

# Trump's Return

Five Findings that Capture the Moment



January 2025



**More in  
Common**

The research in this publication was conducted by More in Common US, a nonpartisan research nonprofit that works to understand the forces driving us apart, find common ground, and bring people together to address shared challenges.

Established in 2017, More in Common US is part of a nonpartisan, international initiative aimed at building societies and communities that are stronger, more united and more resilient to the increasing threats of polarization and social division.

More in Common's work is frequently featured in prominent media and used by senior political leaders, governments and leaders in nonprofits, philanthropy, and business.

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# Key Findings

**1. Commitment to the Constitution: regardless of party, Americans want Trump to honor constitutional constraints.**

- Only 15% of Americans, including 17% of Republicans believe that Trump “should get things done, even it means sometimes ignoring the Constitution”, while 74% of Americans, including 73% of Republicans, believe that he should “always follow the Constitution, even if means he sometimes can’t get things done.”
- Gen Z men stand apart from the average, with 42% saying Trump is justified in sometimes ignoring the Constitution.

**2. America's foreign policy alignment: a respected, peaceful and reliable ally to democracies.**

- Only 13% support expansion through invasion and 26% through the purchase of new territories. However, majorities across parties endorse goals of honoring international alliances, building respect for the country, staying out of wars, and protecting other democracies from invasion.

**3. Support for federal aid to California has underappreciated bipartisan support.**

- Fully 78% of Americans and 72% of Republicans support providing federal assistance for relief efforts for the California wildfires, while just 6% are opposed. Republican support for federal aid is grossly underestimated by Democrats.

**4. Division defines the country, while a desire to be united transcends parties.**

- Across political lines, “divided” is the most commonly chosen word to describe America today.
- Reflecting on the future, Americans most desire the country to be “united”, but don’t believe it’s a priority for the opposing party. Republicans think Democrats want the country to be “green” and “global,” whereas Democrats think Republicans want the country to be “traditional” and “Christian/religious.”

**5. Elon Musk’s controversial entry into politics receives mixed, polarized responses.**

- Americans most commonly describe Musk as “smart”, “ambitious”, and “creative”. However, their perceptions of his entry into politics are highly polarized, receiving more concern and ambivalence than appreciation.

# Methodology

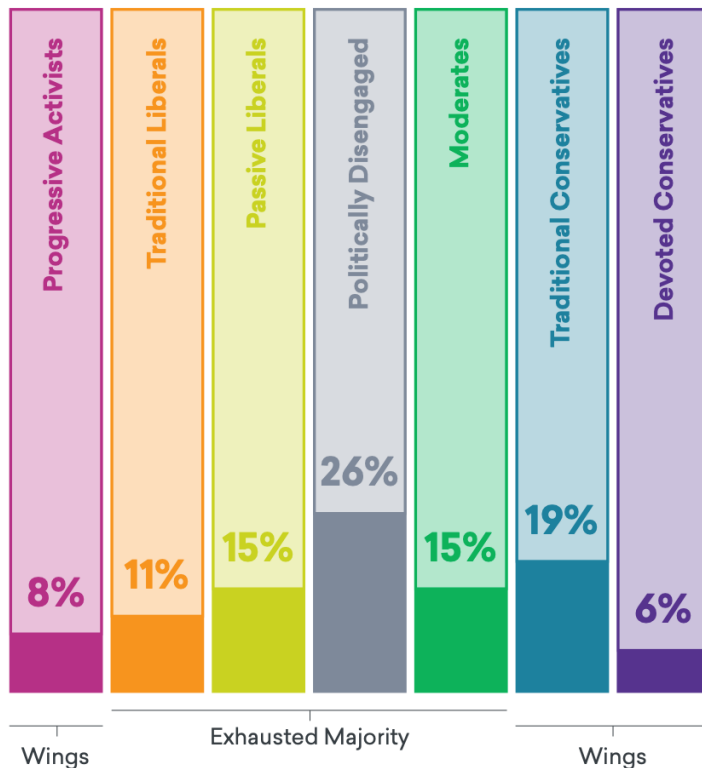
More in Common conducted online survey interviews among a representative sample of 2,003 adults January 13 to 16, 2025. The data was weighted to be representative according to gender/age interlocked, ethnicity, education level, region, and 2024 Presidential vote and turnout. The margin of error (adjusted for weighting) is +/- 2 for the U.S. average and higher for subgroups.

Numbers in data visualizations are rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures may total to larger or smaller than one-hundred percent due to rounding.

More in Common also polled 187 participants from January 14 to 19, 2025 and 157 participants from January 25 to 27, 2025 on its “Americans in Conversation” online qualitative research panel, which is broadly representative of the American population, about their views of American society and the new administration.

Quotations from those activities with respondents are included in this report. Where provided, names have been changed to protect their privacy. Quote attributions include respondents’ demographics, location, political party ID, and More in Common’s [Hidden Tribes segmentation](#). Grammar and punctuation may have been lightly edited for clarity.

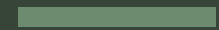
# More in Common's 'Hidden Tribes' segmentation of Americans



In 2018, More in Common surveyed 8,000 Americans and used a statistical process called hierarchical clustering to identify groups of people with similar core beliefs. This revealed seven groups of Americans—what we call Hidden Tribes—with distinctive views and values. Our breakdown of Americans into groups is tied to how they express their core beliefs, which isn't necessarily aligned with conventional demographic measures.

- **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.
- **Devoted Conservatives:** white, retired, highly engaged, uncompromising, patriotic.

Read more about this segmentation at [hiddentribes.us](https://hiddentribes.us).



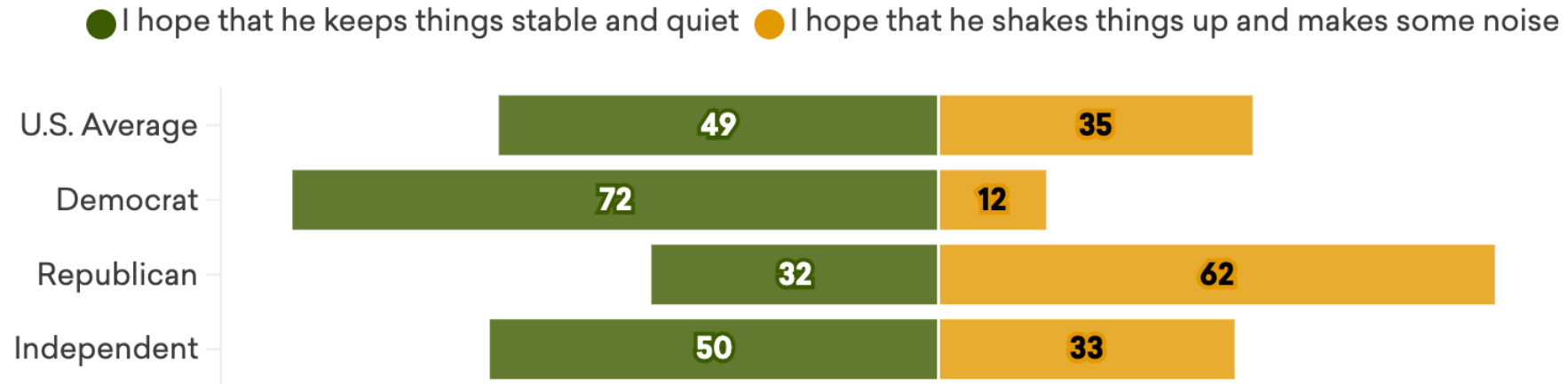
Key Finding 1

# Commitment to the Constitution

# Most Republicans hope that Trump can “shake things up” in his second term.



Question: When it comes to President-elect Trump, which comes closer to your view...



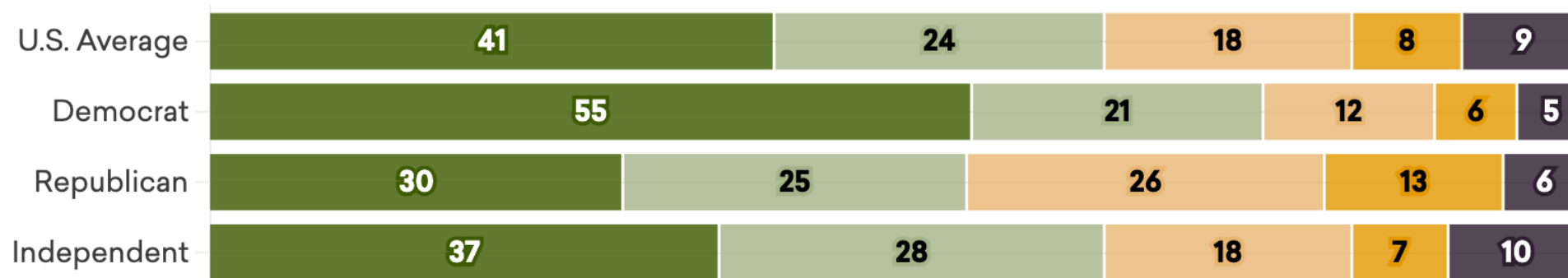
Note: "Don't know" responses are omitted from the data visualization..

More in Common; N=2,003; January 13-16, 2025

## At the same time, most Americans and most Republicans prefer a leader who “respects the rules” rather than one who is willing to bend the rules.

Question: Which do you prefer: a leader who is willing to bend the rules or a leader who respects the rules?

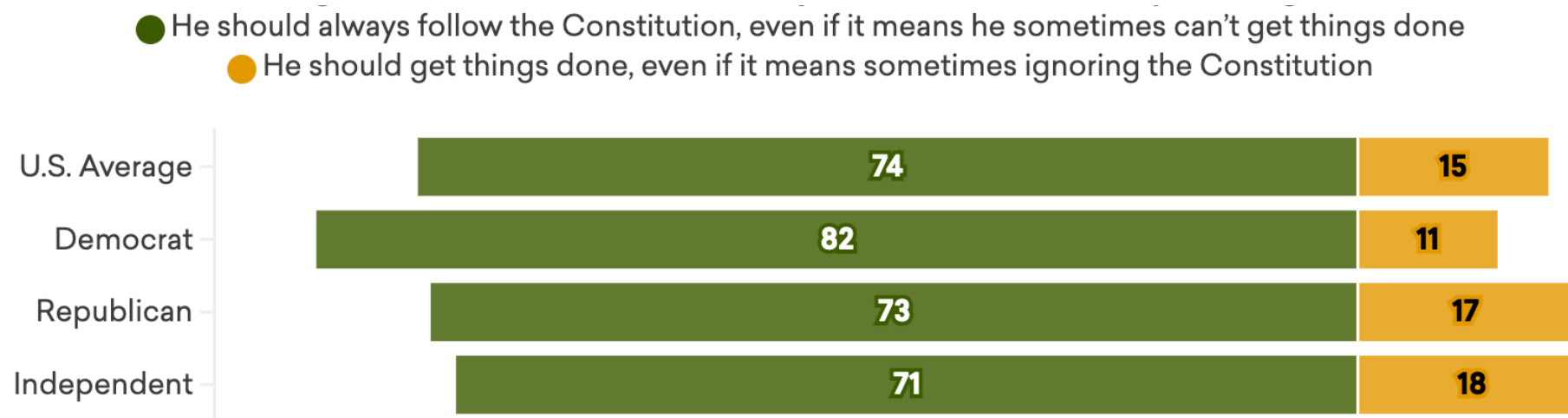
- Strongly prefer a leader who respects the rules
- Somewhat prefer a leader who respects the rules
- Somewhat prefer a leader who is willing to bend the rules
- Strongly prefer a leader who is willing to bend the rules ● Don't know





## Respect for the Constitution remains high. Just 15% believe Trump “should get things done, even if it means sometimes ignoring the Constitution.”

Question: With regards to the Constitution, how do you think President Trump should govern?



Note: "Don't know" responses are omitted from the data visualization..

More in Common; N=2,003; January 13-16, 2025

## Many Americans feel that a president can be effective while following the rules; they hope that President Trump will abide by the Constitution.

Question: With regards to the Constitution, how do you think President Trump should govern?



“He should follow the Constitution and not break laws to do what he wants. The Constitution has been there **since our Founding Fathers** and I think it does a good job of regulating the government.”

– Sheila, 24-year-old white woman, Traditional Conservative, Trump 2024 voter and Republican from Ocala, Florida

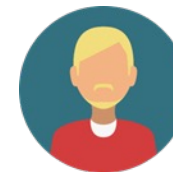


“The Constitution is the foundation for the individual rights and freedoms embraced by Americans. Those who attempt to subvert it get things done will only **lead the U.S. into authoritarianism**, if not fascism.”

– Brian, 72-year-old Black man, Traditional Liberal, Harris 2024 voter and Independent from Tempe, Arizona

“If the commander in chief breaks rules, that's a **bad example** of state and local leaders, as well as citizens.”

– Liam, 66-year-old white man, Devoted Conservative, Trump 2024 voter and Republican from Lula, Georgia



“It is important to follow the principles of our Constitution because the US was built to this extent using our Constitution as the guideline. The **success of the US is mainly due to our leaders following the Constitution.**”

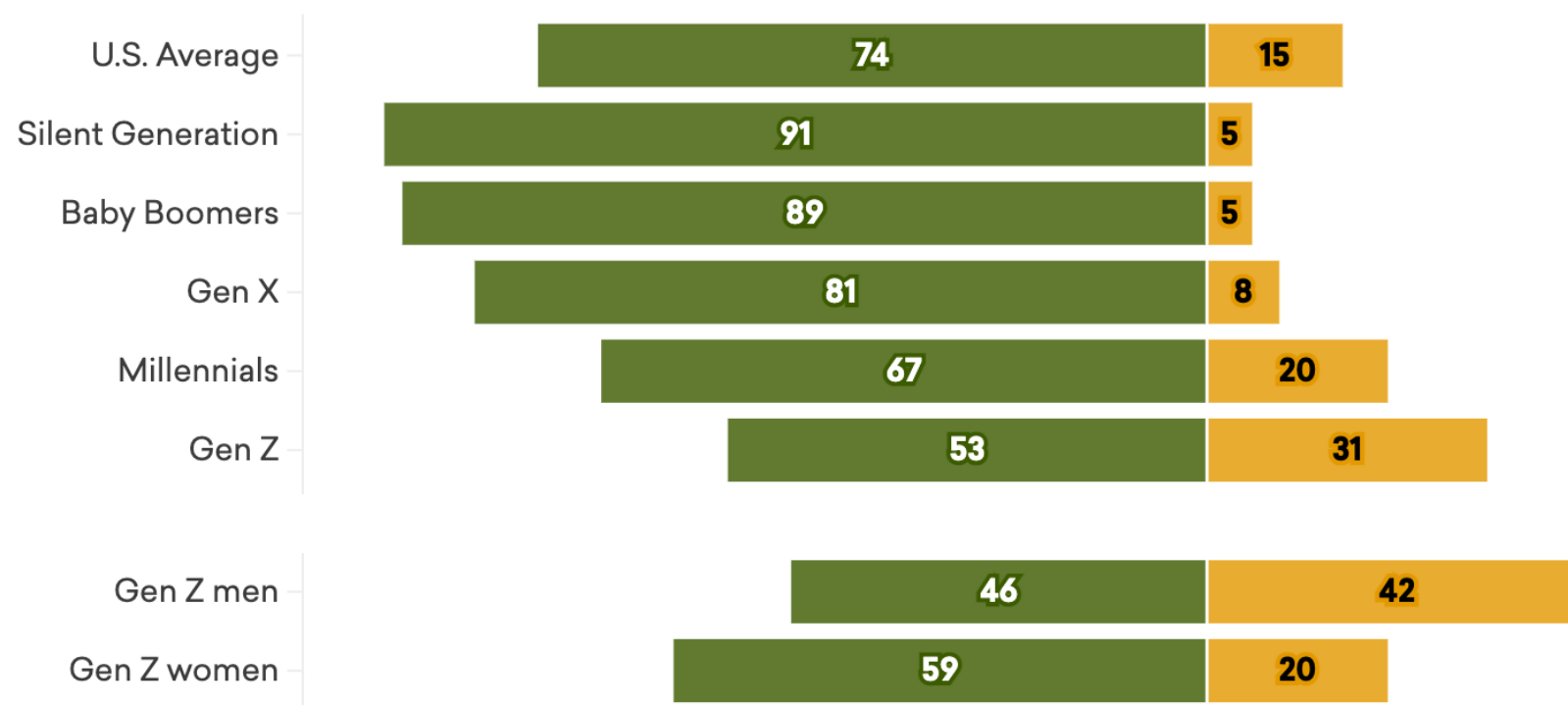
– Naomi, 54-year-old Asian American woman, Traditional Conservative, Harris 2024 voter and Democrat from Kalamazoo, Michigan



## Gen Z Americans and Gen Z men in particular are more willing to support President Trump occasionally sidestepping the Constitution.

Question: With regards to the Constitution, how do you think President Trump should govern?

- He should always follow the Constitution, even if it means he sometimes can't get things done
- He should get things done, even if it means sometimes ignoring the Constitution



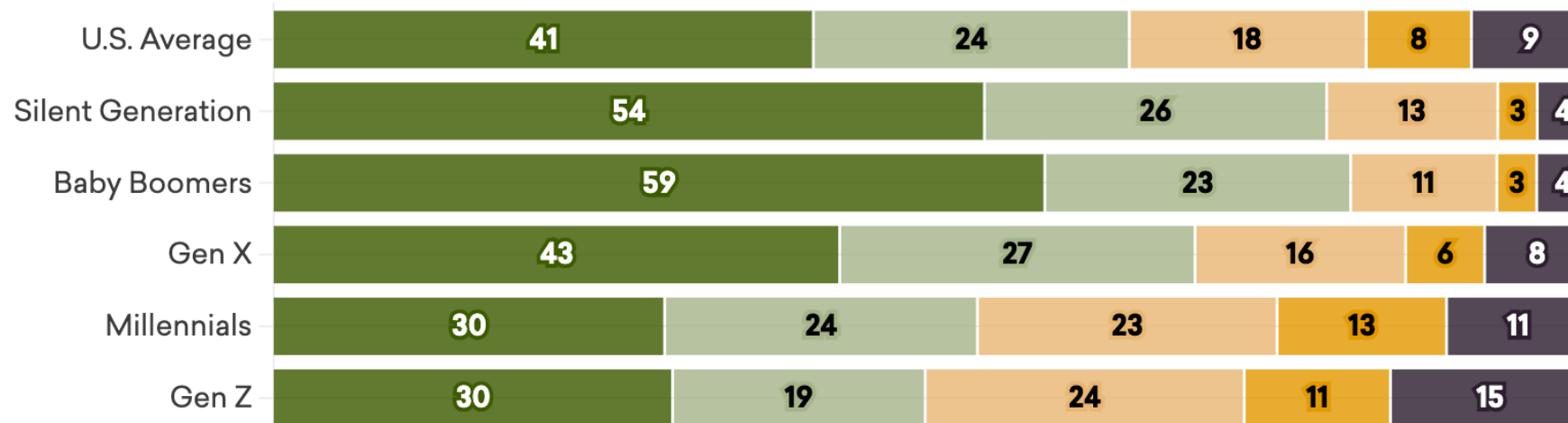
Note: "Don't know" responses are omitted from the data visualization..

More in Common; N=2,003; January 13-16, 2025

## Gen Z are also less likely than older generations to prefer a leader who respects the rules, with over one third leaning towards leaders who are willing to bend the rules.

Question: Which do you prefer: a leader who is willing to bend the rules or a leader who respects the rules?

- Strongly prefer a leader who respects the rules
- Somewhat prefer a leader who respects the rules
- Somewhat prefer a leader who is willing to bend the rules
- Strongly prefer a leader who is willing to bend the rules ● Don't know





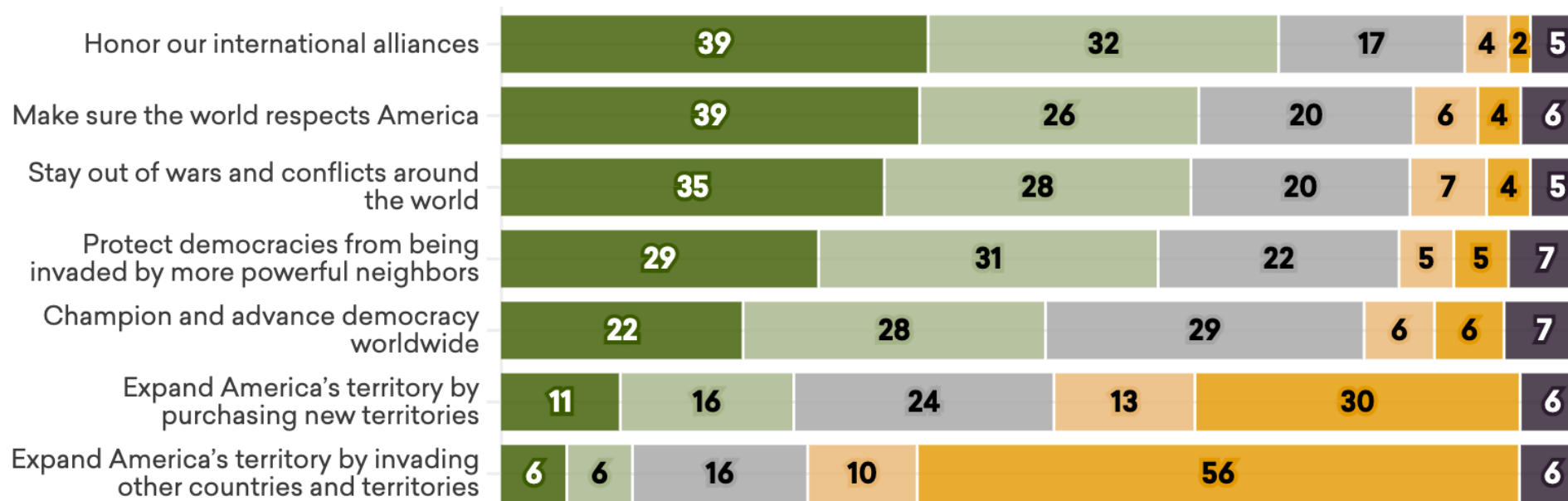
Key Finding 2

# America's Foreign Policy Alignment

# Most Americans want to honor our alliances, protect democracies from invasion, stay out of conflicts, and build respect. Support for territorial expansion is modest.

Question: Do you agree or disagree that the United States should pursue the following goals?

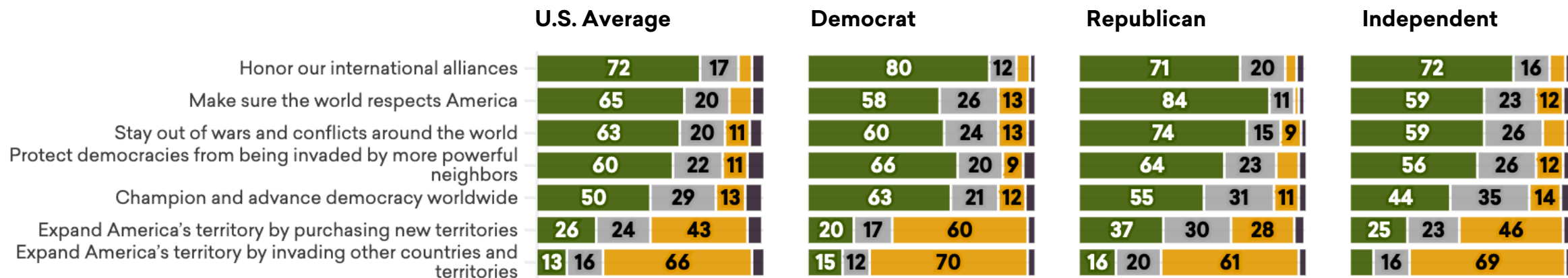
● Strongly agree  
 ● Somewhat agree  
 ● Neither agree nor disagree  
● Somewhat disagree  
 ● Strongly disagree  
 ● Don't know



# Americans are mostly aligned on foreign policy. Republicans are more attuned to respect while Independents are less committed to advancing democracy overseas.

Question: Do you agree or disagree that the United States should pursue the following goals?

● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Don't know





Key Finding 3

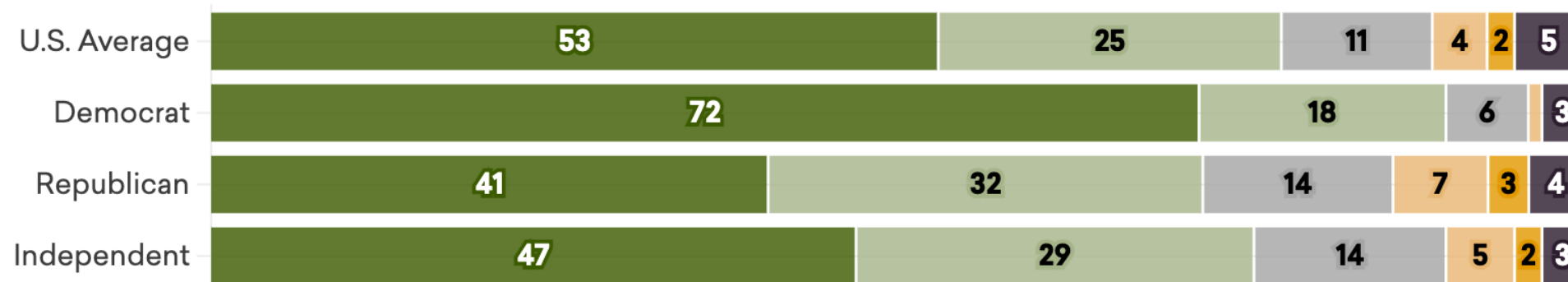
# Support for Federal Aid to California



## Most Americans, including 9 in 10 Democrats and 7 in 10 Republicans, support providing federal aid to the victims of the California fires.

Question: As you may have seen or read, Los Angeles has faced devastating fires in recent weeks that have destroyed tens of thousands of acres, including many homes, landmarks, and businesses.. Do you support or oppose providing federal aid to help repair the damage and assist victims of the fires?

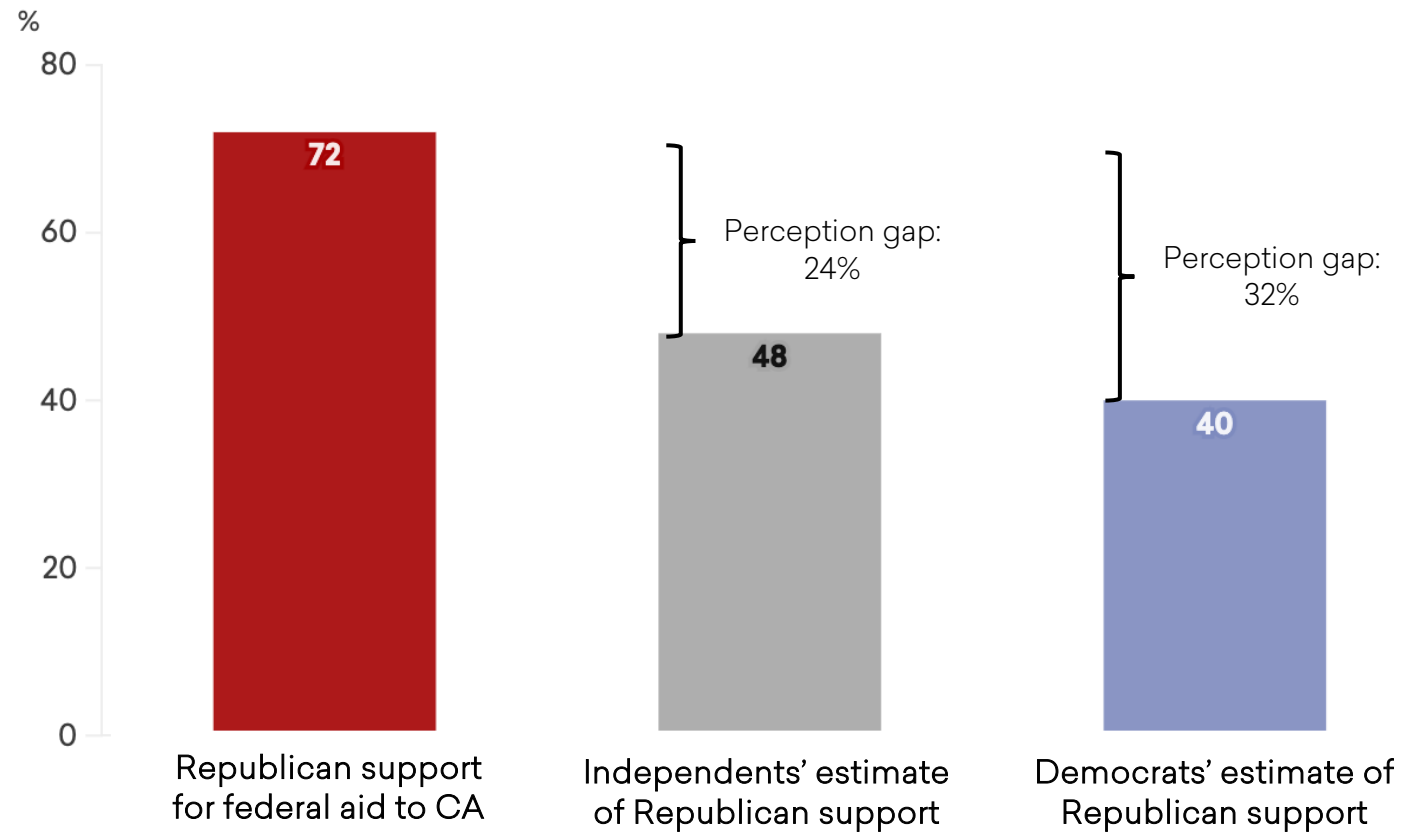
● Strongly support  
 ● Somewhat support  
 ● Neither support nor oppose  
● Somewhat oppose  
 ● Strongly oppose  
 ● Don't know



# But Democrats and Independents incorrectly estimate that most Republicans do not want to provide federal aid to victims of the fires in Los Angeles.



Question: Do you support or oppose providing federal aid to help repair the damage and assist victims of the fires?  
What percent of Republicans do you think support providing federal aid to help repair the damage and assist victims of the fires in Los Angeles?





Key Finding 4

# A Desire to be United Transcends Parties

## Many Americans see division and social fracture as defining features of American society today.

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



“I would describe it as a very mixed-up place with a lot going on. I think we **need to come together and heal** as a nation.”

– Carrie, 43-year-old Mixed race woman, Disengaged, Trump 2024 voter and Republican from Valdosta, Georgia



“**Conflicted and segregated especially between political groups** and unfortunately, even among people groups in general.”

– Ryan, 65-year-old white man, Traditional Conservative, Trump 2024 voter and Republican from Fort Worth, Texas

“Unfunctional and disruptive.”

– Gabriella, 44-year-old Hispanic woman, Moderate, Harris 2024 voter and Democrat from Waukegan, Illinois



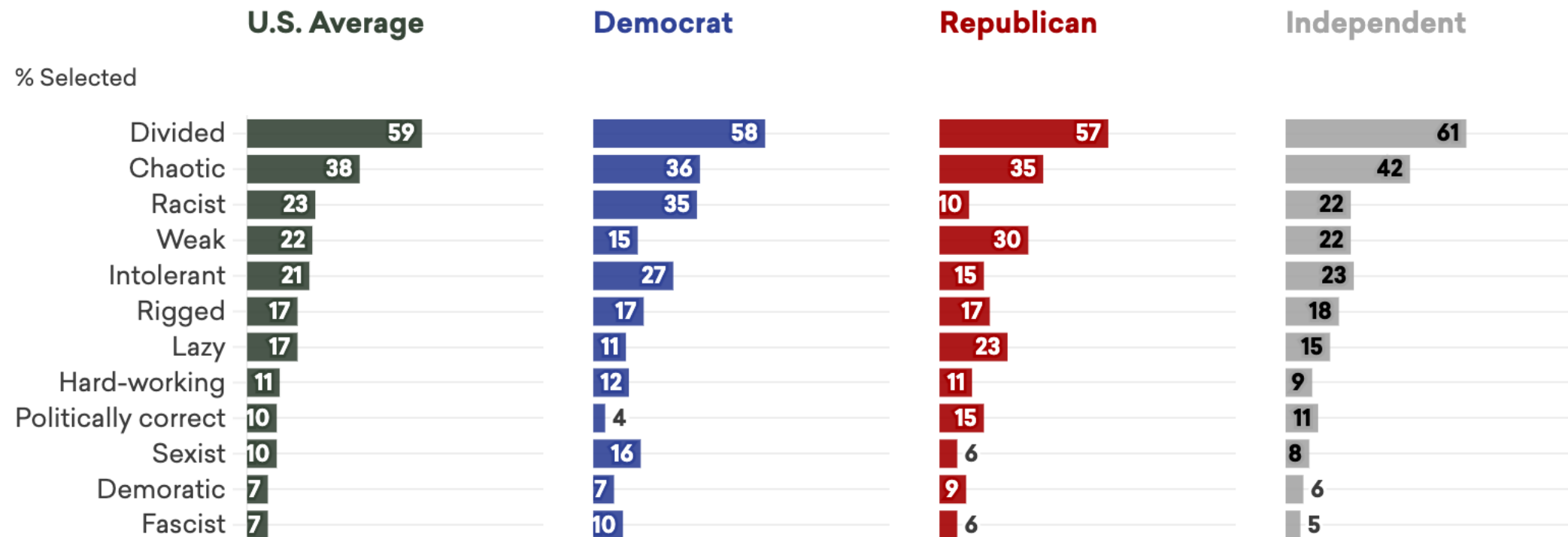
“**Confused** of all things happening, healing in terms of no longer divided or not as divided, seeing things from a different light.”

– Luca, 48-year-old Hispanic man, Traditional Conservative, Trump 2024 voter and Independent from El Paso, Texas



# Across political lines, “divided” is the most commonly chosen word to describe America.

Question: Thinking about the United States today, what qualities would you use to describe it? Please select up to 3 qualities.



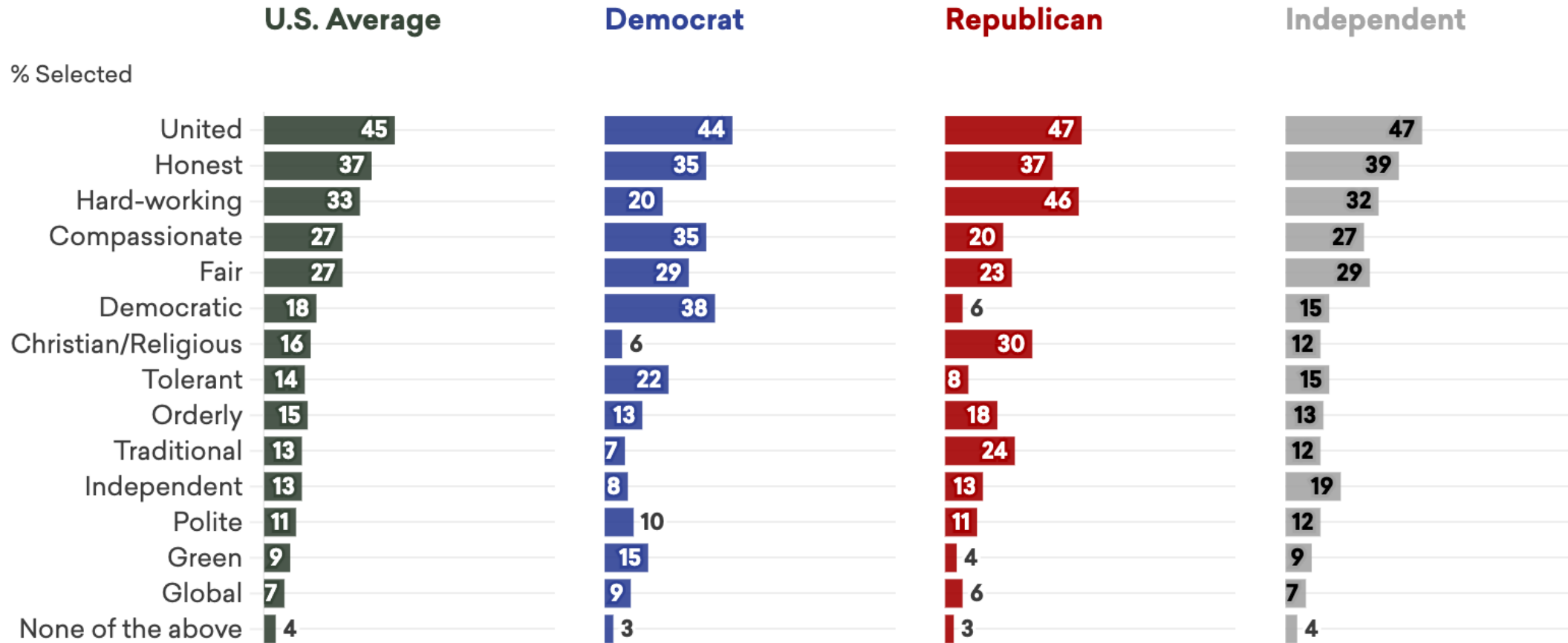
Note: Showing top 12 selected responses of 25 total. The following qualities were selected by less than 7% of the U.S. Average: Independent, Global, Traditional, Honest, United, Fair, Compassionate, Orderly, Christian/Religious, Polite, Green, and None of the above.

More in Common; N=2,003; January 13-16, 2025

# “United” is the single most desired quality Americans want for the country.



Question: Thinking about 10 years into the future, imagine your ideal American society. What should it be like? Please select 3 qualities.



## Many Americans hope the country can heal its divisions and that leaders will collaborate to improve its future.

Question: What are your biggest hopes for America's future at this moment? Please share at least two sentences of your thoughts.



“My biggest hope is for **our leaders to work together to build America back up**; the land of the free for all and home of the brave.”

– Sam, 35-year-old Asian American man, Traditional Liberal, Harris 2024 voter and Democrat from Hawaii



“My biggest hope for America is that the **Democrats and Republicans can come together and pass some important laws** that will help the Americans and not ones that will hurt us in the end.”

– Helen, 43-year-old Black woman, Passive Liberal, Harris 2024 voter and Democrat from Maryland

“My biggest hopes for America's future is for **democracy to prevail**. Our world is so divided and **we need to be united again.**”

– Megan, 30-year-old White woman, Traditional Conservative, Trump 2024 voter and Republican from Georgia



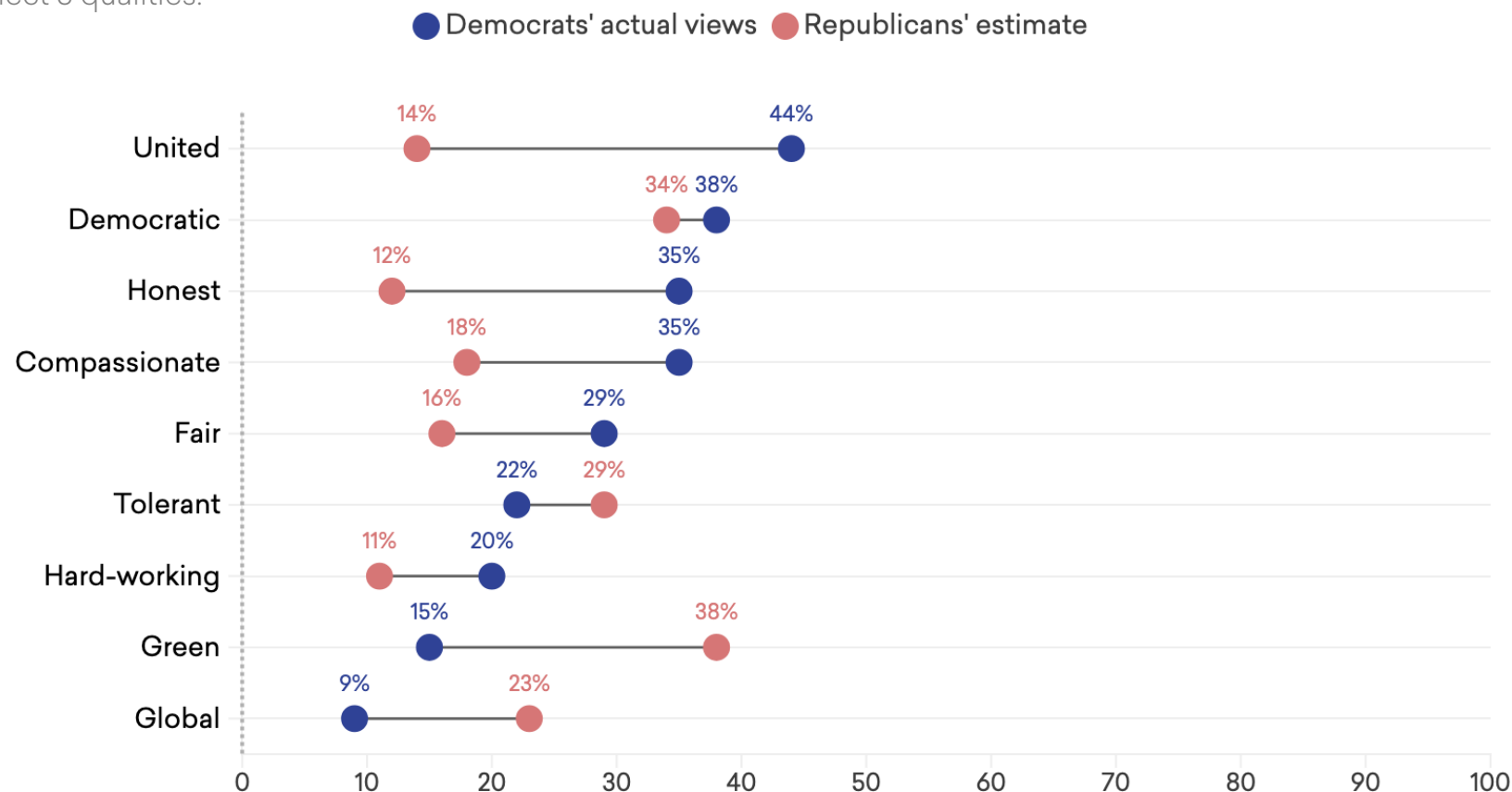
“That the political divisiveness will end and we can **again come together as one country.**”

– John, 79-year-old White man, Traditional Conservative, Trump 2024 voter and Independent from Illinois



# Yet Republicans think that unity is of little importance to Democrats, placing it behind attributes like being “green”, “tolerant”, and “global.”

Question: What qualities do you think that Democrat voters would most want to see in America 10 years into the future? Please select 3 qualities.

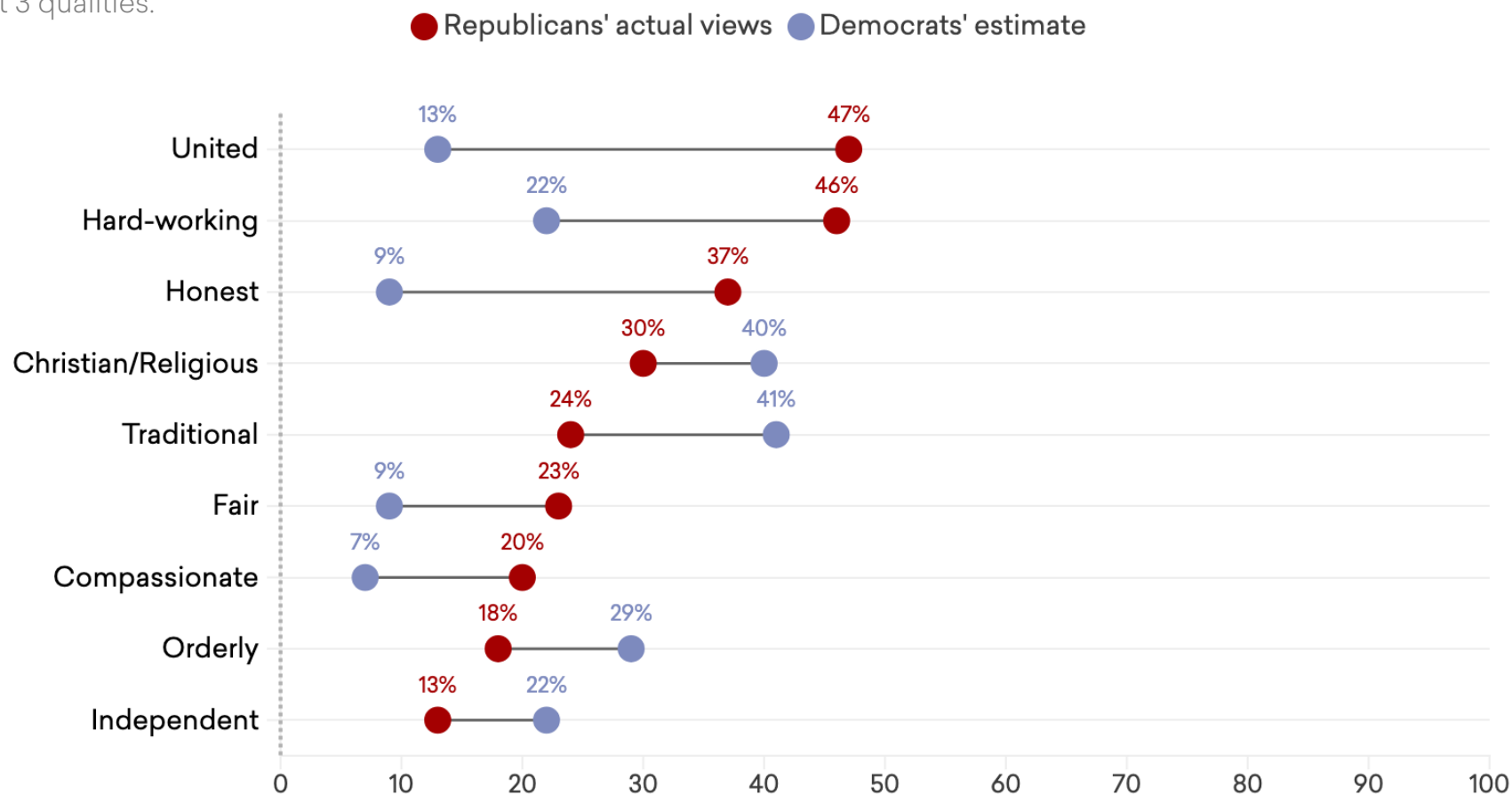


Note: Showing the top 8 selected responses by Democrat respondents of 15 total. The following qualities were selected by less than 15% of Democrat respondents: Orderly, Polite, Global, Independent, Traditional, Christian/Religious, and None of the Above. Additionally, "Global" was selected by fewer than 15% of Democrats but is included in the chart because Republicans significantly overestimate its importance.



## Democrats similarly think that Republicans' priority is for the country to be "traditional" and "Christian/religious," rather than united.

Question: What qualities do you think that Republican voters would most want to see in America 10 years into the future? Please select 3 qualities.



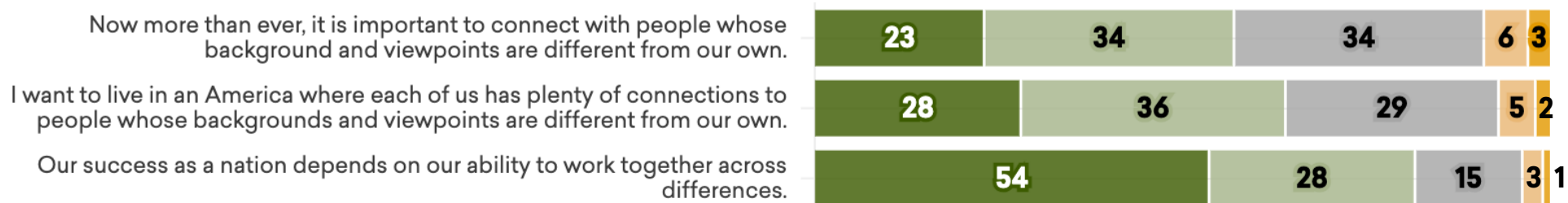
Note: Showing top 9 selected responses by Republican respondents of 15 total. The following qualities were selected by less than 13% of Republican respondents: Polite, Tolerant, Global, Democratic, Green, and None of the Above.

# Most Americans want to connect with and work with people whose views are different from their own.

Question: Please state how much you agree / disagree with the following statements.

● Strongly agree  
 ● Somewhat agree  
 ● Neither agree nor disagree  
● Somewhat disagree  
 ● Strongly disagree

% of responses (U.S. Average)



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Key Finding 5

# Musk's Controversial Entry into Politics

## On average, Americans and conservative segments describe Musk most often as smart and ambitious, while liberal segments see him as dangerous and elitist.

Question: In your opinion, which words best describe Elon Musk? Select up to 3.

| U.S. Average    | Progressive Activists | Traditional Liberals | Passive Liberals    | Politically Disengaged | Moderates       | Traditional Conservatives | Devoted Conservatives |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Smart (32%)     | Dangerous (64%)       | Dangerous (41%)      | Dangerous (26%)     | Smart (32%)            | Smart (34%)     | Smart (45%)               | Smart (57%)           |
| Ambitious (27%) | Elitist (48%)         | Elitist (32%)        | Unpredictable (25%) | Ambitious (25%)        | Ambitious (28%) | Creative (44%)            | Creative (54%)        |
| Creative (25%)  | Selfish (44%)         | Selfish (30%)        | Smart (24%)         | Genius (21%)           | Creative (25%)  | Genius (38%)              | Genius (45%)          |

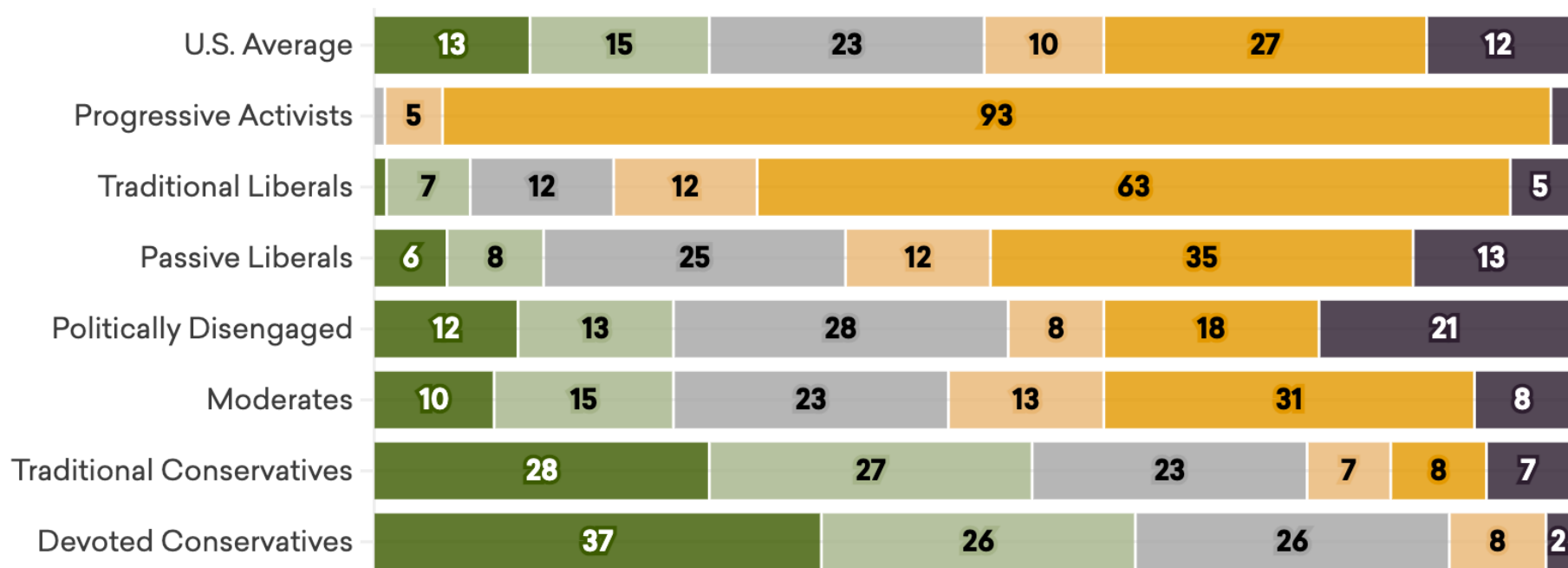
Note: Showing top 3 selected responses by each segment of 17 total.

More in Common; N=2,003; January 13-16, 2025

## Nevertheless, Americans are more likely to be critical or ambivalent rather than appreciative of Musk’s involvement in American politics.

Question: In general, do you think that Elon Musk’s involvement in American politics is a good thing or a bad thing?

● Very good 
 ● Somewhat good 
 ● Equal mix of good and bad 
 ● Somewhat bad 
 ● Very bad 
 ● Don’t know



# Most Democrats believe Elon Musk is driven by self-interest. While Republicans acknowledge his business success, many are uncertain about his political influence.



Question: How much do you trust Elon Musk to make decisions in the public interest?



“I can only judge him based on what he has said and done, but there are clear indications that **he is only looking out for himself.**”

– Rick, 57-year-old Asian American man, Progressive Activist, Harris 2024 voter and Democrat from Fullerton, California



“I think he is **very intelligent and could have great ideas** to move the country forward but we haven’t seen him make political decisions yet so who knows.”

– Scott, 41-year-old white man, Disengaged, Trump 2024 voter and Republican from Brick, New Jersey



“I don’t trust him. He seems like **he only cares about making money** for his bottom line.”

– Darcy, 23-year-old Black woman, Traditional Liberal, Harris 2024 voter and Democrat from Houston, Texas



“Elon Musk’s track record in revolutionizing industries like electric vehicles and space exploration demonstrates his ability to drive significant change. However, **his involvement in politics should be carefully monitored to ensure that his decisions align with the public interest** and do not disproportionately benefit his own ventures.”

– Angela, 40-year-old white woman, Traditional Conservative, Trump 2024 voter and Democrat from Seattle, Washington



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