

North Carolina Political Landscape

Understanding the Identities and
Mindsets of the State's Electorate

ELON UNIVERSITY
POLL 

August 2026

The Many Dimensions of Political Identity

Political analysis often begins with the basic identity: Is someone a Democrat, Republican or Independent? That matters, but it tells us surprisingly little about how people actually see themselves.

This report starts from a different premise. Before North Carolinians are voters, they are neighbors, workers, parents, veterans, people of faith and much more. They hold a wide range of identities and those perspectives often shape their opinions more than the letter beside their name on a voter registration form.

The findings in this report reveal a North Carolina that is both more unified and more complex than our political conversations often suggest.

Public debate frequently centers on the loudest voices at the ideological extremes. Media and campaign rhetoric amplify conflict because disagreement attracts attention. Yet when North Carolinians were asked to

describe themselves, the identities most commonly embraced were not ideological movements or partisan brands. Instead, they reflected work, place, community and broadly held values. Large majorities identified as working class, proud North Carolinians, middle class, religious, and anti-racist.

Perhaps even more striking are the similarities across partisan lines. Republicans, Democrats and Independents all rank working class and proud North Carolinian among their strongest identities. Each group also includes substantial majorities who identify as anti-racist. These commonalities represent an important reality about our state: people with different political preferences often share many of the same ways of understanding themselves.

Of course, meaningful differences remain. Republicans and Democrats often diverge on identities associated with political

movements, cultural priorities and ideological worldviews. Those distinctions help explain many of the policy debates that shape our politics. But they exist alongside a broader foundation of shared experiences and identities that deserves equal attention.

The purpose of this report is not to minimize political disagreement or suggest that partisan differences are unimportant. Rather, it is to broaden the conversation. If we hope to understand North Carolina's political future, we should begin not only by asking how people vote, but also by asking who they believe they are.

That broader perspective reveals a more complete picture of our state's electorate—and, perhaps, a more hopeful one.

- The Elon University Poll

Beyond Party Labels

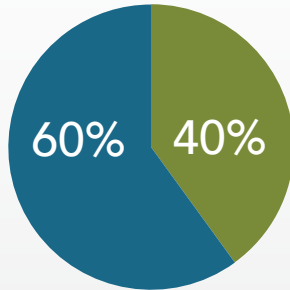
North Carolina's political landscape is shaped by more than party affiliation. This report examines what North Carolinians think about government and the identities they embrace, from economic class and ideology to community, values and place. The survey results reveal the shared perspectives and meaningful differences that define the state's electorate. Together, these findings provide a richer picture of the people behind North Carolina politics.

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Attitudes and views about government

Which of these statements comes closer to your view?

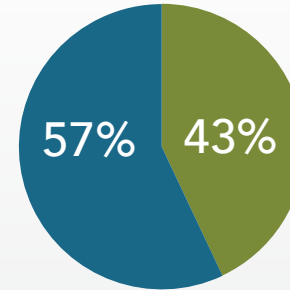
A bigger government providing more services is better.



A smaller government providing fewer services is better.

Thinking about the assistance the government provides to people in need, do you think the government should...

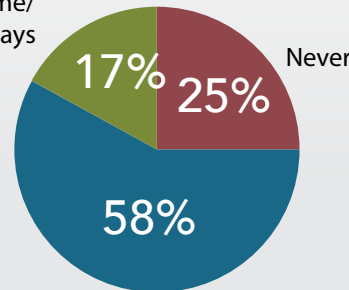
Provide more assistance, even if it means higher taxes.



Provide less assistance and reduce taxes

How much of the time do you trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

Most of the time/
just about always

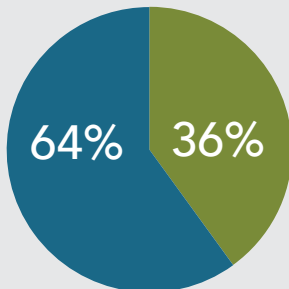


Never

Only some of the time

Which of these statements comes closer to your view?

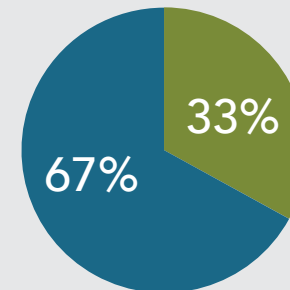
Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest.



Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good.

Which of these statements comes closer to your view?

The American economic system favors a select few.



The American economic system is generally fair.

Mapping the Identities

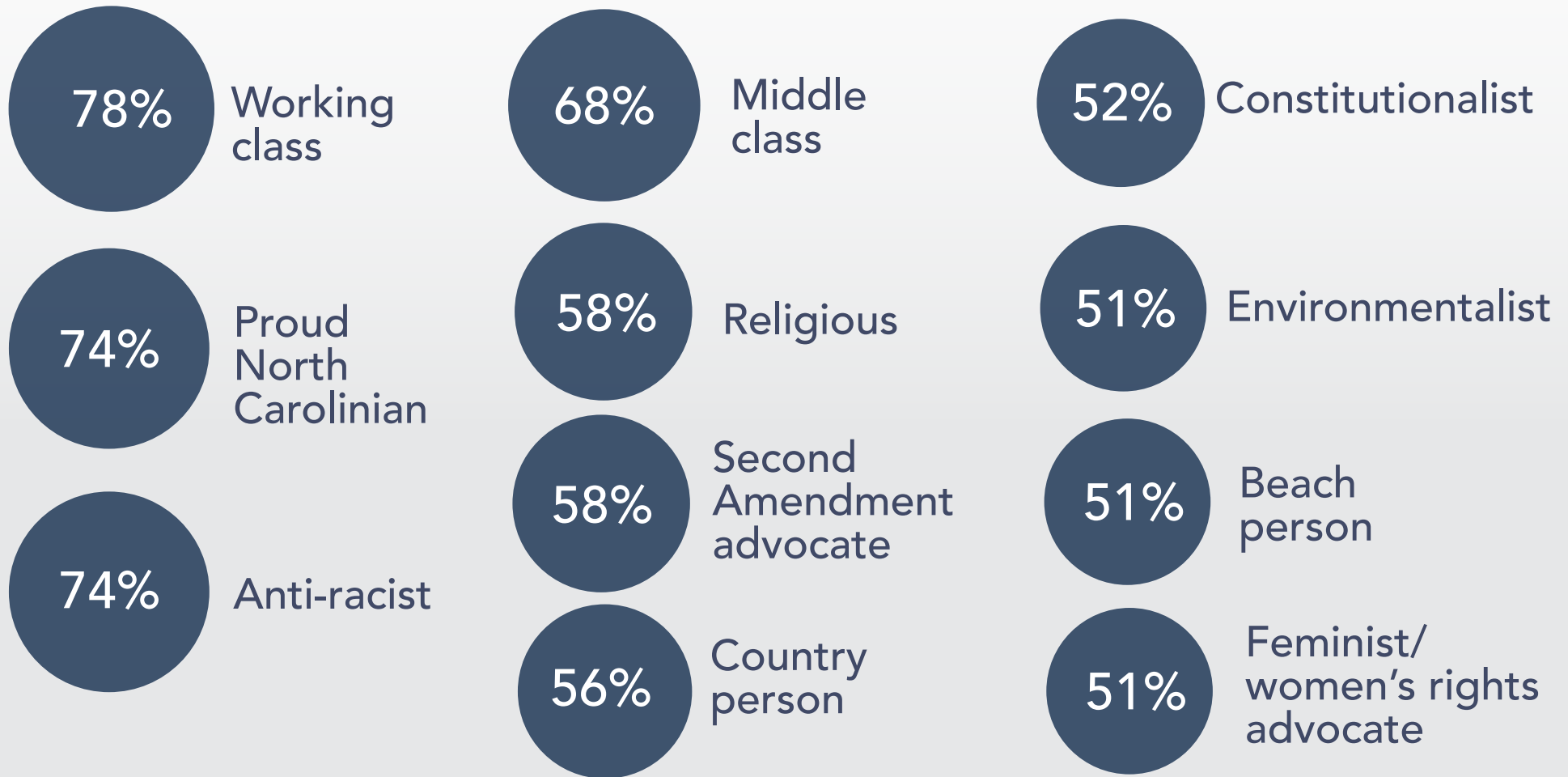
This survey asked North Carolinians how closely they identify with 30 different identities across five different groupings:

Political movement and ideological identities	Economic and class identities	Social, cultural and moral worldview identities	Rights, security and self-reliance identities	Place, service and lifestyle identities
• MAGA (Make American Great Again) • Progressive • Democratic Socialist • Libertarian • Politically moderate • Politically homeless • Anti-establishment	• Working class • Middle class • Small business owner • Fiscal conservative • Capitalist	• Social justice advocate • Anti-racist • Feminist/women's rights advocate • LGBTQ rights advocate • Religious • Spiritual but not religious • MAHA (Make America Healthy Again)	• Constitutionalist • Second Amendment advocate • Prepper	• City person • Country person • Mountain person • Beach person • Proud North Carolinian • Military veteran or military family • Environmentalist • Conservationist

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11 Most frequently chosen identities-all respondents

Percent who said each identity describes them "a lot" or "somewhat"



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10 Least frequently chosen identities—all respondents

Percent who said each identity describes them "a lot" or "somewhat"

20%

Prepper

29%

Democratic
Socialist

34%

MAGA (Make
American Great Again)

20%

Libertarian

32%

Small
business
owner

39%

LGBTQ rights
advocate

26%

Politically
homeless

32%

Anti-
establishment

39%

Mountain
person

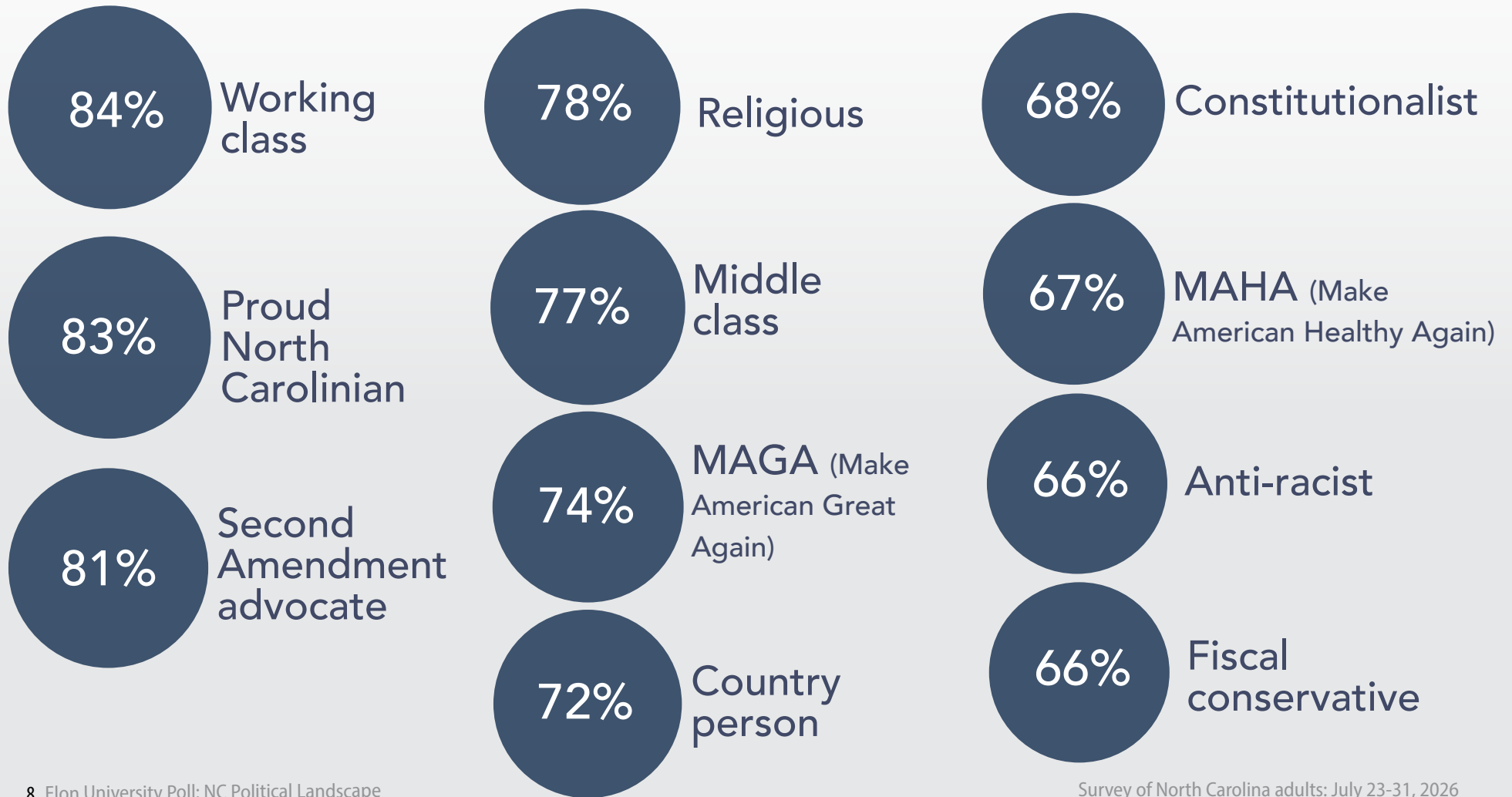
41%

Fiscal
conservative

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11 Most frequently chosen identities-Republicans

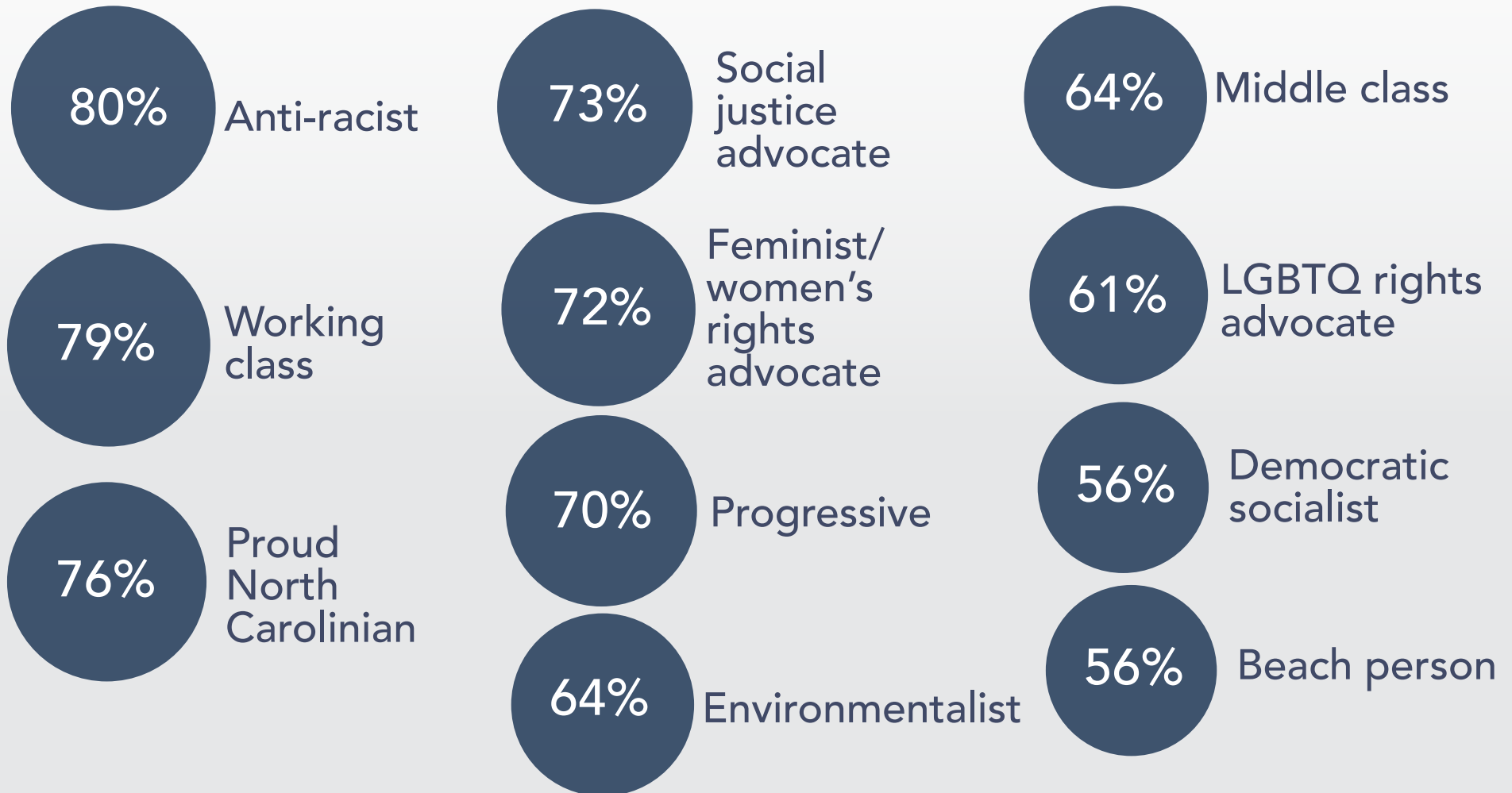
Percent who said each identity describes them "a lot" or "somewhat"



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11 Most frequently chosen identities-Democrats

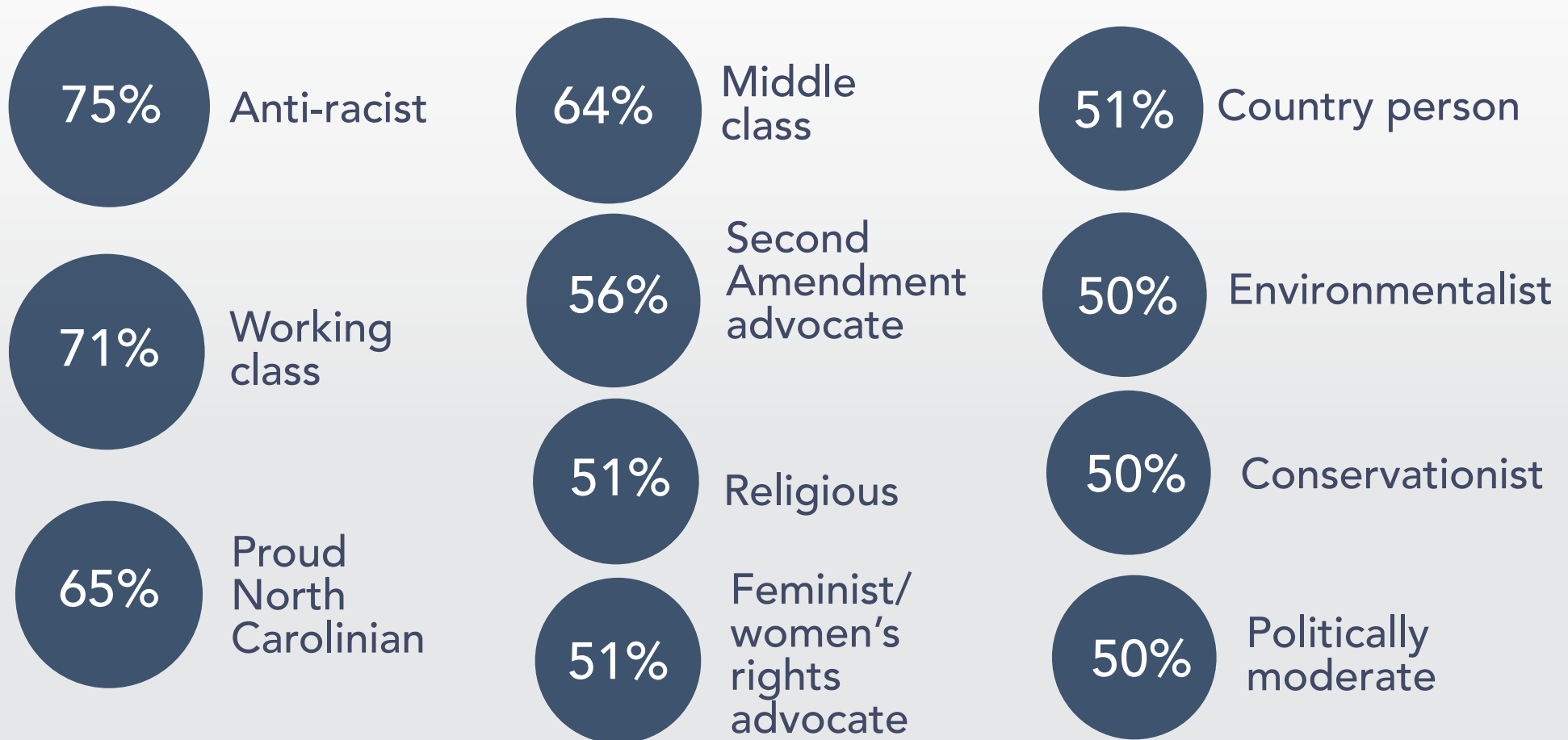
Percent who said each identity describes them "a lot" or "somewhat"



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11 Most frequently chosen identities-Independents

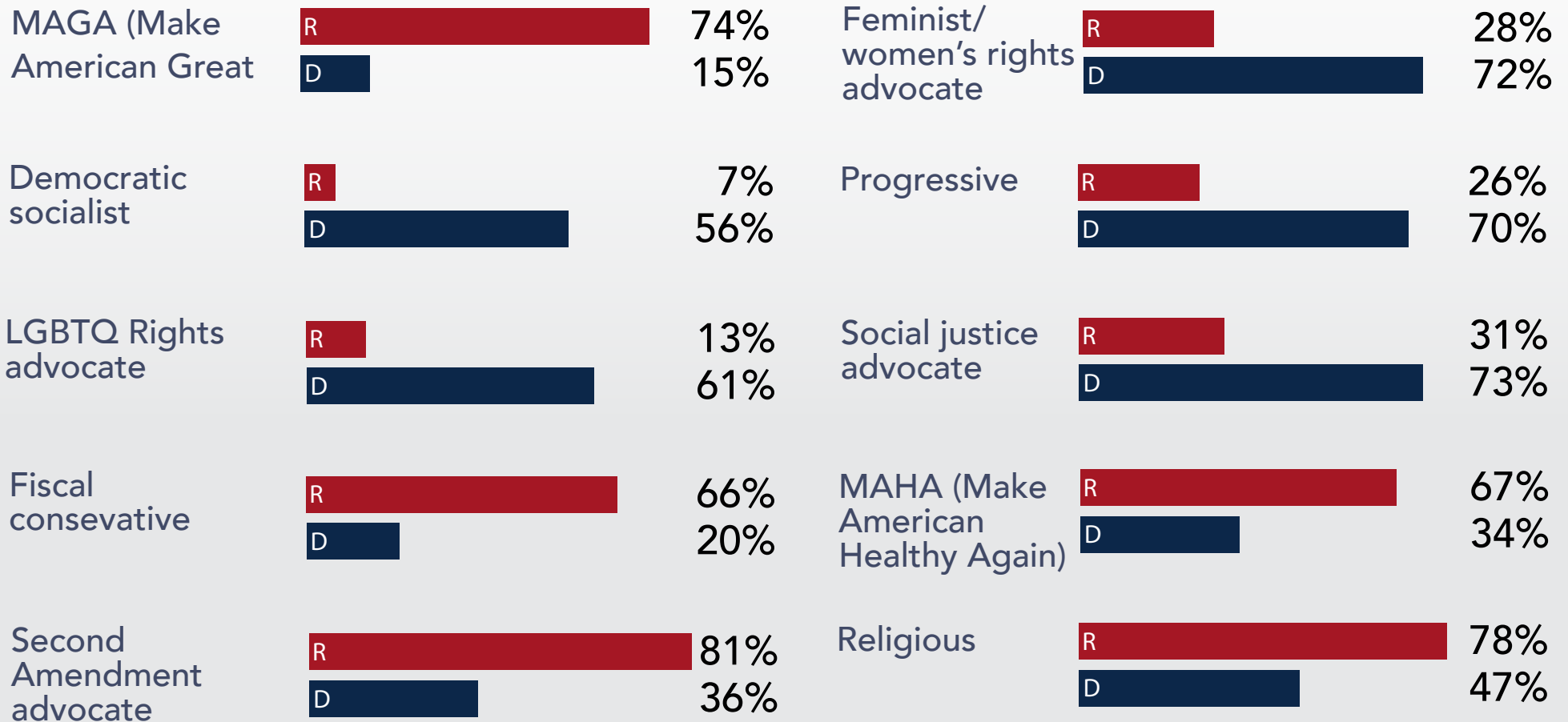
Percent who said each identity describes them "a lot" or "somewhat"



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10 Identities with the **greatest partisan divide**

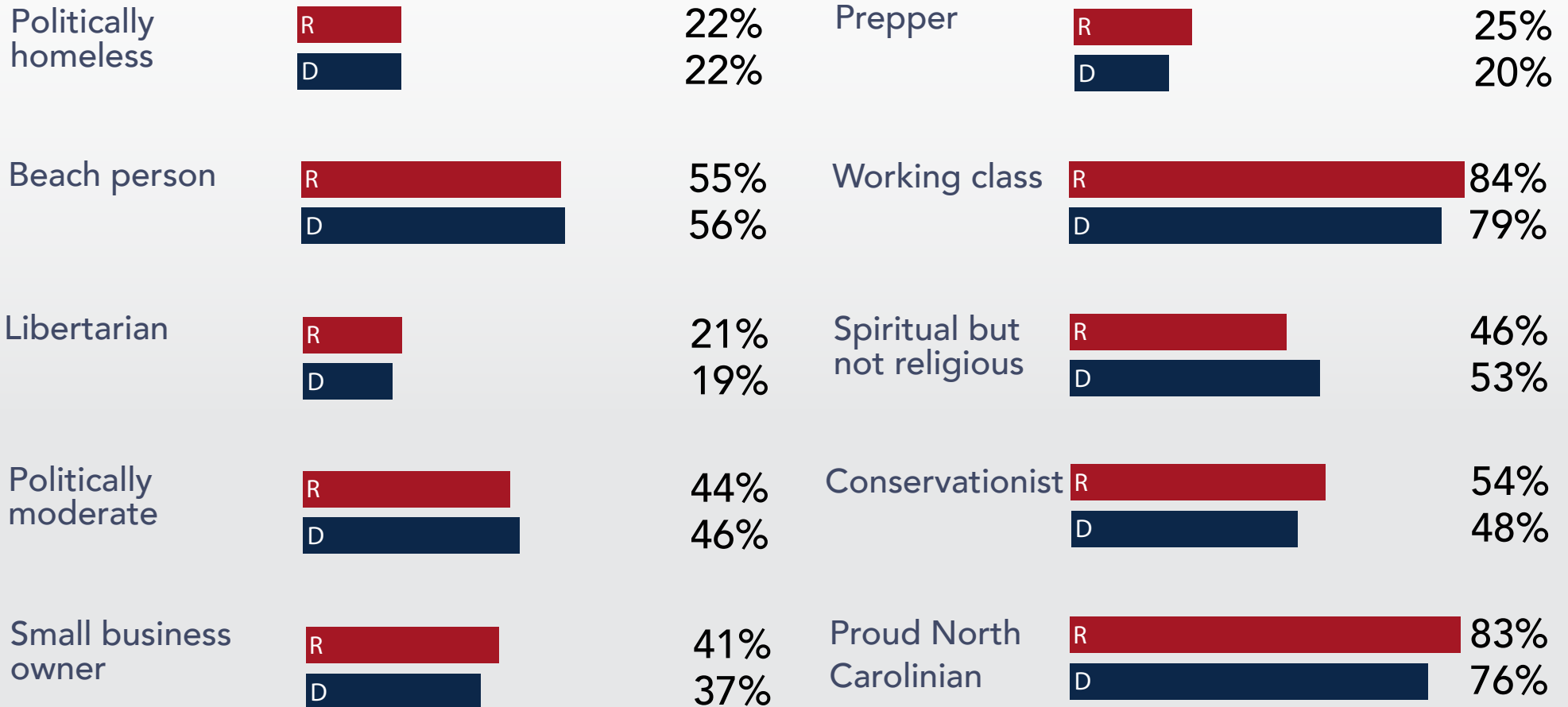
Percent of Republicans (R) and Democrats (D) who said each identity describes them "a lot" or "somewhat"



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10 Identities with the **least partisan divide**

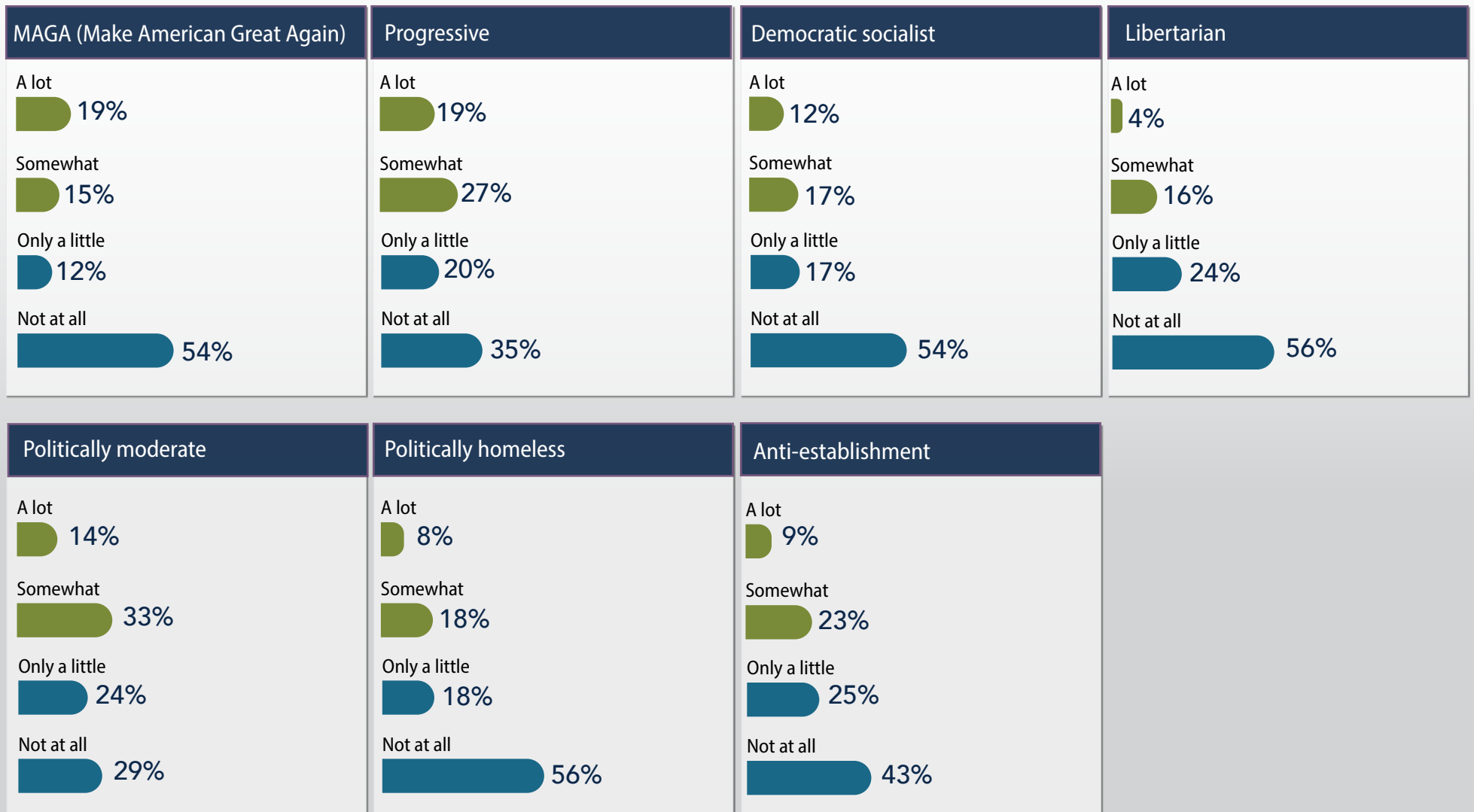
Percent of Republicans (R) and Democrats (D) who said each identity describes them "a lot" or "somewhat"



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Political movement and ideological identities

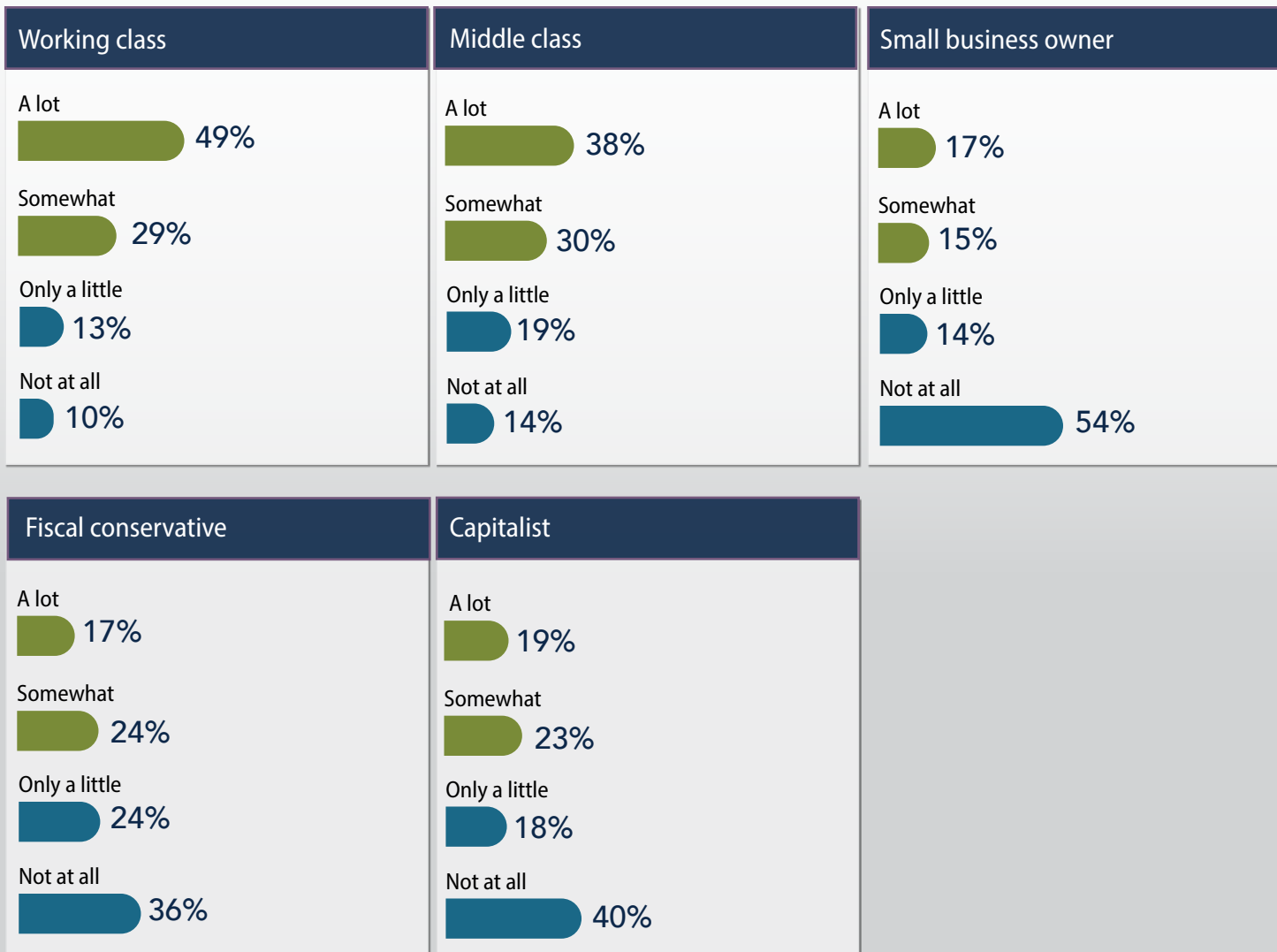
How closely North Carolinians identify with each group



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Economic and class identities

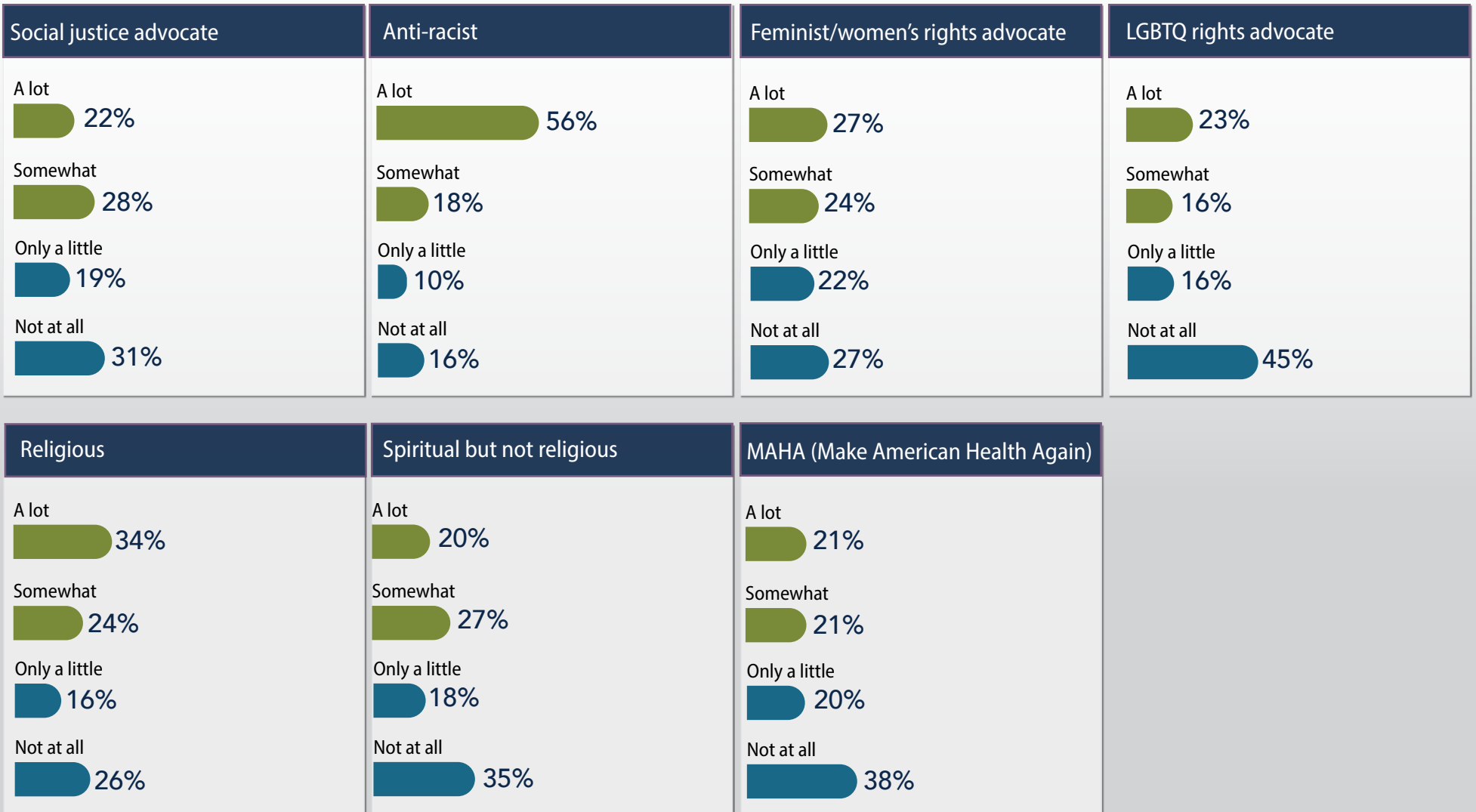
How closely North Carolinians identify with each group



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Social, cultural and moral worldview identities

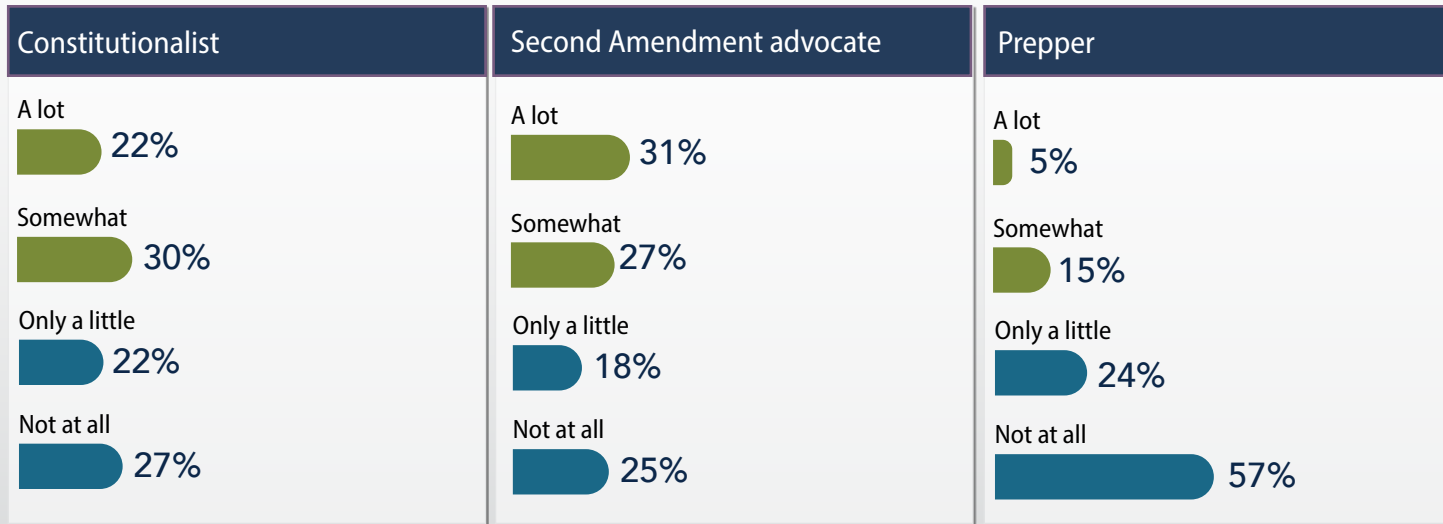
How closely North Carolinians identify with each group



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Rights, security and self-reliance identities

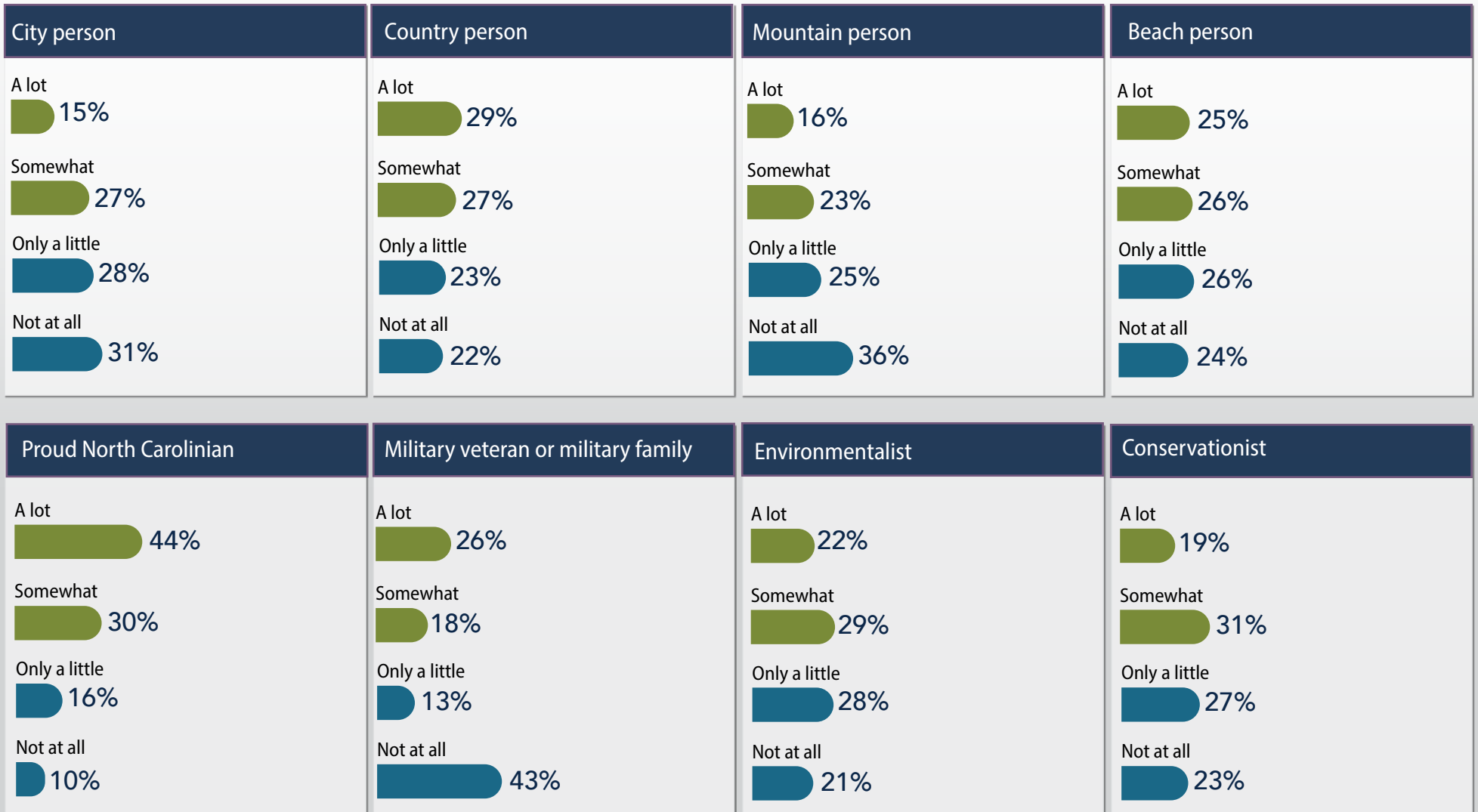
How closely North Carolinians identify with each group



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Place, service and lifestyle identities

How closely North Carolinians identify with each group



How we did this survey

This survey was developed by the Elon University Poll and fielded by the international marketing and polling firm YouGov as an online, web-based survey. Between July 23 and July 31, 2026, 861 North Carolina adults aged 18 and older responded to the survey. These respondents were then matched down to a sample of 800 to produce a final dataset that is statistically representative of the North Carolina population. The margin of error in this survey (adjusted for weights) is +/- 4.24%. Note: all survey research is subject to multiple unmeasurable [sources of error](#) such as sampling error, coverage error and measurement error. Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

More information

Poll topline and methodology: elon.edu/elonpoll

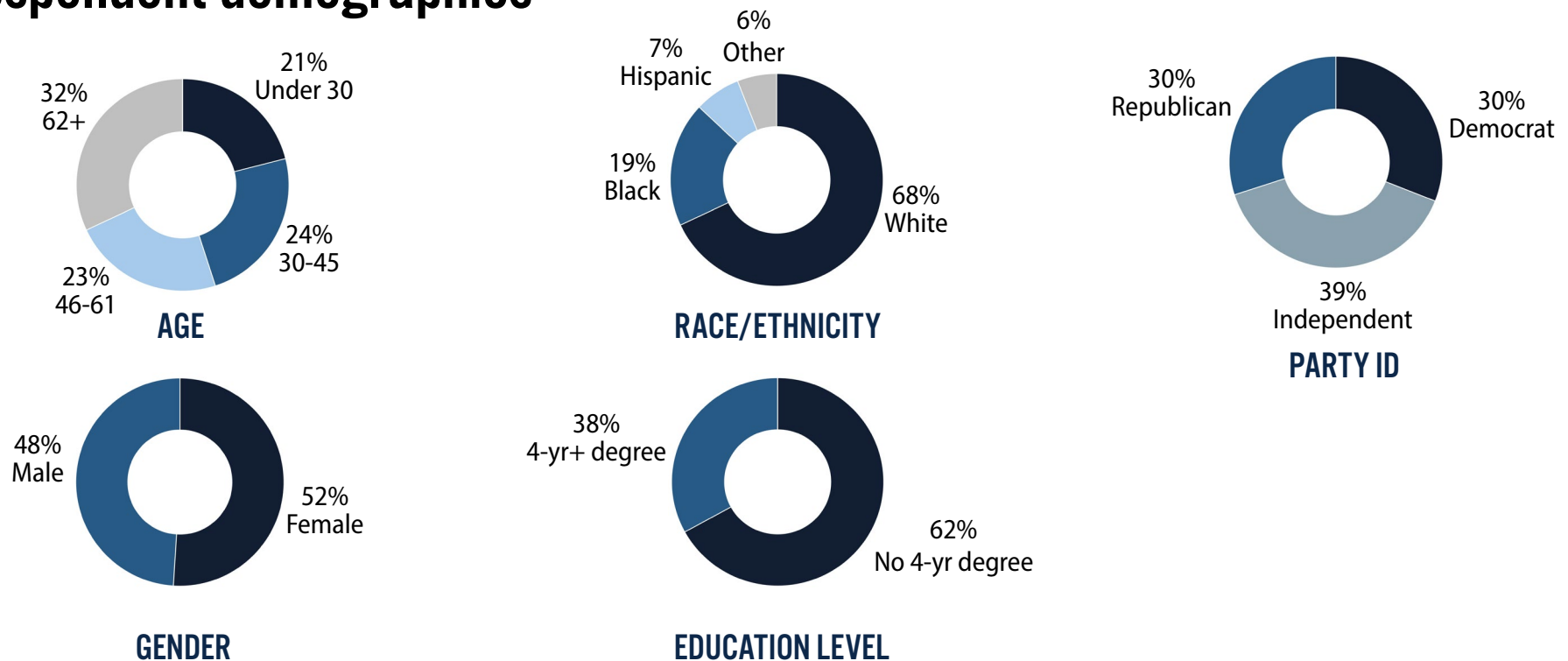
Poll director: Jason Husser, professor of political science and public policy, jhusser@elon.edu

Additional information and media contacts:

Daniel J. Anderson, special assistant to the president, andersd@elon.edu

Eric Townsend, assistant vice president for strategic communications and media relations, etownsend4@elon.edu

Respondent demographics



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