January 15, 2025

TO: Scott Hutcheson, E Pluribus Unum
FROM: Jessica Mason and Sumati Thomas, Embold Research
RE: Survey of the South, 2024 Results

Introduction

On behalf of E Pluribus Unum, Embold Research conducted a poll among 2,918 registered voters across 13 states in order to deepen understanding of the multifaceted economic, political, and social realities of Southern voters.[1] This research builds on a previous poll conducted in November, 2023 with a similar aim of capturing the landscape of social, economic, and political conditions in the same southern states.[2]

This particular survey found that Southerners' relationships with their communities remain nuanced: majorities report feeling accepted and welcomed in their community, but this feeling is countered by the strong notion that if respondents were to have differing views from their communities, they would be ostracized. Moreover, despite the large racial and ethnic diversity of the South, significant proportions of respondents report a lack of diversity in their social circles, neighborhoods, and workplaces, and few voters often discuss race and politics with those who share different opinions.

This research also surfaces a theme of normalized economic hardship. For the majority of Southerners, the high cost of housing and rent is both a central issue in their communities and an obstacle in the way of economic opportunity in their personal lives. Moreover, in a qualitative question asking about comparative economic standing, most respondents, regardless of how they perceive their financial situation, mention personal hardship or dismal local or statewide economic conditions.

Lastly, in a departure from previous polling, this research also focused on perceptions of the health of democracy and regional political environments in the face of Trump's reelection. This research found that while deep polarization divides Southerners in their feelings toward the presidential election outcome and the future of their communities, there is little

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[1] *Polling was conducted online from December 6-24, 2024. Using Dynamic Online Sampling to attain a representative sample, Embold Research polled 2918 white, Hispanic, and Black adults in AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV. Post-stratification was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, region, 2020 presidential vote, and 2024 presidential vote. Each of the states polled represents their share share of the Southern electorate. You can see a full methodology statement [here](), which complies with the requirements of AAPOR's Transparency Initiative. Members of the Transparency Initiative disclose all relevant details about our research, with the principle that the public should be able to evaluate and understand research-based findings, in order to instill and restore public confidence in survey results. The margin of error is 2.7%*
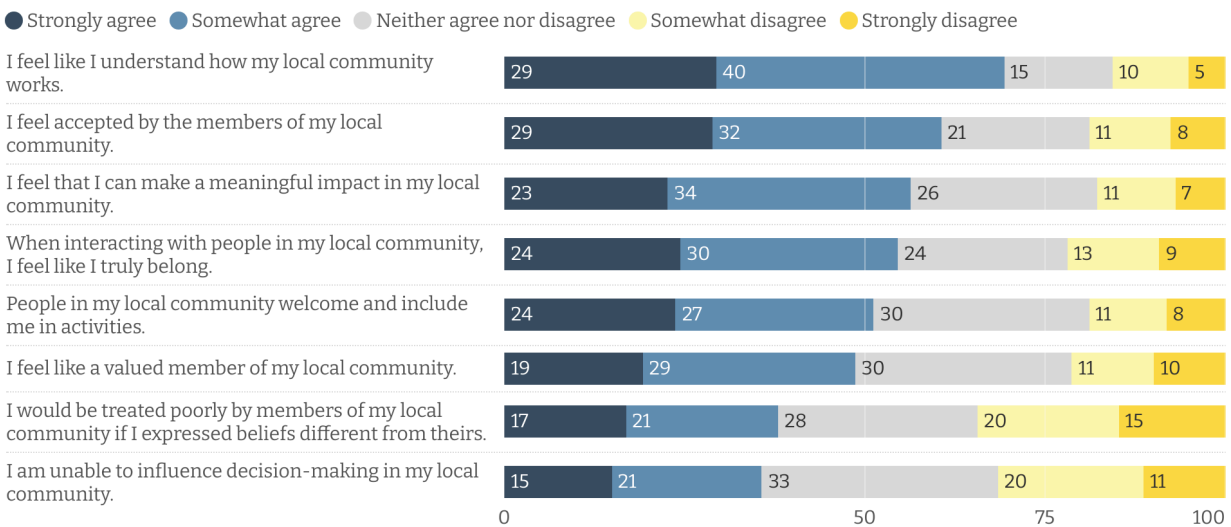
[2] *Polling was conducted online from November 3-13, 2023. Using Dynamic Online Sampling to attain a representative sample, Embold Research polled 2616 registered voters in AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV. Post-stratification was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, region, and 2020 presidential vote. You can see a full methodology statement [here]().*

doubt across the board that a Trump presidency will fundamentally change Southerners' lives economically and politically. Additionally, few voters, regardless of their political leaning, believe that Trump's second term will mend the divisions faced by many communities.

Community and Sense of Belonging

While many Southern residents feel positively toward their communities, the relationship between individual and community remains complicated. Majorities of respondents report they feel a sense of acceptance (61%), belonging (55%), and inclusion (51%). Additionally, almost half (49%) of respondents say that they feel like a valued member of their community. At the same time, nearly four in 10 (38%) of respondents agree with the statement, "I would be treated poorly by members of my local community if I expressed beliefs different from theirs," and an additional 28% neither agree nor disagree. About a third (34%) of respondents believe they would not be treated poorly for expressing differing views. Those who are most likely to say they would be treated poorly for expressing different views tend to be women (42%), voters ages 18-34 (45%), and Democrats (52%).

Sense of Community

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree

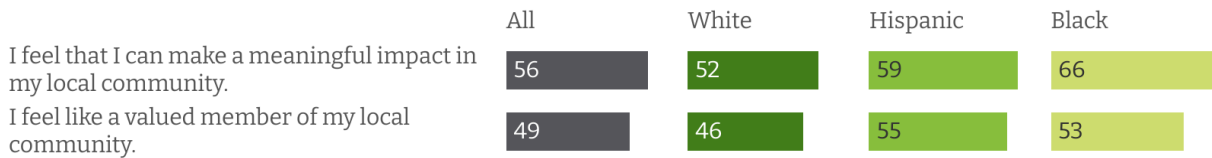| Statement	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel like I understand how my local community works.	29	40	15	10	5
I feel accepted by the members of my local community.	29	32	21	11	8
I feel that I can make a meaningful impact in my local community.	23	34	26	11	7
When interacting with people in my local community, I feel like I truly belong.	24	30	24	13	9
People in my local community welcome and include me in activities.	24	27	30	11	8
I feel like a valued member of my local community.	19	29	30	11	10
I would be treated poorly by members of my local community if I expressed beliefs different from theirs.	17	21	28	20	15
I am unable to influence decision-making in my local community.	15	21	33	20	11

Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your local community.

Southern voters also demonstrate a nuanced relationship with their ability to make changes in their communities. A majority of respondents (56%) believe that they can make a meaningful impact in their local communities. Additionally, nearly seven in 10 (69%) of respondents feel they understand how their local communities work. Despite this optimism

in their ability to make a change and their knowledge of their community, respondents are divided on their actual ability to influence local decision-making. Just under a third (32%) of voters believe that they can influence decision-making in their local communities, while 36% believe they have no influence, and an additional third neither agree nor disagree with whether they can influence local decision-making.

Sense of Community by Race/Ethnicity

Total "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

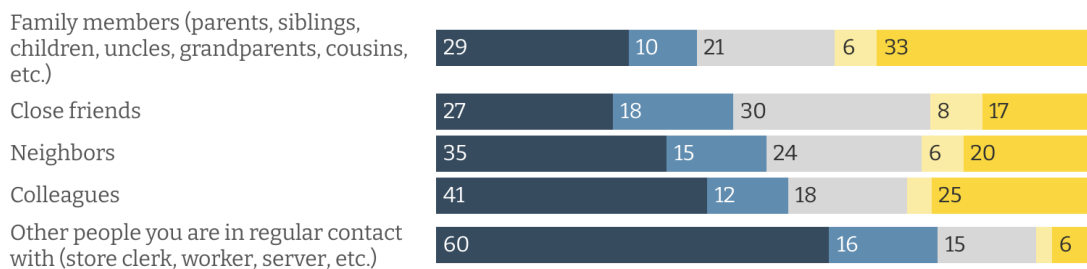|	All	White	Hispanic	Black
I feel that I can make a meaningful impact in my local community.	56	52	59	66
I feel like a valued member of my local community.	49	46	55	53

Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your local community.

Notably, there is a key racial/ethnic difference when it comes to perceptions of a person's value in their community. White respondents are less likely to believe that they can make a meaningful difference in their community (52%) compared to their Hispanic (59%) and Black counterparts (66%). Moreover, less than half of white respondents (46%) feel like they are valued members of their communities; In contrast, majorities of both Black (53%) and Hispanic (55%) respondents feel like valued community members.

Community Connections

● 6 or more ● 4-5 ● 2-3 ● 1 ● None

	6 or more	4-5	2-3	1	None
Family members (parents, siblings, children, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc.)	29	10	21	6	33
Close friends	27	18	30	8	17
Neighbors	35	15	24	6	20
Colleagues	41	12	18		25
Other people you are in regular contact with (store clerk, worker, server, etc.)	60	16	15		6

Q: How many of your family, close friends, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances are from another race or ethnicity than you?
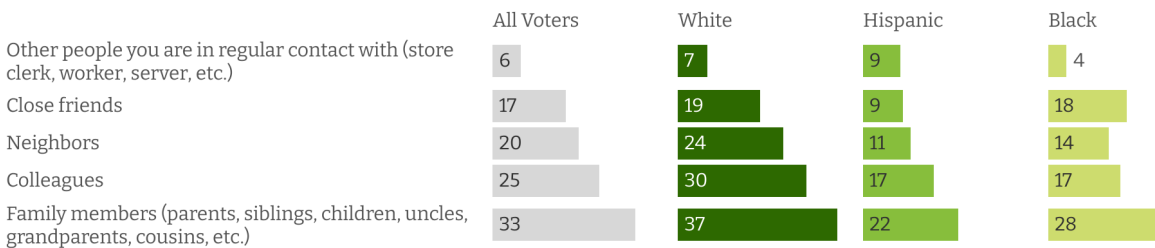
While wider social circles of Southern voters tend to be diverse, the more intimate the connection, the less likely respondents have multiple connections outside of their race or ethnicity. Six in 10 respondents report having regular contact with at least six people of a different race or ethnicity in their day-to-day lives. However, minorities of voters say they have at least six colleagues (41%), neighbors (35%), or close friends (27%) who are a different

race or ethnicity from themselves. Notably, white respondents are much less likely to have diverse environments in their neighborhood and their workplaces compared to their peers of color. For example, nearly a quarter of white respondents say they have no neighbors of a different race or ethnicity, compared to just 14% of Black respondents and 11% of Hispanic respondents. Similarly, 30% of white respondents report having no colleagues of a different race or ethnicity, compared to 17% of Black and 17% of Hispanic respondents. Additionally, respondents who live in urban areas are much more likely to have a diverse array of neighbors (46% six or more connections), colleagues (46%), and close friends (34%) than their rural and suburban counterparts. Meanwhile, rural respondents are the most likely to report having no close friends (18%), neighbors (35%), or colleagues (35%) of a different race.

Community Connections by Race/Ethnicity

Total "None"

● All Voters ● White ● Hispanic ● Black

	All Voters	White	Hispanic	Black
Other people you are in regular contact with (store clerk, worker, server, etc.)	6	7	9	4
Close friends	17	19	9	18
Neighbors	20	24	11	14
Colleagues	25	30	17	17
Family members (parents, siblings, children, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc.)	33	37	22	28

Q: How many of your family, close friends, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances are from another race or ethnicity than you?
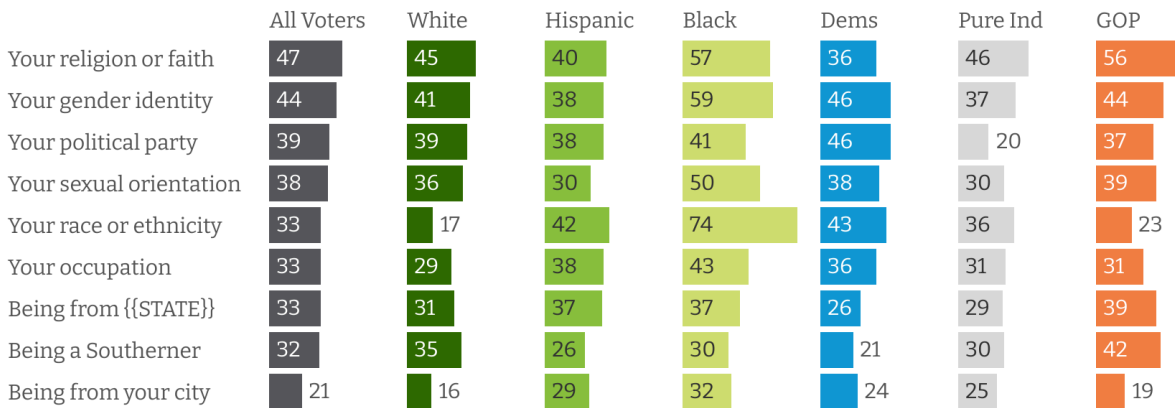
Core Values and Beliefs

Religion, or faith, emerges as a central aspect of the personal identity of Southern voters. Just under half (47%) consider religion or faith to be either an "extremely" or "very" important aspect of their identity, with this aspect being especially important to Black respondents (57%) and Republican respondents (56%). A significant portion of respondents also consider gender identity (44%) and political party (39%) to be central aspects of their identity. Notably, regional identity does not appear to resonate strongly as a factor of personal identity: just under a third of respondents say that being a Southerner is "extremely" or "very" important to their identity, and just 21% say the same of being from their city or town. The importance of race or ethnicity as an aspect of identity varies significantly based on the ethnicity of the respondent: Black respondents overwhelmingly consider race or ethnicity to be a central component of their identity (74%), compared to 42% of Hispanic respondents and just 17% of white respondents.
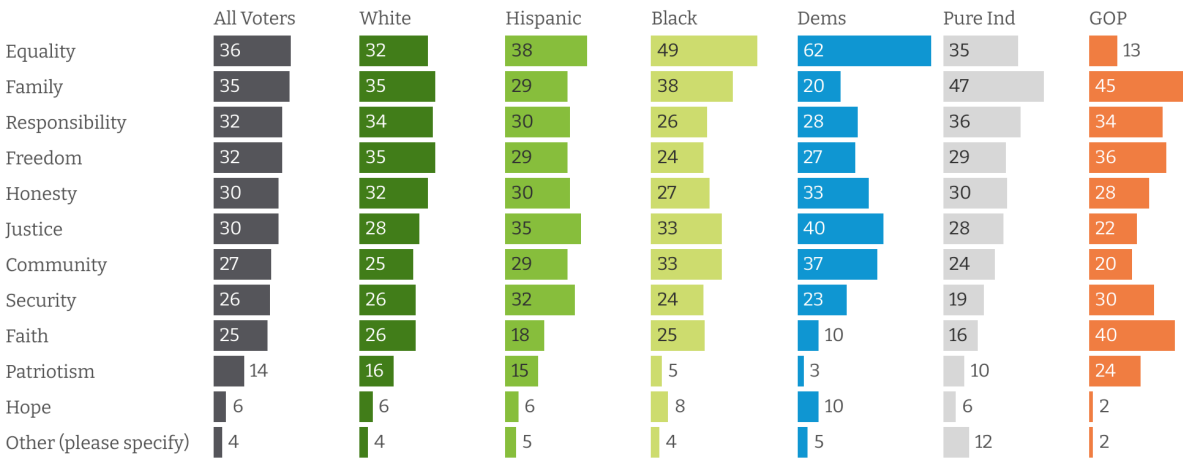
Key Components of Identity

Total "Extremely important" and "Very important"

	All Voters	White	Hispanic	Black	Dems	Pure Ind	GOP
Your religion or faith	47	45	40	57	36	46	56
Your gender identity	44	41	38	59	46	37	44
Your political party	39	39	38	41	46	20	37
Your sexual orientation	38	36	30	50	38	30	39
Your race or ethnicity	33	17	42	74	43	36	23
Your occupation	33	29	38	43	36	31	31
Being from {{STATE}}	33	31	37	37	26	29	39
Being a Southerner	32	35	26	30	21	30	42
Being from your city	21	16	29	32	24	25	19

Q: Every person has different roles and group memberships that shape their identity. How important are each of the following aspects in shaping your personal identity?

When it comes to key values, Southerners are divided on which ones are the most important for maintaining strong communities. Overall, the top most selected values for maintaining strong communities include equality (36%), Family (35%), Responsibility (32%), and Freedom (32%). However, these values vary significantly across gender and racial/ethnic lines. For example, women (44%), as well as Black (49%) and Hispanic (38%) respondents are most likely to select equality as a top value. In contrast, men (38%) and white (35%) respondents are most likely to select freedom. Partisan identity also plays a role in identifying key community values: A majority of Democrats (62%) identify equality as a top value, compared to just 13% of their Republican counterparts. The most selected value for Republican respondents is family (45%), chosen by only 20% of Democrats. The differences between rural and urban respondents align with the divergence across partisan identity: urban respondents are most likely to select equality as a core value (49%), compared to just 29% of rural respondents, while rural respondents most often choose family (only 28% of urbanites feel the same).

Top Community Values

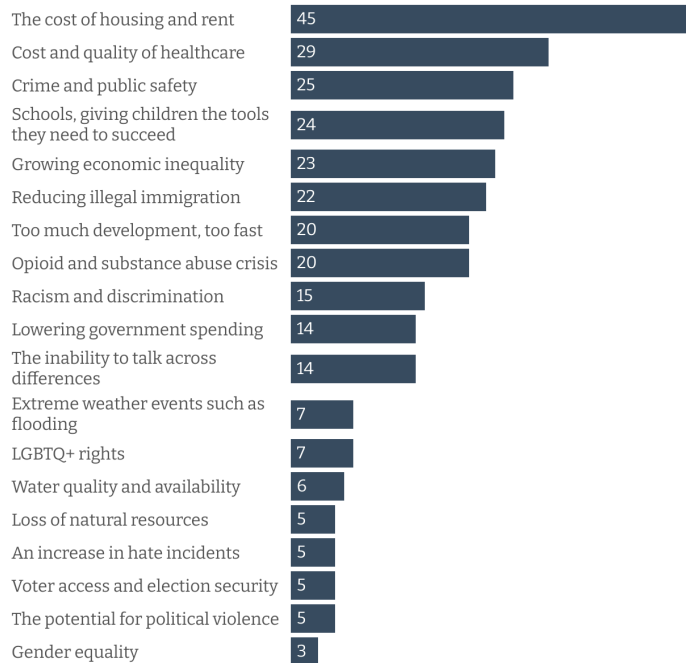|	All Voters	White	Hispanic	Black	Dems	Pure Ind	GOP
Equality	36	32	38	49	62	35	13
Family	35	35	29	38	20	47	45
Responsibility	32	34	30	26	28	36	34
Freedom	32	35	29	24	27	29	36
Honesty	30	32	30	27	33	30	28
Justice	30	28	35	33	40	28	22
Community	27	25	29	33	37	24	20
Security	26	26	32	24	23	19	30
Faith	25	26	18	25	10	16	40
Patriotism	14	16	15	5	3	10	24
Hope	6	6	6	8	10	6	2
Other (please specify)	4	4	5	4	5	12	2

Q: Focus now on yourself. In your opinion, which THREE of the following values are most important for maintaining strong local communities?

On Being "Left Behind": Economic and Other Systemic Barriers

Southern voters consider the cost of housing and rent to be one of the most central challenges facing their communities. Forty-five percent of voters select the cost of housing and rent as one of the top three biggest challenges in their communities. From there, respondents are less unified in what constitutes the remaining top issues, with cost and quality of healthcare (29%), crime and public safety (25%), and schools (24%) being the next most selected items. Gender equality (3%) is the least likely to be considered a central challenge for respondents' communities.

Southerners identify cost of living as the most significant barrier to accessing economic opportunity (44%). Not only is the high cost of
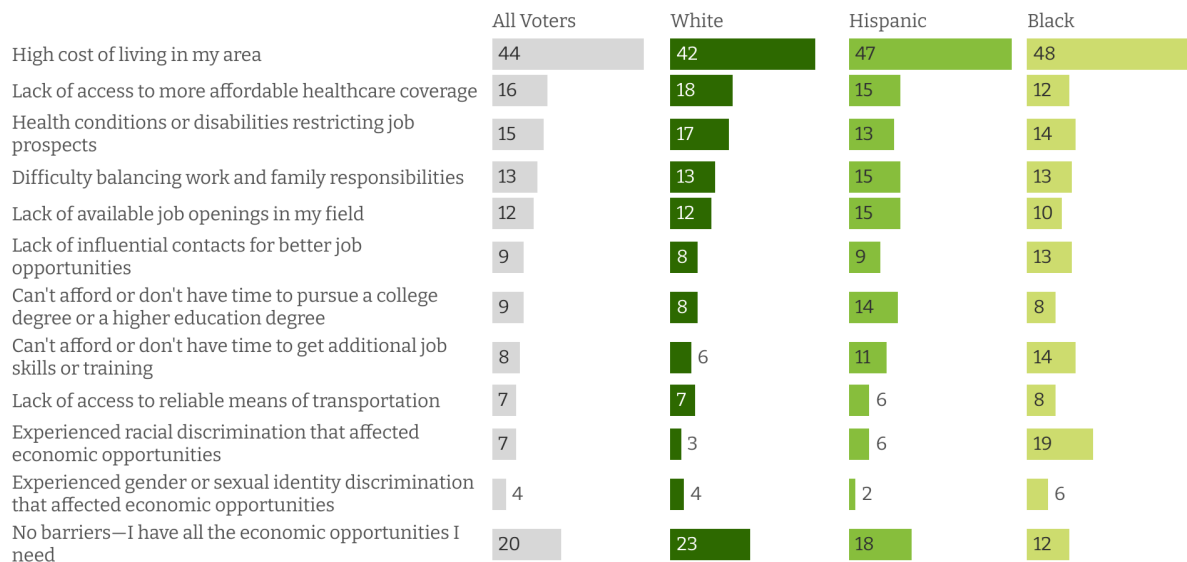
Community Challenges

The cost of housing and rent	45
Cost and quality of healthcare	29
Crime and public safety	25
Schools, giving children the tools they need to succeed	24
Growing economic inequality	23
Reducing illegal immigration	22
Too much development, too fast	20
Opioid and substance abuse crisis	20
Racism and discrimination	15
Lowering government spending	14
The inability to talk across differences	14
Extreme weather events such as flooding	7
LGBTQ+ rights	7
Water quality and availability	6
Loss of natural resources	5
An increase in hate incidents	5
Voter access and election security	5
The potential for political violence	5
Gender equality	3

Q: Below is a list of issues that people sometimes consider to be challenges in their communities. In your opinion, what are the THREE biggest challenges in your community? Please select UP TO THREE.

living the most commonly identified barrier to economic growth, but also the next most cited barriers – lack of access to affordable healthcare (16%) and health conditions or disabilities (15%) – are cited by much fewer respondents. At the same time, one in five respondents say that they experience no barriers to economic opportunity. Notably, men (25%), white respondents (23%), and republican respondents (28%) are the most likely to say they face no economic barriers.

Barriers to economic opportunity

	All Voters	White	Hispanic	Black
High cost of living in my area	44	42	47	48
Lack of access to more affordable healthcare coverage	16	18	15	12
Health conditions or disabilities restricting job prospects	15	17	13	14
Difficulty balancing work and family responsibilities	13	13	15	13
Lack of available job openings in my field	12	12	15	10
Lack of influential contacts for better job opportunities	9	8	9	13
Can't afford or don't have time to pursue a college degree or a higher education degree	9	8	14	8
Can't afford or don't have time to get additional job skills or training	8	6	11	14
Lack of access to reliable means of transportation	7	7	6	8
Experienced racial discrimination that affected economic opportunities	7	3	6	19
Experienced gender or sexual identity discrimination that affected economic opportunities	4	4	2	6
No barriers—I have all the economic opportunities I need	20	23	18	12

Q: There are different factors that may serve as barriers to economic opportunity. What are the top two hurdles you face when trying to improve your financial situation? Please select TWO.

When assessing the groups of people who are being "left behind," respondents from marginalized identity groups are most likely to say that their communities are the ones being forgotten. Although a majority of all respondents (54%) believe that people in their socio-economic bracket, regardless of their income, are being left behind, other types of identity groups show higher variability. For example, the vast majority of Black respondents (81%) feel that people who share their racial or ethnic background are being left behind, compared to 48% of Hispanic respondents, and just 29% of white respondents. Similarly, women (56%) are much more likely to say that people who share their gender are being left behind compared to men (39%).

When asked about their personal financial situation, education, and career, Southerners in roughly equal proportions say they are either, better off, worse off, or about the same as those around them on a local, state, and national level. At the same time, an overwhelmingly common sentiment among Southern respondents is that, regardless of their financial situation in comparison to others, they themselves are facing financial insecurity and barriers to an economically comfortable life.

"I feel that I have made decisions that make me better off in these situations." - *Woman, 35 to 49, Black, Strong Democrat, SC*

"Based on my community, I think I am doing better financially than others based solely on my employment status and industry. The problem is, I feel like I am barely keeping my head above water." - *Man, 35-49, Black, Independent lean Democrat,LA*
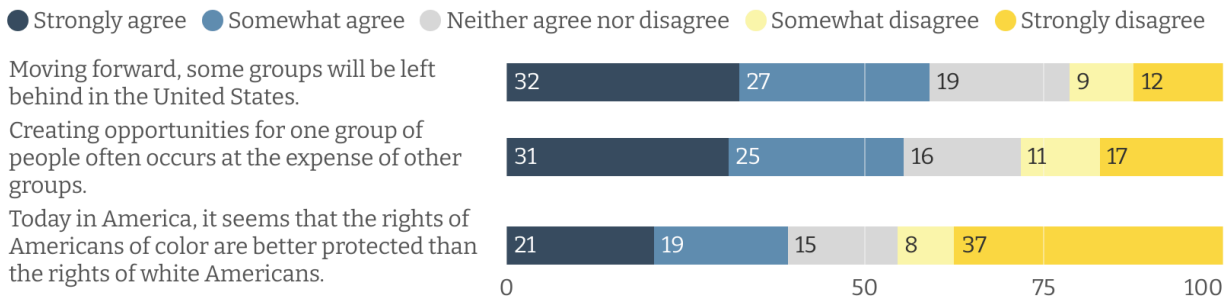
"I feel better off than many, but living paycheck to paycheck without being able to get ahead like the rich making our laws." -*Woman, 50 to 64, white, Strong Democrat, WV*

"I'm much worse off because I'm surrounded by baby boomers who 1)have 80% of the wealth, 2) own 90% of the property, 3) refuse to retire and give up higher paying jobs 4) charge out the f[***] a[**] for rent because "they earned it"" -*Man, 35 to 49, white, Strong Democrat, AL*

Those who believe that they are better off than those around them fall into two central categories: either they feel significantly better off because of their own financial security (either gained through privilege or hard work), or they feel better off because they are surrounded by peers or community members who are significantly struggling. Similarly, those who consider themselves to be on par with their peers often refer to the extremes of wealth: these respondents are better off than those who are homeless or in deep poverty, but do not reach the same status of the uber-wealthy. There is also a strong sentiment among those who believe they are roughly on the same level as others that everyone is in a worse position economically at the moment. Lastly, those who clearly express they are worse off compared to their peers primarily point to current economic conditions, and to a lesser extent, systemic factors such as racial and gender discrimination as why they feel this way.

Majorities of southern voters hold the mindset that some people will be left behind. Nearly six in 10 (59%) of voters agree with the statement, "Moving forward, some groups will be left behind in the United States." Moreover, a similar majority (55%) agree with the statement, "Creating opportunities for one group of people often occurs at the expense of other groups."

Perceptions of Inequality

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree

| Statement					
Moving forward, some groups will be left behind in the United States.	32	27	19	9	12
Creating opportunities for one group of people often occurs at the expense of other groups.	31	25	16	11	17
Today in America, it seems that the rights of Americans of color are better protected than the rights of white Americans.	21	19	15	8	37

Scale: 0 — 50 — 75 — 100

Q: Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following:

Voters' perceptions of who is affected by inequality and how is strongly on racial and ethnic lines. While majorities of voters across the board believe that going forward, some groups will be left behind, Black (78%) and Hispanic (60%) respondents are much more likely to feel this way compared to their white counterparts (53%). Moreover, nearly half (47%) of white voters believe that the rights of Americans of color are better protected than those of white Americans; only 36% of Hispanic respondents, and just 14% of Black respondents, feel the same way.

Perceptions of Inequality by Race/Ethnicity

Total "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree"

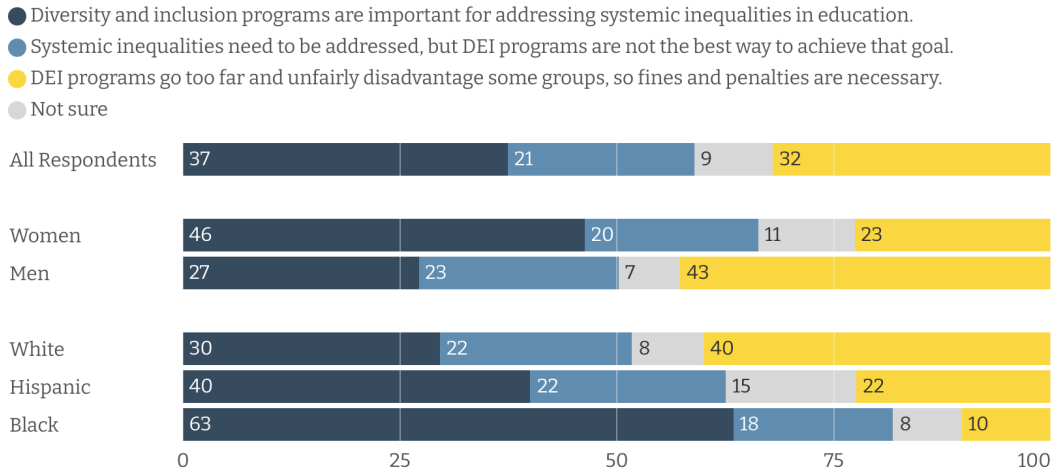| Statement	All	White	Hispanic	Black
Creating opportunities for one group of people often occurs at the expense of other groups.	55	56	47	57
Moving forward, some groups will be left behind in the United States.	59	53	60	78
Today in America, it seems that the rights of Americans of color are better protected than the rights of white Americans.	39	47	36	14
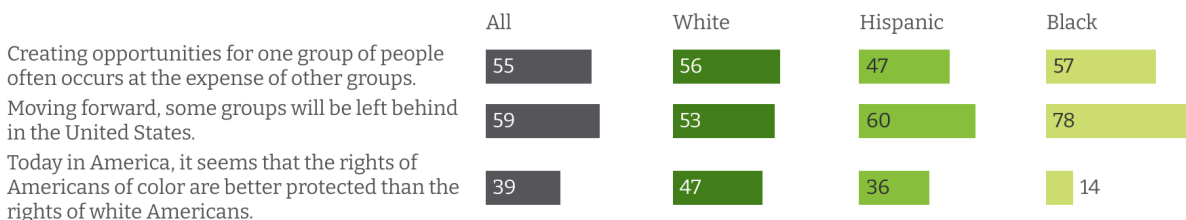
Q: Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following:

Southerners are divided on the presence of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in higher education spaces. When asked about Trump's proposal to end DEI programs and fine colleges and universities who have promoted such programs, 37% say that DEI programs are important and should not be ended, while 32% believe that DEI programs go too far and that fines and penalties must be implemented. An additional 21% most closely align with the middle-ground statement, "Systemic inequalities need to be addressed, but DEI programs are not the best way to achieve that goal" and 9% are unsure. Women (46%), Voters under 35 (49%), Black voters (63%), and college-educated voters (45%) are the strongest supporters of continuing the use of DEI programs to address systemic inequalities

in higher education. In contrast, pluralities of men (43%), white (40%), and non-college-educated voters (34%) feel that DEI goes too far and align with Trump's proposed policy.

Perceptions of DEI Programs in Higher Education

● Diversity and inclusion programs are important for addressing systemic inequalities in education.
● Systemic inequalities need to be addressed, but DEI programs are not the best way to achieve that goal.
● DEI programs go too far and unfairly disadvantage some groups, so fines and penalties are necessary.
● Not sure

All Respondents	37	21	9	32
Women	46	20	11	23
Men	27	23	7	43
White	30	22	8	40
Hispanic	40	22	15	22
Black	63	18	8	10

0   25   50   75   100

Q: Some political leaders, including Donald Trump, have proposed ending diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in colleges and universities. They also want to fine schools that promote DEI and use the money to compensate people who claim these programs have harmed them. Which statement comes closest to your view?

Participation in and Perceptions of Civic and Political Engagement

Southerners report high rates of civic engagement in the past year, with the most common civic action being voting (89%). Significant portions of voters also report supporting or promoting an issue of importance online (48%), asking friends or family to support a cause or vote (46%), and donating to a cause, candidate, or political party (43%). At the same time, voters are least likely to have gotten involved in high-commitment ways, such as organizing community efforts (10%), attending school board or PTA meetings (10%), or attending a demonstration (14%). Only 3% of respondents report not doing any of the civic actions listed.

Certain demographic groups demonstrate higher levels of civic participation than others. For example, with the exception of being active in church, women report higher rates of engaging in different civic activities compared to men. A similar pattern occurs across ideological lines: with the exception of voting and church participation, Democrats report higher rates of civic engagement in the past year than their Republican counterparts. Common modes of civic engagement also vary based on race. For example, white respondents are more likely to have contacted an elected official (45%), compared to Black (34%) and Hispanic (27%) respondents. Meanwhile, Black respondents are much more likely

to have reported mentoring a young person (40%) compared to their Hispanic (23%) and white (25%) counterparts.

Respondents identify two central barriers that prevent individuals from being effective in making change in their communities. One of the most common barriers respondents cite is the lack of time and motivation people have to be the ones to make the changes they want to see. Within this problem, a significant portion of respondents feel that even with time or motivation, individuals alone cannot be effective in making desired changes. Another common obstacle people mention is widespread apathy or lack of empathy for others. This understanding of apathy varies, from those who feel that it stems from bias to others who see it as an outcome of larger hopelessness of individual action. Some people also mention that the lack of community connection also plays a role in creating barriers to change.

Common Forms of Civic Engagement

	All	White	Hispanic	Black
Voted in an election	89	93	81	79
Supported or promoted an issue of importance to me on social media or online	48	52	34	46
Asked friends or family to support a cause or register or vote	46	45	45	52
Donated to a cause, candidate, or political party	43	46	42	36
Contacted an elected official (via email, phone call, letter, etc)	40	45	27	34
Been active in your church	30	30	26	31
Participated in a moderated conversation with people who hold views that are different from your own	29	25	36	38
Mentored a young person	28	25	23	40
Attended a town hall or community forum	23	21	24	26
Volunteered for a cause, candidate, or political party	21	22	17	20
Attended a demonstration for or against a candidate, person, or issue	14	13	14	19
Participated in a PTA or school board meeting	10	8	14	16
Organized community efforts	10	8	10	15
None of these	3	2	7	5

Q: These are some things that some people do to get involved and make changes in their community. Which of the following have you done in the last year? Select all that apply.

"
"Not having enough time to research things because we have to spend so much time working to afford basic necessities" -Woman, 35 to 49, Hispanic, Weak Democrat, GA

"People refuse to get involved. They sit back and want others to do instead." -Woman, 50 to 64, white, Independent lean Republican, AL

"The idea that what we do on a personal level will not have a big impact [on the] big picture. It feels hopeless. Getting people to care and set time aside from their personal/daily responsibilities" -Woman, 18 to 34, Hispanic, Strong Democrat, VA

"Any sense of community we may have had naturally was beaten out of us, replaced with dangerous rugged individualism. people believe they dont [sic] need community and or cannot count on others. people are worked so hard they have no energy to spare." - Woman, 50-64, Black, Strong Democrat, FL

On a systemic level, respondents overwhelmingly point to organizational and government corruption as a central barrier to change. Many respondents see any large organization, from businesses to nonprofits to the government, as corrupted or at risk of being corrupted by wealth and special interests that inhibit change. Other barriers do arise as well: small but significant portions also mention widespread lack of education and the proliferation of misinformation as central to preventing effective organizational action. A small portion also explicitly mentions systemic racism as a barrier for organizations to make effective change.

> "Paid for politicians keep individuals out of the process and too many hoops to jump through for organizations to participate." -*Woman, 65+, white, Weak Republican, GA*
>
> "The federal government, mainstream media pushing agendas that don't agree with 90% of the population" -*Man, 50 to 64, Hispanic, Pure Independent, GA*
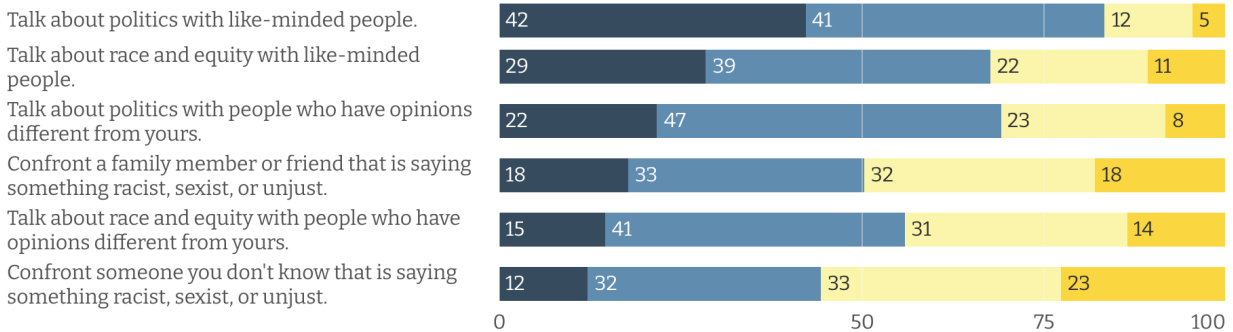>
> "Lack of education in what exactly they are voting for/against. Single issue voters who don't take the time to educate themselves about the candidates or all the issues. Social media allowing foreign interference in our elections, lack of caring on the behalf of the voters and a lack of integrity on behalf of the candidates." -*Woman, 50 to 64, white, Strong Democrat, TN*
>
> "This country was built on racism. Where one skin color gets you privileges and any other skin color doesn't." -*Woman, 50-64, Black, Strong Democrat, NC*

A significant portion of Southerners report often discussing politics with like-minded people, but when it comes to approaching more difficult topics or opposing viewpoints, the frequency drops off significantly. Just over four in 10 (42%) of respondents say they often talk about politics with like-minded people, with an additional 41% saying they sometimes do it. However, voters are much less likely to regularly talk about race (29% often), or talk about either issue with folks of differing viewpoints: just 22% of respondents report often having conversations about politics with people of different views, and 18% say the same about conversations about race with people of different views.

Frequency of Conversations around Race and Politics

● Often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never

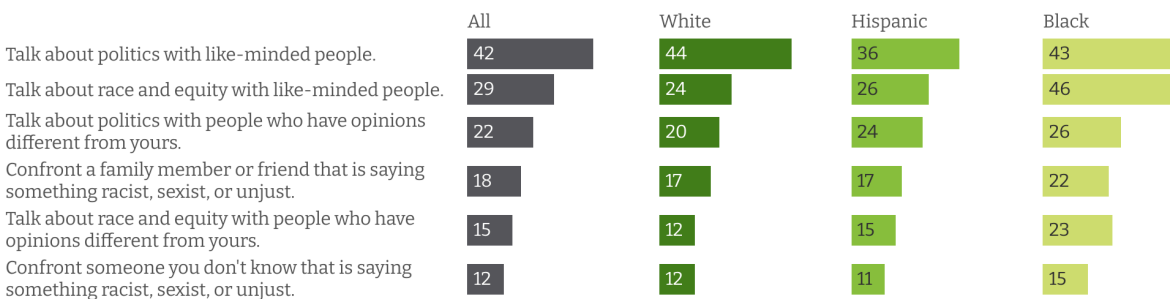|	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Talk about politics with like-minded people.	42	41	12	5
Talk about race and equity with like-minded people.	29	39	22	11
Talk about politics with people who have opinions different from yours.	22	47	23	8
Confront a family member or friend that is saying something racist, sexist, or unjust.	18	33	32	18
Talk about race and equity with people who have opinions different from yours.	15	41	31	14
Confront someone you don't know that is saying something racist, sexist, or unjust.	12	32	33	23

Q: How often do you find yourself doing...?

The frequency of these types of discussions varies significantly across ideological and racial/ethnic lines. Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to have regular conversations about politics with both people who share their views (50% vs. 38%), and with people who don't (24% vs. 19%). Democrats are also more likely to say they often confront either someone they know (26%) or a stranger (18%) who says something unjust compared to their Republican counterparts (10% and 8% respectively). When it comes to conversations about race, Black respondents are much more likely to say they have these conversations with like-minded people (46%), compared to Hispanic (26%) and white respondents (24%); they are also more likely to have conversations about race with those of different opinions (23%) compared to their white and Hispanic peers (12% and 15%). Additionally, though few people say they "often" confront others for doing or saying something unjust, it is white Democrats who are the most likely of any group to report frequently confronting friends and family (29%) and someone they don't know (20%) when they hear or see something unjust.

Frequency of Conversations around Race and Politics

Total "Often"

	All	White	Hispanic	Black
Talk about politics with like-minded people.	42	44	36	43
Talk about race and equity with like-minded people.	29	24	26	46
Talk about politics with people who have opinions different from yours.	22	20	24	26
Confront a family member or friend that is saying something racist, sexist, or unjust.	18	17	17	22
Talk about race and equity with people who have opinions different from yours.	15	12	15	23
Confront someone you don't know that is saying something racist, sexist, or unjust.	12	12	11	15

Q: How often do you find yourself doing...?

# Perceptions of Democracy and Politics in a Post-Election South

Few Southern voters believe that democracy is currently working in the United States. Just 7% of voters feel that democracy in the United States is strong and working well. About three in 10 feel that our democracy is facing challenges but is still functioning. In contrast, 60% of voters have a more negative view of the current state of democracy, with 38% saying that it is currently in trouble and at risk of failing, and 22% saying that it is no longer functioning. Notably, Hispanic respondents are slightly more likely to have a positive outlook on American democracy (43%) compared to both white (36%) and Black (34%) respondents. Additionally, while few people, regardless of their ideology, feel that democracy is currently working well, there is some partisan difference: 74% of Democrats believe that democracy is either at risk of failing or is no longer functioning, compared to 61% of Independents, and less than half (47%) of Republicans.

Health of American Democracy

- Strong and working well
- Facing challenges but still functioning
- Not sure
- In trouble and at risk of failing
- No longer functioning as a democracy

	Strong and working well	Facing challenges but still functioning	Not sure	In trouble and at risk of failing	No longer functioning as a democracy
All	7	29	4	38	22
White	8	28		39	22
Hispanic	8	35	6	31	19
Black		31	5	39	22
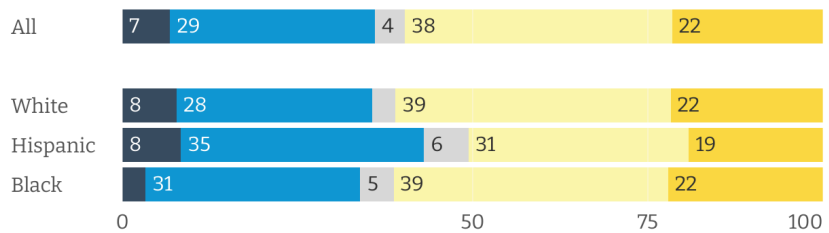
When asked to describe what democracy means, respondents were roughly divided across three central ideas. For some respondents, democracy is tied to the idea of freedom and liberty, although definitions of "freedom" vary significantly. For some, freedom in democracy translates into freedom of expression and of opportunity; for others, it relates more directly to minimal government interference. Others define democracy through the presence of majority rule and often mention the importance of equal representation and the ability to hold government officials accountable. Lastly, another common description was of a government that works for all people, rather than a select few. Many of those who hold this definition, however, also mention that they do not think the system is currently working this way, either blaming the current government or wealthy actors for the breakdown of the system.

Although many definitions of democracy have unifying characteristics across political ideologies, clear partisan differences exist when it comes to defining democracy. Notably, it is overwhelmingly Democratic respondents who define democracy as a government working for everyone, not just a few. In contrast, a small but significant portion of Republican respondents reject the idea of direct election and majority rule in favor of a traditional republic, and equate democracy with "mob rule" or extreme left ideologies.

"My voice: the freedom to live free from tyranny and oppression. The right to choose my religion, partner, career, and way to live." - *Woman, 35-49, white, Independent lean Democratic, NC*
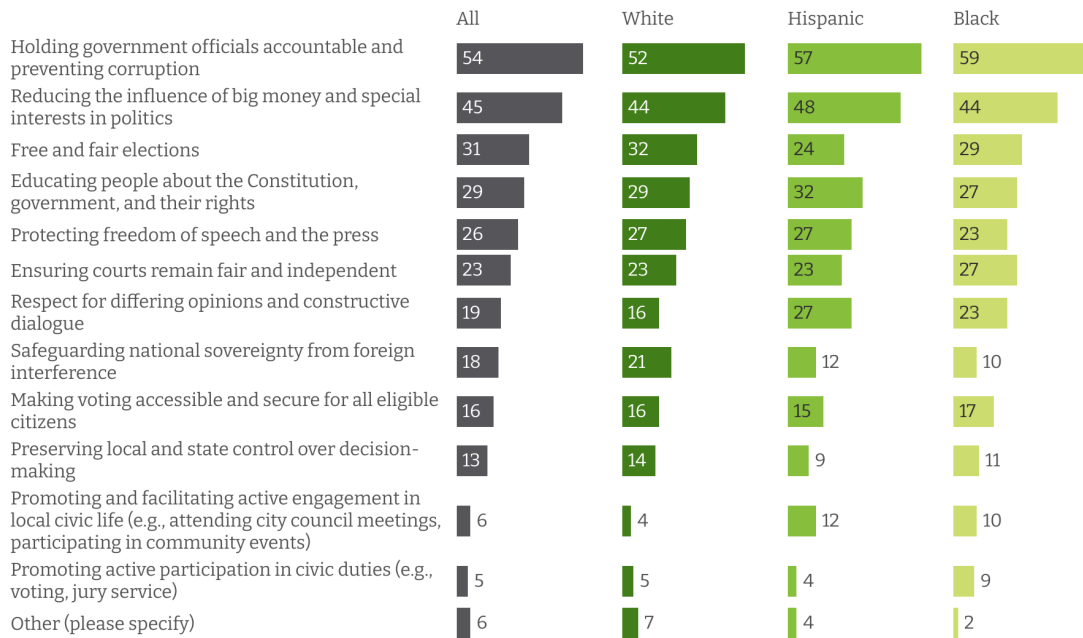
"Freedom to do what I want without government interference" - *Man, 65+, Hispanic, Independent lean Republican, TX*

"Democracy should mean that each citizen has a voice in matters that affect them. In a Democracy, every citizen should be treated Equally, Equitably and Fairly regardless of their ethnicity or socioeconomic status." - *Man, 50-64, Black, Strong Democrat, MS*

"The United States is not a Democracy, we are a Constitutional Republic. The problem is Marxist Democrats trying to turn us into a Democracy, which is Mob Rule and very dangerous to individual liberty." - *Man, 50-64, white, Strong Republican, MS*

Government accountability and the reduction of special interests in politics rise to the top as the most important aspects of maintaining a healthy democracy. When asked which aspects are more important to maintain a healthy democracy, respondents were most likely to select "Holding government officials accountable and preventing corruption" (54%), and "Reducing the influence of big money and special interests in politics" (45%). In contrast, voters are least likely to consider civic involvement and civic engagement as an essential component of a healthy democracy: just 6% select "Promoting and facilitating active engagement in local civic life" and only 5% select "Promoting active participation in civic duties." While significant portions of voters view holding government officials accountable and reducing the influence of special interests as essential to a healthy democracy, there are some key differences in perspective by race and ethnicity. For example, Hispanic respondents are less likely (24%) than their Black (29%) and white (32%) to consider "Free and fair elections" as a central aspect of a healthy democracy. Additionally, white voters are more likely to consider "Safeguarding national sovereignty from foreign interference" as a central component of healthy democracy (21%), while few Black (10%) and Hispanic (12%) respondents feel the same.

Key Components of a Healthy Democracy

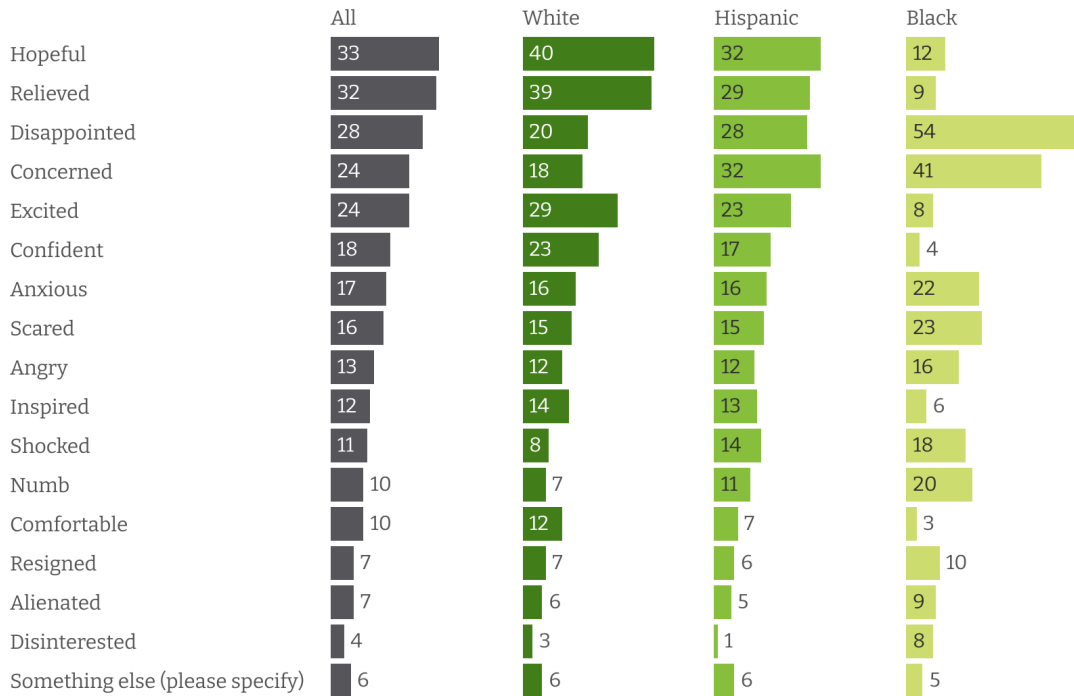|	All	White	Hispanic	Black
Holding government officials accountable and preventing corruption	54	52	57	59
Reducing the influence of big money and special interests in politics	45	44	48	44
Free and fair elections	31	32	24	29
Educating people about the Constitution, government, and their rights	29	29	32	27
Protecting freedom of speech and the press	26	27	27	23
Ensuring courts remain fair and independent	23	23	23	27
Respect for differing opinions and constructive dialogue	19	16	27	23
Safeguarding national sovereignty from foreign interference	18	21	12	10
Making voting accessible and secure for all eligible citizens	16	16	15	17
Preserving local and state control over decision-making	13	14	9	11
Promoting and facilitating active engagement in local civic life (e.g., attending city council meetings, participating in community events)	6	4	12	10
Promoting active participation in civic duties (e.g., voting, jury service)	5	5	4	9
Other (please specify)	6	7	4	2

Q: Which of the following do you think is most important to maintaining a healthy democracy? Select up to 3.

Southern voters feel a wide array of emotions in the face of the 2024 presidential election results. When asked to categorize how they feel about the results of the presidential election, voters most often selected "hopeful (33%)" and "relieved" (32%). At the same time, significant portions of voters also say they feel disappointed (28%) and concerned (24%). These emotions are roughly driven by partisanship: Republican respondents are overwhelmingly relieved (60%), hopeful (59%), and excited (45%). Meanwhile, nearly six in 10 (59%) Democrats say they are disappointed, and significant portions report being concerned (41%) and scared (34%). Additionally, this clear divide in reaction can be seen across generational, gender, and racial/ethnic lines. Voters under 35 (36%), women (32%), and - most notably - Black voters (54%), are the most likely to report feeling disappointed. Meanwhile, men, voters 50 and older, and white voters are much more likely than their counterparts to say they feel hopeful or relieved.
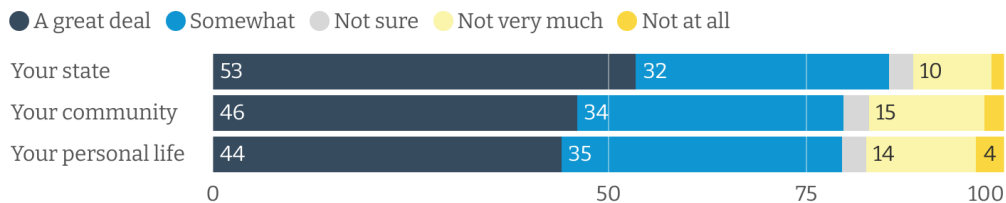
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Feelings toward the 2024 Election

	All	White	Hispanic	Black
Hopeful	33	40	32	12
Relieved	32	39	29	9
Disappointed	28	20	28	54
Concerned	24	18	32	41
Excited	24	29	23	8
Confident	18	23	17	4
Anxious	17	16	16	22
Scared	16	15	15	23
Angry	13	12	12	16
Inspired	12	14	13	6
Shocked	11	8	14	18
Numb	10	7	11	20
Comfortable	10	12	7	3
Resigned	7	7	6	10
Alienated	7	6	5	9
Disinterested	4	3	1	8
Something else (please specify)	6	6	6	5

Q: Which of the following best describes how you feel about the 2024 presidential election results? Select up to THREE.

Large portions of Southern voters believe that their personal lives, communities, and states will be at least somewhat - if not largely - affected by the outcome of the 2024 election. A majority (53%) of voters believe that the outcomes of the presidential election will affect their state a great deal, and significant pluralities believe the same about their communities (46%) and personal lives (44%). Notably, Black and Hispanic respondents are slightly more likely to believe their states (60%) and communities (51%) will be impacted "a great deal" compared to white respondents (50% and 43% respectively).

Regional Impacts of Trump's Reelection

● A great deal ● Somewhat ○ Not sure ○ Not very much ● Not at all

	A great deal	Somewhat	Not sure	Not very much	Not at all
Your state	53	32	10		
Your community	46	34		15	
Your personal life	44	35		14	4

Q: How much do you think the outcome of the 2024 Presidential election will affect_____?

Regional Impacts of Trump's Reelection by Race/Ethnicity

Total "A great deal"

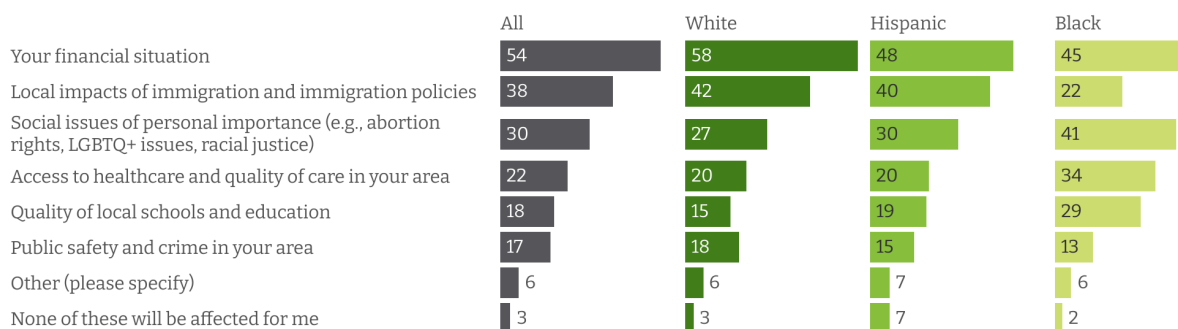|	All	White	Hispanic	Black
Your state	53	50	63	59
Your community	46	43	50	53
Your personal life	44	45	45	42
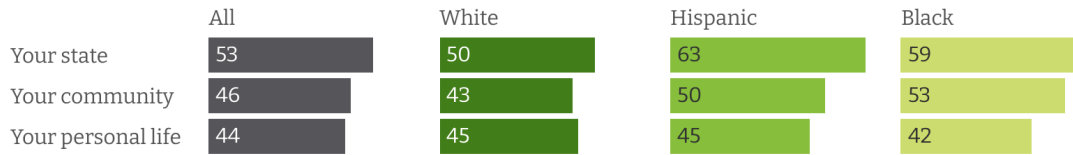
Q: How much do you think the outcome of the 2024 Presidential election will affect_____?

Southerners believe that their financial situation will be one of the top areas in their life most affected by Trump's reelection. When asked what they believe will be the areas in their lives most affected by Trump's return to office, respondents were most likely to say their financial situation (54%), followed by local impacts of immigration and immigration policies (38%). Just 3% of voters say that none of the local issues listed will be affected by Trump's presidency.

While personal financial situation rises to the top as the most affected factor across the board, other commonly chosen factors vary based on key demographic factors. Notably, men (43%), respondents over 50 (43%), white (42%), and Hispanic (40%) respondents select "local impacts of immigration and immigration policies" at much higher rates than their counterparts. Meanwhile, the youngest cohort of respondents (39%), Black respondents (41%), and college-educated respondents (36%) are much more likely to select "social issues of personal importance" as a critically affected area. There is also a clear partisan divide when it comes to issues that will be most affected: outside of personal finances, Republicans identify immigration (54%) as a top issue to be affected by Trump, while Democrats (54%) identify social issues.

Areas Most Affected by Trump's Reelection

	All	White	Hispanic	Black
Your financial situation	54	58	48	45
Local impacts of immigration and immigration policies	38	42	40	22
Social issues of personal importance (e.g., abortion rights, LGBTQ+ issues, racial justice)	30	27	30	41
Access to healthcare and quality of care in your area	22	20	20	34
Quality of local schools and education	18	15	19	29
Public safety and crime in your area	17	18	15	13
Other (please specify)	6	6	7	6
None of these will be affected for me	3	3	7	2

Q: Which of the following areas in your life do you expect to be most affected by Trump's reelection? Select up to TWO.

Despite the many positive emotions arising from Trump's reelection, few voters believe that his return to office will bring people together. Only 26% of respondents believe that Trump's reelection will bring people closer together in their community. Meanwhile, nearly four in 10 (39%) of respondents believe that Trump's reelection will create more division, and an additional 28% believe that things will stay about the same. There is a notable racial/ethnic difference on how respondents believe Trump's reeleciton will impact community cohesion: white voters are roughly split as to whether Trump will unify (29%), divide (32%), or have minimal effect (33%) on their communities, while significant portions of Hispanic (44%) and Black (60%) respondents believe Trump to be a dividing force in their communities. These divisions are also mirrored along partisan lines. Democratic respondents universally believe that Trump's second term will create more division (78%) or keep things about the same (12%). Meanwhile, Republican respondents are divided; a plurality believes that Trump will bring communities closer (46%), but an additional 42% believe that things will stay the same.

Impact of Trump's Reelection on Community

● Bring people closer together ● Things will stay about the same ● Create more division ● Not sure

All	26	28	8	39
White	29	33	7	32
Hispanic	25	21	10	44
Black	14	17	9	60
Dems	4	12	6	78
Pure Ind	20	28	11	40
GOP	46	42	9	4
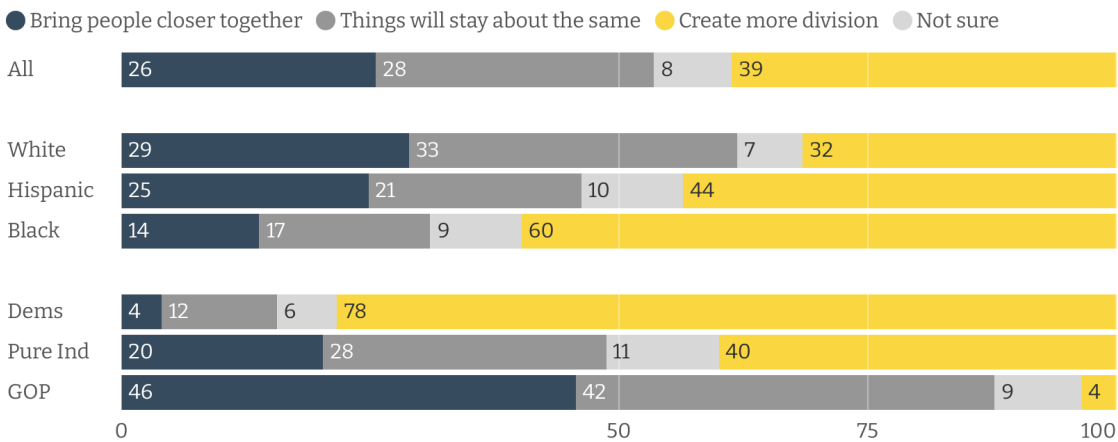
Q: Do you think Trump's reelection will bring people in your community closer together or create more division?
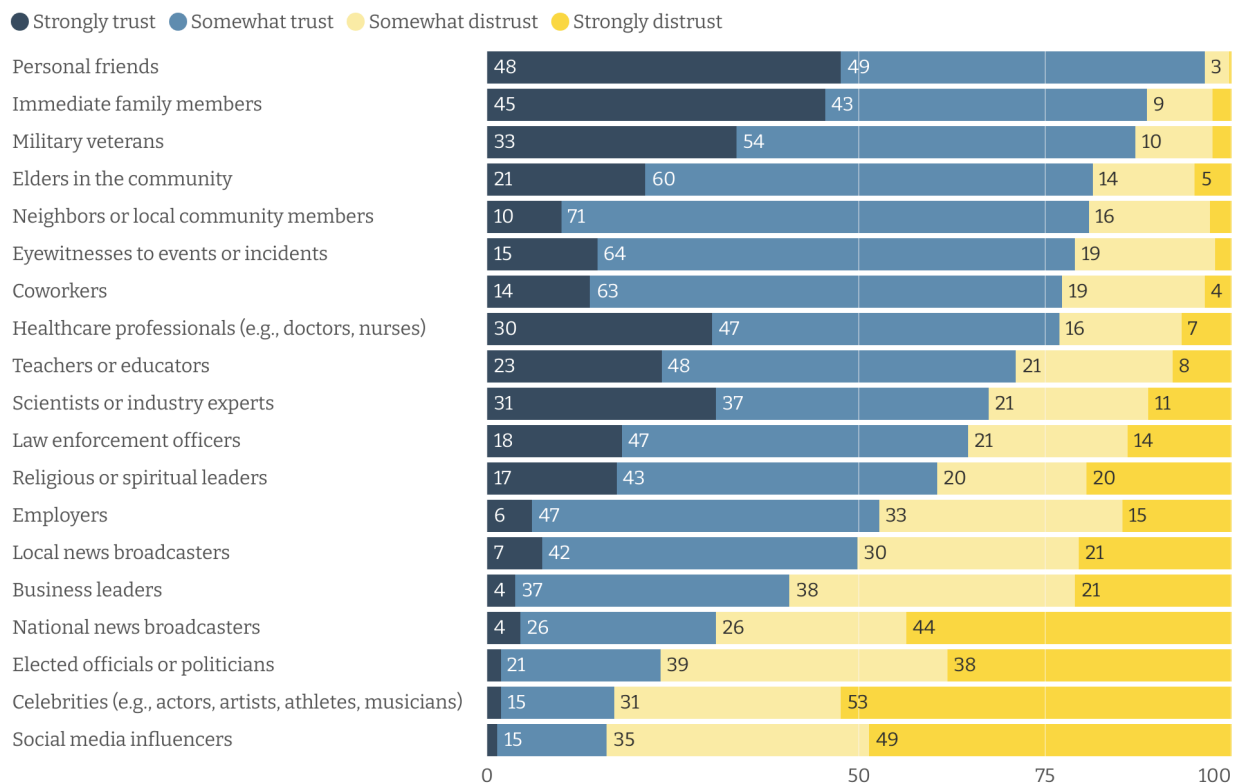
Trusted Sources and Access to Information

Southern voters display high trust in their close circles when it comes to providing news and information. Southern voters universally trust their personal friends (96%), and show high levels of trust with their immediate family (89%), community elders (81%), and neighbors (81%) when it comes to the information these sources provide. Outside of these personal sources, respondents show extremely high trust in information from veterans (87%), eyewitnesses of events (79%), and healthcare professionals (77%). In contrast, respondents are least likely to trust sources with little connection to their personal world, such as celebrities (17%) and social media influencers (16%). Voters also display significant

distrust of elected officials (77% distrust) and national news broadcasters (69%) as sources of information.

Notably, there are key racial and ethnic differences when it comes to trusted sources. Both Hispanic and Black respondents are more likely to trust local news broadcasters (57% and 62%) as well as national news broadcasters (41% and 46%) compared to their white counterparts (24%). Respondents of color are also more likely to trust industry experts in education (77% Hispanic, 83% Black) and science and industry (76% Hispanic, 74% Black) compared to white respondents (64% and 67%). In contrast, white voters show higher trust in law enforcement officers (69%) compared to Hispanic (62%) and Black (53%) respondents.

Trusted Information Sources

● Strongly trust ● Somewhat trust ● Somewhat distrust ● Strongly distrust

Source	Strongly trust	Somewhat trust	Somewhat distrust	Strongly distrust
Personal friends	48	49	3	
Immediate family members	45	43	9	
Military veterans	33	54	10	
Elders in the community	21	60	14	5
Neighbors or local community members	10	71	16	
Eyewitnesses to events or incidents	15	64	19	
Coworkers	14	63	19	4
Healthcare professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses)	30	47	16	7
Teachers or educators	23	48	21	8
Scientists or industry experts	31	37	21	11
Law enforcement officers	18	47	21	14
Religious or spiritual leaders	17	43	20	20
Employers	6	47	33	15
Local news broadcasters	7	42	30	21
Business leaders	4	37	38	21
National news broadcasters	4	26	26	44
Elected officials or politicians	21	39	38	
Celebrities (e.g., actors, artists, athletes, musicians)	15	31	53	
Social media influencers	15	35	49	

0 50 75 100

Q: For each of the following people or groups, please indicate how much you trust the information they provide.

In the case where trusted sources conflict, the most common reaction for Southern voters is to rely on personal research into the topic. Many respondents discuss either doing their own, further research after receiving conflicting information, or opting to rely on the source they deem to provide more clear, reliable, and unbiased information. However, there exist several other ways that Southerners make choices about who to trust: a small but significant portion of respondents discuss relying on their gut instinct in determining which sources to

trust, and others discuss relying on faith and prayer. Notably, respondents who have a high school education or less, as well as Trump 2020 and 2024 voters, are slightly more likely to go with their gut instincts rather than pursue further research.

"Whoever has either more details/ stronger information, OR whoever has actual verifiable information that they can back up with sources" - *Woman, 18-34, Hispanic, Pure Independent, TX*

"I research trusted sites, and consider who has a more accurate news history." - *Woman, 65+, strong Democrat, Hispanic/Latino, TX*

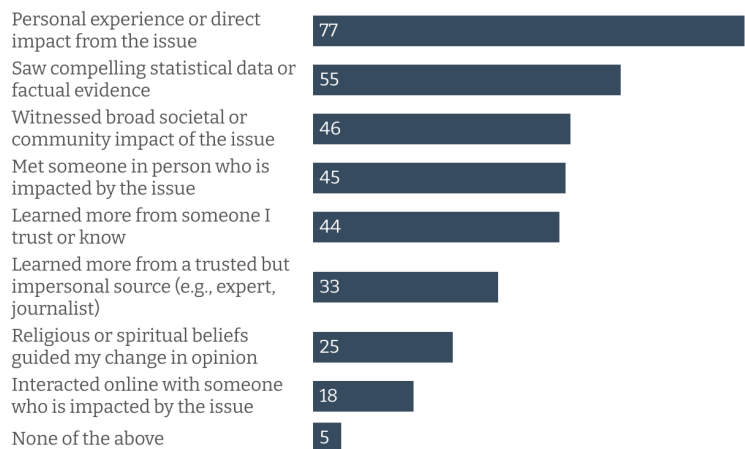"Intuition" - *Man, 50 to 64, white, Strong Democrat, NC*

"I trust what the Bible says. I am discerning in my news media intake." - *Woman, 50 to 64, white, Strong Republican, MS*

Personal experience creates the most profound influence on voters' opinions on social issues. A large majority of respondents (77%) select personal experience or direct impact from the issue as a factor that has caused them to change their stance on a social issue. The next most commonly selected factor is seeing compelling data or factual evidence (55%).

Other personal interactions such as witnessing broad societal or community impacts (46%), meeting someone impacted by the issue (45%), or learning more from a trusted or known source (44%) also influence a significant portion of voters to change their opinion.

Top Influences in a Change of Opinion

Personal experience or direct impact from the issue	77
Saw compelling statistical data or factual evidence	55
Witnessed broad societal or community impact of the issue	46
Met someone in person who is impacted by the issue	45
Learned more from someone I trust or know	44
Learned more from a trusted but impersonal source (e.g., expert, journalist)	33
Religious or spiritual beliefs guided my change in opinion	25
Interacted online with someone who is impacted by the issue	18
None of the above	5

Q: What factors have influenced you to change your stance or opinion on a social issue? Select all that apply.

Southerners get their news from a variety of sources, but significant portions rely on social media and local news outlets. When asked where they get their news about national and local politics, respondents were most likely to select Facebook (31%) as a go-to
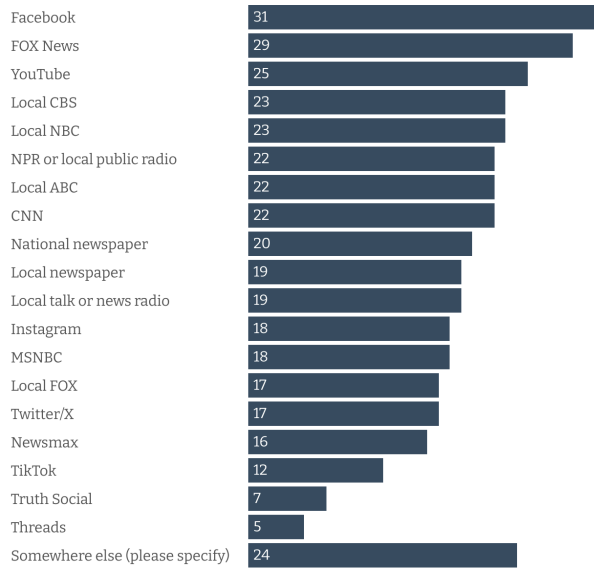
source, followed by FOX News (29%), and Youtube. Local channels such as CBS (23%), NBC (23%), and ABC (22%) are also popular. There is a distinct generational divide in primary media channels, namely, the youngest cohort of respondents (ages 18-34) is most likely to turn to social media sites like YouTube (34%), Instagram (34%), and TikTok (28%), and do so at much higher rates than their older counterparts. There also exists some key differences by race and ethnicity. For example, white respondents are most likely to turn to Facebook (32%) and FOX News (32%). Hispanic respondents also consider Facebook to be a top source (31%), but also commonly turn to YouTube for information (31%). In contrast, Black respondents are most likely to rely on local news outlets such as their local station of ABC (38%), CBS (38%), or NBC (38%).
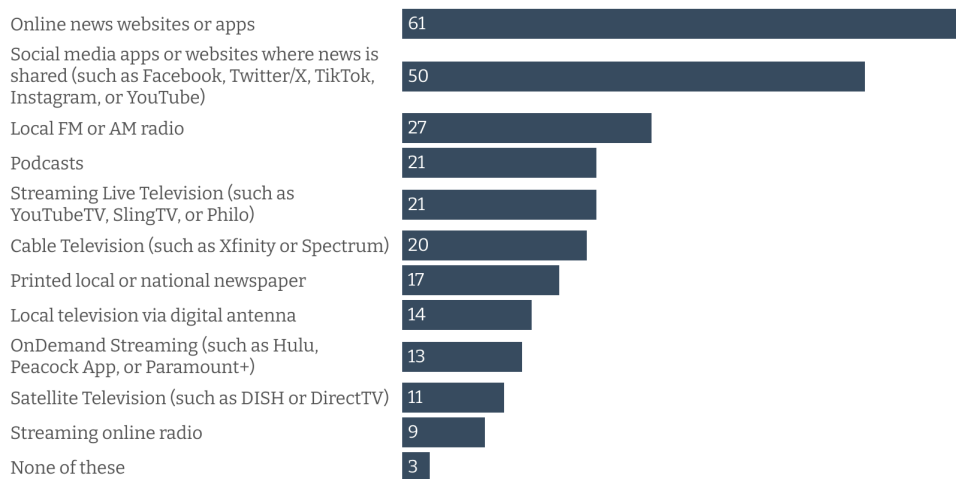
When it comes to the types of channels people use to access news, voters largely rely on online news and social media sources. Just over six in 10 respondents say they access news via online news websites or apps, and half say they use social media apps or websites to access news. Respondents are least likely to use online radio (9%), and satellite television (11%) to access news. Although majorities across age groups use online news or apps, voters under 35 are much more likely to access news through social media (74%) compared to any other age group

Top News Sources

Source	Value
Facebook	31
FOX News	29
YouTube	25
Local CBS	23
Local NBC	23
NPR or local public radio	22
Local ABC	22
CNN	22
National newspaper	20
Local newspaper	19
Local talk or news radio	19
Instagram	18
MSNBC	18
Local FOX	17
Twitter/X	17
Newsmax	16
TikTok	12
Truth Social	7
Threads	5
Somewhere else (please specify)	24

Q: How do you get most of your news about national and local politics and issues? Please select all that apply.

Top Information Channels

Channel	Value
Online news websites or apps	61
Social media apps or websites where news is shared (such as Facebook, Twitter/X, TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube)	50
Local FM or AM radio	27
Podcasts	21
Streaming Live Television (such as YouTubeTV, SlingTV, or Philo)	21
Cable Television (such as Xfinity or Spectrum)	20
Printed local or national newspaper	17
Local television via digital antenna	14
OnDemand Streaming (such as Hulu, Peacock App, or Paramount+)	13
Satellite Television (such as DISH or DirectTV)	11
Streaming online radio	9
None of these	3

Q: Where do you primarily watch, read, or hear news about national and local issues? Please select all that apply.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This most recent iteration of the Survey of the South seeks to continue to provide rich and relevant data about the realities of Southern Americans. This research has demonstrated that Southern voters continue to perceive and interact with their communities in nuanced ways, and that these perceptions are often connected to voters' racial/ethnic, gender, and partisan identity.

As E Pluribus Unum continues its work to address longstanding systemic racial and economic barriers in the South, this research proves instrumental in: 1) revealing how Southern voters perceive and experience these barriers, 2) developing pertinent strategies to further positive community change, especially in diverse communities, and 3) identifying key demographic groups who serve as messengers or catalysts within their communities.