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Voters' Attitudes About Race and Gender Are Even More Divided Than in 2016

Growing share of Democratic voters say it's a lot more difficult to be Black than White in the U.S.

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to understand how Americans' views across a range of different domains have changed since 2016 and how those changes have impacted the coalitions of the two major candidates for president. For this analysis, we conducted an online survey of 11,001 U.S. adults (including 9,114 registered voters) between July 27 and Aug. 2, 2020.

Everyone who took part is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. Read more about the [ATP's methodology](#). Here are the [questions used for this report](#), along with responses, and its [methodology](#).

Voters' Attitudes About Race and Gender Are Even More Divided Than in 2016

Growing share of Democratic voters say it's a lot more difficult to be Black than White in the U.S.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, supporters of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton disagreed over nearly everything, including the extent to which Black adults in this country are disadvantaged because of their race and women because of their gender.

Today, these differences are even wider among voters who support Trump and those who back Joe Biden.

Across a range of political values – around race, gender and family, immigration and religion – there are stark

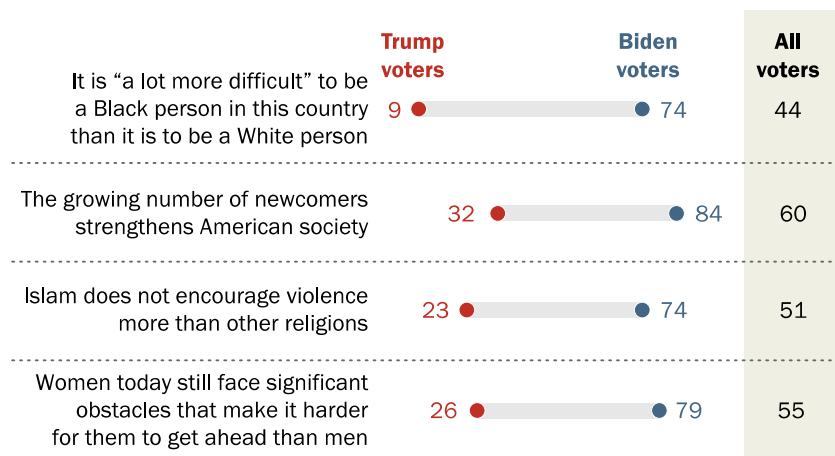
contrasts between voters who support Trump and those planning to vote for Biden in November.

On some, such as attitudes about immigrants' impact on American society, the differences between Trump and Biden supporters, while large, are no larger than the gap between Trump and Clinton voters four years ago.

But in opinions about race and gender, in particular, the divides are much wider. Among all registered voters, 44% say it is a lot more difficult to be a Black person than a White person in this country; 32% say it is a little more difficult, while 23% say it is no more difficult. The share of voters who say it is a lot more difficult to be Black has increased 9 percentage points since 2016.

Stark divides between Trump, Biden voters over race, immigration, gender

% of registered voters who say ...



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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This change has come entirely among supporters of the Democratic candidates: 74% of Biden supporters say it is a lot more difficult to be Black than White, while a smaller majority of Clinton supporters (57%) said this in 2016. Among Trump supporters, there has been virtually no change since 2016. Currently, 9% say it is a lot more difficult to be Black than White; 11% said this four years ago.

Thus the gap in opinions between Trump and Biden supporters in views of whether it is a lot more difficult to be Black (65 percentage points) is considerably larger than the difference between Trump and Clinton supporters in 2016 (46 points).

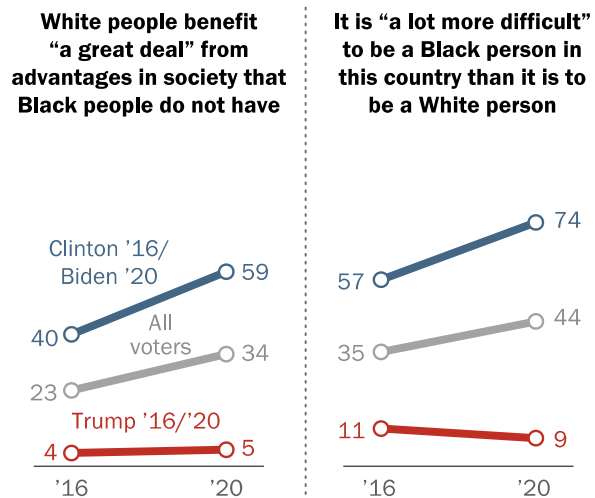
Biden supporters today also are more likely than Clinton supporters four years ago to say that White people benefit a great deal from advantages in society that Black people do not have. Currently, 34% of all registered voters say White people benefit a great deal from advantages that Black people lack, up from 23% in July 2016.

Again, the increase has come only among supporters of Democratic candidates: 59% of Biden supporters say White people benefit a great deal from societal advantages that Black people do not have. Fewer than half (40%) of Clinton supporters said this four years ago. Just 5% of Trump supporters say White people have a great deal of unfair advantages, which is virtually unchanged from 2016 (4%).

The survey by Pew Research Center, conducted July 27-Aug. 2 among 11,001 U.S. adults (including 9,114 registered voters) on the Center's American Trends Panel, also finds growing divergence between the two camps on attitudes about gender and family: Biden voters today are now somewhat *more* likely than Clinton voters were to say women continue to face obstacles that make it harder for them to get ahead than men, while Trump supporters are now somewhat *less* likely to say this than they were in 2016.

Sizable differences between Biden and Clinton supporters in views on race; not much change among Trump supporters

% of registered voters who say ...



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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Opinion among all voters has changed little on whether women continue to face obstacles that make it harder for them to get ahead than men. Currently, 55% say there are still significant obstacles that make it more difficult for women than men to get ahead; 44% say the obstacles that once made it harder for women to get ahead are now largely gone.

Among Biden supporters, 79% say women still face significant obstacles that make it harder for them to advance; a smaller majority of Clinton supporters (72%) expressed this view in 2016. By contrast, a somewhat smaller share of Trump supporters express this view today (26%) than did so four years ago (31%).

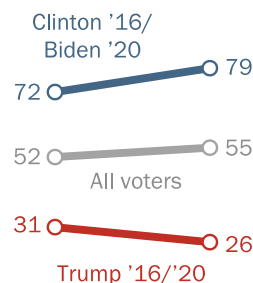
While stark divides between Trump and Biden supporters are evident on two other themes that were central to the 2016 campaign – views of immigrants and Islam – these divides are roughly comparable to the divides seen between Trump and Clinton voters in 2016.

An increasing share of registered voters – Trump and Biden supporters alike – say the growing number of newcomers to the country strengthens American society. In the new survey, 60% say this, while 37% say this threatens the nation’s customs and values. In 2016, opinion was divided: 50% said increasing numbers of newcomers to the U.S. were more of a threat to American customs and values, while 46% said they strengthened society.

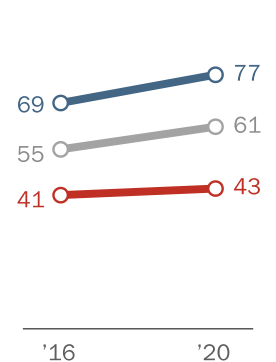
Biden backers more likely than Clinton supporters in 2016 to say obstacles still hinder women’s advancement

% of registered voters who say ...

There are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men



Society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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Only about a third of Trump supporters (32%) say immigrants do more to strengthen society, but this is a 13 percentage point increase from 19% in 2016. Biden supporters are more likely than Clinton supporters four years ago to say the growing number of newcomers strengthens society (84% vs. 71%).

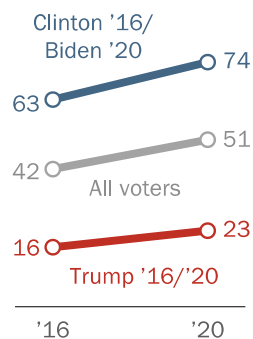
There also has been a shift across both the Republican and Democratic coalitions in views of whether Islam is more associated with violence than other religions. Today, 51% of voters say the Islamic religion does not encourage violence among its believers more than other religions, while 45% say it does. Four years ago, a 54% majority said Islam was more likely than other religions to encourage violence among its followers.

Most Trump supporters (72%) continue to associate Islam with violence, though the share saying this has declined 8 points since 2016. An even larger majority of Biden supporters (74%) than Clinton supporters (63%) say Islam does not encourage violence more than other religions.

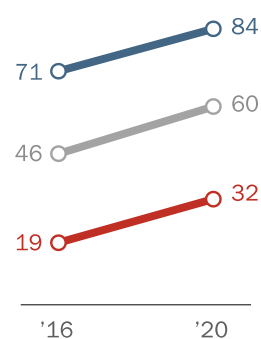
Shifting attitudes, persistent divisions in views on immigration and Islam

% of registered voters who say ...

The Islamic religion does not encourage violence more than others



Newcomers strengthen American society



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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Biden, Trump coalitions diverge over perceptions of structural racism

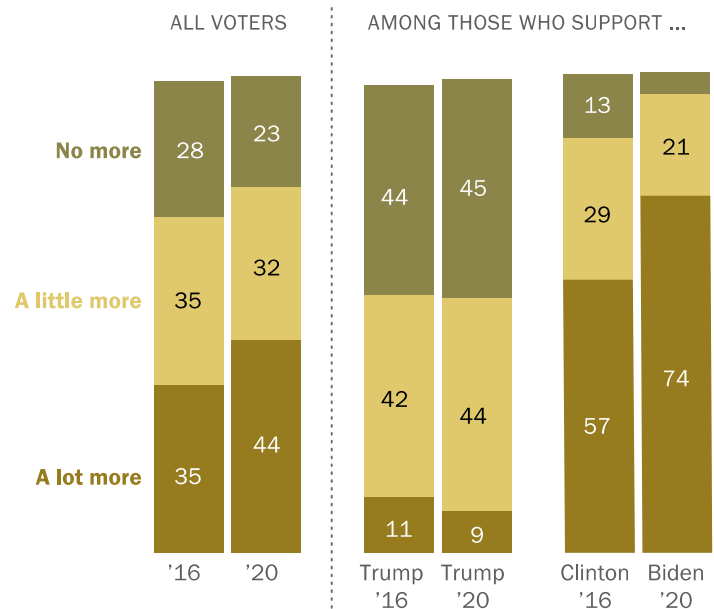
Overall, 44% of Americans now say that it is a lot more difficult to be a Black person in the U.S. than it is to be a White person, while 32% say it is a little more difficult and 23% say it is no more difficult. The share saying it is a lot more difficult to be Black than White is now 9 percentage points higher than it was in the summer of 2016.

But while overall views have shifted, the shift has come exclusively from within the Democratic coalition. The attitudes of Trump supporters today look very similar to attitudes of Trump supporters four years ago: 45% of Trump voters now say that it is no more difficult to be a Black person in the U.S. than to be a White person, while 44% say Black people have it a little more difficult. Only about one-in-ten Trump supporters say that Black people have it a lot more difficult than White people.

Biden's backers, on the other hand, are substantially more likely today than Clinton's backers were in 2016 to say that it is a lot more difficult to be Black than White (74% today vs. 57% in 2016).

Since 2016, more voters – particularly Democrats – say it's more difficult to be Black than White in U.S.

% of registered voters who say it is ___ difficult to be a Black person in this country than it is to be a White person



Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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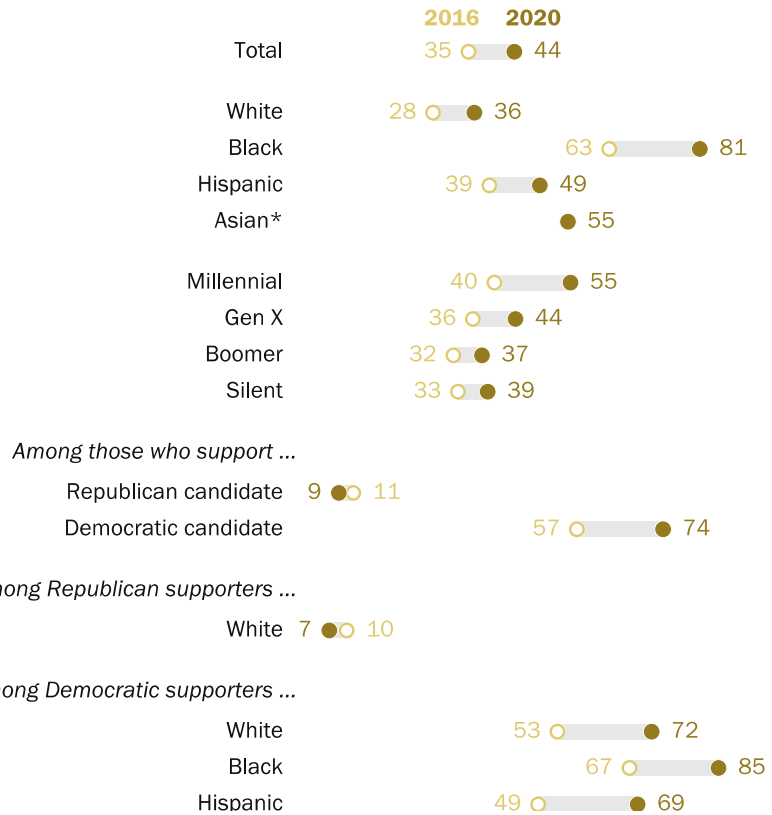
Younger cohorts and those who support Democratic candidates for president have shifted most in these views over the past four years. White voters and those who support Trump have moved least.

In 2016, there were only modest generational differences on the question of whether it is more difficult to be Black than White. There is currently a wider generational gap on this question – with a majority of Millennial voters (55%) saying this compared with 44% of Generation X voters, 37% of Boomer voters and 39% of Silent Generation voters.

Across racial and ethnic groups, growing shares now say it is more difficult to be Black than White in the country, though the overall change is more pronounced among Black voters than White or Hispanic voters. However, this largely reflects the partisan leanings of these groups. Within the Democratic coalition the shift has been similar across racial and ethnic groups.

Generation gap widens over perceptions of whether it is more difficult to be Black than White in the U.S.

% of registered voters who say it is **a lot more** difficult to be a Black person in this country than it is to be a White person



*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. In 2016, there were insufficient numbers of Asian Americans to report.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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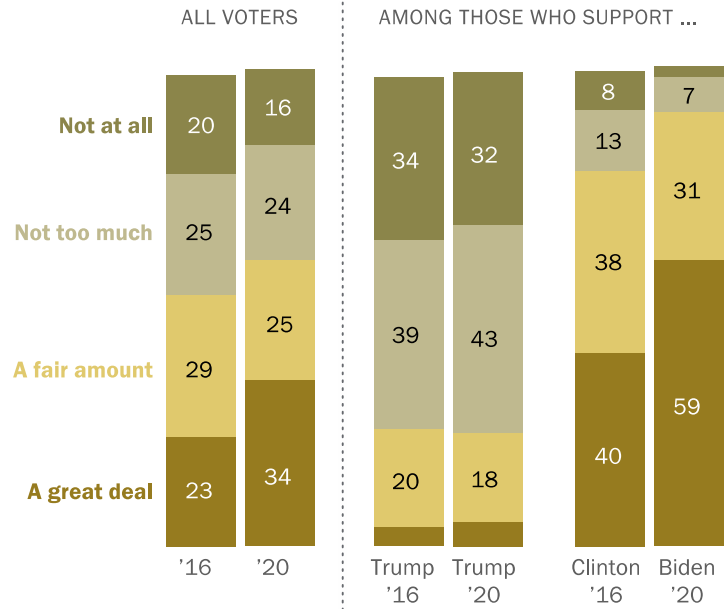
The pattern of opinion on the question of whether White people benefit from societal advantages Black people do not have is largely parallel, with a larger share of voters now saying that White people benefit a great deal from advantages in society that Black people don't have. While Biden's supporters are substantially more likely to say that White people have advantages than Clinton supporters were in 2016 (59% today, 40% then), just 5% of Trump supporters say this today – little different than the 4% who said this in 2016.

Though both Black and White voters are now more likely to say White people benefit from societal advantages than they were in 2016, there remain wide racial differences in these views – even taking partisanship into account.

About eight-in-ten Black Biden voters (81%) say White people benefit a great deal from advantages that Black people don't have, up from 64% among Clinton's Black supporters in 2016. By comparison, about half (51%) of White Biden supporters currently say this, up from 29% among White Clinton supporters in 2016.

Most Biden voters, fewer Trump voters say White people have societal advantages Black people do not

% of registered voters who say White people benefit _____ from advantages in society that Black people do not have



Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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Views about gender and family increasingly divide the coalitions

Overall, a narrow majority of voters say that women today still face significant obstacles that make it harder for them to get ahead than men (55%), while fewer (44%) say that obstacles that once made it harder for women to get ahead are now largely gone.

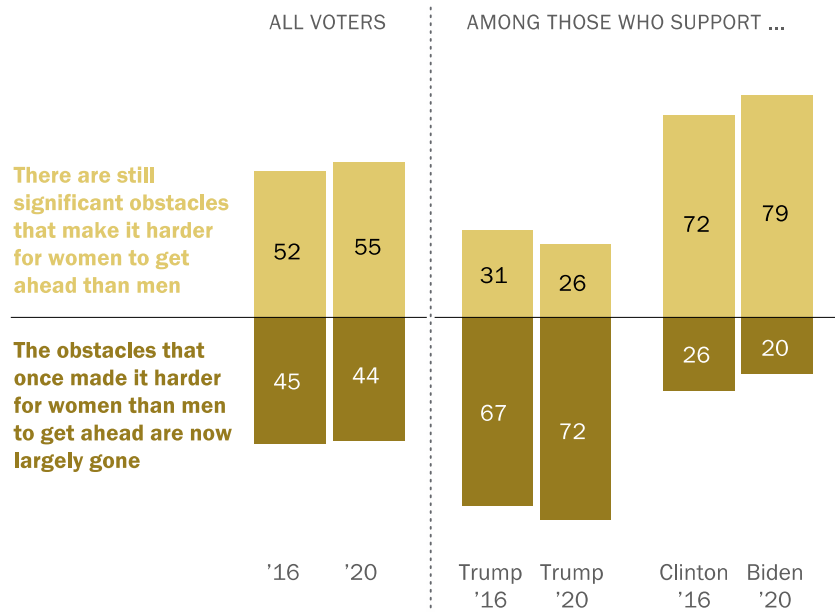
These overall views are little changed from 2016, but the already wide gap between the Democratic and Republican coalitions is now even wider.

Today, 72% of Trump voters say that obstacles that once made it harder for women are now largely gone, up from 67% in 2016. By contrast, just 20% of Biden voters currently say this – a modest decline from the 26% among Clinton voters in 2016.

Women supporters of each candidate remain somewhat more likely than men to say that significant obstacles still exist for women, but the political divide in these views is far greater than the gender gap.

Since 2016, a wider gap between Democratic, GOP voters over whether women continue to face barriers

% of registered voters who say ...



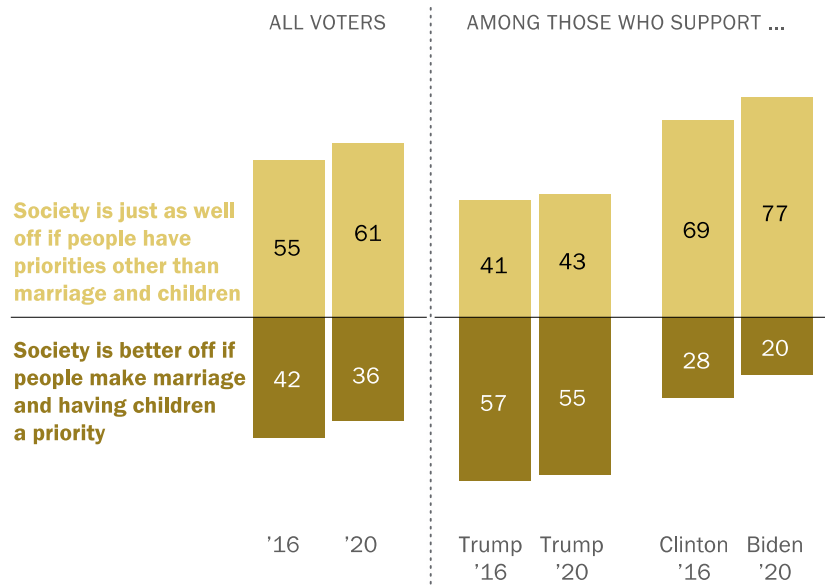
Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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When asked about societal priorities around family, voters are somewhat less likely to say that society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority than they were four years ago (36% today, 42% in 2016). As was the case in 2016, a slim majority of Trump’s voters this year say this (55% today, 57% in 2016). But Biden voters are slightly more likely today to say that society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children than Clinton voters were in 2016 (77% today, 69% in 2016).

Fewer voters now say society is better off if marriage and children are prioritized

% of registered voters who say ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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While stark divides remain over immigration, a smaller share of both GOP and Democratic voters see newcomers as a threat to American values

In 2016, some of the largest issue divides between Trump and Clinton supporters were around attitudes about the nation’s growing racial and ethnic diversity and [immigration](#). These views had been some of [the key distinguishing characteristics](#) of Trump’s strongest supporters in his path to the GOP nomination earlier that year.

As in 2016, there continue to be stark differences in these views – but these gaps have not been growing, and voters across the political spectrum have shifted in a more liberal direction in this domain.

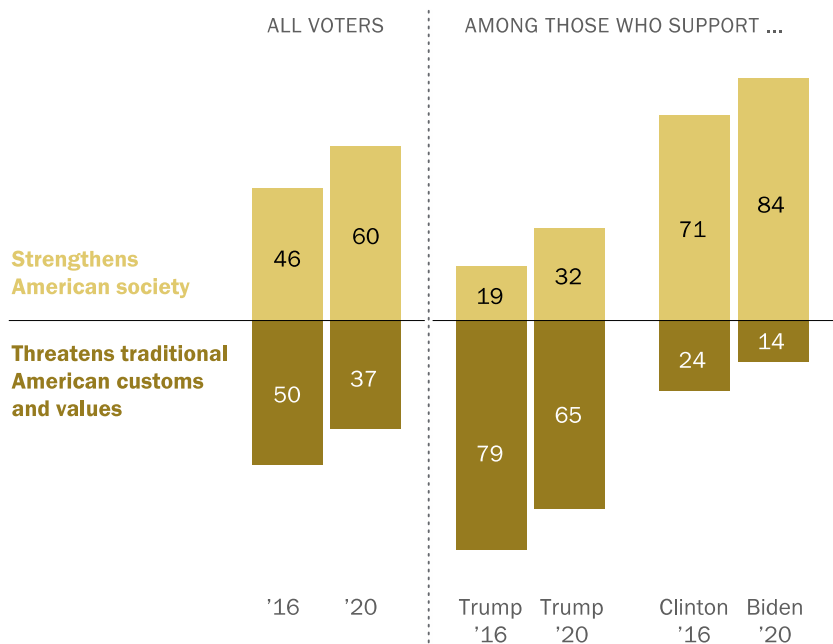
In 2016 voters were about evenly divided in the share saying that the growing number of newcomers strengthens American society (46%) and the share who said they threaten traditional

American customs and values (50%). Today, six-in-ten American voters (60%) say that newcomers strengthen American society and 37% say they threaten traditional customs and values.

Supporters of both major party candidates this year are more likely than 2016 supporters to have positive views of immigrants to the United States, but the gap between supporters of the Republican and Democratic candidates is little different than it was four years ago. Today, more than eight-in-ten Biden supporters (84%) say the growing share of newcomers in the U.S. strengthens American society, up from 71% among Clinton supporters in 2016. By comparison, a

Majority of voters say growing number of newcomers to the U.S. strengthens American society

% of registered voters who say the growing number of newcomers from other countries ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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much smaller share of Trump supporters (32%) view immigration as strengthening society. Still, that is up from just 19% among Trump supporters in 2016.

Views of Islam largely divide the Trump-Biden coalitions

The trajectory on views about Islam is similar to that of newcomers from abroad.

Four years ago, a narrow majority (54%) of voters said that Islam was more likely than other religions to encourage violence among its followers. Today, the balance of opinion has shifted in the other direction, with 45% of voters saying that Islam is more likely to encourage violence and 51% saying it *does not* encourage violence more than other religions.

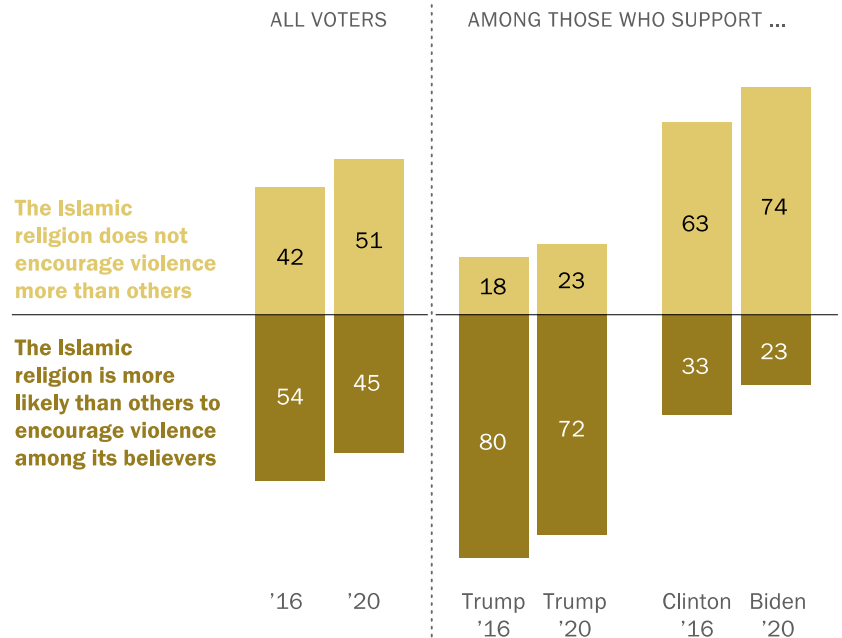
As was the case with attitudes about immigration, the gulf between Trump voters and Biden voters remains as wide as it was four years ago between supporters of Clinton and Trump, even as views in both coalitions have shifted.

Today, roughly three-quarters of Biden backers (74%) say Islam does not encourage violence more than other religions, up from 63% of Clinton’s supporters in 2016.

By contrast, just 23% of Trump’s supporters reject the assertion that Islam is more encouraging of violence than other religions, while 72% say Islam is more likely to encourage violence than other religions. In 2016, fully 80% of Trump supporters said Islam encouraged more violence.

Most Trump voters say Islam encourages violence more than other faiths; Biden voters overwhelmingly say it does not

% of registered voters who say ...



Notes: Based on registered voters. No answer responses not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

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Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted July 27 to Aug. 2, 2020. A total of 11,001 panelists (including

9,114 registered voters) responded out of 14,407 who were sampled, for a response rate of 76%. This does not include 10 panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 4.2%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1.3%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 11,001 respondents is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,303
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,335
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	684
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	6,403
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS/web	5,900	4,720	4,681
	Total	35,014	23,440	15,406

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal

Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. The same recruitment procedure was carried out on August 19, 2019, from which a total of 5,900 were invited to join the panel and 4,720 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 23,440 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 15,406 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.¹ The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.](#)"

Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original selection probability. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table.

Sampling errors and test of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2018 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Asians	
Country of birth among Hispanics	
Years lived in the United States	
Home internet access	
Region x Metropolitan status	2019 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	11,001	1.5 percentage points
Registered voters	9,114	1.5 percentage points
Among those who support ...		
Trump/Lean Trump	3,575	2.4 percentage points
Biden/Lean Biden	5,411	2.0 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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**2020 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 71 July 2020
FINAL TOPLINE
JULY 27-AUGUST 2, 2020
N=11,001**

**ADDITIONAL CONTENT PREVIOUSLY RELEASED
ADDITIONAL CONTENT HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

ASK ALL:

DIFFBLACK How much more difficult, if at all, is it to be a Black person in this country than it is to be a White person?

July 27- Aug 2, 2020		June 7- July 5, 2016 ²
43	A lot more difficult	34
33	A little more difficult	35
23	No more difficult	28
1	No answer	3

ASK ALL:

WOMENOBS Which statement comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right
[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS]?

	The obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead <u>are now largely gone</u>	There are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women <u>to get ahead than men</u>	No <u>answer</u>
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	43	55	1
Sep 3-15, 2019	42	57	1
Feb 26, Mar 11, 2018	42	56	2
Jun 7-Jul 5, 2016	45	53	3

**ADDITIONAL CONTENT PREVIOUSLY RELEASED
ADDITIONAL CONTENT HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**

ASK ALL:

MARRFAM Which statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right? **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS]**

	Society is better off if people make marriage and <u>having children a priority</u>	Society is just as well off if people have priorities other <u>than marriage and children</u>	No <u>answer</u>
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	34	63	3
Sep 3-15, 2019	33	65	1
Feb 26-Mar 11, 2018	40	57	3
Apr 5-May 2, 2016	39	57	4

² In 2016, question was worded "How much more difficult, if at all, is it to be black in this country than it is to be white?"

ASK ALL:

WHADVANT In general, how much do White people benefit from advantages in society that Black people do not have?

	<u>A great deal</u>	<u>A fair amount</u>	<u>Not too much</u>	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>No answer</u>
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	33	26	23	15	1
Sep 3-15, 2019	29	29	23	18	1
Feb 25-Mar 11, 2018 ³	30	28	25	16	2
Aug 8-Aug 21, 2017	26	29	28	16	1
Jun 7-Jul 5, 2016	24	29	25	19	2

ADDITIONAL CONTENT HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE**ASK ALL:**

IMMCULT2 Which statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right?
[RANDOMIZE]

	<u>The growing number of newcomers from other countries threatens traditional American customs and values</u>	<u>The growing number of newcomers from other countries strengthens American society</u>	<u>No answer</u>
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	37	61	2
Sep 3-15, 2019	41	57	2
Feb 26-Mar 11, 2018	45	53	3
Dec 4-Dec 18, 2017	44	54	2
Apr 5-May 2, 2016	49	47	4

ASK ALL:

ISLMVIOL Which statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right?
[RANDOMIZE]

	<u>The Islamic religion is more likely than others to encourage violence among its believers</u>	<u>The Islamic religion does not encourage violence more than others</u>	<u>No answer</u>
July 27-Aug 2, 2020	45	51	5
Sep 3-15, 2019	48	48	4
Apr 5-May 2, 2019	52	43	5

ADDITIONAL CONTENT PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**ADDITIONAL CONTENT HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics today, do you consider yourself a:

ASK IF INDEP/SOMETHING ELSE (PARTY=3 or 4) OR MISSING:

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to...⁴

<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Something else</u>	<u>No answer</u>	<u>Lean Rep</u>	<u>Lean Dem</u>
28	29	27	14	1	17	21

³ In Feb 25-Mar 11, 2018 and prior, question was worded: "How much, if at all, do white people benefit from advantages in society that black people do not have?"

⁴ Party and PartyIn asked in a prior survey.