

# Political Avoidance Survey

## What We Don't Talk About & Why

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November 2023 • The Harris Poll Thought Leadership Practice





# Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll from November 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, among a nationally representative sample of 2,095 U.S. adults.

This research comprises 234 Gen Z (ages 18-25), 701 Millennials (ages 26-41), 544 Gen X (ages 42-57), and 616 Boomers (ages 58 and older).





# Top Highlights

## Holiday Dread

- Young Americans don't want to hear your political point of view, in fact half (51%) of Gen Z skipped family gatherings.
- Four in 10 Gen Z and Millennials (38%) dread holiday gatherings due to potential political discussions, vs. 20% of Gen X and Boomers.
- 48% of Gen Z and Millennials admit "I have a hard time controlling my emotions during political discussions."
- Half of Gen Z and Millennials curate social media to avoid politics, with 41% secretly unfollowing people for their political content.
- 68% of Americans say, "I wish I knew how to talk to people better on the other side of the political divide." Gen Z and Millennials seek political alignment, even with therapists (42%) and primary care providers (42%).

## Keep The Peace Perspectives

- Gen X and Boomers opt for peace, while Gen Z and Millennials deem certain topics off-limits.
- "Keeping the peace" is the primary reason for silence on politics, with 38% admitting difficulty controlling emotions during political discussions.

## Election Anxiety

- 53% of Americans express dread about the upcoming 2024 presidential election year.
- Four in 10 Americans (42%) plan to actively avoid media in the upcoming presidential election year due to political saturation.

## Perceived Division

- 47% of Americans believe the nation is not as divided as portrayed by the media.
- 84% of Americans, across generations, prefer to keep their political opinions reserved, even among friends and family. Besides their significant other, most Americans don't feel political alignment is necessary in their relationships.
- Despite differences, 76% of Americans prefer open discussions with those holding different viewpoints, with 56% of Americans wish they could better communicate across the political divide.

# What We Don't Talk About & Why

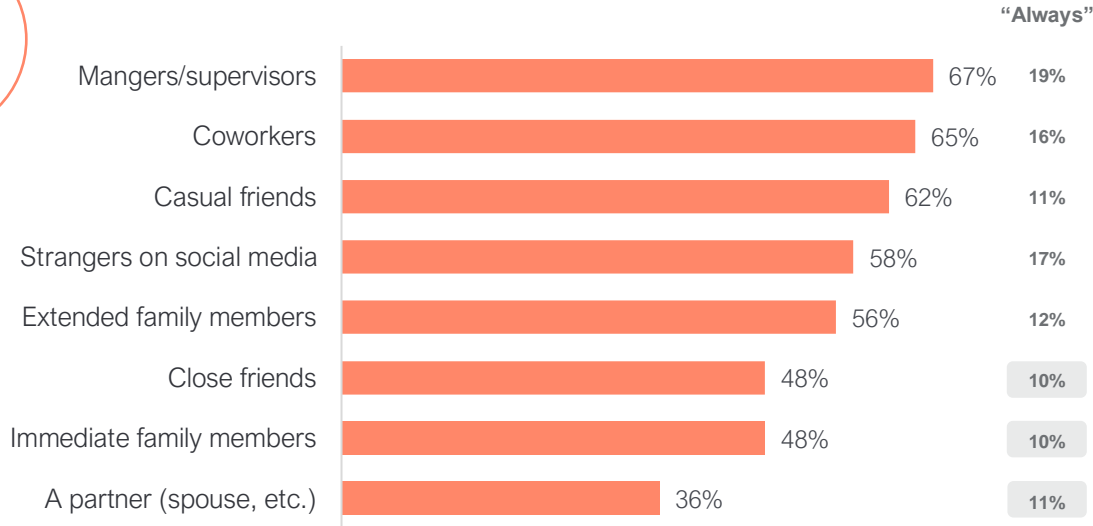


# Silent Majority: 84% of Americans keep political opinions close, even among friends and family

How often do you hold back your honest opinion on politics with \_\_\_\_\_?

THOSE WHO SELECTED SOMETIMES / OFTEN / ALWAYS

84% of Americans hold back their opinion



**53%**  
Americans

“I’m **dreading** the upcoming presidential election year (2024).”

57% Gen Z + Millennial  
49% Gen X + Boomer

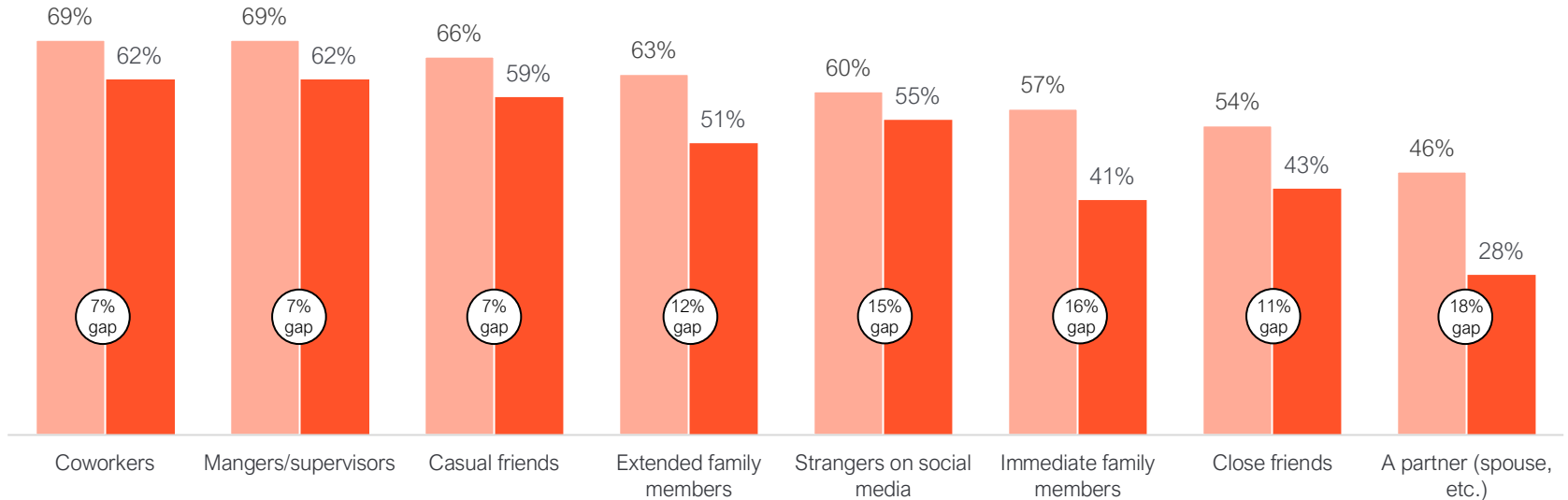


# Younger generations tend to be more reserved on politics than older generations, even with partners

How often do you hold back your honest opinion on politics with \_\_\_\_\_?

THOSE WHO SELECTED SOMETIMES / OFTEN / ALWAYS

Gen Z + Millennial      Gen X + Boomer





# Across Generations, “keeping the peace” dominates as top reason to stay mum on politics, regardless of the political affiliation

## Why do you hold back your political opinion sometimes?

% WHO SELECTED

Reasons were highly similar across political parties



**38%**  
Americans

“I have a hard time controlling my emotions during political discussions.”

48% Gen Z + Millennial  
30% Gen X + Boomer

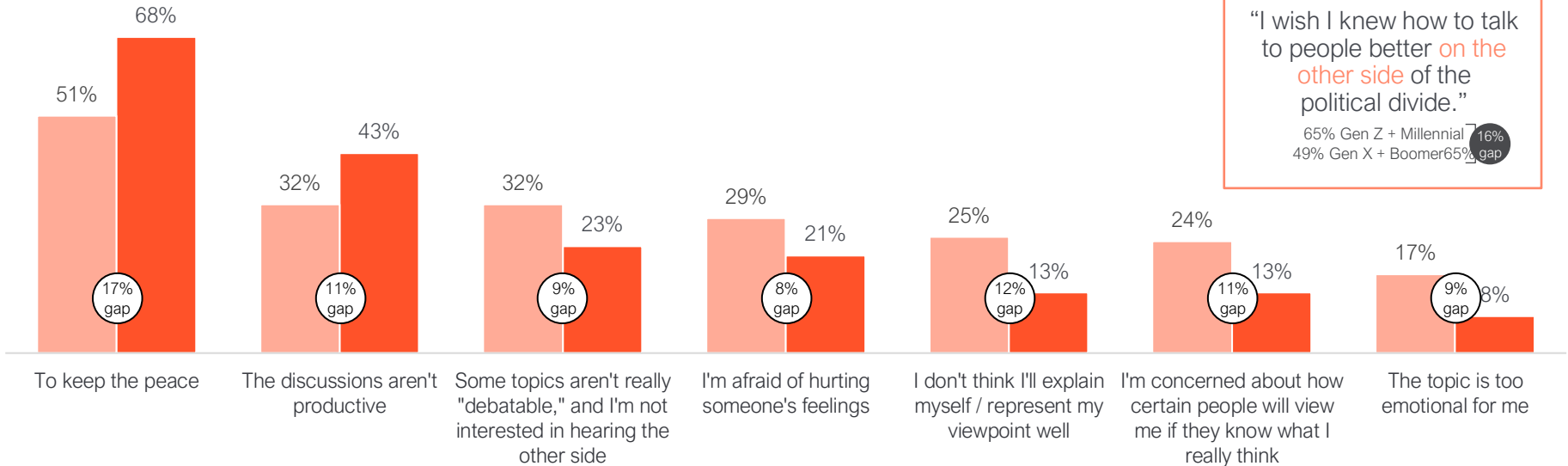


# Gen X and Boomers opt for peace, while Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to say some topics are off-limits

## Why do you hold back your political opinion sometimes?

% WHO SELECTED

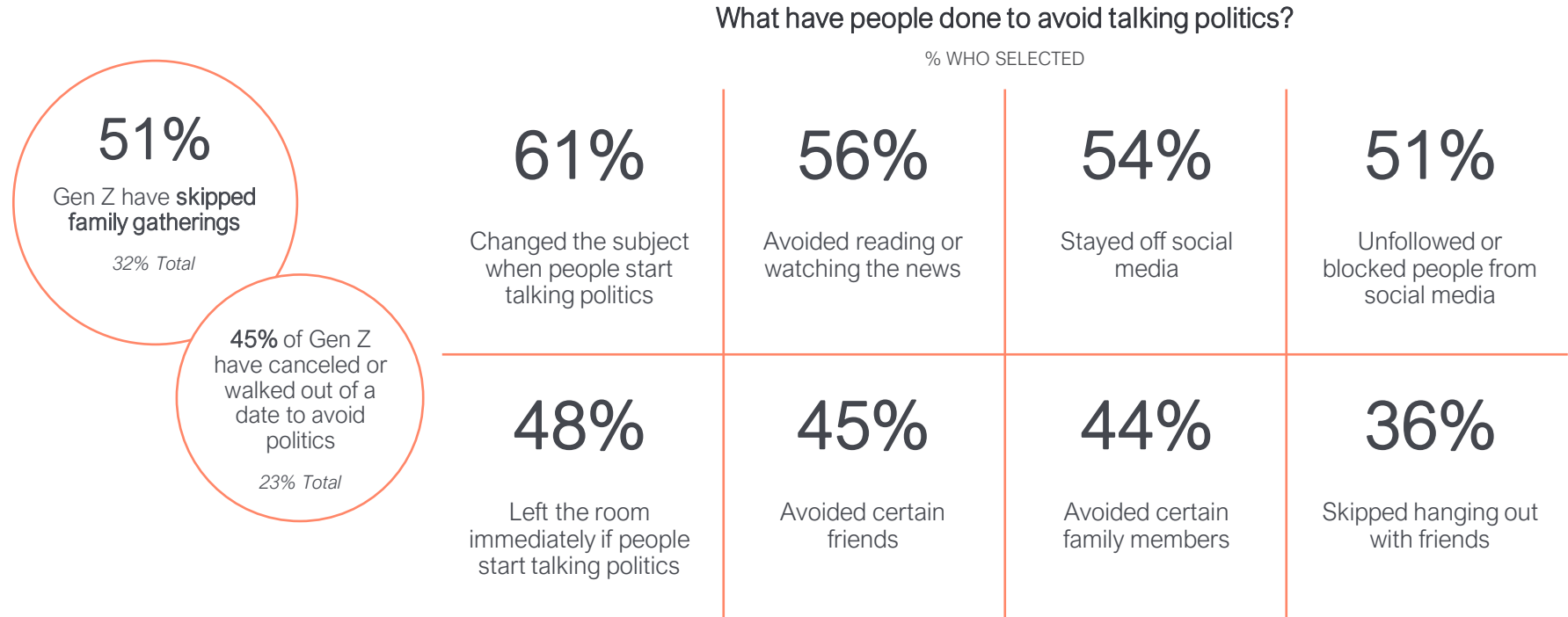
■ Gen Z + Millennial ■ Gen X + Boomer







# Americans are dodging the political talk, with 51% of Gen Z skipping family gatherings and nearly half walking out of dates



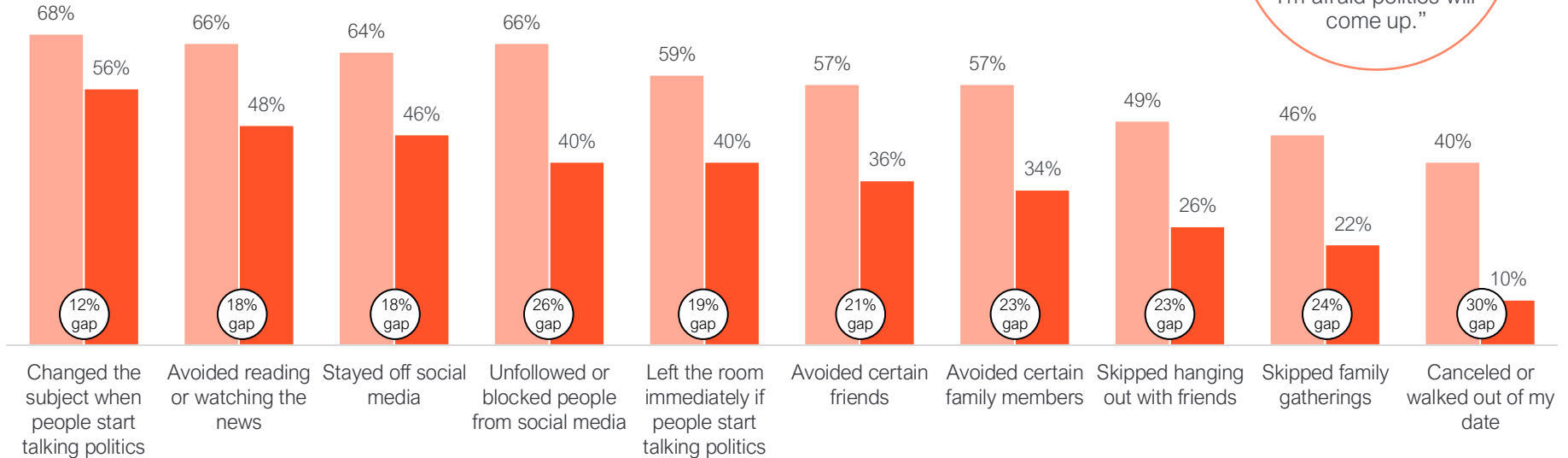


# Gen Z and Millennials steer clear of family gatherings, with four in 10 (38%) dreading political talks during holidays

## What have people done to avoid talking politics?

% WHO SELECTED

■ Gen Z + Millennial ■ Gen X + Boomer



**38%**  
 Gen Z + Mill. vs.  
 20% Gen X + Boomer  
 "I'm dreading holiday gatherings because I'm afraid politics will come up."



# Besides their significant other, majorities of Americans don't feel it's necessary to be politically aligned with the people in their lives

How necessary is it for the following people in your life to have similar political opinions to you?

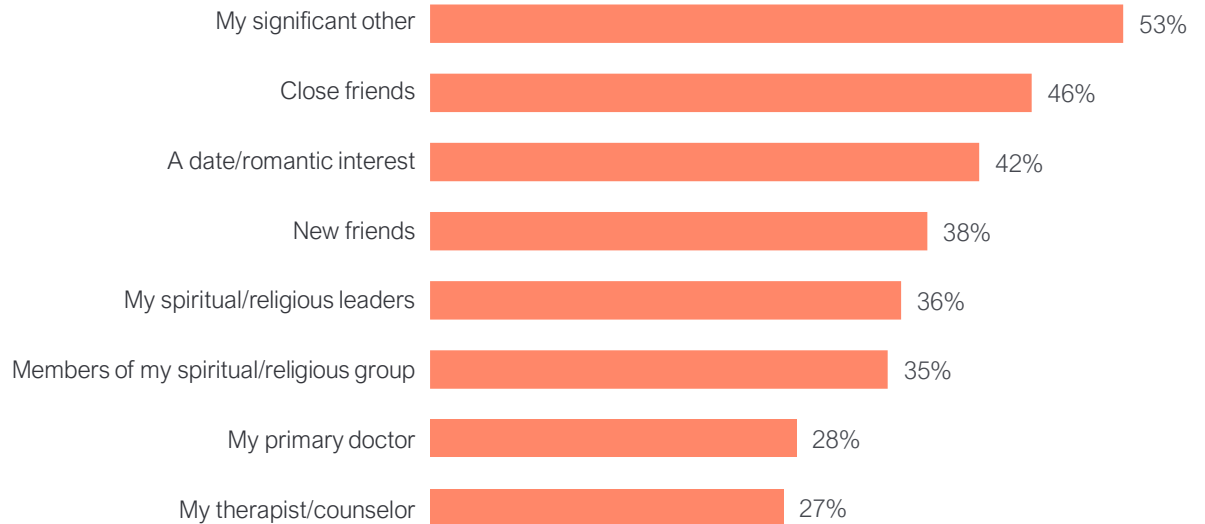
% WHO SELECTED VERY / SOMEWHAT NECESSARY

# 47%

Americans

“Americans are **NOT** as divided as the media makes us seem to be.”

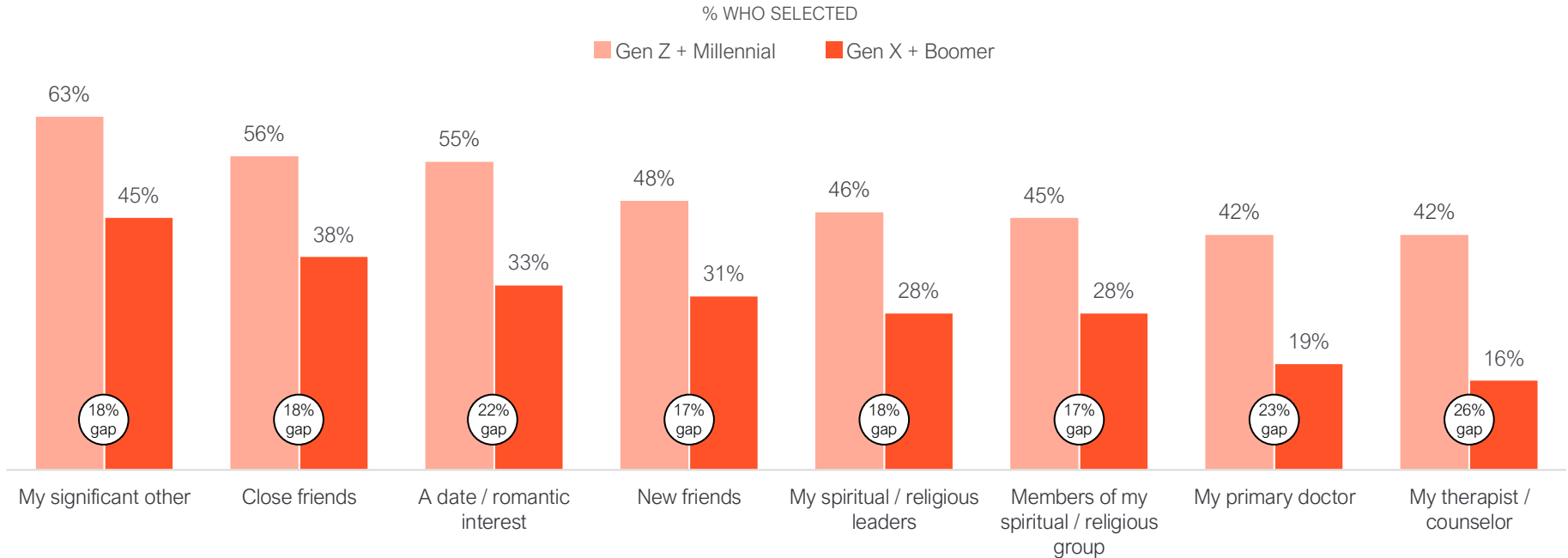
- 48% Gen Z
- 58% Millennial
- 46% Gen X
- 37% Boomer





# However, Gen Z and Millennials seek political alignment, even when it comes to their therapist and primary care provider

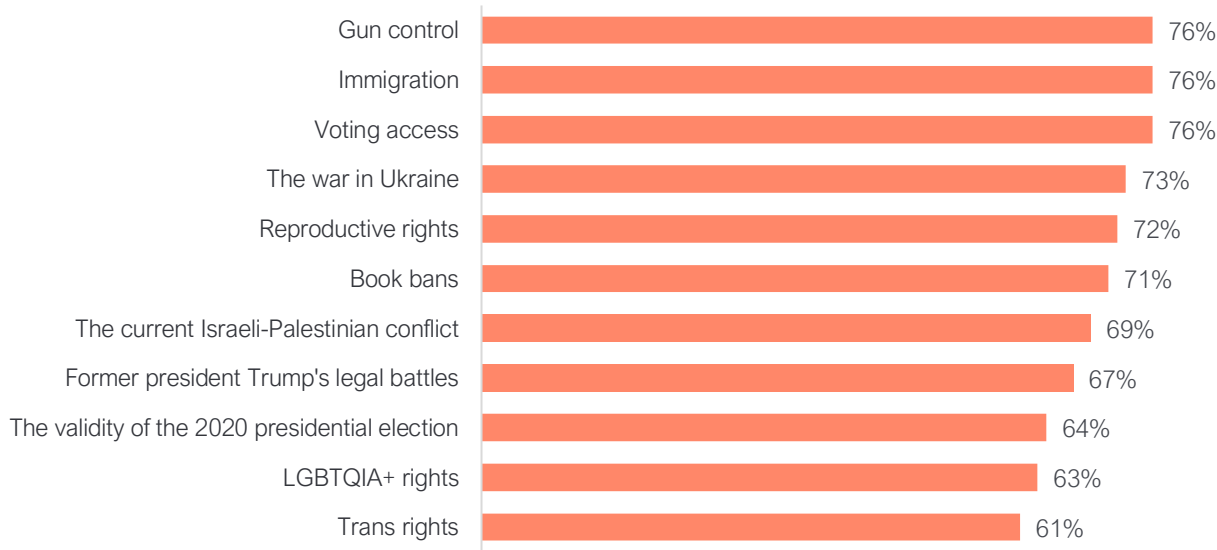
How necessary is it for the following people in your life to have similar political opinions to you?





# Despite contentious political topics, most Americans are willing to engage in discussions with those who hold different viewpoints

Open to discussing \_\_\_\_\_ with those who think differently  
% WHO SELECTED YES



**76%**  
Americans

“When I discuss politics with someone, I prefer for other people to be **open to listening** to different ideas than for them to agree with me.”

*\*No significant differences across generations or political parties\**



Americans grapple with a paradox, navigating the tension of incomplete understanding while holding onto the belief that they can persuade others to see their viewpoint

58%

Americans

“I wish I could  
better understand  
people on the  
other side of the  
political divide.”

66% Millennial

43%

Americans

“I think I can  
influence other  
people's political  
opinions.”

57% Gen Z + Millennial  
33% Gen X + Boomer



# Half of Gen Z and Millennials curate their social media to avoid politics, secretly unfollowing people

42%

Americans

“I plan to **actively avoid media** in the upcoming presidential election year mainly due to politics.”

51% Gen Z + Millennial  
36% Gen X + Boomer

41%

Americans

“I've **'secretly' unfollowed** people on social media so that I don't see their political content or opinions.”

51% Gen Z + Millennial  
34% Gen X + Boomer

To learn more about this research, please reach out to...



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