

# **2023 Public Affairs Pulse Survey**

Doug Pinkham President Public Affairs Council

# **Survey Methodology**

- Poll of 2,219 adults conducted online on Sept. 1-3 by Morning Consult
- Examines opinions and expectations for business, government and society
- MOE of +/- 2 percentage points
- Full report, top lines and cross-tabs available at www.pac.org/pulse



#### **Executive Summary**

The 2023 Public Affairs Pulse Survey, conducted Sept. 1-3 by Morning Consult, provides an in-depth look at public opinion on issues intersecting business, government and American society. These topics include concerns about the integrity of the 2024 elections, distrust of political news, views about business, and the backlash caused by corporate involvement in social issues.

Just 37% of Americans believed the 2024 elections will be both honest and open to rightful voters, while 43% had serious doubts about honesty, openness or both. Democrats were far more optimistic about the legitimacy of the elections than were Republicans or independents.

Nearly two-thirds of the public thought disinformation will be a factor in the outcome of the elections. The two sources of disinformation people were most worried about were social media and the news media.

Americans were also asked to rate the credibility of 11 different sources of political news and information. As in 2022, the highest-rated source for political news was friends and family, and the second highest-rated source was businesses. Next on the trust scale were trade and professional associations, followed by the news media.

By a wide margin, the Pulse Survey showed that Americans considered the Republican Party (59%) to be much more probusiness than the Democratic Party (43%). Nevertheless, while Democrate strongly supported corporate efforts to engage politically on social issues, Republicans strongly opposed them. This pattern persisted across 12 different social issues, from race discrimination to abortion rights.

The public's trust that major companies will behave ethically rose slightly to 51% in 2023. What was noteworthy was that trust levels for all inion industry sectors improved this past year. The least-trusted sectors continued to be pharmaceutical and health insurance firms, but distrust of those sectors declined by 6 and 8 percentage points, respectively.

We have asked the American public to rank the propriety of different campaign funding methods for the past six years and the pecking order has yet to change. In first place was a candidate spending his or her own money to fund a campaign, followed by individual contributions, PACs, super PACs and public financing of elections.

In a question about balancing democratic interests, **Trump** voters were more likely to value supporting individual rights rather than the common good, while Biden voters were more likely to value the common good than individual rights.

Public Affairs Council



- 2011 U.S. public approves of lobbying when done for specific business reasons
- 2012 Most Americans want major companies to assume public service duties
- **2015** If they were CEO, most people would take actions to address regulations
- 2018 Most believe CEOs serve on White House commissions to boost profits
- 2019 Trump's tweets critical of major companies had virtually no impact
- **2020** Democrats, not Republicans, worried more about 2020 election fairness



- **2011** U.S. public approves of lobbying when done for specific business reasons
- 2012 Most Americans want major companies to assume public service duties
- **2015** If they were CEO, most people would take actions to address regulations
- 2018 Most believe CEOs serve on White House commissions to boost profits
- 2019 Trump's tweets critical of major companies had virtually no impact
- **2020** Democrats, not Republicans, worried more about 2020 election fairness



- **2011** U.S. public approves of lobbying when done for specific business reasons
- 2012 Most Americans want major companies to assume public service duties
- 2015 If they were CEO, most people would take actions to address regulations
- 2018 Most believe CEOs serve on White House commissions to boost profits
- 2019 Trump's tweets critical of major companies had virtually no impact
- **2020** Democrats, not Republicans, worried more about 2020 election fairness



- **2011** U.S. public approves of lobbying when done for specific business reasons
- 2012 Most Americans want major companies to assume public service duties
- **2015** If they were CEO, most people would take actions to address regulations
- 2018 Most believe CEOs serve on White House commissions to boost profits
- 2019 Trump's tweets critical of major companies had virtually no impact
- 2020 Democrats, not Republicans, worried more about 2020 election fairness



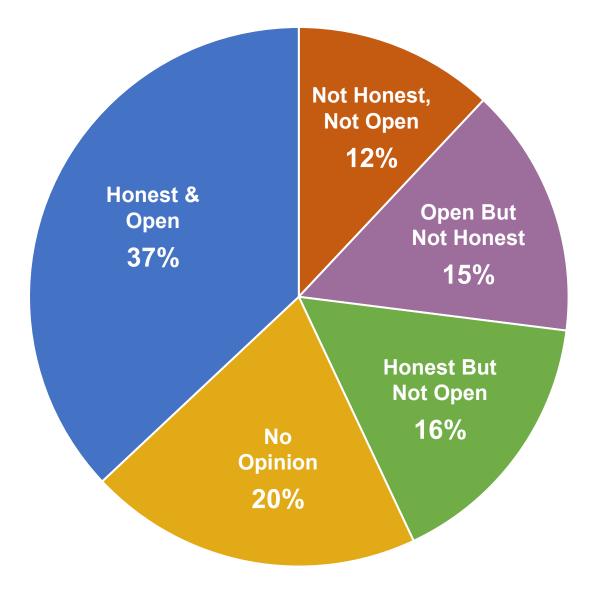
- **2011** U.S. public approves of lobbying when done for specific business reasons
- 2012 Most Americans want major companies to assume public service duties
- **2015** If they were CEO, most people would take actions to address regulations
- 2018 Most believe CEOs serve on White House commissions to boost profits
- 2019 Trump's tweets critical of major companies had virtually no impact
- **2020** Democrats, not Republicans, worried more about 2020 election fairness



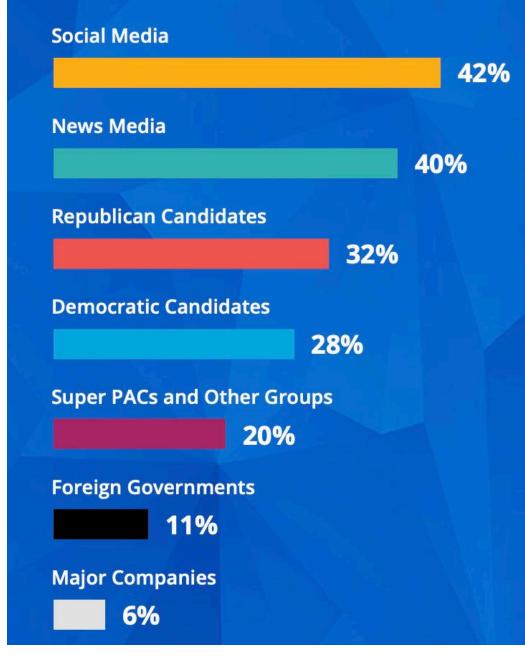
- **2011** U.S. public approves of lobbying when done for specific business reasons
- 2012 Most Americans want major companies to assume public service duties
- **2015** If they were CEO, most people would take actions to address regulations
- 2018 Most believe CEOs serve on White House commissions to boost profits
- 2019 Trump's tweets critical of major companies had virtually no impact
- 2020 Democrats, not Republicans, worried more about 2020 election fairness



#### Perceived Honesty and Openness of 2024 Elections



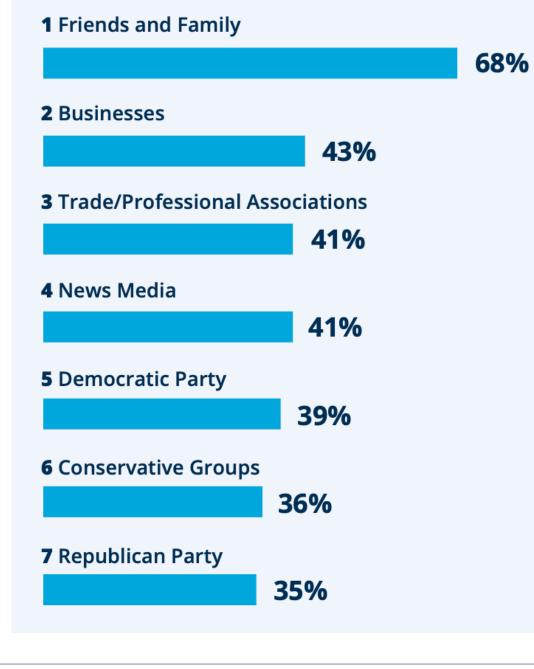




#### Expected Disinformation Sources in 2024 Elections



### 7 Most Trusted Sources of Political News and Information

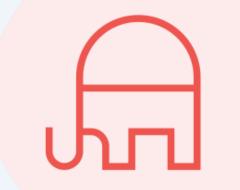






**43%** Think Democratic Party is more pro-business

59% Think Republican Party is more pro-business



#### Who is More Pro-Business?

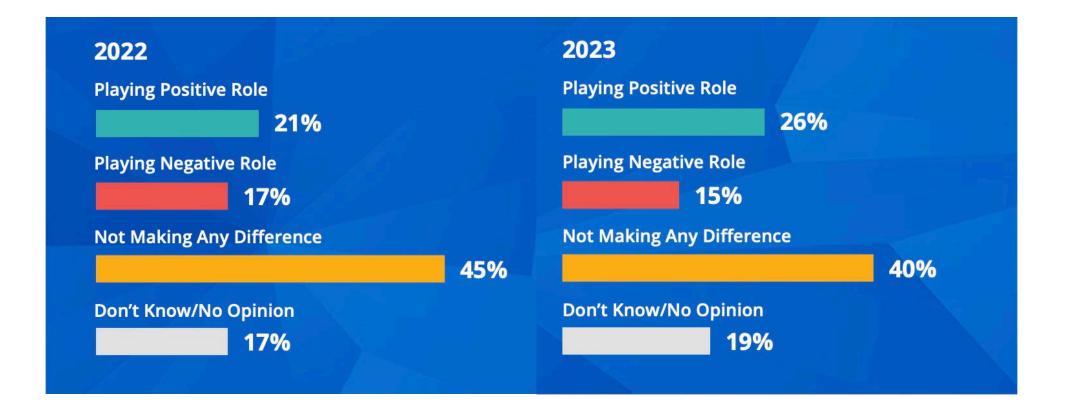


# Democrats More Supportive of Firms Backing Social Issues

Support Environment/Sustainability	Supporting Access to Quality Education
75% 57%	69% 50%
Ending Discrimination by Gender	Ending Hunger/Supporting Food Securi
74% 53%	69% 56
Ending Discrimination by Gender Identity	Supporting Affordable Housing
74% 43%	67% 43%
Ending Discrimination by Race	Improving Voting Access
72% 51%	61% 34%
Ending Discrimination by Sexual Orientation	Supporting DACA
71% 50%	<b>58% 32%</b>
Supporting Human Rights	Supporting Legal Access to Abortions
70% 46%	54% 27%



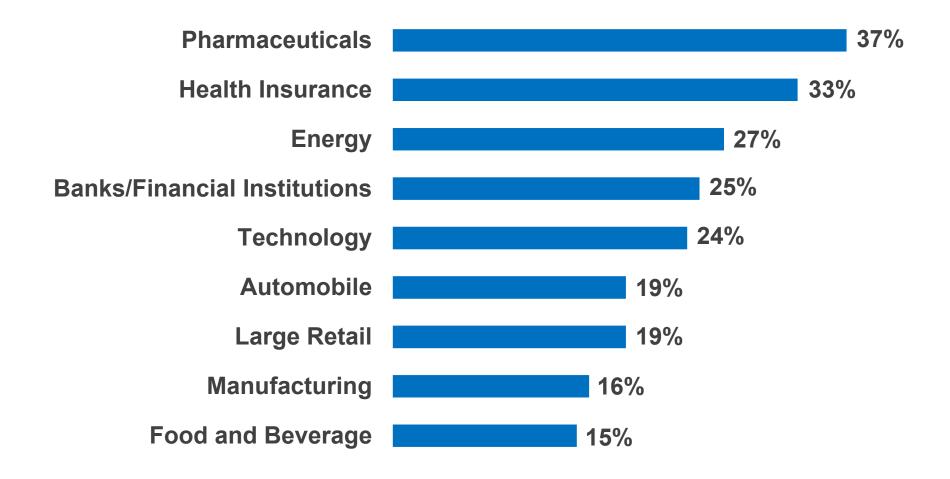
# Are Major U.S. Companies Playing Positive Role in Reducing Racism?





# Which Industries Are Least Trustworthy?

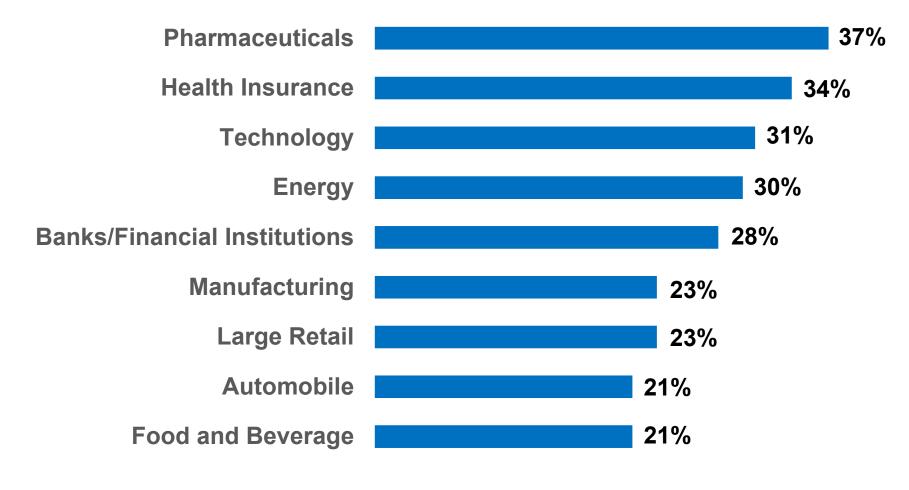
Percentage saying an industry is less trustworthy than average





# Who Needs More Oversight?

Percentage saying an industry is under-regulated





#### Willingness to Take Forms of Political Action



Would personally contact elected representative



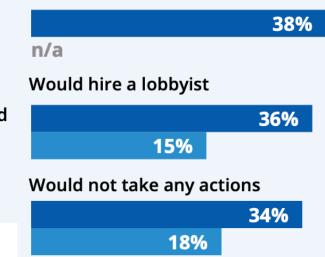
Would work with other companies to change laws and regulations

Would make campaign contributions to elected representatives who agree with my views

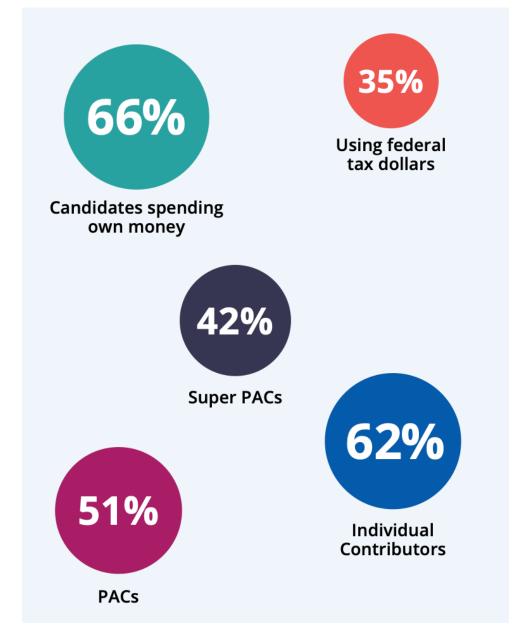


Would ask employees if they were willing to contact their local representatives

Would run ads opposing the laws and regulations



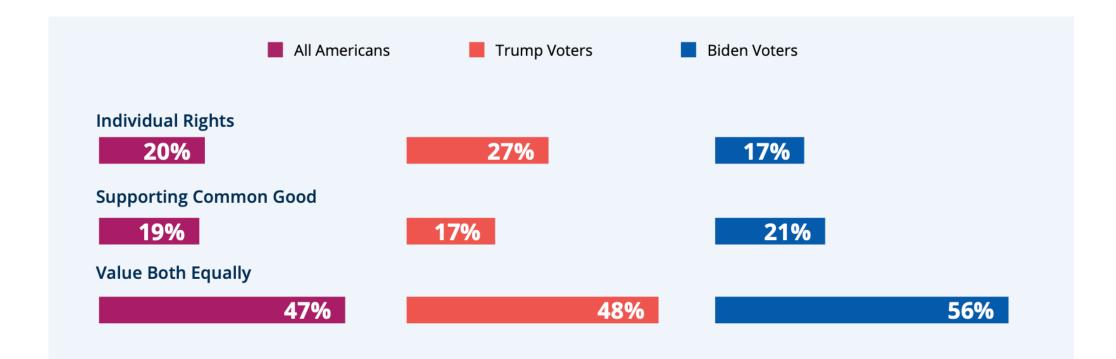




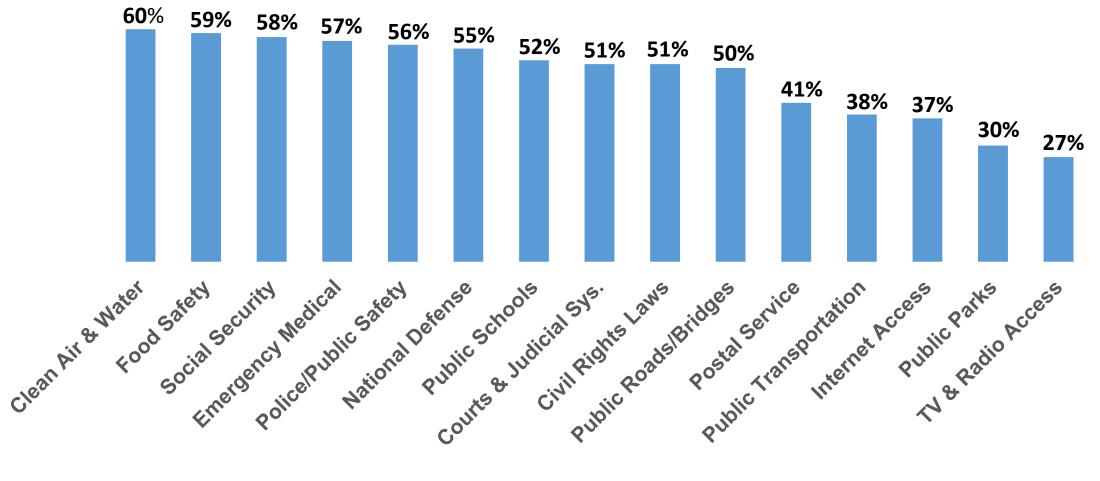
#### How Should Political Campaigns Be Financed?

PA

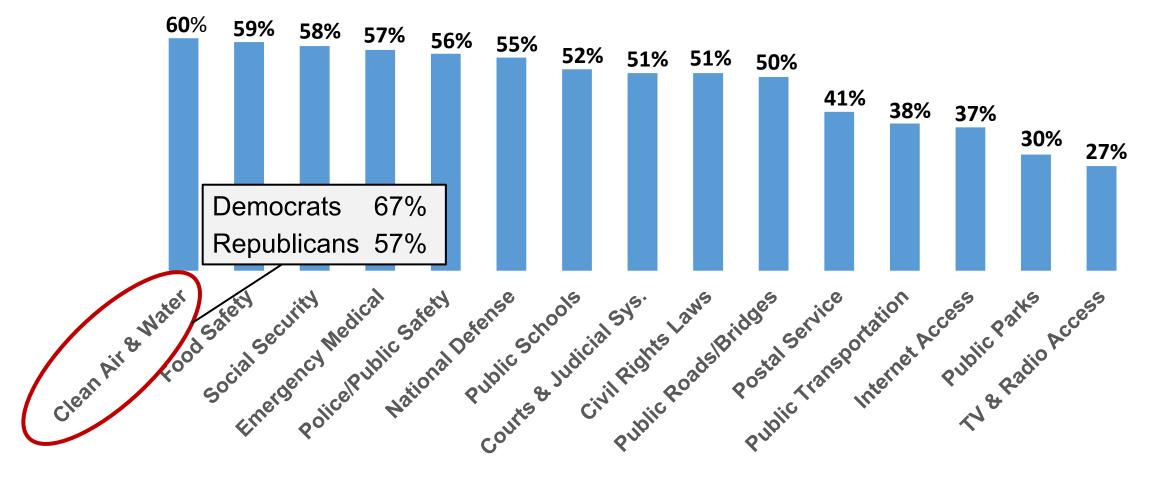
# What's More Important: Individual Rights or Supporting the Common Good?



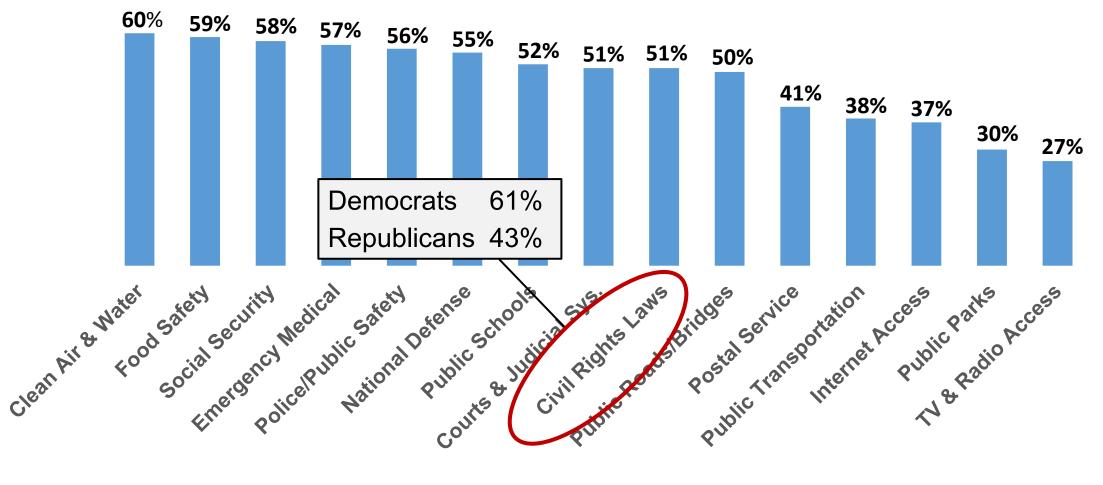






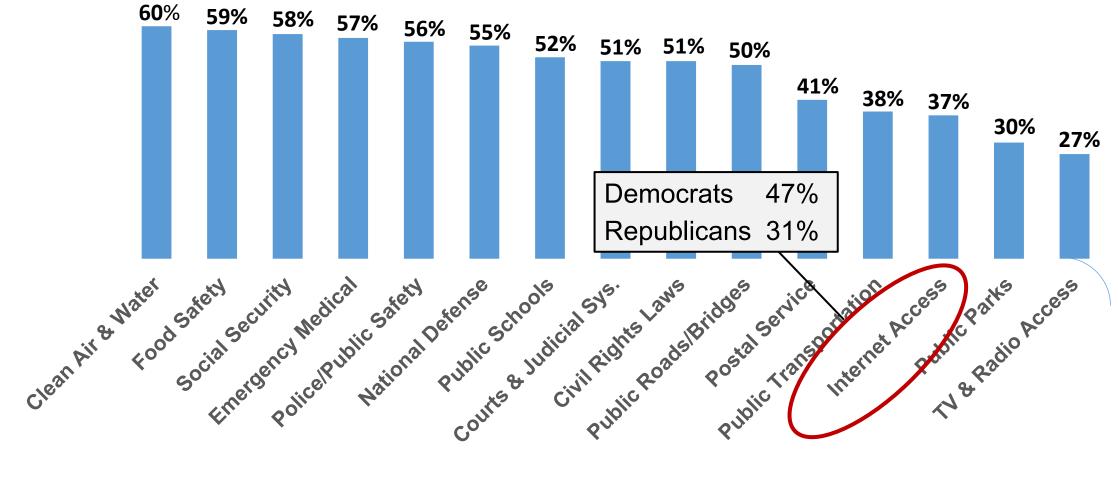
















# **Biggest Surprises in the Data**

- 1. Only 11% of Americans believe **foreign governments** will be a major source of disinformation in the 2024 elections.
- 2. Trust levels improved for each of nine industry sectors.
- 3. In our political involvement scenario, **34% said they would not take any political action**. Five years ago, only 18% held this opinion.
- 4. Clean air/water and food safety are the highest-rated common goods.
- 5. More than half of Americans (51%) said **civil rights laws and regulations** are a "very important" common good.





#### **Public Affairs Council**

#### MANAGE YOUR WORLD

Doug Pinkham dpinkham@pac.org