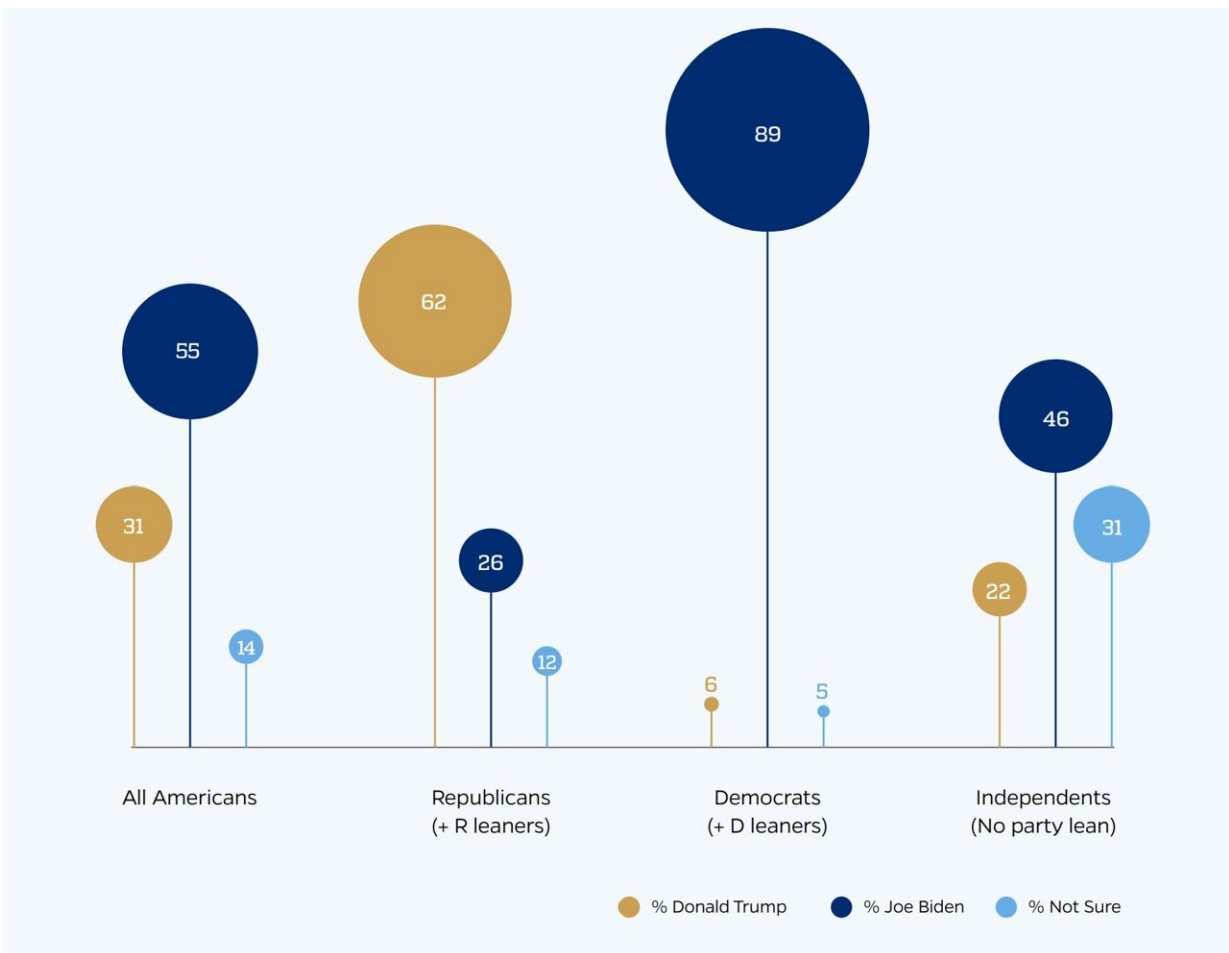


Report provides up-close look at pro-democracy conservatives

April 2 2024, by Hannah Robbins



In your view, who was the legitimate winner of the 2020 presidential election?
 Credit: *Understanding Pro-Democracy Conservatives A Report on Current Levels of Election Trust and Partisan Identity* (2024).

Pro-democracy conservatives appreciate diverse political ideas, value journalism, and trust institutions including elections, according to a new report that defines this quiet but potentially powerful movement.

The report, "[Understanding Pro-Democracy Conservatives: A Report on Current Levels of Election Trust and Partisan Identity](#)," is based on a poll of United States voters. It is the first in a planned series of studies on the nation's pro-democracy conservatives from researchers with Johns Hopkins University's SNF Agora Institute.

"There hasn't been a lot of research that tries to understand conservatives beyond those who reject the 2020 [election results](#), but our findings show pro-democracy Republicans do exist," said co-author Scott Warren, an SNF Agora Fellow who is co-leading an effort to explore and define a [conservative](#) pro-democracy agenda. "Whether you agree or disagree with them on policy, these conservatives will play a critical role in fomenting a healthier democracy, starting with the 2024 election."

To better understand the American electorate, the researchers collaborated with Gallup in October to conduct an online survey of Republicans who believe in the legitimacy of the 2020 election ("believers"), Republicans who deny the election outcome ("deniers"), and Democrats and independents. Respondents were asked about their party affiliation, the 2020 election results, their sources for information and news, and what they think about other people.

Key findings:

- 2020 election believers are more trusting and more accepting of election results generally than the deniers. Only 13% of deniers and 30% of believers trust election results from outside their home state. More believers think it's important to accept the outcome of an election if their own candidate loses.

- Election believers are more interested in the news and more trusting of traditional media outlets. They're more likely to talk to people who have different opinions and viewpoints and are more trusting of science, local government, and the Supreme Court. Election deniers are more likely to rely on friends, family, and social media for [political news](#). More than a quarter of election deniers don't trust any information they see or read, and they are more concerned about misinformation.
- 2020 election believers are less concerned with party identity than election deniers. For more than 40% of election deniers, their identity as a Republican is "very important," while 25% of believers feel the same.
- 2020 election believers are slightly more diverse and older and more often college educated.
- Most Americans don't trust the opposing party to accept the results of the next presidential election—if they lose. Nearly half of Democrats and independents think Republicans will contest the results, and one-third are unsure how Republicans will react. More than half of 2020 election deniers and nearly a quarter of 2020 election believers think Democrats won't accept defeat, while more than a quarter of both groups are unsure.

The findings suggest that Republicans who believe Biden won the 2020 election are more likely to support and trust pro-democracy institutions, even as Republicans who deny the 2020 election results are becoming more entrenched in their own thinking, the researchers said.

"We're looking at a group of people, the deniers, who are worried about disinformation, don't trust any news that they see or read, and don't trust election results from other states," said co-author Lilliana Mason, an associate professor of political science who studies polarization and political violence. "They don't agree with the rest of the country on basic truths, which makes it very hard for democracy to work."

Warren and Mason are conducting similar polls in more than 12 states, including key swing states Michigan, Arizona, and Wisconsin, to understand what motivates pro-democracy conservatives in the voting booth. They'll also bring together pro-democracy conservatives in those states to discuss common goals prior to the November elections.

"As one-third of the Republican electorate, these voters have more power than they think," Mason said.

More information: Report: [Understanding Pro-Democracy Conservatives: A Report on Current Levels of Election Trust and Partisan Identity](#)

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

Citation: Report provides up-close look at pro-democracy conservatives (2024, April 2) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-04-pro-democracy.html>

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