

**SALVE**  
THE PELL CENTER

# VOICES of VALUE

## June 2024 Survey Report



## COMPILED BY

Katie Sonder, Associate Director and Fellow  
Pell Center for International Relations at Public Policy  
Salve Regina University

*Katie Sonder is Associate Director and Fellow at the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy at Salve Regina University. Sonder's current research involves applying conflict resolution best practices to U.S. political polarization. Sonder earned her M.A. in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University in Washington, DC and her B.A. in Philosophy from New York University. She has lived and worked abroad in Thailand through the Princeton in Asia fellowship and in Ethiopia as a Peace Corps volunteer.*



**SALVE REGINA  
UNIVERSITY**

## ABOUT THE PELL CENTER

The Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy at Salve Regina is a multidisciplinary research center focused at the intersection of politics, policies and ideas. Dedicated to honoring Sen. Claiborne Pell's legacy, the Pell Center promotes American engagement in the world, effective government at home and civic participation by all Americans.

Our programs are designed to generate new ideas, to expand public understanding of important issues and, ultimately, to help the public and its leaders make better decisions. Working with students and faculty, we don't just study the world, we try to change it.

The Pell Center is animated by Sen. Claiborne Pell's belief that politics is about translating ideas into action to help people. We work to supplement the education available to Salve Regina students by fostering civic participation to make the world a better place.

## ABOUT SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

[Salve Regina University](#) is a Catholic, coeducational institution of higher education, founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1947. For more than 75 years, Salve has offered rigorous, innovative academic programming in the liberal arts tradition that prepares students to be global citizens and lifelong learners. More than 2,700 undergraduate and graduate students from around the world are enrolled at Salve in 48 undergraduate majors, 13 master's degree programs, combined bachelor's/master's programs, and doctoral programs. Every undergraduate student engages in [Salve Compass](#), a four-year transformational framework through which they develop the experience, skills, and wisdom required for a fulfilling career and to make a positive difference in the world. For more information visit [salve.edu](http://salve.edu).



**SALVE REGINA  
UNIVERSITY**

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The following is an analysis of a Rhode Island state survey conducted by the Pell Center at Salve Regina University. The survey, fielded by Embold Research between June 5-14, 2024 via the web and SMS messaging, gathered responses from 1450 likely voters in Rhode Island, with a modeled margin of error of 2.8%. Demographics of survey participants can be found at the end of the report.

Likely voters are registered to vote in Rhode Island and answered 'Yes, definitely,' 'Yes, probably,' and 'Maybe 50-50,' to the question: How likely are you to vote in the November 2024 election for President, U.S. Congress, and other offices?

## ELECTION POLLING AND JOB PERFORMANCE

President Biden has only a 7-percentage point lead over Trump among likely voters in Rhode Island. Unaffiliated voters will likely make a difference on November 5th. While Independents sway towards Trump (39% vs. 25% for Biden), Robert F. Kennedy Jr. took 17% of their vote and 14% are undecided as of polling.

Independents also have split opinions on the verdict in the New York hush money trial against Trump. While Republicans widely disagree with the verdict (86%) and Democrats overwhelmingly agree (91%), 43% percent of Independents disagree and 45% agree. Those who agree with the verdict generally plan to vote for Biden or are undecided. That said, approval ratings for President Biden are not favorable: seven in ten Independents (70%) disapprove of his job performance and over half of likely voters agree, with 44% *strongly* disapproving.

Democrats have a larger lead among Congressional Senate and House races. Among those up for reelection this year, Representative Gabe Amo has the largest lead among likely voters, with a 21-percentage point edge on Allen Waters, the Republican candidate. Representative Seth Magaziner and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse both hold a 14-point lead over their respective Republican challengers. For all three races, about 20% of the electorate is currently undecided.

More voters approve than disapprove of the job performance of the Rhode Island Congressional representatives. Senator Jack Reed has the highest net approval rating at 58% (*strongly* approve and *somewhat* approve). Senator Whitehouse sits at 48%.

Over half of likely voters in Congressional District 2 approve of the work of Representative Magaziner (51%). Representative Amo's net approval in Congressional District 1 is 42%. Despite his 20-point edge over Waters, he has the largest swath of likely voters who are unsure of his performance (31%), likely because he is the most junior representative, having taken office in November 2023.

## POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND THE 2024 CYCLE

Despite high levels of national pride – nearly three-quarters (71%) believe their identity as Americans is extremely important – likely voters in Rhode Island generally believe U.S. democracy is faltering.

Over a third (38%) believe U.S. democracy is not healthy, 78% agree that levels of political polarization have increased over the past year, and 24% have no trust that the 2024 U.S. elections will be fair and accurate.

Republicans are the most likely political party to believe democracy is troubled; 59% say it's not healthy *at all* and 51% have *no trust at all* in the elections to be fair and accurate.

Not matter their political party affiliation, likely voters attribute disinformation and fake news as a primary contributor to political strife and are generally concerned about inaccurate or misleading information disseminated throughout the 2024 election cycle (about 60% of members from each party are *very* concerned).



# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Beyond concerns over mis- and disinformation during the 2024 election cycle, Democrats worry about attempts to overturn the results of the election (61%), violence or civil unrest after the elections (54%), and voter suppression (52%). Republicans are very concerned about voter fraud (78%), illegal or improper use of mail-in ballots or drop boxes (85%), and biased or inaccurate counting of ballots (68%).

Perhaps because of fraud concerns, Republicans are generally split on whether candidates in 2024 elections should make a commitment before election day to accept the results. The majority of Democrats (84%) believe candidates should make the commitment, compared to only 35% of Republicans.

## NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS

Nearly three-quarters of likely voters avoid the news, at least sometimes. Of those who do, about half avoid news about national politics and election coverage. Democrats are especially prone to avoid these topics (58% and 48% respectively), despite being nearly eight times more likely than Republicans to trust the 2024 U.S. electoral process.

## STATE MATTERS

Over two-thirds of likely voters view their Rhode Island identity as very or moderately important, but 60% believe the state is heading in the wrong direction. Republicans (92%) and Independents (72%) are the most likely to believe this; only 34% of Democrats agree.

Over half of Rhode Islanders (54%) disapprove of Governor McKee’s job performance and nearly 60% disapprove of how he is handling the Washington Bridge crisis. Republicans are the most critical regarding this issue, 59% strongly disapprove compared to 24% of Democrats.

The renewed push by state officials to establish an independent Rhode Island Office of the Inspector General has general bipartisan support. About three quarters of Republicans, Independents, and Democrats *strongly* or *somewhat* support the creation of the office, with Republicans leading the charge (79% net support).

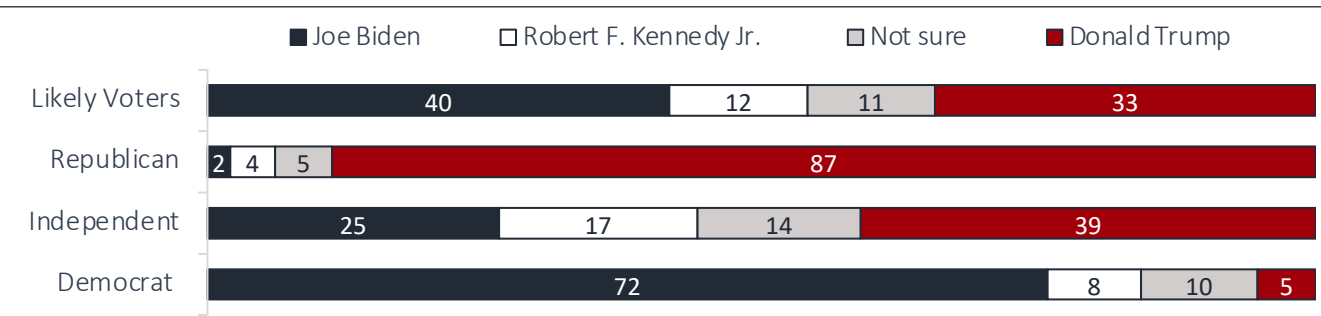


# 2024 ELECTIONS

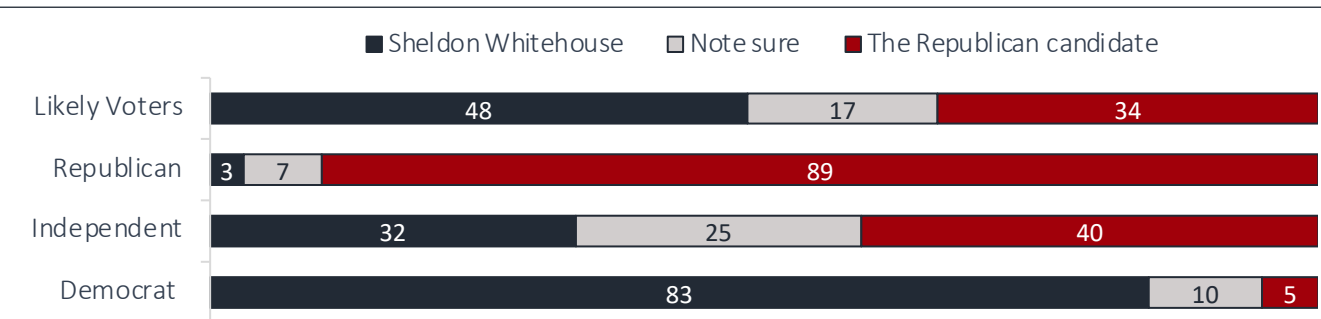
President Biden holds a slim margin over Donald Trump in the presidential election. Democrats in Congressional races boast a much larger edge over Republican opponents.

## If the election were held today, % who would vote for ...

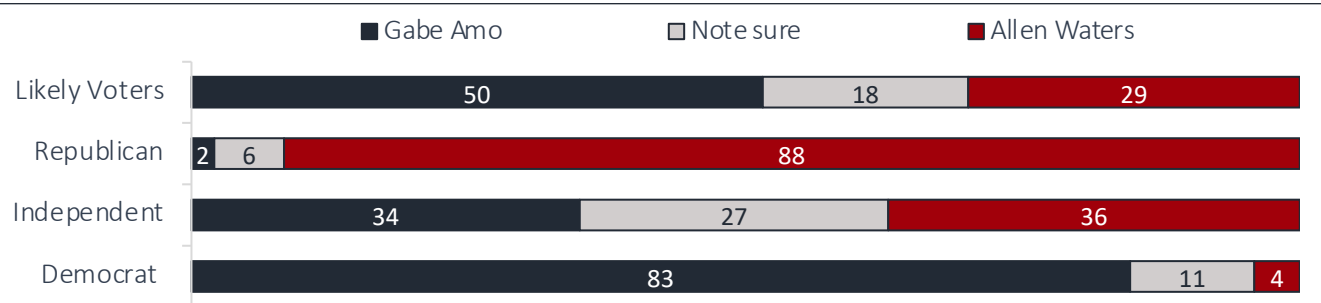
### United States President\*



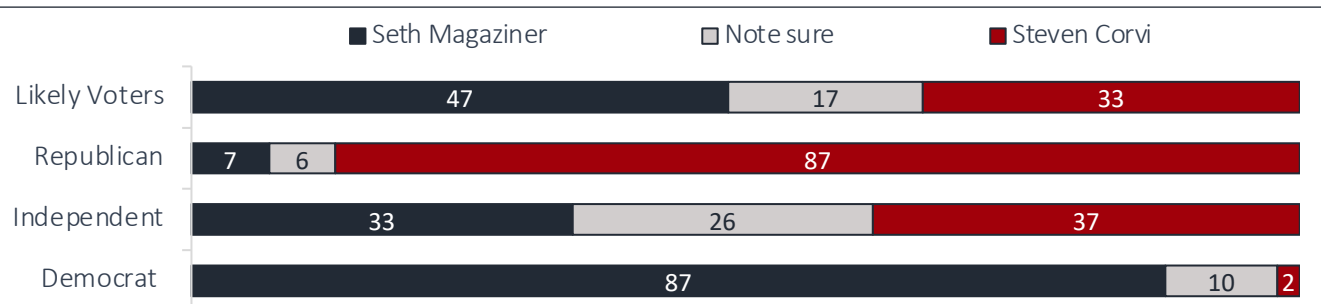
### Senator from Rhode Island



### House Representative from Rhode Island, CD1



### House Representative from Rhode Island, CD2



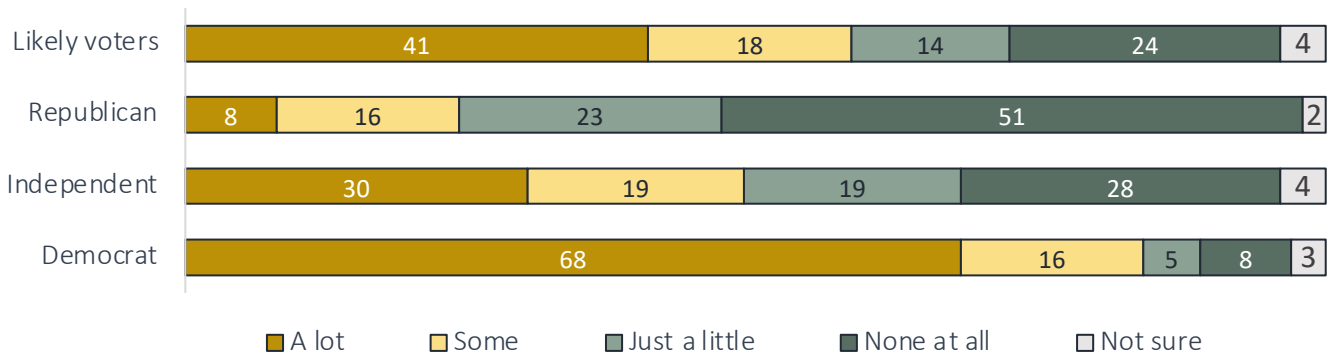
\* Less than or equal to 4% from each category said they plan to vote for another candidate, excluded here.

Note: totals may not add to 100 due to rounding. Less than or equal to 4% of respondents said they would not vote, excluded here.

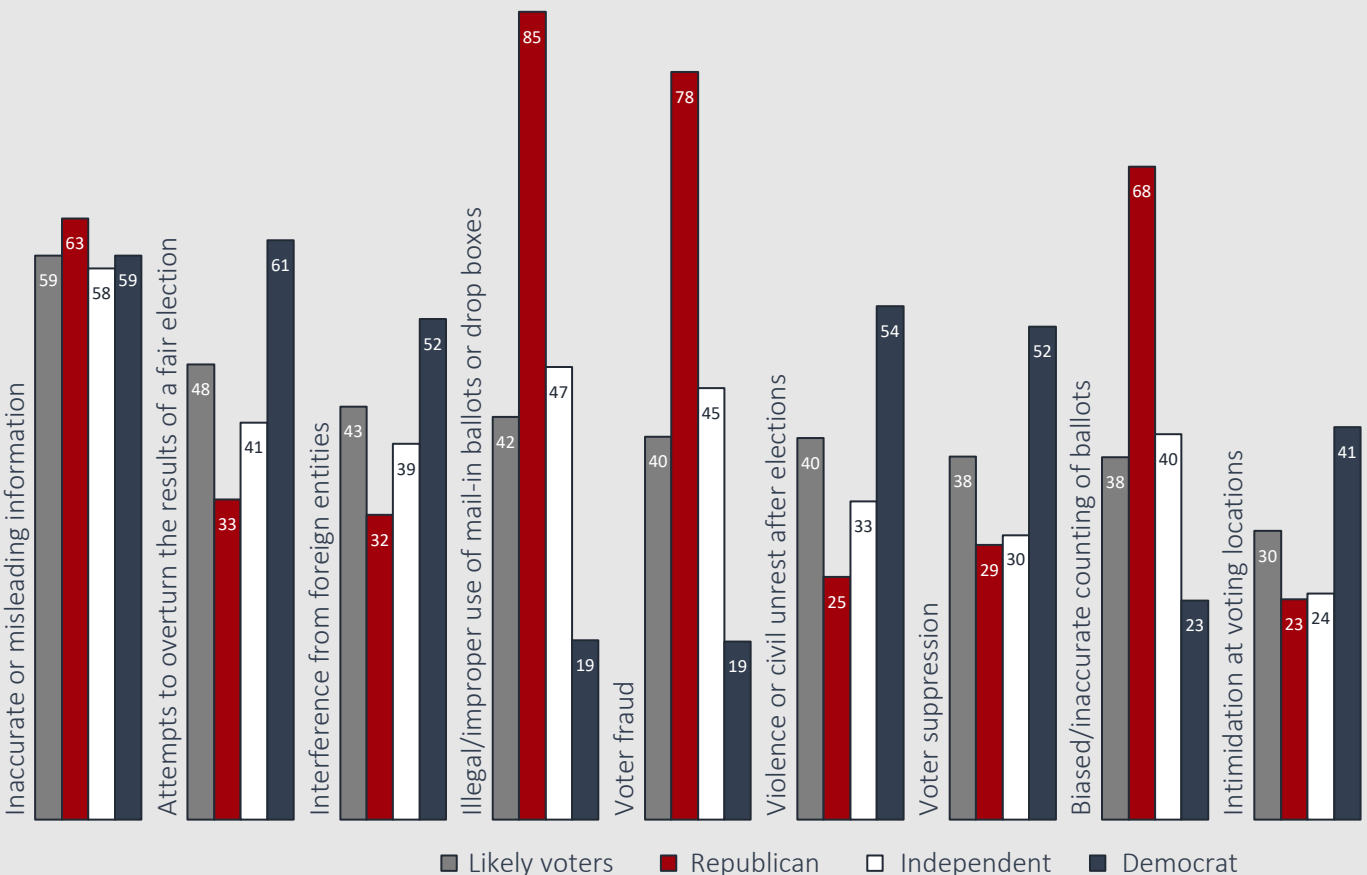
# 2024 ELECTIONS

Democrats are nearly 8 times more likely than Republicans to trust the U.S. electoral process but most Rhode Islanders, no matter their political party, are very concerned about inaccurate and misleading information disseminated during the election cycle.

## % trust in the 2024 U.S. elections to be fair and accurate



## % very concerned about the following during the 2024 elections



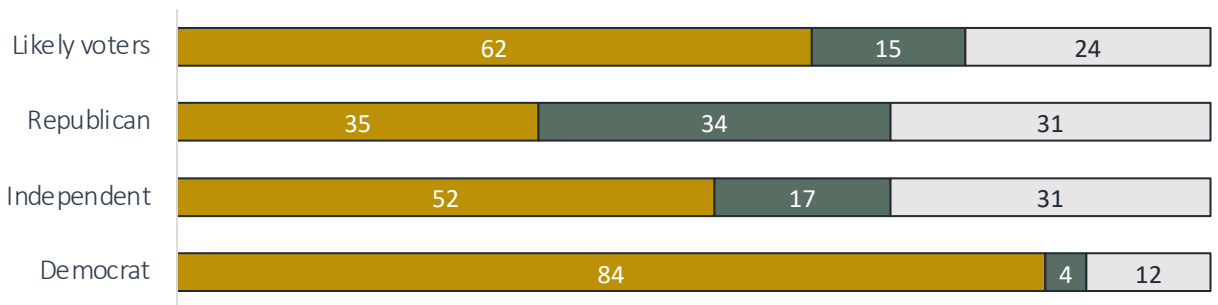
Note: totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

# 2024 ELECTIONS

Independents are split on whether they agree with the verdict against Trump in the New York trial. Those who strongly agree with the verdict plan to vote for Biden or are undecided.

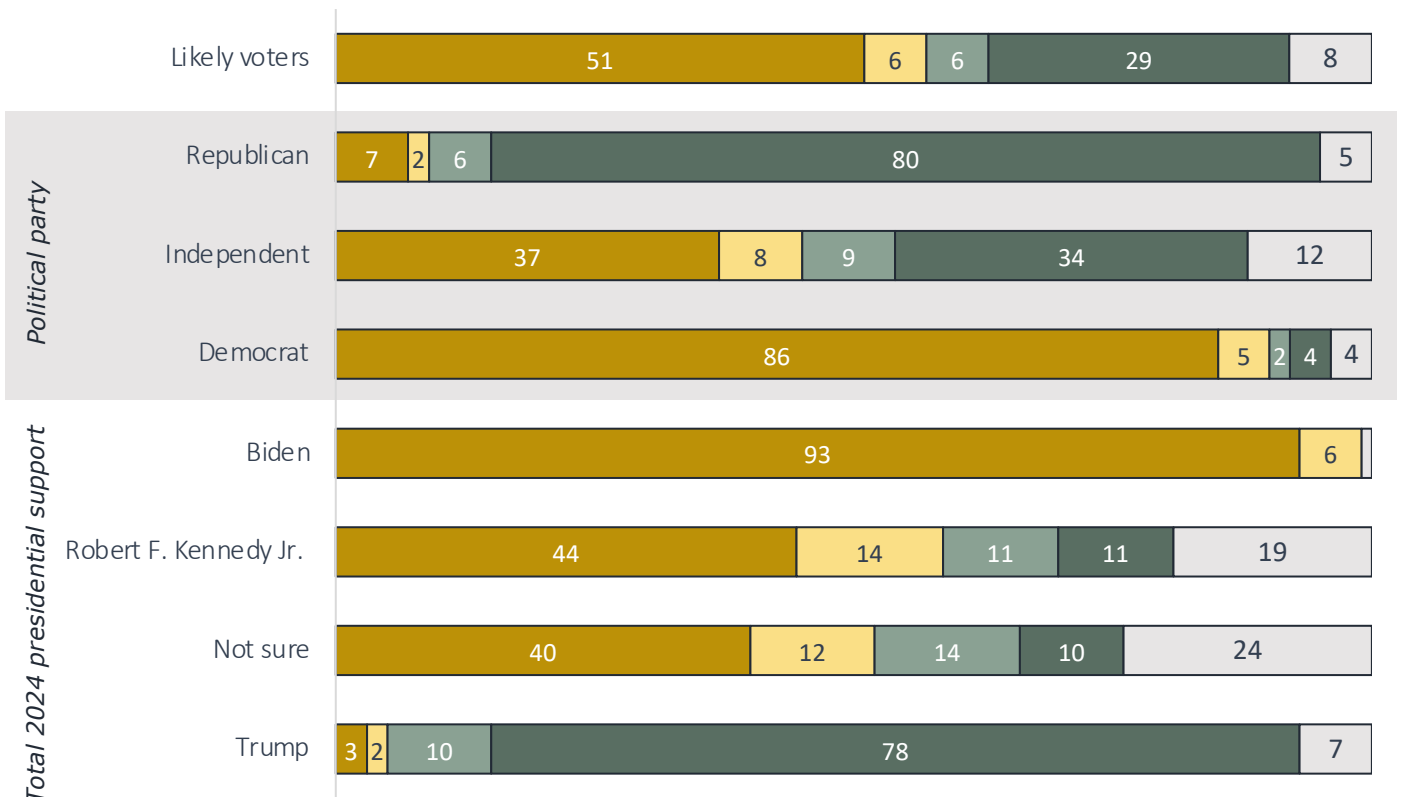
## % who believe candidates running in the 2024 elections at the state and federal level...

- **Should** make a commitment before election day to accept the election results.
- **Should not** make a commitment before election day to accept the election results.
- Not sure



## % who agree or disagree with the statement: "The jury issued the correct verdict in the New York hush money trial against former president Donald Trump."

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure



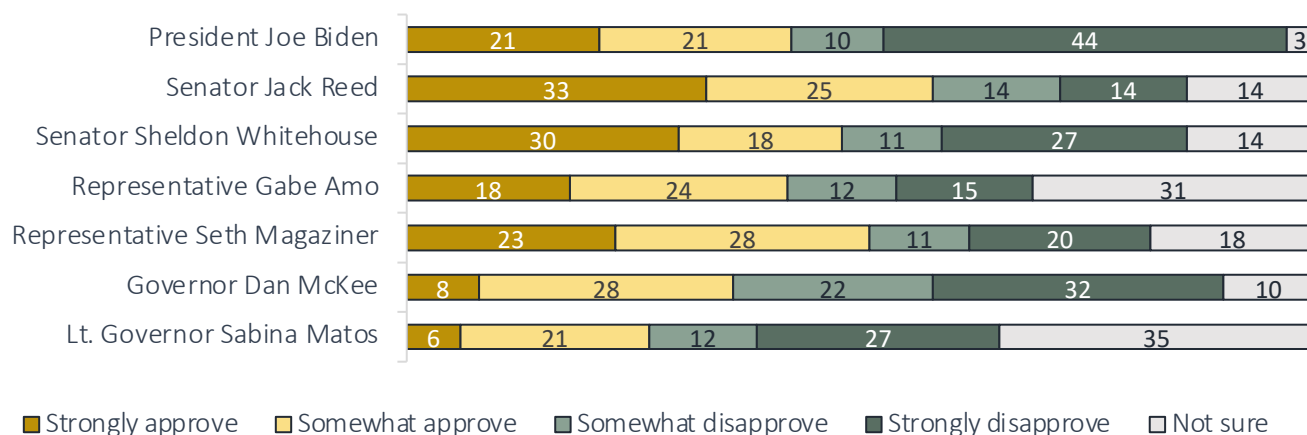
Note: totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.



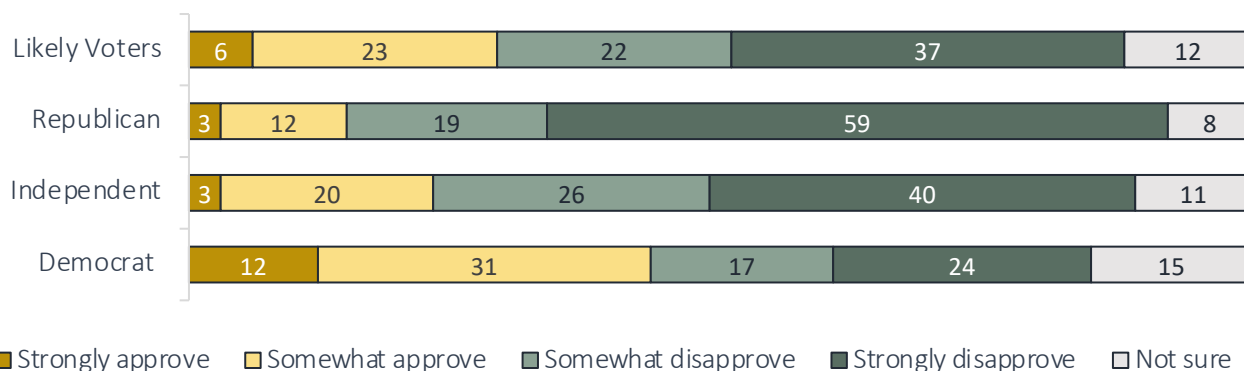
# JOB PERFORMANCE

More voters approve than disapprove of the job performance of Rhode Island Congressional representatives. Approval ratings for President Biden and state officials are lower.

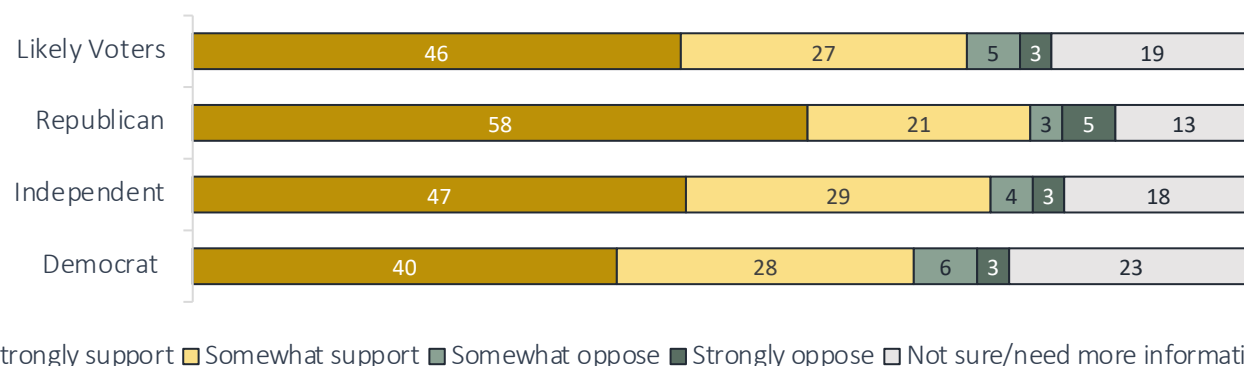
## % approval ratings of job performance



## % approval of how Governor Dan McKee is handling issues concerning the Washington Bridge



## % support the creation of an independent R.I. Office of the Inspector General

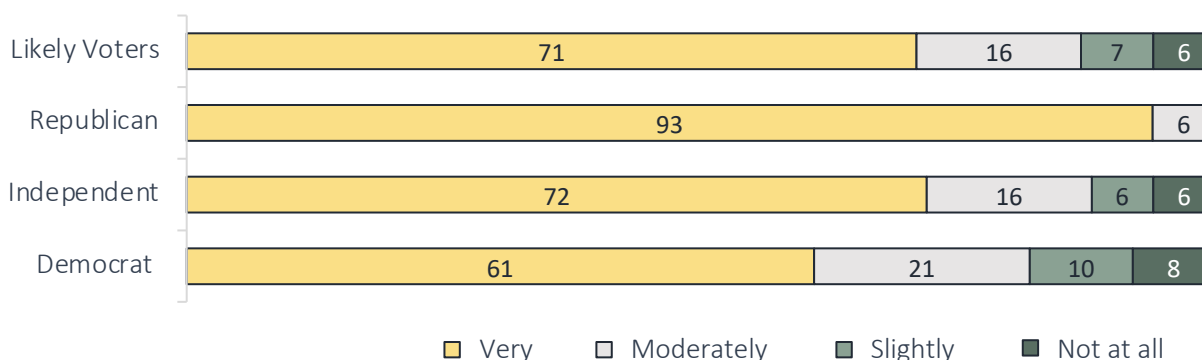


Note: totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

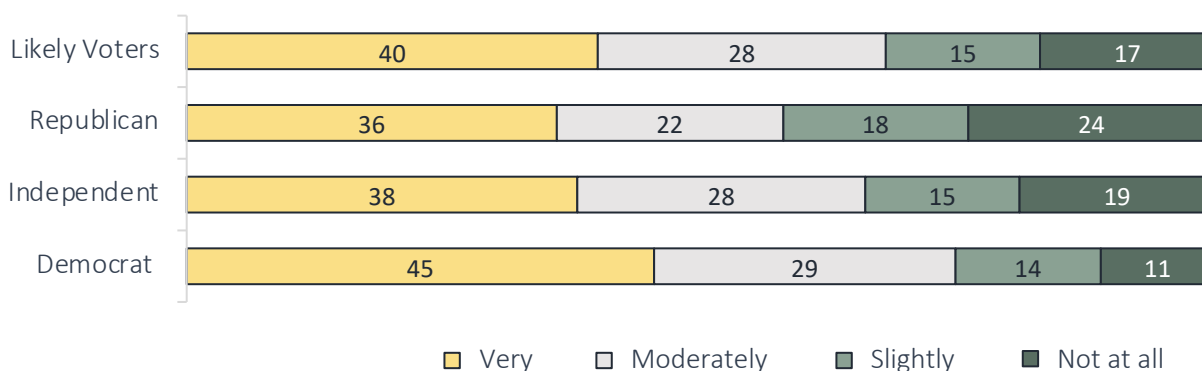
# IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY

National, state, and party identities are important to Rhode Island likely voters. Nearly three-quarters mark their American identity as *very* important.

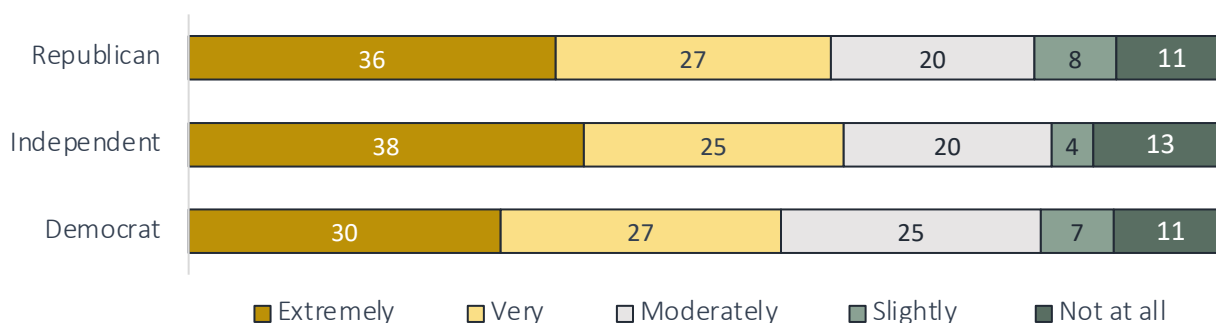
## % importance of American identity



## % importance of Rhode Island identity



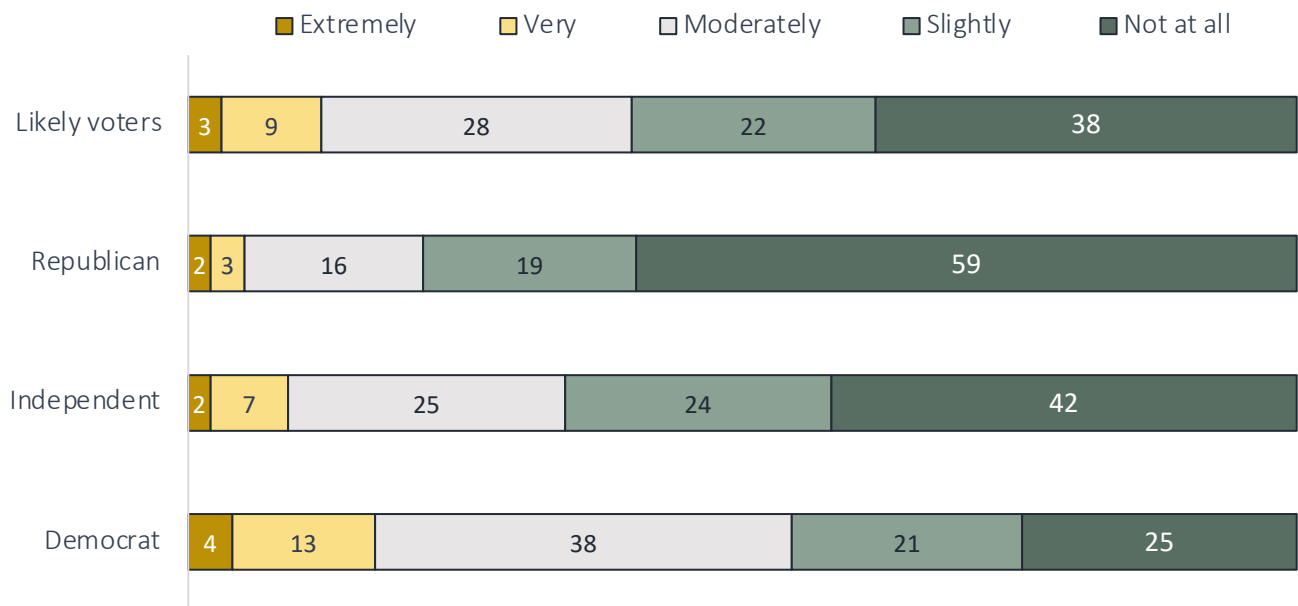
## % importance of party affiliation identity



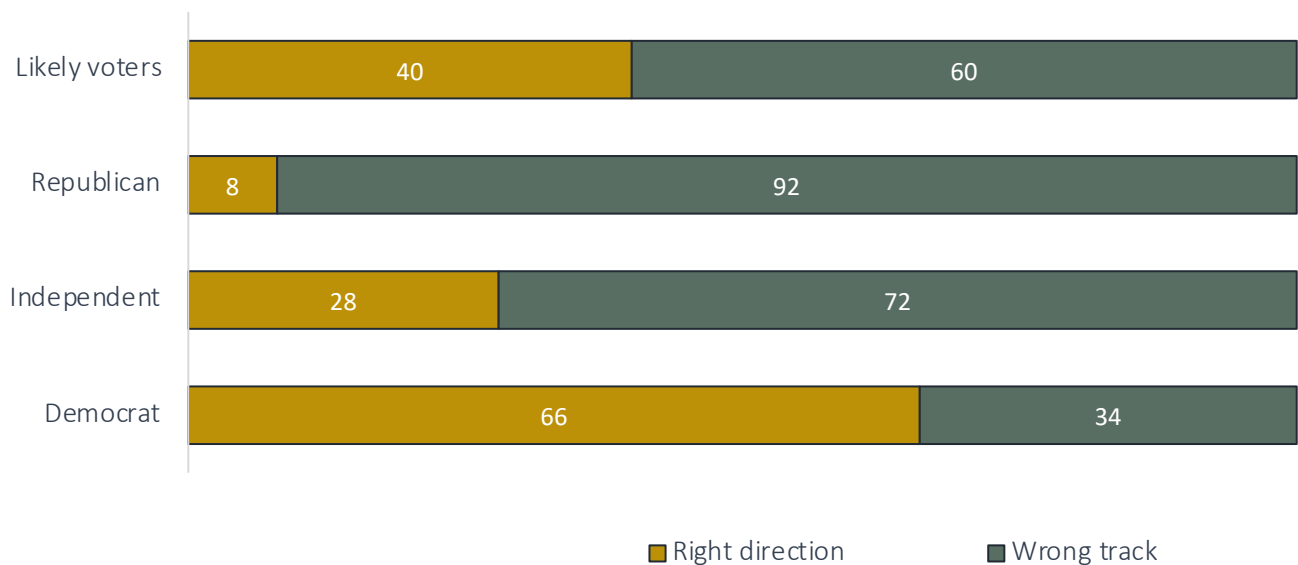
# PERCEPTIONS OF U.S. DEMOCRACY

Despite high levels of national and state pride, Rhode Islanders generally agree that U.S. democracy is unhealthy and Rhode Island is heading in the wrong direction.

## % who believe U.S. democracy is \_\_\_ healthy



## % who believe Rhode Island overall is heading in the right direction or is off on the wrong track

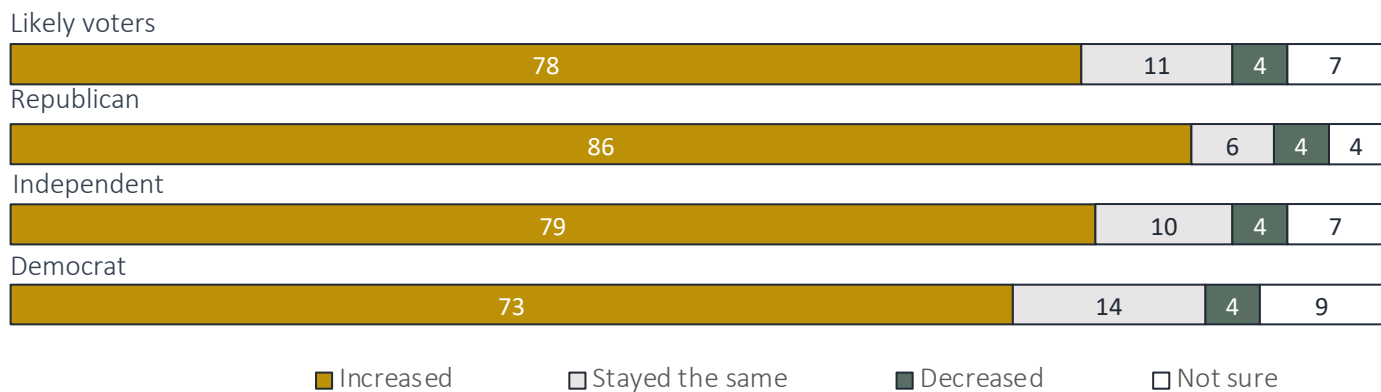


Note: totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

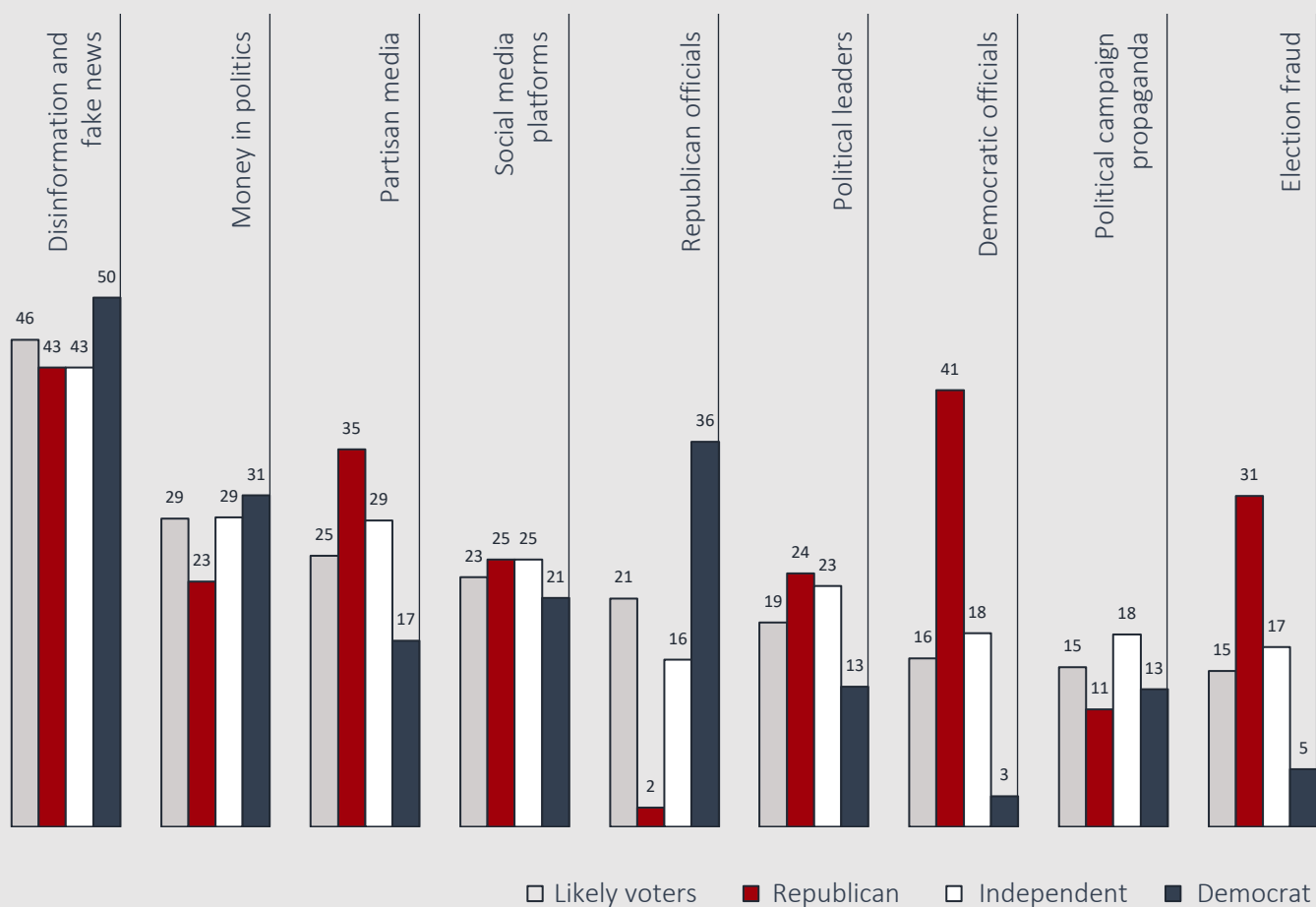
# ROOT CAUSES OF DIVISION

Voters overwhelmingly agree that political polarization has increased in the last year. Disinformation and fake news are tapped as the biggest contributor to political strife by all three parties.

## % who believe the level of political polarization has \_\_\_ in the past year



## % of voters who chose the following as a top three contributor to political polarization



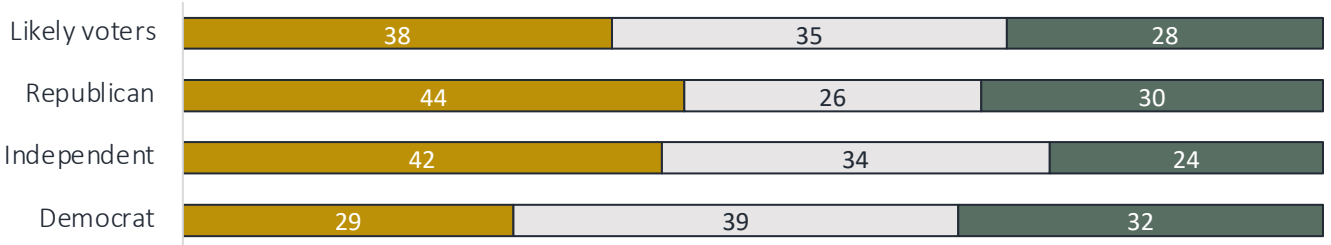
Note: totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

# NEWS AVOIDERS\*

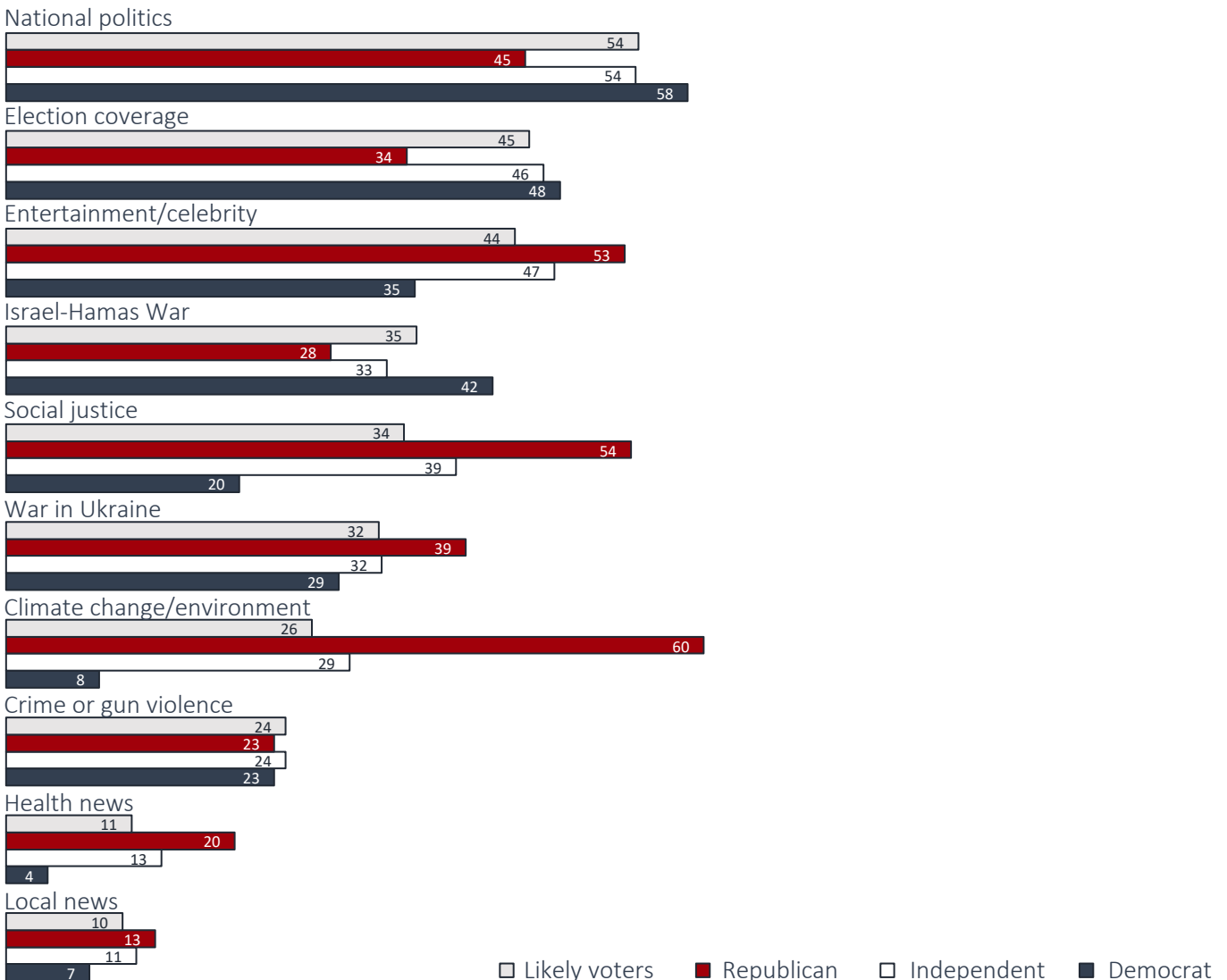
Nearly three-quarters of likely voters avoid the news, at least some of the time, and they are most likely to avoid national politics and election news coverage.

## % who find themselves actively trying to avoid news these days

■ Yes    □ Sometimes    ■ No



## Among news avoiders, % total who say they avoid news about the following topics



□ Likely voters    ■ Republican    □ Independent    ■ Democrat

\*News avoiders is a term borrowed from the [Reuters Institute's Digital News Report](#)  
 Note: totals may not add to 100 due to rounding.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Likely Voters	
n = 1450; modeled margin of error 2.8%	
<b>Registered Party</b>	
Republican	15%
Unaffiliated	44%
Democrat	39%
<b>Likelihood of voting in 2024 elections</b>	
Yes, definitely	85%
Yes, probably	6%
Maybe (50-50)	9%
<b>Age</b>	
18-34	20%
35-49	22%
50-64	28%
65+	30%
<b>Race</b>	
White	82%
Hispanic	7%
Black	4%
AAPI	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Other	3%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	53%
Male	46%
Other	1%
<b>Highest level of education completed</b>	
High school diploma or less	17%
Some college, no degree	28%
Associate's degree	15%
Bachelor's degree	22%
Graduate degree	18%
<b>Congressional district</b>	
1	45%
2	51%

Note: 'not sure' responses not shown

# SURVEY QUESTIONS

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Are you
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other
2. In what year were you born?
3. In what ZIP code do you currently live?
4. Here is a map of Rhode Island's two congressional districts. In which district do you live?
  - 1
  - 2
  - Not sure
5. What is your race?
  - White/Caucasian
  - Hispanic or Latino/a
  - Black or African American
  - Asian/Pacific Islander
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Other (please specify)
6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - High school diploma or less
  - Some college, but no degree
  - Associate's degree, or two-year college degree
  - Bachelor's degree, or four-year college degree
  - Graduate degree
7. Are you registered to vote in Rhode Island?
  - Yes
  - No [terminate]
  - Not sure [terminate]
8. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a:
  - Democrat
  - Republican
  - Independent/Other

[IF DEMOCRAT/REPUBLICAN] Do you consider yourself a:

- Strong Democrat/Republican
- Not so strong Democrat/Republican

[IF INDEPENDENT/OTHER] Do you consider yourself closer to: [RANDOMIZE DEM/REP]

- The Democrats
- The Republicans
- Neither

\*7b. Regardless of what you think of the political parties, which party are you registered to vote with?

- The Democratic Party
- The Republican Party
- Registered to vote, but not with a political party
- Some other political party

\*8. How did you vote in the 2020 election for President, or for some reason were you unable to vote?

- Joe Biden, the Democrat
- Donald Trump, the Republican
- Jo Jorgensen, the Libertarian
- Not registered/Too young/Ineligible
- Did not vote

9. How likely are you to vote in the November 2024 election for President, U.S. Congress, and other offices?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, probably
- Maybe (50-50)
- No, probably not [TERMINATE]
- No, definitely not [TERMINATE]

## VOICES OF VALUE SURVEY QUESTIONS

10. If the 2024 election for president were held today, and the candidates were the following, who would you vote for? [RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Donald Trump, the Republican
- Joe Biden, the Democrat
- Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an Independent
- Not sure
- Another candidate (please specify)

[If not sure] If you had to choose, who would you vote for? [RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Donald Trump, the Republican
- Joe Biden, the Democrat
- Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an Independent
- Not sure
- Would not vote

11. If the election for the **U.S. Senator from Rhode Island** were held today, who would you vote for?

[RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Sheldon Whitehouse, the Democrat
- The Republican candidate
- Not sure

[If not sure] If you had to choose, who would you vote for? [RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Sheldon Whitehouse, the Democrat
- The Republican candidate
- Not sure

12a. [IF RI-01] If the election for the **Rhode Island U.S. House** representative were held today, who would you vote for? [RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Gabe Amo, the Democrat
- Allen Waters, the Republican
- Not sure

[If not sure] If you had to choose, who would you vote for? [RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Gabe Amo, the Democrat
- Allen Waters, the Republican
- Not sure
- Would not vote

12b. [IF RI-02] If the election for the **Rhode Island U.S. House** representative were held today, who would you vote for? [RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Seth Magaziner, the Democrat
- Steven Corvi, the Republican
- Not sure

[If not sure] If you had to choose, who would you vote for? [RANDOMIZE CANDIDATES]

- Seth Magaziner, the Democrat
- Steven Corvi, the Republican
- Not sure
- Would not vote

13. Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the following individuals?

[Strongly approve | Somewhat approve | Somewhat disapprove | Strongly disapprove | Not sure]

- Senator Jack Reed
- Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
- [IF RI-01] Representative Gabe Amo
- [IF RI-02] Representative Seth Magaziner
- Governor Dan McKee
- Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos
- President Joe Biden

14. Do you approve or disapprove of how Governor Dan McKee is handling issues concerning the Washington Bridge?

- Strongly approve
- Somewhat approve
- Somewhat disapprove
- Strongly disapprove
- Not sure

15. Since the Washington Bridge closure, there has been a renewed push by some elected officials to create a Rhode Island Office of the Inspector General. While Republicans have pushed for an Office of the Inspector General for decades, a recent bill proposing the creation of this new office has bipartisan support.

Do you support or oppose the creation of a Rhode Island Office of the Inspector General?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know/need more information

16. How much trust do you have in the 2024 U.S. elections to be fair and accurate?

- A lot
- Some
- Just a little
- None at all
- Not sure



17. How concerned are you about the following when it comes to the 2024 elections? [Very concerned | Somewhat concerned | Not that concerned | Not concerned at all]

- Inaccurate or misleading information about elections
- Violence or civil unrest after Election Day
- Attempts to overturn the results of a fair election
- Interference from foreign entities
- Voter suppression through overly restrictive voting rules or regulations
- Intimidation at voting locations deterring or preventing people from voting
- Biased or inaccurate counting of ballots
- Illegal or improper use of mail-in ballots or drop boxes
- Voter fraud or the counting of ineligible votes (duplicate, non-citizen, or deceased voters)

18. Which of these statements comes closest to your point of view?

- Candidates running in the 2024 elections at the state and federal level **should** make a commitment before election day to accept the election results.
- Candidates running in the 2024 elections at the state and federal level **should not** make a commitment before election day to accept the election results.
- Not sure

19. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“The jury issued the correct verdict in the New York hush money trial against former president Donald Trump.”

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

20. How important are the following aspects to your identity? [Extremely important | Very important | Moderately important | Slightly important | Not important at all] [RANDOMIZE]

- Being a Rhode Islander
- Being an American

21. And how important is being a [Republican / Democrat / independent - based on answer to Q7] to your identity?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not important at all

22. In your opinion, how healthy is the U.S. system of democracy? [RANDOMLY FLIP]

- Not at all healthy
- Slightly healthy
- Moderately healthy
- Very healthy
- Extremely healthy

23. Overall, how would you say things in Rhode Island are going? Are they heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

- Right direction
- Wrong track

24. In the past year, do you think the country has... [ROTATE]

- Become more politically polarized
- Stayed the same
- Become less politically polarized
- Not sure

25. What are the strongest contributors to polarization? Please select your top three. [RANDOMIZE]

- Disinformation and fake news
- Partisan media
- Social media platforms
- Lack of civic engagement
- Lack of exposure to diverse perspectives
- Income inequality
- Neighborhood segregation
- Racism and sexism
- Politically motivated violence
- Political leaders
- Money in politics
- Political campaign propaganda
- Voter suppression
- Redistricting or gerrymandering
- Election fraud
- Foreign interference in elections
- The filibuster
- The electoral college
- Democratic officials
- Republican officials
- Other (please specify)[textbox]

26. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

27. [IF YES OR SOMETIMES] You said that you actively try to avoid news these days. Which of the following news topics do you try to avoid? Please select all topics that you try to avoid.

- Election coverage
- National politics
- Social justice news
- War in Ukraine
- Israel-Hamas War
- Climate change and the environment
- Entertainment/celebrity
- Health news
- Local news
- Crime or gun violence
- Other (please specify)[textbox]

28. In what language did you complete this survey?

- English
- Spanish