

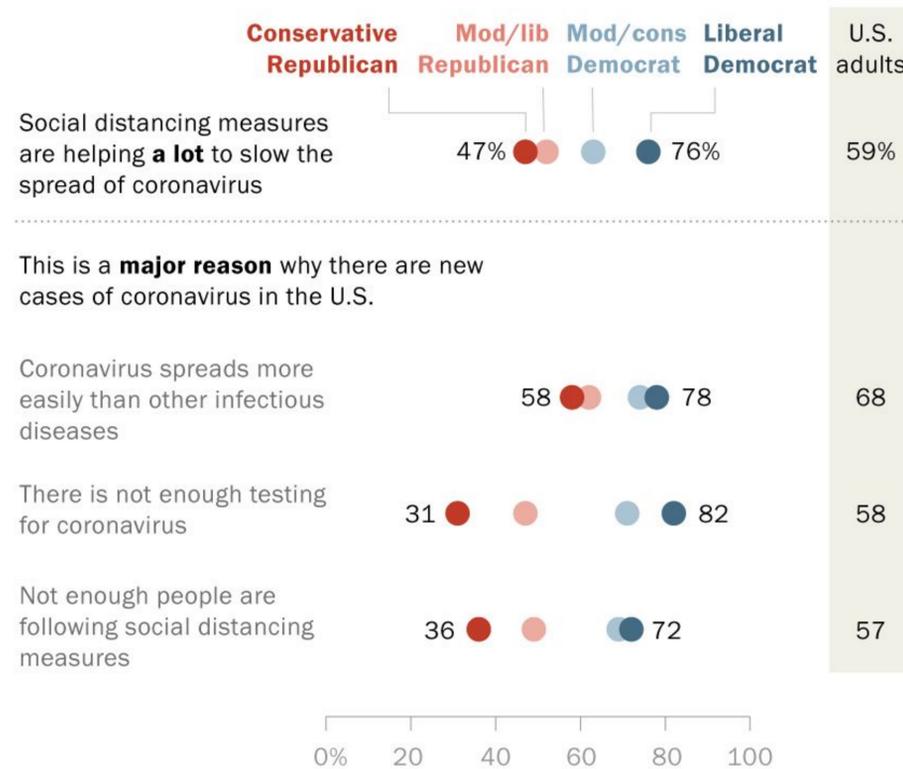
# Political Partisanship Impact on U.S. COVID-19 Policy

## REPUBLICAN RESPONSES

- Elite Response: During the beginning of the pandemic, Republican elites (including former President Trump) made public statements against the seriousness of the pandemic to the public health of the United States. Due to this cues were sent to their constituents regarding how to perceive the virus.
- Republicans overwhelmingly were more likely to reject recommendations from scientists about the severity of COVID-19, and about steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- In Republican states, there were less stringent COVID-19 regulations. Most responded that mask mandates did not help and that they were not going to participate in wearing a mask.
- The majority of Republican constituents did not believe that COVID-19 was a deadly disease and overall perceived less of a threat from COVID-19.
- Greater resistance from the Republican party for possibility of vaccine mandates and COVID-19 vaccinations in general. Many Republican elites publicly voiced against vaccine mandates.
- As the pandemic progressed, there was an increase in Republican distrust for news coverage and information regarding COVID-19. Less attention was given to COVID-19 information from almost every news source.

## Wide partisan differences on the role of testing and spread of coronavirus

% of U.S. adults who say the following



Note: Respondents who gave other responses or who did not give an answer are not shown. Republicans and Democrats include those who "lean" toward the parties.

Source: Survey conducted April 29-May 5 2020.

"Trust in Medical Scientists Has Grown in U.S., but Mainly Among Democrats"

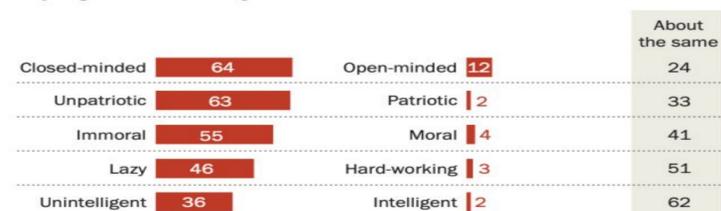
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## DEMOCRAT RESPONSES

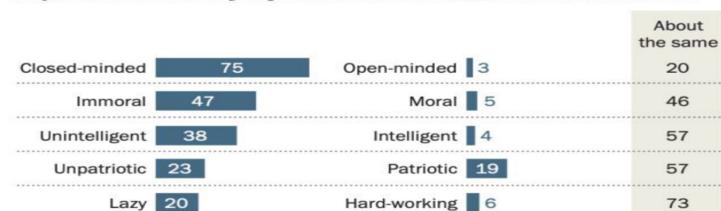
- Elite Response: At the start of the pandemic, Democratic elites were giving statements about their fear of the pandemic and the importance of public health. There was a large push from Democratic elites to begin implementing government policy and regulations to protect the American public from the outbreak.
- Democrats were more likely to accept the information and recommendations from scientists and the CDC regarding the threat COVID-19 posed to public health.
- In Democratic states there was a greater desire to continue and increase COVID-19 regulations. The majority of Democrats responded that they felt safer wearing a mask around others.
- A large majority of Democrats believed since the beginning of the pandemic that COVID-19 was a serious threat to public health.
- Due to the strong belief in the threat of COVID-19, the majority of Democrats responded that they were vaccinated as soon as they could have been and they supported vaccination mandates.
- In Gallup survey, 87% of Democrats responded that they paid close attention to new COVID-19 information on at least one news source. The Democratic elites encouraged their constituents to be informed on COVID-19 information.

## 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 leaners. No answer responses not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 3-15, 2019.

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## Partisan Polarization

- Since 2016 there has been a rising consensus in the United States that the two major political parties are growing farther apart. Most Americans today feel as though they have nothing in common with their opposite party. Although this may be how the majority of constituents feel, it isn't entirely a matter of political polarization. Instead, political identification is reaching further into social identities of Americans which is creating a hostile political environment.
- The media environment in the United States today has also furthered the perception of polarization due to the numerous diverse media sources. Partisans today have the ability to pick and choose which news to listen to and which news to turn off creating less opportunity for exposure to different opinions and ideas.
- Motivated Reasoning → "the process by which individuals rationalize their choices in a way that is consistent with what they prefer to believe, rather than what is actually true"; members of each political party exaggerate the differences between their party and the other party. This psychological process creates a greater perception of polarization and leads each party to have a greater animosity towards the other party, furthering polarization.