

SOTU 2023: Speaking to the Exhausted Majority

January 2023

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2022 US Midterms Survey

More in Common partnered with international polling company YouGov to conduct online survey interviews with n=1,200 US adults from November 15 to 22, 2022.

The data was weighted to be representative of US general population using propensity scores, with score functions including gender, age, race, education, and region. The weights were then post-stratified on 2020 presidential vote choice, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-category), race (5-category), and education (4-category). The margin of error (adjusted for weighting) is +/- 3% for the US average and higher for subgroups.

2018 US Midterms Survey

More in Common partnered with YouGov to conduct online survey interviews with n=2,100 US adults to participate in a survey about their political attitudes in the immediate days after the 2018 midterm elections.

Interlocking Census targets from the 2016 American Community Survey and propensity score weights were used to achieve a representative sample by gender, race, age, education, geographic region, and voting behavior. The study has a margin of error of +/- 2% and higher for analyzing the section of the population that voted and other subgroups.

OVERVIEW

On Tuesday February 7th, President Joe Biden will deliver his State of the Union Address and the GOP will deliver a response. These speeches will receive widespread coverage and are a key opportunity to speak to the nation.

More in Common conducted a national survey in the week following the November 2022 midterm elections to better understand how the President and the GOP-appointed spokesperson can speak to America's Exhausted Majority. The data indicates that both the President's speech and the GOP response should focus on articulating a positive vision for the country while acknowledging the anxieties and frustrations most feel towards our country's politics.

Americans believe a better future is possible, but they are deeply concerned about inflation, healthcare, immigration, crime and other issues. Those concerns are coupled with fatigue towards the extremism in politics, leaving Americans feeling frustrated, disappointed and exhausted.

Many in the Exhausted Majority felt their vote in 2022 was merely defensive – about stopping a negative vision from advancing rather than about bringing forward something positive. They feel both parties do not listen enough to regular Americans and that too often the political conversation is about attacking the other side rather than affirming their own side's goals, priorities and values.

It is a daunting communications challenge, but Americans are eager for a departure from the 'us versus them' narratives that dominate politics in the current era. There remains a deeply-rooted conviction that there is a better way forward. February 7 gives both parties the opportunity to show what that way is.

KEY FINDINGS

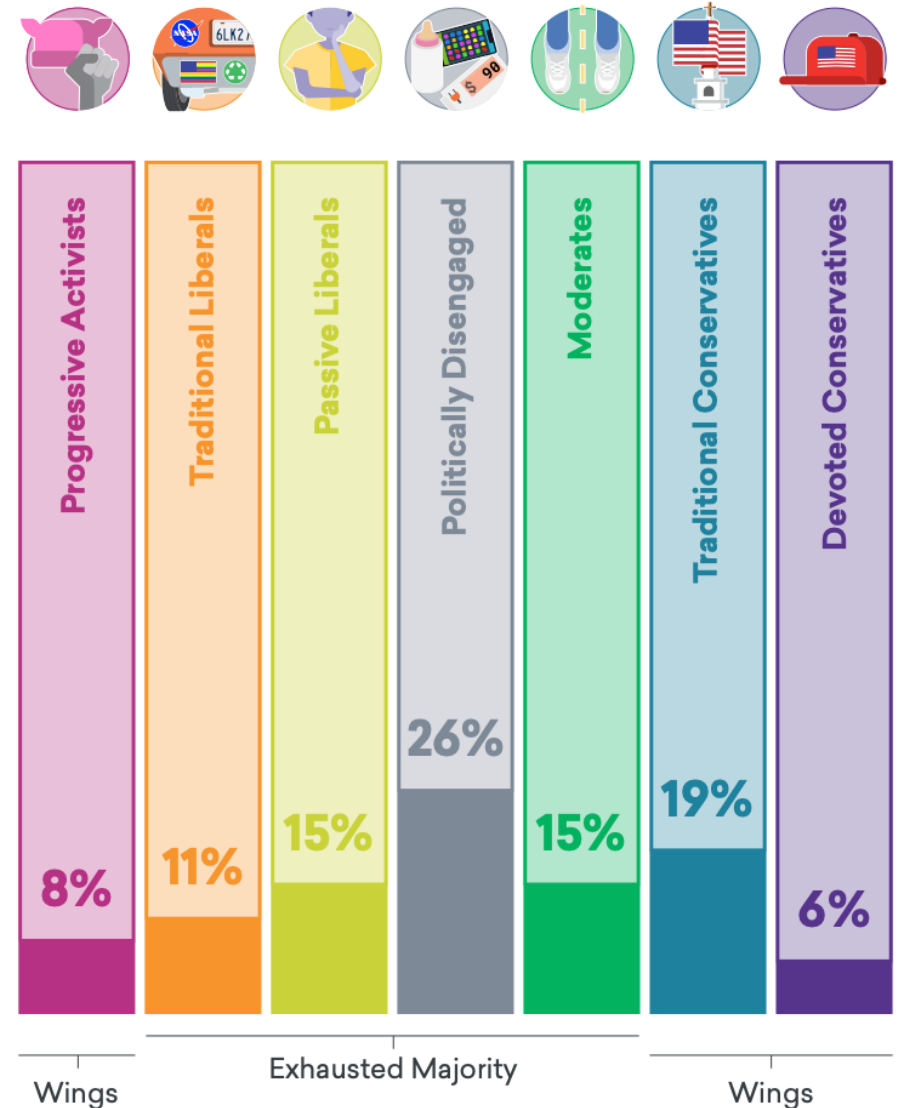
- **Americans remain highly negative; hope and appetite for compromise have fallen since 2018.**
 - The top 5 most common emotions towards the country today are frustration (74%), disappointment (71%), exhaustion (61%), disgust (57%) and anger (53%).
 - Americans feel slightly less negative towards the country today than in 2018, but they also feel less hopeful and excited about the future.
 - Americans are now split on supporting sticking to beliefs (51%) versus compromise (49%), whereas 60% supported compromise in 2018; the gap between the Wings and the Exhausted Majority on this has widened since 2018.
- **Americans are weary of a hostile, antagonistic political climate.**
 - Most think that extremists on both sides of the political spectrum present a threat to America (65%).
 - Most think that the greatest threat to the nation is domestic (86%) rather than foreign.
 - Americans are divided on whether “Some Americans on my side of the political spectrum are too extreme” (44% agree; 47% disagree).
 - A majority (58%) feel that they do not have a voice in the political conversation. Independents especially think this (67%).

KEY FINDINGS

- **Republicans and Democrats are critical of the conduct of their parties.**
 - 25% of Democrats say that their party is hypocritical, 23% say it is too preachy, and 23% say their own party focuses too much on attacking the other side.
 - 34% of Republicans say their own party focuses too much on attacking the other side, 30% say their party is hypocritical and 25% say their own party is too preachy.
 - Independents are critical of both parties, with a majority saying that both parties attack the other side too much and are hypocritical and preachy.
- **Republicans and Democrats grossly overestimate the differences in policy priorities between parties.**
 - Democrats perceive the top Republican issue to be election fraud, but just 19% of Republicans cite it as a top priority.
 - Republicans believe that Democrats are preoccupied with LGBTQ rights, but just 9% of Democrats listed it as a top priority.
 - Meanwhile, inflation is the top concern for both Republicans (63%) and Democrats (40%).
- **However, there is ample opportunity for a better path forward.**
 - Most Americans think extremists across the political spectrum threaten the US.
 - Americans share policy priorities from healthcare to inflation.
 - A third of both Republicans and Democrats want their parties to listen more to regular Americans.

Hidden Tribes

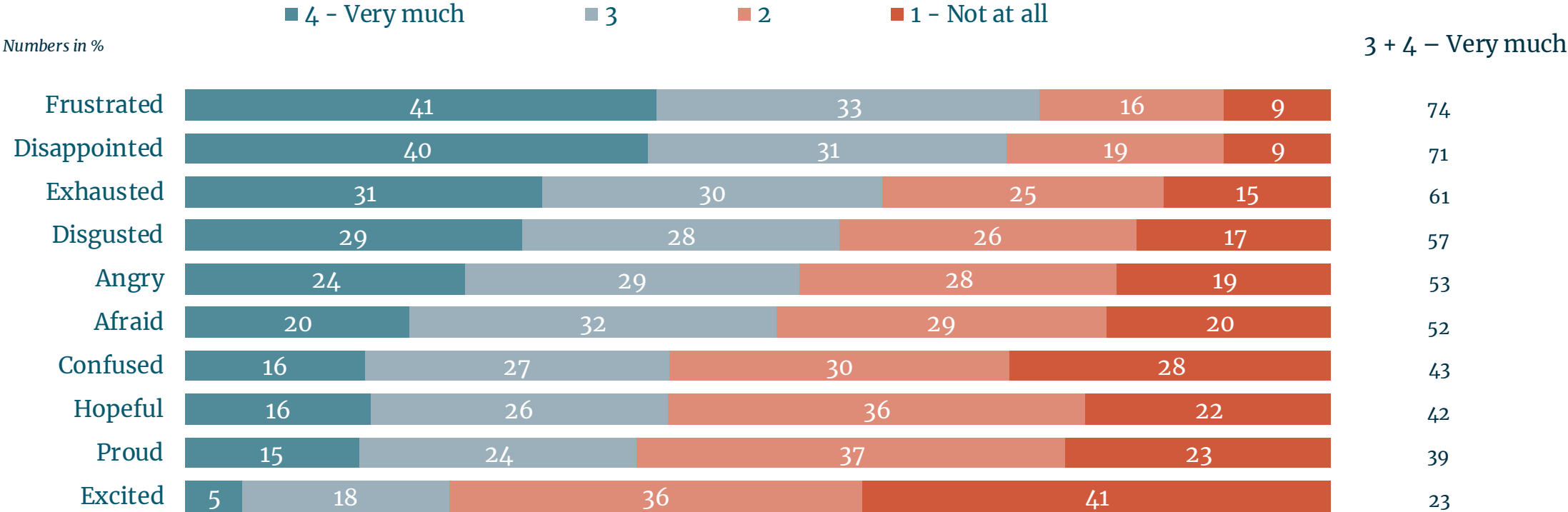
- Progressive Activists: younger, highly engaged, secular, cosmopolitan, angry.
- Traditional Liberals: older, retired, open to compromise, rational, cautious.
- Passive Liberals: unhappy, insecure, distrustful, disillusioned.
- Politically Disengaged: young, low income, distrustful, detached, patriotic, conspiratorial.
- Moderates: engaged, civic-minded, middle-of-the-road, pessimistic, Protestant.
- Traditional Conservatives: religious, middle class, patriotic, moralistic.
- Devoted Conservatives: white, retired, highly engaged, uncompromising, patriotic.



National Mood

Most Americans use negative words such as “frustrated,” “disappointed,” and “exhausted” to describe their feelings towards America.

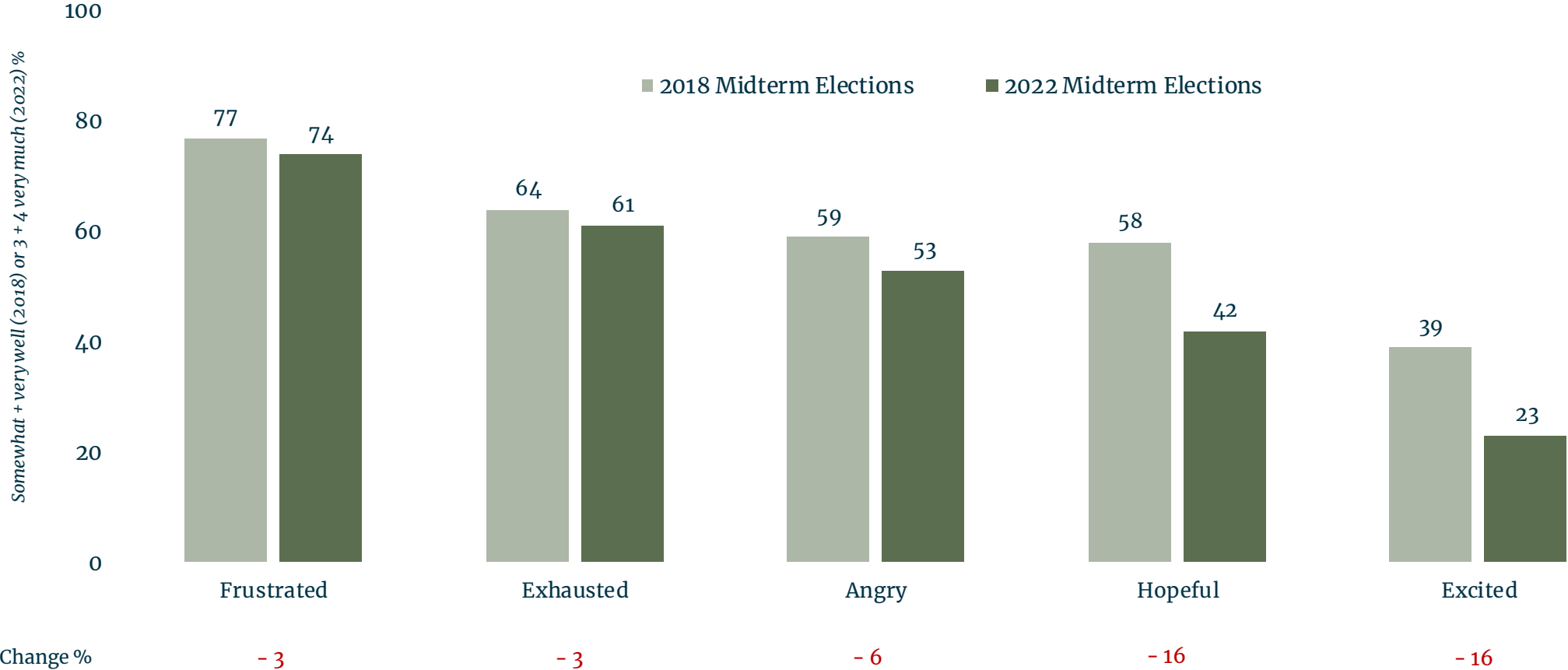
Feelings towards America today



Survey question: To what extent do each of the following reflect your feelings toward America today?

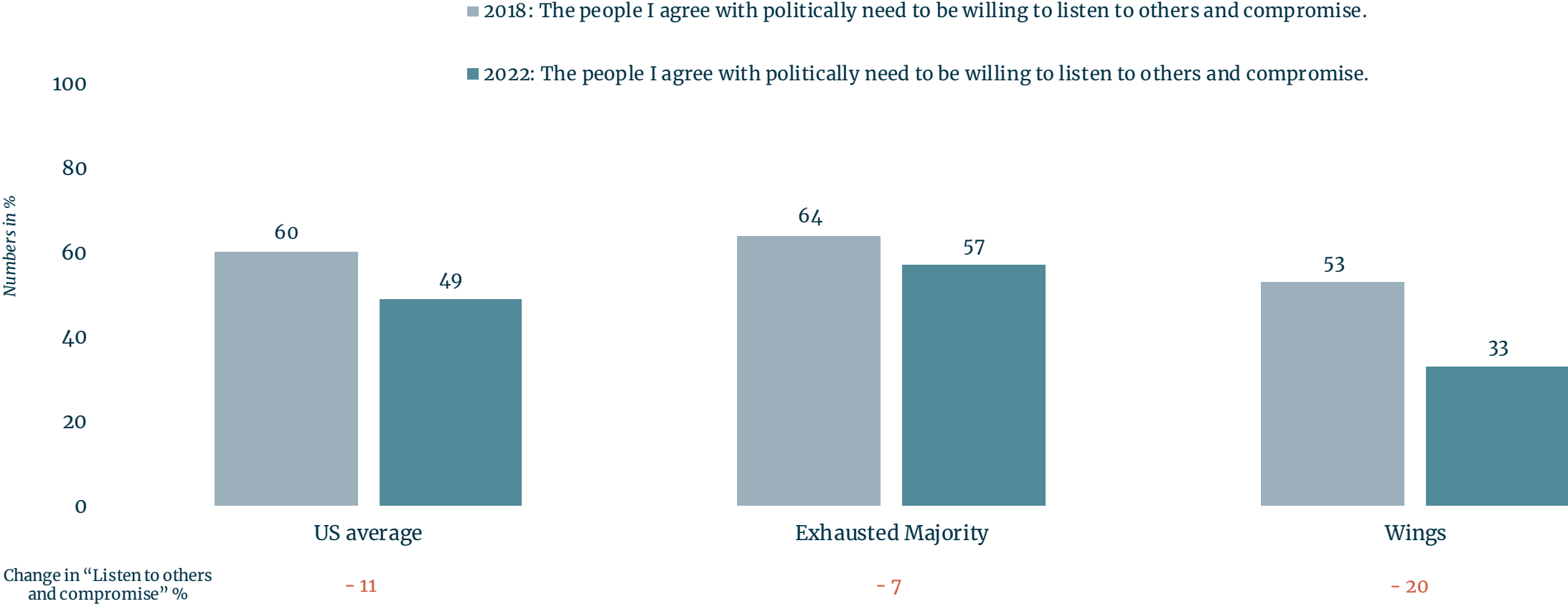
Americans feel slightly less angry towards America than in 2018, but also feel significantly less hopeful and excited about the future.

Change in emotions towards America from 2018 to 2022 midterm elections



Survey question: [2018] How well do the following words describe your feelings towards America today?; [2022] To what extent do each of the following reflect your feelings toward America today?

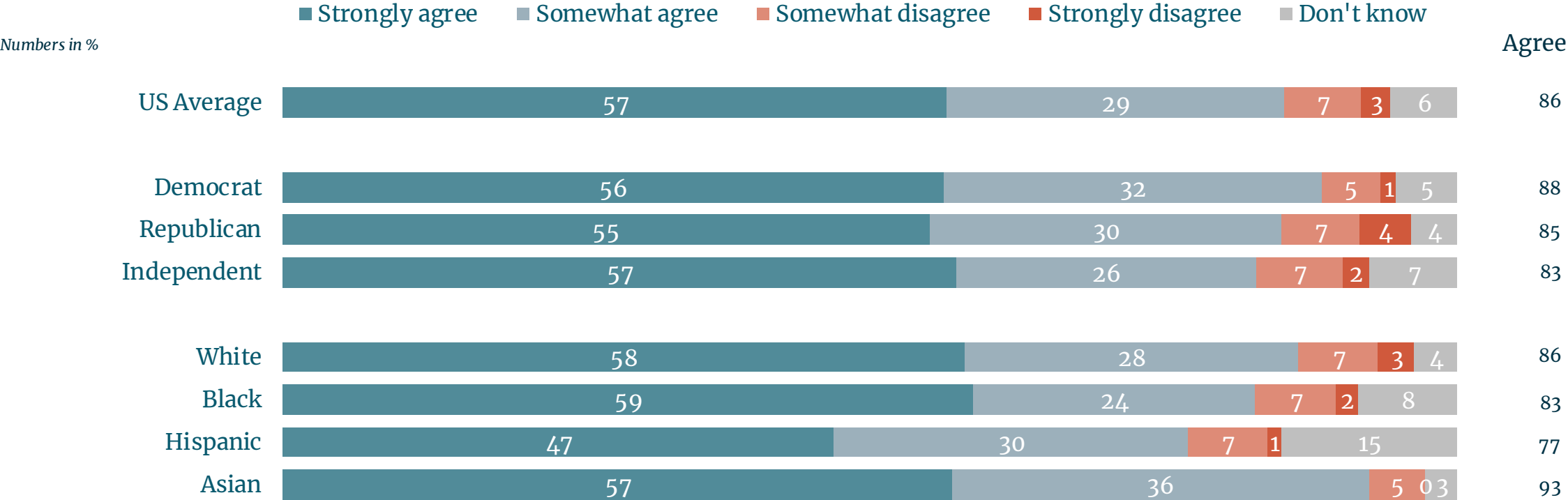
Though all Hidden Tribes groups have lost desire to "listen to others and compromise" since 2018, the change is especially stark among the Wings, widening the gap between the Wings and the Exhausted Majority.



Survey question: Which do you agree with more? "The People I agree with politically need to stick to their beliefs and fight" or "The people I agree with politically need to be willing to listen to others and compromise."

Americans across party and race overwhelmingly believe the greatest threat to America is from within.

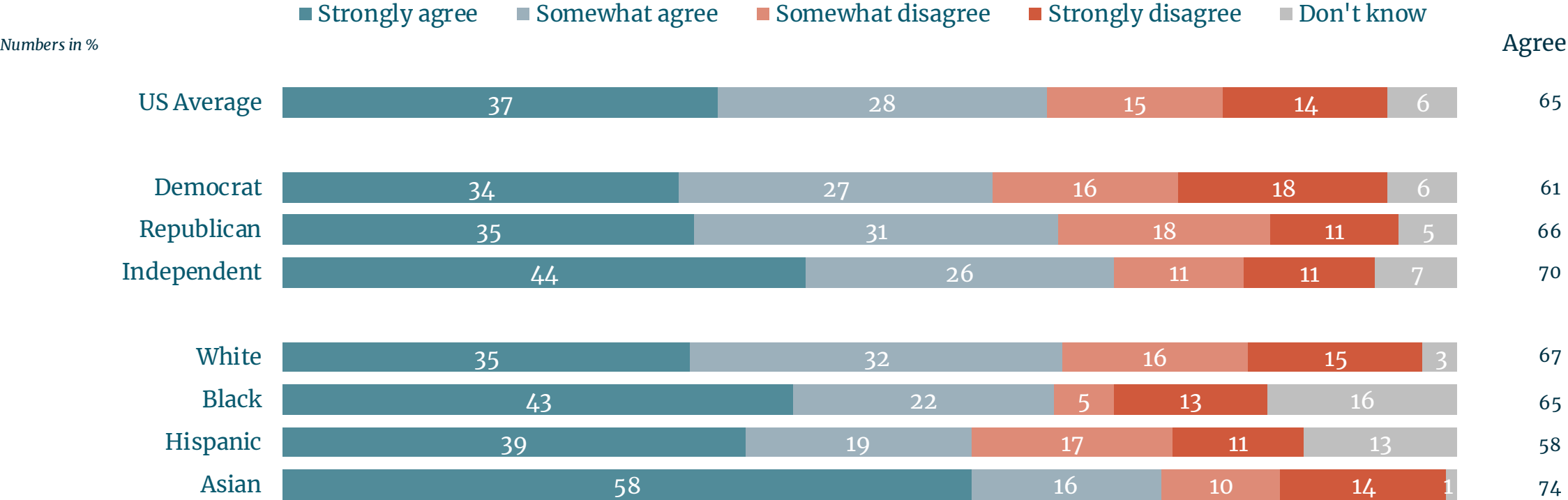
"The greatest threat to the nation is coming from within."



Survey question: How much do you agree with the following statements?

Many Americans think extremists on both sides of the spectrum threaten the US; this sentiment is especially strong among Independents.

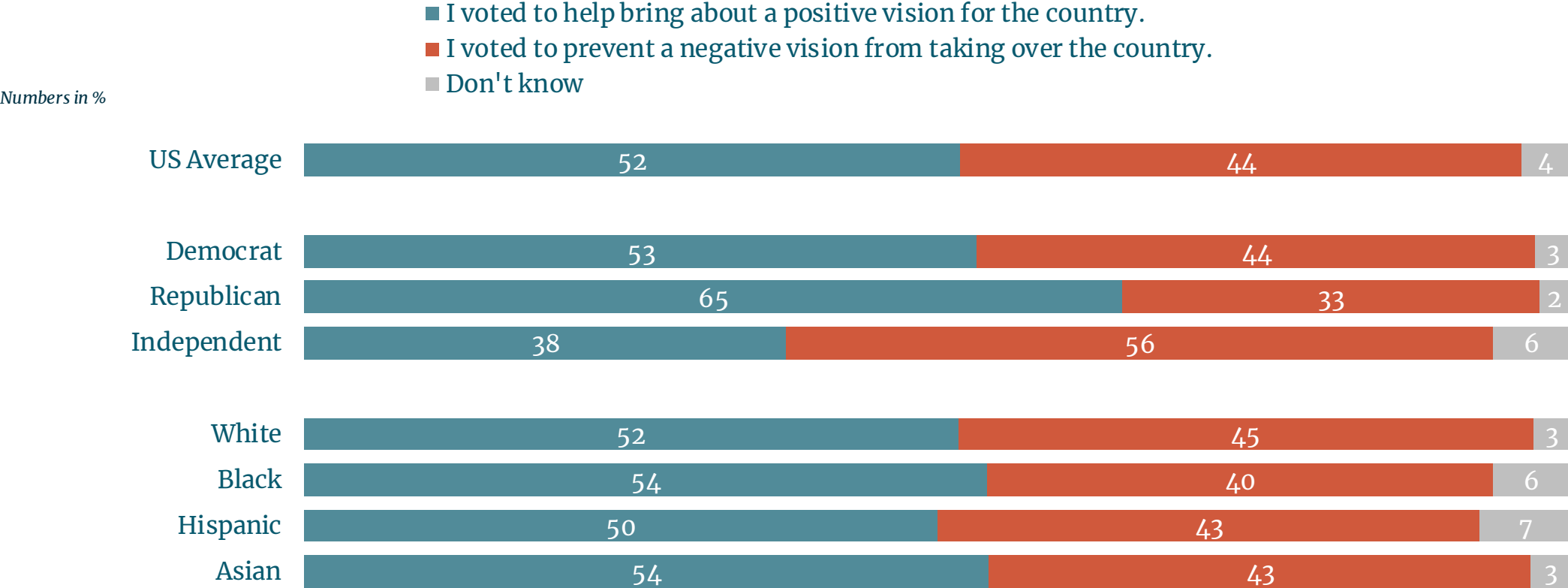
"Extremists on both sides of the political spectrum present a threat to America."



Survey question: How much do you agree with the following statements?

Tone and Sense of Empowerment

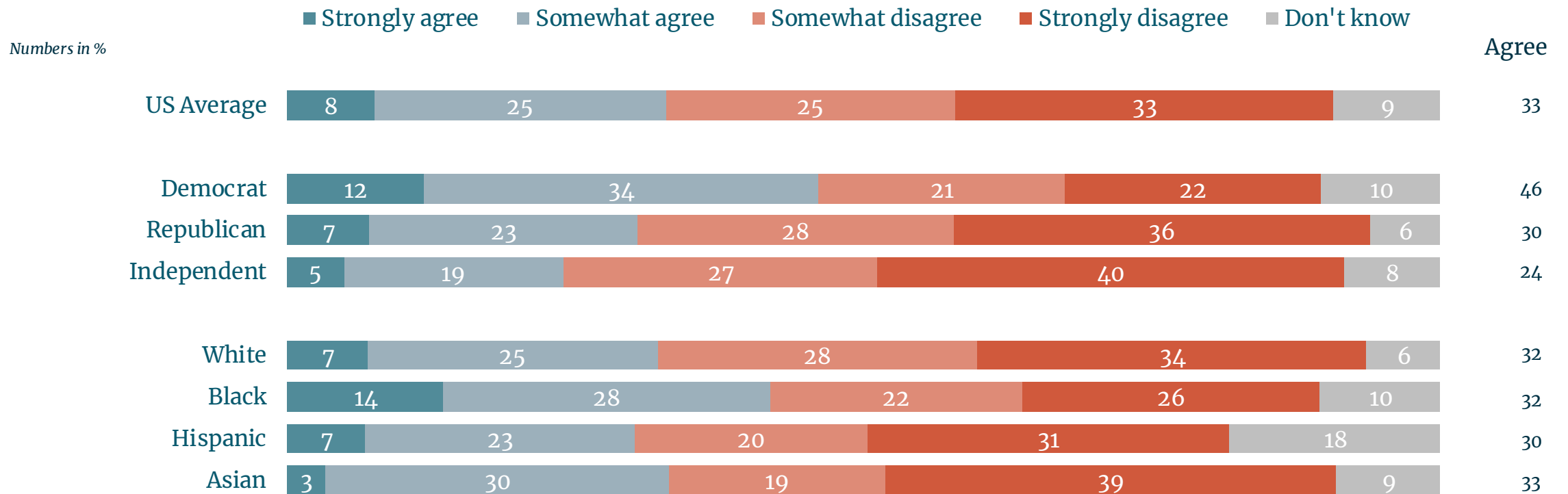
There were very different motivations for voting between partisans and Independents, with a majority of Independents voting to prevent a negative vision from taking over as opposed to voting for a positive vision.



Survey question: Which do you agree with more?

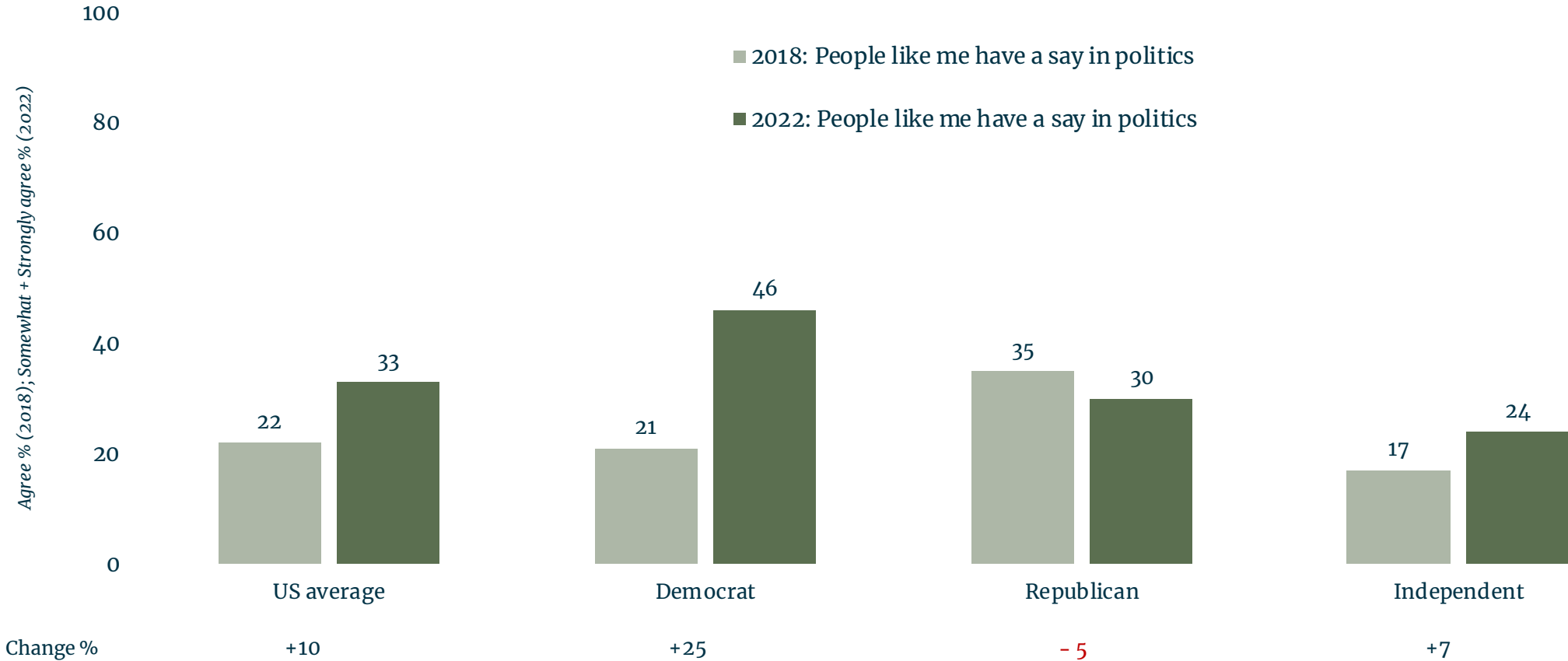
A minority of Americans (33%) feel they have a voice in the political conversation.

"I feel I have a voice in the political conversation"



Survey question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

From 2018 to 2022, the share of Democrats who feel they have a say in politics more than doubled. During that same time, the share of Republicans and Independents who feel they have a voice changed modestly.



Survey question: [2018] Which do you agree with more?; [2022] To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

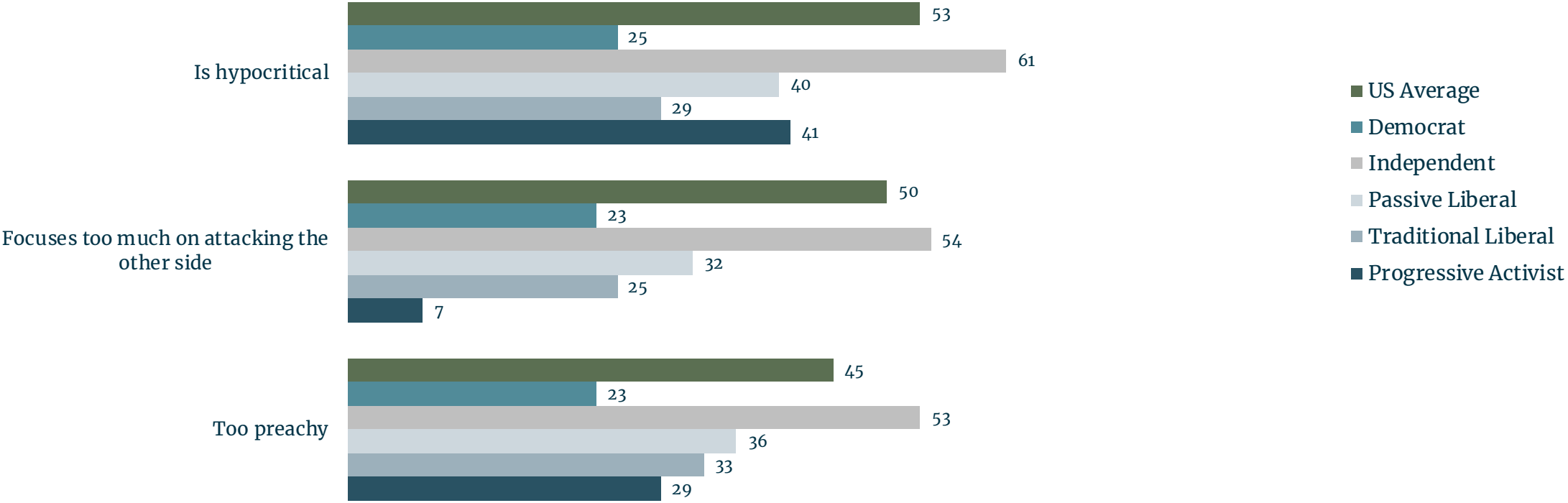
Americans' Views on the Democratic and Republican Parties

About a fourth of Democrats and a majority of Independents say the Democratic Party attacks the other side too much and is hypocritical and preachy.

The Democratic Party

Somewhat + Very well %

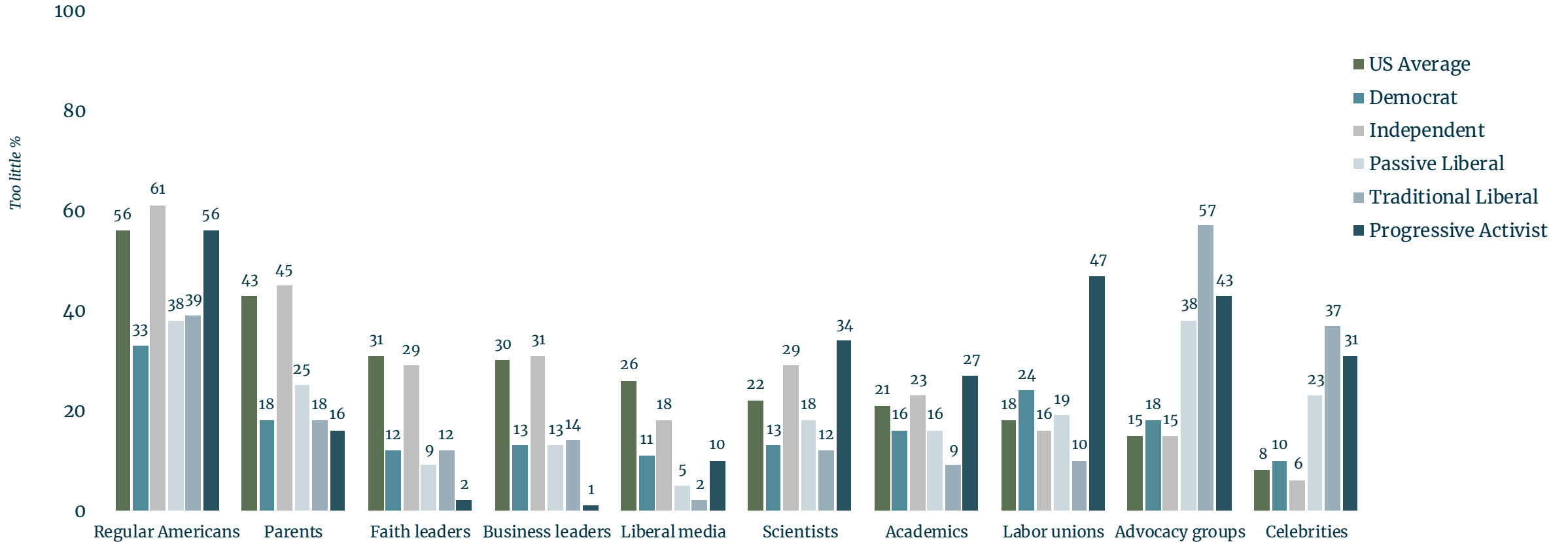
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Survey question: Here are some words and phrases people might use to describe the Democratic party. For each one, do you think it describes the Democratic party very well, somewhat well, not that well, or not well at all? Note: Passive Liberals, Traditional Liberals, and Progressive Activists are grouped together as left-leaning segments.

Democrats say their own party leaders listen too little to regular Americans, labor unions and advocacy groups.

Democratic Party leaders: Listen too little



Survey question: Do you feel that leaders in the Democratic Party listen too much, too little, or the right amount to the following groups? Note: Passive Liberals, Traditional Liberals, and Progressive Activists are grouped together as left-leaning segments.

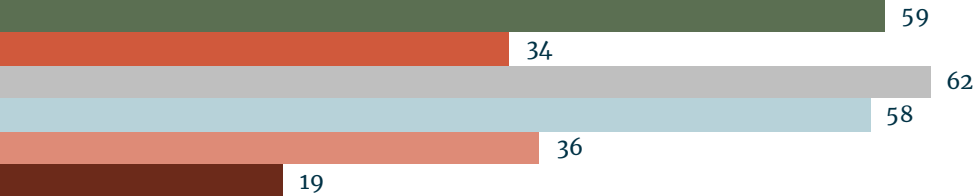
More than a fourth of Republicans and a majority of Independents say the Republican Party attacks the other side too much and is hypocritical and preachy.

The Republican Party

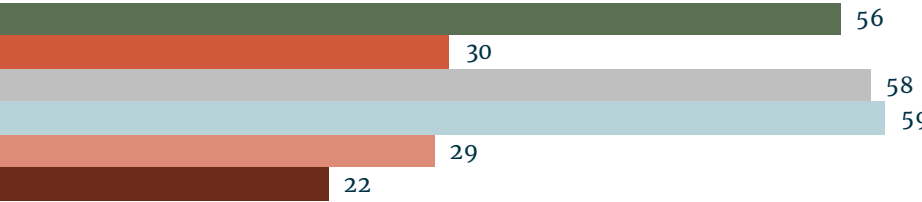
Somewhat + Very well %

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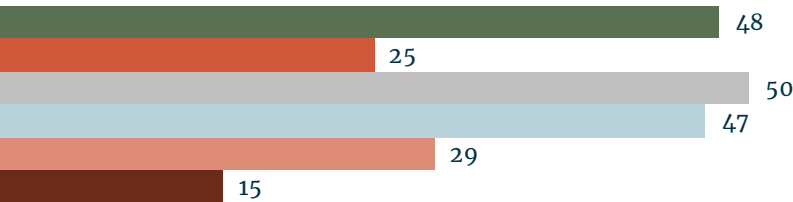
Focuses too much on attacking the other side



Is hypocritical



Too preachy

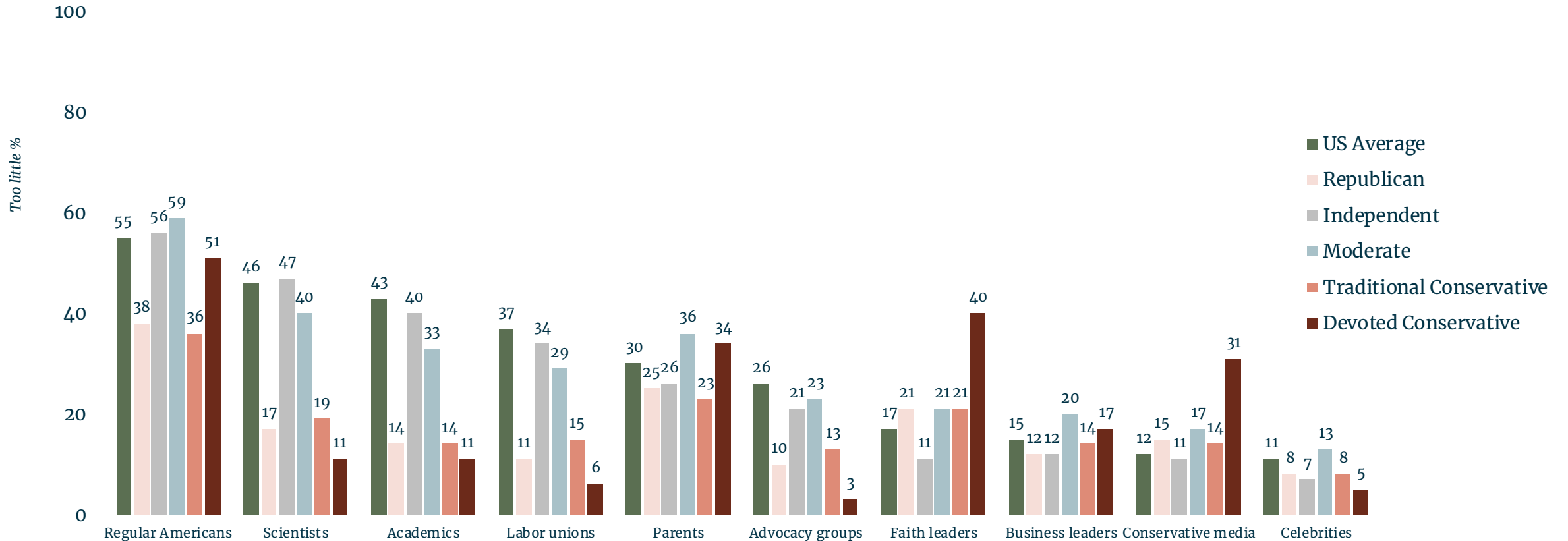


- US Average
- Republican
- Independent
- Moderate
- Traditional Conservative
- Devoted Conservative

Survey question: Here are some words and phrases people might use to describe the Republican party. For each one, do you think it describes the Republican party very well, somewhat well, not that well, or not well at all? Note: Traditional Conservatives and Devoted Conservatives are grouped as right-leaning. Moderates are included with the right-leaning Hidden Tribes groups for comparison purposes.

Republicans say their own party leaders listen too little to regular Americans, parents, and faith leaders.

Republican Party leaders: Listen too little



Survey question: Do you feel that leaders in the Republican Party listen too much, too little, or the right amount to the following groups? Note: Traditional Conservatives and Devoted Conservatives are grouped as right-leaning. Moderates are included with the right-leaning Hidden Tribes groups for comparison purposes.

Most Important Issues

Inflation is by far the most important issue to Americans. Democrats care most about inflation, climate change, healthcare and guns. Republicans care most about inflation, immigration and crime.

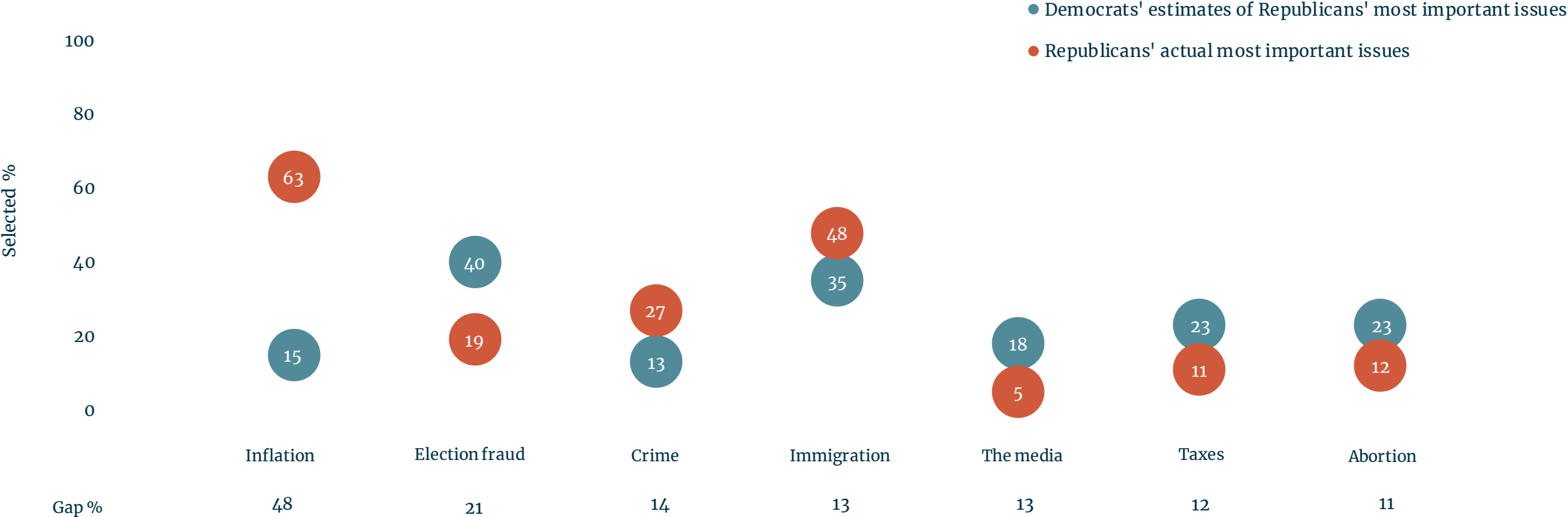
	US Average	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Inflation	51	40	63	54
Healthcare	23	32	15	20
Climate change	22	37	5	21
Immigration	21	3	48	18
Crime	19	9	27	21
Guns	18	29	10	12
Abortion	16	23	12	12
Democracy	14	27	4	12
Taxes	10	6	12	15
Unemployment	10	8	9	12
Division	10	11	7	13
Racism	9	14	3	9
Election fraud	9	1	19	9
Family or moral decline	9	3	15	10
National security	8	4	14	8
Education	7	9	6	8
Judicial system	7	12	2	6
Russia-Ukraine	5	4	4	5
LGBTQ	5	8	1	3
China	4	1	4	6
Other	3	3	3	4
The media	3	2	5	4
None	3	2	1	3

Survey question: Which political or social issues are most important to you today, if any? Please select up to 3 issues.

Perception Gaps on Issue Priorities

Democrats severely underestimate how much Republicans care about inflation and to a smaller extent crime and immigration. Democrats overestimate how much Republicans prioritize election fraud, media, taxes and abortion as issues.

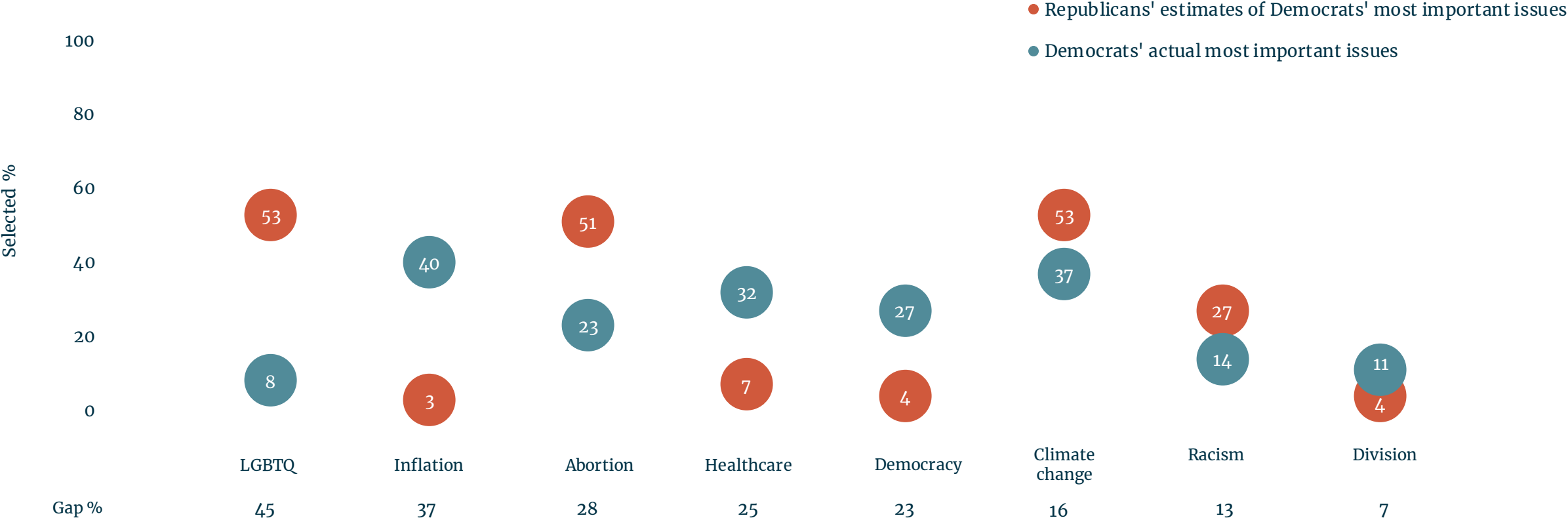
Democrats' perception of Republicans' most important issues



Survey question: [Republicans] Which political or social issues are most important to you today, if any? Please select up to 3 issues. [Democrats] Now we'd like you to say which issues you think are most important to Republicans. Please select the top 3 issues.

Republicans overestimate how much Democrats prioritize LGBTQ issues, climate change and abortion and underestimate how much they care about inflation, healthcare and democracy.

Republicans' perception of Democrats' Most important issues



Survey question: [Democrats] Which political or social issues are most important to you today, if any? Please select up to 3 issues. [Republicans] Now we'd like you to say which issues you think are most important to Democrats. Please select the top 3 issues.

Thank you