



**THE VETERANS AND
CITIZENS INITIATIVE**

Moving Forward Together

Americans' Attitudes towards the Military

February 2023

THE VETERANS AND CITIZENS INITIATIVE

The Veterans and Citizens Initiative (VCI) launched in 2020 to serve as a connective tissue to elevate civic work being done by veterans and military family organizations and build connections between such organizations and the broader field of nonpartisan civic renewal efforts. Anchored in More in Common, a nonpartisan research and civic nonprofit, the VCI leads national research and engages with partners to elevate ways for veteran and military family organizations, and civil society groups, to come together around nonpartisan work that strengthens our democracy and builds a stronger shared sense of belonging.

VCI Partners



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

General Population Survey

Results are shown as “US Average”

More in Common partnered with international polling company Morning Consult to conduct online survey interviews with n=2,004 adult US citizens from October 28 to November 1, 2022. The data was weighted to be representative of American citizens using propensity scores, with score functions including gender, age, race, education, and region. The margin of error is +/- 2%.

American Military Veteran Survey

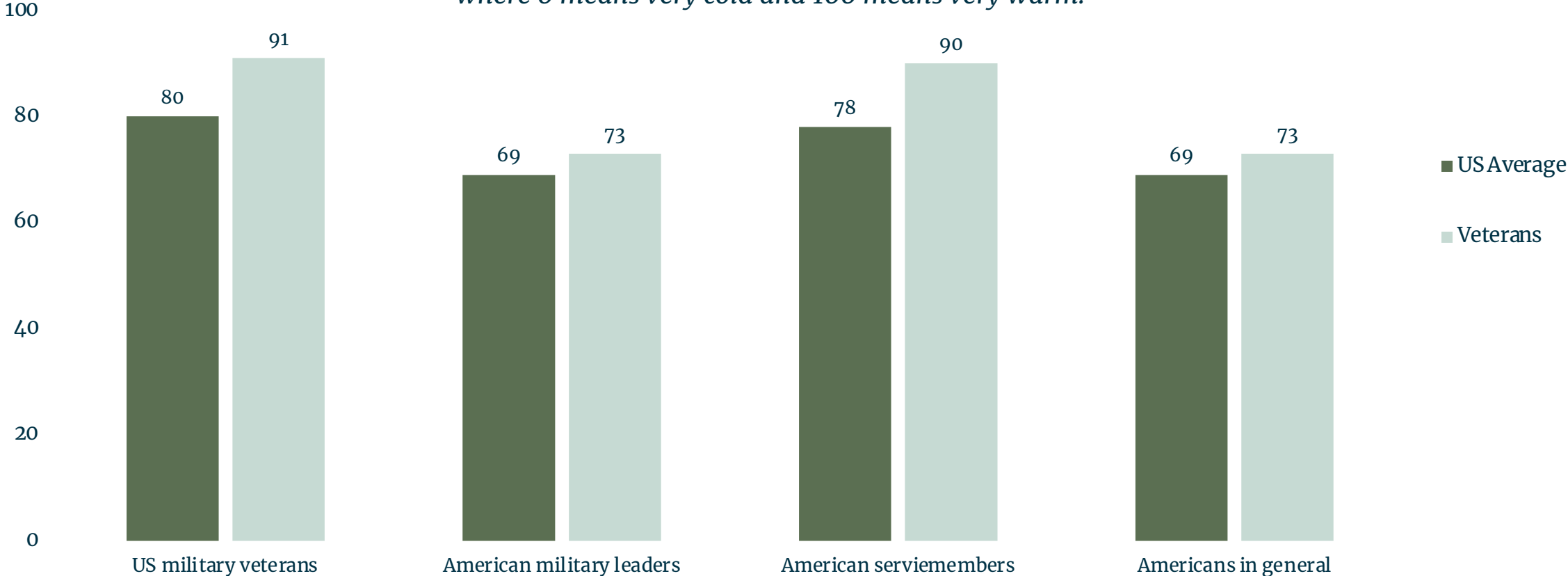
Results are shown as “Veterans”

More in Common also partnered with international polling company Morning Consult to conduct online survey interviews with n=500 US military veterans from October 28 to November 1, 2022. The data was weighted to be representative of American veterans using propensity scores, with score functions including gender, age, race, education, and region. The margin of error is +/- 4% for the veteran sample.

Trust and Warmth toward the Military

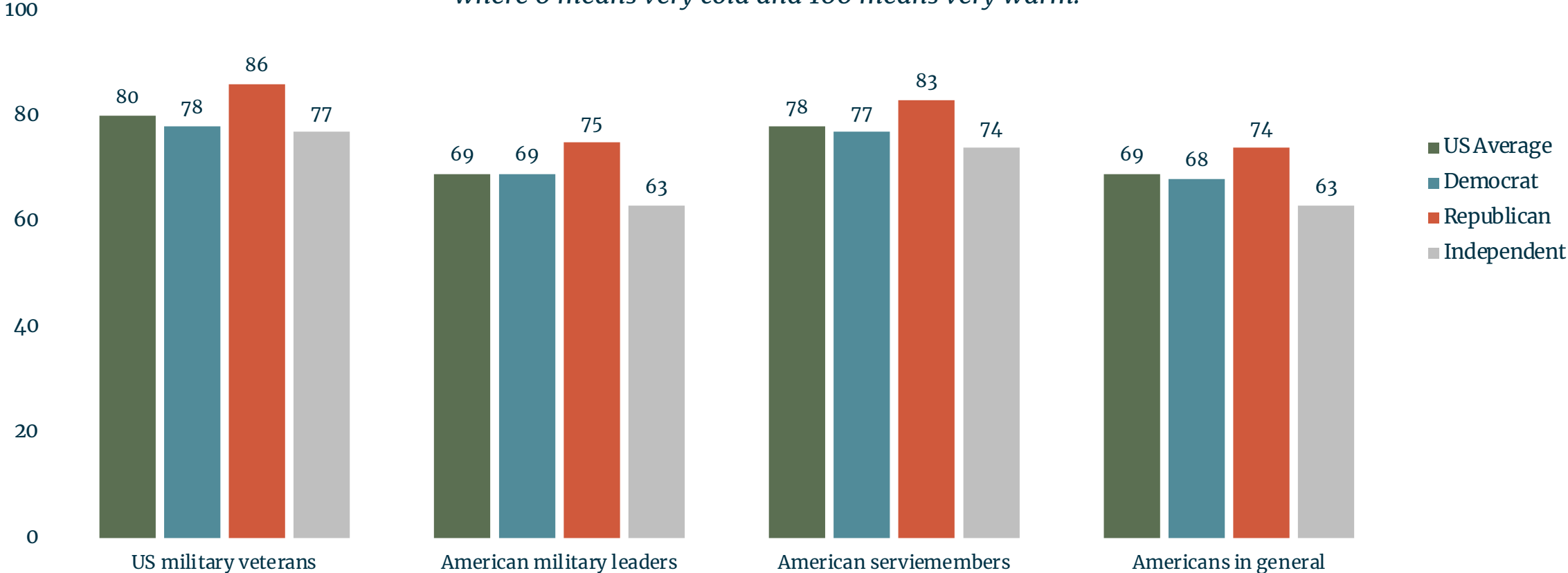
Americans in general feel more warmly toward American service members than American military leaders.

For each of the following groups, indicate how cold or warm you feel towards them, where 0 means very cold and 100 means very warm.



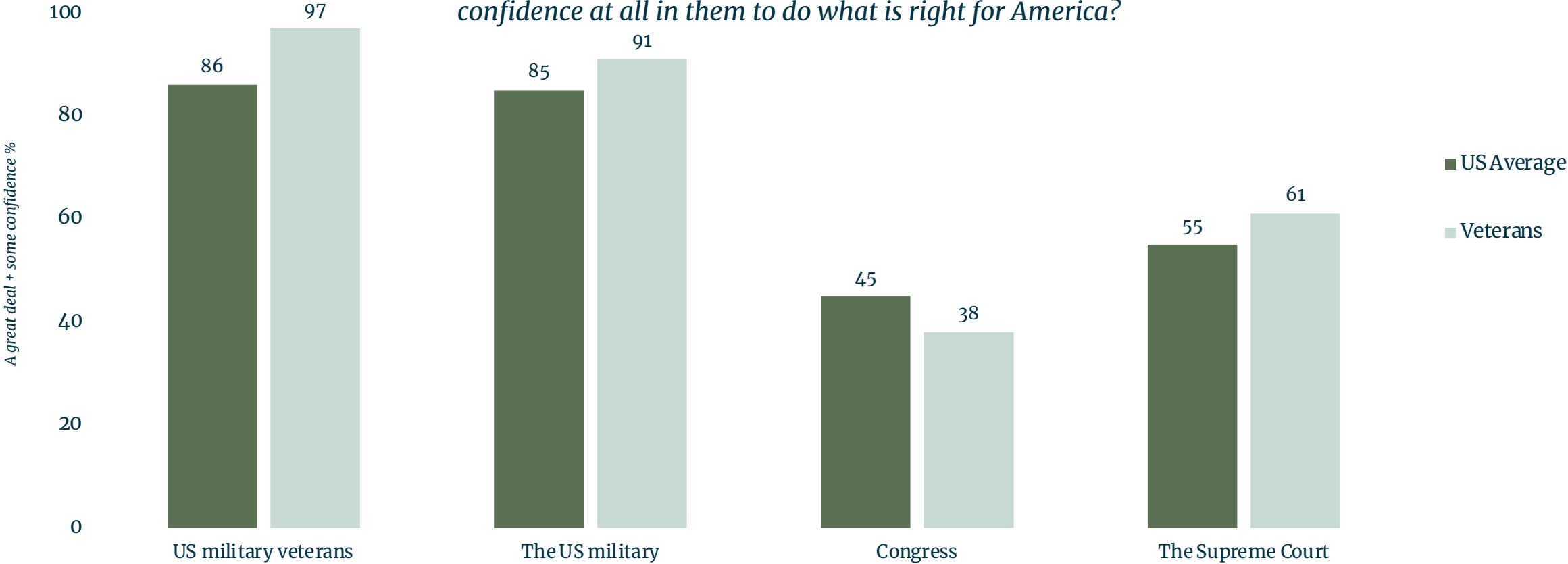
Feelings of warmth toward American servicemembers are high across political ideology, with Republicans reporting slightly warmer feelings.

For each of the following groups, indicate how cold or warm you feel towards them, where 0 means very cold and 100 means very warm.



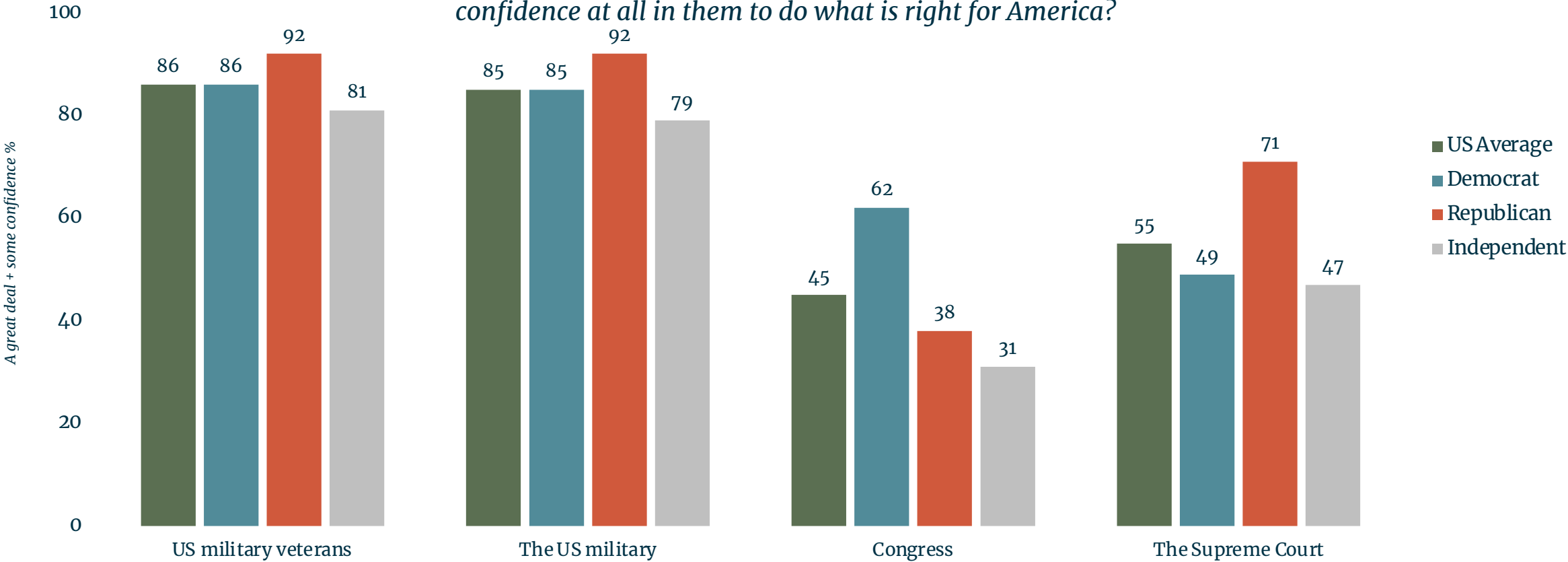
Americans have significantly higher confidence in the military to do what is right for American than in Congress or the Supreme Court.

For each of these groups or institutions, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence, hardly any confidence, or no confidence at all in them to do what is right for America?



The levels of confidence toward the military are similar across political ideology.

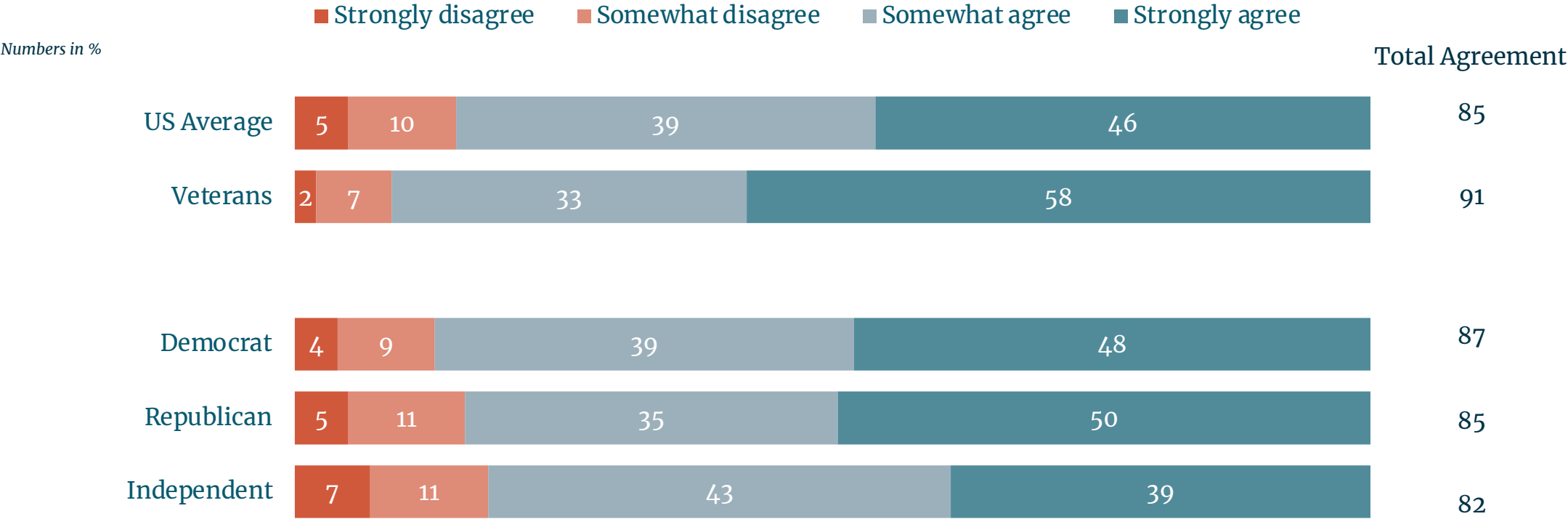
For each of these groups or institutions, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence, hardly any confidence, or no confidence at all in them to do what is right for America?



Confidence in Wartime Capabilities

An overwhelming majority of Americans across the political spectrum have confidence in the military's ability to perform well in wartime.

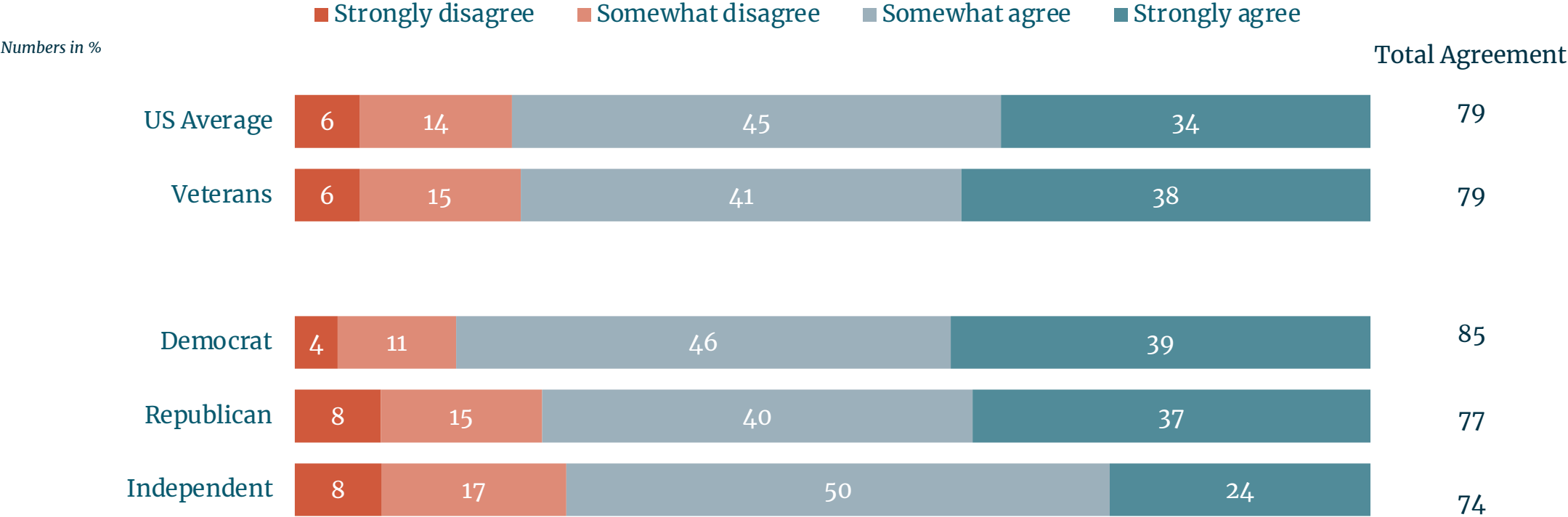
I have confidence in the ability of our military to perform well in wartime.



Survey question: *To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

Most Americans also express confidence in US senior military leaders to perform well in wartime

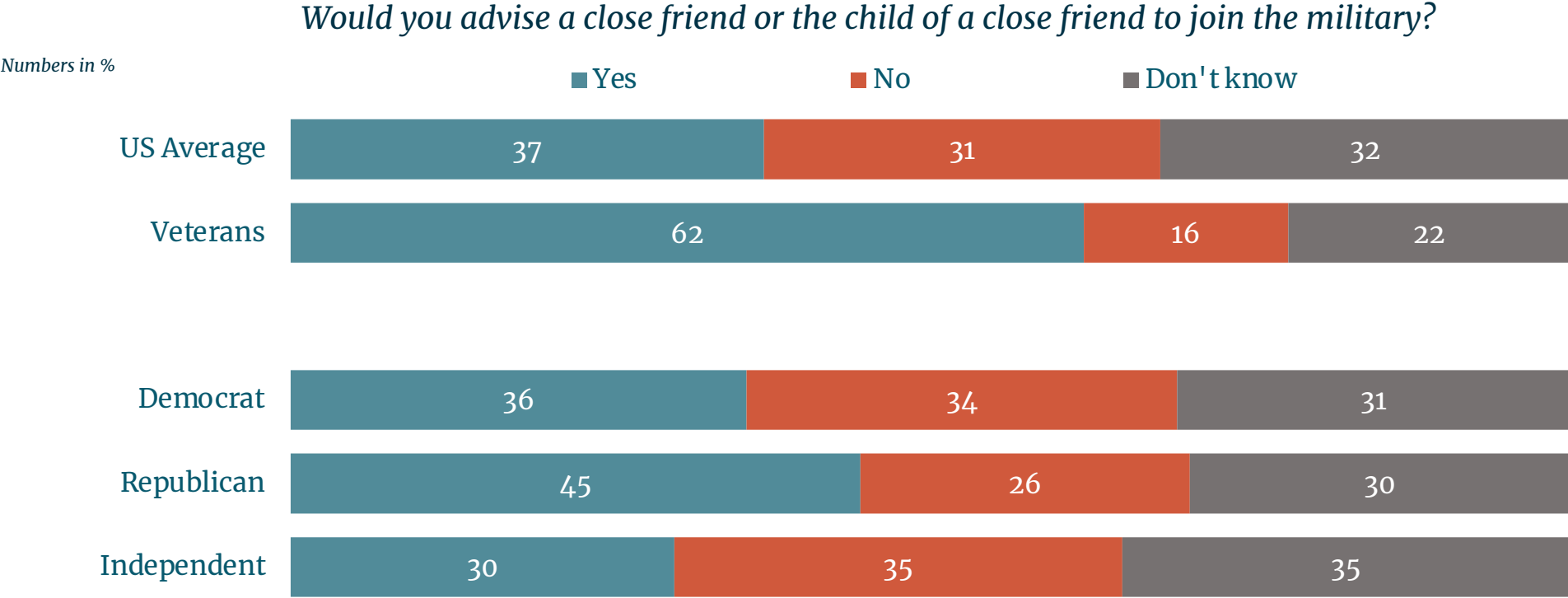
I have confidence in our senior military leaders (generals and admirals) to perform well in wartime.



Survey question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

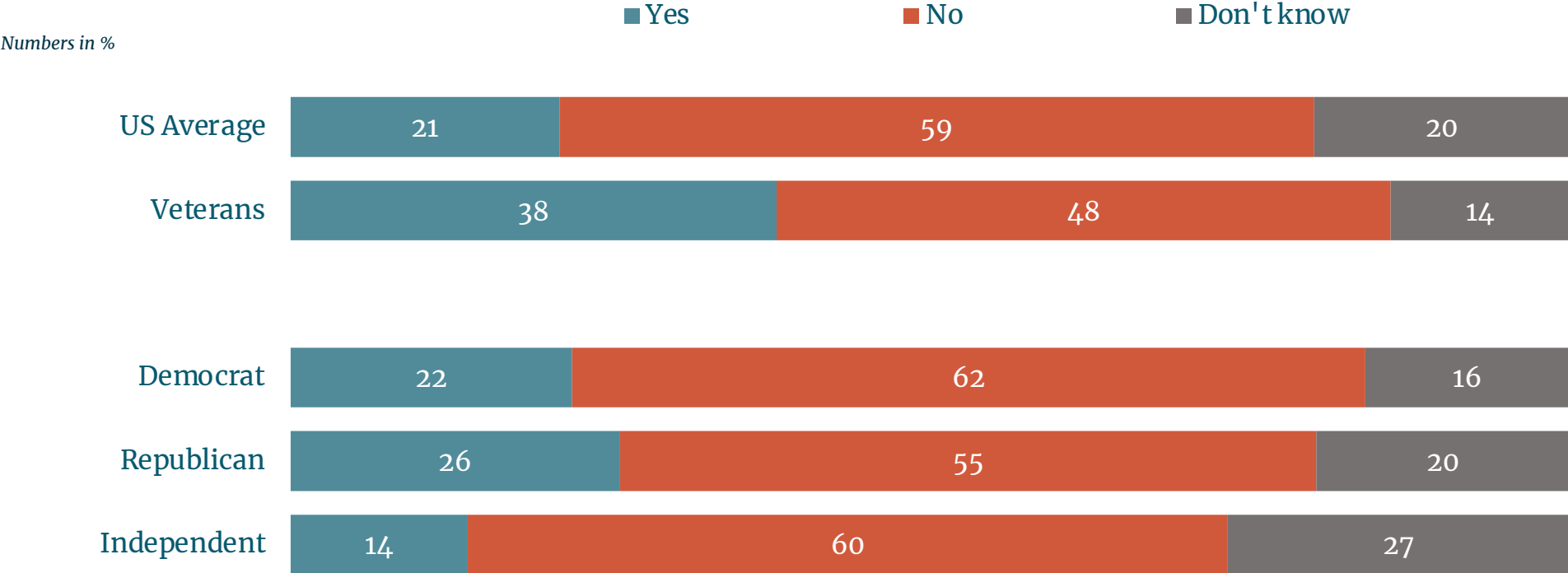
Recruitment & Military Draft

Americans are divided on whether they would advise a close friend or the child of a close friend to join the military. Slightly more than one third say they would, whereas another one third feel unsure. Veterans are much more likely to say they would.



Most Americans oppose returning to the military draft. Veterans are more in favor, though still close to half feel we should not return to a draft.

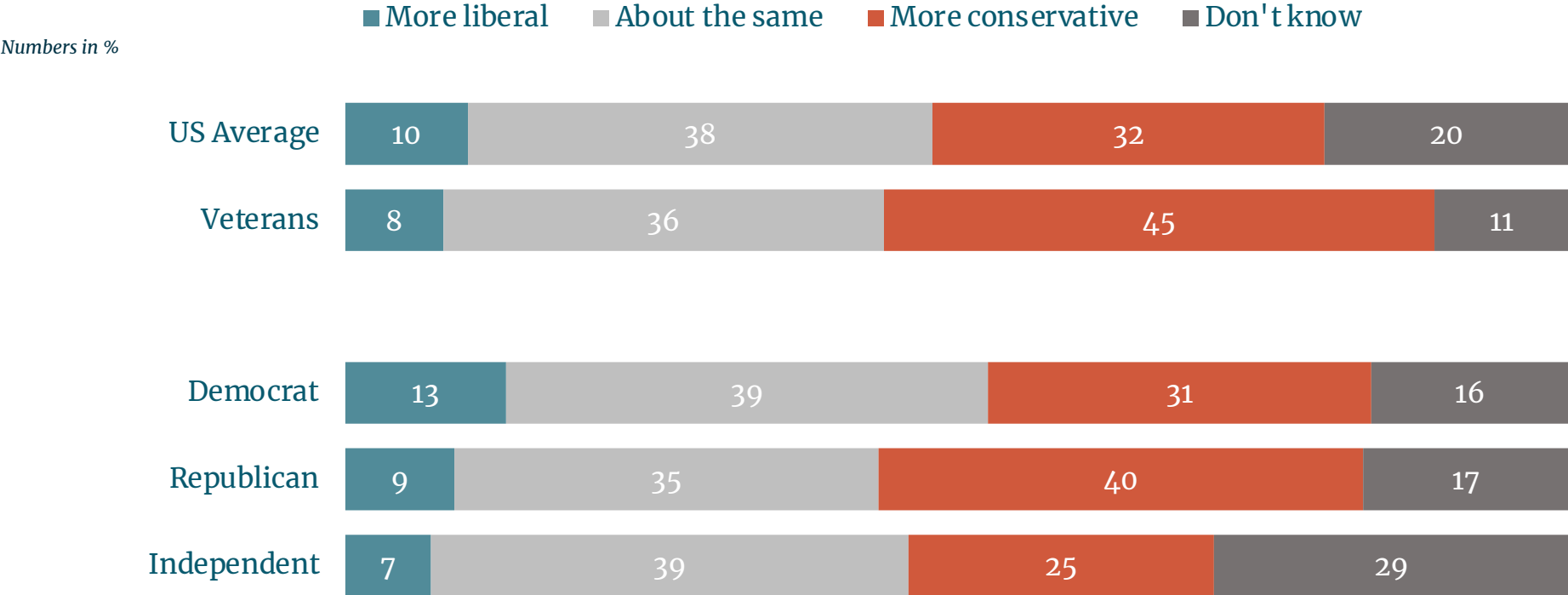
A draft is the mandatory enrollment of individuals into the armed forces. The United States military has been all-volunteer since 1973. Do you think America should return to the military draft?



Perception of the Military

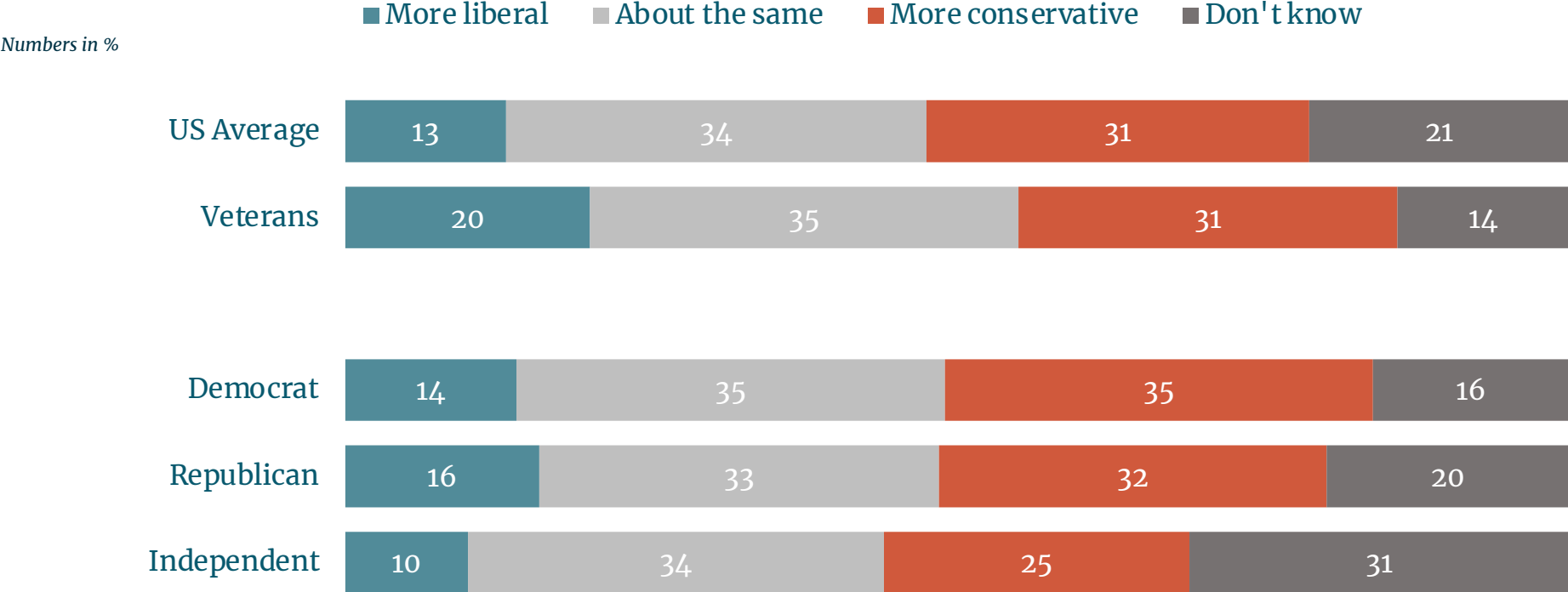
Most Americans think that members of the military are either about the same or more conservative than the rest of American society.

Compared to the rest of American society, do you think members of the US military as a group is more liberal, more conservative, or is it about the same?



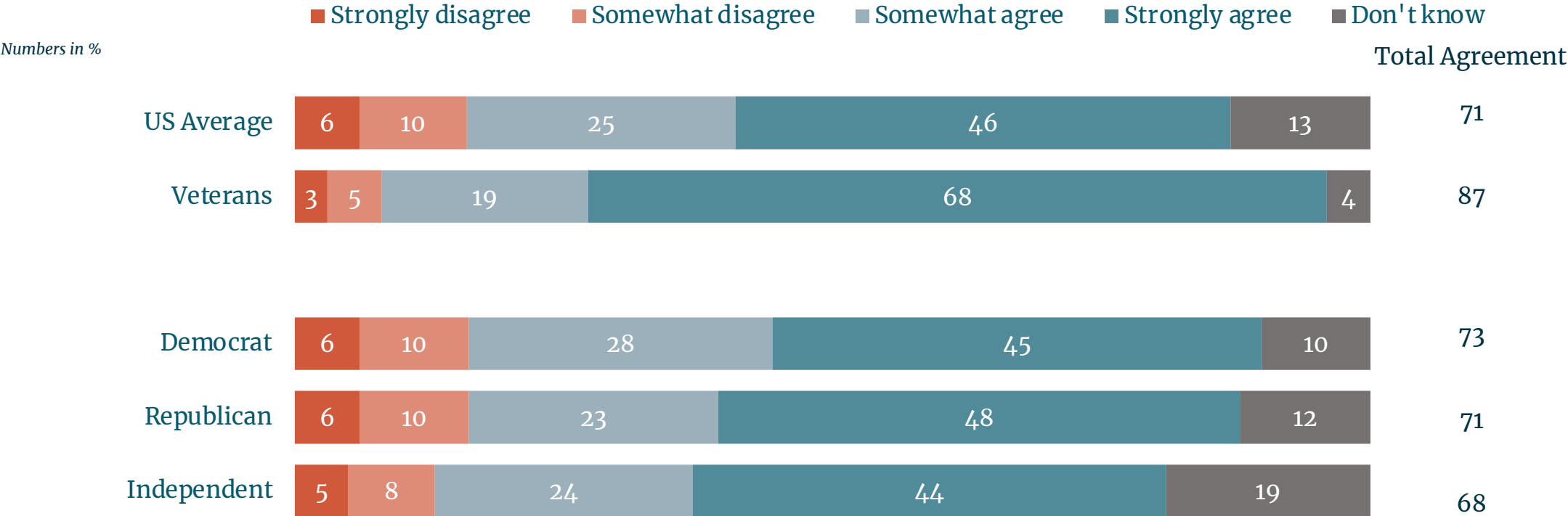
Americans in general feel similarly towards US military leaders; however, there are notable shifts in the views of veterans and of Republicans relative to how they see members of the military more generally.

Compared to the rest of American society, do you think senior US military leaders (generals and admirals) as a group is more liberal, more conservative, or is it about the same?



7 in 10 Americans, regardless of political affiliation, believe that the military *should* be separate from politics. Nearly 9 in 10 veterans agree with this statement.

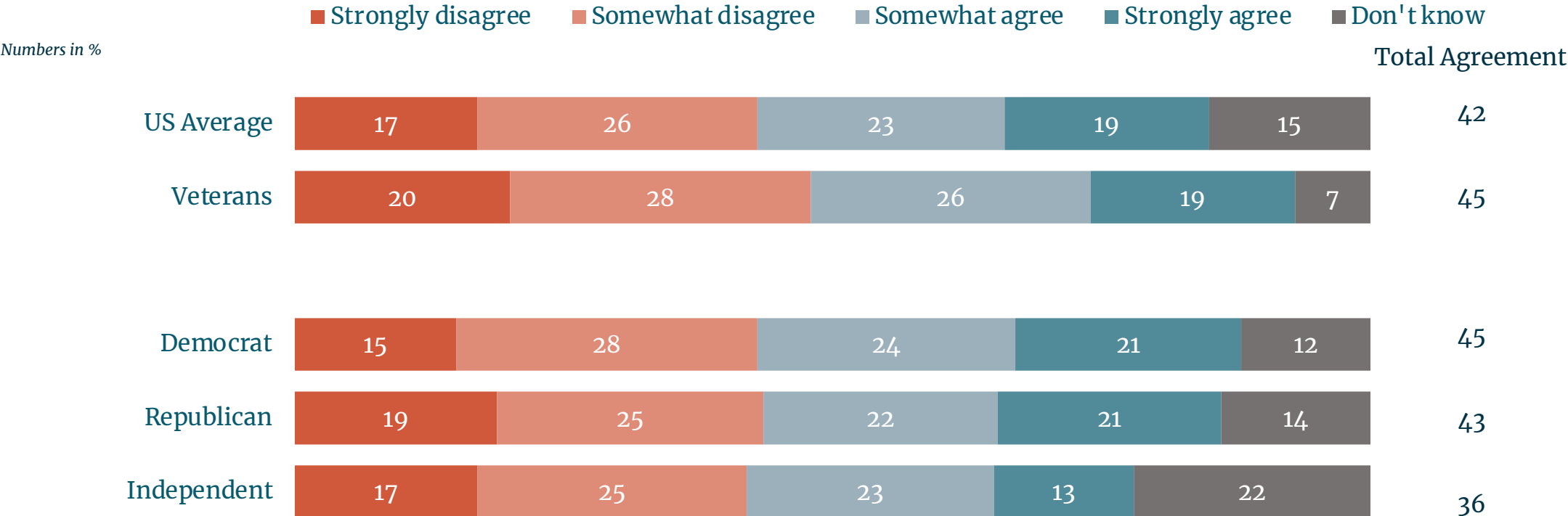
The US military should be separate from politics.



Survey question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

However, only 4 in 10 believe that the military *is* separate from politics.

The US military is separate from politics.

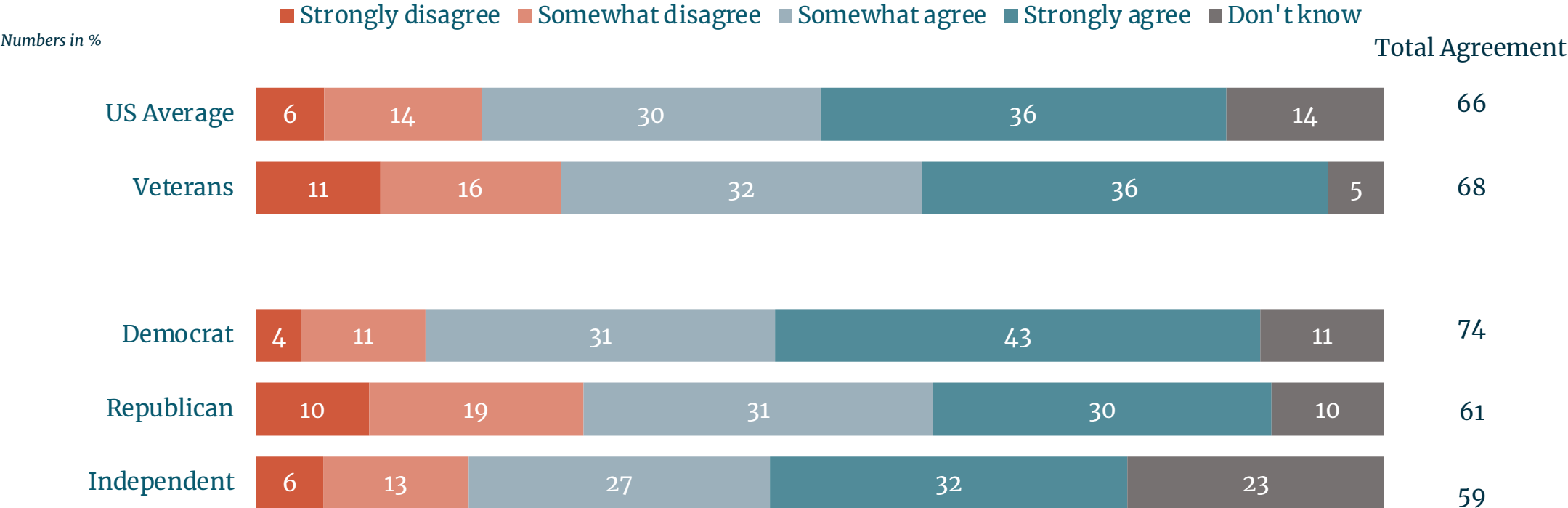


Survey question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Views on the Military

Two thirds of Americans, including veterans, believe that all combat roles in the military should be open to men and women.

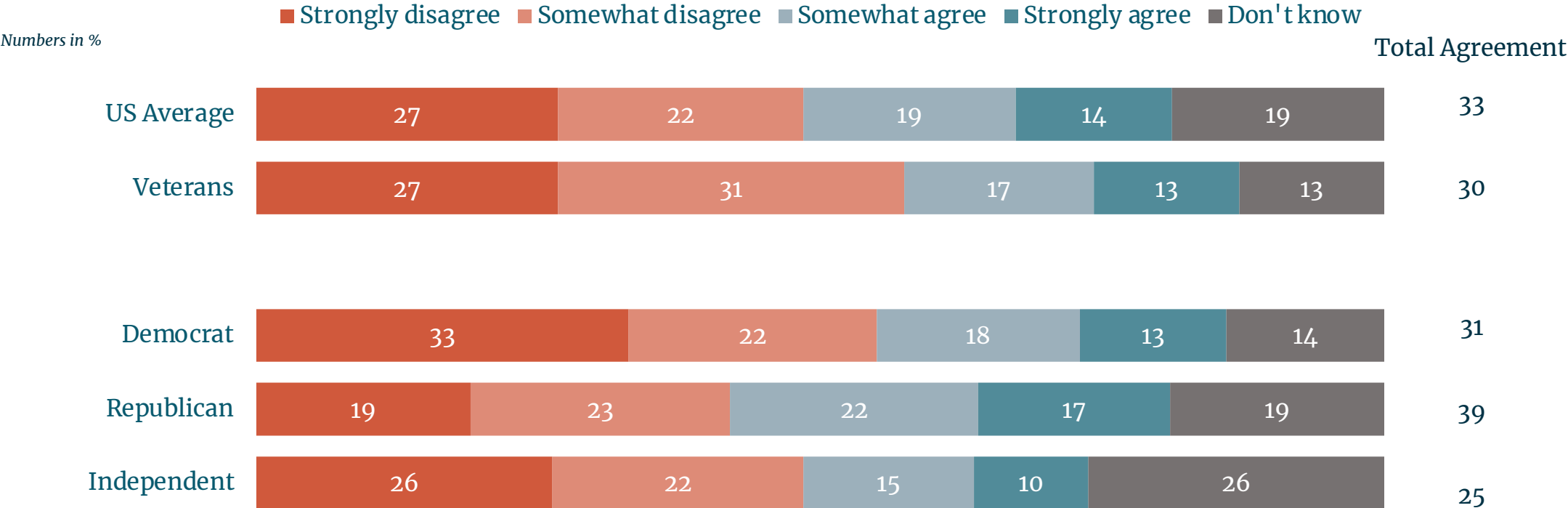
All combat roles in the US military should be open to men and women.



Survey question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Only one third of Americans say that the military was more effective when only men served in combat roles. Around half disagree.

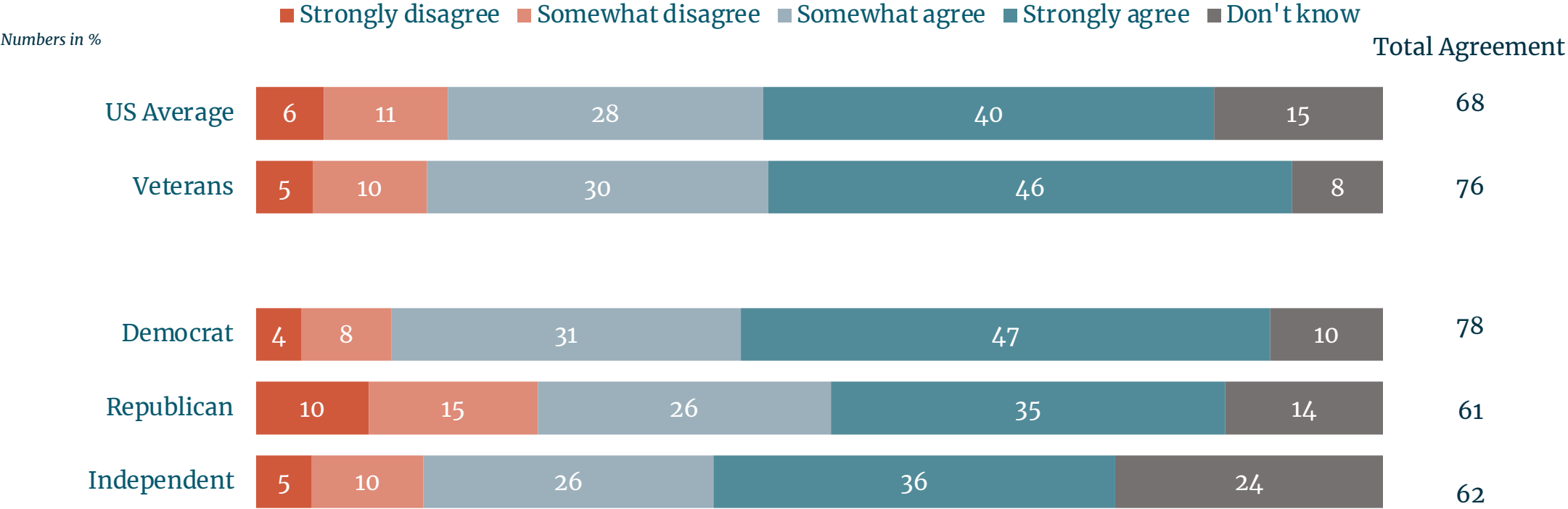
The US military was more effective when only men served in combat roles.



Survey question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Most Americans agree that the US military is stronger because people of all backgrounds can serve. Democrats and veterans are more likely than others to agree.

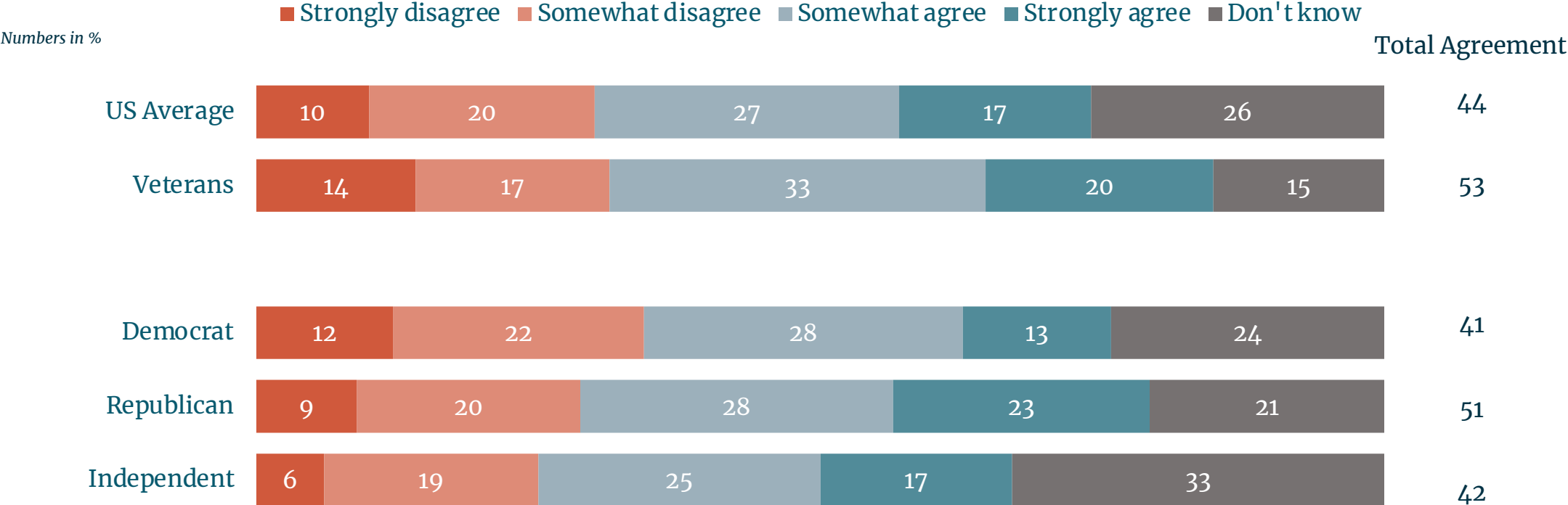
The US military is stronger because people of all backgrounds, including across race, gender, and sexual identity, can serve.



Survey question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Americans are divided on whether they think the military is too involved in non-military affairs: almost half agree, while almost one third disagree and one quarter feel unsure.

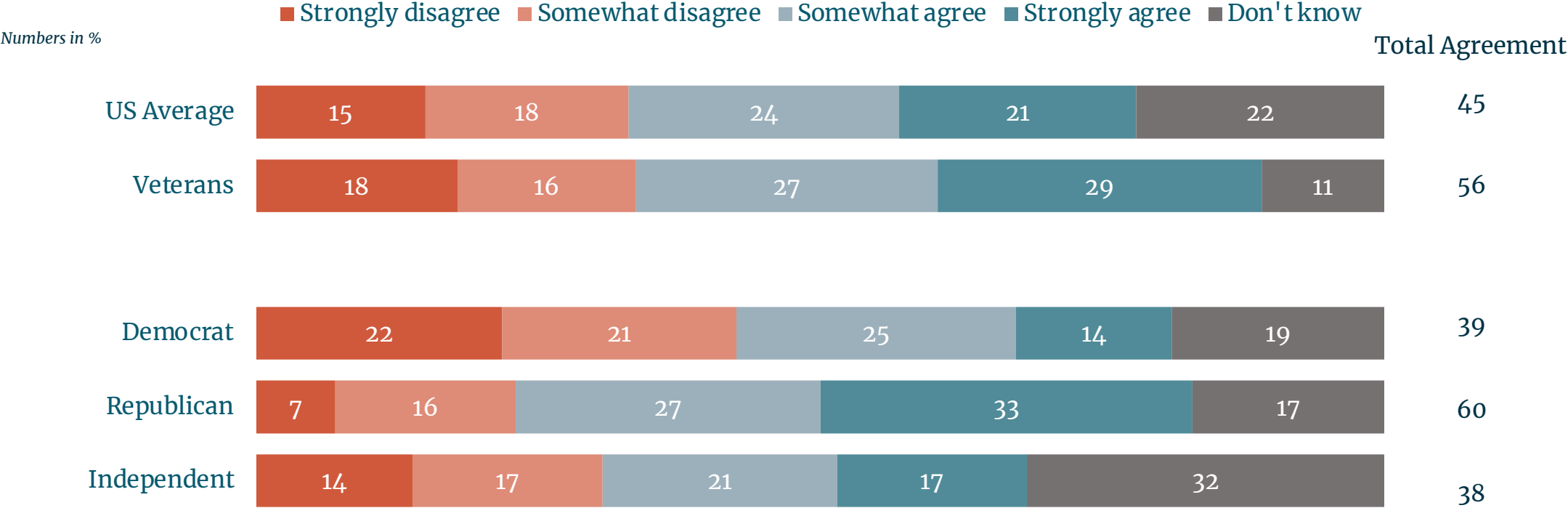
The US military is too involved in non-military affairs.



Survey question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

6 in 10 Republicans, compared to 4 in 10 Democrats and Independents, agree that there is a tradeoff between a focus on diversity and a focus on preparing for war.

There is a tradeoff where the more the military focuses on diversity and inclusion, the less it can focus on preparing for war.

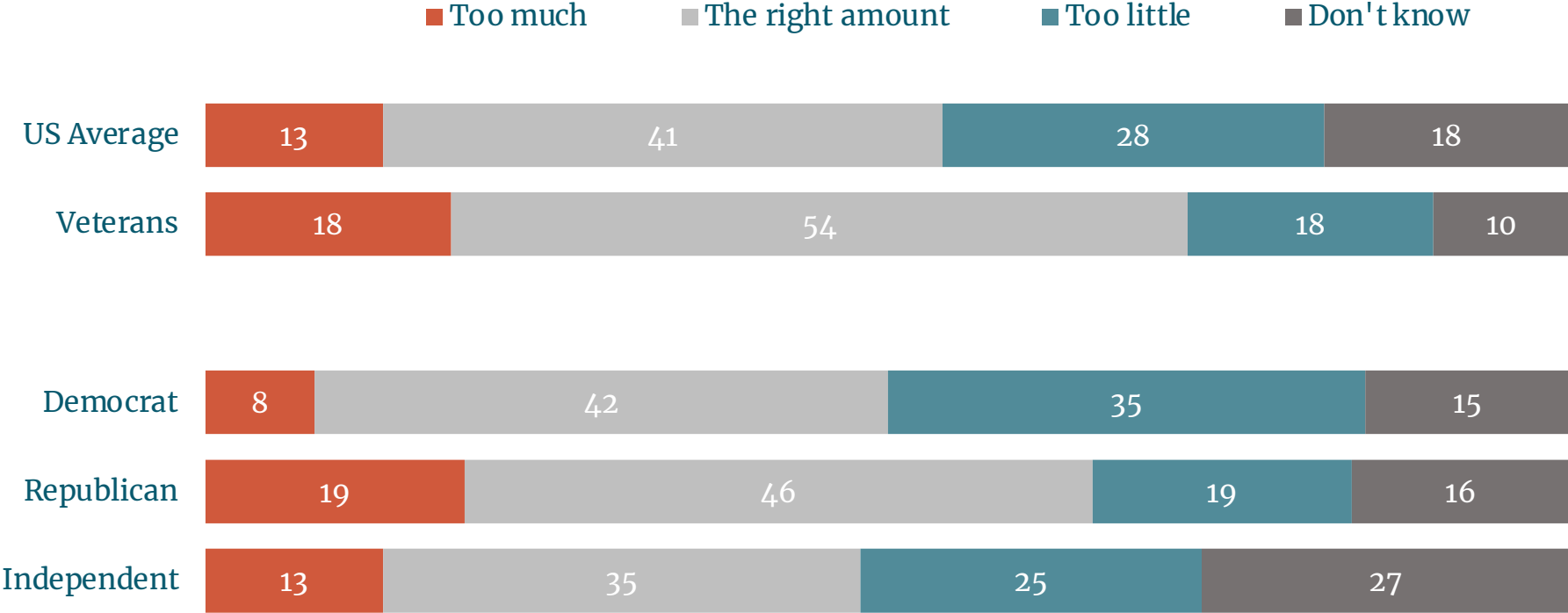


Survey question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

A plurality of Americans across the political spectrum think that the military places the right amount of resources on efforts to include women. One fifth feel unsure.

*For each of the following items, do you think the US military places too little, too much, or the right amount of resources and attention?
[Efforts to include women in the military]*

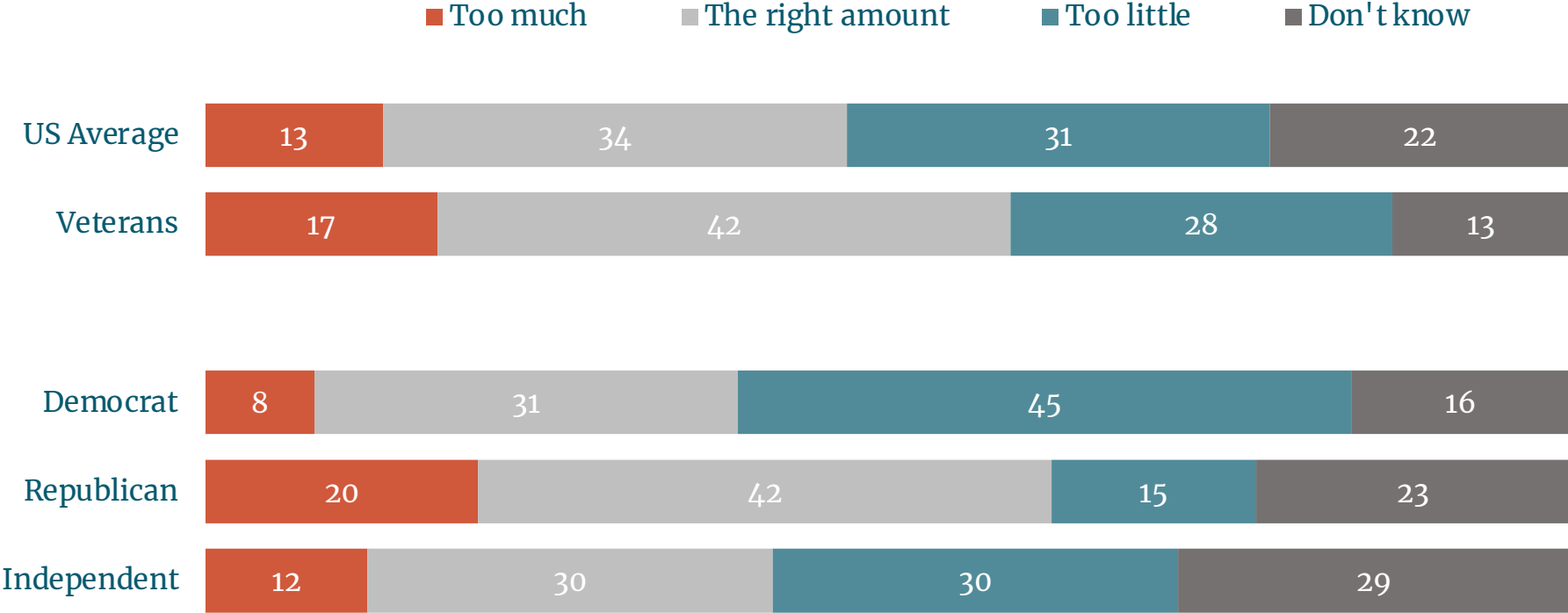
Numbers in %



Americans are divided when it comes to the amount of resources dedicated to addressing racism in the military: one third of Americans thinks it is the right amount, whereas one third, including almost half of Democrats, believes that there is too little attention.

*For each of the following items, do you think the US military places too little, too much, or the right amount of resources and attention?
[Efforts to address racism in the military]*

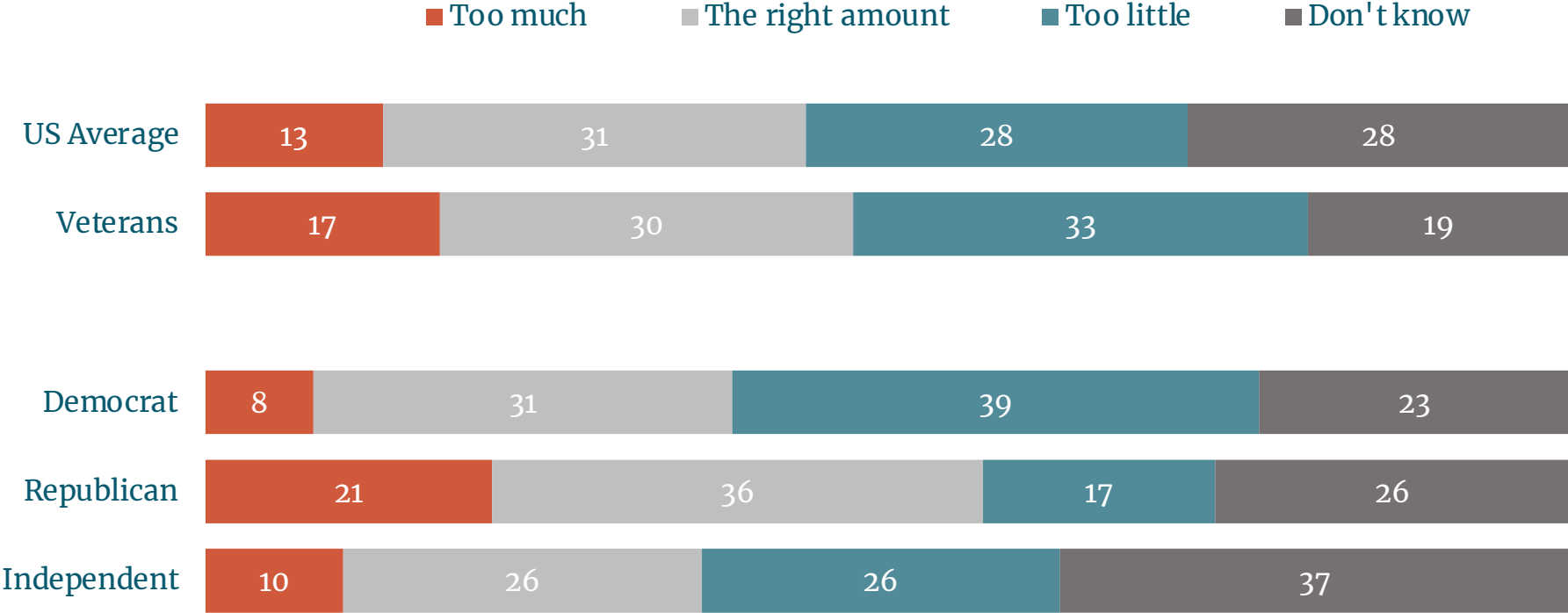
Numbers in %



Americans also diverge on whether the military places the right amount or too little attention on addressing political extremism within its ranks. Democrats are more likely to say there is too little attention, while almost 4 in 10 Independents are unsure.

*For each of the following items, do you think the US military places too little, too much, or the right amount of resources and attention?
[Efforts to address political extremism in the military]*

Numbers in %



Military Leaders, the Media, and Social Media

Survey respondents were randomly assigned into two groups: Group 1 read a vignette in which an Army general responded to a conservative news anchor via social media, whereas Group 2 read a vignette in which an Army general responded to a liberal news anchor via social media.

Group 1 Vignette

Please respond to the following hypothetical situation:

*On live television to a national audience, a prominent **conservative news anchor described the US military as being weak and too progressive**, specifically saying that the prominence given to women in the military had made the institution soft.*

In response to the news anchor, an active-duty Army general responded via social media and called out the news anchor by name, saying that the news anchor was “absolutely wrong” and that “women make the military stronger.”

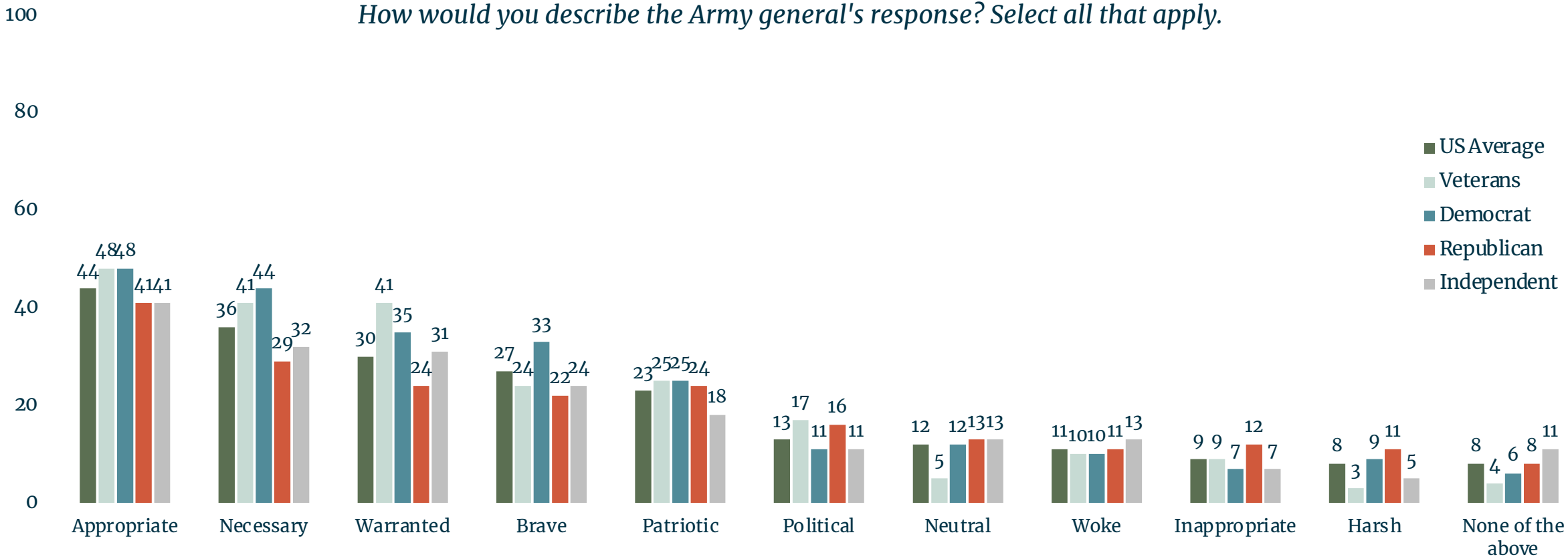
Group 2 Vignette

Please respond to the following hypothetical situation:

*On live television to a national audience, a prominent **liberal news anchor described the US military as being “a tool for the military-industrial complex”** and said that many in the military pushed for America to fight conflicts in order to advance the interests of defense contractors.*

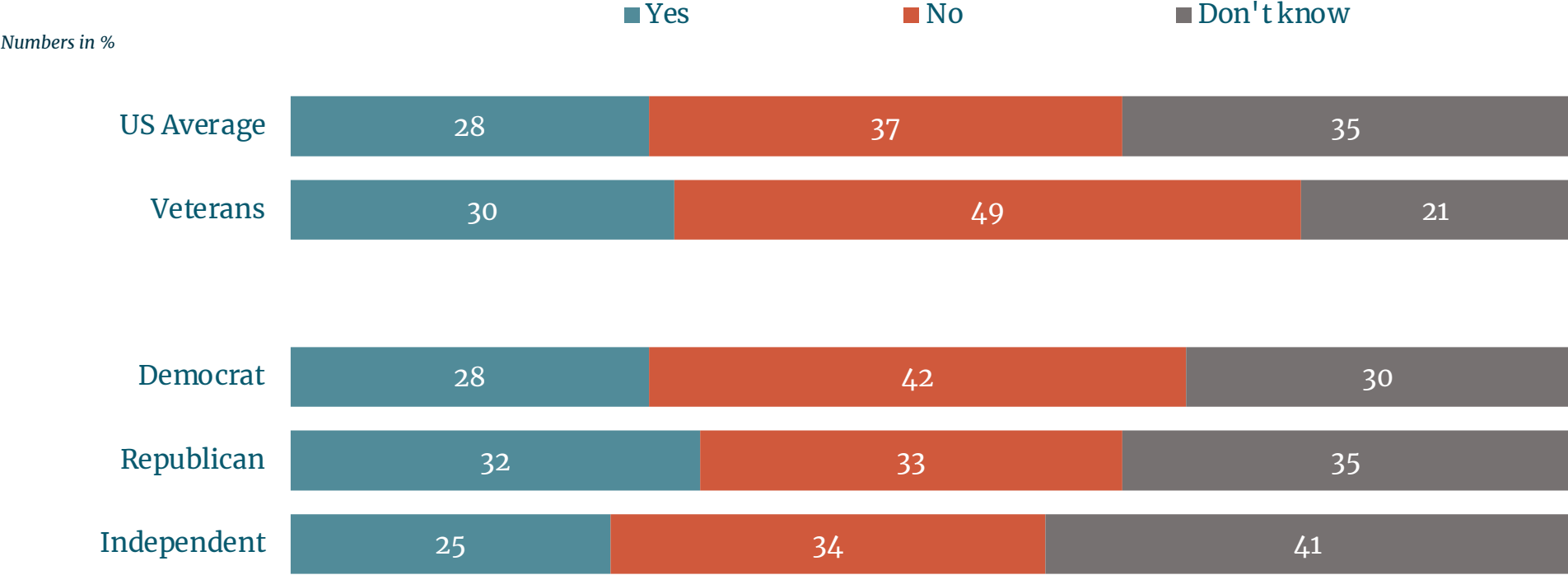
In response to the news anchor, an active-duty Army general responded via social media and called out the news anchor by name, saying that the news anchor was “absolutely wrong” and that “no one knows the cost of war more than the military.”

Group 1 Vignette: Many Americans across the political spectrum believe that the general’s response to the *conservative* anchor was appropriate. Their assessments of the general’s response do not vary significantly by political ideology.

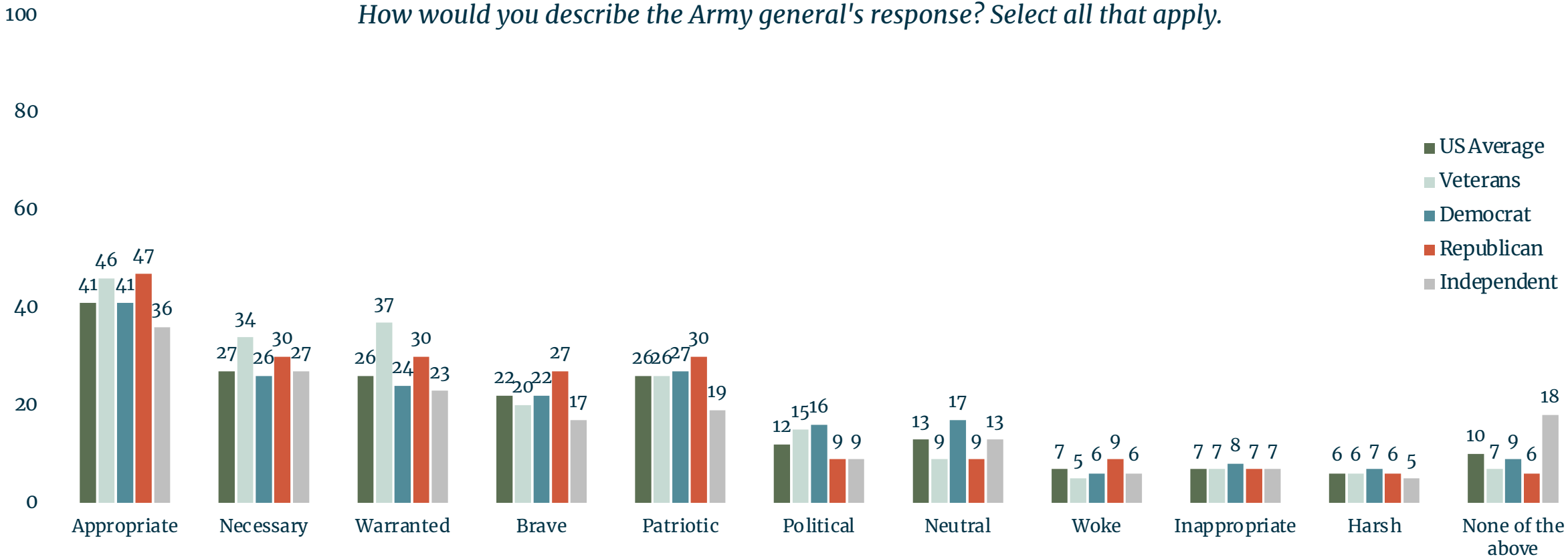


Group 1 Vignette: Almost 4 in 10 Americans believe that the general’s response to the *conservative* anchor was *not* partisan, with Democrats slightly more likely than Republicans and Independents to say it was not partisan.

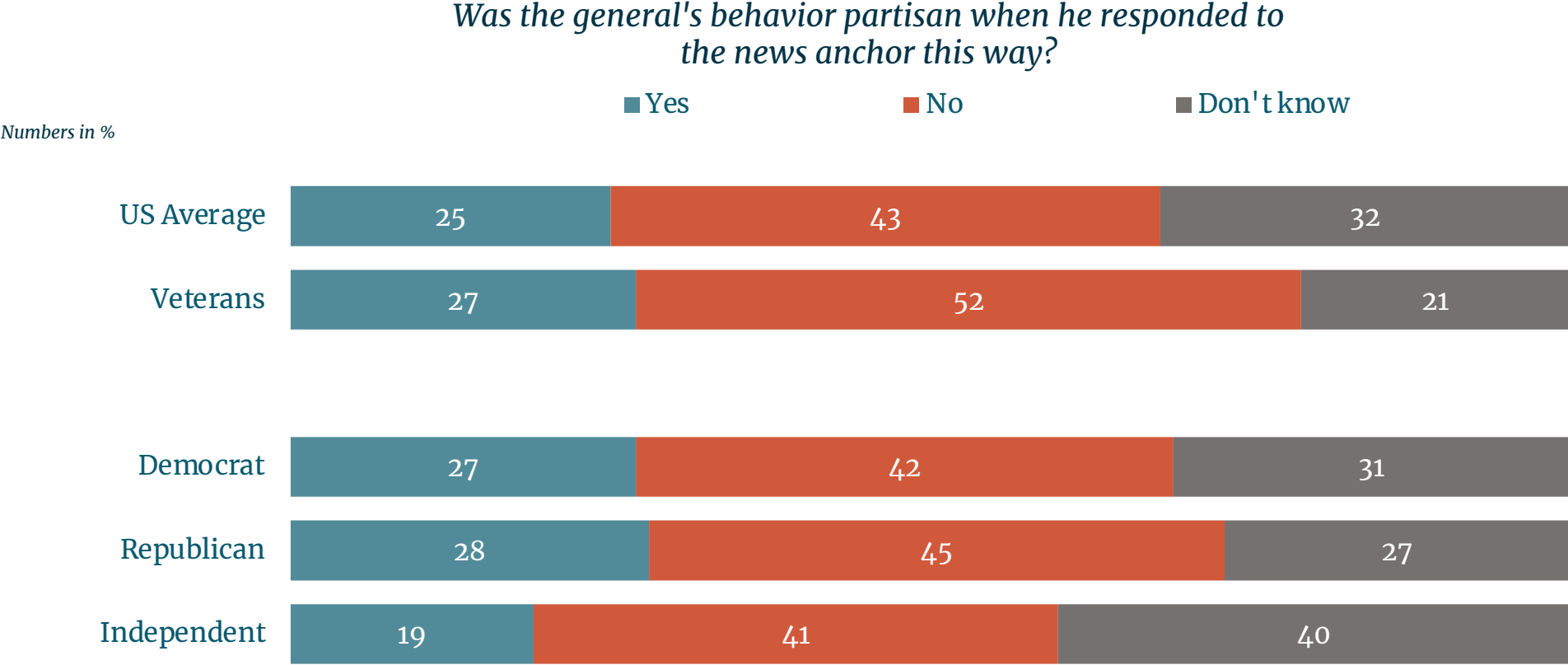
Was the general's behavior partisan when he responded to the news anchor this way?



Group 2 Vignette: Similarly, many Americans across the political spectrum also believe that the general’s response to the *liberal* anchor was appropriate. Their assessments of the general’s response do not vary significantly by political ideology.



Group 2 Vignette: A plurality of Americans across the political spectrum believe that the general's behavior was *not* partisan. One third are not sure.





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Thank You