

**FINAL REPORT**

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# **Civic Cynicism in the United States:** A Typology of Americans

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**Presented by:**

NORC at the University of  
Chicago

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**Presented to:**

Louisiana State University  
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## Section 1: Introduction

Ahead of the transformative election that swept Donald J. Trump back into the White House, Americans across the political spectrum were feeling a deep cynicism about their country and pessimism about its future.

Only about a quarter believed the country's best days are ahead.

Just about a quarter, too, thought the United States is the greatest country in the world. Americans were just as likely to think other countries are better – and that pessimism crossed party lines.

Barely one in ten Americans thought the government represents them well.

And when asked a battery of questions about how much trust people have in those who lead the government, the responses were alarming. Only about two in ten said you can trust people in government to do the right thing. Seven in ten thought politicians are only in it for themselves. The same number felt politicians are more interested in blocking things rather than solving problems. Furthermore, seven in ten believed the government is controlled by the wealthy and big corporations – again across party lines.

Many Americans have lost faith in the fundamental principles underlying their democracy. Seven in ten were at least somewhat worried there won't be a peaceful transition of power following the 2024 presidential election.

A quarter of Americans thought the country needs a complete and total upheaval to get back on track.

On many of these measures, Americans have become more negative and pessimistic. For example, 20 years ago, less than half of the public thought politicians were only out for themselves. Now that number is 70%. In 2004, a third said people in government could be trusted to do what's right. It's 19% today.

In a sense, it is in the deep chords of distrust where Americans seem most united.

That cynicism is shared by people on the left, right and middle, by those highly engaged and those who are not, by people who have positive views of American's history of diversity and those who do not.

The findings not only reveal the strong headwinds that Kamala Harris faced as a de facto incumbent. They explain why her attempt to differentiate how she would reshape the country was not enough to defeat the Trump's pessimism and anger that so deeply resonated with Americans across the political spectrum.

To understand this cynicism, Louisiana State University, NORC at the University of Chicago, and a researcher at the University of Maryland conducted a thorough look into American attitudes toward their country and one another, their civic engagement, and their attitudes and behavior with the news media. This study focused on the public's mood relating to long-standing and systemic issues, not merely temporal reactions to current events. We then created a typology of Americans based on this mood and people's broad outlook for the future.

Most discussions of people's civic attitudes are typically viewed through a prism of political ideology, age, or demographics, such as race and education. We wanted to understand these attitudes based on more nuanced factors – such as trust in democratic processes and political institutions, connections to community and faith in their fellow Americans, as well as people's outlook on America's future.

What we found is that the nation can be more clearly understood as five different groups, which do not divide neatly along party or ideological lines.

One group, whom we refer to as “Classically Liberal” and represents 22% of the country, mostly identifies with the Democratic party and supports diversity and immigration. Another group, whom we call “Mostly MAGA” represents 21% of the country and is made up of supporters of Donald Trump and many aspects of the MAGA movement. But these two groups are more alike in many ways than one might suspect, including in how much they think America needs to change, albeit in very different directions.

The other three groups cross party lines far more than the Classically Liberal or Mostly MAGA. “The Believers” are America’s optimists. Comprising 13% of the country overall, they are the most positive of any cohort about almost everything – from trust in government and the media to tolerance and positive feelings about diversity and the American Dream.

The group we call “The Ambivalent” in many ways looks typical of Americans overall. Making up 29% of the population, they are about average in their levels of cynicism (neither high nor low), in their sense of group identity (they are not particularly tribal), and in their confidence in the current system and the people running it.

And we call the most cynical group “The Disillusioned.” Representing 15% of the country, they take part in the political process less than others. They are the most likely to think the country’s best days are behind it, that the American Dream is out of reach, and that other countries are better. They are the only group in which a majority think America doesn’t just need to *substantially change*, it needs a *total and complete overhaul*. But they are more tolerant of other groups than the Mostly MAGA group. And they don’t skew in any particular partisan direction. Forty-one percent consider themselves unaffiliated or independent and the rest divide evenly between leaning Democrat or Republican. The Disillusioned are among the most racially and ethnically diverse of the cohorts, and the youngest.

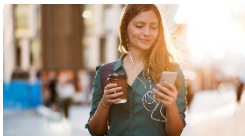




#### **Among the survey’s most striking findings:**






- Americans are pessimistic about the nation’s future. Overall 38% believe America’s best days are behind it; just 23% feel they are still ahead. Seventeen percent believe the country’s best days are neither in the future nor the past and 22% are unsure. This may not constitute complete cynicism, but it is hardly optimistic. The most dour are The Disillusioned. Sixty-two percent of this group think the country’s best days are past. About half (51%) of the Mostly MAGA agree. In contrast, 53% of The Believers think the best is yet to come. There is a fuller discussion of the context of American cynicism in Section 3.
- People across party lines think the country needs to undergo significant change. Fifty-nine percent think the country needs “substantial” change, including 6 in 10 of both Republicans and Democrats and 51% of independents. On this, indeed, the Classically Liberal and Mostly MAGA look remarkably similar (69% and 65% want substantial change). Most Americans, however, do not think the country requires a “complete and total overall.” Only 24% overall feel this way. There is only group in which the majority feel the country needs such wholesale remaking: The Disillusioned with 60%. By contrast, only 17% of Americans seem satisfied and say there should be little or no change in how the country is run.
- Americans are deeply divided over whether they can improve their standard of living. Only
- 35% tend to think they can improve their lives economically; 37% mostly doubt it; the rest (27%) are divided, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. In only one group, The Believers, is there an optimistic majority (75%).
- For all that people are dour about the country in general, they tend to be more optimistic about their own prospects. For instance, while nearly 6 in 10 rate the national economy as “very or somewhat poor,” (and that includes 89% of the Mostly MAGA and 82% of The Disillusioned), just over a quarter (28%) are pessimistic about their own personal finances.

- Similarly, 61% of Americans believe they have either achieved the American Dream or are on their way. Those most likely to say they have achieved the American Dream are The Believers (38%) and Mostly MAGA (34%). The only group in which a majority think the American Dream is out of their personal reach is The Disillusioned, at 69%.
- But cynicism dominates views of the government across all these groups. Few think the federal government is looking out for their interests or those of most Americans. Fifty-three percent feel that the interests of people like themselves aren't being represented by Washington and 45% question whether most Americans' interests are represented.
- Seventy percent think most politicians are in politics for their own self-interest. Less than 20% believe most people in government can be trusted to do what is right.
- The two groups who most often are considered at odds, Classically Liberal and Mostly MAGA, both take part in the political process at high levels (about 9 in 10 say they vote in presidential elections always or most of the time and about 7 in 10 say they do so in midterm elections). Both are vigorous and active seekers of news. Nine in 10 of both groups would like to see substantial change or complete upheaval in how the country is run. Only 6% of both say democracy is working well in the United States these days.

There is no doubt that the country is deeply polarized; however, this study demonstrates that people's partisan affiliations are not enough to understand Americans' troubled emotions, their deeper feelings about their country, their attitudes about other groups, or their levels of civic engagement. The five groups of Americans identified by this research hold distinctly different perspectives about the state of the country. And these perspectives correlate with the ways they engage with government, news, and their participation in civic life. Understanding these groups helps us understand why so many Americans feel misunderstood or unseen in the left/right conversation that dominates our usual national narrative.

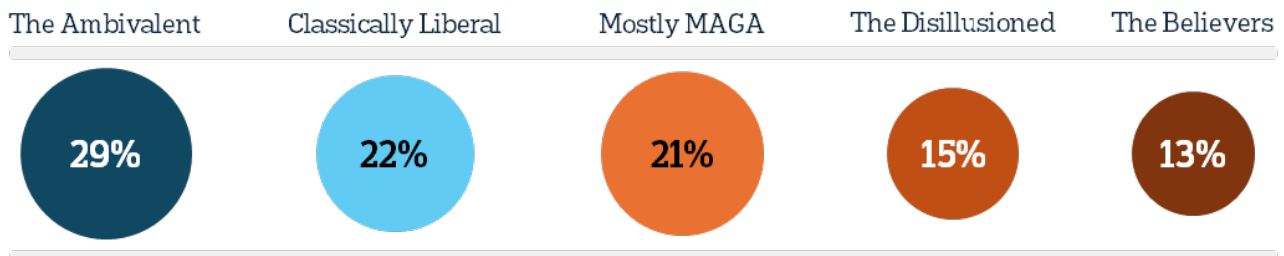
This kind of deeper understanding also illuminates new opportunities for journalists and policymakers to meet people where they are, understand their hopes and frustrations, and find ways to rebuild a public square.

				
<b>The Ambivalent</b> (29%)	<b>Classically Liberal</b> (22%)	<b>Mostly MAGA</b> (21%)	<b>The Disillusioned</b> (15%)	<b>The Believers</b> (13%)
Demographics closely resemble general population, slightly more moderate  Less concerned about current state of politics  High trust in the military, scientific community, and local government and in other people  Receive more news from social media	Mostly white, college-educated, nonreligious  Dissatisfied with state of politics  Supportive of immigrants  High trust in the military, the scientific community, and local government and in other people  Receive more news from digital sources	Mostly older, Republican, Christian and white  Negative national economic outlook  High rates of racial resentment and highly distrustful of immigrants  Dissatisfied with state of politics  High trust in the military, the Supreme Court, local government, and organized	Skew younger, lower income, less educated, and more moderate  Less satisfied with their quality of life, financial situation, and economic mobility prospects  Negative view of national economic outlook and the country's future  Dissatisfied with state of politics	Skew older, religiously diverse, more Democratic  More satisfied with their quality of life, financial situation, and economic mobility  Positive view of democracy and the country's future  Less concerned about current state of politics

				
<b>The Ambivalent</b> (29%)	<b>Classically Liberal</b> (22%)	<b>Mostly MAGA</b> (21%)	<b>The Disillusioned</b> (15%)	<b>The Believers</b> (13%)
and traditional broadcast networks		religion and in other people Receive more news from cable news Negative view of news media	Low trust in institutions and in other people Receive more news from social media Negative view of news media	High trust in government and in other people Receive more news from traditional broadcast networks Positive view of news media

## About the Study

The typology of civic cynicism in the United States is based on a nationally representative survey of 3,031 adults conducted by NORC at the University of the Chicago and funded by Louisiana State University. Five typologies of the public were identified using a Latent Class Analysis based on a range of demographic characteristics and a diverse set of attitudinal measures including trust in democratic processes and political institutions, connections to community, faith in their fellow Americans, and their outlook on the economy, politics, and the American Dream.



Taken together, this analysis provides a framework for understanding the public’s multiple and nuanced perspectives on the country and how those relate to their civic engagement, including their attitudes toward journalism, news behaviors, and political and civic participation.

This report is divided into seven sections.

- The first is this introduction.
- The second section describes the five groups and their demographics, sociopolitical characteristics, and how they regard news media.
- The third section looks at the public’s level of optimism about the United States and how it differs among the five typologies.
- The fourth section compares the typologies across a variety of policies, including their views of democracy and the United States, the trustworthiness and influence of institutions and people, and the value of diversity.
- The fifth section evaluates the political and civic engagement of the typologies.
- The sixth section examines the news consumption of each typology.
- And the seventh section does an in-depth exploration of each typology.

Complete question wordings are available at <https://www.norc.org/research/projects/civic-cynicism-united-states.html>.

## Section 2: The Five Typology Groups: A Snapshot

From afar, we can identify a spectrum of unease in Americans' thinking. As we get closer, and examine factors like social and political trust, attitudes and behavior toward the media, and political engagement, we can begin to see nuances. People's shared sentiments form groupings that give this unease more shadings and move beyond partisan politics and which candidates they support. Here is a summary of those shadings, in the form of the five typologies we have identified.

### The Ambivalent

The largest group of adults (29%) we call The Ambivalent. They tend to be neither overly optimistic nor pessimistic on many views of the country, but often fall near the average. They are less likely than most, for instance, to say they *cannot* improve their standard of living, but also more likely than most to be unsure about it. Along with The Believers, they are more likely to say they are on their way to achieving the American Dream, and only a third say it is out of reach. They are also less likely than the average to say American democracy is not working well (35 % vs. 53% overall) but are half as likely than average (and tied at the bottom with The Disillusioned) to say American democracy is the greatest form of government (only 8% agree). At the same time, they are far less likely to express cynicism across measures. For example, they are less likely to say the American government doesn't represent most Americans satisfactorily (25% vs. 48% overall) or people like themselves satisfactorily (30% vs. 50 % overall).

They take part in civic life less than most (only The Disillusioned are less politically or civically engaged). But they trust other people and leaders of institutions at levels that, relatively, are average-- neither high nor low.

Indeed, The Ambivalent stand out most for feeling less strongly than others about what ideas are essential to American national identity. They are less likely than most groups, for instance, to believe that a shared culture or values, economic opportunity, Christian culture, a shared language, or even concepts such as the rule of law or the liberties and freedoms laid out in the Constitution are essential to American identity.

### Who are The Ambivalent?

They are more moderate politically than other groups; 59% describe themselves as moderate (rather than liberal or conservative) vs. 48% of respondents overall. And much of that higher percentage of moderates comes from fewer of The Ambivalent describing themselves as liberal (just 13% vs. 23% overall).

The Ambivalent are slightly younger than other groups; a majority (52%) are under age 44, seven percentage points higher than respondents overall (45%).

They are slightly more racially and ethnically diverse than respondents overall. Fifty-five percent of The Ambivalent are white, vs. 61% overall; 15% are Black vs. 12% overall, and 21% are Hispanic vs.18% overall.

More of The Ambivalent ended their education after graduating high school (or even before) than respondents overall; 45% have not attended college at all vs. 38% of adults overall.

In terms of their income, The Ambivalent group is generally similar to the rest of the country.

## Classically Liberal

The next largest group of Americans (22%) are those we call Classically Liberal. While overwhelmingly Democratic, in many ways this group remains pessimistic and cynical. Eighteen percent feel America's best days are ahead, similar to the 23% of Americans overall who believe this is the case. They are more likely than most to think other countries are better than the United States (41% vs. 25% overall). Only The Disillusioned (54%) are more cynical.

Classically Liberal are deeply suspicious of government and its leaders in ways that might surprise those who associate liberals with political and economic elites. For instance, they rank as the most cynical group in thinking politics cannot meet the challenges facing the country and that politicians are more interested in blocking things rather than solving problems. They are almost identical with The Disillusioned in thinking the government is controlled by the wealthy and by corporations.

At the same time, the Classically Liberal are most likely to believe American democracy is the best form of government, despite its problems. Eighty-two percent feel this way compared with 69% overall.

They stand out in one other respect. The Classically Liberal are the most supportive of various questions of diversity. Ninety-four percent think diversity makes the country stronger, and fewer than one in ten Classically Liberal are alarmed by elements of diversity that worry others, such as the idea that whites are losing ground to other races, that native born Americans are being replaced by immigrants, or that whites now suffer from discrimination. The percentage of Classic Liberals who are worried about these ideas is in single digits.

### Who are the Classically Liberal?

They are less likely to be Christian (41% vs. 65% for all respondents) and more likely to be secular (50% vs. 27%).

They are slightly more affluent (30% make less than \$50,000 a year vs. 41% overall). They are more likely to have higher levels of education. Fifty-four percent have a college or graduate degree vs. 36% for all respondents. And 86% are Democrats, compared with 41% overall.

## Mostly MAGA

The third-largest group (21%) we call Mostly MAGA.

In some ways, they are strikingly similar to Classically Liberal and in other ways they are the reverse image.

### How do they compare?

Mostly MAGA are more likely than most, and even more so than Classically Liberal, to feel they have already achieved the American Dream. Fully 34% feel that way compared to 27% among Classically Liberal).



They are also active news consumers. Two-thirds of Mostly MAGA say they are likely to actively seek out the news rather than let it come to them, just about the same as Classically Liberal. Additionally, they both are the most likely groups to be closely following the presidential race. Yet despite their avid news consumption, Mostly Maga stand out for their deep distrust-- bordering on antipathy-- for the press.

Mostly MAGA and Classically Liberal are also similar in their cynicism about the political system. They are comparable when it comes to the importance of the rule of law, constitutional liberties, and the democratic system of government to the American national identity.

Mostly MAGA are somewhat more likely than Classically Liberal to think politicians are only in it for themselves and to say politicians are more interested in dividing than uniting. That said, they are both at the high edges of cynicism on these questions. Indeed, on these concerns both groups look a lot like The Disillusioned, the most disengaged and disaffected group of all.

Where Mostly MAGA stand out is in their feelings about diversity, culture, and the media. More than 8 in 10 Mostly MAGA cite shared culture and values as essential to the national identity (similar to The Believers but nearly twice that of Classically Liberal). Seven in 10 say Christian culture is essential to the national identity. No other group comes near that.

The differences are even more striking in response to the questions over diversity. A majority of Mostly MAGA say that white people are losing ground compared to other racial and ethnic groups (59%); that whites are suffering from discrimination (78%); that immigrants are taking jobs from native born Americans (75%); and that immigrants (78%) are replacing native born Americans. In no other cohort do majorities agree with any of those statements.

## **What are the demographics of Mostly MAGA?**

They are more likely to be white than respondents overall (79% vs. 61%), more likely to be Christian (85% vs. 65%). They are more likely to be affluent than respondents overall -- just 34% make less than \$50,000 annually compared with 41% overall. About a third have college degrees, similar to the population overall.

They are the oldest group. Seventy-six percent are over age 45, compared with 55% overall. And 82% percent are Republican, while 63% describe themselves as conservative. Mostly MAGA is the only cohort in which Republicans and conservatives make up the majority. And 69% consider themselves to be a part of the MAGA movement.

## **The Disillusioned**

The fourth group (15%) is The Disillusioned. This group is most cynical about American institutions and ideas and is most pessimistic about the future. On virtually every metric of confidence and optimism, they register at the lowest levels. Six in ten think America needs “a complete and total overhaul.”

They are the least engaged. Fifty-two percent say they had not engaged in the last year in any one of fifteen possible forms of civic or political engagement we probed. Like The Ambivalent, most let news find them rather than seek it out.

Yet unlike the predominantly white Mostly MAGA, The Disillusioned are more racially and ethnically diverse than Americans overall and less angry about diversity as an American value. Indeed, The Disillusioned are fairly

positive about notions of the value of diversity to American culture. Their anger, unlike Mostly MAGA, is not over race, ethnicity, or immigration. In that sense, it is more complex.

## What are the demographics of The Disillusioned?

They are among the most diverse cohorts. They are 52% white, while 17% are Black and 22% are Hispanic. Fewer describe themselves as Christian (52% vs. 65% overall). And they are more likely to say they have no religious affiliation (42% vs. 27% overall).

They are less affluent. Fully 63% said they make \$50,000 or less, compared with 41% overall. They tend to have less formal education. Fifty-five percent have no college education vs. 38% overall.

Importantly, they are also younger. Twenty-nine percent of The Disillusioned are under age 30, the most of any group.

## The Believers

The smallest group (13%), and the most optimistic, is The Believers.

By and large, The Believers trust American leadership, politicians, and institutions. They trust the news media. They are highly engaged, and they think the American government, while it has its problems, is the best system possible. Fifty-three percent think America's best days are still ahead, the only group in which a slim majority feels that way. Thirty-eight percent feel they have already achieved the American Dream. Forty-two percent think America is the greatest country in the world, compared with 24% overall. Forty-six percent think democracy is working well compared with 12% overall.

The Believers also register strongly on what markers are essential to American identity (and their own personal identities) in ways that cross other cohorts. For instance, they feel that the idea of America as a cultural melting pot, a place for immigrants to come to pursue economic opportunity and escape persecution back home, is essential to the American identity. In this regard they resemble Classically Liberal. At the same time, they believe strongly that a shared culture and language is essential to the American identity. Additionally, a majority of The Believers consider a culture grounded in Christian faith to be essential to American identity.

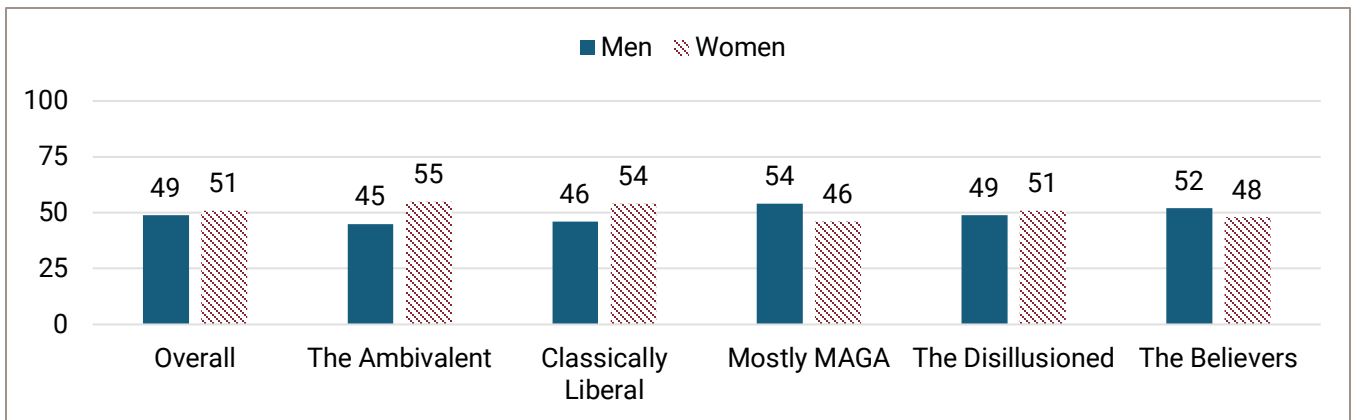
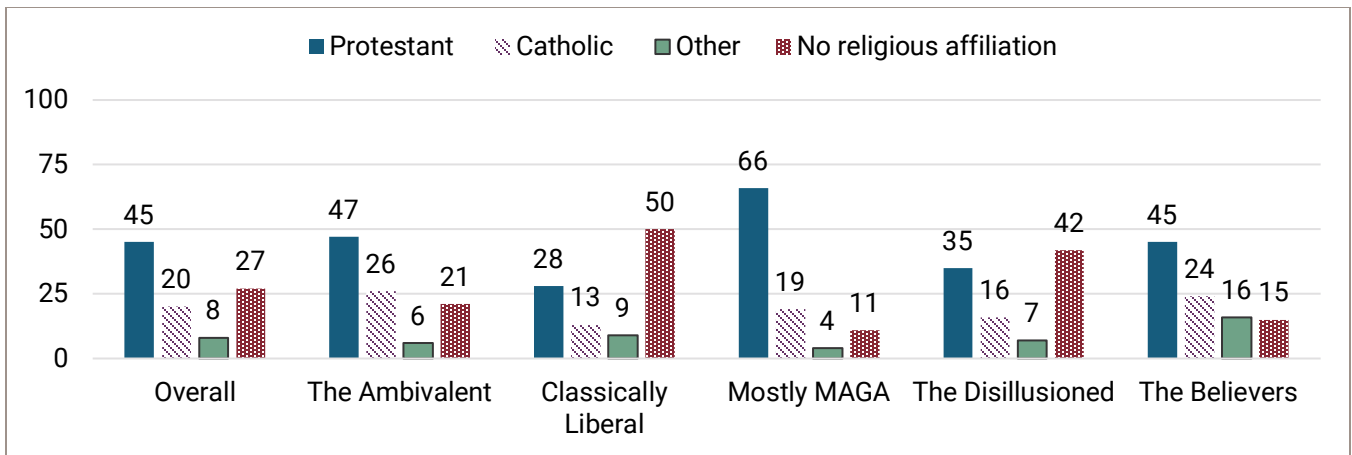
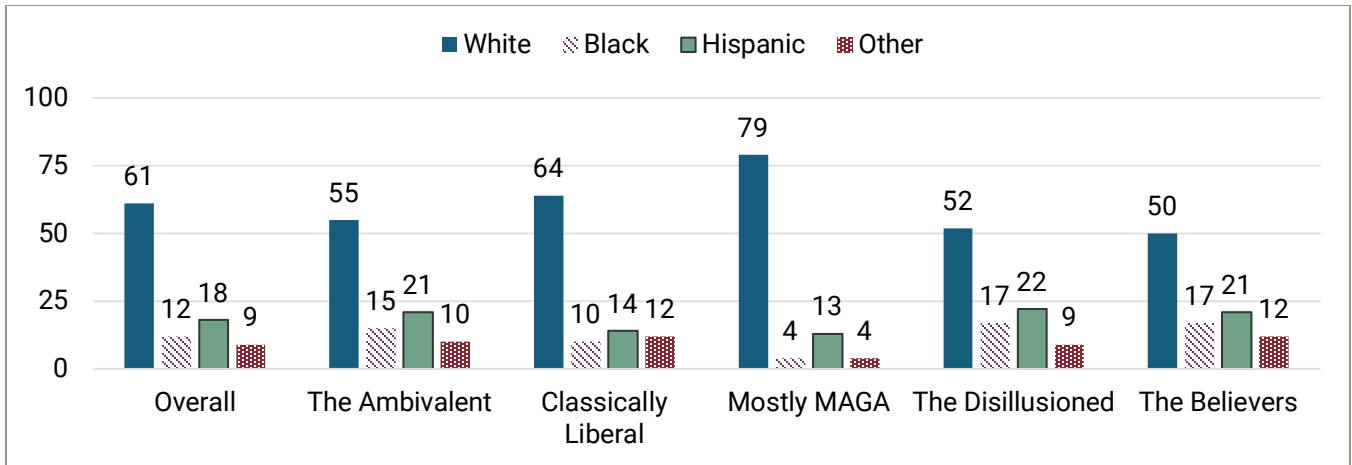
## Who are The Believers demographically?

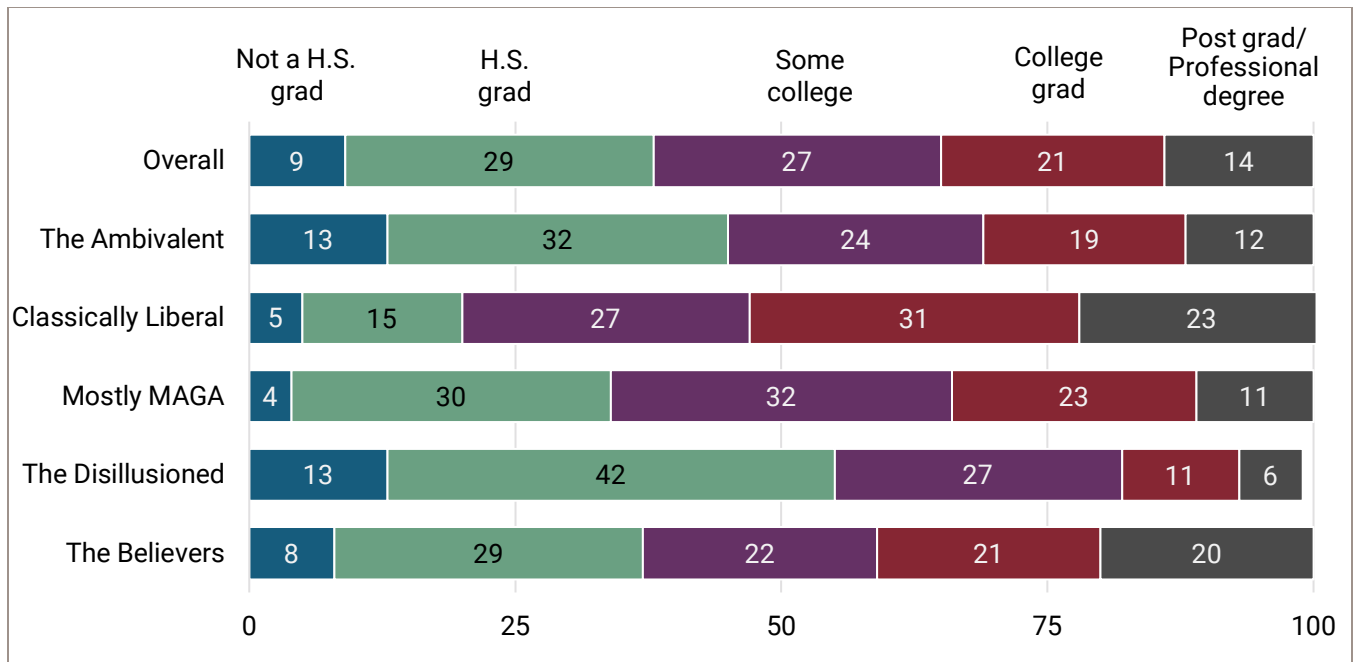
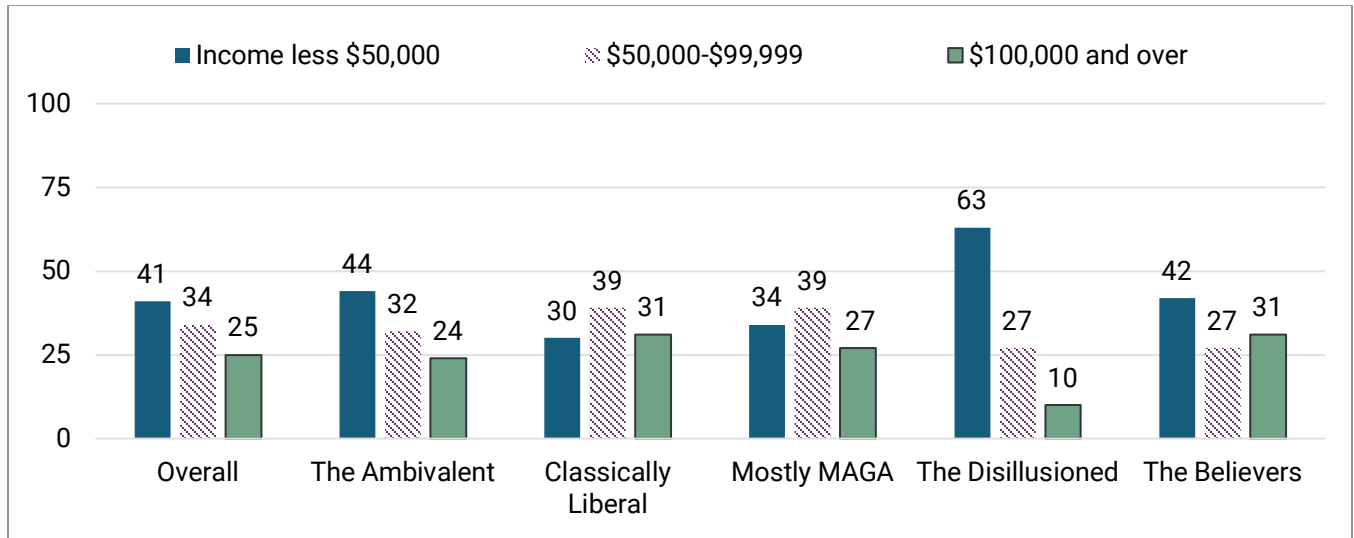
They are diverse. Half are white and about a fifth are either Black or Hispanic. Thus on race and ethnicity, interestingly, The Believers – our most optimistic group – closely resemble The Disillusioned – the most pessimistic cohort.

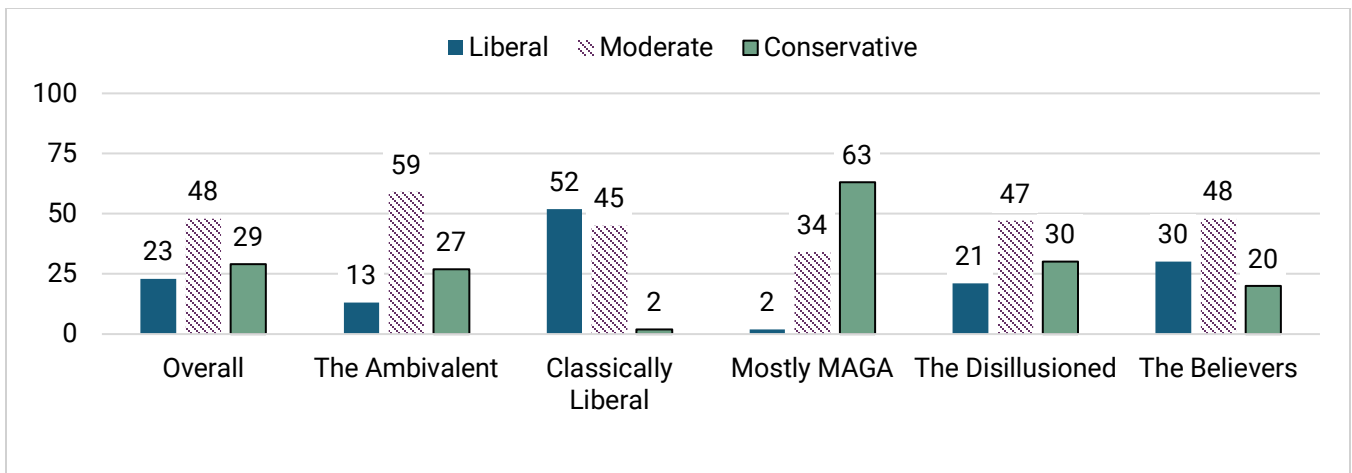
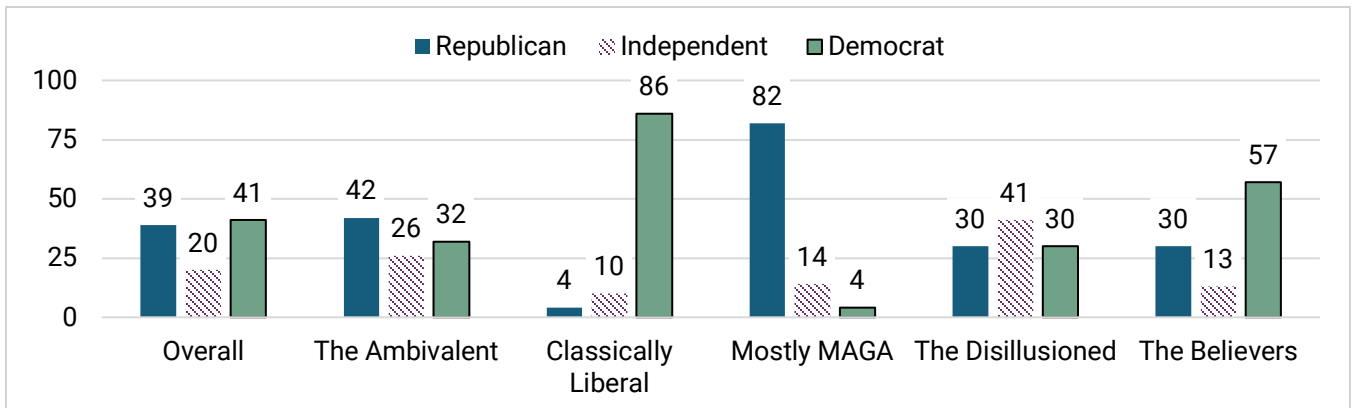
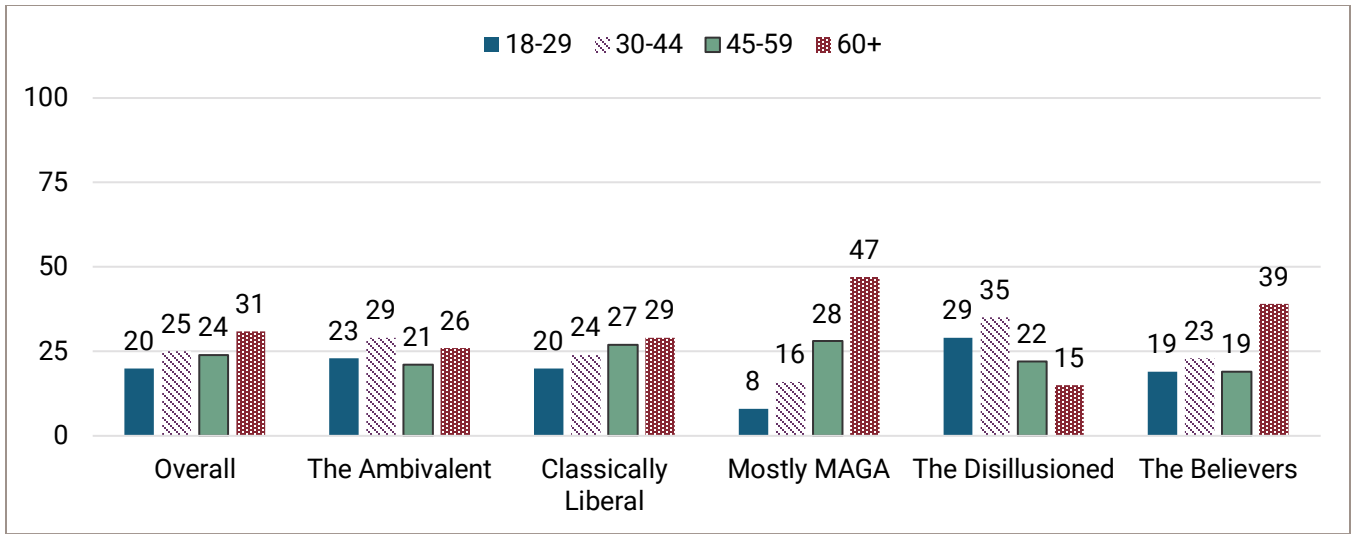
They are religious. Just 15% register as unaffiliated by religion vs. 27% for all respondents.

Financially, they look fairly typical except on the highest end. Fully 31% of The Believers make \$100,000 or more vs. 25% overall. And they are typical of respondents overall in age with one exception. Fewer Believers are age 45 to 59 and more are over 60 than respondents in general.

Politically, meanwhile, The Believers lean Democratic (57% vs. 41% of all respondents). Thirty percent are Republican vs. 39% overall and just 13% are independent compared with 20% overall. Ideologically, they lean slightly more liberal than conservative (30% vs. 20%) but more describe themselves as moderate (48%).







## Section 3: The State of the Country and the American Dream

In recent years, Americans have become more discouraged about the state of the country and their ability to thrive here. Fewer now say the country's best days are ahead or that their standard of living will improve. More people than before think the American Dream is out of reach for them.

Overall, Americans tend to be more pessimistic than optimistic about the country's future. About 4 in 10 think the country's best days are in the past and only 23% think better days are ahead. Ten years ago, more than half of the public were looking forward to America's best days in the future.

Six in 10 describe the national economy as bad, and many people do not see things improving. Only 35% of Americans think that with the way things are going in this country, people like themselves have a good chance of improving their standard of living.

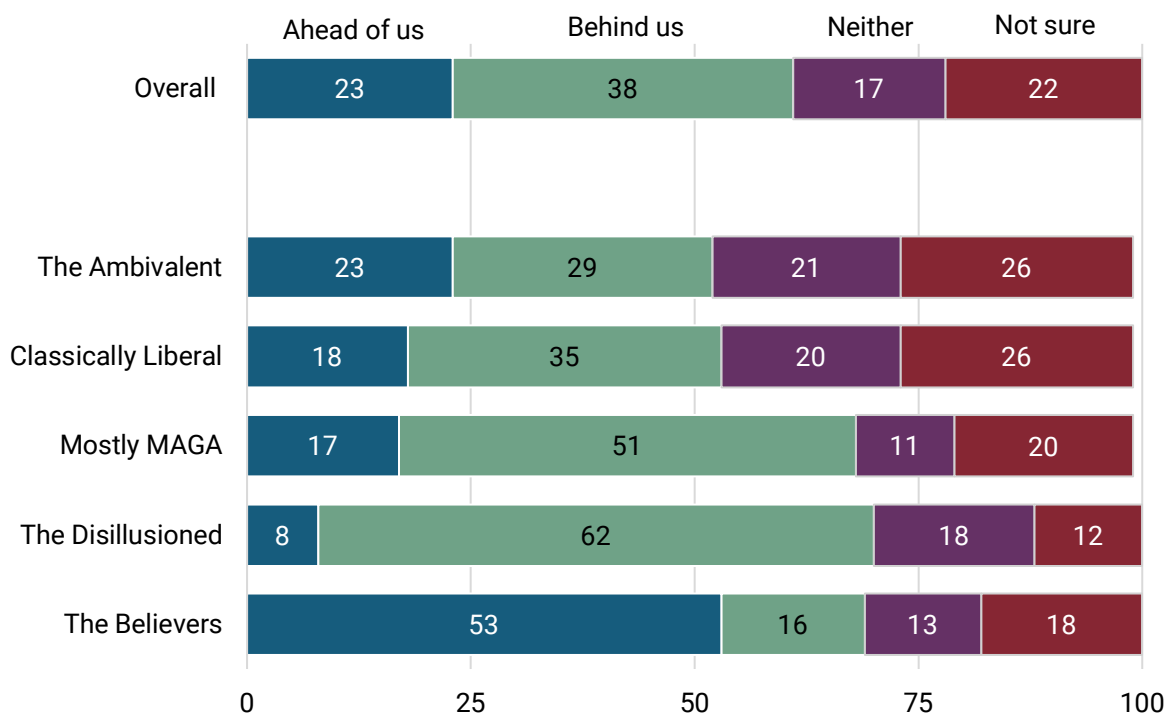
Nearly 4 in 10 say the "American Dream" is out of reach for them – and it's not that Americans have particularly lofty definitions of what it means to achieve the American Dream. Asked to define the American Dream in their own words, the most common definitions center on basic financial and family security and the absence of having to worry about their finances. Forty-one percent offer some version of this definition. The next most common definition (12%) is a comfortable quality of life.

For all that, people feel more satisfied with their own lives than they do about the country overall. Two-thirds, for instance, say they are satisfied with the quality of life in their community and half describe their personal financial situation as good.

The Believers are most positive about the future. The Ambivalent and Classically Liberal tend to be more pessimistic than optimistic about the country. The Disillusioned and Mostly MAGA are gloomiest, with the Disillusioned generally at the farthest end.

### Are America's best days ahead of us or behind us?

Percent of adults



**Question:** In general, do you think America's best days are ahead of us, behind us, or neither ahead nor behind? If you're not sure, you can say that too.

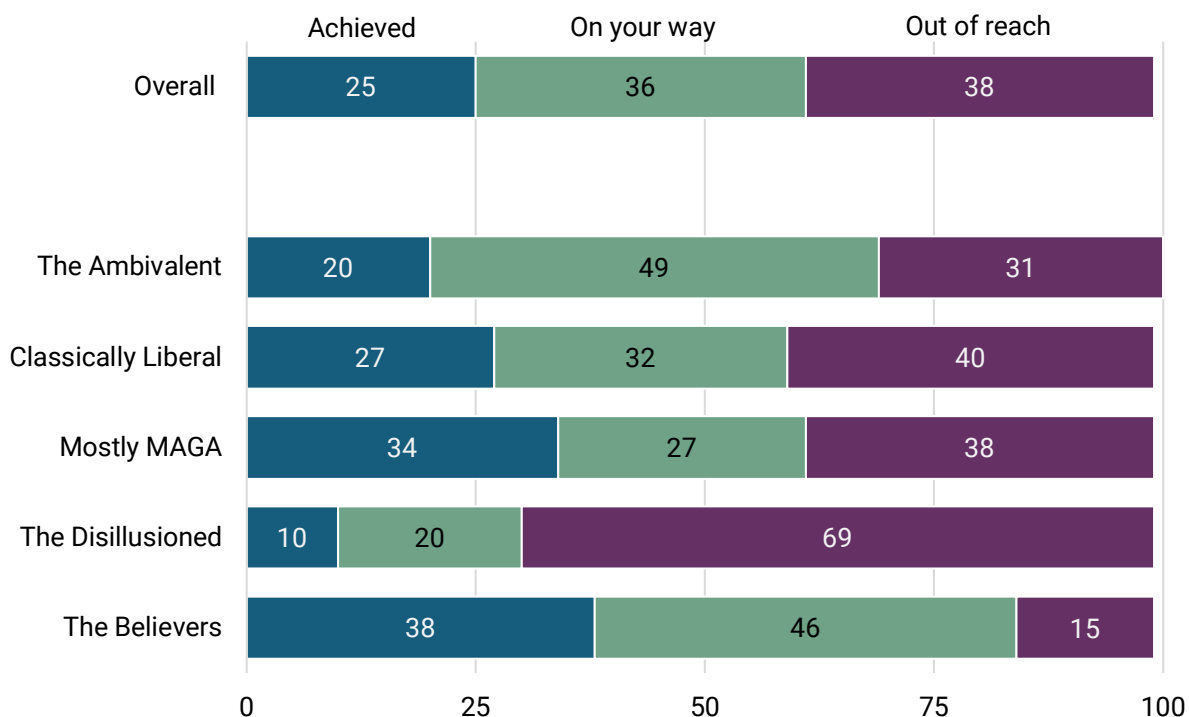
**Source:** LSU/NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

Most Americans feel they have reached the “American Dream” or are on their way. Still a sizable number, about 4 in 10, think the American Dream is out of reach. The Disillusioned are particularly doubtful. Fully 69% believe it is beyond their grasp. The Believers, again, are most positive. Fifty-three percent feel they have already achieved the American Dream. Fewer than two in ten think it is unattainable.

Seven years ago, the public was more positive about its ability to realize the American Dream. In a nationwide Pew Research Center poll of adults taken in 2017, 36% said the American Dream had been reached, 46% said they were on the way, and only 17% thought it was out of reach. The country has gone through the Trump and Biden presidencies, the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent economic turbulence since then. And those numbers have dropped.

### Is achieving the American Dream possible or out of reach?

Percent of adults



**Question:** The term "American Dream" can mean different things to different people. However you define it, do you believe you have achieved the American Dream, you're on your way to achieving the American Dream, or the American Dream is out of reach for you?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

While most Americans do not describe the United States as the best country in the world, half think the country is one of the greatest along with other countries. A quarter of the public think other countries are greater than the United States.

This sense of American exceptionalism or greatness, too, has slipped from years ago. A nationwide Pew Research Center survey conducted 13 years ago in 2011 found only 8% of adults thought there were other countries better than the United States.

The Disillusioned and Classically Liberal are most likely to think other countries are now superior to America. Fifty-four percent of The Disillusioned say other countries are better than the United States; 41% of Classically Liberal feel that way.

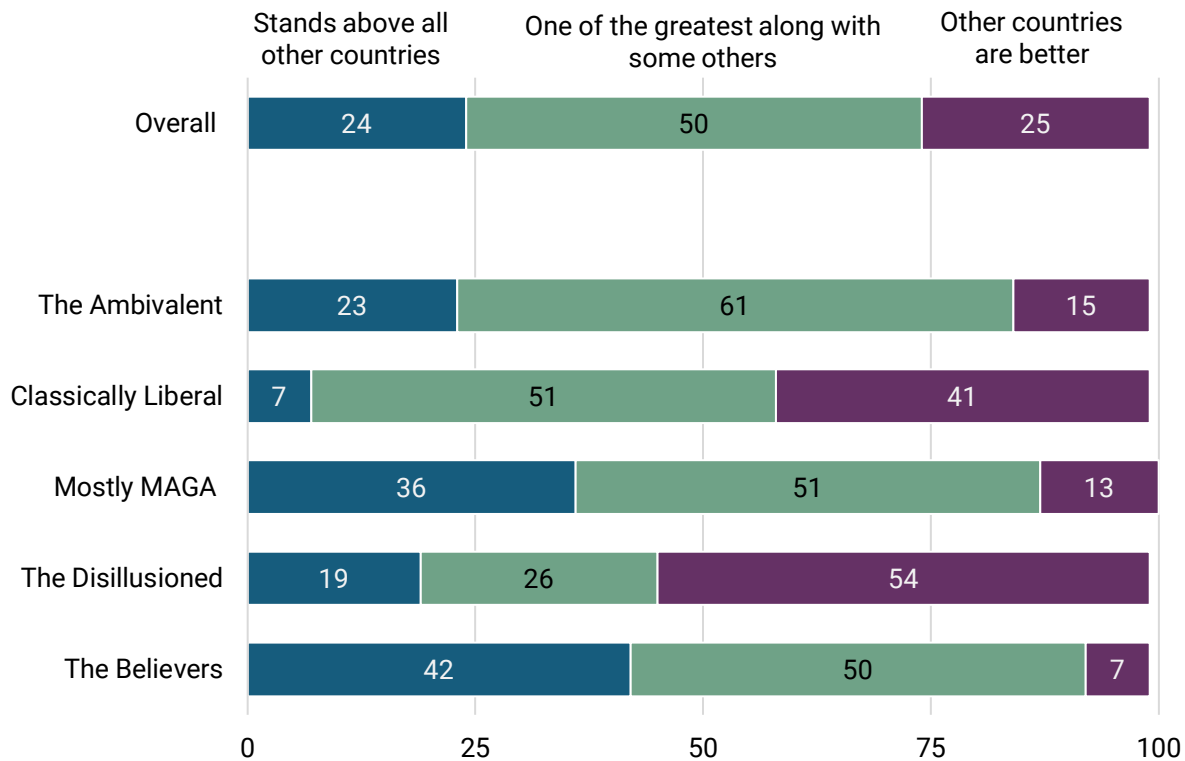
Who is most likely to believe in American exceptionalism? The Believers are the most likely to think America stands above all other nations (42%), followed by Mostly MAGA (36%).

Belief in American exceptionalism, apparently, is tied to more complex feelings than party identification, or even optimism. There is something more subtle at play.



## What is America's place in the world?

Percent of adults



**Question:** Which of these statements best describes your opinion about the United States?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

How do Americans feel about their ability to improve their own standard of living? They are divided. Just over a third (35%) think it is possible while a similar number (37%) think it is not.

Here, too, is a decline from the past. Optimism about the ability to enhance one's quality of life has dropped sharply over the past 20 years. In 2004 the [NORC General Social Survey](#) found that 69% agreed it was possible to improve one's standard of living.

The Believers continue to be an outlier. Seventy-five percent of them say they and their family have a good chance of improving their standard of living. And, as on most questions, The Disillusioned are the most pessimistic. Nearly two thirds (63%) disagree.

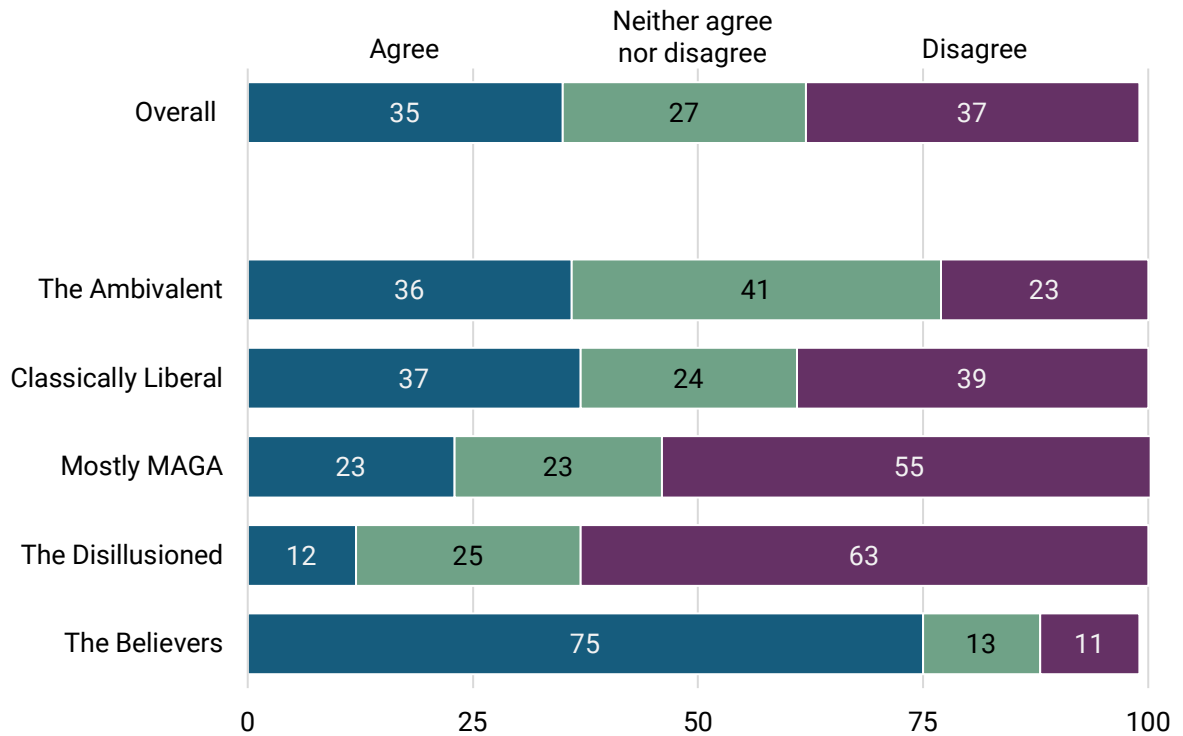
Mostly MAGA also are pessimistic about whether they can improve their standard of living, even though a high percentage of them believe they have already achieved the American Dream.

Classically Liberal, meanwhile, are evenly divided on whether one's standard of living can get better these days. Here they reflect the national divide with 36% thinking upward mobility is possible and 39% disagreeing.

Interestingly, The Ambivalent, a group that often splits on issues, are more positive (36%) than negative (23%) about the odds of improving one's standard of living.

### Is it possible these days to improve ones' standard of living?

Percent of adults



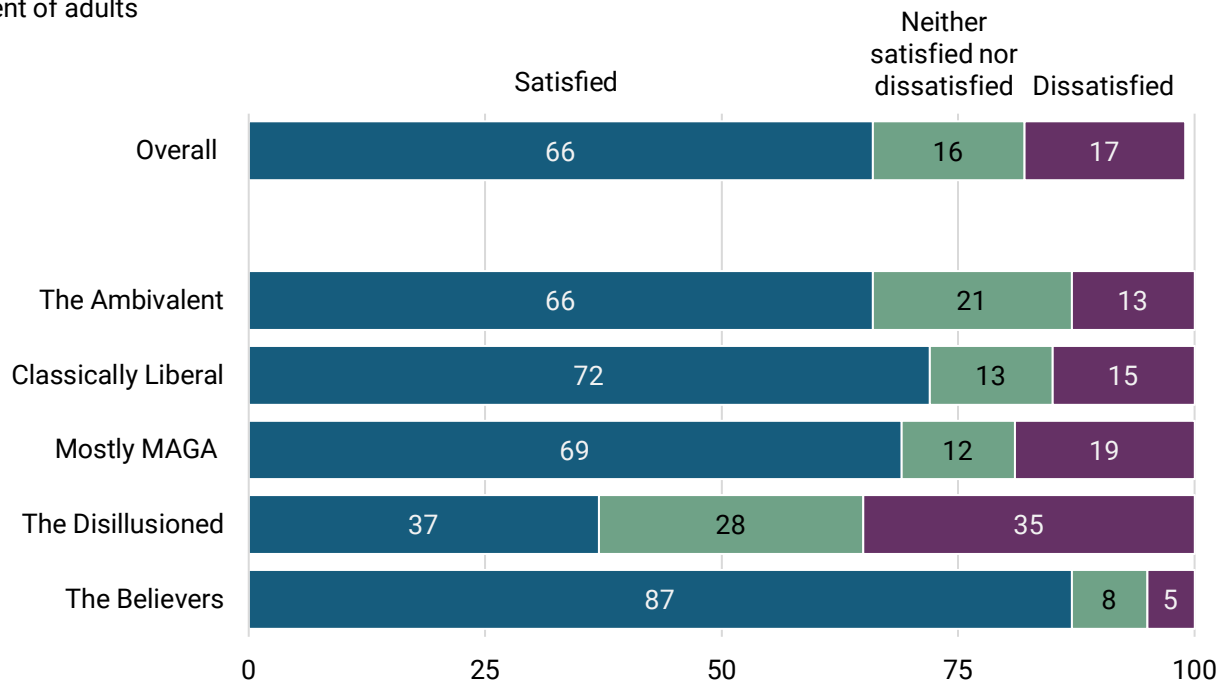
**Question:** To what extent do you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following statement? The way things are in America, people like me and my family have a good chance of improving our standard of living.

While Americans are divided on whether they can improve their standard of living, two-thirds are satisfied with the quality of life in their community. Many typologies look similar on this measure, but there are a couple outliers. Eighty-seven percent of The Believers are satisfied with the standard of living in their community. Just 37% of The Disillusioned agree with that assessment.

Even while a majority are satisfied with the quality of life in their community, the level of satisfaction has declined over the past ten years. A Pew Research Center poll taken in 2014 found 82% satisfied with the quality of life in their community.

### Most are satisfied with the quality of life in their community.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Please tell us whether you are satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, or dissatisfied with the quality of life in your local community?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3031 adults nationwide.

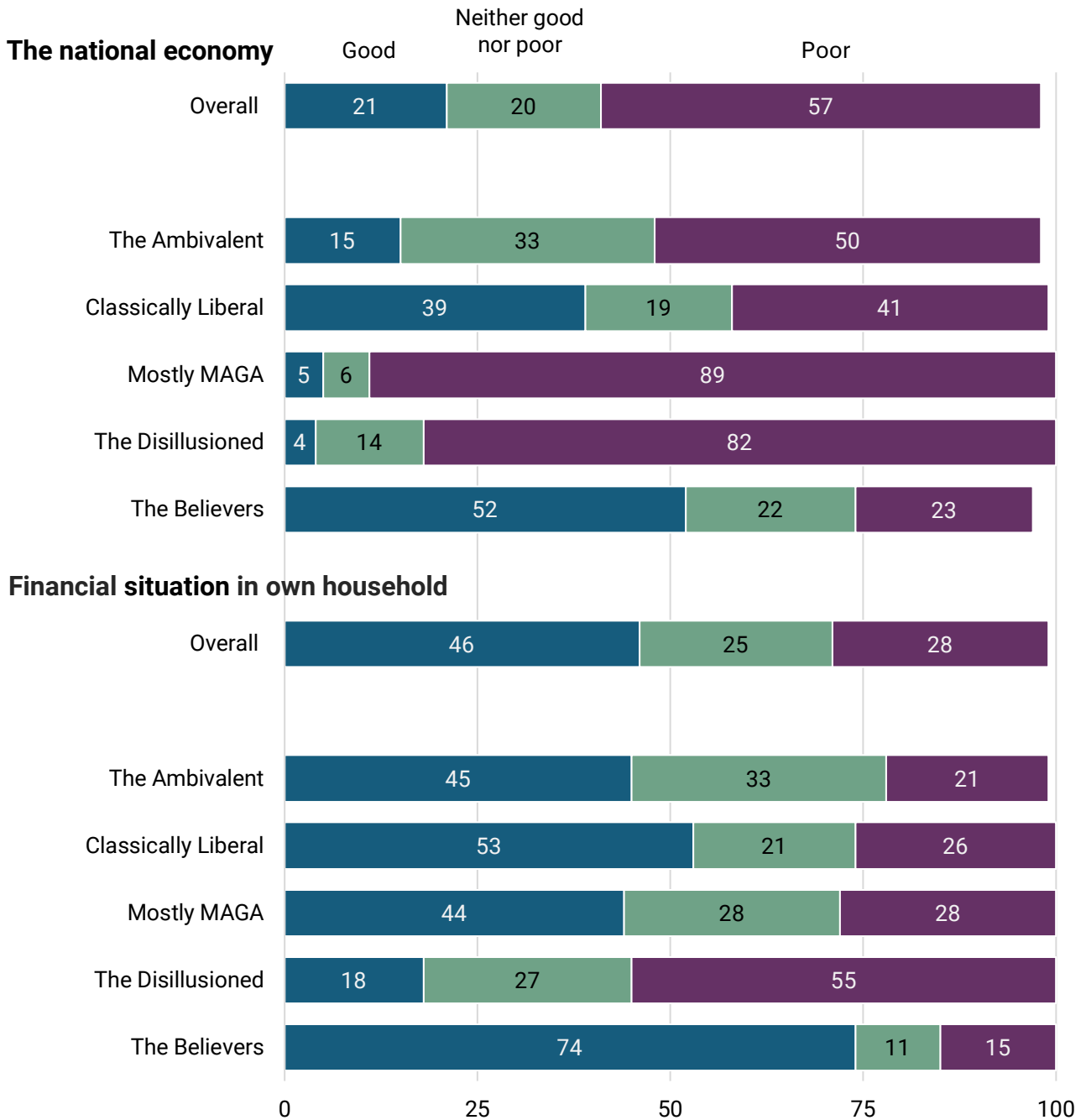
Nearly half of the public say their personal finances are good, while 28% think they are in poor condition. Among most of the five groups, at least 4 in 10 see their household personal financial situation as good. However, The Believers and The Disillusioned are outliers again. The Believers are very positive about their financial situation (74%), while less than a fifth of The Disillusioned say their personal finances are in good shape.

Most of the public is not particularly positive about the country’s overall economy. Half of The Believers think the economy is good. But more than 8 in 10 of The Disillusioned and Mostly MAGA regard the country’s economy to be in poor condition. Classically Liberal respondents are closely divided in their assessment of the national economy, while half of The Ambivalent say it is in bad condition.

According to [AP-NORC national polls](#), views of the national economy turned negative at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and have been negative since. Republicans were much more positive than Democrats about the national economy when Trump was in office and turned negative once Joe Biden was inaugurated. Conversely, Democrats regarded the economy as poor when Trump was president, and once Biden was president their views became more positive.

## Views of the national economy and their own financial situation

Percent of adults



**Question:** How would you describe each of the following these days?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 27, 2024 with 3,311 adults nationwide.

## Section 4: Trust in the System, Perceptions of Politics, and the Role of Diversity in America

The nature and complex cynicism this study has detected in American's attitudes can perhaps be seen most clearly when asked about their views of the system, leaders, institutions, and some core concepts of Americanism. While Americans may feel equally strongly in their cynicism about some of these issues, there is enduring belief in some core concepts, and the reasons for people's cynicism can be very different.

Overall, few people have a positive opinion about the people who lead the government in the United States. Most think politicians are self-serving, obstructionist, and untrustworthy. The public lacks faith in government – local or federal – and the press. Few think the government does a good job representing their interests. These somber feelings, moreover, cut across cohorts, demographics, and party and ideological lines.

Yet while the public may want to change how the government is administered and may be undecided about value of democracy, there is a consensus about the importance of some fundamental aspects of the United States.

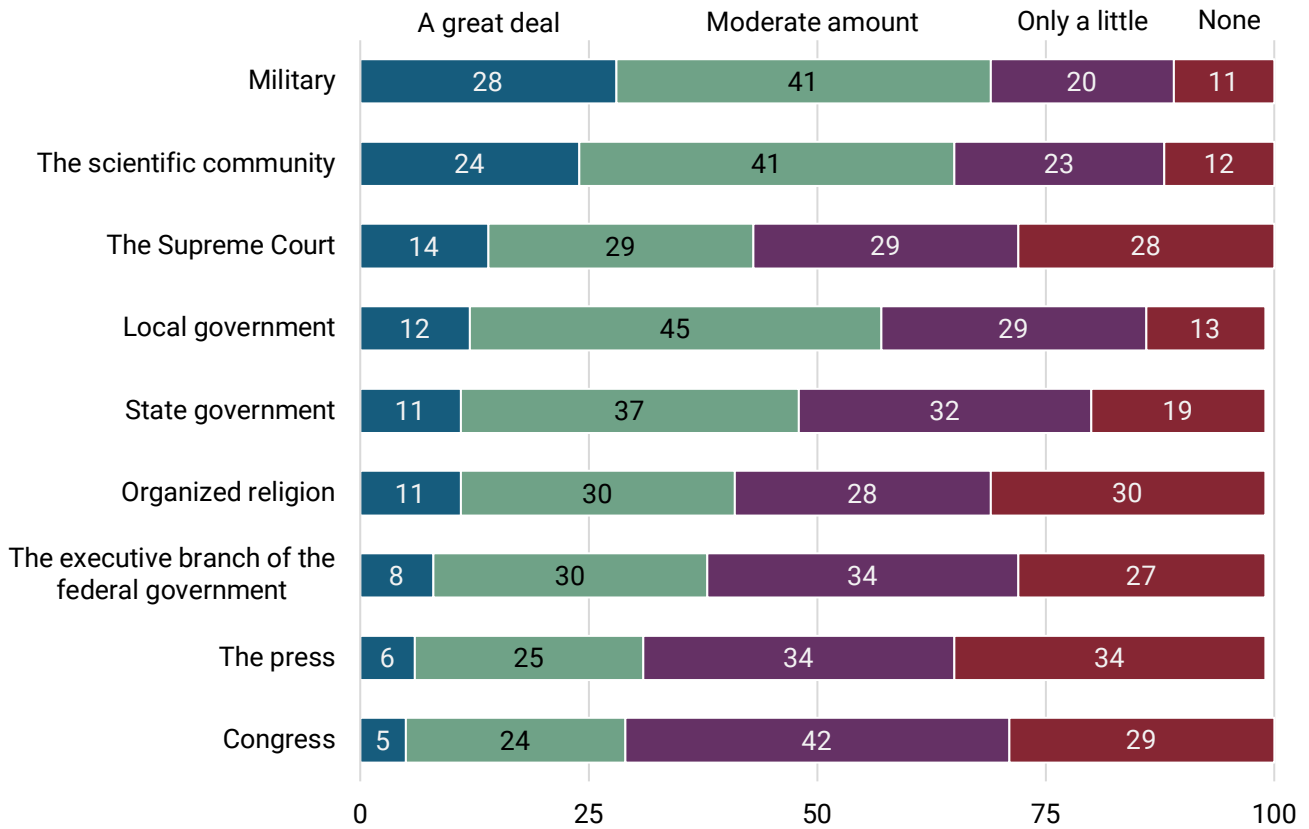
### Confidence and Trust

There are major differences in the public's confidence in and trust of various institutions and people. Sixty-nine percent of adults overall have at least a moderate amount of confidence in the people running the military and 64% have confidence in the scientific community. Beyond those institutions, confidence declines significantly.

There is less faith in the people running the three branches of government. Fifty-seven percent have little or no confidence in the Supreme Court, 61% are uncertain about the executive branch, and 71% have little or no confidence in the people running Congress.

### Little confidence in people running the government

Percent of adults



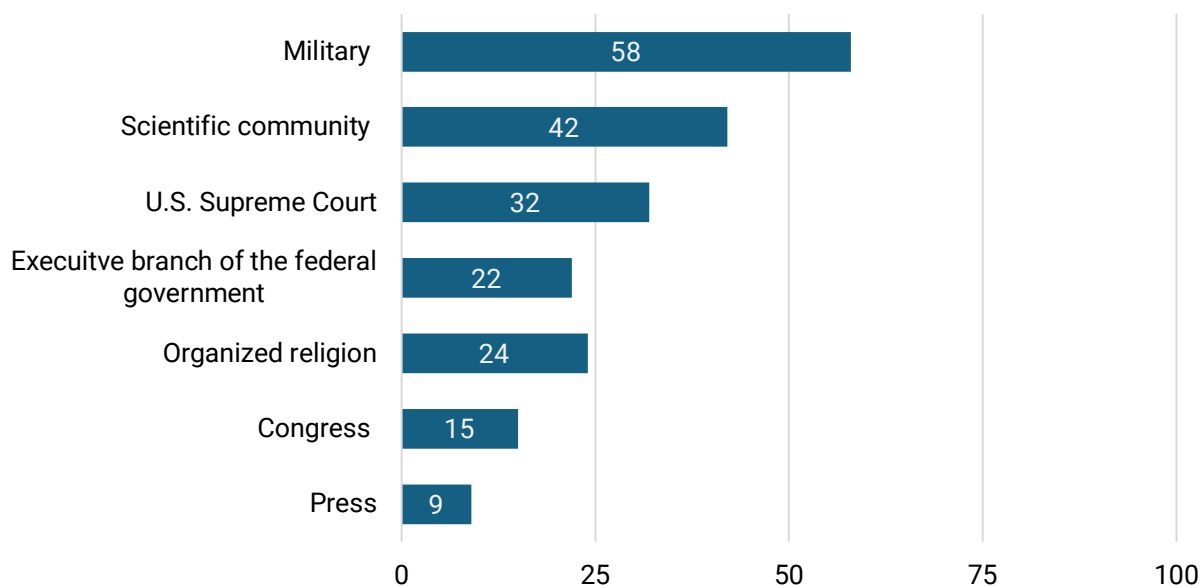
**Question:** Next, we will ask you about some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

While confidence in the people running some of these institutions was not particularly high in past years, there has been a significant drop over the past 20 years according to a similar question asked by the General Social Survey. Nearly every institution that was asked about has seen a decline, with about half as many currently saying they have a great deal of confidence in the people in charge. The press was already regarded very negatively by the public in 2004.

## In 2004, there was more faith in the people running various institutions.

Percent who said great deal



**Question:** (I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?).

**Source:** NORC General Social Survey 2004

As there are variations in the public's overall trust in institutions, there are sizable differences in the views of each typology. A majority of The Believers have a great deal or moderate amount of confidence in the people running each institution asked about. The Disillusioned have the least amount of confidence on nearly every measure, except the press and the Supreme Court.

Only 5% of Mostly MAGA have much confidence in the press, the least of any group. This group also has doubts about Congress, the White House, and the scientific community. But Mostly MAGA tend to have faith in local government, the Supreme Court, the military, and organized religion.

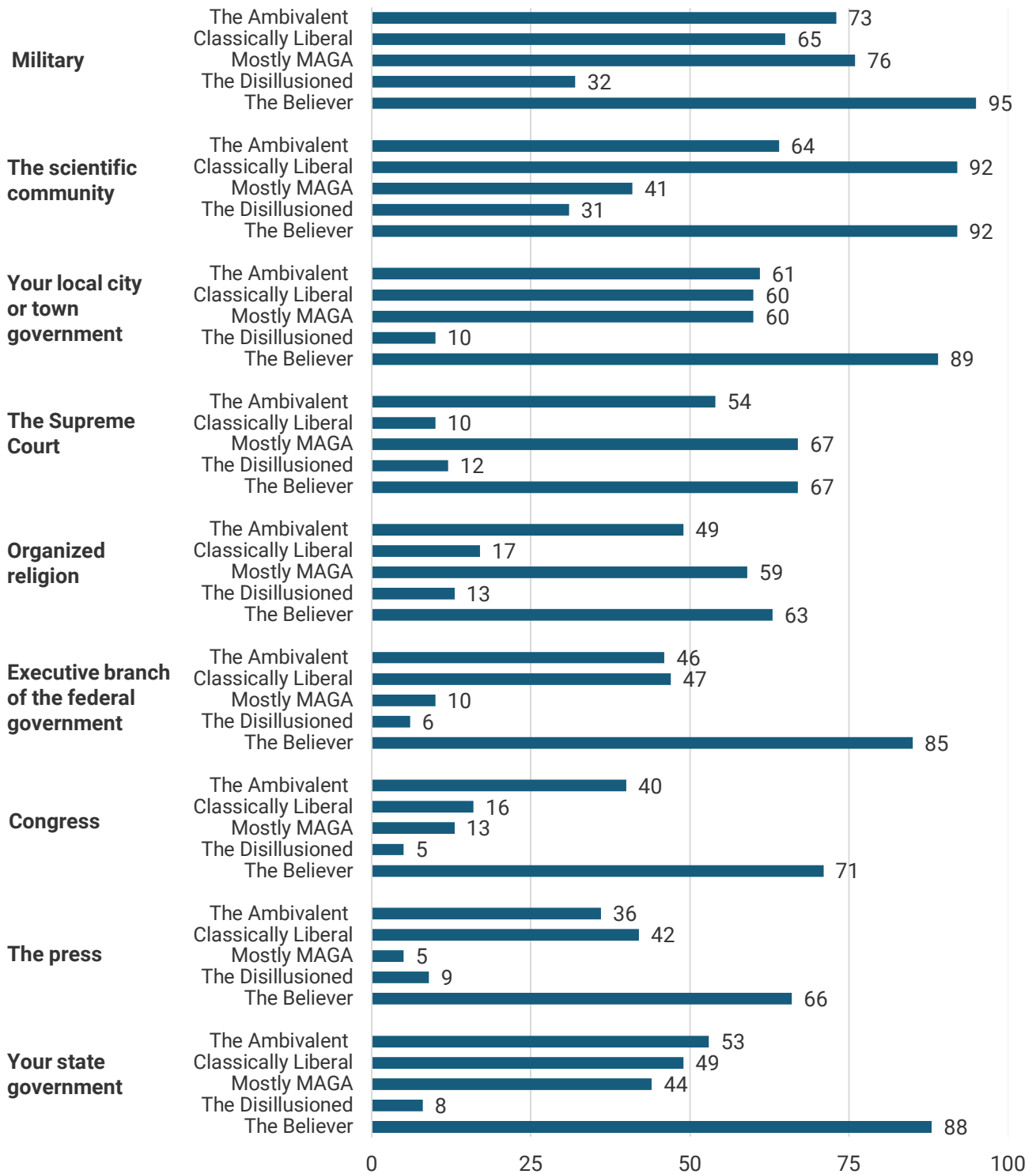
Mostly MAGA and Classically Liberal look alike in their faith in military and local government and lack of confidence in Congress.

But Classically Liberal differ from Mostly MAGA about two other institutions. This liberal cohort does not trust the Supreme Court or organized religion but has a large amount of confidence in the scientific community.

The Believers and The Ambivalent tend to have confidence in the people running institutions. While most groups have little confidence in Congress, 71% of The Believers and 40% of The Ambivalent say they have at least a moderate amount of confidence in the legislative branch of government.

### There are different levels of confidence in people running institutions.

Percent who say a great deal or moderate amount of confidence



**Question:** Next, we will ask you about some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

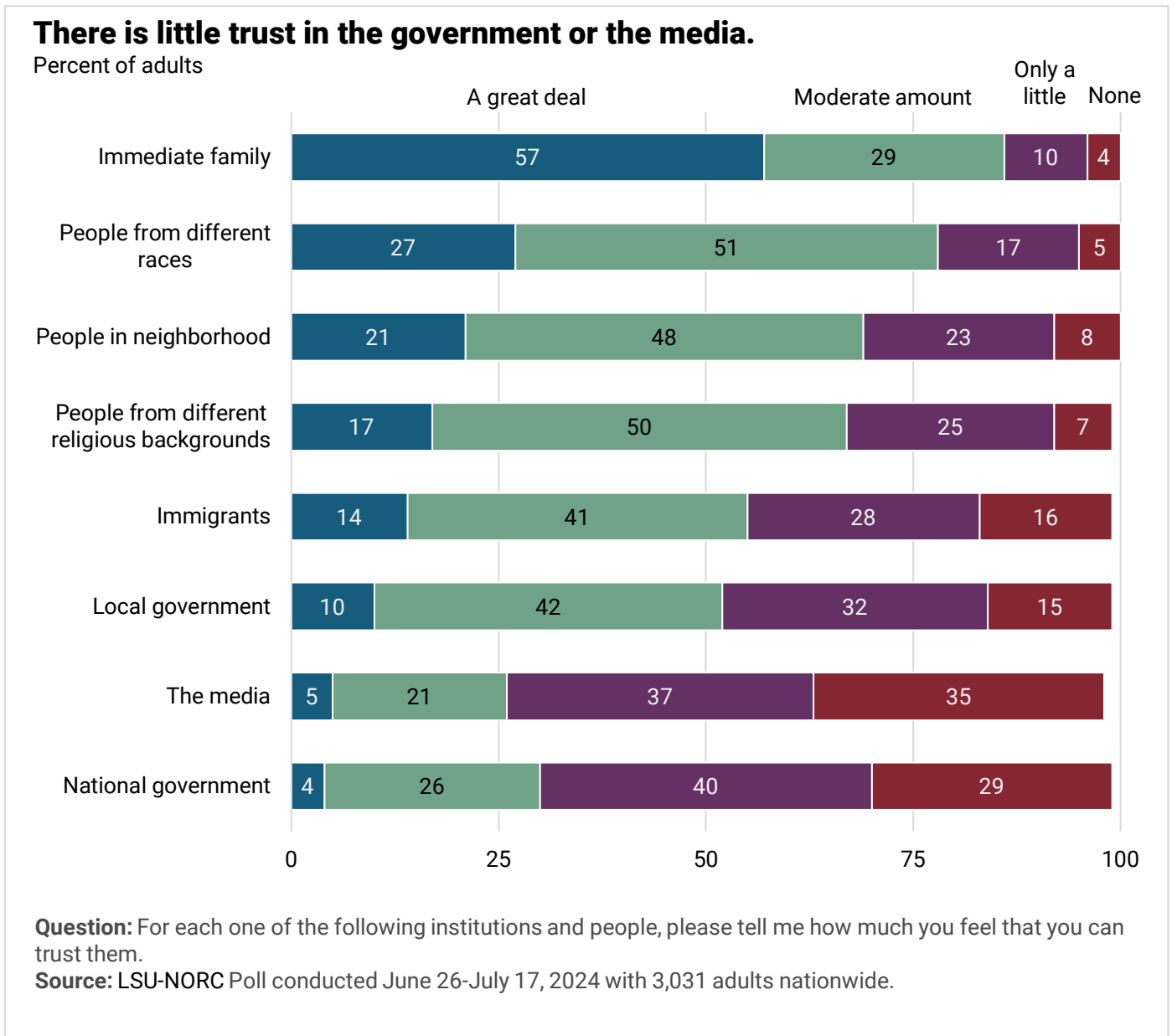
**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.



Most people trust their family and have at least a moderate amount of trust in their neighbors and people of different racial or religious backgrounds. But like their lack of confidence in some institutions, the public lacks much trust in the government. Just about half of the public have any trust in local government, and even fewer (30%) have faith in the federal government.

Again, the press is not regarded positively: Overall, about 7 in 10 have little or no trust in the media.

A similar question asked by the Pew Research Center in 2016 found the public had higher levels of trust in their immediate family. At that time, 70% said they had a lot of trust in their immediate family. Now, 57% have a great deal of trust in their family. The public was slightly more likely to trust people of different religions in 2016 (23% vs.17%) and people in their neighborhood (29% vs. 21%). Local and national government, and the media were also trusted by few people in 2016.



The Believers continue to be most positive and The Disillusioned most negative. A majority of each typology has a great deal or moderate amount of trust in their immediate family. About 9 in10 of Classically Liberal, The Believers, and Mostly MAGA trust their family along with 83% of The Ambivalent. While a majority of The Disillusioned trust their family, they also have more likely to little or no trust in their immediate relatives than any other group.

Most of The Disillusioned have little or no trust in their neighbors or people of a different religion. Just about over half of The Disillusioned trust people from other races. Large majorities of the other typologies trust people of other races, as well as people in their neighborhood and people with different religions.

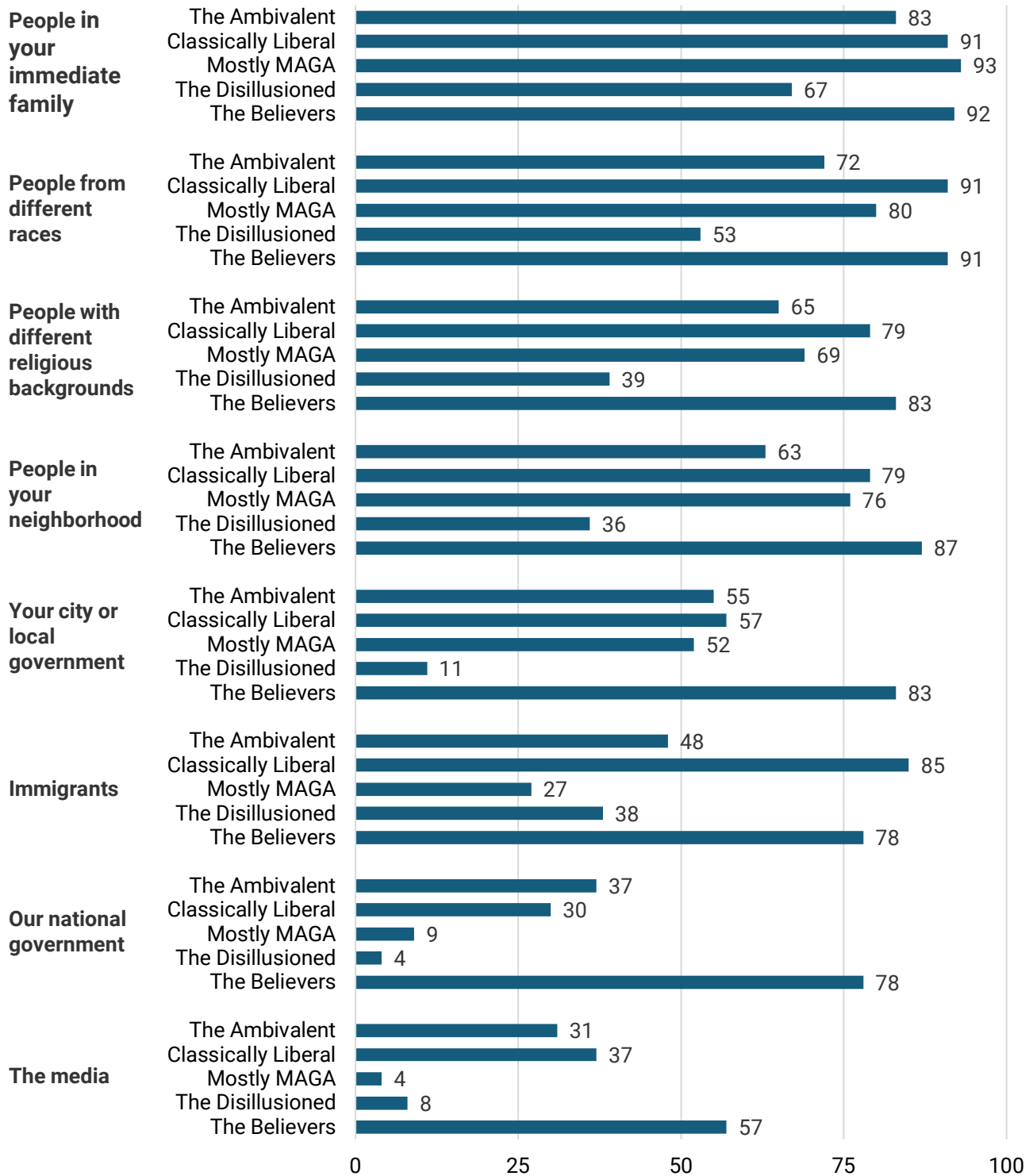
The Disillusioned also express little trust in both their local and federal governments. Other than Mostly MAGA, The Disillusioned have the least amount of trust in immigrants or the media.

Mostly MAGA is the group least likely to trust immigrants with only 27%. Large majorities of Classically Liberal and The Believers, and nearly half of the Ambivalent trust immigrants.

The Believers are the only group with more than half (57%) saying they trust the media. However, the media is the measure with the least amount of trust from The Believers.

## There are varying levels of trust in people and institutions.

Percent who say a great deal or moderate amount of trust



**Question:** For each one of the following institutions and people, please tell me how much you feel that you can trust them.

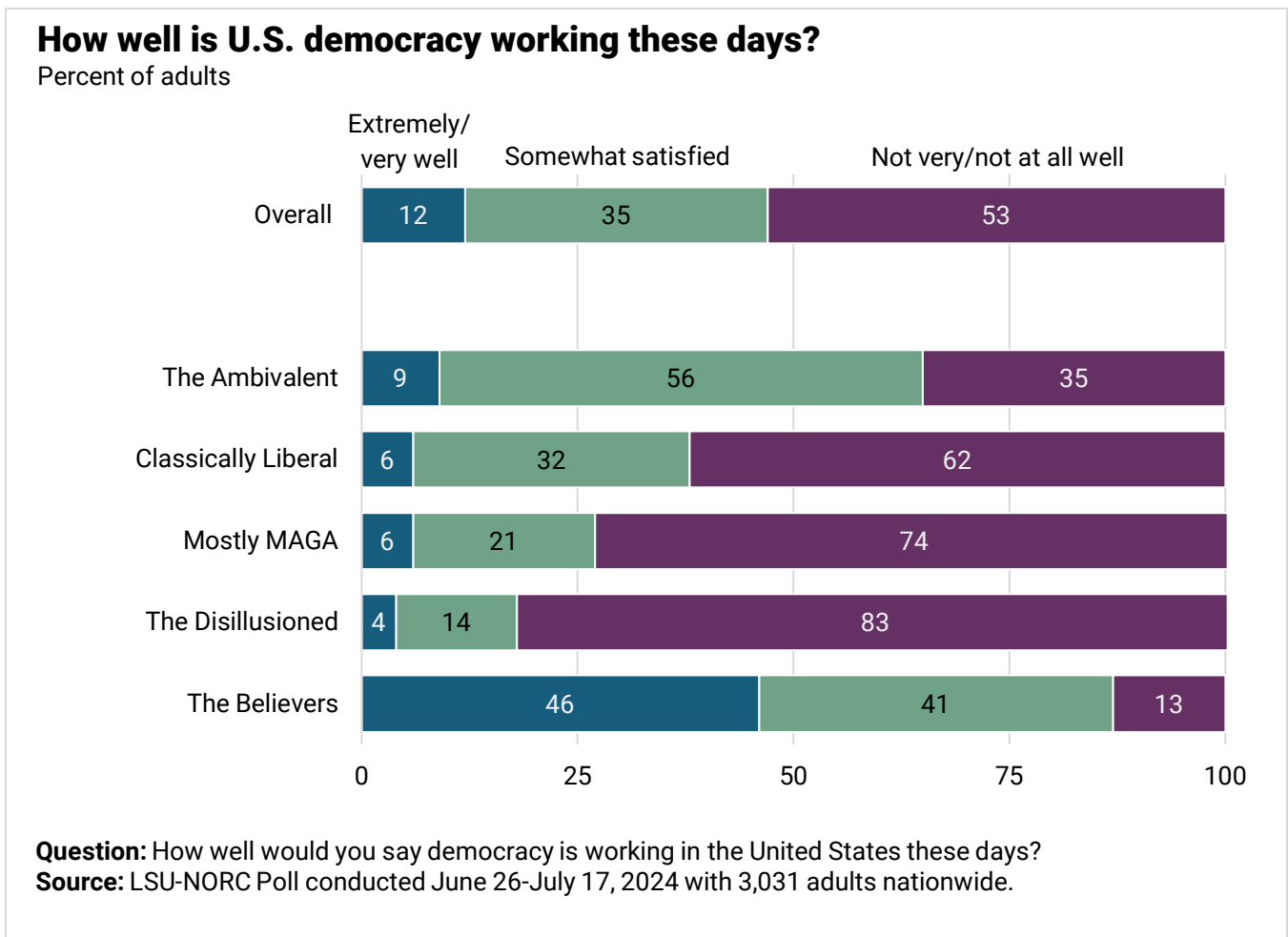
**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

## Democracy and the U.S. Identity

Seven in 10 say a democratically elected government is important to the country’s identity, but only 15% think democracy is the greatest system of government, and 53% say democracy in the U.S. is working poorly.

The public is not very upbeat about the state of American democracy and hasn’t been for several years. [The Associated Press-NORC Center has asked this question several times](#) over the previous four years and found similar percentages of the public saying democracy in the United States was not working very well.

Nearly 9 in 10 of The Believers think democracy is performing at least somewhat well, and two-thirds of The Ambivalent agree. But a majority of the rest say democracy is not functioning well.

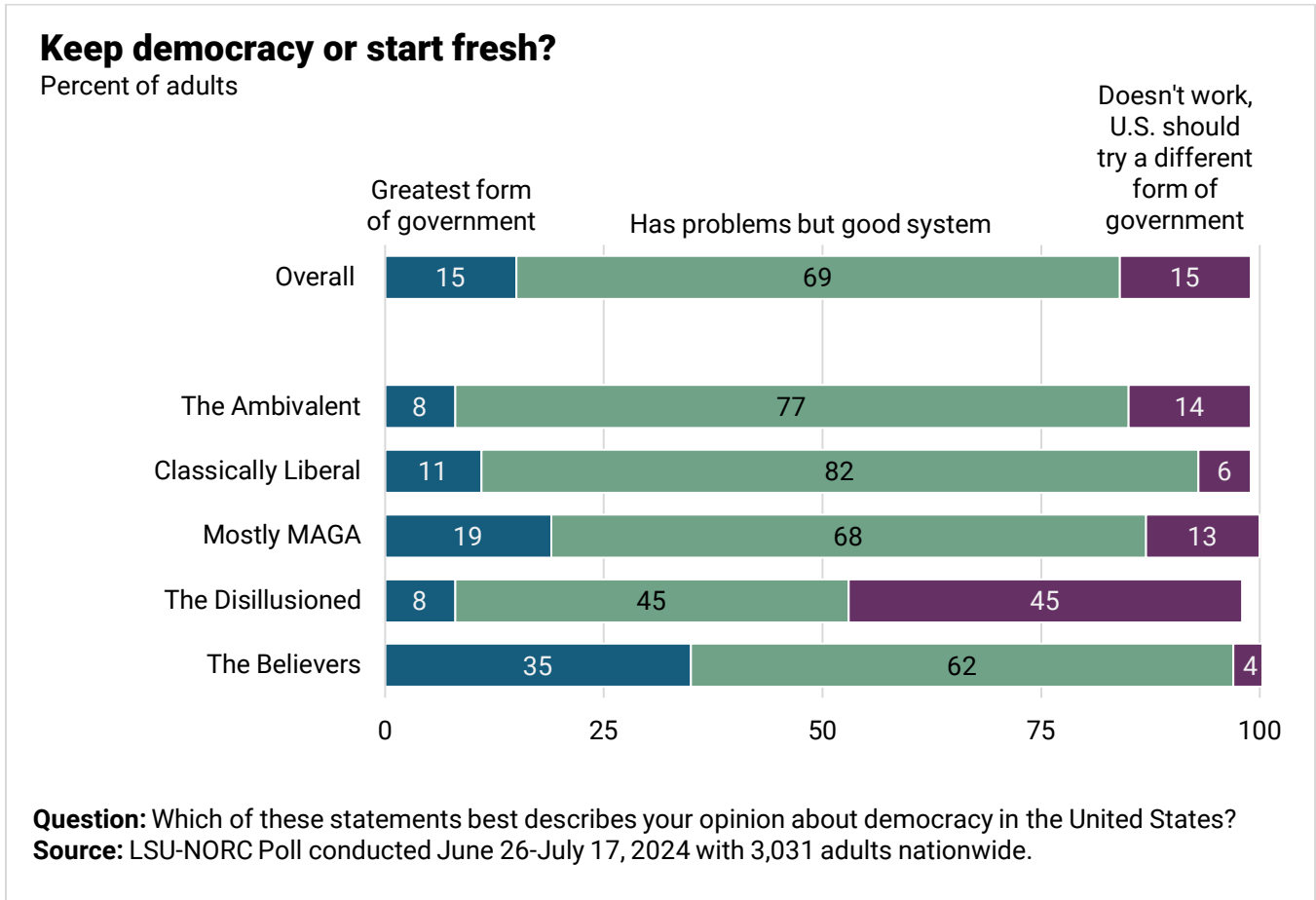


While most Americans have little faith in U.S. democracy, they still regard it as the best form of government. Few say democracy is the greatest form of government, but most say while not perfect, democracy is still a good system of government for the nation. Only 15% think the United States should scrap democracy and try something else.

The Disillusioned are most negative about democracy, with 45% suggesting that the nation abandon it and try something new. Another 45% say democracy is a good system with problems and only 8% think it’s the greatest form of government.

The Believers are the most positive about democracy. Thirty-five percent think U.S. democracy is the greatest form of government. Six in 10 say it is good system, albeit flawed, and only 4% say the United States should try another form of government.

A fifth of Mostly MAGA describe U.S. democracy as the greatest system and two thirds say it is good although with problems. About 8 in 10 Classically Liberal and The Ambivalent think the nation’s democracy has problems, but it’s a good system overall.



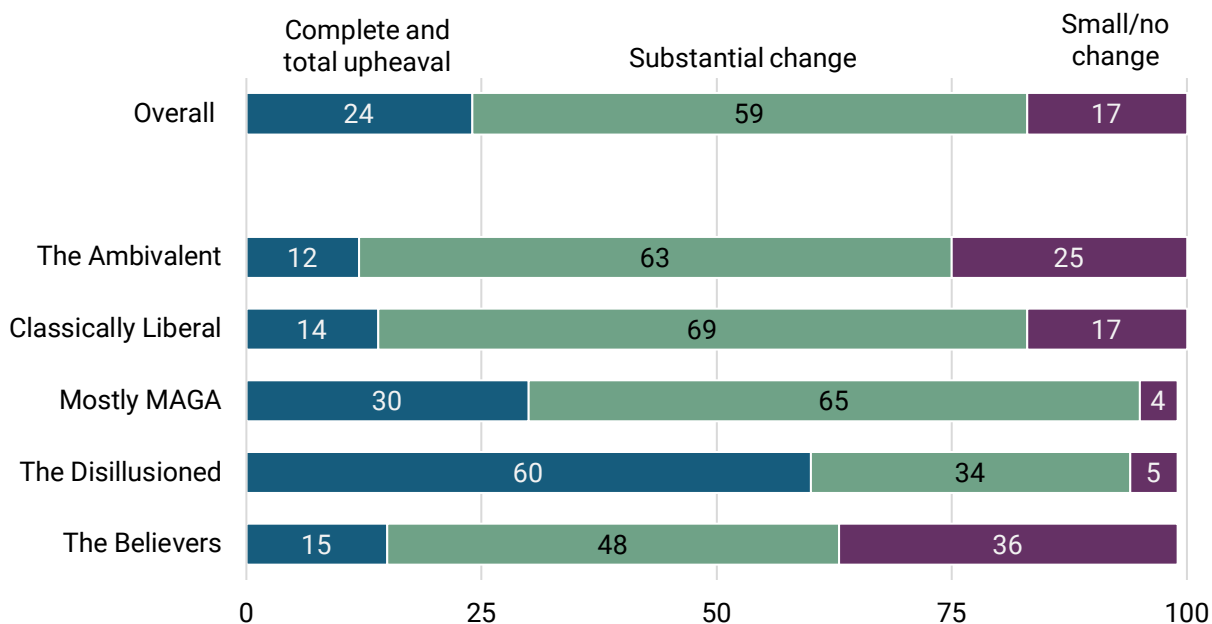
While few want to eliminate democracy from the government of the United States, most do want to see a change in how the country works. Six in 10 adults would like substantial changes to how the country is run, and another quarter want complete and total upheaval. Less than a fifth say there should be little or no change.

Again, The Disillusioned are most cynical about the current state of affairs. Sixty percent want a complete overhaul of the country’s operations. In contrast, about two-thirds of The Ambivalent, Classically Liberal, and Mostly MAGA want to see a significant change in how the work of the government is conducted.

The Believers are the least cynical about the workings of the government. More than a third are not looking for much change. About half say there should be substantial change and 15% say there should be a complete revamp of the government.

### How much change in how the country is run?

Percent of adults



**Question:** How much change would you like to see in how the country is run?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

The public may want change in how the government is administered, and they may be undecided about democracy; however, there is consensus on how important to the country’s identity is its fair judicial system, individual liberties and freedom-- and even the country’s form of government.

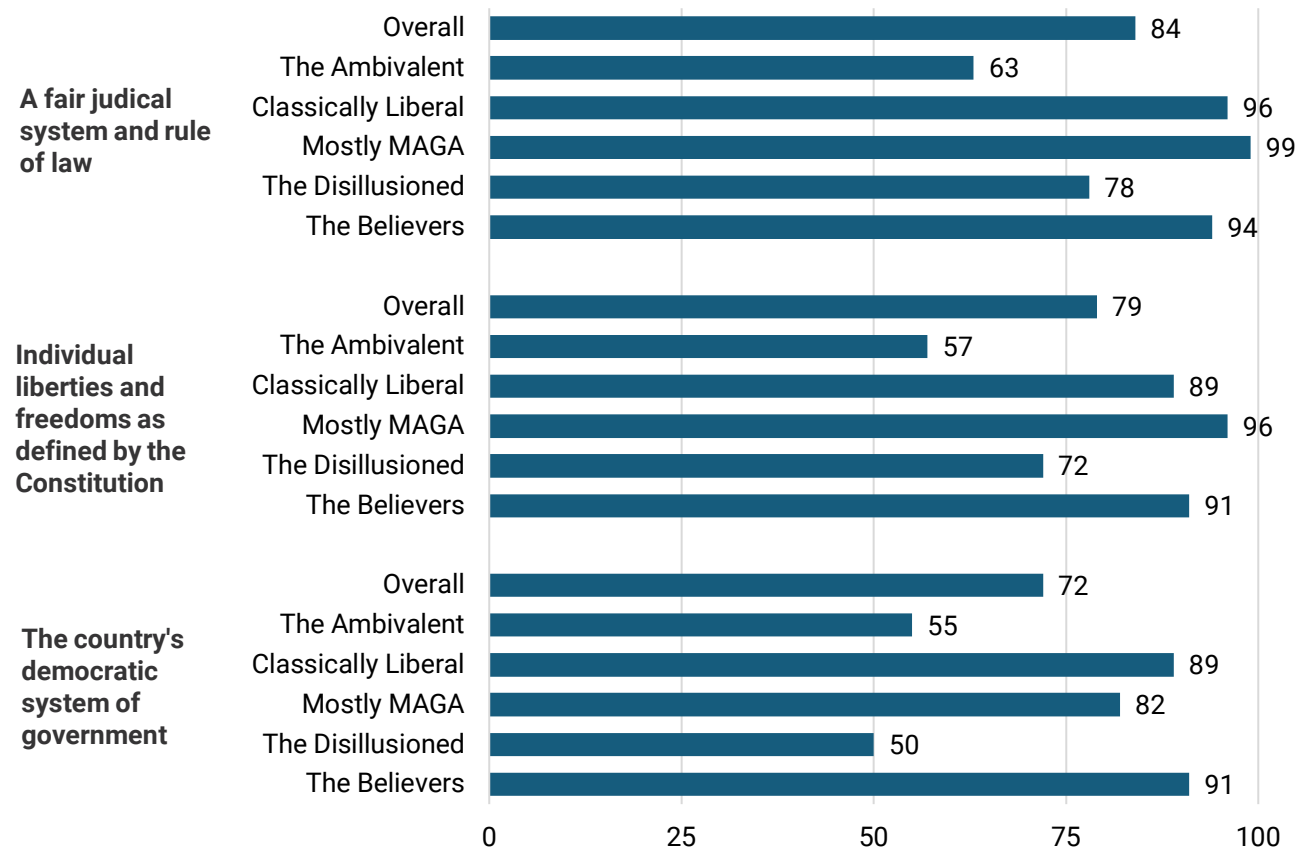
About 8 in 10 adults consider a fair judicial system and rule of law to be extremely or very important to the identity of the United States. Almost as many say liberties and freedoms defined by the constitution are extremely or very important. And regardless of many misgivings about the state of the U.S. democracy, about 7 in 10 also say the country’s democratic system of government is extremely or very important. Even 50% of The Disillusioned regard democracy as an essential aspect of the U.S. identity.

An [AP-NORC Center poll](#) conducted in 2017 found similar high levels of Americans citing country’s fair judicial system and its liberties and freedoms as critical to the U.S. national identity.

Many people also think a shared culture, values, and language are important to the country’s identity along with the ability to work toward the American Dream.

## How important is each to the U.S. identity?

Percent who say extremely or very important



**Question:** How important is each of the following to the United States' identity as a nation?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

## Attitudes toward Politics, Politicians, and Elections

The public has concerns about the quality of the country's elections. About 7 in 10 say either voter fraud or voter suppression is a problem, and two thirds are alarmed by gerrymandering. A third say Biden's election was not valid. And 40% are extremely or very troubled by the thought of post-election violence in 2024.

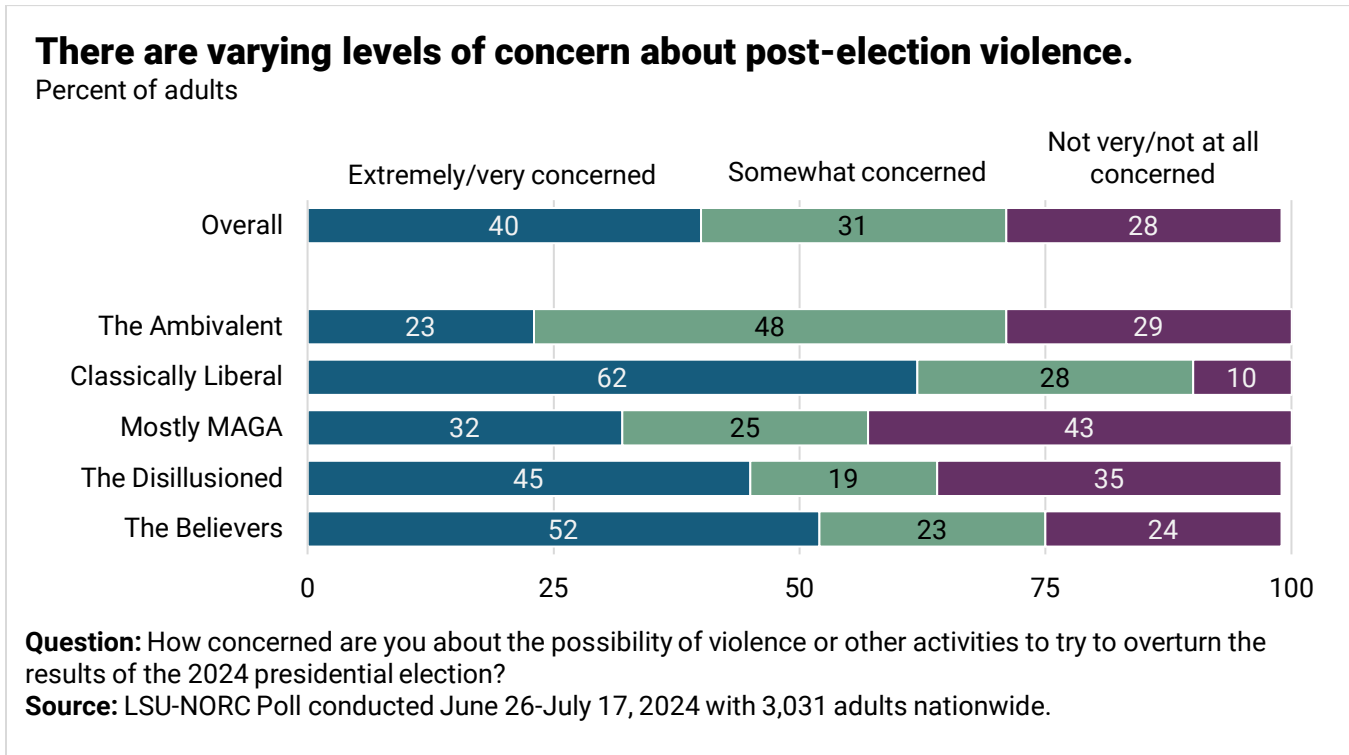
Two-thirds of the public think Biden was legitimately elected as president. About the same proportion of adults have considered Biden the rightful president every time the question has been asked in [AP-NORC polls](#) since the president was inaugurated in January 2021.

Mostly MAGA are most likely to question the results of the 2020 presidential election. Seventy-four percent of Mostly MAGA say Biden was not legitimately elected. The Disillusioned are divided: 51% say Biden is the rightful president and 48% say he is not. All Classically Liberal respondents agree that Biden is the rightful president, along with 87% of The Believers and 70% of The Ambivalent.

Forty percent are concerned about violence or other activities to try to overturn the results of the 2024 presidential election. Seven percent of interviews were collected after the assassination attempt on Trump in July. An analysis of responses before and after the attempt, considering demographic and political

characteristics, shows a small but significant increase in concerns about political violence. However, given the small number of interviews collected after the attempt, the impact on the responses is not meaningful.

Classically Liberal are most concerned about post-election violence. Half of The Believers are concerned, along with 45% of The Disillusioned. The Ambivalent is least likely to say they are extremely or very concerned, and Mostly MAGA are most likely to have little or no concern.



Most people consider gerrymandering, the practice of states drawing legislative districts that intentionally favor one political party, as a major problem. A majority of most typologies say gerrymandering is a major problem, including 90% of Classically Liberal. The Ambivalent are less concerned with 42% saying it is a major problem and slightly more regarding it as a minor problem.

There is less consensus on voter fraud or suppression. Overall, 69% of the public think voter fraud is at least a minor problem. Eighty percent of The Ambivalent, 71% of The Disillusioned, and 61% of The Believers say ineligible people voting is at least a minor problem.

Many have similar levels of concern about voter suppression. Just about as many (72%) of the public believe voter suppression is at least a minor problem, along with 75% of both The Ambivalent and The Believers, and 73% of The Disillusioned.

Mostly MAGA and Classically Liberal are outliers on this topic. Seventy-three percent of Mostly MAGA say voter fraud is a major problem, but only 11% of Classically Liberals agree.

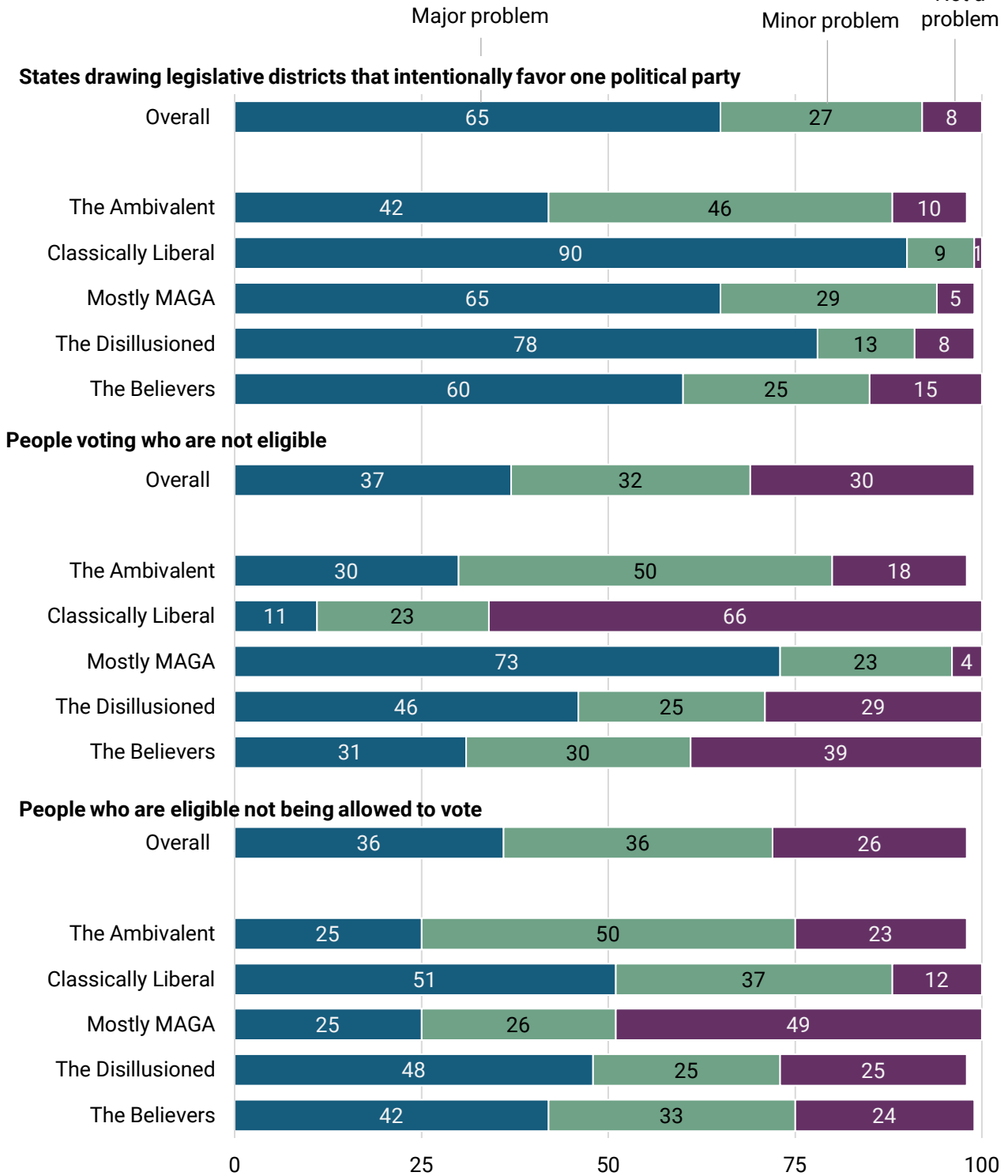
On the other hand, about half of Classically Liberal respondents say eligible voters not being allowed to vote is a major problem, while only 25% of Mostly MAGA agree.

The public have had similar levels of concern about elections in national polls conducted by [The AP-NORC Center](#) since 2020.



## Problems with gerrymandering, voter fraud, and voter suppression

Percent of adults

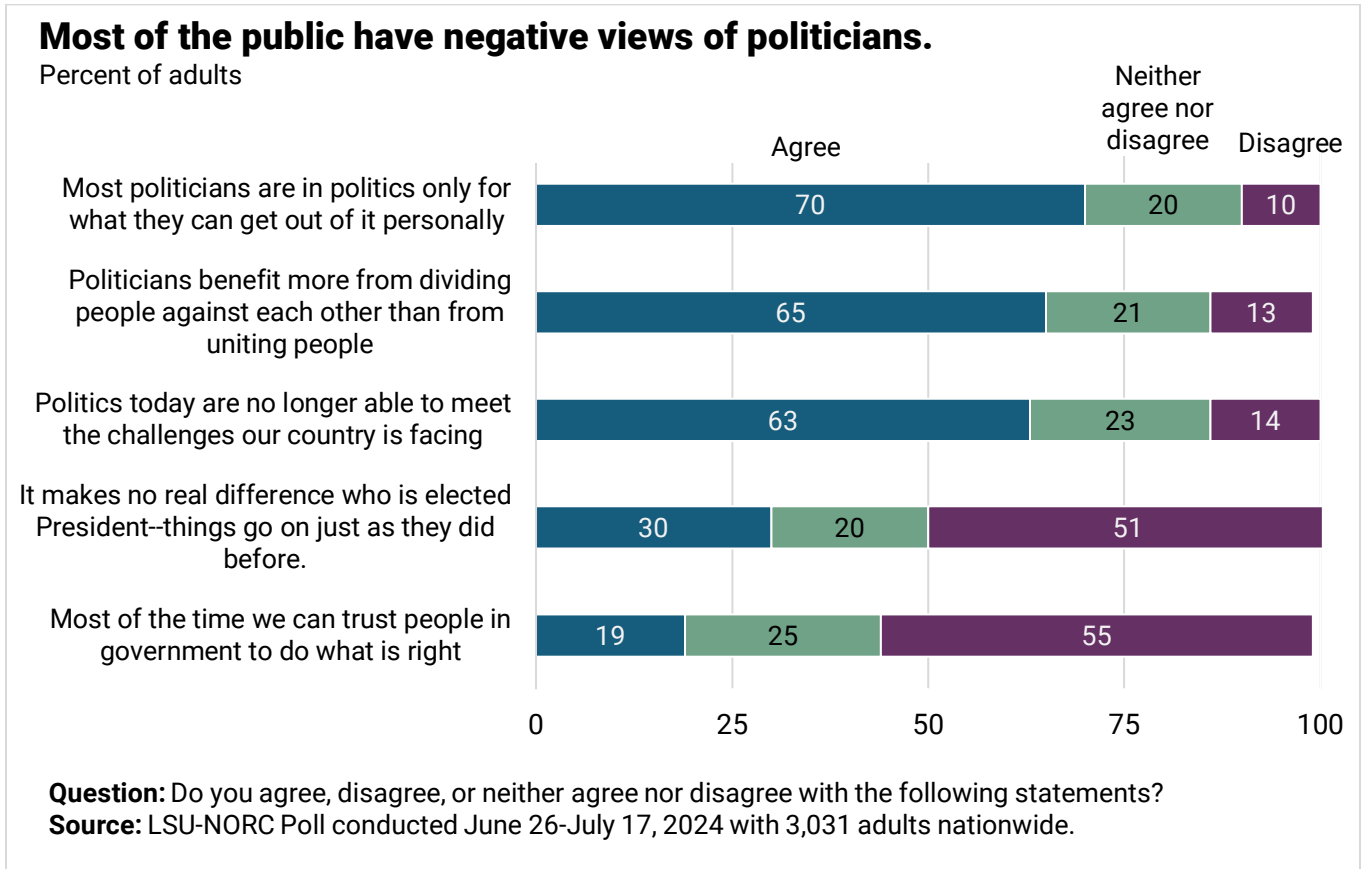


**Question:** How much of a problem is each of the following in U.S. elections?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

Most of the public see politicians through a negative lens. They are viewed as self-serving, more interested in fueling divisions than bringing people together, ineffective, irrelevant, and untrustworthy. Moreover, it seems that some of these characterizations are becoming increasingly negative. Twenty years ago, according to the General Social Survey conducted in 2004, 32% of adults agreed that most of the time people in government can be trusted to do the right thing. In the 2014 General Social Survey, only 21% agreed that politicians are trustworthy, similar to 19% in this survey.

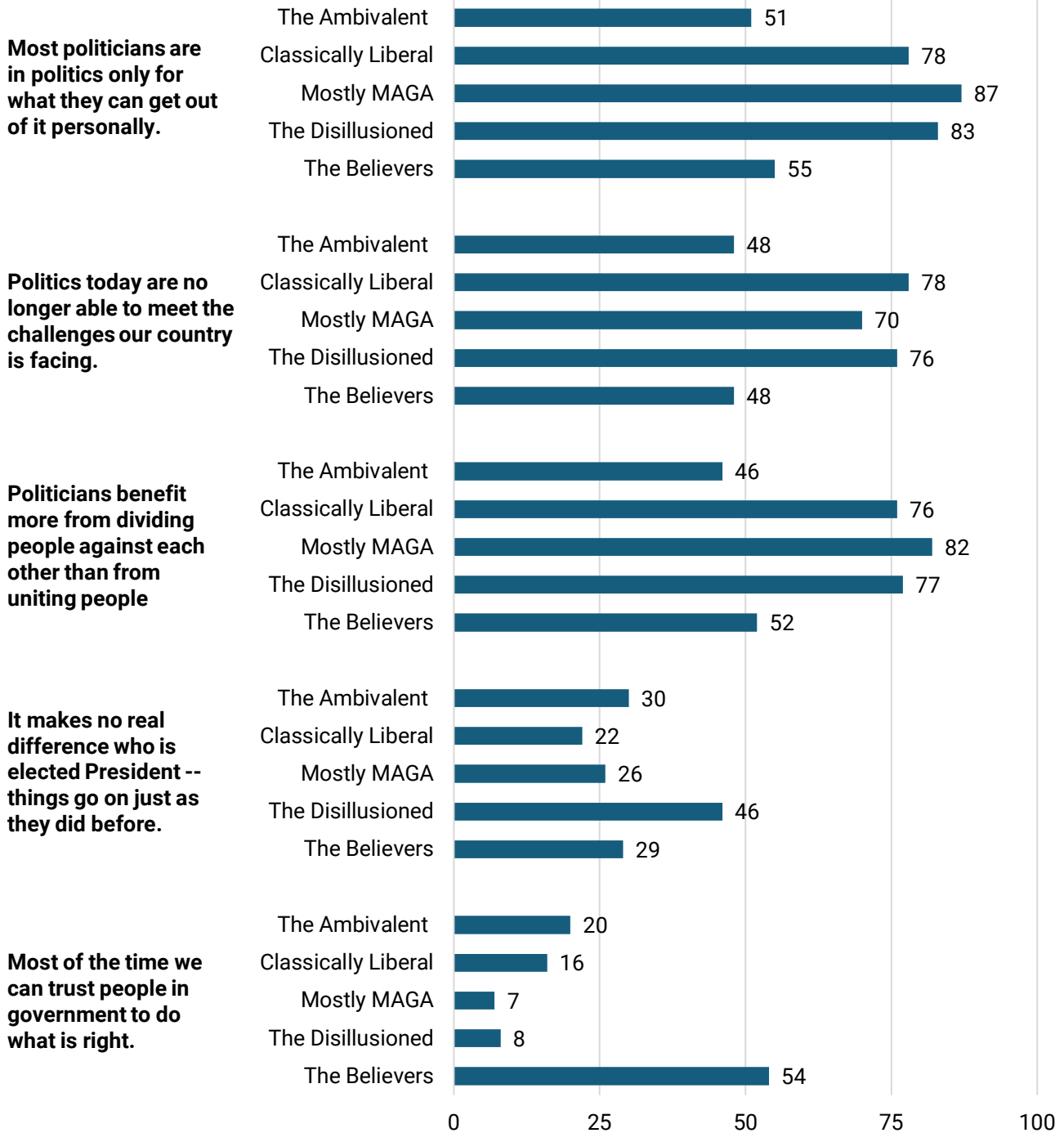
According to the 2004 General Social Survey, 46% agreed that most people in politics are only out for what they can get, and in 2014, 56% agreed with that assessment. Now, 70% think most politicians are self-serving.



In varying degrees, most typologies agree with the overall negative view of politicians, with two exceptions. Fifty-four percent of The Believers say most of the time politicians can be trusted to do the right thing. And while few of the other typologies think it makes no difference who is in the Oval Office because things don't change, 46% of The Disillusioned say it is inconsequential who is elected president.

## How are politicians viewed?

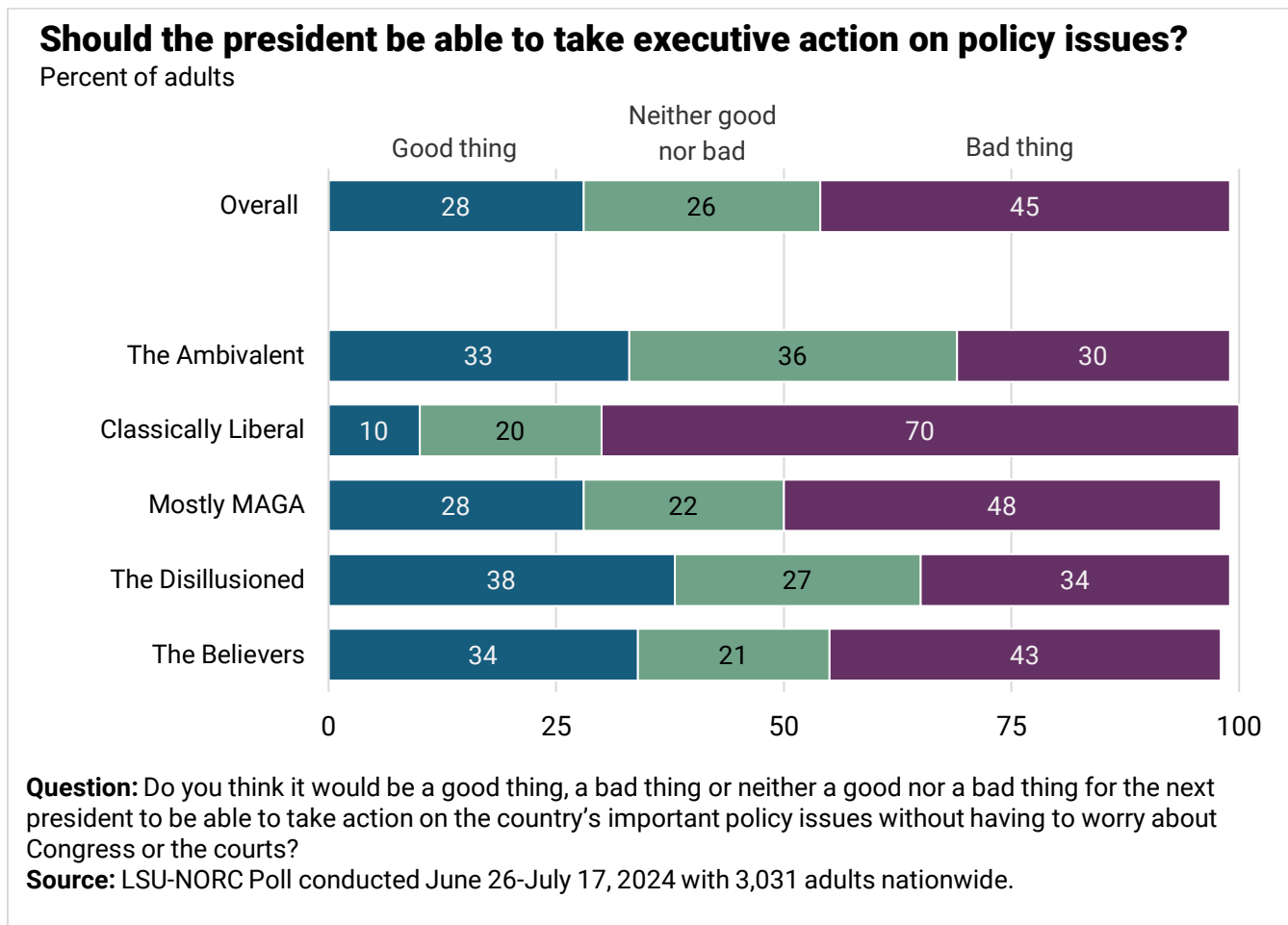
Percent who agree



**Question:** Do you agree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree with the following statements?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

The public is not particularly inclined to support the ability of a president to take executive action. Forty-five percent of the public say it would be a bad thing for the next president to be able to act on important policy issues without having a check from Congress or the courts. Only 28% approve of giving a president this ability. Classically Liberal is particularly opposed to giving the president the ability to take executive action.



Most people have little faith that the federal government is looking out for the interests of most Americans or people like them. They question whether the U.S. government understands their concerns. Fifty percent feel that the interests of people like themselves aren’t being represented and 48% question whether most Americans interests are represented.

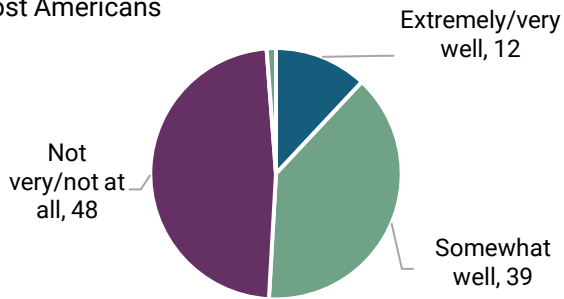
About half of The Believers think Washington is looking out for most Americans, including people like themselves. Among The Ambivalent, about 6 in 10 believe the federal government is doing somewhat well in representing people’s interests.

An [AP-NORC poll conducted June 2023](#) found similar levels of doubt in whether the government is doing a good job representing the interests of people like themselves or most Americans.

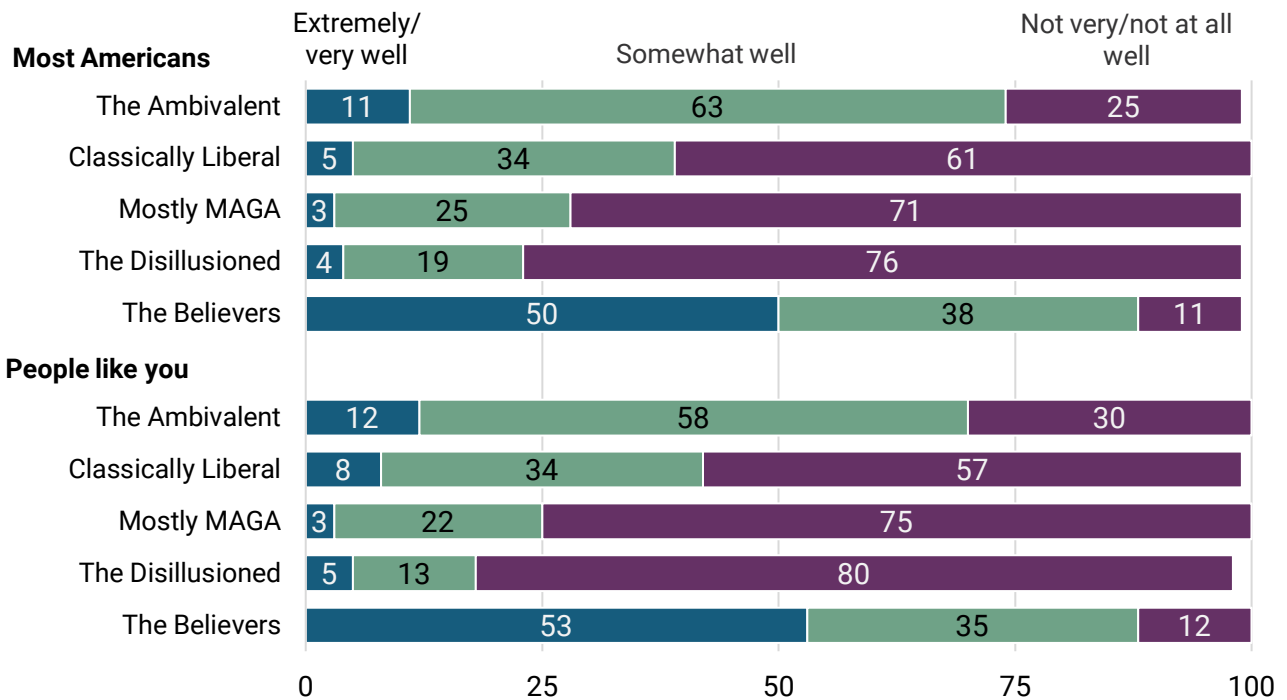
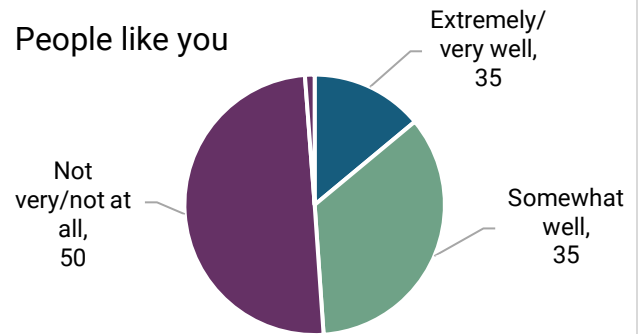
## How well are the interests of each represented by the U.S. government?

Percent of adults

Most Americans



People like you

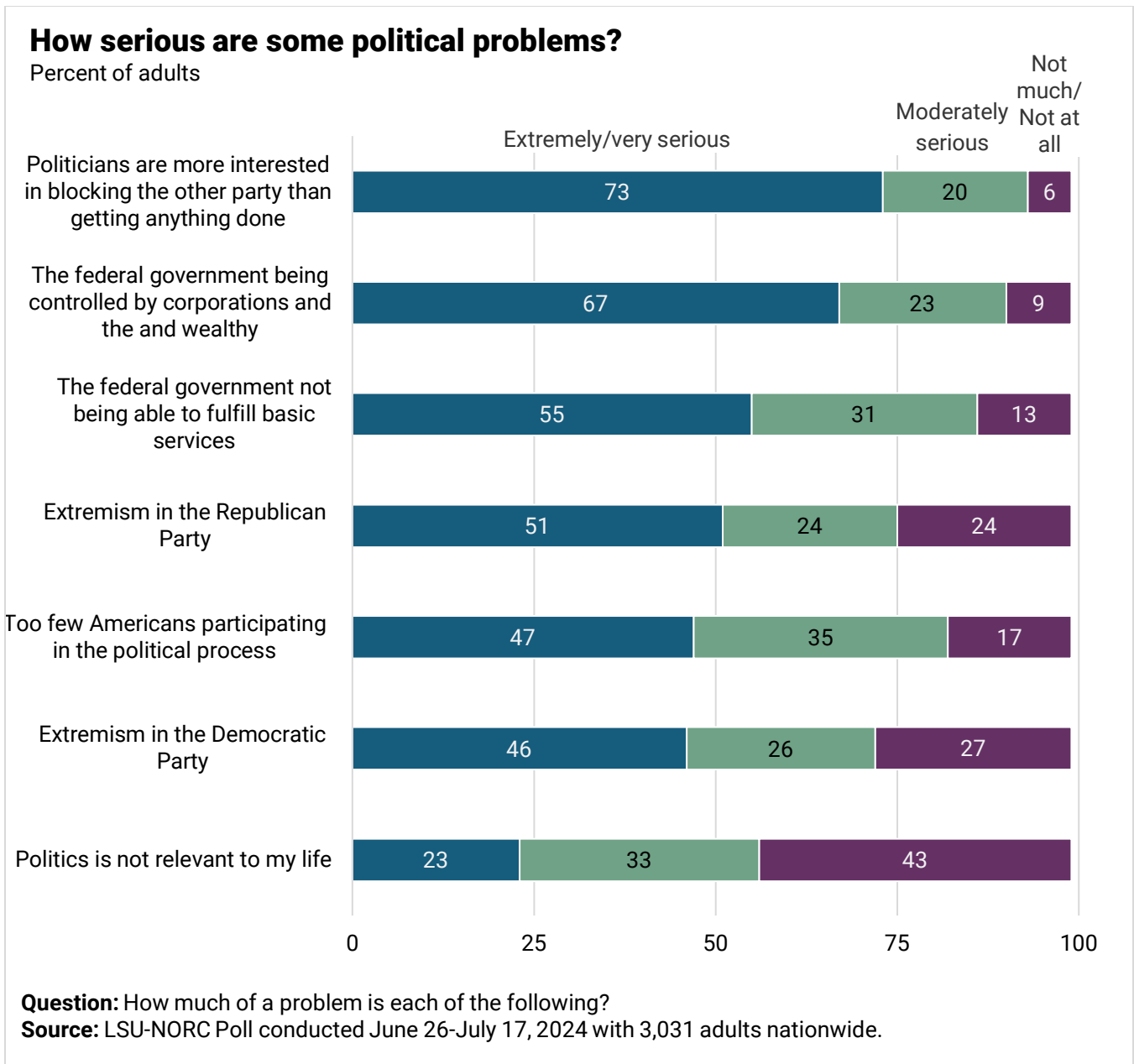


**Question:** In general, how well do you think the interests of each of the following are represented by the U.S. government?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

The public finds Washington's gridlock and the influence of money on the government especially serious. Of slightly less concern is the inability of Washington to provide basic services and a lack of voter turnout. Few consider the lack of relevance of politics in their lives to be of great concern.

Fifty-one percent say extremism in the Republican party is an extremely or very serious problem and about as many say the same about the Democratic party. However, there are strong partisan differences about party extremism. Eighty-two percent of Democrats regard extremism in the Republican party as a serious problem, and 69% of Republicans think it is extremism from the Democrats that is a serious problem. About 4 in 10 independents say both parties have a problem with extremism.



A large majority of most typologies consider politicians’ efforts to block the other side an extremely or very serious problem. About half of The Ambivalent describe the absence of politicians reaching across the aisle to get things done to be an extremely or very serious problem, and 38% say it is a moderately serious problem.

Overall, about half of the public think control of Washington by corporations and the rich is a major problem. Large majorities of Classically Liberal, The Disillusioned, and Mostly MAGA agree, along with 60% of The Believers. Four in 10 of The Ambivalent also think it is a serious problem, but just about as many regard it as only moderately serious.

Again, a majority of the groups, except The Ambivalent, think Washington’s inability to provide basic services is an extremely or serious problem. In fact, 80% of The Disillusioned call it serious. Only a third of The Ambivalent regard this issue as particularly serious, while about half think it is moderately serious.

Nearly half of all Americans consider the lack of voter participation in the political process to be an extremely or very serious problem. About 6 in 10 Classically Liberal think too few American voters taking part is a major problem, along with nearly as many of The Believers and about half of The Disillusioned and Mostly MAGA. Only about a quarter of The Ambivalent see this as extremely or very serious, while about half say it is moderately serious.

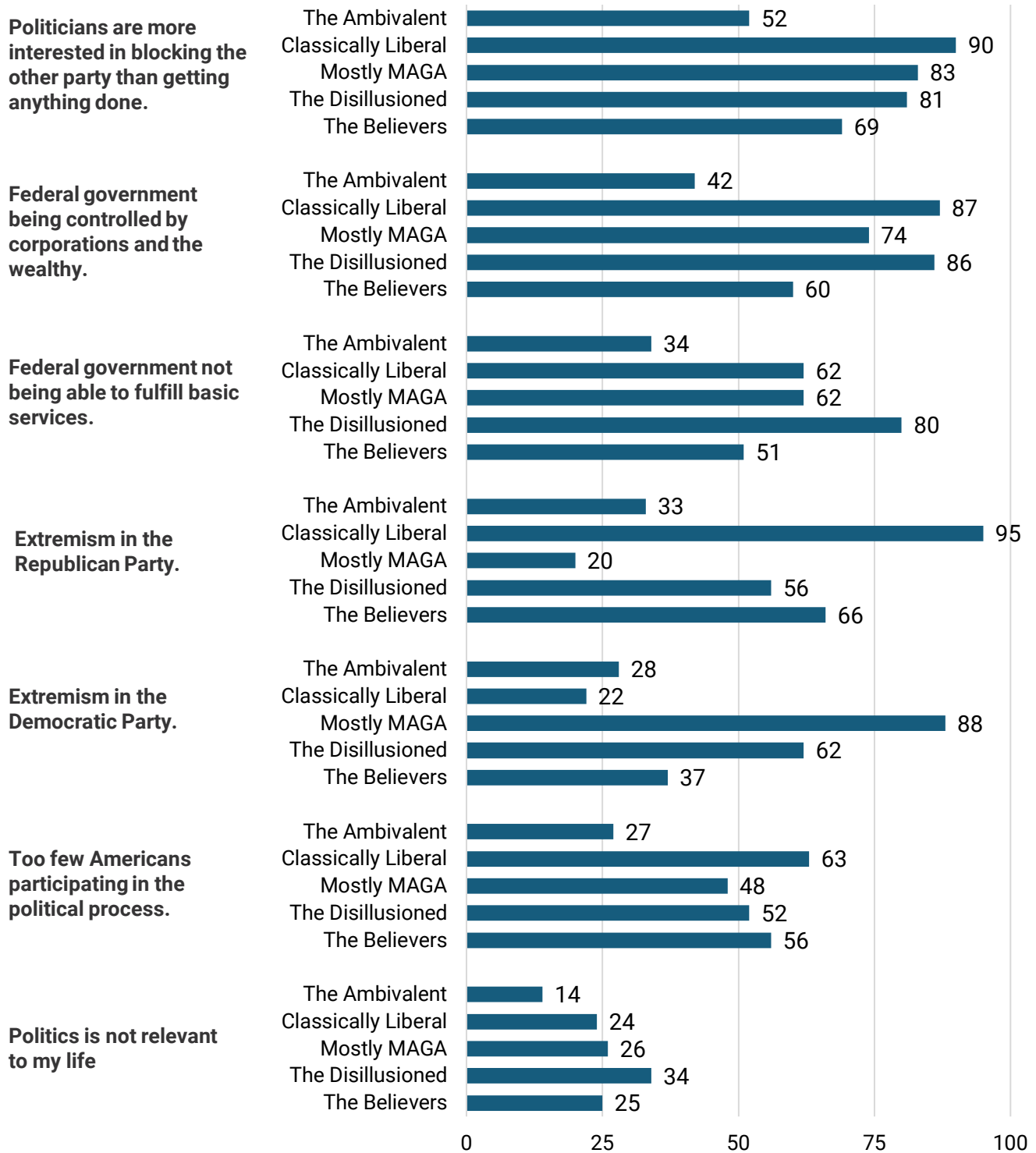
Only about a quarter of the public regard the relevance of politics as serious. About the same amount of Classically Liberal, Mostly MAGA, and The Believers agree. A third of The Disillusioned consider the lack of political relevance in their life to be serious, but only 14% of The Ambivalent think that as well.

The views of Mostly MAGA and Classically Liberal are just about mirror opposites on extremism in the political parties. While 95% of the Classically Liberal say Republican extremism is extremely or very serious, only 20% of Mostly MAGA agree. And 88% of Mostly MAGA think extremism on the Democratic side is an extremely or very serious problem with 22% of Classically Liberal respondents in agreement.

Among the other typologies, two-thirds of The Believers think the Republicans have a problem with extremism, and 37% say the same about the Democrats. About 6 in 10 of The Disillusioned say extremism in the Republican party is a major problem and about equal proportion say the same about the Democrats. And a third of The Ambivalent say Republican extremism is a very serious problem, and nearly as many think that about the Democratic party.

## There are different views on the seriousness of political problems.

Percent who say each is extremely or very serious



**Question:** How much of a problem is each of the following?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.



## Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion

Nearly two-thirds of Americans feel the country's diversity makes the United States stronger and less than 10% say the diverse population weakens the country. Still, a third of adults think native born Americans are losing influence and jobs because of immigration.

A study conducted in 2022 by [The AP-NORC Center](#) found similar results regarding the public's attitudes toward diversity and immigration.

Most adults agree that the ability of people living here to get good jobs and achieve the American Dream is extremely or very important to the U.S. identity. There is less agreement on the importance of shared American culture and values, the mixing of cultures and values from around the world, or the ability of people to come from other places in the world to escape violence or find economic opportunities.

A majority of Classically Liberal and The Believers think the variety of people in the United States make the country much stronger. Only 1% of Classically Liberal and 5% of The Believers think diversity actually weakens the nation.

In contrast, about a fifth of Mostly MAGA and The Disillusioned say diversity weakens the country, and another third of each of those typologies believe it makes no difference either way. Few of The Ambivalent say diversity is a negative for the country but 41% think it's neither a benefit nor a disadvantage.

## Section 5: Civic and Political Engagement

In this section, we look at the civic and political engagement of Americans. This survey was conducted before Biden withdrew from the presidential race and Vice President Kamala Harris received the Democratic nomination. The change in candidates could have altered the public's interest and participation in the 2024 presidential campaign.

Most of the American public is politically engaged, with the vast majority reporting they are registered to vote and three-quarters saying they voted in the last presidential election. However, only about half say they pay substantive attention to government affairs or the 2024 presidential campaign.

Three-quarters say they often vote in presidential elections, and most say they also regularly vote in state, midterm, and local elections, as well as primaries or caucuses and referendums. Only about 4 in 10 report regularly voting in local school board elections.

Very few Americans have been civically engaged over the past year. Between a fifth and a quarter have taken part in a religious institution or organization, signed a petition, volunteered for a social organization, or donated to a social cause. Fewer have communicated with their representatives, attended public hearings or community meetings, or taken part in organized sports. Less than 10% have taken part in political campaigns, protests, or service organizations. Thirty-six percent say they have not done any of these things.

## How Much Attention have Americans Paid to the 2024 Election?

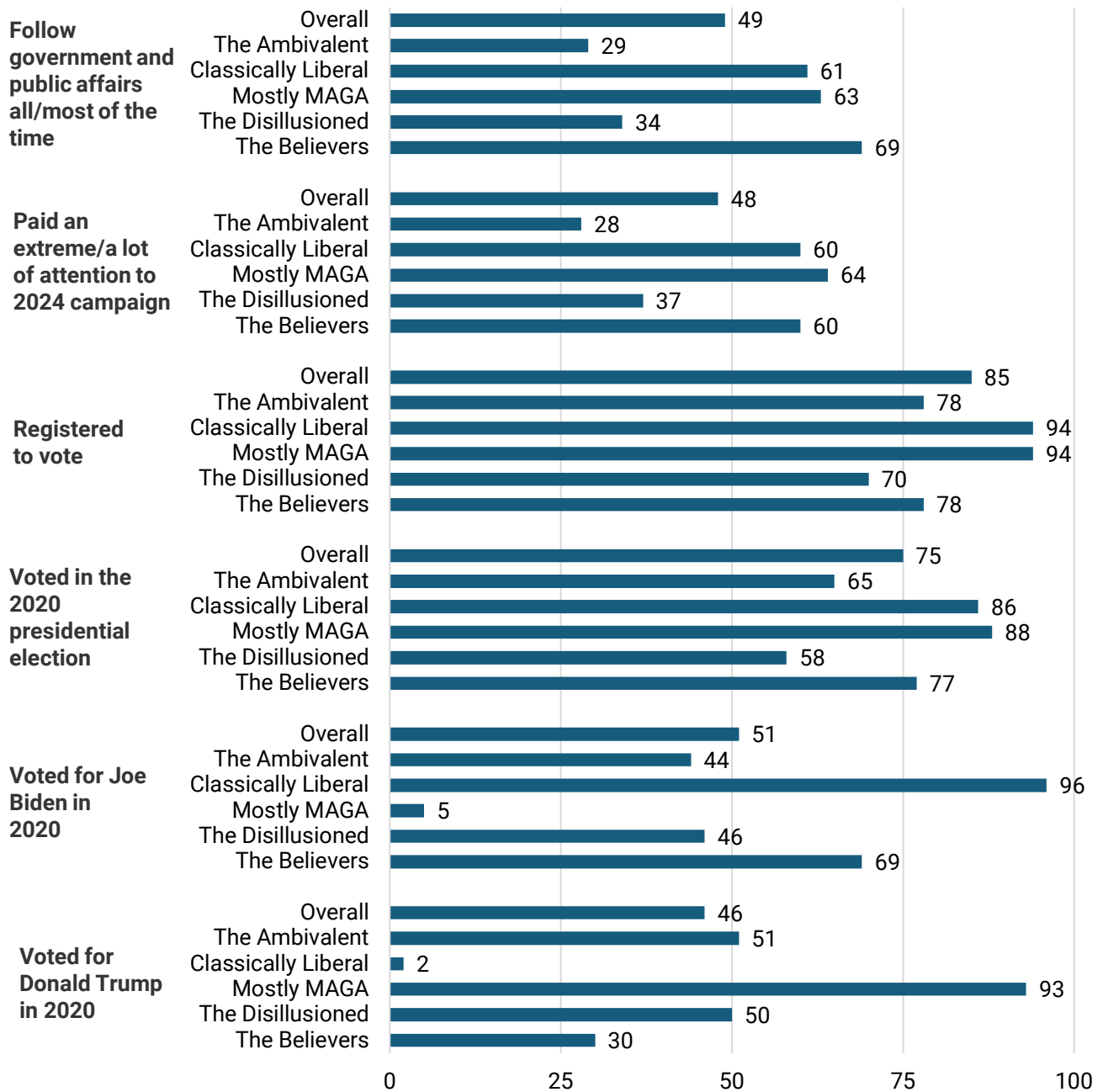
About half of Americans are paying attention to government or public affairs all or most of the time (49%). Just as many have been paying at least a lot of attention to the 2024 presidential campaign so far (48%). Fifty-five percent think politics are at least somewhat relevant to their lives.

However, 85% of respondents report they are currently registered to vote at their address, and 75% said they voted in the last election. When it comes to the 2024 election, Americans said if they were unhappy with both major parties' candidates, they would vote for their party's nominee (33%) or for whichever candidate they dislike less (32%). Twenty-one percent say they wouldn't vote for president.

The cohorts vary when it comes to how much attention they pay to government or public affairs. More than 6 in 10 of The Believers, Mostly MAGA, and Classically Liberal follow government and public affairs all or most of the time. The level of attention drops significantly among The Disillusioned and The Ambivalent.

## How engaged in politics are Americans?

Percent who say each of the following



**Questions:** Some people follow what’s going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there’s an election going on or not. Others aren’t that interested. Would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs:

How much attention have you paid to the 2024 presidential campaign so far?

Are you currently registered to vote at your address, or not?

In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren’t registered, they were sick, or they just didn’t have time. Which one of the following statements best describes you?

In the 2020 presidential election, did you vote for Donald Trump, Joe Biden, or someone else?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

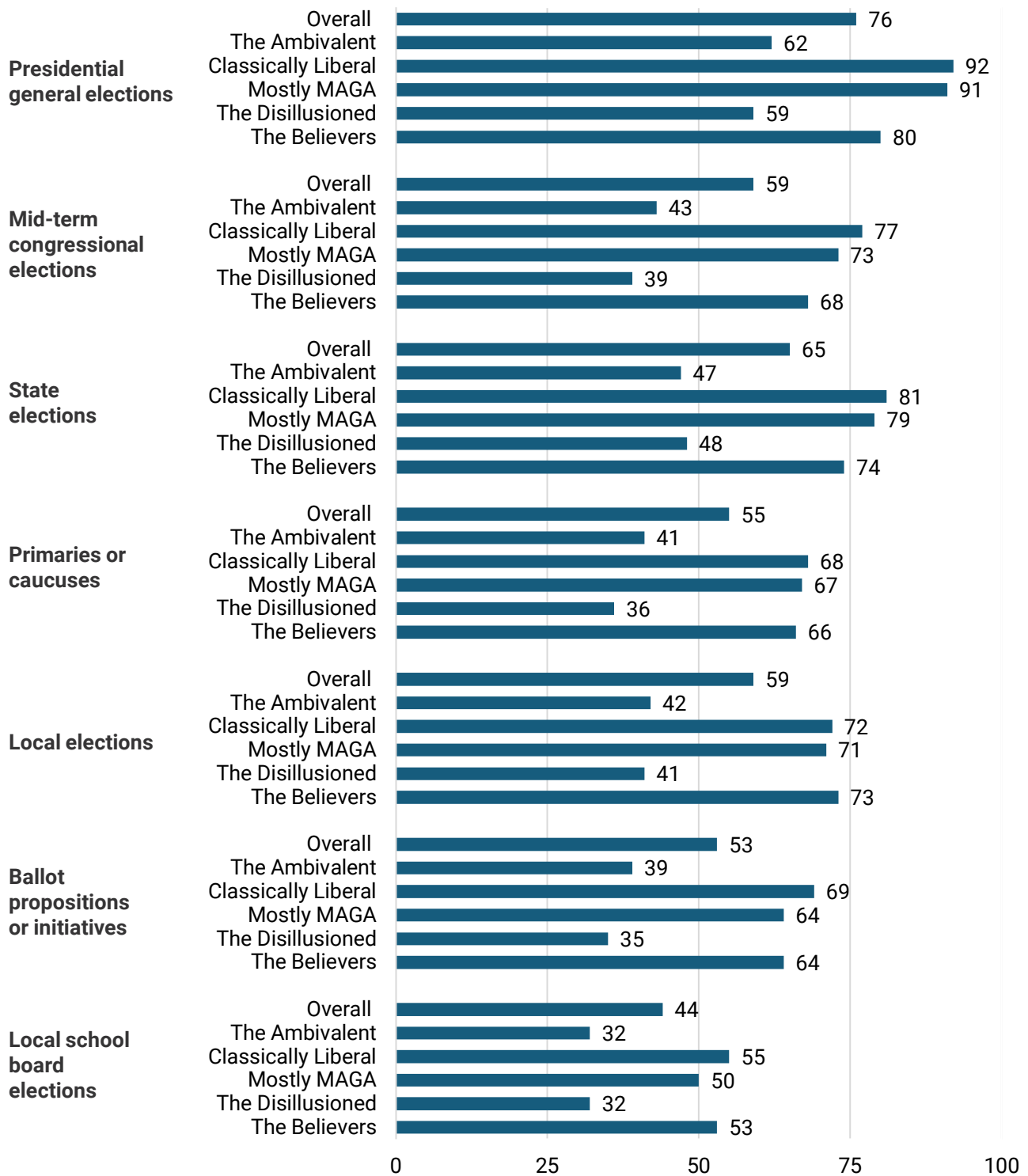
## How Often do People Vote?

Three-quarters of Americans say they always or mostly vote in the presidential general elections every four years. Around 60% also say they always or mostly vote in state elections, midterm elections, and their local elections. About half report regularly voting in primaries or caucuses and ballot propositions or initiatives. Americans take part in local school board elections the least, with only 44% saying they always or mostly vote in those contests.

Regardless of cohort, most of the public say they typically vote for president. Classically Liberals and Mostly MAGA are more politically engaged than the other typologies with around 90% reporting regular voting for president, and over half saying they vote always or most of the time in every other election, including local school board elections. The Believers also say they are politically active with 80% who say they regularly take part in the presidential general election and more than half in every other election as well. The Ambivalent and The Disillusioned are less inclined to vote, with about 60% saying they vote for president, and less saying they take part in other elections.

### Most say they vote in presidential elections.

Percent who say almost always or most of the time



**Question:** How often, if ever, do you vote in the following elections?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

## How Civically Engaged are Americans?

Overall, few Americans are engaged in their communities. About a quarter say they participated in religious institutions or organizations, signed a petition, volunteered for a social or community organization, or donated to a social cause over the past year. Other types of civic engagement participation fall below 20%. Thirty-six percent say that they have not taken part in any civic activity in the last 12 months.

The two highest participating groups are Classically Liberal and The Believers. Mostly MAGA isn't far behind, but The Ambivalent and The Disillusioned are the least civically engaged. Fifty-two percent of The Disillusioned say they do not take part in any civic activities, along with 45% of The Ambivalent. For the Classically Liberal, 24% say they are not civically engaged, as well as 28% of the Believers and 30% of Mostly MAGA.

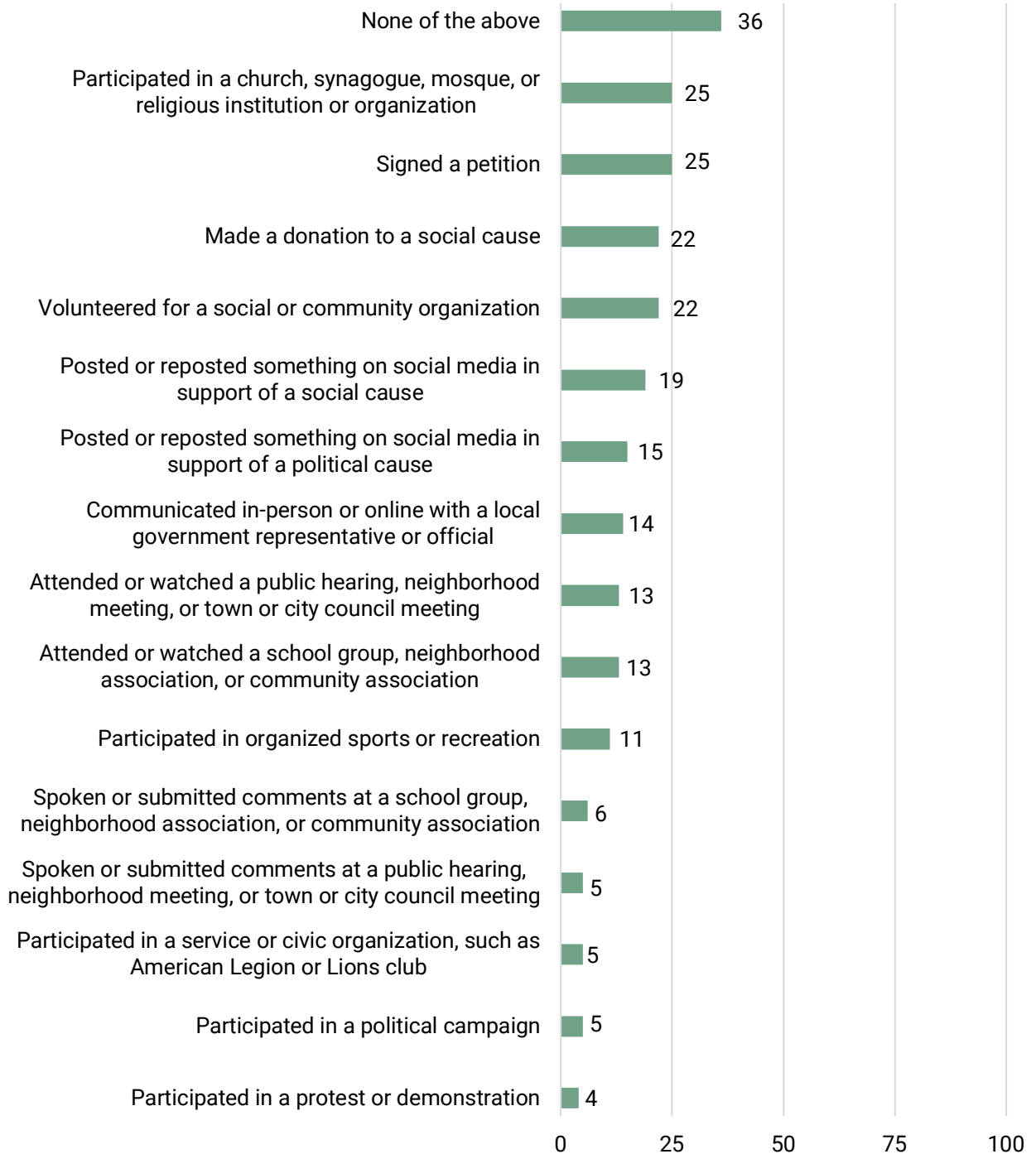
Classically Liberal has higher rates of participation in signing petitions (43%) where the other typologies fall around 15% to 25%. Classically Liberal are also more likely to post or repost something on social media in support of a social or political cause (30% and 25%) with the other typologies falling around or below 20%. Thirty-six percent of Classically Liberal make donations to a social cause, along with 28% of The Believers. Less than 20% of the other typologies donate to social causes.

The Believers share some similarities with Classically Liberal. They both have comparable rates in participation in volunteering for a social or community organization (31% and 29%), and in communicating in-person or online with a local government representative or official (23% and 17%). The rest of the typologies fall around or below 20%.

However, when it comes to participation in religious institutions or organizations, Mostly MAGA have the highest rate of participation with 41%, and The Believers behind them at 33%. The other typologies' participation in organized religion is around 25%. Only about 1 in 10 of The Disillusioned participate in organized religion.

## Most Americans are not civically engaged

Percent of adults who have done the following



**Question:** Over the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? These activities can be online or in-person. *Select all that apply.*

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

## Section 6: Attitudes about the News Media

In this section, we look at Americans' attitudes toward the news media and their news behaviors.

As in the past, we find that overall the public tends to be more critical about *the news media in general* than with *the news media they usually consume*. For example, more than half say the media they use most often deal fairly with both sides of an issue; only a third say that about news media in general.

In the same vein, 60% say news media in general are more interested in making money than in telling the truth; only 37% say that about the media they use most often.

The public has become more likely to get their news from social media or online sources. A third use social media, YouTube or digital or online news sources for information about government and public affairs. Still, about half use more traditional sources, such as network and local news broadcasts, local and national newspapers, public television and radio, and cable news programs.

### News Media in General vs. News Media Used

#### How well do the media inform?

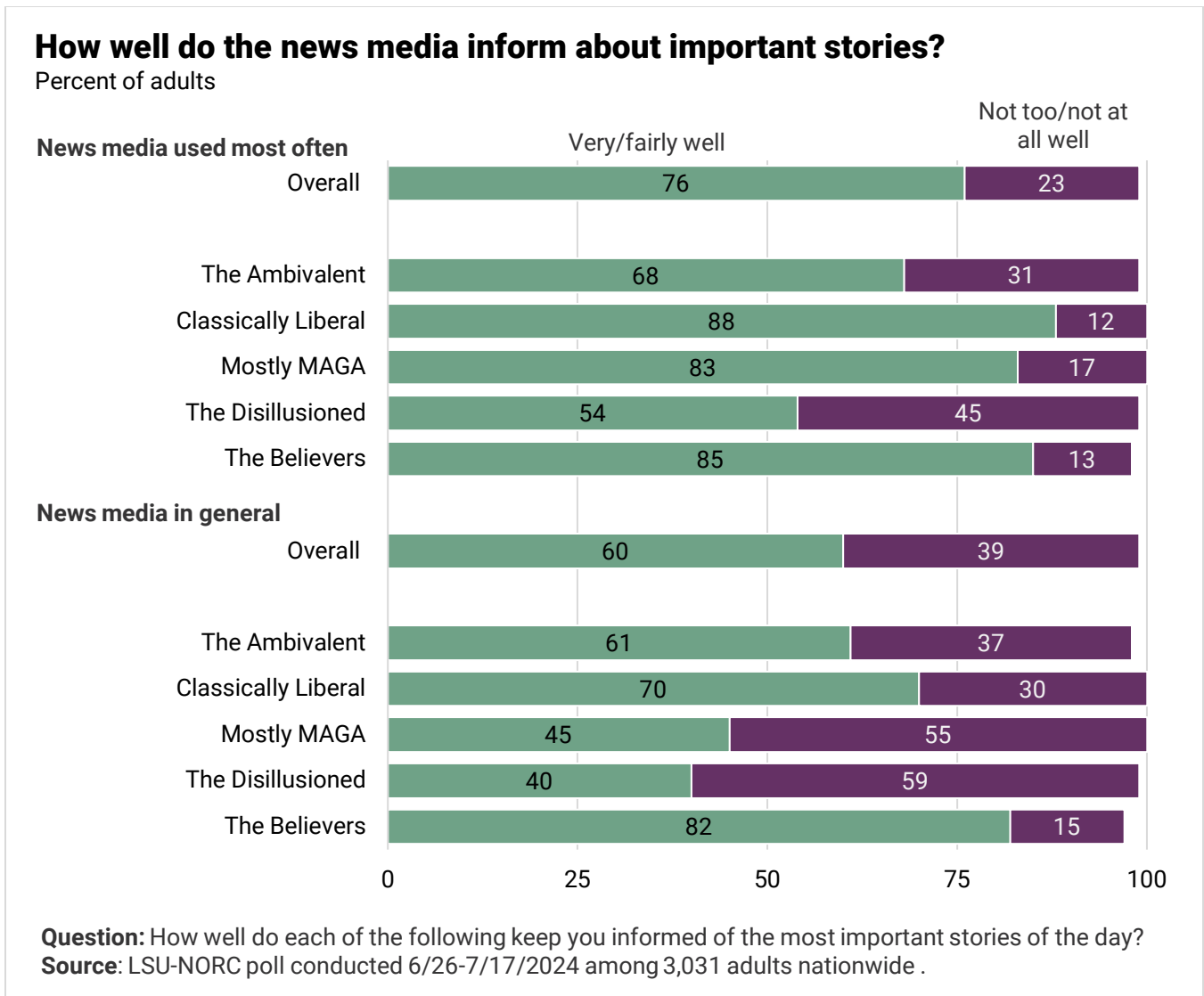
Interestingly, people feel they are well informed by the media they consume, even if in many other respects they don't view news coverage as very dependable.

More specifically, a majority in every group says the *news media they use most often* do a good job of informing them about the important news of the day. More than 8 in 10 of The Believers and Classically Liberal feel that way along with 7 in 10 of The Ambivalent. But it is even true of better than 8 in 10 Mostly MAGA, a group that generally has scathing regard for the press. It is also true of 54% of The Disillusioned.

The difference comes when you ask about *the news media in general*. Even here a majority of the Ambivalent (61%), Classically Liberal (70%), and The Believers (82%) feel well informed.

The outliers are The Disillusioned and Mostly MAGA. They are more negative about the ability of the news media in general to keep one informed about important stories. More than half of The Disillusioned and Mostly MAGA think the news media do a poor job of informing the public.





As you drill down into more specific questions about the press, the numbers tend to drop further for all groups.

### Do people think the news media deal fairly with all sides?

Again, people trust their own media.

The Believers are the most positive. About two-thirds say the source of the news they usually use are fair to all sides, and half say it about the news media in general.

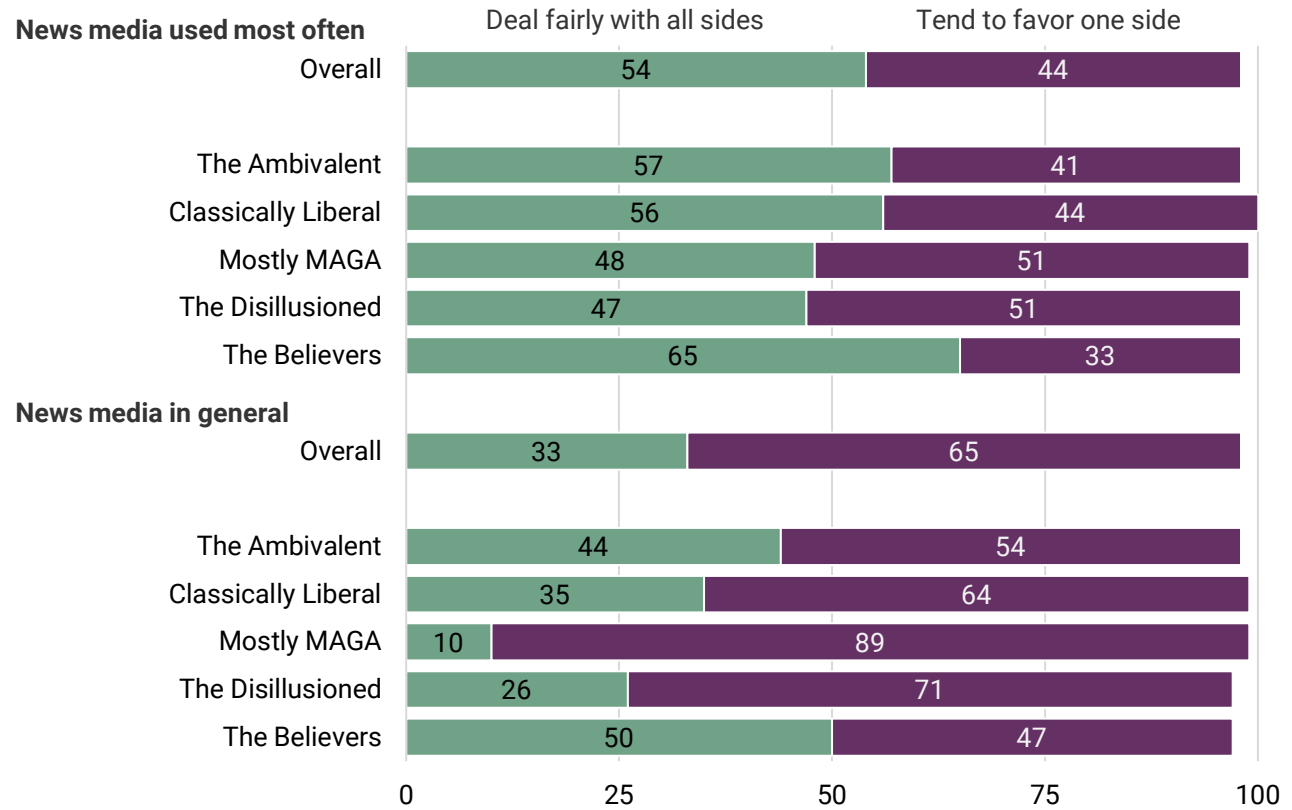
Nearly 6 in 10 of Classically Liberal and The Ambivalent think their usual source of news is fair to all sides. But only a third of Classically Liberal and 4 in 10 of The Ambivalent say the same about news media in general.

Yet on the question of fairness, Mostly MAGA and The Disillusioned are suspicious even of the media on which they most often rely. Fully half of Mostly MAGA and The Disillusioned think the media they usually consume tend to favor one side of an issue.

And they have a withering view of the media generally. Only 10% of Mostly MAGA and about a quarter of The Disillusioned say news media in general are even handed when reporting the news.

## Do the news media deal fairly with all sides when presenting news about political and social issues?

Percent of adults



**Question:** In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that each of the following deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

### Are the media willing to admit their mistakes?

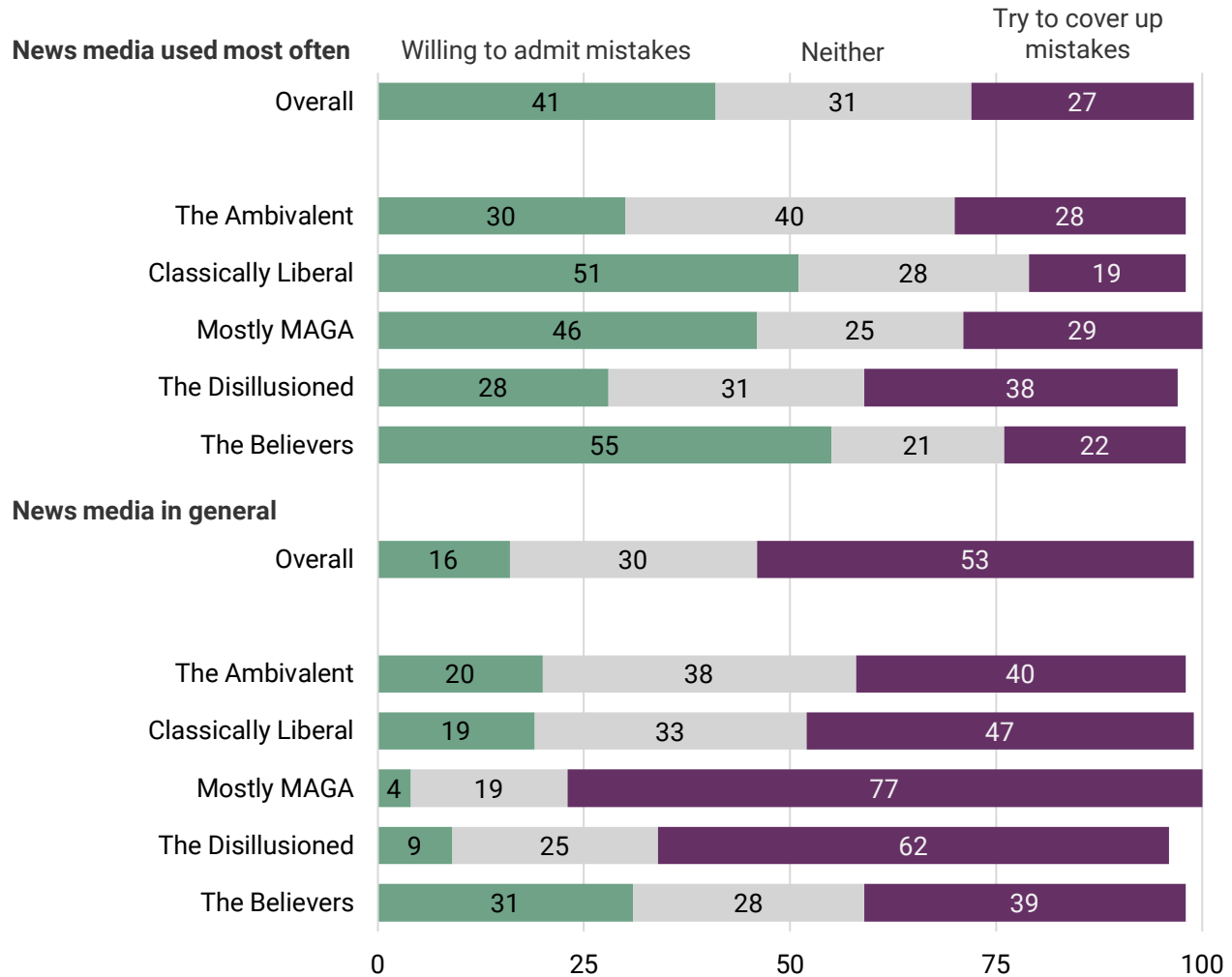
About half of The Believers and Classically Liberal and nearly half of Mostly MAGA think *the news media they consume* are willing to admit mistakes.

But few think the media in general meet that level of accountability. Even among The Believers--the most forgiving-- only 31% think the press overall owns up to its mistakes.

And three-quarters of Mostly MAGA and 6 in10 The Disillusioned say news media try to conceal errors.

## Are the news media willing to admit their mistakes or try to cover up them up?

Percent of adults



**Question:** Would you say each of the following are willing to admit their mistakes or try to cover up their mistakes or neither?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

## On Balance, do the News Media Tend to Protect Democracy or Hurt it?

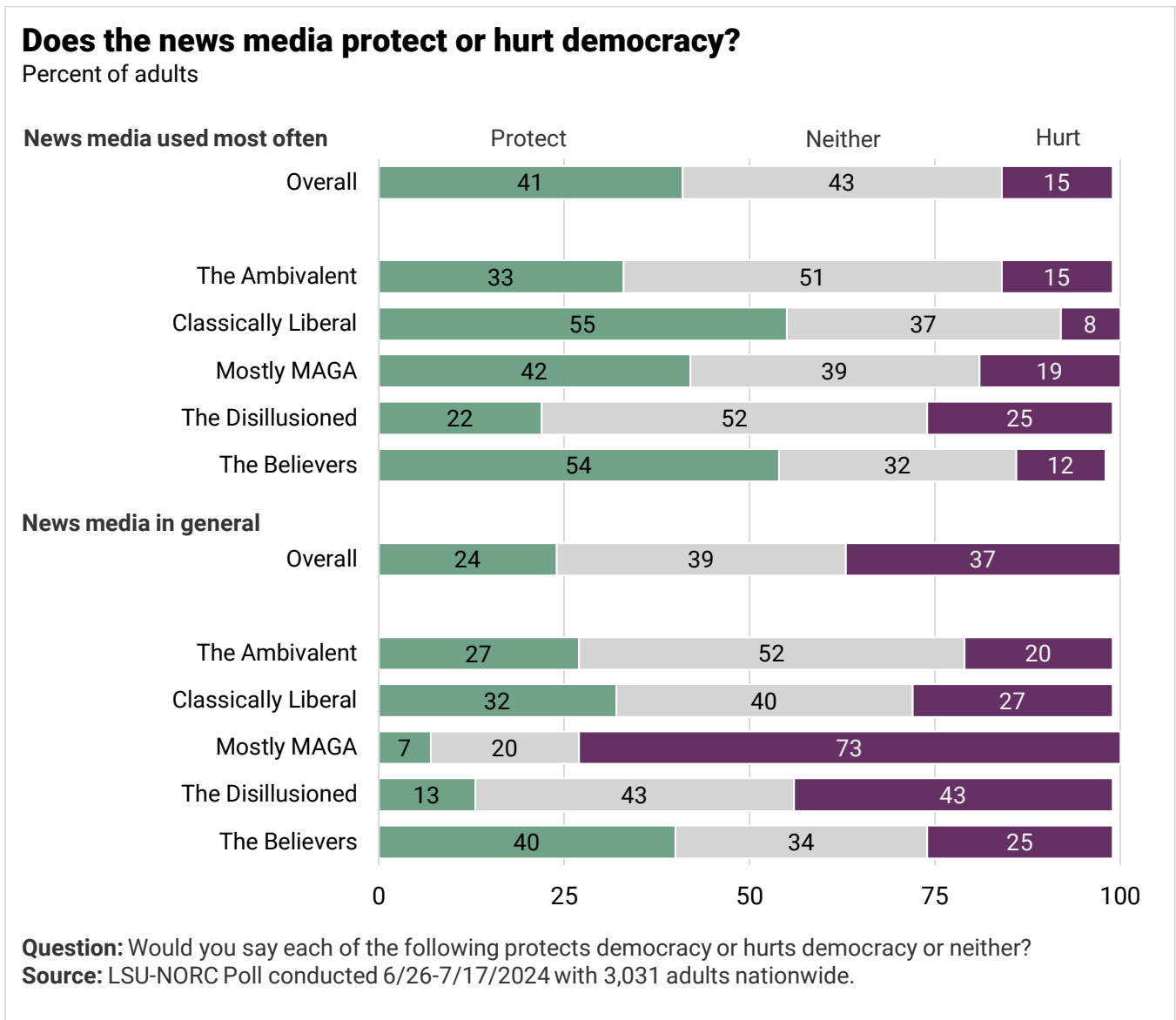
This question about media probes a bottom-line equation.

The responses will offer journalists only limited solace. Even the media cynical Mostly MAGA tend to be more positive about their own media, but it is far from a ringing endorsement. More than half of The Believers and Classically Liberal think their news media protect democracy, along with about 4 in 10 Mostly MAGA – good numbers but not an overwhelming endorsement.

That cannot be said of The Disillusioned or The Ambivalent. Even thinking of the news sources they rely on most, The Disillusioned are equally likely to say the media they use help as often as they hurt. And fully half of The Ambivalent and The Disillusioned say the news media they rely on neither benefit nor damage democracy.

And the public, even among the more media friendly cohorts, are fairly cynical about the value of the press in general. For instance, just 40% of The Believers say news media are a positive for democracy. That is true of only a third of Classically Liberal and less than 3 in 10 of The Ambivalent. Forty-three percent of The Disillusioned say news media in general hurt democracy and the same percentage say they neither help nor hurt.

And what of the Mostly MAGA? Nearly three-quarters say news media are detrimental to democracy.



### Is the press trying to get the story right? Or are they just in it for a buck?

A key element in understanding declining levels of trust in the news media involves perceptions of the press' motives.

On this key question of motive, the results for journalists again are not encouraging. Overall, across the cohorts, the public is just as likely to say that *even the media they rely on most* are more interested in making money than telling the truth.

The Believers are the most likely to attribute good motives to the news media. Six in 10 of The Believers think truth telling is more important to *the news media they rely on* than making a profit.

But the other groups tend to be more cynical – even about the media they use most often.

Nearly half of The Disillusioned say the media they use are more concerned about increasing their earnings than in being truthful. About 4 in 10 of Mostly MAGA and The Ambivalent agree that the news media they rely on look to make a profit over telling the truth. A third of Classically Liberal say a profit is more important than delivering the truth, and about 15% say neither is their motive.

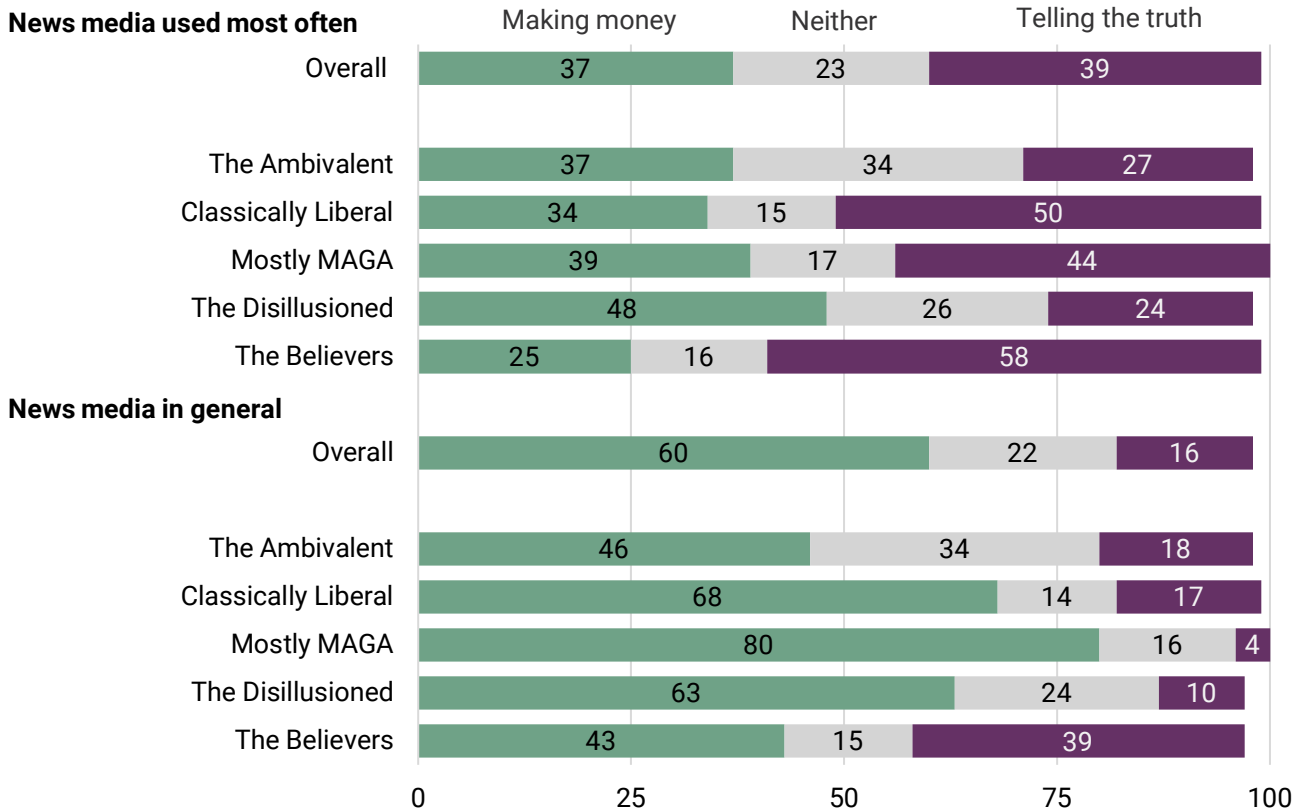
And the news media in general, not their preferred source? The numbers are stark.

Eighty percent of Mostly MAGA think the media are mostly motivated by profit, not truth telling. But it is also true of approximately 6 in 10 of The Disillusioned and Classically Liberal along with nearly half of The Ambivalent.

Again, The Believers are the most inclined to be trusting. Yet even they are split: 43% say the press is more motivated by profit and slightly more than 39% think the press is more motivated by trying to tell the truth.

## Is the news media more interested in making money or telling the truth?

Percent of adults



**Question:** Would you say each of the following is more interested in making money or telling the truth or neither?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

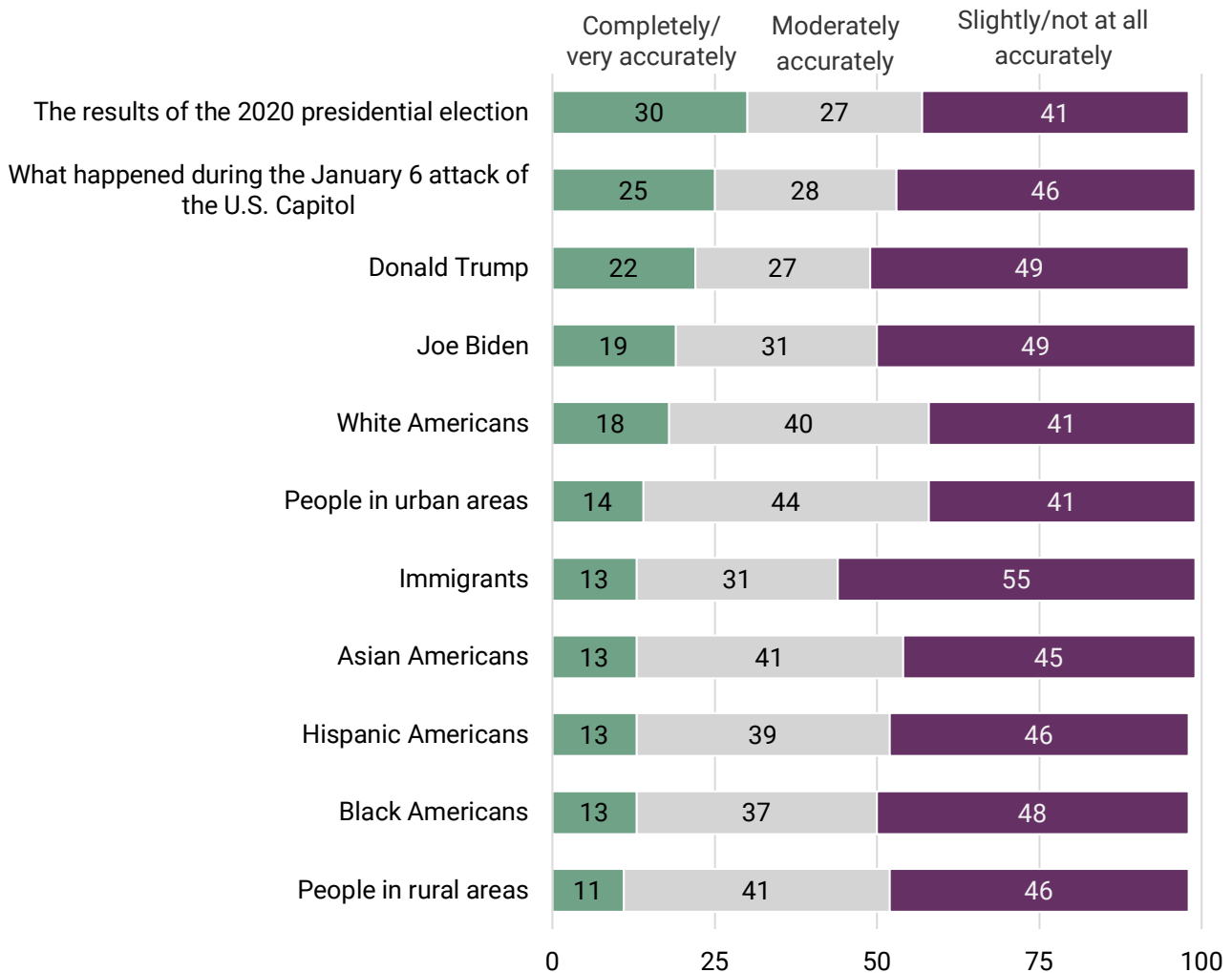
## Accuracy of News Media

Americans think the press covers some subjects more reliably than others. For example, only 30% of the public think the results of the 2020 presidential election have been reported completely or very accurately. About half do not think the coverage of Trump is very accurate, and the same number say the same about Biden.

Less than 15% think reporting about racial or ethnic minority groups, urbanites or residents of rural areas, or immigrants is very accurate. In fact, 55% say coverage of immigrants tends to be wrong.

### How accurate does the news media portray these topics?

Percent of adults



**Question:** Thinking about news coverage in general, how accurately do you think news organizations portray each of the following topics?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

Furthermore, there are differences among the cohorts on this, though the numbers tend not to be particularly high among any groups.

About 6 in 10 of Classically Liberal and The Believers regard the election coverage as trustworthy. As one might guess, The Believers are most likely to say that any of the topics asked about are covered accurately by the news media.

Classically Liberal are also more likely than any group, except The Believers, to regard reporting about the events on January 6<sup>th</sup> and Trump as reliable.

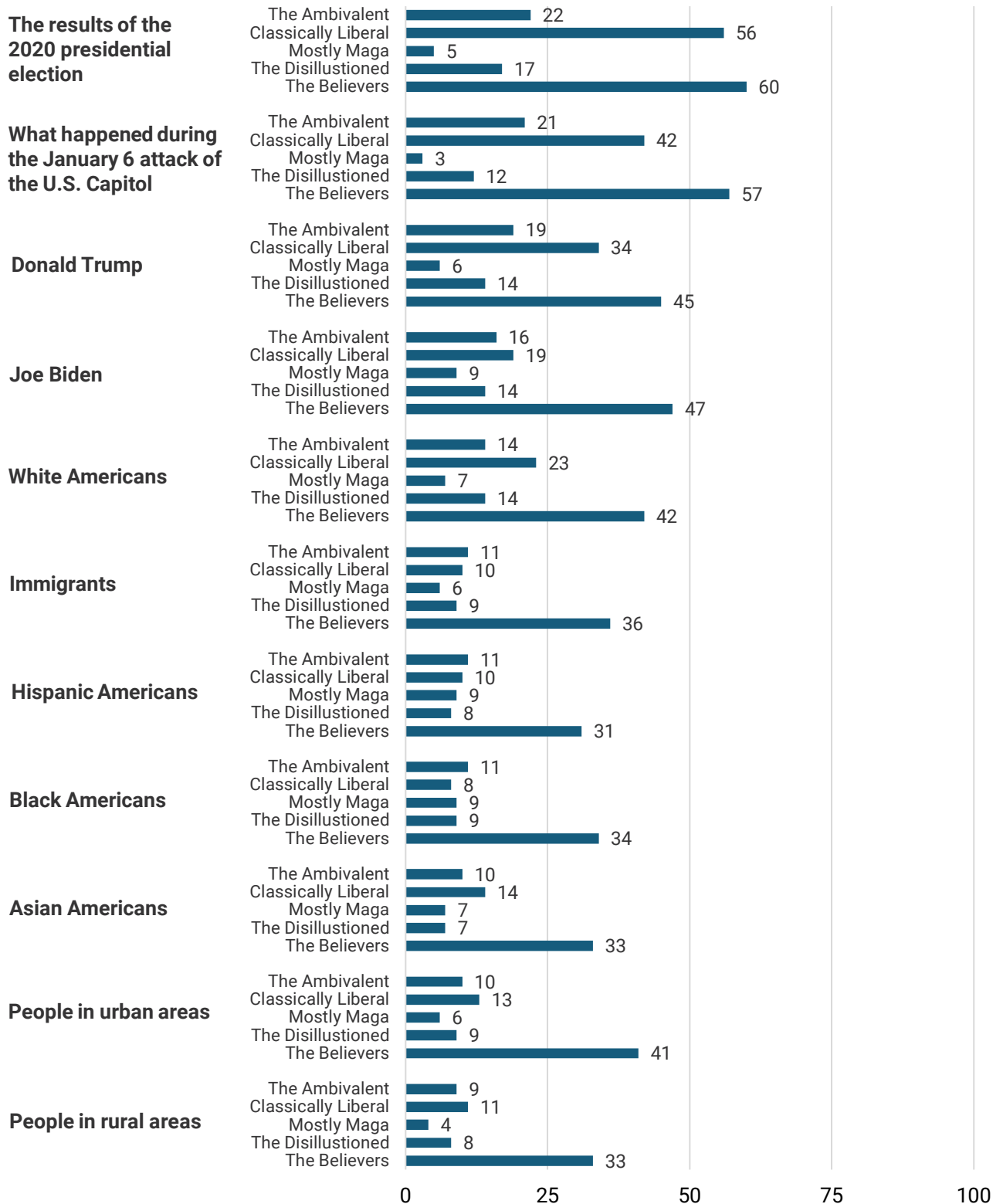
On many other topics, however, Classically Liberal are as skeptical as the cohorts who generally regard the press with deep suspicion. Classically Liberal, for instance, look like other more negative cohorts in their view that coverage of racial and ethnic groups, and people living in different parts of the country is not very dependable.

Yet when it comes to assessments of the press, Mostly MAGA stand apart, even from The Disillusioned. Despite high levels of engagement, and even high levels of news consumption, Mostly MAGA regard the press with ratings so low they might be described as contempt. Less than 10% think the coverage of political events, Trump or Biden, or different groups of people is particularly accurate, the lowest of any other typology.



### Few see news coverage of these topics as completely or very accurate.

Percent who say completely or very accurate



**Question:** Thinking about news coverage in general, how accurately do you think news organizations portray each of the following topics?

**Source:** LSU-NORC Poll conducted June 26-July 17, 2024 with 3,031 adults nationwide.

## Where do people get their news about government and public affairs?

The primary sources of news for the public overall are social media and YouTube, online or digital news, or network news broadcasts, each selected by about 1 in 7 adults. Nearly as many selected cable news or local television and newspapers. Less than 10% named national newspapers, PBS or NPR, or individual people.

Some typologies are more inclined to use a particular news outlet than others to stay informed about government and public affairs. The top news source for The Disillusioned and The Ambivalent is social media. The Ambivalent are nearly as likely to rely on broadcast news programs, while after social media The Disaffected tend use online news sites.

A quarter of Mostly MAGA get their news from cable news, while Classically Liberal tend to rely on digital or online news sources, social media or YouTube, or network news programs.

## Section 7: A Deep Dive into Each Typology

In section 1 of this report, we offer a snapshot description of the five groups and graphical illustration of their similarities and differences on demographics. In this section, we provide more in-depth analysis of each of the five groups, including demographic breakdowns, complete rundowns of political participation, engagement with the news, and civic engagement.

To generate the typology and its cohorts— The Disillusioned, Mostly MAGA, The Ambivalent, Classically Liberal, and The Believers— we examined attitudes across three key dimensions. One measured respondents' faith in government and institutions, their core values regarding the country's governance, and trust in various groups within their community. The second assessed their outlook on democracy and functionality of the current system of governing. The third considered their personal outlook and their sense of whether they are gaining or losing ground.

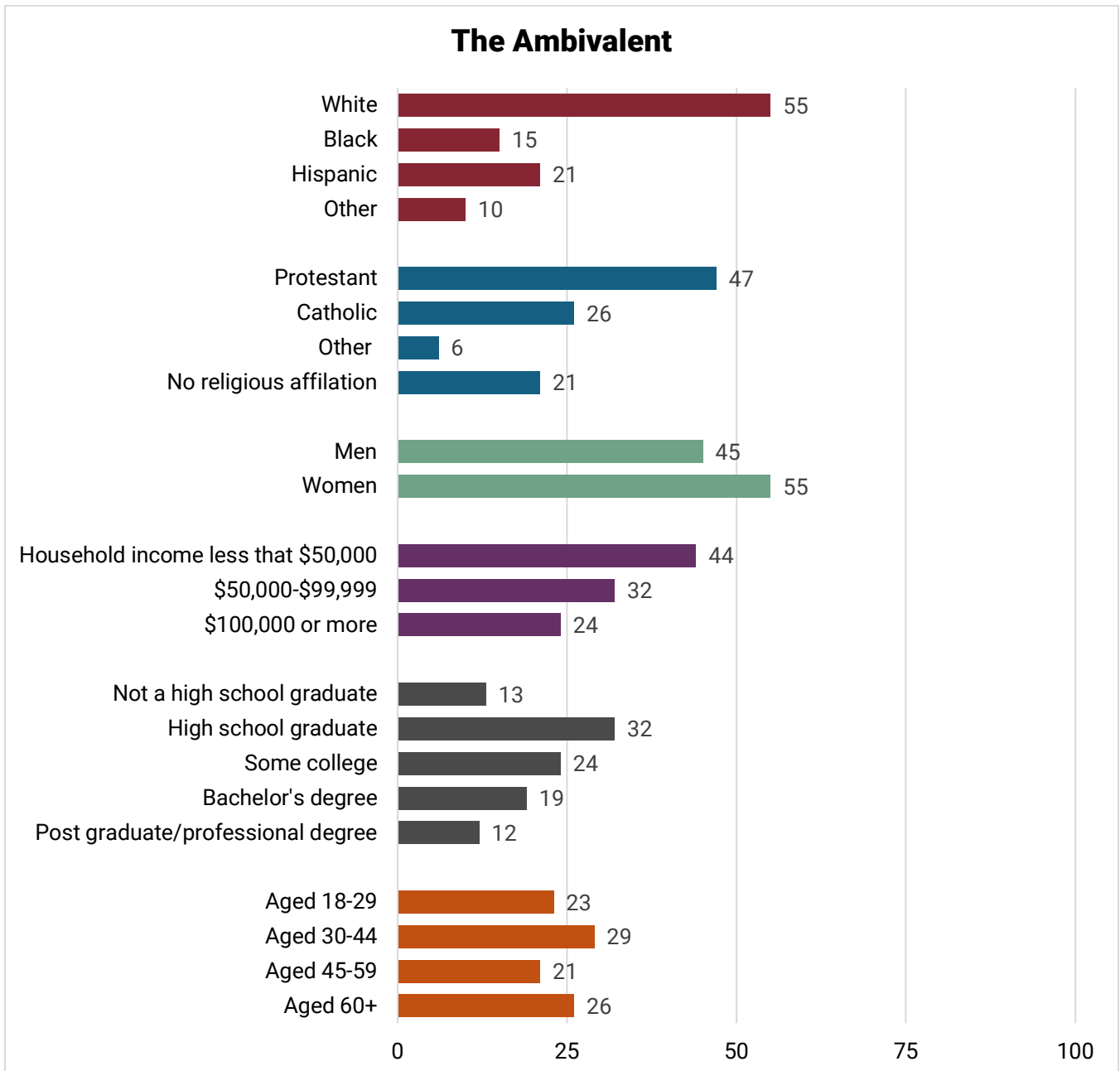
### The Ambivalent (29%)

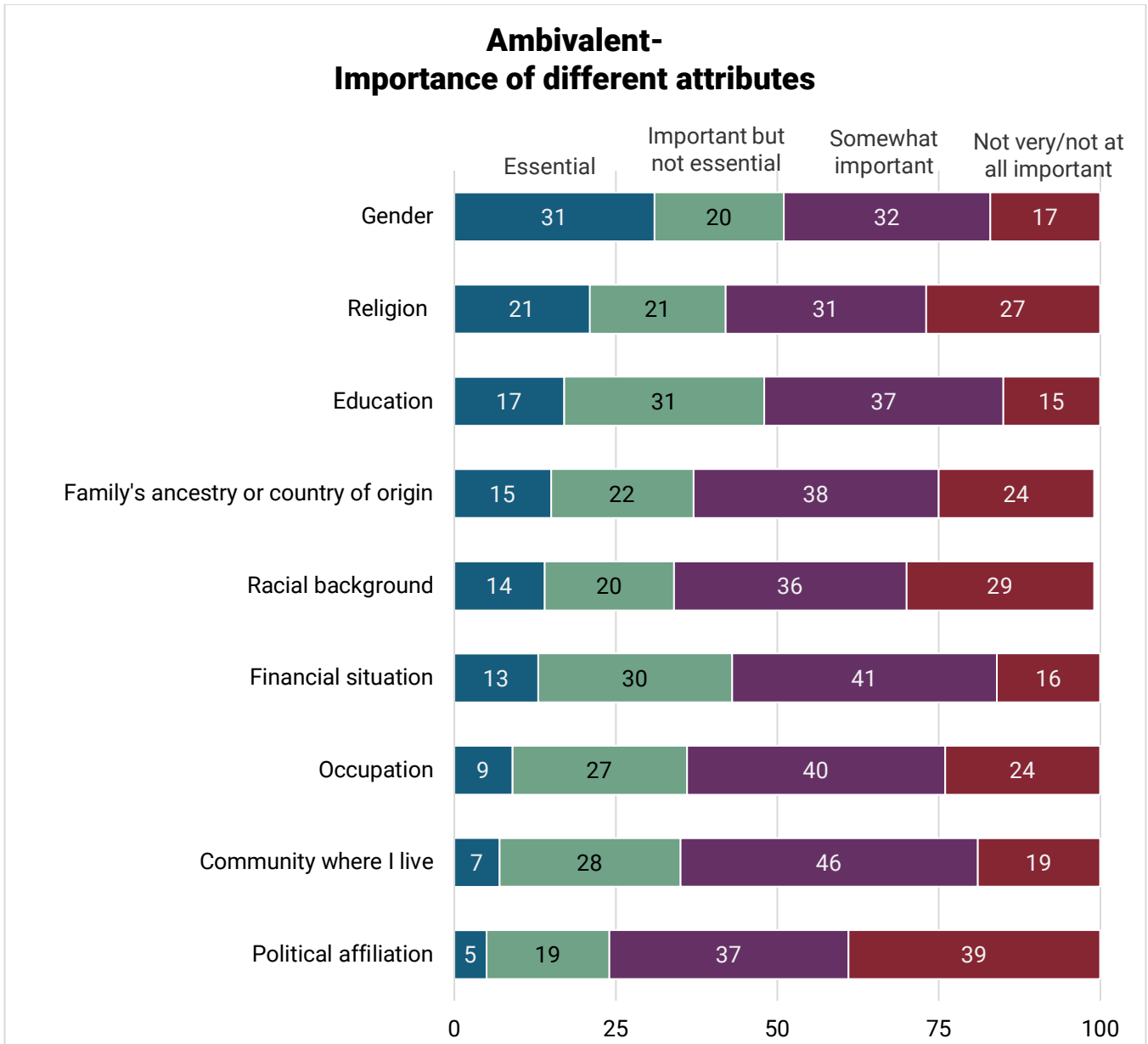
The largest segment of the population, The Ambivalent, most closely resemble the general population in terms of demographics, although they are slightly more moderate. Compared with the other groups, they are less concerned about the country overall, the current system of governance, or the state of politics. They are also less politically engaged, with fewer reporting that they often pay attention to the news or vote in elections. The Ambivalent have a high level of trust in certain institutions and in other people but are less likely than other groups to have taken part in any form of civic engagement. While this group tends to inadvertently consume news rather than seek it out, they have a generally positive view of the news sources they consume.

## Demographics

Among The Ambivalent, 73% identify as Christian and 41% report that religion is a key aspect of their identity. Like the general population, 31% of this group holds a bachelor’s degree or higher. Forty-eight percent say education is an important characteristic to their identity, a lower share than most other groups.

Men comprise 45% of this group, while women make up 55%. Overall, 51% view gender as important to their identity, a lower share compared to other groups. Fewer of The Ambivalent view their racial background (35%) or their family’s ancestry or country of origin (37%) as an important identity characteristic. However, Black adults among this group (49%) are more likely than either white (31%) or Hispanic (34%) adults to say their racial identity is important.





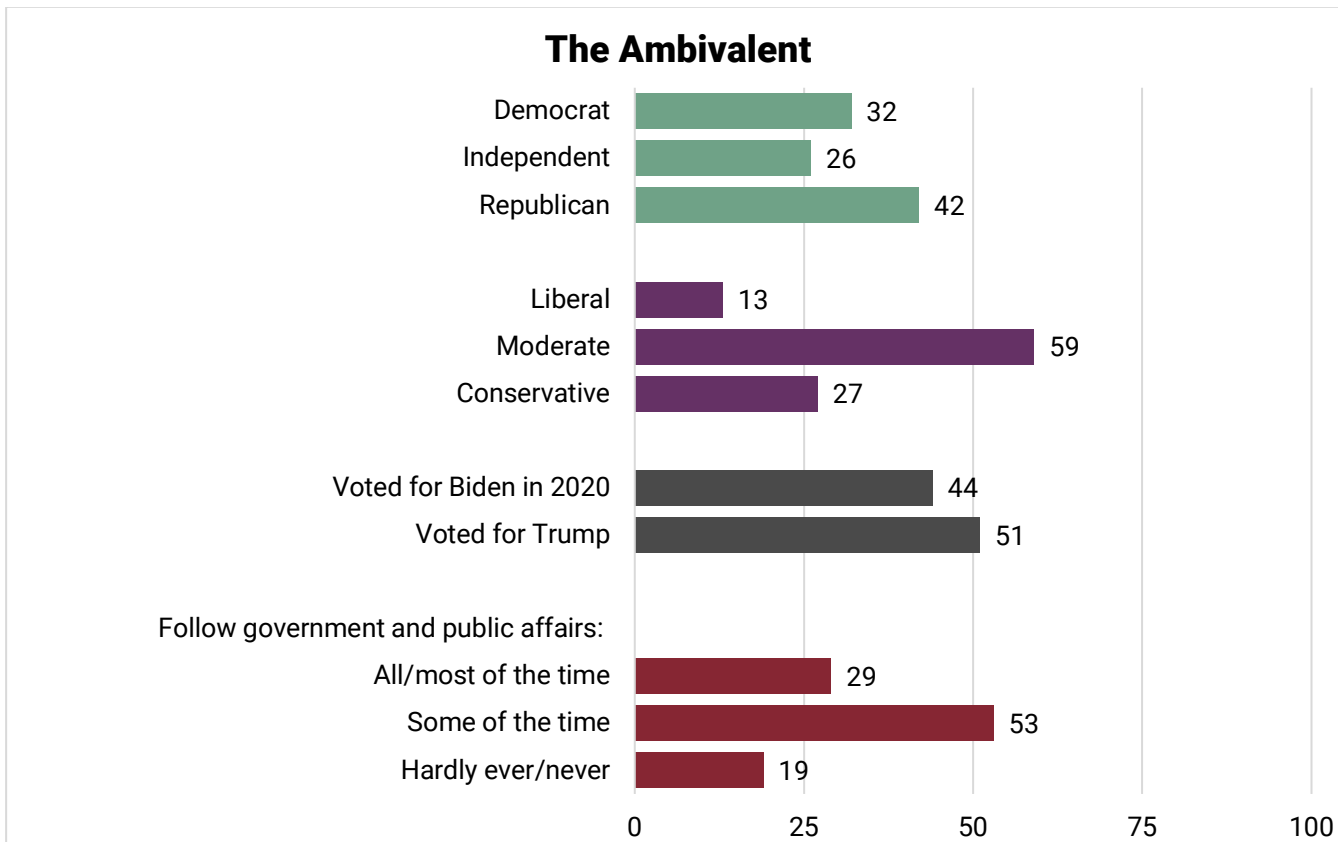
### Politics and Its Coverage in the News

A higher share of The Ambivalent identify as Republican (42%) than Democratic (32%) or independent (26%). Twenty-six percent consider themselves MAGA supporters, like the population overall. Just 23% report that their political identity is essential or important to their personal identity, the lowest share of any group. Twenty percent report that they are not currently registered to vote.

Twenty-three percent of this group say that they did not vote in the 2020 presidential election. Of those who did vote, 51% say they voted for Trump and 44% for Biden. Among The Ambivalent, 59% consider themselves moderate, while 27% say they are conservative, and just 13% say they are liberal.

Only about a fifth view news coverage of the 2020 presidential election (22%) or the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup> (21%) as completely or very accurate, while about a third view coverage of the election (33%) or

January 6<sup>th</sup> (35%) as completely or very inaccurate. While 53% follow politics and government affairs at least some of the time, only 29% follow what’s happening all or most of the time, the lowest share of any group.



### Engagement with News and Information

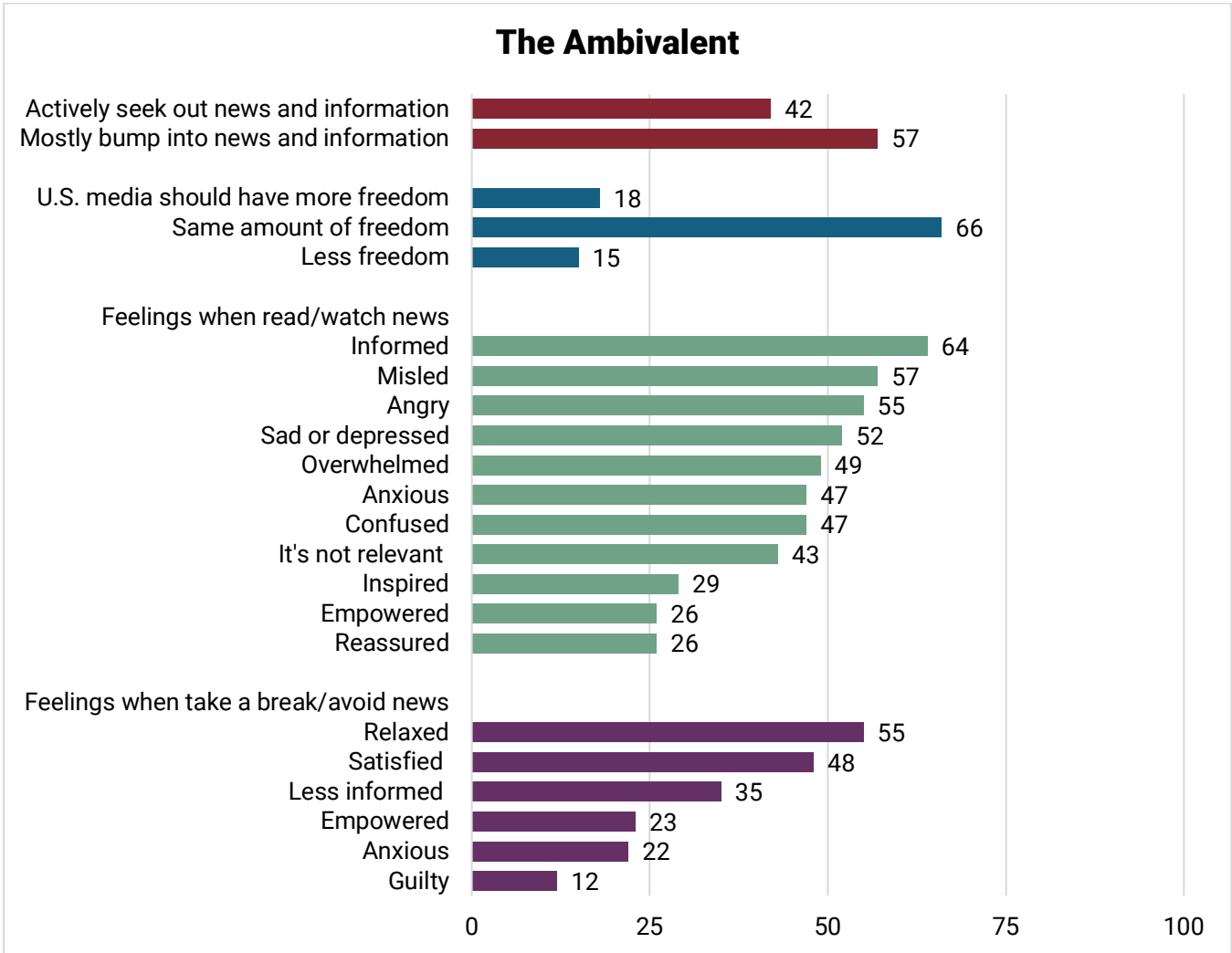
Forty-two percent of The Ambivalent report they actively seek out news and information rather than just bump into it, while more (57%) mostly bump into news. About half of The Ambivalent trust conventional news sources, such as traditional network news and local television news, local newspapers, public television and radio. Fifty-eight percent have little trust in information about the government or public affairs from social media or YouTube. They tend to be ambivalent about cable news, such as CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC, with 38% saying they have a great deal or moderate amount of trust, and 50% have little or no trust.

About half of The Ambivalent say news consumption can make them angry, anxious, depressed, or uninspired these days. Regardless, most say the news makes them feel informed. Forty-eight percent say they feel worse the more time spent watching or reading news. Still about a third avoid the news and say they avoid hard news by focusing on entertainment or sports coverage.

About half of The Ambivalent set limits on the amount of time devoted to consuming news and about the same amount take extended breaks from watching or reading news. Thirty-five percent feel less informed when they avoid or take breaks from consuming news. However, about half say they feel relaxed when taking a break from news coverage.

The Ambivalent are about equally as positive with the news media in general as they are with the news they consume most. Sixty-eight percent say they are kept informed about the important stories of the day by the news

they use most often. Fifty-seven percent say the news media they use most often deal fairly with all sides on political and social issues, 33% say they protect democracy rather than hurt it, 30% say they are willing to admit mistakes, 27% say they are more interested in telling the truth rather than making a profit. But while the news media in general is seen as being informative about important stories, 46% say making money is imperative over truth telling, 54% think one side on politics and social issues is favored, 40% say mistakes are covered up, and 52% say news media in general neither help nor hurt democracy.



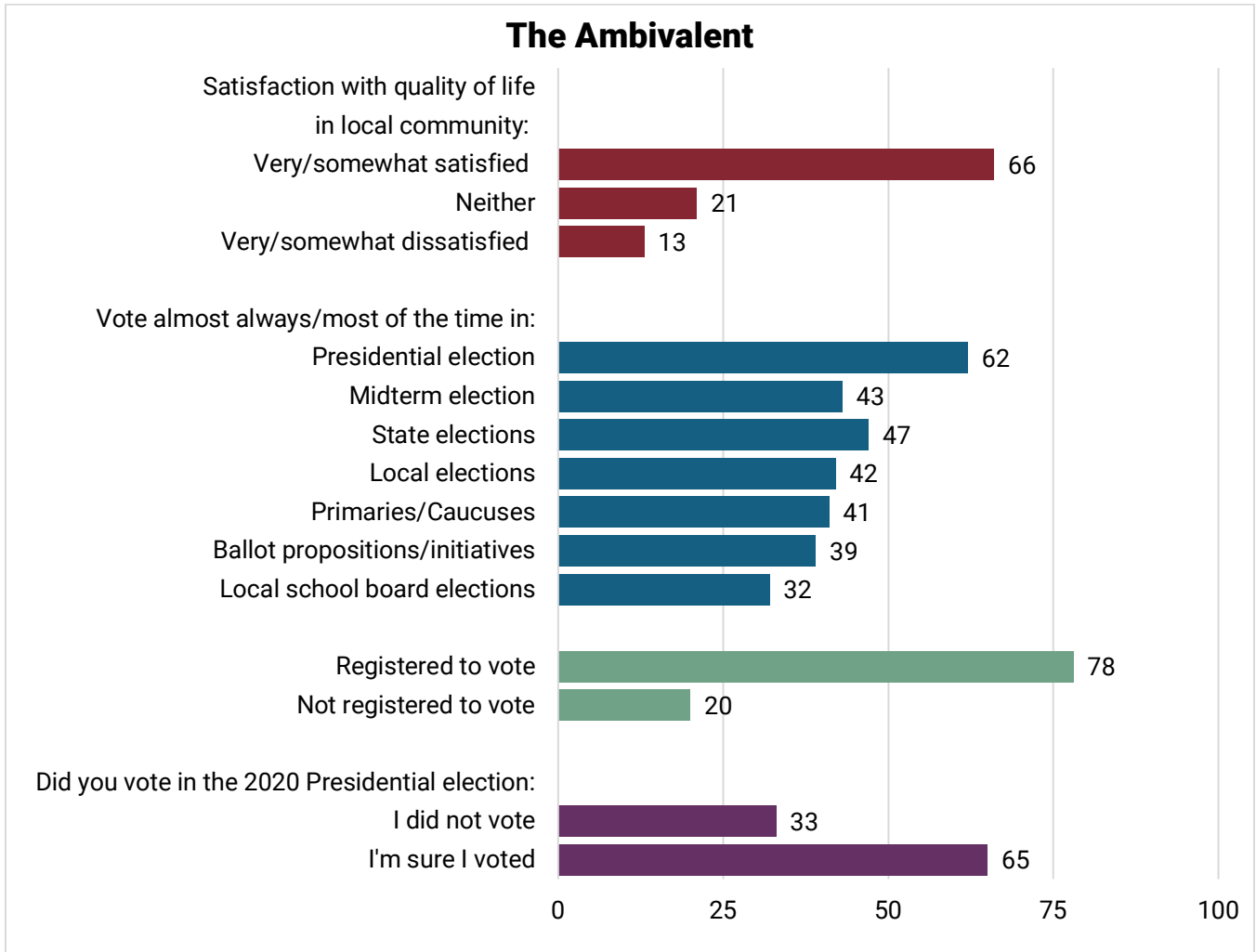
### Civic Engagement and Participation

While many in this group seem to be politically apathetic, they say they do vote. Seventy-eight percent of The Ambivalent say they are registered to vote, and 65% report being sure they voted in the 2020 general election. Six in 10 say they vote in presidential elections most of the time and often vote in state contests, local elections, primaries, or referendums. Fewer turn out for school board elections.

The Ambivalent are mostly satisfied with the quality of life in their community, with two-thirds reporting they are satisfied compared to just 13% saying they are dissatisfied. About a fifth do not feel strongly either way.

Just over half of this group have not engaged in any form of civic engagement over the past year. Around 90% report they have not communicated with their political representatives, posted on behalf of a political or social

cause, attended or watched a public meeting, took part in a protest or political campaign, or participated in organized sports in a service or civic organization. Additionally, the vast majority have not signed a petition, donated to a social cause, or volunteered. Despite 72% identifying as Christian and 41% reporting that religion is a key aspect of their identity, just 21% have participated in a religious institution in the past year.



### Classically Liberal (22%)

Classically Liberal contain a high share of Democratic, white, college-educated, and nonreligious respondents. This group is dissatisfied with the current state of government and politics and in favor of major change, but also have a high degree of trust in certain institutions and in other people. Notably, they are highly supportive of immigrants, view racism as a major issue, and believe that diversity is important in making the country stronger. This group is more politically engaged than most, with about 9 in 10 reporting that they're registered to vote and voted in the last election and the vast majority saying they vote in other forms of elections. Most also actively seek out news and follow political affairs always or most of the time.

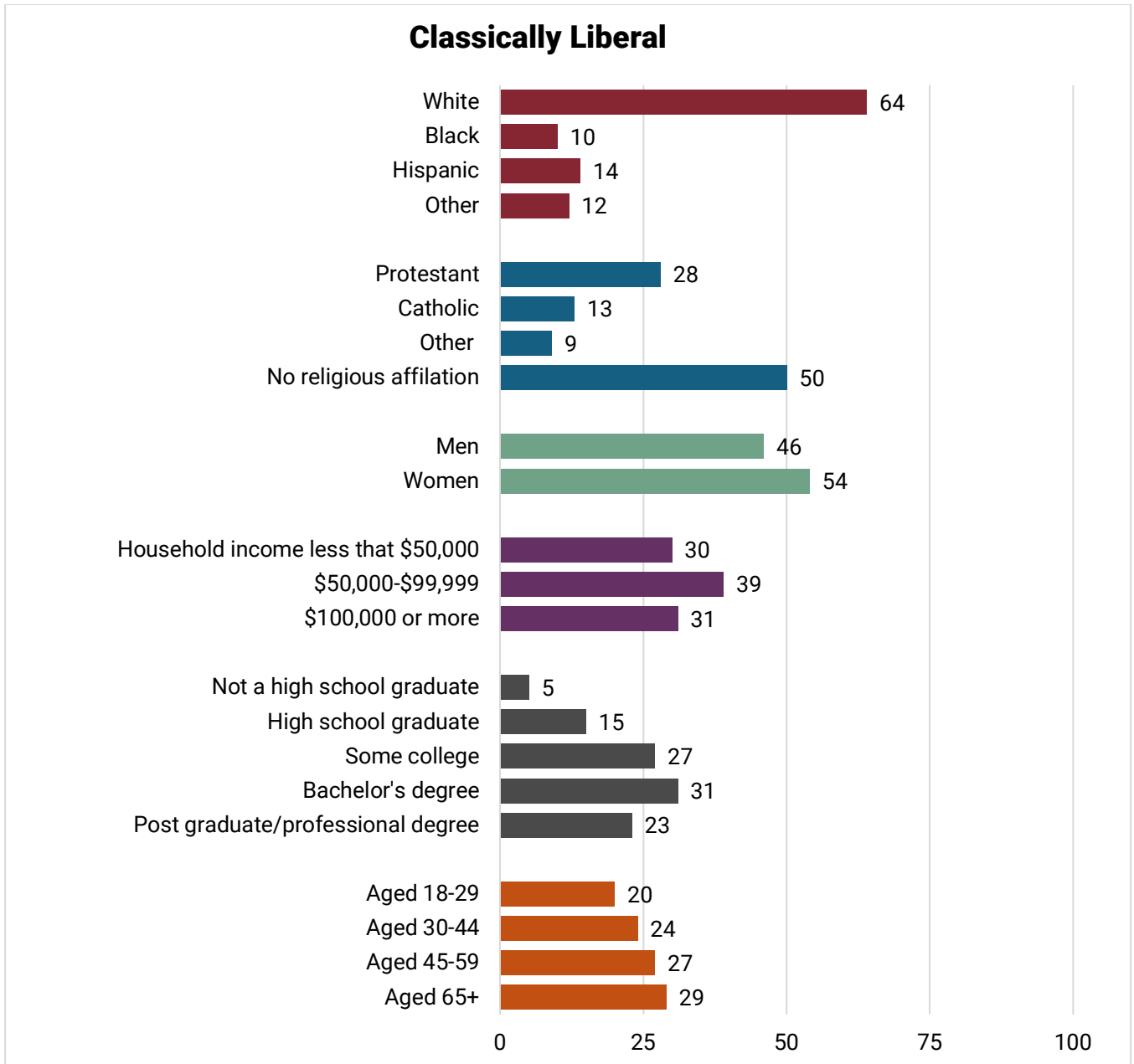
## Demographics

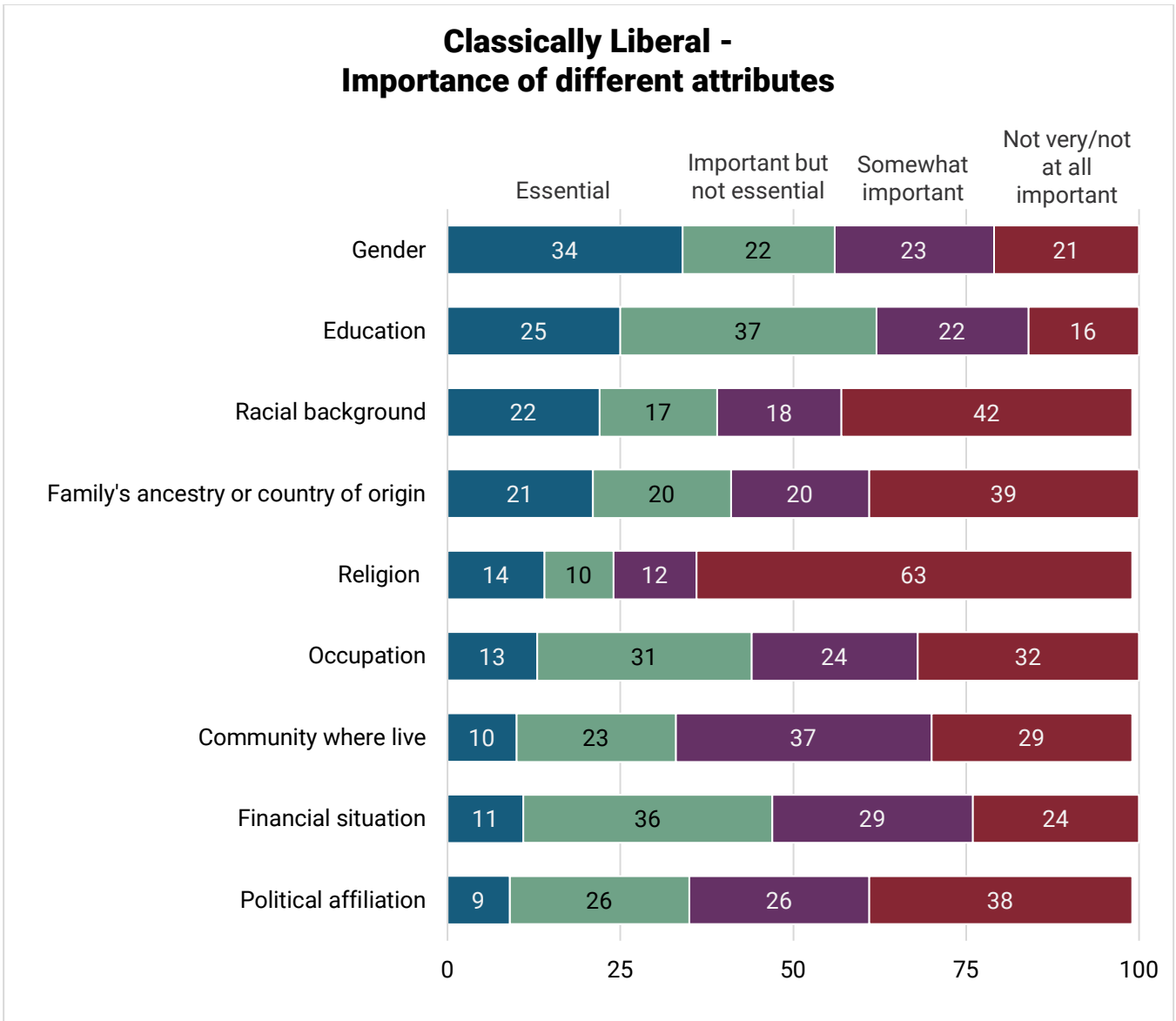
Fifty percent of Classically Liberal are not affiliated with any religious tradition and 63% say religion is not important to their identity. This group tends to be better educated than most others. Thirty-one percent have a bachelor's degree and an additional 23% have gone to graduate school or have a professional degree. Education is important to the identity of 62%.

Overall, 56% say gender is essential or important to their identity. Among men, 46% of Classically Liberal say their gender is an important characteristic. In contrast, 64% of women consider their gender to be an important attribute.

Of all Classically Liberal respondents, 39% say their race is essential or important to their identity and 42% say it is not very or not at all important. White adults and Black and Hispanic adults in this group have very different ideas about the importance of race to their identity. Among white adults, 57% say race has little or no influence on how they perceive their identity. In contrast, 82% of Black adults and 60% of Hispanic adults say race is essential or important to their identity. Similarly, 65% of Black adults and 62% of Hispanic adults say their family ancestry is important to their identity, while 50% of white adults say their family's country of origin is of little or no importance.





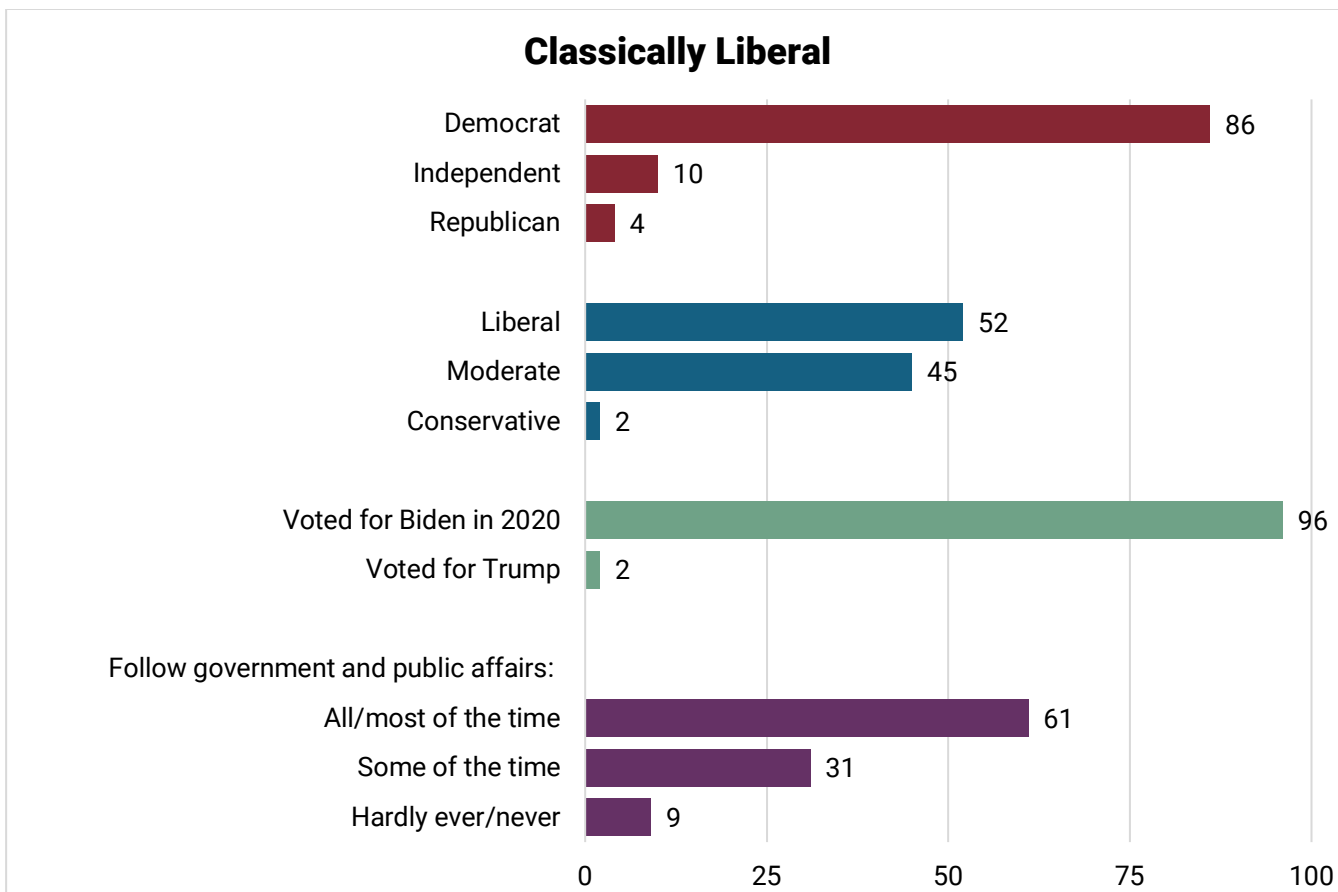


## Politics and Its Coverage in the News

Eighty-six percent of Classically Liberal define themselves as Democrats. At some point in their past, 38% considered themselves as an independent and 14% say they were once Republicans. Less than 1% are MAGA supporters and 96% say they voted for Biden in 2020. But only 35% say their party identification is important to their identity. Twenty-six percent say party identification is somewhat important and 38% say it is not very or not at all important to their personal identity.

Among Classically Liberal, 52% consider themselves liberal and 45% say they are moderate. Sixty-one percent follow politics all or most of the time, and just about as many (60%) are paying a good deal of attention to the 2024 presidential campaign.

Most (56%) think news coverage was completely or very accurate in handling the results of the 2020 presidential election. In reporting on January 6<sup>th</sup> attack on the U.S. Capitol, 42% say news coverage is completely or very accurate.



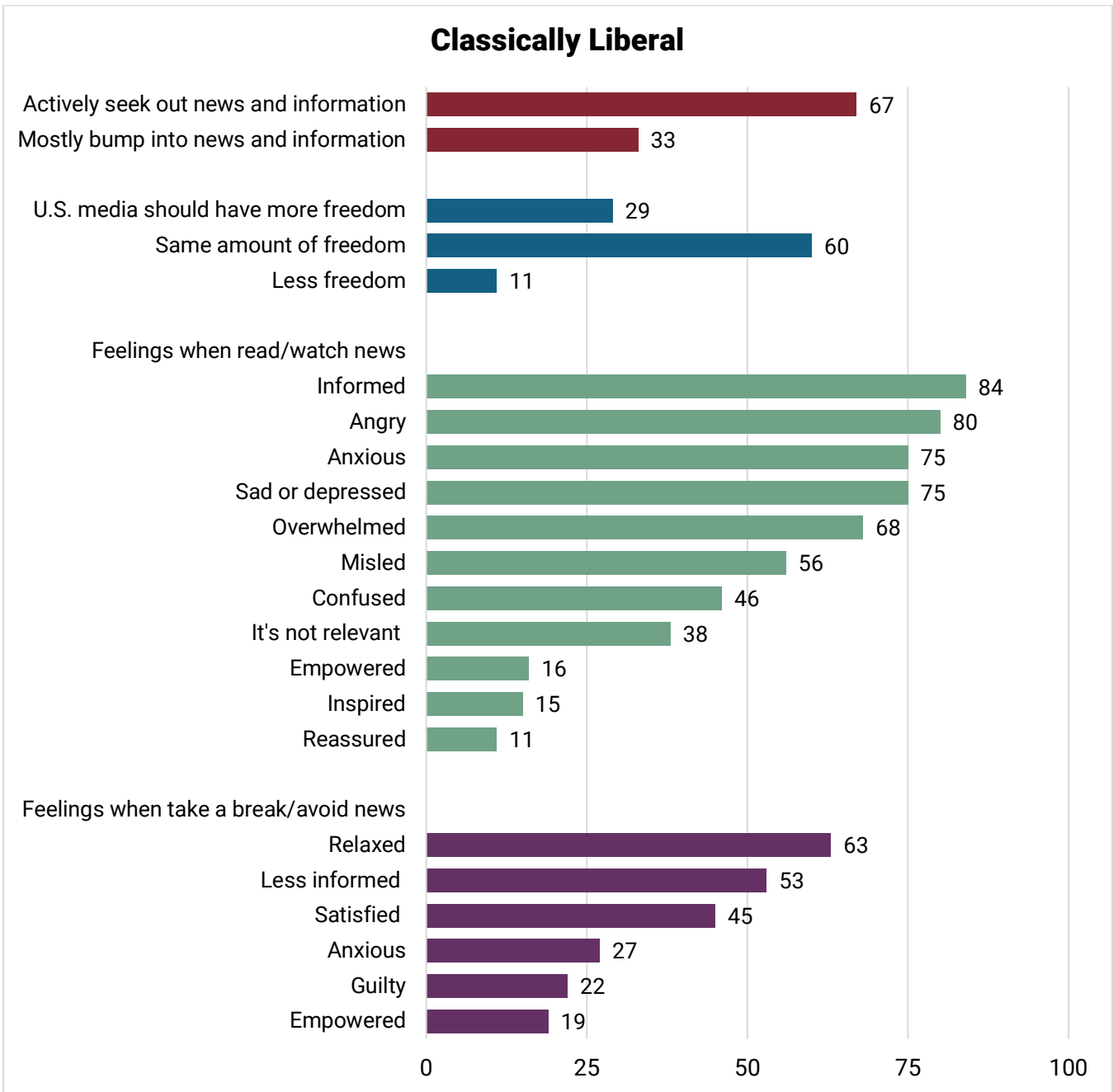
### Engagement with News and Information

Two-thirds say they actively seek out news and information rather than just bump into it. Most Classically Liberal trust conventional news sources, such as traditional network news and local television news, national and local newspapers, public television and radio. Sixty-two percent have little trust in information about the government or public affairs from social media or YouTube. They tend to be ambivalent about cable news, such as CNN, Fox News, or MSNBC, with 38% saying they have a great deal or moderate amount of trust, and 49% have little or no trust.

A large majority say news consumption can make them angry, anxious, depressed, or uninspired these days. Regardless, most say the news makes them feel informed. Sixty-six percent say they feel worse the more time spent watching or reading news. Still only about a quarter say they avoid the news or avoid hard news by focusing on entertainment or sports coverage. About half set limits on the amount of time devoted to consuming news and about the same amount take extended breaks from watching or reading news. About half of Classically Liberal feel less informed when they avoid or take breaks from consuming news. However, most say they feel relaxed when taking a break from news coverage.

Classically Liberal tend to have positive views about the news media they usually consume. Eighty-eight percent say they are kept informed about the important stories of the day by the news they use most often. Fifty-six percent say the news media they use most often deal fairly with all sides on political and social issues and 55% say they protect democracy rather than hurt it. Fifty-one say the news media they rely on are willing to admit mistakes and 50% say they are more interested in telling the truth rather than making a profit. But while the

news media in general is seen as being informative about important stories, 68% say making money is imperative over truth telling, 64% think one side on politics and social issues is favored, 47% say mistakes are covered up, and 40% say news media in general neither help nor hurt democracy.

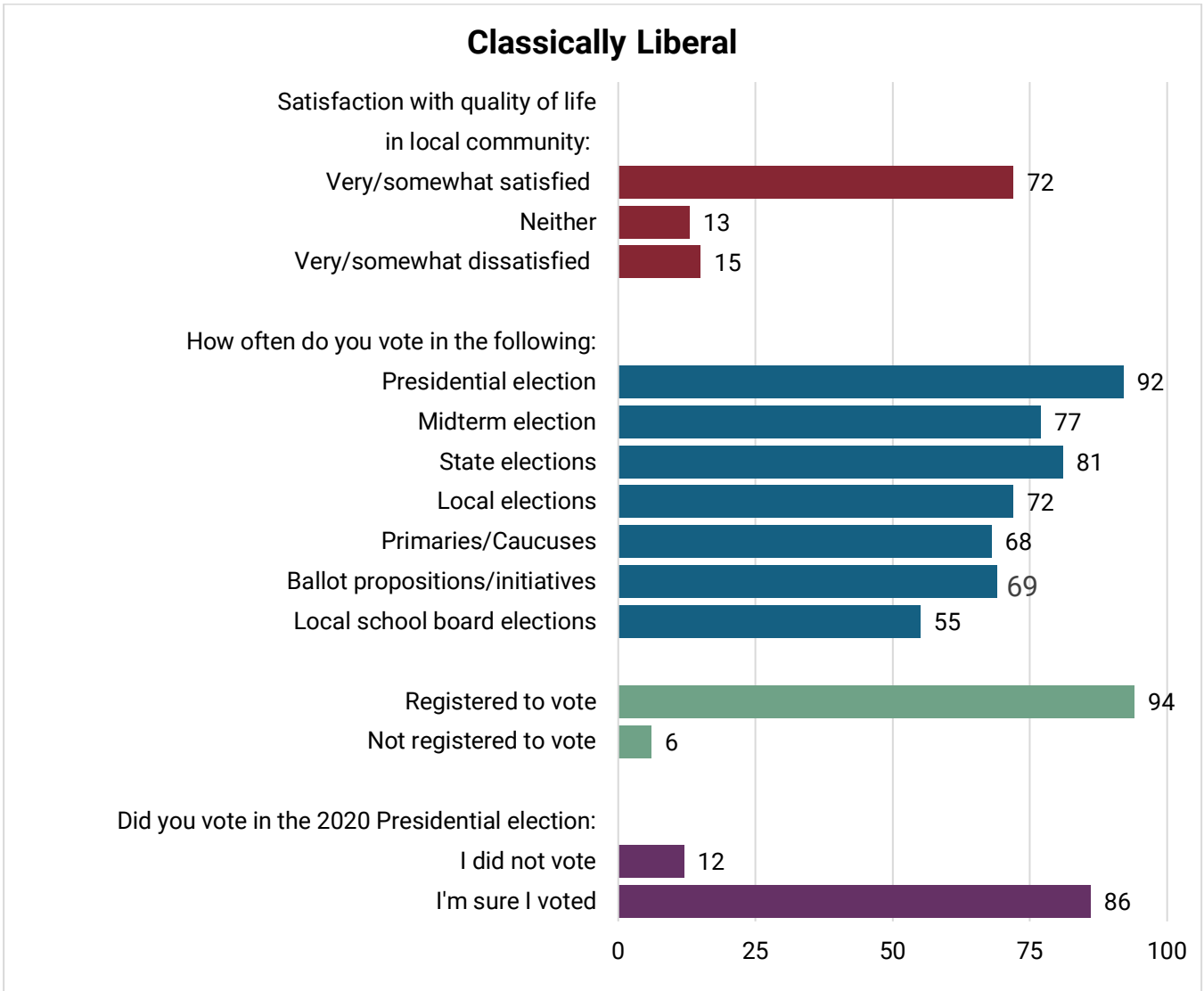


### Civic Engagement and Participation

Ninety-four percent of Classically Liberal say they are registered to vote, and 86% report participating in the 2020 general election. Of those who voted, 96% voted for Biden. This group is more politically engaged than most, with the vast majority saying they vote in presidential (92%), midterm (77%), state (81%), primary (68%), or local (72%) elections always or most of the time.

Seventy-two of Classically Liberal report they are satisfied with their lives, while very few are dissatisfied (15%) or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (13%).

When it comes to specific forms of civic engagement, 4 in 10 have signed a petition and about a third have volunteered or donated to a social cause, while a fifth have attended a public or community meeting, participated in organized religion, or communicated with their representative. However, very few have taken part in a civic organization or organized sports, participated in a political campaign, or attended a protest.



## Mostly MAGA (13%)

The vast majority of Mostly MAGA respondents are Christian, white, Republican, and over the age of 45, with most residing in either the South or the Midwest. This group has a negative view of the national economy and the state of politics but is also characterized by high rates of racial resentment and belief in the Great Replacement Theory. Uniquely, Mostly MAGA trust the Supreme Court and organized religion in addition to the military, local government, and other people. Most follow current affairs either all or most of the time and actively seek out news, but 7 in 10 do not trust the media at all and most believe they are profit driven, biased, and

unaccountable for their mistakes. This group is similarly politically engaged as Classically Liberal, with about 9 in 10 reporting that they are registered to vote, voted in the last presidential election, and often vote in other elections.

## **Demographics**

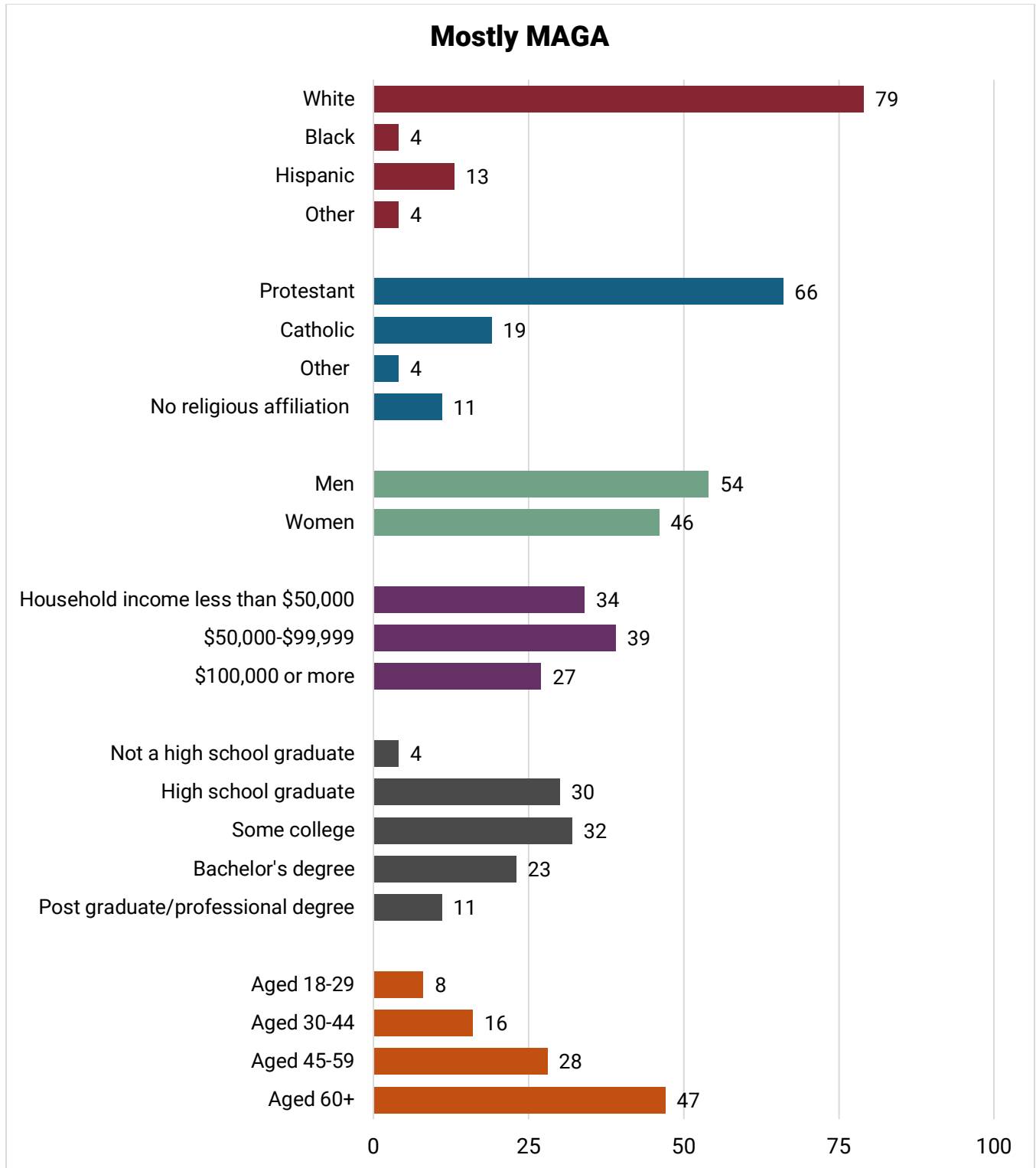
Two-thirds of Mostly MAGA identify as Protestant, and half describe themselves as born-again or evangelical.

Most have a high school graduate degree or attended some college. Only 23% have a bachelor's degree, and 11% have a post graduate degree. However, education is important to the identity of about 65%.

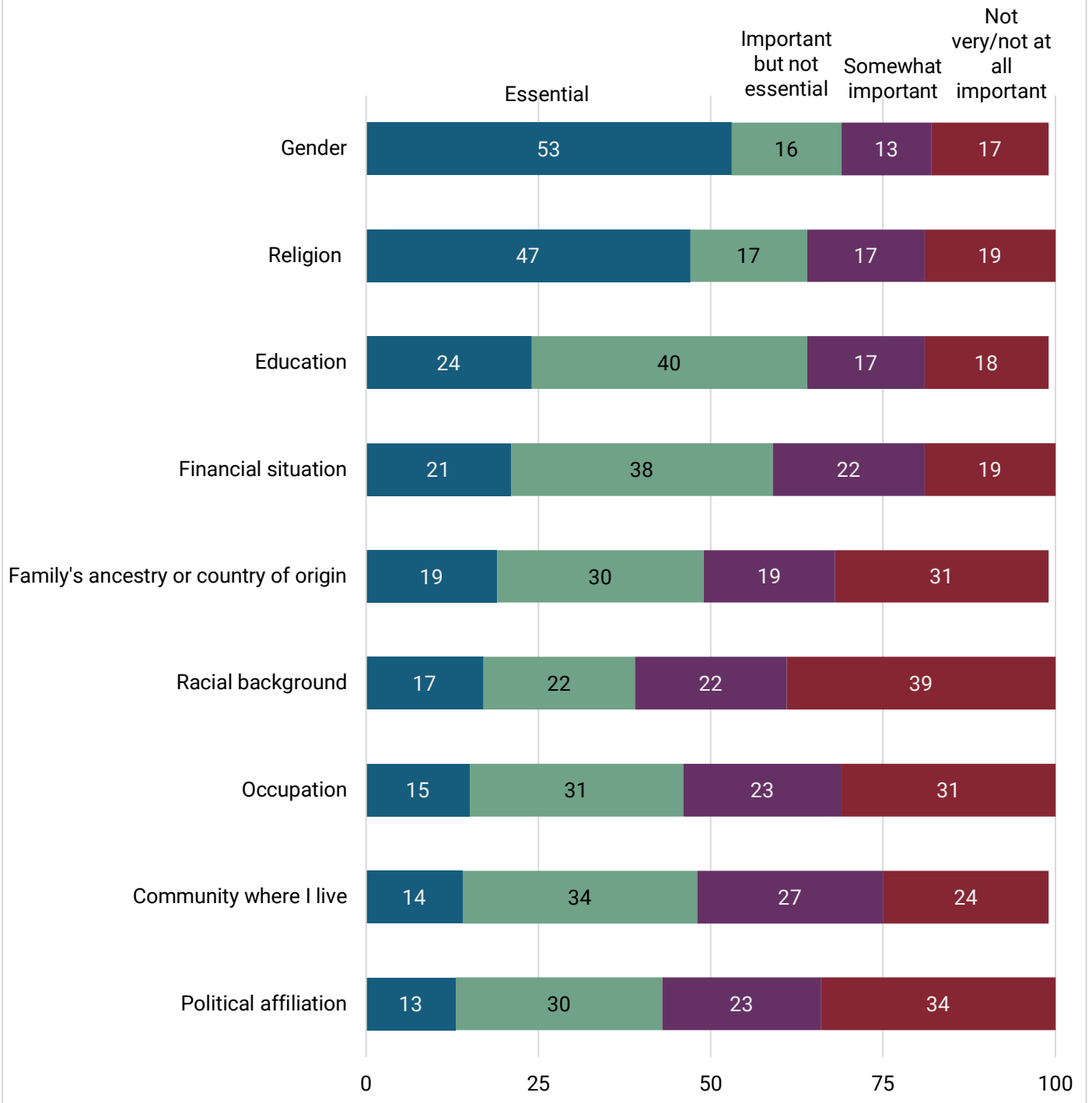
Overall, 70% say that gender is essential or important to their identity. Fifty-four percent identify as male and 46% as female. Among men, 65% say gender is an important characteristic, while 75% of women say the same.

Almost 80% identify as white, while just 4% say they are Black, and 13% Hispanic. Forty-percent think that their racial background is essential or important to their identity, while just about as many say that it is not very or not at all essential or important to their identity.

This group also tends to lean older, with three-quarters 45 years old or older. Forty-four percent live in the South and 22% reside in the Midwest. Less than 20% live in either the Northeast or the West.



### Mostly MAGA - Importance of different attributes





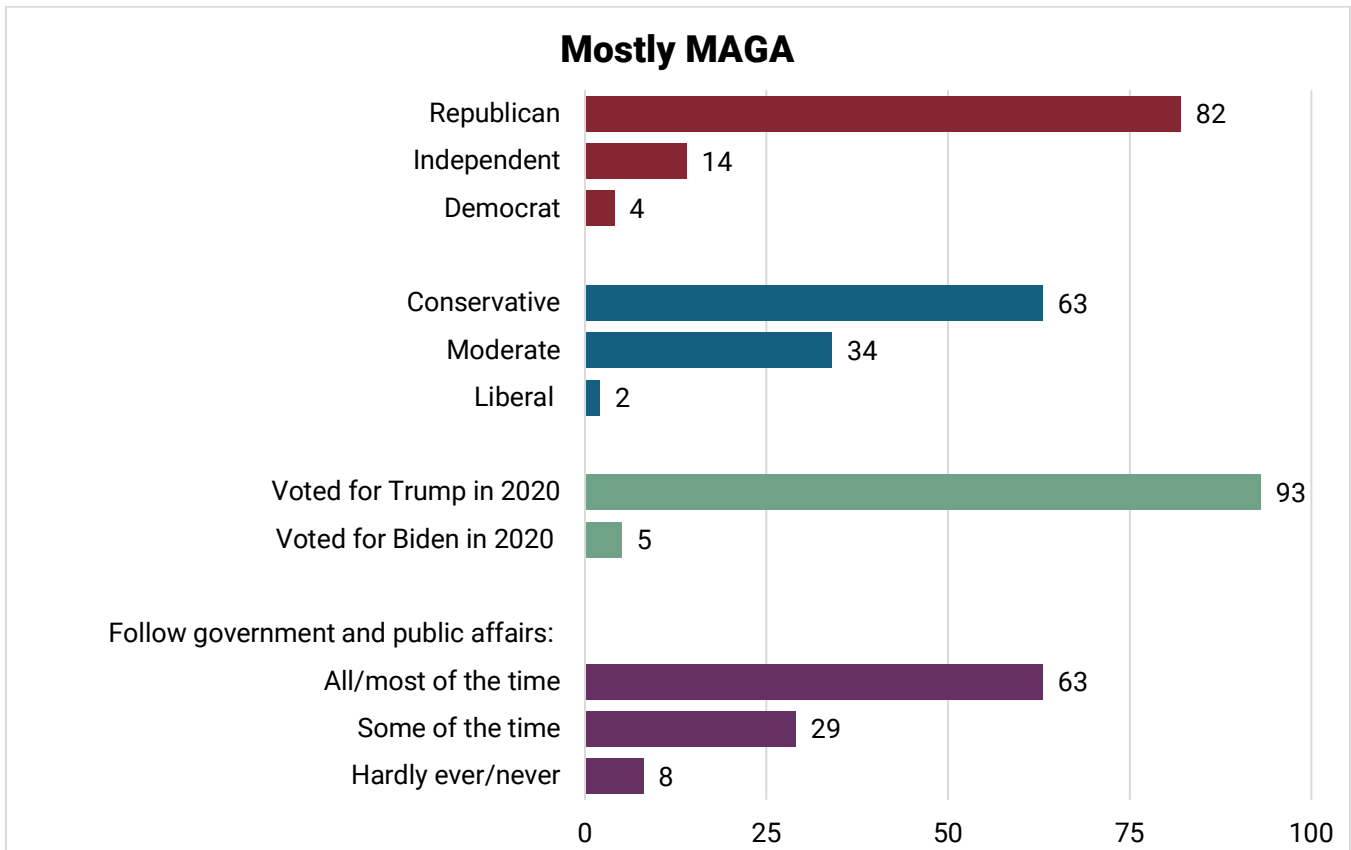
## Politics and Its Coverage in the News

Eighty-two percent identify as Republican, while 14% say they are independent and only 4% are Democrats. Sixty-nine percent consider themselves to be MAGA, while 30% say they are not. Forty-three percent say their political affiliation is essential or important to their identity while 34% say that it is not very or not essential or important at all.

Sixty-three percent of this group consider themselves somewhat or very conservative, while most of the rest (34%) consider themselves moderate.

Most of this group (63%) follow what's going on in government and public affairs all or most of the time, and 90% have been paying at least some attention to the 2024 presidential campaign so far.

Around 80% believe that Trump, Biden, the results of the 2020 presidential election, the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup> are not accurately portrayed by the news.



## Engagement with News and Information

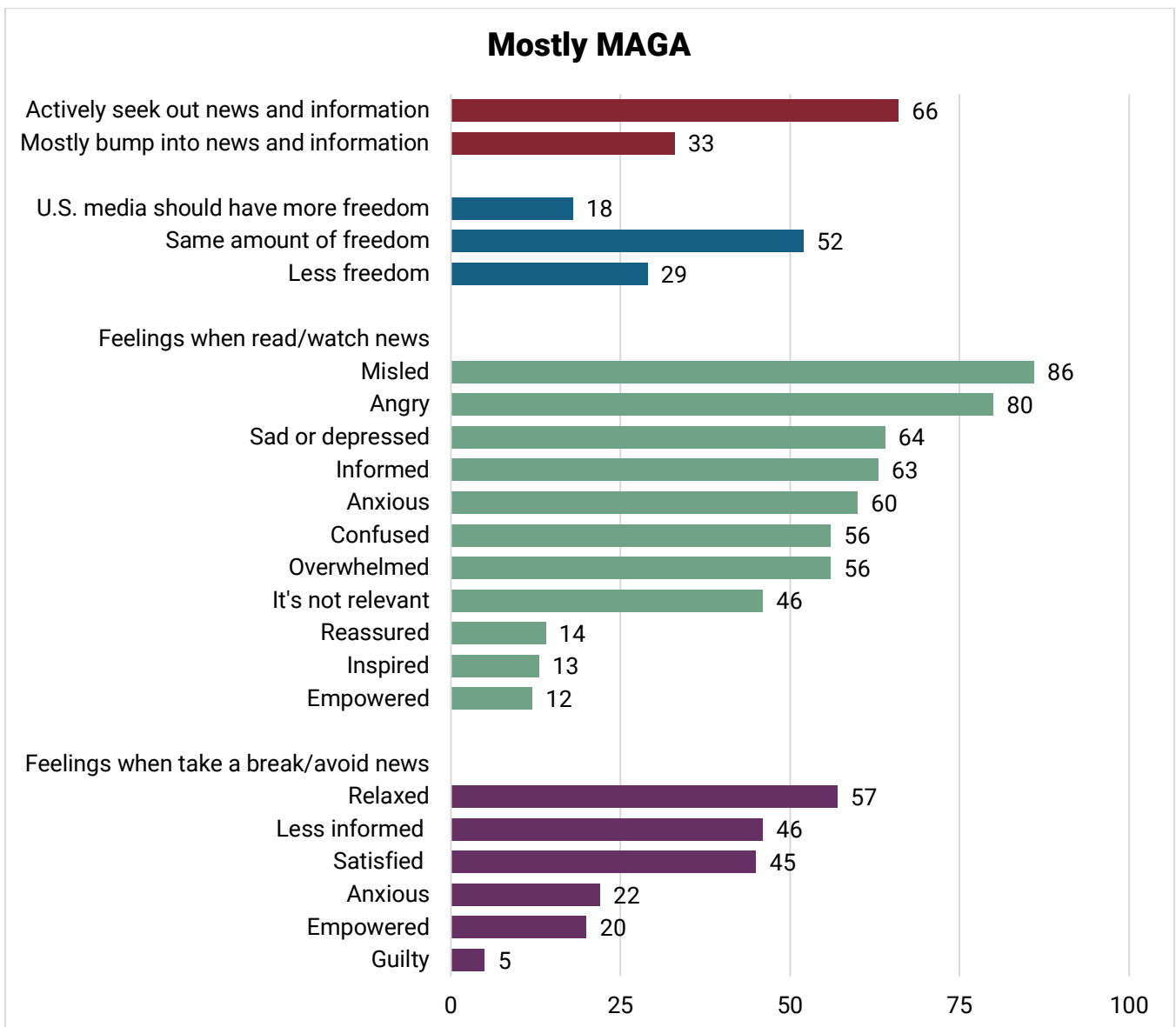
Sixty-nine percent say they do not trust the media at all, but 66% say they actively seek out news and information. Mostly MAGA do not trust conventional news sources and more of them seem to trust their friends and family members as reliable sources of information.

Most of this group say news consumption makes them feel confused, angry, depressed, or misled these days, but 63% also say they feel like the news keeps them informed. Around 60% say they set limits on the amount of time they spend watching or reading the news and they feel worse the more time they spend doing it. Around half

say they take extended breaks, but a majority (73%) say they do NOT avoid watching or reading the news. Most say they do not feel anxious, empowered, less informed, guilty, or satisfied when they avoid or take a break from the news. Over half (57%), however, do say they feel relaxed.

Over half also say that the news media in general do not keep them well informed, but 83% say that the news media they use most often keep them very or fairly informed. A majority of the group say they either pay about the same amount of attention or more attention to the news compared with five years ago.

Half of Mostly MAGA think the news media they use most often tends to favor one side on political and social issues. Forty-six percent say that the news media they use most often are willing to admit their mistakes, 42% think they protect democracy, and 44% think they are telling the truth rather than making a profit. When it comes to the news media in general, 89% think that they tend to favor one side on political and social issues, 77% say they are trying to cover up their mistakes, 73% think they hurt democracy rather than protect it, and 80% say they are more interested in money than telling the truth.

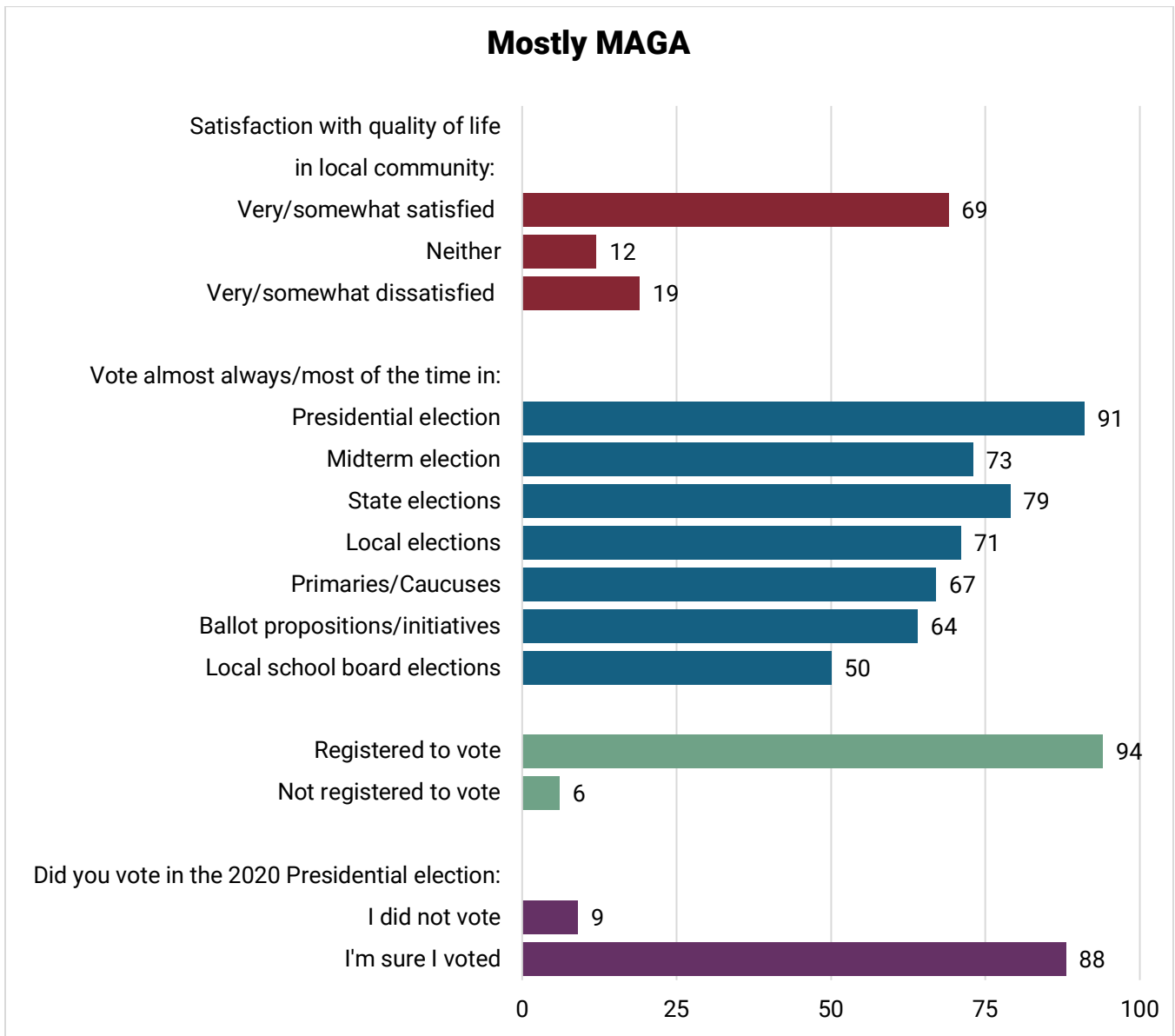


## Civic Engagement and Participation

The majority of Mostly MAGA are very or somewhat satisfied with their quality of life in their communities. At least half of this group vote in every single election from local school board elections up to the presidential election.

Most (over 80%) do not attend or take part in public meetings, school or community organizations, civic organizations, organized sports recreation, political campaigns, protests, or demonstrations, or communicate in person or online with a government representative. Around 20% have volunteered for a social or community organization, donated to a social cause, signed a petition, or posted or reposted on social media for a social or political cause. Forty-one percent have participated in organized religion. Thirty percent have done none of the above.

Ninety-four percent of this group say they are currently registered to vote, and 88% report being sure they voted in 2020 election.



## The Disillusioned (15%)

The Disillusioned are less educated, less affluent, and younger than many of the other groups. Most lack a college education, make under \$50,000 a year, and nearly two-thirds are under the age of 45. More identify as moderate than liberal or conservative, and most do not view politics as important to their identity. Compared to others, they are less satisfied with their current quality of life and financial situation as well as their potential for economic mobility. This group shares a dissatisfaction with the current state of politics and the economy with others but is set apart by a lack of trust in institutions and other people as well as a bleak outlook on the country's future. Three-quarters do not trust the media, and just over half say they mostly bump into news. This group is less politically engaged, with only 7 in 10 reporting they are registered to vote and 6 in 10 saying they voted in the last presidential election.

### Demographics

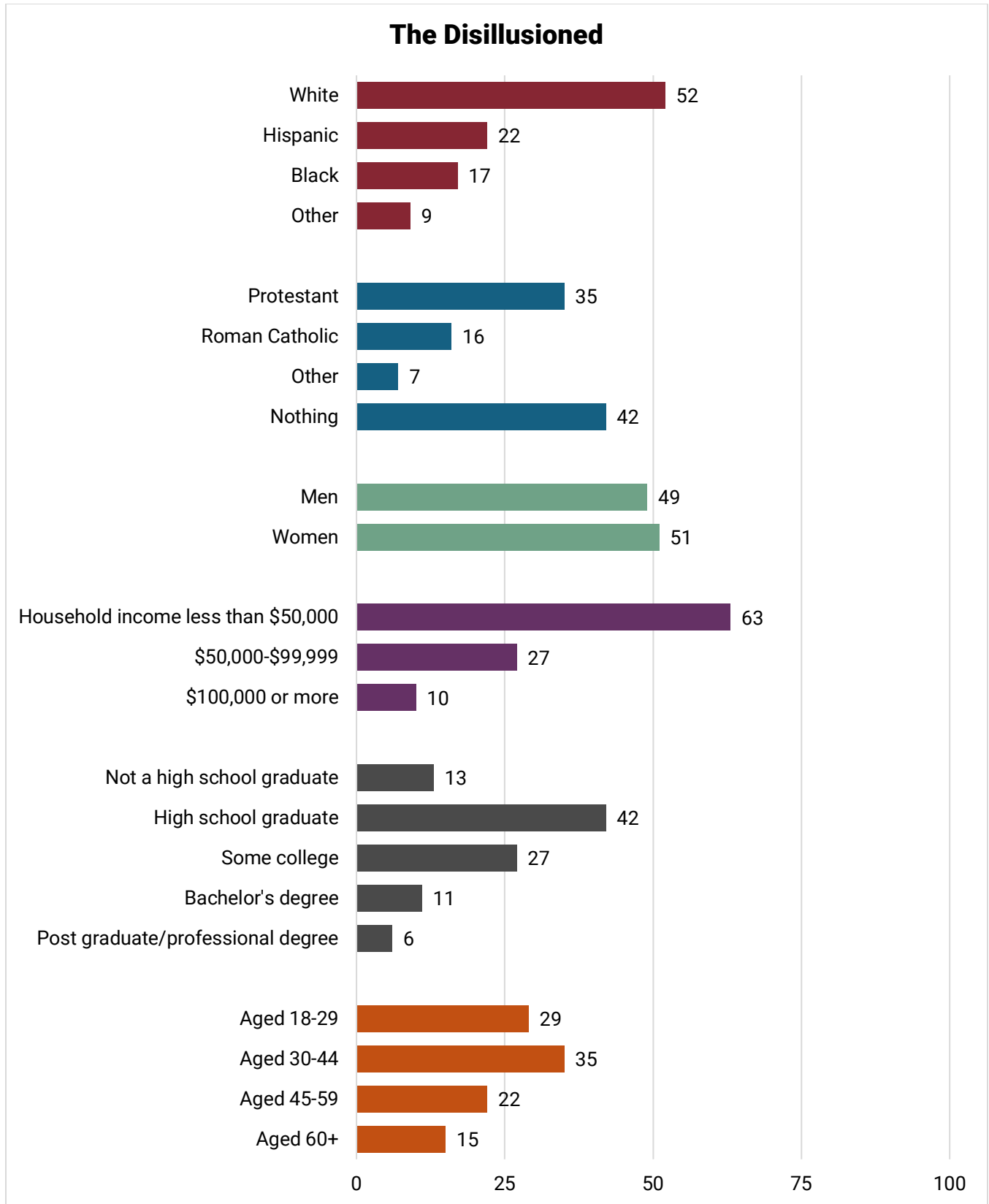
About half (52%) of The Disillusioned are either Protestant or Roman Catholic, while 4 in 10 (42%) have no religious affiliation.

Overall, this group is less educated than the public overall. Over half have a high school diploma or less. In fact, 13% say they didn't graduate high school. Only 43% report education being important or essential to their identities.

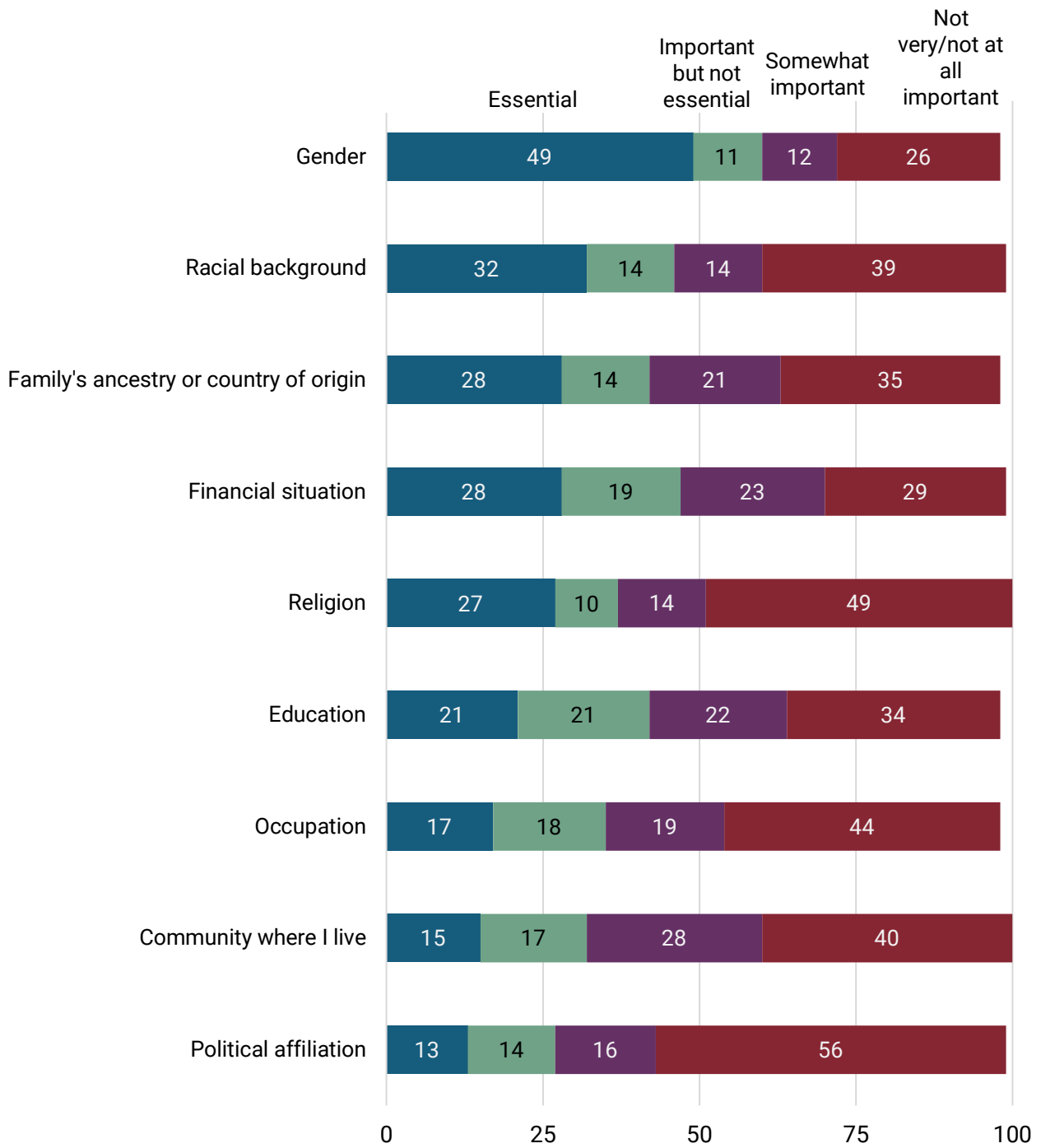
Sixty percent say that gender is essential or important to their identity. Fifty-one percent are women and 49% are men. Both male and female members of this cohort hold similar views on the importance of gender to their identities.

A little over half (52%) identify as white, 17% as Black, 22% as Hispanic, and 9% as other races or ethnicities. Forty-six percent say that their racial background is important or essential to their identities.

The Disillusioned also tend to be younger, with nearly two-thirds (64%) under the age of 44. Forty-four percent live in the South, 22% in the West, 19% in the Midwest, and 14% in the Northeast.



### The Disillusioned - Importance of different attributes



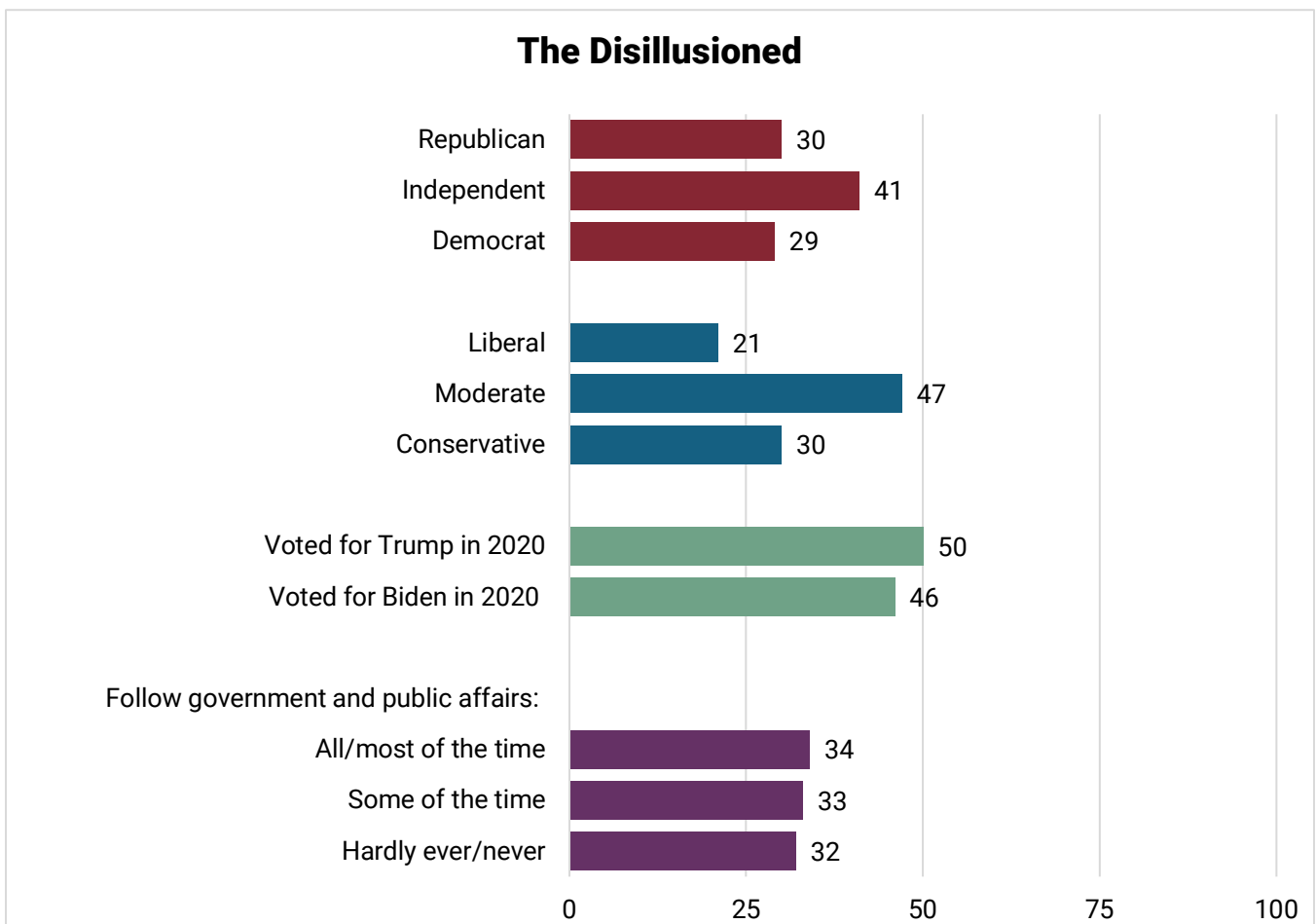
## Politics and Its Coverage in the News

Over half of The Disillusioned (56%) don't think their political affiliation is an important or essential part of their identity. Twenty-nine percent identify as Democrats, 30% as Republican, and 41% as independent. Only 27% say that they are a part of MAGA.

Most of this group say they are moderates (47%), with 21% identifying as liberal, and 30% as conservative.

Only about a third (34%) say they follow what's going on in government and public affairs all or most of the time, but 62% have been paying at least some attention to the 2024 presidential campaign so far.

Over 6 in 10 of The Disillusioned think much of what is depicted in the news is only slightly accurate or not at all accurate, including but not limited to coverage of Biden, Trump, the results of the 2020 election, and the attack on the U.S. Capitol.



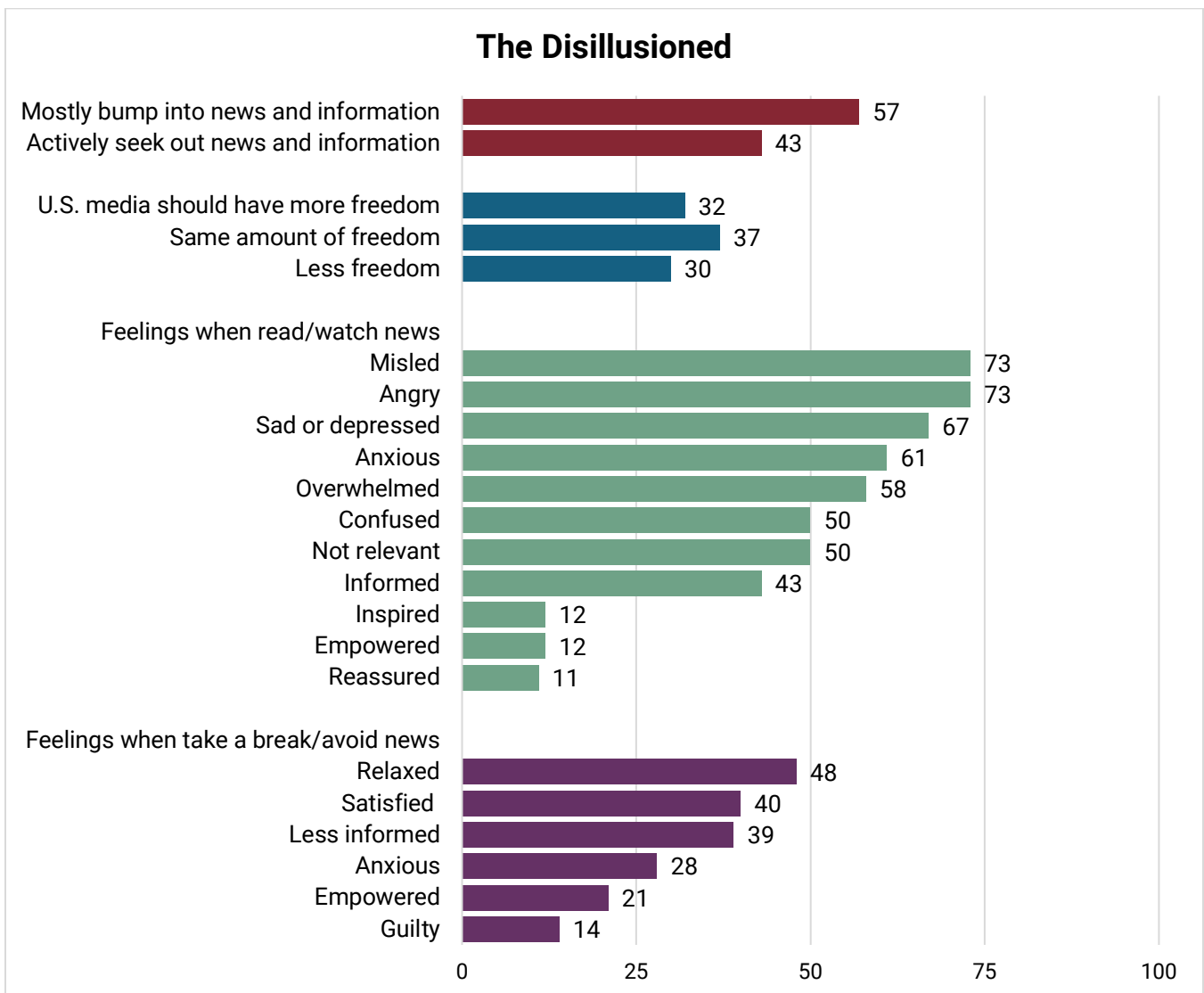
## Engagement with News and Information

Seventy-four percent say they do not trust the media at all, and that goes up to 91% if you include those who trust the media just a little bit. Over half (57%) say they mostly bump into news rather than actively seek it out. This group tends not to trust the information from any source; however, they are a bit more trusting of family members, and local and public television and newspapers.

The majority of The Disillusioned say that news consumption makes them feel angry, misled, sad or depressed, anxious, or overwhelmed. A little more than half (54%) say they set limits on the amount of time they spend watching or reading the news and they feel worse the more time they spend doing it. Sixty percent say they take extended breaks from watching or reading the news. Most say they do not feel guilty, empowered, anxious, less informed, or satisfied when they avoid or take a break from the news. Half of this group do say they feel relaxed.

Over half also say that the news media in general do not keep them well informed, but about half say the news media they use most often keep them very or fairly informed. Most of the group say they pay about the same amount of attention or more attention to the news compared with five years ago.

About half of The Disillusioned think the news media they use most often tend to favor one side on political and social issues. Thirty-eight percent say the news media they use most often are trying to cover up their mistakes, 52% think they neither protect nor hurt democracy, and 48% think they are trying to make money rather than tell the truth. When it comes to the news media in general, 71% think they tend to favor one side on political and social issues, 62% say they try to cover up their mistakes, 43% think that they neither hurt nor protect democracy, but 43% also say that the news media hurt democracy, and 63% say they are more interested in money than telling the truth.





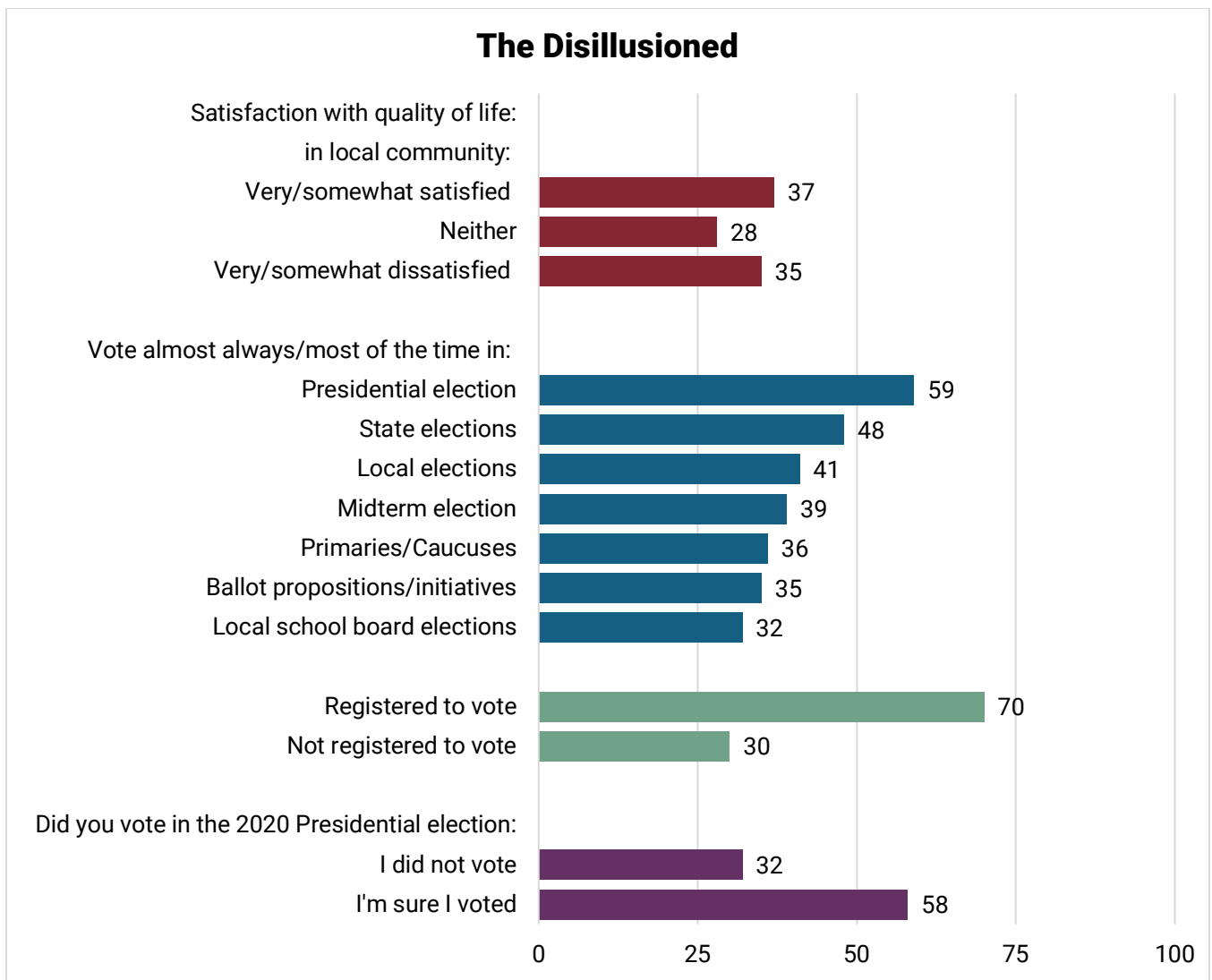
## Civic Engagement and Participation

The Disillusioned are just as likely to say that they are satisfied and dissatisfied with the quality of their lives (37% and 35%). Twenty-eight percent said are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

About 60% say they vote in presidential elections always or most of the time. Other than that, almost half do not vote in other types of elections.

A large majority do not attend or take part in public meetings, school or community organizations, civic organizations, organized sports recreation, religious organizations or institutions, political campaigns, protests or demonstrations, or communicate in person or online with a government representative. Less than 20% have volunteered for a social or community organization, donated to a social cause, signed a petition, or posted or reposted on social media for a social or political cause. Fifty-two percent say they have done none of the above.

Seventy percent of this group say they are currently registered to vote, and 58% report being sure they voted in 2020 election.



## The Believers (13%)

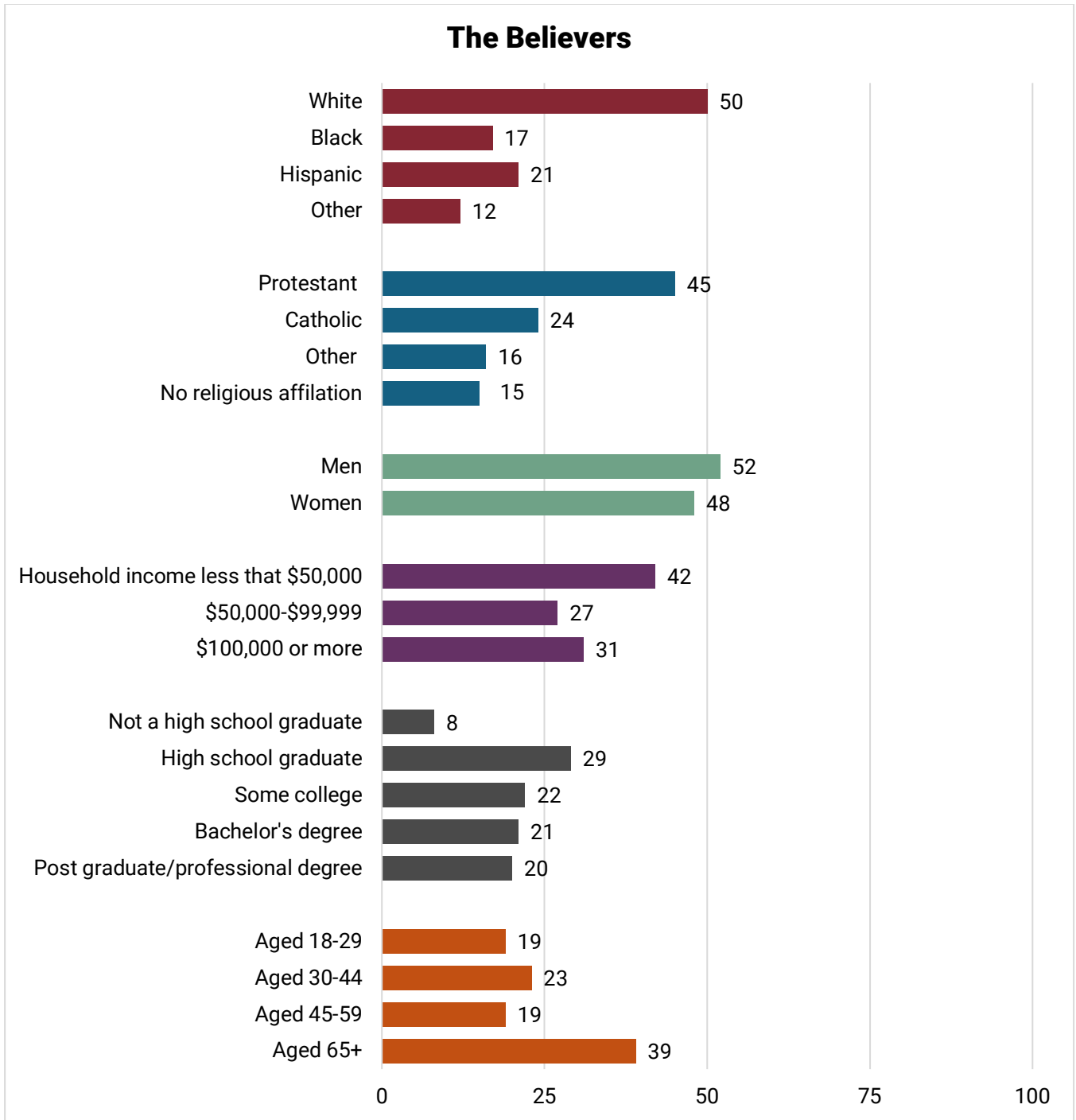
The Believers consist of educated, Democratic, religiously diverse, and slightly older respondents. This group is the least cynical and most optimistic of the five typologies, with more satisfied with their current quality of life and financial situation compared with the others. They are less concerned about the state of politics, have a positive outlook about democracy and the country's future, and report a high degree of trust in most institutions and in other people. Seven in 10 actively seek out news, and most have a positive view of the news media they use most often. The vast majority report they are registered to vote and took part in the last general election.

### Demographics

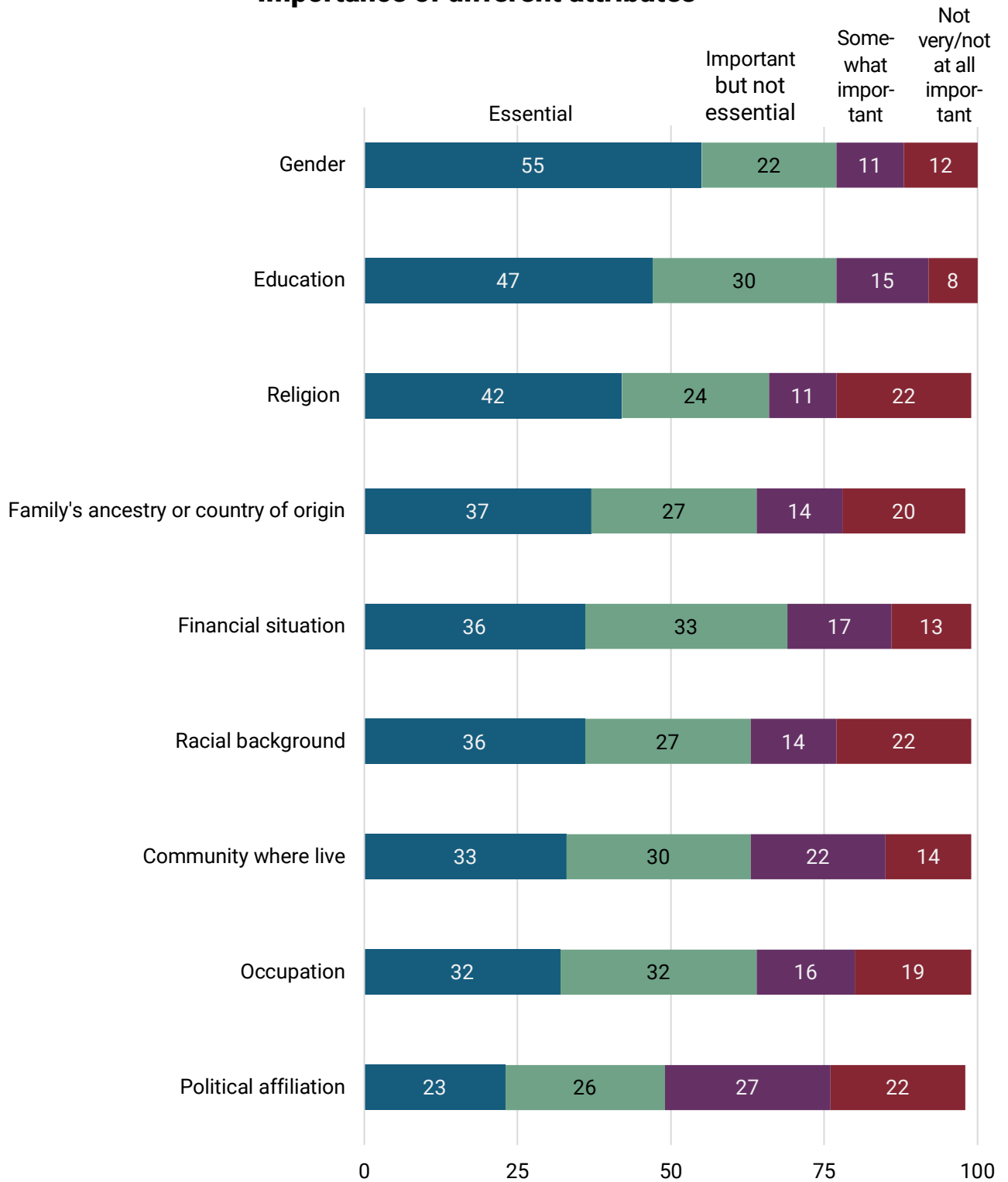
Thirty-seven percent of The Believers describe themselves as born-again or evangelical Christian. Two-thirds say religion is essential or important to their personal identity.

Four in 10 are college graduates and nearly half say their education attainment is essential to their identity. Overall, 55% say gender is an essential or important part of their identity. Among men, 51% of The Believers say their gender is an essential characteristic, and 60% of women agree.

Among The Believers, 63% say their race is essential or important to their identity. Again, white adults, Black adults, and Hispanic adults in this group have different ideas about the importance of race to their identity. Among white adults, only 25% say race is essential to their personal identity and among Hispanic adults 42% say race is an essential aspect of their identity. In contrast, 65% of Black adults regard their racial background as essential to their personal identity. Nearly half of Black Believers and Hispanic Believers say their family ancestry is essential to their identity, compared with about a quarter of white Believers.



### The Believers - Importance of different attributes

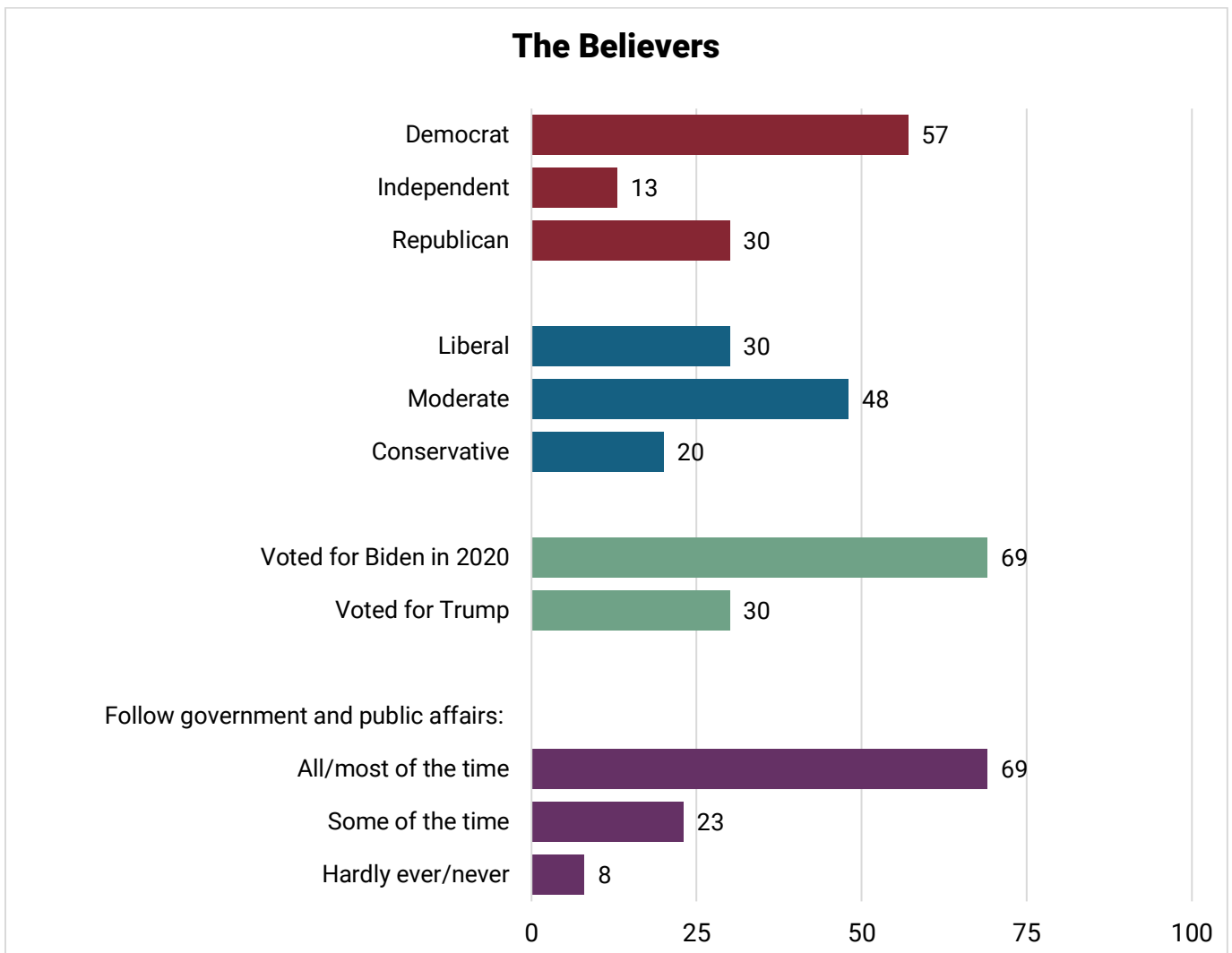


## Politics and Its Coverage in the News

Fifty-seven percent of The Believers define themselves as Democrats. At some point in their past, 26% considered themselves independent and 14% say they were once Republican. A quarter say they are MAGA supporters. Most (69%) say they voted for Biden in 2020, and 30% backed Trump. Only 23% say their party identification is an essential part of their identity.

Among The Believers, about half regard themselves as politically moderate, while 30% say they are liberal and 20% identify as conservative. Sixty-nine percent follow news about government and public affairs all or most of the time, and 60% are paying a good deal of attention to the 2024 presidential campaign.

Most (60%) think news coverage was completely or very accurate in handling the results of the 2020 presidential election. And in their reporting of the attack on the U.S. Capitol, 57% say the press handled it completely or very accurately.



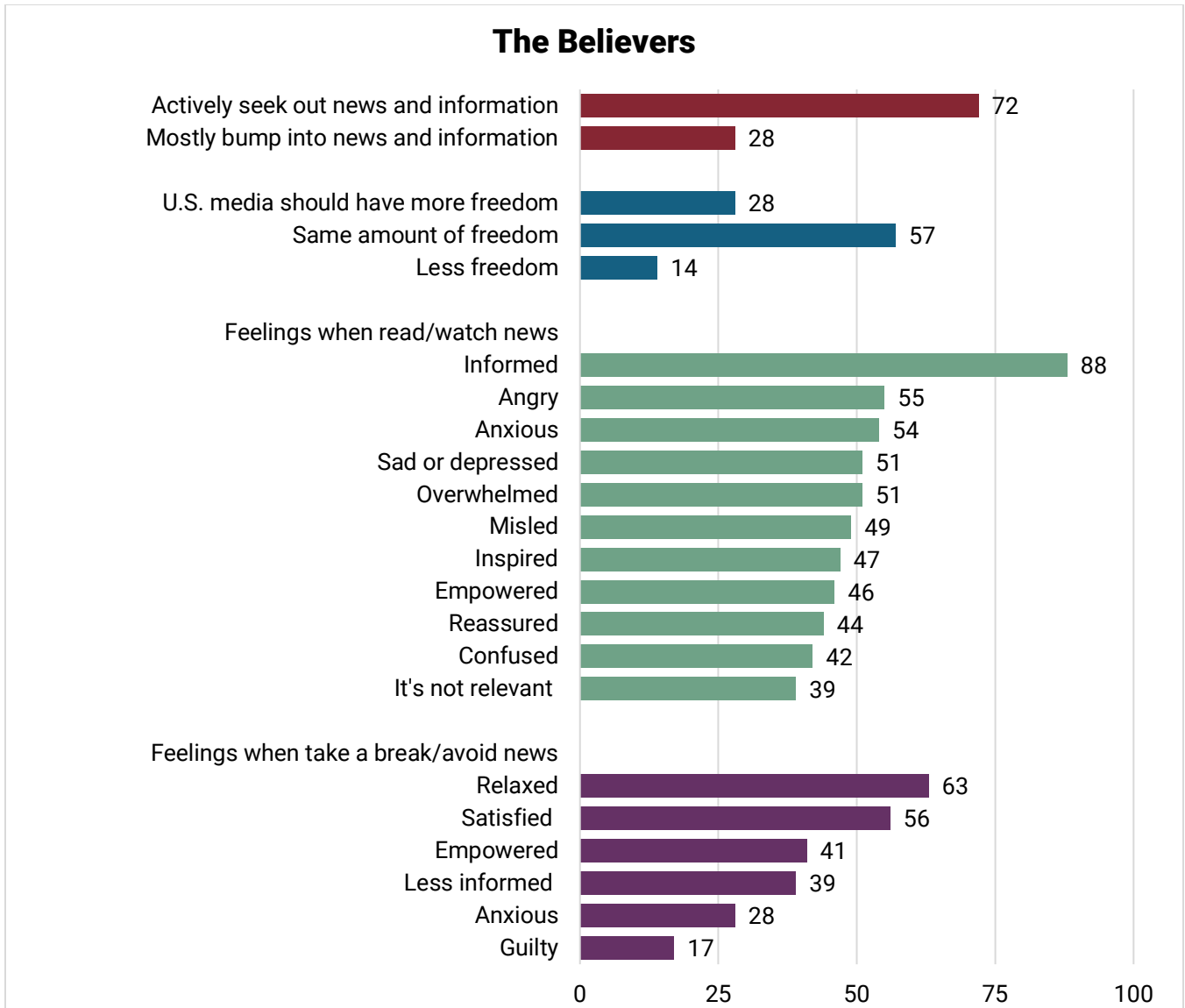
## Engagement with News and Information

Seventy-two percent say they actively seek out news and information rather than just bump into it. Most of The Believers trust conventional news sources, such as traditional network news, local television news and cable news, national and local newspapers, and public television and radio. They are more ambivalent about information about the government or public affairs from social media or YouTube: 38% have a lot or moderate amount of trust while 44% have little or no trust.

More than half say news consumption can make them angry, anxious, or overwhelmed these days. Regardless, a large majority say the news makes them feel informed. Forty-four percent say they feel worse the more time spent watching or reading news. Still only 19% avoid the news and 34% say they avoid hard news by focusing on entertainment or sports coverage. About half set limits on the amount of time devoted to consuming news and about the same amount take extended breaks from watching or reading news.

Four in 10 of The Believers feel less informed when they avoid or take breaks from consuming news. However, most say they feel relaxed when taking a break from news coverage.

The Believers tend to have positive views about the news media they usually consume. Eighty-five percent say they are kept informed about the important stories of the day by the news they use most often. Sixty-five percent say the news media they use most often deal fairly with all sides on political and social issues. Fifty-nine percent say the news media are more interested in telling the truth rather than making a profit, 55% say they are willing to admit mistakes, and 54% say they protect democracy rather than hurt it. But while news media in general are seen as being informative about important stories, 47% think one side on politics and social issues is favored, 43% think news media are more interested in making money, and 39% say mistakes are covered up.



## Civic Engagement and Participation

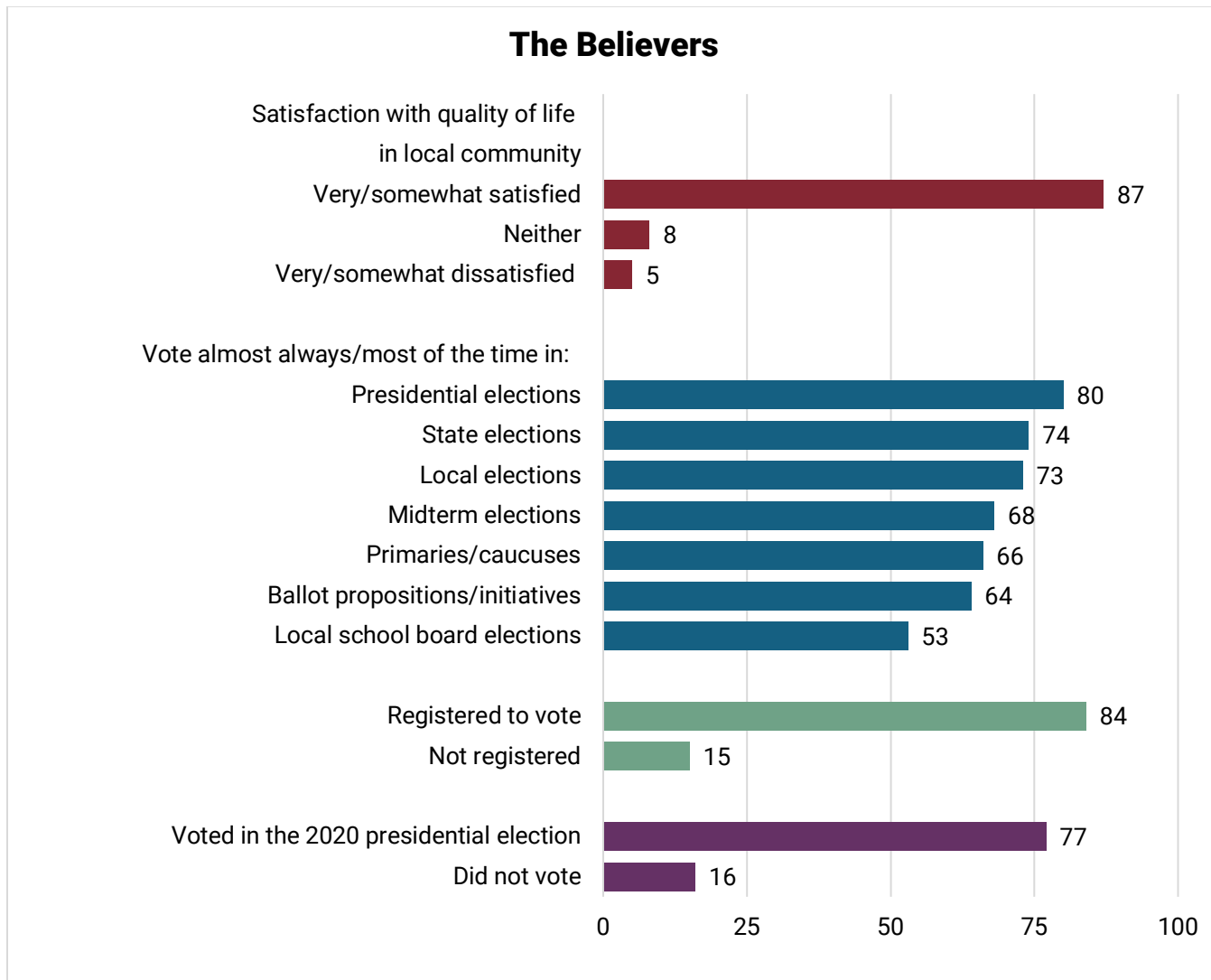
Eighty-four percent of The Believers say they are registered to vote, and three-quarters (77%) report having voted in the 2020 general election: 3 in 10 voted for Trump, while 69% supported Biden.

Similar to other groups, more say they vote in presidential general elections (80%) than other types of elections, but most of the Believers say they also vote in midterm (68%), state (74%), primary (66%), and local (73%) elections.

Nearly all The Believers are satisfied with their lives and with the quality of life in their community, with 87% reporting they are satisfied compared with just 5% who are dissatisfied and 8% who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

The Believers have low rates of civic engagement, with about a third having participated in a religious institution and only about a quarter reporting that they've signed a petition, donated to a social cause, or volunteered. About a fifth have attended a public or community meeting or communicated with their political

representatives, but even fewer have taken part in organized sports or a civic organization or participated in a protest or political campaign.



## Methodology

This survey, funded by the Wendell Gray Switzer Jr. Endowed Chair in Media Literacy at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from NORC at the University of Chicago and Louisiana State University collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using both probability and non-probability sample sources. Interviews for this survey were conducted between June 26 and July 17, 2024, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The probability sample source is AmeriSpeak®, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S.



households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face to face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,514 completed the survey—1,468 via the web and 46 via telephone. Panel members were invited by email or by phone from an NORC telephone interviewer. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive (\$3) for completing the survey. The final stage completion rate is 22.2%, the weighted household panel response rate is 22.3%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.8%, for a cumulative response rate of 3.9%.

Proedge provided 1,517 non-probability interviews with adults age 18 and over. The non-probability sample was derived based on quotas related to age, race and ethnicity, gender, and education. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and via the web only. For panel recruitment, Proedge uses invitations of all types, including email invitations, phone alerts, banners, and messaging on panel community sites to include people with a diversity of motivations to take part in research. Because non-probability panels do not start with a frame where there is known probability of selection, standard measures of sampling error and response rates cannot be calculated.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 146 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them, for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample, or for straight lining all grid questions asked of them. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the sample was selected and fielded, and all the study data were collected and made final, a raking process was used to adjust for any survey nonresponse in the probability sample, as well as any noncoverage or under and oversampling in both probability and non-probability samples resulting from the study specific sample design. Raking variables for both the probability and nonprobability samples included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, education, and 2020 presidential vote choice among self-identified 2020 voters. Population control totals for the raking variables were obtained from the 2024 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of people age 18 and over.

In order to incorporate the nonprobability sample, NORC used TrueNorth calibration, an innovative hybrid calibration approach developed at NORC based on small area estimation methods in order to explicitly account for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample. The purpose of TrueNorth calibration is to adjust the weights for the nonprobability sample to bring weighted distributions of the nonprobability sample in line with the population distribution for characteristics correlated with the survey variables. Such calibration adjustments help to reduce potential bias, yielding more accurate population estimates.

The weighted AmeriSpeak sample and the calibrated nonprobability sample were used to develop a small area model to support domain-level estimates, where the domains were defined by race/ethnicity, age, and gender. The dependent variables for the models were:

- Q25F: Do you agree, neither agree nor disagree, or disagree with the following statements? Native-born Americans are losing economic, political, and cultural influence in this country because of the growing population of immigrants.

- Q33A: Would you say each of the following are willing to admit their mistakes or try to cover up their mistakes or neither? The news media in general.
- Q43\_10: Over the past 12 months, have you done any of the following? These activities can be online or in-person. Volunteered for a social or community organization

These were found to be key survey variables, in terms of model fit. The model included covariates, domain-level random effects, and sampling errors. The covariates were external data available from other national surveys such as health insurance, internet access, voting behavior, and housing type from the American Community Survey (ACS) or the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Finally, the combined AmeriSpeak and nonprobability sample weights were derived such that for the combined sample, the weighted estimate reproduced the small domain estimates (derived using the small area model) for key survey variables.

The overall margin of sampling error for the combined sample is +/- 2.3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Complete questions and results are available at <https://www.norc.org/research/projects/civic-cynicism-united-states.html>.

Additional information on the TrueNorth approach can be found here: <https://amerispeak.norc.org/our-capabilities/Pages/TrueNorth.aspx>.

For more information, email [info@norc.org](mailto:info@norc.org).

## Contributing Researchers

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### About LSU Manship School of Mass Communication

The LSU Manship School of Mass Communication ranks among the strongest collegiate communication programs in the country, with its robust emphasis on media and public affairs. It offers undergraduate degrees in public relations, journalism, political communication, digital advertising and pre-law, along with four graduate degree programs: Master of Mass Communication, Ph.D. in Media and Public Affairs, Certificate of Strategic Communication and a dual MMC/Law degree.

<https://www.lsu.edu/manship/>

### About NORC at the University of Chicago

NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent research organization that collaborates with government agencies, foundations, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to provide data and analysis that support informed decision-making in key areas, including health, education, economics, crime, justice, and energy. NORC's 70 years of leadership and experience in data collection, analysis, and dissemination—coupled with deep subject matter expertise—provides the foundation for effective solutions.

<https://www.norc.org/>