



The Politics of Identity and Othering

Online survey of 2,509 registered voters nationwide

Fielded September 20-24, 2023



Methodological Approach to the Research

We conducted an online survey with a nationally representative sample of 2,500 registered voters with two overarching goals:

1. Identify the types of voters who are the most susceptible to use of othering by politicians and which specific ‘othering’ tactics are most impactful across different audiences.
2. Explore potential approaches for countering othering tactics, including which messages are most effective and which audiences are most likely to be persuaded or mobilized as a result of well-designed outreach to them.

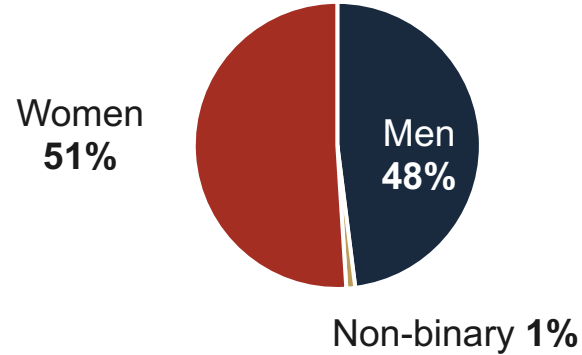
The survey is roughly divided into three sections:

1. Section one includes a battery of key baseline measurements (including questions that we use in a segmentation analysis) to identify what kinds of social and cultural “threats” concern people the most these days.
2. Section two includes an experiment where respondents watch videos that represent real-world political othering tactics. Half of respondents were randomly assigned to watch either (a) three videos on othering tactics that focus on a zero-sum game—in which “others” are portrayed as taking away resources from “us,” including jobs and public benefits or (b) three videos on othering tactics that focus on cultural threats, including religion, crime and American culture.
3. The final section of the survey tests potential responses to these othering tactics, using written text to investigate efficacy of various themes for countering othering narratives.

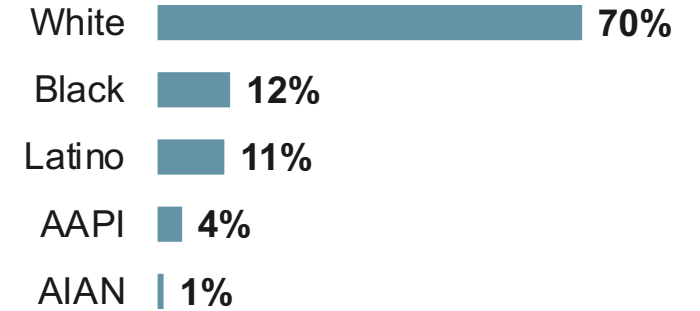
Methodology and Profile of the Sample

- Online survey of 2,509 registered voters nationwide
- Sample includes race/ethnicity oversamples:
 - Black voters (382 total interviews)
 - Latino voters (369 total interviews)
 - AAPI voters (283 total interviews)
- Fielded September 20-24, 2023

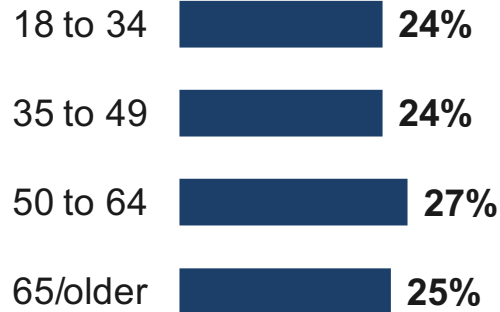
Gender



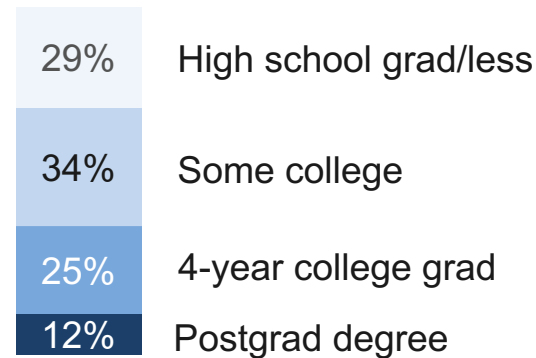
Race



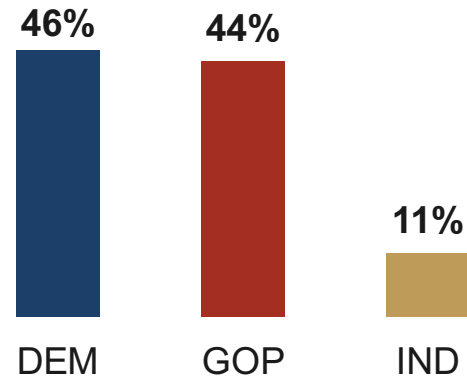
Age



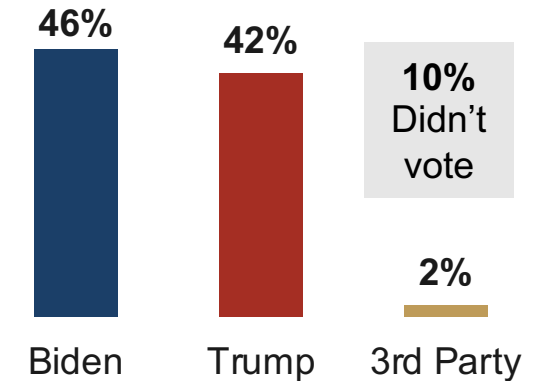
Education



Party ID



2020 Vote



Key Takeaways

1

Deep-Rooted Economic & Societal Worries

- Many voters, especially white voters, fear that societal changes are eroding their power; this is fueled by perceptions of declining economic status of middle- and lower-class Americans.
- Hostility to the presence and societal influence of immigrants also is a key driver for white conservative voters, who also share the economic concerns of other voters.

2

Democratic Vulnerabilities

- The prevailing sense of unease provides Republicans with an opportunity not just to energize their base but also to chip away at Democratic margins.
- Issues of rising crime and the perceived erosion of faith, family, and patriotism resonate beyond the conservative white base, connecting with diverse voter groups – expanding the audience base for the othering tactics of the right.
- Crime is a unique vulnerability for Democrats; Republicans can appeal to broad segments of the electorate by talking about crimes in ways that are less explicitly racialized.

Key Takeaways

3

Complex Dynamics of Outgroup Othering

Susceptibility to othering is most extreme among older, white, conservative men but it exists to some degree across all demographic groups. Notably, there are minimal educational differences between those who are the most and least inclined to othering.

- The rhetoric against trans athletes in schools has traction among an unsettlingly broad spectrum of voters, cutting across typical ideological divisions.
- The general concern about crime is almost unanimous. However, narratives that attribute crime to Black individuals primarily resonate with white conservatives and suburban white voters.
- Anti-immigrant arguments hold sway more with Trump voters and white voters over age 50.
- An alarming gender divide: nearly half of white, AAPI, and Latino men are more sympathetic to claims that women are neglecting their families than that women's rights are under attack.
- While voters of color largely reject explicitly racist othering appeals, they remain open to other forms of othering that speak to traditional family values and gender roles.

Key Takeaways: Promising Strategic Counter-Narratives to Othering

The pervasive influence of 'othering' within the political context demands an intentional and informed response. Our research has identified three particularly effective messages that merit further exploration.

Strong condemnation of fearmongering politicians

Enough is enough. It's time to see through the fearmongering that some politicians are using to distract us from the real issues facing our nation. While the rich get even richer, the rest of us struggle with rising costs and wages that don't keep up. Yet they want us to blame our neighbors and people who they say are different instead of holding corporations and corrupt politicians accountable.

Center our collective fight for freedom for all

America is about freedom for all. It is a national promise written in the Declaration of Independence. As a country, we fight not just for our own freedoms, but the freedoms of all people, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. If one of us loses our freedom because of who we are, what we look like, or what we believe, we all lose.

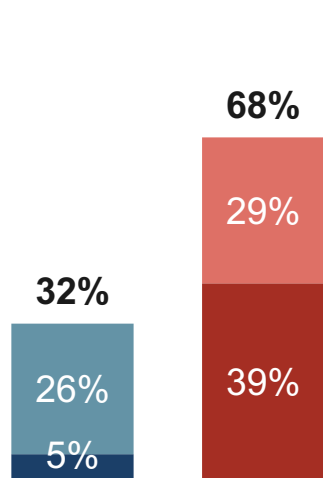
Among voters of color, also emphasize strength in diversity

Our diversity is what makes the United States truly great. When people from different backgrounds come together, we spark innovation, foster creativity, and build vibrant communities. Embracing our differences makes us a stronger nation. Let's support leaders who champion our multi-cultural fabric and uphold our values.

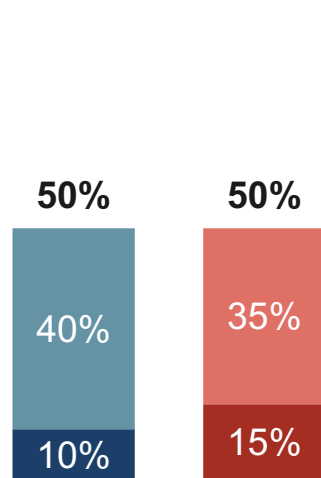
Voters voice discontent with changes in the past 25 years.

The United States has changed a lot as a country in the past 25 years. Do you think the changes that have occurred in the country over the past 25 years have mainly been for the better or for the worse?

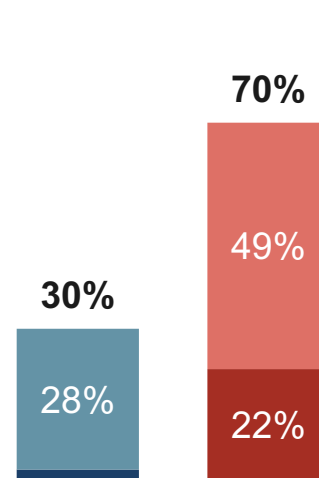
■ A lot more for the better ■ Somewhat more for the better ■ Somewhat more for the worse ■ A lot more for the worse



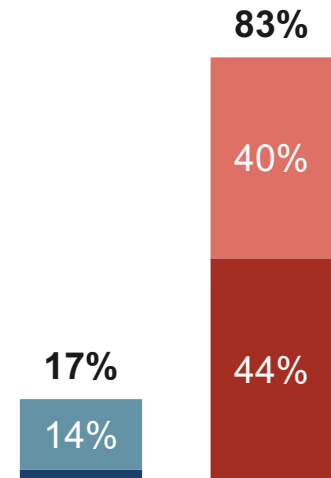
All Voters



Biden voters



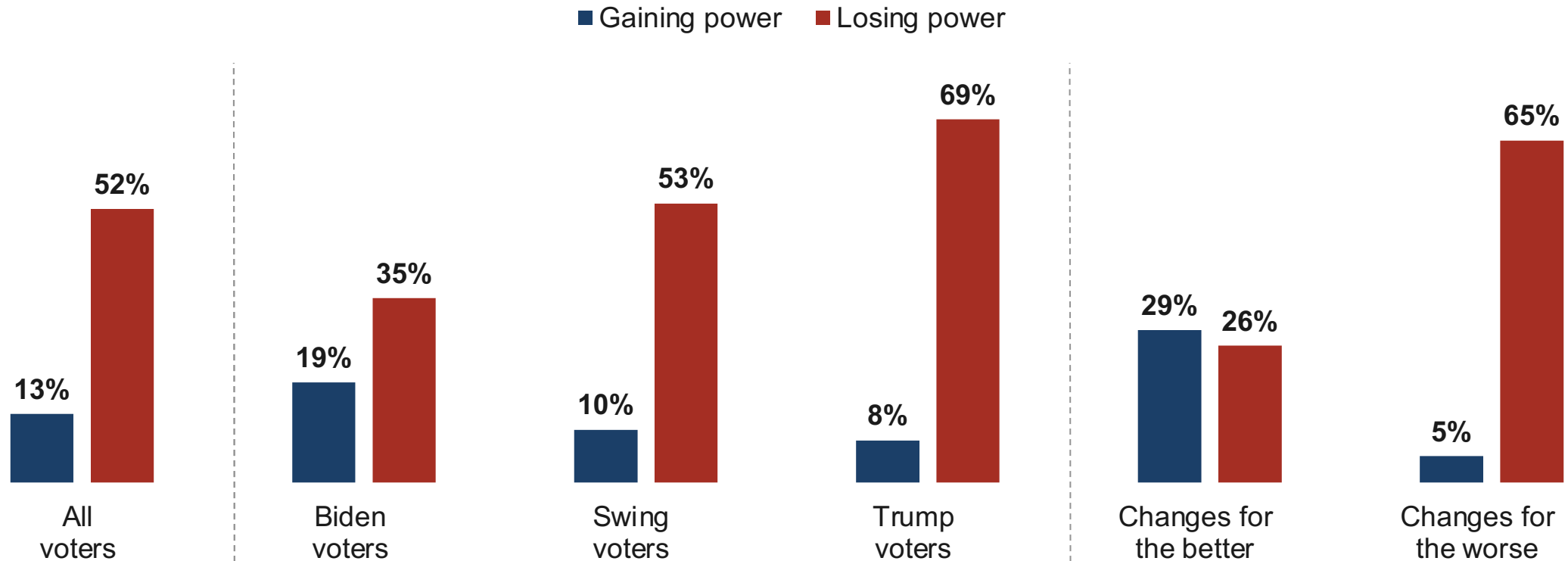
Swing voters



Trump voters

Over half of voters believe that they are losing power in our country today.

*Thinking about the changes that are occurring in our society, do you think **people like you** are mostly gaining power or losing power in our country today?*



The sense of losing power is pervasive across the electorate, with white voters feeling it most acutely.

*Thinking about the changes that are occurring in our society, do you think **people like you** are mostly gaining power or losing power in our country today?*

	Gaining power %	Losing power %
Men	15	52
Women	11	53
Black voters	27	35
Latinx voters	27	42
AAPI voters	19	38
White voters	8	58
18-34	22	44
35-49	15	45
50-64	9	57
65+	5	63
White women noncollege	6	61
White women college grads	6	57
White men noncollege	8	59
White men college grads	11	56
Urban	23	39
Suburban	10	56
Small town/rural	6	61
Evangelical	11	61
LGBTQ	16	44

While both Biden voters and Trump voters see crime and violence to be big problems, there are big gaps between them on other issues.

<i>How big a problem, if at all, do you consider this to be today?</i>	Biden voters %	Trump voters %	GAP
Crime and violence in America's cities	83	91	8
Loss of family values, faith, and patriotism	42	85	43
Disrespect for our country, American flag	39	79	40
The rights of women being taken away	80	38	42
Too much political correctness, censoring free speech by liberal elites	33	80	47
Public employees working for the deep state	44	69	25
The rise in right-wing extremism	80	30	50
Increase in intolerance for other people/cultures	69	39	30
Racial injustice, systemic discrimination against Black Americans	76	27	49
The rise in white nationalism	81	23	58
Immigrants who want to change America instead of adapting	25	71	46
People can't talk about God, prayer, and traditional Christian values in schools/public	28	68	40
Mistreatment of immigrants	70	27	43
Reverse discrimination against white Americans	18	61	43

Crime and the erosion of faith, family values, and patriotism are not just conservative talking points for the white base; they strike a chord with voters of color too.

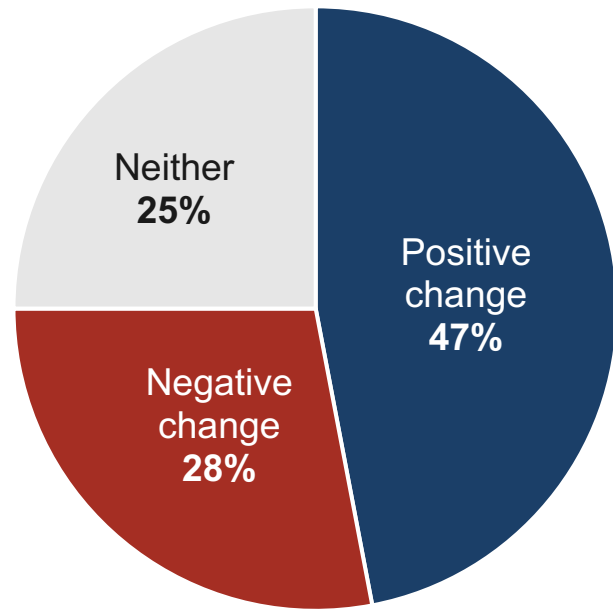
% Very/fairly big problem (highest rated)

Black voters	Latino voters	AAPI voters	White voters
Crime/violence (85)	Crime/violence (86)	Crime/violence (83)	Crime/violence (87)
Racial injustice, discrimination against Black Americans (83)	Racial injustice, discrimination against Black Americans (66)	Women's rights taken away (61)	Loss of family values, faith, patriotism (65)
White nationalism (77)	Women's rights taken away (64)	White nationalism (61)	Disrespect for our flag, country (61)
Women's rights taken away (74)	Loss of family values, faith, patriotism (62)	Right-wing extremism (58)	Too much political correctness (61)
Loss of family values, faith, patriotism (62)	Mistreatment of immigrants (62)	Loss of family values, faith, patriotism (56)	Public employees working for the deep state (56)

Across race/ethnicity, women are more concerned than men about the rights of women being taken away (by 10+ points).

Fewer than half of voters say America's growing diversity is a positive change, with a large gap between Trump and Biden voters.

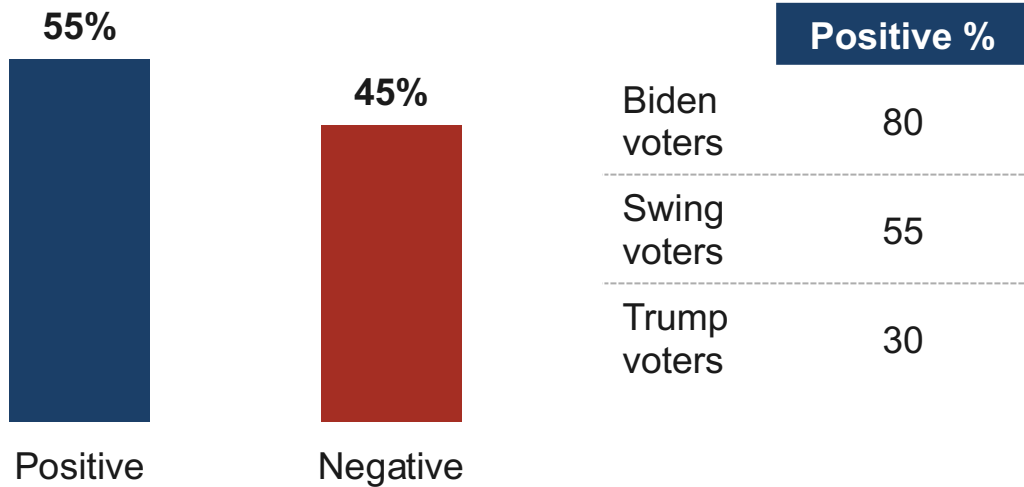
The population of the United States is getting increasingly diverse--with people of many different nationalities, religions, races, and lifestyles becoming a bigger part of the population. Do you see the **growing diversity of the United States** as more of a positive change or a negative change?



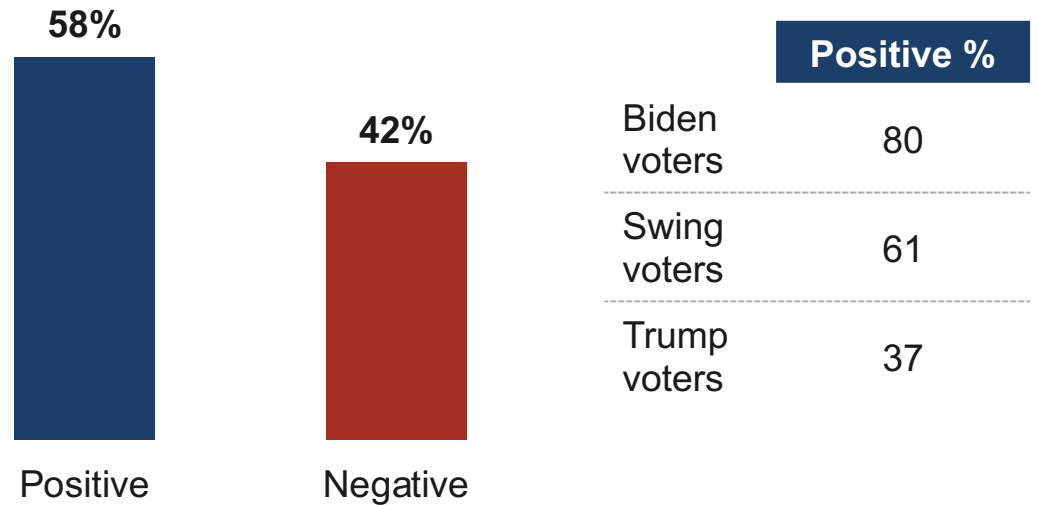
	Positive %	Negative %
Biden voters	72	9
Swing voters	48	25
Trump voters	25	47
Black voters	60	16
Latino voters	60	17
AAPI voters	60	21
White women noncollege	41	33
White women college grads	56	21
White men noncollege	29	43
White men college grads	47	28
LGBTQ voters	66	17

While a majority of voters welcome the growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ people, a notable minority views this shift negatively.

Do you think it is more positive or more negative that **transgender people** are now freer to openly express their gender identity than in the past?



Do you think it is more positive or more negative that **LGBTQ people** are now freer to openly express their sexual orientation and gender identity than in the past?



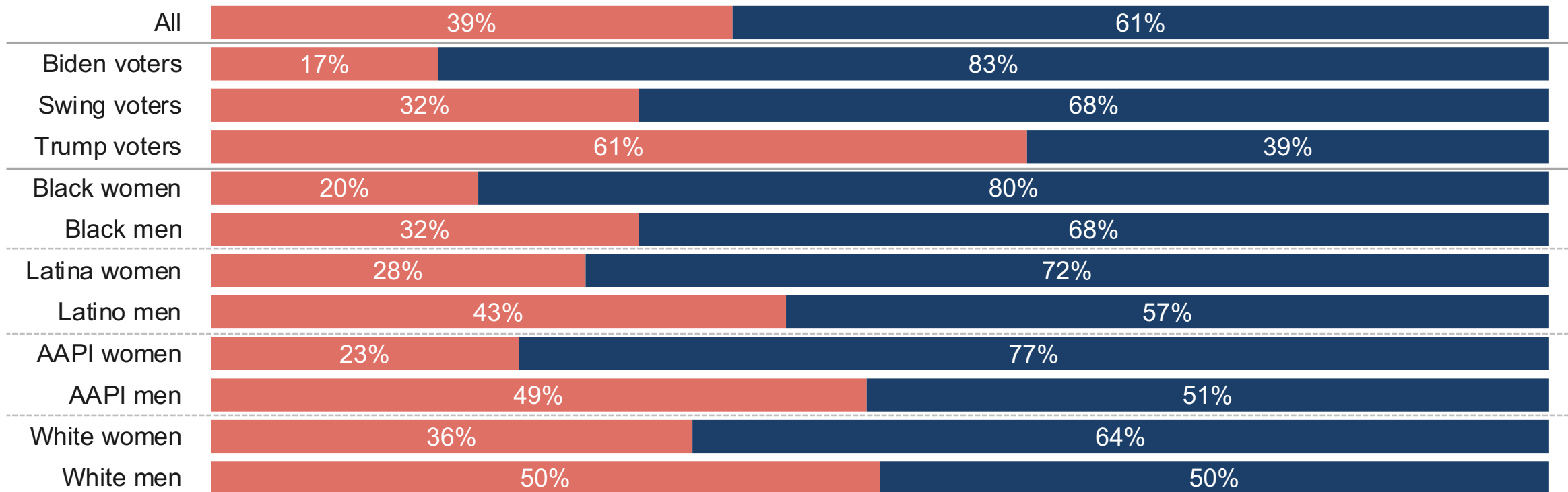
Younger voters and women are most likely to view each as a positive.

Voters side with progressives on women's rights, but stories about women neglecting family appeal to Trump voters and many men.

Which comes closer to your view?

Women today are too focused on their careers and not enough on their families.

The rights of women today are under attack and being taken away.

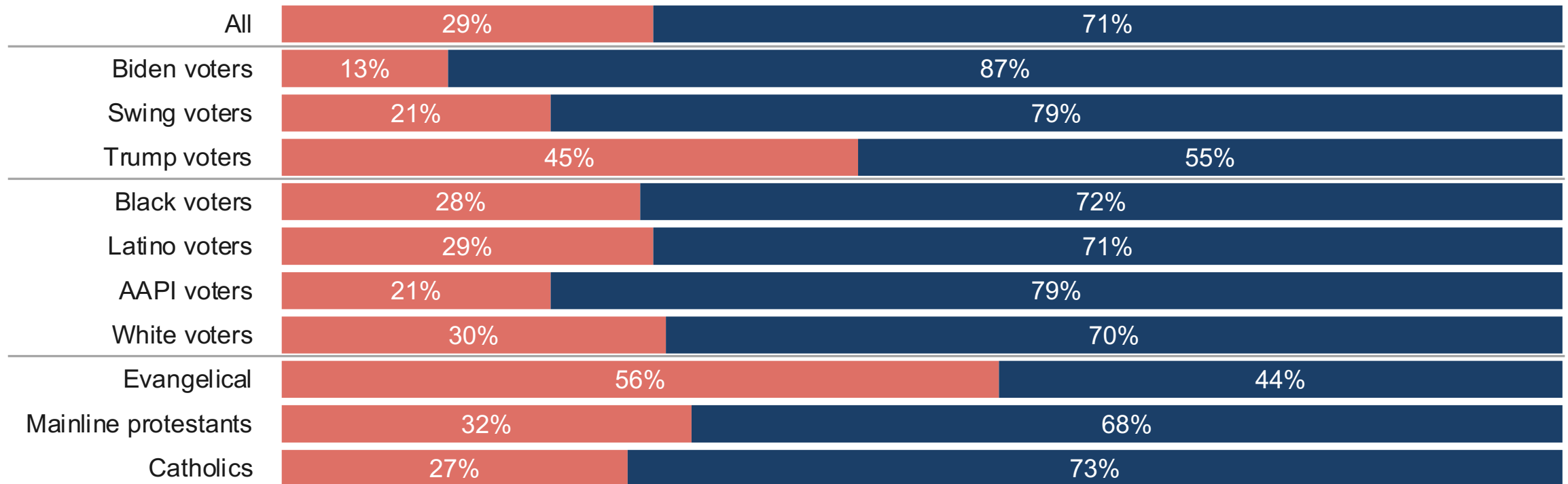


Despite concerns about the decline of faith in public life, voters firmly uphold the principle of separating church and state.

Which comes closer to your view?

America was founded as a Christian nation, and we should continue to uphold Christian principles.

America was founded on freedom of religion, and we should protect the separation of church and state.



SEGMENTATION

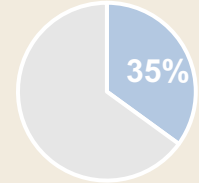
Segmenting voters reveals distinct othering levels: low, moderate, and high. While white, less educated Republicans often hold the most extreme views, these tendencies ripple across the entire electorate.

Overview of Approach to the Segmentation Analysis

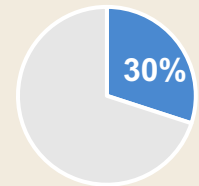
We created a composite score for respondents based on 10 questions about different demographic groups: immigrants, Black and African American individuals, women, people from other cultures, white Americans, and LGBTQ individuals.

Respondents were segmented into three distinct groups, reflecting the intensity and prevalence of their “othering” views. These **three** groups allow us to understand the profiles of, and analyze how, people with different levels of othering predispositions respond to political othering messages.

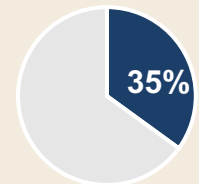
1) Othering resisters: individuals who reject othering views toward different groups.



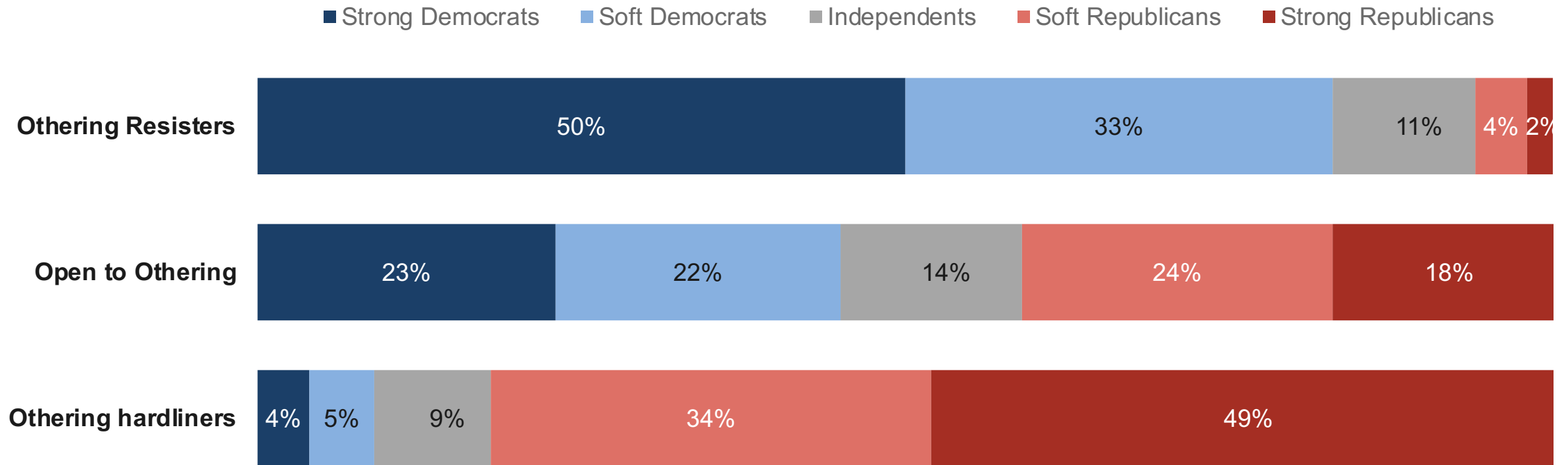
2) Open to othering: those who show occasional or moderate tendencies toward “othering”.



3) Othering hardliners: people with strong and consistent “othering” beliefs across a range of groups.

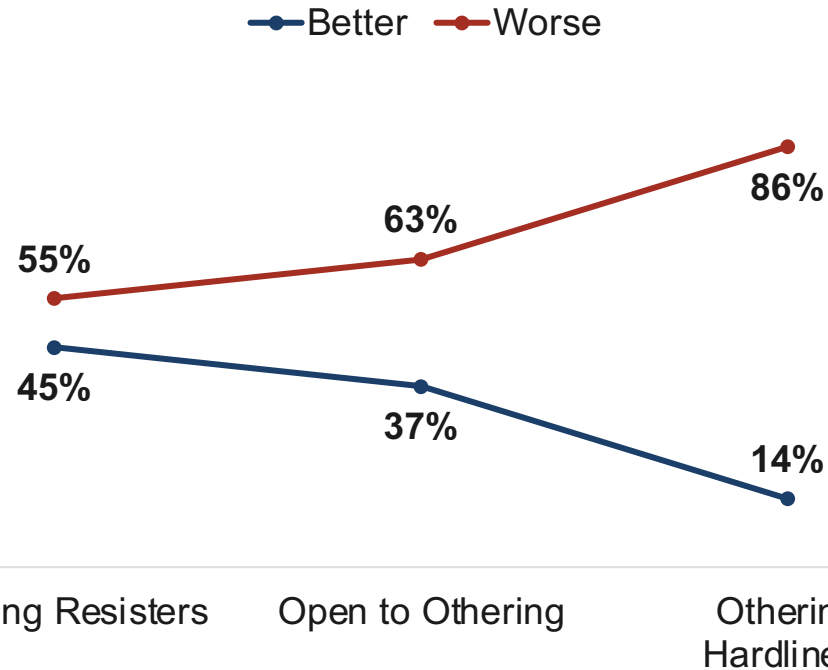


Partisanship and othering are closely linked. Controlling the political narrative around othering can potentially deepen partisan divides and sway more ambivalent voters.

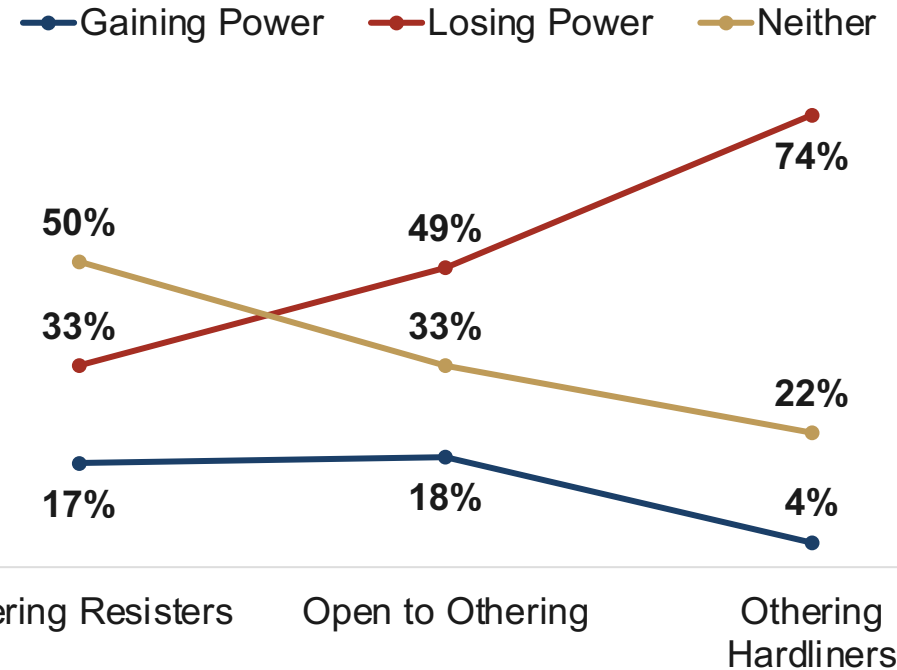


Those with stronger othering views feel the nation is in decline and they are losing power, offering a chance for opportunists to assign blame.

Do you think the changes that have occurred in the country over the past 25 years have mainly been for the better or for the worse?



Thinking about the changes that are occurring in our society, do you think people like you are mostly gaining power or losing power in our country today?









REACTIONS TO OTHERING

In a test of six media representations of othering, anti-trans rhetoric and racist crime videos stand out as particularly concerning; they resonate not just with extreme hardliners but with a broader audience as well.

Media Reactions: Overview of Methodology

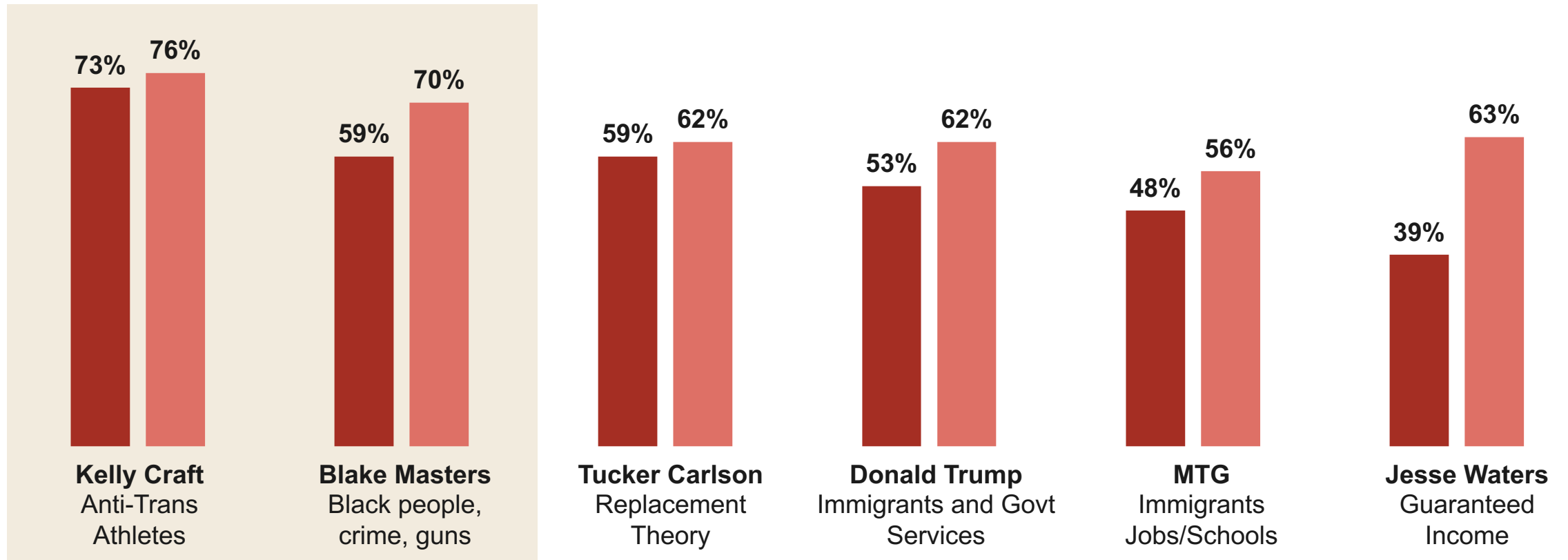
Participants each were randomly assigned to watch a set of three videos: One set portrayed ‘others’ as threatening the ingroup’s resources while the other set portrayed ‘others’ as threatening the ingroup’s culture.

RESOURCE THREAT	CULTURE THREAT
 <p data-bbox="708 601 1192 679">Donald Trump on Immigrants Taking Govt. Services</p>	 <p data-bbox="1857 558 2359 725">Tucker Carlson on Immigrants Taking Voting Rights from American-born Citizens (Replacement Theory)</p>
 <p data-bbox="708 822 1174 939">Marjorie Taylor Green on Immigrants Replacing Jobs, Schools</p>	 <p data-bbox="1857 843 2308 922">Kelly Craft on Transgender Athletes Endangering Kids</p>
 <p data-bbox="708 1043 1207 1208">Jesse Waters on POC, Immigrants Taking Money and Resources with Guaranteed Income</p>	 <p data-bbox="1857 1065 2390 1182">Blake Masters on “gangs, Black people” Being Responsible for Crime in Cities</p>

The anti-trans video and racist Blake Masters video have the most traction with voters.

■ I agree with what I saw and heard in the video

■ I agree the video is raising an important problem that I am concerned about



Extreme anti-trans rhetoric resonates with large numbers of swing voters and even half of Biden voters, exposing a potential conservative leverage point.

% Agree what saw and heard in video

● Biden voters ● Swing voters ● Trump voters

Kelly Craft

Anti-Trans athletes

53% ● 82% ● 93%

Blake Masters

Black people, crime, guns

28% ● 63% ● 88%

Tucker Carlson

Replacement Theory

28% ● 60% ● 89%

Donald Trump

Immigrants and Govt services

18% ● 54% ● 87%

MTG

Immigrants jobs/schools

15% ● 50% ● 81%

Jesse Waters

Guaranteed Income

31% ● 45% ● 49%

While Trump and MTG's othering tactics are transparent, many miss how attacks on trans athletes and immigrants are a form of fearmongering, making it even more dangerous.

% Agree the video is trying to frighten and divide people

● Biden voters ● Swing voters ● Trump voters

Younger voters, voters of color, and college-educated women tend to recognize divisive 'othering' tactics. The anti-trans video stands out as an outlier.

Kelly Craft
Anti-Trans athletes



Blake Masters
Black people, crime, guns



Tucker Carlson
Replacement Theory



Donald Trump
Immigrants and govt services



MTG
Immigrants jobs/schools



Jesse Waters
Guaranteed Income



OTHERING TACTICS DEMAND RESPONSE

Our research highlights two effective strategies:

- 1) A strong moral stance condemning politicians for their fearmongering and efforts to distract us from their failures; and**
- 2) A message rooted in our national value of freedom, underscoring our collective fight for freedom for all.**

The response to othering attacks that tests best is a direct callout of politicians' divisive fearmongering.

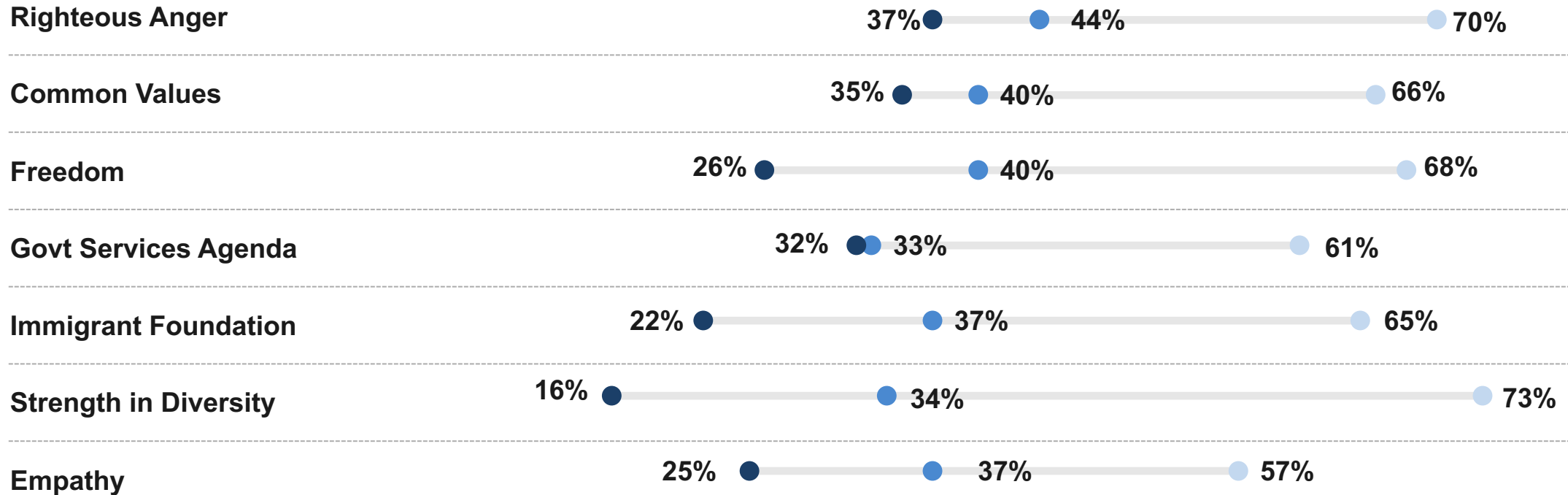
How convincing is each statement to you personally?

	Very convincing %
RIGHTEOUS ANGER Enough is enough. It's time to see through the fearmongering that some politicians are using to distract us from the real issues facing our nation. While the rich get even richer, the rest of us struggle with rising costs and wages that don't keep up. Yet they want us to blame our neighbors and people who they say are different instead of holding corporations and corrupt politicians accountable.	66
COMMON VALUES No matter what we look like or where we come from, we all want what's best for our families and communities. But a handful of politicians use fear and lies to divide us and gain power. They point the finger at people who they say are different to pursue their own agendas and hide their own failures. We need to support leaders who value all of us.	62
FREEDOM America is about freedom for all. It is a national promise written in the Declaration of Independence. As a country, we fight not just for our own freedoms, but the freedoms of all people, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. If one of us loses our freedom because of who we are, what we look like, or what we believe, we all lose.	59
GOVT SERVICES AGENDA Some politicians pit some Americans against other Americans just so that they can gain power and get elected to promote their agenda to dismantle government services, including public education and unemployment benefits. Creating opportunities for people to pursue their American dream is who we are at our core, and we will not allow them to destroy the government services that make those opportunities possible.	56
IMMIGRANT FOUNDATION Our nation's founders were immigrants seeking a better life, driven by the promise of liberty and equality. Like them, many others have come to America seeking freedom from oppression. When we uphold these values for all, regardless of where they come from or who they are, we build a society that respects individual rights and provides opportunities for everyone to thrive.	55
STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY Our diversity is what makes the United States truly great. When people from different backgrounds come together, we spark innovation, foster creativity, and build vibrant communities. Embracing our differences makes us a stronger nation. Let's support leaders who champion our multi-cultural fabric and uphold our values.	55
EMPATHY It's too easy to focus on our differences, but wouldn't it be better if we learned how much we share and have in common with each other? We all want to be able to care for our families. We all know the pain of loss or being misunderstood. Let's give each other a helping hand and support leaders who bring out the best in us.	52

Righteous Anger emerges as a top message among voters across different othering predispositions, whereas Strength in Diversity mainly resonates with othering resisters

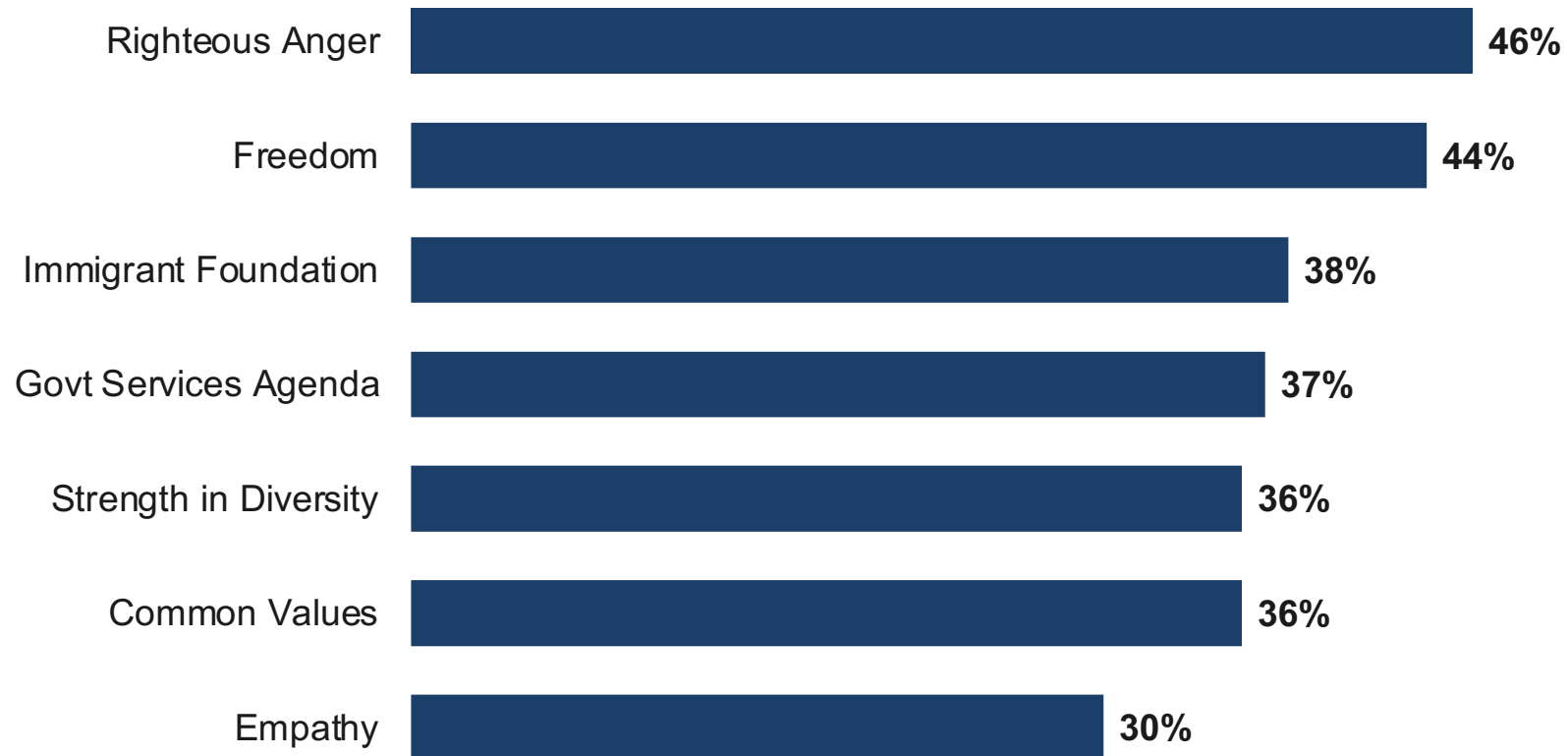
% who rate this statement as very convincing

● Othering resisters ● Open to othering ● Othering hardliners



When voters rank their top messages, ‘Righteous Anger’ and ‘Freedom’ stand out as the most powerful.

Top 3 Most Convincing



The Freedom message is effective across all audiences while Strength in Diversity connects with voters of color.

Top 3 Most Convincing

Biden voters %	Swing voters %	Trump voters %
Righteous anger (46)	Righteous anger (47)	Freedom (41)
Freedom (46)	Freedom (44)	Righteous anger (47)
Strength in diversity (45)	Strength in diversity (40)	Govt services agenda (37)

Black voters %	Latino voters %	AAPI voters %	White voters %
Righteous anger (47)	Freedom (47)	Strength in diversity (49)	Righteous anger (48)
Strength in diversity (44)	American values foundation (41)	American values/foundation (46)	Freedom (43)
Freedom (43)	Strength in diversity (41)	Freedom (44)	American values/foundation (38)

Next steps for future research

The results of this research provide helpful guidance on promising narratives that could be used to respond and inoculate against GOP othering tactics. Future research should further test the specific application of these narratives to explore:

- How do different types of anti-othering messages work in response to specific types of othering? In other words, are some messages more effective at countering racist othering, while others may be better suited to take other types of othering, including anti-immigrant and anti-trans rhetoric?
- Do anti-othering messages need to call out specific types of othering, or is it possible to build an effective narrative that counters othering without having to name specific attacks?
- How do different executions of these anti-othering messages compare—e.g., is it more effective to communicate responses to othering via video as opposed to written text?
- Can Democrats go on the offense when it comes to othering? Are there messages that help inoculate against future iterations of GOP othering tactics?