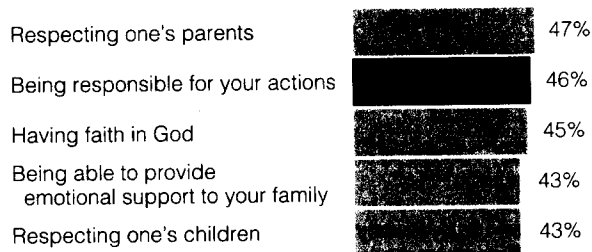


# NO EXCUSES?

Are we letting ourselves off the hook? Despite speculation prompted by recent court cases, the public does not, in general, look kindly on excuse-making. Younger respondents are more likely than older ones to say that most Americans try to avoid responsibility and to find this sort of behavior acceptable sometimes.

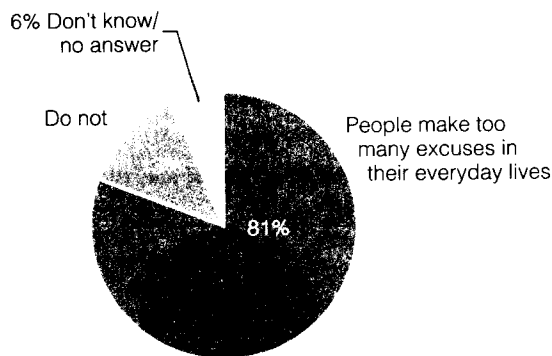
Question: I'm going to list some values that people hold. Some people say these values are important to them. Other people say they are not important to them. Please tell me how important each of these values is to you personally—is it one of the most important values you hold, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all? If you are not sure how important a particular value is to you, please say so.

## One of the most important values to you



Note: Top five responses shown.  
Source: Survey by Mellman and Lazarus for Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, September 1991.

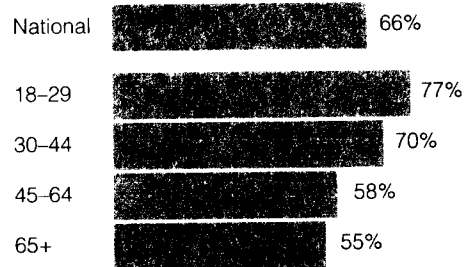
Question: These days, do you think people make too many excuses in their everyday lives, or don't they?



Note: Sample=871 adults.  
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 5-7, 1994.

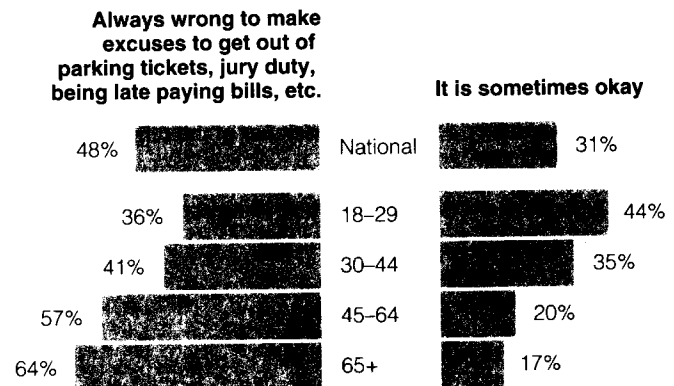
Question: Do you think most Americans are willing to take responsibility when they have done something wrong, or do you think most Americans try to avoid taking responsibility for their actions?

## Most Americans try to avoid taking responsibility for their actions



Note: Sample=871 adults.  
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 5-7, 1994.

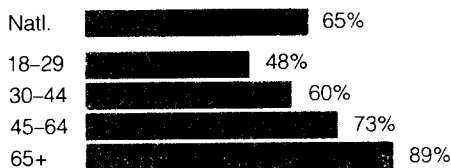
Question: As you may know, many people make excuses to get out of things like parking tickets, jury duty, being late for work, family and social commitments, being late paying bills, and other things. Do you think it's always wrong to make excuses for things like this, or is it sometimes okay to do this?



Younger respondents are also more likely than older ones to say that they sometimes make excuses. There is substantial skepticism about victim defenses, but sympathy for real victims.

Question: **How about you? Would you say you've made excuses to get out of things like that (parking tickets, jury duty, being late for work, family and social commitments, being late paying bills, and other things) often, sometimes, hardly ever, or never?**

**Hardly ever/never make excuses to get out of things**

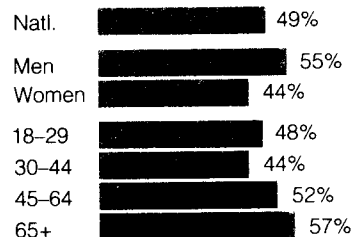


Note: Sample=871 adults.  
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 5-7, 1994.

Question: **Here are some defenses people have given for their actions when they have been charged with committing a violent crime. For each, I'd like to know whether your first reaction—before you hear any more information—is to believe the explanation or to think it's just an excuse.**

**If someone charged with committing a violent crime against their spouse or partner says they have done this because they have been physically abused by that spouse or partner, first reaction is...**

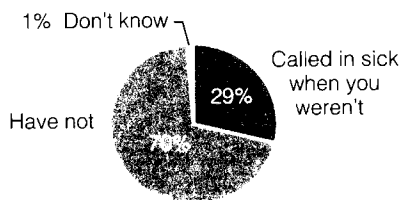
**To think it's just an excuse**



Note: Sample=871 adults.  
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 5-7, 1994.

Question: **Please tell me if you have ever done any of the following things on the job. Remember that all answers are strictly confidential.**

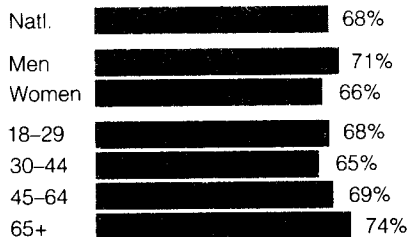
**Have done on the job**



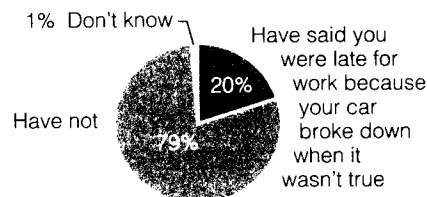
Note: Sample=802 employed adults.  
Source: Survey by Gordon S. Black Corporation for USA Today, April 1987.

Question: **In recent years, some defendants in criminal trials have pleaded not guilty, saying they have been subject to abuse and difficult personal circumstances. In general, do you think people should be allowed to use these explanations as defenses for what they did, or shouldn't this be allowed?**

**People should not be allowed to use explanations such as abuse and difficult personal circumstances as defenses for what they did**



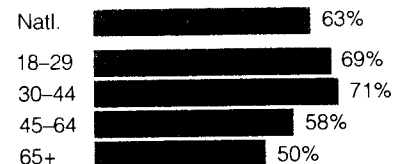
Question: **I'd like to read a number of things people sometimes say, but which are either not true or they don't mean. For each one I mention, have you, yourself, said it at some time when it wasn't true?**



Note: Sample=614 adults.  
Source: Survey by Gordon S. Black Corporation for USA Today, November 17, 1986.

Question: **On another subject, imagine that a woman or child who has been sexually or physically abused over a period of time kills their abuser. Should they be given a lighter punishment because of the history of abuse, or not?**

**If a woman or child who has been abused kills their abuser, they should be given a lighter punishment**



Note: Sample=520 adults.  
Source: Survey by ABC News, February 2, 1994.