



# State of the Facts 2020: Elections & Information Trends

## State of the Facts Poll 2020: Elections

- 48% pay close attention to information on elections and politics, but they are often unsure where to go for information they trust.
- 40% find it difficult to know if what the candidates in the upcoming presidential election are saying is true or not.
- 51% feel Trump's campaign messages are rarely or never based in facts, compared to 39% who feel the same about the Biden campaign.
- 11% are having a difficult time finding factual information on how to register to vote, and 16% say the same about how to cast their ballot this year.
- Nearly three-quarters are at least somewhat concerned about foreign interference in the November election.

## State of the Facts Poll 2020: Information Trends

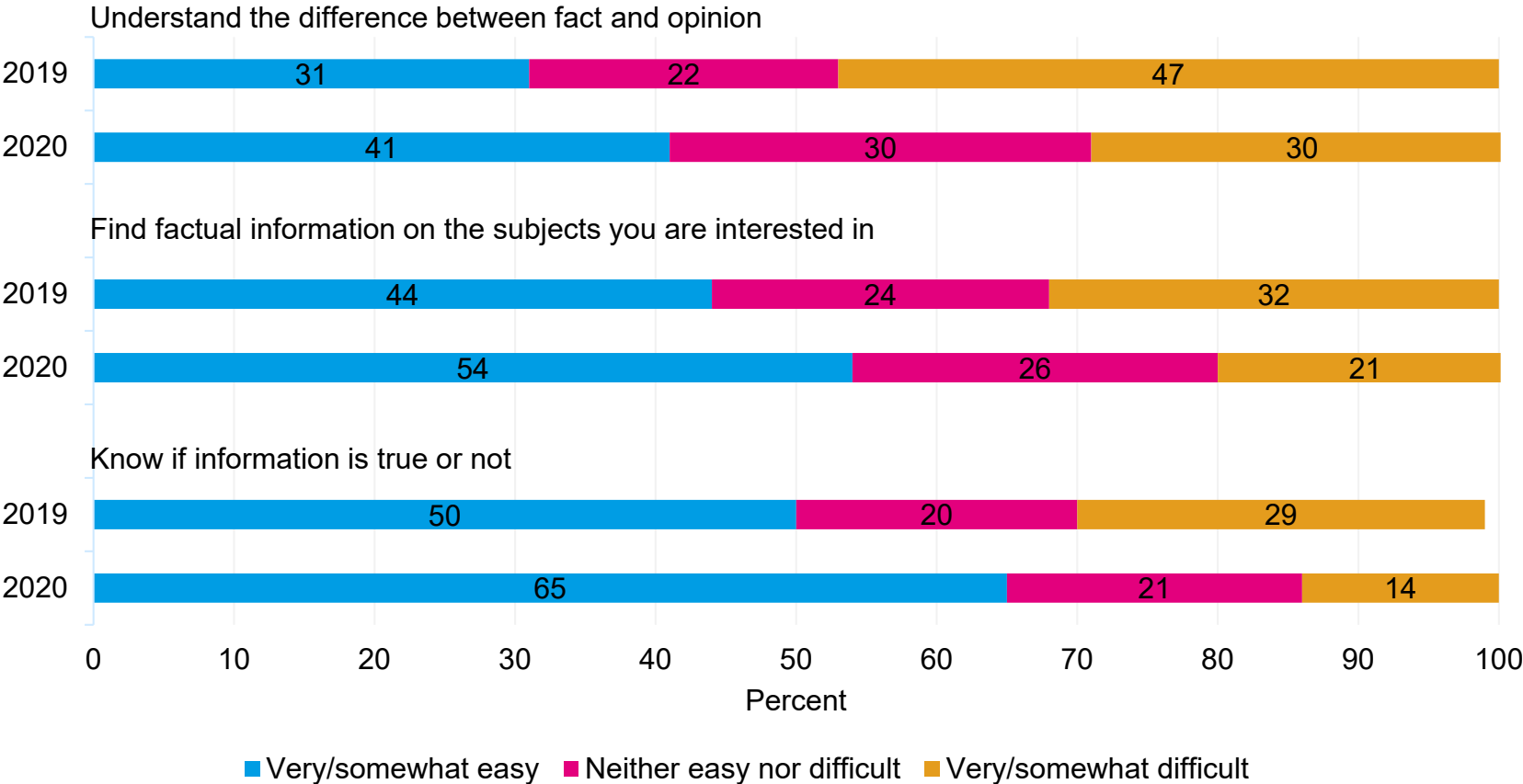
- Compared to 2019, more Americans now believe a reliance on different facts is a cause of political division in the country.
- 83% consider the spread of misinformation a major problem.
- Americans are getting information about the government from a variety of sources. Daily use of social media as a source decreased considerably since 2019 (37% 2020 vs. 54% 2019).
- Trust in government information on most topics remains low.
- 59% feel the political beliefs of the president have a lot of influence on the information provided by the government.
- When it comes to forming opinions on an issue, people's values (78%), data (73%), and personal experience (68%) top the list of important factors.

# The State of the Facts



# Americans say it is easier for them to determine fact from opinion, find factual information, and know if information is true compared to 2019.

## How easy or difficult is it for you to...



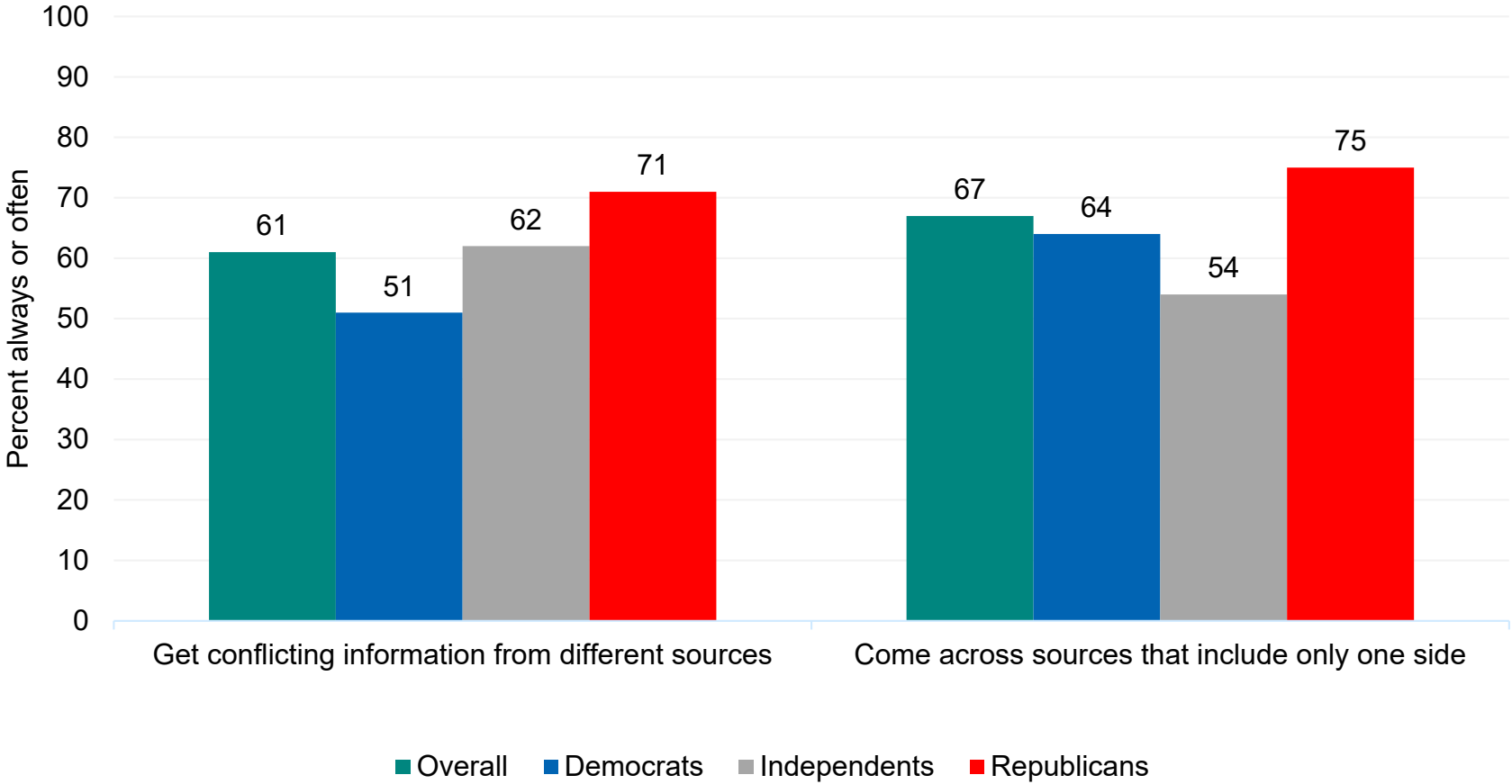
Next, these days, how easy or difficult is it for you to ...

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts polls conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults and September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# About two-thirds of Americans get conflicting information from different sources and come across lopsided sources when gathering information.

## How often do you feel like you...



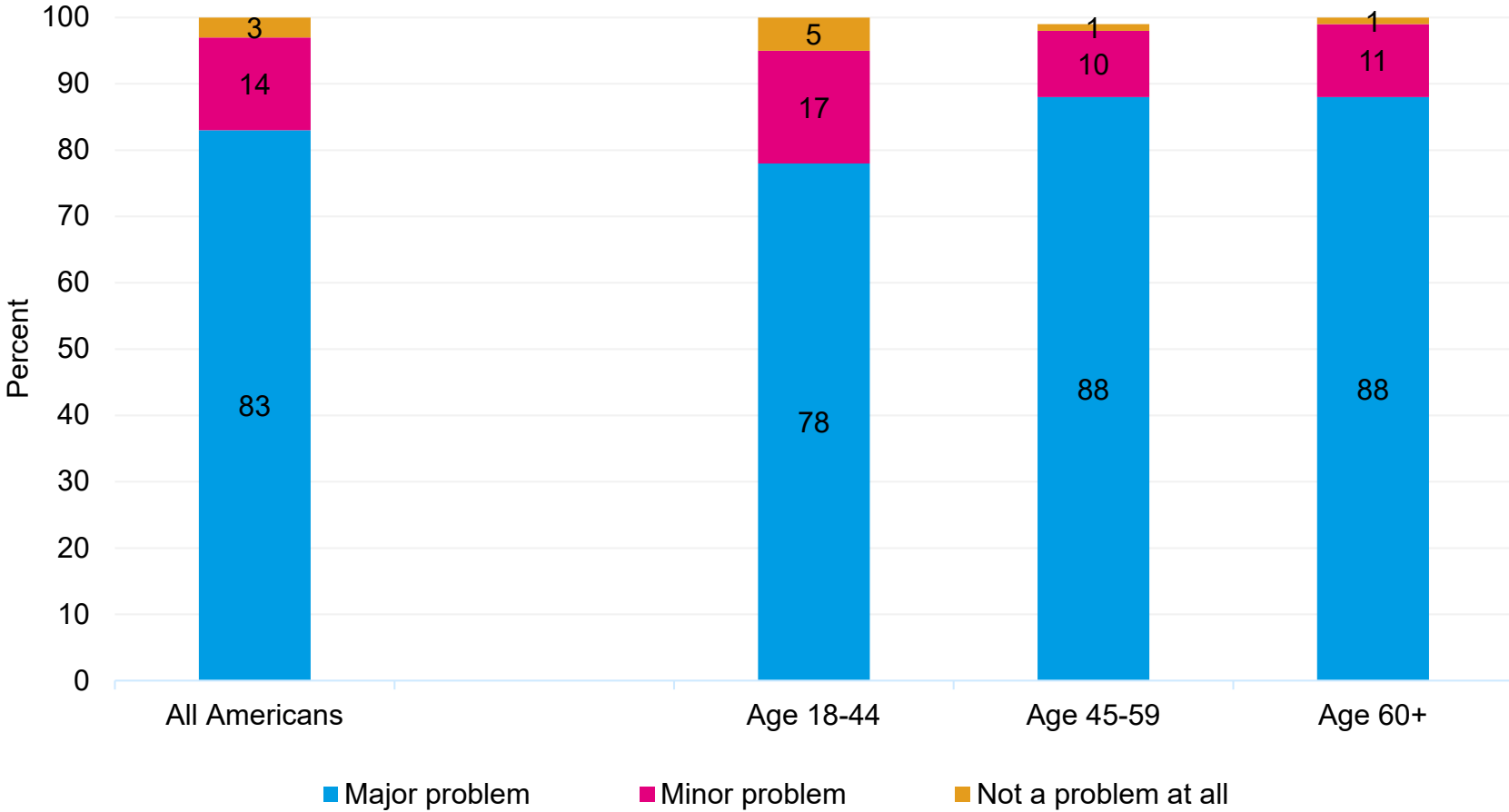
*How often do you feel like you ...*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# Most Americans say the spread of misinformation is a major problem, but those age 18-44 are less likely to think so.

## Do you think the spread of misinformation is a ...



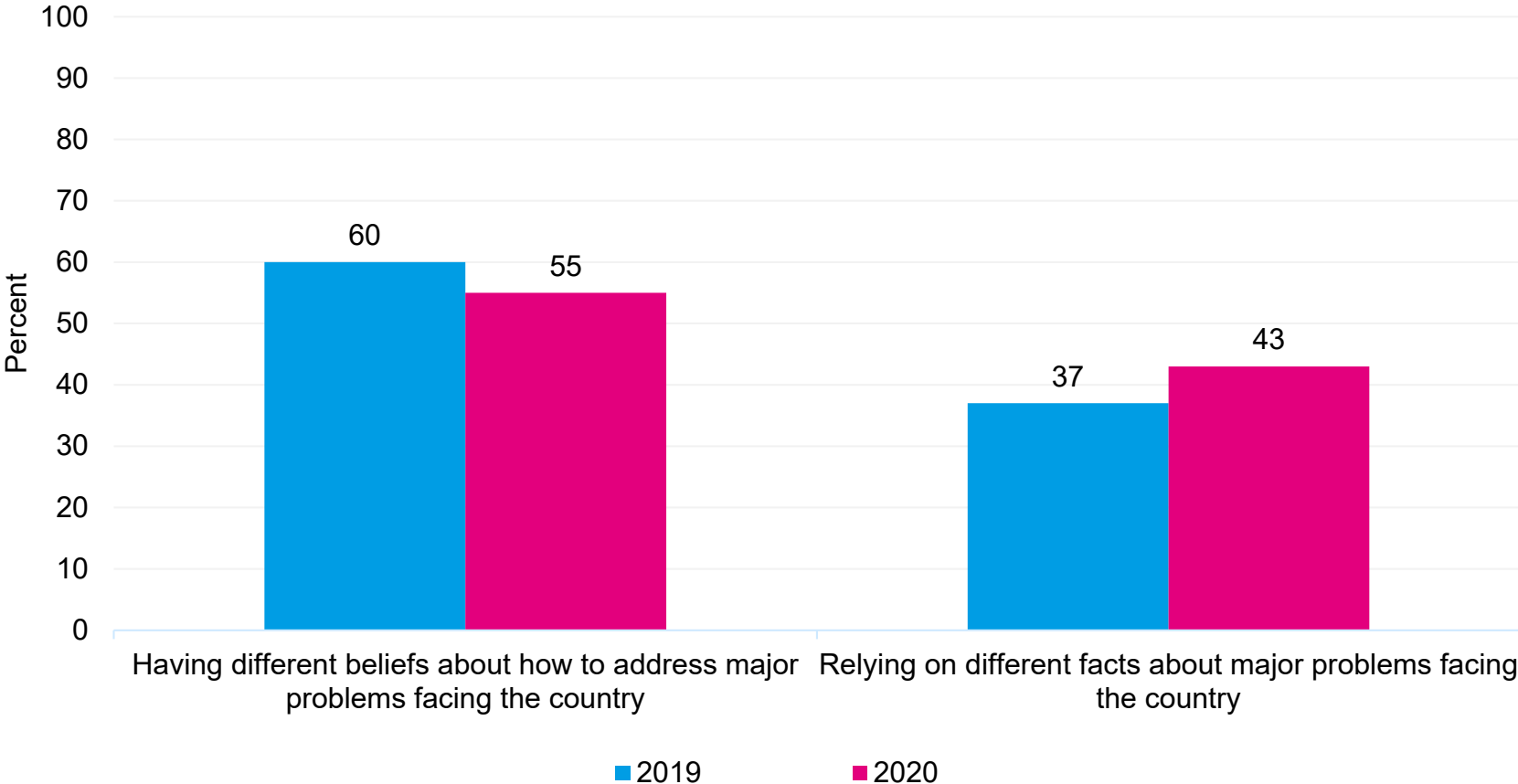
*When it comes to getting information about the government, do you think the spread of misinformation is a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem at all?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



Compared to 2019, more Americans now believe a reliance on different facts is a cause of political division in the country.

### Which comes closest to your view?



*Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right? Political division in the United States is more a result of Americans ...*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts polls conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults and September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



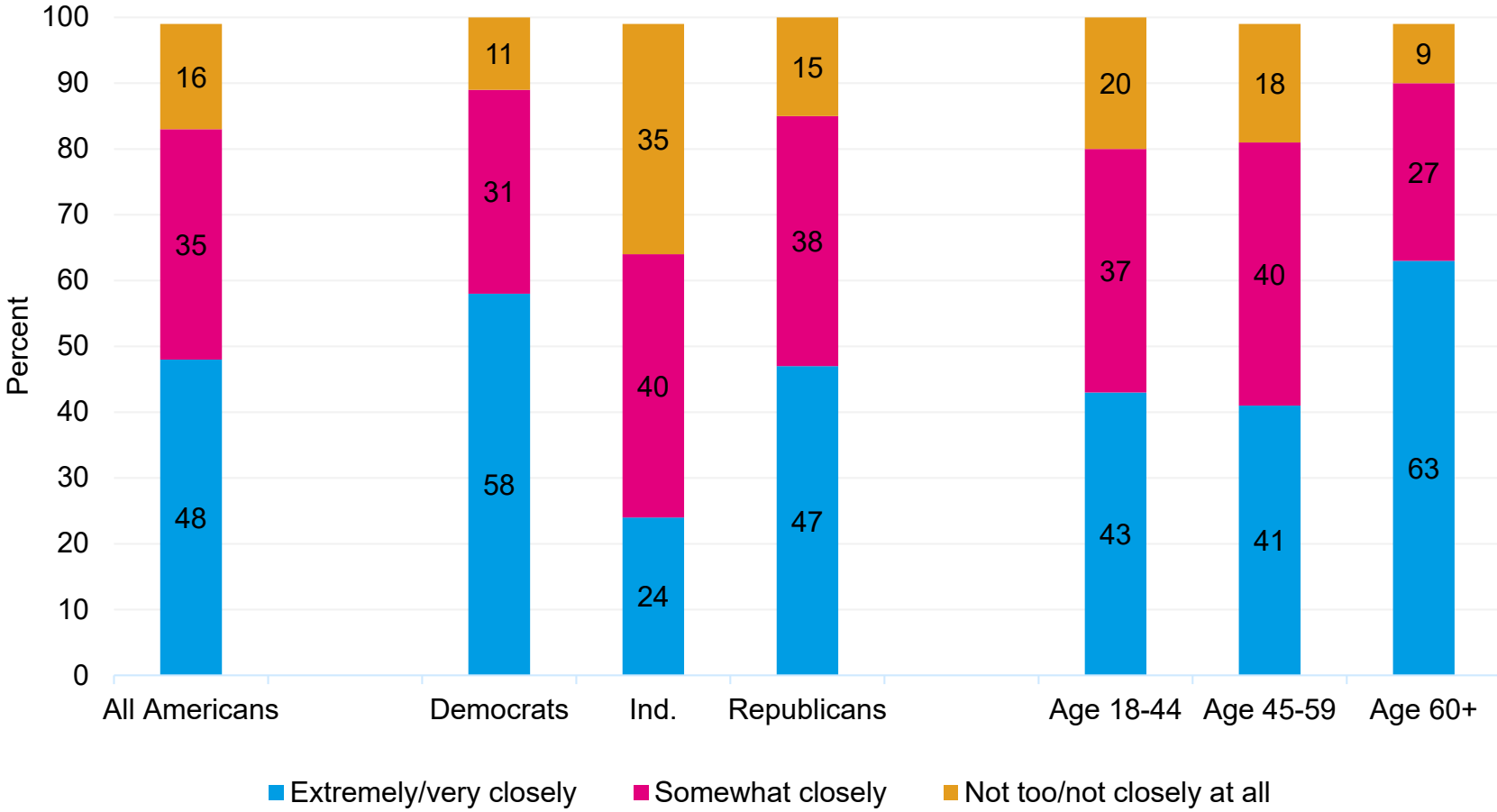


# Facts in the 2020 Election



# About half of Americans closely follow elections and politics, with Democrats, Republicans, and older Americans most likely to do so.

## How closely do you pay attention to elections and politics?



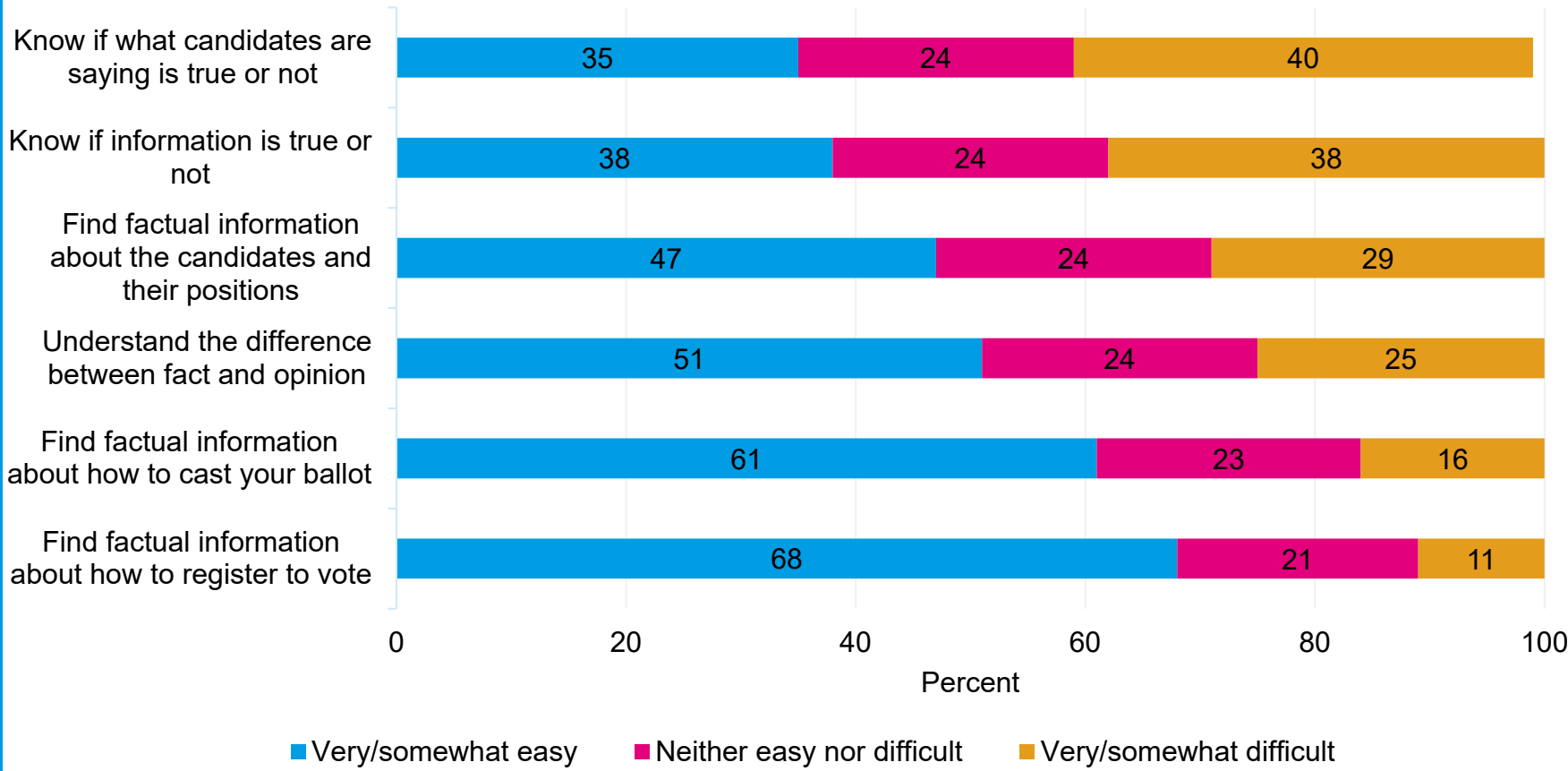
Next, how closely do you pay attention to information about each of the following topics? [Elections and politics]

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



When it comes to election information, about 4 in 10 find it difficult to know what the candidates are saying or if information is true.

### When it comes to information about the upcoming presidential election, how easy or difficult is it for you to...?



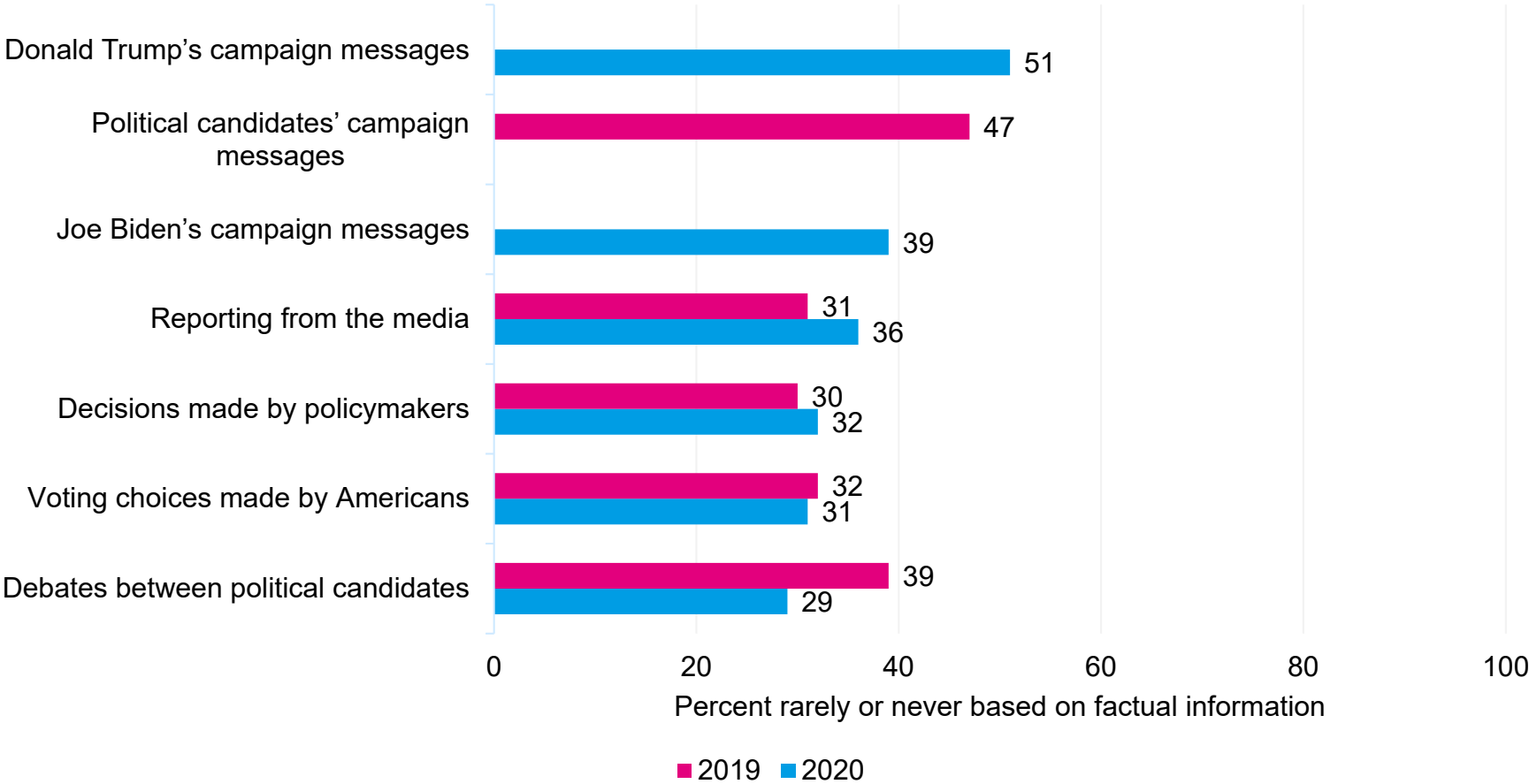
*When it comes to information about the upcoming presidential election, how easy or difficult is it for you ...*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# A majority of Americans overall feel President Trump's campaign messages are not grounded in facts.

## How often do you think each of the following are based on factual information?



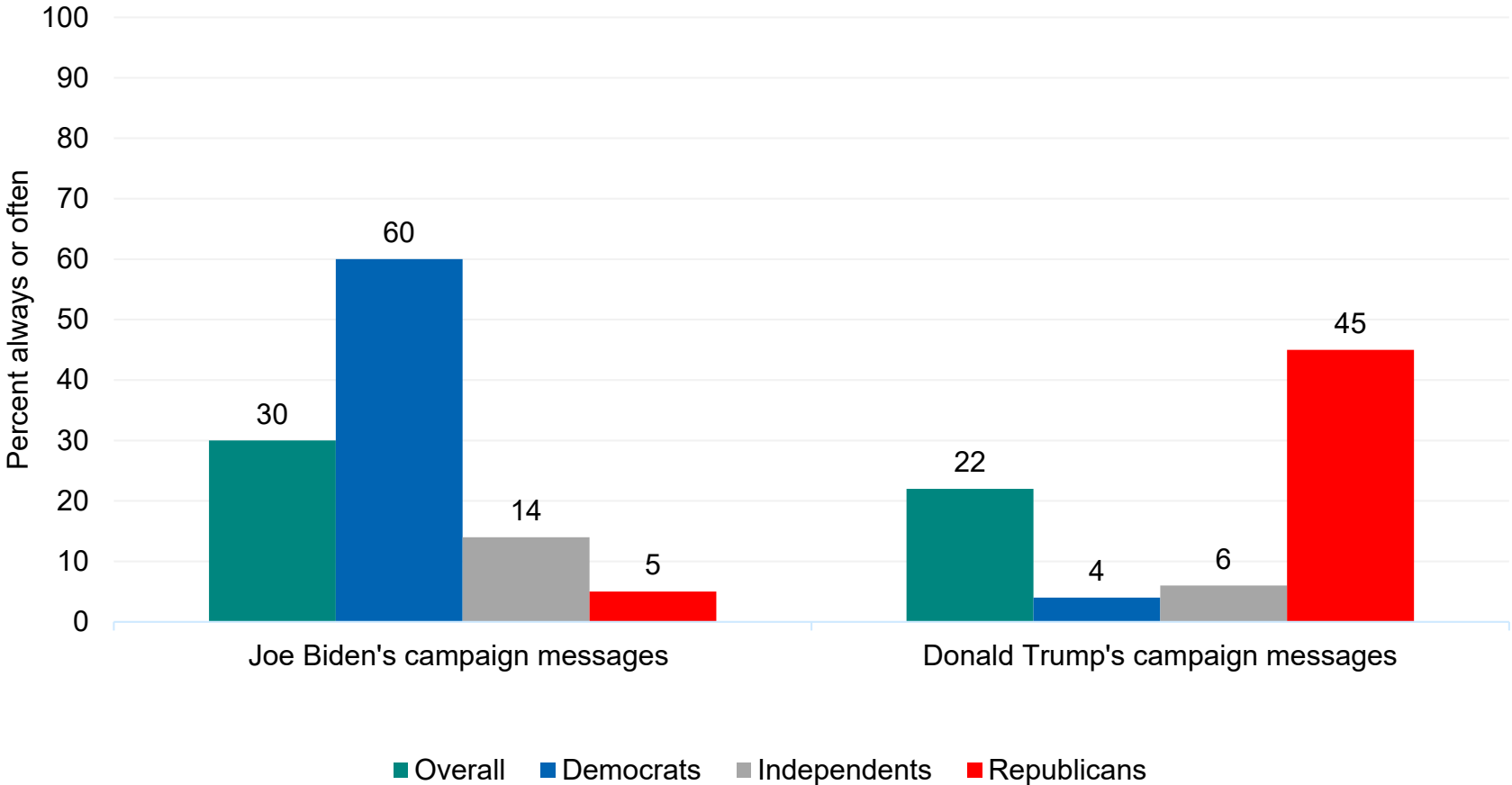
*When it comes to information about the upcoming presidential election, how easy or difficult is it for you ...*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts polls conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults and September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# More Democrats say Joe Biden's campaign messages are always or often grounded in facts compared to how Republicans feel about Donald Trump.

## How often do you think each of the following are based on factual information?



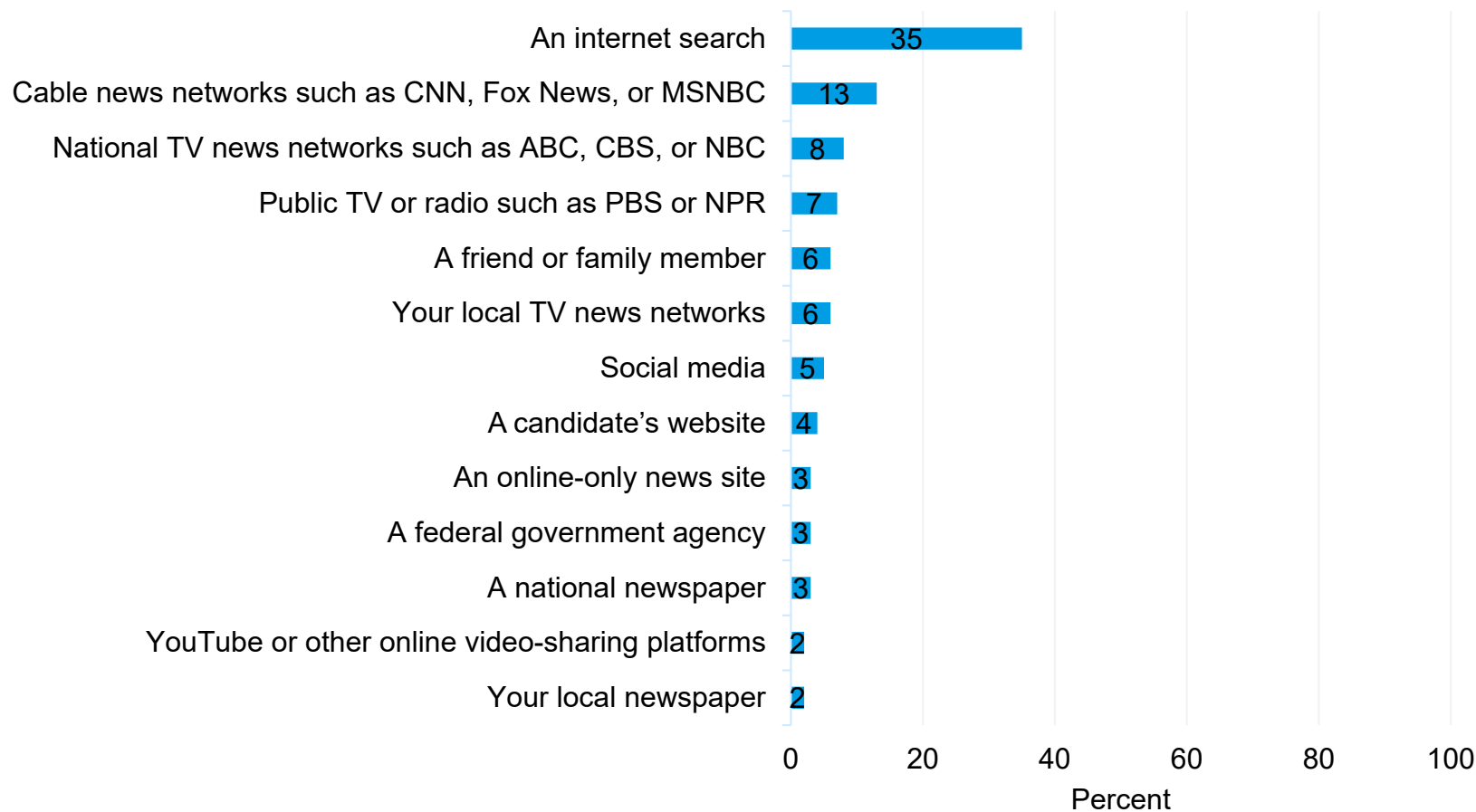
*When it comes to information about the upcoming presidential election, how easy or difficult is it for you ...*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



When trying to determine if news about the election is true, an internet search is the most common approach.

## Where do you generally go first to check if news about the election is true or not?



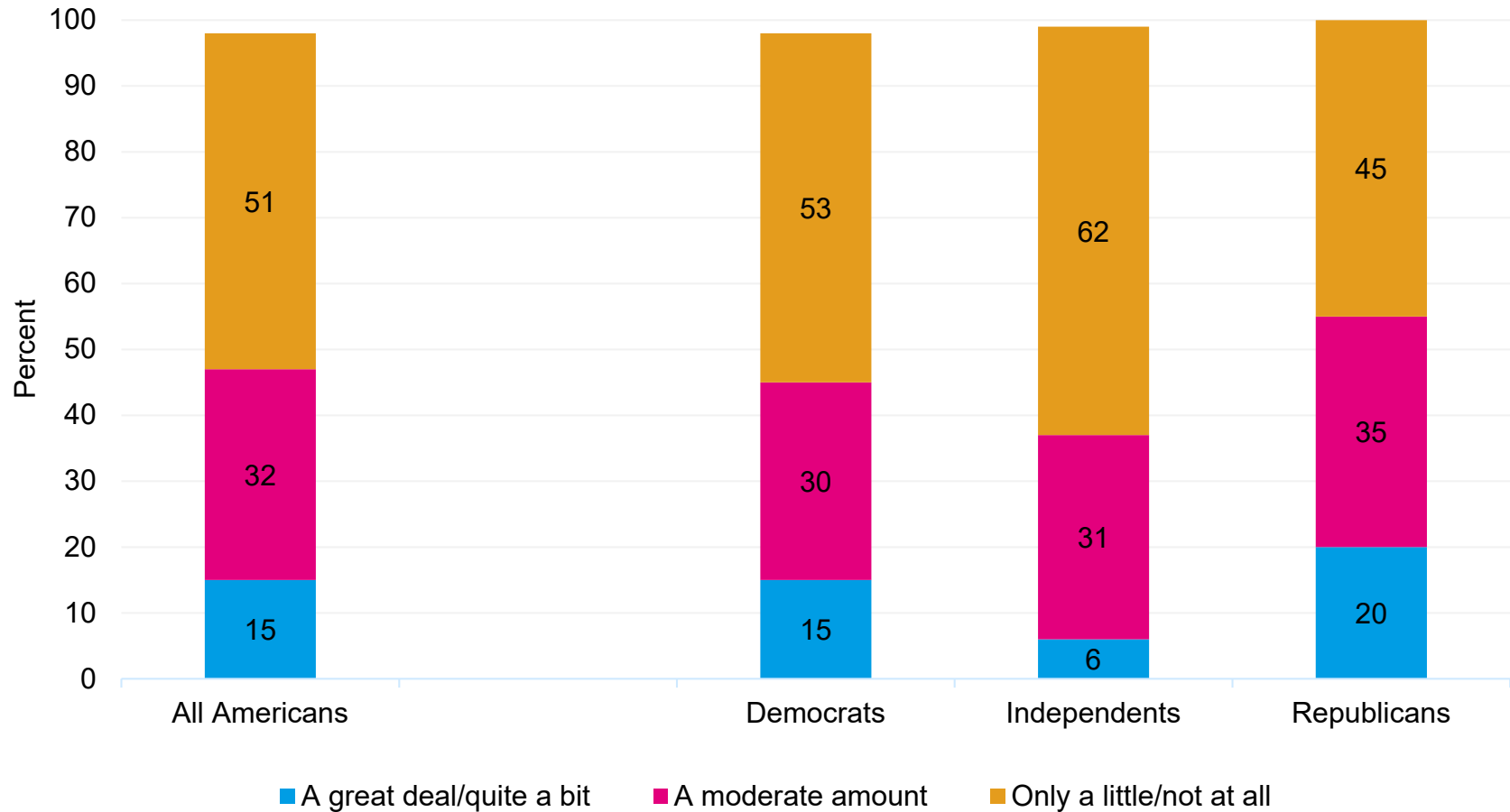
*When you see news about the upcoming presidential election and you want to find out if it is true or not, where do you generally go first to check?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



However, few trust information from the federal government on elections. Political independents are least trusting.

## How much do you trust information from the federal government about elections and politics?



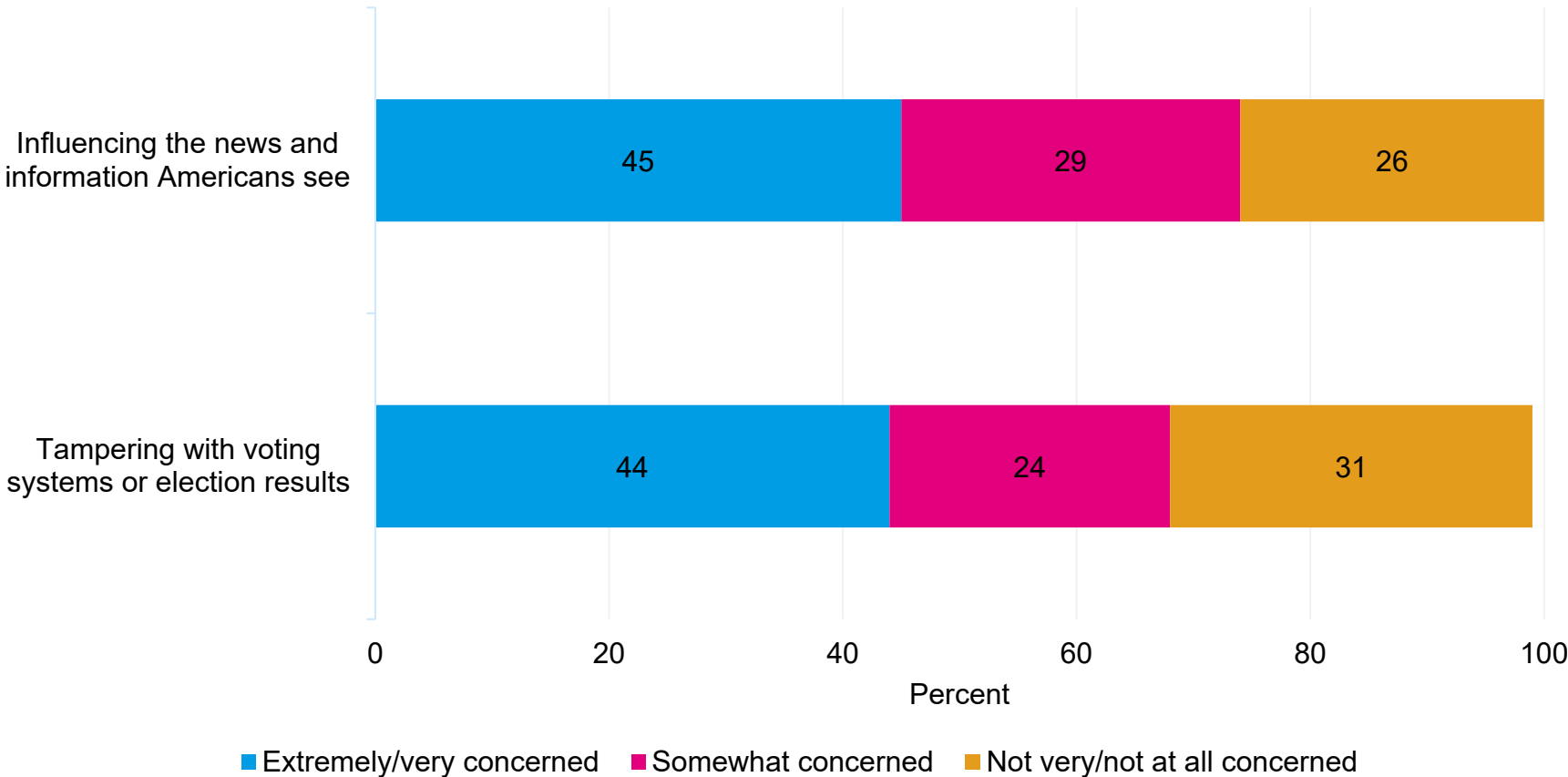
*How much do you trust information from the federal government about the following topics? [Elections and politics]*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# Concerns about foreign government interference in the 2020 election are high.

## How concerned are you about foreign governments interfering with the election by...



*How concerned are you about foreign governments interfering with the 2020 presidential election by ...*

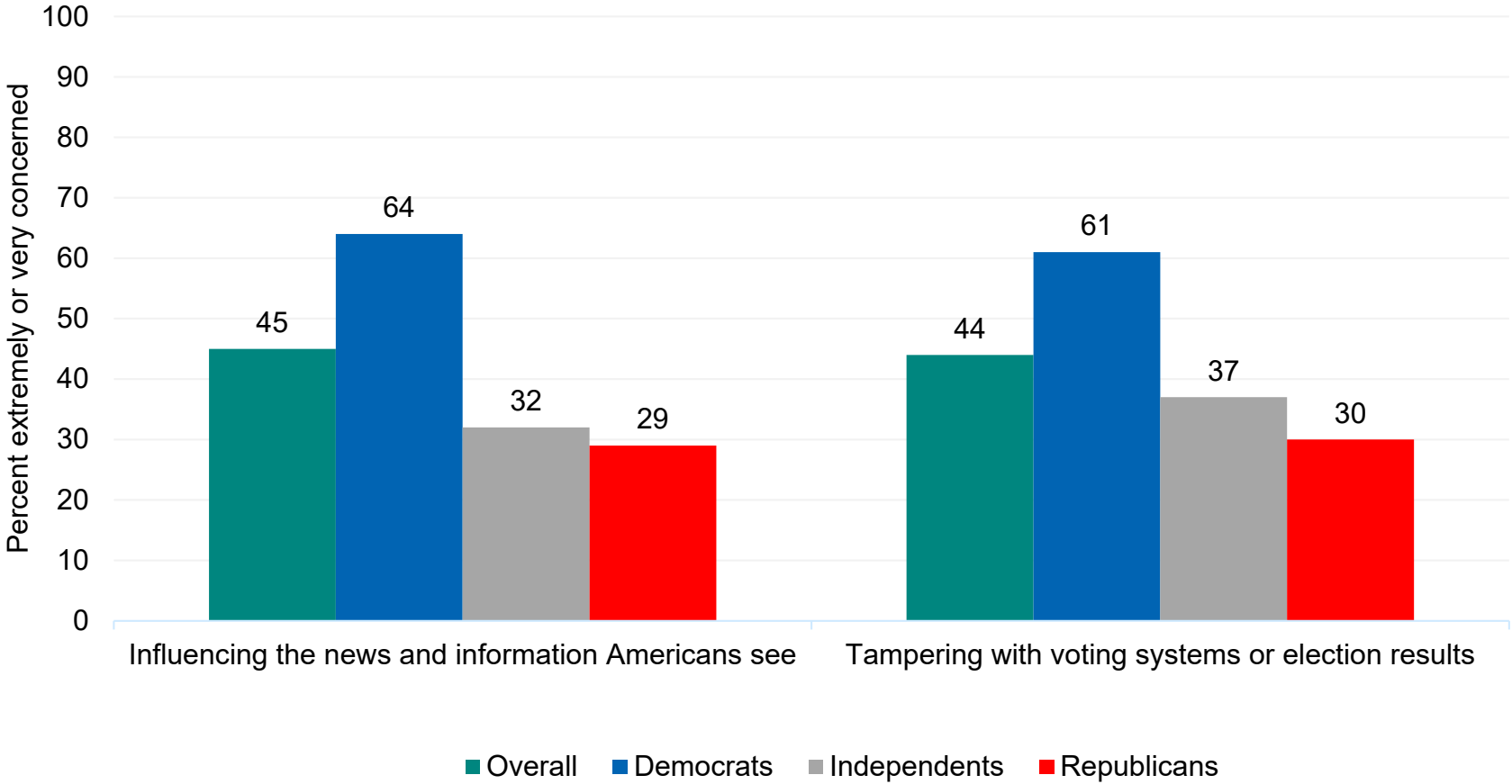
Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults





# Democrats are more concerned than Republicans or independents about foreign interference in the election.

## How concerned are you about foreign governments interfering with the election by...



*How concerned are you about foreign governments interfering with the 2020 presidential election by ...*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults

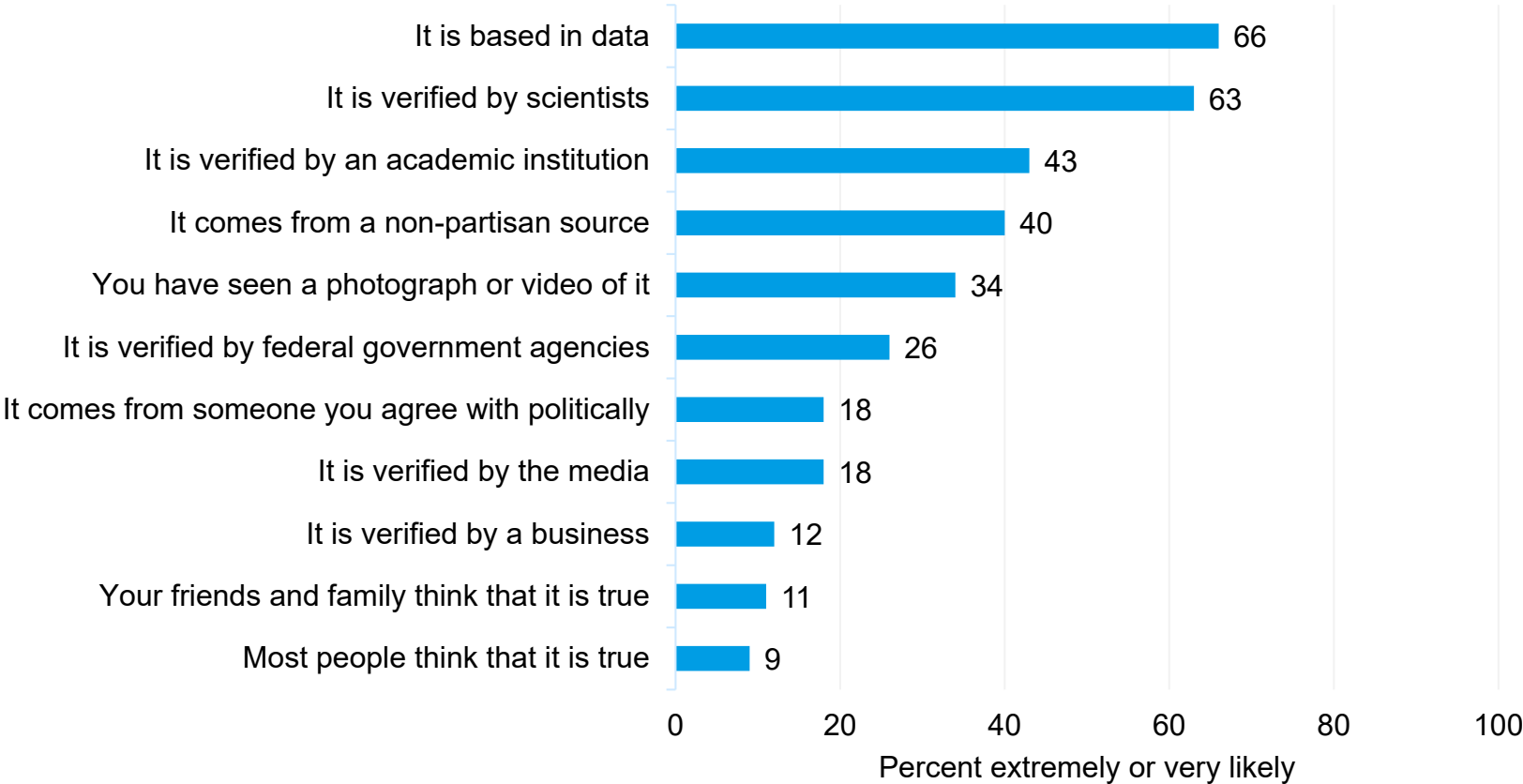


# How Americans make sense of the information



# Americans are most likely to consider information factual if it is based in data and verified by scientists.

## How likely are you to consider information factual if...



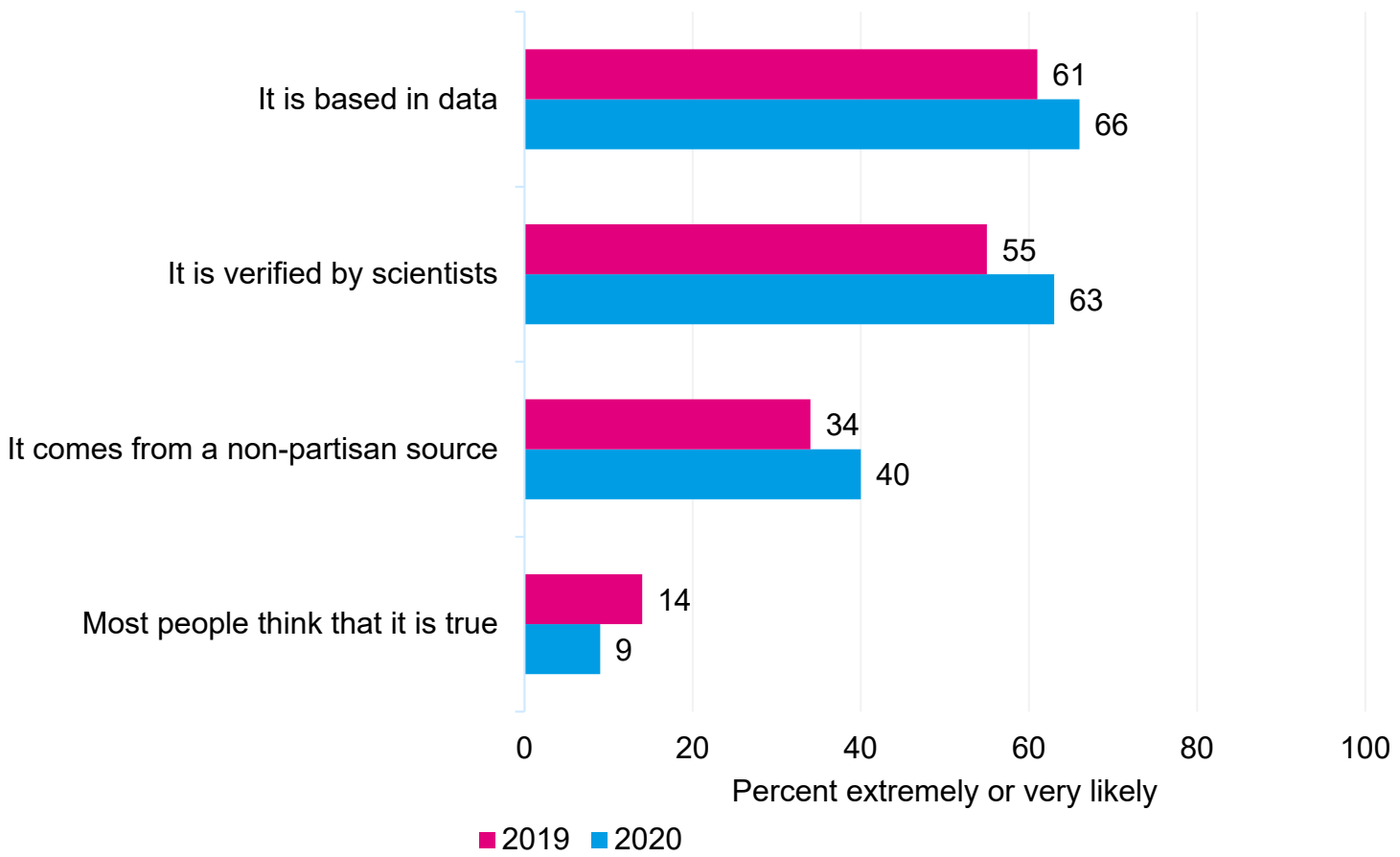
*How likely are you to consider information factual if it has each of the following characteristics?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults.



Since last year, more Americans consider information factual when it's based in data, is verified by scientists, or comes from non-partisan sources.

### How likely are you to consider information factual if...



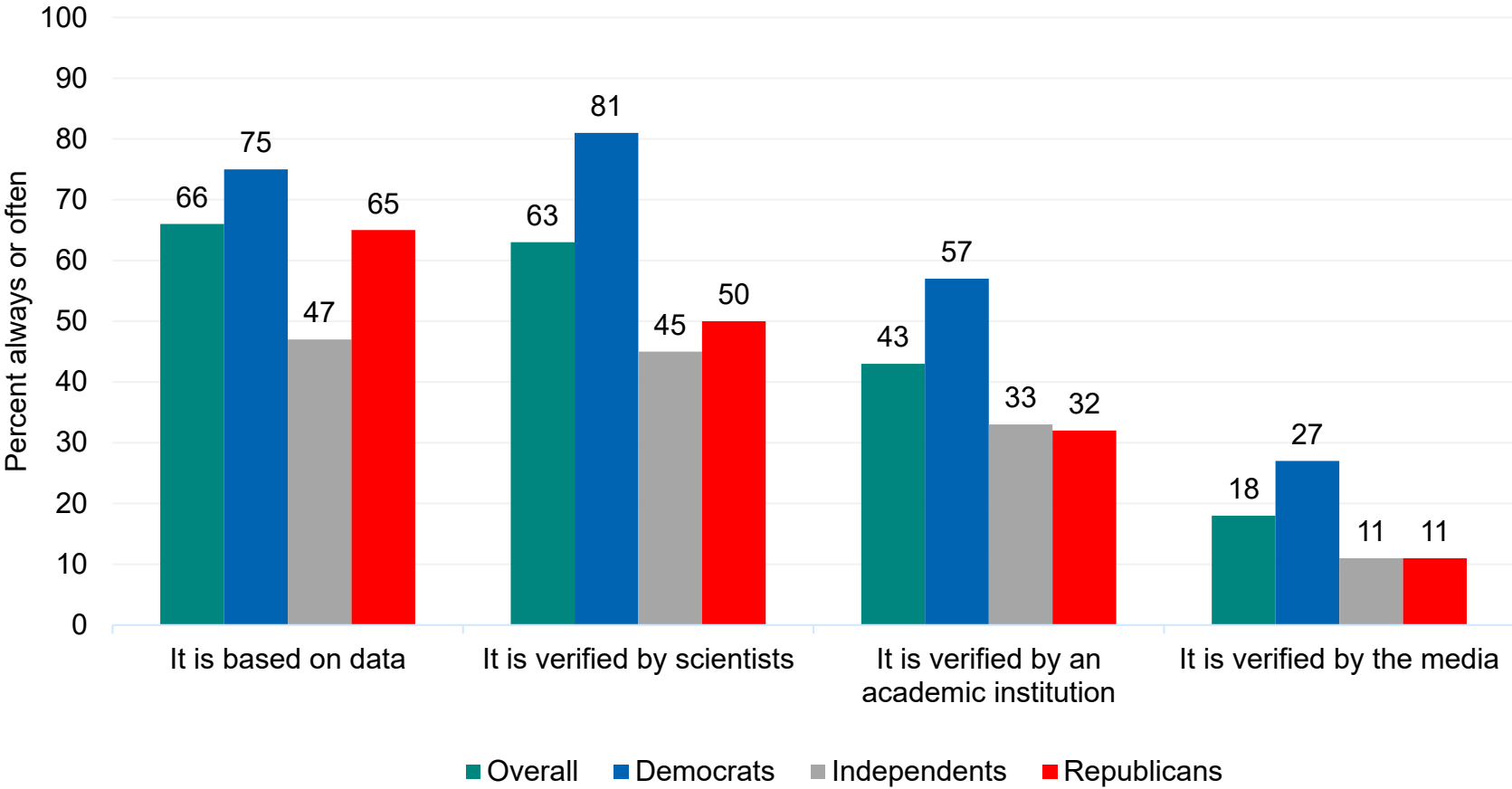
*How likely are you to consider information factual if it has each of the following characteristics?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults and October 15-28, 2019 with 1,032 adults



Democrats are more likely than Republicans and independents to say verification from scientists, academics, and the media, and being based in data are important.

### How likely are you to consider information factual if...



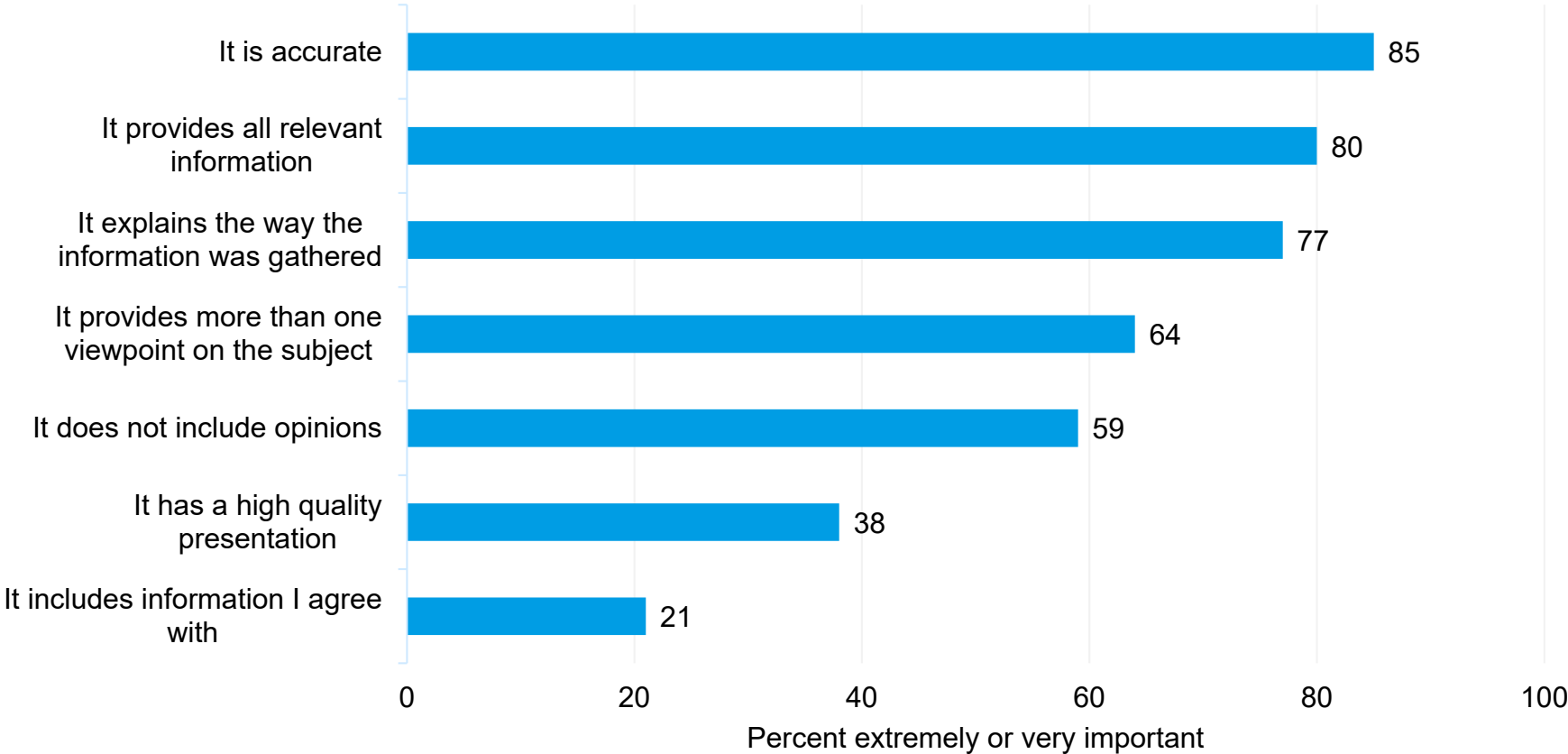
*How likely are you to consider information factual if it has each of the following characteristics?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# Accuracy and completeness of information matter most in assessing factual information.

## Thinking about information you consider factual, how important is each of the following factors?



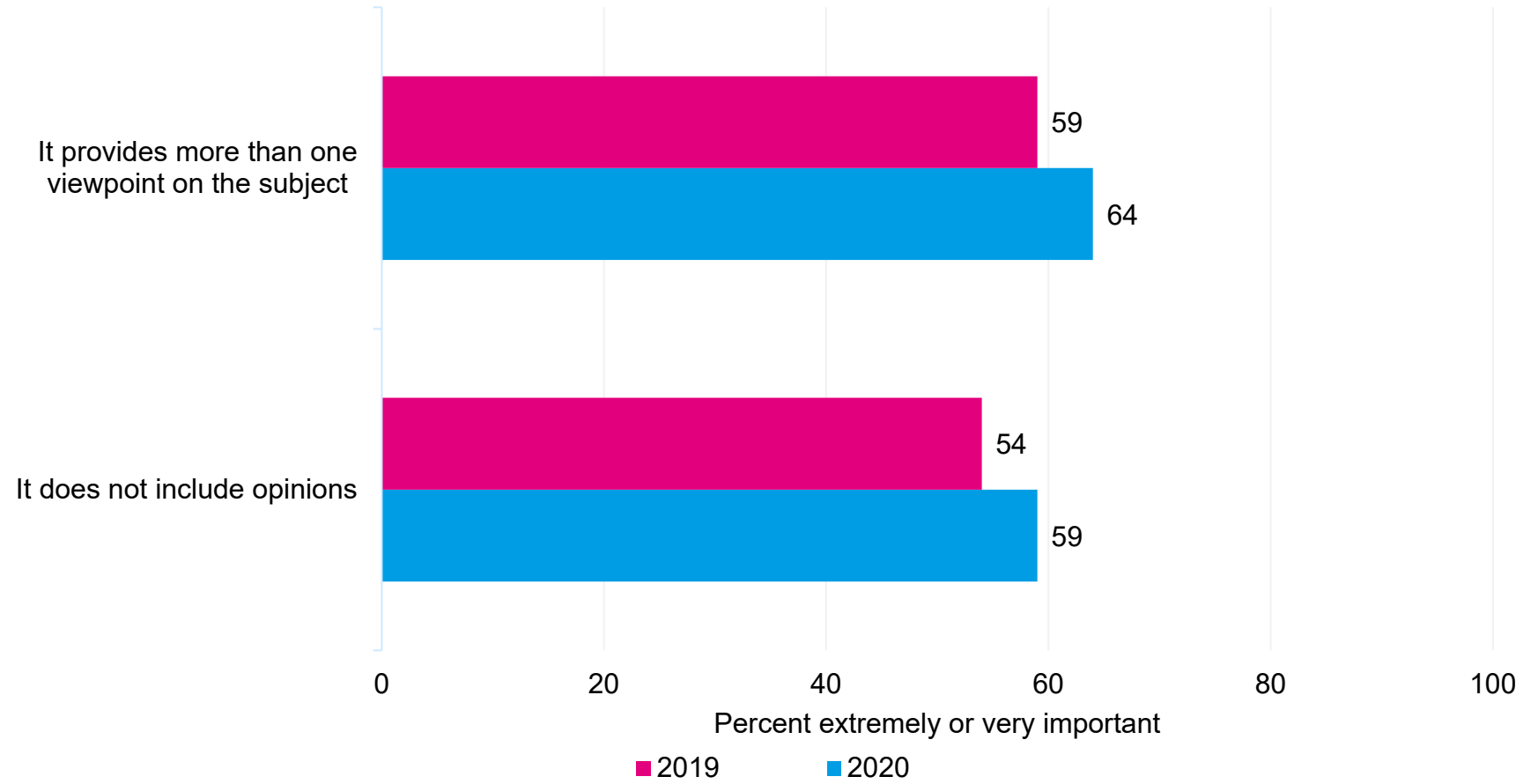
Thinking about information you consider factual, how important is each of the following factors?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# More Americans now think presenting multiple viewpoints and avoiding opinion are important to what they consider factual information.

## Thinking about information you consider factual, how important is each of the following factors?



Thinking about information you consider factual, how important is each of the following factors?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults and October 15-28, 2019 with 1,032 adults



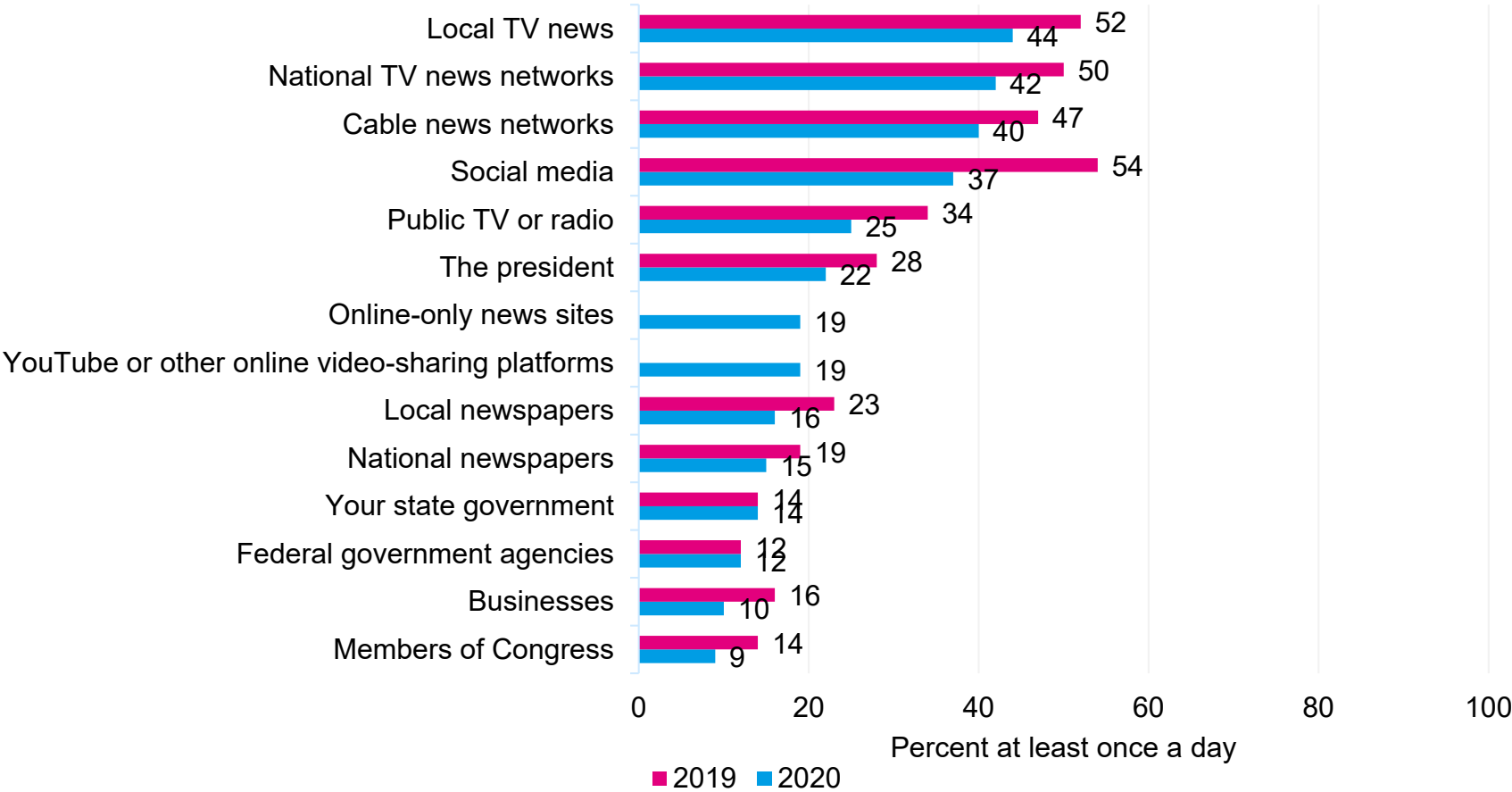
# How Americans get information





Americans are getting information about the government from a variety of sources. Daily use of social media decreased considerably since 2019.

### How often do you get information about the government from...



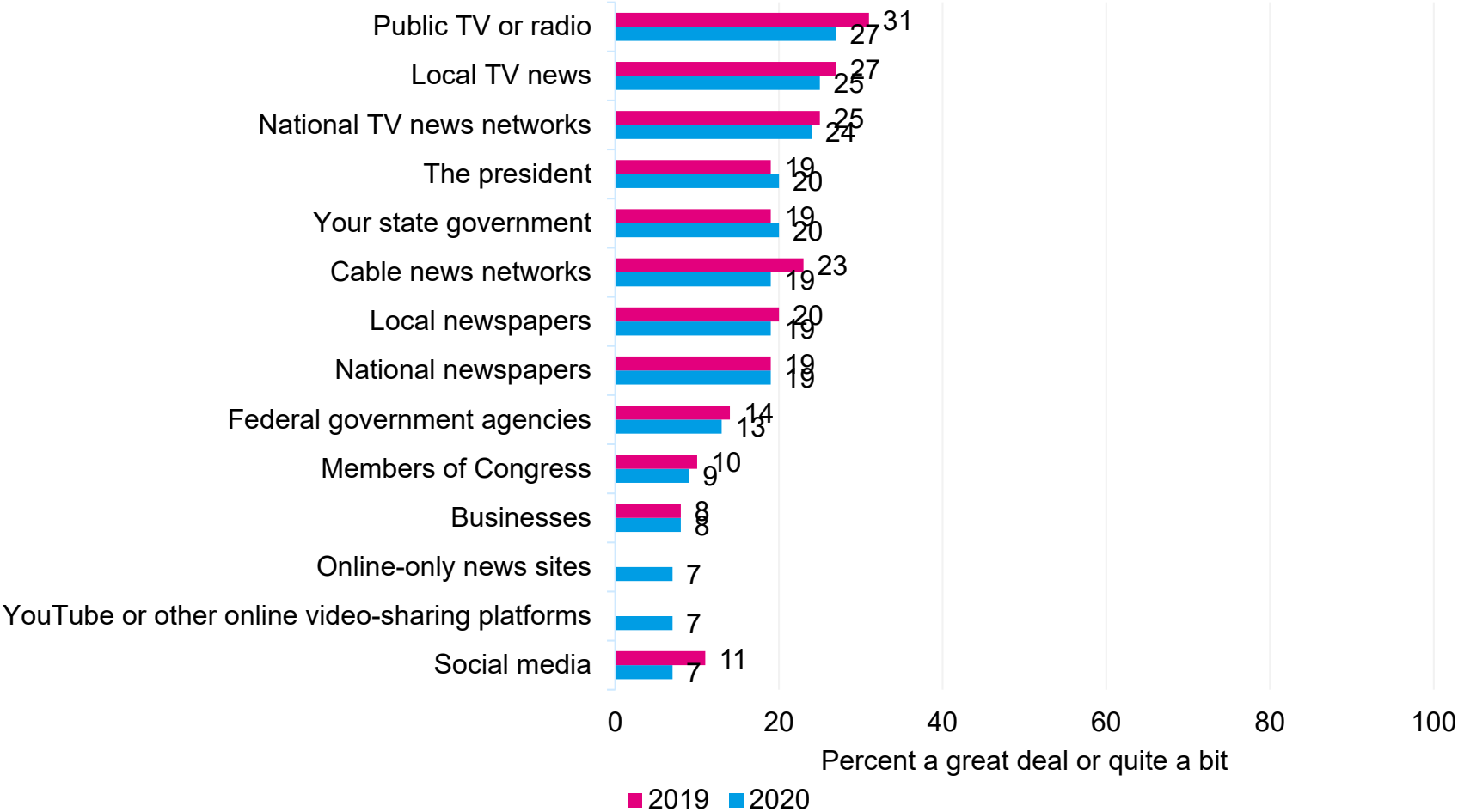
*Thinking about some of the ways you get information about the government these days, how often, if at all, do you get information from ...*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults and October 15-28, 2019 with 1,032 adults



Public, local, and national TV news continue to be the most trusted sources of information about the government, but levels are still low.

How much do you trust information about the government from...



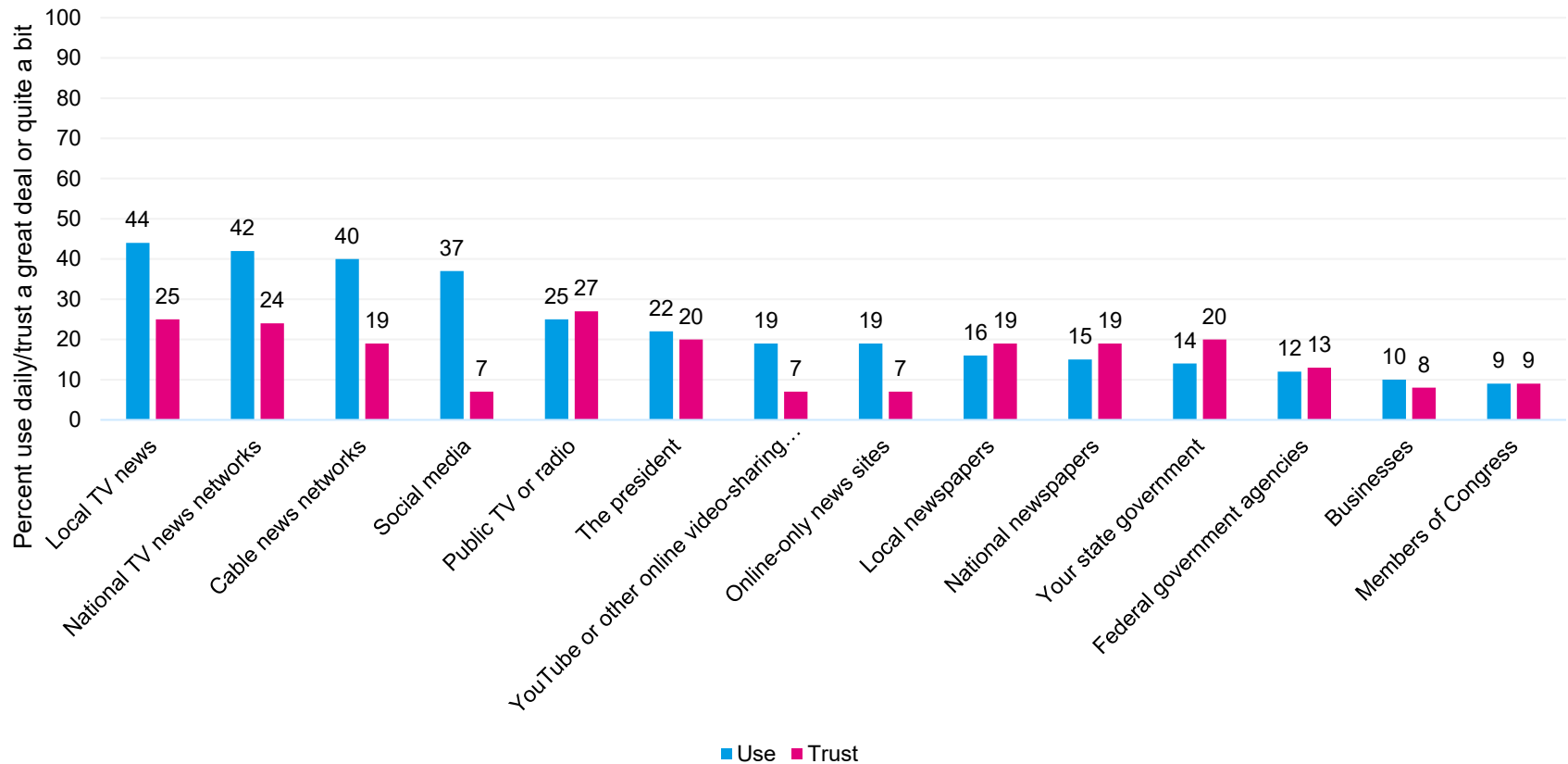
Regardless of how often you get information from these sources, how much do you trust information from them about the government?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults and October 15-28, 2019 with 1,032 adults



# Even the most used sources are not highly trusted. Social media in particular is used often but few trust it.

## Comparing usage and trust...



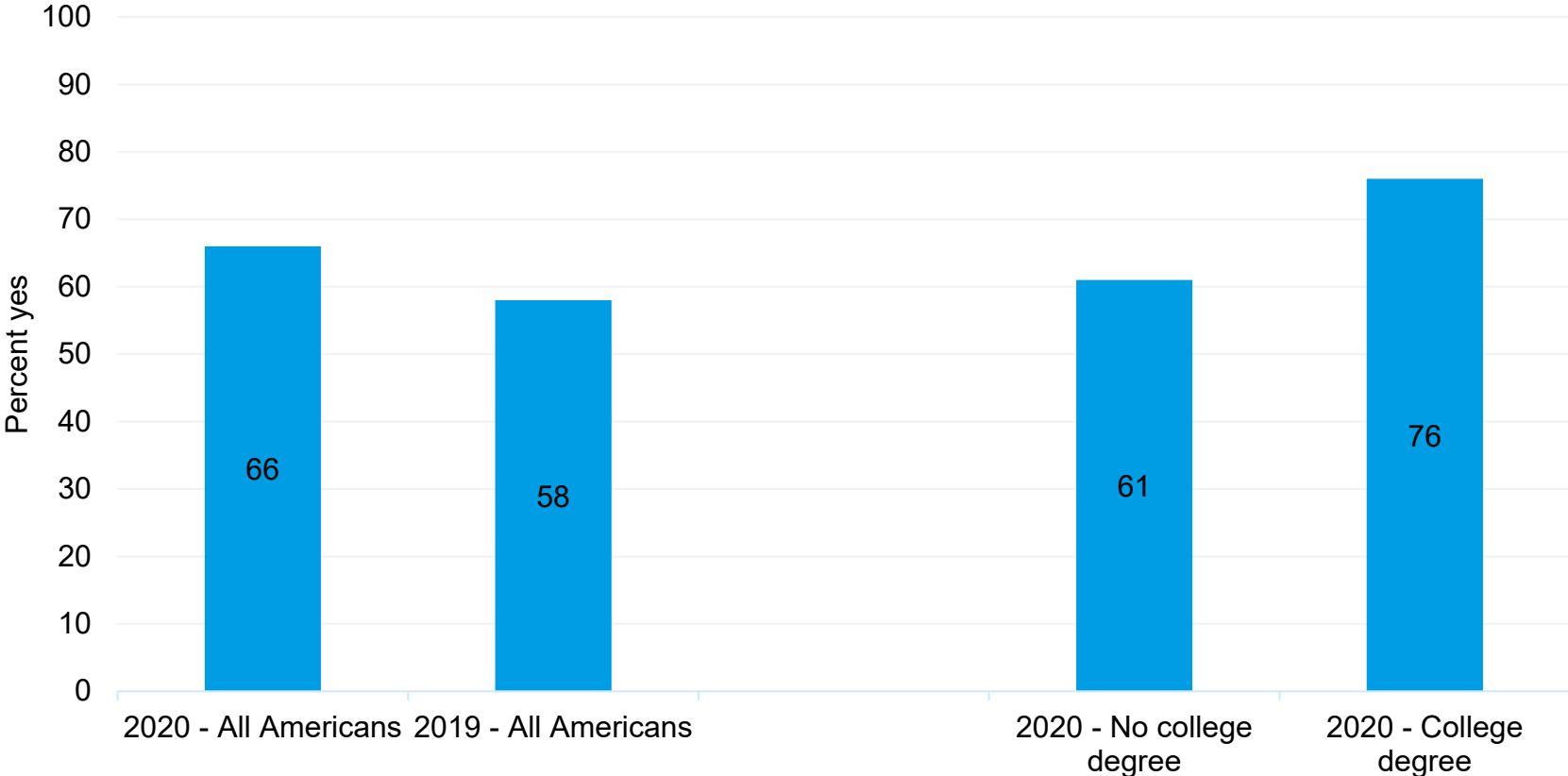
*Thinking about some of the ways you get information about the government these days, how often, if at all, do you get information from .../Regardless of how often you get information from these sources, how much do you trust information from them about the government?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# More Americans, especially those with a college degree, are using federal government websites to look up information.

## Have you used federal government websites like the CDC to look up information?



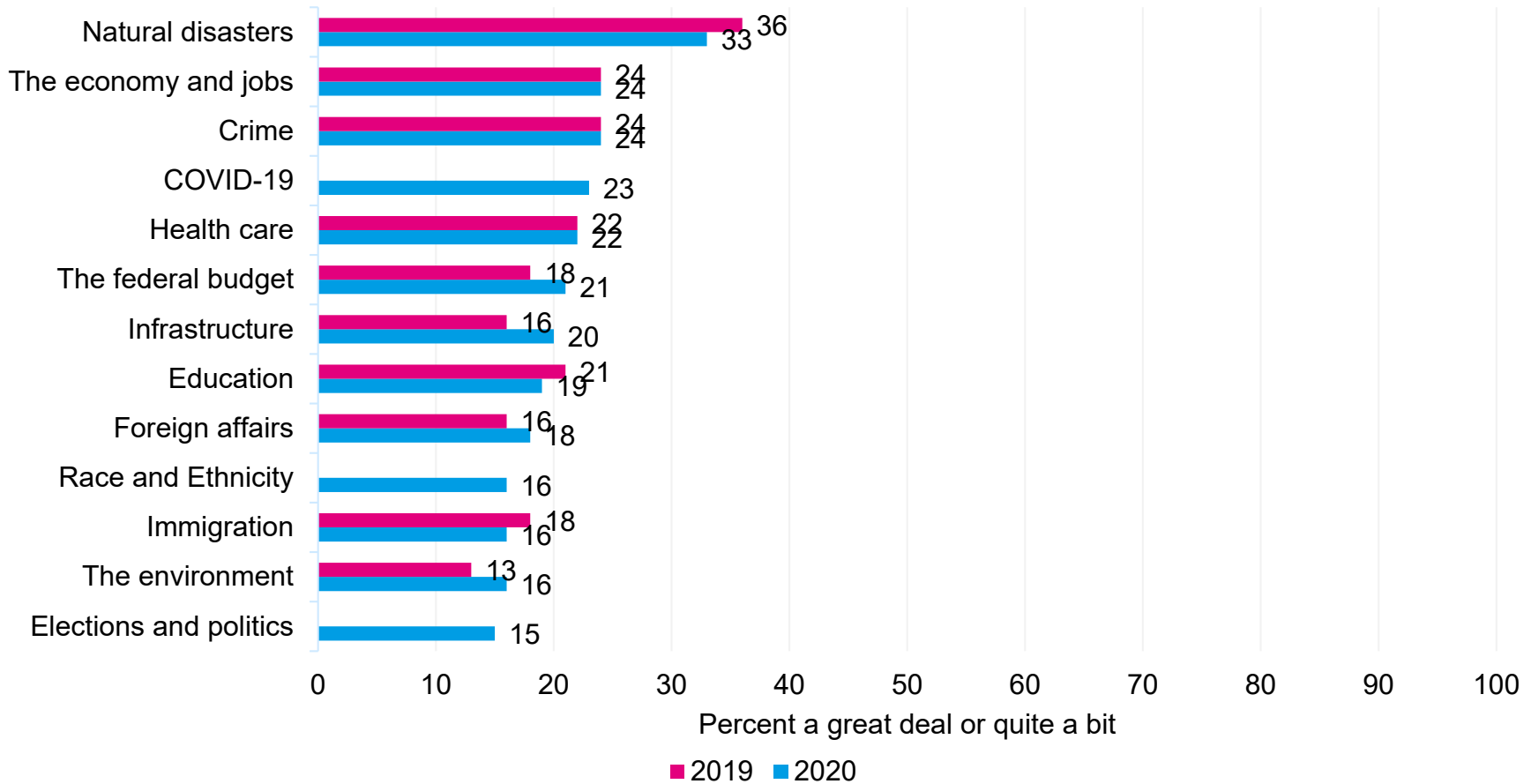
*Have you ever used federal government websites (e.g. Census Bureau, IRS, Centers for Disease Control) to look up information?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults and October 15-28, 2019 with 1,032 adults



# But trust in government information on most topics remains low.

## How much do you trust information from the federal government about...



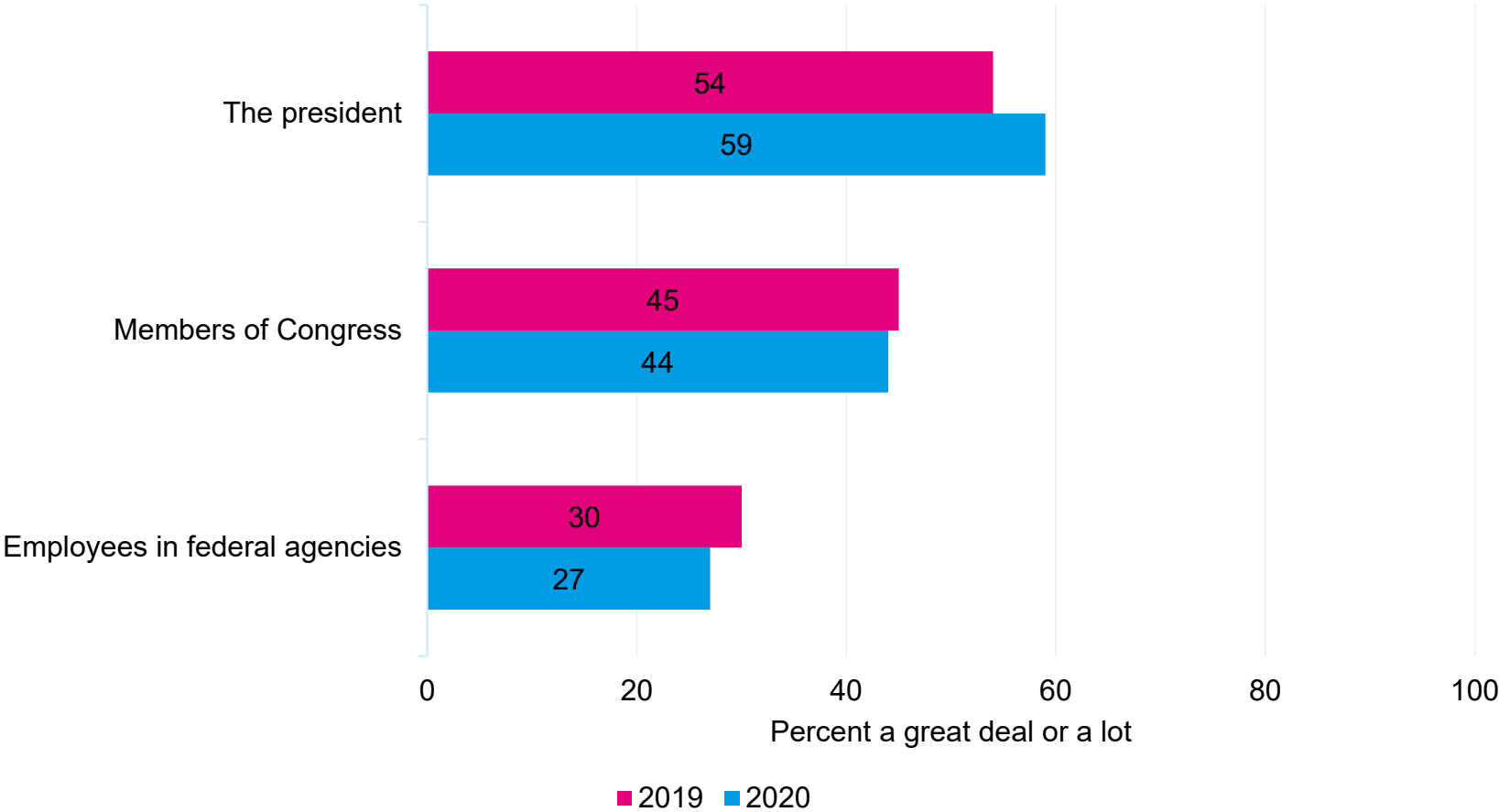
*How much do you trust information from the federal government about the following topics?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults and October 15-28, 2019 with 1,032 adults



A majority feel the political beliefs of the president have a lot of influence over the information provided by the government.

### How much do the political beliefs of each influence information provided by the government?



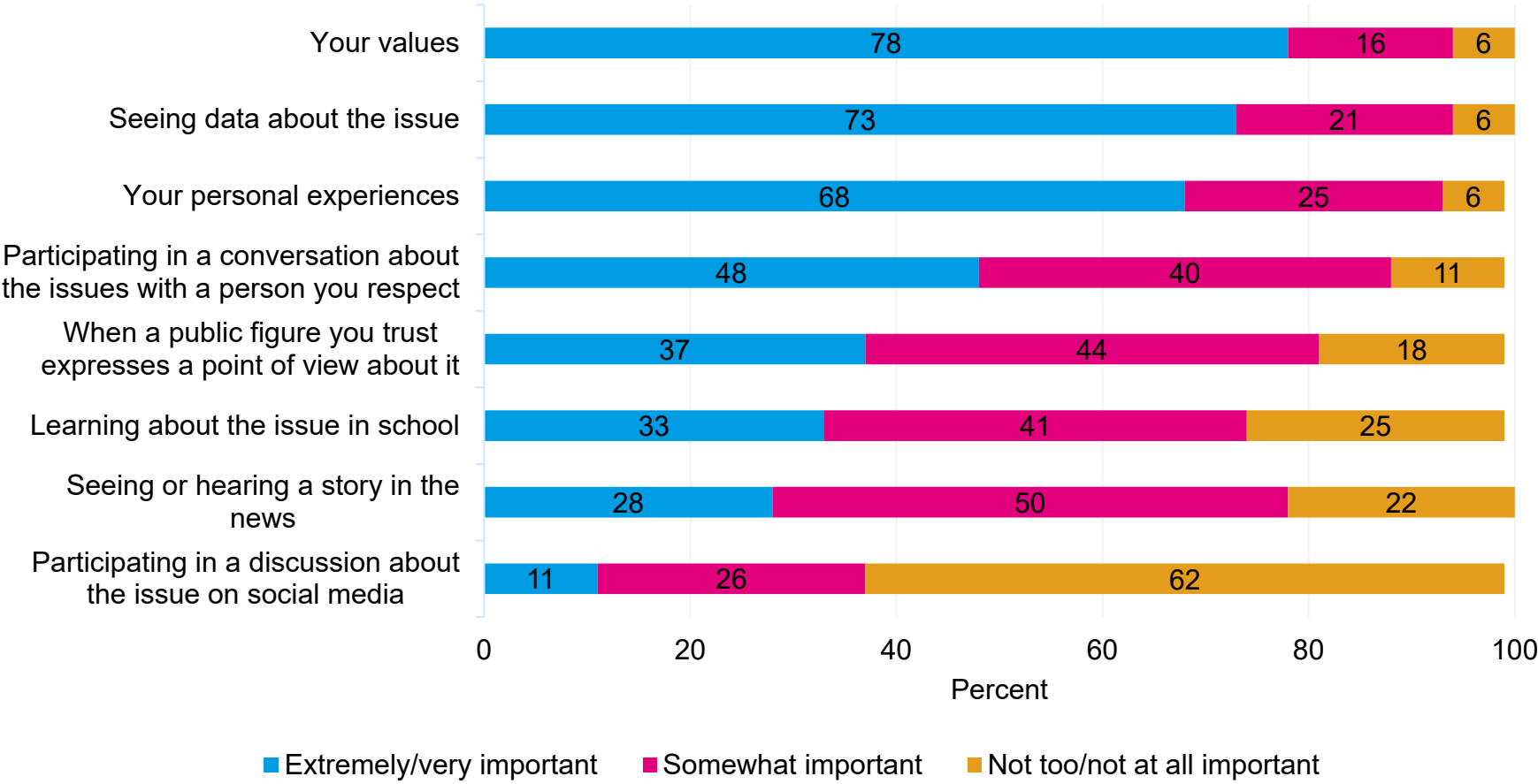
*How much influence do you think the political beliefs of each of the following have over information provided by the federal government?*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults and October 15-28, 2019 with 1,032 adults



# Values, seeing data on an issue, and experiences are most important for forming opinions on issues

## How important is each of the following in helping you form opinions on an issue?



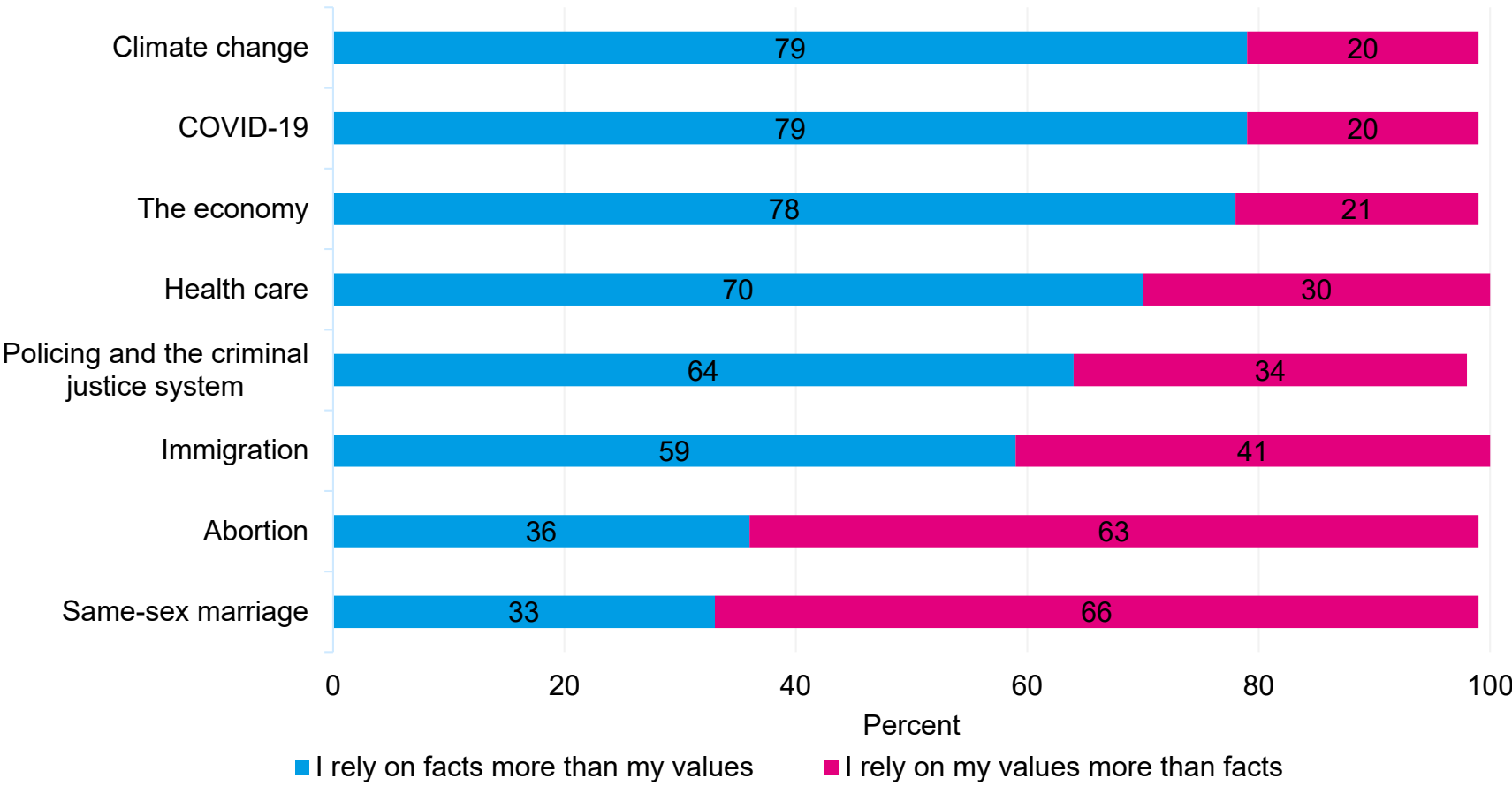
How important is each of the following in helping you form opinions on an issue?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults



# Americans rely more on facts than values when thinking about COVID-19, climate change, the economy, health care, policing, and immigration.

## Which comes closer to how you think about each of the following issues?



Which comes closer to describing how you think about each of the following issues?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted September 15-25, 2020, with 1,043 adults





## State of the Facts Poll 2020

- Poll conducted by The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and funded by USAFacts.
- Nationwide poll of 1,043 adults conducted September 15-25 using the AmeriSpeak Panel<sup>®</sup>.
  - AmeriSpeak is NORC's probability based panel designed to be representative of all US households.
  - 966 via the web and 77 via telephone
  - Interviews conducted in English and Spanish
- Margin of error +/- 4.1 percentage points
- AAPOR Response Rate 3 of 5.4%
- Complete topline and methodology available at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).