

Americans' Attitudes toward Social Media

May 2024



About More in Common

For more information please visit
www.moreincommon.com
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The report was conducted by More in Common US, a nonpartisan research nonprofit that works to understand the forces driving us apart, find common ground, and bring people together to address our shared challenges.

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



Topline Findings

- **Americans are worried about the effects of social media.**
 - 71% believe insufficient attention is paid to the dangers of social media.
 - 47% say they would prefer to live in a world where TikTok never existed.
 - 58% believe social media has a negative impact on the lives of children.
- **Parents of children ages 5-10 are most likely (41%) to say they prefer to live in a world in which social media never existed.**
- **Gen Z Americans are generally concerned about the effects of social media, though less so than older Americans.**
 - 3 in 5 (60%) say they spend too much time on their phone.
 - Half (50%) say social media has had a negative effect on young people versus US average of 58%.
 - 1 in 3 (32%) support a total ban of smartphones during the school day.
- **There is bipartisan support for greater regulation of social media.**
 - 68% of Democrats and 68% of Republicans support banning social media companies from opening accounts for children under 15.
- **Americans are less likely than Europeans to want more government regulation of social media.**
 - While 42% of Americans believe the government is not doing enough to regulate social media, that proportion is higher in Germany (51%), France (57%) and the UK (65%).



Background

Recent years have seen a growing public concern about the negative effects of social media on society and mental health. In 2016, many left-leaning critics blamed sites such as [Facebook](#) and [X](#) (formerly Twitter) for enabling disinformation campaigns that skewed the results of the presidential election in favor of Donald Trump. In 2020, similar accusations were made by conservatives, who argued that [X](#) and [Facebook](#) suppressed information that was unfavorable to Joe Biden.

Meanwhile, scholars have noted an [increase](#) in both the average number of daily users of social media over the past decade—from 970 million users in 2010 to 4.95 billion users in October 2023—and the [average daily time](#) spent on such sites went from 90 minutes per day in 2012 to 151 minutes per day in 2023 . These trends, when coupled with a troubling increase in [mental health issues](#)—particularly among teenagers—has led some to call for increased regulation of such sites for our nation’s young people.

In this report, More in Common explores people’s attitudes towards social media today. We conducted an international comparative investigation of attitudes towards social media use in four countries: the US, UK, France, and Germany. We asked respondents various questions about the societal effects of social media, their attitudes towards government regulation, and their own personal experiences using social media.



Methods

More in Common conducted online survey interviews from April 29th to May 2nd, 2024. The total sample was 8,071 adults, with N=2,014 US adult citizens in the United States, 2,008 in the UK, 2,047 in France, and 2,002 in Germany. The data was weighted to be representative of each countries' citizens using propensity scores, with score functions including gender, age, race, education, and region. The weights for the sample were then post-stratified on 2020 Presidential vote choice, with a four-way stratification of gender, age (6- category), race (5-category), and education (4-category). The margin of error (adjusted for weighting) is +/- 2.2 for the US average and is higher for subgroups.

Note: Numbers in data visualizations are rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures may total to larger or smaller than one-hundred percent due to rounding. Unless otherwise noted, all figures indicate %.



Key Findings

Most Americans (71%) believe not enough attention is paid to the dangers of social media

Little difference by party

Please use the scale to indicate which comes closest to your view, where 1 means you fully agree with the first statement and 4 means you fully agree with the second statement.

- 1 - I think the dangers of social media are often exaggerated ● 2 - ● 3 -
● 4 - Not enough attention is paid to the dangers of social media

Numbers in %



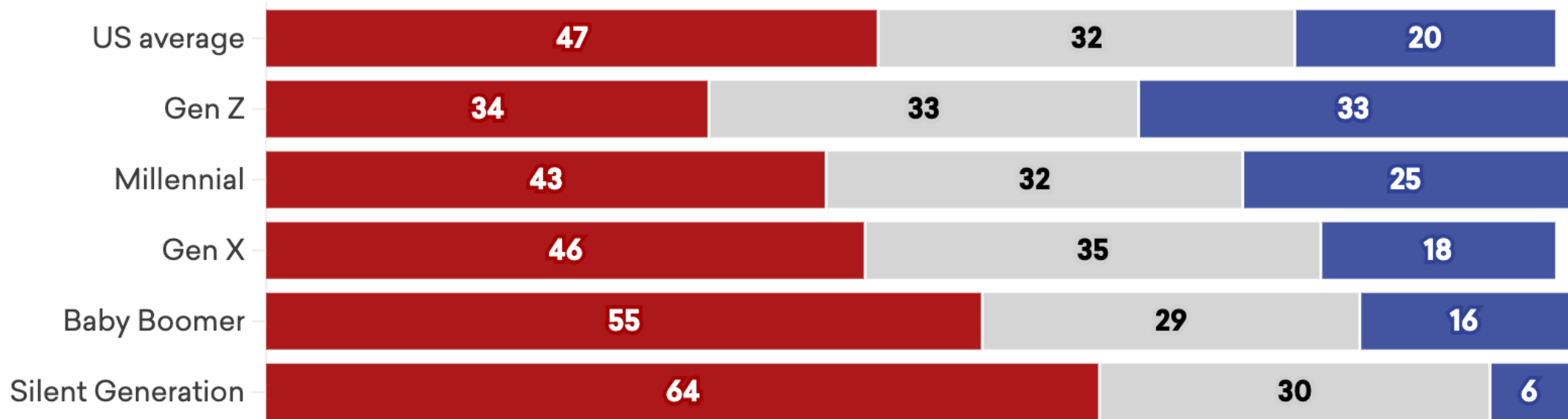
Older Americans are more likely to say they'd prefer to live in a world where TikTok was never invented

Younger Americans are split

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I would prefer to live in a world where TikTok was never invented.
- I don't know
- I believe the world is better off because TikTok exists

Numbers in %



Majority of Americans believe that social media is harming children

Do you think social media has a positive or a negative impact on the lives of children aged under 15 overall?

● Negative impact ● Neutral ● Don't know ● Positive impact

Numbers in %

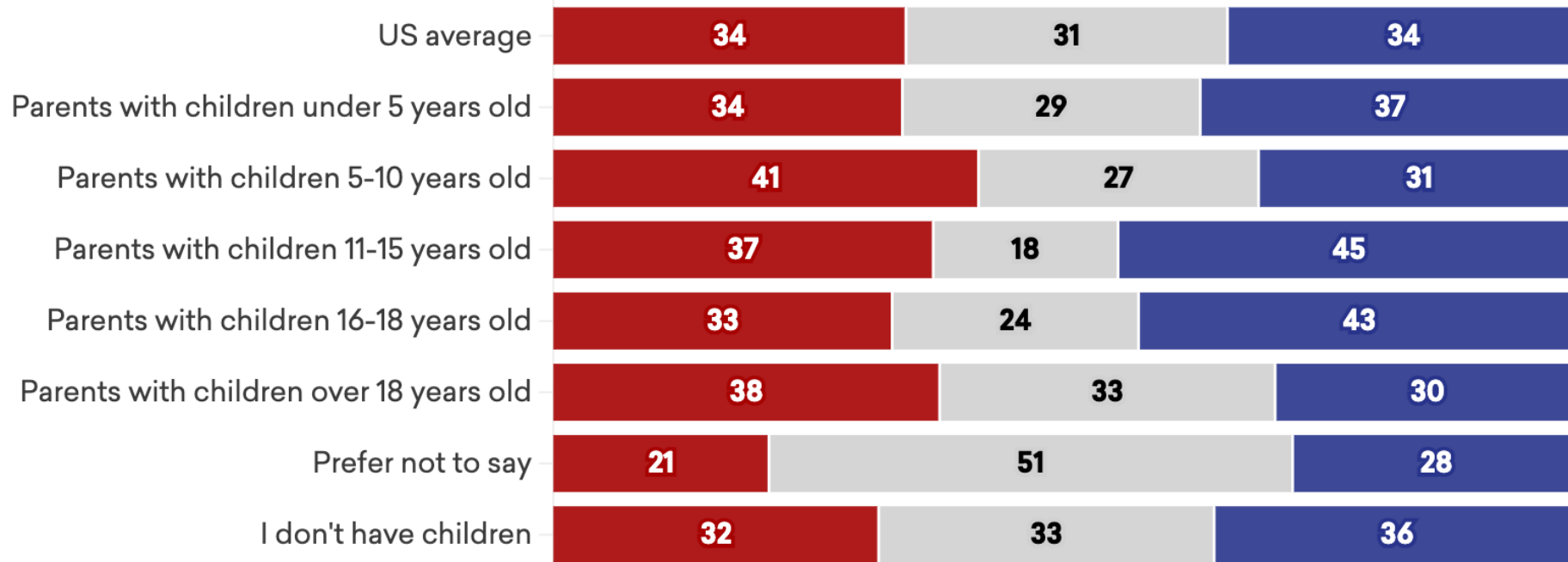


American parents of children age 5-10 most likely to say the world would be better if social media were never invented

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I would prefer to live in a world where social media was never invented
- I don't know
- I believe the world is better off because social media exists

Numbers in %

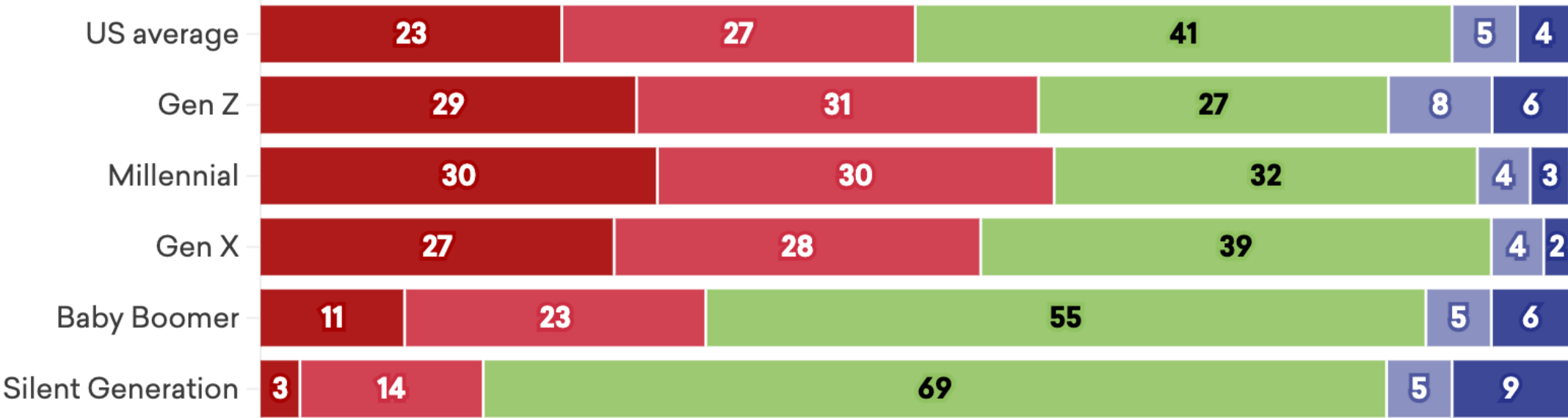


6 in 10 of Gen Z and Millennial Americans say they spend too much time on their phone

Thinking about the time you spend on your phone, do you think...

- I spend far too much time on my phone
- I spend a bit too much time on my phone
- I spend the right amount of time on my phone
- I spend too little time on my phone
- I spend far too little time on my phone

Numbers in %



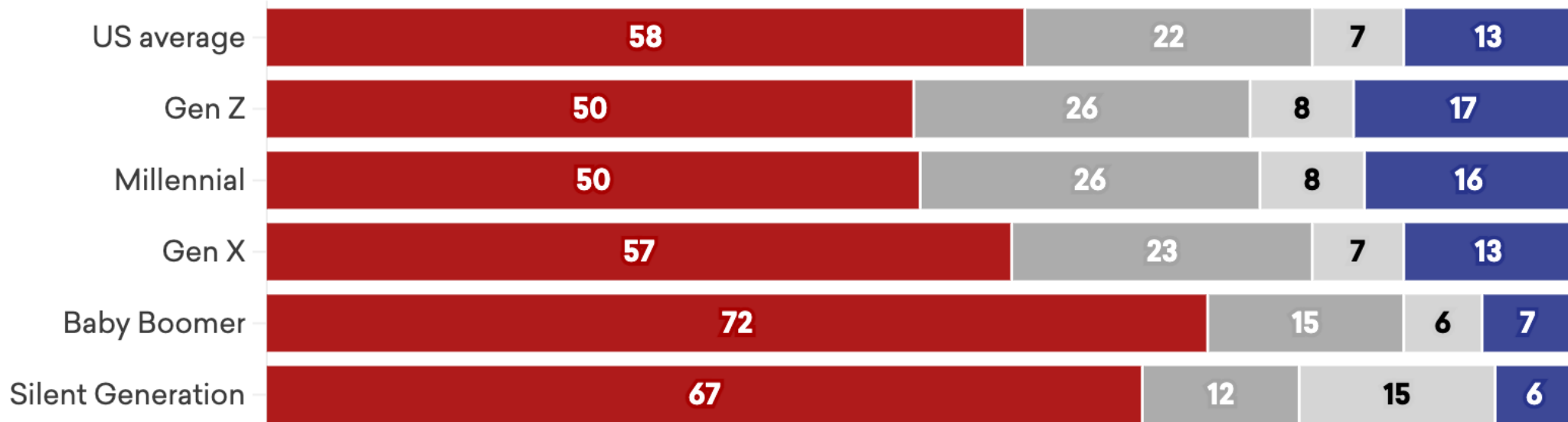
Majority of Americans believe social media is negatively impacting young people

Half of Gen Z and Millennials agree

Do you think social media has a positive or a negative impact on the lives of children aged under 15 overall?

● Negative impact ● Neutral ● Don't know ● Positive impact

Numbers in %



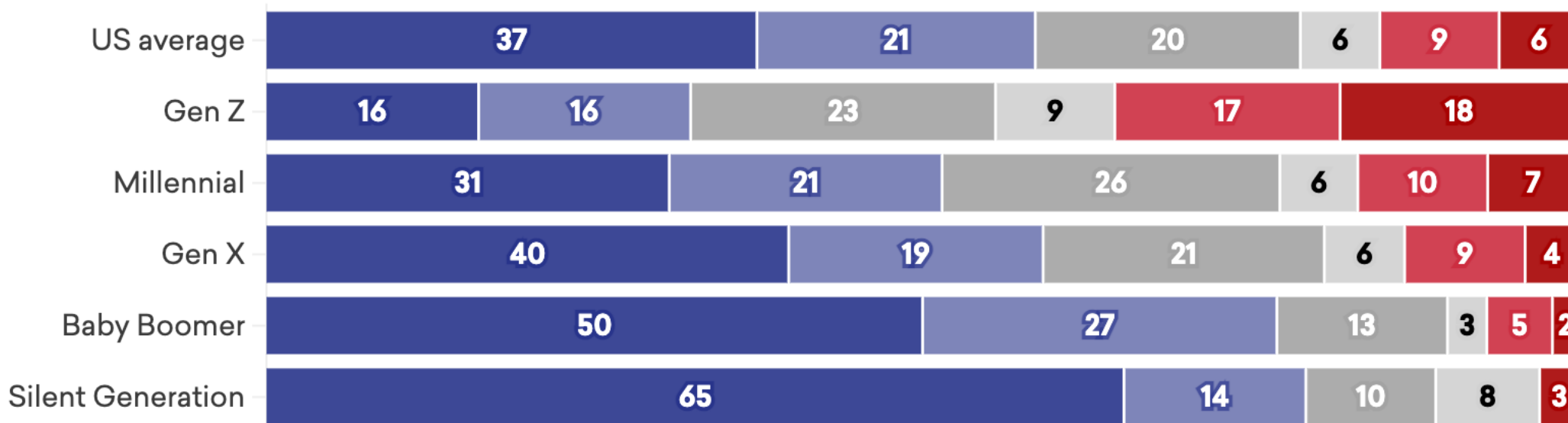
Majority of Americans support banning smartphones in schools

1 in 3 Gen Z agree

To what extent do you support or oppose these policies? [Schools introducing and enforcing a total ban on smartphones during the school day]

● Strongly support ● Support ● Neither support nor oppose ● Don't know ● Oppose ● Strongly oppose

Numbers in %

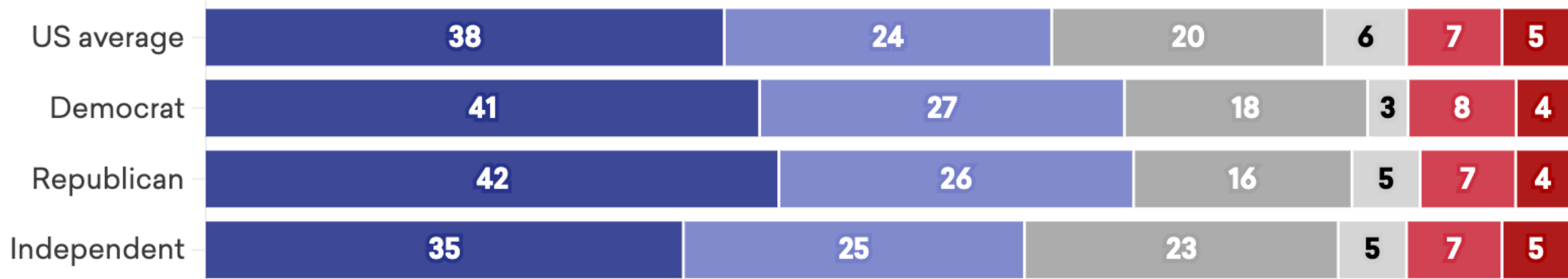


Most Democrats and Republicans support banning accounts from those under 15 years old

To what extent do you support or oppose these policies? [Banning social media companies from opening accounts for anyone under 15 years old]

● Strongly support ● Support ● Neither support nor oppose ● Don't know ● Oppose ● Strongly oppose

Numbers in %



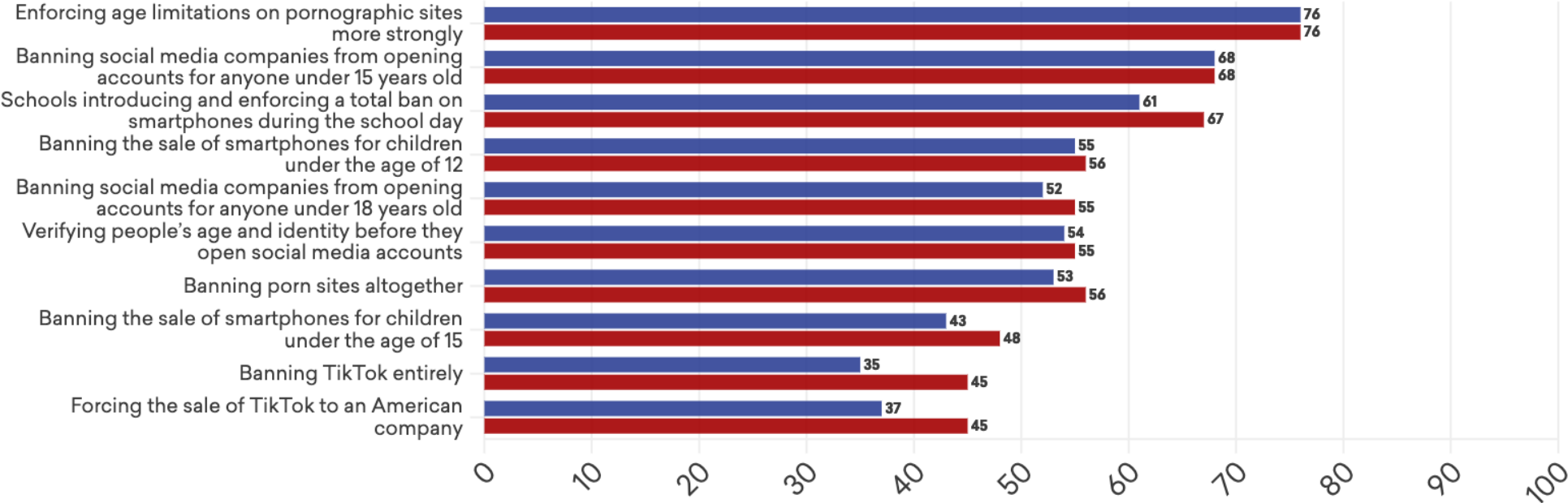
Bipartisan support for certain government interventions

Strongest support for limitations on pornography and on social media accounts for children under 15

Some governments have proposed the following measures. Do you support or oppose these?
[total support %]

● Democrat ● Republican

Numbers in %



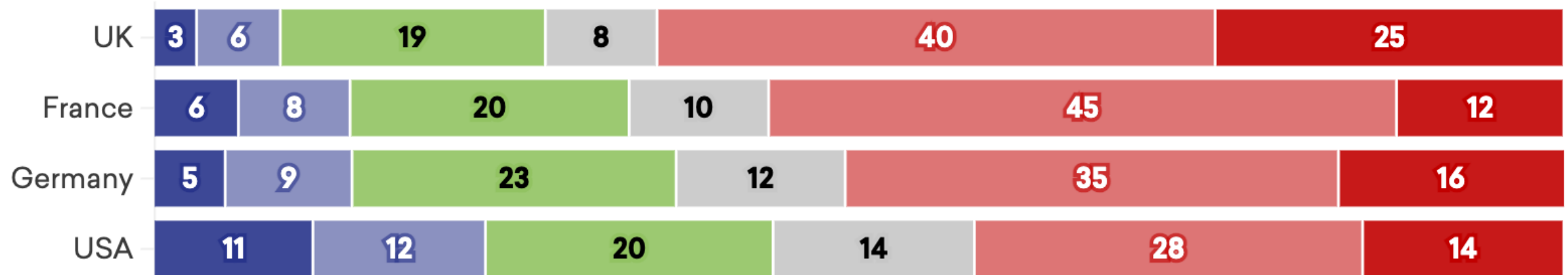
Americans least likely to think government is not doing enough to regulate social media

2 in 5 Americans believe government isn't doing enough

What is your view of the regulation of social media platforms, like Facebook, TikTok and YouTube? Is the government...

● Doing far too much ● Doing too much ● Doing the right amount ● Don't know ● Not doing enough ● Not doing nearly enough

Numbers in %





Conclusions

Overall, these data paint a nuanced picture of how Americans are feeling about the effects of social media on their lives, both across demographics and in comparison to other countries.

While Americans are more sanguine about the effects of social media than their European counterparts, many remain wary of the possible negative consequences of these platforms in their daily lives. This includes Democrats and Republicans, and even our nation's young people, who demonstrate remarkably high levels of skepticism about the effects of social media—though less than older Americans.

Overall, these observations show increasing public concern regarding the potential risks of these platforms.



Additional Findings by Generation

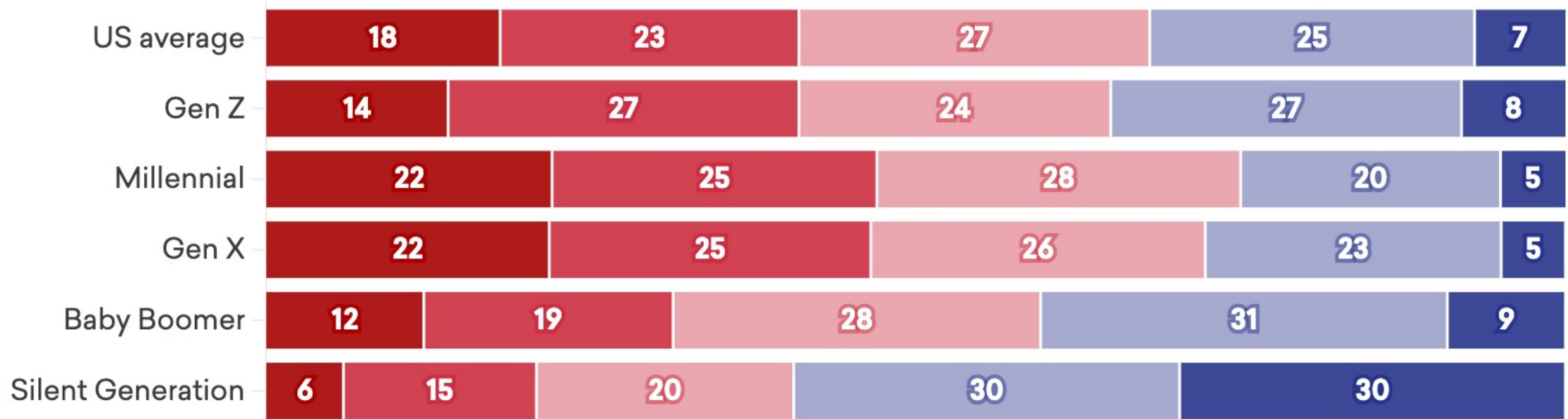
Younger generations check their phone more often

Most Americans check their phones every 2 hours or less

Thinking about a normal day, how long do you usually go without looking at your phone?

- Less than 15 minutes
- More than 15 minutes but less than every hour
- Around 1-2 hours
- More than 2 hours but not all day
- All day

Numbers in %



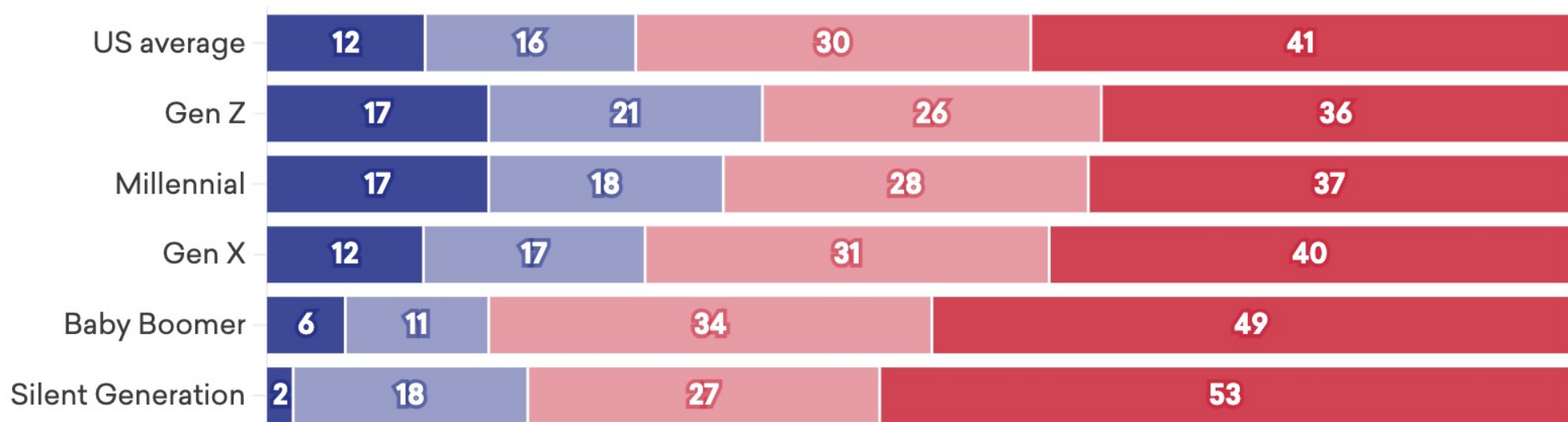
Most Americans think we don't pay enough attention to the dangers of social media

62% of Gen Z Americans agree

For the following pairs of statements, please use the scale to indicate which comes closest to your view, where 1 means you fully agree with the first statement and 4 means you fully agree with the second statement.

- 1 - I think the dangers of social media are often exaggerated
- 2 -
- 3 -
- 4 - Not enough attention is paid to the dangers of social media

Numbers in %



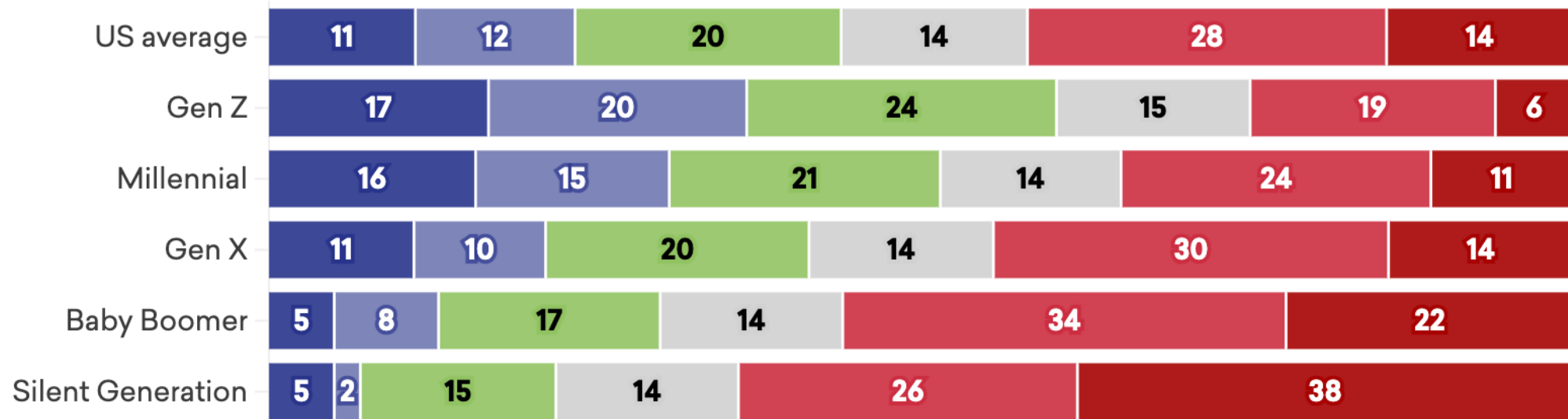
Older generations think increased social media regulation is needed

Younger generations are split

What is your view of the regulation of social media platforms, like Facebook, TikTok and YouTube? Is the government...

● Doing far too much ● Doing too much ● Doing the right amount ● Don't know ● Not doing enough ● Not doing nearly enough

Numbers in %

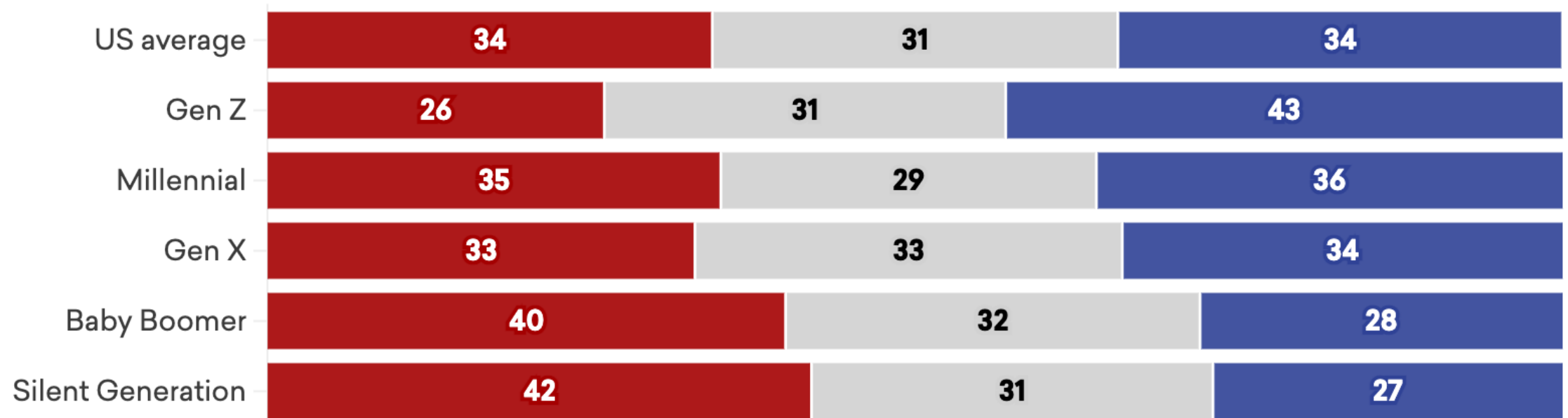


Young people are significantly more likely to be in favor of a world with social media

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I would prefer to live in a world where social media was never invented.
- I don't know
- I believe the world is better off because social media exists

Numbers in %



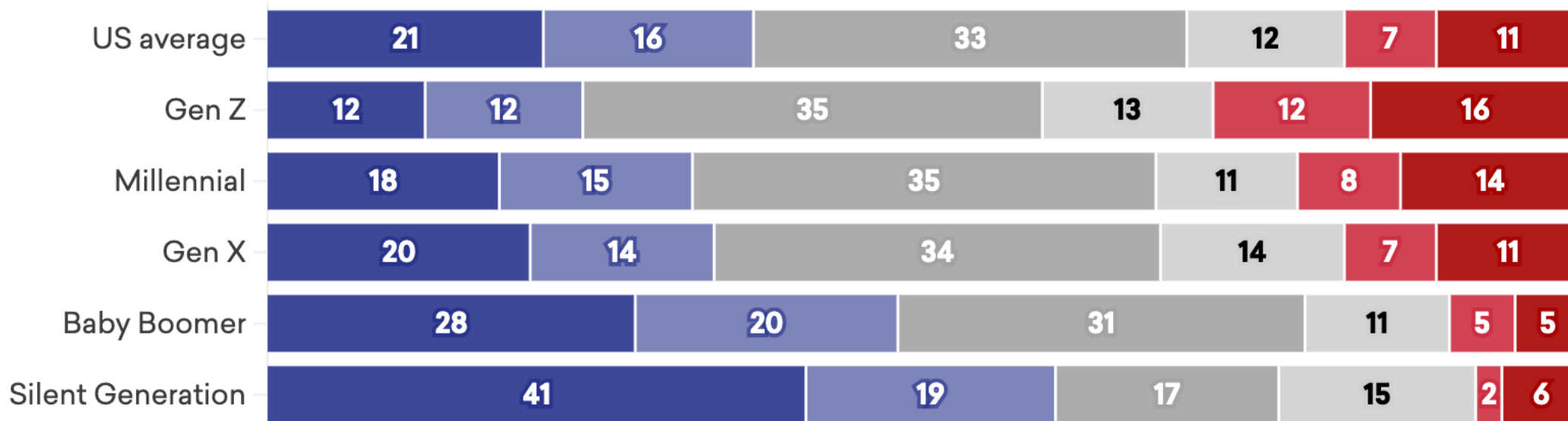
Most Americans are undecided about whether the US government should force the sale of TikTok

1 in 4 Gen Z support the sale

To what extent do you support or oppose these policies? [Forcing the sale of TikTok to an American company]

● Strongly support ● Support ● Neither support nor oppose ● Don't know ● Oppose ● Strongly oppose

Numbers in %





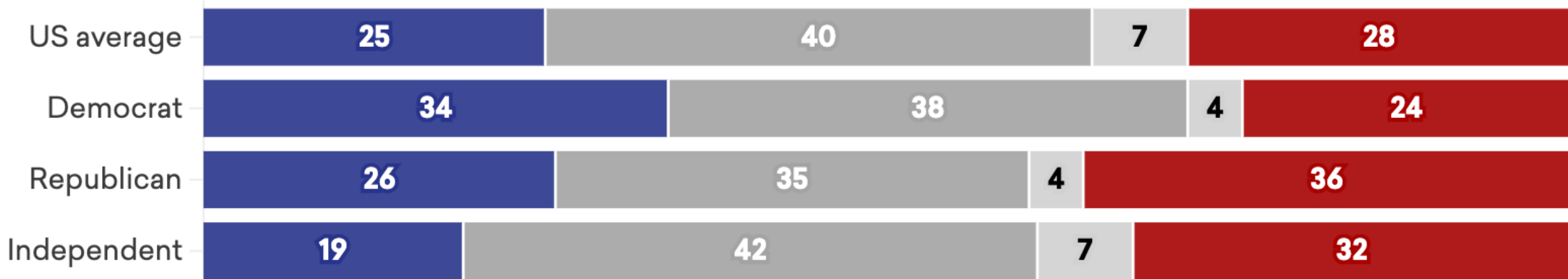
Additional Findings by Party

Independents and Republicans think social media is more bad than good for society, while the reverse is true for Democrats

Do you think social media is a good or a bad thing for society overall?

● A good thing overall ● Neither a good thing nor a bad thing ● Don't know ● A bad thing overall

Numbers in %

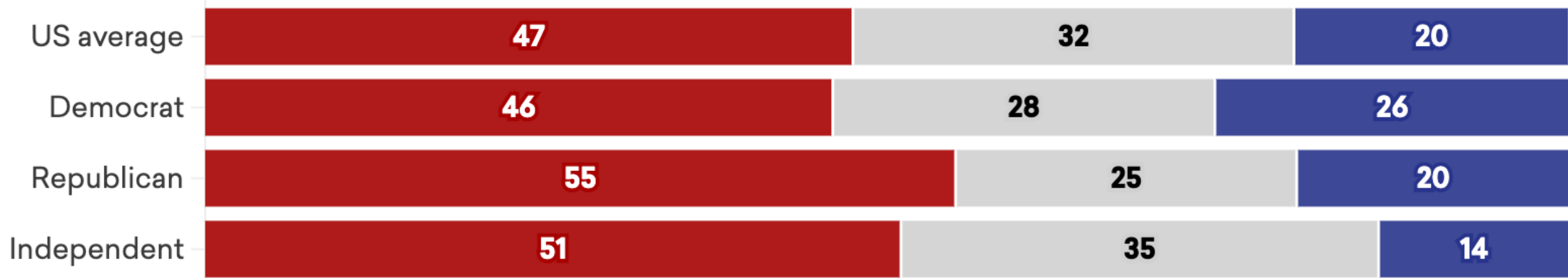


About half of Americans would prefer to live in a world where TikTok never existed

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I would prefer to live in a world where TikTok was never invented
- I don't know
- I believe the world is better off because TikTok exists

Numbers in %



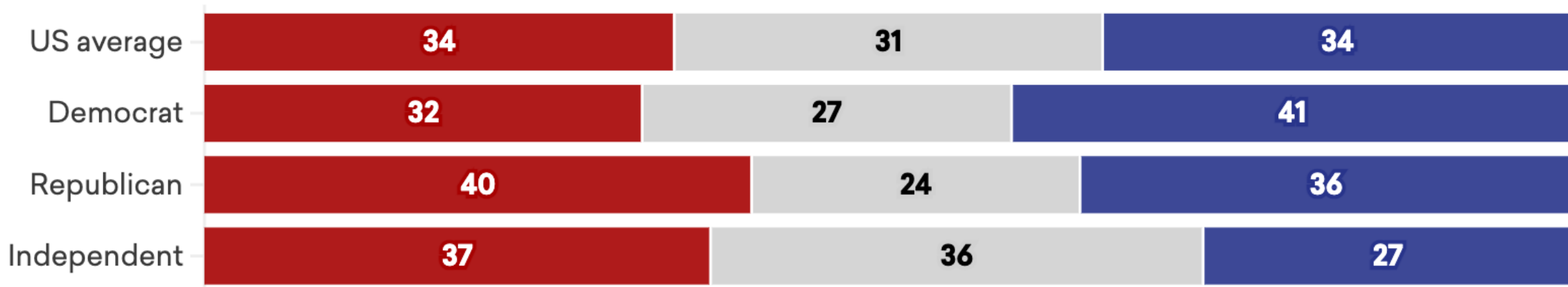
Americans generally undecided about whether the world is better because social media exists

Republicans (40%) most likely to prefer a world where social media was never invented

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I would prefer to live in a world where social media was never invented
- I don't know
- I believe the world is better off because social media exists

Numbers in %



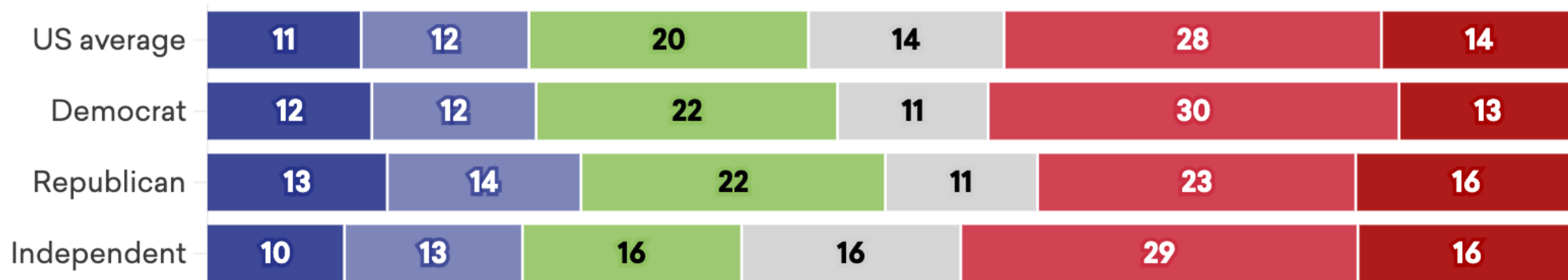
Similar levels of support for government regulation of social media platforms across political affiliations

1 in 3 Americans say government not doing enough

What is your view of the regulation of social media platforms, like Facebook, TikTok and YouTube? Is the government...

● Doing far too much ● Doing too much ● Doing the right amount ● Don't know ● Not doing enough ● Not doing nearly enough

Numbers in %





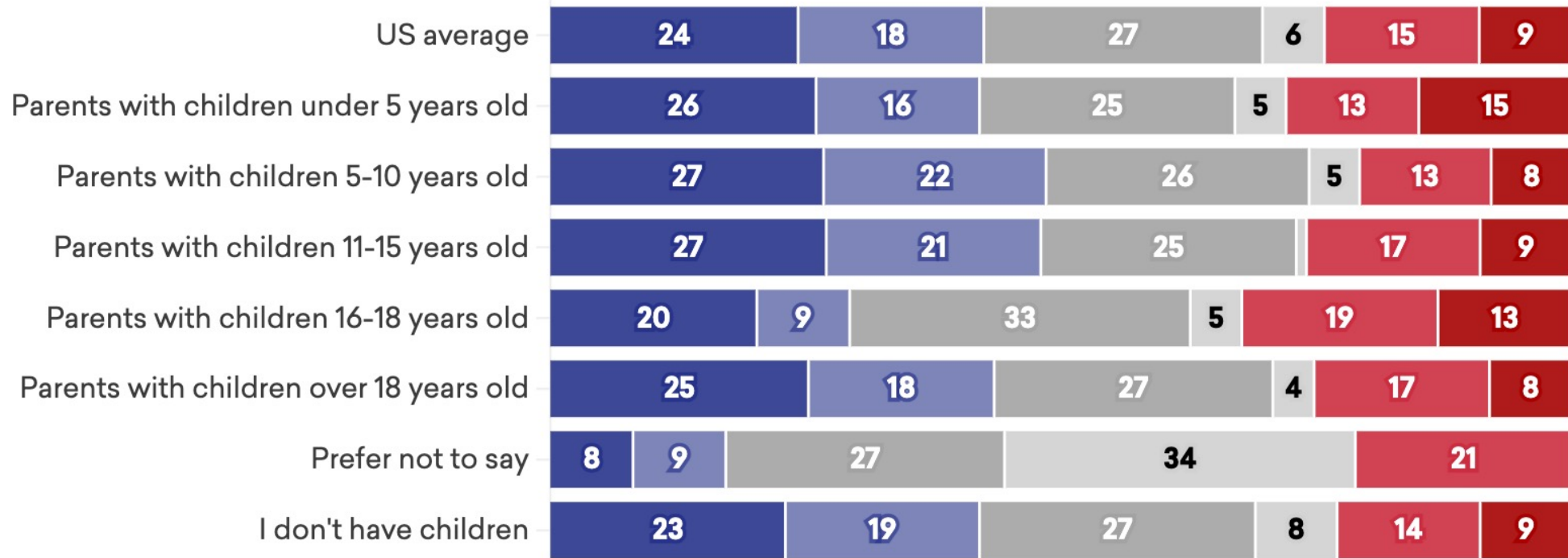
Attitudes among Parents

4 in 10 Americans support banning smartphone sales to those under 15

To what extent do you support or oppose these policies? [Banning the sale of smartphones for children under the age of 15]

● Strongly support ● Support ● Neither support nor oppose ● Don't know ● Oppose ● Strongly oppose

Numbers in %

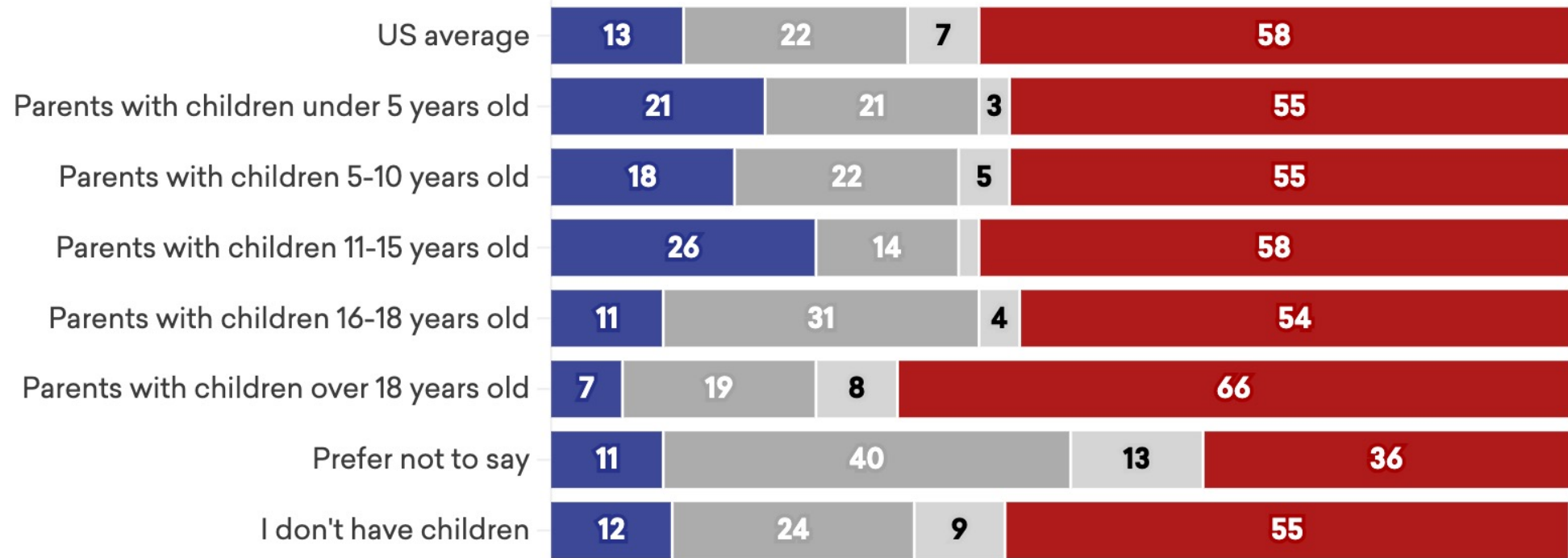


Majority of American parents agree social media is harming children

Do you think social media has a positive or a negative impact on the lives of children aged under 15 overall?

● Positive impact ● Neutral ● Don't know ● Negative impact

Numbers in %

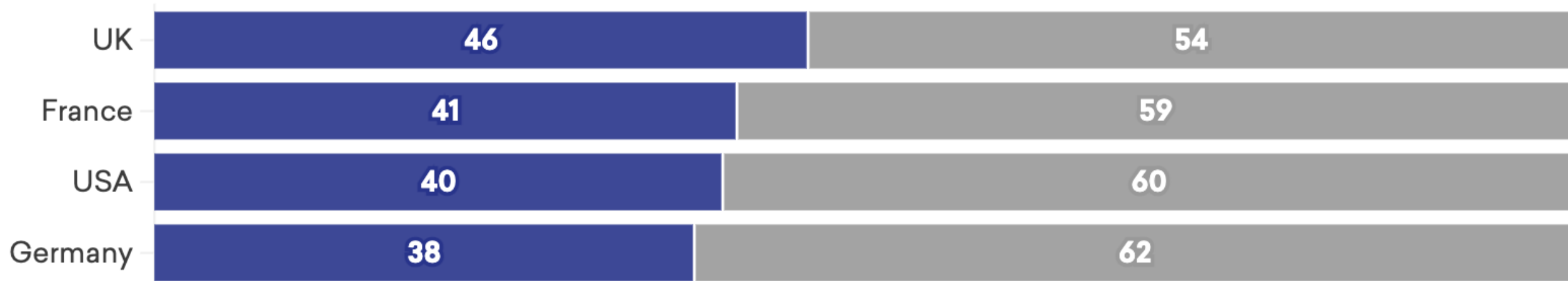


Many parents struggle to limit the amount of time their children spend on their phones

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I struggle to limit the amount of time my child(ren) spend on their phones
- I find it easy to limit the amount of time my child(ren) spend on their phones

Numbers in %





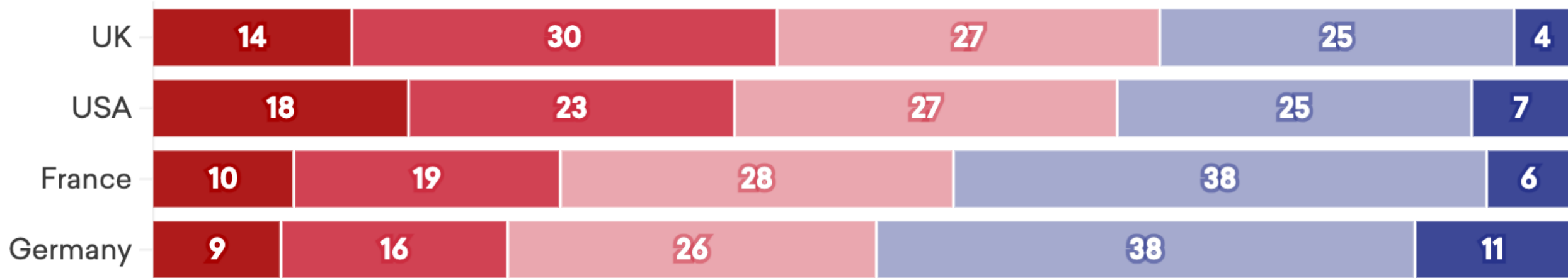
International Comparison

Most people check their phones every 2 hours or more frequently

Thinking about a normal day, how long do you usually go without looking at your phone?

- Less than 15 minutes
- More than 15 minutes but less than every hour
- Around 1-2 hours
- More than 2 hours but not all day
- All day

Numbers in %

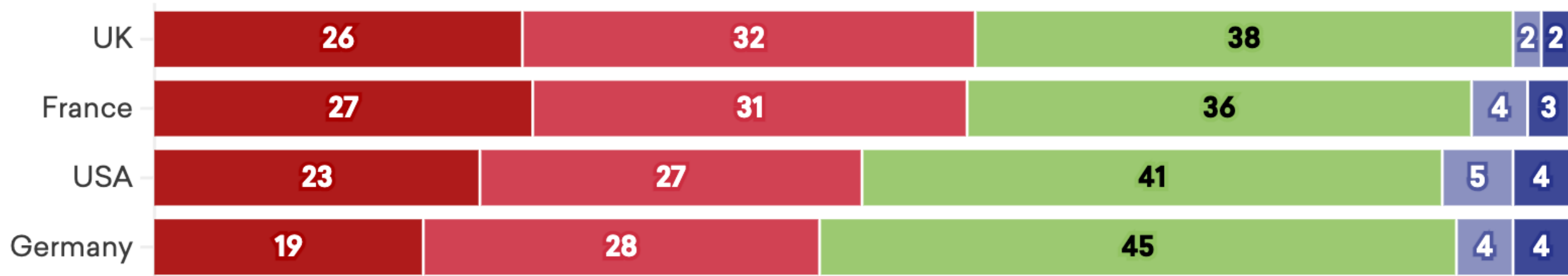


About half of people believe they spend too much time on their phone

Thinking about the time you spend on your phone, do you think...

- I spend far too much time on my phone
- I spend a bit too much time on my phone
- I spend the right amount of time on my phone
- I spend too little time on my phone
- I spend far too little time on my phone

Numbers in %

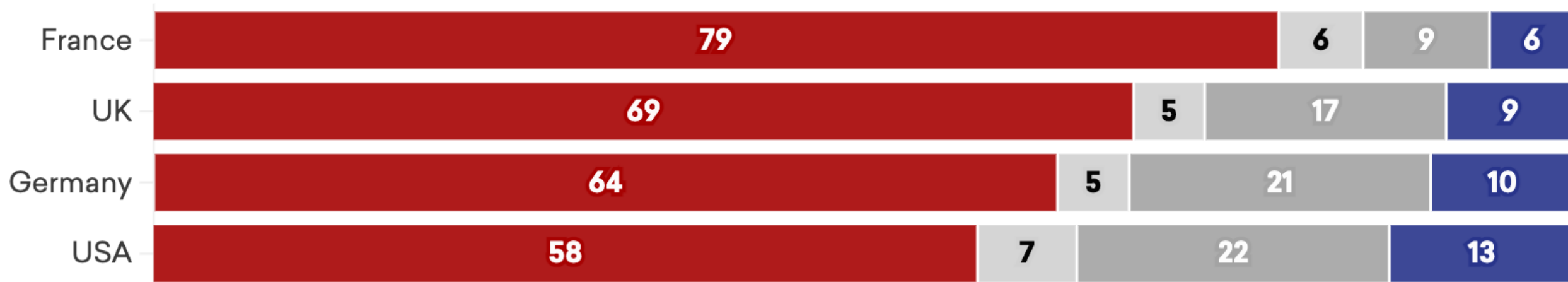


In all four countries, there is a strong sense that social media is harming children

Do you think social media has a positive or a negative impact on the lives of children aged under 15 overall?

● Positive impact ● Neutral ● Don't know ● Negative impact

Numbers in %



Around three-quarters of people in all four countries think not enough attention is paid to the dangers of social media

Please use the scale to indicate which comes closest to your view, where 1 means you fully agree with the first statement and 4 means you fully agree with the second statement.

- 1 - I think the dangers of social media are often exaggerated
- 2 -
- 3 -
- 4 - Not enough attention is paid to the dangers of social media

Numbers in %



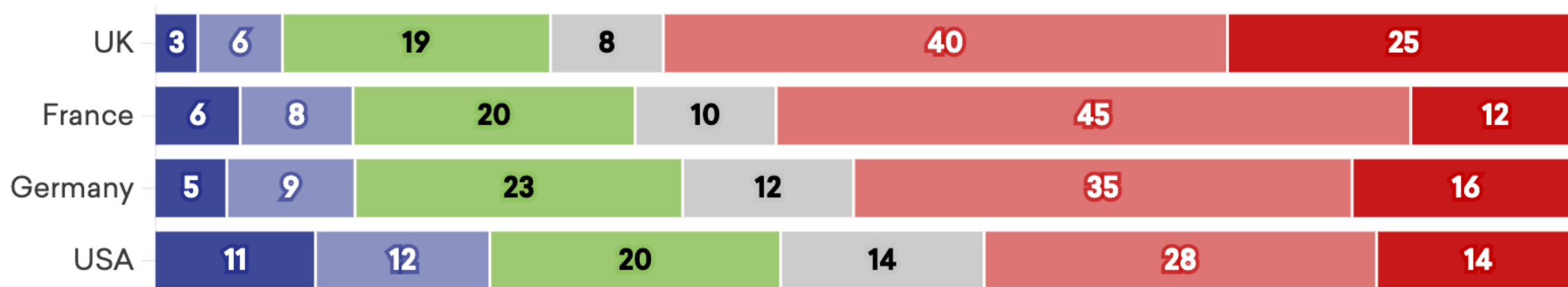
Americans least likely to think government is not doing enough to regulate social media

2 in 5 Americans believe government isn't doing enough

What is your view of the regulation of social media platforms, like Facebook, TikTok and YouTube? Is the government...

● Doing far too much ● Doing too much ● Doing the right amount ● Don't know ● Not doing enough ● Not doing nearly enough

Numbers in %

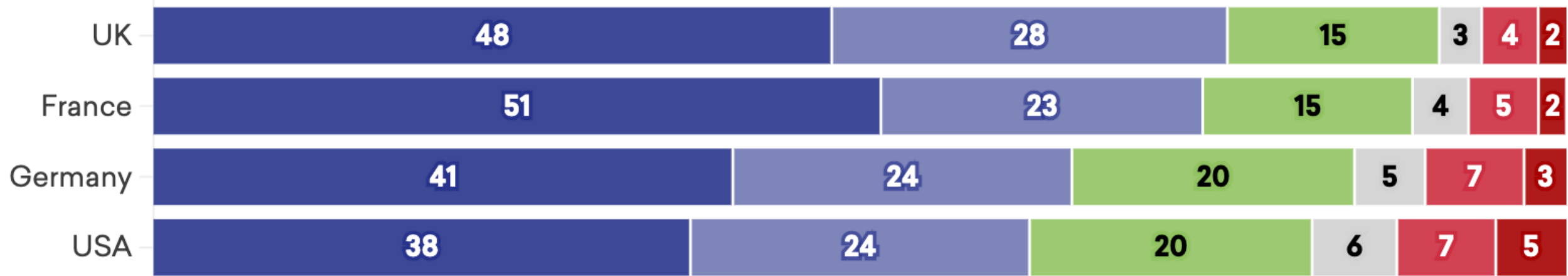


Majority of people in all countries support banning social media for children under 15

To what extent do you support or oppose these policies? [Banning social media companies from opening accounts for anyone under 15 years old]

● Strongly support ● Support ● Neither support nor oppose ● Don't know ● Oppose ● Strongly oppose

Numbers in %





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Appendix

SELECTED KEY QUESTIONS

How often do you post content on social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

Thinking about a normal day, how long do you usually go without looking at your phone?

When you think of social media's impact on society, what word comes to mind?

Thinking about the time you spend on your phone, do you think...

- [1] I spend far too much time on my phone
- [2] I spend a bit too much time on my phone
- [3] I spend the right amount of time on my phone
- [4] I spend too little time on my phone
- [5] I spend far too little time on my phone

Have you ever considered deleting your social media accounts?

Do you think social media is a good or a bad thing for society overall?

Do you think the following platforms are generally a force for good or bad in the US today?'

Do you think social media has a positive or a negative impact on the lives of children aged under 15 overall?

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- [1] I would prefer to live in a world where social media was never invented.
- [2] I believe the world is better off because social media exists
- [3] I don't know
- [1] I would prefer to live in a world where TikTok was never invented.
- [2] I believe the world is better off because TikTok exists
- [3] I don't know
- [1] I would prefer to live in a world where smartphones were never invented.
- [2] I believe the world is better off because smartphones exist
- [3] I don't know