

# What Unites Americans in 2024

There's plenty of division to go around in 2024. But a new Pew Research report on how Americans view major institutions offers some insights into where Americans agree—and where the biggest divides are.

Titled “From Businesses and Banks to Colleges and Churches: Americans’ Views of U.S. Institutions,” the [report](#) summarized the views of over 5,000 American adults as expressed via a survey taken in mid-January.

Americans reserve their highest praise for small businesses, with national sentiment toward mom-and-pop stores rising from 80 percent in October 2022 to 86 percent at the beginning of this year. Both Democrats (88 percent) and Republicans (87 percent) are agreed in this assessment.

Views of the military likewise remain relatively high and nonpartisan, with 64 percent of Republicans and 60 percent of Democrats expressing a healthy regard for men and women in uniform. Only 36 percent of Americans say the effect of the military is negative, with those under the age of 30 more likely to say so.

Americans are similarly agreed, albeit negatively, in their views on large corporations. Just 32 percent of Republicans and 26 percent of Democrats say Big Business plays a positive role in American society.

While Democrats have long been the more critical of Wall Street, flagging support for corporate America among Republicans is a more recent and perhaps surprising development, dropping from 54 percent in 2019.

Though Pew did not probe the *why* behind the *what*, we might hazard a guess that Big Business is now suspect among conservative Americans due to its embrace of ESG

(environmental, social, and corporate governance) and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

When it comes to banks, an identical 38 percent of Republicans and Democrats take a positive view. Once again, while Republicans were the traditional fan club of Big Finance, it appears that corporate wokeness has turned that relationship icy, too. For context, 63 percent of Republicans expressed support for banks as recently as 2019. Democrats' views on banks hardly changed in that period.

A wide partisan divide can be seen in American society on K-12 public schools, colleges, and universities. Around three-quarters of Democrats view these institutions positively while only about 30 percent of Republicans say the same. The divide is almost as wide on K-12 schools. Put another way, Democrats are approximately twice as likely as Republicans to view schools and colleges positively.

Churches and other religious organizations enjoy favor with 59 percent of Americans, up from 53 percent in late 2022—but the political divide on this question remains especially stark: A full 73 percent of Republicans say churches have a positive impact on American society while just 45 percent of Democrats agree. Even among Democrats, however, the divide is not quite as dramatic as it may seem. While only 31 percent of self-identified liberal Democrats have a positive impression of churches, 58 percent of Democrats overall view organized religion positively.

There are several key takeaways from this Pew study.

First, though Americans have their own reasons why, their views on banks and Big Business, Main Street, and the military are strikingly similar. Maybe this country isn't so divided after all?

Second, corporate wokeness (ESG, DEI) has not made Wall Street or Big Finance noticeably more palatable to Democrats, but it

appears to have soured Republicans' views of these important institutions. Now would be a good time for the corporate and finance sectors to cut their ties with toxic "stakeholder capitalism" and get back to business.

Third, more research is needed to understand changing views on the church. Are Americans appreciative of organized religion because of its defiance of petty COVID *diktats* or its embrace of the rainbow religion? Are Republicans just diehard traditionalists, or are there signs of spiritual revival in conservative America?

Finally, if educational institutions want to attract and serve all Americans regardless of background, big reforms are needed, whether in terms of the curriculum being offered, the staff being hired, or the culture being fostered on campus.

The election year ahead surely promises plenty of drama and division. But it's clear that Americans are united in their skepticism of several big institutions—and their support for local community. Perhaps it's time to find whatever common ground unites people. Perhaps it's time to repair the West and its culture.

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