The Common Good

US Residents Public Opinion Survey & Index

Conducted by:

Emerson College

P O L L I N G

Commissioned by:

THE
COMMON GOOD

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Methodology

Emerson College Polling, under the supervision of Associate Professor Spencer Kimball, is pleased to present The Common Good with the findings from a survey of US residents. All respondents interviewed in this study were part of a fully representative sample using an area probabilistic sampling method of N=1,000 (sample size). The margin of error for the sample is +/- 3.0% in 19 of 20 cases.

The sample size of the survey is n=1,000. The entire sample was weighted by age, gender, ethnicity, education and region based on US Census data.

The survey was administered using a mixed-mode methodology including: text-to-web, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), web survey via email, and an online panel.

The results presented in this report include univariate and bivariate analysis of the data. Frequency distributions for each item included on the questionnaire are shown in the tables. In all cases, cross-tabulation results are also shown. This type of bivariate analysis examines differences between sub-groups of the overall population. In the cases where cross tabulation results are presented, a chi-square test, an independent t-test for means, or a Z-test for independent percentages is shown.

A chi-square test is used in cases where comparisons are made for categorical variables. A t-test is used in cases where comparisons are made for measurement variables. A Z-test is used in cases where comparisons are made between independent population percentages.

The purpose of these statistical tests is to determine whether or not the observed difference between sub-groups in the sample is due to sampling error or whether it is due to a real difference in the population. When the results are statistically significant, it strongly suggests that the observed difference between sub-groups found in the sample is due to a real difference in the population, and not due to sampling error.

A chi-square significance level of .05 indicates significance at the 95 percent level. In other words, it is 95 percent likely that the results are due to a real difference between comparison groups. A chi-square significance level of .01 indicates significance at the 99 percent level. When a t-test or a Z-test is shown, lower- and upper-case letters indicate significance at the 90 and 95 percent levels respectively.

The Common Good Index

The Common Good Index score was developed using a graded, five-question series to assess degrees of political division across the various groups that comprise the United States of America. Respondents were asked an introductory series of five questions, and their answers were compiled. Responses to the series were combined to create a score on a scale of 10 to 100, with 10 indicating no division, and 100 showing complete division. Voters were then analyzed by age, gender, political affiliation, race, education, household income, and region, and each group was assigned a significance score. A significance level of .05 indicates significance at the 95 percent level. In other words, it is 95 percent likely that the results are due to a real difference between the cohort and their reported levels of divisiveness. The questions asked were:

1. Do you have family or friends with whom you can no longer discuss political matters civilly or respectfully?	6.2/10
2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: our government is so divided that it is no longer effective.	14.5/20
3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: national division is a threat to our democracy.	14.9/20
4. Is the greatest threat to our country internal (from within the USA) or external (from other countries)?	27.6/35
5. When considering those with whom you strongly disagree politically, do you generally believe them to be good and honest people?	7.7/15

The Common Good Index score is 70.9.

Age
Age has a significance score of .005, meaning that one's age is a statistically significant factor in an individual's propensity towards divisiveness. The Index divided voters into four age categories: 18-34, 35-49, 50-64, and 65+. Amongst age, the average score is 70.9, with minor deviations amongst ages 18-34 (69.2), 50-64 (70.3) and 65+ (69.5). However, middle aged voters–aged 35-49–received a score of 75.0. This bears out in many points of data, where this cohort has the highest numbers of any age group to say that political violence is always justified (9%), the highest percentage that are extremely worried that elections will not be conducted fairly (25%), and the most who believe that new divisions in the country are going to lead to civil war (20%).

Age	Common Good Index Score

18-34	69.2
35-49	75.0
50-64	70.3
65+	69.5
Total	70.9

Gender

Gender has a significance score of .038, meaning that one's gender is not always a statistically significant factor in an individual's propensity towards divisiveness.

Gender	Common Good Index Score
Men	71.6
Women	70.6
Total	70.9

Political Party Affiliation

Political affiliation has a significance score of .081, meaning that one's political affiliation is not a statistically significant factor in an individual's propensity towards divisiveness.

Republicans are the group most likely to be extremely concerned that the midterm elections will not be conducted fairly, with 30% saying they are extremely concerned, compared to 16% of independent voters, 15% of Democrats, and 14% of those who are not registered.

Political Party	Common Good Index Score
Not Registered	68.8
Democrat	69.6
Republican	73.3
Independent	70.7
Total	70.9

Education

Education has a significance score of .000, meaning that one's level of education is a statistically significant factor in an individual's propensity towards divisiveness. Voters with some college experience but no degree show the highest divisiveness scores (74.7) followed by those with a bachelor's degree (72.9), those with an advanced degree (70.7) and those with a high school diploma or less (67.0). Voters with some college experience had the highest numbers of those who were extremely concerned that the midterms would not be conducted fairly (24%), and the most likely to cite economic inequality as the primary case of national division (17%).

Education	Common Good Index Score
HS or less	67.0
Some college	74.7
College Graduate	72.9
Post-grad	70.7
Total	70.9

Race
Education has a significance score of .002, meaning that one's race is a statistically significant factor in an individual's propensity towards divisiveness. While Hipanic (69.2), Black (66.1), and AAPI (68.5) voters all have scores lower than the national average, White voters (73.0) are higher in divisiveness than the other races. White voters have the highest numbers of any race that believe that party politics are the primary and secondary causes of national division (28% and 20% respectively), and the race with the lowest numbers of those who have taken multiple civics classes (48%).

Race	Common Good Index Score
Hispanic	69.2
White	73.0
Black	66.1
AAPI	68.5
Total	70.9

Income
Income has a significance score of .021, meaning that income is not always a statistically significant factor in an individual's propensity towards divisiveness. Households at the lowest end of earnings have a

score of 67.8, while households in the highest bracket have a score of 69.5. Middle earning households have division scores of 72.2. Those earning $25,000-$75,000 have the highest numbers of any income group that are extremely concerned that the midterms will not be conducted fairly (22%), and the highest percentage that believe that political violence is always justified (10%). Those earning $75,000-$150,000 have the highest number of those that identify party politics as the primary cause of national division (43%), which is 17 points higher than the next closest income group.

Income	Common Good Index Score
>$25k	67.8
$25k-$75k	72.2
$75k-$150k	72.7
$150k+	69.5
Total	70.8

Region
Region has a significance score of .075, meaning that region is not always a statistically significant factor in an individual's propensity towards divisiveness.

Region	Common Good Index Score
Northeast	72.9
South	71.4
Midwest	71.7
West	68.1
Total	70.8

Survey Results

1. **Do you have family or friends with whom you can no longer discuss political matters civilly or respectfully?**

Fifty-two percent of US residents say yes, they have family or friends with whom they can no longer discuss political matters civilly or respectfully, while 48% say they do not.
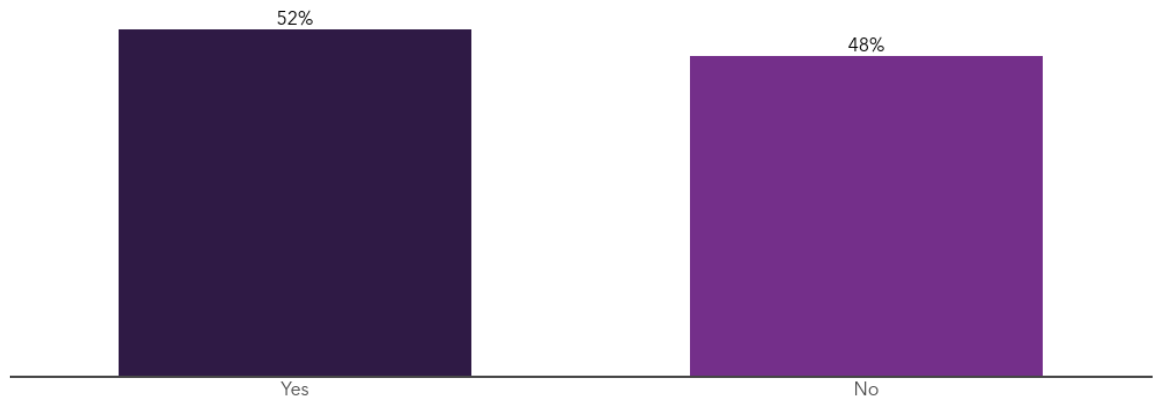
Do you have family or friends with whom you can no longer discuss political matters civilly or respectfully?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

	52%	48%
	Yes	No

2. **Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. First, our government is so divided that it is no longer effective.**

Sixty-two percent of Americans agree that "our government is so divided that it is no longer effective"; 30% of voters agree strongly. Twenty percent disagree, and 18% are neutral.
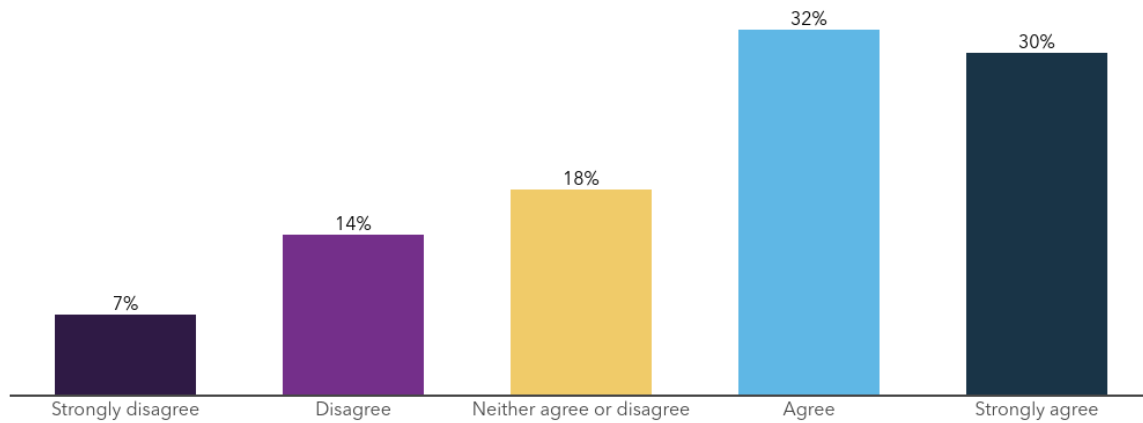
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. First, our government is so divided that it is no longer effective.

ECP

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

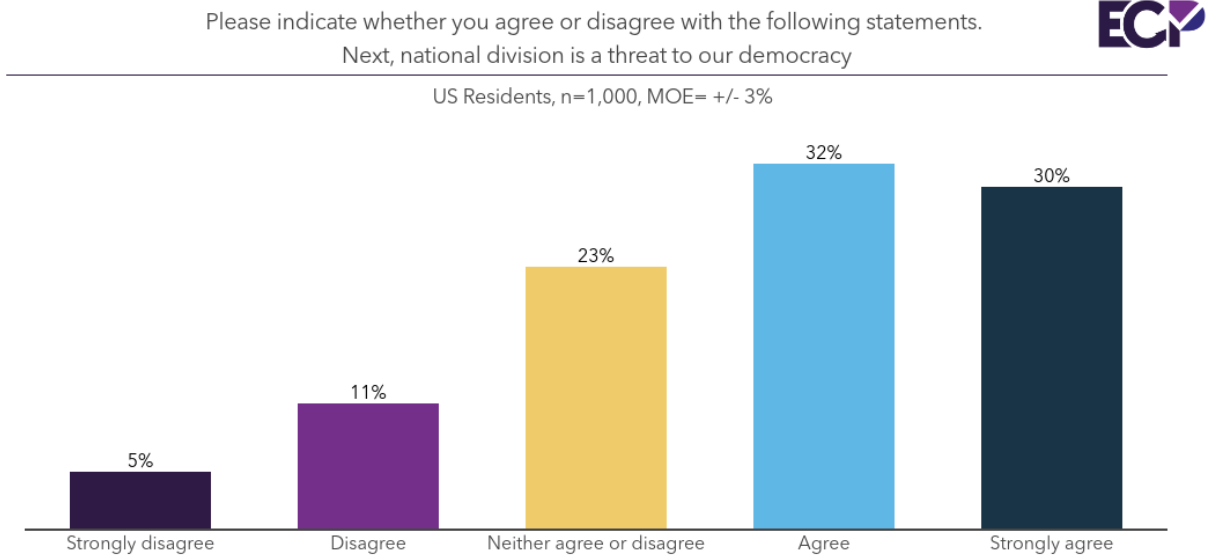| Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
7%	14%	18%	32%	30%

3. Next, national division is a threat to our democracy

Sixty-one percent believe that "national division is a threat to our Democracy."

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.
Next, national division is a threat to our democracy

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

**4. Is the greatest threat to our country internal (from within the USA) or external (from other countries)?**

Nearly one-in-four Americans (78%) think that the greatest threat to our country is internal, while 22% believe that our greatest threat is external.

Is the greatest threat to our country internal (from within the USA) or external (from other countries)?   ECP

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%
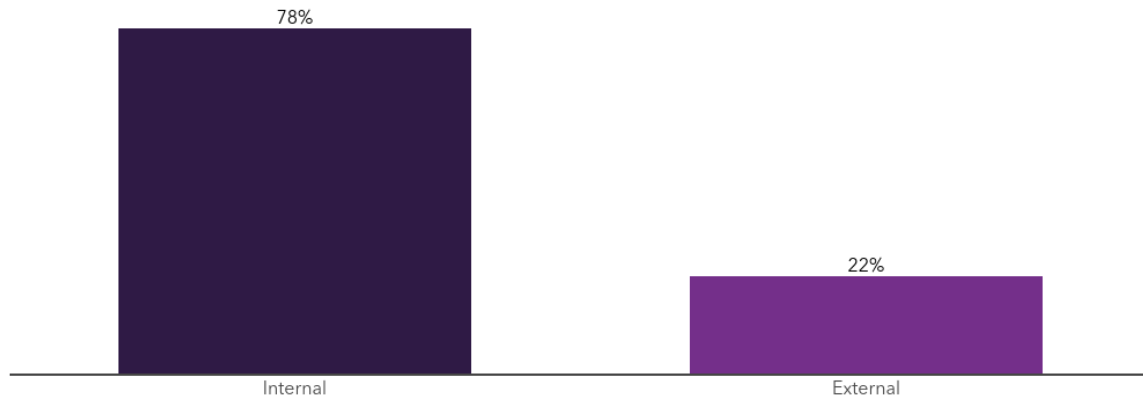
5. __When considering those with whom you strongly disagree politically, do you generally believe them to be good and honest people?__

A plurality of voters are sometimes skeptical about the character of those with whom they disagree politically. Thirty-six percent say that they only "sometimes" believe that "those they disagree with are good and honest people", with 30% saying they "often" believe the best of those they disagree with. Sixteen percent responded "always", 11% said "rarely," and 7% said "never."

When considering those with whom you strongly disagree politically, do you generally believe them to be good and honest people?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
16%	30%	36%	11%	7%
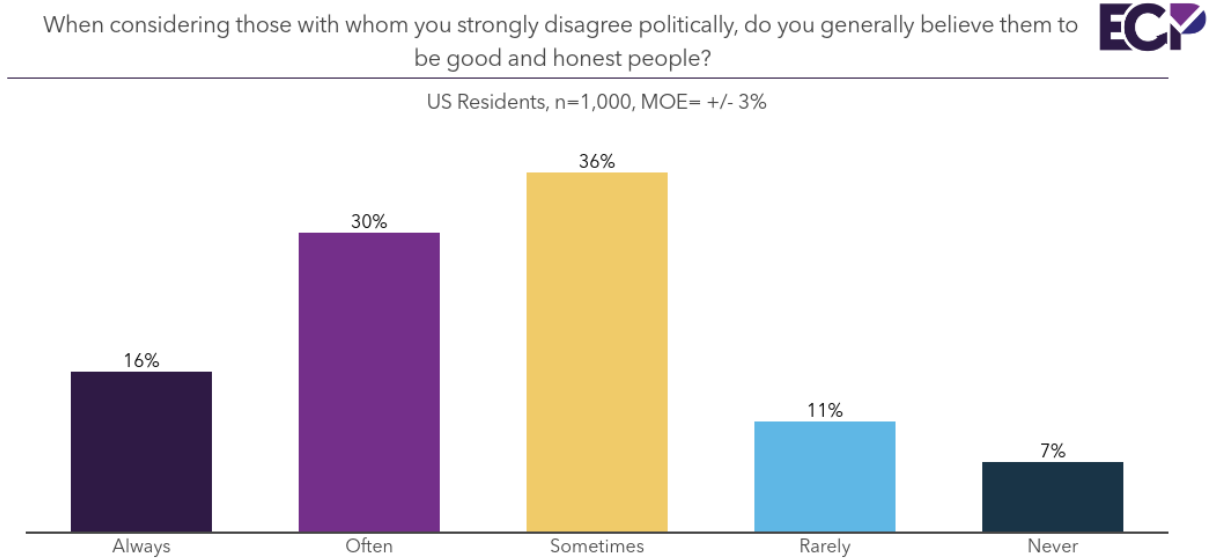
6. **How concerned are you that the midterm elections this November will not be conducted fairly?**

When asked how concerned voters are about the fair administration of the midterm elections, responses were evenly distributed between those who are not at all concerned (24%) and those who were extremely concerned (20%). Nineteen percent are "slightly concerned", 20% are "somewhat concerned", and 18% are "moderately concerned".

- Seniors are sharply divided in their beliefs. While 25% say that they are "not at all concerned," another 25% say that they are "extremely concerned."
- Younger voters aged 18-34 are most likely to be not at all concerned (28%) or moderately concerned (26%).
- Thirty percent of Republicans are extremely concerned, compared to 14% of Democrats and 16% of independent voters.
- 54% of Democrats, 44% of independent voters, and 30% of Republicans are slightly or not at all concerned that the midterm elections will be fairly conducted.
- Forty-three percent of independent women are slightly or not at all concerned about fair midterms. In this instance, their beliefs are similar to Democrats (49%), but different from Republicans (24%).

How concerned are you that the midterm elections this November will not be conducted fairly?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
24%	19%	20%	18%	19%
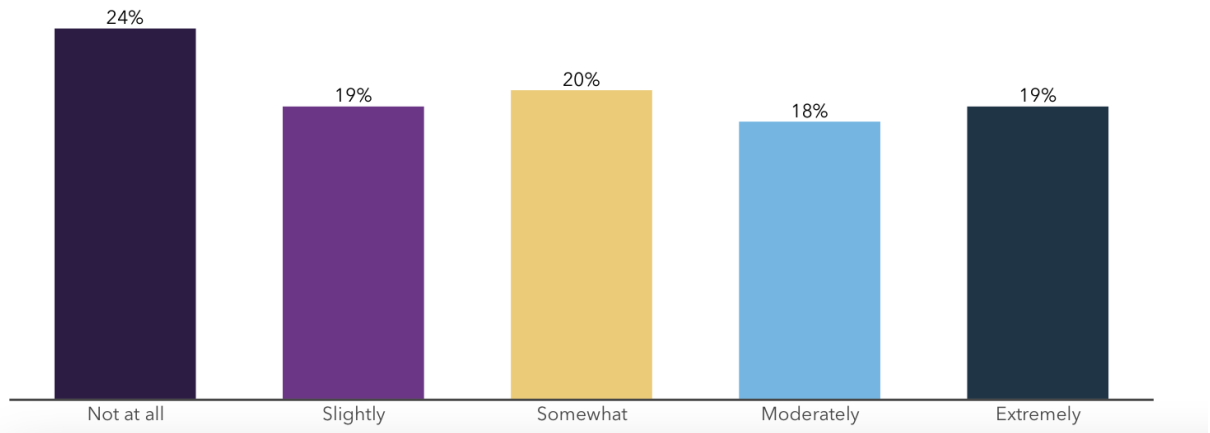
7. **Is political violence justified in certain circumstances?**

A plurality of respondents 44% report that political violence is never justified. Twenty-three percent say it is justified rarely, and another 23% say it is justified sometimes. Alarmingly, 10% say that political violence is always (6%) or often (4%) justified.

- Men are more inclined to justify political violence than women. While 15% of men say that political violence can always or often be justified, only 5% of women say the same.
- Almost half of women (49%) say that political violence is never justified compared to 39% of men.
- The largest group of those who believe that political violence is never justified is highest among non-registered citizens at 54%.
- For independent women, 39% say political violence is never justified, while 4% say it is either often or always justified.

Is political violence justified in certain circumstances?
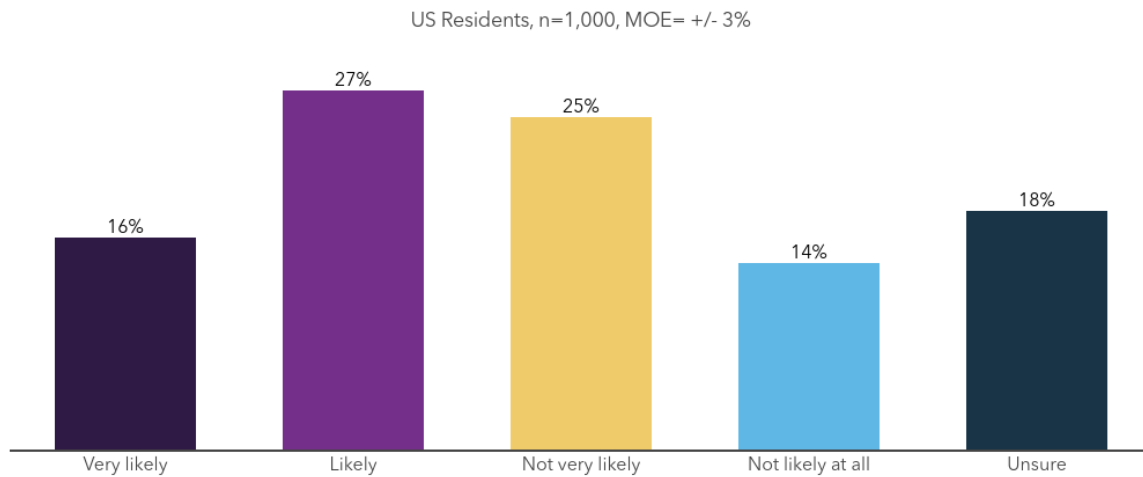
US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%
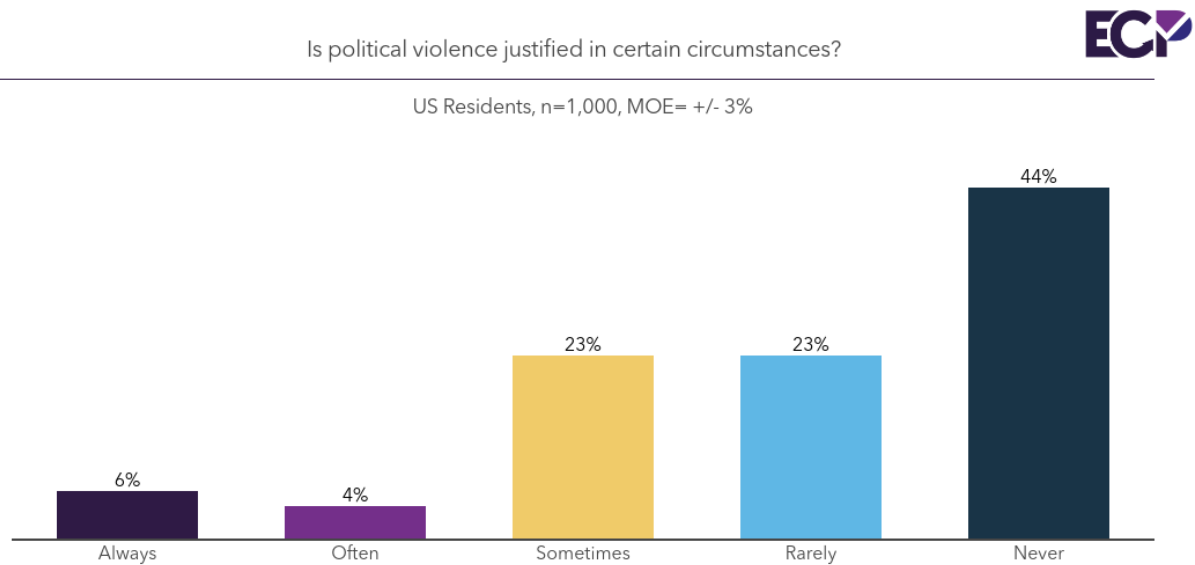
8. How likely is it that divisions in our country are going to lead to a new civil war?

Forty-three percent of Americans think that divisions in our country are likely to lead to a new civil war, and 39% believe it is not likely; 18% are unsure.

- While a 44% plurality of men believe that division in our country is unlikely to lead to civil war, a plurality of women (48%) believe that civil war is likely.
- A majority of Republicans (51%) believe that civil war is likely, compared to a 40% plurality of Democrats.
- Fifty-one percent of Republicans, 40% of Democrats, and 36% of independent voters report that divisions in our country are either likely or very likely to lead to a new civil war.
- A 52% majority of independent women think that divisions will lead to civil war, compared to 46% of Democrats, and 47% of Republicans.

How likely is it that divisions in our country are going to lead to a new civil war?   ECP

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Very likely	Likely	Not very likely	Not likely at all	Unsure
16%	27%	25%	14%	18%

9. Please choose the issue that you believe is the primary causes of national division.

A quarter of Americans point to party politics as the primary cause of national division, followed by the news media (16%), and economic inequality (14%).

- Economic equality is seen as a primary cause to 19% of those households making under $25,000 and 16% of households making $25,000-$75,000.
- A 43% plurality of those making $75,000-$150,000 believe that party politics is the primary cause of national division.
- Most of the highest earning households of $150,000+ believe that party politics (26%) and the news media (24%) are the primary cause of national division.
- For non-registered citizens, economic inequality tops their concerns (41%).
- **Republicans (26%), Democrats (24%), independent voters (23%), and non-registered citizens (32%) all agree that political parties are the top reason for national division.**
- Like the partisans, independent women point to political parties as the largest reason for division (23%), followed closely by crime and police reform (22%).

Please choose the issue that you believe is the primary causes of national division.

ECP
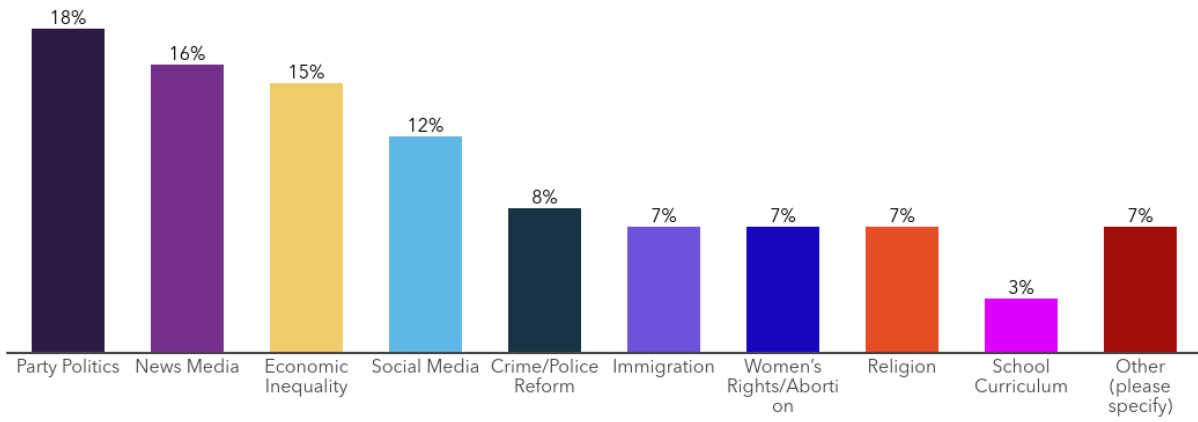
US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%
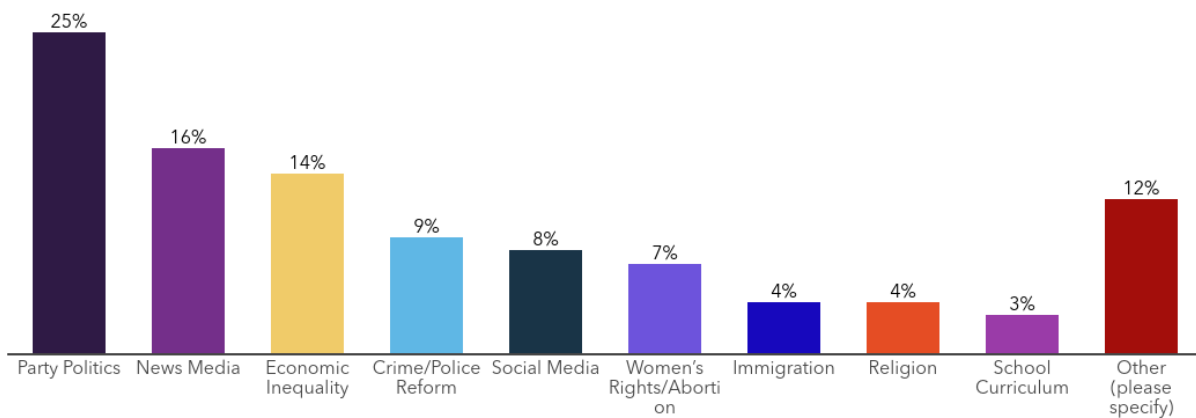
10. Please choose the second issue that you believe is a cause of national division.

Please choose the second issue that you believe is a cause of national division.

ECP

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Party Politics	News Media	Economic Inequality	Social Media	Crime/Police Reform	Immigration	Women's Rights/Abortion	Religion	School Curriculum	Other (please specify)
18%	16%	15%	12%	8%	7%	7%	7%	3%	7%

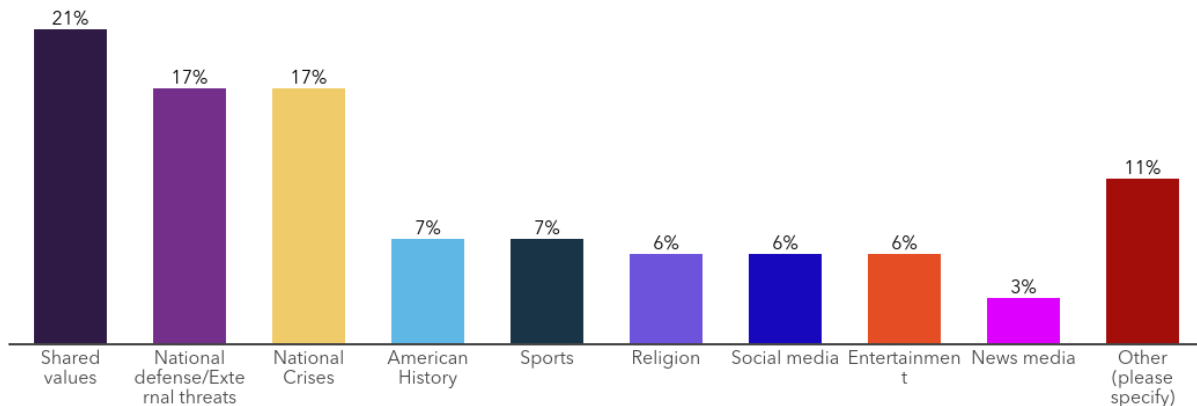**11. Please choose the issue that you believe most unites us as a nation.**

Conversely, 21% of Americans believed that shared values most unites us as a country, followed by national crises (17%), and national defense/external threats (17%).

- A 46% plurality of non-registered voters and a 23% plurality of independent voters think that "shared values" most unites us as a nation.
- Nineteen percent of Democrats believe that a national crisis must unite the nation.
- Eighteen percent of Republicans agree with Democrats that national crises must unite the nation, followed national defense and shared values at 17% each.
- For non-registered voters, shared values are their top issue with a near-majority of 46%, compared to 23% of independent voters, and 17% for both Republicans and Democrats.
- A combination of existential threats and national crises unites 43% of non-registered citizens, 34% of Democrats, 34% of Republicans, and 30% of independent voters.
- Shared values (28%), national crises (14%), social media (13%), and entertainment (12%) are what unite independent women most.

Please choose the issue that you believe most unites us as a nation.

ECP

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Shared values	National defense/External threats	National Crises	American History	Sports	Religion	Social media	Entertainment	News media	Other (please specify)
21%	17%	17%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	3%	11%

12. <u>Do you believe that most Americans can identify the difference between opinion journalism and news reporting?</u>

Forty-one percent of Americans believe that most Americans rarely (33%) or never (8%) know the difference between opinion journalism and news reporting. 37% say that most Americans sometimes know the difference, with 12% saying "always," and 10% saying "often."

- Hispanic voters are the most confident racial cohort, with a 40% plurality saying that they believe that voters can always tell the difference between opinion journalism and the news.
- Whites are the least confident in their fellow Americans' ability to discern this difference, with a 41% plurality saying that Americans rarely determine this difference.
- A near majority (46%) of black voters and one-in-three AAPI voters believe that other Americans only "sometimes" know the difference between opinion journalism and news.
- 47% of non-registered citizens, 32% of Democrats, 46% of Republicans, and 45% of independent voters think that Americans can rarely or never discern between opinion journalism and reporting.
- Thirteen percent of independent women say that Americans can often or always identify the difference between opinion journalism and news reporting, compared to 19% of Republicans and 23% of Democrats.

Do you believe that most Americans can identify the difference between opinion journalism and news reporting?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
12%	10%	37%	33%	8%
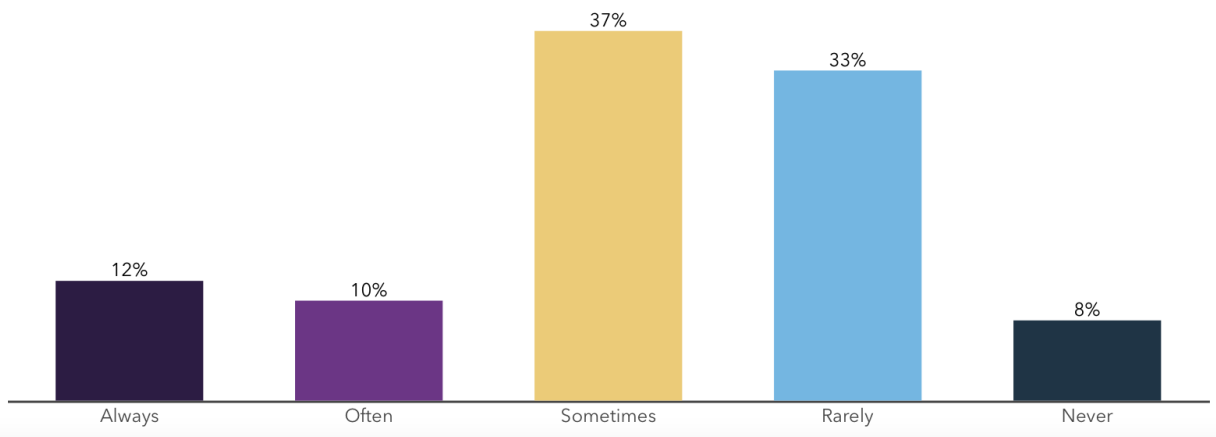
13. Did you ever take a civics or government class when you were in middle school or high school?

Half of Americans report having taken multiple civics classes in middle or high school; 26% say that they have taken at least one, leaving 24% who have taken none at all.

● The northeast has the highest percentage of those who have taken no civics classes (33%); the midwest has the lowest percentage in the country (21%).
● Eighty-one percent of men have taken multiple (54%) or single (28%) civics classes, compared to 71% of women who have taken multiplied (46%) or single (25%) classes.
● **43% of non-registered citizens reported not taking a civics class, compared to 30% of independent voters, 20% of Republicans, and 17% of Democrats.**

Did you ever take a civics or government class when you were in middle school or high school?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%
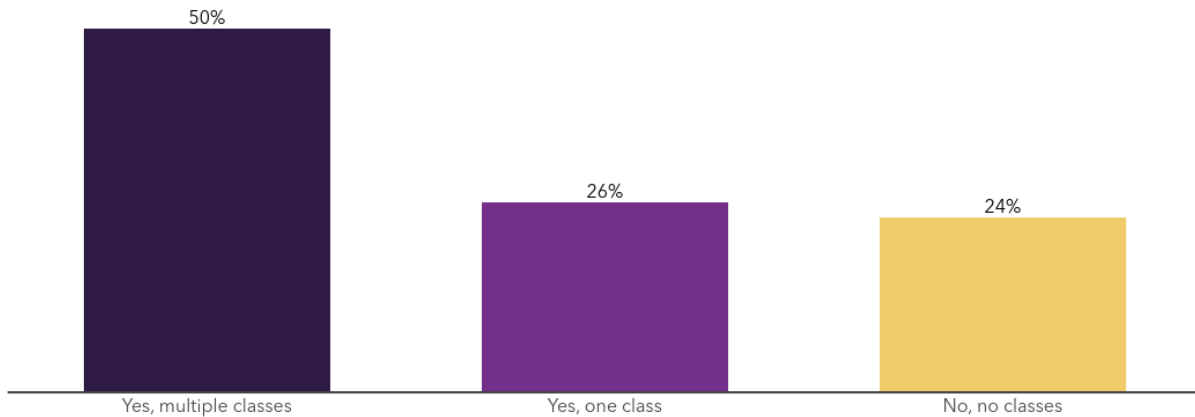
14. **Is the process by which political parties pick candidates for office an important contributor to national division?**
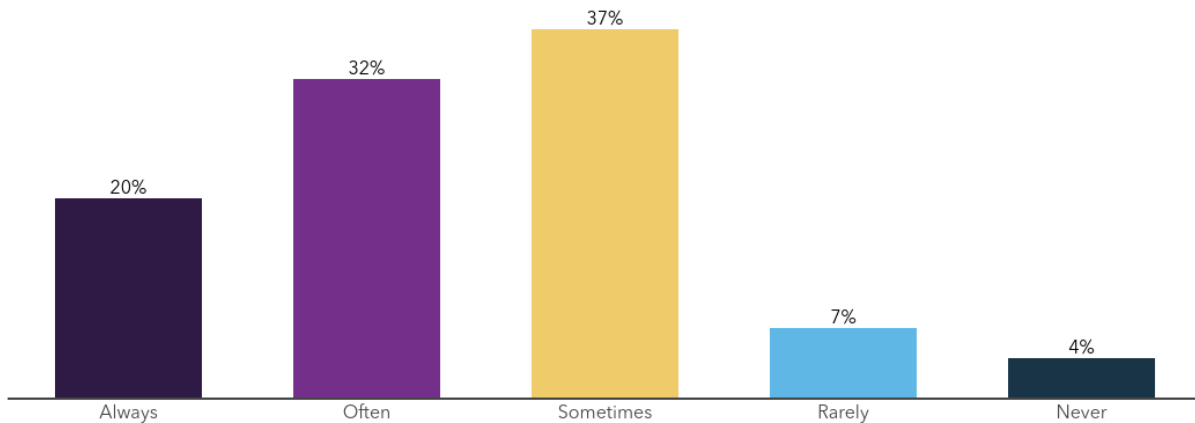
A majority (52%) of Americans believe that the process by which political parties pick candidates for office are always (20%) or sometimes (32%) an "important contributor to national division." Thirty-seven percent say that it is sometimes an important contributor, 7% say rarely, and 4% say never.

- Whites, black, and AAPI voters are most likely to characterize our political process as a "sometimes" important contributor to national division, at 44%, 35% and 36% respectively.
- Hispanic voters are far more critical of these political processes, with 43% saying it is "always" an important contributor to division, and 34% saying it is "often" an important contributing factor.
- 58% of democrats agree with the statement, followed by 51% of Independents and 50% of Republicans.

Is the process by which political parties pick candidates for office an important contributor to national division?
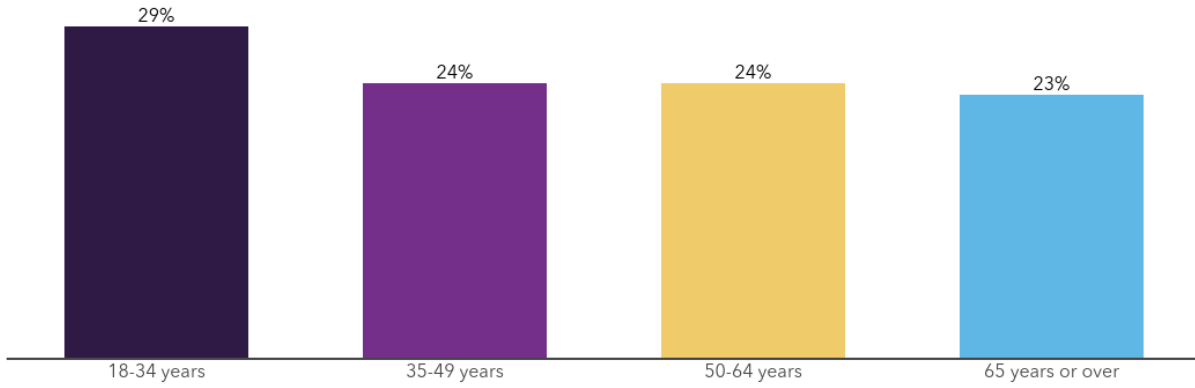
US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Demographics
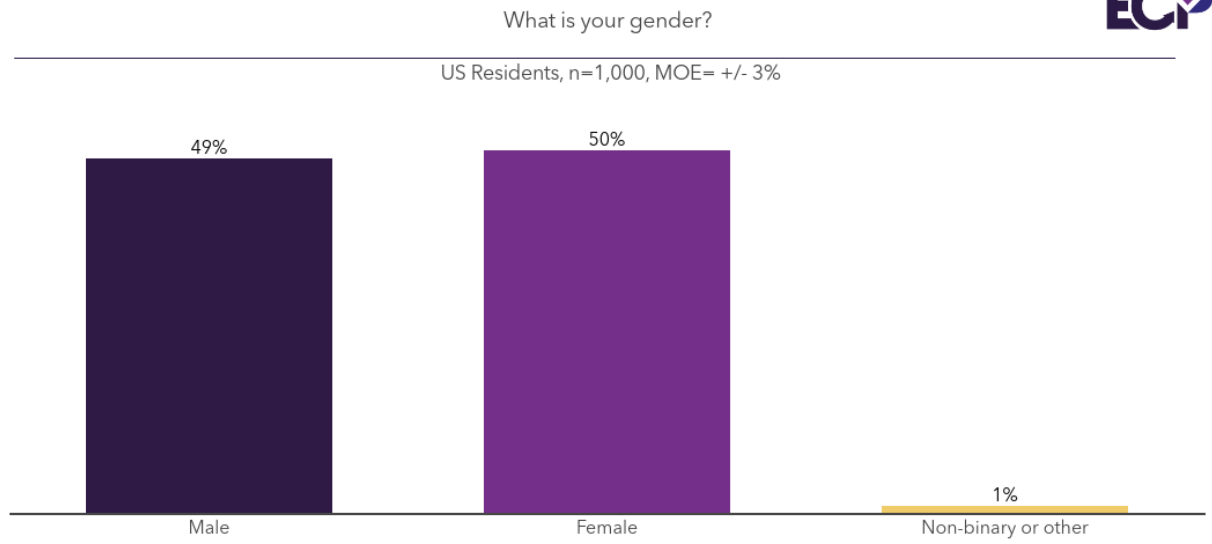
15. What is your age range?

What is your age range?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Age Range	Percentage
18-34 years	29%
35-49 years	24%
50-64 years	24%
65 years or over	23%

16. **What is your gender**

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Male	Female	Non-binary or other
49%	50%	1%

17. **What is your party affiliation?**

What is your party affiliation?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

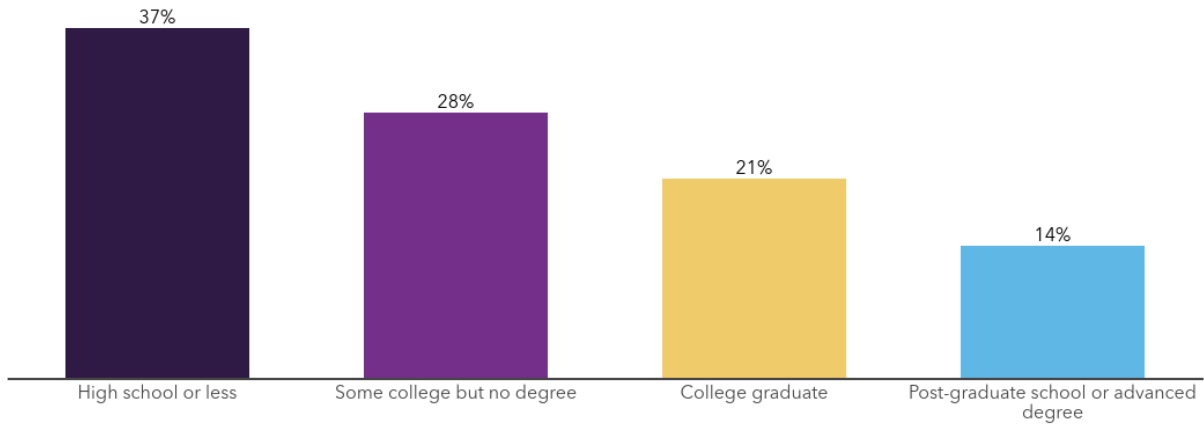| Not registered to vote	Democrat	Republican	Independent or other
9%	36%	30%	25%
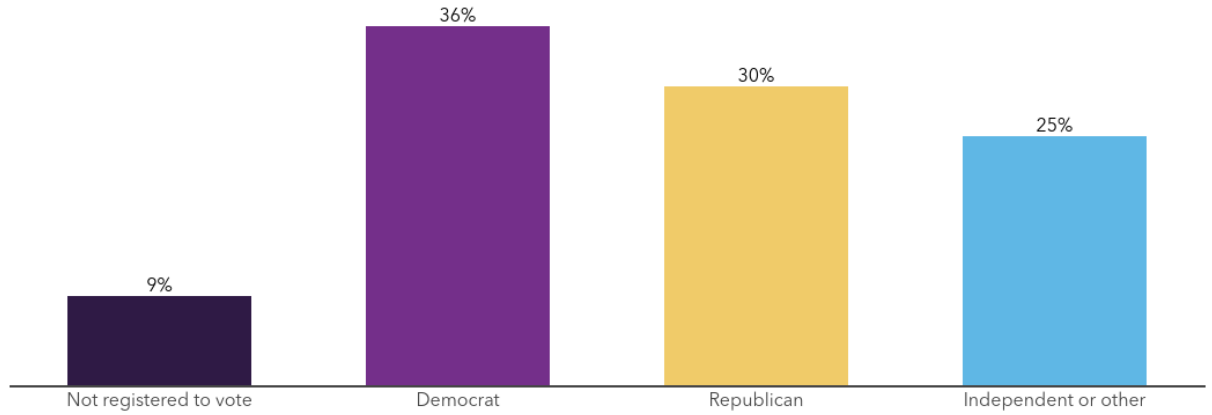
18. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

37% — High school or less
28% — Some college but no degree
21% — College graduate
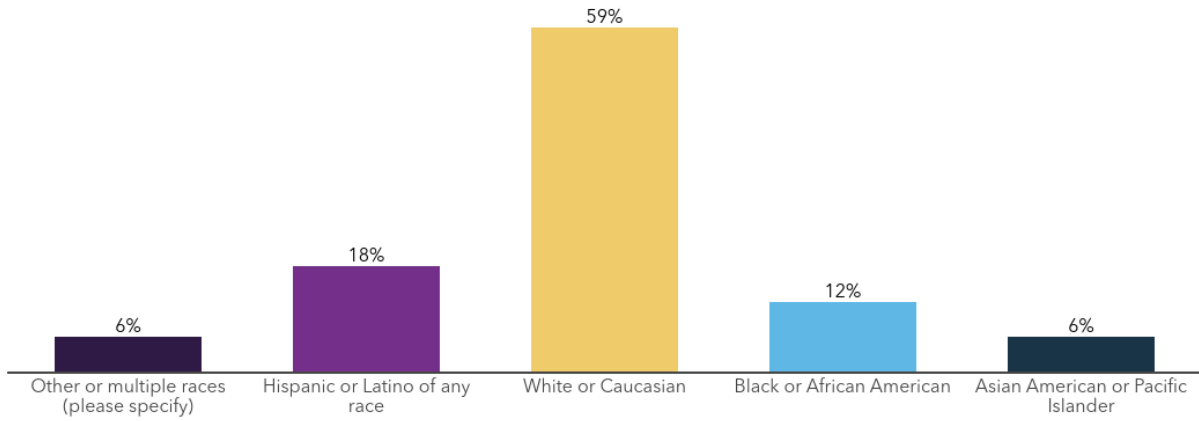14% — Post-graduate school or advanced degree

19. Please tell me which one of these racial or ethnic groups you identify with.

Please tell me which one of these racial or ethnic groups you identify with.

ECP

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

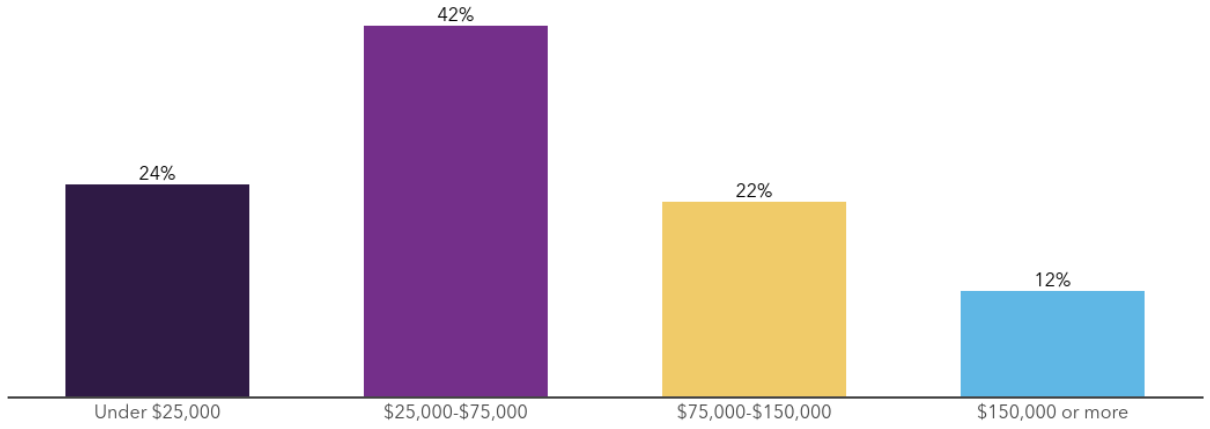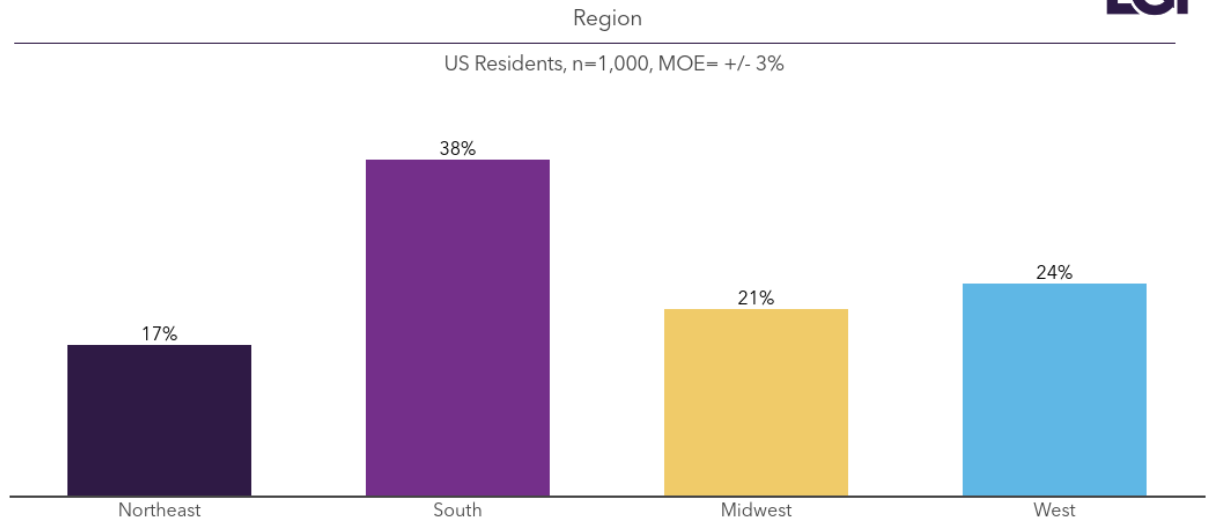| Category	Percentage
Other or multiple races (please specify)	6%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	18%
White or Caucasian	59%
Black or African American	12%
Asian American or Pacific Islander	6%

20. **What is your yearly household income?**

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Under $25,000	$25,000-$75,000	$75,000-$150,000	$150,000 or more
24%	42%	22%	12%

21. **Region**

Region

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Region	Percentage
Northeast	17%
South	38%
Midwest	21%
West	24%

22. **Mode**

US Residents, n=1,000, MOE= +/- 3%

Mode	South	Midwest	West
40%	33%	16%	11%