GBAO

Third Way
Anti-Trump Narrative Research
Executive Summary

April 2025

n = 2,000 registered voters nationwide
Conducted March 17-23, 2025 via online panel
Margin of error = +/- 2.2 percentage points

Key Findings

Figure 2

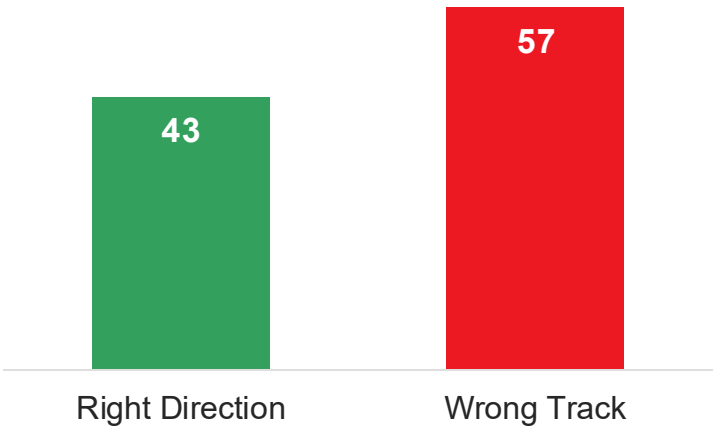
- Even weeks before “Liberation Day,” economic concerns dominate the landscape;
- Trump’s standing with Independents is underwater, voters see him as chaotic;
  - But he’s seen as strong and patriotic, and younger men continue to support him
- The public has serious concerns with cancer research and Medicaid cuts, and personal data breaches;
  - Other cuts (including USAID), as well as deportation, trans/DEI policies, resonate much less
- Messages centered on broken, chaotic **economic** policies resonate, alongside concerns about data privacy breaches and gaps in social safety network;
  - Personal attacks on Trump’s bullying, intimidation and lack of empathy don’t work (again, this is pre-tariff economic crisis)
- Messages **DO** dent Trump’s standing, particularly with women, younger voters.

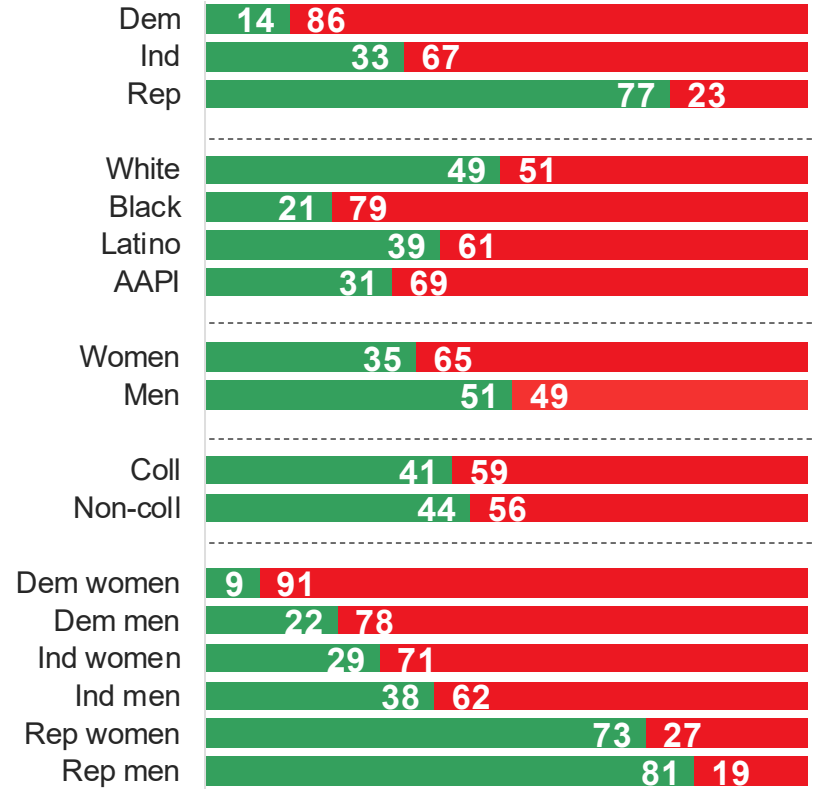
Right Direction Number Edges Up Due To Massive Republican Shift, But Independents, Democrats Are Very Downbeat

Direction of the Country

Generally speaking, do you think that things in the United States are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

WSJ Oct '24:
Total: 26-64
Dem: 55-29
Ind: 22-68
Rep: 3-94





Inflation & The Economy Are Priority Issues For Voters

Figure 4

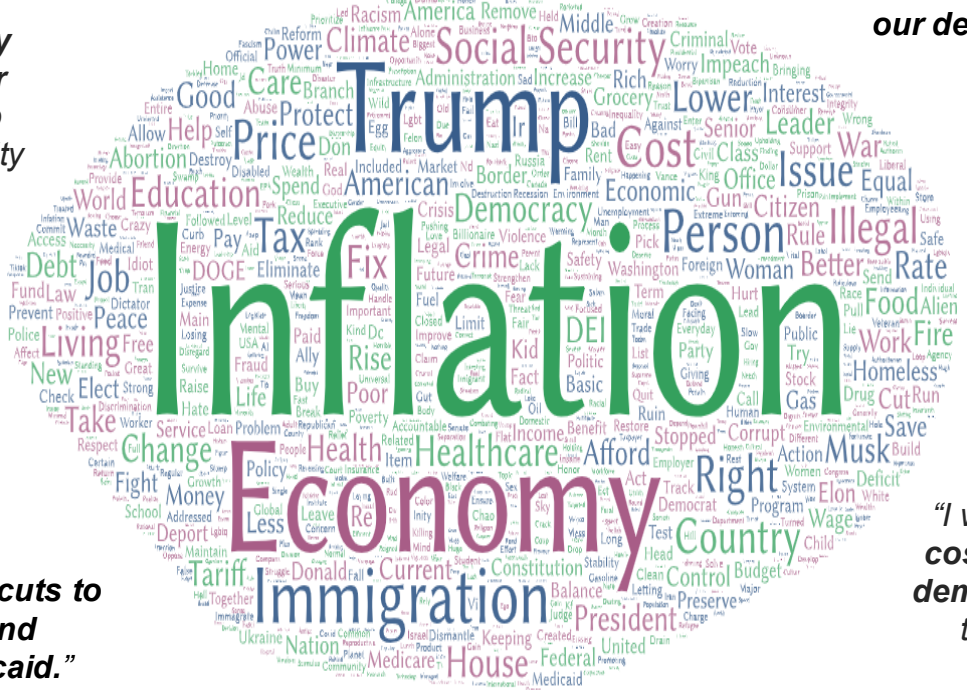
Top Issue

What is the top issue you want your elected leaders in Washington D.C. to focus on? (open end)

*"Well, I would say **the economy, this consistently ranks as a top concern for me**. Issues like inflation, job creation and economic stability are paramount."*

*"**I want inflation to go down** and interest rates to improve"*

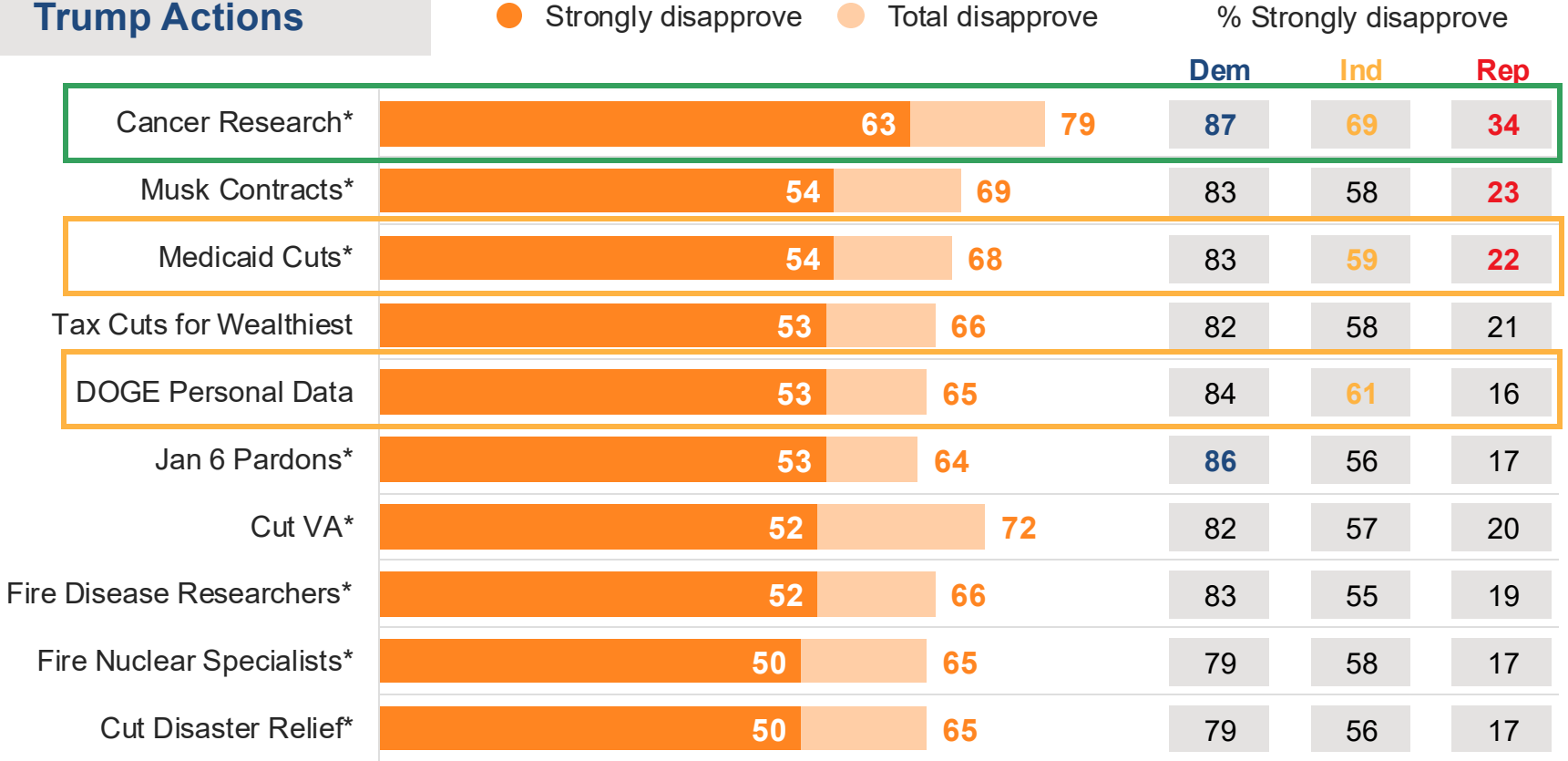
*"Focus on **preventing cuts to Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid.**"*


Inflation
Economy
Trump
Immigration
Price
Social Security
Democracy
Education
Person
Tax
Healthcare
Climate
Right
Country
Issue
Illegal
Cost
Lower
Job
Debt
Living
Peace
Change
Fight
Money
Tariff
House
President
Federal
Medicare
Medicaid
Nation
Ukraine
Deport
Border
Crime
Fix
Rise
Poor
Life
Take
Work
Food
Rate
Gas
Musk
Elon
Homeless
Fire
Save
Wage
Budget
Control
Preserve
Constitution
Current
Donald
Democrat
Republican
Corrupt
Stopped
Afford
Income
Benefit
Restore
Health
Policy
Less
Leave
Re
Abortion
Care
Protect
Help
Good
Allow
Waste
Crazy
Debt
Law
Fund
Prevent
Police
New
Elect
Check
Hate
Service
Problem
Respect
Fraud
Paid
Ally
Buy
Reduce
Spend
Pay
Curb
Eliminate
DOGE
Fix
Crisis
Violence
Legal
Billionaire
Pushing
Fuel
Closed
Improve
Limit
Kid
Fact
Fear
DEI
Politic
Basic
Party
Giving
Stock
Try
Public
Lie
Race
Pull
Send
Better
Woman
Foreign
Washington
Safety
Term
Hurt
Lead
Slow
Call
Human
Ruin
Quit
Oil
Gas
Drug
Cut
Run
Environmental
Action
Women
Deficit
White
Program
Wage
Child
Test
Head
Clean
Letting
Major
Balance
Judge
Charge
Preserve
Keeping
Created
Israel
Dismantle
Medicaid
United
Drain
Gasoline
Immigration
Together
Maintain
Tariff
Deport
Addressed
School
Fight
Money
Growth
Change
Take
Worker
Service
Loan
Problem
Respect
Fraud
Paid
Ally
Buy
Rise
Poor
Life
Hate
Raise
Check
Elect
Strong
New
Living
Free
Peace
Prevent
Positive
Fund
Law
Debt
Job
Waste
Crazy
Education
World
Provide
Abortion
Destroy
Help
Allow
Good
Care
Protect
Price
Don
Trump
Social Security
Climate
Power
Reform
Racism
America
Remove
Middle
Criminal
Vote
Impeach
Worry
Bringing
Interest
Lower
Leader
War
Issue
Equal
Liberal
Citizen
Rule
Illegal
Person
Democracy
Economic
Gun
Office
Senior
Class
Support
Cost
Rich
Grocery
Inequality
Against
Enter
Bad
Bill
Rent
Family
Border
Russia
Market
Included
American
Spend
Reduce
Tax
Education
Crime
Future
Strengthen
Foreign
Woman
Better
Rate
Send
Food
Alien
Work
Fire
Homeless
Drug
Cut
Run
Save
Musk
Elon
Deficit
Wage
Budget
Control
Preserve
Constitution
Current
Donald
Democrat
Republican
Corrupt
Stopped
Afford
Income
Benefit
Restore
Health
Policy
Less
Leave
Re
Country
Child
Test
Head
Clean
Letting
Major
Balance
Judge
Charge
Preserve
Keeping
Created
Israel
Dismantle
Medicaid
United
Drain
Gasoline
Immigration
President
Federal
House
Nation
Ukraine

Cutting Cancer Research Engenders Strong Disapproval From Almost 2/3 Of Voters

Figure 5

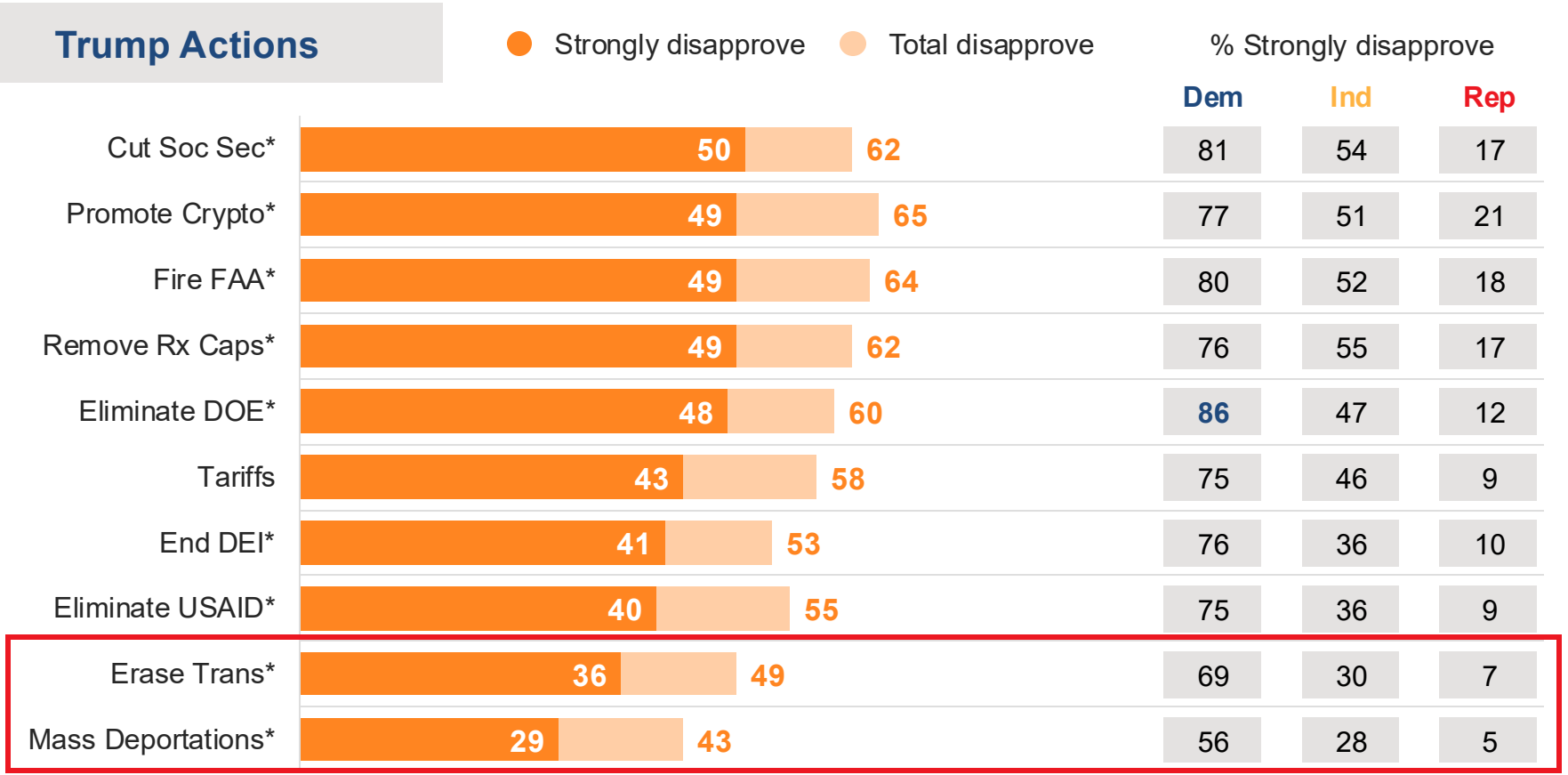
Trump Actions



*split sample

Mass Deportations Least Troubling To Voters, Followed By Anti-Trans Actions

Figure 6



*split sample

Cancer Research Most Powerful Negative Across Key Targets

Figure 7

Trump Actions

● Top negative ✓ ● Next top negatives *% Strongly disapprove*

	Ind	Non-White Mod	Non-coll	Trump Job App Twd Disapp	Trump Job App to Disapp	Infrequent News	Trump Voter	Non-voter
Cancer Research*	69✓	75✓	60✓	59✓	71✓	63✓	36✓	70✓
Musk Contracts*							22	
Medicaid Cuts*	59	66	53	49	57	55	22	
Tax cuts for wealthy			53	47	57	57		64
Personal Data	61					55		64
Jan 6 Pardons*		66						
Social Security*						55		

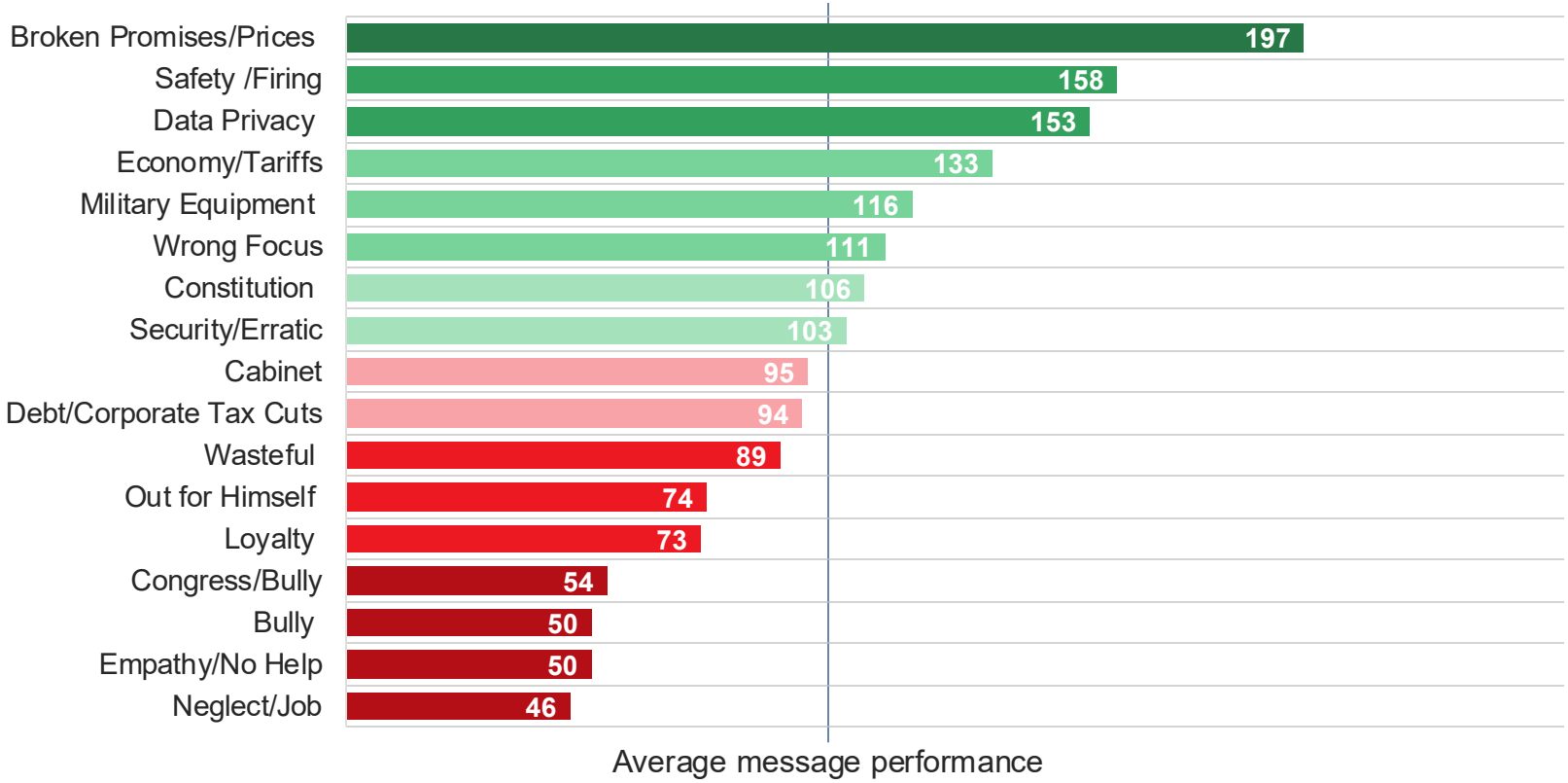
**split sample*

Frames Focused On Prices/Economy, Personal & National Security Perform Best; Frames Centered On Trump Character Are Less Effective

Figure 8

MaxDiff Frames

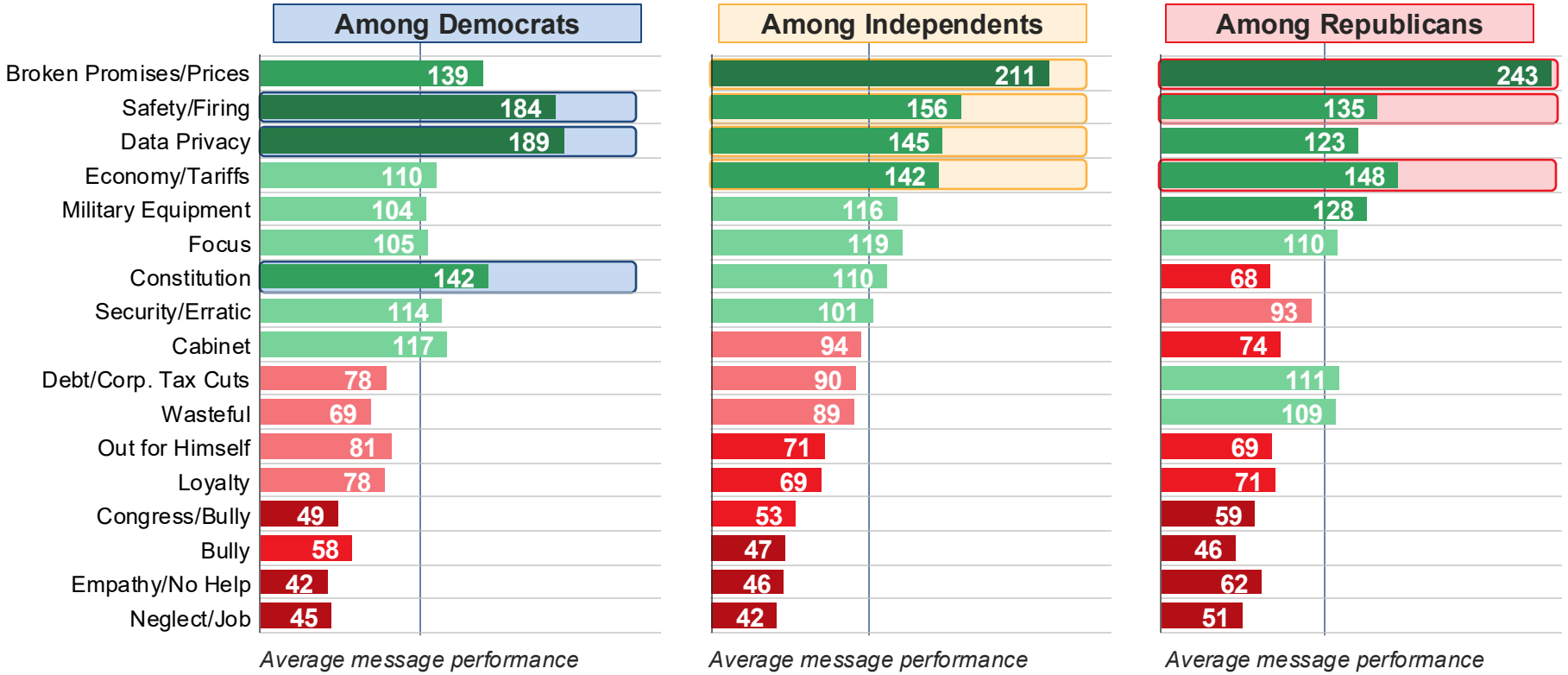
Mean Score = Average MaxDiff score indexed to 100. Scores above 100 perform better than average, below 100 are less than average.



Economic Frames Strongest With Independents & Republicans

MaxDiff Frames By Party

Mean Score = Average MaxDiff score indexed to 100. Scores above 100 perform better than average, below 100 are less than average.



Big Picture Recommendations:

Figure 10

- ✓ Highlight the chaos Trump is creating and the economic fallout from his unpredictable actions.
- ✓ Frame the attacks broadly enough for our targets to see themselves as collateral damage. Tariffs and economic uncertainty will hurt them. Data breaches will hurt them. Cancer research cuts will hurt them.
- ✓ **Economic chaos and threats to personal privacy/security must ALWAYS lead every attempt to sum up Trump's failures.**
- ✓ **Overall refrain: These actions all make America weaker and poorer.**

Words Of Caution:

- Broad attacks on DOGE will likely fall flat as well and this was even before Musk left the Administration. The strength is in the specificity of the cuts and the widespread damage they will cause.
- Mass deportations, attacks on DEI and cuts to USAID are high profile actions of the Trump admin, but they should not be what Dem candidates focus on to win competitive elections.
- Personal attacks on Trump's character do not resonate. He was hired to improve the economy, not be a role model.
- Personal attacks on Trump's character do not resonate. He was hired to improve the economy, not be a role model.
- (At least before Liberation Day) Attacking "tariffs" on our allies alone are not enough to create strong concerns. Tariffs need to explained as the taxes and inflationary policies they are.
- Trump's attacks on the constitution (trampling on free speech, threatening to lock up his opponents) do have some resonance here, including with some Independents, but not in a vacuum.

Third Way: 8 Key Fiscal Facts

Figure 12

- ✓**Can check out full 8 key fiscal facts, but here is the most important one considering the polls findings:**
- ✓**Donald Trump is the king of debt—expect even more in Trump 2.0.**
  - Did you know: During his first term, President Trump added $8.4 trillion to the national debt, and the debt-to-GDP ratio jumped 23 percentage points. His upcoming agenda is also deeply fiscally irresponsible. According to the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, his campaign plans could add upwards of $16 trillion to the debt. Of that, $5-6 trillion would come from extending his signature 2017 tax cuts.

Making Republicans Own the #TrumpSlump

- ✓ Americans Are Feeling the Pain of the Trump Slump
  - Voters' view of Trump's handling of the economy has already dipped 11 points.
- ✓ Business and Finance Believes the Trump Slump Has Arrived
  - The Federal Reserve slashed its expected 2025 GDP growth rate to an anemic 1.7%. The Fed also projected "weaker growth, higher unemployment and higher inflation than they had anticipated in December.
- ✓ Even Conservative and Nonpartisan Businesses Leaders and Top Economists Believe GOP Tariffs and Deficit Policies are Causing the Trump Slump
  - "Tariffs = a hidden tax on Americans," wrote the former Ronald Reagan economic advisor Steve Hanke.

Pricey Projections: The Cost of Trump's Tariffs

Figure 14

- ✓ Cost to Families
  - Tariffs will “amount to an average tax increase of $1,243 per US household in 2025.”
  - Real income for the average taxpayer would drop by about $2,900 in 2026.
  - “A middle-income household faces a $22K lifetime loss.”
- ✓ Cost to the Economy
  - GDP will drop by 1.4% in 2025. “This would be driven by a large increase in inflation throwing the brakes on consumption as an engine of growth.”
  - Trump’s tariffs “will reduce long-run GDP by about 6% and wages by 5%.”