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Constitution Day Event 2020

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The Constitution: Why our Shared Values are Important

CONSTITUTION DAY EVENT: SEP 15, 2020

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Themes of Presentation

- ▶ **Unprecedented Discussion of Possible Major Disruption of US Democracy.**
 - ▶ From Trump's speculation on not respecting election result
 - ▶ Trump Pol Appointee calling for armed insurrection
 - ▶ Public doubt of outcome: 39% not confident of fair election
- ▶ **US version of Democracy depends on given level of shared values**
- ▶ **Constitution does not produce "shared values":**
- ▶ **What does?:**
 - ▶ 1) political practice & leadership does;
 - ▶ 2) outside events do

This Is Democrats' Doomsday Scenario for Election Night

What if early results in swing states on Nov. 3 show President Trump ahead, and he declares victory before heavily Democratic mail-in votes, which he has falsely linked with fraud, are fully counted?

Trump refuses to commit to accepting November election results

US president attacked Democratic challenger Joe Biden who has built up a substantial lead according to polls.

FiveThirtyEight

19 Jul 2020



Politics

Sports

Science

Podcasts

Video

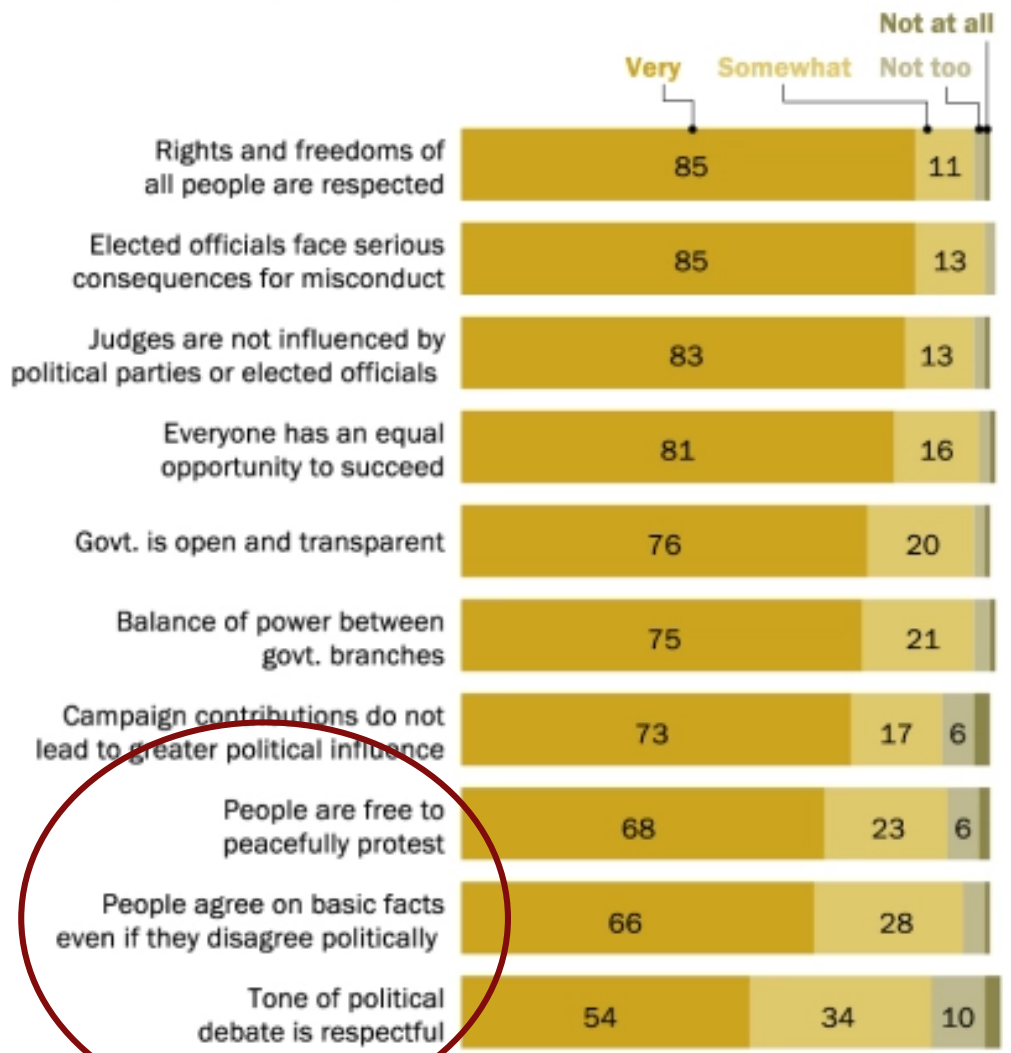
Our 2020 Election Forecast

What If Trump Loses And Won't Leave?

By [Geoffrey Skelley](#)
Filed under [2020 Election](#)
Published Sep. 14, 2020

Sizable majorities say several democratic values and principles are 'very important' for the country

% who say it is ___ important for the country that ...



Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

Shared Values on Basic Importance of Democratic Governance

** Constitution makes many of these possible...but practice is key*

Problems in practice

- ▶ Polarization → view of other partisans as “enemy” and “bad” for country
- ▶ Elite Polarization: more severe and extreme → cues to public
- ▶ 2020 Context of COVID & recession heightens tension & sense of stakes: Exhibit A = U.S. Congress

[Pew 2017 Study: Support for Democ:](#)

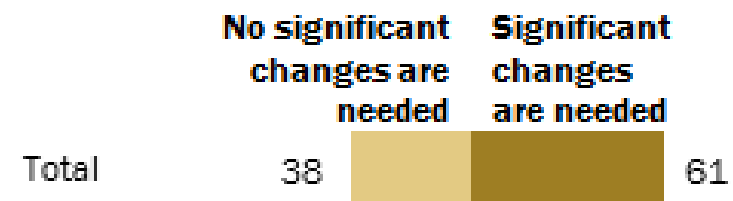
- ✓ 51% described themselves as “dissatisfied” with how American democracy is working,
- ✓ 46% of Americans open to forms of government other than representative democracy, including rule by a strong leader or by groups of experts.

FOR RELEASE OCTOBER 10, 2019

Partisan Antipathy: More Intense, More Personal

Majority of Republicans say Democrats are ‘more unpatriotic’ than other Americans

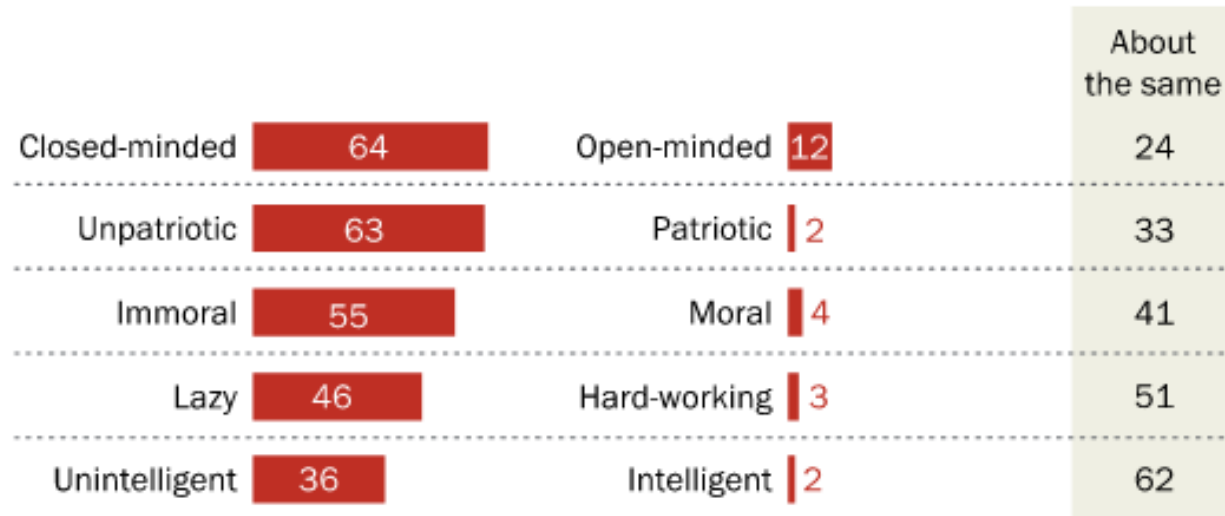
Thinking about the fundamental design and structure of American government, % who say that ...



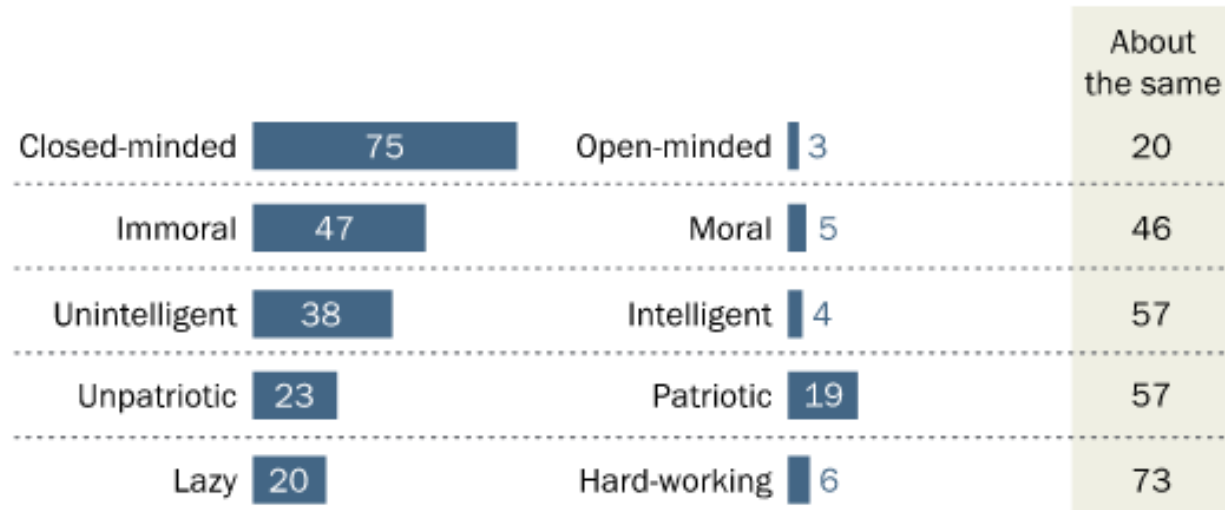
Polarization: views of the other...

Most partisans view the other side as 'closed-minded'; Republicans see Democrats as 'unpatriotic'

% of Republicans who say Democrats are more ____ than other Americans



% of Democrats who say Republicans are more ____ than other Americans



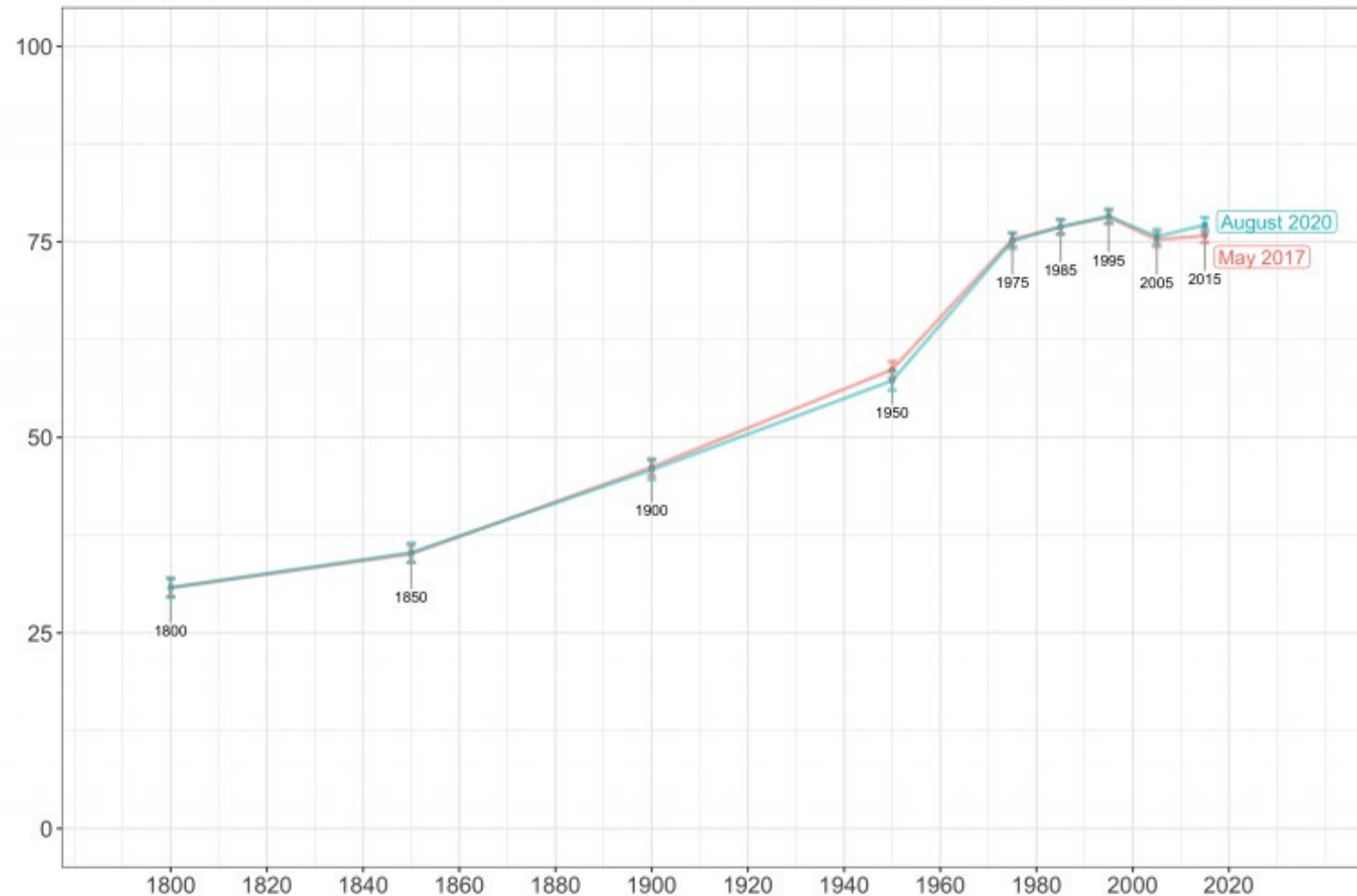
Notes: Partisans do not include independents. No response percentages not shown.

“Strength” of US Democracy: Historical Rating

How important are shared values to “improving” our Constitution & democracy: very important, but..

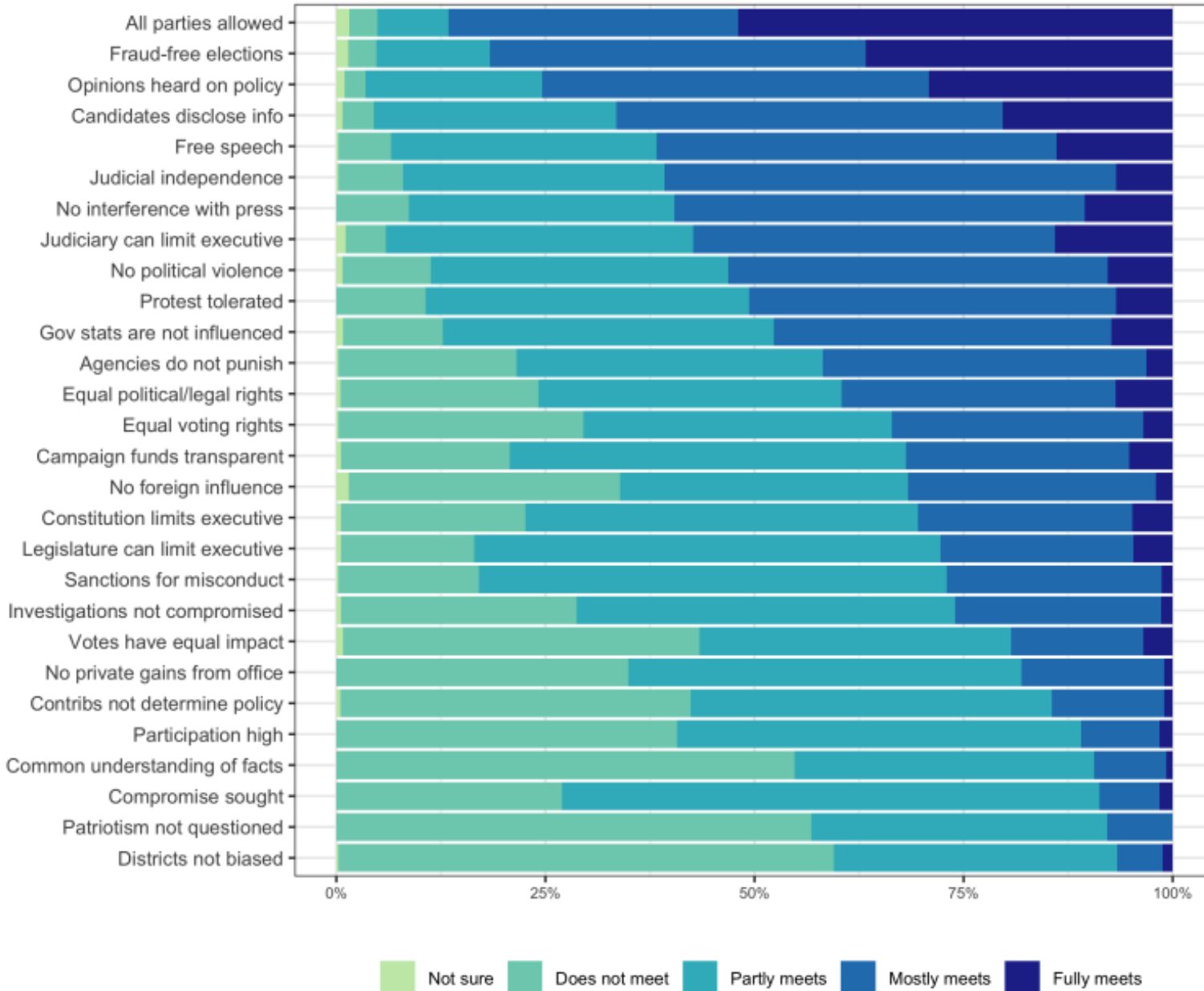
Biggest gains come from
“narrowing” opportunities to block
reform

Historic ratings of U.S. democracy among experts



Ratings of U.S. democracy by experts surveyed by Bright Line Watch (May 2017 and August 2020) on a scale from 0 (least democratic) to 100 (most democratic). Vertical error bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Performance of U.S. democracy: August 2020 expert survey



Democratic principles are in descending order of % experts who rate statement as "mostly meets" or "fully meets."

“Performance” of US Democracy

Views of Political Science & related experts on how well democracy functions

-- “Fully/Mostly Meets”: 1st amendment principles

-- “Does not/Partly” Meets: shared values???

Scale created from these Items

Elections

- Elections are conducted, ballots counted, and winners determined without pervasive fraud or manipulation
- Citizens have access to information about candidates that is relevant to how they would govern
- The geographic boundaries of electoral districts do not systematically advantage any particular political party
- Information about the sources of campaign funding is available to the public
- Public policy is not determined by large campaign contributions
- Elections are free from foreign influence

Voting

- All adult citizens have equal opportunity to vote
- All votes have equal impact on election outcomes
- Voter participation in elections is generally high

Rights

- All adult citizens enjoy the same legal and political rights
- Parties and candidates are not barred due to their political beliefs and ideologies
- Government protects individuals' right to engage in unpopular speech or expression
- Government protects individuals' right to engage in peaceful protest
- Citizens can make their opinions heard in open debate about policies that are under consideration

Protections

- Government does not interfere with journalists or news organizations
- Government effectively prevents private actors from engaging in politically-motivated violence or intimidation
- Government agencies are not used to monitor, attack, or punish political opponents

Accountability

- Government officials are legally sanctioned for misconduct
- Government officials do not use public office for private gain
- Law enforcement investigations of public officials or their associates are free from political influence or interference
- Government statistics and data are produced by experts who are not influenced by political considerations

Institutions

- Executive authority cannot be expanded beyond constitutional limits
- The legislature is able to effectively limit executive power
- The judiciary is able to effectively limit executive power
- The elected branches respect judicial independence

Discourse

- Even when there are disagreements about ideology or policy, political leaders generally share a common understanding of relevant facts
- Elected officials seek compromise with political opponents
- Political competition occurs without criticism of opponents' loyalty or patriotism

To measure perceived democratic performance, the survey asked, “How well do the following statements describe the United States as of today?” Each respondent was then presented with 10 statements of principle, randomly drawn from the set above, and offered the following response options:

- The U.S. does not meet this standard
- The U.S. partly meets this standard
- The U.S. mostly meets this standard
- The U.S. fully meets this standard
- Not sure