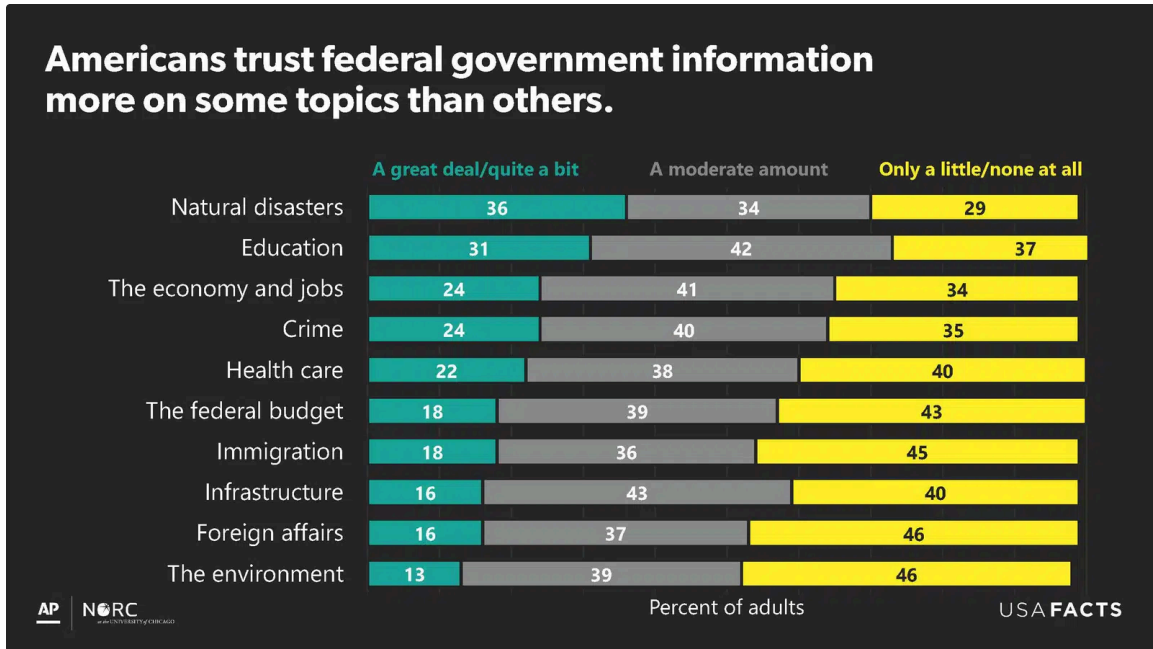


State of the Facts Poll 2019

Americans agree that facts should be accurate, transparent, and based on data. However, they disagree about which sources of information to trust. These findings come from our 2019 State of the Facts Poll, conducted in conjunction with The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Published Wed, December 4, 2019 by the [USAFacts Team](#)

[Home](#) / [Population](#) / [Articles](#) / State of the Facts Poll 2019



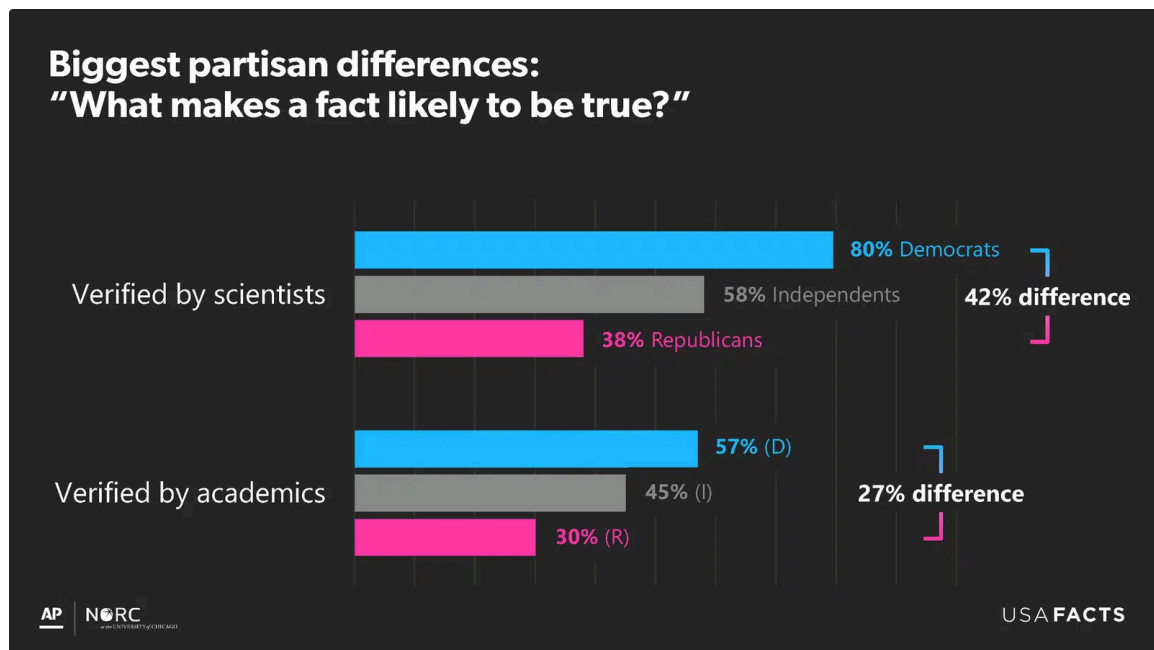
Each year, USAFacts conducts a poll to assess how Americans feel about facts, data, and where that data comes from. The resulting report, called the State of the Facts poll, provides insights into to how Americans agree and disagree on the

nature of data. We partnered with [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) to conduct our 2019 poll.

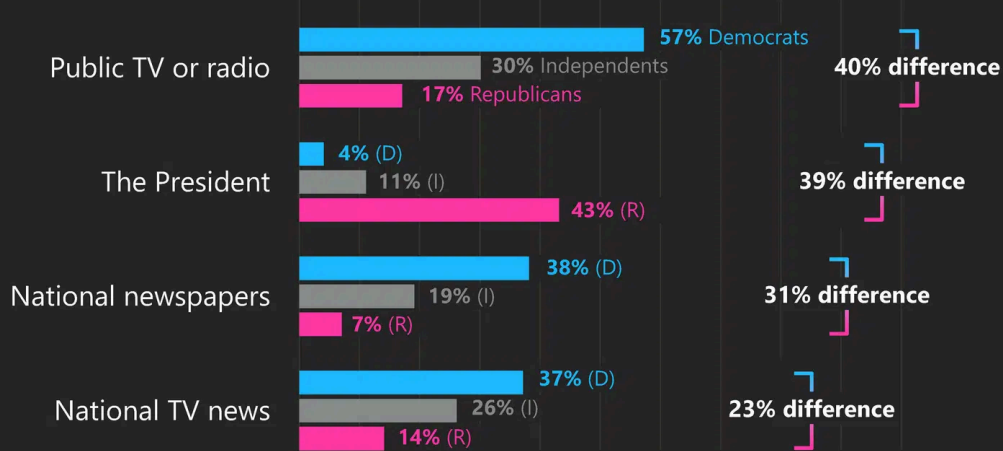
The State of the Facts Poll examines Americans' perceptions of what constitutes a fact, their ability to understand facts, and their use and trust of government sources. While who and what people trust is divided along political lines, Americans have consensus on other aspects of facts and data.

For example, 54% of Americans say the presidents' political beliefs have a lot of influence on government information, while 30% say the same about federal agency employees. Democrats and Republicans polled had similar views on this question.

[Download the data](#) | [Download the report](#)



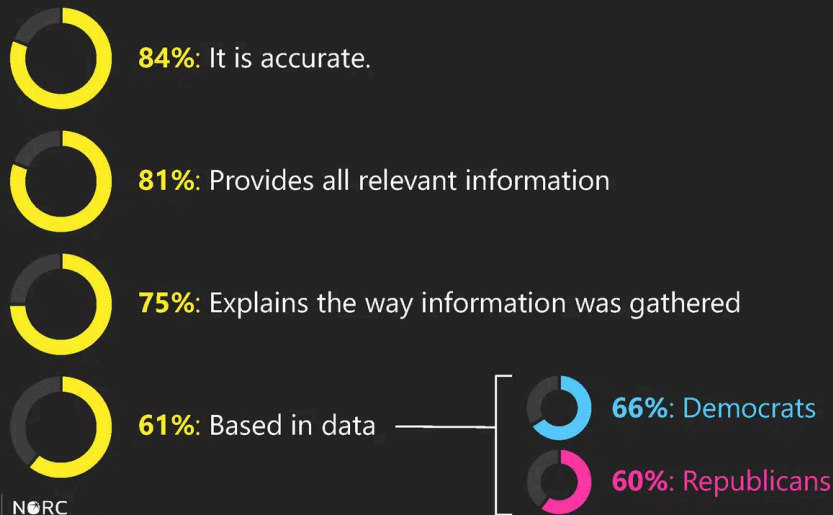
Biggest partisan differences: "How much do you trust each source?"



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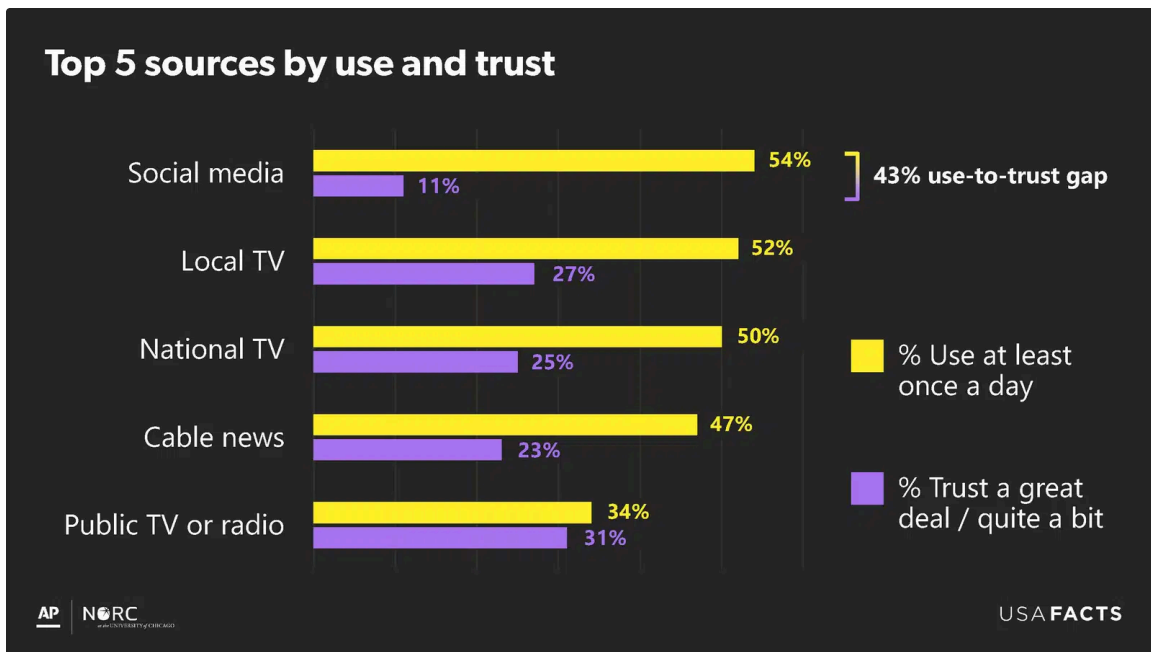
USA FACTS

Partisan agreement on "What makes a fact."



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USA FACTS



However, Americans trust the federal government more on some topics than others: Republicans are more likely than Democrats to trust government information on the economy (33% vs. 17%), immigration (25% vs. 14%), foreign affairs (22% vs. 13%), and infrastructure (21% vs 14%).

Meanwhile, there is a 40% difference in how much Democrats and Republicans trust public television or radio, with 57% of Democrats trusting it, as opposed to 17% Republicans. There’s a smaller gap in trust — but much less trust overall — when it comes to national TV news: 37% of Democrats said they trust it, while only 14% of Republicans did.

And as the 2020 presidential campaign gets underway, Americans are expressing deep skepticism about the information provided by political candidates. Just 9% of American adults say that candidates’ campaign messages are always or often based in fact. Only 13% say the same about political debates.

On the flip side, 54% of Republicans believe candidates' campaign messages are rarely or never based in facts, compared with 39% of Democrats thinking the same. There are generational differences, too: Baby Boomers have less confidence in politicians' statements than Millennials.

There were a few topics where the generations came together, and those instances illustrate a need for reliable data. Both 30% of Millennials and Baby Boomers — and 31% of Generation Xers — say they rarely or never think decisions by policymakers are based in factual information. There is a three-percentage-point gap between Boomers and Millennials on if they believe reporting from the media is rooted in facts.



State of the Facts 2019

State of the Facts Poll 2019

- Nationwide poll of 1,032 adults conducted October 15-28 using the AmeriSpeak Panel[®]. AmeriSpeak is NORC's probability based panel designed to be representative of all US households. Poll conducted by The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research
 - Margin of error +/- 4.2 percentage points
 - 888 via the web and 144 via telephone
 - Interviews conducted in English and Spanish
 - Cumulative response rate of 8.5%
 - Final stage completion rate = 29.1%
 - Weighted household panel response rate = 34.2%
 - Weighted household panel retention rate = 85.6%
- Examines views on federal government information and perceptions of facts

Key Findings



State of the Facts Poll 2019

- Americans say they face a challenging environment for finding facts.
 - Nearly half say they struggle with knowing whether information is true or not. This holds for Democrats and Republicans.
 - Majorities say the sources they come across are one-sided, and that they get conflicting information across sources.
 - Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say sources are one-sided.
 - Local TV, national TV, and social media are top news sources for information about the government but trust in these sources is low, especially for social media.

State of the Facts Poll 2019

- Americans are deeply divided along party lines in where they get information, and what they trust.
 - Democrats trust information from scientists, academics, and the media more than Republicans do.
 - Democrats are much more likely to use and trust national news sources; Republicans are more likely to trust the president.
 - Republicans express greater trust than Democrats in data from the government on the economy, immigration, foreign affairs and infrastructure.
- About 4 in 10 adults say political division in the country is due to Americans' reliance on different facts.

State of the Facts Poll 2019

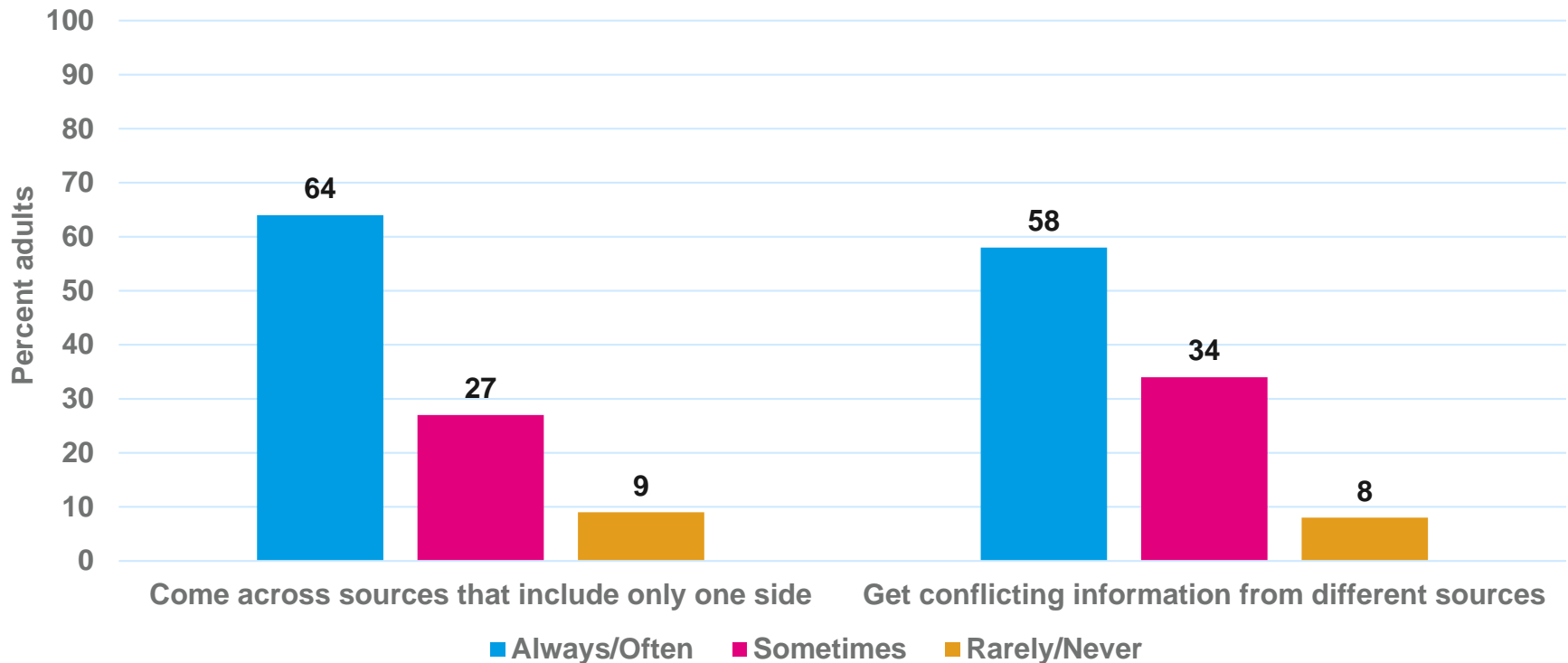
- Still, the public overwhelmingly agrees on what facts should be.
 - Majorities of Democrats and Republicans say transparency and being backed up by data are key elements.
- Americans across parties think the president's and Congress' politics influence federal government information. A minority says the same about employees of federal agencies.
 - As a source, the government is not often used or trusted compared to other places people go for facts.

State of the facts



Majorities report they frequently come across one-sided sources and conflicting information

State of the Facts Poll 2019

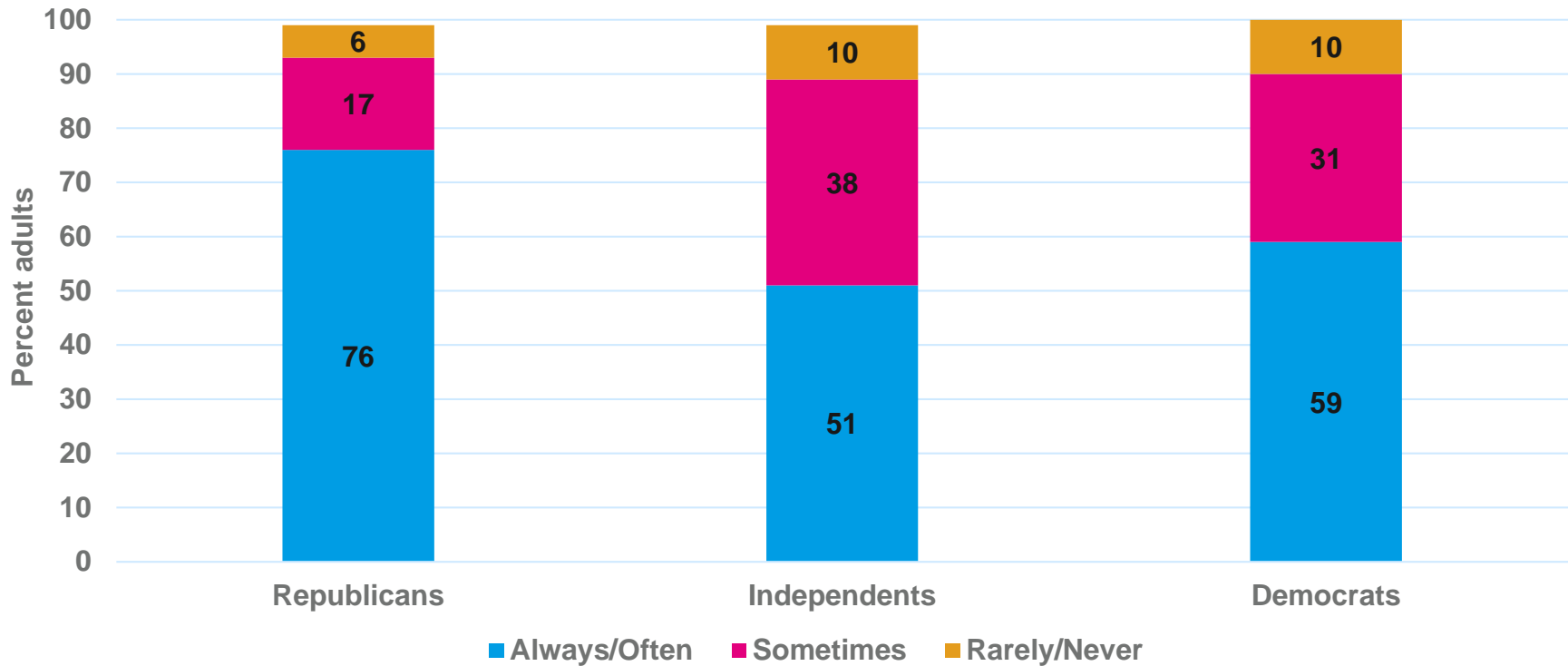


Question: How often do you feel like you ...

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Republicans are most likely to frequently come across one-sided sources

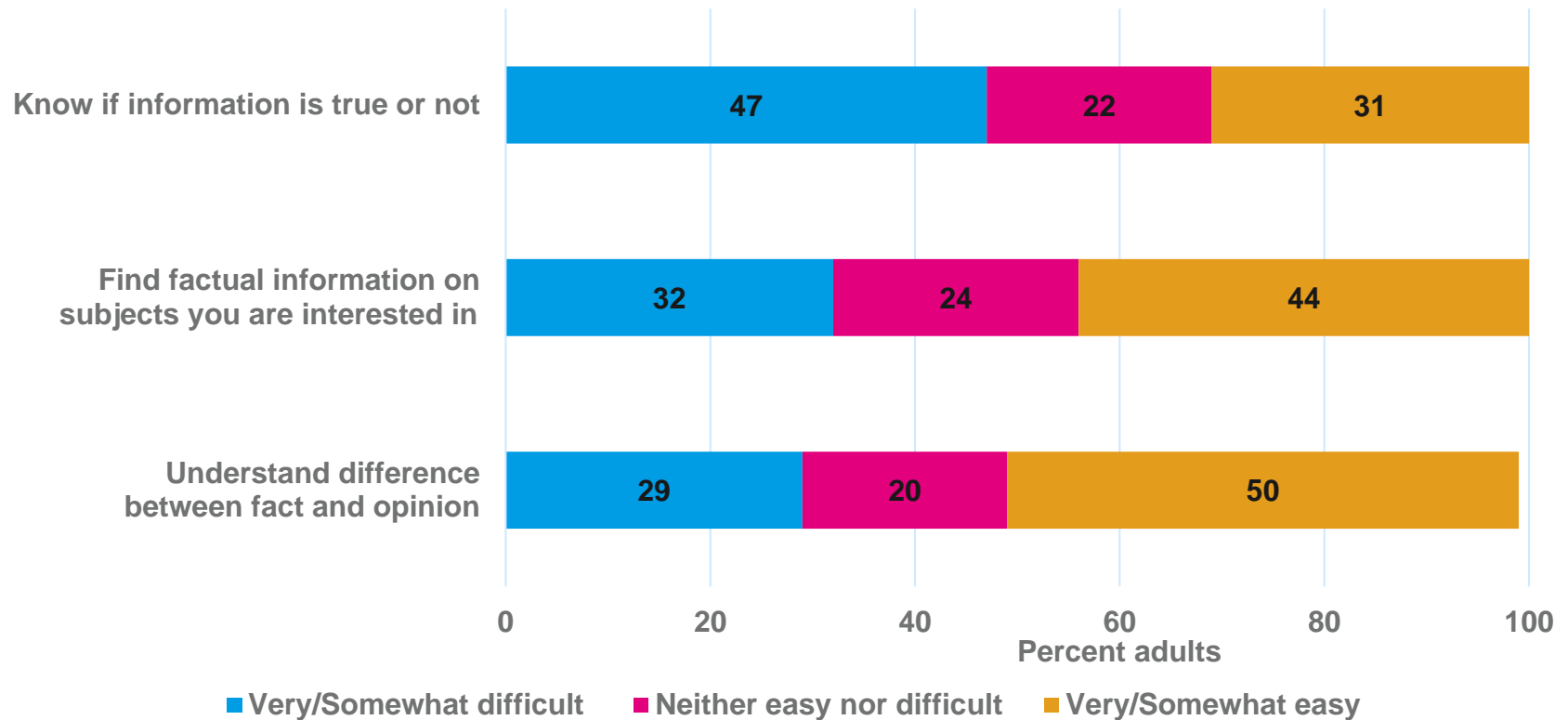
State of the Facts Poll 2019



Question: How often do you feel like you come across sources that include only one side ...
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Nearly half say it is hard to know if information is true, but fewer say the same about parsing fact vs. opinion

State of the Facts Poll 2019

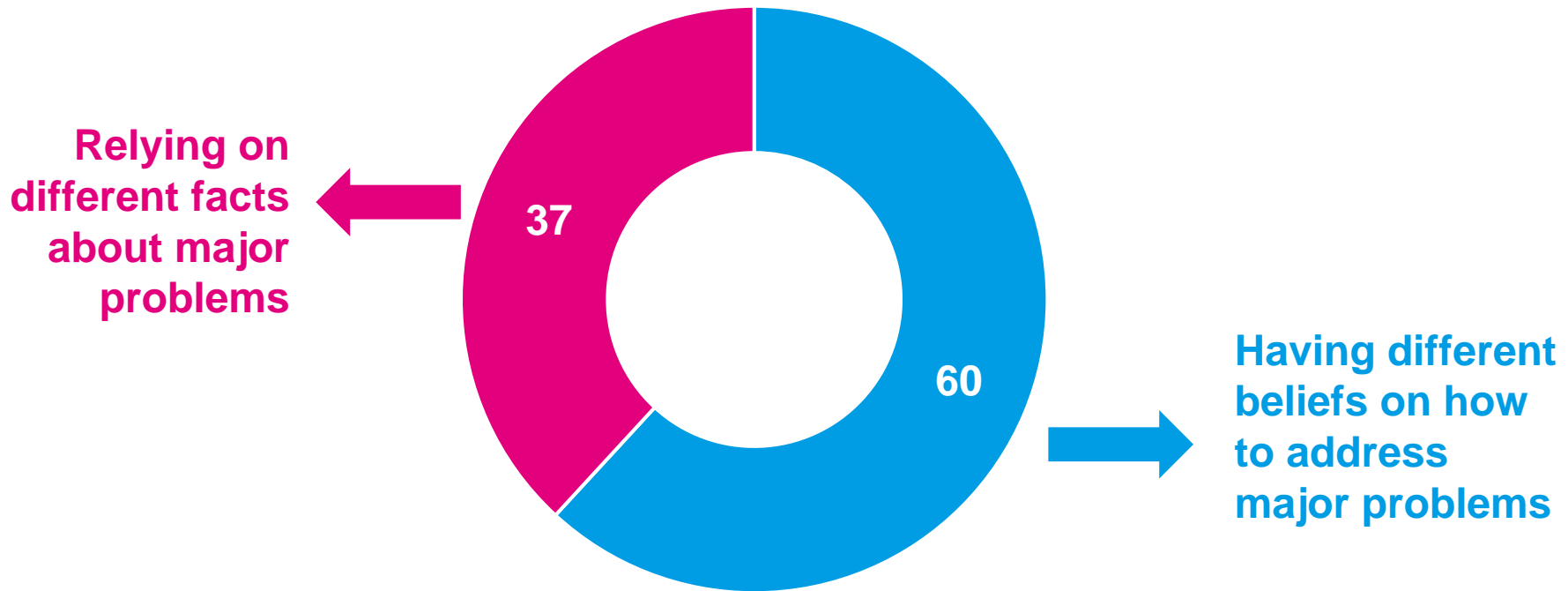


Question: Next, these days, how easy or difficult is it for you to...

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Majority says political division is due to different beliefs; nearly 4 in 10 say it's about different facts

State of the Facts Poll 2019



Question: 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...

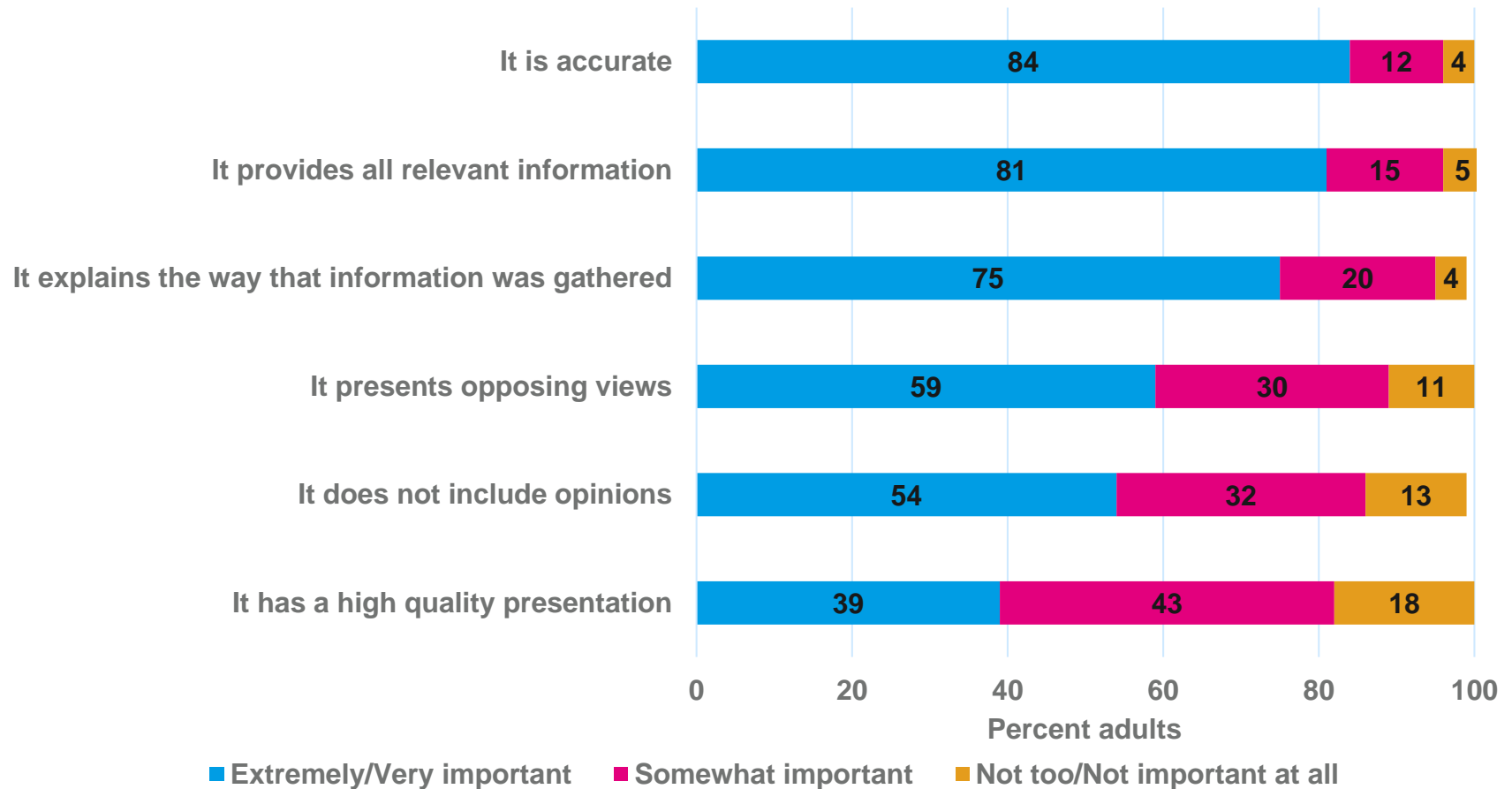
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

What is a fact?



Key characteristics of a fact include accuracy, completeness, and transparency

State of the Facts Poll 2019

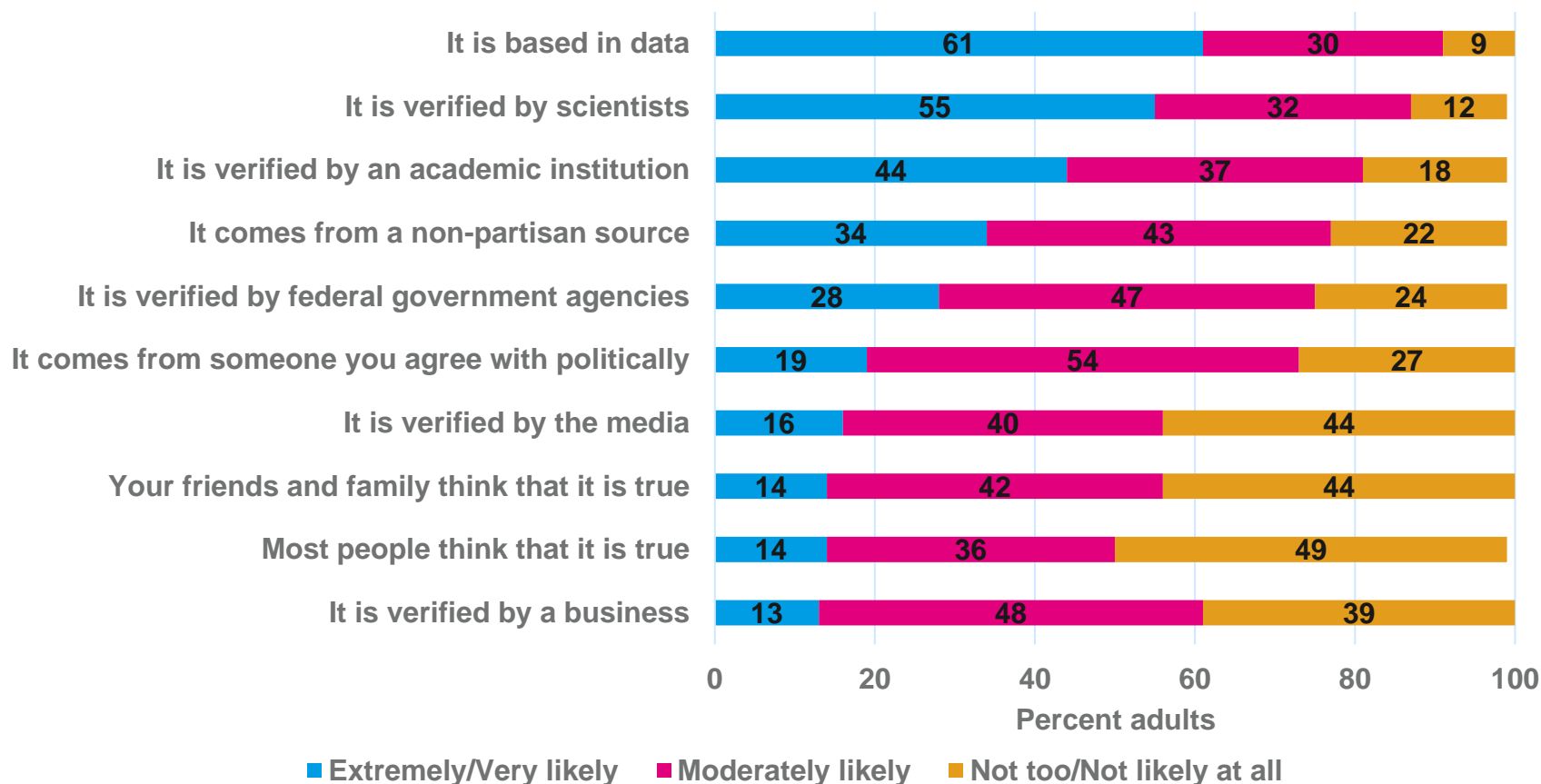


Question: Thinking about information you consider factual, how important is each of the following factors?
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



Majorities consider information factual if it is based in data and validated by scientists

State of the Facts Poll 2019



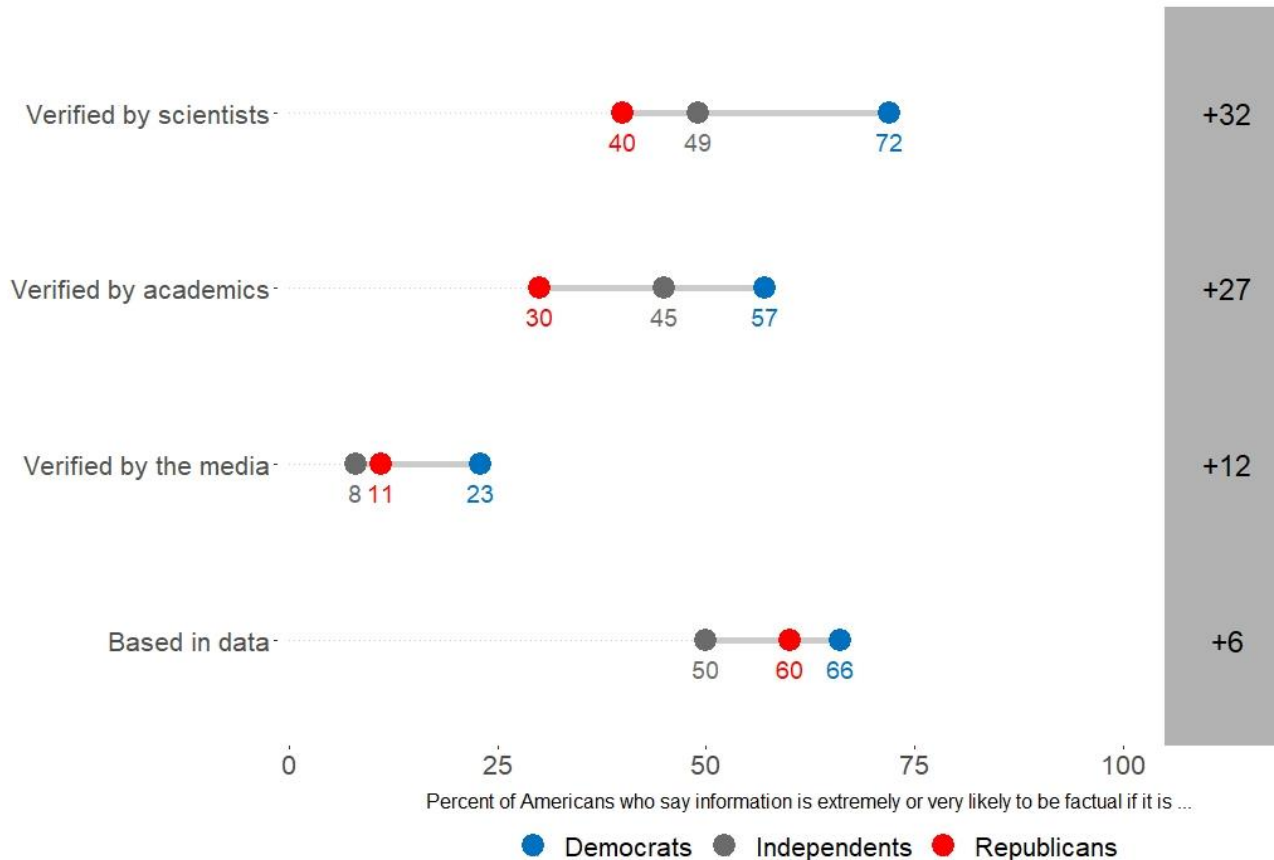
Question: How likely are you to consider information factual if it has each of the following characteristics?
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



Democrats and Republicans agree facts are based in data, disagree about scientists, academics, and media

State of the Facts Poll 2019

Percentage point difference between Democrats and Republicans

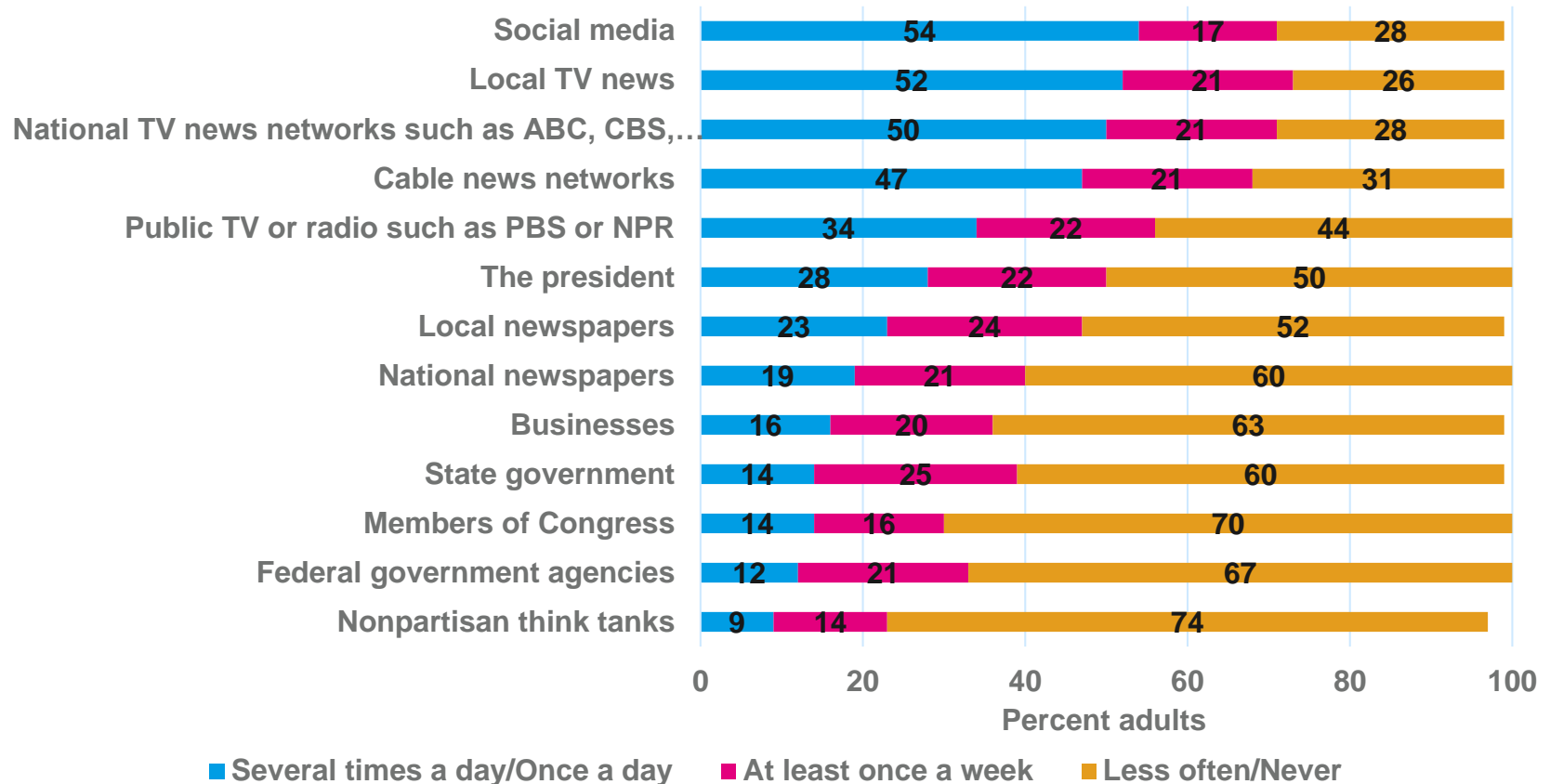


Question: How likely are you to consider information factual if it has each of the following characteristics?
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults
Note: Only significant partisan differences shown.



Social media and news media are top sources of information about the government

State of the Facts Poll 2019



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

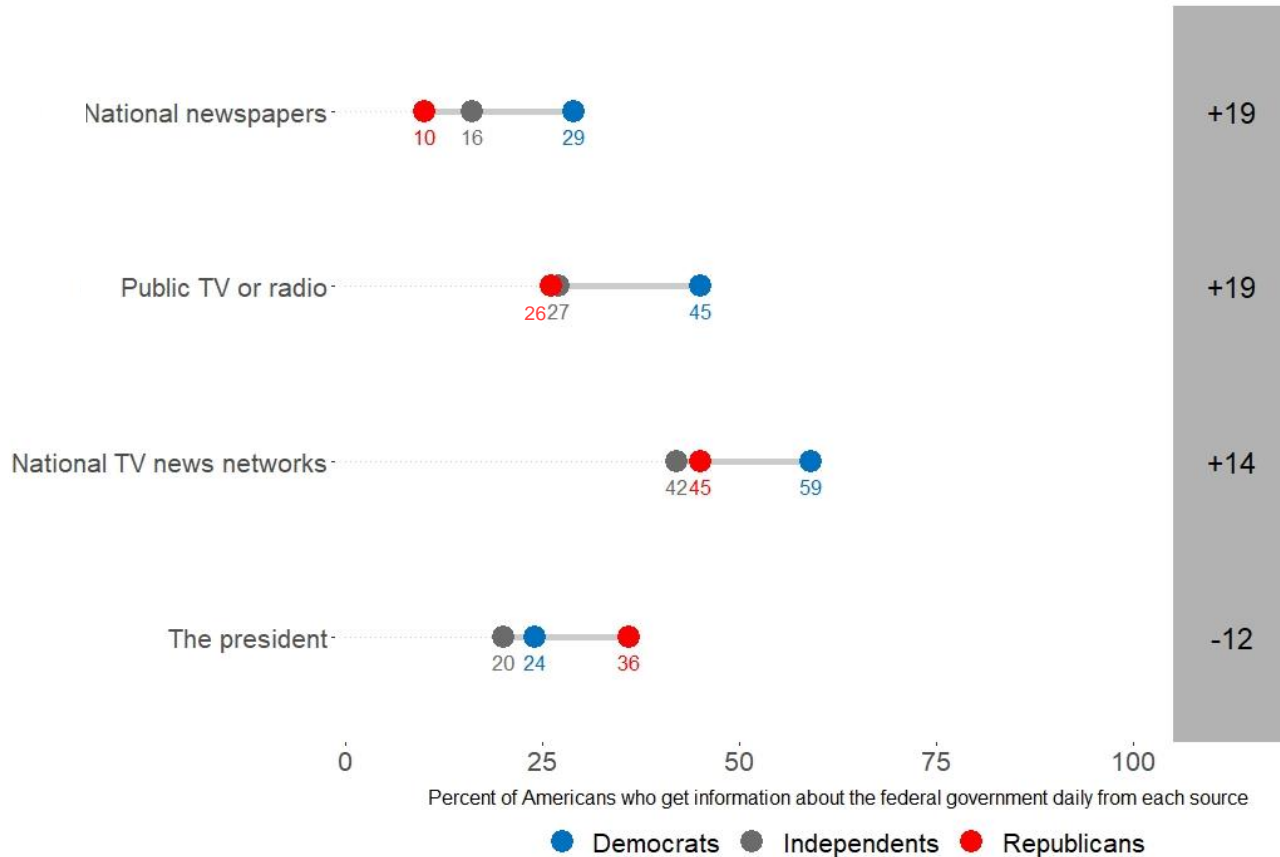
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



Democrats and Republicans differ in their use of several information sources

State of the Facts Poll 2019

Percentage point difference between Democrats and Republicans



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

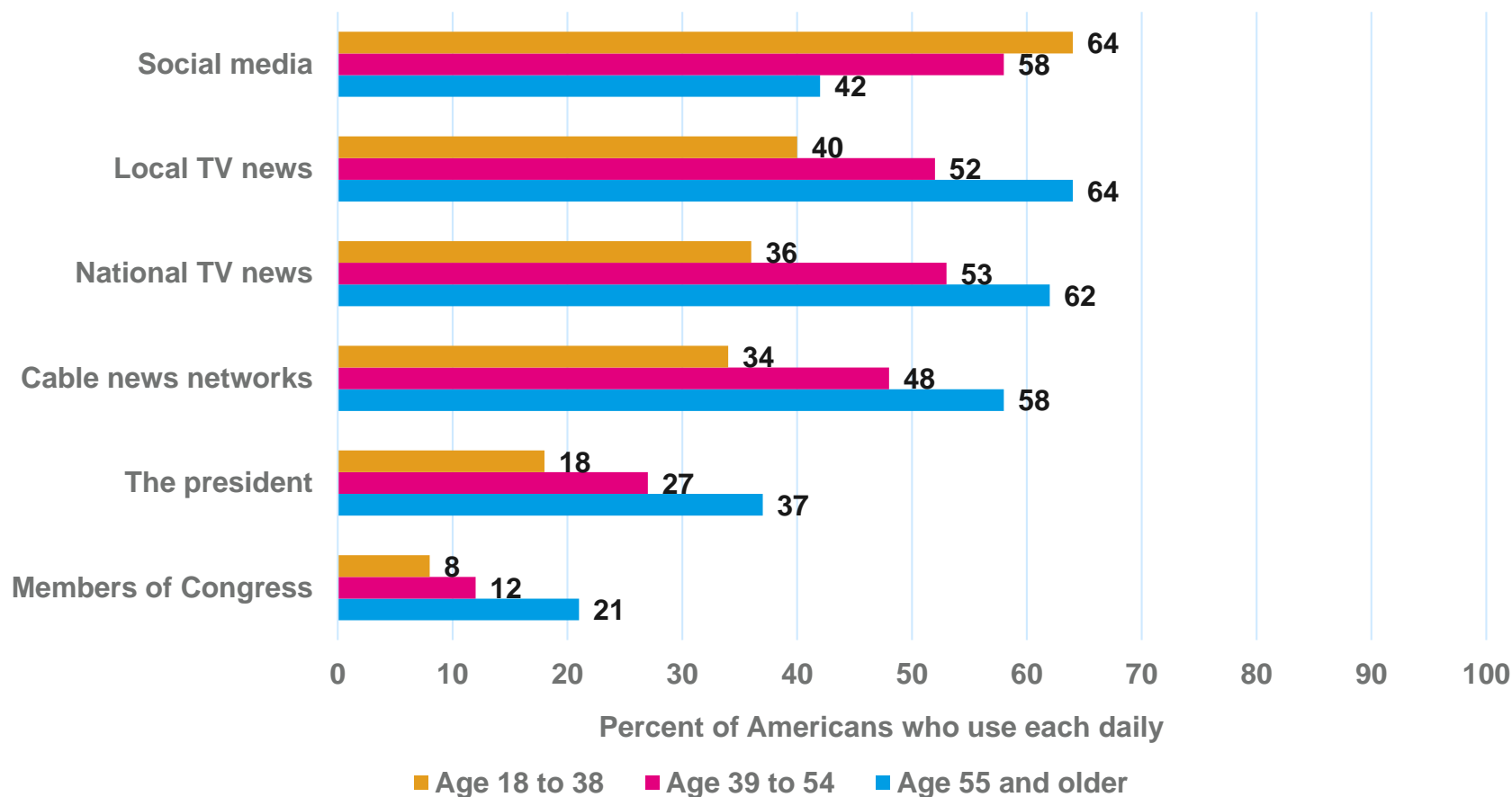
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Note: Only significant partisan differences shown.



Younger generations are more likely to get news from social media, while Boomers are more likely to turn to TV

State of the Facts Poll 2019



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

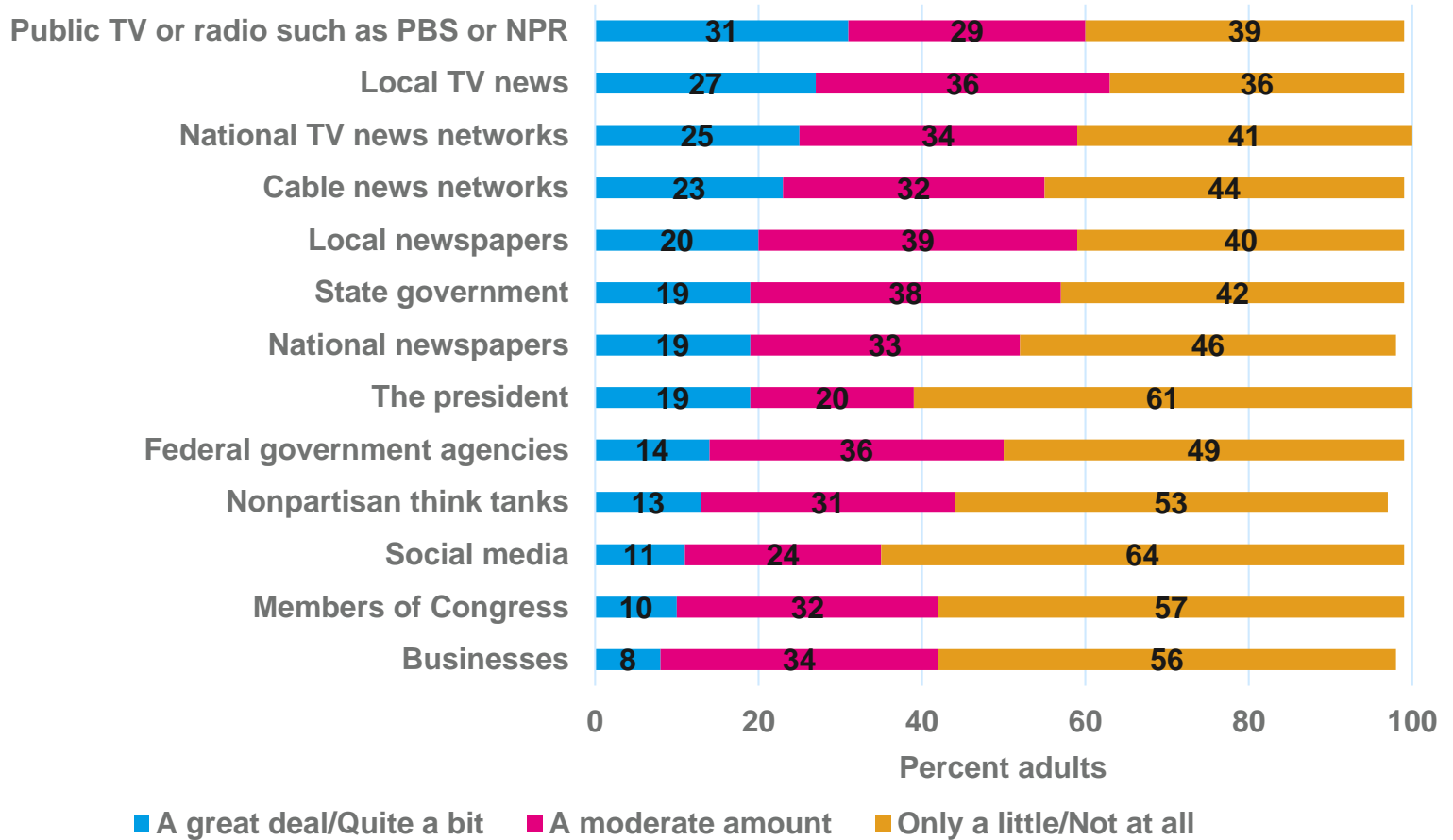
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Note: Only significant differences between age groups shown



Trust in information sources is low across the board, but especially for social media

State of the Facts Poll 2019



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

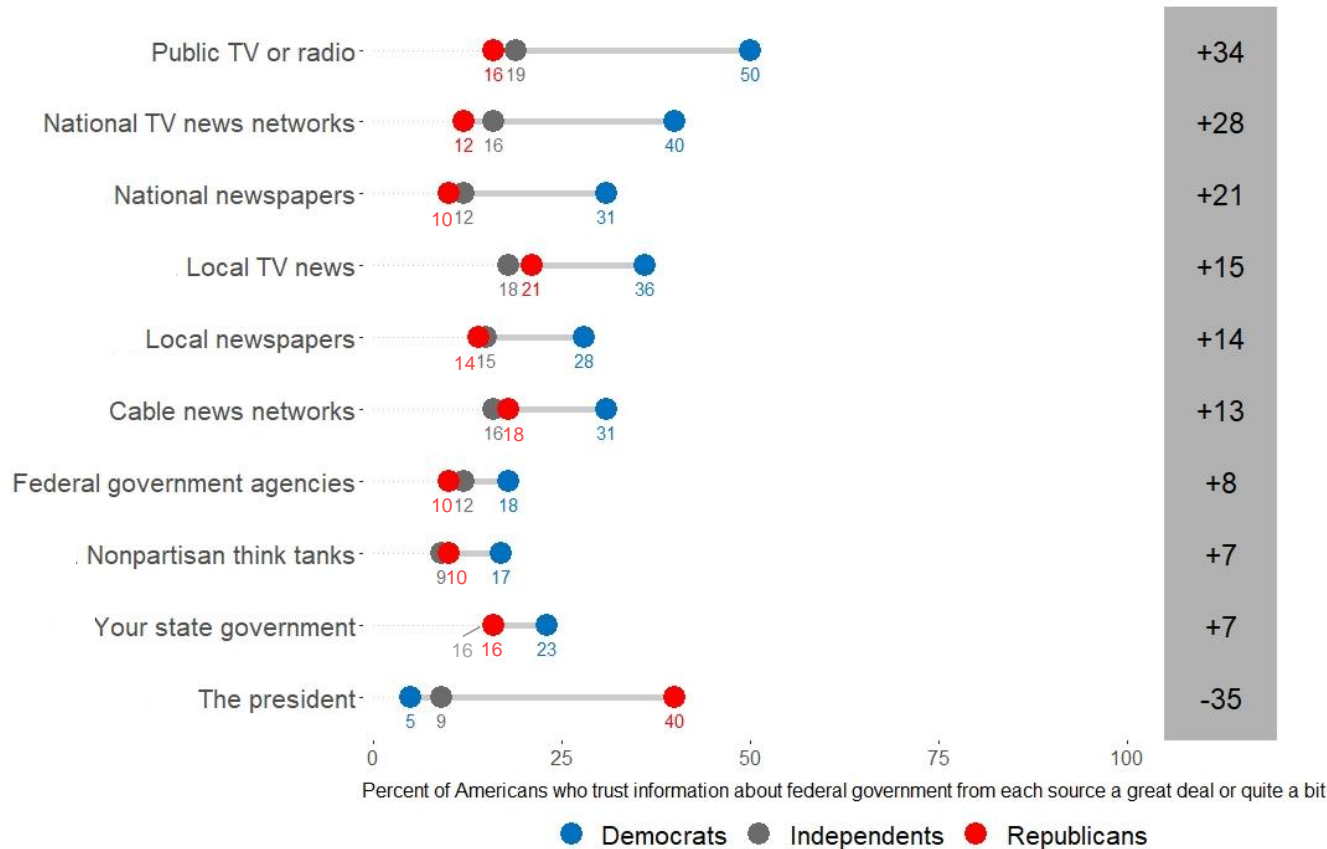
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



Republicans more likely to trust the president about government info, Democrats trust the media more

State of the Facts Poll 2019

Percentage point difference between Democrats and Republicans



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

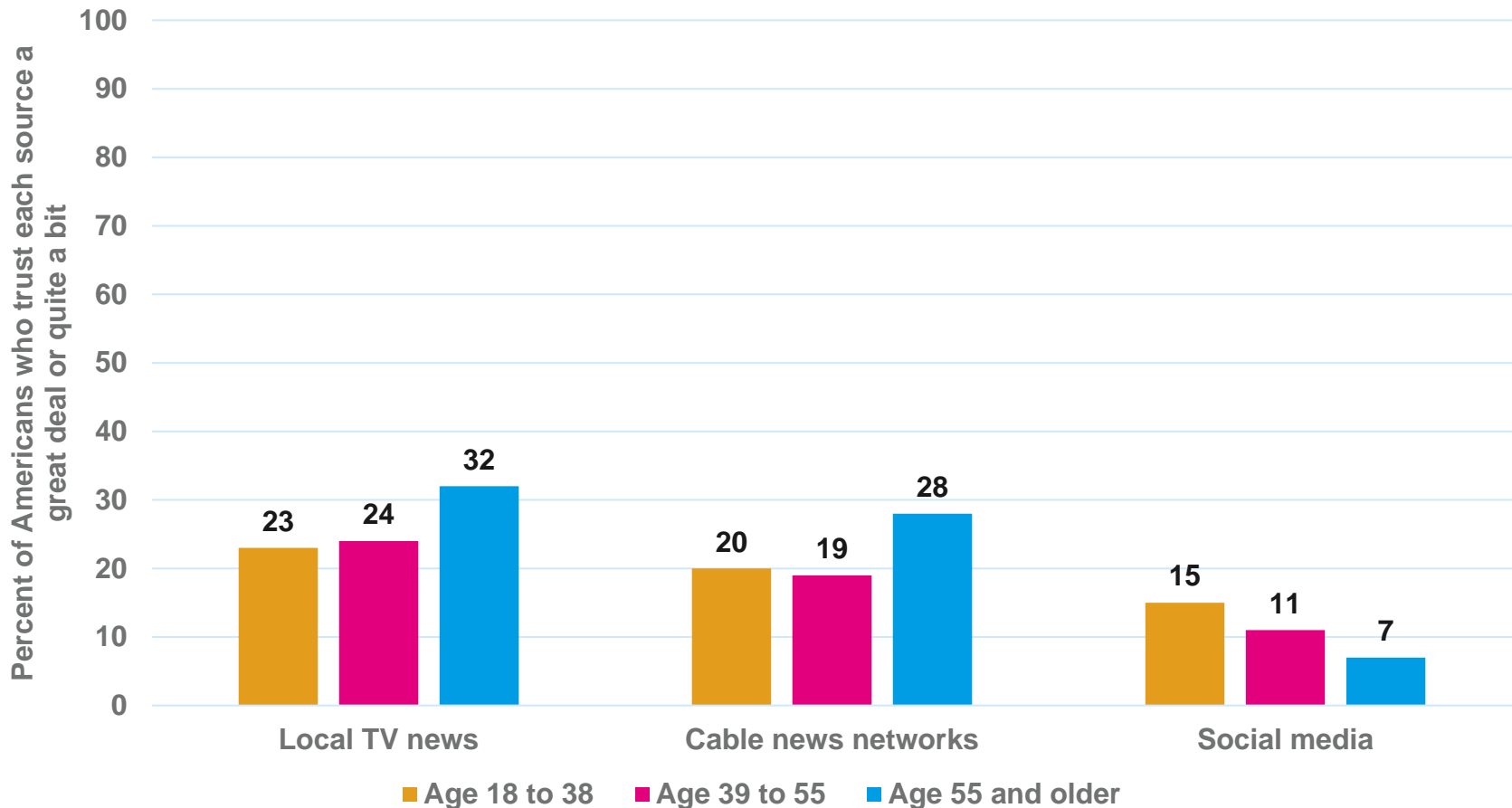
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Note: Only significant partisan differences shown.



Older generations more likely to trust local, cable news; trust in social media is low, but highest for millennials

State of the Facts Poll 2019



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

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Note: Only significant differences between age groups shown



For major sources, there is a large gap in % of people who use it frequently and people who trust it a lot

State of the Facts Poll 2019

Source	% Use	% Trust	Use-Trust Gap
Social media	54	11	43
Local TV news	52	27	25
National TV news	50	25	25
Cable news	47	23	24
The president	28	19	9
Businesses	16	8	8
Members of Congress	14	10	4
Public TV or radio	34	31	3
Local newspapers	23	20	3
National newspapers	19	19	0
Federal government agencies	12	14	-2
Nonpartisan think tanks	9	13	-4
State government	14	19	-5

Questions: Thinking about some of the ways you get information about the government these days, how often, if at all, do you get information from...% who use it at least once a day /Regardless of how often you get information from these sources, how much do you trust information from them about the government? % trust a great deal/quite a bit

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

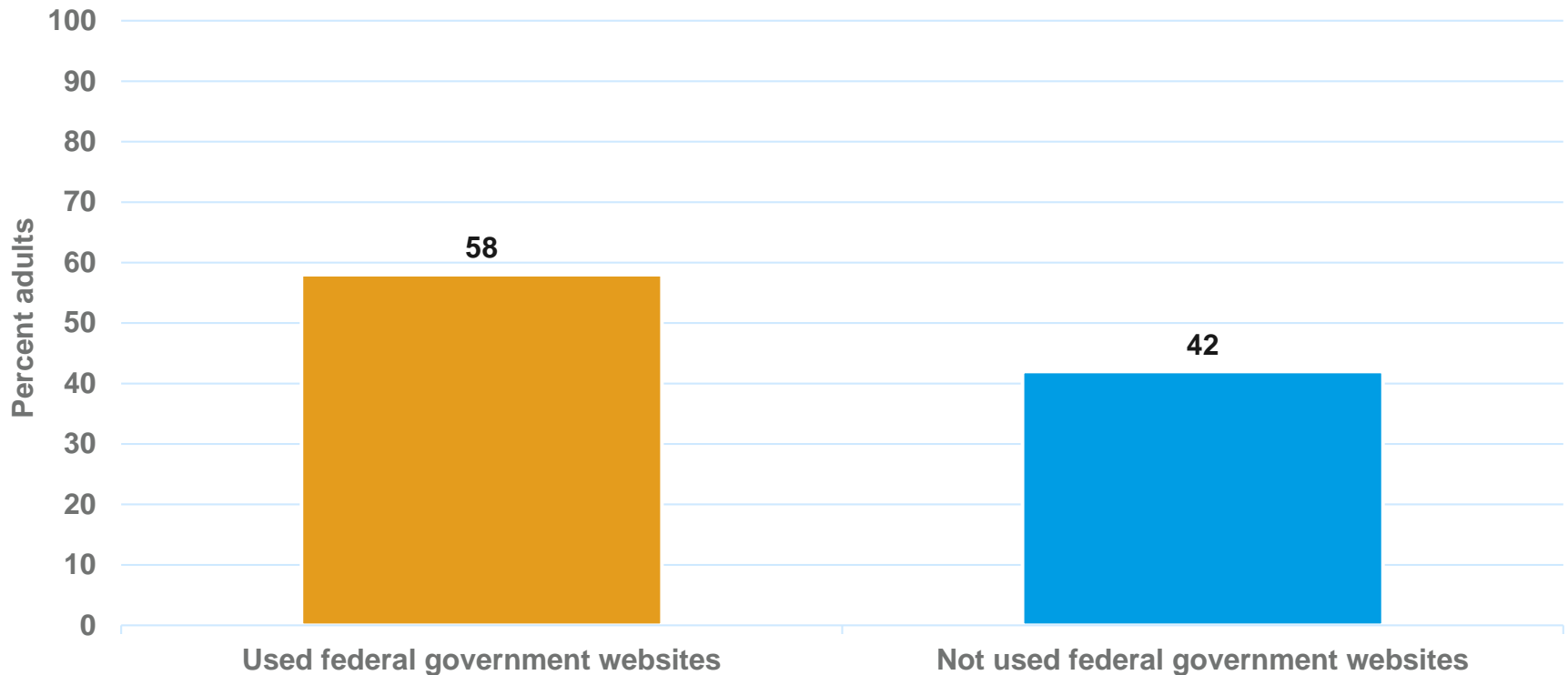


Federal government as a source



A majority of Americans have used federal government websites to find information

State of the Facts Poll 2019



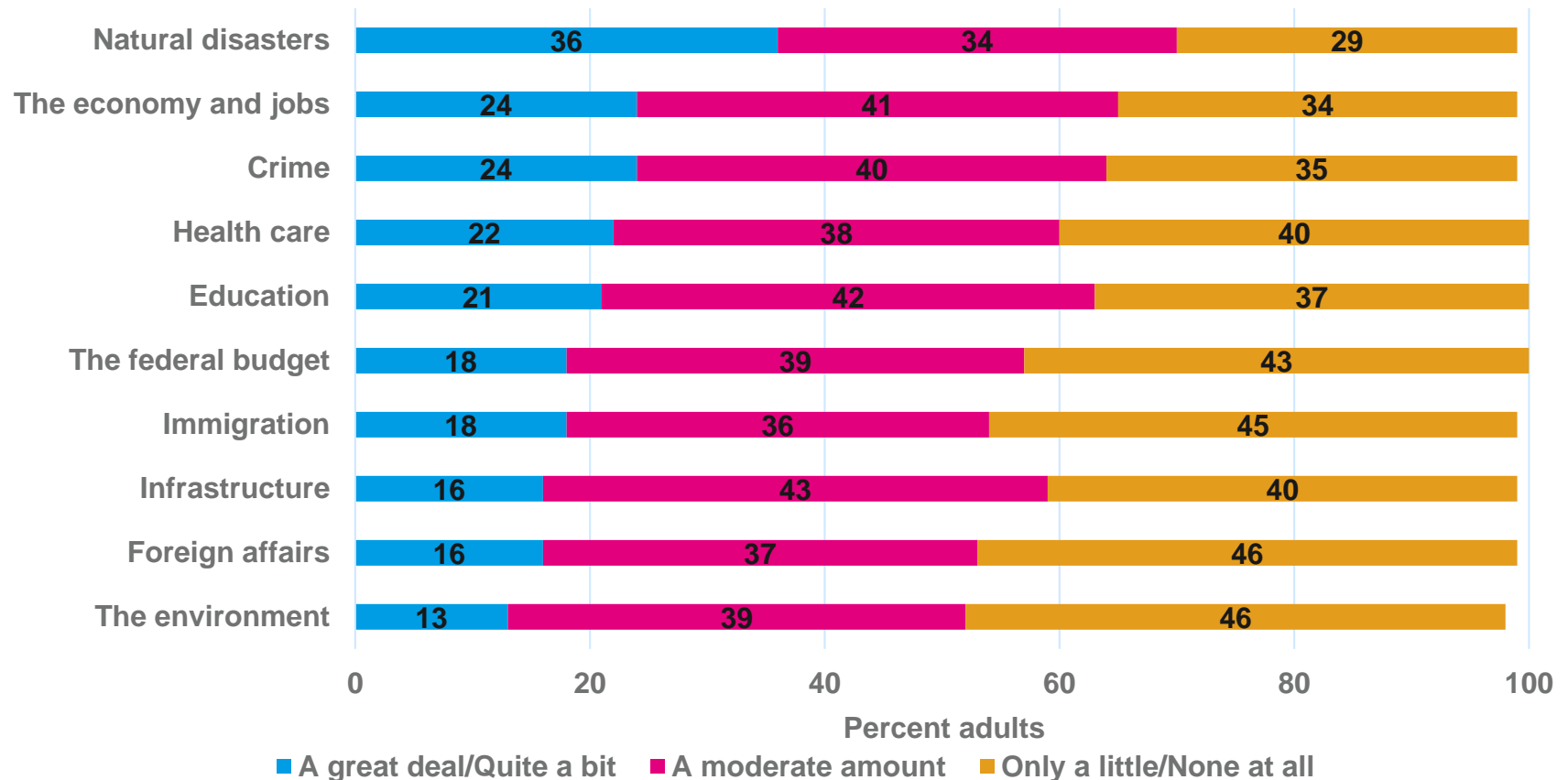
Question: Have you ever used federal government websites (e.g. Census Bureau, IRS, Centers for Disease Control) to look up information?

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



Americans trust federal government information more on some topics than others

State of the Facts Poll 2019



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

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



More trust among Republicans on natural disasters, economy, immigration, foreign affairs, and infrastructure

State of the Facts Poll 2019

Percentage point difference between
Republicans and Democrats



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

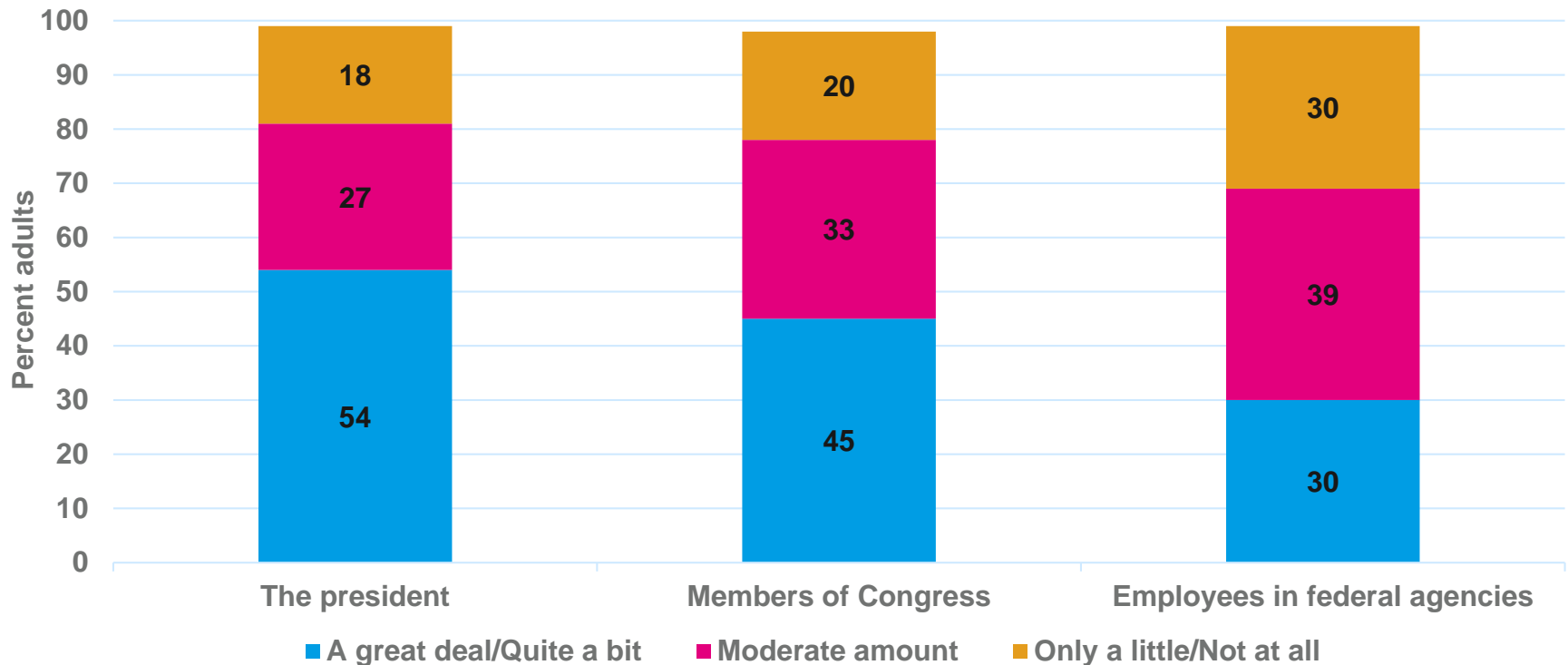
Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Note: Only significant partisan differences shown.



Public believes fed agency workers less likely to bias government information than president or Congress

State of the Facts Poll 2019

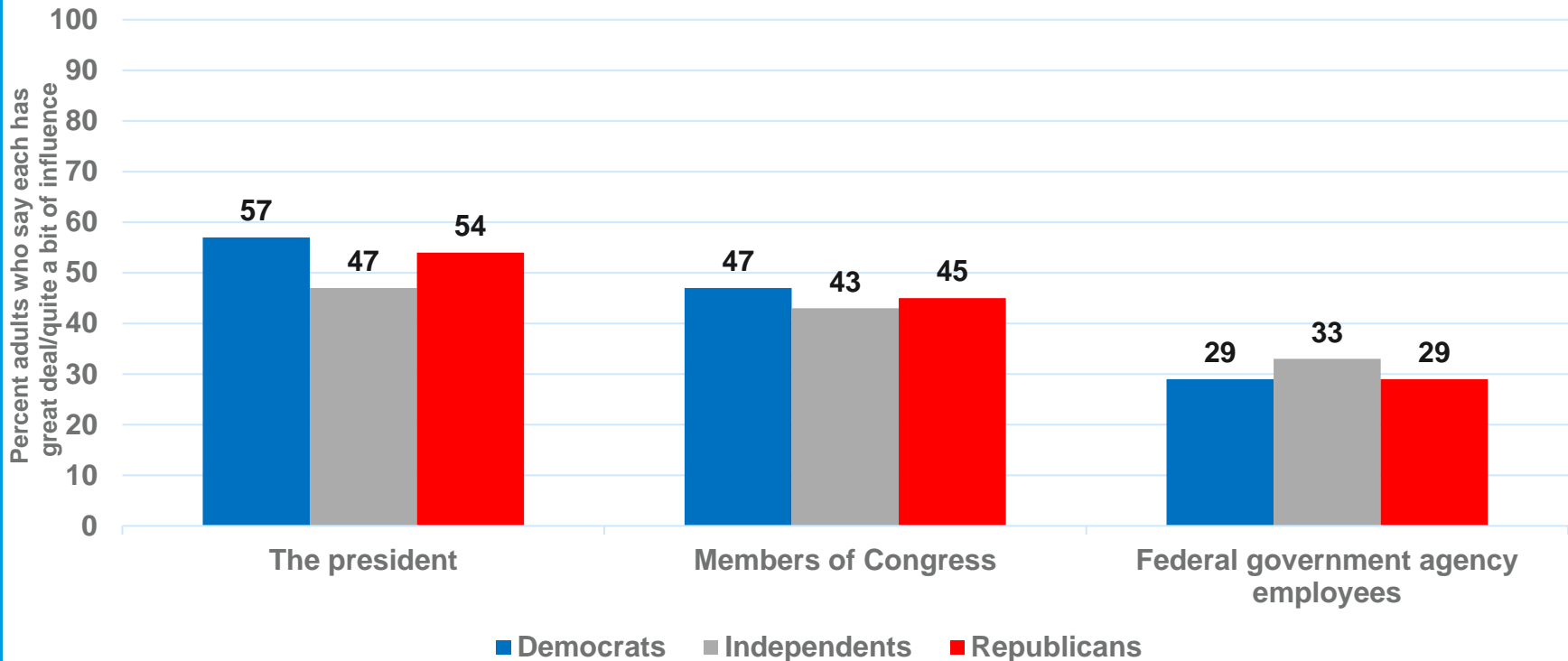


Question: How much influence do you think the political beliefs of each of the following have over information provided by the federal government?

Source: AP-NORC/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

Agreement across parties: president's political beliefs most likely to influence government info, agency employees least

State of the Facts Poll 2019



Question: 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/USA Facts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults

About USAFacts and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

State of the Facts Poll 2019

- USAFacts is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan civic initiative providing the most comprehensive and understandable single source of government data.
- The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.





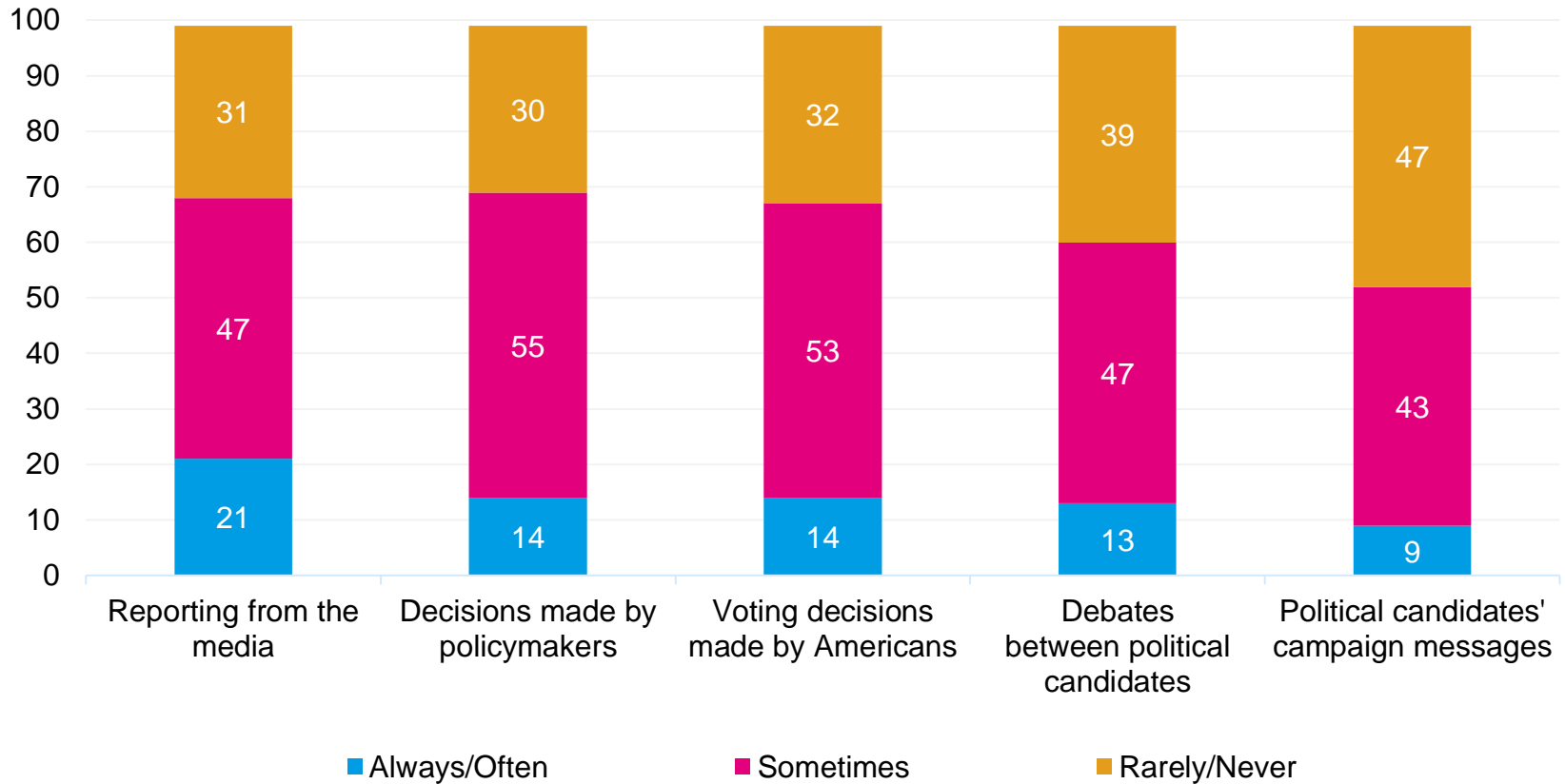
State of the Facts 2019: Elections

State of the Facts Poll 2019: Elections

- Few Americans think elections are frequently informed by facts. Less than 2-in-10 say politicians' messages or voters' choices are based on factual information.
- Republicans and Baby Boomers are more skeptical than Democrats and Millennials about political candidates and their campaigns.
- Lack of faith in elections is part of a broader crisis around facts: Americans are deeply divided on what information to trust, though they agree on what facts should be.
 - *For more information, see [State of the Facts 2019](#)*

Americans say facts often missing from the election process

State of the Facts Poll 2019: Elections



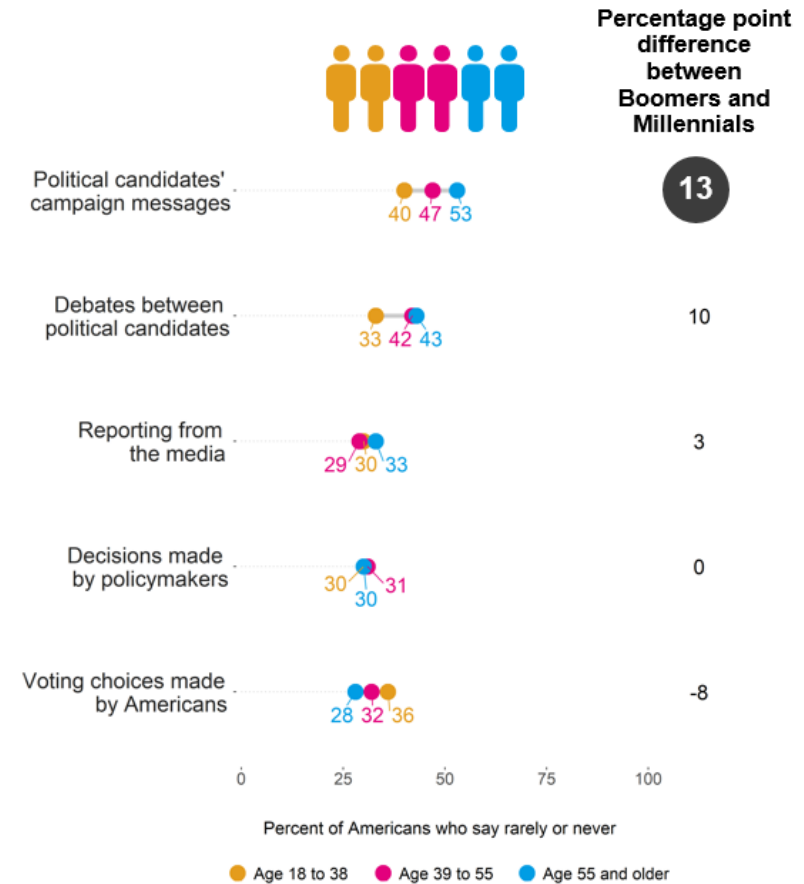
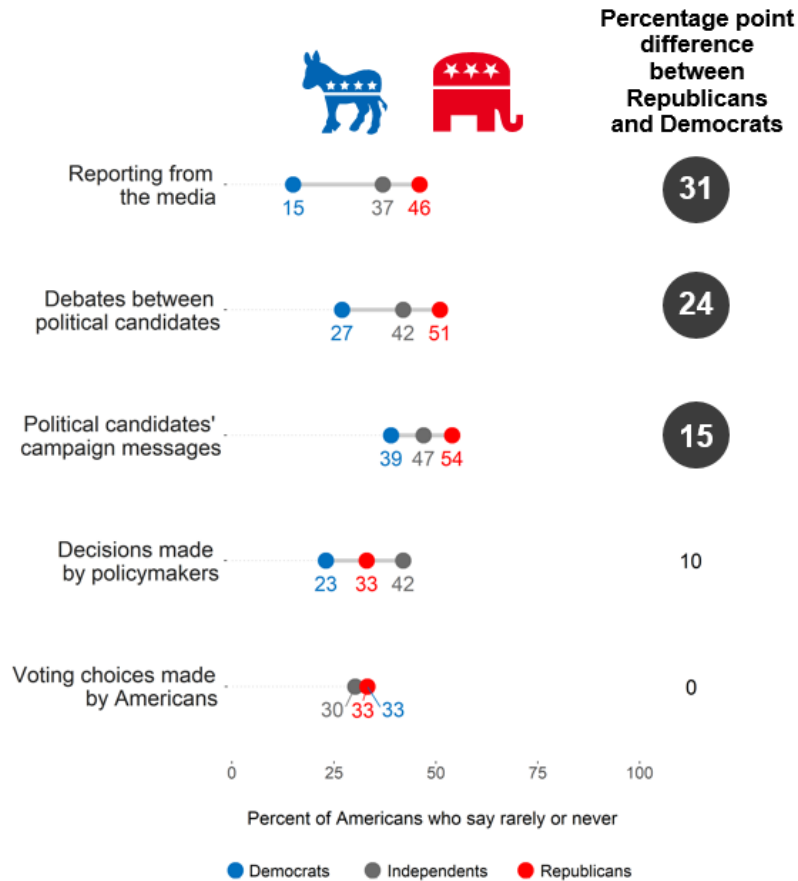
How often do you think each of the following are based on factual information?

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



Republicans, Boomers are more skeptical than Democrats, Millennials

State of the Facts Poll 2019: Elections



*How often do you think each of the following are based on factual information?
Percent who say rarely or never*

Source: AP-NORC/USAFacts poll conducted October 15-28, 2019, with 1,032 adults



State of the Facts Poll 2019

- Nationwide poll of 1,032 adults conducted October 15-28 using the AmeriSpeak Panel[®]. AmeriSpeak is NORC's probability based panel designed to be representative of all US households. Poll conducted by The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and funded by USAFacts.
 - Margin of error +/- 4.2 percentage points
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