



HARVARD Kennedy School

**INSTITUTE OF POLITICS**

# Executive Summary

Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward  
Politics and Public Service  
33rd Edition

---

## Harvard Public Opinion Project

Presented by:

John Della Volpe  
Director of Polling

Erik Fliegauf '19  
Student Chair, HPOP

For more information:

Mary Cappabianca  
Communications Specialist

[mary\\_cappabianca@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:mary_cappabianca@hks.harvard.edu)  
(617) 384-5923

25 April 2017

# INTRODUCTION

Conceived by two Harvard undergraduate students during the winter of 1999, Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics (IOP) of Young Americans' Attitudes toward Politics and Public Service began in 2000 as a national survey of 18- to 24- year old college undergraduates. Over the last 18 years, this research project has grown in scope and mission, as this report now includes an analysis of 18- to 29- year olds on a broad set of longitudinal and current events issues.

The first survey of N=800 college undergraduates was completed in the Spring of 2000 and all interviews were conducted over the telephone; since that time, 32 subsequent surveys have been released. Over this period, a number of modifications have been made to the scope and methodology in order to ensure that sampling methods most accurately capture the view of the population of young adults in a manner that will be useful to both the Institute of Politics and the broader research and political communities.

- In 2001, the survey was expanded from N=800 to N=1,200 college students in order to capture a more robust sample of the undergraduate population.
- In 2006, the survey expanded to N=2,400 interviews, as we began interviewing members of the 18- to 24- year-old cohort who were not currently attending a four-year college or university. In addition, because of changing uses of technology among younger Americans, in 2006 the survey moved from a telephone poll to a survey that was administered online.
- In 2009, we expanded our scope a third time to include the population of young adults aged 18 to 29. While we will continue to report on the attitudes and opinions of U.S. college students, this change in our research subject was made to allow for better and more direct comparisons to the broader set of election and general public opinion research tracking data, which tends to track the 18- to 29-year-old demographic group. Our fall political tracking surveys will include samples of N=2,000, while the spring semester's research will be more in-depth and include as many as N=3,000 interviews. All of our interviews are conducted in English and Spanish. Harvard IOP surveys utilize RDD and Address-Based Sampling (ABS) frames and are administered online using GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks).

The interviewing period for this survey of N=2,654 18- to 29- year olds was March 10 to March 24, 2017. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 2.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. During the interviewing period, major media stories included coverage of the firing of Preet Bharara, the U.S attorney for the Southern District of Manhattan, release of the Congressional Budget Office Report on the American Health Care Act, release of President Donald Trump's 2018 federal budget proposal, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson ruling out any negotiation with North Korea to freeze its nuclear and missile programs, F.B.I. director James B. Comey confirming an investigation into Russian interference in the presidential election and whether associates of the president were in contact with Moscow, an attack that killed 3 and injured 20 near British Parliament, Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch's testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee and the failure of the House Republicans to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Harvard IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe supervised the survey group of undergraduates. As always, the Harvard Public Opinion Project would like to thank IOP Director Maggie Williams, Executive Director Amy Howell and Mary Cappabianca, Communications Specialist for their insight and support over the course of this and all IOP projects.

# KEY FINDINGS

# I. POLITICS OF TODAY

PRESIDENT TRUMP HAS BEEN IN OFFICE FOR ABOUT 100 DAYS. WHAT ONE PIECE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER TO THE PRESIDENT IN ORDER TO MOVE THE COUNTRY FORWARD?

“BE STRONG AGAINST AMERICA'S ENEMIES, AND COMPASSIONATE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.”

“DON'T FOCUS ON ANY CONTROVERSIES IN THE PAST; INSTEAD FOCUS ON PRESENT AND FUTURE ISSUES.”

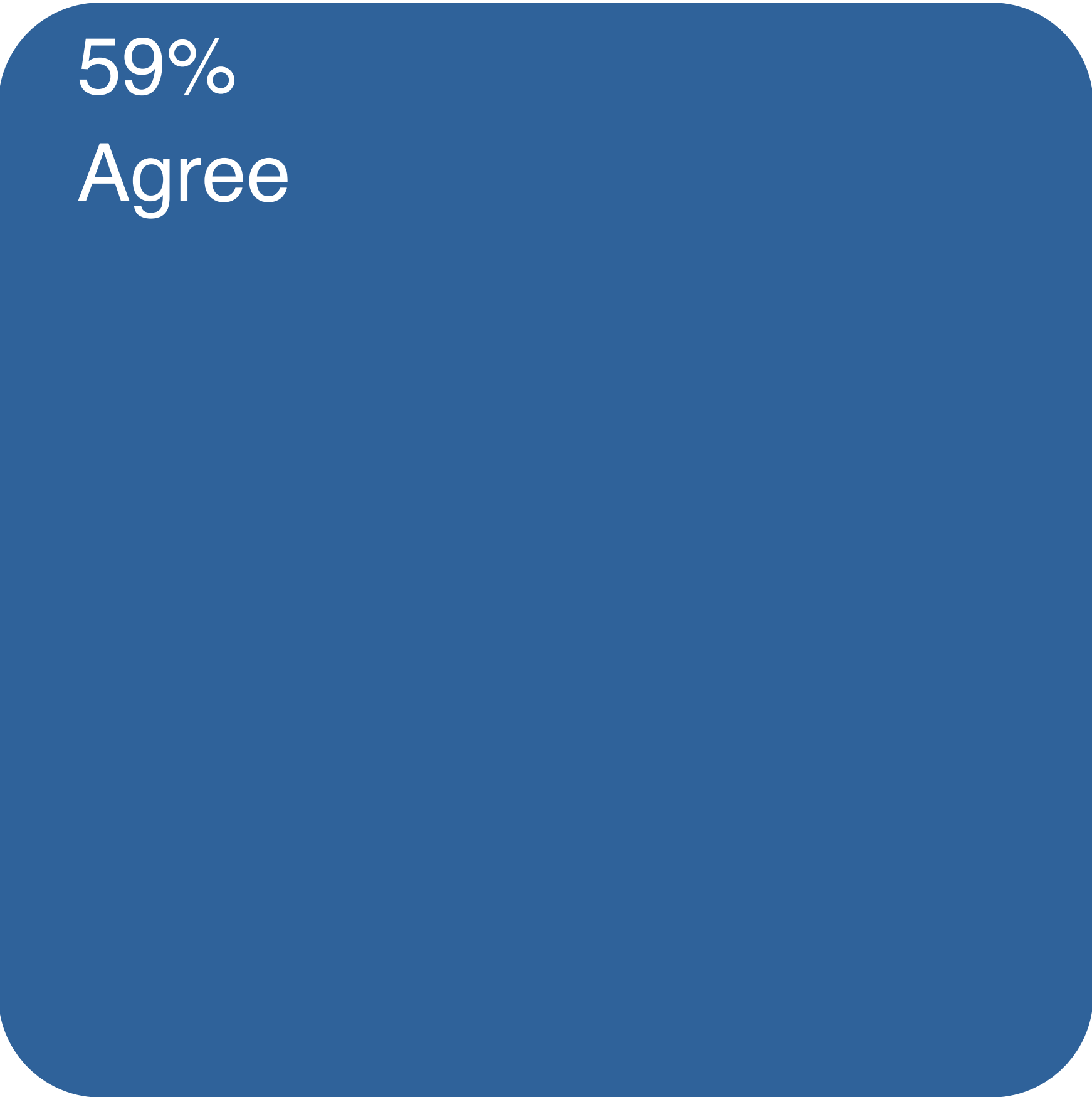
“UNITING OUR COUNTRY SHOULD BE THE TOP PRIORITY.”

“I WOULD SAY THAT HE'S ALREADY DONE A LOT TO CHANGE THE WAY THINGS ARE HANDLED IN OUR COUNTRY. BUT TO MOVE IT FORWARD WE NEED TO WORK ON BECOMING ONE AS A COUNTRY.”

“DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO EASE RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS TENSIONS BECAUSE IF NOT, SOMETHING TERRIBLE IS GOING TO HAPPEN.”

# 01: 59% AGREE THAT THEY WANT TO HELP UNITE AMERICA; COMMITMENT CROSSES PARTY, GENDER, AGE AND RACIAL LINES

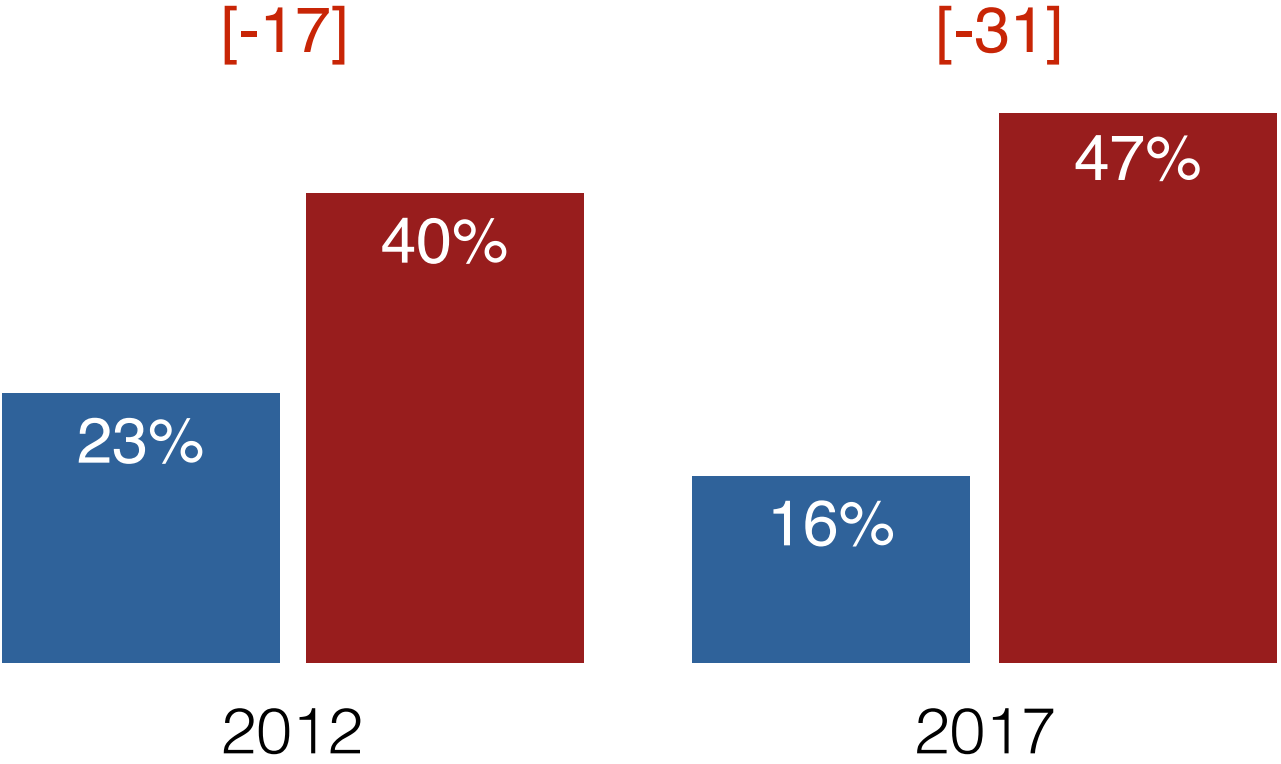
I want to do what I can to help unite, not further divide, America.



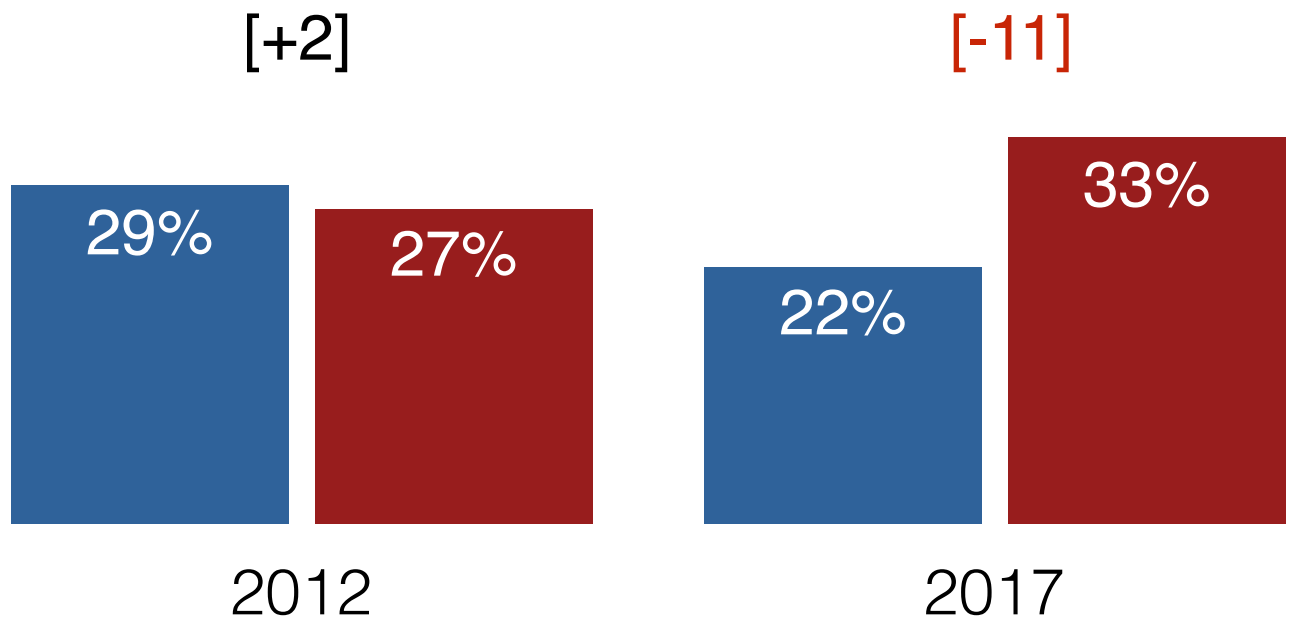
Subgroup	% Agree
18-24	60%
25-29	58%
Democrat	62%
Republican	61%
Independent	57%
Male	56%
Female	62%
White	60%
Black	55%
Hispanic	58%
Red State	62%
Blue State	57%
Purple State	57%

# 02: POLITICS IS MORE RELEVANT & TANGIBLE THAN 5 YEARS AGO, BUT IDEA OF WORKING IN PUBLIC SERVICE IS LESS APPEALING

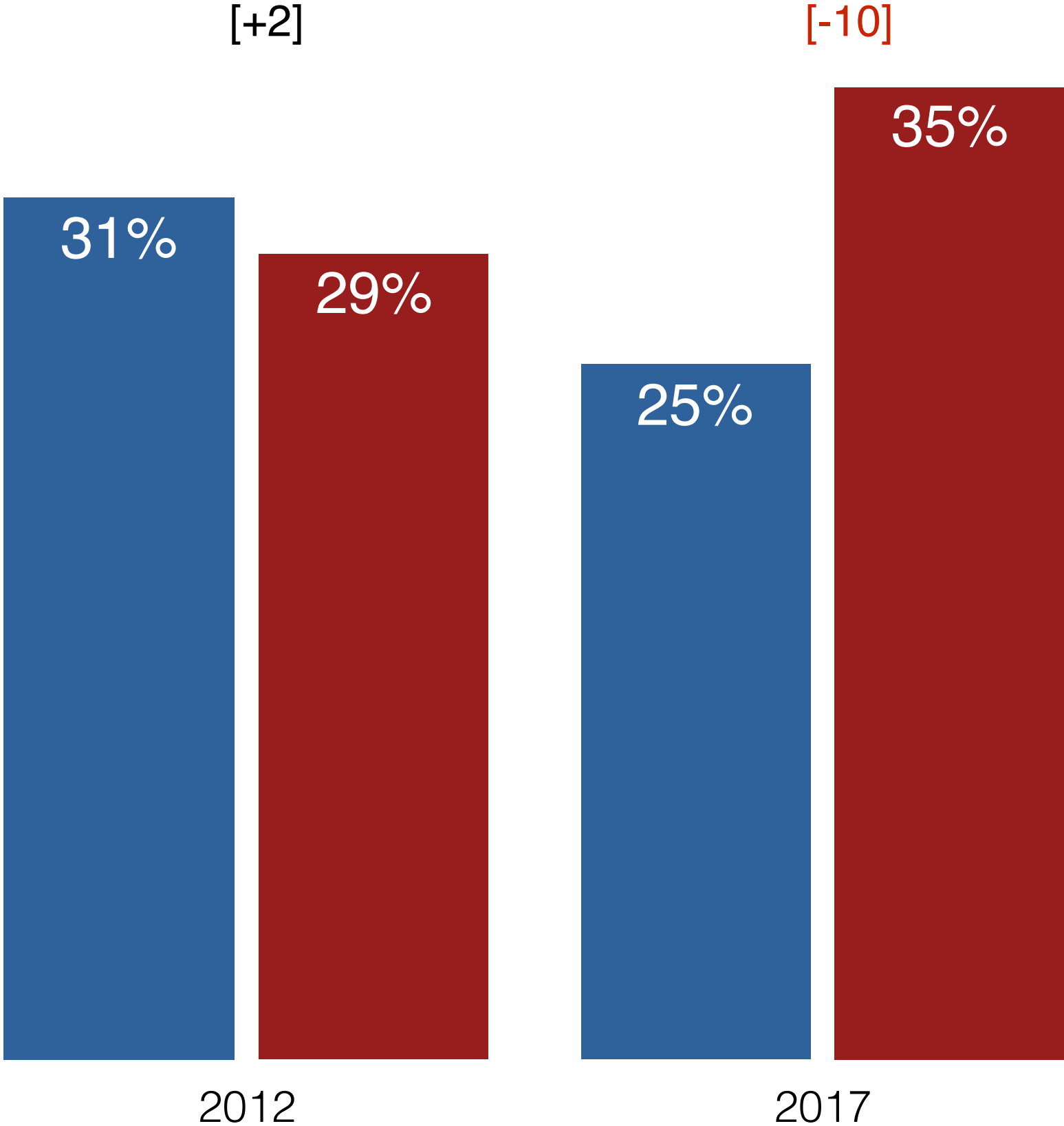
Politics is not relevant to my life right now.



Political involvement rarely has any tangible results.



The idea of working in some form of public service is appealing to me.



# 03: LOW INTEREST AMONG 18-29 YEAR OLDS IN RUNNING FOR OFFICE OVER NEXT FEW DECADES; THIRD PARTY VOTERS MOST INTERESTED

Between now and when you are 50 years old, what are the chances that you will run for elected office of some kind?

**9%** chance

Chances of running for office increase among 18-29 year olds who are:

3rd party voters in 2016 **19%**

Clinton Voters: 10%  
Trump Voters: 8%  
Did not vote: 6%

Already politically active **17%**

Not politically active: 6%

Male **11%**

Female: 7%



# 04: VOTING, TALKING ABOUT IMPORTANT ISSUES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE VIEWED AS TOP WAYS TO PRODUCE CHANGE IN AMERICA

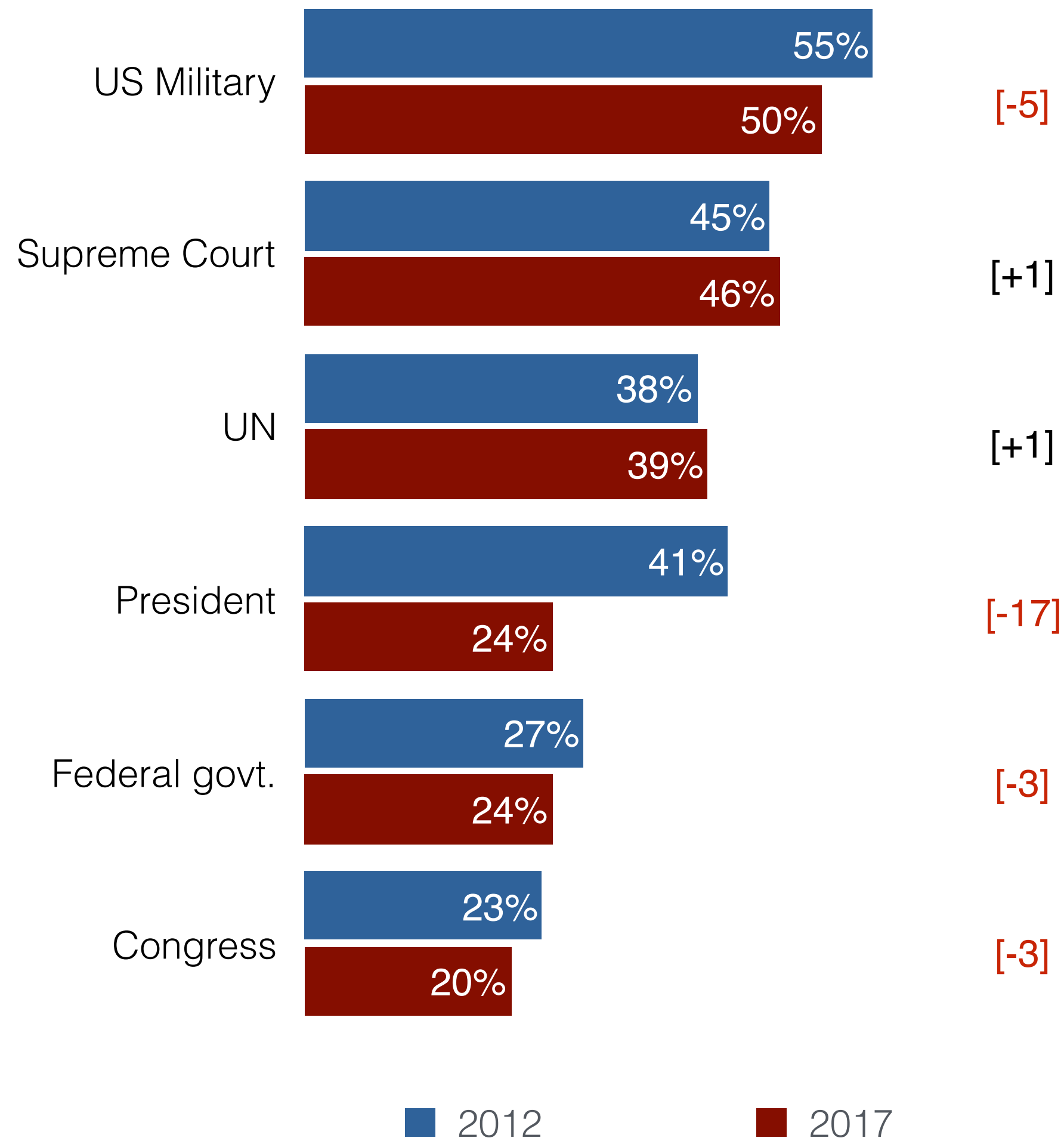
Please select the **top three** most effective ways to produce change in American society.

Subgroup	Voting	Talking about important issues	Volunteering for community service	Calling/Emailing your representative	Running for office	Attending a protest
18-29	74%	53%	41%	39%	31%	16%
College Students	80%	58%	46%	38%	33%	17%
18-24	77%	53%	41%	38%	31%	16%
25-29	71%	54%	41%	40%	32%	16%
Democrat	81%	57%	36%	40%	32%	22%
Republican	80%	47%	50%	42%	34%	10%
Independent	67%	55%	42%	37%	31%	14%
Male	73%	51%	37%	40%	34%	16%
Female	75%	56%	44%	37%	29%	16%
White	77%	50%	43%	42%	34%	13%
Black	77%	59%	36%	34%	32%	21%
Hispanic	69%	59%	37%	36%	24%	21%

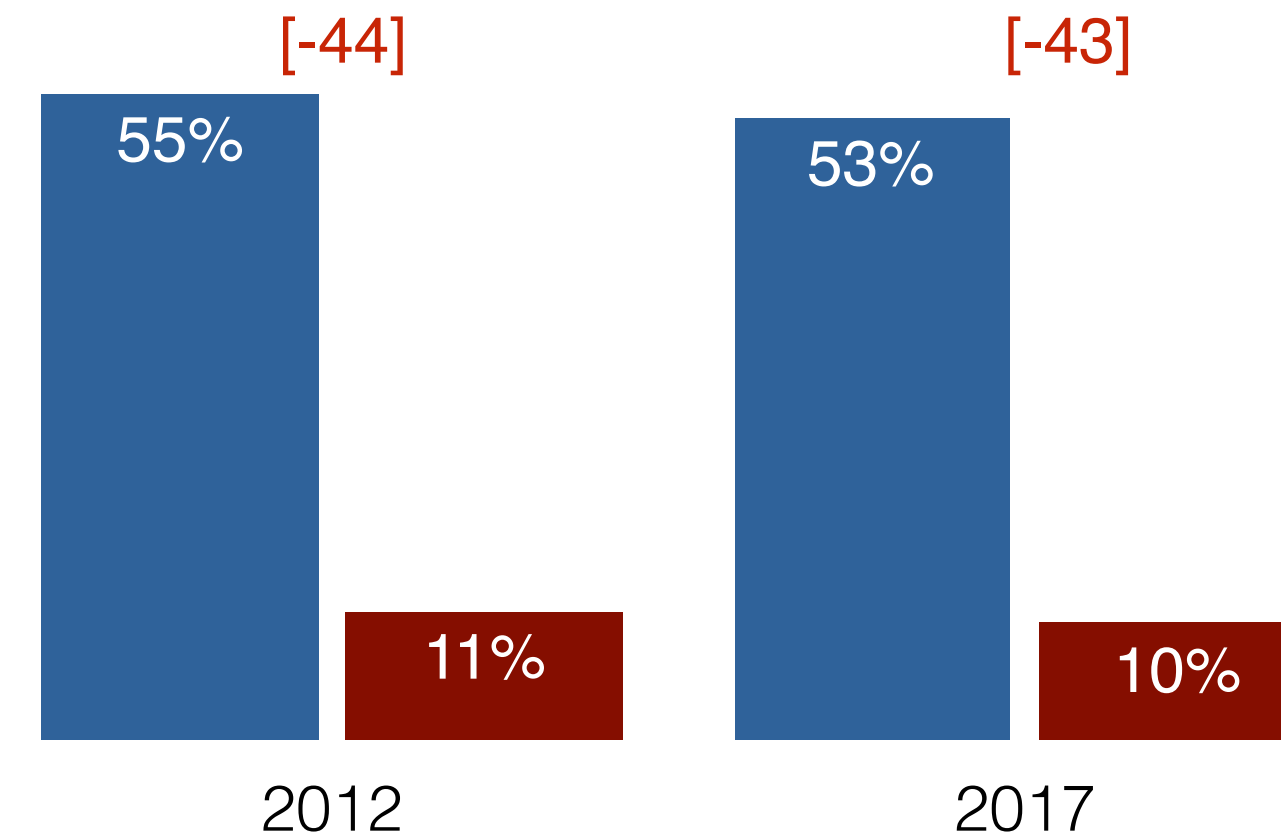
\* Yellow denotes significant difference within the subgroup.

# 05: LEVELS OF TRUST REMAIN LOW; DISCONNECTEDNESS FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS AND POLITICAL SYSTEM REMAIN HIGH

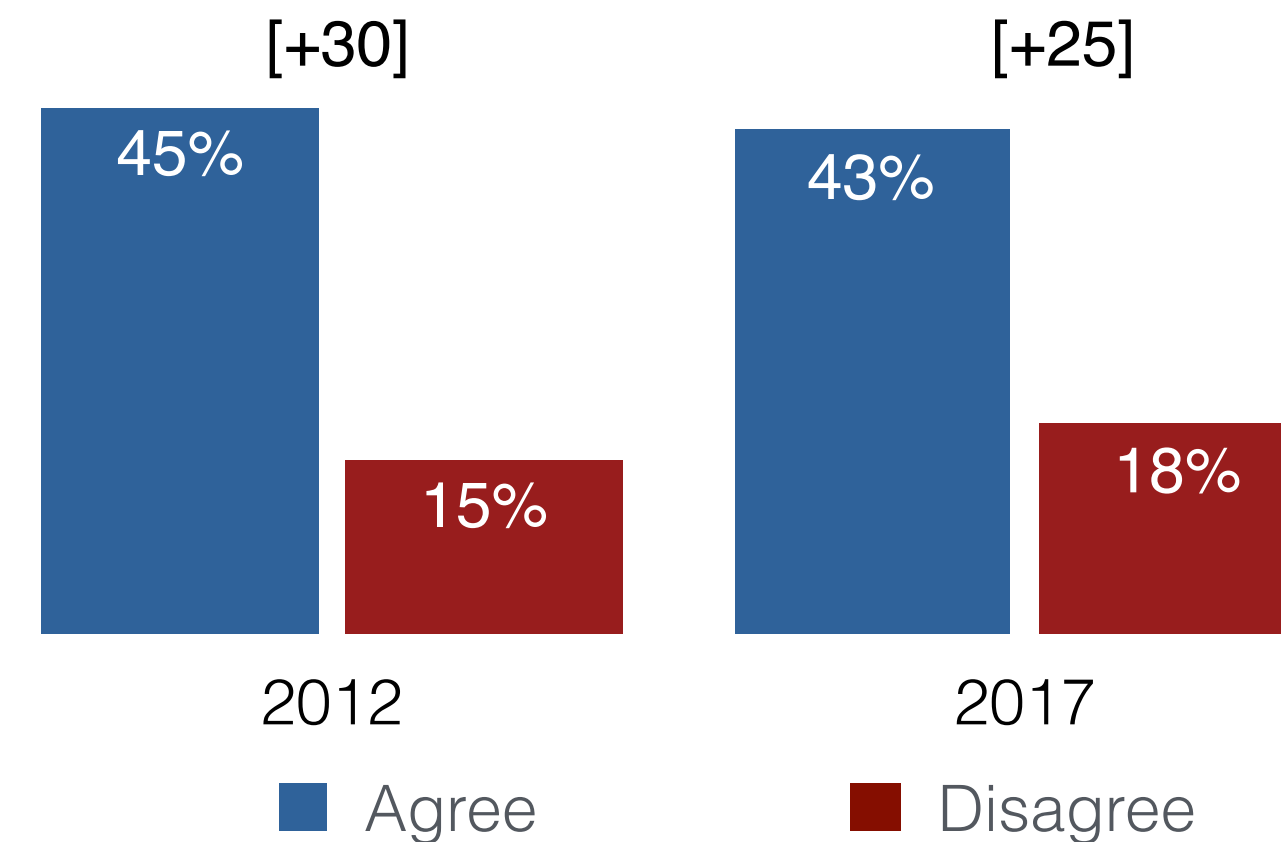
How often do you trust each to do the right thing?  
(% who indicate "all" or "most of the time")



Elected officials don't seem to have the same priorities I have.



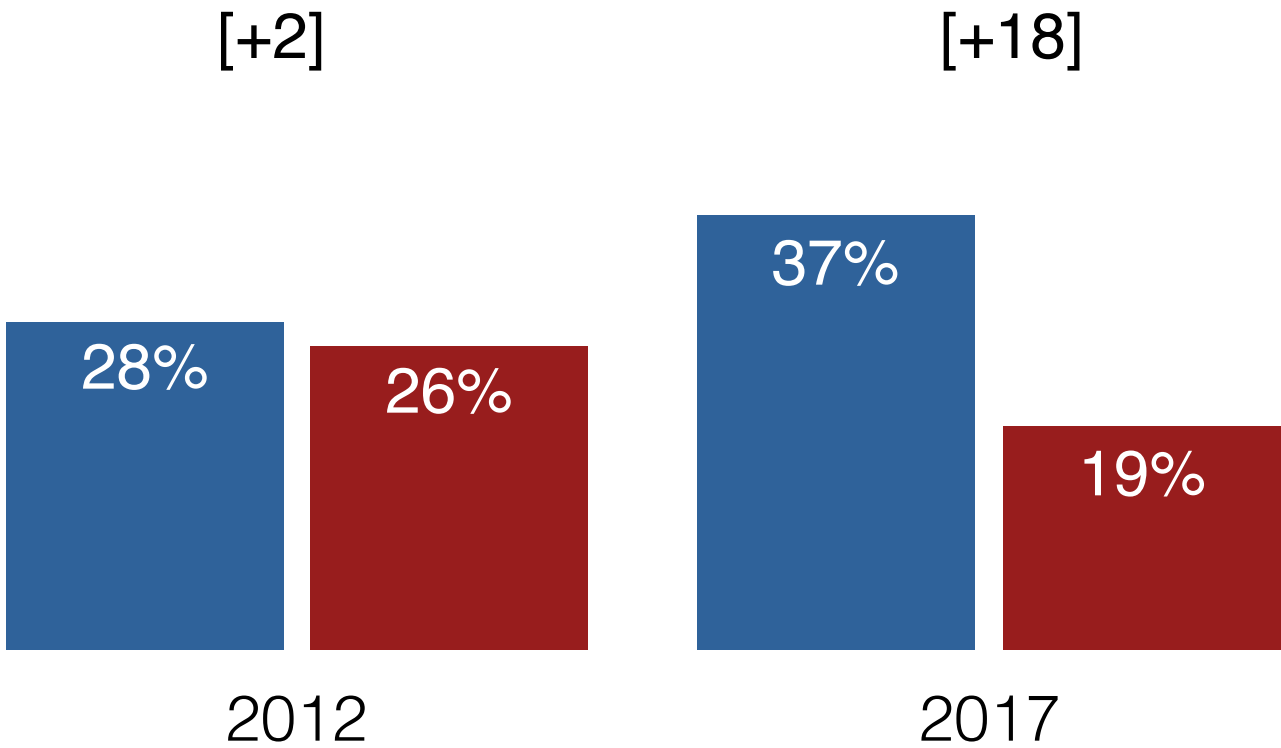
Politics today are no longer able to meet the challenges our country is facing.



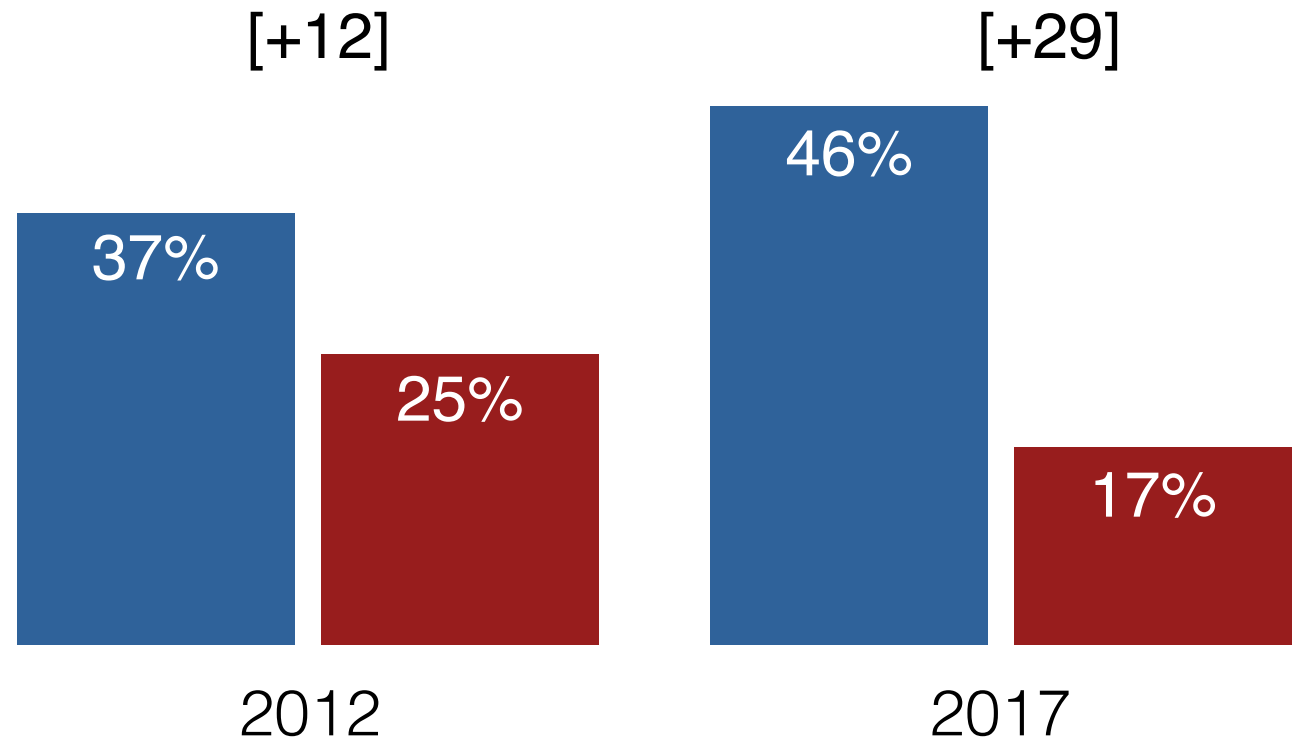
## II. POLITICAL VIEWS, IDEOLOGY, TRUMP AGENDA

# 06: OVER LAST 5 YEARS, SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE & REDUCE POVERTY; GROUND ALSO SHIFTING ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION & IMMIGRATION

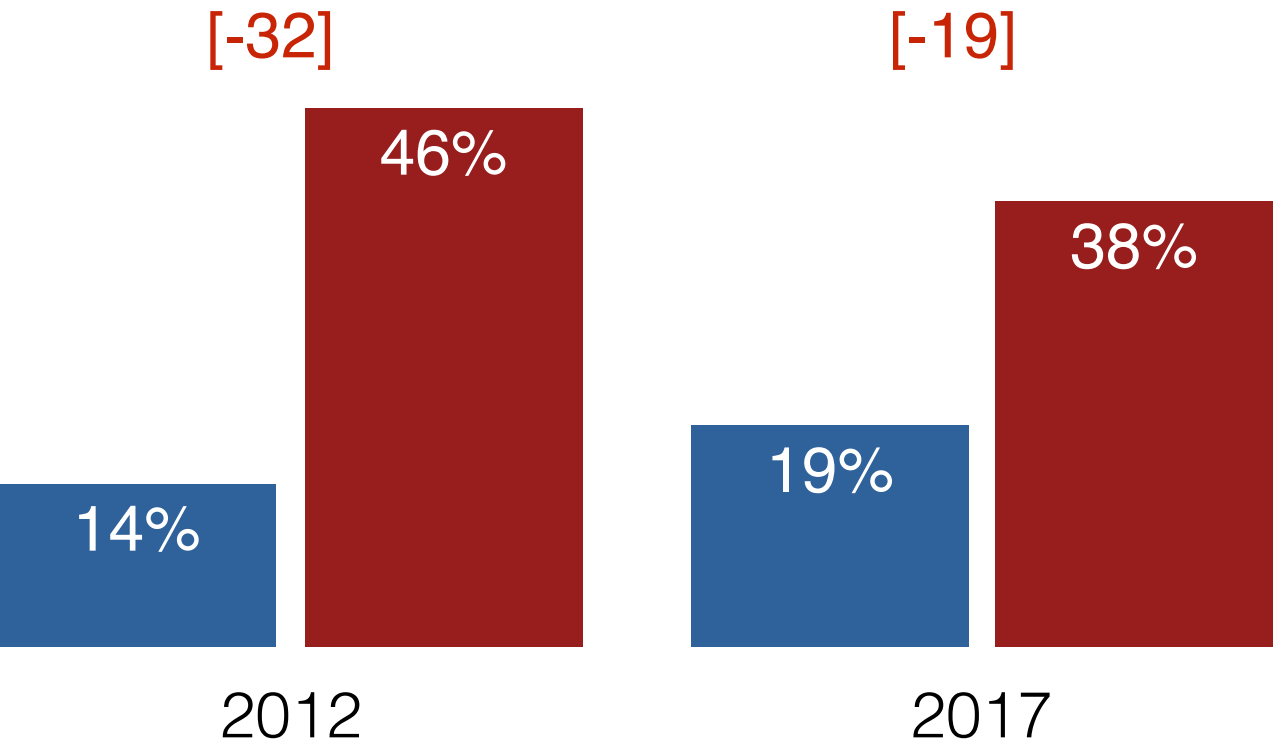
Government should do more to curb climate change, even at the expense of economic growth.



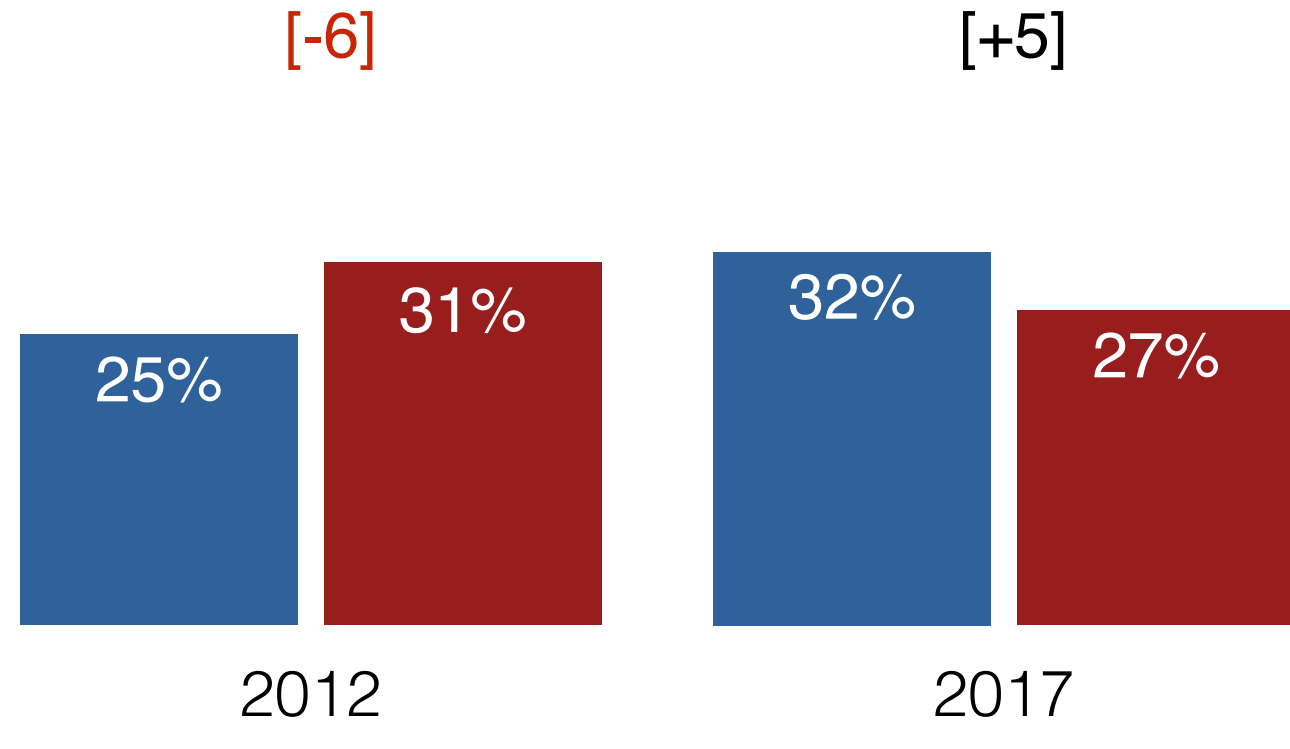
The government should spend more to reduce poverty.



Qualified minorities should be given special preference in hiring and education.



Recent immigration into this country has done more good than harm.



■ Agree ■ Disagree

# 07: MOST POPULAR ELEMENTS OF POTUS AGENDA TESTED ARE “CRACKING DOWN” ON ILLEGAL/UNFAIR TRADE & ENDING “ANTI-POLICE” ATMOSPHERE

Crack down on countries that engage in illegal or unfair trade practices that hurt American workers.

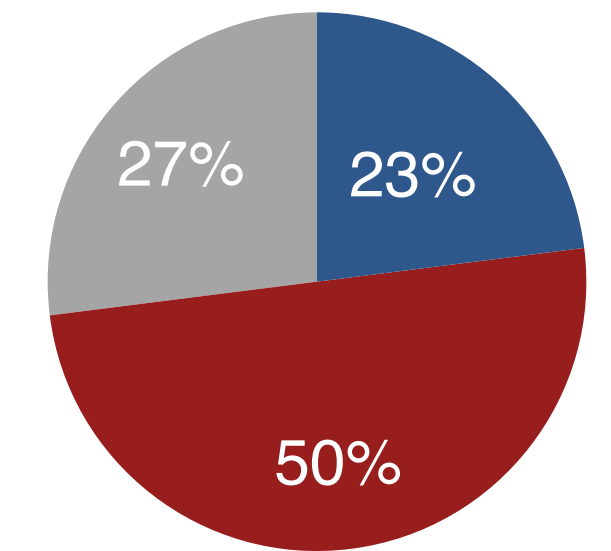
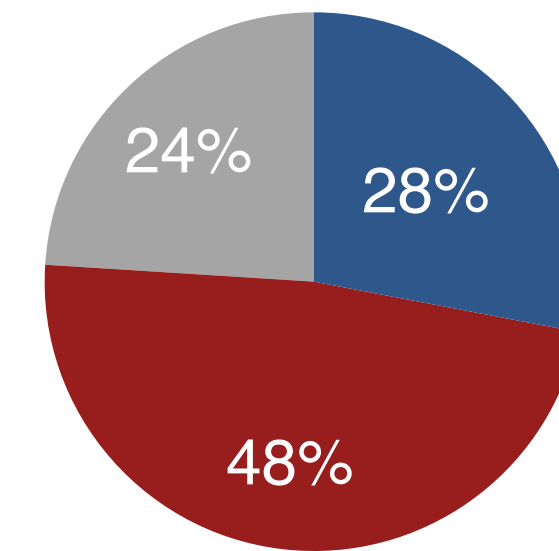
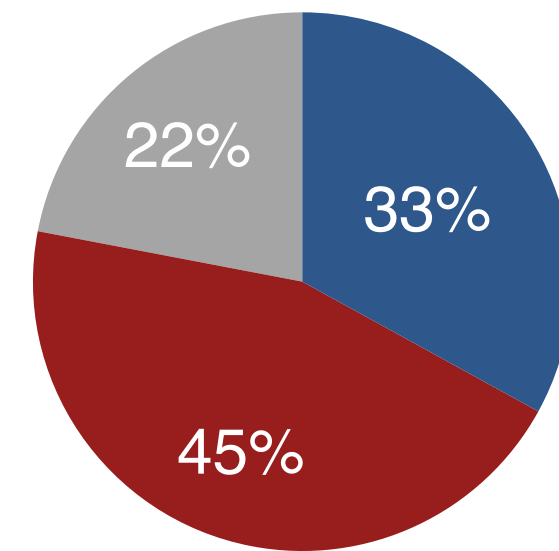
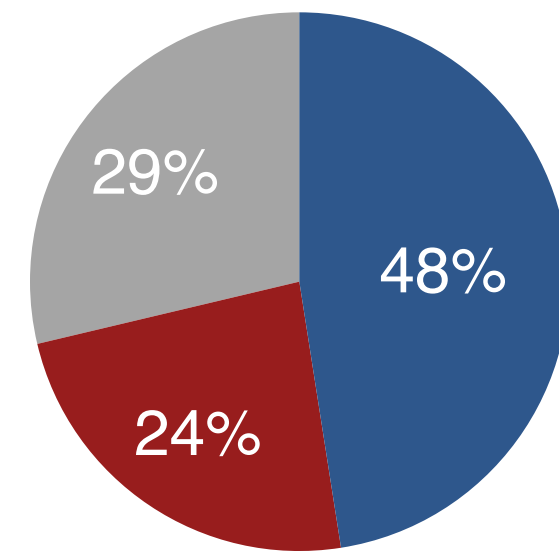
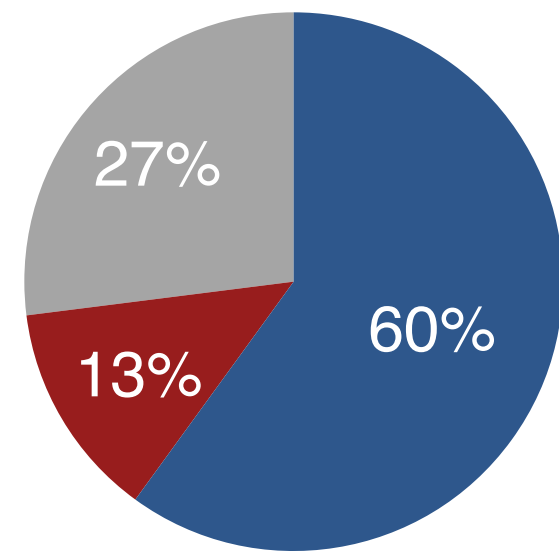
End the “anti-police” atmosphere in America and empower law enforcement.

“Repeal and replace” Obama’s health care policy, also referred to as the Affordable Care Act.

Temporarily ban all refugees from coming into the U.S. and temporarily ban issuance of new visas from 6 predominately Muslim countries in the Middle East.

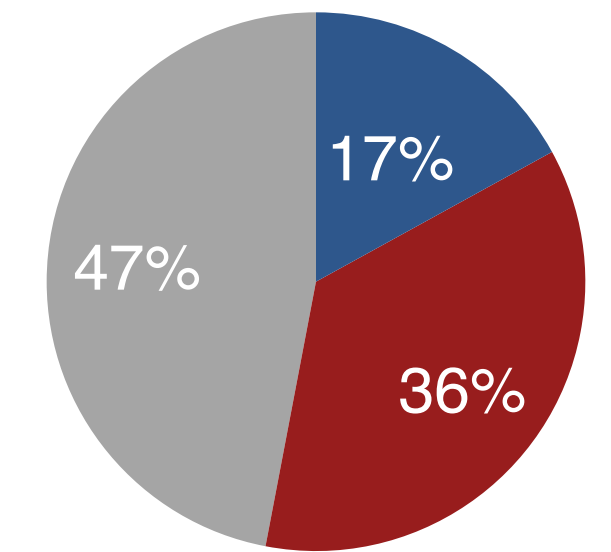
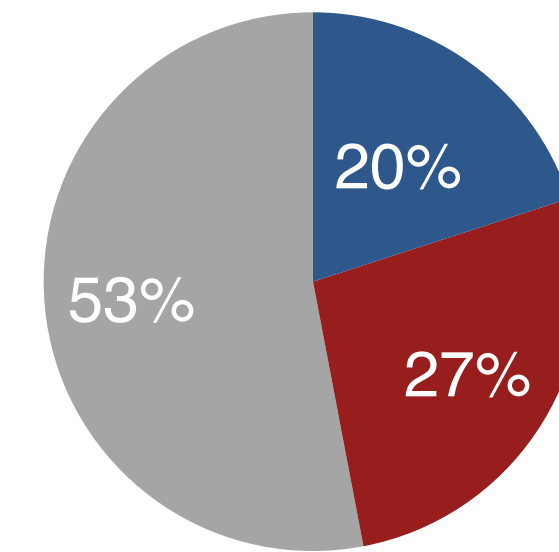
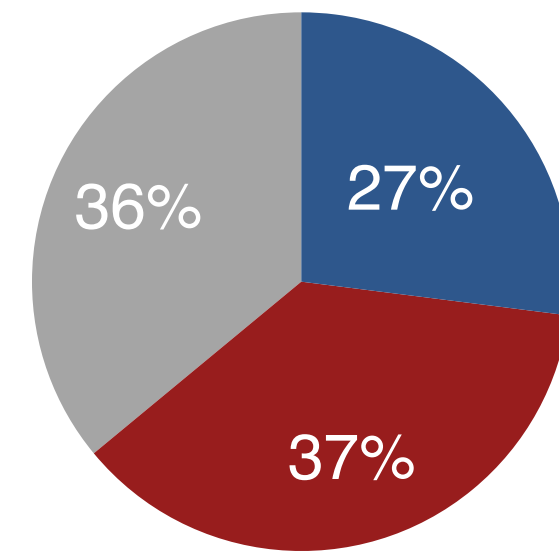
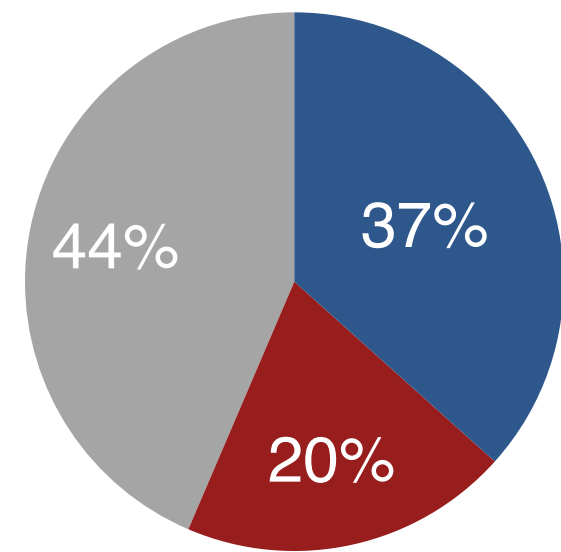
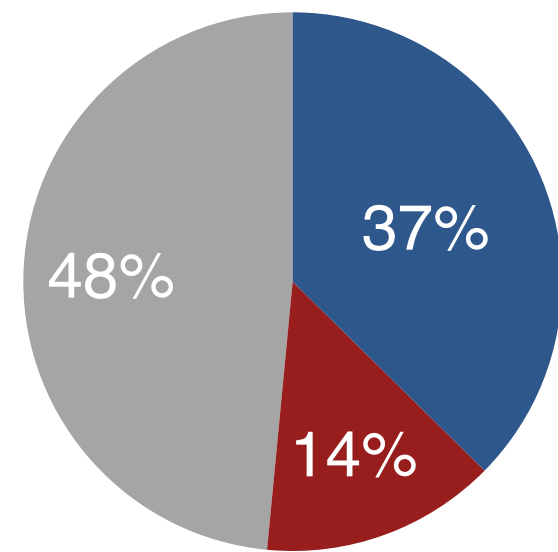
Build a wall on the U.S. Mexico Border.

If implemented, would this policy make **America** better, worse or would it not make a difference?



● Make America better ● Make America worse ● Would not make a difference / Declined to answer

If implemented, would this have a positive impact, negative impact, or would it not have an impact on **you and your family**?



● Positive impact ● Negative impact ● Would not have an impact / Declined to answer

# 08: BLACKS AND WHITES, YOUNG DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS, HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH VERY DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE

Please indicate whether or not you have a close relationship with someone who fits the following description:

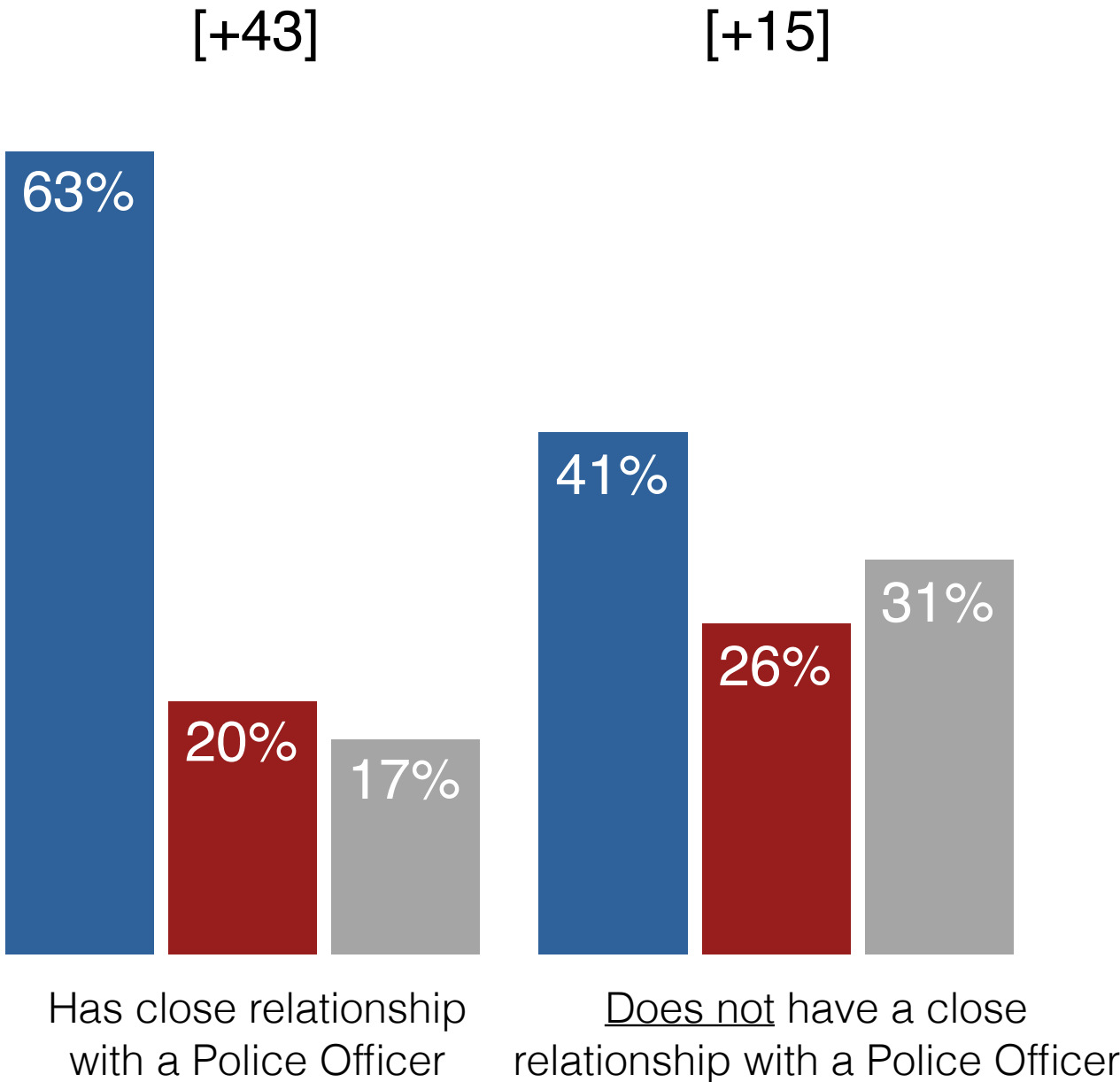
Subgroup	Hillary Clinton Supporter	Gun Owner	Donald Trump Supporter	LGBTQ	Born Again/ Evangelical Christian	Police Officer	Truck Driver	Veteran of Iraq/ Afghanistan	Drug Addict/ Recovering	Muslim	Ivy League Student/ Graduate	Undocument-ed Immigrant	Millionaire
18-29	62%	60%	55%	54%	38%	35%	33%	31%	28%	23%	22%	22%	17%
College Students	69%	63%	59%	57%	39%	35%	33%	30%	26%	34%	27%	18%	24%
18-24	65%	59%	57%	54%	38%	35%	32%	28%	28%	25%	23%	22%	17%
25-29	60%	61%	53%	54%	39%	36%	33%	34%	29%	20%	21%	22%	16%
Democrat	75%	49%	39%	61%	36%	28%	30%	26%	26%	28%	26%	23%	14%
Republican	55%	80%	85%	49%	55%	53%	45%	43%	34%	22%	22%	21%	28%
Independent	56%	60%	55%	52%	33%	34%	29%	30%	28%	19%	20%	21%	13%
Male	60%	59%	57%	48%	41%	37%	35%	32%	28%	24%	22%	21%	18%
Female	64%	60%	54%	61%	36%	34%	30%	30%	29%	22%	23%	22%	15%
White	64%	73%	71%	58%	38%	40%	33%	36%	32%	22%	24%	10%	14%
Black	67%	48%	24%	48%	50%	27%	37%	26%	23%	27%	19%	14%	19%
Hispanic	55%	41%	38%	50%	37%	33%	34%	25%	25%	19%	20%	53%	12%

\* Yellow denotes significant difference within the subgroup.

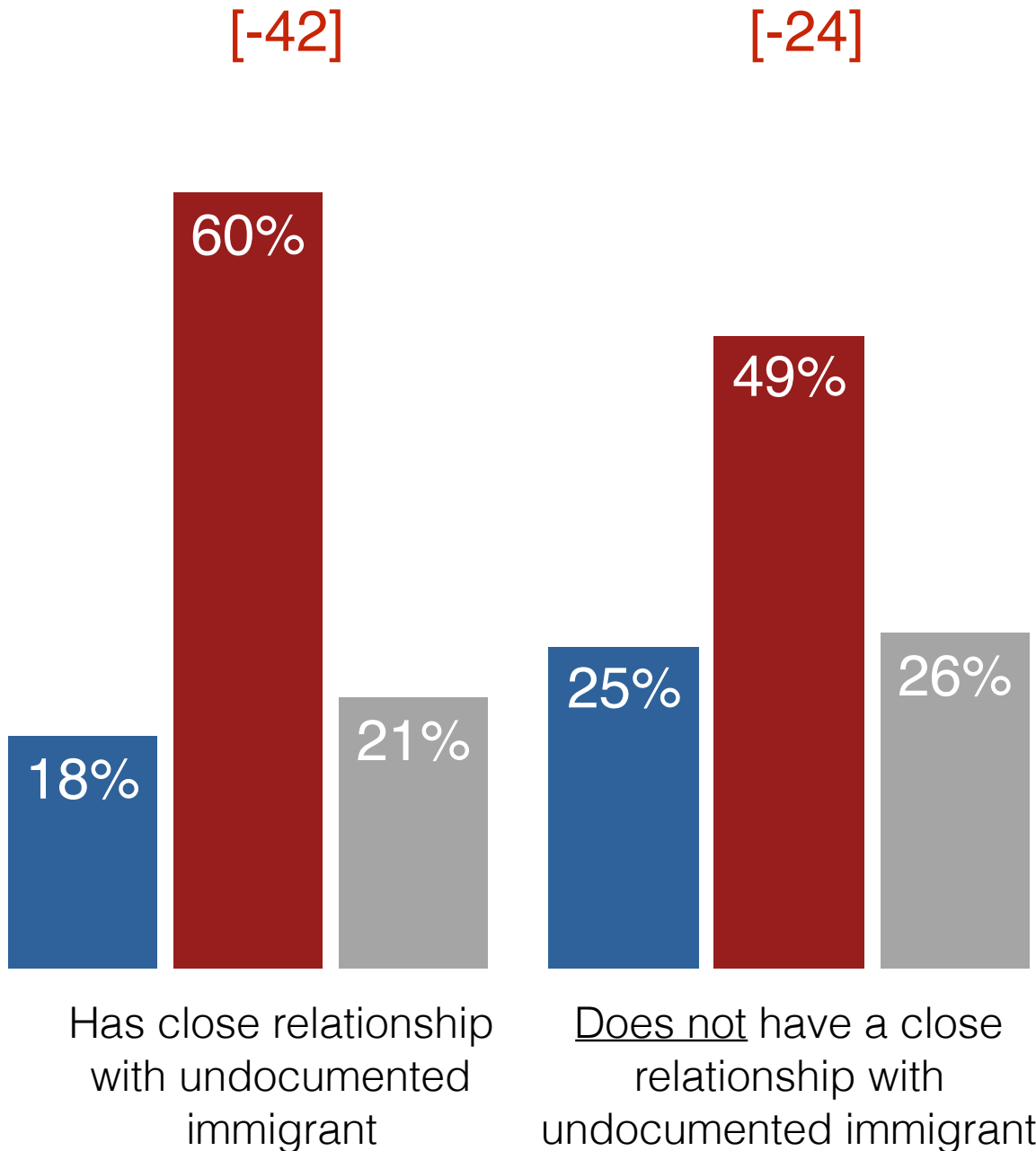
# 09: VIEWS TOWARD PRESIDENT TRUMP'S AGENDA HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY RELATIONSHIPS AND "WHO YOU KNOW"

If implemented, would this policy make America better, worse, or would it not make a difference?

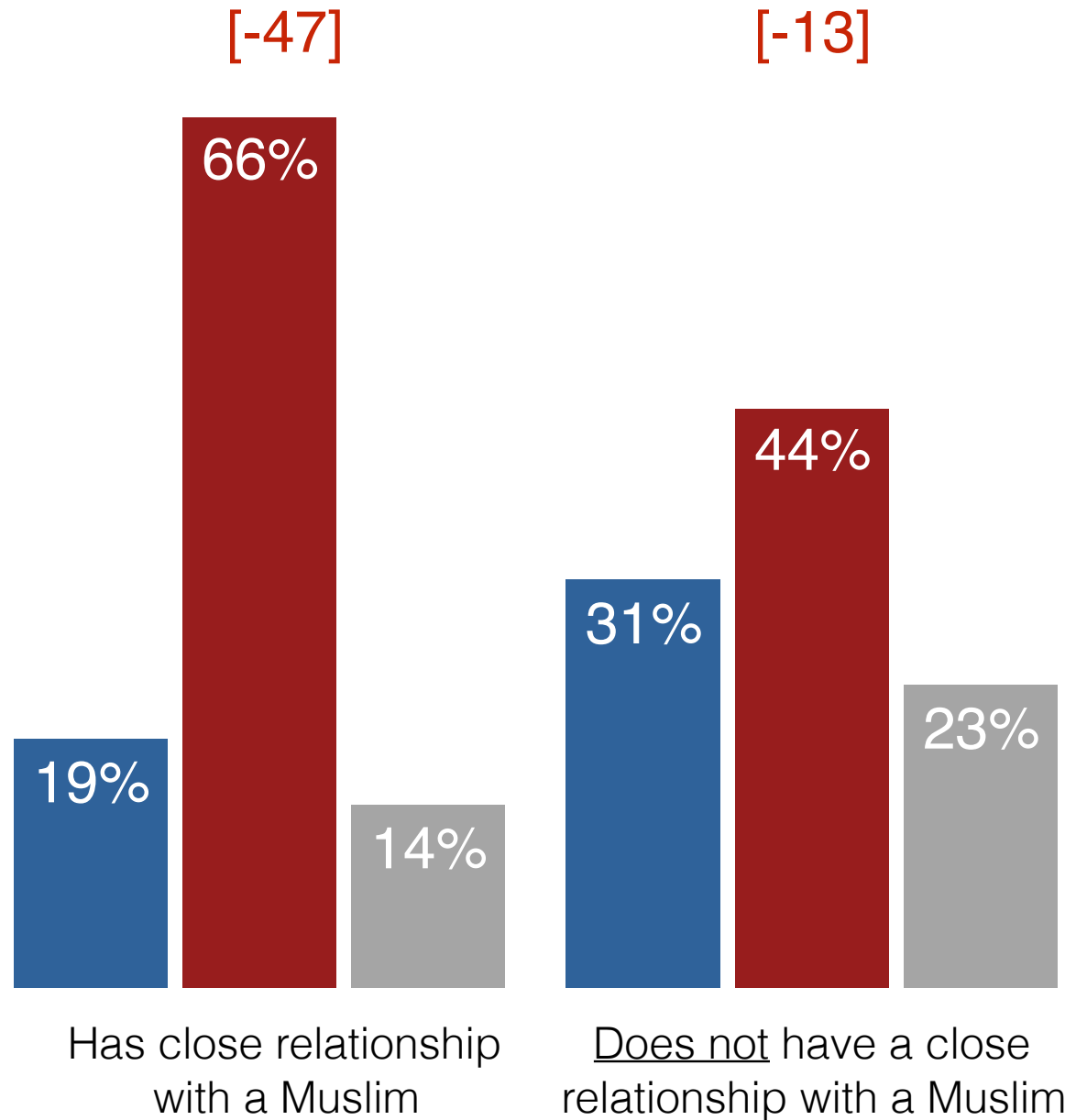
End the 'anti-police' atmosphere in America and empower law enforcement officers to do their jobs and keep our streets free of crime and violence.



Build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border.



Temporarily ban all refugees from coming into the U.S. and temporarily ban issuance of new visas from 6 predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East.

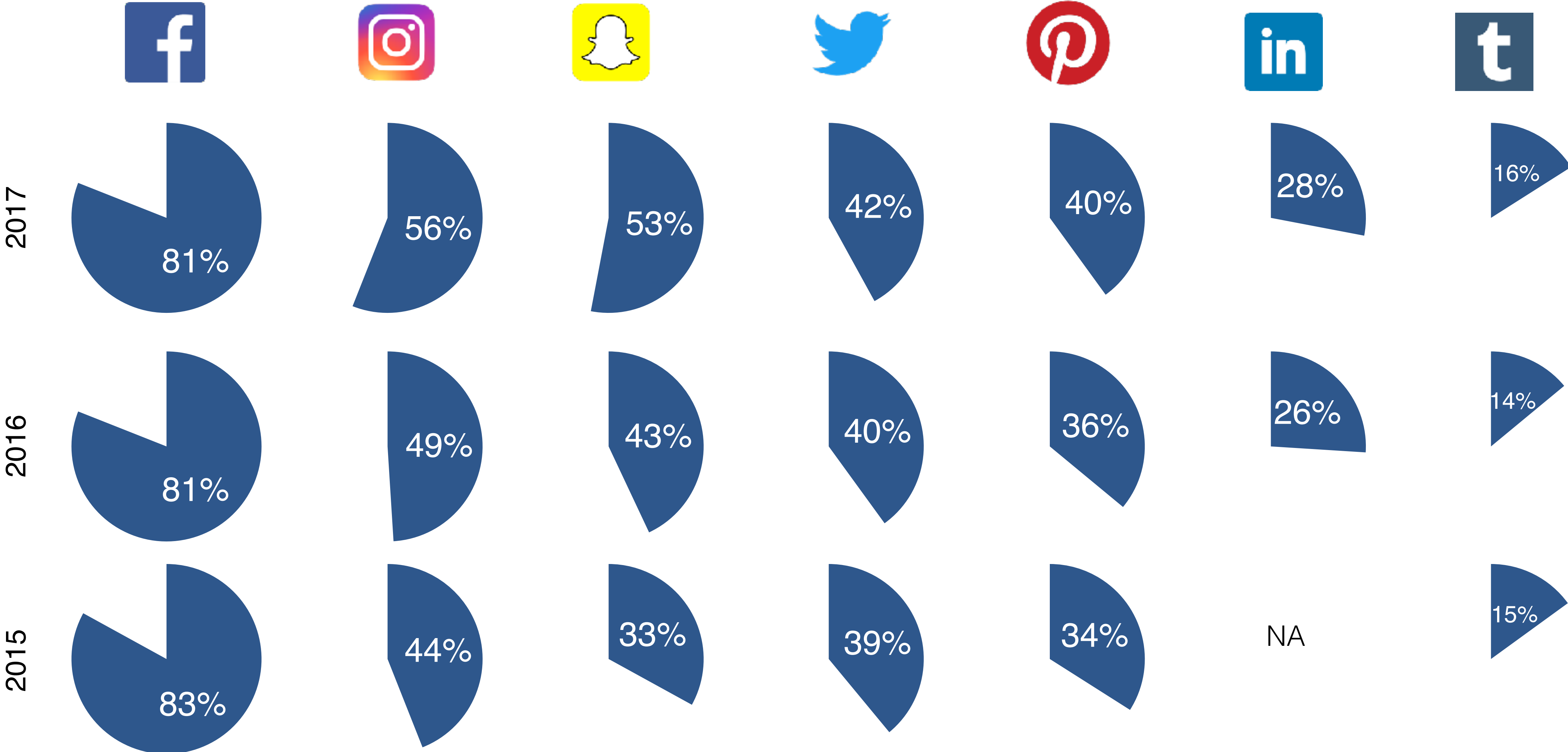


■ Make America better ■ Make America worse ■ No difference

# III. MEDIA



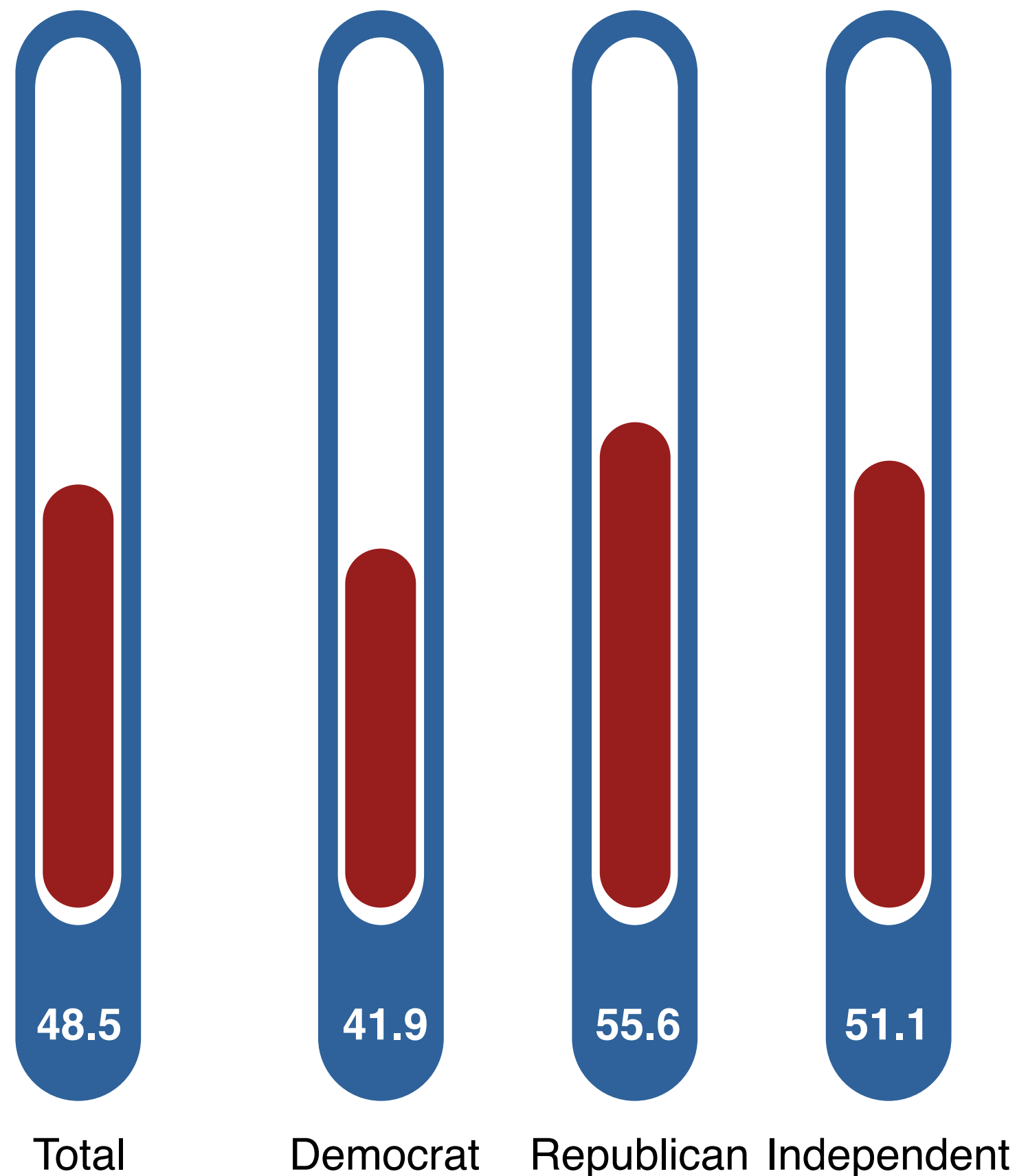
# 10: SNAPCHAT, FOLLOWED BY INSTAGRAM, FASTEST GROWING SOCIAL NETWORKS AMONG 18-29 YEAR OLDS



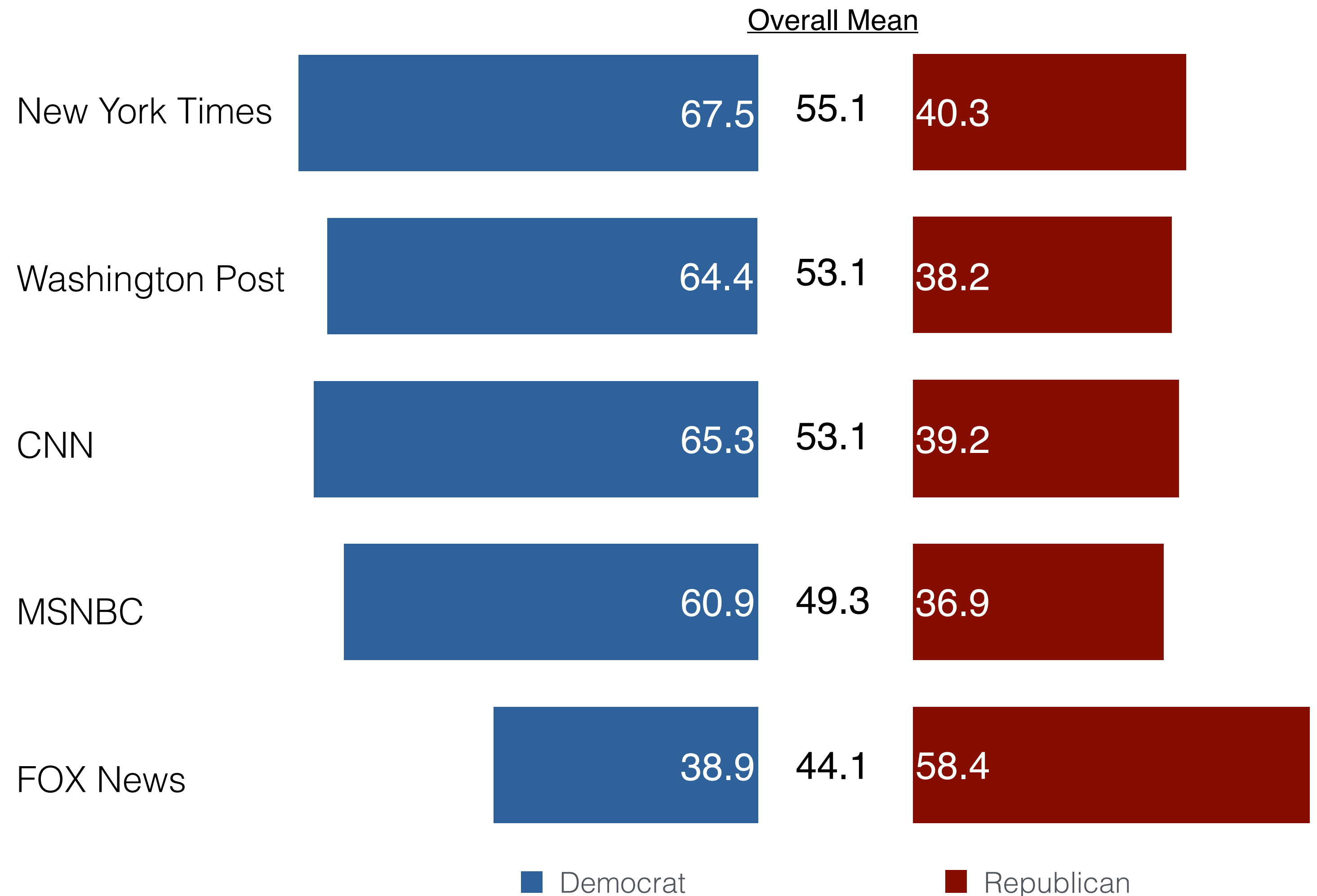
On which of the following platforms do you have an account?

# 11: 18-29 YEAR OLDS BELIEVE THAT NEARLY HALF OF THEIR FACEBOOK FEED IS "FAKE NEWS;" VIEWS OF MEDIA DIFFER WIDELY BASED ON PARTY ID

Approximately what percentage of the news that appears on your Facebook feed do you believe to be "fake news."

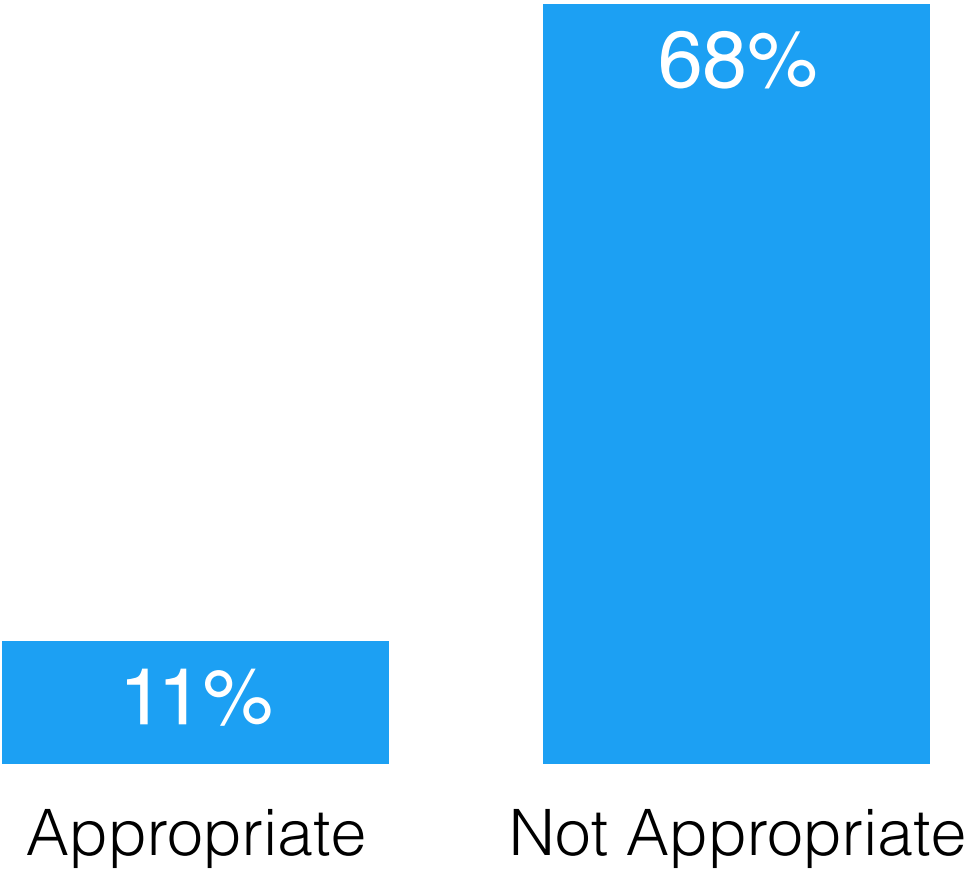


On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 = extremely unfavorable and 100 = extremely favorable, what is your opinion of the following news outlets?



# 12: MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS BELIEVE USE OF TWITTER BY PRESIDENT TRUMP IS NOT APPROPRIATE; FEW USE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

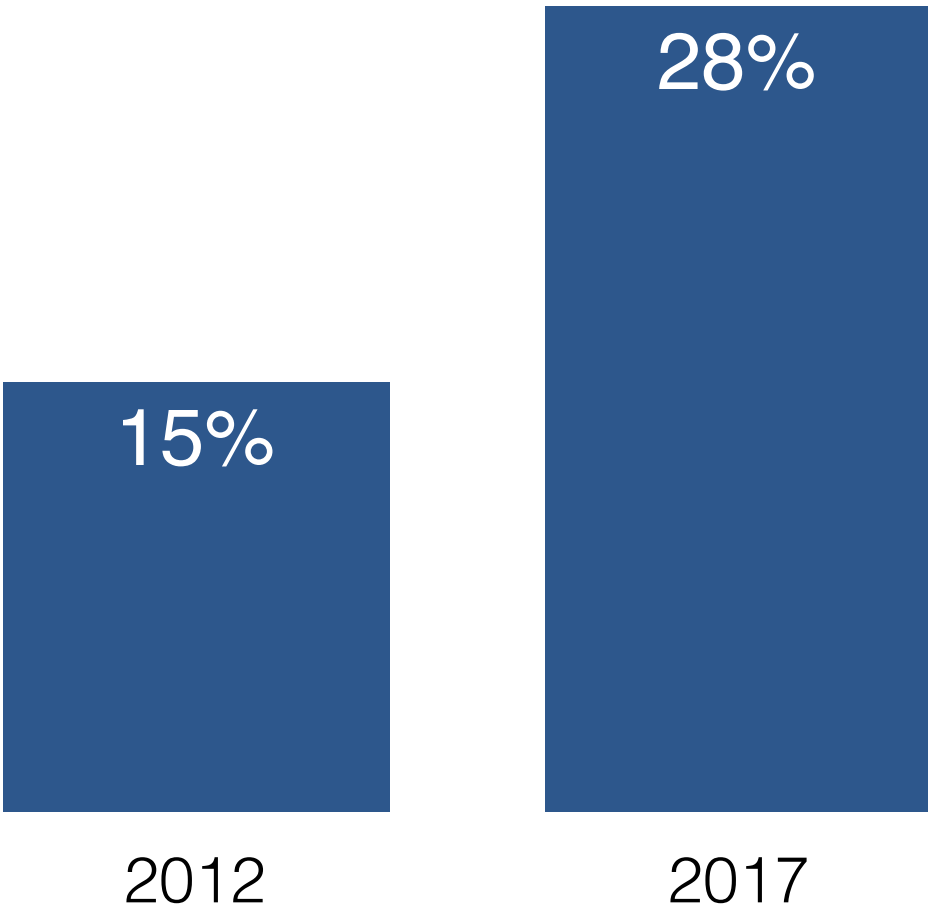
Overall, do you believe President Trump's use of Twitter is mostly appropriate, or mostly inappropriate for the President of the United States.



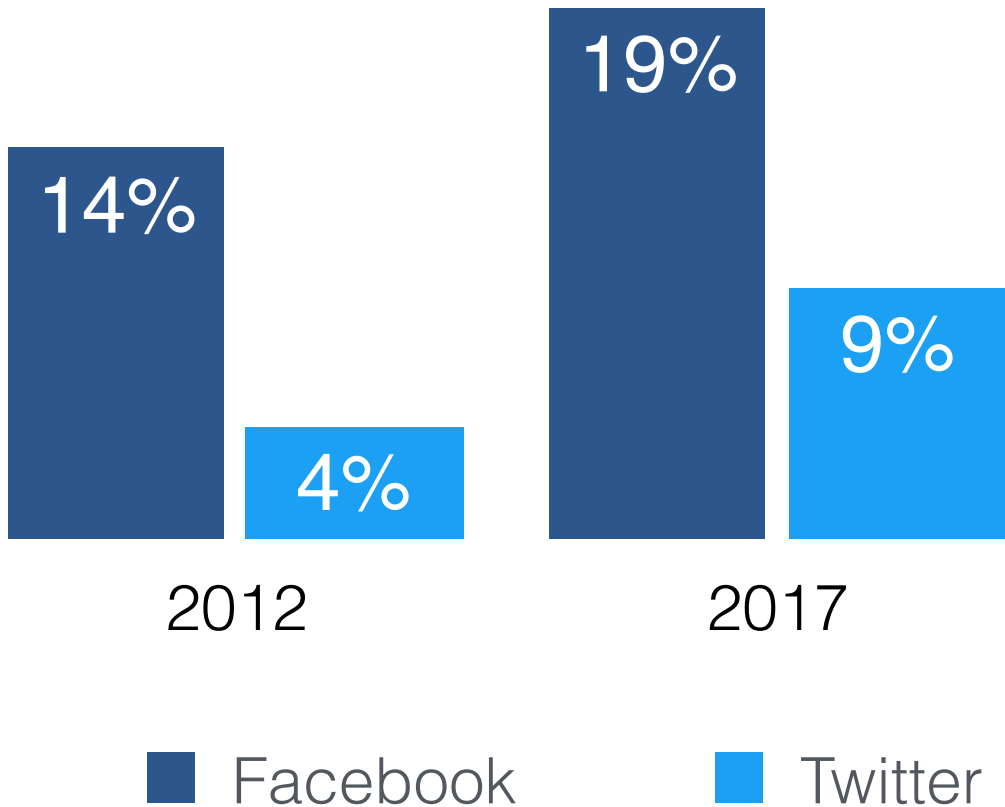
By Party ID

D: 3% Appropriate / 86% Not  
 R: 23% Appropriate / 47% Not  
 I: 12% Appropriate / 64% Not

% of 18-29 Year Old Population Who Has Facebook Account + Has Used it to "Like" A Political Candidate on Facebook



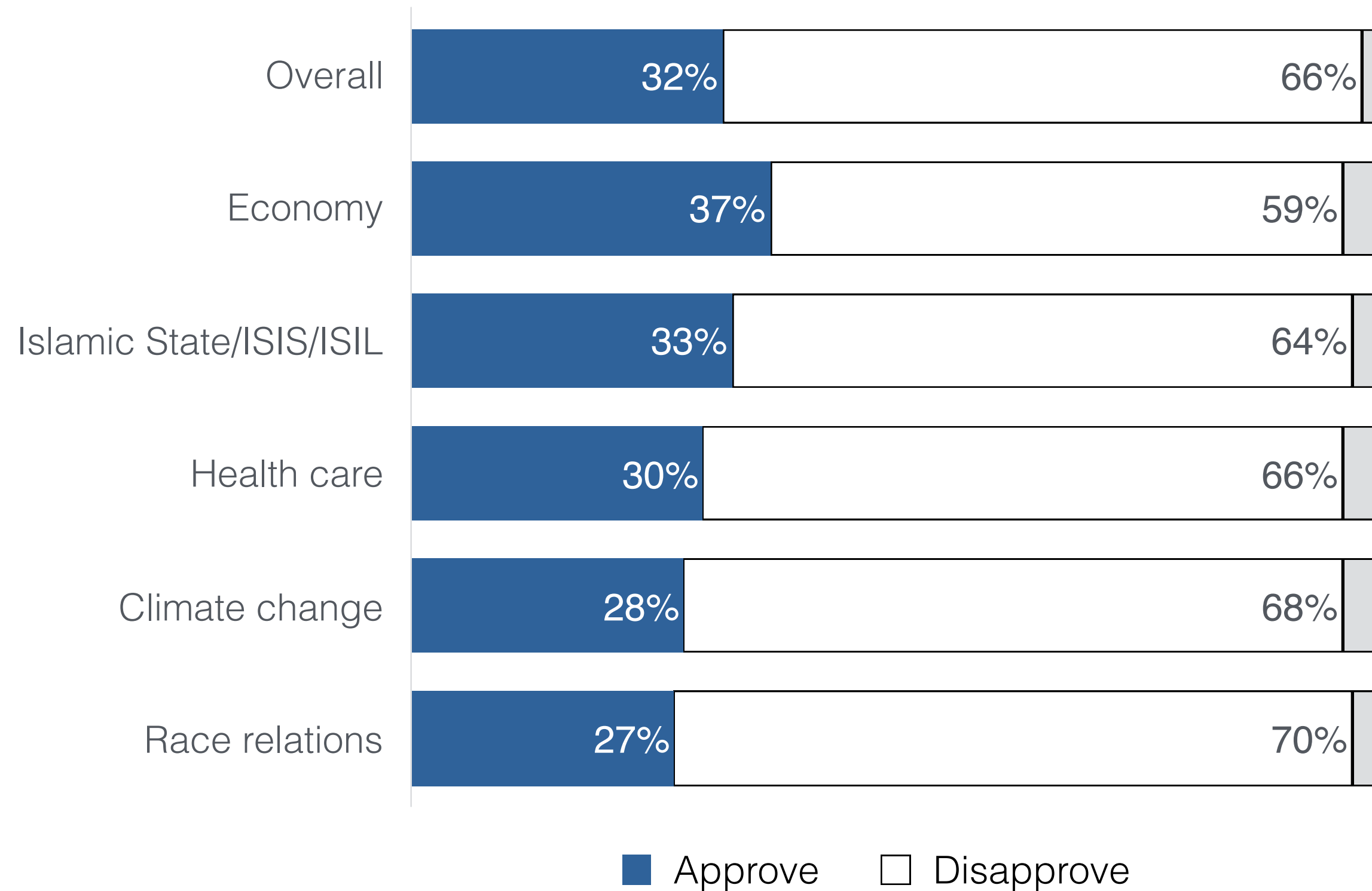
% of 18-29 Year Old Population Who Has Facebook/Twitter Account + Has Used it to Advocate for a Political Position



## IV. FIRST 100 DAYS

# 13: PRESIDENT TRUMP'S APPROVAL RATING 32%; 18-29 YEAR OLDS GRADE POTUS AND MEDIA WITH MORE F'S THAN A'S FOR FIRST 100 DAYS

A) In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of: Donald Trump as president? B) Now thinking specifically about Donald Trump, do you approve or disapprove of the way he is handling the following issues?

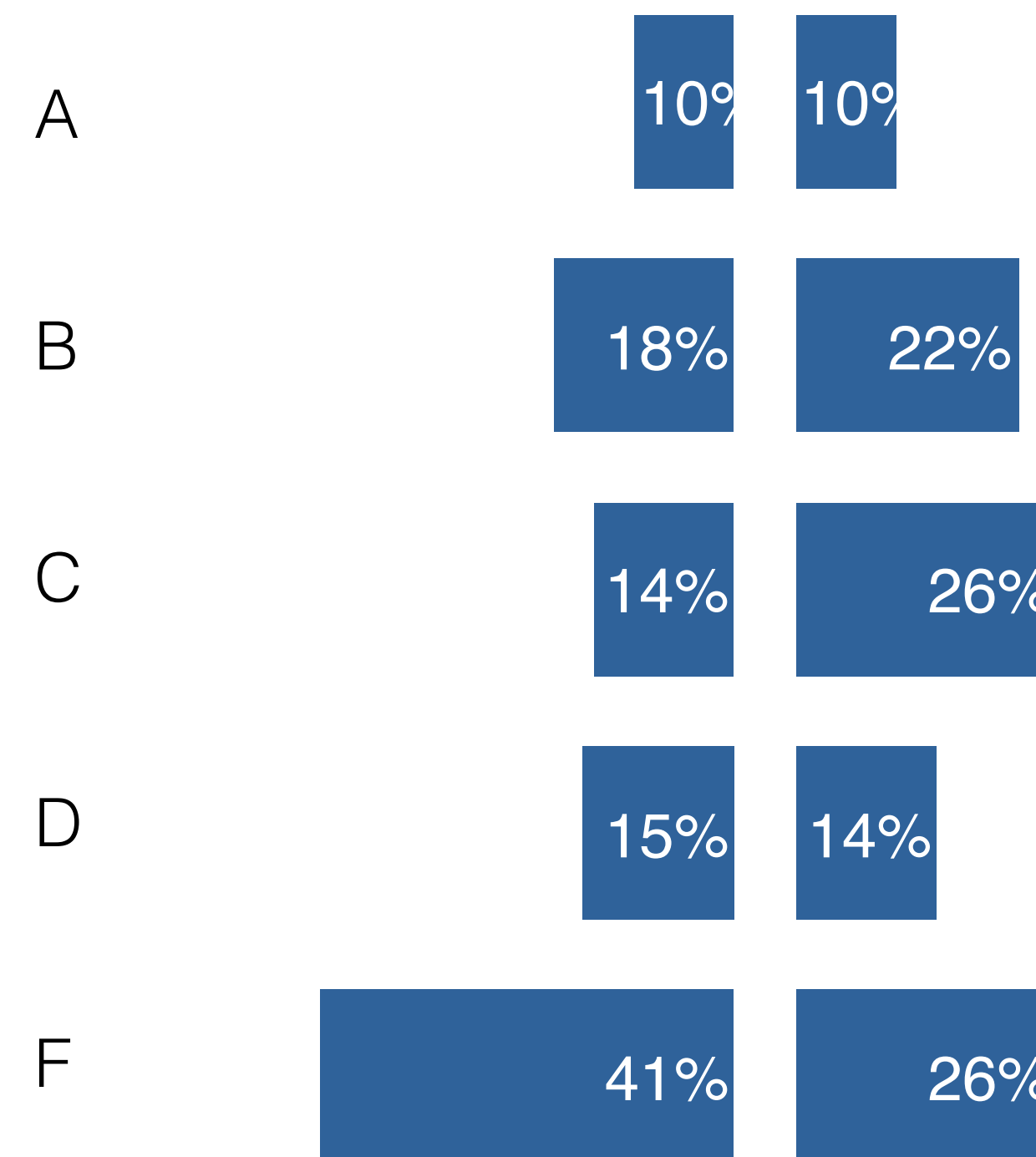


Overall Job Performance By Party ID

D: 7% Approve  
 R: 78% Approve  
 I: 30% Approve

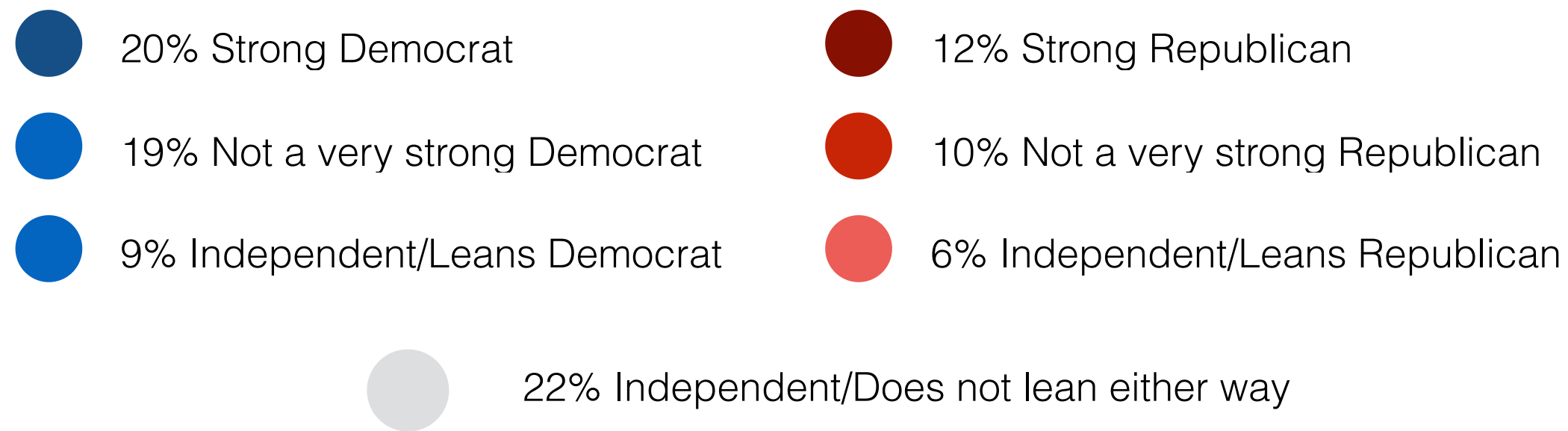
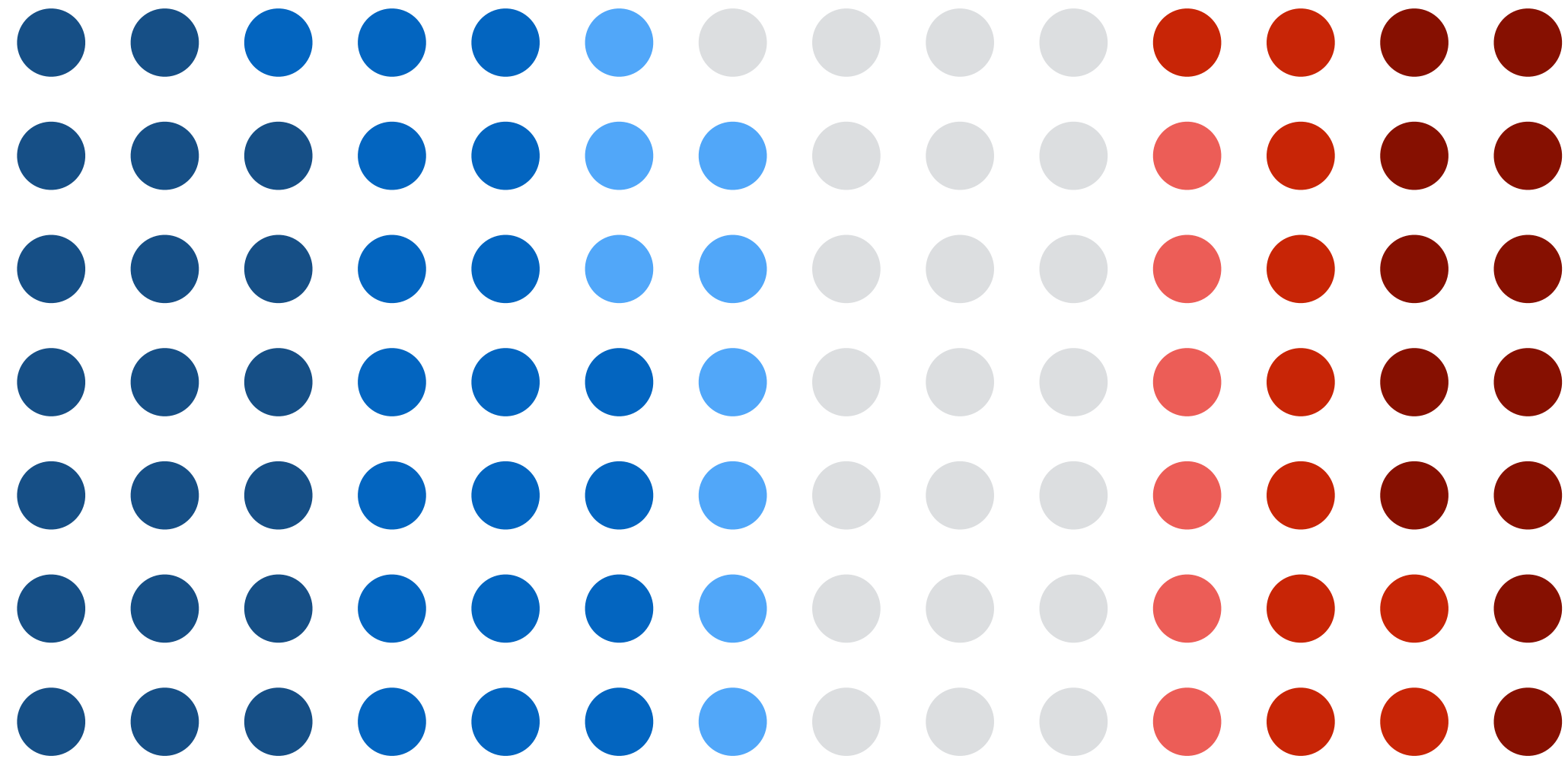
What grade would you give President Donald Trump as he nears his first 100 days in office?

What grade would you give the mainstream media for their coverage of President Trump as he nears his first 100 days in office?



## V. POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION, TRUMP VOTER

# 14: NEAR MAJORITY CONSIDER THEMSELVES TO BE, OR LEAN, DEMOCRAT, 28% REPUBLICAN; RACE, HEALTH CARE AND GUNS BEST PREDICTORS OF PARTY AFFILIATION



## Views and Characteristics Most Aligned with Each Party



60% Non-White

59% agree that basic health insurance is a right

51% do not know a gun owner



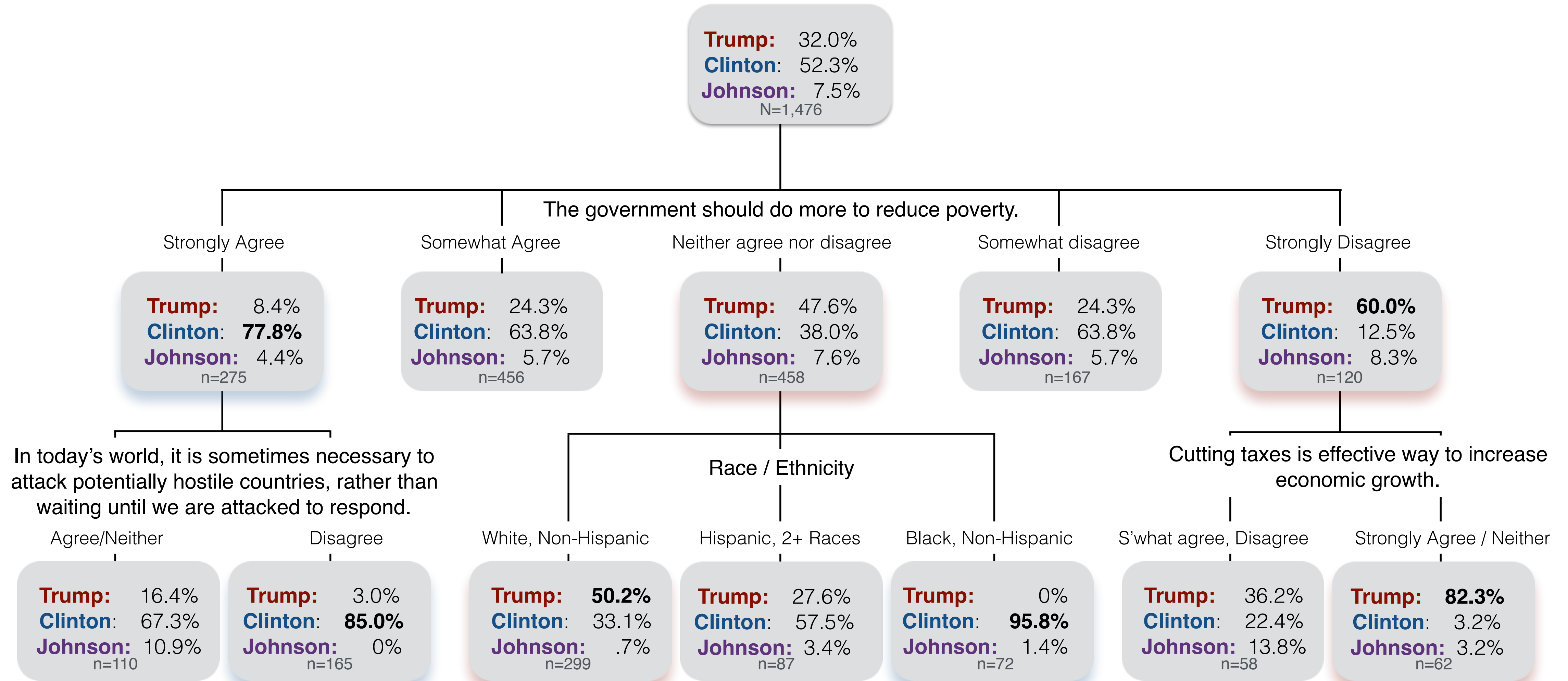
80% know a gun owner

79% White

47% disagree that basic health insurance is a right

# 15: VIEWS TOWARD GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE & TAX POLICY ARE MOST PREDICTIVE FACTORS IN SUPPORT OF TRUMP

For whom did you vote in 2016?





# HARVARD PUBLIC OPINION PROJECT

Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics (IOP) was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy and aims to inspire undergraduates to consider careers in politics and public service. The Institute oversees the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum, one of the world's premier arenas for political speech, discussion, and debate, and runs a fellowship program offering a unique opportunity for political practitioners to spend semesters at Harvard and interact with students. The IOP also offers dozens of paid internships for eight to ten weeks during the summer; a nonpartisan, quarterly journal written and run entirely by undergraduates; and a unique, nationwide survey project of young adults' political views.

Students are offered wide-ranging opportunities, including internships and conferences intended to provide opportunities for interaction with the people who shape politics and public policy. The IOP does not offer formal courses or degree-granting programs; instead, it provides avenues for practical experience and encourages students to examine critically and think creatively about politics and public issues. For more information, including past results of these polls, please visit us online at [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu).

Institute of Politics team members who worked on this project include:

John Della Volpe  
Director of Polling, Institute of Politics

Mary Cappabianca  
Communications Specialist, Institute of Politics

Maggie Williams  
Director, Institute of Politics

Amy Howell  
Executive Director, Institute of Politics

The Student Chair of the Harvard Public Opinion Project Committee is Erik Fliegau '19. Student members of the committee are: Dustin Chiang '19, Kyle Deeds '20, Sonya Jacobs '18, Myer Johnson-Potter '20, Michael Kassabian '19, Teddy Landis '20, Rhea Malik '17, Jeff Metzger '17, Luke Minton '20, Rachel Nadboy '20, Meg Panetta '17, Stefan Petrovich '20, Andrew Rocca '18, Trey Sexton '19, Isabel Slavinsky '20, Laura Thorsett '18, Maximilian Ubinas '17, Miguel Undurraga '19, Chris Vassallo '20 and Hannah Warntjes '18.



HARVARD Kennedy School

**INSTITUTE OF POLITICS**

# Executive Summary

Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward  
Politics and Public Service  
33rd Edition

---

## Harvard Public Opinion Project

Presented by:

John Della Volpe  
Director of Polling

Erik Fliegauf '19  
Student Chair, HPOP

For more information:

Mary Cappabianca  
Communications Specialist

[mary\\_cappabianca@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:mary_cappabianca@hks.harvard.edu)  
(617) 384-5923

25 April 2017