

## Leadership Confidence Survey Results<sup>©</sup>

Research gathered and compiled by the Sustainability Leadership Institute with assistance from University of Nebraska, Omaha's Center for Public Affairs Research  
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Thank you to those who responded to our recent *Leadership Confidence Survey* distributed March 31-April 4, 2012. We received a 22% response rate of a distribution to 2500 people. Respondents were 67% Midwestern US citizens, 33% citizens of the US other than Midwest and citizens abroad. Seventy six percent (76%) were between the ages of 33 and 65, 95% had at least a community college degree, and nearly one half had an annual income of \$75,000 or more.

Questions were designed to measure the relative level of confidence in business and civic leaders for dealing with increasingly complex challenges. Results indicate that respondents have the most confidence (70% confident or very confident) in their own abilities for dealing with complex challenges, followed by 65% confidence in the leaders in their organizations. The degree of confidence decreases rather significantly the further from their organizations the assessed business and civic leaders are. For example, respondents indicated 29% confidence in local leaders, 18% regional/state leaders and 10% national; however, they registered 14% confidence in global leaders. Perhaps the lack of confidence in local, state and national-level business and civic leaders by US respondents has to do with the current election-year noise in the US; however, the lower attribution readings in general suggest a relative lack of trust or confidence regarding local, state, regional and national business and civic leaders.

A full 96% of the population sampled said they were willing or very willing to engage constructively with others to understand and work toward resolving complex economic, social and environmental challenges. However, only 21% of respondents were optimistic or very optimistic that leaders they observed or encountered were willing to engage accordingly.

Is it a hopeful sign that respondents registered 1) confidence in their own abilities to deal with complex challenges compared to their relative lack of confidence in others, and 2) a willingness to engage with others in figuring out how to deal with complex challenges compared to a lack of optimism that others would do the same? Perhaps it means there is simmering source of active energy within the population of people sampled, ready to do whatever it takes to move toward resolving big challenges!

What factors did people consider as they evaluated their own abilities? If assumed ability is relatively high, what might inhibit people from getting involved in conversations and actions for change? Perhaps it has to do knowing how, when, where, and with whom to go about engaging in a meaningful and productive interaction to expand holistic understanding and generate innovative ideas for positive change. How do we create more opportunities for participatory leadership?

Good food for thought as we continue our study and work. Overall, the survey confirms our suspicion that confidence in leadership, beyond our immediate spheres, is low. What does that mean for the future we want to create?