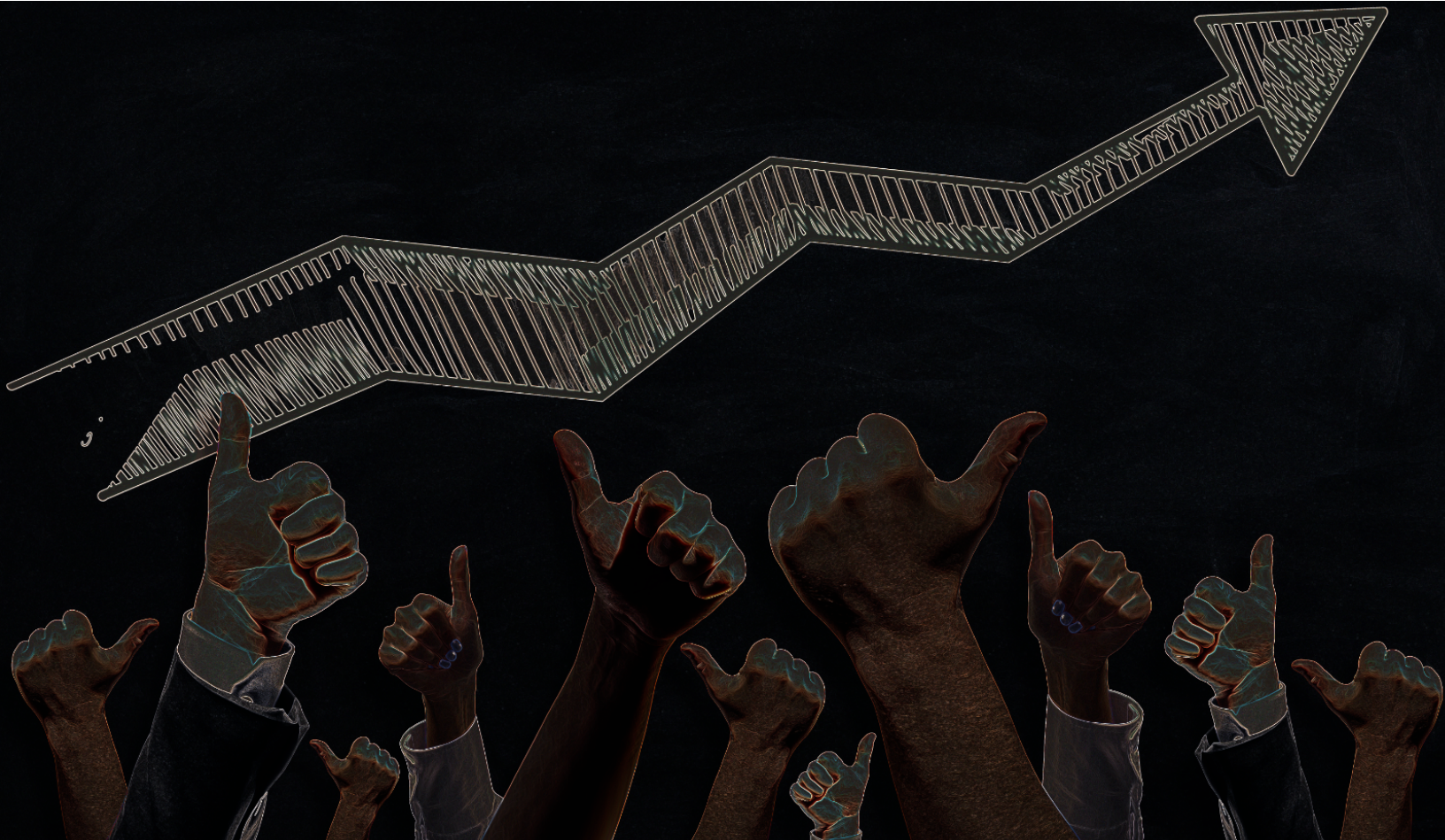




Populist Attitudes in America

An August 2024 Survey



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Populist Attitudes in America

An August 2024 Survey

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A Report

from the

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Introduction

This report presents various results of a survey developed by the Institute for the Study of Modern Authoritarianism and fielded nationwide from August 7 to August 12, 2024, by the online research organization YouGov. There were 1,000 respondents, and their responses were weighted to better reflect key U.S. demographics.¹ The survey had a standard margin of error of 3.1% at a 95 percent confidence level.

The survey was written to assess the frequency of populist sentiments among the U.S. electorate during the 2024 presidential race and to estimate the populist following of each of the presidential candidates. Three essays analyzing the findings from the survey have been authored by the Institute's survey research director, Thomas Shull, and published by the Institute's online periodical, *The UnPopulist*, at theunpopulist.net.² These three essays are reproduced, with minor copy-edits, in the pages below. They describe the four potential populist attitudes measured by the survey and the method used to determine which people qualified, through their answers, as populist followers of their preferred presidential candidate under our model of populism.

The first essay focuses on Donald Trump's supporters; the second, on Kamala Harris' supporters; and the third, on Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s supporters. The essays begin on the next page, and they are followed by the "topline" survey results, which present a straightforward record of all the survey's questions and people's responses to them.

Detailed crosstabulations of the survey results are available in a separate Excel file at www.ismaglobal.org.

¹ A brief technical summary of the weighting methodology appears at the end of this report (see page 44).

² See "Many Trump Supporters Will Question a Close Harris Victory—Making Another Jan. 6 a Distinct Possibility, Our Survey Finds," *The UnPopulist*, September 28, 2024, <https://www.theunpopulist.net/p/many-trump-supporters-will-question>; "Kamala Harris' Base Will Stand by Her If She Leads Efforts to Restrain Executive Power, Our Survey Shows," *The UnPopulist*, October 18, 2024, <https://www.theunpopulist.net/p/kamala-harris-base-will-stand-by>; "Our Survey Finds that Kennedy's Supporters Are More 'Normal' Than He Is and Even Than Trump and Harris Supporters," *The UnPopulist*, December 20, 2024, <https://www.theunpopulist.net/p/our-survey-finds-that-kennedys-supporters>.

Many Trump Supporters Will Question a Close Harris Victory— Making Another Jan. 6 a Distinct Possibility, Our Survey Finds

They buy some version of the Great Replacement Theory and believe that elites are selling them out

Originally published September 28, 2024.

Polls show the outcome of the presidential race is likely to be close. If that proves true, the result will almost certainly be contested. Legal challenges to the election process are already underway. The inevitable question, then, is whether America will experience another spasm of violence like Jan. 6, with its threat to Congress and the peaceful transfer of power.

The results of an extensive survey of populist attitudes conducted in August by *The UnPopulist's* parent organization, the Institute for the Study of Modern Authoritarianism, found a segment of populist supporters of President Donald Trump who approved of the protest on Jan. 6, 2021, considered the prospect of a Kamala Harris presidency as a crisis to democracy, and anticipated a historically corrupt election in 2024—a combination of concerns that could well motivate them, based on their reasoning about the event, to engage in another Jan.6-style protest.

Some nonpopulist Trump supporters express the same acute concerns about a Harris victory, and even those who don't may well feel skeptical about it. Trump supporters generally hold very negative views of America's political elites and of at least one other social group, particularly undocumented immigrants, whom they often believe these elites favor. Many even endorse some version of the "Great Replacement Theory," holding that immigration puts Republicans or white Americans at risk.

We will focus on Trump's supporters and his populist base in this essay, discussing who they are and their responses to our survey. We'll turn to populism among Harris and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. supporters in subsequent essays.

Capturing America's Populist Moment

The precise definition of populism is contested in the academic literature, but for the purposes of our survey, we defined populists as those who exhibited any three of the following four attitudes:

1. Feel an unusually direct connection with a political leader or, alternatively, with his or her agenda while believing this leader understands them and will defend their interests like no other candidate.
2. Seem willing to let their candidate as president override institutional checks on state power to achieve the movement's goals.

3. See themselves as harmed or ignored by powerful elites—often government elites—who corruptly act against their interests.
4. Perceive themselves as losing ground to disliked groups, such as immigrants, whom the elites favor or refuse to check and whom the populists don't see—unlike themselves—as “real” or “true” members of the nation.

The combination of these views, if left unchecked, tends to facilitate an autocracy by eroding constraints on government power.

Our 52-question survey was constructed around the definition of populism above and fielded to a representative sample of 1,000 U.S. respondents by the online research data group YouGov. Our questions aimed to be politically neutral, so that we could detect populism on either the right or the left. Importantly, the survey, the first major poll of its kind in the United States, will establish a baseline to track populist trends in the future.

Based on our findings, we estimate that populists constitute approximately 36% of the supporters of President Donald Trump, 29% of the (then-) supporters of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and 15% of the supporters of Vice President Kamala Harris.

Who Are the Trump Populists?

Although Trump populists, as noted above, constitute a little more than a third of Trump's supporters, they are about 14% of America's adult population—roughly the same size as the African American population.

Demographically, just like Trump's overall supporters, Trump populists also tend to be:

- Older: Those 18 to 44 years of age comprised 51% of non-Trump supporters and of nonpopulist Trump supporters, but only 23% of Trump populists. Nearly two-thirds of Trump populists were 55 or older, while just above one-third of other respondents had reached 55. Hence, a sizable contingent of Trump populists belongs to the Baby Boom generation—a famously restive generation that came of age in an era of protests and social division.
- Whiter: 87% were white, with just 3% Black and 4% Hispanic, compared to 74%, 8% and 9% of Trump nonpopulists, respectively, and 60%, 17% and 13% of non-Trump supporters, respectively.
- More Protestant and Roman Catholic: 71%, compared to 51% of other respondents. About 36% identified as “born again,” slightly above the 31% of other respondents.
- Slightly more low-income: For instance, 38% had an annual income below \$50,000, compared to 35% of other respondents.
- Slightly more “working class”: 72% did not have a four-year college degree, compared to 66% of other respondents.

- More likely to be married: 56%, compared to 44% of everyone else.

One interesting finding, given that populism is typically a “male” phenomenon, was that Trump populists had roughly the same gender breakdown as the rest of the population: 51% female and 49% male.

As for their beliefs, they tended to be:

- More conservative: 75% self-identified as conservative or very conservative, compared to just 21% of the others taking the survey.
- More patriotic: 84% said they were very or extremely proud to be an American, compared to 63% of other respondents.

Connection with Trump and Handing Him More Unchecked Power

To detect signs of populism, one of the attitudes we searched for in the survey was the feeling of a strong, even personal, connection with their candidate or his or her goals. Another involved respondents’ willingness to let their candidate override institutional constraints on executive power if elected president.

To test how respondents felt about granting their candidate such power, we asked two sets of questions. One looked at how much more willing people might be to let their candidate, as opposed to a generic president of their preferred party, use executive orders to circumvent their political opponents in Congress. Another set asked whether they trusted their candidate “as president to decide when to follow the law and when to ignore it to achieve justice” when the opposing party had already misused federal power for partisan purposes.

On this count, there was little difference between Trump and Harris supporters. A 63% majority of Trump supporters approved at least one of these dubious uses of executive power, a percentage point *less* than Harris supporters (64%). (The overall level of support was higher than—but otherwise consistent with—the findings of our November pilot survey, in which majorities of Trump’s supporters (51%) and President Joe Biden’s supporters (53%) approved this misuse of executive authority.

Clear differences emerged, however, when we measured the degree of respondents’ connection with their candidate. We asked the survey takers to pick their *primary* reason for supporting the candidate and looked for those who:

- Said they felt a “personal connection” with him or her, or ...
- Supported his or her policy agenda and ...
 - Strongly agreed that he or she was the *only* recent politician who understood people like them, and ...

- o Strongly agreed that he or she was the *only* recent politician who would actually fight for people like them.

From these questions, we estimated that 22% of Trump supporters exhibited signs of a populist connection with the candidate, compared to just 6% of Harris and Kennedy supporters alike. (The figure for Trump supporters was essentially unchanged from the 21% who showed signs of this attitude last November.)

Trusted Leader, Distrusted Elites

Populist movements are characterized by not only a strong trust in a leader, but by a strong distrust of society’s elites. We found that Trump supporters exhibited a greater level of skepticism than other respondents toward America’s governing elites—both its national elected officials and its unelected officials in the federal bureaucracy. Overall, 76% of Trump supporters agreed with the harsh statement, “America’s political elites among its national elected officials have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests,” while 70% agreed with a similar statement about bureaucratic elites (see table below). In both cases, 43% of Trump supporters *strongly* agreed, and strong agreement was our standard for signs of an anti-elitist populist attitude.

Percentages of Trump Supporters Saying People Like Them Are Often Harmed by Various Elites’ Self-Interest					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Political elites among national elected officials	43	33	17	6	0
Bureaucratic elites among unelected federal officials	43	27	23	7	1
Cultural elites in...					
Media	47	23	22	7	2
Universities/ Entertainment	45	23	24	7	1
Business elites in finance and industry	31	33	26	9	1
Religious elites in Christian churches	11	20	36	19	13

Trump supporters were also more negative than other Americans when it came to cultural elites. Some 69% of Trump supporters, compared to 48% of other Americans, said that cultural elites in the media had harmed them in pursuit of their own selfish interests, with 47% of Trump supporters strongly agreeing. Similarly, 67% of Trump supporters had a harsh assessment of cultural elites in universities and entertainment, compared to 39% of other Americans. In fact, Trump supporters were more likely to *strongly* agree with the harms caused by “selfish” cultural elites than they were even with federal elites in the “swamp.”

Conversely, Trump supporters were *less* skeptical than other Americans toward religious elites in Christian churches (31% vs. 59%, respectively) and toward business elites in finance and industry (63% vs. 71%). Still, a strong majority of Trump supporters disapproved of the business elites' actions.

In all, 61% of Trump supporters showed signs of the second populist attitude by *strongly* agreeing that at least one of these various elites had selfishly harmed people like them.

'Social Outgroups' and Their Elite Enablers

Populism often combines a distrust of powerful elites with a dislike of a "social outgroup." Populists see the elites as letting this group enjoy special advantages or privileges at their expense even though, unlike the populists, it is not a "real" part of the nation.

To explore this dynamic, something we hadn't done fully in our pilot survey, we presented the respondents with 12 societal groups segmented by: race and ethnicity (whites, Blacks, and Hispanics), religion (Muslims, Jews, and Evangelical Christians), gender (men and women), sexual identity (transgender people and gays and lesbians), and immigration status (legal and undocumented immigrants). We then asked people their general feelings about each group: positive, negative, or neither.

Respondents who expressed negative feelings toward the group were further asked whether they:

- Agreed or disagreed that "government elites permit [the group] to have special advantages at the expense of people like you."
- Agreed or disagreed that people in this group "can't be true members of the national community"—a generic rephrasing of their not being "real" or "true Americans."

Negative views of a group on all three questions suggested that the respondent considered them an "outgroup," indicating signs of populist views on this count. About 54% of Trump supporters qualified for this attitude with at least one group.

Although we did not find a large difference in negativity between Trump and Harris supporters toward Blacks, Hispanics and Jews, Trump supporters were roughly 10 times as likely to view as an outgroup transgender people (19.2% vs. 1.5%), Muslims (15.2% vs. 1.4%), and gays and lesbians (10.6% vs. 1.2%).

But the group most frequently seen as a social outgroup among Trump supporters was illegal immigrants (a description we reluctantly embraced to ensure a clearer distinction with "legal immigrants"). Fully 48%—nearly 10 times the percentage of Harris supporters—saw this group as an outgroup.

Percentages of Respondents Showing Signs of a “Social Outgroup” Populist Attitude								
Candidate Choice	Illegal Immigrants	Evan-gelicals	Muslims	Jews	Blacks	Hispanics	Gays/ Lesbians	Trans-gender
Harris Supporters	5	13	1	1	0	1	1	2
Trump Supporters	48	1	15	3	3	3	11	19
All Respondents	25	7	8	2	2	2	5	9

Note: The percentages who displayed potential populist attitudes toward legal immigrants, men, women, and whites were 2% or less for both Harris and Trump supporters and 1.1% or less for all respondents. These figures are not shown.

Trump populists had strong opinions about undocumented immigration. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that U.S. political leaders had “intentionally failed to reduce undocumented immigration because they want more immigrants in the country.”

Moreover, they seemed to embrace the reasons offered in the Great Replacement Theory for this failure. There are two versions of this theory, one soft and one strong. The soft version holds that Democratic Party politicians allow undocumented immigration because they think immigrants will vote for them and help them win elections. About 89%—nine in 10—Trump populists believed this. The strong version holds that U.S. political leaders want undocumented immigrants in the country to replace the culture and political power of white Americans. Nearly half (49%) of Trump populists believed this.

In addition, a sizable 45% minority of Trump populists agreed with yet another distrustful explanation (though non-GRT)—that U.S. political leaders wanted undocumented immigrants to provide “cheap foreign labor to drive down business costs and workers’ wages.”

Although support for this theory wasn’t as high among Trump’s non-populist supporters, it was still high. About 50% bought the soft version that Democrats were trying to import voters to win elections, 23% believed the strong version that this was an intentional effort to diminish the power of the native white population and 27% believed that this was meant to drive down native wages and help business.

Should We Fear Another Jan. 6? Short Answer: Yes

The support in Trump’s base for the Great Replacement Theory shows just how suspicious his supporters have become of America’s elites. But this cynicism extends to America’s core institutions, including its elections.

As mentioned above, we estimate that Trump populists constitute about 14% of U.S. adults, and of those Trump populists:

- 74% believe Biden was illegitimately declared president.
- 89% regard Harris as a definite threat to democracy if elected.

- 74% agreed that the 2024 election will decide whether America will continue to be a democracy.
- 50%, more than twice the percentage of all other respondents, believe that the 2024 election “will be the most corrupt election in the history of our country”—by implication, even more corrupt than the 2020 election that sparked the Jan. 6 march on the Capitol.

So how did Trump populists feel about the Jan. 6 protest at the Capitol?

A 38% plurality of Trump populists approved of the protestors’ actions that day. When that plurality was asked why, 46% said, “Protests like this are important whenever there’s a question about the results of a close presidential election, even if they disrupt Congress.” The other 54% said, “The protest on Jan. 6, 2021, properly disrupted Congress because the 2020 presidential election was a very unusual case.”

Consider those answers. Among the Trump populists who think the Jan. 6 protest makes sense whenever there’s a question about a close election, over half also believe the 2024 election will be the most corrupt in history. Given that the election looks likely to be very close, those Trump populists—about 9% of all Trump populists—appear primed to see a Jan.6-style protest as important, even if it disrupts Congress.

The other Trump populists who approved of the Jan. 6 protestors, in contrast, said it was acceptable because the 2020 election presented a very unusual case. But nearly half of them also believe this will be the most corrupt election in history, and vast majorities of them see Kamala Harris as a definite threat to American democracy if elected and believe this election will determine whether the U.S. continues as a democracy. These Jan.6-approving Trump populists who believe all three of those things—8% of all Trump populists—likewise seem primed to see the 2024 election as a “very unusual case” that would “properly” disrupt Congress in the case of a close election.

Hence, about 17% of Trump populists seem very likely to have grounds for considering a similar protest to be legitimate if Harris is declared the victor in November. They represent about 2.5% of American adults—millions of people who, as populists, feel a strong connection to their candidate’s cause and a strong desire to see him prevail and gain power. And of course, a similar “crisis logic” could lead other Trump supporters who *aren’t* populists, but who nevertheless approved of the Jan. 6 protest, to consider a protest like that to be appropriate this year.

Ultimately, only a small fraction of these partisans would have to actually travel to the Capitol to represent an imposing crowd. On the whole, it is probably well that Congress will now be receiving extra protection when certifying the next election on Jan. 6, 2025.

Of course, we believe that understanding populist sentiments will help us to do more than anticipate an outlier problem like a Jan. 6 protest. More fundamentally, a significant segment of Americans is becoming impatient with the constraints, mechanisms and procedures of liberal democracy, driving a crisis of legitimacy in American institutions.

Defusing that deep frustration will take more than a quadrennial increase in the number of police stationed at the Capitol.

Kamala Harris' Base Will Stand by Her If She Leads Efforts to Restrain Executive Power, Our Survey Shows

She has a real opportunity to strengthen democratic norms if elected

Originally published Oct. 18, 2024

Kamala Harris has the smallest populist following of the major presidential candidates this election season, as we reported earlier this month based on a survey of populist attitudes in America fielded by our parent organization, the Institute for the Study of Modern Authoritarianism. Under the survey's model of populism, 15% of Harris' supporters could be classified as "populists," compared to 36% of Republican Donald Trump's, and 29% of then-Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr's.

But this does not mean that if Harris wins, our governing institutions will be secure from populist pressures. True, far fewer of her supporters than Trump's exhibit two of the populist attitudes the survey measures: feeling an unusually strong bond with their candidate and her cause, and identifying people in American society that, unlike them, can't be "real" members of the American community. They do, however, display the other two attitudes at levels similar to Trump's supporters: a strong skepticism of society's elites, and a willingness to let their candidate override checks on presidential power to achieve political goals.

If elected, Harris could thus face pressure to misuse her power. That said, our survey shows that if she chooses to take the lead in fireproofing the presidency³ from future abuses by rogue executives, as *The UnPopulist* has recommended, she would have backing from her supporters—including her populist supporters—to do so. In effect, Harris faces a historic opportunity to strengthen American institutions for years to come.

The 'UnPopulism' of Harris Supporters

The ISMA survey tested for the four populist attitudes summarized above and classified people displaying three or more of these as "populists." The sizable gap between the number of Harris and Trump populists emerged mostly from large differences between Harris and Trump supporters on two of those four attitudes.

The first of the two attitudes producing this gap involved people's sense of attachment to their political candidate. Just 6% of Harris supporters showed the potential populist attitude

³ See "Fireproofing the Presidency," *The UnPopulist*, <https://www.theunpopulist.net/t/fireproofing-the-presidency>, accessed February 04, 2025.

of feeling an unusually close attachment to Harris, or to both her and her policy agenda. In contrast, 22% of Trump supporters did so with Trump.

Harris supporters were also less likely to display the frequent populist attitude of identifying “social outgroups”—in other words, people in American society they viewed negatively, as specially advantaged, and as ultimately unable to be “true members of the national community.” A 54% majority of Trump supporters held this attitude toward at least one of the 12 groups we tested, particularly undocumented immigrants, transgender people, Muslims, and gays and lesbians. Just 22% of Harris supporters did the same, with their primary outgroup being evangelical Christians—a demographic frequently associated with Donald Trump, the Republican Party, and conservative ideology (see table below).

Percentages of Respondents Showing Signs of a “Social Outgroup” Populist Attitude								
Candidate Choice	Illegal Immigrants	Evan-gelicals	Muslims	Jews	Blacks	Hispanics	Gays/ Lesbians	Trans-gender
Harris Supporters	5	13	1	1	0	1	1	2
Trump Supporters	48	1	15	3	3	3	11	19
All Respondents	25	7	8	2	2	2	5	9

Note: The percentages who displayed potential populist attitudes toward legal immigrants, men, women, and whites were 2% or less for both Harris and Trump supporters and 1.1% or less for all respondents. These figures are not shown.

Harris Supporters’ Strong Skepticism of American Elites

Harris supporters’ lower rate of populist sentiments in these areas doesn’t mean, however, that they can’t succumb to traditional populist temptations. In the other two areas we tested, Harris supporters showed signs of populist attitudes nearly at par with Trump supporters.

One of these attitudes was whether people saw themselves as harmed or ignored by corrupt, powerful elites. We tested people’s attitudes toward six elites in all (see table below), asking if the respondent thought these elites “have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests.” Despite this strong, even cynical language, a majority of Harris supporters agreed or strongly agreed in four of the six cases, while a plurality agreed in the other two.

In all, 59% of Harris supporters strongly agreed with this harsh statement about at least one elite. This qualified them, under our model, as exhibiting signs of this populist attitude at a rate nearly equal to the 61% of Trump supporters who did the same. And while Trump supporters reserved their strongest criticism for the cultural elites, Harris supporters were most severe on business elites in finance and industry, religious elites in Christian churches—perhaps echoing their greater willingness to view evangelical Christians as a social outgroup—and political elites among the nation’s elected officials. This last elite is particularly relevant to the risks posed by Harris supporters’ feelings on the fourth populist attitude.

Percentages of Harris Supporters Saying People Like Them Are Often Harmed by Various Elites' Self-Interest					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Political elites among national elected officials	29	40	24	6	1
Bureaucratic elites among unelected federal officials	22	32	27	15	4
Cultural elites in...					
Media	18	29	32	16	4
Universities/ Entertainment	11	23	31	26	8
Business elites in finance and industry	39	35	18	7	1
Religious elites in Christian churches	39	28	23	8	3

The Partisan Allure of Expanding Executive Power

The other populist attitude where Harris supporters ranked high was their apparent willingness to let their candidate, if elected president, override checks on presidential power. We asked two sets of questions to test this inclination. One pair of questions gauged how much more willing people might be to let their preferred candidate, as opposed to a generic president of their own party, use executive orders to circumvent their political opponents in Congress. Another set asked whether they trusted their preferred candidate “as president to decide when to follow the law and when to ignore it to achieve justice” when the opposing party had allegedly misused federal power for partisan purposes. Among Harris supporters, 64% endorsed one or both these ideas, compared to 63% among Trump supporters.

This high percentage of Harris supporters probably reflects the strong skepticism they expressed, as discussed above, toward the political elites among America’s national elected officials—a group that presumably includes the Republican national officials who might thwart Harris’ goals. Harris supporters’ high figures were likely also due to the allegation in one question, also mentioned above, of a partisan abuse of power by the respondent’s political opponents.

But there was no suggestion of underhanded tactics in our question about a generic president of the respondent’s own party using an executive order to bypass opposition in Congress. Even then, 48% of Harris supporters agreed or strongly agreed with the idea, compared to only 36% of Trump supporters.

This Harris percentage would likely decline and the Trump percentage rise if Trump won the White House in November. This is the lesson of an extensive study published earlier this year by the Democracy Fund and titled *Democracy Hypocrisy: Examining America’s Fragile*

Democratic Convictions.⁴ The study found that people often switch their views on liberal democratic norms over time depending on whether it helps or hurts their political party. Neither side was immune from this. As I noted in an essay⁵ for *The UnPopulist*, the study found that while Republicans zigzagged on respecting election outcomes when it affected their own candidates, “The Achilles’ heel for Democrats appears to have been their endorsing unilateral presidential action even when it [was] not constitutionally authorized without congressional approval” whenever a Democrat happened to be president.

Harris Populists and Executive Power

This dynamic appears to be even stronger among Harris populists. In the question mentioned above about a generic president of the respondent’s own party issuing an executive order to circumvent Congress, fully 59% agreed or strongly agreed with the idea. This figure rose to 72% when Harris herself was named as the president in the question, a rate of agreement that raises what would be a bare majority of approval for the idea among Harris’ nonpopulist supporters to a 55% majority among all Harris supporters. In effect, Harris populists—nearly one in every six Harris supporters—provide her with a more secure political base for using executive orders to bypass Congress unconstitutionally.

Consider, too, that 81% of Harris supporters said they had negative feelings toward Republicans, a number that rises to 90% for Harris populists. No doubt part of this is anti-Trump sentiment: Eighty-four percent (84%) of Harris populists said they felt “very fearful” of Trump’s election; 88%, that he “would definitely pose a threat to American democracy”; and 97%, that this presidential election “will decide whether America will continue to be a democracy.” But such feelings will probably continue to affect Harris supporters’ views of Republicans if Harris wins the election and, as seems quite plausible,⁶ Trump partisans aggressively protest the result.

If Harris is elected in this environment and required to govern with a recalcitrant Republican Congress, she could easily face pressure—particularly from her populist supporters—to bypass Congress and “legislate” by executive order. Indeed, 56% of Harris populists agreed that members of their party “harm themselves if they comply with the law when their political opponents do not,” and it’s clear that many Harris populists—and other Harris supporters—believe Republicans have not. The pressure on Harris would also intensify if partisans tapped her supporters’ negative feelings toward national political elites—a group that would include Congress—or if the proposed legislation involved efforts to curb the perceived power of the business or religious elites Harris supporters are skeptical of.

Yet this does not mean Harris couldn’t stand her ground against inappropriate executive orders and, further, argue to rein in or *reduce* executive power. Over the past few years,

⁴ Joe Goldman, Lee Drutman, and Oscar Pocasangre, *Democracy Hypocrisy: Examining America’s Fragile Democratic Convictions*, January 4, 2024, Democracy Fund, <https://democracyfund.org/idea/democracy-hypocrisy/>, accessed February 4, 2025.

⁵ Thomas Shull, “Americans May Be Turning Against Representative Democracy Along With Commitment to Democratic Values,” *The UnPopulist*, April 18, 2024, <https://www.theunpopulist.net/p/americans-may-be-turning-against>, accessed February 4, 2025.

⁶ See pages 9–11, above.

Democrats have campaigned on the importance of maintaining constitutional norms, and aside from the issue of executive orders, these appeals appear to have been accepted by Harris supporters. For example, our survey asked about four other constitutional norms, such as the government’s not censoring partisan media outlets (see table below). Majorities of Harris supporters—populists and nonpopulists alike—endorsed them. Solid majorities of Harris populists and nonpopulists likewise rejected as a “somewhat or very bad way of governing this country” a system in “which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from Congress or the courts.”

Percentages of Harris Supporters Who Disagreed or Agreed With Violating Various Norms				
	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree/ Agree	Not asked*
[Inparty: Democratic/Republican] elected officials should sometimes consider ignoring court decisions when the judges who issued those decisions were appointed by [Outparty: Republican/Democratic] presidents.	51	23	18	8
When a [Inparty: Democratic/Republican] candidate questions the outcome of an election, other [Inparties: Democrats/Republicans] should be more loyal to the [Inparty: Democratic/Republican] party than to election rules and the constitution.	54	18	19	8
The government should be able to censor media sources that spend more time attacking [Inparties: Democrats/Republicans] than [Outparties: Republicans/Democrats].	53	21	18	8
[Inparties: Democrats/Republicans] should reduce the number of polling stations in areas that typically support [Outparties: Republicans/Democrats]	65	17	11	8

**Harris supporters who declared themselves strictly independent, learning toward neither the Democratic nor Republican party, were not asked these questions. The respondent’s “Inparty,” Democratic or Republican, was determined by which party they identified more with in a separate question; the “Outparty” was the major party opposing their preferred party.*

In fact, it’s telling that when Harris populists in our survey were asked about which of eight different traits they saw as “very important” in a presidential candidate, they put at the *bottom* of the list the qualities “assertive with political power,” “politically outmaneuvers his or her opponents,” and “quick to seize political opportunities”—in other words, the traits displayed in unilaterally issuing executive orders to bypass Congress. At the *top* of the list was a candidate who “sticks to constitutional principles,” seen as very important by 80% of Harris populists and by 70% of Harris supporters as a whole. Harris populists and other Harris supporters appear, then, to have embraced in broad terms—even if not with perfect consistency—constitutional ideals on executive power.

Trump supporters are not markedly different on these issues. They are generally less staunch in support of the norms, but they, too, are more likely to oppose than to support violating them—except, again, on the issue of using executive orders to bypass Congress, where a plurality approve the idea. They are, however, rather less likely than Harris supporters to see it as very important that their president have such traits as “tolerates views

different from his or her own” (44%, versus 62% for Harris supporters), “willing to compromise when necessary” (40% vs. 61%) and “seeks bipartisan coalitions” (31% vs. 48%). If Trump were elected president, it is less clear Republican party members would value his working with Democrats in Congress to curb the powers of the presidency, and that he would make such work a priority.

If, in contrast, a newly elected President Harris consistently delivered a message of respecting constitutional limits on presidential power and refrained from issuing inappropriate executive orders of her own, she might well change her supporters’ views on this issue. Indeed, persuading her voters should be easier after the election. A Harris victory is likely to be a narrow one, demonstrating to her supporters the very real possibility that Donald Trump—a candidate a vast majority of them said they were very fearful of—might have held presidential power again. The need to curb that power for the good of the country, even if it means constraining her own power and persevering with Congress to achieve her goals, is an argument she should be able to win with her base.

Pursuing a Historic Legacy of Executive Initiative—and Restraint

So while our survey indicates that Kamala Harris, if elected, may well be able to rally her followers to support her in exceeding some of the proper limits on presidential authority, it also shows that she has a real political opportunity to instead make a principled argument for working with Congress to proactively reform and constrain a president’s power. This broad ideal is largely accepted by her followers, including—at least for now—her populist followers.

Such reforms could do much to limit the potential damage populism presents to American democracy, and they would represent a historic legacy. Above all, they could raise the chances that 2028 becomes a year in which Americans no longer believe their presidential election represents a threat to American democracy, because they no longer fear that a president’s power might prove unlimited.

Our Survey Finds that Kennedy’s Supporters Are More ‘Normal’ Than He Is and Even Than Trump and Harris Supporters

Populists in his cohort, however, are more inclined than any other group to endorse aggressive use of executive power to achieve political goals

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Just over four months ago, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was an independent candidate for president with a small base of support. This support, however, was large enough to swing a close election to either Democrat Kamala Harris or Republican Donald Trump. Now he stands as Trump’s nominee for secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, after withdrawing from the presidential race and endorsing Trump.

It's an opportune time, then, to look at the supporters, including the populist supporters, who helped fuel his electoral rise and place his name on more than 30 state ballots. Without their backing, Kennedy's nomination to the cabinet of president-elect Trump—whose own campaign was driven by populist sentiments—would have been virtually unimaginable. Just before Kennedy bowed out of the presidential contest, he was drawing support from about 4% of the electorate, according to the results of an early August survey by the Institute for the Study of Modern Authoritarianism, the parent organization of *The UnPopulist*. Kennedy's percentage in the poll, which was fielded by the online research group YouGov, was consistent the findings of other surveys at the time. Our survey, however, included the Institute's model of populism and found that about 29% of Kennedy's followers qualified as populists—less than our estimate of 36% of Donald Trump's supporters, but nearly twice our estimate of 15% of Kamala Harris' supporters. The most distinctive populist feature of Kennedy's supporters involved one of the four populist attitudes the survey measured: their uniquely high readiness to allow their candidate, if elected president, to overstep legal limits on presidential power to achieve political goals.

Yet despite this intemperance and despite Kennedy's unconventional views and candidacy, his supporters frequently appear, well, unexceptional, even conventional. On many questions, the Kennedy coalition reflected the views of Americans as a whole in ways that Trump and Harris supporters did not.

In other areas, that same coalition seemed distinctly Trumpian, and in yet others, Harrisian—an unusual commingling of “opposing” views in our polarized age. Indeed, their nonpolarization may have been precisely why they were politically homeless enough to back an independent, longshot candidate. And while Kennedy's populist followers are just a sliver of the American electorate, their relatively large size in an upstart campaign that could have swung a presidential election is a reminder of populism's influence in our political era—an impact that could prove larger and more lasting, our survey suggests, than populists' numbers alone might indicate.

The Harris-Trump Coalition?

At the time our survey was fielded, from Aug. 7 to Aug. 12, Kennedy supporters were an obviously unusual group—a rump segment of the electorate. Some of Kennedy's earlier followers had decamped to support Kamala Harris when she entered the race; Pew Research even found that much of her initial surge above President Joe Biden's polling numbers came from former Kennedy backers.⁷ Those who remained behind were supporting a candidate who championed unorthodox views, questioning the American health establishment's consensus on the value of unpasteurized milk, fluoride in drinking water, and a range of vaccines.

Kennedy's followers' demographics appear to stand out in a couple respects, according to our survey, though comparisons are somewhat uncertain given his constituency's relatively small size. One is on gender: We found that 64% were women, compared to 50% of Harris

⁷ “1. The Presidential Matchup: Harris, Trump, Kennedy,” Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/08/14/the-presidential-matchup-harris-trump-kennedy/>, accessed February 4, 2025.

supporters and 49% of Trump supporters. Another was education: 83% of Kennedy supporters did not have a college degree, compared to 60% of Harris supporters and 71% of Trump supporters.

But in most cases, Kennedy supporters seemed familiar enough: sometimes like Harris supporters, sometimes like Trump supporters, and other times like an even blending of the two.

For example, Kennedy supporters sounded like Harris supporters in that:

- 73% disapproved of the actions of the protesters who entered the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021
- none of those who identified as Republican described themselves as MAGA Republicans
- three-quarters agreed that American business elites often harm people like themselves in pursuit of the elites' own selfish interests
- a majority wanted more ways for immigrants to obtain government documents as a remedy for more orderly border flows
- 29% said their religion was "nothing in particular."

At the same time, Kennedy supporters sounded like Trump supporters in that:

- only a minority (33%) thought Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election was legitimate
- 54% thought that if elected, Kamala Harris would definitely pose a threat to American democracy
- a 52% majority believed the 2024 election would be the most corrupt election in U.S. history
- 87% said they wanted more physical barriers at the southern border to forestall undocumented immigration
- a 54% majority identified as Protestant or Roman Catholic.

Or Average Americans?

On other important questions, Kennedy supporters sounded much like average Americans, or at least more so than either Harris or Trump supporters alone. This isn't entirely surprising: 53% of Kennedy supporters identified themselves as strict political independents, while the 47% who did not were pretty evenly divided between those who leaned or

identified Democratic and those who leaned or identified Republican. Such a coalition could plausibly produce a balanced, or “middle,” view.

The survey asked respondents, for instance, to rate the importance of eight different traits they wanted to see in a presidential candidate. Four of the eight traits the survey listed were competitive or combative, while the other four involved norms of negotiation.

The table below ranks the traits for each group of supporters by the percentage of each candidate’s followers who rated the trait as “very important.” As the table shows, Americans generally favored the presidential traits that respected the norms of negotiation, rather than Machiavellian conflict, but they still wanted their candidate to show some willingness to fight (see the first column for “All Respondents”). The order produced by Kennedy supporters perfectly matches the order favored by all the survey’s respondents, while the preferences of Harris and Trump supporters do not (differences from the rankings for all respondents are shaded in gold when higher, blue when lower, and white when the same).

Presidential Traits Seen as ‘Very Important’ Ranked From Greatest to Least for Candidates’ Supporters and All Respondents			
All Respondents	Harris Supporters	Trump Supporters	Kennedy Supporters
Sticks to constitutional rules	Sticks to constitutional rules	Sticks to constitutional rules	Sticks to constitutional rules
Willing to fight	Tolerates views different from his or her own	Willing to fight	Willing to fight
Tolerates views different from his or her own	Willing to fight	Tolerates views different from his or her own	Tolerates views different from his or her own
Willing to compromise when necessary	Willing to compromise when necessary	Assertive with political power	Willing to compromise when necessary
Seeks bipartisan coalitions	Seeks bipartisan coalitions	Willing to compromise when necessary	Seeks bipartisan coalitions
Assertive with political power	Assertive with political power	Politically outmaneuvers his or her opponents	Assertive with political power
Politically outmaneuvers his or her opponents	Politically outmaneuvers his or her opponents	Seeks bipartisan coalitions	Politically outmaneuvers his or her opponents
Quick to seize political opportunities	Quick to seize political opportunities	Quick to seize political opportunities	Quick to seize political opportunities

Note: Gold cells denote traits ranked higher by a candidate’s supporters than by all respondents (see first column); blue cells denote traits ranked lower; white cells, traits ranked the same. Rankings are based on the percentage of people in each column saying a trait is “very important.”

In another series of questions, we asked people for their views on five controversial policy issues: abortion, transgender athletes, assault rifles, tax policy, and health care. Respondents were asked whether their views were closer to an uncompromising “progressive” answer, such as “allow all abortions no matter their reason,” or to an uncompromising “conservative” answer, such as “outlaw all abortions no matter their reason.” Respondents gave answers on a scale from 1 to 7, where 4 was “middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides” (see example below).

Some believe that abortions should always be legal no matter what the reason. Others believe that abortions should never be legal no matter what the reason. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

- 1 Allow all abortions no matter their reason
- 2
- 3
- 4 Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides
- 5
- 6
- 7 Outlaw all abortions no matter their reason

On four of the five issues, Americans' average response was between a 3 and 4—i.e., slightly progressive—but on transgender athletes, their average was between a 5 and 6, closer to a more conservative desire to “require transgender athletes to compete on teams matching their sex assigned at birth.” As with the presidential traits, Kennedy supporters' average answers to each question almost uniformly came closer to Americans' average responses than did the answers of Harris supporters or Trump supporters. The sole exception came on trans athletes, where Kennedy supporters were just barely more conservative than Trump supporters (who were closer to the American average), and where Harris supporters were, by a small margin, closest to the average.

These examples of ways in which Kennedy supporters' views alternately reflect those of average Americans, Harris supporters, or Trump supporters is not to somehow validate their views as “correct” or to dismiss as irrelevant Kennedy's own unorthodox claims regarding, for instance, public health. Rather, it's simply to indicate that this political minority is more conventional than is often recognized, and that its relatively high rates of populist sentiment can't be explained simply by unlikely demographics or an abundance of “exotic views.”

This brings us to the attitudes that put many Kennedy supporters into the populist camp.

Key Populist Attitudes Among Kennedy Supporters

We measured populist sentiment by testing four potential populist attitudes and classifying as “populist” those who exhibited three or more of those attitudes. One attitude was whether someone felt an unusually direct connection with their candidate or their candidate's agenda and believed he or she uniquely understood and would fight for them. Notably, only 6% of Kennedy supporters gave responses exhibiting this sentiment, a level

comparable to the 6% of Harris supporters who did so, and considerably less than the 22% of Trump supporters who did so.

We also looked for signs the respondent saw people like themselves as being harmed or ignored by powerful societal elites who corruptly acted only in the elite’s interests. While Kennedy supporters certainly exhibited signs of this view (see table below), particularly toward national political and bureaucratic elites in the federal government, they again did so at rates lower than Harris supporters and Trump supporters: 45%, versus 59% and 61% respectively.

Percentages of Kennedy Supporters Saying People Like Them Are Often Harmed by Various Elites’ Self-Interest					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Political elites among national elected officials	34	52	9	1	4
Bureaucratic elites among unelected federal officials	27	57	16	0	0
Cultural elites in...					
Media	19	40	41	0	0
Universities/ Entertainment	29	32	29	10	0
Business elites in finance and industry	32	43	19	5	0
Religious elites in Christian churches	16	38	27	14	5

A third attitude we tested was whether respondents saw people like themselves as losing ground to disliked segments of society who were favored or unchecked by the elites, and whom the respondent didn’t view as able to be “real” or “true” members of the nation. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of Kennedy supporters identified at least one such “social outgroup”—most frequently “illegal immigrants”—among the 12 societal subgroups we tested, which also included racial groups, such as whites, Blacks and Hispanics; religious groups, such as evangelicals, Muslims and Jews; and sexual minorities, such as gays and lesbians and transgender people. The Kennedy supporters’ percentage was higher than that of Harris supporters (22%), but lower than that of Trump supporters (54%).

In other words, relatively few Kennedy supporters felt an unusually close connection with him or his agenda; a smaller percentage expressed a strong disgruntlement with elites compared to Trump and Harris supporters; and they fell somewhere in between Trump and Harris supporters in antipathy toward social groups. But the populist trait that Kennedy supporters were more likely to exhibit than Harris and Trump supporters was the fourth one: a willingness to allow their candidate, if elected president, to overstep legal limits on presidential power to achieve their political goals. One set of questions tested their readiness to let their candidate, as president, bypass partisan congressional resistance and accomplish his or her goals unilaterally through an executive order, while another set asked whether

they trusted him “as president to decide when to follow the law and when to ignore it to achieve justice” in the face of allegations that his political opposition had misused federal power for partisan purposes.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of Trump supporters endorsed one or both these ideas, as did 64% of Harris supporters. In contrast, 74% of Kennedy supporters did so—a deep disconnect with Kennedy supporters’ earlier preference for a president “who sticks to constitutional rules.” Notably, even this cognitive dissonance is reflective of Americans more broadly. Most respondents ranked a president’s sticking to constitutional rules as “very important,” yet most who did so also endorsed, in other questions, their preferred candidate’s violating limits on his or her power as president.

Kennedy Populists: A Different Mold?

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of Kennedy supporters qualified as populist under our survey’s model, having exhibited three or more of the four populist attitudes our survey explored. Interestingly, these Kennedy “populists” appear to depart from patterns we’ve seen among Trump’s and Harris’ populist followers and among populist Americans more broadly.

Trump populists and Harris populists, for instance, had a larger proportion of whites, Protestants, and people 55 years of age or older than did Trump nonpopulists and Harris nonpopulists, respectively. These differences within the Trump and Harris camps weren’t always statistically significant, but there *was* a statistically significant association between populists as a whole and all three factors—being over 55, white or Protestant. People in these demographic groups were thus more likely than average to be populist, rather than nonpopulist. Inversely, people who were 18 to 44—Gen Z and Millennials—were significantly *less* likely than average to be populist.

In contrast, Kennedy populists, compared to Kennedy nonpopulists:

- had essentially the same percentage of people 55 or older
- had roughly the same percentage of whites
- did have a higher proportion of Protestants (41% vs. 24%), but also had a higher proportion who identified their religious views as “nothing in particular” (41% vs. 24%)—a difference not seen among Trump or Harris supporters.

Also departing from the patterns among Trump and Harris supporters, Kennedy populists, compared to Kennedy nonpopulists:

- were more frequently Hispanic
- had a higher percentage of Millennials, and
- were entirely “working class,” meaning they included no college graduates.

Did Kennedy supporters represent a new source of populist challenge—a Kennedy-related variant of younger, working class, more Hispanic, less religiously defined populists? Ultimately, we can't say, because the number of Kennedy populists, who were just 1% of the adult population, was too small to draw such conclusions with confidence. Even in the case of Kennedy populists' lacking a college degree, which was statistically associated with Kennedy populism at a 95% confidence level, seems tenuous given that it wasn't found for populists in general, Harris populists or Trump populists. The only characteristic that Kennedy populists clearly shared with other populists was their paucity of young single women, who, we have found, are *nonpopulist* to a statistically significant degree.

In all, the possibility of a distinctly different type of populist coalition among Kennedy supporters who often seemed ordinary—or at least no more unusual than Harris or Trump supporters—is a fascinating outcome. While we didn't ask Kennedy supporters how much they agreed with his most controversial health and environmental claims, their views on the many topics we tested were, as discussed earlier, well within the bounds of current American opinion. What distinguished them was their holding views that seemed Trumpian in some cases and Harrisian in others—an unusual mix in our polarized age, and one for which Kennedy's candidacy provided a home. The other key element that united them was less a personal connection with Kennedy himself than an impatience for change, one they expressed in a widespread willingness to let Kennedy, as president, circumvent the law to address injustices or to get things done in the face of perceived Democratic and Republican intransigence.

The Immediate Significance of Populism in America

So what do our findings about Trump, Harris, and Kennedy populists imply for America's political future? Our results suggest populist voters may have a particularly significant impact on the American political system. For instance, Harris and Trump populists were likely to identify strongly with their party and follow the election news very closely, and they were similarly likely to have voted in the previous two presidential elections. Their policy views also tended to be more "extreme": On questions about the five controversial policies discussed earlier, Trump populists were generally more conservative in their responses than Trump nonpopulists (and significantly so in four of the five cases), while Harris populists were generally more progressive in their responses than Harris nonpopulists (and significantly so in four of the five cases).

These attributes have been thought to make people disproportionately likely to vote in primary elections. How much this is true is in dispute,⁸ but the profile above does suggest

⁸ See, for example, Geoffrey Skelley, "Changing How Primaries Work Probably Won't Make Politics Less Divisive," *FiveThirtyEight*, July 19, 2021, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/changing-how-primaries-work-probably-wont-make-politics-less-divisive/>, accessed February 4, 2025; Wioletta Dziuda, Anthony Fowler, William Howell, and Lynn Vavreck, "Do Extremist Voters Dominate Primary Elections?" *Not Another Politics Podcast* — Episode 3, University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, <https://harris.uchicago.edu/news-events/news/do-extremist-voters-dominate-primary-elections-0>, accessed February 4, 2025; and "Does America's primary system benefit extreme candidates?," *The Economist*, August 16, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2022/08/16/does-americas-primary-system-benefit-extreme-candidates>, accessed February 4, 2025.

populists are likely voters, and to the extent they vote in their party primaries, they have an outsized impact on our elections by helping to pick the Democratic and Republican nominees.

And populists tend to prefer a particular *kind* of candidate. On our survey questions about traits that are important in a president, populists, at a statistically significant level, placed more importance than nonpopulists on a president's being "willing to fight," being "assertive with political power," and "politically outmaneuver[ing] his or her opponents." To be sure, populists were similarly likely to place importance on a president who "sticks to constitutional rules," but as we noted above, they were often willing to set aside those rules for their own candidate. For Congress, populists were also significantly more likely to prefer a member "who sticks to their principles no matter what," rather than a candidate "who compromises to get things done."

To be clear, the more competitive and unyielding traits we found to be associated with populism aren't bad in themselves. Rather, they suggest an emphasis on competition and confrontation in a constitutional system that, while accommodating and even requiring such attitudes to arrive at better public policies, also requires a degree of compromise and cooperation to produce laws and programs that are seen as legitimate and acceptable to the public as a whole. In a polarized political climate, that legitimacy is vital, but it may become harder to achieve if Congress and the presidency become more inclined to confrontation than negotiation. Unfortunately, the unconstitutional shortcuts populists often endorse will only erode that legitimacy further.

ISMA's survey is meant to serve as a measure of the popular agitation populist leaders can tap. The findings of our survey, with its widespread evidence of popular impatience not just with elites, but with democratic norms and procedures, suggest that however short-lived the Kennedy coalition's populist "moment" may have been, a populist America may well wear many faces, increasingly affect our governing institutions, and persist for years to come.

Notes on the Topline Report

The pages that follow are a straightforward record of the survey's questions and people's responses. The results are weighted. Readers should note the following:

- Some of the questions were not asked of all respondents. The respondents who were presented with any given question are described in *[bracketed, red, italicized text]* immediately preceding the question itself.
- The numbers in the topline report below represent the percentage of people among all 1,000 survey respondents who chose each response. Thus, in the questions that were not asked of all respondents, there is a percentage listed for the people who were not presented with the question.

The percentages in these questions therefore do not necessarily represent the percentage of people who chose the response among only those who were asked the question. Such percentages are, however, available in the crosstabulations of the survey questions posted on the Institute's website at ismaglobal.net.

- For a few of the questions, the figures provided do not represent percentages, but rather represent calculations of the mean, median, or mode response. These exceptions are clearly indicated.
- Many of the survey questions were customized for the individual respondent. In most cases, this customization involved inserting in the survey text the name of the respondent's preferred presidential candidate (we gathered this information from question 6 of the survey). In some cases, we inserted the names of specific political parties. These and other insertions are clearly set off in *[bracketed, blue, italicized text]* in the questions and responses. Additional explanations of these customized insertions often appear in the *[bracketed, red, italicized text]* immediately preceding the question.
- People's responses to a survey question can be unintentionally influenced by the questions they have already answered and by the order in which the response choices for a given question are listed. To reduce the effect of this bias on the survey's overall results, we often randomized the order of the various sub-questions within a larger question before presenting them to the respondent. We also frequently randomized the order in which the respondent saw the response options for any given question. In cases where the response options represented a scale—for instance, responses varying from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”—we often reversed the order of the responses before presenting them to the respondent, so that the list began with “strongly disagree.” For simplicity's sake, these randomizations are not described in the questions below.
- Due to rounding, the response percentages for a given question may not sum to precisely 100 percent. The total will exceed 100 percent in questions that allow multiple answers.

The Survey Questions and Topline Responses

[Asked of everyone.]

- 1) In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how things are currently going in the United States?

Very satisfied	7
Somewhat satisfied	20
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/Undecided	14
Somewhat dissatisfied	25
Very dissatisfied	33

[Asked of everyone.]

- 2) We'd like you to rate how you feel towards two groups on a scale of 0 to 100. Zero means very unfavorable and 100 means very favorable. Fifty means you do not feel favorable or unfavorable.

(a) How would you rate your feeling toward Democrats?

Mean	47
Median	50
Mode	0

(b) How would you rate your feeling toward Republicans?

Mean	45
Median	50
Mode	0

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone.]

3) How likely are you to vote in the upcoming presidential election?

Very likely	72
Fairly likely	10
Fairly unlikely	3
Very unlikely	9
I don't know; I'm not sure	6

[Asked of everyone.]

4) On the whole, how closely are you following news about the upcoming presidential election?

Very closely	43
Fairly closely	34
Not too closely	17
Not closely at all	6

[Asked of everyone.]

5) Would you say you are more enthusiastic, less enthusiastic, or neither more nor less enthusiastic about voting in the upcoming presidential election than you were in the 2020 presidential election?

More enthusiastic	52
Neither more nor less enthusiastic	28
Less enthusiastic	14
I don't know; I'm not sure	6

[Asked of everyone.]

6) If the upcoming presidential election were held tomorrow and the candidates were those listed below, whom would you probably vote for?

Democrat Kamala Harris	43
Republican Donald Trump.....	40
Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr.	4
Independent Cornel West.....	1
Libertarian Party candidate Chase Oliver.....	1
Green Party candidate Jill Stein.....	0
I don't think I would vote.....	6
I'm not sure	5
I would vote for someone else	1

[Asked of those whose response to question 6 was one of the six named candidates: Kamala Harris, Donald Trump, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Cornel West, Jill Stein, or Chase Oliver. All others skipped to question 10. In the question below, “[respondent’s preferred candidate]” indicates where the name of the candidate the respondent chose in question 6 was automatically inserted in the question.]

7) How certain are you that you will vote for *[respondent’s preferred candidate]* in the upcoming presidential election?

Very certain	66
Fairly certain	14
Fairly uncertain	2
Very uncertain	2
I don't know/I'm not sure.....	3
<hr/>	
Not asked	12

[Asked of those who chose one of the six named candidates in question 6. All others skipped to question 10.]

8) Which of the following would you say is the PRIMARY reason you would vote for *[respondent's preferred candidate]*? Choose only one.

I support <i>[her/his]</i> policy agenda	25
<i>[She/He]</i> 's the only candidate who can actually win and is fit to serve as president	24
I don't want <i>[candidate's major opponent(s): Kamala Harris/ Donald Trump/ Donald Trump or Kamala Harris]</i> to be elected president	20
I am <i>[candidate's party affiliation: a Democrat/ a Republican/ an independent voter/ a Green Party supporter/ a Libertarian Party supporter]</i> and prefer to vote for <i>[my party's candidate/ an independent candidate]</i>	13
None of the above really describes why I would vote for <i>[respondent's preferred candidate]</i>	4
I feel a personal connection with <i>[her/him]</i>	2
<hr/>	
Not asked	12

[Asked of those who chose one of the six named candidates in question 6. All others skipped to question 10.]

9) When you think about *[respondent's preferred candidate]*, do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
a) <i>[She/He]</i> 's the only recent politician who understands people like me	29	34	19	4	2	12
b) <i>[She/He]</i> 's the only recent politician who will actually fight for people like me	34	34	15	3	2	12

[Asked of everyone.]

10) When you think of the elites who run America’s most powerful institutions, do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) America’s political elites among its national elected officials have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests	35	36	23	5	1
b) America’s business elites in finance and industry have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests	35	33	23	8	1
c) America’s bureaucratic elites among the unelected officials in the federal government have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests	31	30	26	10	2
d) America’s cultural elites in the media have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests	31	26	30	11	3
e) America’s cultural elites in universities and the entertainment industry have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests	27	24	30	15	4
f) America’s religious elites in its Christian churches have often harmed the interests of Americans like me in pursuit of their own selfish interests	25	23	30	14	7

[Asked of those who responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to question 10(a). All others skipped to question 12.]

11) When you think of America’s political elites among its national elected officials and their effect on people like you, which of the following, if any, describes the kinds of harms they cause?

	Major harm	Moderate harm	No real harm	Not asked
They lie to benefit themselves and promote their agendas, damaging trust in government	56	13	2	29
They favor special interests and other groups at the expense of people like me	53	17	1	29
Their decisions hurt people’s safety and quality of life	49	20	3	29
They don’t care about government waste and fraud	48	21	2	29
They just don’t do their jobs, so important national business never gets done	45	23	4	29
They make bad decisions because they don’t know enough about the issues	39	27	4	29
Their decisions hurt people in my community	37	30	4	29
They cause a harm not mentioned above	36	27	8	29

[Asked of those who responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to question 10(c). All others skipped to question 13.]

12) When you think of America’s bureaucratic elites among the unelected officials in the federal government and their effect on people like you, which of the following, if any, describes the kinds of harms they cause?

	Major harm	Moderate harm	No real harm	Not asked
They lie to benefit themselves and promote their agendas, damaging trust in government	47	13	2	39
They’re more interested in controlling the public than in helping the public	46	13	2	39
They favor special interests and other groups at the expense of people like me	46	14	2	39
They overstep the limits on their powers, which undercuts our democracy	44	14	3	39
They don’t care about government waste and fraud	42	17	3	39
They pass rules that hurt people in my community	37	21	3	39
They make bad decisions because they don’t know enough about the issues	36	22	4	39
They cause a harm not mentioned above	33	22	6	39

[Asked of everyone.]

13) For each of the groups of Americans listed below, would you say your feelings are GENERALLY positive, negative, or neither positive nor negative?

	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative
a) Republicans	14	24	15	18	29
b) Democrats	18	23	15	15	29
c) People on the political right	10	22	31	17	21
d) People on the political left	9	20	33	14	24
e) Evangelical Christians	14	21	33	16	16
f) Muslims	7	17	49	16	11
g) Jews	17	27	47	6	3
h) Legal immigrants	34	35	25	4	2
i) Illegal immigrants	5	12	28	20	35
j) Whites	23	33	36	6	1
k) Blacks	26	30	36	6	2
l) Hispanics	24	28	41	6	2
m) Gays and lesbians	16	17	42	13	12
n) Transgender people	12	15	37	19	17
o) Men	29	29	33	7	2
p) Women	36	30	29	4	1

[In general, the questions below were asked only of those who met two criteria: they had “somewhat negative” or “very negative” feelings about the group in question 13, and they were not part of the group being tested. The second criterion was omitted for the questions on immigrants and sexual minorities, demographics where respondents’ personal data were not available. All others skipped to question 16.]

14) For each of the groups in America listed below, would you GENERALLY agree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree that government elites permit them to have special advantages at the expense of people like you?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
a) Republicans	14	13	7	4	7	55
b) Democrats	20	10	5	3	4	58
c) People on the political right	10	11	7	3	4	65
d) People on the political left	17	9	4	1	4	65
e) Evangelical Christians	11	8	6	2	3	70
f) Muslims	7	6	6	5	3	73
g) Jews	2	2	2	1	1	91
h) Legal Immigrants	1	1	1	1	1	94
i) Illegal Immigrants	22	9	10	7	7	45
j) Whites	2	1	1	0	1	96
k) Blacks	3	1	1	1	1	93
l) Hispanics	2	2	1	2	1	93
m) Gays and lesbians	8	5	4	4	5	74
n) Transgender people	13	8	5	4	6	64
o) Men	2	2	1	0	0	94
p) Women	1	0	0	0	0	98

[Asked of the same people and according to the same guidelines as in question 14. In general, the questions below were asked only of those who met two criteria: they had “somewhat negative” or “very negative” feelings about the group in question 13, and they were not part of the group being tested. The second criterion was omitted for the questions on immigrants and sexual minorities, demographics where respondents’ personal data were not available. All others skipped to question 16.]

15) For each of the groups in America listed below, would you GENERALLY agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree that they can’t be true members of the national community?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
a) Republicans	5	7	15	11	8	55
b) Democrats	5	6	17	9	5	58
c) People on the political right	4	7	11	7	6	65
d) People on the political left	7	5	12	6	5	65
e) Evangelical Christians	5	5	9	6	5	70
f) Muslims	6	6	8	5	3	73
g) Jews	1	3	3	1	1	91
h) Legal Immigrants	1	1	1	2	1	94
i) Illegal Immigrants	19	13	10	8	5	45
j) Whites	1	0	2	1	1	96
k) Blacks	1	1	3	1	1	93
l) Hispanics	1	1	2	2	1	93
m) Gays and lesbians	4	4	7	5	5	74
n) Transgender people	6	6	12	6	6	64
o) Men	1	1	3	1	1	94
p) Women	0	0	1	0	0	98

[Asked of those who chose one of the six named candidates in question 6. All others skipped to question 17. The specific “Inparties” and “Outparties” appearing in the question varied depending on the respondent’s self-identified party affiliation and candidate preference. “Inparties” were assumed to be preferred to “Outparties.”]

16) In recent years, some people have expressed concern that federal government law enforcement agencies like the Department of Justice and the IRS have been used by political leaders in Washington, D.C., to target their political opposition’s leaders and supporters, while protecting their own. When you think about politics and the law, would you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
a) <i>[Outparties: Democrats/Republicans/Democrats and Republicans]</i> often twist the law to protect themselves or attack their enemies	40	28	13	4	2	12
b) <i>[Inparties: Democrats/Republicans/Independent elected politicians/Green Party politicians/Libertarian Party politicians]</i> harm themselves if they comply with the law when their political opponents do not	10	23	30	18	7	12
c) I would trust <i>[respondent’s preferred candidate]</i> as president to decide when to follow the law and when to ignore it to achieve justice	24	25	26	9	4	12

[Asked of those who identified themselves as Republicans, Democrats, or supporters of the Green or Libertarian Party presidential candidates. Those identifying as independents and not supporting one of the two minor-party candidates skipped to question 18; all others skipped to question 19. The specific “Inparty” or “Outparty” appearing below depended on the respondent’s self-identified party affiliation and candidate preference. The “Inparty” was assumed to be preferred to the “Outparty.”]

17) Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
If a <i>[Inparty: Democratic/Republican/Green Party/Libertarian Party]</i> president can’t get cooperation from <i>[Outparty: Republican/Democratic/Democratic and Republican]</i> members of Congress to pass new laws, the <i>[Inparty: Democratic/Republican/Green Party/Libertarian Party]</i> president should circumvent Congress and issue executive orders on their own to accomplish their priorities.	11	24	27	12	7	19

Question source: Polarization Research Lab (with minor modifications).

[Asked of those both identifying as independents and not supporting one of the two minor-party candidates in question 6. All others skipped to question 19.]

18) Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
If a president elected as an Independent can't get cooperation from Democratic and Republican members of Congress to pass new laws, the Independent president should circumvent Congress and issue executive orders on their own to accomplish their priorities.	1	4	8	4	3	81

Question source: Polarization Research Lab (with minor modifications).

[Asked of everyone.]

19) When you think of the traits you would like to see in a presidential candidate, how important would you say the following traits are?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important
Sticks to constitutional rules	69	25	5	1
Willing to fight	62	32	4	1
Tolerates views different from his or her own	52	38	8	2
Willing to compromise when necessary	49	39	9	3
Seeks bipartisan coalitions	39	42	13	5
Assertive with political power	36	48	13	3
Politically outmaneuvers his or her opponents	31	44	20	5
Quick to seize political opportunities	27	47	19	6

[Asked of everyone.]

20) If you had to choose, would you rather have a member of Congress who compromises to get things done or sticks to their principles, no matter what?

I'd rather have a member of Congress who compromises to get things done 60
I'd rather have a member of Congress who sticks to their principles, no matter what..... 40

Question source: YouGov.

[Asked of those whose response to question 6 was one of the six named candidates. All others skipped to question 23.]

21) Which of the following statements better describes *[respondent's preferred candidate]*—the statement on the left, the statement on the right, or a description somewhere in between the two statements? Choose a number between 1 and 7 to indicate your answer.

	Description on left		In between; both equally				Description on right		I'm not sure; I don't know	Not asked
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
a) <i>[She/He]</i> fights for the real Americans that the establishment politicians in Washington look down on	13	7	7	20	7	11	18	6	a) <i>[She/He]</i> cares about making government work for all Americans, particularly those striving for constructive progress	12
Mean response = 4.3 Median response = 4 Mode response = 4										
b) <i>[She/He]</i> recognizes the need for respectful inclusion of those who differ from <i>[her/him]</i>	11	7	8	21	8	8	18	6	b) <i>[She/He]</i> pushes back against the people who are making a mess of this country	12
Mean response = 4.3 Median response = 4 Mode response = 4										

(Question 21 continued)

	Description on left		In between; both equally				Description on right		I'm not sure; I don't know	Not asked
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
c) <i>[She/He]</i> says what other politicians don't have the guts to say	18	9	9	18	6	10	14	4	c) <i>[She/He]</i> understands the importance of thoughtful, rather than incendiary, democratic discourse	12
Mean response = 3.8 Median response = 4 Mode response = 4										
d) <i>[She/He]</i> respects the importance of democratic processes to ensure consensus among key stakeholders	13	9	10	26	6	9	9	5	d) <i>[She/He]</i> makes decisions, instead of getting bogged down in "committees" and "dialogue" about everything	12
Mean response = 3.8 Median response = 4 Mode response = 4										
e) <i>[She/He]</i> makes politics real, something between <i>[her/him]</i> and the people, and not some game played by party leaders and bureaucrats back in Washington	13	10	8	25	8	8	12	4	e) <i>[She/He]</i> recognizes the importance of working with governmental and party institutions to negotiate solutions and to construct a well-informed basis for change	12
Mean response = 3.9 Median response = 4 Mode response = 4										

[Asked of those who chose one of the four party-affiliated candidates in question 6. All others skipped to question 23.]

22) Which of the following statements do you think better describes the *[respondent's preferred candidate's party: Democratic Party/Republican Party/Green Party/Libertarian Party]* under *[respondent's preferred candidate]*?

The party is like an energized community of people pursuing <i>[respondent's preferred candidate]</i> 's cause nationwide	21
The party is a professional institution supporting its candidates' campaigns nationwide.....	14
Both about equally	37
Neither describes the party under <i>[respondent's preferred candidate]</i>	4
I don't know; I'm not sure	7
<hr/>	
Not asked	17

Turning again to the upcoming election ...

[Asked of everyone.]

23) As you think about the 2024 presidential election, would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	I don't know; I'm not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The 2024 presidential election will decide whether America will continue to be a democracy.	35	28	23	7	7
This will be the most corrupt election in the history of our country.	10	17	33	21	20

[Asked of those who chose one of the six named candidates in question 6. All others skipped to question 25.]

24) Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
If <i>[respondent's preferred candidate]</i> is elected president and can't get cooperation from <i>[candidate's opponents: Democratic/Republican/Democratic and Republican]</i> members of Congress to pass new laws, President <i>[candidate's last name]</i> should circumvent Congress and issue executive orders on <i>[her/his]</i> own to accomplish <i>[her/his]</i> priorities.	15	30	26	12	4	12

Question source: Polarization Research Lab (with minor modifications).

[Asked of those whose response to question 16(c) was “agree” or “strongly agree.”]

25) In an earlier question, you indicated that you would trust *[respondent’s preferred candidate]* as president to decide when to follow the law and when to ignore it to achieve justice. Which of the following BEST describes why you would trust *[respondent’s preferred candidate]* to ignore the law in some cases? Choose only one.

I have a particularly high trust in <i>[respondent’s preferred candidate]</i> ; I wouldn’t agree if <i>[she/he]</i> were like most presidents	16
The country is basically in a state of crisis, requiring a leader to engage in unusual measures	14
<i>[Respondent’s preferred candidate]</i> ’s opponents in the <i>[candidate’s main opposition: Republican Party/Democratic Party/Democratic and Republican parties]</i> often break the law, so <i>[she/he]</i> may have to do the same to set things right.....	8
Presidents often have to break laws to get things done	1
None of the above really describes why I’d agree with <i>[respondent’s preferred candidate]</i> ’s ignoring the law as president in some cases	11
<hr/>	
Not asked	51

[Asked of everyone.]

26) Thinking about each of the following presidential candidates, how fearful would you feel if he or she were elected president?

	Very fearful	Somewhat fearful	Not very fearful	Not at all fearful	I'm not sure; I don't know
Republican Donald Trump	41	11	10	34	4
Democrat Kamala Harris	36	11	12	34	6
Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr.	24	26	21	12	17
Green Party candidate Jill Stein	21	19	18	9	33
Independent Cornel West	19	17	19	10	35
Libertarian Party candidate Chase Oliver	17	20	16	7	40

[Asked of everyone.]

27) How likely do you think the following presidential candidates would be to pose a threat to American democracy if elected?

	Would definitely pose a threat to American democracy	Would possibly pose a threat to American democracy	Would not pose a threat to American democracy	I don't know; I'm not sure
Republican Donald Trump	42	12	38	8
Democrat Kamala Harris	33	13	46	8
Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr.	14	27	35	23
Green Party candidate Jill Stein	13	19	27	41
Independent Cornel West	10	19	27	44
Libertarian Party candidate Chase Oliver	9	21	21	48

[Asked of those who selected in question 27 more than one candidate at their highest chosen threat level, whether “would definitely pose a threat” or “would possibly pose a threat.” Those who selected only one candidate at their highest chosen threat level skipped to question 29. Those who chose only “would not pose a threat” or “I don’t know; I’m not sure” for each of the six candidates in question 27 skipped to question 30. The combined results of questions 27 and 28 are shown in the response list below.]

28) And which of these candidates do you think would pose the greatest threat to American democracy? Choose only one.

Republican Donald Trump.....	45
Democrat Kamala Harris	34
Green Party candidate Jill Stein.....	2
Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr.	1
Independent Cornel West.....	1
Libertarian Party candidate Chase Oliver.....	1
Two or more candidates pose the greatest threat	4
None of the candidates poses a clear threat	11

[Asked of those who chose one candidate as the greatest threat to American democracy in questions 27 and 28. Those who saw two or more candidates as posing the highest threat skipped to question 30, as did those who saw none of the candidates as a clear threat.]

29) In your view, which of the following represent the three BIGGEST threats *[candidate whom respondent saw as greatest threat]* would pose to American democracy as president? SELECT NO MORE THAN THREE.

<i>[She/He]</i> would tolerate political violence, especially from people who support <i>[her/him]</i>	39
<i>[She/He]</i> lacks the capacity for this critical job, putting our democratic system at risk	39
<i>[She/He]</i> would exceed the president’s rightful powers, threatening the government’s checks and balances.....	37
<i>[She/He]</i> would let <i>[his/her]</i> ideology overrule our individual rights	35
<i>[Her/His]</i> policies would target people on the basis of race, religion, sex or sexual orientation	29
<i>[She/He]</i> would target <i>[her/his]</i> political opponents for prosecution.....	27
<i>[She/He]</i> may not willingly step down from power at the end of <i>[her/his]</i> presidential term.....	21
<i>[She/He]</i> would present another threat not listed above	8
<hr/>	
Not asked	15

[Asked of everyone.]

30) Do Donald Trump’s recent felony convictions for falsifying business records make you feel more likely, less likely or neither more nor less likely to vote for him for president in the upcoming election?

Much less likely to vote for Donald Trump	36
Somewhat less likely to vote for Donald Trump	6
Neither more nor less likely	31
Somewhat more likely to vote for Donald Trump.....	4
Much more likely to vote for Donald Trump.....	20
I’m not sure; I haven’t decided yet	4

[Asked of everyone.]

Turning to questions of government more generally ...

31) For each political system below, would it be a very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad or very bad way of governing this country?

	Very good	Somewhat good	Somewhat bad	Very bad	I don’t know; I’m not sure
a) A democratic system where citizens, not elected officials, vote directly on major national issues to decide what becomes law	23	36	14	10	16
b) A democratic system where representatives elected by citizens decide what becomes law	27	44	11	6	13
c) A system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from Congress or the courts	10	19	21	37	14

Question source: Pew Research Center.

[Asked of those who self-identified as Democrats or Republicans, including those who leaned toward one of the two parties. All others skipped to question 33. The specific “Inparty” or “Outparty” appearing below depended on the respondent’s self-identified party affiliation and candidate preference. The “Inparty” was assumed to be preferred to the “Outparty.”]

32) Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not asked
When a <i>[Inparty: Democratic/Republican]</i> candidate questions the outcome of an election, other <i>[Inparties: Democrats/Republicans]</i> should be more loyal to the <i>[Inparty: Democratic/Republican]</i> party than to election rules and the constitution.	7	13	21	19	21	19
The government should be able to censor media sources that spend more time attacking <i>[Inparties: Democrats/Republicans]</i> than <i>[Outparties: Republicans/Democrats]</i> .	6	16	18	17	25	19
<i>[Inparty: Democratic/Republican]</i> elected officials should sometimes consider ignoring court decisions when the judges who issued those decisions were appointed by <i>[Outparty: Republican/Democratic]</i> presidents.	5	11	22	22	21	19
<i>[Inparties: Democrats/Republicans]</i> should reduce the number of polling stations in areas that typically support <i>[Outparties: Republicans/Democrats]</i> .	3	7	18	23	30	19

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone.]

33) Some have argued recently that the U.S. Constitution is “broken,” saying it’s no longer a good way to run the federal government and should be set aside in favor of something different. How much do you agree or disagree with that idea?

Strongly disagree.....	41
Somewhat disagree	13
Neither agree nor disagree.....	14
Somewhat agree.....	17
Strongly agree	7
I don’t know; I’m not sure.....	8

[Asked of everyone.]

34) On January 6, 2021, people protesting the vote counts in the November 2020 presidential election entered the U.S. Capitol and disrupted the U.S. Congress' attempts to finalize the presidential election results. When you think of the protesters entering the Capitol, would you say that you approve of their actions, disapprove of their actions, or neither approve nor disapprove?

Strongly disapprove	48
Somewhat disapprove	14
Neither approve nor disapprove.....	18
Somewhat approve	8
Strongly approve.....	6
I don't know; I'm not sure	6

[Asked of those who responded "strongly approve" or somewhat approve" in question 34. All others skipped to question 36.]

35) Which would you say better describes the reason you approve of the actions of the January 6, 2021, protesters at the Capitol?

Protests like this are important whenever there's a question about the results of a close presidential election, even if they disrupt Congress	7
The protest on January 6, 2021, properly disrupted Congress because the 2020 presidential election was a very unusual case	6
I don't know; I'm not sure	1

Not asked 85

[Asked of those who responded “strongly disapprove,” somewhat disapprove,” or “neither approve nor disapprove” in question 34. All others skipped to question 37.]

36) Which of the following statements better describes your view of the crowd entering the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021?

It was an attempted coup meant to keep Donald Trump in office despite Joe Biden’s having won the election	44
It was an initially peaceful protest about the election process that got out of hand.....	26
I don’t know; I’m not sure	10
<hr/>	
Not asked	20

[Asked of everyone.]

37) Do you think Joe Biden’s being declared the winner of the 2020 presidential election over Donald Trump was legitimate or illegitimate?

Legitimate	56
Illegitimate	26
I’m not sure; I don’t know enough to say	17

[Asked of everyone.]

38) News reports indicate that in recent years, large numbers of undocumented immigrants have crossed the U.S. border with Mexico and entered the country. When you think about the causes of this, would you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) The federal government needs to install more physical barriers at the border	34	24	21	12	8
b) The federal government needs to create more ways for immigrants to obtain government documents to enter in an orderly manner	24	33	19	10	14
c) Our political leaders in Washington, D.C., have intentionally failed to reduce undocumented immigration because they want more immigrants to enter the country	30	17	28	16	9

[Asked of those who responded “agree” or “strongly agree” in question 38(c). All others skipped to question 40.]

39) In the previous question, you *[agreed/strongly agreed]* that our political leaders in Washington, D.C., have intentionally failed to reduce undocumented immigration because they want more immigrants to enter the country. Why do you think they might want more immigrants to enter the country? CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY. IF YOU ARE UNSURE, CHOOSE ONLY THAT OPTION.

	Applies
Democratic Party politicians believe immigrants will vote for them and help them win elections	32
Our national political leaders want cheap foreign labor to drive down business costs and workers' wages	21
Our national political leaders want undocumented immigrants in the country to replace the culture and political power of white Americans	17
Our national political leaders want more immigrants for reasons not listed above	15
I don't know; I'm not sure	4
<hr/>	
Not asked	53

[Asked of everyone. Part 1 and Part 2 of the question were randomly rotated in the question text before being presented to each respondent.]

40) Some believe that [1: manufacturing, possessing, and selling assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons should be banned]. Others believe that [2: manufacturing, possessing, and selling assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons should not be restricted]. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1. Ban the manufacture, possession, and sale of assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons	29
2.	8
3.	6
4. Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides	30
5.	6
6.	5
7. Do not restrict the manufacture, possession, and sale of assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons	16

Mean response	3.6
Median response	4
Mode response	4

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone. Part 1 and Part 2 of the question were randomly rotated in the question text before being presented to each respondent.]

41) Some believe that [1: richer people should pay a larger percentage of their income in taxes, as compared to poorer people]. Others believe that [2: every person should pay the same percentage of their income in taxes, regardless of how much they earn]. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1. Tax richer people at a higher rate	35
2.	8
3.	9
4. Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides	25
5.	4
6.	3
7. Tax everyone at the same rate	15

Mean response	3.2
Median response	3
Mode response	1

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone. Part 1 and Part 2 of the question were randomly rotated in the question text before being presented to each respondent.]

42) Some believe that [1: transgender athletes should be allowed to compete on teams that match the gender they identify with]. Others believe that [2: transgender athletes should be required to compete on teams that match the sex they were assigned at birth]. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1. Allow transgender athletes to compete on teams matching their gender identity	8
2.	3
3.	3
4. Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides	27
5.	5
6.	4
7. Require transgender athletes to compete on teams matching their sex assigned at birth	50

Mean response	5.3
Median response	6
Mode response	7

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone. Part 1 and Part 2 of the question were randomly rotated in the question text before being presented to each respondent.]

43) Some believe that [1: there should be a government insurance plan that covers all medical expenses for everyone]. Others believe that [2: medical expenses should be paid by individuals and through private insurance plans]. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1. Implement government health insurance for everyone	34
2.	7
3.	9
4. Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides	25
5.	5
6.	5
7. Have individuals and private insurance pay medical expenses	14

Mean response 3.3

Median response 4

Mode response 1

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone. Part 1 and Part 2 of the question were randomly rotated in the question text before being presented to each respondent.]

44) Some believe that [1: abortions should always be legal no matter what the reason]. Others believe that [2: abortions should never be legal no matter what the reason]. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1. Allow all abortions no matter their reason	22
2.	12
3.	9
4. Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides	28
5.	11
6.	12
7. Outlaw all abortions no matter their reason	7

Mean response	3.6
Median response	4
Mode response	4

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone.]

Turning now to more general questions ...

45) How proud are you to be an American?

Extremely proud	39
Very proud	27
Moderately proud	18
Only a little proud.....	10
Not at all proud	6

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of those who self-identified as Democrats or Republicans, including those who leaned toward one of the two parties. All others skipped to question 47. The specific “Outparties” appearing in the question were members of the major party opposed to the respondent’s own.]

46) Are you friends with any *[Outparties: Republicans / Democrats]*?

No.....	12
Yes, just one	3
Yes, some friends.....	43
Yes, about half of my friends.....	11
Yes, most of my friends.....	3
Not sure	8

Not asked	19
-----------------	----

[Asked of everyone.]

47) Not including your relatives, how many close friends would you say you have?

None	9
1	7
2-3	42
4-5	23
6 or more	20

Question source: American Enterprise Institute.

[Asked of everyone.]

48) Do you think your wallet (or your valuables) would be returned to you if it were found by a stranger?

No.....	63
Yes	37

Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

[Asked of everyone.]

49) Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

You can't be too careful in dealing with people	65
Most people can be trusted	35

Question source: Pew Research Center.

[Asked of everyone.]

50) Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?

They would try to take advantage of me if they got the chance	56
They would try to be fair	44

Question source: Pew Research Center.

[Asked of everyone.]

51) Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?

Most of the time people try to be helpful	53
They are mostly just looking out for themselves	47

Question source: Pew Research Center.

[Asked of those who self-identified as Republicans, including those who leaned Republican.]

52) Would you describe yourself as a “MAGA Republican,” “Never Trumper” or “Neither”?

MAGA Republican.....	18
Never Trumper	2
Neither	17

Not asked	63
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Question source: Polarization Research Lab.

Weighting Methodology*

YouGov interviewed 1,113 respondents, who were then matched down to a sample of 1,000 to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The sampling frame is a politically representative “modeled frame” of U.S. adults, based upon the American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata file, public voter file records, the 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration supplements, the 2020 National Election Pool (NEP) exit poll, and the 2020 CES surveys, including demographics and 2020 presidential vote.

The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, region, and home ownership status. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

The weights were then post-stratified on 2020 presidential vote choice, as well as a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weight.

* This section is copied verbatim from the survey codebook YouGov provided to ISMA.

About the Author

Thomas Shull is survey research director for the Institute for the Study of Modern Authoritarianism and editor-at-large for ISMA's web publication, *The UnPopulist*. His career as a writer, editor and analyst has included serving on the editorial board of *The Detroit News*, working as a senior analyst on the former NBC/*Wall Street Journal* Survey of public opinion, and acting as senior editor, and later as senior director of research quality, at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Michigan.

About ISMA

Founded in 2023, ISMA is a public policy organization committed to defending free societies and opposing the worldwide slide into illiberalism. ISMA's commentaries and research attempt to understand and respond to the complexities of authoritarian systems in the contemporary world.

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