

The American Aspirations Index



Populace

“Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment,
nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.”

— Abraham Lincoln, 1858

Abstract

What it is:

A national private opinion survey fielded in the opening days of the Biden administration. It surfaces what the American people prioritize — and what they believe most others prioritize — for the long-term future of the country. It was conducted by the think tank Populace, powered by the research data company YouGov, and complemented in pre-testing by three rounds of national, small-group, in-depth interviews.

How it was conducted:

The primary survey component was a choice-based-conjoint (CBC) instrument that distinguishes between personal opinion and perceived societal opinion (how respondents believe most people would answer). Rather than directly asking respondents what aspirations they hold for the future of the country, this survey's CBC simulated real-world decision-making by forcing respondents to make tradeoffs. This not only reduces the ceiling effect where respondents can claim everything is important, but also minimizes social desirability effects.

The three supporting small-group, in-depth interviews included both Trump voters and Biden voters. They were held virtually due to coronavirus precautions. Participants agreed to be quoted in this report, with edits made for clarity and brevity.

Survey conducted: January 21-January 28, 2021.

Pre-testing interviews: December 16-17, 2020.

About Populace:

Populace is a Massachusetts-based think tank dedicated to building a world where all people have the chance to live fulfilling lives in a thriving society. Populace's private opinion research offers new insights into what Americans actually believe, with polling methodologies that reduce the distorting effects of social influence commonly found in traditional public opinion research.

For more information, visit Populace.org.

Table of Contents

01. Learned divisiveness: Fierce clashes and collective illusions in American politics
02. Common ground: Americans' agreed-upon priorities for the future
03. Shared urgencies: From long-term aspirations to near-term opportunities

Methodology

Appendix A: Conjoint Results: Adult American Citizens

Appendix B: Conjoint Results: Biden Voters and Trump Voters

Appendix C: Achievement and Urgency Score Results

Appendix D: Demographic Cuts of Attributes Referenced in Report

Executive Summary

The American Aspirations Index represents the first-ever *private opinion* survey of the American people's ambitions for the long-term future of the country. It uses tools and methodologies that minimize distortions found in many traditional public opinion polls.

A representative democracy requires some level of public consensus to determine the future direction of the country. That's why understanding the public's highest aspirations, unbiased by social influence, is a vital task. It's a task made markedly more important in an era of technological change, political polarization, and social unrest.

The report reveals not only what national values and policy goals Americans personally prioritize, but also what they believe others prioritize. The results are consequential for anyone involved in politics, invested in business, or simply interested in how Americans think of the future and one another.

Key Findings

1 Across race, gender, income, education, generational cohorts, and 2020 presidential vote, there is *stunning* agreement on the long-term national values and priorities that Americans believe should characterize the country moving forward.

Chief among them: high quality healthcare as a necessity, not a privilege; an overwhelming commitment to individual rights; and upholding equal treatment for all, but not necessarily equal outcomes.

2 Where significant differences in aspirations do emerge, they are almost entirely political in nature.

The evidence suggests Americans mistake *intensity* of partisan disagreement on a small number of issues (e.g., immigration) for breadth of partisan disagreement across a far-ranging number of issues.

3 Collective illusions — significant gaps between personal and perceived societal aspirations for the nation — as an obstacle to progress.

For example, there is a surprising level of support for action on climate change and conservation. However, Americans don't recognize it. Climate action privately ranks as the third highest personally-held national aspiration out of 55 possibilities; yet, Americans believe that 'most others' would rank climate action as a much lower priority (#33).

4 National unity is not a priority.

The American people don't prioritize national unity for its own sake as a long-term aspiration (#50). They do, however, privately value restoring respect for one another (#14).

5 Biden voters and Trump voters share a sense of urgency around 5 policy objectives.

Voters from both political camps want improvement in the near-term on healthcare, keeping communities safe, helping the middle class, modernizing infrastructure, and criminal justice reform.

Introduction

The American Aspirations Index is a first-of-its-kind, nationally representative study designed to understand the American peoples' highest priorities for the future of the country. Populace undertook this work out of a deep belief that the public's voice should be part of consequential conversations about how America is shaped in the years to come.

That's the aim of the American Aspirations Index, with a novel approach. Where countless surveys and focus groups examine short-term public opinion — Do you support or oppose this policy? Do you approve or disapprove of this political figure? — this work leverages private opinion methodologies to understand what Americans want most for the country over the long-term.

“In a democracy, understanding the will of the people is essential to driving meaningful progress. By measuring the American people’s highest values, ideals, and aspirations for the country, we can orient our short-term debates in a context of what really matters.”

— Todd Rose, President of Populace

The distinction between private and public opinion is important. While standard public opinion polling approaches continue to provide valuable insights about general public sentiment, they are inherently susceptible to the distorting effects of social influence. Private opinion research aims to overcome these limitations, in part, by simulating real-world, complex trade-offs. This particular report is based on a combination of direct questions, along with a choice-based conjoint (CBC) component that distinguishes between personal opinion and perceived societal opinion (how respondents believe most people would answer).¹ The result is a level of insight that is not possible through traditional public opinion polling alone.

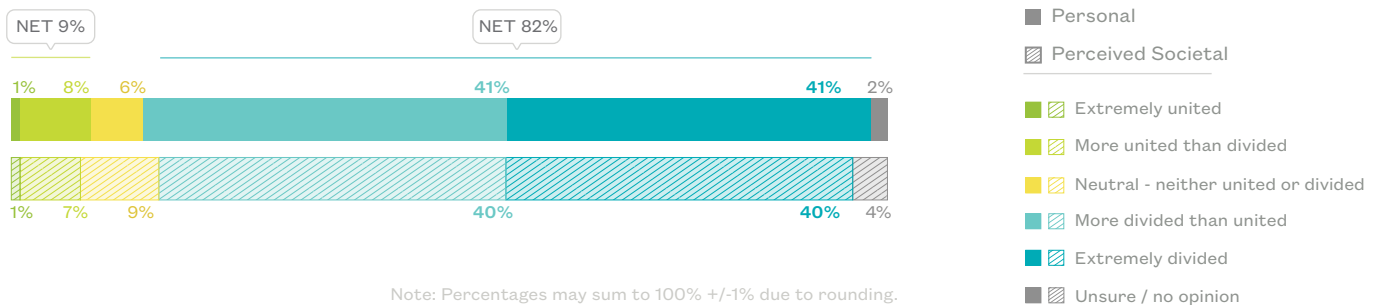
By illuminating Americans' personal ideals for the future of the country and revealing the systematic misunderstandings that we hold about one another, the American Aspirations Index provides unique insights about the nature of our divisions and the true extent of our common ground. It also uncovers possible paths forward that align short-term progress with long-term aspirations.

¹ See appendix for terminology and details about the methodology.

Learned divisiveness: Fierce clashes and collective illusions in American politics

If there is one constant in America today, it is the perception of widespread national divisions. Consider that 82% of Americans personally believe the country is more divided than united, and a staggering 41% believe the country is “extremely divided.” Importantly, Americans not only personally believe that the country is divided, they also believe *most other* Americans agree with them.

To what extent do you believe Americans are united or divided today?



To what extent is public sentiment based in reality? That is, does today’s sense of social division reflect real disagreements or simply widespread misunderstandings? By measuring private opinion and comparing it to societal perceptions, the American Aspirations Index offers answers to these kinds of questions.

The American Aspirations Index also reveals a key theme that underlies our disagreements. While there are notable differences in long-term aspirations for the country, those differences are not rooted in traditional demographics like race, gender, age, education, or even income. Rather, they are almost entirely political in nature.

The following section details the divisions between Trump voters’ and Biden voters’ visions for the future of the country and — equally important — the significant gaps between personally-held and perceived societal national aspirations (known as collective illusions) that derive from simply misjudging one another.

(1) Division stems from *intensity* of disagreement on a small number of issues, rather than breadth of disagreement across many issues.

Contrary to prevailing public opinion narratives, Trump and Biden voters actually agree on a greater number of high-level, high-stakes aspirations than on which they disagree. Out of each voting bloc’s top fifteen personally-held national aspirations for the country, Trump voters and Biden voters actually hold nine in common.

The data shows today’s prevalent sense of division likely emanates from intense disagreement on a small number of specific issues. Consider just the top personally-held national priority for each camp. For Trump voters, that foremost national priority accounts for a full 25% Share of Preference (SOP) allotted among all 55 attributes; for Biden voters, the foremost national priority accounts for only 9% SOP.

The bottom line: What is often mistaken for breadth of political disagreement is actually narrow — if extremely intense — disagreement on a limited number of partisan issues.

Attribute (Personal)	Biden Voter Rank	Trump Voter Rank
Successfully addresses climate change	#1 SOP 9.19	#15 SOP 1.81
People have high quality healthcare	#2 SOP 8.79	#4 SOP 3.61
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech, peaceful assembly, to keep and bear arms, freedom of religion)	#3 SOP 8.05	#1 SOP 24.66
Preserves clean air, water, and open spaces	#4 SOP 5.17	#18 SOP 1.70
Public leaders are held accountable for their actions	#5 SOP 4.41	#5 SOP 3.49
People are treated equally — regardless of background — in all aspects of society	#6 SOP 4.28	#10 SOP 2.21
Neighborhoods and communities are safe	#7 SOP 2.91	#6 SOP 2.47
Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias	#8 SOP 2.66	#9 SOP 2.25
People receive a high quality education	#9 SOP 2.56	#26 SOP 1.34
People who work earn at least a living wage	#9 SOP 2.56	#29 SOP 1.17
People actively participate in the democratic process	#11 SOP 2.24	#22 SOP 1.50
The middle class is thriving	#12 SOP 2.16	#11 SOP 1.95
People treat one another with respect	#13 SOP 2.08	#18 SOP 1.70
People are guaranteed due process of law	#14 SOP 1.99	#17 SOP 1.76
Has modern infrastructure systems across the country (e.g., transportation, electricity, internet)	#15 SOP 1.92	#13 SOP 1.82

See full data in the appendix

(2) Fundamental disagreement over the future of immigration.

No single subject exhibits partisans’ contested aspirations for the country more starkly than immigration. For Trump voters, “*Severely restricts immigration*” was the third most important personally-held national aspiration (out of 55), whereas for Biden voters this same attribute ranked within their bottom ten (#46).

Trump voters’ personal views about immigration were further emphasized by their desire that the country would “[*Have*] *secure national borders.*” This attribute registered in the top five personally-held national aspirations (#2) for Trump voters, but in the back half of all possible aspirations (#31) for Biden voters.

Attribute (Personal)	Biden Voter Rank		Trump Voter Rank	
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech, peaceful assembly, to keep and bear arms, freedom of religion)	#3	SOP 8.05	#1	SOP 24.66
Has secure national borders	#31	SOP 1.11	#2	SOP 4.21
Severely restricts immigration	#46	SOP 0.58	#3	SOP 3.68
People have high quality healthcare	#2	SOP 8.79	#4	SOP 3.61
Public leaders are held accountable for their actions	#5	SOP 4.41	#5	SOP 3.49

See full data in the appendix

“As a country, we're not perfect. But a lot of people want to come to this beautiful America for the opportunity to make their own decisions, to believe in whoever they want to believe in, to vote when they want to vote.”
Stefania G. | Admin Assistant | Sonoma, CA | Voted for Biden

“We're already such a melting pot. We already have different cultures from all over the world. So in another 100 years it's just going to be more scrambled eggs. I don't feel that immigration needs to be central to our country in the future.”
Barbara B. | Teacher | Rutherfordton, NC | Voted for Trump

The strong and opposing partisan sentiments related to immigration seem to distort how Americans believe most people in the country view the subject. In aggregate, restricting immigration is a middling personally-held national aspiration (#20). However, Americans perceive it to be a much more salient issue for the country at large (#7).

Attribute	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta
Severely restricts immigration	#20	#7	13 ▲	#46	#6	40 ▲	#3	#9	6 ▼
Is open to immigration	#42	#18	24 ▲	#27	#18	9 ▲	#52	#21	31 ▲

See full data in the appendix

Similarly, “[*Being*] open to immigration” ranked #42 in personally-held national aspirations for Americans overall, due in part to Trump voters who ranked it in their bottom five (#52). Yet, that same attribute holds a much higher perceived societal ranking (#18). The difference in personal and perceived societal rankings might be exacerbated by Trump voters’ belief that ‘most people’ hold a view on immigration opposed to their own, while Biden voters see openness to immigration as one of many competing priorities.

The bottom line: Political camps deeply disagree about what the future of immigration should look like. That debate may contribute to Americans misjudging where the majority of the country privately stands on the issue.

(3) High quality education: A top concern for Biden voters, but not for Trump voters.

Ensuring that “*People receive a high quality education*” registers as a top ten privately-held national aspiration for Biden voters (#9); in contrast, it ranks squarely in the middle of privately-held priorities for Trump voters (#26). Furthermore, Biden voters’ share of preference (SOP) on this particular attribute is nearly double that of Trump voters (Biden voters SOP: 2.56, Trump voters SOP: 1.34).

“High quality education is a basic need. Every American should be entitled to it.”

Jeff P. | Community College Instructor | Portland, OR | Voted for Biden

The bottom line: Biden voters place a much higher priority on education as part of the long-term future of the country than do Trump voters.

(4) Participation in the democratic process ranks twice as high for Biden voters’ as it does for Trump voters.

Issue-advocacy, coalition building, and voting are all cornerstones of democratic participation. But as a priority for the future of the country, one political camp values civic engagement considerably more than the other.

Biden voters registered “*People participate in the democratic process*” twice as high as Trump voters — 11th and 22nd priorities respectively. Here, attribute rankings alone don’t tell the full story. In terms of SOP, there is a 40% difference between the value Biden voters assign to the attribute and the value Trump voters assign to it.

“In the last election, 70 million Americans voted one way and 70 million Americans voted the other way. That’s the promise of America — exercising the right vote.”

Mark L. | Paralegal | Chicago, IL | Voted for Biden

The bottom line: If this difference in personally-held national aspirations between Biden and Trump voters translates into a difference in behavior, there could be meaningful consequences for voting rights legislation and election turnout for years to come.

(5) Competing expectations on the nature of work.

Both Trump and Biden voters surface attitudes on what should be expected from work in their respective top fifteen personally-held national aspirations. However, what matters most to each camp about the nature of the work branches in different directions.²

- For Biden voters, the priority for future generations is that *“People who work earn at least a living wage.”* This attribute ranks 9th (out of 55) for Biden voters, whereas it is in the back half of all possible attributes (#29) for Trump voters.
- For Trump voters, the priority for future generations is that *“People have jobs they enjoy,”* ranking 12th among Trump voters but 21st for Biden voters.

The bottom line: A core debate on the future of work may be missing from current conversations. Two points of view are emerging: one that prioritizes jobs and careers primarily as a means to material security; the other, as a source of immaterial enjoyment.

(6) Collective illusion: Underestimating the desire for climate action and conservation efforts.

“Successfully addresses climate change” (#3) and *“Preserves clean air, water and open spaces”* (#5) both register in Americans’ top five personally-held national priorities overall. Those prominent rankings are influenced by Biden voters’ preferences, for which climate action is the highest personally-held national aspiration of all fifty-five possibilities, and conservation efforts are in the top five (#4).

What allows Biden voters’ powerful preference for action on climate and conservation to translate to top aggregate rankings isn’t Trump voters’ matching enthusiasm, but rather, Trump voters’ lack of opposition. Unlike one-sided Trump voter priorities (e.g., *“Severely restricts immigration”* or *“Has secure national borders”*), Biden voters’ intensity of preference on climate and conservation is met by tepid permission. Trump voters register climate action as their 15th highest priority, with conservation efforts not far behind (as Trump voters’ 18th highest priority).

Attribute	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech ‘...’)	#1 SOP 14.43	#1 SOP 7.40	0	#3 SOP 8.05	#1 SOP 7.37	2 ▲	#1 SOP 24.66	#1 SOP 8.01	0
People have high quality healthcare	#2 SOP 6.67	#8 SOP 2.75	6 ▼	#2 SOP 8.79	#5 SOP 2.86	3 ▼	#4 SOP 3.61	#8 SOP 2.60	4 ▼
Successfully addresses climate change	#3 SOP 5.73	#33 SOP 1.49	30 ▼	#1 SOP 9.19	#34 SOP 1.46	33 ▼	#15 SOP 1.81	#38 SOP 1.42	23 ▼
Public leaders are held accountable for their actions	#4 SOP 4.04	#5 SOP 2.82	1 ▼	#5 SOP 4.41	#7 SOP 2.78	2 ▼	#5 SOP 3.49	#7 SOP 2.70	2 ▼
Preserves clean air, water, and open spaces	#5 SOP 3.52	#26 SOP 1.65	21 ▼	#4 SOP 5.17	#21 SOP 1.74	17 ▼	#18 SOP 1.70	#26 SOP 1.61	8

See full data in the appendix

² One potential objection could have been an uneven distribution of household income between Trump and Biden voters. However, there were no significant differences in household income between the two voting blocs.

“Climate change as it’s progressing is not a tenable situation. It’s just going to get worse. Without addressing it full-on, we’re going to end up pouring billions of dollars undoing just the damage. It has the potential to be a vicious cycle.”

Amy C. | Restaurant Manager | Milwaukee, WI | Voted for Biden

“Either you believe in climate change [as a threat] or you don’t. I don’t, but others do.

It’s that simple.”

Lynn H. | Architect | Las Vegas, NV | Voted for Trump

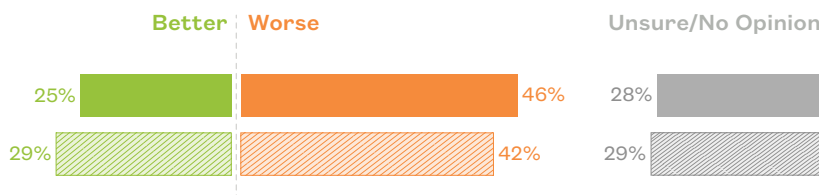
If it’s not genuine partisan disagreement that keeps climate action and conservation efforts from becoming areas of shared concern, what does? This research suggests one obstacle is that Americans fundamentally misunderstand each other when it comes to these environmental issues. While both attributes rank as top five personally-held national aspirations for Americans overall, they are perceived to be of much lower priority than they actually are. For climate action, the perceived societal rank (#33) is 30 spots lower than it is in reality; for conservation efforts, the perceived societal rank (#26) is 21 spots lower. Importantly, these collective illusions exist for both Trump voters and Biden voters alike.

The bottom line: What stands in the way of progress is not necessarily disagreement about whether or not climate and conservation issues are a long-term priority, but rather the illusion that these environmental issues are not important to the American people.

Common ground: Americans' agreed-upon priorities for the future

In many ways the prevailing public sentiment of deep national division is matched only by pessimism and uncertainty about the future of the country. Indeed, not only do just a quarter of Americans (25%) believe that the next generation will have it better than now (whereas nearly half think they will have it worse), a mere 39% of Americans believe that the country's best days are ahead of us.

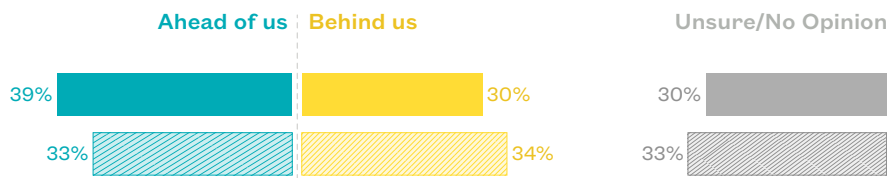
Will the next generation of Americans have it better or worse than now?



Key

- Personal
- ▨ Perceived Societal

Are America's best days ahead of us or behind us?



Note: Percentages may sum to 100% +/-1% due to rounding.

However, to the extent that this pessimism arises, at least in part, from a perceived lack of shared values and aspirations, this research would suggest that it is unwarranted. In private, Americans — across demographic groups — are more closely aligned on a greater number of issues than prevailing public opinion narratives suggest.

Consider that when examining Americans' highest personally-held national aspirations:

- Men and women hold eight priorities in common of their respective top ten.
- Americans belonging to low income households (those making less than \$35,000 per year) and Americans belonging to high income households (those making more than \$75,000 per year) share eight of their respective top ten aspirations.
- Those with four year college degrees and those without four year college degrees hold eight of their top ten personally-held, national aspirations in common.
- Americans who identify as White, African American, and Hispanic share eight out of their top ten highest aspirations for the country.

In other words, there is a surprising level of agreement on the long-term national priorities that could come to characterize America for future generations. This section spotlights those consensus priorities held by clear majorities of Americans, without significant exception across demographic and ideological differences.

Personally-Held Attributes	Gender		Income			Ethnicity			Education		
	Overall	Male Rank	Female Rank	Low Inc. Rank	Middle Inc. Rank	High Inc. Rank	White Rank	Black Rank	Hispanic Rank	Degree Rank	w/o Degree Rank
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech (...))	#1 SOP 14.43	#1 SOP 15.82	#1 SOP 13.24	#1 SOP 13.41	#1 SOP 14.91	#1 SOP 15.01	#1 SOP 15.56	#1 SOP 10.10	#1 SOP 11.78	#1 SOP 13.04	#1 SOP 15.08
People have high quality healthcare	#2 SOP 6.67	#2 SOP 6.09	#2 SOP 7.18	#2 SOP 6.95	#2 SOP 6.81	#2 SOP 6.28	#2 SOP 6.20	#2 SOP 8.39	#2 SOP 9.02	#3 SOP 6.77	#2 SOP 6.63
Successfully addresses climate change	#3 SOP 5.73	#3 SOP 5.64	#3 SOP 5.81	#3 SOP 6.07	#3 SOP 5.28	#3 SOP 5.96	#3 SOP 5.51	#3 SOP 6.74	#3 SOP 4.91	#2 SOP 7.04	#3 SOP 5.12
Public leaders are held accountable for their actions	#4 SOP 4.04	#4 SOP 3.76	#4 SOP 4.27	#4 SOP 4.01	#4 SOP 4.11	#4 SOP 3.97	#4 SOP 4.05	#4 SOP 4.33	#5 SOP 3.58	#4 SOP 4.06	#4 SOP 4.02
Preserves clean air, water, and open spaces	#5 SOP 3.52	#5 SOP 3.15	#5 SOP 3.83	#6 SOP 3.41	#5 SOP 3.45	#5 SOP 3.69	#5 SOP 3.47	#6 SOP 3.93	#6 SOP 3.11	#4 SOP 4.06	#6 SOP 3.27
People are treated equally—regardless of background—in all aspects of society	#6 SOP 3.43	#6 SOP 2.99	#6 SOP 3.80	#5 SOP 3.76	#6 SOP 3.38	#6 SOP 3.19	#6 SOP 3.28	#5 SOP 4.08	#4 SOP 3.87	#6 SOP 3.56	#5 SOP 3.37
Neighborhoods and communities are safe	#7 SOP 2.80	#7 SOP 2.78	#7 SOP 2.82	#7 SOP 2.84	#7 SOP 2.71	#7 SOP 2.87	#7 SOP 2.76	#7 SOP 2.94	#7 SOP 2.74	#7 SOP 2.87	#7 SOP 2.77
Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias	#8 SOP 2.48	#9 SOP 2.25	#8 SOP 2.68	#8 SOP 2.56	#9 SOP 2.41	#8 SOP 2.50	#8 SOP 2.47	#8 SOP 2.72	#10 SOP 2.22	#8 SOP 2.56	#8 SOP 2.45
Has secure national borders	#9 SOP 2.32	#8 SOP 2.75	#14 SOP 1.95	#11 SOP 2.02	#8 SOP 2.54	#9 SOP 2.33	#8 SOP 2.47	#22 SOP 1.58	#11 SOP 2.18	#13 SOP 2.05	#9 SOP 2.45
The middle class is thriving	#10 SOP 2.11	#10 SOP 2.16	#11 SOP 2.07	#11 SOP 2.08	#10 SOP 2.04	#10 SOP 2.24	#10 SOP 2.10	#12 SOP 2.08	#9 SOP 2.23	#11 SOP 2.19	#11 SOP 2.07
People receive a high quality education	#11 SOP 2.04	#14 SOP 1.93	#10 SOP 2.12	#9 SOP 2.15	#14 SOP 1.93	#12 SOP 2.06	#12 SOP 2.00	#14 SOP 1.91	#8 SOP 2.49	#10 SOP 2.22	#15 SOP 1.95
People are able to go as far in life as their abilities and aspirations will take them	#12 SOP 2.03	#11 SOP 2.13	#15 SOP 1.94	#13 SOP 2.01	#12 SOP 1.96	#11 SOP 2.12	#11 SOP 2.04	#16 SOP 1.80	#13 SOP 2.03	#17 SOP 1.87	#10 SOP 2.10
People who work earn at least a living wage	#13 SOP 2.00	#20 SOP 1.80	#9 SOP 2.16	#9 SOP 2.15	#18 SOP 1.89	#15 SOP 1.99	#14 SOP 1.97	#13 SOP 1.93	#14 SOP 2.02	#9 SOP 2.24	#18 SOP 1.88
People treat one another with respect	#14 SOP 1.96	#18 SOP 1.83	#11 SOP 2.07	#16 SOP 1.93	#16 SOP 1.92	#13 SOP 2.02	#17 SOP 1.91	#9 SOP 2.31	#15 SOP 2.00	#15 SOP 1.94	#14 SOP 1.97
Has a strong economy	#15 SOP 1.92	#12 SOP 1.94	#17 SOP 1.91	#18 SOP 1.87	#11 SOP 1.97	#18 SOP 1.90	#15 SOP 1.95	#18 SOP 1.73	#12 SOP 2.13	#19 SOP 1.74	#13 SOP 2.01

See full data in the appendix

(7) An overwhelming commitment to individual rights.

That the future of the country guarantees “People have individual rights” emerged as the absolute top attribute in Americans’ personal priorities. Note that its respective share of preference (14.43) more than doubles that of the second highest ranking attribute (healthcare: 6.67). Meaning, Americans’ commitment to individual rights isn’t simply deep-rooted; it significantly outweighs any other rival priority.

Also worth noting is that this attribute emerged as the absolute top performer again in perceived societal priorities. That is, the foremost priority respondents believe ‘most people’ would want most to protect for future generations.

“Without individual rights a government can shackle your mind and not your body.”

Mark L. | Paralegal | Chicago, IL | Voted for Biden

“Individual rights are an American ideal. Talk to people from other countries; they highly regard the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They respect the privileges that we have, that they wished they had. Individual rights make America.”

Lynn H. | Architect | Las Vegas, NV | Voted for Trump

The bottom line: Across all generations; regardless of ethnicity, urbanity, and gender; whether white collar or blue collar; and even whether a viewer of CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News; nothing matters more for the long-term future of the country than upholding individual rights.

(8) High quality healthcare: A necessity, not a privilege.

“People receive high quality healthcare” is a top five personally-held national aspiration, both in aggregate and across key subgroups including presidential vote history, income, and race. Notably, Americans also recognize that other Americans share their view of healthcare as a top public priority. The attribute did not once drop out of Americans’ top ten perceived societal rankings.

People have high quality healthcare:	Overall	Voters		Income			Ethnicity		
	Total	Biden Voters	Trump Voters	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income	White	Black	Hispanic
Personal:	#2 SOP 6.67	#2 SOP 8.79	#4 SOP 3.61	#2 SOP 6.95	#2 SOP 6.81	#2 SOP 6.28	#2 SOP 6.20	#2 SOP 8.39	#2 SOP 9.02
Perceived Societal:	#8 SOP 2.75	#5 SOP 2.86	#8 SOP 2.60	#7 SOP 2.75	#8 SOP 2.65	#5 SOP 2.86	#8 SOP 2.69	#5 SOP 3.01	#6 SOP 2.74

See full data in the appendix

“Having high quality healthcare available to everyone sends a symbol to the world that we as a country, the United States of America, care about our people.”

Amy C. | Restaurant Manager | Milwaukee, WI | Voted for Biden

“We can all agree we’ve seen too many people suffer terrible consequences of not having adequate healthcare. Even if you don’t have physical consequences, there are financial implications that affect more than just you — they affect all of us. You have to wonder why America can’t get this right.”

Michelle S. | Self-employed | Houston, TX | Voted for Trump

The bottom line: The combination of strong personal value and strong perceived societal value attached to ensuring Americans receive high-quality healthcare underscores the heightened importance of this issue moving forward.

(9) Widespread desire for criminal justice reform.

One of the most widely shared aspirations of the American people is the desire to “[Have] a criminal justice system that operates without bias.” This particular attribute is the 8th highest personally-held national aspiration for Americans overall, and is consistently a top-ten priority across age, gender, race, urbanity, and politics.

“If we want to live in a country where we tout about being the land of the free, we cannot justify a criminal justice system that locks up large swaths of the population — particularly black and brown populations. It’s as fundamental as do we want to live in a democracy or not?”

Jeff P. | Community College Instructor | Portland, OR | Voted for Biden

“Gun sales are the highest they’d ever been in the country’s history, because the criminal justice system is just so broken. Entire communities don’t trust the police anymore. This needs to get fixed.”

Eduardo B. | Engineer | Los Angeles, CA | Voted for Trump

The bottom line: Criminal justice reform isn’t just an issue in which progress is possible. It represents an issue that Americans from different backgrounds, demographics, and political persuasions insist upon addressing.

(10) A thriving middle class matters more than a strong economy.

With two notable exceptions (Trump voters and African Americans), “A thriving middle class” outperformed “Has a strong economy” in personally-held national aspirations for the country. However, this is an issue where reality and perception diverge: a strong economy is perceived to be more important to Americans (#9) than a thriving middle class (#22).

Not only does a thriving middle class matter more to Americans overall, it also matters for those at opposite ends of the economic spectrum. For low income households (those making less than \$35,000 per year) and high income households (those making more than \$75,000 per year) “A thriving middle class” is the 11th and 10th ranked personally-held priority for the future of the country respectively, whereas “Has a strong economy” is outside the top fifteen national aspirations for both groups (#18 for each).

““Has a strong economy,” that’s just a title. But “a thriving middle class” would mean more people are sharing the wealth.”

Kristin S. | Speech Therapist | Fishkill, NY | Voted for Biden

Attribute	Americans Overall		Low Income		Middle Income		High Income	
	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank
The middle class is thriving	#10 SOP 2.11	#22 SOP 1.72	#11 SOP 2.08	#19 SOP 1.79	#10 SOP 2.04	#30 SOP 1.56	#10 SOP 2.24	#19 SOP 1.85
Has a strong economy	#15 SOP 1.92	#9 SOP 2.62	#18 SOP 1.87	#9 SOP 2.61	#11 SOP 1.97	#9 SOP 2.53	#18 SOP 1.90	#6 SOP 2.74

See full data in the appendix

The bottom line: The bottom line: Most Americans prioritize the financial health of the middle class over the blanket promise of a strong economy; however, they do not realize that most Americans agree with them. This suggests that a collective illusion, not the privately held aspirations of the American people, may be driving economic priorities.

(11) Accountability ranks high as an American value.

“Public leaders are held accountable for their actions” ranks in the top five of Americans’ personally-held national aspirations, a finding that holds across demographic cuts like education, race, income, and even for Biden and Trump voters alike. Importantly, the attribute also ranked in the top ten perceived societal aspirations across the same subgroups. Meaning, Americans from different backgrounds not only hold accountability as a private value, they recognize it as a shared national aspiration.

It may be reasonable to assume that different political camps want accountability applied in different places, and to different persons. However, when asked to explain *why* this particular value mattered for future generations, both Biden and Trump voters expressed a common perspective motivating this priority.

“Without accountability at the top, there’s simply no trust. When you don’t have accountability, you’re not living in a democracy.”

Marla C. | Learning Platform Manager | Frisco, TX | Voted for Biden

“Too many politicians are more interested in grandstanding than governing. You can talk about creating an altruistic world, but you’re responsible for what happens on the ground.”

Michael K. | Accountant | St.Paul, MN | Voted for Trump

The bottom line: Americans across demographic and ideological differences view accountability as a foundational societal value.

(12) Americans want equal treatment, but not necessarily equal outcomes.

Of the top fifteen attributes that define Americans’ aspirations for the future of the country, several speak to traditional egalitarian virtues, including: “People have individual rights” (#1); “People are treated equally — regardless of background - in all aspects of society” (#6); “Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias,” (#8); “People are able to go as far in life as their abilities and aspirations will take them” (#12); and “People treat one another with respect” (#14).

What is equally clear is that Americans don’t prioritize equal outcomes. Consider that “Has very little income inequality” ranked in the bottom fifteen of personally-held national aspirations (#41 out of a possible 55 attributes).

“Americans are very proud to be individuals. We want to be rewarded for our hard work. Guaranteeing equal opportunity is fair, but guaranteeing equal outcome is not. That’s American, knowing your outcome is not predetermined.”

Mark L. | Paralegal | Chicago, IL | Voted for Biden

“You can do anything in America. You could start from nothing, be an immigrant, get your first restaurant, and then form a franchise in 20 years. But it’s not necessarily going to go that way. It’s entirely up to you.”

Michael K. | Accountant | St.Paul, MN | Voted for Trump

The bottom line: Americans want to ensure that all citizens have ‘a fair shot.’ But they also feel strongly that what is done with that fair shot should be up to the individual.

(13) Agreement on what doesn't matter: National unity and American Exceptionalism.

Not only do Americans largely agree on what matters most for the future of the country, there is also widespread agreement about the attributes that matter the least. Most notably, national unity and American Exceptionalism. For example, not only did the attribute *“There is national unity”* rank 50th (out of 55 possible priorities) in personally-held national aspirations overall, it is a consistent bottom-10 priority across all demographic cuts.

Similarly, the group of attributes most often used to describe America’s standing on the international stage — *“Is the wealthiest country in the world”* (#47); *“Is the leader of the free world”* (#48); *“Is the most powerful country in the world”* (#51); *“Is the most admired country in the world”* (#52); and *“Enforces international laws around the globe”* (#53) — are all deprioritized as personally-held national aspirations.

Bottom Ten Attributes	Americans Overall		
	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta
Engages in free trade with other countries	#46 SOP 0.67	#43 SOP 1.31	3 ▲
Is the wealthiest country in the world	#47 SOP 0.64	#35 SOP 1.46	12 ▲
People are a part of close-knit communities	#48 SOP 0.63	#52 SOP 0.89	4 ▼
Is the leader of the free world	#48 SOP 0.63	#41 SOP 1.36	7 ▲
There is national unity	#50 SOP 0.61	#42 SOP 1.35	8 ▲
Is the most powerful country in the world	#51 SOP 0.53	#28 SOP 1.60	23 ▲
Is the most admired country in the world	#52 SOP 0.52	#34 SOP 1.48	18 ▲
Enforces international laws around the globe	#53 SOP 0.24	#53 SOP 0.67	0
Government directs a significant portion of the economy	#54 SOP 0.23	#54 SOP 0.64	0
Important decisions for communities are primarily made by the federal government	#55 SOP 0.13	#55 SOP 0.32	0

See full data in the appendix

“I am so tired of hearing about what America is and how we have to be. I personally am not going to make America the richest. I'm going to make America better by working hard and contributing to my community. These [titles] aren't important to me — I'd rather see different change come about.”

Stefania G. | Administrative Assistant | Sonoma, CA | Voted for Biden

“At the end of the day, what do I care if there is a country that has a better economy than ours if everything is fine here? What do I care if another country has a more powerful military, if we can protect ourselves? What do I care?”

Eduardo B. | Engineer | Los Angeles, CA | Voted for Trump

The bottom line: Issues like national unity and exceptionalism (defined by international comparison) are not part of Americans’ aspirations for the country. Instead, Americans prioritize issues related to quality of life over national achievements.

(14) Collective illusion: Respect matters more than we think.

The civic virtue *“People treat one another with respect”* not only ranks as the 14th most important personally-held national aspiration for Americans overall, this particular attribute is a consistent top twenty aspiration across all demographic cuts — marking it as a compelling national priority.

And yet, Americans do not believe that most other Americans prioritize this civic virtue. In fact, when it comes to perceived societal national aspirations, Americans believe that most people would rank *“People treat one another with respect”* near the bottom third of national priorities (#36 out of 55). This collective illusion around the value of respect is remarkably durable — there is not a single demographic cut where it does not hold.

“To thrive as a society, we need to respect one another’s differences that all Americans have while trusting that we can move beyond those to take care of things that matter.”

Stefania G. | Administrative Assistant | Sonoma, CA | Voted for Biden

“Basic respect for each other is something everyone can be on board with.”

Michelle S. | Self-employed | Houston, TX | Voted for Trump

People treat one another with respect	Americans Overall			(Continued)	Americans Overall		
	Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta		Personal Rank	Perceived Soc. Rank	Rank Delta
Americans overall	#14 SOP 1.96	#36 SOP 1.45	22	Rural	#15 SOP 2.01	#42 SOP 1.39	27
Male	#18 SOP 1.83	#36 SOP 1.45	18	Suburban	#16 SOP 1.90	#36 SOP 1.44	20
Female	#11 SOP 2.07	#35 SOP 1.45	23	Urban	#11 SOP 2.01	#36 SOP 1.48	25
White	#17 SOP 1.91	#38 SOP 1.42	21	w/ College degree	#15 SOP 1.94	#36 SOP 1.43	22
Black	#9 SOP 2.31	#27 SOP 1.70	18	w/out College degree	#14 SOP 1.97	#36 SOP 1.46	23
Hispanic	#15 SOP 2.00	#37 SOP 1.39	22	Blue collar	#17 SOP 1.91	#33 SOP 1.51	13
Low Income	#16 SOP 1.93	#35 SOP 1.44	19	White collar	#17 SOP 1.91	#40 SOP 1.34	24
Middle Income	#16 SOP 1.92	#36 SOP 1.50	20	Biden voter	#13 SOP 2.08	#36 SOP 1.45	23
High Income	#13 SOP 2.02	#36 SOP 1.40	23	Trump voter	#18 SOP 1.70	#36 SOP 1.43	18
Gen Z	#18 SOP 1.72	#26 SOP 1.69	8				
Millennials	#12 SOP 2.07	#39 SOP 1.37	27				
Gen X	#11 SOP 2.12	#39 SOP 1.35	28				
Baby Boomers	#17 SOP 1.86	#30 SOP 1.55	13				

See full data in the appendix

The bottom line: Americans share a common aspiration for a society where people treat one another with respect; they just don’t realize it. Recognizing this collective illusion is important because, left alone, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

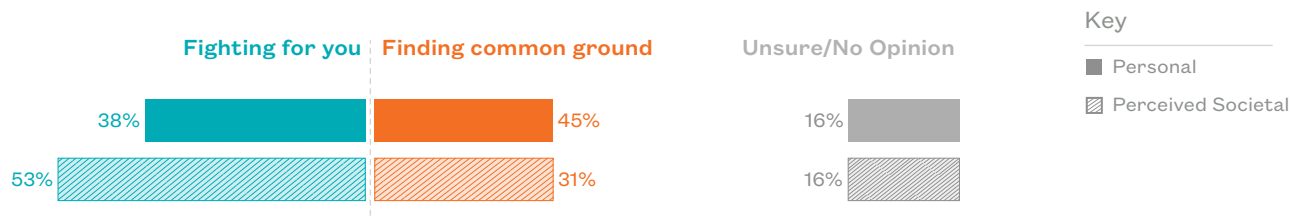
Shared Urgencies: From long-term aspirations to near-term opportunities

Although this report is primarily focused on understanding Americans’ personally-held national aspirations, it also aims to identify potential pathways that can move America closer to that long-term future they most want for the country. To that end, the survey included two additional elements that complemented the main CBC instrument.

- An “Achievement Score” which asked respondents whether or not in their opinion each attribute could be said to *generally* describe America today. (Example: in this study the Achievement Score for “*Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias*” is 18%, meaning that only approximately two out of ten respondents believe that this is generally true about America today).
- An “Urgency Score” which asked respondents whether or not they personally would be *upset* if America did not make significant progress on each attribute over the next few years. (Example: in this study the Urgency Score for criminal justice was 90%, meaning nine out of ten respondents would be upset if the country does not make significant progress on this particular issue).

Taken together, these three survey components lead to respective short-lists of ‘shared urgencies’ — those areas which represent near-term, agreed-upon opportunities for action that align with long-term national aspirations. They are defined as the policy targets that register in the top 15 personally-held national aspirations for the country, are considered generally ‘unachieved’ by 50% or more of the population, and are considered ‘urgent’ by 50% or more of the population.

Should politicians you support focus on fighting for you or on finding common ground?



Note: Percentages may sum to 100% +/-1% due to rounding.

Indicating just how difficult this ‘shared urgency’ criteria is to meet, consider that Americans are almost evenly divided between wanting politicians to “[fight] for you” (38%) and “[find] common ground” (45%). This suggests viable near-term progress that comports with Americans’ long-term aspirations for the country will depend on finding short-term policy priorities that have genuine bipartisan appeal. But, as always, bipartisanship is a choice. There are also partisan pathways in which short-term priorities match the respective voter bloc’s long-term national aspirations. Each scenario points to a different future for the country.

Bipartisan Priorities	Biden Voters' Priorities	Trump Voters' Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthcare - Safe communities - Criminal justice - Middle class - Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate change - Conservation - Living wage - Education - Democratic participation - Due process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual rights - Secure borders - Restricted immigration - Strong economy - Secure retirement

(15) A politically viable way forward: Five bipartisan shared urgencies.

With a divided populace and a legislative branch split on a knife’s edge, it would be reasonable to question if there is a single bipartisan priority to advance.

In fact, there are five.

Out of all 55 possibilities, both Biden voters and Trump voters register access to high-quality healthcare, keeping communities safe, criminal justice reform, helping the middle class, and revitalizing our national infrastructure in their top 15 personally-held, national aspirations for the future. More immediately, at least 50% of Biden voters and 50% of Trump voters agree that these five attributes cannot be said to generally describe America today. Finally, at least 50% of Biden voters and 50% of Trump voters report that they personally would be “upset” if America did not make significant progress on each of these five fronts over the next few years.

Attribute	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score
People have high quality healthcare	#2	26%	84%	#2	14%	96%	#4	50%	73%
Neighborhoods and communities are safe	#7	29%	90%	#7	29%	93%	#6	34%	96%
Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias	#8	18%	90%	#8	7%	96%	#9	33%	91%
The middle class is thriving	#10	20%	81%	#12	11%	85%	#11	35%	88%
Has modern infrastructure systems across the country	#16	35%	79%	#15	25%	90%	#13	43%	77%

See full data in the appendix

With voters from both political camps signalling these five priorities as meriting both action today and continued attention moving forward, it's these bipartisan shared urgencies that represent the best prospects for viable legislative action.

The bottom line: While there are certainly partisan policy agendas, there are also genuine win-win opportunities for action that appeal to Biden voters, Trump voters, and the American people overall.

(16) Biden voters' shared urgencies for the near-term Democratic agenda.

The democratic agenda, in as much as it can be defined by Biden voters' priorities, upholds six additional, near-term policy targets beyond the bipartisan five. Namely, addressing climate change, increasing conservation efforts, improving access to high quality education, ensuring a living wage for American workers, facilitating democratic participation, and guaranteeing due process of law for all.

Yet simply noting Trump voters do not hold these six policy targets as needed, near-term priorities tells only a partial story. Reviewing the 'shared urgency' criteria suggests Trump voters would react with ranging levels of opposition depending on which of these democratic priorities the current administration might choose to advance.

Attribute	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score
Successfully addresses climate change	#3	20%	64%	#1	8%	93%	#15	41%	21%
Preserves clean air, water, and open spaces	#5	30%	81%	#4	16%	95%	#18	55%	62%
People receive high quality education	#11	25%	79%	#9	19%	93%	#26	32%	64%
People who work earn at least a living wage	#13	26%	77%	#9	9%	94%	#29	47%	54%
People are guaranteed due process of law	#16	29%	89%	#14	19%	93%	#17	41%	91%
People actively participate in the democratic process	#18	34%	74%	#11	35%	85%	#22	38%	74%

See full data in the appendix

On climate change, the divide between Biden voters and Trump voters is not whether American should address climate change, but how *immediately* action is needed. A full 93% of Biden voters 'would be upset' if America did not make progress on the issue over the next few years. Only 21% of Trump voters feel the same. This suggests that while Trump voters will not advocate for mitigation or adaptation measures, they also will not forcefully oppose them. Successfully addressing climate change is ultimately a welcome outcome for Biden and Trump voters alike.

In contrast, consider another Biden voter imperative: ensuring American workers a living wage. This attribute ranks in the top fifteen personally-held, national aspirations for Biden voters, but it is notably de-prioritized by Trump voters (who register it in the back-half of all long-term aspirations). Similarly, whereas 94% of Biden voters report that they ‘would be upset’ if America did not make progress on this issue over the next few years, that sense of urgency plummets to just 54% among Trump voters. This dual gulf between Biden and Trump voters on the living wage question suggests a higher likelihood of meaningful political resistance.

The bottom line: Apart from those policy objectives included in the bipartisan shared urgencies, Biden voters see an additional six areas as imperative today. However, a closer look at the data suggests uneven levels of anticipated political resistance depending on which of those six priorities Democrats may attempt to advance.

(17) Trump voters’ shared urgencies for the near-term Republican agenda.

The Republican agenda, in as much as it can be defined by Trump voters, upholds five additional policy targets beyond the bipartisan five. Namely, bolstering individual rights, strengthening the economy, ensuring Americans have a secure retirement, securing the national border, and severely restricting immigration into the country.

Again, only noting that Biden voters do not share these five policy items as needed, near-term priorities misses key nuance. Republican leaders should expect varying levels of political resistance depending on which, if any, of these five Trump voters’ shared urgencies they attempt to advance.

Attribute	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Rank	Achievement Score	Urgency Score
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech, etc.)	#1	51%	82%	#3	60%	79%	#1	49%	92%
Has secure national borders	#9	32%	61%	#31	47%	43%	#2	19%	92%
Has a strong economy	#15	29%	88%	#22	19%	87%	#8	48%	97%
People have a secure retirement	#19	16%	82%	#18	9%	91%	#13	25%	74%
Severely restricts immigration	#20	29%	36%	#46	44%	14%	#3	15%	69%

See full data in the appendix

To illustrate the anticipated difference in reaction, compare two shared urgencies unique to the Trump voting bloc: severely restricting immigration and doing more to ensure that Americans have secure retirements.

On “*Severely restricting immigration*” Trump voters uphold the attribute as key to the country’s future (#3); Biden voters see it as anathema (#46). This difference of opinion is matched by a difference in perception. Whereas 15% of Trump voters say that America can be described as severely restricting immigration today, that percentage nearly triples among Biden voters (44%). Similarly, a full 69% of Trump voters ‘would be upset’ if the country did not make progress on severely restricting immigration today. Only 14% of Biden voters feel the same.

Alternatively, on “*People have a secure retirement*” Trump voters register the attribute in their top 15 personally-held national aspirations (#14); whereas for Biden voters, it is just outside (#18). A minority of Trump voters (25%) and a minority of Biden voters (9%) consider this attribute as generally true of America today. Finally, a compelling majority of Trump voters (74%) and Biden voters (91%) both report that they ‘would be upset’ if the country didn’t make progress on this front over the next few years.

On each of the three ‘shared urgency’ metrics, there’s an inordinate distance between the two voting blocs regarding immigration, but barely any difference at all regarding retirement. This suggests Republicans should expect very different levels of political resistance depending on which, if any, of Trump voters’ near-term priorities they move to advance.

The bottom line: Apart from those policy objectives included in the bipartisan shared urgencies, Trump voters see an additional five areas as imperative today. However, a closer look at the data suggests uneven levels of anticipated political resistance depending on which of those five priorities Republicans may attempt to advance.

Methodology

Integrity Statement

Powered by **YouGov**, this national private opinion survey was completed by a general population sample of 2,010 respondents.

The conjoints received a percent certainty score — calculated as a Root Likelihood (RLH) fit — of 85.3% (personal) and 84.5% (perceived societal). The scores achieved suggest exceptional model fit.

Small group interviews were held as a separate, but complementary component to the private opinion methodology. They are solely meant to serve as anecdotal additions to the CBC instrument findings, adding color to how respondents interpreted the importance, or relative unimportance, of discrete attributes.

Dates in field: **January 21 - January 28, 2021**

For questions or comment, contact research@populace.org.

Glossary of Terms

Choice-Based-Conjoint Instrument

Rather than directly asking respondents what aspirations they hold for the long-term future of the country, this survey used a choice-based-conjoint (CBC) instrument that forced respondents to make tradeoffs in their priorities. This also reduces the ceiling effect where respondents can claim everything is important (or unimportant).

For each choice task, respondents were prompted with the following:

“Step past 2020 with all its ups and downs [to] imagine that you have the opportunity to shape what America will be for future generations. Though you won’t live to see the country you create, imagine that what you design today – from its values and aspirations to its policies and achievements – will determine what characterizes the America that millions live in and call home.”

They were then asked to select the profile which:

1. comes closer to what you *personally want* America to become for future generations.
2. comes closer to what you *believe most people want* America to become for future generations.

The outcome of the CBC is the contribution of each attribute to setting the long-term priorities (aspirations) of the country according to an individual preference and that of perceived societal preference.

Example Choice Task

Attributes randomly populate across multiple choice tasks per respondent.

Future America A	Future America B
People are treated equally – regardless of background – in all aspects of society	Fosters innovation and entrepreneurship
Neighborhoods and communities are safe	People are guaranteed due process of law
Is a free and fair democracy	Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias
Has a strong economy	People have jobs they enjoy
People have their basic needs met	People who work earn at least a living wage
Is the wealthiest country in the world	Is the most admired country in the world

Question: Which of the following profiles is closer to what you personally want for the long-term future of America?

Future America A	Future America B
Question: Now please think about most people in America. Which of the following profiles is closer to what you think <u>most people</u> want for the long-term future of this country?	

Future America A	Future America B
------------------	------------------

Conjoint Attribute

This conjoint instrument comprised 55 possible attribute levels representing the elements of what a future America could look like, value, achieve, or prioritize. Based on respondent selections, the results of the choice-based conjoint assign each attribute a Share of Preference (SOP).

Private Opinion Research:

One of the defining traits of Populace methodologies is to differentiate between ‘personal opinion’ — the attitudes, preferences, and beliefs of individual respondents — and ‘perceived societal opinion’ — that is, what individual respondents think best reflects the attitudes, preferences, and beliefs of the majority.

Collecting both personal and perceived societal opinion opens an entirely new evaluative lens, contributing to a body of work called ‘private opinion research.’

Due, in part, to the effects of social pressure, individuals who think they are in the minority on a given topic tend to be less likely to make their views public. In contrast, those who think they are in the majority are not only more likely to make their views public but also expect that those views will be acted on. The problem is that individuals are not necessarily reliable estimators of what the majority opinion genuinely is on any particular topic. As a result, collective illusions can form in which people who are actually in the majority believe they are in the minority. When collective illusions exist they can impair everything from shared reality and social norms to social trust and collective action.

Share of preference (SOP):

The SOP reflects an attribute’s relative prioritization concerning the long-term future of the country. The SOP of each attribute is reflected as a percentage out of 100 (together, all the attribute’s SOPs sum to 100). The higher the SOP, the greater the priority of that attribute in characterizing what respondents want — or think most people want — the country to become.

Personal SOP / Personal ranking:

Personal SOP signals an attribute’s consideration share out of 100% when respondents assess what they personally want most for the long-term future of America. Personal ranking designates an attribute’s comparative priority when evaluating what respondents personally want the country to become.

Perceived Societal SOP:

Perceived societal SOP signals an attribute’s consideration share out of 100% when respondents assess what they believe most people want most for the long-term future of America. Perceived societal ranking designates an attribute’s comparative priority when respondents evaluate what they believe most others would want the country to become.

Appendix A

Conjoint Results: Adult American Citizens

(Table 1/3)

	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech, peaceful assembly, to keep and bear arms, freedom of religion)	1	14.43	1	7.40
People have high quality healthcare	2	6.67	8	2.75
Successfully addresses climate change	3	5.73	33	1.49
Public leaders are held accountable for their actions	4	4.04	5	2.82
Preserves clean air, water, and open spaces	5	3.52	26	1.65
People are treated equally—regardless of background—in all aspects of society	6	3.43	13	2.18
Neighborhoods and communities are safe	7	2.80	4	2.98
Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias	8	2.48	15	2.05
Has secure national borders	9	2.32	2	3.66
The middle class is thriving	10	2.11	22	1.72
People receive a high quality education	11	2.04	20	1.76
People are able to go as far in life as their abilities and aspirations will take them	12	2.03	5	2.82
People who work earn at least a living wage	13	2.00	17	2.01
People treat one another with respect	14	1.96	36	1.45
Has a strong economy	15	1.92	9	2.62
People are guaranteed due process of law	16	1.91	16	2.02
Has modern infrastructure systems across the country (e.g., transportation, electricity, internet)	16	1.91	10	2.32
People actively participate in the democratic process	18	1.89	22	1.72
People have a secure retirement	19	1.87	3	3.24
Severely restricts immigration	20	1.85	7	2.78
Everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed	21	1.69	14	2.15
People have jobs they enjoy	22	1.66	11	2.26

Conjoint Results: Adult American Citizens (Table 2/3)	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
Is a free and fair democracy	23	1.55	24	1.68
People are diverse in their backgrounds and beliefs	24	1.49	20	1.76
Has high levels of economic mobility	25	1.39	29	1.60
People have their basic needs met	26	1.37	37	1.44
People have control over how their personal information is used	27	1.26	25	1.66
Is energy independent	27	1.26	50	0.97
People are treated with human dignity	29	1.23	48	1.06
Ensures national security from foreign and domestic threats	30	1.19	27	1.62
Fosters innovation and entrepreneurship	31	1.09	47	1.10
Has a free market economy	31	1.09	31	1.57
Has state-of-the-art scientific capabilities	33	1.08	32	1.53
There is widespread tolerance in society	34	1.03	51	0.95
Government spending is aligned with the public's priorities	35	1.02	30	1.59
Public leaders look like the communities they represent	36	0.99	19	1.81
People generally trust one another	37	0.97	44	1.20
Important decisions for communities are primarily made by state and local governments	38	0.92	12	2.20
People are paid according to the unique value they create	39	0.91	45	1.13
Is a fair society	40	0.90	38	1.42
Has very little economic inequality	41	0.89	45	1.13
The press operates freely and independently	42	0.87	39	1.41
Is open to immigration	42	0.87	18	1.87
Advances national interests primarily through diplomacy	44	0.82	49	0.98

Conjoint Results: Adult American Citizens (Table 3/3)	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
Government has a balanced budget	45	0.76	39	1.41
Engages in free trade with other countries	46	0.67	43	1.31
Is the wealthiest country in the world	47	0.64	35	1.46
Is the leader of the free world	48	0.63	41	1.36
People are a part of close-knit communities	48	0.63	52	0.89
There is national unity	50	0.61	42	1.35
Is the most powerful country in the world	51	0.53	28	1.60
Is the most admired country in the world	52	0.52	34	1.48
Enforces international laws around the globe	53	0.24	53	0.67
Government directs a significant portion of the economy	54	0.23	54	0.64
Important decisions for communities are primarily made by the federal government	55	0.13	55	0.32

Appendix B

Conjoint Results: Biden Voters and Trump Voters

(Table 1/3)

	BIDEN VOTERS				TRUMP VOTERS			
	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
Successfully addresses climate change	1	9.19	34	1.46	15	1.81	38	1.42
People have high quality healthcare	2	8.79	5	2.86	4	3.61	8	2.60
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech, peaceful assembly, to keep and bear arms, freedom of religion)	3	8.05	1	7.37	1	24.66	1	8.01
Preserves clean air, water, and open spaces	4	5.17	21	1.74	18	1.70	26	1.61
Public leaders are held accountable for their actions	5	4.41	7	2.78	5	3.49	7	2.70
People are treated equally—regardless of background—in all aspects of society	6	4.28	13	2.18	10	2.21	12	2.17
Neighborhoods and communities are safe	7	2.91	4	2.95	6	2.47	3	2.97
Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias	8	2.66	17	2.00	9	2.25	14	2.15
People receive a high quality education	9	2.56	25	1.67	26	1.34	22	1.76
People who work earn at least a living wage	9	2.56	16	2.01	29	1.17	17	1.97
People actively participate in the democratic process	11	2.24	24	1.68	22	1.50	19	1.80
The middle class is thriving	12	2.16	20	1.77	11	1.95	22	1.76
People treat one another with respect	13	2.08	36	1.45	18	1.70	36	1.43
People are guaranteed due process of law	14	1.99	15	2.05	17	1.76	12	2.17
Has modern infrastructure systems across the country (e.g., transportation, electricity, internet)	15	1.92	10	2.36	13	1.82	11	2.31
People are diverse in their backgrounds and beliefs	16	1.82	22	1.71	31	1.04	19	1.80
People have their basic needs met	17	1.78	34	1.46	43	0.72	38	1.42
People have a secure retirement	18	1.77	3	3.41	13	1.82	4	2.92
People are able to go as far in life as their abilities and aspirations will take them	19	1.64	9	2.61	7	2.44	5	2.85
Everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed	20	1.56	13	2.18	16	1.77	15	2.14
People have jobs they enjoy	21	1.49	12	2.19	12	1.84	10	2.43

**Conjoint Results:
Biden Voters and Trump Voters (Table 2/3)**

	BIDEN VOTERS				TRUMP VOTERS			
	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
Has a strong economy	22	1.47	8	2.67	8	2.33	6	2.77
Is a free and fair democracy	23	1.44	28	1.64	20	1.64	24	1.74
Has high levels of economic mobility	24	1.38	33	1.51	27	1.32	25	1.68
There is widespread tolerance in society	25	1.33	51	0.93	48	0.62	51	0.94
People are treated with human dignity	26	1.26	48	1.09	32	1.03	50	0.98
Is open to immigration	27	1.22	18	1.97	52	0.35	21	1.77
People have control over how their personal information is used	27	1.22	26	1.65	28	1.28	30	1.54
Has very little economic inequality	29	1.19	44	1.17	51	0.53	47	1.04
Public leaders look like the communities they represent	30	1.13	19	1.83	40	0.76	18	1.85
Has secure national borders	31	1.11	2	3.75	2	4.21	2	3.67
Has state-of-the-art scientific capabilities	32	1.10	31	1.54	33	1.01	27	1.58
Is energy independent	33	1.08	49	0.97	23	1.48	48	1.02
Important decisions for communities are primarily made by state and local governments	34	1.06	11	2.26	41	0.75	15	2.14
Government spending is aligned with the public's priorities	35	1.00	30	1.57	36	0.95	29	1.55
Is a fair society	36	0.94	39	1.41	45	0.68	35	1.44
Fosters innovation and entrepreneurship	37	0.91	46	1.12	25	1.35	46	1.13
People generally trust one another	38	0.89	45	1.16	35	0.97	44	1.23
Ensures national security from foreign and domestic threats	39	0.88	26	1.65	21	1.54	27	1.58
The press operates freely and independently	40	0.82	37	1.44	37	0.90	41	1.41
Has a free market economy	41	0.79	28	1.64	24	1.44	32	1.47
Advances national interests primarily through diplomacy	42	0.78	50	0.96	38	0.84	49	1.00
People are paid according to the unique value they create	43	0.68	47	1.10	30	1.15	45	1.17
Engages in free trade with other countries	44	0.64	43	1.28	46	0.63	36	1.43

Conjoint Results: Biden Voters and Trump Voters (Table 3/3)	BIDEN VOTERS				TRUMP VOTERS			
	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
People are a part of close-knit communities	45	0.61	52	0.85	49	0.58	52	0.93
Severely restricts immigration	46	0.58	6	2.82	3	3.68	9	2.52
There is national unity	47	0.57	41	1.33	46	0.63	43	1.24
Government has a balanced budget	48	0.53	42	1.31	34	1.00	31	1.50
Is the leader of the free world	49	0.49	40	1.37	41	0.75	42	1.39
Is the wealthiest country in the world	50	0.46	37	1.44	38	0.84	33	1.45
Is the most admired country in the world	51	0.42	32	1.52	50	0.54	33	1.45
Is the most powerful country in the world	52	0.34	23	1.69	44	0.70	38	1.42
Government directs a significant portion of the economy	53	0.27	54	0.56	54	0.14	53	0.65
Enforces international laws around the globe	54	0.22	53	0.63	53	0.21	54	0.62
Important decisions for communities are primarily made by the federal government	55	0.13	55	0.31	55	0.09	55	0.31

Appendix C

Full achievement and urgency scores

Table (1/3)

	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Pers. Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score
People have individual rights (e.g., free speech, peaceful assembly, to keep and bear arms, freedom of religion)	1	51%	81%	3	60%	79%	1	49%	92%
People have high quality healthcare	2	26	84%	2	14%	96%	4	50%	73%
Successfully addresses climate change	3	20%	64%	1	8%	93%	15	41%	21%
Public leaders are held accountable for their action*	4	10%	93%	5	10%	97%	5	11%	92%
Preserves clean air, water, and open spaces	5	30%	81%	4	16%	95%	18	55%	62%
People are treated equally—regardless of background—in all aspects of society*	6	21%	87%	6	7%	96%	10	40%	79%
Neighborhoods and communities are safe	7	29%	90%	7	29%	93%	6	34%	96%
Has a criminal justice system that operates without bias	8	18%	90%	8	7%	96%	9	33%	91%
Has secure national borders	9	32%	61%	31	47%	43%	2	19%	92%
The middle class is thriving	10	20%	81%	12	11%	85%	11	35%	88%
People receive high quality education	11	25%	79%	9	19%	93%	26	32%	64%
People are able to go as far in life as their abilities and aspirations will take them*	12	42%	82%	19	22%	86%	7	69%	87%
People who work earn at least a living wage	13	26%	77%	9	9%	94%	29	47%	54%
People treat one another with respect*	14	19%	89%	13	14%	95%	18	30%	87%
Has a strong economy	15	29%	88%	22	19%	87%	8	48%	97%
People are guaranteed due process of law	16	29%	89%	14	19%	93%	17	41%	91%
Has modern infrastructure systems across the country (e.g., transportation, electricity, internet)	16	35%	79%	15	25%	90%	13	43%	77%
People actively participate in the democratic process	18	34%	74%	11	35%	85%	22	38%	74%
People have a secure retirement	19	16%	82%	18	9%	91%	13	25%	74%
Severely restricts immigration	20	29%	36%	46	44%	14%	3	15%	69%

*10 values based attributes (highlighted in grey) were not included in the policy oriented 'shared urgencies' section.

Full achievement and urgency scores Table (2/3)

	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Pers. Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score
Everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed	21	34%	87%	20	14%	94%	16	67%	84%
People have jobs they enjoy	22	22%	61%	21	15%	65%	12	38%	45%
Is a free and fair democracy	23	30%	87%	23	32%	95%	20	30%	86%
People are diverse in their backgrounds and beliefs	24	65%	66%	16	69%	82%	31	72%	45%
Has high levels of economic mobility	25	30%	69%	24	17%	73%	27	51%	72%
People have their basic needs met	26	32%	80%	17	15%	95%	43	60%	59%
People have control over how their personal information is used	27	12%	84%	27	21%	72%	28	50%	89%
Is energy independent	27	28%	73%	33	13%	86%	23	50%	80%
People are treated with human dignity	29	28%	90%	26	15%	96%	32	50%	86%
Ensures national security from foreign and domestic threats	30	36%	81%	39	33%	79%	21	43%	94%
Has a free market economy	31	40%	60%	41	38%	49%	24	53%	81%
Fosters innovation and entrepreneurship	31	44%	73%	37	42%	76%	25	53%	78%
Has state-of-the-art scientific capabilities	33	55%	71%	32	58%	76%	33	63%	69%
There is widespread tolerance in society*	34	24%	69%	25	13%	88%	48	37%	48%
Government spending is aligned with the public's priorities	35	9%	78%	35	8%	86%	36	7%	80%
Public leaders look like the communities they represent	36	19%	60%	30	15%	75%	40	28%	47%
People generally trust one another*	37	20%	77%	38	19%	86%	35	29%	74%
Important decisions for communities are primarily made by state and local governments	38	47%	51%	34	51%	46%	41	48%	62%
People are paid according to the unique value they create	39	28%	59%	43	11%	52%	30	48%	75%
Is a fair society	40	27%	83%	36	14%	95%	45	46%	70%

*10 values based attributes (highlighted in grey) were not included in the policy oriented 'shared urgencies' section.

Full achievement and urgency scores Table (3/3)	Americans Overall			Biden Voters			Trump Voters		
	Personal Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Pers. Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score	Personal Ranking	Achievement Score	Urgency Score
Has very little economic inequality	41	18%	61%	29	12%	79%	51	29%	36%
The press operates freely and independently	42	37%	67%	40	53%	82%	37	16%	62%
Is open to immigration	42	31%	52%	27	24%	80%	52	45%	18%
Advances national interests primarily through diplomacy	44	27%	67%	42	25%	80%	38	40%	63%
Government has a balanced budget	45	7%	64%	48	7%	52%	34	6%	78%
Engages in free trade with other countries	46	40%	59%	44	40%	61%	46	48%	59%
Is the wealthiest country in the world	47	36%	35%	50	32%	22%	38	51%	53%
People are a part of close-knit communities	48	23%	51%	45	18%	50%	49	29%	53%
Is the leader of the free world	48	34%	48%	49	19%	42%	41	58%	65%
There is national unity*	50	8%	70%	47	8%	73%	46	12%	67%
Is the most powerful country in the world	51	40%	39%	52	28%	25%	44	58%	63%
Is the most admired country in the world	52	26%	38%	51	13%	33%	50	50%	50%
Enforces international laws around the globe	53	27%	33%	54	22%	33%	53	28%	25%
Government directs a significant portion of the economy	54	46%	24%	53	45%	27%	54	48%	13%
Important decisions for communities are primarily made by the federal government	55	27%	20%	55	20%	14%	55	36%	17%

*10 values based attributes (highlighted in grey) were not included in the policy oriented 'shared urgencies' section.

Appendix D

Demographic Cuts of Attributes Referenced in Report

Criminal justice system operates without bias	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
Americans overall	8	2.48	15	2.05
Male	9	2.25	16	2.00
Female	8	2.68	15	2.09
White	8	2.47	15	2.11
Black	8	2.72	24	1.75
Hispanic	10	2.22	12	2.16
Low income	8	2.56	16	2.08
Middle income	9	2.41	16	1.91
High income	8	2.50	13	2.17
Gen Z (age 18-21)	8	2.64	18	2.00
Millennials (age 22-37)	8	2.47	14	2.07
Gen X (age 38-53)	8	2.53	15	2.02
Baby boomers (age 54-72)	9	2.33	16	2.04
Rural	9	2.37	16	2.03
Suburban	8	2.58	15	2.16
Urban	8	2.45	18	1.91
w/ College degree	8	2.56	14	2.11
w/out College degree	8	2.45	16	2.01
Biden voter	8	2.66	17	2.00
Trump voter	9	2.25	14	2.15

Public leaders are held accountable for their actions	Personal Rank	Personal SOP	Perceived Societal Rank	Perceived Societal SOP
Americans overall	4	4.04	5	2.82
Male	4	3.76	7	2.67
Female	4	4.27	5	2.95
White	4	4.05	5	2.78
Black	4	4.33	6	2.99
Hispanic	5	3.58	4	2.86
Low income	4	4.01	5	3.00
Middle income	4	4.11	6	2.79
High income	4	3.97	7	2.70
Gen Z (age 18-21)	4	4.08	3	2.88
Millennials (age 22-37)	5	3.92	6	2.84
Gen X (age 38-53)	4	3.99	6	2.82
Baby boomers (age 54-72)	4	4.22	7	2.81
Rural	4	3.84	5	2.81
Suburban	4	4.06	8	2.71
Urban	4	4.37	7	2.89
w/ College degree	4	4.06	9	2.58
w/out College degree	4	4.02	5	2.93
Biden voter	5	4.41	7	2.78
Trump voter	5	3.49	7	2.70

Copyright Standards

This document contains proprietary research, copyrighted and trademarked materials of Populace, Inc.

Accordingly, international and domestic laws and penalties guaranteeing patent, copyright, trademark and trade secret protection safeguard the ideas, concepts and recommendations related within this document.

The materials contained in this document and/or the document itself may be downloaded and/or copied provided that all copies retain the copyright, trademark and any other proprietary notices contained on the materials and/or document. No changes may be made to this document without the express written permission of Populace, Inc.

Any reference whatsoever to this document, in whole or in part, on any web page must provide a link back to the original document in its entirety. Except as expressly provided herein, the transmission of this material shall not be construed to grant a license of any type under any patents, copyright or trademarks owned or controlled by Populace, Inc.

Populace