



THE EXISTENTIAL THREAT TO AMERICAN DEMOCRACY:

Political Extremism, Radicalization & The 2024 Presidential Election



LINCOLN
DEMOCRACY
INSTITUTE

DEMOCRACY INDEX OVERVIEW

POWERED BY



QuestionPro



THE AMERICAN REALITY

On January 20, 2025, America's experiment with democracy will either continue as it has for over two hundred forty-eight years, or it will die. Democracy's fate will not be decided by who wins in November 2024. Rather, the outcome will be determined by whether those on the side receiving fewer votes will peacefully accept governance by those who are elected. The outcome of this is unknown for the first time in over a century.

THE LINCOLN DEMOCRACY INDEX

What makes the 2024 elections unique in American history is that we are going into an election cycle knowing there is a real chance a significant portion of the voting population will not accept the results as free and fair. It is highly likely these voters will not accept the governance of the election's winner because they do not believe the outcome. Therefore, to confront this challenge, we must ask ourselves – why is this so?

To solve such a challenge, we must acknowledge the existence of a problem. Then we must strive to understand the problem and take appropriate actions to find a path forward.

The Lincoln Democracy Institute (LDI) set out to tackle this challenge by creating its Democracy Index. LDI realized that there was a dearth of research exploring how political extremism has become normalized -- leading us further down the path of polarization, demonization, and violence. To address this phenomenon, LDI launched our groundbreaking research project focused on quantifying and comprehending the existential crises we are facing in American democracy today.

With our survey partner QuestionPro, LDI conducted over 17,000 interviews with registered voters. The sample statistically matches the American electorate based on gender, race, age, and geography. Each participant was given a 45-minute survey that delved into worldviews and personalities as well as levels of partisanship, extremism, and radicalization -- all to identify the underlying variables of the challenges we face.

While some of the conclusions may be troubling, we hope you find this initial set of insights valuable. Like any unpleasant diagnosis, this research provides the opportunity of a path toward healing.

LINCOLN DEMOCRACY INDEX OBJECTIVES

- 1. QUANTIFY** the levels of partisanship, hyper-partisanship, extremism, and radicalization within the American electorate by better understanding the operative psychological steps towards political extremism and the underlying drivers of radicalization.
- 2. DEFINE** the macro worldviews and micro political values/personalities within the American electorate today to learn what drives politics at its most basic level.
- 3. REFINE** political engagement to meet the moment of our current political reality, taking into consideration what we know of elections and the ongoing battle with zero-sum extremists and radicalized actors intentions on destroying our win-win democratic values.

KEY FINDINGS

As Abraham Lincoln said long ago, “a house divided against itself cannot stand.”

Today, America is experiencing a cycle of escalating extremism. If left unchecked, this cycle will inevitably lead to more of the violent radicalization we witnessed on January 6, 2021, at the US Capitol. That day, our democracy withstood the attack upon it, but next time we may not be as lucky.

The data that follows from the LDI Democracy Index provides a greater understanding of how divided our nation’s house has become, the underlying causes of these divisions, and what Americans can do as individuals and as a collective to confront these challenges as we move towards this generation’s moment of truth — the 2024 presidential election.

A NATION DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF CANNOT STAND

Although America's political divides are not new, there is a distinct sense since 2016 that something has changed and that our divisions have widened. Understanding these tectonic shifts is where the Lincoln Democracy Index comes into play by shedding unique quantitative light through data on the structural soundness of America's democracy. The data shows that the United States has entered a cycle of political extremism: Normalization, Polarization, Demonization, and Violence. Below is a summary of the key findings supporting this conclusion:

NORMALIZATION:

- Nearly half of American registered voters view those not sharing their politics as “untrustworthy enemies” and have little faith in the freeness or fairness of elections.
- Approximately a quarter of Americans fully meet the four steps of political extremism: psychological distress, acceptance of simplistic answers, overconfidence, and intolerance of political differences.
- Another third of Americans are emerging extremists, exhibiting three of the four steps and displaying distrust or intolerance towards those with differing political views.

POLARIZATION:

- Americans across political divides share a common top fear of “corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government.” Unfortunately, the interpretation of who falls under the categories of corrupt or incompetent is based almost entirely on partisan identification.
- Political extremism exists in both parties, with over half of Republicans and Democrats being extremists or emerging extremists. Even among independents, there is a notable extremism problem.

DEMONIZATION:

- What is perceived as right or wrong with America is highly influenced by one's political perspective. For example, supporters of Black Lives Matter and gender-neutral pronouns are viewed as “what is right” by those on the political left, while MAGA supporters and gun owners are seen as “what is wrong.” The reverse is true for those on the political right.
- Extremist individuals on both sides have higher levels of demonization of opposing political groups or ideologies.

THE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE:

- According to LDI's data, at least one in ten Americans demonstrate all three components of Kruglanski's Significant Quest Theory of Radicalization: need, network and narrative. These Americans are also likely to be considering violence in the future. Currently, three in four voters within this category are on the political right. However, it is essential to recognize how the cycle of extremism can radicalize individuals across political divides, leading to violent conflicts in response to each other's actions. Moreover, this reprisal radicalization can occur rapidly. The data shows that the United States has entered a cycle of political extremism: Normalization, Polarization, Demonization, and Violence. As we go through this cycle more Americans on both sides will begin moving through this cycle towards extremism and acceptance of violence in our politics.

As the 2024 presidential election approaches, America finds itself deeply divided, with escalating levels of extremism and radicalization among the electorate. The crucial question is whether our democracy can withstand these divisions and find a path through 2024 elections.

THE CAUSES OF OUR DIVISIONS

The extremism in America today results from decades of increasing polarization within our politics. The 2016 presidential campaign of Donald Trump marked a significant tipping point, as the optimism of Barack Obama's "Hope and Change" gave way to the normalization of extremist rhetoric, exemplified by the use of phrases such as "Lock Her Up." This trend continued during the Trump Presidency, leading to the radicalization and violence witnessed at the US Capitol on January 6 in 2021. As we approach the next presidential election, it is crucial to identify the factors that, if left unchecked, will further fuel extremism, radicalization, and violence. Based on our data, six causes are contributing to our current divides:

- 1. DIFFERING WORLDVIEWS:** Extremists and emerging extremists on both the right and left share common characteristics, including greater anger and pessimism and lower trust in others. The critical distinction between extremists on the right and left lies in the direction of their anger and distrust, as each side directs these emotions toward those on the opposing side through intolerance, distrust, and demonization.
- 2. DIVERGING FEARS:** The far left and right hold fundamentally divergent fears. As we move along the political spectrum, distress over specific issues becomes more pronounced or diminished. For example, concerns over transgender Americans serving in the military increase significantly when moving from left to right. At the same time, global warming fears decrease dramatically in intensity when moving from right to left.
- 3. RELITIGATING THE SIXTIES:** The Baby Boomers, who have dominated American politics since 1992, comprise a base of extremists on both the far right and far left. They exhibit more pronounced ideological divides compared to other generations. They are more inclined to be intolerant and distrust those not sharing their political views, regardless of whether they are on the right or the left.
- 4. THE COLD WAR GENERATIONS VERSUS POST COLD WAR GENERATIONS:** Generations that experienced the end of the Cold War have different cultural values and relationships with technology compared to those who remember the Cold War. The larger the generational distance from 1989, the greater the divide in these differences.
- 5. CULTURAL VALUES: REFORMIST VERSUS TRADITIONAL:** Most Americans prefer traditional values over reformist ones. Overstepping the perceived status quo into the reformist territory, even within one's political side, often triggers intense resistance. Cultural issues, such as the Dobbs decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* or abolishing the police, are fueled by extremism on both sides. Yet, they can also serve as cognitive dissonance to unite the tolerant and trusting across party lines by breaking them off from the intolerant extremists on their side of our political divides.
- 6. SEPARATED MEDIA ECOSYSTEMS:** Americans exist within three separate media ecosystems - Traditional Media, Fox News Media, and New Right Extremist Media. While extremists and emerging extremists can be found in each, those demonstrating radicalization consume media predominantly from New Right Extremist Media. Therefore, any New Left Extremist Media ecosystem emergence should be watched closely as it would have just as troubling implications for our democracy as that on the right does now. Moreover, as we move through our next presidential election cycle, it is essential to assess whether rhetoric within New Right Extremist Media again aligns with the narratives like election denialism that led to the events on January 6.

As the next test of our America's democracy unfolds, we must watch these groups for growing extremism. Moreover, those relying on the New Right Extremist Media ecosystem must be observed closely to see if they accept narratives with potentially violent consequences again in 2024. In 2020 all the signs of what eventually happened were in plain view. This time, we have quantitative data to back up our hunches. We ignore it at our peril.

CONFRONTING THAT WHICH DIVIDES US

The 2024 presidential election will be an existential test for the American experiment. It will determine whether we can heal our divisions or continue the current erosion of the foundation of American democracy. To confront this crisis and foster a healthier nation, we propose the following based on our research:

- **RECOGNIZE WHAT IS AT STAKE IN 2024:** Ensuring acceptance of election results is crucial for the survival of any democracy. Ultimately, the losing side must consent to be governed by those they did not support, as failing to do so destroys the foundation of democracy. Many Americans doubt the fairness of the 2020 elections, and there is a belief among right-wing extremists and those on the left and right with low trust and intolerance that the other party cannot win a “free and fair” election in 2024. To address election denialism, we must actively marginalize deniers and confront the silence of those who refuse to speak out against such denials. Upholding trust and integrity in our elections is the first step towards safeguarding our democracy.
- **ENGAGE CONSTANTLY WITH THOSE DETERMINING THE OUTCOME:** In the upcoming elections, a small group of voters in Wisconsin, Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Nevada will play a decisive role. These voters, historically leaning towards supporting Republicans, have shown a willingness to cross party lines in recent elections. Engaging them in a sustained and ongoing conversation is vital to ensure they continue prioritizing democracy over partisan interests.
- **CREATE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ENABLERS OF EXTREMISM:** Political extremism follows a progression of psychological distress, acceptance of simplistic answers, overconfidence, and intolerance of political differences. Leaders in a democracy are responsible for confronting and addressing voters on this trajectory. Failure to do so makes them enablers, contributing to the toxic effects harming our democracy. Those who choose to remain silent must be held politically accountable, as they share responsibility for the challenges we face alongside the illiberal actors driving extremism and radicalization.
- **COVER EXTREMISM BY UNDERSTANDING ITS CYCLE:** Intolerance and distrust perpetuate a dangerous cycle of extremism within our democracy: normalization, polarization, demonization, and violence. Journalists covering politics and the coming presidential campaign must recognize and comprehend this cycle. Individuals displaying emerging extremist tendencies can rapidly descend into full-fledged extremists as the cycle unfolds. Moreover, zero-sum politicians and organizations strategically fuel and exploit extremist behaviors by leveraging media coverage. The media is responsible for acknowledging this reality and incorporating this understanding into their coverage of governing, politics, and the coming elections.
- **INVEST WITH DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AS THE NORTH STAR:** Supporting candidates during elections and safeguarding democracy from extremism are interconnected, yet distinct, endeavors. While supporting candidates buys time to address extremism in elections, defending democracy requires long-term, sustained engagement beyond campaigns and elections to defeat extremism. Therefore, when deciding where to help, it is crucial to prioritize the defense of democracy as the guiding principle. Consider how your support contributes to buying time for democratic forces, obstructing the cycle of extremism, or marginalizing extremists. By aligning to defend democracy, meaningful contributions to safeguarding democratic principles get made.

The challenges of extremism America faces did not arise overnight, and addressing them requires a sustained long-term effort. Through this research, we understand the challenges, their underlying causes, and the strategic steps to start correcting course. Armed with this knowledge, we can begin the vital work of defeating unhealthy extremism. It will require commitment, dialogue, and a collective effort, but we have the potential to overcome these challenges and build a stronger and more resilient nation.

The background of the entire page is a textured, fibrous material in two colors: red on the left and blue on the right. A jagged, dark crack runs vertically down the center, separating the two colors. In the middle of this page, there is a dark grey rectangular box containing the table of contents.

CONTENTS

Section 1 - The Four Steps to Political Extremism

Section 2 - The Political Tolerance Spectrum

Section 3 - Political Extremism in America Today

Section 4 - The Significant Quest Theory of Radicalization

Section 5 - Extremism and the Media Ecosystems

Section 6 - The 2024 Republican Presidential Primaries

Section 7 - The 2024 Democratic Nomination

Section 8 - The Existential Threats of the 2024 General Election

Section 9 - The Keys to Countering Extremism in 2024



SECTION #1 THE STEPS TO POLITICAL EXTREMISM

Political extremism refers to the advocacy or support for political ideologies, beliefs, or actions that fall significantly outside the conventional or mainstream political spectrum. Extremists often reject or challenge the accepted social norms and political institutions in pursuit of radical change.

This chapter will discuss and explain the four distinct steps identified by LDI's research that lead individuals to political extremism:

1. Psychological Distress
2. Acceptance of Simplistic Answers
3. The Overconfidence Effect
4. Intolerance

Extremism, when based on legitimate grievances, is not necessarily a destructive force within a democracy. For example, positions initially viewed as extreme by political elites at points in American history have driven transformative changes. These include the Civil Rights Movement, Universal Suffrage, and Marriage Equality; each transformed our nation for the better.

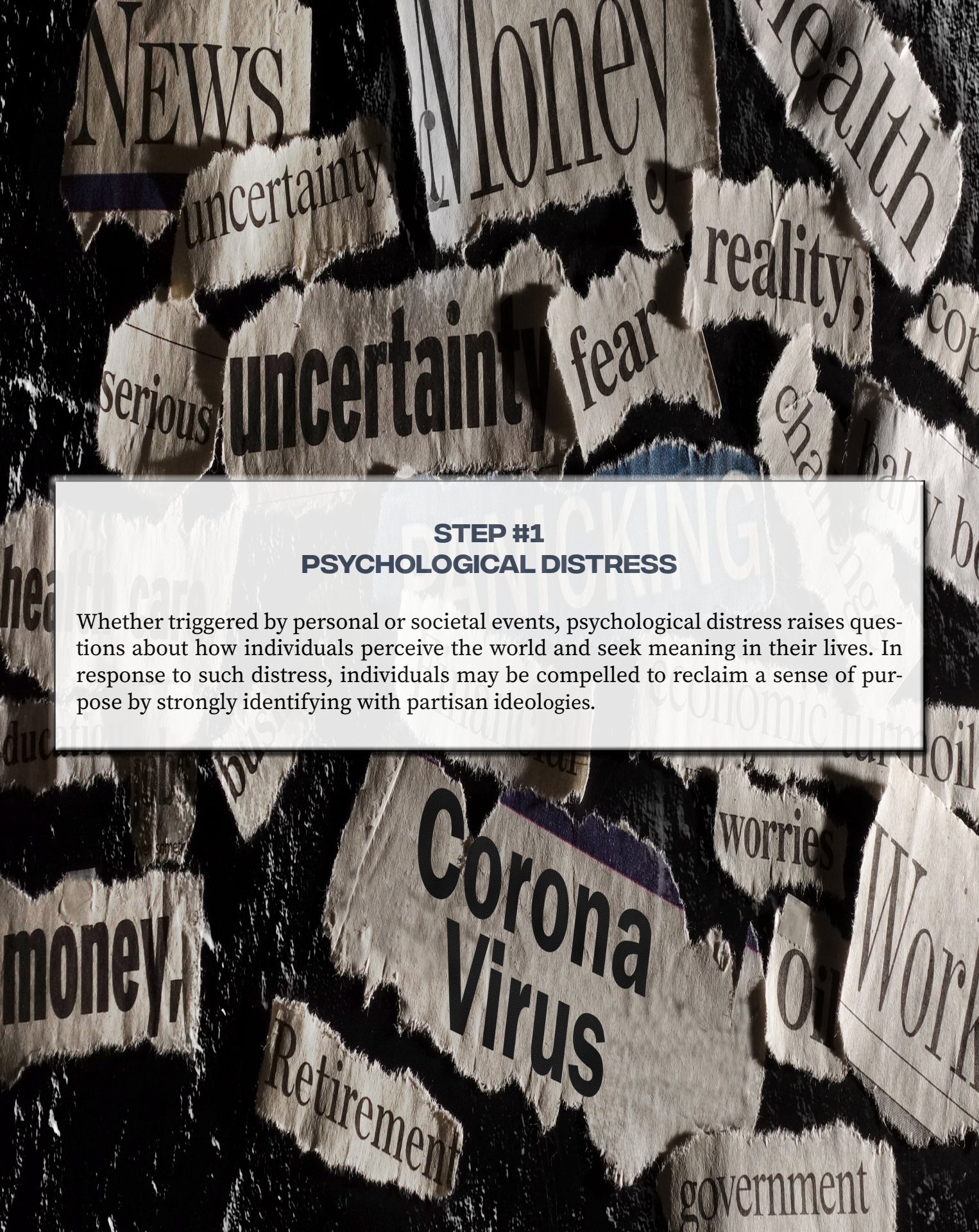
However, political extremism becomes an imminent threat to a democracy when its drivers are intolerance fueled by false fears, distorted realities, disinformation, or a sense of entitlement. This volatile combination, exploited by opportunistic and, more often than not, illiberal politicians, unleashes a toxic contagion. The profound consequences of this brew include:

- The normalization of extreme views.
- A destructive escalation of polarization.
- A dangerous demonization of those with different political views.

If left unchecked, this trajectory will ultimately lead to acts of violent radicalization, further undermining, or even destroying, the very foundation of our democracy.

Powered by the sophisticated survey research platform Question Pro, the index aims to comprehensively understand how much this threat has damaged the foundation of America's democracy. To accurately gauge the impact of unhealthy political extremism in America, the LDI Index employs a robust methodology incorporating the four distinct steps identified above.





STEP #1 PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Whether triggered by personal or societal events, psychological distress raises questions about how individuals perceive the world and seek meaning in their lives. In response to such distress, individuals may be compelled to reclaim a sense of purpose by strongly identifying with partisan ideologies.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS -- AMERICAN FEARS

To gain insights into the causes of psychological distress, LDI asked respondents to rate forty statements on a scale of zero (not afraid) to one hundred (terrified) to gauge levels of fear. The survey reveals that regardless of political affiliation, the greatest anxiety of all Americans is the same. The bad news is the perceived solutions accepted to address the same fear depend on partisan identification.

REPUBLICAN DISTRESS

Republicans demonstrate higher levels of anxiety than Democrats or Independents. Their average scores by issue type are: Global Fears (64), Economic Fears (62), Political Fears (61), Cultural Fears (56), and Social Fears (51). If you were to define a prevailing distress narrative within the GOP today, it would be: “corrupt and incompetent Democrats are transforming America into a woke, socialist nation by bankrupting the country and undermining the traditional values that have made America great.” While Republicans share a common anxiety with Democrats and Independents regarding “corrupt or incompetent individuals holding high positions in government,” they differ significantly on which specific individuals in government are “corrupt” or “incompetent.” For Republicans, the answers are the Democratic Party and its leaders like President Biden or Nancy Pelosi.

DEMOCRAT DISTRESS

Meanwhile, Democrats exhibit lower levels of anxiety. This lower anxiety could be attributed to their perception of the world as less threatening, the traditional information ecosystem they inhabit, or their party’s control of the White House. Their average scores are: Economic Fears (59), Political Fears (58), Social Fears (57), Cultural Fears (53), and Global Fears (52). Like Republicans, the foundation of Democratic distress stems from concerns about the actions of the opposing side. Their prevailing distress narrative centers around a belief that “corrupt and incompetent Republicans, led by an autocratic leader, Donald Trump, are dismantling America as we know it at the

AMERICAN'S GREATEST FEARS	
Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	74
The power of billionaires to control government, the economy, and policy choices for their own interests	68
My children or grandchildren growing up in an America worse than the one I have lived in	66
A decision by the Supreme Court taking away rights or liberties for members of my family or me	65
Not having enough money for retirement.	64
American Democracy being replaced by One Party Autocratic Rule	64
A conflict occurring between the United States and a major military, like China or Russia, causing a World War	64
An Economic Depression in your lifetime.	64
A nuclear war happening where the United States is attacked	62
Not being able to pay for needed medical care.	61
Average score of all Registered Voters on a scale from 0 Not Afraid to 100 Terrified	

behest of their billionaire backers and enabled by a radical-right Supreme Court intent on undermining basic rights and liberties.” For Democrats, those who are corrupt are Republicans, their appointees to the Supreme Court, and Donald Trump, who is listed higher than any other leader.

DISTRESS AMONG INDEPENDENTS

Independents exhibit lower anxiety than those on the partisan sides of the political spectrum. These lower levels of unease may be attributable to less time spent on political engagement and more reliance on a traditional information ecosystem for their news. Among independents, their apprehensions revolve around Economic Fears (60), followed by Political Fears (56), Global Issues (55), and Cultural and Social Fears (51). The fundamental distress narrative for independent voters is: “political parties empower corrupt and incompetent leaders who serve the interests of elites, leading to the deterioration the America we have known throughout our lifetime.” Unlike those who identify with a party, independents don’t demonize leaders as much as they tend to see politicians as corrupt or incompetent.

THE IMPACT OF DIVERGENT FEARS

The distress Americans are experiencing is a combination of multifaceted fears dividing along partisan lines. Even when there appears to be agreement, the consensus breaks down into partisan camps regarding solutions. Moreover, the diversity of fears creates an environment where politically self-interested politicians offer simplistic solutions, often in the form of demonization of those who don’t share the answers, to exploit the public’s political divisions around the distress voters are feeling.

THE SIX CLUSTERS OF DISTRESS

According to the data, distress among American voters today can be broken down into six clusters based on their anxieties and the intensity of those fears. Our electorate ranges from highly distressed Americans, to those who are not distressed in the least. The largest group is, in fact, highly prosperous, feeling little anxiety about the moment but very concerned about where America is headed and highly distressed about the future. The following page provides details on each of these groups.

Republicans	
Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	74
Democrats in Congress borrowing more and more money to pay for unneeded programs rather than addressing the debt	73
Traditional values being replaced by political correctness and wokeism	71
America becoming a socialist country	71
Independents	
Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	75
The power of billionaires to control government, the economy, and policy choices for their own interests	70
My children or grandchildren growing up in an America worse than the one I have lived in	67
A decision by the Supreme Court taking away rights or liberties for members of my family or me	63
Democrats	
Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	73
A decision by the Supreme Court taking away rights or liberties for members of my family or me	70
The power of billionaires to control government, the economy, and policy choices for their own interests	70
A family member or friend being denied reproductive rights where they live causes them to be forced to carry a child against their will.	69

LEVELS OF DISTRESS

HIGHLY DISTRESSED (13% of Registered Voters)

This group is characterized by a higher likelihood of being married (60%), male (55%), and residing in urban areas (54%). Around half of them feel less prosperous than their parents (50%), while 20% report a similar financial status to them. The average age of this group is 46, and they display a higher tendency to invest in the stock market (54%) and own homes (72%). They are slightly more likely to be Black (16%) or Hispanic (11%) than the national average. Regarding political affiliation, they are almost evenly divided between Republicans (40%) and Democrats (42%). In the 2016 and 2020 elections, they supported Donald Trump by a substantial margin (49% to 28% and 47% to 39%, respectively).

ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED (14% of Registered Voters)

This group is predominantly female (64%), white (74%), and older (average age of 54). They exhibit a strong influence of economic fears (82 out of 100) and believe that America's best days are behind us (67%). Around 78% anticipate more threats to individuals like themselves in the future. A significant majority of them have a household income of less than \$100,000 per year (88%) and a lower investment rate (37%). They tend to identify more with the Republican Party (39%) and consider themselves "Make America Great Conservatives." In the 2016 and 2020 elections, they supported Donald Trump (50% to 35% and 51% to 39%, respectively).

PROSPEROUS BUT DISTRESSED ABOUT THE FUTURE (27% of Registered Voters)

This group is characterized by a younger age (average age of 44) and diverse ethnicity (59% white, 16% black, 19% Latino). They have higher affluence, with 39% reporting household incomes of \$100,000 or more and 57% investing in stocks. Most feel as prosperous as their parents (27%) or even better off (42%). However, they harbor pessimism about the future, with concerns about retirement savings (64%), corrupt or incompetent politicians (64%), and nuclear attacks on America (62%). About half of them have children under 18. Politically, they are evenly divided between Democrats (40%) and Republicans (38%). In the 2016 election, they supported Trump (42% to 30%), and in 2020, they favored him by a narrower margin (43% to 39%).

BORDERLINE DISTRESSED (16% of Registered Voters)

This group shares similarities with the Highly Distressed group in terms of average age (54), female predominance (62%), and ethnicity (79% white). They are slightly less concerned about economic fears (66 out of 100) but still believe America's best days are behind us (56%). A significant proportion (68%) think their children will have worse lives than their parents. They express concerns about corrupt and incompetent officials (87 out of 100) and the influence of billionaires on government, the economy, and policy choices (77%). There is a fear that American democracy could fail (74%), resulting in a worse future for their children and grandchildren (73%). In the 2016 election, they split their votes between Trump and Clinton (42% to 42%), and in 2020, they favored Biden (50% to 40%).

NOT DISTRESSED (19% of Registered Voters)

This group closely mirrors the demographic makeup of the entire country, with a balanced female-to-male ratio (54% to 46%), an average age of 54, and a slightly higher proportion of white individuals (77%). Around 44% have a college or advanced degree, and 80% earn less than \$100,000 per year in household income. Most of them own homes, with 75% valued at \$500,000 or less. Regarding how they perceive their parent's financial status, 40% believe they are worse off, while 37% believe they are better off. Politically, 42% identify as Democrats, 30% as Republicans, and 28% as independents. In the 2016 election, they were evenly split between Trump and Clinton (41% to 42%), but in 2020, they supported Biden by a significant margin (52% to 37%).

HIGHLY NOT DISTRESSED (12% of Registered Voters)

This group exhibits the lowest levels of fear compared to other groups, with political fears averaging 22% and economic fears averaging 21%. They are older, averaging 53, and slightly more male (56%). They tend to live in urban areas (36%) or suburbs (44%) and have higher education levels, with 44% holding college or advanced degrees. They are more likely than the general population to identify as Democrats (43%) or independents (27%). In the 2016 election, they supported Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump (48% to 34%); in the 2020 election, they strongly favored Joe Biden (59% to 30%).



STOP THE

STEP #2

ACCEPTANCE OF COGNITIVELY SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS

Acceptance of cognitively simplistic answers to topics of psychological distress stems from human desire for clarity and ease in understanding complex issues. This tendency drives individuals toward extremist political beliefs, as they offer clear explanations for the world's complexities. Extremist ideologies provide certainty and reassurance during distress, offering simplistic solutions to alleviate concerns. By simplifying real-world challenges, extremist politicians appeal to those seeking straightforward answers in times of real or imagined turmoil.

ACCEPTANCE OF COGNITIVELY SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS

To assess how many Americans accept cognitively simplistic answers, LDI utilized two sets of questions. First, respondents were asked to rate the simplicity or complexity of solutions to economic, social, cultural, political, and global challenges facing America today. Then each was given a choice between two statements: one

54% TO 45% OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THE CHALLENGES THE COUNTRY FACES ARE SIMPLE BUT THE ANSWERS ARE MADE COMPLEX BY THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE THE POLITICAL DIVIDE.

suggesting the challenges America faces are simple but made complex due to unwillingness by those across the political divide to accept simple answers. The other asserting the challenges faced are complex and require complex solutions, but those on the other side of politics are unwilling to admit this complexity. The responses were then used to divide Americans into two categories: those inclined

to accept simplistic answers and those less prone to do so.

ANALYSIS #1: BIPOLAR GROUPINGS

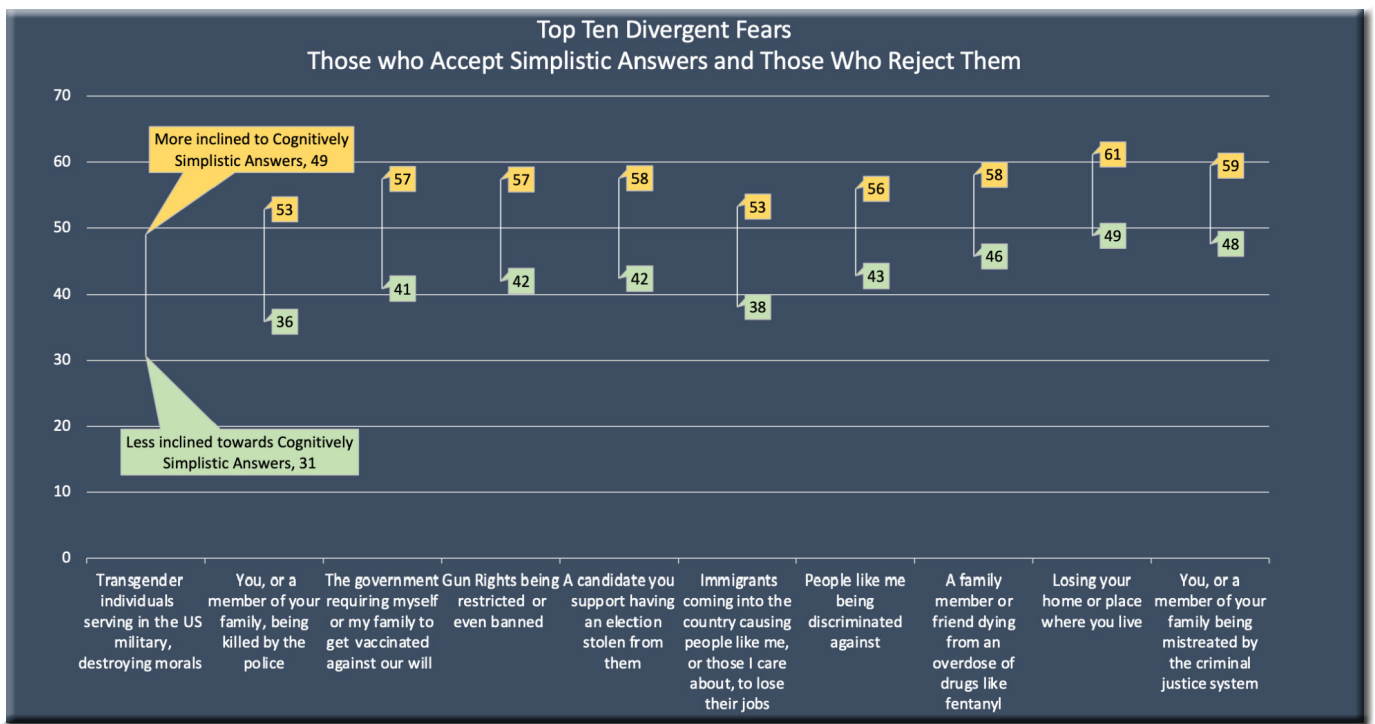
In this analysis, 43% of voters accepted simplistic answers, while 57% rejected them. Both groups shared similar top five fears on their distress scores, but distinct differences emerged when considering all forty fears. Those accepting simplistic answers had higher average scores for thirty-seven of the forty statements. Those rejecting simplistic answers scored higher on three fears, but each of these fears were among the top five of all Americans:

1. “Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government.”
2. “The power of billionaires to control government, the economy, and policy choices for their interests.”
3. “A conflict between the United States and a major military power causing a World War.”

AMONG THE TOP FIVE FEARS OF ALL AMERICANS THERE IS MINIMAL DIFFERENCE IN THE LEVEL OF FEAR BETWEEN THOSE WHO ACCEPT SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS AND THOSE WHO REJECT THEM.

For all other fears, the group accepting simplistic answers had higher distress levels, indicating a correlation between accepting simplistic answers and psychological distress.

The graph on the next page illustrates the top fears based on the divergence between the two groups: those accepting simplistic answers and those rejecting them. In each case, there is a difference of more than 10 points in average distress levels. Among the forty fears tested, those accepting simplistic answers scored seven points higher on average than those who rejected such answers, regardless of whether the overall anxiety levels for a specific fear statement were high or low. This significant gap suggests a strong correlation between the acceptance of simplistic answers and the intensity of distress experienced by an individual.



POLITICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

Independent voters were least inclined to accept simplistic answers, with two-thirds rejecting them. Republicans (46%) and Democrats (44%) showed similar tendencies, but partisans further to the left or right of the political spectrum had a higher likelihood of accepting such answers. Demographically, women were less inclined to accept simplistic answers (63%) than men (51%). Millennials were more willing to accept simplistic answers (61%), while older voters were more likely to reject them. Education levels did not show significant differences in the acceptance or rejection of such answers, but those who considered religion important or very important were far more inclined to accept simplistic answers than other Americans.

OTHER KEY DIFFERENCES

Opinions on the impact of MAGA (Make America Great Again) on America varied, with a higher percentage of those accepting simplistic answers, two-thirds, believing “MAGA has made America better” compared to those rejecting them (54%). Views on the fairness of elections also differed, with most of those accepting simplistic answers perceiving them as neither free nor fair. In contrast, those less inclined to accept simplistic answers viewed them as free and fair.

ANALYSIS #2: SIX GROUP CLUSTERING

In our second analysis, LDI employed a two-factor analysis to create clusters based on acceptance of simplistic answers for economic, political, global, social, and cultural challenges. This approach identified six distinct groups that were characterized by their acceptance or rejection of simplistic answers. These groups demonstrated varied perspectives, with some embracing simplicity to specific cultural or social challenges while acknowledging complexity in others, such as economic or global challenges. Based on this segmentation, thirty-seven percent of Americans strongly or overwhelmingly accepted simplistic answers, thirty-three percent mostly or entirely rejected them, and the remaining portion accepted or rejected them depending on the circumstances. The following page presents an overview of these six detailed clusters of Americans.

LEVELS OF ACCEPTING SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS

OVERWHELMINGLY ACCEPT SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS (24% of Registered Voters)

This group consists of younger Americans with an average age of 45, predominantly male (60%), residing in urban areas (52%). They display diversity, with 21% being Black and 12% Hispanic. Highly educated, 23% hold a college degree and 18% have a graduate degree. They often consider religion significant in their lives (54%) and align with either the Democratic Party (43%) or the Republican Party (39%). More than one-third of them (35%) experience very high distress, particularly regarding economic fears (averaging 70 out of 100). Additional percentages include 19% highly distressed and 17% distressed. In the 2016 election, they supported Trump (52% to 34%) and marginally backed him again in 2020 (49% to 44%).

STRONGLY ACCEPTING SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS (13% of Registered Voters)

This segment of relatively young individuals with an average age of 43, is slightly more male (53%). They predominantly reside in urban areas (53%) or suburbs (33%), with nearly 70% living within 30 miles of their birthplace. They are more likely to be African-American (14%) or Latino (19%) compared to other groups. Around 40% hold a college education. Approximately 45% experience distress, with 9% being highly distressed and 14% very highly distressed. Their political affiliation is more centrist, with 42% supporting the Democratic Party and 38% favoring the Republican Party. In 2016, they supported Trump (50% to 36%), but swung to Biden in 2020 (48% to 42%).

ECONOMIC & GLOBAL COMPLEX & SOCIAL SIMPLE (15% of Registered Voters)

These Americans perceive economic and global issues as complex, while regarding social issues as having simplistic solutions. They have an average fear score of 64 out of 100 for economic fears, 58 for global fears, and 53 for social fears, with economic fears being higher than the average for all American voters. With an average age of 52, they consist of slightly more female individuals (55%). Their ethnic composition mirrors America as a whole. They are more likely to reside in suburbs (46%) or rural areas (25%), with approximately one-third having a college or graduate degree. Their distress tends to be lower, with 11% being very highly distressed, 22% highly distressed, and 14% distressed. In the 2016 election, they voted for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton (46% to 40%), but slightly favored Biden in 2020 (47% to 45%).

MARGINALLY ACCEPT SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS (16% of Registered Voters)

This segment comprises mostly millennials and Generation Z, with an average age of 49. They are more female (58%) and tend to reside in suburban (43%) or rural (22%) areas. Ethnically, they are a microcosm of America. Approximately 62% have incomes below \$75,000 per year, with around one-third holding a college degree (24%) or graduate degree (11%). Distress levels are significant, with 32% being distressed, 11% highly distressed, and 8% very highly distressed. Their primary fears revolve around economic (58 out of 100) and political (56) issues. In the 2016 election, they heavily supported Trump (46% to 36%) but swung towards Biden in 2020 (45% to 44%).

MOSTLY REJECT SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS (20% of Registered Voters)

This group has an average age of 55, predominantly female (64%), and tends to reside in suburban areas (49%) or rural areas (25%). They are primarily white (76%) and nearly half have incomes below \$50,000. They are less likely to have investments (44%) or a valid passport (43%). More than half experience lower levels of distress, including not being distressed (23%), highly not distressed (16%), or borderline distressed (18%). Their main fears revolve around economic issues (average score of 56 out of 100) and they are divided in their political affiliations, with 37% identifying as Democrats, 32% as Independents, and 31% as Republicans. In the 2016 election, they were equally split between Trump and Clinton (40% each), but in 2020 they heavily favored Biden (48% to 38%).

ENTIRELY REJECT SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS (13% of Registered Voters)

This group is predominantly female (54%) and more likely to live in suburban areas (51%) or rural areas (25%) that are more than 30 miles away from their place of birth (61%). They are overwhelmingly white (82%) and the most likely to have received government benefits (59%). Although around 38% have incomes below \$50,000, 72% own their own homes and more than half have investments (54%). Their fears revolve around economic and political issues (average score of 56 out of 100 for each), but they have the lowest levels of distress, including being not distressed (12%), highly not distressed (15%), and very highly not distressed (9%). They lean more towards the Democratic Party (41%) than the Republican Party (31%) or identifying as Independents (28%). They supported Clinton (47% to 41%) and heavily favored Biden (56% to 36%) in the 2016 and 2020 elections, respectively.

A large crowd of people at night, many holding up phones to record. A prominent sign in the center reads '*TYRE NICHOLS*' and 'ABOLISH THE POLICE!!!'. The sign is dark with white chalk-like text. The background is filled with people, some wearing masks, and the scene is dimly lit, suggesting an outdoor nighttime gathering.

STEP #3 THE OVERCONFIDENCE EFFECT

When voters facing distress encounter incongruent realities or alternative perspectives, the acceptance of cognitively simplistic answers can lead to the overconfidence effect. This effect refers to the tendency of potential extremists to possess unwarranted confidence in their own perceived ability to define and understand the “real” truths, alternative facts, or perspectives, regardless of actual realities or evidence. This overconfidence can further reinforce their belief in the validity and superiority of their chosen ideologies, making them more resistant to opposing viewpoints and less willing to engage in critical thinking or consider alternative perspectives.

THE OVERCONFIDENCE EFFECT

To pinpoint individuals demonstrating the overconfidence effect or those susceptible to it, LDI applied a series of questions to gauge self-confidence levels. These queries focused on self-perceived competencies such as resolving complex issues, assessing character, distinguishing truthful information, and knowledge of politics and government. Additionally, respondents were asked about their abilities to make informed policy choices compared to experts and their whether they would “try and convince” or “try and understand” people with differing views in a conversation when they are confident of their correctness on the issue being discussed.

EMPLOYING SUBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

The questions we used to identify overconfidence were intentionally subjective. In essence, it would be challenging for a respondent to determine if they are above, below, or average in their capacity to recognize truthful information or evaluate people’s character, given the subjective nature of both the questions and the topics. For instance, if the Secretary of Defense, or Pentagon staff, were respondents in our survey, we would hope they would classify themselves as above average in terms of awareness of “real threats to the nation.” However, these individuals are exceptions, and the ratings are relative - a junior Pentagon staffer might be far above average compared to the general American population but well below average in relation to the Secretary of Defense. Consequently, the vast majority of the fifty-nine percent of respondents who believe they possess an above-average understanding of national threats are exhibiting overconfidence in their abilities. When evaluated alongside other questions, it becomes feasible to gauge the extent and prevalence of the overconfidence effect among Americans. It’s worth noting that statistically, more than half of the American population can’t be above average, as the average represents the midpoint of a hundred percent.

Thinking about yourself in comparison to others, how would you rate....

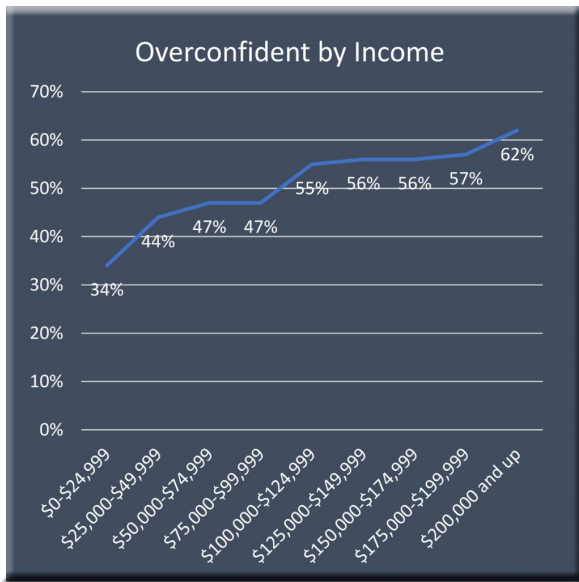
	Below Average	About Average	Above Average
Your ability to find truthful information.	10%	23%	67%
Your sense of whether people are good or bad.	12%	26%	62%
Your awareness of the real threats to our country.	14%	29%	59%
Your ability to understand and solve complex problems.	15%	29%	57%
Your knowledge of our constitution and system of government	20%	32%	51%
Your knowledge of those seeking election and those serving in our government.	18%	34%	50%

A CRISIS OF OVERCONFIDENCE?

Our data reveals that most American voters consider themselves above average for confidence (see table), with the lowest confidence levels relating to government and politics. Voters claimed better-than-average abilities to identify threats to the nation, evaluate individuals’ moral characters, and find truthful information. Six in ten voters believe they are equally (42%) or better (19%) suited than experts to make policy decisions. When delving further into the data, it becomes clear why so many Americans feel that way -- by breaking down the data into an overconfident grouping and a non-overconfident one, fifty-eight percent are overconfident in themselves.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE OVERCONFIDENT

Across most demographic categories, overconfidence is an equal opportunity trait. Men are more likely to be overconfident than women (53% to 48%). Older voters are more likely to



be overconfident (The Silent Generation and Baby Boomer are both 50%) than younger ones (Millennials at 47% and Generation Z at 36%), those currently middle-aged, Generation X, are the least overconfident (45%). To a large degree, the most significant divergence in levels of overconfidence among American voters correlates with education. Most of those with Graduate-level degrees (59%) and college degrees (51%) are the most likely to be self-confident. The other demographic factor is household income, which is directly related to education. That said, Americans with household incomes greater than \$100,000 are more likely to be overconfident, and those who have incomes less than that level are more likely to not be overconfident. The most confident group comprises Americans with household incomes of over \$200,000 -- of whom sixty-two percent are

overconfident. Interestingly, home value and investments do not correlate with higher self-confidence to determine essential understandings that impact a democracy.

THE POLITICS OF THE OVERCONFIDENT

Neither party has a monopoly on self-confidence, with Democrats and Republicans equally demonstrating overconfidence (47% each). Ideologically, Libertarians were the most confident (56%), followed by Progressives (52%) and MAGA Conservatives (52%). Those who claim their close friends shared their views on government had higher self-confidence levels (54%), as did individuals who identified MSNBC (57%) and the Rachel Maddow Show in particular (63%) as key sources of information on politics. Those who identified Fox News as important were lower (52%), but Tucker Carlson viewers were similar to Maddow's (62%).

DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE GROUPINGS

When analyzing the data further, it becomes apparent there is a significant division between those who have a high degree of confidence across all the questions asked and those who see themselves as average or below average on most of the questions. Thus, in dividing Americans into groups around the overconfidence effect, we started with this point of division. Then we looked at each group to identify if there were specific differences between them. Ultimately, we discovered that inside the two groups, there are three subcategories: those who are either highly overconfident or highly not overconfident, those who are overconfident or not overconfident, and those who are slightly overconfident or not overconfident.

SIX IN TEN VOTERS IN THE UNITED STATES BELIEVE THEY ARE AS GOOD OR BETTER THAN EXPERTS AT MAKING SOUND POLICY DECISIONS. THOSE WITHOUT COLLEGE DEGREES ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO FEEL THIS WAY.

LEVELS OF OVERCONFIDENCE

THE HIGHLY OVERCONFIDENT (15% of Registered Voters)

The Highly Overconfident are predominately male (57%), say Religion is Very Important (53%), and has the largest number of MAGA Conservatives (14%). They see themselves as Well Above Average or Far Above Average in their ability to find truthful information (45% & 44%), their awareness of the real threats to the country (43% & 40%), and their knowledge of those seeking election and serving in government (38% & 34%). Nearly half have college (26%), or graduate degrees (21%), and almost one in four (38%) have incomes over \$100,000. Nevertheless, they are the most likely to overwhelmingly (30%) accept simplistic answers, while only one in five reject them. More than half say they are Very Highly Distressed (20%), Highly Distressed (19%), or Distressed (15%). In 2020 they favored Biden (47% to 46%), but in 2016 they backed Trump (48% to 40%).

THE OVERCONFIDENT (28% of Registered Voters)

The Overconfident are split evenly between males (51%) and females (49%). They are slightly more likely to be white (72%). One in three (32%) have household incomes over \$100,000. Eight in ten see themselves as Slightly Above Average (37%) to Well Above Average (41%) at solving complex problems, while more claim to be Far Above Average (7%). Most suggest they are above average in finding truthful information (31% Slightly Above, 52% Well Above, and 12% Far Above) and in their awareness of the real threats to the nation (35%, 42%, and 11%). Two in five have college (30%) or graduate degrees (16%). A third reject simplistic answers (33%), while just over a third overwhelmingly (27%) or strongly (10%) accept them. Just over half are Distressed (25%), Highly Distressed (14%), or Very Highly Distressed (12%). In 2016, they backed Trump (47% to 40%) and favored Biden in 2020 (51% to 42%).

THE SLIGHTLY ABOVE AVERAGE (13% of Registered Voters)

The Slightly Above Average is split between males (48%) and females (52%) and has the highest percentage of minorities (African American 16% & Latino 13%). Two in five see themselves as average (42%) at solving complex problems, and nearly half view themselves as slightly above average (32%) or well above average (13%). Just under half see themselves as average in their awareness of the threats to the nation (44%), their knowledge of those seeking office (45%), and their knowledge of the constitution and system of government (48%). Nearly one in four has a college (27%) or graduate degree (10%). Nearly half overwhelmingly (28%) or strongly (18%) accept simplistic answers, compared to just over one in five who reject (8%) or mostly reject them (15%). Only a quarter are Very Highly (13%) or Highly Distressed (12%), while over a quarter are Highly Not (13%) or Not Distressed (17%). In 2016 overwhelmingly supported Trump (50% to 36%) and slightly favored Trump in 2020 (47% to 45%).

THE SLIGHTLY BELOW AVERAGE (21% of Registered Voters)

The Slightly Below Average is likely to be female (62%), live in rural areas (23%), and the least likely to have a valid passport (44%) or investments (41%). Just under half see themselves as average (47%) at solving complex problems, one in ten (14%) says slightly below average, and one in four say slightly above average (27%). Just under half (46%) see themselves as average in knowing the threats to the nation and in their knowledge of those seeking office (45%). Over one in three have college (23%) or graduate degrees (11%), with nearly half rejecting (16%) or mostly (28%) rejecting simplistic answers compared to one in five who overwhelmingly (4%) or strongly (18%) accept them. They are also more likely to Not (22%) or Highly Not (10%) be Distressed versus those who are Very Highly (14%) or Highly Distressed (8%). In 2020 they favored Biden (48% to 36%), but in 2016 they gave Trump a two-point edge (40% to 38%).

THE BELOW AVERAGE (19% of Registered Voters)

The Below Average is female (60%), more likely to live in rural areas (23%), and have incomes of less than \$50,000 (44%). At solving complex problems, eight in ten see themselves as average (47%), slightly below average (14%), or slightly above average (27%). Just under half see themselves as average in their awareness of the threats to the country (46%), their knowledge of those seeking office (45%), and their knowledge of the constitution and system of government (48%). A third have college (23%) or graduate degrees (11%), and a third are High Not (12%) or Not (21%) Distressed, with nine percent and twelve being Very Highly or Highly Distressed. Just over a third reject (11%) or mostly reject (26%) simplistic answers compared to six percent who overwhelmingly accept them and one in five (22%) who strongly accept them. In 2020 they favored Biden (48% to 42%), but in 2016 they gave Trump a large win (46% to 37%).

THE WELL BELOW AVERAGE (6% of Registered Voters)

The Well Below Average are male (59%), diverse (Black 16% and Hispanic 14%), and live in Urban Areas (54%), which are within thirty miles of where they were born (70%). They are more likely than average to be doing better financially than their parents (44%) and lean Democratic (43%), with the lowest percentage of Independents (17%). They are most likely to have served in the military (21%), to receive government benefits (56%), to be invested in the market (62%), to be very highly distressed (24%), and to Overwhelmingly (35%) or Strongly Accept (19%) Simplistic Answers. They backed Trump in 2016 (50% to 37%) and again in 2020, but only by one percentage point (45% to 44%).



STEP #4 INTOLERANCE

The convergence of the overconfidence effect and a tendency toward simplistic solutions often results in extremists cultivating a sense of moral superiority and employing absolute moral judgments. Convinced that their perspectives embody universal truths and are morally superior to contrasting viewpoints, they tend to view those with differing beliefs as inferior. This refusal to tolerate opposition is a distinctive trait of political extremism. It propels extremists to dismiss the rights and freedoms of those they disagree with, thereby exacerbating societal divisions and eroding the principles of inclusivity and tolerance that underpin a democratic society.

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FASCISM

MEASURING INTOLERANCE LEVELS IN AMERICA TODAY

To measure tolerance and intolerance among divergent political viewpoints, LDI utilized questions to determine the degrees of trust versus distrust and tolerance versus intolerance. Initially, participants were tasked with classifying those with opposing political views as “Trustworthy Political Opponents” or “Untrustworthy Enemies.” This classification was developed to gauge respondents’ level of trust towards those with differing political beliefs, an essential characteristic of a healthy democracy. Following this, participants rated specific groups and institutions as being “a force for good” or “a force for evil” in America today and whether they hold “all the power” or “no power” in America today. These questions were formulated to provide insight into the respondents’ levels of tolerance or intolerance for the politically aligned within America’s democratic framework.

To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, LDI included a broad spectrum of groups for assessment: African Americans, Billionaires, Evangelical Christians, Government Employees, Gun Owners, Jews, MAGA Supporters, the LGBT+ Community, Socialists, and Whites. In addition, institutions were also analyzed, including Academic Institutions, Religious Institutions, Corporations, the Entertainment Industry, and the Media.

MODEL #1: TRUSTWORTHY OPPONENTS OR UNTRUSTWORTHY ENEMIES?

The initial element of LDI’s intolerance analysis rests on if respondents trust those with different political views from their own. We presumed that labeling political rivals as “Untrustworthy” and “Enemies” indicates intolerance. Ultimately, more than half of the respondents (55%) view their political opponents as “trustworthy,” while 45% consider them “untrustworthy.” A majority from both main political parties, as well as centrists, are trusting of those with divergent politics: Republicans (53%), Democrats (56%), and Independents (55%). When we examined by self-identified ideology, nine of the ten ideology groups viewed their political adversaries as trustworthy. The outlier is the MAGA Conservatives, where two-thirds (66%) see those who do not share their politics as “untrustworthy enemies.”

COMPARED TO 43% OF ALL OTHER VOTERS, 66% OF SELF-DESCRIBED MAGA CONSERVATIVES SAID THEY SEE THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF POLITICS AS "UNTRUSTWORTHY ENEMIES."

MODEL #2: TOLERANCE OR INTOLERANCE OF GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS

Our second approach to measuring intolerance involved dividing respondents into two sections based on their tolerance or intolerance towards different groups and institutions. The groupings in this analysis were determined by the average and median rating participants allotted. According to this evaluation, 51% of the voters generally displayed intolerance, whereas 49% demonstrated tolerance.

Breaking down the political contrasts of the tolerant and intolerant groups, it is found Independents are the most intolerant (61%). Republicans are the most tolerant (55%) while Democrats are evenly divided, with 51% showing tolerance and 49% intolerance.

The high level of intolerance among Independents may appear paradoxical. However, an in-depth analysis indicates they hold a wide array of targets for intolerance. Typically, Americans on the political right (Republicans) and left (Democrats) express tolerance towards groups aligning with their political party and intolerance towards those aligning with the opposing party. This results in a simultaneous display of tolerance towards ideologically similar groups, neutrality on non-aligned groups or institutions, and intolerance towards those ideologically affiliated with the rival side. Independents, on the other hand, exhibit a more complex pattern. For instance, 42% of them perceive MAGA Supporters as having a detrimental impact on America, and similar percentages extend to the Media (37%), Socialists (31%), Billionaires (28%), the LGBTQ+ Community (24%), and Evangelicals (23%). This contrasts with the responses of partisans. For example, Democrats, show overwhelming intolerance towards MAGA Supporters, neutrality towards Media, and a substantial tolerance towards the LGBTQ+ Community.

VOTERS IDENTIFYING AS INDEPENDENT WERE THE MOST LIKELY TO BE INTOLERANT TOWARDS INSTITUTIONS AND GROUPS, BUT WERE JUST AS LIKELY AS DEMOCRATS OR REPUBLICANS TO VIEW THOSE WHO DO NOT SHARE THEIR POLITICAL VIEWS AS UNTRUSTWORTHY ENEMIES.

BUILDING A COMBINED INTOLERANCE SCORE

Given that each model only appears to capture a portion of the present intolerance in America, we decided to combine the two. The first step involved segmenting the electorate based on their responses to the trustworthy/untrustworthy question. Next, these responses were cross-referenced with the tolerance or intolerance ratings. We then analyzed these combined insights in the context of their outlook on the future (optimistic or pessimistic), their attitudes toward humanity (trusting or cautious), and their general mindset (satisfied or angry) for confirmation of this method for gauging intolerance.

THERE ARE MORE AMERICANS TODAY WHO ARE INTOLERANT TOWARDS GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS WITH OPPOSING POLITICAL VIEWS THAN THOSE WHO ARE TOLREANT AND SEE THE OTHER SIDE AS TRUSTWORTHY.

TRUSTWORTHY AND TOLERANT

The Trustworthy and Tolerant segment makes up twenty-six percent of the American Electorate. All in this group (100%) are scored as “tolerant” and express they view those on the other political spectrum as “trustworthy political opponents.” Notably, they are the most optimistic (52% compared to 34% of all registered voters), trusting of others (52% compared to 33%), and the most likely to be satisfied with their lives (73% compared to 53%).

UNTRUSTWORTHY AND INTOLERANT

The Untrustworthy and Intolerant comprise thirty-one percent of registered voters. All in this group scored as “intolerant” (100%) and labeled those who do not share their politics as “untrustworthy enemies.” In addition, they are the most pessimistic (74%), cautious (82%), and angry (65%).

UNTRUSTWORTHY BUT TOLERANT

The Untrustworthy but Tolerant contains fourteen percent of voters. This group consists entirely of those who were scored as “tolerant” (100%), but all considered those who don’t share their values as “untrustworthy enemies.” They are pessimistic (66%), cautious (73%), and slightly more satisfied (52%) than angry (48%).

TRUSTWORTHY AND INTOLERANT

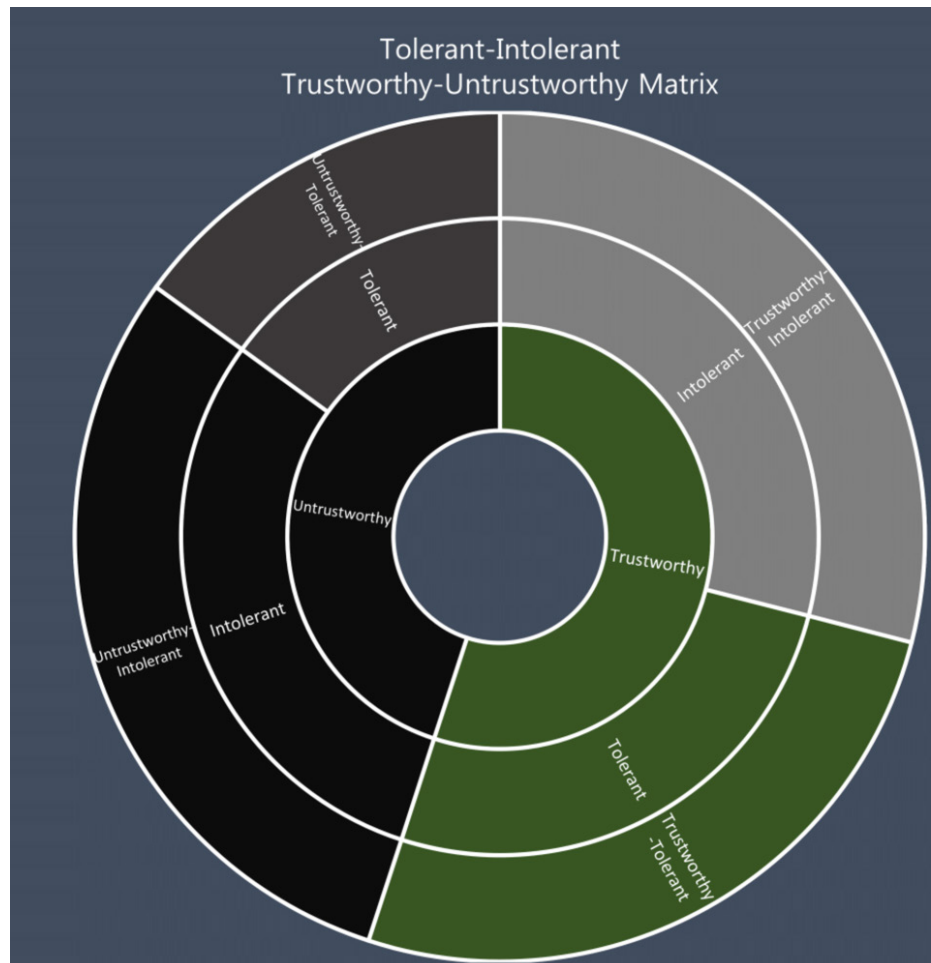
The Trustworthy and Intolerant include twenty-nine percent of the electorate. This group consists entirely of those who are “intolerant” but consider those who don’t share their values as “trustworthy political opponents.” They are pessimistic (63%), satisfied with life (53%), and cautious (73%).

DEGREES OF INTOLERANCE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

The adjacent chart, the Tolerant-Intolerant Trustworthy-Untrustworthy Matrix, demonstrates how trust or distrust in those with differing political views can influence, but not necessarily dictate, intolerance outside

politics. The black sections represent voters who display both intolerance and distrust towards those with differing political views. The green areas illustrate those who consider individuals with contrasting political views trustworthy opponents and show tolerance towards groups and institutions, regardless of their political alignment. Finally, the grey blocks highlight voters whose tolerance/intolerance and trust/distrust levels do not align. These voters will be pivotal in 2024, not necessarily because of their voting preference, but in their willingness to accept election results if their candidate loses. Our democracy’s future will likely hinge on this fault line.

Many Americans across the political spectrum still trust those with different views and/or respect differences. However, a plurality is either distrustful or intolerant, posing a significant systemic risk. The leap from distrusting those with different opinions or being intolerant towards their values to political extremism, radicalization, or even violence is small, especially if presented with a need and narrative to join a network of others to defend the nation from those they see as distrustful enemies.



SIX LEVELS OF TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE

The Six Levels of Tolerance and Intolerance framework provides an insightful breakdown of registered voters based on their levels of trust and tolerance. This categorization has identified six distinct groups with varying levels of trustworthiness and tolerance. There are “highly” tolerant and trusting individuals, as well as those who are “highly” intolerant and untrusting. These two “highly” categorized groups are especially notable due to their pronounced optimism or pessimism towards others, while the other four groups breakout as described in this section.

TRUSTWORTHY AND TOLERANT (21% of Register Voters)

These Americans are likely to accept simplistic answers (94%) but less likely to be very highly distressed. Only 35% are overconfident. A majority (55%) spend more than an hour per day consuming political information. They are more likely to perceive natural threats (like weather, viruses, and natural disasters) as the greatest threat to America. They are more likely to be Democrats (45%) or Republicans (38%).

UNTRUSTWORTHY BUT TOLERANT (15% of Register Voters)

This group of Americans includes voters who are distressed (61%), prone to accepting simplistic answers (64%), and overconfident (58%). They are active on social media (79%) and spend significant time consuming political information. They are more likely to view other Americans or foreign nations as the greatest threat to America. Nearly half of this group are Republicans (46%).

TRUSTWORTHY BUT INTOLERANT (24% of Register Voters)

Members of this group are less likely to be distressed (48%) and accept simplistic answers (45%), but a majority are overconfident (57%). They are equally active on social media (80%) and a third views economic forces as the greatest threat to America. Politically, they are more likely to be independent voters (30%) and tend to lean moderate in their ideologies.

TRUSTWORTHY BUT HIGHLY INTOLERANT (10% Registered Voters)

These Americans are equally distressed (50%) and overconfident (50%), with 57% categorized as intolerant and accepting simplistic answers (100%). They are equally active on social media (79%) and spend significant time consuming political information. They are more likely to be independent voters (27%) but are evenly spread in terms of Democrats and Republicans.

UNTRUSTWORTHY AND INTOLERANT (23% of Register Voters)

This group of Americans consists of voters who are distressed (50%), prone to accepting simplistic answers (57%), overconfident (50%), and intolerant (100%). They are active on social media (79%) and spend significant time (36% spending more than an hour daily) consuming political information. They are more likely to be independent voters (27%) and are slightly more likely to identify as MAGA Conservatives (13% compared to the national average of 9%).

UNTRUSTWORTHY AND HIGHLY INTOLERANT (7% of Registered Voters)

This group of Americans is characterized by anger (62%), caution (81%), and pessimism (74%). A significant portion (40%) can be classified as politically extremist. They are active on social media (79%) and spend significant time consuming political information. They are more likely to be independent voters (27%) but are evenly spread in terms of Democrats and Republicans. They are slightly more likely to identify as MAGA Conservatives (15% compared to the national average of 9%).

An American flag is flying on a silver pole attached to a white porch railing. The flag is partially obscured by a white text box in the center. The background shows a house with white columns and green siding, with purple flowers visible in the distance.

THE POLITICAL TOLERANCE SPECTRUM

The Ten Types of American Voters from Tolerant to Radicalized

Combining LDI's research on the four steps to Political Extremism and more traditional questions about politics, ideology, and issues, LDI has identified ten unique types of voters within the American Electorate. We call this collection of types the Political Tolerance Spectrum which combines a traditional left-to-right, liberal-to-conservative political spectrum with a spectrum ranging from tolerant to trusting through factors of intolerance, political extremism and radicalization.

THE POLITICAL TOLERANCE SPECTRUM

To understand the American electorate's challenges with political extremism, LDI built a spectrum combining traditional political divides (e.g., Republican-Democrat or Progressive-Conservative) with the four steps to political extremism. First, to create this Political Tolerance Spectrum, we melded the levels of distress, acceptance of simplistic answers, overconfidence, and intolerance with identification and support (generic and specific) for political parties and politicians, hot or cold scoring questions on movements or participants in events like January 6th, ideology, and the importance of issues to voters. Then, using cluster analysis, LDI broke out the electorate into ten groups, outlined in detail on the following pages.

USING THE TOLERANT-INTOLERANT/TRUSTWORTHY-UNTRUSTWORTHY MATRIX

After clustering voters, LDI cross-referenced the data with the tolerant-intolerant/trustworthy-untrustworthy matrix to examine tolerance and trust among these voters by groups.

The outer ring of the chart below shows the percentage of the ten groups in the Political Tolerance Spectrum that fall within each of the four parts of the Tolerant-Intolerant/Trustworthy-Untrustworthy Matrix (the inner ring). For example, the portion of the inner ring in black shows those who are Untrustworthy and Intolerant, and the area above that section reveals the vast majority of these Untrustworthy and Intolerant Americans are in the Intolerant Traditional Left (blue), the Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left (dark blue), the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right (dark red), and the Slightly Intolerant Independent (pink) groups on the Political Tolerance Spectrum.



POLITICAL TOLERANCE SPECTRUM CLUSTERING QUESTIONS
Trustworthy or Untrustworthy Enemies
Levels of Distress Clusters
Levels of Overconfidence Clusters
Levels of Cognitively Simplistic Answers Clusters
Tolerance Score
Hot/Cold Scores – Donald Trump, Joe Biden, and Liz Cheney
Scoring Questions – Black Lives Matter, January 6 th Protestors, and MAGA
0-100 (Never Vote to Always Support) MAGA Candidate, Socialist Progressive Candidate, Traditional Republican Candidate, Traditional Democratic Candidate

BREAKING DOWN THE GROUPS

The final step in defining the Political Tolerance Spectrum was taking the entire LDI dataset and using it to build profiles for each group-- who are they, what is their ideology, what do they value, how they might vote, and most importantly, their potential for political-extremist behaviors, radicalization, and even violence. Ultimately, these breakdowns are critically important in identifying the voters most at risk and the tactics we must use to avoid an expanding cycle of political extremism as we move through the 2024 presidential Election and beyond.

THE POLITICAL TOLERANCE SPECTRUM

THE INTOLERANT CULTURALLY REFORMIST LEFT

Comprising eight percent of voters, the Highly Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left is comprised primarily of self-identified socialists and progressives who strongly favor Managed Markets (79%), A Broad Social Safety Net (95%), Global Engagement by the US (93%), and support Reformist Cultural Values (98%). They are far more likely to say religion is not important (46%), the least likely to have served in the military (5%) or own guns (22%), and by far the most likely to be doing better than their parents (49%). They are the least distressed of the groups, more likely to reject simplistic answers, but highly overconfident and overwhelmingly intolerant of those who do not share their views (76%) and see them as untrustworthy enemies (96%).

THE INTOLERANT TRADITIONAL LEFT

The Intolerant Traditional Left makes up eleven percent of voters and includes self-identified Traditional Liberals (22%), Independent Learning Liberals (16%), Progressives (11%), and a third who describe themselves as Moderate-Independents. They favor Managed Markets (67%), A Broad Social Safety Net (57%), and Global Engagement by the US (73%). However, they divide on Cultural Values between reformists (57%) and traditionalists (43%). They are more likely than not to be distressed, slightly more likely than not to accept simplistic answers, somewhat overconfident, and overwhelmingly intolerant of those who do not share their views (77%) and see them as untrustworthy enemies (78%).

THE SLIGHTLY TOLERANT TRADITIONAL LEFT

Constituting twelve percent of Voters, the Slightly Tolerant Traditional Left includes Progressives (14%), Traditional Liberals (23%), Independent Learning Liberals (21%), and Moderate-Independents (28%). They favor Managed Markets (66%), A Broad Social Safety Net (79%), Global Engagement by the US (91%) and are strongly reformist on Cultural Values (84%). Over one in ten suggest they previously identified as Independents (5%) or Republicans (7%). They are the least distressed group (55%) and most unlikely to accept simplistic answers (55%). They are somewhat overconfident, and while intolerant (70%), they still see those with different views as Trustworthy Political Opponents (93%).

THE TOLERANT CENTERISTS

Making up eleven percent of voters, the Tolerant Centerists are slightly left ideologically with a makeup of: Progressive (13%), Traditional Liberal (15%), Independent-Leaning Liberal (13%), and Moderate-Independent (23%). They favor Managed Markets (82%), are split between A Broad Social Safety Net (52%) and A Limited Safety Net (48%), are more America Focused (55%) than Global (45%), and overwhelmingly favor Traditional Cultural Values (79%) while being Pro-Choice (73%). They are distressed (73%), strongly or overwhelmingly accept simplistic answers (46% & 14%), are below average in confidence (43%), and highly tolerant (57%), viewing

THE TOLERANT-INTOLERANT MIDDLE

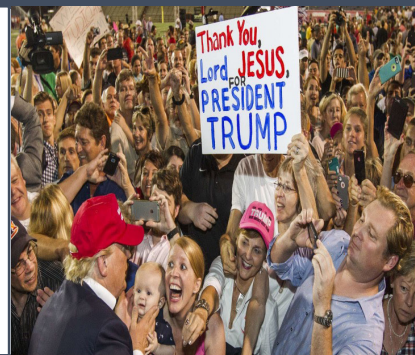
Comprising ten percent of the electorate, Disengaged Moderates reside on the center-right of the political spectrum: Moderate-Independent (38%), Independent-Leaning Conservative (22%) and Traditional Conservative (13%). They lean slightly towards Managed Markets (53%) versus Free Markets (47%), strongly favor a Limited Social Safety Net (72%), favor Global Engagement (65%), and strongly support Traditional Cultural Values (74%), but split two-to-one Pro-choice (67%) on Abortion. Half are not distressed (42%) or marginally distressed (44%), they reject simplistic answers (47%), are neither highly confident or unconfident. They are highly intolerant (74%) but see those on the other side of politics as Trustworthy (91%).



TOLERANT TO POLITICAL EXTREMIST

THE HIGHLY INTOLERANT MAGA RIGHT

The Highly Intolerant MAGA Right makes up ten percent of voters. It is comprised of self-identified MAGA (40%) and Traditional Conservatives (33%) who overwhelmingly favor Free Markets (80%), a Limited Safety Net (90%), America First Policies (79%), and universally support Traditional Cultural Values (99%). Three out of four (76%) identify as Pro-Life. They are the most likely to say religion is Very Important (57%), own guns (51%), and have the highest self-described levels of patriotism (90 out of 100). A majority are distressed (58%), most accept simplistic answers (76%), and are overconfident (74%). They are highly intolerant (69%), seeing those with different views as untrustworthy enemies (79%).



THE INTOLERANT TRADITIONAL RIGHT

Comprising ten percent of voters, the Intolerant Traditional Right is primarily Traditional (30%) and MAGA (26%) conservatives with Conservative (14%) and Moderate-leaning (11%) Independents. They back Managed Markets (55%) A Limited Safety Net (66%) and America First Engagement (61%) while overwhelmingly backing Traditional Cultural Values (92%). Most are Pro-Life (62%), and say religion is very (48%) or somewhat important (30%). They are affluent, ten percent have incomes over \$175,000 per year, and distressed (62%). They accept simplistic answers (57%), and are overconfident (60%). Seven in ten are intolerant (70%) but split on those who don't share their politics (51% Trustworthy - 49% Untrustworthy).



THE SLIGHTLY TOLERANT RIGHT

The Slightly Intolerant Right is nine percent of voters. Comprised of Traditional (39%) and MAGA Conservatives (11%), as well as Conservative-leaning (22%) and Moderate (16%) Independents, they split between Global Engagement (49%) and America First (51%). Most favor Free Markets (69%) and support A Limited Safety Net (85%). They back Traditionalist Cultural Values (94%), but nearly half (44%) are Pro-Choice. They are white (85%), the oldest group (average age of 59), and live more than 30 miles from where they were born (62%). Less than half are distressed (41%) and reject simplistic answers (46%) while being confident (65%). Most are tolerant (54%) of those with different views, seeing them as trustworthy opponents (57%).



THE SLIGHTLY INTOLERANT INDEPENDENTS

Constituting eight percent of the electorate, the Slightly Intolerant Independents fuse Moderate (29%), Liberal (11%), and Conservative (11%) leaning Independents, with Traditional Conservatives (11%) and Liberals (9%). Their average age is 42 and ethnically diverse (41% minorities). They strongly favor Managed Markets (77%), A Limited Social Safety Net (63%), America First Engagement (61%), and Traditional Cultural Values (89%), yet most are Pro-Choice (63%). Most live in Urban (46%) or Suburban (36%) areas. They are highly distressed (74%) and accept simplistic answers (66%) but are the least confident group (44% below average). They split on tolerance (50%) but are overwhelming Untrustworthy of political opponents (86%).



THE DISENGAGED MODERATES

Making up twelve percent, the Tolerant-Intolerant Moderates are the youngest group (average age 39), highly diverse (41% minorities), and Urban (73%). They lean left: Socialist (11%), Progressive (17%), Traditional Liberals (12%), and Liberal (13%) or Moderate leaning (19%) Independent. They overwhelmingly support Managed Markets (91%), A Broad Social Safety Net (78%), America First (85%), and Traditional Cultural Values (96%). They are the most likely to have served in the military (18%), the most distressed (88%), the most likely to accept simplistic answers (89%), evenly divided in their confidence, and overwhelmingly tolerant (83%). They see those with different views as Trustworthy (74%).



DIVERSITY makes
STRONGER

POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN AMERICA

the cycle of political extremism

- 1. NORMALIZATION:** the process by which ideas or behaviors considered outside the mainstream become increasingly accepted and embraced by a broader segment of society.
- 2. POLARIZATION:** the point when individuals and groups align themselves strongly with one side or the other resulting in a breakdown of civil discourse and increasingly hostile rhetoric.
- 3. DEMONIZATION:** the process of portraying individuals or groups with opposing views as morally corrupt or evil, often using inflammatory language and rhetoric that fuels hatred and intolerance.
- 4. VIOLENCE:** in extreme cases, the demonization of certain groups can lead to violence, with individuals or groups acting out against those they see as enemies.
- 5. REPRESSION OR REVOLUTION:** in response to the violence, government authorities may crack down on extremist groups and individuals, often using authoritarian methods further polarize society leading to a vicious cycle of violence and repression or revolution and change in governance.

POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN AMERICA

Political extremism is a crisis confronting American democracy. Unfortunately, LDI's research reveals a troubling trend: most registered voters in America show signs of extremism. A significant 22% are categorized as Political Extremists that meet all four criteria for extremism: psychological distress, acceptance of simplistic answers, the overconfidence effect, and intolerance. An additional 32% are Emerging Extremists, exhibiting intolerance or distrust towards those with differing views and meeting two of the other three criteria. Beyond them are an additional 10% of voters who, while tolerant and trusting, exhibit distress, accept simplistic answers, and are prone to overconfidence in their political beliefs.

TWENTY-TWO PERCENT OF AMERICANS FULLY EXHIBIT THE CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH POLITICAL EXTREMISM

This prevalence of extremism poses an existential threat to American democracy. As the intensity and rhetoric of the 2024 election begins to ramp up, the danger is that many individuals could slide even further down this dangerous path toward extremism. Without proactive measures to counteract these trends, the very fabric of our

democratic institutions and norms is at risk.

AN ADDITIONAL THIRTY PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE EXHIBITS CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL EXTREMISM, INCLUDING INTOLERANCE OF OPPOSING VIEWS AND MEETING AT LEAST TWO OF THE OTHER CRITERIA.

BUILDING OUT LDI'S ANALYSIS

LDI used the Level Groupings of Distress, Acceptance of Simplistic Answers, and Overconfidence to identify respondents displaying steps toward political extremism. For the final step of intolerance, we included respondents who demonstrated intolerance and those labeling individuals with differing political views as "Untrustworthy Enemies" rather than "Trustworthy Political Opponents."

erance, we included respondents who demonstrated intolerance and those labeling individuals with differing political views as "Untrustworthy Enemies" rather than "Trustworthy Political Opponents."

FROM THE MAINSTREAM TO THE EXTREME

The American electorate can be divided into four groups based on our analysis of political extremism using the method mentioned above. At one end are the tolerant traditional mainstream voters, who display few or no extremist tendencies. On the other are the fully-fledged extremists, who meet all four criteria. In between are troubled but tolerant mainstream voters, necessary for a functioning democracy, but they are paired with an even more significant segment of Americans who are intolerant, distressed, and prone to accepting simplistic answers or being overconfident in their political beliefs. This incipient extremism raises questions about whether they will remain within democratic norms or move towards illiberal extremism, particularly in an electoral environment where extremism is normalized, and polarization in the form of demonization in our politics will escalate.

THE TOLERANT MAINSTREAM

The Tolerant Mainstream, 20% of voters, tend to be tolerant and show few signs of extremism. They are more likely to be male (51%), live in urban areas (44%), and have

higher incomes (37%). With low levels of distress, their top fear is the election of corrupt or incompetent politicians (29%), and the most pressing issues for them in politics today are crime and violence (28%) and the High Cost of Living/Inflation (28%). Therefore, their potential for increasing extremism is very low.

THE TROUBLED MAINSTREAM

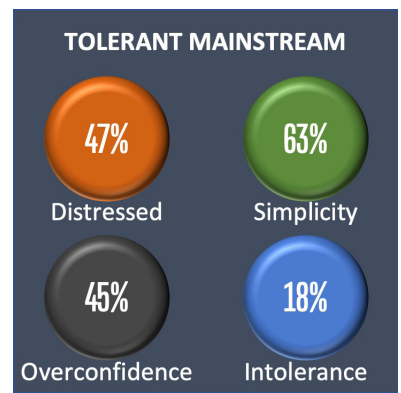
The Troubled Mainstream, comprising 26% of the electorate, is a mix of distress, acceptance of simplistic answers, overconfidence, and intolerance. They are slightly more female (51%) and reside in more urban areas (41%) than the average. They hold household incomes between \$75,000 to \$150,000 (36%). Their greatest fears are corrupt politicians (70), the power of billionaires (65), and the Supreme Court taking away their rights or liberties (63). Ideologically, they are slightly left of center and more likely than average to identify as Democrats. Their potential for increasing extremism is low to moderate as we progress through the 2024 presidential election.

THE EMERGING EXTREMISTS

Emerging Extremists, comprising 32% of the electorate, exhibit intolerance or distrust towards those with differing views and meet two other steps toward extremism. Three in four are psychologically distressed and almost equally split between accepting simplistic answers and exhibit overconfidence in their political views. They are more likely to be older (29% Boomers, 27% Gen X), female (55%), and suburban (46%). Two-thirds (68%) rely on television news for their information about politics, and half (49%) use internet news sites. Of those who are highly distressed, their greatest fears are corrupt or incompetent politicians being elected (76), the power of billionaires (71), and their children or grandchildren growing up in a worse America than they have lived in (68). The top issues for these voters are the High Cost of Living and Inflation (34%), Crime and Violence (24%), and Abortion (20%). The potential for extremist behavior among these voters is a substantial concern, and their potential for full-fledged extremism is high.

THE POLITICAL EXTREMISTS

Political Extremists, make up 22% of the electorate and meet all four steps of political extremism. They are more likely to be female (55%) and middle-aged (27% Gen X and 27% Millennials), with household incomes of less than \$75,000 per year (63%). They are the least likely to have investment savings in the markets (44%) or say local television news (37%) is an important source of information about politics. Instead, those on the right live in a New Right Extremist Media Ecosystem comprised of Fox News and its competitors like Newsmax, alongside other



new media platforms, which are also the primary sources for their friends and family. As such, they are the most likely to say most of their close family and friends share their views on government and politics (49%). They are already extremists, and the relative question of concern for their political behaviors moving forward is how many hold the current potential for radicalization, including violent radicalization.

EXTREMISM WITHIN THE POLITICAL TOLERANCE SPECTRUM

The tolerant and troubled mainstream resides at the center of the Political Tolerance Spectrum, with few signs of political extremism. They comprise most of the Disengaged Moderates, Tolerant Centers, Tolerant-Intolerant Middle, Slightly Tolerant Right, and Slightly Tolerant Left. However, the Slightly Intolerant Center has about a quarter who are either political extremists or emerging extremists, but unlike those on the polar ends of American politics, they tend to be intolerant of both sides.

Over half of Political Extremists and Emerging Extremists come from four groups occupying the partisan poles of the Political Tolerance Spectrum. On the right are the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right and the Traditional Intolerant Right, while on the left are the Traditional Intolerant Left and the Intolerant Culturally Reformist. These factions sometimes battle each other, often for primacy within their bloc.

POLITICAL EXTREMISM ACROSS THE POLITICAL TOLERANCE SPECTRUM							
The Tolerant Mainstream		The Troubled Mainstream		The Emerging Extremists		The Political Extremists	
Tolerant Centrists	19%	Disengaged Moderates	17%	The Intolerant Traditional Left	14%	Highly Intolerant MAGA Right	20%
Disengaged Moderates	18%	The Slightly Tolerant Traditional Left	13%	Highly Intolerant MAGA Right	12%	The Intolerant Traditional Left	14%
The Slightly Tolerant Traditional Left	18%	The Tolerant Intolerant Middle	12%	Slightly Intolerant Center	12%	Slightly Intolerant Center	12%
The Tolerant-Intolerant Middle	12%	The Slightly Intolerant Center	11%	The Intolerant Traditional Right	11%	Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left	10%
The Intolerant Traditional Right	11%	The Intolerant Traditional Right	11%	The Slightly Tolerant Traditional Left	11%	The Intolerant Traditional Right	9%
The Slightly Tolerant Right	10%	The Intolerant Traditional Left	11%	Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left	10%	The Slightly Tolerant Right	9%

Within the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right, 42% are political extremists, and another 38% are emerging extremists. On the left, both the Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left and the Intolerant Traditional Left comprise 27% extremist, with 41% of the former and 39% of the latter being emerging extremists. The Intolerant Traditional Right is slightly better off, with only 19% being political extremists and 33% falling into the emerging extremist category. Within the battle on the right for control, the Traditional wing appears to be losing, while on the left the opposite is true, at least for the moment.

THE RISK OF ESCALATING EXTREMISM IN 2024

Extremism poses a significant threat as it operates in a cycle. While slightly less than a quarter of Americans fully embrace political extremism today, a substantial portion of emerging extremists - nearly one-third of all voters - already exhibit intolerant and extremist behavior. Moreover, these individuals are at high risk for full-fledged extremism because they may eventually view the 2024 presidential campaign as a competition to control America's soul. Even more troubling, some of the most extreme among us have already taken steps towards radicalization, which poses an even greater risk to our democracy in the form of violence.

A photograph of Donald Trump speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit and a black glove on his right hand, which is raised in a three-fingered gesture. The podium features the Seal of the President of the United States. An American flag is visible in the background to the left.

THE SIGNIFICANT QUEST THEORY OF RADICALIZATION

Pulled from Kruglanski's three key steps that lead from intolerant political extremism to radicalization

NEED: The initial step involves a perceived need to protect one's values and/or nation from what is perceived as an existential threat. This can be a real or imagined threat, but it needs to be significant enough to motivate action.

NETWORK: The second step involves the finding of a network of like-minded individuals. This community provides a sense of belonging and a common cause – the defense against the identified existential threat. This network can provide emotional support, resources, and a sense of identity, all of which can intensify commitment to the cause.

NARRATIVE: The final step involves a compelling narrative that prescribes the actions the network must undertake to defend against the existential threat. This narrative is typically provided by a leader who is accepted by the network. It provides a roadmap for action as well as justification for potentially extreme behaviors, and often frames the situation as a significant quest or mission.

RADICALIZATION IN AMERICA TODAY

Political extremists have the potential to devolve into radicalization, and even violence, quickly. To understand the levels of radicalization in America today, LDI examined how different groups within the Political Tolerance Spectrum responded to Need, Network, and Narrative statements. Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed, from 0 if they completely disagreed to 100 if they completely agreed. In building our model of those who are radicalized, we chose a score of over 70 out of 100 as the defining point for strong agreement with the statement and, thus, acceptance.

NEED

Four of the ten segments analyzed demonstrated agreement with a “Need” statement, while the remaining six disagreed. The groups showing a need included the Intolerant Traditional Left, Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left, Intolerant Traditional Right, and Highly Intolerant MAGA Right. Each of

these four groups scored in the high seventies, with the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right exhibiting an even higher average score of 94. This suggests that nearly all of these voters agree with the statement: “Today, right now, America faces threats from the radical socialist left that will destroy our nation if they are not defeated.”

OF THE TEN GROUPS OF AMERICANS, FOUR HAD AVERAGE SCORES ABOVE 75 ON NEED, INCLUDING ONE WITH A NEED SCORE OF 94 ALONGSIDE NETWORK AND NARRATIVE SCORES GREATER THAN 75.

NETWORK

What distinguishes the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right from other Americans is their belief in being part of a network of like-minded individuals defending their values and nation. They strongly agree with the statement: “I am part of a group of like-minded patriotic Americans fighting to save our nation from radical leftist socialism.” This sense of shared purpose and belonging within a network is concerning, as it reinforces the perception among extremists that they are not alone in their need to defend the nation and their values. However, other groups exhibiting a need do not demonstrate a similar sense of network.

NARRATIVE

What makes Donald Trump a danger to America’s democracy is his ability to provide a narrative to those on the right who perceive a need to safeguard the nation from his political opponents and the sense they are part of a network he leads -- MAGA. He did this on January 6, 2021, with a narrative of “We are going to walk down to the Capitol” and “You must fight like hell to take your country back.” These statements culminated the need that he had set forth: “The election was a fraud,” and the network: “Come to Washington on January 6 to join other patriots.”

The question moving forward into the 2024 election, particularly with Trump running again, is whether his rhetorical narratives to take action remain impactful to the extremist and radicalized elements on the right. Based on our data, the answer

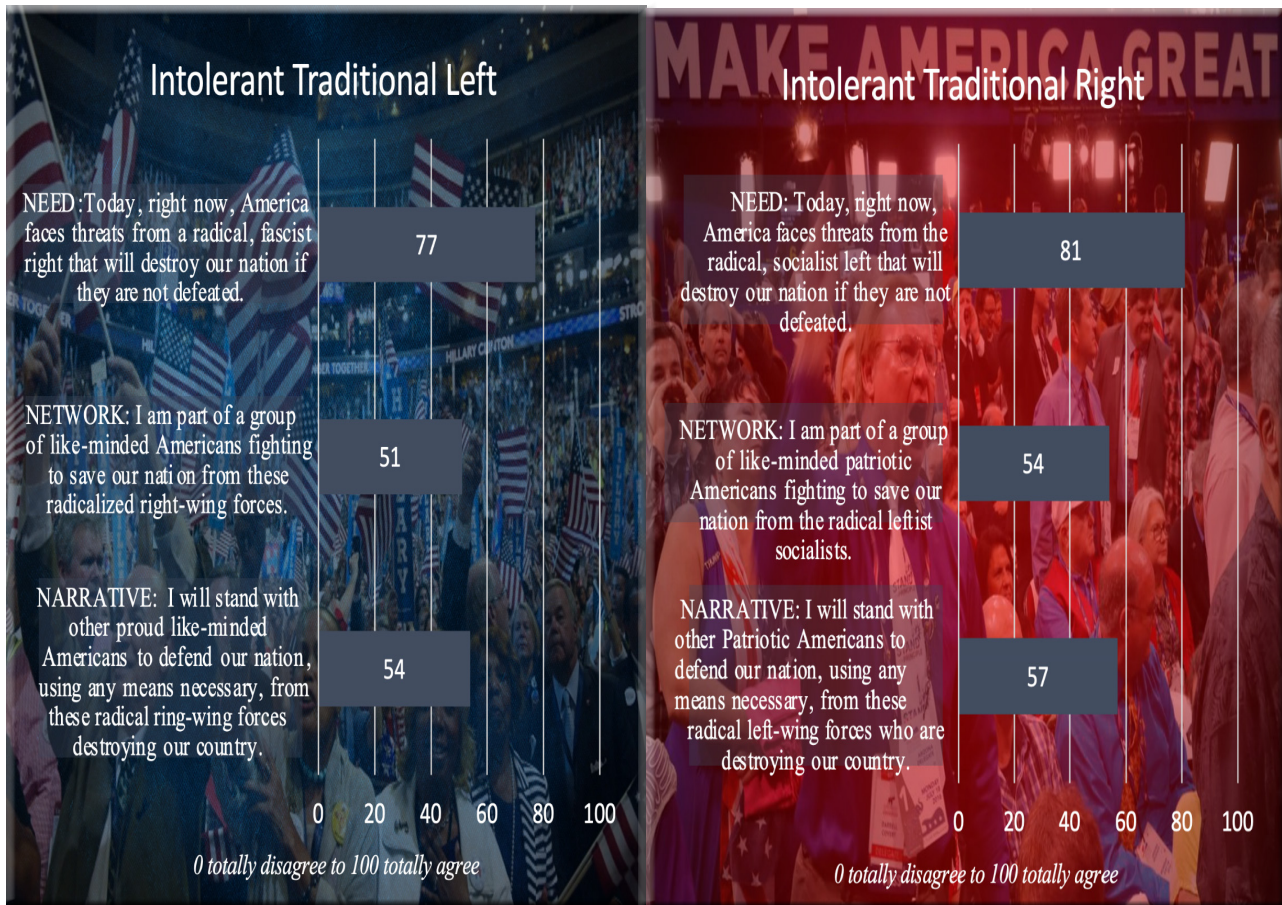
to this question is an obvious and resounding yes. However, this answer raises an equally important question: will the actions of these radicalized lead other groups of Americans – those on the opposite side to whom Trump’s threats are made – to feel a need to defend themselves, their values, and their nation and thus find a network and narrative to become radicalized as well?

ARE TODAY’S LEVELS OF RADICALIZATION NORMAL?

While political extremism can be a part of a healthy democracy during times of significant social change, the extremism we currently witness raises questions about the authenticity and magnitude of the grievances fueling it. It is crucial to understand the depth of this extremism’s transformation into radicalization, as defined by the Significant Quest theory, and its potential to infect our political landscape further.

THE INTOLERANT TRADITIONAL LEFT AND RIGHT

The data reveals that the Intolerant Traditional Left and Intolerant Traditional Right exhibit signs of political extremism, primarily driven by a perceived threat from the opposing side. However, their scores drop to just above neutral when it comes to a sense of network and narrative. While the majority within these two groups remain politically extremist or emerging extremists, democratic norms appear to hold. Nevertheless, 3% of the Intolerant Traditional Right and 5% of the Intolerant Traditional Left score above 70 for the three statements on Need, Network, and Narrative, indicating slight level of radicalization on both sides within these groups.



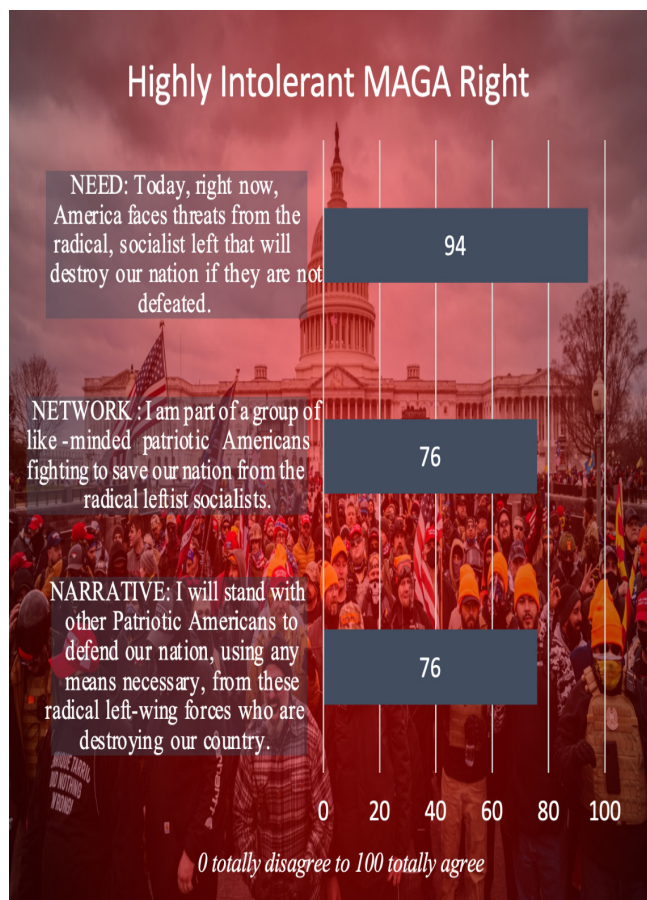
THE INTOLERANT CULTURALLY REFORMIST LEFT

Similar to the Intolerant Traditional groups, the Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left displays a need to stand up to the right but does not demonstrate high levels of network and narrative based on the data. Approximately 9% of the Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left show scores at or above 70 for Need, Network, and Narrative, suggesting some radicalization.



ABNORMAL RADICALIZATION ON THE RIGHT

What sets the political right apart from the political left in America today is the presence of a large group, the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right, that has moved beyond intolerant political extremism into significant radicalization.



THE HIGHLY INTOLERANT MAGA RIGHT

Among this group, nearly all (98%) demonstrate at least one element of a significant quest, with two-thirds embracing all three, meeting our definition of fully radicalized. They strongly agree with the statements of Need (94), Network (76), and Narrative (76). More concerning is their rejection of the idea that those with opposing political views can win elections legitimately, which is crucial for the functioning of our democracy. Furthermore, they are the most likely among all groups to believe that “violence is acceptable at times in a democracy.”

THE POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER RADICALIZATION

The presence of approximately 12% of the electorate showing signs of radicalization is troubling. However, even more concerning is the higher percentage expressing support

CONFRONTING RADICALIZATION

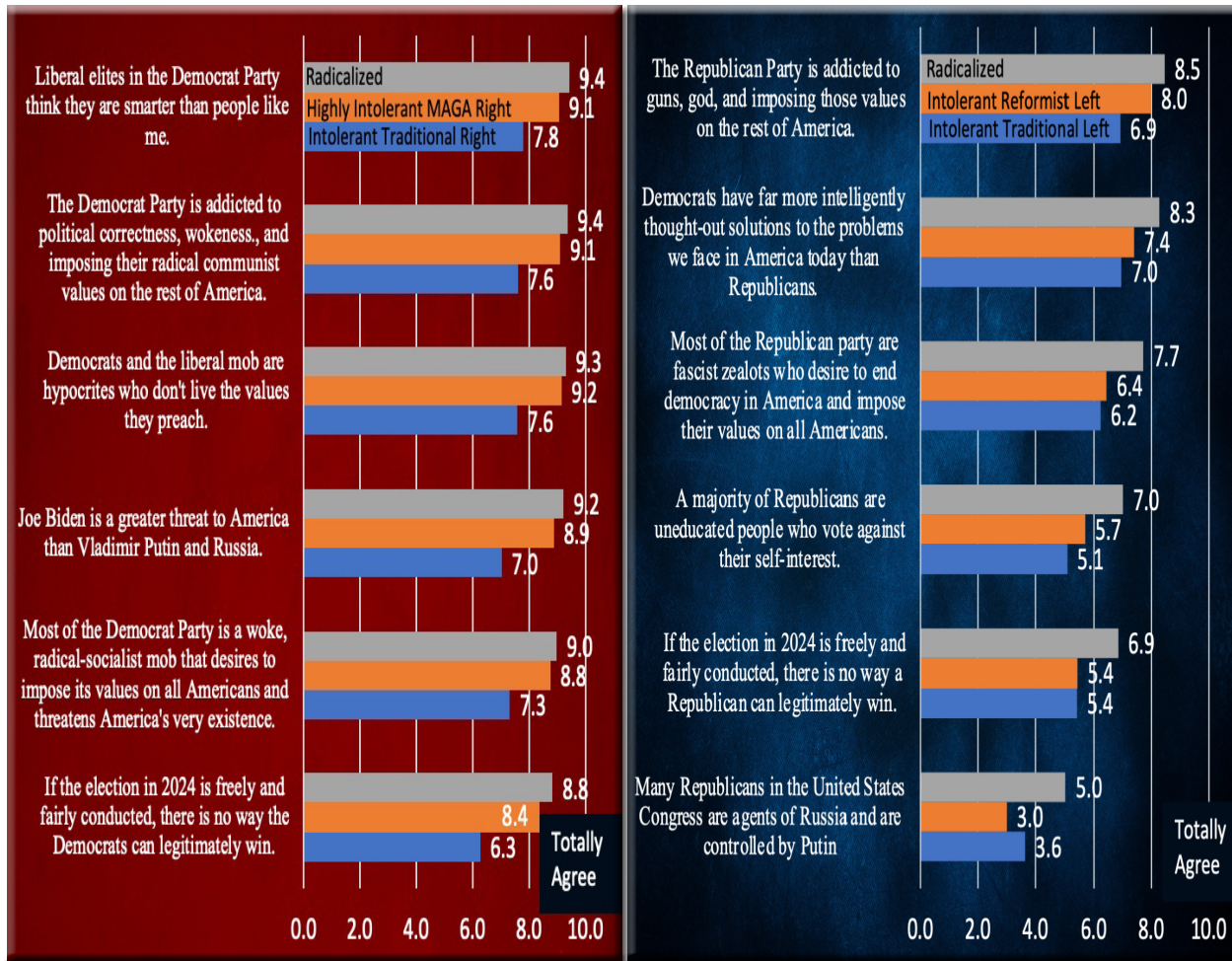
for defending their values and displaying intolerance towards those with differing political views.

The chart at the bottom illustrates the significant divide between the two ends of the political spectrum, with each side perceiving the other negatively. This divide creates a dangerous situation, increasing the likelihood of escalating intolerance and violence.

It is alarming that many right-leaning voters do not believe Democrats can win elections “freely and fairly.” This belief can lead to disenfranchisement and a willingness to resort to extreme actions. Similarly, we must not overlook the potential for those on the left to move towards more extreme positions in response to perceived movements in network and narrative, whether real or contrived.

CONFRONTING RADICALIZATION

The upcoming 2024 election has the potential to rapidly deteriorate from a democratic process into an escalating cycle of political extremism, radicalization, and violence. Politicians and groups employing demonization or attempting to build Need, Network, and Narrative must be called out, condemned, and marginalized by all Americans. The most effective way to defeat political extremists and the radicalized is to demonstrate that their ideologies and actions are unacceptable within the framework of American democracy.



Extremist

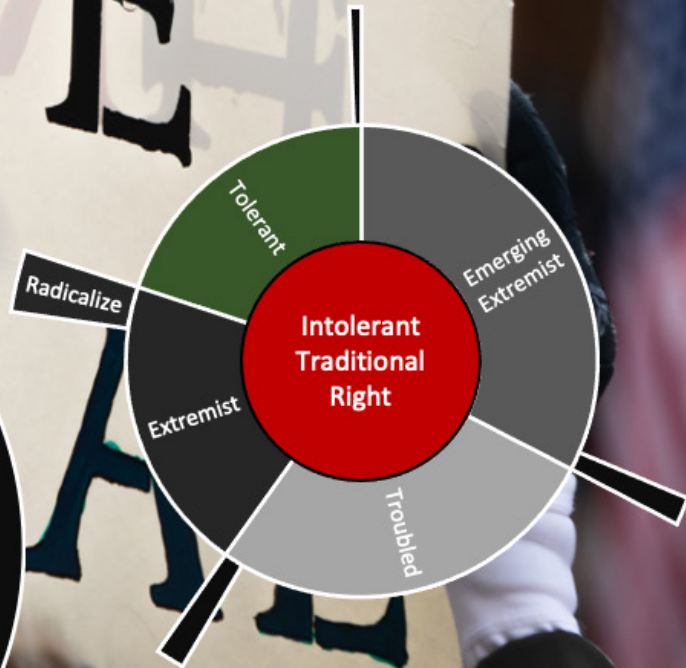
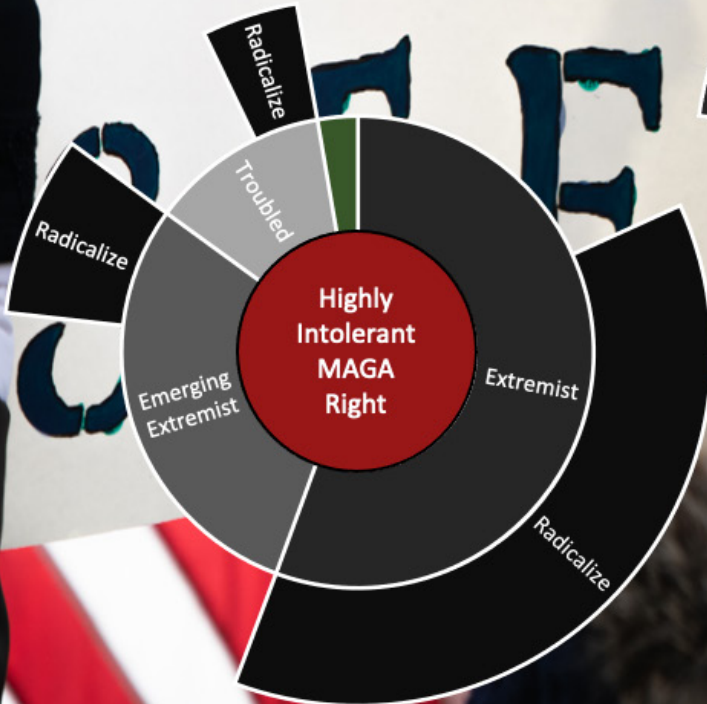
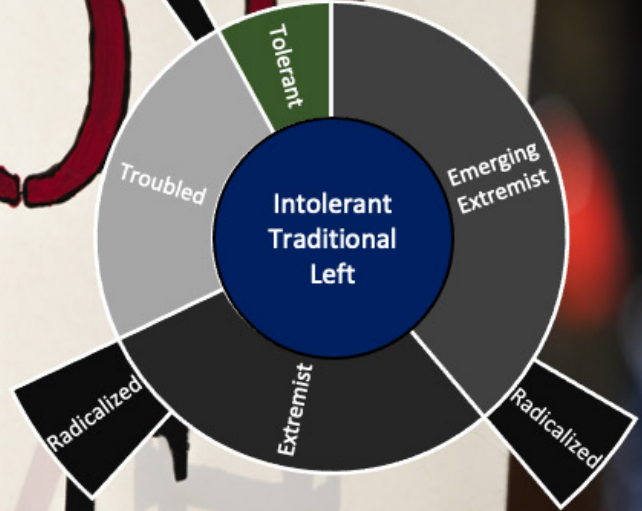
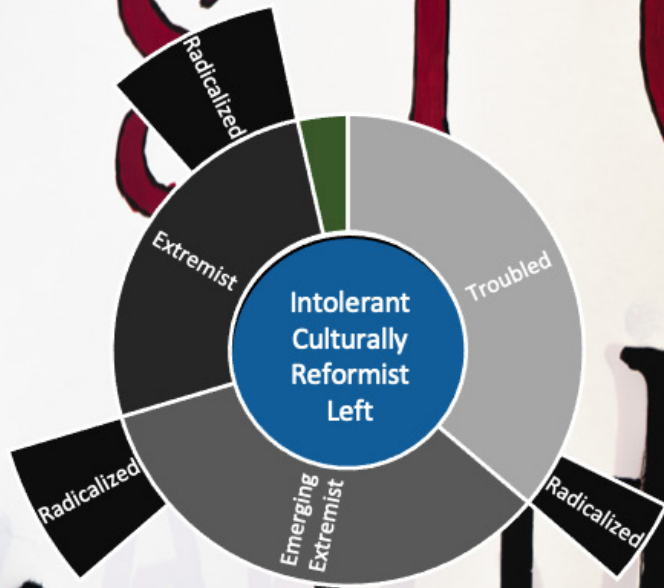
Emerging
Extremist

Troubled
Mainstream

Tolerant

Radicalized

Demonstrating Need, Network and Narrative
Greater than 70





EXTREMISM AND THE MEDIA ECOSYSTEMS

The Three News Ecosystems of American Politics

Three distinct news ecosystems have emerged in American politics: the Traditional Media Ecosystem, the Fox News Ecosystem, and the New Right Media Ecosystem. The Traditional Media Ecosystem serves as the primary news source for center and left-leaning Americans. In contrast, the Fox News Ecosystem has played a significant role in fueling political extremism by normalizing and demonizing the political left. This ecosystem operates on a business model that capitalizes on distress, simplistic answers, overconfidence, and intolerance. However, Fox News now faces competition from the emerging New Right Media Ecosystem, which takes extremism to new heights. This ecosystem fully embraces the Need, Network, and Narratives of radicalization, further amplifying division and polarization in American politics.



channel

TOLERANCE, INTOLERANCE, AND NEWS SOURCES

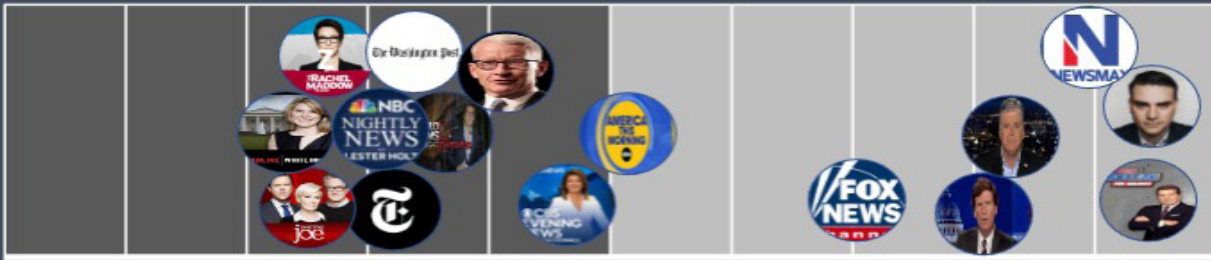
LDI’s survey data reveals that Americans live in distinct news information ecosystems. Differences in these ecosystems lead to differences in distress, answers accepted, levels of (over)confidence, tolerance or intolerance, and realities based on real or imagined fears and grievances. Our data indicates that an individual’s levels of extremist behavior and the steps they have taken toward extremism are greatly influenced by the news they consume. At the same time, levels of distress, desire for simplistic answers, overconfidence, and intolerance play a critical role in the news choices of Americans. This two-way relationship between the news media of choice and the steps towards extremism indicates that media sources play a crucial role in the threats our democracy faces, particularly on the right. Recent revelations from the Dominion Lawsuit against Fox News further demonstrate that major media companies know extremist viewers may switch sources -- or even news ecosystems -- if the simplistic answers they accept are not reinforced by their chosen media platforms.

THE FORMATION OF THREE NEWS MEDIA ECOSYSTEMS:

There are three distinct groups when the news media data is broken out against tolerance levels. These ecosystems include the Traditional Media Ecosystem, the Fox News Ecosystem, and a New Media Right Ecosystem.

1. THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM encompasses traditional legacy media such as network television news (e.g. NBC Night News), legacy cable news (e.g. CNN or MSNBC), newspapers (both print and online), affiliated podcasts, and new

MEDIA CONSUMED AND PERSPECTIVES GAP



MAGA Makes America Worse

MAGA Makes America Better



Black Lives Matter Makes America Worse

Black Lives Matter Makes America Better

media associated with long-established media organizations. It is shared by both the center and left of the political tolerance spectrum, with partisan variations among sources depending on an individual’s ideological and political leanings as well as their level of distress, acceptance of simplistic answers, overconfidence, and intolerance.

2. **THE FOX NEWS ECOSYSTEM**, consumed primarily by those on the right and center-right, tends to foster and attract the overconfident and intolerant among its members. However, this is somewhat tempered by their willingness to consume and exposure to alternative information and narratives from the mainstream nightly news and local news from the three major networks consumed by its members. That cross-pollination between these sources of influence is crucial because it impacts the diversity of perspectives for individuals within this ecosystem.
3. **THE NEW MEDIA RIGHT ECOSYSTEM** consists of emerging and evolving political extremists introduced to Need and Network through the Fox News Ecosystem, specifically the prime-time lineup. It includes networks like OAN and Newsmax TV, as well as various other platforms such as Joe Rogan or Dan Bongino, and talk radio shows like Mark Levin. Fox News also plays a role through its prime-time programming, grooming viewers toward extremist behaviors by catering to their perceived need for specific narratives, networks, and a sense of purpose.

THE IMPACT OF NON-TRADITIONAL MEDIA:

The presence of non-traditional news media ecosystems has profound implications for political extremism in America today. These ecosystems are characterized by narratives fueled by distress, simplicity, and overconfidence; shaping individuals’ beliefs, behaviors, and levels of extremism. Analyzing the intersection of the Political Tolerance Spectrum and Media Ecosystems reveals a concerning trend wherein overconfident individuals become intolerant and distrustful of those with different perspectives. This demand for outrage creates an opportunity for opportunistic actors within the media space to exploit these divisions. The subsequent divergence across media and political landscapes further deepens the divisions among the populace.

In 2020, Donald Trump effectively leveraged these partisan media ecosystems to promote a narrative of election denial, similar to his previous use of demonizing rhetoric such as, “Lock her Up,” during his 2016 election campaign. Looking ahead to 2024, it is likely that Trump and other political figures will continue exploiting these ecosystems to perpetuate the cycle of extremism in large part because Trump normalized them. This suggests that both the left and the right in the 2024 election will employ media to amplify their narratives and mobilize their bases through messaging of polarization and demonization at the risk of further inflaming political extremism.

Television	67%
Internet News Sites	49%
Newspapers	34%
Radio	31%
Friends and Family Members	30%
Podcasts and Streaming Shows	29%

All Registered Voters

THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

Most important sources of information about news and politics by groups within Political Tolerance Spectrum



THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

Almost sixty-four percent of Americans rely on traditional media for their information about news and politics. Depending on where they fall on the political spectrum, they tend to have slightly different viewing habits. For example, those who watch MSNBC or read the New York Times are more likely to lean left, while those who rely on network news, like ABC or CBS, tend to be a cross-section of both moderates and the left. Interestingly, the Traditional Media Ecosystem has the same levels of political extremists as the Fox News Ecosystem (22%), while also containing more Emerging Extremists (37%), demonstrating intolerance for those who don't share their political beliefs, a mix of distress, acceptance of simplistic answers, and overconfidence in their political views. Most of those who meet our model definition of extremist (full or emerging) are on the left or clustered among the intolerant middle of the Political Tolerance Spectrum. Given the larger number of Democratic voters, Biden won these voters 57% to 30% in 2020; they tend to skew towards the left of center. On the Political Tolerance Spectrum, most are Slightly Tolerant Traditional Left (16%), Intolerant Traditional Left (15%), Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left (12%), and the Tolerant-Intolerant Middle (11%). Four in ten (42%) intend to vote in the Democratic Presidential Primaries, and a quarter (26%) say they will vote in the Republican Primaries.



THE FOX NEWS ECOSYSTEM

The Fox News Ecosystem comprises twenty-two percent of the electorate and consists of individuals on the center-right of both the political spectrum and the Political Tolerance Spectrum. Most are Intolerant Traditional Right (20%), Slightly Intolerant Right (17%), Tolerant-Intolerant Middle (11%), or Tolerant Centrists (11%). Nearly a quarter are Politically Extremist (23%), which mirrors the levels in the Traditional Media Ecosystem, with an additional three in ten (29%) meeting the criteria to be defined as Emerging Extremists. One in fifty (2%) strongly agree with the Need, Network, and Narrative of the Significant Quest and are grouped as radicalized based on our modeling. Using a scale from 0 (as negative as possible) to 100 (as positive as possible), they view those who protested the death of George Floyd (42), Joe Biden (36), and Democrats (42) negatively, and to a greater degree, those who were at the US Capitol (37) in a negative light. They generally view the Republican Party warmly with Donald Trump (54) and Ron DeSantis (60) viewed evenly. Just over six in ten (62%) say they will be voting in the 2024 Republican presidential primaries.

NEW MEDIA RIGHT ECOSYSTEM

Most important sources of information about news and politics by groups within Political Tolerance Spectrum



THE NEW MEDIA RIGHT ECOSYSTEM

The New Media Right System, comprising fourteen percent of registered voters, is a combination of Fox News (40%), emerging right-wing cable news like Newsmax (52%), right-wing talk radio (46%) and podcasts (38%). Over a quarter of these voters spend more than two hours a day consuming political information in a world where nearly seventy percent (69%) say you “must be very careful who you trust,” and half (52%) say “most of their close friends share their views on government and politics.” On the Political Tolerance Spectrum, four in ten (39%) are Highly Tolerant MAGA Extremists, with an additional eight percent coming from the Intolerant Traditional Right and the Slightly Tolerant Right. An additional eleven percent are Tolerant-Intolerant Moderates. A third of those in the New Media Right Ecosystem (32%) are political extremists, and an additional third (33%) are Emerging Extremists. Moreover, nearly two in five (37%) are Radicalized based on our model using the Significant Question Theory. In the upcoming Republican Presidential Primaries, these voters will comprise over a quarter (26%) of the vote, and they favor Donald Trump over Ron DeSantis, sixty-five percent to thirty-five percent in a head-to-head matchup.

CLOSED NEWS ECOSYSTEMS' DANGER TO DEMOCRACY

Fragmentation into closed information ecosystems significantly impacts political extremism and radicalization, particularly when comparing the far left and far right. For example, the earlier graphics showed those on the left of the Political Tolerance Spectrum sharing news sources with those in the center. Although groups like the Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left and Intolerant Traditional Left prefer MSNBC or the New York Times, they also rely on sources such as nightly news from the three legacy networks and local news for information they share with those in the center. This variety contributes to an aligned worldview of the country's challenges and potential solutions.

THE LDI SURVEY REVEALED THAT CLOSED MEDIA ECOSYSTEMS SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT POLITICAL EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION. THE GROWTH OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION INFLUENCES TRADITIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE, DRIVING EMERGING EXTREMISM ACROSS THE ELECTORATE.

the New York Times, they also rely on sources such as nightly news from the three legacy networks and local news for information they share with those in the center. This variety contributes to an aligned worldview of the country's challenges and potential solutions.

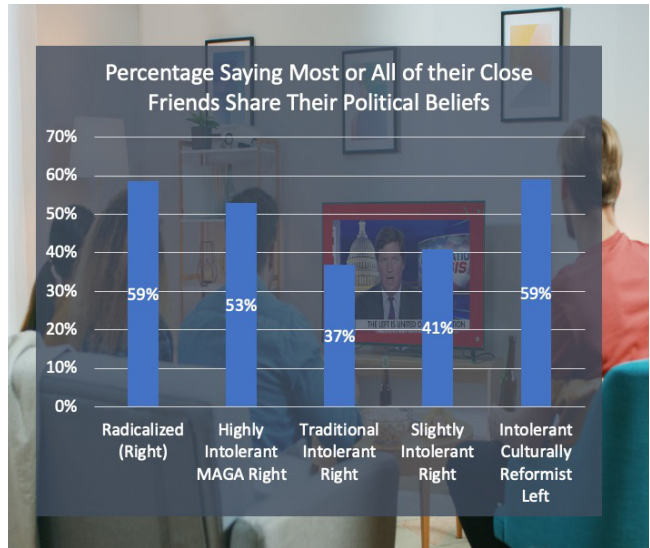
In contrast, those on the right have a more constrained information space, especially within the New Media Right ecosystem.

The chart on the next page shows that the top five fears within each ecosystem differ depending on the prevalence of alternative informational viewpoints. Notably, a majority of the Intolerant Traditional MAGA Right exists within the New Media Right Ecosystem (54%), with the Traditional Ecosystem (34%) being the alternative rather than the Fox Ecosystem (16%). Conversely, the Intolerant Traditional Right and the Slightly Intolerant Right, while leaning on the Fox Ecosystem (42% and 41%, respectively), are more likely to fall into the Traditional Ecosystem (48% and 46%). This more natural pairing, which includes media like network news which both share in common, provides some congruence in their understanding and tolerance frameworks.

THE IMPACT OF HAVING FRIENDS WHO MOSTLY SHARE YOUR VIEWS

Americans on the Far Left and Far Right of the Political Tolerance Spectrum say, "Most of their friends share my beliefs about politics and government." The more you move toward the center of the spectrum, the more likely you are to have friends with different views. This raises the question of which is more critical to levels of extremism and radicalization -- having friends with different perspectives or having a diversity of opinion within the media ecosystem where you receive information.

The chart on the next page shows the top five fears broken out by each media ecosystem and whether most friends share political views or if many have different opinions. As the chart indicates, those who are part of the Traditional Ecosystem tend to align regarding what they fear and how intensely they hold these fears regardless of how their friends feel. On the other



THE NEW MEDIA RIGHT ECOSYSTEM

Friends SHARE MY BELIEFS about government and politics	Fear Score	Friends HAVE DIFFERENT BELIEFS about government and politics	Fear Score
Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	79	Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	81
The traditional values being replaced by political correctness and wokeism	77	The traditional values being replaced by political correctness and wokeism	74
My children or grandchildren growing up in an America worse than the one I have lived in	77	Democrats in Congress borrowing more and more money to pay for unneeded programs rather than addressing the debt	73
Democrats in Congress borrowing more and more money to pay for unneeded programs rather than addressing the debt	74	American Democracy being replaced by One Party Autocratic Rule	73
Extremist environmental policies stopping the United States from extracting and using our domestic energy resources	74	My children or grandchildren growing up in an America worse than the one I have lived in	72

FOX NEWS ECOSYSTEM

Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	76	Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	75
Democrats in Congress borrowing more and more money to pay for unneeded programs rather than addressing the debt	74	Democrats in Congress borrowing more and more money to pay for unneeded programs rather than addressing the debt	71
My children or grandchildren growing up in an America worse than the one I have lived in	73	My children or grandchildren growing up in an America worse than the one I have lived in	70
Immigrants coming into the country illegally to commit terrorist acts in your community	73	The traditional values being replaced by political correctness and wokeism	68
The traditional values being replaced by political correctness and wokeism	70	An Economic Depression in your lifetime.	67

TRADITIONAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	75	Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government	74
The power of billionaires to control government, the economy, and policy choices for their own interests	72	The power of billionaires to control government, the economy, and policy choices for their own interests	70
A decision by the Supreme Court taking away rights or liberties for members of my family or me	71	A decision by the Supreme Court taking away rights or liberties for members of my family or me	67
Not having enough money for retirement.	65	Not having enough money for retirement.	65
A family member or friend being denied reproductive rights where they live causes them to be forced to carry a child or to seek unsafe medical treatments and risk being arrested.	65	My children or grandchildren growing up in an America worse than the one I have lived in	64

hand, while sharing some top fears, those in the right-leaning Fox Ecosystem and the far-right New Media Right Ecosystems have different intensity levels. Moreover, the fears of the two right-wing ecosystems are unaligned beyond the top fear of all Americans -- "Corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government" -- although who is "corrupt or incompetent" depends nearly entirely on where you stand politically.

The chart also demonstrates the impact of having friends who mostly share your views within your media ecosystem versus having a more politically diverse set of friends. On average, those with sets of friends who mostly share their views are typically more intense in their fears, with average fear scores across all fears higher by 2 points than those with a politically diverse set of friends. Perhaps more importantly, the more ideologically consolidated the media ecosystem is, the greater the impact, with the average difference rising by 4 across the top ten fears.

INDIVIDUALS IN THE CLOSED NEW MEDIA RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST ECOSYSTEM WITH LIKE-MINDED FRIENDS ARE FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO EXHIBIT NEED, NETWORK, AND NARRATIVE--THE FOUNDATIONS OF RADICALIZATION-- THAN THOSE WITH DIVERSE FRIENDS.

Those in the most closed New Media Right Ecosystem with friends who mostly share their views are four times more likely than those with politically diverse friends in the same ecosystem to demonstrate Need, Network, and Narrative, the foundational steps to radicalization. They are also much more likely to be overconfident political extremists. This is the case even though both within the New Media Right Ecosystem share the same levels of intolerance and untrustworthiness (57%).

AN EXTREMIST BUSINESS MODEL

A typical viewer of Newsmax, Tucker Carlson, or Fox News, in general, is no more or less intolerant or distrusting of those who don't share their political views than those watching or reading traditional media like the New York Times or MSNBC. Among all these news sources, the average levels of highly or very highly intolerant Americans are between 40% and 43%. However, a critical difference exists which perhaps highlights the problem we face and the business models of the former versus those of the latter. While

THE DANGER OF MEDIA THAT FOSTERS POLITICAL EXTREMISM IS THAT ONCE CONSUMERS BECOME EXTREMISTS, THEY START DEMANDING THE NEED, NETWORK, AND NARRATIVES OF RADICALIZATION.

both are similar in levels of intolerance, viewers of Newsmax, Tucker, and Fox News are much more likely to be distressed, accept simplistic answers, and be overconfident in their ability to find "truthful" information. For example, viewers of the New Media Right or Tucker Carlson are likelier to say they are far above or well above average in "knowing the real threats to

the country" (47%) compared to those relying on ABC Nightly News (36%). Moreover, the same pattern applies to every question we ask to gauge confidence.

The combination of distress within these ecosystems generates a unique set of fears for their viewers compared to the rest of America. Coupling these unique fears with entertainment and political news programming provides simplistic answers and induces overconfidence in viewers of their rightness. It became a highly profitable business

model built for news companies, like News Corp. Yet, it also causes high levels of full-fledged extremism (Newsmax Viewers, 42%, Tucker viewers, 40%, and Fox News, 35%) and emerging extremism (Newsmax Viewers, 41%, Tucker viewers, 40%, and Fox News, 42%). Moreover, as this media consumer marketplace on the right becomes more extremist, it creates an even more toxic problem of radicalization within America's democracy, as viewers demand greater polarization and demonization of others who don't share their values.




A DISCOVERY MECHANISM FOR EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION

The New Media Right Ecosystem plays a significant role in radicalization by acting as a discovery mechanism for individuals seeking narratives. Their intentional or unintentional business model leverages political extremism and thus provides the necessary ingredients of Need, Network, and Narrative, contributing to radicalization. Normalizing extremist and radical behavior within politics has profound implications for our society. Removing Tucker Carlson from the Fox News ecosystem will unlikely impact the demand for extremist content. However, it can create an even greater marketplace for such material as it is less readily available.

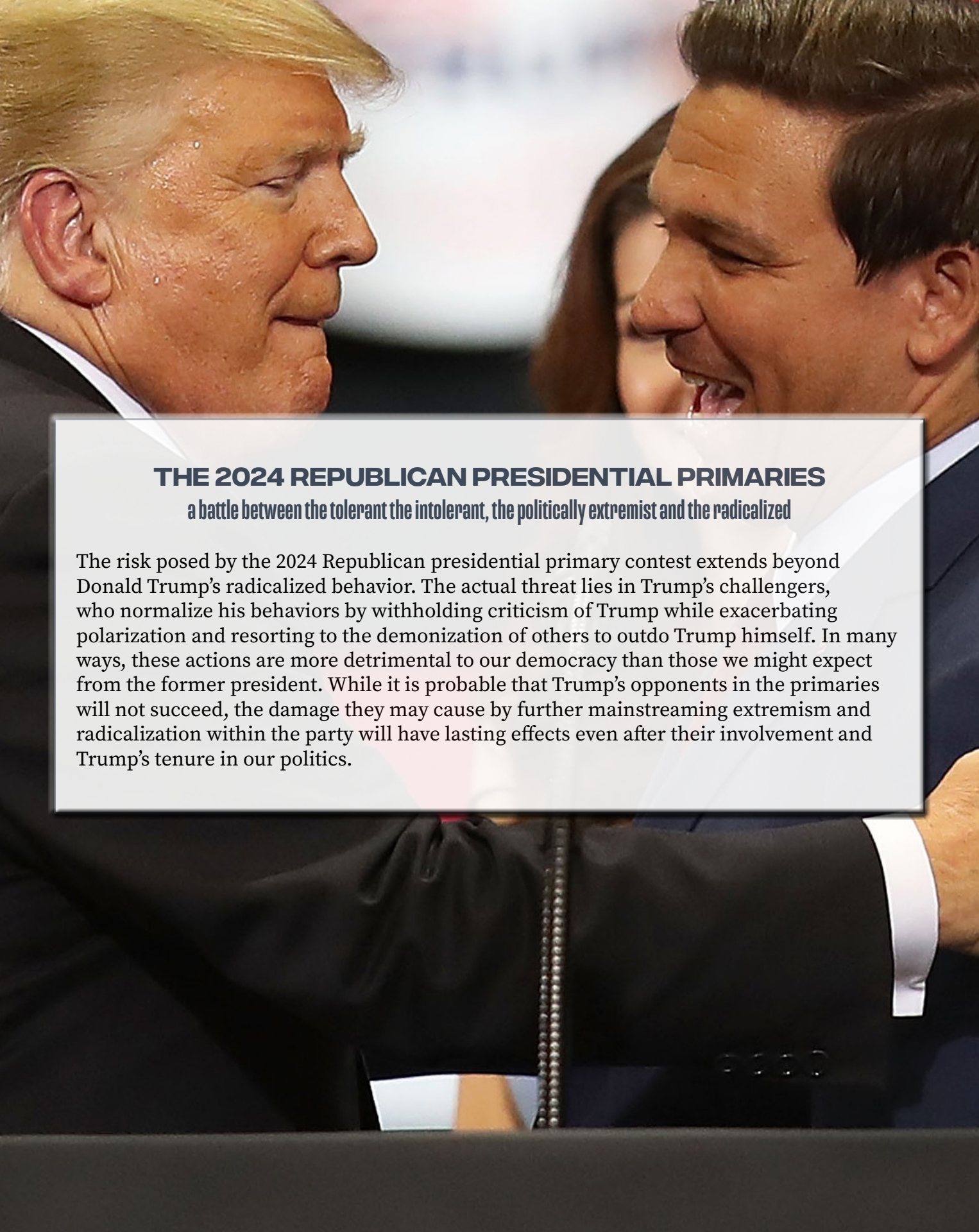
With 22% of Americans classified as Political Extremists and 31% as Emerging Extremists, there is a significant demand for content that aligns with their beliefs. Moreover, our data shows that demand will likely increase as we approach the 2024 presidential election. As a result, political extremists on both sides will seek content focusing on Need, Network, and Narrative against perceived threats to the nation. Meanwhile, Emerging Extremists on both sides will look for simplistic answers that validate their fears, intolerance, and distrust.

Ironically, the Fox News Ecosystem has experienced fragmentation as it attempts to balance news reporting with its viewers' demands for simplistic answers. This fragmentation has led to the loss of extremist viewers who seek more radical alternatives. On the left, a similar media ecosystem has yet to emerge fully, but it may only be a matter of time before a triggering event sparks its creation.

The fragmentation within our information ecosystems influence our politics and discourse. It is a reciprocal relationship, similar to Newton's cradle, with politics and discourse shaping the information ecosystems and the ecosystems being shaped by politics and discourse. As we move into and through the 2024 Election cycle, this interplay will continue to impact our society.

THE MEDIA AND RADICALIZATION				
Percentage citing the following as a critical source of information about news and politics				
	ALL RADICALIZED ON THE POLITICAL RIGHT	HIGHLY INTOLERANT MAGA RIGHT	THE INTOLERANT TRADITIONAL RIGHT	THE SLIGHTLY INTOLERANT RIGHT
	53%	47%	42%	42%
	25%	22%	9%	12%
	13%	11%	3%	6%

(Average Need, Network and Narrative >70)



THE 2024 REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

a battle between the tolerant the intolerant, the politically extremist and the radicalized

The risk posed by the 2024 Republican presidential primary contest extends beyond Donald Trump's radicalized behavior. The actual threat lies in Trump's challengers, who normalize his behaviors by withholding criticism of Trump while exacerbating polarization and resorting to the demonization of others to outdo Trump himself. In many ways, these actions are more detrimental to our democracy than those we might expect from the former president. While it is probable that Trump's opponents in the primaries will not succeed, the damage they may cause by further mainstreaming extremism and radicalization within the party will have lasting effects even after their involvement and Trump's tenure in our politics.

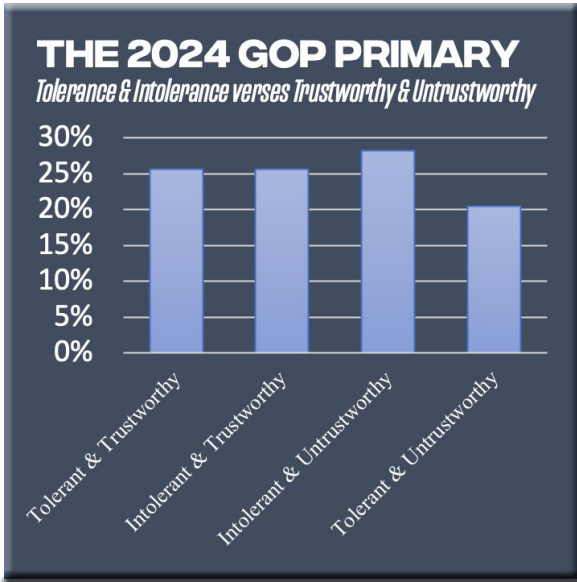
THE GOP PRIMARIES: ONLY TRUMP CAN STOP TRUMP

Based on our research, the only thing likely to stop Donald Trump from becoming the 2024 Republican standard bearer is Donald Trump. In a head-to-head matchup at the outset of the race, Trump leads his top challenger for the nomination, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, by a sixty-two percent to thirty-eight percent margin among likely primary voters and caucus-goers. In the traditional early states through those typically on Super Tuesday, Trump's lead over DeSantis increases to sixty-nine percent, with nearly a majority (46%) saying they will definitely support him.

AT THE OUTSET OF THE 2024 GOP PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY, THE INDEX SHOWS DONALD TRUMP LEADING RON DESANTIS IN A HEAD-TO-HEAD MATCHUP 62% TO 38%.

TRUSTING AND DISTRUSTING VERSUS TOLERANT AND INTOLERANT

Trump's dominant position in the primaries is built on the fact that the 2024 Republican presidential primaries feature four distinct voter groups -- which mirror those among all Americans on tolerance versus intolerance and trust versus distrust. The largest, at 28% of likely primary voters, is intolerant of political differences and views dissenters as untrustworthy enemies. The second group, at 26%, is also intolerant but sees those with differing views as trustworthy opponents. The third group is tolerant and views others as trustworthy, while the final group, at 20%, is tolerant but sees dissenters as untrustworthy enemies.



On the Political Tolerance Spectrum, over eighty percent of primary voters fall into four groups: the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right (30%), the Intolerant Traditional Right (17%), the Slightly Tolerant Right (22%), and Disengaged Moderates (17%). Notably, over half of the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right are either intolerant and untrusting (57%) or tolerant but untrusting (26%). Just under half of the Intolerant Traditional Right, mainly establishment Republicans, are intolerant but view political opponents as trustworthy. A plurality of the Slightly Tolerant Right are both tolerant and trusting (32%), as are the vast majority of Disengaged Moderates (62%). The levels of

intolerance and distrust within the GOP primary voting universe strongly suggest that Donald Trump is a symptom of the political extremism illness within the Republican Party today, but not the disease of intolerance and distrust infecting the Party and its core supporters.

EXTREMISM IN THE GOP MAKES TRUMP THE PROHIBITIVE FAVORITE

Based on LDI's model of political extremism utilizing the four steps, over half of the Republican Primary electorate in 2024 are either Political Extremists (24%) or Emerg-

ing Extremists (31%). Among these voters, Donald Trump is the definite choice of nearly half (Politically Extremist, 49% and Emerging Extremists, 47%). When those who say they will probably support Trump are added in, he receives sixty-six percent of the Politically Extremist and sixty-eight percent among Emerging Extremists. While these extremist voters provide Trump with his base of support, his surprising levels of support among the Tolerant and Trusting solidify his dominance within the Party and its upcoming primaries. Among Tolerant and Trusting Republicans, Trump receives 73% backing in a head-to-head against his top rival. Trump can fuse the support of both the extremist wing of the Party who are intolerant and distrusting, with those who are tolerant and trusting, which makes him unique and a force that will be difficult to stop in the battle for the Party's nomination.

THE DAUNTING CHALLENGE OF DEFEATING DONALD TRUMP

Given the reality in our data that Donald Trump appears to have locked down the definite support of over four in ten (46%) likely primary voters, a challenger for the nomination would need to put together a coalition fusing the tolerant and intolerant, together with the trusting and distrusting voters. The central challenges to do so are threefold.

First, given Trump's near plurality of support, defeating him requires primaries and caucuses that pit him against a single challenger. With enough definite supporters who are unlikely to change their minds, his support base is essentially insurmountable in a race of plurality.

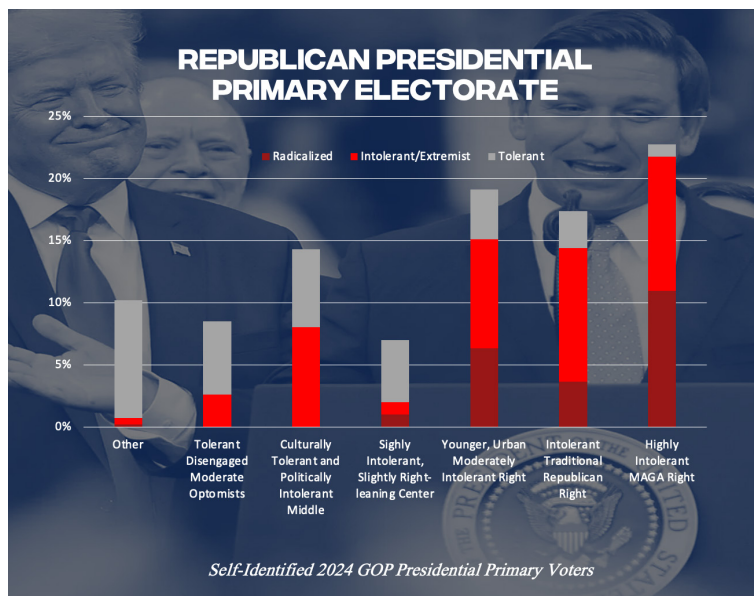
Second, building a coalition within the GOP to defeat Trump in primaries requires appealing to voters with diametrically opposite views about those who don't share their political beliefs and values. As the former President, Donald Trump is universally defined by these voters. He can transcend the divide between the tolerant and trustworthy quarter of the GOP and those in the intolerant and distrusting factions because he has previously united them. A viable challenger bears the burden of trying to appeal to intolerance and tolerance and trust and distrusting voters simultaneously. Such an appeal is further complicated by the three media ecosystems that Republican Primary voters rely upon for their news and information. A plurality of these voters fall within the Traditional Media Ecosystem (43%), and they divide into four categories: Tolerant and Trusting (17%), Intolerant and Trusting (27%), Intolerant and Untrusting (29%), and Tolerant and Trusting (27%). Thus, for a Trump challenger, messaging appealing to tolerance or intolerance or trustworthiness or untrustworthiness will simultaneously appeal to and dissuade voters needed to build a viable coalition. The Fox News Ecosystem is equally paradoxical for a Trump challenger. These voters are more likely to be Trusting (59%) but break sixty percent to forty percent towards intolerance. Among voters relying on the New Media Right-Wing Extremist Ecosystem, two-thirds (67%) are untrusting, with sixty-five percent being intolerant. An appeal to these voters, who are Trump's most robust base of support, will inevitably turn



off those voters who are necessary to build a winning coalition that is tolerant and trusting.

CHALLENGE #3: A PYRRHIC VICTORY?

The final challenge in beating Donald Trump for the Republican nomination is that defeating him would likely doom whoever toppled him to inevitable defeat in the 2024 general election. It could even cause the Republican Party to implode. When Donald Trump's primary supporters were asked if they would stay with the Republican Party or leave if he is not the nominee, twenty-five percent said they would definitely leave. Eighteen more said they would probably quit the Republican Party. However, when these voters are given a hypothetical matchup between Ron DeSantis and Joe Biden in the general elections, just over half suggest they would support DeSantis as the Republican standard-bearer (56%). At the same time, nineteen percent say they would support Biden, sixteen percent are undecided, and eight percent (comprising two percent of all general election voters) would not vote. It is this latter group, if they indeed choose to sit the race out, who would almost certainly tip the critical electoral college states towards Democrats and ensure a Biden victory.



NORMALIZATION OF POLITICAL EXTREMISM

Finally, the 2024 Republican Primary process presents a significant challenge to American democracy, not solely due to Donald Trump's involvement, but because of the mainstream normalization of political extremism by other contenders vying for the nomination. Despite avoiding direct criticism of Trump, these contenders are embracing messaging and actions that exhibit similar intolerance and potentially illiberal tendencies to Trump. An example of this is Ron DeSantis' attacks on Disney. In our survey, we found that while 51% of Americans view Disney as contributing to what makes America great, only 28% believe it represents what is wrong with America. However, among DeSantis supporters in the Republican primary, these numbers are reversed, with 41% perceiving Disney as what is wrong with America. This targeted intolerance, especially when promoted by an elected official seen as a mainstream rival to Trump, normalizes political extremism. The normalization of extremism within mainstream Republican circles poses a genuine danger to the nation as the GOP nomination process unfolds and must be closely monitored.

THE 2024 DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION

it has everything, and very little, to do with Joe Biden

The fate of the Democratic Party in the short term is entirely about Joe Biden, but the long-term destiny of the party -- and American democracy -- lies in whatever comes next. Perhaps that next is after a defeat in the 2024 General Election. Maybe it comes upon completion of his term, or some circumstance between now and then. Regardless, Joe Biden's presidency will not cure the growing political extremism and radicalization we are witnessing in American Politics. It is, however, what (not who) comes next for Democrats that has the potential to determine the fate of our democracy.

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WHERE DO THE DEMOCRATS GO?

Based on our data, Joe Biden will be the Democratic Party's standard-bearer in the upcoming election as among likely Democratic Primary voters, fifty-seven percent say he should run again, and he has announced his intentions to do so. Consequently, the short-term fate of the Democratic Party is entirely tied to Biden's electoral prospects. Still, the destiny of the party in the long run – and likely American democracy – lies in whatever comes next. When that next phase arrives, whether it is upon completion of a second Biden term, a defeat in the 2024 general election to Donald Trump or another Republican, or due to some unforeseen events, the time that follows Biden's direct involvement will determine not only the direction of the party representing the American left, but also the trajectory of our nation as a whole.

THE SHORT-TERM FATE OF JOE BIDEN (AND PERHAPS OUR NATION)

When all Americans were asked in our survey if Biden should seek re-election, two-thirds (63%) said he should not. While just under two-thirds of self-identified Democrats were supportive, over four out of five Republicans (81%) and Independents (78%) said he should not. Americans share a reservation about a second Biden term because of his age. Of those who said he should not run again, sixty-two percent agree with the statement, "He will be 82 years old, which is too old," and perhaps equally important, a similar number of Americans said, "He isn't physically up to the job" (53%). Even among Democratic primary voters who overwhelmingly want him to run again, nearly half (48%) suggested he was "too old."

JOE BIDEN'S AGE WON'T SEAL HIS ELECTORAL FATE; TOLERANT AND TRUSTWORTHY REPUBLICANS WILL

Addressing the age issue will undoubtedly be imperative for the Biden campaign in 2024, given half of his 2020 voters are concerned about his age. The reality is that the most likely match-up he will face will be one against Donald Trump, whom he defeated in 2020. However, past results are not indicative of future returns in investing or elections, and a Biden-Trump rematch will hinge on the ability of both sides to mobilize their bases of support and whether Biden can keep the Republican voters in key swing states who supported him over their party's candidate in 2020. According to our data, Donald Trump holds eighty-four percent of his supporters from 2020, who suggest they will support him again. Meanwhile, Joe Biden is keeping less of his base at eighty-one percent. Thus, the election will once again hinge on eight percent of the total electorate, which is currently undecided and shifted to Trump in 2016, then broke towards Biden in 2020.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC COALITION

The Democratic Party coalition, according to the Political Intolerance Spectrum, consists of five groups: Intolerant Traditional Left (20%), Slightly Tolerant Traditional Left (20%), Culturally Reformist Left (16%), Tolerant Centerists (15%), and Disengaged Moderates (14%). Ideologically, it is primarily divided into three roughly equal parts: Traditional Liberals (24%), Progressives and Socialists (24%), and Independent-leaning Liberals and Independent-Moderates (34%). The party's members are generally younger, better educated, more ethnically diverse, urban, and less religious than the rest of America.

This results in a more optimistic coalition (56% vs. 68% pessimistic for all other Americans) and similarly satisfied (54%) compared to other Americans. Democrats overwhelmingly support Managed Economic Markets (78% vs. 51% of other Americans), a Broad Social Safety Net (73% vs. 35% of all other Americans) and Global Engagement (63% vs. 46%). They are divided between Reformist Cultural Values (49%) and Traditional (51%). The high level of support for Reformist values, primarily by the Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left, significantly differs from the rest of Americans, who lean 80% towards Traditional and 20% towards Reformist values.

EXTREMISM IS A PROBLEM FOR DEMOCRATS TOO

The challenges of political extremism exists within both major political parties. On the left, Democrats have slightly fewer Political Extremists than Republicans (20% to 23%) and about the same percentage of Emerging Extremists (31% versus 32%). However, Democrats tend to be slightly more Intolerant (63% to 59%) of political differences but more trusting (56% to 52%), seeing those who don't align politically as Trustworthy Political Opponents rather than Untrustworthy enemies.

Just as the Republicans are clustered on the far right, the Political Extremists in the Democratic Party tend to be clustered on the far left. The total number on the left is twenty-seven percent of Political Extremists (Socialists, 5%; Progressives, 11%; and Traditional Liberals, 11%), which is nearly the same as the twenty-nine percent who are on the right (MAGA Conservatives, 14%; and Traditional Conservatives, 15%). Where the parties differ on extremism when examined by the Political Intolerance Spectrum is that the far right—the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right (20% of all Political Extremists)—are far more likely to be Political Extremists than the Culturally Reformist Left (10% of all Political Extremists). The underlying reasons why this is the case need to be examined further. Still, one key difference is the Media Ecosystems

ALTHOUGH DEMOCRATS ARE SLIGHTLY LESS LIKELY THAN REPUBLICANS TO BE POLITICAL EXTREMISTS OR EMERGING EXTREMISTS, THEY DISPLAY A HIGHER LIKELIHOOD OF INTOLERANCE TOWARDS THOSE WITH DIFFERING POLITICAL VALUES.

from which they draw their news and political information. As discussed in the section on Extremism and Media Ecosystems, the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right primarily rely on a closed information loop of New Right Media, while those on the left, including the Intolerant Culturally Reformist Left and the Intolerant Traditional Left, rely on the more diverse Traditional Media Ecosystem.

RADICALIZATION: NEED WITHOUT NETWORK OR NARRATIVE

As the section on radicalization highlighted, the most significant difference between the political parties today is the radicalization of the far right, specifically the Highly Intolerant MAGA right. According to the survey, 11% of self-identified Democrats demonstrated some Need, Network, and Narrative levels, scoring 65 out of 100 when evaluating statements about the right in America. In contrast, nearly 26% of

self-identified Republicans displayed similar tendencies when evaluating statements about the left, with 60% of the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right exhibiting such characteristics. Moreover, roughly nine percent of the political right meet all three steps towards radicalization compared to only three and a half percent on the left.

While the data suggests that the left has not developed the radicalization challenges of the right, the reality in the future may be more complex. On the political far-right, both the New Media Right Ecosystem and figures like Donald Trump provide Network and Narrative structures that currently do not exist on the left. However, their actions can spur opposite reactions on the left. While neither the Culturally Intolerant Left nor the Intolerant Traditional Left demonstrated much Network or Narrative in our survey (they averaged 50 out of 100 in agreement with statements of Network or Narrative towards the right), they scored at an average level of 78 regarding Need. This Need, coupled with the high levels of intolerance, political extremism, and emerging extremism, presents a real danger that the American left could join the far right in the radicalization process.

THE WHAT COMES NEXT

As we witness what came after the 2020 elections, we can predict that what comes next for our democracy will arrive both with the 2024 election's outcome and whether a peaceful transition of power is possible regardless of whether Biden wins or not. As stated at the outset of this section, unless unforeseen circumstances arise, Joe Biden will be the nominee of the Democratic Party in 2024. In the presidential election, Biden will (likely) prevail, thereby continuing the current chapter of the Democratic Party's history and delaying what comes next for the Democratic Party until 2028.



THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A Battle to hold an Election With an Outcome Percieved as Free and Fair by Both Sides

The 2024 Presidential Election will be a pivotal moment for the United States, with its importance going beyond the traditional contest of electoral victory. Our data suggests that this election will serve as a crucial test to determine whether the cycle of political extremism that we are currently experiencing begins to subside or becomes the tipping point that threatens the very foundation of the American experiment. While the candidate who receives the majority of votes on November 5, 2024 will be significant, what is even more crucial is whether we, as Americans, can peacefully accept the outcome, regardless of our individual preferences. The ability to once again come together and respect the democratic process will be essential in preserving our democracy's integrity, which in our current political climate, may not be possible.

THE STATE OF THE 2024 RACE: UNDECIDED

The casting of primary ballots has yet to begin, and the field of candidates on the Republican side has yet to be set, but the most likely outcome is already evident. In 2024, the most likely scenario by far, based on our data and barring unforeseen circumstances, is a rematch between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Moreover, given how the race currently stands, the LDI Index shows Biden leading Trump by a 45% to 43% margin in a hypothetical matchup. With 12% undecided, it once again has the potential to be close. When undecided voters were allocated based on a scoring model where they rated both Biden and Trump from 0 if they would never support them to 100 if they definitely would vote for them, the race is Biden 51%, Trump 47%, with 2% undecided who have between a 45% and 55% chance of supporting either candidate. In the swing states of Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, Biden leads Trump 44% to 42%, with 10% undecided and 4% saying they wouldn't vote. When the same model was used to allocate undecideds, and those who wouldn't vote were eliminated, the race in these states stood at 50% for Biden and 47% for Trump, with 3% of voters being truly undecided. In Chapter 2 of the LDI Index, published later this summer, we will use this same data and state-specific polling in those states to dig deeper into the swing voters in these critical states who will ultimately decide the election outcome.

KEEPING THE CORRUPT OR INCOMPETENT OUT OF GOVERNMENT

The steps to political extremism begin with psychological distress in the form of fears. As highlighted throughout this chapter, the top anxiety of all Americans, with an average score of 74 out of 100, is “corrupt or incompetent people being elected or appointed to high positions in government.” This fear was the top among Republicans (74), Democrats (73), and Independent (75) voters. It's also the top anxiety for those who rely on the New Media Right Ecosystem (81), the Fox News Ecosystem (75), and the Traditional Media Ecosystem (74). It is also true for those who rely on MSNBC (80) or those that view Tucker Carlson as a critical source of news and information (85). Finally, it's the greatest fear for the Tolerant and Trustworthy (62), the Troubled Mainstream (70), the Politically Extremists (84), and perhaps most importantly and ominously for what the 2024 election portends, the Emerging Extremists (76).

The good news is that, at least, Americans from across our political divides agree on something; the bad news is that we adamantly disagree about who the corrupt and incompetent are. Herein lies the major problem we face as we approach these elections: candidates must answer voters' fears to move voters. Nevertheless, few, (if any) answers are cognitively simplistic and lead voters to overestimate their knowledge of who is trustworthy and who is the enemy. This situation creates a battle that is fought almost entirely on being intolerant and distrusting those on the other side. Ultimately, some

OURS IS A NATION WHERE WE AGREE ON WHAT WE FEAR — CORRUPT OR INCOMPETENT PEOPLE BEING ELECTED OR APPOINTED TO HIGH POSITIONS IN GOVERNMENT, BUT WE ARE A HOUSE DIVIDED, VEHEMENTLY DISAGREEING ON THE SOLUTIONS AT THE DAWN OF HAVING TO MAKE OUR DECISION.

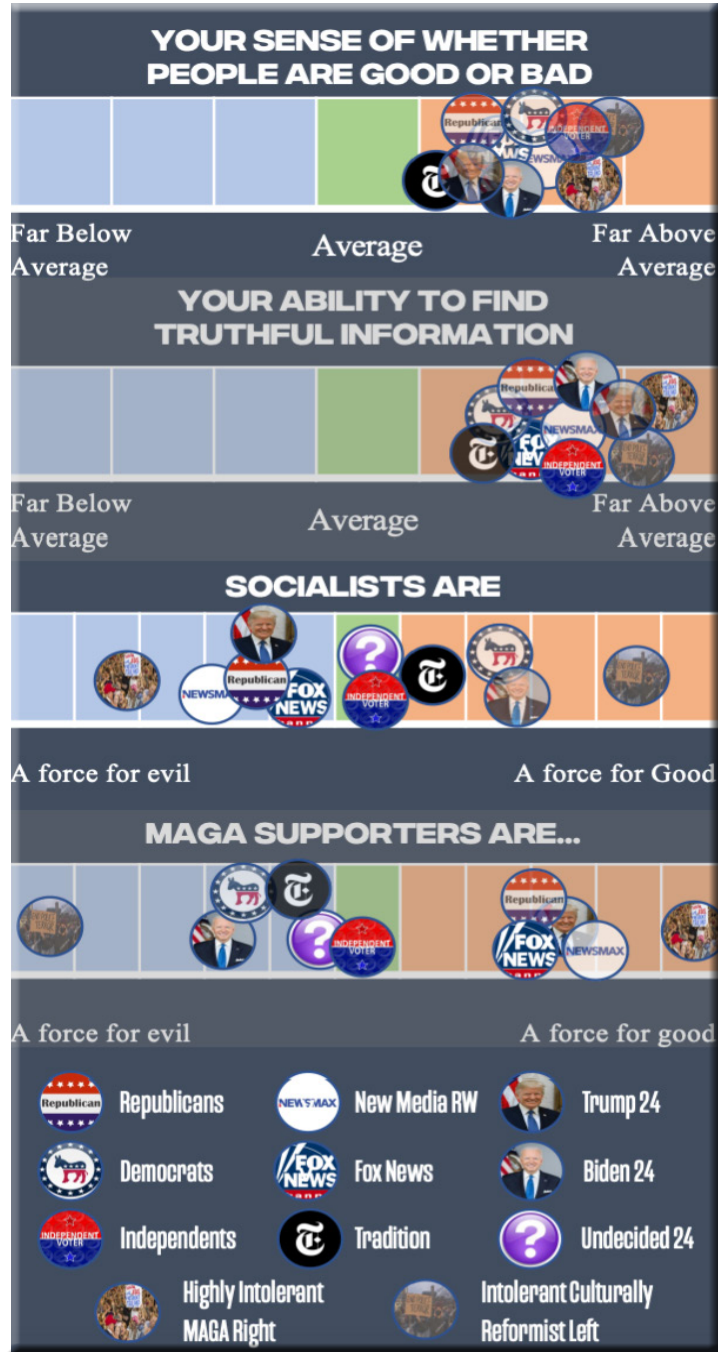
of these individuals will be elected and have to govern a nation where half the country views them as the biggest challenge and the most significant fear they hold about our nation.

**THE 2024 ELECTION:
OVERCONFIDENCE IN
THE SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS**

A central reality in the data is how our politics have become highly personalized, where much of the electorate views individuals as all good or all evil. This demonization we are witnessing is a sign of ever-growing extremism. The chart on the right shows where individuals in various groups fall in terms of how they see their abilities and where they fall between seeing MAGA supporters and Socialists in America today between good and evil. As the chart demonstrates, Americans on both sides of the political divide believe they are above average at knowing if people are good or bad (62% say they are above average) as well as at finding truthful information (69% say they are above average). Not surprisingly, as the chart shows, the extremists among us are most likely to think they are above average and to view those who don't share their views as evil. We are witnessing the cycle of political extremism in action -- Normalize, Polarize, and Demonize. That is why an election constructed in stark terms of good or evil ("very bad people" -- the term Donald Trump often uses) is so dangerous for our democracy. When demonization occurs in a society, violence is the next step in the cycle. The question we need to ask ourselves throughout the 2024 election cycle is: what might be that spark?

**WILL EITHER SIDE ACCEPT
LOSING THE PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION?**

Imagine it is the day after the 2024 election, and the candidate you want-





ed to win has lost. Throughout the election, you were worried that only the candidate you supported could defend and protect the country and its democracy. Now, you believe the election was rigged. If you are a Trump supporter, you think the steal occurred through dropboxes or even more nefarious activities. If you were a Biden supporter, you might believe in discrepancies in key Electoral College states. These include Republican-controlled state legislatures and governors passing legislation disenfranchising those needed to win the state(s) that were ultimately lost by small margins. Regardless, you likely believe that Donald Trump will never concede power if he becomes president. If you supported Trump, not only do you think the election was a fraud and you were cheated once again as he is saying so; four more years of Biden means the end of America as you know it.

What would you do next? Would you be asking how I can save the country (Need)? What questions would follow if you believe someone evil has been elected who won't give up power and will destroy the country (or both)? Who will help me save the country (Network)? What can we do, even if it means breaking the norms of our democracy since they have already done so (Narrative)?

The success of elections isn't ultimately determined by those who win at the ballot box but instead by those who lose and consent to be governed by those they did not support. That reality has been true of all elections we have held throughout American history, and it will be true after the next one as well. But unfortunately, the data suggests some highly troubling signs that events after the 2020 Elections may not be outliers, but instead might be part of a new normal.

THE OTHER SIDE CAN'T WIN FREELY OR FAIRLY

To develop an understanding of the threat, we provided respondents with a statement asking them to score from 0 (not true) to 10 (entirely accurate). The statement read: "If the election is freely and fairly conducted, there is no way a Republican (Democrats only)/a Democrat (Republicans only) can legitimately win." The results are very troubling.

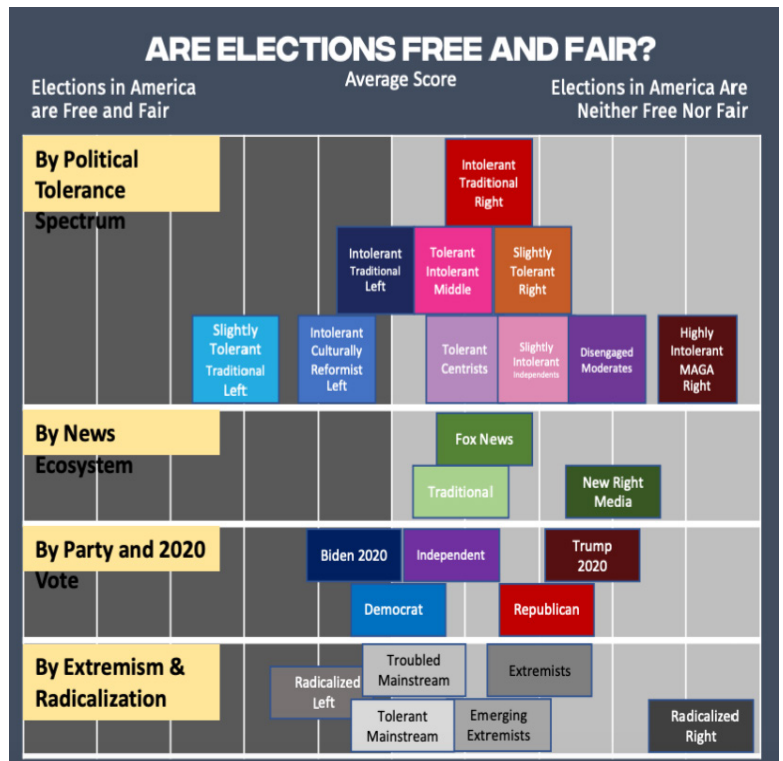
Not surprisingly, among the portion of the electorate who are Political Extremists, there is a belief that the other side cannot win freely and fairly. Among the extremists on the left, the average score was 7.05; on the right, it was even higher at 8.51. There was also

only a minor drop-off with the Emerging Extremists; their average on the left was 6.48, compared to 8.15 on the right. Even among those who are mainstream, on both the right and the left, the average score was above five, demonstrating agreement rather than disagreement.

DECLINING FAITH IN OUR ELECTIONS: A PROBLEM ON BOTH SIDES

Overall, those on the right of the Political Tolerance Spectrum were far more likely to suggest Democrats can't win freely and fairly than those on the left were to say the same about Republicans. However, the picture is slightly more complex when examining overall faith in our elections. On the Political Tolerance Spectrum the Highly Intolerant MAGA Right, which is nearly entirely extremist based on the four steps and where over half demonstrate support for statements of Need, Network, and Narrative, thereby meeting our definition of radicalized, overwhelmingly believe elections are neither free nor fair. When asked a scale question ranging from 0, free and fair, to 10, they are neither free nor fair, they scored an average of 8.8. However, when they are taken out, the average score on that question for self-identified Democrats is 5.41, for Republicans 6.53, and for Independents, it's 5.79. In each case, the average of the groups leans more toward doubts about American Elections than faith in them.

All this leads to the question of whether violence is once again possible. Violence, or its potential, is tough to quantify in a survey. That being said, we did ask voters if violence was ever acceptable in a democracy and scored where respondents stood from 0 (never) to 10 (now is the time). There is far more acceptance of violence in our democracy on the right (Republicans average 5.6) than on the left (Democrats average 4.1), and levels are a threat. It is also true that the cycle of extremism and radicalization can escalate to violence quickly if given the right circumstances and fertile ground. Our survey suggests this possibility is America's reality on the eve of the 2024 Elections.



COUNTERING EXTREMISM IN 2024

A Note from the Author, Trygve Olson

The true threat to our democracy in 2024 and beyond lies in the potential for violence and a non-peaceful transition of power. The data presented in this report provides crucial quantitative insights into the size, scope, and risks we face. In 2020, our nation can be forgiven for not fully grasping the nature and magnitude of the threats we faced, culminating in the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021.

However, as we approach November 2024, the post-election certification process, Inauguration Day, and beyond, Americans cannot afford inaction in the face of unmistakable threats. Failing to act now would leave future generations with a less democratic, or potentially, autocratic, America. The answer to why they were cast this fate will be reflected on each of us in the mirror if we fail to recognize and confront the challenges we face within our democracy.

The following are suggestions, based on the experiences of others around the world, to confront and counter the unpleasant realities of American political extremism:

- 1. ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITY:** Political extremism exists on both the right and left of the political spectrum, and the potential for further violence and radicalization on either, or both sides is a reality we must confront.
- 2. ADDRESS COGNITIVE DISSONANCE:** Individuals who fall victim to political extremism are not inherently bad or un-American. Instead, they have been manipulated by self-interested actors who profit from their distress, offer simplistic answers, exploit their overconfidence, and normalize their intolerance through polarization and demonization. To counter this, we must expose and demonstrate the cognitive dissonance between the well intentioned who succumb to extremism and those who use and enable them.
- 3. RECOGNIZE THE ROLE OF OUR ELECTORAL CHOICES:** The state of our nation is a result of the choices we have made through our elections. While each of us has one vote, our collective efforts will determine the outcomes. Therefore, we must bring our skills and assets to the fight to defend our democracy, understanding that compromises may be necessary to achieve what is best for the nation.
- 4. UNDERSTAND ELECTIONS AS A MEANS TO AN END:** The challenges we face today have been building up over decades, and they cannot be solved through a single election or the defeat or victory of a single candidate or party. Instead, to overcome extremism, we must repeatedly unite in the understanding that extremists do not represent the majority of Americans, but rather, those of us committed to our democracy do.

In conclusion, I am an optimist. While the data on extremism may seem bleak, the upcoming chapters of the LDI Index will reveal that those of us who prioritize democracy and reject extremism are rising to meet the challenges of America's unpleasant reality. We must continue doing so one election and one battle at a time.

THE LINCOLN DEMOCRACY INDEX

Moving Forward

The LDI Index is an ongoing initiative to identify strategies and tactics to defend American democracy against current threats. This initial chapter provides a glimpse of the comprehensive data we will be releasing in future chapters. Upcoming chapters will explore the following topics:

- **THE BANNON LINE:** In 2020, Steve Bannon, a top advisor to Donald Trump, suggested if the Lincoln Project could sway four percent of Republican voters away from Trump, he would fail to secure a second term. This prediction materialized as five percent of Republicans either abstained from voting for Trump or supported Joe Biden. This trend persisted in the 2022 key governor races. This chapter will analyze these right-of-center voters prioritizing democracy over politics to safeguard our democratic values and outline the necessary steps based on data to ensure their continued commitment in favor of democracy over partisanship.
- **THE CHALLENGE FOR CORPORATE AMERICA:** Extremism poses a threat not only to politics but also to the economy. This chapter explores how companies are becoming targets of extremists and partisan influences. The chapter will also provide insight into how corporate actors can address these challenges.
- **THE SWING STATES:** Focusing on key states that have historically determined presidential elections, this chapter analyzes the unique divisions, extremism, and pivotal voters within these states. Their choices may shape the future of American democracy, and this chapter will provide the pathway to ensure they do.
- **PERSONALITIES AND WORLDVIEWS OF AMERICAN VOTERS:** Using data from the LDI survey, this chapter explores the sixteen personalities and worldviews of the American electorate, highlighting their perspectives on the world and politics based on their foundational values. It then explains how these personalities hold the strategic and tactical keys to defending democracy.
- **IN-DEPTH MEDIA ECOSYSTEMS:** Building on the role of media ecosystems in this current chapter on extremism, this chapter provides research on specific news sources and their impact on our politics. Moreover, it will provide leaders at these organizations with insights they can use to ensure they are part of the solution rather than exacerbating the problem.
- **THE 2024 ELECTIONS AND BEYOND:** The final chapter will review all of the data in the LDI Index, focusing on the prospects for American democracy in the 2024 elections and beyond.

Moving forward, LDI seeks support to expand this research through focus groups, providing a more nuanced understanding of threats from extremists. A detailed program will also monitor changing dynamics within critical groups identified in this and future chapters, ensuring timely actions against rising threats. By gaining insight into potential proactive countermeasures, these efforts aim to prevent a repeat of the turmoil following the 2020 election elections.



METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The Lincoln Democracy Institute Index is comprised of interviews conducted online with a total of 16,026 self-identified registered voters between February 18 and April 4, 2023. Additionally, 1,723 interviews were conducted after the national sample to gather oversamples of 800 registered voters in the states of Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The samples were carefully selected to ensure statistical representation of the number of registered voters in each state, as well as balanced representation across gender, age, and ethnicity. The survey was carried out by QuestionPro, a leading global consumer research firm specializing in survey fieldwork.

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ABOUT THE TEAM

for further inquiry about this project, please email: media@lincolndemocracyinstitute.us

Trygve Olson

Survey author and Lincoln Democracy Institute (LDI) Senior Advisor, Trygve Olson is a highly respected expert on democracy and political risk analysis. With a wealth of experience, Olson has played key roles in two presidential campaigns and has provided strategic guidance to major Republican committees. Notably, he served as a Senior Advisor to Mitch McConnell's Super PAC, Kentuckians for Strong Leadership, and Karl Rove's American Crossroads. He has lent his expertise to prominent center-right political parties across Europe, including the European People's Party, the Norwegian Conservative Party (Hoyre), British Conservative Party, and the German CDE-CSU. For almost three decades, Olson has been actively involved with the International Republican Institute (IRI). Through his work with IRI, he has trained thousands of activists and has become a recognized expert in confronting autocratic rulers, implementing non-violent resistance tactics, and mobilizing youth movements.



Erin Dobson

Lincoln Democracy Institute Executive Director, Erin Dobson has more than three decades of experience in state and federal campaigns including three Republican Presidential campaigns. She served as a senior advisor to Howard Schultz's exploratory campaign and was Governor Sonny Perdue's Director of Communications. Dobson's experience includes senior communications and public affairs roles with The Coca-Cola Company, WebMD and Nike. She has held senior staff roles in both Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft and Melinda French Gates's family offices. She is an advisor to Hedge Fund, EcoR1 Capital and Private Equity Fund, Biospring Partners.



Jeff Timmer

Lincoln Democracy Institute Senior Advisor, Jeff Timmer is a political strategist with three decades of experience at the highest levels of the Republican Party, campaigns, and government. He is an acknowledged expert on the politics of critical battleground state, Michigan. His expertise and insight into elections and Republican behavior appear frequently in broadcast and print news across the country and worldwide. Timmer has managed, advised, and directed strategy on hundreds of legislative, congressional, statewide political and ballot issues campaigns and grassstops and grassroots mobilization campaigns. He was an advisor to Ohio Governor John Kasich's 2016 presidential campaign. Timmer is a noted redistricting expert, was executive director of the Michigan Republican Party, and was an influential consultant and advisor to GOP politicians.



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Greg Minchak

Lincoln Democracy Institute Communications Advisor, Greg Minchak, has two decades of experience at the intersection of communications and public policy. Greg has extensive history running communications teams for campaigns, national nonprofits, and trade consortiums. He has worked on multiple federal and state-wide campaigns, including two Democratic Presidential campaigns. He managed the policy development process for Steyer 2020 and is the former Director of Strategic Communications for the National League of Cities.



Andrew Wilson

Senior Research Analyst for the Lincoln Democracy Institute, Andrew Wilson, has worked closely with the author of the Lincoln Democracy Index. He has played an instrumental role in LDI's corporate accountability efforts and democracy issue targeting. Wilson worked overseas in Albania for Prime Minister Edi Rama's re-election campaign. He also served as researcher and liaison to Gideon Sa'ar's 2021 Israeli Prime Minister bid. Wilson started his career in politics working for legislators in the Florida House of Representatives and worked on a variety of statewide elected officials in the state.



Mary Slowinski

Research Associate Mary Slowinski is an undergraduate student at Northwestern University studying Organizational Analysis with minors in Legal Studies and Political Science. She joined LDI's team after a spending a year working for the Lincoln Project's political team. Slowinski has previously worked on campaigns for Joe Biden, Pete Buttigieg, Jan Schakowsky, and Alexi Giannoulias.

