

Solutions Voters: A Force in American Politics 2015-2020

November 2021



Methodology

- The 2020 CSI national survey was conducted in October 2020. This survey is the sixth consecutive Fall survey of registered voters. Five previous CSI surveys similar in content were conducted in the Fall of 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019.
- All surveys were based on national cross-sectional samples of 1000 to 1200 registered voters. The 2020 sample interviewed 1260 registered voters.
- Each national sample of registered voters was weighted to match national voter demographic characteristics of gender, race, etc.
- Respondents in each survey completed an extensive on-line questionnaire approximately 20 minutes in length.

Project History

- The Civil Society Institute (CSI) has been conducting surveys on leadership and problem solving since 2004.
- The 2015 through 2020 CSI Leadership Surveys identified a key cohort of voters who are pragmatic and optimistic about solving many of the issues facing America today.
- These voters are labeled “Solution Voters”

Solutions Voters: Basic Definition

The Solutions Voter is a permanent and distinct part of the American electorate defined by the following characteristics...

Believes practical solutions exist for most of our problems

+

Expresses optimism that existing solutions can be successfully implemented

+

Prioritizes solutions over party and ideology

+

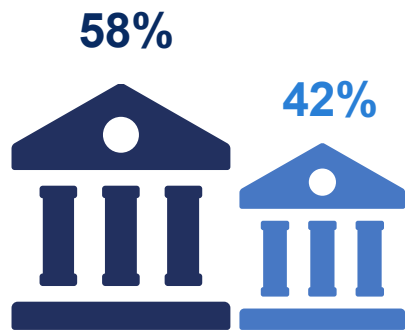
Engages politically and is well informed

The strongest predictor of membership in the Solutions Voter cohort is optimism about progress in implementing solutions to our problems

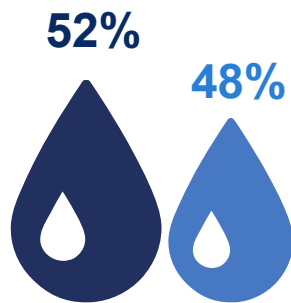
Issues Optimism Among 2020 Voters

Based on what you read and hear from our politicians, how optimistic or pessimistic are you that, as a country, we will make progress on implementing workable solutions to each of the following -- (Rank ordered from highest to lowest expressed optimism based on the total sample)

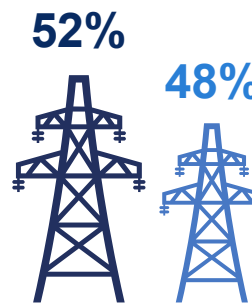
■ Optimists Among All Voters ■ Pessimists Among All Voters



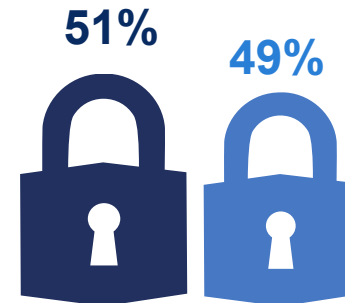
Rebuilding our national economy



Protecting the quality and safety of our water supply



Investing in our country's infrastructure

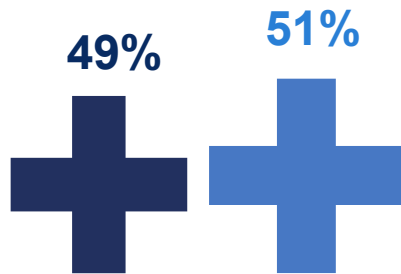


Increasing the security of our country's borders

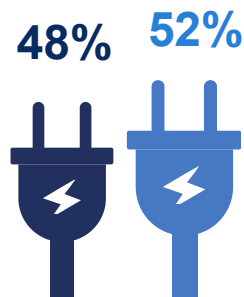
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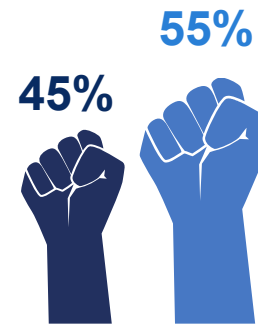
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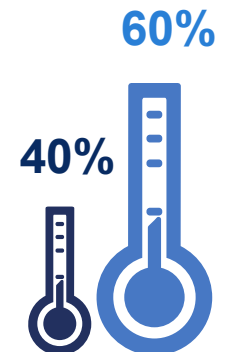
Ensuring that all Americans have access to affordable health care



Modernizing our national electrical grid systems



Reducing racial divisions in our society



Taking immediate steps to address climate change

2020 Issues Optimism Among Solution Voters

Based on what you read and hear from our politicians, how optimistic or pessimistic are you that, as a country, we will make progress on implementing workable solutions to each of the following --

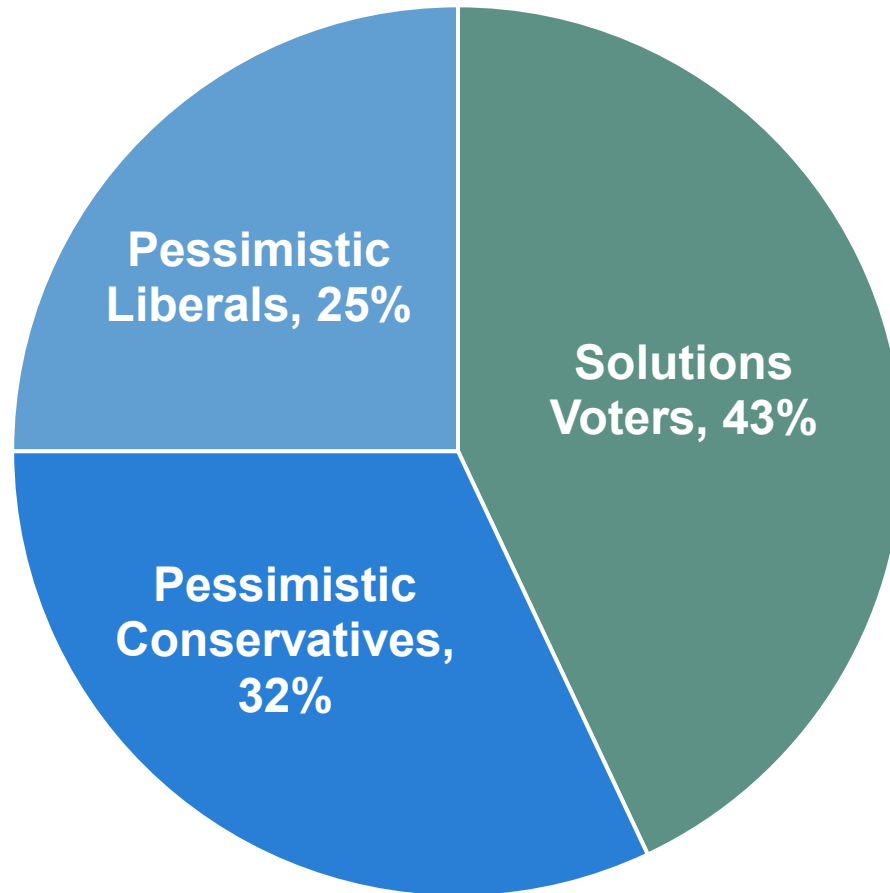
Average optimism across nine issues among Solution Voters is 81%

Compared to 49% optimism among total registered voters.

- Rebuilding our national economy
- Protecting the quality and safety of our water supply
- Investing in our country's infrastructure (i.e. transportation, energy, public utilities)
- Increasing the security of our country's borders
- Controlling the spread of the Covid 19 virus
- Ensuring that all Americans have access to affordable health care
- Modernizing our national electrical grid system
- Reducing racial divisions in our society
- Taking immediate steps to address climate change

Solution Voter Cohort	Total Registered Voter Optimism
90.1%	57.7%
85.2%	52.1%
84.0%	51.9%
80.3%	50.7%
84.8%	49.3%
84.9%	48.6%
78.6%	47.8%
79.4%	44.9%
69.5%	40.1%

Solutions Voters: A Substantial Part of The Electorate



Solutions Voters: Willing to Cross Ideological Partisan Identity to Support Solutions

Conservative Positions Supported By Solutions Voters

	All voters	Solutions Voters	Pessimistic Conservatives	Pessimistic Liberals
Criminal justice reform – Make penalties for assaulting a police officer tougher	71%	77%	77%	55%
Foreign policy – NATO allies should be paying more for defending Europe	66%	71%	75%	49%
Employment – Expect employment opportunities for all will be better	54%	63%	61%	32%
Immigration – Immigrants want to change America, not learn English and assimilate	55%	58%	76%	24%
Criminal justice reform - Contract running of prisons to the private sector	40%	53%	38%	18%
Politics – Russia did meddle in 2016 but it did not impact the outcome of the presidential race	43%	48%	55%	20%
Asylum seekers – Numbers should be reduced because of threat of terrorism	43%	41%	69%	15%

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Liberal Positions Supported by Solutions Voters

	All Voters	Solutions Voters	Pessimistic Conservatives	Pessimistic Liberals
Training for the future – Government should fund education and training to better prepare for technology and robotics	75%	83%	57%	85%
Immigration – Separating children from parents at the border is cruel and beneath the ideals of America	69%	76%	43%	90%
Environment – US must take a leading role to address climate change	66%	74%	32%	82%
Criminal justice reform – Reduce pre-trial jail time for those who cannot make bail to avoid job loss	60%	68%	42%	68%
Immigration – A wall on the southern border is not the solution to border security	53%	66%	36%	85%
Criminal justice reform – End mandatory minimum sentencing	57%	64%	42%	65%
Health – Favorable opinion of the ACA	44%	56%	15%	61%

2020 Solutions Voters Are Informed and Politically Active

Solutions voters follow national news more closely than others

How often do you follow the national news either in a newspaper, on television or online, or on the radio?

	Solution Voters	Pessimists / Fence Sitters	Total
Several times every day	44.5%	30.9%	37.1%
Every day at least once	32.6%	37.7%	35.4%
A few times a week	15.8%	22.1%	19.2%
Less often than that	5.1%	7.3%	6.3%
Never	1.9%	2.1%	2.0%

Several times every day

Every day at least once

A few times a week

Less often than that

Never

Level of Political Activism

	Solution Voters	Pessimists / Fence Sitters	Total
Engaged	18.9%	8.9%	13.5%
Somewhat Engaged	49.7%	52.6%	51.3%
Not Engaged	31.4%	38.5%	35.2%

Engaged

Somewhat Engaged

Not Engaged

Solution voters are more politically active compared to other voters

Solution Voters View the Common Good

On the scale provided below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the two statements.

Solution Voters believe most Americans are willing to sacrifice for the common good; they also believe that most Americans take care of themselves first at the expense of the common good.

Most Americans are willing to do their part and to accept modest personal sacrifices for the benefit of the common good of all people in our country

Most Americans think of themselves individually or as members of small groups, and look out for their own interests at the expense of the common good

Solution Voters	Pessimists / Fence Sitters	Total
69.8%	37.0%	52.1%
69.9%	54.9%	61.8%

Solutions Voter Profile on the Environment

Examples of Common Ground Issues for Republican and Democratic Solutions Voters :

- Protecting our water quality and safety is a very high priority issue.
- Water management and planning systems must be updated and reformed particularly where water is scarce.
- Pesticides and chemicals from farming and ranching put our water supply at risk.
- New technology can save us from our aging water systems and keep our water safe.
- Fossil fuels must remain our cornerstone of the energy system because of costs and jobs.
- Transitioning away from fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas and coal, will make our products more expensive / less competitive.

Solution Voters Believe in Moving to Sustainable Energy Sources

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"To protect the United States from the ravages of extreme climate related disasters such as wildfires, we must move America away from its reliance on fossil fuels and toward more sustainable energy sources such as wind and solar."

Disagree	14.4%	16.6%	15.6%
Fence Sitters	12.4%	18.3%	15.6%
Agree	73.2%	65.1%	68.9%

Solution Voter Attitudes Toward “Microgrids”

The microgrid concept has been in the public view for the last several years. It remains mostly unrecognized among the general public.

Solution Voters are significantly more aware of microgrids compared to the average registered voter.

Interest in learning more about microgrids is very high among Solution Voters

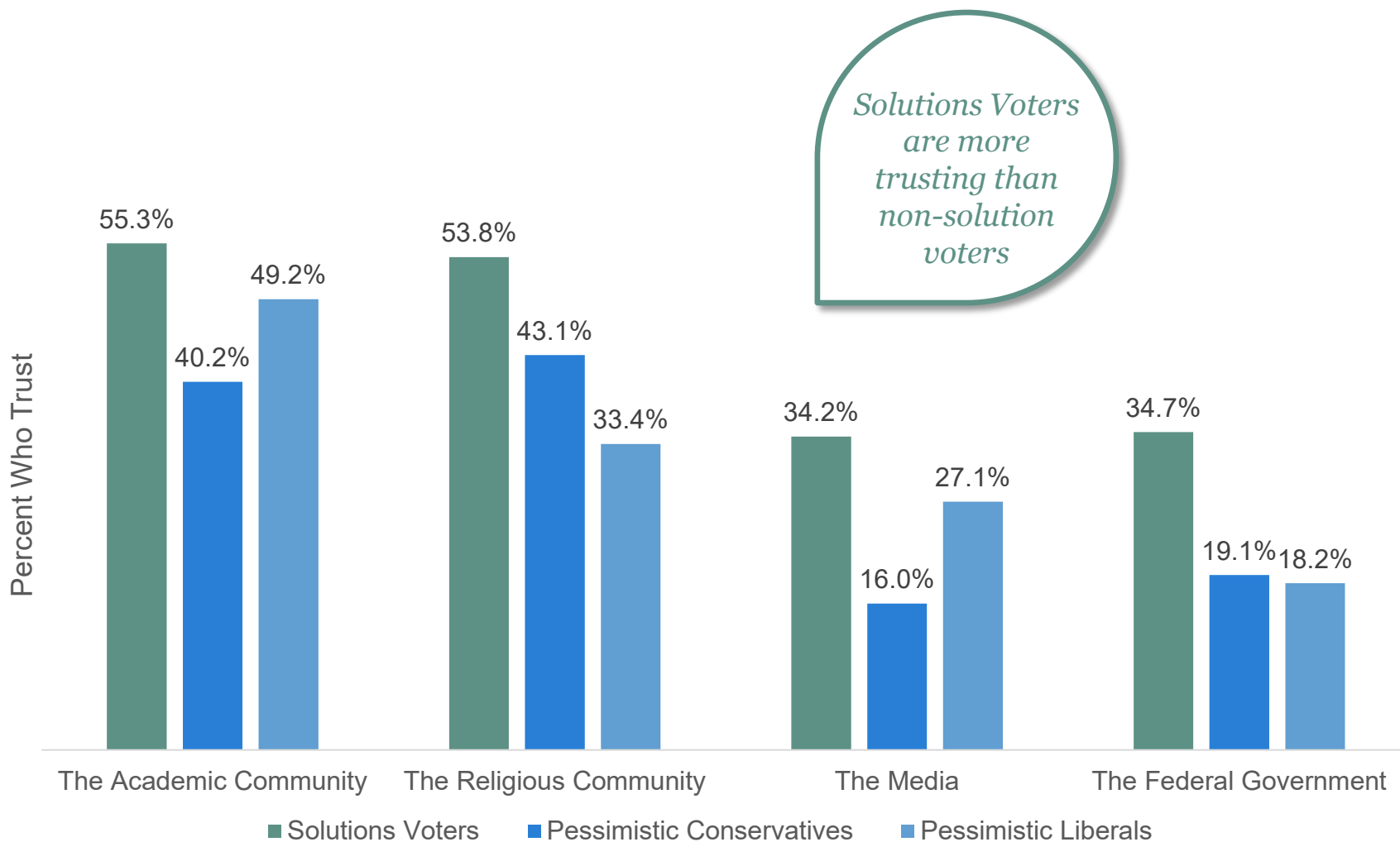
How familiar are you with the concept of microgrids?

	Solution Voters	Pessimists / Fence Sitters	Total
Never heard of before	41.4%	59.4%	51.1%
Heard of but never paid any attention to	28.4%	26.1%	27.2%
Heard of but had the wrong impression of	11.1%	7.8%	9.3%
Heard of and understood what microgrids were all about	19.1%	6.7%	12.4%

Please indicate your level of interest in microgrids

Not interested	12.6%	22.2%	17.8%
Fence Sitters	17.0%	23.4%	20.4%
Interested in learning more	70.4%	54.4%	61.7%

Attitudes of the Solution Voter: Trust in Institutions



Solution Voters On Policies which Promote the Common Good

People sometimes talk about the “common good” and what it means to do “good things” for our country. The following statements describe policies that some feel would support the common good. Other people disagree. For each statement, please indicate on the scale provided how strongly you agree or disagree that the policy described would support the common good for our country.

Addressing climate change now so that our children and grandchildren have a livable and sustainable environment

Providing health care for all so that the society as a whole is healthier and less likely to drive up the country’s health care costs.

Supporting a strong military to keep all Americans safe from foreign intervention

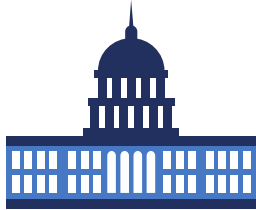
Pay a reasonable premium for energy as part of a national transition to clean, sustainable energy

Solution Voters consistently support each of the four common good statements

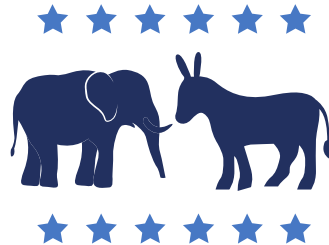
Particularly strong support is give to “supporting a strong military” and “paying a premium to support a transition to clean energy

Solution Voters	Pessimists / Fence Sitters	Total
76.4%	66.4%	71.0%
75.9%	63.4%	69.1%
83.5%	56.2%	68.8%
72.0%	50.2%	60.2%

What We Heard in Focus Groups



Voters from the right and the left openly discuss and believe that progress toward workable solutions to our problems are possible but currently out of reach because of the hyper partisan polarization among our politicians



Political party was cited as more negative driver of nation's division than race/ethnicity, region of the country, religion, and gender identity. The media is viewed as a key culprit in exacerbating dysfunctional partisanship.



Participants believe that it is up to “all of us” to work together, listen to each other, and strive to compromise but struggle to operationalize how to do this.

In Their Own Words

“I look locally for solutions, like the Boys & Girls Clubs and the parent-teacher organizations. They know what’s needed in the community and that’s a more positive force to me than even local government.”

—Suburban Clinton voter, Akron

“The hyper partisanship is very destructive. On some of the other things like race, we’ve actually made progress. But somehow it’s still ok to say you can’t stand people who happen to associate with a different political party. I mean, how do you know? You wouldn’t say that you automatically hate someone because they’re a different religion. And that’s really a problem in our country today.”

—Rural Trump supporter, Akron

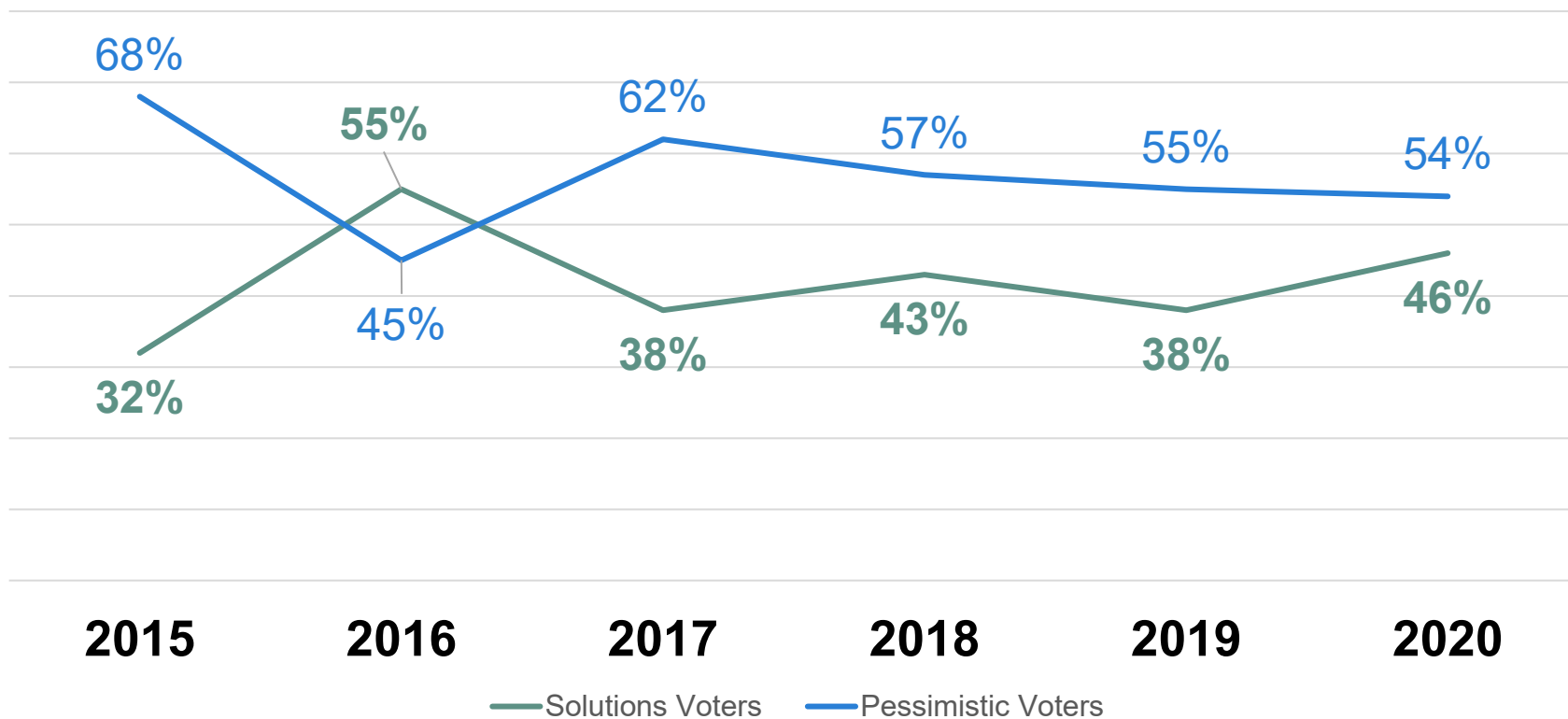
“We’re a melting pot, we are everybody, we are the world. That’s one of America’s greatest strengths.”

—Rural Trump supporter, Akron

“Media and politicians seem to create a crisis when one may not be there.”

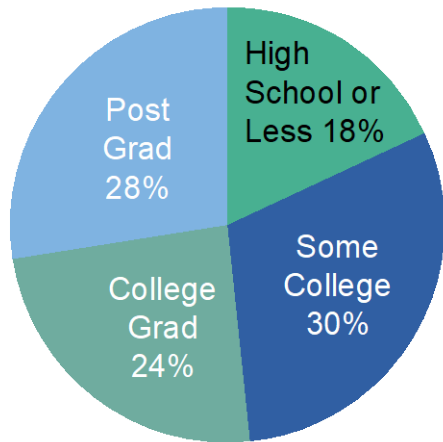
—Suburban Clinton voter, Des Moines

Solutions Voter vs Pessimistic Cohorts Over Time (2015-2020)

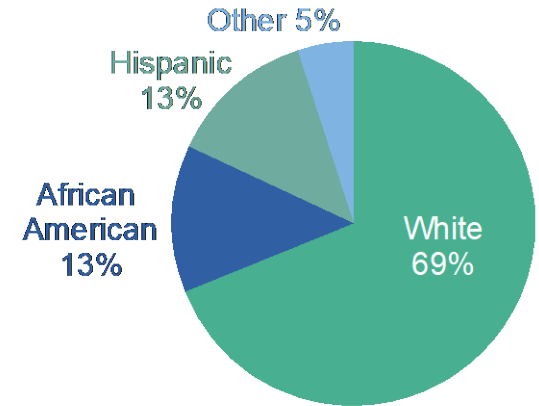


October 2020 Poll

Solutions Voter 2020: Demographics



55%
tend to be under
50 years old



58%
attend religious
services frequently



49% Republican



37% Democrat

51% conservative vs 22% liberal

50%
voted for Trump

43%
voted for Biden



33%
Below
Median
Income



20%
Median
Income



48%
Above
Median
Income

Solutions Voters: Found Across the Political Spectrum

Data on Self-declared party and ideology

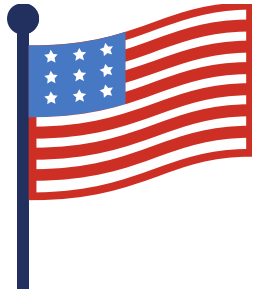
Party Self-Identified

	Solutions Voters 2020	Solutions Voters 2016	All Voters 2020
Democratic	37%	42%	47%
Republican	49%	37%	37%
Completely independent	14%	24%	16%

Ideology Self-identified

Middle of the road	36%	37%	33%
Conservative	33%	42%	38%
Liberal	31%	22%	29%

Strategic Implications: We Can Move Beyond Partisan Gridlock



Solutions Voters and their informed optimism are an unrecognized constant force in American politics and embody the political DNA of unique American democratic values and principles.



Solutions Voters are primed to move beyond polarized politics because they disrupt the left/right, conservative/liberal images we have of ourselves and our politics.



Solutions Voters are not bound by political dogma. Therefore, they are more open to embrace solutions that arise from anyplace across the political spectrum.

Strategic Implications: Key to A New Kind of Politics

- Solutions Voters most likely to vote against their preferred party and ideology to give support to the solutions he/she believes in.
- Political candidates who have the ability and courage to cross party dogma to offer the right mix to a solutions voter can hold special appeal to the Solutions Voter.
- Solution Voters are primed to be key to policy breakthroughs on the following issues:
 - Health Care
 - Immigration
 - Criminal justice

Summary

- Solutions Voters are diverse and exist across race, age, and gender.
- What unites them includes:
 - **a future-oriented optimism that despite different view, we can unite together and solve our problems**
 - a personal engagement with current issues
 - a trusting nature
 - a belief in Americans' goodness
 - a concern for the role of government

For more information

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