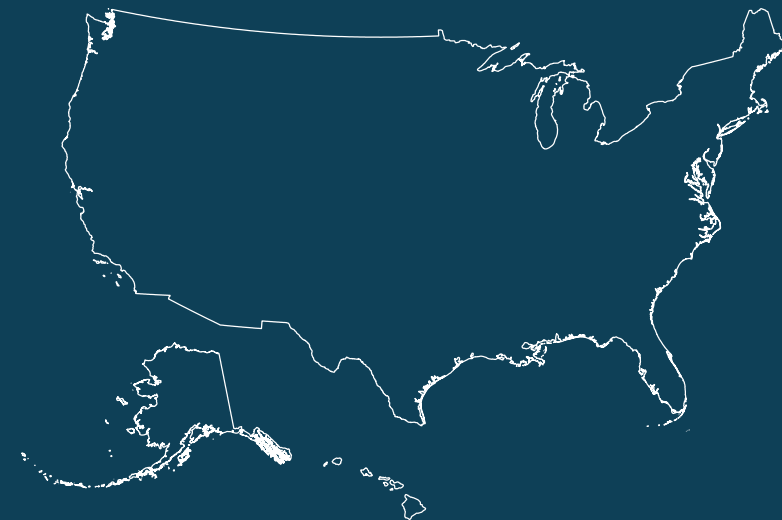


The New Normal?

A study of the impact of COVID-19
on American society and politics

September 2020



About More in Common



More in Common is an international initiative set up in 2017 to build societies that are stronger, more united, and more resilient to the increasing threats of polarization and social division.

We work with a wide range of groups in civil society, politics, government, business, faith, education, philanthropy and the media to connect people across lines of division.

More in Common's teams in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States work together and share a commitment to advancing our mission.

For more information please visit www.moreincommon.com or contact us at contact@moreincommon.com

About this Study



COVID-19 has upended the lives of people across the world, causing untold suffering and dislocation, with a death toll expected to soon exceed one million. The impact of the pandemic on our health, economy and society will reshape the world of the 2020s. It could result in societies becoming more deeply divided along existing fault lines, but that is not inevitable. This study shows that COVID-19 has unleashed hopes for change, especially in countries that have struggled most with the virus. It has also made us more aware of our shared humanity, of the value of strong local communities, and of the importance of our connection to nature.

Many choices lie ahead as we grapple with the fallout of the pandemic. The decisions being made in the months ahead – in families, communities and nations – will have consequences for a generation. This is why More in Common has compiled this snapshot of public opinion in France, Germany, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, with key findings on:

- The impact of the pandemic on personal health, family life, employment and finances
- How COVID-19 has impacted our societies – and people's feelings of togetherness, solidarity, empathy, trust and loneliness
- Whether people want a return to normal or wish to see significant change in the aftermath of the pandemic
- Views on political priorities and support for policies on issues such as the economy, jobs, the environment and taxation
- Hopes and fears for the future

Our snapshot combines a mix of country-specific and cross-country questions. We hope that the findings presented here, as well as the detailed national studies that form part of this project, will provide valuable insights into this once-in-a-generation moment. Most of all, we hope they will strengthen efforts to build more united and resilient societies.

Scope and Methodology



Scope

France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States

Methodology

N=2,000 per country; margin of error +/- 2%; some figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Research partners

- France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: Kantar
- UK and US: YouGov

Fieldwork dates

- France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Poland: July 1-8, 2020
- UK: June 19-28, 2020
- US: June 19-22, 2020

Method: Online survey using representative demographic quotas

Note: Due to space constraints, not all questions were asked in every country

COVID-19 in the United States



Situation as of September 10, 2020



Mixed public reception of crisis management, divided sharply at the national level along partisan lines.

6,378,972 Infections

190,714 Deaths



Slow-moving economic relief measures: highest number of unemployed ever registered at one point since the Great Depression (14.7% in April 2020) down to 8.4% today; second stimulus package is still being debated with likely reductions.

-7.3% Expected drop in GDP (2020)

8.4% Current unemployment rate



Partial lockdown with significant variation across states; cities have more restrictions than sparser areas. Workplaces and schools are still largely remote.

The federal government has issued guidelines but no requirements on when lockdowns should be lifted. Interstate travel regulations are increasingly common.

National Context

With many deaths, uneven compliance with social distancing policies, and low government approval, the American people's perception of their country's handling of the pandemic is comparatively negative. The American context has been marked by stark division along political lines on the severity of the situation and the appropriate way to respond. This polarization has also stymied agreement on economic relief policy, the second wave of which continues to be debated to this day. Ideological tensions hit a boiling point in June with the killing of George Floyd, resulting in protests against police brutality across the nation on a scale unseen since the Civil Rights era.

What sets the US apart?

- Lockdowns were instituted and continue to vary significantly in degree of restrictiveness by state and city
- Stances on the pandemic's seriousness and on how to weigh economic and health priorities split strongly along party lines
- Notable anti-lockdown protests materialized early in the crisis
- Historic protests against police brutality mobilized in massive demonstrations across the country
- The chief focus of public attention now is on the upcoming November election and is unlikely to change before then

Key Info

- **Head of Government:** Donald J. Trump (R)
- **Legislative Majorities:** Republicans control Senate, Democrats control the House of Representatives
- **Next Federal Election:** November 2020



Findings at a Glance

- **Disappointment and division.** Compared to other countries, the US reveals the most severe levels of disappointment in politics and in other people, as well as the deepest sense of division.
- **Rising unemployment.** Nearly half of Americans report that they personally know someone who has lost their job due to the pandemic, more than in any other country surveyed.
- **Splintered trust.** While Americans of more liberal orientation trust scientific experts most for information related to COVID-19, many conservatives trust President Trump above all, and show severe skepticism towards institutional sources.
- **Worsening discourse.** The most politically engaged are in rare agreement that public discourse has worsened since the pandemic began.



Findings at a Glance (continued)

- **Imminent foreign interference.** Most Americans, across parties, believe that foreign interference is likely in the upcoming election, particularly via social media. Levels of concern, however, fall along partisan lines.
- **Protecting the election.** In the midst of a global pandemic, Americans prioritize having a safe and secure election nearly as highly as improving the healthcare system.
- **But far from powerless.** However, 4 in 5 Americans believe that citizens can change society through their decisions and actions, a greater degree of confidence than in any other country surveyed.



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Segmentation: America's Hidden Tribes



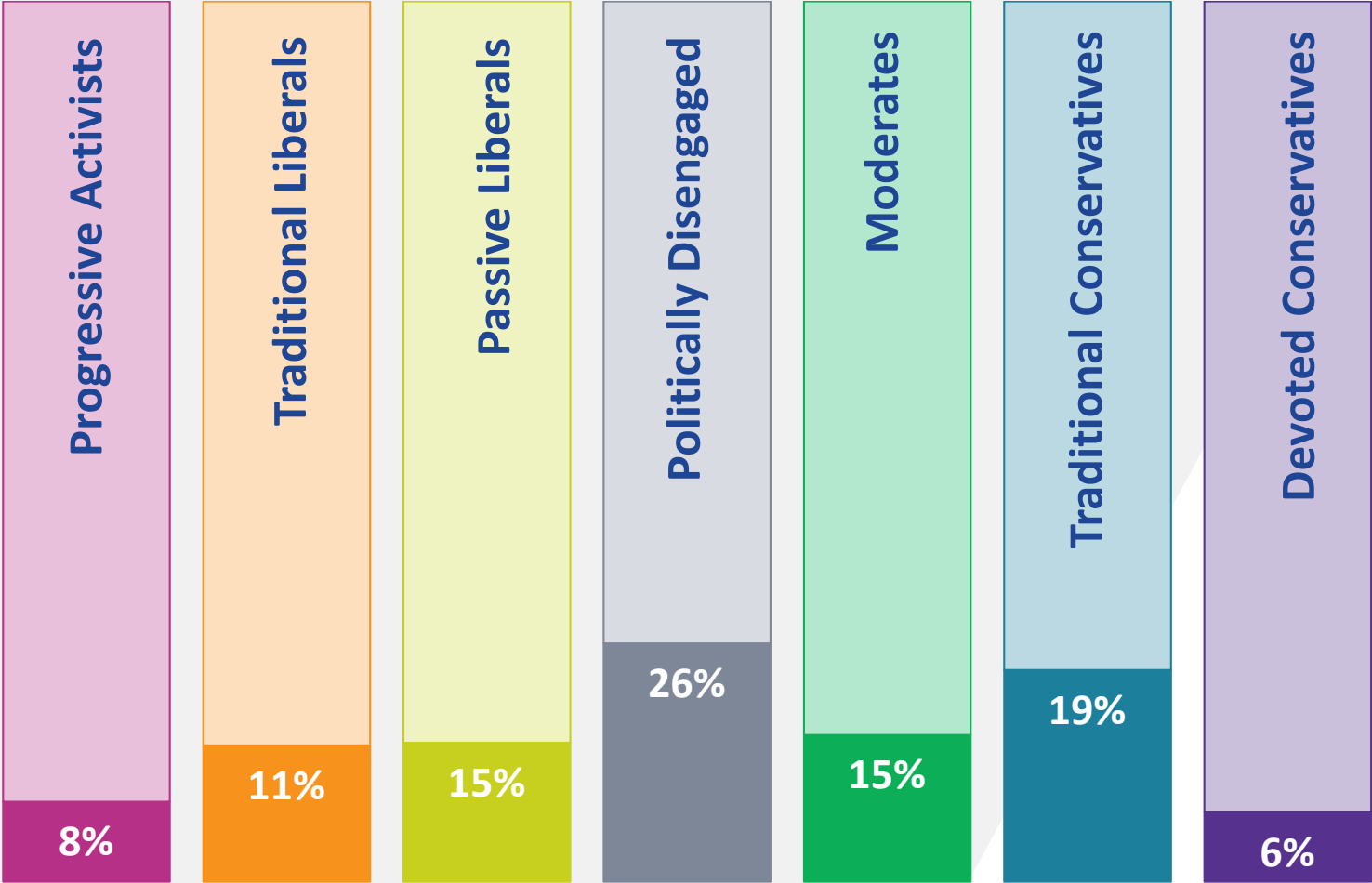
In a previous study, “**Hidden Tribes: A Study of America’s Polarized Landscape**”, published in 2018, we used methods from social psychology and political science to group people into seven population clusters, or “tribes”, each with a distinctive view of society based on their core beliefs.

The seven tribes identified in the United States have unique sets of characteristics beyond their political preferences. Listed in order from left to right on the ideological spectrum:

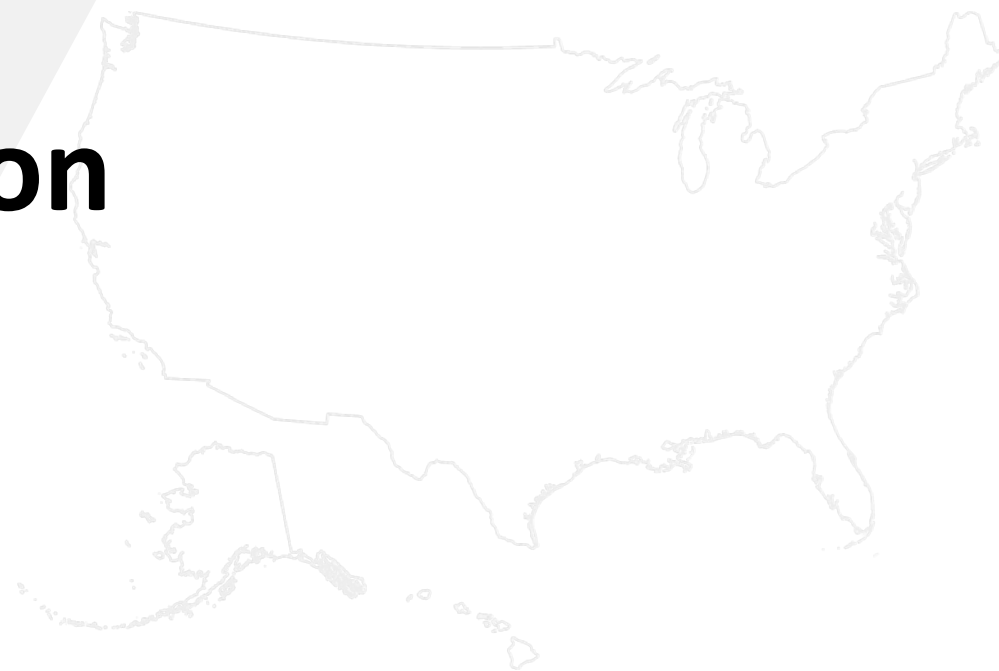
- **Progressive Activists:** younger, highly engaged, secular, cosmopolitan, angry.
- **Traditional Liberals:** older, retired, open to compromise, rational, cautious.
- **Passive Liberals:** unhappy, insecure, distrustful, disillusioned.
- **Politically Disengaged:** young, low income, distrustful, detached, patriotic, conspiratorial.
- **Moderates:** engaged, civic-minded, middle-of-the-road, pessimistic, Protestant.
- **Traditional Conservatives:** religious, middle class, patriotic, moralistic.
- **Devoted Conservatives:** white, retired, highly engaged, uncompromising, patriotic.

For a more specific explanation of the segmentation methodology please see our visit the original study at hiddentribes.us.

The US Tribes



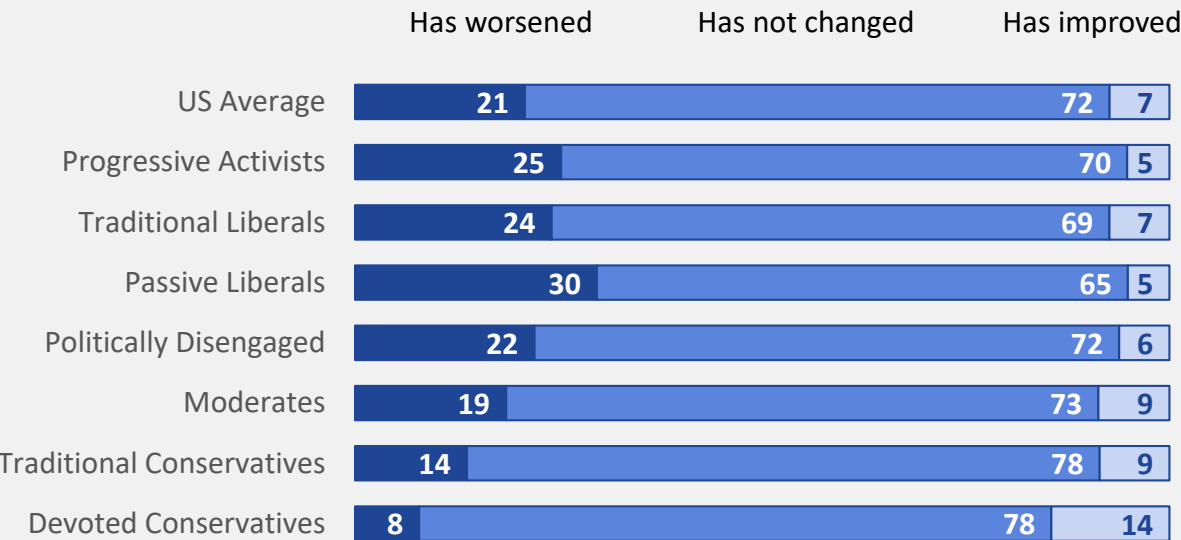
I. The Impact of COVID-19 on Personal Lives



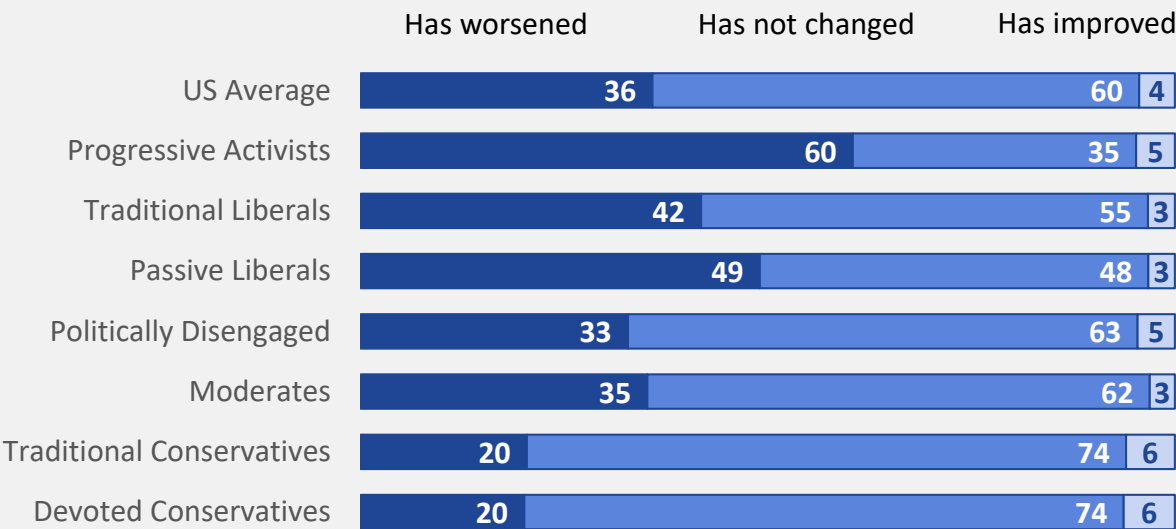
Americans feel their mental health has worsened more than their physical health.



Physical Health



Mental Health

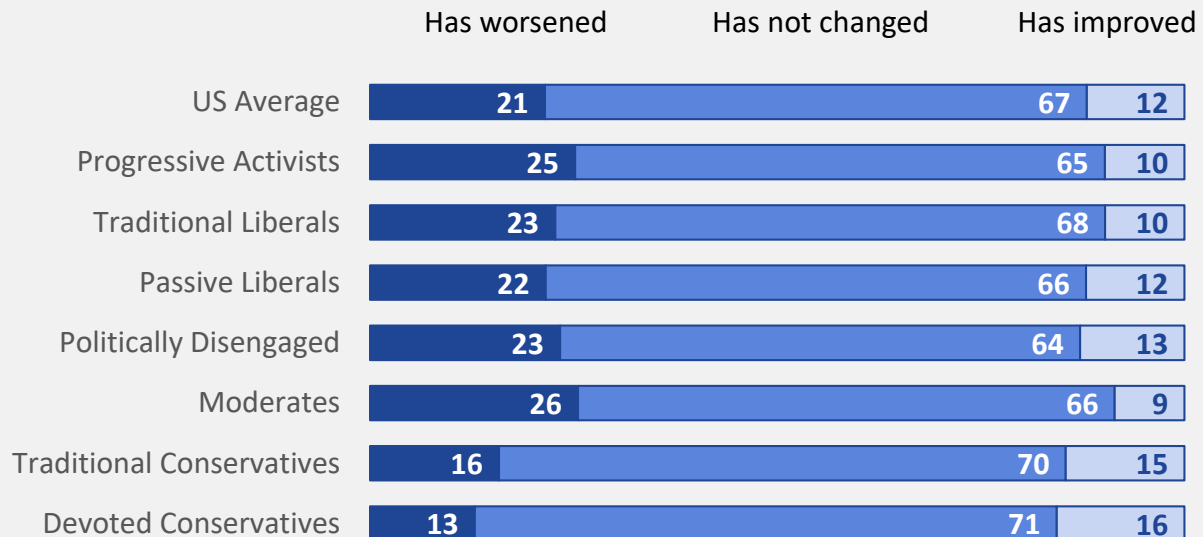


Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

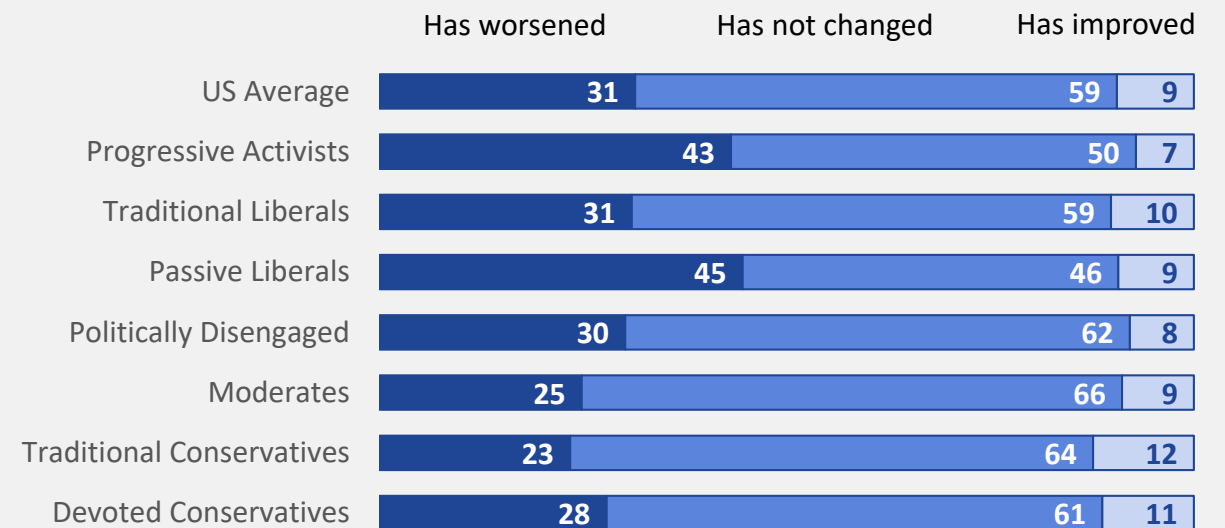
Americans' financial situations are also in decline.



Family Life

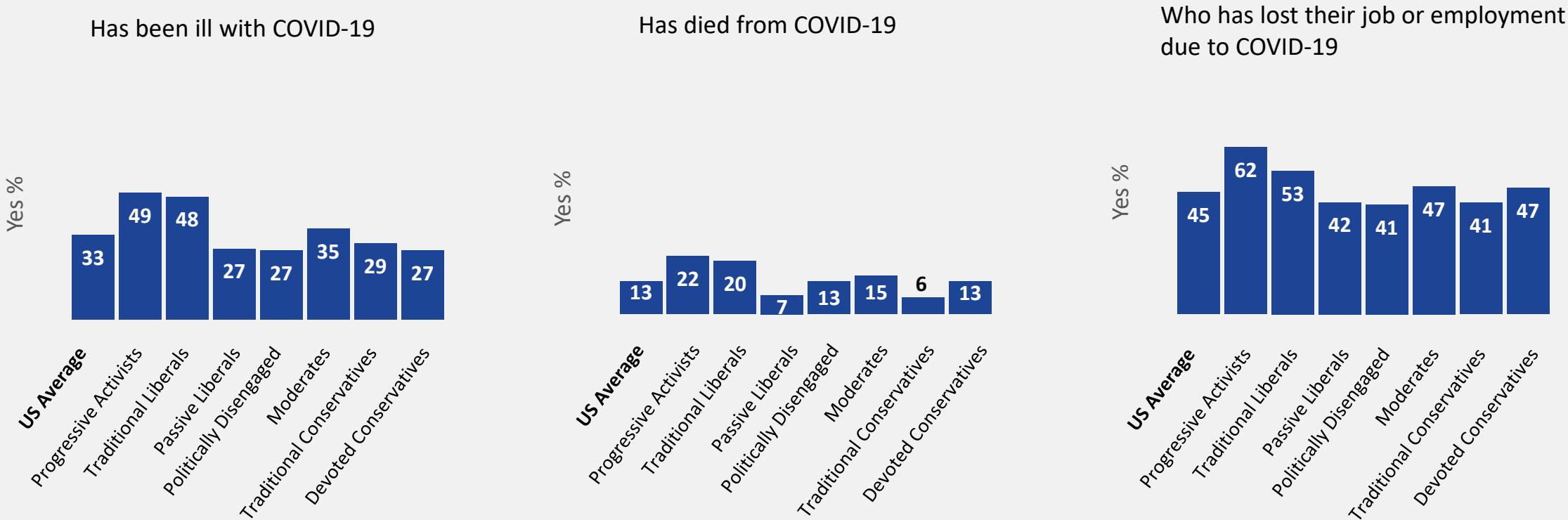


Financial Situation



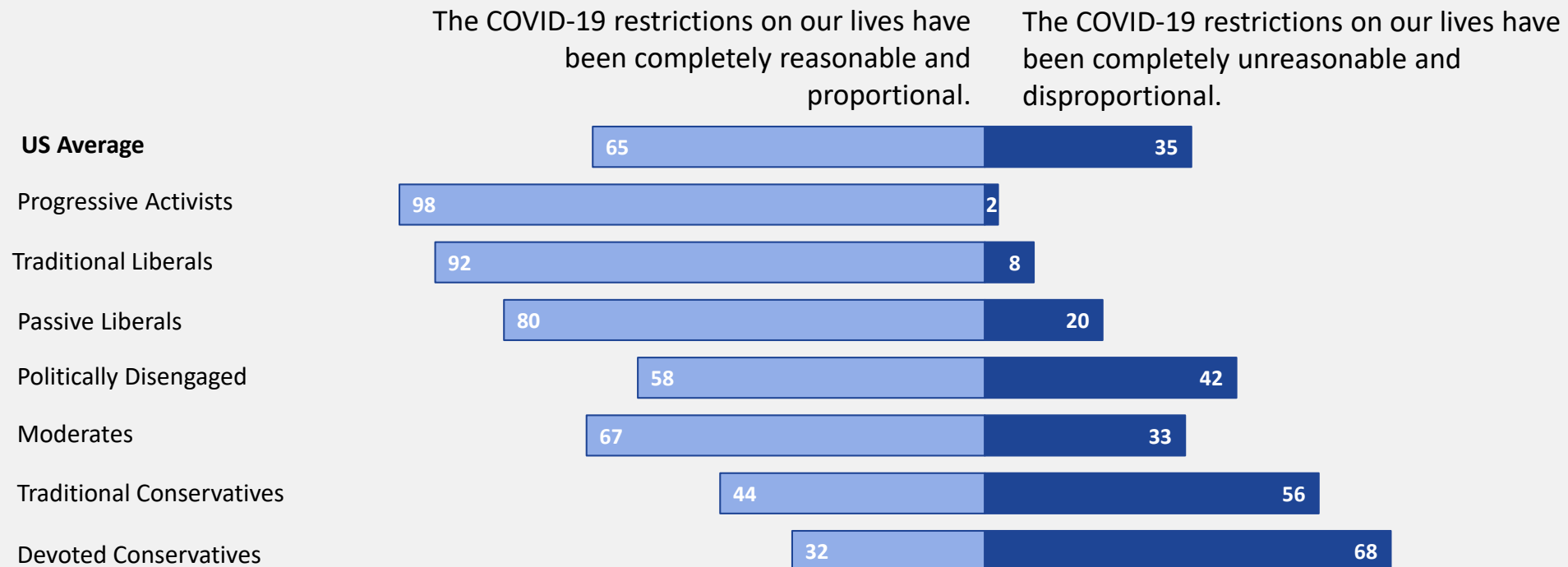
Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

Nearly half of Americans say they know someone who has lost their job due to the pandemic.



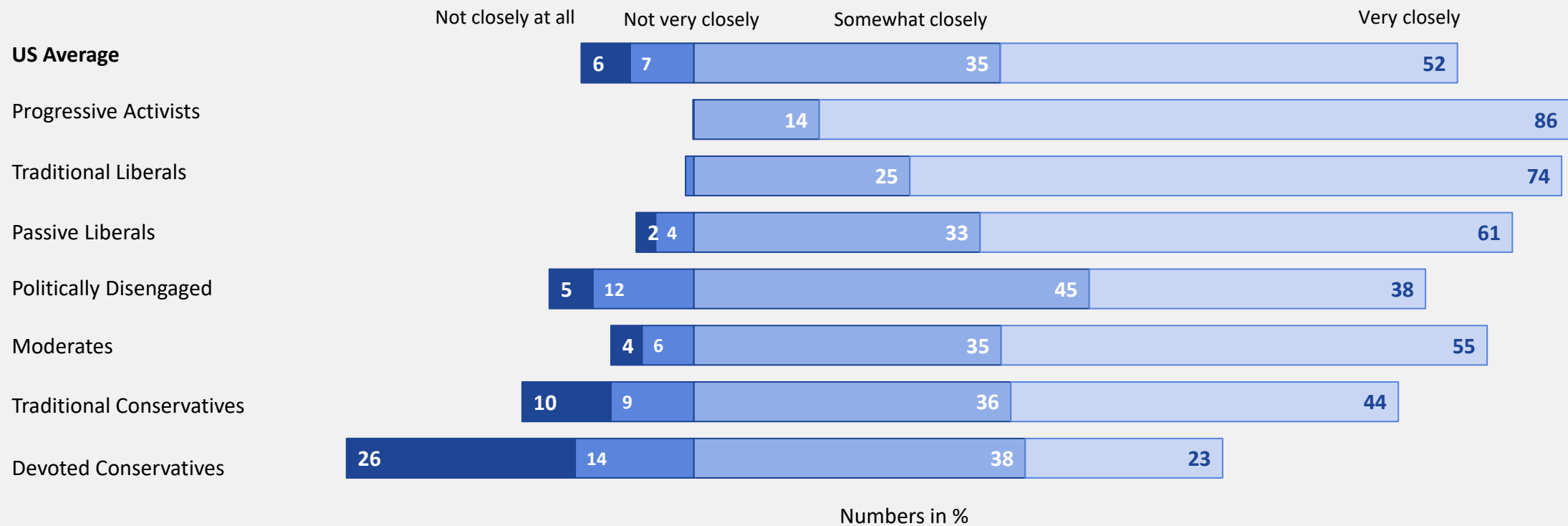
Question: Do you personally know someone who...?

Americans agree that the COVID-19 restrictions have been reasonable, but this varies by tribe.



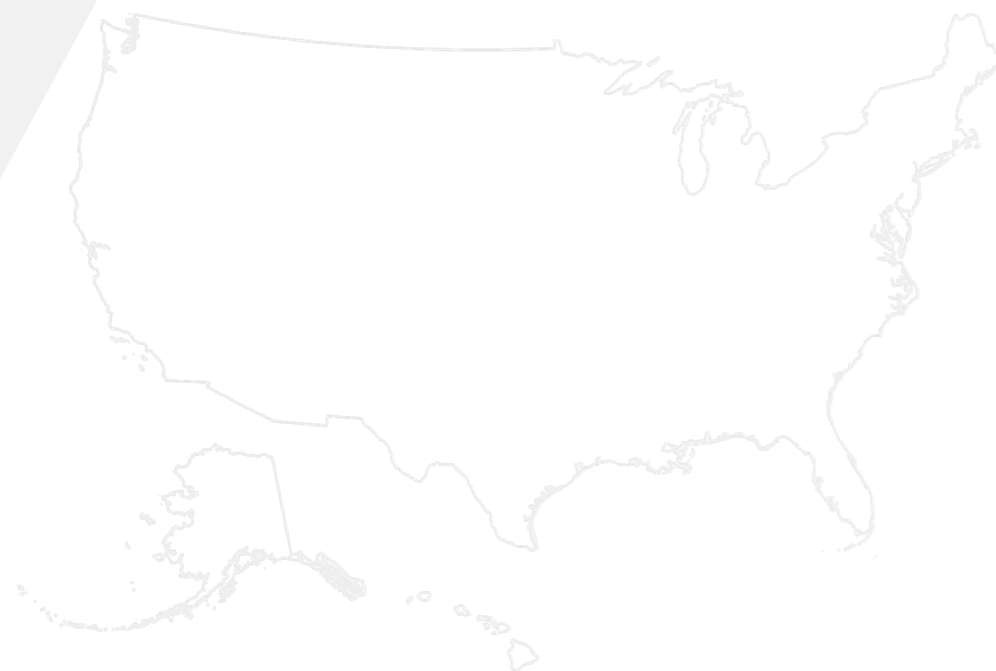
Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

Resistance to COVID-19 rules is limited to a relatively small number of tribal partisans.

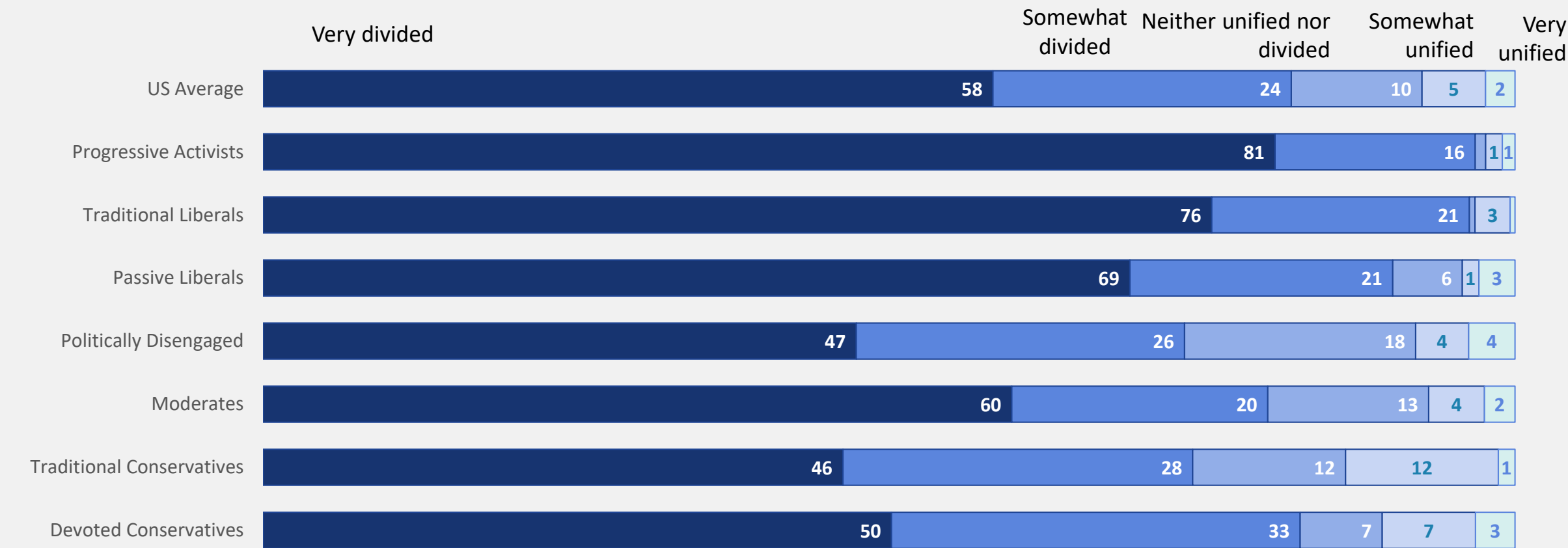


Question: When it comes to the COVID-19 social distancing rules that have been put in place in your area (wearing a mask, staying home, etc.), would you say that you have followed the rules...?

II. Internal Divisions



More than 70% of every tribe perceives that the country is divided.



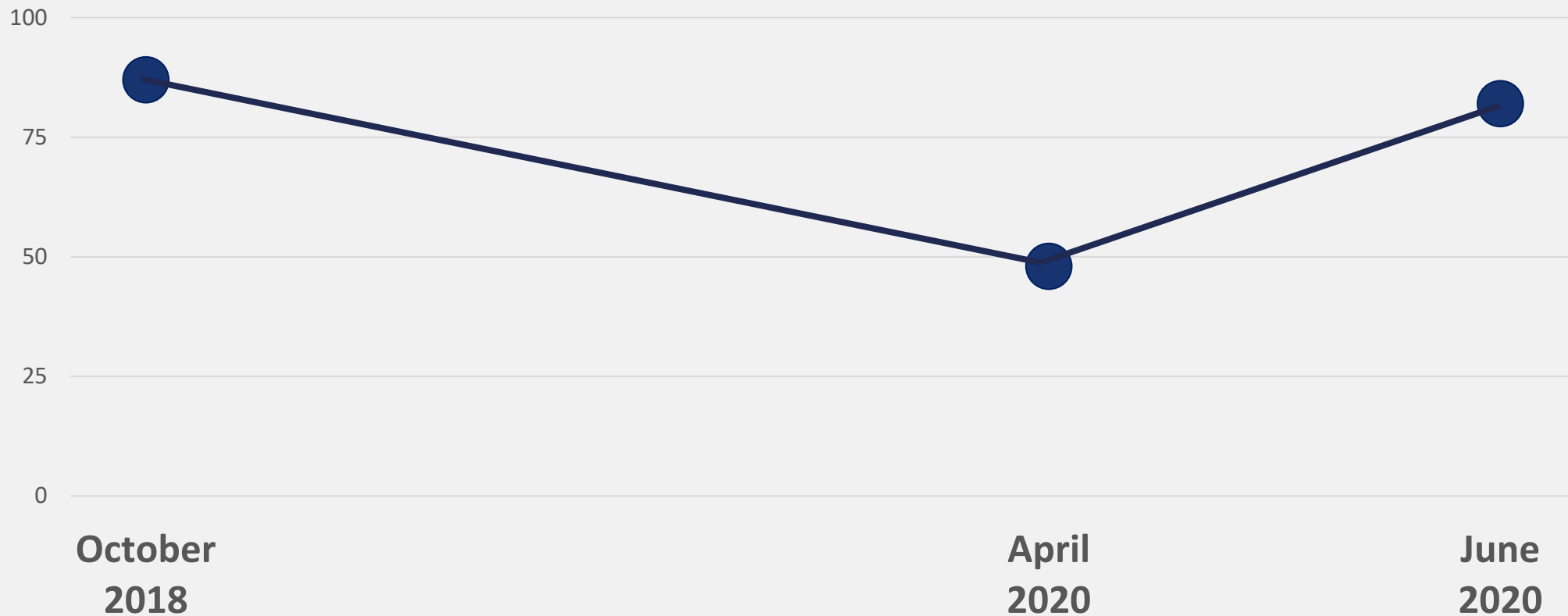
Numbers in %

Question: How unified or divided does the US feel today?

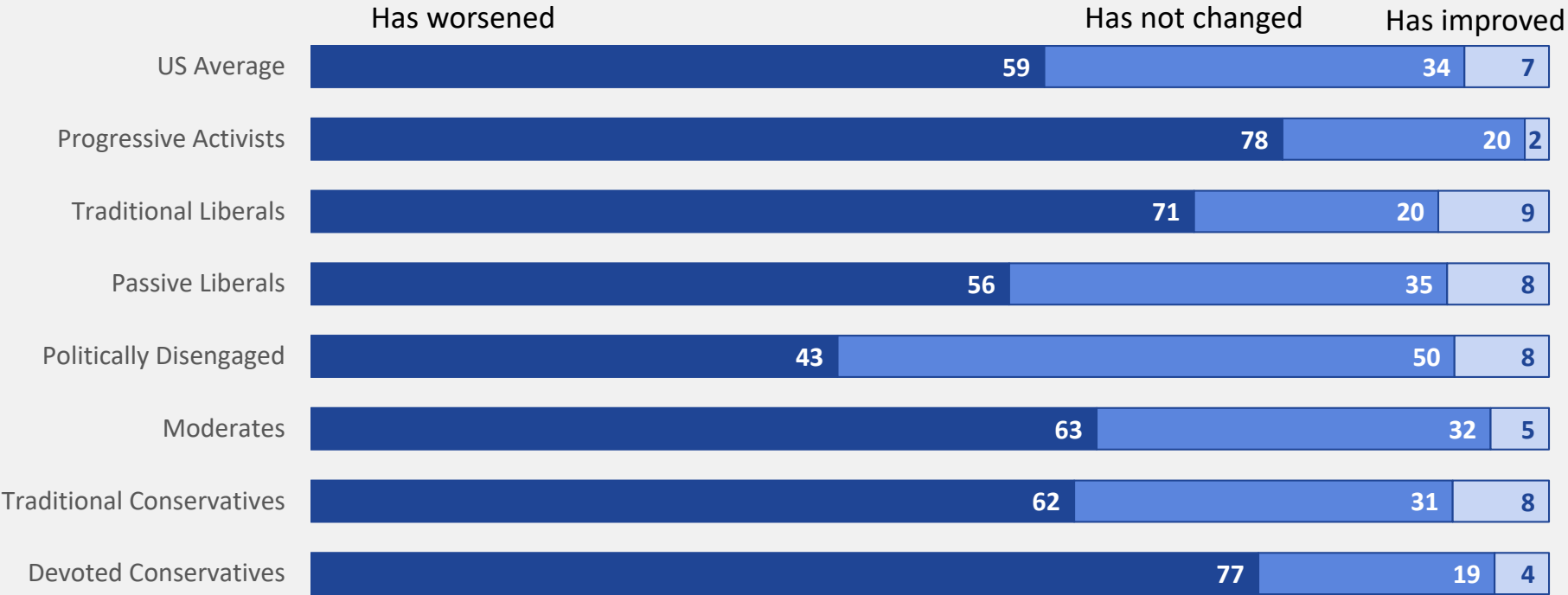
COVID-19 helped reduce Americans' sense of divisions, but this did not last.



% of Americans who say the country feels more divided



Most Americans feel that the tone of public debate in the country has gotten worse.



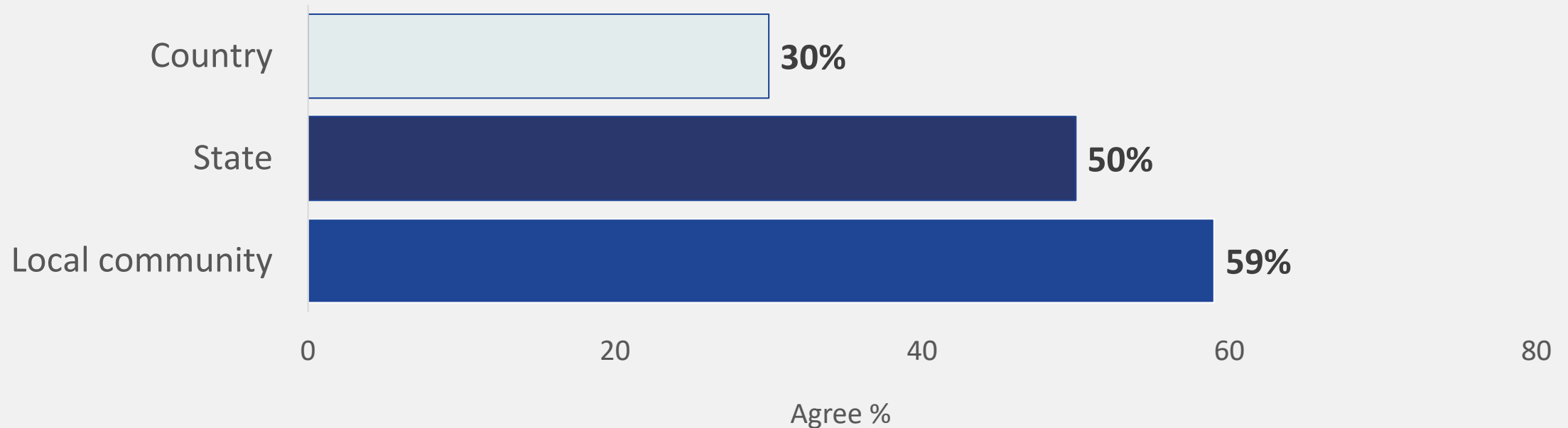
Numbers in %

Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in the United States, if at all?

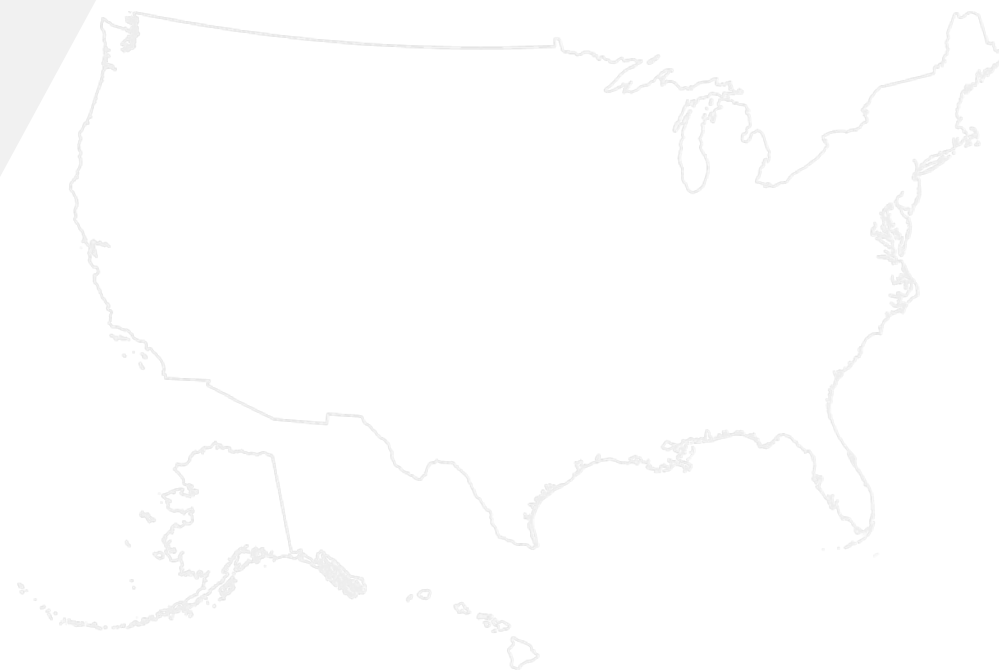
At the local level, people feel a stronger sense of belonging, pride and hope.



“My country/state/local community's handling of the crisis **has made me prouder** of my country/state/local community”



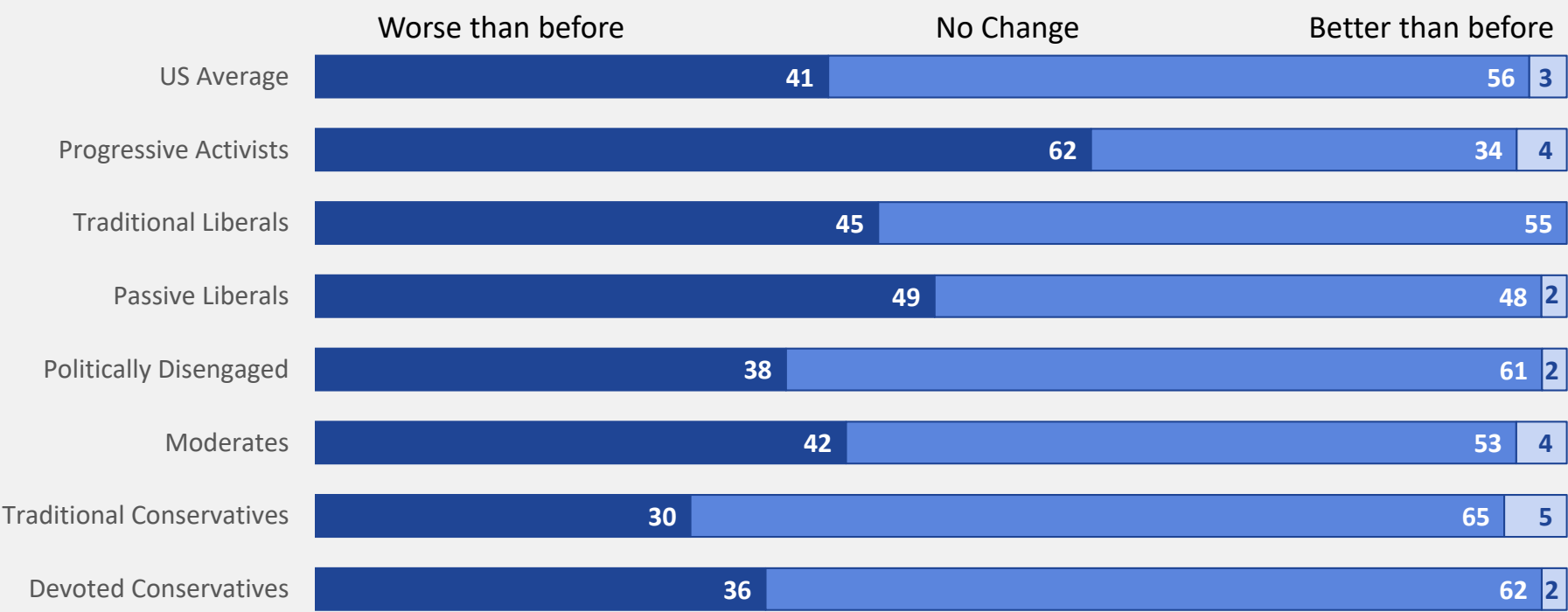
III. Trust and Information



More than 40% of Americans feel that their trust in other people is worse because of the pandemic.



This perception is strongest among Progressive Activists, 62% of whom have less trust in others now than before the crisis.



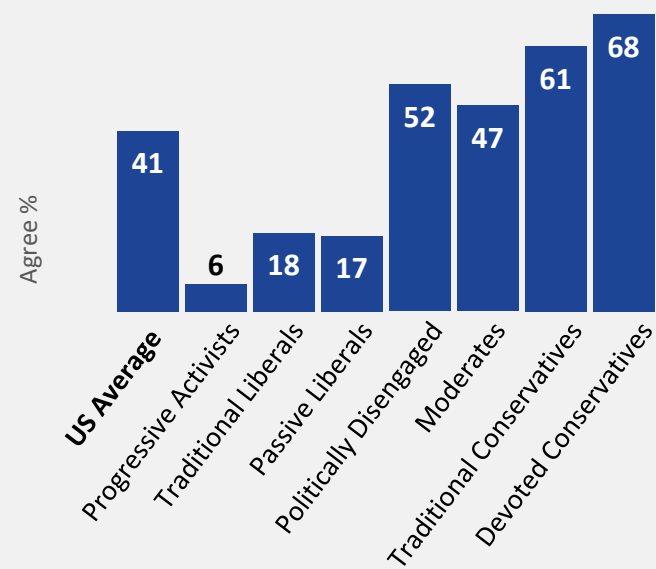
Numbers in %

More than half of Americans think the government is hiding knowledge about COVID-19.

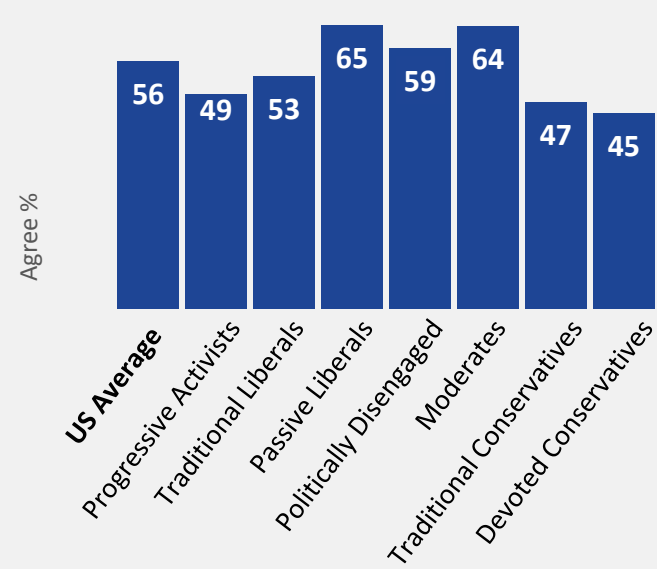


There is polarizing disagreement between most tribes, not just the wings, about the media and government pushing their own agenda.

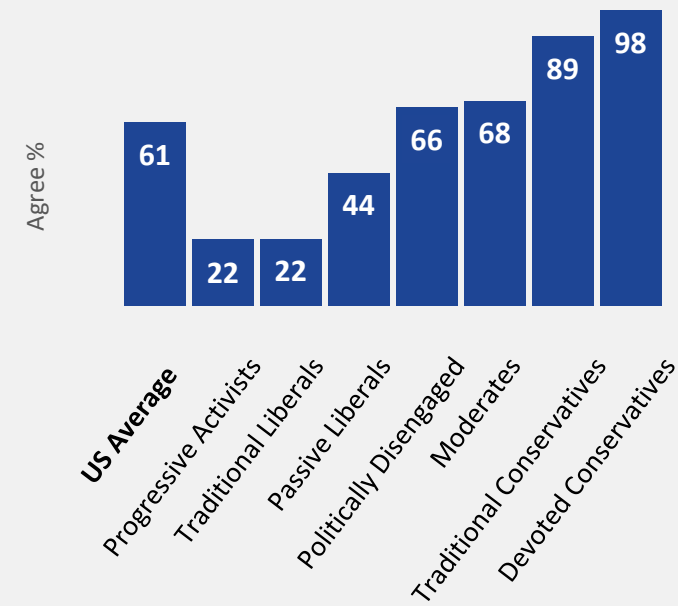
“The government is making this crisis seem bigger than it is to push through their own agenda.”



“The government knows things about COVID-19 that it is hiding from the public.”



“The media seem to be pursuing their own agenda rather than simply reporting the facts.”

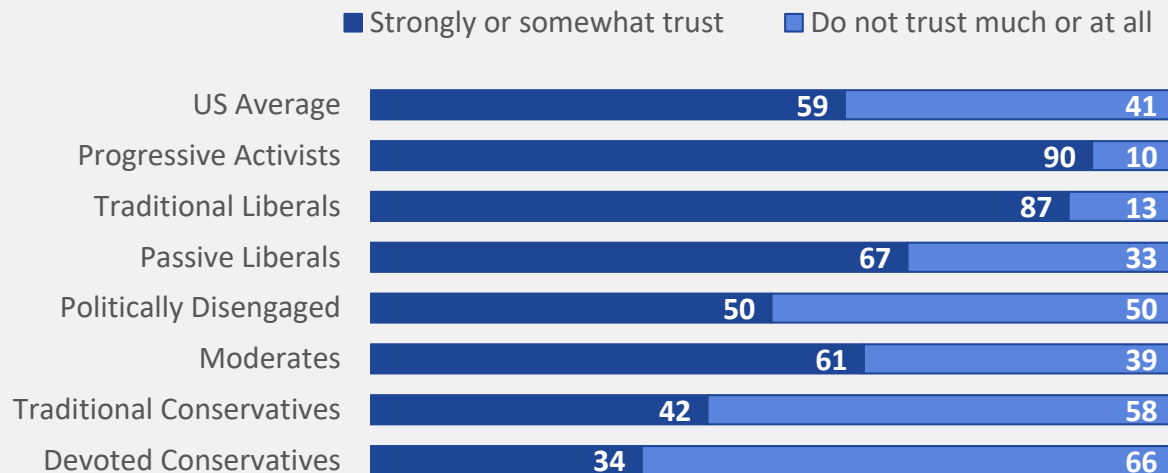




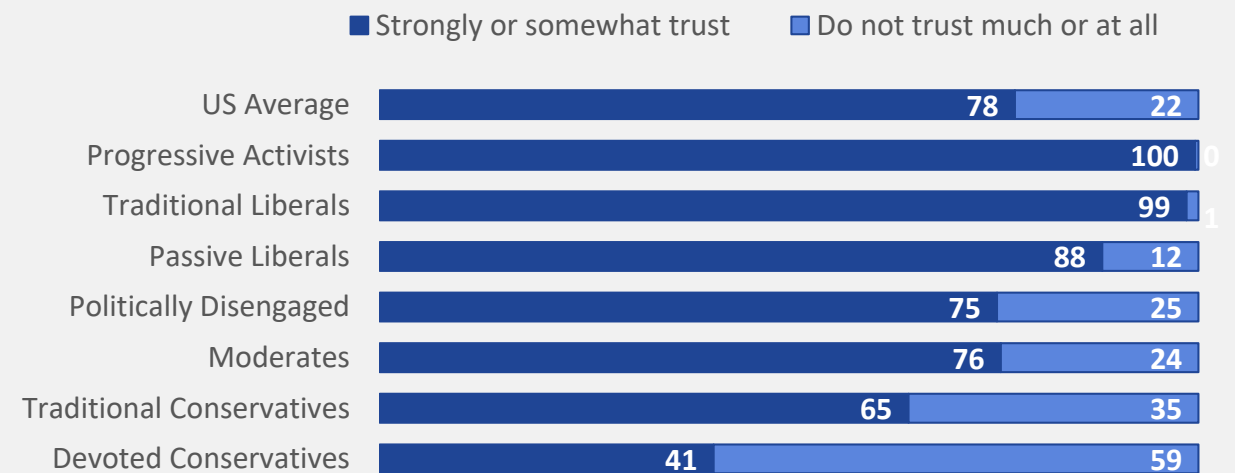
Most Americans trust the news media and scientific experts since the pandemic began.

Unlike most Americans, Devoted and Traditional Conservatives do not trust the news media they consume, and Devoted Conservatives are similarly skeptical of scientific and medical experts.

News Media you consume the most

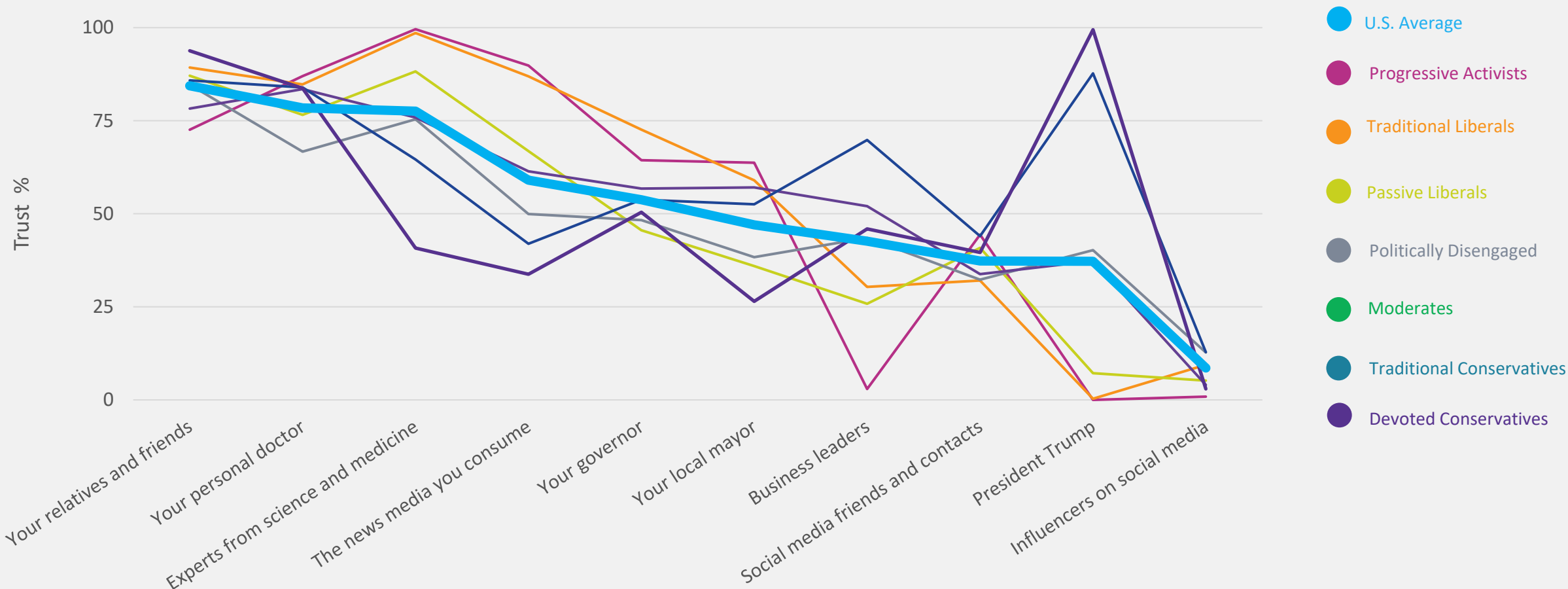


Experts from science and medicine



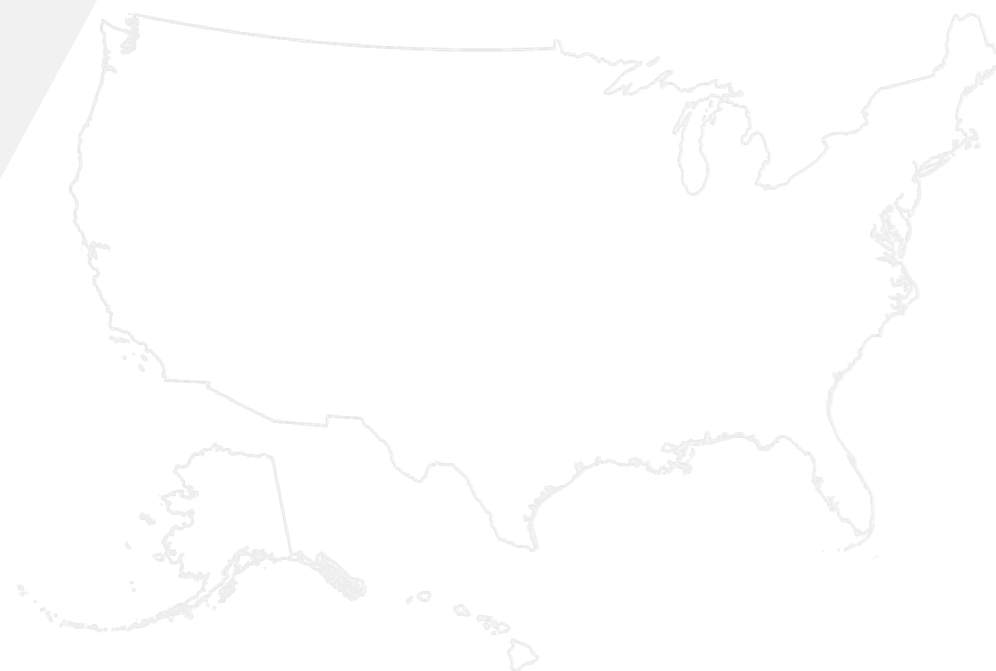
Question: Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed, if at all?

Conservatives trust President Trump, while liberals trust scientific experts above all others.

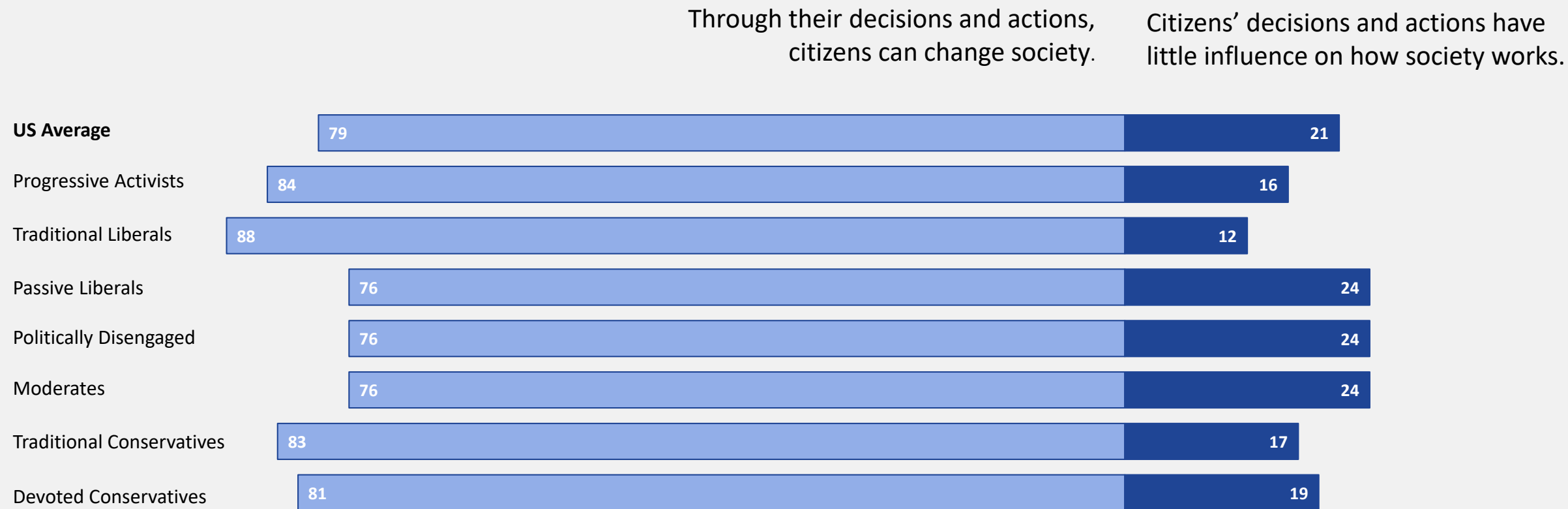


Question: Please indicate to what extent, if at all, you trust these groups of people or institutions when it comes to accurate and reliable information on the COVID-19 pandemic.

IV. Policy Priorities



Confidence that citizens can change society stretches across the political spectrum.



Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

Americans want a more united and equal country.

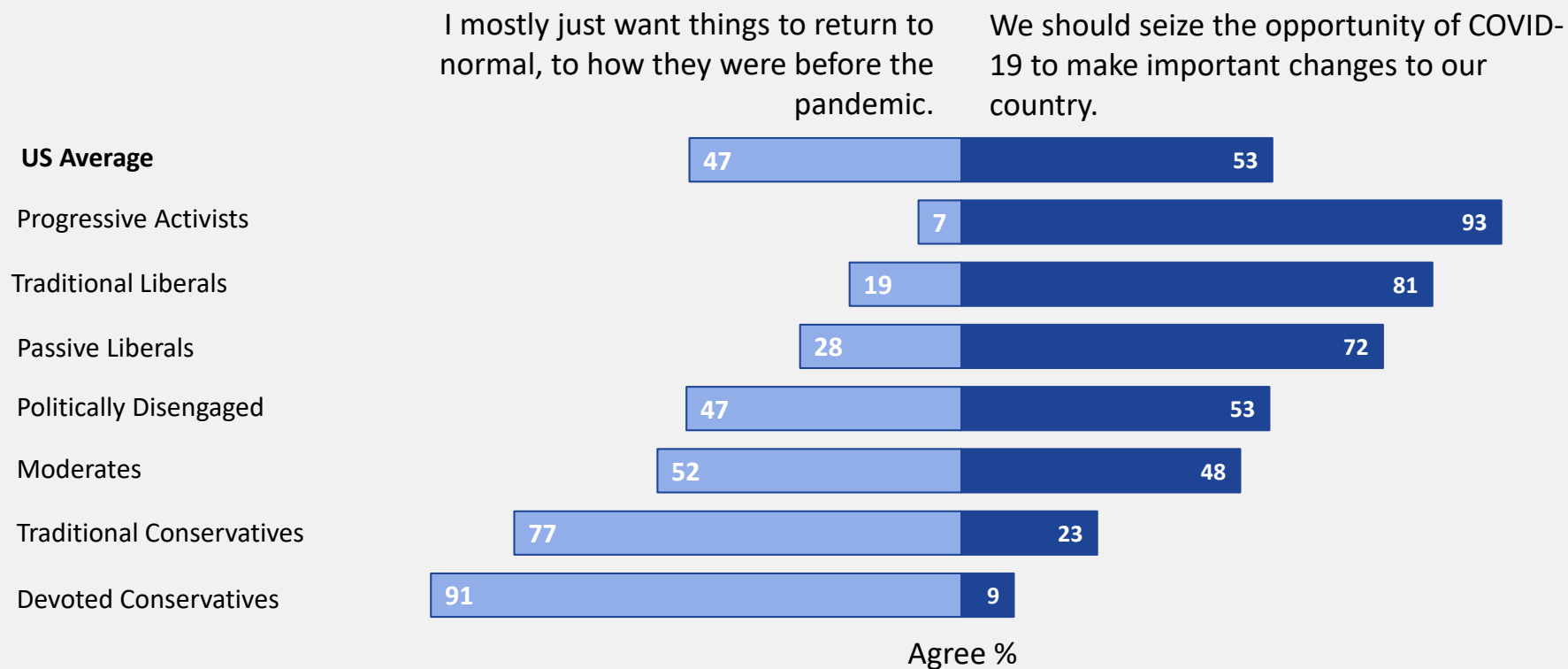


“America should become more...”

	US Average	Progressive Activists	Traditional Liberals	Passive Liberals	Politically Disengaged	Moderates	Traditional Conservatives	Devoted Conservatives
United	29	12	27	27	28	41	31	32
Equal	25	50	38	39	22	20	11	5
Environmentally-friendly	22	57	50	32	13	17	6	2
Compassionate	22	47	29	31	18	21	9	4
Educated	21	39	26	29	16	20	16	12
Healthy	20	16	26	23	23	18	16	10
Hard-working	19	0	6	10	20	24	31	32
Safe	18	5	8	13	25	25	19	17
Fair	18	17	31	28	13	20	10	11
Patriotic	18	0	4	6	15	13	41	50
Family-oriented	16	0	2	10	15	19	29	39
Tolerant	14	23	22	21	10	14	10	4
Christian	13	0	2	4	12	13	26	34
Democratic	10	29	19	13	7	9	4	4
Traditional	10	0	1	2	14	10	17	19
Prosperous	9	2	4	3	9	9	15	18
Self-confident	3	0	1	2	5	5	4	2
None of these	2	0	1	1	7	0	0	0

Question: Which of the following qualities do you think the United States should focus on the most? The US should become more...(max. 3)

Desire for change following the pandemic is deeply divided along ideological lines.

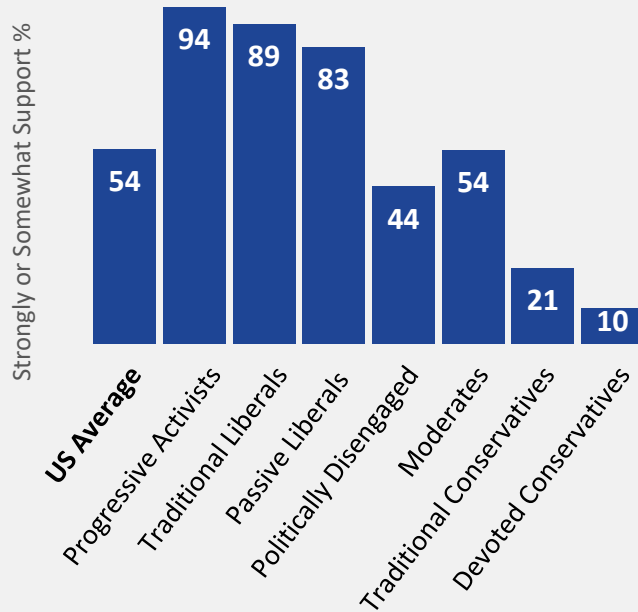


Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

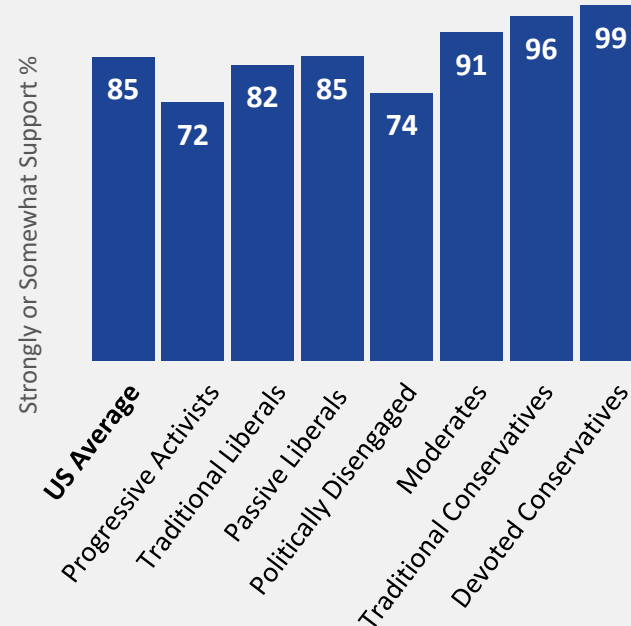
The most popular policy proposal is to bring manufacturing jobs back to the US.



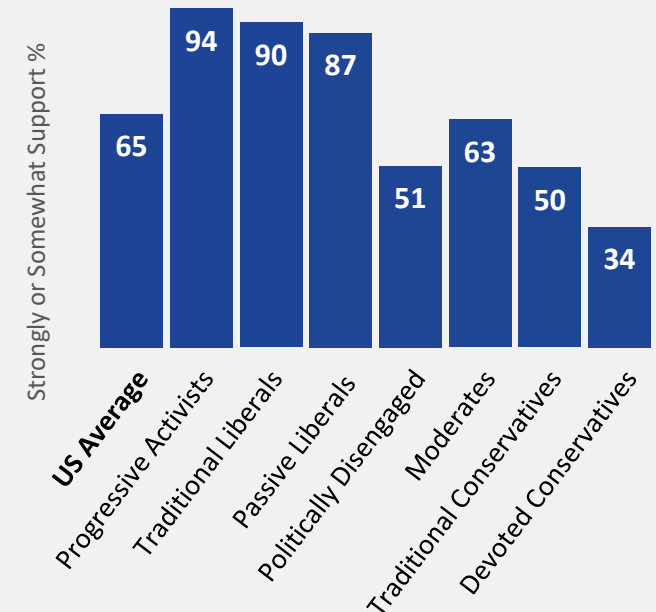
“Developing a “Green New Deal” that makes large-scale government investments to make our economy more environmentally friendly.”



“Developing a plan to bring back manufacturing industries and jobs that have been moved overseas in recent decades.”



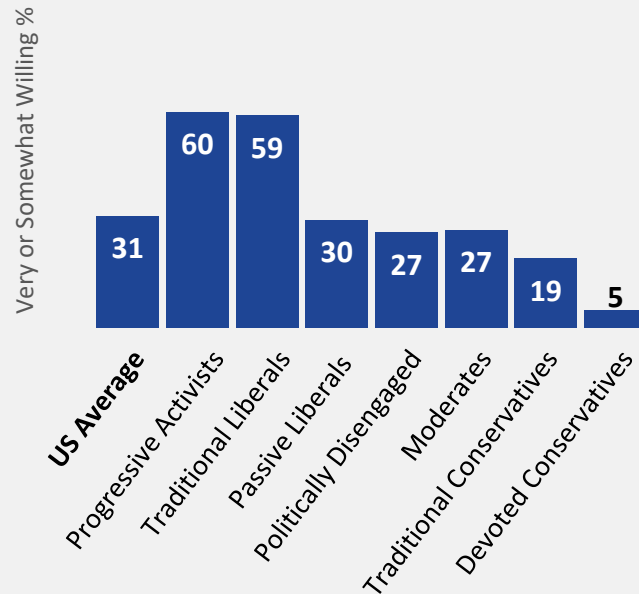
“Establish a “National Trust for Civic Infrastructure” which would fund community spaces such as parks, libraries, museums in areas which currently lack such facilities.”



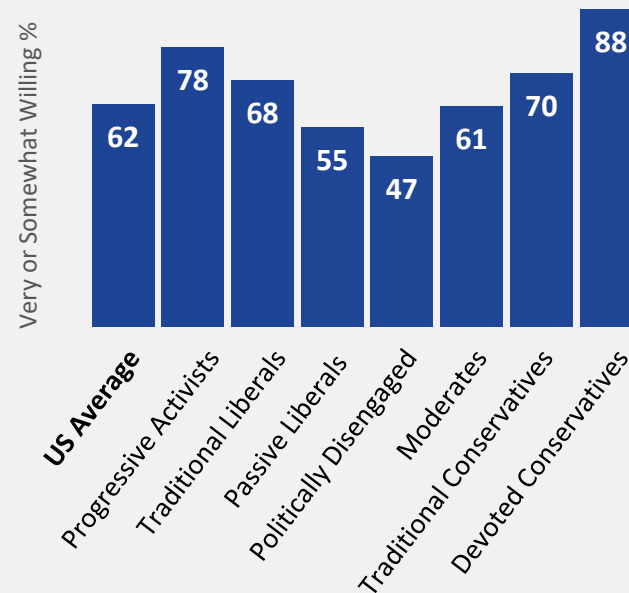


Most Americans say they are willing to pay higher prices to keep jobs in the US, but not higher taxes to finance economic recovery.

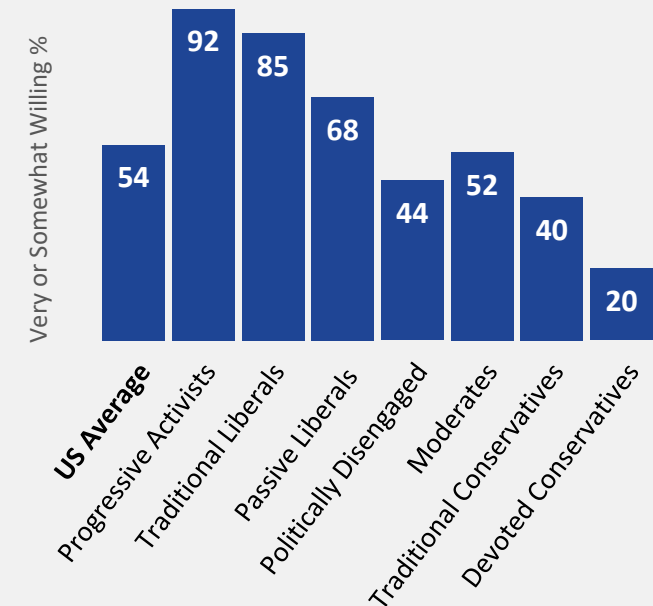
“Pay higher income taxes to help finance the economic recovery of the US”



“Pay higher prices for products made in the US to save jobs in the US”



“Accept restrictions on my freedom of movement to protect the health of others”



Election integrity ranks highly among Americans' immediate priorities.



	US Average	Progressive Activists	Traditional Liberals	Passive Liberals	Politically Disengaged	Moderates	Traditional Conservatives	Devoted Conservatives
Improving our health system	33	46	44	43	34	31	18	14
Ensuring a safe and secure election in November	32	58	53	28	17	26	37	47
Fighting crime and violence	27	1	4	9	32	34	49	51
Reducing unemployment	26	7	16	24	26	29	34	34
Addressing racism in our society	25	45	32	40	25	23	9	4
Supporting individuals and families in greatest need	21	22	23	32	23	22	11	6
Protecting democratic rights and freedoms	19	17	20	12	15	19	28	28
Supporting small businesses	19	5	16	9	21	18	29	32
Reducing immigration and refugee intake	17	0	6	4	14	18	34	47
Reducing economic inequality	15	41	24	31	11	9	2	2
Protecting climate and environment	15	35	29	24	10	14	5	1
Reducing political division	12	6	12	10	11	20	9	12
Improving our education system	11	9	8	12	14	13	8	5
Combatting terrorism	9	0	1	4	10	9	18	14
Protecting ethnic, racial and religious minorities	8	8	8	10	11	11	3	2
Working towards gender equality	3	1	4	3	6	2	1	0

Question: Besides containing the COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following issues should the government prioritize addressing in the months ahead? Please select the top 3.

V. Threats to the 2020 Election

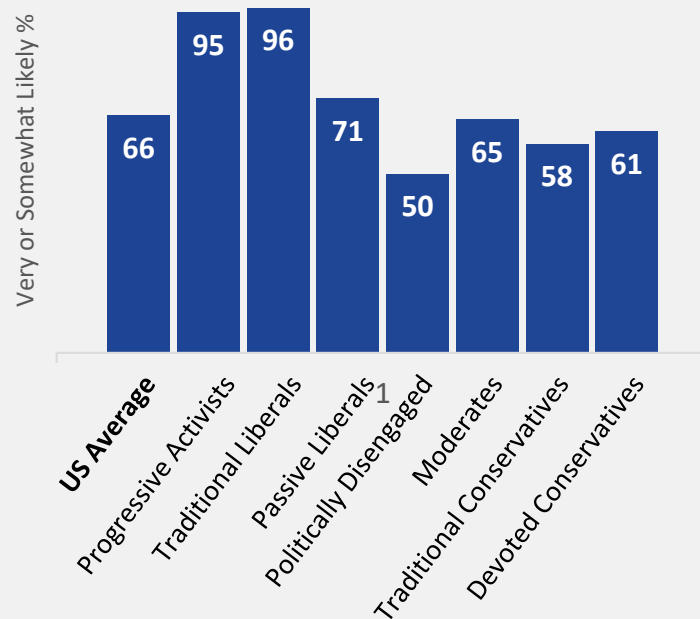


Two-thirds believe that foreign interference is likely in the 2020 presidential election.

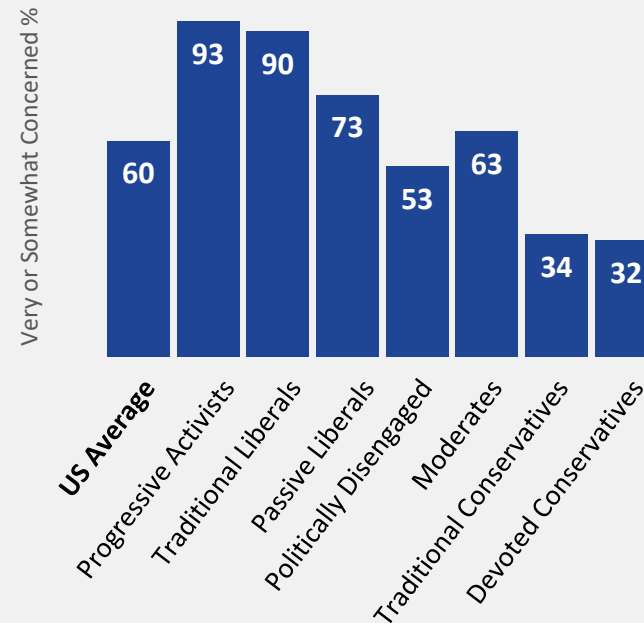


For all groups except the conservative wing, their concern mirrors the perceived likelihood of interference. Most Americans in the conservative wing believe the media pays too much attention to the topic of foreign interference.

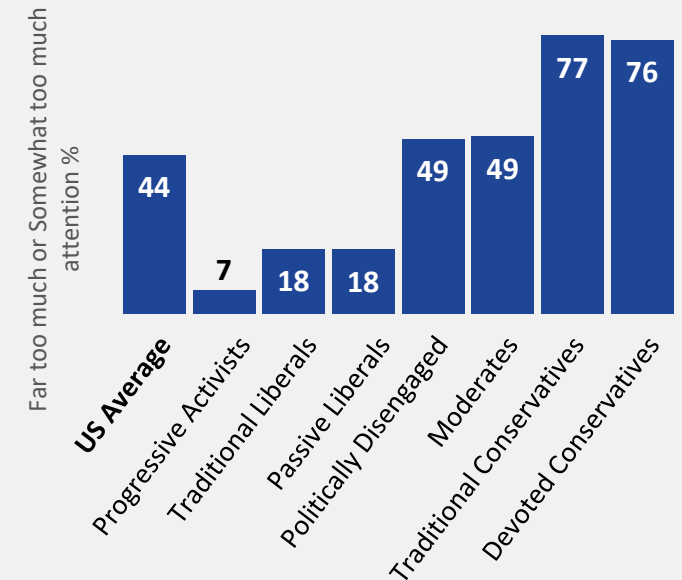
“Likelihood of foreign interference”



“Concerned about foreign interference”



“Media Attention to Foreign Interference”



Question 1: In your opinion, how likely is it that foreign countries will attempt to interfere in the 2020 presidential election?

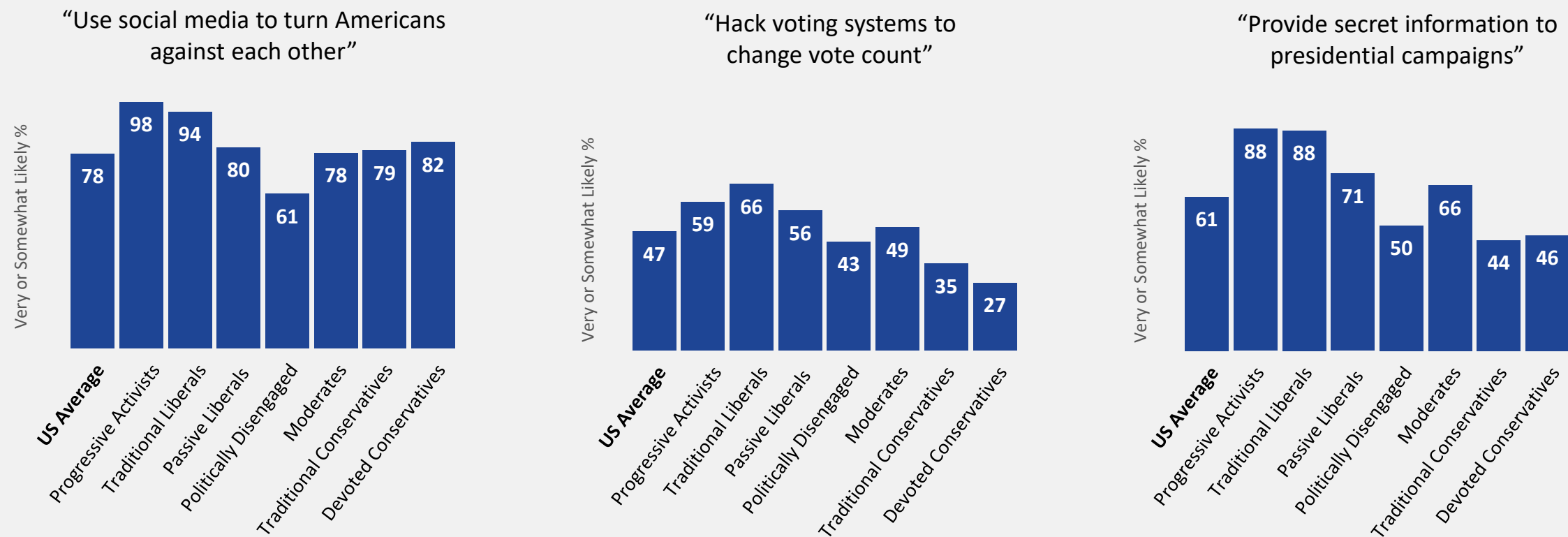
Question 2: How concerned are you that foreign interference will affect the outcomes of the 2020 election, if at all?

Question 3: When it comes to covering claims of interference in US elections by foreign countries, do you think that the media gives them...

Nearly 80% of Americans think foreign actors will interfere in the federal election using social media.



Belief in foreign actors hacking vote systems or providing secret information to campaigns differed more strongly by ideology.





Thank you

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