

**CLASS AND  
WORLDVIEW:  
A REPORT ON  
THE MULTIRACIAL  
WORKING CLASS**





1 / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2 / INTRODUCTION	6
3 / METHODOLOGY	8
4 / DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT OF THREE CLASSES	14
5 / FINDINGS ACROSS CLASS	20
6 / FINDINGS WITHIN WORKING CLASS	38
7 / ROBUSTNESS CHECKS	60
8 / CONCLUSION	66
9 / ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	68



# 1 / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, working class voters hold the balance of the country in their hands. Many indicators across recent elections and current polls show that the **Democratic Party’s coalition is becoming increasingly affluent, while the weight of working class voters is growing in the Republican Party’s coalition.** There has been a notable softening of support for Democrats among working class Black and Latino voters. Nevertheless, many important questions have gone largely unaddressed, including how the working

class should be defined and understood, whether the working class is actually more socially and culturally conservative than the middle and upper classes, and what the ideological differences within the working class are.

This report, based on polling conducted by **HIT Strategies** and **Working Families Power** in August 2023, addresses these three gaps in current discussions about class and political alignment in the United States.

## KEY FINDINGS ↘

### #01

*The middle and upper classes strongly favored Biden over Trump in 2020, while the working class was split, with high abstention rates.*

### #02

*We see large differences between classes on topics relating to class, economic fairness, and distribution, in which the working class is uniformly to the left of the middle and upper classes.*

### #03

*Differences between classes are much smaller on social and cultural questions compared to economic fairness questions, and they do not uniformly point to a working class that is more socially and culturally conservative than the middle and upper classes.*

### #04

*The multiracial working class is large and diverse, representing approximately 63% of registered voters. We identify seven distinct ideological profiles within the working class: Next Gen Left, Mainstream Liberals, Tuned Out Persuadables, Anti-Woke Traditionalists, Secure Suburban Moderates, Diverse Disaffected Conservatives, and Core MAGA. Bringing more working class voters into a progressive coalition requires understanding the particular ways in which different groups of working class voters are cross-pressured.*



# 2 / INTRODUCTION

Long gone are the days when “soccer moms” were the constituency that would decide American elections. In 2024, working class voters hold the balance of the country in their hands. Across the ideological spectrum, this claim has taken on the status of received wisdom. **The shift in the Democratic Party’s coalition towards more affluent, highly educated voters is now widely documented.**<sup>1</sup> And many in the Republican Party believe that their party’s future lies with working class voters, who are drawn to the party’s social conservatism, if only the GOP can overcome its fealty to a small government ideology that has much less appeal to working class voters.<sup>2</sup> Donald Trump’s “populism” is believed by many to have a special appeal to working class voters. Moreover, in 2024, “working class” is not simply pundit and pollster code for white working class: **poll after poll shows an alarming softening of support for Democrats among younger Latinos and Black men.** Nevertheless, many questions remain unanswered.

In particular, we observe three major shortcomings in how class is understood and how it is used to explain contemporary political alignments.

First, the **discussion of class in America now takes place overwhelmingly through what is in fact a proxy for class** – and a crude one at that – namely, the presence or absence of a four-year bachelor’s degree. Second, the widespread belief that the **working class is more socially, culturally, and perhaps even more economically**

**conservative than the middle and upper classes** is assumed more often than it is convincingly demonstrated, as is that claim’s main implication, that the greater social and cultural conservatism of the working class explains the working class’s drift away from the Democrats and towards the GOP. Finally, by any sensible definition, **the working class represents a gigantic share of the electorate. Yet ideological differences within the working class are almost never explored in any systematic way**, except by relying on other demographic categories like race and age.

**Working Families Power**, a sister organization of the Working Families Party, has the mission of **building power for and with the multiracial working class**. We believe that the working class is structurally underrepresented in our political system,

## THE WORKING CLASS IS STRUCTURALLY UNDERREPRESENTED

and that this underrepresentation directly contributes to inequality and injustice in our society. Overcoming that underrepresentation requires building progressive political majorities anchored in the broad working class. Any program for doing so must begin with a clear map of the ideological diversity of working class voters.

<sup>1</sup> Zacher, Sam. 2023. “Polarization of the Rich: The New Democratic Allegiance of Affluent Americans and the Politics of Redistribution.” *Perspectives on Politics*: 1–19. doi: 10.1017/S1537592722003310

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Ruffini, *Party of the People: Inside the Multiracial Populist Coalition Remaking the GOP* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023).



# 3 / METHODOLOGY



In August 2023, Working Families Power and HIT Strategies fielded a nationally representative, **opt-in online panel poll of 5,003 registered voters**, with the option to take the survey in either English or Spanish. Altogether, **the poll included 127 survey response questions** that were designed to understand respondents' values concerning a wide range of themes, including what makes the economy work, economic fairness and distribution, trade, immigration, abortion, education, sexuality, crime and policing, sexism, racial resentment, nationalism, the role of government, and traditional values. We asked multiple questions about each of these themes, and in every case, we asked some questions that were coded in a conservative manner, and others that were coded in a progressive manner.

In most cases, respondents answered on a 0-10 agree/disagree rating spectrum, although some used scales of 1-5, 1-6, or 1-7. In other words, **respondents were never given so-called 'forced choice' questions**, and instead were presented with a survey that allowed them to express conflicted or even contradictory views. Furthermore, **we studiously avoided asking typical policy questions**, based on a conviction that opinions on these are heavily filtered through a partisan lens and partisan cue-taking, thus telling us very little about underlying values. **We also avoided asking questions that are particularly sensitive to current events**, again with an eye towards isolating underlying values. It was critical for this research to capture opinions that could be applied beyond just the 2024 election cycle.

## EXAMPLE IMMIGRATION BATTERY FROM OUR ONLINE POLL ↘

### #01

*America's openness to people from all over the world is essential to who we are as a nation.*

### #02

*If America is too open to people from all over the world, we risk losing who we are as a nation.*

### #03

*Our government shows more concern for immigrants than it does for ordinary Americans.*

### #04

*America should only accept highly-skilled and educated immigrants.*



#05

*Through their hard work, taxes, and other contributions, most immigrants make America stronger.*

#06

*People coming to this country fleeing violence and poverty deserve our compassion.*

#07

*Most immigrants come to America because they think that our government will take care of them.*

#08

*Asylum should be reserved for people genuinely in danger, not as a way to get around our legal limits on immigration.*

#09

*Immigrants commit more crimes than American citizens.*

#10

*Our open borders are allowing drug gangs, terrorists and other criminals to invade our country, threatening the safety of our communities and our national security.*

#11

*Most undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. should be offered a path to citizenship.*



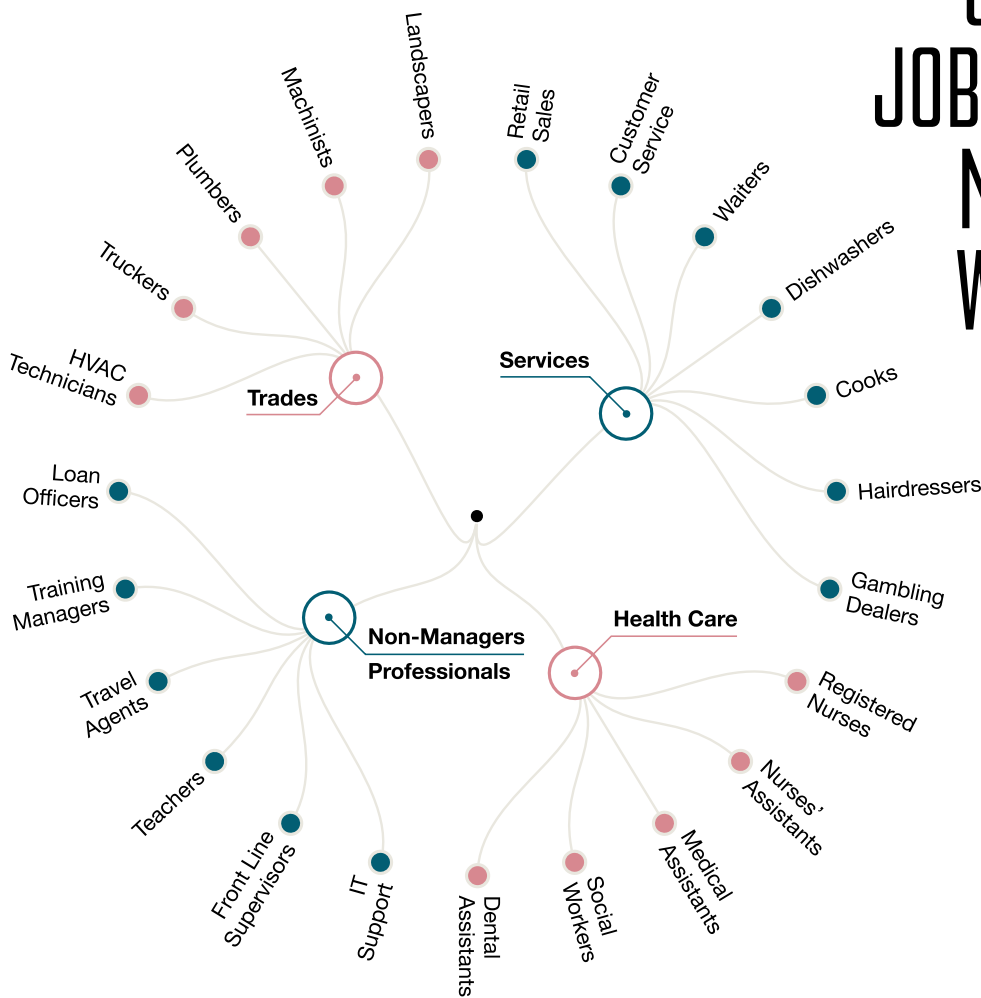
🗳️ In the remainder of this report, we present responses to our survey questions on a five point scale, (strong agree/support, somewhat agree/support, neutral, somewhat disagree/oppose, strong disagree/oppose), which allows comparability across questions that utilized different scales.



Importantly for our analysis, our poll departed from typical polling practice in collecting two pieces of data about respondents' class background that are usually omitted. First, we included the **General Social Survey's (GSS) question** about class self-identification to judge the extent to which "subjective" and "objective" class align. Second, following a method recommended to us by the Center for Working Class Politics, we asked an open-ended question for respondents' **occupation and industry**. We then utilized a tool

developed by the Centers for Disease Control to map that data onto Census occupation codes. From there, we utilized publicly available "crosswalks" to translate Census occupation codes into the principal class schema utilized in sociology research, the so-called *Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Portocarero (EGP)* schema. Following a slightly modified collapse from Franko and Witko (2023)<sup>3</sup>, we converted the EGP categories into a hierarchical five category occupational class schema.

Figure 01 →



# COMMON JOBS IN THE MODELED WORKING CLASS

Methodology

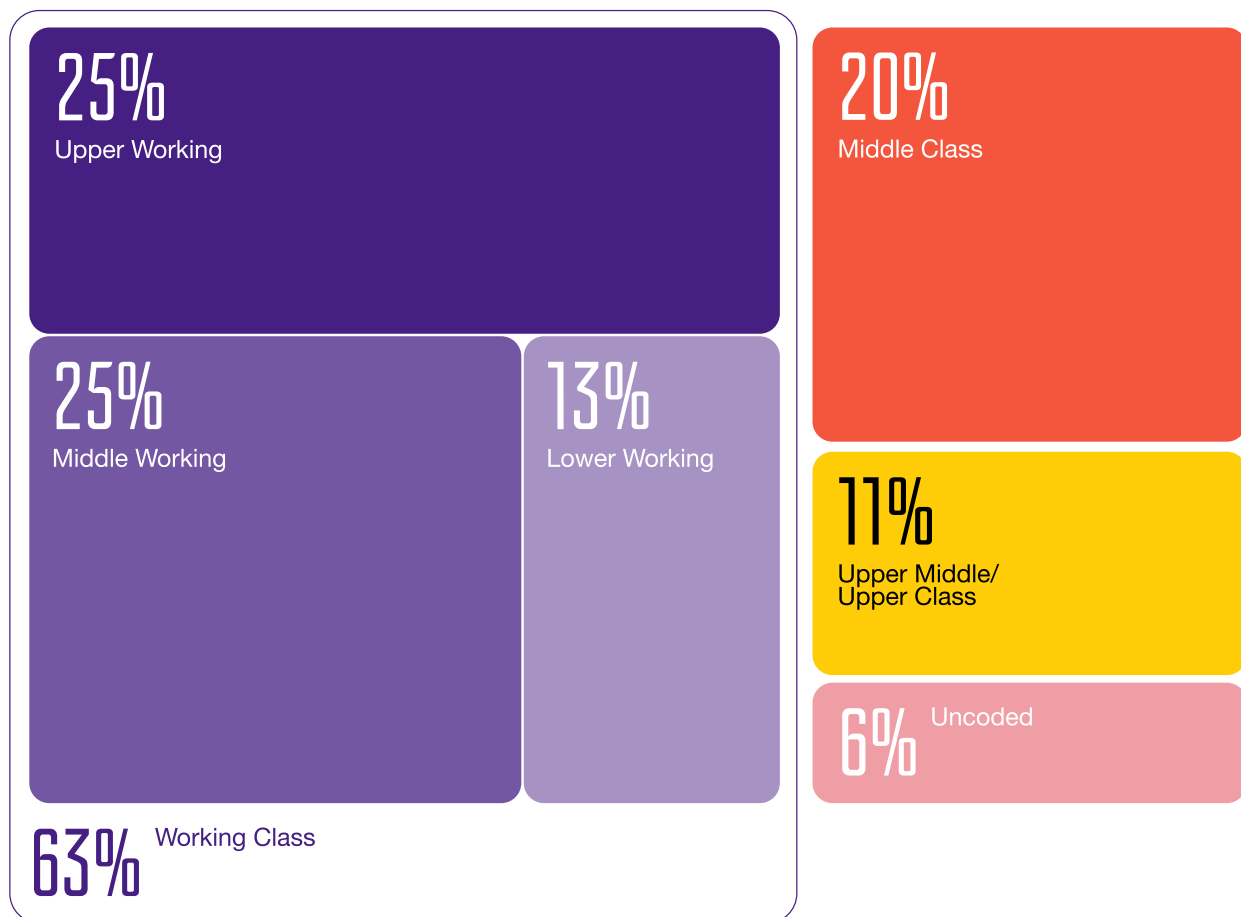
<sup>3</sup> Franko, William W. and Christopher Witko. 2023. "Unions, Class Identification, and Policy Attitudes." *Journal of Politics*, 85 no. 2. doi: 10.1086/722347



Our efforts to identify an occupational class category for each of our respondents were overwhelmingly successful, with the result that **we were able to code 94% of our 5,003 respondents**. With this data, we were able to replicate the statistical method — a so-called *Graded Response Model (GRM)* — used by Franko and Witko (2023) to model the social class of each respondent.

That method essentially posits that there is something real out there called “class,” but it’s not something we can directly observe. Some other things that we do observe, like income, educational attainment, and occupational class, are related to class, and the relationship between those variables can tell us something about the **“true” underlying class** that we don’t directly observe.<sup>4</sup>

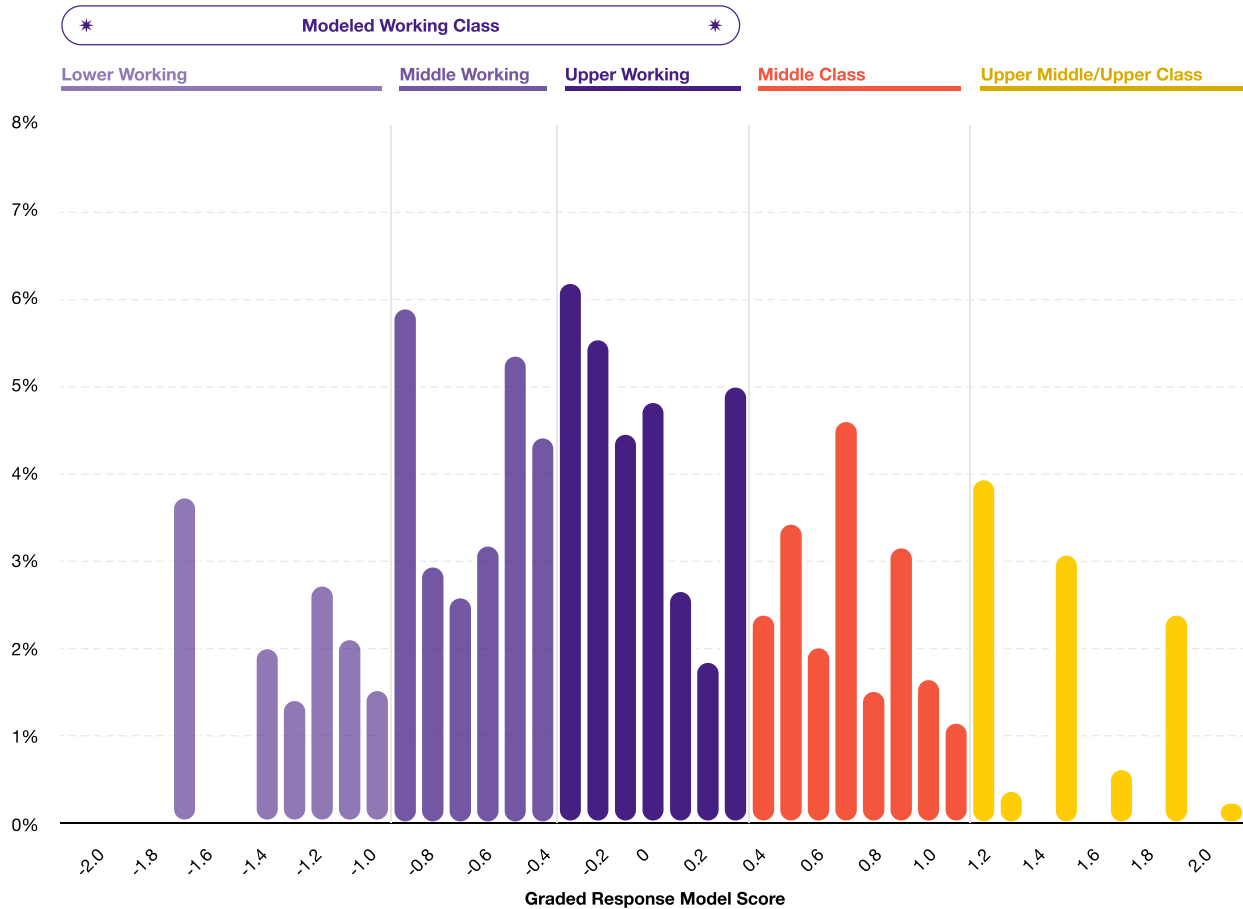
Figure 02 →



<sup>4</sup> Income, educational attainment, and occupational class are certainly not the only possible pieces of information about an individual that indicate their “true” underlying class. This model does not incorporate intergenerational wealth (or debt) or asset ownership, and therefore is also silent on questions of inheritance. It does not adjust income for cost of living or for life cycle earnings. It does not take into account individuals’ class upbringing, which powerfully shapes life chances and also one’s perception of one’s own social class. The incorporation of additional variables, as well as adjustments to certain variables, could make the model more accurate. However, there is also a trade-off in terms of space in a polling instrument for collecting additional data, as well as challenges relating to coding data, all of which make the model harder and therefore more costly to employ and especially to replicate. We feel that the method we chose strikes a good balance. It substantially improves over polling industry practice, and it can be replicated at reasonable cost and effort.



Figure 03 ↓



Methodology

This model outputs a single “score” that runs from low to high. **Using k-means clustering** (a standard method for grouping sets of observations), we divided this series into five class “bins.”

Based on our own observations of the **income, education, and occupational class levels** that respondents in the five bins tended to have, and in order to maximize comparability with the polling industry standard definition of class, we opted to treat the bottom three “bins” as a single, broad “modeled working class.”

We labeled the fourth bin “modeled middle class,” and we labeled the fifth bin “**modeled upper middle/upper class,**” which in the remainder of this report we will refer to as the “upper class” for ease of presentation.<sup>5</sup>

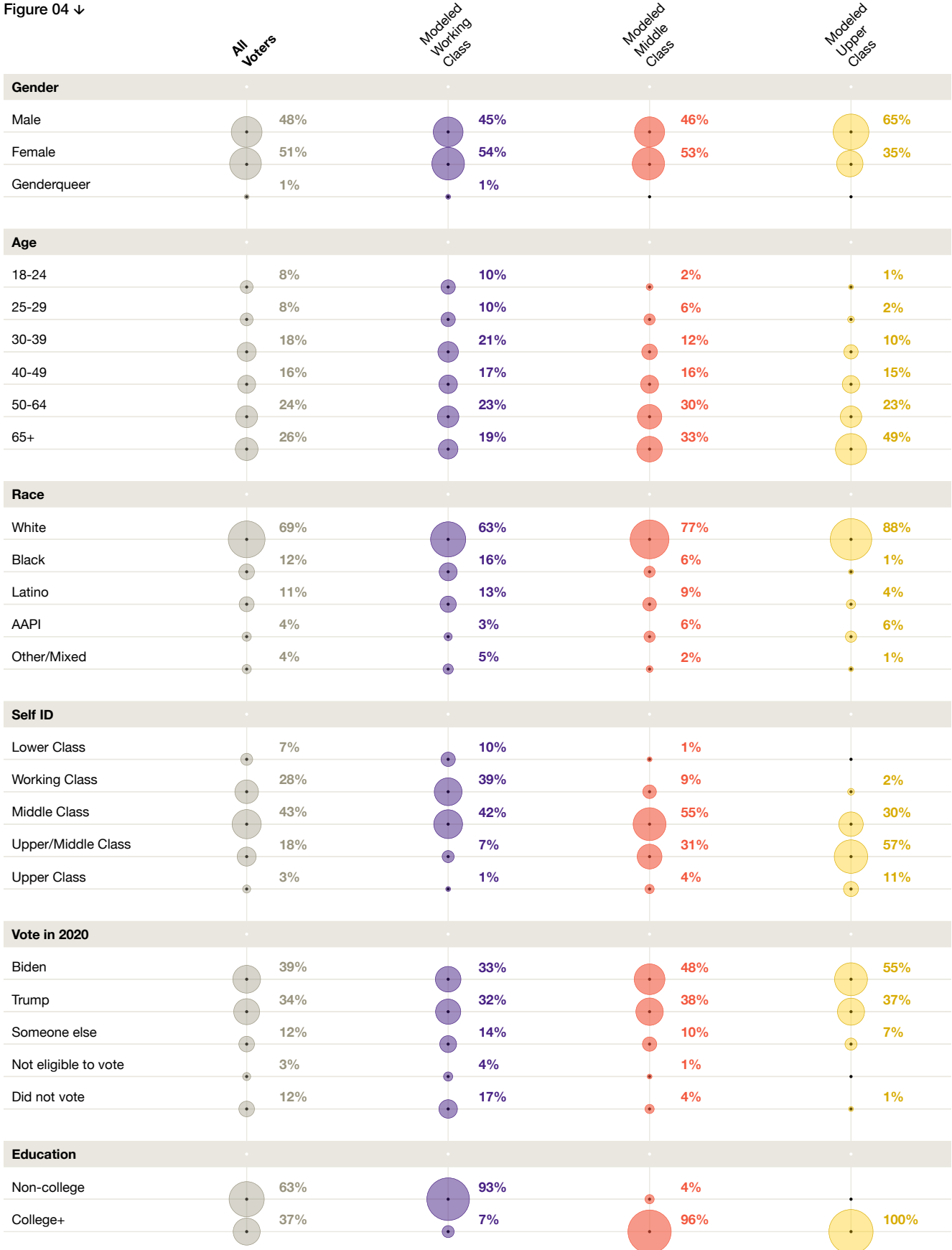
In a second phase of analysis, we performed a **clustering analysis** to understand the distinct ideological profiles within the modeled working class. We discuss the statistical methods we employed and the findings of that part of the analysis later in the report.

<sup>5</sup> If we had a much larger sample, it might have been possible to divide the highest bin further into an upper middle class and a true upper class. However, the true upper class is too small in our sample to be able to make statistically meaningful observations about it.



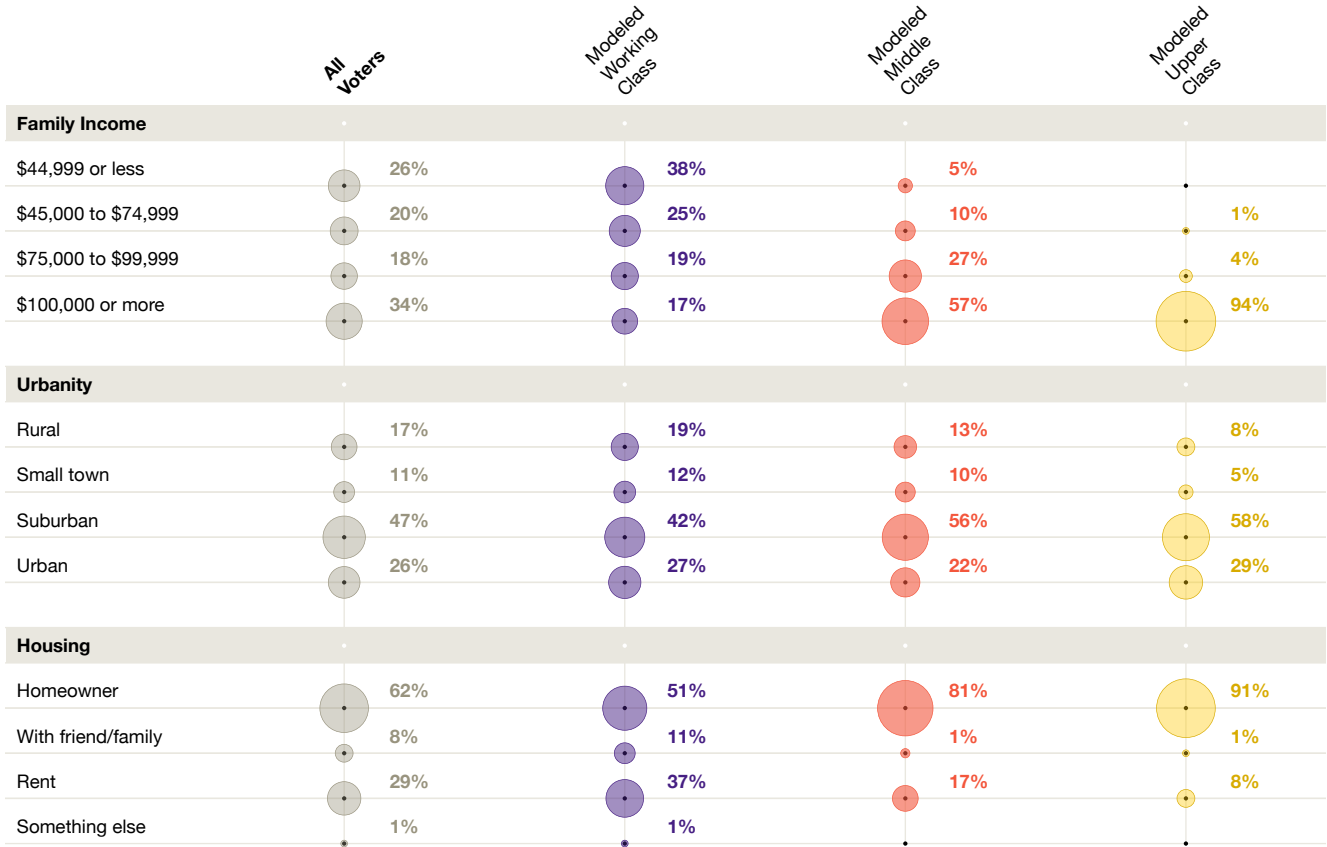
# 4 / DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT OF THREE CLASSES

Figure 04 ↓



Demographic Snapshot of Three Classes





There are notable demographic differences across our modeled classes.

# THE MODELED WORKING CLASS IS MORE RACIALLY DIVERSE THAN THE MODELED MIDDLE & UPPER CLASSES

The modeled working class is more racially diverse than the modeled middle and upper classes. The modeled working class is also younger than the other two modeled classes (perhaps in part reflecting the fact that younger individuals tend to have lower incomes and less prestigious occupations). In terms of urbanity, the working class is more urban (27% vs. 23% for non-WC); substantially less suburban (42% for WC vs. 56% for middle and upper); more small town (12% for WC vs. 8% for middle and upper); and more rural (19% for WC vs. 12% for middle and upper). It is possible that cost of living has some effect on these numbers, with low cost of living leading to overcounting





the rural working class vs. high cost of living undercounting the urban working class.

Unsurprisingly, **we see very large differences across classes in terms of how people view their own class position.** Using a slightly adapted version of the categories used for decades by the General Social Survey, we found that roughly half of our modeled working class identifies as lower or working class and roughly half identifies as middle class or above. Only 10% of the modeled middle class identifies as lower or working class. And only 2% of the modeled upper class identifies as working class (0% identifies as lower class).

The modeled working class is similar to voters without a college degree nationally. Yet the differences illustrate the importance of this method. Though they are small in number (~1% of the weighted sample), those voters

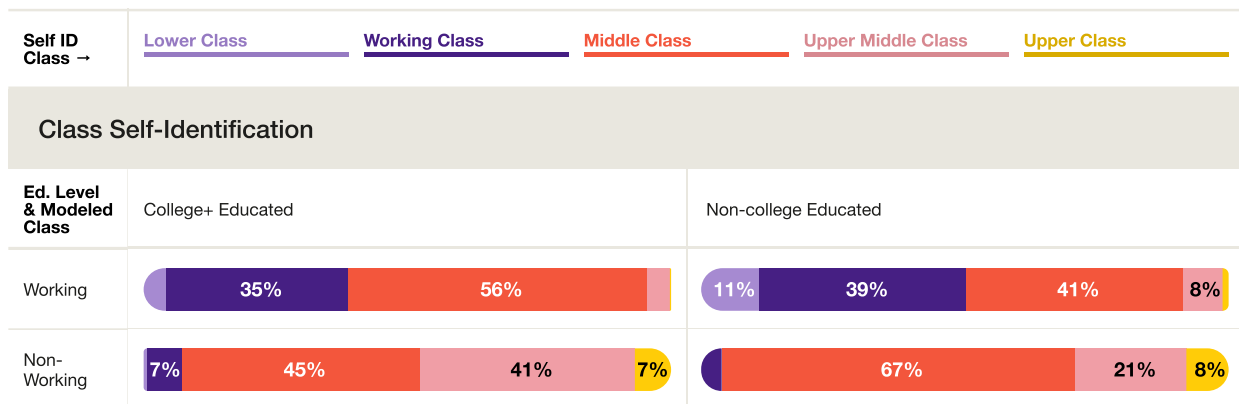
who do not have a college degree but are not included in our modeled working class, because they have higher household incomes and/or higher status occupations, appear to be more ideologically conservative than voters who do not have a college degree who are included in our modeled working class. Conversely, voters who do have a college degree and are included in our modeled working class (~4.5% of the weighted sample) are more progressive than those voters who have a college degree and are not included in our modeled working class.

Thus the effect of these admittedly small divergences from a schema simply based on the presence or absence of a college degree is to model a working class that is more progressive than would be the case if we treated it as synonymous with the absence of a four-year degree, and to model a middle and upper middle/upper class that is more

**➊ Modeled working class voters with a college degree have class self-identification similar to modeled working class voters without a college degree.**

**➋ Modeled non-working class voters without a college degree have class self-identification similar to modeled non-working class voters with a college degree.**

Figure 05 →

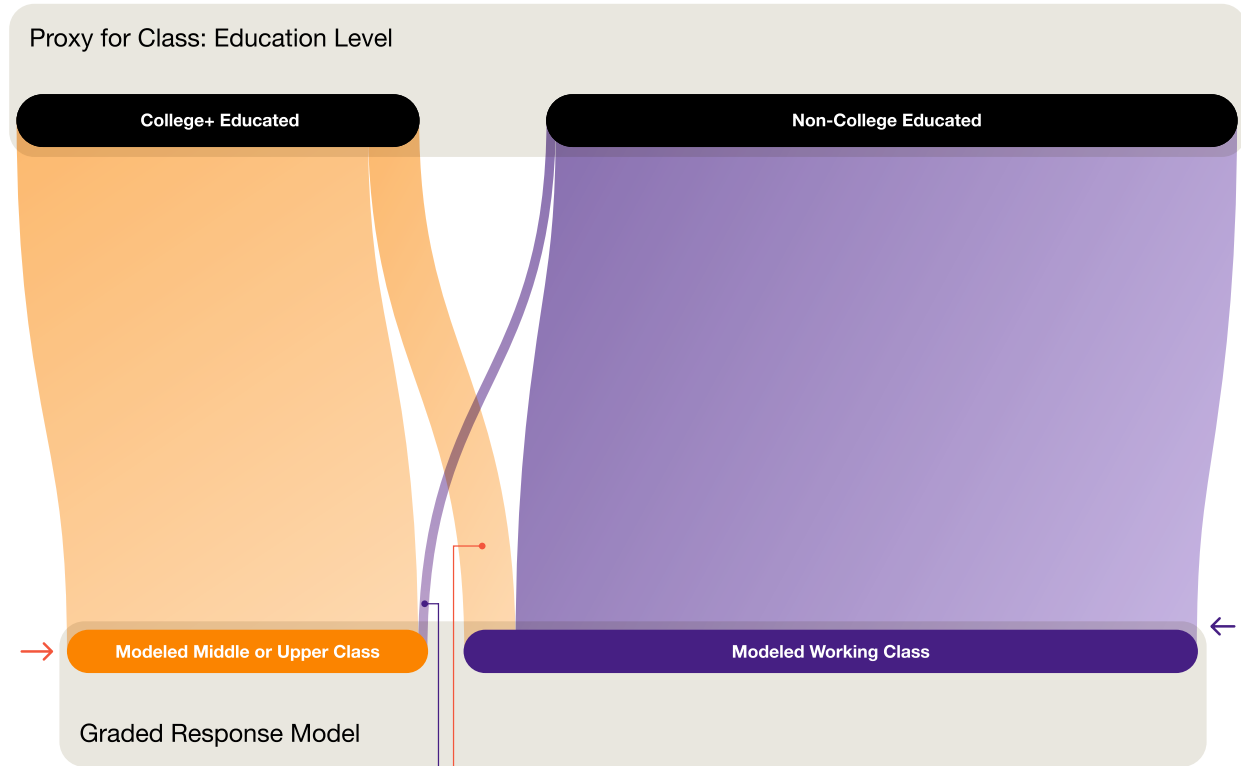


conservative than would be the case if we treated it as synonymous with the presence of a four-year degree.

As a simple robustness check for this method, **we can look at respondents' class self-identification.** Among modeled working class voters without a college degree, 50% identify as lower or working class, and 50% identify as middle, upper middle, or upper class. Among modeled non-working class voters without a college degree, only 4% identify as working class, and 96% identify as middle class or above. Among modeled working class voters with a college degree,

39% identify as working class or below, and 60% identify as middle class or above. Among modeled non-working class voters with a college degree, 8% identify as working class or below, and 92% identify as middle class or above. The college-educated voters we have modeled as belonging to the working class look much more similar to non-college working class voters than they do to college-educated non-working class voters. And the non-college voters we have modeled as not belonging to the working class look much more similar to college educated voters not in the working class than they do to non college educated voters in the working class.

Figure 06 ↓



More conservative non-college educated voters included in our middle or upper class result in a more conservative class than would be the case if we treated it as synonymous with the presence of a four-year degree.

More progressive college+ educated voters included in our modeled working class result in a more progressive class than would be the case if we treated it as synonymous with the absence of a four-year degree.





# 5 / FINDINGS ACROSS CLASS

# 5.1. HOW DIFFERENT CLASSES VOTED IN 2020

📌 **The middle and upper classes strongly favored Biden over Trump in 2020, while the working class was split, with high abstention rates.**

This is very important to note from the start: the working class does appear to tilt to the political right relative to the middle and

upper classes, or, perhaps more accurately, **the middle and especially the upper middle classes appear to tilt to the political left**

Figure 07 →

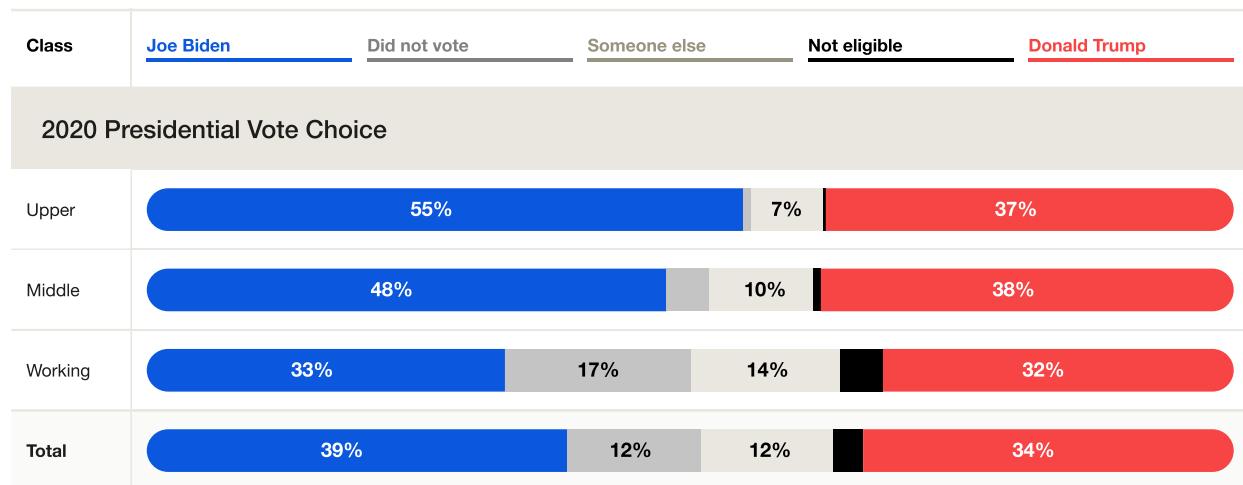
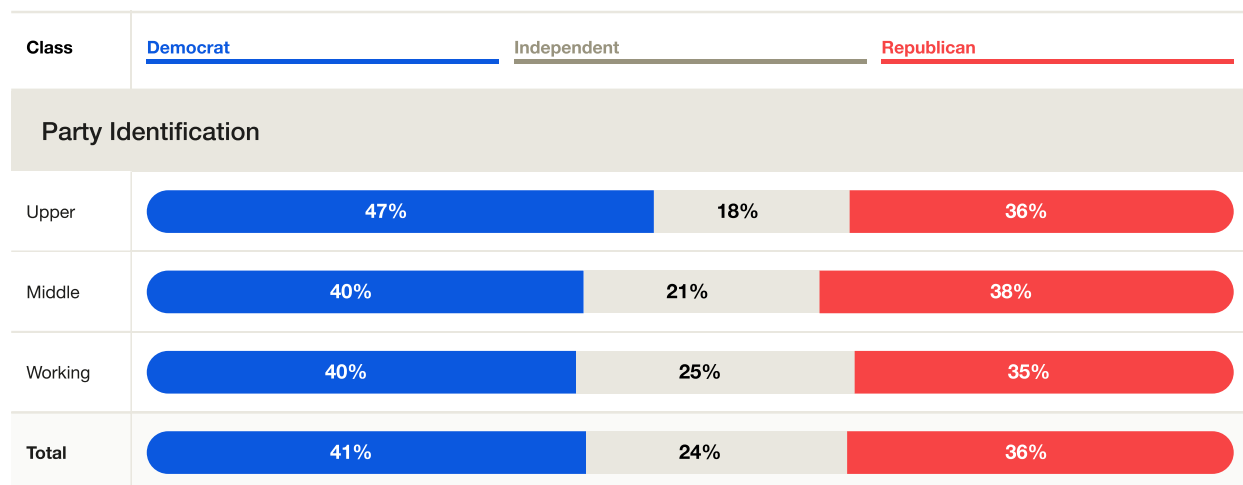


Figure 08 →



Findings Across Class



relative to the working class.<sup>6</sup>

This is also visible in party ID, where the

Democratic edge is largest among the upper middle/upper class.

## 5.2. CLASS & ECONOMIC FAIRNESS QUESTIONS

🗳️ **We see large differences between classes on topics relating to class, economic fairness and distribution, where the working class is uniformly to the left of the middle and upper classes.**

By far the biggest differences in attitudes and values that we observe between the three classes we modeled are on questions relating to the **class structure, distribution of wealth, and economic fairness of life** in America. Simply put, the working class is vastly more likely than the middle and especially the upper class to believe that **economic life** in America is **fundamentally unfair**.

### 5.2.1. Benefits & Pay for Workers

For example, the single biggest class divide we saw on any question in our poll was in reaction to the statement **“Workers in this country generally get the pay and benefits they deserve.”** Working class respondents disagreed with this statement by a net of 36 percentage points. Upper class respondents agreed with it by a net of 21 percentage points, for a swing of 57 points between classes. The difference between classes on

this question is larger than the difference between parties: self-identified Democrats disagreed by a net of 39 percentage points, while self-identified Republicans agreed by a net of 6 percentage points, for a swing of 45 points. We saw similar gulfs between classes in response to statements like, **“In America today, one of our biggest problems is the lack of jobs with good pay, benefits, and opportunities for advancement.”**

<sup>6</sup> Working class respondents were also much more likely to say that they voted for “someone else” in 2020. Based on the actual election results, it is not possible that 14% of working class respondents voted for someone other than Joe Biden or Donald Trump in 2020. It is impossible to say with certainty, but we suspect that many of these respondents simply did not wish to say who they voted for, or did not wish to express that they did not cast a vote. 49% of them are true independents, 24% are Democrats or Democratic leaners, and 26% are Republicans or Republican leaners. 57% are self-described moderates and almost exactly equivalent numbers self-describe as either liberal or conservative. If we had to guess, we would say that slightly more of these voters went for Trump over Biden.



Figure 09 ↓

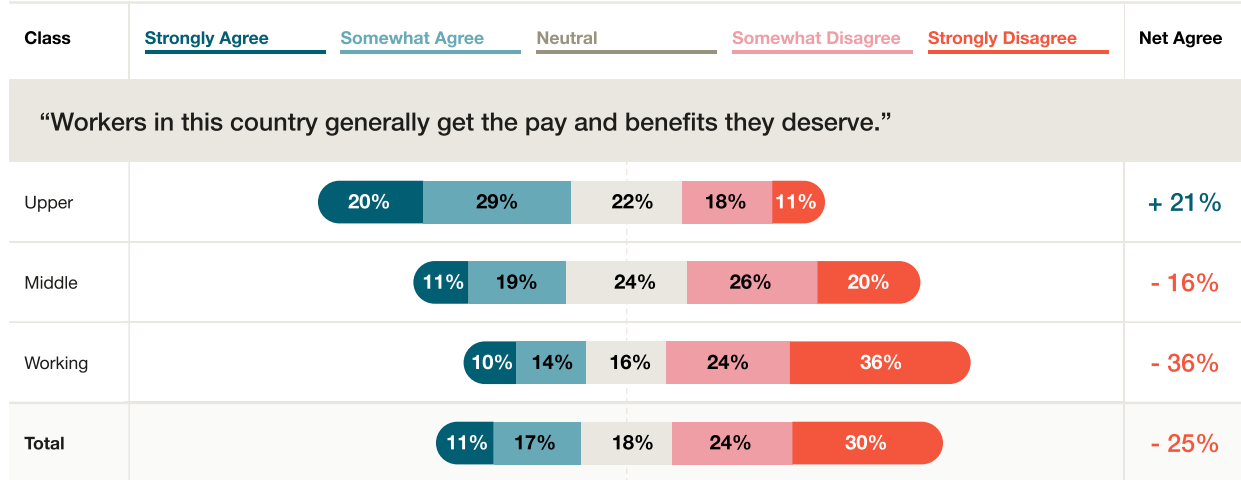
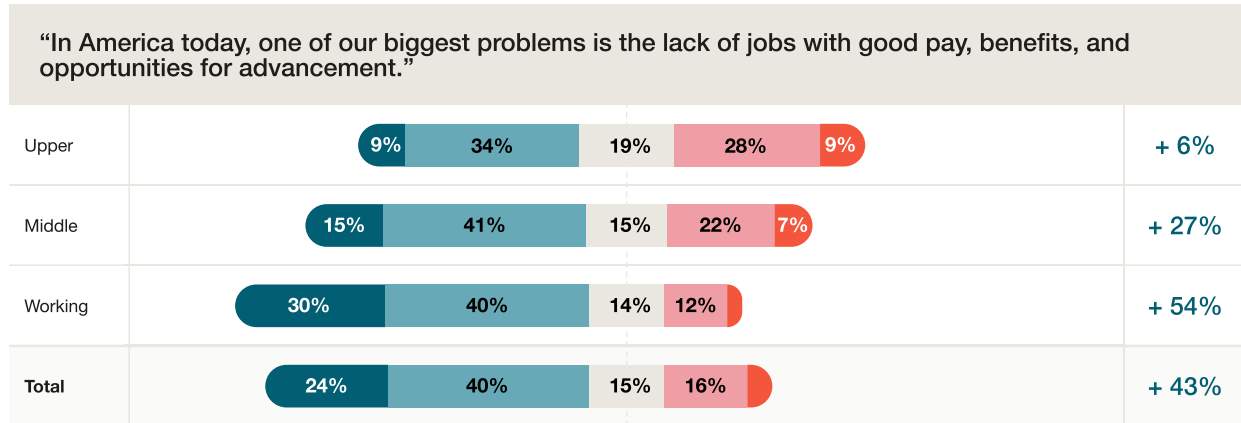


Figure 10 ↓



Findings Across Class

### 5.2.2. Economic Policy

We also saw huge gaps in favorability towards four very **progressive economic policies** that emerged as particularly compelling to working class voters from qualitative research we did prior to this poll.

#### 📍 The working class is much more supportive of bold progressive policies.

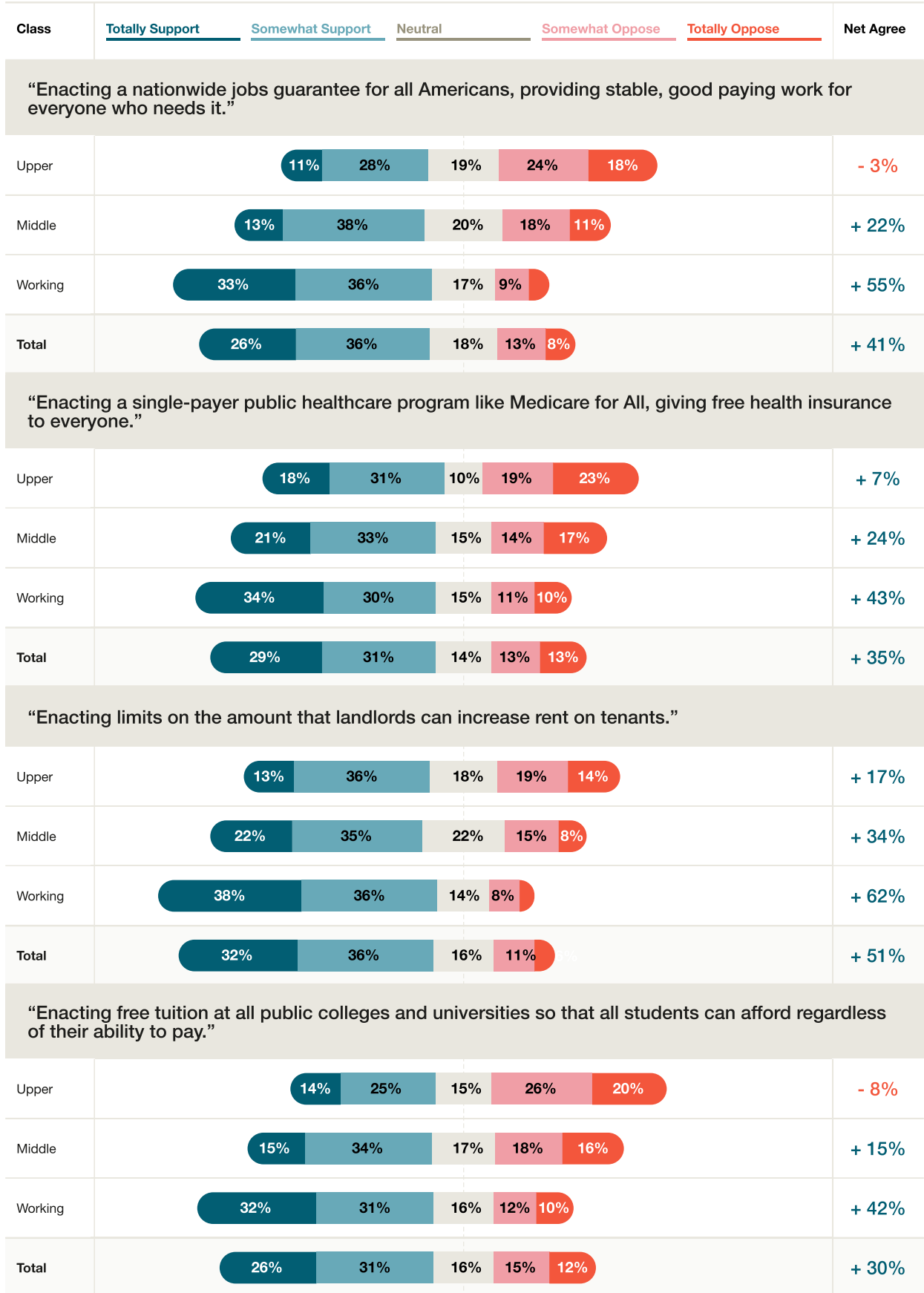
*The modeled working class supports a jobs guarantee by net 55 points, while the modeled upper class opposes it by net 3 points, for a difference of 58 points.*

*A Medicare for All, single-payer healthcare system is +43 among the working class, +7 among the upper class, for a swing of 37 points.*

*Modeled working class voters support rent controls by net 62 points, compared to +17 among modeled upper class voters, for a swing of 45 points.*



Figure 11 →



Findings Across Class





*And modeled working class voters support free college by net 42 points, while upper class voters oppose it by net 8 points, for a differential of 50 points.*

*For both jobs guarantee and rent controls, the difference between classes is larger than the difference between parties.*

## 5.3. SOCIAL & CULTURAL QUESTIONS

🗳️ **Differences between classes are much smaller on social and cultural questions compared to economic fairness questions, and they do not uniformly point to a working class that is more socially and culturally conservative than the middle and upper classes.**

### 5.3.1. Immigration

On immigration, where one would expect big differences by class, we saw **much smaller differences** than on questions of economic fairness, and the **upper classes were not uniformly more progressive**.

*The biggest class gaps we saw were in response to the statement “Through their hard work, taxes, and other contributions, most immigrants make America stronger,” where all respondents agreed by a net of 53 points, but upper class voters agreed by net 65 points while working class voters agreed by net 49 points.*

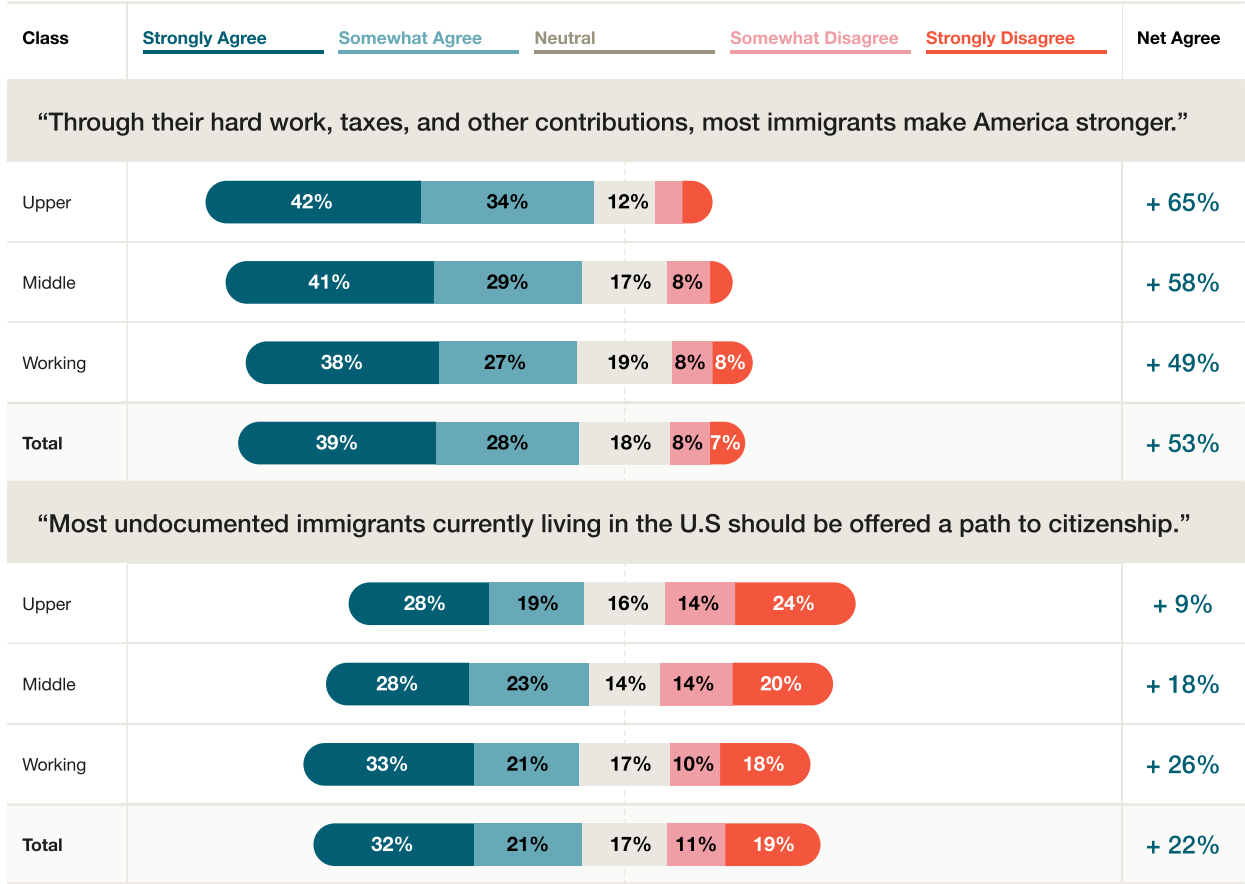
*However, on the question of a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, all voters favor it by net 22 points, but working class voters favor it by 26 points and upper class voters only by 9.*

*And this is not simply a function of the fact that the modeled working class has a much higher percentage of voters of color. White upper class voters were 18 points more favorable towards immigrants’ contributions than white working class voters. But white working class voters were 12 points more supportive of a path to citizenship than white upper class voters.*

*These differences in attitudes between classes pale in comparison to the partisan differences on these questions.*



Figure 12 ↓

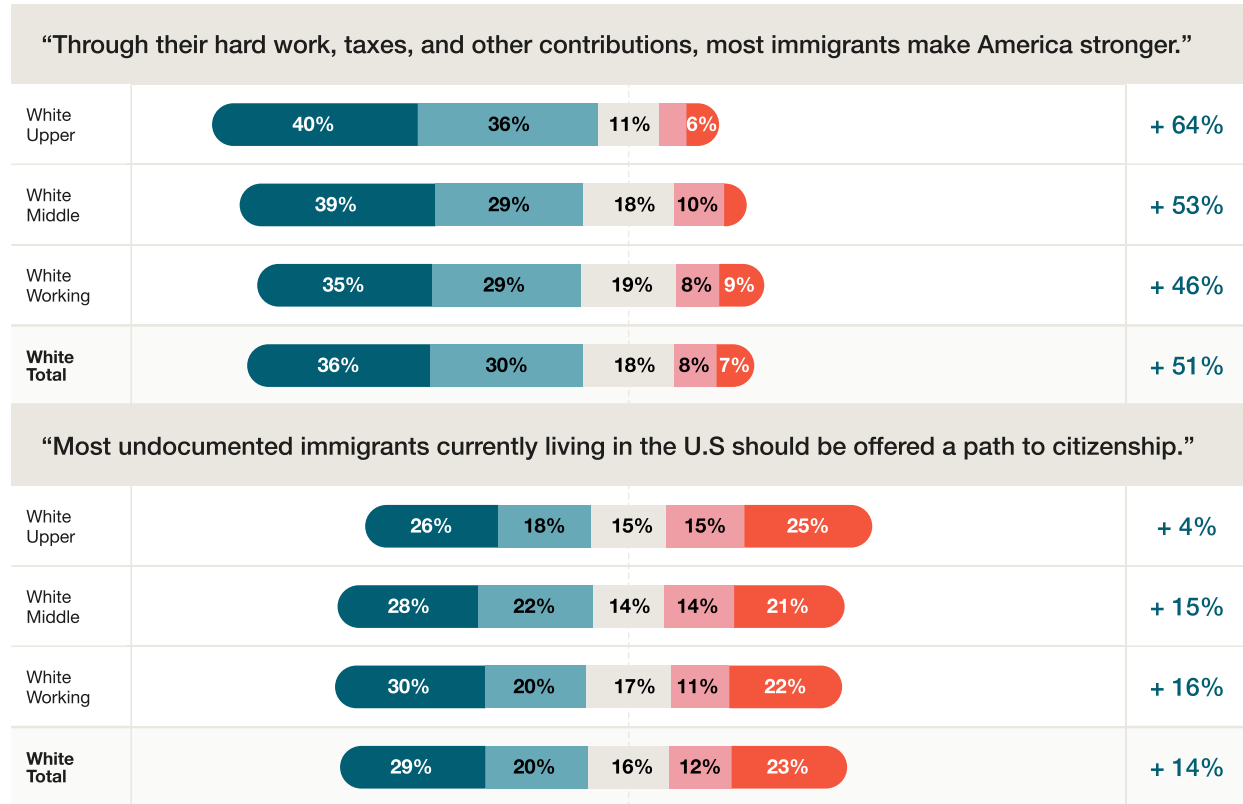


Findings Across Class



**👉 This is true even when looking just at white voters.**

Figure 13 ↓

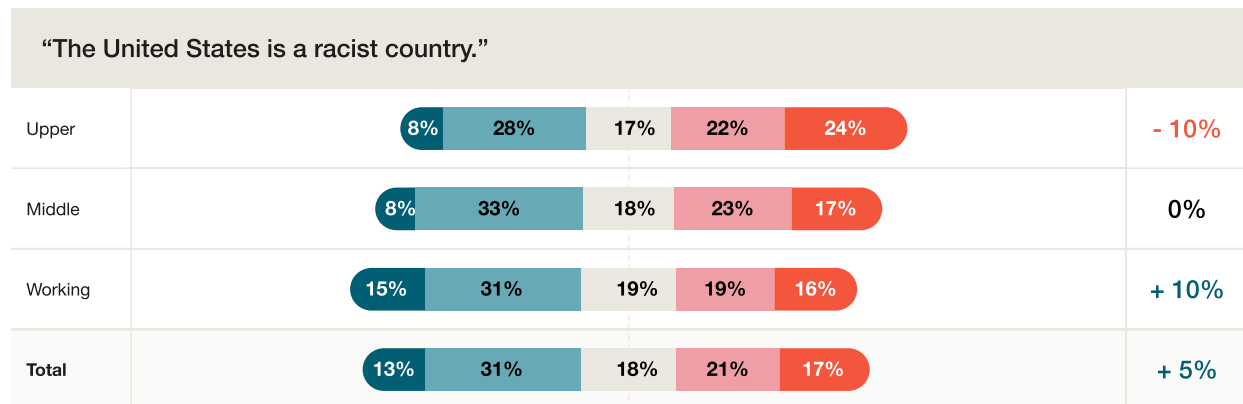


Findings Across Class

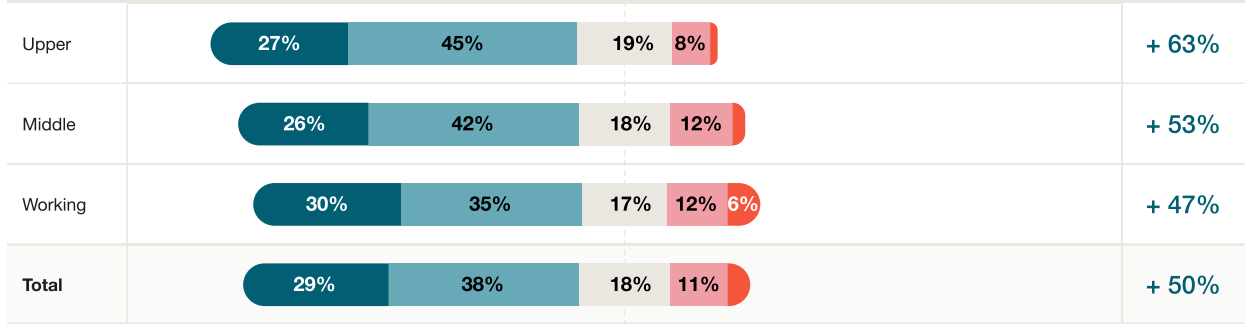
**5.3.2. Nationalism**

**👉 The working class is mostly less nationalistic than the middle and upper classes.**

Figure 14 ↓



“America must remain the world’s greatest military power, no matter the cost.”



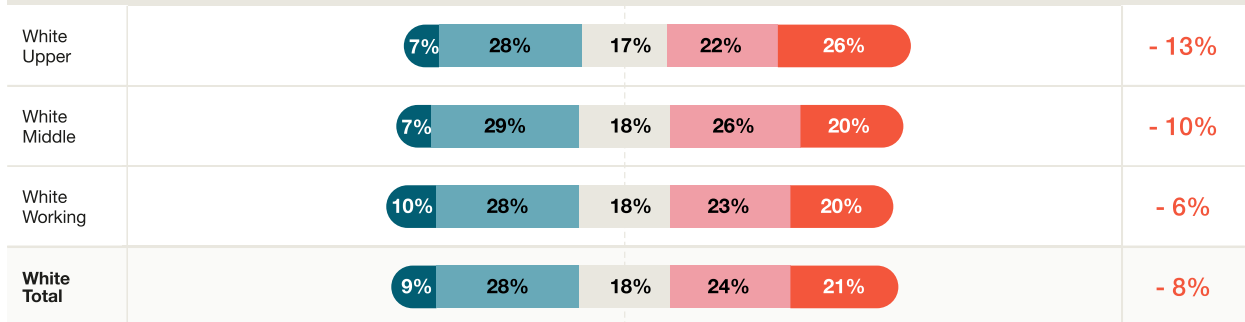
We found that the **working class was, if anything, slightly less nationalistic** than the upper classes. For example, working class respondents narrowly agreed with the statement that **“The United States is a racist country.”** Upper class respondents disagreed.

And while white working class voters disagreed with this statement, they did so by a narrower margin than white upper class voters. Working class voters were also slightly less likely to agree with the statement **“America must remain the world’s greatest military power, no matter the cost.”**

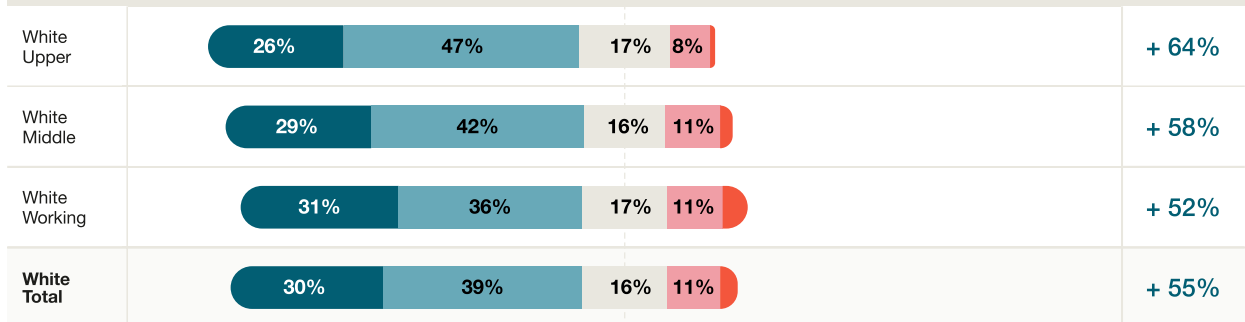
📍 This is true even when looking just at white voters.

Figure 15 →

“The United States is a racist country.”



“America must remain the world’s greatest military power, no matter the cost.”



### 5.3.3. Racial Resentment

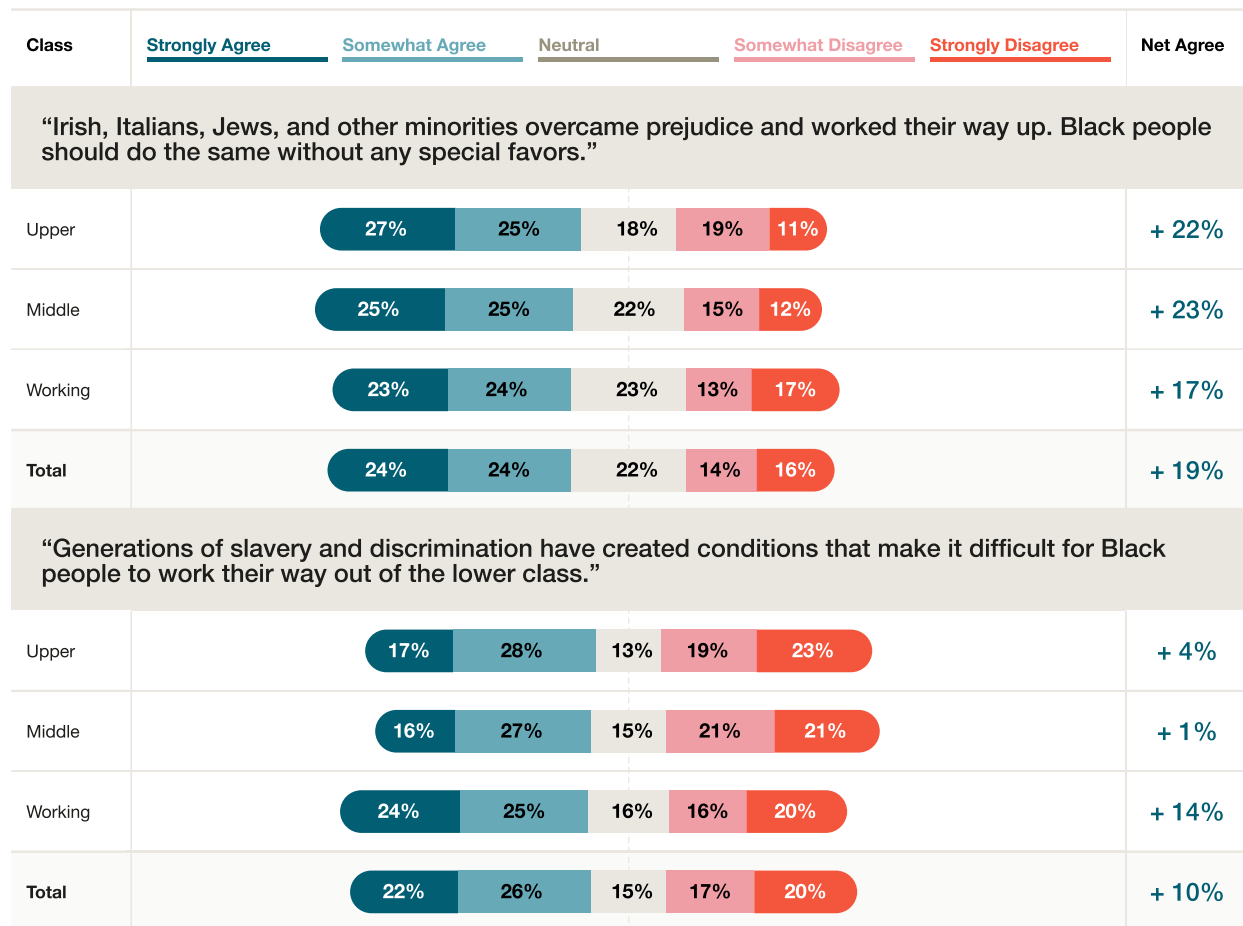
We found that the working class was slightly less racially resentful than the upper classes, for example agreeing by smaller margins than the upper class that **“Irish, Italians, Jews, and other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Black people should do the same without any special favors,”** and agreeing by larger margins that **“Generations of slavery and discrimination have created**

**conditions that make it difficult for Black people to work their way out of the lower class.”**

However, on both of these questions, white working class voters display slightly higher levels of resentment than white upper class voters, though the differences are small and are dwarfed by partisan differences.

**📍 The working class is mostly less racially resentful than the middle and upper classes.**

Figure 16 ↓

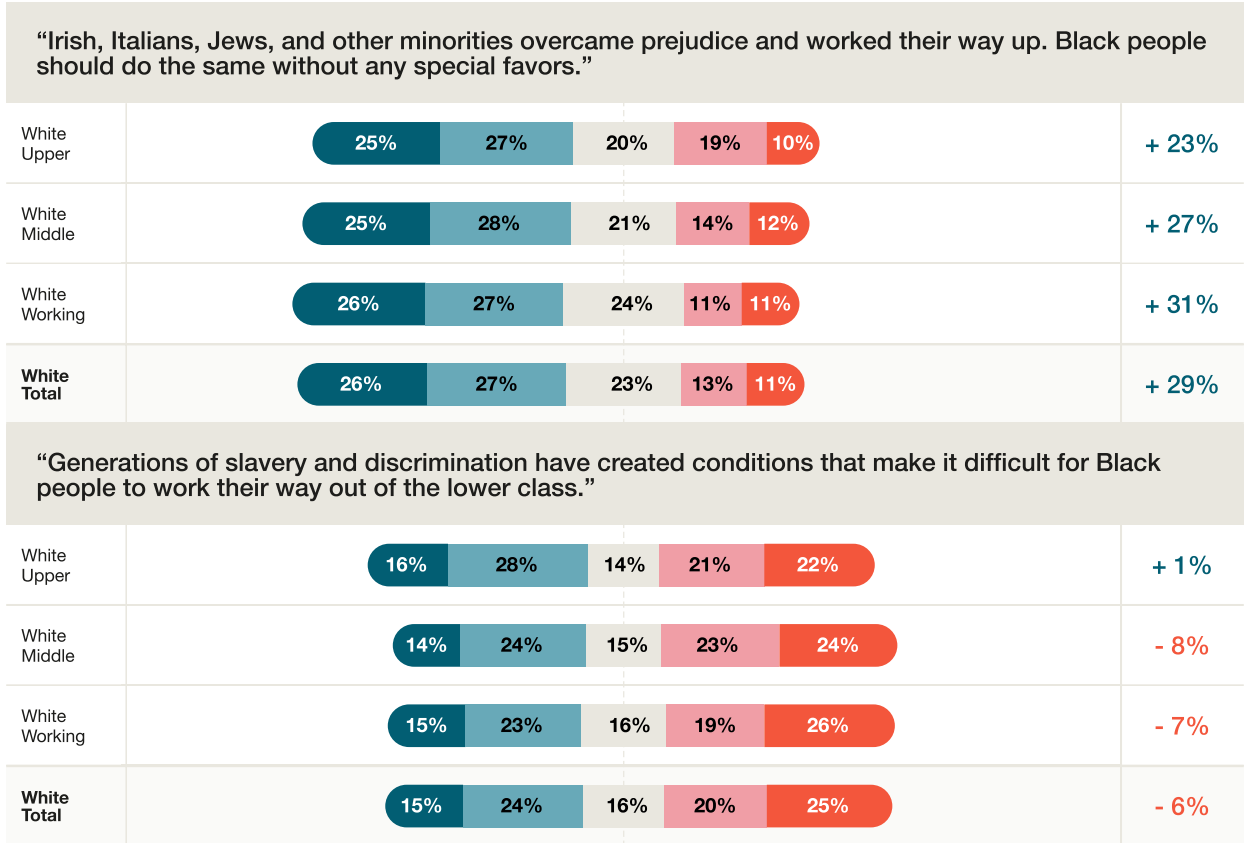


Findings Across Class



🔴 However, the white working class is slightly more racially resentful than the white middle and upper classes.

Figure 17 ↓



Findings Across Class

5.3.4. Sexism

🔴 The working class is more likely than the middle class to agree with sexist statements. (The upper class is, too.)

Figure 18 ↓

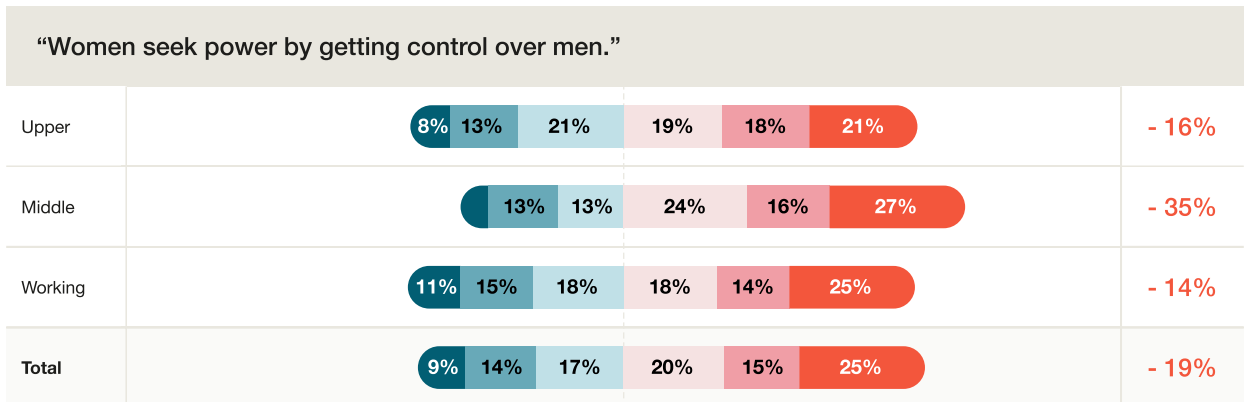
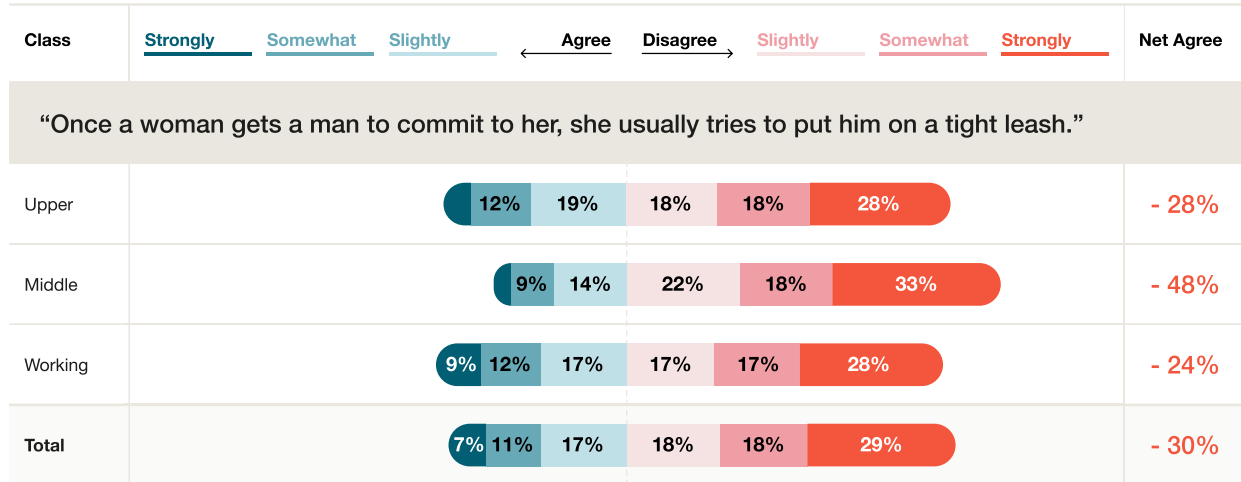


Figure 19 ↓



We found somewhat larger differences between classes in response to so-called **hostile sexism** statements, with both working class and upper class voters appearing more conservative than middle class voters. For example, both working and upper class voters disagreed by smaller margins than the middle class with the statement **"Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to get him on a tight leash."** Working class respondents disagreed by net 24 points, while middle class respondents disagreed by net 48 points, for a swing of 24 points between

classes. And working class respondents disagreed with the statement **"Women seek power by getting control over men"** by net 14 points, while middle class respondents disagreed by net 35 points, for a swing of 21 points between classes.

In both cases, **these class differences are smaller than partisan differences.** Unsurprisingly, there are gigantic gender differences on these questions; nevertheless, working class women are less likely to disagree in both cases than middle class women by roughly similar margins.

### 5.3.5. Abortion

On abortion, we found **barely any differences** between classes.

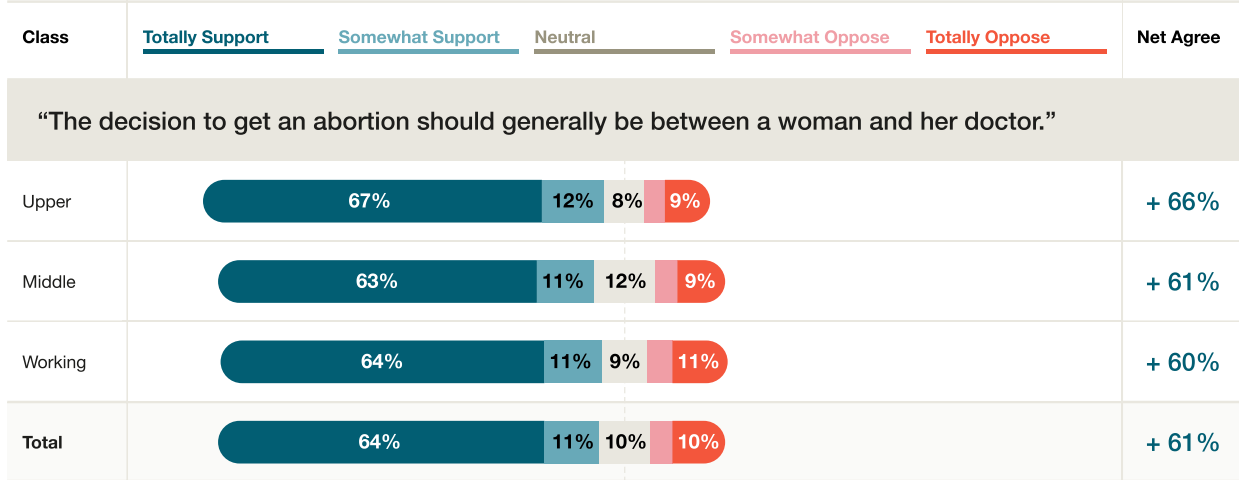
*The upper class agreed with the statement "The decision to get an abortion should generally be between a woman and her doctor" by a margin of +66. The working class agreed by a margin of +60, for a swing of only 6 points. The partisan swing on this question, by comparison, is 53 points.*

*Even on the much more ambiguous statement "I generally consider abortion to be morally wrong," the upper class disagreed by net 4 points, the working class disagreed by net 5 points, and the middle class agreed by a single point (compare with the fact that, as noted earlier, the middle class was generally less sexist than either the working class or the upper class). In contrast, there was a 76 point swing between Democrats and Republicans on this question. (Democrats disagreeing by net 40, and Republicans agreeing by net 36).*



📌 **Abortion is a winning issue across class; the working class firmly supports reproductive decisions made by a woman and her doctor.**

Figure 20 →



Findings Across Class

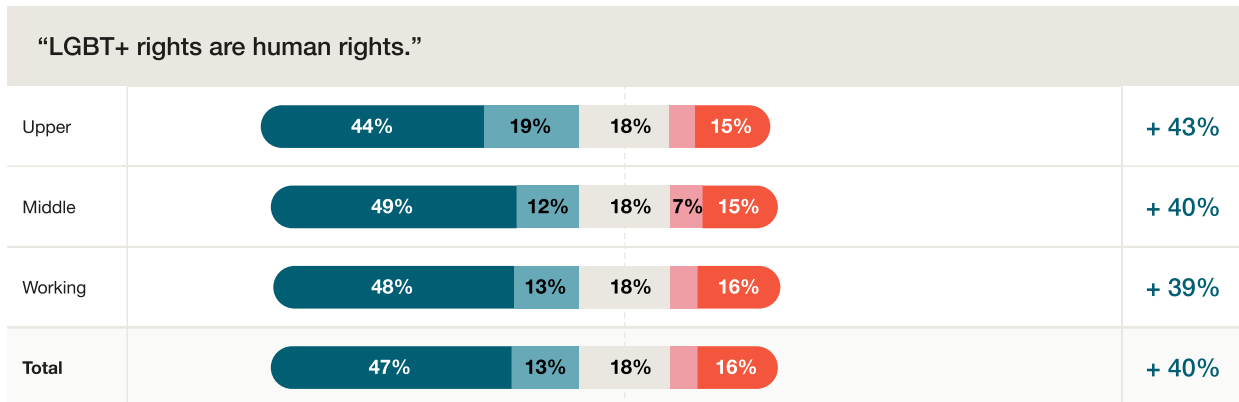
### 5.3.6. Sexuality & LGBTQ rights

We also saw **muted differences** between classes on questions of sexuality and LGBTQ rights.

*The working class agreed with the statement “LGBTQ+ rights are human rights” by net 39 points, compared to net 43 points for the upper class, a swing of only 4 points. We did find that working class respondents were slightly less likely to disagree with transphobic statements. For example, working class respondents disagreed that “Transgender people have a mental illness” by net 19 points, while both middle and upper class voters disagreed by net 27 points, for a swing of 8 points.*

*Again, and unsurprisingly, class differences are swamped by partisan differences. Democrats disagreed with this statement by net 54 points, while Republicans agreed by net 16 points, for a partisan swing of 70 — fully 10 times larger than the class differential.*

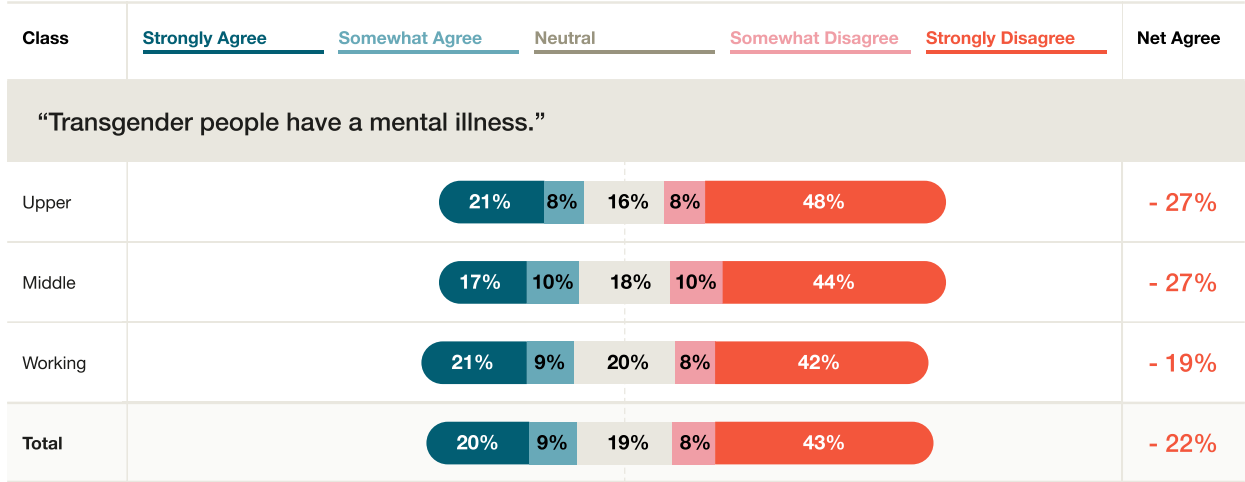
Figure 21 →





📍 The working class is indistinguishable on basic questions of LGBTQ equality. It's slightly more likely than the middle class to agree with transphobic statements.





### 5.3.7. Crime & Policing

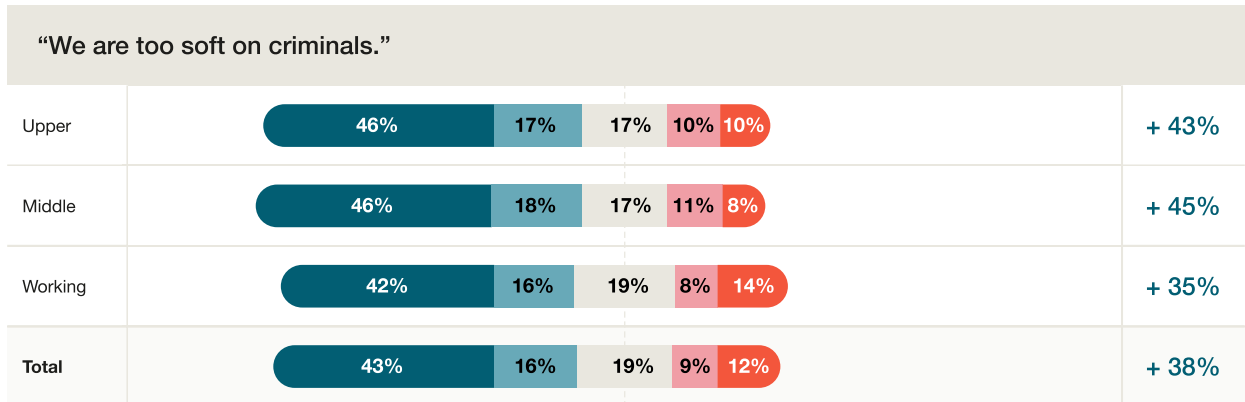
On crime and policing, the working class generally has **less punitive attitudes** than the middle and upper classes.

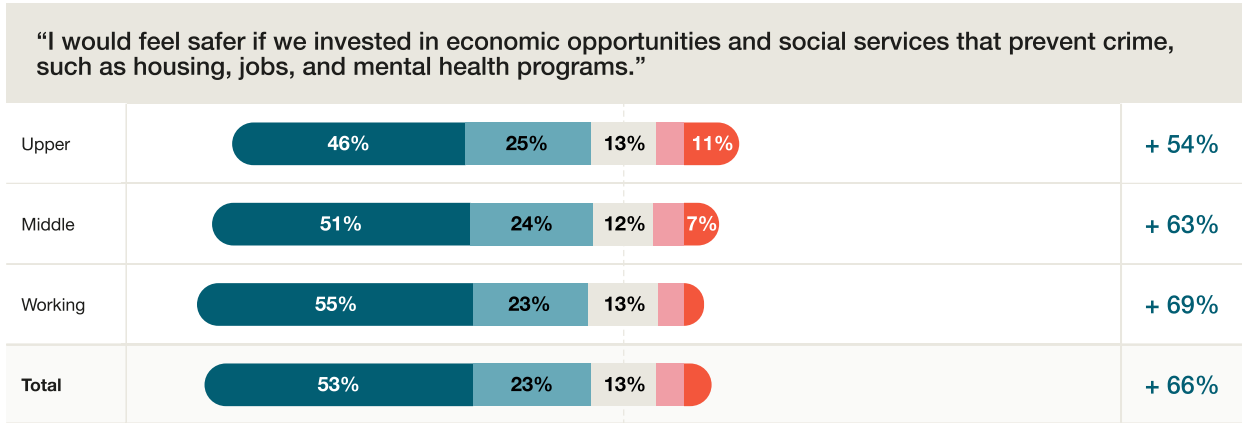
*For example, the working class agreed with the statement “We are too soft on criminals” by a slightly smaller margin than middle or upper class voters, and agreed by a larger margin with the statement “I would feel safer if we invested in economic opportunities and social services that prevent crime, such as housing, jobs, and mental health programs.”*

*Again, class differences are swamped by partisan differences.*

**📍 The working class has less punitive attitudes around crime and policing.**

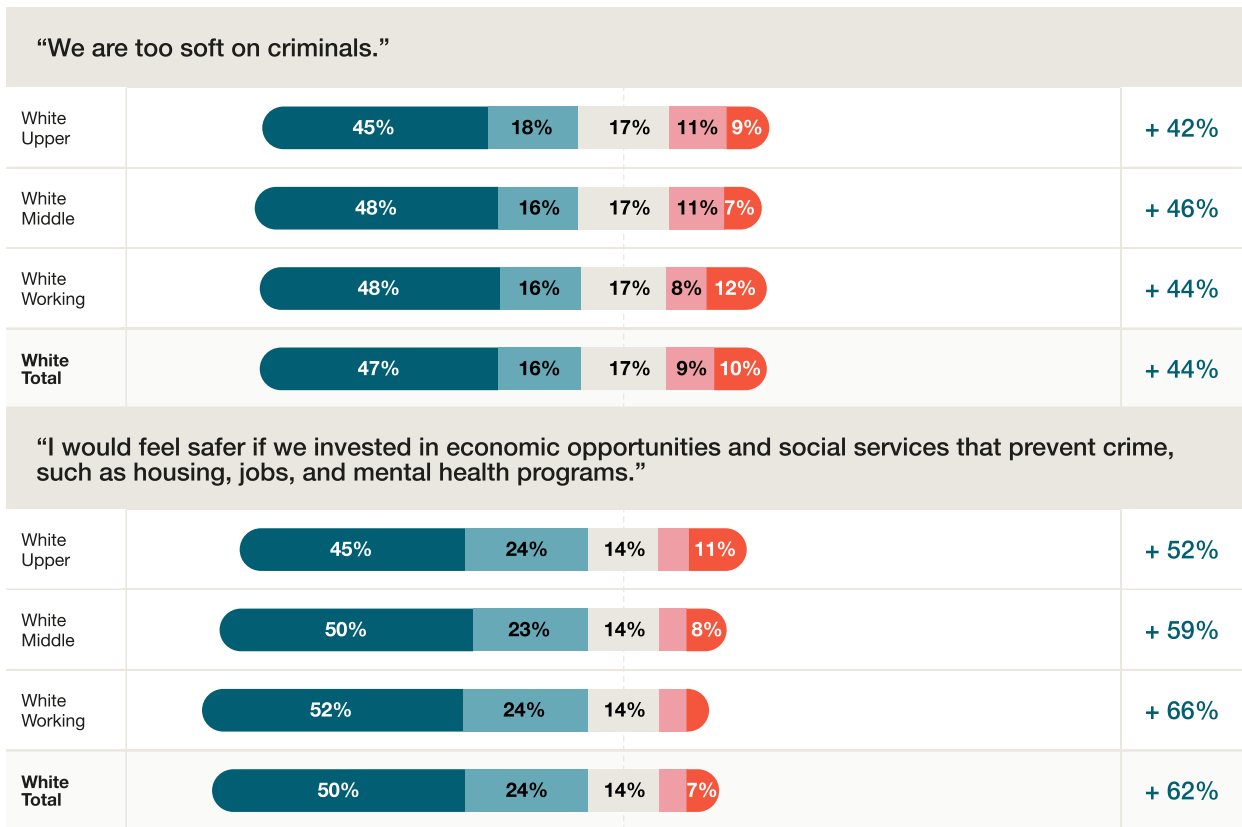
Figure 22 ↓





📍 This is true even when looking just at white voters.

Figure 23 →



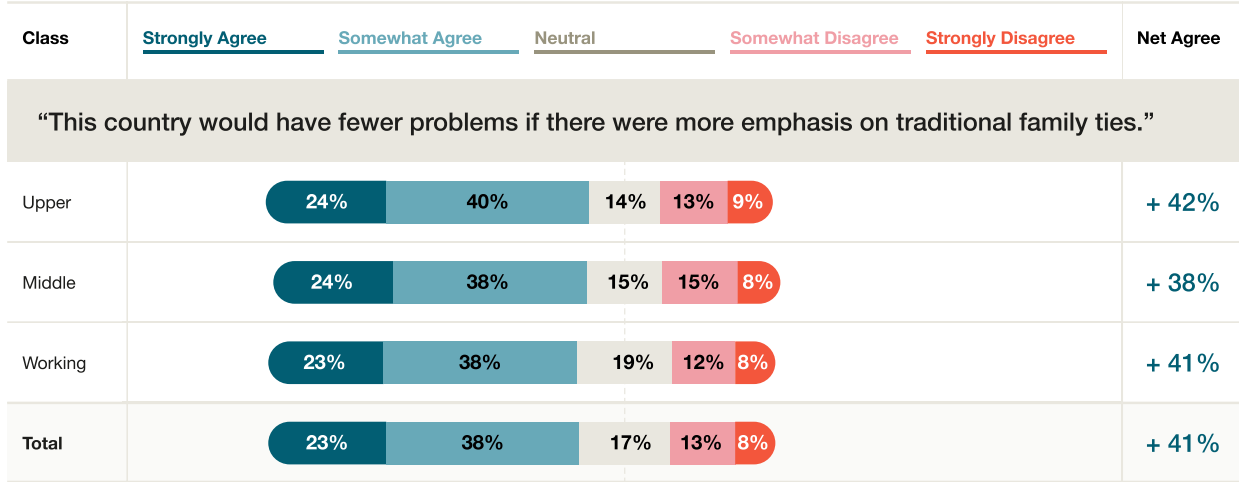
Findings Across Class

### 5.3.8. Traditional Family Ties

📍 Even on a question about the importance of 'traditional family ties,' the working class is no more conservative than other classes.



Figure 24 ↓



By net 42 points, the upper class agreed with the statement "This country would have fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties." By net 41 points, the working class agreed with this statement.

Even probing specifically for whether "wokeness" was a major factor in provoking working class voters, we found overwhelming agreement across classes that it was important to voters to "keep woke extremists out of power" when voting in 2024, but this sentiment was stronger among upper class voters than among working class voters.

Findings Across Class

## 5.4. Summary of Class Findings

Across theme after theme, **we simply do not see differences between classes that could explain a significant shift to the right among working class voters.** To reiterate, the only consistently large difference we observe between classes is that the working

class is to the left of the middle and upper classes on questions of class, distribution, and economic fairness, and indeed these are the only topics on which the differences between classes are consistently larger than the differences between parties.

### 🗳️ This is not to say that voters don't agree with certain conservative values statements.

For example, voters as a whole agreed with the statement "Our open borders are allowing drug gangs, terrorists, and other criminals to invade our country, threatening the safety of our communities and our national security" by net 31 points. Working class voters agreed by a narrower margin. Our research does not contradict other research indicating that border security is a salient issue on which the electorate tilts right.

Our point is simply that to the extent that this kind of framing resonates with voters, on the border and on other social and cultural issues like crime and policing, it is not more resonant with the working class than it is with the rest of the electorate, and in some instances is less so.





# 6 / FINDINGS WITHIN WORKING CLASS

# 6.1. OVERVIEW

## WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT THE WORKING CLASS FROM DOING CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Looking at averages across class does not give any basis for arguing that an underlying social and cultural conservatism is driving working class voters away from the Democrats, since no underlying social and cultural conservatism can be observed in the data. But at 63% of registered voters, we should hardly imagine that the working class has monolithic views on anything. Instead of assuming cleavages arise from partisanship alone, **we wanted to explore how values**

**could segment working class voters.**

We performed a **cluster analysis** to understand distinct ideological profiles within the broad working class. The cluster analysis utilizes only survey response variables as inputs, rather than demographic or partisan variables. Demographic and partisan variation across clusters is therefore purely an output of the exercise. **As a result, none of the clusters are homogenous in demographic or partisan terms.** What unites people in the different clusters is that their answers to a set of worldview questions are similar to people in the same clusters as them, and different from people in other clusters.

**The cluster analysis ultimately drew on roughly 40 of our non-demographic survey response questions to sort respondents into the seven clusters.** Recognizing that a 40+ question series is unwieldy for future use, we were able to isolate using linear discriminant analysis a series of 10 questions that assigns individuals to the correct cluster 83% of the time.

Findings within Working Class

## THE 10 PREDICTIVE QUESTIONS ↘

#01

*No matter how frequently you vote in elections, how much power do you feel that your vote has to make a positive impact on issues you care about?*

#02

*We are too soft on criminals.*



#03

*I would feel safer if we invested in more police and law enforcement.*

#04

*Enacting a single-payer public healthcare program like Medicare for All, giving free health insurance to everyone.*

#05

*Enacting a nationwide jobs guarantee for all Americans, providing stable, good-paying work for everyone who needs it.*

#06

*Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.*

#07

*When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.*

#08

*Transgender people have a mental illness.*

#09

*LGBTQ+ rights are human rights.*

#10

*If America is too open to people from all over the world, we risk losing who we are as a nation.*

Our analysis identified **seven working class clusters**, which we've labeled *Next Gen Left*, *Mainstream Liberals*, *Tuned Out Persuadables*, *Anti-Woke Traditionalists*, *Secure Suburban Moderates*, *Diverse Disaffected Conservatives*, and *Core MAGA*.

**Looking first at demographics and partisanship across clusters, it's clear that there are sharp differences between them.** To reiterate, the inputs to the cluster

model are values-based questions around immigration, sexism, sexuality, broad progressive policies, economics, crime and criminal justice, vote power, and nationalism, not demographic or partisanship variables. That means that stark differences in the age composition of different clusters (for example) reflects the fact that certain attitudes are disproportionately held by younger people and other attitudes are disproportionately held by older people.





**We see large differences across clusters in terms of gender, race, age, and urbanity.** We also see class and economic differences, even though the clusters are limited to those we have defined as belonging to the working class. In terms of gender, at one extreme, Diverse Disaffected Conservatives are 38% female. At the other extreme, Mainstream Liberals are 71% female. With age, 75% of the Core MAGA segment is 50 or above and only 15% is below 40, as opposed to the Next Gen Left segment, where only 18% is 50 or above, and fully 66% is below 40. Looking at race, fully 86% of the Core MAGA segment is white, compared to only 46% of the Diverse Disaffected Conservatives. Looking at indications of economic differences within

the working class, 46% of both Diverse Disaffected Conservatives and Tuned Out Persuadables have family incomes below \$45,000, while for the Core MAGA cluster that proportion is only 27%. Only 30% of the Next Gen Left cluster are homeowners, as opposed to 75% of the Core MAGA cluster. 47% of the Secure Suburban Moderates and Anti-Woke Traditionalists believe they will be able to retire in relative comfort, vs. only 15% of the Next Gen Left and 19% of the Tuned Out Persuadables. **Two of these clusters are predominantly made up of Democratic partisans. One of them is predominantly made up of Republican partisans. The other four are genuinely cross-pressured, both in terms of partisanship and 2020 vote choice, and in terms of worldview.**

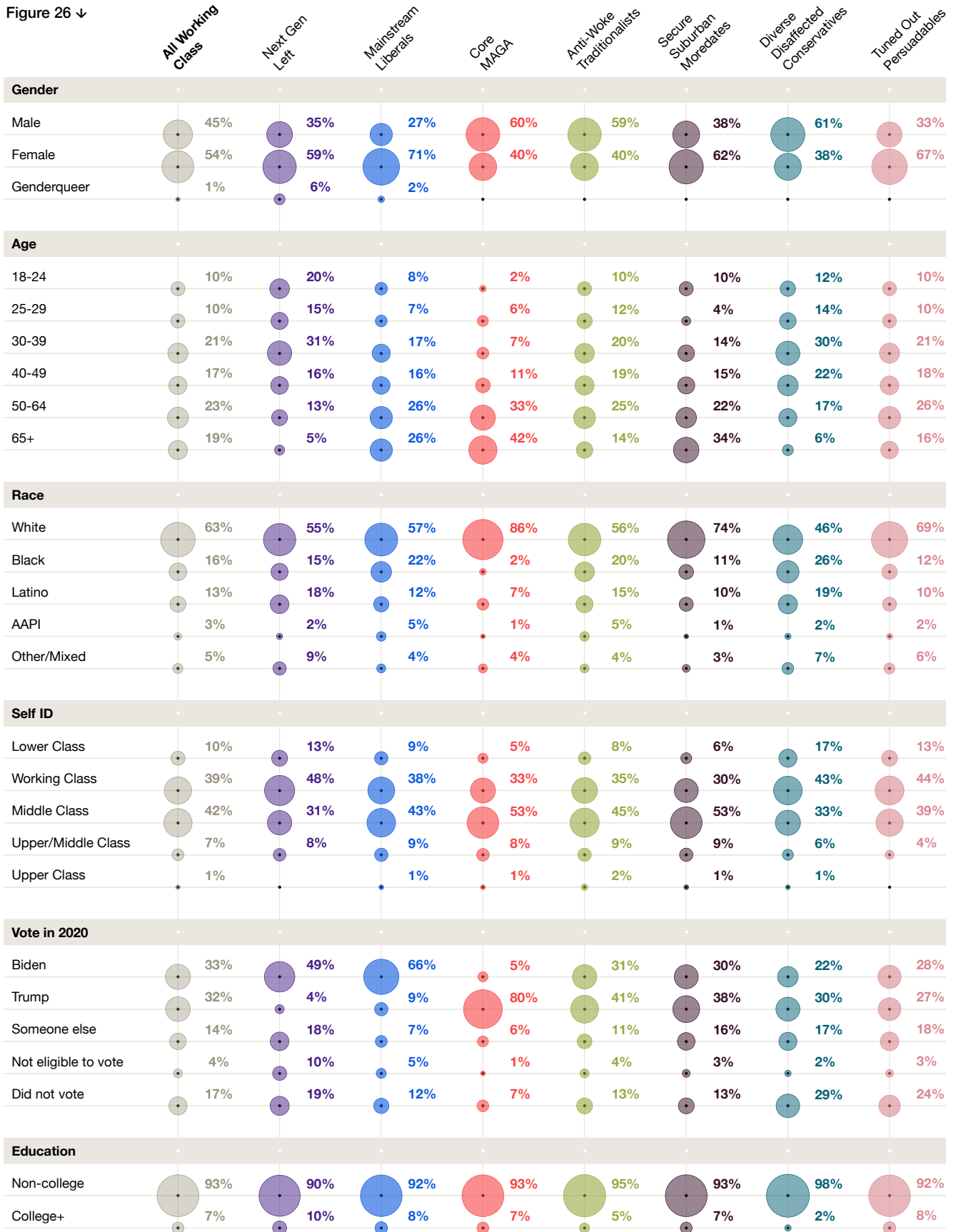
Figure 25 →



Findings within Working Class

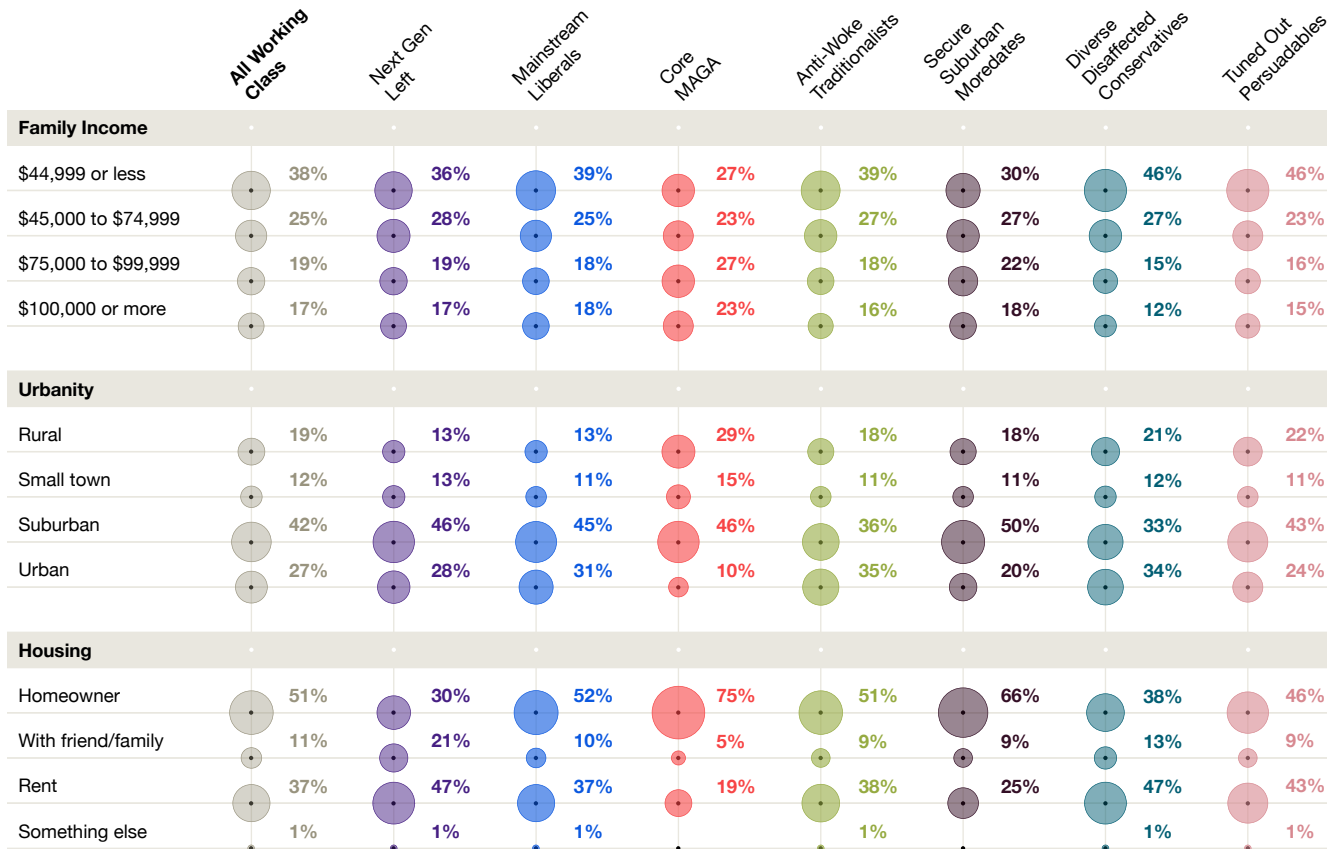


Figure 26 ↓



Findings within Working Class





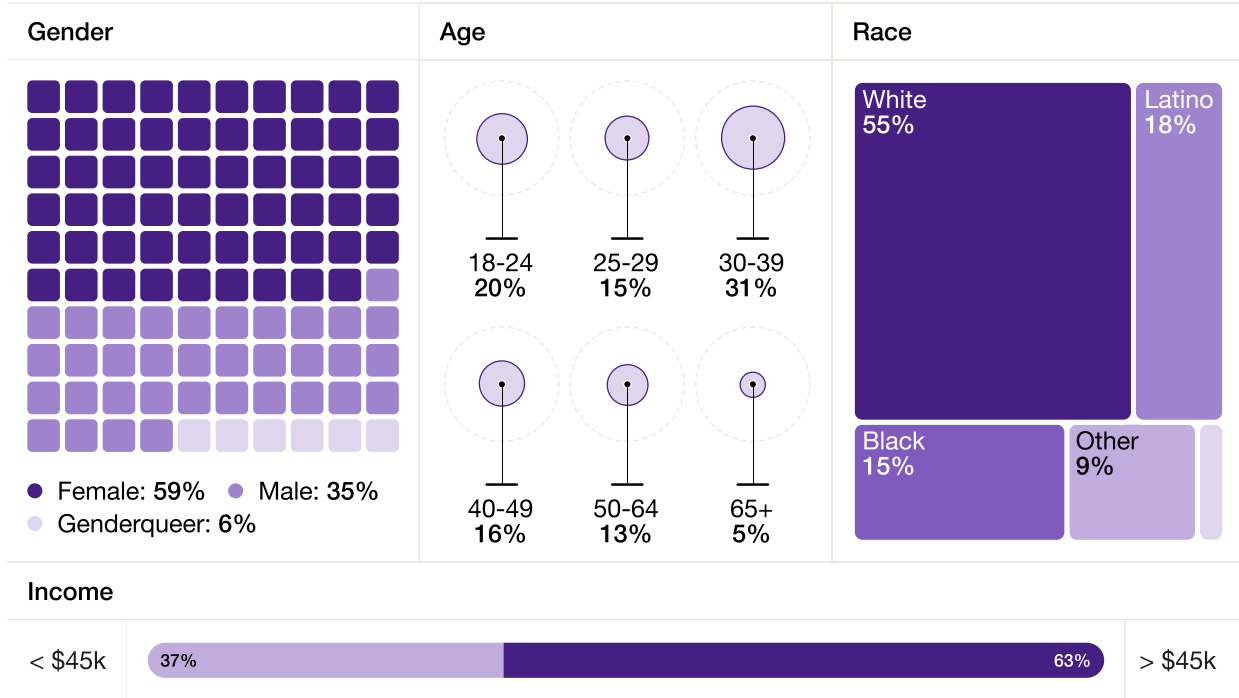
# 6.2. NEXT GEN LEFT

**The Next Gen Left voter is the farthest left on almost every metric and strongly favors progressive policies.** This is a disproportionately young, multiracial group whose most typical member is a millennial woman. This cluster has the highest representation of people who identify as LGBTQ+ and who identify as genderqueer or gender non-conforming. The Next Gen Left is slightly more urban and suburban and significantly less rural than the working class as a whole. They are underrepresented in the South Atlantic and overrepresented in the West (excluding California). They are not consistent voters and don't identify with

mainstream Democratic politics, though they are vastly more likely to identify as Democrats than Republicans. They feel financially insecure and are quick to recognize the unequal distribution of wealth in America. In our August 2023 survey, the issues they rated as most important out of 16 we prompted were inflation and the cost of living, healthcare, the cost of housing, racism and discrimination, abortion access, and climate change and the environment. *“Keeping woke extremists out of power,”* immigration and conditions at the US-Mexico border, and national security are the issues they rated least important.



Figure 27 ↓



**One of the first things to emphasize about the Next Gen Left cluster is that it exists.** So much of the discourse about contemporary left wing politics takes as a given that contemporary left wing views are held by affluent, college-educated voters, and not by working class voters. In fact, the Next Gen Left cluster, representing roughly 14% of working class registered voters, is down-the-line left wing. Though this cluster does have the highest percentage of college graduates among the seven clusters, graduates still make up only 10%, compared to 7% for the working class as a whole. Only 30% of Next Gen Left members are homeowners (compared to 51% for the working class as a whole). In terms of income, the Next Gen Left cluster is close to the average for the working class as a whole, with 37% reporting household income below \$45,000, 29% reporting between \$45,000 and \$75,000, 18% reporting between \$75,000 and \$100,000, and 17% reporting income above \$100,000. That is compared to 38%, 26%,

19%, and 17% respectively for the working class as a whole. Its members are the most likely to identify as working class or lower class, and the least likely to believe that they'll be able to retire in relative comfort.

**In our qualitative research, we have heard from these voters that this insecurity stems from not feeling like they had the same opportunities for success compared to previous generations.**

*"I know a lot of people who are fresh out of college who are trying to get a job that they paid money for to get a degree in and they can't get it because they're giving entrance level jobs to people who, in the past, would have advanced in their careers. People aren't getting promoted. People aren't given opportunities anymore. It's sad."*

— Next Gen Left Black Woman, Age 35, Georgia, Child Activities Assistant

**Next Gen Left voters tend to feel**



**that their vote has little ability to make a positive impact on issues they care about.** Of all clusters they disagree the most that workers get the pay and benefits they deserve. They're also the most likely to agree that shareholders and CEOs get rich off of working people's backs. Next Gen Left voters have markedly different attitudes towards American national identity from other clusters. They are much more likely to agree that the US is a racist and sexist country. And they are much less likely to agree that they would rather be a citizen of the United States than any other country. Members of this cluster have the most consistently pro-immigrant views, and the

least punitive attitudes around policing and public safety of any cluster. For example they are overwhelmingly likely to disagree that we are too soft on criminals and to disagree that they would feel safer if we invested more in police and law enforcement.

Progressive policies like a jobs guarantee, Medicare for All, rent controls, and free college are popular among all working class clusters except Core MAGA and (in the case of Medicare for All and free college) the Secure Suburban Moderates. **But in each case, the Next Gen Left cluster demonstrates the greatest enthusiasm for these policies among the seven clusters.**

## 6.3. MAINSTREAM LIBERALS

**The Mainstream Liberals cluster is mostly made up of liberal Democrats. This is a multiracial group that is typically Gen X or Boomer women** (indeed, this cluster is overwhelmingly female). Compared to the Next Gen Left, they vote in almost every election and tend to feel that their vote does have a positive impact on the issues they care about. They are relatively more financially secure than the average working class voter but still quick to recognize the unequal distribution of wealth in America. Inflation and the cost of living, gun violence, healthcare, jobs and the economy, and racism and discrimination were the issues they rated most important. *"Keeping woke extremists out of power,"* student loans, and immigration and conditions at the US-Mexico border ranked lowest.

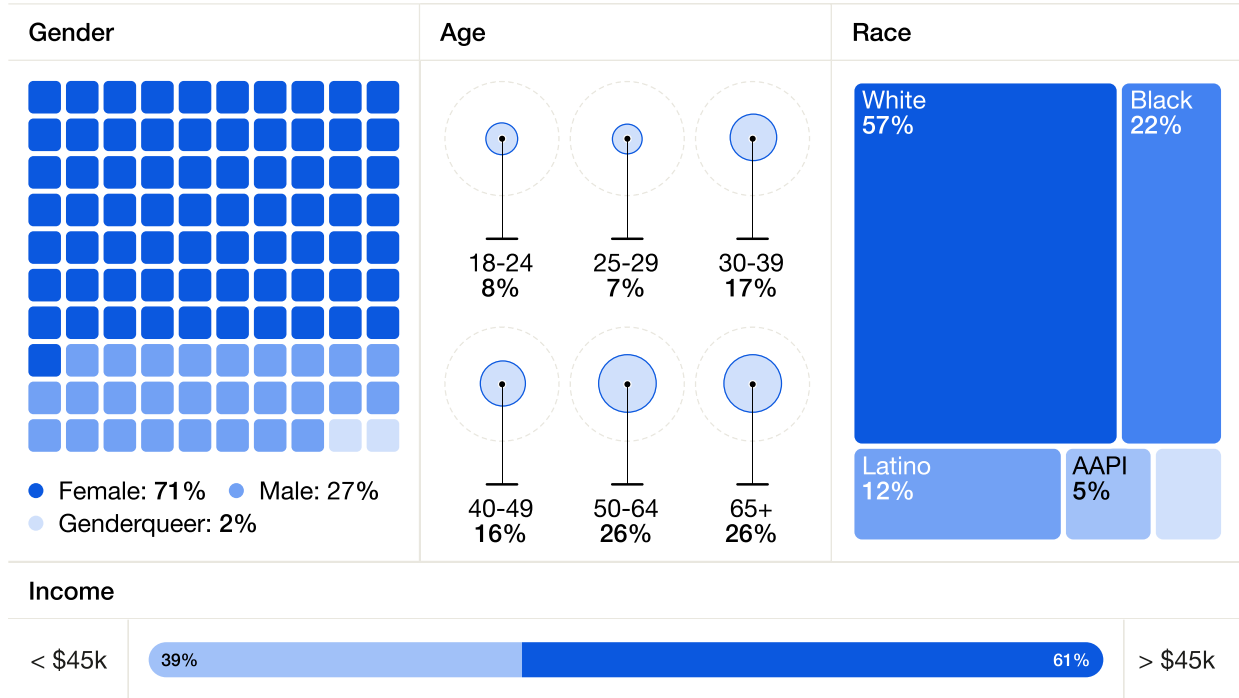
In terms of their economic and financial

situations, Mainstream Liberals have homeownership levels that match the working class as a whole. And the distribution of their household incomes is also nearly identical to that of the working class as a whole, as is the share of them with college degrees. They are slightly more likely than the working class as a whole to believe that they'll be able to retire in relative comfort.

**Across every theme that our survey addressed, the Mainstream Liberals are the second most left wing cluster, usually just slightly to the right of the Next Gen Left.** Where the two differ most noticeably is in their relative senses of empowerment (the Next Gen Left feels heavily disempowered, while Mainstream Liberals feel relatively empowered), and in their attitudes around national identity. While on average they agree that the United States is a racist and



Figure 28 ↓



sexist country, Mainstream Liberals are more likely than working class voters as a whole to agree that they would rather be citizens of the United States than any other country. Mainstream Liberals are also more similar to some of the cross-pressured clusters

than they are to the Next Gen Left on some aspects of policing and public safety. **They agree by a wide margin that we are too soft on criminals, and that they would feel safer if we invested more in police and law enforcement.**

## 6.4. CORE MAGA

**At the other end of the ideological spectrum, there is one partisan Republican cluster that has down-the-line right wing views.** In demographic terms, this cluster is overwhelmingly white, disproportionately male, and much older than the working class as a whole, closely reflecting a core component of the MAGA base. Core MAGA voters are the least urban and the most rural of the seven clusters, with only 10% residing in urban areas (27% for the working class

as a whole) and 29% residing in rural areas (22% for the working class as a whole). This cluster looks similar to the working class as a whole in terms of its regional distribution, except that it is significantly underrepresented in California (4% vs. 9% for the working class as a whole). Core MAGA is also by far the most economically well-off of the seven working class clusters. Only 27% of Core MAGA voters report household incomes of \$45,000 or less, compared to

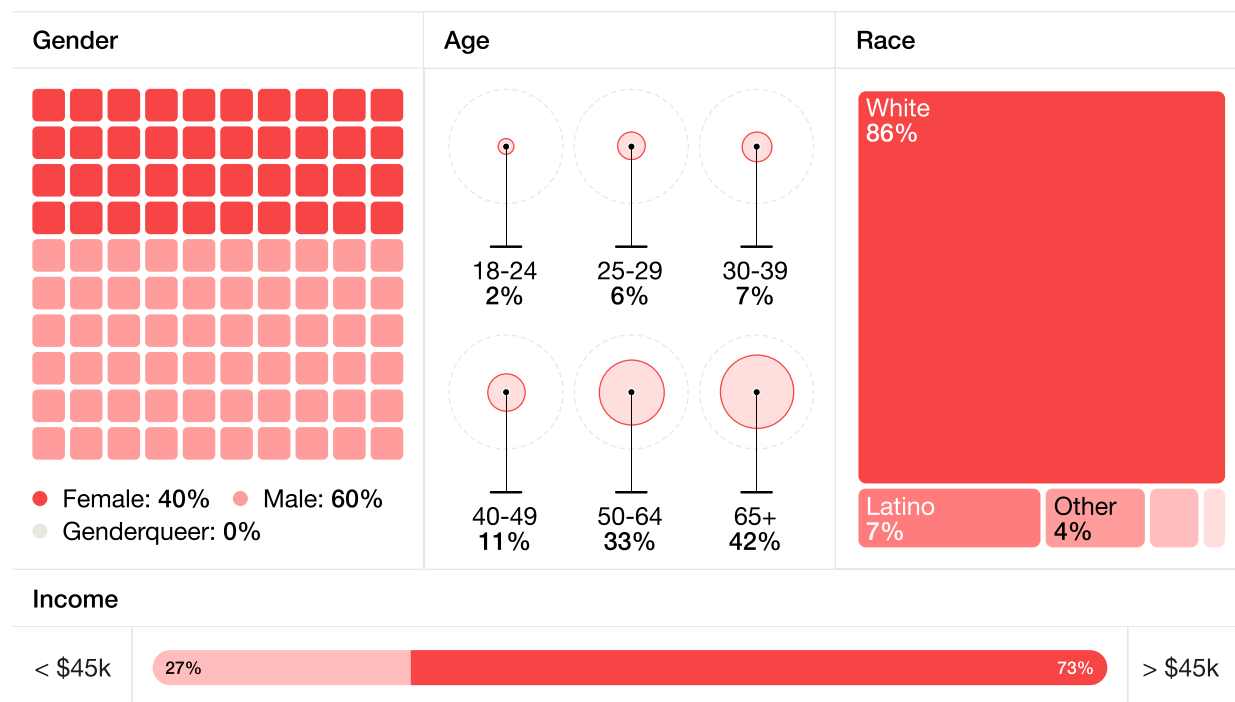


38% for the working class as a whole. 27% report household incomes between \$75,000 and \$100,000, compared to 19% for the working class as a whole. And 23% report incomes above \$100,000, compared to 17% for the working class as a whole. Fully 75% of Core MAGA voters are homeowners, compared to 51% for the working class as a whole. The issues they rated most important were inflation and the cost of living, national security, immigration and conditions at the US-Mexico border, “keeping woke extremists out of power,” and crime. Least important were student loans, “keeping MAGA extremists out of power,” and climate change and the environment, followed closely by abortion access and racism and discrimination.

Traditionalists manifest more sharply sexist views. Notably, Core MAGA is the most conservative cluster on questions of class, economic fairness, and distribution. In other words, far from manifesting “populist” attitudes, the most committed base of the Trumpist GOP looks much more similar to the traditional, pre-Trump “small government” Republican voter. Core MAGA voters are the least likely to agree that shareholders and corporate executives get rich off of the backs of working people. They are the least likely to agree that one of America’s biggest problems is the lack of jobs with good pay, benefits, and opportunities for advancement, and they are the most likely to agree — by far — that one of our biggest problems is people taking advantage of government programs so they don’t have to work. They give the lowest approval ratings to labor unions. They have the lowest levels of support for a jobs guarantee, Medicare for All, rent control, and free college, and are the only cluster that on net opposes a jobs guarantee.

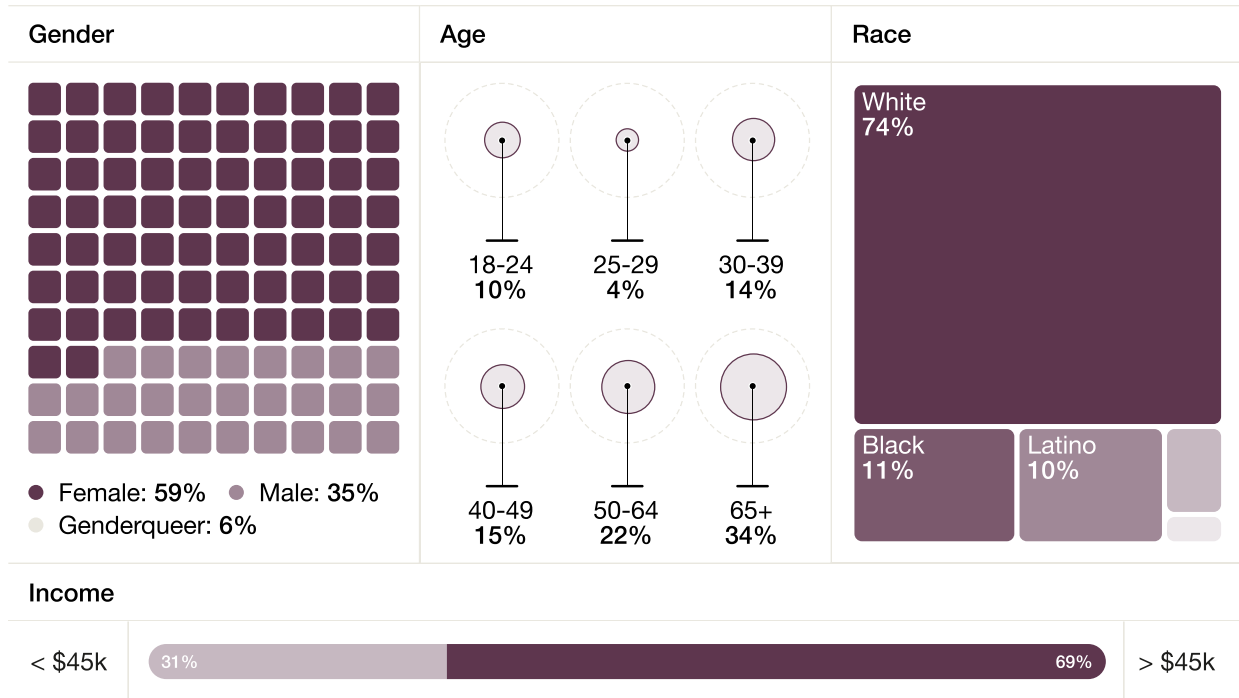
**In ideological terms, Core MAGA is the most conservative on every theme we explored, with the exception of questions relating to hostile sexism, where Diverse Disaffected Conservatives and Anti-Woke**

Figure 29 ↓



# 6.5. SECURE SUBURBAN MODERATES

Figure 30 ↓



**Secure Suburban Moderates, as their name implies, are disproportionately found in the suburbs** (50% vs. 42% for the working class as a whole). They are predominantly female, more predominantly white than the working class as a whole, and lean older (56% over 50 vs. 42% for the working class as a whole). We labeled them “*secure*” because, despite all being in the broad working class, **they show the highest levels of economic security of any of the clusters besides the Core MAGA group.** 66% are homeowners compared to 51% for the working class as a whole. 31% have incomes below \$45,000 vs. 38% for the working class

as a whole, and 42% have incomes above \$75,000 vs. 36% for the working class as a whole. They’re the least likely of any of the clusters to identify as lower class or working class (37% vs. 50% for the working class as a whole). To a greater extent than any other working class cluster, they say that they expect to be able to retire in relative comfort. **We see this economic comfort reflected in their responses to questions about class, economic fairness, and distribution.**

In ideological terms, the Secure Suburban Moderates look a lot like the archetype of a suburban moderate. They favored Trump by





8 points in 2020. They are in the middle on themes like immigration and crime and public safety. **It is the second most conservative cluster on questions of class, economic fairness, and distribution, and the second least supportive of progressive policies** like

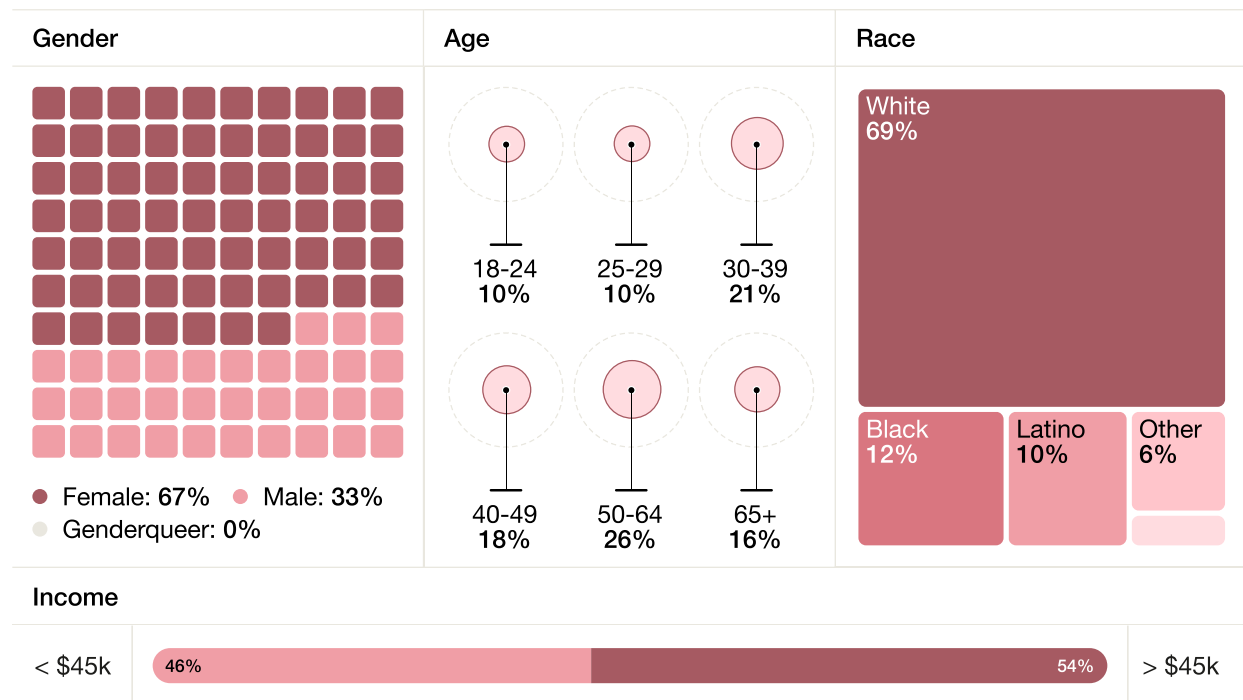
a jobs guarantee, free college, rent control, and Medicare for All. To the extent that these voters are not simply loyal Republicans, it is because they are mostly pro-choice and they are relatively progressive on questions of gender and sexuality.

# 6.6. TUNED OUT PERSUADABLES

**The Tuned Out Persuadables are mostly classic, low-information moderate and independent swing voters.** They are relatively evenly distributed in terms of age, and skew heavily female. They tend to feel very disempowered politically. And they

are economically one of the most insecure clusters. 46% have household incomes below \$45,000, compared to 38% for the working class as a whole. They are second only to the Next Gen Left in believing that they won't be able to retire in relative

Figure 31 ↓



Findings within Working Class



comfort. They are significantly less likely than the working class as a whole to say that they follow politics most or some of the time (61% vs. 72%). Their most important issues were inflation and the cost of living, jobs and the economy, healthcare, and crime, and their least important were student loans, *“keeping MAGA extremists out of power,”* and *“keeping woke extremists out of power.”*

On perceived vote power for the working class... *“I feel the people that are heard are the lobbyists and the people with the money that push the agendas, and the votes, and everything. We're the working class, we're paying the taxes, we're paying everybody's salary, but yet we're not being heard.”*

—Tuned Out Persuadable White Woman, Age 52, Arizona, Respite Care

**As the name indicates, these voters are not left wing, but they align more with**

**the left than the right.** They are the only one of the four cross-pressured segments that favored Biden over Trump in 2020. On most questions of class, economic fairness, and distribution, they are the furthest to the left besides the two primarily partisan Democratic clusters, and they strongly favor progressive policies like a jobs guarantee, rent control, free college, and Medicare for All (though they're also more likely than average to agree that *“one of our biggest problems is people taking advantage of government programs so they don't have to work.”*) They hold mostly left-of-center views on immigration. They lean slightly right-of-center on questions of crime and policing, but not dramatically so, and they manifest slightly higher levels of racial resentment than the working class as a whole. They generally lean left on questions of abortion, gender, and sexuality. They are generally less nationalist than the working class as a whole.

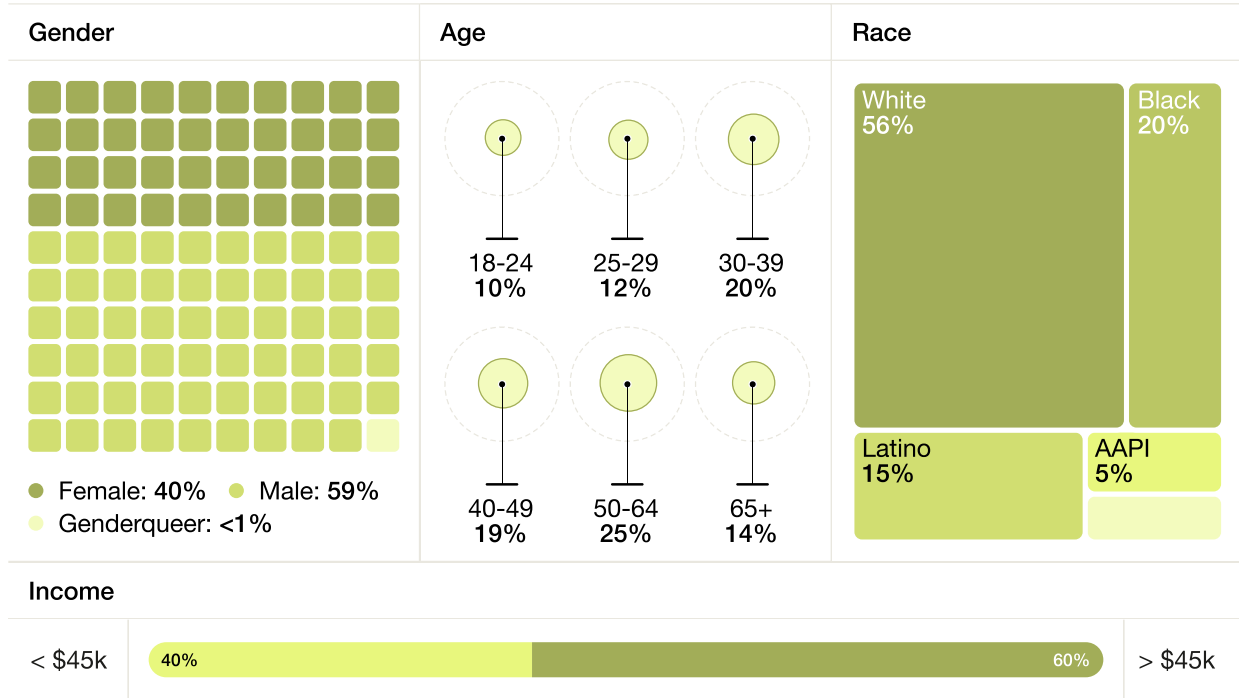
## 6.7. ANTI-WOKE TRADITIONALISTS

**This cluster is racially diverse, skews male, and is evenly distributed in terms of age.** Members of this cluster are much more likely to be found in urban areas than the working class as a whole (35% vs. 27%), and much less likely to be found in suburbs (36% vs. 42%). In terms of income, they are almost identical to the working class as a whole, but they are somewhat less likely to identify as lower or working class and somewhat more likely to identify as middle class or above

than the working class as a whole. Only the Secure Suburban Moderates express greater confidence that they will be able to retire in relative comfort. This cluster is somewhat less likely to have a four-year college degree than the working class as a whole (5% vs. 7%). They express very high levels of agreement that their vote can make a positive impact on issues they care about. **Their most important issues were inflation and the cost of living, jobs and the economy,**



Figure 32 ↓



**national security, healthcare, and crime, and their least important were student loans, "keeping MAGA extremists out of power", and abortion access.**

**Ideologically, Anti-Woke Traditionalists self-identify as more conservative than the working class as a whole** (36% very or somewhat conservative vs. 27%). Their name reflects the fact that, apart from the Core MAGA cluster, they are the most likely to agree that the country would have fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties, and the most likely to rate *"keeping woke extremists out of power"* as a priority when casting their vote. They're also very likely to agree that *"the so-called experts have their own agenda, ordinary Americans know what's best for our families and our communities"* and that *"the United States would be better if we stuck to the Judeo-Christian values we were founded on."*

They strongly agree that abortion is

generally wrong. This cluster supported Trump by a margin of 10 points, the most of any of the cross-pressured clusters.

**On other social and cultural themes, the Anti-Woke Traditionalists also lean right.** They manifest higher levels of hostile sexism than the Core MAGA cluster, and they also appear to be more transphobic than working class voters as a whole. They are right-of-center on many immigration questions, including being the second most likely to agree that *"our government shows more concern for immigrants than it does for ordinary working Americans."* And they trail only the Core MAGA cluster in agreeing that they would feel safer if we invested more in police and law enforcement.

On questions of class, economic fairness, and distribution, the Anti-Woke Traditionalists embody conflicting views. After Core MAGA they are the most likely to agree that one of our biggest problems is people taking



advantage of government programs so they don't have to work. They're second only to Core MAGA in agreeing with the statement *"I can make a better life for myself and my family if I just hustle hard enough, make good choices, and take advantage of opportunities."* But they are also one of the clusters most likely to agree that shareholders and corporate executives get rich off of the backs of working people. **They strongly support progressive policies like a jobs guarantee, rent control, free college, and Medicare for All.** Apart from the two partisan Democratic clusters, they're the most likely to agree that *"if enough working people come*

*together and stand up for ourselves on the job, we can win better pay, benefits, and working conditions."* And they overwhelmingly agree that *"Working people have a lot in common, but some greedy corporations and politicians divide people on race, religion, and gender to keep working people from standing together for what we all need."*

**More than any other cluster, the Anti-Woke Traditionalists resemble the fabled working class voter who leans left on economic questions** (though tempered with a powerful dose of *"bootstraps"* mentality), **and leans right on social and cultural questions.**

## 6.8. DIVERSE DISAFFECTED CONSERVATIVES

**The Diverse Disaffected Conservatives stand out as the most racially diverse of all seven clusters** (46% white vs. 63% for the working class as a whole), disproportionately young (56% under 40 vs. 42% for the working class as a whole), and the most disproportionately male of any of the seven clusters (61% vs. 45% for the working class as a whole). They also have the lowest average incomes, along with the Tuned Out Persuadables (46% with household incomes under \$45,000, vs. 38% for the working class as a whole). This cluster also has by far the lowest levels of educational attainment, with only 2% having a four-year college degree. Like the Anti-Woke Traditionalists, members of this group are much more likely to be found in urban areas and much less

likely to be found in suburban ones than the working class as a whole. They express very low levels of political empowerment and are among the least tuned in to politics. Fully 29% say that they did not vote in 2020, compared to 17% for the working class as a whole. In August 2023, their most important issues were inflation and the cost of living, jobs and the economy, the cost of housing, healthcare, and education, and their least important were *"keeping MAGA extremists out of power,"* abortion access, and student loans.

**On social and cultural questions, with one notable exception, this cluster leans to the right.** Members of this cluster register the highest average levels of hostile sexism,



indicate transphobic attitudes, and show hostility towards LGBTQ+ equality (only 25% agree that LGBTQ+ rights are human rights, vs. 47% who disagree). They are to the right of the working class as a whole on abortion. On questions of immigration they are on average more towards the center than either Core MAGA or Anti-Woke Traditionalists. However, our focus group participants displayed very negative attitudes about immigration and worried about immigrants relying too heavily on the government for support. Where they differ from these more conservative groups is on questions of crime and policing, where their attitudes look more similar to the Next Gen Left cluster. They are also among the least nationalistic clusters.

On government concern for immigrants: *“But once all of these immigrants come over here from Mexico... they give them food stamps right then... Me, I'm barely paying rent, I'm taking care of my grandson. I mean, we barely have food... But now if a Mexican*

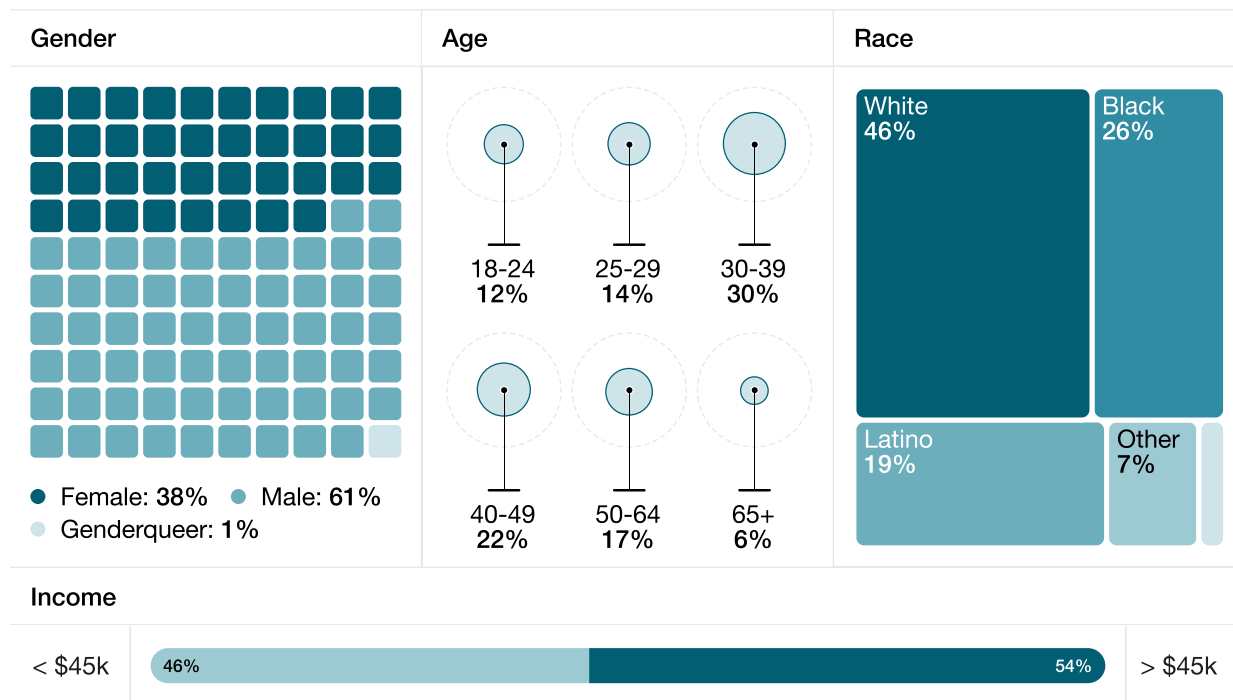
*family [comes] over here and [goes] down there, they [are] just going to give it to them.”*  
 — **Diverse Disaffected Conservative Black Woman, Age 48, Georgia, Substitute Teacher**

On questions of class, economic fairness, and distribution, members of this cluster express relatively muted views. They support progressive policies like a jobs guarantee, rent control, free college, and Medicare for All, but with lower intensity than all other clusters except Core MAGA and Secure Suburban Moderates. They agree, but less emphatically than other clusters, that shareholders and corporate executives get rich off the backs of working people. And they’re less likely than the working class as a whole to agree that *“If enough working people come together and stand up for ourselves on the job, we can win better pay, benefits, and working conditions.”*

**On balance, the Diverse Disaffected Conservatives present as a group with high levels of cynicism.**

Findings within Working Class

Figure 33 ↓



# 6.9. PREDICTIVE QUESTIONS

As explained above, working class respondents were assigned to one of seven clusters based on their responses to roughly 40 of the 127 non-demographic survey response questions in our poll. Respondents'

answers to ten of those questions are especially predictive of which cluster they are assigned to, **and as such these ten questions illustrate some of the starkest differences between clusters.**

🗨️ **The following charts show answers to those ten questions by cluster, which helps illustrate the particular ideological profile of each working class cluster.**



Figure 34 ↓

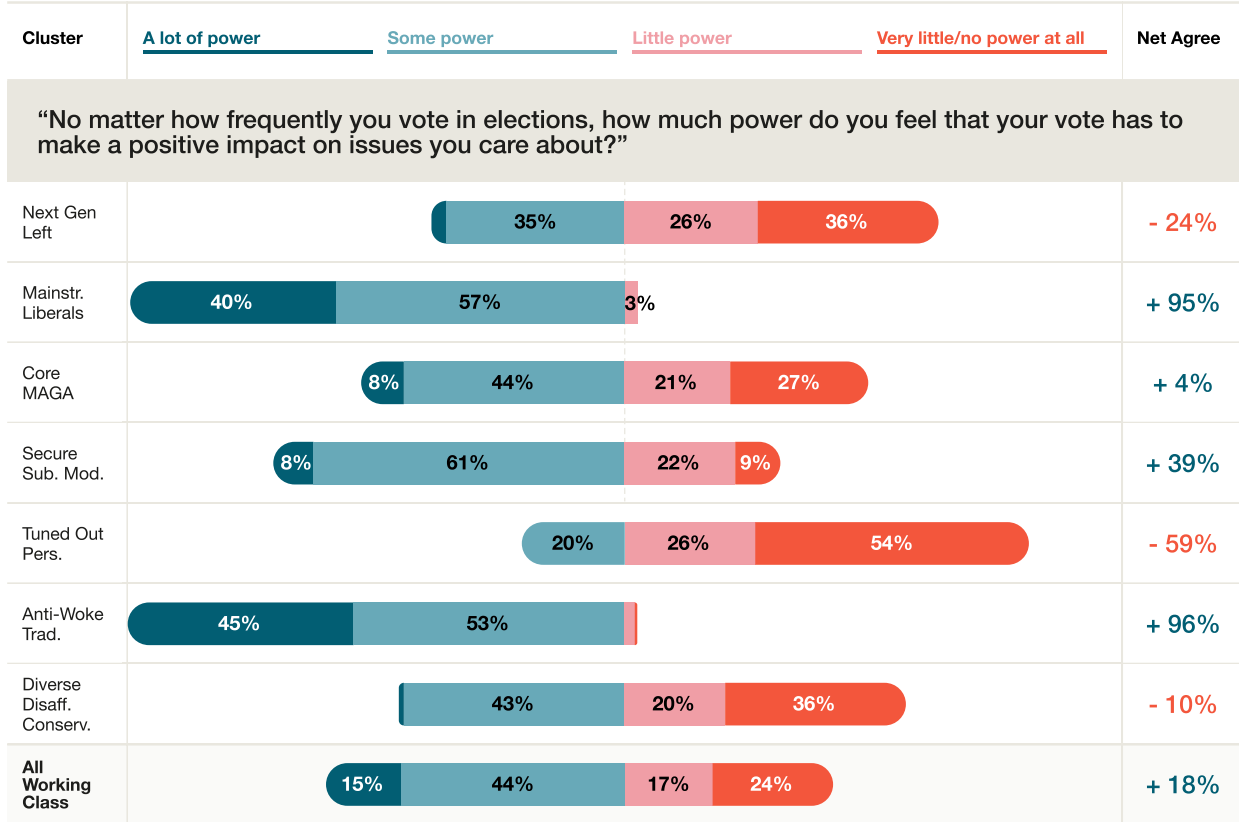
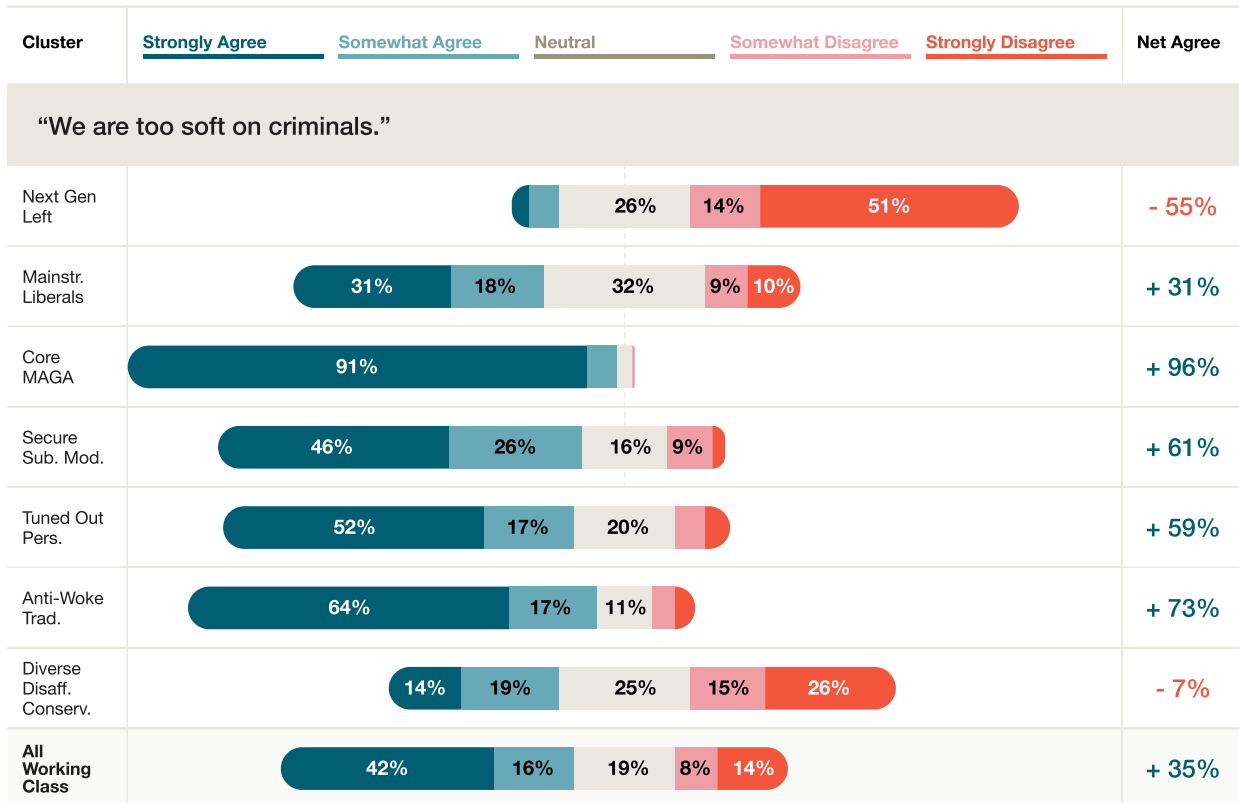


Figure 35 ↓



Findings within Working Class



Figure 36 ↓

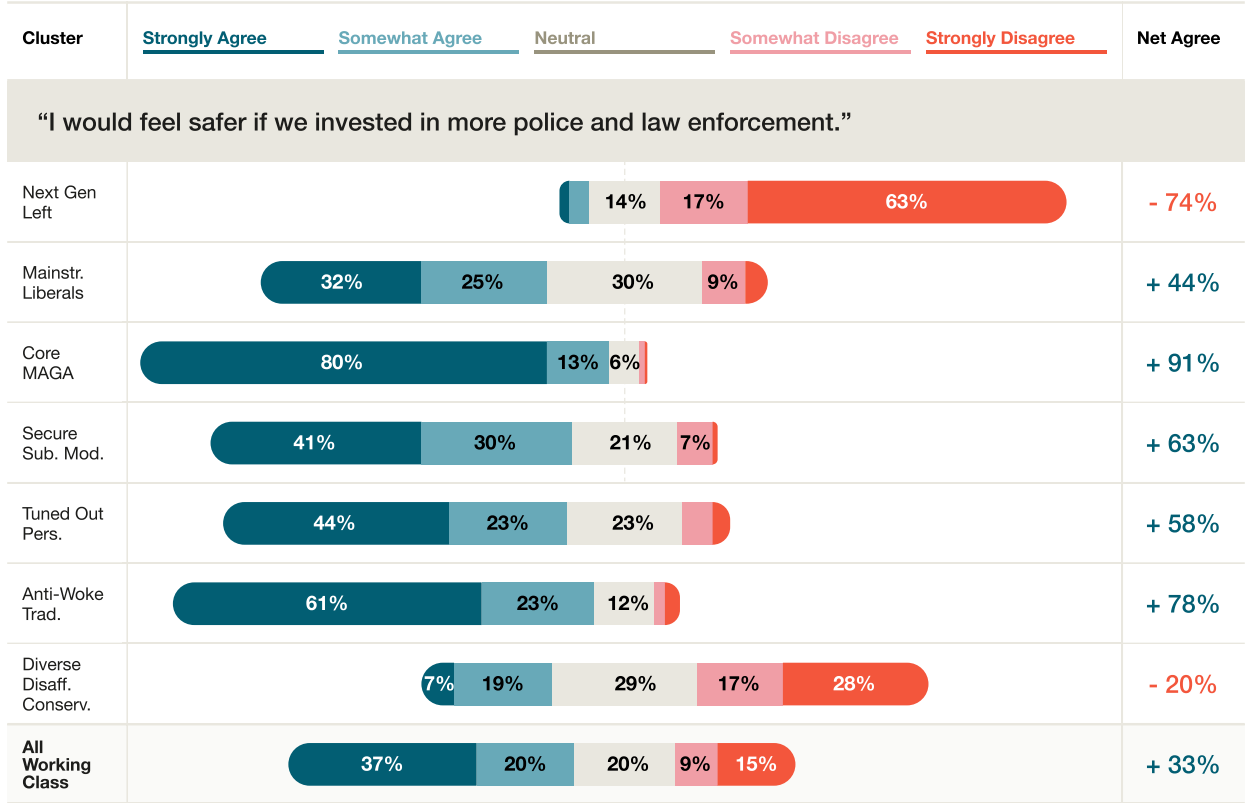


Figure 37 ↓

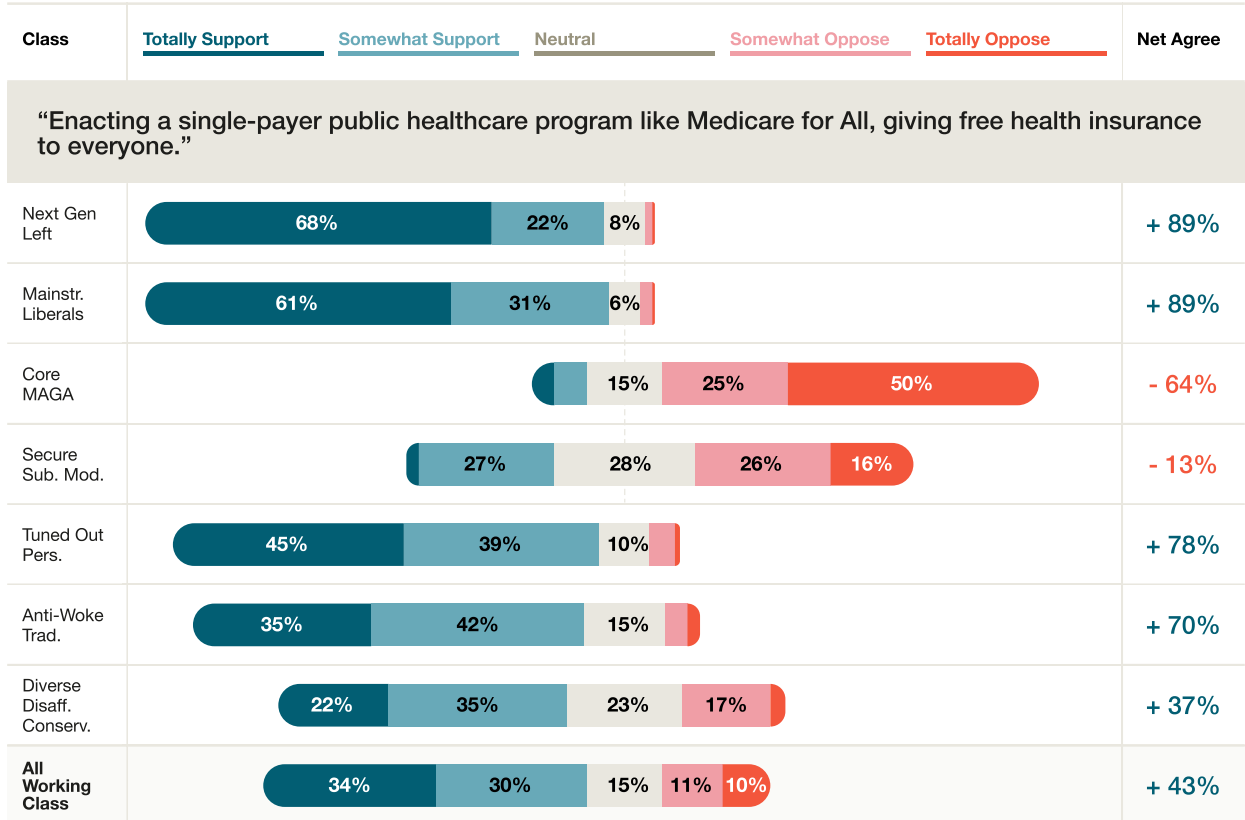




Figure 38 ↓

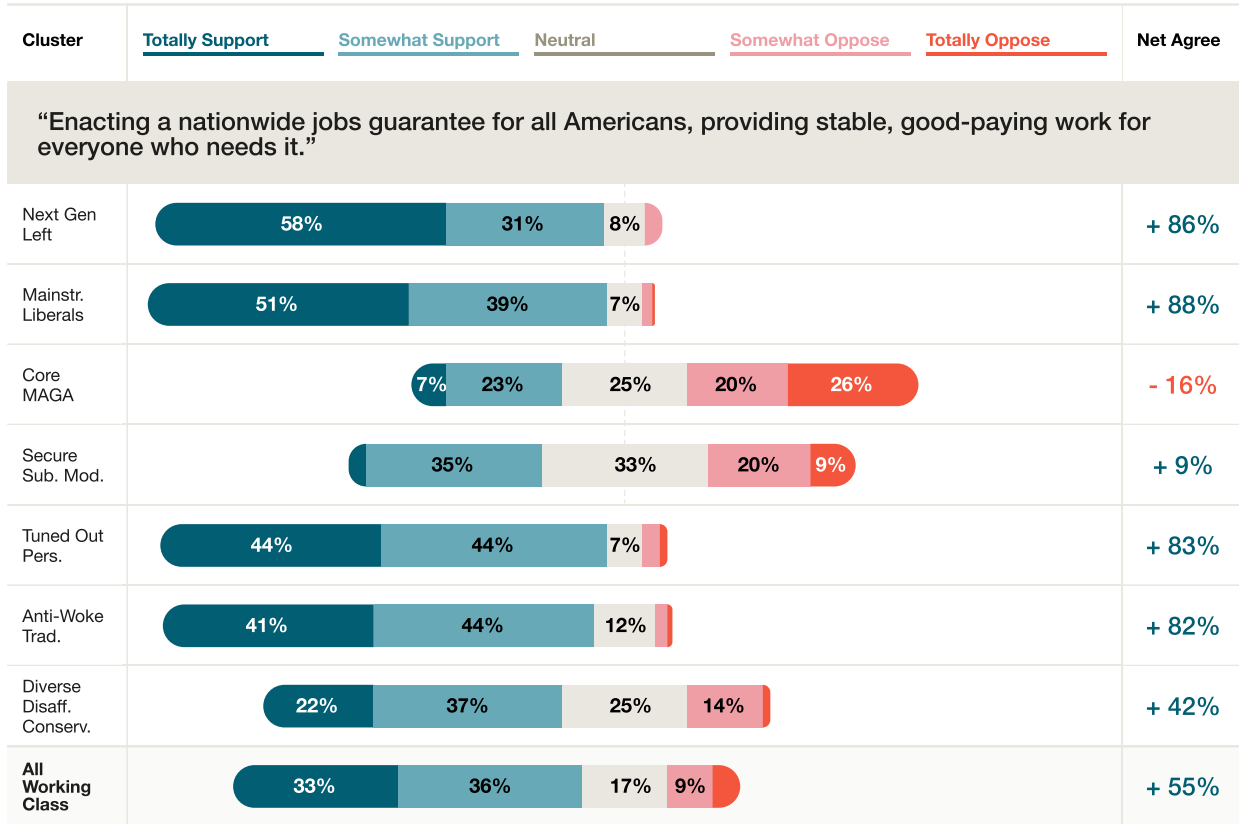
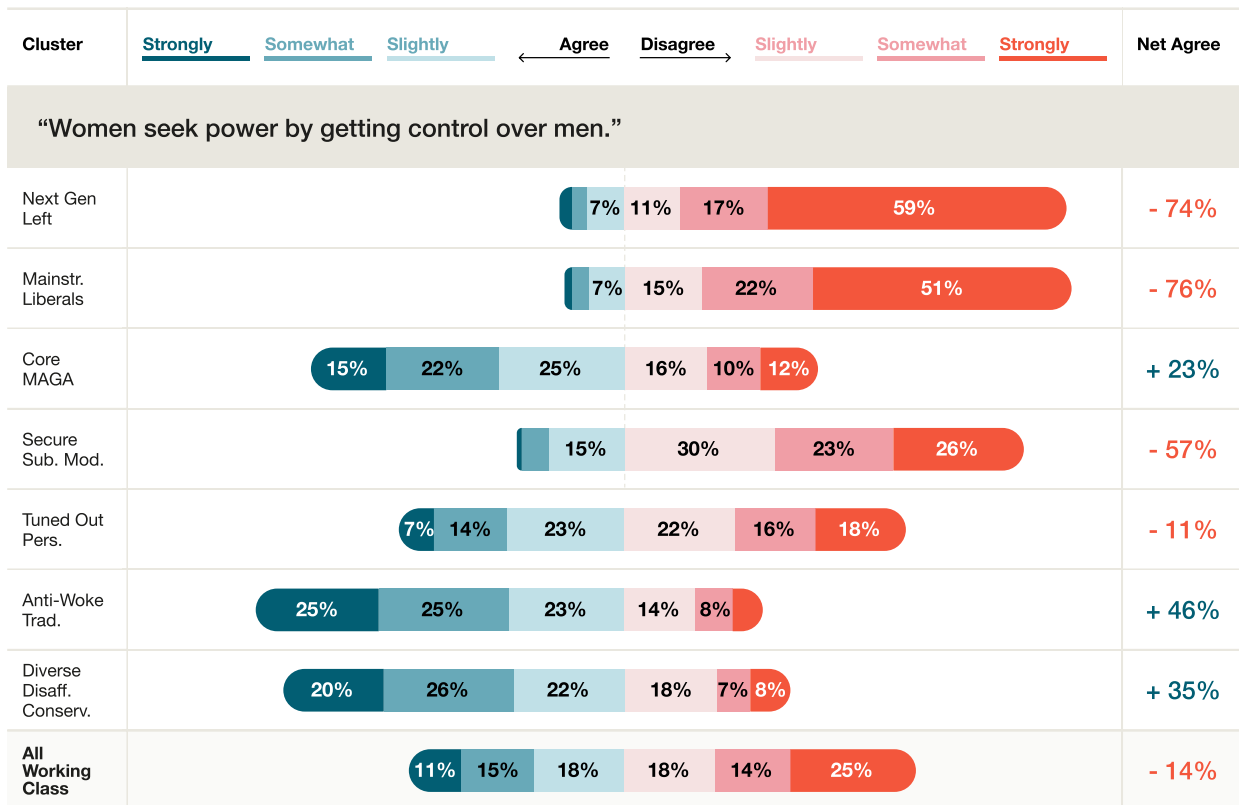


Figure 39 ↓



Findings within Working Class



Figure 40 ↓

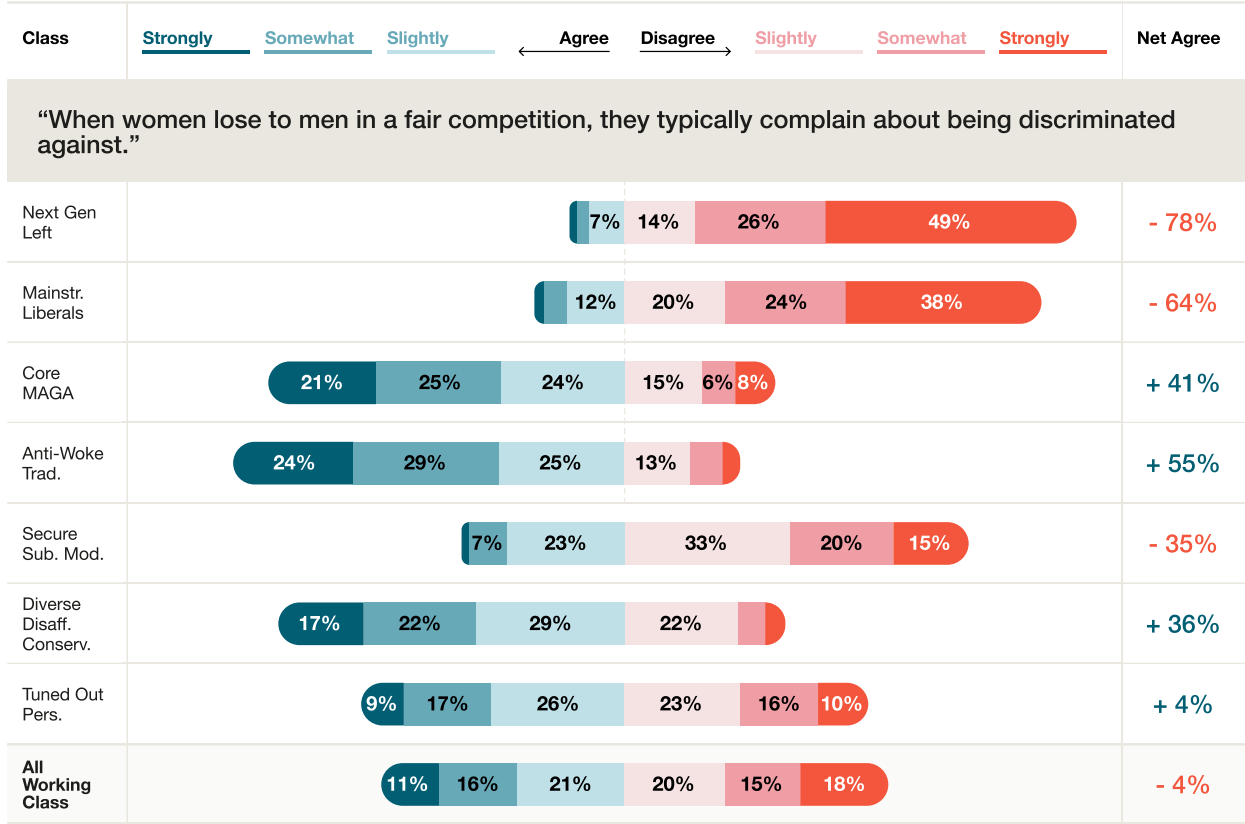


Figure 41 ↓

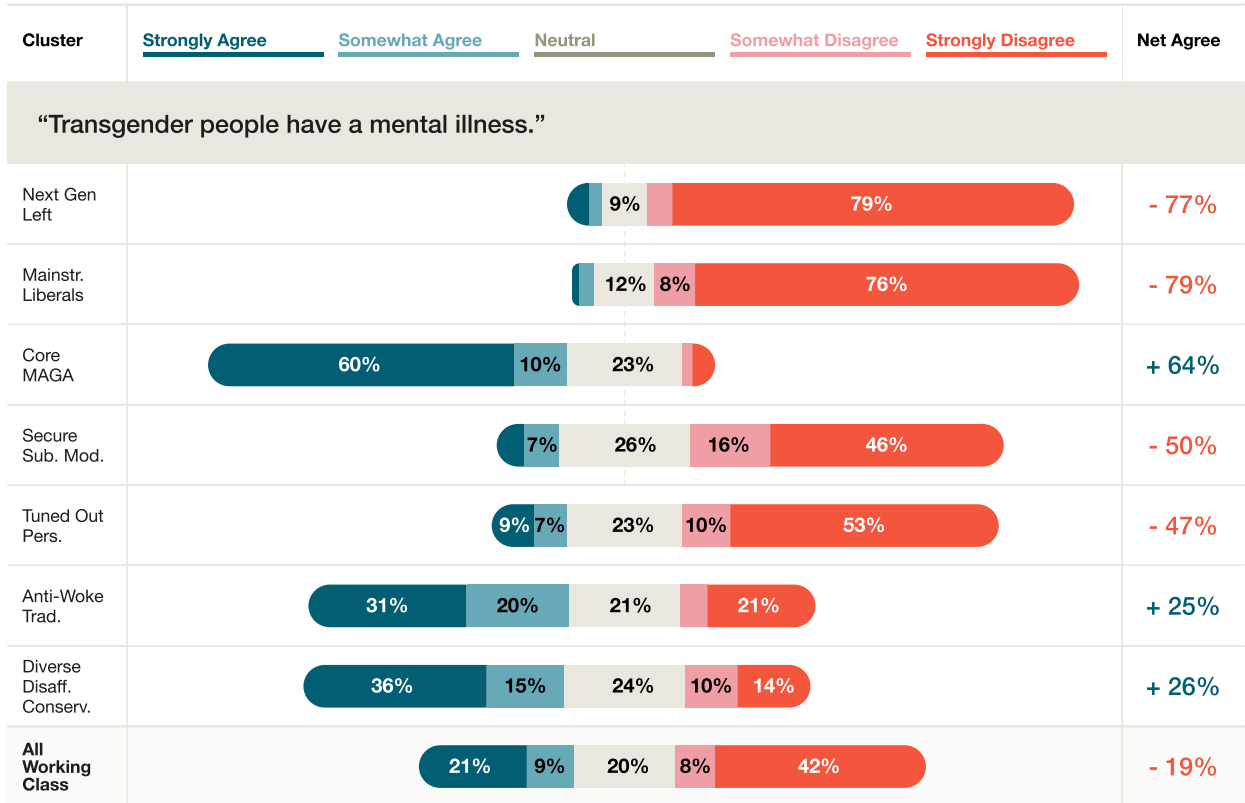


Figure 42 ↓

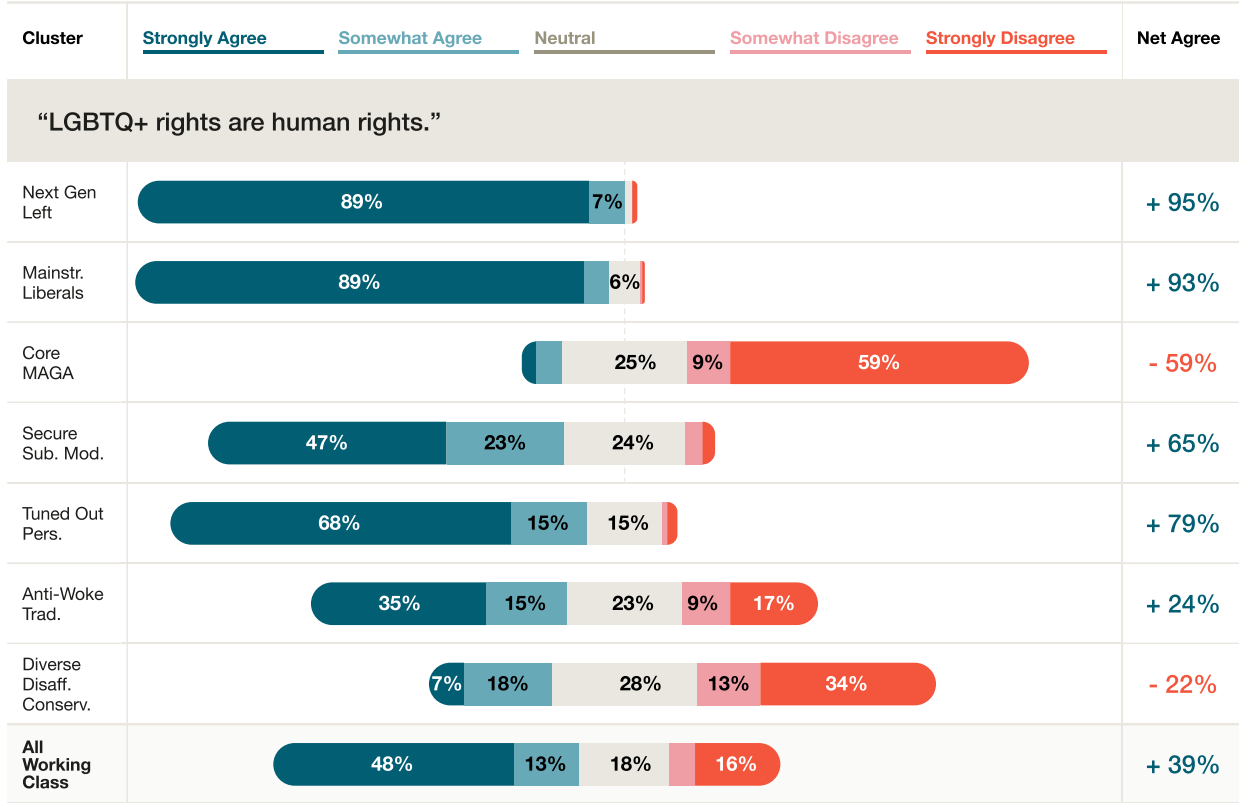
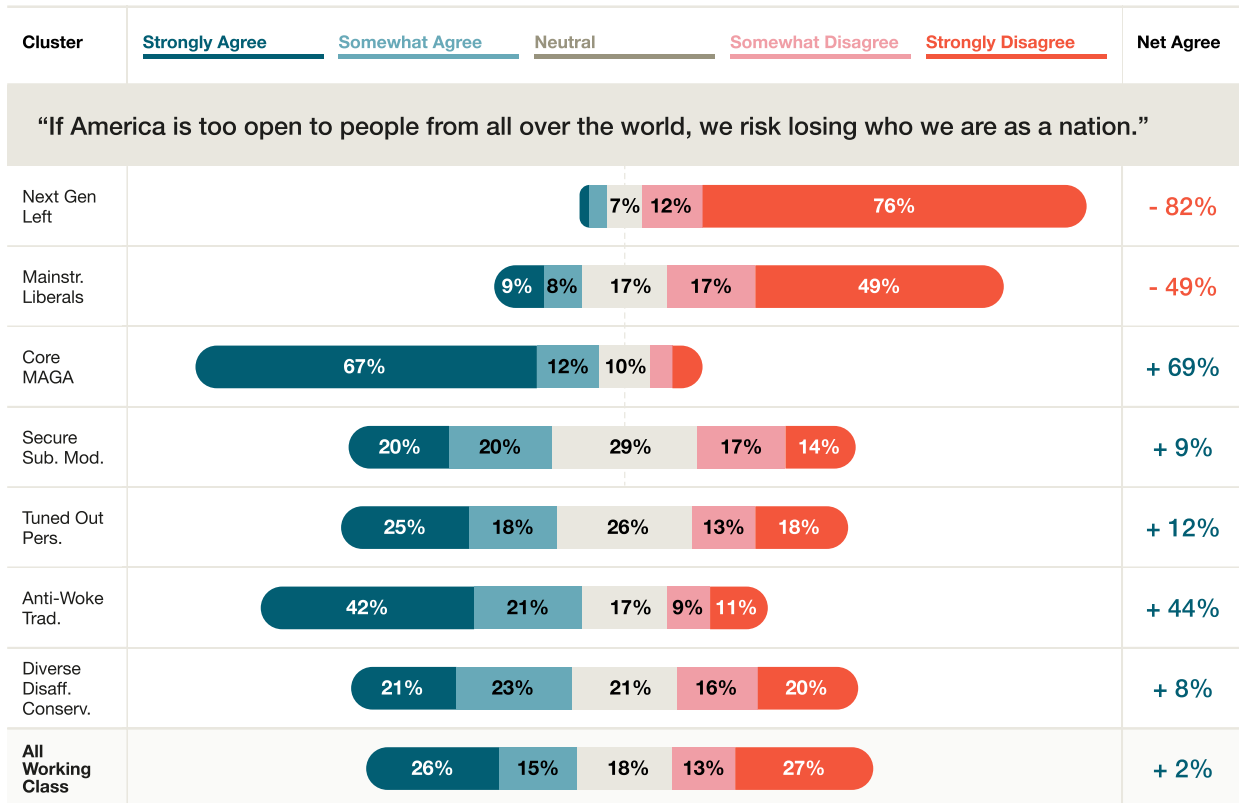


Figure 43 ↓



Findings within Working Class



# 7 / ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

# REGRESSION ANALYSIS

In order to perform a check on the large differences between classes that we observed in individual attitudes on questions of class, distribution, and economic fairness, as well as the muted differences in individual attitudes on social and cultural questions, **we performed a regression analysis that predicted the odds of a higher score on 127 Likert-style questions from 11 predictors:** class, self-identified class, age (defined as generation), homeownership, ideology, gender, partisanship, sexuality, 2020 vote choice, race, and vote likelihood. Furthermore we performed this analysis four times, each with a different specification of the class variable: our five-part modeled class, a seven-point educational attainment variable, a two-point educational variable (college and non-college) and the reduced version of our modeled class variable (is working class or is not working class).

Across all four model specifications, class is a meaningful predictor of attitudes, both in the scale of the effects it has and in the confidence we can have that it explains those effects. **However, other variables have a much larger effect on average.** Gender, age, and sexuality have larger effects on average, and their effects are statistically significant more often than class. Race is also a stronger predictor of attitudes, especially in comparing Black and white voters (being Latino, AAPI, or mixed or other race has a smaller effect on average than being Black). Class appears to be a stronger predictor than some other demographic variables, like region, urbanity, and marriage status. But class pales in comparison to political

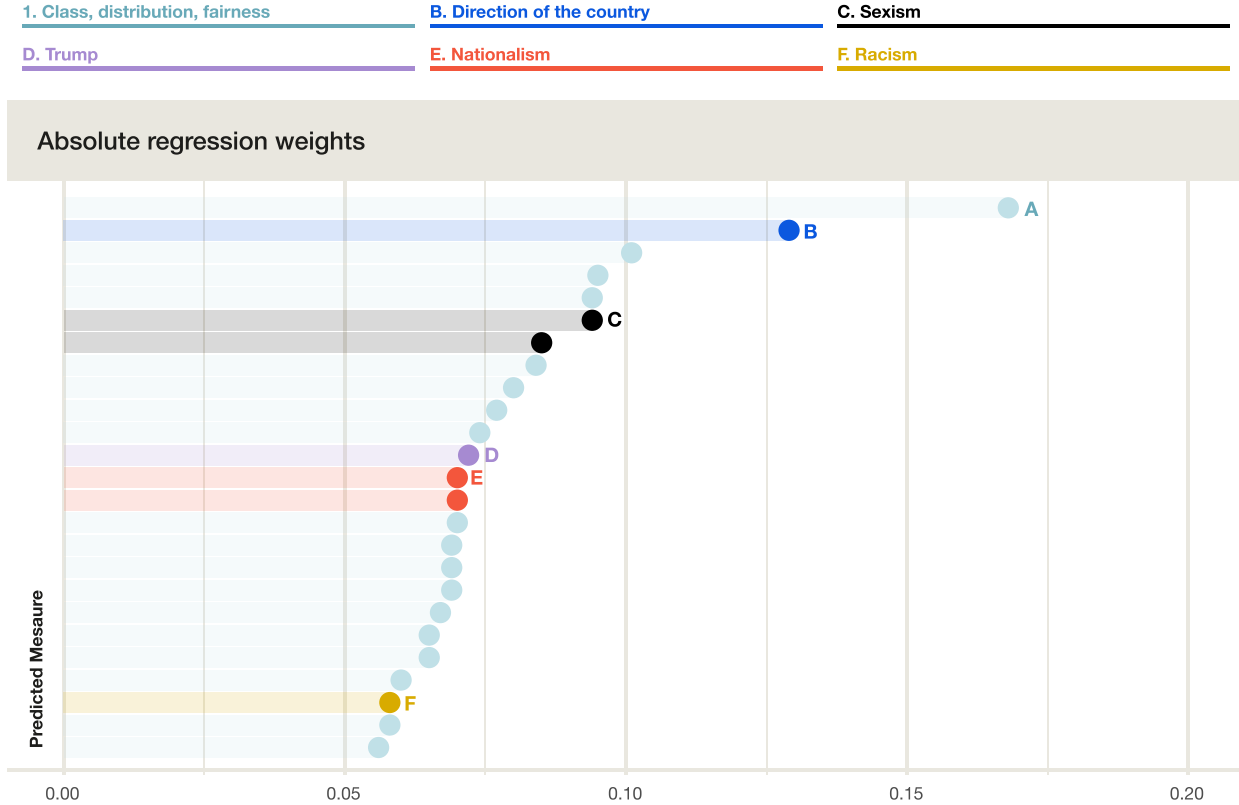
indicators, including partisanship, ideology, and 2020 vote (all of which are distinct from each other) as an explanatory factor in our dataset.

Where class is strongest is overwhelmingly on questions about class, economic fairness, and distribution. With our preferred model specification, we ranked the 127 survey questions in our poll by the magnitude of the effect of the class variable in a regression controlling for age, gender, sexuality, ideology, partisanship, homeownership, 2020 vote choice, and 2024 vote likelihood.

Out of the top 25, 19 of them relate to questions of class, economic fairness, and distribution, where being working class uniformly increases the odds of a respondent having a more progressive view, or to attitudes about one's personal financial situation or life chances, where being working class uniformly increases the odds of a negative outlook. **At the very top of the list are support for a jobs guarantee, support for rent control, belief that working people are the engine of the economy, and support for free college.** Also high on the list are statements about CEOs and shareholders getting rich off the backs of working people, agreeing that one of the biggest problems in the US is the lack of good jobs with good pay and benefits, agreeing that the US lost more than it gained from free trade, and support for a single-payer healthcare system. On many of these questions — and unlike the social and cultural questions below — the magnitude of the effect of class is larger than that of ideology or partisanship. Of the remaining



Figure 44 ↓



six questions in the top 25, one relates to overall attitudes about the direction of the country, one relates to nationalism, two relate to sexism, one relates to criminal justice, and one relates to Donald Trump.

The nationalism question shows that, holding other variables constant, being working class means greater odds of agreeing that **the US must remain the world's top military power**, no matter the cost. Though the magnitude of the effect is large and significant, it is dwarfed by the effects of generation (the older a respondent is the more likely they are to agree), ideology (the more conservative, the more likely to agree), sexuality (LGBTQ respondents are less likely to agree), and vote likelihood (respondents who report that they are less likely to vote are less likely to agree with the statement). A similar tendency can be seen in the sexism questions. Holding other factors

constant, being working class increases the odds that a respondent agrees that women try to put men on leashes and that they agree that many women get a kick out of teasing men sexually. The magnitude of the class effect, however, is smaller than that for generation, gender, sexuality, ideology, 2020 vote choice, race, and 2024 vote likelihood.

**The question relating to criminal justice is part of a battery asking respondents to state how important an issue is to them when deciding how to vote.** Holding other variables constant, being working class increases the odds that a respondent will rate the importance of criminal justice reform higher. In some of our other model specifications, some racial resentment questions were towards the top of the list for the magnitude of the effect of class on responses. A lower modeled class increases the odds that someone agrees that Black



people need to overcome adversity just like Irish, Italians, Jews, and other immigrants have; not having a college degree decreases the odds that a respondent will agree that white people have had more opportunities in recent years. However, these effects are smaller and less consistently significant than the effects for variables like race, gender, and ideology.

**We asked about approval of Donald Trump, along with several other national figures.** Again, holding other variables constant — including ideology, partisanship, and 2020 vote choice — being working class increases the odds that a respondent has a more favorable view of Donald Trump. However, being working class also increases the odds that a respondent has a more favorable view of Bernie Sanders, Barack Obama, the Democratic Party, and the Republican Party.

What about the issues that seem to cleave the electorate the most, like immigration, abortion, crime and policing, and trans rights? Our survey included a large number of questions about immigration. By and large, class has small and statistically non-significant effects on a respondent's views on immigration. **The main class differences we do observe are that being working class decreases the odds that a respondent will express criticism of our asylum system, and lowers the odds that a respondent supports restricting immigration to high-skilled workers.** In some specifications, being working class means less likelihood of agreeing that immigrants commit more crimes than non-immigrants, and greater likelihood of agreeing that immigrants make our country stronger. Where class does seem to have a conservative pull with respect to immigration is in agreement that most immigrants

come to America because they believe our government will take care of them. But the effect is small.

On abortion, our analysis suggests that being working class increases the odds of agreeing that **abortion should be between a woman and her doctor, and that politicians should have no say in it.** On questions of attitudes towards trans people, class has no predictive power when it comes to agreement with the statement “*Trans people have a mental illness.*” Being working class does slightly increase the odds of agreeing that most kids who identify as transgender are confused and will feel differently when they're older.

And on crime and policing, **the biggest differences in class terms point to working class voters having more progressive attitudes on these questions.** Being working class means higher odds of agreeing that investing in economic opportunities and social services to prevent crime will make us feel safer. And it means higher odds of agreeing that one of our biggest problems is police officers abusing trust. We see greater likelihood of agreeing that “*we are too soft on crime.*” However, in focus groups we saw that for many working class respondents, when they hear this statement they immediately bring up white-collar crime, and it's clear that many of them are angrier about this than they are about how our criminal legal system treats shoplifting, for example.

Being working class does appear to make a respondent more likely to agree about the importance of “*traditional family ties,*” **but similar to other social and cultural questions, class explains much less of the variation than other demographic characteristics like race, age, gender, sexuality, ideology, and partisanship.**



# FACTOR ANALYSIS

To assess whether any of the observed differences in worldview that can be explained in part by class in turn explain the relatively higher share of working class voters who report having voted for Trump in 2020, we conducted an additional stage of regression analysis.

**We performed a factor analysis on all of the variables that were in the top 25 for largest statistically significant coefficients of the class variable in each of four specifications we tested, for a total of 37 variables, excluding Trump approval.** The analysis pointed to four factors. The biggest factor by far is the one that most of the questions relating to class, distribution, and economic fairness load on to, like support for a jobs guarantee and agreement that the distribution of wealth in America is unfair. A second factor appears to explain variation in questions relating to nationalism, the one immigration question out of the 37, the trustworthiness of “so-called experts,” as

well as some of the variation on the racial resentment questions among those 37. A third factor explains much of the variation in questions that measure personal anger with the present situation, namely direction of the country, personal financial situation relative to a couple of years ago, ability to retire, and to some extent the statement “*no matter how hard I work I will never get ahead.*” Lastly a fourth factor explains much of the variation in the two hostile sexism questions, and some of the variation of the two main racial resentment questions.

**We then performed a regression with these four factors as predictive variables and 2020 vote choice as the dependent variable.** We first performed the regression on all voters in our dataset.

**In this specification, the first factor, which captures attitudes about class, distribution, and economic fairness, negatively predicts Trump support with**

Figure 45 ↓

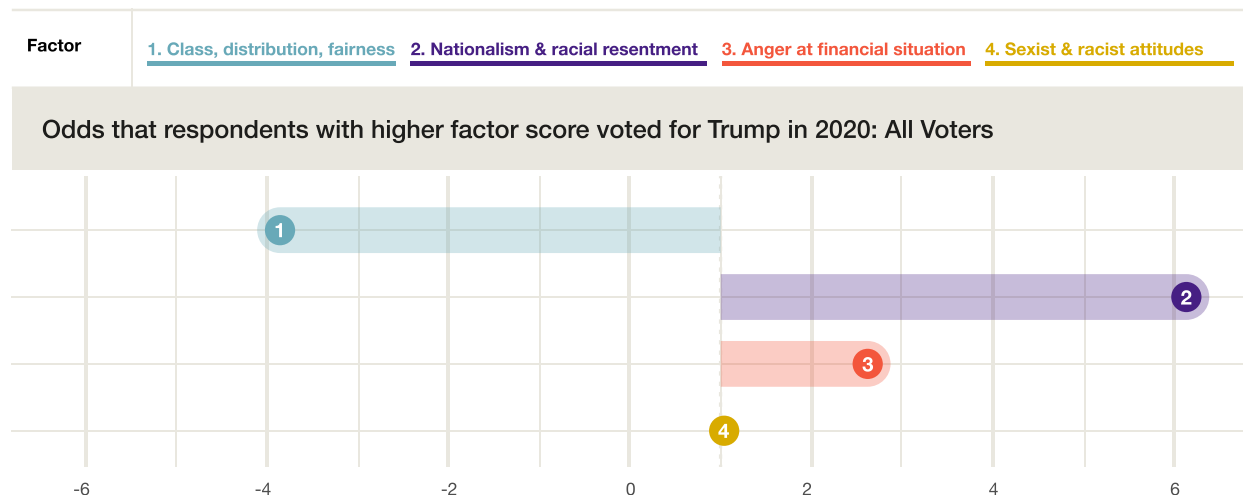
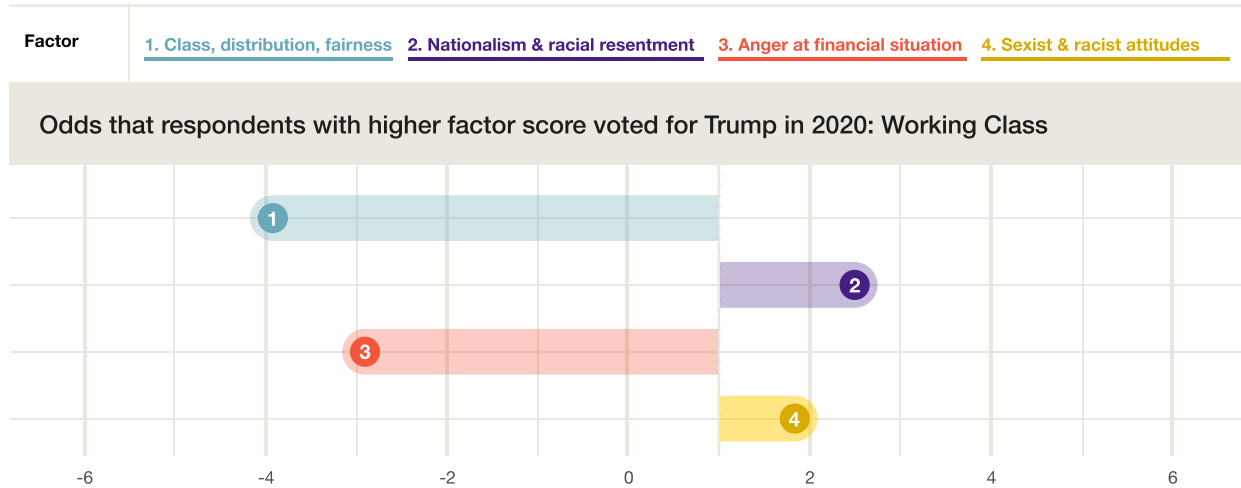




Figure 46 ↓



**a large magnitude** (log odds ratio of -1.35 means a higher score on that factor results in a respondent being 3.85 times less likely to support Trump). The factor that captures nationalism and racial resentment positively predicts Trump support with a large magnitude (log odds ratio of 1.81 means a higher score on that factor makes a respondent 6 times more likely to support Trump). The third factor, which captures anger at one's personal financial situation, also positively predicts Trump support (log odds ratio 0.96). And the factor that captures sexist and racist attitudes appears to have almost no explanatory power. Standard errors are not impressive for any of these, and are outside the range of significance for the third and fourth factors. **In a second specification, we ran the same regression, but this time only on our working class subsample.** The magnitudes and standard errors are basically identical for the first factor as when we looked at the whole sample. The second factor has the same sign though a lower magnitude (meaning that nationalism and racism are less strongly predictive of Trump voting within the working class than they are among the electorate as a whole). **The third factor, capturing anger at one's personal situation, has the opposite sign,**

**a slightly higher magnitude, and greater statistical significance.** And then, strikingly, **the fourth factor, capturing primarily sexist and some racist attitudes, jumps up in both magnitude and significance.**

A possible interpretation, therefore, of how class relates to voting for Trump goes something like this: **Holding most other salient factors constant, being working class makes a voter slightly more likely to hold nationalist/racist and misogynist/racist views** (though to reiterate, being working class is a much weaker predictor of the likelihood of holding these views than race, ideology, partisanship, age, and gender). If a voter is working class, having more nationalist and racist views makes that voter considerably more likely to be a Trump voter, and holding misogynist and racist views makes that voter somewhat more likely to be a Trump voter. **However, it must be kept in view that this same analysis shows that being working class makes a voter more likely to hold progressive views about class, distribution, and economic fairness,** and having more progressive economic views makes that voter considerably less likely to be a Trump voter.



# 8 / CONCLUSION

Our poll and the analysis we performed do not contradict the widespread belief that support for Democrats is stronger among middle and upper class voters than it is among working class voters. But our study does strongly call into question the explanation most commonly advanced for those political alignments, namely that the working class is simply more socially and culturally conservative than the middle and upper classes.

**Our study shows that the most salient differences in worldview between classes revolve around questions of class, distribution, and economic fairness,** where the working class is well to the left of the middle and upper classes, and regression analysis strongly suggests that the further left a voter is on these questions of class, distribution, and economic fairness, the less likely they were to have supported Donald Trump in 2020. **Our study furthermore shows that differences between classes on social and cultural values tend to be small, and that, where there are differences,** the working class is not always more conservative, even when looking only at white voters. Regression analysis suggests that, to the extent that class can explain some of the instances in which we do observe that the working class holds more conservative values than the middle and upper classes, it explains less of the differences in attitudes on those questions than other characteristics like age, gender, race, sexuality, ideology, and partisanship. **We simply do not observe a working class that is uniformly more conservative than the middle and upper classes,** and to the extent that we do observe differences, those differences are not sufficient to explain the differences in partisan alignment that we do observe across classes.

In the absence of a simple story of how class explains partisan alignments, the remainder of our analysis focused on identifying distinct ideological profiles within the working class. **We identified seven such profiles, which we have called Next Gen Left, Mainstream Liberals, Core MAGA, Tuned Out Persuadables, Secure Suburban Moderates, Anti-Woke Traditionalists, and Diverse Disaffected Conservatives.** Contrary to claims that contemporary leftism is primarily a phenomenon of affluent and highly educated young people, we found one fully leftist and one very progressive cluster that together make up more than a quarter of the working class.

**At the other end of the ideological spectrum, we identified one down-the-line right wing cluster.** Against at least some versions of the “populist” argument for Trump’s support, we find the working class voters who most vehemently support the former president and the GOP are on average much more economically secure than the working class as a whole. In between those three clusters that manifest a clear partisan sort, the remainder of the working class is made up of voters who are genuinely cross-pressured, in several distinct ways. Understanding who these cross-pressured voters are, and the nature of their ideological conflictedness, is essential groundwork for the project of building a progressive coalition anchored in the working class.

**🎯 Working Families Power intends to build on this analysis to develop strategies for accomplishing this pivotal goal.**



# 9 / ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE:

## 📍 Project Lead & Report Author

*Ted Fertik (Working Families Power)*

## 📍 HIT Strategies Project Team

*Roshni Nedungadi, Courtney Couillard, Ross Miletich, and Jake Rubinstein*

## 📍 Project Consultant

*Jonathan Chavez*

## 📍 Support and Engagement of:

*Jared Abbott (Center for Working Class Politics), Jenifer Fernandez Ancona (Way to Rise), Will Carter (Democracy Alliance Partner and a founding donor of the Rural Democracy Initiative and Winning Jobs Narrative), Toby Chow (128 Collective), Bobby Clark (Winning Jobs Narrative), Kassia DeVorse (Minerva Insights), Rahna Epting and Joel Payne (MoveOn), Bill Franko (West Virginia University), Mansoor Khan (SEIU), Abigail Stahl (Groundwork Collaborative), Chris Witko (Penn State University), and Erin Heaney (SURJ)*

## 📍 Inputs and Edits from:

*More than a dozen staff at Working Families Power, especially the members of our research working group: brittany bennett, Charlie Blaettler, Zack Campbell, Aimee Castenell, Matt Cordeiro, Sarah Ganong, Adam Gold, Amanda Johnson, Pedro Lira, AJ Springer, Karl Stromberg, and Carlos Valverde, as well as Mike Boland, Joe Dinkin, Rob Duffey, Braeden Lentz, Maurice Mitchell*

## 📍 This research was made possible by grants from:

*Way to Rise, the Fightback Table, 128 Collective*

## 📍 Report Design & Data Visualization by Data Culture

*Alessia Musio, Marisa Ruiz Asari, and Iva Brunec*  
[studio.datacult.com](http://studio.datacult.com)

**WORKING FAMILIES POWER** ©HITstrategies

*For further information, please contact*  
[research@workingfamilies.org](mailto:research@workingfamilies.org)







