



University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll

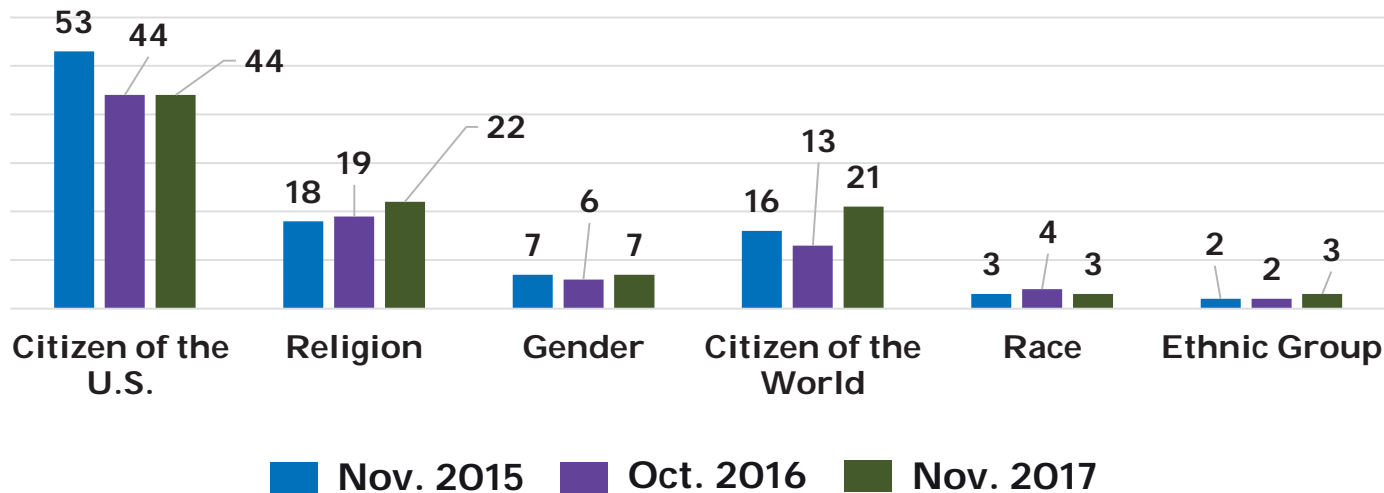
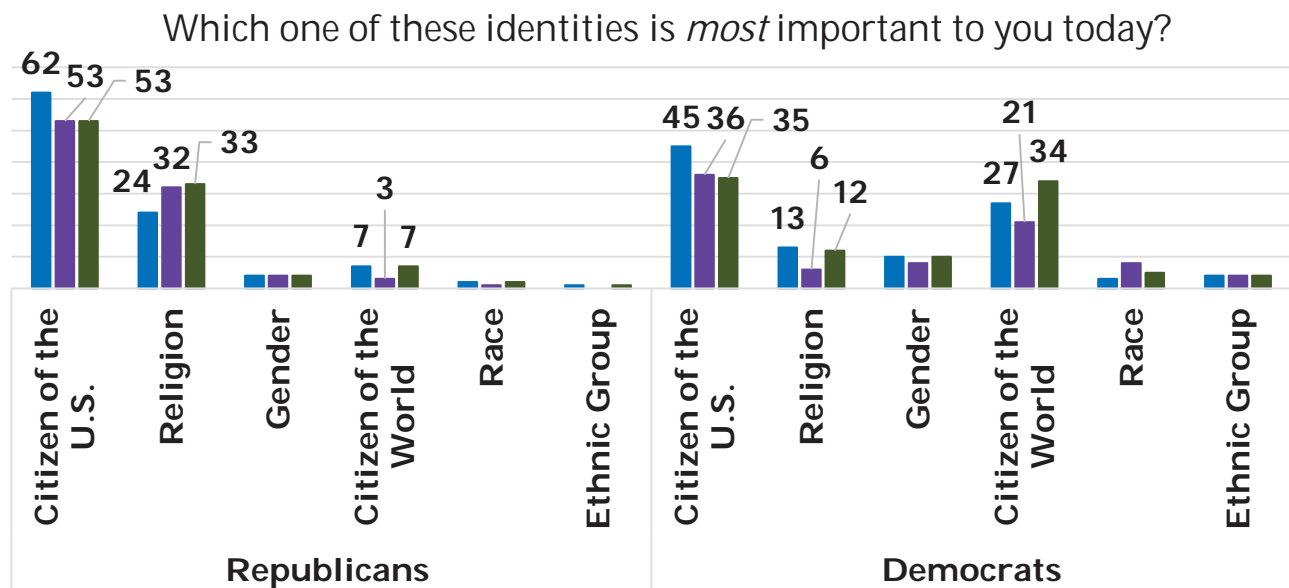
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Study No. 3

America First? American National Identity Declines Over Last Two Years Among Both Republicans and Democrats

Religious Identity Rises For Republicans,
Cosmopolitan Identity For Democrats



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Leadership and Advisory Board for the Critical Issues Poll



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Professor Telhami has also been active in the foreign policy arena. He has served as advisor to the US Mission to the UN (1990-91), as advisor to former Congressman Lee Hamilton, more recently as senior advisor to George Mitchell, President Obama's United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace (2009-2011) and as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Trilateral US-Israeli-Palestinian Anti-Incitement Committee.

Professor Telhami has contributed to *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times* and regularly appears on national and international radio and television. His best-selling book, *The Stakes: America and the Middle East* was selected by Foreign Affairs as one of the top five books on the Middle East in 2003. He has been a principal investigator in the annual Arab Public Opinion Survey, conducted since 2002 in six Arab countries.



Stella Rouse is an associate professor in the Department of Government and Politics and director of the Center for American Politics and Citizenship.

Professor Rouse earned her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University in 2008. In 2010, she was a visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Social Sciences (REGSS) at Duke University as a Ford Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow.

Rouse's book, *Latinos in the Legislative Process: Interests and Influence*, published by Cambridge University Press, was named by Huffington Post as one of the "Best Political Science Books of 2013." Her forthcoming book, "The Politics of Millennials: Political Beliefs and Policy Preferences of America's Most Diverse Generation," with Ashley Ross, will be out in August 2018.

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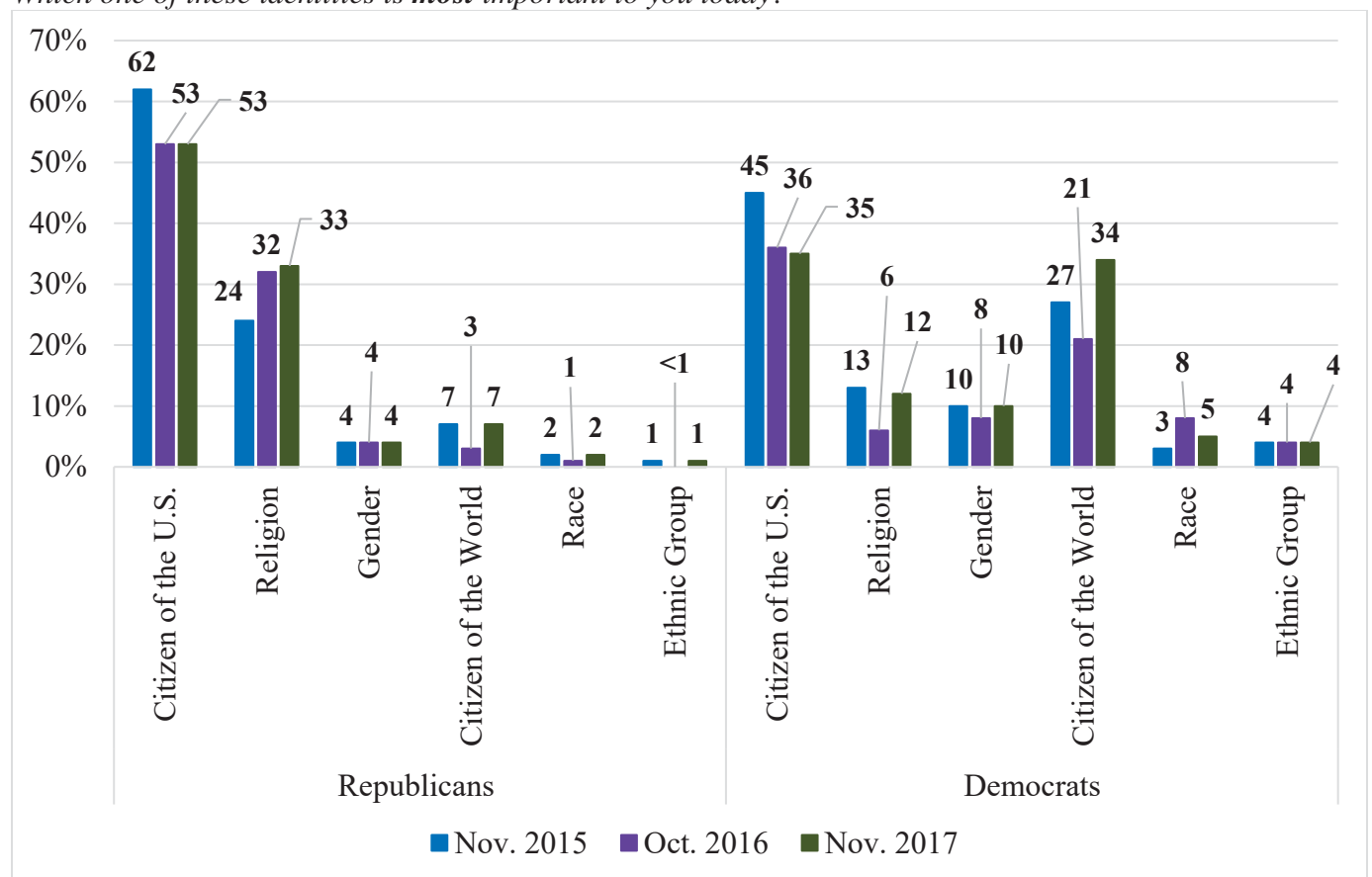
America First?

American National Identity Declines Over Last Two Years Among Both Republicans and Democrats

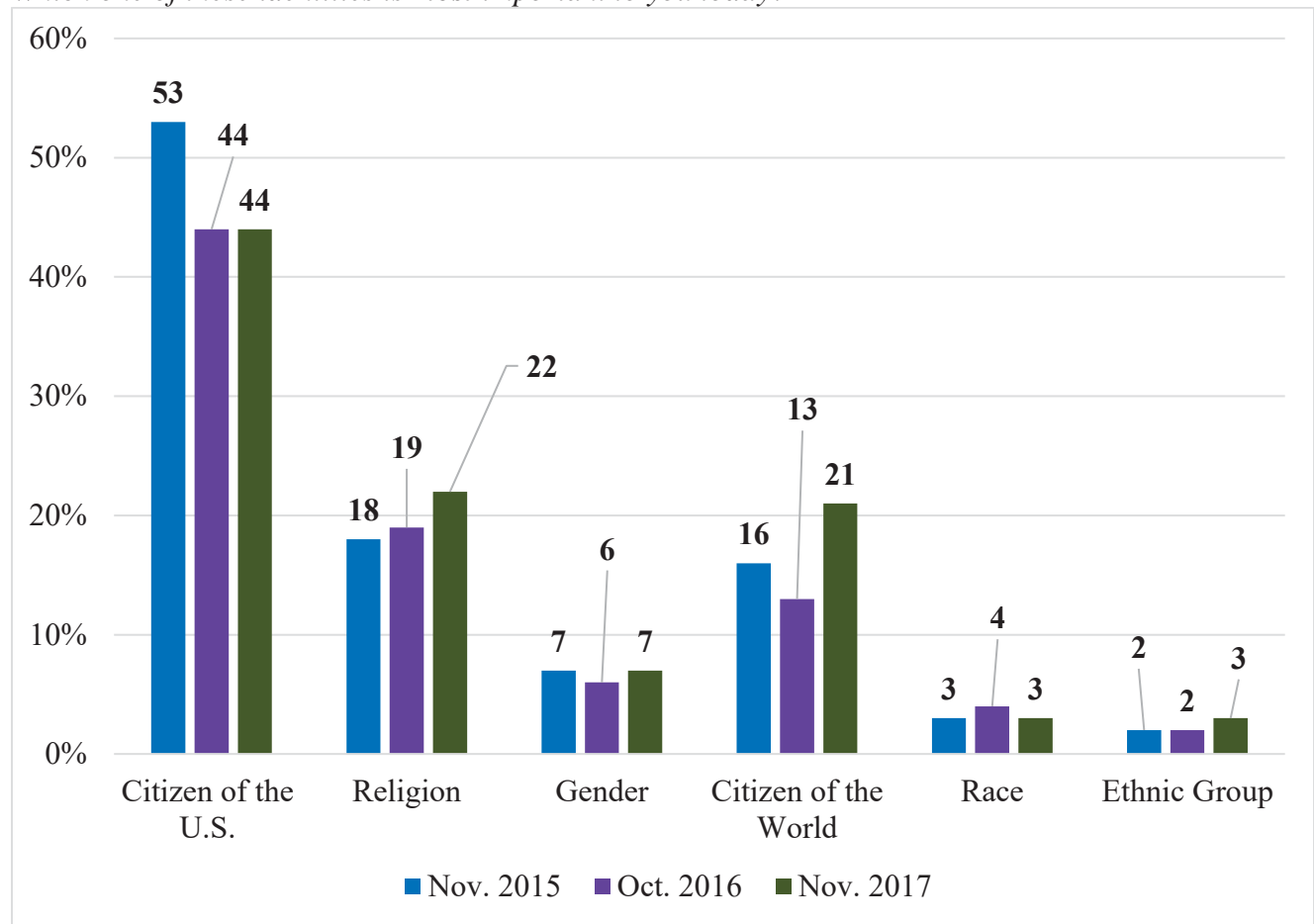
Religious Identity Rises for Republicans, Cosmopolitan Identity for Democrats

President Trump has championed the “America First” theme during the 2016 presidential campaign and in his first year in office. Has this impacted the American public’s sense of core identity, beyond the well-documented deep party divide? An analysis of three national polls in November 2015, October 2016, and November 2017 reveals striking findings: American national identity has declined since 2015 among both Republicans and Democrats by roughly the same degree (9-10%), with much of that decline accounting for a significant rise in religious identity among Republicans and cosmopolitan identity among Democrats. Still, the latest poll shows that national identity remains the stronger identity for all Americans (44%), with Democrats nearly evenly divided between national and cosmopolitan identities.

*Which one of these identities is **most** important to you today?*



Which one of these identities is **most** important to you today?

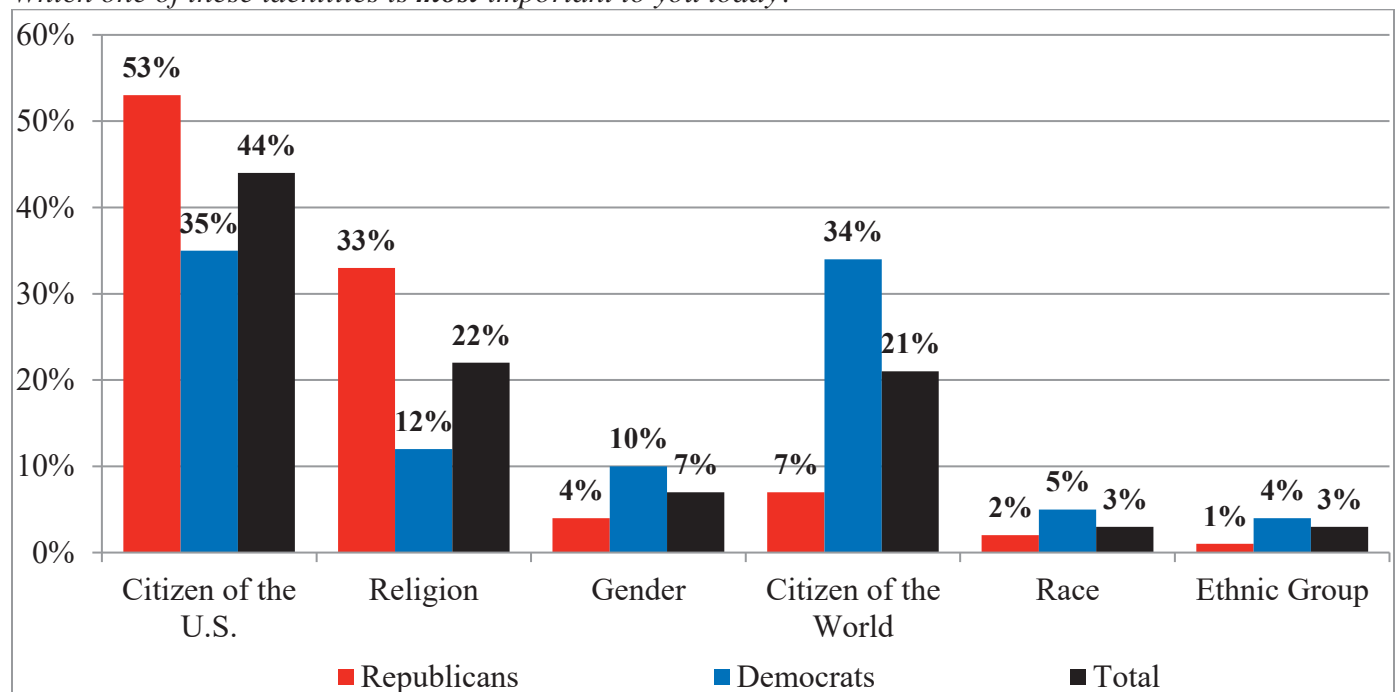


American Identity One Year into Trump's Presidency

On the anniversary of Donald Trump's historic ascent to the presidency, the UMD Critical Issues Poll fielded a survey to probe changes in core identities, beyond the partisan divide. These identities may be equally important for explaining American cleavages, but they are less discussed than partisanship. What it means to be an American is now imbued with partisan values, as Democrats, especially young Democrats, have moved away from identifying as citizens of the United States and more toward identifying as citizens of the world. As we find in the Critical Issues Poll, this shift in identity may have its roots in the declining faith many have in the American Dream and American exceptionalism. The cosmopolitan, or world-oriented, leanings of young Democrats and their disillusionment with American exceptionalism are likely to have consequences for how this group interacts with the American political system. As it turns out, Republicans' identification as American first has also declined since 2015.

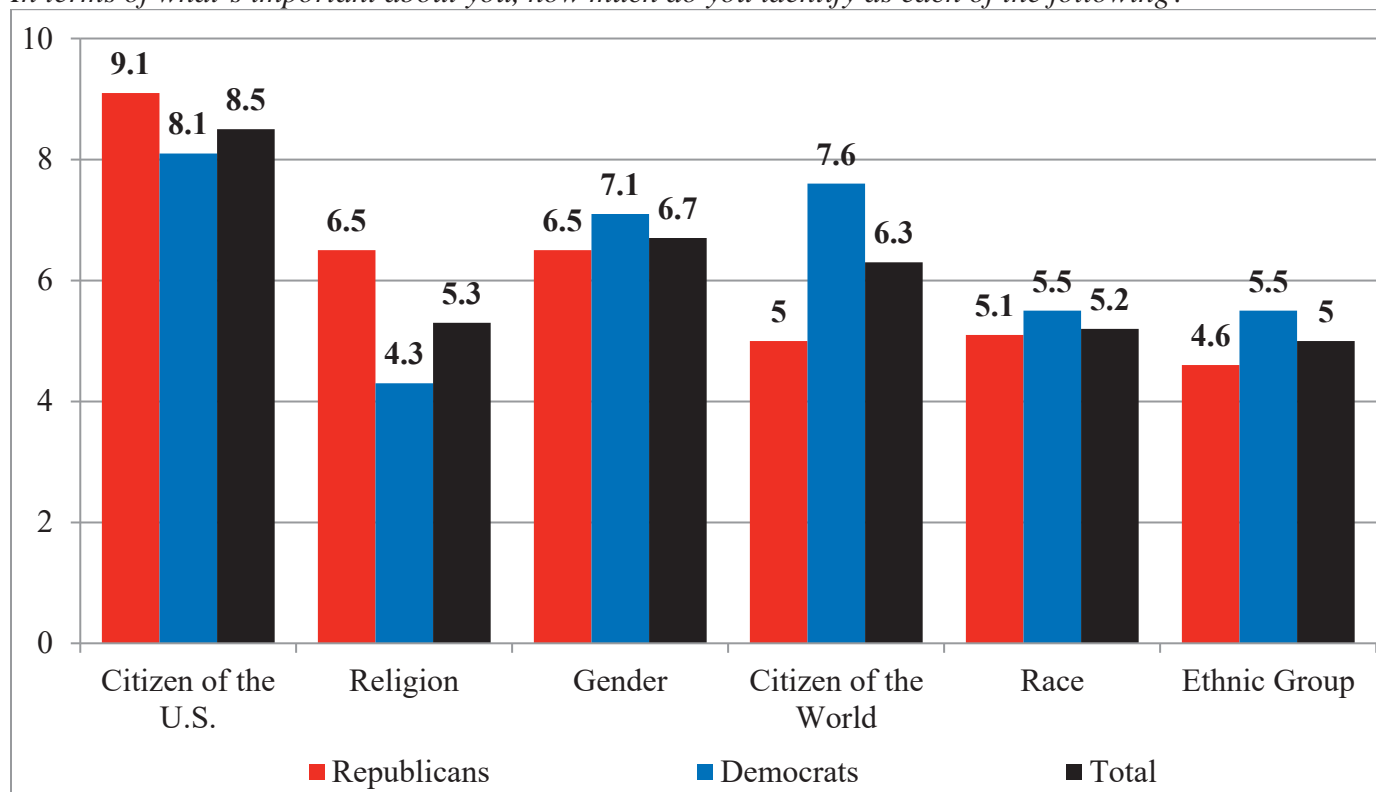
In the November 2017 Critical Issues Poll, we asked respondents to name the identity that was *most* important to them from a list that included being a citizen of the U.S., a follower of their religious faith, their gender, a citizen of the world, or a member of their race or ethnic group. Among Republicans, 53% selected their American identity as being the most important – a decline from 62% in 2015; and 33% selected religious identity, a rise from 24% in 2015. Democrats were evenly split between their American identity (35%) and their cosmopolitan identity (34%); this compares with 45% and 27%, respectively, in 2015. Democrats were also more likely than Republicans to select gender, but neither race nor ethnicity was a popular choice among any of the groups.

*Which one of these identities is **most** important to you today?*



Prior to asking respondents to name the identity that was *most* important to them, we asked them to rate each individual identity on a scale of zero to ten, with ten indicating the strongest feelings of identity.

In terms of what's important about you, how much do you identify as each of the following?



Still, the results once again show that Republicans identify as citizen of the U.S. more than as citizens of world. On average, Republicans were an entire point higher than Democrats on how much they identified as citizens of the United States. Conversely, Democrats were more than two-and-a-half points higher than Republicans in terms of how strongly they identified as citizens of the world. In fact, Democrats nearly gave the same marks to being a citizen of the world as they did to being a citizen of the United States.

We continue to find large gaps on feelings of identity looking at the other categories, most especially on matters of religion. For Republicans, religion was as powerful an identity as gender and far ahead of world citizenship, race, and ethnic group. Among Democrats, however, religion appears to be the least salient identity. Democrats, on average, rate religion more than three points lower than “citizen of the world,” and nearly three points lower than gender. These results indicate that Republicans, far more than Democrats, consider religion a central identity.

Democrats rated race and ethnicity as a more salient identity than Republicans did, though interestingly these two identities scored the lowest overall among our sample. Gender was named as a stronger identity than race and ethnicity, with Democrats being more likely to find it salient.

Identity Divide Persists Across Age and Gender

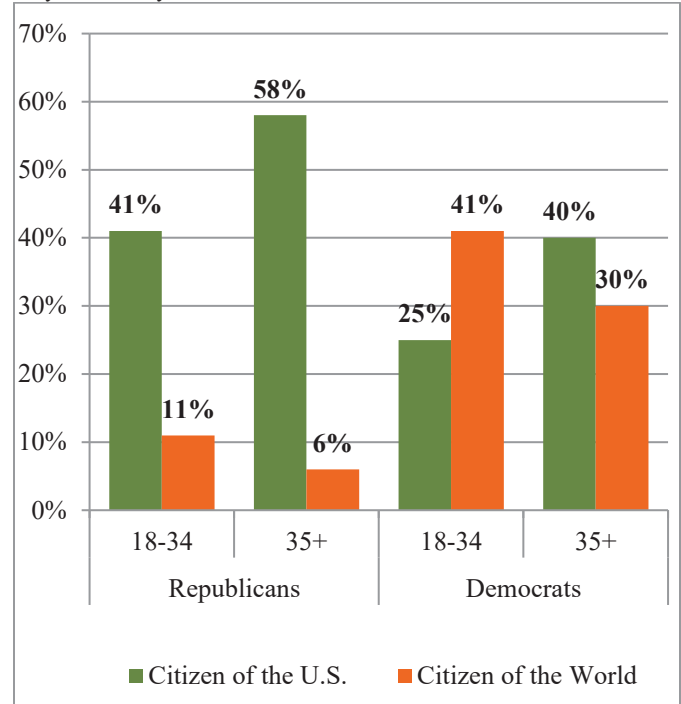
Digging deeper into the identity gap between Democrats and Republicans, we find that it is particular constituent groups associated with the two parties that are driving the shift in identity.

While Millennial Republicans are somewhat more likely than older Republicans to identify as citizens of the world, it is among Millennial Democrats that we see a more significant increase in the adoption of the cosmopolitan label in the era of Trump. Millennial Republicans were still almost four times more likely to identify as a citizen of the U.S. rather than a citizen of the world. Among Democratic Millennials, in contrast, “citizen of the world” was the most popular identity, beating out “citizen of the U.S.” by a whopping 41% to 25% margin.

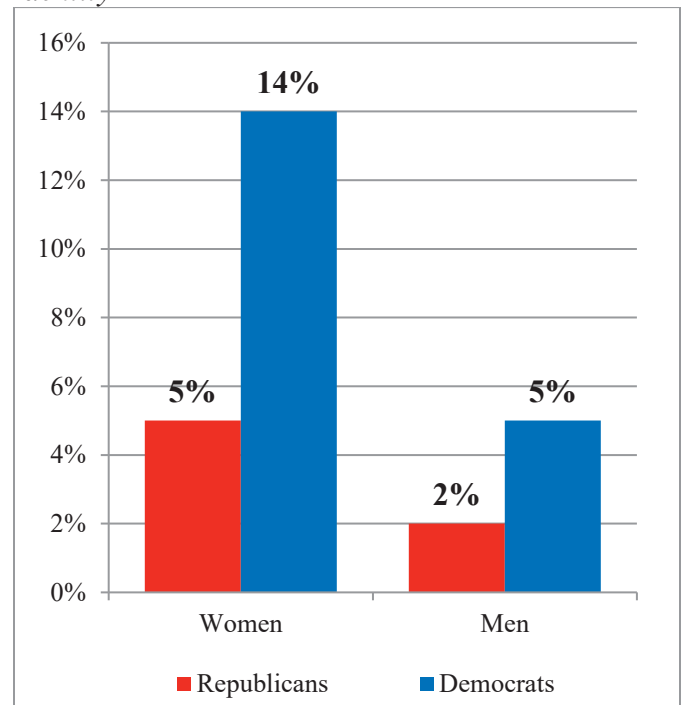
Additionally, at a time in which sexual harassment and sexual assault have been intensely discussed topics in American politics, issues of gender have grown in political importance. We therefore looked at the degree to which women and men of both parties chose gender as the most important identity. We find that it is Democratic women who most strongly identify with their gender. Democratic women were almost three times as likely as Republican women to select gender as the most important identity. This gap persists across Democratic and Republican men, though the overall levels of identity are far lower among men.

The numbers suggest that the Democratic Party should be more responsive to issues of gender, since women who identify with their gender make up a larger part of the Democratic Party. Given the number of political actors who have been accused of sexual misconduct against women, these findings indicate that Democrats may face greater pressure to hold members accused of transgressions accountable.

Which one of these identities is **most** important to you today?



% Selecting “Gender” as the Most Important Identity



Focusing Exclusively on Partisanship Misses Important Divisions within the Parties Centering on Core Identities

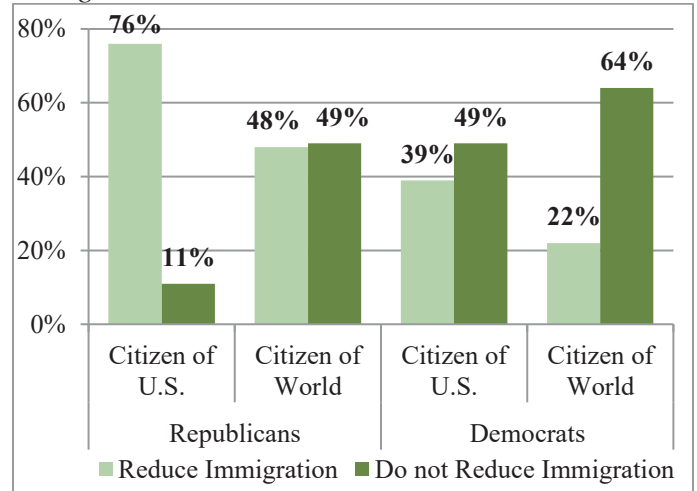
On a host of political issues, we find that the divisions in the American electorate go well beyond party affiliation. While partisanship is an important feature of American politics, we find that looking at public opinion only through partisanship often masks the underlying attitudes that drive political division in the United States.

The figures on the right show that, within each party, individuals who identify primarily as citizens of the U.S. have vastly different political opinions from those who identify as citizens of the world. On the issue of immigration, Republicans generally support reducing the overall number of immigrants. Yet among those Republicans who identify as citizens of the world, they are evenly split (keeping in mind that only 7% of Republicans ranked “citizen of the world” as most important). For Democrats, holding a more nationalist identity makes them 17 percentage points more likely to support the reduction of immigration (39% compared to 22%).

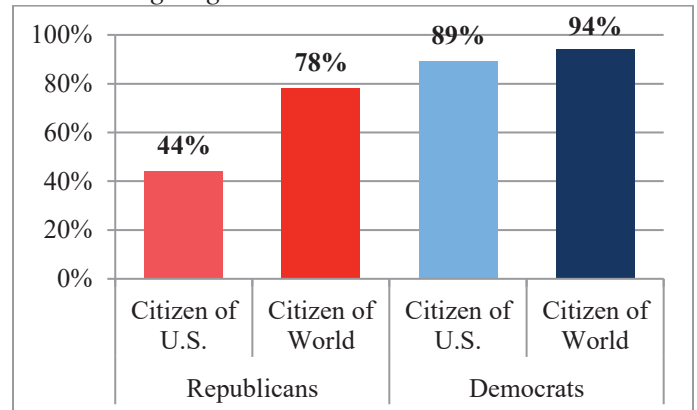
On the issue of abortion, Republicans again show a large division based on identity. Republicans who adopt a cosmopolitan identity are much more pro-choice, while Democrats of both identities are strongly pro-choice.

Looking at attitudes around climate change, the same split appears for Republicans and, to a somewhat lesser extent, for Democrats. Forty percent of Republicans who identify as citizens of the world believe there is solid evidence to support climate change, compared to only 17% who identify as citizens of the U.S. For Democrats, a gap also appears, as those who identify as citizens of the world are eight percentage points more likely to believe there is solid evidence behind the scientific theory of climate change.

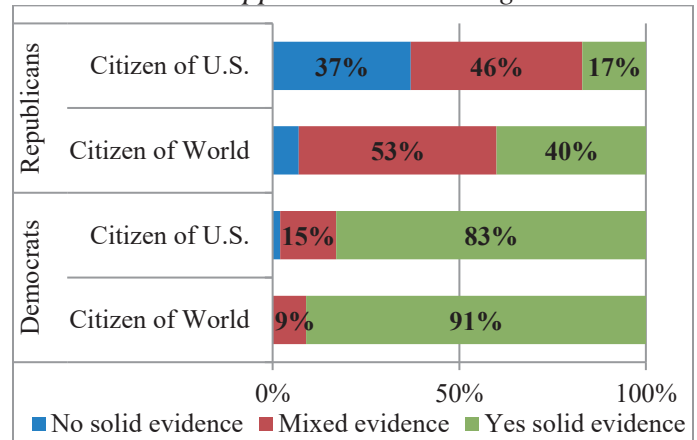
Should the Federal Government Reduce Immigration or Continue Current Policies?



% Favoring Legal Abortion-Most/All Cases



Does Evidence Support Climate Change?



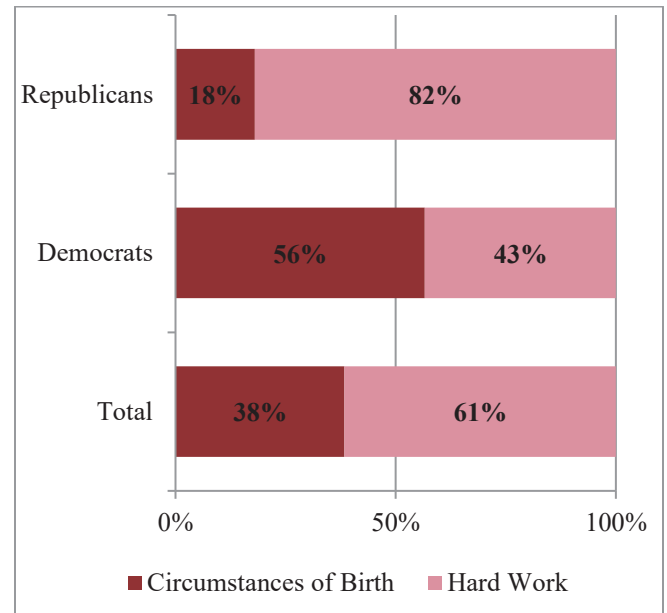
Age, Identity Gaps Fuel Declining Faith in the American Dream

What is driving the gap in American identity? In the era of Trump, young Democrats and those who identify as citizens of the world are becoming increasingly pessimistic about the health of the American Dream. This finding lies in stark contrast to our [analysis](#) last year, which found Republicans more likely to view the system as rigged against them. In this poll, we asked respondents to choose between two narratives. The more pessimistic narrative argued that the circumstances of birth were the major determinant of success. The narrative in line with the American Dream claimed that, “With hard work and determination, anything is achievable in the United States.” Overall, we find that 61% of respondents sided with the more optimistic view of the American Dream while 38% claimed that circumstances of birth were more important.

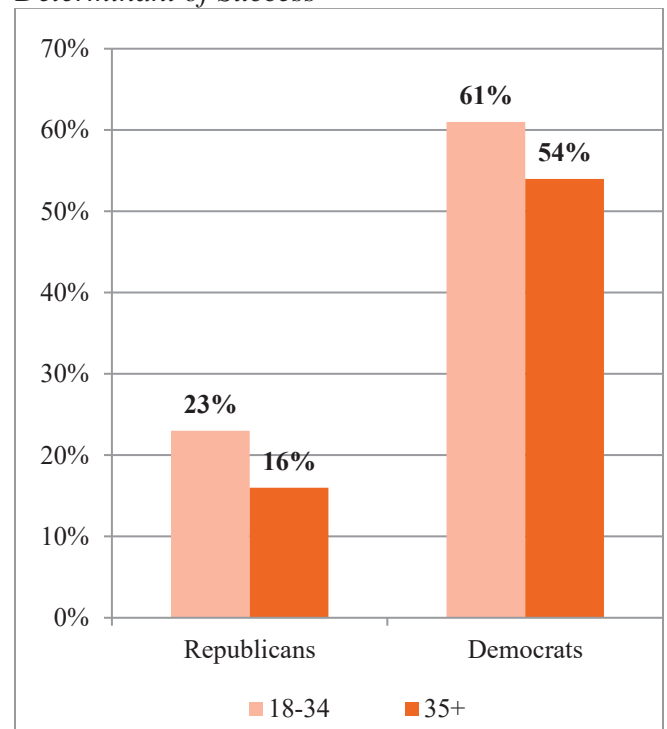
Paul Ryan’s [assertion](#) that, “in our country, the condition of your birth does not determine the outcome of your life,” appears to reflect the opinion of most Republicans. Yet it does not reflect the opinion of Democrats. While over 80% of Republicans said hard work was the primary determinant of success, only 43% of Democrats selected the same option.

Unlike in [2008](#) when younger voters were more optimistic about the future than older voters, we find Millennials (age 18-34) are more likely to say that hard work and determination are not sufficient for success in modern American society. While the principal identity dividing respondents is partisanship, it is noteworthy that Millennials of both parties are roughly 7 percentage points more likely to say that it is the luck of birth that determines success rather than hard work and determination. Sixty one percent of younger Democrats see circumstances of birth as a bigger determinant of success. This speaks to a growing generational fissure.

Primary Factors in Success: The Circumstances into which You are Born or Hard Work and Determination



% Choosing Circumstances of Birth as Bigger Determinant of Success



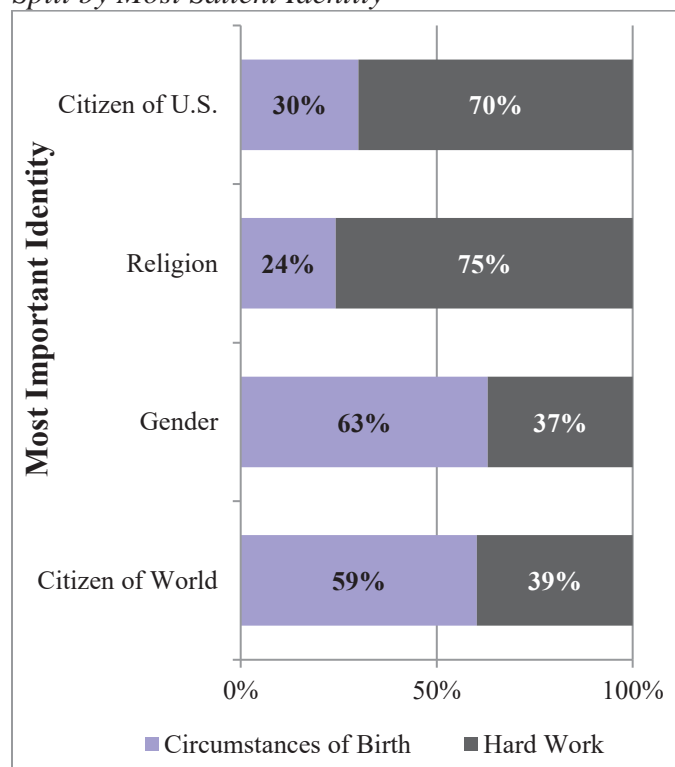
As the two figures to the right show, the split in the United States over the health of the American dream is not exclusively partisan. These core identities divide both Democrats and Republicans in important ways. Individuals citing their American citizenship or their religion as the most salient identity overwhelmingly say that hard work and determination determines success in the United States. More than 70% of these groups said they believed that hard work was more important than the circumstances of birth for success. By contrast, less than 40% of those selecting their gender or world citizenship as the most salient identity believed that hard work was most sufficient for success.

The Critical Issues Poll reveals that the split we see in terms of identity and belief in the American Dream is not simply an artifact of partisanship. The second figure shows strong differences within party based on whether one identifies more strongly as a citizen of the U.S. or a citizen of the world.

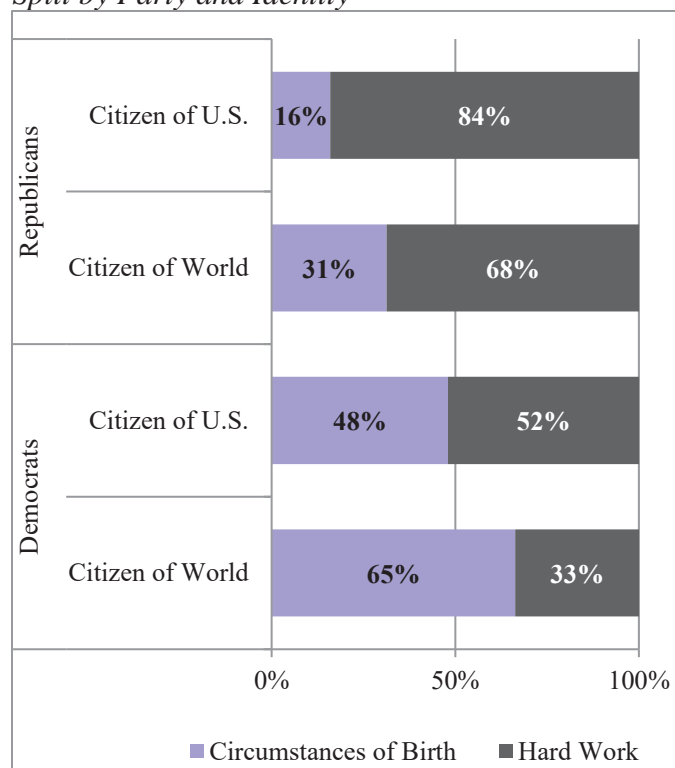
Among Republicans, all groups generally believe that hard work and determination are more important factors than the circumstances of one's birth. Yet we find that individuals identifying as world citizens are almost twice as likely to say that circumstances of birth are more important. (by a margin of 31%-16%).

Among Democrats, the difference is just as stark. As a group, Democrats are more likely to say that the circumstances of birth are the more important factor in success (56%). Yet Democrats who identify as citizens of the U.S. are more likely to believe that hard work and determination play the bigger role, by a margin of 52%-48%. Among those Democrats identifying as world citizens, the relationship is very different. By a 65%-33% margin, Democrats who identify as citizens of the world do not believe that hard work and determination are most important. The partisan, age, and identity divide provide some insight into the contentious politics we see playing out today.

Primary Factor in Success in the United States, Split by Most Salient Identity



Primary Factor in Success in the United States, Split by Party and Identity



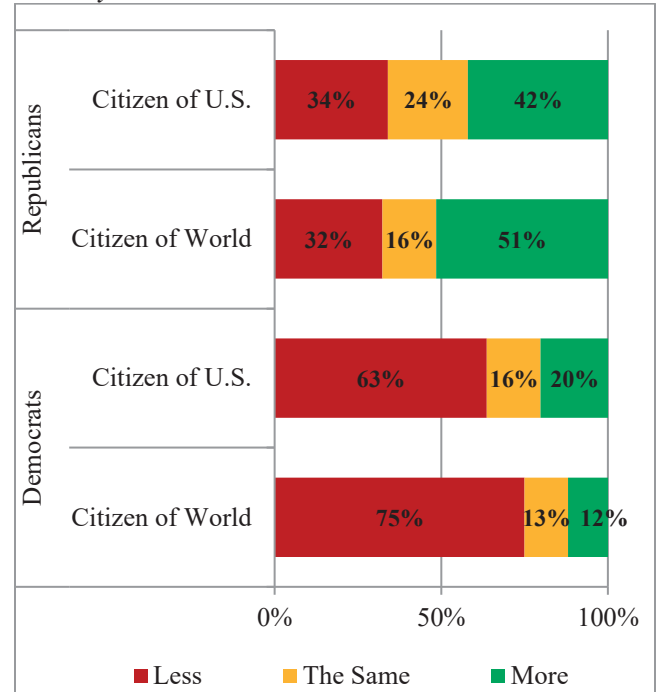
Identity and the Sources of Disillusionment

Disillusionment with the American Dream, most especially among cosmopolitan Democrats, appears to come from the belief that the American class structure has grown rigid. Moreover, the identities associated with being a Democrat (gender and cosmopolitan citizenship) lead to pessimistic views about upward mobility and the wealth gap in America. Even those who identify more strongly with their religion or their American citizenship do not generally believe that the American class structure has become more egalitarian in the past few decades.

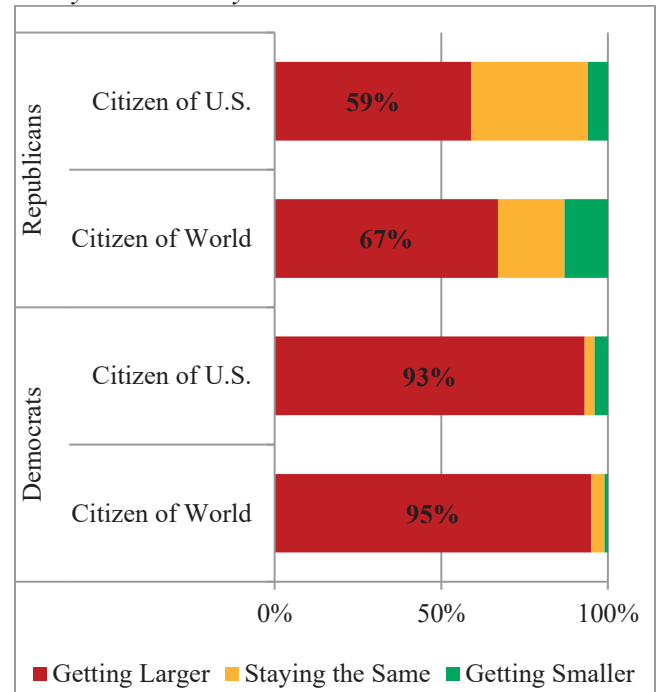
When asked whether there is more or less upward mobility in the United States compared to a generation ago, respondents are split by party and identity. While respondents identifying as citizens of the U.S. are generally more optimistic, this is not consistent across parties. Only 32% of Republicans identifying as a citizen of the world said there was less upward mobility, compared to 34% of Republicans identifying as citizens of the U.S. For Democrats, however, the gap is larger. By a 75%-63% margin, Democrats are more likely to believe there is less upward mobility if they identify as citizens of the world.

On the question of the wealth gap, there is more agreement across the board that economic equality in the United States is slipping further out of reach. Among all groups examined here, individuals say the gap is getting larger, but important differences exist across partisanship and identity. Republicans identifying as citizens of the U.S. are the most likely to see financial success as more attainable to all with only 59% saying the gap is growing. On the other end of the spectrum 95% of Democrats adopting the cosmopolitan identity say the gap is getting larger.

Less or More Upward Mobility by Party and Identity



Wealth Gap Getting Larger or Smaller by Party and Identity



Support for Confederate Monuments Largely Dependent on Core Identities

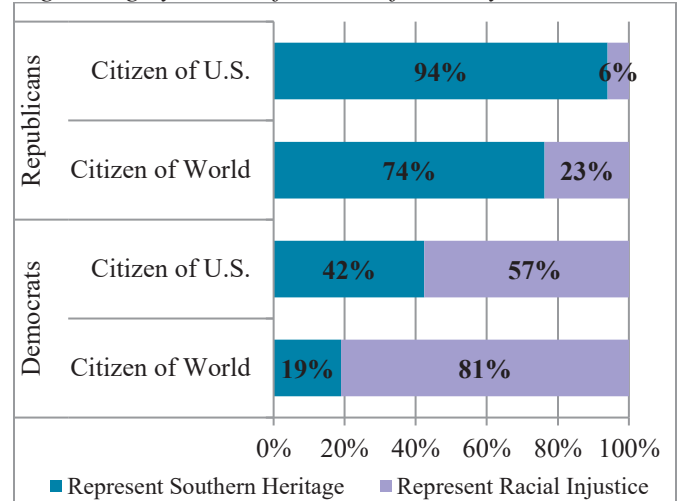
In August 2017, protests originally sparked by the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee turned violent, as white nationalists and counter-protesters clashed in Charlottesville, Virginia. The violence, along with President Trump's reaction to the protests, sparked controversy around the country.

With this poll, we find Americans largely support Confederate monuments, but disapprove of Donald Trump's reaction to the protests. Overall, respondents believe the monuments represent Southern heritage and history rather than racial injustice by a margin of 59%-40%. Yet deep divisions appear when looking at the issue by identity, age, and race. For both Democrats and Republicans, the American vs. Cosmopolitan split is clear, with those adopting a cosmopolitan identity being far more likely to view Confederate symbols as representing racial injustice. Among Republicans, who are generally more likely to view them as symbols of Southern heritage, the gap is 94%-74%. Among Democrats, that gap is 42%-19%.

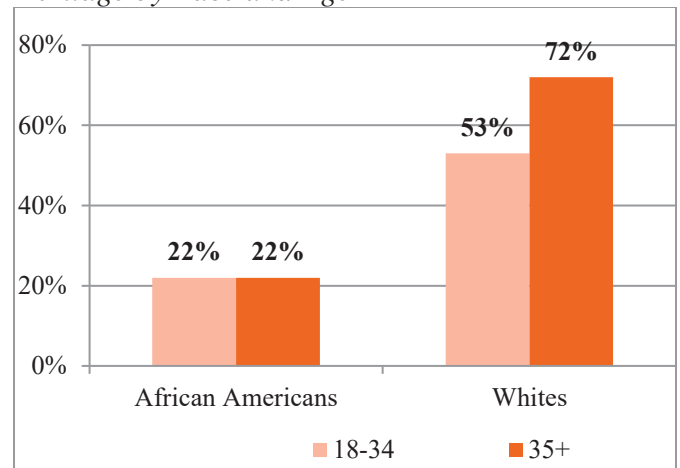
Looking at the issue by age and race, we find that African Americans of all ages do not view the monuments as representing southern heritage. For whites, however, we see a generational divide, with 53% of Millennial whites claiming the monuments represent Southern heritage, while 72% of older whites say the monuments represent heritage rather than injustice.

While respondents overall said the monuments represented Southern heritage rather than racial injustice, they disapproved of President Trump's response to the protests in Charlottesville. Overall, only 39% said they approved of Trump's handling of the situation, compared to 59% who said they disapproved. Democrats were particularly negative on the President's performance, with only 7% saying they approved of his reaction to the protests.

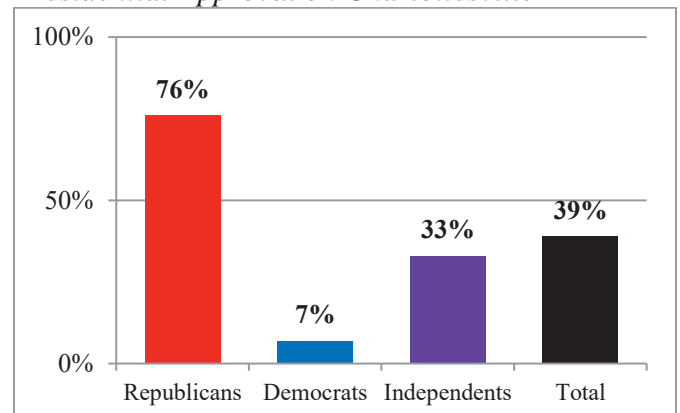
Which of the following is closer to your view regarding symbols of the Confederacy?



% Saying Monuments Represent Southern Heritage by Race and Age



Presidential Approval on Charlottesville

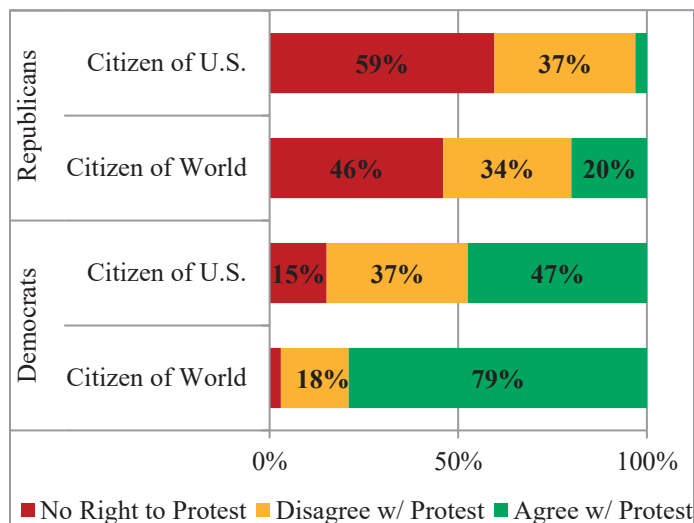


Cosmopolitan Identity Associated with Greater Support for NFL Protests

Donald Trump stirred controversy last September by [suggesting](#) NFL owners should fire players who refuse to stand for the national anthem. These protests began in 2016 when Colin Kaepernick sat (and later kneeled) during the national anthem to bring attention to racial injustice in America.

With this poll, we looked not only at whether Americans support NFL player protests, but whether Americans believe players have the right to protest in the first place. Overall, we find that on the question of civil liberties, two-thirds either agree with the protest or agree with the players right to protest. But on the merits of the political dispute itself, two-thirds do not support the underlying cause of the protest. Overall, we find the respondents evenly split. A third agree with the protest, a third disagree with the protest but affirm players' right to protest, and a third believe the players should not have the right to protest.

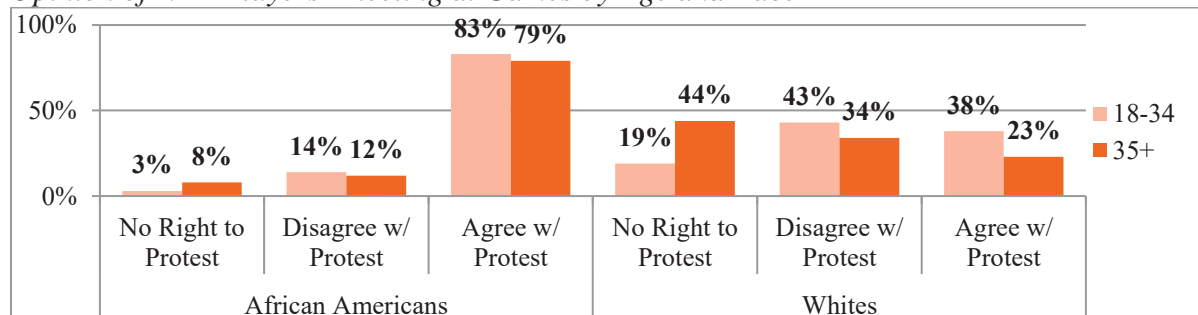
Opinion of NFL Protest by Party and Identity



The Critical Issues Poll reveals that Americans are both evenly and deeply divided on this issue. Republicans who identify as citizens of the U.S. overwhelmingly believe that NFL players should not have the right to protest in this manner. Only three percent of this group said they agreed with the protest. Democrats, and particularly cosmopolitan Democrats, are far more positive with regard to the protest. A full 79% of Democrats identifying as citizens of the world agree with the protest, and only 3% of this group say the protests should not be allowed.

The NFL protests also divided respondents by race and age. African Americans across the board supported the protests; among whites, both age groups agree, to varying degrees, that players should have the right to protest, but disagree with the substance of those protests. Forty-four percent of whites over the age of 35 said that NFL players should not have the right to protest compared to only 19% of Millennials. Thirty-eight percent of Millennial whites said they agreed with the protests, compared to only 23% of older whites.

Opinion of NFL Players Kneeling at Games by Age and Race



Overall, the Critical Issues Poll reveals that while partisanship is still a predictable measure of political attitudes, there are other identities that are crucial to examine as well. In particular, American identity, cosmopolitan identity, generational identity, religious identity, and gender identity are important factors of how Americans are feeling one year into the Trump presidency. These factors help us understand what respondents think about salient issues such as faith in the American dream, the opportunity for upward mobility, support for Confederate monuments, and sentiments about NFL player protests.

Survey Methodology

The survey was carried out November 1-6, 2017 online from a nationally representative sample of Nielsen Scarborough's probability-based panel, originally recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of adults. The national sample was 2,000, including a down-weighted oversample of 1,042 among 18-34 year olds. Responses were weighted by age, gender, income, education, race, and geographic region using benchmarks from the US Census. The survey was also weighted by partisan identification. The margin of error is 2.19%

To access the survey methodology of all three of the polls listed in the report, please click [here](#).

For more information, please visit: criticalissues.umd.edu

Note: These questions were fielded as part of a larger poll on foreign and domestic issues. Participants in this study were provided by Nielsen from Nielsen's sample of respondents.