

## State of American Politics – December 2023

The partisan divide over the size and scope of government remains as wide as ever: Support for smaller government endures as a Republican touchstone. Fully 80% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say they prefer a smaller government with fewer services, compared with just 31% of Democrats and Democratic Leaners.

Yet both Republicans and Democrats favor significant government involvement on an array of specific issues. Among the public overall, majorities say the federal government should have a major role in dealing with 12 of 13 issues included in the survey, all except advancing space exploration.

There is bipartisan agreement that the federal government should play a major role in dealing with terrorism, natural disasters, food and medicine safety, and roads and infrastructure.

And while the presidential campaign has exposed sharp partisan divisions over immigration policy, large majorities of both Republicans (85%) and Democrats (80%) say the government should have a major role in managing the immigration system.

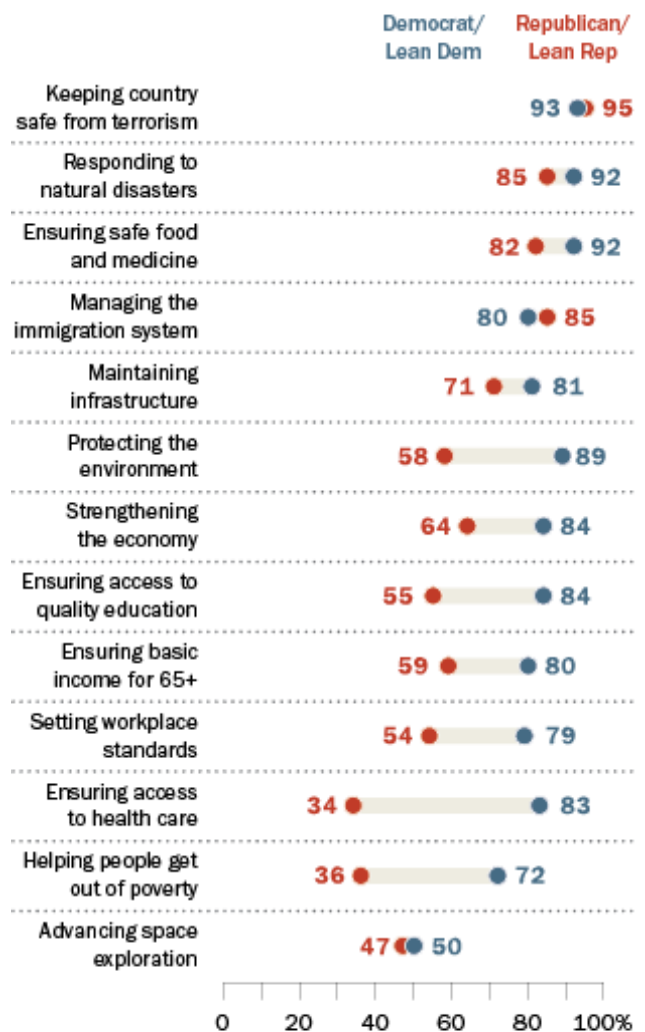
But the partisan differences over government's appropriate role are revealing – with the widest gaps on several issues relating to the social safety net.

Only about a third of Republicans and Republican leaners see a major role for the federal government in helping people get out of poverty (36%) and ensuring access to health care (34%), by far the lowest percentages for any of the 13 issues tested. Fully 72% of Democrats and Democratic leaners say the government should have a major role in

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### Republicans less likely to see a major role for government in most areas

% who say govt should play a major role ...



Survey conducted Aug. 27-Oct. 4, 2015. Q71.

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helping people out of poverty, and 83% say it should play a major role in ensuring access to health care.

Moreover, while majorities of Republicans favor a major government role in ensuring a basic income for people 65 and older (59%), protecting the environment (58%) and ensuring access to high-quality education (55%), much larger shares of Democrats – 80% or more in each case – favor a large government role.

However, these differences are a matter of degree. Overwhelming numbers of Republicans and Democrats say the federal government should have either a major or minor role on all 13 issues tested. Relatively few in either party want the government to have no role in these issues, though 20% of Republicans say the government should have no role in ensuring health care.