

## From tax cuts to ‘the wall’, Trump’s legacy defined by the political lens through which Americans view his actions

*Majority agree that reducing combat troops overseas was a good policy move*

**February 1, 2021** – The final days of President Donald Trump’s term were, much like his four years in office, defined by partisanship and chaos. Trump was banned from various social media networks after allegedly inciting an assault on the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C, and his unprecedented second impeachment continues.

But what of his legacy? A new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds that on nearly all policies undertaken by his administration, a bitter partisan divide exists over whether they were ultimately good or bad actions for the country.

Of ten separate measures implemented by Trump and assessed by Americans, - from tax cuts, to construction of a wall on the southern border, only one generates majority praise across the political divide: nearly three-in-five (57%) say reducing troop levels abroad was a good move.

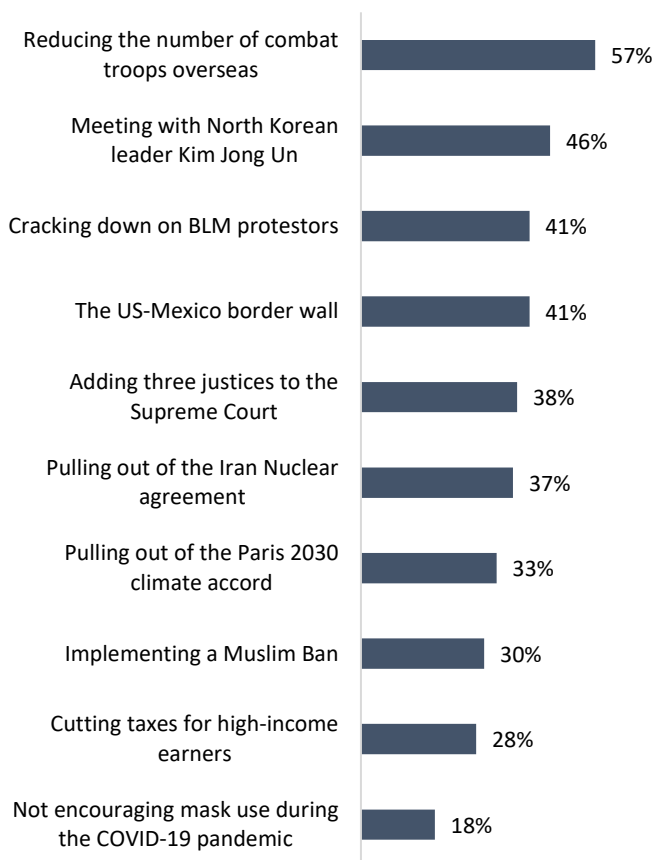
The least popular of Trump’s actions is his refusal to consistently promote mask wearing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Two-thirds of Americans (65%) and even three-in-ten Trump voters (29%) say this was poor leadership.

**More Key Findings:**

- Without exception, on all ten of the actions and policies assessed, Republicans are more likely to say each was good than bad, and Democrats the reverse.

**Looking back at Trump’s actions as President over the last four years, would you say each of the following actions were good or bad for the country?**

**(Percentage saying good for each)**



**METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 14 – 15, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 3,452 American adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum USA](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.7 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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- 83 per cent of Trump voters say cracking down on Black Lives Matter protestors was a good decision, while 82 per cent of Biden voters say it was a bad one
- The Trump administration's tax cuts for wealthy individuals, which are facing [a partial repeal](#) from the Biden administration, are seen as bad policy by 86 per cent of Biden voters and one-in-five (20%) who supported Trump in November

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**Part One: Views on policies, positions reversed by Biden**

For Donald Trump, the first day of the new administration under Joe Biden must have been hard to watch, as President Biden signed several executive orders to end or reverse key initiatives of the Trump term. For Americans, Biden's early actions are met with the same partisanship and disagreement that has defined the last decade in the nation's politics.

**Border Wall**

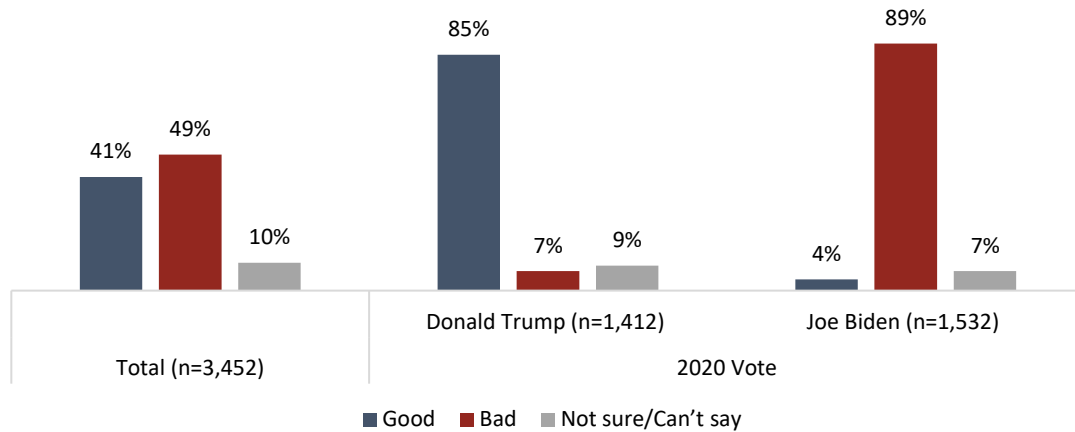
One of the trademarks of the Trump term, and one that will leave a certain physical legacy, is the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. To date, about 80 miles of new wall have been built along the border, while another 370 miles of fence has been rebuilt or reinforced. Joe Biden signed an executive order [terminating funding](#) and construction of the wall, which has cost about \$15 billion to date.

Trump voters see the wall as a great accomplishment, with 85 per cent saying this was a good move for the country. Oppositely, 89 per cent of Biden voters say it was a mistake. Overall, half of Americans (49%) ultimately say this was bad policy:

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**Good vs. bad for the country: The US-Mexico border wall**

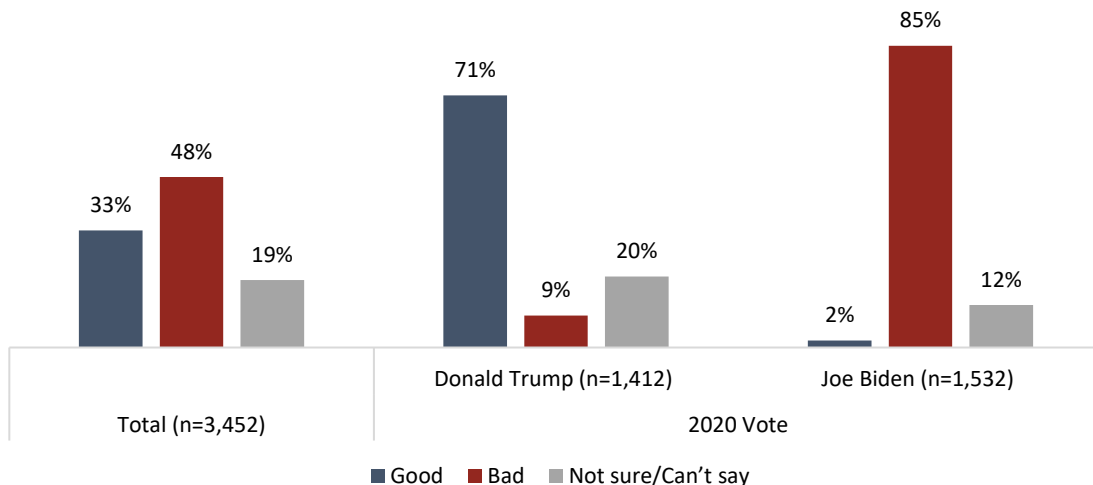


**Paris Climate Agreement**

In June 2017, the Trump administration announced it would formally withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord, which had been negotiated and entered by the previous administration under Barack Obama. Obama set a target of reducing American emissions by 26 to 28 per cent in the decade after the signing. Another of Joe Biden’s first actions was to commit to rejoining the accord, alongside 194 other nations.

While Trump voters feel less strongly about the Paris agreement than they do the wall, a firm majority (71%) say it was a good move to leave. Meanwhile 85 per cent of Biden voters will be happy to see the country rejoin the accord:

**Good vs. bad for the country: Pulling out of the Paris 2030 climate accord**

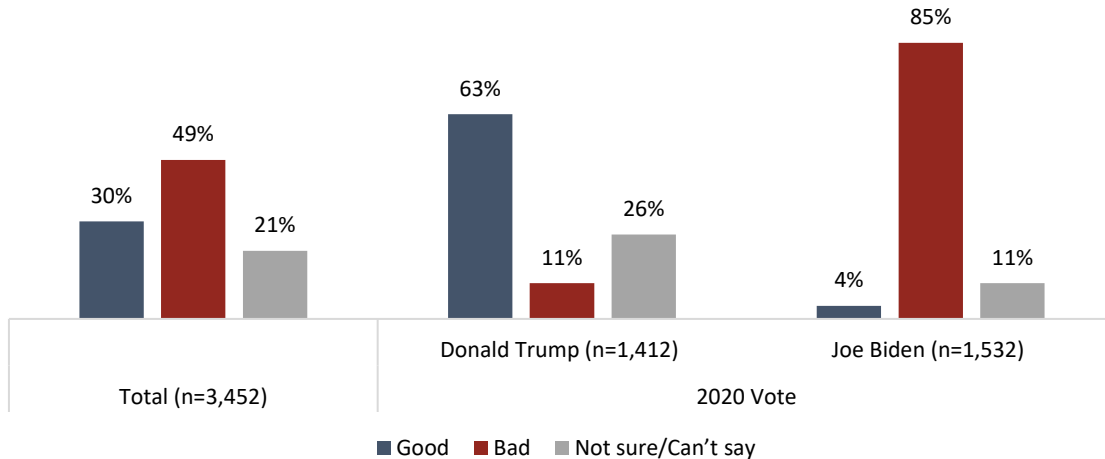


**Muslim Ban**

One of the first and most controversial actions under former President Trump was the so-called Muslim Ban. In January, 2017, Trump issued an order “barring entry and freezing refugee applications from seven Muslim-majority countries”. The initial policy was ruled unconstitutional, but was upheld in 2018 after more countries with non-Muslim-majority populations were added. Three-in-ten Americans felt this

was a good move for the country, while half (49%) disagreed. Joe Biden has **reversed** this policy and the administration has set a goal of 45 days to being issuing visas to residents of affected nations.

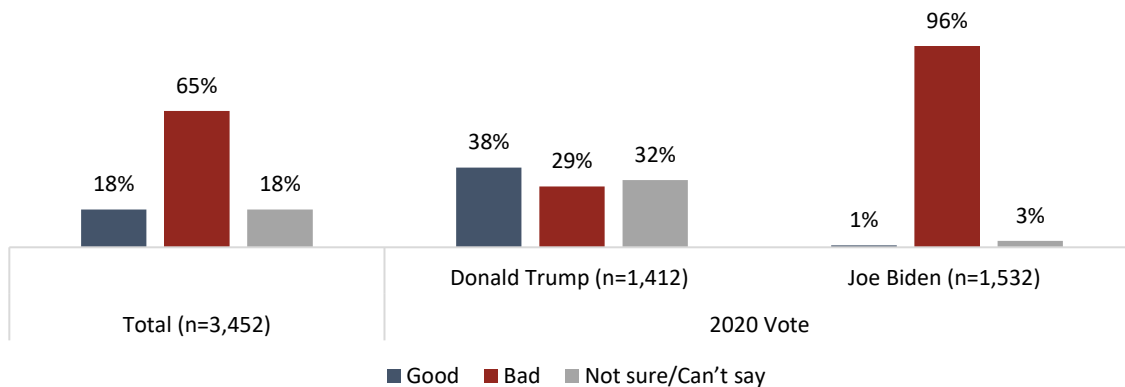
**Good vs. bad for the country: Implementing a Muslim Ban**



**Mask-wearing**

Joe Biden issued an executive order on day one that mandated mask wearing and social distancing on federal properties, while encouraging all Americans to follow the example in order to stem the surging number of COVID-19 infections across the country. Trump’s approach to mask wearing is where his supporters are most critical. Three-in-ten (29%) say he took the wrong attitude in not encouraging mask use, while just 38 per cent say he did the right thing:

**Good vs. bad for the country: Not encouraging mask use during the COVID-19 pandemic**

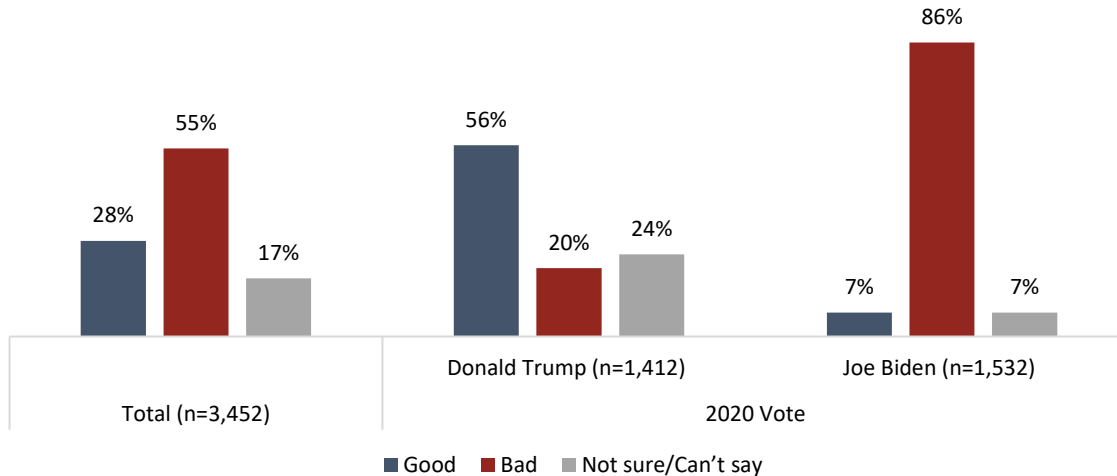


**Trump tax cuts**

A majority of Americans also oppose the tax cuts aimed at high-income earners, a landmark of the Trump administration portfolio. While all earners received a reduction in their income taxes, those earning in the top five per cent received a **considerably higher reduction** than those in the bottom 20 per cent, leading to criticism from Democrats and some others. One-in-five Trump voters (20%) say the tax cut for wealthy Americans is bad policy, while a majority still say it was a good move (56%). Overall, Americans are twice

as likely to say this was a bad move than a good one. The new administration will be targeting a rollback of some, but not all of the tax cuts early in its term.

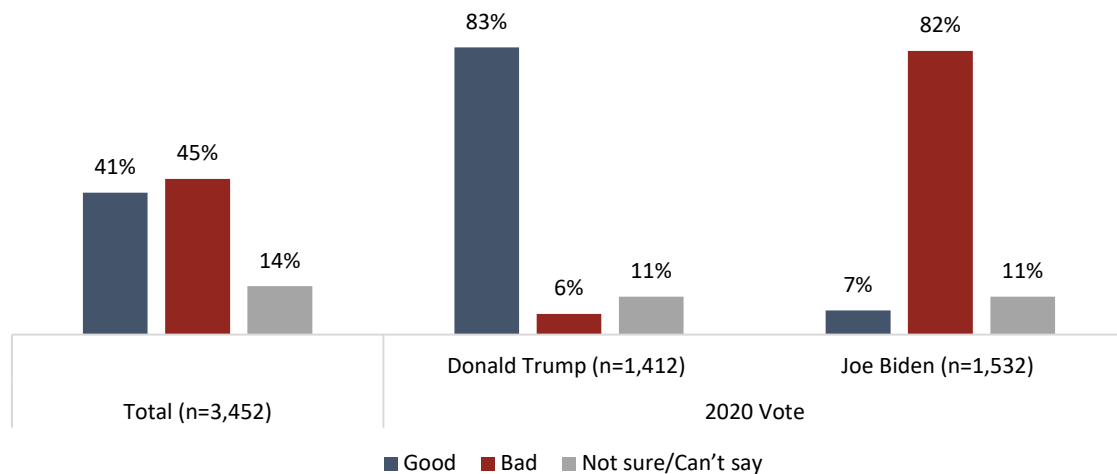
**Good vs. bad for the country: Cutting taxes for high-income earners**



**Approach to Black Lives Matter**

The treatment of Black Lives Matter protesters earlier in 2020 generates more disagreement than all other issues, aside from the wall. Four-in-five Trump voters (83%) say that cracking down on protesters was good for the country, while the same number of Biden voters (82%) say it was bad. The former president sent federal officers to a number of cities during protests last year, and drew vehement criticism for his comparatively favourable reaction to protests in the Capitol on January 6. President Biden was among those critics, and has taken a more sympathetic approach to BLM:

**Good vs. bad for the country: Cracking down on BLM protestors**



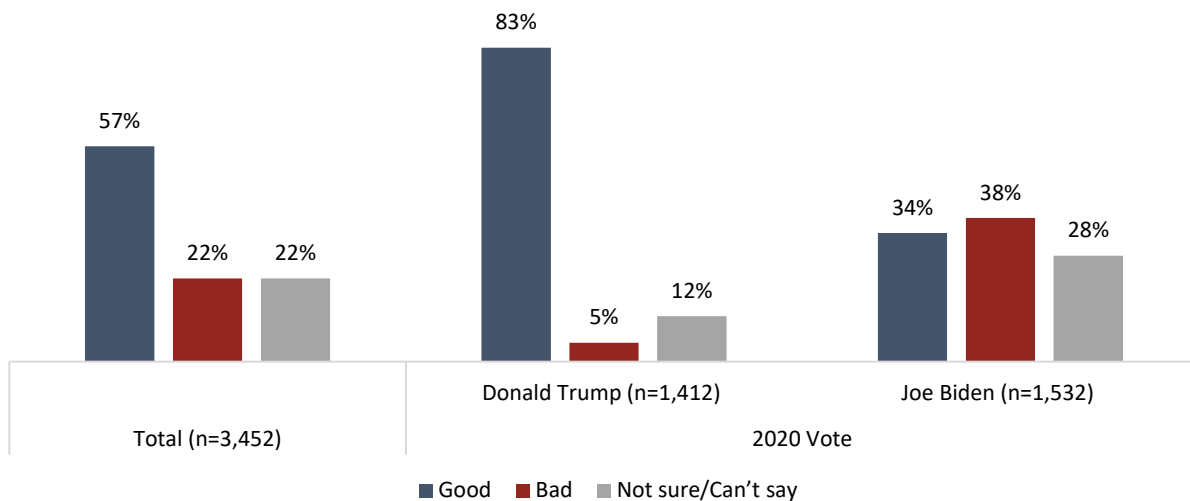
**Part Two: Enduring Accomplishments?**

Despite the reversal of a number of policies and positions by the new administration, there are undoubtedly aspects of the Trump term that will endure. They, too, are overwhelmingly divisive within the American public, although a few find a greater level of consensus.

**Reducing troop numbers overseas**

Of the ten items canvassed in this study, only one receives majority approval from Americans – reducing the number of American troops serving overseas. More than half (57%) say that this was good for the country. While military spending increased under Trump, there was a modest reduction in the number of troops serving overseas. This is something that resonates heavily with Trump voters, and more than most issues with Biden voters:

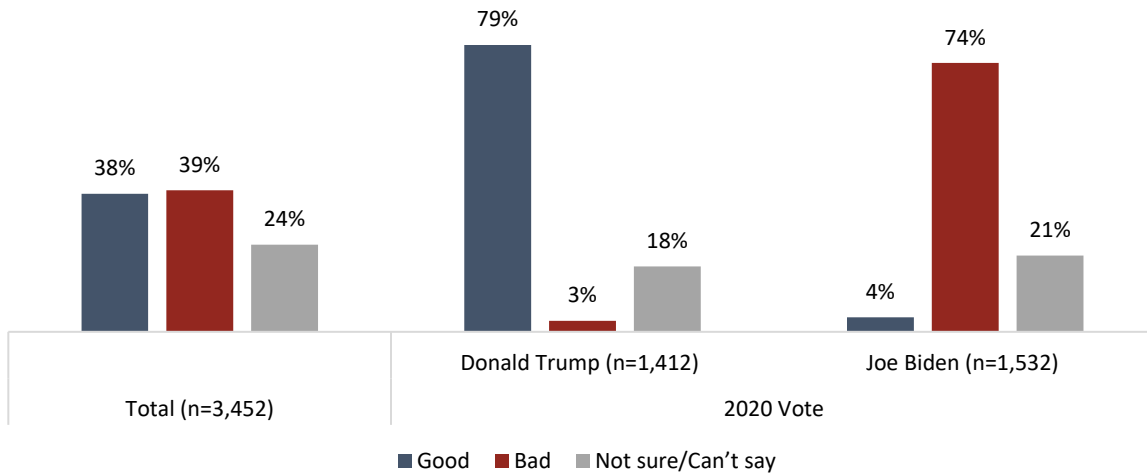
**Good vs. bad for the country: Reducing the number of combat troops overseas**



**Supreme Court justices**

The same level of bipartisanship cannot be found when it comes to the administrations activity involving the Supreme Court. The Republican Senate blocked a nomination in the final year of Barack Obama’s term, with Senate leader Mitch McConnell stating that a replacement for the court should not be chosen in an election year. The same situation unfolded, however in 2020 when Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, and Republicans broke with that previous philosophy, confirming Amy Coney Barrett in just one month. Trump voters are overwhelmingly of the opinion that adding Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and the aforementioned Coney Barrett was a good move. Three-quarters of Biden voters disagree:

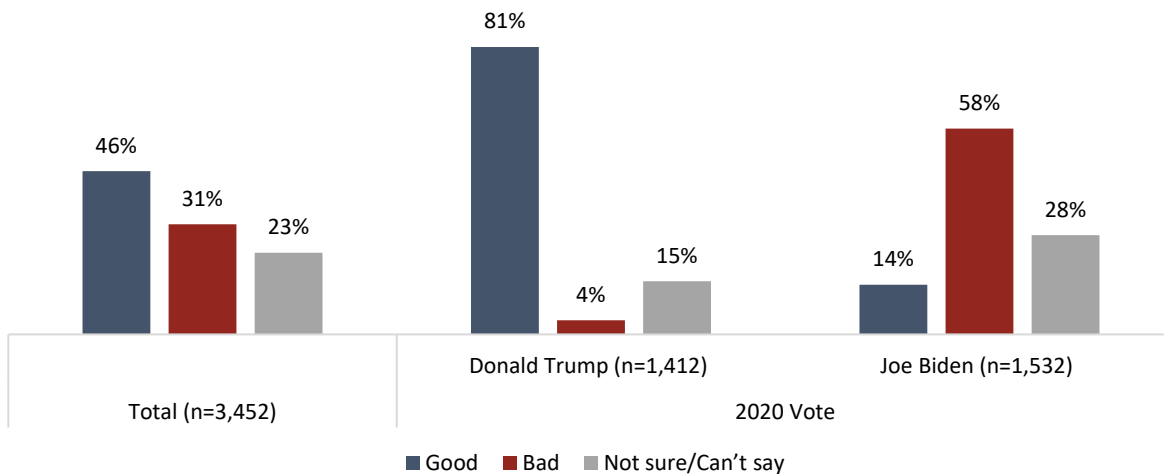
**Good vs. bad for the country: Adding Gorsuch, Kavanaugh and Coney Barret to the Supreme Court**



**Diplomacy with North Korea**

It is not yet clear the approach the Biden administration will take to relations with North Korea. Trump met with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un three times, but ultimately did not reach any resolution in regulating that nation’s weapons production. In a recent speech, Kim reiterated that the United States is his nations biggest enemy and continued to stress that he will pursue more weapons testing. Views of the Trump administrations decision to meet with Kim are purely partisan, as seen in the following graph:

**Good vs. bad for the country: Meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un**

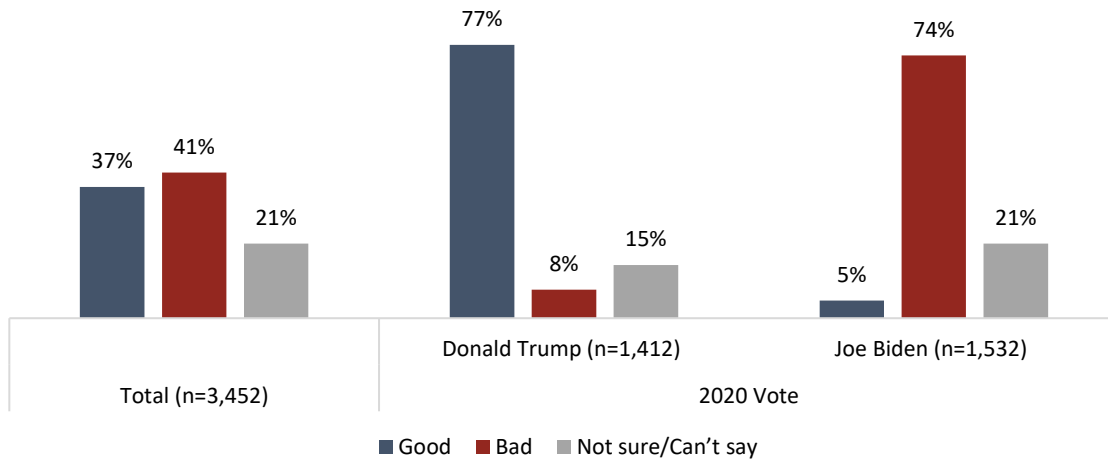


**The unique challenge of the Iran Nuclear deal**

The Biden administration has suggested that it will pursue a far different strategy when it comes to relations with Iran. President Trump approached the nation with what has been called a “maximum pressure” campaign, applying crippling sanctions against the objections of allies. The Biden

administration is moving to tone down the aggression, but has also stated that a re-engagement on the terms of the original nuclear agreement are a “[long way](#)” off at this point. Trump voters are supportive of the decision to terminate the agreement, while Biden voters largely wish it had not been done:

**Good vs. bad for the country: Pulling out of the Iran Nuclear agreement**



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