Bridging Movement Research Highlights

Survey Data Informing the Mission

Table of Contents

Summary References

Toxic Polarization: The Numbers (Listen First Project's current feature of compelling data points)

Data on the Problem Deck (Listen First Project's 2018 visual presentation of compelling data)

Society at Large

Defining the Issue: Toxic Polarization

Polarization is a term we often hear thrown around in political discourse as a catch-all concept for the unsatisfactory state of affairs in which we find ourselves. More nuanced discussions might counter claims of traditional polarization with concepts such as "partisan sorting;" suggesting that—rather than moving to the extremes (poles) of policy positions—most Americans remain relatively centrist in their views but now sort themselves along partisan lines in everyday life. A third concept, affective polarization, argues that while average policy positions remain relatively centrist, we increasingly dislike our partisan opponents. It is with this idea of affective polarization in mind that Pearce Godwin, founder and CEO of Listen First Project, describes toxic polarization as "the way we demonize one another across differences."

See most compelling stats and graphs in Listen First Project's Data on the Problem ('18) powerpoint

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Toxic polarization is a growing problem in the U.S.
- Almost 20 percent of Democrats and Republicans say that many members of the other side "lack the traits to be considered fully human." (Lethal Mass Partisanship)
- About 15 percent of Republicans and 20 percent of Democrats agree that the country would be "better off if large numbers of opposing partisans in the public today 'just died.'" (Lethal Mass Partisanship)
- We now fear those with whom we disagree, viewing them as serious threats (66%) to the nation, and most of us (78%) have few or no (41%) friends from the opposing side. (Pew Research, Partisanship and Political Animosity 2016, Partisan Antipathy: More Intense, More Personal, Pew 2020)
- "Since 1980, our perceptions of the other party have fallen from around 50 to around 25 points on the 100-point scale; Almost all the significant increase in affective polarization is due to an increased dislike of the other side instead of an increased preference for your own side." (Dartmouth College, Five Thirty Eight)
- 70 percent of Republicans and more than 60 percent of Democrats see the opposing party as a "serious threat" to the United States. 42% see the opposing party as "downright evil." (*Lethal Mass Partisanship: Prevalence, Correlates, & Electoral Contingencies*)
- We're viewing the other side more and more coldly. (Pew Research, Partisan Antipathy: More Intense, More Personal)
- Republicans (57%) and Democrats (41%) think of the other party as enemies rather than political opposition. (CBS News Poll)
- 28% of Democrats and 23% of Republicans say their party should do everything it can to hurt the other party at the expense of the country. (Beyond Conflict)

- 54% of Americans say that other Americans pose the biggest threat to our country. (CBS News *Americans see democracy under threat — CBS News poll*)
- Between 5 percent and 15 percent endorse political violence or have no sympathy about harm to political opponents (Kalmoe & Mason APSA 2018)
- When asked to rate how they feel about people on the other side using a thermometer, the number of Democrats and Republicans who give one another "very cold" ratings has risen by 16 percent and 14 percent respectively since 2016. As the same report notes, increasing shares of partisans of both persuasions say those on the other side are "closed-minded" and "immoral." (Pew Research, Partisan Antipathy: More Intense, More Personal)
- Republicans tend to think of Democrats as enemies 57% of the time vs. 43% as political opponents. Democrats tend to think of Republicans as enemies 41% of the time vs. 59% as political opponents. (CBS News Poll)
- About 30 percent of partisans thought the other party was a threat to the nation's well-being in 2014, according to Pew Research, and that number rose into the 40s in 2016 (Pew Research)
- We fear and hate the other (Pew Research)
  - See charts in LFP's Data on the Problem

Americans recognize toxic polarization & are concerned about its consequences
- 93% say we have a civility problem in society; 69% say major problem (Weber Shandwick, Civility in America 2019)
- 75% of Americans say incivility has reached a crisis level (Weber Shandwick, Civility in America VII)
- 87% say political polarization is a threat to America (AP/NORC, The American Identity)
- 65% believe polarization will only get worse. (Pew Research, Looking into the Future)
- CBS News *Americans see democracy under threat — CBS News poll*
  - 51% expect political violence in the country to increase.
  - 71% believe American democracy is threatened.
  - 52% are scared about things in the U.S., with another 26% angry. 49% are hopeful.
- Forty-three percent of voters believe America is headed toward a new civil war (Simon Wiesenthal Center)
  - 60% of respondents were concerned with tone of debate and inability of people who disagree on political issues to have civil conversations
- Stubblefield Institute - Civility & Civic Engagement Research and Data Report
  - 62.6% of people consider division in the country to be "high"
  - Most people agree that a lack of civil discussion in the political system is a serious problem (73.5% strongly agree and 17.3% somewhat agree)
  - There is little hope among Americans for improvement
    - 45.5% think that nothing will really change over the next year
    - 31.6% think that things will become less civil over the next year

- Despite these problems, people claim to have not given up -
  - "Americans are not ready to give up on the system, however. Large majorities say that they are strongly engaged in public life and that they are willing to talk politics with others. The study also found that the more uncivil a person perceives politics to be, the more likely he or she is to vote, to seek out information about a candidate or an issue, and to participate in a greater number of civic activities."
  - "I am willing to talk politics with others" - 41.8% strongly agree, 26.9% somewhat agree
  - 69% of respondents claimed to have a "moderate" level of civic involvement (specified as 4-8 civic activities)

Polarization and COVID-19

Toxic polarization has manifold contributing factors that need to be analysed and understood in order to best address the threat it poses. Among the most prevalent of these factors in the past year have been the social, political, and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As this [NYT piece](#) suggests, the disproportionate impact coronavirus has had on "Blue America" is likely a contributing factor to the partisan divide regarding perceptions of virus deadliness.
- Death rates among traditionally Democratic partisans (African Americans and Latinos, in particular) have been greater than those of other groups.
- Democrats are more likely to live in urban counties ravaged by the virus, whereas Republicans are more likely to live in urban counties that have been less impacted comparatively.
- Counties won by Trump in 2016 have reported just 27% of virus infections and 21% of the deaths, despite containing 45% of the American population.
- Urban communities and adjacent suburbs have an infection rate 3x as high as the rest of the nation and a death rate 4x as high. Urban America also tilts heavily Democrat due to America's history of segregation along racial, religious and economic lines.

In May 2020, this [CNN poll](#) found strong partisan divisions on virtually every coronavirus-related topic.
- 71% of Republicans say that the worst of the virus is behind them, while 74% of Democrats feel that the worst is ahead.
- 58% of Democrats are afraid of a second wave of COVID while only 14% of Republicans are.
- 82% of Democrats think the federal government is doing a poor job, while 80% of Republicans say they are doing a good job.
- 84% of Republicans trust the information from Trump, whereas a mere 4% of Democrats trust information from Trump.
- 54% of African Americans say they know someone with COVID whereas only 38% of whites and 36% of Latinos do.

Physical and digital distance can heighten partisanship, prejudice, and xenophobia. The social distancing measures implemented to combat the virus were partially responsible for a decrease in physical engagement with one another.
- Social media platforms can become echo chambers. Disease threats such as COVID-19 cause people to limit their social interactions and new ideas. ([How the Pandemic Divides Us | Greater Good](#))

- Our attitudes become more extreme after speaking with like-minded others, without us realizing it. ([Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Partisan underestimation of the polarizing influence of group discussion](#))
- When afraid, people are more likely to follow those who share their beliefs, leading to more polarization and increased potential for the spread of conspiracy theories. ([How the Pandemic Divides Us | Greater Good](#))
- Donald Trump's continued reference to COVID-19 as the "Chinese Virus" contributed to *STOP AAPI HATE* receiving nearly 1,500 reports of verbal harassment, shunning, and physical assaults. ([STOP AAPI HATE](#)).

A [Carnegie Endowment study](#) found that COVID-19 created opportunities for leaders in politically polarized countries to bridge the divides, but also reinforced existing political polarization.
- In Chile, a country "wracked by intense divisions and turmoil since October 2019," the pandemic actually decreased the division by "easing the pressure of constant protests and providing the government with a valuable opportunity to regain public trust."
- Comparatively, in India, polarization has gotten worse, as "hate-mongering voices in the media and society have branded India's Muslim minority as a vector of disease, fueling discrimination and even violence."
- As with India, governments doubling down on preexisting polarization and division was found to be the standard response in Brazil, Indonesia, Poland, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the United States. In these countries, divisive political figures have exploited the crisis to rally their base and inflame divisions.
- The pandemic has provided fresh fodder for attacking foreign enemies, the media, and other favored punching bags. Another common polarizing leadership tactic is to exclude the opposition from the crisis response.

Declining Civility & Engagement

Although popularized in 2000 with the publication of Robert Putnam's well-known book "Bowling Alone," America's declining civic engagement has long been a topic of discussion in the social sciences. These concerns have only increased over the past decade and have significant implications on our ability to combat toxic polarization.

Civic and community engagement seems to have declined
- Thirty-four percent of Americans say "there is no community [outside of friends and family] where they feel a strong sense of belonging. ([More in Common - Two Stories of Distrust in America](#))
- A majority see fewer things that bind Americans together today than in the past. ([Washington Post, Most think political divisions as bad as Vietnam era, new poll shows](#))
- 22% of U.S. adults say that they often or always feel lonely, feel that they lack companionship, feel left out, or feel isolated from others. Furthermore, many say that their loneliness has a negative impact on various aspects of their lives. Those reporting loneliness appear to lack meaningful connections with others. ([Loneliness and Social Isolation in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan: An International Survey](#))
- [Civic Deserts: America's Civic Health Challenge](#)
    - Just 28 percent of Americans say that they belong to any group that has leaders whom they consider both accountable and inclusive.
    - From 1974 to 2004, membership in at least one community organization or group had decreased by more than 13 percentage points.
    - 60 percent of rural young Americans – as well as nearly a third of urban and suburban young Americans – perceived their own communities to be "civic deserts" (defined as communities without opportunities for civic engagement).
- We're withdrawing from conversations ([Weber Shandwick, Civility in America VII: The State of Civility](#))

In particular, we're spending less time engaging with people who hold views that differ from our own
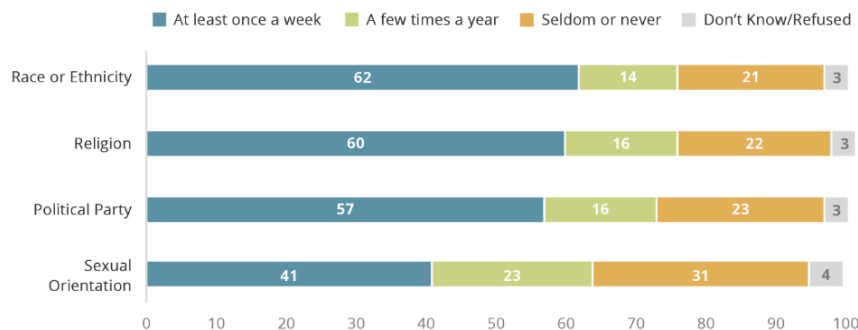- "The United States has gotten much more sorted, geographically and socially. People are less likely to date and marry across political lines. Since 1973, the rate of politically mixed marriages in America has declined by 50 percent. Neighbors are more likely to agree on politics than they were 15 years ago. This sorting leads to prejudice, as racial or religious segregation does." ([The Atlantic](#))
- Three-fourths of Americans regularly talk politics only with members of their own political tribe ([The Washington Post](#))
    - "A 2014 Pew study found that just over a quarter of Facebook users (including 31 percent of consistent conservatives and 44 percent of consistent liberals) have muted or unfriended someone because of political disagreements."

- 55% of Republicans have just a few or no Democratic friends. 65% of Democrats have just a few or no Republican friends. ([Pew Research](#))
- At least 13 percent of people severed a relationship with a friend or family member over the election. ([Reuters](#), [The American Conservative](#))
- 22 percent of people who voted for Hillary Clinton stopped talking with someone after the election. ([Reuters](#), [The American Conservative](#))
- 50% of Democrats, 38% of Republicans and 35% of independents have stopped talking to someone because they have different political views. ([Weber Shandwick](#))
- 1 in 10 Americans (11%) have ended a romantic relationship over political differences ([Wakefield](#))
- While still the minority, a [2019 study](#) by the Public Religion Research Institute found that nearly a quarter of Americans "seldom or never" interact with those who differ from them in race/ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, and sexual orientation. (See figure 4 below).

FIGURE 4. Frequency of Americans' Interactions With Those Who Differ From Them
Thinking about your interactions with other people, how frequently do you interact with those who do NOT share your...

Legend: At least once a week | A few times a year | Seldom or never | Don't Know/Refused

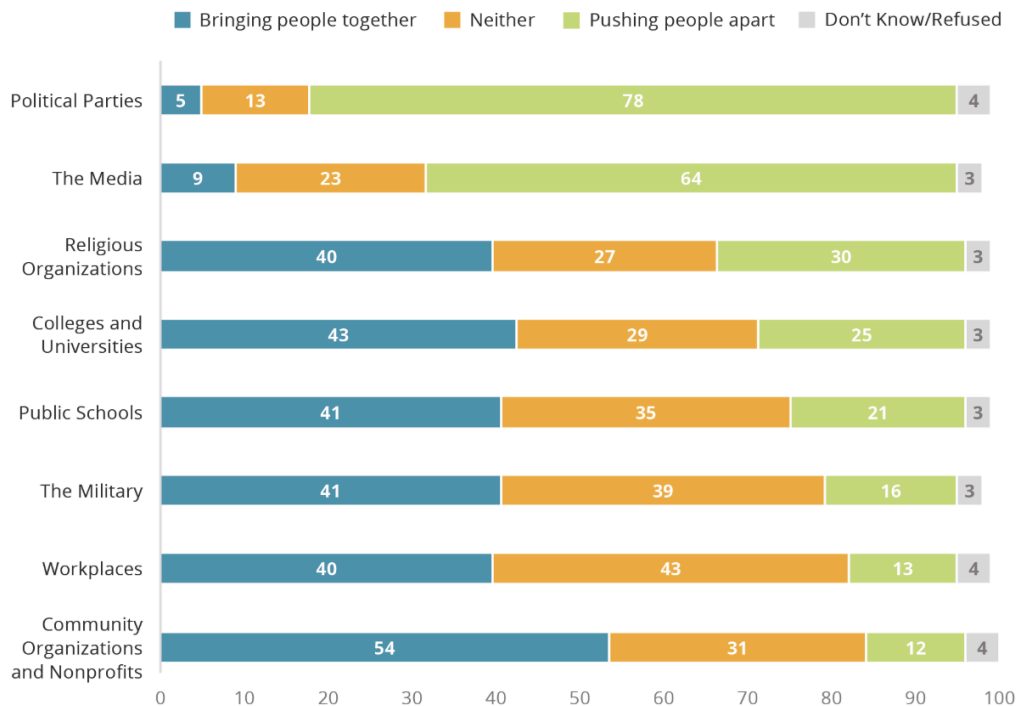|	At least once a week	A few times a year	Seldom or never	Don't Know/Refused
Race or Ethnicity	62	14	21	3
Religion	60	16	22	3
Political Party	57	16	23	3
Sexual Orientation	41	23	31	4

Source: PRRI/The Atlantic 2019 Pluralism Survey.

- One potentially positive sign found in the same [PRII study](#) was that most of these interactions across differences were, at the very least, not bad.
  - Interactions with people who do not share their race or ethnicity…
    - "Somewhat or mostly positive" (59%)
    - "Neither positive nor negative" (30%)
  - Interactions with people who do not share their sexual orientation…
    - "Somewhat or mostly positive" (55%)
    - "Neither positive nor negative" (33%)
  - Interactions with people who do not share their religious background…
    - "Somewhat or mostly positive" (54%)
    - "Neither positive nor negative" (35%)
  - The biggest area of conflict is with those of different political affiliation, where only 40% say these interactions are "somewhat or mostly positive" and 36% say these interactions are "neither positive nor negative."

- The [PRII study](#) also found that many of the largest institutions in the U.S.—particularly political parties and the media—are pushing people apart rather than bringing them together.

FIGURE 10. Are Institutions Bringing People Together or Pushing Them Apart?

Do you think the following institutions are mostly bringing people together or mostly pushing people apart?

Institution	Bringing people together	Neither	Pushing people apart	Don't Know/Refused
Political Parties	5	13	78	4
The Media	9	23	64	3
Religious Organizations	40	27	30	3
Colleges and Universities	43	29	25	3
Public Schools	41	35	21	3
The Military	41	39	16	3
Workplaces	40	43	13	4
Community Organizations and Nonprofits	54	31	12	4

Source: PRRI/The Atlantic 2019 Pluralism Survey.

- The effect of partisanship and political advertising on close family ties ([Science Magazine](#))
    - "Thanksgiving dinners attended by residents from opposing-party precincts were 30 to 50 minutes shorter than dinners from same-party precincts. This decline from a mean of 257 minutes survives extensive spatial and demographic controls."
    - "Reductions in the duration of Thanksgiving dinner in 2016 tripled for travelers from media markets with heavy political advertising—an effect not observed in 2015—implying a relationship to election-related behavior."
    - "Although fewer Democratic-precinct residents traveled in 2016 than in 2015, Republican-precinct residents shortened their Thanksgiving dinners by more minutes in response to political differences."
    - "Nationwide, 34 million hours of cross-partisan Thanksgiving dinner discourse were lost in 2016 owing to partisan effects."

- "Both Republicans and Democrats estimated that just over half of those in the other party were 'so extreme you can't imagine finding common ground with them.'" ([USAToday](#))
- Less than 4 in 10 Americans feel "most people can be trusted". This stark finding on interpersonal trust is particularly true for Passive Liberals, close to 7 in 10 of whom say "you can't be too careful in dealing with people." ([More in Common - Two Stories of Distrust in America](#))
- Fifty-five percent of Americans agree with the statement, "other Americans are either with me or against me." This sentiment shows significant variation across race and ideology: 7 in 10 Black Americans and more than 7 in 10 Devoted Conservatives agree with this statement. ([More in Common - Two Stories of Distrust in America](#))

Two reasons for the lack of engagement—particularly with political "others"—are the increased ease of creating digital echo chambers and geographic segregation
- The balkanization of information sources into echo chambers as well as heightened anger on social media have exacerbated the problem. ([Pew Research, Trump, Clinton Voters Divided in Their Main Source for Election News](#); [Pew Research, The Political Environment on Social Media](#))
- Reduction of local news institutions are driving political polarization ([The Nieman Lab](#))
  - "Less local news available (In 2006, American newspapers sold over $49 billion in ads, employed more than 74,000 people and circulated to 52 million Americans on weekdays. By 2017, ad revenues were down to $16.5 billion (a 66 percent drop); the newspaper workforce fell by 47 percent, to just over 39,000; and weekday circulation fell below 31 million." ([The Nieman Lab](#))
  - "Voters were 1.9 percent more likely to vote for the same party for president and senator after a newspaper closes in their community, compared to voters in statistically similar areas where a newspaper did not close." ([The Nieman Lab](#))
- 61% of Americans now live in 'landslide counties' where the Democratic or Republican presidential candidate won by 20 or more percentage points. ([New York Times](#), [2020](#))

This division is not limited to our engagement with one another. It also extends into the things we do and enjoy by ourselves
- Do you eat like a Republican or a Democrat? ([Time Magazine](#))
  - 75% of popular items ordered on Grubhub had correlations to partisanship of the districts
- Favorite TV shows of Republicans vs. Democrats ([Entertainment Weekly](#))

Along with the increase in toxic polarization and the decline in civic engagement, there has been a stark decrease in civility

- *UVA Center for Politics and Project Home Fire*
  - "Majorities — often large majorities — of both Biden and Trump voters express some form of distrust for voters, elected officials, and media sources they associate with the other side. A strong majority of Trump voters see no real difference between Democrats and socialists, and a majority of Biden voters at least somewhat agree that there is no real difference between Republicans and fascists."
  - "Significant numbers of both Trump and Biden voters show a willingness to consider violating democratic tendencies and norms if needed to serve their priorities. Roughly 2 in 10 Trump and Biden voters strongly agree it would be better if a "President could take needed actions without being constrained by Congress or courts," and roughly 4 in 10 (41%) of Biden and half (52%) of Trump voters at least somewhat agree that it's time to split the country, favoring blue/red states seceding from the union."
- *Civility in America 2018: Civility at Work and in our Public Squares* (Weber Shandwick):
  - 84% of Americans have, at one time or another, experienced incivility. This occurs during a range of activities, among which shopping (39%), driving (39%), and using social media (38%) are the most common.
    - Encounters are frequent, averaging 10.6 times per week
    - Online interactions edge out in-person interactions (5.4 vs 5.2)
    - Encounters of incivility has risen since 2016 (5.8 times/week in 2016, to 10.6 times/week in 2018)
  - 96% of Dems, 95% of Reps agree that civility is important to democracy
  - 40% of Republicans think Trump would be a lot more effective if he believed in a civil manner, 31% believed he'd be a little more effective
    - 50% of Democrats said a lot, 30% said a little
- *Civility In America 2017: Political Edition (Weber Shandwick)*
  - "A record high 69 percent of Americans believe that the U.S. has a major civility problem, a view shared equally by people who voted for Donald Trump or former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton."
    - "Seventy-five percent say incivility has risen to crisis levels, with Clinton voters more likely to have that view than those who voted for Trump (81 vs. 72 percent, respectively)."
  - "Among the nearly six in 10 Americans (56 percent) who expect civility to get worse in the next few years, nearly 9 in 10 Clinton voters (89 percent) named politicians as the group most responsible for the decline in civility."
    - "This was followed by the Internet/social media (69 percent) and news media (51 percent)."

- - "Trump voters blamed the news media (77 percent), demonstrators/protesters (76 percent) and the Internet/social media (75 percent)."
    - "Only 28 percent of Clinton voters saw demonstrators or protesters as a leading reason for the erosion of civility in the years ahead."
    - "Only 53 percent of Trump voters cited politicians."
  - "Voters were equally divided over Secretary Clinton's civility (47 percent uncivil vs. 50 percent civil), but views differ between Trump and Clinton voters."
    - "Eighty percent of Secretary Clinton's supporters saw her as civil, with only 18 percent saying she was uncivil."
    - "Of Trump's voters, 77 percent said Clinton was uncivil against 21 percent who thought her civil."
  - "As a candidate, Trump was viewed as uncivil by 72 percent of American voters, with only 26 percent finding his candidacy civil."
    - "Even a majority of his voters (53 percent) found him uncivil vs. civil (46 percent)."
    - "Clinton's voters found Trump more uncivil (89 percent) than civil (nine percent)."
  - "The voters agreed that political incivility affects the reputation of the U.S. (86 percent)"
    - "That uncivil comments by political leaders encourages greater incivility in society (79 percent)"
    - "That incivility leads to less political engagement on the part of the American people (75 percent)"
    - "That the U.S. is losing stature as a civil nation (73 percent)"
    - "That incivility deters people from entering public service (59 percent)."
    - "These views were held by majorities of both Trump and Clinton voters."
  - "The incivility of the presidential campaign kept some people from going to the polls altogether."
    - "Incivility was cited by 59 percent of non-voters as either a major factor (41 percent) or minor factor (18 percent) in their decision not to vote in 2016."
- *Civility in America 2016: The State of Civility* (Weber Shandwick)
  - 59% of Americans quit paying attention to politics because of incivility
  - 22% of parents have transferred children to different schools because of incivility
  - 75% of Americans surveyed would be willing to set a good example by practicing civility
  - 49% recommend civility training in schools and colleges
- Psychology Today reported … (Congressional Civility and Respect Caucus)
  - Four in five people believe that incivility on social media is on the rise
  - 88% believe that people are less polite on social networks than they are in person

○ 45% have unfriended or blocked someone online because of uncivil comments

Despite experiencing the highest levels of incivility, Gen Z remains optimistic that things can improve
- Civility in America: A Gen Z Perspective 2016 ([Weber Shandwick](#))
  - 15-18-year-olds reported the highest rate of encounters with incivility
  - 61% of Gen Z reports experiencing incivility at school; 59% believe schools should have civility training
  - Younger Americans are more optimistic about the future of civility (2x more likely than Gen X and Baby Boomers to believe civility will improve in next few years)
  - Gen Z believes the internet and social media are root causes of incivility
  - 88% of Gen Z have personally experienced incivility; experience it 8.4 times in a 7-day week

Most people admit that growing partisan division and incivility is bad
- The overwhelming majority of Americans are frustrated by incivility in politics but are conflicted on the desire for "compromise and common ground" ([Georgetown University](#))
  - "85% of voters polled believe "compromise and common ground should be the goal for political leaders" (including 80% of Republicans, 87% of Independents, and 90% of Democrats)."
  - "79% of voters say they are tired of leaders compromising their values, and want them to stand up to the other side (including 85% of Republicans, 69% of Independents and 78% of Democrats)."
  - "83% of voters believe that behavior that used to be seen as unacceptable is now accepted as normal behavior."
  - "When asked to rank the level of political division in our country (with "0" meaning no political division in the country, and "100" meaning political division on the edge of civil war), the mean response was 70.8 and the most common response was 75."
  - "Partisan voters are willing to assign significant blame to their own leaders and preferred media outlets: Majorities of Republicans think GOP political leaders (62%), Fox News (53%), and President Trump (54%) are at least somewhat responsible for increased incivility; while a majority of Democrats assign some responsibility to Democratic political leaders (58%) and CNN (50%)."
  - "Millennial voters (57%) are more likely to blame social media than voters over the age of 65 (43%)."
  - "Men and women largely agree on the growing incivility in our politics (men 60% "strongly" agree, women 63% "strongly" agree) but women are more likely to hold President Trump (women 59%, men 48%) and the GOP (women 43%, men 33%) responsible, while men are more likely to blame Democrats (men 43%, women 30%)."

- *The Battleground: Voters' Frustration with American Politics, a Democratic Perspective (Georgetown University)*
  - "77% of voters agree that political, racial, and class divisions are getting worse and our national dialogue is breaking down, including 55% who agree strongly." (Georgetown University)
  - "Three-quarters or more of men and women (76% and 78% agree, respectively) believe that political, racial, and class divisions are getting worse and our national dialogue is breaking down"
    - "Urban (82%), suburban (76%), and rural voters (75%)—with the sentiment strongest in urban areas"
    - "Approximately 7-in-10 or more voters in every age cohort agree (72% among under 30s, 76% among 35-44 year olds, 81% among 45-64 year olds, and 77% among voters 65+)"
    - "White (76%), black (92%), and Latinx (69%) voters—especially pronounced among African American voters; and nearly two-thirds of voters of all partisan stripes, though there is nearly a 30-point gap between Democrats (93% agree) and Republicans (64% agree), with independents hewing closer to the latter (68% agree)."
  - "Voters express concern and frustration about the uncivil and rude behavior of many politicians (88% agree, including 71% strongly agree)."
- A poll of over 1,000 adults and 100 teens ages 16-17 found that the vast majority (92% and 91%, respectively) agreed that "civility among our elected officials, at all levels, including the presidential level, is important." (Weber Shandwick)
- "63% of Democrats and 74% of Republicans disagree with the statement that 'people must be uncivil to ensure that government officials pass or defeat legislation they don't like.'" (Weber Shandwick)
- "By nearly a 4-to-1 margin (79 vs. 21 percent), Americans found the election uncivil." (Weber Shandwick)
  - "While substantial majorities of Trump and Clinton voters (72 and 83 percent, respectively) viewed the campaign as uncivil, there was significant disagreement in the two camps about the civility of the two candidates." (Weber Shandwick)
- 70 percent of people said the 2016 election 'brought out the worst in people' (Monmouth University, The American Conservative)

- Battleground Poll 64 ([Battleground Poll 64](#))

Message	Agree	*Strongly Agree*	Agree (GOP)	Agree (IND)	Agree (DEM)
The political, racial, and class divisions in this country are getting worse and our national dialogue is breaking down.	83%	*61%*	74%	79%	93%
I am frustrated by the uncivil and rude behavior of many politicians.	90%	*74%*	87%	90%	93%
Behavior that used to be seen as unacceptable is now accepted as normal behavior.	83%	*66%*	82%	75%	87%
Compromise and common ground should be the goal for political leaders.	85%	*63%*	80%	87%	90%
I'm tired of leaders compromising my values and ideals. I want leaders who will stand up to the other side.	79%	*58%*	85%	69%	78%
I'm tired of politicians in Washington who work with the powerful special interests instead of standing up to them.	89%	*71%*	87%	87%	91%

- "93 percent of the public agrees that the nation has a civility problem" ([Weber Shandwick](#))
  - Democrats (69 percent) and Republicans (73 percent) acknowledge that it's a "major" problem.
  - "Nearly 75 percent of the public – and equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans – agree the problem has gotten worse in recent years."
  - "Members of each party are more likely to think civility will get worse than better in the years ahead, Democrats by 53 percent-22 percent and Republicans by 43 percent-28 percent."
- "The public is all but unanimous in citing the importance of civility to democracy, with 96 percent of Democrats and 95 percent of Republicans agreeing." ([Weber Shandwick](#))
- "83 percent of Democrats and 76 percent of Republicans believe that uncivil politicians encourage incivility and members of both parties generally share the belief that incivility is having, or will have, negative consequences for our country." ([Weber Shandwick](#))
- "75 percent of the public says incivility is leading to political gridlock." ([Weber Shandwick](#))
- "60 percent say incivility has led them to stop paying attention to political debates or conversations." ([Weber Shandwick](#))
- "59 percent say incivility is deterring people from entering public service." ([Weber Shandwick](#))
- "While 83 percent of the public say incivility leads to intolerance of free speech, Democrat and Republican respondents diverged somewhat on the intensity of the impact, with 60 percent of Democrats saying incivility has 'a lot' of impact and 29 percent saying 'some.' Republican opinion was 49 percent-35 percent, respectively." ([Weber Shandwick](#))

- "While 79 percent of all respondents said incivility is leading to less political engagement, 53 percent of Democrats saw a 'lot' less compared with 32 percent who saw 'some.' Only 34 percent of Republicans saw a 'lot' less engagement, compared with 44 percent who saw 'some.'" ([Weber Shandwick](#))
- "93 percent of the public believes it is important for the President of the United States to be civil." ([Weber Shandwick](#))
  - "86 percent of Democrats said it's 'very' important for a president to be civil; 9 percent said it is 'somewhat' important." ([Weber Shandwick](#))
    - "68 percent of Republicans said it is 'very' important; 26 percent said 'somewhat'" ([Weber Shandwick](#))
  - "73 percent said a more civil President Trump would be a more effective president" ([Weber Shandwick](#))
    - "40 percent of Republicans said he would be a 'lot' more effective; 31 percent said a 'little' more effective'" ([Weber Shandwick](#))
    - "50 percent of Democrats said a 'lot'; 30 percent said a 'little'" ([Weber Shandwick](#))
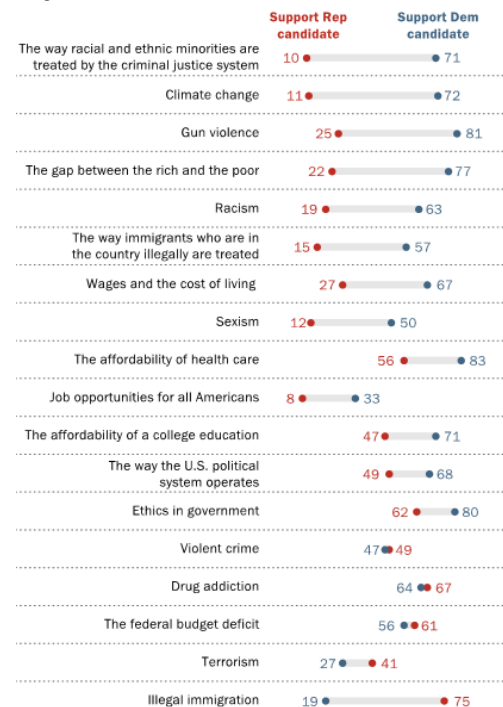
Ideological and Party Platform Divisions

As the aforementioned data have shown, toxic polarization has increasingly divided the American people—particularly along political party lines. While the policy positions of the major parties may not be truly polarized (at the extremes of the spectrum), there are still very tangible differences in the policy positions and general perceptions of political partisans. This section takes a closer look at these divisions.

There is very little agreement over what issues are most important and need to be addressed

- *Conflicting Partisan Priorities for U.S. Foreign Policy* (People Press)
  - 70% of Democrats view improving relationships with allies at a top priority, but only 44% of Republicans
  - 70% of Republicans think it's important for the US military to maintain their advantage, while only 34% of Democrats/Democratic-leaning individuals do
  - 39% of Democrats think aiding refugees should be a top foreign policy priority, while only 11% of Republicans think the same
  - 64% of Democrats believe in the importance of dealing with climate change, while only 22% of Republicans think the same

- A 2018 Pew Research report found very little partisan agreement on what voters considered to be the pressing problems facing the country.
  - "Several of the issues that rank among the most serious problems among Democratic voters – including how minorities are treated by the criminal justice system, climate change, the rich-poor gap, gun violence and racism – are viewed as very big problems by fewer than a third of Republican voters."
  - "By contrast, illegal immigration is the highest-ranked national problem among GOP voters, but it ranks lowest among the 18 issues for Democratic voters (75% and 19%, respectively, say it is a very big problem)."

With few exceptions, wide partisan differences over the seriousness of problems facing the United States

% of registered voters who say each is a 'very big' problem in the country today ...

	Support Rep candidate	Support Dem candidate
The way racial and ethnic minorities are treated by the criminal justice system	10	71
Climate change	11	72
Gun violence	25	81
The gap between the rich and the poor	22	77
Racism	19	63
The way immigrants who are in the country illegally are treated	15	57
Wages and the cost of living	27	67
Sexism	12	50
The affordability of health care	56	83
Job opportunities for all Americans	8	33
The affordability of a college education	47	71
The way the U.S. political system operates	49	68
Ethics in government	62	80
Violent crime	47	49
Drug addiction	64	67
The federal budget deficit	56	61
Terrorism	27	41
Illegal immigration	19	75

Note: Based on registered voters.
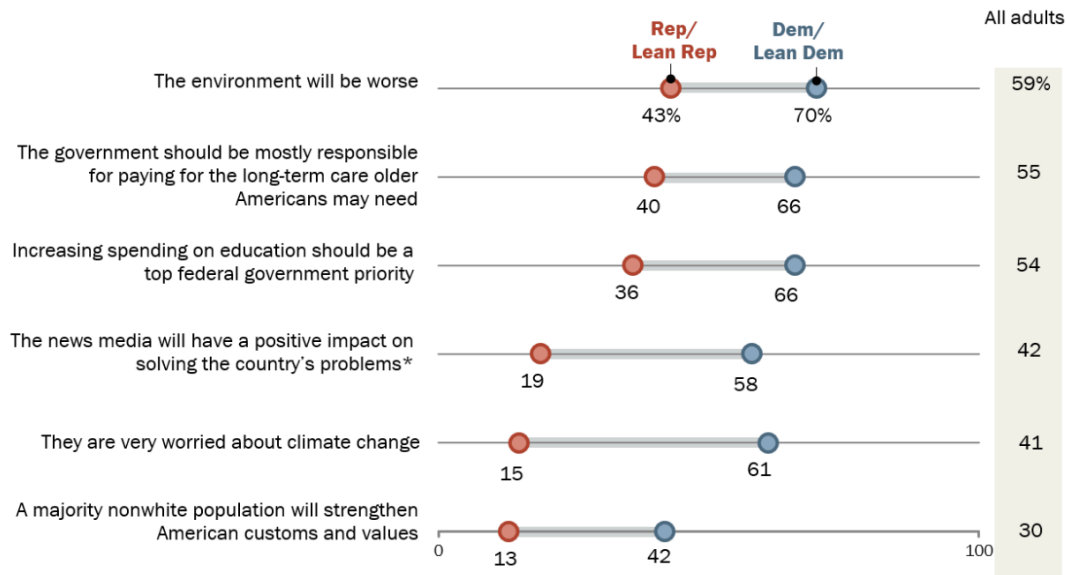Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 24-Oct. 7, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- *Looking to the Future, Public Sees an America in Decline on Many Fronts* ([Pew Research Center](#))
  - "Across a range of issues, the difference between partisans is not merely apparent, but conspicuously large."
  - "Despite shared concern about the future quality of the nation's public schools, about two-thirds of Democrats and those who lean Democratic (66%), but only 36% of Republicans and Republican leaners, rate increased spending on education as a top federal government priority."
  - "Partisan differences are particularly large on issues related to the environment."
    - "About six-in-ten Democrats (61%) but only 15% of Republicans say they are very worried about climate change."
    - "An even larger share of Democrats (70%) predict the condition of the environment will get worse in the next 30 years, while 43% of Republicans agree."

Parties are deeply divided on future worries and priorities

% saying _____ in the future

	Rep/ Lean Rep	Dem/ Lean Dem	All adults
The environment will be worse	43%	70%	59%
The government should be mostly responsible for paying for the long-term care older Americans may need	40	66	55
Increasing spending on education should be a top federal government priority	36	66	54
The news media will have a positive impact on solving the country's problems*	19	58	42
They are very worried about climate change	15	61	41
A majority nonwhite population will strengthen American customs and values	13	42	30

* Shares who say this will have a very/somewhat positive impact.
Note: These specific results are drawn from different questions, some of which used different question formats. For full results and question wording, see the topline.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Dec. 11-23, 2018.
"Looking to the Future, Public Sees an America in Decline on Many Fronts"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- Major issues that split the country are: Immigration impact, white privilege, sexual harassment, Islamophobia ([Hidden Tribes](#))

The *Civility & Civic Engagement Research and Data Report* done by the Stubblefield Institute also found significant partisan differences in views on civility
- "Those who identify as Democrats and Independents were more likely than those who identify as Republicans to view American politics as uncivil. In particular, Democrats were much more likely to view recent politics as "extremely uncivil" as compared to Republicans."
- Democrats are more hopeful that political dialogue will become more civil over the coming year
  - Become less civil - Dems (15.5%) Reps (46%)
  - Become more civil - Dems (39.1%) Reps (7.3%)
- "Results of the survey also showed that the more strongly an American identifies with a political party – regardless of which one – the more willing he or she is to talk politics with others. Among partisans, Republicans are slightly more willing than Democrats to engage in political discussions."
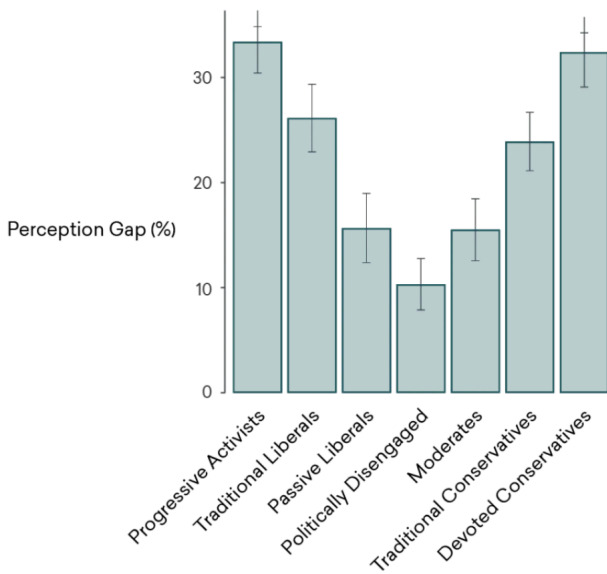
This divergence in issue priorities arises in-part because of the demographics of the major voting constituencies. The wings of each party vote at higher rates than the center, creating a vicious cycle in which centrists feel their views are not represented by the candidates and therefore don't vote at all, which drives politicians to play to the views of those at the wings.
- The 2018 Hidden Tribes Midterm Report found that …
  - Wing groups have the highest turnout (94% from Progressive Activists, 89% from Traditional Liberals, 86% from Devoted Conservatives, 65% from Traditional Conservatives)
  - Half of eligible Americans did not vote because
    - People were not registered (14% of all voters), mostly in Traditional Liberals, Passive Liberals, and Traditional Conservatives
    - Non-voting Moderates (19%) and Passive Liberals (18%) did not know enough about their choices
    - Inability to vote: of non-voters, 3% requested absentee ballot but did not receive one, 3% not allowed to vote at polls despite trying, 2% lines too long
  - 47% of Americans feel their views are well represented in today's political debates
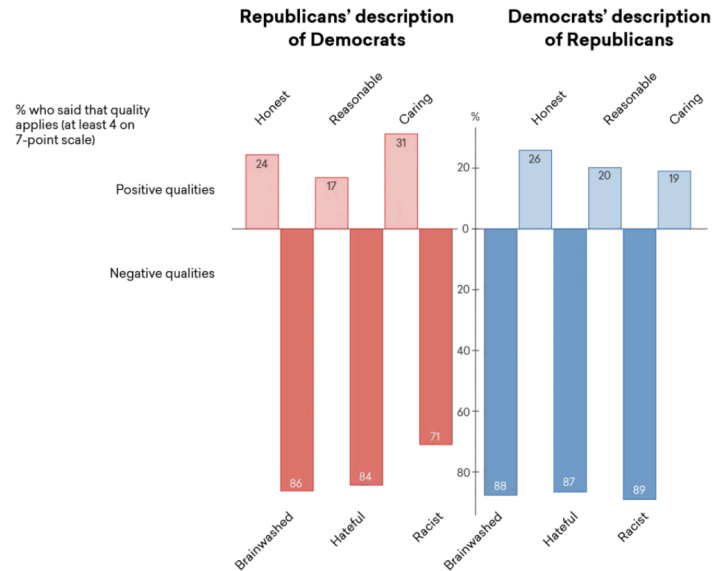
Individuals at the ideological extremes have the least accurate perception of those at the other end of the spectrum. When considering this fact along with the previous phenomenon, we get a good idea of how toxic polarization has become such a prevalent force in our political environment.

- "The more people know about the political system, the worse they may be at guessing what their opponents actually believe." ([CNN](#))
- Public Religion Research Institute shows that 8 in 10 Republicans believe the Democratic Party has been taken over by socialists, while 8 in 10 Democrats believe the Republican Party has been taken over by racists. ([PRRI](#))
- More in Common: [How False Impressions are Pulling Americans Apart](#)
  - Study found that the strongest partisans of each party had the least accurate perception of the views held by the strongest partisans of the other party.
  - "The number of Republicans who hold extreme views (34 percent) is only about two thirds what Democrats believe (53 percent). The number of Democrats who hold extreme views (29 percent) is only about half what Republicans believe (56 percent)."
  - This gap between the perceived and actual views carries over into value judgements. As the figure below shows, each party is overwhelmingly likely to attribute negative qualities to the other party.

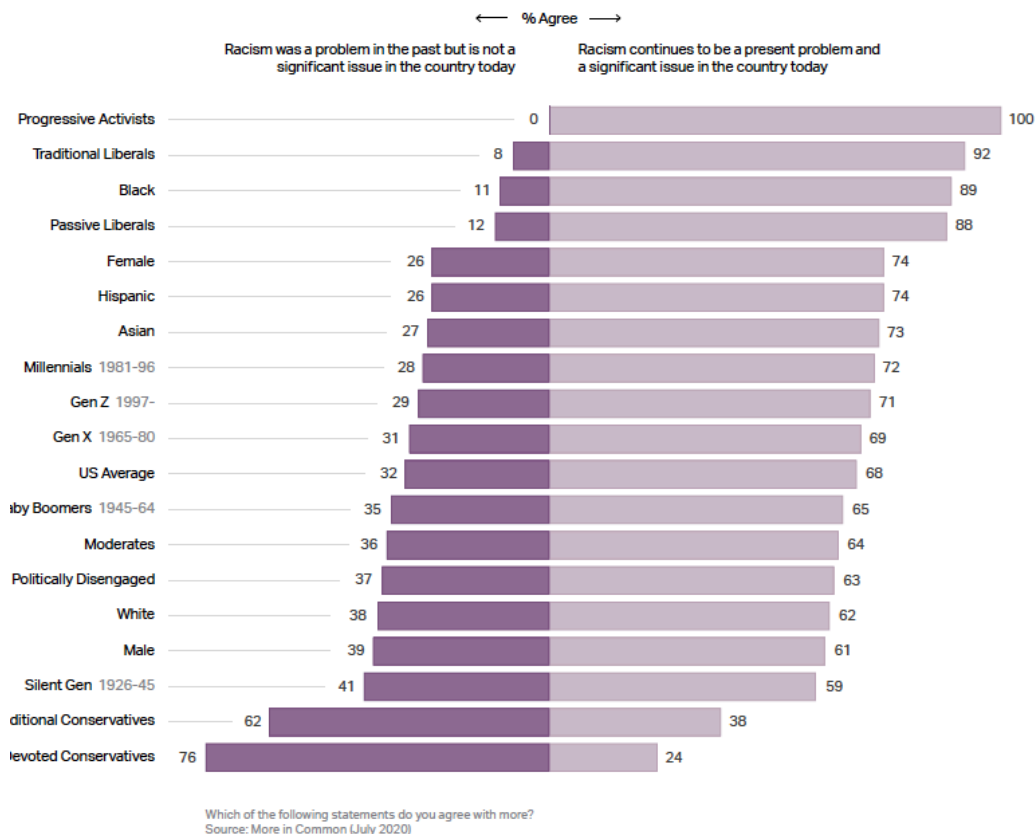**Another of the strongest areas of partisan difference is race and the effects of racism on society today. While most people believe racism continues to be an issue today, devout conservatives and liberals disagree sharply. Perception also varies significantly by race and gender, which plays out along partisan lines given the demographic composition of each party.**

- *American Fabric: Identity and Belonging* ([More in Common](#))
  - "More than two-thirds of Americans (68 percent) recognize racism as a current problem and a significant issue. While a clear majority of white Americans agree (62 percent), Black Americans are significantly more likely to say racism is a persistent problem (89 percent), as are Hispanic Americans (74 percent) and Asian Americans (73 percent).
  - Two-thirds of Americans believe that racism "continues to be a present problem and a significant issue in the country today," rather than being "a problem of the past but not a significant issue in the country today." Majorities of every major racial group, gender and generation agree that racism persists as a problem in the country today, Black Americans (89 percent) and women (74 percent) are among the groups that are most fully aligned in their response. Traditional and Devoted Conservatives are the only groups where a majority does not perceive racism as a significant problem today.
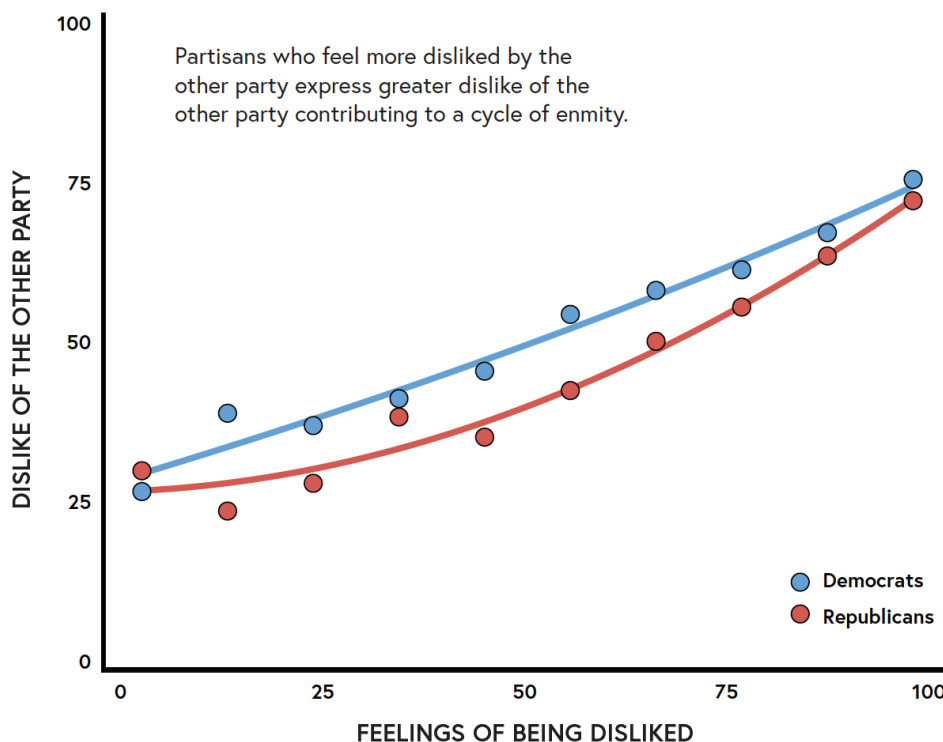
Figure 8 ——— **Racism in America Today**

←— % Agree —→

Racism was a problem in the past but is not a significant issue in the country today | Racism continues to be a present problem and a significant issue in the country today

Group	Past not significant	Present problem
Progressive Activists	0	100
Traditional Liberals	8	92
Black	11	89
Passive Liberals	12	88
Female	26	74
Hispanic	26	74
Asian	27	73
Millennials 1981-96	28	72
Gen Z 1997-	29	71
Gen X 1965-80	31	69
US Average	32	68
Baby Boomers 1945-64	35	65
Moderates	36	64
Politically Disengaged	37	63
White	38	62
Male	39	61
Silent Gen 1926-45	41	59
Traditional Conservatives	62	38
Devoted Conservatives	76	24

Which of the following statements do you agree with more?
Source: More in Common (July 2020)

We also overestimate the extent to which "the other side" hates and dehumanizes us, which results in individuals retaliating by hating and dehumanizing those they think are doing the same to them.

- "[T]he levels of perceived dehumanization are more than twice as large as levels of actual dehumanization, creating a large Dehumanization Divide." "In our nationally representative sample, 79% of Democrats overestimated how much Republicans actually dehumanize them, while 82% of Republicans overestimated how much Democrats actually dehumanize them." ([Beyond Conflict - America's Divided Mind](#))

- "The feeling of being disliked can be powerful in disrupting intergroup relations. If you feel that the other party dislikes your own party because of who you are, then you are more likely to dislike them in return. Perceived dislike could be interpreted as a threat to one's group." ([Beyond Conflict - America's Divided Mind](#))

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Areas of Hope?

In addition to the findings presented in previous sections that people are aware of toxic polarization and its destructive effects, there are (thankfully) a number of reasons for us to have hope. It is by recognizing the desire many people have to improve and stepping in to facilitate that process that the #ListenFirst Coalition can make a difference.

Polls continue to find that many Americans have a desire to improve the state of our political discourse and a belief that change is possible.

- The 2019 Weber Shandwick study "Civility in America 2019: Solutions for Tomorrow" (conducted among 1,230 U.S. adults 18 years of age and older and 100 teens ages 16–17) found that...
  - 86% believe it is possible for people to disagree in a civil way
  - 60% express hope about the future of civility in the U.S.
  - 62% say that if an organization existed to make it easier to support civility or get involved, they would be likely to participate or support it.
  - Respondents were willing to...
    - Make an effort to be civil when treated uncivilly (46%)
    - Encourage family, friends and coworkers to be civil (45%)
    - Vote for political leaders who behave in a civil way (43%)
    - Speak up against, or do something about, incivility when you see it (35%)
    - Post more positive things in social media about things you see happening (23%)
    - Donate money or time to support organizations that promote civility (10%)
  - To improve civility, respondents support...
    - Civility training in the workplace (37%)
    - A national campaign to promote civility (28%)
    - A coalition of companies that promotes civility in society (18%)
    - A national day of civility (17%)
- 75% say they're willing to set a good example by practicing civil conversations, and 36% — more than 100 million people — want to see a national campaign promoting such conversations. (Weber Shandwick, Civility in America VII: The State of Civility)
- There is bipartisan agreement that it is important to improve trust in both the federal government and in fellow Americans, as well as that there are ways to do so. Indeed, more than eight-in-ten Americans (84%) and (86%) believe it is possible to improve the level of confidence people have in the government, and in each other, respectively. (Pew Research Americans' Solutions for Trust-Related Problems)
- Although a minority, there are still people left who truly believe that we are all in this together. 13% of Biden voters and 5% of Trump voters expressed hope for unity and rising above partisanship. In fact, two voters, one who supported Biden and another who backed Trump, chose exactly the same words to express this sentiment: "We are all Americans." (Pew Research)

- 79% of Americans believe creating more opportunities for people to talk with those who have different values and views would be effective in reducing divisiveness. (Hidden Common Ground)
- 71 percent of Americans believe that there is more common ground among the American people than the news media and political leaders portray. (Hidden Common Ground)
- 86 percent of Americans are fed up with the "dysfunctional divisiveness" in our nation and are eager to overcome them (The Way Out)
- 93 percent of Americans say they are tired of the current political divide (Hidden Tribes)
- "Optimism about bridging racial divides: 66 percent of Americans are optimistic that people of different racial and religious backgrounds can work together to solve the country's problems, according to the February 2019 PRRI report."

Despite increasing levels of division and polarization, there are still some areas of common ground
- A 2019 USA Today poll found that Americans were united on one thing: "They are sick and tired of being so divided."
  - "More than nine of 10 respondents said it's important for the United States to try to reduce that divisiveness."
  - "Almost half of those in the other party were seen as 'misguided but worth trying to find common ground with.'"
  - "Four in 10 Republicans and nearly half of Democrats said they would be 'tempted' to vote for the opposing party's nominee if he or she had the best shot at unifying the country."
  - "Nine in 10 said it's important to them that the candidate they vote for "actively works toward unifying the country and making it less divisive."
  - "Only 28% said the country as a whole was headed in the right direction.
  - "70% said things have gotten off on the wrong track for the United States."
  - "An overwhelming 83% called divisiveness and gridlock 'a big problem.'"
- 3 in 4 Americans (77%) believe our differences aren't so great we can't work together (Hidden Tribes)
- The America That Isn't Polarized (The New York Times)
  - 54 percent of Americans hold roughly an equal mix of conservative and liberal positions or say they do not follow the news most of the time. (The New York Times)
    - This may be outdated - see here: Percent of people having a MIX of opinions is now about a third rather than about a half.
  - America's moderate are less likely to post about politics on social media and are less likely to cross paths with a politically engaged person -- 18 percent have a college degree, and 44 percent are nonwhite, and almost 50 percent are under the age of 40 (The New York Times)

- Americans who are more ideologically rigid make up 26 percent of the electorate as of 2017 ([The New York Times](#))
- 18 percent of Democrats said they thought violence would be justified if the Republicans won the presidential election in 2020, and 14 percent of Republicans said the same (if Democrats won) ([The New York Times](#))

Some research suggests that we have less of an issue with polarization, and more of an issue with our ability to talk about contentious issues like politics in a constructive manner. Facilitating dialogue is significantly easier than attempting to address tangibly irreconcilable differences.

- *Is America Hopelessly Polarized, or Just Allergic to Politics? ([The New York Times](#))*
  - "When people learned that their future in-law would rarely discuss politics, fewer than 30 percent said that they would be unhappy with an in-law from the opposing party."
  - "When specified that the hypothetical in-law would never shut up about politics — he or she would interrupt social gatherings and holidays with the latest Trump dirt from MSNBC or Hannity tirade from Fox — more than 40 percent of people would be unhappy with the marriage."
  - "For those who do not strongly identify with a party, which includes nearly two-thirds of Americans, fewer than 20 percent said they would be unhappy with an in-law from the opposing party who rarely discussed politics. When, instead, their child's chosen partner was a talkative member of the opposing party, this number doubled to 40 percent."

Despite real differences in beliefs between partisans, we tend to exaggerate the extremity of "the other side's" views.

- "Americans dramatically overestimate the extremity of their opponents' views." ([CNN](#), [Perception Gap](#))
  - "Both Democrats and Republicans overestimate the proportion of their political opponents holding immoderate views by about 20 percentage points or more."
  - "Independents, on average, misjudge Democrats' and Republicans' views by about 16 percentage points."

This ([American Enterprise Institute report](#)) found that most people don't view compromise as a sign of weakness

- "22 percent of the public agree that being willing to compromise is evidence of a weak position. More than three-quarters (77 percent) disagree."
- "Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe that willingness to compromise signals weakness (32 percent to 19 percent, respectively), but a majority of those who belong to either party disagree."

- "Only 10 percent of Americans with a college degree see compromise as a sign of a weak position, compared to roughly one-third (32 percent) of those without any college education."

  The [Hidden Tribes](#) 2018 midterm study found similar results
  - 90% say they want both parties to find places to compromise
  - 54% of Americans reject the view that "one side is right about nearly everything"

There are proven ways we can decrease toxic polarization
- "In a 2019 study involving nearly 1,000 political partisans, 'warm contact' between political leaders did more to reduce affective polarization and negative opinions about the other party than issue compromise." ([Western Political Science Association](#), [Five Thirty Eight](#))

Workplace

External Relevance (Corporate Social Responsibility)

Weber Shandwick's annual studies have continued to find that becoming a champion of conversations that prioritize understanding is a potential means by which to strengthen brand and market position.

Civility in America 2019: Solutions for Tomorrow
- Many people want businesses to take a stand on the problem of civility
    - 43% of survey respondents agree that leadership has a responsibility to enforce civility in the workplace
    - 33% agree that leadership has a responsibility to speak out against uncivil behaviors in society.
    - 57% say social media companies should play a larger role in helping improve civility in our nation.
    - 48% say business should play a larger role in helping improve civility in our nation.
- Companies can increase the bottom line by speaking out on issues unrelated to their core business but that personally matter to consumers
    - Intention to purchase increases when consumers hear about the CEO making a public statement with which the consumers agree
    - Virtue signaling can galvanize support and generate goodwill for a company
    - 51 percent of Millennials say they would be more likely to buy from a company whose CEO spoke out on an issue they agree with
    - 47 percent of Millennials believe CEOs have a responsibility to speak up about issues that are important to society
- Boost pride and loyalty among employees
    - 44 percent of Millennial employees would be more loyal to their organization if their CEO took a position on a current issue
- Allow employees to organize a Listen First group at work
    - 11% of employees would like to start or join a civility group at their workplace
- Civility in America Corporate Reputation Edition 2013
    - Large American businesses considered uncivil by 53% of Americans
    - 61% of Americans say they've decided not to buy from a company again because they were treated uncivilly by the business and/or advised others not to buy products or services from a company because they had a rude or uncivil experience
- Civility in America VII - 2016
    - 53% have stopped buying from a company because of uncivil representatives
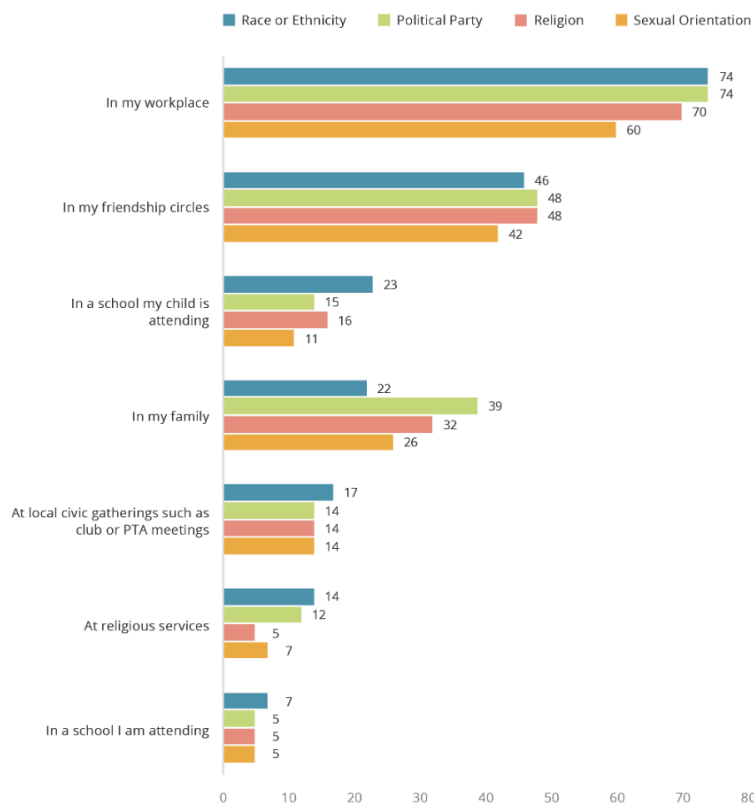
Bruce Mehlman's *"Woke Capitalism" and Its Discontents: Navigating Hyper-Activism in an Age of Disruption***," has similar findings**

- 68% of Americans think CEOs should take a stand on social issues.
- 54% of employees globally think CEOs should speak publicly on controversial political and social issues.
- 43% of U.S. consumers will favor the company that takes a stand on like-minded social, environmental, or political issues.
- ~25% of investments into U.S. stock & bond mutual funds last year went to ESG funds, up from 1% in 2014.

The workplace is the most common place for people to engage with those who they regard as different from themselves—meaning it provides an important opportunity for dialogue and bridge-building to occur.

FIGURE 5. Locations of Americans' Interactions With Those Who Differ From Them
Where do you frequently interact with people who do NOT share your...

Source: PRRI/The Atlantic 2019 Pluralism Survey.

Internal Relevance (Work Force)

Key outcomes of building a Listen First business environment

- Enhanced engagement, commitment, collaboration, and innovation

    - Firms that communicate effectively are over 4 times more likely to report high levels of employee engagement versus firms that communicate less effectively (Thread HCM, Watson Wyatt Communication ROI Study)
    - Companies that are highly effective communicators are 20 percent more likely to experience lower turnover rates than their peers (Thread HCM, Watson Wyatt Communication ROI Study)
    - 87% of employees who experience incivility at work say it negatively impacts their job performance. 24% of all Americans have quit a job because of an uncivil workplace (Weber Shandwick)
- Increased effectiveness communicating with customers and stakeholders
    - 53% of Americans have stopped buying from a company because of uncivil representatives (Weber Shandwick)
    - 68% of customer loss is caused by an attitude of indifference (Weber Shandwick)
- Elevated organizational performance
    - Communication failures cost Fortune 500 companies an average of $62.4 million per year, while costing small companies $420,000 per year (Society for Human Resource Management)
    - Productivity losses resulting from communication barriers cost $26,041 per worker per year (SIS International Research)
    - Companies that communicate effectively have a 19.4 percent higher market premium than companies that do not (Society for Human Resource Management)
    - Shareholder returns for organizations with the most effective communication were over 57 percent higher than were returns for firms with less effective communication *(Building High-Performance People and Organizations)*
    - Google's internal study to uncover the top traits of best performing managers found that great managers are great listeners. (Forbes Magazine)
- The Harvard Business Review conducted a poll of 800 managers/employees across 17 industries and found… (Congressional Civility and Respect Caucus)
    - 48% of workers on the receiving end of uncivil behavior intentionally decreased their efforts on the job
    - 78% of workers said their commitment to the organization declined
    - 80% of workers lost time/productivity worrying about the incident
    - When consumers perceive employees to be uncivil, they are less likely to use the services of a company

- ○ Cisco estimates that incivility cost their company $12 million a year
- Independent-mindedness at Work. Is Arguing Good for You and Your Workplace? (LinkedIn)
  - ○ "Harvard Business School professor Linda Hill in *Collective Genius* opines that in healthy organizations 'it's psychologically safe to have conflict and discussion." And she argues innovative organizations foster *creative abrasion;* by that she "means being able to spark heated but constructive debates that amplify differences as opposed to minimizing them.""
  - ○ "Jeffrey Kassing, a professor at Arizona State, with his extensive research of employee dissent, has added support to our findings. He found that proposing solutions proved to be the most competent form of upward dissent strategy, followed by direct-factual appeal, repetition, and circumvention"
- Are Politically Diverse Teams More Effective? *(Are Politically Diverse Teams More Effective?)*
  - ○ Harvard Business Review journalists "estimated the political affiliation of more than 600,000 Wikipedia contributors through their intensity of contribution to liberal versus conservative articles." They "found that millions of editor contributions to liberal versus conservative pages was a significant predictor of whether they identified as liberal or convervative and how they voted."
  - ○ The journalists also "measured the political diversity or polarization of each team of editors behind 232,000 different Wikipedia pages." They found that "political polarization was strongly associated with higher page quality, far exceeding the quality of similarly sized biased, neutral, or moderate editor teams." They witnessed this correlation to apply to "political articles, [as well as] those on social issues and science."
  - ○ The researchers concluded that "bias is generally undesirable"; however, "is sometimes driven by passion." They stated that "teams with mixtures of bias [are] willing to engage and collaborate [to] yield superior performance," which "reveals a 'silver lining' of political diversity and disagreement."
- Polarization in America: two possible futures *(Polarization in America: two possible futures)*
  - ○ The researchers "describe two possible futures, each based on different sets of theory and evidence"; although "it is too early to know which future [is] approaching, [the] ability to address misperceptions may be one key factor."
  - ○ "As polarization has risen, so have Americans' worries: 90% believe their country is divided over politics and 60% feel pessimistic about their country overcoming these divisions to solve its biggest problems."
  - ○ "Recent research in psychology has primarily highlighted the negative consequences of polarization in America… Polarized Americans are more willing to exclude people with opposing political beliefs than to exclude people of other races—a jarring comparison considering the prevalence of race-based exclusion."
- Methodology *(Methodology)*
  - ○ The researchers studied the 4-1-5 method (4 diverse people, 1-hour a week, 5 sessions) to understand the connection between social learning and trust. They learned that trust is "critical to a functioning democracy, our overall health, and the innovation and productivity of our economy."

- Although trust is needed to ensure a productive and positive nation, it is lacking among American people and the government and media; further, many (17%) do not trust the government and many (41%) do not trust the news media.
  - It is important to ensure that communities have a strong focus on "empathy and trust" to properly function and promote "peer learning." Empathy and trust aid in the prevention of loneliness and isolation individuals often face in the community, as when diverse groups work together, they inspire each other.
- [How We Can Reconcile With Each Other When Our Politics Are So Polarized](#)
  - Harvard Graduate School of Education found that 67% of Americans believe it's important to get along with people they disagree with politically. The researchers also found that 83% of surveyed individuals said they could respect someone who disagrees with them politically as long as the person respected them back. 80% of surveyed individuals said they would be "happy" to engage in conversations with people who have opposing political views, as long as their conversation was considerate.
  - Red/Blue sessions allow people to share their political opinions in a safe and respectable way, to ensure that ideas are exchanged regardless of one's political party affiliation. These sessions allow for proper civil discourse among Americans.
  - Dr. Doherty discusses the need for a universal "attitude adjustment," as in order to exchange ideas successfully we must accept our diversity and disagreements. By doing this, diverse individuals can express their points of view on current events in a safe way; although disagreements are likely and possible, it is important to remain open-minded when speaking with someone with different views.
- [Back to work after COVID: Will we talk politics again with coworkers?](#)
  - More than 4 in 10 human resource professionals are discouraging employees from discussing politics at work, according to an October survey by the Society for Human Resource Management.
  - In 2020, 44% of human resource professionals reported intensified political volatility among their workers, up from 26% in 2016, according to a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management
  - During the 2020 presidential primary season, before the pandemic erupted, 36% of American workers avoided talking to or collaborating with a coworker due to that person's political views, according to a survey by research and advisory group Gartner...
  - ...nearly one-third said they had "witnessed at least one instance of unacceptable treatment of a coworker because of their political beliefs, including being called offensive names, being avoided by colleagues or being treated unfairly," according to Gartner.