

Main St. American Values Study

The Main St. American Values Study is our proprietary brand framework designed to help brands build deeper connections with consumers while avoiding the risk of being quietly disqualified from consideration. By combining universal, aspirational, and deep identity-driven values, this framework shows brands how to capture and keep people by appealing to their deepest beliefs.

Our approach has yielded a new framework for how values drive brand growth: A directive indicating the power of a values-aligned customer and the risk of invisibility as a brand if you miss connecting with the moral floor. To move beyond stated importance and understand real impact, we applied advanced analytics to isolate which values actually influence brand perceptions.

Key Findings

1

Americans aren't divided on values. But values are layered

The values Americans hold personally, expect from society, and want from brands don't line up neatly. But underneath the complexity, there's unity with nearly everyone saying trust, respect, and integrity matter.

How "Family" Ranks as a Personal, Societal and Brand Value

	Ranking*
PERSONALLY	#1
SOCIETY	#8
BRANDS	#11

*Number in each row is family's ranking relative to 32 other values such as integrity, trust, and religion; rank is based on the share of consumers saying a value is important to them personally, for society, or for brands



2

The values everyone agrees on don't help brands stand out. They just keep them in the game.

Over 95% of Americans say these universal values like trust, respect and integrity matter personally, and they assume brands will show up with them no matter the context. Brands won't win by having these values, but they'll lose if they don't. They set the floor but cannot build the ceiling.

Brand Implication



Universal values create no differentiation because **no brand can own what everyone holds**. But any brand that is perceived as lacking them pays a high price— in credibility, trust, and advocacy.

3

The real growth comes from the values that tap into consumer aspirations and identity.

Once brands clear that baseline, differentiation comes from two other layers of values that actually drive affinity, consideration, and growth.



Reach values tap into aspiration, reflecting who people want to be or become. They scale easily and travel well across most audiences.



Reach values are either aspirational in behavior (these include sustainability, inclusion, and community) and/or aspirational in character (including ambition, belonging, and optimism)



Roots values tap into identity by reflecting who people already are. They are emotionally-loaded and can build deeper connections for specific audiences, but they carry more risk too, as they can alienate others if misaligned.



Roots values occupy a special place where they are close to people's true selves and brands can relate to them (these include patriotism, heritage, tradition, and religion)

How to apply the values framework in practice:

Applying the framework starts with understanding your audience, not picking values off a list

Key questions to ask yourself if you're a brand or marketer:

Identify the foundations

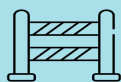
What universal values are expected in my category?

Define the aspiration

Who is my audience trying to be or become?

Understand the identity signals

What deeply held values shape how they see themselves.



Guardrail:

This is NOT a paint-by-the-numbers exercise, the right combination of values will differ by brand, category, and audience. As a reminder, values shift by life stage, generation, and belief systems. So yes, the same framework applies but how exactly it shows up, should flex.



The takeaway::

Brands that connect across all three layers have the strongest opportunity to build relevance, resonance, and long-term loyalty. So It isn't per se about standing for MORE values, it's simply to stand for the ones that actually drive choice, and to express them in a way that people will recognize.

Methodology

Unless otherwise specified, data featured in this report comes from a study of 5,000 US adults, ages 18-74, conducted online in February and March 2026.

We tested a set of 33 values, developed through an in-depth review of existing American values research including but not limited to Gallup, PRRI, and Pew Research Center foundational academic frameworks. This ensured coverage of both: enduring core values (e.g., family, freedom, fairness) and emerging/identity-linked values (e.g., inclusion, sustainability, patriotism).

About NRG (National Research Group)

NRG is a leading global insights and strategy firm at the intersection of entertainment and technology. Rooted in four decades of industry expertise, the world's most innovative brands turn to us for guidance on growth, audience engagement, and content strategy across platforms and devices. Working at the confluence of content, technology, and culture, NRG helps clients understand what's next.

About DonerColle Partners

DonerColle Partners is a newly combined Stagwell (STGW) partnership formed between leading Stagwell agencies Doner and Colle McVoy, each with 90 years of history. Grounded in a shared belief that great work comes from strong relationships, the partnership combines deep roots with modern marketing expertise across strategy, creative, media and digital, including AI-enhanced content development, insight generation and measurement.

Built for the brands that move America, DonerColle Partners blends insight, craft and innovation to help brands connect meaningfully with people and drive lasting growth. To learn more, visit donercolle.com and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).