

## Capitol Attack Anniversary: Majority of Canadians & Americans say January 6 riot was 'domestic terrorism'

*Most Americans – including half of 2020 Trump voters – say rioters should be held accountable*

**January 6, 2022** – In the year since supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol building in Washington, D.C last Jan. 6, many, [including the FBI director](#), have classified the events as an act of domestic terror.

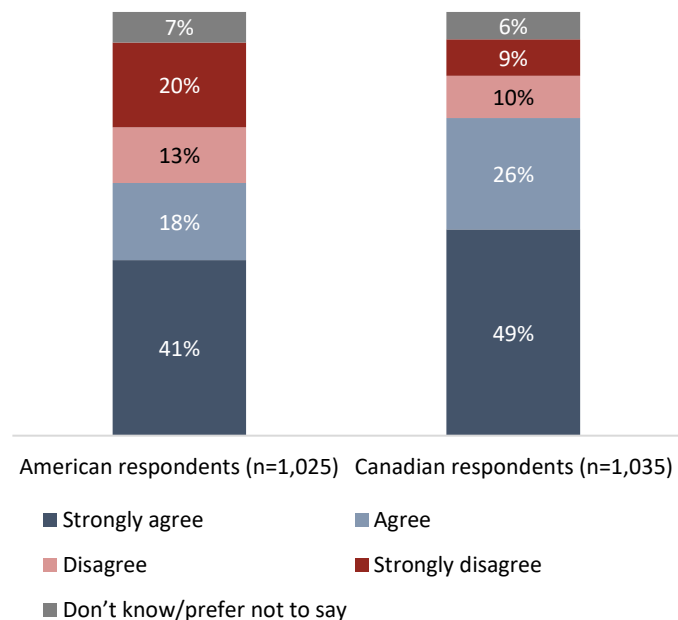
Now, a new two-country study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds a majority of Canadians and Americans alike agree with that designation – though political divisions on both sides of the border are evident.

While one-quarter (24%) of those who voted for Trump in 2020 agree that the storming of the Capitol was domestic terrorism, still seven-in-ten (68%) disagree. This represents a significant difference from the near unanimity voiced by President Joe Biden's voters (92%) in believing that term is appropriate.

In Canada, 35 per cent of past Conservative voters disagree with calling the events an act of domestic terrorism, while a handful of NDP (5%) and Liberal (5%) voters take this view.

Investigations into the attack continue. More than 700 people have been charged with crimes for their actions, and Trump allies [continue to combat subpoenas](#) for information from the committee in charge. Canadians and Americans likely see this as another example of flailing democracy in the U.S. Indeed, when asked about American democracy, three-in-five in each country say that the country used to be a good example for other countries to follow but is no longer. Still, one-in-five Americans (22%) and one-in-ten Canadians (10%) feel American democracy sets an exemplary standard.

### Finally, when thinking about the January 6 riot at Capitol Hill, would you say it was... [An act of domestic terrorism]



#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Dec. 29-30, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,035 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

ARI conducted an additional online survey from Dec. 29-30, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,025 American adults who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 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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### More Key Findings:

- One-quarter of Americans (26%) believe the rioters' cause was a genuine attempt to defend democracy, while one-quarter (25%) believe the event was fiction and created by the media. Fewer (15%) believe it was an attack on American democracy orchestrated by foreign powers.
- Three-quarters (74%) of Americans believe it's important to prosecute those who broke into the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. Nearly all (94%) of those who voted for Biden in 2020 agree. Fewer, but still half (53%), of those who voted for Trump believe authorities should punish those who rioted.
- With Trump [potentially building toward another run](#) at the presidency in 2024, the claim that the 2020 election was stolen persists among his past supporters. That said, one-in-five (20%) Trump voters disagree with his claims and feel that Biden was the rightful winner.

### About ARI

*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 foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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#### Part One: Jan. 6: One year later

On Jan. 6, 2021, the day the U.S. Congress was to count the 2020 Electoral College votes and certify the election of President Joe Biden, a mob forced itself past police barricades and into the U.S. Capitol building. Rioters smashed windows, broke into offices, stole laptops and caused [\\$1.5 million \(US\) in damage](#) as lawmakers were forced to [barricade themselves inside the House of Congress chamber](#) and other [safe rooms](#). [Four people died on Jan. 6](#), and a fifth person, a Capitol Police officer, died [the day after sustaining injuries](#) during the riot.

Since then, [over 700 people](#) have been charged with crimes related to the assault on the U.S. Capitol, as the FBI continues to investigate the events its director has classified as ["domestic terrorism."](#)

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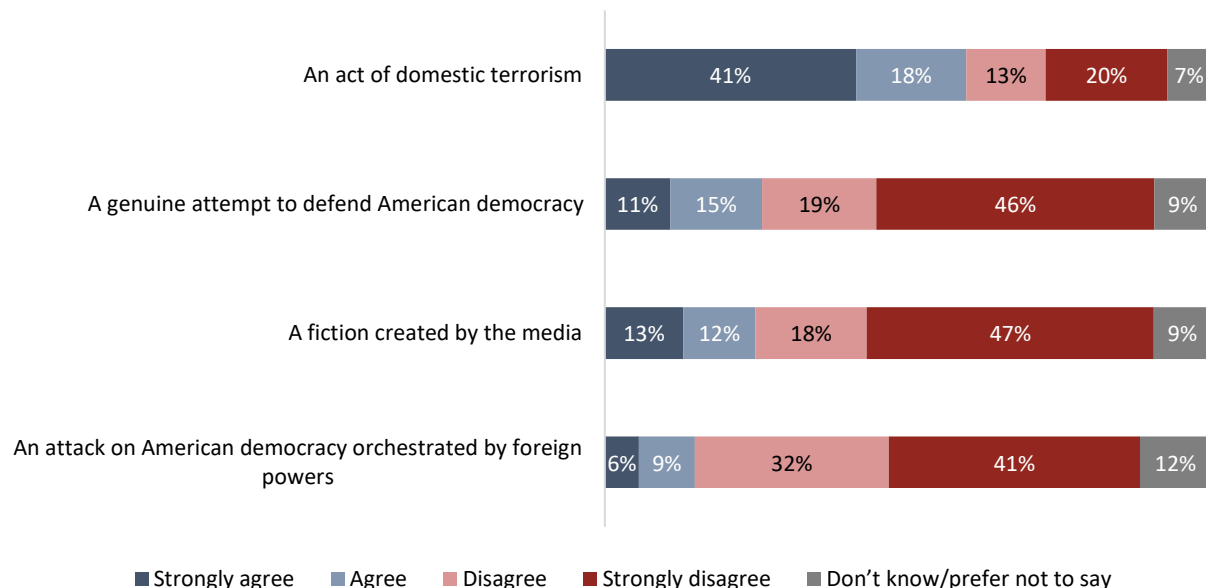
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A majority of Americans agree with the FBI: three-in-five (60%) believe the events of Jan. 6 were an act of domestic terrorism. But one-third (33%) disagree, including one-in-five who do so strongly.

One-quarter (26%) show sympathy for the rioters: they believe the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol was a genuine attempt to defend the democratic process.

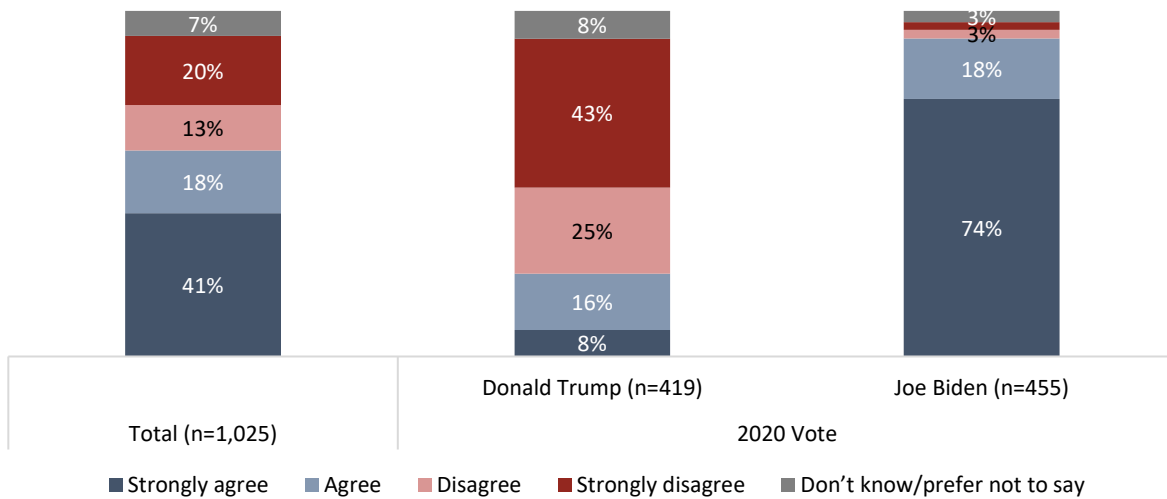
There are also a minority of Americans who believe larger, conspiring forces are at work when it comes to the events one year ago. One-quarter (25%) believe it was a story invented by the media. Fewer (15%) believe the riot at the Capitol was orchestrated by foreign powers. Notably, while the House of Representatives committee tasked with investigating the events of Jan. 6 is considering whether or not [foreign governments attempted to amplify the divisions](#) caused by the 2020 election, no evidence has been found that the riot was orchestrated outside of the U.S.

**When thinking about the January 6 riot at Capitol Hill, would you say it was....  
(American respondents, n=1,025)**



There is a significant political divide in how the Jan. 6 riot is viewed. Nearly all (92%) of those who voted for President Joe Biden believe it was an act of domestic terrorism; seven-in-ten (68%) of those who voted for former President Donald Trump disagree. However, a significant minority (24%) of Trump voters believe the riot was terrorism:

**When thinking about the January 6 riot at Capitol Hill, would you say it was....  
[An act of domestic terrorism]  
(American respondents)**

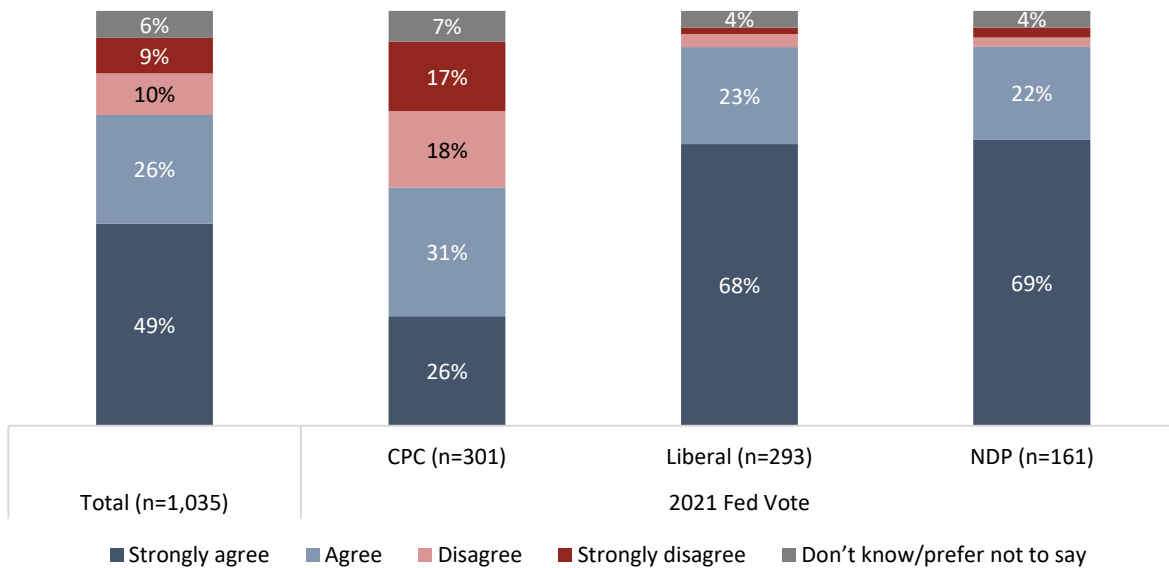


**Canadians more likely to view Jan. 6 as domestic terrorism**

In Canada, more believe the riot at the U.S. Capitol was an act of domestic terrorism. Three-quarters (75%) of Canadians say so, but the strength of that belief varies across political lines.

Nine-in-ten past Liberal (91%) and NDP (91%) voters believe the assault on the Capitol was an act of terrorism; fewer past Conservative voters (57%) agree:

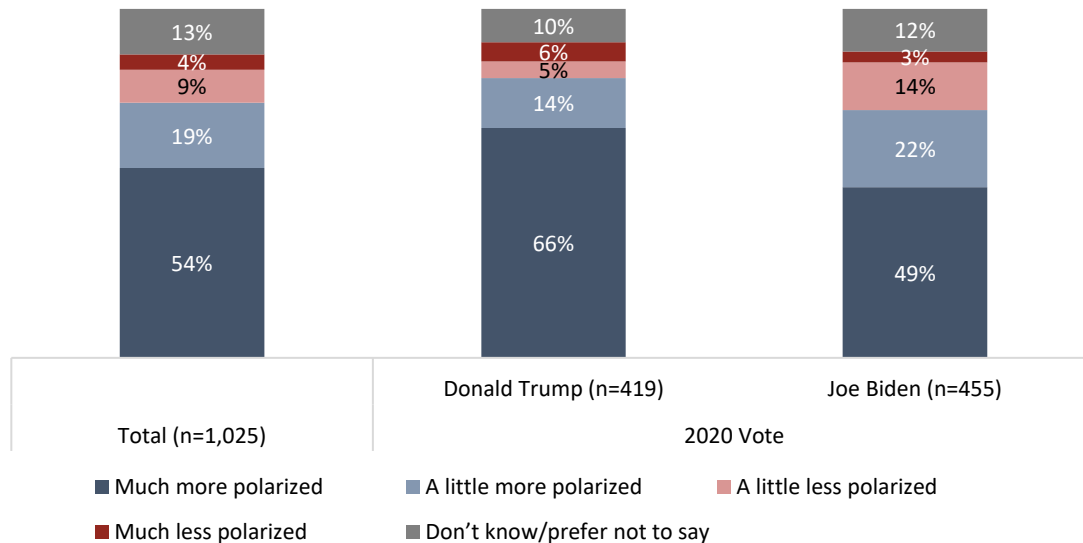
**When thinking about the January 6 riot at Capitol Hill, would you say it was...  
[An act of domestic terrorism]  
(Canadian respondents)**



**Three-quarters of Americans believe polarization has increased in last year**

While there are differences in opinion across political lines in the U.S. in how to characterize what happened on Jan. 6, there is more agreement on its effect. Four-in-five (80%) of those who voted for Trump in 2020 and seven-in-ten (71%) of those who voted for Biden believe politics have become more polarized in the intervening year:

**Would you say that the United States is more or less politically polarized than it was a year ago?  
(American respondents)**



**Part Two: Majorities in both countries believe U.S. democracy has declined in recent years**

U.S. leaders have envisaged the country as a [“beacon of democracy,”](#) a vision that stands in contrast with [its recently acquired place](#) on the Sweden-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistances’ annual list of “backsliding” democracies. The think tank [highlighted](#) “declines in civil liberties and checks on government” as it noted there were “serious problems with the fundamentals of democracy” in the U.S.

Three-in-five Americans (61%) agree, saying that their country used to be a good example of democracy but hasn’t been in recent years. North of the 49th parallel, a similar number (62%) of Canadians echo Americans on this point.

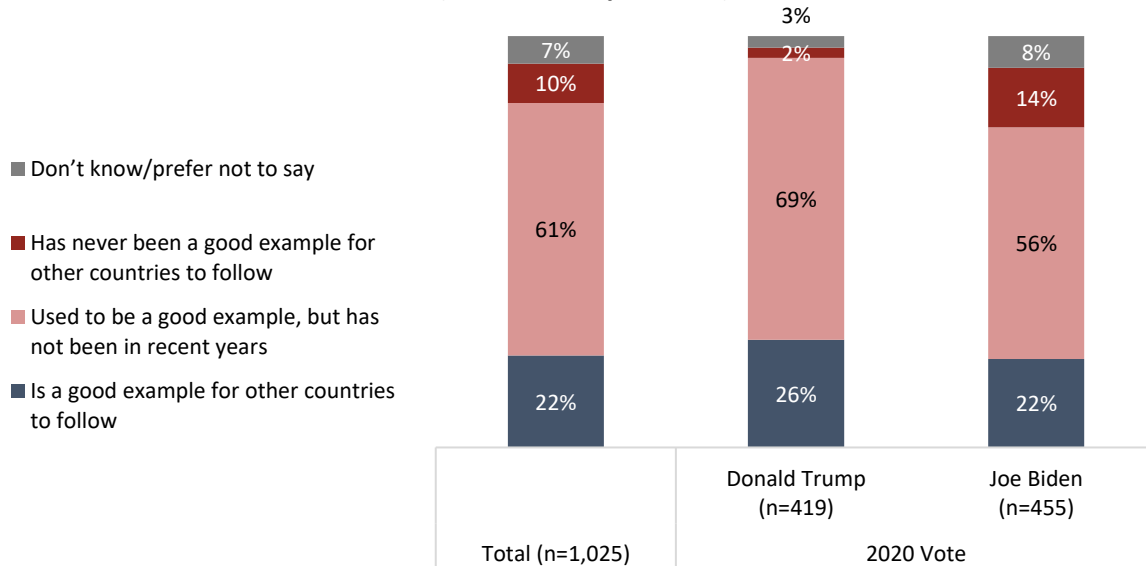
Where there is more divergence between American and Canadians respondents is on the question of the quality of democracy in the United States. One-in-five (22%) of Canadians say that the U.S. was never an exemplar of democracy, whereas half as many (10%) Americans say the same (see [detailed tables](#)).

There is majority agreement on this issue across political lines, though to varying degrees. At seven-in-ten (69%), those who voted for Trump are also more likely to respond that American democracy has declined in recent years – this compared with 56 per cent of Biden supporters who say the same.

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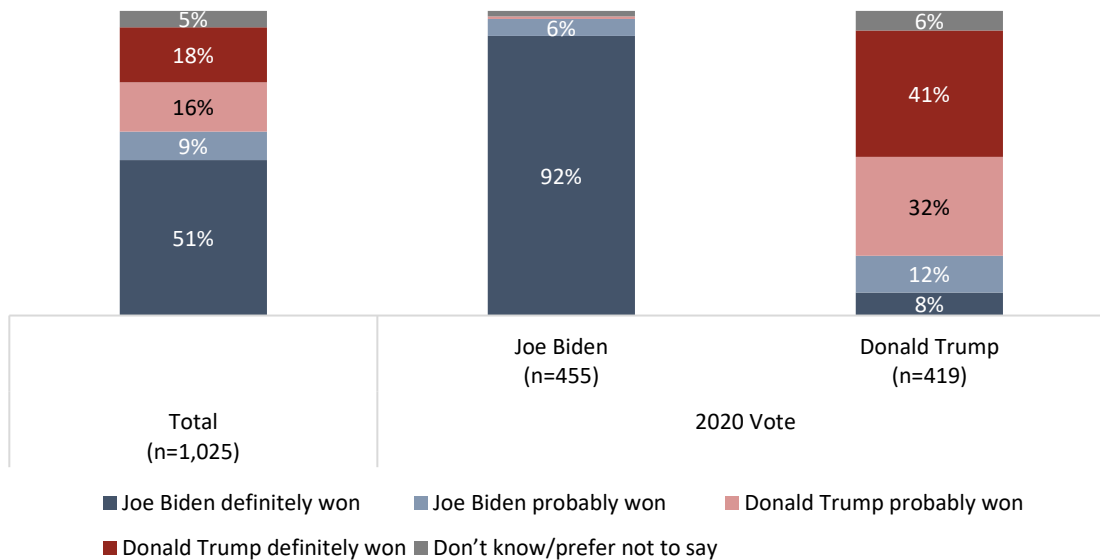
**Democracy in the United States...  
(American respondents)**



**Three-quarters of Trump voters believe he won 2020 election**

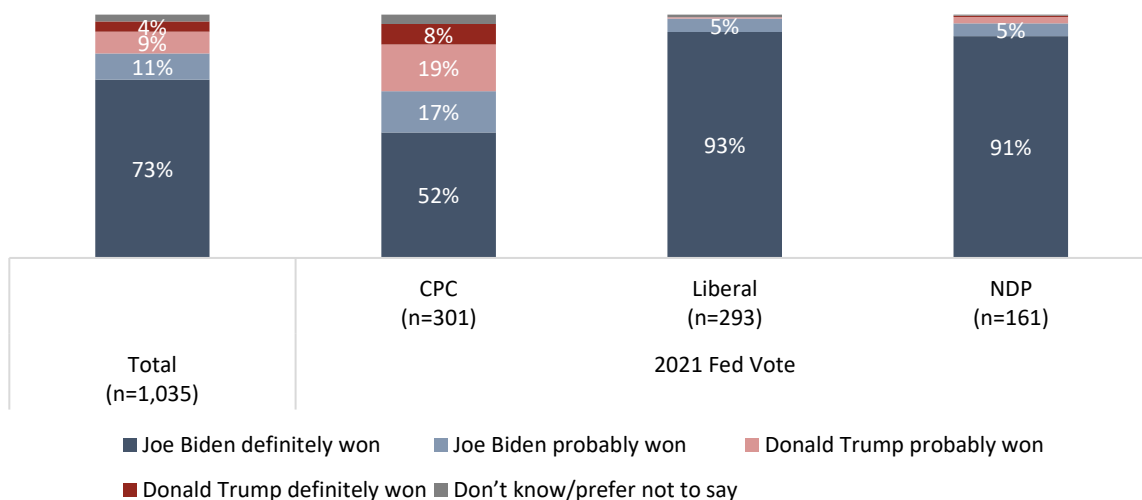
Although those who voted for Trump in the last election are the most likely to say that democracy in the United States is a good example for other countries to follow at one quarter (26%), there remains significant disagreement over the results of the last election. Two-in-five (41%) who voted for Trump responded that he definitely won the last presidential election, while another third (32%) say that he probably won. A significant minority of Trump voters, one-fifth (20%), believe Biden definitely or probably won. By contrast, 2020 Biden voters are near-unanimous in their view of how the election turned out:

**Who do you think won the 2020 election – that is, who received the most votes cast by eligible voters in enough states to win the election?  
(American respondents)**



When looking at their southern neighbours, most (84%) Canadians believe in the results of the 2020 U.S. election. Still, 13 per cent of Canadians believe that Trump definitely or probably won the last election. This includes three-in-ten (28%) of those who voted for the CPC in last year's election.

**Who do you think won the 2020 election – that is, who received the most votes cast by eligible voters in enough states to win the election?  
(Canadian respondents)**



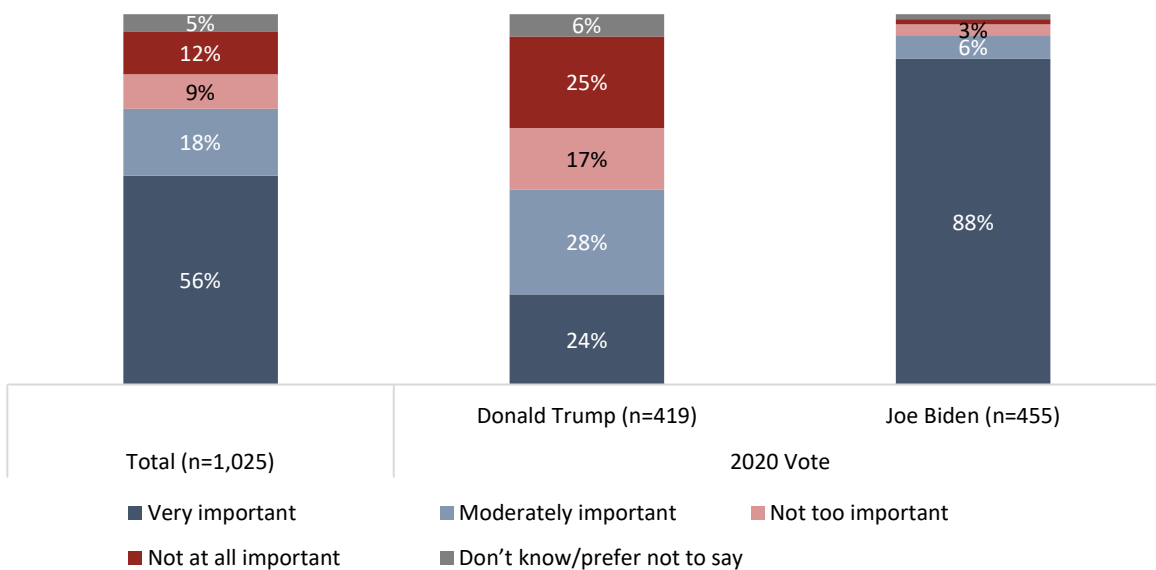


**Part Three: Three-quarters in U.S. say Capitol Riot participants must be prosecuted**

American authorities are still investigating Jan. 6 one year later, and have so far charged over 700 people with crimes [related to the riot](#). [Over 150](#) of those charged have pleaded guilty.

Three-quarters (74%) of Americans say it's important individuals who broke into the U.S. Capitol last year be prosecuted, including half (53%) of Trump voters, while two-in-five (41%) among this base believe the prosecution of rioters is unimportant:

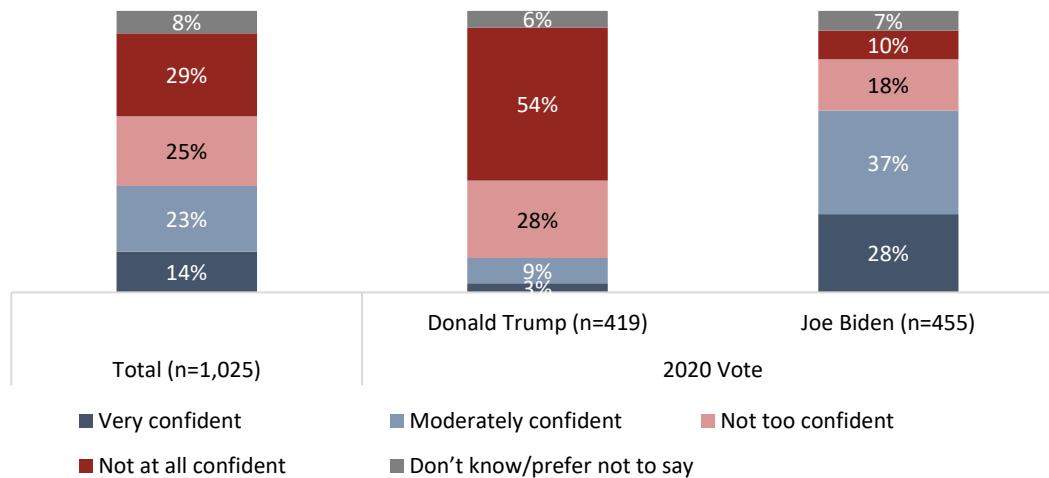
**How important, if at all, do you think it is that the individuals who broke into and rioted at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, be prosecuted? (American respondents)**



The U.S. House of Representatives committee to investigate the Jan. 6 attack includes both Democrats and Republicans, though four seats intended to be occupied by Republicans are vacant after there was [a disagreement](#) between House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy on which Republicans should occupy them.

More than half of Americans (54%) lack confidence that the committee's investigation will be fair and reasonable. Perhaps in light of the lack of Republican representation on the committee, those who voted for Trump in 2020 are much less likely to show confidence in its investigation:

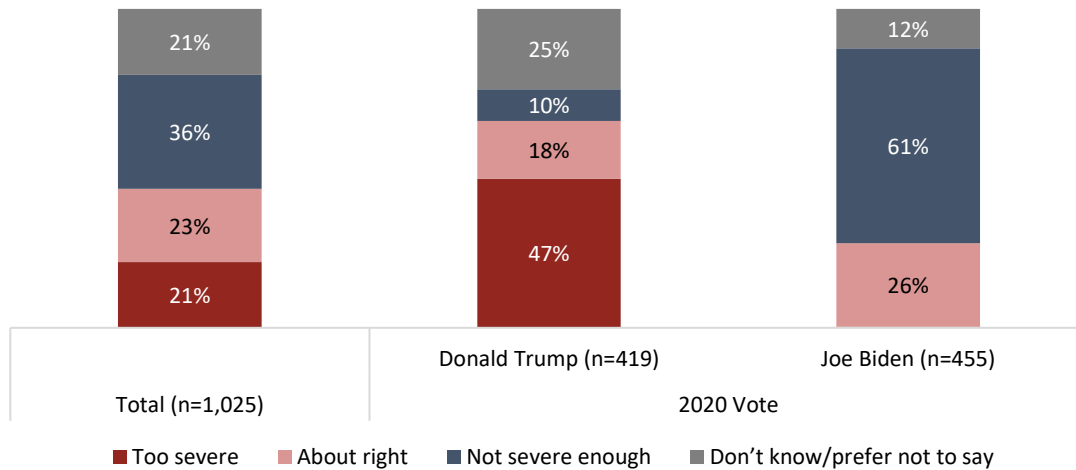
**How confident are you that the committee's investigation will be fair and reasonable?  
(American respondents)**



The wheels of justice are still turning for those charged in connection to the Jan. 6 riot. While 700 have been charged, and 150 have pleaded guilty for their actions, just 71 have been sentenced as of the beginning of 2022. Of those who have been sentenced, less than half have received prison time. Many instead have received fines, community service, or probation.

A plurality of Americans (36%) believe the sentences so far have not been severe enough, while one-in-five (21%) say they've been too severe and another one-quarter (23%) feel the sentences have been about right. There is a political divide on this issue, as well. A majority (61%) of those who voted for Biden in 2020 believe the punishments should be harsher, while half (47%) of those who voted for Trump say they've been too stringent:

Now thinking of the criminal penalties, the individuals who broke into the Capitol and rioted have been receiving. Would you say they are:  
(American respondents)



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

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

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