



Americans' Views on the Economy and Economic Policy

Key findings from a survey among 1,203 registered voters nationwide

Conducted June 21–23, 2023

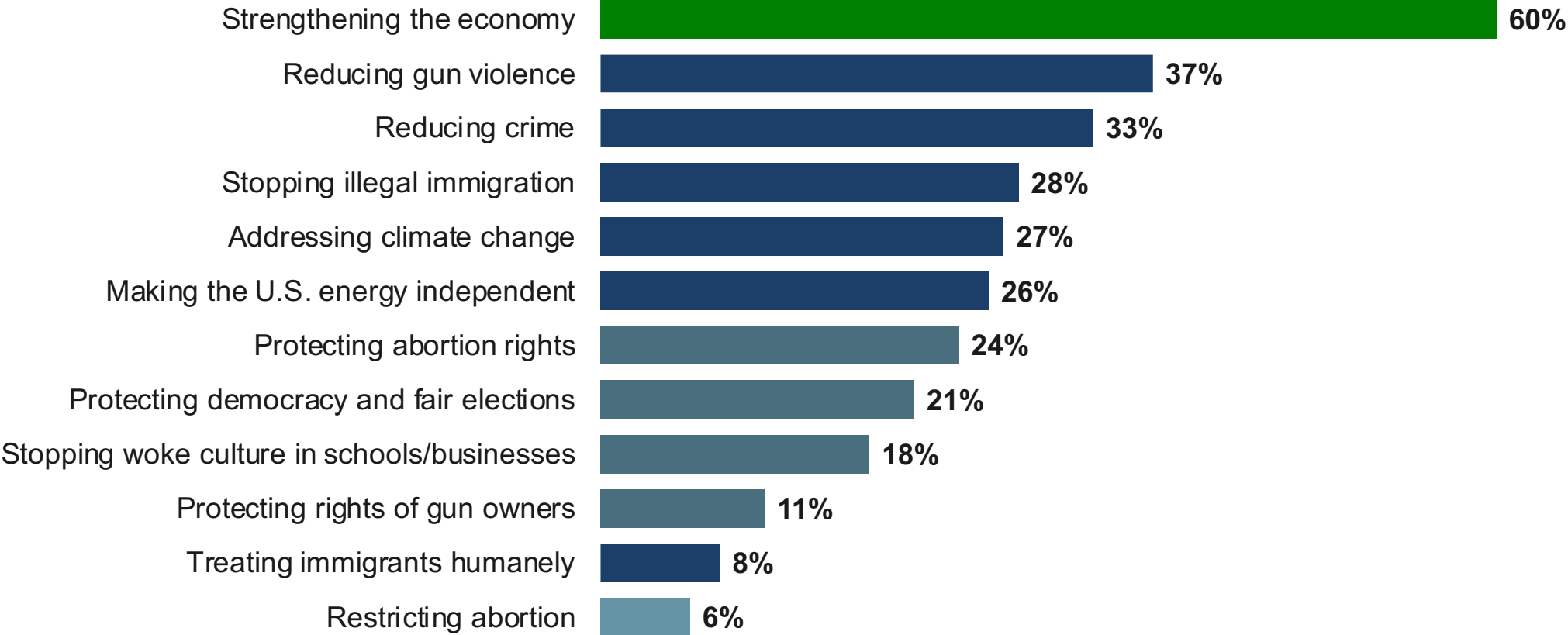
For the Center for American Progress

The logo for the Center for American Progress (CAP) consists of the letters "CAP" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a solid blue square.

CAP

Strengthening the economy is the most widely shared priority for Americans today.

Three Most Important Priorities for the President and Congress to Address

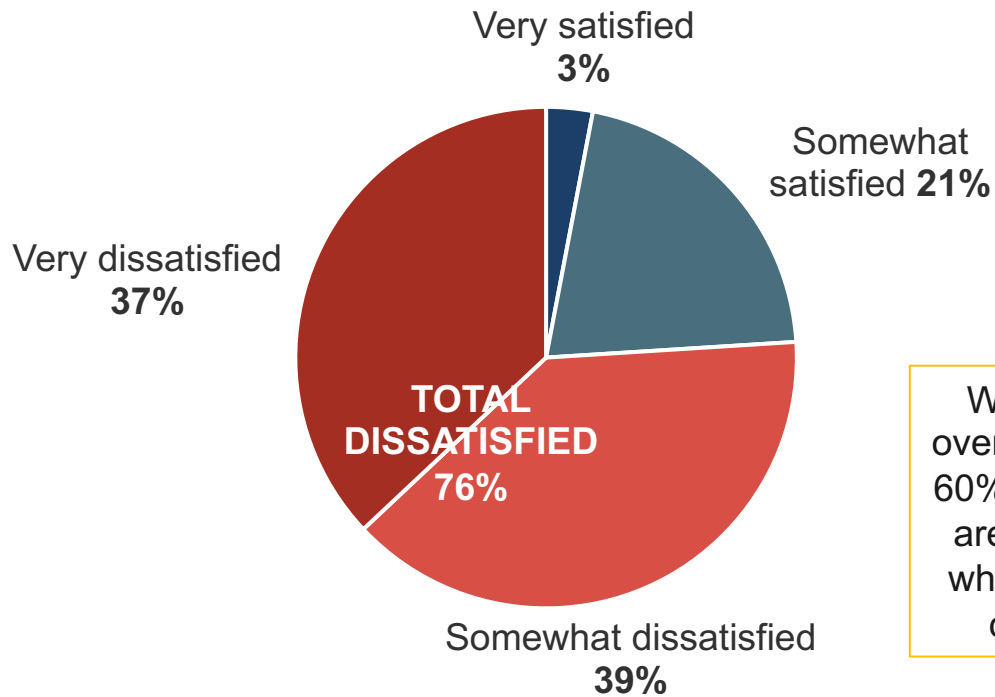


Strengthening the economy is a dominant priority across race and economic class.

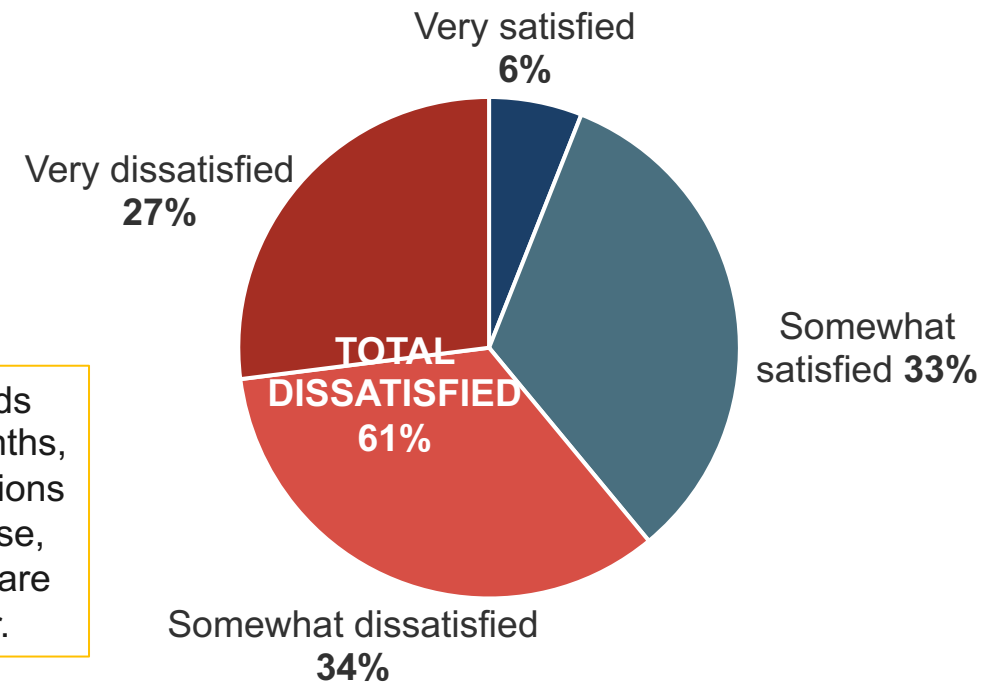
<i>Three most important priorities for the president and Congress to address</i>	White voters %	Black voters %	Hispanic voters %	Middle class %	Working class %	Low-income %	Aspiring middle class* %
Strengthening the economy	61	56	60	59	60	60	62
Reducing gun violence	31	56	48	40	35	32	35
Reducing crime	30	41	43	32	38	28	36
Stopping illegal immigration	33	8	19	27	27	30	26
Addressing climate change	26	36	24	29	28	22	28
Making the U.S. energy independent	29	12	20	25	27	25	24
Protecting abortion rights	24	24	22	24	24	24	27
Protecting democracy and fair elections	21	28	18	22	19	24	19
Stopping woke culture in schools/businesses	21	8	14	17	19	20	18
Protecting the rights of gun owners	12	8	11	10	12	15	12
Treating immigrants humanely	7	14	14	7	7	13	8
Restricting abortion	6	7	6	6	5	8	6

Large majorities of Americans are dissatisfied with the economic situation today.

How satisfied are you with the economic situation IN THE COUNTRY today?



How satisfied are you with the economic situation FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY today?



When asked about trends over just the past few months, 60% say economic conditions are changing for the worse, while only 14% say they are changing for the better.

Personal economic satisfaction varies by economic class and income.

How satisfied are you with the economic situation FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY today?

	SATISFIED			DISSATISFIED		
	Very %	Somewhat %	TOTAL %	Very %	Somewhat %	TOTAL %
Middle class	10	46	56	13	31	44
Working class	3	22	26	33	42	74
Low-income	2	15	17	51	32	83
White non-college grads	3	25	28	36	36	72
White college grads	8	40	48	20	32	52
Black voters	8	41	49	18	34	51
Hispanic voters	9	34	43	21	36	57
Income under \$50K	4	26	30	35	36	70
Income \$50K to \$100K	6	33	39	24	37	61
Income over \$100K	11	44	56	17	28	44

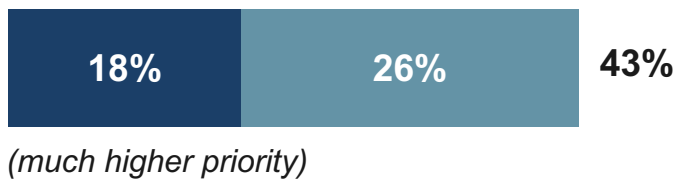
A majority prioritizes growing the economy over ensuring economic fairness.

More Important Goal for the Country

Growing the economy



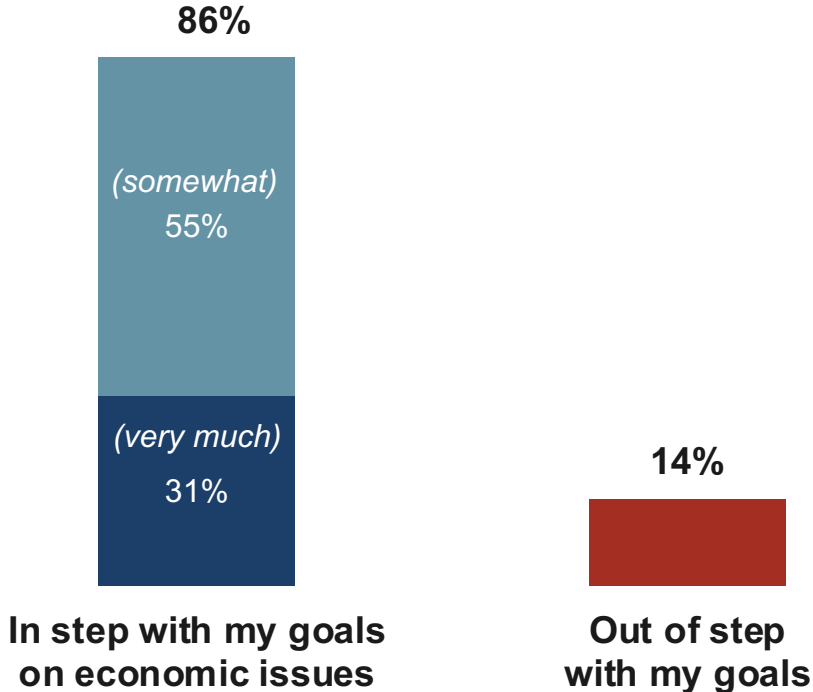
Ensuring economic fairness



	GROWING ECONOMY			ECONOMIC FAIRNESS		
	Much %	Somewhat %	TOTAL %	Much %	Somewhat %	TOTAL %
White non-college grads	30	29	60	17	23	40
White college grads	30	31	61	14	25	39
Black voters	22	21	43	31	26	57
Hispanic voters	22	26	47	21	32	53
Middle class	27	34	61	14	25	39
Working class	28	22	50	21	29	50
Low-income	29	25	54	24	21	46
Aspiring middle class	26	26	51	24	25	49

Overwhelming majorities say an elected official who is focused on growing the middle class would be in step with their own economic goals.

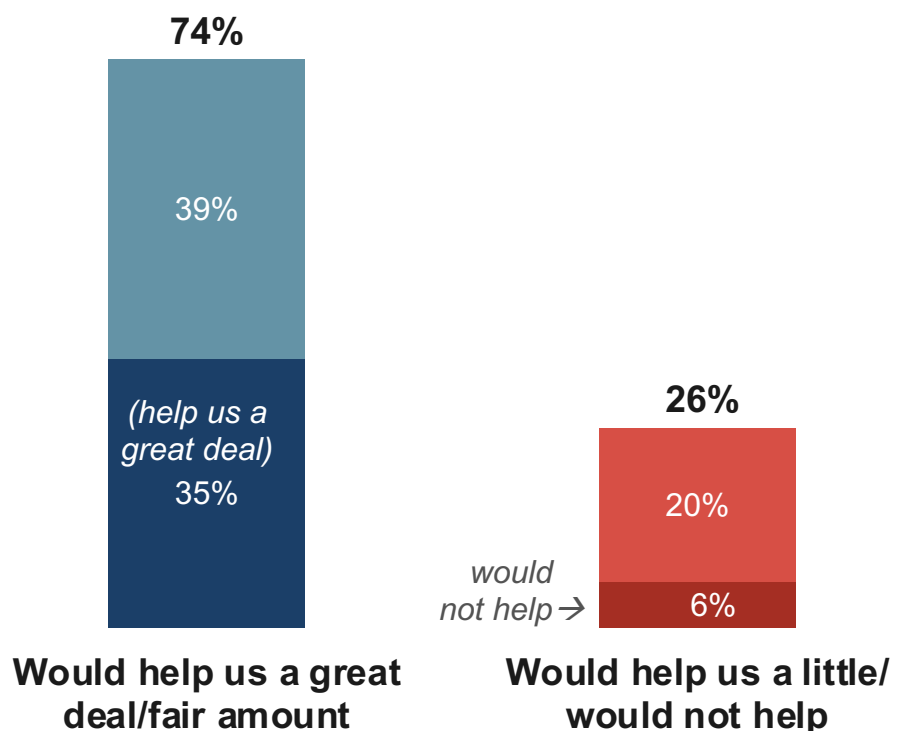
If an elected official said their economic priority is to strengthen the economy by growing the middle class, this elected official would be:



	IN STEP WITH MY GOALS		TOTAL %
	Very much %	Somewhat %	
White non-college grads	31	53	85
White college grads	30	58	87
Black voters	35	48	83
Hispanic voters	28	60	88
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Middle class	29	59	89
Working class	31	53	84
Low-income	35	48	83
Aspiring middle class	41	48	89

Three quarters say they personally would be helped by an agenda focused on strengthening the economy by growing the middle class.

Would an economic agenda focused on strengthening the economy by growing the middle-class help people like you and your family?



	WOULD HELP A GREAT DEAL/ FAIR AMOUNT		TOTAL %
	Great deal %	Fair amount %	
White non-college grads	35	40	75
White college grads	31	40	71
Black voters	42	37	79
Hispanic voters	46	31	76
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Middle class	35	43	78
Working class	38	37	76
Low-income	34	29	62
Aspiring middle class	43	36	79

Intuitively, Americans believe that an agenda focused on strengthening the economy by growing the middle class would help them deal with affordability challenges.

What are some ways in which you personally might be helped by an economic agenda that is focused on strengthening the economy by growing the middle class?

(aggregated volunteered comments)

- 22%** Lower cost of living; affordable living
- 17%** Fair, lower taxes
- 14%** Reduce, lower inflation; improve economy
- 12%** Better pay; raise the minimum wage
- 9% More discretionary income, money to spend
- 8% More jobs, job opportunities
- 5% Housing, affordable housing
- 5% Other opportunity comments
- 4% Other government action comments
- 4% Helping small, local businesses
- 4% I'm middle class; my family, I would benefit (unspecified)
- 4% Ensure wealthy pay fair share; make the rich pay more

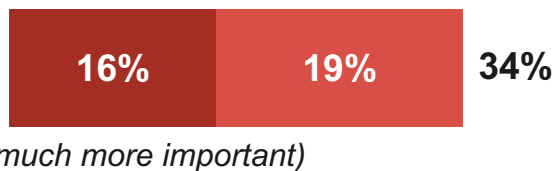
By 2-to-1, Americans believe that growing the middle class should be a higher priority for elected officials than shrinking the size of government.

More Important Focus for Elected Officials in Dealing with the Economy

Growing the middle class



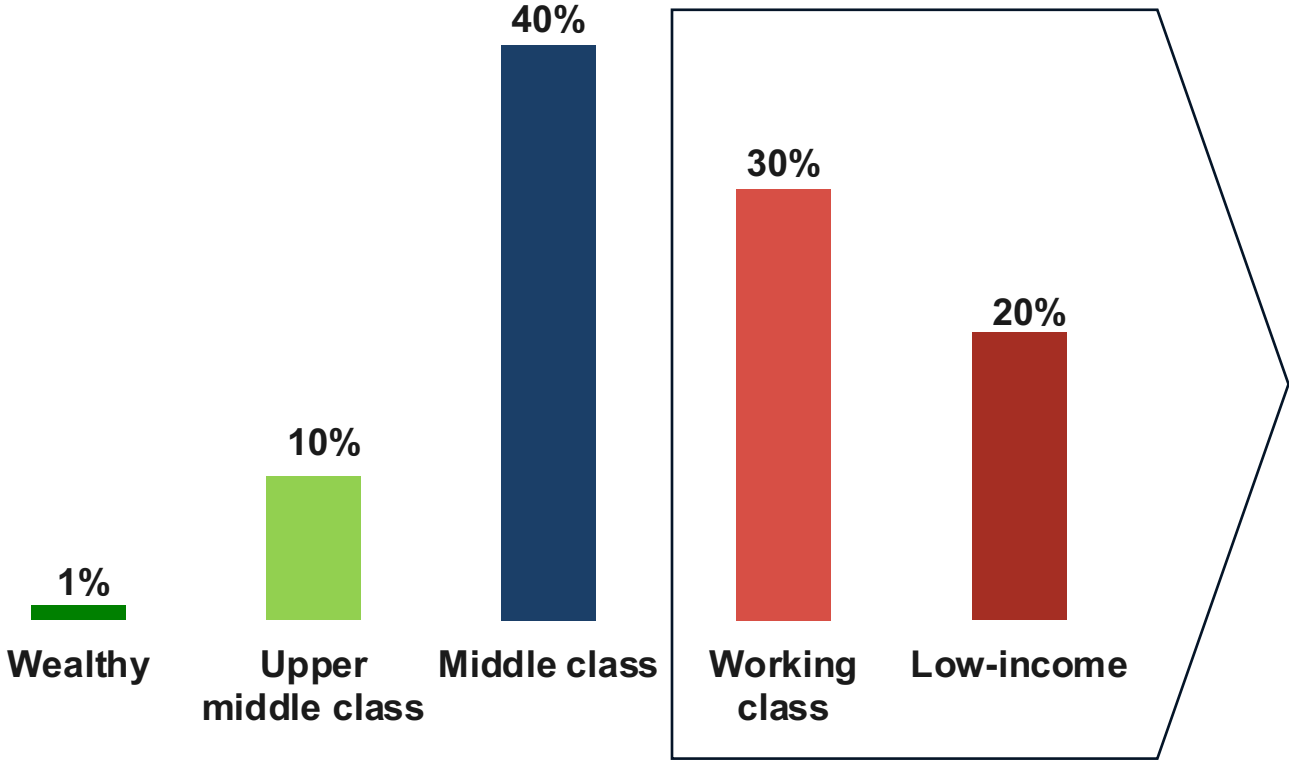
Shrinking the size of government



	GROWING MIDDLE CLASS		TOTAL %
	Much %	Somewhat %	
White non-college grads	28	35	63
White college grads	30	35	65
Black voters	38	36	74
Hispanic voters	27	45	72
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Middle class	29	38	67
Working class	30	37	68
Low-income	25	34	59
Aspiring middle class	33	38	71

80% of voters either consider themselves to be middle class or say it is important for them to become middle class.

Which of the following best describes how you think of your current economic situation?



Among those who consider themselves to be working class or low-income, 60% say that being middle class is an important goal for them personally.

Identification with the middle class is a dominant phenomenon across races, places, and age.

Which best describes how you think of your current economic situation? Is being middle class an important goal for you?

	Working class/ low-income				Working class/ low-income		
	Current middle class/higher %	Aspire to middle class %	Don't aspire to middle class%		Current middle class/higher %	Aspire to middle class %	Don't aspire to middle class%
White non-college grads	35	38	27	Age 18 to 34	44	40	16
White college grads	78	17	5	Age 35 to 49	49	31	20
Black voters	40	38	22	Age 50 to 64	52	27	21
Hispanic voters	45	30	25	Age 65/older	55	21	24
Large city	47	35	19	Income under \$50K	24	45	31
Small city	49	35	16	Income \$50K to \$100K	58	24	18
Suburbs	58	25	17	Income over \$100K	85	10	5
Small town/rural area	42	30	28				

In their own words: What it should mean to be middle class in America?

<i>Volunteered positive aspects of being in/ rising into the middle class</i>	All voters	Middle class	Aspiring middle class
Money for cost-of-living expenses, necessities	26%	26%	30%
Home ownership; able to afford a house, property	20%	23% → -6	17%
Able to pay bills, pay bills on time	15%	12% → +7	19%
Comfortable, live comfortably	13%	13%	14%
Leisure activities, vacations, entertainment	11%	11%	13%
Hard working, working for a living, working class	10%	14% → -8	6%
Disposable, discretionary income	9%	9%	7%
Vehicle ownership	8%	9%	8%
Able to support, take care of a family	8%	7%	11%
Good, better pay	7%	7%	8%
Able to save money, have more money (unspecified)	7%	7%	9%
Financial security, financially stable, freedom from financial worries	7%	5%	10%
Ability to afford, enjoy luxuries, indulgences	6%	7%	5%
Not living paycheck to paycheck	5%	6%	6%
Healthcare, affordable healthcare	5%	4%	7%
Living a good life, quality of life, better life	5%	6%	3%
Nice home, better housing, suitable place to live	5%	6%	4%

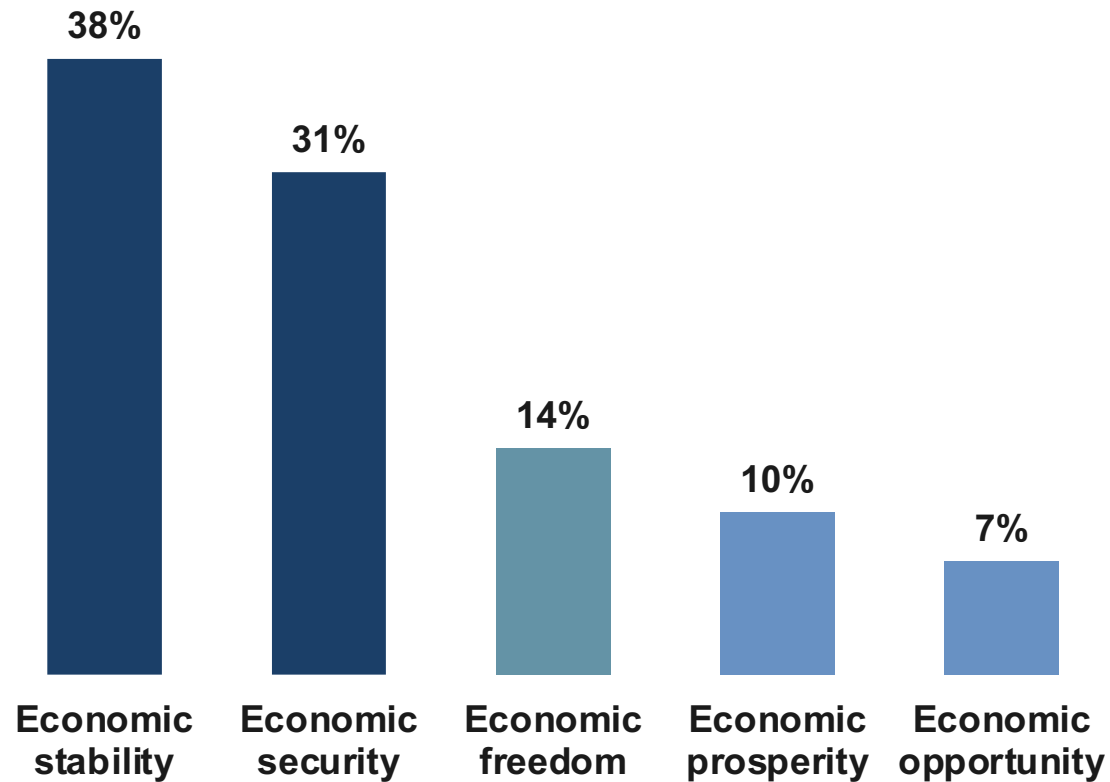
Americans are looking first and foremost for a comfortable standard of living, stability, and security.

<i>Three statements that best sum up what it should mean to be middle class in America</i>	All voters	Middle class	Aspiring middle class
Being able to afford a comfortable standard of living	38%	37%	36%
Feeling financially stable	30%	27%	31%
Feeling financially secure	27%	27%	30%
Having enough money to raise a family on	27%	28%	27%
Not feeling stressed about money all the time	24%	18%	30%
Being able to own your own home	24%	29%	16%
Having peace of mind about your financial situation	21%	19%	20%
Having enough money to retire on	21%	24%	18%
Being able to save a little money at the end of each month	20%	21%	19%
Providing good opportunities for your children	12%	14%	12%
Feeling that your hard work has paid off	12%	13%	10%
Having more control over your life	10%	8%	12%
Being able to spend time with your family	10%	11%	10%

Less than 10% mention being able to have a few luxuries (8%), travel/enjoy life (7%), have good job (7%), go to college (4%).

Economic stability and security are more important to Americans today than other more aspirational economic goals.

Which one of the following economic goals is the most important to you personally?

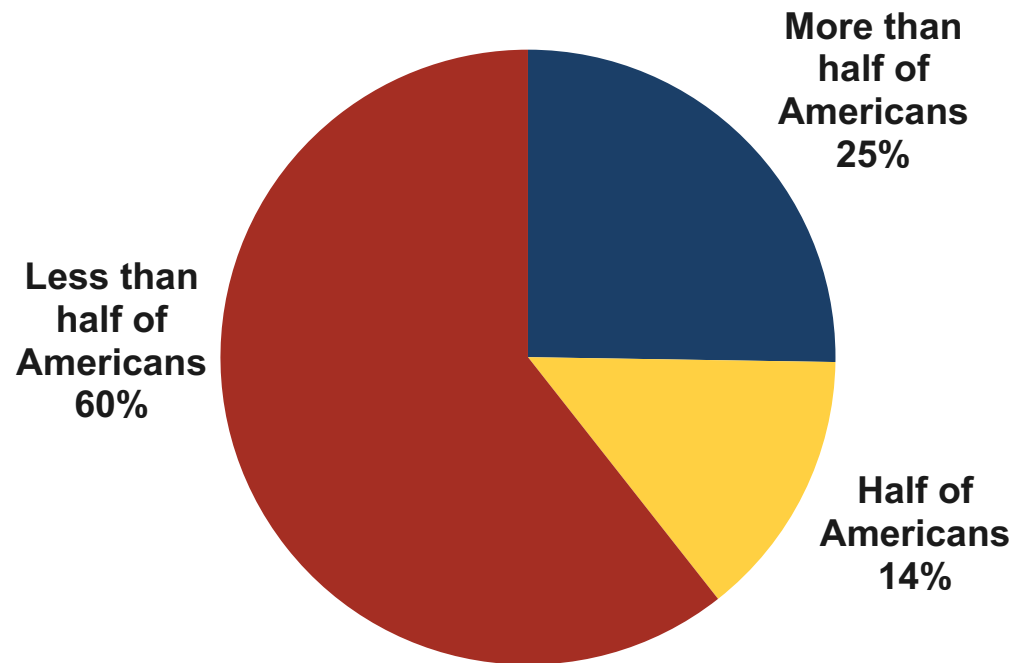


	Economic stability %	Economic security %
White voters	38	34
Black voters*	44	16
Hispanic voters	32	27
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Middle class	32	34
Working class	44	27
Low-income	44	28
Aspiring middle class	45	26
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Age 18 to 34	46	18
Age 35 to 49	34	28
Age 50 to 64	40	34
Age 65/older	33	43

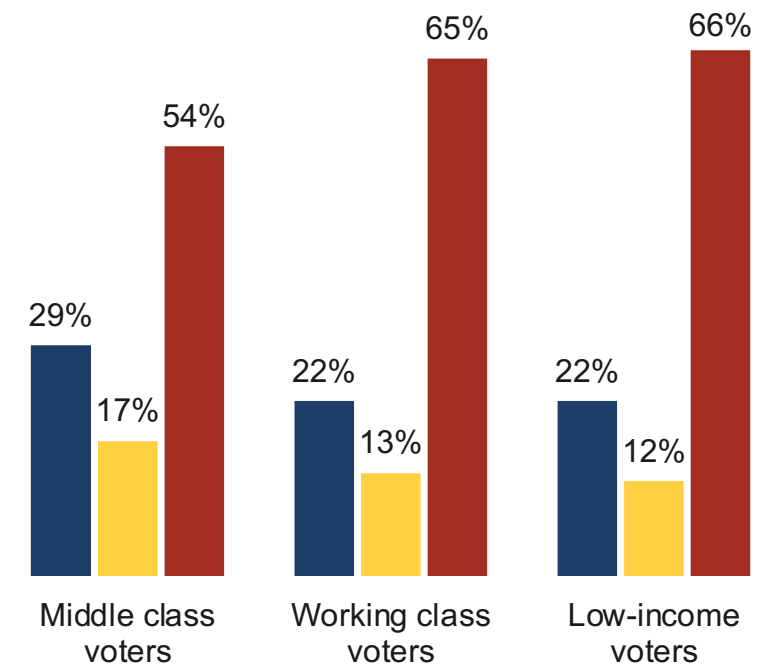
*22% of Black voters select "economic freedom."

Most Americans believe that a secure middle-class standard of living is now the exception rather than the rule.

What percent of Americans have what you would consider to be a secure, middle-class standard of living today?

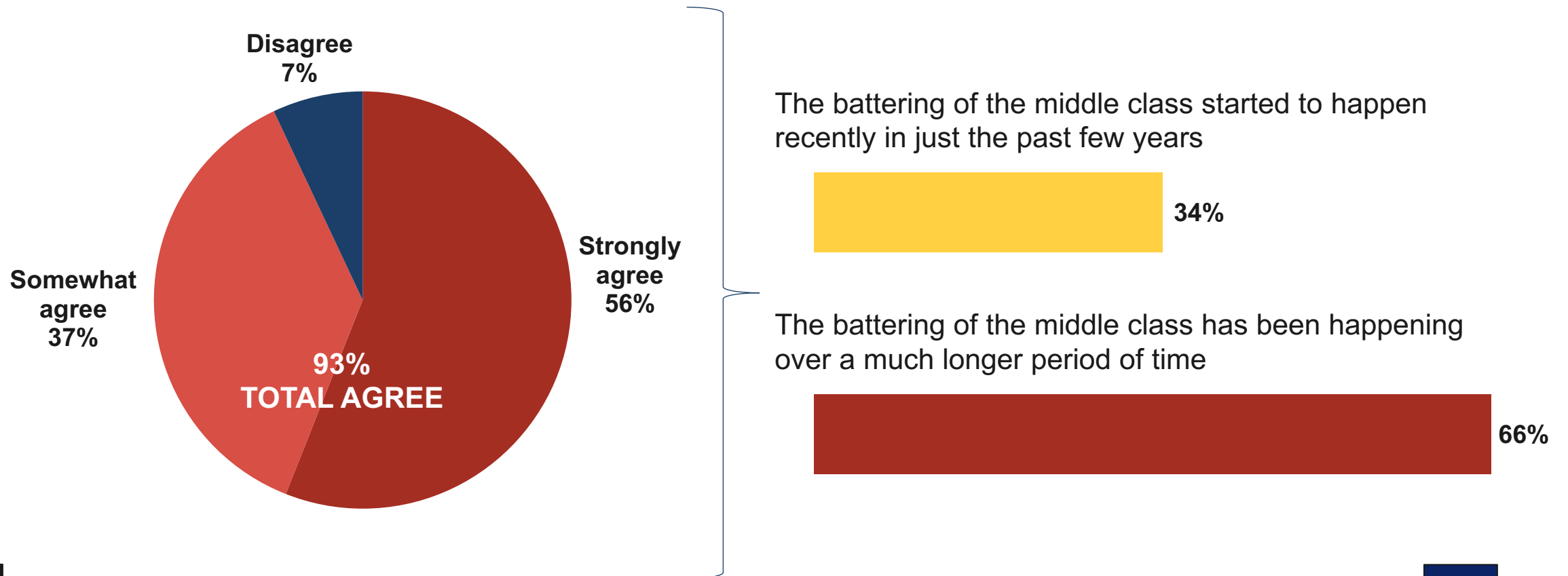


Perceptions by economic class:



Nearly all Americans believe the middle class is being battered, and two-thirds say it has been happening for a long time.

“The middle class in America has been battered, and it has become much harder for people to rise up into the middle class and stay in the middle class than it was in the past.”



Most Americans feel they would be helped more by an agenda focused on investing in the American people, lowering costs, and ensuring strong retirements than on cutting spending, reducing taxes, and eliminating burdensome regulations.

Which set of economic approaches do you think would do more to help people like you?

Investing in **THE AMERICAN PEOPLE**, lowering costs, and ensuring secure retirements



Cutting government spending, reducing taxes, and eliminating burdensome regulations on businesses



68%

+36

Investing in **AMERICA**, lowering costs, and ensuring secure retirements



Cutting government spending, reducing taxes, and eliminating burdensome regulations on businesses



61%

+22

Very large majorities say that an official who prioritizes investing in America/the American people would be in step with their own economic goals – with more intensity around investing in the American people.

An elected official who puts a high priority on investing in **THE AMERICAN PEOPLE** would be:

In step with my economic goals



Out of step with my economic goals



An elected official who puts a high priority on investing in **AMERICA** would be:

In step with my economic goals

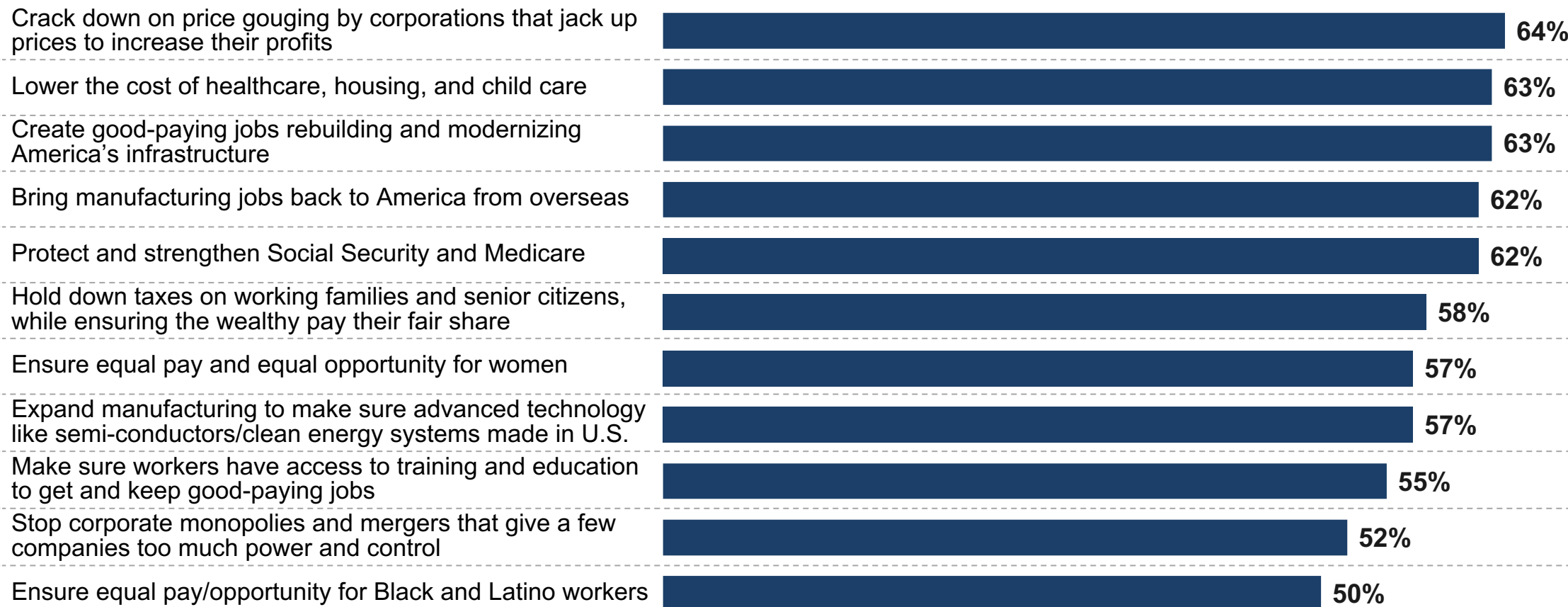


Out of step with my economic goals



Top policies for growing the middle class: stop price gouging, lower costs, create good-paying jobs rebuilding America, bring back manufacturing, protect Social Security and Medicare.

Very favorable to policies for strengthening the economy by growing the middle class (9-10 on 0-to-10 scale)



When Americans prioritize policies, items related to affordability rise to the top, including fair taxes.

<i>Three most important ways to grow the middle class in America</i>	All voters
Lower the cost of healthcare, housing, and childcare	42%
Hold down taxes on working families and senior citizens, while ensuring wealthy pay their fair share	36%
Bring manufacturing jobs back to America from overseas	33%
Create good-paying jobs rebuilding and modernizing America's infrastructure	30%
Protect and strengthen Social Security and Medicare	30%
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Increase the minimum wage so that everyone who works hard makes a living wage	28%
Crack down on price gouging by corporations that jack up prices to increase their profits	25%
Expand American manufacturing to make sure that advanced technology products like semi-conductors and clean energy systems are made here in the United States	23%
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Make sure workers have access to training and education to get and keep good-paying jobs	19%
Stop corporate monopolies and mergers that give a few companies too much power and control	15%
Ensure equal pay and equal opportunity for women	13%
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Ensure equal pay and equal opportunity for Black and Latino workers	9%
Make sure workers who want to form and join unions have the freedom and ability to do so	4%

When Americans prioritize policies, items related to affordability rise to the top, including fair taxes. – *Key Subgroups*

<i>Three most important ways to grow the middle class in America</i>	Middle class	Aspiring middle class	Age 18 to 34	Age 35 to 49	Age 50 to 64	Age 65/older
Lower the cost of healthcare, housing, childcare	40%	44%	53%	45%	35%	34%
Hold down taxes; ensure wealthy pay their fair share	37%	32%	25%	33%	43%	41%
Bring manufacturing jobs back from overseas	34%	31%	17%	36%	42%	37%
Good-paying jobs rebuilding, modernizing infrastructure	31%	32%	25%	34%	32%	31%
Protect and strengthen Social Security and Medicare	29%	29%	16%	20%	37%	45%
Increase minimum wage	22%	34%	41%	29%	24%	18%
Crack down on price gouging by corporations	23%	29%	27%	28%	22%	24%
Expand manufacturing: advanced tech products made in U.S.	27%	16%	17%	19%	25%	29%
Access to training, education to get, keep good-paying jobs	21%	20%	20%	19%	17%	21%
Stop corporate monopolies and mergers	14%	15%	16%	18%	11%	15%
Ensure equal pay and equal opportunity for women	14%	13%	21%	14%	11%	8%
Ensure equal pay, opportunity for Black and Latino workers	9%	11%	17%	9%	6%	6%
Freedom, ability to form and join unions	4%	5%	8%	3%	4%	3%

Majorities of Americans say unions play a positive role in growing the middle class, but many are unfamiliar with unions.

Labor Unions' Role in the U.S. Economy

Positive role by giving workers a voice at their jobs and allowing them to bargain for better wages, better benefits, and fairer treatment



Negative role by demanding wage increases that get passed on to consumers and taking away the flexibility that businesses need



No opinion/do not know much about labor unions



Labor Unions and Growing the Middle Class

Positive role



Negative role



Neither



No opinion/do not know much about labor unions



	Positive role %	Negative role %	Neither %	No opinion %
Middle class	54	22	8	16
Working class	59	16	6	18
Low-income	50	17	10	24
Age 18 to 34	62	10	10	18
Age 35 to 49	51	16	7	27
Age 50 to 64	51	26	10	14
Age 65/older	55	25	5	14