

Public Wise

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FUND

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of polling done by outside organizations on public opinion about the events of January 6th and provides an overview of poll findings from a Public Wise poll conducted with Change Research in early October 2021.

Outside polls have focused on topics such as whether January 6th participants should be prosecuted, the January 6th congressional committee and investigation, whether there has been too much or too little attention paid to the events of January 6th, who is to blame for the violence, and the nature and implications of what happened.

Public Wise polling focused on how to characterize the events and participants, specific modes of accountability for participants and elected officials who took part in different aspects of January 6th, and the importance of remembering January 6th as a significant moment in American history compared to other recent important events.

Findings from all relevant polling on January 6th paint a picture of a split public. There are huge partisan divides with regards to most aspects of January 6th.

There is generally majority support for accountability, but this seems to be driven primarily by very high support among Democrats, generally low support among Republicans, and mixed support among Independents, which averages to small majorities in favor of accountability.

There is also a divide in how the events are labeled and interpreted. Democrats appear to be more comfortable with words like insurrection and coup.

When we do not separate by party identification, the most popular characterization for January 6th is to call it a riot. Even when respondents are willing to label the events from that day treason or insurrection, there seems to be some discomfort labeling participants traitors or insurrectionists.

This may speak to a general queasiness at ascribing motives to actors even when condemning their actions.

Finally, Democrats and Republicans place very different levels of existential importance on the events of January 6th. Democrats are more likely to say that what happened on January 6th changed their view of the world, and they are more likely to say more attention needs to be paid to it, accountability should be had for it, and the events should be remembered in American history.

Republicans are more likely to say too much attention has been paid, it is not important to remember, too much is already known, and people do not need to be held accountable.

This implies two groups with very different understandings of the implications of the events as they relate to American democracy. Meanwhile, Independents are in the middle, relatively divided among themselves on most questions. In this respect, Independents are better examined via their reported ideology than their party ID, or lack thereof.

This report was prepared by Jessica Kalbfeld, PhD, Director of Research at Public Wise, with support from the Public Wise Research department. All information comes from publicly available polling conducted and commissioned by outside organizations, or from Public Wise's own polling conducted in conjunction with Change Research, a Public Benefit Corporation.

Please direct all questions and inquiries to Sara Moore, PhD, Deputy Director of Research at Public Wise (sara.moore@publicwise.org).

Key Takeaways

There are huge partisan splits on most topics related to January 6th

Ideology may be a better divider of opinion than party identification – progressives and liberals are aligned regardless of party, while moderates and conservatives tend to be more split – and because outside polling does not tend to stratify by ideology they may be missing important splits among Independents and within self-identified Republicans

Despite rejecting partisan labels, Independents are split ideologically – with liberal and progressive Independents answering like Democrats and conservative Independents answering more like Republicans

While support for prosecuting January 6th participants has remained high among Democrats, Republican support for prosecution has dropped over time

Democrats are more likely to think that penalties for January 6th participants are not severe enough while more than one-third of Republicans say penalties have been too severe and only one-fifth agree they have not been severe enough

Belief in a Trump victory makes Republicans more likely to think that the penalties have been too severe and less likely to think that prosecution is important

A majority of Americans agreed there should be an investigation into the events of January 6th -- Democrats show much more support for this than Republicans -- and now that there is such an investigation, the majority of Americans do not think it will be fair and reasonable

The number of Americans who think that too little attention has been paid to January 6th has risen since March, but that number is still only about one-third of the American public, and a majority of Republicans think that too much attention has been paid

Black Americans are more likely than any other group to think that too little attention has been paid to January 6th

A majority of Americans place the blame for the violence on January 6th on Trump, white supremacists, and conservative media that spreads conspiracy theories, but Republicans were less likely to blame Trump in June than they were in January

The most agreed upon characterization for the events of January 6th is to call it a “riot,” followed by an “insurrection,” although Public Wise found that “rioters” and “protesters” were more popular terms for the actors than “traitors” or “insurrectionists”

A majority of Americans agree that January 6th was an attempt to overturn the election and an attack on democracy

Democrats are much more likely than Republicans or Independents to say that participants in the events of January 6th should be held accountable if a court determines their actions broke the law

Democrats are more likely than Republicans or Independents to say it is important to keep track of participants after they stand trial

A majority of Americans do not think that January 6th participants should hold or seek public office, but that is largely driven by Democrats while a majority of Republicans oppose barring participants from public office and Independents are split

A majority of Americans do not think participants should be in positions paid for by taxpayer dollars, including police and other law enforcement agencies

A vast majority of Democrats think that elected officials should not remain in office if they participated in January 6th in a variety of ways; while a majority of Republicans agree with most Democrats that elected officials should not remain in office if they coordinated with protestors ahead of time to tell them the layout of the Capitol Building, a majority do think they should remain in office if they spoke at the rally and voted against certifying the election, and they are split on whether elected officials should remain in office if they funded buses

There is a partisan split on the importance of remembering January 6th as an event in American history

For both Democrats and Republicans, there is high motivation to vote in upcoming elections, regardless of opinion on January 6th accountability

Outside Polling

Summary

There have been a number of polls conducted since January regarding the events of January 6th and the participants. While these polls have focused on different aspects of the topic, they all pick up on a consistent partisan split in sentiment. Concern is concentrated among Democrats.

Disinterest and/or lack of concern is concentrated among Republicans. Independents tend to be firmly in the middle, although for some questions they lean towards Republican sentiment. However, these outside polls do not tend to look at distributions by ideology rather than party. Based on our own polling, we suspect that these polls may be missing important splits among Independents by ideology, and even some ideological splits among Republicans.

Most firms polling on January 6th have not asked the same questions at different points in time. This makes it difficult to gauge changes in sentiment as the events of January 6th recede farther into the past.

Pew Research polled in early March and mid-September. Their data provides insight into changing attitudes on prosecution of people who participated in the events of January 6th and whether enough attention is being paid to January 6th. In the case of prosecution of participants, Republican support fell between March and September.

Meanwhile, overall sentiment that more attention should be paid to the events of January 6th rose between March and September (27% in March versus 35% in September), however the change is driven mostly by Democrats. In March, 11% of Republicans/Lean Republican said there was too little attention being paid compared to 14% in September. For Democrats/Lean Democrat the number was 40% in March and 60% in September.

PRRI (Public Religion Research Institute) also conducted repeated polling with Ipsos via the Ipsos Knowledge Panel, which shows opinion holding steady between January and August on the extent to which white supremacists, Trump, and conservative media sources that spread conspiracy theories shoulder “a lot” of responsibility for the violence on January 6th (white supremacists 62% in January and 59% in August; Trump 57% in January and 56% in August; conservative media 57% in January and 55% in August.)

Most polling focuses on five general topics related to January 6th: prosecution and penalties for participants; the January 6th congressional commission and investigation; the amount of attention on the events; who is to blame for the events; and the nature of the events (riot vs. insurrection, etc.) and the implications for the country. The next sections will summarize public polling findings on each topic in turn.

Prosecution and Penalties

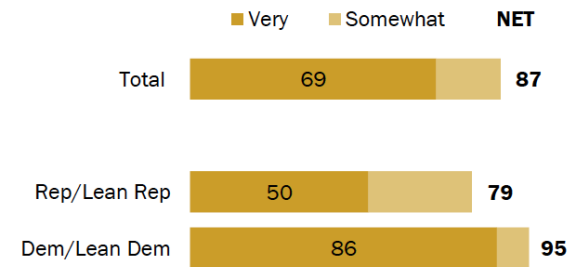
In a general population snap poll conducted the evening of January 6th, Ipsos found that 74% of American adults thought the people who broke into the Capitol should be arrested. They also found that 70% disapproved of the protesters.

In March, Pew found that 69% of adults (via their American Trends Panel, see Figure 1) thought it was very important for law enforcement to find and prosecute people who broke into the Capitol (87% thought it was important, combining those who said very and those who said somewhat).

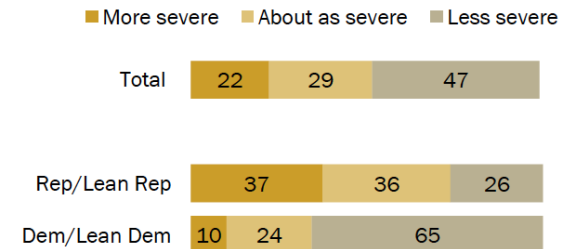
Democrats were more likely than Republicans to feel this way (80%), but half of Republicans agreed. For the most part, Democrats said they thought the penalties would be less severe than they should be (65%) while 37% of Republicans thought that the penalties would be more severe than they should be.

Partisan divides on whether it is 'very important' to prosecute Capitol rioters and in views of their likely penalties

% who say it is ___ important that federal law enforcement agencies find and prosecute those who broke into the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6



% who say the criminal penalties the rioters will receive are likely to be ___ than they should be



Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 1-7, 2021.

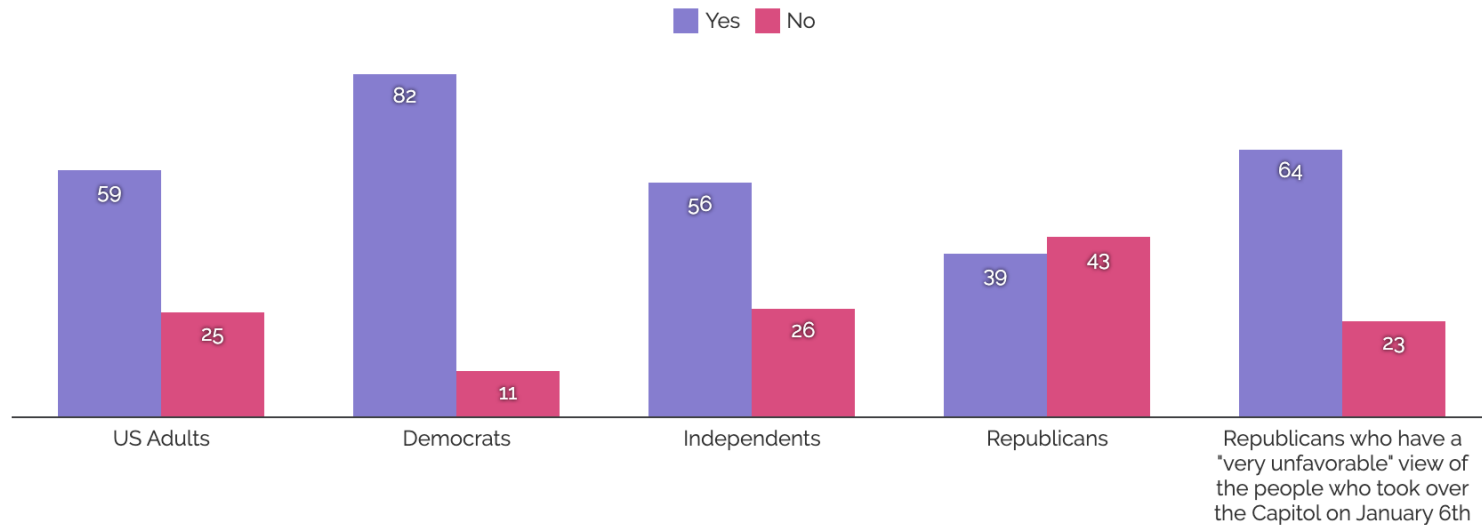
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Figure 1: Pew Poll of US Adults, March 2021

In May, a poll (see Figure 2) conducted by the Economist and YouGov found that 59% of people wanted those arrested for participation in January 6th to be prosecuted. Interestingly, they split Republicans into two groups, separating those who had very negative views of the people who entered the Capitol from the rest of the Republicans. Those with unfavorable views toward January 6th participants were even more likely than Independents to say that the participants should be prosecuted for their actions.

By 59% to 25%, Americans approve of Trump supporters being prosecuted over their participation in the takeover of the Capitol building

Do you think it is right for Trump supporters to be prosecuted over their participation in the takeover of the Capitol building? (%)



YouGov

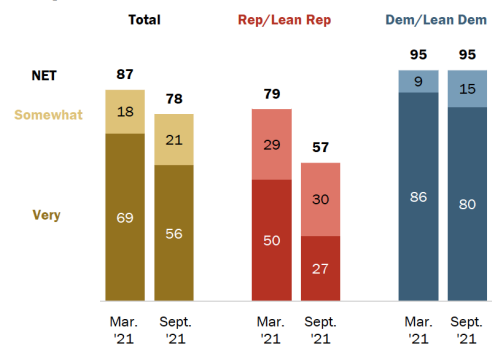
The Economist / YouGov | May 22 - 25, 2021 | [Get the data](#)

Figure 2: YouGov/Economist Poll of US Adults, May 2021

In September, Pew again polled their American Trends Panel (see Figure 3) and found that 48% of Americans thought that the criminal penalties for those involved in the events of January 6th were not harsh enough.

Fewer Republicans say it is important for federal law enforcement to find and prosecute U.S. Capitol rioters than said this in March

% who say it is very/somewhat important that federal law enforcement agencies find and prosecute those who broke into and rioted at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 13-19, 2021.

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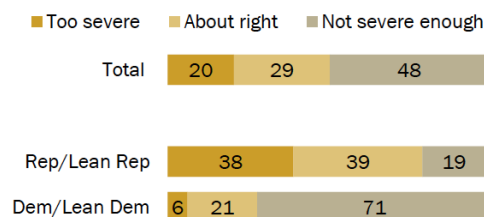
Figure 3. Pew Poll of US Adults, September 2021

They also found that since their March poll, Republican support for prosecution had dropped and that Democrats were much more likely than Republicans to say that the penalties for January 6th participants are not severe enough (see Figure 4).

Finally, among self-identified Republicans, there was a divide in opinion about penalties between Republicans who believe that Trump won the 2020 election and Republicans who believe Biden fairly won the 2020 election.

Democrats far more likely than Republicans to say penalties for Capitol rioters are not severe enough

% who say the criminal penalties for those who broke into the Capitol and rioted on Jan. 6 have been ...



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 13-19, 2021.

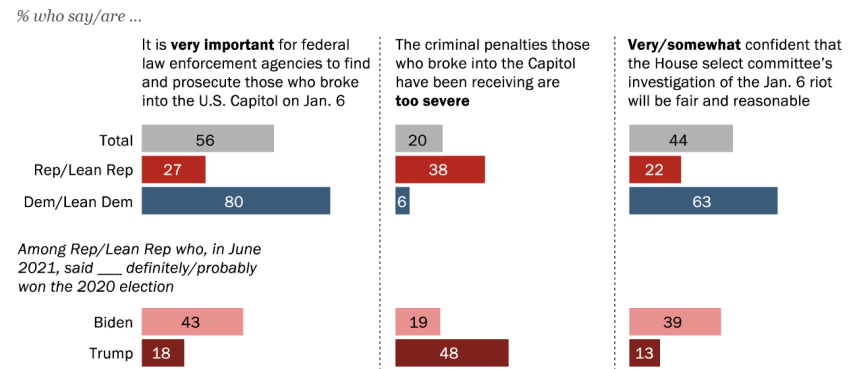
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Figure 4. Pew Poll of US Adults, September 2021

As Figure 5 shows, among Republicans who think Trump won the 2020 election, 48% say that criminal penalties for January 6th participants have been too severe, whereas 43% of Republicans who believe that Biden won the 2020 election think that it is important for law enforcement to find and prosecute those who broke into the Capitol.

This set of questions was also asked in March, and while the percentage of Republicans who believe that Trump won the 2020 election and also think the criminal charges have been too severe is approximately the same as those who said in March that they expected the charges to be too severe, the percentage of Republicans who believe Trump won the 2020 election who think that prosecution of January 6th participants is important has dropped from 42% in March to 18% in September.

Republicans who contend Trump won the 2020 election more likely to say penalties for those who broke into the Capitol on Jan. 6 are too severe



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 13-19, 2021.
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Figure 5. Pew Poll of US Adults, September 2021

Jan 6th Commission

The poll conducted by the Economist/YouGov in May found that 56% of US adults approved of a congressional investigation into the events of January 6th.

This approval was split along party lines. 84% of Democrats approved, 51% of Independents, and 28% of Republicans. According to a Monmouth University poll conducted in June, 50% of US adults wanted an independent commission to investigate what happened on January 6th.

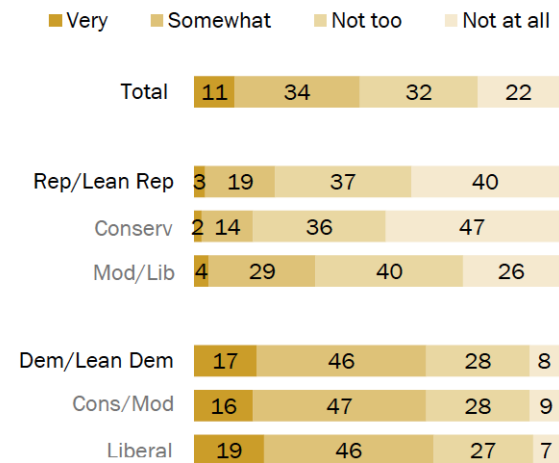
In September, Pew found that there was not a lot of confidence in the congressional committee investigation. Figure 6 shows the breakdown -- overall, only 11% of Americans indicated that they thought the committee's investigation would be fair and reasonable. Confidence was lowest among Republicans and those who lean Republican.

Democrats were more likely to express at least some confidence in the committee, although only 17% of Democrats/Lean Democrats overall expressed that they were very confident.

So, while a majority of Americans wanted an investigation, there is very little confidence in the investigation they are getting.

Majority of Americans have little or no confidence the Jan. 6 committee investigation will be fair and reasonable

% who are ___ confident that the House committee's investigation into Jan. 6 riot will be fair and reasonable



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 13-19, 2021.

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Figure 6: Pew Poll of US Adults, September 2021

Attention

In their March poll (see Figure 7), Pew found that a plurality of Americans think that there is about the right amount of attention being paid to the events of January 6th and their impacts (44% compared to 27% who said that there was too little attention and 28% that said there was too much attention).

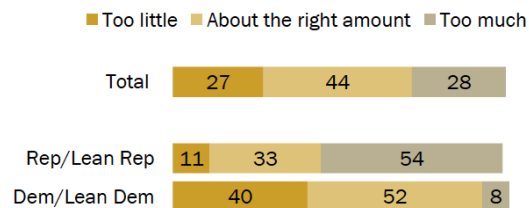
While there is a party split in opinion, fewer Democrats than might be expected say there is too little attention. In fact, a majority of Democrats say there is about the right amount of attention compared to the 40% who think there is too little.

In the same poll, Pew found that there is a racial/ethnic split in opinion on whether there has been the right amount of attention on the events of January 6th (see Figure 8).

Black Americans are the most likely to think that too little attention has been paid with 49% answering that way, while only 21% of white Americans, 34% of Hispanic Americans, and 24% of Asian Americans agree.

Majority of Republicans say too much attention is being paid to the Capitol riot and its impacts

% who say there has been ___ attention paid to the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol and its impacts



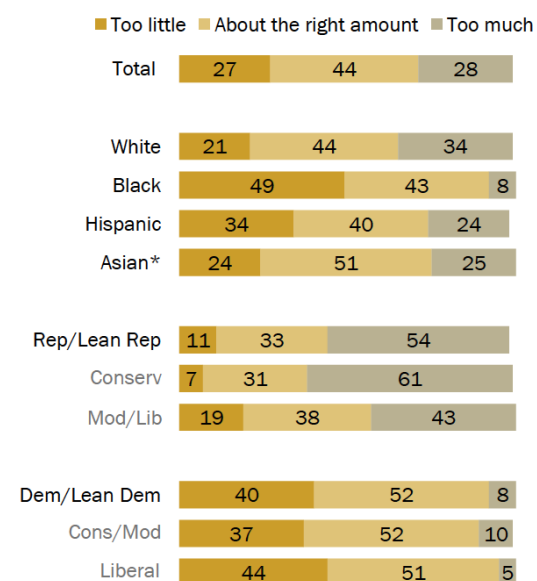
Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 1-7, 2021.

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Figure 7: Pew Poll of US Adults, March 2021

Black adults more likely than Whites and Hispanics to say too little attention has been paid to the Capitol riot

% who say there has been ___ attention paid to the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol and its impacts



*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.
Notes: No answer responses not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include only those who are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 1-7, 2021.

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Figure 8: Pew Poll of US Adults, March 2021

In comparing their polls from March (Figure 7) and September (Figure 9), Pew did find a slight shift in sentiment over time.

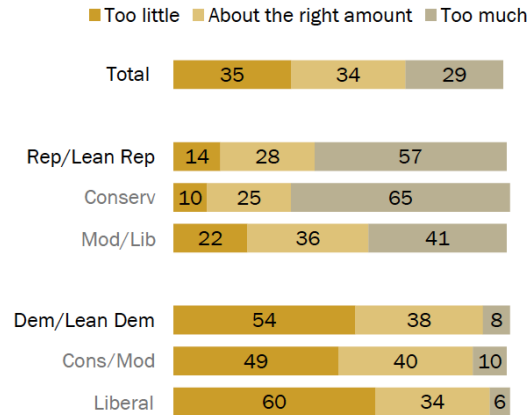
In March a total of 27% of Americans said that too little attention was being paid while that number was up to 35% in September.

Among Democrats, there was shifting sentiment towards the belief that too little attention had been paid with 54% saying so in September compared to the 40% who said so in March.

Meanwhile the share of Republicans who said that too little attention was being paid held relatively steady with 14% in September compared to 11% in March.

Majority of Republicans say there has been too much attention on Jan. 6 riot; Democrats more likely to say too little

% who say ___ attention has been paid to the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol and its impacts



Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 13-19, 2021.

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Figure 9: Pew Poll of US Adults, September 2021

Blame

Several polls have asked about the question of who is to blame for the events on January 6th.

In our own focus group research, Public Wise found that most respondents placed at least some blame on then President Trump, and many also indicated that they thought the individual participants at the Capitol were responsible for their own actions.

In January, an NBC News poll found that 52% of registered voters thought Trump was mostly or solely to blame. In June, a Morning Consult/Politico poll of registered voters found that Republican voters were less likely to blame Trump than they had been when polled in January.

Voters were also more likely in June than in January to say that they thought the rioters represented the Republican Party and less likely to say that the rioters represented Trump but not the Republican Party.

This suggests that as time goes on voters are more likely to associate the participants in the events of January 6th with the Republican Party as an institution rather than separating out Trump and his followers from the established political party and its members.

Finally, a poll conducted in August by PRRI (Public Religion Research Institute) with Ipsos using their Ipsos Knowledge Panel found that 59% of US adults think that white supremacists shouldered the responsibility for the violence that occurred on January 6th, compared to 62% in mid-January.

56% said that Trump shouldered the responsibility, compared to 57% in January. And 55% said that conservative media that spreads conspiracy theories shouldered the responsibility for the violence, compared to 57% in mid-January.

Nature of Events and Implications

There is some disagreement among the public as to the nature of the events of January 6th and their implications, and perceptions have changed somewhat as the months have passed since they took place.

Polling indicates that concern among Republicans is generally waning while concern among Democrats has remained high and steady. Democrats seem to be more concerned with implications for democracy while Republicans are less concerned, and there are signs that they are losing interest/patience with attention on the events and what they might mean for the country.

According to Ipsos's snap poll conducted the evening of January 6th, 51% of the general public aged 18-65 said they thought that it was an attempted coup. YouGov also conducted a snap poll on January 6th and found that 62% of registered voters thought that the events of January 6th represented a threat to democracy.

In a June poll, Monmouth University found that 72% of US adults said that what happened at the Capitol should be called a riot. 56% said that it should be called an insurrection, however there was a partisan split with Democrats more likely to agree and Republicans more likely to disagree with this characterization. 33% said that it could be called a "legitimate protest."

A Morning Consult/Politico poll in June found that 66% of Democrats said that January 6th had a major impact on their world view. Only 20% of Republican voters said the same.

NBC News polling conducted in August (see Figure 10) found that 59% of registered voters were concerned about the attack and its implications for the country. 59% also said that the attack was an attempt to overturn the election and 52% agree that the attack was an act of terrorism.

A full 46% said that the severity of the events had been exaggerated to discredit Trump. Democrats were most likely to say that it was an attempt to overturn the election and an act of terrorism, although majorities of Independents agreed, while Republicans were most likely to say that it had been exaggerated to discredit Trump.

In October, Quinnipiac polling found that 66% of Republicans said they don't see January 6th as an attack on government. The same poll also found 74% of Republicans said that enough is already known about what happened on January 6th, which could be interpreted as waning support for further investigation and fatigue with the topic in general.

Deep partisan divide on impact of Jan. 6 attack

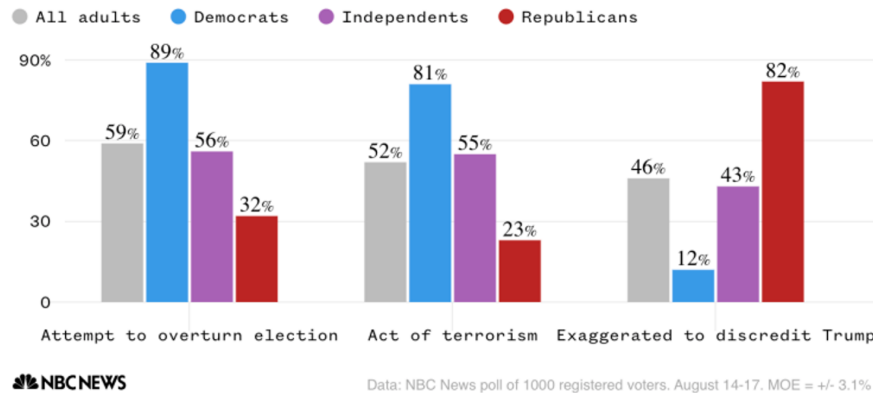


Figure 10: NBC News Poll of Registered Voters, August 2021

Public Wise Polling

Summary

Public Wise conducted its own polling on the topic of January 6th in partnership with Change Research, a Public Benefit Corporation. The poll was fielded October 5-7 through online only polling. The poll sampled from the general US population, aged 18+, with a sample size of 3,711.

The poll asked a number of questions related to January 6th, covering many of the same topics as prior polls. Unlike prior polls, however, this poll asked more specific questions about how the events and its participants should be labeled.

It also delved deeper into the topic of accountability, in particular asking for opinions on accountability for elected officials and for different types of participation.

In general, the majority of Americans support some form of accountability for those who participated in the events of January 6th.

Support for accountability for elected officials who participated in some way, either through speaking at the rally, voting against certifying the electoral votes, funding buses that transported participants, or coordinating with rioters in advance varies with the severity of the participant's actions and along ideological lines.

There is also a lot of variation in what Americans are comfortable calling the events and the people who participated.

Finally, motivation to vote in 2022 is high among most Americans, regardless of things like party affiliation and opposition to/support for accountability.

Labeling Events and Participants

In the poll, we gave respondents a list of words that have been used in the media and public discourse to describe the events of January 6th and its participants. We then asked respondents to provide the one word or phrase that came to mind immediately in response to these terms. They were asked to respond to the words traitor, patriot, treason, coup, freedom fighter, militants, and rioter. We randomized whether respondents saw this set of questions first or a series of questions asking about their political participation. Regardless of the order in which respondents saw the survey, they responded to the terms with political figures and terminology.

In response to the term “traitor,” the most frequently provided words that came to mind were “Trump” followed by “Biden.”

In response to “patriot” the top responses were “Trump” and “country.”

“Treason” evoked “Trump,” “Biden,” and “country.”

“Coup” was most associated with “Trump,” “overthrow,” and “government.”

“Freedom fighter” had a larger variety of responses, such as “military,” “freedom,” “patriot,” “Trump,” and “rights.”

“Militants” was most associated with “BLM,” and “Antifa.”

Finally, “rioter” was most associated with “BLM,” “Antifa,” “criminal,” and “Trump.”

	Total Well	Total Not Well
A riot	58%	40%
Rioters	55%	42%
An insurrection	50%	45%
Insurrectionists	48%	46%
Treason	49%	47%
Traitors	46%	50%
A protest that got out of hand	44%	53%
Protestors	51%	46%
Patriotism	29%	67%
Patriots	18%	73%

Table 1: Terms for Actions and Actors on January 6th

We then asked the respondents to indicate the extent to which certain terms, including those asked in the previous association question, accurately described the events at the Capitol and the people who participated. We provided several pairs of actions and equivalent actors, described in Table 1.

Note that slightly fewer people were willing to describe the actors as rioters, traitors, or insurrectionists than were willing to describe the events as a riot, an insurrection, or treason.

Upon further examination, the respondents most likely to say the events were treason but the actors are not best described as traitors were also more likely to be white, female, and to approve of the job Biden is doing as president. While further investigation using other methods would be necessary to determine why this is the case, we can speculate that perhaps there is a reluctance to judge individuals as harshly as one might judge group actions.

	Total Well	Total Not Well
An attempt to overthrow the election	54%	43%
An attack on democracy	52%	44%
An attempted coup	49%	46%
Something the media has made too big a deal of	47%	50%
Standing up for the country	32%	65%

Table 2: Terms for Actions on January 6th

In addition to these action/actor pairs, we asked about several stand-alone descriptions for the actions (shown in Table 2) and the actors (shown in Table 3).

Overall, Americans are more likely to describe the events and the people who participated in terms that cast them negatively and are more likely to place the blame on right wing extremists than left wing extremists. However, the public is still relatively divided.

Only small majorities are willing to characterize the events as an attempt to overthrow the election or an attack on democracy. Just under 50% of the American public would say that the events are well-described as an attempted coup.

Just under a third of Americans are willing to say that the events are well-described as “standing up for democracy” and 18% are willing to say that the participants are well described as “freedom fighters.”

Additionally, just under half of Americans (47%) said that the events are well-described as “something the media has made too big a deal of.”

This sits in the context of outside polling from Pew, discussed earlier, which found that about 35% of the American public think that too little attention has been paid to January 6th, while 34% say it's getting just the right amount of attention and 29% say it has gotten too much attention.

Almost half of the American public think that the events have been exaggerated and 30% say that the events have gotten too much attention. This suggests that Americans have conflicted feelings, the complexities of which may not be adequately captured by current public opinion polling.

	Total Well	Total Not Well
QAnon Militants	45%	42%
Antifa Militants	23%	66%
Freedom Fighters	22%	72%
Political Prisoners	18%	73%

Table 3: Terms for Actors on January 6th

Accountability

In order to understand how people feel about accountability, we asked a series of questions related to different levels of participation.

We asked about accountability and penalties for participants, as well as whether participants should be able to seek or remain in positions paid for by taxpayer dollars.

We also asked about whether elected officials who participated in the events of January 6th in a number of different ways should be allowed to remain in office.

Overall, the majority of Americans believe that it is important to hold participants accountable if a court determines their actions broke the law. 73% said it was important, with 61% saying it was very important and 12% saying it was somewhat important. There was, of course, a partisan divide.

Figure 11 shows opinions on the importance of accountability for participants by party identification.¹

While almost all Democrats thought that it was very important to hold participants accountable if a court found their actions broke the law, only 27.3% of Republicans agreed. Another 20.6% of Republicans indicated that it was somewhat important.

On the other hand, almost one-third of Republicans report that they think it is not important at all for participants of January 6th to be held accountable if a court finds they broke the law.

¹ For the purposes of reporting we group together Democrat and Lean Democrat and we group together Republican and Lean Republican. Those in the Independent category are respondents who report being independent and not leaning in either direction.

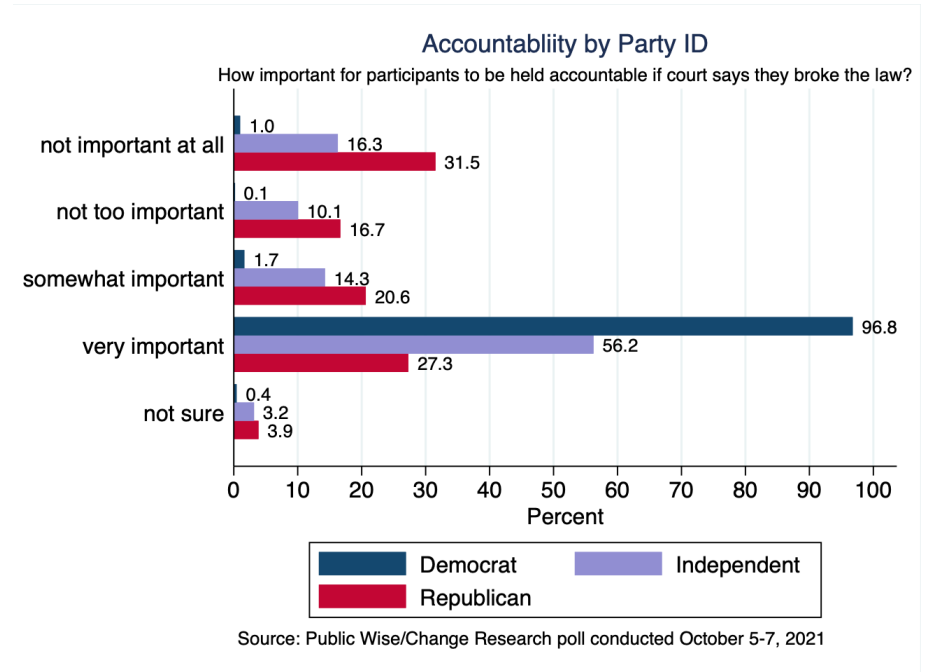


Figure 11: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Within party identification, the importance of accountability varied according to ideology.

Figure 12 shows opinions on the importance of accountability for participants who identified as Independent, broken down by ideology. Self-described liberal and progressive Independents overwhelmingly agree that accountability is important.

Approximately 70% of moderate Independents and about 46% conservative Independents believe it is important.

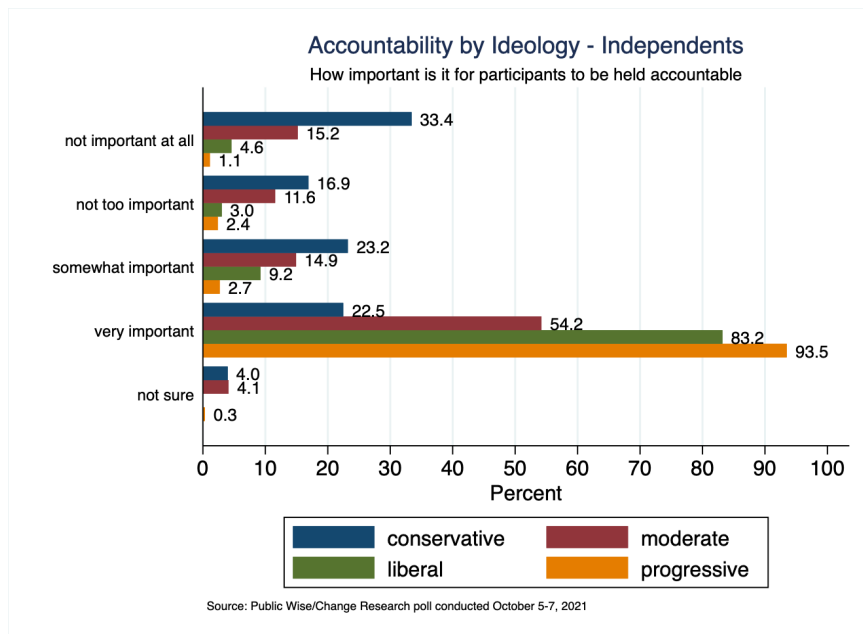


Figure 12: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Figure 13 shows opinions on the importance of accountability for participants who identified as Republican, broken down by ideology. 60% of moderate Republicans agree that accountability is important compared to about 44% of conservative Republicans.

However more than half of all conservative Republican respondents say that accountability is not important at all or not too important.

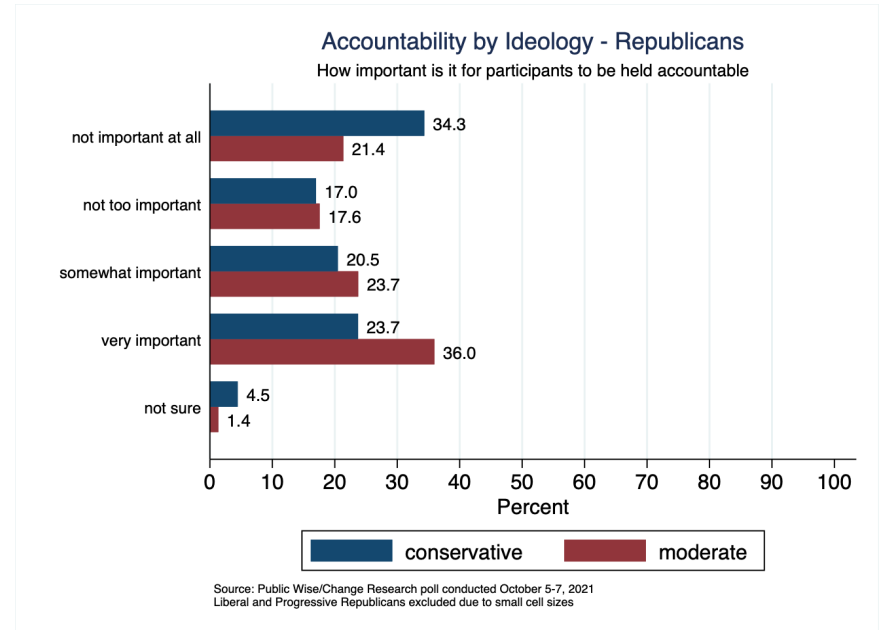


Figure 13: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Figure 14 shows the opinions on importance of accountability for participants by ideology alone. Self-described progressives and liberals overwhelmingly agree that accountability is important. Almost three-quarters of moderates agree that accountability is important.

Conservatives are more split – 51% of conservatives say that accountability is not important and 45% say that it is important. Looking at accountability by ideology captures the opinions of respondents better than looking at accountability by party identification because, as shown in Figures 12 and 13, Independents and Republicans’ views on accountability are better explained by ideology than by party.

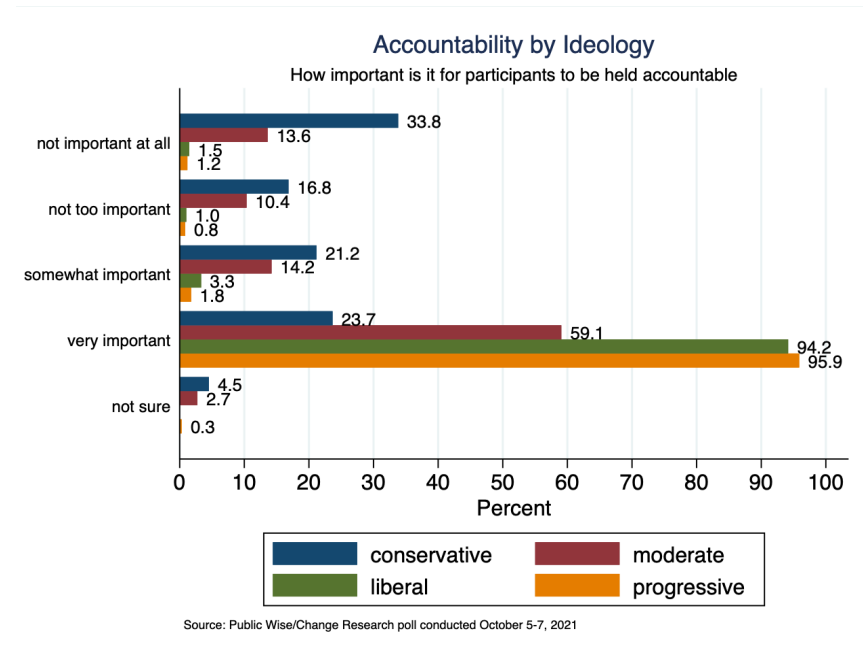


Figure 14: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

For those respondents who indicated that they felt that participants should be held accountable if it was determined they had broken the law, we also asked how they should be held accountable. 67% said that participants should face criminal charges with conviction and time behind bars. 19% thought they should face criminal charges with conviction and parole, probation, or community service. 8% said they should face a fine. Finally, 7% indicated that they should face some other penalty.

See Figure 15 for the responses by party. Democrats are generally in agreement with almost 90% saying that the penalty should be time behind bars. 61% of Independents agree. Meanwhile, Republicans are split on penalty with 26% saying the penalty should be a fine, another 26% saying the penalty should be time behind bars, 36% calling for parole/probation/community service, and 12% opting for some other penalty.

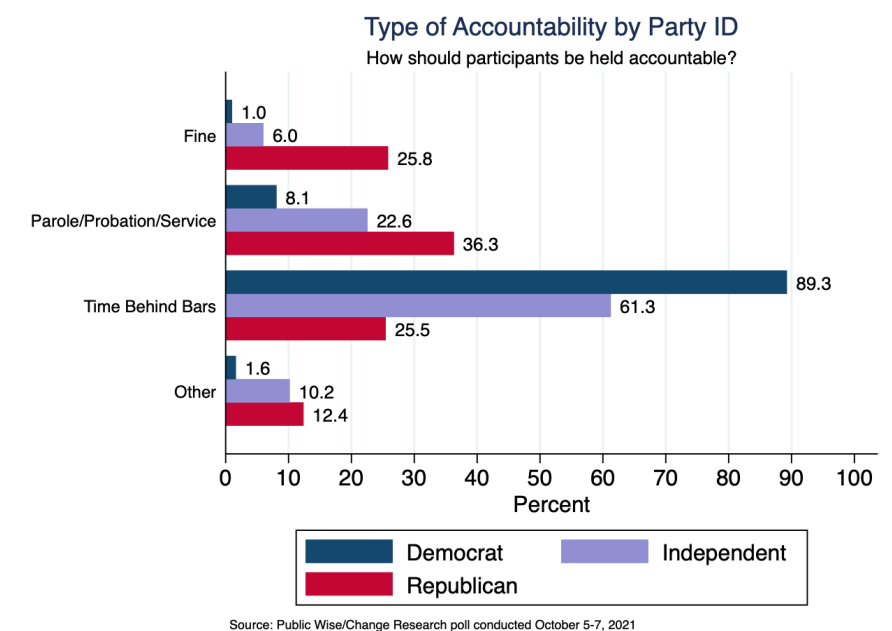


Figure 15: Public Wise/Change Research Polls of US Adults, October 2021

We further asked how important it is to keep track of people who participated in the events of January 6th following their trials (see Figure 16).

Overall, 56% of Americans felt it was important to keep track, with 46% saying it was very important, and 30% said it was not important at all to keep track. Here the partisan divide was even starker. Slightly fewer Democrats felt that it was very important to track than to hold accountable, 88% compared to 97%, respectively.

A larger proportion of Republicans felt that it was not important at all to track than felt that way about accountability, with 57% saying it was not important at all to track compared to 32% who said it was not important at all to hold them accountable.

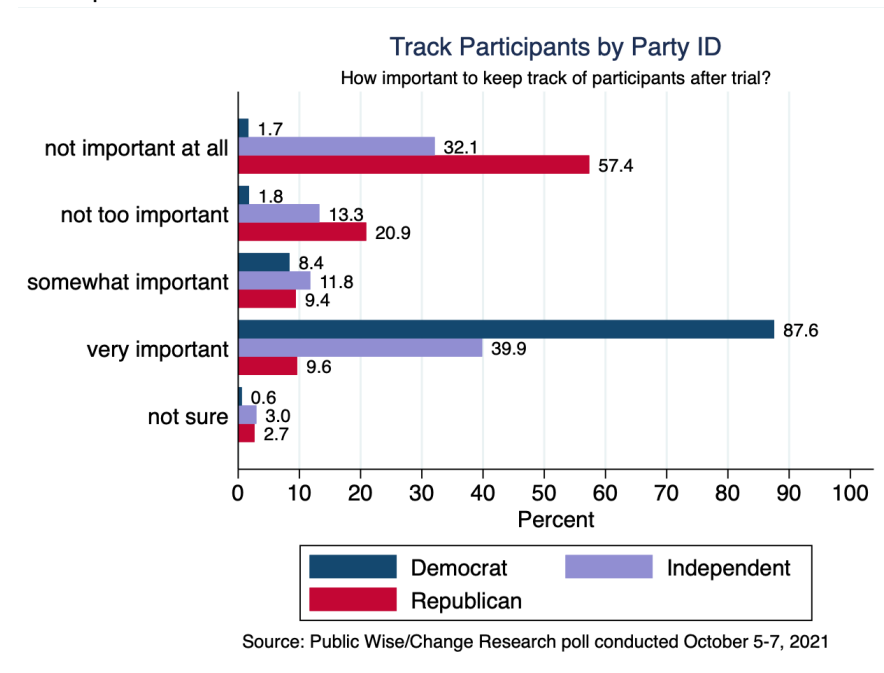


Figure 16: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Figure 17 shows the breakdown by ideology. Progressives and liberals overwhelmingly agree that it is important to track participants after trial.

Just over half of moderates agree that it is important, but 82% of conservatives say that it is not important.

The ideological split explains what could appear to be disagreement or ambivalence among Independents when they are looked at as a monolithic group.

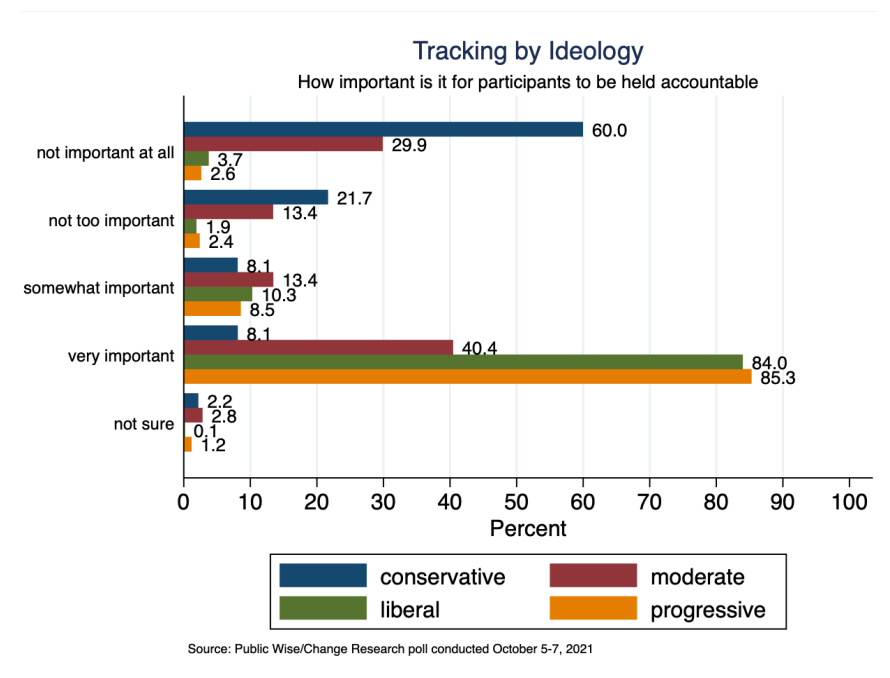


Figure 17: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

In addition to asking about accountability and tracking, we also wanted to capture opinions on whether participants should be able to seek or hold public office, hold public positions paid for by taxpayer dollars, or hold positions with police or other law enforcement agencies.

Figure 18 shows the partisan split on the question of barring January 6th participants from seeking or holding public office.

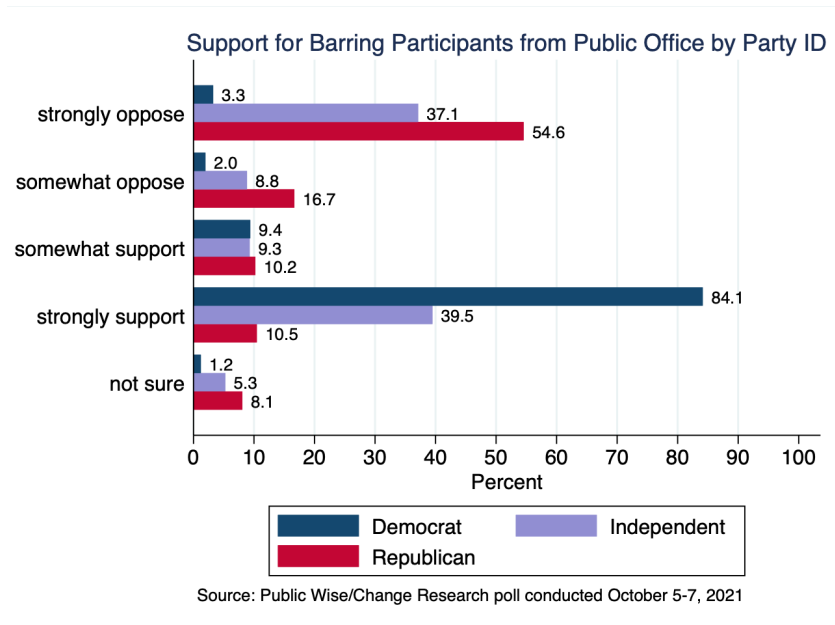


Figure 18: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

84% of Democrats strongly support barring participants from public office while 55% of Republicans are strongly opposed. Independents are more evenly split with just under 40% in each of the categories strongly support or strongly oppose and about 9% each in the categories somewhat support and somewhat oppose.

Figure 19 shows this question by ideology rather than party identification. As with prior questions, progressives and liberals are aligned in agreement that participants should be barred from holding or seeking public office.

Moderates are relatively split on this question with about 50% for and 44% against. Almost three-quarters of conservatives opposed barring participants from public office.

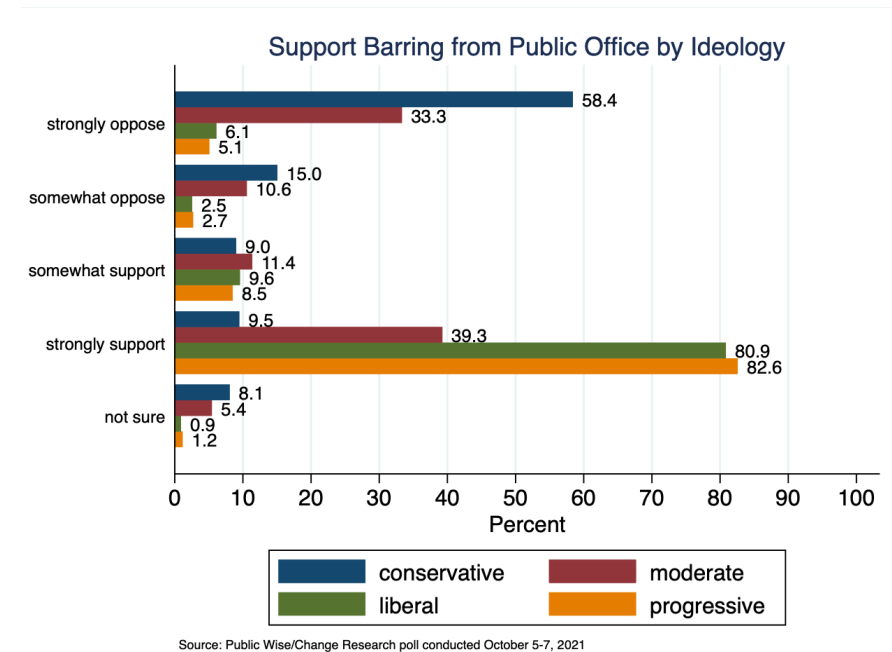


Figure 19: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

In order to ask more specific questions about tax paid positions and law enforcement, we randomized the sample so that half received each question.

Here we found that 53% supported barring people who participated in January 6th from seeking or holding public office while 42% opposed, and 58% supported barring participants from holding police or other law enforcement positions while 38% opposed.

We split the sample in part because, while police and law enforcement are public positions paid for by taxpayer dollars, we felt that it did not make sense to assume people would have the same feelings about a January 6th participant being a police officer compared to a road maintenance worker, for example.

In fact, as we expected, there was stronger sentiment against January 6th participants being in law enforcement positions compared to more generic public roles. We suspect that if we had broken public positions down specifically there would be a lot of variation in which jobs are deemed okay and which inappropriate for a January 6th participant, even if they are all paid through taxes.

In addition to asking about accountability for participants, we also asked about accountability for sitting elected officials who participated in some way.

When asked if elected officials who spoke at the rally on the mall before the events at the Capitol took place should remain in office, overall 41% said they should remain in office, 42% said they should not remain in office, and 17% said they were not sure.

Figure 20 shows responses to this question by party identification. 77% of Democrats thought that elected officials who spoke at the rally should not remain in office while 74% of Republicans thought that they should remain.

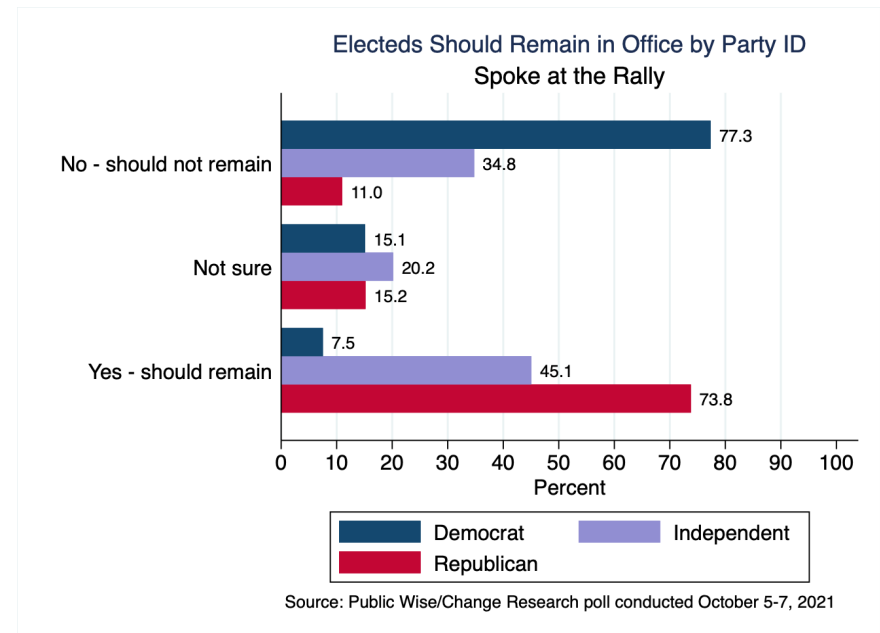


Figure 20: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Figure 21 shows the ideological split on whether elected officials who spoke at the rally should remain in office. About three-quarters of progressives and three-quarters of liberals say that these elected officials should not remain in office.

Three-quarters of conservatives disagree and say they should remain in office. The moderates are split, with 36% saying they should not remain, 45% saying they should remain, and 19% who are not sure.

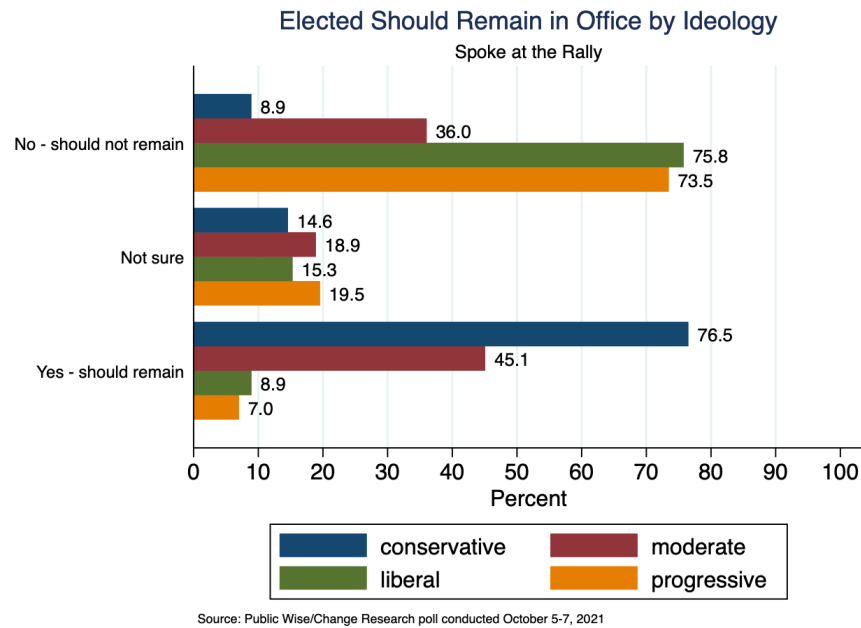


Figure 21: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

When asked the same question about elected officials who voted against certifying the electoral votes, overall 36% said they should remain, 51% said they should not remain, and 13% said they were not sure.

Figure 22 shows the partisan split on this question. 81% of Democrats thought that any elected official who voted against certifying the electoral votes should not remain in office. Republicans were somewhat more split on this question.

About one-quarter agreed with Democrats saying that these elected officials should not remain in office while 37% said that they should remain in office.

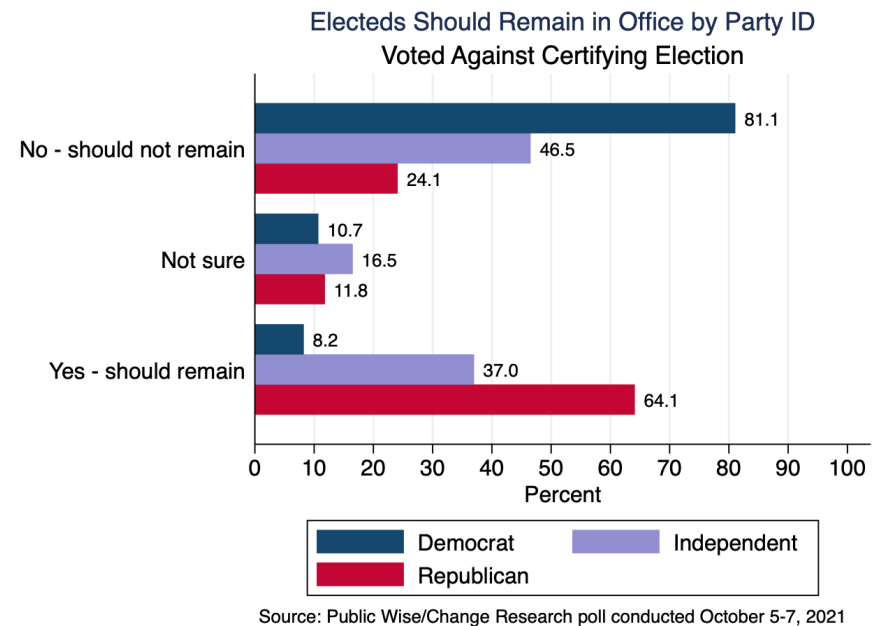


Figure 22: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Figure 23 shows this question by ideology. 76% of liberals and 80% of progressives say that elected officials who voted against certification should not remain in office. 65% of conservatives say they should remain and 22% say they should not.

Moderates are also split on this issue with 47% saying they should not remain and 39% saying they should remain.

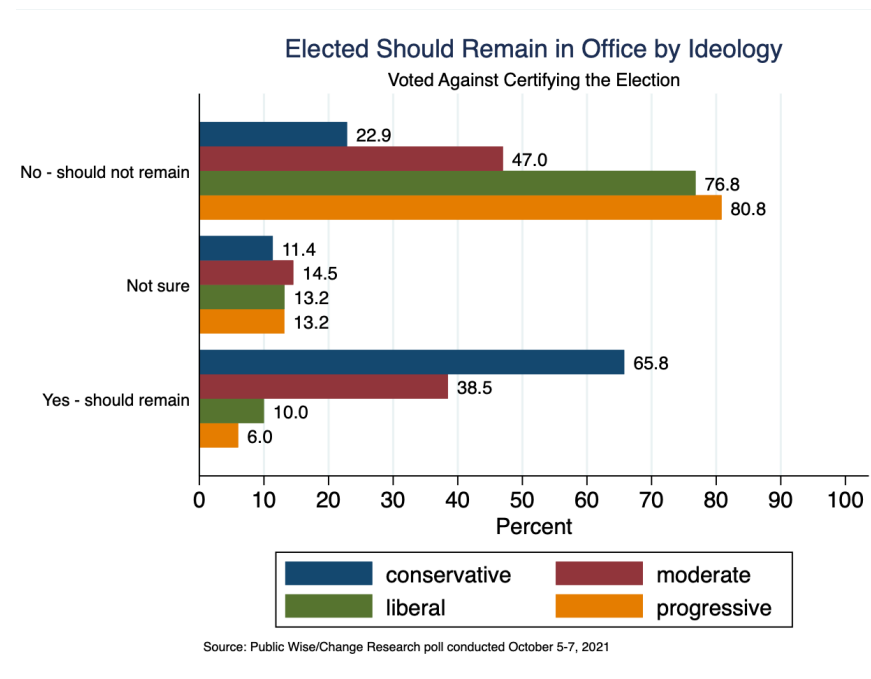


Figure 23: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

When asked about elected officials who paid for buses for people to come hear the rally and participate in the protest, overall 30% said that these elected officials should remain in office while 56% said they should not and 14% said they were not sure.

Figure 24 shows the partisan split. Again, Democrats are mostly united with 82% saying that elected officials who funded buses should not remain in office. Republicans are even more split on this question than they were about voting against certification. With regards to elected officials who funded buses, 36% of Republicans said they should not remain in office, 16% said they were not sure, and 48% said they should remain in office (compared to the 64% of Republicans who said they should remain in office if they voted not to certify the election).

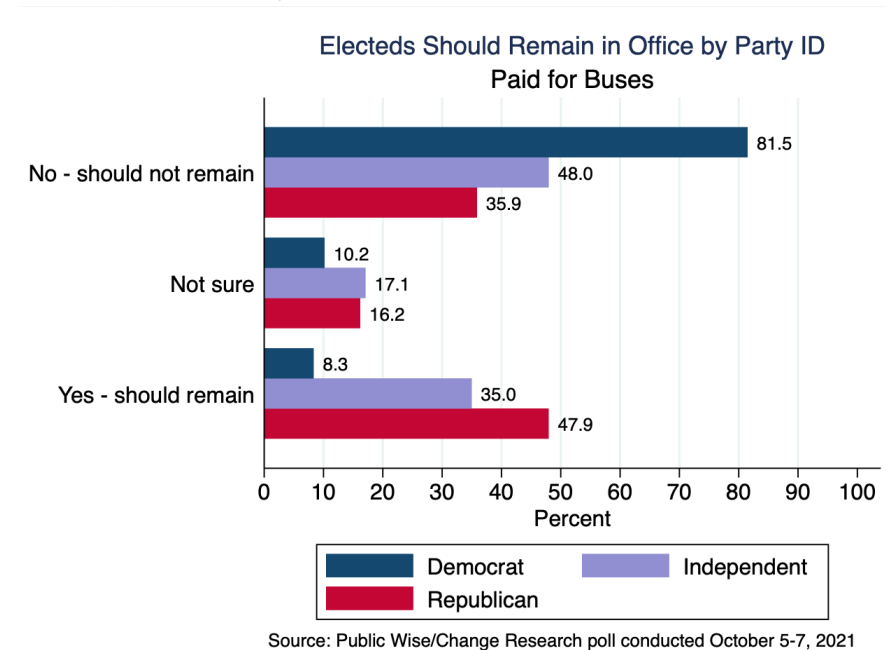


Figure 24: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Figure 25 shows the breakdown by ideology. More than two-thirds of liberals and progressives thought that elected officials who funded buses should not remain in office.

Moderates and conservatives were split – 48% of moderates and 36% of conservatives agreed with liberals and progressives that elected officials should not remain in office if they funded buses while 35% of moderates and 48% of conservatives disagreed.

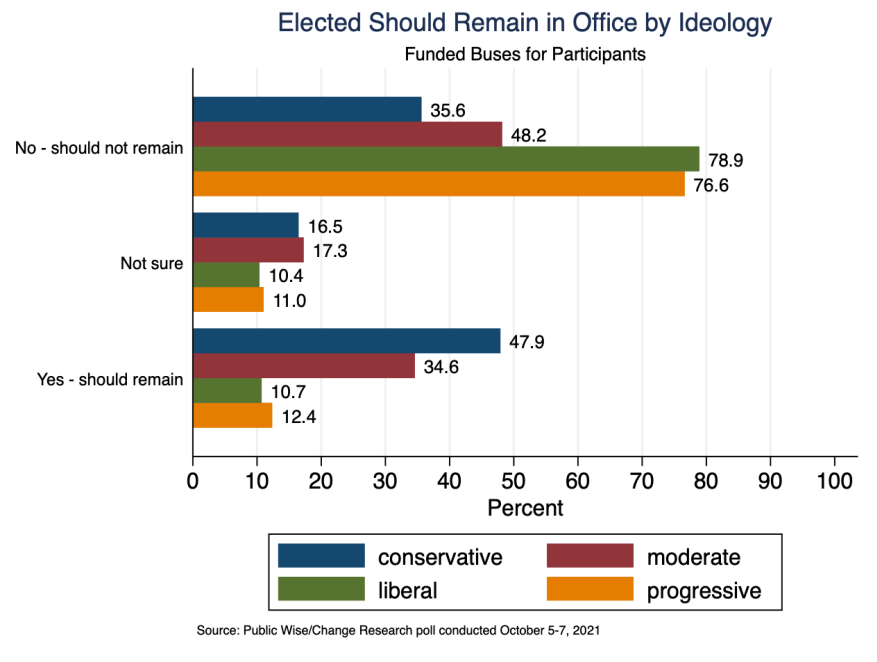


Figure 25: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Additionally, we asked about whether an elected official should remain in office if they coordinated with protesters in advance to help them understand the layout of the Capitol building and how to move within it quickly.

Here there was the most consensus -- overall only 10% of respondents said that elected officials should remain in office if they coordinated in this way with protesters, 78% said that they should not remain in office, and 12% said they were not sure.

Figure 26 shows the partisan split. Advanced coordination with protesters is the behavior Republicans were least willing to tolerate. 63% said that if elected officials engaged in this behavior they should not remain in office, compared to 21% who said they were not sure and only 16% who said they should remain.

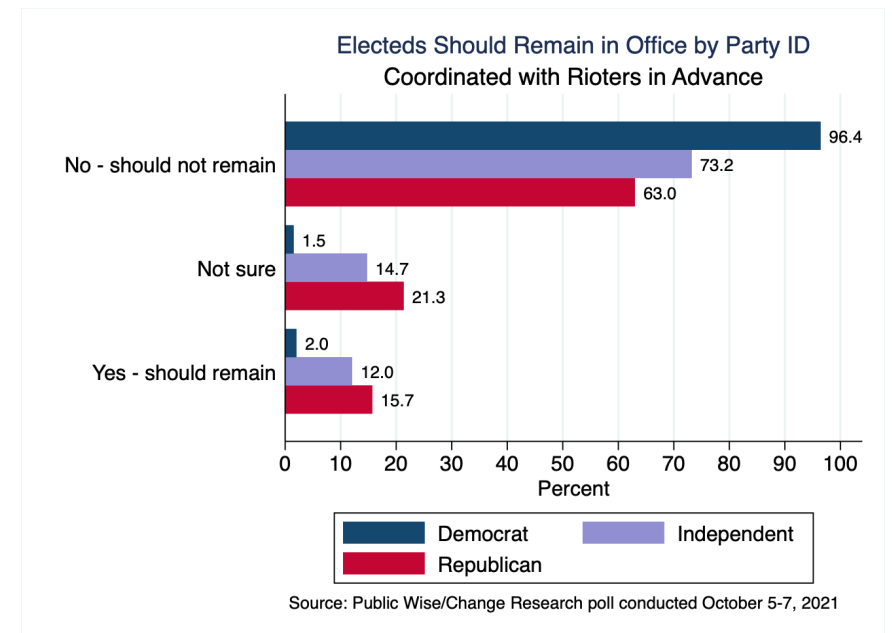


Figure 26: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Among Democrats, 96% said elected officials should not remain in office if they coordinated and only 1.5 and 2% respectively said they were not sure or that elected officials should remain in office.

Figure 27 shows this question by ideology. While the overall picture is similar to the one told by party identification, there are some interesting nuances that emerge when considering opinion on this question by ideology instead. 94 and 97% of liberals and progressives, respectively, think that officials should not remain in office if they coordinated.

75% of moderates and 60% of conservatives agree. The remaining 40% of conservatives are split between saying these officials should remain in office even if they coordinated and not being sure.

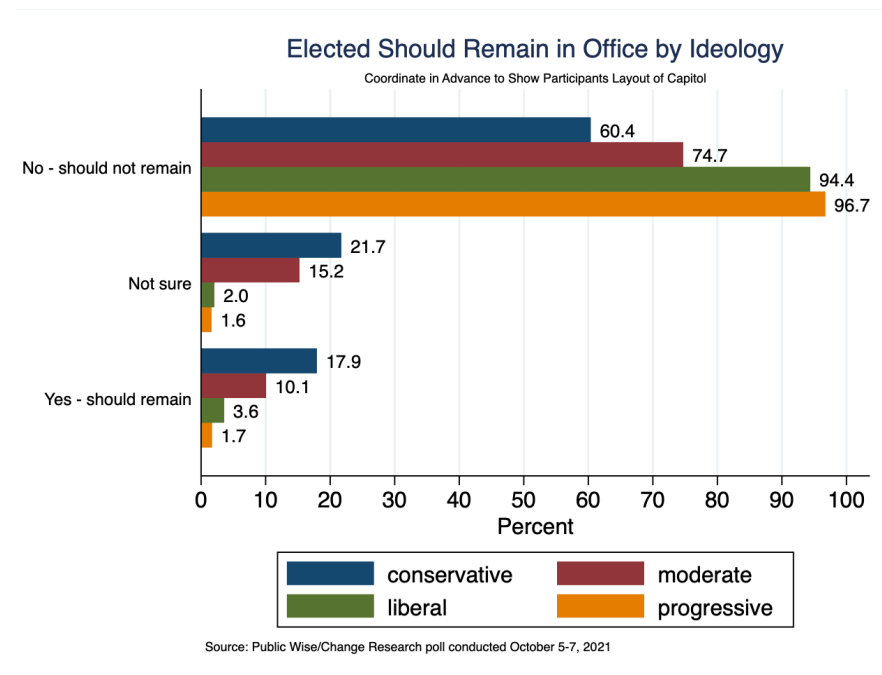


Figure 27: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Overall, there is broad support for holding participants in January 6th accountable if their actions are shown to be against the law and, among those who think there should be accountability, the widely preferred penalty is time behind bars.

There is wide support among Democrats for keeping track of participants after their trials and for barring them from seeking or holding public office. Independents are split on both these questions and there is little support among Republicans.

Finally, Democrats overwhelmingly agree that elected officials who participated or coordinated in any way should not remain in office.

Republicans are more likely to say they should remain in office except if they coordinated in advance with protesters, in which case the majority of Republicans also say they should not be allowed to remain in office.

Investigation and Historical Memory

Beyond accountability and penalties, there is the issue of investigation and historical memory. With regards to the congressional committee investigation into the events of January 6th, there is 60% support, with 50% of Americans indicating that they strongly support the investigation.

Meanwhile, 37% oppose, with 26% strongly opposed. This is in line with the result from the Economist/YouGov poll from May that we discussed earlier, which found that 56% of US adults approved of a congressional investigation into the events. As might be expected, there was a partisan divide on this question.

Figure 28 shows the partisan split on approval for the congressional committee. 93% of Democrats strongly support the investigation while just over half of Republicans strongly oppose. Another 21% of Republicans somewhat oppose, 14% somewhat support and only just under 9% of Republicans strongly support the investigation. Another 5% of Republicans are not sure.

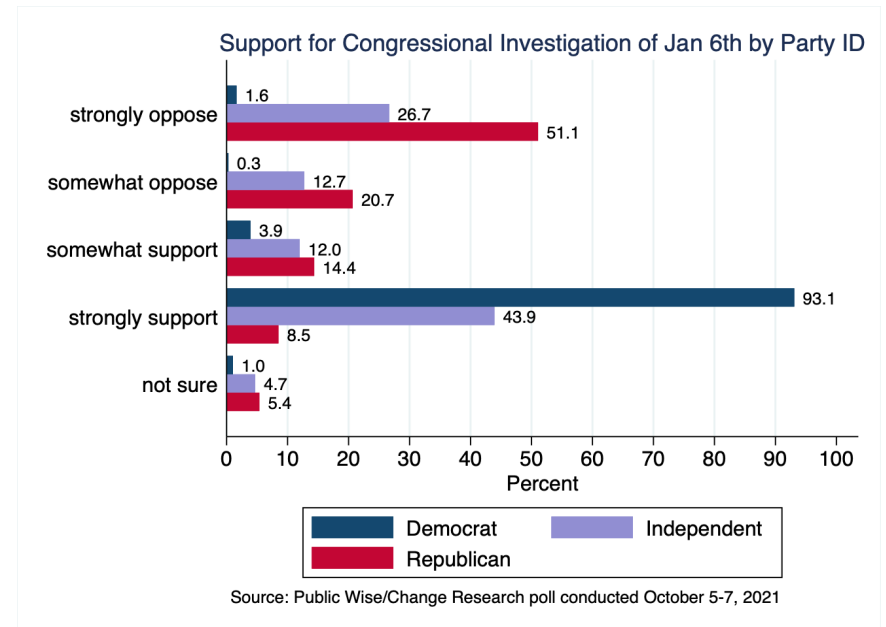


Figure 28: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Figure 29 shows the same question broken down by ideology rather than party. 96% of progressives, 95% of liberals, and 58% of moderates support the investigation. On the other hand, 75% of conservatives oppose the investigation.

This suggests that sentiment within the Republican party is split by ideology.

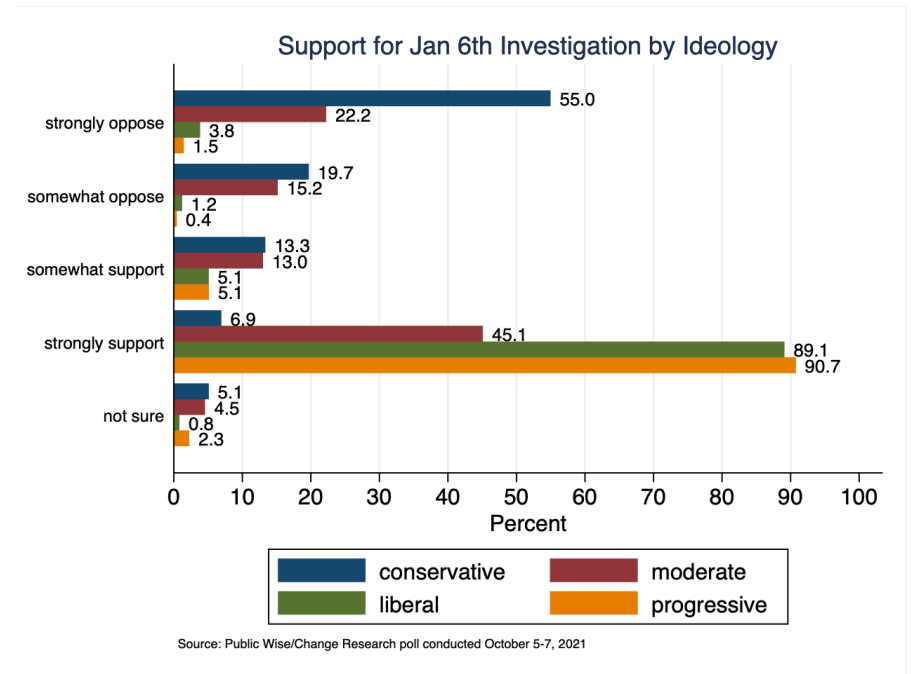
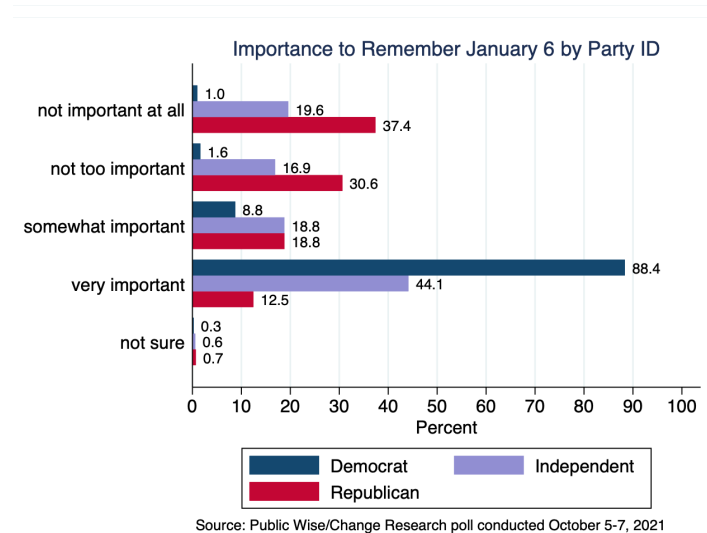
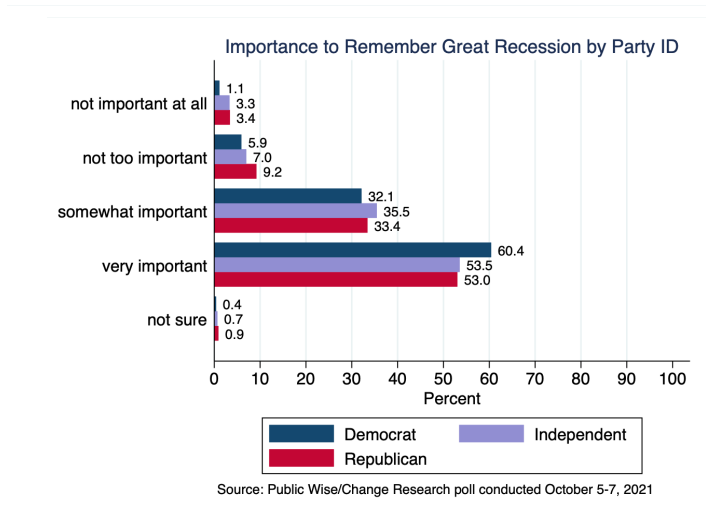
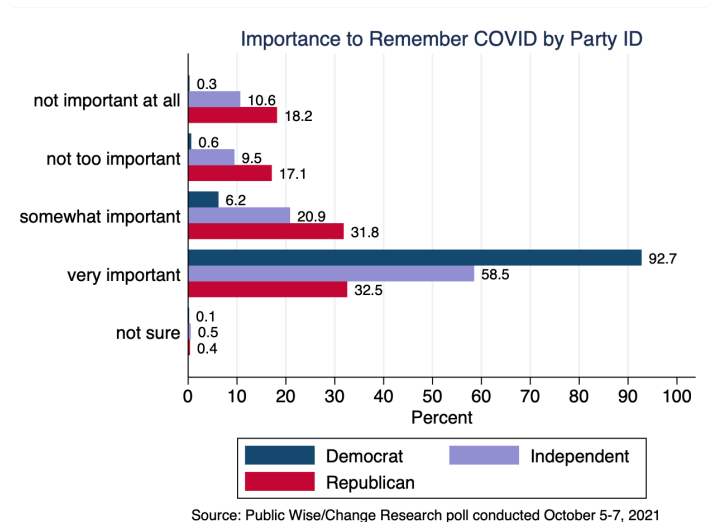
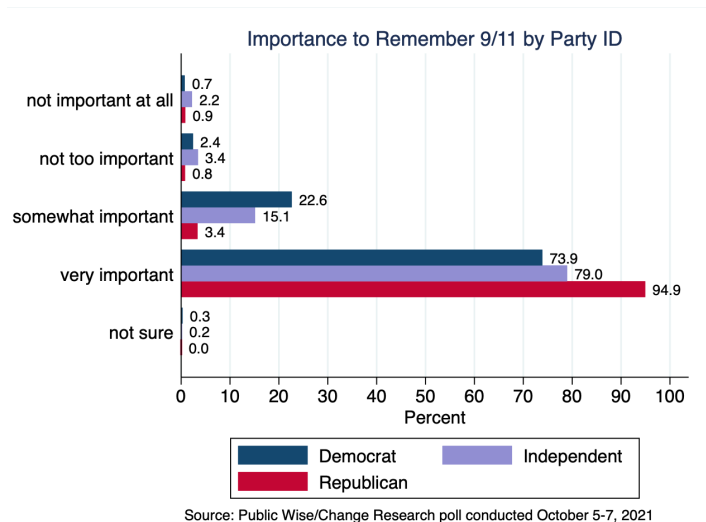


Figure 29: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

To assess the question of whether Americans think that January 6th was an important moment in our national history, we asked respondents to say whether it was important to remember. We also asked the same question about three other relatively recent historical events: 9/11, the coronavirus pandemic, and the financial crash of 2008. Figure 30 shows the responses to each of these events by party identification.

Figure 30: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021



There is relatively universal agreement that it is important to remember the events of 9/11 in American history. There is more variation as to whether it is important to remember the events of the financial crash of 2008 that led to the Great Recession, however, that variation does not seem to be accounted for by party identification.

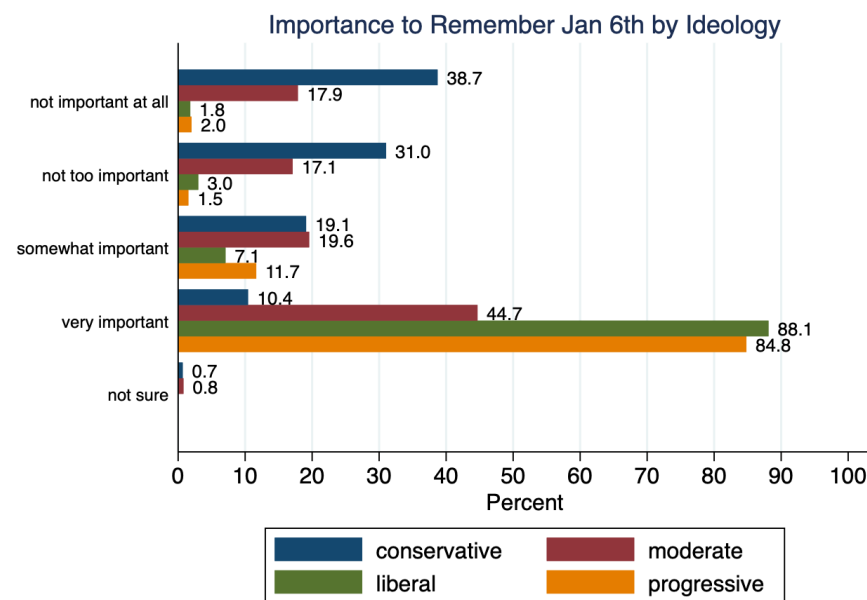
Democrats, Republicans, and Independents responded at relatively equal rates with between 50 and 60% of each group saying it is very important, 32-35% saying it is somewhat important, 5-9% saying it is not too important, and less than 4% of each group saying it is not important at all.

With regards to COVID, Republicans are fairly split as to whether or not it is important to remember while 93% of Democrats and 59% of Independents agree it is very important to remember COVID. Among these events, January 6th is the only one where more Republicans think it is not important at all to remember the events than think it is very important to remember.

37% of Republicans say it is not important at all and another 31% say it is not too important. Meanwhile, 88% of Democrats think it is very important to remember January 6th in American history.

Figure 31 shows opinions on how important it is to remember January 6th by ideology. Similar to what we might expect from the party breakdown, progressives and liberals are united in thinking that remembering January 6th is important. The majority of moderates also think it is either important or very important. On the other hand, the majority of conservatives think it is either not too important or not important at all.

This finding, combined with the outside poll results on whether enough attention has been paid, and our findings on accountability, suggest there is a deep partisan and ideological divide on understanding the nature of the events of January 6th, their current implications, and their importance as a defining national moment.



Source: Public Wise/Change Research poll conducted October 5-7, 2021

Figure 31: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021

Motivation to Vote

In addition to asking about the specific events of January 6th, we also asked about the extent to which Americans are motivated to vote. We were curious as to whether vote motivation varied by party identification and by opinions on January 6th. We asked respondents to indicate how motivated they are to vote in 2022 on a ten-point scale where one is the least motivated and ten is the most motivated. For ease of interpretation, we collapsed the ten-point scale to three categories: not very motivated to vote, moderately motivated to vote, and somewhat to very motivated to vote.

Figure 32 shows motivation by party identification. Most Americans reported being somewhat to very motivated to vote in 2022, regardless of party identification. 94% of Democrats, 91% of Republicans, and 81% of Independents report that they are motivated to vote in the 2022 elections.

Independents are more likely than other respondents to report being not very motivated, but only 12% of Independents answered this way. 53% of people who report not voting in 2020 report being somewhat to very motivated to vote in 2022.

With such high levels of motivation to vote among all groups, we did not find any interesting correlations between motivation to vote and opinions on January 6th. It appears that people report being motivated to vote regardless of their opinion on what happened at the Capitol, their views on whether elected officials who participated should remain in office, or any other aspect of January 6th that we asked about.

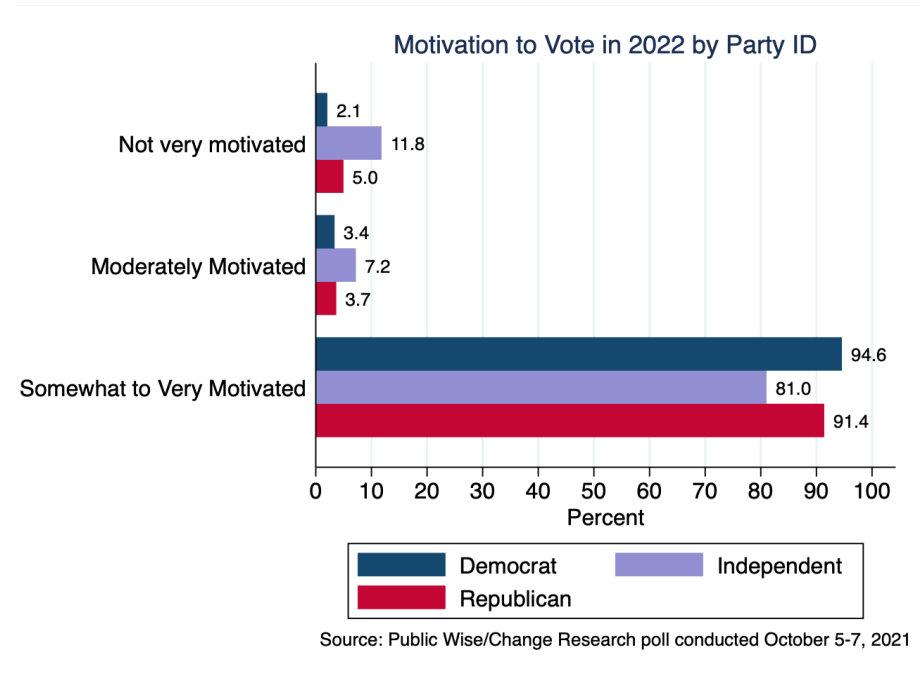


Figure 32: Public Wise/Change Research Poll of US Adults, October 2021