

The background of the page features a stylized American flag. The top right corner shows a blue field with white stars, and the bottom left corner shows a red and white striped field. The main text is centered on a white background.

# WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY

UCI-OC POLL EXPLAINS 2024 ELECTION

December 6, 2024

The UCI-OC Poll, produced by the School of Social Ecology at the University of California, Irvine, surveyed Orange County residents following the 2024 general election. The results help explain the election's outcomes and further showcase Orange County as a bellwether for larger political dynamics afoot across the country.

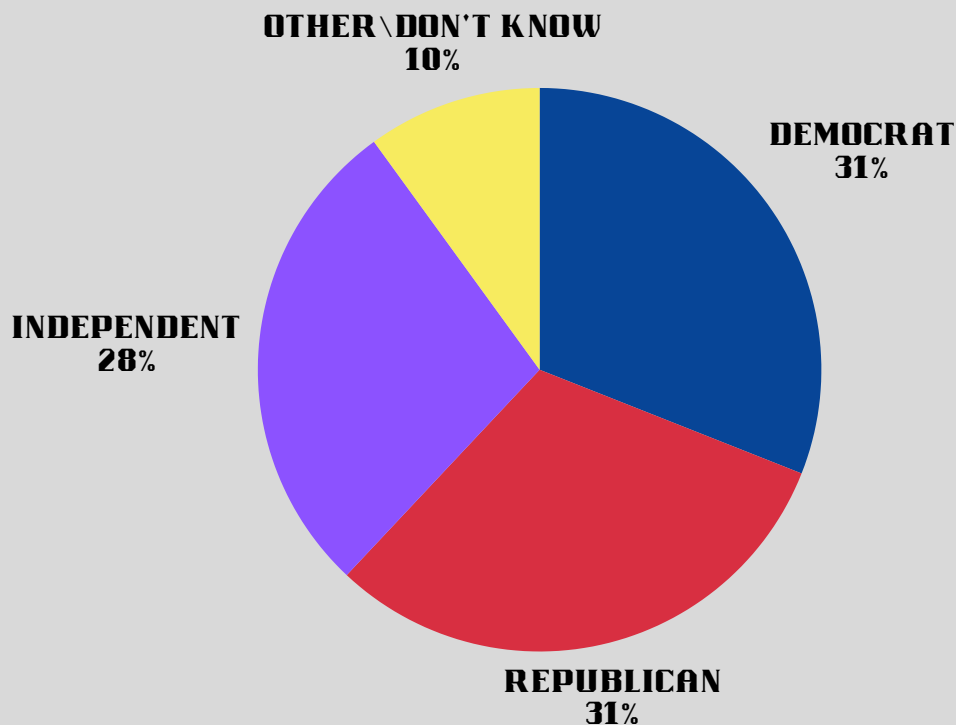
**UC Irvine** School of Social Ecology

# Orange County still a Purple County

Once again, Orange County split its vote in the 2024 general election. Kamala Harris narrowly beat Donald Trump for President among OC voters, while Steve Garvey barely bested Adam Schiff for Senate. Democrat Dave Min won the 47th congressional district by a smaller margin than did Katie Porter the last two election cycles, and while Derek Tran flipped the 45th congressional district for Democrats, Michelle Steele beat him in Orange County.

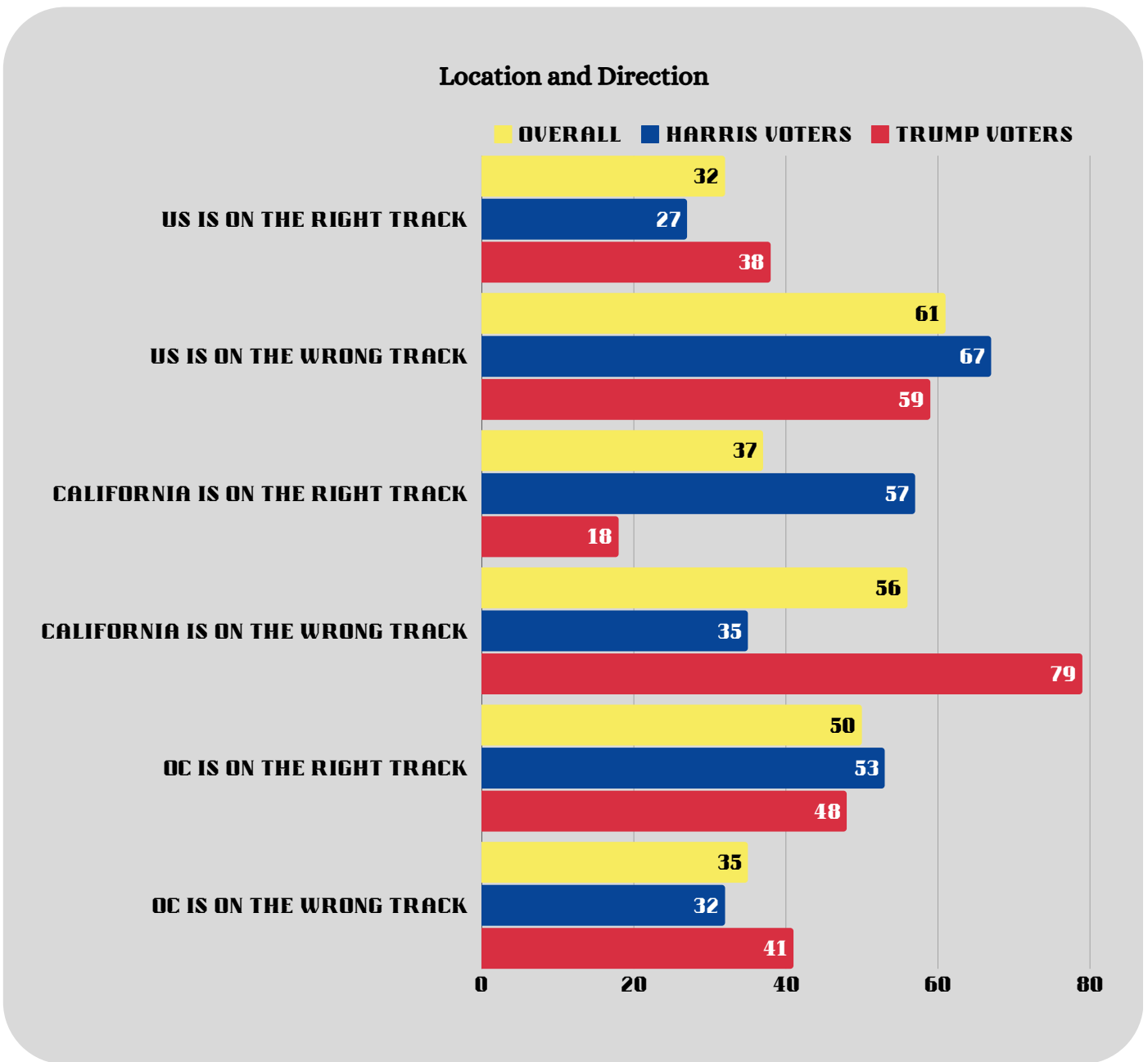
These narrow and split results seem likely to be the foreseeable future for Orange County, which remains one of just three truly “purple” counties among the nation’s 25 most populous counties. In the UCI-OC Poll, residents were evenly split between Democrats (31%) and Republicans (31%), with self-described independents (those not affiliating with a major party) comprising 28% of OC voters in the 2024 election.

**Political Breakdown of OC Residents**



## Voters Believe that the U.S. and California are on the Wrong Track but are more Confident about Orange County. However, there are Strong Partisan Differences

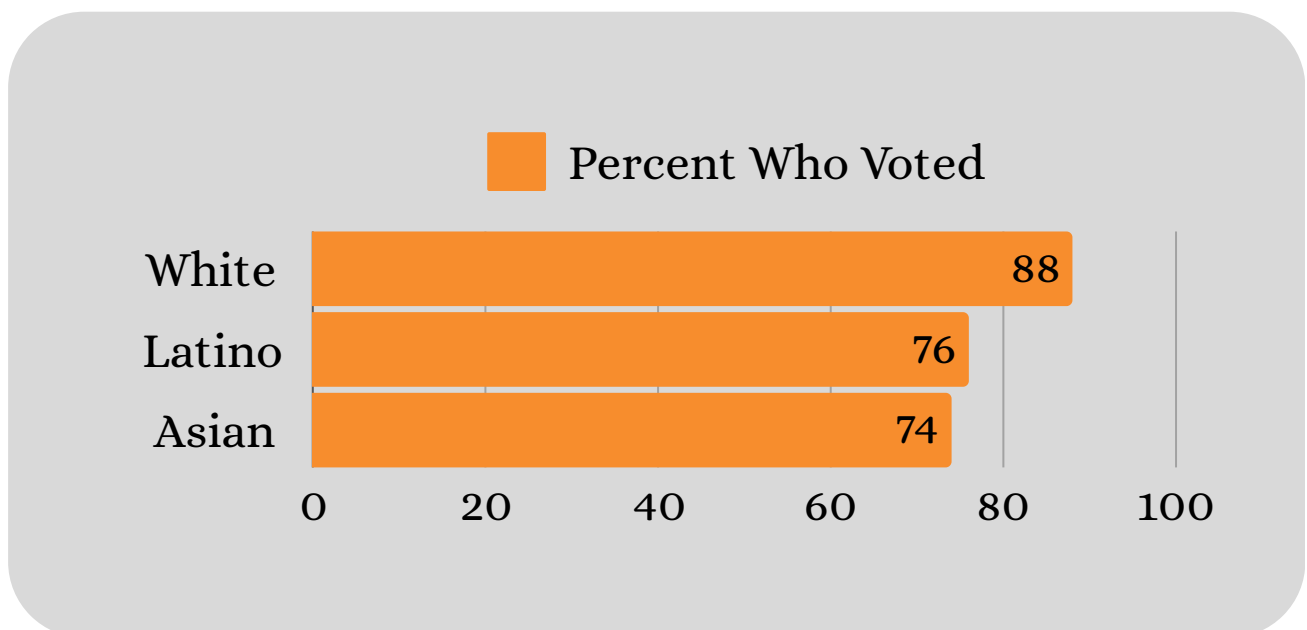
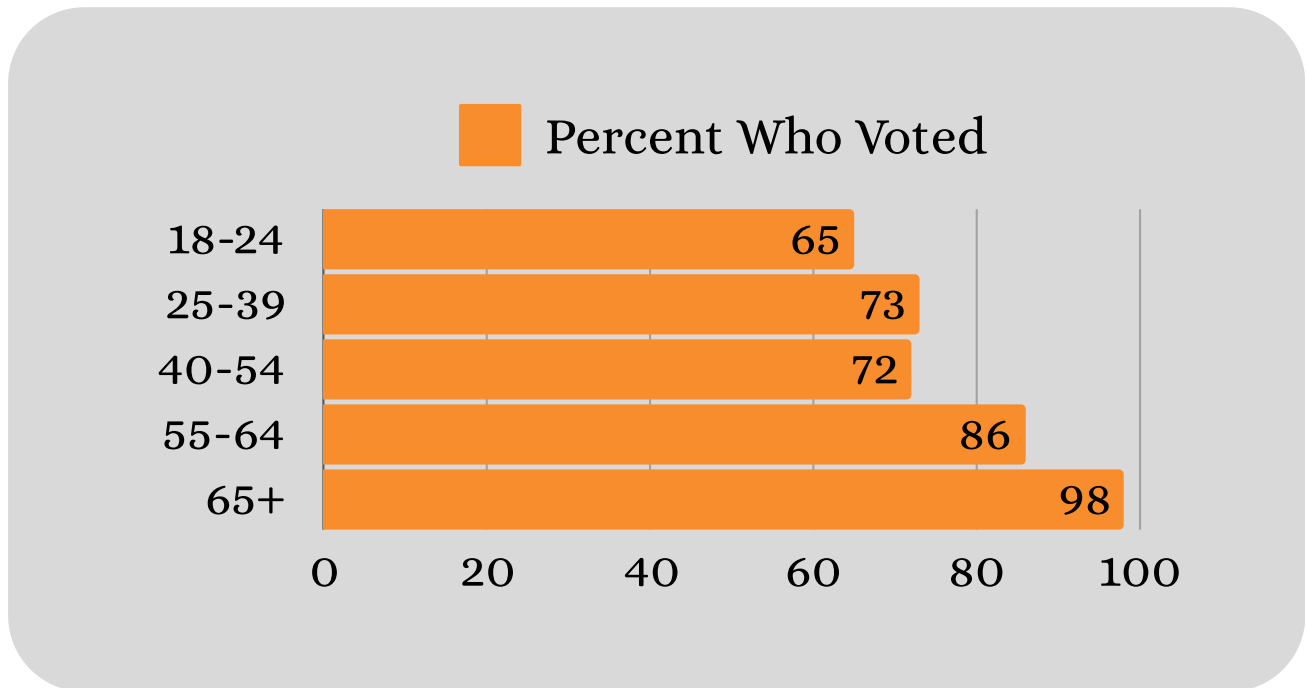
Orange County voters believe the U.S. is on the wrong track, with Harris voters more likely to say this than Trump supporters. Overall, OC voters also believe California is on the wrong track, but these figures reflect substantial differences between Harris and Trump voters, the latter of whom are unified in dissatisfaction with the Golden State. By contrast, pluralities, if not majorities, of both voter groups believe that Orange County is on the right track. Women are more pessimistic than men on the status of all three locales.

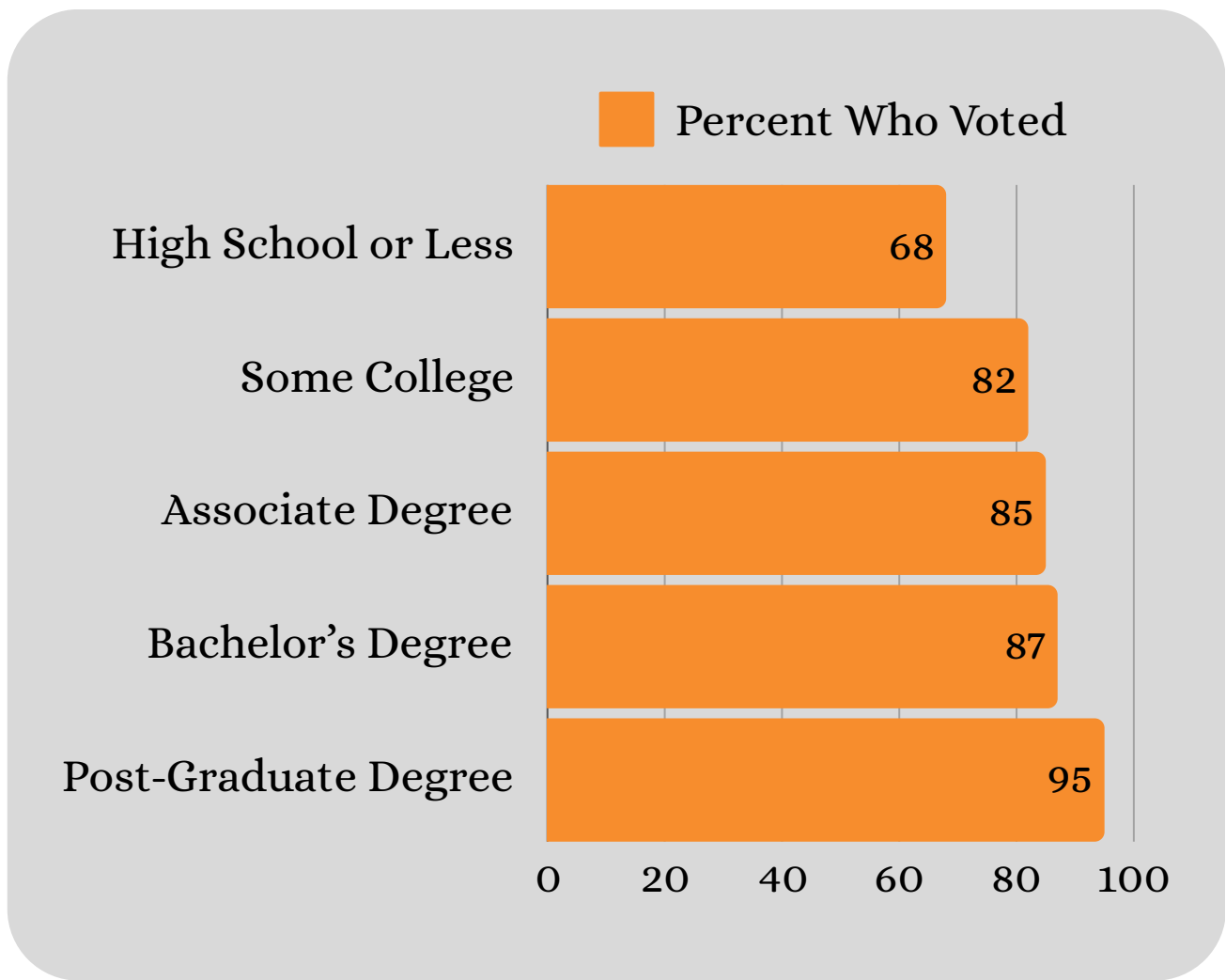


## Voter Turnout Was Low

Turnout declined by over 10 percentage points from 2020 to 2024, going from 87% of registered voters to 76%. Participation rates also varied by age, race, and education. The most likely demographic to have voted in 2024 were white college-educated senior citizens.

High School graduates were the least likely to vote, with voter participation rising with educational attainment.



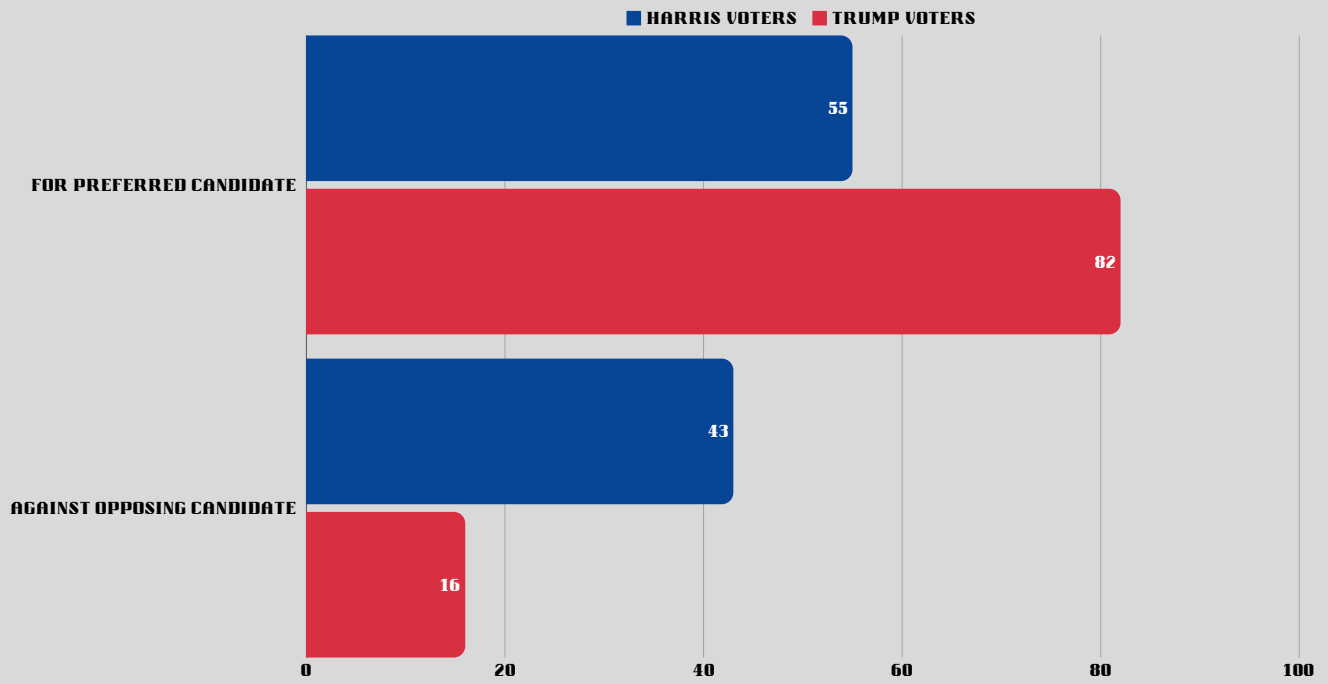


### **The Election was about Trump. The Campaign was about Harris**

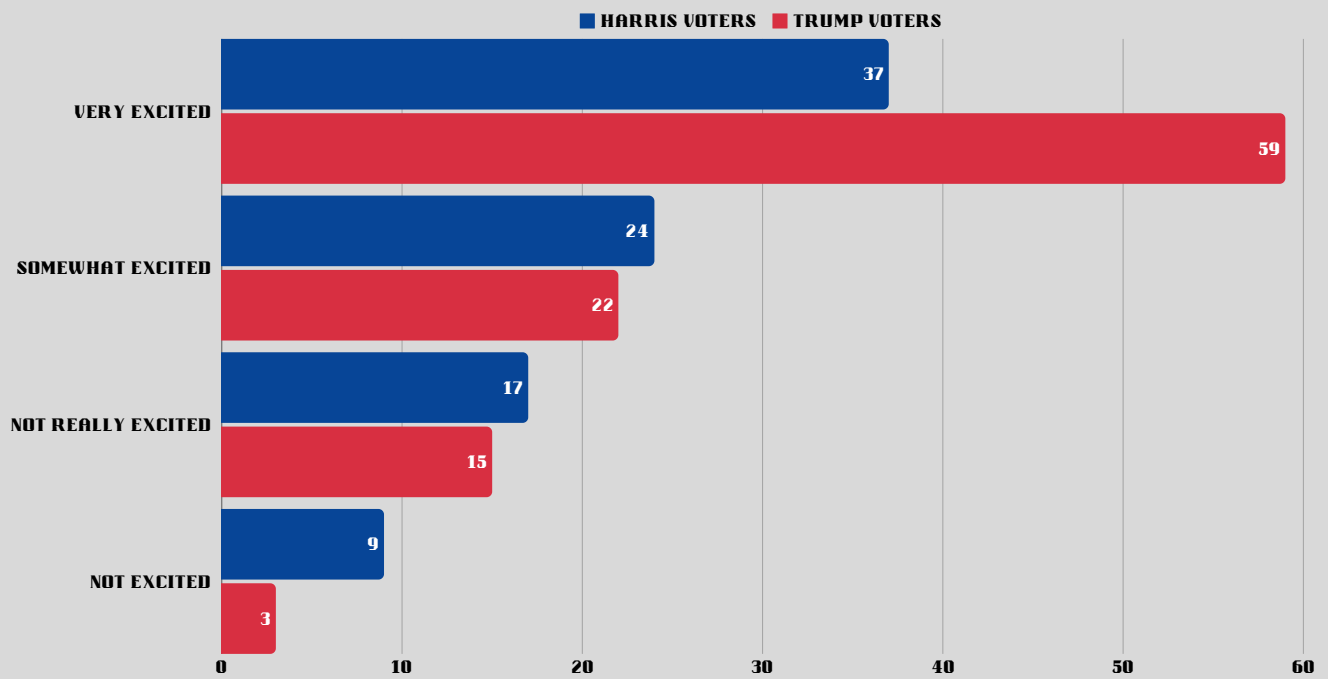
Donald Trump's voters were more excited to cast their vote for him than Harris' supporters were to vote for her. His supporters voted primarily to advance his candidacy as opposed to countering Harris. Harris' voters, by contrast, were motivated by their disagreement with Trump as well as their support for Harris. Both candidates were viewed net unfavorably by the public.

Trump started the general election campaign with a larger share of his vote baked in than did Harris. Harris picked up a greater share of her support in September and early October than did Trump, as she received a bounce with the launch of her candidacy when President Biden made the decision not to seek reelection. However, as the campaign progressed, Harris was unable to build on the initial bounce. As the story moved from her being a new alternative to Biden to her being tied to Biden, Trump garnered a greater share of his support than she did in the closing weeks.

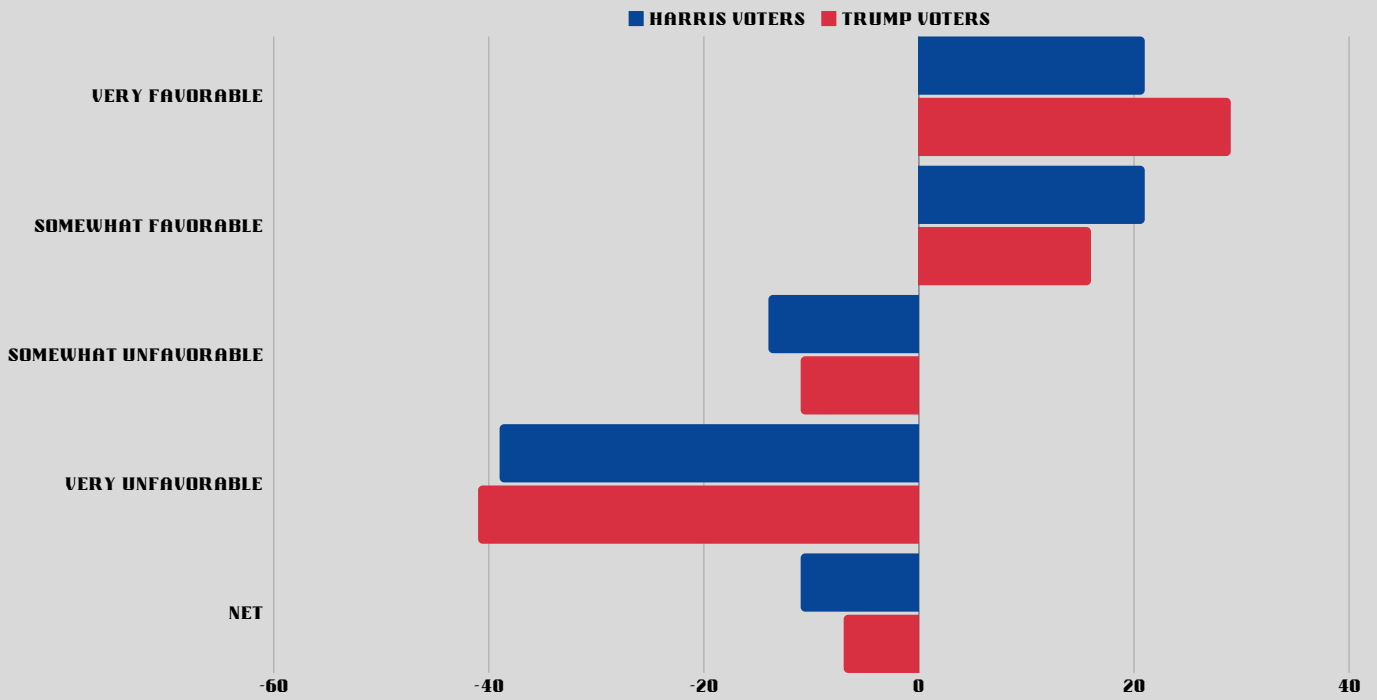
### Reason for Voting



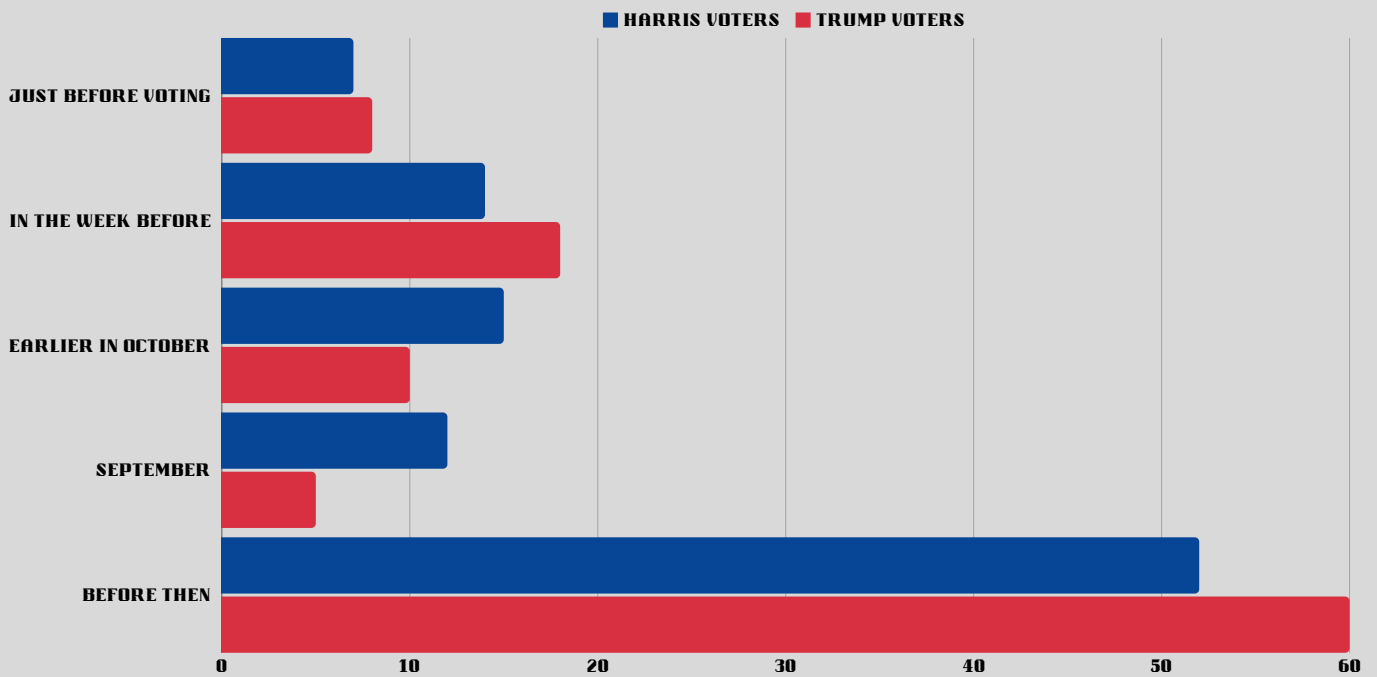
### Excitement Level to Vote for President



### Public Perception of Candidate



### When Decided to Vote for Presidential Candidate

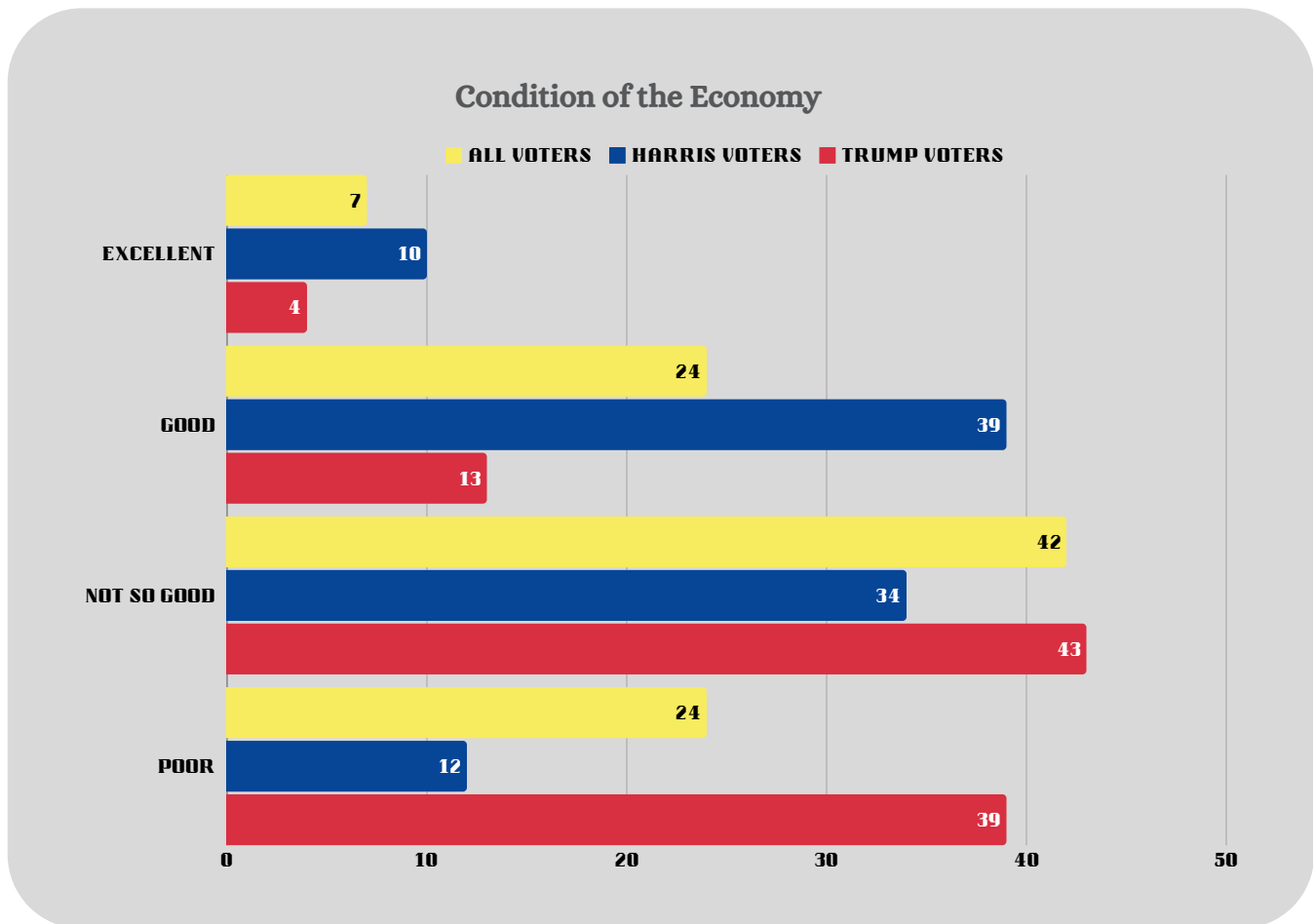


## Biden Cast a Large Shadow on the Campaign

Orange County residents do not approve of Joe Biden's performance as President. More than six in 10 registered voters disapprove, and 40% strongly disapprove of Biden's record. Donald Trump received 80% of his support from those voters who strongly disapprove of Biden's performance. Absent fully separating herself from Biden, Harris had a baked-in disadvantage that was going to make winning nationwide difficult.

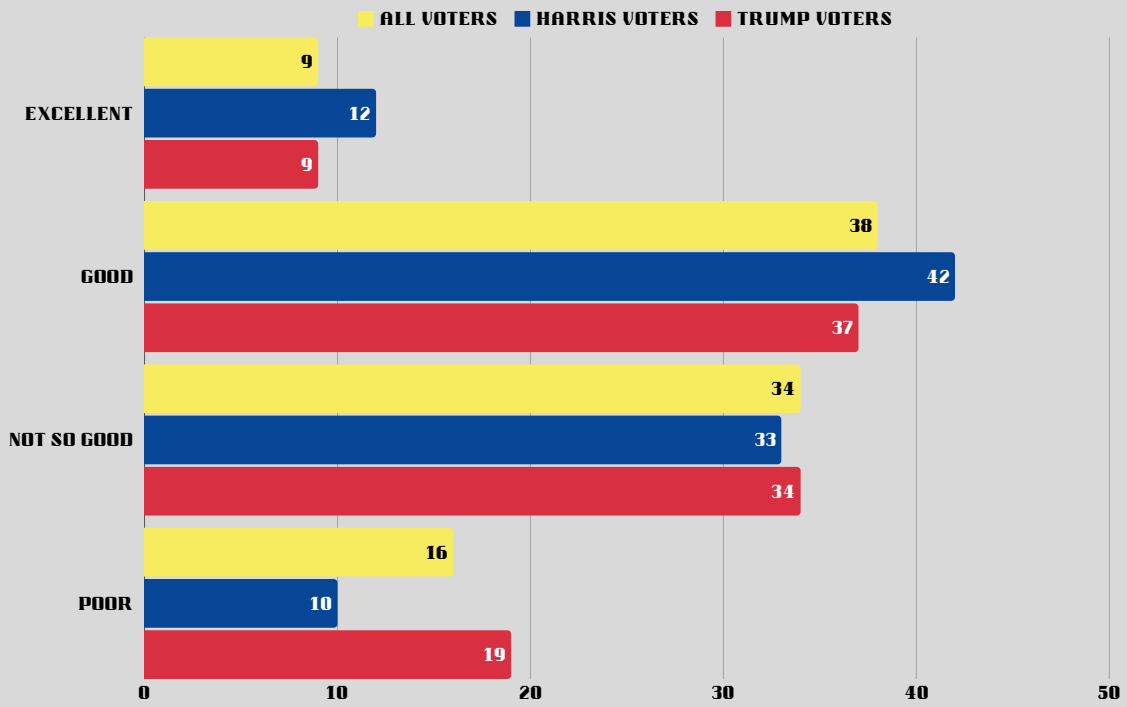
## It was the Pocketbook, but Even More So, Comparisons to 2020

Large majorities of OC voters believe the nation's economy is not doing well. Only 20% of voters say their own economic situation is better today than it was four years ago, and half of all voters believe they are not doing well economically. Donald Trump benefitted substantially from voters pessimistic about the nation's economy or their own situation. In fact, among voters who believe they are doing worse today, Trump received two times the level of his support compared to that of Harris.

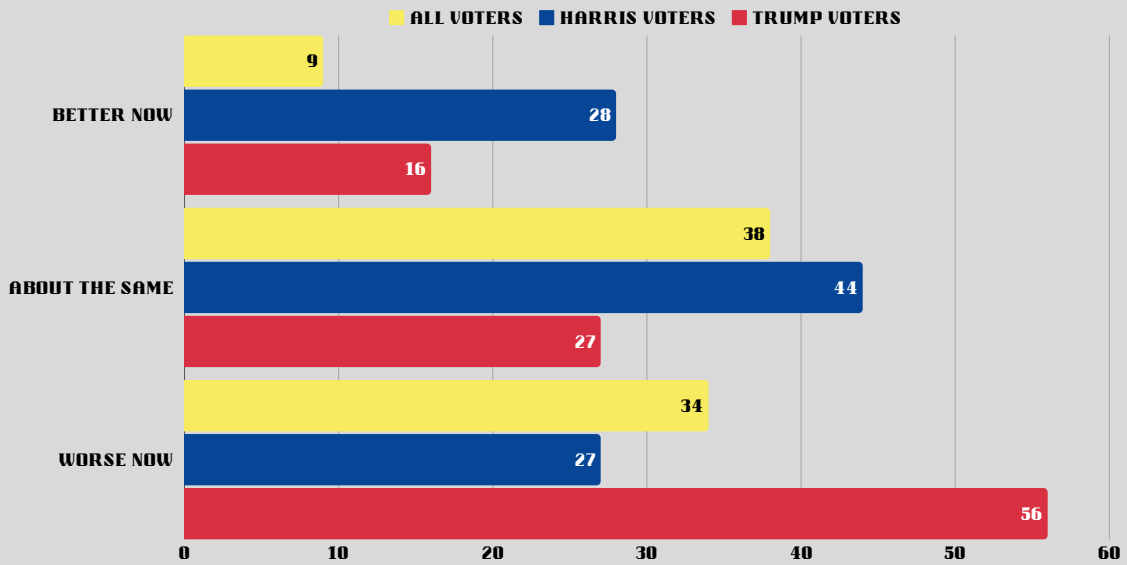




### Personal Economic Situation



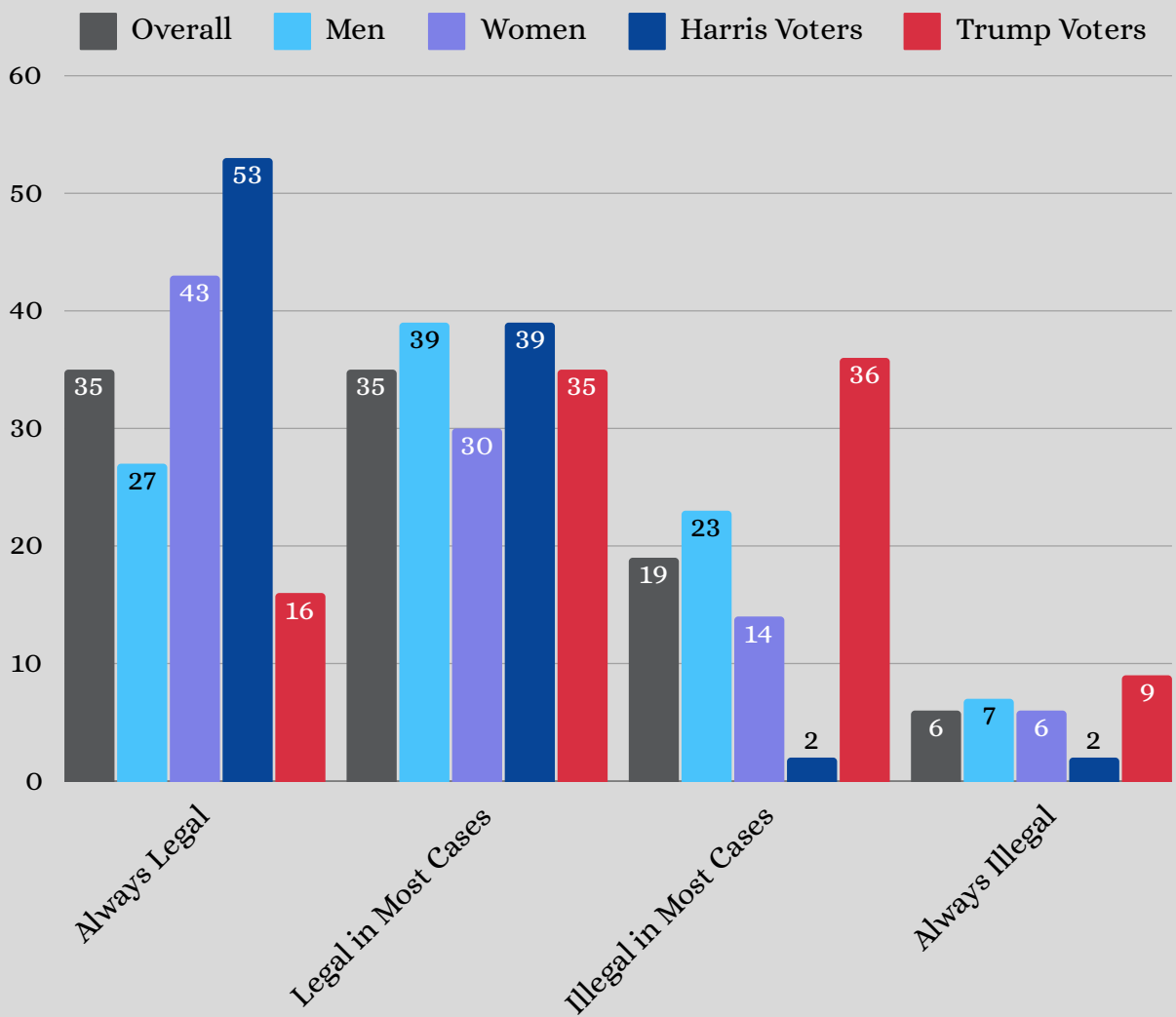
### Personal Economics Compared to Four Years Ago

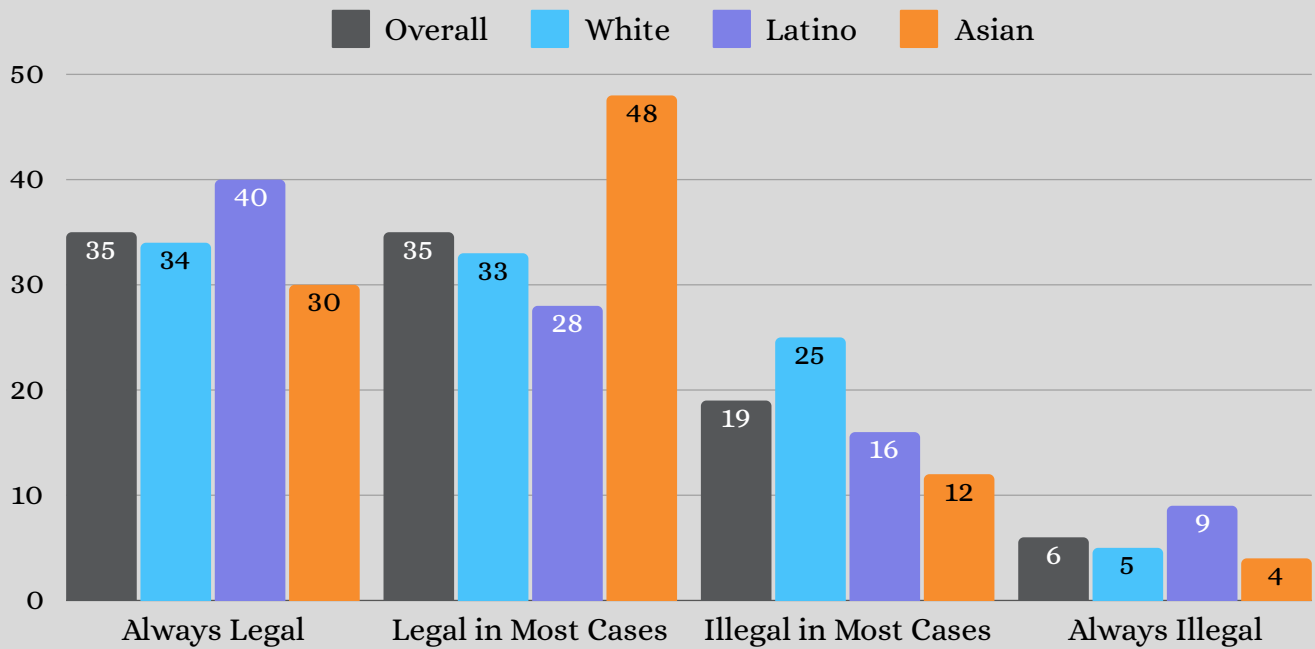


## Abortion was not the Silver Bullet for Democrats

Seven in 10 OC voters are pro-choice, believing abortion should be legal in all or most cases. Just 6% believe it should be illegal in all cases. Women are 10 points more likely than men to be pro-choice and are significantly more likely than men to believe that abortion should be legal in all cases. However, more than 60% of men are pro-choice. Asian voters are the most pro-choice, followed by Latino and White voters.

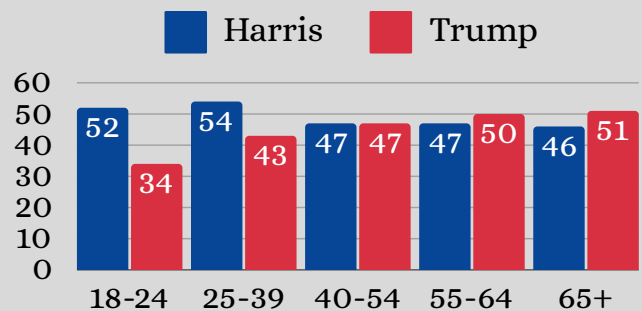
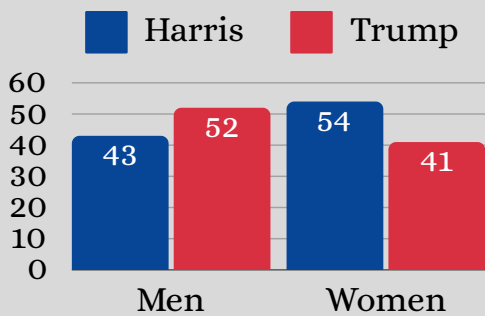
Harris staked much of her campaign on the issue of abortion, and to that end virtually all her support in Orange County came from pro-choice voters. However, half of Trump support came from voters who believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases. Just 9% of his voters believe abortion should be outlawed completely.





### Gender and Age Divides Continue

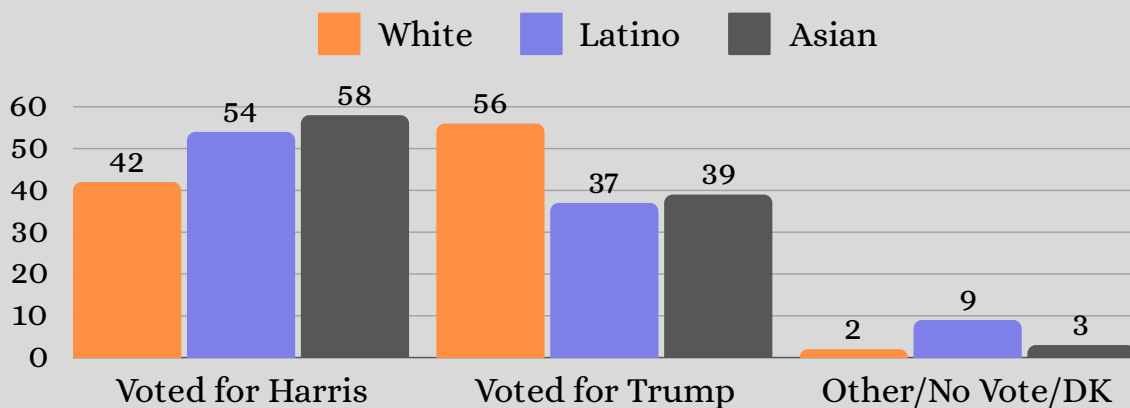
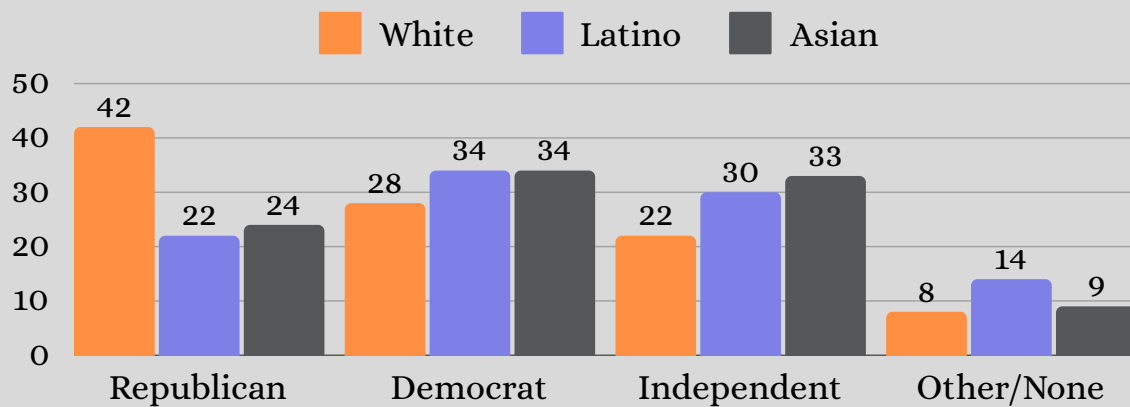
As in past elections, women were much more likely to vote for the Democratic presidential candidate, while men favored the Republican candidate. So, too, younger voters preferred the Democrat, whereas older voters supported the Republican. The tipping point between Harris and Trump was voters aged 40-54, who were evenly divided between the two candidates.



## Asian Voters Leaning Left, Latinos Move toward Center, White Voters Go Right

A large plurality of white OC residents identifies as Republican, whereas Latino and Asian residents split somewhat evenly as Democrats or Independents. These are continuing developments from the primary election, as Asians leaned left and Latinos moved more to the center. White voters in the general election were more likely to identify as Republican than from the primary race.

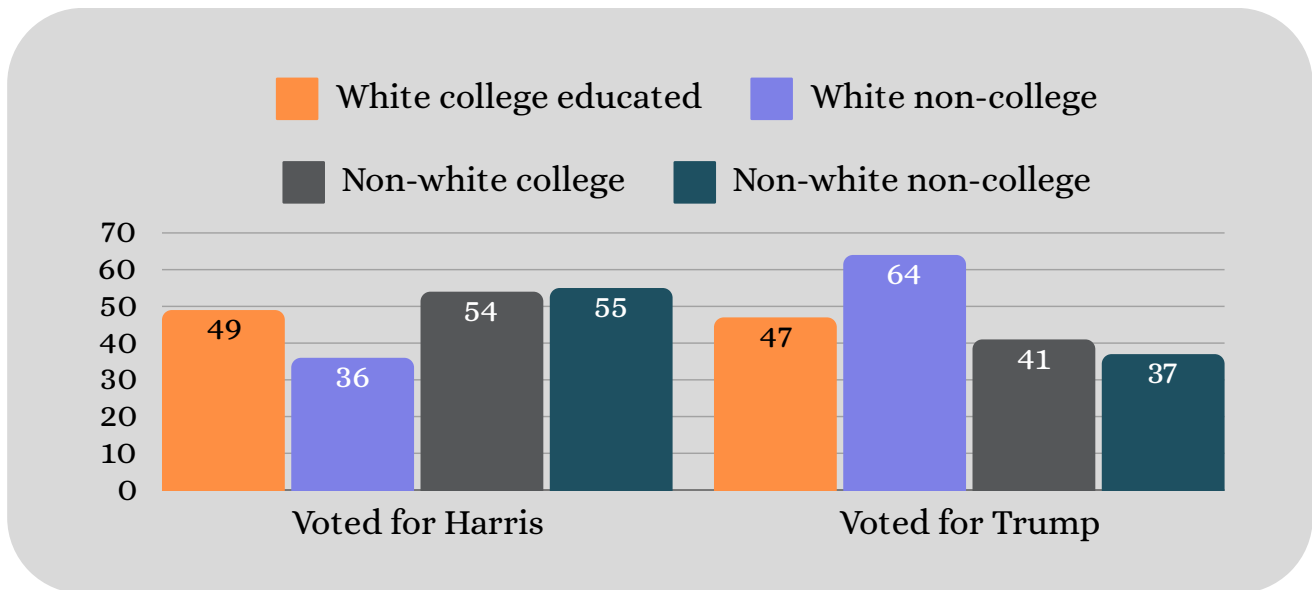
Whites were also the most likely to vote for Trump, giving him 56% of their support. Asian voters were Harris' most likely supporters. Although Latino voters were the least likely to support Trump, they only gave Harris 54% of their votes. Upwards of 9% of Latinos said they did not vote for President, chose a different candidate than Harris or Trump, or could not recall for whom they voted. This is in comparison to 3% of Asian voters and 2% of White voters who said the same.



## The Education Gap Continues, Mainly Among White Voters

The UCI-OC Poll immediately following the primary election this year found a significant schism among OC residents on education: the college educated were more likely than the non-college educated to express support for Biden over Trump. This was true for both white and non-white residents.

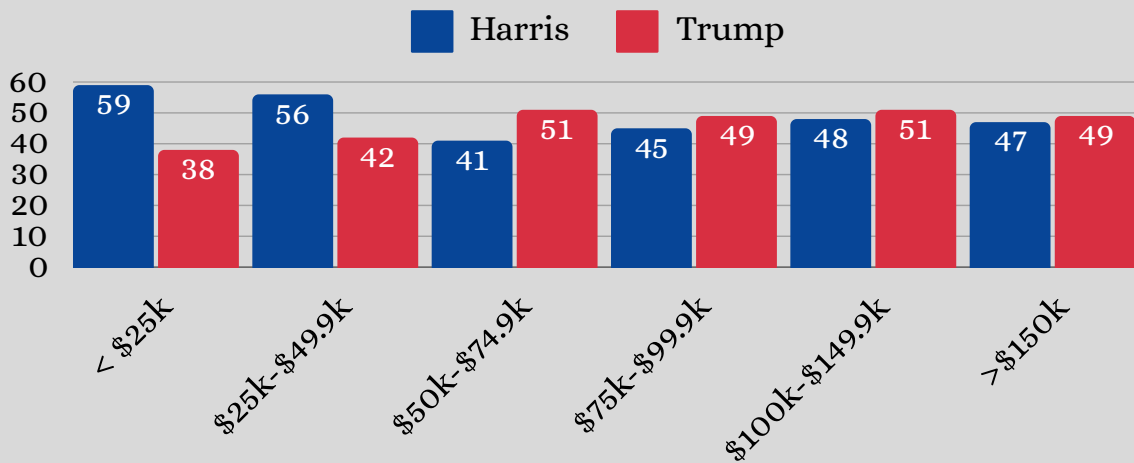
The general election saw another education gap, but it is a more complex story in Orange County. Comparing the college educated to the non-college educated, the only meaningful difference is among white voters. Nearly two-thirds of white non-college educated voters supported Trump, whereas a bare plurality of white college educated voters chose Harris. By contrast, non-white voters did not vary significantly on college-education.



## Harris Won the Poorest OC Residents. Trump Took the Middle Class. The Two Split Residents Earning Over \$100,000

Harris' best showing was among OC residents earning less than \$50,000/year, where she won by margins of 21% (annual incomes lower than \$25,000) and 14% (those earning \$25,000-\$49,999/year).

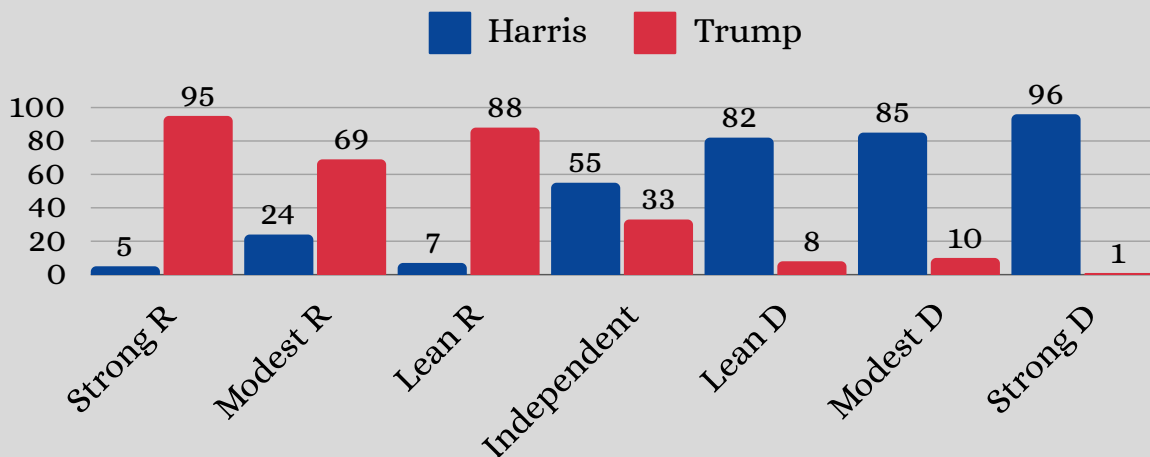
Trump did best among the lower middle class, those earning \$50,000-\$74,999/year, where he boasted a winning margin of 10%. He also enjoyed a 4% margin among residents earning between \$75,000 and \$99,999/year. That gap shrank to 3% and then 2% among wealthier voters.



**Harris and Trump Held Onto Their Strongest and Weakest Partisans. Harris also Won Independents. However, Modestly Attached Republicans were in Play.**

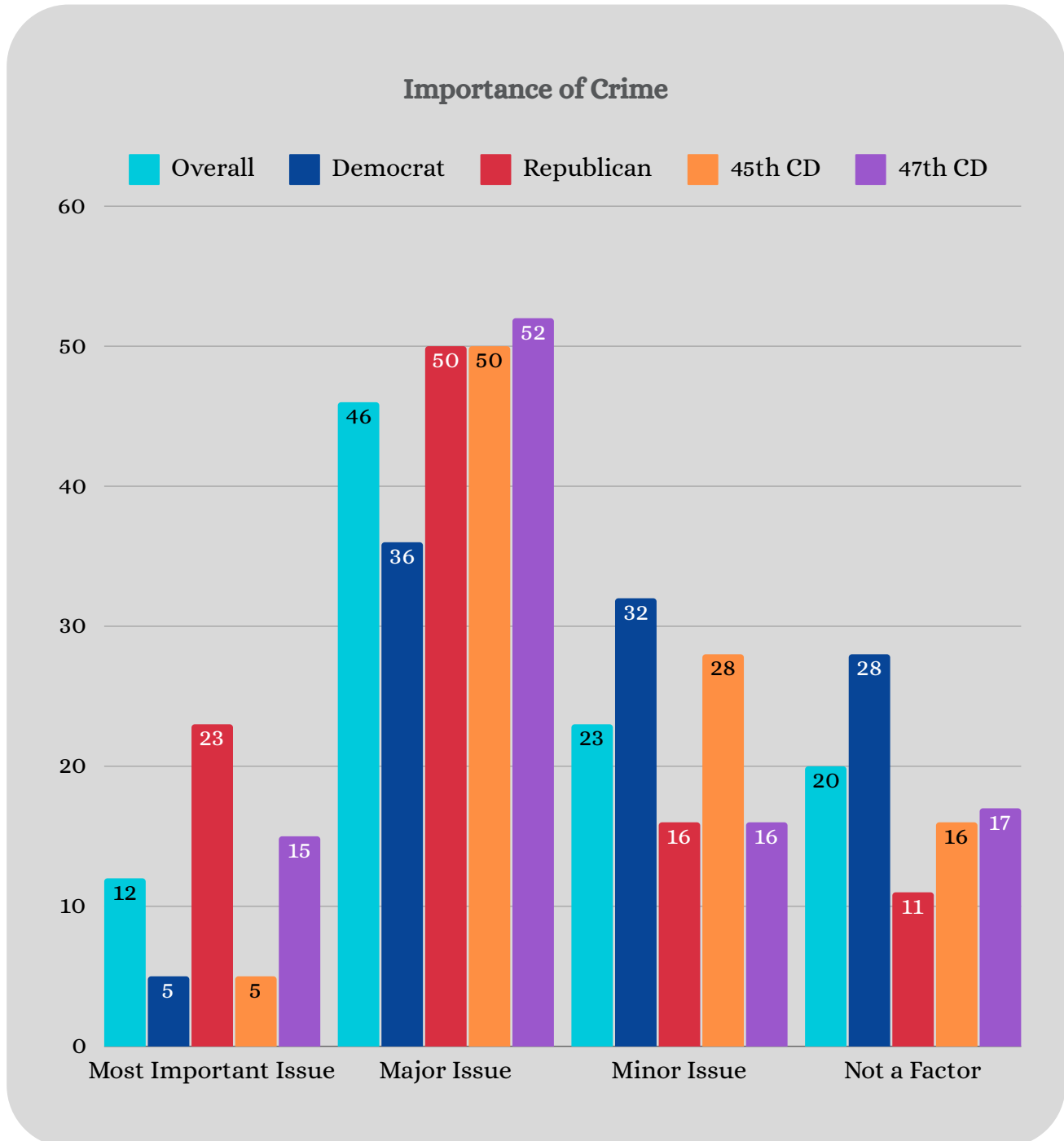
Just as seen after the primary election, strongly attached Republicans and Democrats voted for their party’s candidate. Ironically, the same can be said for voters who aren’t attached to a party but lean Republican or Democrat. Independents who lean Republican voted for Trump, and those who lean Democratic chose Harris. True Independents also chose Harris.

Trump’s greatest problem in Orange County was losing one in four modestly attached Republicans. These are self-described Republicans, not Independents, but ones who say they are “not a very strong” Republican. They constituted about 11% of the electorate.



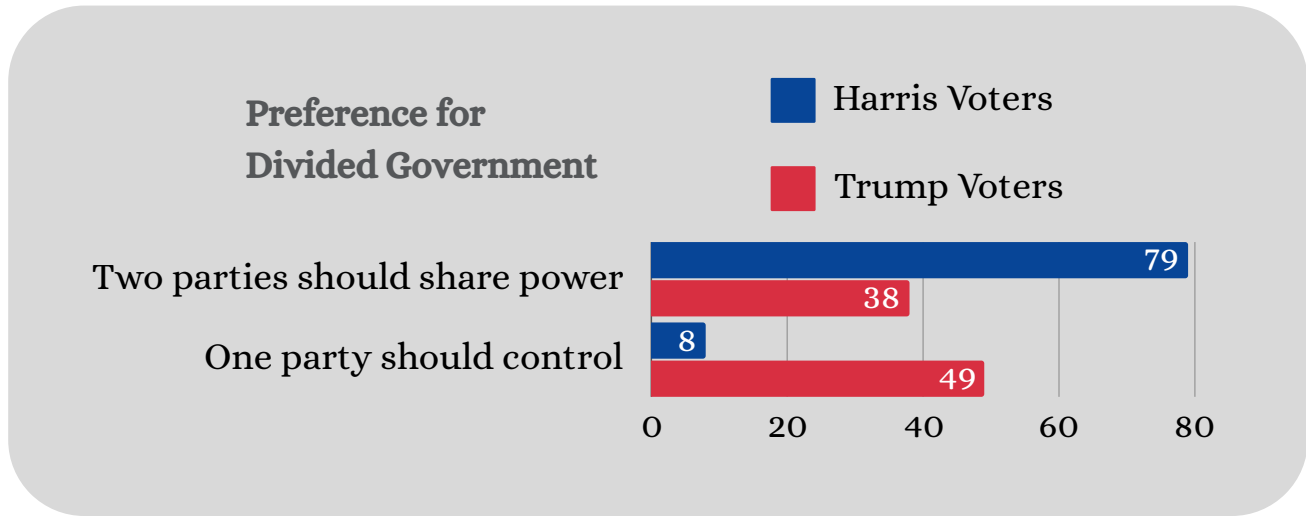
## Crime was a Significant, but Not the Most Important, Issue in Voting for Congress

Nearly six in ten OC voters said crime was a major, if not the most important, issue in their vote for Congress. However, just 12% of voters called it the most important factor. There were substantial partisan differences, with nearly five times as many Republicans than Democrats calling crime the most important issue. In the most competitive OC congressional races, crime was slightly more elevated an issue, but few voters called it the most important issue in their choice for Congress.



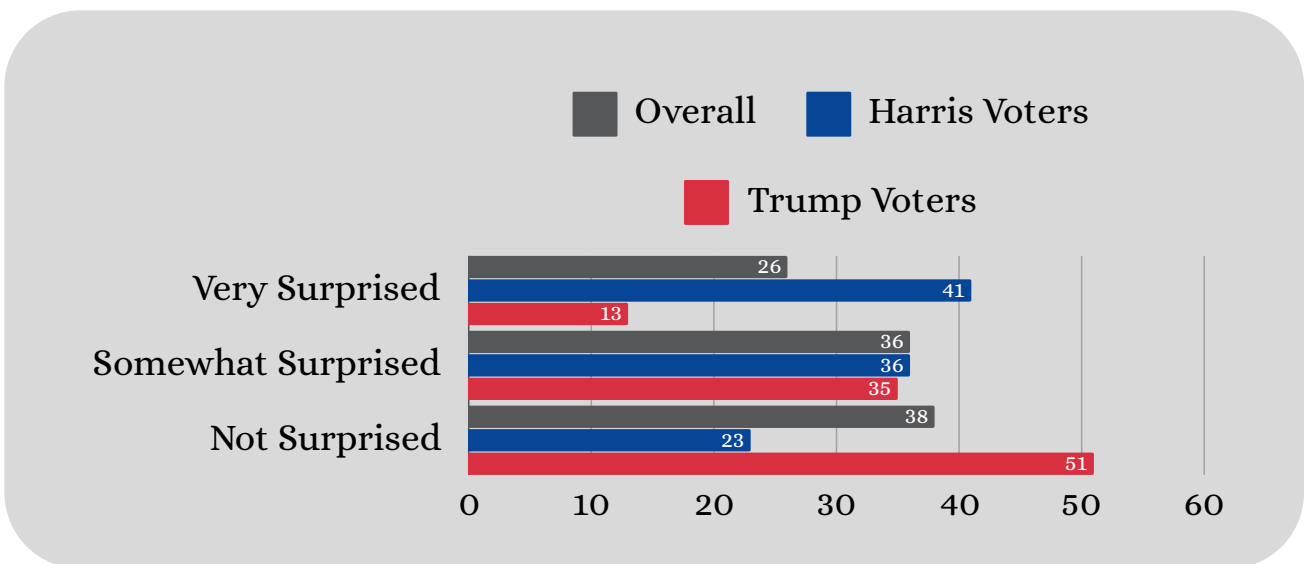
## Checks and Balances is a Democratic Thing

Voters for Harris and Trump disagreed significantly about the desirability of power sharing in Washington, D.C. Almost four in five Harris voters favored divided government, saying it is better to have different parties controlling Congress and the White House to provide checks and balances. By contrast, Trump voters were split, with nearly half believing it is better to have one party in control, thereby “allowing more to get done.”



## Voters Generally Expected Harris to Win

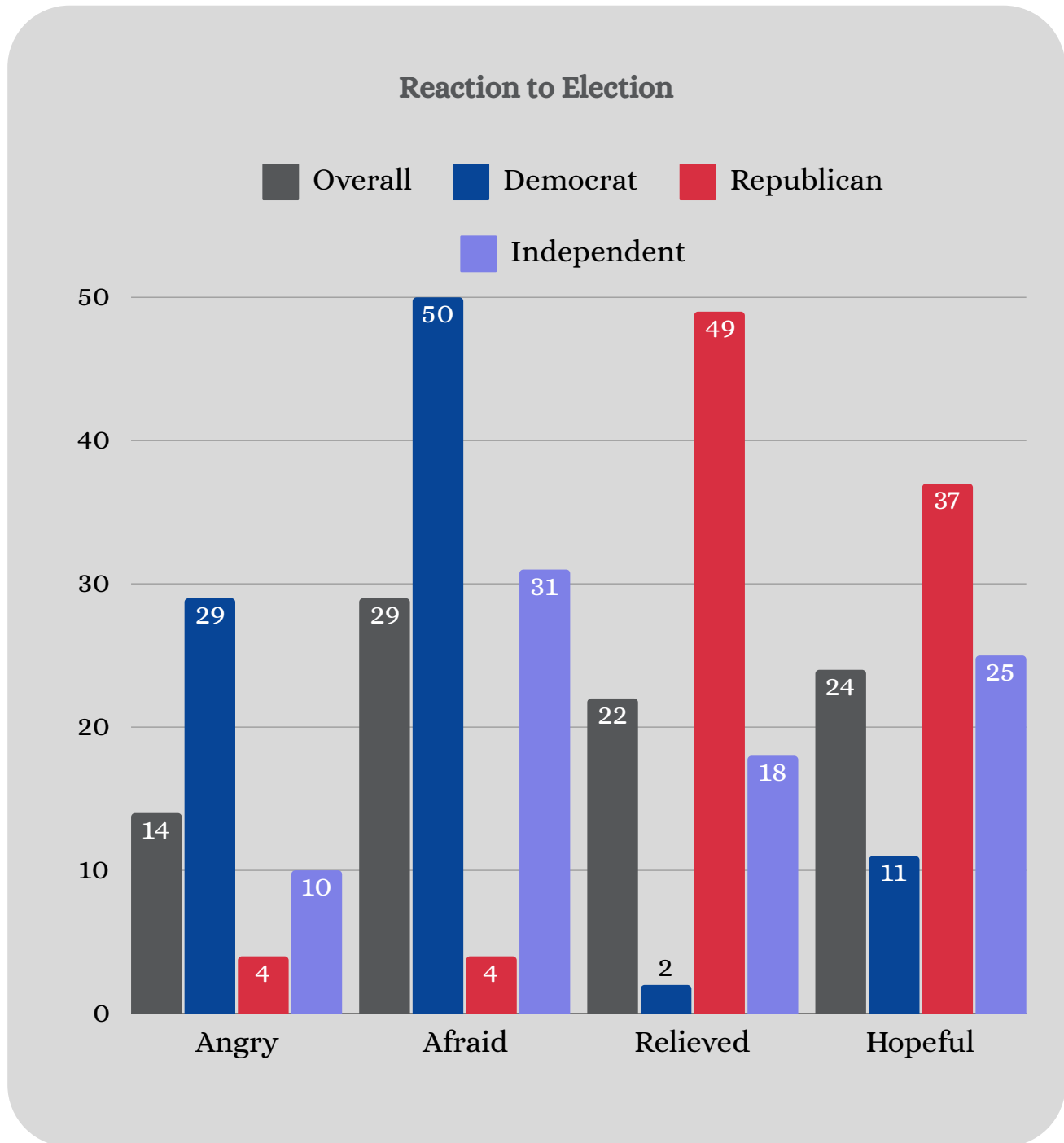
Almost two-thirds of OC voters were surprised by the election results, with 4 in 10 Harris voters being very surprised. By contrast, half of Trump voters were not surprised by the results.





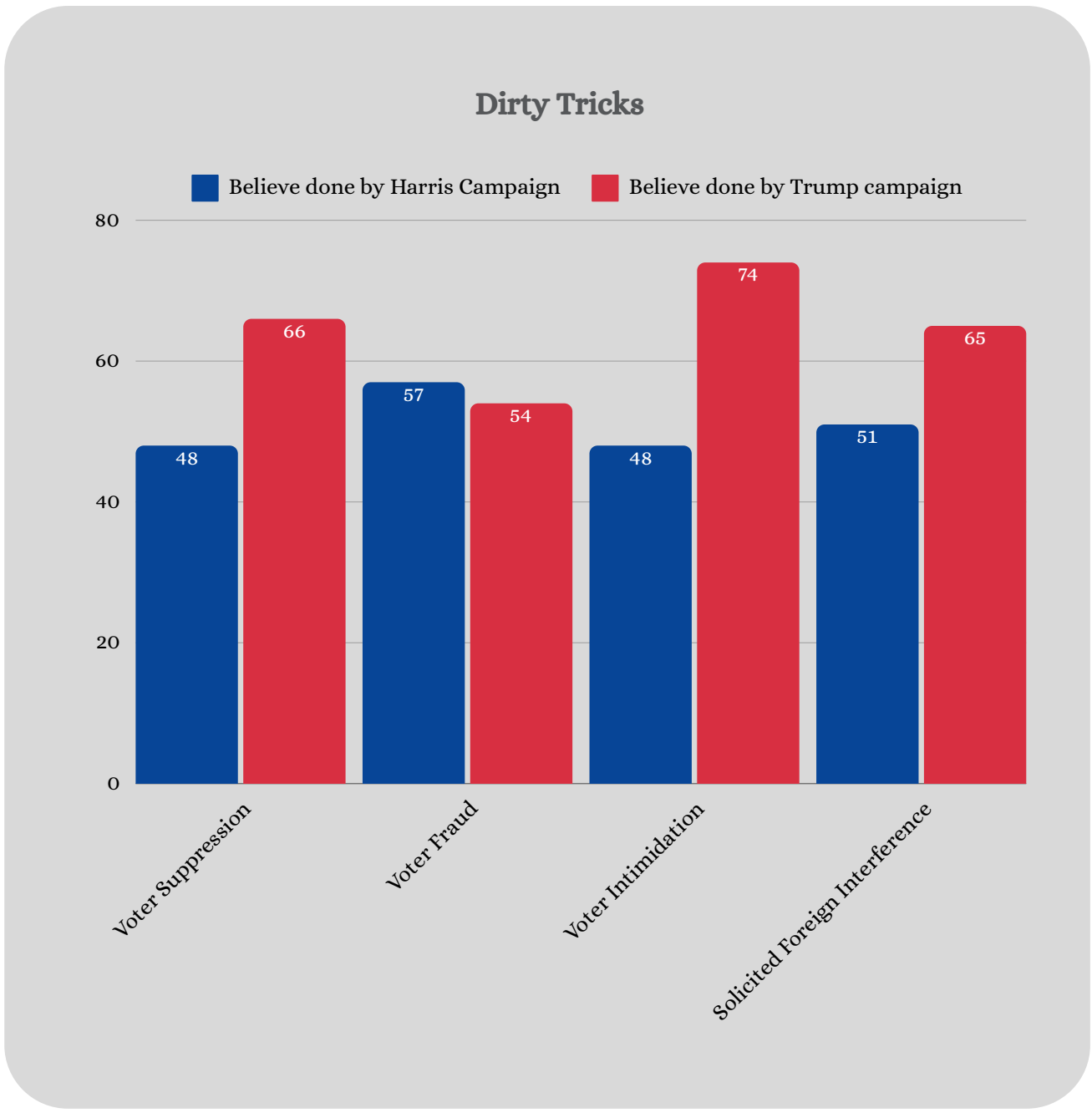
## Republicans are Hopeful and Relieved from the Election. Democrats and Independents are Afraid.

A small percentage of OC residents is angry from the election, but residents are more afraid than relieved or hopeful from the results. Republicans are 24 times more likely than Democrats and almost 2.7 times more likely than Independents to be relieved from the election. Republicans are also 3 times more likely than Democrats and 30% more likely than Independents to be hopeful from the results.



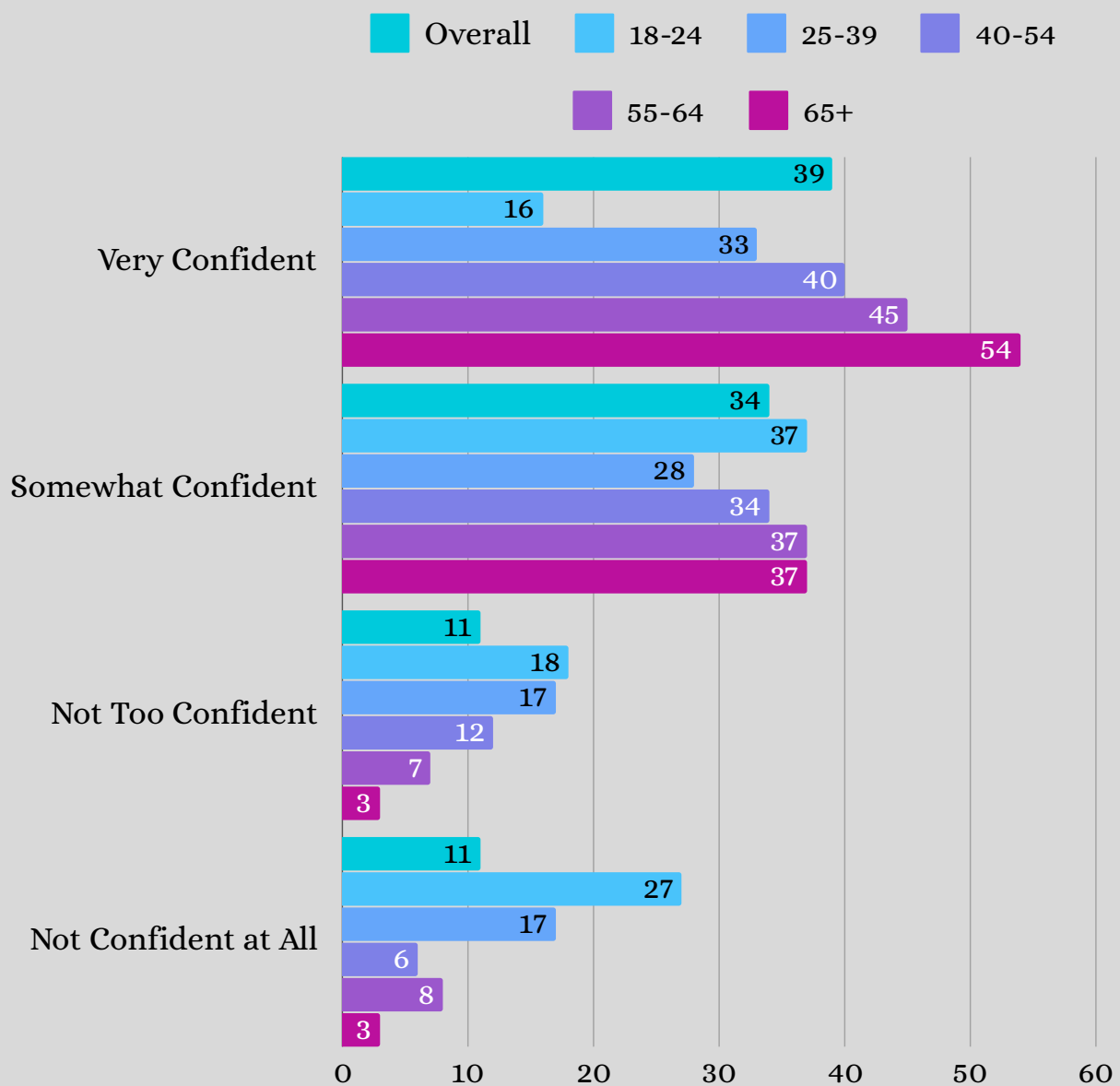
## Residents Criticize the Behavior of Both Campaigns, but Large Majorities Say the Trump Campaign Engaged in Dirty Tricks

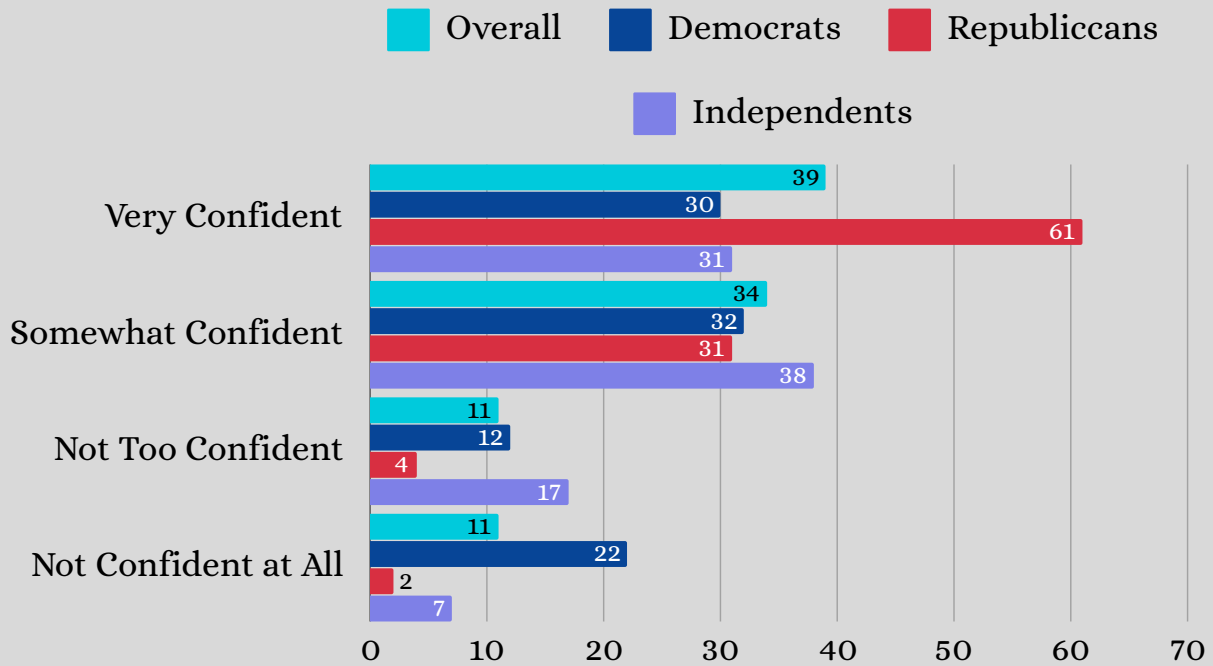
Residents view the behavior of both presidential campaigns negatively, with about half of residents believing the Harris campaign engaged in various dirty tricks. However, those numbers pale against the negative view of the Trump campaign's behavior. Almost three-quarters of residents believe the Trump campaign intimidated voters, and two-thirds think the campaign sought to suppress voter turnout and solicited foreign interference. Even majorities of self-described Republicans said this about the Trump campaign.



## Distrust of the Electoral System Varies Considerably

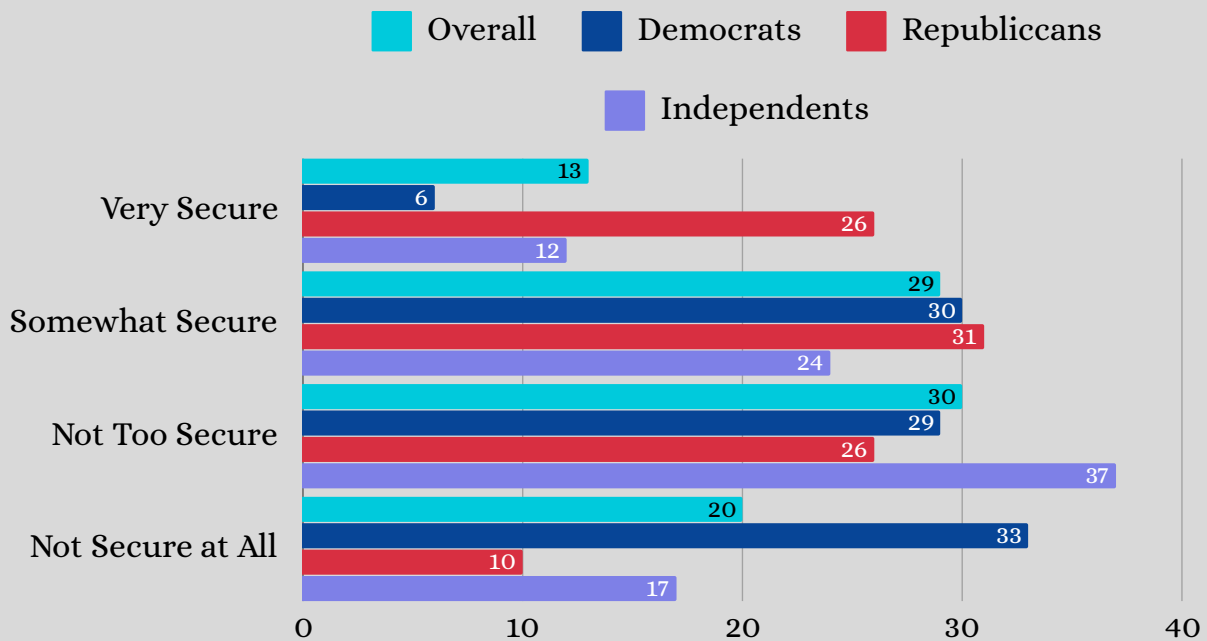
Nearly three-quarters of OC voters believe the elections were conducted at least somewhat fairly and accurately, but there was considerable variation among voter groups. Distrust was greatest among the youngest voters, those aged 18-24, 45% of whom were doubtful. By contrast, just 6% of voters 65 and older were distrustful of the election's administration. In a sharp contrast to 2020, just 6 percent of Republicans doubted the election's integrity compared to 34% of Democrats and 24% of Independents.





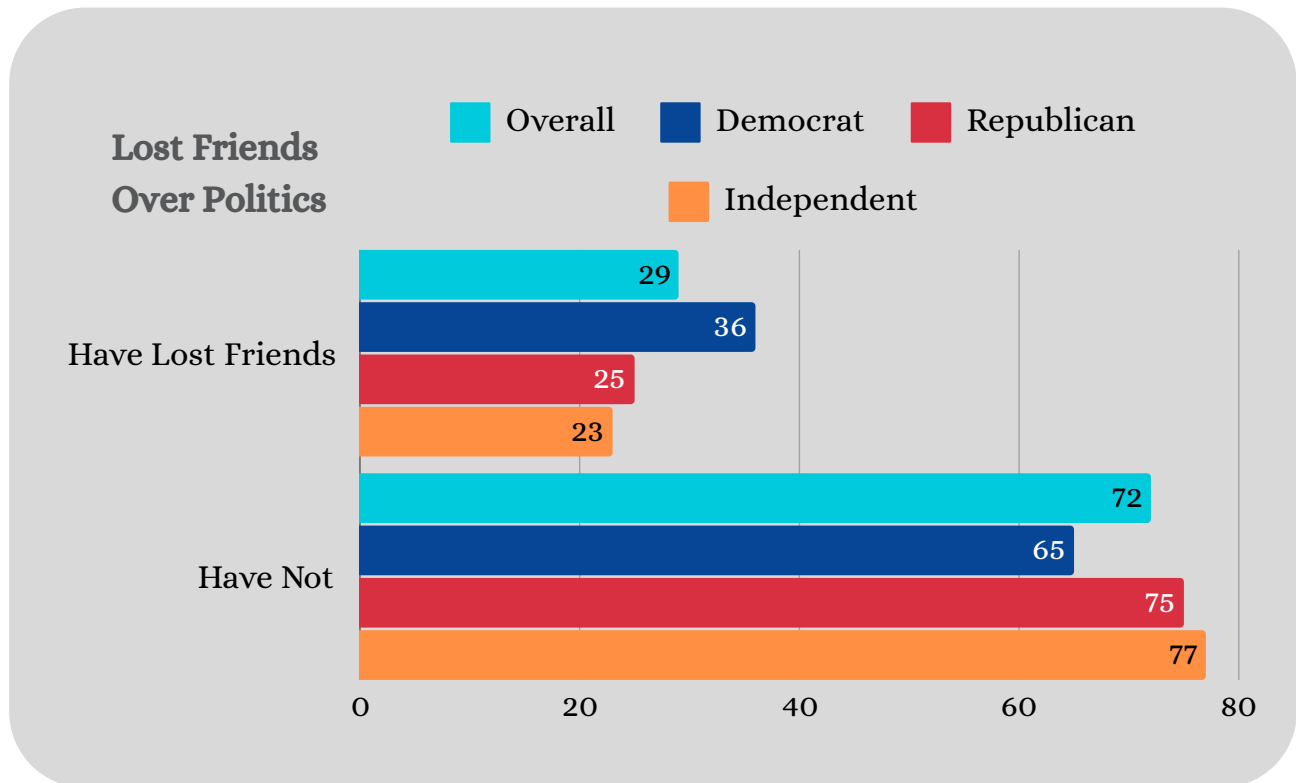
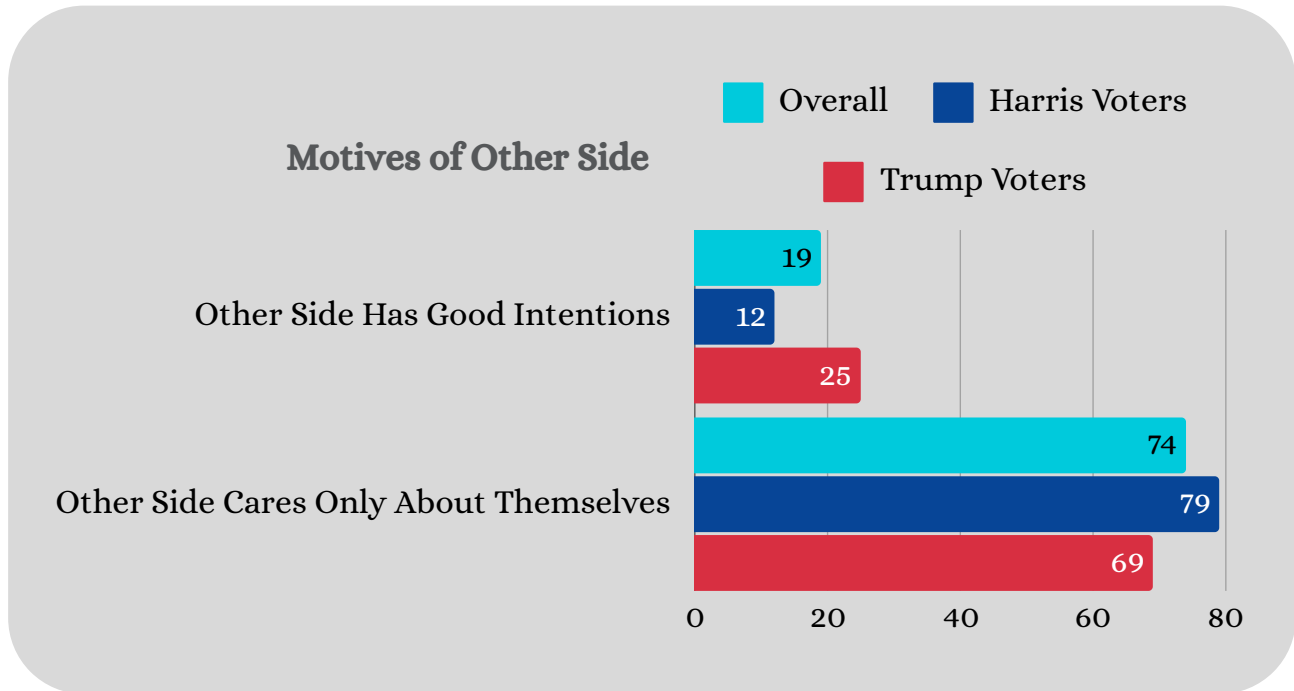
### Half of Residents Worry about the Future of Democracy

Fifty percent of OC residents believes the future of democracy in America is unsecure. Over 60% of Democrats are concerned, followed by 54% of Independents. By contrast, 57% of Republicans believe democracy is somewhat or very secure.



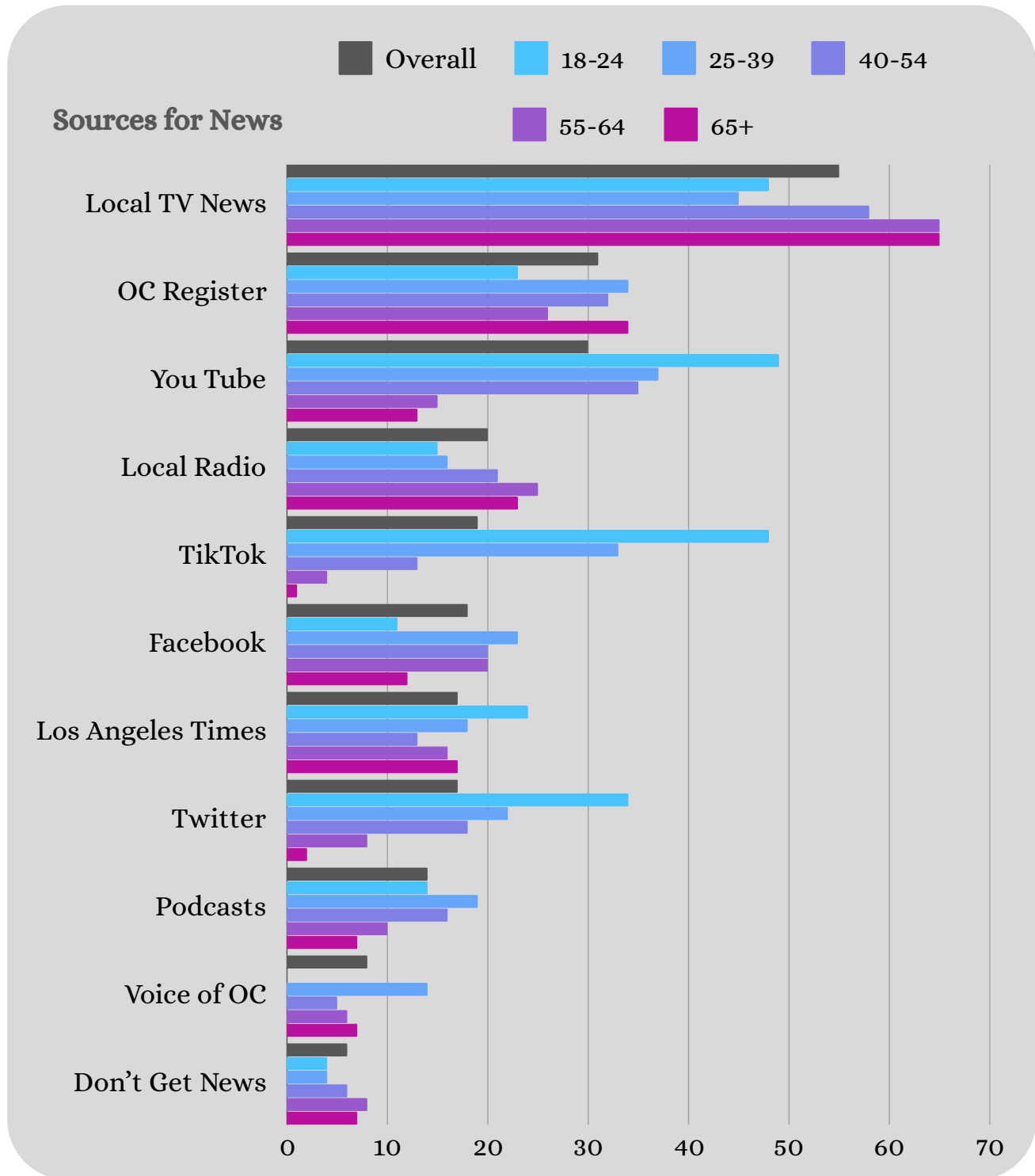
## Voters Have a Poor View of Their Opponents. Some Have Lost Friends Over Politics.

Large majorities of voters view their political opponents negatively, believing that those on the other side care only about themselves. Distrust is higher among Harris voters. Almost one in three voters has lost friends or close relationships over politics, the fallout greater for Democrats than Republicans or Independents.



## It's a Whole New World of Political News

Whereas most voters turned to a handful of news sources as recently as two decades ago, they now choose from a cornucopia of sources – many of them online. Generational differences are significant. For example, almost half of voters aged 18-24 receive news from Tik Tok, compared to 1% of voters 65 and older. Local TV news, though, remains a mainstay for many OC residents.



# Methodology

The November 2024 UCI OC Poll was produced by UC Irvine's School of Social Ecology in collaboration with TrueDot Inc. The survey was fielded November 12-18, 2024, reaching a sample of 838 adult respondents currently living in Orange County. The modeled error was 5.5% at the 95% confidence-level. This study used a hybrid methodology, blending a probability-based sample of records from the Orange County voter file with a non-probability sample of adult respondents from a large online panel. The data were weighted to population parameters derived from recent US Census Bureau demographic data by age, gender, educational attainment, and race and ethnicity. Additionally, the sample was calibrated to the results of the 2024 Presidential Election in Orange County.

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To learn more about the  
UCI-OC Poll, visit the website:

[sites.uci.edu/ocpoll](https://sites.uci.edu/ocpoll)

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