



The Associated Press-NORC  
Center for Public Affairs Research

# AMERICANS SPLIT ON U.S. ROLE IN COMBATTING CORONAVIRUS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH RUSSIA



@2020 AP Alex Brandon (left); @2019 AP Susan Walsh (right)

More Americans blame the U.S. government's actions for the current coronavirus situation than attribute it to the policies of foreign governments or the World Health Organization.

These are among the findings from a new UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll being released in conjunction with the 2020 Pearson Global Forum, a virtual event that will bring together researchers and policymakers to develop strategies to prevent and resolve international conflicts.

A majority of Americans believe their government's actions were a significant cause of the current coronavirus situation, and most want the United States to take a major role in developing a vaccine. Yet, at this point, only 57% intend to get a vaccine when it is available, and that figure declines if the vaccine is developed outside the United States. If the United States develops a vaccine, a majority say it should be kept for Americans first, even if it means fewer people around the world get vaccinated.

The poll shows Americans are significantly more likely to disapprove than approve of how President Donald Trump is handling Russia, and a majority of Americans say ties should be weakened with Russia.

## Three Things You Should Know

About the UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll Among American Adults:

- 1) While 57% intend to get a vaccine if it becomes available to them, just 46% would get a vaccine developed outside the United States.
- 2) 26% approve of how Trump is handling Russia, and Republicans are more likely than independents and Democrats to approve (53% vs. 12% and 3%).
- 3) 10% support increasing the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan when there is no mention of casualties, but just 3% say the same if there is a mention of the 2,200 U.S. troop deaths in that country.

The study highlights stark differences between Democrats and Republicans about the coronavirus situation and the development of a vaccine, along with the role Russia had in the 2016 election, and threats to the upcoming 2020 election. For example, Democrats are almost twice as likely as Republicans to say that Russia interfered with the 2016 presidential election and also almost twice as likely to be concerned about a foreign government doing so again.

The survey also reveals little agreement on what to do about the war in Afghanistan. Few Americans follow news and information about the war, and Americans have mixed views on whether to increase or withdraw troops.

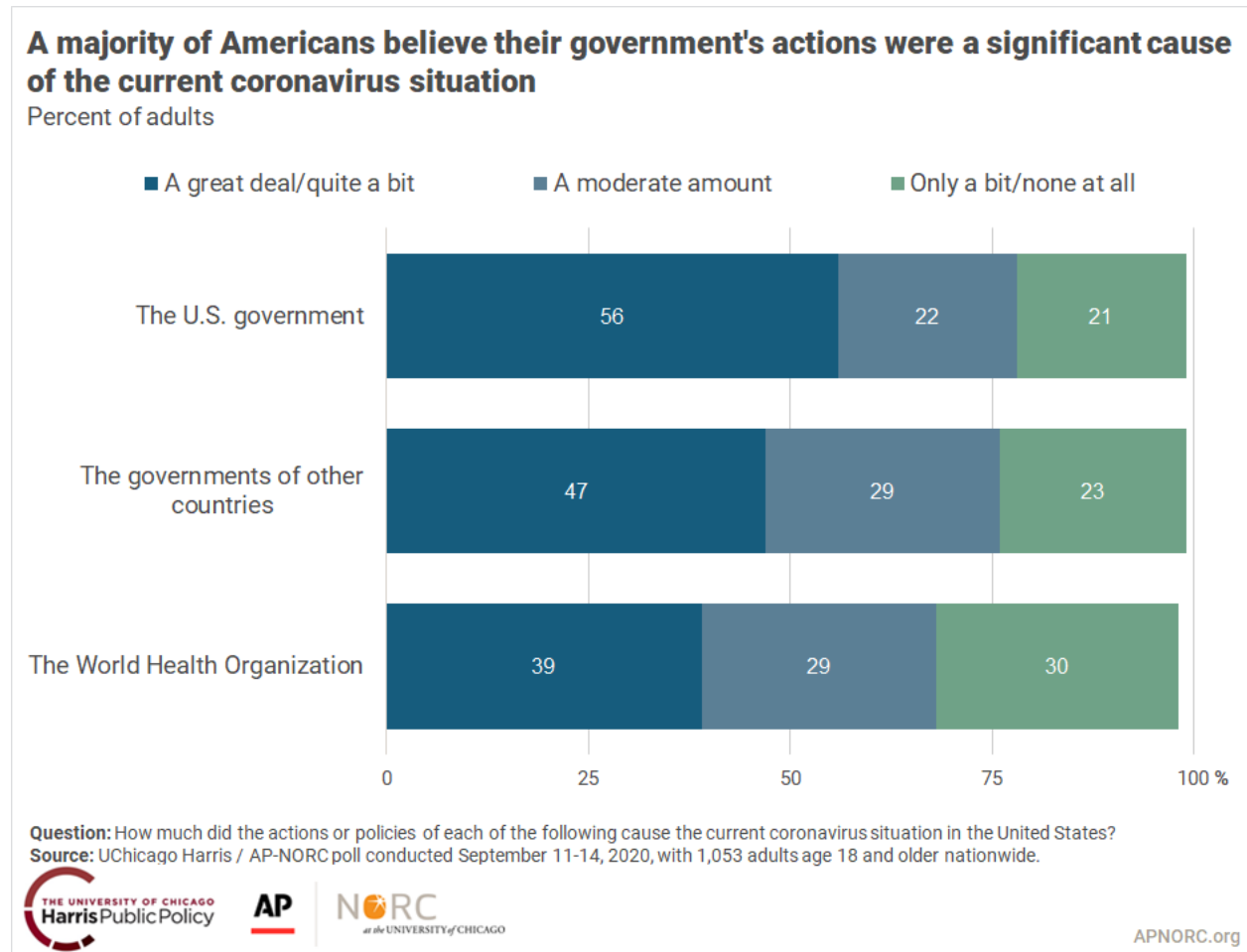
The nationwide poll was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from September 11 to 14, 2020, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,053 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points.

Other key findings from the study include:

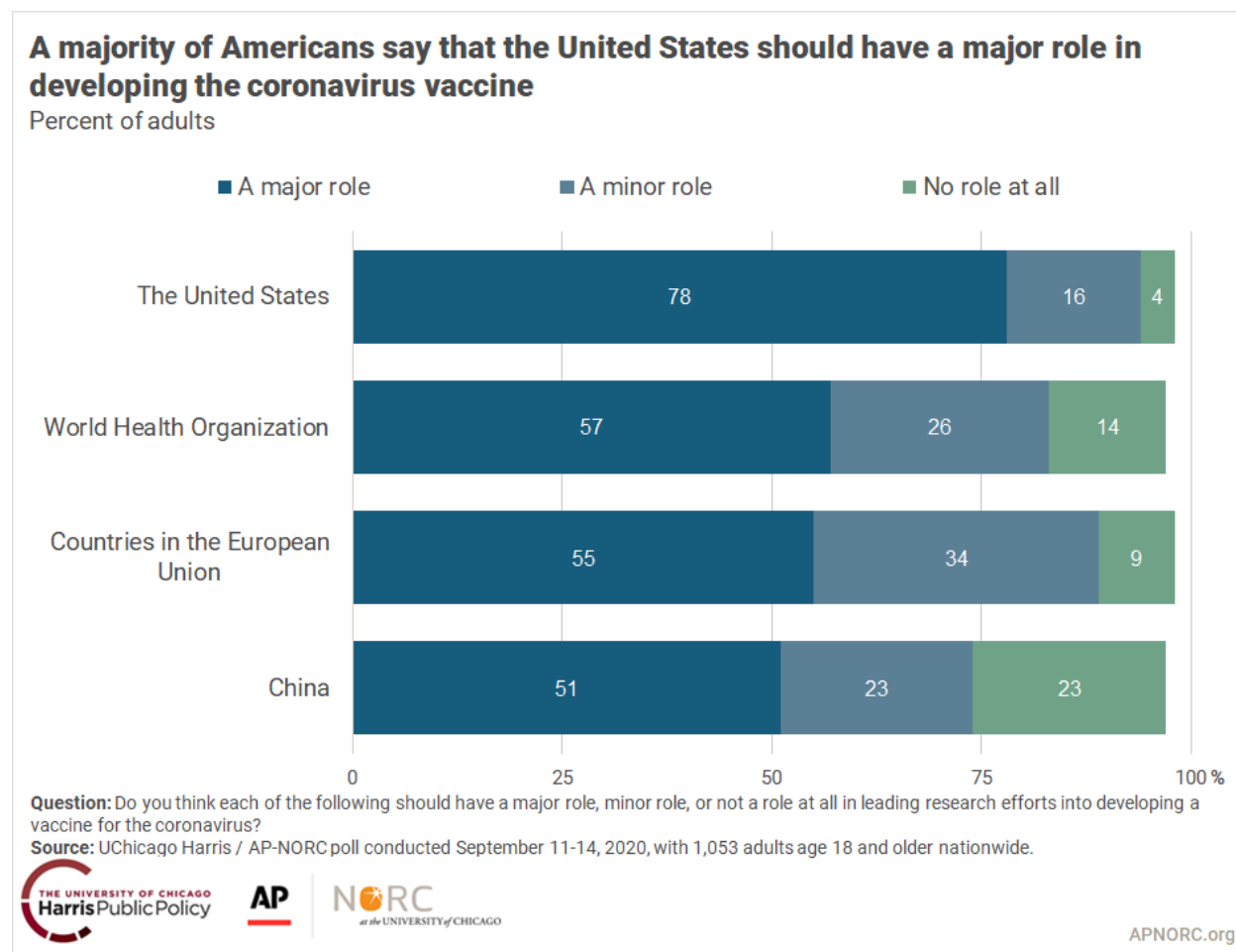
- Democrats are more likely than Republicans and independents to blame the United States for the current coronavirus situation (79% vs. 38% and 42%). In contrast, Republicans are more likely to blame the governments of other countries or the World Health Organization.
- If a vaccine is developed, 58% of Americans say the United States should keep any vaccine for itself, even if that means fewer around the world get vaccinated, while 39% say the vaccine should be made immediately available to other countries.
- Republicans are more likely than Democrats and independents to say that the United States should keep any vaccine for itself, even if that means fewer around the world get vaccinated (70% vs. 52% and 41%). However, Republicans are also less likely than Democrats to say they will get a coronavirus vaccine if it becomes available, regardless of origin.
- Democrats are almost twice as likely as Republicans to say that Russia tried to influence the results of the 2016 presidential election (90% vs. 48%).
- More than half of Americans (57%) do not follow any news and information about U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

## MAJORITIES BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT’S ACTIONS WERE A CAUSE OF THE CURRENT CORONAVIRUS SITUATION AND WANT IT TO HAVE A MAJOR ROLE IN DEVELOPING A VACCINE.

Americans are more likely to say the actions of the U.S. government caused the coronavirus situation in the United States than to attribute the situation to the actions of foreign governments or the World Health Organization.



When it comes to the coronavirus vaccine, most (78%) believe the United States should have a major role in developing this vaccine. However, majorities also believe that countries in the European Union, the World Health Organization, and China should have a major role in development.

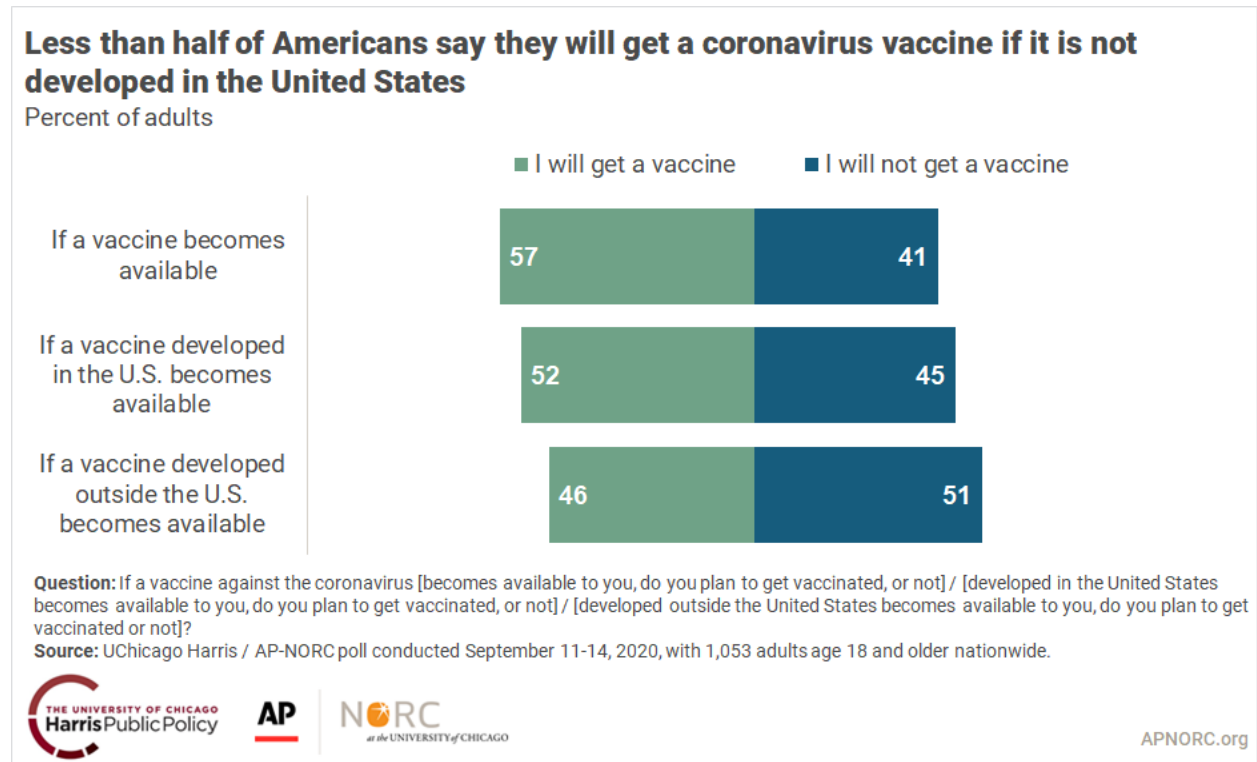


If the United States develops a vaccine, 58% of Americans agree it should be kept for Americans first, even if it means fewer people around the world are vaccinated right away. In contrast, just 39% agree it should be immediately available worldwide.

If a vaccine becomes available, more than half of Americans say they will get a vaccine when developed.<sup>1</sup> This study featured a survey experiment in which respondents were asked if they would get a vaccine if it becomes available to them. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three groups—one group without any mention of the origin of the potential vaccine, one group told the potential vaccine was developed in the United States, and one group told the potential vaccine was developed outside the United States.

While 57% of Americans say they will get a vaccine if it becomes available to them, just 46% of Americans say they will get a vaccine developed outside the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were not given an explicit option to say they are not sure if they will or will not get vaccinated if a vaccine against the coronavirus becomes available to them.



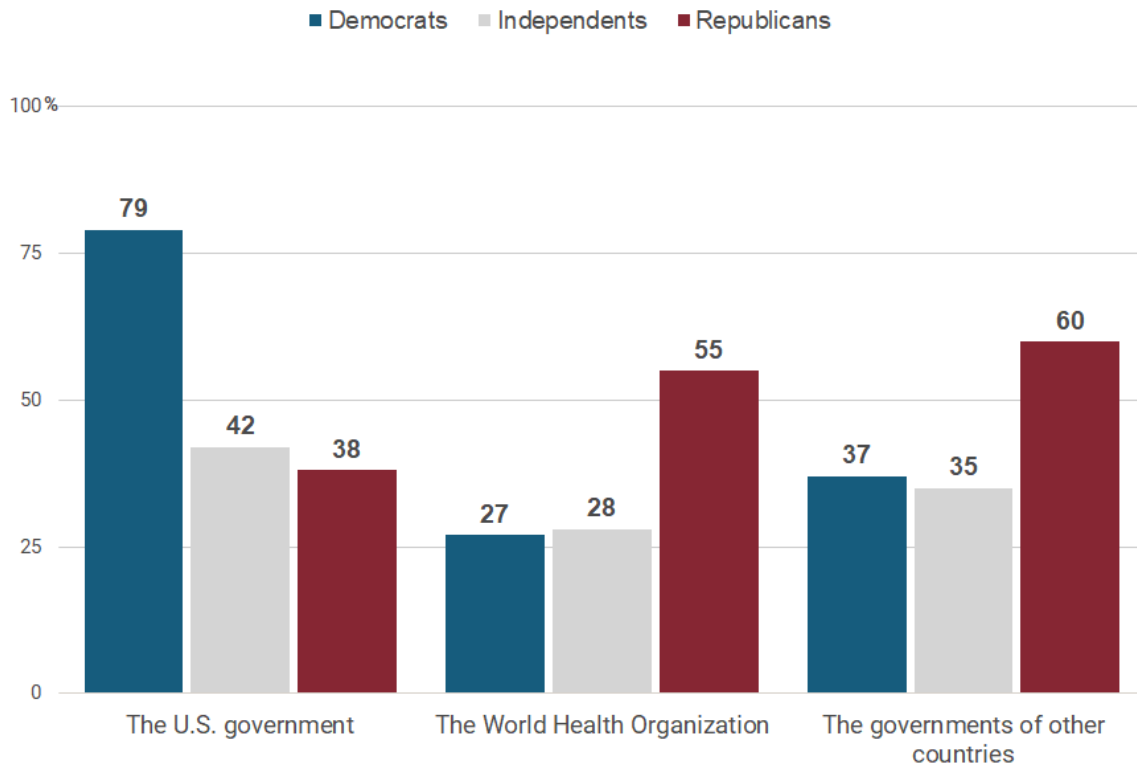
## THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT PARTISAN SPLIT ON WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE CORONAVIRUS SITUATION AND WHAT TO DO WITH A VACCINE ONCE DEVELOPED.

There are significant partisan differences in attitudes toward the causes of the coronavirus situation in the United States, who should play a major role in developing a vaccine, and who should get a vaccine if one is available.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans and independents to blame the United States for the current coronavirus situation (79% vs. 38% and 42%). In contrast, Republicans are more likely to blame the governments of other countries or the World Health Organization.

### Partisan divide on who caused the current coronavirus situation in the United States

Percent of adults who say the actions or policies of each caused the current coronavirus situation



**Question:** How much did the actions or policies of each of the following cause the current coronavirus situation in the United States?  
**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted September 11-14, 2020, with 1,053 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

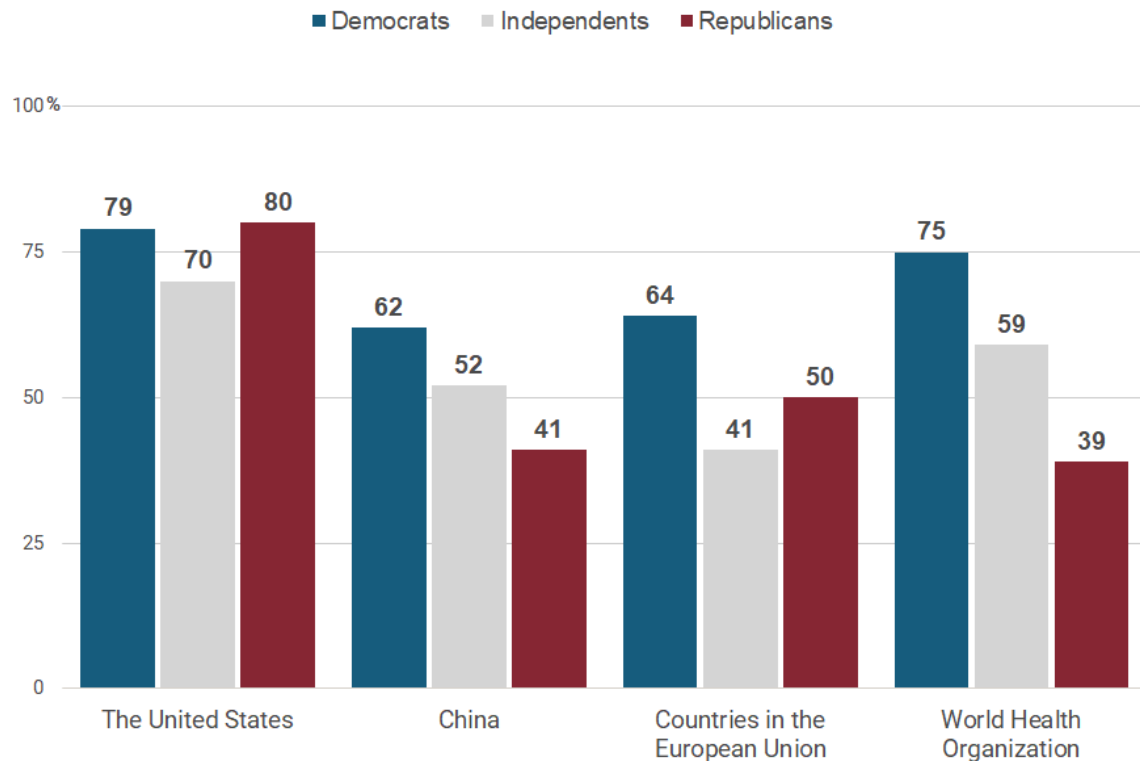


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When it comes to who should play a role in developing the coronavirus vaccine, majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents agree that the United States should play a major role. However, Democrats are more likely than Republicans and independents to say that China, countries in the European Union, and the World Health Organization should also play a major role.

### Partisan divide on who should have a role in developing the coronavirus vaccine

Percent of adults who say each should have a major role in developing the coronavirus vaccine



**Question:** Do you think each of the following should have a major role, minor role, or not a role at all in leading research efforts into developing a vaccine for the coronavirus?

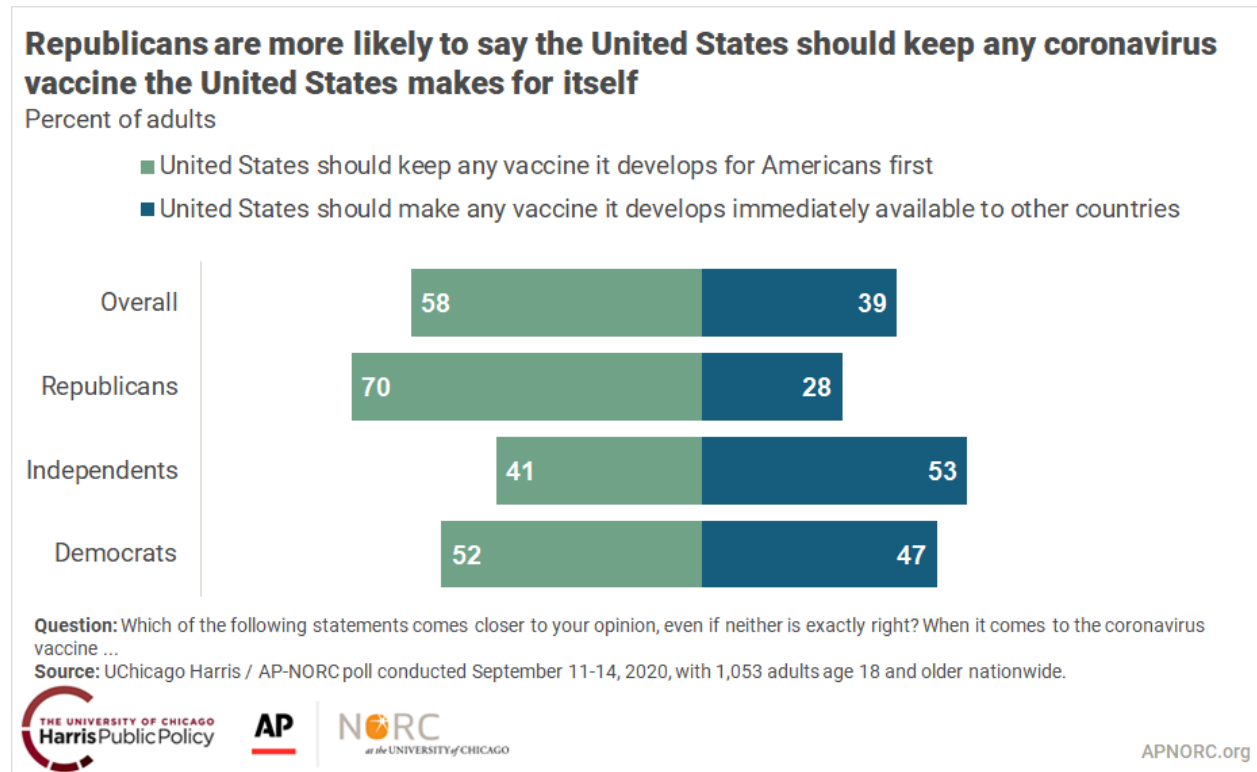
**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted September 11-14, 2020, with 1,053 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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If a vaccine is developed, Republicans are more likely than Democrats and independents to say that the United States should keep any vaccine for itself, even if that means fewer around the world get vaccinated (70% vs. 52% and 41%).

However, Republicans are less likely than Democrats to say they will personally get a coronavirus vaccine if it becomes available, regardless of origin.



## MOST AMERICANS SAY RUSSIA TRIED TO INFLUENCE THE 2016 ELECTIONS, AND A MAJORITY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN THE 2020 ELECTIONS.

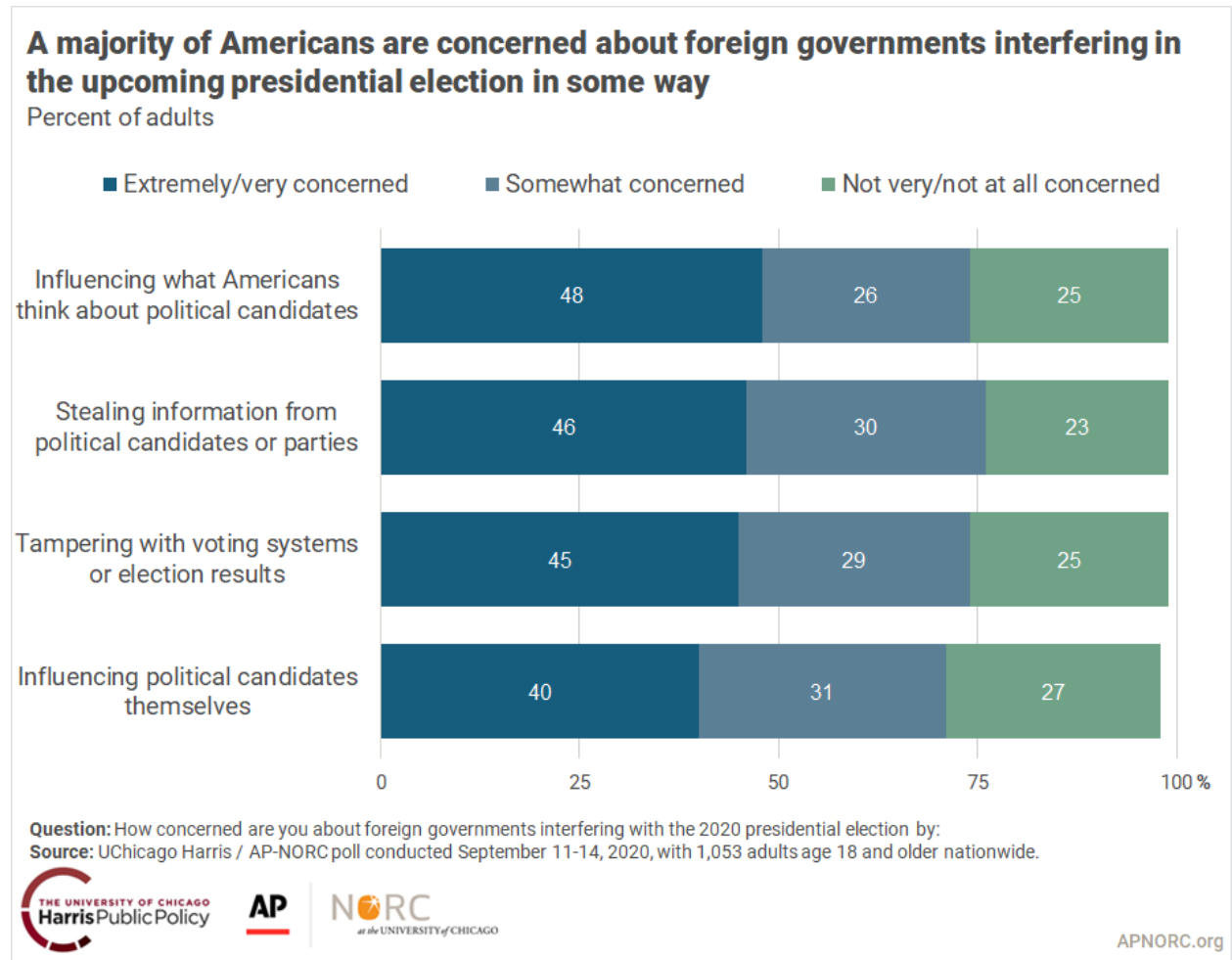
Fifty-eight percent of Americans say ties with Russia should be weakened while 39% want them strengthened. Moreover, 26% approve of Trump’s handling of Russia while 46% disapprove. Another 27% neither approve nor disapprove.

Most Americans (69%) say that Russia tried to influence the 2016 elections, and more than half similarly report concerns about foreign governments impacting the 2020 elections.

Americans express some concerns about foreign governments interfering in the upcoming presidential election whether by influencing what Americans think, stealing information from political candidates, tampering with voting systems or results, or influencing political candidates.

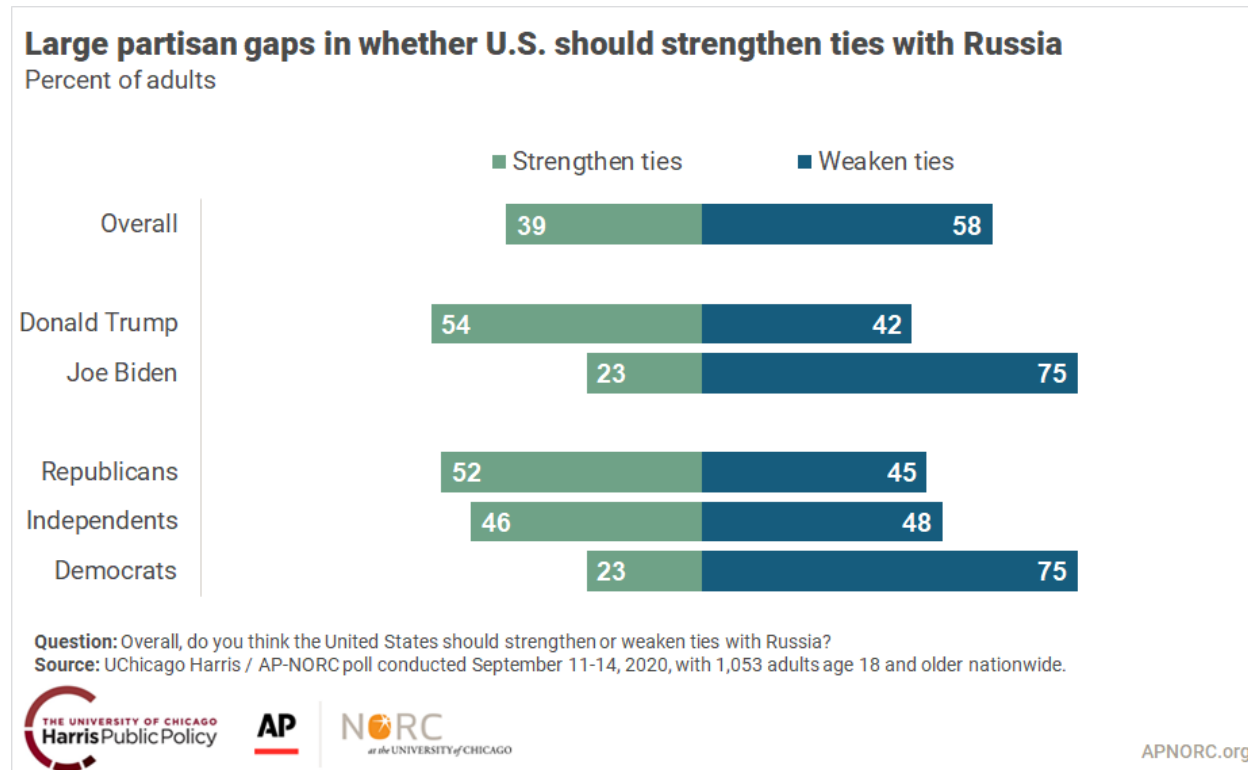
A majority of Americans (59%) are extremely or very concerned about foreign governments interfering in the upcoming presidential election in at least one of these ways.





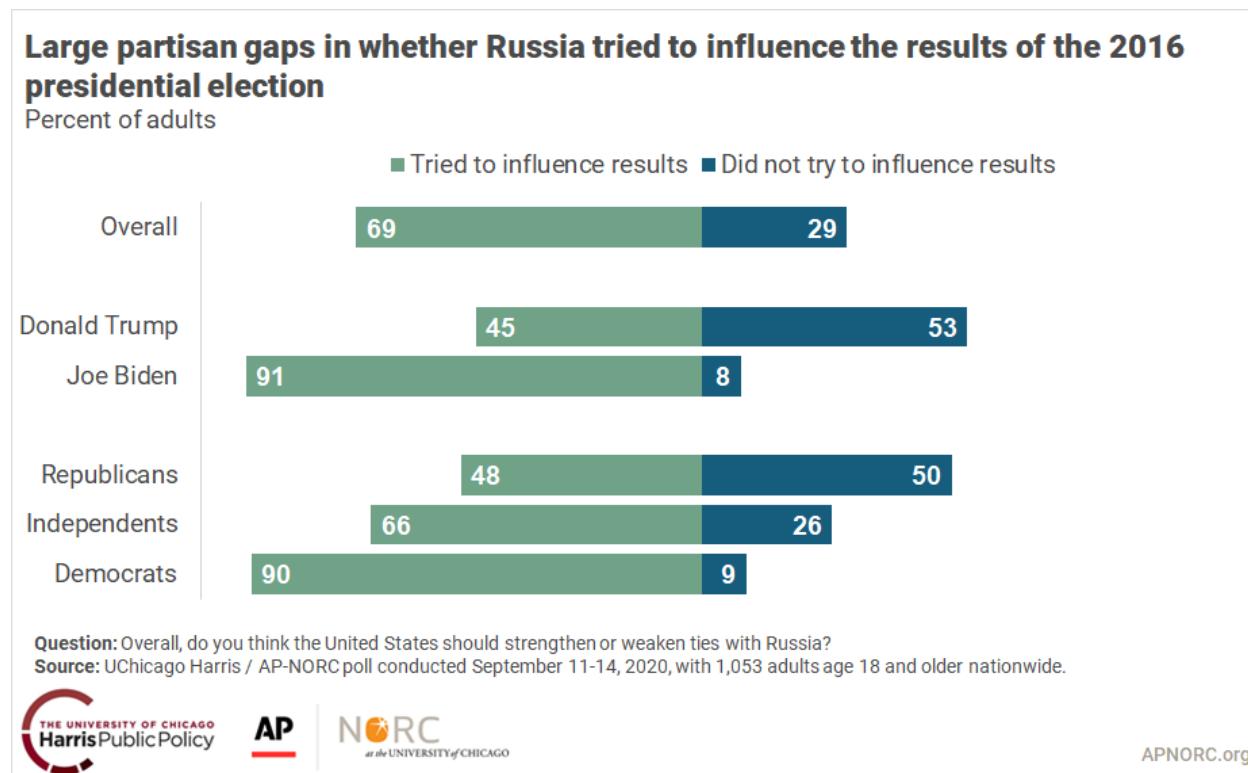
This level of concern is similar to results from previous surveys conducted in June 2019 and February 2020.

There are strong partisan differences about attitudes towards Russia and potential foreign government election interference.

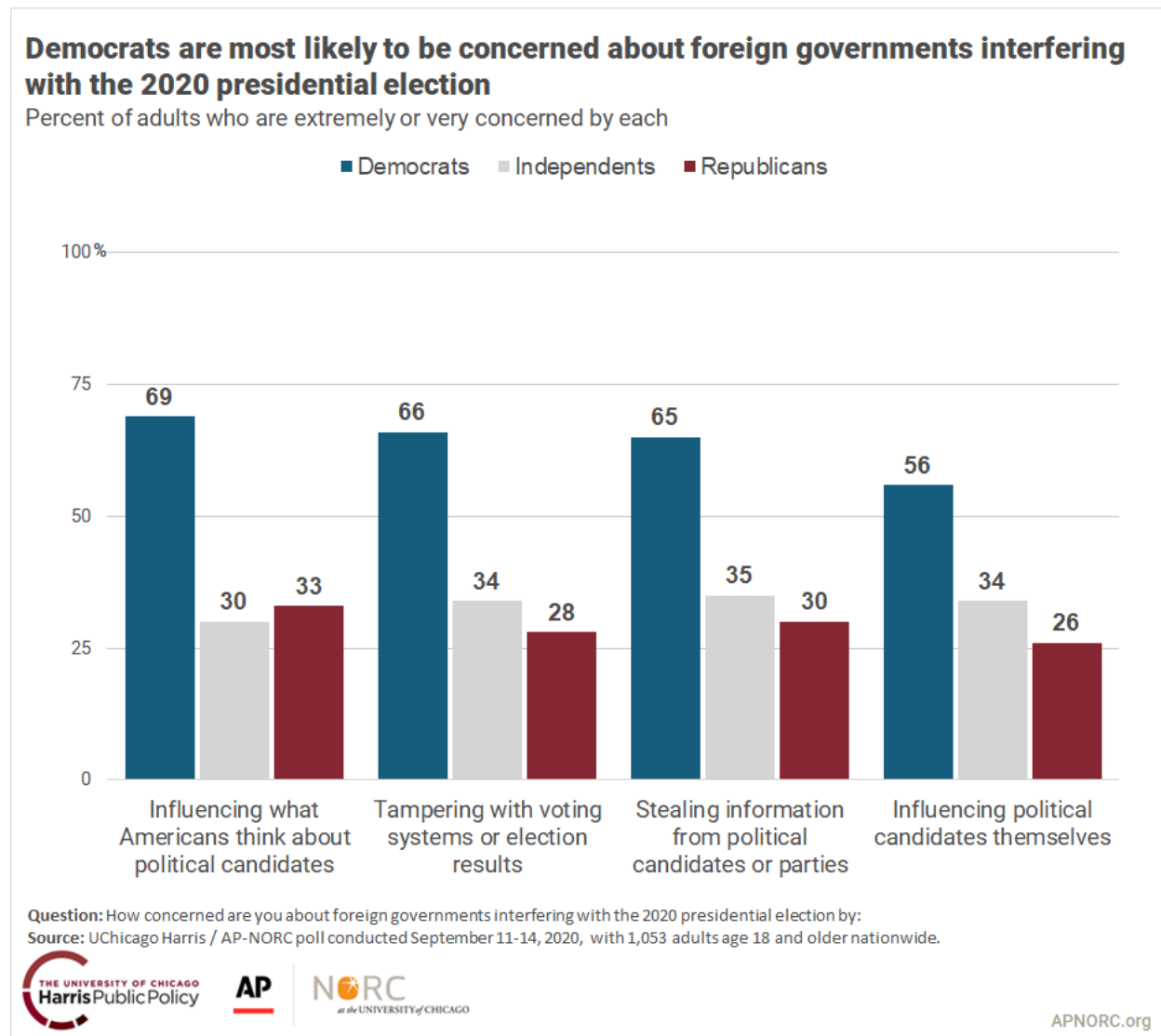


Similarly, while overall 26% of Americans strongly or somewhat approve of how Trump is handling Russia, Republicans are more likely than Democrats or independents to approve (53% vs. 3% vs. 12%).

When looking back at the 2016 presidential election, more than half of Americans (69%) agree that Russia tried to influence the results—a nearly universal opinion among Democrats (90%) and just under half of Republicans (48%).



Democrats are also more likely to be concerned about the upcoming presidential elections. For example, they are more than twice as likely as Republicans to be concerned about foreign governments tampering with voting systems or election results (66% vs. 28%) and influencing political candidates (56% vs. 26%).



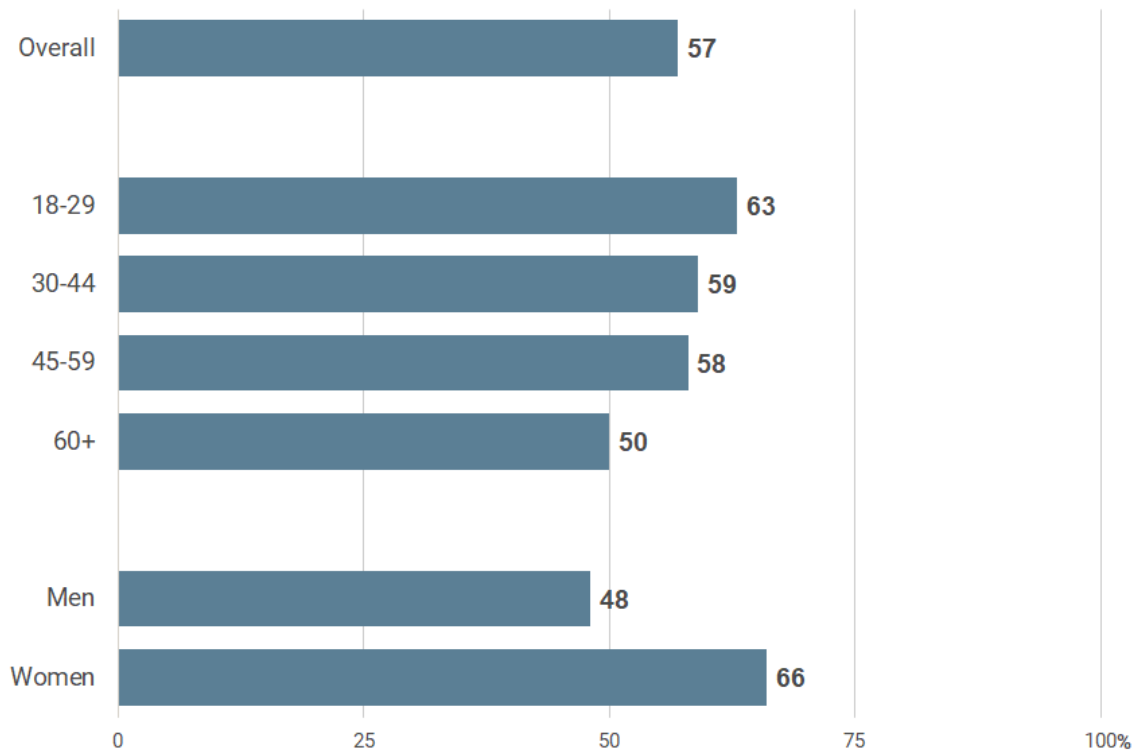
**FEW AMERICANS FOLLOW NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, AND THERE IS NO PUBLIC CONSENSUS ON HOW MANY TROOPS THE UNITED STATES SHOULD HAVE IN THE COUNTRY.**

After more than 18 years of conflict in Afghanistan, few Americans follow news and information about the war.

More than half of Americans (57%) do not follow any news and information about the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. Some Americans are particularly less likely to follow news and information about this conflict. Younger Americans between 18 and 29 are more likely to say they do not follow news and information on Afghanistan than Americans age 60 or older (63% vs. 50%). Similarly, women are more likely to say they do not follow news and information on this topic (66% vs. 47%).

## Younger Americans and women are more likely to say they do not follow news and information about the Afghanistan War

Percent of adults who do not follow news and information



Question: How closely do you follow news and information about United States involvement in the war in Afghanistan?

Source: UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted September 11-14, 2020, with 1,053 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



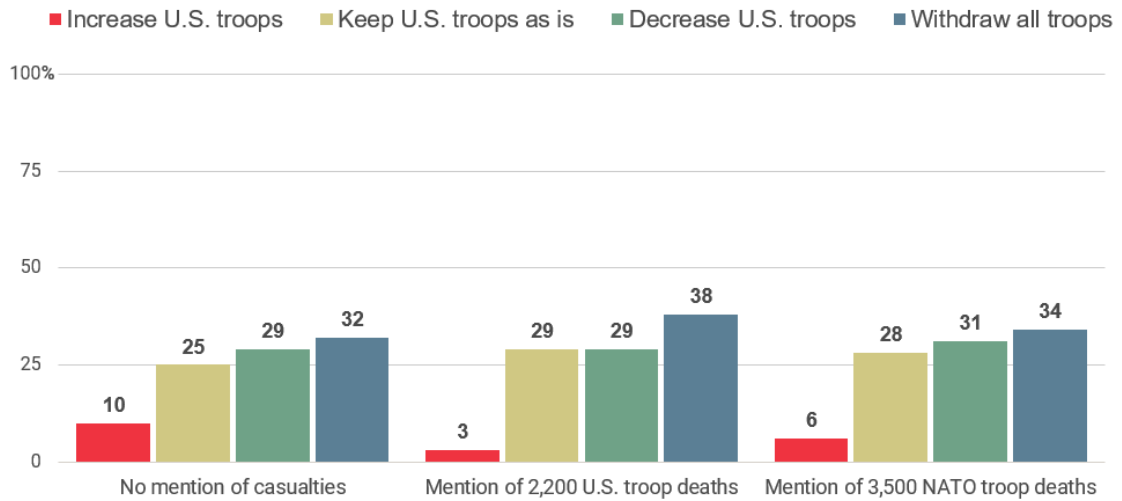
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This study featured a survey experiment in which respondents were asked about their support for changes to the number of American troops in Afghanistan. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three groups—one group without any mention of casualties, one group that saw the number of U.S. troop deaths, and one that saw the number of NATO ally troop deaths in Afghanistan.

While 10% of Americans support increasing the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan when there is no mention of casualties, just 3% say the same if there is a mention of the 2,200 U.S. troop deaths. Similarly, the number of Americans who support withdrawing all troops increases when there is a mention of U.S. troop deaths (32% vs. 38%). There is no significant change in opinion when NATO ally troop deaths are mentioned.

## Americans are less likely to want to increase U.S. troops in Afghanistan after knowing the number of U.S. casualties

Percent of adults



**Question:** [The war in Afghanistan is now the longest war in modern U.S. history] / [The war in Afghanistan is now the longest war in modern U.S. history and more than 2,200 U.S. troops have been killed] / [The war in Afghanistan is now the longest war in modern U.S. history and more than 3,500 NATO ally troops have been killed]. Do you feel we should increase the number of American troops in Afghanistan, keep the number of U.S. troops what it is now, decrease the U.S. troops in Afghanistan, or withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan?

**Source:** UChicago Harris / AP-NORC poll conducted September 11-14, 2020, with 1,053 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between September 11 and 14, 2020, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,053 completed the survey—995 via the web and 58 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 19.5%, the weighted household panel response rate is 21%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 80.4%, for a cumulative response rate of 3.3%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.13 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2020 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

One of the largest graduate professional schools at the University of Chicago, Harris Public Policy has been driven by the belief that evidence-based research, not ideology or intuition, is the best guide for public policy. For more than three decades, our exceptional community of scholars, students, and alumni have applied this exacting perspective to the world's most pressing problems using the latest tools of social science. Through our undergraduate and graduate programs, we empower a new generation of data-driven leaders to create a positive social impact throughout our global society. For more information, visit <https://harris.uchicago.edu/>.

## **ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH**

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

The founding principles of The AP-NORC Center include a mandate to carefully preserve and protect the scientific integrity and objectivity of NORC and the journalistic independence of AP. All work conducted by the Center conforms to the highest levels of scientific integrity to prevent any real or perceived bias in the research. All of the work of the Center is subject to review by its advisory committee to help ensure it meets these standards. The Center will publicize the results of all studies and make all datasets and study documentation available to scholars and the public.