Pew Research Center

Americans' Views of Technology Companies

Most think social media companies have too much influence in politics and censor political viewpoints they object to – both sentiments are growing among Democrats

BY *Monica Anderson*

About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan, nonadvocacy fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. It does not take policy positions. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, computational social science research and other data-driven research. It studies politics and policy; news habits and media; the internet and technology; religion; race and ethnicity; international affairs; social, demographic and economic trends; science; research methodology and data science; and immigration and migration. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to understand Americans' attitudes toward technology companies. For this analysis, we surveyed 10,133 U.S. adults from Feb. 7 to 11, 2024.

Everyone who took part in the 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 U.S. 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. Read more about the ATP's methodology.

Here are the questions used for this report, along with responses, and the survey methodology.

Americans' Views of Technology Companies

Most think social media companies have too much influence in politics and censor political viewpoints they object to – both sentiments are growing among Democrats

Most Americans are wary of social media's role in politics and its overall impact on the country, and these concerns are ticking up among Democrats, according to a new Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults. Still, Republicans stand out on several measures, with majorities believing major technology companies are biased toward liberals.

Our survey asked Americans about three key areas: Social media's impact on politics and the country | Political censorship and bias in Big Tech | Government regulation of technology companies

Social media's impact on politics and the country

Since 2020, more Americans – particularly Democrats – believe social media companies wield too much political power. Roughly eight-in-ten Americans (78%) say these companies have too much power and influence in politics today, according to a new Pew Research Center survey of 10,133 U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-11, 2024. This is up from 72% in 2020.

Another 16% say these sites have the right amount of political influence, while only 4% think they don't have enough power.

Views by party

Republicans and independents who lean toward the Republican Party

Democrats increasingly say social media companies have too much power and influence in today's politics

% of U.S. adults who say social media companies have ___ (of) power and influence in politics today
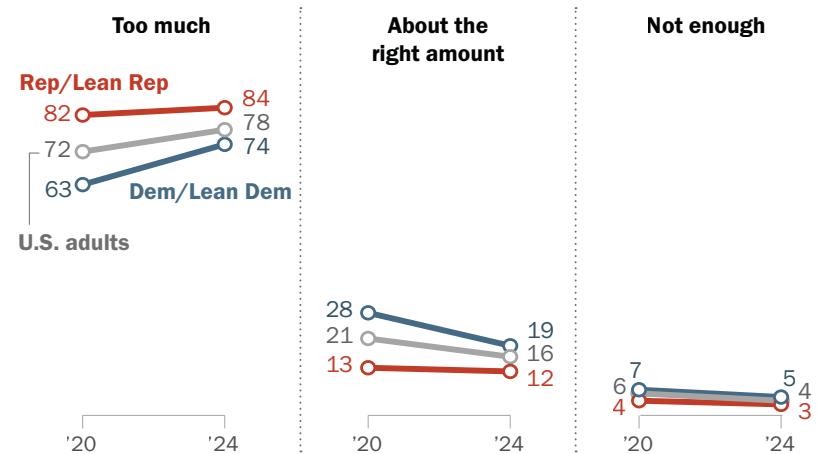
Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-11, 2024.
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(84%) are more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners (74%) to think these companies have too much political power. And while Republicans' opinions have changed little since 2020, this view has grown more common among Democrats over the past four years: **74% of Democrats believe social media companies have too much power and influence in politics, up from 63% in 2020.**

What impact does social media have on the country?

Americans are far more likely to say social media has a negative rather than positive impact on the country. Roughly two-thirds (64%) think social media has a mostly negative effect on the way things are going in the country today.

Only 10% describe social media as having a mostly positive impact on the country. And about a quarter say these sites have neither a positive nor a negative effect.

These overall figures are nearly identical to what the Center found in 2020. For instance, the share of Americans who see social media's impact on the country as mostly negative has remained at 64%.
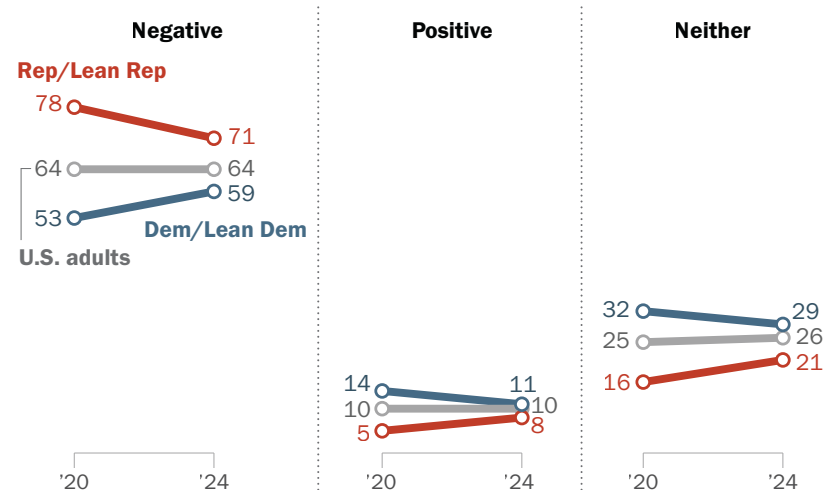
Democrats' views of social media's impact on the U.S. have grown more negative since 2020, but negative views are still more widespread among the GOP

% of U.S. adults who say social media has a mostly ___ effect on the way things are going in this country today

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-11, 2024.
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Views by party

Majorities in both political parties see social media's impact on the country negatively, though Republicans remain more wary than Democrats (71% vs. 59%). That said, **a growing number of Democrats believe these platforms have a mostly bad impact on the country,** rising to 59% in our current survey, up from 53% in 2020.

By comparison, the share of Republicans who say social media negatively affects the way things are going in the country has dropped from 78% in 2020 to 71% today.

Political censorship and bias in Big Tech

As social media has become a key way people share news and information, some lawmakers and commentators – especially conservatives – have expressed concerns that these companies are politically biased and limit free speech.

Our survey finds that **most Americans think social media sites actively censor political viewpoints they disagree with.** Roughly eight-in-ten U.S. adults (83%) say it's very or somewhat likely that these platforms intentionally censor political viewpoints they find objectionable, up from 77% in 2022. Just 17% in the current survey think this is not likely the case.

Views by party

Majorities in both parties believe political censorship is likely occurring on social media, but more Republicans hold this view. Fully 93% of Republicans say it's likely that social media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints that they find objectionable, including 66% who say that this is *very* likely happening.

By comparison, 74% of Democrats think this is likely occurring, with 25% saying there's a strong possibility this is occurring.

Republicans' views have held steady since 2022. **But the share of Democrats who think it's likely that social**

Republicans widely believe social media sites are likely censoring political views that they object to, but growing shares of Democrats also think this

% of U.S. adults who say it is ___ that social media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints that they find objectionable
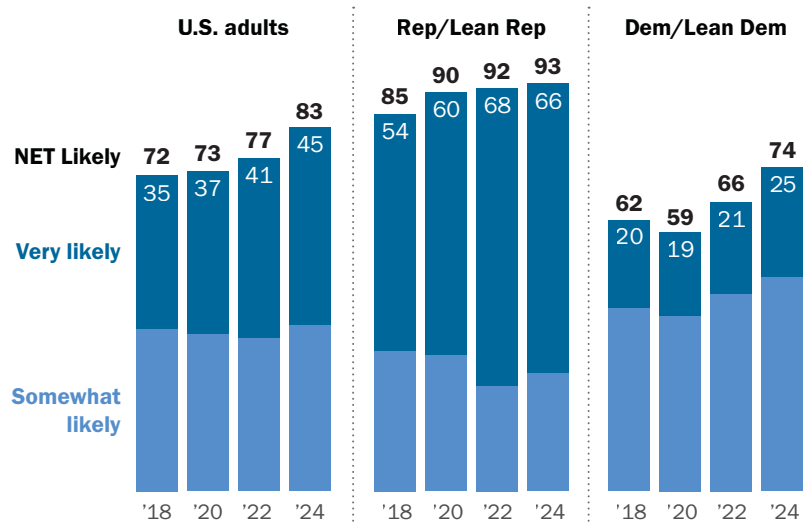
Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-11, 2024.
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media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints they object to is rising – 74% say this today, up from 66% two years ago.

Do major technology companies have liberal or conservative biases?

Overall, Americans are more likely to think Big Tech companies support the views of liberals over conservatives than the other way around. More than four-in-ten U.S. adults (44%) think major technology companies support the views of liberals over conservatives. Far fewer – 15% – say these companies support conservative views over liberal ones. Still, a notable share (37%) thinks this industry equally values conservative and liberal viewpoints.

Views by party

Republicans widely believe that major tech companies have a pro-liberal bias. Fully 71% of Republicans say major technology companies support the views of liberals over conservatives. Much smaller shares believe these companies support the views of liberals and conservatives equally (22%) or favor conservative beliefs over liberal ones (6%).

By contrast, the most commonly held view among Democrats is that technology companies support the views of conservatives and liberals equally, with 50% saying this.

Most Republicans think major tech companies support the views of liberals over conservatives

% of U.S. adults who say major technology companies tend to support the views of …

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-11, 2024.
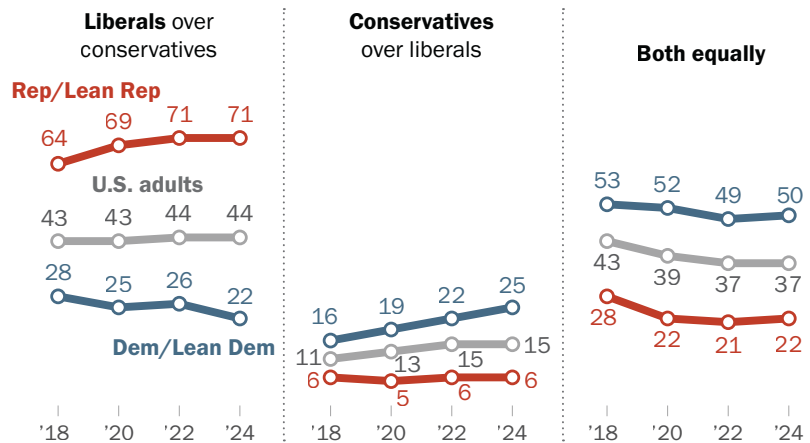"Americans' Views of Technology Companies"

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Roughly a quarter of Democrats either say that these companies favor the views of conservatives over liberals (25%) or liberals over conservatives (22%).

While there's been little change in views since 2022, there are some differences when comparing today's views to those in 2018, when we first started asking these questions.

Over the past six years, a rising share of Republicans say major tech companies favor liberal over conservative views (71% today vs. 64% in 2018), while more Democrats today than in the past

think these companies support conservative views more than liberal ones (25% today vs. 16% in 2018).

Government regulation of technology companies

Amid concerns over free speech, social media's impact on youth and AI's impending foothold, lawmakers and advocates on both sides of the political aisle have pushed for more government oversight of the tech industry.

But there's a long-running debate about what role the government should play in regulating Big Tech. We wanted to know where Americans stand, how views have changed over time, and whether opinions vary by party.

Americans favor more rather than less regulation of Big Tech companies. When asked whether the government should regulate major technology companies more, less or at its current level, 51% believe these

About half of Americans support more government regulation of major tech companies

% of U.S. adults who say major technology companies should be regulated by the government ___ they are now

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-11, 2024.
"Americans' Views of Technology Companies"
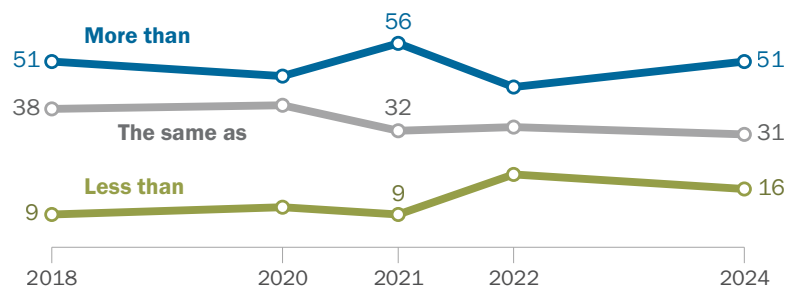
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companies should be regulated *more* than they are now. Far fewer – 16% – feel they should be regulated less than they are now.

Still, 31% say their current level of regulation should stay the same.

Support for more government regulation of technology companies is identical to what it was in 2018. Support for more regulation has risen and fallen somewhat over the past six years, ranging from 44% in 2022 to 56% in 2021. The share of Americans who think these companies should be regulated more than they are now is identical to what the Center found in 2018, when we first asked the question. At the same time, the share who say there should be *less* regulation has increased from 9% in 2018 to 16% today.

Views by party

**Democrats are more supportive of increased government oversight of tech companies than are Republicans.** Six-in-ten Democrats say the government should regulate major technology companies more than it is now, compared with 45% of Republicans.

The partisan gap between Democrats and Republicans is similar to that in 2022. But these differences have not always been large. For instance, similar shares of Republicans (48%) and Democrats (46%) favored more regulation of technology companies back in 2020.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say major tech companies should be regulated more

*% of U.S. adults who say major technology companies should be regulated by the government **more than they are now***
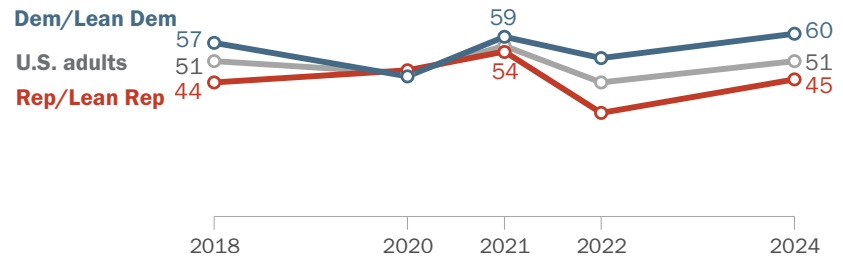
Note: Those who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 7-11, 2024.
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Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at pewresearch.org/internet.

Methodology

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 ATP Wave 142, conducted from Feb. 7 to 11, 2024, and includes an oversample of non-Hispanic Asian adults, non-Hispanic Black men, and Hispanic men in order to provide more precise estimates of the opinions and experiences of these smaller demographic subgroups. These oversampled groups are weighted back to reflect their correct proportions in the population. A total of 10,133 panelists responded out of 11,117 who were sampled, for a response rate of 91%. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is less than 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 10,133 respondents is plus or minus 1.5 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 sampling (ABS) recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service 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.[1] Within each sampled household, the adult with the next

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[1] AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."

birthday is asked to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.[2]

We have recruited a national sample of U.S. adults to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an "oversample") to boost sample size with underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

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	1,391
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	831
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	404
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS	9,396	8,778	3,848
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS	5,900	4,720	1,387
June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021	ABS	3,197	2,812	1,440
May 29 to July 7, 2021; Sept. 16 to Nov. 1, 2021	ABS	1,329	1,162	731
May 24 to Sept. 29, 2022	ABS	3,354	2,869	1,454
April 17 to May 30, 2023	ABS	686	576	434
Total		**43,580**	**30,859**	**11,920**

Note: RDD is random-digit dial; ABS is address-based sampling. 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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Across the six address-based recruitments, a total of 23,862 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 20,917 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 30,859 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 11,920 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

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 noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. It featured a stratified random sample from the ATP in which Hispanic men, non-Hispanic Black men and non-Hispanic Asian adults were selected with certainty. The remaining panelists were sampled at rates designed to ensure that the share of respondents in each stratum is proportional to its share of the U.S. adult population to the

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[2] Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

greatest extent possible. Respondent weights are adjusted to account for differential probabilities of selection as described in the Weighting section below.

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 team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data that 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 $15 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. 7 to 11, 2024. Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset of ATP panelists with a known residential address on Feb. 7.[3]

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 the morning of Feb. 7. 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 sampled panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on the afternoon of Feb. 7.

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 who consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to two SMS reminders.

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[3] Postcard notifications are sent to 1) panelists who have been provided with a tablet to take ATP surveys, 2) panelists who were recruited within the last two years, and 3) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

Invitation and reminder dates, ATP Wave 142

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	Feb. 7, 2024	Feb. 7, 2024
First reminder	Feb. 9, 2024	Feb. 9, 2024
Final reminder	Feb. 11, 2024	Feb. 11, 2024

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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 whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, two ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is 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. These weights are then rescaled and adjusted to account for changes in the design of ATP recruitment surveys from year to year. Finally, the weights are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2022 American Community Survey (ACS)
Age x Gender	
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Black (alone or in combination) x Hispanic	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metropolitan status	
Volunteerism	2021 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2022 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity	2023 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Frequency of internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 2nd and 98th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. This trimming is performed separately among non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic Asian, Hispanic and all other respondents. Sampling errors and tests 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.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 142

Group	Unweighted sample size	Weighted percentage	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	10,133		1.5 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	4,594	45	2.1 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	5,227	48	2.1 percentage points

Note: This survey includes oversamples of non-Hispanic Asian adults, non-Hispanic Black men and Hispanic men. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. Refer to the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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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, ATP Wave 142

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	10,133
Logged on to survey; broke off	2.12	27
Logged on to survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	81
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	873
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	1
Completed interview but was removed for data quality		2
Screened out		0
Total panelists sampled for the survey		**11,117**
Completed interviews	I	10,133
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	981
Non-contact	NC	1
Other	O	2
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		**11,117**
AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		91%

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Cumulative response rate as of ATP Wave 142

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	71%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 142	45%
Response rate to Wave 142 survey	91%
Cumulative response rate	**3%**

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2024 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 142 TOPLINE
FEBRUARY 7-11, 2024
N=10,133

THE QUESTIONS PRESENTED BELOW ARE PART OF A LARGER SURVEY CONDUCTED ON THE AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL. OTHER QUESTIONS ON THIS SURVEY HAVE BEEN RELEASED OR ARE BEING HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE.

NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED. THE PERCENTAGES LESS THAN 0.5% ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (*). ROWS/COLUMNS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING.

	Sample size	Margin of error at 95% confidence level
U.S. adults	10,133	+/- 1.5 percentage points

ASK ALL:
SNSRATE   Overall, what effect would you say social media has on the way things are going in this country today?

Feb 7-11, 2024		Jul 13-19, 2020
10	Mostly positive effect	10
64	Mostly negative effect	64
26	Neither positive nor negative effect	25
*	No answer	1

ASK ALL:
TECHPOW   How much power and influence in politics today do social media companies have? **[RANDOMIZE 1-2; ITEM 3 ALWAYS LAST]**

Feb 7-11, 2024		Jun 16-22, 2020
78	Too much power and influence	72
4	Not enough power and influence	6
16	About the right amount	21
2	No answer	2

ASK ALL:
TC5   Thinking about the role of the government in regulating major technology companies, do you think they should be regulated… **[RANDOMIZE 1-2; ITEM 3 ALWAYS LAST]**

Feb 7-11, 2024		Apr 25-May 1, 2022	Apr 12-18, 2021	Jun 16-22, 2020	May 29-Jun 11, 2018
51	More than they are now	44	56	47	51
16	Less than they are now	20	9	11	9
31	The same as they are now	33	32	39	38
2	No answer	3	3	3	1

ASK ALL:
TC6b   Do you think major technology companies tend to support the views of…
[RANDOMIZE 1 AND 2, ITEM 3 ALWAYS LAST]

Feb 7-11, 2024		Apr 25-May 1, 2022	Jun 16-22, 2020	May 29-Jun 11, 2018
44	Liberals over conservatives	44	43	43
15	Conservatives over liberals	15	13	11
37	Both equally	37	39	43
3	No answer	5	4	3

ASK ALL:
SM7   How likely, if at all, do you think it is that social media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints that they find objectionable?

Feb 7-11, 2024		Apr 25-May 1, 2022	Jun 16-22, 2020	May 29-Jun 11, 2018
45	Very likely	41	37	35
38	Somewhat likely	35	36	37
13	Not very likely	17	19	19
3	Not at all likely	5	6	8
1	No answer	2	2	1

ASK ALL:
PARTY   In politics today, do you consider yourself a:
ASK IF INDEP/SOMETHING ELSE (PARTY=3,4) OR MISSING:
PARTYLN   As of today do you lean more to…[3]

Republican	Democrat	Independent	Something else	No answer	Lean Rep	Lean Dem
28	29	27	13	2	17	19

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[3] PARTY and PARTYLN asked in a prior survey.