

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Overall courage scores remain similar to previous quarters, with a 4.16% increase in the overall ACI score.**
- **Business owners continue to show a higher overall courage score than the general population.** As in past surveys, the overall courage index score for business owners is higher than that for non-business owners.
- **Business and moral courage declines by age.** The drop-off starts around age 45 and dips to the lowest level in those over 65.
- **Social courage continues to be a high point for Americans, with the highest index scores overall and evidence that courage in the social arena declines only slightly with age.**

### AMERICAN COURAGE

Americans remain strong in the face of fear this winter, as they have for much of the year. Overall, the American Courage Index survey reveals that courage levels remain similar at the end of the year to the levels in the fall and summer, the first surveys in the series. And, as has been true all year, business owners continue to demonstrate slightly higher levels of courage than the general population.

Activities and news stories in the final months of 2015 are evidence that the world is a complicated and sometimes frightening place. Terrorist attacks and mass shootings in the United States and abroad have made people uneasy in general and have heightened fears in many. Consumer confidence declined in October and November, after increases in August and September, indicating that people were feeling some amount of instability. Indeed, while personal income continued to increase since the summer (slight growth of less than half of 1% each month) consumers do not seem to notice the difference in their daily lives and may remain fearful of the economy.

So, while Americans may in fact be safer than at other times in history, many likely do not actually feel safer or more confident. Steven Pinker notably said in 2011 that despite outward appearances that seem to contradict the fact, "...we may be living in the most peaceable era in the existence of our species."<sup>1</sup> Yet, because of current news practices and increased media consumption, Americans tend to see a lot of bad news and many examples of violence, and likely overestimate the true level of danger these events represent.

In the face of these fears and concerns especially, Americans persist in showing overall strength and courage, although in a few specific areas—moral, intellectual and business courage—people feel uneasy or unable to be brave.



<sup>1</sup> Pinker, Steven, "Violence Vanquished," Wall Street Journal, 24 September 2011. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000142405311904106704576583203589408180> accessed 17 December 2015.



**AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX** (OVERALL COURAGE)

	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>% Change Fall to Winter</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>25.81</b>	<b>25.30</b>	<b>26.07</b>	<b>4.16% </b>
<b>Business owners</b>	<b>29.47</b>	<b>28.22</b>	<b>29.09</b>	<b>3.08% </b>
<b>Non-business owners</b>	<b>25.28</b>	<b>25.05</b>	<b>25.84</b>	<b>3.15% </b>



**AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX** (OVERALL COURAGE BY AGE)

	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>% Change Fall to Winter</b>
<b>18-24</b>	<b>26.54</b>	<b>25.59</b>	<b>26.06</b>	<b>1.84% </b>
<b>25-34</b>	<b>24.22</b>	<b>24.35</b>	<b>27.69</b>	<b>13.72% </b>
<b>35-44</b>	<b>25.65</b>	<b>25.75</b>	<b>27.10</b>	<b>5.24% </b>
<b>45-54</b>	<b>25.54</b>	<b>25.95</b>	<b>24.72</b>	<b>-4.74% </b>
<b>55-64</b>	<b>25.91</b>	<b>24.62</b>	<b>25.06</b>	<b>1.79% </b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>27.49</b>	<b>25.36</b>	<b>24.86</b>	<b>-1.97% </b>



## MORAL COURAGE

The index indicates that moral courage has dipped—overall it is down 12.4% from the fall. Age plays a role here, as moral courage declines with age. The oldest Americans (65+) are 53.7% less courageous than the youngest cohort (18-24).

To determine moral courage, the survey asked about dealing with injustice or illegal activity (systematic discrimination, sexual harassment, fraud, corruption, etc.) in an organization (employer, school, government, etc.) that the respondent was part of. As in past quarters,

most (68%) have never faced such a situation. Of those who did, most (13%) chose to mind their own business (11% fall, 15% summer).

When asked how they would deal with a situation like this in the future, as in the previous quarter, slightly more people (22% winter, 19% fall) said they would mind their own business. Of those who believe they would act, the overwhelming choice continues to be sending an anonymous tip (40% winter vs. 42% fall). Next in line—consult a lawyer about filing a lawsuit (27% winter vs. 23% fall).

### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (MORAL COURAGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>Overall</b>	<b>6.46</b>	<b>8.63</b>	<b>7.56</b>	<b>-12.40% ☆</b>
<b>Business owners</b>	<b>8.64</b>	<b>8.44</b>	<b>8.50</b>	<b>0.71% ☆</b>
<b>Non-business owners</b>	<b>6.12</b>	<b>8.65</b>	<b>7.39</b>	<b>-14.57% ☆</b>

### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (MORAL COURAGE BY AGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>18-24</b>	<b>8.93</b>	<b>10.24</b>	<b>12.16</b>	<b>18.75% ☆</b>
<b>25-34</b>	<b>6.14</b>	<b>11.04</b>	<b>8.90</b>	<b>-19.38% ☆</b>
<b>35-44</b>	<b>6.04</b>	<b>9.09</b>	<b>7.55</b>	<b>-16.94% ☆</b>
<b>45-54</b>	<b>6.95</b>	<b>7.82</b>	<b>7.69</b>	<b>-1.66% ☆</b>
<b>55-64</b>	<b>6.35</b>	<b>6.63</b>	<b>6.30</b>	<b>-4.98% ☆</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>6.71</b>	<b>7.72</b>	<b>5.63</b>	<b>-27.07% ☆</b>

## EMOTIONAL COURAGE

Americans have emotional courage in abundance, and the survey indicates people felt more courageous this quarter than last. It is up 13% overall and 15.58% in non-business owners. As with moral courage, age makes a difference—while moral courage decreases as people get older, emotional courage increases.

The oldest Americans are 102.6% more courageous than those 18-24, and 26% more courageous than 25-34 year olds, who recovered from a brief dip in emotional courage last quarter.

When asked about responding to a significant and painful emotional loss, most people said they would become emotionally cautious and limit their

vulnerability (31% this quarter vs. 28% fall and summer). As in previous surveys, roughly a quarter of respondents reported opening up emotionally (26% winter, 22% fall, 27% summer) and continuing as before with no change in emotional guardedness (26% winter, 21% fall, 24% summer).

When asked to predict a future response to emotional loss, older respondents predict continuing as before at roughly the same rate as last quarter (44% winter vs. 41% fall), but were less likely to expect to open up emotionally (28% winter vs. 39% fall). The youngest respondents (18-24) expected most to open up emotionally and accept their vulnerability (28%), while the next youngest cohort (25-34) anticipated becoming emotionally cautious.



### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (EMOTIONAL COURAGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>Overall</b>	<b>55.75</b>	<b>48.15</b>	<b>54.42</b>	<b>13.02%</b> 
<b>Business owners</b>	<b>59.27</b>	<b>55.09</b>	<b>57.55</b>	<b>4.47%</b> 
<b>Non-business owners</b>	<b>54.90</b>	<b>46.53</b>	<b>53.78</b>	<b>15.58%</b> 



### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (EMOTIONAL COURAGE BY AGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>18-24</b>	<b>44.96</b>	<b>40.04</b>	<b>31.15</b>	<b>-22.20%</b> 
<b>25-34</b>	<b>42.81</b>	<b>26.40</b>	<b>50.09</b>	<b>89.73%</b> 
<b>35-44</b>	<b>52.55</b>	<b>47.20</b>	<b>53.63</b>	<b>13.62%</b> 
<b>45-54</b>	<b>57.92</b>	<b>55.16</b>	<b>52.71</b>	<b>-4.44%</b> 
<b>55-64</b>	<b>61.13</b>	<b>55.37</b>	<b>59.78</b>	<b>7.96%</b> 
<b>65+</b>	<b>71.68</b>	<b>64.18</b>	<b>63.11</b>	<b>-1.67%</b> 

## SOCIAL COURAGE

The social arena continues to be where Americans show their self-confidence and character, with the highest of all the index scores. Results from the summer and winter surveys are similar, with a slight blip in the fall numbers for this measurement. Business owner scores dipped a bit (down 4.62%) while non-business owners demonstrated an uptick in courage (4.3%).

When asked about facing a situation of social pressure (large social event where they knew very few people, public speaking or performing live as an actor, musician, etc.), people overwhelmingly said they essentially faced the situation head on: 32% say they showed up with a smile and plunged in (slightly less than last quarter at

40%, the same as summer), and 38% smiled bravely and forced themselves to proceed despite feeling awkward or unsure (similar to fall and summer). The oldest cohort showed the wisdom of their years: those 65+ reported the highest percentage of showing up and plunging in (49%).

When asked about dealing with such social pressure in the future, the level of bravery was similar to that of past experiences: 38% would smile and plunge in (compared with 43% fall, 33% summer) and 33% would smile bravely and force themselves to proceed (the same as summer and compared with 28% fall). While everyone expects to show up with a smile, the oldest cohort does so with the most gusto—50% report expecting this compared with only 28% for the 18-24-year-old set.

### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (SOCIAL COURAGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>Overall</b>	<b>74.12</b>	<b>72.58</b>	<b>74.58</b>	<b>2.76%</b> 
<b>Business owners</b>	<b>76.29</b>	<b>72.91</b>	<b>69.54</b>	<b>-4.62%</b> 
<b>Non-business owners</b>	<b>73.63</b>	<b>72.50</b>	<b>75.62</b>	<b>4.30%</b> 

### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (SOCIAL COURAGE BY AGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>18-24</b>	<b>77.32</b>	<b>62.48</b>	<b>77.01</b>	<b>23.26%</b> 
<b>25-34</b>	<b>68.62</b>	<b>71.50</b>	<b>75.65</b>	<b>5.80%</b> 
<b>35-44</b>	<b>73.50</b>	<b>73.60</b>	<b>78.28</b>	<b>6.36%</b> 
<b>45-54</b>	<b>73.91</b>	<b>75.31</b>	<b>71.92</b>	<b>-4.50%</b> 
<b>55-64</b>	<b>76.65</b>	<b>73.77</b>	<b>74.85</b>	<b>1.46%</b> 
<b>65+</b>	<b>76.14</b>	<b>70.01</b>	<b>71.09</b>	<b>1.54%</b> 

## INTELLECTUAL AND BUSINESS COURAGE

Intellectual courage is a curious animal. It is down in all measures from last quarter. This quarter, as in the summer, business owners showed a higher level of courage than their non-business-owning counterparts. Last quarter, however, the numbers were reversed—in the fall business owners indicated a lack of courage compared with the general population.

Business owners are significantly more courageous when it comes to business, showing an increase of 5.24% from last quarter, while non-business owners showed an 8.83% decrease in business courage since last quarter.

Intellectual courage continues to drop off with age, beginning at roughly age 45. When asked about actions indicating intellectual courage such as championing or introducing a new product at work, or devoting time to a creative endeavor such as a novel or invention, there continued to be a lack of action—66% took no action (compared with 55% fall and 73% summer).

The age group that reported the highest percentage of taking no action were those 55-64 (80%).

Of those who did take action, this quarter echoes last quarter—championing or introducing a new product line at work (12% winter, 20% fall, though only 8% summer) or getting involved in a creative endeavor (11% winter, 13% fall, 11% summer).

When asked about intellectual actions in the next year, more than half plan nothing (61% compared with 50% fall). The most popular planned activity is devoting time to a creative endeavor like writing a novel (16%).

Survey respondents also show caution in business, similar to last quarter—80.6% have done nothing in the past year that indicates confidence in the business environment such as changing careers, starting a business or going freelance (80.4% fall). For business owners, the most taken action was starting a new business (17.8% winter, 15.4% fall). For non-business owners, changing careers was most popular (8.2% winter, 8.4% fall). And, as it did last quarter, business courage declines by age and drops precipitously after age 45.

### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (INTELLECTUAL COURAGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>Overall</b>	<b>7.47</b>	<b>11.29</b>	<b>9.31</b>	<b>-17.54%</b> 
<b>Business owners</b>	<b>9.26</b>	<b>7.29</b>	<b>12.07</b>	<b>65.57%</b> 
<b>Non-business owners</b>	<b>7.11</b>	<b>12.22</b>	<b>8.74</b>	<b>-28.48%</b> 

### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (INTELLECTUAL COURAGE BY AGE)

	Summer	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>18-24</b>	<b>6.03</b>	<b>16.41</b>	<b>12.82</b>	<b>-21.88%</b> 
<b>25-34</b>	<b>7.86</b>	<b>14.79</b>	<b>13.10</b>	<b>-11.43%</b> 
<b>35-44</b>	<b>10.15</b>	<b>14.62</b>	<b>11.13</b>	<b>-23.87%</b> 
<b>45-54</b>	<b>7.54</b>	<b>9.35</b>	<b>8.78</b>	<b>-6.10%</b> 
<b>55-64</b>	<b>6.15</b>	<b>7.82</b>	<b>5.28</b>	<b>-32.48%</b> 
<b>65+</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>7.97</b>	<b>7.42</b>	<b>-6.80%</b> 



### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (BUSINESS COURAGE)

	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>Overall</b>	<b>5.59</b>	<b>5.27</b>	<b>-5.72% ☆</b>
<b>Business owners</b>	<b>12.78</b>	<b>13.45</b>	<b>5.24% ☆</b>
<b>Non-business owners</b>	<b>5.21</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>-8.83% ☆</b>



### AMERICAN COURAGE INDEX (BUSINESS COURAGE BY AGE)

	Fall	Winter	% Change Fall to Winter
<b>18-24</b>	<b>12.20</b>	<b>11.62</b>	<b>-4.75% ☆</b>
<b>25-34</b>	<b>11.18</b>	<b>9.20</b>	<b>-17.71% ☆</b>
<b>35-44</b>	<b>5.01</b>	<b>6.02</b>	<b>20.16% ☆</b>
<b>45-54</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>-4.70% ☆</b>
<b>55-64</b>	<b>2.08</b>	<b>2.08</b>	<b>0.00% ☆</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>-14.91% ☆</b>

## CONCLUSION

As the year ended, there were few surprises or significant changes in the level of courage in America. The overall trend was encouraging—a slight uptick indicating more courage in the aggregate. Yet individual scores based on age and type of courage illustrate more delicate and complex conduct.

It is relatively easy to define courage—action in the face of fear. Yet it is not as easy to define the absence of courage. It is not necessarily weakness, nor is it always or even usually cowardice. Instead, it may be prudence. Or wisdom. Or a keen ability to read the situation or environment. As business owners look to the coming year, the American Courage Index can help them put their decisions into context and make informed choices about how to address the challenges and fears they face.



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