

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
FALK AUDITORIUM
CHALLENGES FOR MOVING TOWARD A
MORE INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, October 27, 2022

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DIONNE: I want to thank everyone for being here today. This is very exciting for us because this partnership is 13 years old, this is the 13th report that PRRI and Brookings have been involved in. And this is our first live event since 2019. We've done it online ever since, so to have all of you here is such a blessing for us. So thank you so much for coming.

And my name is E.J. Dionne, I'm a senior fellow here at Brookings. My colleague, Bill Galston, who is also a senior fellow, had been really pleased to partner with PRRI over 13 years. And Melissa Deckman, the CEO, is going to have a few words to say after I finish. And it's a real joy to work with her and Robbie Jones, who is the all-star MVP of PowerPoints, as you will see. But that's only because he's an all-star MVP at data analysis. So he analyzes the data well and presents it clearly.

We have worked on all kinds of projects together. We had one of the first reports 13 years ago about the Tea Party and showed how closely related the Tea Party was to the religious conservative movement. Which I think when we look back, retrospect, help explain how this morphed into what became the Trump movement.

We did another report early on, on the relationship of libertarianism to conservatism. We did a report on the religious and moral attitudes of young people which caught the trend early, on the religious disaffiliation of the young, and also differences in attitudes on same sex marriage on the one hand and abortion on the other.

This has been a real joy, and maybe you're not supposed to say this at a think tank, but it's also been an awful lot of fun. And we are joined today by an extraordinary group of respondents whom Bill will introduce after Robbie's presentation. I just want to thank them for being here.

We've been very lucky not only in getting a lot of great data but getting extraordinary people to come and respond to it from a variety of points of view. So I want to welcome our respondents.

And I want to welcome Melissa Deckman, who will tell you a bit about PRRI, tell you all the things I forgot to say. And I hope to tell us a little bit about some of the work we've got going forward. Melissa Deckman, welcome.

MS. DECKMAN: Thank you very much, E.J. Good morning, everyone. It's so great to be in person to talk about our 13th annual American Values Survey.

Those of you who are here probably are familiar with PRRI, but for those of you watching at home or in your offices or hopefully not while you're driving your car. But PRRI has been around since 2009. We are a non-partisan, non-profit, research organization that examines the nexus between religion, culture, and politics. And we invite you if you're not here with us in person, if you go to our website at PRRI.org you can download our amazing study here full of all kinds of interesting things. Today you can also sign up to get some regular news briefings, including our Morning Buzz, in your inbox.

We also have commentary going on while this is happening on Twitter, on Facebook, and as of this morning on Instagram. So you can find us at PRRI.poll and at Twitter at PRRI.poll. And please use the hashtag that they've hopefully put up here to follow for more specific commentary about the AVS study today.

Before we begin, I just wanted to thank our terrific panelists for coming today. We have Mona Charen, Eugene Scott, and Janelle Wong. I also want to acknowledge our amazing research team and our staff at PRRI, including Dr. Natalie Jackson, our director of research, and our research staff, Dr. Diana Orcés, Ian Huff. We also relied on the assistance of three very talented college interns for their help in this study. Najita Islam, Roselyn Marfo, and Simone Nikitina. Our chief of staff, Sean Sands, has kept us running on the wheels on time, I'm really appreciate for his help. And we have also a terrific communications team, Jessica Royce and Amber Cooper. And lastly, Tim Duffy is our graphic designer who has just always done stellar work for PRRI. So thank you for that team.

This process, what you'll see today, is months and months of planning and analysis and work. So we're really grateful to be sharing it with you and also of course to continue our collaboration with E.J. and Bill Galston here at Brookings.

So it's my pleasure now to introduce you to the founder and president of PRRI, Dr. Robert Jones, who had previously served as CEO before I came in in July 1st. So he's the author of

“White Too Long, the Legacy of White Supremacy and American Christianity,” which won a 2021 American Book Award. He is also the author of “The End of White Christian America,” which won the 2019 Grawemeyer Award in Religion. And he holds a Ph.D. in religion from Emory University and M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a B.S in computing science and mathematics from Mississippi College. So, Robbie, take it away.

MR. JONES: Hello, actual people. It’s so great to be in front of you. As E.J. said, we haven’t been back here in person since 2019. This is only the second big public release that PRRI has done of any kind since COVID, so so glad to be here in front of all of you and just express my own thanks for the PRRI team, the Brookings team, Bill Galston and E.J. Dionne for their long-standing partnership with PRRI on this project. And are happy here to present just a little sliver of the findings from our 13th annual American Values Survey.

As Melissa said, the full report which runs some 70 pages with, I don’t know, dozens of charts, you can find online at PRRI.org. And my job is to try to give you a slice of that 70 pages, you know, here in just a few minutes. But I want to walk you through at least some of the main findings of the report that will set the table for our panel discussion with our esteemed panelists today.

So this is the 13th Annual American Values Survey. It was conducted in early September so given that things change by the day right here, just keep that in mind. Early September, September 1st through 11th. It is a representative sample of over 2,500 American adults in the U.S.

We designed it in partnership with The Brookings Institution. And a big thank you to the Carnegie Corporation of New York who has been our long-standing stalwart funder of this work. And also a shout out that PRRI has also received initial support from the Ford Foundation, the Wilber and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation, Stand Together Trust, and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock. So thanks to all those organizations for their support. All right.

So we’re going to jump right into the findings. A few things at the start before we get to any specific issues. I just want to lay out, and this will be no surprise of course, that we are a politically and culturally divided country. But even, you know, as someone who stares at these numbers a lot, some

of these are actually kind of eye popping to see just how big some of the gaps are on some of these issues.

So to start with a couple of Bellwether questions. One we've been asking for a long time and kind of a standard question about whether things are going in the right direction or are headed on the wrong track.

And here we have our question we've been asking for a long time on the American Values Survey. Since the 1950s has American culture and way of life mostly changed for the better or changed for the worst? So here I'm going to show you two sides, the negative answers to both of these questions.

So first here we are with things in this country are moving in the wrong direction. Maybe again not surprised given just what we all feel about the mood. Three-quarters of the country say things are moving in the wrong direction. So fairly sour, dour mood out there.

It is still big gaps through, you know, 40 percentage points between Republicans and Democrats on this question. And then big spreads also on religious groups. And I think if you've been to these presentations, you'll see this pattern a lot with the way Christian groups kind of cluster together in one place and other religious Americans and the religiously unaffiliated kind of down the way. We'll see this pattern here as well. And white evangelical Protestants kind of the anchor of the Republican Party sticking out and looking nearly identical to the Republican Party here.

Here's our other question. It is not quite as linear in the relationship to there but you still see basically the same patterns. Republicans twice as likely as Democrats to say that things have changed for the worst since the 1950s. No other group among religion groups think things have changed for the worst since the 1950s other than white evangelical Protestants.

Another couple of questions that just kind of cultural bellwethers again. Attitudes around newcomers to the country and attitudes around gender. Here we found to be very predictive of other kinds of political attitudes. Despite these being very different kinds of questions, so newcomers threaten traditional American customs and values.

And this is a question from the General Social Survey. Society as a whole has become too soft and feminine. You can see they correlate very highly together here. And when you look at the spread on these again, so this is first just the newcomers question, whether they threaten traditional America customs and values. You see this chasm, right, between the Democrats and Republicans on this threat question. And then similar kinds of patterns here among, again, white Christians kind of up at the top, but white evangelical Protestants standing out even among that group, two-thirds saying newcomers threaten traditional American customs and values.

And if I put up the other one, society as a whole has become too soft and feminine, you'll see very, very similar patterns on this question, right. So they run some differences, but they run pretty tightly together.

Speaking of gender, one of the more interesting questions we asked in this survey was perceptions about whether there are two genders or more than two genders. And we found very different views again, kind of dividing the country. Here among all Americans we asked are there a range of genders, and then whether you feel strongly about that or not.

So I've got up here the people who say there are a range of genders. The darker lines are those who felt strongly, lighter lines are those who don't feel strongly. You can see here again it's about a little more than a third of the country that thinks there's a range of genders. But again this big gap, you know, only 10 percent of Republicans and we're looking at, you know, over 6 in 10 Democrats who believe this.

And then you can see the other side of this. The one that really jumps out, right, among Republicans, 73 percent only two genders, and feel strongly about this. Like very, very strong opinions on this.

This correlates, you will not be surprised, to a whole range of issues around transgender rights, LGBTQ issues in general, etcetera.

The other place that we've seen a very consistent pattern, I've written a fair amount about this in my last book. Is this denial really of systemic racism. Various measures that get at not just

personal racism but racism that exists in some systemic fashion, the effects of past discrimination on the present.

And here we see several questions here, and I'll give you the full spread in a minute. But the first one is really about whether past discrimination has an effect on the present. The second one is just straight statement about whether white supremacy's still a problem. One about the criminal justice system, whether a Black person is more likely than a white person to receive the death penalty. And then this kind of so-called reverse discrimination question, whether people believe discrimination against white Americans has become as big a problem as discrimination against Black Americans and other minorities.

You'll see that only about a third of Republicans affirm any of these statements, and it's even less for the effects of past discrimination on the present. And then when you look at and you throw in, those look very different than Independence and Democrats on these questions.

And this is, you know, from critical race theory to what's being taught in schools. You'll see this is part of what's going on. Certainly questions around reparations, very, very different world views here on this question.

Another one that we have asked here is a question that gets at Christian nationalism. We've seen a lot of ink spilled about this, a lot of writing, people trying to understand what this is. We wrote this question really trying to go head-on at what we see as the key elements of that.

So this question is an agree or disagree question. God intended America to be a new promised land where European Christians could create a society that would be an example to the rest of the world. Three in 10 Americans affirmed this statement. And again, you can see these very, very big, it's half of Republicans that affirm this statement. And then we look at the religious breaks. Again it's half of white evangelicals who affirm this statement.

And this statement also, we can talk about this in the discussion. Also highly correlated to a range of other things. QAnon beliefs, it's also related to propensity to take up violence in political space. So we can pick that thread up a bit. But this is again the lay of the land here.

I mentioned QAnon. We have a set of questions that we've been tracking over time

where we've tried to get a sense of like so just who are people we could classify as QAnon believers. This measure does not ask people to identify with a label. So what we've done here is actually got three attitudinal measures that we glean from the rhetoric that's getting used in QAnon circles.

And one, and a question that I, and I think our whole team, as social scientists, never thought we would actually write when we see on the page, is actually a question about whether people believe that there is a group of Satan worshipping pedophiles, right, that are controlling the government. We actually wrote that in a question. And we kind of looked at it and went, are we really here that this is a legitimate survey question, and the answer is yes. That's where we are.

The other question in this battery is kind of an apocalyptic edge of QAnon that says that there's a storm coming soon that's going to sweep out the current leadership and install the rightful leaders in their place.

And then finally a question about violence and whether true American patriots may have to take up violence, commit acts of violence, if that's what it takes to set the country back on track.

So even with those kinds of measures, the fairly conservative way of measuring this, we have 19 percent of Americans that affirm all three of those beliefs. And you can see it's almost three in 10 among Republicans, it's about a quarter of white evangelicals, it's fewer among Democrats. The QAnon doubters are the ones who mostly disagree, might disagree with one of those questions but mostly disagree. And then rejecters are those who reject all three of those premises.

And you can see again, this is a huge party differences, but that three in 10 Republicans confirming all three of those statements.

One other thing is that when we've been tracking this again, this kind of goes back to early 2021 and we've actually noted a slight uptick in the number of people who qualify who affirm all three of those questions. Where it's gone from 14 to 19 percent just over this time period.

Here are the other ones. QAnon doubters, QAnon rejecters, and notable QAnon objectors, those who reject all three of those have dropped by 10 percentage points. So people have moved into the middle, and they've moved over to the affirming side. So essentially, it's slightly gaining

traction over this last time period.

So up to the critical issues in the mid-terms here. And give you a sense of again, what are people saying is important. Again, this is early September data here that we have.

So here are the top issues that kind of came out. More than 40 percent or more of Americans say are critical issues to their vote in the election. Leading the top here are two things that are tied for the top. Increasing cost of housing and everyday expenses and health of our democracy. So that's notable, right? These are kind of topping out the list.

Below that we have some things kind of in the high level 40s. Crime, access to guns and safety, abortion, education, and immigration. It won't surprise anyone to say that this measure on abortion is much higher than we had typically seen it, you know, especially if you could go back five or ten years, that number's often been in the 20s. But it's now up in the mid-40s and kind of competing for the top things in the election.

Now that's kind of the view from the top. But again, if you're going to look underneath a little bit and check out the partisan divides, you'll see some pretty different things.

So here first are Republican priorities, right? So the top four that actually cracked more than 50 percent, cost of housing, immigration, crime, health of our democracy, right. Guns, abortion, climate change fall far below that. So that's Republicans.

There's Democrats, right? So very different list of things. Topping out the list at more than six in 10, health of our democracy, then abortion, then access to guns and gun safety, climate change. The one place where they do agree is increase in cost of housing, but immigration and crime way down the list for Democrats. If I put them back up together you can kind of see just, you know, here's Republicans and it looks really different.

The other thing to say is that even though both parties believe that the health of democracy is one of their top issues, again it will not surprise you that they mean very different things by that. And here's just one window into that.

So we asked people about what are the bigger problem for the integrity of the U.S.

elections are. Is the bigger problem people casting votes who are not eligible to vote, that is voter fraud. Or is the bigger problem eligible voters being denied the right to vote, so voter disenfranchisement.

The country's largely split, a plurality on the eligible voters being denied the right to vote side. But here's Democrats, right? 83 percent on the side of eligible voters being denied the right to vote. There's independents agreeing with that but a little bit better split. And here are Republicans, right, on the other side. I mean they are literally mirror images of each other on this question. So when they say health of democracy, you know, it's two different visions of what that means, at least there's one window into that.

We also asked people, again, this is early September, whether they were excited to vote. And our data in early September we are finding Republicans with an edge here on just generally asking them if they're excited to vote.

So for example very strong Republicans, 57 percent say they're very excited to vote. But among strong Democrats it's on 46 percent saying they're very excited to vote.

We also asked the question though, in the context of the Dobbs decision and the overturning of Roe v. Wade. So we asked people when you think about that, how motivated are you to vote. And we asked it that way we get a different lay of the land, right. With Democrats more strongly, particularly strong Democrats, 78 percent very motivated to vote when thinking about the overturn of Roe v. Wade.

Republicans are in a strong majority there, it's about six in 10 as well. They look basically the same, right, there's not a big difference between general motivation to vote and vote thinking about the current state of play of abortion. Whereas for Democrats it looks like an advantageous thing.

So to the extent that is salient, when people go to the polls, believers, or mail it in or drop it off, Democrats should have an advantage but in general it looks like Republicans have the advantage and energy.

We also asked a question about knowing kind of dissatisfaction about the parties. And, you know, the political science literature for a long time now has been suggesting that even though we

have these partisan divides, it's really more about people hating the other party than it is loving their own party, right. So that's really what drives negative partisanship, is what really is driving a lot of these divisions.

So we asked a question about whether people would be interested in a third party given that kind of general dissatisfaction with parties. It turns out that four in 10 Americans say they'd be interested in a third party that's somewhere between ideologically speaking, the Democrats and the Republicans here.

And when you look at it, there's a sizeable number of all parts and slightly fewer Republicans say they'd be interested in that. They're a little more interested actually in something to the right of the current Republican Party. Less so among Democrats. But it's a sizeable number really across all parties. And you see this big number, almost six in 10 among those who say they're political independents.

So to say just a little bit more about abortion given that it's been such a big issue to see change in the country. And just to kind of some level setting here. We asked about people who oppose or affirm the overturn of Roe v. Wade, the decision that affirmed the constitutional right to abortion. These are the numbers who oppose the Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

Among all Americans it's six and 10. That's fairly consistent with those who affirm the legality of abortion. And you see there kind of big again, big party splits here. 40 points, 42 points between the two political parties with independents and Democrats fairly strong opposing the overturn of Roe v. Wade.

And this is also notable too, I think there's a lot of misinformation out there about where "voters of faith" are on this issue. I heard an entire interview on NPR about Ralph Reed, who just kept using this term "voters of faith, voters of faith." And insisting that they all opposed abortion. But it's pretty clearly not the case, right.

If you kind of look here it's essentially two groups, and one of them is the bigger one, white evangelical Protestants are really the only group down here, along with other Christians, and that

group is comprised of other Christians of color. Primarily API Christians and others who are not African-American or Latino. And so they're there too.

But every other major religious group, including Hispanic Catholics, white Catholics, white mainline Protestants, those Americans who follow a non-Christian religion, African-American Protestants, and the religiously unaffiliated, all oppose the overturning of Roe v. Wade, right? So it's fairly clear. White Anglicans today, just for the record, make up 14 percent of the country, right? So that's how big that group is over there.

Other Christians are about 8 percent. So we're really talking about only a quarter of people of faith over here that represent a quarter of Americans are in this camp of supporting the overturn of Roe v. Wade.

Also by age, again, the trend won't surprise you. But even among seniors, those 65 years of age or older, a majority opposes, and both men and women here as well overall oppose the overturn of Roe v. Wade.

So here's what the trends look like. You know, we've been tracking this for quite a while. And one of the axioms of kind of polling on the legality of abortion really for decades has been that there really isn't much shift. It's very, very stable, these attitudes. We are seeing some volatility though, not surprisingly, in the last couple of years.

So here are the trends. All Americans in gray, and the two political parties. Republicans have still remained basically the same as they were more than a decade ago. But we have seen kind of this uptick in the support for legality among all Americans and driven really by a kind of uptick among Democrats in these last few years.

One other thing I think is also worth saying, particularly because we're in a place where there are effectively total bans on abortions in many states now coming online. There are very, very few, and always have been very, very few Americans who support total bans on abortion, right? Abortion being completely illegal.

So here are the trends for Democrats and all Americans back from 2010 all the way up to

'22 who say abortion should be illegal in all cases, right? It's pretty low, it's down in like almost none among Democrats, it's down one in 10 among all Americans. But this I find pretty interesting. Here are the numbers for Republicans over that time period, right?

So just since 2020, and really into '21, you know, we're still at 23, 22 percent. So it's hard to say. It's really only at most one in four Republicans historically have supported complete ban on abortion. And that number has dropped by half just in the last couple of years, right? So that's the kind of important thing you gotta pay attention to I think in this space.

All right. Let me tell you a little bit about Biden and Trump here. First of all, Biden's job approval, we asked about his job as President, also about handling of the pandemic, abortion, economy, and immigration. Not a lot of difference, gets higher marks on the pandemic, lower marks on other places.

Here obviously, not surprising, very, very low approval among Republicans. This one is telling, I think, just for handling of abortion, a little bit lower, still fairly high marks but a little bit lower than some of the other areas for his handling of abortion.

We asked a question also about the impact of the January 6 hearings on favorability of Donald Trump. We wanted to kind of see just what impact this has had. So we asked, we gave all the options. Did it make you less favorable, have a less favorable view of Trump, did it have no impact on your view of Trump, or did it give you a more favorable view of Trump.

We actually had some here, 8 percent that had a more favorable view. But it's basically four times as likely for those who viewed the hearings, four times as likely to have a more negative view of Trump.

Here's Democrats and Republicans and independents. Notably on Republicans slightly more made them have a more favorable view of Trump than a less favorably view of Trump. But among independents here again, you know, it's five to one that made them have a less favorable view of Trump.

Among religious group by in large for the most part, overwhelming more negative view of Trump. The one place where it is balanced down here is at the very bottom. By Angelical Protestants it's

a drop, right? Really pushed some this way and some this way, but almost an equal, almost in equal amounts.

We also asked about looking ahead to 2024, who people want to see at the top of the ticket. So in each of these we asked separately, and we asked those who identified as Democrats or as independents who leaned Democratic. We asked about Biden, those who were Republican or independents who leaned Republican, we asked about Trump here.

So here's the story from Democrats, who should the nominee be, 40 percent it should be Biden, but 58 percent somebody else among Democrats. Among independents who lean Democrat it's even stronger shift. Only 20 percent say it should be Biden, 78 percent said they prefer someone else.

Trump is still holding on here though among Republicans, right, 54 percent say that they prefer to see Trump at the top of the ticket. But if you look at independents who lean Republican, it's the other way, right? So you see a bigger difference here. So a fair amount of dissatisfaction but with Trump kind of slightly hanging on a majority among Republicans there.

And I want to close with just a few issues I think that will kind of give us a sense of some things we've been watching for a long time.

And one question here about the pathways for citizenships. For Dreamers this is kind of a live issue, kind of winding its way through the courts. And ultimately, I think only going to get resolved by legislative action. But we asked people three, gave people three options, which is your preference. That we should allow children of undocumented immigrants to apply for citizenship, we should require them, or permanent resident status. We should require them to reapply every two years, which is basically the state of play as it stands. Or these immigrants should be identified and deported.

So we look at this. Most people, including a majority of Republicans, are in one of those first two categories, either status quo or offering a path to citizenship. But there is a fair number here of Republicans who say they should be identified and deported.

This number, by the way, is now among Republicans, almost identical to the number if we are not asking about Dreamers, but if we're just asking about undocumented immigrants in general,

about four in 10 say no, they should be identified and deported now. And that number's been going up over the last, you know, decade or so.

That's also been true even for white evangelicals. I went back and looked. White evangelical Protestants, not on this question but on the general question on the path to citizenship. Back in 2013 only 30 percent of white evangelical Protestants said that undocumented immigrants in the country should be identified and deported. That number in our latest survey is 49. All right? So that kind of gives you a sense of the Trump effect among white evangelicals on the question of immigration.

One place of some bipartisan agreement is on limiting the power of Supreme Court justices. Here we tested two different policies. One there should be a mandatory retirement age, the other one, there should be term limits for Supreme Court justices. We get three-quarters of Americans agreeing with both of those statements.

It's driven a little bit by those who either favor or oppose overturning *Roe v. Wade*. And you can see these kind of differences here, but they're not great. We still have majorities in both of those places.

One other unique question I think we asked for the first time this year, given all the local noise and efforts around things like banning books, looking at curriculum, so-called critical race theory that's been in bills all over the country. Is attitudes about public school teachers and librarians. Like how much do we trust what they're doing here.

And so we asked people, gave people two options that public school teachers and librarians are providing our kids with appropriate curriculum and books that teach the good and bad of American history, or public-school teachers and librarians are indoctrinating our kids with inappropriate curriculum and books that wrongly portray America as a racist country.

Now by in large Americans, by two to one, are in the former camp, like trusting that public school teachers and librarians are doing their jobs and not indoctrinating kids. But you'll see this kind of big difference here. Again, we don't have trend data on this but the majority of Republicans in that second camp, right? Saying that no, public school teachers and librarians are indoctrinating our kids with

inappropriate material.

And here similar attitudes among religious groups. I kind of abbreviated this here. But white evangelical Protestants again stand out, look very close to Republicans, majority not trusting the job that public school teachers and librarians are doing. But all other religious Americans in very different place on this, as are the religiously unaffiliated here.

So that's the wrap. Just a couple of words in closing. You know, we see in the survey I think this bifurcation, right, of the country that's kind of marked by a kind of rightward stance among Republicans and evangelicals over time, particularly around issues of immigration and American identity. And on these questions, you know, related to America, that identity, I mean even somebody who has looked at this data for a long time and year after year, I'm still continually struck by how by party, by race, by religion, we are in many ways factions and worlds apart.

You know, not just politically again, but culturally. And that we have two political parties, essentially defending different histories, living in different realities, and even promoting two essentially incompatible views of America's future.

And with that cheery note I will turn it over, welcome the panel up here to join me for a panel discussion.

MR. GALSTON: Well, once again welcome everybody. It is, indeed, you know, a thrill to be gathered back together face to face for the first time in three years. My name is Bill Galston, I'm a senior fellow in Governance Studies here at The Brookings Institution. I am, along with E.J., the Brookings unindicted co-conspirators in the creation of this report.

I'm going to get straight to our business. I am going to introduce our commentators, I'm going to thank some other people who need to be thanked for this event, which would not have been possible without their help, and then we're going to proceed.

So first of all, to my immediate right, but I guess stage left, Mona Charen, who is the policy editor of the Bulwark. And if you don't know what the Bulwark is, after this session is over rush and find out. And she is also the moderator of a weekly podcast, Beg to Differ, in which I've had the pleasure

to participate since its inception, and it is a great listen, ladies and gentlemen.

Next Eugene Scott, who is a Washington native and writes about Washington, DC and breaking political news for The Washington Post. And let me welcome you to this annual festival of cultural difference.

And finally Janelle Wong, who is on the PRRI board and is also a professor of Government, University of Maryland, where I taught for nearly 20 years before decamping to a university without students.

Finally, we're all here together but I just want to call out two people without whom we would not be here together. Two people at Brookings, Catalina Navarro, who has organized down to the minute this event. And Megan Bell, who has reached out in all sorts of ways to coordinate the behind-the-scenes activities that have helped lead to the creation of this report.

Now without further ado, Mona.

MS. CHAREN: Well thank you, Bill. It's a pleasure to be here. I want to thank Bill and E.J. and all the people at Brookings for inviting me, and PRRI.

I've always learned a lot from these surveys, and this one is no exception. They do prompt a lot of discomfort I'd say because this poll reinforces impressions about the nation that we have been grappling with for a number of years, the sharp and increasing polarization, the rising tolerance for political violence, the educational divide between the college educated and everyone else. And as a former conservative Republican, I am particularly aggrieved by the dark and suspicious and unwelcoming attitude that has taken hold in my former party.

And I will just quote now from the report, "Majorities of Republicans, 56 percent, and Democrats, 55 percent, believe that their generation is better off than their parents' generation was, compared with 45 percent of Independents. However, Republicans, 27 percent, are notably less likely than independents and Democrats to say that the next generation will be better off financially than their parents' generation." So there's that mood of pessimism.

And this pessimism about the future is reflected in other results as well. Such as the

finding that 43 percent of Americans describe the country as too soft and feminine, where 68 percent of Republicans believe that to be the case, as Robbie highlighted. Again, 69 percent of Republicans think that newcomers threaten traditional American values and customs, compared with only less than half, 40 percent of Americans more broadly.

So and then there's of course the wrong trek question. So here you have 93 percent of Republicans believe the country is going in the wrong direction. And you have to ask, what do people mean by that? Robbie talked about how people interpret questions differently in terms of voting.

But this one also gives rise to questions. So the wording of the question was, since the 1950s American culture and way of life has mostly changed for the worst. And as I said that's the one where overwhelming majorities of Republicans agree. And it's hard to know how people interpret that broad wording.

I mean it's obvious, for example, that for African-Americans, obviously America has changed for the better since the 1950s. And yet if you look at the responses among Black Protestants, if I'm reading this correctly, 48 percent of Black Protestants say things have changed for the worst since the days of Bull Connor.

So I'm guessing the Black Protestants, like other Americans, would say that it's complicated. Some things are much improved, and some are much worse.

Another finding that can be interpreted as pessimism about the future concerns the value of a college education. Again, this is complicated, college has gotten very expensive, and that might factor into people's calculations. But it's striking. In 2016 55 percent of Americans said a college degree was a good investment. In 2022, only 42 percent say so.

And the drop among Republicans was the steepest of all, going from 52 percent thought college was a good investment in 2016, to only 34 percent this year. Again, affordability could be a factor, but ideology probably also plays into this. Republicans are more inclined to think that colleges are redoubts of wokeness these days.

But however one may feel about concern about the political bias of college, the fallout in

faith in getting a college education for yourself may also reflect a certain lack of hope and ambition that we've seen in other surveys, especially by David Otter at MIT that looked at, you know, young men who are raised in single parent families, for example, who show a notable drop off in ambition for themselves and their futures.

Well one hope we're finding from this survey was about the teaching of American History. Again quoting from the report "Americans overwhelmingly favor teaching children history that includes both the good and bad aspects of our story so that they can learn from the past versus refraining from teaching aspects of history that could make them feel uncomfortable and so forth." So only 7 percent of Republicans objected to that or disagreed with that. So that is a good thing. And you wouldn't have I think guessed at those numbers if you were looking just at the culture wars that we're undergoing in Florida and elsewhere.

But that pretty much exhausts the good news in this report. And so let me just close with a few thoughts about the QAnon results.

So we do live in a new information environment, we all know that. And we know that with this, you know, the rise of demagoguery and specialized media, that this could lead Republicans to be hostile to Democrats, more suspicious of newcomers, worried about the economy, and so forth.

But the data about the QAnon believe are just head spinning. Again, Robbie read it out but I'm just going to read the first part of that three-part test one more time to emphasize what these people are agreeing to.

"The government, media, and financial world in the U.S. are controlled by a group of Satan worshipping pedophiles who run a global child sex trafficking operation." 27 percent of Republicans agree with that statement, and the other two.

This is far beyond normal politics. This is the kind of disordered thinking that we associate with unstable societies. And even as I stare at the numbers, I have trouble assimilating this. A significant share of our fellow citizens are not just angry or alienated, dissatisfied, sour, they are unhinged. And we are seeing a 21st Century revival of the blood libel which incited hatred and programs

against my Jewish ancestors around the globe. And frankly, it is a nightmare to see it in our time and in this mostly blessed nation.

MR. GALSTON: Thank you, Mona. If I had a knife, I think I'd slit my throat.

MS. CHAREN: I didn't mean to be cheerful, right?

MR. SCOTT: Now we have a headline.

MR. GALSTON: I know you better than that. Janelle, over to you.

MS. WONG: Thank you so much for having me, and congratulations to PRRI for this troll of data.

The AVS I think is really unique in allowing us a vivid picture, maybe too vivid, of the forces that are shaping political outcomes. Not only today, but as you can see from Robbie's presentation, in comparison to past years.

And to me it was really striking to see the extent to which universal issues like healthcare in the wake of a global pandemic, I mean what happened to healthcare? And even the environment to some extent seemed to be taking a back seat to racial anxieties, to fundamental differences in both a vision of the past and a vision for the future and how those issues are shaping politics today.

So in the short time I have here I just wanted to draw attention to some of the less prominent trends captured by this really rich data that I believe cut against some of the headlines.

So one, attitudes about LGBT rights are complex here. We see that majorities of people from both parties and all religious groups, including 60 percent of white evangelical Christians support protecting LGBT rights. At the same time, as noted in the report, there seems to be some evidence of a ceiling on Republican support for these protections.

So we see an increase over time among Democrats, but Republican support seems to have stalled out at around a little over 60 percent.

A second kind of cut against the headlines finding is that much has been made about Republicans using crime to win over voters, especially voters of color in this election. But note that the issue of crime plays really differently across communities.

So actually if you look at the cross tabs, Black respondents were more likely than any other group to say that crime was a critical issue in this election. Nearly 60 percent said it was critical, not just one of many important issues. Compared to less than 50 percent of whites.

But that does not translate into Republican support among Black voters. And so of course this survey and past surveys have shown us the extent to which race matters.

And third, there is a lot of speculation over Latino's defection to the GOP in the upcoming mid-terms. Here we see that the data are also really illuminating. So in this survey Latino respondents shows the lowest levels of gun ownership among any of the racial groups analyzed. Lower levels than Blacks or whites. But almost half of this group of Latinos say that gun issues are a critical issue going into this election.

So this is likely a result of the Uvalde School shooting and reminds us that Latino voters are gun control voters. And this is likely to be the case in Texas, including in the Rio Grande Valley. So this is such a focus as a Latino vote, Texas, and I think is kind of a hidden kind of finding that really will matter in this upcoming election.

So I'll end it there, but thank you, it's an honor to be here and have a chance to dig deep into this really rich troubling data.

MR. GALSTON: Thanks so much, Janelle. Eugene, over to you.

MR. SCOTT: Awesome. I cover national politics at The Washington Post. And before that I was a national political reporter at CNN. And my first day at CNN was the day that Donald Trump announced that he was going to run for President.

And so prior to that I had spent at least a decade covering politics and what some conservatives would refer to as Real America. Being a DC native I believe that all America is Real America. But what I do also know is that there's far more than two Americas if you'd spent time outside of America. And I think this survey reveals that.

There's so many different Americas shaped by various world views and experiences. And I came across a stat that I meant to write down while preparing for this event that I found fascinating.

And some significant percentage of Americans self-identify as rural despite never living in or not being born in rural places. And it was really fascinating in terms of how we identify.

One of the things that's really interesting about this survey, which is not surprising, which Mona hinted at, is your perception of the direction in which this country is moving often is tied to the identity group that you are a part of. It's hard, I mean last night my family celebrated my mother's 69th, birthday. Both of my parents, who are both alive, went to state sanctioned segregated schools. Their son has a graduate degree from Harvard. It's very hard for you to tell someone like that that this country is moving in the wrong direction, but that is what so many people who don't share their experiences believe.

I am 41 years old; I am a gay man. When I was in undergrad, and at 41, I like to remind people that still counts as millennial. Elderly millennial, but millennial.

MS. CHAREN: You hang on to that.

MR. SCOTT: And the reason it's important is because when I speak to 25-year-old gay men they don't know that when I was in undergrad gay sex was illegal in the State of North Carolina. It was still on the books in the State Legislature within my lifetime. And so I also as a 41-year-old who grew up in DC, I remember the AIDS quilts on the mall. I'm still a part of that epidemic. We now have PrEP that some states are trying to get taken away.

So when you think about who is focused on the direction of this country, it's really important to ask what their identity groups are, where are they from, and what their personal experiences are. And you will find, generally speaking, that gay men of color in big cities who are highly educated view things very differently than straight white men in rural America. Which should be obvious but, you know.

One thing that I've always been fascinated with is the concept of values voters. One thing I will say about Republicans is in many of the causal wars they have won the labeling game. And the whole idea that values voters are voters that they are particular to one particular group. Everyone's a values voter, everyone has values, and people vote their values.

We were talking earlier today about which party, which members vote on the economy.

And the perception is the Republican voters vote on the economy. I've never met a Democrat who's not voting on the economy. But the reality is the labeling is something that people on the right side of the aisle have won.

But what we're seeing with this survey and surveys moving forward is that everyone has values, and they have different values. And who they believe is pushing their values forward will determine who they back.

It's also very interesting, we've been talking about this for at least 10 years and need to be talking about it more, is the rise of the religious nones, that's the religiously unaffiliated, and I think one of the main reasons this group is so interesting is because we are about to see what values look like for people who do not align with organized religion. Which should be obvious, but one thing we will discover is that they have values. And some of their values do align in many ways with people in religious organizations, and in significant ways they don't. And this will be more clear as time moves forward.

The urban world divide is fascinating to me. And it's fascinating because we do see this gap getting bigger as so many communities are enduring what's considered a brain drain. And people who perhaps would have shaped a community in a certain way and perhaps may no longer feel like they feel safe in that space to have their ideas and values are leaving, and therefore just creating bigger gaps between those who remain in small towns in this country and those who live in larger cities.

And as, you know, a journalist, and the journalist on this panel, not the only journalist obviously, but one of the things I continue to be taken aback by is how diverse our media climate is and how much that shapes your perception of America. We are listening to very different things. And watching very different things. Podcasts and newsletters and following people on Twitter. I mean there are young people who've taken their information from specific political identities who don't even know that the A.M. radio is still a thing. And their political leaders are going on A.M. radio every week.

And so I don't have a lot of hope or happy ending when it comes to that because it's very difficult to get people on the same page when you're dealing with a different set of facts. And I think that is something that is not going to change in the age of disinformation. But it's helpful for us to just be

aware of what it is that we're dealing with.

MR. GALSTON: Thanks so much. That was fascinating. I'm going to moderate a panel discussion involving everybody in just a minute. But first I'm going to take the liberty of bringing Robbie back into the conversation by asking him for a kind of a summary, all things considered, judgement. Which follows hard on the heels of your closing comments during the presentation of the report.

This is now the 13th report in this annual series. It's entitled Challenges in Moving Toward a More Inclusive Democracy. But I would submit to you that each of the 13 reports could have had that very same title. Okay. 13 years in, are the challenges to the more inclusive democracy less or more than they were when we started this?

MR. JONES: Thank you for that easy question. Yeah. So I look back across, there's a clear divide for me when Donald Trump come to the top of the ticket and assumed control of the Republican Party, right? That's a clear shift I can see across the years.

That one set I mentioned, a kind of hardening of conservative political folks, white evangelicals, Republicans in general, around like immigrants, newcomers, and seeing this external threat, right, to the country. And I think that's had a, there's an external piece of that and there's a heightening of the salience of whiteness and the salience of kind of like white Christian identity, as Eugene said, like what are "real Americans," right?

The sense that there is a "real America" that is white and Christian, right? And other people are sort of out there as threats to that American identity I think has become more salient. That's one big thing that I see.

That one set I gave you about white evangelicals kind of go back to like the Gang of Eight and George W. Bush and like this kind of comprehensive immigration reform plan that came from the Republican side of the table. And like that's just nowhere, right, to be found.

And again, if you think about white evangelical Protestants had, you know, there was an evangelical immigration table and there was all kinds of energy inside the Southern Baptist Convention, right, working on those issues. And they sort of moved, you know, on those issues from being, you know,

was only 30 percent to deport, make sure I get it right here, on the deportation side of that question, you know, that question asked. Only 30 percent, right, in 2013, so we should deport undocumented immigrants. It's half of white evangelicals now, right?

So this whole idea of values voters, compassionate Christianity, like those kinds of things I think have kind of, they seem kind of quaint, you know, these days. I was thinking about that, and I think there's just been this hardening, you know, that I really see as one of the key problems, you know, in having the divides. They've been there like through the 90s and all that, but I think this kind of hardening and doubling down on things that are really about a kind of white Christian identity and holding on to that dominance in the country I see as one of the main themes.

MR. GALSTON: So if I were to pretend to be a hard-hitting, you know, television interviewer, you know, I would say okay, Mr. Jones. In so many words you're saying that we've gone backwards rather than forwards in moving towards a more inclusive democracy. Would that be your bottom line?

MR. JONES: Yeah, I think clearly. I think if the conversation's, you know, is about that. And I think, add one more thing.

I think one of the reasons why it's a harder conversation today is because the country has changed in a way that we have literally moved, right? One of the things we've been tracking over this time, we have literally moved from being in 2008, the country was a majority white Christian country. Demographically speaking it was 54 percent white and Christian. Today that number is 44.

MR. GALSTON: Yeah.

MR. JONES: And I think that sea of change, right, has led to a kind of vulnerability and sometimes I only half-jokingly called it kind of the Great White Christian Freak-out, you know, moment from the country like no longer, right. They used the word "Moral Majority," right, in the 80s, and they meant it.

I don't think anybody's really talking about the moral majority today, right? But there's a sense of a kind of minority that's threatened, that's hunkered down and kind of like fighting for control.

MR. GALSTON: Thanks. I'm going to ask now the entire panel, or as many as are intrigued by each one of the questions I'm about to pose, to give us your thoughts about some of the more striking findings of this report.

I want to begin with the politics of gender. Okay. We've already heard about, you know, the two genders versus gender fluidity part of the equation. Robbie's laid that out for us. Let me put two other findings on the table and then just ask you for your thoughts.

Are men punished just for being men? 56 percent of Republicans say yes, compared to 18 percent of Democrats, and you can map that on to liberals and conservatives and a bunch of the other, you know, group findings.

Second finding, you know, the country, the cultural, or "becoming too soft and feminine." Republicans 68, Democrats 19. What's going on? Why do so many people think that men are being punished just for being men, and that the country systematically is becoming feminized in a way that does not work to the country's advantage?

MS. CHAREN: I'll jump in if I may.

MR. GALSTON: Please.

MS. CHAREN: So this releases my inner conservative. In 2018 I wrote a book called *Sex Matters*, where I argued that there are certain differences between men and women that it doesn't make any sense to deny, and that they should be celebrated. And I said a bunch of other things too. Some of which actually are also repeated in a book by a Brookings scholar that just came out "Of Boys and Men," Richard Reeves' new book. Highly recommend it.

There has been, in my judgment, a tendency over the last few years on the part of some people on the left to pathologize masculinity, to label it as toxic, to say that when boys are energetic and so on in school that this is something that instead of being channeled, has to be, you know, has to be repressed. And I think there's been a backlash against that.

Now I hasten to add that some of the people on the right are also misusing this for their own purposes. So you've now got people like Josh Holly and Ben Schapiro and Tucker Carlson getting in

on this, and they're saying they want to, you know, they want to emasculate all the men, or, you know, I won't even describe some of the things that Tucker Carlson says on his program about what men should do to improve their virility.

In any event it's being misused on the right. But at the root there is a core of truth about how we have been navigating this whole issue of masculinity and femininity over the last 25, 40 years where we have lost the concept that boys need to be encouraged in their masculinity, they need to be taught to be good men, they need to be told that masculinity is not a toxic thing, it's a positive thing. If the child is taught to be the things that good men have always striven to be, you know, to be self-reliant, to be strong, to be a protector of others, to do what's right, to have a conscience. All those things were part of what I would label traditional masculinity but which I think has too often been disparaged as part of something that, you know, like the many in the feminist movement argued that we had to get past any ideas that there were good things to traditional masculinity.

So that's my sort of cultural conservative view of why this is playing out as it is. And again, I hasten to add I do not like the way it's being abused by the Hollys and Carlsons of the world.

MR. GALSTON: Rest of the panel?

MR. SCOTT: I think there are two things that are happening. One, I think people are being challenged to adopt a broader definition of manhood. And being taught to rethink what a man is and what it's not. I'm blown away by seriously how often even now I hear from boys or their parents about thank you for wearing a pink necktie on TV or a purple necktie. It's a necktie, it's a man's garment.

But the thing that I think is so fascinating about the conversations being had about gender and sexuality in our society. There are some conversations one would argue, you know, are more complex, you know, in terms of some of the trans conversations. And we're forgetting that there's still a lot of people in this country who still are trying to figure out if pink is a girl color or a boy color. And so these conversations are challenging people to revisit things that may have been settled for quite some time that cause great discomfort.

In terms of the ideas of gender roles, there's another conversation, the economic

conversation to be had about the significant loss of jobs in so many communities that many men would traditionally have. And the significant rise of women in colleges. And ideas about what, that really is transforming gender roles right there in many families and many communities. It's not uncommon for women to date men in various communities that have less education than they do. And so that is really causing quite a bit of discomfort for a lot of people.

And there's, you know, a backlash to that. And you're seeing people double down and dig their heels into embracing stereotypes and ideas that many people would have thought that we maybe had moved beyond, or at least were on our way of moving beyond.

MS. WONG: I think what is really striking about the findings in this survey, especially around the question about the U.S. has it become too soft, has it become more feminine. Is that identity definitely matters, but what we see with that question is partisanship matters. And so Republican women are much more likely than Democratic women to take that stance. And I think that's where we start to see the kind of partisan divides in some ways overriding what you would assume based on identity.

And the second thing is I think we, I don't think very many surveys are asking these deeper kind of gender questions, and this is a really an opportunity to look at this potent mix of not just racism but also sexism and how it is kind of boiling up to shape our politics.

MR. JONES: So one quick comment. So in the presentation I put two questions together. One of them was that too soft and feminine question, and I put it alongside the threat the newcomer was being a threat and showed how tightly correlated these were.

So to Janelle's comments, I think these things are tied together. Partisanship is the glue that holds them together. But the other thing to say about it is, from a religious perspective, this is often getting held together by, if you think about what's going on there with the gender fluidity question, there's basically a sense of are things fixed or are things fluid? Are they black, are they white, are they gray, right? Those are kind of world view questions and I think coming out of a kind of more conservative Christian circles, you know, everything from like opposition to evolution for example. Isn't just about a seven-day creation thing but it's about whether things evolve from one thing to another, right? Or

whether God created that thing to be the thing that it is and it never changes, right?

And so everything's in a box and everything's in a hierarchy, right? So it's a kind of a dependable system that you can see. And I think there's that kind of fixedness and certainty that I think is kind of the world view. And so, you know, everything from like we've all been to Zoom meetings, right, and so putting your pronoun, right, on your Zoom meeting, right, is a way of saying my appearance may not reflect my gender identity, right, to you, so I'm going to explicitly put it here.

And that's a very different way of thinking it. And if you think, nope, they're men, and they're women, and that's all there are, right? And I think it's a side of how deep these divides go, right, that we don't really have even an agreement on what gender means, right?

MR. GALSTON: Well I feel an article coming on called The Politics of Threat. Right? Because that seems to be a common thread, you know, what is fixed is reassuring, what is, you know, to use Eugene's word, unsettled after having been settled, is anything but reassuring.

I cannot believe how over prepared I am for this panel because in precisely four minutes we're going to turn to audience questions. But there is one more finding that I'd like to put on the table because I think it's significant and if people would respond, you know, with one minute each of commentary, that would be perfect.

I'm going to call this segment of the panel the Politics of Discrimination. And if I were to summarize the survey on this question of discrimination. I would say that Democrats see it almost everywhere and Republications see it almost nowhere. With one very important exception.

MS. CHAREN: I know where you're going.

MR. GALSTON: White people. Okay. A solid majority of Americans think that, you know, white people, they're subject to a lot of discrimination in this country and then to put a point on that with a second finding from the survey, 65 percent of Republicans affirm the proposition that discrimination against white Americans is as bad as discrimination against Black Americans.

How do we understand this? Or can we?

MR. SCOTT: I without question think it's largely tied to the media that these individuals

consume. Tucker Carlson is constantly telling these individuals that that is what is happening in America.

Now one would argue that no, I am experiencing that, I don't need him to tell me that.

And where I would love to hear what discrimination as a white person looks like. And that's not to, you know, discount their experience. I would just like to hear what they are considering discrimination.

In my reporting it usually is articulating an idea and getting pushback for it and therefore feeling they're no longer allowed to have an idea in society and therefore it be affirmed.

And when you have spent much of your life putting forward an idea or using a term or, you know, moving in some type of way politically and it being affirmed and encouraged, and now you're being told that it's inappropriate, that can feel like discrimination. And it certainly can feel like discrimination if you do life in a bubble, which you most likely do, and don't have any meaningful interaction with the people who are not like yourself, who are actually enduring discrimination themselves. That looks very different from a pushback to a tweak.

And so that is what I have found it to be.

MS. WONG: I would just say that I think we're seeing a really dangerous framing of racial discrimination arising in the political science literature shows us, which is a zero-sum framing. That rights and advancements for especially Black Americans, some White people feel like that means a losing of advancements and rights for white people.

So this zero-sum framework I think is emerging in a more powerful way than it has in the past. And I think it is really, really dangerous.

MS. CHAREN: I've heard a lot of kind of extremist talk from right wingers about, you know, how terrible it is to be a white person in America and that, you know, they feel besieged, that they're not respected, they're not honored, they're the only people you can make fun of, that kind of thing.

And, you know, maybe there is some of that, but I'm very interested in Eugene's point that, so they've seen that, you know, minority groups get a lot of sympathy when they say that they're discriminated against and so they want in on that. And they want to say, the things I don't like about my life, that's discrimination, and I should get sympathy too.

But it's not discrimination, it's other things. And, you know, nobody lives in a bed of roses.

MR. GALSTON: Okay. It's your turn. I'm going to recognize questions in batches of three. To state the obvious, if each panelist responds to each question, we won't even get through the first try. So let's, you know, pick your spots. Okay. Hands, please. I'm going to start in the back of the room and, yes. Identify yourself by name, if there's an institutional affiliation that's relevant, cite that. State a question tersely.

MS. ASTRO: Sounds good. My name is Aliva Astro, I work at Third Way. So I'm really interested in the question on health of democracy that Robbie was talking about. It sounds like you all are hypothesizing that for Democrats the health of democracy concern is about oppression, for Republicans it's about voter fraud. My guess would be that for Republicans concern about the health of democracy also involves concern about cancel culture, free speech, and sort of general distrust in the media.

So I'm wondering if you all, if you have any other data on that, suggesting what else is underlying Republican concern for the health of democracy and sort of what you make of that, if it's really focused on voter fraud or if there are a few different Republican concerns when they talk about the health of democracy.

MR. GALSTON: Thanks. I'll now take a hand from this column. Yes, right in the back.

MS. COOK: Hi. I'm Fay Lomax Cook, Professor Emeritus for Northwestern University and now here in Washington as a visiting Fellow at the National Academy for Social Insurance. And I think this has been fabulous, I think the survey is wonderful.

In terms of thinking about values of Americans, I was a bit disappointed not to hear any more in the value survey about support for programs to help poor people, about social insurance programs like Social Security and Medicare.

I know a lot of the questions in NORC's General Social Survey focus on support for social programs. But I think any time we think about values of Americans we also need to think about our

values and what support is for helping others. And I'd love to hear you chat about that.

MR. GALSTON: And now a hand from Column C. Yes, sir.

MR. PRICE: Hello, I'm Albert Price, and I'm an Emirates Professor of Political Science at University of Michigan, Flint. I am in this area because we moved to Frederick.

On the questions it seems to me that there's a level of understanding that is not tapped because as far as I could tell, all the way back to the early voting studies in the 1960s, the citizens don't understand ideology, they get labeled by it, but they don't understand it the way Phillip Converse described it as a constrained system of belief across many issues.

They see some issues affiliated with their partisanship and call that conservative or liberal. But they don't see the role of government in society or any set of consistent things.

And I was wondering if on the crime and also on the gender issues, if Democrats are missing entirely attacking crime because of the difficulties in separating response to crime, which is police violence and the homicides by police of African-American citizens and the demand of African-American citizens to be protected from crime which is occurring in their neighborhoods, because that's where in almost city the death rate of homicides is in racially segregated segments of town.

So I was wondering, and with gender, gender is the social construct of what manifests as people's roles in society. People understand sex because they think they know that they had a boy or a girl when their child was born. And so the confusion I think emerges between sex differences which people can understand readily and gender differences, which require a level of sophistication and understanding that I don't see existing in the public very much.

Anyway, I wonder if there are levels of misunderstanding rather than just straight out wrong.

MR. GALSTON: Okay, panel, over to you.

MS. CHAREN: I'll take the first question if I may.

MR. GALSTON: Please.

MS. CHAREN: So on this I would ask for Robbie's expertise on previous surveys

because it strikes me that the other factors that you mentioned, suspicion of the media and other things, might have played a bigger role in years past. But since 2020 the overwhelming reason that we have so much suspicion of our electrical system is one guy. Donald Trump. And all of his enablers. I shouldn't say it that way. Also all of his enablers within the Republican Party.

It is now the case of 51 percent of the candidates for office in the mid-terms who have Rs after their names either deny the legitimacy of the 2020 election or who have raised questions about it. And so that's why you're seeing it.

MR. JONES: So I actually watch FOX news every now and then. And, you know, I've seen chyrons running across the bottom of the screen that say "Defending the health of our democracy." Like using that language across the bottom. But what they're talking about is voter fraud over and over again. That seems to be the thing that kind of is a thing that kind of goes back to, and throughout the survey we actually did ask people about what their most trusted news source was, television news source, you know, the networks, FOX News, news mags that weight on the right, PBS, etcetera.

And what we found very consistently through here is that on these questions we're talking about those who say they most trusted FOX News, which among Republicans is by far the network that folks trusted, you could see like 20 percentage points difference to the right for Republicans who was say they most watch FOX News versus Republicans who say they trust anything else. So it's getting through, right, and it's just measurable all through the report. You'll see this when you break this out through the report.

MS. WONG: I can take the question on social programs in a slightly different direction.

I do think that one of the fundamental, there is a question on this survey about addressing poverty and I can't remember the exact.

MR. JONES: The gap between the rich and the poor is a typical issue.

MS. WONG: It is on there too. And past surveys I think have shown that this is another major racial divide in the U.S. is people of color, Black, Asian-American, and Latinos, are much more likely to support funding social programs compared to white Americans.

And I think that's been fairly consistent and will continue to be a major both partisan divide and a reason why I would say like Asian-American and Latin-American evangelicals are actually more likely to be Democrats than white evangelicals of this commitment to this social safety net.

MR. JONES: Just real quick, half of African-Americans say the growing gap between the rich and the poor is a critical issue for them, versus only 30 percent of whites.

MR. GALSTON: If I can step out of my moderator's role for just a minute in response to your question.

One of the things that fascinates me about American politics is how some of the partisan cleavages over economics have actually been narrowing. I'll give you my favorite example. In his famous down the escalator announcement speech, Donald Trump virtually ended the speech with the following words, which I can quote just about verbatim. "We gotta save Social Security, period. And Medicare, period. And Medicaid, period. Without cutting a dime, period. We gotta do it."

With those lapidary words Donald Trump turned his back on Paul Ryanism. He turned his back on small government conservatism as populists have done around the world. And that doesn't mean that there's going to be an outbreak of sympathy on the right for the specific problems of poor people.

When it comes to social insurance, the increasingly working-class base of populist conservative parties and leaders means that they cannot take the same stance on those programs that the previous generation of small government conservatives did.

Okay. We have time for one more trosh of questions, if we're brisk. So once again, Column A, Column B, Column C. Let's start with Column A. Okay. I see a hand in the back.

MR. SHUMAKER: Yeah. My name is Ed Shumaker. I'd like you to put on your historical hats and think back to other times in the nation's history when we've had divisions, maybe not to this amount, and how we did or did not come out of it.

MR. GALSTON: Column B. Yes, please.

MS. CAMPBELL: Hi, my name's Ramia Campbell. I study right wing extremism and

conspiracism more generally. Apologies for the specificity of this question.

On page 36 of the report, of the small report, you talk about Great Replacement Theory. And I've, over the past two years, really tried to Great Replacement Theory from, you know, being a fringe internet conversation to a dinner table conversation, courtesy of talking heads like Tucker Carlson.

I am wondering if the phrasing of the question about Great Replacement Theory maybe leads to a greater belief in the conspiracism of the American population than perhaps truly exists. It's phrased in the report as immigrants are invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background. And I think maybe that erases the actual ethnic identity of the theory. The Great Replacement Theory is largely about the replacement of the white population in the west and the intentional replacement of the white population in the west through immigration but also through abortion, the abortion of white children, right, as part of that, the race mixing, the marriage between white and non-white populations.

So I'm wondering if sort of the simplified phrasing of theories like the Great Replacement Theory maybe convince people that they are more conspiracists than they actually are.

MR. GALSTON: Thank you. And now from Column C. Seeing no hands, we'll go. Sure. You didn't have your hand up just a minute ago.

MALE SPEAKER: I guess the question includes democracy. One thing that's missing here is the question of whether institutional forms are driving cultural change rather than vice versa. So for example if one imagined that America had proportional voting rather than first past the post, you would probably have eight to 10 parties in Congress. That might give you more of an expression of difference without what you have at the moment, which is the grappling for control of two mega parties by two political elites. And that seems to me to generate such inclusion which in turn generates a question of conspiratorialism and these ideas of a mega differences between certain portions of society.

MR. GALSTON: As an only partially defrocked political scientist I thank you for asking that question. Regrettably, panel, you get 30 seconds each before I call upon Father Dionne to pronounce the benediction.

MS. CHAREN: Could I do a quick historical reference.

MR. GALSTON: Yes.

MS. CHAREN: In answer to the first question? So my sense is that we are at a moment where we are struggling to deal with a new technology, namely the internet. We haven't quite figure out how to do this. And I would just recall that in the early days of this republic when newspapers were, you know, beginning to have broad circulation, they were frequently called the Democrat or the Republican. They were explicitly partisan. They were also incredibly nasty. John Adams was called I think a howling hermaphrodite in one of them.

So this kind of polarization is not new. It's not necessarily unprecedented. It is, though, it isn't clear how we will see our way forward to controlling it and reeling back some of the extremism that this new technology has birthed.

Was that quick?

MR. GALSTON: Almost. Other responses to the questions.

MR. JONES: I'll take up the Replacement Theory. So, you know, when I was writing survey questions, trying to figure out what to leave in, what to take out and we made an explicit decision on this one, to ask it without the racial component in it. Though what that meant was that we could then analyze it by racial and ethnic identity, right? And so who's more attracted to this idea, I think you're exactly right about the history of this. It's always been, and I would also add it's always been an ethno/religious identify, right, that's driven like who's getting replaced. Well it's white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Christians that have been replaced, have seen themselves as kind of like the owners of the country.

And so I think that's their, the last thing I'll say since this may be my last chance to get a word is I do think one way of thinking about this is that these are very, I think Mona's right, these are not new questions. I thank her for the historical question. These are not new questions, they have been with us since before the republic, right?

And I'll return to that question about whether America's a promised land for European

Christians. This is one of the oldest kind of ideas about what this continent is. It is the version of Christianity that lands on these shores.

And I think one of the ways of understanding our current predicament is it's our generation's struggle with this question of whether we are, this country is a Christian nation, the promised land for European Christians, or whether we are a pluralistic democracy. And those two things are mutually incompatible.

MR. GALSTON: I see head shaking here. Then I will try in 30 seconds to respond to the science question from the front row.

I don't need to tell you that there is an extensive literature on, you know, the pluses and minuses of proportional representation as opposed to first past the post. There's no question that first past the post generates two, or in the case of the UK, two and a half political parties. And that's okay when there's a substantial amount of overlap between the two political parties. But when there are posts like this, then you have, in the case of the United States, a country that is both deeply divided and closely divided. And that is the worst possible formula for effective government in a Madisonian republic of divided powers and institutions.

And one of the findings of this survey is that 42 percent of Americans say that they would be interested perhaps to the point of supporting a party in between the Democrats and the Republicans. We haven't talked much about that finding but I plan to talk about it in some subsequent commentary because I think it does shed some light on how people feel about the current at loggerheads political system that we have in this country.

Father Dionne.

MR. DIONNE: So first I want to thank one of the most learned audiences ever gathered in DC. I think there's more political science in this room than in a couple of political science faculties put together. Thank you on proportional representation and thank, great choice, one of my favorite organizations, the National Academy of Social Insurance. Thank you for raising economic justice questions, which are actually covered in this survey. And thank you for so many sophisticated questions.

I want to reiterate a thank you to Catalina Navarro for helping organize all of this. I also want to shout out Megan Bell, who just recently left us for a great job, but she is here in spirit, and really helped put this together.

I want to thank my friend Bill. He and I have been working on these surveys for a long time. I want to thank Melissa. And lastly, I want to thank our great panel.

First to Eugene, there is nothing elderly or aged about you. And that was just a spectacularly spirited comment.

MR. SCOTT: From one Eugene to another.

MR. DIONNE: Exactly. No, I always favor panels with at least two Eugenes on them.

And secondly, I want to thank Mona. You bring me up even when you are reciting nightmarish news. And you were spectacular.

Janelle, I want to shout out because you use surveys the way they should be used, not to confirm conventional wisdom, but to explode it, and you did that extremely well.

And lastly, as you saw, Robbie really is the MPV of PowerPoints and survey presentations.

This has been a spectacular discussion. The report is really interesting. And thanks to everyone for restoring in-person events to this great tradition.

Thank you.

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Expires: November 30, 2024

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