

The Mood of the American Voter on the Eve of the 2020 Presidential Election

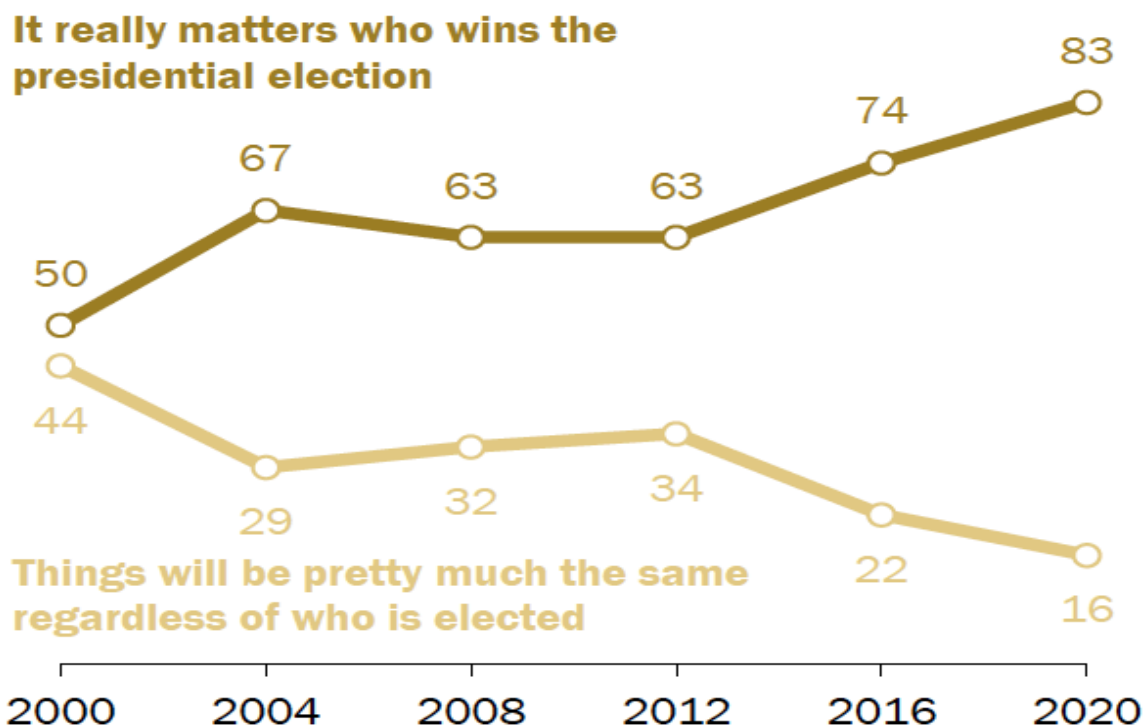
Bruce Stokes, German Marshall Fund

October 5, 2020

The State of the U.S. Presidential Race

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

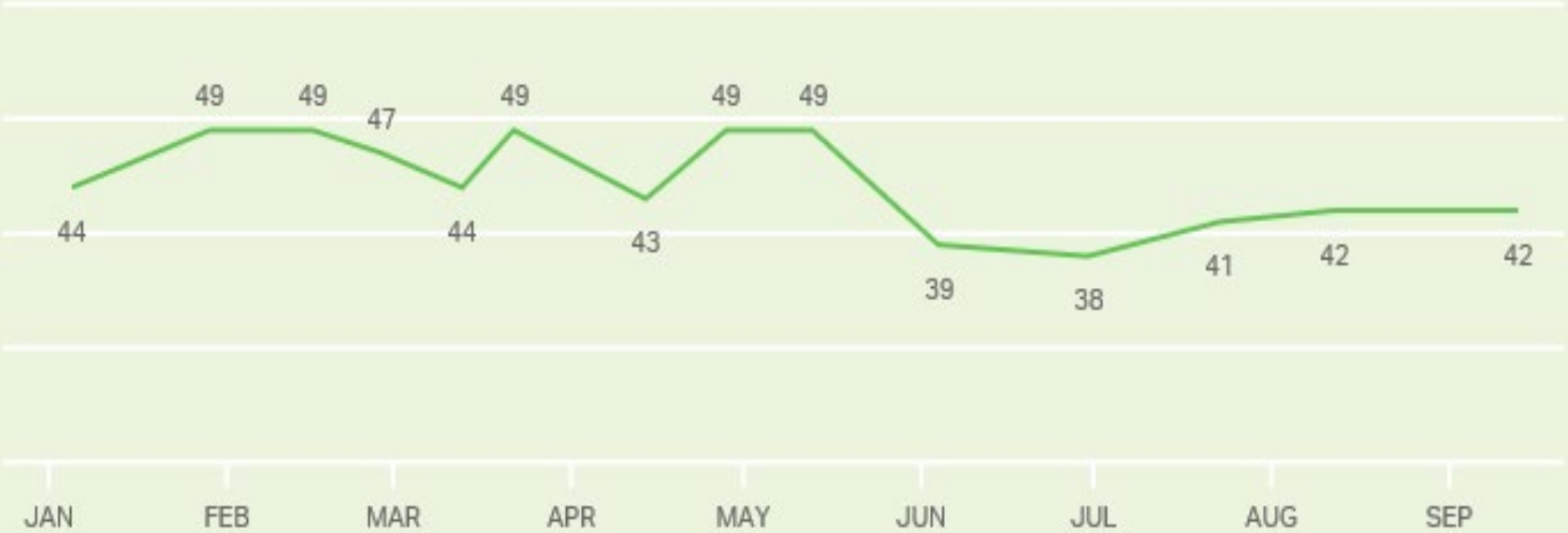
% of registered voters who say ...



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.

President Donald Trump's Job Approval in 2020

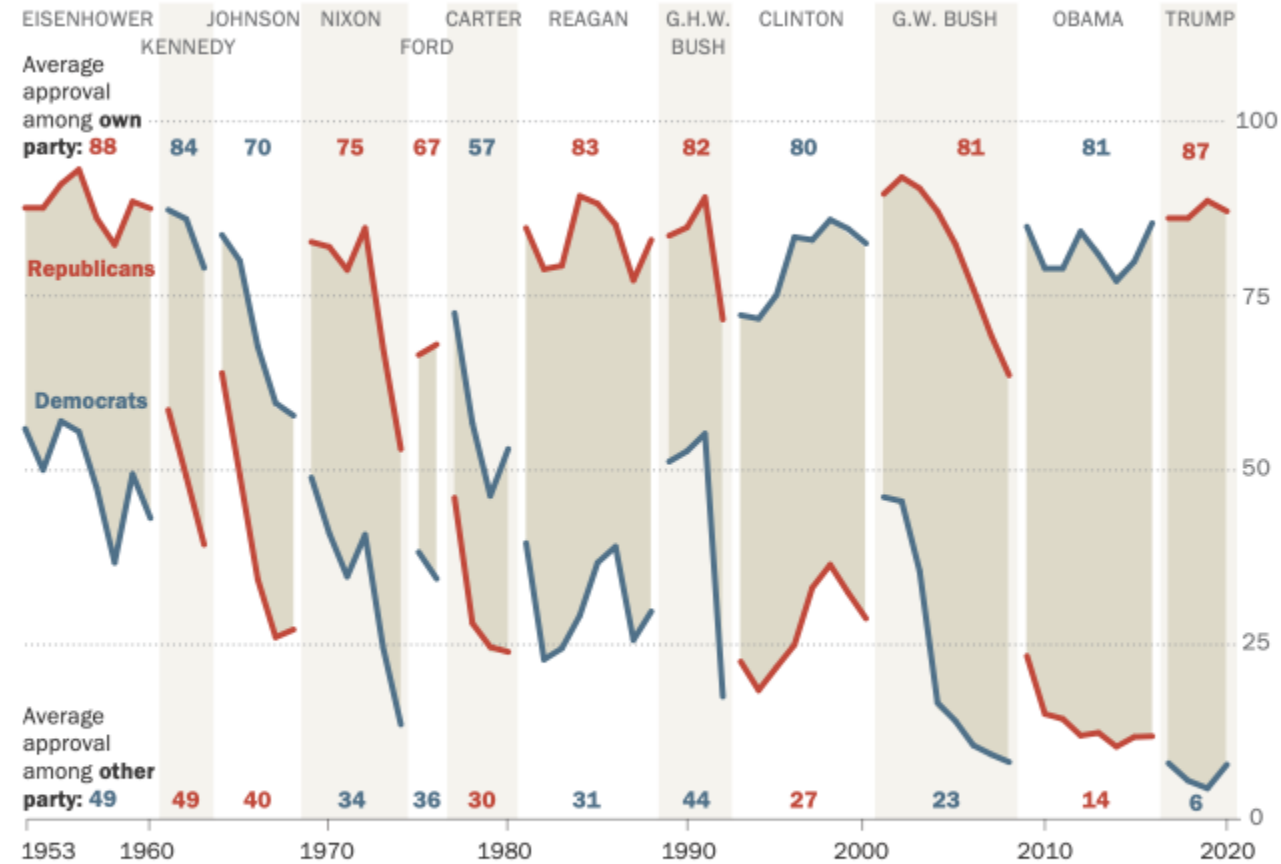
■ % Approve



GALLUP

Trump approval more polarized than for any other president since Eisenhower

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



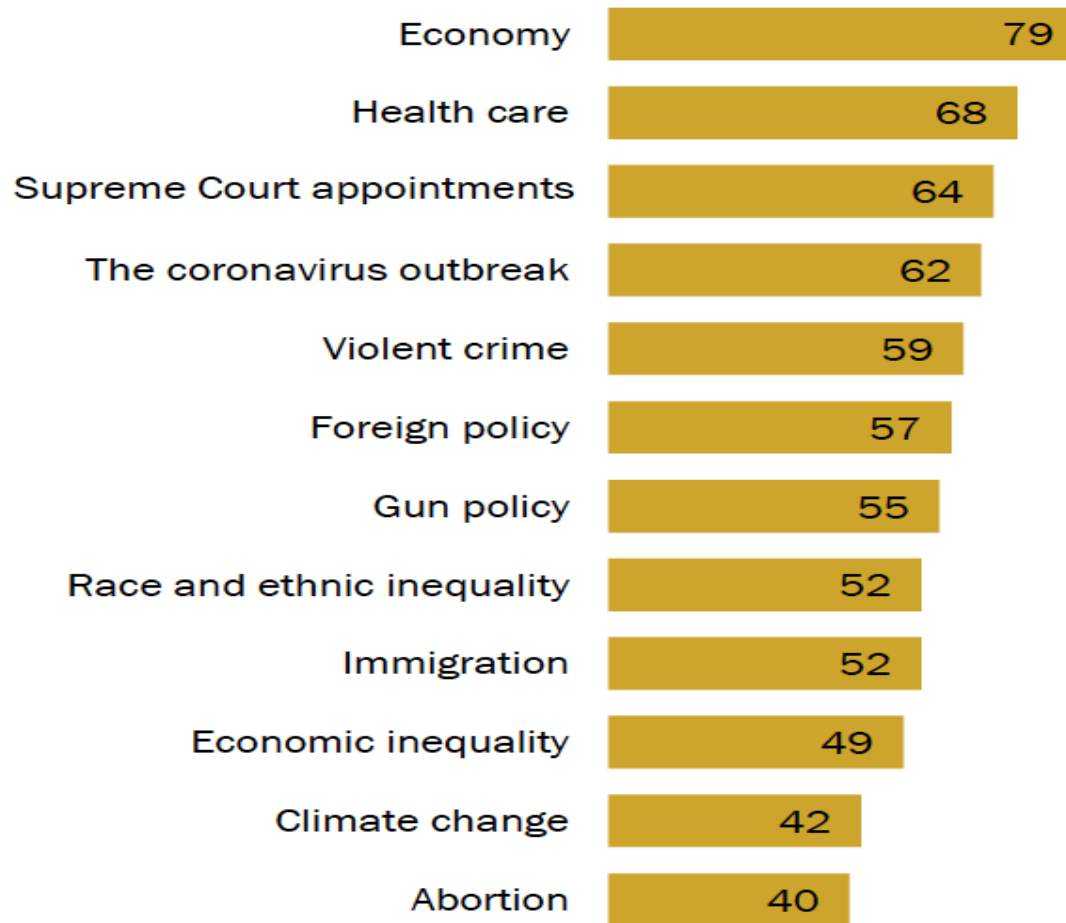
Note: Lines show yearly approval averages; data labels show administration averages. Because some earlier data did not include partisan leaning, Republicans and Democrats in this graphic do not include leaners.

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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Economy is top issue for voters in the 2020 election

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



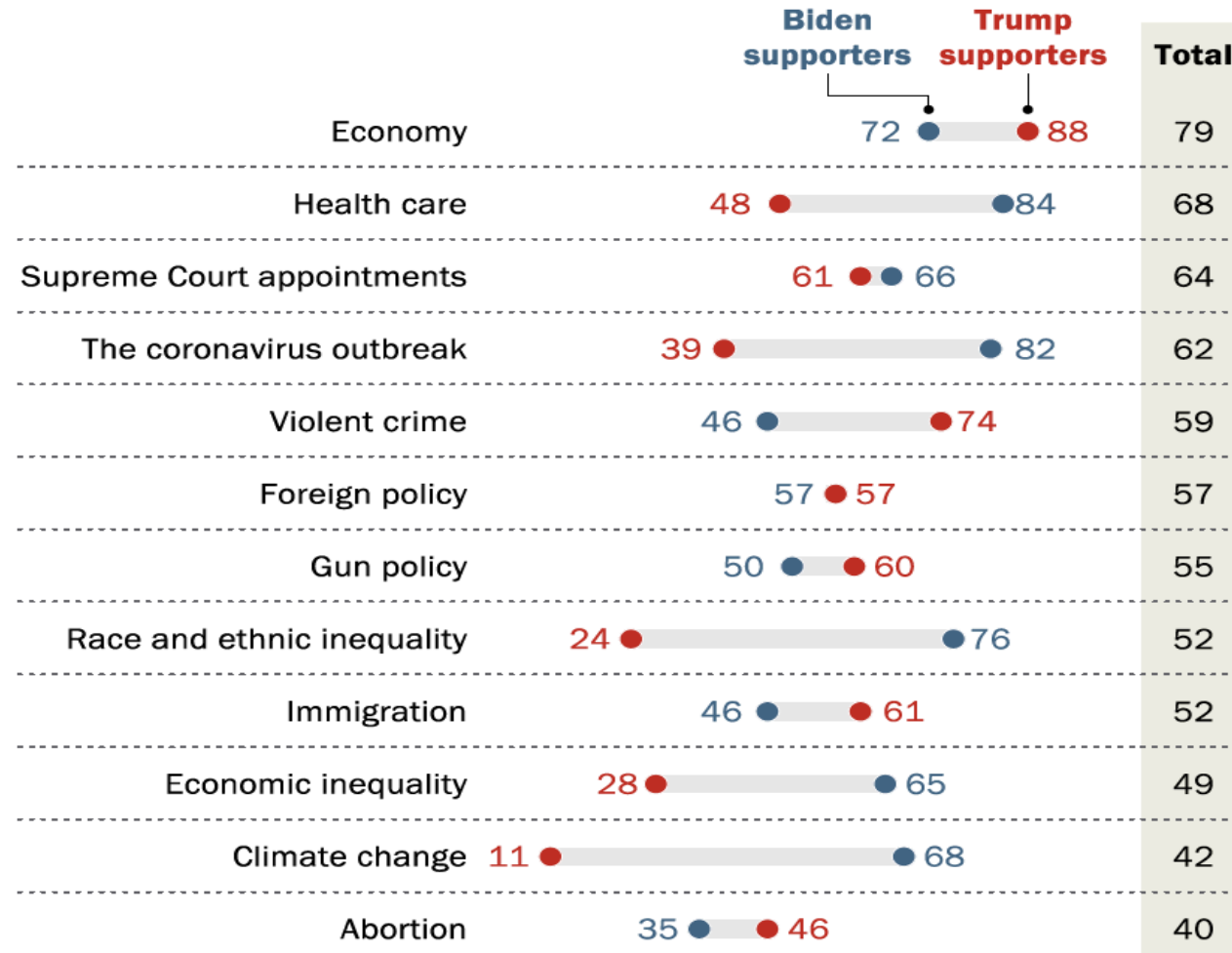
Note: Based on registered voters.

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

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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.

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GOP holds edge on economy; Democrats lead on climate change, coronavirus

% of registered voters who say ____ could do a better job dealing with ...

	Democratic Party	Republican Party	Both/ neither/ DK	D-R Gap
Climate change	58	27	15	D+31
Abortion and contraception policies	51	36	14	D+15
Health care	51	37	12	D+14
Public health impact of COVID-19	47	35	18	D+12
Issues involving race and ethnicity	49	37	15	D+12
Immigration	48	41	11	D+7
Foreign policy	42	44	14	R+2
Federal budget deficit	39	42	19	R+3
Law enforcement and criminal justice	42	46	12	R+4
Gun policy	43	48	9	R+5
Economy	40	49	11	R+9
Terrorism	37	46	17	R+9

Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 23-Aug. 4, 2020.

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No Recession in 2 Years Before Election

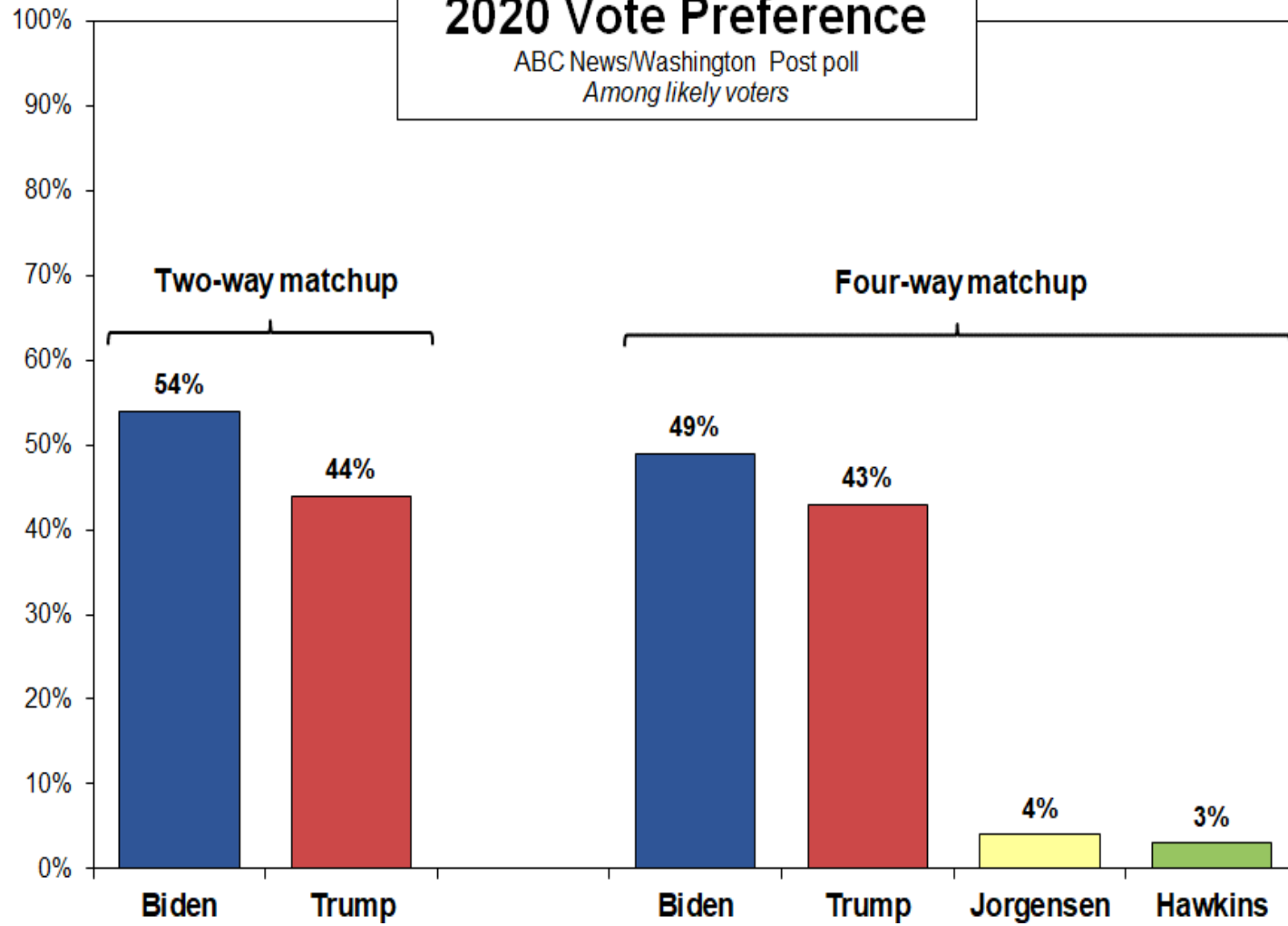
RECESSION?	President (Year)	REELECTION?
NO	Obama (2012)	YES
NO	Bush43 (2004)	YES
NO	Clinton (1996)	YES
NO	Reagan (1984)	YES
NO	Nixon (1972)	YES
NO	LBJ (1964)	YES
NO	IKE (1956)	YES
NO	Truman (1948)	YES
NO	FDR (1944)	YES
NO	FDR (1940)	YES
NO	FDR (1936)	YES
NO	Wilson (1916)	YES

Recession in 2 Years Before Election

RECESSION?	President (Year)	REELECTION?
YES	Bush41 (1992)	NO
YES	Carter (1980)	NO
YES	Ford (1976)	NO
YES	Hoover (1932)	NO
YES	Coolidge (1924)	YES
YES	Taft (1912)	NO

2020 Vote Preference

ABC News/Washington Post poll
Among likely voters



All	44-54%
Women	34-65
Men	55-42
College graduates	34-64
Non-college graduates	52-46
Age 50+	47-52
Less than 30*	33-61
Whites	52-46
Blacks*	9-88
Hispanics†	29-68
Suburbanites	47-52
Suburban women	34-66
Suburban men	60-38
Independents	37-59
Independent women	20-77
Independent men	51-43
White Protestants	61-38
Evangelical	75-25
Non-evangelical	41-58
Military household	49-49
Non-military household	41-57
2016 red states	49-49
2016 blue states	39-59

Adjustments made for adequate sample size:

* Among registered voters

† Among likely voters in August and September polls

WHO BENEFITS FROM HIGHER TURNOUT?... THAT DEPENDS

Eligible Citizens Who Didn't Vote in 2016

State/2016	Non-College White	College White	Non-White
MI	1,563,809	412,191	643,000
MN	786,284	210,716	259,000
NH	220,282	68,924	24,795
PA	2,289,875	603,125	695,000
WI	819,356	160,644	306,000
AZ	683,831	228,169	904,000
FL	2,565,664	719,336	2,565,000
GA	1,171,614	327,386	1,303,000
NC	1,105,431	320,569	834,000
TX	2,665,119	812,881	4,274,000

Trump Opportunities:
Rust Belt

Biden Opportunities:
Sun Belt

Source: [Dave Wasserman](#), Cook Report

Behind the Numbers

What is Driving Public Sentiment?

This dynamic country subjects its inhabitants to **more extreme contrasts and abrupt changes during a lifetime or a generation than is normally the case with other great nations.**

Erik Erikson

Childhood and Society, 1950

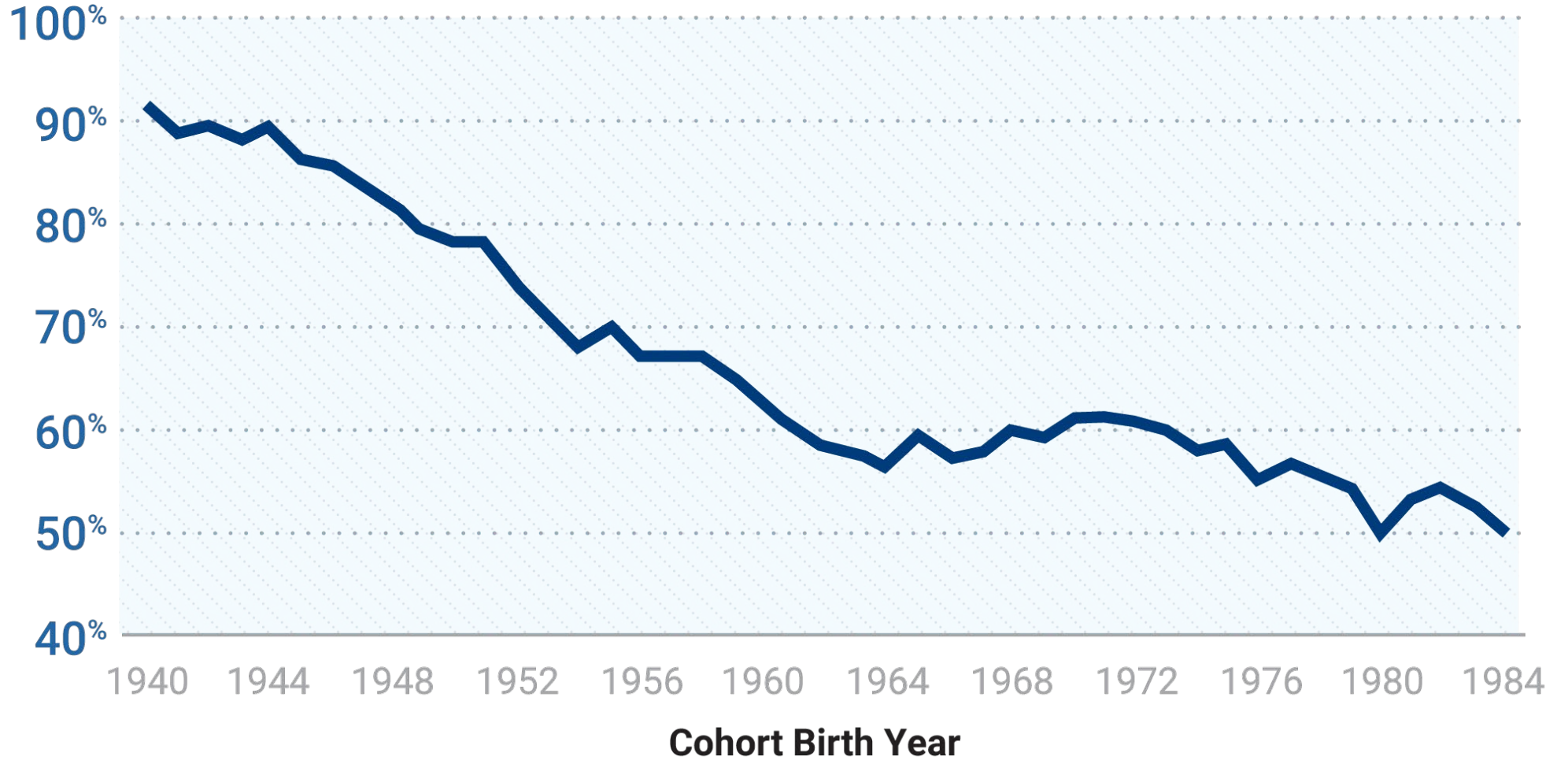
Americans Have Experienced Dramatic Societal and Economic Transformation in One Lifetime

	1967	2017
	%	%
Non-white	12	38
Foreign-born	4.9	14
White, no college education	75	39
Births to unmarried women	8.5	40.3
Women in the workforce	41	57
Church Membership	73	50
Share of wealth owned by top 1%	27	42
Portion of the Workforce in Manufacturing	28	9
Trade as a share of the U.S. economy	9.7	27.1

Source: Mehligan, Castagnetti, Rosen & Thomas analysis based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, Pew Research Center, U.S. Dept. of Labor and T. Piketty, Gallup

03 The Fading American Dream

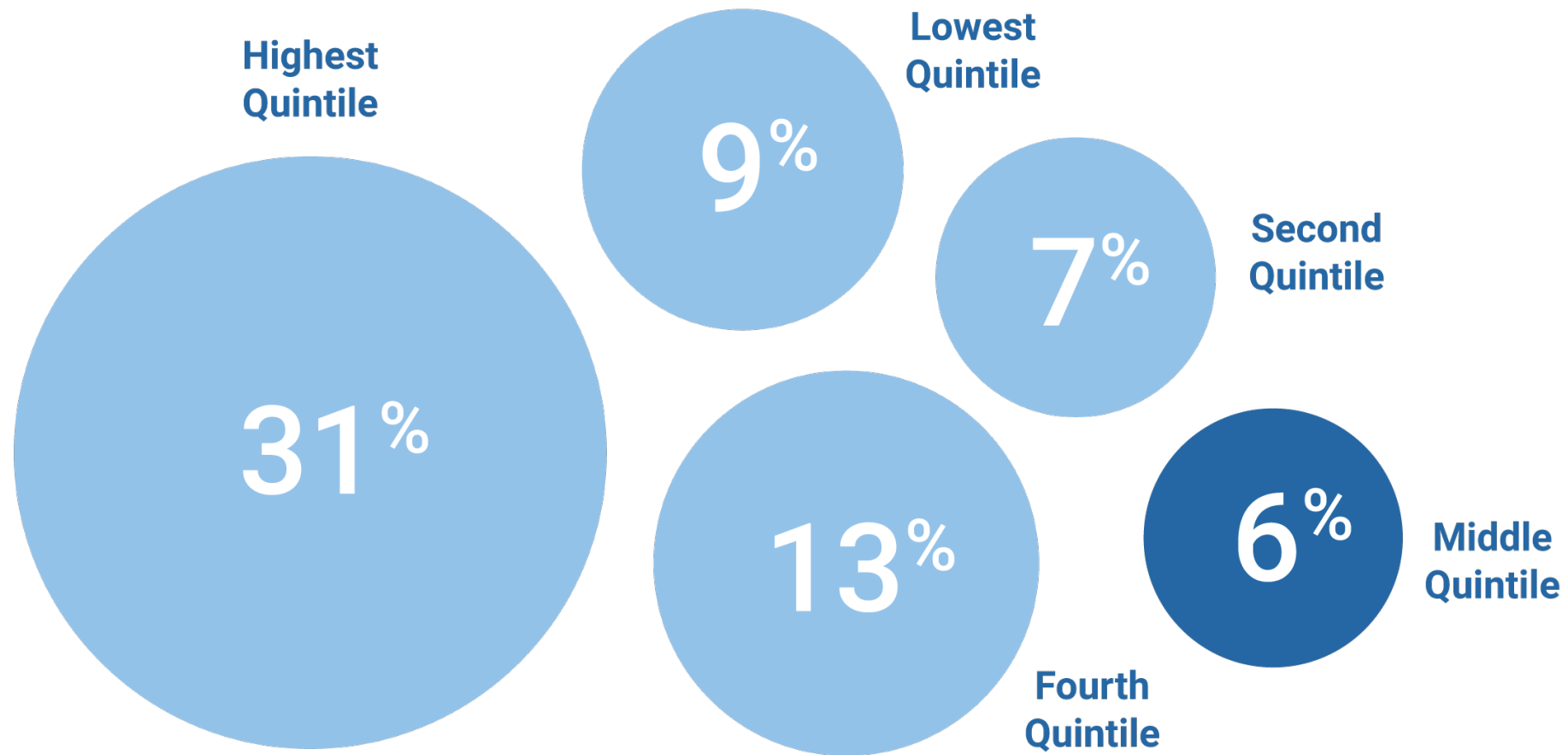
Share of children making more than their parents



Source: Chetty, R. et al. (2017), "The fading American dream: Trends in absolute income mobility since 1940"

02 Sluggish wage growth in the middle

Percent change 1979-2019



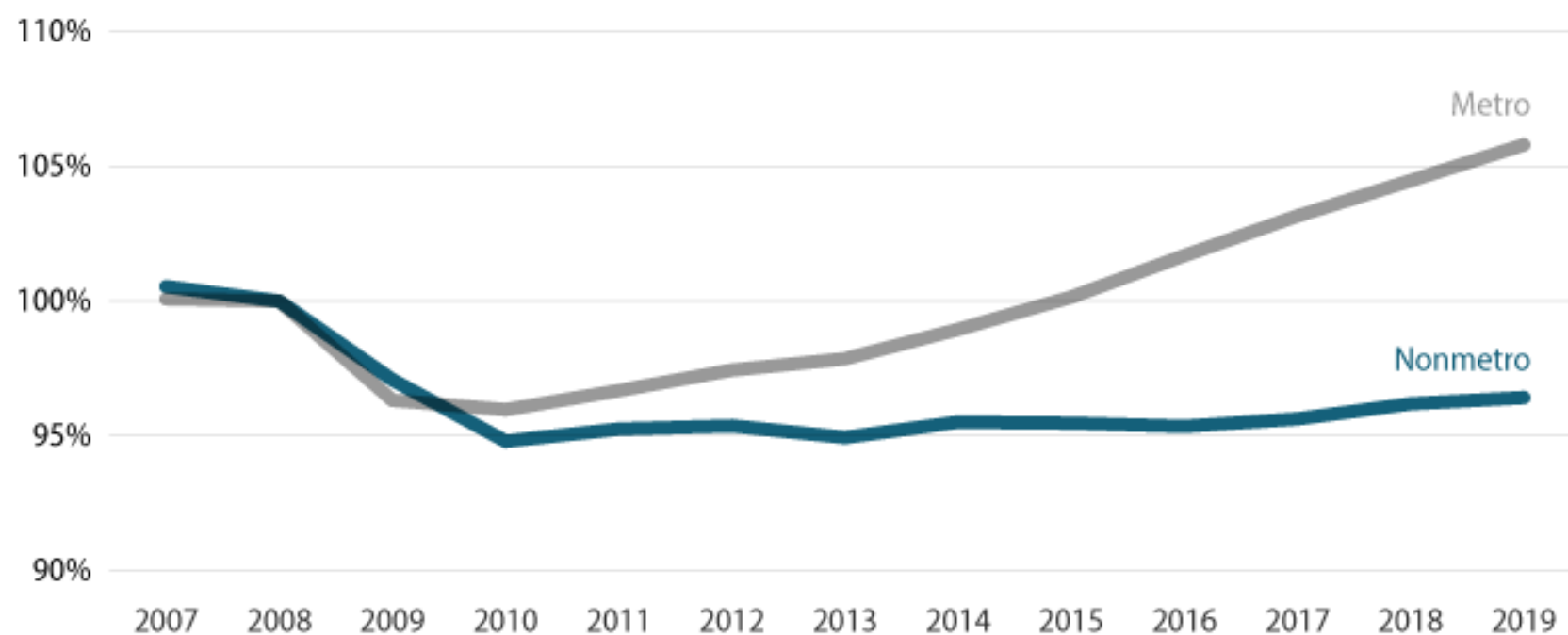
Source: Authors' analysis of CPS ORG data retrieved from CEPR.
Note: Percent change from 1979-2019 in median wage for each wage quintile.
Restricted to workers ages 25-54; adjusted to 2019 dollars using CPI-U-RS

BROOKINGS

FIGURE 1

Employment rates in nonmetro counties have not recovered since the Great Recession

Average change in metro and nonmetro county employment rates, 2007–2019



Source: Economic Research Service, "Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America," available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america/> (last accessed August 2020).

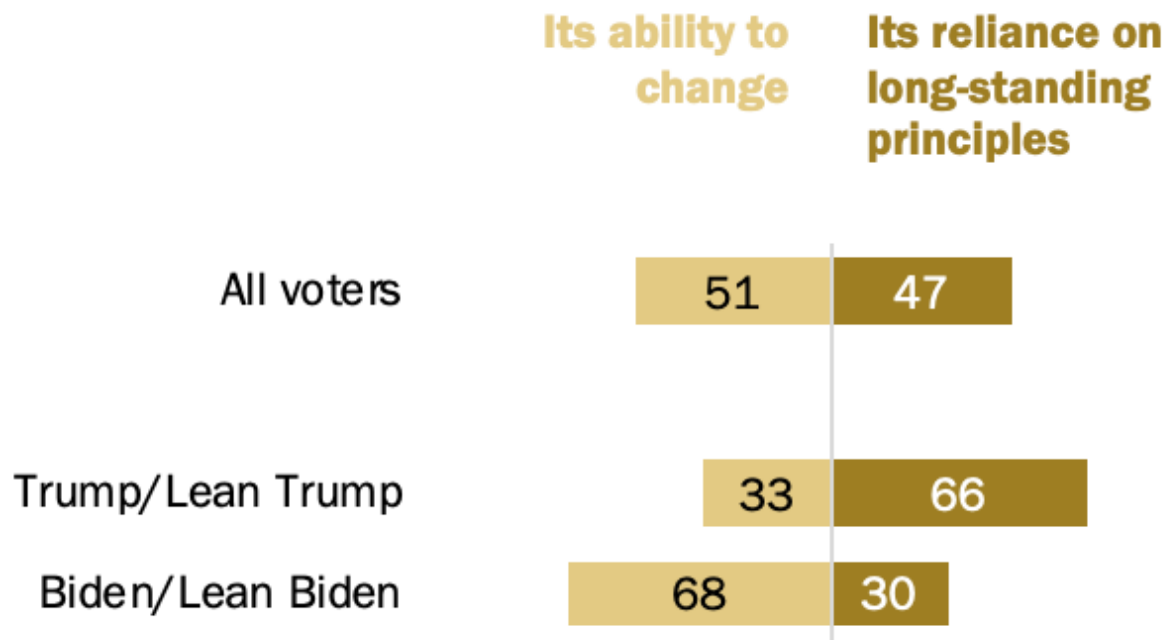
CHANGE ELECTIONS ARE INCREASING...

Change in Control of House, Senate and/or White House



Biden supporters far more likely than Trump supporters to link U.S. success to its ability to change

% of registered voters who say the U.S. has been successful more because of ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

A More Diverse America

Most of the growth in the electorate since 2000 has come from Hispanic, Black and Asian eligible voters

U.S. eligible voter population change, 2000 to 2018

	2018 eligible voter population	Change, 2000- 2018	% of total increase
Hispanic	29,831,000	15,544,000	39%
Black	29,210,000	6,884,000	17
Asian	10,302,000	5,663,000	14
Other	6,793,000	2,431,000	6
			Net non-White 76%
White	157,538,000	9,774,000	24
Total	233,675,000	40,298,000	

Note: Eligible voters are adult U.S. citizens. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Differences between numbers and percentage increases are computed before the underlying estimates are rounded.

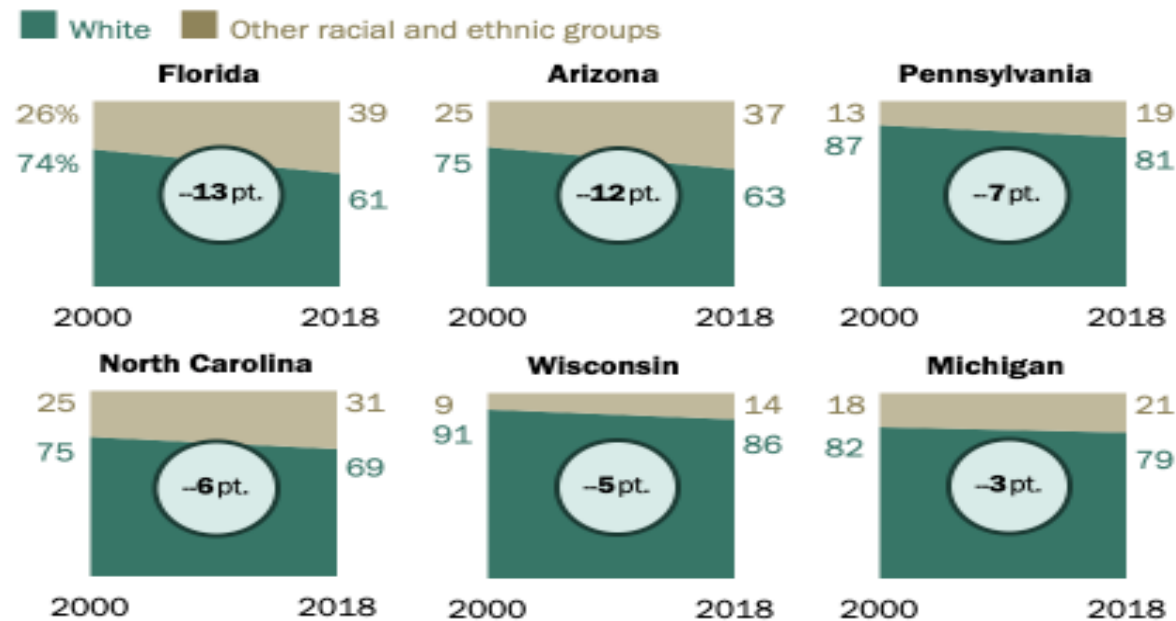
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2018 American Community Survey and 2000 decennial census.

"The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Electorate"

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Pace of racial and ethnic change varies widely across key battleground states

% of electorate that is ...



Note: Eligible voters are adult U.S. citizens. White adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. "Other racial and ethnic groups" include those who identify as Black, Asian, Hispanic, some other race or multiple races or ethnicities.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2018 American Community Survey and 2000 decennial census.

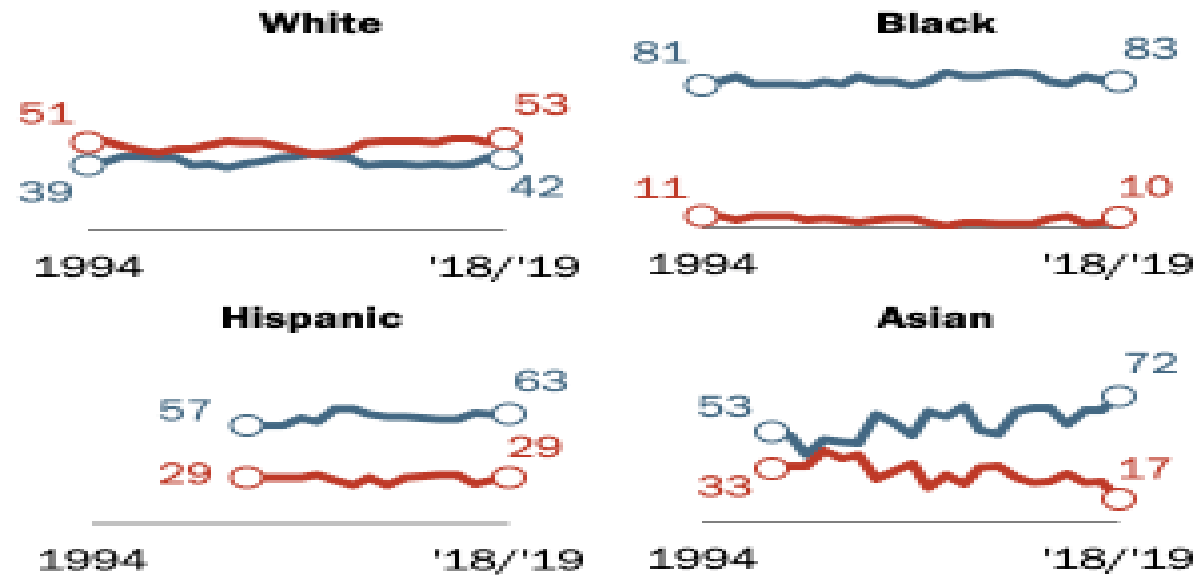
"The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Electorate"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

All major racial and ethnic voter groups lean Democratic, except Whites

% of registered voters who identify as/lean toward ...

■ Rep/lean Rep. ■ Dem/lean Dem.



*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Note: Based on registered voters. Due to smaller sample sizes in 2018 and 2019, the data from those years has been combined.

Respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

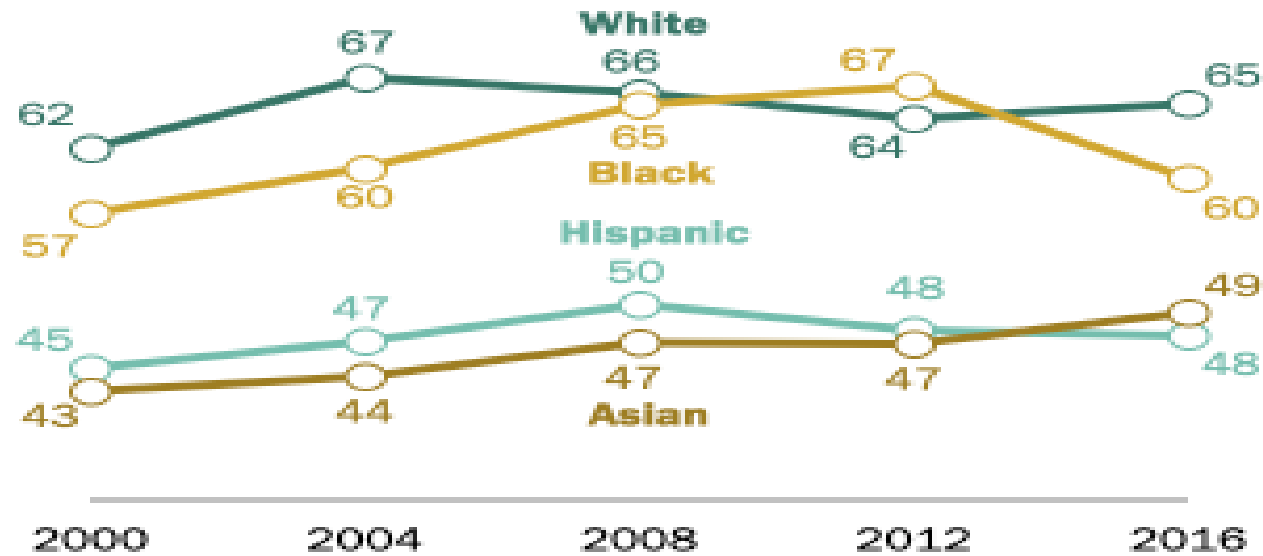
Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

"The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Electorate"

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Higher voter turnout among White and Black voters in presidential elections

% of ___ eligible voters who say they voted



Note: Eligible voters are adult U.S. citizens. The 2000 Voting and Registration Supplement of the Current Population Survey collapses Asian and Pacific Islanders into one category. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

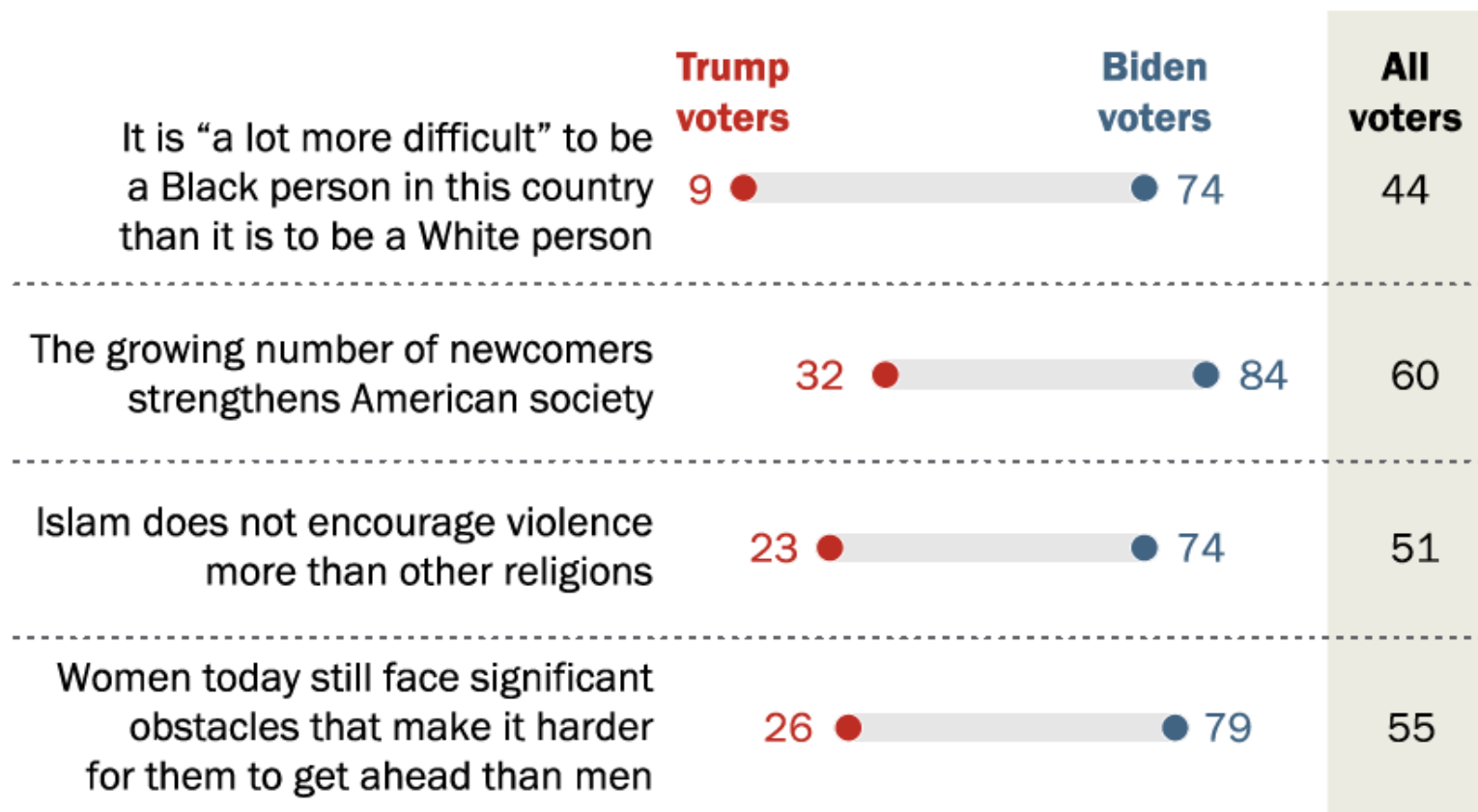
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 Current Population Survey, November Voting and Registration Supplement.

"The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Electorate"

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Stark divides between Trump, Biden voters over race, immigration, gender

% of registered voters who say ...



Note: Based on registered voters.

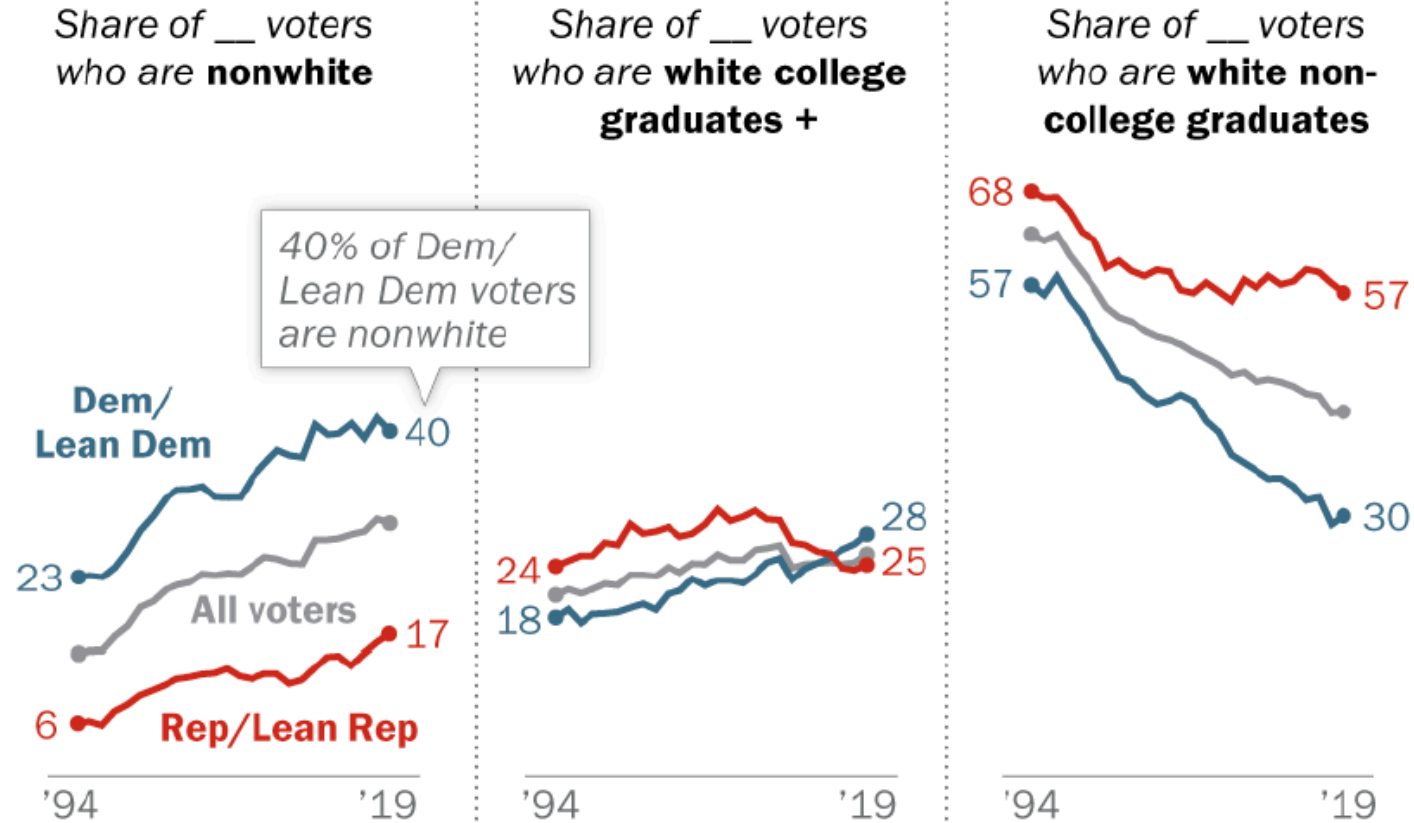
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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A Demographically Divided, Highly Partisan Electorate

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

% of registered voters who are

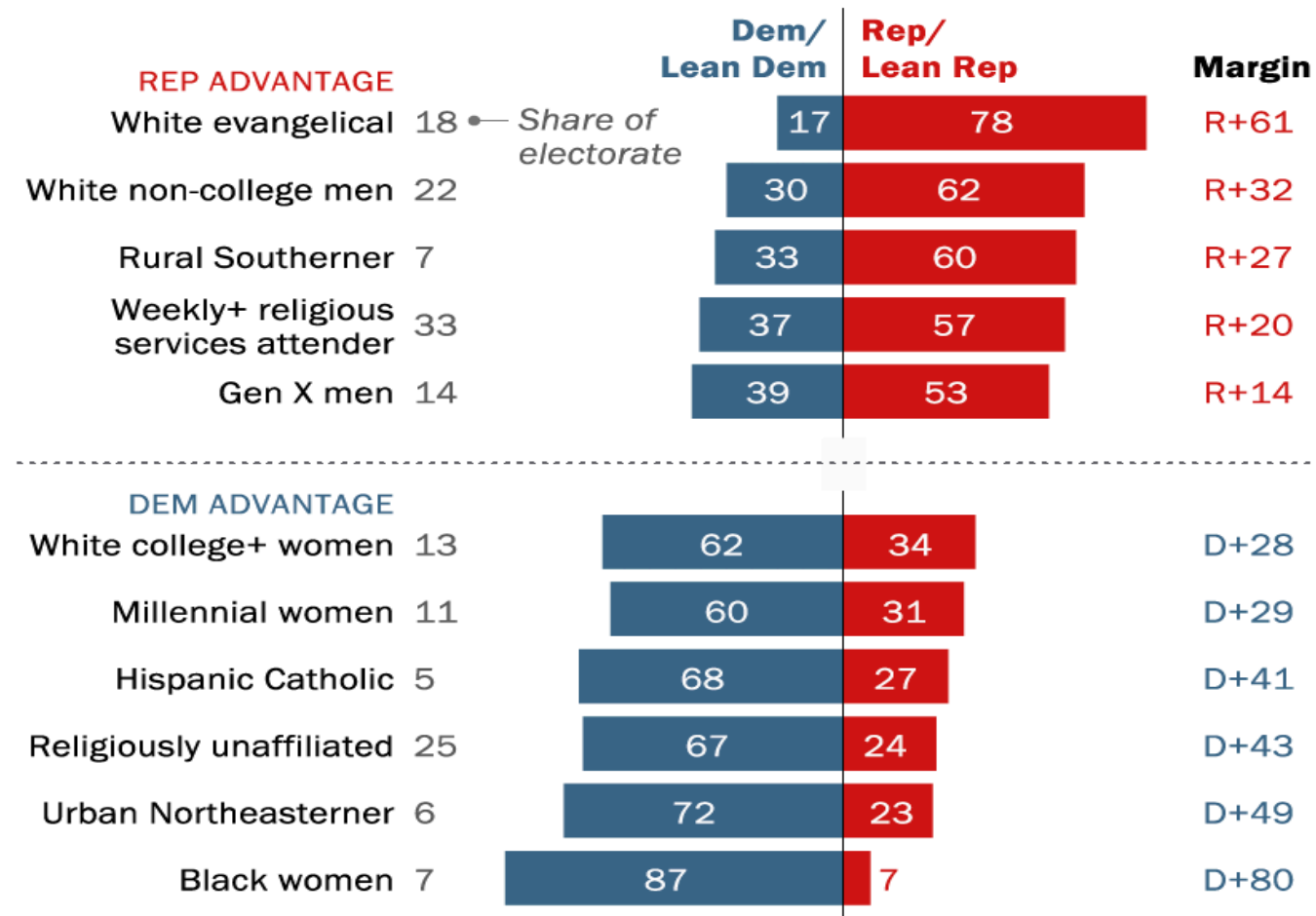


Notes: Based on registered voters. Whites include only those who are not Hispanic; nonwhite includes black, Hispanic, Asian, other race and mixed race.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

A study in contrasts: Republican and Democratic strengths and weaknesses in party identification

% of registered voters in each group who identify as ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. Figures show combined 2018 and 2019 data. Don't know responses not shown. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Annual totals of Pew Research Center survey data (U.S. adults).

Americans' Views on International Issues

Figure D: Top 7 Critical Threats

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all (% critical threat):

n varies

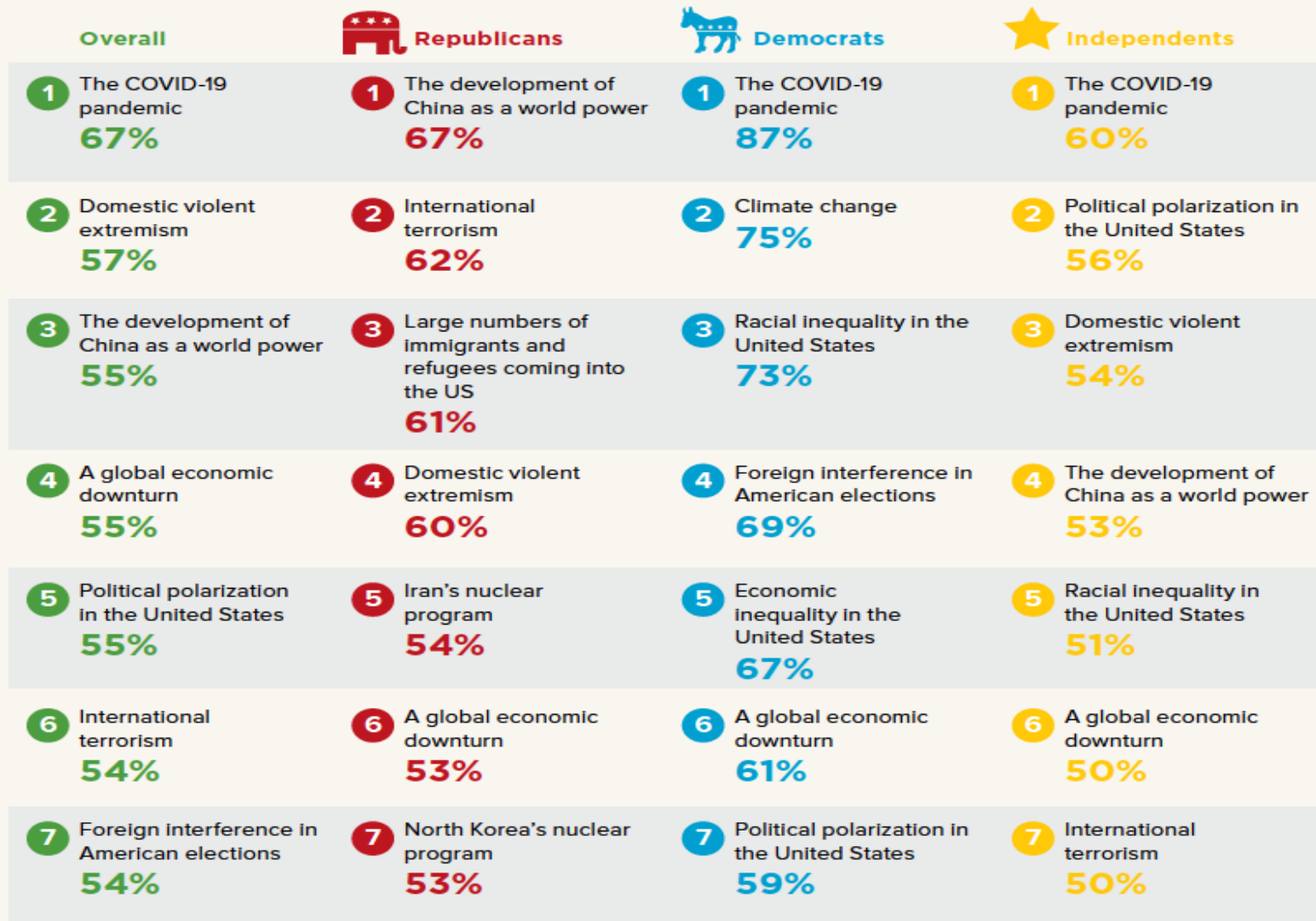
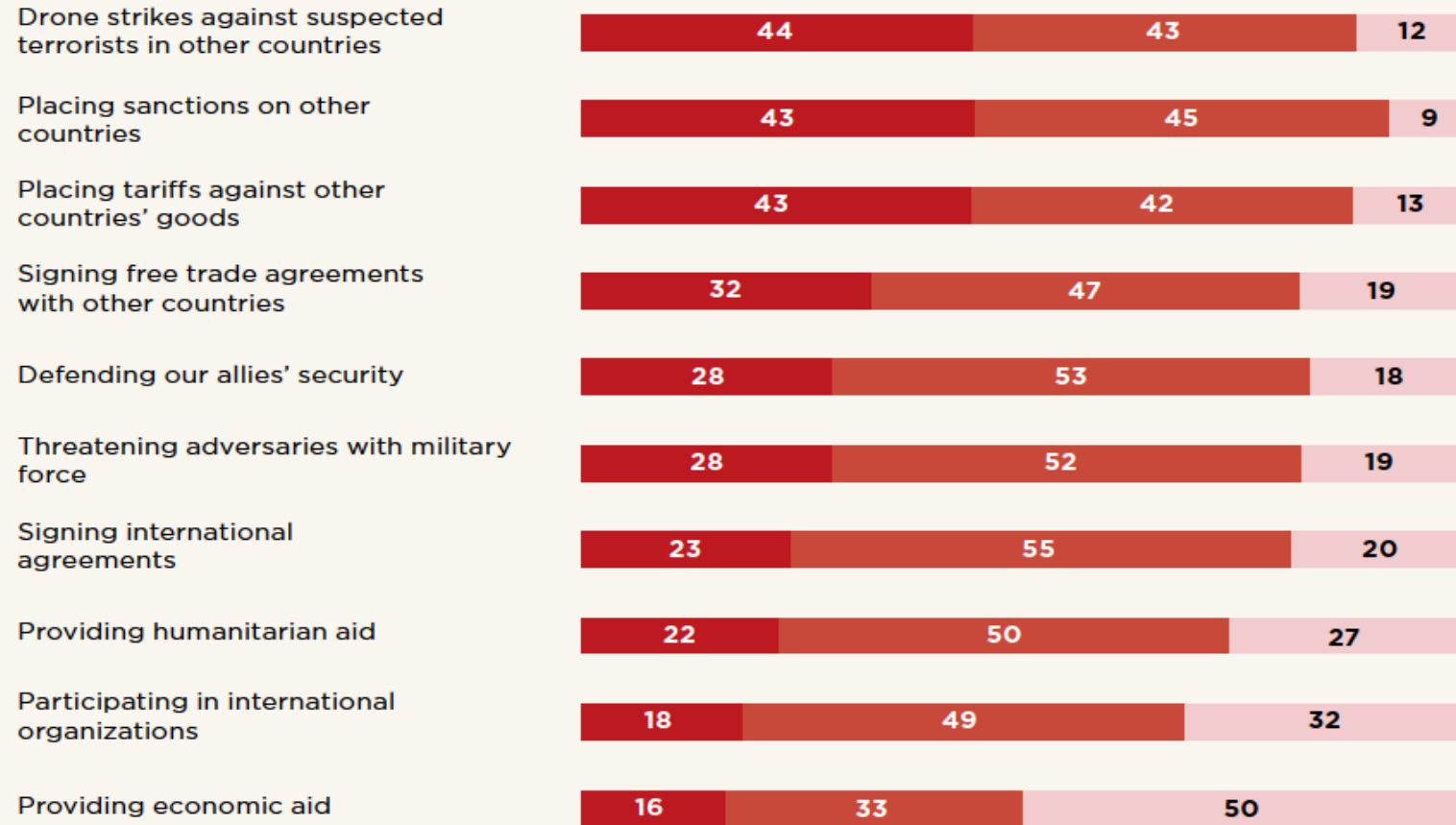


Figure 10: **Republicans' Approaches to Foreign Policy**

The United States uses different foreign policy approaches to achieve its foreign policy goals. Do you think the United States should use the following foreign policy approaches more than it is now, less than it is now, or the same as it is now? (%)

n = 659

■ More than now ■ Same as now ■ Less than now



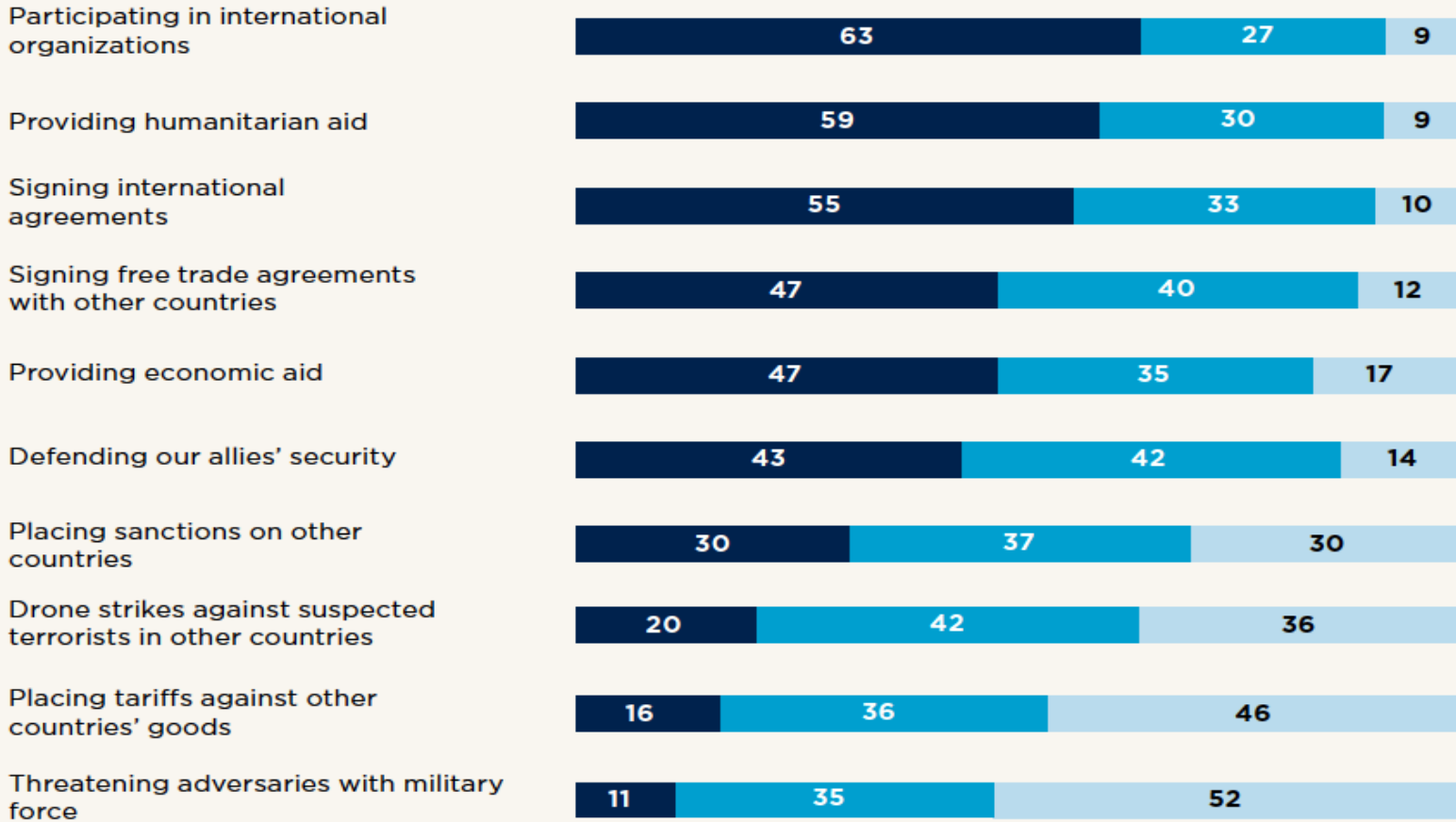
Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 7: Democrats' Approaches to Foreign Policy

The United States uses different foreign policy approaches to achieve its foreign policy goals. Do you think the United States should use the following foreign policy approaches more than it is now, less than it is now, or the same as it is now? (%)

n = 702

■ More than now ■ Same as now ■ Less than now



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

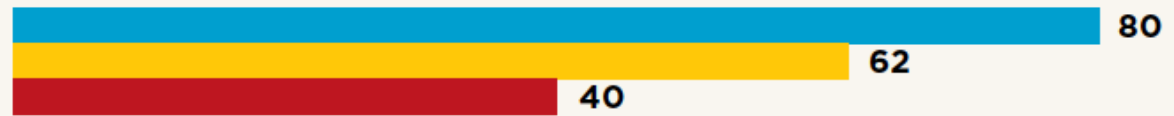
Figure A: Lessons from the Coronavirus Pandemic

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? The coronavirus outbreak has made it clear that it is more important for the United States to: (%)

n = 2,111

■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican

Coordinate and collaborate with other countries to solve global issues



Overall 62

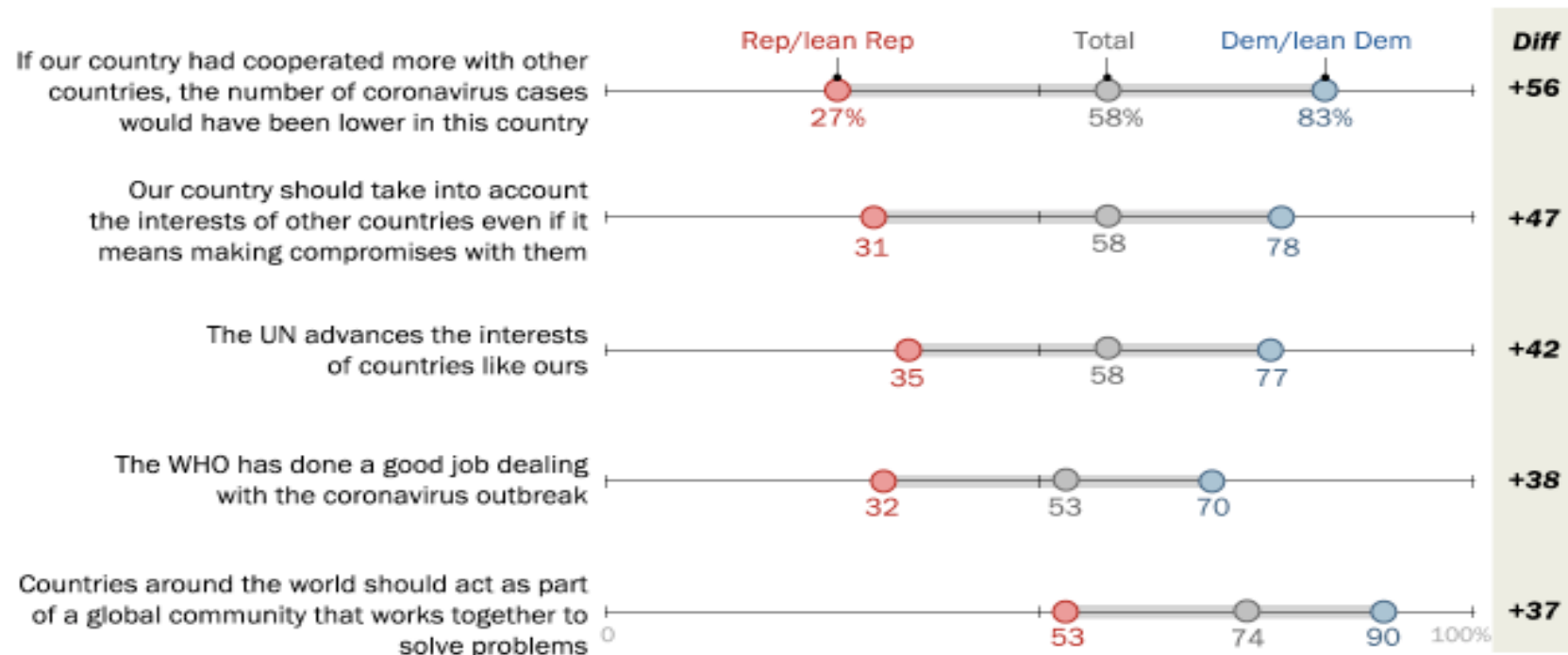
Be self-sufficient as a nation so we don't need to depend on others



Overall 36

In the U.S., Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to support international cooperation, the UN and the WHO's coronavirus response

% of Americans who say ...



Note: "WHO" refers to the World Health Organization.

Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q4, Q8e, Q10e, Q11, Q12f. Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey. Q32.

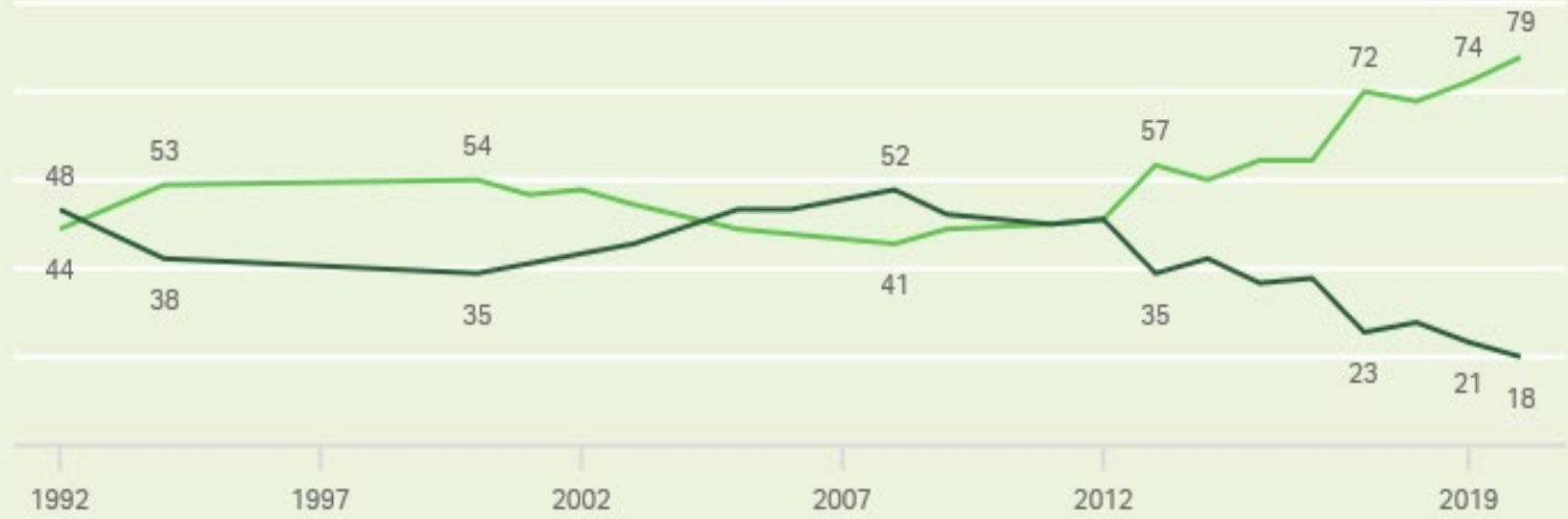
"International Cooperation Welcomed Across 14 Advanced Economies"

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Americans' Views of What Foreign Trade Means for the U.S.

What do you think foreign trade means for America? Do you see foreign trade more as an opportunity for economic growth through increased U.S. exports or a threat to the economy from foreign imports?

■ % Opportunity for economic growth ■ % Threat to the economy

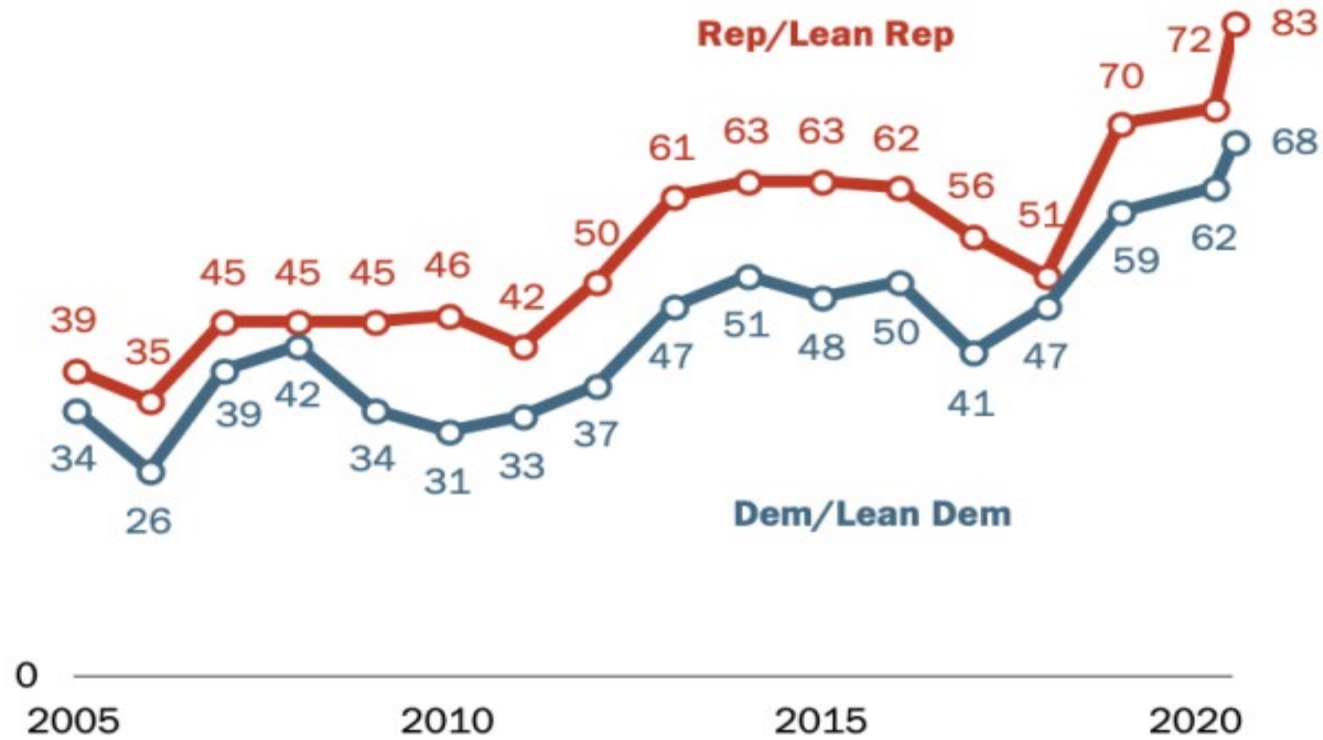


GALLUP

Republicans are more negative toward China than Democrats, though all partisans hold increasingly unfavorable views

% who say they have an unfavorable opinion of China

100 %



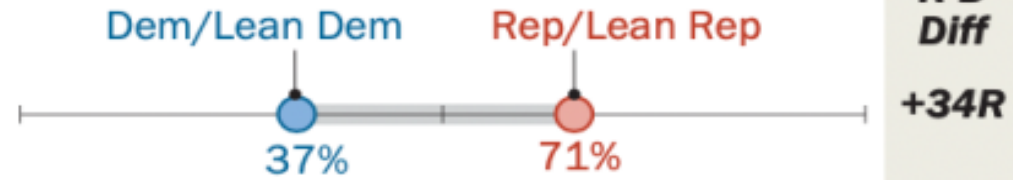
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 16-July 14, 2020.

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Republicans generally prefer tougher policy on China

% who say ...

The U.S. should hold China responsible for the role it played in the outbreak of the coronavirus, even if it means worsening relations with China



**R-D
Diff
+34R**

It is more important to get tougher than build a strong relationship with China on economic issues



+33R

The U.S. should try to promote human rights in China, even if it harms economic relations with China



-8R

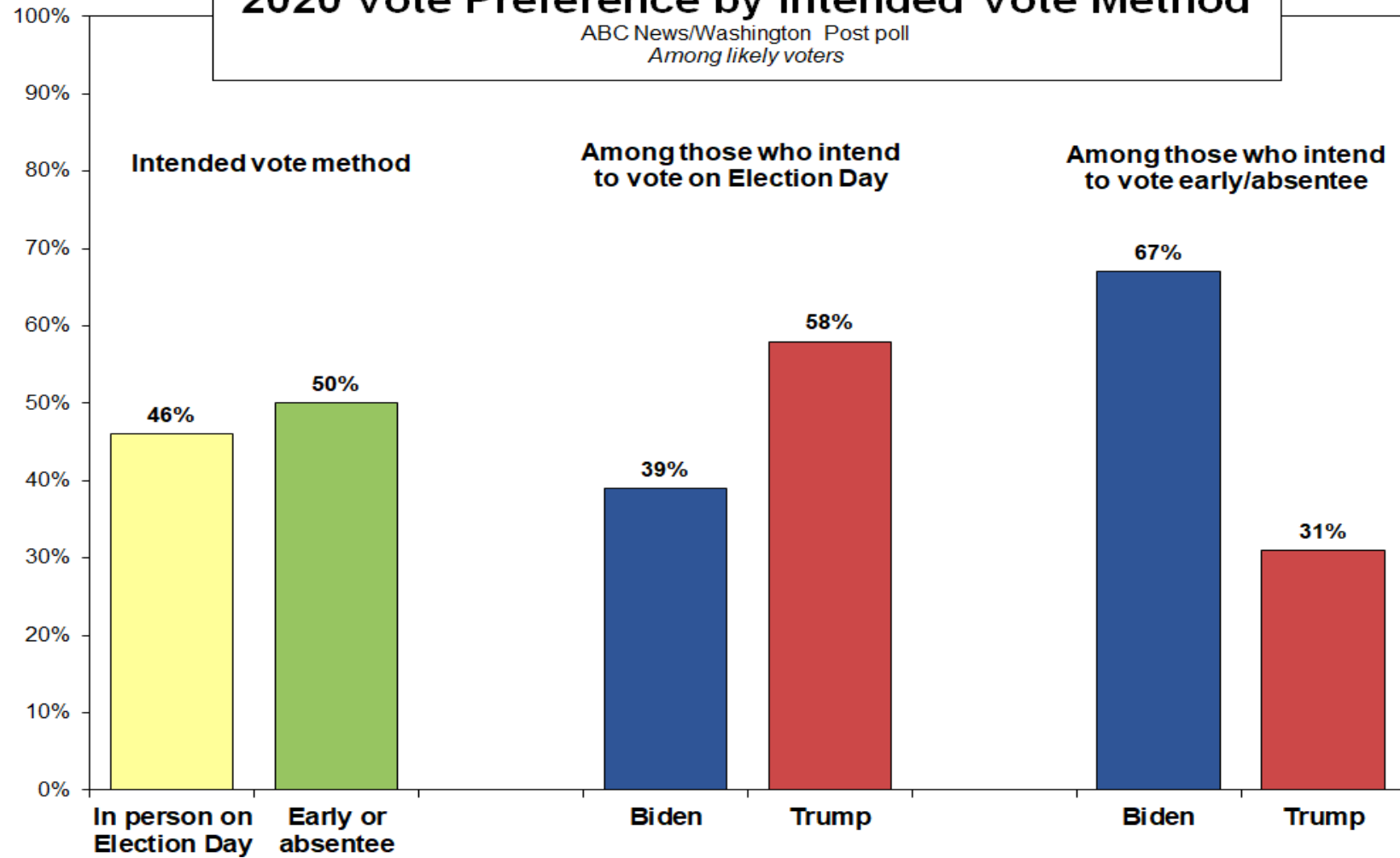
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 16-July 14, 2020.

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Expect a Fraught Election Day and Beyond

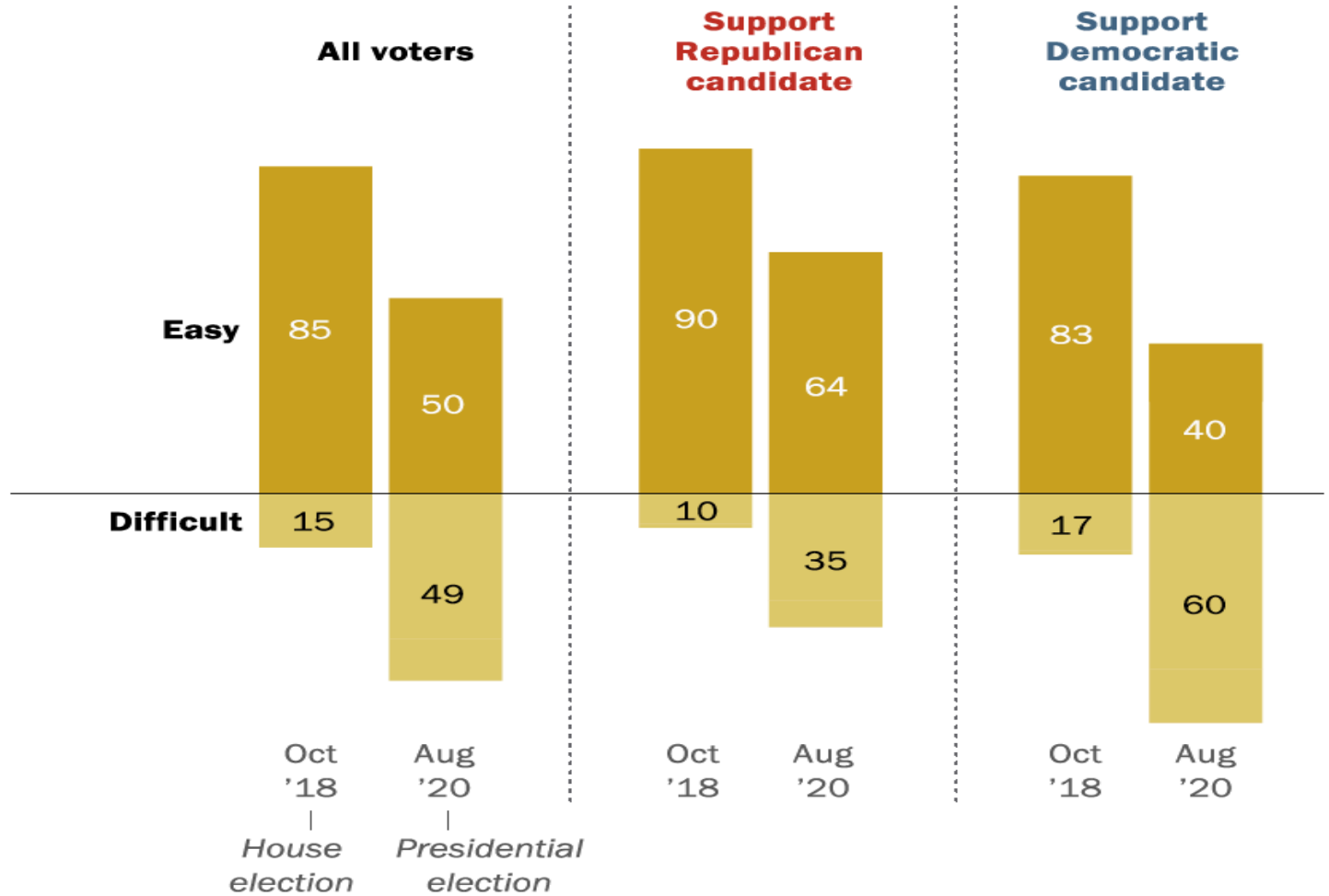
2020 Vote Preference by Intended Vote Method

ABC News/Washington Post poll
Among likely voters



Half of voters, including a majority of Biden supporters, expect it will be difficult to vote in this year's election

% of registered voters who expect voting in the November elections to be ...

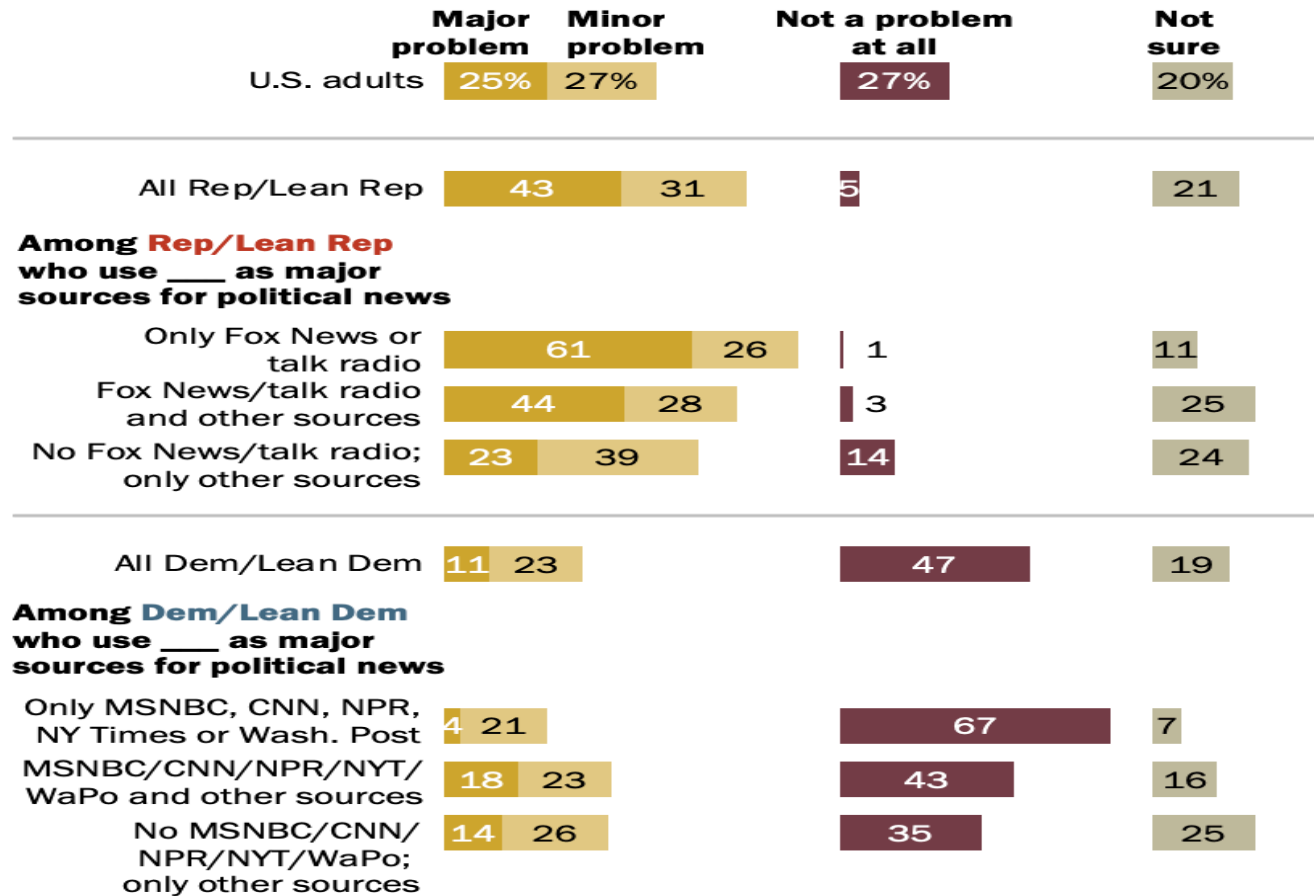


Notes: Based on registered voters. Based on supporters of Republican and Democratic House candidates in 2018, Trump and Biden supporters in 2020. No answer responses not shown.

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

Republicans about four times as likely as Democrats to say voter fraud has been a major issue with mail-in ballots

% of U.S. adults who say voter fraud has been a ____ when it comes to voting by mail in U.S. presidential elections



Note: The Fox News cable channel and talk radio shows such as Sean Hannity or Rush Limbaugh have audiences that lean Republican and conservative. MSNBC, CNN, NPR, New York Times and Washington Post have audiences that lean Democratic and liberal. Sources whose audiences are more mixed include ABC, CBS or NBC network television news. Respondents who did not give an answer not shown. See Appendix for more details. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020. "Political Divides, Conspiracy Theories and Divergent News Sources Heading Into 2020 Election"

2020 Presidential Election Outcome

ABC News/Washington Post poll

