

In a country polarized by politics, Trump and Clinton supporters share a surprising amount in common

Voters have significant disagreements on the issues; but minimal differences in personal experience

September 20, 2016 – Against the backdrop of what has arguably been the most divisive presidential campaign in recent history, a new public opinion poll of U.S. voters by the Angus Reid Institute* shows supporters of the Democratic and Republican nominees actually share a great deal in common.

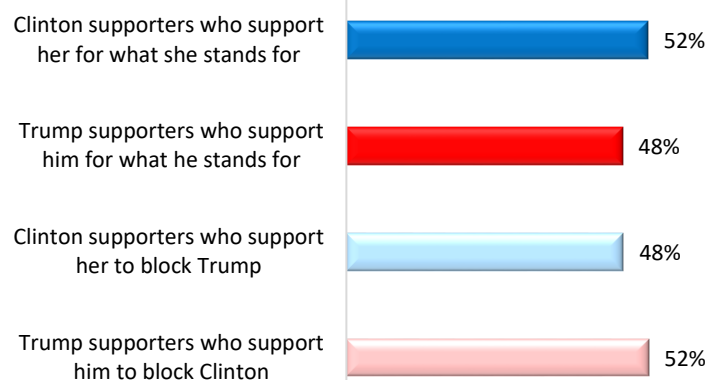
These commonalities are especially apparent when Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton voters are probed about their own personal outlooks on life and some core beliefs about America as a country. Supporters of each candidate express optimism about their own futures, and are inclined to feel that America is the greatest country on Earth.

At the same time, however, the candidates' boosters live on different planets when it comes to a variety of policies and social issues – from the source of problems facing America's minority communities to the future of the Affordable Care Act, and more.

Key Findings:

- Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are deeply unpopular candidates. Most Americans say they're inclined to "dislike" each one (57% dislike Clinton; 63% dislike Trump)
- Perhaps relatedly, roughly half of each candidate's supporters say they would vote for their candidate in order to block the other one from winning the presidency, rather than because of what he or she stands for
- Supporters of both candidates say they feel like it's impossible for them to actually have a say in the political decisions that affect them and agree that the American Dream isn't as promising as it used to be

Reasons for Presidential preference:



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Sept. 8 – 12, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 2,393 American registered voters who are members of the [Springboard America](#) panel. The sample included 2,393 registered voters. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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PART 1: The voting landscape

In many ways, the 2016 U.S. Presidential election is unprecedented. It's the first time a woman has been nominated for the country's highest office. It's the first time in more than half a century that a major party has nominated a candidate with no previous political experience. It's guaranteed to produce the oldest President on inauguration day in American history. And it's happening at a time when political polarization – already considered by some to be worse than ever in 2012 – seems to only be getting worse.

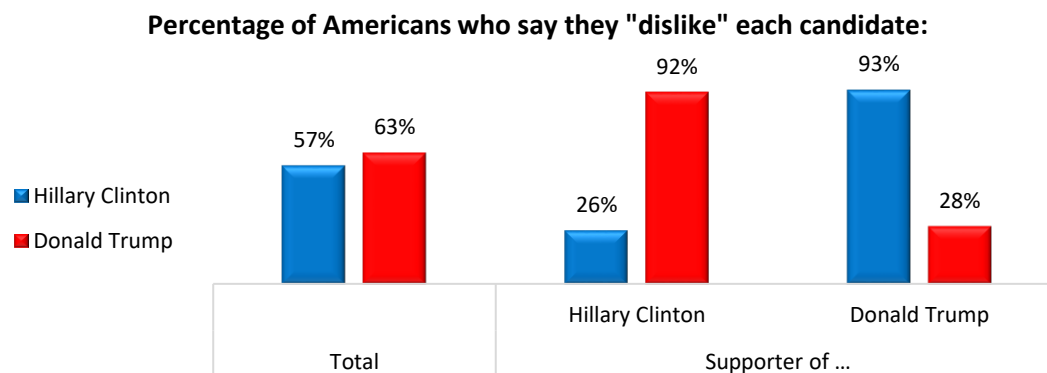
With this context in mind, the Angus Reid Institute sought to gain a sense of who the supporters of each candidate are – what motivates them, what they value, and how they view their lives and their country.

While this survey asks registered voters about their about voting intentions, it is not intended to provide a conclusive word on the standings of the candidates. Rather, it is intended to create a profile each candidate's supporters. At the time of this writing, national polling averages showed Clinton with a narrow lead over Trump (41.7% versus 40%, with 8% for Libertarian Gary Johnson, [according to FiveThirtyEight](#))

ARI asked registered voters to pick a side in this election, first by asking who they planned to vote for, and then by asking those who chose an option other than Clinton or Trump which of the two they're more inclined to lean toward. For the purposes of this report, each candidate's "supporters," consist of these two groups (those who intend to vote for the candidate, and those leaning in his or her direction).

One key factor that motivates Americans to sort themselves into these two camps is their distaste for the candidates. As seen in the first graph of this report, roughly half of each candidate's support comes from people who say they're motivated by a desire to prevent the other option from winning.

Fully one-quarter of each candidate's supporters say they dislike the person they would pick to be the next President of the United States:



CONTACT:

Angus Reid, Chairman: 604.505.2229 angus@angusreid.org

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Voting intentions reported in this survey tend to follow the well-documented demographic trends that have been reported elsewhere. Trump supporters tend to be older, whiter and less-educated than those who prefer Clinton.

PART 2: Common ground – on what do the two sides agree?

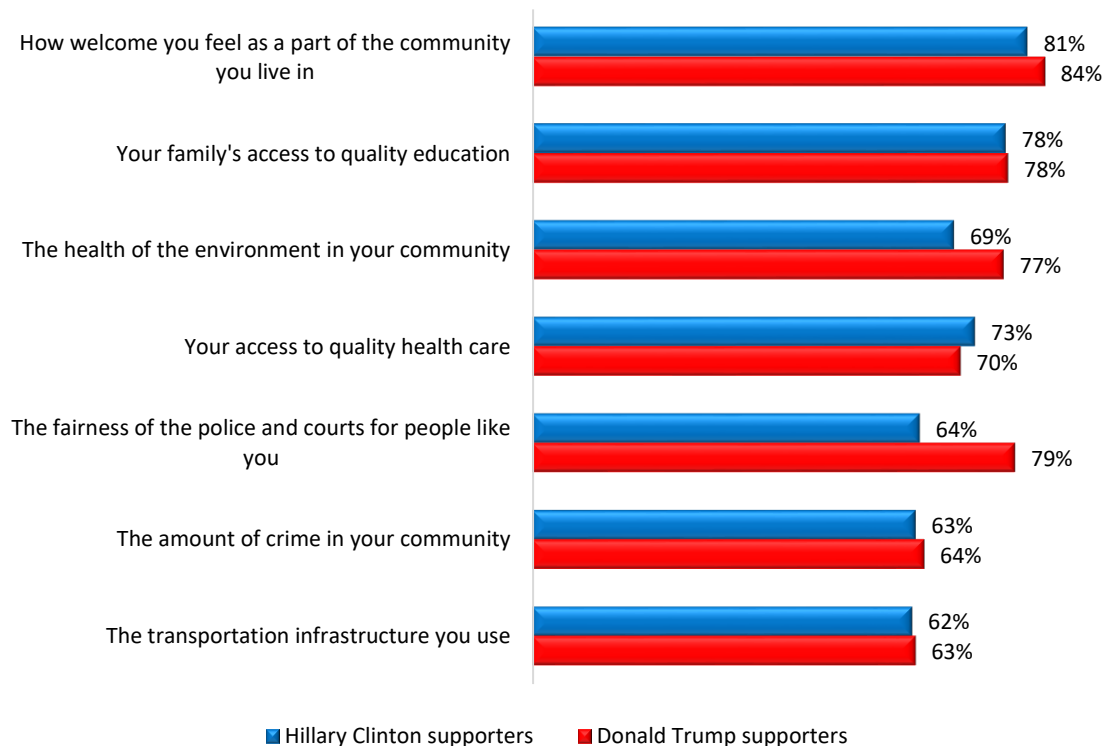
Shared beliefs: The things on which both sides agree

There are lots of differences between Trumpists and Clintonites. They've received lots of attention in the media, and they will be discussed later in this report.

But what, if anything, do these two camps have in common? Are there any beliefs that unite the partisans?

As it turns out, these two groups share a number of common values and experiences, starting with a general sense of satisfaction with a variety of aspects of their daily life:

Please indicate your satisfaction with the following specific things in your life and community today (responses by Presidential preference)



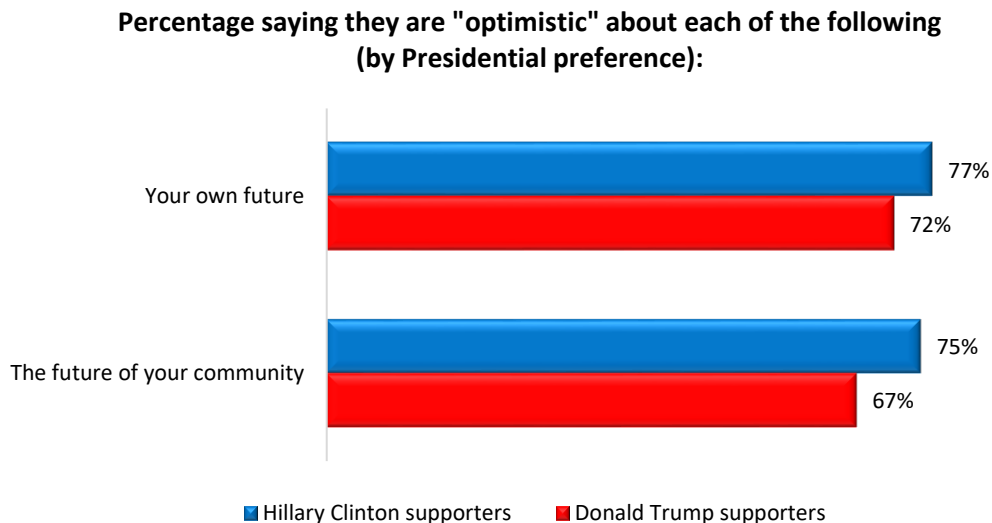
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Likewise, supporters of each candidate are inclined to be optimistic about their own futures and the future of the community they live in:



In other words, Trump supporters and Clinton supporters are united in the belief that their own lives are pretty satisfactory these days, and in their optimism that things will stay that way for them in the future.

The two camps also share a belief that "America is the greatest country on Earth" (72% of Clinton's supporters and 84% of Trump's agree with this) and that "if you work hard, it is possible to be successful no matter what your background" (74% Clinton; 85% Trump).

At the same time, people on both sides feel disenfranchised by the political process and demoralized about the promise of America. Roughly eight-in-ten supporters of each candidate say "the American Dream is not as promising as it used to be," and more than six-in-ten say "it's impossible for me to have any real influence on the political decisions that affect me."

The following infographic highlights these broad ideas on which Americans on each side of the Presidential race agree:

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Presidential Preference

Shared Certainty

Percentage of Americans who...



Say the American Dream is not as promising as it used to be:	78%	84%
Believe if you work hard, it is possible to be very successful no matter what your background:	74%	85%
Are Optimistic about their own future:	77%	72%
Say America is the greatest country on Earth:	72%	84%
Are Optimistic about the future of their community:	75%	67%
Say it is important to have new experiences that challenge them:	74%	69%
Feel it is impossible for people like them to have any real influence on the political decisions that affect them:	61%	69%

Two key takeaways from these shared attitudes:

- 1) Political support isn't obviously driven by dissatisfaction with daily life. The average Trump supporter likely has the same overall feelings about his life and community – the quality of schools, the amount of crime, the general sense of camaraderie in their home town, etc. – as the average Clinton supporter.
- 2) Likewise, Trump may want to "Make America Great Again," but his supporters have by no means cornered the market on political disillusionment and frustration with the American Dream. People across the political spectrum feel like they're being left behind by the political process in the U.S. If they gravitate toward Trump or toward Clinton, it is likely for other reasons.

Shared uncertainties: The things on which both sides are split

At the same time, there are divisions in American society that cut across partisan politics. Respondents to this survey were asked to respond to a series of "face-offs" relating to major social and policy issues in the United States.

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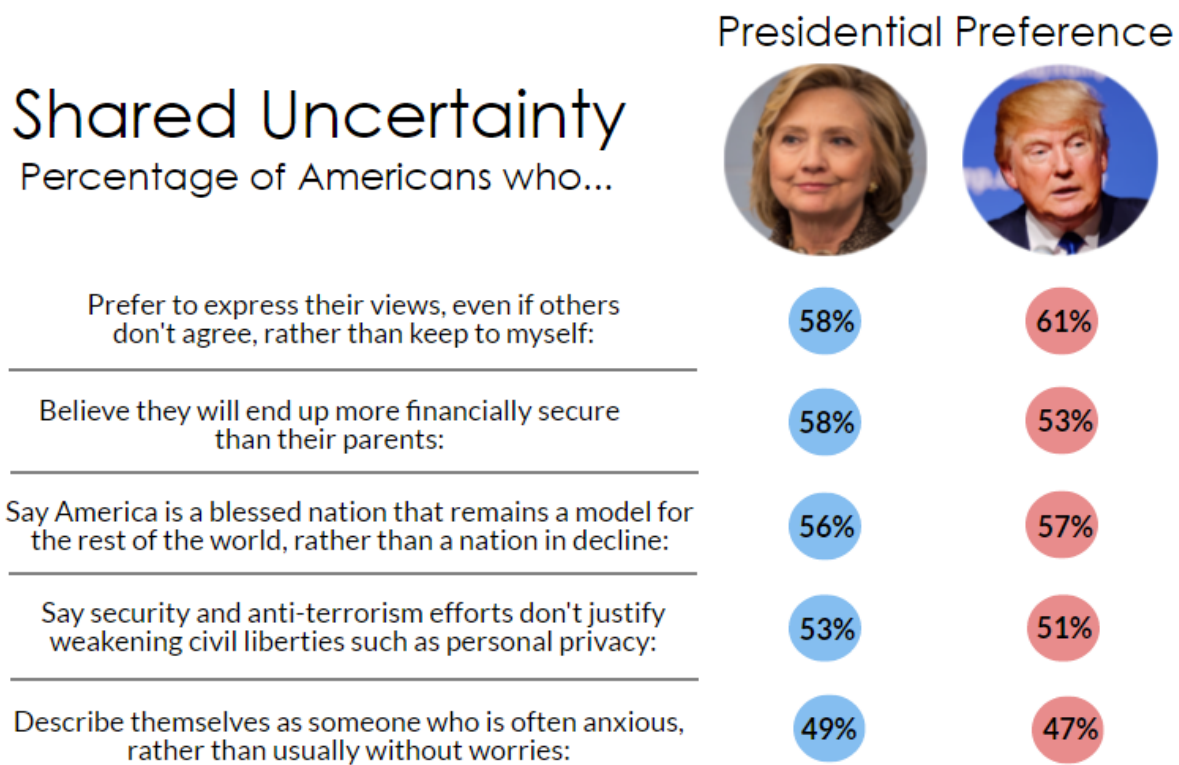
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On most of these questions, Clinton and Trump supporters are polar opposites, but on a handful, they express similarly conflicted views.

Roughly half of each candidate's support, for example, say security and anti-terrorism efforts don't justify weakening civil liberties such as privacy. Likewise, a narrow majority of both Clinton and Trump supporters say "America is a blessed nation that remains a model for the rest of the world." These shared divisions are highlighted in the following infographic:



This bipartisan ambiguity also extends to two measures of personal satisfaction canvassed in this survey: one's own financial situation, and the job opportunities in one's community.

Roughly half of each candidate's supporters say they are satisfied with these two economic measures, while the other half is dissatisfied:

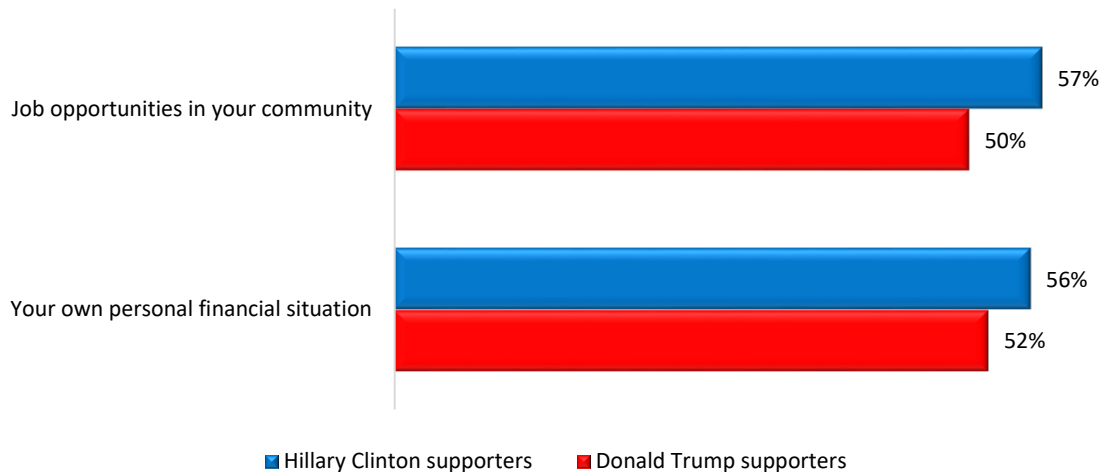
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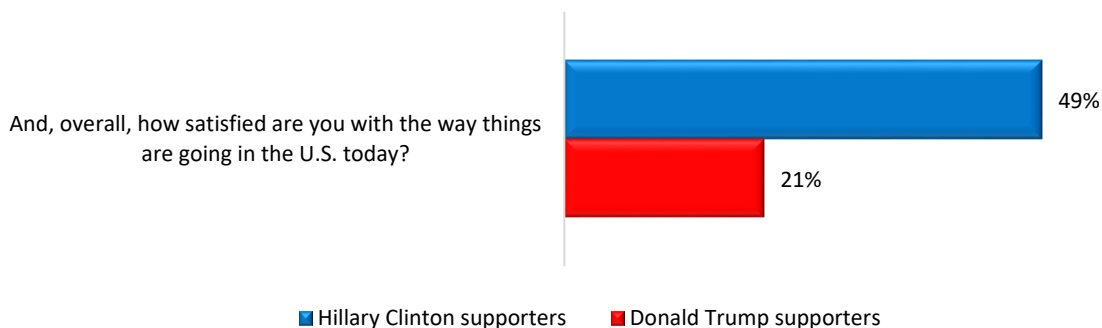
PART 3: Planet Clinton, Planet Trump – lightyears apart

Clinton supporters more satisfied today; more optimistic about tomorrow

While Americans who favour each candidate express similar amounts of satisfaction with their personal lives and their communities, they have decidedly divergent views on the overall direction of the country.

Clintonites are more than twice as likely as Trumpists to say they are satisfied with the way things are going in the U.S. today. Nearly half of them feel this way, as seen in the following graph:

Please indicate your satisfaction with the following specific things in your life and community today (responses by Presidential preference)



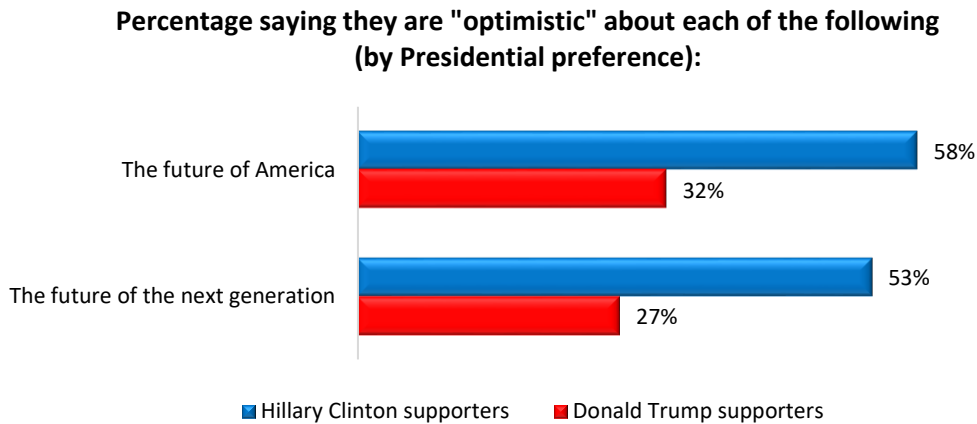
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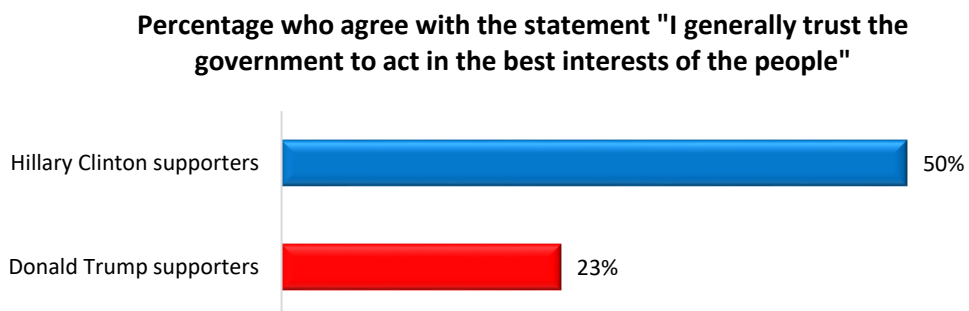
In a similar vein, those who prefer Clinton are more likely to say they're optimistic about the country's future, and the future of the next generation of Americans:



Given that Clinton's party has held the White House for the last eight years, and that she has the endorsement of the sitting President, it is perhaps understandable that her supporters are more likely to be satisfied with the status quo and to feel more positively about that status quo continuing.

Massive policy divides

Similarly, Hillary Clinton's supporters are more than twice as likely as Trump's to agree with the statement "I generally trust the government to act in the best interests of the people." Almost half of Clintonites agree with this statement, compared to less than one-quarter of Trump supporters who do so:



On face-off questions related to key elements of public policy, the Clinton and Trump camps are bitterly divided.

Among the largest gaps between the two groups? Opinion on immigration policy, widely seen as one of Trump's signature issues.

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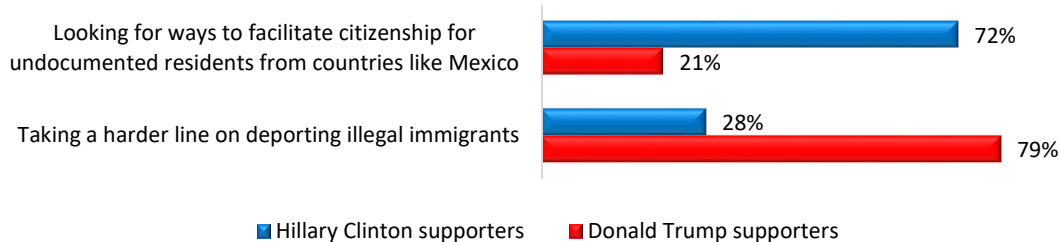
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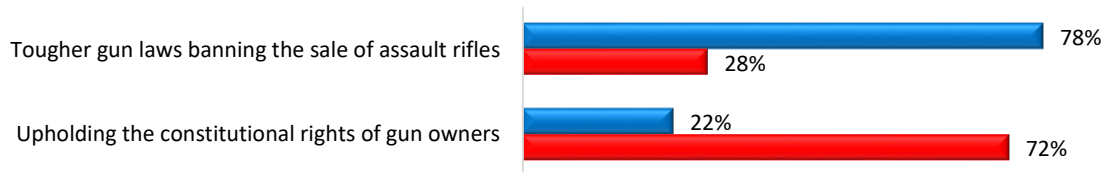
Nearly eight-in-ten Trump supporters (79%) say America's priority should be "taking a harder line on deporting illegal immigrants," while almost as many Clinton supporters (72%) say the priority should be "looking for ways to facilitate citizenship for undocumented residents."

On immigration, the priority should be:

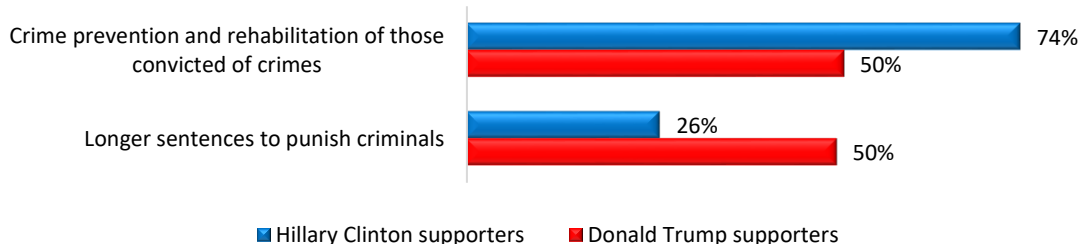


As seen in the graphs that follow, the two camps also espouse deep divisions on gun policy, while Trump supporters are internally split on the purpose and function of the justice system:

On gun laws, the priority should be:



On the justice system, the priority should be:



Even more divisive than these issues is the signature achievement of the Obama administration: The Affordable Care Act, better known as "Obamacare." Those who prefer Clinton overwhelmingly say the healthcare law should be "strengthened and expanded" (80% say so), while Trump partisans equally overwhelmingly say it should be "cancelled" and health care left up to "individual Americans and the marketplace" (81%):

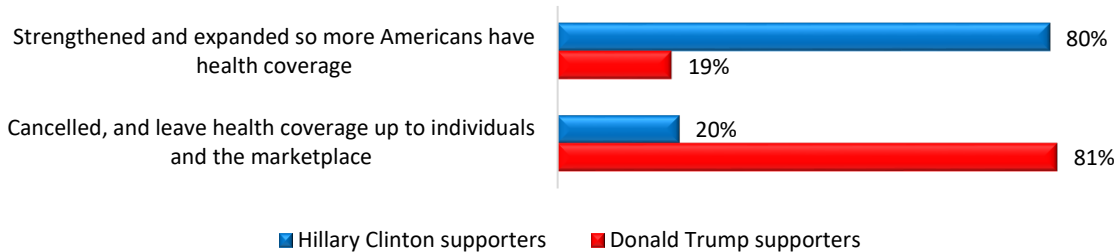
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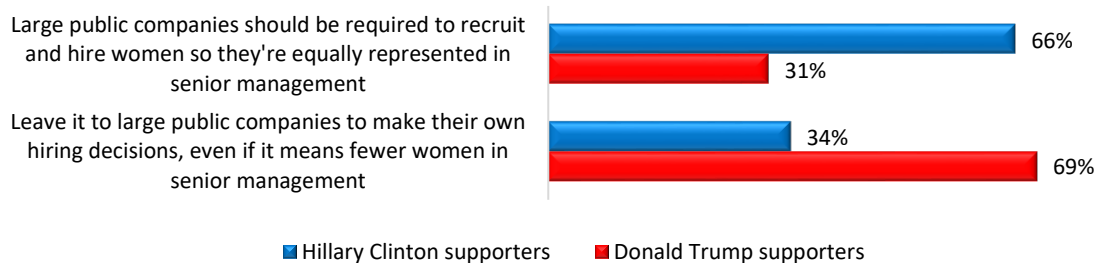
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Would you say 'Obamacare' should be:



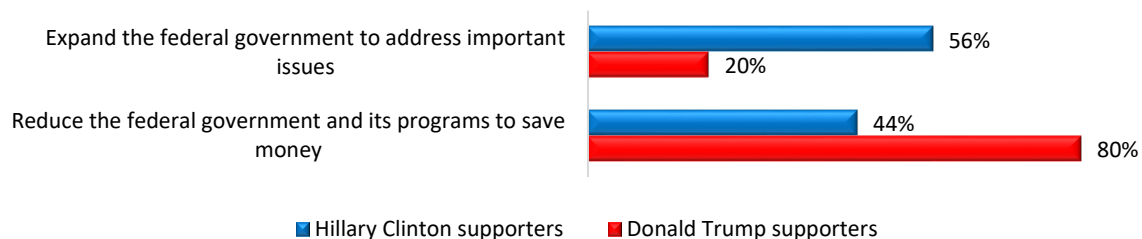
The two sides also find themselves on opposite sides of another face-off on the role of government, this one dealing with hiring equality, and whether government intervene to ensure greater representation of women in senior corporate management:

On women in the workplace, would you say:



Another question about the role of government – about whether expansion of government is desirable, in a broad sense – divides the Clinton camp, while eight-in-ten Trumpists are certain the size of government should be reduced:

On the size of government, which would you prefer?



Clintonites are similarly split on the role of the federal government when it comes to economic issues, while the vast majority of those who support Trump say the free market should rule:

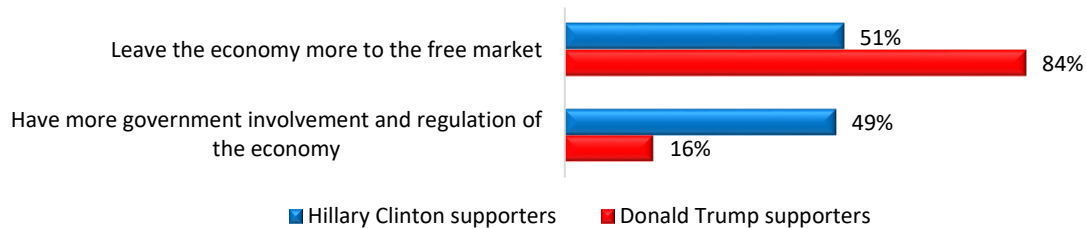
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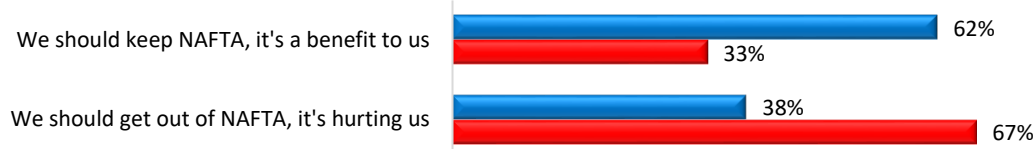
On the economy, would you say we should:



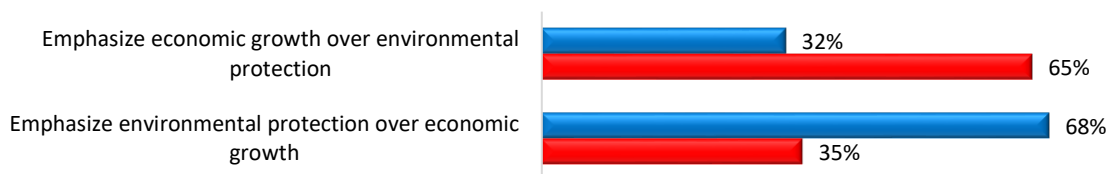
Other economic face-offs – on the social safety net, environmental protection versus economic growth, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) – divide partisans more evenly.

On NAFTA, especially, the findings are striking. Historically, Republicans have favoured free trade as part of an ideological commitment to deregulation. In the age of Trump – who has made opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and frustration over international trade more generally a central part of his campaign – would-be Republican voters seem to have abandoned their support one of the country's oldest free trade agreements:

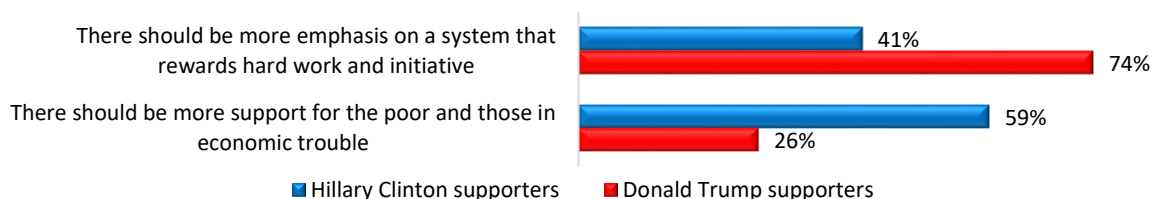
On NAFTA, would you say:



On the balance between environment and economy, should we:



On the social safety net, would you say:



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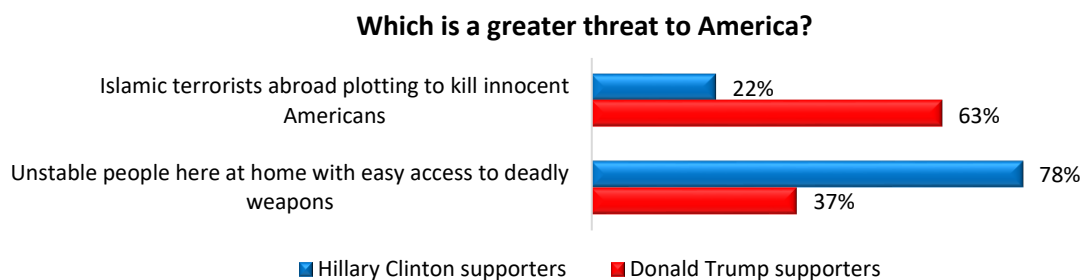
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Divergent attitudes

The two groups are also divided by their attitudes toward a variety of social issues in America today, starting with their assessment of which is a greater threat to public safety: Islamic terrorists abroad or unstable people at home with easy access to weapons.

As seen in the following graph, Trumpists lean toward the former, while Clintonites tilt more heavily toward the latter:



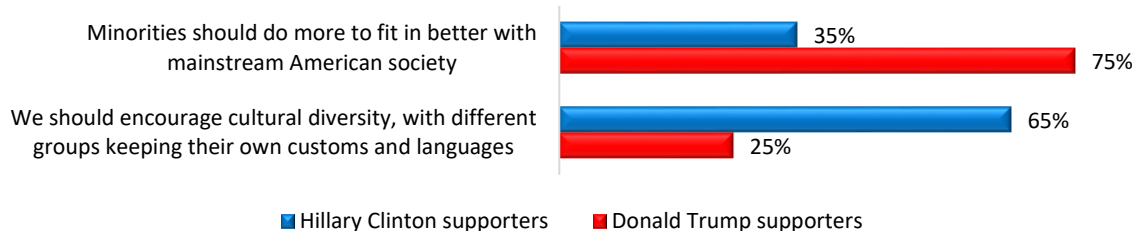
Notably, three-quarters of Trump supporters (75%) say “minorities should do more to fit in better with mainstream American society,” while 65 per cent of Clinton supporters choose the opposing option: “We should encourage cultural diversity, with different groups keeping their own customs and languages.”

There are similar divides on a face-off between “greater acceptance of people who are LGBTQ” and “more recognition of the importance of traditional families where a man is married to a woman,” and on a face-off about the source of problems facing black Americans, as seen in the following graphs:

On LGBTQ issues:



On diversity:



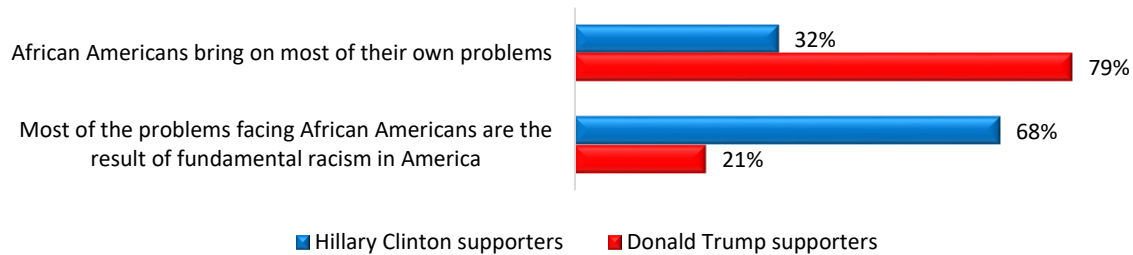
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On race, would you say:



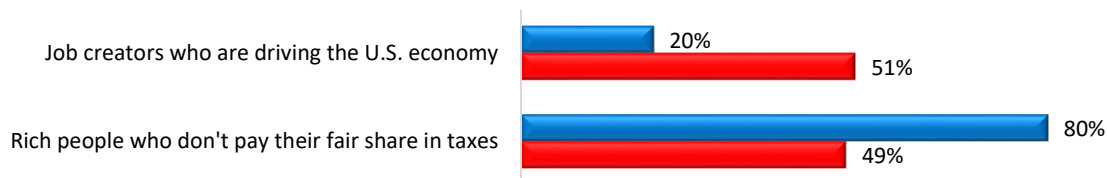
Clearly, when it comes to these measures of social policy, most Trump supporters take a more “traditional” approach, while those who prefer Clinton tend to favour what might be described as a more “modern” one.

In this sense, it could be argued that Trump’s supporters see his “Make America Great Again” message as a plan to return America to a bygone era of greater cultural homogeny.

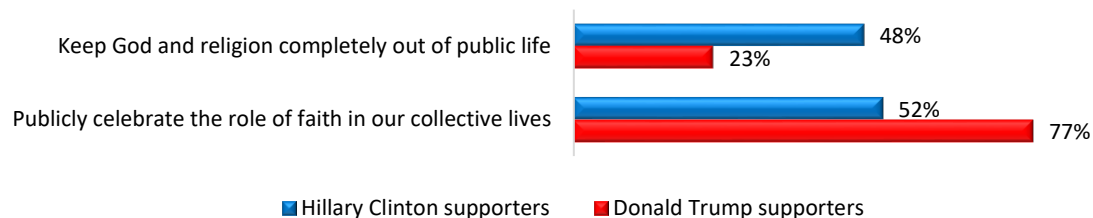
On other social issues, the two groups aren’t opposites. Regarding religion, for example, three-quarters of Trumpists (77%) say America should “publicly celebrate the role of faith in our collective lives,” while Clinton supporters are more evenly split.

Conversely, Clintonites are mostly united in their opinions of wealthy people, while Trump supporters are divided, as seen in the following graphs:

Wealthy people are:



On religion in America, would you say we should:



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PART 4: Conclusion – Where does America go from here?

Whether Trump or Clinton wins in November, the deep partisan divisions between their supporters will remain.

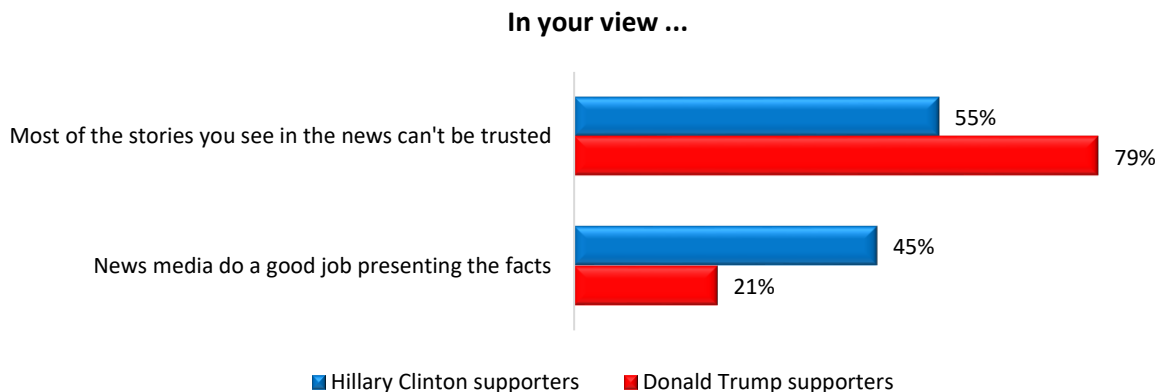
This report has highlighted a good deal of common ground on which the next President could attempt to unite the country, but there are significant obstacles to doing so.

First, most of the areas where large numbers of Americans on both sides agree are either personal (i.e. satisfaction with one's own life) or exceedingly vague (i.e. America is the greatest country on Earth). It's difficult to envision a collective rallying cry around something so abstract or individualistic.

Second, even if the next President were able to craft a message around the things Americans of all political stripes have in common, it's likely to be ignored by a large swath of the population. As this data highlights, partisanship in America is so strong, and these candidates so disliked, that many Americans are likely to reject anything the next President says simply because of who says it.

Third, the news media is no longer regarded as a trustworthy arbiter of the facts. Even if a message that could unite Americans existed, most of them wouldn't believe it coming from the media any more than they would believe it coming from the President.

Two-thirds of Americans (66%) say "most of the stories you see in the news can't be trusted," when asked a face-off question about this. Trump supporters are especially likely to distrust the media (79% do), but a majority of Clinton supporters do so as well:



All of this adds up to a rough next four years in America, whether under a Trump or a Clinton Administration.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to*

CONTACT:

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For detailed results by Presidential preference, [click here](#).
For results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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