



Fourth of July in America

American Identity Research Project

May – June 2022



INTRODUCTION

Although the United States has always had competing narratives about its national identity, today the competition has transformed into a dangerous fight. A critical piece of moving America towards a healthier, more inclusive democracy will be lifting up narratives of national identity that can reach and resonate across lines of difference.

Since 2020, More in Common has been studying beliefs and attitudes towards American identity and how they vary across groups in the United States. Beginning in February 2022, More in Common began organizing monthly meetings of a table of non-profits and civil society partners who are similarly invested in the subject of American history and identity, and who want to act from an evidence base to draw Americans together. These partners serve as collaborators and informal advisers on this project.

In May and June 2022, More in Common partnered with YouGov to field a national survey to a representative sample of 2,500 adult U.S. citizens. This survey is the first of three that will be fielded in 2022 to explore associations with American identity, figures and events in American history, connections to national holidays, aspirations for our shared future, and more.

The attitudes captured in the data show significant concerns around Americas future and its ability to live up to its ideals. The findings also reveal a wide spectrum of strength of attachment to American identity. Between the points of polarization, we see meaningful commonality in seeing the United States with nuance and humility, indicating the potential for American identity to help transcend conflict between groups and bridge lines of political division. Many Americans share the same family narratives, aspirations for the country, and support for various historic figures, events and holidays.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

US Citizen Survey

Results are shown as “U.S. Average”.

More in Common partnered with international polling company YouGov to conduct online survey interviews with N=2,500 adult US citizens from May 17 to June 3, 2022. The data was weighted to be representative of American citizens 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 (6-category), race (5-category), and education (4-category). The margin of error (adjusted for weighting) is +/- 1.96 for the US average and higher for subgroups.

Research Goals

- Explore views on how Americans should confront history.
- Measure the significance and general feelings towards various American historical figures and events.
- Probe aspirational visions of America and which historical eras to call back to for inspiration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Americans are concerned about where the country is headed. Most share a broad pessimism about the current and future state of the United States.

Most do not describe America today with any positive attributes. Though most Americans say they want a future country that is “united”, “hard-working”, and “responsible”, Americans describe the country today mostly as “**divided**”, “**chaotic**”, and “**intolerant**”.

Most Americans lack faith in political parties. Nearly three in four Americans (71%) say that neither of the major political parties makes them feel hopeful about the country’s future.

Americans see the country moving in the wrong direction on the features they most value: more Americans see basic values such as individual rights, democracy and opportunity as moving in the wrong versus right direction.

2. Despite this pessimism, faith that Americans have more in common remains high and shared history and celebrations transcend lines of division.

Americans across the political spectrum align in their recognition of **the importance of key attributes of the country**, including of individual liberties (86%), of opportunity (86%), and of being a “nation of immigrants” (71%).

Americans also share **positive feelings towards most major holidays**. Americans in general feel warm towards 4th of July (74%), Veterans Day (76%), Thanksgiving (76%) and Martin Luther King Jr. Day (66%). This is true across political parties, generations, and racial groups.

For these reasons and others, the majority of Americans think that **we have “more in common than what divides us”** (71%).

3. E Pluribus Unum: Shifting the focus to family history reveals narratives that are distinct as well as shared.

The many: There are family narratives that resonate most strongly among particular subgroups of Americans. For example, most Black Americans feel that their family’s experience in America has been one of “exclusion, discrimination and abuse” (76%).

The one: However, Americans also share narratives of family experience. Meaningfully, 87% of Americans feel that their family’s journey resonates with “a story of working hard, doing your part, and passing on to the next generation a better life”. Most Americans also say their family story is one of “a search for opportunity and a better life” (79%) and as “a quest for freedom and equality” (69%).

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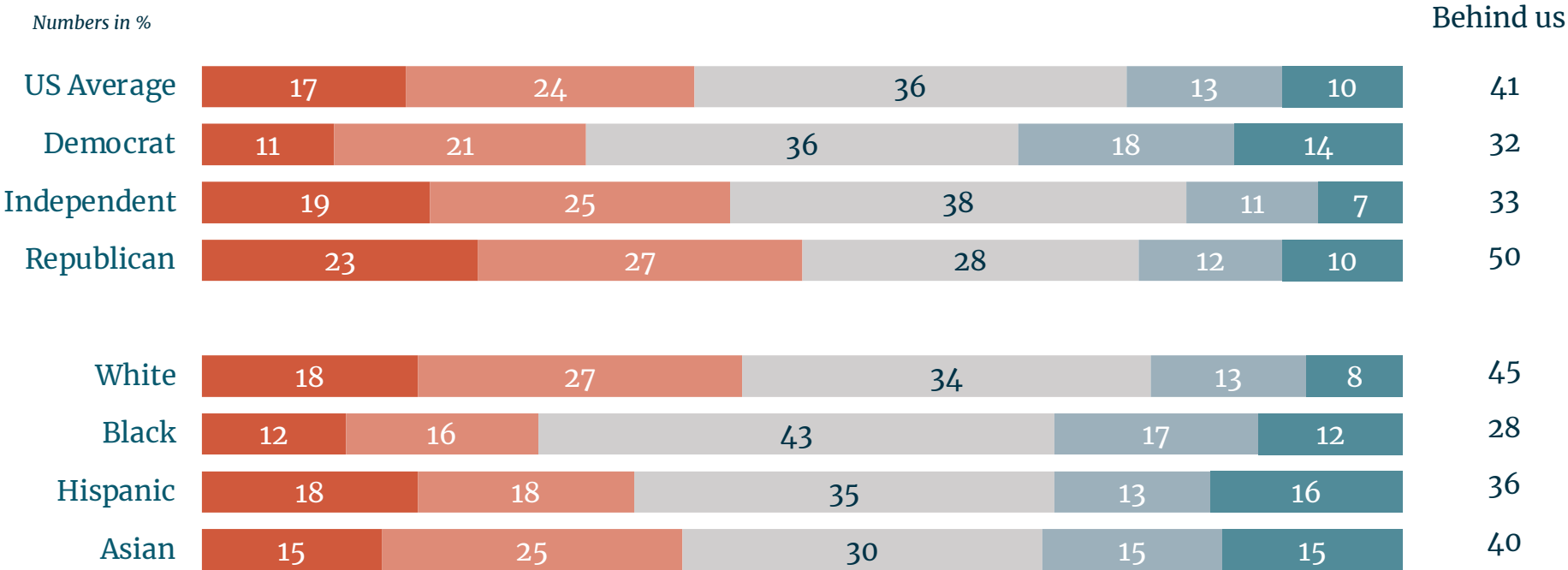
Our Best Days

A plurality of Americans think that the country's best days are in the past.

Americans are uncertain if not pessimistic towards the future. Over 40% believe that the country’s best days are in the past, while more than one third have no idea what to expect.

Which of the following do you agree with more? America’s best days are...

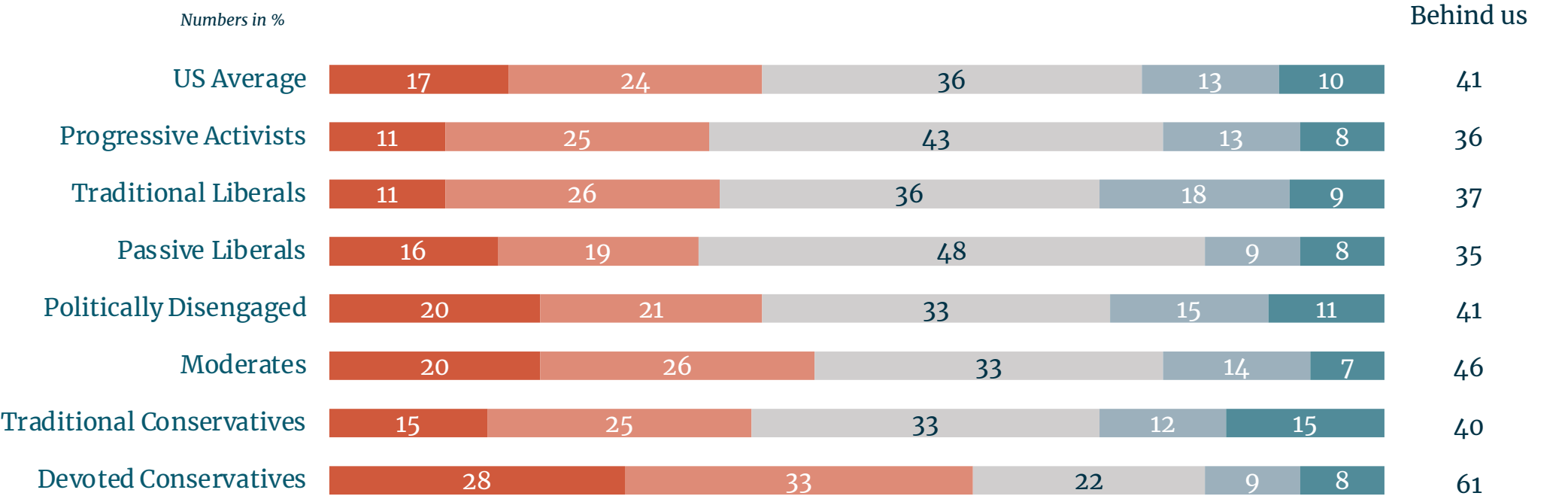
Definitely behind us Probably behind us I have no idea what to expect Probably ahead of us Definitely ahead of us



Over one third of all Hidden Tribes don't know what to expect for the future. Devoted Conservatives are most likely to say that the country's best days are behind us.

Which of the following do you agree with more? America's best days are...

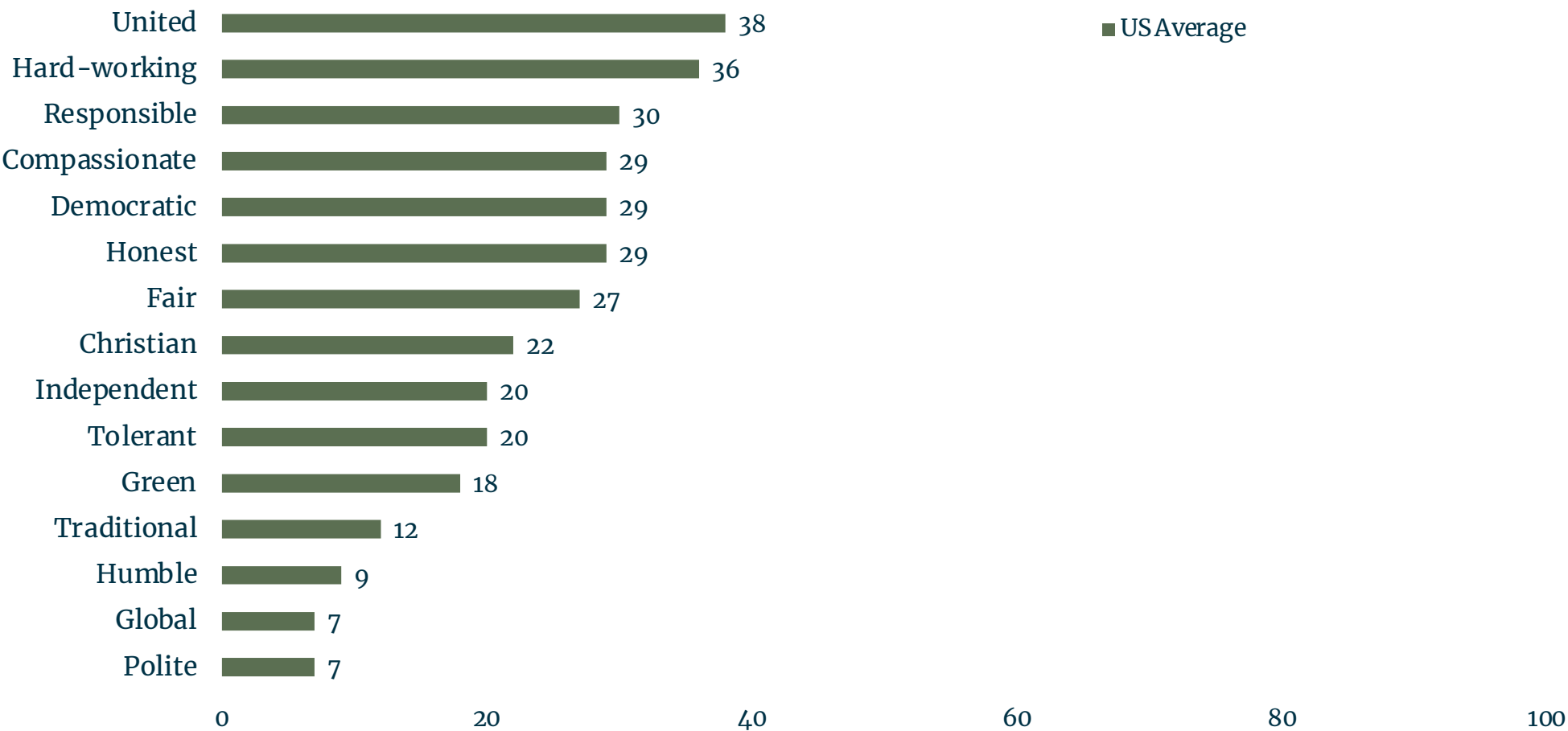
Definitely behind us Probably behind us I have no idea what to expect Probably ahead of us Definitely ahead of us



Ideal America and America Now

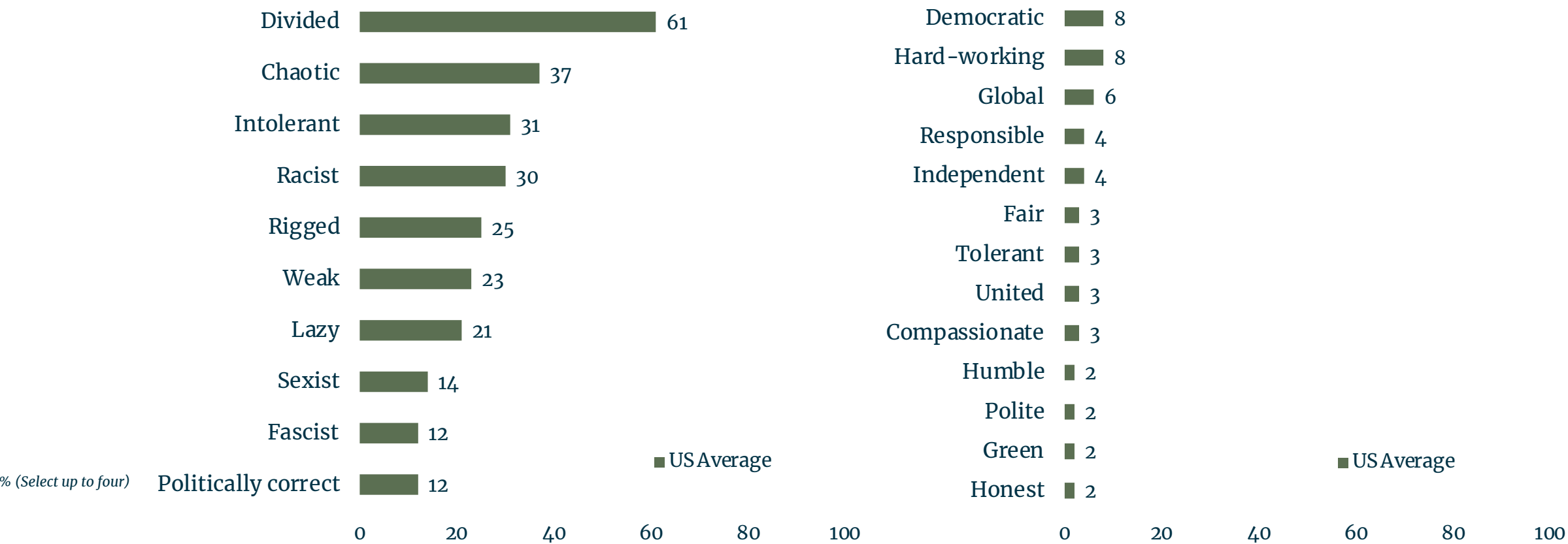
Americans want an America that is united, hardworking, responsible, democratic, compassionate, and fair.

Thinking about 10 years into the future, imagine your ideal American society. What should it be like?



However, when asked about America today, Americans see a much more negative picture—over 60% of Americans think that country is divided and one third describes America as chaotic, intolerant, and racist.

Thinking about the United States today, what qualities would you use to describe it?

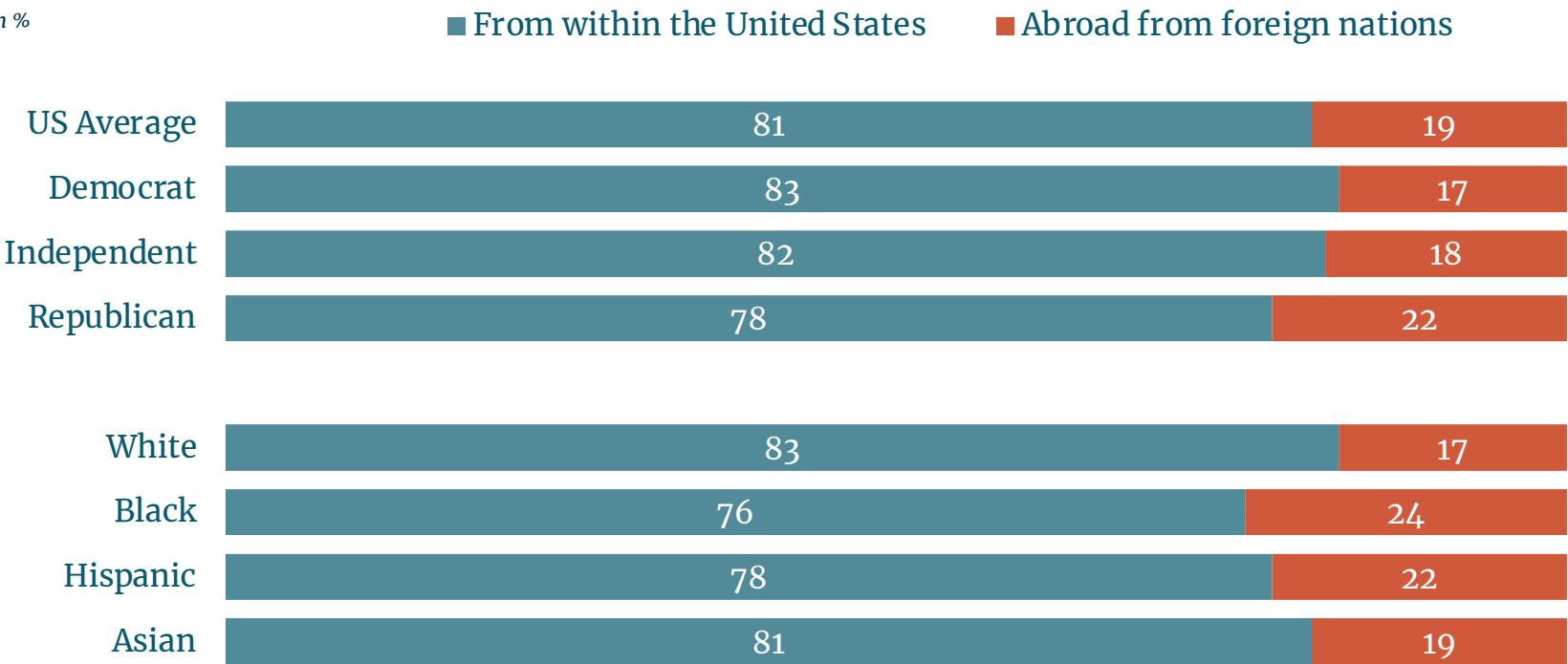


Threats to America

The majority of Americans overwhelmingly agree that the greatest threat to the US comes from within the country.

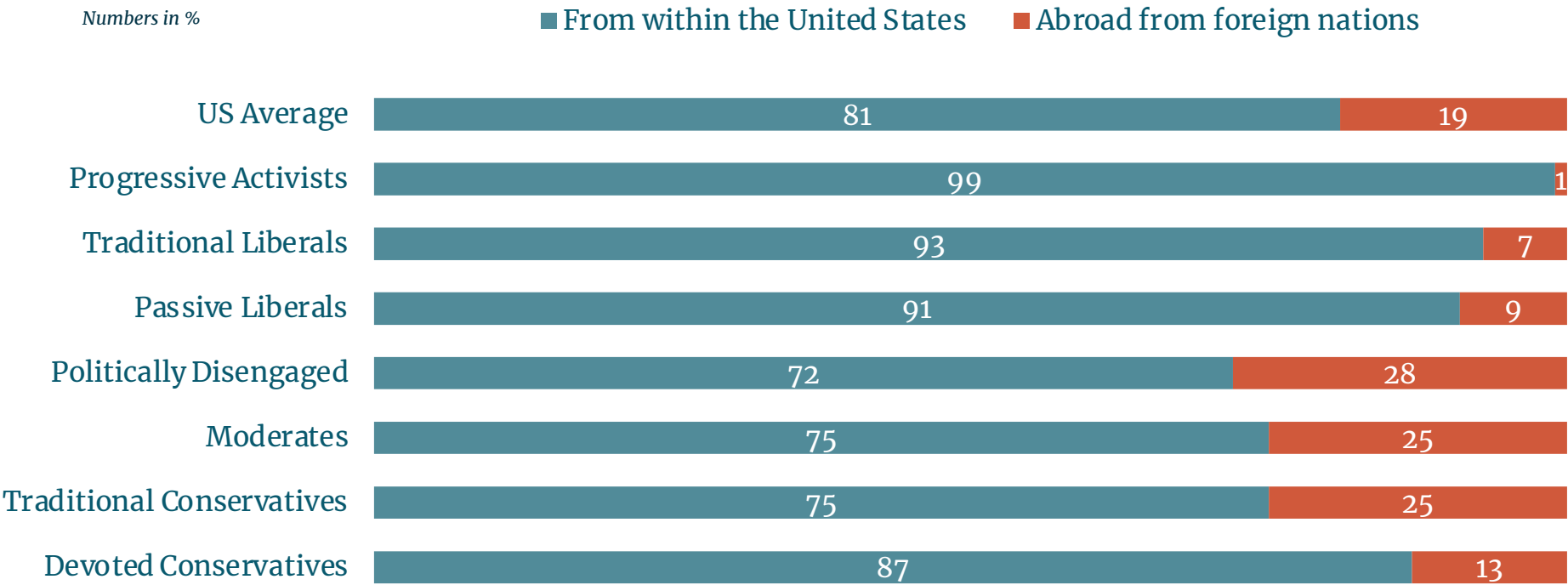
In your opinion, where does the greatest threat to the United States come from today?

Numbers in %

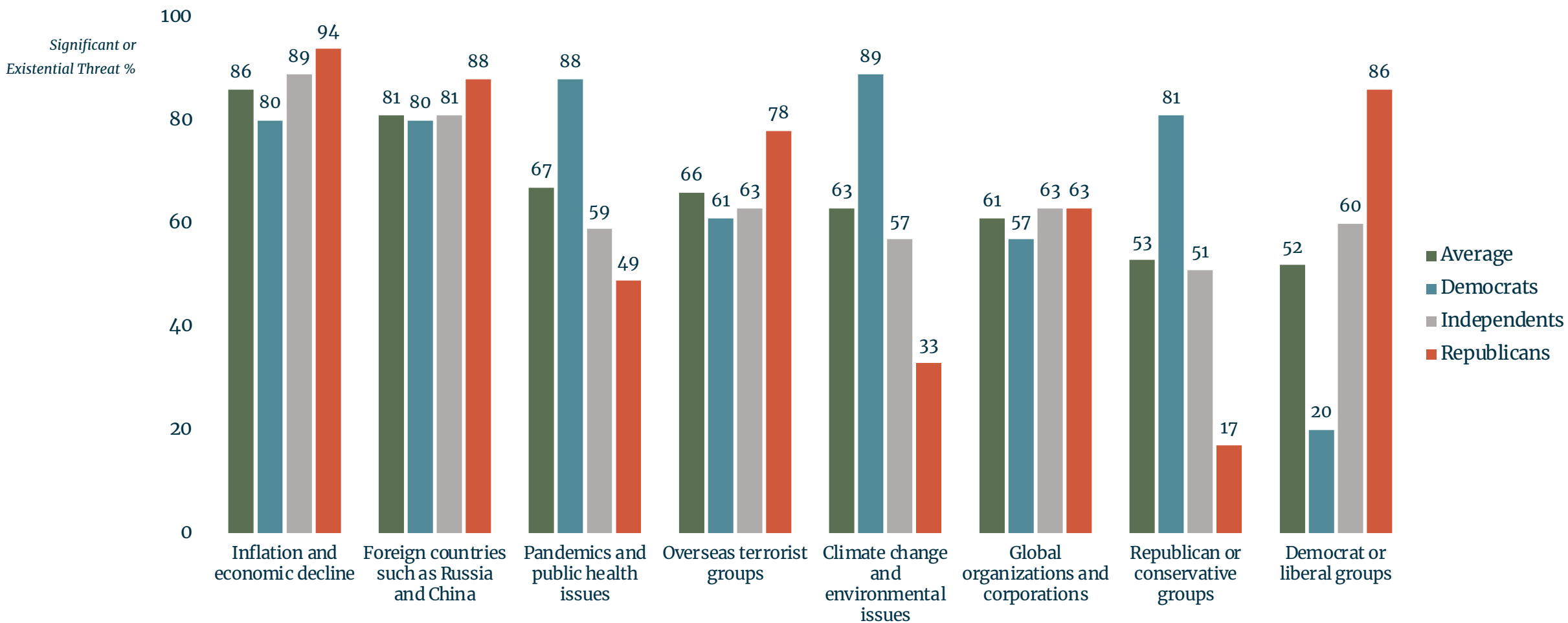


Liberal-leaning Americans are slightly more likely to agree than conservative Americans that the greatest threat comes from within the country.

In your opinion, where does the greatest threat to the United States come from today?

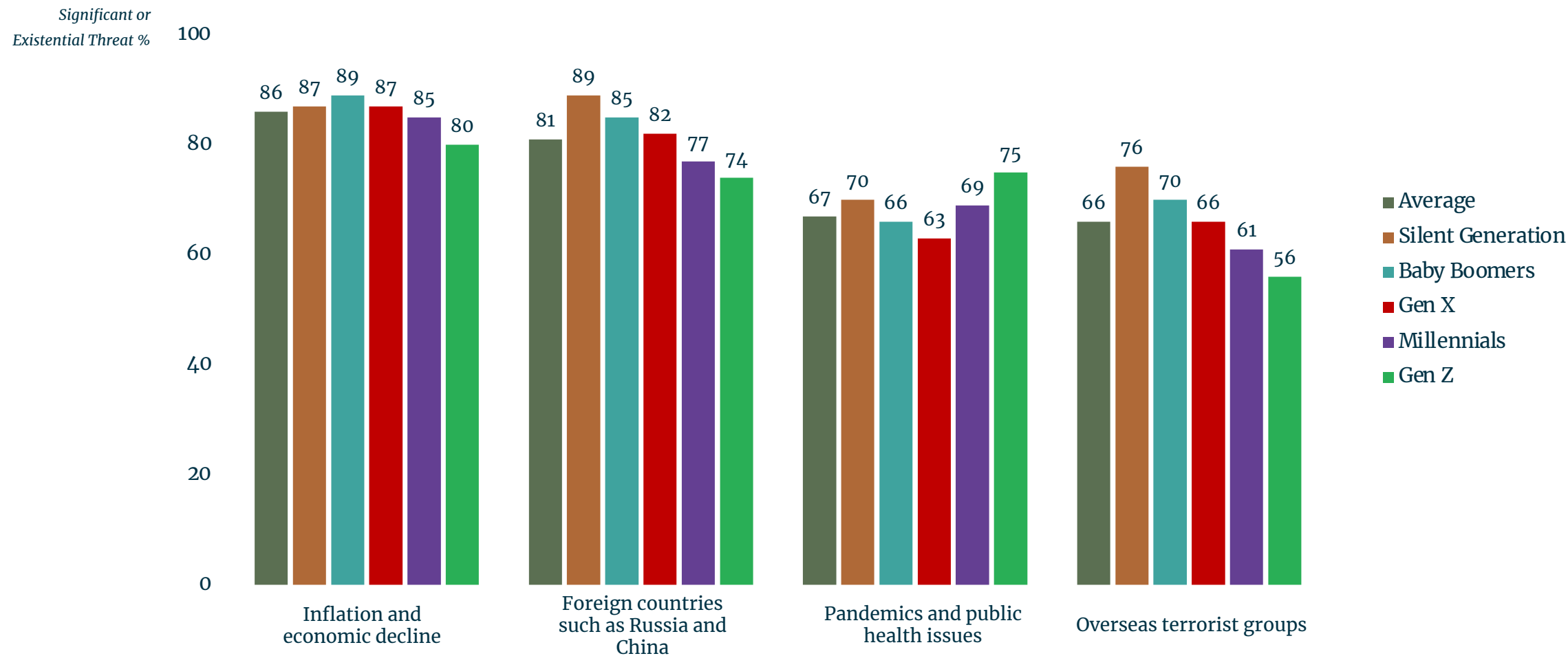


All parties are very concerned with inflation, Russia, and China. Democrats are the most concerned about future pandemics. Republicans are less concerned about climate change. Both parties see the other as a very severe existential threat.



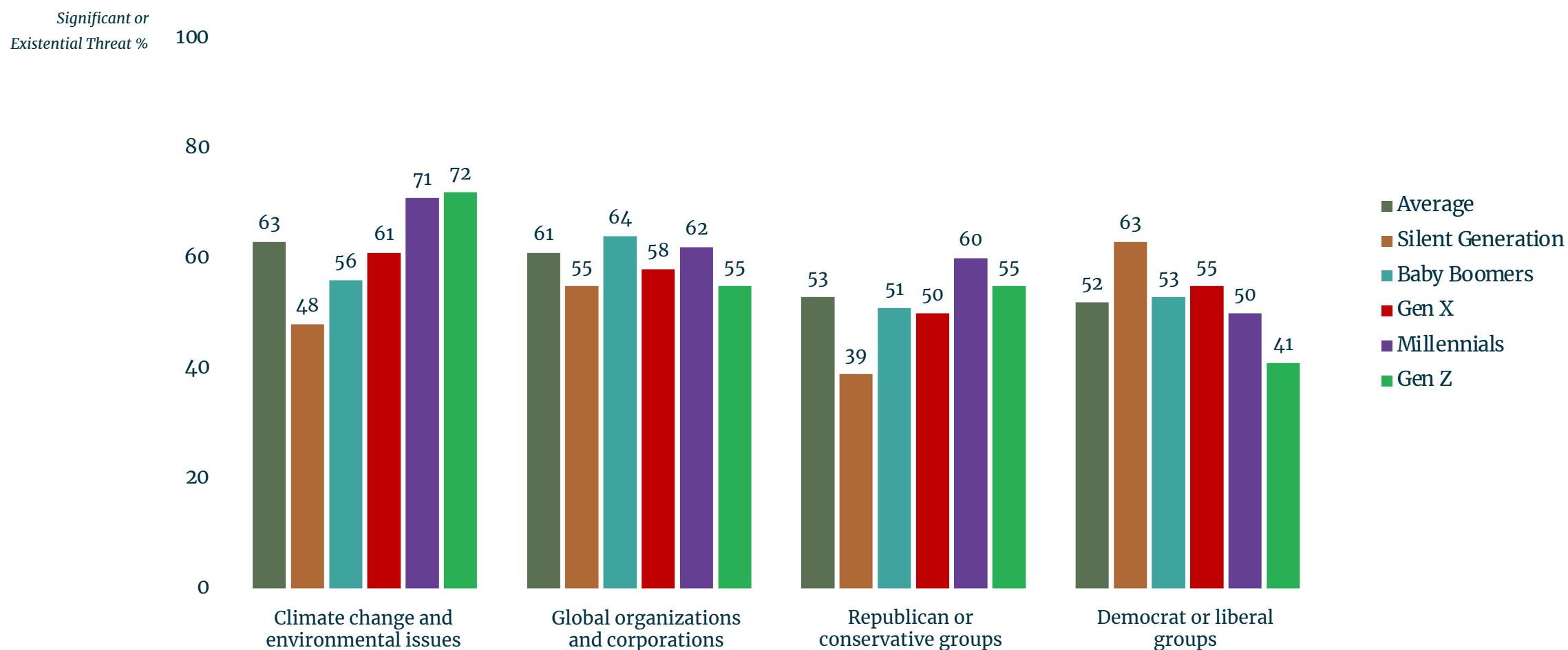
Survey question: How much of a threat do you believe the following are to America?

All generations see inflation, Russia, and China as major existential threats.



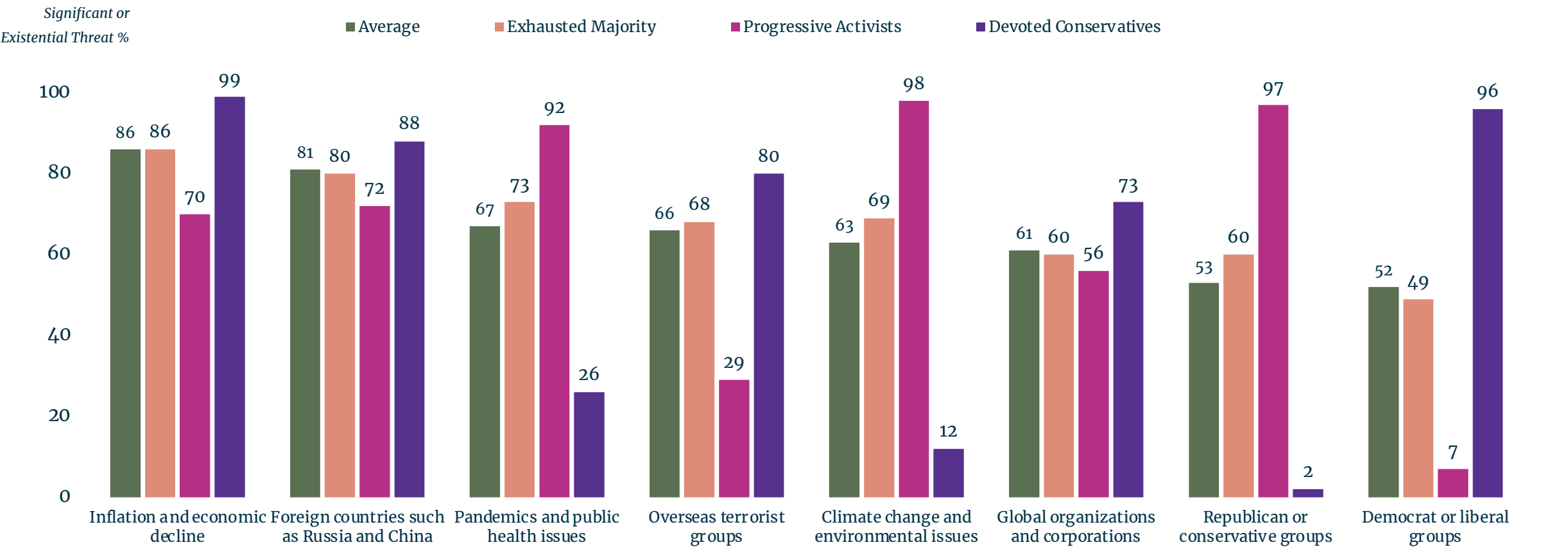
Survey question: How much of a threat do you believe the following are to America?

Compared to older generations, younger generations see climate change as a significant or existential threat.



Survey question: How much of a threat do you believe the following are to America?

Though the Exhausted Majority and Wing groups share concerns about inflation and foreign countries, Progressive Activists and Devoted Conservatives differ widely from each other and the Exhausted Majority in many threat assessments.

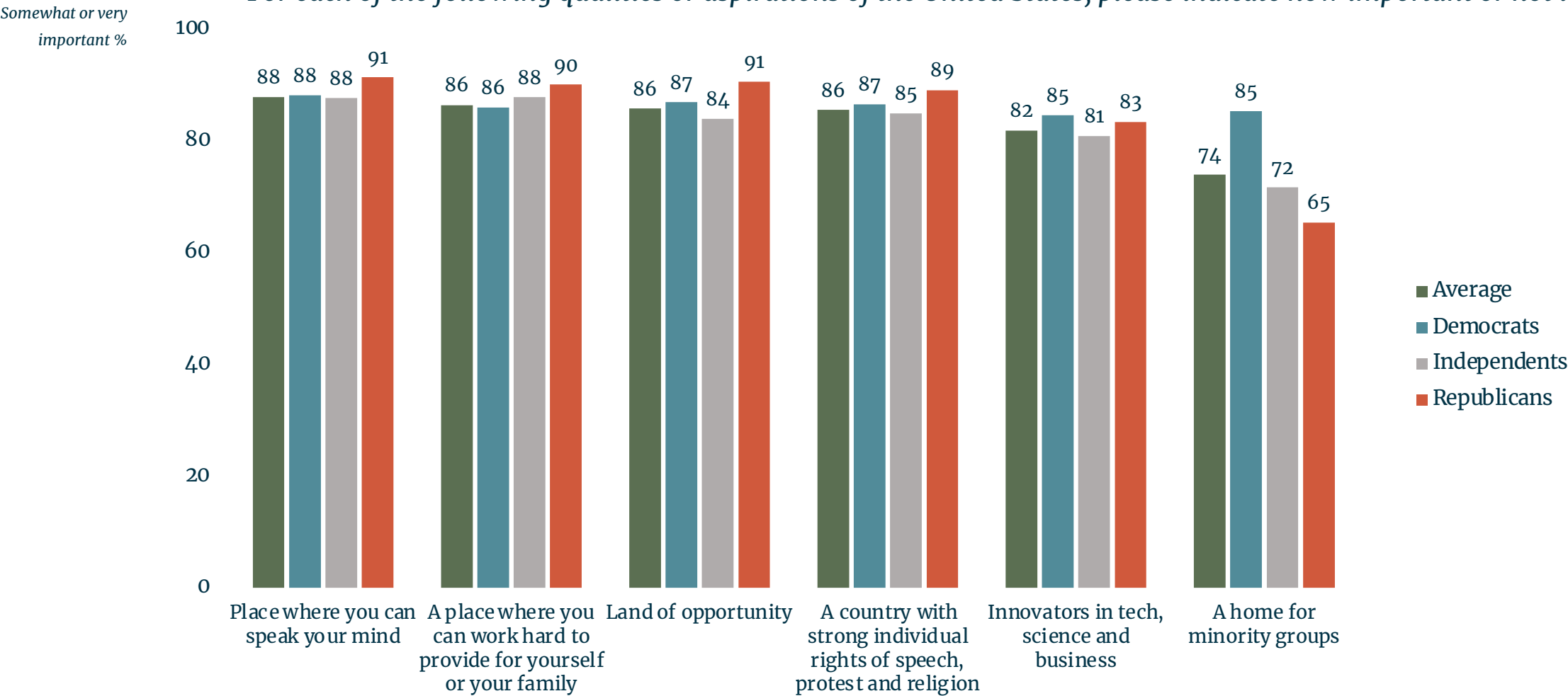


Survey question: How much of a threat do you believe the following are to America?

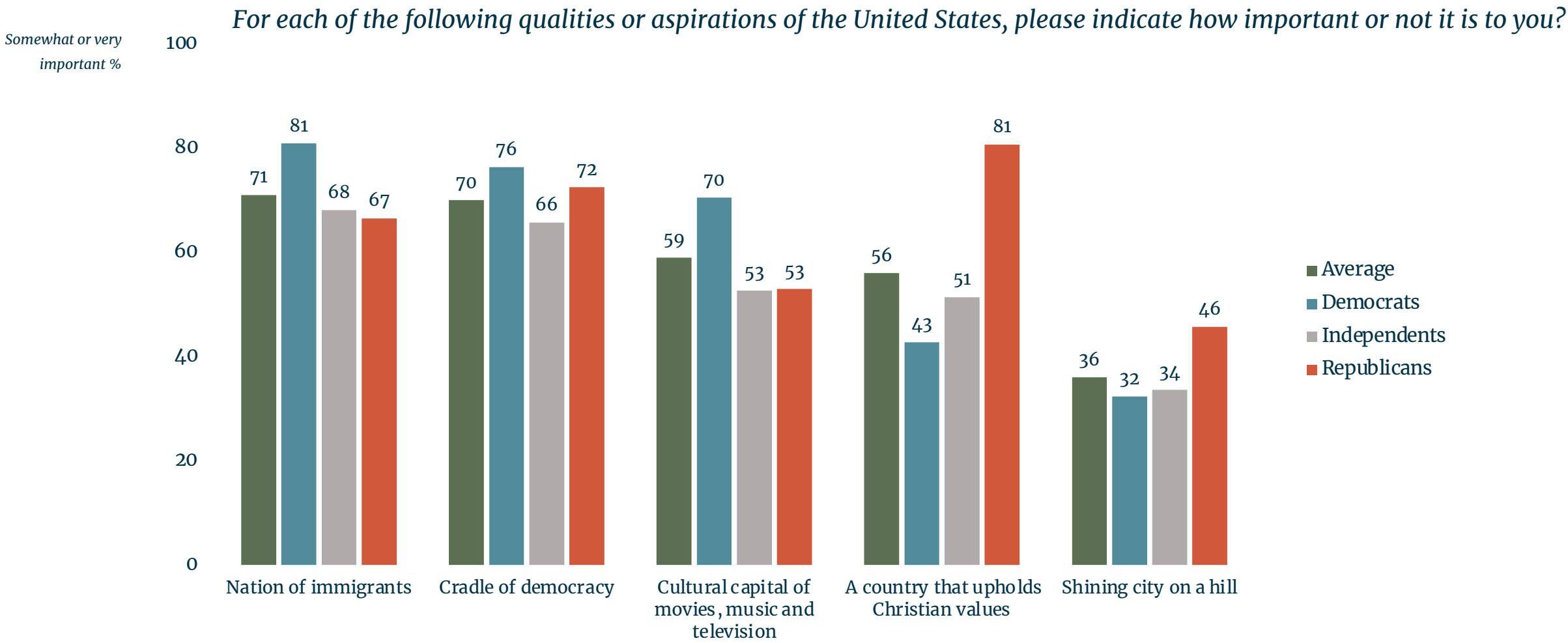
Important Qualities of the United States

Almost 9 in 10 Americans, regardless of political affiliation, highly value the aspirations of the country to be a place where one can speak their mind and one where everyone can work hard to provide for themselves.

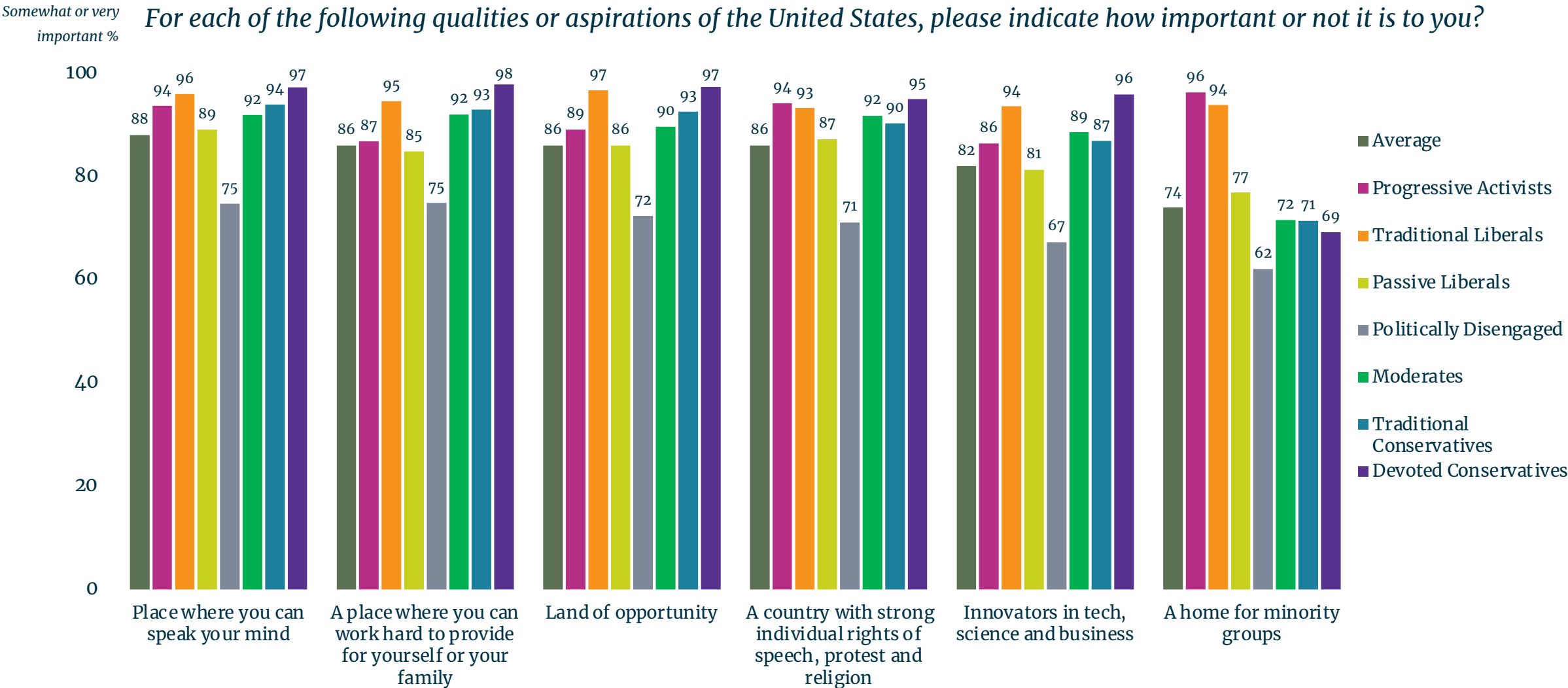
For each of the following qualities or aspirations of the United States, please indicate how important or not it is to you?



7 in 10 feel that America’s aspiration to be a nation of immigrants is important. Republicans are significantly more likely to emphasize America’s aspiration to be a country that upholds Christian values.

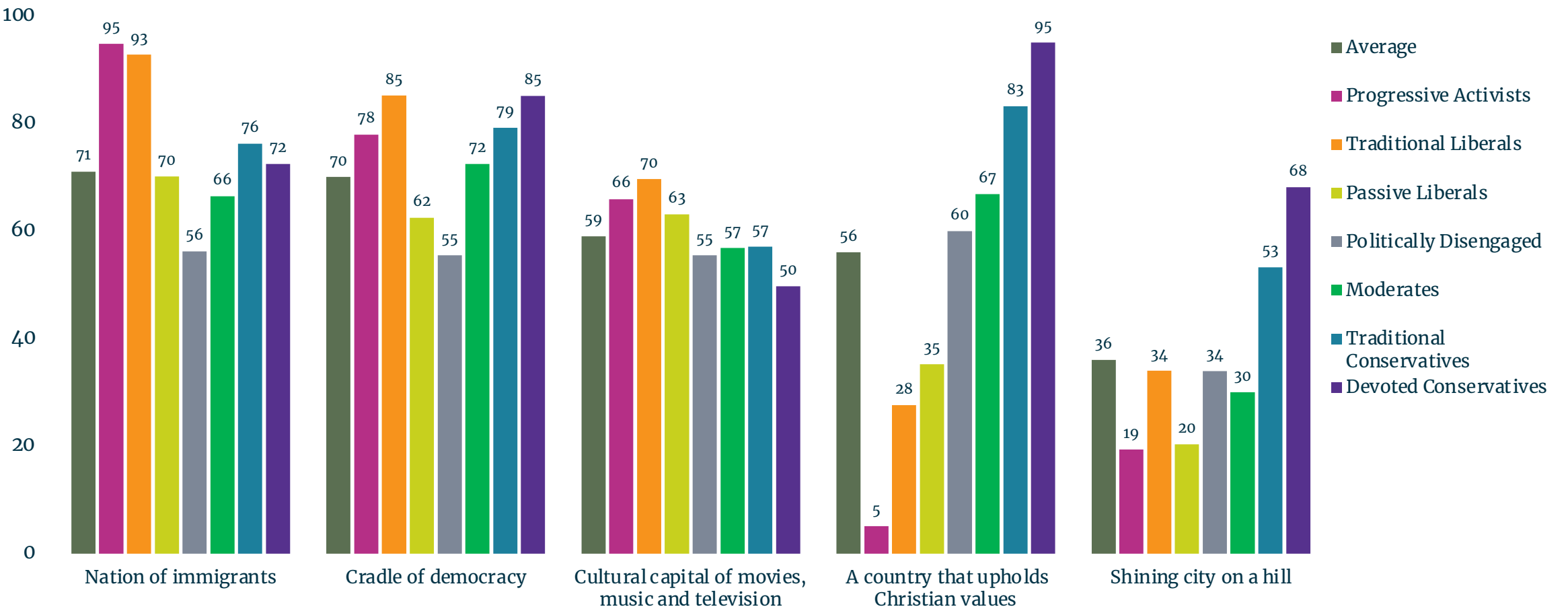


Compared to other segments, Politically Disengaged are less enthusiastic about most aspirations of the US.



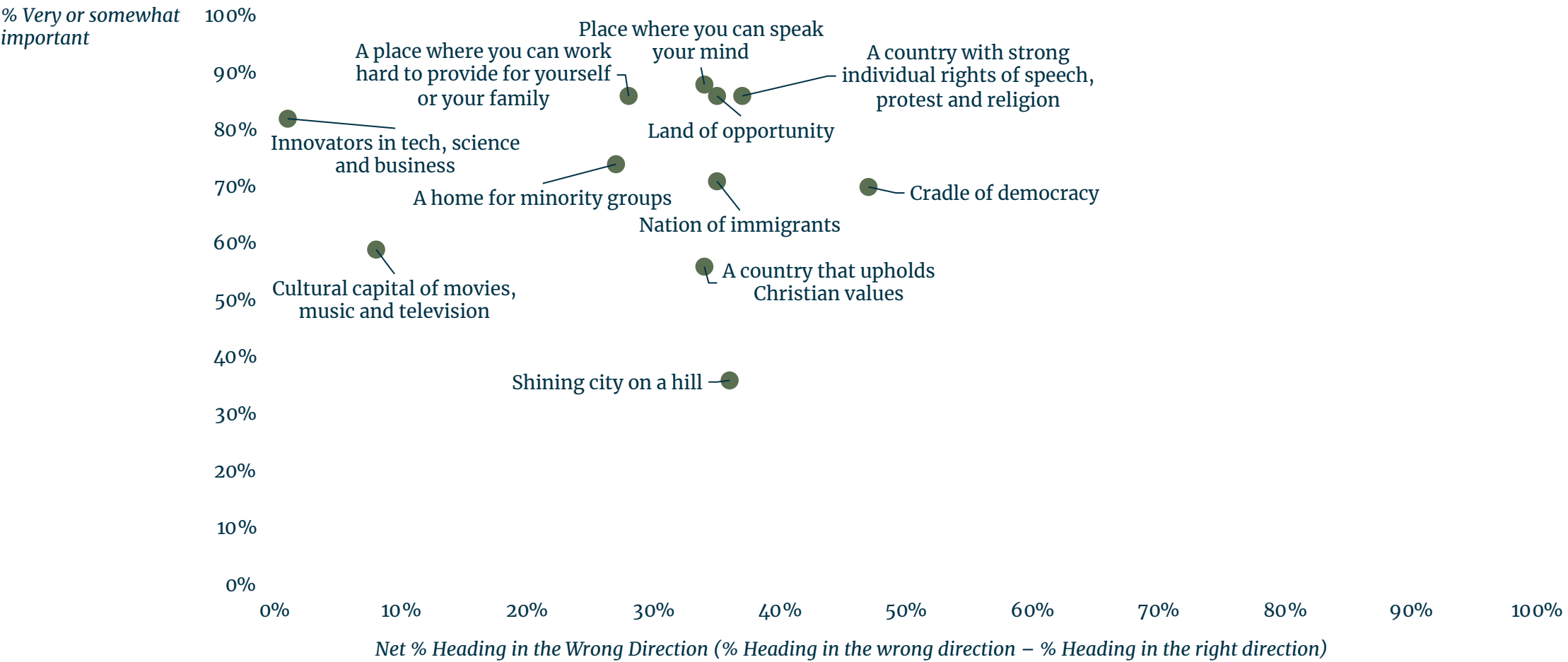
Only half of the Politically Disengaged see the country’s aspiration as a nation of immigrants and cradle of democracy as important.

Somewhat or very important % For each of the following qualities or aspirations of the United States, please indicate how important or not it is to you?



Americans see the country moving in the wrong direction on the features they most value: more Americans see basic values such as individual rights, democracy and opportunity as moving in the wrong versus right direction.

Americans highly value strong individual rights, the status of the country as a land of opportunity and cradle of democracy; however, a significant plurality believe that the country is going in the wrong direction with regards to those aspirations.



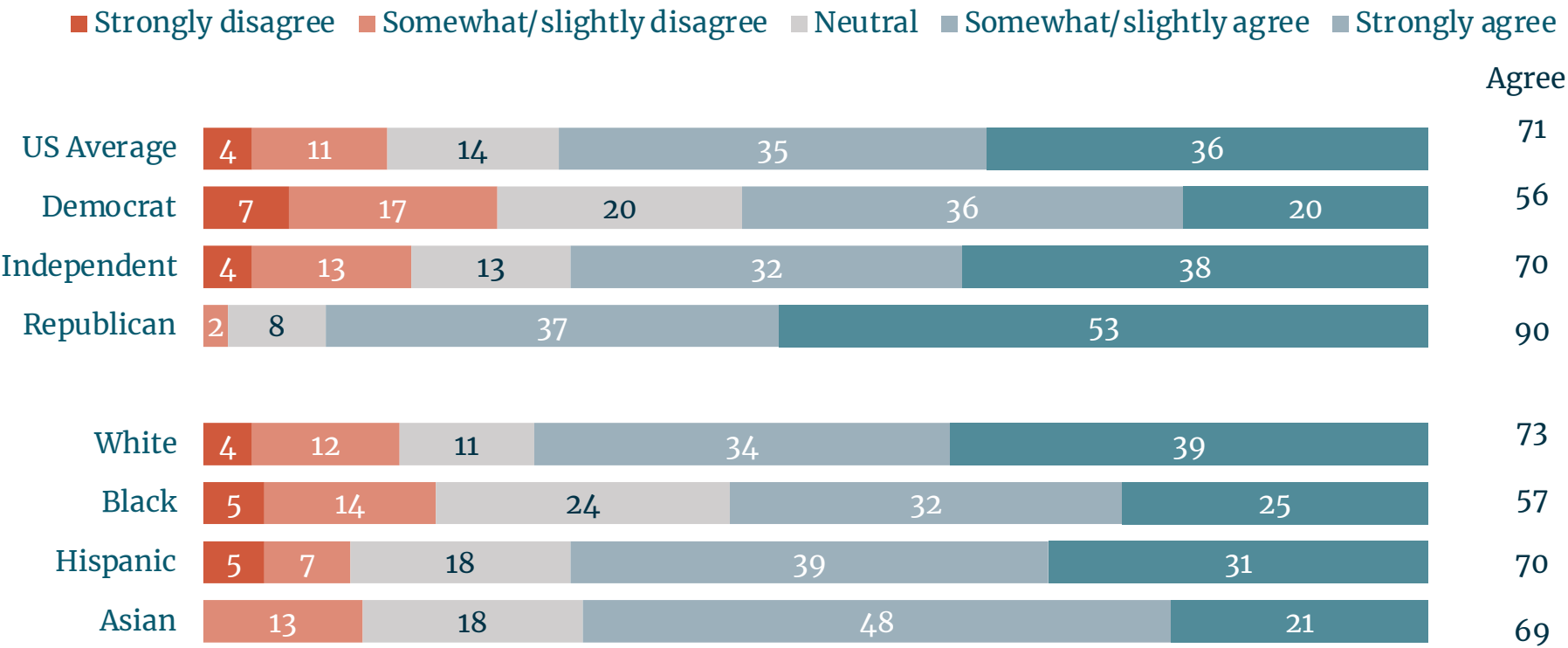
Survey question: For each of the following qualities or aspirations of the United States, please indicate how important or not it is to you? Do you think that the country is headed in the right direction, wrong direction, or staying the same?

American Narratives : Individual Liberty

Most Americans are supportive with a message of personal responsibility and individuality.

America is the land of liberty, personal responsibility and individuality. These qualities have propelled the country to its greatest successes. When the government interferes with individual liberty, we see America move backwards.

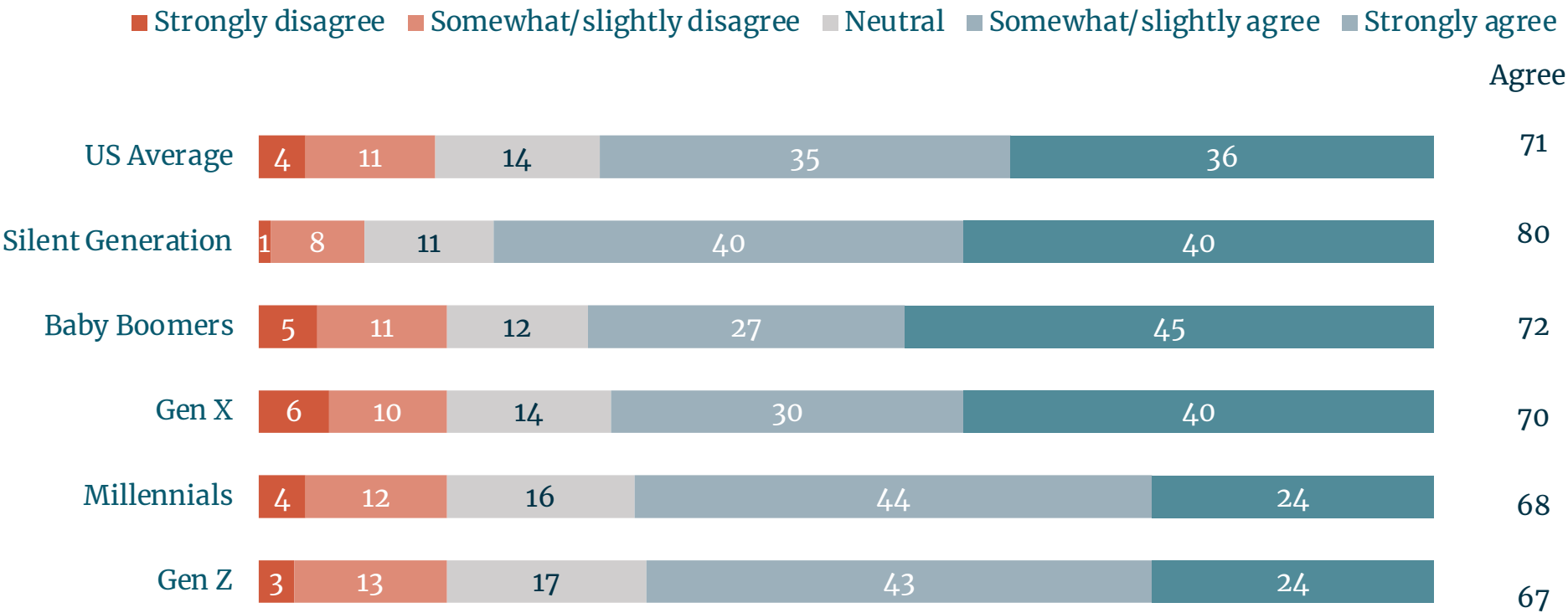
Numbers in %



Older generations are slightly more receptive to this message.

America is the land of liberty, personal responsibility and individuality. These qualities have propelled the country to its greatest successes. When the government interferes with individual liberty, we see America move backwards.

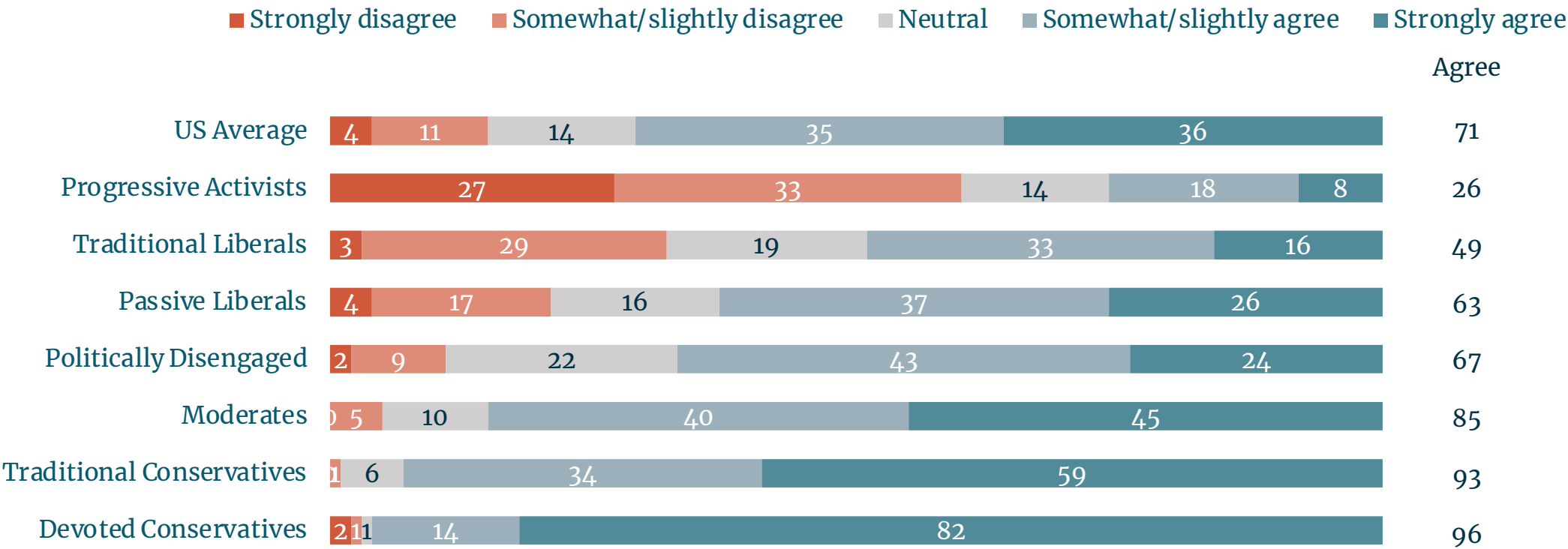
Numbers in %



Most Devoted Conservatives agree strongly with the message of personal responsibility, while most Progressive Activists do not agree.

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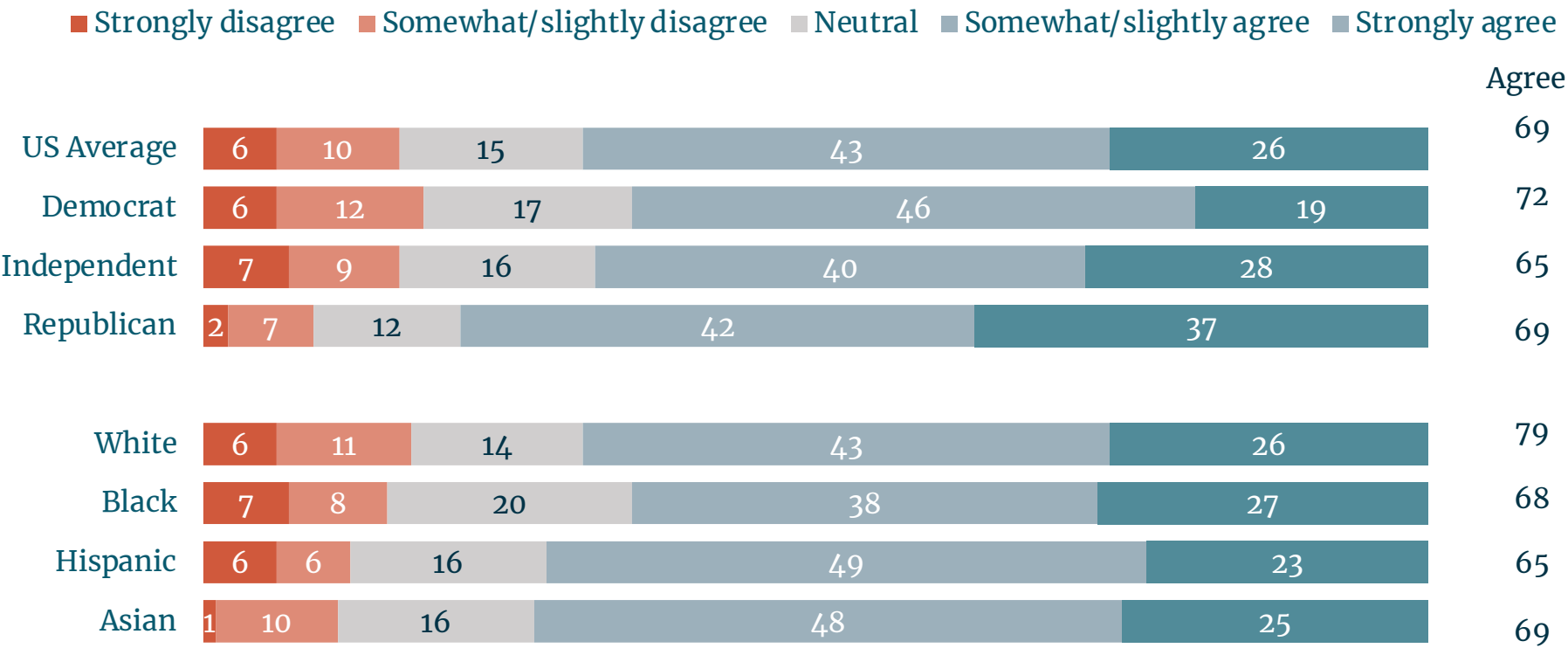


American Narratives: Meritocracy

Most Americans agree with the message if a strong meritocracy.

America's greatest strength is the importance we place on individual intelligence, skill, and merit. Though some government interventions are necessary for everyone to have an equal chance to move up, we are a country where if you get a good education, develop your talents, and are open to innovation, you can do anything.

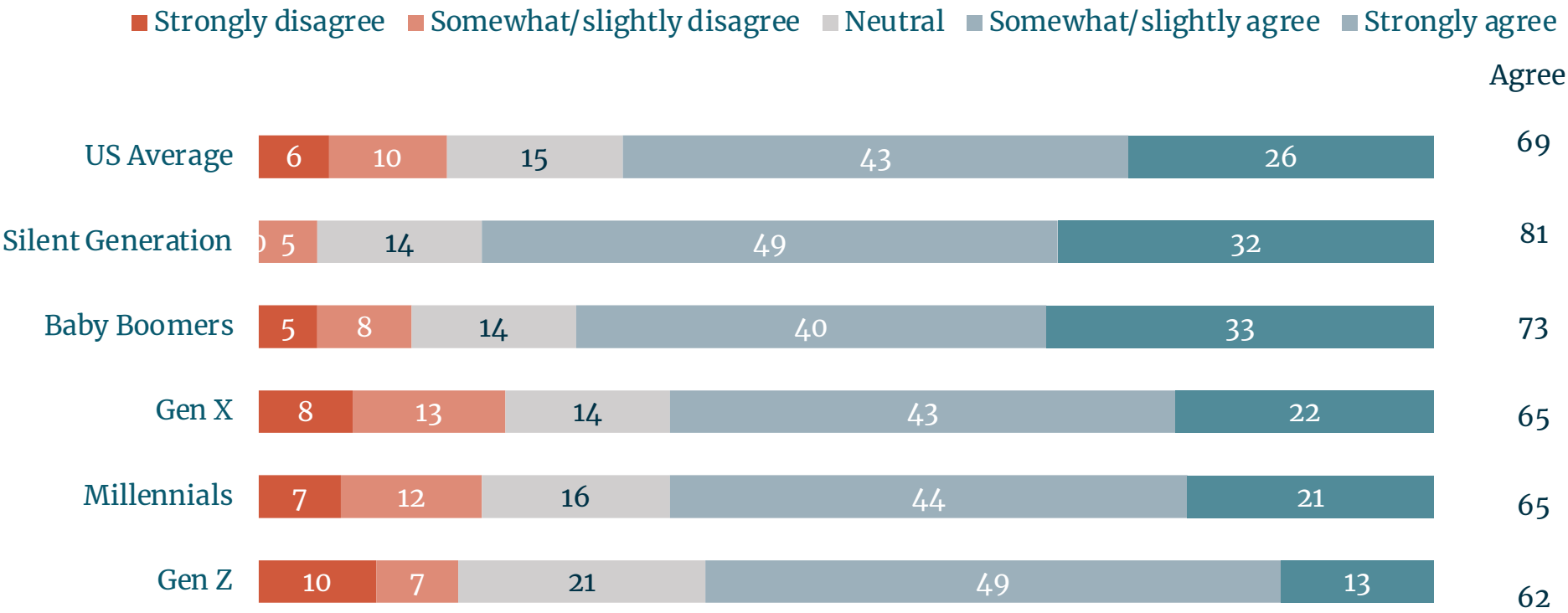
Numbers in %



Younger generations agree to a lesser extent than older generations.

America's greatest strength is the importance we place on individual intelligence, skill, and merit. Though some government interventions are necessary for everyone to have an equal chance to move up, we are a country where if you get a good education, develop your talents, and are open to innovation, you can do anything.

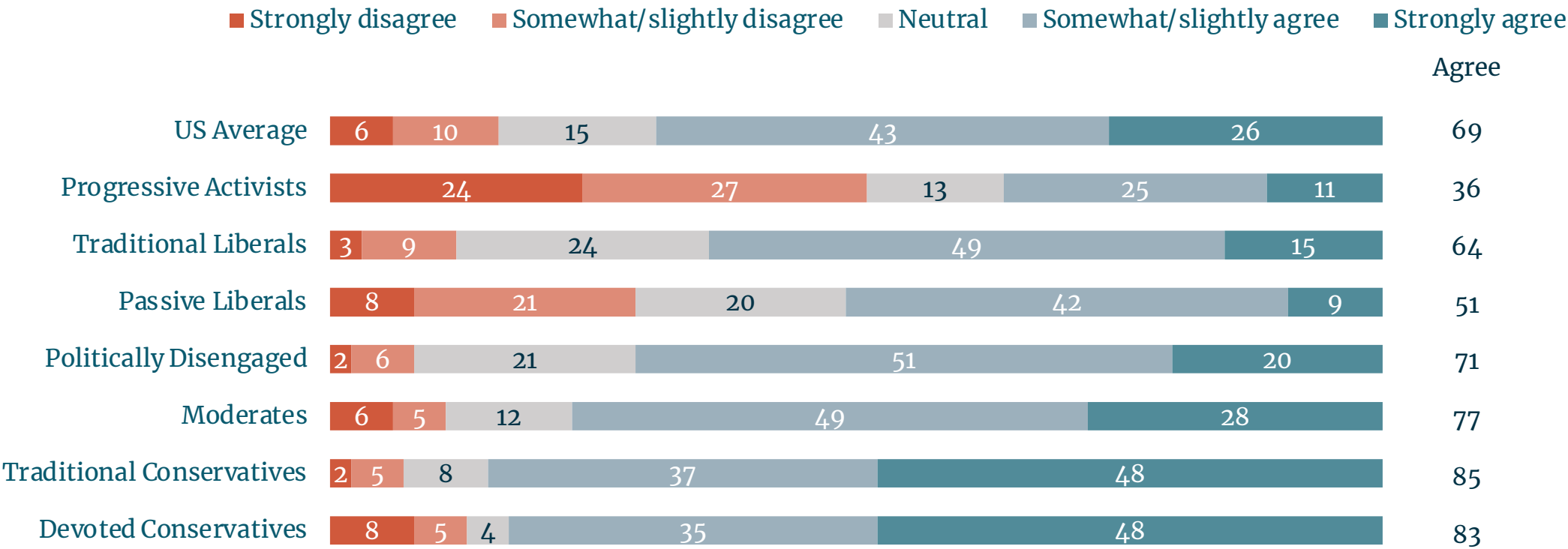
Numbers in %



A majority of Progressive Activists—and some Passive Liberals—disagree with the statement on meritocracy.

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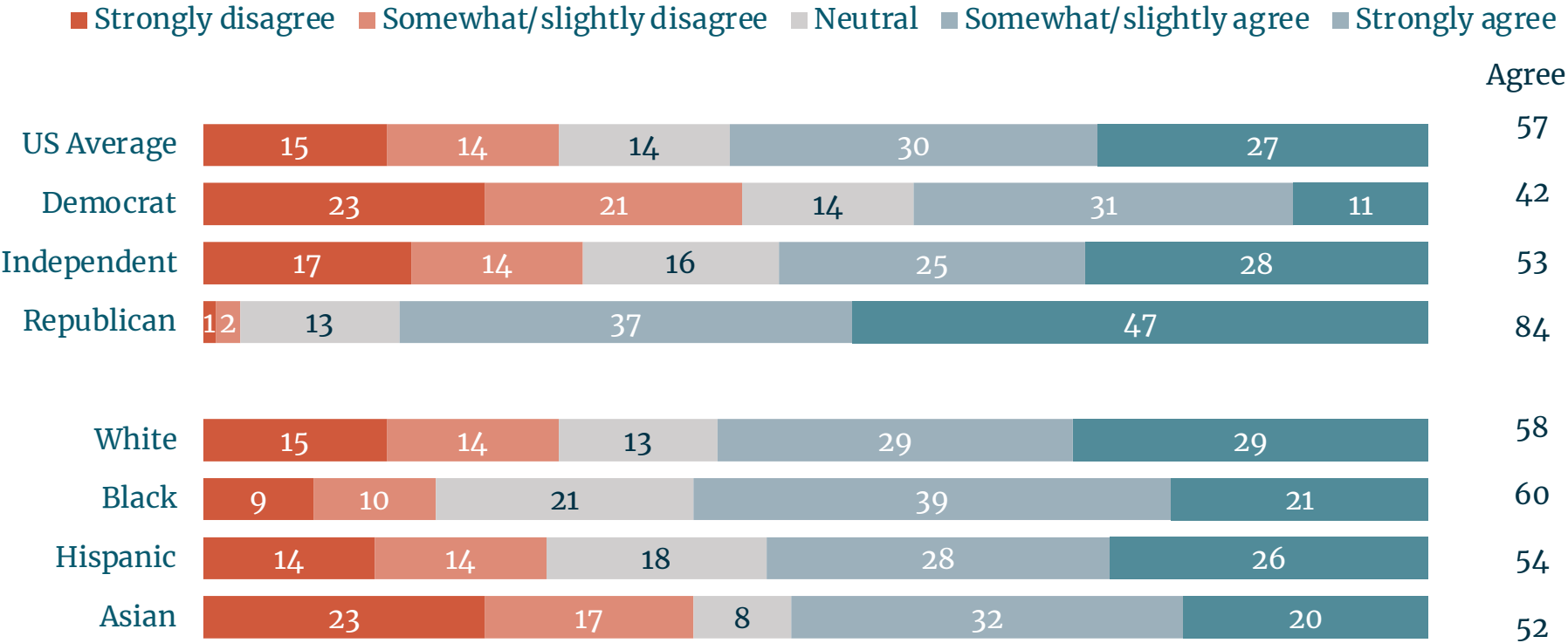


American Narratives: Exceptionalism and Isolationism

A majority of Americans do agree with a message focused on independence and American exceptionalism. However, a majority of Democrats and nearly a third of Independents disagree with the statement.

America is a great country because of our independence from the rest of the world. We were founded on Judeo-Christian values and made great by strong leaders who put the nation first. When we forget what makes America unique or get too involved with the rest of the world, we see America move backward.

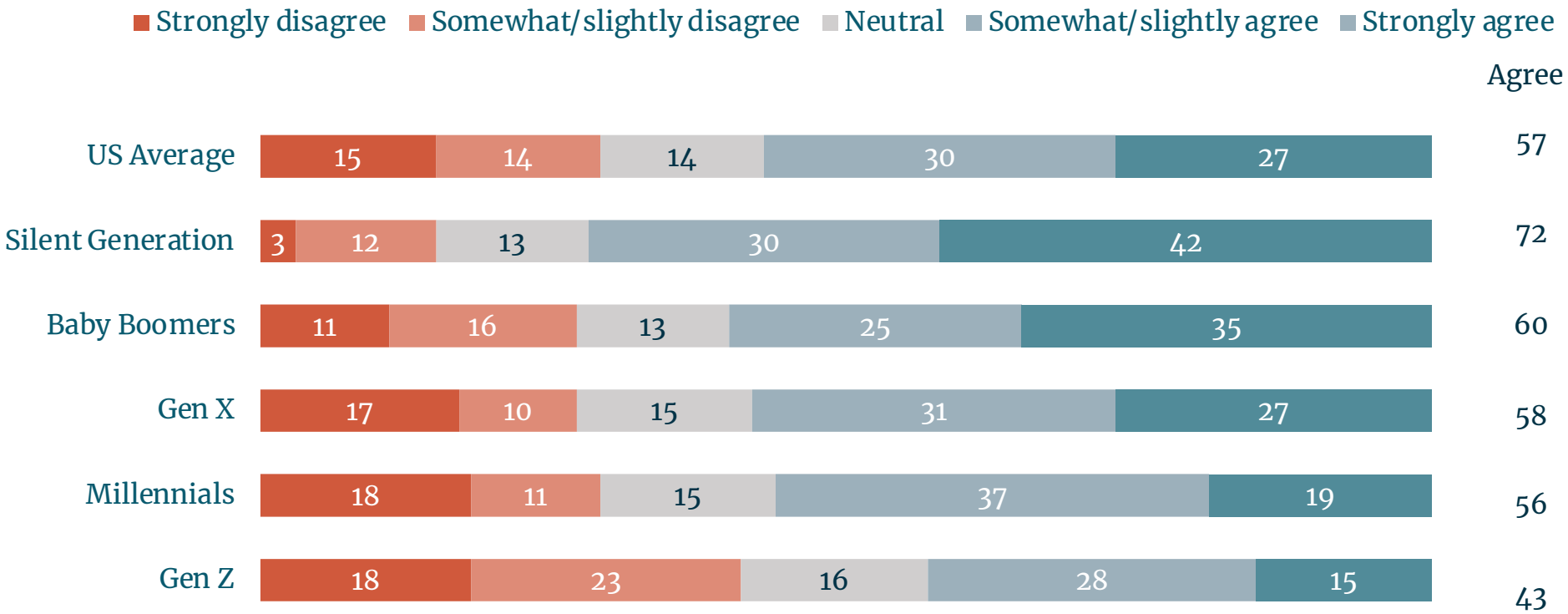
Numbers in %



Gen Z especially does not agree with the statement on American individualism and exceptionalism, while the Silent Generation especially agrees.

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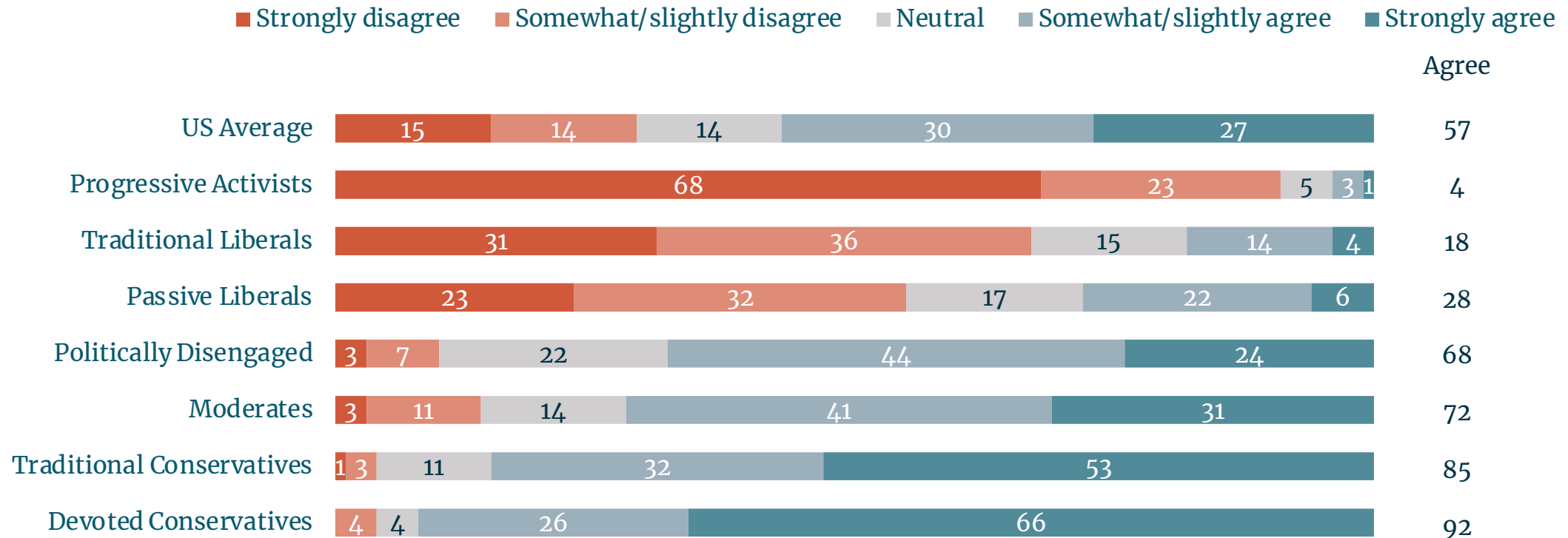
Numbers in %



Hidden Tribes wings feel especially strong either in support (Devoted Conservatives) or disagreement (Progressive Activists) of this message.

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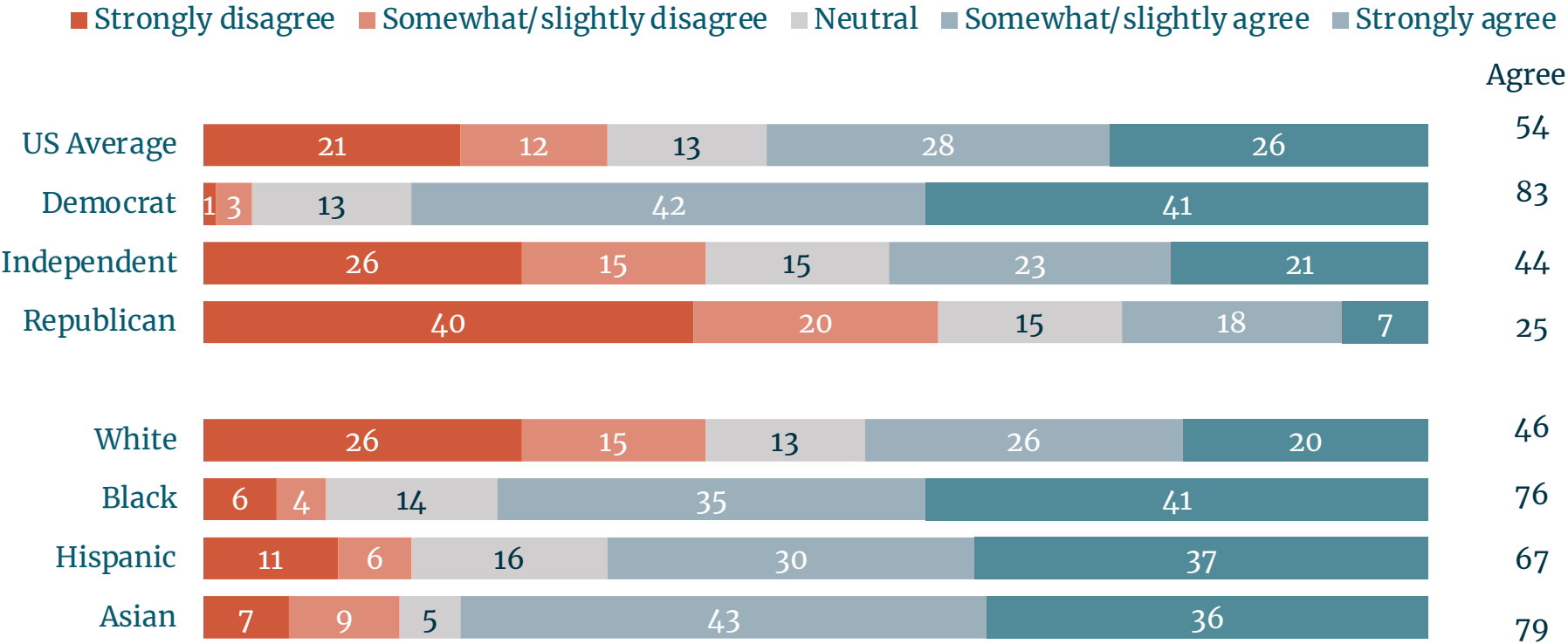


American Narratives: Justice and Oppression

Americans are split in their views on a message of structural racism and mistakes made in the past. A majority of Americans agree, but most Republicans do not. Independents are split on the statement.

America is still defined by its original sins. Although the country has made progress, until we break down the systems of oppression against communities of color, Indigenous people, and other marginalized groups, we will not be a great nation.

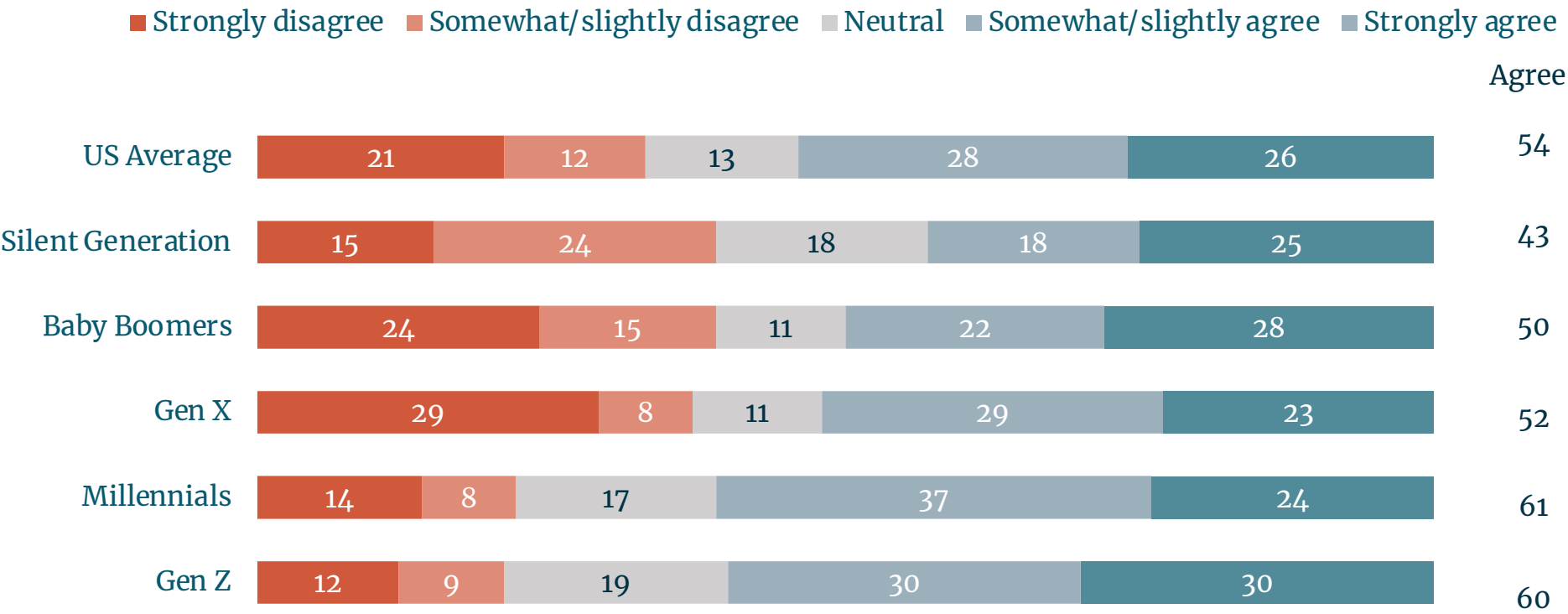
Numbers in %



Younger generations are more likely to agree with this statement, while older generations are mostly split.

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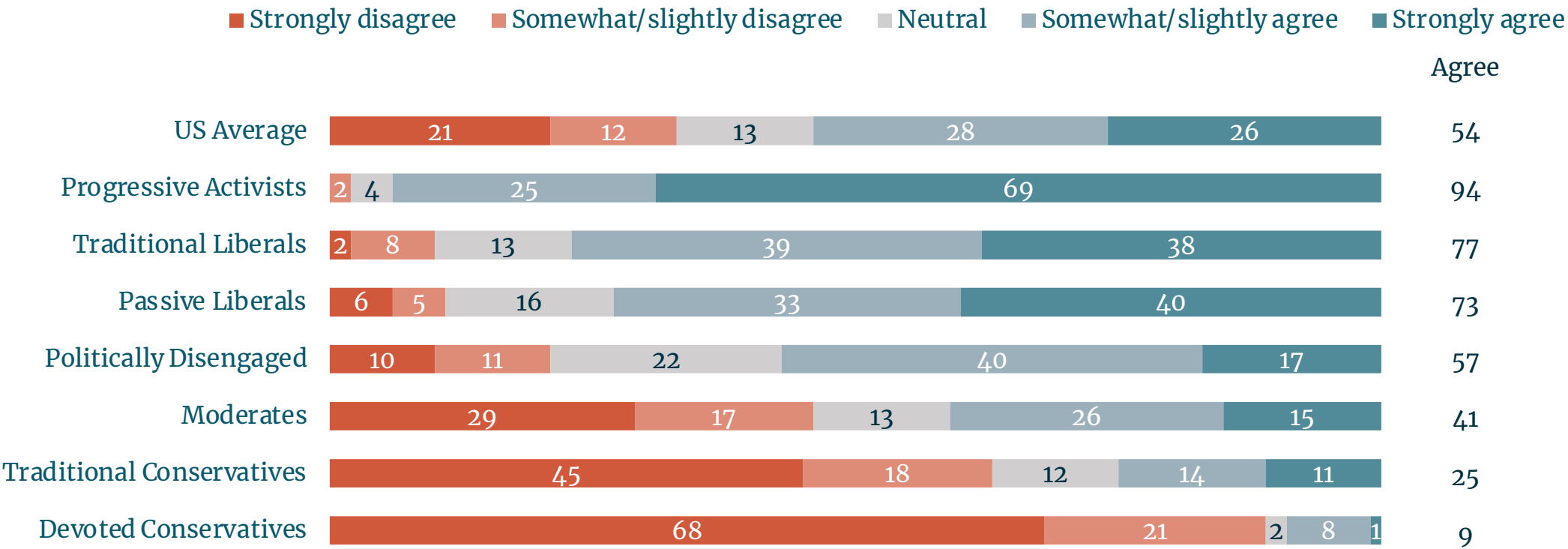
Numbers in %



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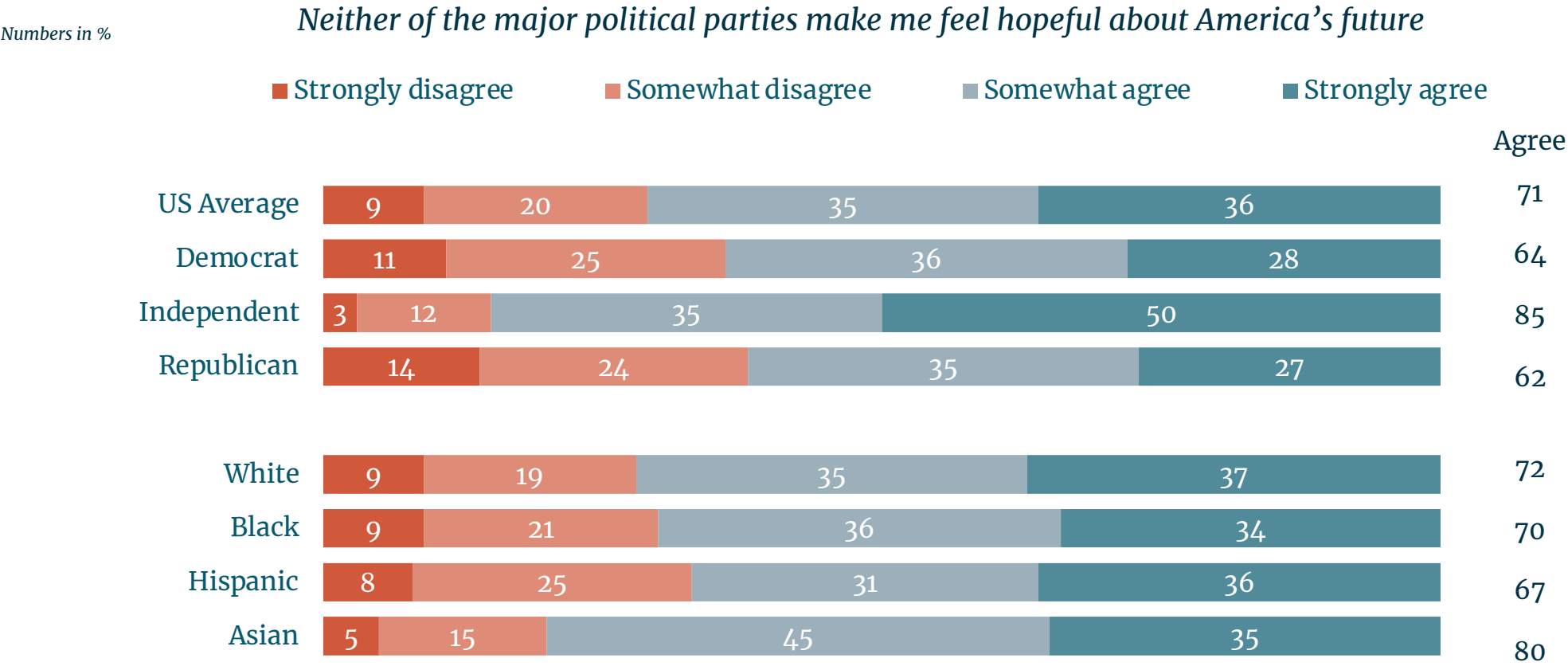
America is still defined by its original sins. Although the country has made progress, until we break down the systems of oppression against communities of color, Indigenous people, and other marginalized groups, we will not be a great nation.

Numbers in %



Faith in Political Parties

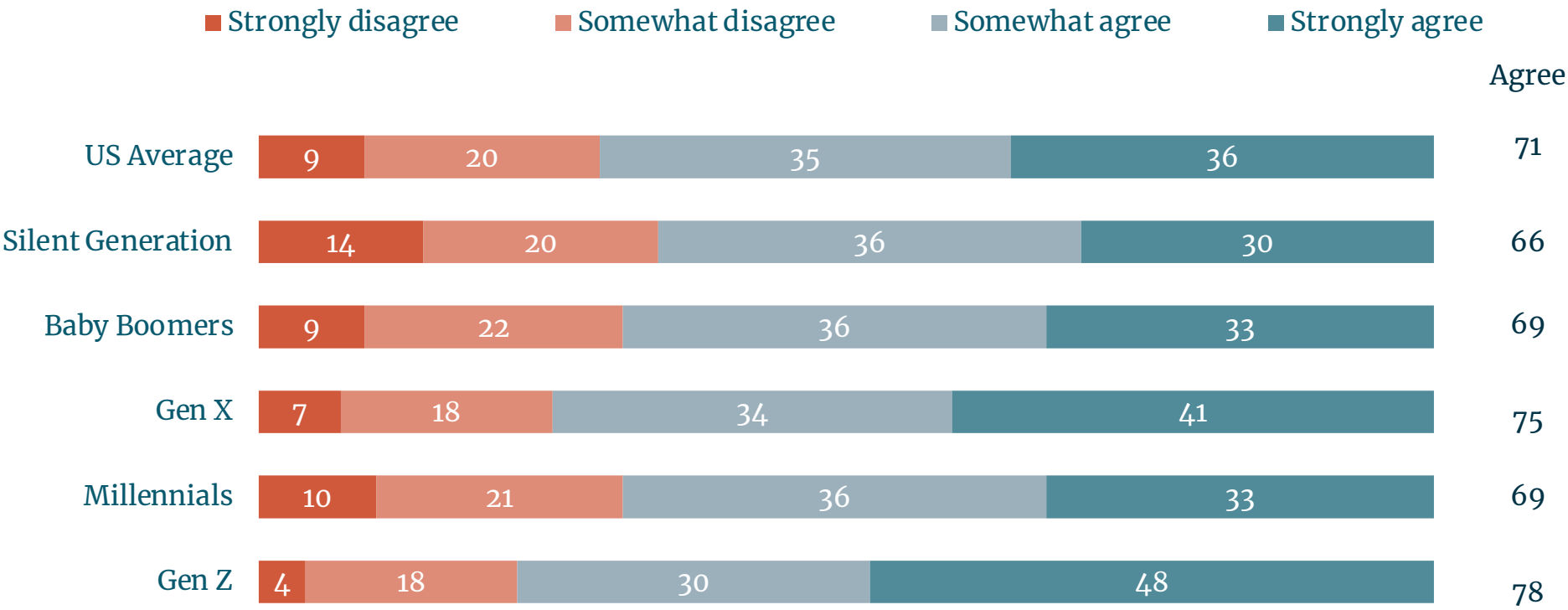
The majority of Americans feel that neither the Democratic party nor the Republican party provides hope for the future. Independents agree the most with this statement.



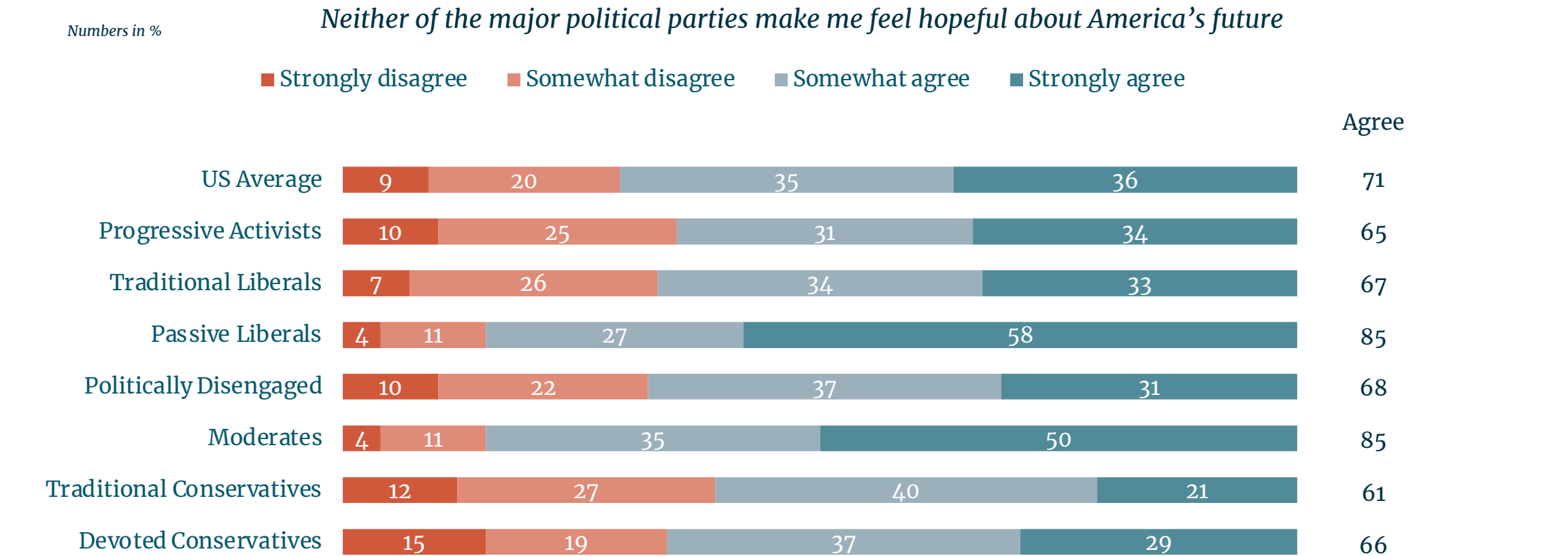
Younger generations are slightly more pessimistic about the major political parties than older generations.

Numbers in %

Neither of the major political parties make me feel hopeful about America's future



Moderates and Passive Liberals agree the most with the statement that neither political party gives them hope for the future.



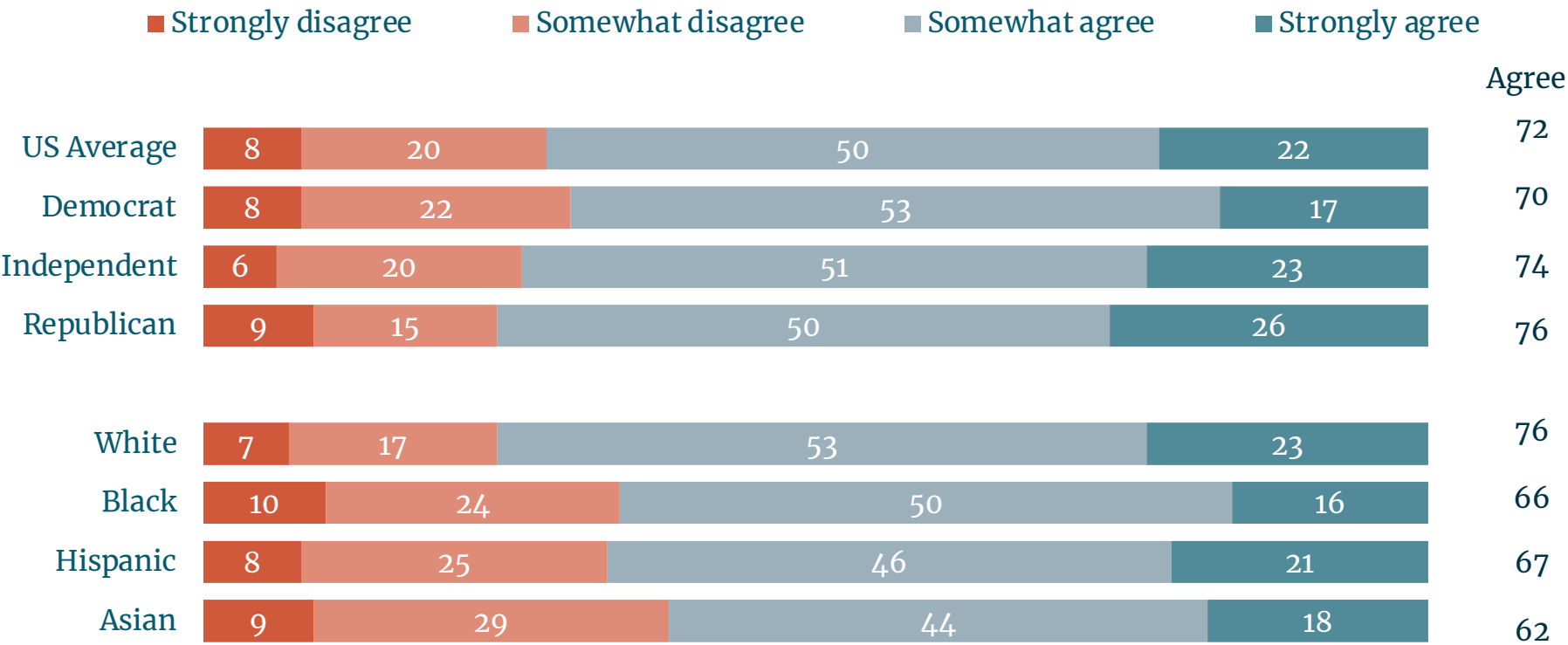
Areas of Common Ground

Faith that Americans have more in common remains high.

The majority of Americans think that we have more in common than what divides us.

Numbers in %

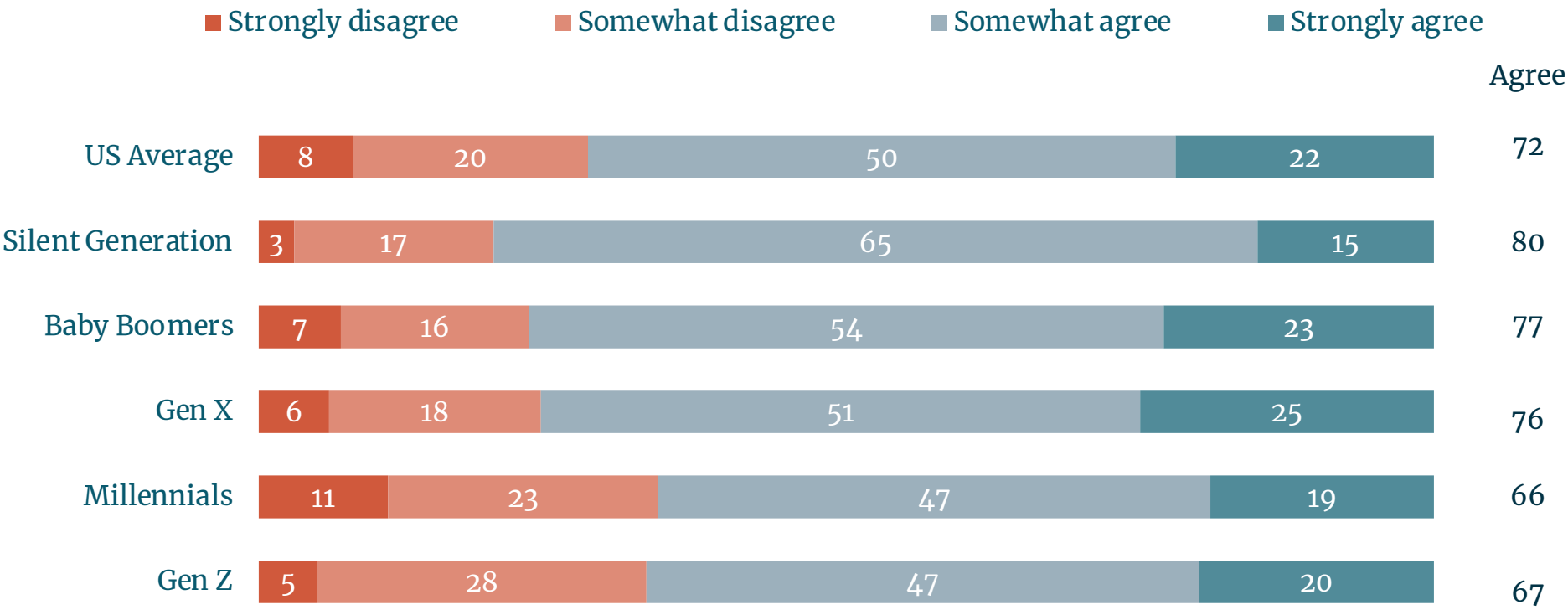
Americans have more in common than what divides us



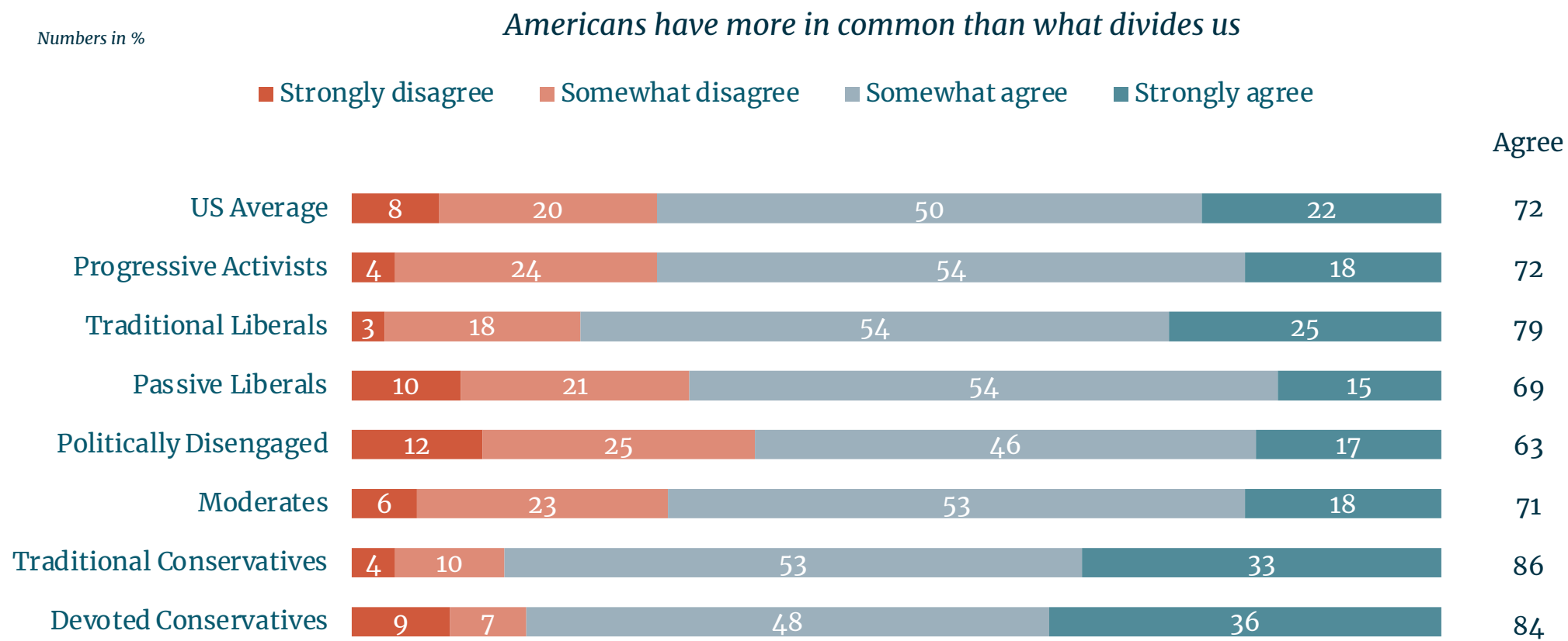
Gen Z agrees slightly less than older generations that Americans have more in common.

Numbers in %

Americans have more in common than what divides us

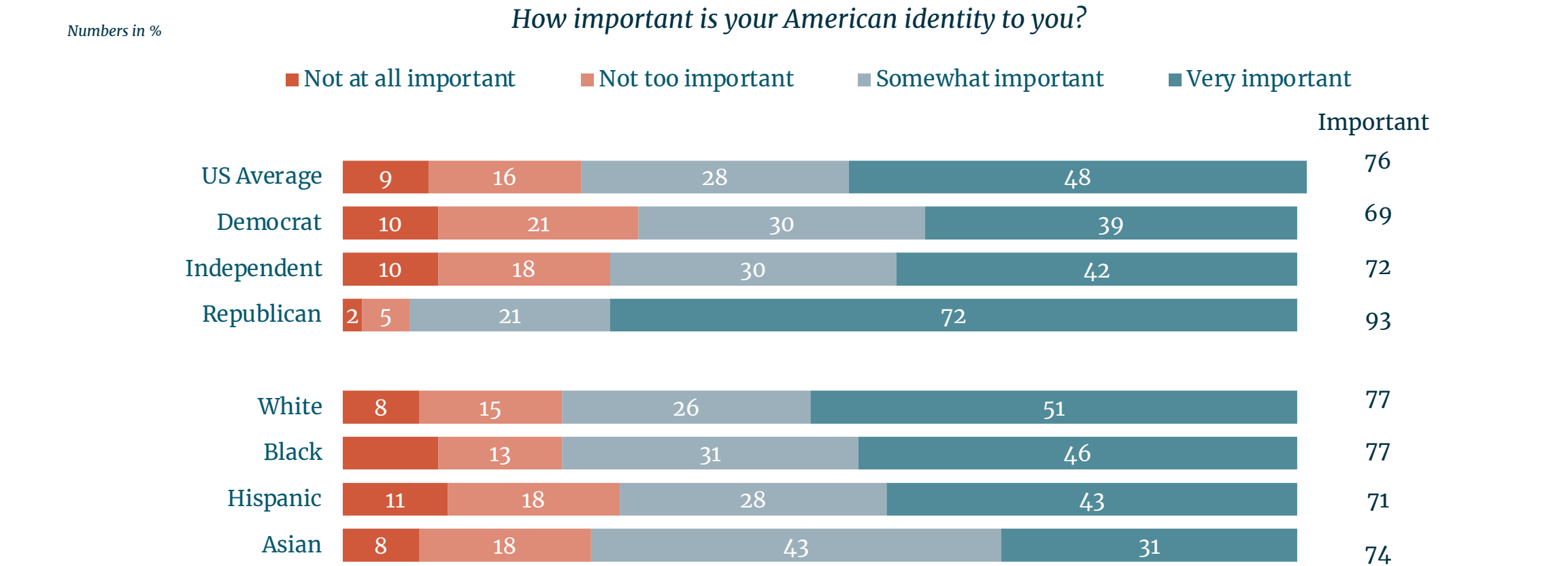


The Exhausted Majority agrees slightly less than the Wings that Americans have more in common.



76% say that American identity is important to them.

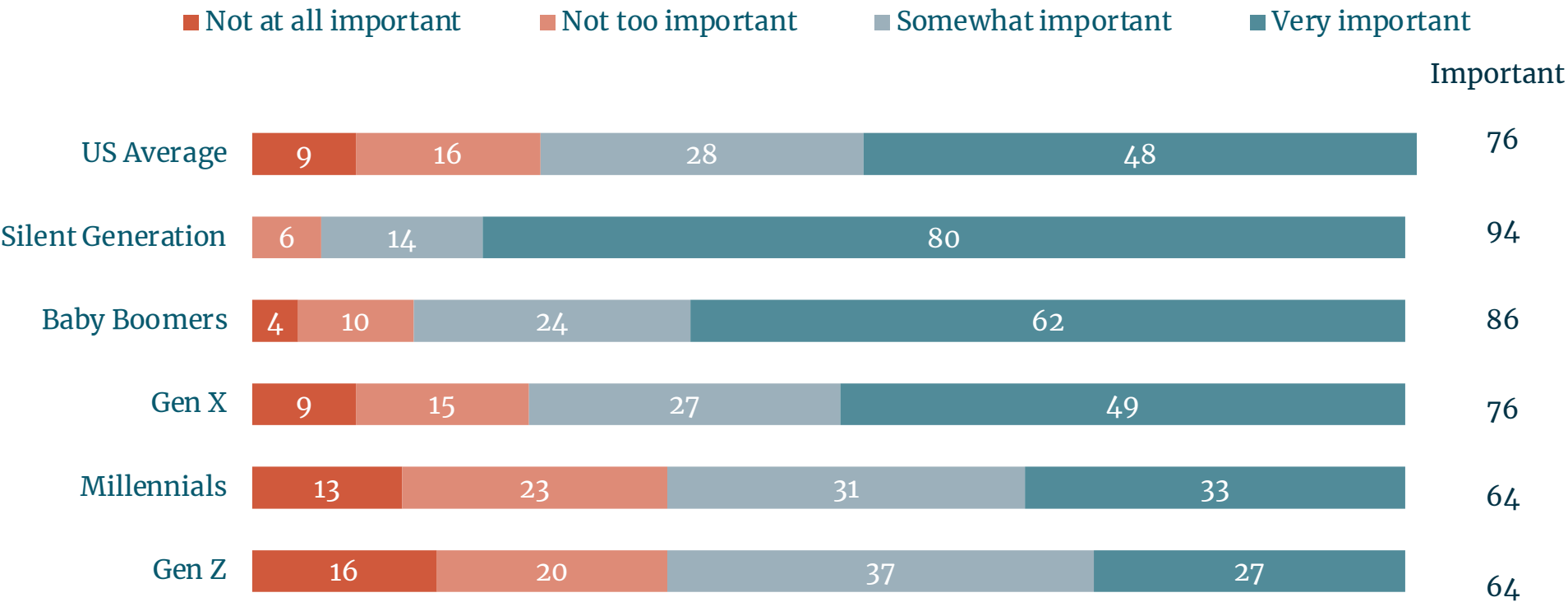
While American identity is important across parties, it is far more important to Republicans than Democrats or Independents.



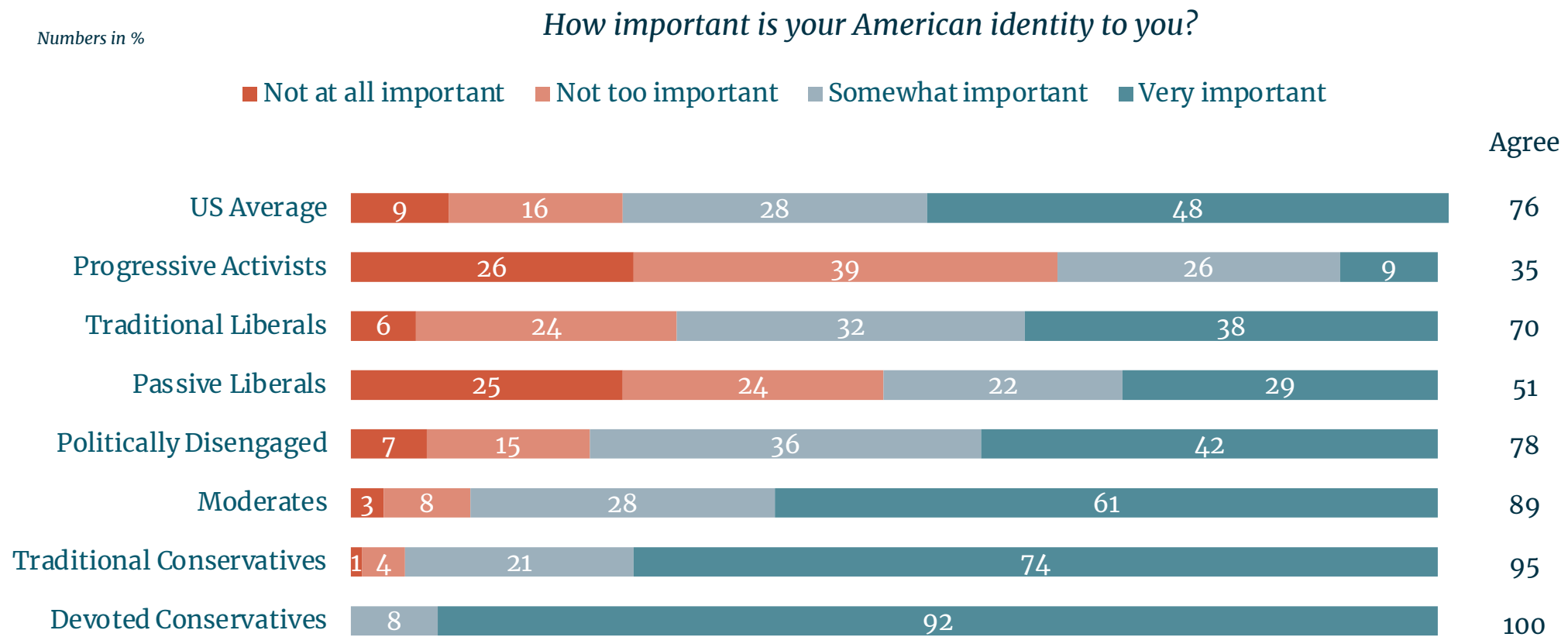
American identity is of relatively less importance to younger generations.

How important is your American identity to you?

Numbers in %

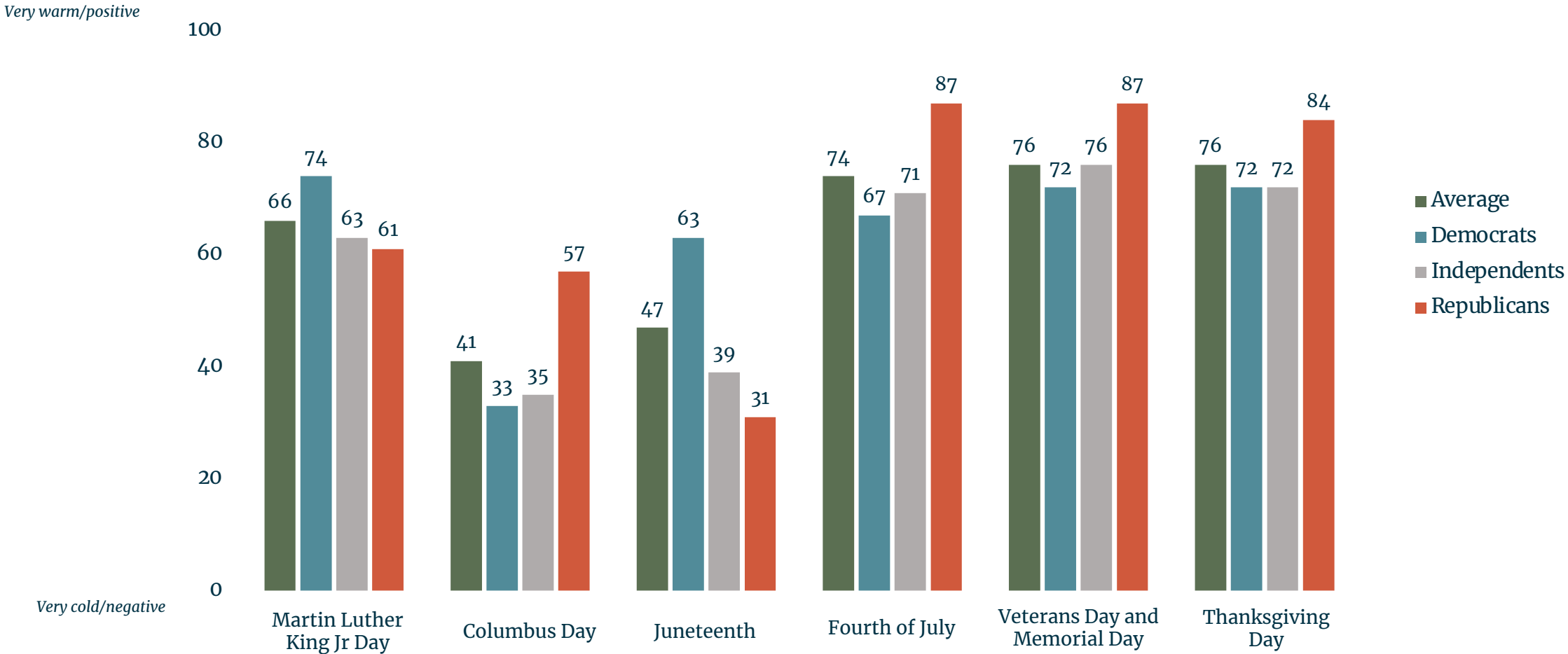


While 76% of Americans think that their American identity is important to them, 92% of Devoted Conservatives think that it is "very important".



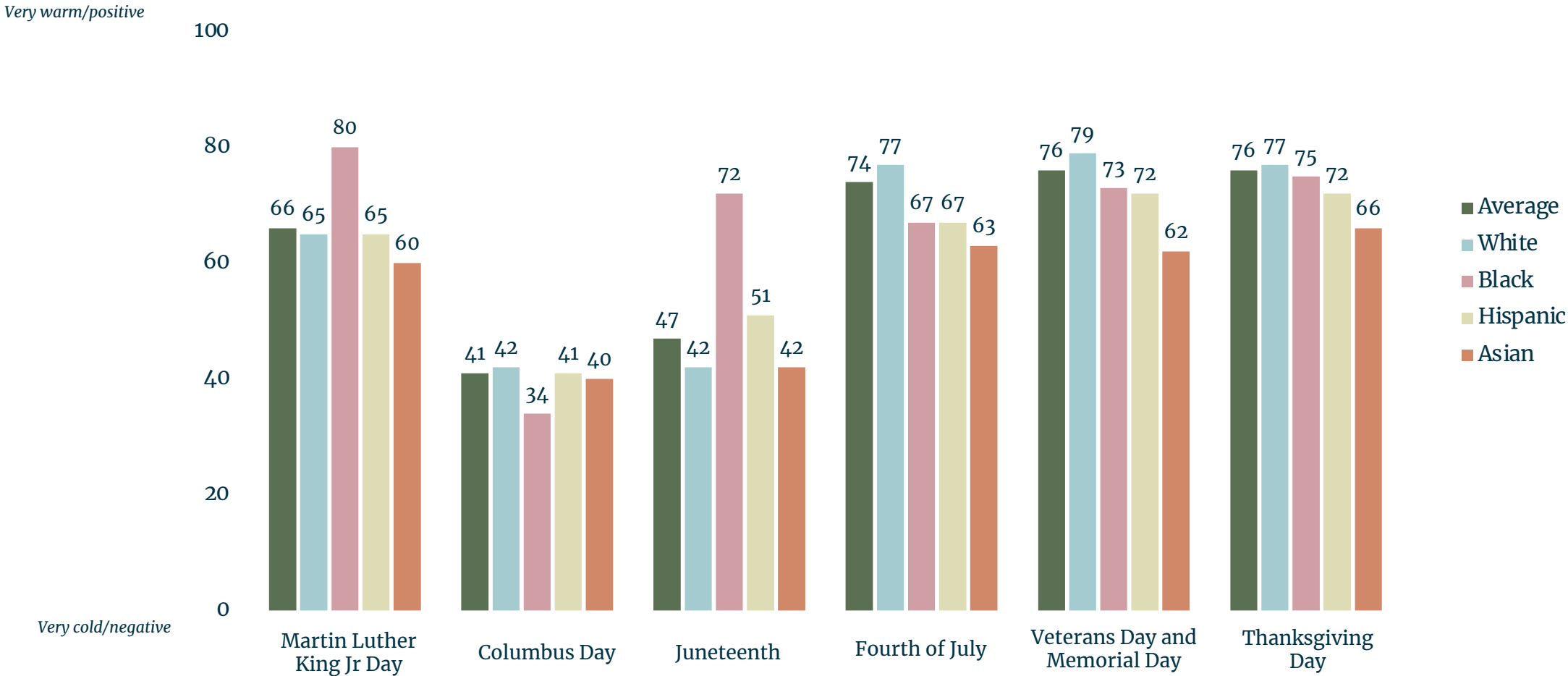
American Holidays

Americans in general feel warm towards the 4th of July, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving. Republicans feel warmer than Democrats and Independents towards the holidays.



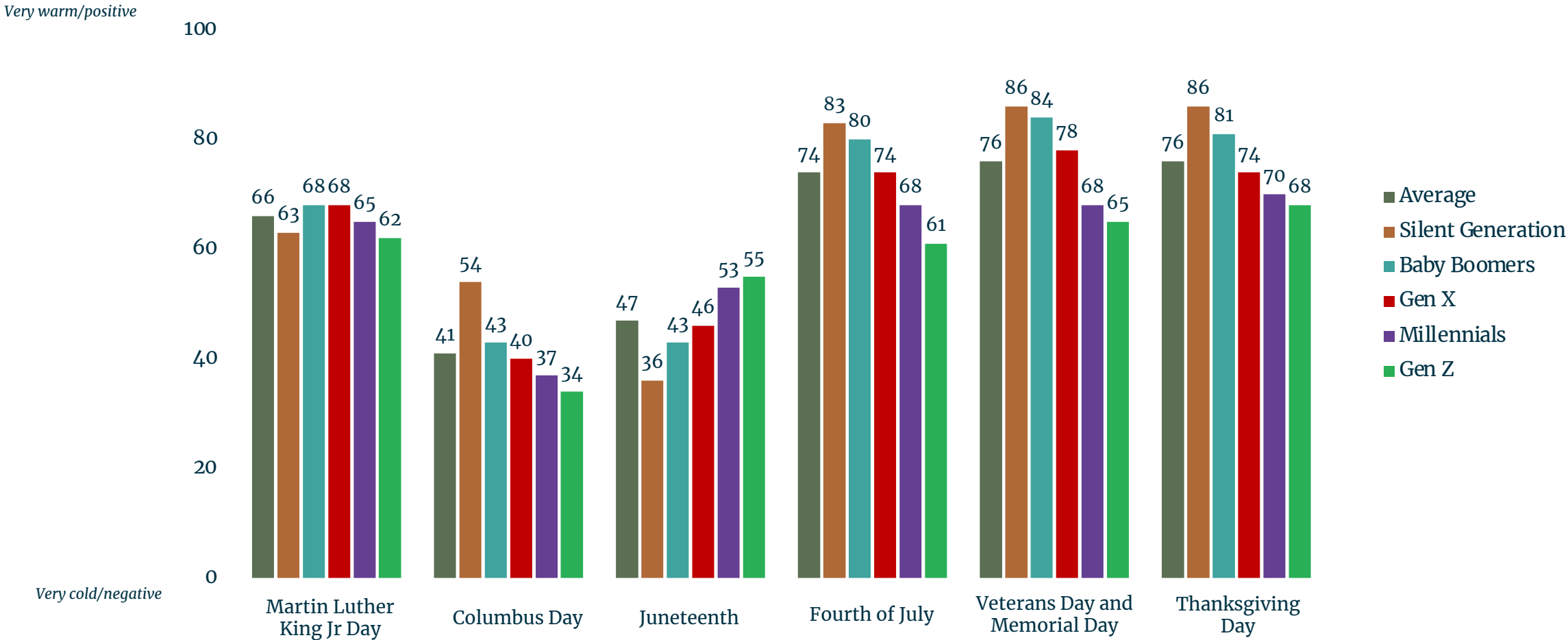
Survey question: On a scale from 0 to 100, how cold or warm do you feel towards the following? [Showing averages]

Americans across racial groups feel warm towards the 4th of July.



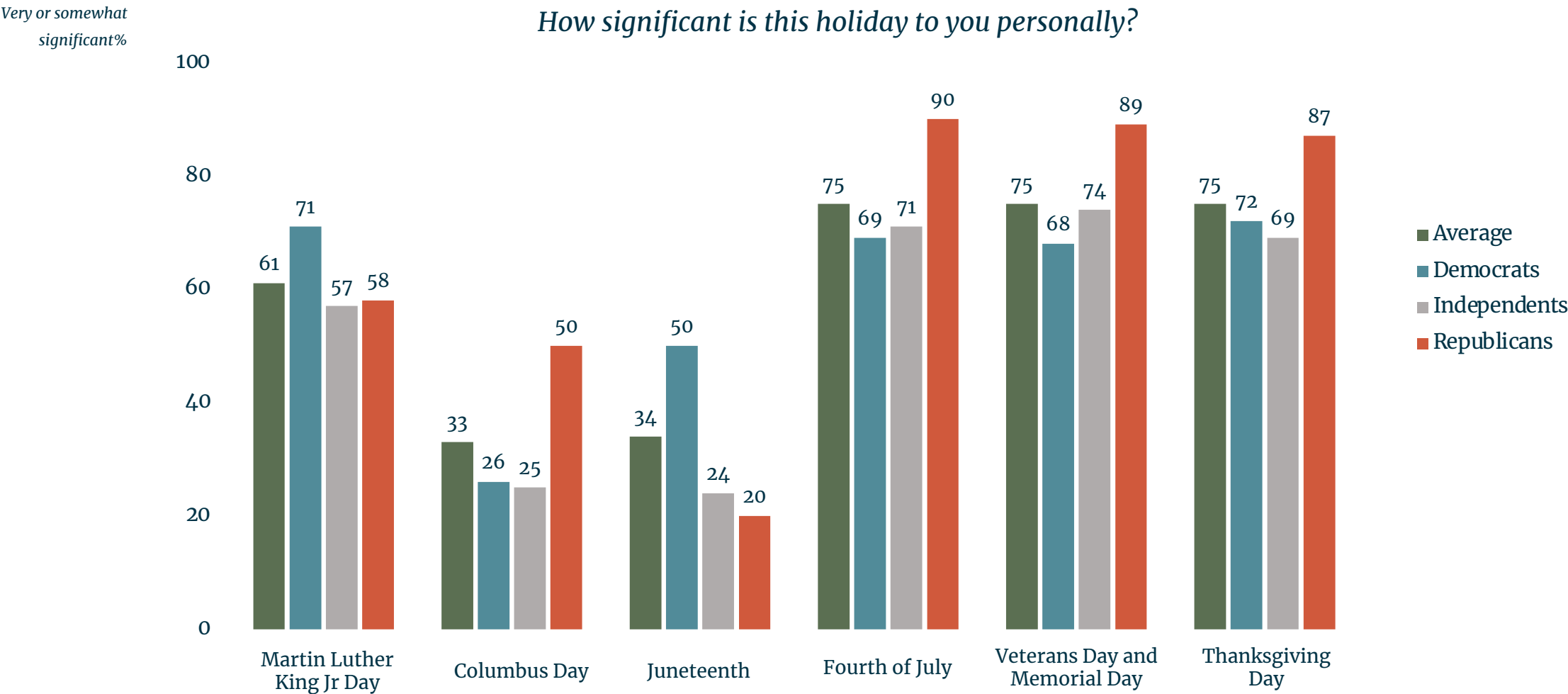
Survey question: On a scale from 0 to 100, how cold or warm do you feel towards the following? [Showing averages]

Americans from older generations feel more warmly towards 4th of July, compared to Gen Z and Millennials Americans.

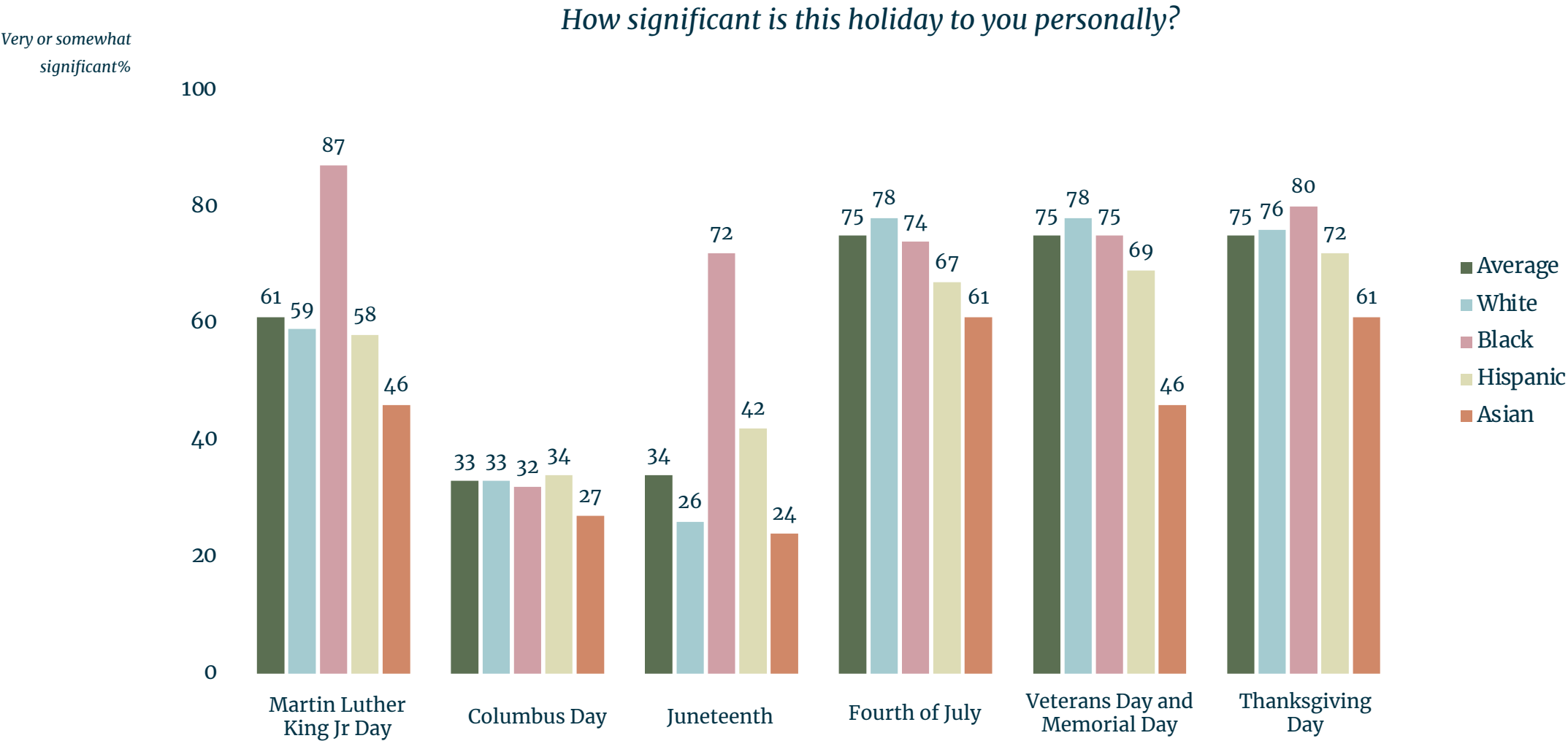


Survey question: On a scale from 0 to 100, how cold or warm do you feel towards the following? [Showing averages]

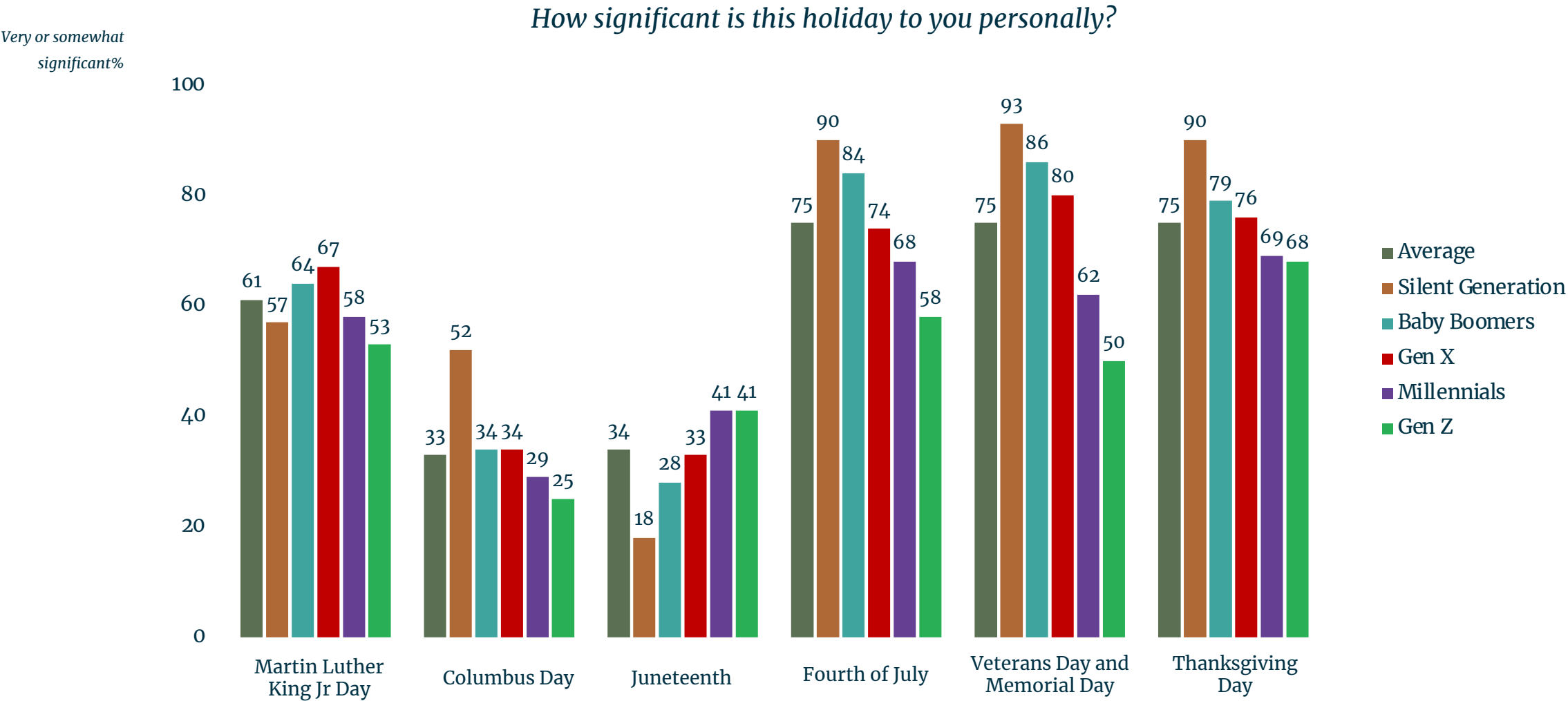
Most Americans regardless of party find the 4th of July significant.



Americans across racial groups find the 4th of July personally significant, albeit with some differences.



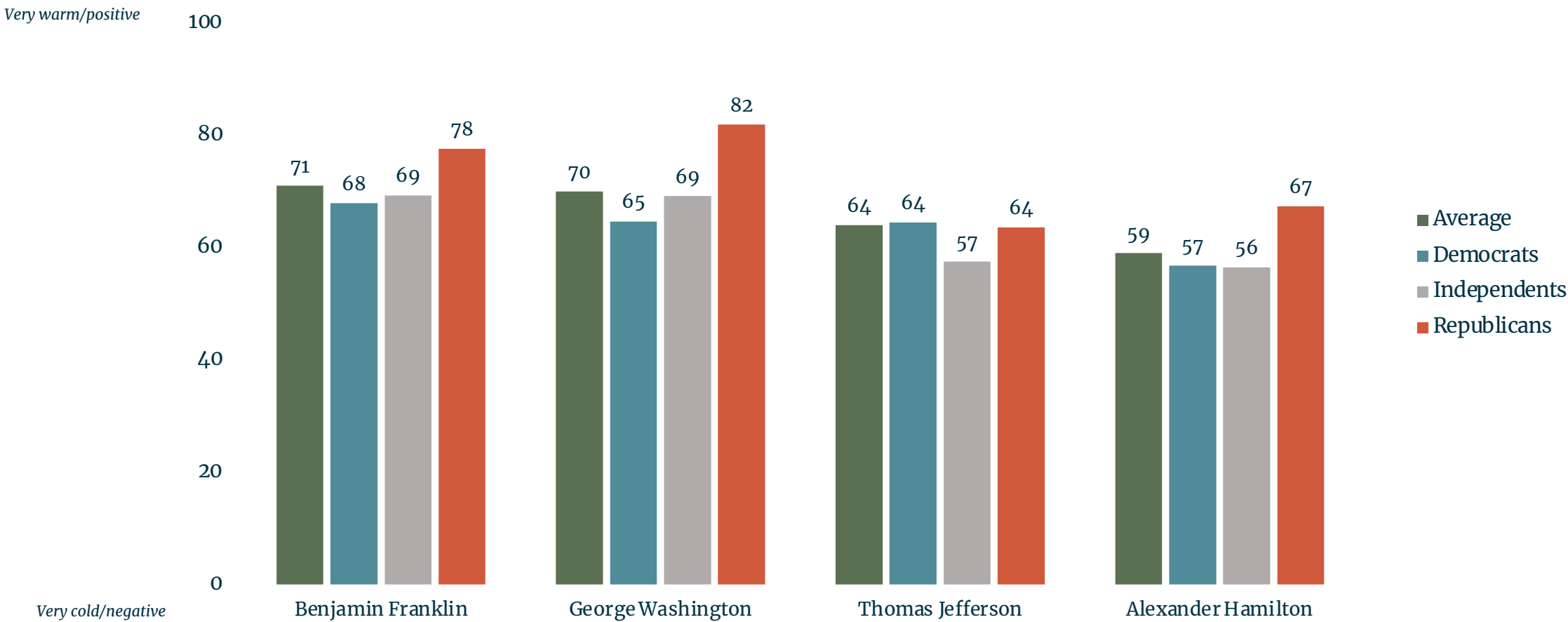
Americans from older generations find most American holidays, including the 4th of July, more personally significant than younger generations do.



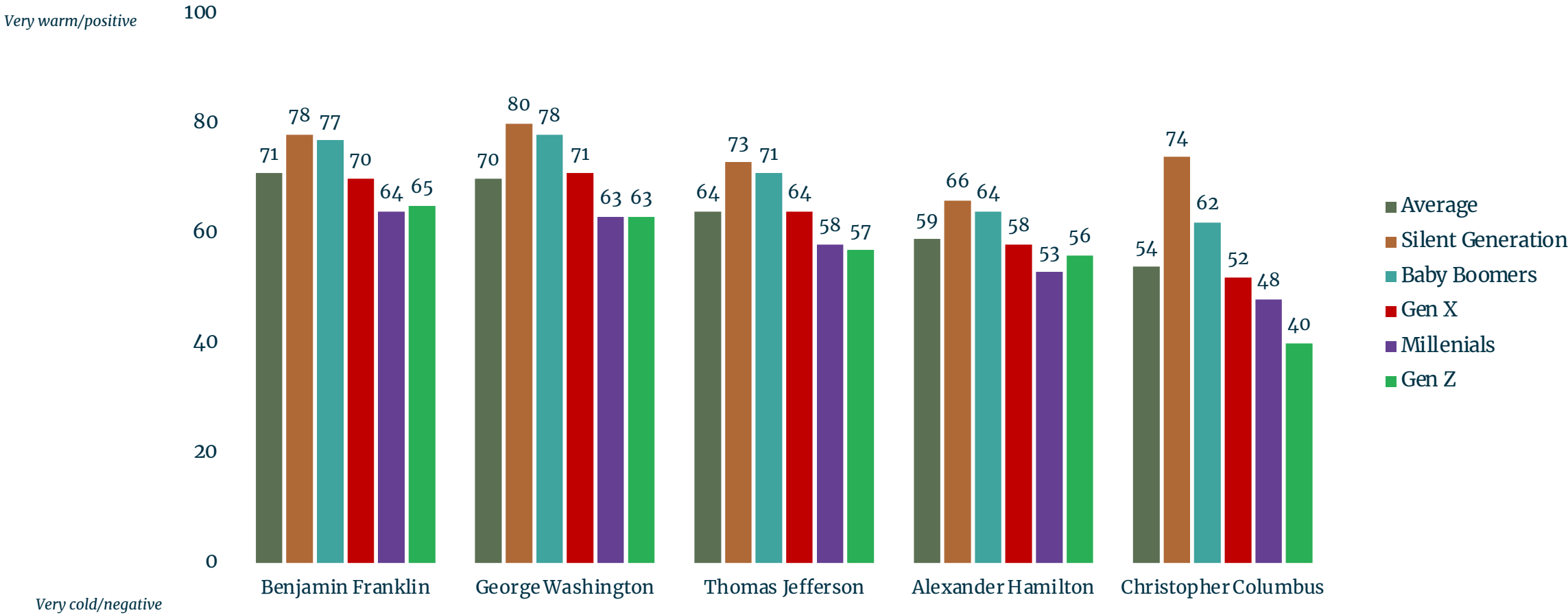
Views on Historical American Figures and Events from Early Republic

Americans in general have warm feelings towards the Founding Fathers. Republicans are more likely to have warmer feelings than Democrats and Independents.

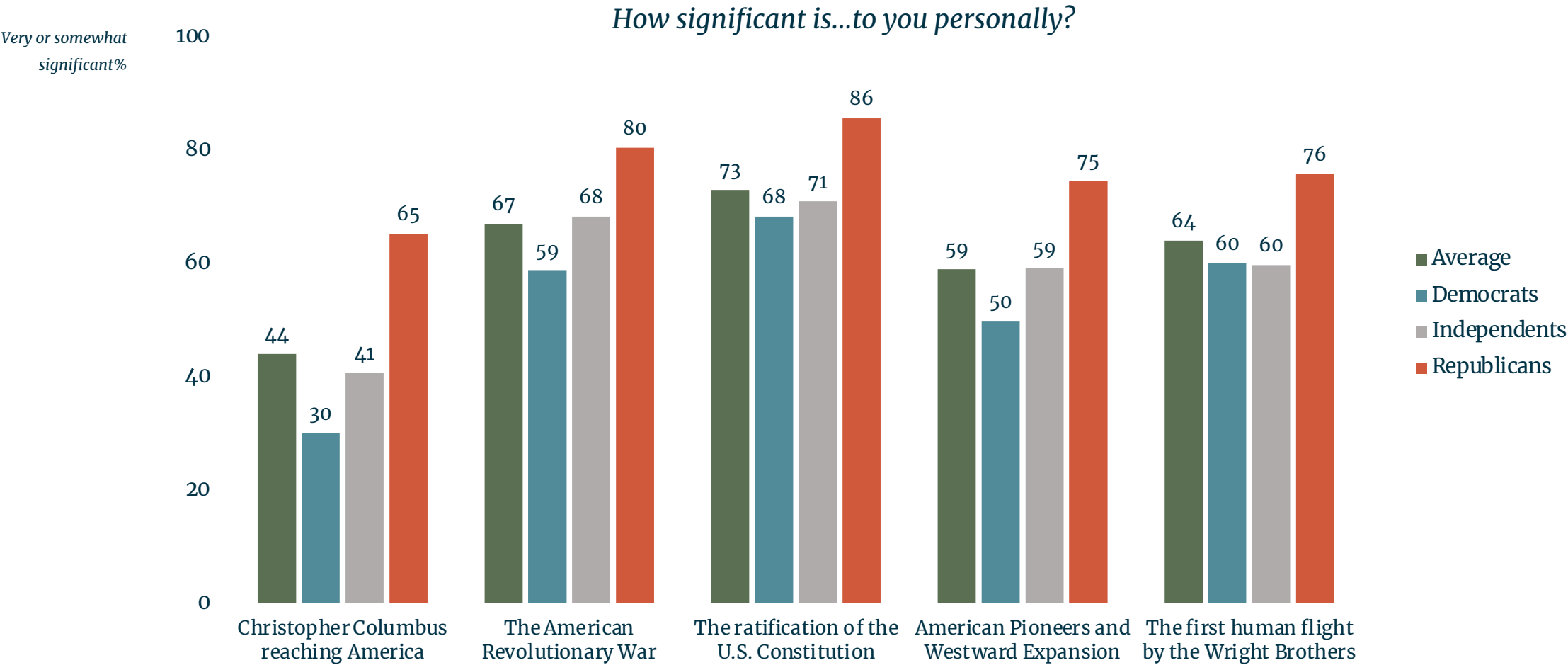
On a scale from 0 to 100, how cold or warm do you feel towards the following?



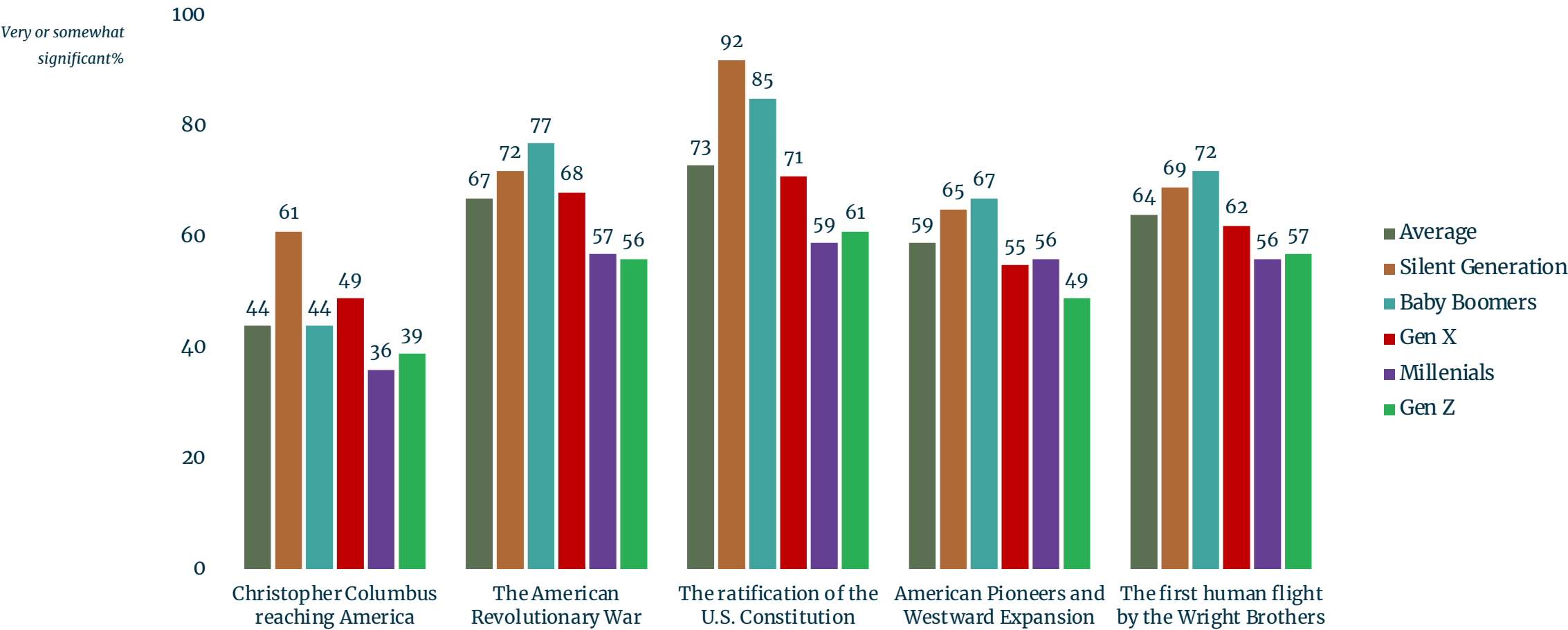
Older generations look more favorable towards Founding Fathers and towards Christopher Columbus.



Most Americans identify the Revolutionary War and ratification of the Constitution as significant to them personally; Republicans much more likely than Democrats to identify Christopher Columbus reaching America and Westward expansion as significant.



Older generations find key moments of America’s founding and history more significant compared to younger generations.

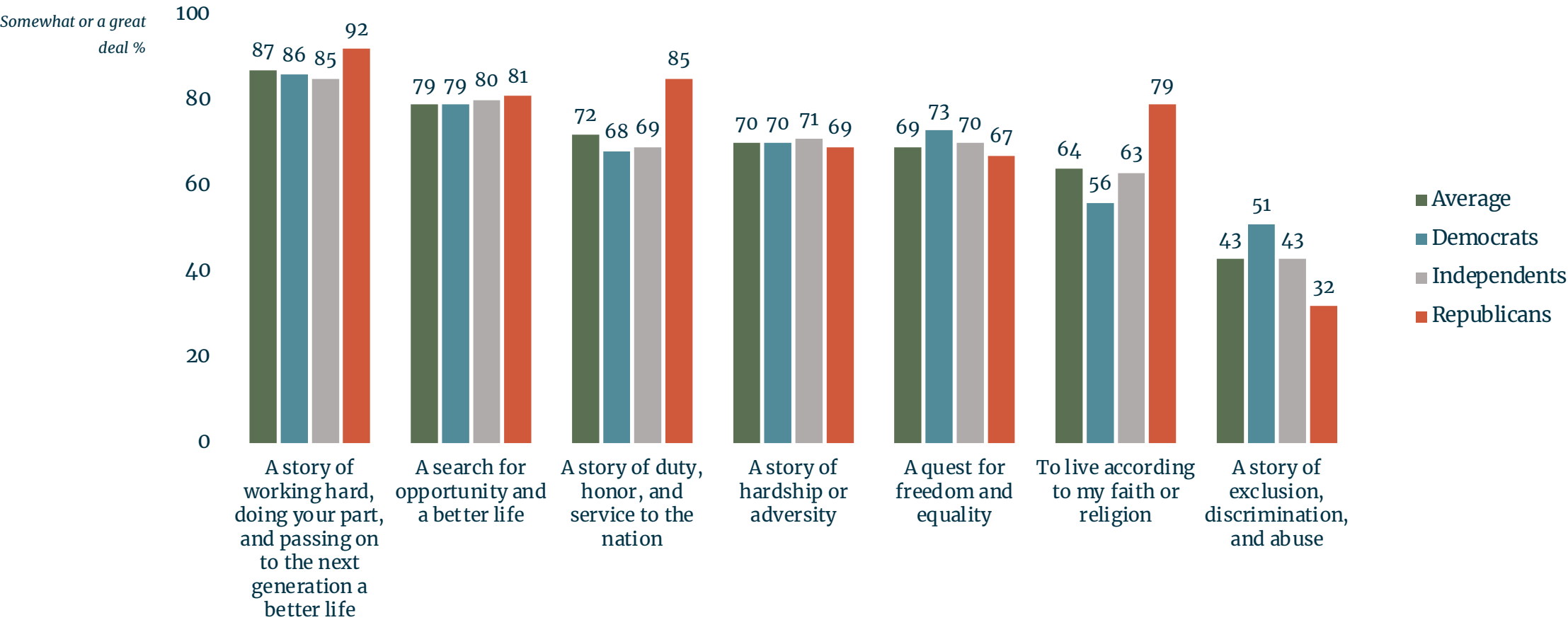


Harnessing Stories of E Pluribus Unum: Narratives of Family Experiences in America

When asked about their family experiences in America, Americans identify narratives that are broadly shared across the population as well as narratives that have distinct resonance for particular groups.

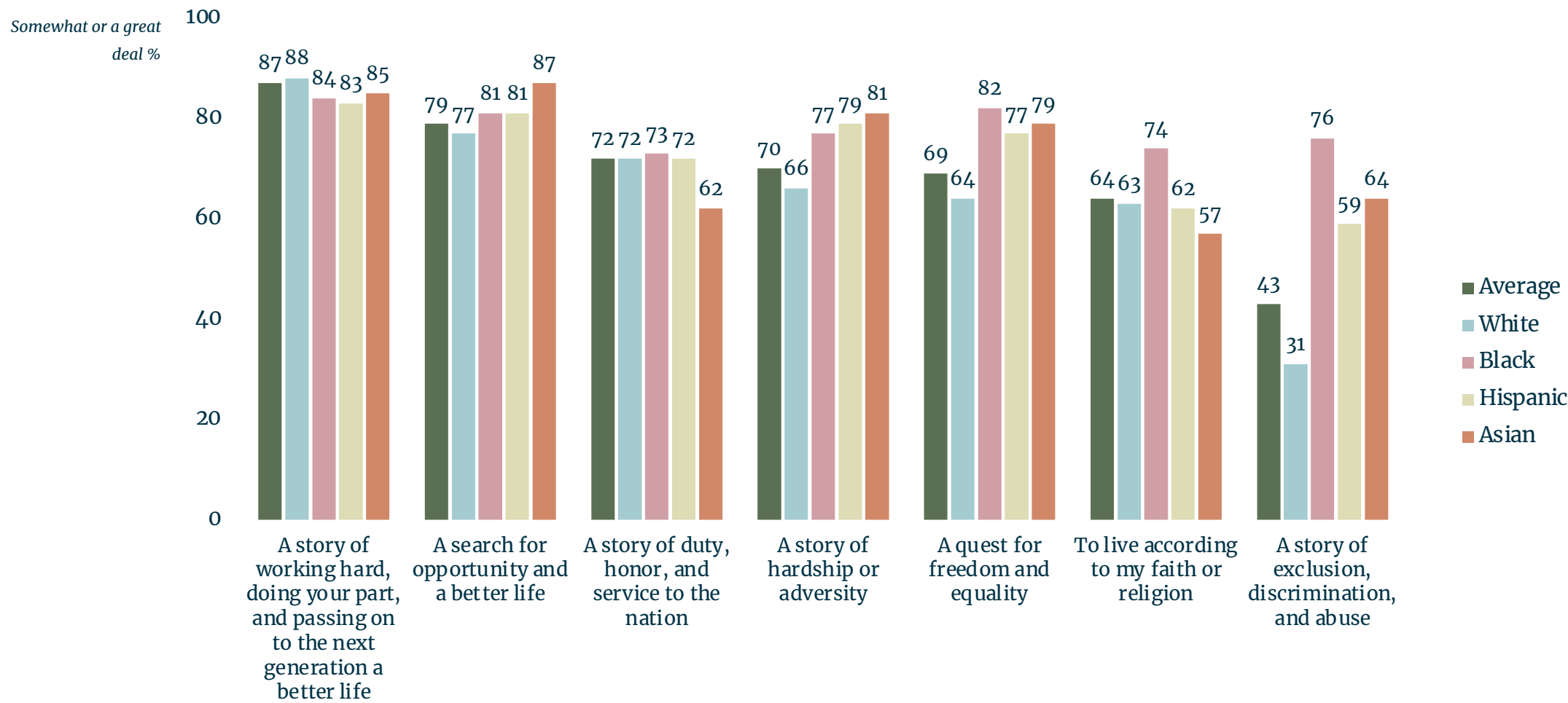
The Unum or "one" – 9 in 10 Americans feeling like a story of hard work and passing on a better life resonates with their family's experience in America.

To what extent do each of these resonate with your family's experience in America?

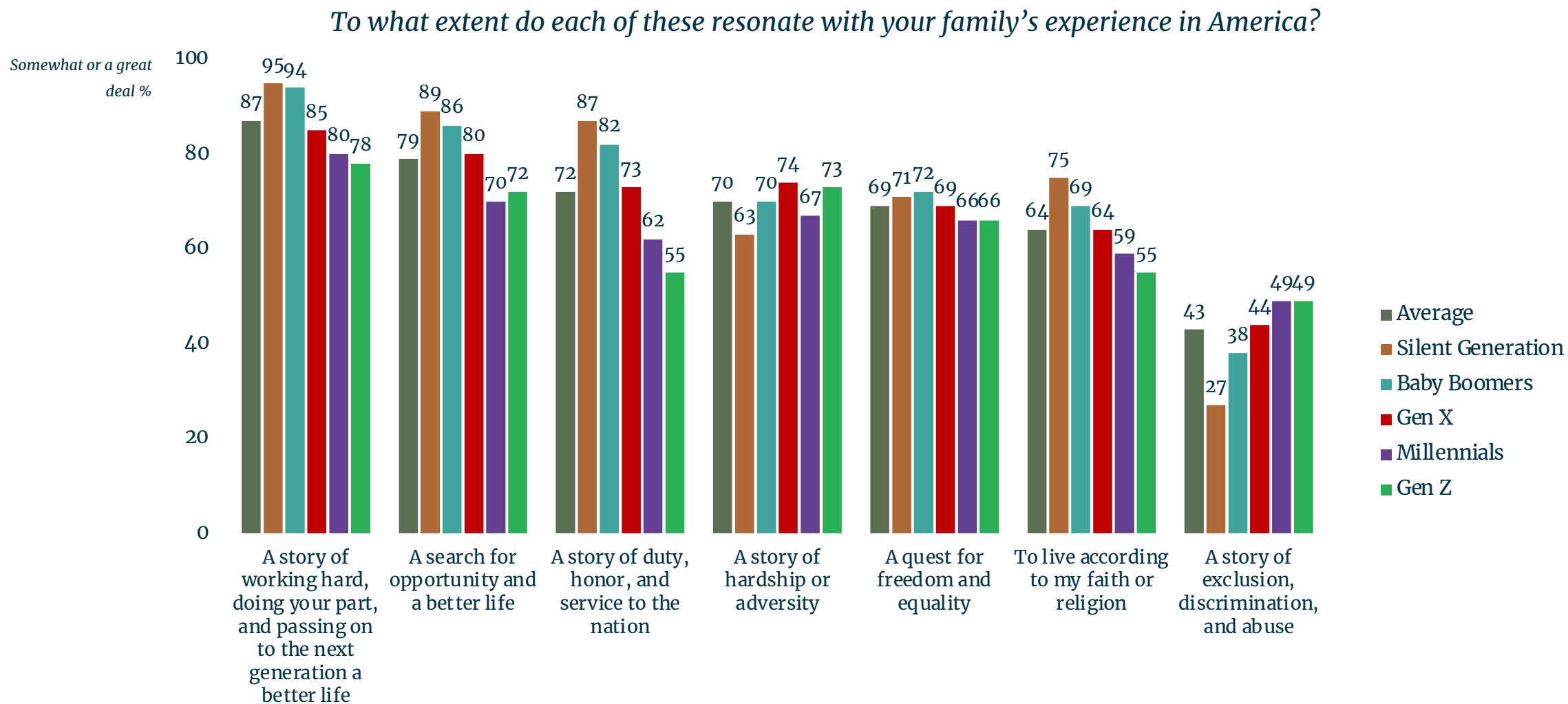


The "Pluribus" or "many" – At the same time, there are narratives that resonate most strongly among particular segments of Americans. The story of a "quest for freedom and equality," for examples, resonates most strongly with Black Americans.

To what extent do each of these resonate with your family's experience in America?

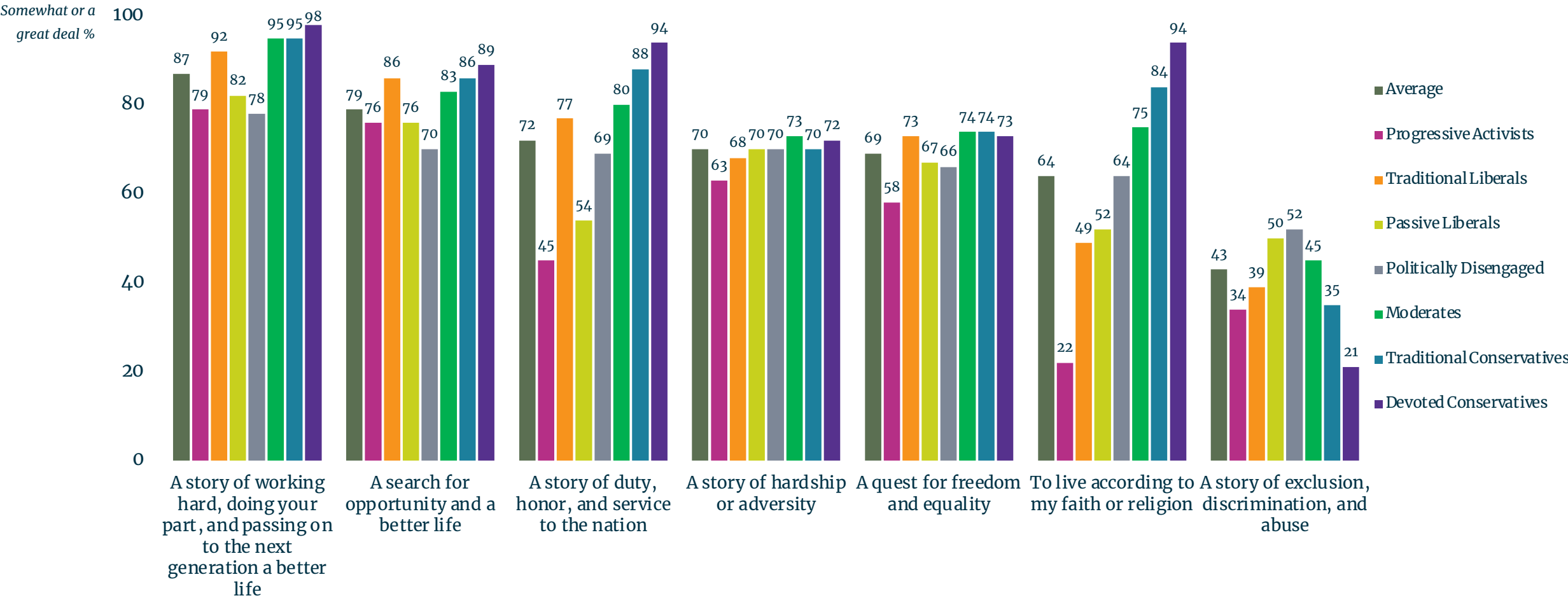


The story of "duty, honor, and service to the nation" shows widest variance across generations.



The stories of duty and of living according to faith or religion show wide variation across the Hidden Tribes.

To what extent do each of these resonate with your family's experience in America?



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A moment to pause.** Americans are concerned about the future of the country, more pessimistic than not about the future of the country, and do not see the country living up to its fundamental ideals. The Fourth of July presents a moment for Americans to pause, heal, celebrate, and turn to family and friends to check in.
- **Lift up personal stories.** Our research explores key narratives that Americans identify both in their own family history and in the shared American history. Although the Fourth of July typically evokes stories of national history, we find that personal stories of family history are a more powerful way to break through 'us versus them' narratives. We can celebrate our common national identity by asking about and sharing our family stories, where our research shows there are many important points of commonality. At a time of intense polarization, personal stories are also a more effective way to raise and talk about different and even divergent experiences as Americans.

Thank You