



America's Values, Goals, and Aspirations

New Poll Serves As Jumping Off Point for National Dialogue

Americans Disagree on the Top National Goals for the Country. A new poll by Ipsos finds Americans differ on what should be our top policy goals and aspirations for the future.

- **Divergent Policy Goals:** When ranking their top five national goals (outside of addressing COVID-19), Republicans and Democrats have differing priorities. Democrats rank improving healthcare affordability (64%) and improving racial justice (51%) as top goals, where Republicans rank having a strong and growing economy (68%) and putting America first (54%) as top priorities. Relatively, Democrats prioritize reducing income and wealth inequality (46% to 15%) and addressing global climate change (43% to 16%), where Republicans prioritize ensuring citizens' personal freedom (46% to 24%).
- **Different Interpretations on State of the Country:** Americans differ when evaluating where we stand in achieving those same national goals. For example, by wide margins Republicans more than Democrats believe America has a strong and growing economy (81% to 37%), has affordable healthcare (57% to 22%), ensures racial justice (65% to 22%), and provides jobs and opportunity for all (85% to 35%).
- **National Aspirations are Elusive:** Some have suggested America needs a "moonshot" to help unite the nation, but when asked what important national accomplishment Americans could unite behind, few common ideas emerged. About half of respondents offer ideas related to electing/defeating one of the two candidates for president, or simply that they had none, or did not think it was possible given our polarized state.

But there is Much Stronger Agreement on Individual and Community Values and Goals. Regardless of party, age, gender, race, income, or geographic location – Americans are encouragingly unified on certain individual values, on goals for themselves and their families, and on what defines our country.

- **Strong Core National Values:** Strong majorities believe certain values are extremely/very important in defining our nation, including free speech (81%), equal justice under law (80%), ensuring everyone has an opportunity to succeed (80%), individual freedom (78%), working together toward the common good (76%), personal independence and self-reliance (71%), rule of law (70%), and free market competition (60%).
- **Agreed Upon Individual Values:** Strong majorities hold certain values as extremely/very important for themselves, including being honest (90%), hard-working (83%), independent (80%), well-educated (73%), generous (72%), well-respected (69%), and connected to other people (60%). Conversely, only 26% hold being wealthy as extremely or very important.

- **Common Bonds on Personal, Family, and Community Goals:** Americans want the same, simple goals for themselves, their families, and communities. Strong majorities rank being healthy (80%), having financial security (74%), having a loving relationship with a spouse or partner (67%), and for those with children – instilling good values in kids (79%), in their top goals. Safety is by far the top attribute Americans want for the community they live in, with 50% ranking it number one out of ten possible community attributes – with the next closest being availability of job opportunities or friendly neighbors (10% each).

This Provides a Starting Point for a National Dialogue. The poll only scratches the surface on our commonalities and differences. Going forward, FixUS is facilitating a *National Dialogue on Common Values, Goals, and Aspirations*, where participants will have the opportunity to join small group discussions and focus groups intended to dig deeper on these issues and strive toward informing a bottom-up path forward for the country. Our hope is that engaging in open dialogue with each other as individuals, and focusing on our common values, goals, and aspirations may serve as a bridge to close our gaps at the national level.

- **Deeper Understanding of What Binds Us:** Only 34% of Americans believe that being united is an attribute that describes America well, and this was a point of agreement across both parties and subgroups. Building off this sentiment requires gaining more qualitative understanding of what may bind us as individuals and in our communities, and go beyond the snapshot poll results to help forge meaningful common ground.
- **Prioritize Honesty and Trust:** Being honest, at 90 percent, was the strongest area of agreement among all values asked in the survey. This includes 96 percent of those surveyed 55 and older and 95 percent of women. Citizen engagement should include an opportunity for open and honest dialogue - emphasizing this shared value to help determine how best to restore trust in our system.
- **Build Empathy for Key Differences:** Large differences in values and experiences must be acknowledged to build toward consensus. For example, Republicans are much more likely to hold being patriotic (78% to 42%) and being committed to a faith or religion (57% to 33%) as extremely/very important relative to Democrats. And more than a third of Americans who cite financial security as one of their top five goals (34%) are not close to achieving financial security for themselves and their families. Yet large differences by income, race, and geography were generally low throughout the values and goals surveyed, which may prove helpful in building areas of commonality.

To learn more and to sign up to participate in the National Dialogue, visit www.fixusnow.org.

About the study: These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between September 2-3, 2020, on behalf of FixUS. For this study, a sample of 1,005 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents.