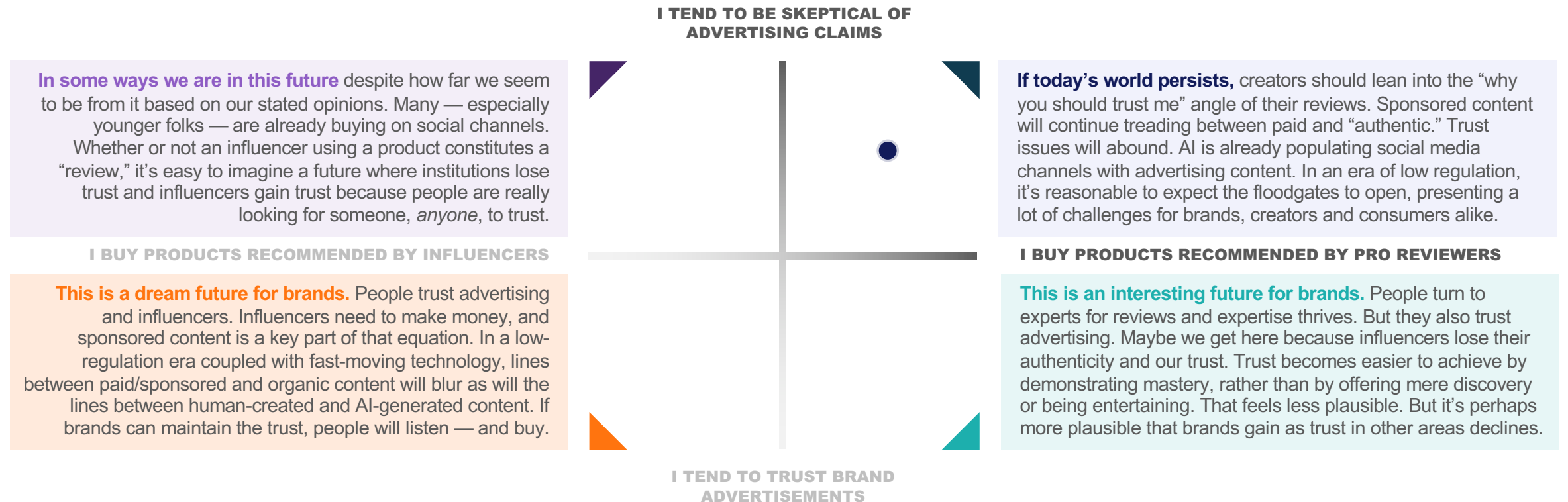
ON MOST ISSUES, I AM NOT OPEN TO NEW  
IDEAS OR BELIEFS



Tensions that will drive change:

# Will influencers sway ad skeptics or not?

The future is always in tension. We can measure those contradictions today with forced-choice questions. And we can plot them against each other in a classic 2x2 grid. That allows us to visualize where we are today, but also to imagine what the possible futures are if those tensions shift over time – and how far they would have to move to get us to a different future from our baseline.

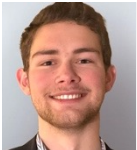


# Future Jobs to Be Done

Ipsos spins the traditional “Jobs to Be Done” framework forward with *future* Jobs to Be Done (fJTBD). This builds on the theory that people consume to fulfill certain needs or accomplish specific tasks. For example, we don’t just view influencer content on social media, we hire them to guide us on a journey of replicating their lifestyle.

To bring JTBD into the future, we envision powerful and plausible scenarios through strategic foresight. While many needs are enduring and do not change over time, the context of that job will change along with the potential solutions and alternatives. These scenarios help us define the circumstances in which people may find themselves, like considering whether to make purchases based on what brands communicate in advertising campaigns or through conducting research into how trusted, professional reviewers assess a product.

We use fJTBD to tie these scenarios to actions that organizations can take to help people meet future needs. While it’s typical in foresight to create fJTBD clusters, we’re sharing one scenario here as an example.



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## Help me message effectively at scale

In a world where polarization continues to rise while trust in institutions wanes, marketers will find it increasingly difficult to connect to a mass audience without alienating groups on either side of major divides (such as those related to politics or economic class).

Potential fJTBD:

- Help me determine whether product reviews are based on real experiences or brands paying for positive feedback online
- Help me as a brand understand if and to what degree my consumer can be influenced by advertising at all
- Help me as a brand replicate the type of intimate, 1-to-1 relationship consumers have with their favorite influencers

Imagine a world where ... brands use real-time feedback on brainwave activity and subtle emotional responses to tailor product experiences and advertising campaigns.



For full results and methodology, visit [future.ipsos.com](https://future.ipsos.com)  
and [subscribe to our newsletter](#) to receive our next issue of **What the Future**

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