

# Worldview Politics and America's Great Divide

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# Divided by a Pandemic?

## August 2020 CBS News Poll

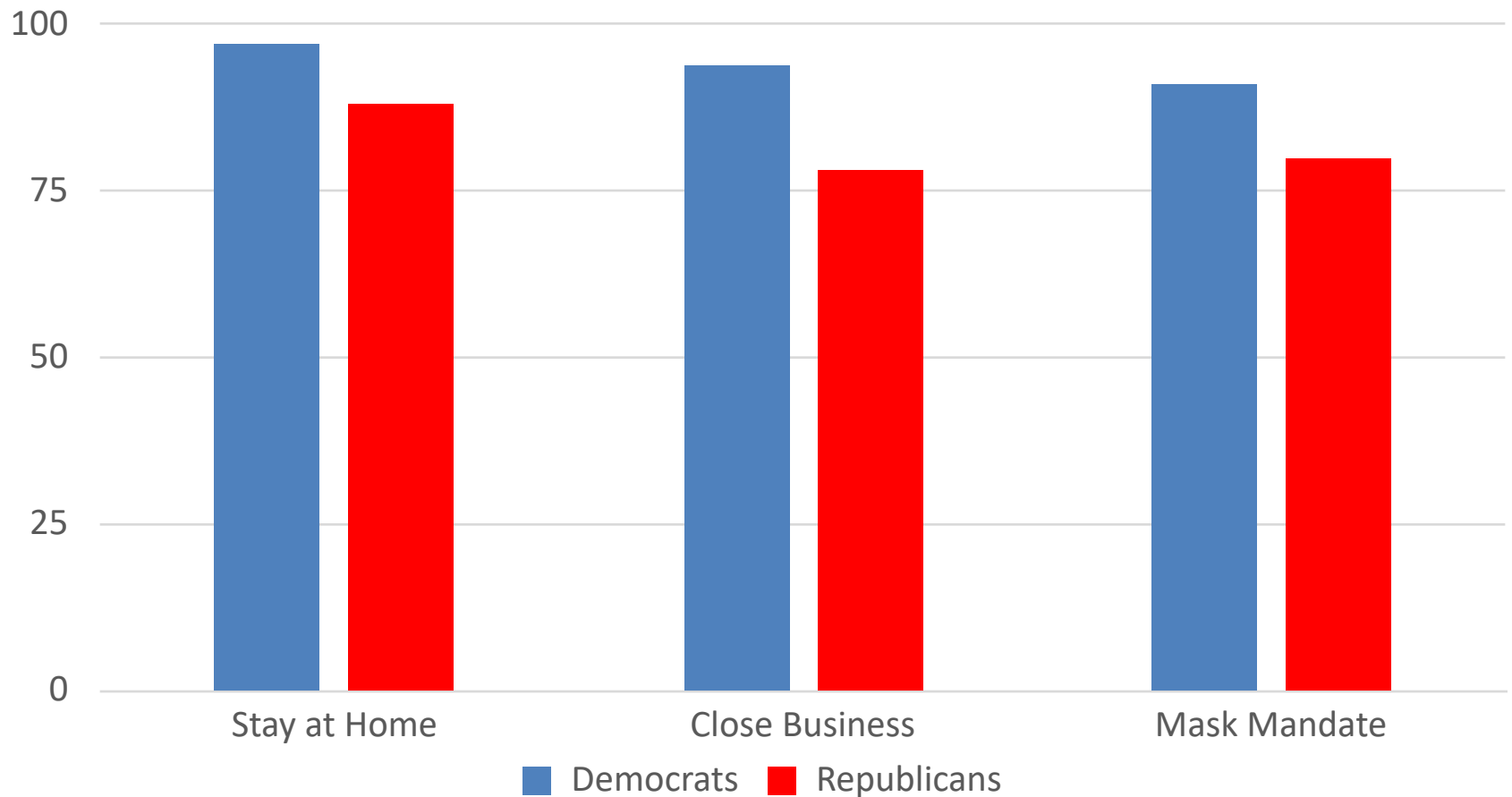
Do you think the number of deaths from Covid-19 is acceptable or not acceptable

Democrats – 90 percent unacceptable, 10 percent acceptable

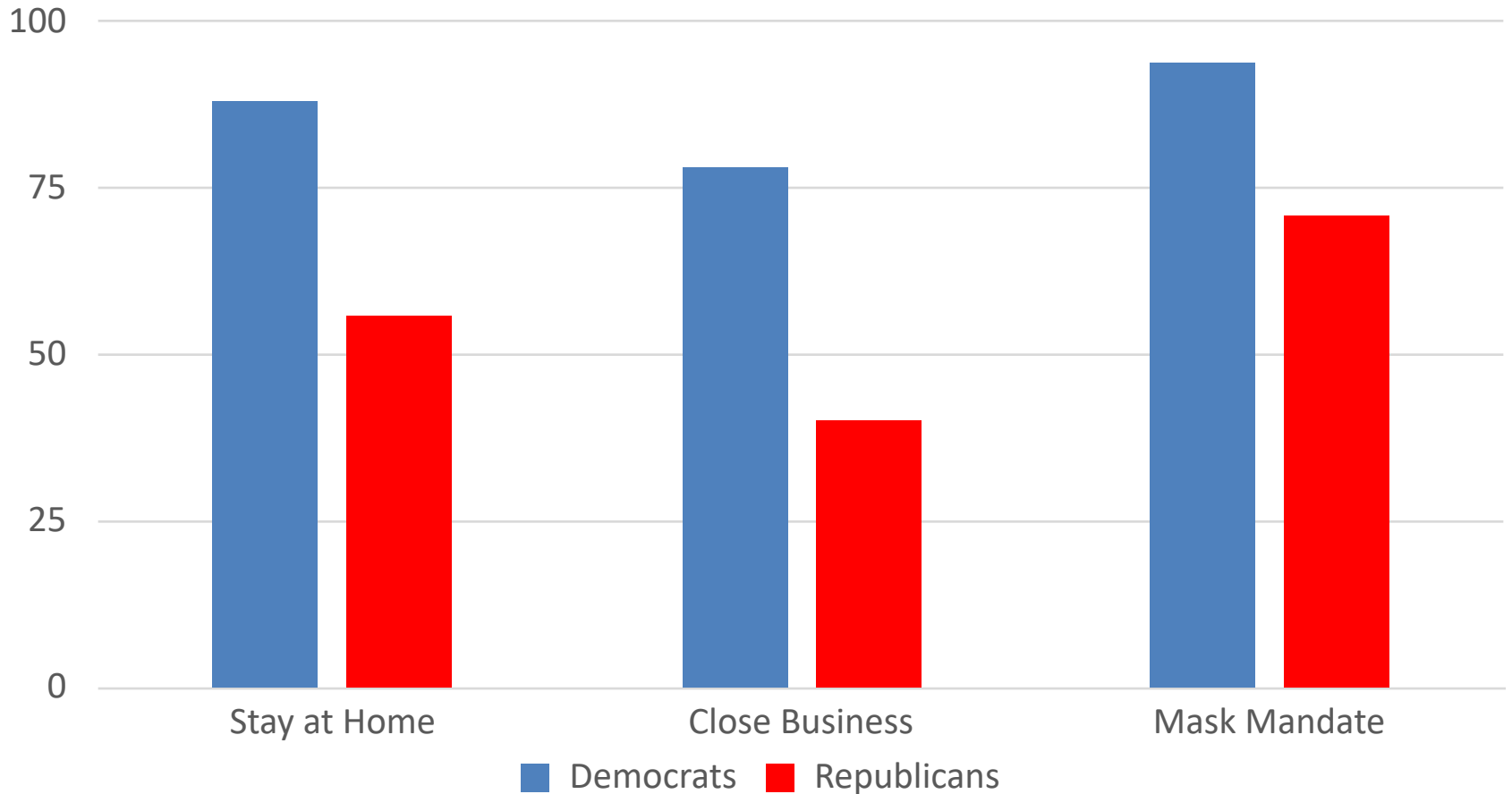
Independents 67 percent unacceptable, 33 percent acceptable

Republicans – 43 percent unacceptable, 57 percent acceptable

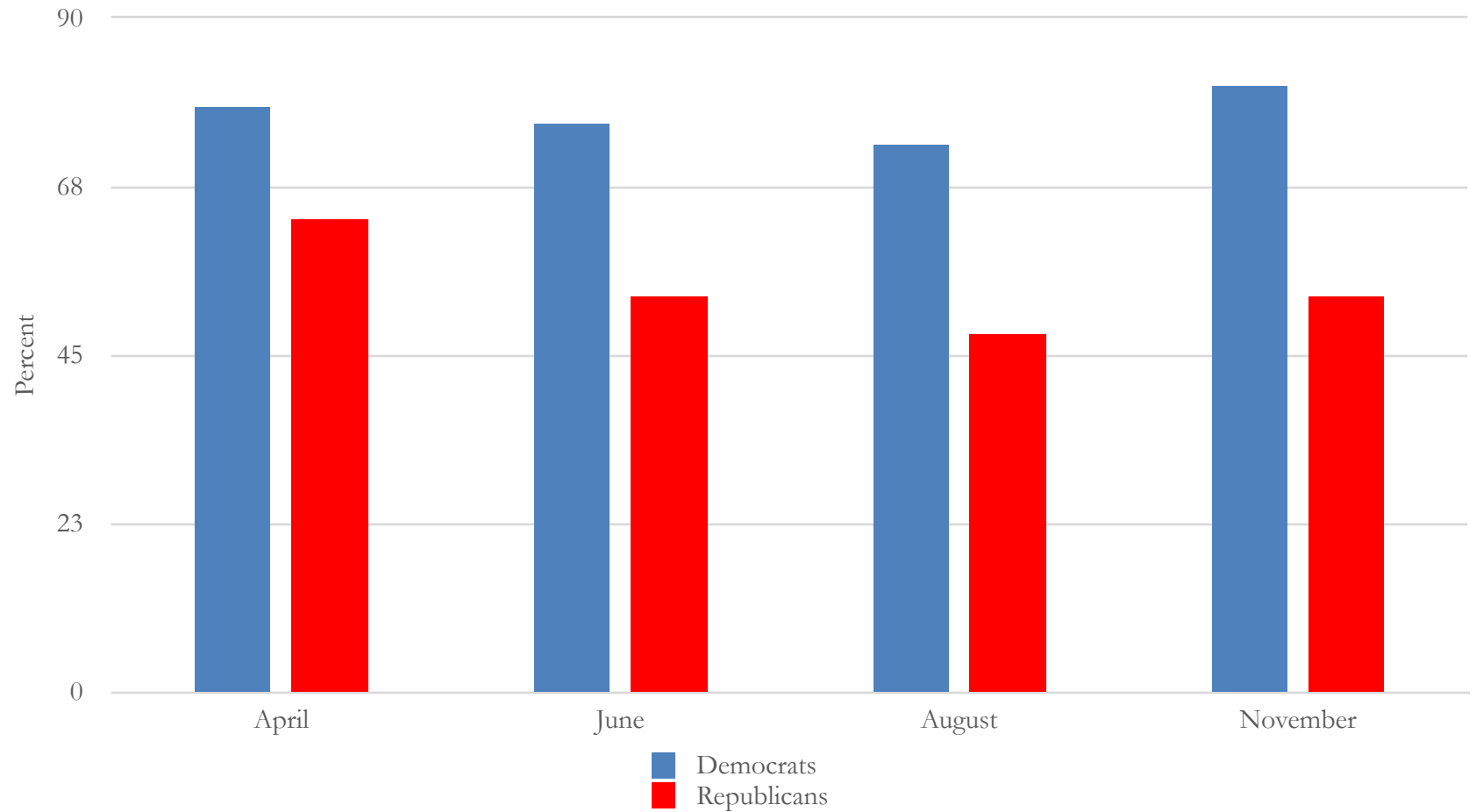
# It Didn't Have to Be This Way: Support for Covid Mitigation Policies, by Party, April 2020



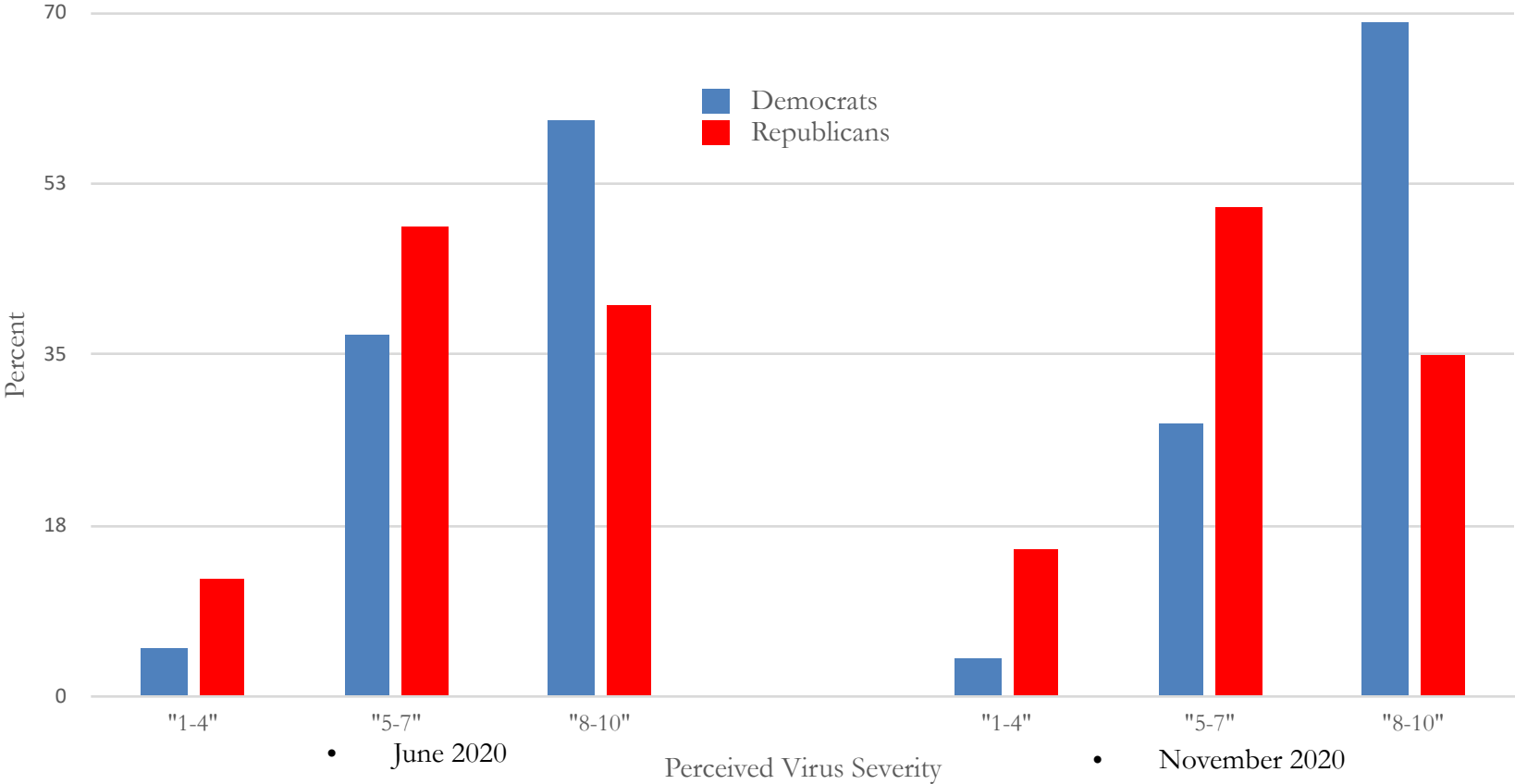
# But Hyper-partisanship Produced This: Support for Covid Mitigation Policies, by Party, September 2020



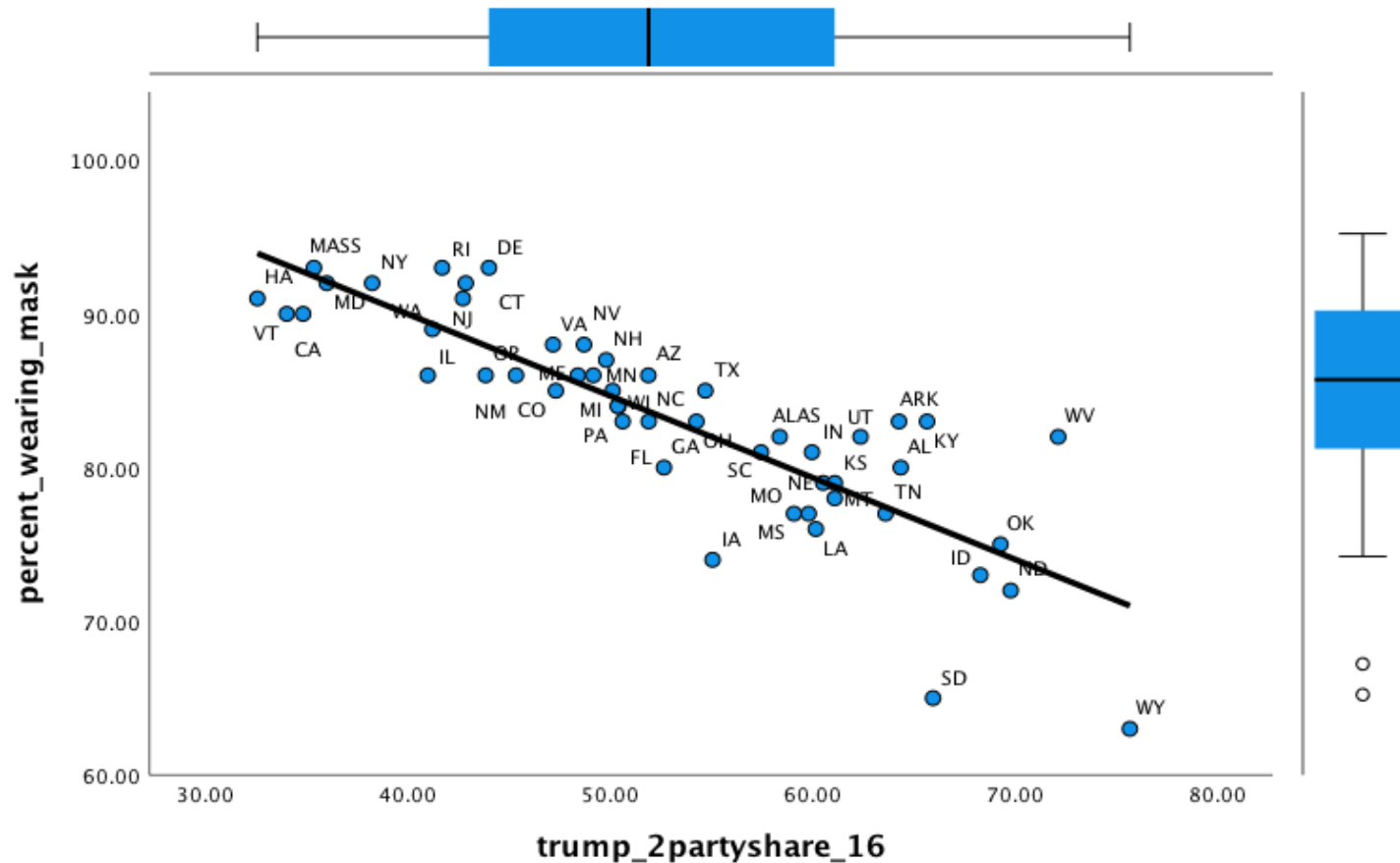
# Percent Either Somewhat or Very Concerned About Getting Seriously Ill From Covid, by Party



# Perceptions of Virus as more like a Bad Flu or Potentially Deadly Disease, by Party, June versus November 2020



# Percent Wearing Masks and Percent Voting for Donald Trump, by State







# What is going on?

Crises used to bring Americans together.

Yet we are more polarized than ever when it comes to fighting something that has cost us more than 500,000 lives.

# Why?

Central to the answer is understanding what is at the root of the division between Republicans and Democrats.

Mix that together with some inept leadership and you end up with more than 30 million sickened by Covid and 500 thousand dead.

# “The Snake” (Excerpt) Oscar Brown, Jr.

On her way to work one morning  
Down the path along side the lake  
A tender hearted woman saw a poor half frozen snake  
His pretty colored skin had been all frosted with the dew  
"Oh well," she cried, "I'll take you in and I'll take care of you"

\*But instead of saying thanks, the snake delivered a fatal bite\*

"I saved you," cried that woman  
"And you've bit me even, why?  
You know your bite is poisonous and now I'm going to die"  
"Oh shut up, silly woman," said the reptile with a grin  
"You knew damn well I was a snake before you took me in

# About That Snake

- Is the metaphor a clarion call to common sense?  
Immigrants and refugees might harm us.
- Or is it a disgusting incitement of prejudice?  
Immigrants and refugees are people not snakes.

**The Solution for One Side Creates the Problem  
for the other**

# The Issues that Divide the Parties Have Changed

- The New Deal Party Divide – **Experience it in your head**
  - Free Enterprise versus Regulation
  - Business versus Labor
  - Fewer Government Programs versus More Government Programs
- The Worldview Party Divide – **Experience it in your gut**
  - Race
  - Gender Equality
  - Law and Order
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Immigration
  - Terrorism

# Parties are Coalitions of Groups

## **Republican vs. Democrat**

- Race: White vs. Non-white
- Gender: Men vs. Women
- Religion: Religious vs. Secular
- Place: Country vs. City
- Essence: **The traditional vs. The novel**

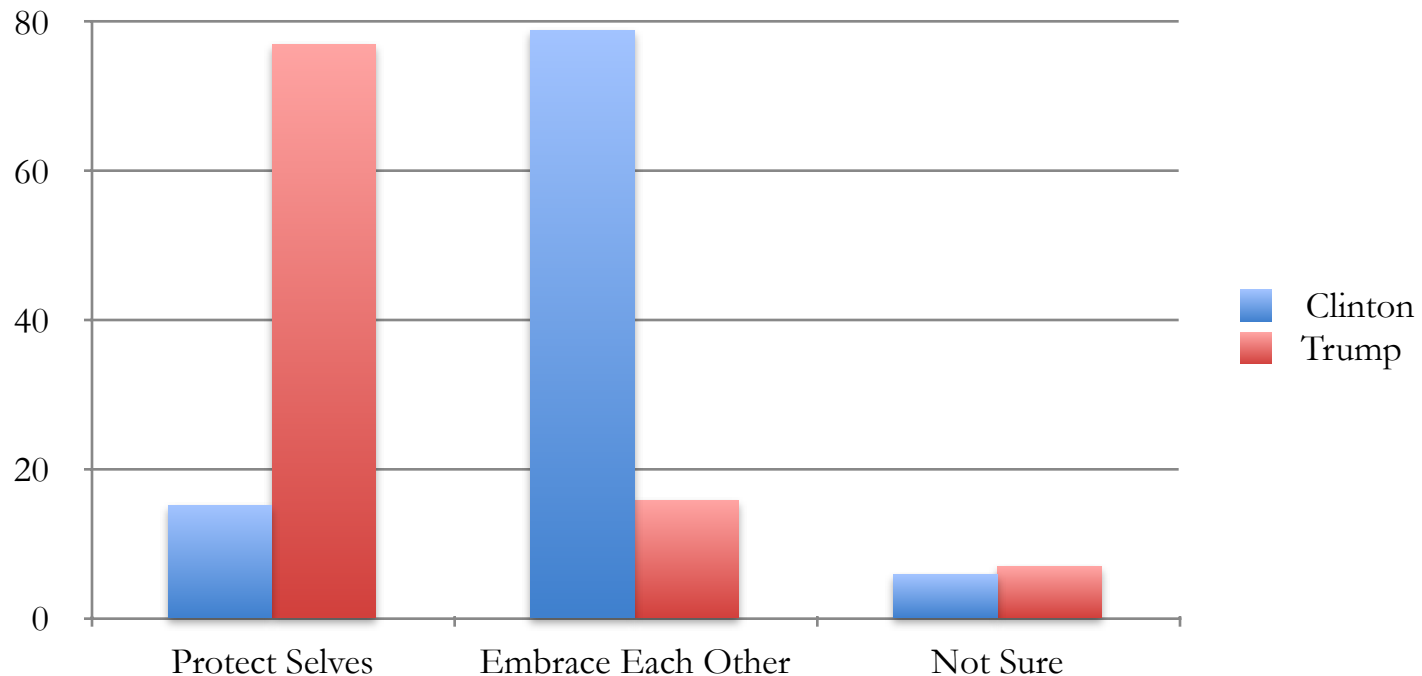
# Which Produces Some Very Strange Divides

## **Republican vs. Democrat**

- Food: American vs. Ethnic
- Beer: Light Macro-brews vs. Dark Micro-brews
- Family Size: Lots of children vs. Few children
- Vehicles: Big, American vs. Small, Foreign
- Essence: **Traditional** Choices vs. **Novel** Choices

# Which Comes Closest to your View

- Our lives are threatened by terrorists, criminals, and immigrants and our priority should be to protect ourselves
- It's a big, beautiful world, mostly full of good people and we must find a way to embrace each other and not allow ourselves to become isolated.





# What is a “Fixed” Worldview?

- **Mantra: The World is a Dangerous Place**
- **Follow directions.**
  - Rely on established **hierarchy**. It provides order in a chaotic world.
  - Embrace **traditions** that are tried and true. Make the world predictable.
- **Be vigilant.** Keep **us** safe. Be watchful of **them** – “Them” might be dangerous.
- **Wary** of social change & wary of physical threats

# What is a “Fluid” Worldview?

- **Mantra: The World is Fun to Explore**
- **Follow your own path.**
  - Not being so wary allows people to be more **open to new experiences**
  - They can be **unconventional**, flout traditions.
- Embrace social change. Established conventions amount to conformity.
- Favor personal autonomy over community values.

# Measuring Worldviews: Fixed vs. Fluid

“Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others. I am going to read you pairs of desirable qualities. Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have.”

*Independence or Respect for Elders*

- \_\_\_ Independence (Fluid)
- \_\_\_ Respect for elders (Fixed)

*Curiosity or Good Manners*

- \_\_\_ Curiosity (Fluid)
- \_\_\_ Good Manners (Fixed)

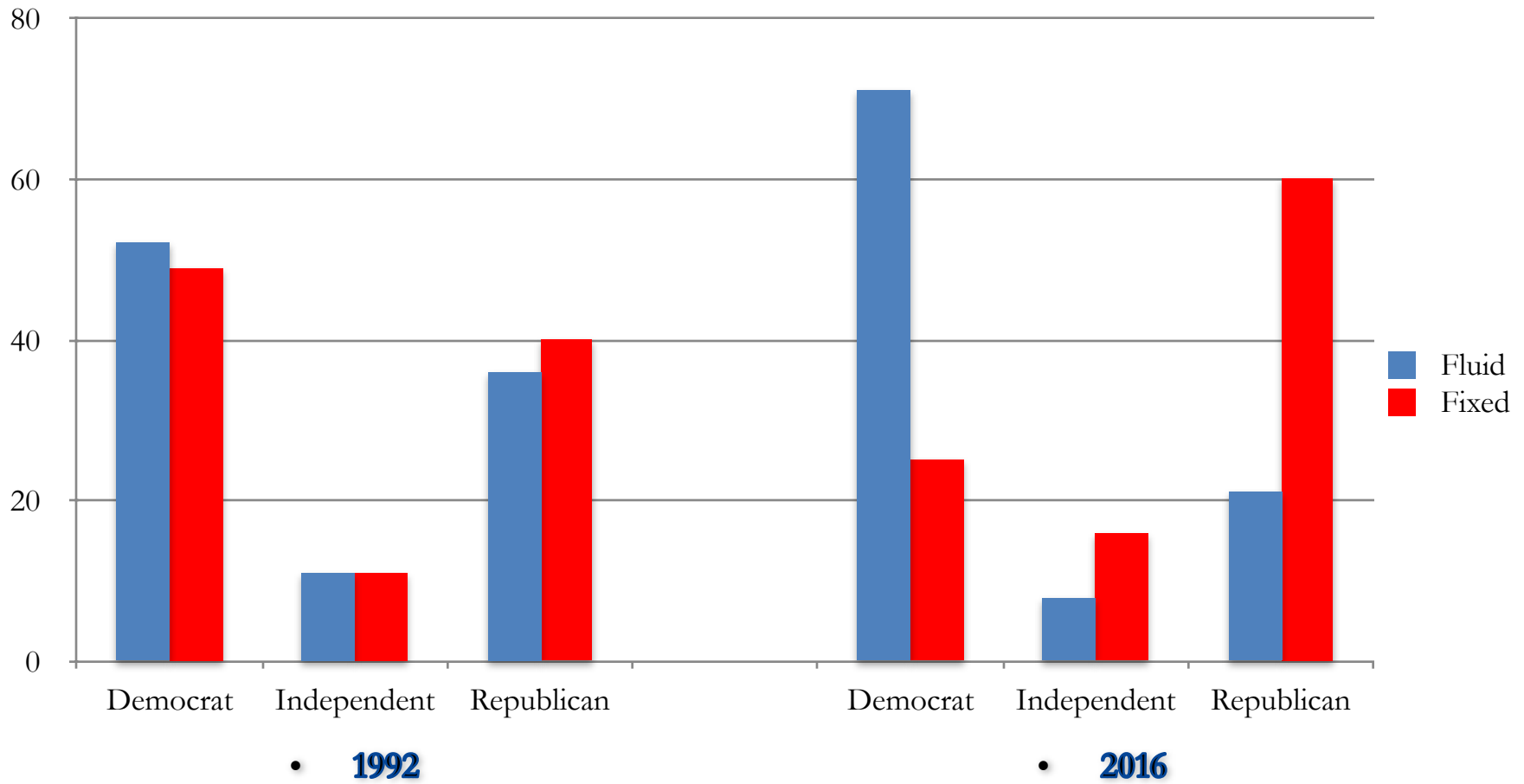
*Obedience or Self-Reliance*

- \_\_\_ Obedience (Fixed)
- \_\_\_ Self-reliance (Fluid)

*Being Considerate or Well-Behaved*

- \_\_\_ Being Considerate (Fluid)
- \_\_\_ Being Well-Behaved (Fixed)

# Partisanship by Worldview, 1992 versus 2016



# Being “Fixed” or “Fluid” informs people’s ideas on the issues that divide us deeply

- Military Intervention
- Racial Attitudes
- Immigration
- Gender Equality
- Gun Control
- LGBT Issues
- Constitutional Interpretation
- How to Keep the Country Safe from Terrorism
- Support for Civil Liberties

Not only that it causes those on the opposite side of the divide to drink the wrong beer, watch the wrong television shows, and drive the wrong kind of car.

# The Other Party is Not Just Disagreeable but Dangerous

- Clear majorities of Republicans and Democrats report the other party makes them feel “afraid”, “angry”, and “frustrated”.
- Majorities also think the other “party’s policies are so misguided that they *threaten the nation’s well-being.*”

# We Hate the Other Side

