

WORKTRENDS

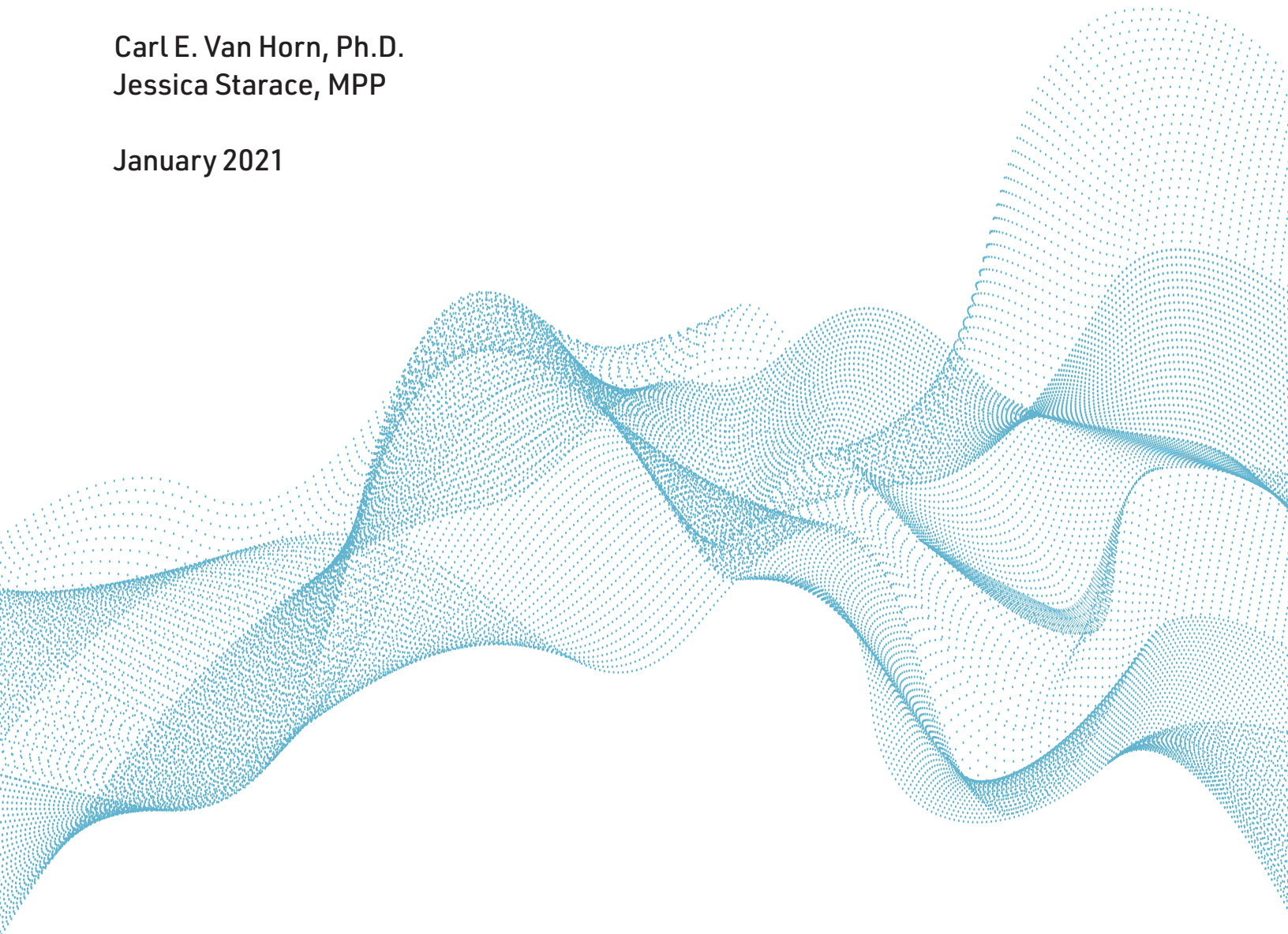
AMERICANS' ATTITUDES ABOUT WORK, EMPLOYERS, AND GOVERNMENT

Healing the Wounded Economy

**Large Majorities of Americans Support Government Action
to Create Jobs and Help Workers and Businesses**

Carl E. Van Horn, Ph.D.
Jessica Starace, MPP

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HELDRICH CENTER
FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

RUTGERS

Edward J. Bloustein School
of Planning and Public Policy

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Key Takeaways from the Post-Election Survey

1. Broad Support for Economic Policy Remedies

Government spending on infrastructure projects, aid to small businesses, temporary community service jobs, and paid family leave are supported by large majorities of respondents who support both major political parties.

2. Government Responsibility for Economic Relief

One in two Americans believe that the government is primarily responsible for helping laid-off workers – the largest percentage of Americans that say government has the primary obligation since the Great Recession.

3. Bi-partisan Cooperation Preferred but Unlikely

Large majorities of Democrats and Republicans say that cooperation on strengthening the economy is very important in the next year, but most doubt that will happen.

4. Mixed Views on Confidence in the New Administration

Americans are divided on how confident they are that President-elect Joe Biden will effectively manage the economy. Democrats are fairly confident that Biden's policies will lower the unemployment rate in the next year, create jobs, and boost the stock market. Republicans have lower expectations.

This report compares findings from a post-election survey conducted between December 4 and 14, 2020 with a pre-election survey conducted between October 21 and November 1, 2020 and with previous Heldrich Center surveys conducted during and after the Great Recession. See Appendices A, B, and C for methodology and sample information.

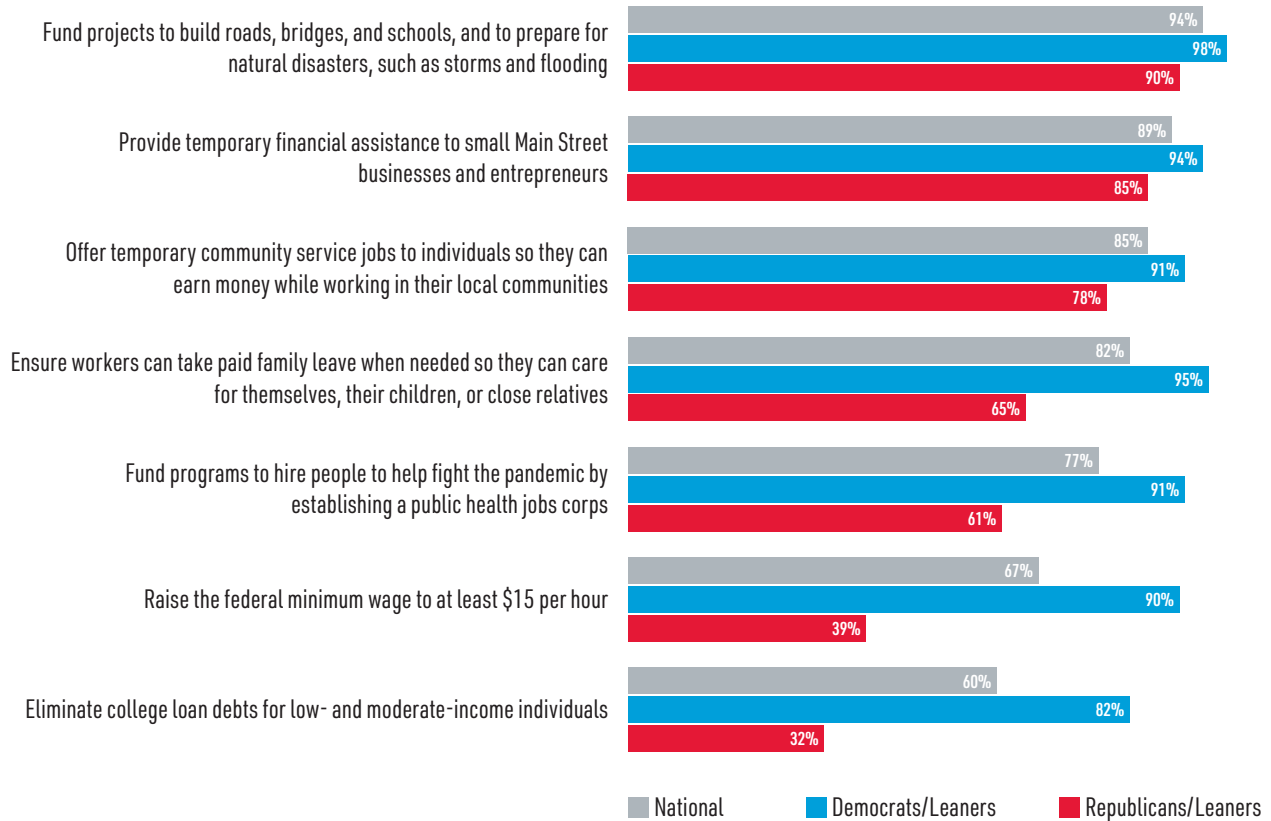
Detailed Results

1. Broad Support for Economic Recovery Remedies

Funding for infrastructure projects, aid to small businesses, temporary community service jobs, and paid family leave are supported by large majorities of both political parties.

Government spending on infrastructure projects is the most popular policy option among both Democrats and Republicans (94% of national sample). Temporary financial assistance to businesses (89%), temporary community service jobs (85%), and workers' access to paid family leave (82%) also garner significant support (see Figure 1). The percentage of Americans who say they strongly support these policies is displayed in Table 1a.

Figure 1: (Post-Election). Support for Economic Recovery Remedies (% agree)¹



National Sample: N=814 for minimum wage and college loan debt; N=813 for community service jobs, public health jobs corps, and paid leave; N=812 for infrastructure spending and aid to businesses

Democrats: N=343 for community service jobs, minimum wage, infrastructure spending, and college loan debt; N=342 for aid to businesses, public health jobs corps, and paid leave

Republicans: N=380 for minimum wage, college loan debt, public health job corps, and paid leave; N=379 for community service jobs and aid to businesses; N=378 for infrastructure spending

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements...strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

¹ National sample numbers in this report include Democrats/Leaners, Republicans/Leaners, and true Independents. See Appendix B for breakdown by party identification.

Table 1a: (Post-Election). Percent Agreement/Strong Agreement on Economic Policy Proposals – National

Government should...	Total % Agree	Total % Strongly Agree
Fund projects to build roads, bridges, and schools, and to prepare for natural disasters, such as storms and flooding	94%	61%
Provide temporary financial assistance to small Main Street businesses and entrepreneurs	89%	45%
Offer temporary community service jobs to individuals so they can earn money while working in their local communities	85%	37%
Ensure workers can take paid family leave when needed so they can care for themselves, their children, or close relatives	82%	46%
Fund programs to hire people to help fight the pandemic by establishing a public health jobs corps	77%	35%
Raise the federal minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour	67%	44%
Eliminate college loan debts for low- and moderate-income individuals	60%	31%

National Sample: N=814 for minimum wage and college loan debt; N=813 for community service jobs, public health jobs corps, and paid leave; N=812 for infrastructure spending and aid to businesses

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements...strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

Democrats and Republicans diverge on the degree of support for various policy proposals, as shown in Table 1b.

Table 1b: (Post-Election). Percent Agreement/Strong Agreement on Economic Policy Proposals (with Strongly Agree Broken Out), by Political Party

Government should...	Democrats % Agree	Republicans % Agree	Democrats % Strongly Agree	Republicans % Strongly Agree
Fund projects to build roads, bridges, and schools, and to prepare for natural disasters, such as storms and flooding	98%	90%	80%	42%
Provide temporary financial assistance to small Main Street businesses and entrepreneurs	94%	85%	60%	29%
Offer temporary community service jobs to individuals so they can earn money while working in their local communities	91%	78%	50%	22%
Ensure workers can take paid family leave when needed so they can care for themselves, their children, or close relatives	95%	65%	66%	22%
Fund programs to hire people to help fight the pandemic by establishing a public health jobs corps	91%	61%	55%	13%
Raise the federal minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour	90%	39%	69%	17%
Eliminate college loan debts for low- and moderate-income individuals	82%	32%	48%	10%

Democrats: N=343 for community service jobs, minimum wage, infrastructure spending, and college loan debt; N=342 for aid to businesses, public health jobs corps, and paid leave

Republicans: N=380 for minimum wage, college loan debt, public health job corps, and paid leave; N=379 for community service jobs and aid to businesses; N=378 for infrastructure spending

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements...strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

2. Government Responsibility for Economic Relief

Asked to choose between the government, employers, and workers themselves, one in two Americans say the government should be primarily responsible for helping laid-off workers. This is the largest percentage of Americans in Work Trends surveys who assign responsibility to the government since the Great Recession.

Majorities of both parties agree that actions should be taken to prevent layoffs of essential workers and assist workers laid off due to the pandemic, totalling 3 million in December 2020, and peaking at 18.1 million in April 2020.² One in two (49%) Americans say it is primarily the government’s responsibility to help laid-off workers, rather than employers or workers themselves (see Table 2).

Table 2: (Post- and Pre-Election). Who is Responsible for Helping Laid-off Workers?

	December 2020 (Post-Election)	November 2020 (Pre-Election)	August 2014	January 2013	August 2010
Government	49%	49%	32%	26%	32%
Employers	29%	25%	30%	32%	26%
Workers	22%	26%	38%	42%	42%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N Size	812	803	1,136	1,062	809

When people are laid off from work, who should be mainly responsible for helping them? Is it government, employers, or workers themselves?

² <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

Individuals who identify with the Democratic party offer the strongest support for government intervention to assist laid-off workers. Republicans are less likely to think that workers should receive support from the government (64% Democrats, 31% Republicans as shown in Table 3) and are also less likely than Democrats to strongly agree with the various policy options (see Figure 2).

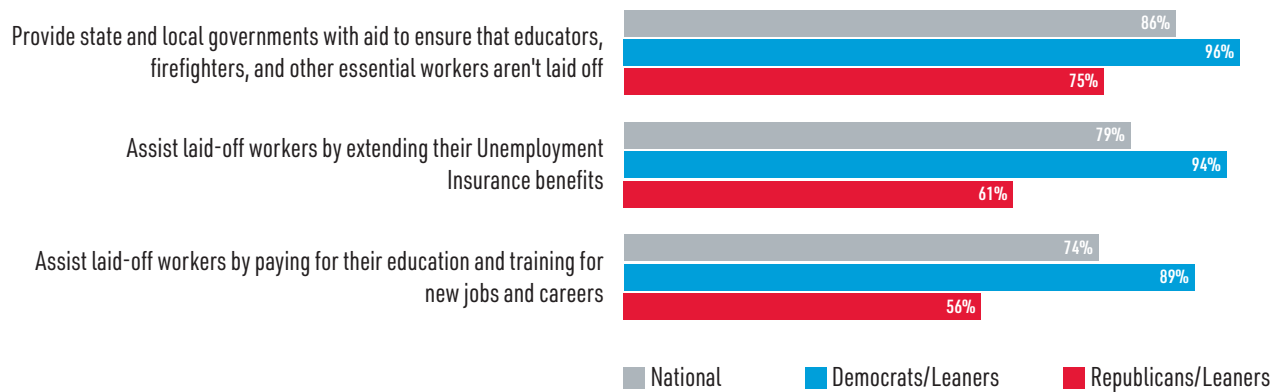
Table 3: (Post-Election). Who Should Help Laid-Off Workers? (Opinions by Political Party)

	Democrats	Republicans
Government	64%	31%
Employers	27%	32%
Workers Themselves	9%	37%
Total	100%	100%
N Size	343	379

When people are laid off from work, who should be mainly responsible for helping them? Is it government, employers, or workers themselves?

Additional policy options tested in the Work Trends post-election survey – providing aid to avert layoffs of essential workers, extending Unemployment Insurance benefits, and paying for education and job training – are supported by at least three in four Americans (86% support averting essential worker layoffs, 79% support extending Unemployment Insurance, and 74% support the government funding education and training), and the majority of Democrats and Republicans (see Figure 2 and Table 4).

Figure 2: (Post-Election). Support for Aiding Laid-Off Workers (% Agree)



N=814; N=813 for essential worker layoffs

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements...strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

Table 4: (Post-Election). Agreement on Policies for Aiding Laid-Off Workers

Government should...	Total % Agree	Total % Strongly Agree	Democrats % Agree	Republicans % Agree	Democrats % Strongly Agree	Republicans % Strongly Agree
Provide state and local governments with aid to ensure that educators, firefighters, and other essential workers aren't laid off	86%	53%	96%	75%	71%	34%
Assist laid-off workers by extending their Unemployment Insurance benefits	79%	38%	94%	61%	58%	17%
Assist laid-off workers by paying for education and training for new jobs and careers	74%	28%	89%	56%	41%	12%

Democrats: N=343; N=342 for essential worker layoffs
 Republicans: N=380

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements...strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

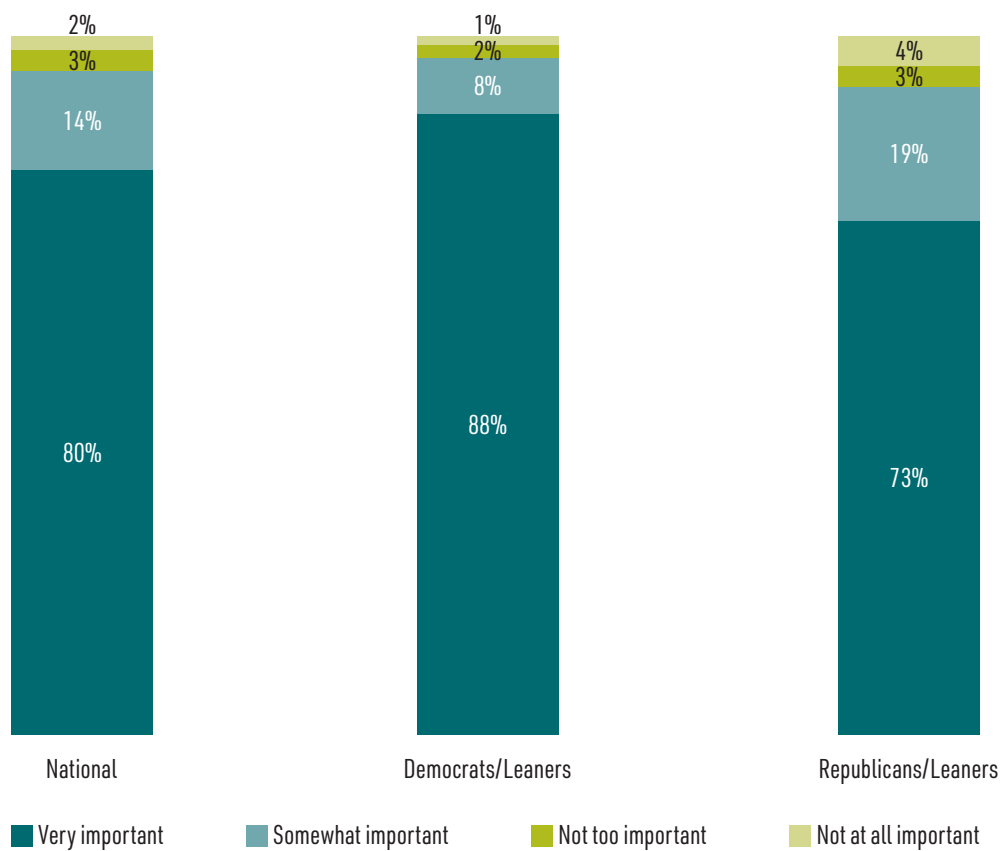
Comparing the Heldrich Center’s pre-election survey of Americans with the post-election survey, no meaningful changes were found on policy options tested in both surveys, including extending Unemployment Insurance, creating community service jobs, and paying for education/training for laid-off workers.

3. Bi-partisan Cooperation Preferred but Unlikely

Democrats and Republicans overwhelmingly agree that working together on strengthening the economy is very important.

Four in five (80%) Americans surveyed believe it is very important that Democrats and Republicans work together to develop strategies to strengthen the economy; fully 9 in 10 say it is at least somewhat important that they cooperate (94%). On this opinion, there is no division across political party lines – fully 9 in 10 Democrats (96%) and Republicans (92%) agree that working together is at least somewhat important (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: (Post-Election). Percent Importance that Political Parties Work Together to Develop Strategies to Strengthen the Economy



National sample: N=811; Democrats/Leaners: N=343; Republicans/Leaners: N=379

In the next year, how important is it that Democrats and Republicans work together to develop strategies to strengthen the economy?

Americans are split on how confident they are that the government can manage the most important problems facing the United States. One in two Americans say they have a lot or some confidence that the federal government can handle the most important problems facing the nation (49%); the other half of respondents have little or no confidence (51%) (see Table 5). Democrats are considerably more optimistic than Republicans in the federal government’s ability to handle the crises. Three-quarters of Democrats report a lot or some confidence (76%) compared to less than one-quarter of Republicans (23%) (see Figure 4).

Table 5: (Post-Election). Americans are Split in their Faith in the Government to Handle the Nation’s Problems

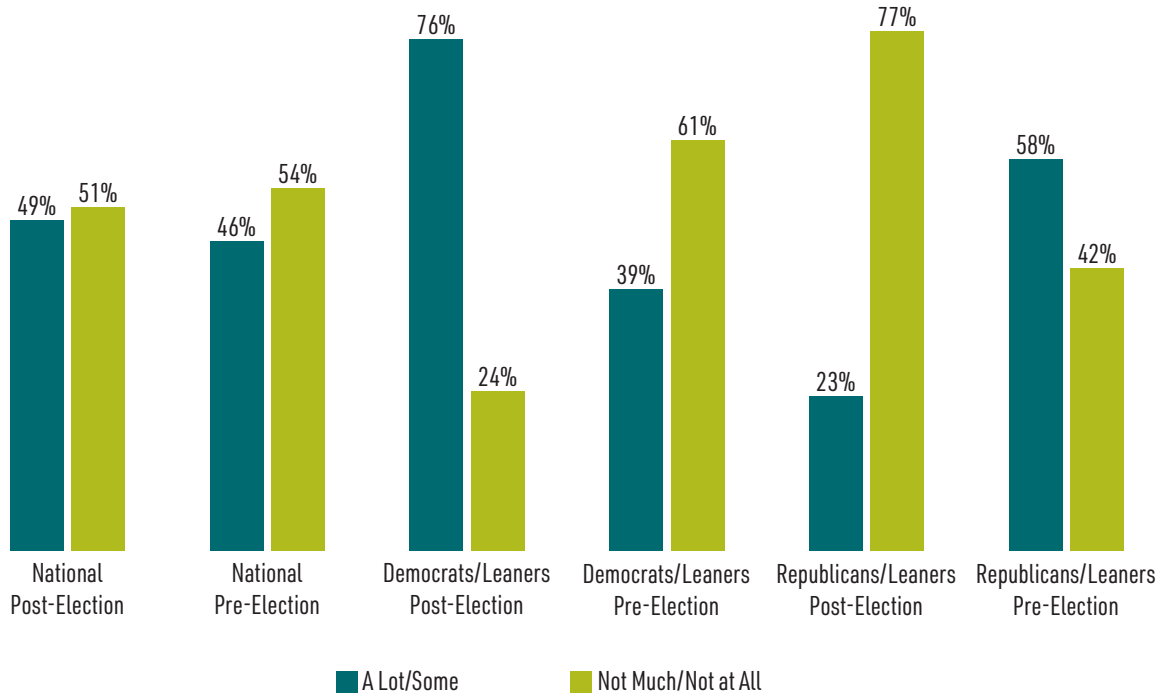
A lot of confidence	12%
Some confidence	37%
Not much confidence	32%
No confidence at all	19%
Total	100%

N=812

How much confidence do you have that the government in Washington, D.C. will make progress over the next year on the most important problems facing the country?

The election of President-elect Joe Biden affected views on whether positive improvements in the economy will happen. Prior to the election, opinions were drastically different along party lines – slightly more than one-third of Democrats expressed a lot or some confidence (39%) compared to more than half of Republicans (58%). Figure 4 shows the differences in opinions between the pre- and post-election surveys.

Figure 4: Percent Confidence in the Government Making Progress on the Nation’s Most Important Problems



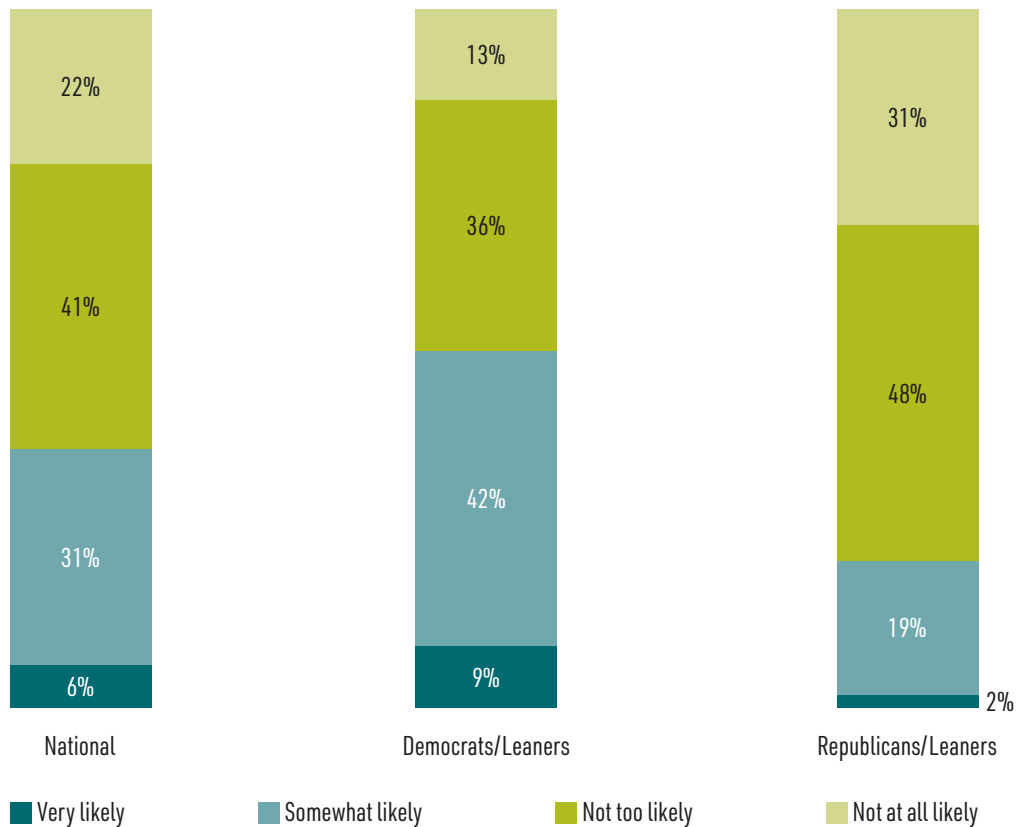
Total Post-Election: N=812; Democrats Post-Election: N=343; Republicans Post-Election: N=379
 Total Pre-Election: N=804; Democrats Pre-Election: N=329; Republicans Pre-Election: n=376

How much confidence do you have that the government in Washington, D.C. will make progress over the next year on the most important problems facing the country?

Fewer than 1 in 10 Americans believe that the political parties will work together to develop strategies to strengthen the economy. Only 6% say that it is very likely (6%), with another 3 in 10 believing such a reality is somewhat likely (31%). Just over one-third (37%) are optimistic (see Figure 5).

Democrats are markedly more hopeful that the political parties will find common ground on strengthening the nation’s economy. On the economy specifically, one in two Democrats think the possibility of collaboration on the economy is very or somewhat likely (51%), compared to one in five Republicans (21%) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: (Post-Election). Percent Likelihood that Political Parties will Work Together to Develop Strategies to Strengthen the Economy



Total: N=809; Democrats: N=342; Republicans: N=379

In the next year, how likely is it that Democrats and Republicans will work together to develop strategies to strengthen the economy?

Given these predictions, there is much work to be done on jobs and the economy, an opinion held by the majority of Americans both before and after the presidential election:

- ▶ After the election, one in four Americans rate the government's handling of the job situation in the United States as excellent or very good (24%); three in four grade the government's handling of the job situation as only fair or poor (76%). Prior to the election, 3 in 10 Americans gave the government positive reviews on jobs (31%); there is no meaningful difference when comparing these excellent or very good ratings before and after the election, given the surveys' margin of error.
- ▶ After the election, 3 in 10 Americans say the state of the national economy is excellent or good (30%), and they reported the same prior to the election (31%), while 7 in 10 say that economic conditions are only fair or poor (70% post-election and 69% pre-election).

On these measures, there are slight differences observed for Republican supporters between the pre- and post-election periods. Republican supporters are more pessimistic about the jobs situation given the election of Biden, compared to Democrats:

- ▶ After the election, fewer than 1 in 10 Democrats (7%) and 4 in 10 Republicans (45%) rate the government's handling of jobs as positive (excellent or good). Prior to the election, this opinion was also held by fewer than 1 in 10 Democrats (6%), but fully 6 in 10 Republicans (61%).
- ▶ Prior to the election, 1 in 10 Democrats (11%) but more than half of Republicans (58%) rated the economy as excellent or good. These numbers are similar to after the election, when fewer than 2 in 10 Democrats (18%) and about half of Republicans (50%) gave the national economy a positive rating.

4. Mixed Views on Confidence in the New Administration

Americans are divided on how confident they are that President-elect Biden will manage various aspects of the economy. Democrats largely say they are fairly confident that President-elect Biden’s policies will lower the unemployment rate in the next year, create jobs, and boost the stock market. One in two Republicans are not at all confident that Biden will build a stronger economy.

A majority of Americans think the election of President-elect Biden will affect them personally. Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) say Biden’s election as the 46th president will have an effect on their lives, with slight differences comparing those who say the election results will affect them a great deal and some between the post- and pre-election surveys (see Figures 6a and 6b).

Figure 6a: (Post-Election). Thinking personally, how much do you think the election of Joe Biden will affect your life?

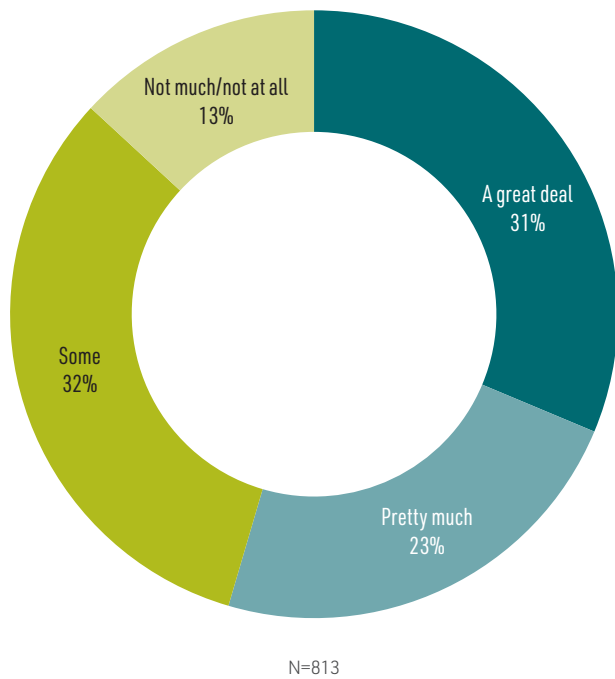
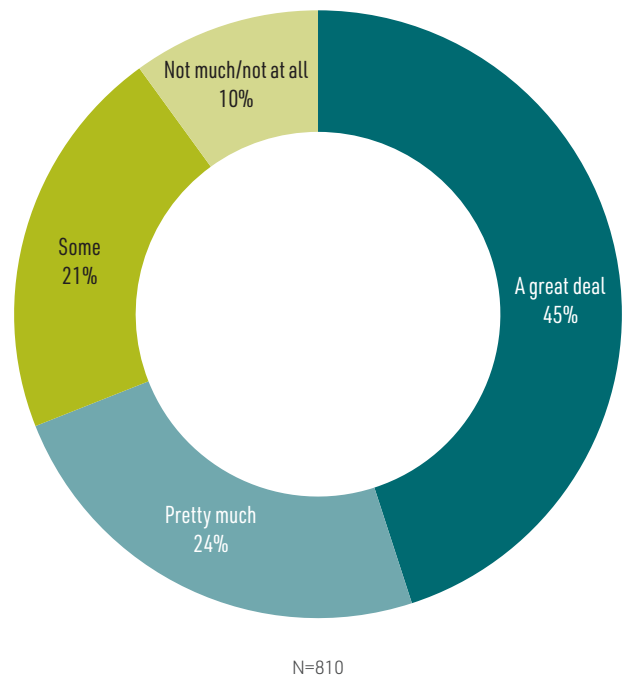


Figure 6b: (Pre-Election). Thinking personally, how much do you think who wins the 2020 presidential election will affect your life?



After the election, 3 in 10 Democrats and nearly 4 in 10 Republicans say that Biden’s presidency will affect their lives a great deal (29% and 38%, respectively) (see Figures 7 and 8). Supporters of both political parties were slightly more likely to report the winner of the presidential election would affect their lives a great deal before the election (46% of Democrats and 48% of Republicans).³

Figure 7: (Post-Election). Thinking personally, how much do you think the election of Joe Biden will affect your life (Democrats)?

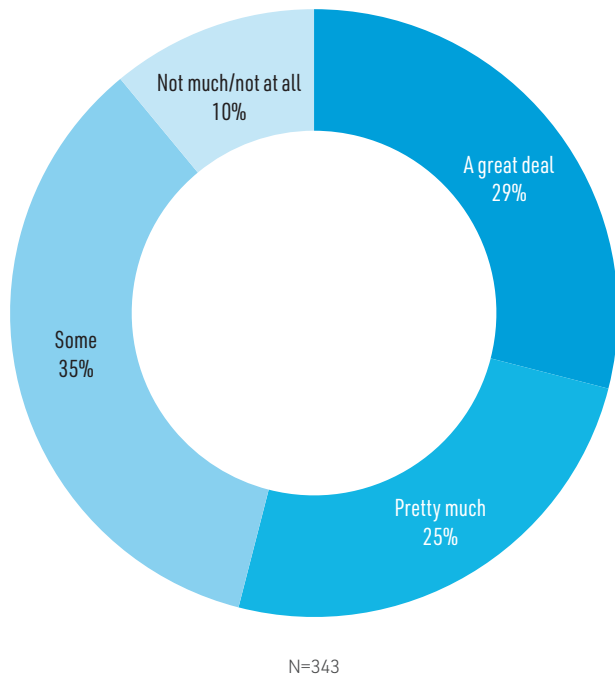
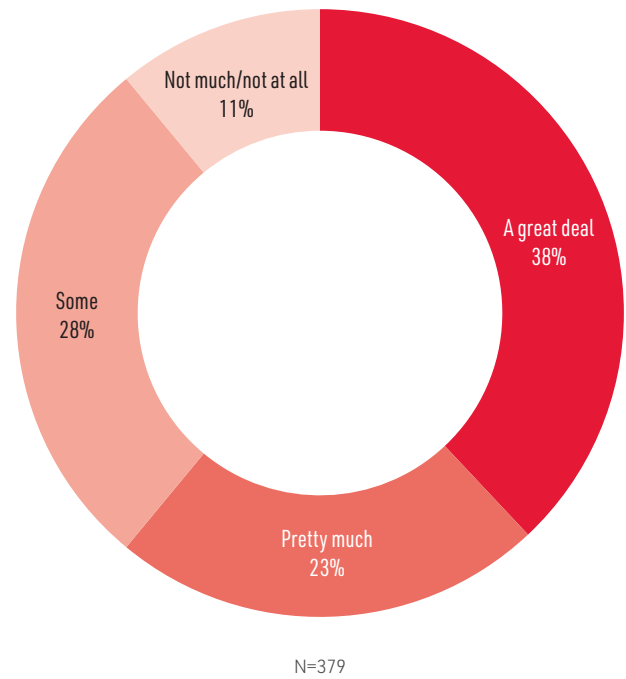


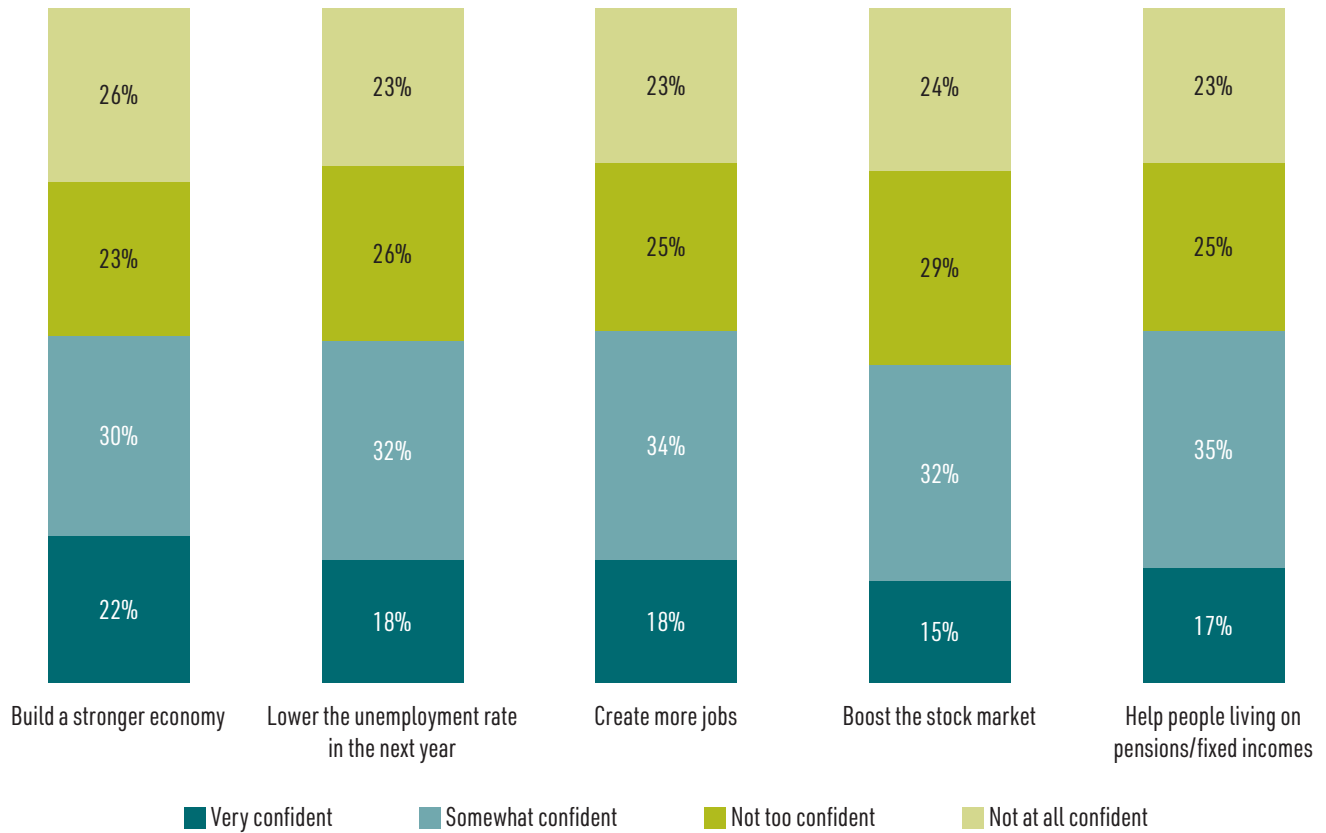
Figure 8: (Post-Election). Thinking personally, how much do you think the election of Joe Biden will affect your life (Republicans)?



³ The margin of error for both samples by political party is described in Appendix B. In the pre-election survey, the question asked was, “Thinking personally, how much do you think who wins the presidential election will affect your life?”

Americans are largely split when asked how confident they are that President-elect Biden can strengthen various aspects of the national economy; there are no meaningful differences on these opinions between the pre- and post-election periods⁴ (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: (Post-Election). Americans' Confidence in Biden's Ability to...



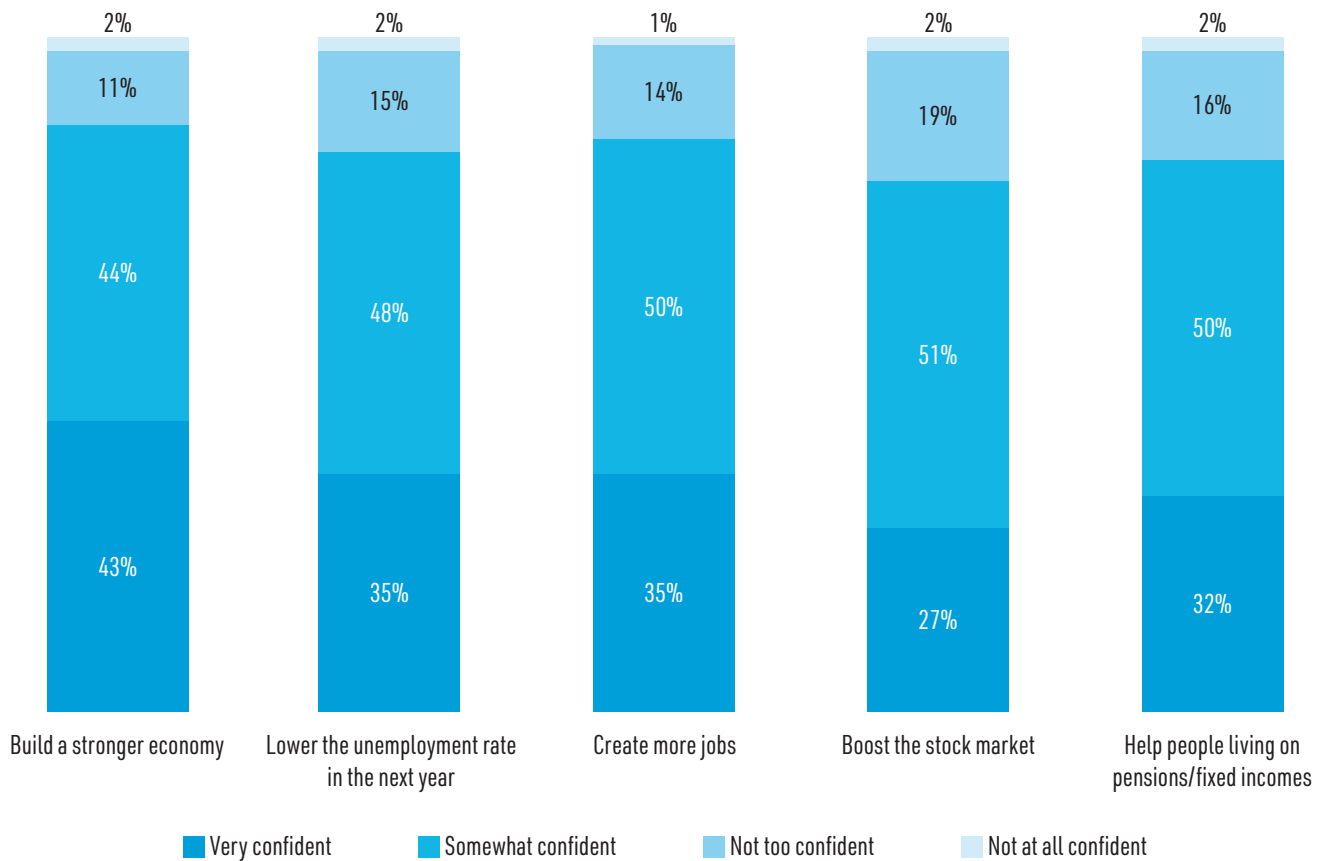
N=806 for economy and jobs; N=808 for pensions/fixed incomes; N=805 for Unemployment Insurance; N=804 for stock market

Regardless of your party or who you voted for, please mark how confident you are that President-elect Joe Biden will handle each of the following issues.

⁴ In the pre-election survey, respondents were asked about their confidence in Biden's ability to manage the various economic issues "if he is elected President."

Democrats are most likely to express that they are somewhat confident that Biden can build a stronger economy (44%), lower the unemployment rate in the next year (48%), create more jobs (50%), boost the stock market (51%), and help people living on pensions or fixed incomes (50%). Republicans are largely doubtful that the President-elect can achieve positive results, saying they are not at all confident that Biden can build a stronger economy (52%), lower the unemployment rate in the next year (47%), create more jobs (49%), boost the stock market (48%), and help people living on pensions or fixed incomes (45%) (see Figures 10 and 11).

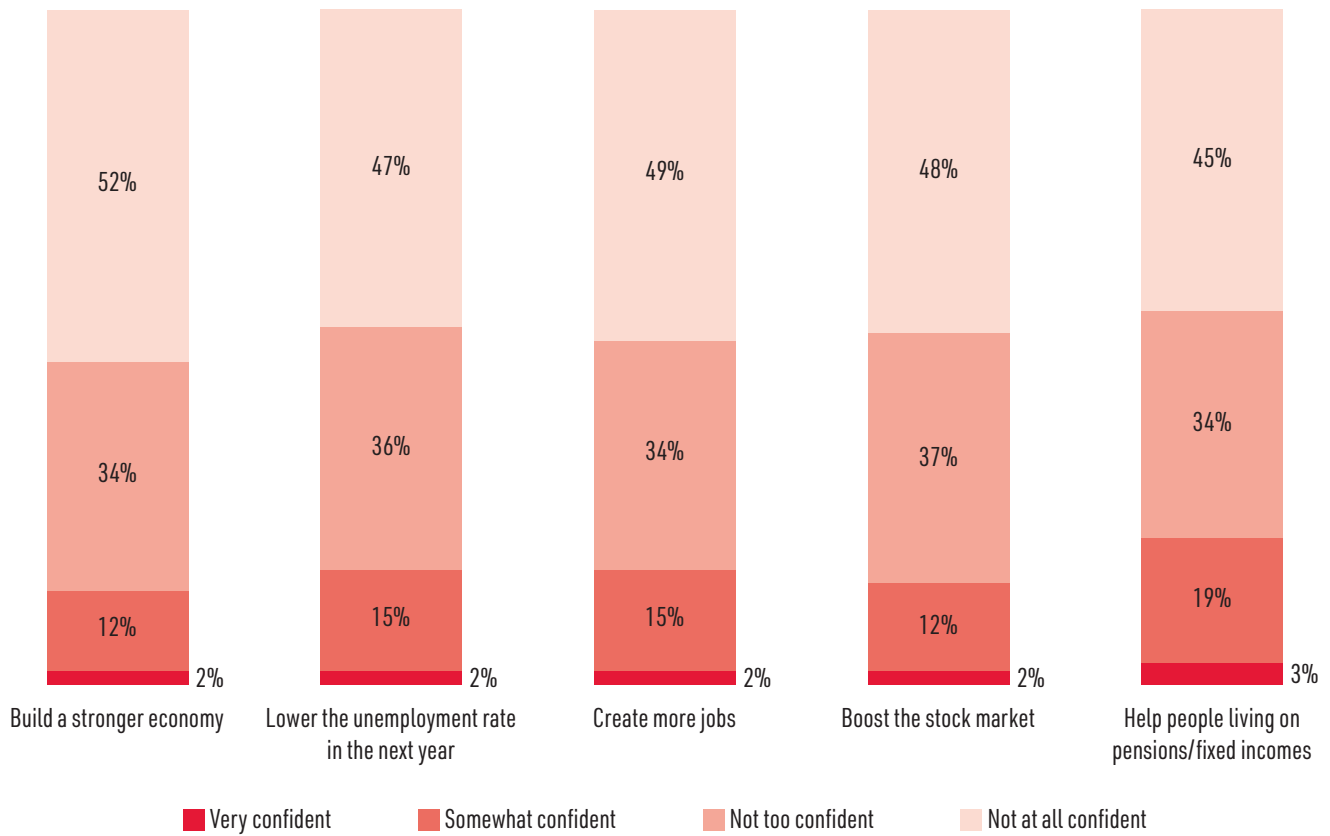
Figure 10: (Post-Election). Democrats' Confidence in Biden's Ability to...



N=342

Regardless of your party or who you voted for, please mark how confident you are that President-elect Joe Biden will handle each of the following issues.

Figure 11: (Post-Election). Republicans' Confidence in Biden's Ability to...



N=347 for all except N=379 for pensions/fixed incomes

Regardless of your party or who you voted for, please mark how confident you are that President-elect Joe Biden will handle each of the following issues.

Appendix A: Methodological Statement

Healing the Wounded Economy includes results from two surveys using fresh samples conducted before (pre-) and after (post-) the November 3, 2020 presidential election. The pre-election survey was fielded October 21 to November 1, 2020 online with a national probability sample of 810 U.S. residents age 18 or older. The post-election survey was fielded December 4 to 14, 2020 online with a national probability sample of 814 U.S. residents age 18 or older. Both studies have been weighted separately using sample weights and post-stratification weights on various demographic categories such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, census region, education, metropolitan status, and household income.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for the pre-election sample of 810 respondents is ± 3.80 percentage points, at a 95% confidence interval (design effect is 1.2198). The sampling error for the post-election sample of 814 respondents is ± 3.77 percentage points, at a 95% confidence interval (the design effect is 1.2029). Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or contextual effects.

The survey was conducted in English using the Ipsos Public Affairs' web-enabled KnowledgePanel[®], a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population (all non-institutionalized adults age 18 or older who live in the United States). Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel[®]. For those who agree to participate but do not already have Internet access, Ipsos provides at no cost a laptop and Internet Service Provider connection. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique login information for accessing surveys online, and are sent e-mails inviting them to participate in research.

Appendix B: Sample Composition and Notes

In this report, percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding. Refusals are excluded as missing data. Reported sample sizes are unweighted to reflect the sample composition of each survey. Reported percentages are weighted. A sample composition table is presented below for both the post-election and pre-election surveys.

Post-Election

Field Dates: December 4 to 14, 2020	Unweighted Sample Size	Approximate Margin of Error
Total Sample	814	±3.77%
Democrats (including Leaners)	343	±5.80%
Republicans (including Leaners)	380	±5.51%

Sample Composition	Unweighted Sample Size	Unweighted Percent
Gender		
Male	404	50%
Female	410	50%
Total	814	100%
Age		
18 to 34	170	21%
35 to 44	116	14%
45 to 64	288	35%
65+	240	30%
Total	814	100%
Education		
Less than high school	46	6%
High school degree	207	25%
Some college	235	29%
Bachelor's degree or higher	326	40%
Total	814	100%
Race/Ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic	575	71%
Black, non-Hispanic	70	9%
Other, non-Hispanic	42	5%
Two+ Races, non-Hispanic	27	3%
Hispanic	100	12%
Total	814	100%
Income		
Under \$30,000	103	13%
\$30,000 to \$59,999	156	19%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	74	9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	133	16%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	110	14%
\$125,000+	238	29%
Total	814	100%
Party Identification		
Democrat, including Leaners	343	42%
Republican, including Leaners	380	47%
Independent	91	11%
Total	814	100%
Region		
Northeast	143	18%
Midwest	173	21%
South	282	35%
West	216	27%
Total	814	101%

Pre-Election

Field Dates: October 21 to November 1, 2020	Unweighted Sample Size	Approximate Margin of Error
Total sample	810	±3.80%
Democrats (including Leaners)	330	±5.96%
Republicans (including Leaners)	380	±5.56%

Sample Composition	Unweighted Sample Size	Unweighted Percent
Gender		
Male	405	50%
Female	405	50%
Total	810	100%
Age		
18 to 34	146	18%
35 to 44	119	15%
45 to 64	319	39%
65+	226	28%
Total	810	100%
Education		
Less than high school	54	7%
High school degree	216	27%
Some college	222	27%
Bachelor's degree or higher	318	39%
Total	810	100%
Race/Ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic	585	72%
Black, non-Hispanic	63	8%
Other, non-Hispanic	34	4%
Two+ Races, non-Hispanic	28	4%
Hispanic	100	12%
Total	810	100%
Income		
Under \$30,000	112	14%
\$30,000 to \$59,999	163	20%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	68	8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	98	12%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	110	14%
\$125,000+	259	32%
Total	810	100%
Party Identification		
Democrat, including Leaners	330	41%
Republican, including Leaners	380	47%
Independent	99	12%
Total	809*	100%
Region		
Northeast	137	17%
Midwest	183	23%
South	305	38%
West	185	23%
Total	810	101%

* One respondent refused to answer the party identification question set

Appendix C: Work Trends Trend Data Information

August 2014**Conducted online by GfK Knowledge Networks**

July 24 to August 3, 2014

Sample: U.S. national adults, including an oversample of the employed and unemployed and looking for work⁵
N=1,153

January 2013**Conducted online by GfK Knowledge Networks**

January 9 to 16, 2013

Sample: U.S. national adults, including an oversample of the employed and unemployed and looking for work
N=1,090

August 2010**Conducted online by Knowledge Networks**

July 20 to August 5, 2010

Sample: U.S. national adults, including an oversample of the unemployed and looking for work
N=818

⁵ Oversamples are corrected by weighting in total percentages reported.

Background

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey was founded as a research and policy organization devoted to strengthening New Jersey's and the nation's workforce during a time of global economic change. The Heldrich Center researches and puts to work strategies that increase worker skills and employability, strengthen the ability of companies to compete, create jobs where they are needed, and improve the quality and performance of the workforce development system. Since 1997, the Heldrich Center has experienced rapid growth, working with federal and state government partners, Fortune 100 companies, and major foundations. The center embodies its slogan "Solutions at Work" by teaming with partners and clients to translate cutting-edge research and analysis into practices and programs that companies, unions, schools, community-based organizations, and government officials can leverage to strengthen the nation's workforce.

Since its inception, the Heldrich Center has sought to inform employers, union leaders, policymakers, community members, the media, and academic communities about critical workforce and education issues that relate to the emerging global economy. To better understand the public's attitudes about work, employers, and the government, and improve workplace practices and policy, the Heldrich Center produces the Work Trends surveys on a regular basis. (The complete set of reports is available at www.heldrich.rutgers.edu). The surveys poll the general public on critical workforce issues facing Americans and American businesses. The survey findings are promoted widely to the media and national constituencies. The series is directed by Carl E. Van Horn, Ph.D., Director of the Heldrich Center and Distinguished Professor of Public Policy at Rutgers University.

Healing the Wounded Economy continues to advance the goals of the Work Trends series to give American workers a voice in the national economic policy debates, and thereby provides policymakers and employers with reliable insights into how workers across the nation are judging and acting upon the realities of work and the workplace.

The authors of this report were Carl Van Horn, Ph.D. and Jessica Starace, MPP. Sean Simone, Ph.D. was instrumental in developing the survey design and analyzing the survey data. Kristine Joy Bacani, Brittney Donovan, Nathan Satish, and Nidhi Tandon assisted with the data analysis. InBum Chung was the graphic designer. Robb C. Sewell edited the report.