

Perspectives on Democracy and Elections

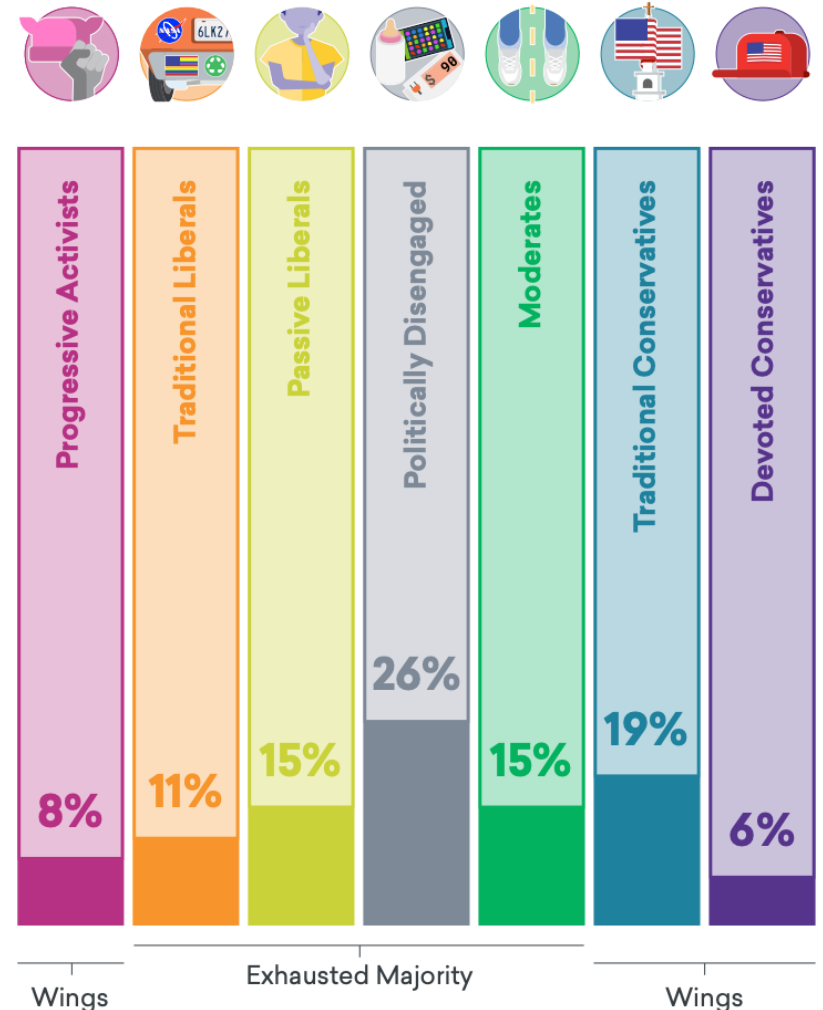
July 2022

Activities Fielded to Americans via Americans in Conversation

- Who do we Trust, Who do we not Trust
 - Fielded March 18–21, 2022.
 - N=272
 - Gathered baseline views on trust of various figures, organizations and institutions.
- Civic Sense
 - Fielded April 29–May 6, 2022.
 - N=281
 - Measured support for basic democratic principles.
- What is Worrying you?
 - Fielded June 23–30, 2022.
 - N=262
 - Explored the top anxieties Americans have in the current moment.
- General Questionnaire
 - Fielded February–April, 2022.
 - N=369
 - Probed fundamental views on politics, engagement, and moral values.
- Trust in Elections
 - Fielded July 1–8, 2022.
 - N=264
 - Probed how participants felt about the integrity of elections, and who they could trust on this topic.
- Thoughts on democracy
 - Fielded March 2–4, 2022.
 - N=264
 - Asked participants about their views on the state of democracy and ideals for democracy.
- Inflation
 - Fielded June 13–17, 2022.
 - N=291
 - Probed how participants experienced inflation in their personal lives.

Hidden Tribes

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



**Linda, age 55-64, White
female, Passive Liberal, Texas**

Linda is liberal-leaning, middle-income, and holds a college degree. She is not a regular voter.

She is **less trusting of people** and thinks that the government should play a larger role in helping Americans.

Linda thinks that politicians don't care about her, and the government is rigged to serve the rich. She is worried about the world becoming more dangerous.

- Somewhat liberal and middle-income.
- Lives in a suburban area.
- Holds a college degree.
- “Very unfavorable” view of Trump.
- Thinks that “You can't be too careful in dealing with people.”
- Follows news “most of the time” but does not vote regularly.
- Thinks that “Some people’s situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success” and that the government should take more responsibility to provide for Americans.
- Values independence instead of respect for elders.

- Thinks that “Politicians don't care about people like me” and “The American government is mostly rigged to serve the rich and influential.”
- Thinks that “American identity is being strengthened through diversity.”
- Is “worried about increasing intolerance towards people of different races and ethnicities.”
- Thinks “The world is becoming a more dangerous place.”

Linda faces **severe** economic hardship due to inflation.

She is strongly opposed to Donald Trump and feels that **him and his supporters are an existential threat to democracy.**

To her, violent political extremism could spell the end of America. Linda trusts Fauci, Biden, scientists, and journalists. She doesn't trust Trump and conservative media.

Linda especially thinks American democracy is not functioning well.

“I have always known that Trump was a bozo but not nearly as bad as when he was the president. His actions speak for themselves. I am disappointed in Americans that continue to support him.”

Most concerning threat in America: “Anti-government violent extremism in the US. Overthrowing our government will affect a great many areas, and I think it is a real possibility as long as people believe or follow Republicans and Trump. We are at risk.”

Trusts:

Anthony Fauci	Scientists/Doctors
Joe Biden	Journalists
Oprah/Brene Brown	Family and friends

Does Not Trust:

Donald Trump	Tucker Carlson
Jeff Bezos	Supreme Court
Republican politicians	Big tech

- Thinks “America’s best days are behind us.”
- Thinks America is not functioning well at “individual liberty” and “justice”.
- Rates the health of American democracy as 2 out of 10 (unhealthy to healthy).
- Feels “Some responsibility” to support strengthening democracy.
- Concerned about lack of access to abortions, cybersecurity, and gun violence.

Feels “severe” financial hardship due to inflation, saying, “I am cutting back on everything like only one trip to the grocery per week...[and] cutting way back on groceries.”

Linda thinks that the rules of voting prevent certain people and groups from voting. She wants more information on the people conducting elections.

Linda does not trust state election officials or law enforcement on election information. Her idea of an undemocratic society is one with no real elections.

Election worries:

- *Rules that make voting more difficult, like limitations on voting hours, reduced number of voting centers, and limitations on voting early or absentee. Rules that require IDs to vote.*

What would build confidence in the legitimacy of state elections:

- *Information about the safety measures built into the elections process. Information about the people who are responsible for conducting elections and counting votes.*
- *“The leadership of each state is making the difference now.”*

Trusts with election information:

*Independent fact checkers
Established news organizations*

Does not trust with election information:

*Specific people on social media
Their state’s election officials
Law enforcement officials
Religious leaders*

A completely undemocratic society:

“The leader is a dictator; there are no real elections; things can change on a whim; significant poverty and limitations for its citizens. There would be no balanced media or access to media. Censorship would be the norm.”

A completely functioning democratic society:

“We were somewhat functioning before Obama and not because of Obama but because of Republicans. Bush cheating the election started the fall of our democracy. We have more zealots that are seen and heard.”

“It is obvious that the voter laws are making it difficult for non-Republicans to vote.”

Is neutral when asked if “I am confident in my state's election processes and results.”

**Lucille, age 65+, Black female,
Disengaged, Mississippi**

Lucille is a low-income resident of a rural area. She holds a high school degree.

Lucille is less politically engaged, compared to Linda.

At times, she feels unsafe in her own home and goes without necessary medication.

She thinks that certain people are in situations so tough that no amount of work will allow them to find success.

- *Somewhat liberal and low income.*
- *Lives in a rural area.*
- *A grandmother.*
- *Has a high school education.*
- *Not politically engaged, following news only “some of the time.” Rarely votes, attends protests, or shares political content.*
- *Sometimes feels unsafe in her own home or goes without needed medicine.*

- *Thinks that “Some people’s situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success” and “Government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for.”*
- *Is “worried about increasing intolerance towards people of different races and ethnicities.”*

Lucille feels **severe** financial hardship and is most concerned about the rules of health care. She rarely watches the news and finds it hard to know what to believe.

She does not trust most people generally, but trusts scientists, journalists, and the police somewhat. **Like Linda, she does not trust Trump, but she also doesn't trust politicians from either party.**

Lucille does not think American democracy is functioning well on all metrics.

“There is so much mixed information coming from so many unreliable sources – you don’t know what to believe.”

Most concerning threat in America: “I have a concern about the rules for health care, we have no control over what can be charged for services. Even though we have health care, we still have a lot of out-of-pocket expenses that we cannot afford.”

Trusts:

Scientists/Doctors Anthony Fauci

Journalists (some) Police (some)

Family and friends Oprah

Does Not Trust:

Donald Trump TV personalities

Democratic and Republican elected officials

- Rarely watches the news and trusts her family and friends the most.
- Somewhat disagrees that “It is very easy to get the facts about what is happening in the country.”
- Thinks America is not functioning well at almost everything, from elections to justice to majority rule.
- Rates the health of American democracy as 4 out of 10 (unhealthy to healthy).

Feels “severe” financial hardship due to inflation, saying, “I can not go out to stores, by gas, groceries, I think twice about buying if it is not necessary.”

Lucille is mostly concerned about the actions of polling workers and those responsible for tallying election results.

She only somewhat trusts state election officials and the media on election information – but not poll workers.

Lucille does not feel part of a democratic society.

Election worries:

- *Poll workers changing or discarding votes. Fraud with mail-in ballots or drop boxes.*

What would build confidence in the legitimacy of state elections:

- *“Information about the people who are responsible for conducting elections and counting votes.”*

A completely undemocratic society:

“If there were an undemocratic society there would not be a lot of disagreement; there would be more union between parties. If that were the case, it would be better for all people. There would be less confusion and disagreement.”

A completely functioning democratic society:

“A functioning democratic society would follow its own rules. Politicians would practice what they preach. There would be no competition among parties. Everything would apply to all – no matter the party was in power.”

Trusts with election information:

State election officials

Established news organizations

Independent fact checkers, like PolitiFact

My preferred political candidates

Does not trust with election information:

Law enforcement officials

Friends and family

Poll workers

- *Is neutral when asked if “I am confident in my state's election processes and results.”*
- *Agrees somewhat that “People like me don’t have any influence over what the government does.”*
- *Somewhat disagrees that “I feel like a part of a democratic society.”*

Thank you.