



World Justice  
Project

A photograph of the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol building at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow clouds. The Washington Monument is in the foreground on the left, and the U.S. Capitol building is visible behind it on the right.

# The Rule of Law in the United States

Key Findings from the WJP General Population Poll 2024

# Acknowledgements

*The Rule of Law in the United States: Key Findings from the WJP General Population Poll 2021* was produced by the World Justice Project under the research oversight of Alejandro Ponce and the executive direction of Elizabeth Andersen.

The production of this report was led by Ana María Montoya and Tanya Primiani. This report was prepared by Santiago Pardo, Hannah Rigazzi, Victoria Thomaides, and Carlos Toruño.

The findings in this report are taken from the General Population Poll (GPP) conducted for the World Justice Project in 2021. The GPP's conceptual framework and methodology were developed by Mark David Agrast, Juan Carlos Botero, and Alejandro Ponce. The production of this iteration of the country report series was developed by Ana María Montoya, Santiago Pardo, Alejandro Ponce, Tanya Primiani, Hannah Rigazzi, Natalia Rodríguez Cajamarca, Victoria Thomaides, and Carlos Toruño Paniagua with the support of Said Aarji, Erin Campbell, James Davis, Joshua Fuller, Skye Jacobs, and Moss Woodbury.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## About this Report

- 5 About this Report
- 6 Executive Findings

## Section I: Rule of Law and Government Accountability

- 9 Rule of Law
- 11 Accountability

## Section II: Elections and News Consumption

- 13 Voting and Registration
- 14 Integrity of the Electoral Process
- 16 Hypothetical Situations
- 20 News Consumption

## Section III: Authoritarianism and Fundamental Freedoms

- 23 Authoritarianism
- 25 Fundamental Freedoms

## Section IV: Corruption and Trust

- 29 Corruption
- 31 Trust

## Section V: Law Enforcement

- 34 Police
- 36 Criminal Justice System

## Project Design

- 39 Methodology

## Appendix

- 42 Methodological Materials
- 43 About the World Justice Project
- 44 Other Publications

## About this Report

- 5 About this Report
- 6 Executive Findings

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

**EFFECTIVE RULE OF LAW** reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices large and small. Strengthening the rule of law is an important objective for governments, donors, and civil society organizations around the world. To be effective, rule of law development requires clarity about the fundamental features that define the rule of law, as well as an adequate basis for its evaluation and measurement.

*The Rule of Law in the United States: Key Findings from the WJP General Population Poll 2021* presents question-level data drawn from the General Population Poll (GPP), an original data source designed and collected by the World Justice Project. To provide a more in-depth view of trends in perceptions of rule of law in the United States, this report also presents select findings over time and compared to other countries in the international Group of 7 (G7).

The GPP was conducted through online interviews to a nationally representative sample of 1,258 U.S. households in 2021. This poll was designed to capture data on the experiences and perceptions of ordinary people regarding a variety of themes related to the rule of law.

*This report represents the voices of people in the United States and their experiences with the rule of law in their country.*

The data derived from the General Population Poll is presented in this report as thematic briefs, each one highlighting a different dimension of the rule of law from the perspective of people in the United States. These thematic briefs focus on the current rule of law ecosystem in the United States while simultaneously illuminating changes over time and comparisons across the following peer countries in the G7: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The sections of this report describe people's perceptions of and attitudes towards the following topics: accountability, authoritarianism, fundamental freedoms, corruption, trust in institutions, the criminal justice system and its actors, crime victimization, security, police performance, and discrimination.

# EXECUTIVE FINDINGS

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## SECTION 1

### Rule of Law and Government Accountability

#### 1. Rule of Law

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#### 2. Government Accountability

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## SECTION 2

### Elections and News Consumption

#### 3. Voting and Registration

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#### 4. Integrity of the Electoral Process

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*Netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas sed tempus urna. Viverra accumsan in nisl nisi scelerisque eu ultrices vitae. Nec ullamcorper sit amet risus nullam eget felis. Sapien eget mi proin sed libero enim sed faucibus turpis. Vehicula ipsum a arcu cursus vitae congue mauris rhoncus aenean.*

#### 5. Hypothetical Situations

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## **6. News Consumption**

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## **SECTION 3**

### **Elections and News Consumption**

#### **7. Authoritarianism**

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#### **8. Fundamental Freedoms**

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## **SECTION 4**

### **Corruption and Trust**

#### **9. Corruption and Trust**

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## **SECTION 5**

### **Law Enforcement**

#### **10. Police**

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#### **11. Criminal Justice System**

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## **Section I: Rule of Law and Government Accountability**

9 Rule of Law

11 Accountability

# Rule of Law

## Chart 1.1

### Top Terms Associated to Rule of Law in the United States

*Most frequent terms used by people when asked about the term Rule of Law*



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

## Chart 1.2

### Perception of the Rule of Law in the United States

*Most frequent terms used by people when asked to describe the current state of the Rule of Law in the United States*



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

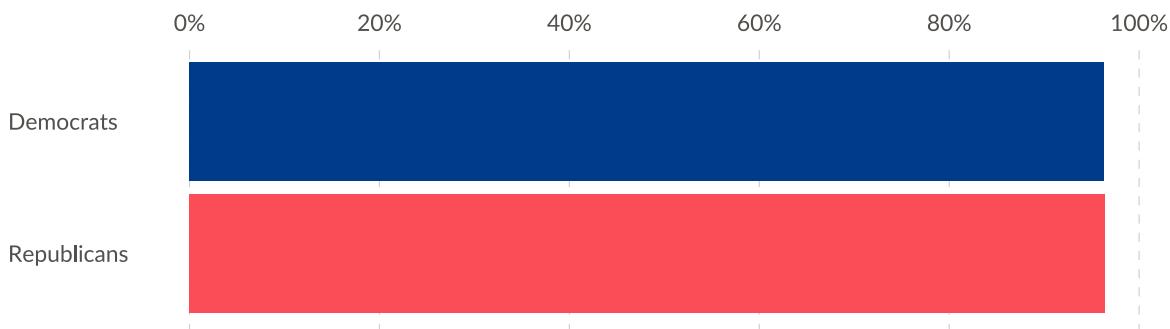
# Rule of Law

Chart 2

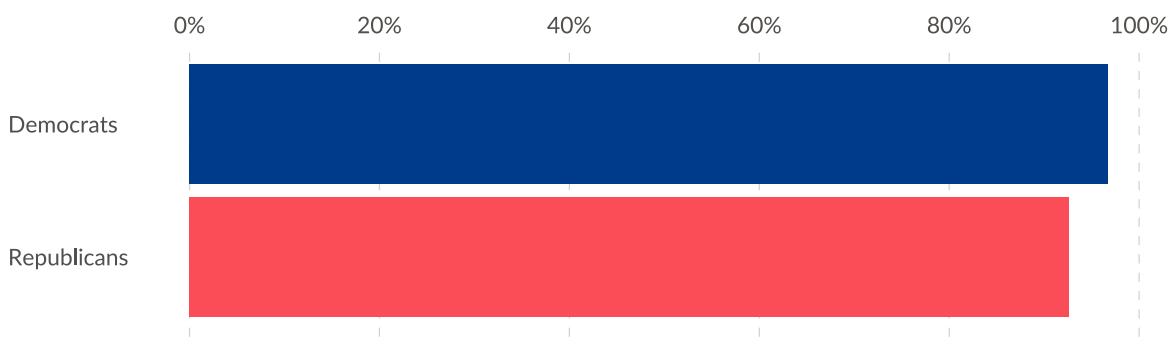
## Relevance of the Rule of Law, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents who believe that the Rule of Law is essential or important in the following topics...

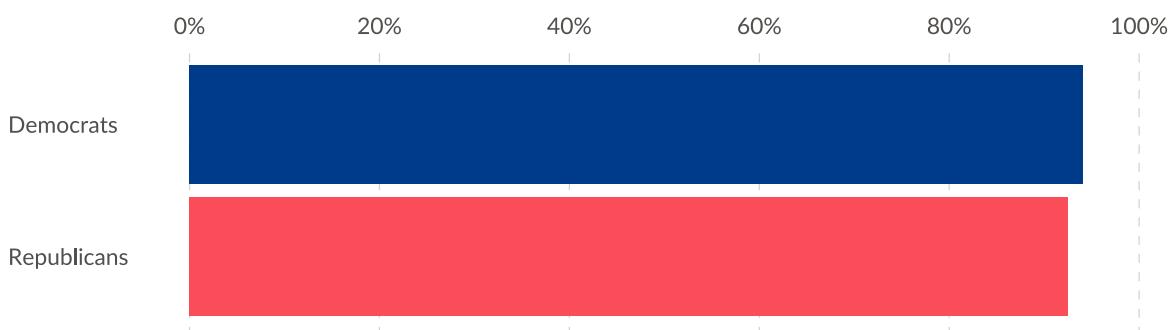
### The future of the United States



### US democracy



### Your own life



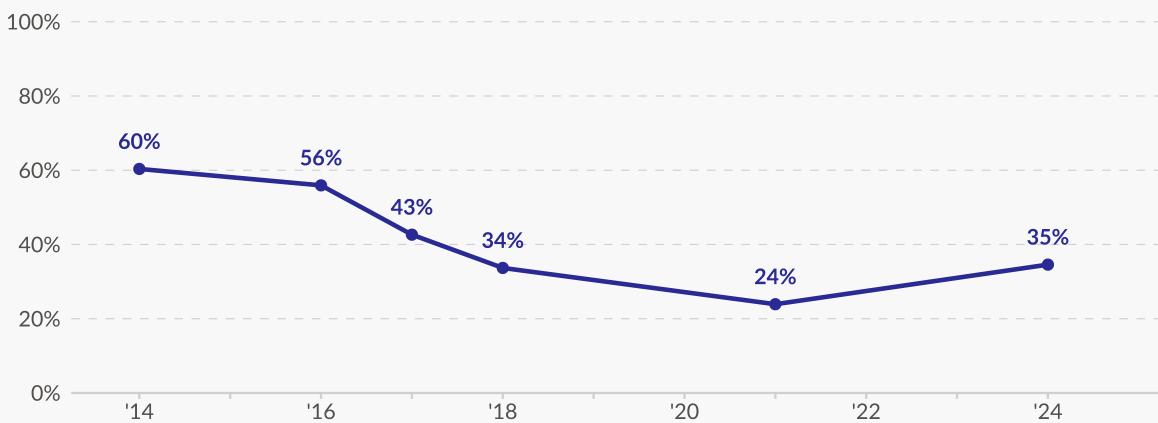
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

# Accountability

Chart 3.1

## Perceptions of Accountability in the United States over Time

*Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that high-ranking government officials would be held accountable for breaking the law...*

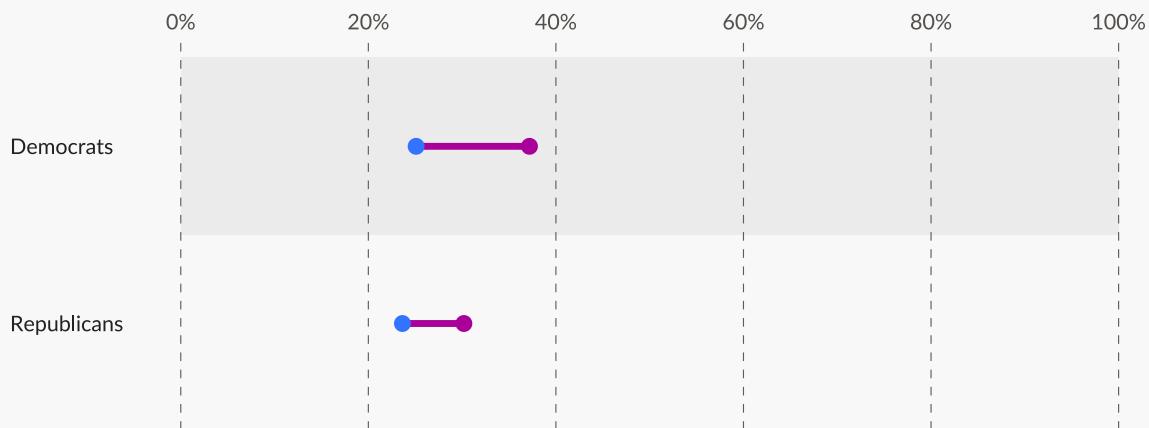


Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

Chart 3.2

## Perceptions of Accountability, by Political Affiliation

*Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that high-ranking government officials would be held accountable for breaking the law...*



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021 and 2024

## **Section II: Elections and News Consumption**

13 Voting and Registration

14 Integrity of the Electoral  
Process

16 Hypothetical Situations

20 News Consumption

## Voting and Registration

Chart 4

### Electoral Participation and Vote Intention in the United States

None



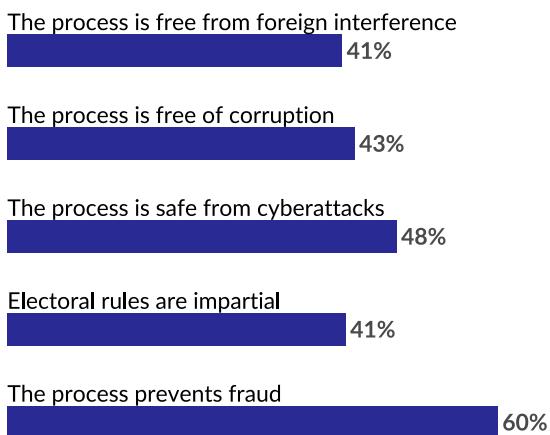
# Integrity of the Electoral Process

Chart 5

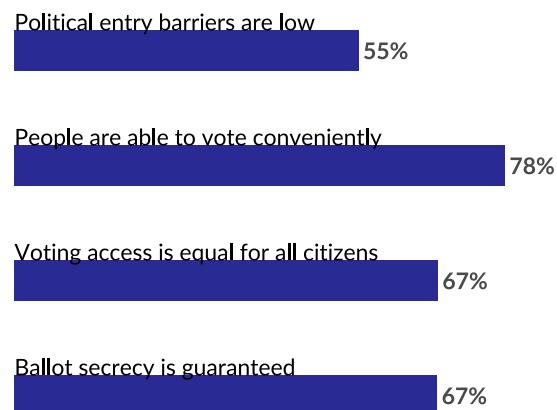
## Integrity of the Electoral Process in the United States

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the following statements...

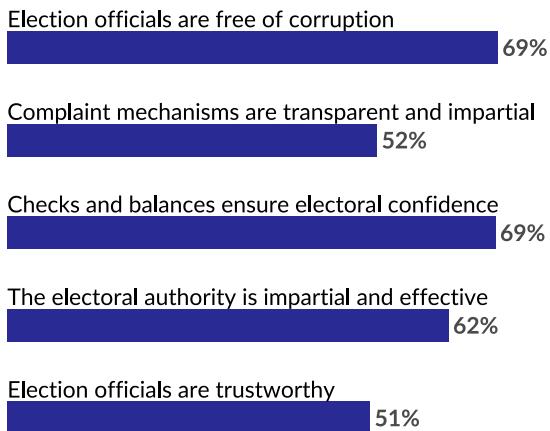
### Electoral Process



### Voting Rights



### Electoral Authorities



### Electoral Results and Vote Counting



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

# Integrity of the Electoral Process

Chart 6

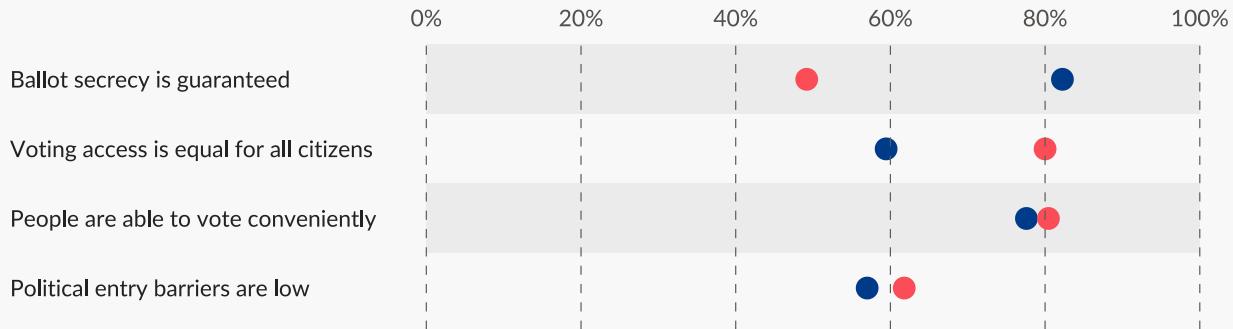
## Integrity of the Electoral Process, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the following statements...

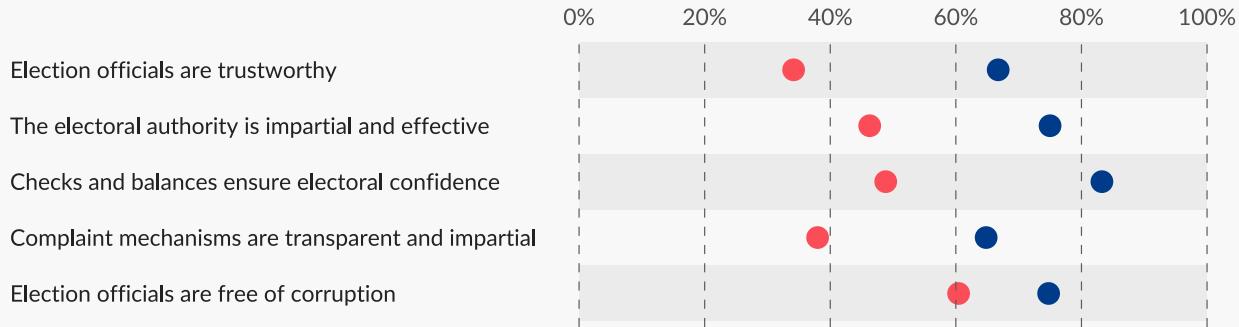
### Electoral Process



### Voting Rights



### Electoral Authorities



## Hypothetical Situations

Chart 7

### Acceptance of Election Results, by Political Affiliation

None

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

16 Elections and News Consumption

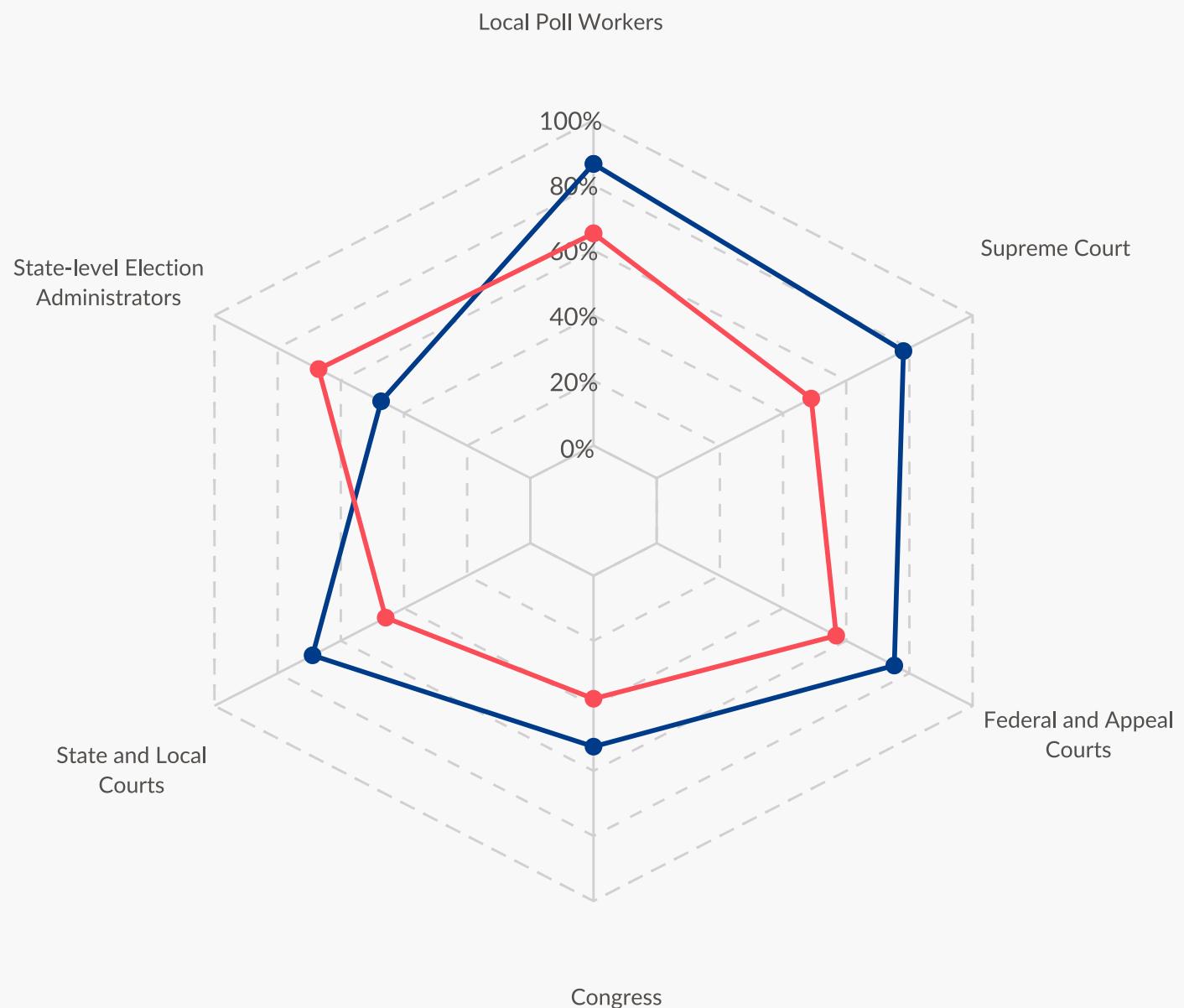


# Hypothetical Situations

Chart 8

## Trust in Institutions to Ensure Fair Election Results

Percentage of respondents who has a lot or some trust that the following institutions would fairly determine the election results...

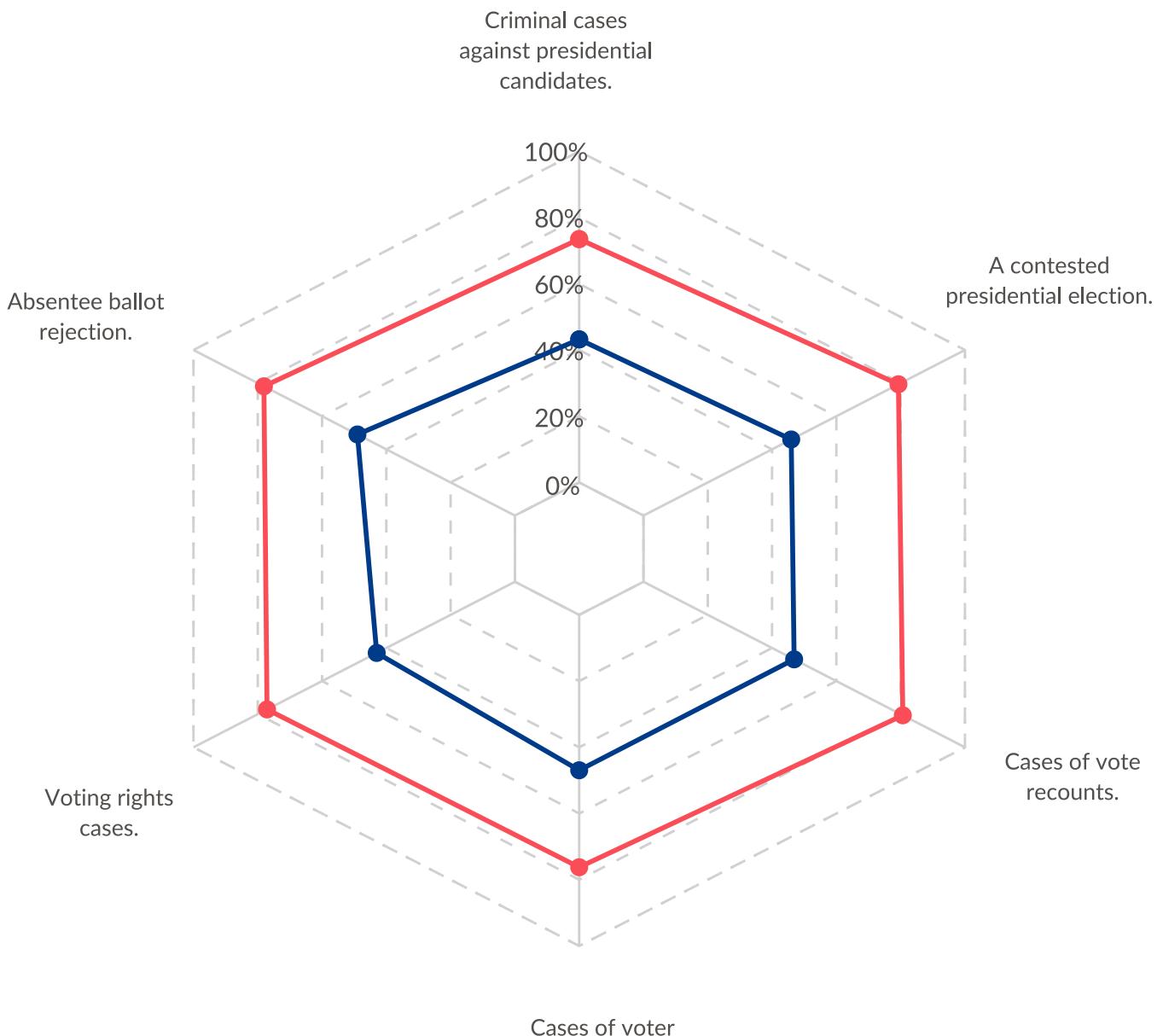


# Hypothetical Situations

Chart 9

## Role of the Judiciary in the Electoral Process, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents that agree or strongly agree that the Supreme Court of Justice would be impartial if having to decide on...



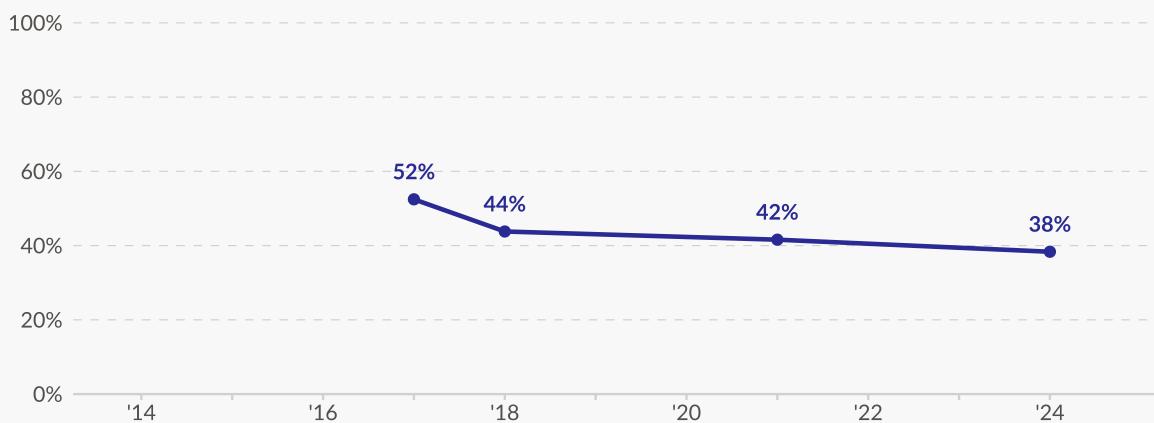
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

# Hypothetical Situations

## Chart 10.1

### Trust in News Media in the United States over Time

Percentage of respondents who reported that they have a lot or some trust in the News Media



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

## Chart 10.2

### Factors of Good Quality Information, by Political Affiliation

Difference in the percentage of Democrats and Republicans who marked a factor as important.



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

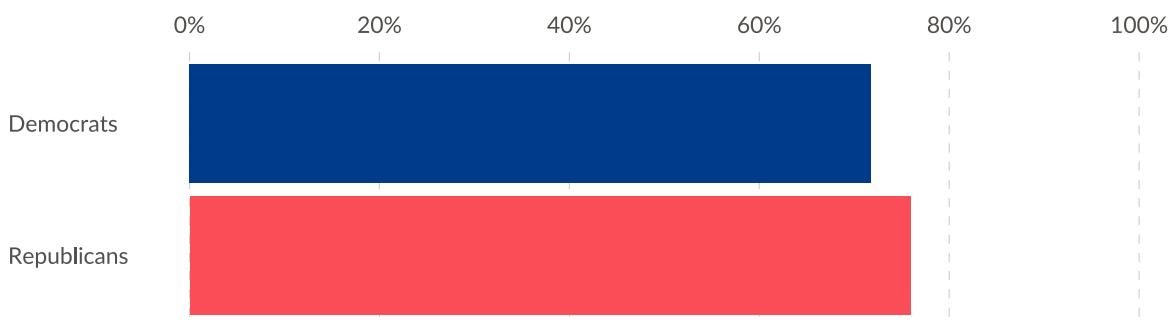
# News Consumption

Chart 11

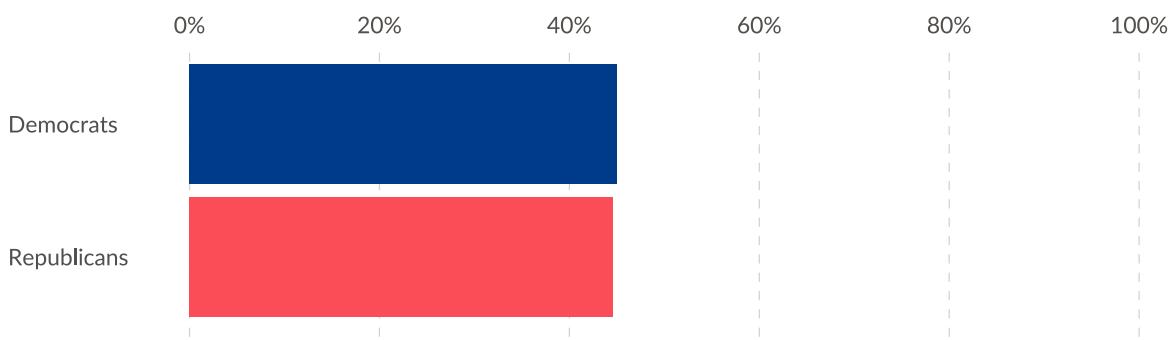
## Frequency of Media Engagement, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents that confirmed...

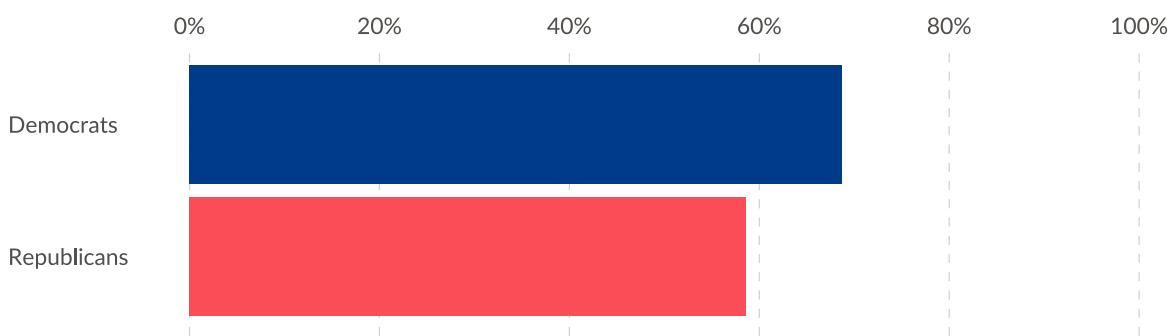
| Having found political news on social media every day.



| Have engaged in online political discussions at least once a week.



| Have checked the truthfulness of the information in the last three months.



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2024

# News Consumption

Chart 12

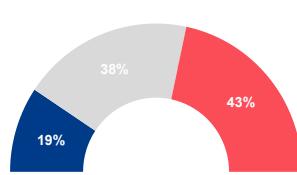
## Attitudes Towards Authoritarianism and Rule of Law

Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements...

Legend 1

Legend 2

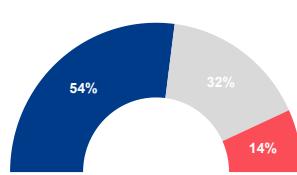
Legend 3



Legend 1

Legend 2

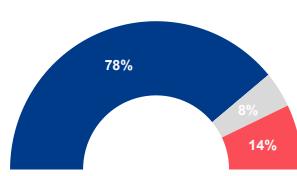
Legend 3



Legend 1

Legend 2

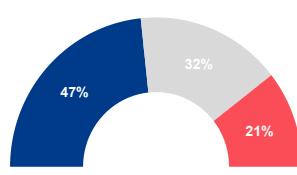
Legend 3



Legend 1

Legend 2

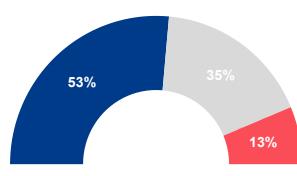
Legend 3



Legend 1

Legend 2

Legend 3



## **Section III: Authoritarianism and Fundamental Freedoms**

23 Authoritarianism

25 Fundamental Freedoms

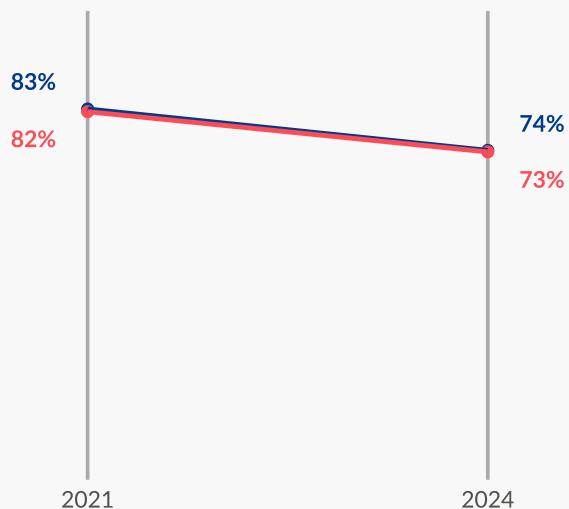
# Authoritarianism

Chart 13

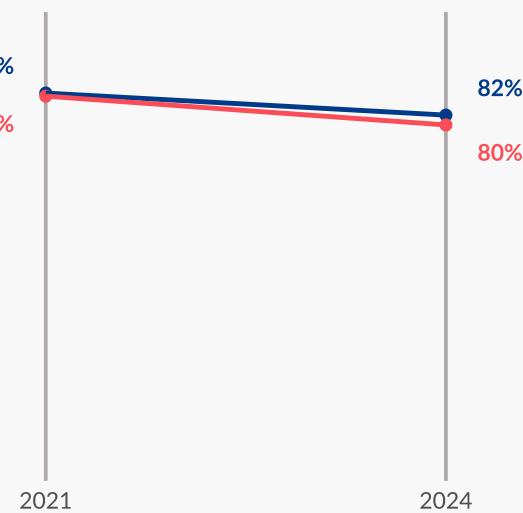
## Attitudes Towards Authoritarianism and Rule of Law, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the following statements...

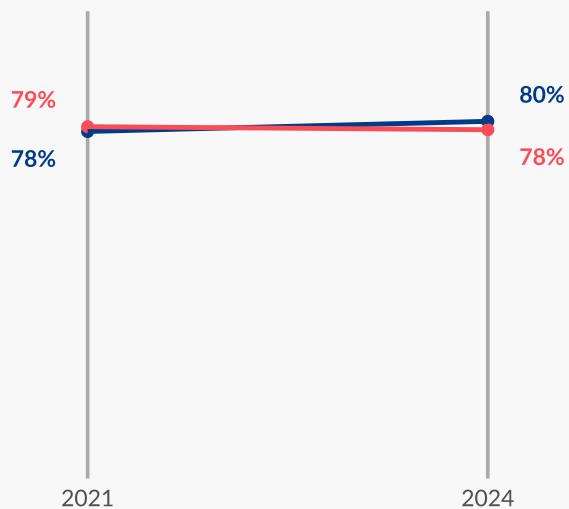
| It is important that citizens have a say in government matters, even at the expense of efficiency.



| The President must always obey the law and the courts.



| It is important to obey the government in power, no matter who you voted for.



# Authoritarianism

Chart 14

## Perceptions of Constraints on Government Powers

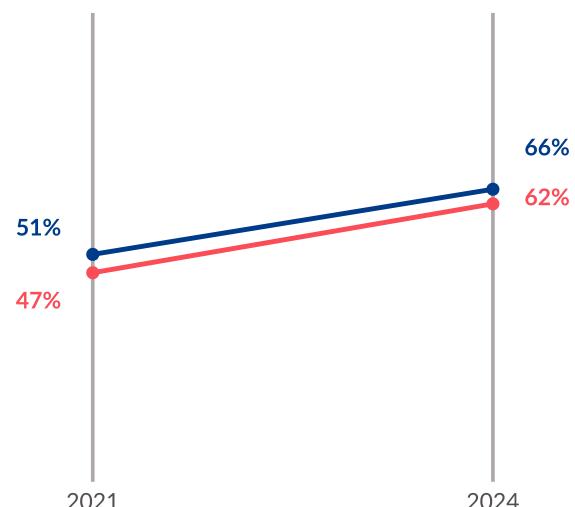
Percentage of respondents in the United States who believe that various actors could hypothetically stop the President's illegal actions

...

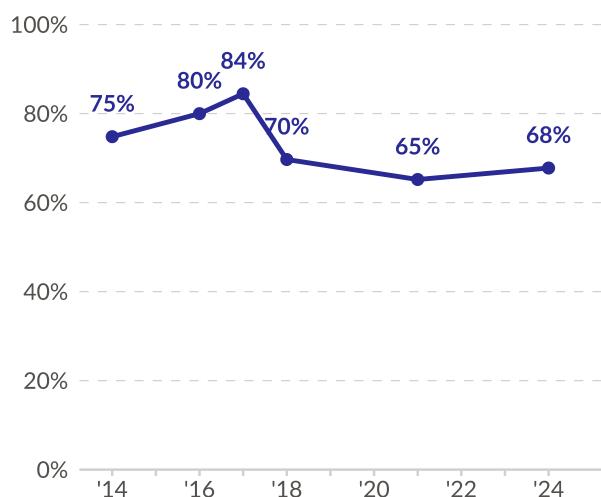
| Likelihood of the Congress to stop the President



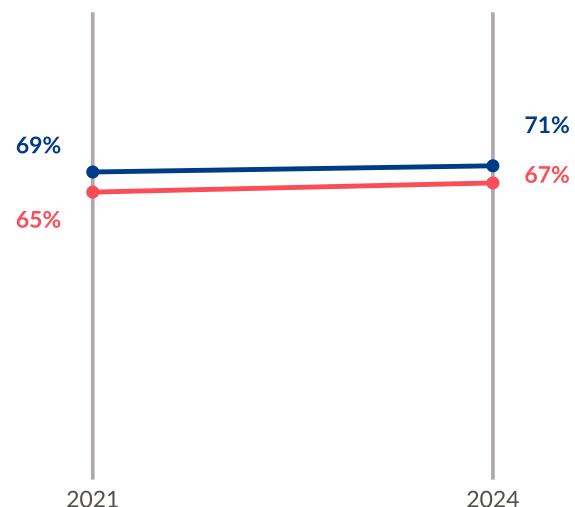
| Likelihood of the Congress to stop the President



| Likelihood of the Courts to stop the President



| Likelihood of the Courts to stop the President



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

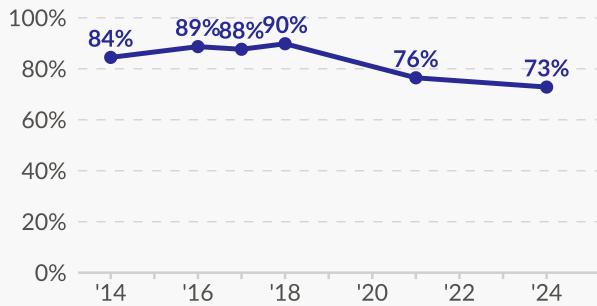
# Fundamental Freedoms

Chart 15.1

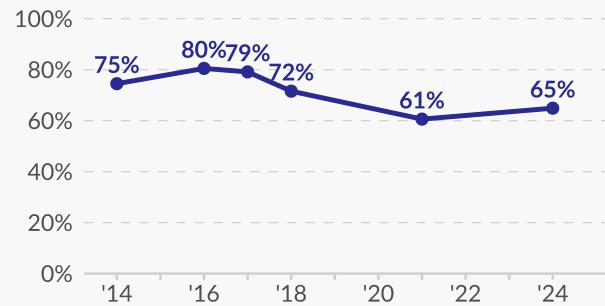
## Fundamental Freedoms in the United States over Time

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree on the following statements...

### People can express opinions against the government



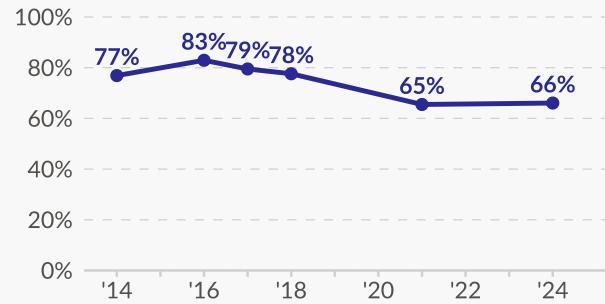
### Civil society organizations can express opinions against the government



### Political parties can express opinions against the government



### The media can express opinions against the government without fear of retaliation



### The media can expose cases of corruption



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

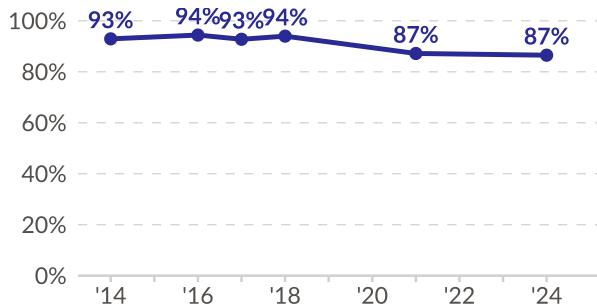
# Fundamental Freedoms

Chart 15.2

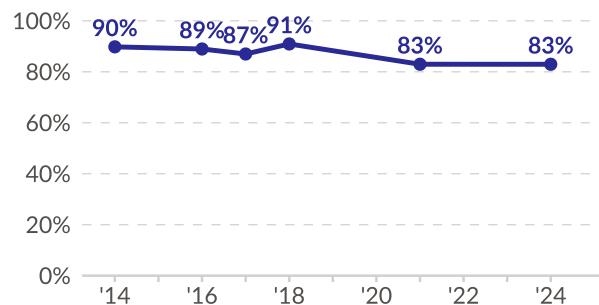
## Fundamental Freedoms in the United States over Time

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree on the following statements...

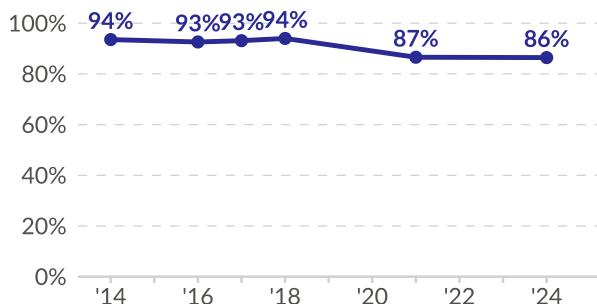
### People can attend community meetings



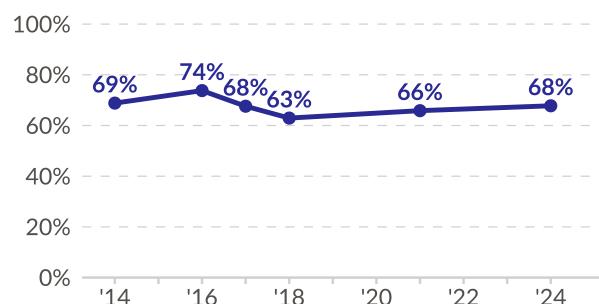
### People can join any political organization



### People can organize around an issue or petition



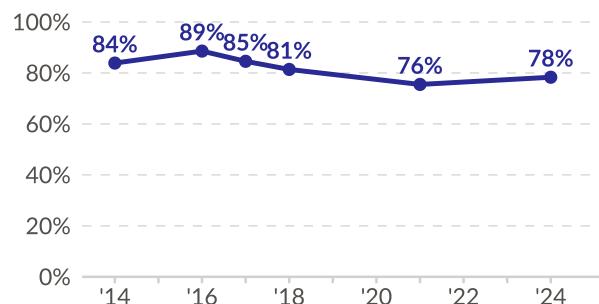
### Local government officials are elected through a clean process



### People can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured



### Religious minorities can observe their holy days



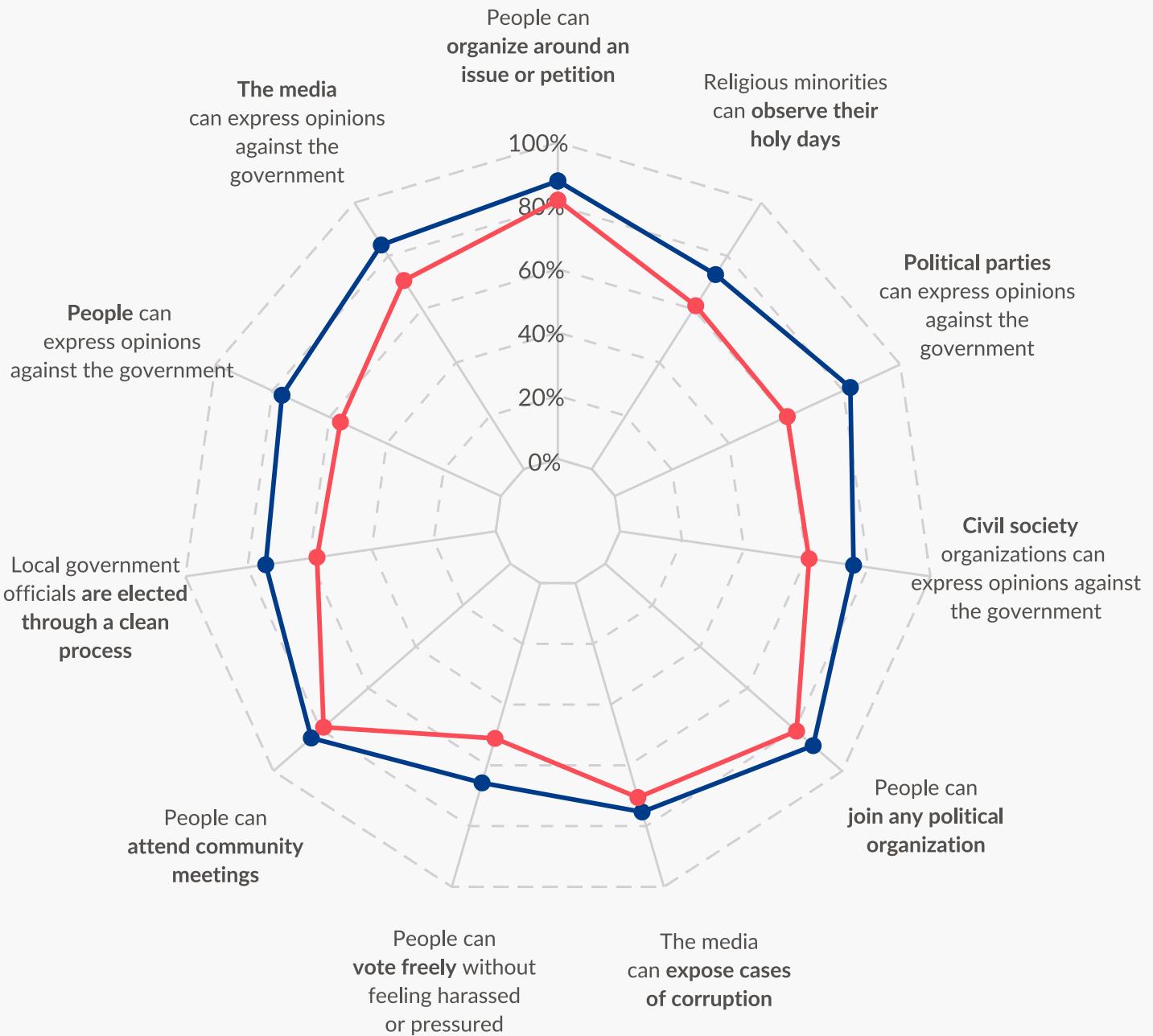
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

# Fundamental Freedoms

Chart 16

## Perceptions of Fundamental Freedoms, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree on the following statements...



## Section IV: Corruption and Trust

29 Corruption

31 Trust

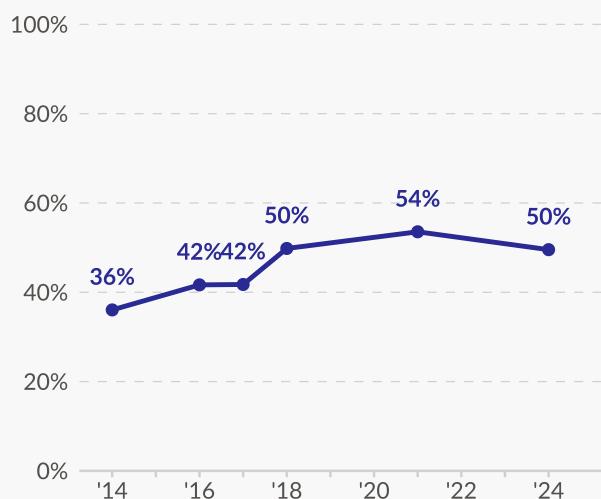
# Corruption

Chart 17

## Perceptions of Corruption by Institution over Time

Percentage of respondents in the United States who believe that most or All people working in the following institutions are corrupt ...

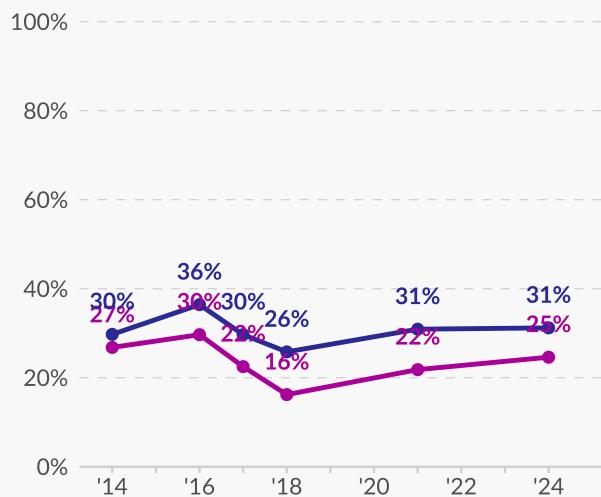
Members of Congress



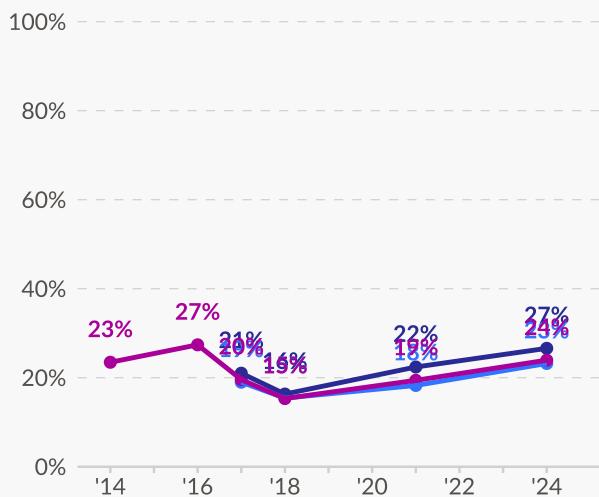
Police Officers



Executive



Justice System



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

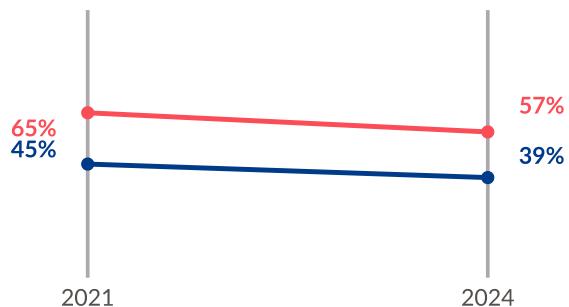
# Corruption

Chart 18

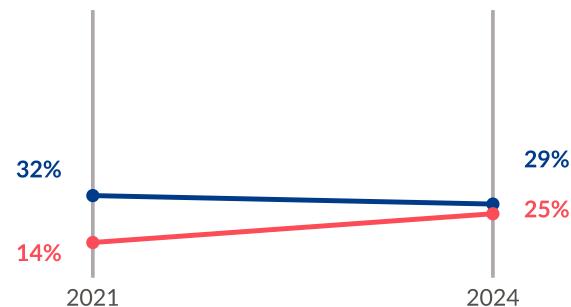
## Perceptions of Corruption, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents in the United States who believe that most or All people working in the following institutions are corrupt ...

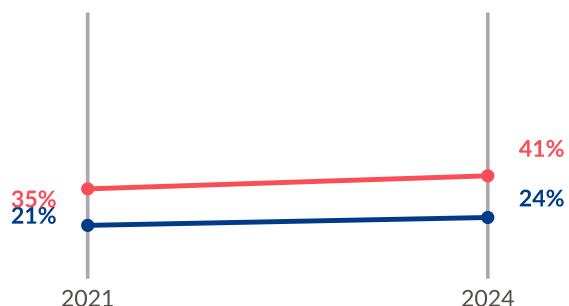
Members of Congress



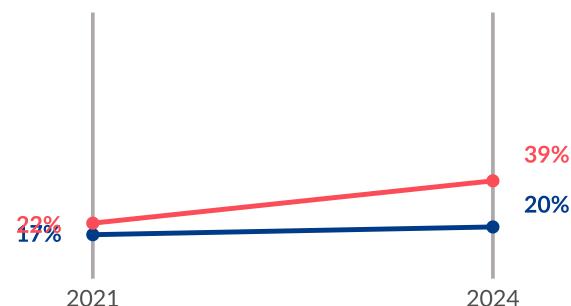
Police Officers



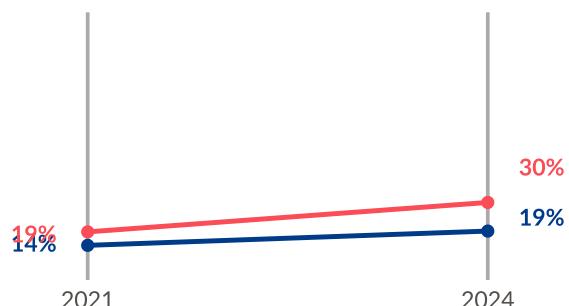
National Government Officers



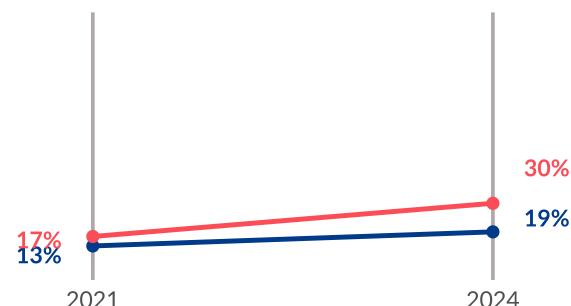
Prosecutors



Judges and Magistrates



Public Defense Attorneys



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021 and 2024

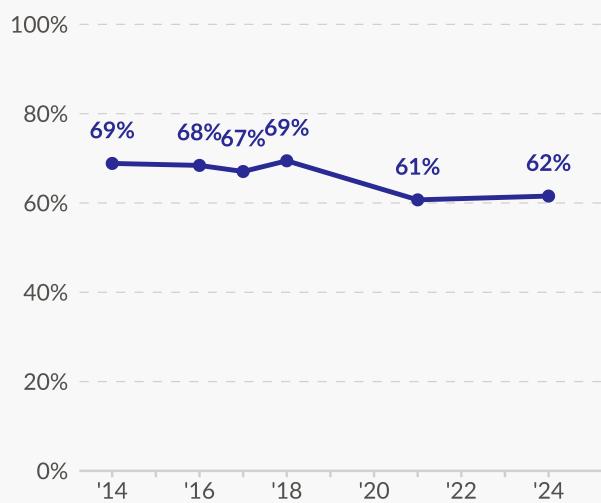
# Trust

Chart 19

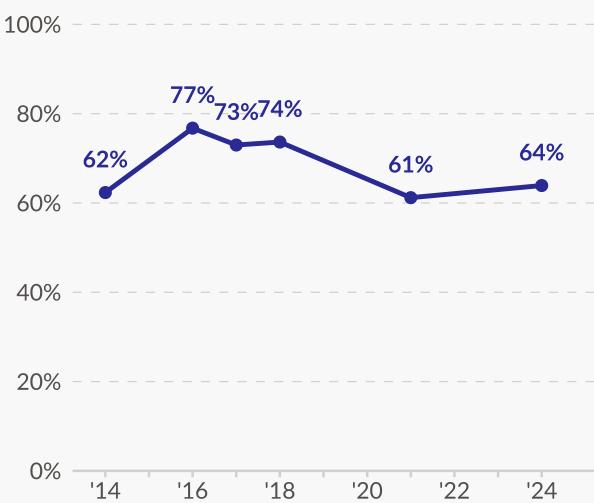
## Trust in Institutions over Time

Percentage of respondents who have a lot or some trust in...

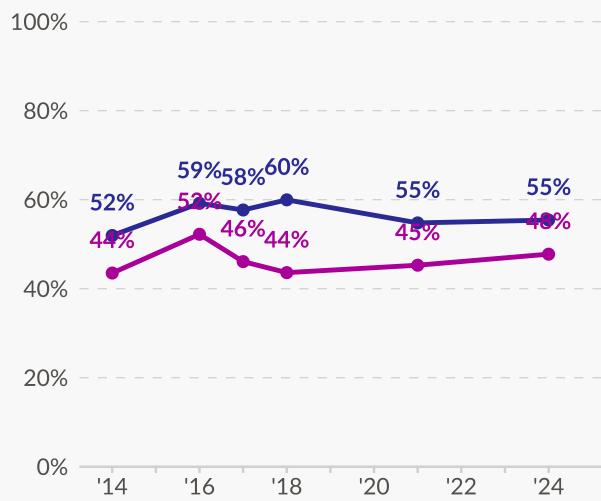
### People Living in Their Country



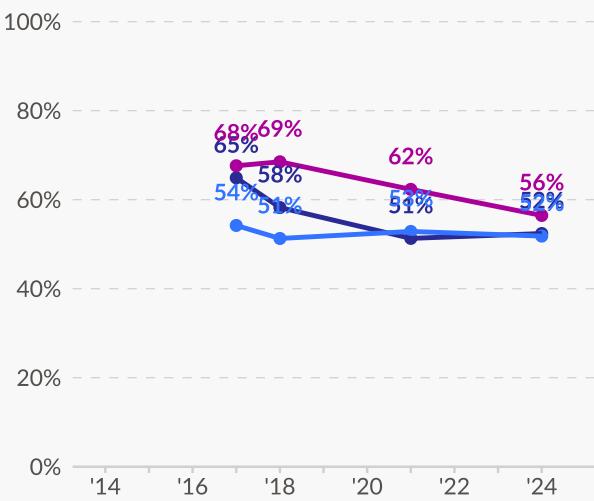
### Police Officers



### Executive



### Justice System



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

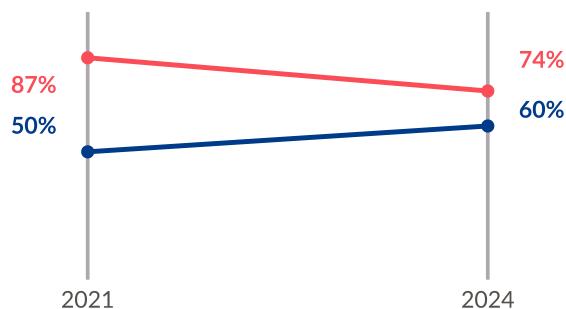
# Trust

Chart 20

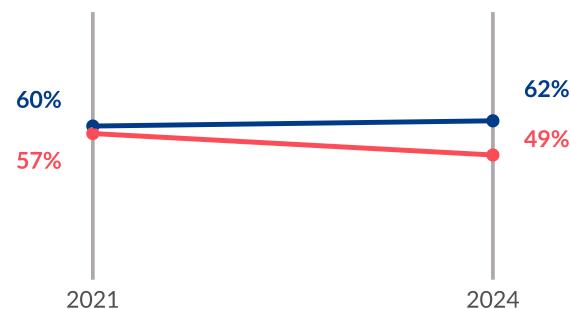
## Trust in Institutions over Time, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents who have a lot or some trust in...

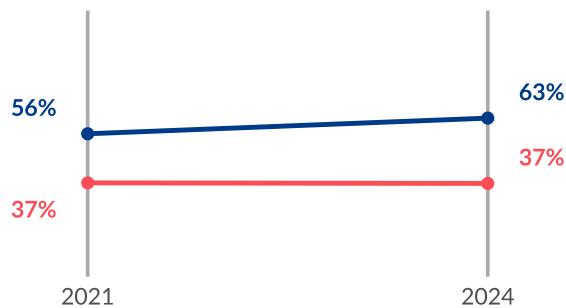
Police Officers



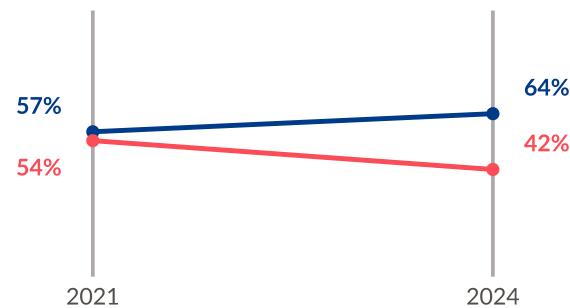
Local Government Officers



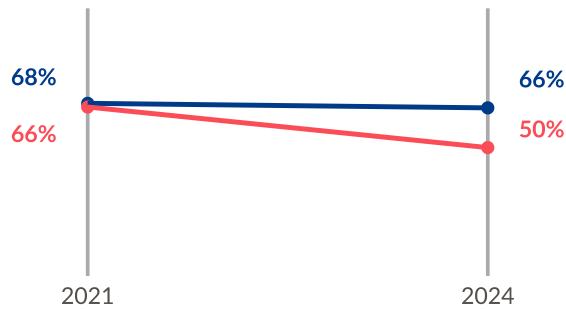
National Government Officers



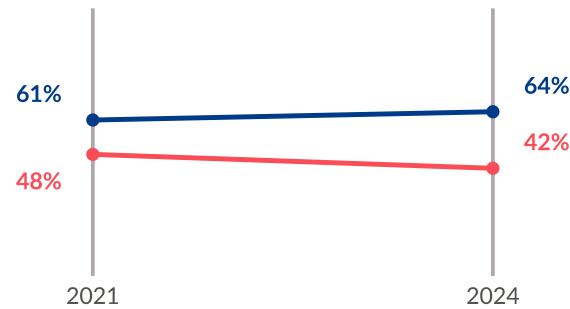
Prosecutors



Judges and Magistrates



Public Defense Attorneys



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021 and 2024

## **Section V: Law Enforcement**

34 Police

36 Criminal Justice System

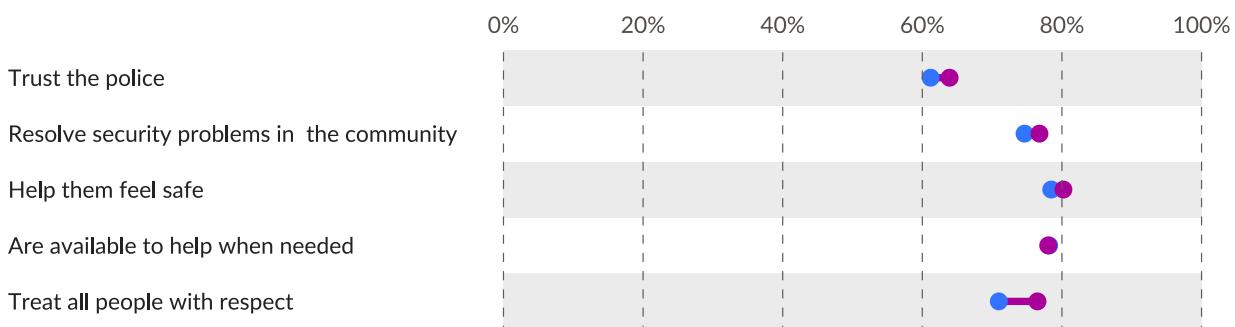
# Police

Chart 21

## Perceptions of the Police

*Opinions on the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement*

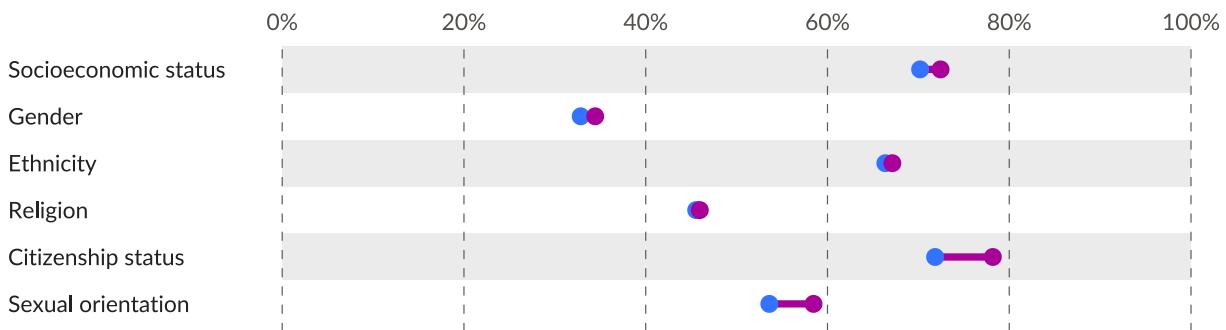
### Trust and Safety



### Accountability and Due Process



### Discrimination



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021 and 2024

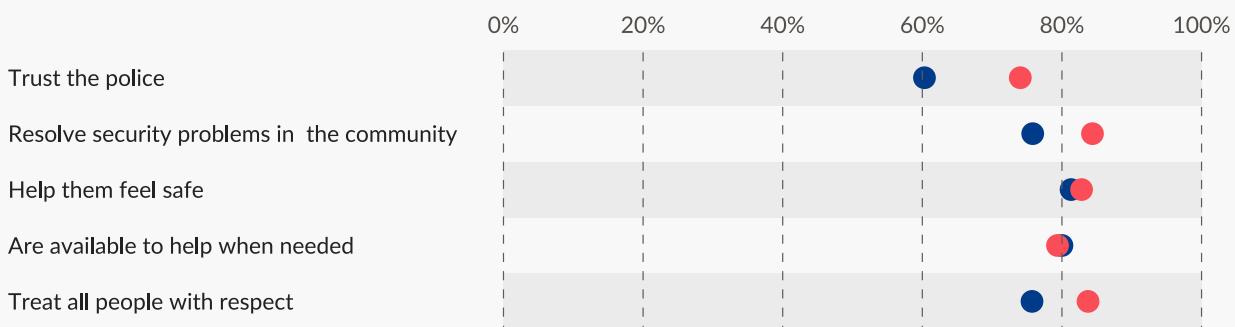
# Police

Chart 22

## Perceptions of the Police, by Political Affiliation

Opinions on the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement

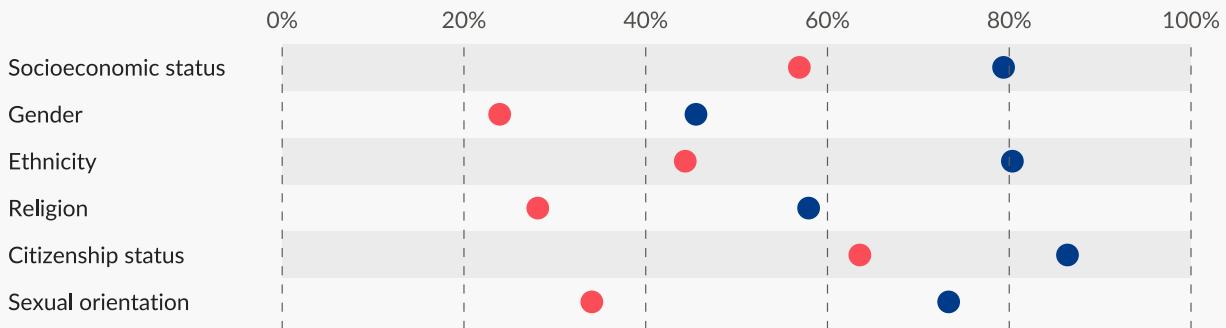
### Trust and Safety



### Accountability and Due Process



### Discrimination



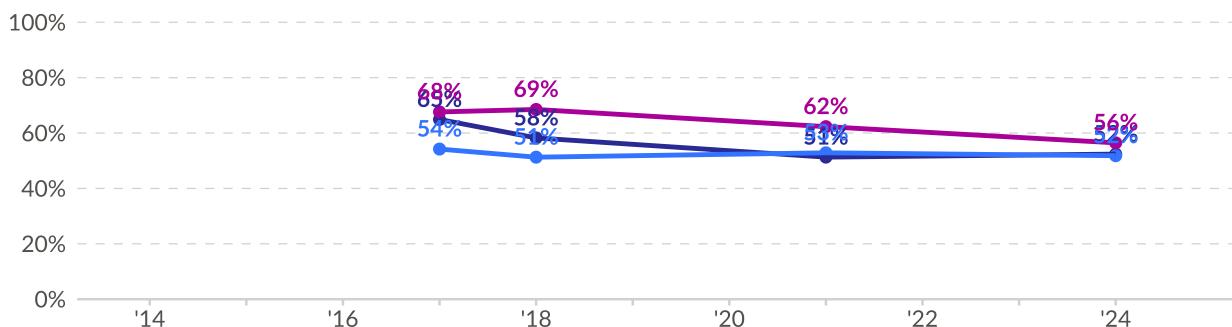
# Criminal Justice System

Chart 23

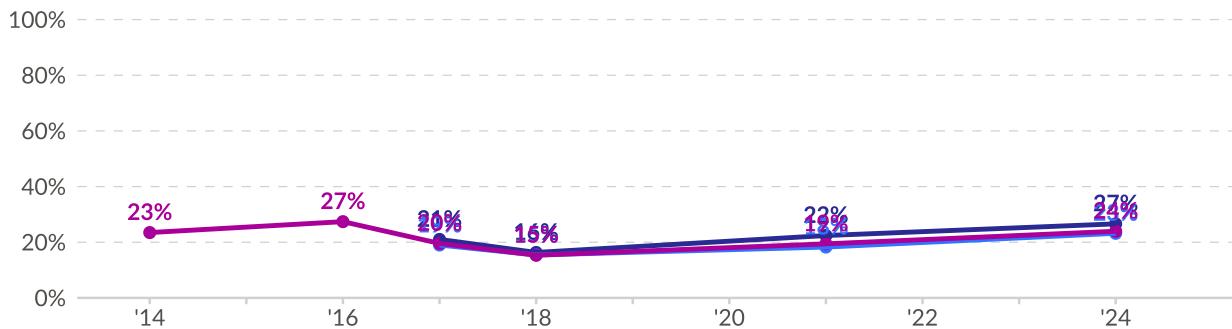
## Criminal Justice Actors

*Perceptions of criminal justice actors in the United States*

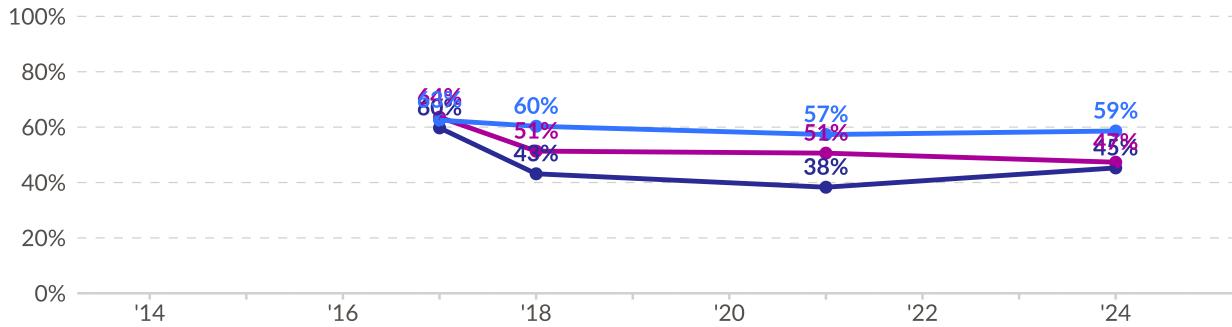
Trust



Corruption



Independence



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024

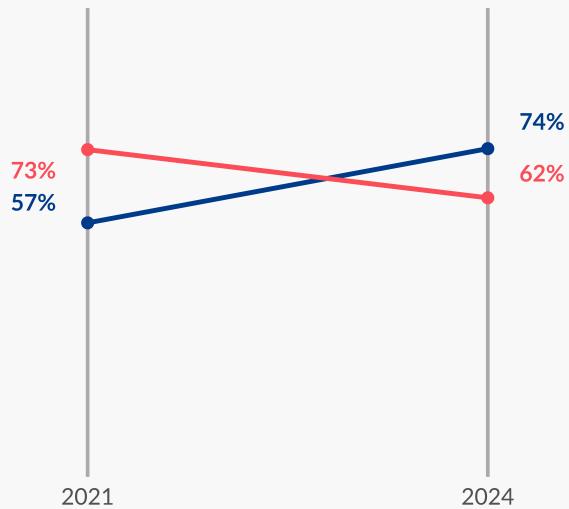
# Criminal Justice System

Chart 24

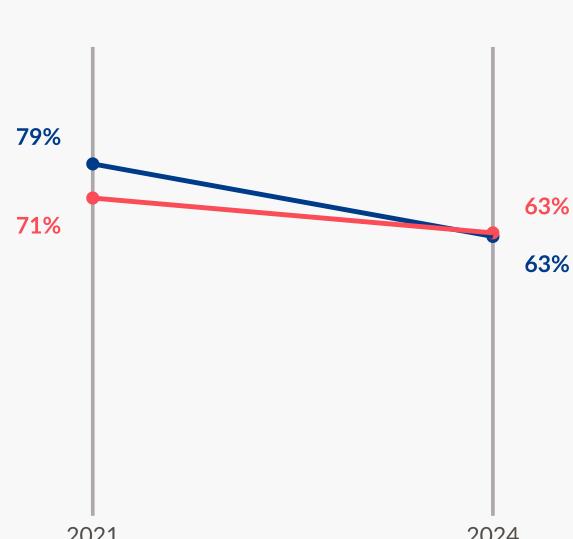
## Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System, by political affiliation

None

### Courts guarantee everyone a fair trial



### Courts are more concerned about procedures than with justice



### Courts are biased towards money or influence

