

May 2025

Americans' Environmental Blind Spot

Democrats and Republicans
Underestimate Support for
Environmental Issues



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 an 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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Introduction

Environmental policy is often framed, like many issues in our public discourse, as a battleground of "left vs. right." The national narrative often casts progressives as climate alarmists and conservatives as climate deniers. With these narrow competing framings, over eight in ten Americans are understandably frustrated with the partisan nature of environmental discourse.

Our latest research finds that Americans agree on more than they think when it comes to environmental policies. Large majorities across party lines support protecting public lands, addressing pollution, and leading the world in clean energy development. Yet most Americans underestimate how widely these views are shared, both within their own party and across the aisle.

Highlighting these misperceptions matter. While partisan differences in opinion remain — particularly around the pace of environmental action — identifying and leveraging shared values around land stewardship and American leadership can create a strong foundation for making bipartisan progress on solutions to protect the environment.

Key Findings (1/3)

1. Americans, regardless of political affiliation, agree that protecting nature is important.

- 88% of Americans say that it is important that national parks and public lands remain open, accessible, and well-maintained—including 93% of Democrats, 88% of Republicans, and 83% of Independents.
- 76% of Americans think that it is important for the government to actively address environmental issues such as pollution—including 91% of Democrats, 66% of Republicans, and 73% of Independents.

2. Framing climate action in terms of promoting American leadership can be a powerful unifier.

- 83% of Americans think the US should be a world leader in developing clean energy, including 73% of Republicans, 93% of Democrats, and 83% of Independents.

Key Findings (2/3)

3. Americans are more aligned on clean energy leadership than they realize, and these misperceptions within and across party lines may be blocking opportunities for bipartisan progress.

- More than two times as many Republicans think that the US should become a leader in clean energy than Republicans themselves estimate (73% versus 33%).
- Similarly, almost twice as many Democrats think that the US should become a leader in clean energy than Democrats themselves estimate (93% versus 57%).

4. Yet Americans somewhat disagree about the pace of environmental action and whether climate change will affect the economy.

- When it comes to seizing the moment, Republicans and Democrats differ: 47% of Republicans and 88% of Democrats agree that we should “speed up our action on climate change.”
- Moreover, only 45% of Republicans—compared to 83% of Democrats—are concerned about how climate change will impact the US economy.

Key Findings (3/3)

5. **Ultimately, Americans are committed to tackling the challenge of climate change together, irrespective of its causes.**

- Our previous research shows that while most Americans (64%) believe climate change is primarily caused by human activity, a significant portion (20%) believe it is happening but driven only by natural factors.
- Yet across these differences, there is a strong shared commitment for action: 82% of Americans agree we should "work together to solve the problem of climate change, regardless of its causes."

Methodology

More in Common conducted online survey interviews among a representative sample of 2,149 US adults from April 9-16, 2025. The data were 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 +/- 2.1% for the US average and higher for subgroups. Where relevant, we supplement these findings with data from a second nationally representative survey of 2,647 US adults, conducted from February 21-27, 2025.

More in Common also polled 205 participants from April 28 to May 6, 2025 on its “Americans in Conversation” online qualitative research panel, which is broadly representative of the American population. Quotations from those activities are included in this report. Where provided, names have been changed to protect privacy. Grammar and punctuation may have been lightly edited for clarity.

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.

Where do Americans align?

America's Environmental Blindspot: Democrats and Republicans
Underestimate Support for Environmental Issues

A majority of Americans (88%) believe it is important that national parks and public lands remain open, accessible, and well-maintained.

“How important is it to you that national parks and public lands remain open, accessible, and well-maintained?”

% “Important” and “Extremely important”



Note: % Important includes respondents who selected “4” or “5” on the scale 1 = Not at all important to 5 = Extremely important.

Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 2,419 US adults conducted in April 2025.

A majority of Americans (76%) believe it is important for the government to actively address environmental issues.

“How important is it to you that the government actively works to address environmental issues such as pollution?”

% “Important” and “Extremely important”



Note: % Important includes respondents who selected “4” or “5” on the scale 1 = Not at all important to 5 = Extremely important.

Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 2,419 US adults conducted in April 2025.

Across partisan lines, there's strong support for government action on pollution—seen as a shared issue that requires accountability.

There **needs to be regulations to limit the pollution of manufacturers.** If they go past the limits, they should be **held accountable** to those that were harmed by it, such as [people] in neighboring towns.

Mikayla, 49-year-old Asian American woman, Republican from Easton, Pennsylvania



I think it is **partly the government's responsibility to create and enforce laws and regulations that companies need to follow** in order to reduce pollutions and keep the earth in as great a shape as possible.

Mitch, 48-year-old white man, Republican from Perry Hall, Maryland



We have to preserve what remains and try to fix areas we can. Having clean water and less pollutants in our food and air benefits all of the world. **The government has to lead the way.**

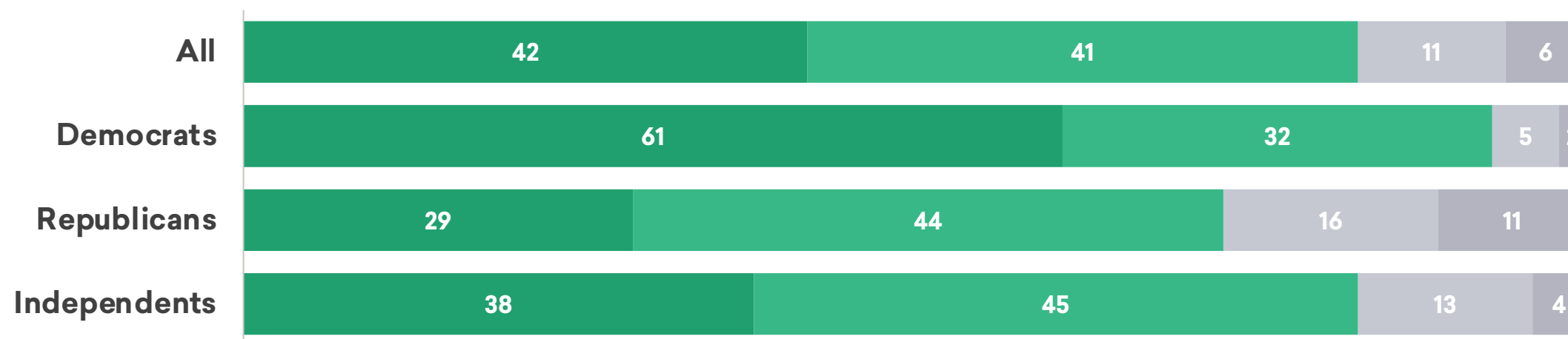
Christopher, 50-year-old white man, Independent from Sussex, New Jersey



A majority of Americans (83%) believe the US should be a **world leader in developing clean energy**.

“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The US should be a world leader in developing clean energy.” (%)

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

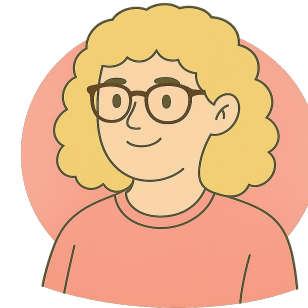


Americans across the political spectrum believe the US should lead on clean energy—not just for environmental reasons, but economic ones too.



The transition to clean energy is taking place whether we like it or not. **If we want to benefit economically, we need to be a part of it.**

Mick, 47-year-old white man, Independent from Citrus Springs, Florida



If the US wants to be seen as a leader in the world then we can't just pick and choose what issues we want to lead in. **Leading any initiative encourages product development and creates jobs.**

Deb, 42-year-old white woman, Democrat from Waukesha, Wisconsin

We should be a leader in developing clean energy—but more so we can lead economically. It should not be at the detriment of our industries/economy.

Jeanne, 47-year-old white woman, Republican from Washougal, Washington



How do Americans think we should address climate change?

America's Environmental Blindspot: Democrats and Republicans Underestimate Support for Environmental Issues

A majority of Americans (64%) believe human activity is the main cause of climate change.

“Climate change refers to a long-term change in Earth’s climate due to an increase in average atmospheric temperature. Which of the following best describes your view on climate change over the past 150 years?” (% US Average)

Climate change is happening, and while natural factors sometimes play a role, human activity is the main cause.

64%

Climate change is happening, but it is caused by only natural factors.

20%

I am unsure.

11%

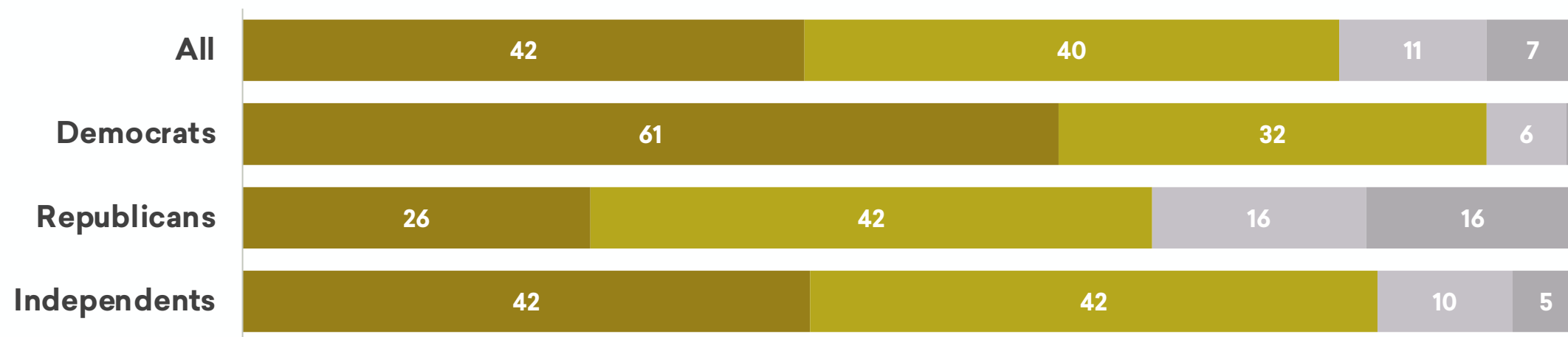
Climate change is not happening.

5%

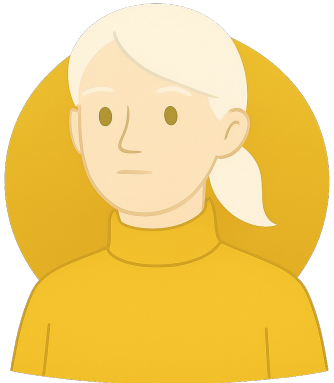
82% of Americans think that people should **work together** to solve climate change, including 68% of Republicans.

“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Humans should work together to solve the problem of climate change, regardless of its causes.” (%)

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree



There's broad agreement that addressing climate change is a shared responsibility that requires cooperation and common purpose.



Humans need to work together to address climate change. **This is a problem that will affect all of humanity not just a specific segment of it.**

Betty, 64-year-old white woman, Republican from Westlake, Ohio

By working together, we have the best opportunity for finding a solution that benefits everyone. **Division will only slow us down.**

Mason, 49-year-old white man, Democrat from Lower Burrell, Pennsylvania



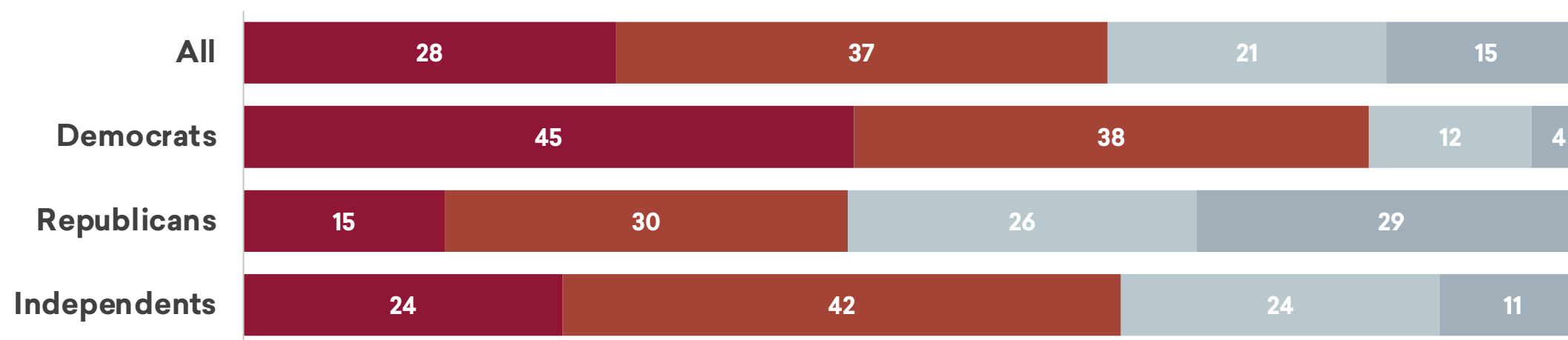
We all need to do our part for climate change.

Talia, 41-year-old Hispanic woman, Republican from San Diego, California

65% of Americans are **worried** about how climate change will harm the economy.

“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I am worried about how climate change will harm the economy” (%)

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree



Many express concern that climate change is already increasing costs and creating housing instability.

I think **climate change will cause the prices of most things to get worse.** It is going to have financial effects upon most of what we buy.

Jon, 44-year-old white man, Democrat from Lansing, Illinois



Climate change has already harmed the US economy. **We have already had our share of natural disasters, and people having to rebuild and relocate for housing.**

Evelyn, 52-year-old Black woman, Democrat from Aliceville, Alabama

We have already seen the damage and devastation of fires, floods and tornadoes. **People have lost their homes and businesses, and the insurance industry has had to pull out of certain areas.**

Chloe, 67-year-old Asian American woman, Republican from Watsonville, California



Others are unsure of the connection between climate change and the economy or worry that climate policies themselves will hurt the economy.

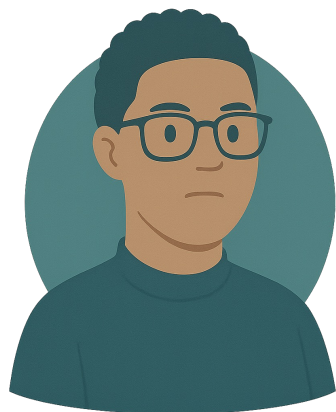
I don't see a tie in between the economy and climate change. We are only one of many countries that contribute to pollution, **so we can only control so much.**

Jill, 47-year-old white woman, Republican from Oregon, Wisconsin



I think radical or unreasonable climate change policies may harm the US economy and not the alleged threat of climate change itself.

Todd, 43-year-old Black man, Republican from New York, New York



I don't understand the connection between climate change and the economy, so I don't have a strong opinion.

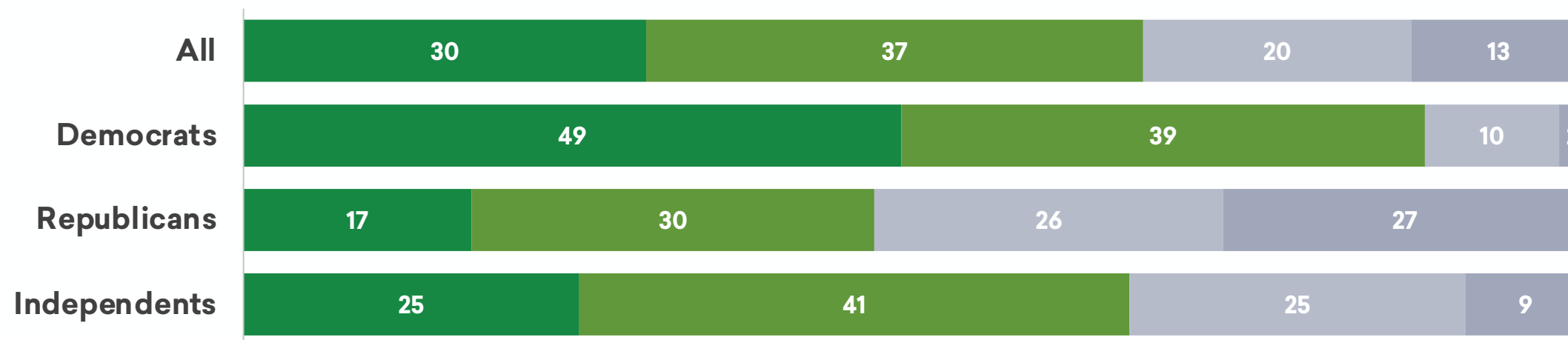
Tyler, 62-year-old white man, Republican from Kendall Park, New Jersey



67% of Americans agree that we need to **speed up** action on climate change, though agreement diverges by party.

“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? We should seize the moment now to speed up our action on climate change.” (%)

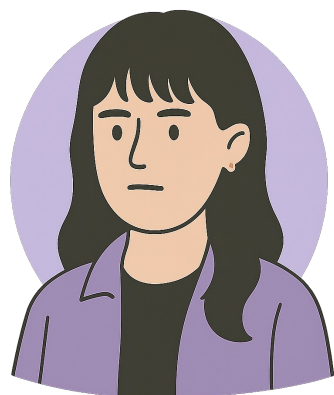
■ Strongly agree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree



Some people who are less sure about immediate action raise concerns about the feasibility of solutions.

I think humans should work together on all problems, not just climate change. However, a **reasonable approach needs to be taken and a bit of “give and take”** to get to the best solution possible.

Timothy, 53-year-old white man, Independent from Vero Beach, Florida



I think it is important that we all work together but **we also need to be realistic** in how it can really be solved. Many of the solutions people come up with aren't really solutions.

Dia, 56-year-old white woman, Republican from Roseville, California

It is an important situation and needs attention. There are other more immediate needs as well. **We also cannot police the whole world, and our efforts alone will not save the planet.**

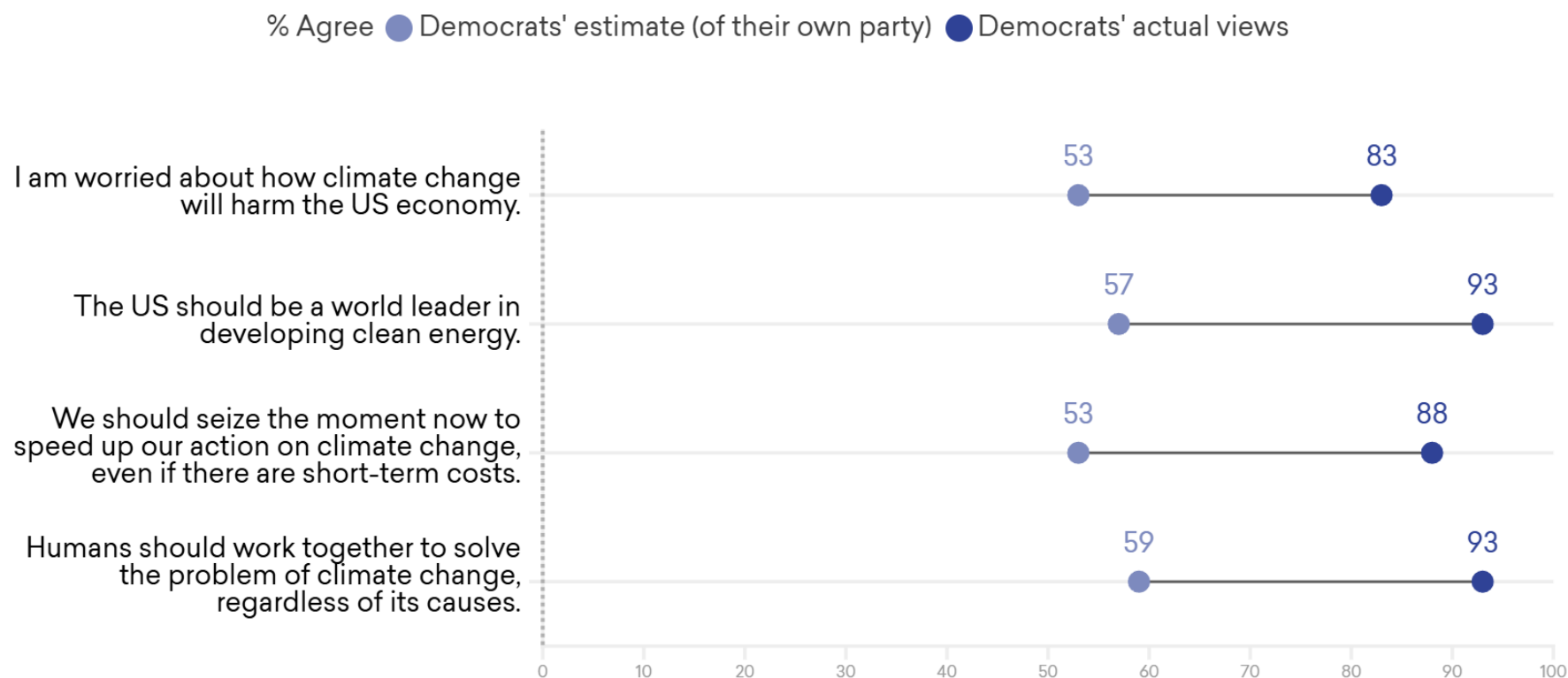
Andrea, 58-year-old Hispanic woman, Republican from Katy, Texas



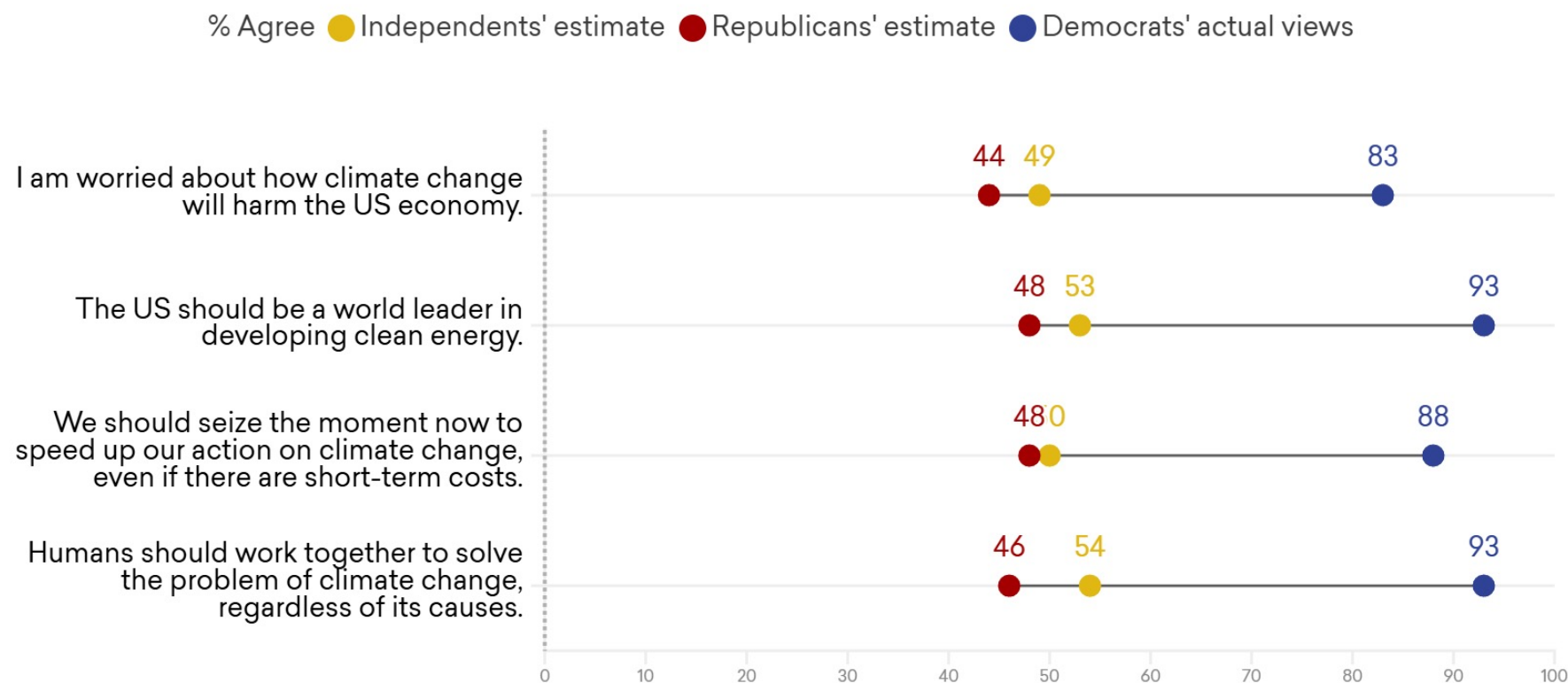
What do Americans misunderstand about each other?

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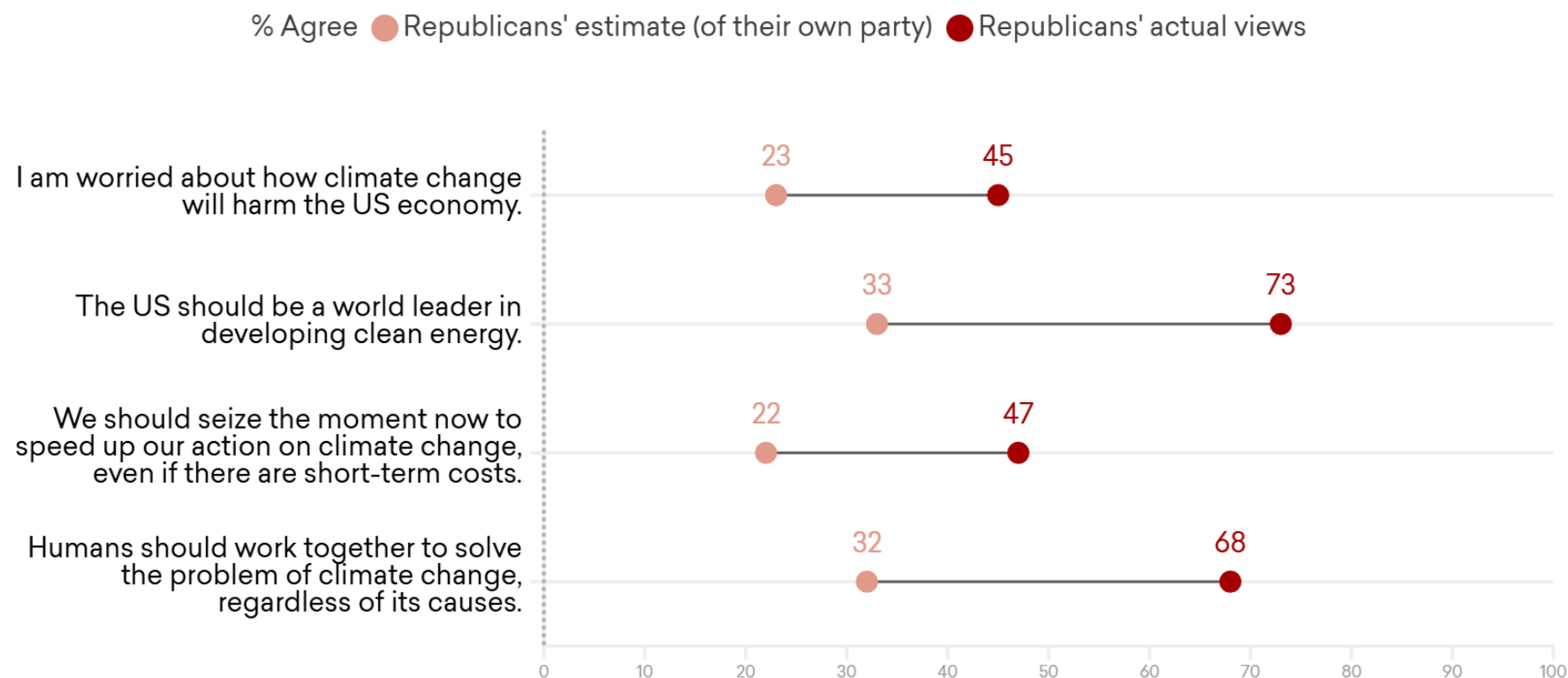
Democrats **underestimate** how much members of their party are aligned on climate issues, including concerns about climate change's economic impact and support for US clean energy leadership.



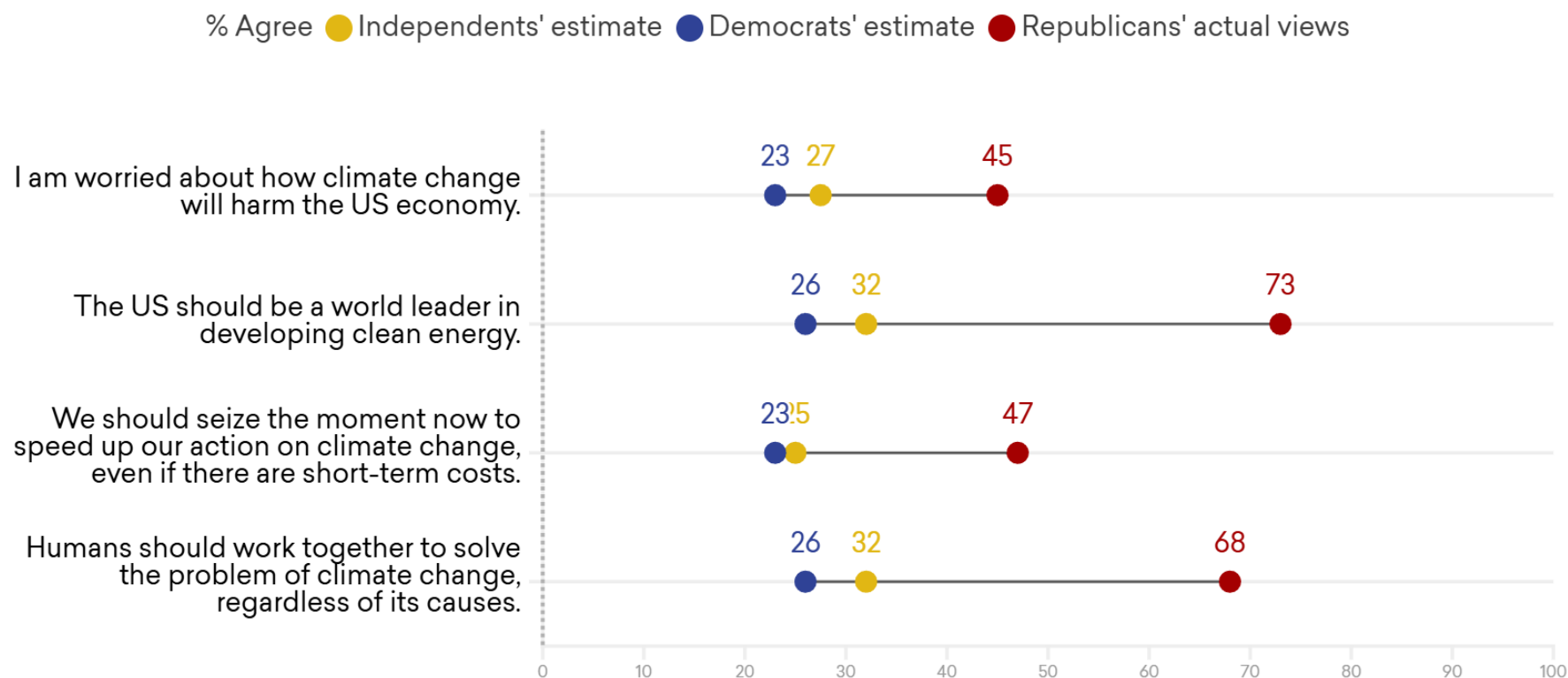
Republicans and Independents also underestimate Democrats' alignment around certain climate-related beliefs.



Republicans **underestimate** how much members of their own party want to see the US lead in developing clean energy and solving the problem of climate change.



Democrats and Independents also underestimate Republicans' support for the US to lead in developing clean energy and solving the problem of climate change.





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