

FOR RELEASE OCTOBER 21, 2021

# Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems

*Dissatisfaction with functioning of democracy is linked to concerns about the economy, the pandemic and social divisions*

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## RECOMMENDED CITATION

Pew Research Center, October, 2021, "Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems"

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## How we did this

This Pew Research Center analysis focuses on views of democracy and the desire for political, economic and health care reform. For this report, we conducted nationally representative surveys of 16,254 adults from March 12 to May 26, 2021, in 16 advanced economies. All surveys were conducted over the phone with adults in Canada, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan.

In the United States, we surveyed 2,596 U.S. adults from Feb. 1 to 7, 2021. Everyone who took part in the U.S. survey is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories.

This study was conducted in places where nationally representative telephone surveys are feasible. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, [face-to-face interviewing is not currently possible](#) in many parts of the world.

Here are the [questions](#) used for the report, along with responses. See our [methodology](#) database for more information about the survey methods outside the U.S. For respondents in the U.S., read more about the [ATP's methodology](#).

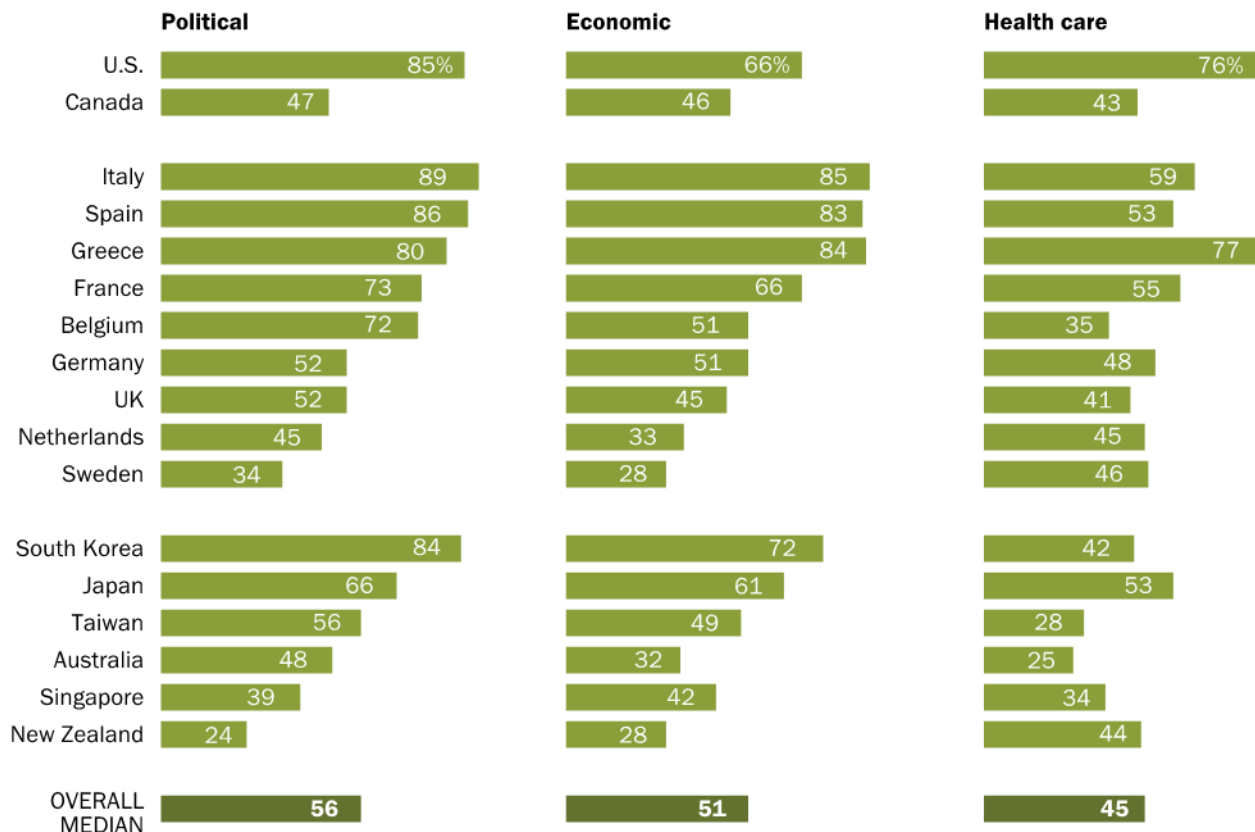
# Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems

*Dissatisfaction with functioning of democracy is linked to concerns about the economy, the pandemic and social divisions*

As citizens around the world continue to grapple with a global pandemic and the changes it has brought to their everyday lives, many are also expressing a desire for political change. Across 17 advanced economies surveyed this spring by Pew Research Center, a median of 56% believe their political system needs major changes or needs to be completely reformed. Roughly two-thirds or more hold this view in Italy, Spain, the United States, South Korea, Greece, France, Belgium and Japan.

## Many see need for significant political, economic and health care reform

% who say the \_\_\_\_ system in (survey public) needs to be completely reformed/needs major changes



Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13a-c.

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Even in places where the demand for significant political reform is relatively low, substantial minorities say their system needs minor changes. In all of the publics surveyed, fewer than three-in-ten say the political system should not be changed at all.

But while many want change, many are also skeptical about the prospects for change. In eight of the 17 publics, roughly half or more of those polled say the political system needs major changes or a complete overhaul and say they have *little or no confidence* the system can be changed effectively.

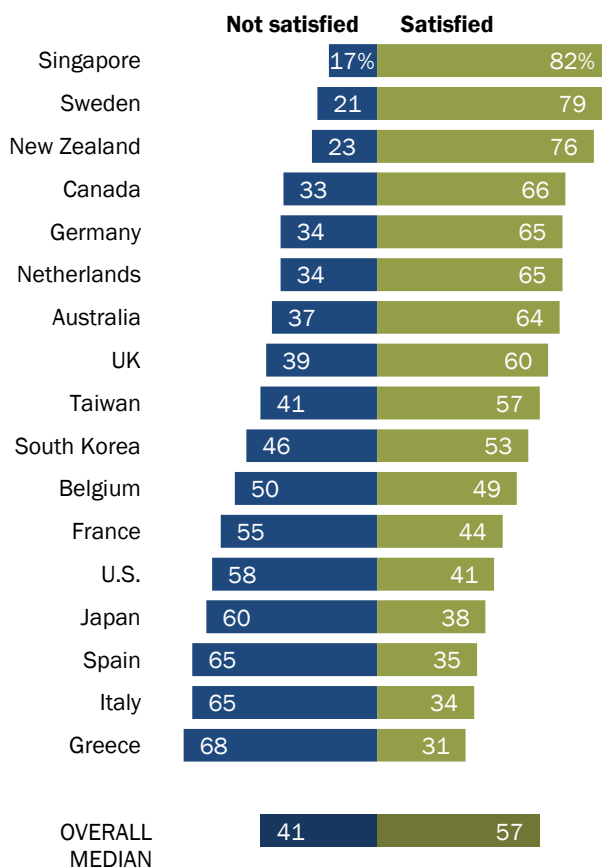
There is also a strong desire for economic reform in many of the publics surveyed. In Italy, Spain and Greece – three countries where the economic mood has been mostly dismal for over a decade – at least eight-in-ten of those polled believe their economic systems need major changes or a complete overhaul. About three-quarters in South Korea and two-thirds in the U.S. and France share this sentiment.

In comparison, there is less demand for changes to health care systems. But the U.S. and Greece are clear outliers: About three-quarters of Americans and Greeks say their health care system needs major changes or needs to be completely reformed.

These questions about political, economic and health care reform reveal very different public moods across the advanced economies surveyed. There are six nations – the U.S., Italy, Spain, Greece, France and Japan – where discontent with the status quo is especially high. In all six, more than half want major changes or complete reform to the political, economic and health care systems.

### Assessments of how well democracy is working vary widely

% who are \_\_\_ with the way democracy is working in (survey public)



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q3.

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Satisfaction with the way democracy is working is also lowest in these countries. Fewer than half of adults in Greece, Italy, Spain, Japan, the U.S. and France are satisfied with the functioning of democracy in their country.

However, the public mood is not so downcast everywhere. Majorities in half of the surveyed publics express satisfaction with the state of their democracy. And there are six nations – Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, Singapore and New Zealand – where the desire for reform is relatively low. (Organizations that provide cross-national ratings of democracy generally give Singapore lower ratings than the other nations in the survey. For more on how the Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House and the Varieties of Democracy project rate all 17 places polled, see [Appendix A](#).) Fewer than half of those surveyed in all six countries want significant reform to their political, economic or health care systems. Satisfaction with democracy is also notably high in these nations.

### People in advanced economies offer very different assessments of their political, economic and health care systems

**Satisfaction with democracy is relatively low and demand for reform is relatively high**

U.S.  
France  
Greece

Italy  
Spain  
Japan

Fewer than half of those surveyed in each country are satisfied with the way democracy is working, and more than half want significant reform to their political, economic and health care systems

**Mixed views on reform and the state of democracy**

Belgium  
Germany  
UK

South Korea  
Taiwan

**Satisfaction with democracy is relatively high and demand for reform is relatively low**

Canada  
Netherlands  
Singapore

Sweden  
Australia  
New Zealand

More than half of those surveyed in each country are satisfied with the way democracy is working, and fewer than half want significant reform to their political, economic and health care systems

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey.  
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## The impact of economic assessments

Attitudes toward the state of democracy and political reform are shaped in part by views about the economy, the impact of COVID-19 and social and political divides.

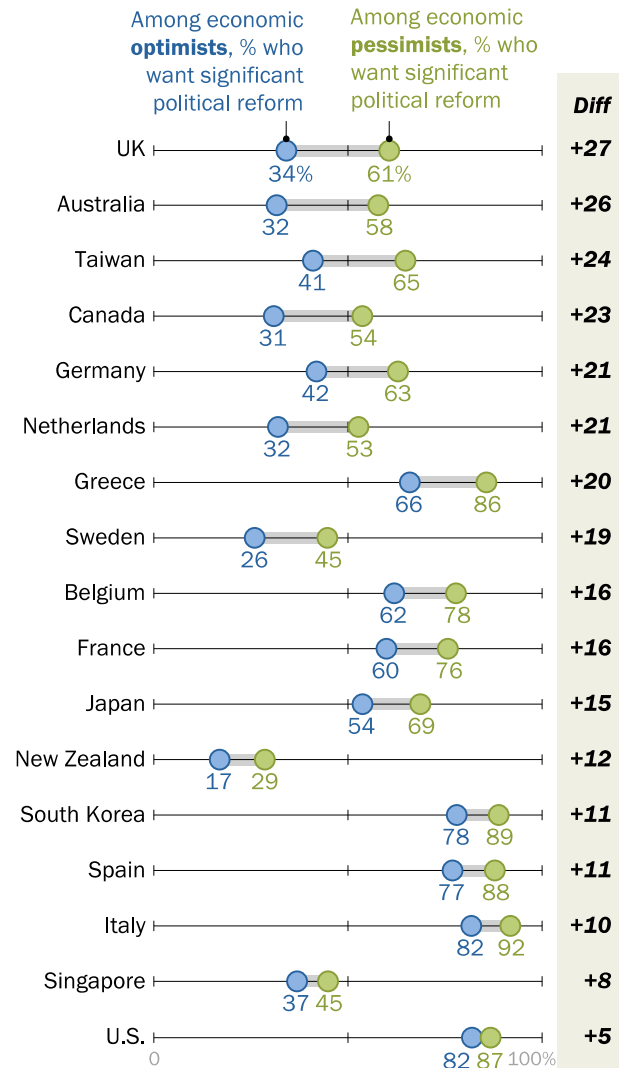
People who describe the current economic situation in their country as bad are consistently more likely than those who describe it as good to say they are dissatisfied with the way democracy is working. And in 16 publics, they are more likely to want significant political reform.

Similarly, optimism or pessimism about the long-term economic future for children is linked to attitudes toward political reform. In the societies polled, those who think children in their country today will be financially worse off than their parents are especially likely to say their political system needs major changes or complete reform.

In the United Kingdom, for example, 61% of respondents who are pessimistic about the next generation's financial prospects think their country needs significant political reform, compared with just 34% among those who are optimistic that the next generation will do better financially than their parents.

Opinions about the current and future state of the economy are also tied to views about economic reform. People who say the current national economic situation is bad and those who are pessimistic about the financial

## Economic pessimists see greater need for political reform



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant. Economic optimists are those that say children today will be better off financially than their parents. Economic pessimists say children today will be worse off financially than their parents.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13c.

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prospects for today's children are generally more likely to call for significant changes to their economic system.

## COVID-19 and views about the state of politics

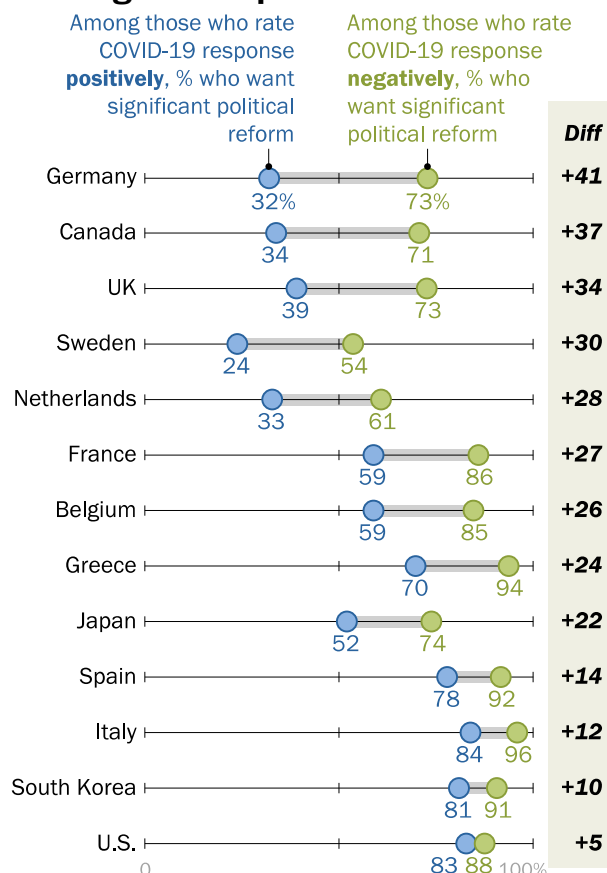
The [coronavirus pandemic](#) has influenced politics and public opinion around the globe. As previous Pew Research Center [reports have shown](#), a growing number of people in advanced economies report that their lives have changed significantly as a result of the pandemic. Our analysis also shows that opinions about the impact of COVID-19 are shaping attitudes toward democracy and the need for reform.

People who believe their country is doing a poor job of dealing with the pandemic are consistently more likely to say they are dissatisfied with the way their democracy is working and to call for political reform.

For instance, 73% of Germans who feel their country is handling the crisis poorly believe their political system needs major changes or should be completely overhauled, while just 32% of those who think the country is handling it well express this view.

The belief that one's country is doing a bad job of dealing with the pandemic is also linked to a desire for health care reform. In the U.S. – where the demand for reform is relatively high – 86% of those who think the country has handled the pandemic poorly want significant change in the American health care system; 62% of those who say the U.S. has done a good job dealing with the pandemic want significant change.

### Those who rate their country's pandemic response negatively are more likely to want significant political reform



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant. In Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan, there were too few people who rate their society's COVID-19 response negatively to include in analyses.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13c. "Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems"

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Another key finding from our [earlier reporting on COVID-19](#) is that growing shares of the publics in advanced economies believe their country is more divided than before the outbreak. We also find that this belief about people now being more divided is linked to attitudes about the political system. People who think their country is more divided since the outbreak are particularly likely to be dissatisfied with the state of democracy and to want political reform.

## Divided societies and political reform

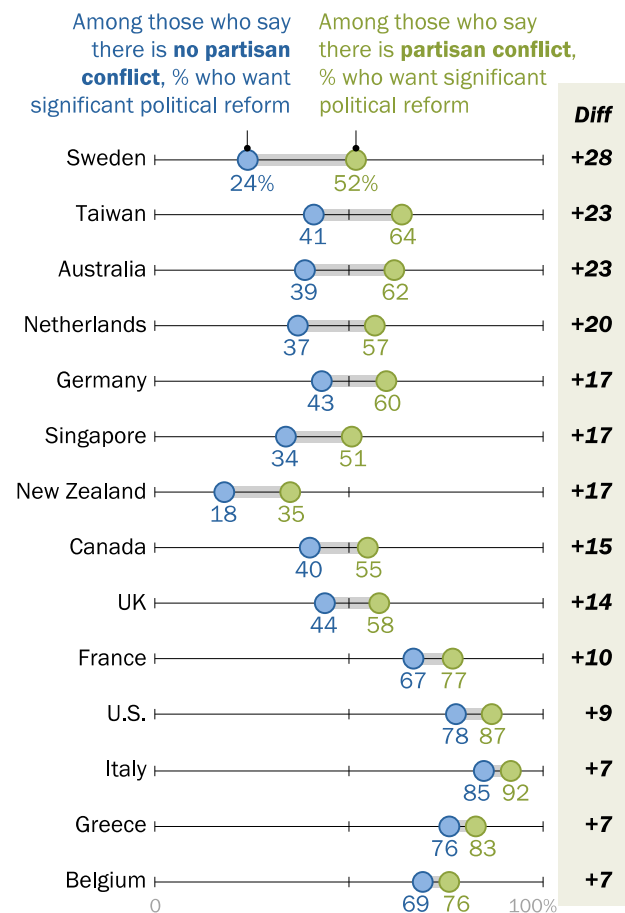
The pandemic has exacerbated long-running divisions in countries around the globe, and as a recent Center report found, many people in these 17 advanced economies see [significant partisan and racial and ethnic conflict](#) in their societies.

Perceptions of partisan divisions – which are especially common in South Korea and the U.S., where nine-in-ten see conflict between people from different political parties – are linked to unhappiness with the state of democracy and a strong desire for political reform.

Sweden is a nation where the demand for political reform is low overall, but among those who say there is significant partisan conflict in their country, 52% think the political system needs major changes or should be overhauled completely; only 24% of Swedes who do not believe there is partisan conflict in their country say their political system needs significant reform. Similar gaps between those who see partisan conflict and those who do not are also found in 13 other publics surveyed.

Beyond partisan disagreements, at least a quarter in many places say most people [disagree about basic facts](#) on important issues

## More support for overhaul of political system among those who see partisan conflict in their societies



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13c.

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facing their country (in France, the U.S., Italy, Spain and Belgium, about half or more say this). And the desire to reform the political system is especially common among those who see widespread disagreement over basic facts. For instance, 69% of Dutch respondents who say there is disagreement about basic facts want significant political reform, compared with just 37% of those who believe people generally agree about facts.

These are among the major findings of a Pew Research Center survey, conducted from Feb. 1 to May 26, 2021, among 18,850 adults in 17 advanced economies. The survey also finds that at least half in every public surveyed say their government respects the personal freedoms of its people. Still, about a third or more of those polled in Greece, France, Japan, Belgium, Spain, Italy and the U.S. say their government does not respect personal freedoms.

## Widespread support for political reform in many publics

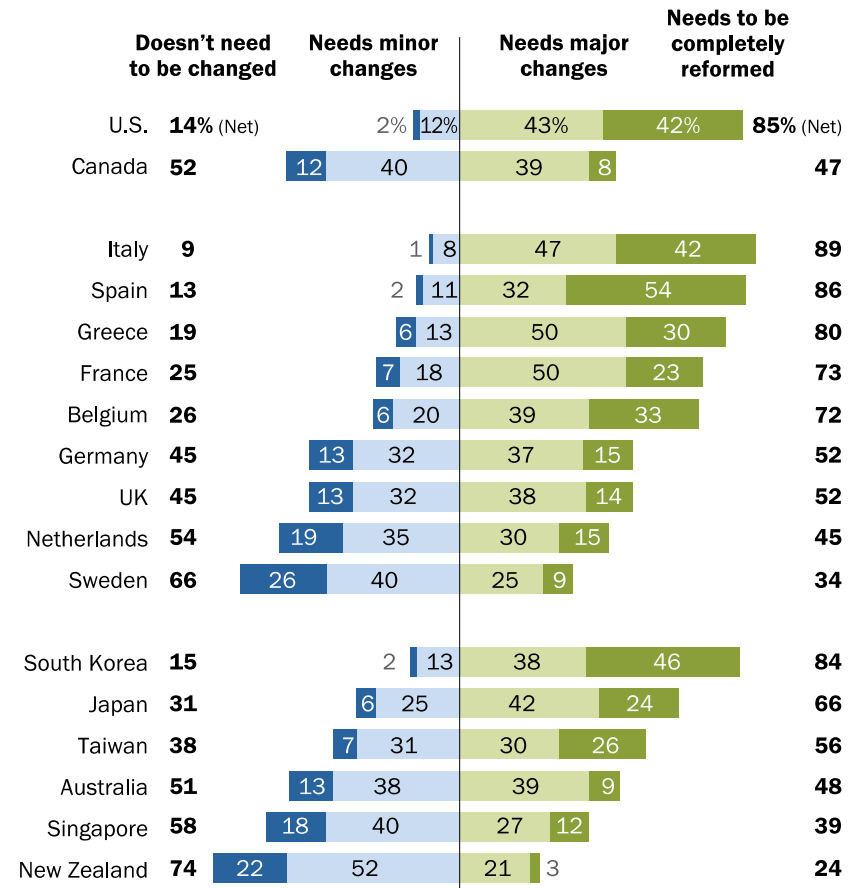
Roughly half or more in 13 of 17 publics surveyed say their political system needs at least major changes. A median of 38% say their system needs major changes, while 23% say it needs to be completely reformed.

In Spain, South Korea, the U.S. and Italy, four-in-ten or more say their political systems need to be completely reformed. And in nearly all places, roughly a third or more of people say major changes are needed.

In contrast, most of those surveyed in New Zealand, Sweden, Singapore, the Netherlands, Canada and Australia think their political systems need either minor changes or no changes at all.

### Large shares in many publics say their political system needs reform

% who say the political system in (survey public) ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13c.

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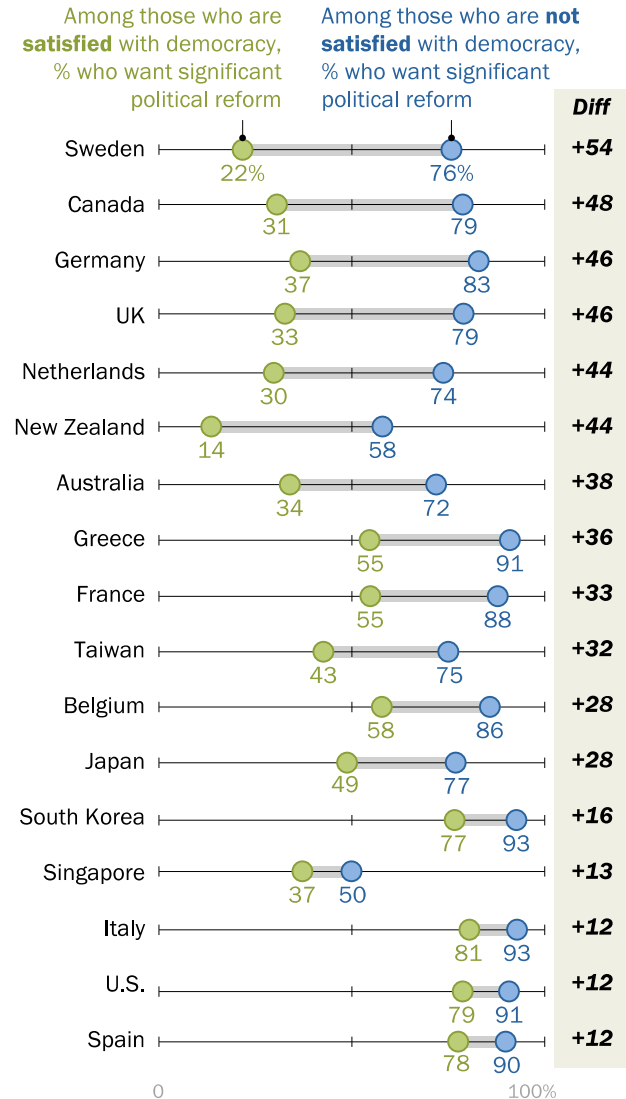
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Those who are dissatisfied with democracy are consistently more likely to say that their political system needs at least major changes. These differences are double digits in every place surveyed but tend to be largest in nations where large majorities are satisfied with democracy, such as Sweden and Canada, and smaller where fewer are satisfied with democracy, such as the U.S. and Italy.

In the U.S., large majorities of both Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (88%) and Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (83%) support major changes or complete reform. Roughly half of Democrats (47%) think the political system needs to be completely reformed, compared with 38% of Republicans.

In 14 publics, people who support the governing party are less likely to want significant political reform. The U.S. is the only country where this pattern is reversed. (The U.S. survey was conducted in early February 2021, only a couple weeks after Joe Biden was inaugurated as president.)

## Those who are dissatisfied with their democracy are more likely to want political reform



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13c.

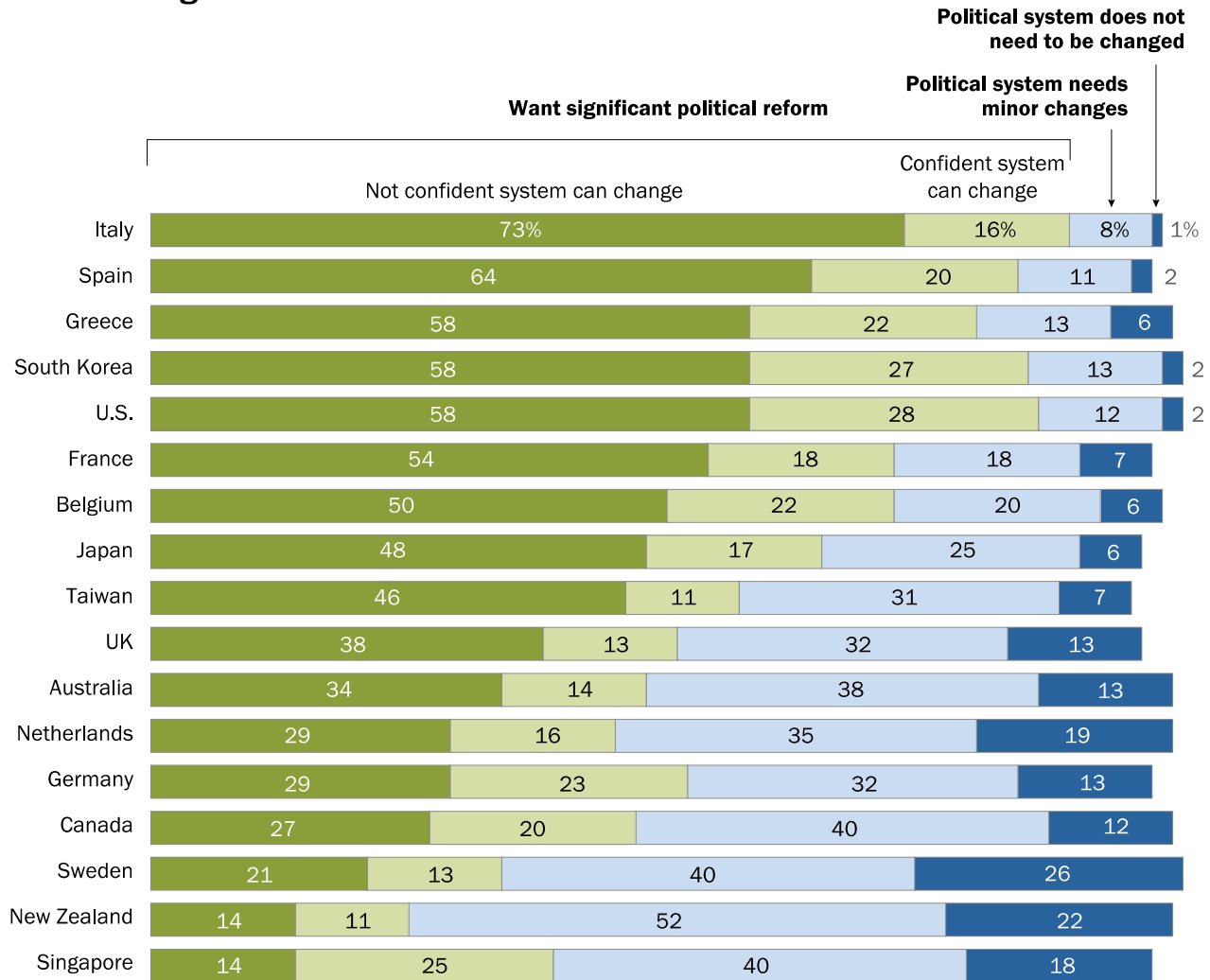
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## Many who want changes are not confident the political system can be effectively reformed

Respondents who said the political system where they live needs major changes or complete reform were then asked how confident they are that the system can be changed effectively. A

### Those who want changes to their political system are not confident political system can be changed



Note: Those who did not answer not shown. Confidence that the political system can be changed only shown for people who say their political system needs major changes or complete reform. Percentages based on total sample. The total share who say they want significant political reform may differ slightly from previous charts due to rounding.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13c & Q14.

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median of 46% across the 17 publics express both a desire for change and a lack of confidence, while a median of just 18% are confident the change they feel their system needs can happen.

Italians are by far the most pessimistic: 73% want significant political reform but are not confident their system can be changed effectively. Roughly half or more share this view in Spain, Greece, South Korea, the U.S., France, Belgium and Japan. In every public except Singapore, larger shares of those who want political reform lack confidence that reform can happen effectively, compared with those who are confident change can occur.

Those who do not support the governing party are more likely to want political reform *and* lack confidence that the system can be changed effectively in nearly every public surveyed. In the UK, 47% of people who do not support the governing Conservative Party say their political system needs significant reform and do not think effective reform is possible, while only 17% of Conservative supporters hold this view.

## Views on economic system reform vary widely across 17 publics

When it comes to reforming the economic system, views are roughly split across the 17 publics surveyed. Majorities in seven publics say the economic system needs complete or major reform, while in five, majorities say the system needs minor changes or no reform at all, and elsewhere opinion is divided.

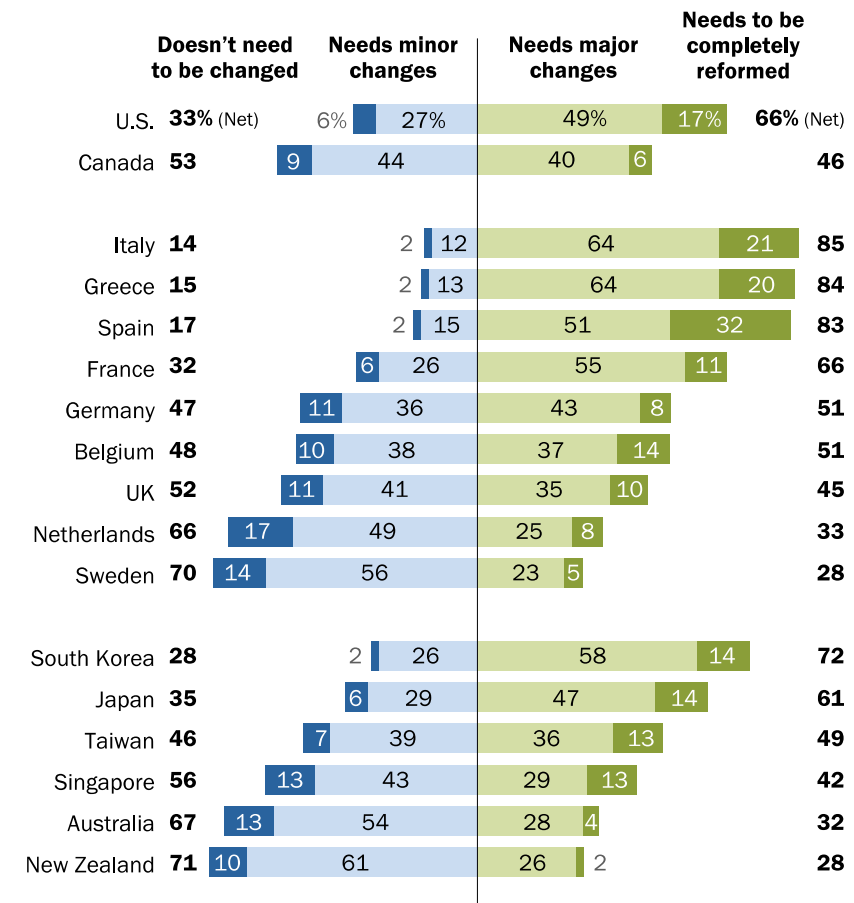
Calls for economic reform are highest in Italy, Greece and Spain – three countries where large shares say that the **economic situation is not good**. Additionally, large majorities in the U.S., France, South Korea and Japan believe the economic system in their countries needs significant reform. In the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand, where people generally describe their economic situation as good, large majorities say their economic system either does not need any changes or needs only minor changes.

Opinion on the degree to which the economic system needs reform is more balanced among Canadians, Germans, Belgians, Britons and Taiwanese.

In the U.S., 80% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents think the economic system needs major changes or a complete overhaul, compared with 50% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who say the same.

### Views on economic reform vary widely

% who say the economic system in (survey public) ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13a.

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There are also significant ideological differences on this question in the UK, Australia and Belgium, with respondents who place themselves on the ideological left voicing more support for economic reform than those on the right.

## Publics mostly split on whether reform of health care system is needed

Overall, there is somewhat less support for reforming health care systems than for making significant reforms to political or economic systems. Still, roughly half or more in seven nations think the health care system needs major changes or needs to be completely reformed, and in the U.S. and Greece, roughly three-in-four express this view.

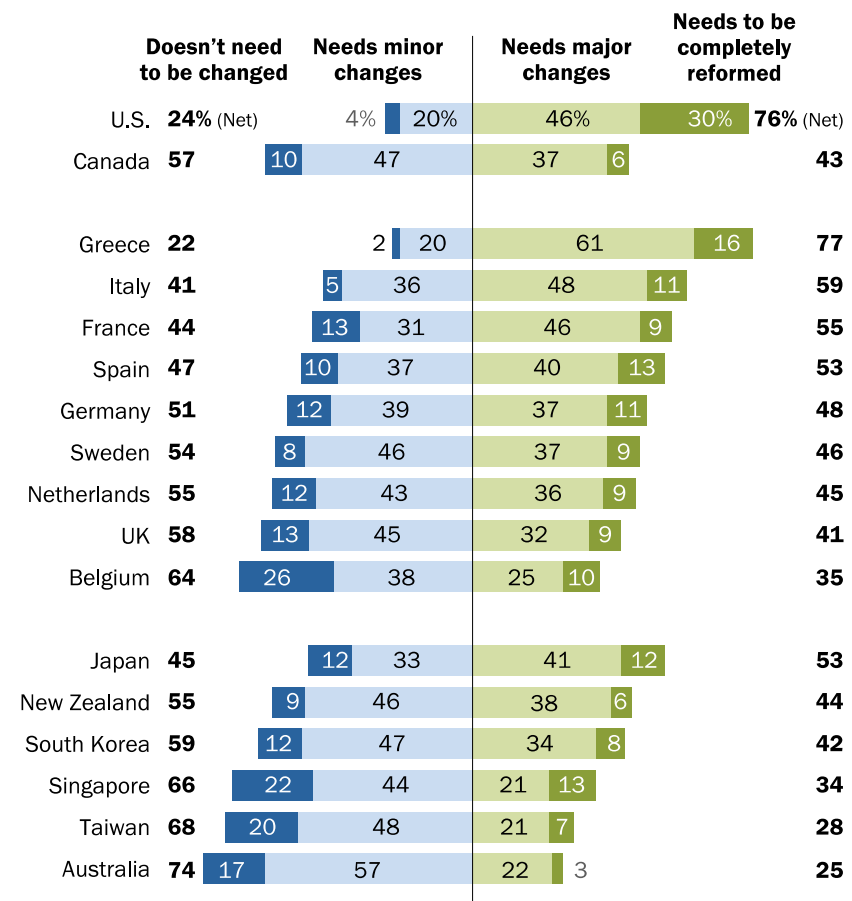
Majorities among supporters of both major American political parties believe the health care system needs at least major changes. Still, the desire for change is stronger among Democrats (39% want complete reform and 47% want major changes) than among Republicans (20% complete reform, 43% major changes).

Views are more positive elsewhere, especially in Belgium, Singapore and Taiwan, where one-in-five or more say their health care system doesn't need to be changed.

Older people in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea are more likely to

### Americans, Greeks most vocal about health care system reform

% who say the health care system in (survey public) ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q13b.

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say their health care system needs significant reform, while in the U.S., younger people are more likely to say this.

## Wide range of views on how democracy is functioning

A median of 57% across 17 publics say they are satisfied with the way their democracy is working. But while views of democracy are relatively positive overall, assessments vary across the advanced economies surveyed.

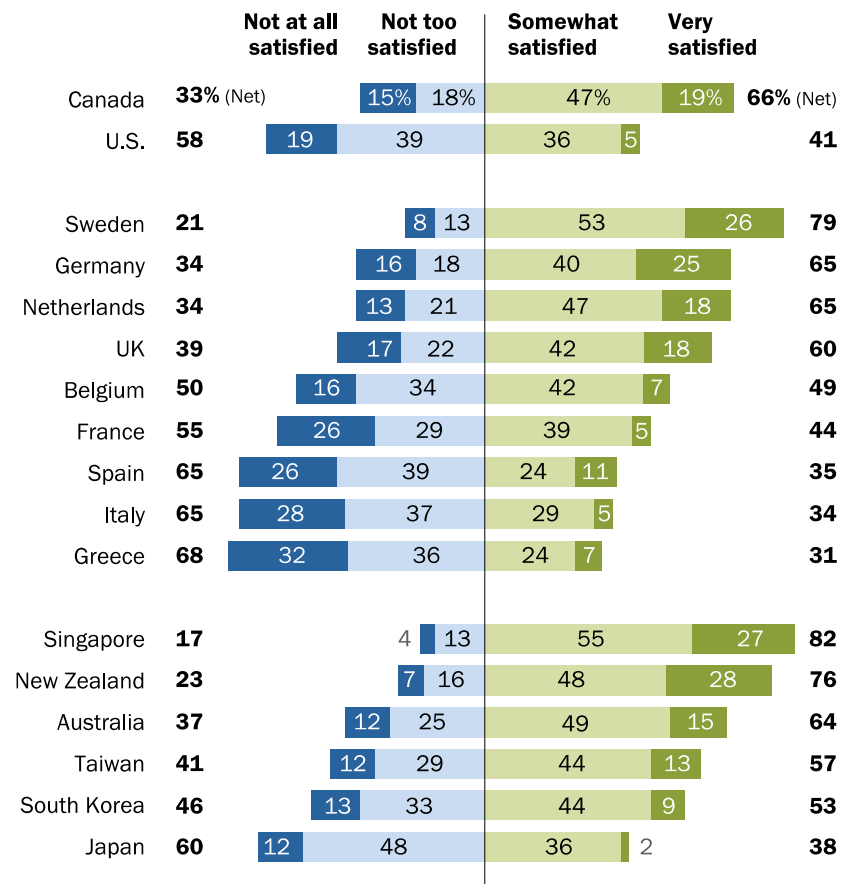
Only 41% of Americans are satisfied with the way democracy is working in their country. (The survey was conducted in early February 2021, roughly a month after supporters of former President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol.)

In Europe, large majorities in Sweden and Germany are satisfied with the way their democracy is functioning, including roughly a quarter in each country who are *very* satisfied. Ratings are also positive in the Netherlands, where Prime Minister Mark Rutte [won his fourth election](#) as the survey was fielding.

On the other end of the spectrum, only around a third are content with their democracy in Spain, Italy and Greece. In these three countries, as well as France, at least a quarter say they are *not at all* satisfied with how their democracy is working.

### Many are satisfied with the way democracy is working, but views vary

% who are \_\_\_ with the way democracy is working in (survey public)



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q3.

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Assessments of democracy are generally positive across most of the Asia-Pacific region. Satisfaction is particularly high in Singapore and New Zealand, where roughly a quarter are very satisfied. But more than half in Australia, Taiwan and South Korea also rate their democracies positively. Japan is an outlier in the region, with only 38% providing a positive assessment.

It is worth noting that previous Pew Research Center surveys have generally found [more negative views](#) of [democratic functioning](#). This is due, in part, to discontent in many countries in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, where the coronavirus has halted [face-to-face data collection](#), meaning no recent comparative data on these attitudes are available.

In North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, views of democracy have not changed much since the last time this question was asked in 2019, though slightly larger shares in Australia, Sweden and Greece are now satisfied. The UK is the only country where positive ratings have increased substantially since 2019, rising from 31% to 60%.

Across every public surveyed, people are much more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy is working if they support the party in power, say the current economic situation is good and think their society is more united now than it was before the coronavirus outbreak.

## Most say their government respects people's personal freedoms

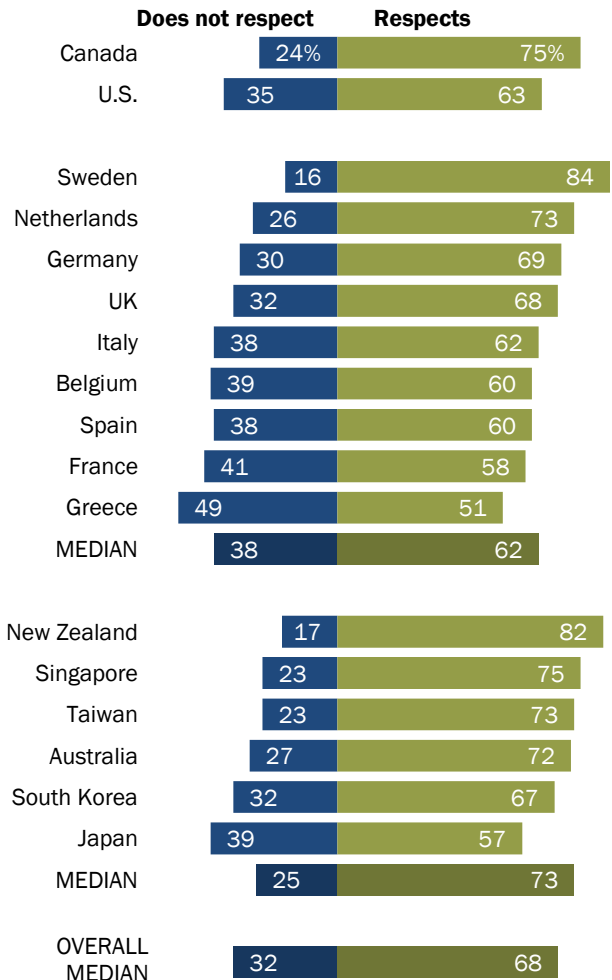
The COVID-19 pandemic has raised concerns among many about the potential for governments to use the crisis to [acquire more power](#) over their citizens, at the expense of civil liberties. Among the advanced economies surveyed, though, half or more say their government respects the personal freedoms of its people. Still, sizable shares of the publics in many nations say their government does not respect such freedoms, including roughly four-in-ten or more in six countries. Respondents in the Asia-Pacific region say their government respects freedoms at slightly higher rates than those in European countries polled – a median of 73% versus just 62%, respectively.

Three-quarters of Canadians agree that their government respects individual liberties, while 63% of Americans hold this view.

Across Europe, people tend to say that their governments respect the personal freedoms of their people. In Sweden, 84% say their government respects personal freedoms, and roughly seven-in-ten agree in the Netherlands, Germany and the UK. Smaller majorities in Italy, Belgium, Spain and France say this, as well. In Greece, however, views are almost equally divided between those who think the government respects personal freedoms and those who think it does not.

### Majorities say their government respects personal freedoms, but there is notable disagreement

% who say the government of (survey public) \_\_\_ the personal freedoms of its people



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q6c.

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Across the Asia-Pacific region, majorities say their government respects individual liberties. Roughly eight-in-ten in New Zealand say this, with roughly seven-in-ten or more saying the same of their government in Singapore, Taiwan and Australia. Two-thirds of Korean respondents also say their government respects freedoms, while roughly six-in-ten of Japanese say the same.

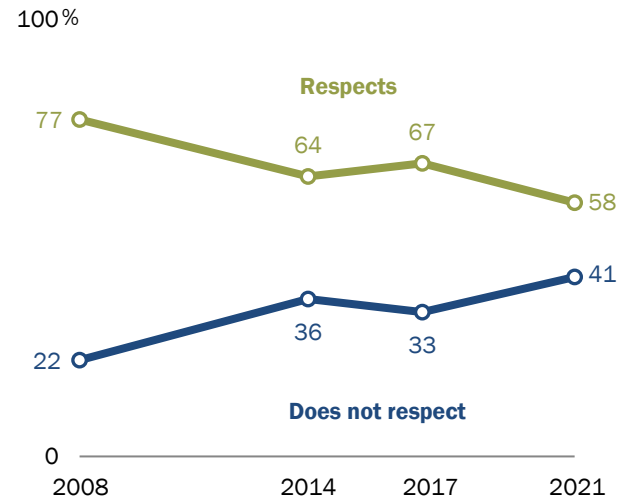
Over the last decade, the share saying their government does *not* respect personal freedoms has increased in France. When the question was first asked in 2008, just 22% of French adults said this about their government. In the time since, that share has nearly doubled, with 41% now agreeing that their government does not respect personal freedoms. Trend data on this question is not available in the other places surveyed.

In some countries, those with more education are more likely to say their government respects personal freedoms. For instance, in Germany, 83% of those with a postsecondary degree say this of the German government, while just 62% of those without a postsecondary degree agree. A similar difference prevails in Belgium (75% of those with a postsecondary degree vs. 54% of those without one). There are double-digit differences based on education on this subject in the U.S., Italy, Japan, Sweden, South Korea and Spain, as well.

Views on respect for freedoms also varies by income in some places. In South Korea, roughly three-quarters of those with higher incomes say their government respects freedoms, while just 60% of those with lower incomes agree. There is a similar split in Italy, where 68% of those with higher incomes and just 55% of lower-income adults say that the Italian government respects people's individual liberties.

### French less positive on government's respect for freedoms than in the past

% who say the government of France \_\_\_ the personal freedoms of its people



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q6c.

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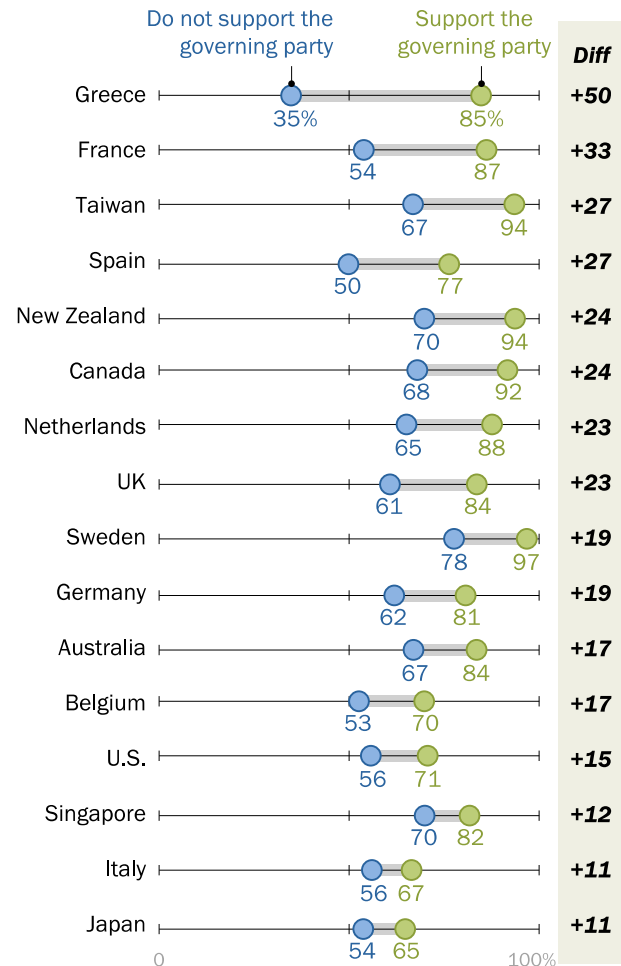
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Those who support the party currently in power are far more likely to say their government respects freedoms than those who do not support the governing party in all the publics where this analysis is possible (party support was not asked in South Korea; for more on how governing party is defined, see [Appendix B](#)). The difference is largest in Greece: 85% of respondents who say they feel closest to New Democracy (ND) also attest that their government respects personal freedoms. Among those who do not feel closest to ND, just about a third say this. There are similar, sizable differences between supporters and non-supporters of En Marche in France, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan and the coalition between United Left, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and Podemos in Spain.

In Europe, those with favorable views of some right-wing populist parties are less likely to say the government respects their people's personal freedoms (for more on how populist parties are defined, see [Appendix C](#)). The largest gap in views is in Germany, where three-quarters of those with an unfavorable view of Alternative for Germany (AfD) say the German government respects individual liberties. In contrast, only four-in-ten of those with a favorable view of AfD perceive the government in this way. There are similar differences between those with favorable and unfavorable views of the Sweden Democrats, Forum for Democracy (FvD) and Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, and Vox in Spain.

## Supporters of the party in power are far more likely to say personal freedoms are respected

% who say the government in (survey public) **respects** the personal freedoms of its people, among those who ...



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant. Party support was not asked in South Korea. For more information about governing parties, see Appendix B.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q6c.

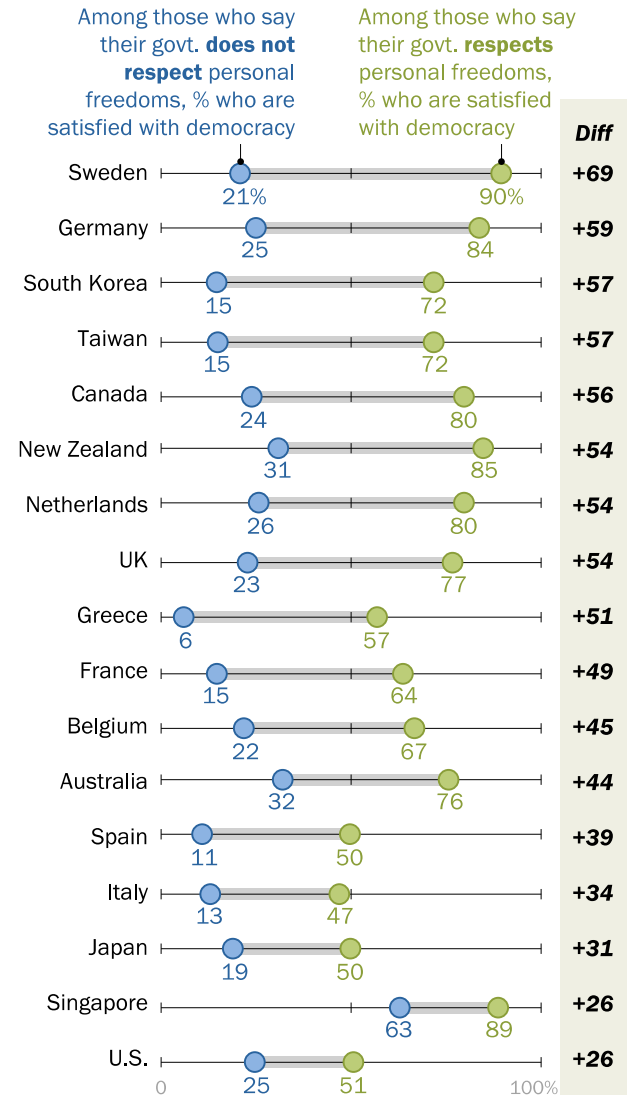
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People are much more likely to rate their democracy positively if they think their government respects the personal freedoms of its people, compared with those who say their government does not respect freedoms.

In Sweden, for example, 90% of people who say their government respects personal freedoms are pleased with how democracy is working in their country. Among those who think the government does not respect the freedoms of its citizens, only 21% are satisfied. Similar differences of roughly 50 percentage points or more can be seen in nine other publics.

### Very few are happy with democracy if they think their government does not respect personal freedoms



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q3.

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## Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals.

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## Appendix A: Classifying democracies

We use three measures to better understand the status of democracy across the advanced economies included in our survey: 2020 Democracy Index scores from the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) (EIU), 2020 Global Freedom Status scores provided by [Freedom House](#) and Regimes of the World classifications from Varieties of Democracy ([V-Dem](#)). Each organization uses different methods for classifying political systems, so using data from multiple sources can provide a more complete picture of the status of democracy across the survey publics.

The EIU Democracy Index is based on ratings across 60 indicators, grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture. Countries are categorized into regime types based on their overall score on the index. Full democracies are ones in which basic freedoms and liberties are respected, with few problems in how democracy is functioning. Flawed democracies have more substantial issues, such as low levels of political participation or problems in how the society is governed, though they still meet the basic requirements of free elections and respect for civil liberties. All the publics included in the current Pew Research Center survey are classified as either full or flawed democracies, but the EIU classification includes two other categories: hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes.

Researchers and experts at Freedom House assign scores to countries and territories across the globe on 10 indicators of political rights (e.g., whether there is a realistic opportunity for opposition parties to gain power through elections) and 15 indicators of civil liberties (e.g., whether there is a free and independent media). For each measure, scores range from 0, representing the smallest degree of freedom, to 4, indicating the largest degree of freedom. Based on their combined score across all indicators, Freedom House classifies societies as free, partly free or not free. Each category covers a broad range of countries and territories and, therefore, within each classification there can be a lot of variation. Overall, those classified as free have relatively more freedom than those considered partly free or not free.

V-Dem has local experts respond to a large set of questions about the political system and society in countries and locations across the world. For our purposes, we use the [Regimes of the World](#) question, where experts indicate how the political regime should be classified – closed autocracy, electoral autocracy, electoral democracy or liberal democracy – based on how their elections work and other factors related to how their government functions. Nearly every public in our survey is considered a liberal democracy, meaning experts rate their elections as free and fair, with multiple parties, and provide positive assessments of different aspects of their government, such as respect for personal liberties and rule of law. V-Dem classifies Singapore as an electoral autocracy, defined



as having “de-jure multiparty elections for the chief executive and the legislature, but failing to achieve that elections are free and fair, or de-facto multiparty.”

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## Democracy classifications

	EIU Democracy Index	Freedom House Global Freedom Status	V-Dem Regimes of the World
Australia	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Canada	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Germany	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Japan	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Netherlands	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
New Zealand	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
South Korea	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Spain	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Sweden	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Taiwan	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
UK	Full democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Belgium	Flawed democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
France	Flawed democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Greece	Flawed democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Italy	Flawed democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
U.S.	Flawed democracy	Free	Liberal democracy
Singapore	Flawed democracy	Partly free	Electoral autocracy

Note: All classifications are based on the state of the political system over the course of the previous year (2020).

Source: Freedom House (2021), The Economist Intelligence Unit (2021), Varieties of Democracy (2021).

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## Appendix B: Political categorization

For this report, we grouped people into two political categories: those who support the governing political party (or parties) and those who do not. These categories were coded based on the party or parties in power at the time the survey was fielded, and on respondents' answers to a question asking them which political party, if any, they identified with in their survey public.<sup>1</sup>

In publics where multiple political parties govern in coalition (as in many European countries), survey respondents who indicated support for any parties in the coalition were grouped together. In Germany, for example, where the center-right CDU/CSU governed with the center-left SPD at the time of the survey, supporters of all three parties were grouped together. In publics where different political parties occupy the executive and legislative branches of government, the party holding the executive branch was considered the governing party.

Survey respondents who did not indicate support for any political party, or who refused to identify with one, were considered to be *not* supporting the government in power.

Below is a table that outlines the governing political parties in each survey public.

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<sup>1</sup> Governing parties were not updated to account for elections that occurred after the survey was fielded and resulted in a new party (or parties) serving in government. Language used to measure party identification varied public by public.

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## Appendix: Political categorization

<b>Public</b>	<b>Governing political party(ies)</b>
Australia	Liberal-National Party/Country Liberal Party/Liberal, National
Belgium	Ecologists (Ecolo), Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V), Green (Groen), Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD), Reformist Movement (MR), Socialist Party (PS), Vooruit (Socialist Party Different)
Canada	Liberal Party
France	En Marche
Germany	Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD)
Greece	New Democracy (ND)
Italy	Democratic Party (PD), Five Star Movement (M5S), Forza Italia (FI), Free and Equal (LEU), Lega
Japan	Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Komeito (NKP)
Netherlands	ChristianUnion*, Democrats 66 (D66), People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), The Christian Democratic Appeal
New Zealand	Labour Party, Green Party
Singapore	People's Action Party (PAP)
Spain	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), United Left (IU), We can / Podemos
Sweden	Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), Green Party
Taiwan	Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
UK	Conservative Party
U.S.	Democratic Party

\* ChristianUnion (ChristenUnie) left the governing coalition in the Netherlands on April 3, 2021. It is not considered part of the governing coalition after this date.

Note: South Korea was excluded from this analysis because party favorability is not asked. Only parties represented in the federal government are shown.

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## Appendix C: Classifying European political parties

### Classifying parties as populist

Although experts generally agree that populist political leaders or parties display high levels of anti-elitism, definitions of populism vary. We use three measures to classify populist parties: anti-elite ratings from the [2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey \(CHES\)](#), Norris' [Global Party Survey](#) and [The PopuList](#). We define a party as populist when at least two of these three measures classify it as such.

CHES, which was conducted from February to May 2020, asked 421 political scientists specializing in political parties and European integration to evaluate the 2019 positions of 277 European political parties across all European Union member states. CHES results are regularly used by academics to classify parties with regard to their left-right ideological leanings, their key party platform positions and their degree of populism, among other things.

We measure anti-elitism using an average of two variables in the CHES data. First, we used “PEOPLE\_VS\_ELITE,” which asked the experts to measure the parties with regard to their position on direct vs. representative democracy, where 0 means that the parties support elected officeholders making the most important decisions and 10 means that “the people,” not politicians, should make the most important decisions. Second, we used “ANTIELITE\_SALIENCE,” which is a measure of the salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric for that particular party, with 0 meaning not at all salient and 10 meaning extremely salient. The average of these two measures is shown in the table below as “anti-elitism.” In all countries, we consider parties that score at or above a 7.0 as “populist.”

The [Global Party Survey](#), which was conducted from November to December 2019, asked 1,861 experts on political parties, public opinion, elections and legislative behavior to evaluate the ideological values, issue position and populist rhetoric of parties in countries on which they are an expert, classifying a total of 1,051 parties in 163 countries. We used “TYPE\_POPULISM,” which categorizes populist rhetoric by parties. We added only “strongly populist” parties using this measure. In Italy, experts were asked to categorize the Center-Right coalition instead of individual parties within the coalition. The coalition includes Lega and Forza Italia. For both parties, we have used the coalition rating of “strongly populist.”

The PopuList is an ongoing project to classify European political parties as populist, far right, far left and/or euroskeptic. [The project](#) specifically looks at parties that “obtained at least 2% of the vote in at least one national parliamentary election since 1998.” It is based on collaboration

between academic experts and journalists. The PopuList classifies parties that emphasize the will of the people against the elite as populist.<sup>2</sup>

Reform UK, formerly the Brexit Party, is only classified as populist on one measure but is still included for analysis in the report. It is not included in the PopuList and does not meet our anti-elite CHES threshold of 7.0, but is considered a right-wing populist party by the Global Party Survey and [other experts](#).

## Classifying parties as left, right or center

We can further classify these traditional and populist parties into three groups: left, right and center. When classifying parties based on ideology, we relied on the variable “LRGEN” in the CHES dataset, which asked experts to rate the positions of each party in terms of its overall ideological stance, with 0 meaning extreme left, 5 meaning center and 10 meaning extreme right. We define left parties as those that score below 4.5 and right parties as those above 5.5. Center parties have ratings between 4.5 and 5.5.

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<sup>2</sup> Mudde, Cas. 2004. “[The Populist Zeitgeist](#).” Government and Opposition.

## European populist party classifications

Party	Country	2019 Left-right	2019 Anti-elitism	2019 Global Party Survey	The PopuList
Populist parties on the left					
La France Insoumise	France	1.3	8.3	Strongly populist	Populist
Podemos	Spain	1.9	7.7	--	Populist
Syriza	Greece	2.3	7.0	--	Populist
Populist parties in the center					
Five Star Movement (M5S)	Italy	4.8	9.2	Strongly populist	Populist
Populist parties on the right					
Forza Italia	Italy	6.9	4.1	Strongly populist	Populist
Reform UK*	UK	8.2	5.3	Strongly populist	--
Sweden Democrats	Sweden	8.5	7.5	Strongly populist	Populist
Party for Freedom (PVV)	Netherlands	8.7	9.5	Strongly populist	Populist
Lega	Italy	8.8	7.6	Strongly populist	Populist
Greek Solution	Greece	9.0	7.6	--	Populist
Alternative for Germany (AfD)	Germany	9.2	9.0	Strongly populist	Populist
Forum for Democracy (FvD)	Netherlands	9.5	9.7	--	Populist
Flemish Interest	Belgium	9.6	8.5	Strongly populist	Populist
Vox	Spain	9.7	4.1	Strongly populist	Populist
National Rally	France	9.8	8.6	Strongly populist	Populist

\*Previously named the Brexit Party.

Note: Left-right indicates the average score CHES experts gave each party on an 11-point left-right scale. Scores for anti-elitism are an average of party position on direct vs. representative democracy and the salience of anti-elite rhetoric within the party.

Source: CHES (2019), Global Party Survey (2019), The PopuList (2019).

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## Methodology

### Pew Research Center's Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Gallup and Langer Research Associates. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are [available here](#). Results for the U.S. survey are based on data from the American Trends Panel.

### The American Trends Panel survey methodology

#### Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted Feb. 1 to Feb. 7, 2021. A total of 2,596 panelists responded out of 2,943 who were sampled, for a response rate of 88%. This does not include one panelist who was removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 4%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 2%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 2,596 respondents is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points.

#### Panel recruitment

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in

2019 and 2020, respectively. Across these three address-based recruitments, a total of 17,161 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 15,134 (88%) agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. Of the 25,076 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,553 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

### American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,184
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,243
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/cell RDD	3,905	1,628	621
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	5,903
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS/web	5,900	4,720	2,330
June 1 to July 19, 2020	ABS/web	1,865	1,636	1,272
<b>Total</b>		<b>36,879</b>	<b>25,076</b>	<b>13,553</b>

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.<sup>3</sup> The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

### Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was non-institutionalized persons ages 18 and older, living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii.

This study featured a stratified random sample from the ATP. The sample was allocated according to the following strata, in order: tablet households, U.S.-born Hispanics, foreign-born Hispanics, high school education or less, foreign-born Asians, not registered to vote, people ages 18 to 34, uses internet weekly or less, non-Hispanic Black adults, nonvolunteers and all other categories not already falling into any of the above.

### Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management

<sup>3</sup> AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."



team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data which was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

### Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

### Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Feb. 1 to Feb. 7, 2021. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on Feb. 1, 2021.

On Feb. 1 and Feb. 2, invitations were sent out in two separate launches: Soft Launch and Full Launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Feb. 1, 2021. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Feb. 2, 2021.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists that consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to two SMS reminders.

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#### Invitation and reminder dates

	Soft Launch	Full Launch
Initial invitation	Feb. 1, 2021	Feb. 2, 2021
First reminder	Feb. 4, 2021	Feb 4, 2021
Final reminder	Feb. 6, 2021	Feb. 6, 2021

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### Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center's researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for very high rates of

leaving questions blank, as well as always selecting the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, one ATP respondent was removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

## Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey

(and the probability of being invited to participate in the panel in cases where only a subsample of

respondents were invited). The base weights for panelists recruited in different years are scaled to be proportionate to the effective sample size for all active panelists in their cohort. To correct for nonresponse to the initial recruitment surveys and gradual panel attrition, the base weights for all active panelists are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table to create a full-panel weight.

For ATP waves in which only a subsample of panelists are invited to participate, a wave-specific base weight is created by adjusting the full-panel weights for subsampled panelists to account for any differential probabilities of selection for the particular panel wave. For waves in which all active panelists are invited to participate, the wave-specific base weight is identical to the full-panel weight.

In the final weighting step, the wave-specific base weights for panelists who completed the survey are again calibrated to match the population benchmarks specified above. These weights are trimmed (typically at about the 1st and 99th percentiles) to reduce the loss in precision stemming

## Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age x Gender	2019 American Community Survey
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metro/Non-metro	2019 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	2020 National Public Opinion Reference Survey
Frequency of internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. The 2016 CPS was used for voter registration targets for this wave in order to obtain voter registration numbers from a presidential election year. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population. The 2020 National Public Opinion Reference Survey featured 1,862 online completions and 2,247 mail survey completions.

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from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and test of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Weighted %</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	2,596		2.7 percentage points
Half sample	At least 1,287		3.7 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	1,106	44	3.9 percentage points
Half sample	At least 549		5.6 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	1,410	49	3.7 percentage points
Half sample	At least 688		5.2 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

**Dispositions and response rates**

Final dispositions	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	2,596
Logged onto survey; broke off	2.12	41
Logged onto survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	23
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	282
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality		1
Screened out		N/A
Total panelists in the survey		2,943
Completed interviews	I	2,596
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	346
Non-contact	NC	1
Other	O	0
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		2,943
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		88%

Cumulative response rate	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	12%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	72%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 82	57%
Response rate to Wave 82 survey	88%
Cumulative response rate	4%

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## Topline questionnaire

**Pew Research Center**  
**Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey**  
**October 21, 2021 Release**

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see Methodology section and our [international survey methods database](#).
- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- The U.S. survey was conducted on Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel. Many questions have been asked in previous surveys on the phone. Phone trends for comparison are provided in separate tables throughout the topline. The extent of the mode differences varies across questions; while there are negligible differences on some questions, others have more pronounced differences. Caution should be taken when evaluating online and phone estimates.
- Since 2020, the Italy survey has been conducted by telephone; surveys were conducted face-to-face in 2002 and 2007-2019.
- In 2021, the Greece survey was conducted by telephone; all prior surveys in Greece were conducted face-to-face.
- Not all questions included in the Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.