

Trust in U.S. News Media

July 2020

Conducted by





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Led by:

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In association with The Harris Poll

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Foreword and Introduction



Foreword

With pleasure, I invite you to peruse the material that follows in the report on ***Trust in the U.S. News Media*** prepared for the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communication with two surveys combined here conducted by The Harris Poll. The work was organized and led by Dr. Everette E. Dennis and Dr. Klaus Schoenbach to advance understanding of public attitudes toward the news and information media. Kerry Hill, David Krane and Charlie Spinale at The Harris Poll supervised the survey research. This project, carried out in two national surveys of adult Americans in December 2019 and June 2020, offers a comprehensive and multi-textured look at trust in news media both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It builds on previous studies done by survey research firms, media scholars and others, to provide a timely assessment of the public's perception of the news media generally as well as the people and organizations that gather, process and disseminate the news. With a series of questions aimed at trust in sources of information about COVID-19 as well as attitudes toward and respect for police, the report aims to illuminate the institutional interplay that helps form public opinion. Having taken the measure of trust just before the pandemic and well into it, this Northwestern Medill-Harris Poll project hopes to capture any changes that are instructive for journalism and the public. At a time of increasing public accountability for almost all social institutions, this up-close look at the news media, public health and the police will be useful in advancing the national conversation. We at Medill are pleased to encourage and help disseminate this study which is consistent with our historic commitment to the education of journalists and other media professionals as well as fostering audience understanding on the eve of our centenary, celebrating 100 years of such service.

--Charles Whitaker, Dean and Professor, Northwestern Medill



Taking the Measure of Public Trust in U.S. Media: Results of a Survey in Two Waves

Taking the temperature of public trust in the U.S. news media is a regular ritual for pollsters, critics and scholars. Often, however, these efforts have not differentiated between trust in the news media in general, in specific sources of news, different media organizations and outlets, in journalists, or in the subjects covered (whether it be politics, the economy or science, for example). Also, explaining why some citizens trust the news media more, others less, has often been confined to a small number of standard socio-demographic variables, such as age, gender and education.

But trust in the news media, tied to the idea of the informed citizen, is necessarily complex. Trust involves a belief in the honesty and integrity of a media institution or platform, the reporters who gather, produce and disseminate the news, and the sources they rely on. So, trust is not to be equated with popularity. Also, it is important to carefully identify which media or media outlets inspire the most or least trust. It should make a difference whether one's reference point is a specific legacy-media outlet like a newspaper or network broadcast or a social media platform like Twitter, Instagram or Facebook.

Media, of course, are one of multiple social institutions in contemporary society. They have a critical social function and are natural adversaries and critics of government, politics and social institutions. So, trust in the news media is best seen in a comparative context with other organizations and institutions, ranging from banks and car manufacturers to the medical community, health insurance companies, pharmaceutical firms and others (including social media) and even such outliers as cannabis oil manufacturers.

Our study goes beyond the usual socio-demographics as potential determinants of trust in the news media. The impact of political orientations will be analyzed, but also the public's perceptions of how useful and fair the news media are. In addition, people's constitutional values and beliefs about freedom of expression are considered, as well as how strongly they are connected to the necessity to shield news media and their reporters from external pressures.



This study is an effort to probe more deeply to demystify the public's relationship with news media, especially at a time of widespread criticism and assaults on media. For more than three years as President of the United States, Donald Trump has repeatedly asserted in a consistent barrage of criticism that the media are the “enemy of the people,” rendering “fake news.” While there has almost always been a contentious relationship between the White House and the news media, the present conflict is especially volatile and worrisome to those concerned about freedom of expression in American society. The value of a study such as this one is in gauging public confidence in the media, providing intelligence about specific attitudes, opinions and concerns for the public, and finally, in guiding news media and their professionals toward greater and more textured understanding of their audience.

This study is especially timely. Its genesis was to have current information about media trust before the 2020 Presidential campaign began. We planned and developed an online survey of Americans 18 and older, conducted for us by The Harris Poll, to learn whether trust in media and journalism is significantly affected at a particularly contentious time.

The study, carried out in December 2019 with 2,007 survey subjects, was ready for release as the COVID-19 pandemic appeared. Since changes in the social environment certainly affect public opinion, we questioned whether the findings were still valid amid a major public-health crisis and massive economic fallout. With people sheltering at home, we imagined that dependency on public-affairs information would increase—and perhaps make citizens more discerning about the media they rely on and use. So, we decided to repeat the survey, but also to add items to specifically determine whether the pandemic and subsequent events had any impact on perceptions of trust.

The second wave was conducted in late May 2020, with 2,019 adults surveyed, nearly six months after the initial survey, and a few days after the death of George Floyd that triggered nationwide demonstrations and calls for racial justice. Thus, the data reported here probe into the public mood both before and during the continuing pandemic and the controversies pitting public health against the economic impact of the shutdown—and just as nationwide demonstrations began.

Surprisingly, with some notable exceptions, our findings in December 2019 and May 2020 are remarkably stable. Overall trust in the news media increased slightly from 53% to 55% between December and May. Also, in both of our surveys, journalists are a respected group of professionals, even somewhat more than the news media are trusted. Generally, Americans give the news media a tepid endorsement overall, but there is a widening gap along political lines with great disparities between Democrats and Republicans. This political gap is evident across all areas of the surveys.



Pollsters have long reported the contrast between an individual's professed belief in freedom of expression and their willingness to accept, or at least tolerate, some forms of speech or media coverage. As the expression goes, "I believe in media freedom, except for..." In both the December and May waves of this study, the public was answering in the assertion that "Freedom of speech is one of the values that makes America great" (91% both waves), and that "Freedom of the press is essential for American democracy" (89% both waves). The public further believes media should be protected from pressure from business and government (80% December, 75% May). At the same time, half of our respondents regard the coverage of President Trump as unfair (49%, 50%). About 40% even believe that news media are "the enemy of the people," and agree that the President should be allowed to close news outlets for bad behavior. Some 29% in December and May would allow the President to specifically close certain media like CNN, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

When we probed trust in sources of information about COVID-19 in May, most Americans said they trusted information provided by public health experts (83%) compared with the less trusted social media (38%). Drilling down, there are again great differences between what people accept and believe, again depending on party preference, especially when it comes to specific spokespersons—with President Trump scoring well with Republicans and badly with Democrats and receptivity for state governors in New York and California cutting along party lines as well. Also relevant to recent controversies involving law enforcement, there was a significant decrease in respect for police officers between December and May, and this decline was observed across age, race and political affiliation.

These findings and many more are contained in this report which we hope will inspire further dissection and discussion leading to a more comprehensive understanding of media trust and what to do about it.

--Everette E. Dennis and Klaus Schoenbach, June 2020

Dr. Dennis is professor of journalism in the Medill School and formerly dean and CEO of Northwestern University in Qatar where Dr. Schoenbach, a distinguished adjunct professor, served as senior associate dean and is concurrently honorary professor at Zeppelin University, Germany, and a honorary fellow of the Amsterdam School of Communication, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



Key Findings



Key Findings

Americans give the news media a tepid endorsement, viewed simultaneously as a friend and a foe. There is a wide political divide in perceptions of the media, and the gap has expanded over time.

- 3-in-4 agree the news media keeps them up-to-date (75%), and helps them understand the news of the day (74%) - same as in December
- 41% agree the news media is the enemy of the people (vs. 43% in December)
- Democrats are nearly twice as likely as Republicans to agree news media are trustworthy (77% Democrats vs. 36% Republicans). The gap has widened from 70% Democrats vs. 38% Republicans in December

Almost all Americans say they support freedom of speech and freedom of the press. At the same time, many would like to suppress media that don't support their own views.

- 91% agree freedom of speech is one of the values that makes America great, same as in December
- 89% agree freedom of the press is essential for American democracy, same as in December
- 75% agree news media should be protected from pressure from government and big business, although this is down from 80% in December
- 61% agree reporters should be shielded from prosecution by the Trump administration (vs. 63% in December)
- 40% agree the president should have the authority to close down news outlets engaged in bad behavior, same as in December
- 29% agree President Trump should close down news media like CNN, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*, same as in December



Key Findings

Americans have more respect in journalists as a profession than they do in media as an institution.

- 55% of Americans trust the news media, up slightly from 53% in December
- 67% of American respect journalists, same as in December

Most Americans feel journalists/news media should be impartial in their reporting, but many do not believe they are. Perhaps not surprising, as most feel top news outlets are partisan one way or the other.

- 85% agree it is essential for journalists to be completely neutral in their reporting (vs. 88% in December)
- 75% agree it is okay for journalists to have a point of view as long as they make it clear it is their own opinion, although this is down from 79% in December
- 58% agree the news media reports fake news - down from 65% in December
- 43% disagree the news media reports the news fairly and impartially, same as in December

There is a strong distrust of news on social media, yet many still get their news from there.

- 67% of American distrust news on social media, same as in December
- 82% are concerned about what is real or fake on the internet - down from 85% in December
- Yet, 42% get news on social media each week, jumping to 54% among Millennials and 62% among Gen Z



Key Findings

Americans are voracious consumers of news, but tend to favor news sources that support their own political ideology. During these tumultuous times, Americans are checking the news more often, and turning more to 24-hour news outlets.

- Americans access news for over an hour each day (77 minutes per day, on average)
- The main sources for news are TV (53%), 24-hour channels (43%, up from Dec) and social media (42%, down from Dec)
- Fox News is the most watched news outlet among Republicans (57%), while Democrats watch CNN the most (52%)

Most Americans trust information about COVID-19 provided by public health experts. Trust in news media and White House/President Trump briefings are split down party lines.

- For information about COVID-19, 83% trust public health experts, 63% trust news media, and 55% trust White House briefings
- By party affiliation, 85% of Republicans vs. 19% of Democrats trust President Trump, while 85% of Democrats vs. 44% of Republicans trust news media

There has been a significant decrease, since December, in respect for police officers. This is likely a reaction to the recent killings of African-Americans including, George Floyd.

- 42% of Americans respect police officers 'very much,' down 9 percentage points from 51% in December. This decrease in respect is observed among black and white respondents and across political affiliations. Respect (very much/somewhat) for police has fallen more among Black Americans, dropping 16 points to 60%.



Detailed Findings

Throughout this report some of data points are presented by demographic subgroups such as age, race and political affiliation. While there is a myriad of ways to analyze the data, we have chosen a small set of demographic subgroups that represent the most topically interesting and relevant differences.



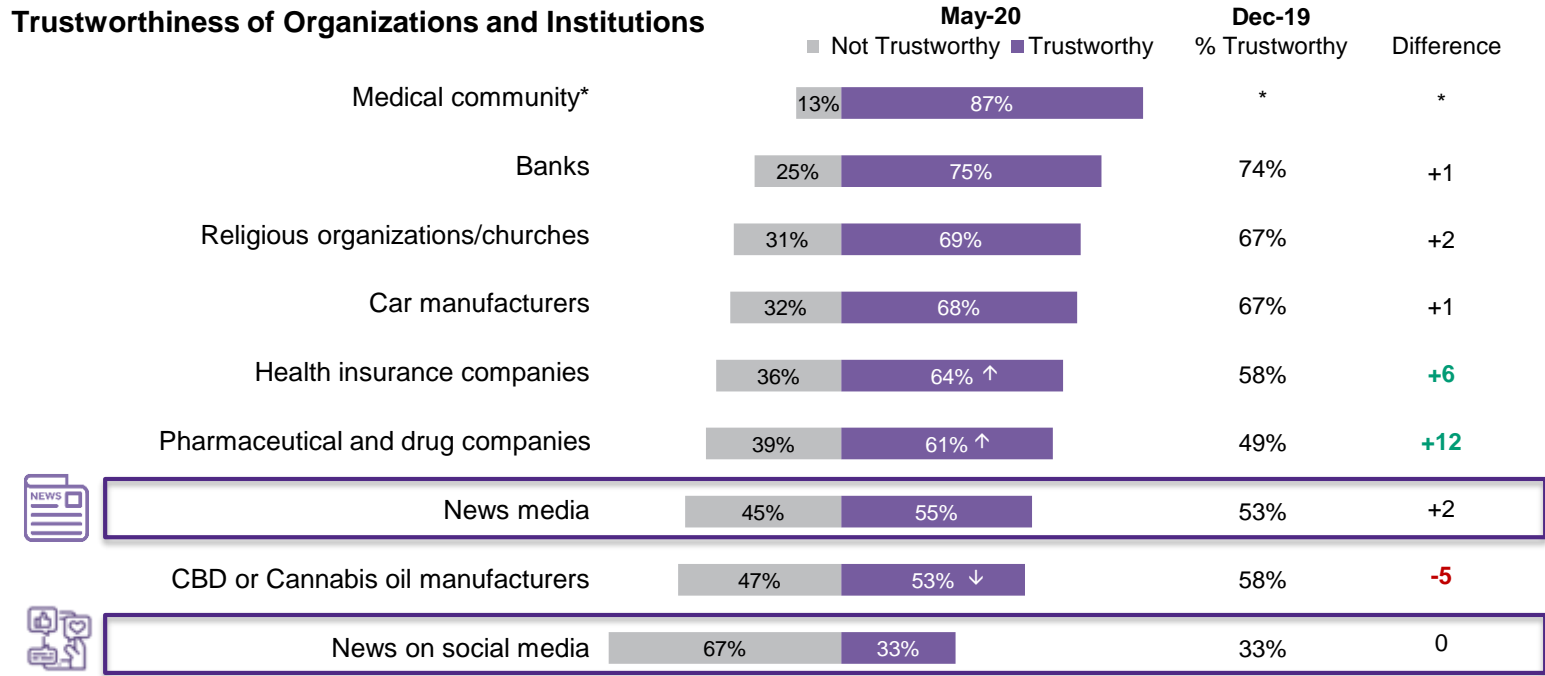
Detailed Findings Trust and Respect for Institutions and Occupations



Just over half of Americans find the news media trustworthy, while two-thirds do not trust news on social media, both remain unchanged from December.

Trust in the health insurance and pharma industries are up significantly from December (pre-COVID).

Trustworthiness of Organizations and Institutions



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

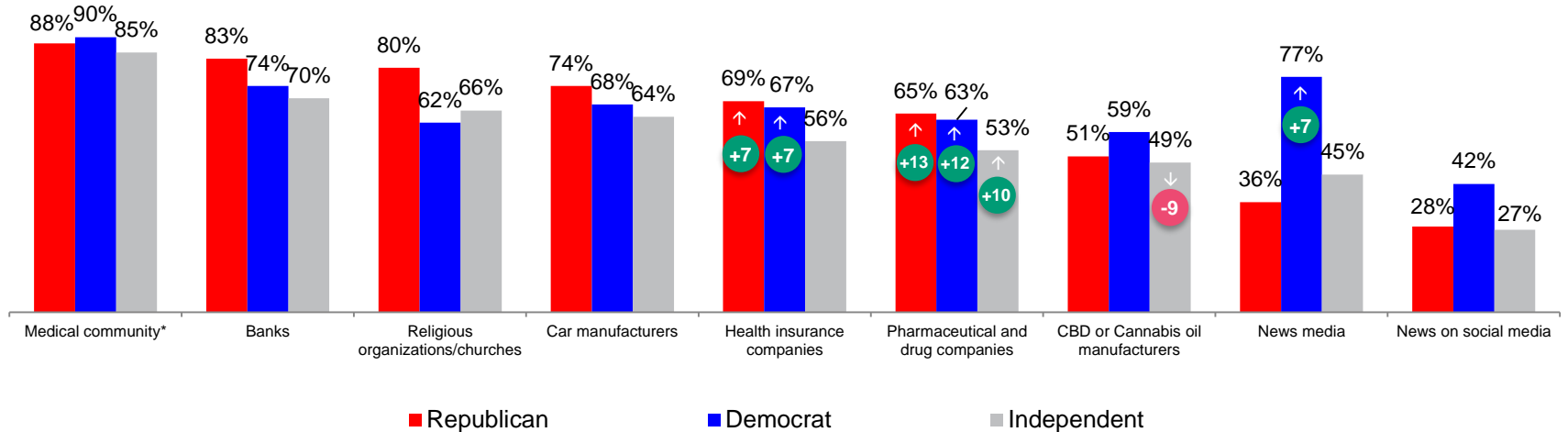
Q8. Now we'd like to ask you about different organizations and institutions. How trustworthy do you consider each of the following?



Trust in health insurance and pharma companies has increased across political ideologies. Trust in news media has increased among Democrats only, widening the gap vs. other parties.

May-20

Trustworthiness of Organizations and Institutions % Very/Somewhat Trustworthy



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q8. Now we'd like to ask you about different organizations and institutions. How trustworthy do you consider each of the following?

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Most Americans do not trust news found on social platforms and are concerned about its legitimacy; yet, 4-in-10 do use social media for news.

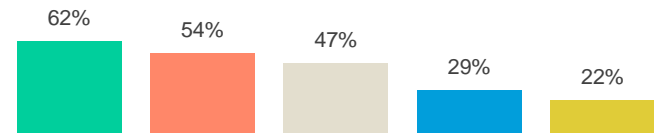
Younger generations use social media more but are just as concerned about what is real and what is fake.



News on Social media May-20

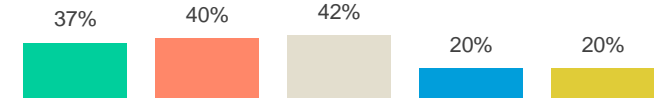
Get news on social media at least once a week

42%



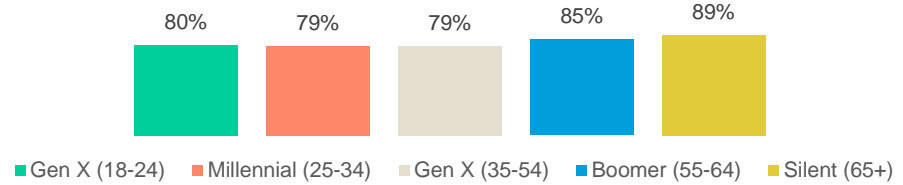
Trust news on social media

33%
Very/Somewhat



Concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet

82%
Agree

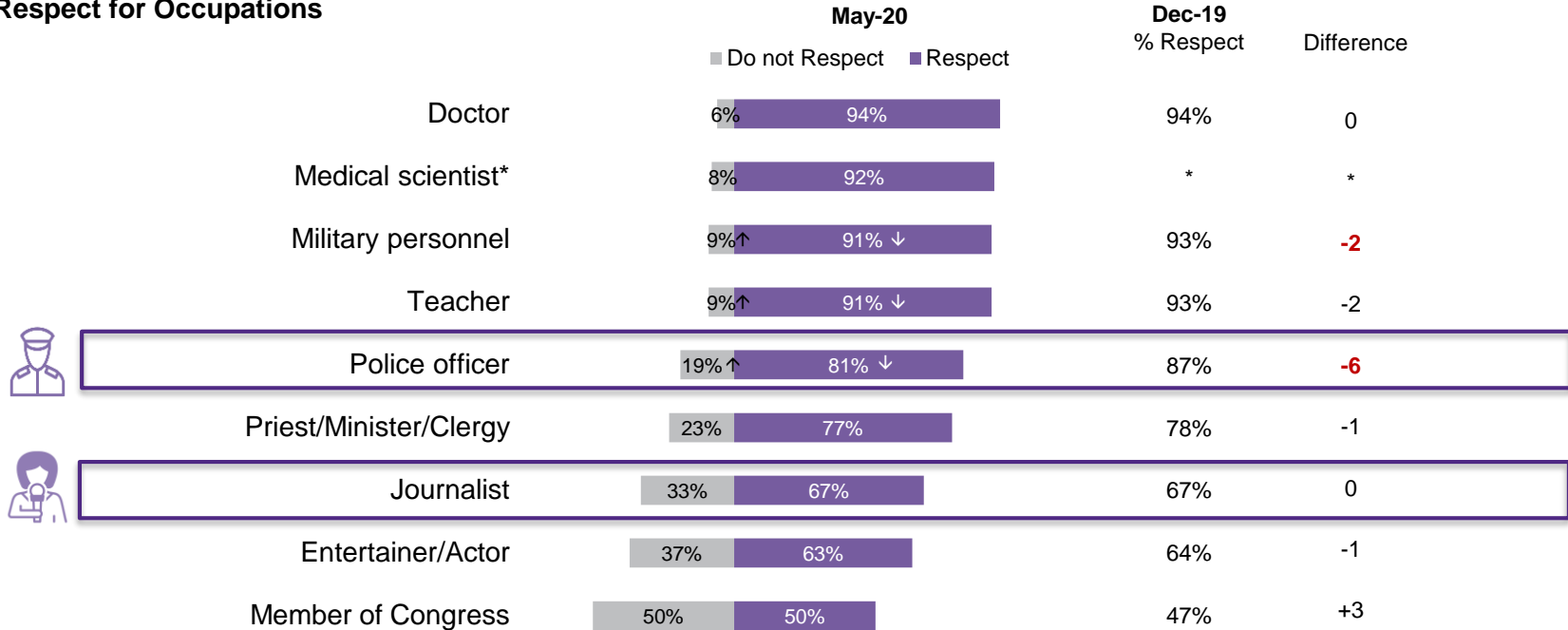


■ Gen X (18-24) ■ Millennial (25-34) ■ Gen X (35-54) ■ Boomer (55-64) ■ Silent (65+)



Two-thirds of Americans respect journalists - unchanged from December. The death of George Floyd, however, has negatively impacted respect for police officers.

Respect for Occupations



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q9. Below is a list of occupations. How much do you personally respect each occupation?

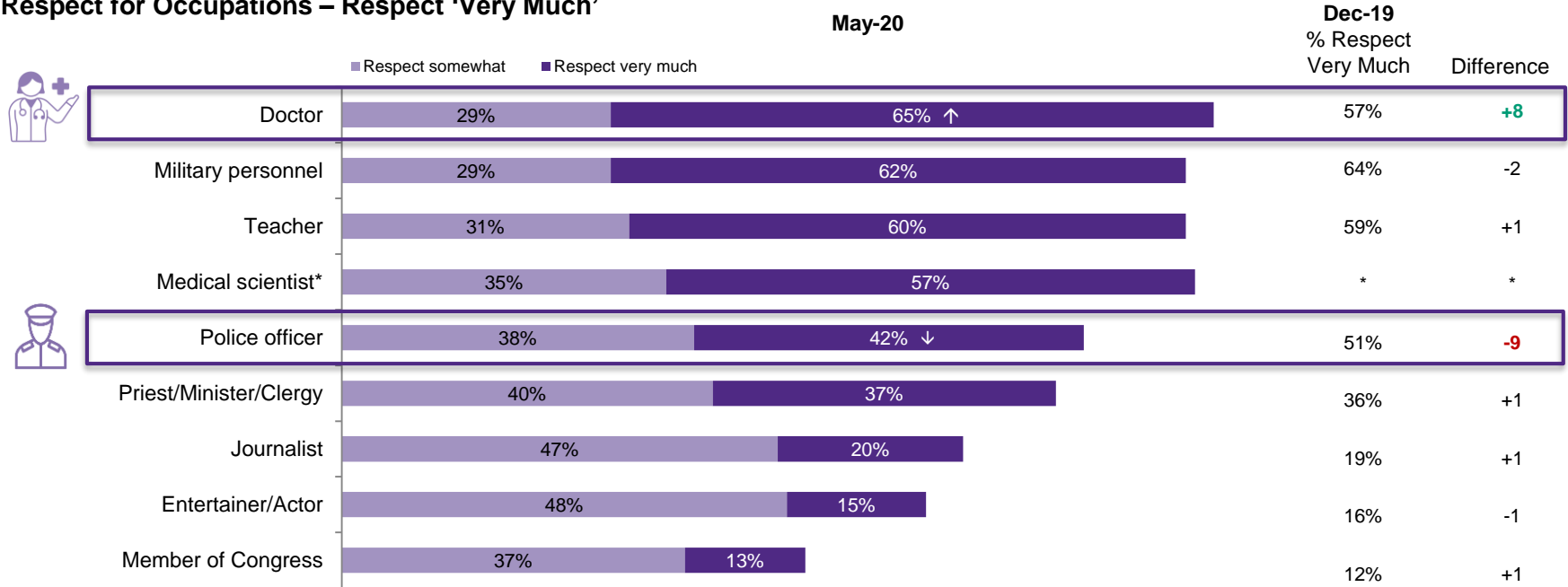
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The May-20 survey was conducted 2 days after the death of George Floyd.



Compared to December, Americans are now more likely to respect doctors “very much,” and less likely to trust police officers to the same degree.

Respect for Occupations – Respect ‘Very Much’



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

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Q9. Below is a list of occupations. How much do you personally respect each occupation?

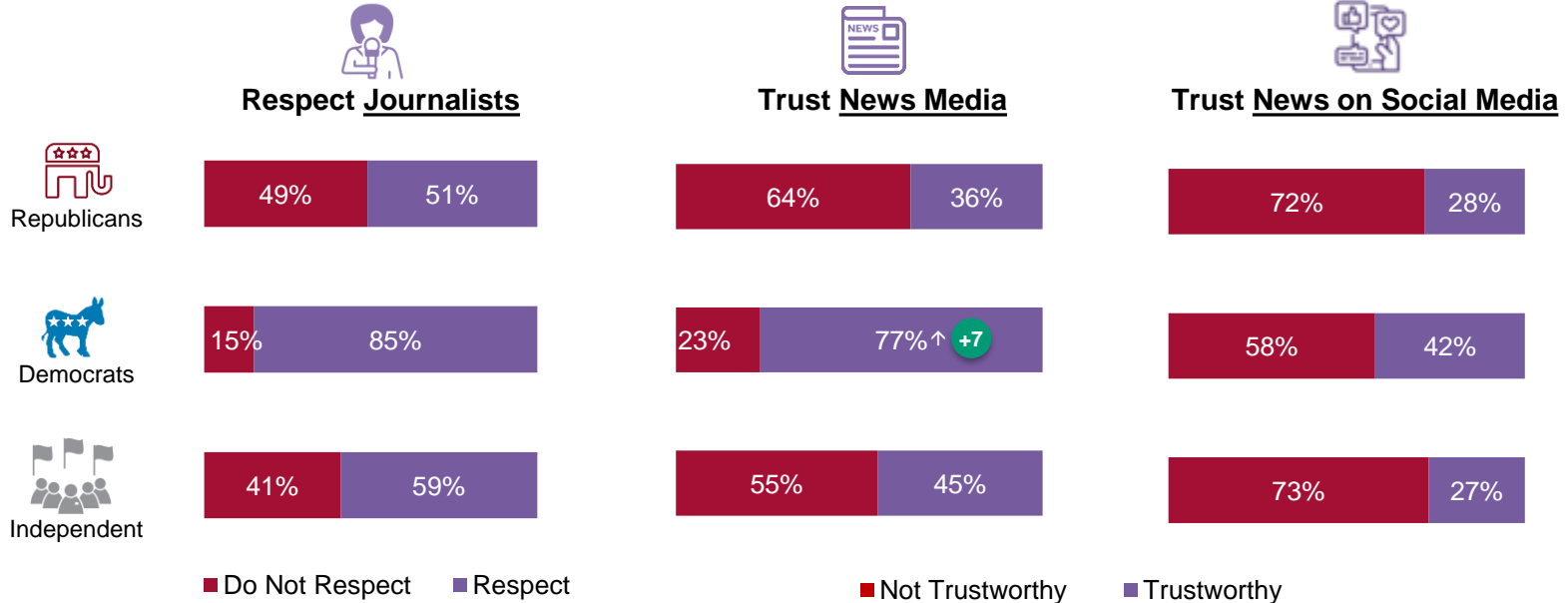
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The May-20 survey was conducted 2 days after the death of George Floyd.



Democrats have far more trust and respect for news media/journalists than their counterparts, and their trust in news media has grown since December.

Respect and Trust for Journalists and Media May-20



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q8. Now we'd like to ask you about different organizations and institutions. How trustworthy do you consider each of the following?

Q9. Below is a list of occupations. How much do you personally respect each occupation?



Respect for journalists is high across age groups; trust in social media is low across the board. Trust in news media is mixed; yet strongest (and growing) among Gen X.

May-20



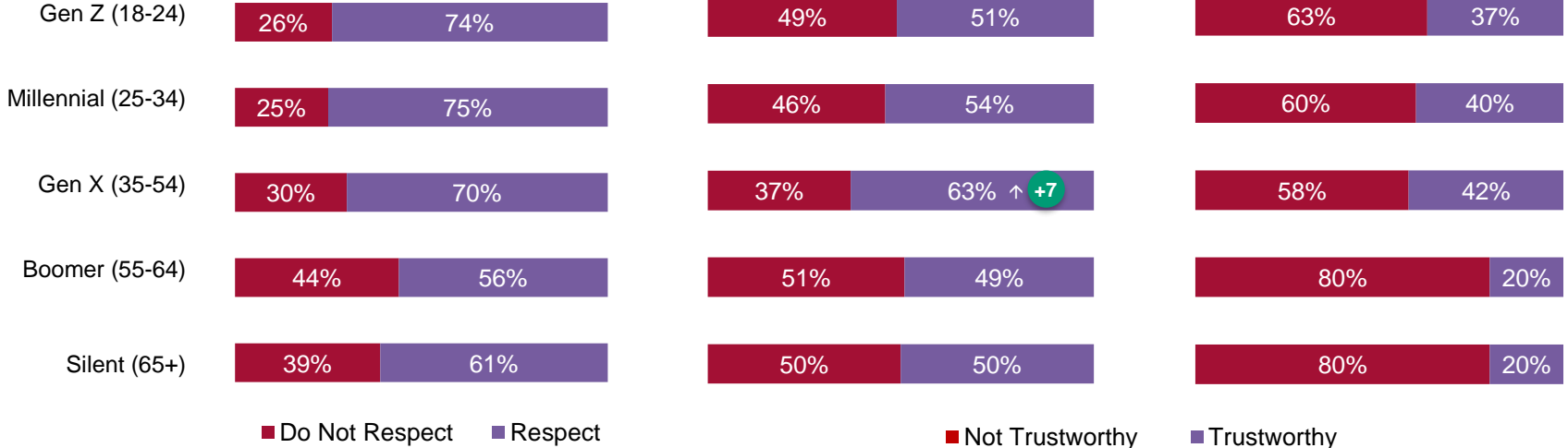
Respect Journalists



Trust News Media



Trust News on Social Media



↑/↓ **Green/Red** indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q8. Now we'd like to ask you about different organizations and institutions. How trustworthy do you consider each of the following?

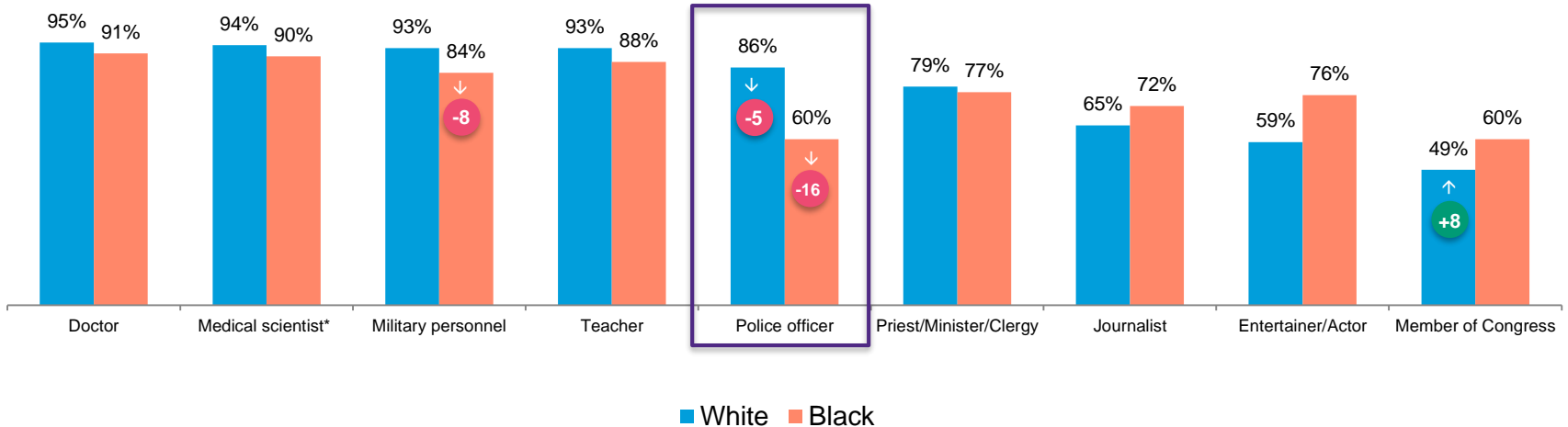
Q9. Below is a list of occupations. How much do you personally respect each occupation?



While majorities respect police officers, the black community is significantly less likely to say they respect police officers - and their numbers have seen a double-digit decline from December to May.

Blacks also show a decline in respect for the military since December.

May-20
Respect for Occupations
 % Respect (Very/Somewhat)



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ **Green/Red** indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q9. Below is a list of occupations. How much do you personally respect each occupation?

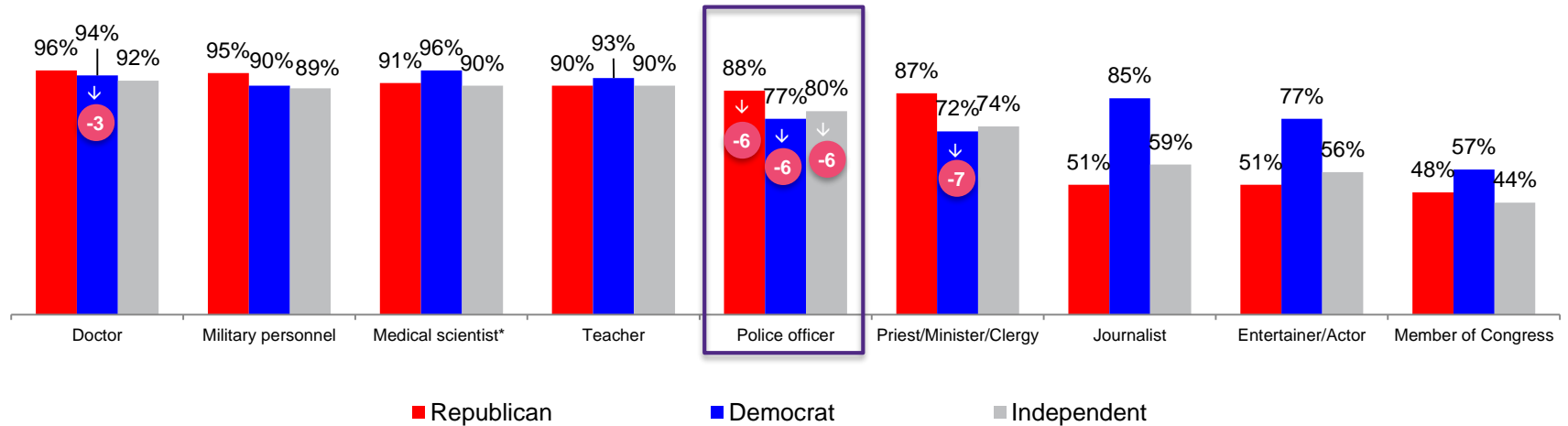
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The May-20 survey was conducted 2 days after the death of George Floyd.



The decline in respect for police officers from December to May is observed across all political parties.

May-20
Respect for Occupations
 % Respect (Very/Somewhat)



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q9. Below is a list of occupations. How much do you personally respect each occupation?

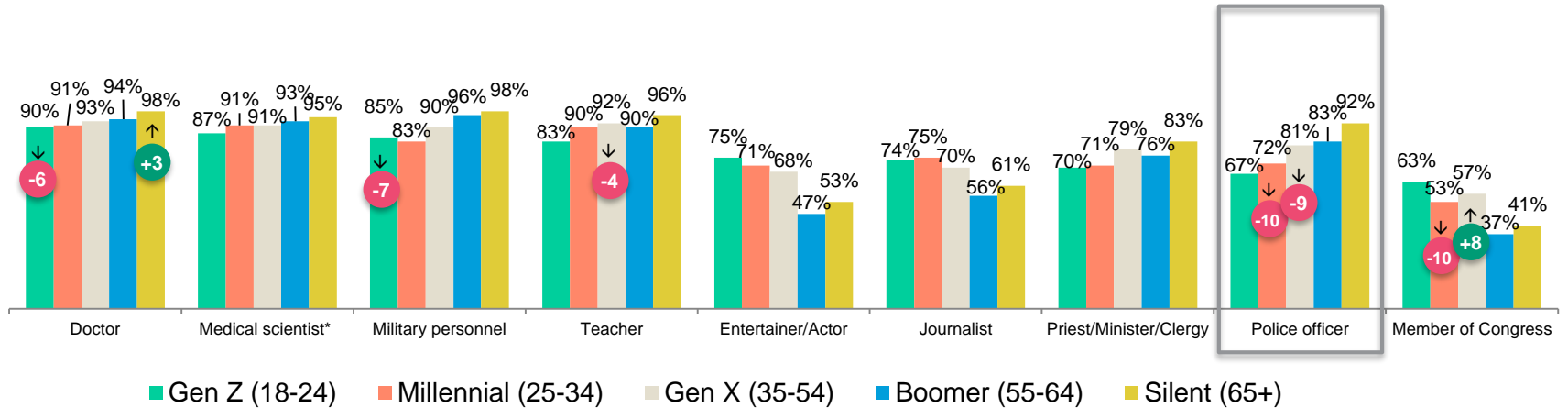
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The May-20 survey was conducted 2 days after the death of George Floyd.



Gen Z is the least likely to respect the police. The decline in respect for police officers from December to May is steepest among Millennials and Gen X.

May-20
Respect for Occupations
 % Respect (Very/Somewhat)



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q9. Below is a list of occupations. How much do you personally respect each occupation?

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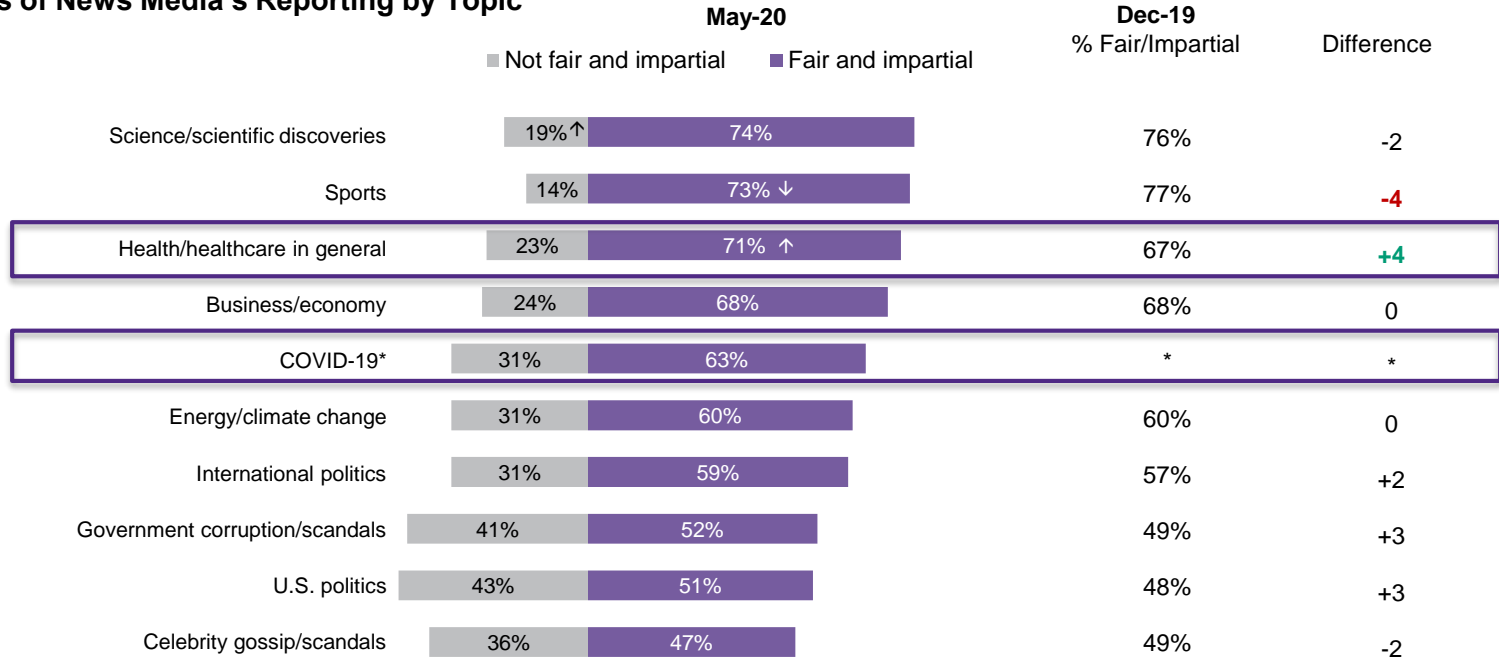


Detailed Findings Fair and Impartial Reporting by News Media



About 7-in-10 Americans believe news about health/healthcare is fair and impartial—an increase from December. Six in ten believe news about COVID-19 is fair and impartial.

Perceptions of News Media’s Reporting by Topic



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q5. The next question is about news topics. To what extent do you believe U.S. news media's general reporting of each of the following topics is fair and impartial?

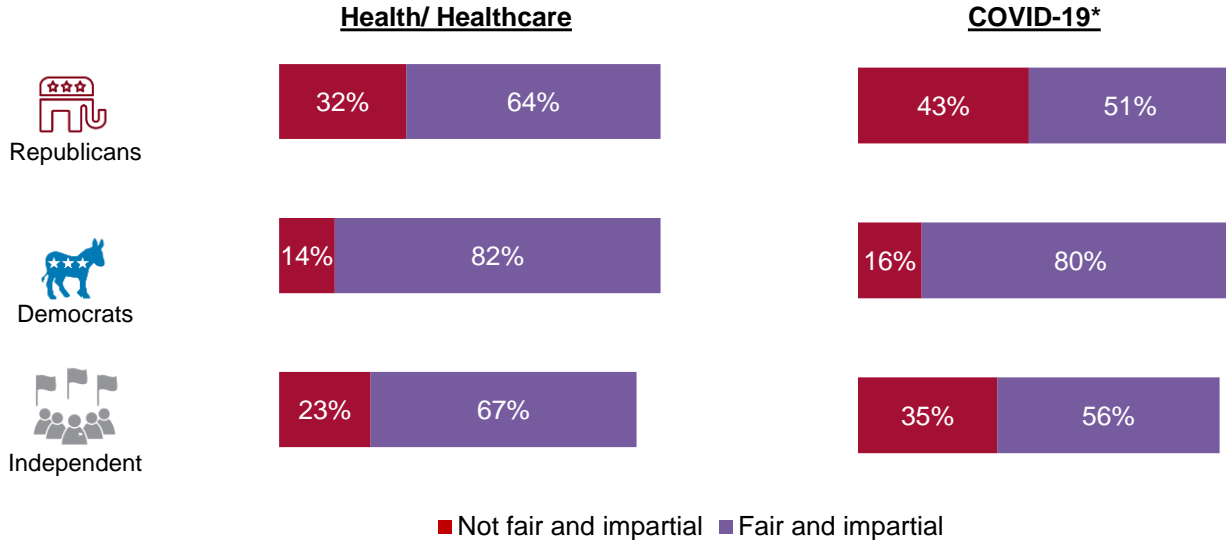
'Don't know' responses not shown



Eight in ten Democrats believe reporting about health/healthcare and COVID-19 is fair/impartial. Republicans are split on COVID-19 reporting.

Perceptions of News Media's Reporting by Topic

May-20



*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q5. The next question is about news topics. To what extent do you believe U.S. news media's general reporting of each of the following topics is fair and impartial?

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'Don't know' responses not shown

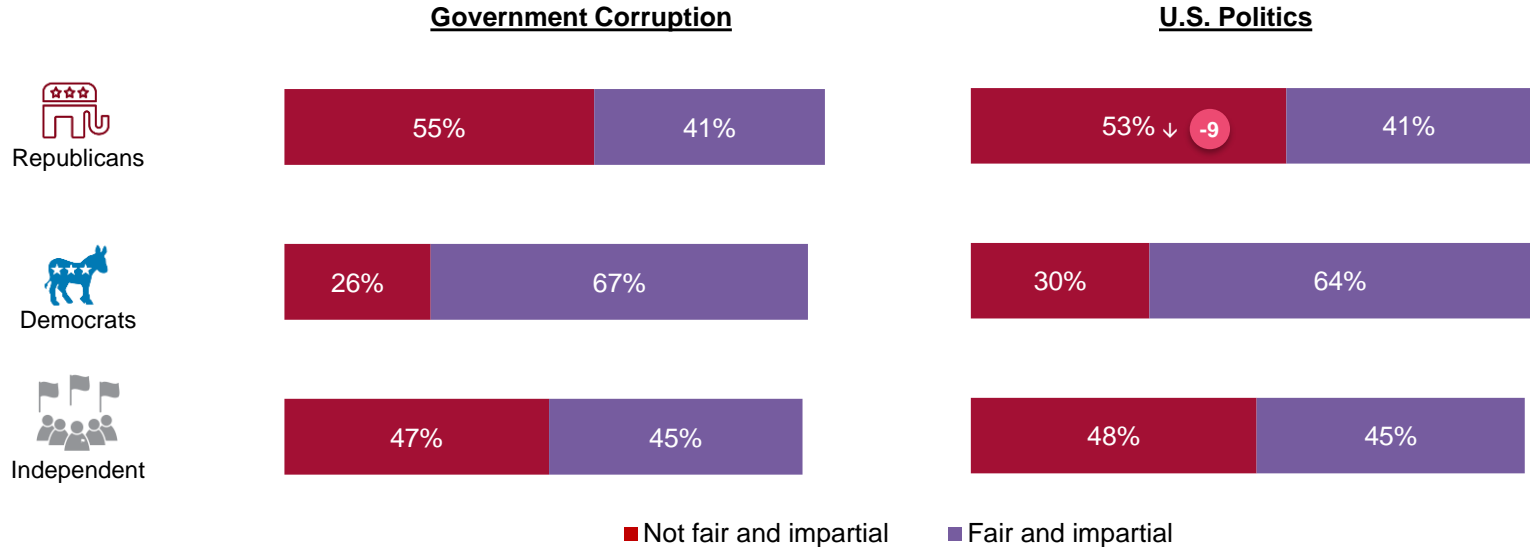


A slight majority of Republicans believe reporting about gov't and politics is not fair and impartial, while Democrats have opposing views. Independents are split.

Republicans' negative opinion of news media's reporting about politics has, however, softened over time.

Perceptions of News Media's Reporting by Topic

May-20



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q5. The next question is about news topics. To what extent do you believe U.S. news media's general reporting of each of the following topics is fair and impartial?

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'Don't know' responses not shown



Detailed Findings

Perceptions and Beliefs about News and News Media



There is strong and stable agreement on first amendment rights. Agreement that news media should be protected from pressure from the gov't or big business interests has declined since December.

Agreement with Statements

■ Disagree
 ■ Somewhat Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree

	May-20 Agree (NET)	Dec-19 Agree (NET)	Difference
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Freedom of speech is one of the values that makes America great



91%

91%

0

Freedom of the press is essential for American democracy

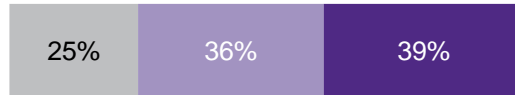


89%

89%

0

News media should be protected from pressure from the government or big business interests



75%↓

80%

-5

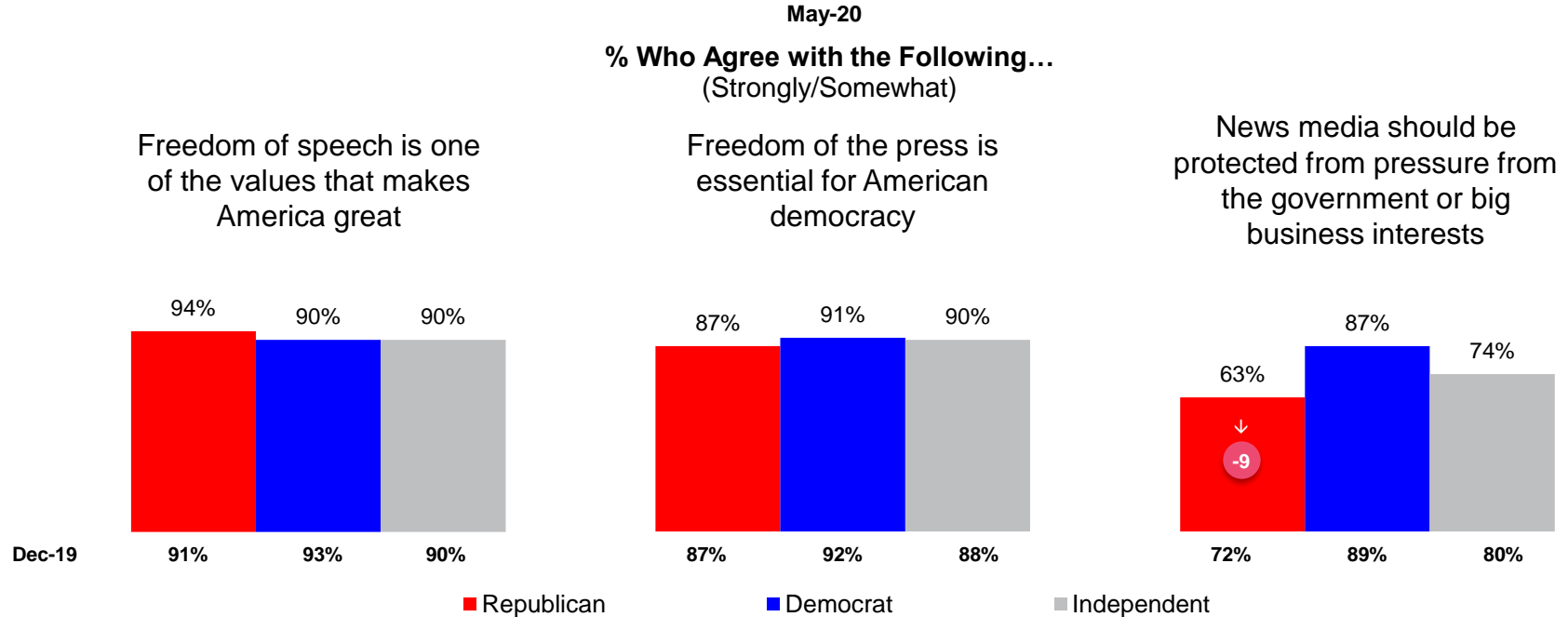
↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?



Republicans are less likely in May to agree that news media should be protected from gov't and big business interests.



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

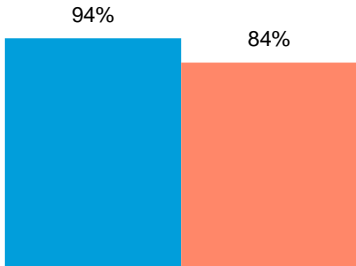
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Against December levels, Black Americans show substantial declines in likelihood to agree that news media should be protected from gov't and big business interests.

May-20
% Who Agree with the Following...
(Strongly/Somewhat)

Freedom of speech is one of the values that makes America great

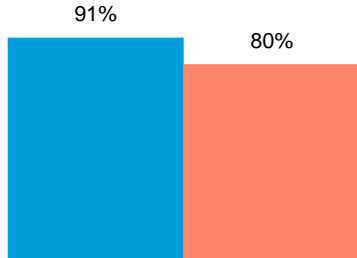


Dec-19

94%

86%

Freedom of the press is essential for American democracy

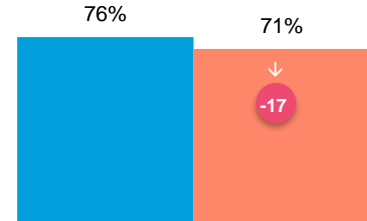


92%

85%

■ White ■ Black

News media should be protected from pressure from the government or big business interests



78%

88%

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

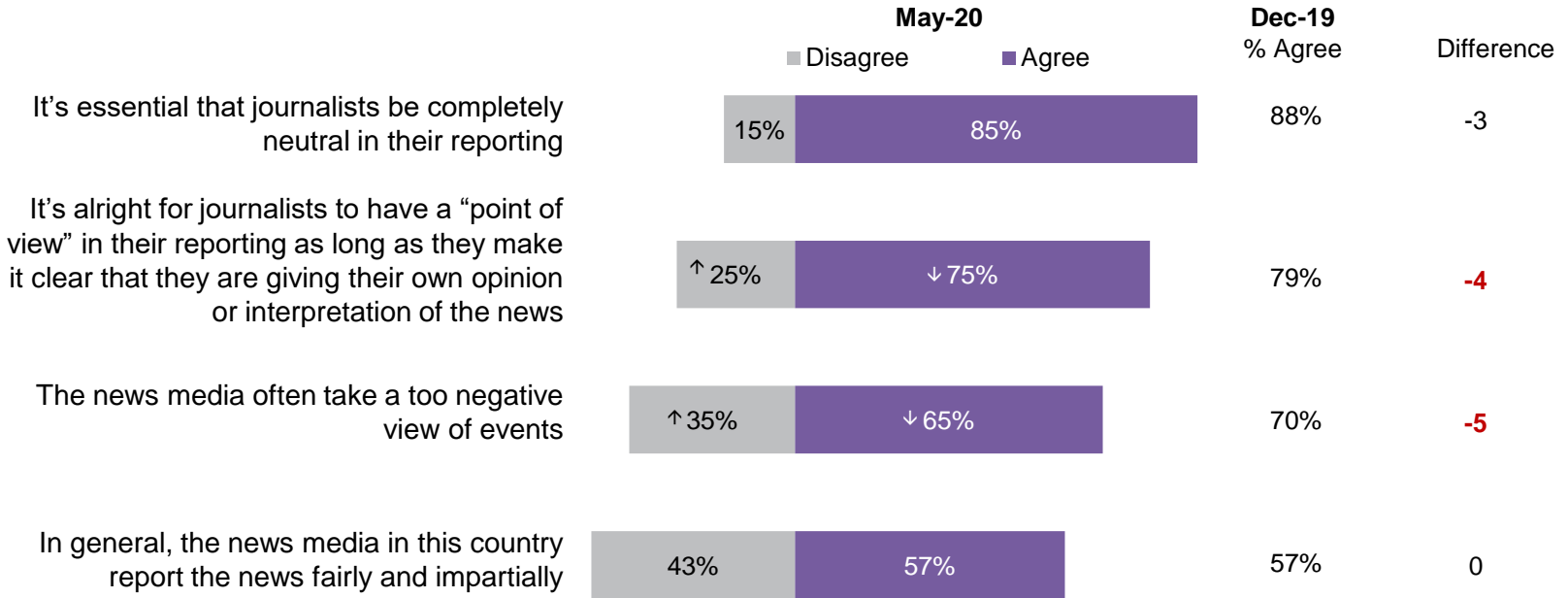
Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

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Nearly 6-in-10 continue to agree that, in general, the news media report the news fairly and impartially. There is less agreement now than in December, however, that the news media is too negative or that it's okay for journalists to express a “point of view” in their reporting.

Agreement with Statements



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

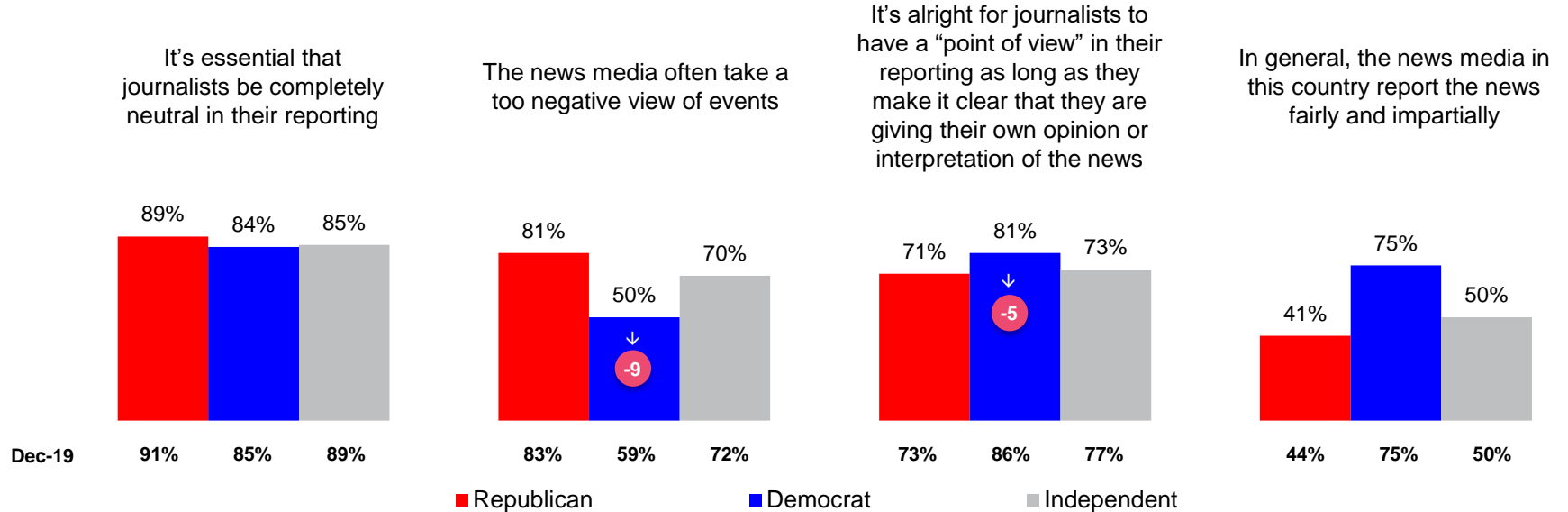
Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

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Democrats are the most likely to say the news media is not too negative, and that it reports the news fairly and impartially.

May-20
% Who Agree with the Following...
(Strongly/Somewhat)



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)
Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?
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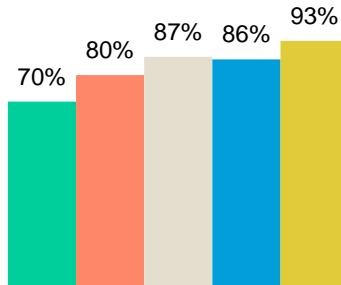


Compared to December, Millennials are less likely to say news media is too negative, and Gen Z is less likely to agree it is okay for journalists to have a “point of view.”

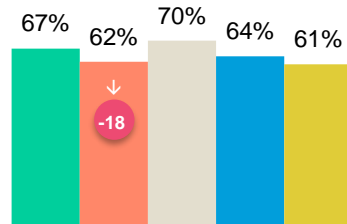
May-20

% Who Agree with the Following...
(Strongly/Somewhat)

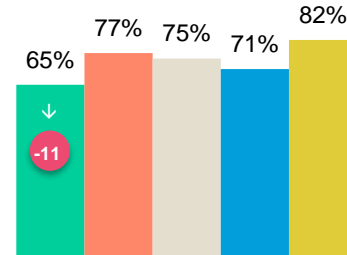
It's essential that journalists be completely neutral in their reporting



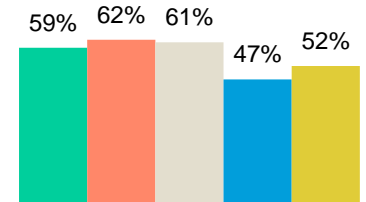
The news media often take a too negative view of events



It's alright for journalists to have a “point of view” in their reporting as long as they make it clear that they are giving their own opinion or interpretation of the news



In general, the news media in this country report the news fairly and impartially



■ Gen Z (18-24) ■ Millennial (25-34) ■ Gen X (35-54) ■ Boomer (55-64) ■ Silent (65+)

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

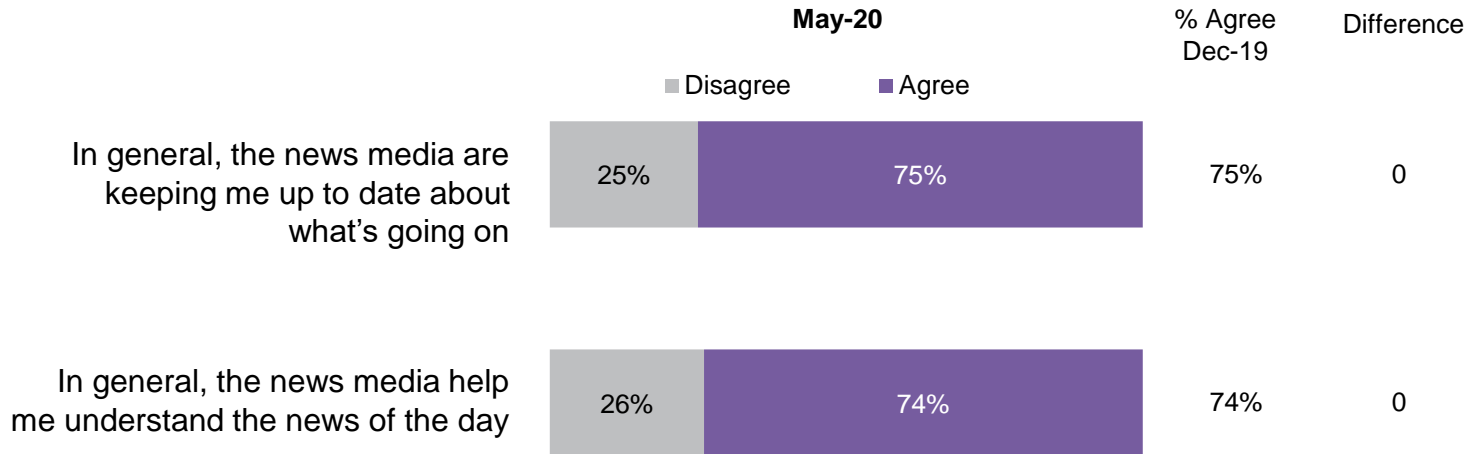
Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

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Three-quarters of Americans agree news media keeps them up to date and helps them understand the news of the da. This remains unchanged from December.

Agreement with Statements



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

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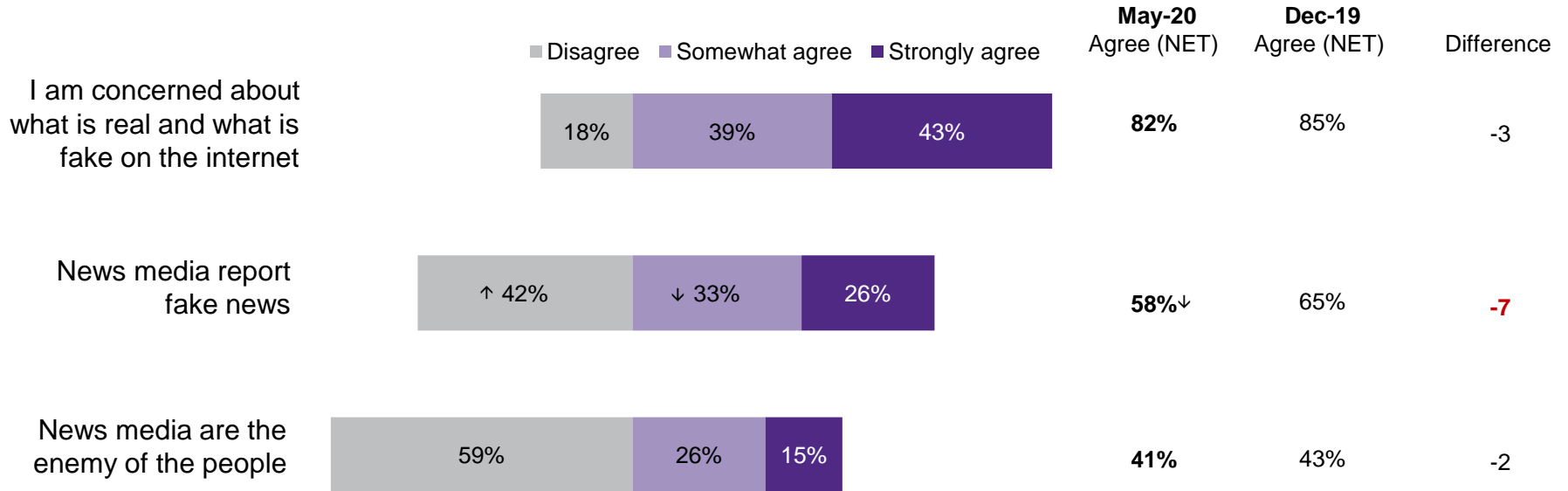
Detailed Findings

Fake News and The Age of Trump



Americans are less likely than in December to say news media reports fake news, but almost 6-in-10 still hold this view. And 4-in-10 continue to describe the news media as “the enemy of the people.”

Agreement with Statements

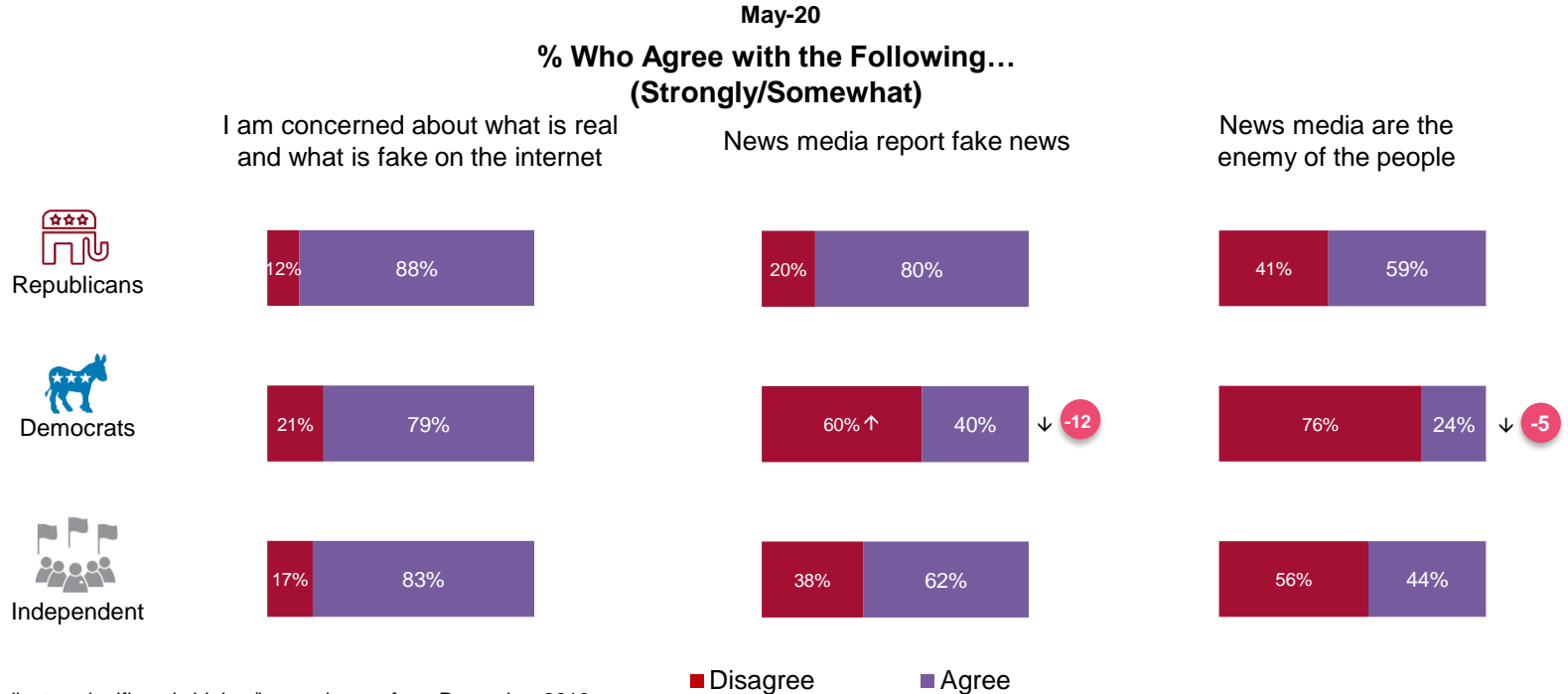


↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)
 Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?
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Republicans and Independents are much more likely than Democrats to agree that the news media report fake news, and that they are the enemy of the people. The gap between parties has widened since December.



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

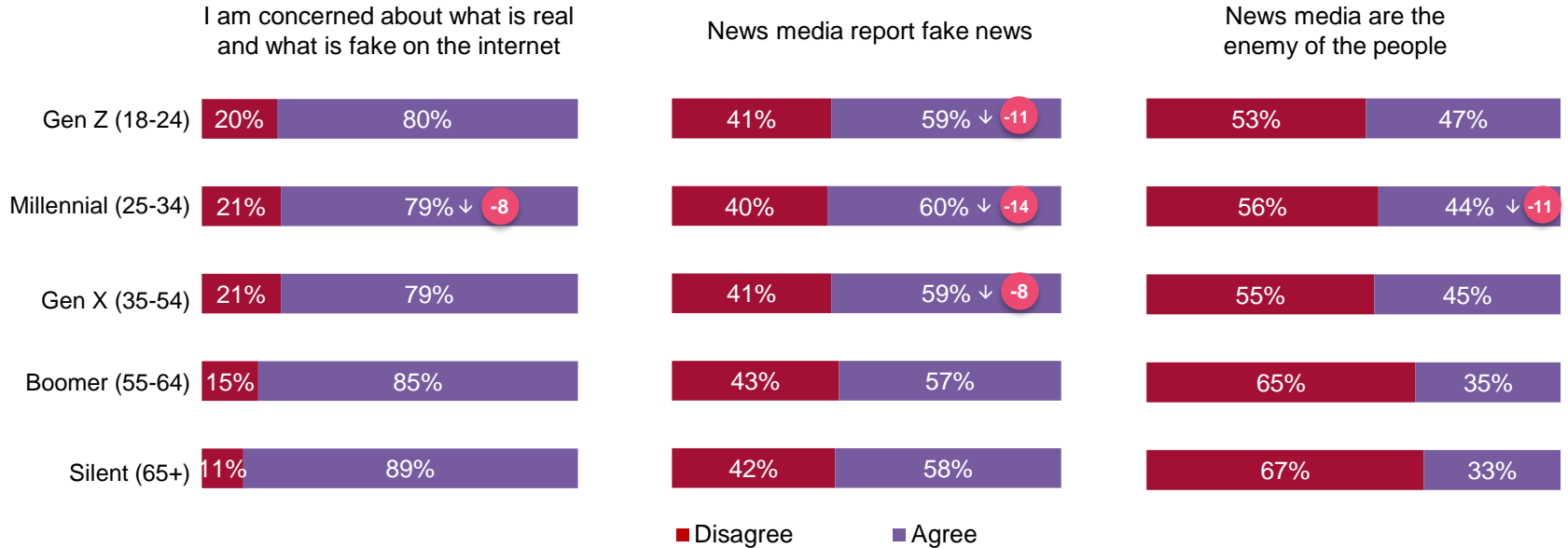
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)
 Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?
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Nearly half of Gen Z agrees news media are the enemy of the people. That said, younger Americans are less likely now than in December to say the news media report fake news.

May-20

% Who Agree with the Following...
(Strongly/Somewhat)



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

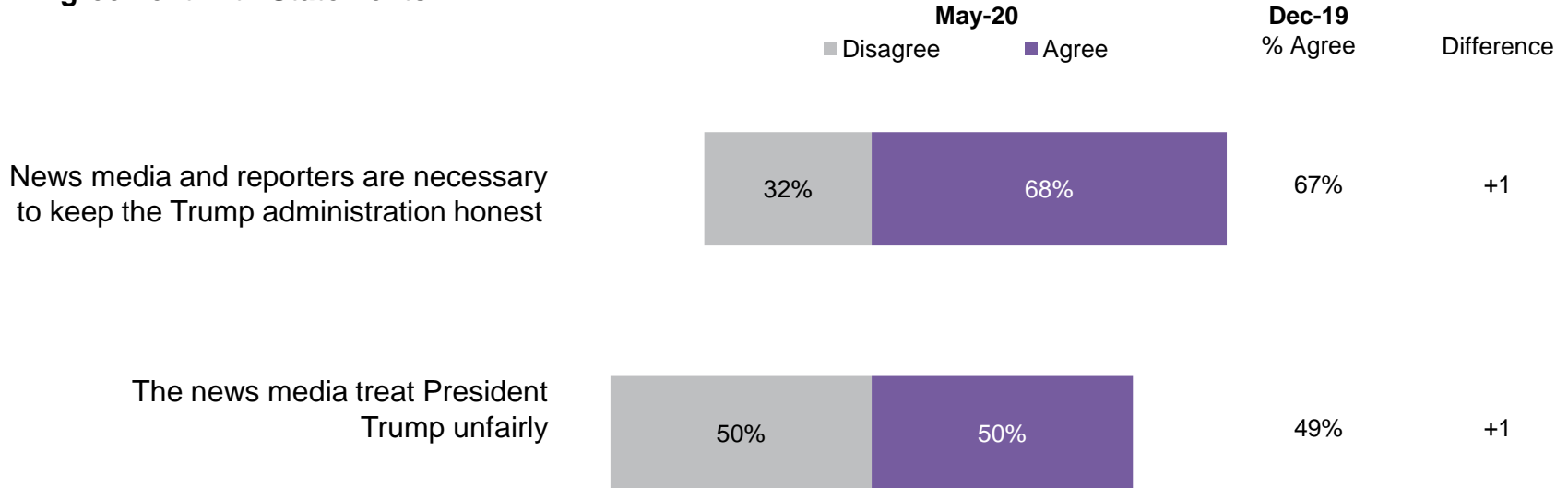
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Nearly 7-in-10 Americans agree the news media is needed to keep the Trump administration honest, but half say the media treats President Trump unfairly.

Perceptions are unchanged from December.

Agreement with Statements



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

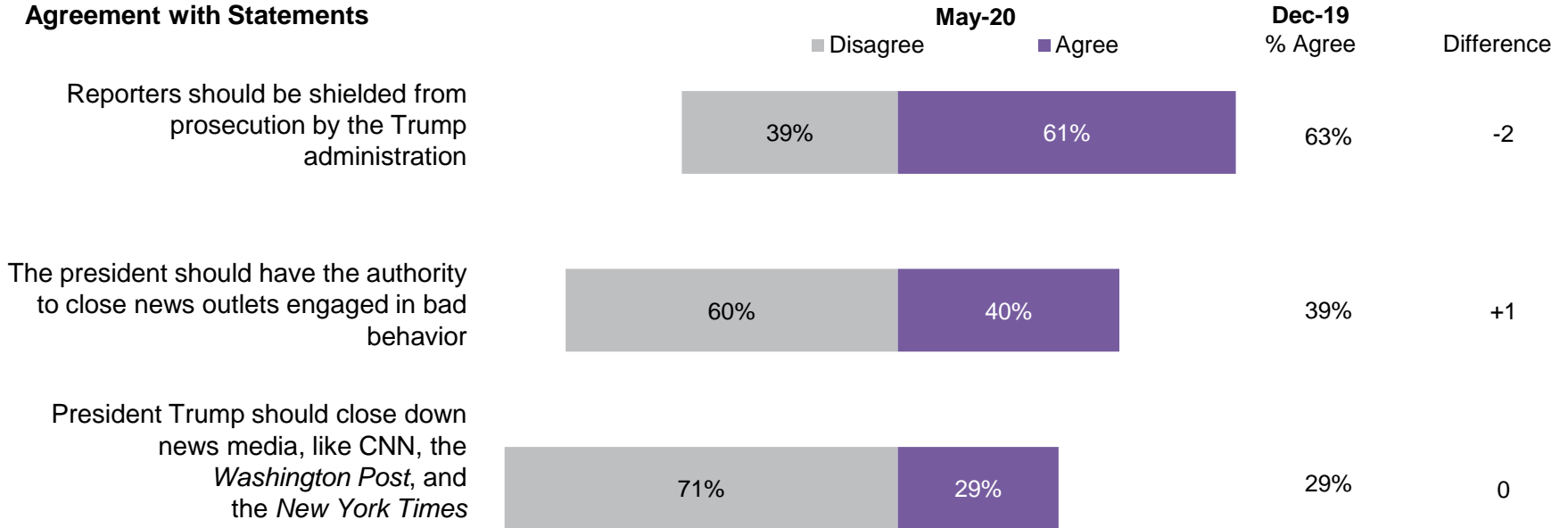
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About 6-in-10 Americans believe reporters should be shielded from prosecution by President Trump, but a notable minority think the president should have the authority to close down news outlets.

Perceptions are unchanged from December.

Agreement with Statements



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q1-Q3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the news and news media?

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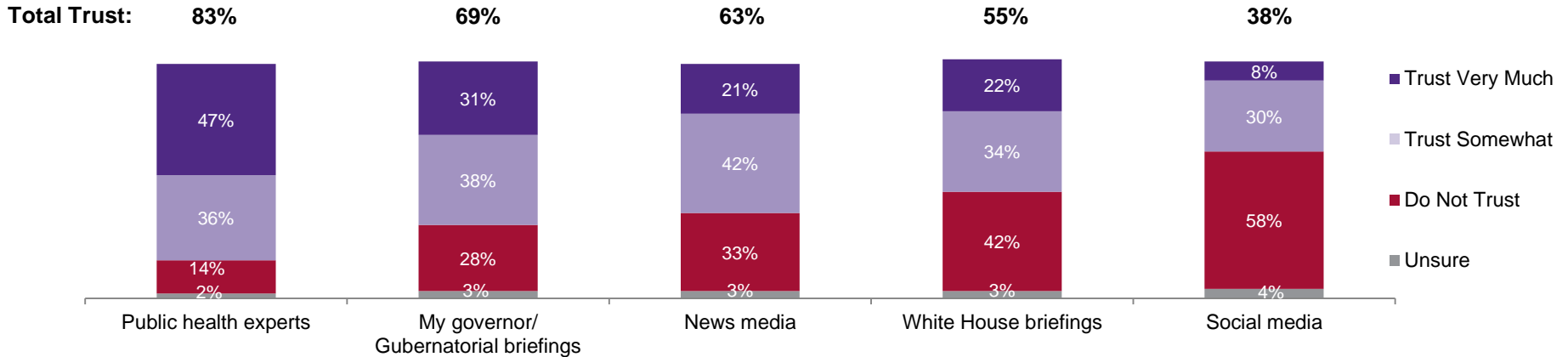
Detailed Findings Trust in Sources of Information about COVID-19

The questions in this section were asked in May 2020 only



Americans trust public health experts the most for information about COVID-19. Most do not trust information on social media.

May-20
Trust information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q4A. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...

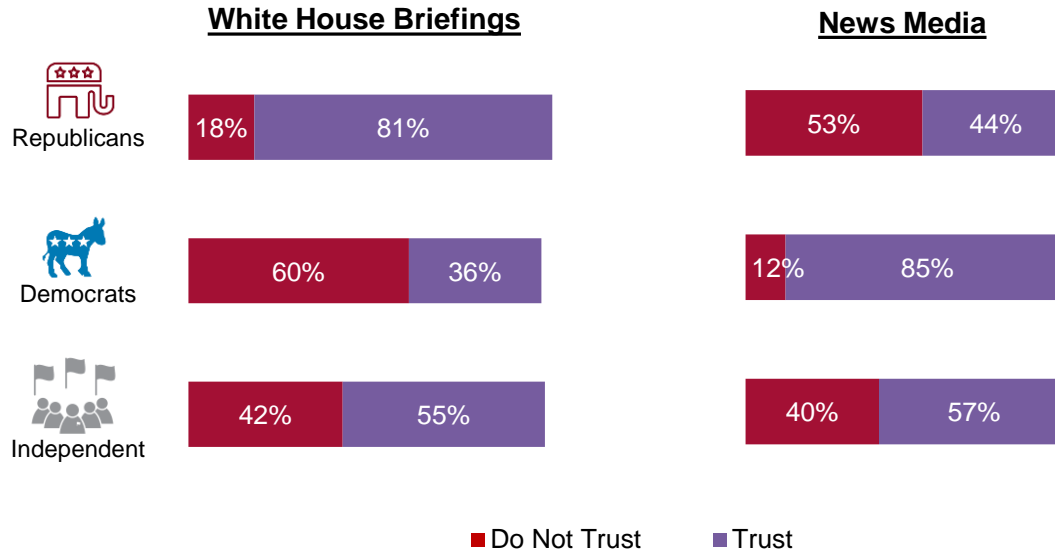
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Trust in information about COVID-19 from news media and White House briefings are split down party lines.

May-20

Trust information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q4A. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...

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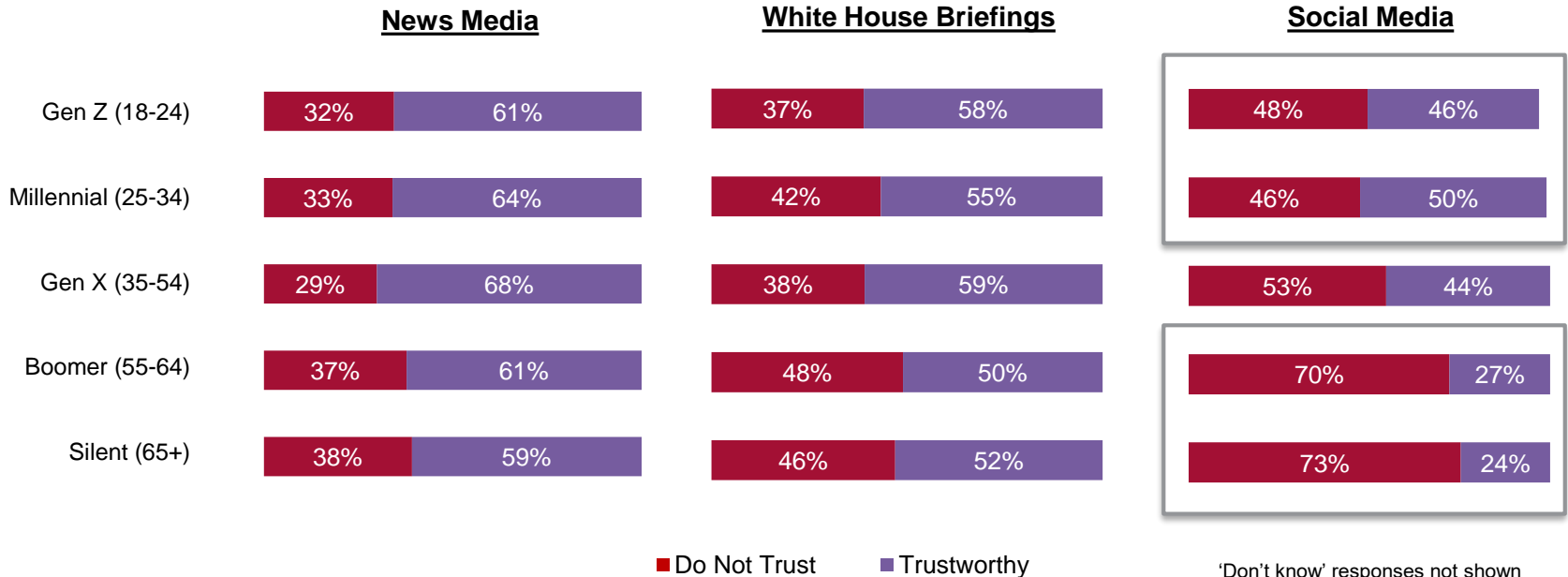
'Don't know' responses not shown



Younger Americans are far more likely than their older counterparts to trust information about COVID-19 on social media, but even among this group, only about half trust this source.

May-20

Trust information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q4A. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...

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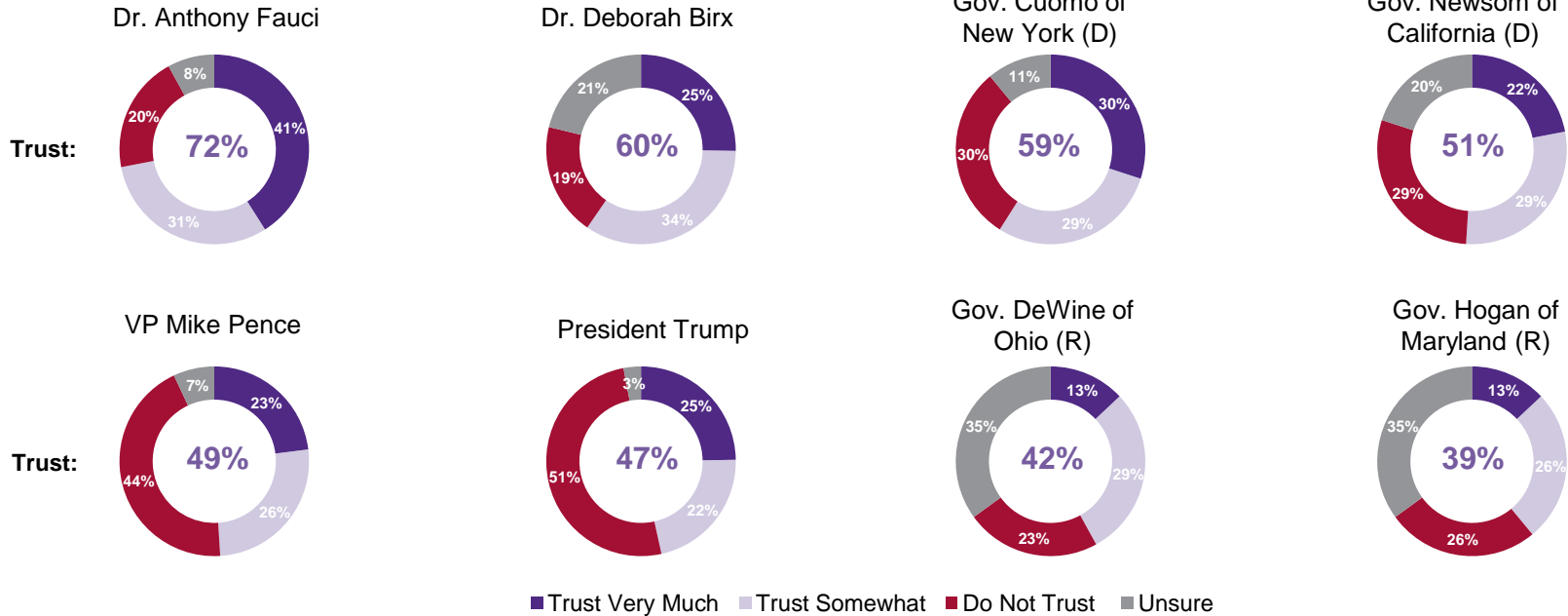
'Don't know' responses not shown



Nearly three-quarters of Americans trust COVID-19 information from Dr. Fauci. More than half do not trust information from President Trump.

May-20

Trust information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q4B. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...

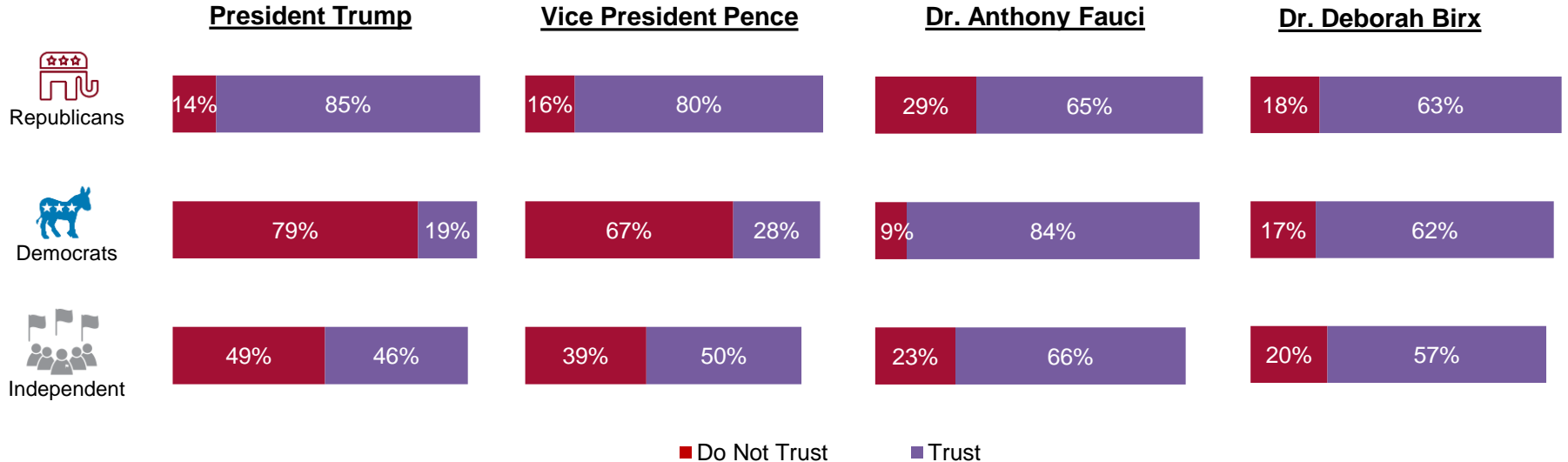
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Both parties trust COVID-19 information from Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx. The level of trust in the information provided by President Trump and Vice President Pence, however, is split along party lines.

May-20

Trust information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...



'Don't know' responses not shown

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q4B. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the information about the COVID-19 pandemic provided by...

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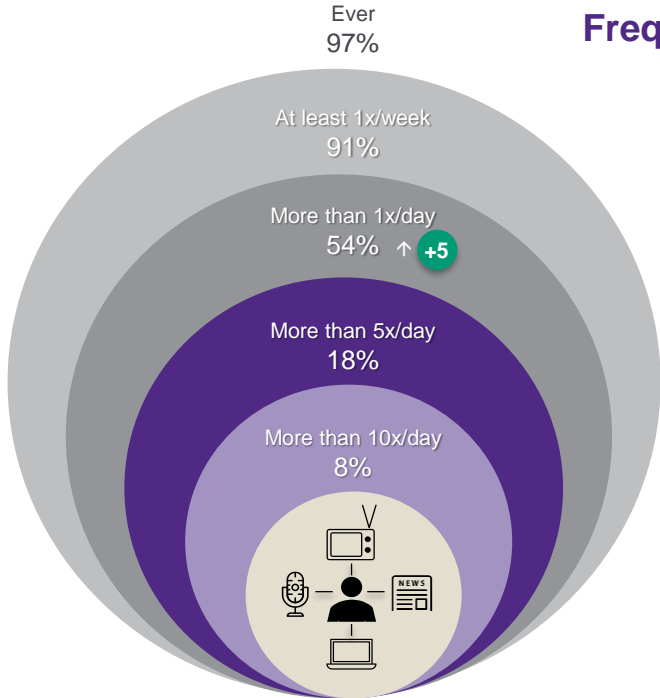
Detailed Findings

News Outlets: Frequency of Use and Perceived Political Leaning



Americans are looking at the news more than an hour per day, on average. Older groups and Democrats spend more time accessing news.

May-20 Frequency of News Consumption



	Avg. # of Minutes Accessing News per day*
Total	77
Gen Z	71
Millennial	56
Gen X	74
Boomer	82
Silent	99
Republican	73
Democrat	87
Independent	74

*Not asked in December 2019

↑/↓ **Green/Red** indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

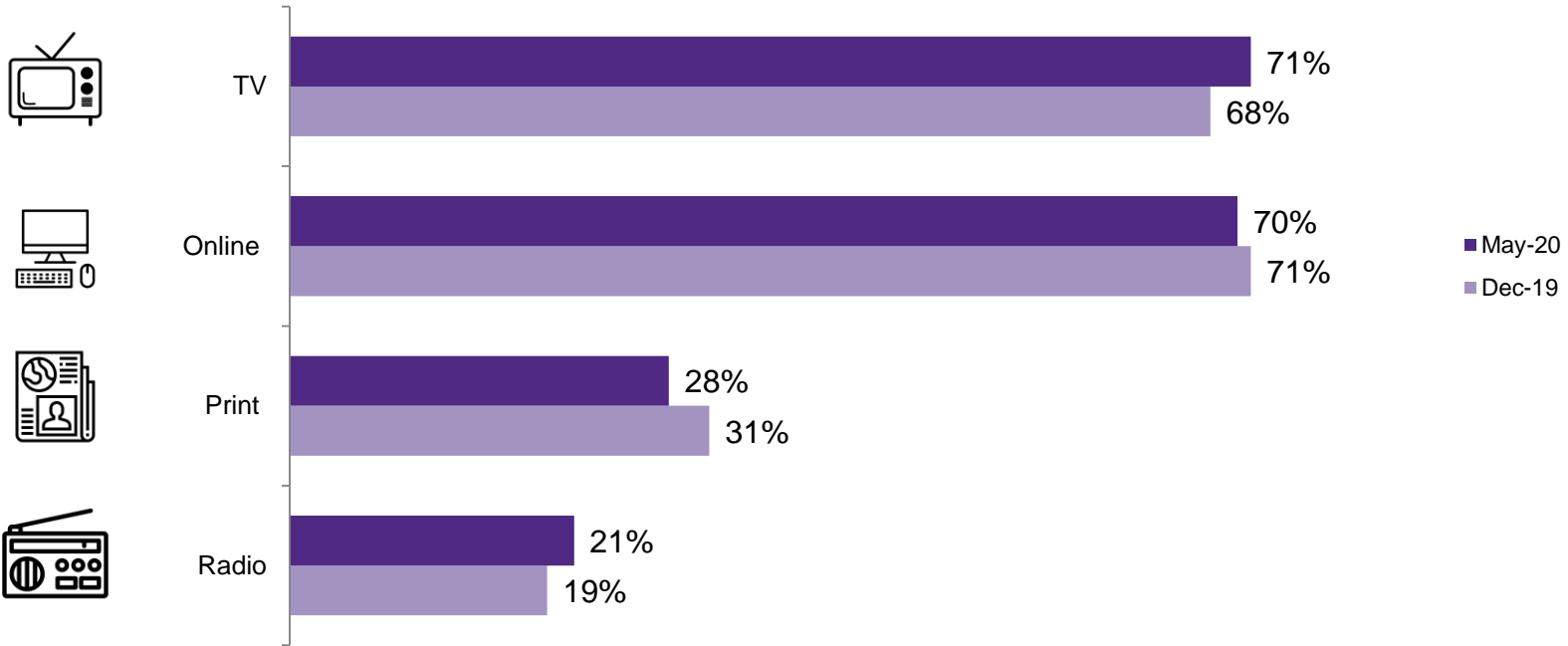
Q6. Typically, how often do you access news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, print or online)?

Q6A On average, how much time do you spend watching, reading the news or listening to the news per day-taken altogether?



TV and internet remain the most used channels for news.

% Who Have Used the Following in the Last Week as a Source of News



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

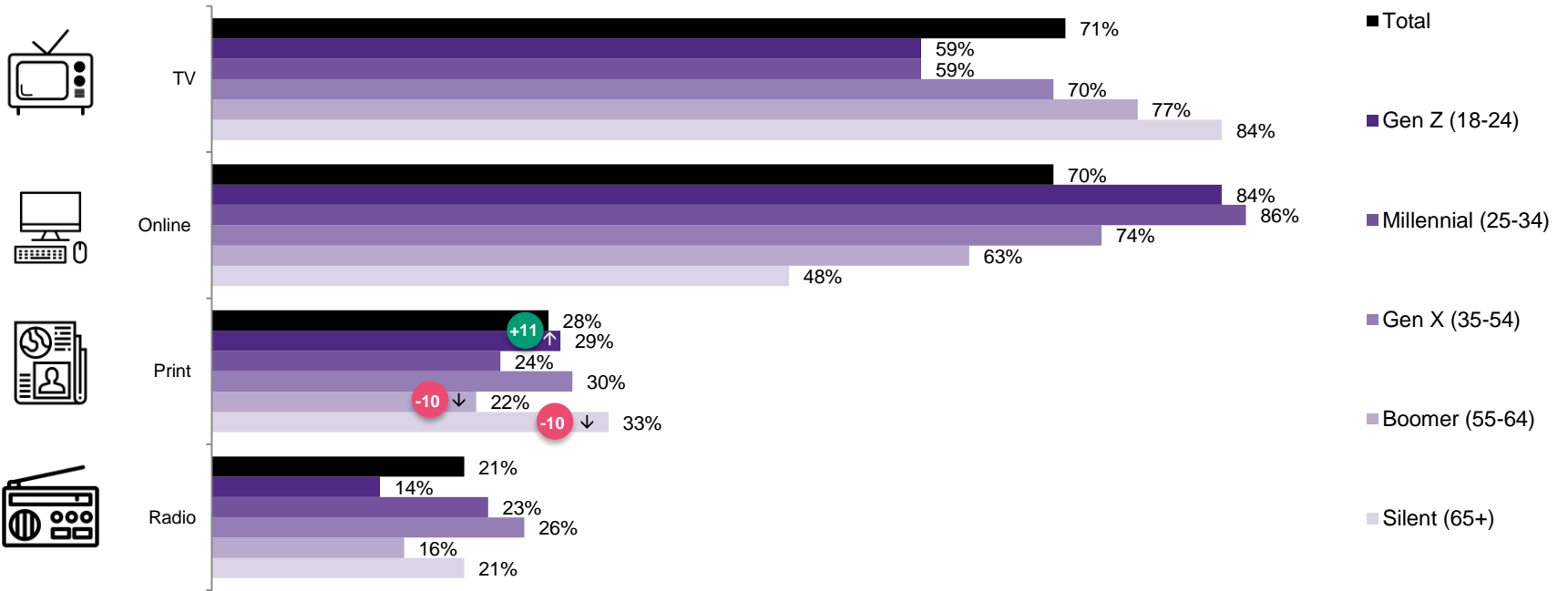
Q10. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply.

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TV and internet remain the most used channels for news across age groups, but use of the internet for news declines with age.

May-20
% Who Have Used the Following in the Last Week as a Source of News



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

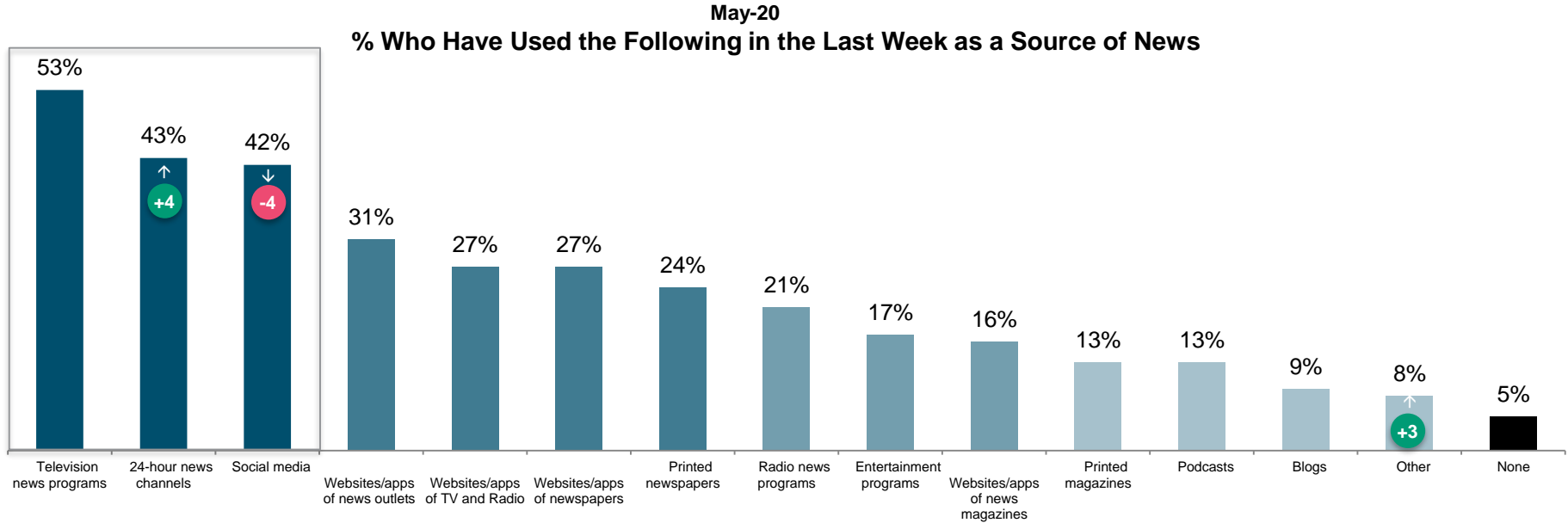
Q10. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply.

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Honing in on individual news sources used, television news, 24-hour cycles, and social media rise to the top for Americans.

As pandemic and protest news flood in, Americans are looking to 24-7 news options more so now than in December.



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q10. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply.

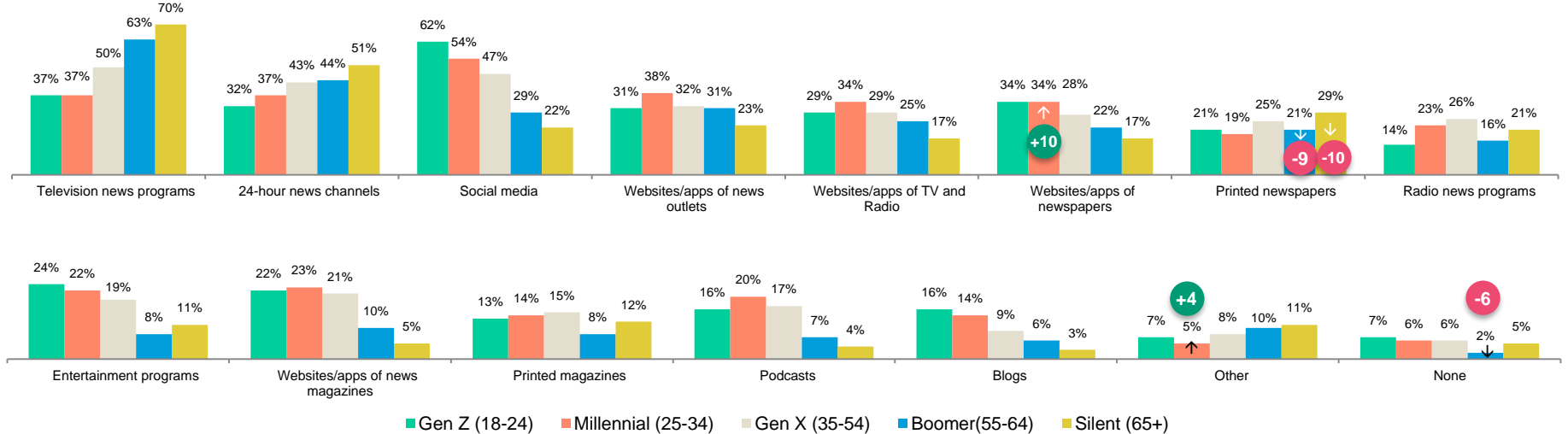
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While TV news and 24-hour channel use increases with age, the reverse is true for social media.

Newspaper websites are becoming more popular among Millennials while print options are decreasing among Boomers and Silent.

May-20
% Who Have Used the Following in the Last Week as a Source of News



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

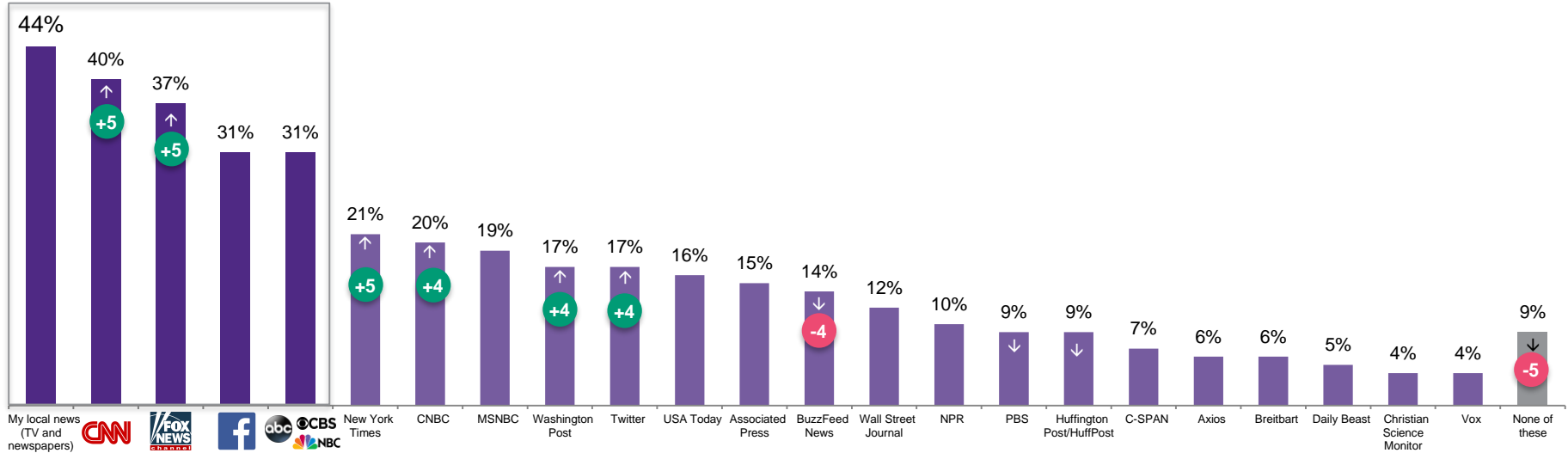
Q10. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply.

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Local news is used most often, followed by CNN and Fox News, both of which saw an uptick in use from December.

May-20
% Who Use the Following as a News Source At least Once a Week



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

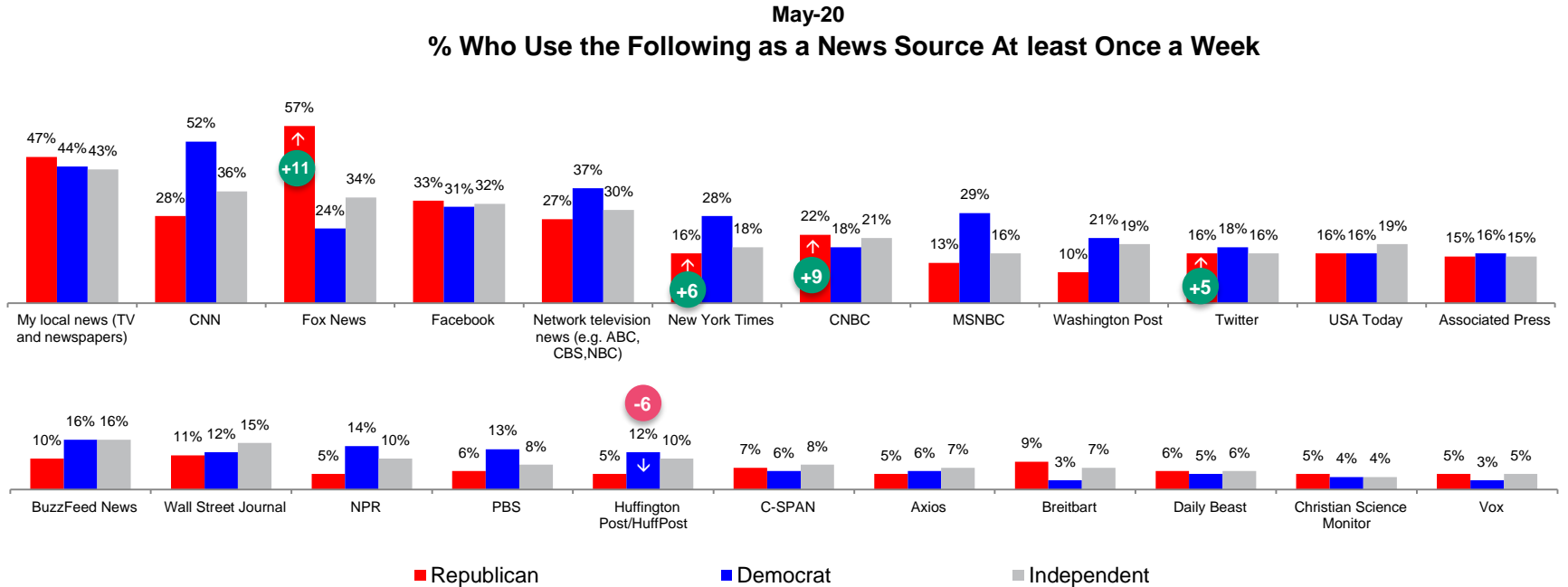
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q11. Which of the following do you use as a source for news at least once a week? This can be via any platform (radio, TV, print or online). Select all that apply.

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Compared with December, Republicans are now more likely to consume news via Fox News, NY Times, CNBC, and Twitter.



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

Q11. Which of the following do you use as a source for news at least once a week? This can be via any platform (radio, TV, print or online). Select all that apply.

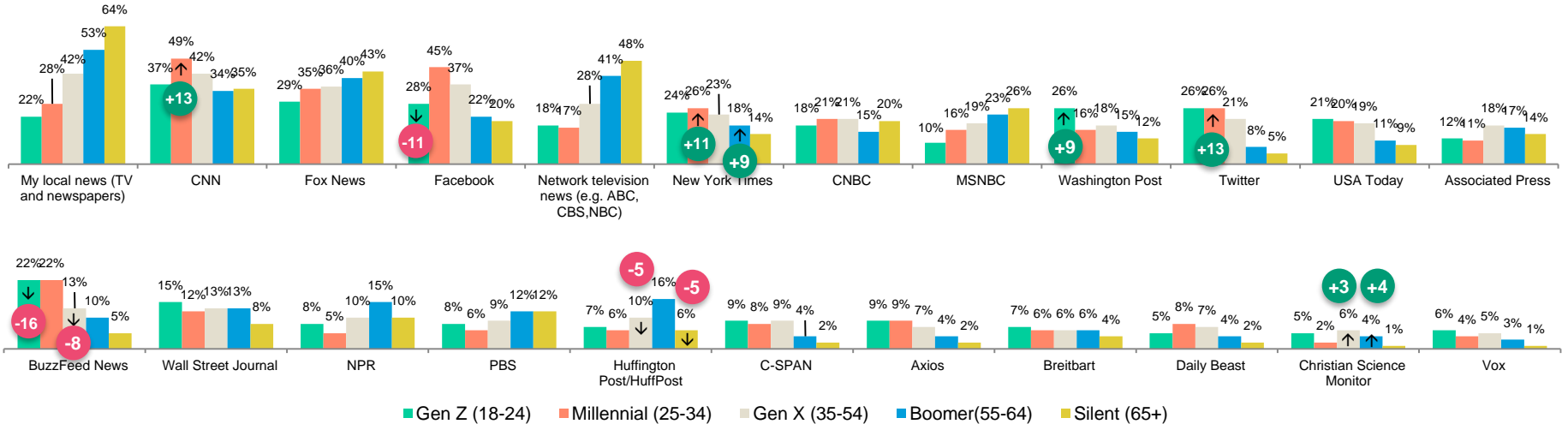
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Use of 'traditional' news sources—local and network news—increases substantially with age. Use of sources like Twitter and BuzzFeed decreases with age.

May-20

% Who Use the Following as a News Source At least Once a Week



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)

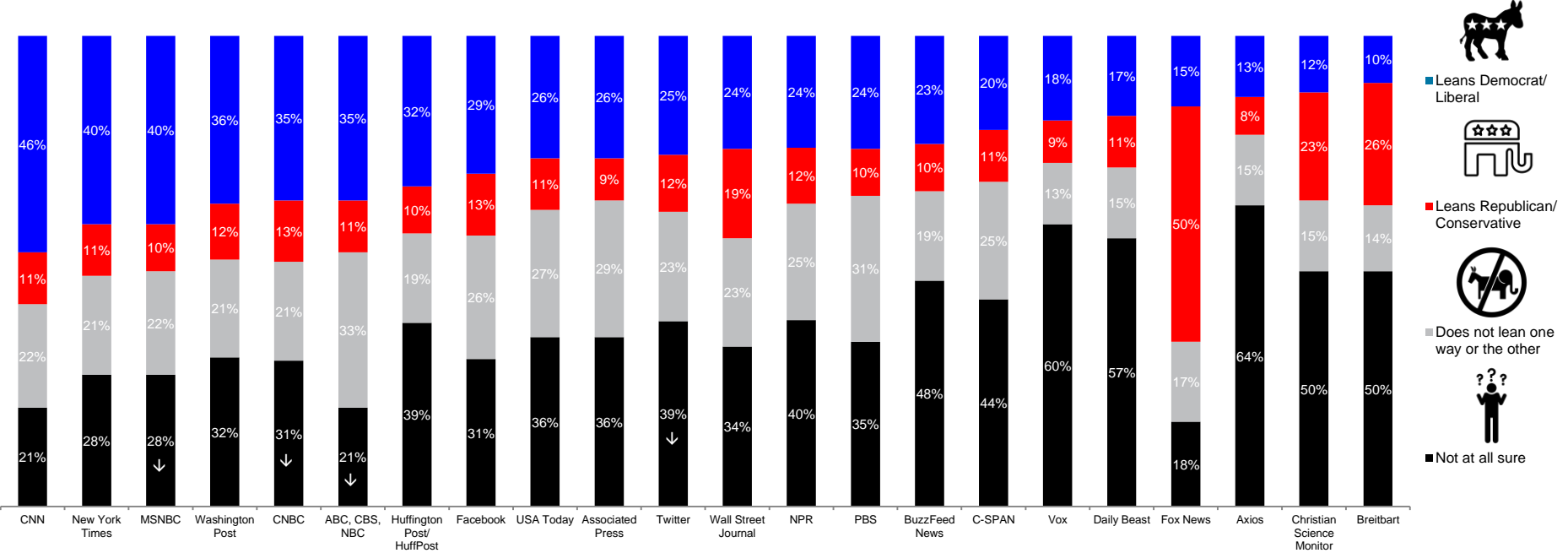
Q11. Which of the following do you use as a source for news at least once a week? This can be via any platform (radio, TV, print or online). Select all that apply.

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Majorities are unsure of the political leanings of news outlets.

May-20
Perceived Political Leaning of New Outlets



Leans Democrat/Liberal



Leans Republican/Conservative



Does not lean one way or the other



Not at all sure

↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

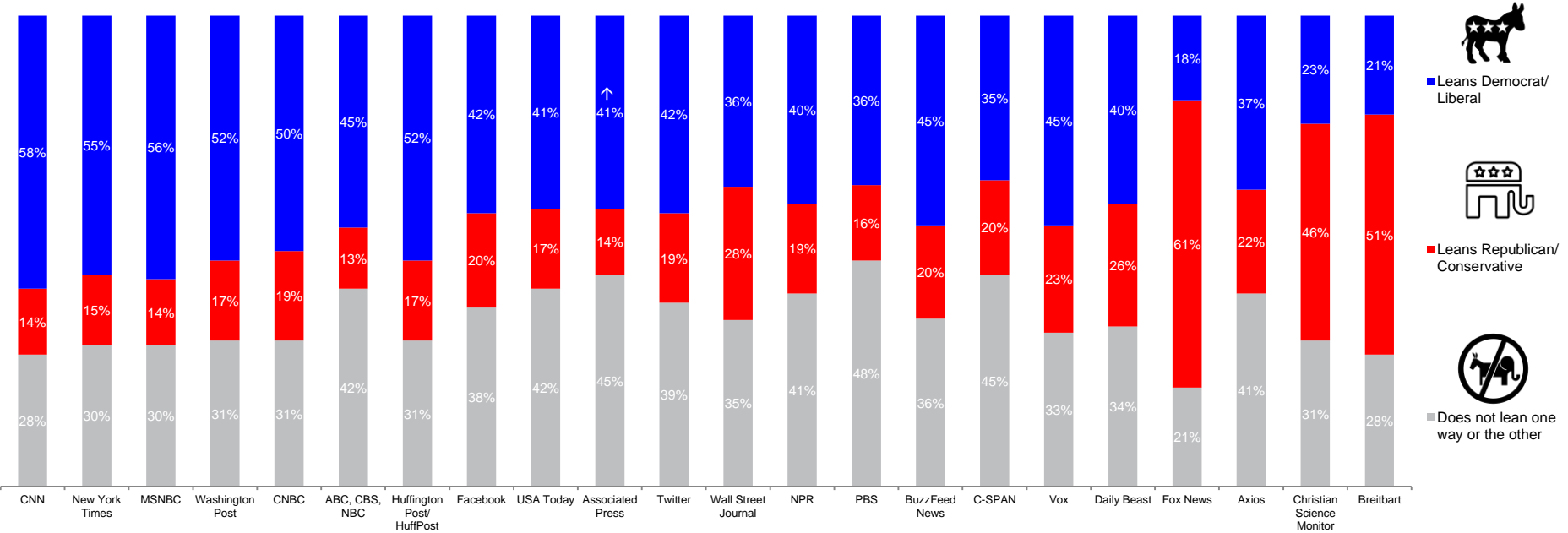
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)
Q12-13. Do you feel the news reported by each of the following ...
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Among those offering an opinion, CNN is perceived to be the most liberal, Fox News the most conservative, and PBS the most neutral.

May-20

Perceived Political Leaning of New Outlets – Excluding ‘Not Sure’



↑/↓ Green/Red indicates significantly higher/lower change from December 2019

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=2019)
Q12-13. Do you feel the news reported by each of the following ...

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Detailed Findings

Methodology and Demographic Profile of Respondents



Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States between May 27-29, 2020 among 2,019 adults (aged 18 and over). The survey was deployed by The Harris Poll - via its Harris On Demand omnibus - on behalf of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. Where applicable, results are compared with a similar survey conducted via the same methodology between December 9-11, 2019 among 2,007 adults (aged 18 and over).

Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, the words "margin of error" are avoided as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for these surveys were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the samples are based on those who agreed to participate in the online panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.



Demographic Profile of Respondents: December 2019 and May 2020

	DECEMBER N=2,007	MAY N=2,019
Gender		
Male	48%	48%
Female	52%	52%
Age		
18-24	12%	11%
25-34	18%	18%
35-44	17%	17%
45-54	16%	16%
55-64	17%	17%
65+	21%	21%
Education		
High school graduate	21%	17%
Job-specific training program(s)	3%	4%
Some college, but no degree	20%	24%
Associate degree	12%	10%
College graduate (e.g., B.A., A.B., B.S.)	19%	19%
Some graduate school, but no degree	3%	2%
Graduate degree	11%	13%
Race		
White	68%	68%
Black or African American	12%	12%
Asian or Pacific Islander	7%	7%
Native American or Alaskan native	3%	2%
Other race	9%	9%
Region		
Northeast	17%	18%
Midwest	21%	21%
South	38%	38%
West	23%	23%

	DECEMBER N=2,007	MAY N=2,019
Employment Status		
Employed full time	42%	40%
Employed part time	11%	9%
Self-employed	10%	8%
Not employed, but looking for work	4%	5%
Not employed and not looking for work	1%	2%
Not employed, unable to work due to a disability or illness	4%	5%
Retired	21%	23%
Student	5%	7%
Homemaker	7%	6%
Political Identity		
Republican	30%	31%
Democrat	37%	39%
Independent	27%	25%
Income		
Less than \$50k	31%	32%
\$50k-\$74.9k	17%	17%
\$75k-\$99.9k	13%	14%
\$100k+	36%	35%