

THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT



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THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT: A 50-STATE SURVEY

REPORT #115: AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS IN SCIENCE

USA, June 2025

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ROCHESTER



THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT

Report of June 23, 2025, v.1

The Civic Health and Institutions Project

and

The COVID States Project

A joint initiative of:

Northeastern University,

Harvard University,

Rutgers University,

University of Rochester

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Note on methods:

Between April 10, 2025, and June 10, 2025, we collected a total of 31,062 responses from individuals age 18 and older across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The surveys were conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for more details, see chip50.org and covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to 2020 vote choice and turnout, race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the latest in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors in the United States.

More information on methodology is available at www.chip50.org/survey-methodology.

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Or visit us at www.chip50.org or www.covidstates.org.

American Attitudes Toward Government Interventions in Science

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Americans who disapprove of the administration's science-related policies outnumber those who approve by more than two to one. On average, 48% *disapprove or strongly disapprove* of recent government actions in that space, while only 21% *approve or strongly approve*.
- The most negatively viewed actions are the pause in public health information dissemination (51% disapproval) and the firing of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) employees (50% disapproval).
- Approval levels for individual actions are low; only the dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (29%) and the layoffs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (27%) received more than 25% approval.
- Average approval of science-related government actions is highest among Republicans (42%), men (28%), graduate degree holders (30%), and high-income respondents (31%). Disapproval is strongest among Democrats (74%), African Americans (56%), women (53%), and those aged 65 and older (55%).
- A majority of Americans support greater government investment in research: 57% favor increased *medical research* funding and 42% support increased *scientific research* funding. Relatively few want funding cuts: only 10% for medical research and 16% for science.
- Even among Republicans, nearly half (48%) favor more medical research funding, though only 31% support increases in science research funding. A quarter of Republicans support cuts for scientific research and 15% for medical research.
- While support for research remains strong, the proportion of Americans reporting high trust in scientists declined from 58% in 2020 to 36% in 2025, with sharper drops among Republicans (from 54% to 26%) than among Democrats (from 67% to 50%).
- Despite declines in public confidence, scientists and doctors remain more trusted than most institutions, including Congress, the Supreme Court, and the news media.

Introduction

Since the start of its second term, the Trump administration has made sweeping changes across the US federal science and health sectors. The changes included massive budget and workforce cuts, agency reorganizations, and shifts in research priorities. While framed by the administration as efforts to reform government and reduce bureaucratic spending, critics argue that these moves endanger public health and risk long-term damage to scientific innovation.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the world's largest public funder of biomedical research. It supports studies to find new treatments for cancer, diabetes, dementia, and other diseases, and works to improve overall human health. In 2025, the agency faced proposals to cut its budget by 40%, reducing funding from approximately \$47 billion to \$27 billion¹. NIH was also instructed to implement a new policy capping indirect cost reimbursements at 15%, far below the typical current range of 30–70%. Indirect costs on grants are used by universities to pay for research infrastructure, including lab space, utilities, and administrative personnel. By June 2025, the NIH had terminated over 2,100 research grants totaling \$9.5 billion, as well as \$2.6 billion in contracts², amounting to roughly 20% of its annual budget.

The National Science Foundation (NSF), which oversees fundamental science and engineering research, also had to pause its grant distributions. Government plans for the agency include a 55% budget cut, massive layoffs, and major restructuring³. Other agencies with public health missions, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), were similarly targeted with significant budget and personnel cuts⁴.

Starting early in its term, the Trump administration instructed federal health officials to pause all public communication. Agencies were also directed to take down website content, health datasets, and interactive tools that included language the White House deemed objectionable⁵. Materials were often targeted based on keywords such as "gender" or "diversity", regardless of the context in which those terms were used.

Overall, these developments sparked widespread opposition due to their impact on the institutions responsible for medical research, public health, and US scientific leadership.

¹ www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/04/16/hhs-budget-cut-trump/

² www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/federal-judge-says-trump-cuts-nih-grants-are-illegal-politico-reports-2025-06-16/

³ www.science.org/content/article/exclusive-nsf-faces-radical-shake-officials-abolish-its-37-divisions

⁴ www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/04/05/q-s1-58312/hhs-layoffs-rif-cdc-fda-nih

⁵ www.statnews.com/2025/02/14/tracking-cdc-data-changes-trump-executive-order-targets-gender/

"Stand Up for Science" rallies were held in multiple cities across the country⁶. Leading researchers sent open letters to Congress⁷, describing the administration's actions as a "wholesale assault on US science." Hundreds of NIH staff members signed a declaration decrying the politicization of science and pushing back against cutbacks and changes in the agency⁸. Meanwhile, federal judges reinstated science grants that had been deemed illegally terminated², though the administration is now appealing these rulings.

This report explores American attitudes to those recent changes, drawing on survey data collected between April and June 2025, from 31,062 US adults in all 50 states and Washington, DC. Within the broader landscape of institutional disruption, we focus on reporting how actions related to science were received differently across political, demographic, and geographic lines.

Attitudes Towards Changes in Government Agencies

Our survey revealed fairly widespread disapproval of government actions targeting science and medicine during the first months of the Trump administration. On average, over twice as many people disapprove of these actions as approve (see Figure 2). When asked about eight specific changes, nearly half of the respondents said they *disapproved* or *strongly disapproved* of each one, while fewer than one in three *approved* or *strongly approved* of any individual action (see Figure 1).

The science-related administration actions we asked about included:

1. The **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** fund and conduct medical research. The Trump administration suspended their grant funding, halting biomedical research.
2. The **National Science Foundation (NSF)** funds scientific research. The Trump administration paused NSF funding distribution, delaying new research projects.
3. The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** are responsible for protecting public health. The Trump administration fired 10% of CDC employees, including people in charge of responding to disease outbreaks.

⁶ www.washingtonpost.com/science/2025/03/07/stand-up-for-science-protest/

⁷ www.nytimes.com/2025/03/31/science/trump-science-nas-letter.html

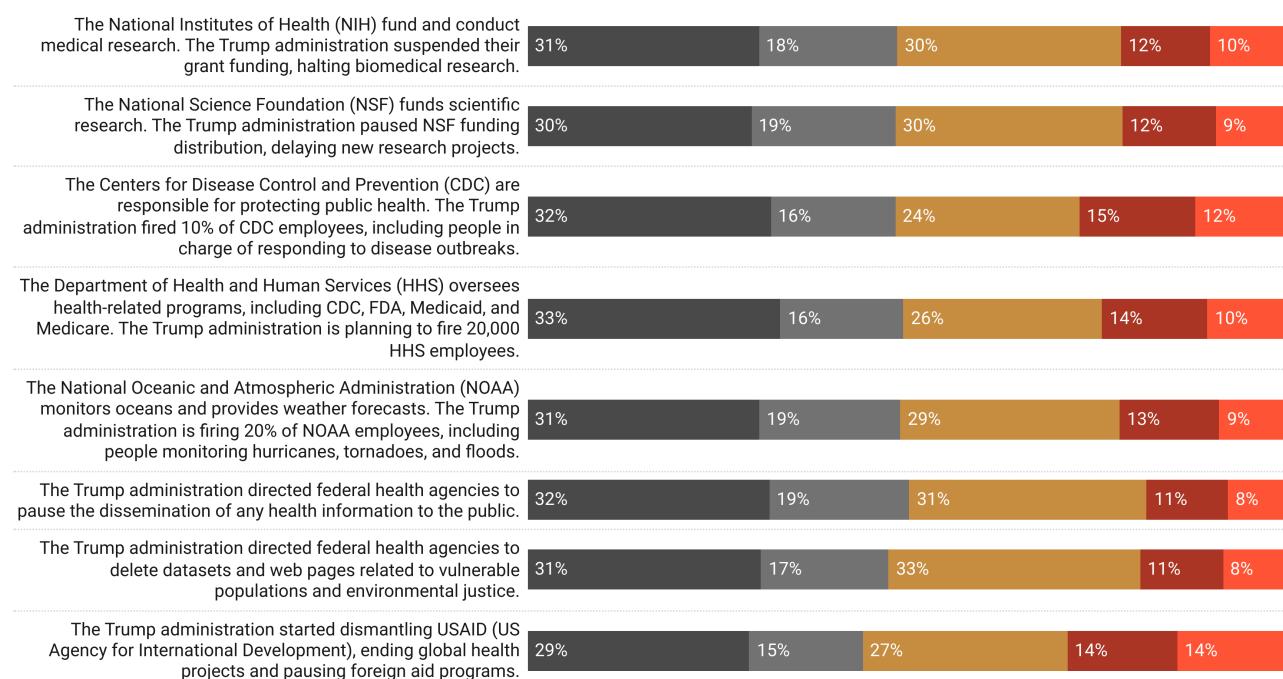
⁸ www.standupforscience.net/bethesda-declaration

4. The **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** oversees health-related programs, including CDC, FDA, Medicaid, and Medicare. The Trump administration is planning to fire 20,000 HHS employees.
5. The **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** monitors oceans and provides weather forecasts. The Trump administration is firing 20% of NOAA employees, including people monitoring hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods.
6. The Trump administration directed **federal health agencies** to pause the dissemination of any health information to the public.
7. The Trump administration directed **federal health agencies** to delete datasets and web pages related to vulnerable populations and environmental justice.
8. The Trump administration started dismantling **USAID (US Agency for International Development)**, ending global health projects and pausing foreign aid programs.

American Attitudes on Science-Related Actions of the Trump Administration

Respondent approval of government actions related to science and medicine.

Strongly disapprove Disapprove Neither approve nor disapprove Approve Strongly approve



National sample, N = 31,062, Time period: 04/10/2025-06/10/2025

Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 1.

Overall, approval was highest for the dismantling of USAID (29% *approve* or *strongly approve*) and for the layoffs at CDC (27% approval). Disapproval was highest for the pause in disseminating health information (51% *disapprove* or *strongly disapprove*) and the firing of NOAA employees (50% disapproval). While close to a third of respondents strongly disapproved of each action, strong approval was consistently below 15%.

A significant portion of the public expressed ambivalence, with "*neither approve nor disapprove*" responses ranging from 24% to 33% depending on the action. Taken as a whole, the numbers reveal considerable skepticism or opposition to policies seen as weakening science and health agencies.

While there were some distinctions in how people reacted to different science-related policies, patterns were highly consistent across the board. Most respondents tended to give similar answers to all eight questions we asked⁹. Based on that, we created a combined measure for further analysis by averaging each respondent's approval score across all eight items. This summary score captures individuals' overall orientation toward the second Trump administration's approach to science and public health policy.

At the national level, 21% of Americans *approved* or *strongly approved* of the Trump administration's science-related actions, while 48% *disapproved* or *strongly disapproved* (see Figure 2). Disapproval was most pronounced among Democrats, 74% of whom expressed negative views, compared to just 8% who approved. Other groups with high disapproval included African Americans (56%), Asian Americans (50%), women (53%), seniors aged 65 and older (55%), and individuals with college or graduate degrees (50%).

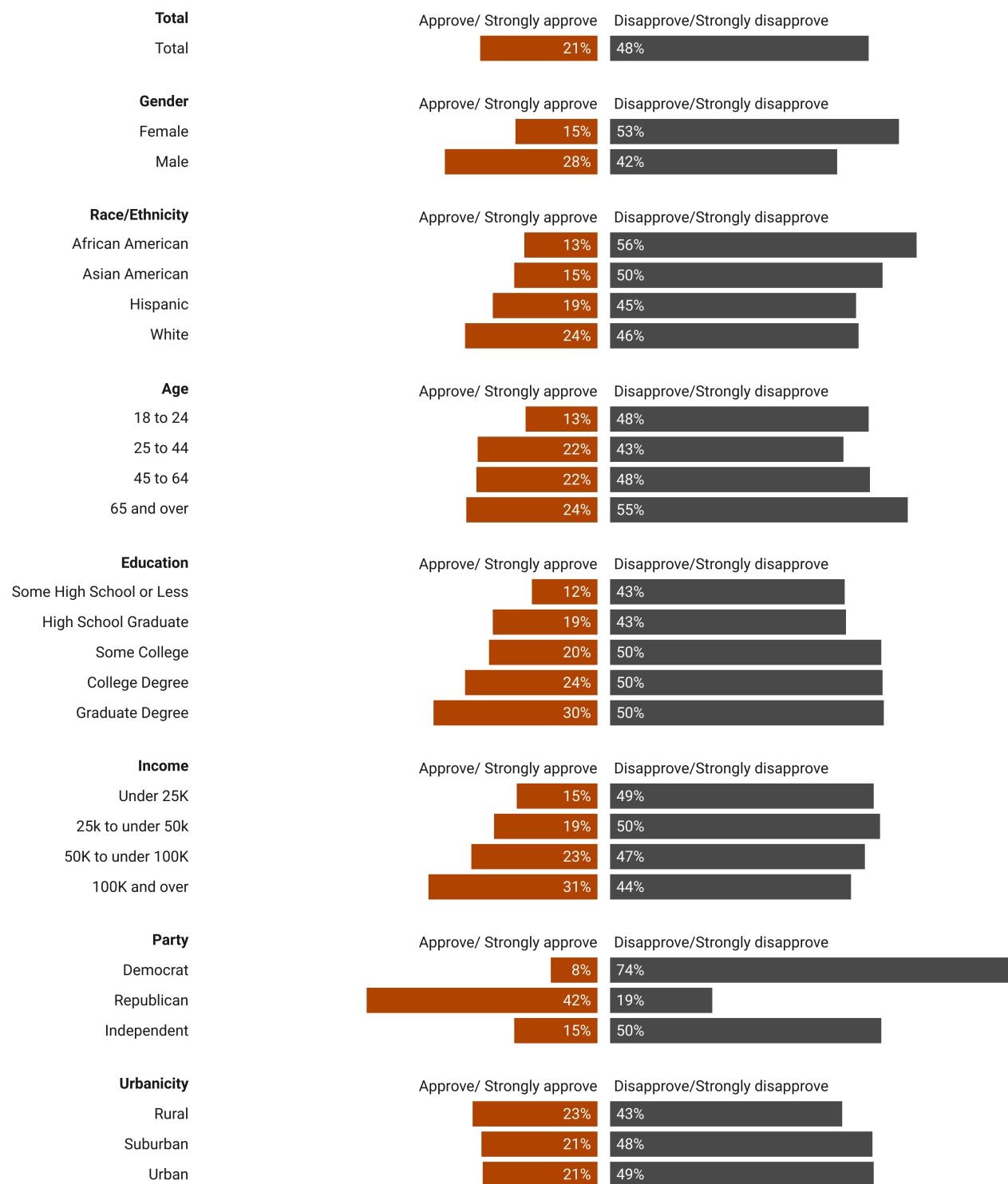
Although graduate degree holders were among the most disapproving groups, they also showed some of the highest approval rates, suggesting polarized views within more highly educated populations. Americans with graduate degrees were among the least likely to give a neutral answer: only 20% said "*neither approve nor disapprove*", compared to 38% of people who never went to college.

Republicans stood out as the only group in which approval outweighed disapproval, with 42% expressing approval and only 19% disapproval. Approval was also higher among men (28%), White respondents (24%), and high-income earners making over \$100K (31%). Still, even among Republicans and high-income individuals, a substantial share of respondents remained ambivalent or disapproving. Additionally, over twice as many Republicans (39%) as Democrats (17%) took a neutral position, saying they neither approved nor disapproved.

⁹ Inter-item correlations ranged from .72 to .88; Cronbach alpha was .96, and in a principal component analysis, all items loaded on a single factor explaining 80% of the variance.

Public Approval of Science-related Actions of the Trump Administration

Respondent approval averaged across eight Trump administration actions related to science and medicine. Those include suspending NIH and NSF funding; mass firing employees of CDC, HHS, and NOAA; pausing dissemination of health communication; deleting government data, and dismantling the USAID.



National sample, N = 31,062, Time period: 04/10/2025-06/10/2025

Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 2.

In models accounting for multiple relevant demographic, political, and geographic factors (Figure 3), the strongest predictors of approving the administration's actions were partisanship and ideology. In addition to Republicans and those with conservative views, men and people with higher income were also more likely to approve.

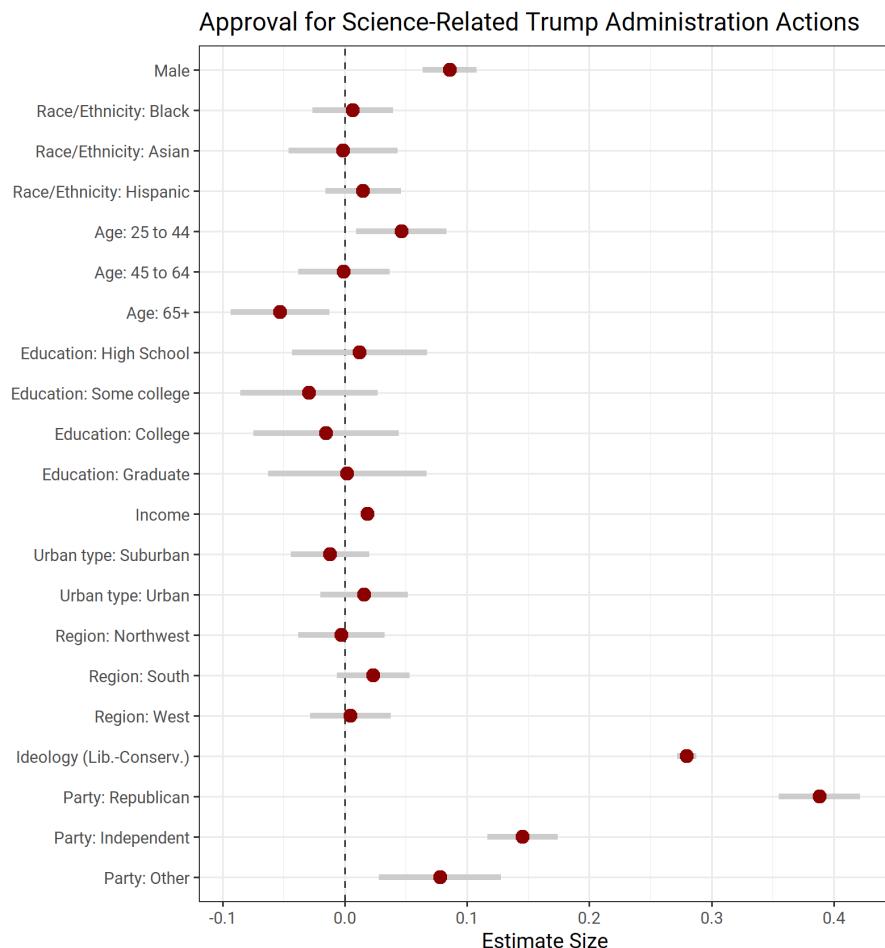


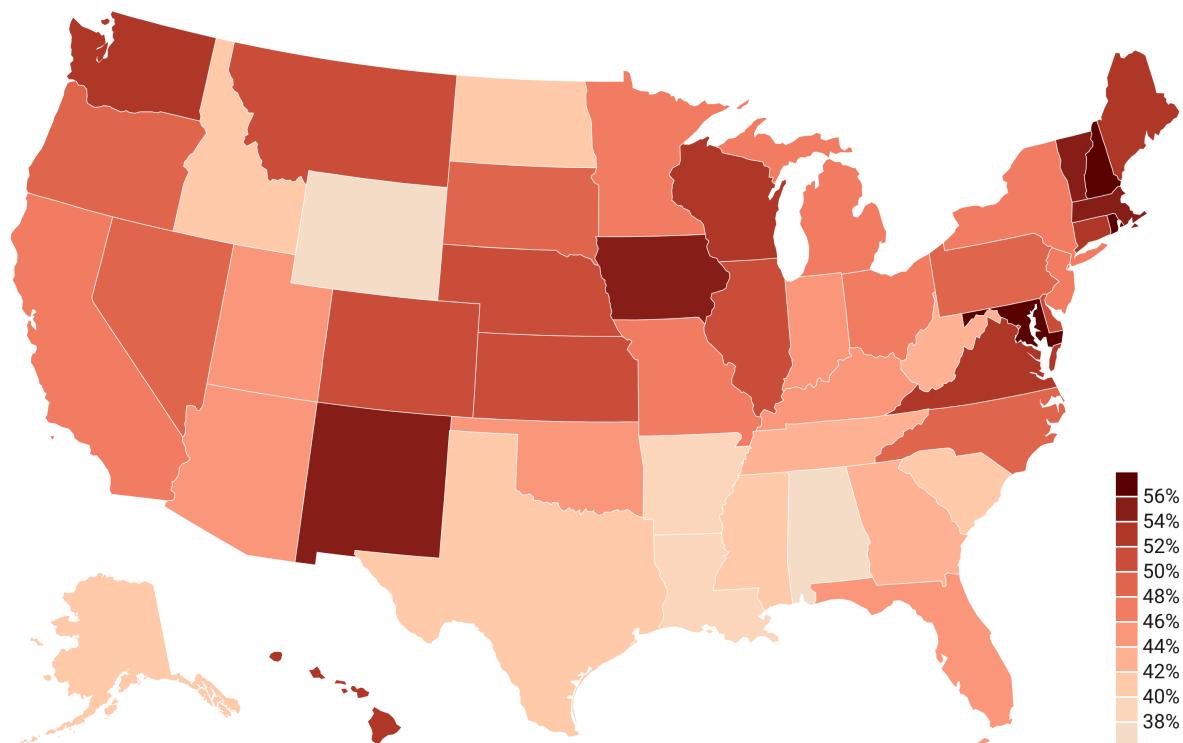
Figure 3.

Approval of the Trump administration's science-related actions varied considerably across states, with the Northeast region showing the strongest opposition (see Appendix A). The regional divides reflect political attitudes: states that typically lean Democratic tended to have the highest levels of disapproval, while more Republican-leaning states showed greater support or ambivalence.

Leading the nation in disapproval were New Hampshire (58%), Rhode Island (58%), Maryland (56%), New Mexico (55%), and Vermont (55%). The states with the lowest disapproval included South Carolina (41%), Idaho (41%), Arkansas (40%), Louisiana (39%), Alabama (38%), and Wyoming (37%). Correspondingly, those states had among the highest approval rates, along with Alaska (28% *approve or strongly approve*) and Florida (27% approval).

Disapproval of Science-Related Government Actions by State

Percent respondents who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove" of Trump administration science policies. Respondent scores were averaged across eight Trump administration actions related to science and medicine. Those include suspending NIH and NSF funding; mass firing employees of CDC, HHS, and NOAA; pausing dissemination of health communication; deleting government data, and dismantling the USAID.



National sample, N = 31,062, Time period: 04/10/2025-06/10/2025

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 4.

Preferences for Funding Science in 2025

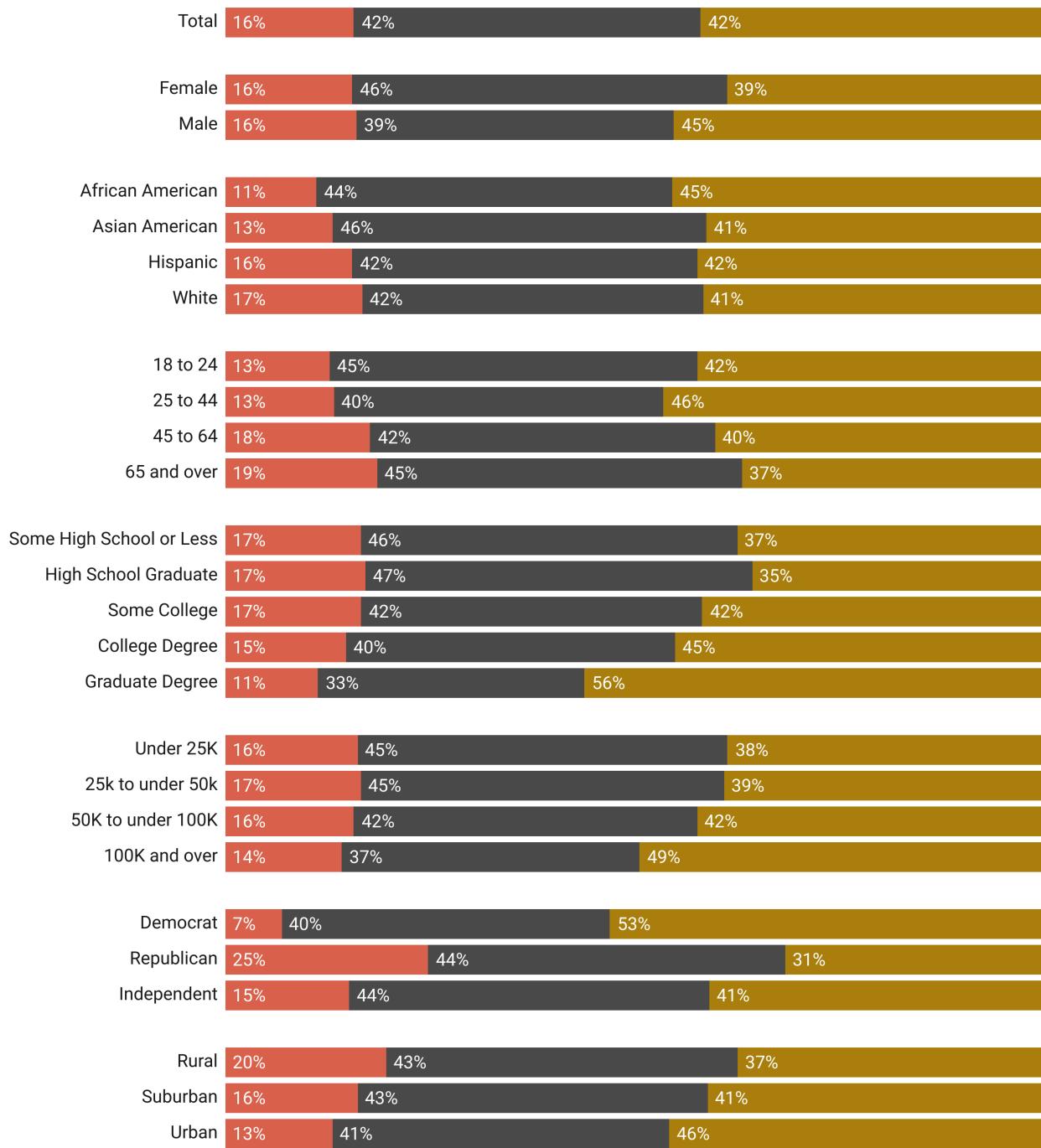
In our most recent survey, we asked respondents whether they thought in 2025 the government should invest in *scientific research* more, less, or the same amount of money as in 2024. We also asked an identical question about *medical research*.

Our results showed strong support for *increased* federal investment in research. When asked how much money the US government should invest in scientific research, 42% of Americans said it should be more than in 2024, another 42% preferred the same amount as in 2024, and only 16% favored cutting spending. Support for increasing scientific research funding was highest among graduate degree holders (56%), those earning over \$100K (49%), and Democrats (53%). While Republicans were more hesitant (only 31% supported increased spending and 25% wanted cuts), a clear majority of Americans across demographic and political groups opposed cutting scientific funding.

Public Opinion on Government Investment in Scientific Research

How much money should the US government invest in scientific research in 2025?

■ Less than in 2024 ■ The same amount as in 2024 ■ More than in 2024



National sample, N = 31,062, Time period: 04/10/2025-06/10/2025

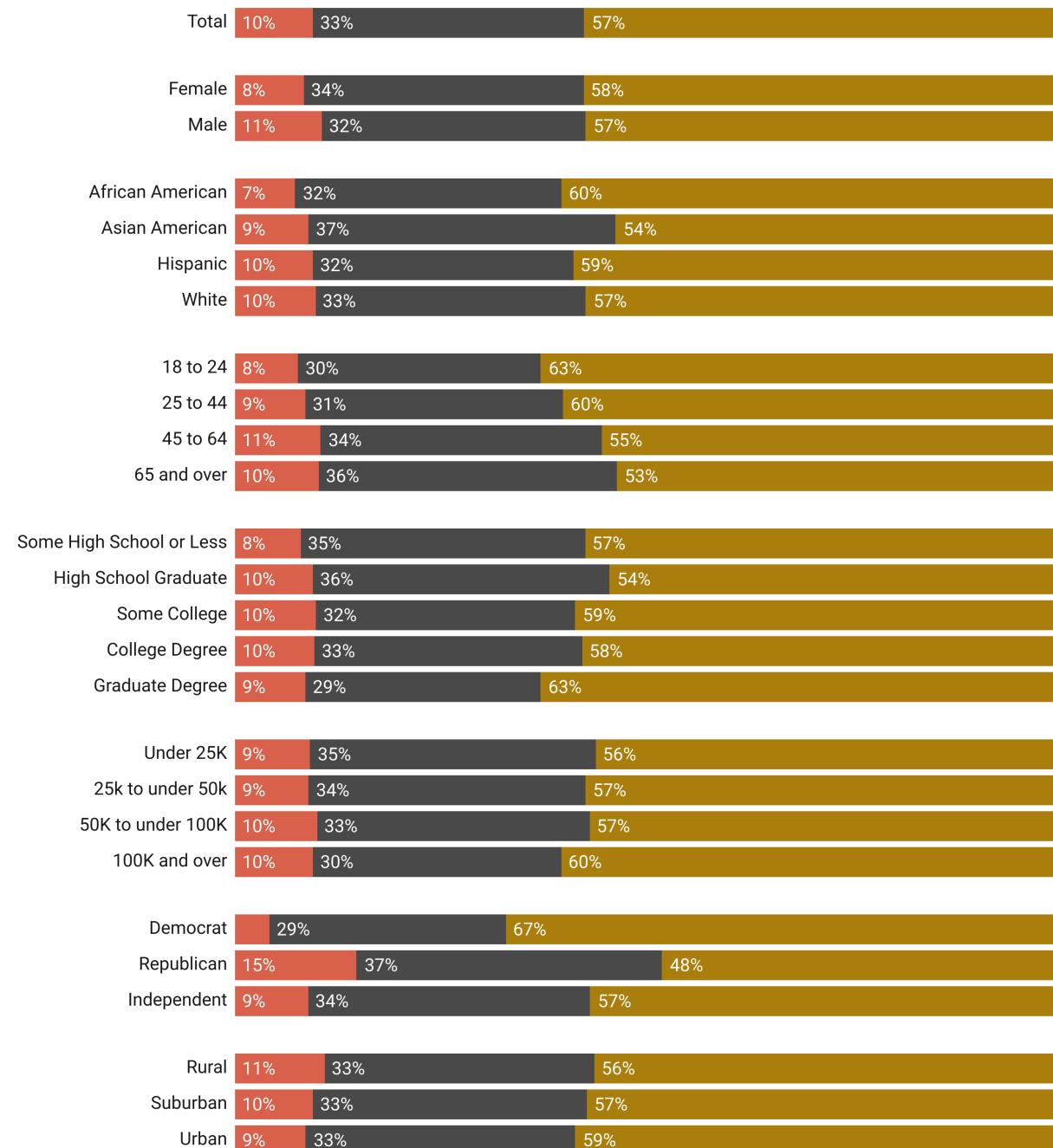
Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (CHIP50.org)

Figure 5.

Public Opinion on Government Investment in Medical Research

How much money should the US government invest in medical research in 2025?

Less than in 2024 The same amount as in 2024 More than in 2024



National sample, N = 31,062, Time period: 04/10/2025-06/10/2025

Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 6.

Public enthusiasm was even stronger when it came to medical research. Overall, 57% of Americans favored increasing government investment in medical research in 2025, with just 10% preferring to reduce it. This view was remarkably consistent across gender, age, and income groups. Younger adults aged 18 to 24 (63%), graduate degree holders (63%), and Democrats (67%) were especially likely to support more money for medical research. Even among Republicans, nearly half (48%) supported increasing funding, and only 15% favored cuts.

Overall, the results show widespread, bipartisan, and cross-demographic support for medical research, positioning it as a rare point of consensus in American public opinion.

In models accounting for multiple relevant demographic, political, and geographic factors (Figure 7-8), partisanship and ideology were the strongest predictors of supporting funding for science. Republicans and conservative Americans were least likely to back more spending in these areas. Being male and having a graduate degree predicted stronger support for funding scientific research, but not medical research. Higher income was associated with stronger support for both.

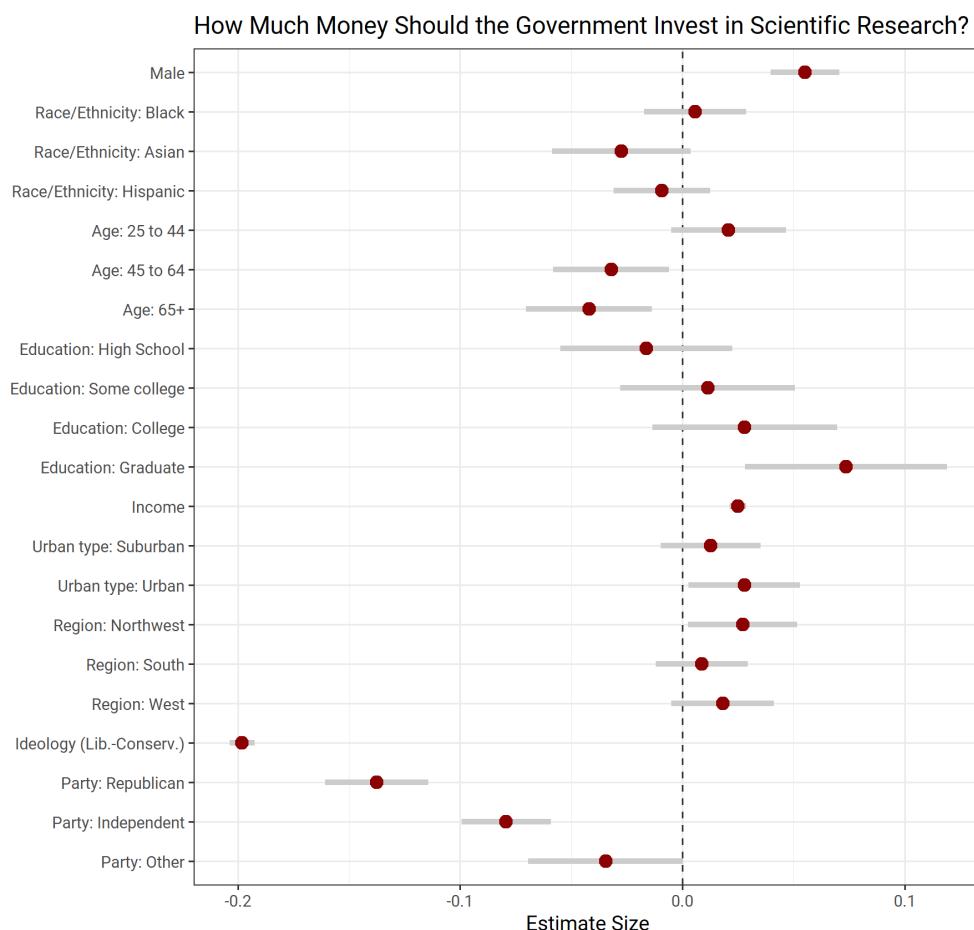


Figure 7.

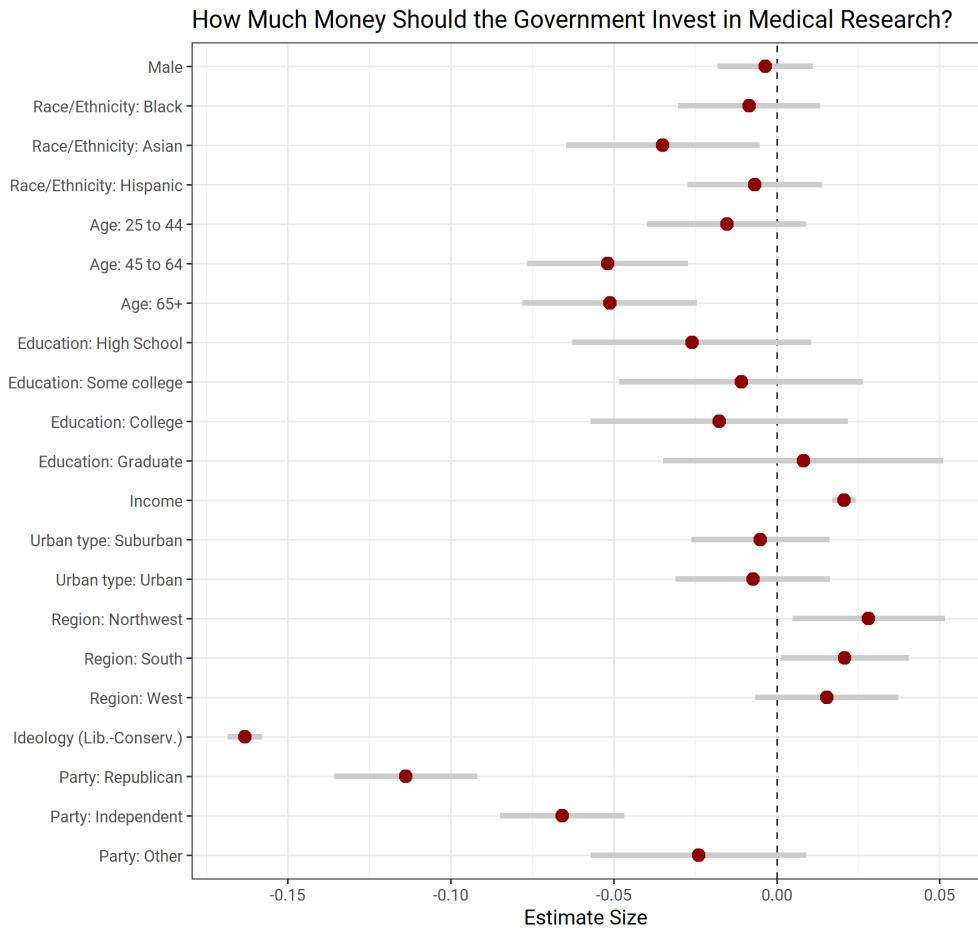


Figure 8.

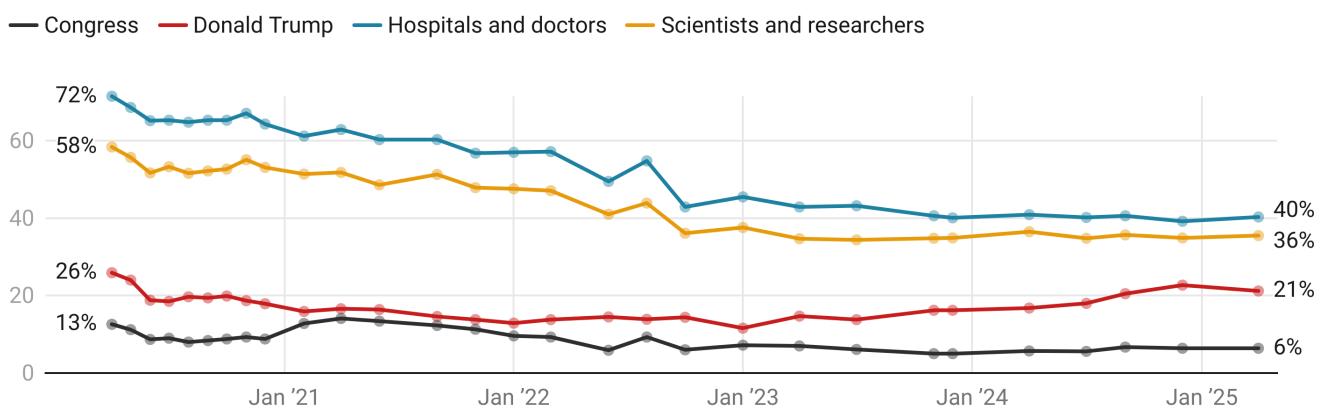
Taken together, our findings suggest that medical research funding enjoys widespread, cross-partisan support with relatively modest ideological gaps. On the other hand, support for increased scientific research funding is more sharply divided along political lines. Republicans and conservatives are distinctly less likely to favor increased spending on science, even when controlling for demographic variables, while Democrats, liberals, and the highly educated are consistently more supportive. This distinction aligns with prior analyses showing that public health research tends to elicit broader agreement than more abstract or politically charged domains of science policy.

Trust in Scientists and Researchers

Attitudes toward science and medicine policies are shaped in part by public trust in the institutions and professionals that operate in those domains. Over the past five years, that trust has not only declined substantially, but has also become more politically polarized. In May 2020, over 58% of Americans (67% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans) reported trusting *scientists and researchers* "a lot". By May 2025, those numbers had fallen sharply: overall trust declined by 23 percentage points, dropping to just 36% of Americans.

Trust in Science, Medicine, and Government Over Time (2020-2025)

How much do you trust the following people and organizations to do what is right?
[percent respondents who say "A lot"]



Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 9.

Among Democrats, trust fell by 17 points (to 50%), while among Republicans, it dropped by 28 points (to 26%), marking a striking partisan divergence.

Trust in Scientists and Researchers Over Time by Party (2020-2025)

How much do you trust the following people and organizations to do what is right?
[percent respondents who say "A lot"]



Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

• Created with Datawrapper

Figure 10.

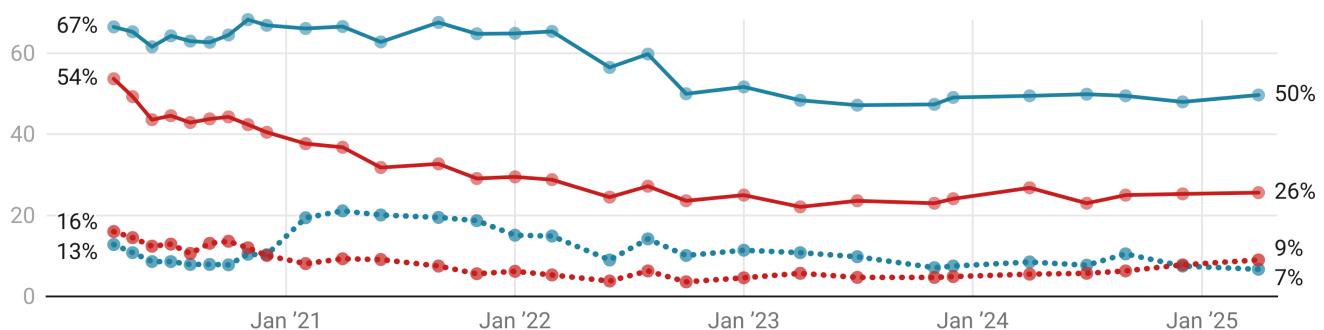
Despite these declines, *scientists and researchers* (36% reporting “a lot” of trust) and *hospitals and doctors* (40% “a lot”) remain among the most trusted institutions in the U.S., rivaled only by the military (38% “a lot”). Trust in other civic institutions is considerably lower. Only 6% of Americans say they trust Congress “a lot,” while 8% express high trust in the news media, and 13% trust the White House and the Supreme Court a lot. Even among Republicans, scientists (26%) and medical professionals (39%) are more trusted than most other public institutions, surpassed only by the military (51%), Donald Trump (50%), and the police (37%).

These findings show that while overall trust in science and medicine has eroded, these domains still retain a comparatively high degree of credibility, particularly in comparison with other social institutions.

Trust in Institutions Over Time by Party (2020-2025)

How much do you trust the following people and organizations to do what is right?
[percent respondents who say “A lot”]

— Democrats: Trust in science — Republicans: Trust in science
··· Democrats: Trust in congress ··· Republicans: Trust in congress



Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 11.

Appendix A: State Tables

Table 1. Respondent approval averaged across eight Trump administration actions related to science and medicine. Those include suspending NIH and NSF funding; mass firing employees of CDC, HHS, and NOAA; pausing the dissemination of health communication; deleting government data and dismantling the USAID.

State	Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Neither approve nor disapprove	Approve	Strongly approve	N
AK	17.8	23.8	30.4	21.6	6.5	382
AL	18.5	19.4	37.0	19.2	5.8	525
AR	19.8	19.9	36.1	16.9	7.3	451
AZ	25.2	19.6	31.8	17.9	5.5	612
CA	25.1	22.2	31.8	14.7	6.2	1589
CO	26.1	24.3	28.8	14.5	6.3	510
CT	31.6	20.8	28.8	13.0	5.8	477
DC	28.5	21.9	25.6	17.8	6.1	405
DE	31.0	20.5	27.6	15.6	5.3	461
FL	24.8	20.3	27.6	19.1	8.3	1237
GA	20.7	22.6	33.3	15.0	8.4	775
HI	31.9	21.5	30.5	11.1	4.9	401
IA	28.9	25.6	24.7	14.9	5.8	493
ID	21.8	18.8	36.3	16.7	6.3	459
IL	30.6	20.9	29.5	15.1	3.8	832
IN	25.9	18.2	35.8	13.9	6.2	558
KS	28.1	22.9	31.0	14.8	3.2	449

KY	23.1	21.3	32.7	19.1	3.9	569
LA	22.9	15.7	37.7	18.7	5.0	544
MA	32.1	22.2	25.5	13.4	6.8	528
MD	32.1	24.0	24.7	13.8	5.4	631
ME	26.6	25.4	30.7	14.6	2.7	447
MI	25.4	20.6	30.9	18.1	5.0	757
MN	27.6	20.2	30.6	17.1	4.4	529
MO	25.6	21.0	30.5	18.8	4.2	604
MS	18.6	23.3	38.1	15.5	4.6	523
MT	27.7	23.6	27.0	16.5	5.2	447
NC	26.8	22.0	30.3	15.7	5.2	768
ND	19.2	22.7	37.7	14.7	5.7	429
NE	28.2	23.5	29.3	15.3	3.7	500
NH	31.3	26.4	25.2	11.0	6.0	421
NJ	26.7	20.5	32.3	16.5	3.9	673
NM	36.6	18.5	28.0	11.5	5.4	511
NV	25.9	22.4	30.5	14.9	6.2	558
NY	26.2	21.5	32.0	15.8	4.5	1243
OH	24.6	22.0	30.7	16.3	6.4	843
OK	22.8	21.2	34.3	13.9	7.7	555
OR	30.2	19.3	30.5	14.5	5.6	510
PA	29.1	20.4	30.0	14.6	5.9	859
RI	33.7	23.7	25.8	12.6	4.1	438
SC	19.9	21.2	33.1	20.7	5.1	535
SD	26.5	22.9	29.1	16.7	4.8	455
TN	23.9	19.4	32.4	15.8	8.5	614

TX	22.2	19.6	36.3	16.2	5.6	1511
UT	29.7	16.2	32.4	14.2	7.6	456
VA	31.2	21.2	27.0	13.9	6.8	621
VT	34.0	21.0	27.4	13.8	3.8	310
WA	33.2	19.1	27.8	15.2	4.7	603
WI	29.6	23.9	24.1	15.9	6.5	572
WV	21.7	20.6	37.1	14.9	5.8	484
WY	19.3	18.1	36.5	15.9	10.2	386