

navigator*

Friday, February 28th

Cuts and DOGE:
A Guide for Advocates



Credit: Shutterstock/Lev Radin

Key Takeaways:

- Three in five Americans are concerned about recent cuts to government programs.
- Americans are hearing a lot about and view negatively Elon Musk's involvement in the Trump administration and Trump's recent firing of government workers and attempts to close government agencies.
- When talking about cuts, the most troubling are the ones that directly impact Americans rather than those more focused on the bureaucracy. Of cuts Trump and Republicans have already done, the most troubling are related to health care, education, and safety. Of the policies they are proposing, the biggest worries are cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid and higher costs due to tariffs.

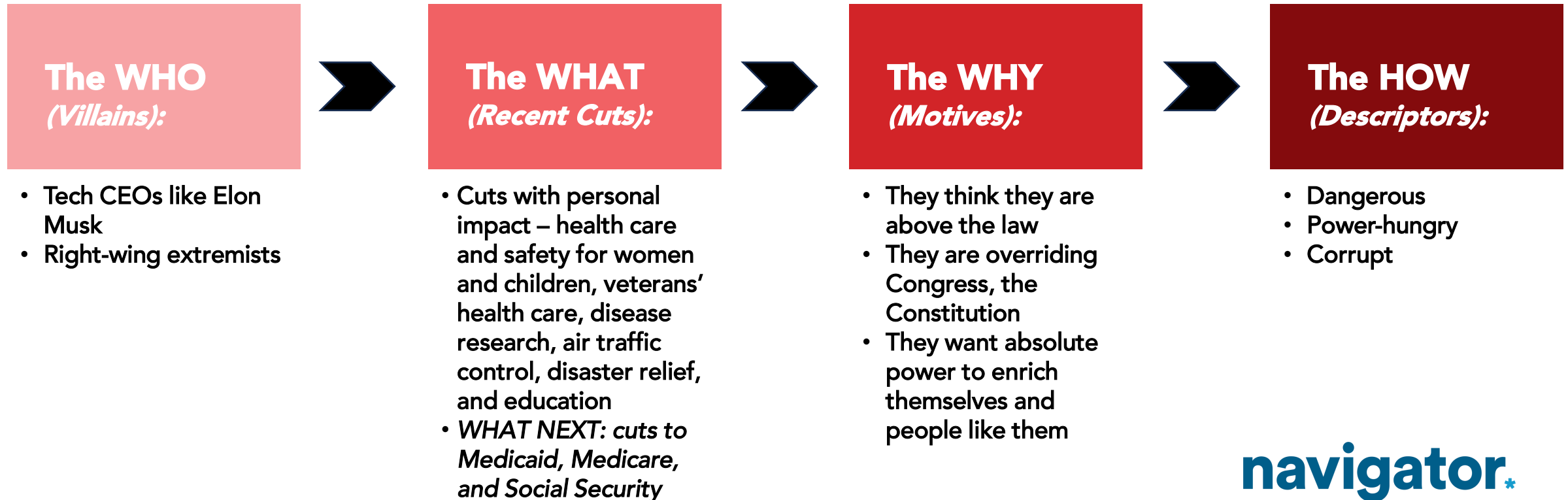
Key Takeaways:

- Musk and billionaires in the Trump administration acting like they are above the law, violating the Constitution and overriding government, and enriching themselves while harming the middle class and hurting the economy are seen as the most troubling descriptions of what they are doing.
- Spending cuts on their own are not a natural negative for Trump, and Americans trust him and Republicans more on government spending than they trust Democrats. Acknowledging there is waste in government that should be cut, while criticizing what Trump and Republicans have cut so far, helps bolster progressive arguments to win the spending debate.

Americans' Top Concerns: The Trump Administration Acting Like They Are Above the Law & Cutting Programs That Impact Them

Initial branding guidance on recent cuts under the Trump administration points to:

- The Trump administration, led by (tech CEOs like Elon Musk and right-wing extremists), has already (cut programs with personal impact – health care and safety for women and children, veterans' health care, disease research, air traffic control, disaster relief, and education) and will (cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid). They are (acting like they're above the law, overriding Congress and the Constitution, and enriching themselves) because they are (dangerous, power-hungry, and corrupt).

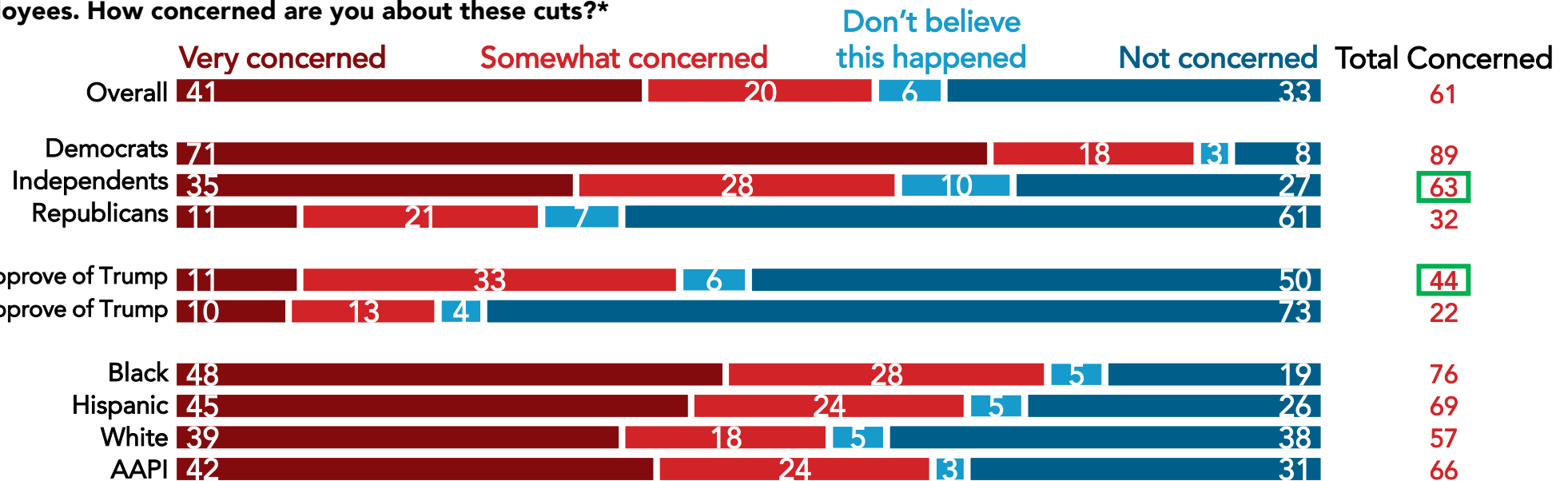


Three in Five Americans Are Concerned About Recent Cuts to Government Spending and Firings of Government Employees

Majorities of independents (63%) and 44% of 2024 Trump voters who do not strongly approve of the job he is doing are concerned.

- Roughly four in five who know someone impacted by Trump’s policies are concerned about cuts to the federal government.

As you may know, Donald Trump's administration has recently made significant cuts to federal government spending, including laying off thousands of federal government employees. How concerned are you about these cuts?*



Know someone who recently... **

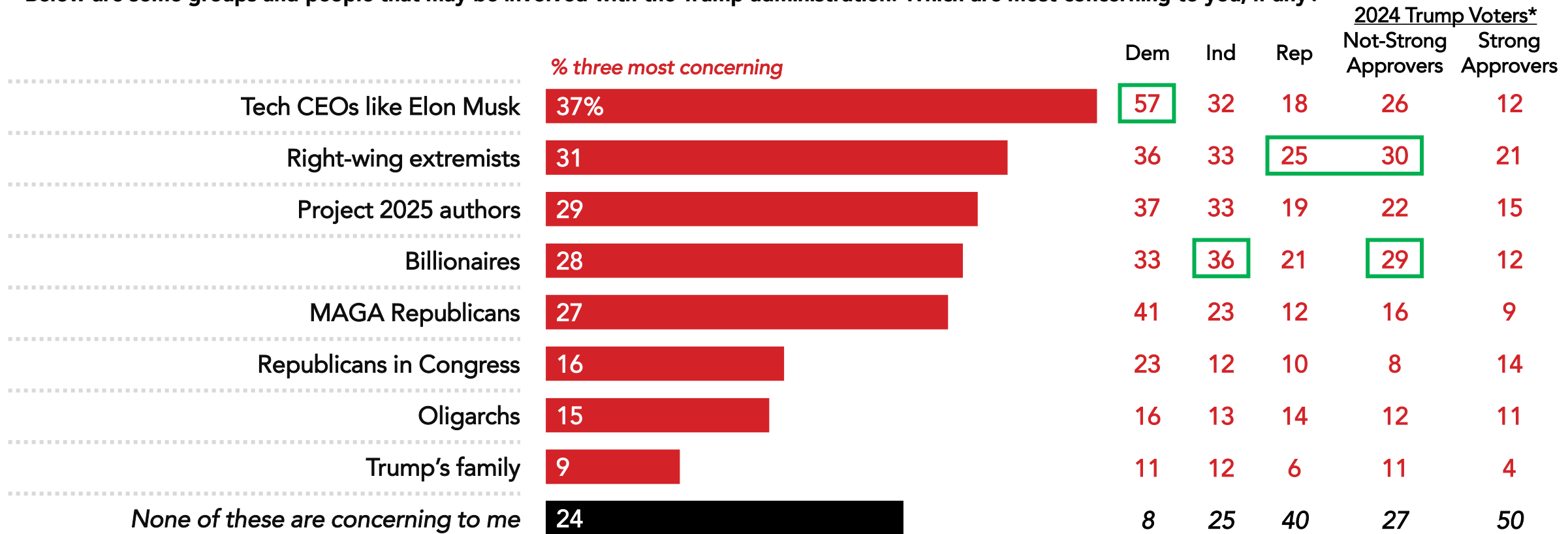


*Half of respondents were asked this question format, while the other half was asked: "As you may know, Donald Trump's administration has given Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) power to make significant cuts to federal government spending and lay off thousands of federal government employees. How concerned are you about these cuts?" Results were combined due to lack of differentiation to allow for greater subgroup analysis. **Respondents self-reported on another question whether they or someone they know has recently gone through the following events/experiences. Nationwide survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted February 20-February 24, 2025. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

Americans Are Most Concerned by Tech CEOs Like Musk & Right-Wing Extremists Being Involved in the Trump Administration

Americans are most concerned about tech CEOs like Elon Musk (37%), right-wing extremists (31%), Project 2025 authors (29%), and billionaires (28%) being involved. Only 15% of Americans across party lines are concerned about “oligarchs” being involved.

Below are some groups and people that may be involved with the Trump administration. Which are most concerning to you, if any?

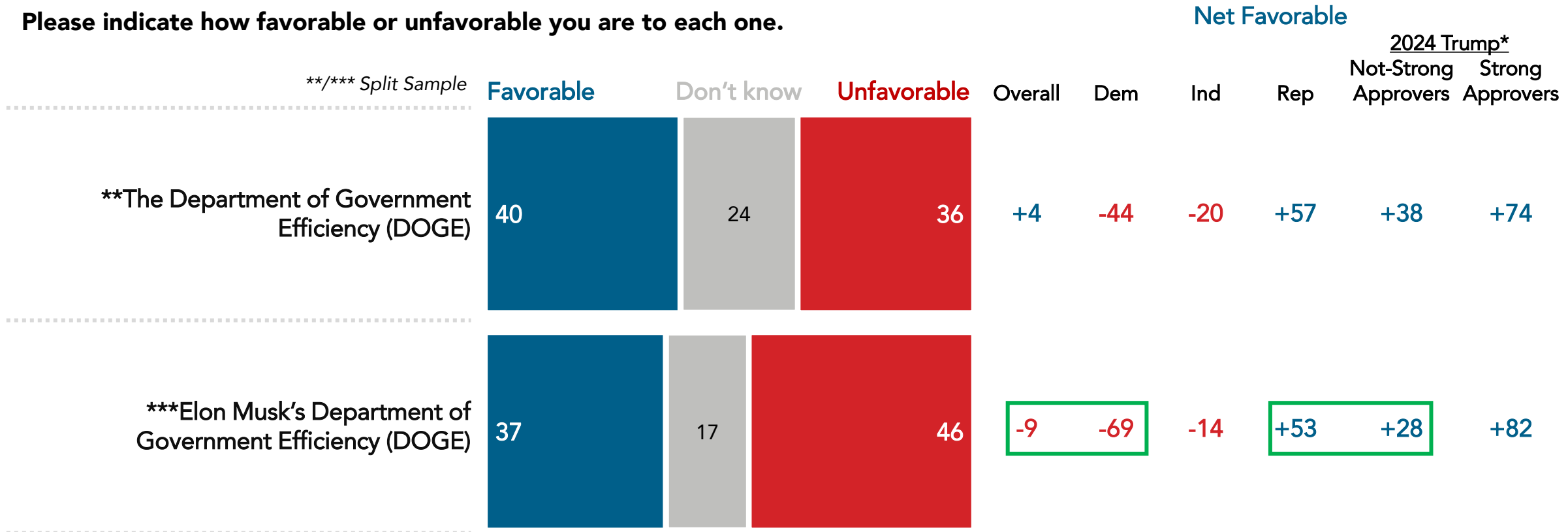


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Giving Musk Ownership of DOGE Drives Up Negative Views

Greater numbers of Democrats and 2024 Trump voters who do not strongly approve of the job he is doing are unfavorable to DOGE when Elon Musk is explicitly linked to it, while independents are slightly more favorable to DOGE when Musk is mentioned.

Please indicate how favorable or unfavorable you are to each one.

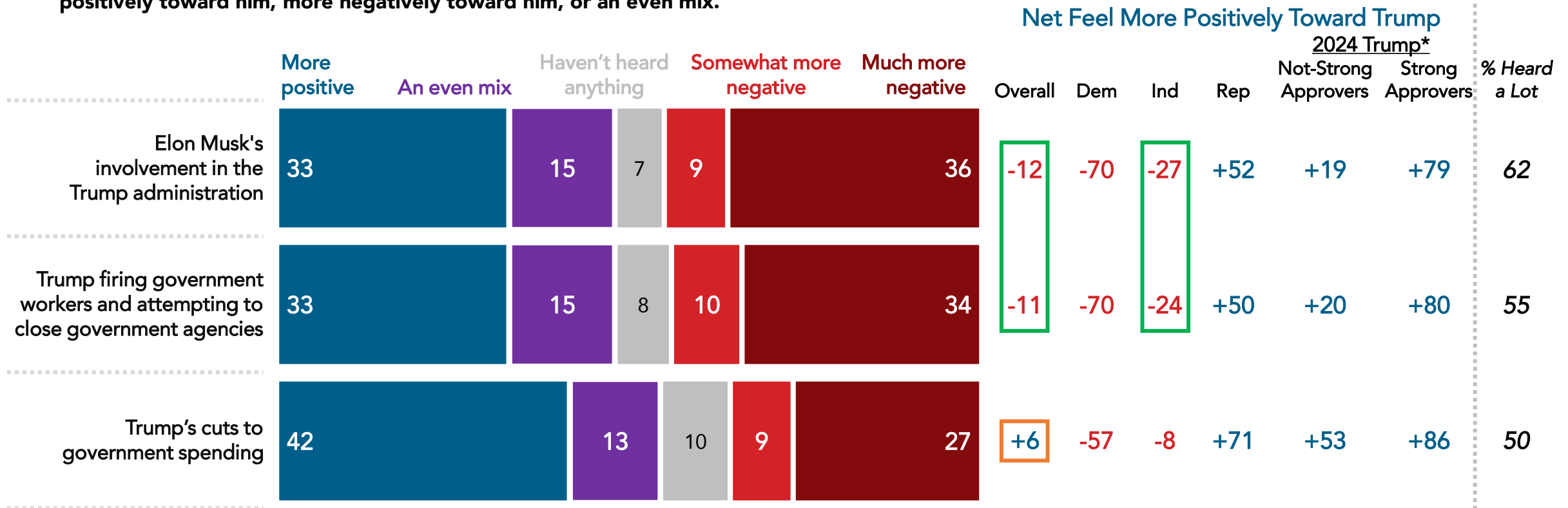


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Musk's Involvement and Trump's Firings Viewed Most Negatively; Americans Are Mixed On Spending Cuts in Abstract

Elon Musk's involvement (net -12 feel more positively towards Trump) and Trump firing government workers and closing government agencies (net -11) make Americans feel more negatively; spending cuts without specifics make them feel more positively (net +6).

Below is the same list of recent events. For each one, regardless of how you feel about Trump in general, please indicate whether it makes you feel more positively toward him, more negatively toward him, or an even mix.



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Most Concerning Cuts: Protecting Women & Children, Veterans' Care, Fighting Disease, Disaster Relief, & FAA; Not Bureaucracy

Below is a list of some things that have happened as a result of the recent cuts to the federal government made by the Trump administration. Please indicate how concerned you are about each one.

Total Concerned

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Don't believe	Not concerned	Overall	Total Concerned			2024 Trump*	
						Dem	Ind	Rep	Not-Strong App.	Strong App.
Ending programs keeping women and children safe from sexual abuse, including cuts to rape crisis centers and programs preventing child exploitation and human trafficking worldwide	48	19	15	18	67	90	76	42	55	33
Cuts to life-saving health care for veterans through Veterans Affairs	46	22	14	18	68	88	75	46	57	37
Cuts to the National Institutes of Health, threatening medical research to find cures and Treatments for diseases like cancer and suspending clinical trial	45	20	9	26	65	89	71	40	51	27
Cuts to staff and funding at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the agency overseeing air traffic control and safety	44	19	9	28	63	86	70	39	52	27
Cuts to disaster relief for events like wildfires, hurricanes, and tornadoes	44	22	13	21	67	89	74	42	57	32
Cuts to the Department of Education, like teacher training and programs to help children with disabilities	44	19	8	29	63	89	69	34	50	24
Pausing medical programs around the world that have beaten back malaria, HIV, and other diseases	43	20	10	27	63	89	69	35	55	24
Firing food inspectors at the Food and Drug Administration	43	19	9	29	62	87	68	35	48	26
Firing veterans who are working in agencies across the federal government, as veterans often take jobs as civil servants after their careers in the armed forces	42	23	12	23	65	88	67	42	56	30
Firing hundreds of government employees at Homeland Security	39	22	7	32	61	87	64	33	45	22
Cuts to the IRS in the middle of tax season, including the investigators who hold tax cheats accountable	38	20	6	36	58	84	58	31	39	24
Slashing the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which blocks higher overdraft fees and credit card late fees	37	19	9	35	56	81	59	30	40	23
Cuts to the World Trade Center Health Program, putting the healthcare of 9/11 responders at risk	37	24	13	26	61	86	69	34	45	26
Firing park rangers at the National Park Service	35	23	10	32	58	85	66	27	38	24

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Biggest Future Worries Include Eventual Cuts to Social Security, Medicare, & Medicaid and Higher Costs From Tariffs

About seven in ten Americans are also worried about new tariffs and cuts hurting farmers and threatening our food supply (69%).

Below is a list of things some people say they are worried about as a result of recent actions made by the Trump administration, including cuts to the federal government. Please indicate how worried you are about each one.

	/ Split Sample			Total Worried				2024 Trump*	
	Very worried	Somewhat worried	Not worried	Overall	Dem	Ind	Rep	Not-Strong App.	Strong App.
That these cuts are just the beginning and will lead to bigger cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security	49	20	31	69	92	76	43	55	30
That new tariffs will increase the costs of everyday goods	48	24	28	72	92	79	50	68	37
That these cuts are just the beginning and will lead to the repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), taking away health care protections for people with preexisting conditions	44	22	33	67	91	75	40	52	27
That cuts to medical research will push back the timeline for cures for diseases such as cancer	44	23	32	68	92	74	41	58	30
***That big layoffs and cuts to the federal government will have a negative ripple effect economically, leading to higher unemployment and a potential recession	44	23	33	67	90	73	43	59	27
That eliminating the Department of Education would hurt kids by taking money out of the classroom	44	21	35	65	91	71	37	50	25
That the combination of new tariffs and cuts to programs that support American farmers will hurt the farming industry and threaten our food supply	43	26	31	69	92	77	45	68	28
That cuts to food safety inspections will increase food-borne disease and make more people sick	43	25	33	67	92	76	40	57	28
That cuts at the Federal Aviation Administration will lead to more plane crashes	42	23	35	65	90	70	38	50	26
That cuts to medical research will lead to the spread of more diseases like the avian flu	41	24	35	65	91	73	38	55	25
**That big layoffs and cuts to the federal government will have a negative ripple effect economically, harming local businesses and communities across the country	41	23	36	64	92	74	34	48	23
That big layoffs and cuts to the federal government will force local nonprofits around the country to close	40	24	36	64	90	69	36	52	24

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Billionaires Enriching Themselves, Taking Too Much Power, Violating Constitution Most Concerning in Trump Administration

Below are some statements made by people who have expressed concern about the role of Elon Musk and other billionaires in the Trump administration. Please indicate how concerning you find each one.

	Very concerning	Somewhat concerning	Don't believe	Not concerning	Total Concerning Overall	Dem	Ind	Rep
*Donald Trump is making billionaires in his administration even richer. He is going to <u>protect and create new tax breaks for his billionaire friends while they make massive spending cuts</u> to programs that regular people rely on	47	16	21	16	64	91	72	33
*Donald Trump is giving <u>billionaires in his administration the power to act like kings</u> , with no checks over their actions. They are gaining power they should not have, including <u>taking control of our data, like our confidential tax and health records</u> , for their own purposes	47	15	21	17	62	90	73	31
**Donald Trump is giving <u>billionaires in his administration the power to act like kings</u> , with no checks over their actions. They are gaining power they should not have, including <u>access to the computer system that makes government payments, such as for Medicare and Social Security</u> , and taking over various federal agencies with little oversight	47	17	17	19	63	87	70	38
The power that Trump has given billionaires in his administration is <u>violating the Constitution and overriding our system of checks and balances</u> . The billionaires in charge are bulldozing our democracy to make more money and grow their own power and influence	46	18	18	18	63	92	70	33
Donald Trump and the billionaires in his administration are <u>alienating our allies in Europe, Canada, and Mexico while cozying up to authoritarian leaders in China and Russia</u> , just so they can make more money and grow their own power and influence	45	17	19	19	62	90	68	33
Donald Trump is giving <u>billionaires in his administration power over the American people</u> , including controlling all aspects of the federal government, our democracy, and the rights and freedoms that Americans hold dear	45	17	19	19	63	90	68	34
**Donald Trump is making billionaires in his administration even richer. He is helping them <u>grow their businesses and pad their profits, making shady deals with them for new government contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars while they make massive spending cuts to things people rely on</u>	45	17	18	20	62	87	66	36
Donald Trump is giving billionaires in his administration the power to <u>influence our government by allowing them to fire non-partisan government watchdogs</u> who make sure taxpayers aren't abused and destroy agencies that oversee their personal business interests	45	18	16	21	63	91	68	33
Donald Trump is giving billionaires in his administration the power to <u>push their dangerous ideology that envisions artificial intelligence taking over our country</u> , with the ultimate goal of running the country using only their technology. One inside official was recently quoted as saying their goal was to replace "the human workforce with machines" and kick Americans out of their jobs	44	19	20	17	63	88	68	36
Donald Trump is giving billionaires in his administration power to <u>promote right-wing conspiracy theories</u> , like the theory that there is a plot to replace white Americans and the belief that there has been a "white genocide" in South Africa, and to support a right-wing extremist party in Germany that has used Nazi slogans	42	17	23	18	60	89	62	29

*/** indicates a split sample experiment.
 Nationwide survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted February 20-February 24, 2025.
 For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

Billionaires Like Musk Acting Like They're Above the Law, Overriding Government/the Constitution, Enriching Themselves Most Troubling

Independents are most concerned they are hurting the economy and raising prices (36%), while 2024 Trump voters who do not strongly approve of the job he is doing are concerned they're acting like they're above the law (28%) and betraying voters (24%).

Which of the following phrases troubles you the most about what Trump, Musk, and other billionaires in the Trump administration are doing?

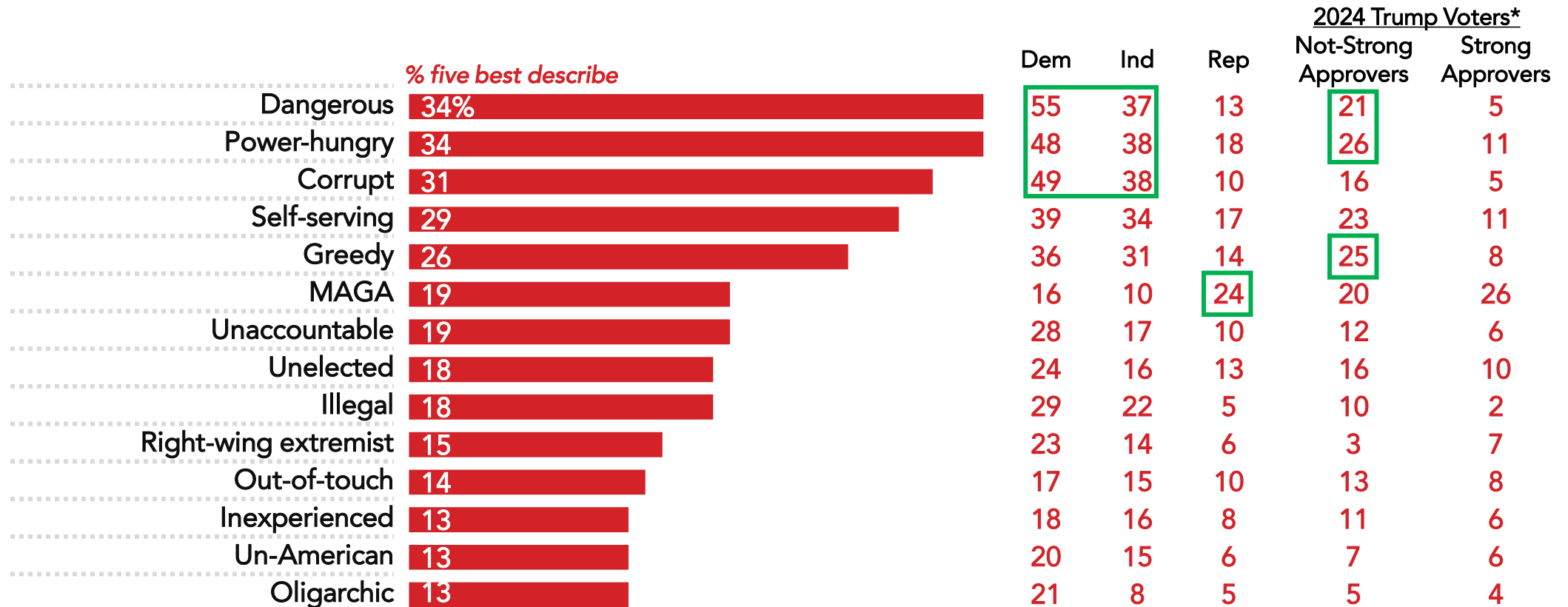
	% three most troubling	Dem	Ind	Rep	2024 Trump Voters*	
					Not-Strong Approvers	Strong Approvers
They are acting like they're above the law	33%	48	32	18	28	11
They are overriding Congress, the courts, and the separation of powers	30	44	28	17	21	10
They are violating the Constitution	29	46	32	11	15	7
They are looking out for the rich at the expense of the middle class	29	40	30	18	22	13
They are hurting the economy, raising prices American families have to pay	28	38	36	17	23	8
They are unaccountable and ignoring the will of the people	23	35	23	11	18	5
They are taking official actions that are illegal	20	32	21	7	10	5
They are betraying voters: this is not what the American people voted for	19	26	19	12	24	8
They are engaging in a one party power grab	16	22	18	10	12	8
They are trying to distract from the issues voters care about most, like the economy	14	17	15	10	7	9

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“Dangerous,” “Power-Hungry,” “Corrupt,” and “Self-Serving” Are Best Descriptors of Musk and Other Billionaires’ Actions

“Oligarchic” (13%), “un-American” (13%), and “inexperienced” (13%) test lower across the board.

Which of the following words or phrases best describes the actions of Elon Musk and the other billionaires working with the Trump administration?

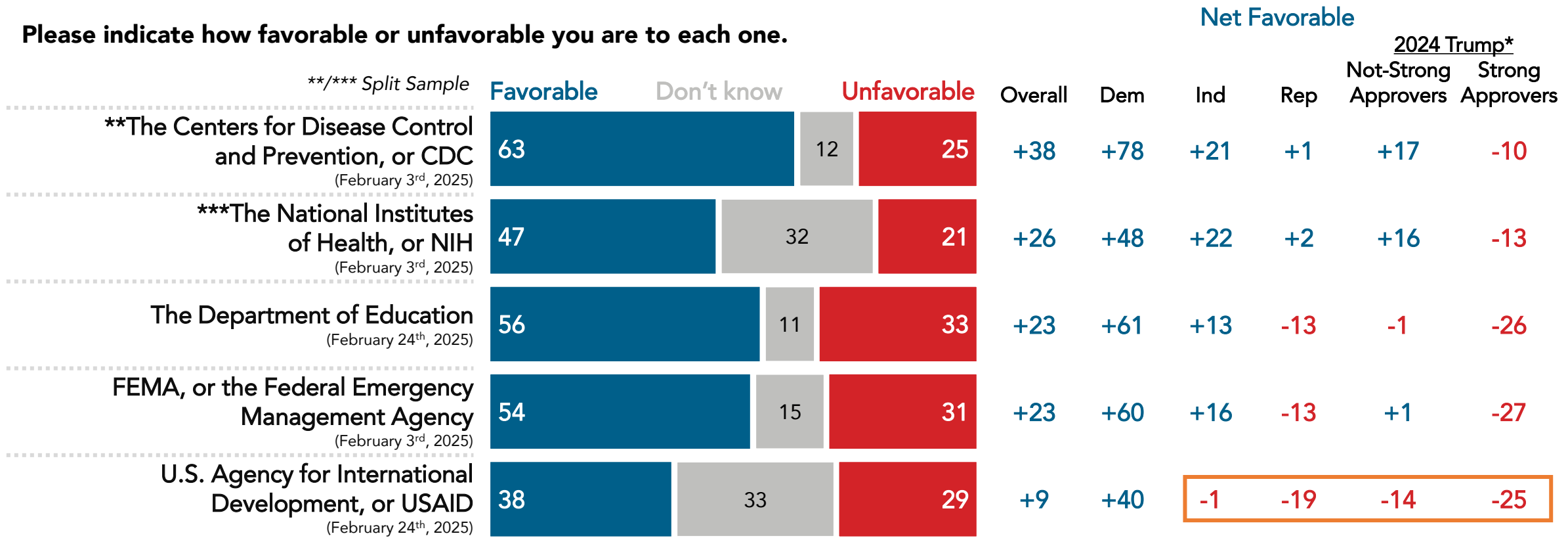


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CDC, NIH, Department of Education, FEMA Viewed More Favorably of Recently Vulnerable Agencies; USAID Less Known

Independents rate the CDC (net +21 favorable), the NIH (net +22), the Department of Education (net +13), and FEMA (net +16) more favorably than not, while USAID breaks even.

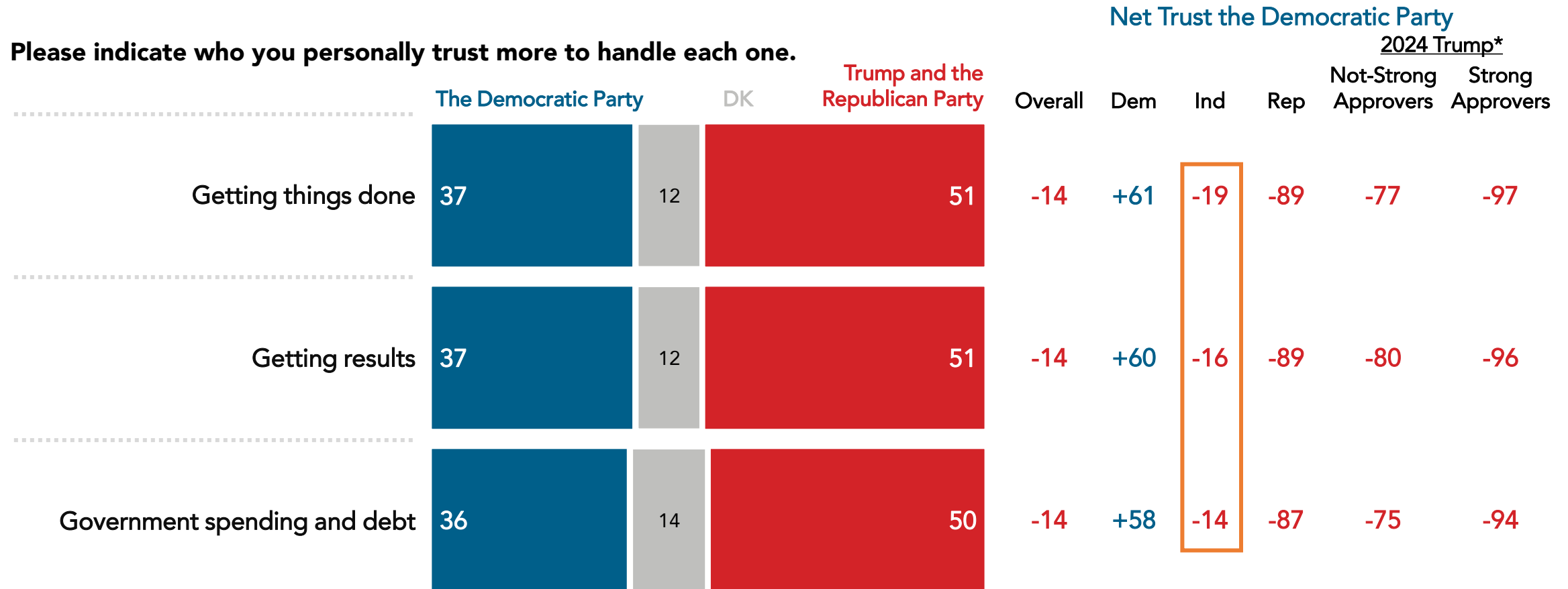
Please indicate how favorable or unfavorable you are to each one.



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Republicans Hold Notable Advantages on Getting Things Done and “Government Spending” Without Specifics

Trump and Republicans have a 14-point trust advantage on “government spending and debt” overall and among independents.



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Acknowledging Waste in Government and Supporting Cutting Some Waste Helps Progressives in the Spending Debate

Americans, especially independents, are more likely to agree with a statement that acknowledges waste in government spending and supports some cuts (net +12), compared to a statement that solely criticizes Trump and Republicans for their spending cuts (net +4).

Which side do you agree with more?

Statement 1: The federal government has been bloated and wasteful for far too long. Right now, we have an opportunity to make big cuts to wasteful spending to right-size the government. We should make real change now, and we can always restore funding for important things later.

Statement 2: Everyone knows there is waste in government that should be cut, but Trump and Republicans are recklessly cutting critical programs that Americans rely on, without thinking about who it will hurt. They have already threatened funding for cancer research, food for hungry kids, and protections for people who have been scammed by big banks and credit card companies.

Statement 3: Trump and Republicans are recklessly cutting critical programs that Americans rely on, without thinking about who it will hurt. They have already threatened funding for cancer research, food for hungry kids, and protections for people who have been scammed by big banks and credit card companies.

Overall

Statement 1: 44%

Statement 2: 56%

Independents:

Statement 1: 36%

Statement 2: 64%

Net Statement 2:
+12

Net Statement 2:
+28

Overall

Statement 1: 48%

Statement 3: 52%

Independents:

Statement 1: 47%

Statement 3: 53%

Net Statement 3: +4

Net Statement 3: +6

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About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO along with an advisory committee, including: Jessica Floyd, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; Mike Podhorzer, AFL-CIO; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

About the Study

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among a sample of 1,000 registered voters from February 20-February 24, 2025. 100 additional interviews were conducted among Hispanic voters. 74 additional interviews were conducted among Asian American and Pacific Islander voters. 100 additional interviews were conducted among African American voters. 100 additional interviews were conducted among independent voters. The survey was conducted online, recruiting respondents from an opt-in online panel vendor. Respondents were verified against a voter file and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of the national registered voter population across a variety of demographic variables. The margin of error for the full sample at the 95 percent level of confidence is +/- 3.1 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

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To learn more about Navigator:

<http://navigatorresearch.org>

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