Pew Research Center

# U.S. Political Landscape & American Voter Attitudes Ahead of the 2020 Election

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Pew Research Center

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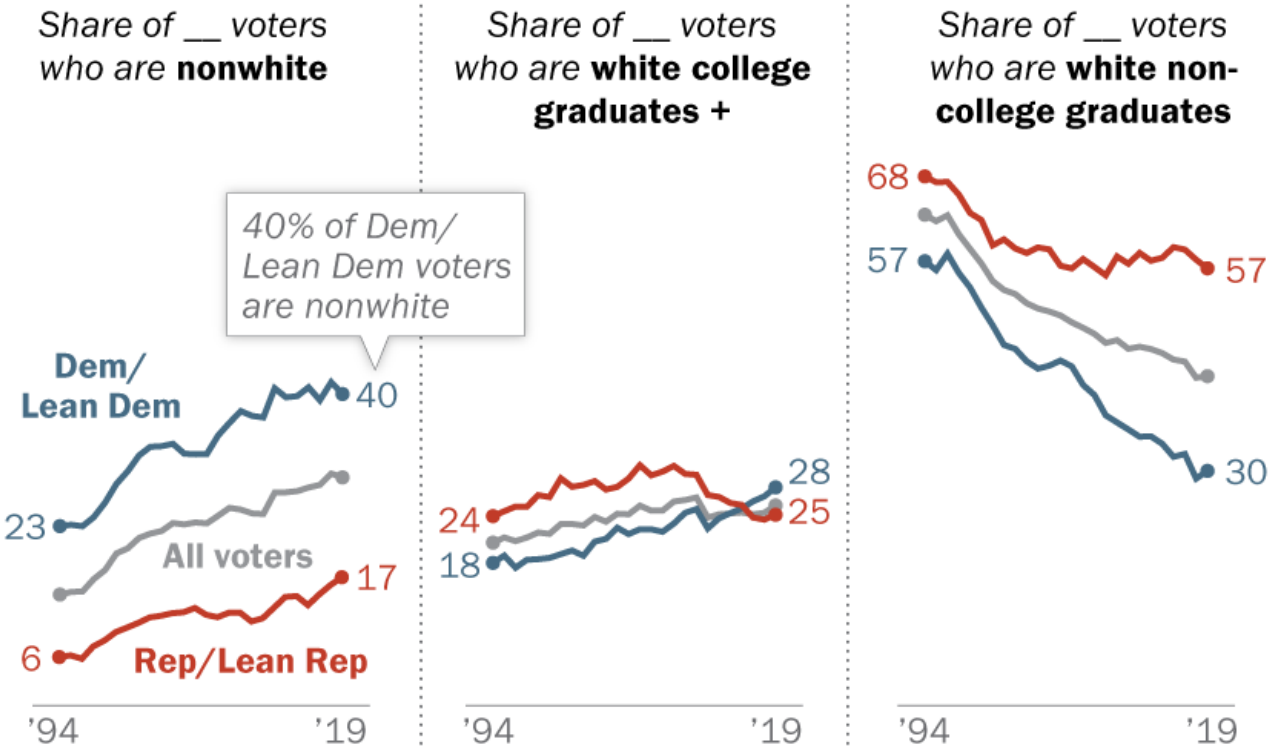
**What we do:** Generate a foundation of facts to enrich public dialogue and support sound decision-making. We conduct public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and data-driven social science research.

# A CHANGING U.S. ELECTORATE

# A changing U.S. electorate, widening differences between the Republican and Democratic coalitions

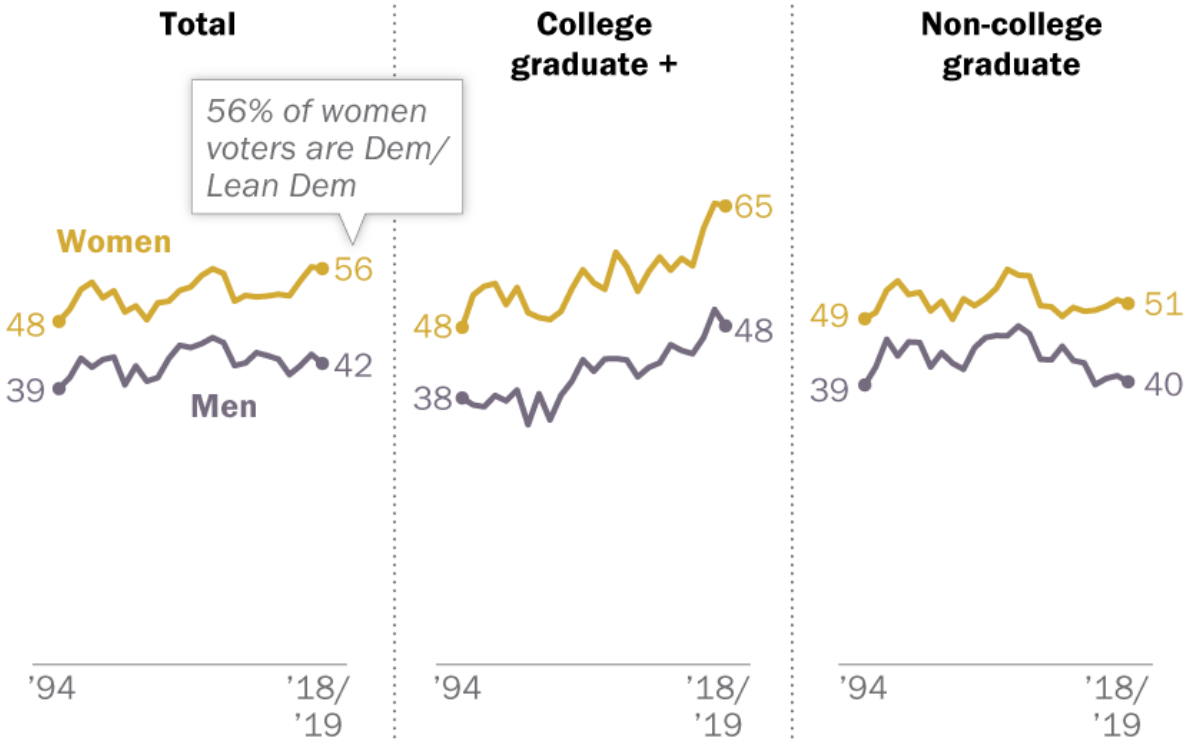
*% of registered voters who are ....*




Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic; nonwhite includes black, Hispanic, Asian, other race and mixed race.
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults)

# Wide gender gap in leaned partisanship, especially among college graduates

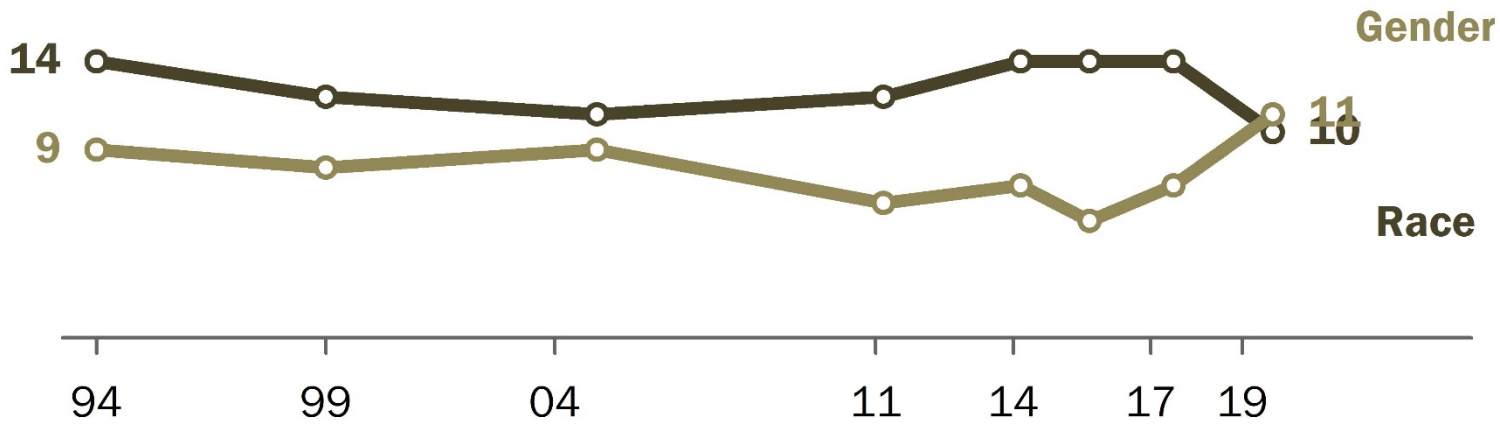
*% of ___ registered voters who identify as Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party*




Notes: Based on registered voters. Due to smaller sample sizes in 2018 and 2019, the data from those years has been combined.
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

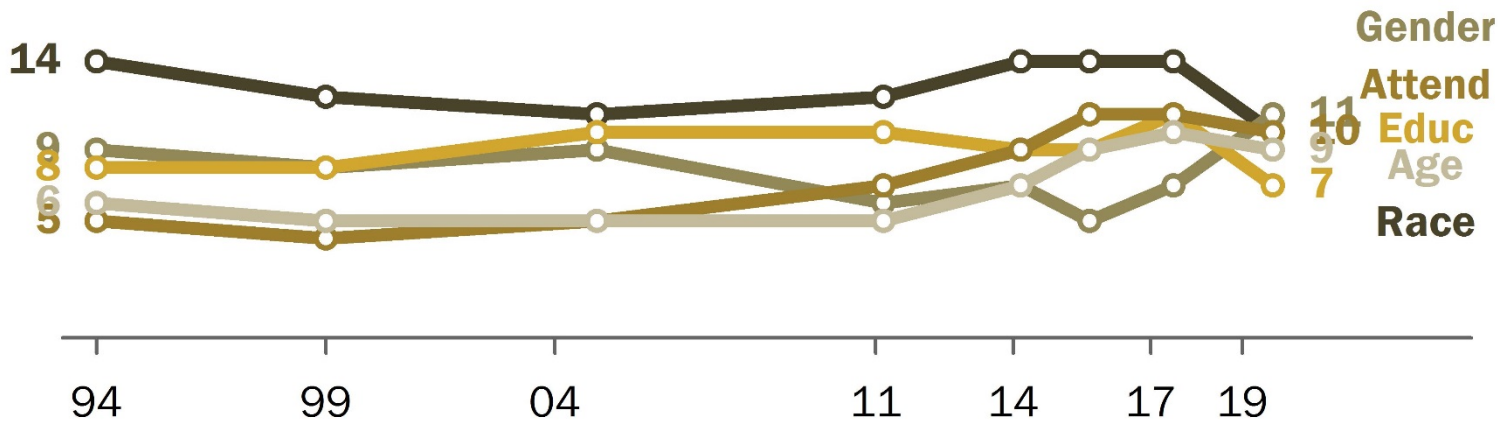
# DOMINATED BY PARTISANSHIP

# *Average gap in the share taking a conservative position across 10 political values, by key demographics*



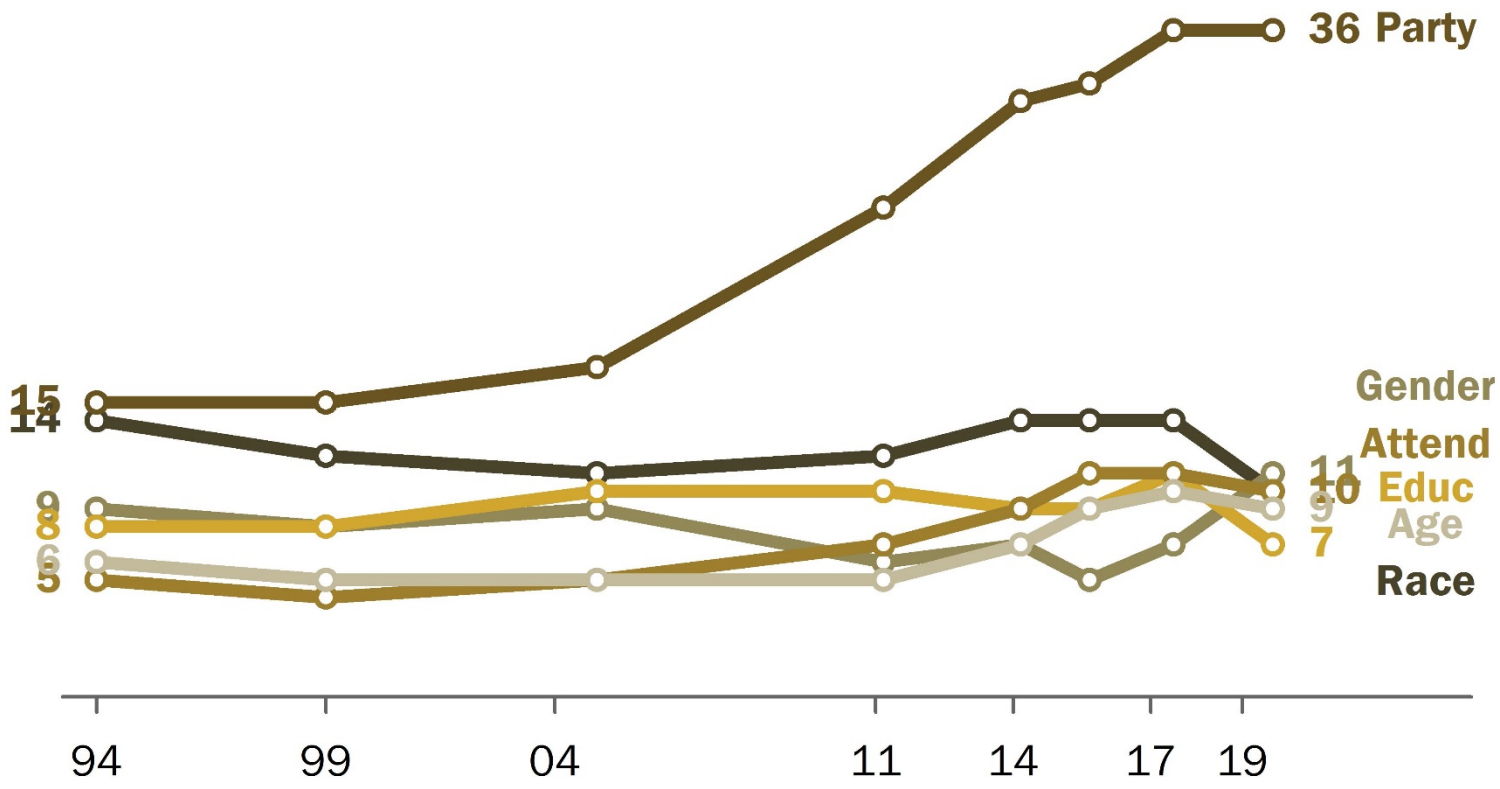

Source: Survey conducted June 8-18 and June 27-July 9, 2017. [LINK]

# *Average gap in the share taking a conservative position across 10 political values, by key demographics*




Source: Survey conducted June 8-18 and June 27-July 9, 2017. [LINK]

# *Average gap in the share taking a conservative position across 10 political values, by key demographics*

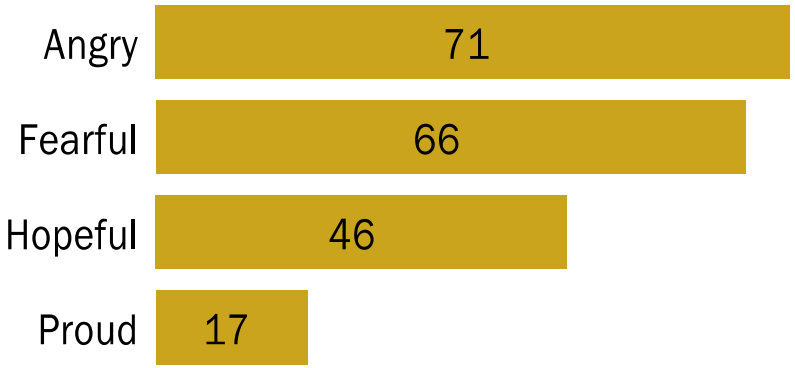



Source: Survey conducted June 8-18 and June 27-July 9, 2017. [LINK]

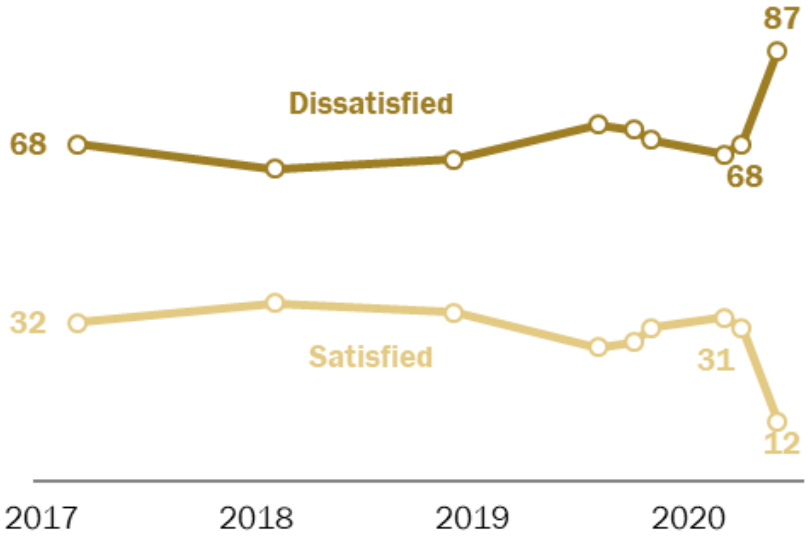
# ELECTION 2020 & COVID-19

# Majorities feel anger, fear with state of nation; few feel proud

*% who say, in thinking about the state of the country these days, they feel ...*



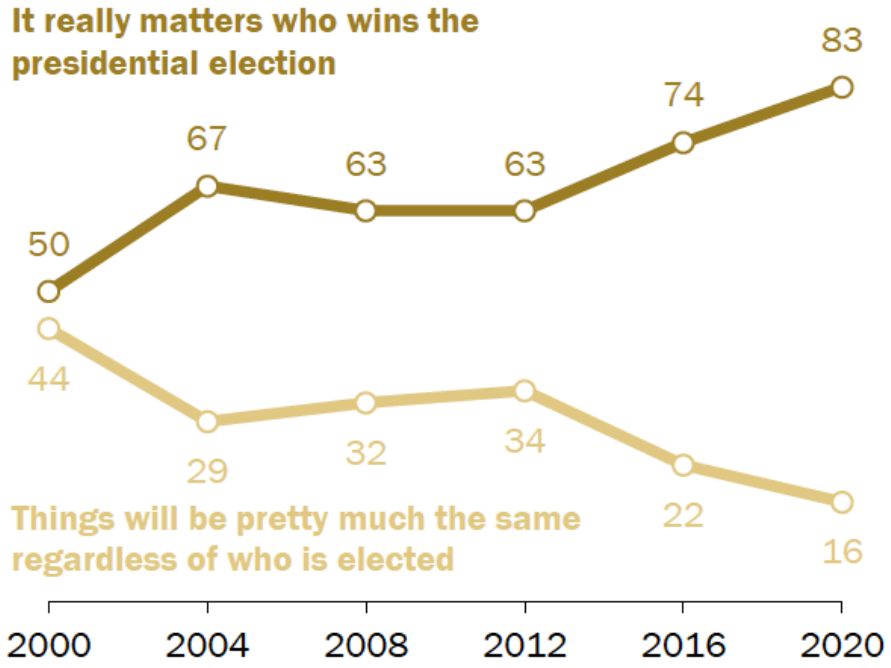

*% who say they are ____ with the way things are going in the U.S. today*




Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 16-22, 2020.

# More voters say it ‘really matters’ who wins the presidency than at any point in the last 20 years

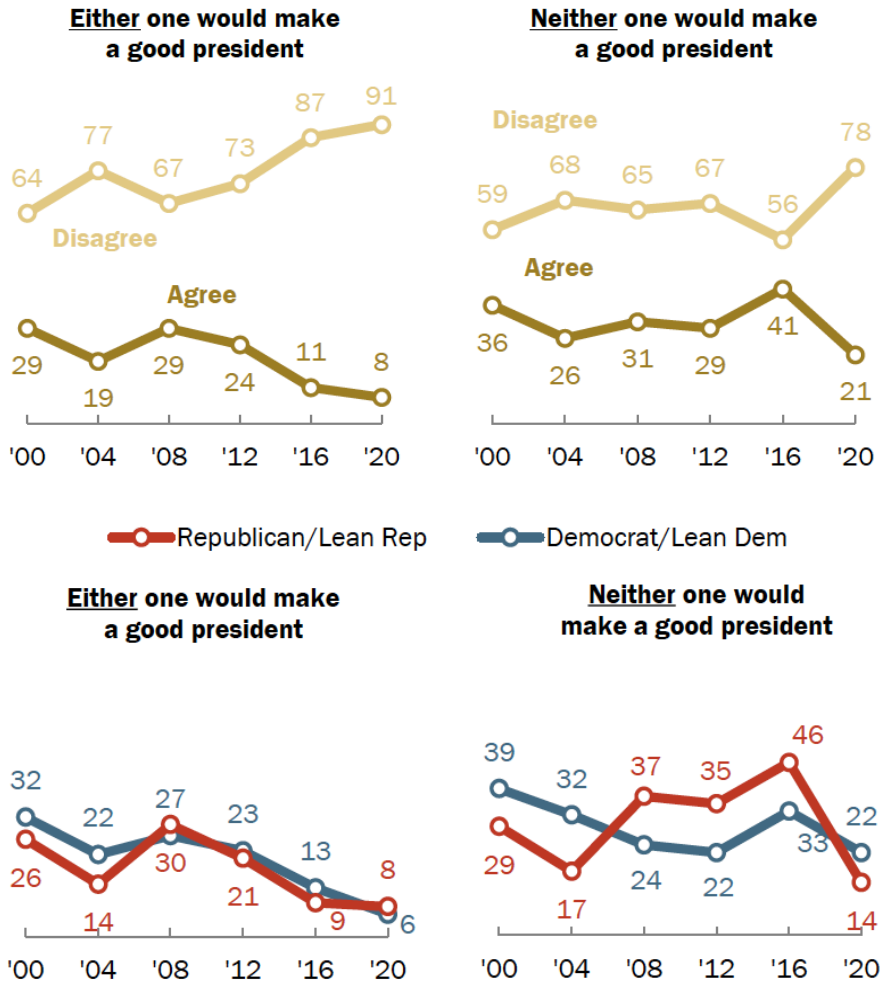
*% of registered voters who say…*




Notes: Based on registered voters. Volunteered and don’t know responses not shown. Data for prior years from June surveys.
Source: Telephone survey of U.S. adults conducted July 23-Aug.4, 2020 [LINK]

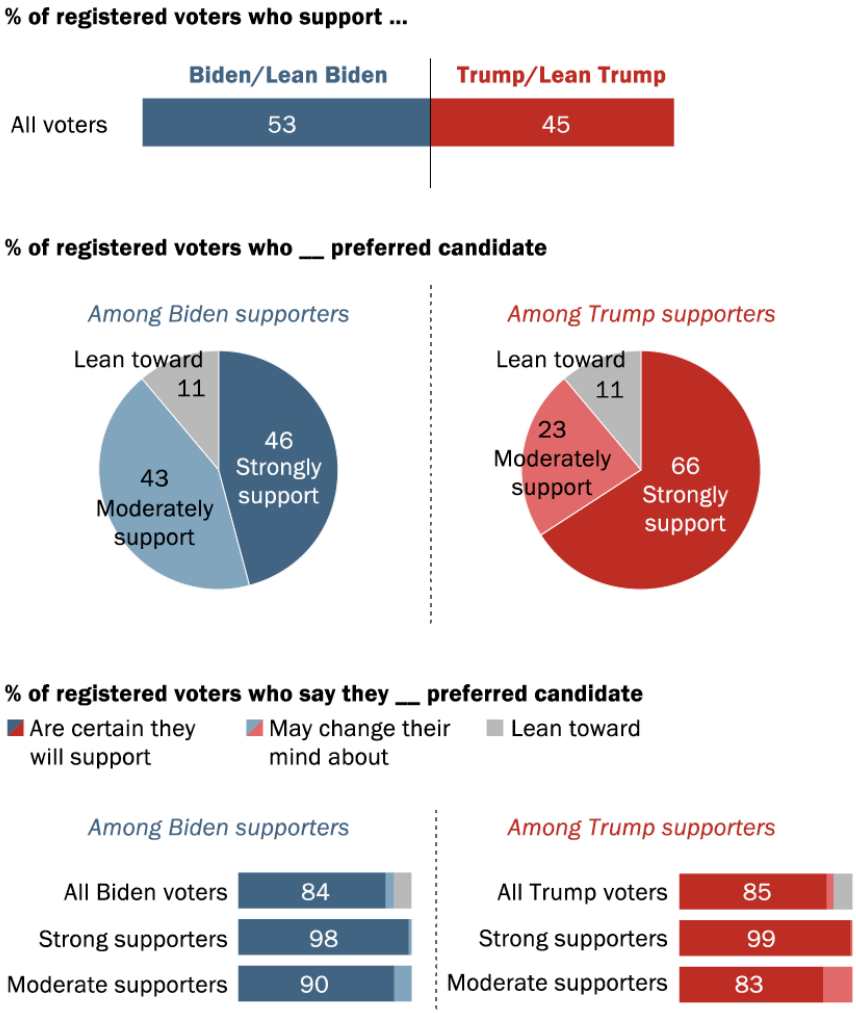
# Record low shares of voters say either – or neither – would make a good president

*% of registered voters who say it is difficult to choose between the candidates because…*




Notes: Based on registered voters. Volunteered and don't know responses not shown. Data for prior years from June surveys.
Source: Telephone survey of U.S. adults conducted July 23-Aug.4, 2020 [LINK]

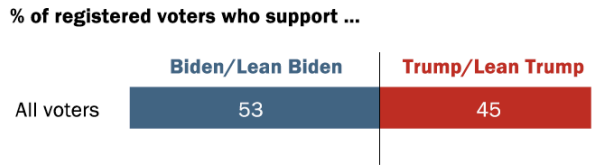
# Biden has overall advantage, despite lagging Trump in strong support



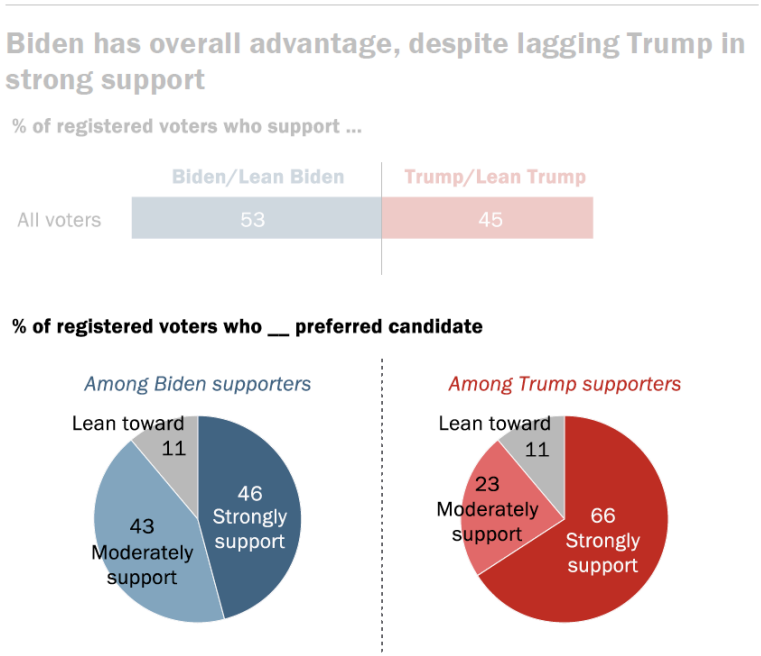

Notes: Based on registered voters. Support for each presidential candidate based on results from four questions. Those who lean toward either candidate note asked about strength of support or whether they were likely to change their mind. No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug.2, 2020 [LINK]

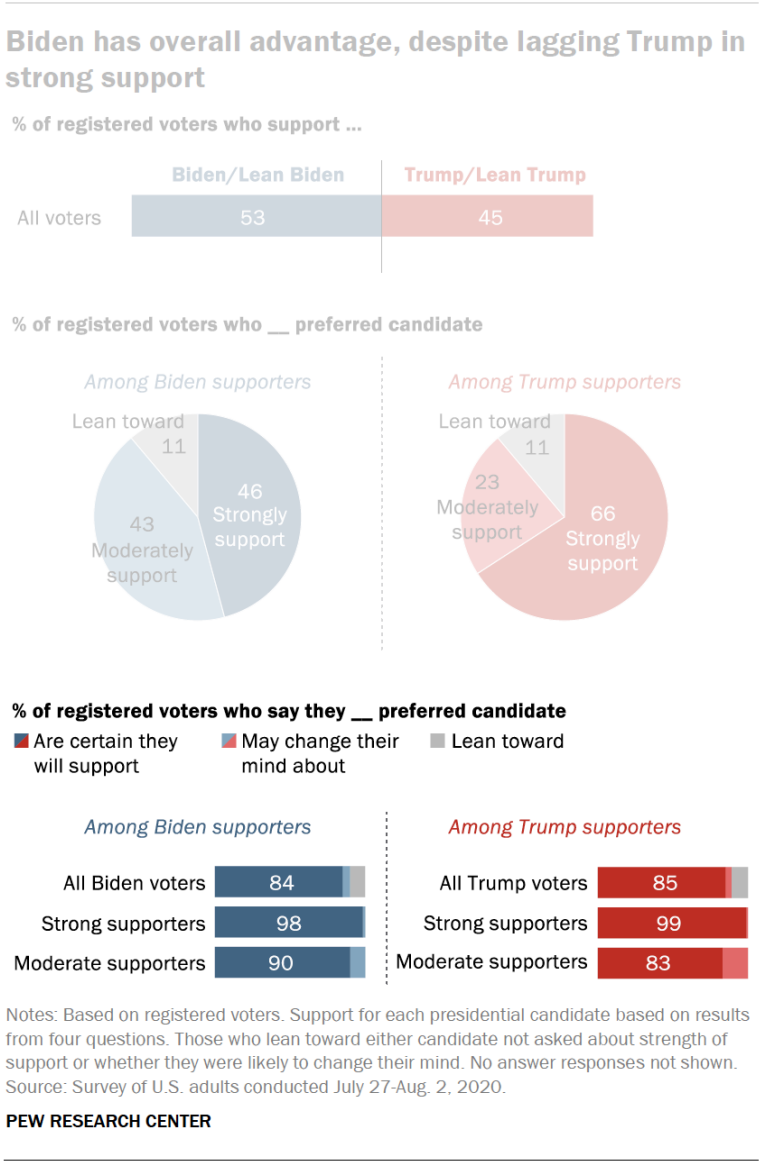
## Biden has overall advantage, despite lagging Trump in strong support




[LINK]


Biden has overall advantage, despite lagging Trump in strong support
% of registered voters who support ...
Biden/Lean Biden
Trump/Lean Trump
All voters
53
45
% of registered voters who __ preferred candidate
Among Biden supporters
Lean toward 11
46 Strongly support
43 Moderately support
Among Trump supporters
Lean toward 11
23 Moderately support
66 Strongly support

[LINK]


Biden has overall advantage, despite lagging Trump in strong support
% of registered voters who support ...
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% of registered voters who __ preferred candidate
Among Biden supporters
Lean toward 11
46 Strongly support
43 Moderately support
Among Trump supporters
Lean toward 11
23 Moderately support
66 Strongly support
% of registered voters who say they __ preferred candidate
Are certain they will support
May change their mind about
Lean toward
Among Biden supporters
All Biden voters 84
Strong supporters 98
Moderate supporters 90
Among Trump supporters
All Trump voters 85
Strong supporters 99
Moderate supporters 83
Notes: Based on registered voters. Support for each presidential candidate based on results from four questions. Those who lean toward either candidate not asked about strength of support or whether they were likely to change their mind. No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.
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[LINK]

# TURNOUT AND VOTING DURING THE PANDEMIC

# By international standards, U.S. voter turnout is low

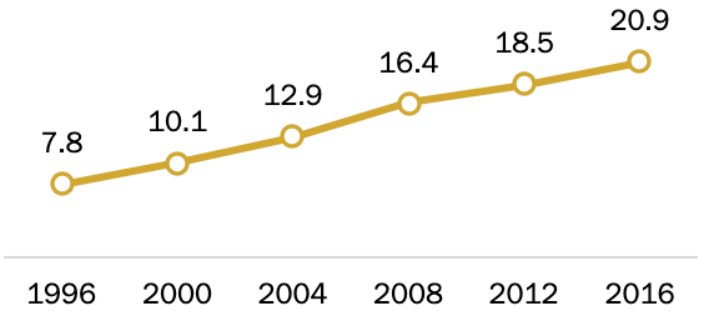
*Votes cast in most recent national election as a...*

US voter turnout is 26/32 OECD countries

Source: Pew Research Center calculations based on data from International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, European Election Database, United States Election Project, Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives and various national election authorities. [LINK]

## Share of voters casting ballots by mail has steadily risen since 1996

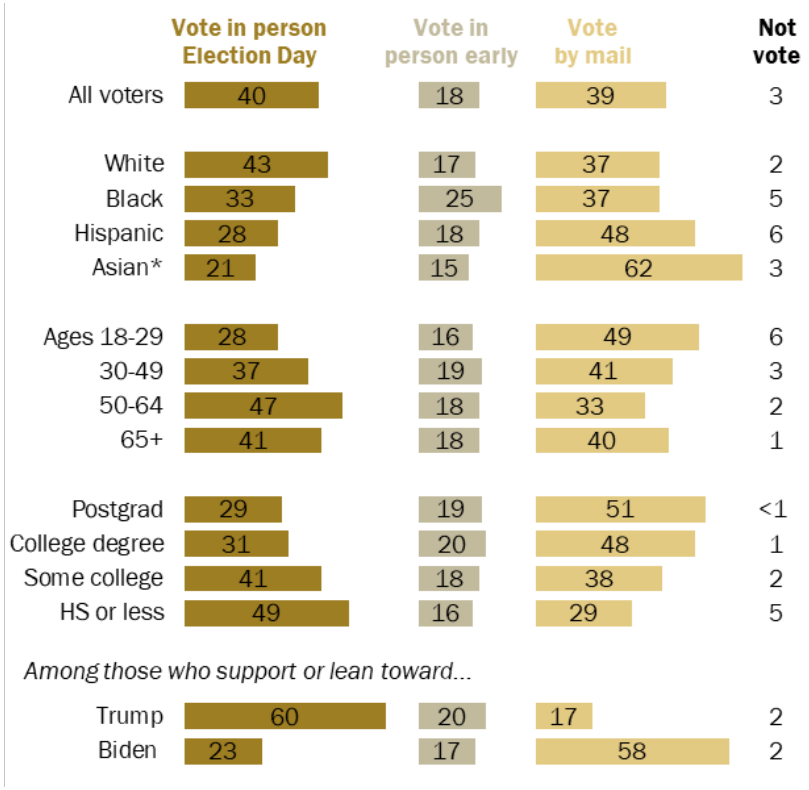
*% of U.S. voters who cast a ballot by mail*




Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1996-2016 Current Population Survey November Supplements (Ipums and U.S. Census Bureau

## Six-in-ten Trump backers say they would rather vote in person on Election Day – about the same share of Biden supporters would prefer to vote by mail

*% of registered voters who say they prefer to ___ for the election in November*



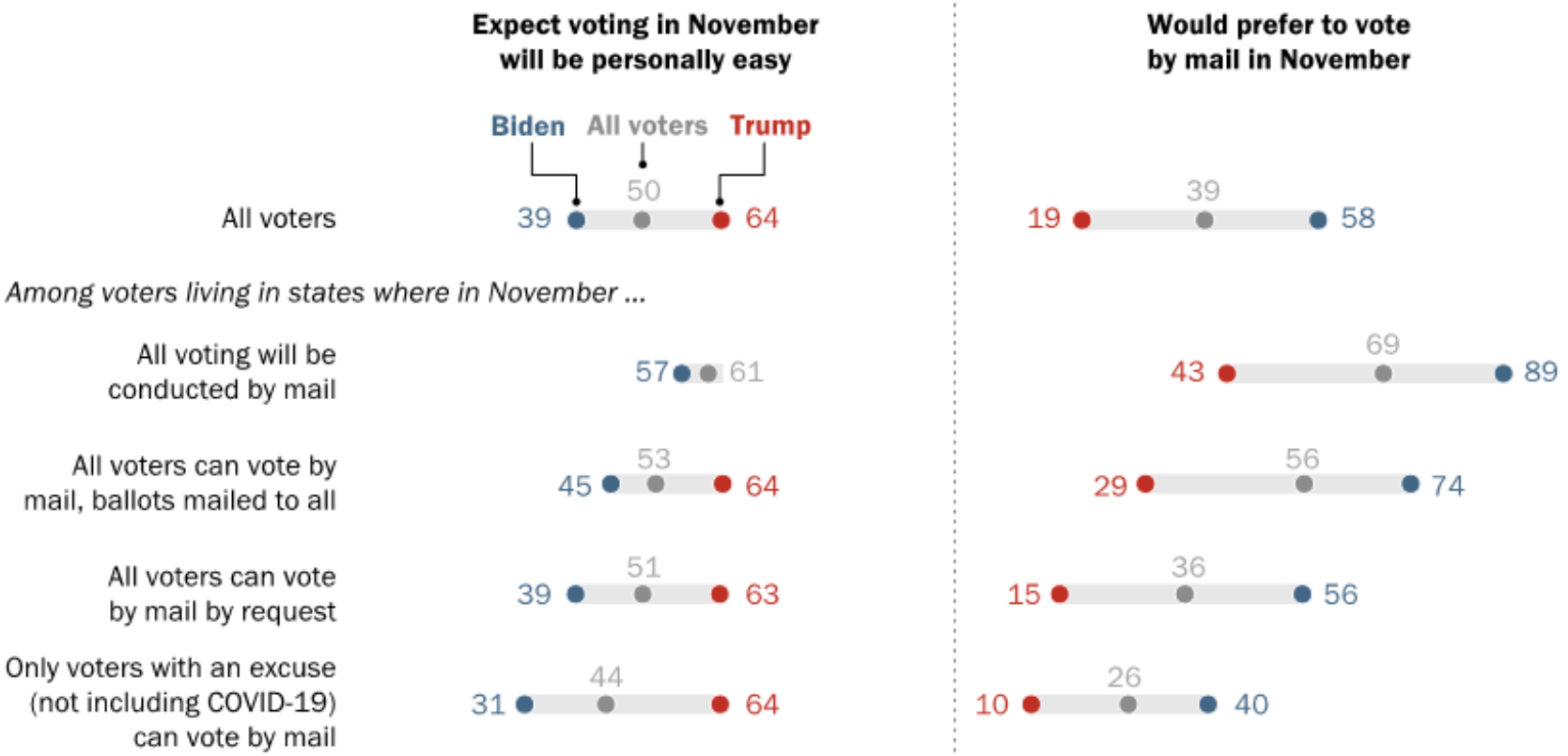

*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27- Aug. 2, 2020.

# Biden supporters' views on ease of voting vary depending on their states' voting law; Trump backers more likely to say it will be easy regardless of where they live

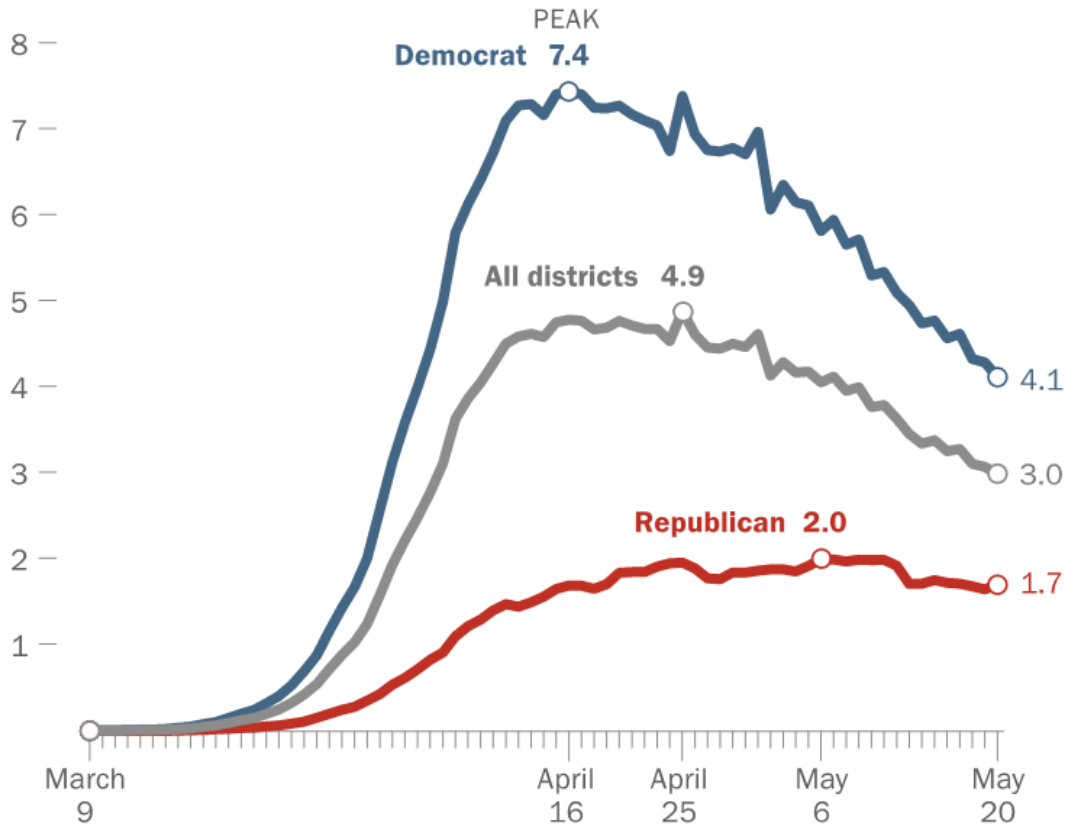
*% of registered voters who say they...*




Notes: Based on registered voters. There were too few Trump voters living in states where elections are conducted entirely by mail to report out separately for the question about expectations of voting due to form splits.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020

# Since mid-April, COVID-19 deaths declined in Democratic districts; relatively stable in Republican districts

*Average number of newly report deaths in congressional districts represented by…(seven day rolling average)*




Source: Pew Research Center analyses of COVID-19 Data Repository from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering as of May 20, 2020. [LINK]

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# Thank you.
# Questions?

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**All Pew Research Center data are available online at: www.pewresearch.org**

**Election 2020:**
**www.pewresearch.org/topics/2020-election/**

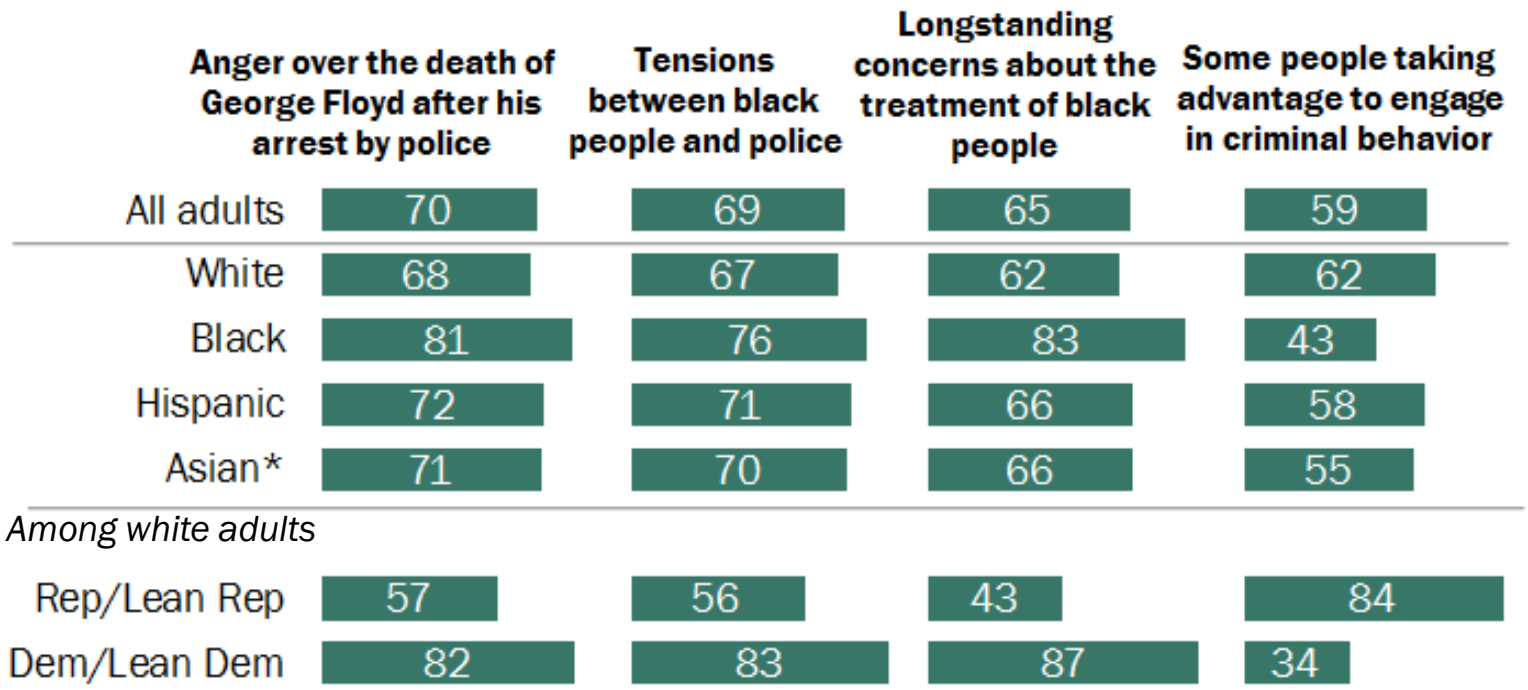
**COVID-19 related data:**
**www.pewresearch.org/covid**

**Subscribe to our newsletters at**
**www.pewresearch.org/follow-us/**

# RACIAL ATTITUDES & VIEWS OF RECENT PROTESTS IN THE UNITED STATES

# Public sees mix of factors underlying recent protests; views differ widely by party

*% saying each factor contributed a great deal to the demonstrations to protest the death of George Floyd*



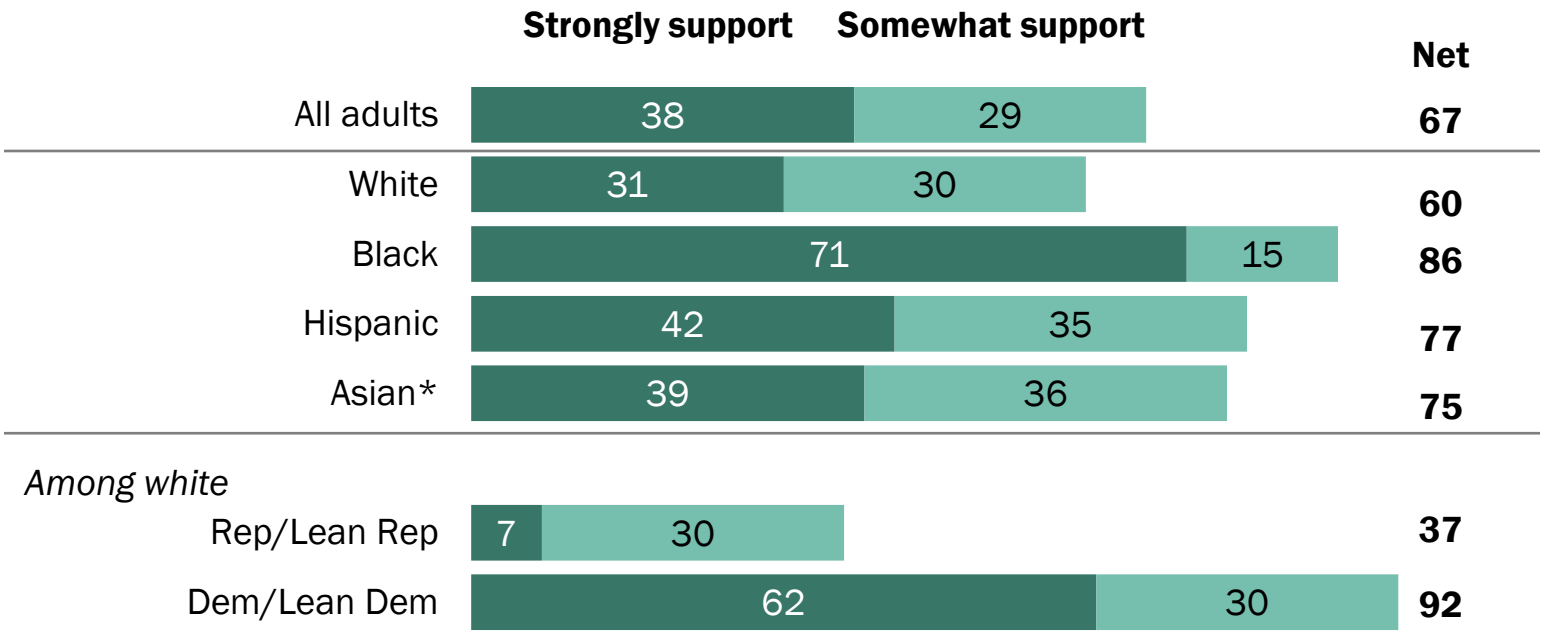

*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Note: Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. White, black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 4-10, 2020.

# Two-thirds of Americans support Black Lives Matter, but views are deeply divided along partisan lines

*% saying they ____ the Black Lives Matter movement*

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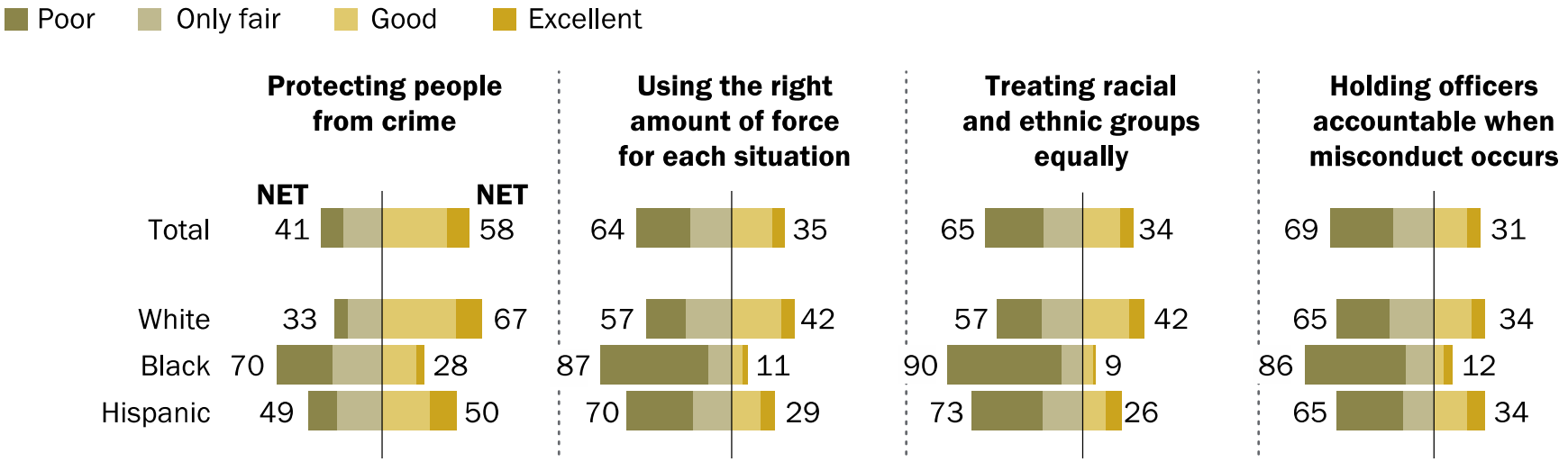
Note: Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. White, black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 4-10, 2020.

# Black adults are highly critical of police performance in several areas; far fewer white adults express negative views

*% who say police around the country are doing a ____ job of ...*




Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 16-22, 2020.

# CAN WE TRUST PUBLIC OPINION POLLS?

# Key things to know about election polling in the U.S.

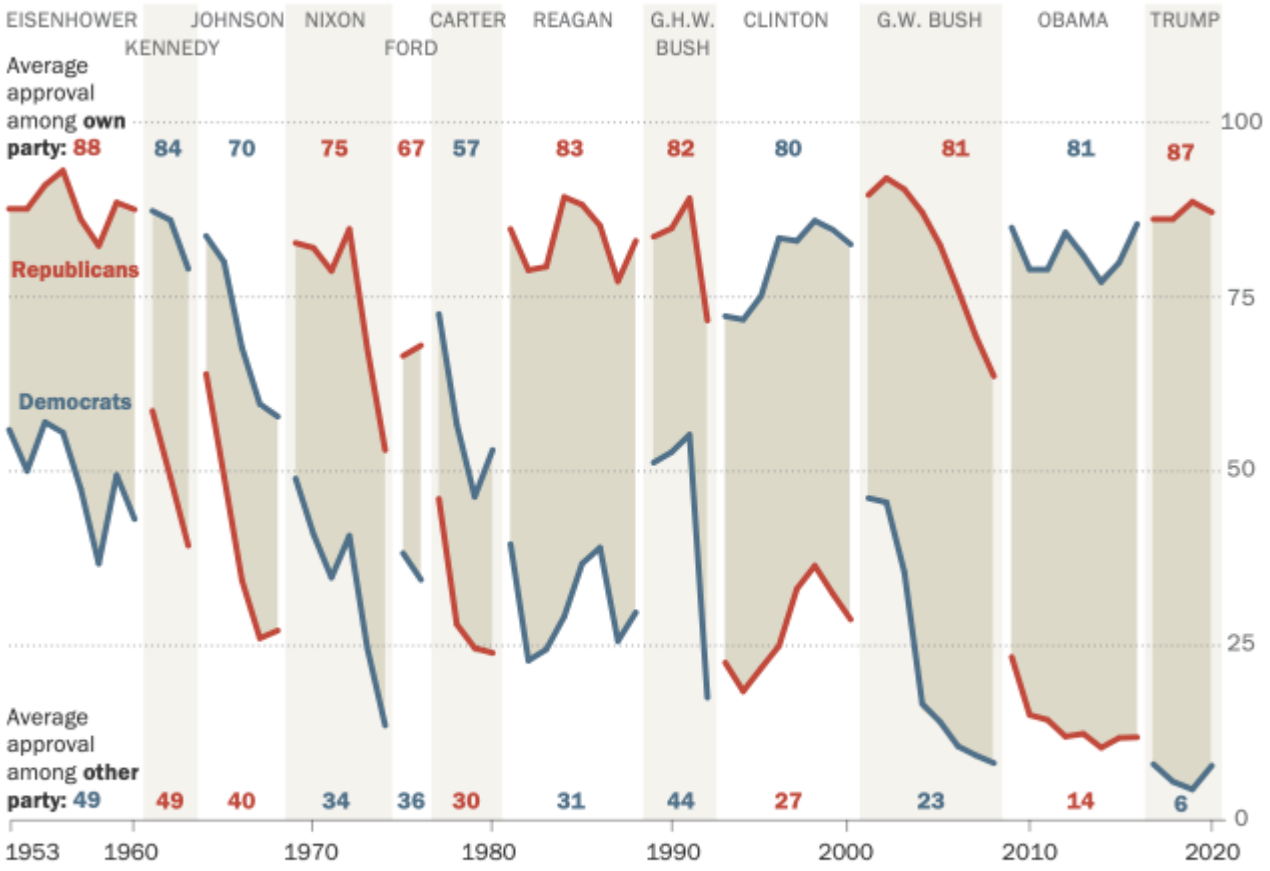
- Not all polls are created equal
  - Data quality concerns, difficulties in state-level polling
- Margins of error do not account for all sources of uncertainty
- Polling is about more than prediction

For more, see this post: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/05/key-things-to-know-about-election-polling-in-the-united-states/

# ELECTION FUNDAMENTALS AND 2020

## Trump approval more polarized than for any other president since Eisenhower

*% who approve of president's job performance, by party*




Note: Lines show yearly approval averages; data labels show administration averages. Because some earlier data did not include partisan leaning, Republicans and Democrats in this graphic do not include leaners.

Source: Annual totals of survey data from Pew Research Center American Trends panel (2017-2020), Pew Research Center phone surveys (1993-2017), and Gallup organization (1953-1993).

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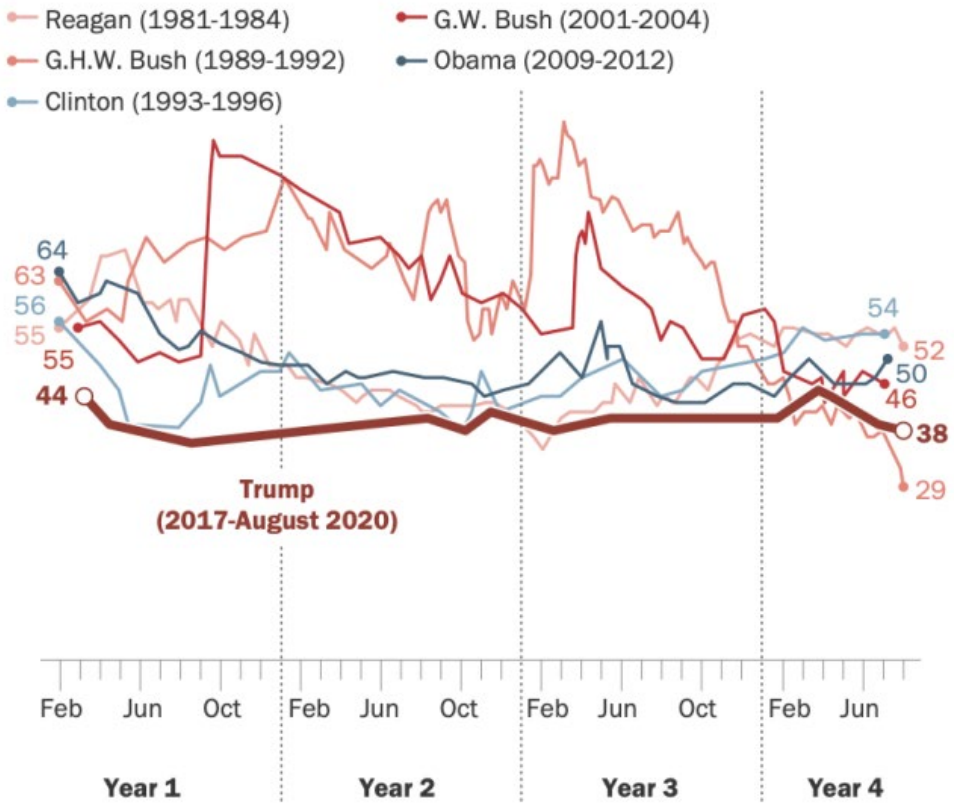
https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/24/trumps-approval-ratings-so-far-are-unusually-stable-and-deeply-partisan/

## Throughout his first term, Trump's approval rating has been quite stable compared with his predecessors

*Presidential job approval in first term in office (%)*



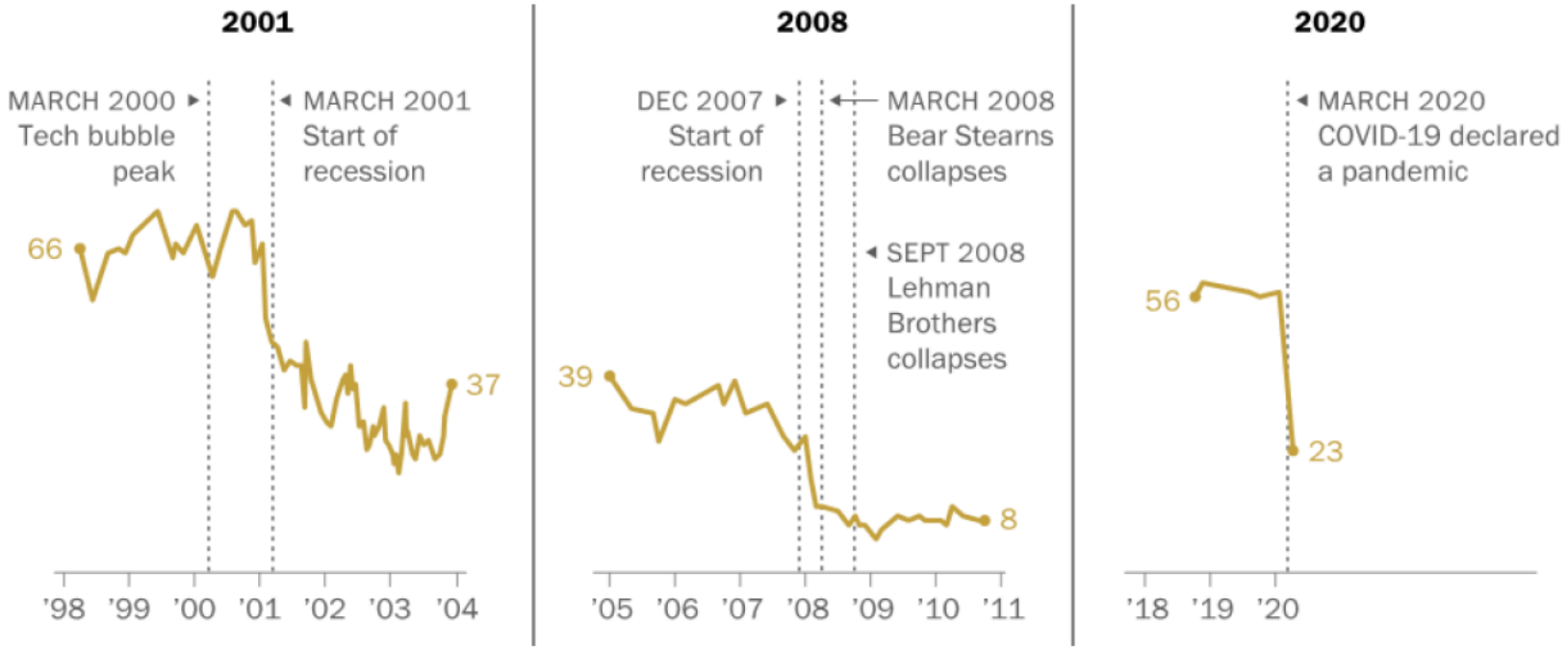

Source: Telephone survey data from Pew Research Center (Obama through Clinton) and the Gallup organization (H.W. Bush and Reagan) telephone surveys. Trump approval rating based on data from Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/24/trumps-approval-ratings-so-far-are-unusually-stable-and-deeply-partisan/

## Sudden decline in national economic ratings amid coronavirus outbreak, in contrast to past economic downturns

*% who rate national economic conditions as excellent or good*




Notes: Data from 1998-2003 is from telephone surveys conducted by Gallup. Data from 2005-2011 is from telephone surveys by Pew Research Center. Data from 2018-2020 is from Pew Research Center's online American Trends Panel.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 7-12, 2020.

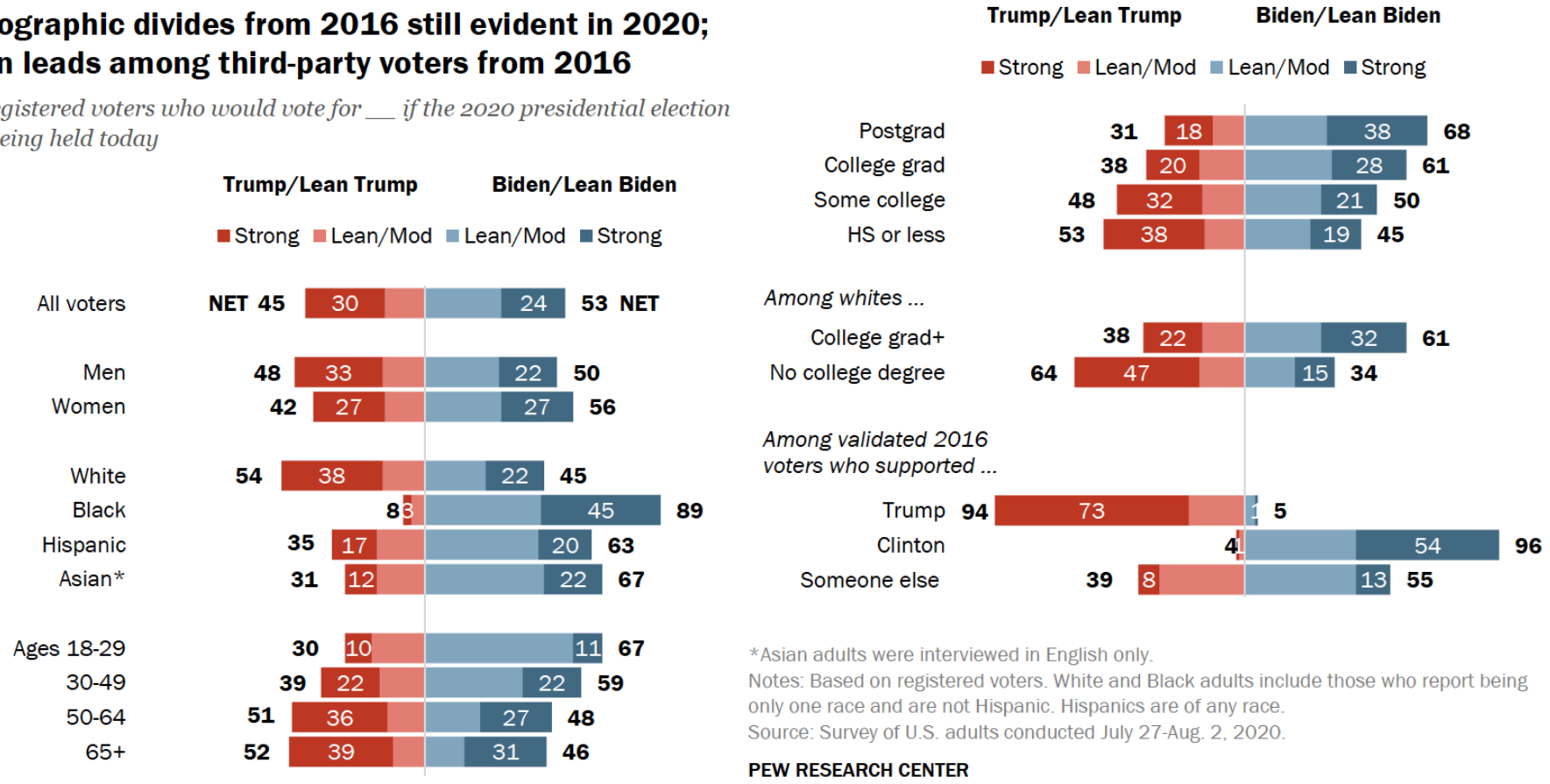
**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/04/21/positive-economic-views-plummet-support-for-government-aid-crosses-party-lines/

# APPENDIX

## Demographic divides from 2016 still evident in 2020; Biden leads among third-party voters from 2016

*% of registered voters who would vote for ___ if the 2020 presidential election were being held today*

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Notes: Based on registered voters. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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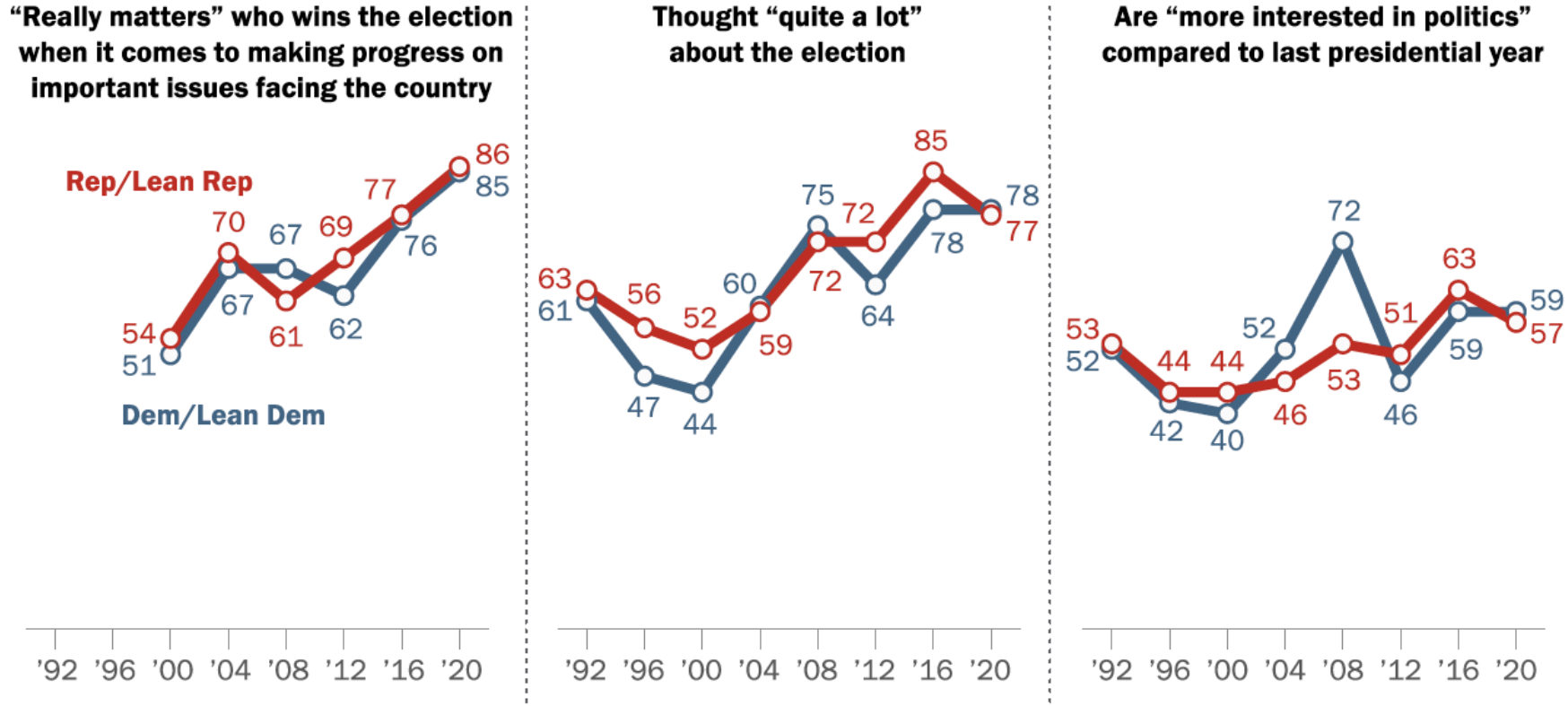
https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/the-2020-trump-biden-matchup/

# Record-high shares of both Republican and Democratic voters say the election outcome 'really matters'

*% of registered voters who say ...*




Notes: Based on registered voters. Results from prior surveys were conducted in June of election years.
Source: Telephone survey of U.S. adults conducted July 23-Aug. 4, 2020.

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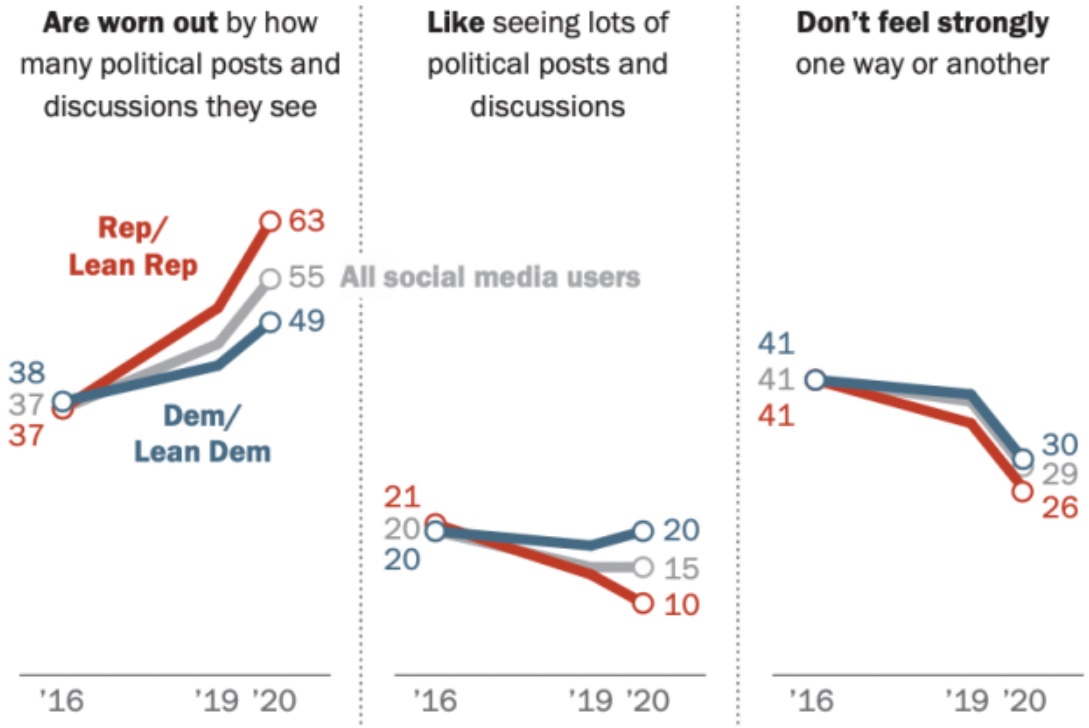
https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/the-2020-trump-biden-matchup/

## Growing shares of social media users are worn out by the number of political posts they encounter; this is especially true for Republican users

*% of social media users who say they ___ on social media*



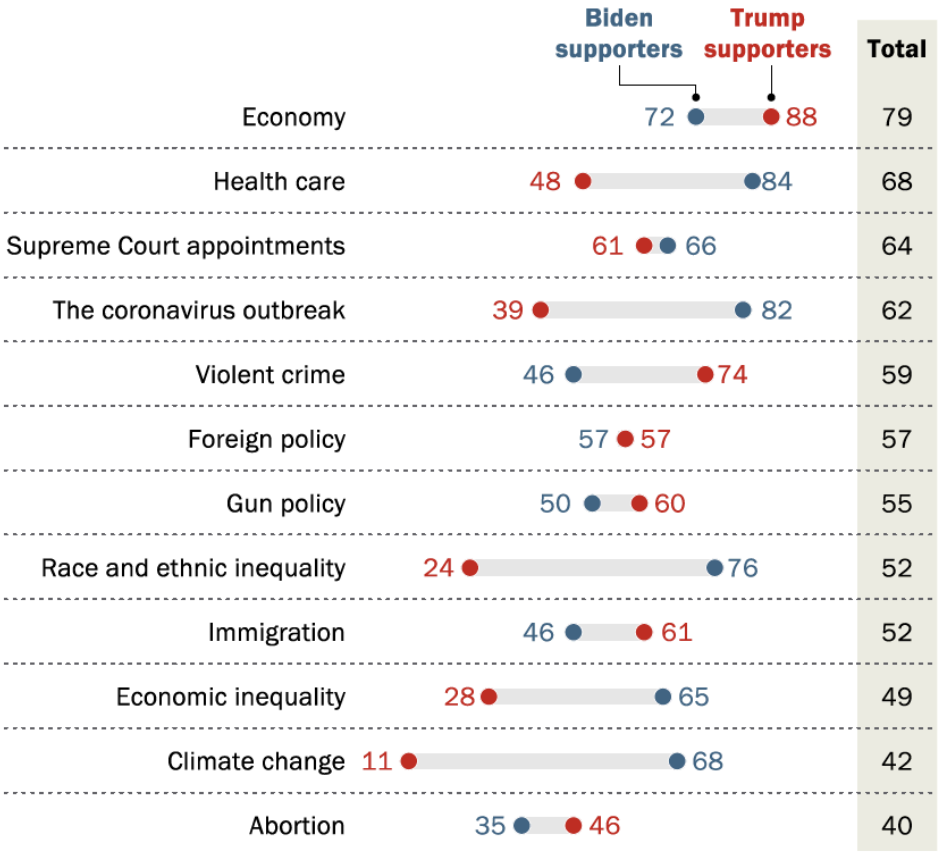

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 13-19, 2020.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/19/55-of-u-s-social-media-users-say-they-are-worn-out-by-political-posts-and-discussions/

## Top issues for Trump supporters are economy, crime; Biden supporters prioritize health care, coronavirus

*% of registered voters saying each is 'very important' to their vote in the 2020 presidential election*



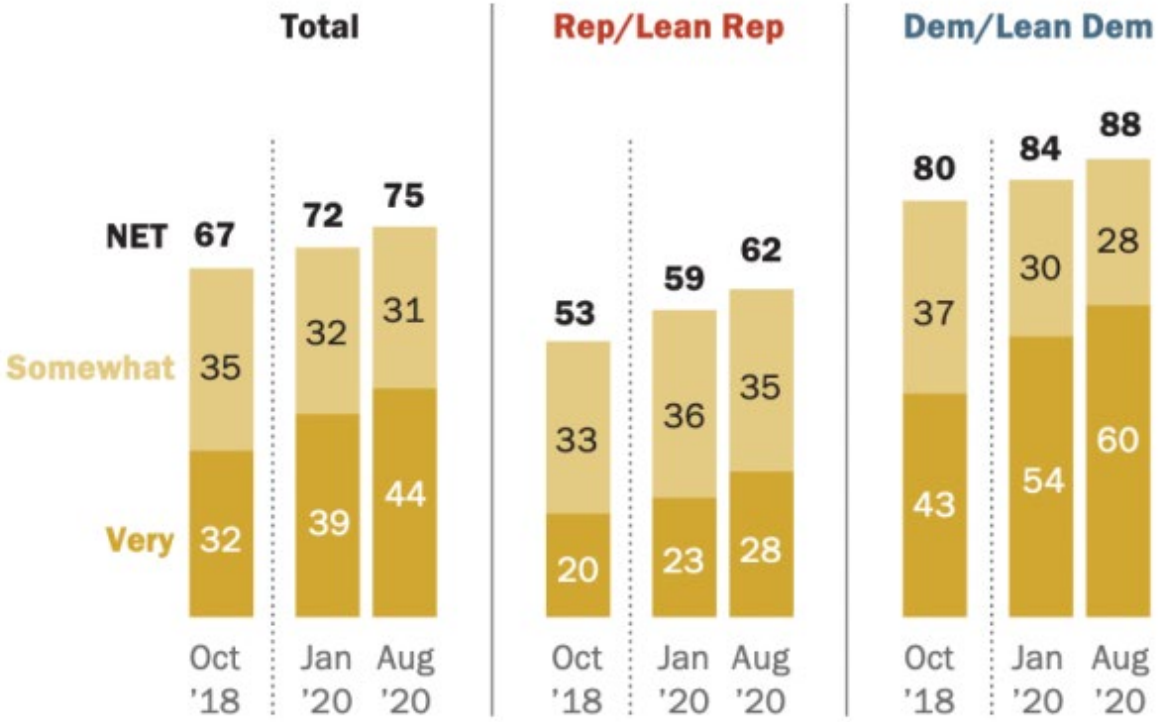

Note: Based on registered voters.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/13/the-2020-trump-biden-matchup/

## Growing shares in both parties expect foreign governments to attempt to influence 2020 election

*% who say it is ___ likely that Russia or other foreign governments will attempt to influence the U.S. presidential election this November*




Note: In October 2018, question asked about the "U.S. elections in November."
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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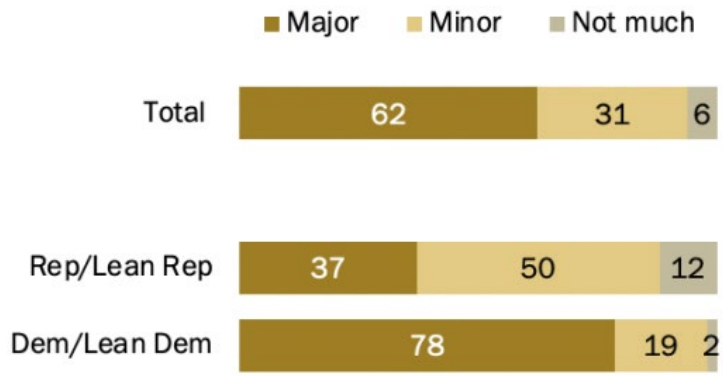
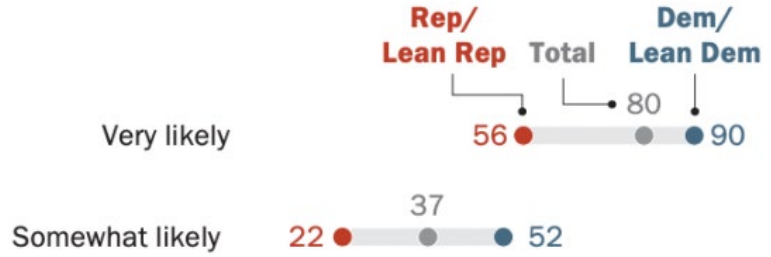
https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/18/75-of-americans-say-its-likely-that-russia-or-other-governments-will-try-to-influence-2020-election/

## Among those who say foreign interference is likely, partisan divides over whether it's a 'major problem'

*Among those who say it is very or somewhat likely that Russia or other foreign governments will attempt to influence the 2020 election, % who say attempts are a ___ problem*




*Among those who say it is ___ Russia or other foreign governments will attempt to influence the 2020 election, % who say attempts are a* ***major problem***




Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

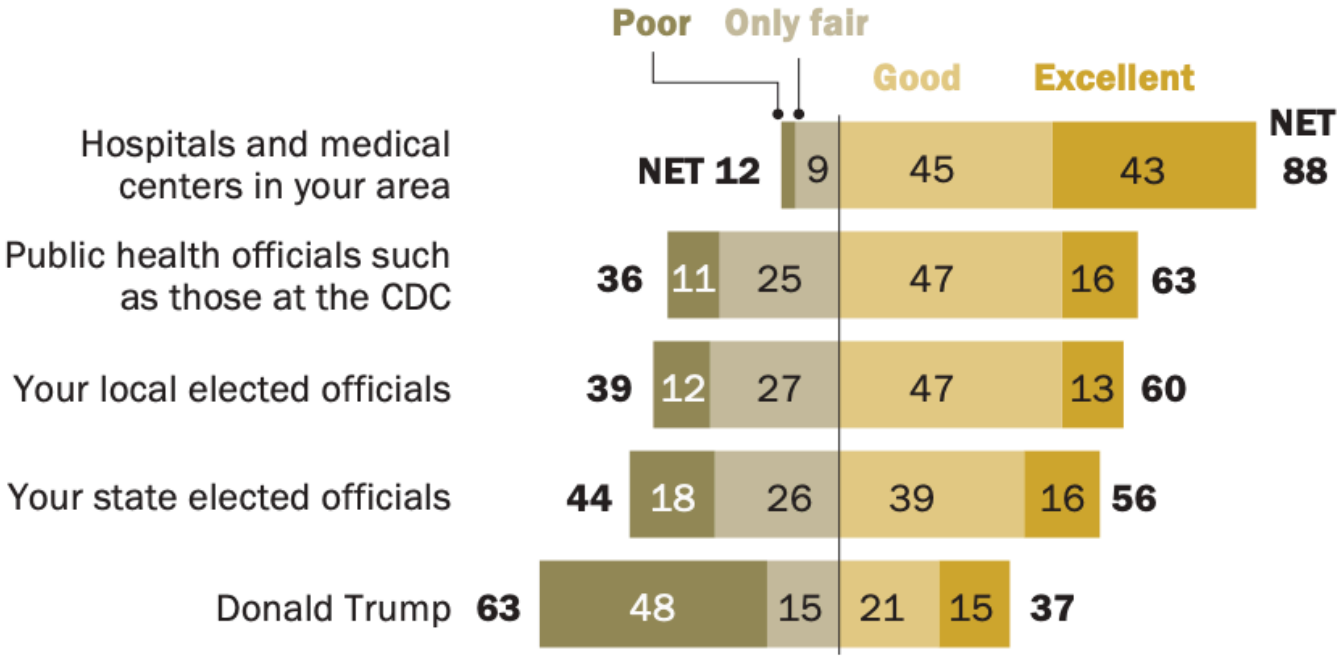
**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/18/75-of-americans-say-its-likely-that-russia-or-other-governments-will-try-to-influence-2020-election/

# CORONAVIRUS ATTITUDES

# Majority of Americans are critical of Trump's response to COVID-19; nearly half say he is doing 'poor' job

*% who rate the job each of the following is doing responding to the coronavirus outbreak as ...*



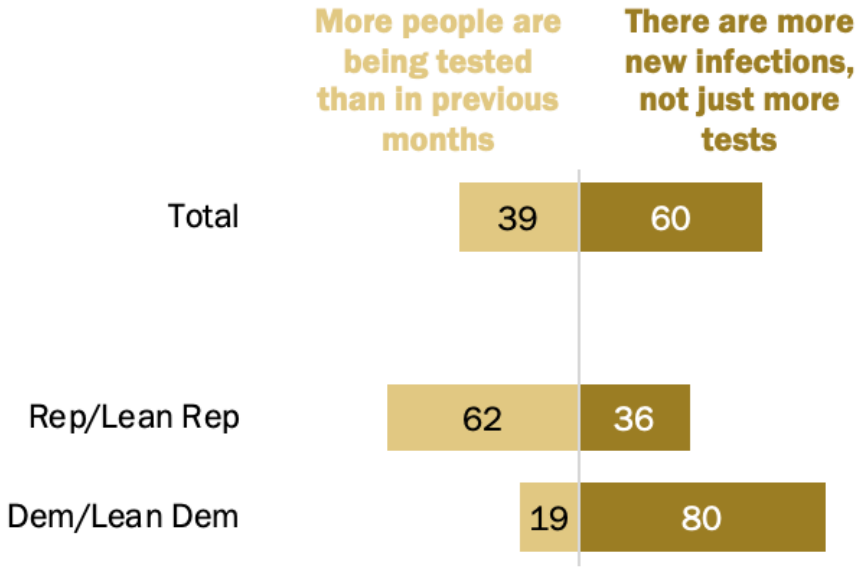

Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/06/most-americans-say-state-governments-have-lifted-covid-19-restrictions-too-quickly/

## Majority says COVID-19 cases have risen primarily because of more new infections, not just more testing

*% who say the **primary** reason there are increasing numbers of confirmed cases of coronavirus in the U.S. is that ...*



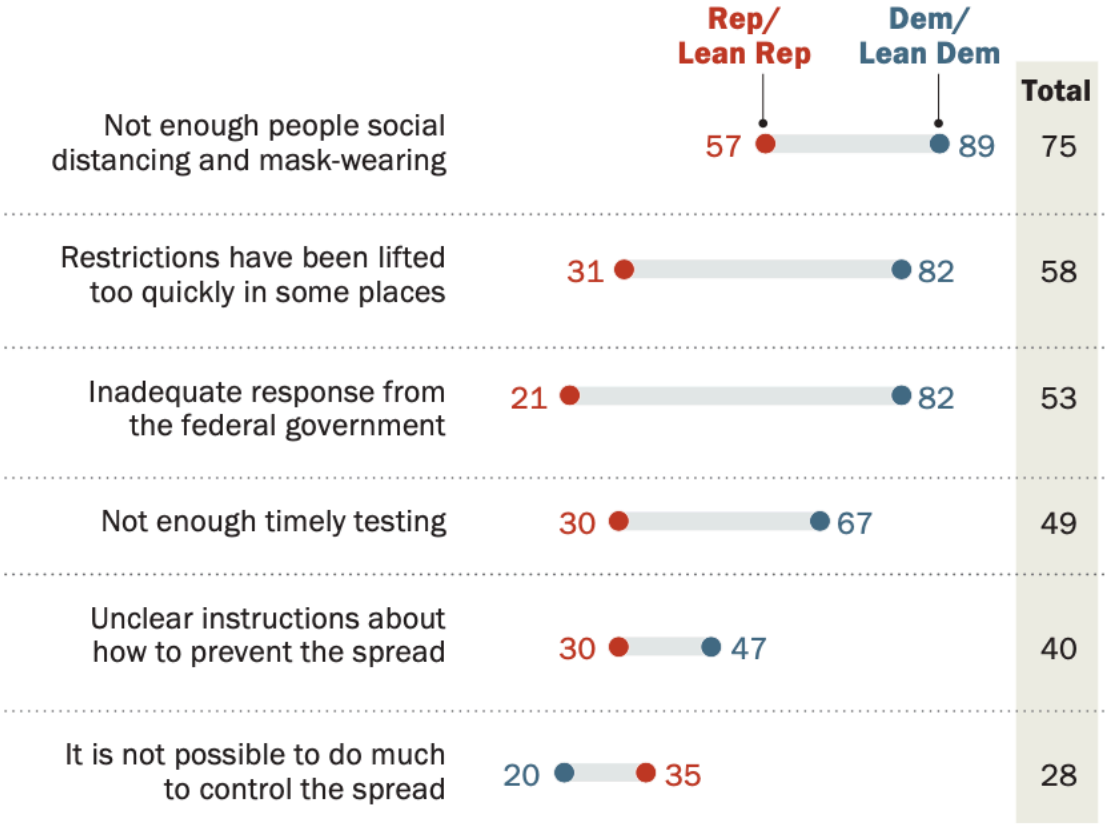

Notes: See topline for full question wording. No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/08/06/most-americans-say-state-governments-have-lifted-covid-19-restrictions-too-quickly/

## Majorities of both partisan coalitions say 'not enough' social distancing a major reason outbreak continues

*% who say each is a **major reason** why the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. has continued*




Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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