



Politics in the Workplace Survey: 2016 Election Season

American Psychological Association

September 2016



Executive Summary



Executive Summary

- 1 in 4 U.S. employees have been negatively affected by political talk at work this election season, with younger workers in particular experiencing diminished productivity and more stress, according to a new survey by the American Psychological Association.
- This year's extraordinary presidential campaign is taking a toll on American workers, some of whom report feeling stressed, argumentative and less productive because of political discussions on the job.
- More than 1 in 4 younger employees reported feeling stressed out because of political discussions at work, and more than twice as many men as women said political talk is making them less productive, according to the survey from APA's Center for Organizational Excellence.
- The "Politics in the Workplace: 2016 Election Season" survey was conducted online on APA's behalf by Harris Poll from Aug. 10-12, 2016, among 927 U.S. adults who are employed full or part time.



Executive Summary

- Men were more likely than women, and younger workers (ages 18-34) were more likely than older generations, to have experienced negative consequences of political discussions at work this election season, the survey found. This includes having difficulty getting work done, producing lower-quality work and being less productive overall.
- Similarly, these groups were more likely to have said that because of political discussions at work, they feel more isolated from their colleagues, have a more negative view of them and have experienced an increase in workplace hostility.
- Compared to women, men were more than four times as likely to report having argued about politics with a coworker (18 percent vs. 4 percent).
- Despite the differences in the way political discussions are affecting certain categories of employees, the survey found few differences across political party or philosophy when it comes to how the 2016 election is affecting American workers.



Executive Summary

- Among all workers surveyed, nearly half (47 percent) said people are more likely to discuss politics in the workplace this election season than in the past.
- Although a majority of working Americans (60 percent) indicated that people at work are generally respectful toward others with differing political views, more than a quarter (26 percent) have witnessed or overheard their coworkers arguing about politics, and about 1 in 10 (11 percent) have gotten into an argument themselves.
- More than half of American workers (54 percent) said they avoid discussing politics with colleagues, and 1 in 5 (20 percent) reported avoiding some coworkers because of their political views.
- Overall, more than a quarter of working Americans (27 percent) reported at least one negative outcome as a result of political discussions at work during this election season.



Executive Summary

- Some workers have bonded with their colleagues over political discussions this election season, with almost a quarter reporting they feel more connected to coworkers (24 percent) and have a more positive view of them (23 percent).
- A small but significant number of employees reported a more negative view of coworkers, and said they feel more isolated from them, perceive more workplace hostility and that team cohesiveness has suffered (13 percent each).
- As a result of political discussions at work this election season, at least 1 in 10 working Americans said they have felt tense or stressed out (17 percent), have been more cynical and negative at work (15 percent), have had more difficulty getting work done (10 percent), have been less productive at work (13 percent) and that their work quality has suffered (10 percent).



Executive Summary

Gender Differences

- Men were more than twice as likely as women to have said they regularly discuss politics with coworkers (28 percent vs. 13 percent).
- Similarly, almost twice as many men reported feeling isolated from their coworkers because of political discussions (16 percent vs. 9 percent) and 18 percent said workplace hostility has increased (vs. 8 percent of women).
- Compared to women, more than twice as many men reported that they have had more difficulty getting work done (13 percent vs. 6 percent), that their work quality had suffered (14 percent vs. 5 percent) and that they had been less productive at work (18 percent vs. 7 percent) as a result of political discussions at work this election season.



Executive Summary

Age Differences

- For younger workers (ages 18-34), 28 percent said political discussions at work have made them feel stressed out; 23 percent reported feeling more isolated from their coworkers; and 25 percent said workplace hostility has increased.
- Almost 1 in 5 younger workers (18 percent) reported having an argument with a coworker about politics.
- More than 1 in 4 younger employees (ages 18-34) said they have a more negative view of coworkers as a result of political discussions at work (26 percent), and that they avoid some coworkers because of their political views (28 percent).
- Compared to older generations, younger workers (ages 18-34) were more likely to have reported that political talk has negatively affected their work performance, with almost a quarter saying they have been less productive (24 percent), 21 percent citing a decline in work quality and 19 percent reporting having difficulty getting their work done.

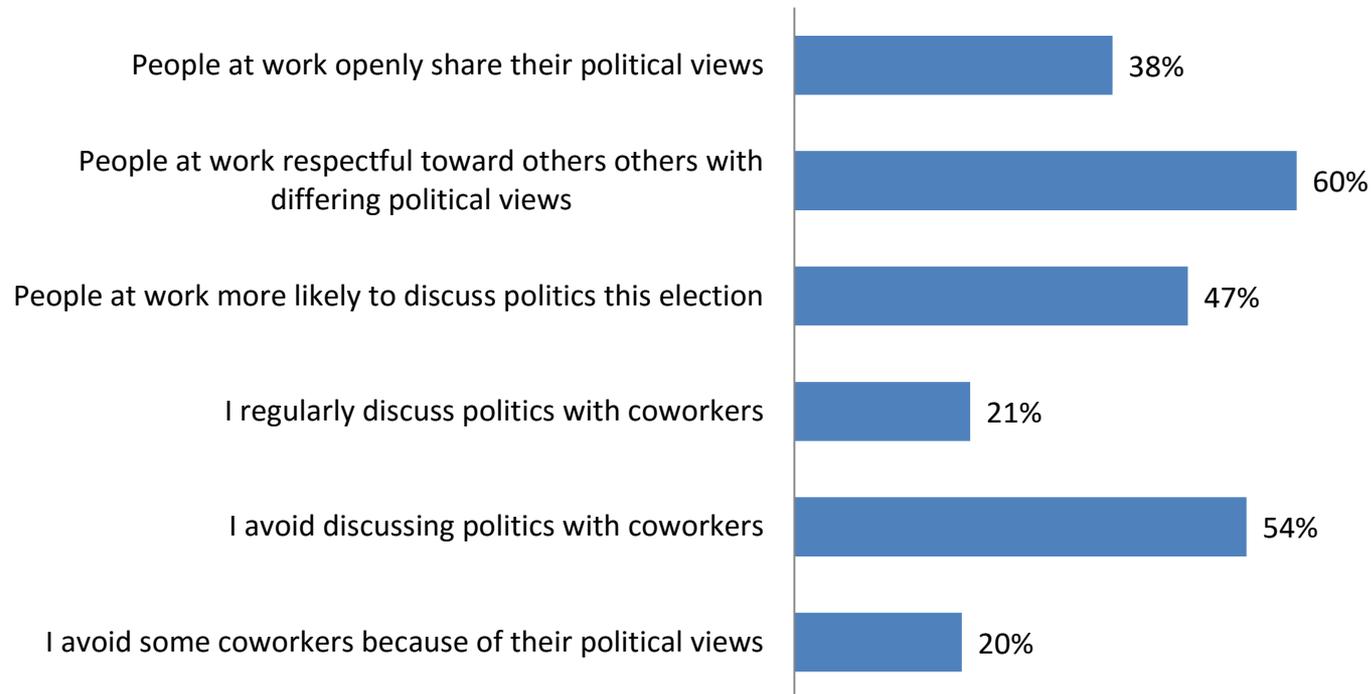


Detailed Findings



Discussing Politics at Work

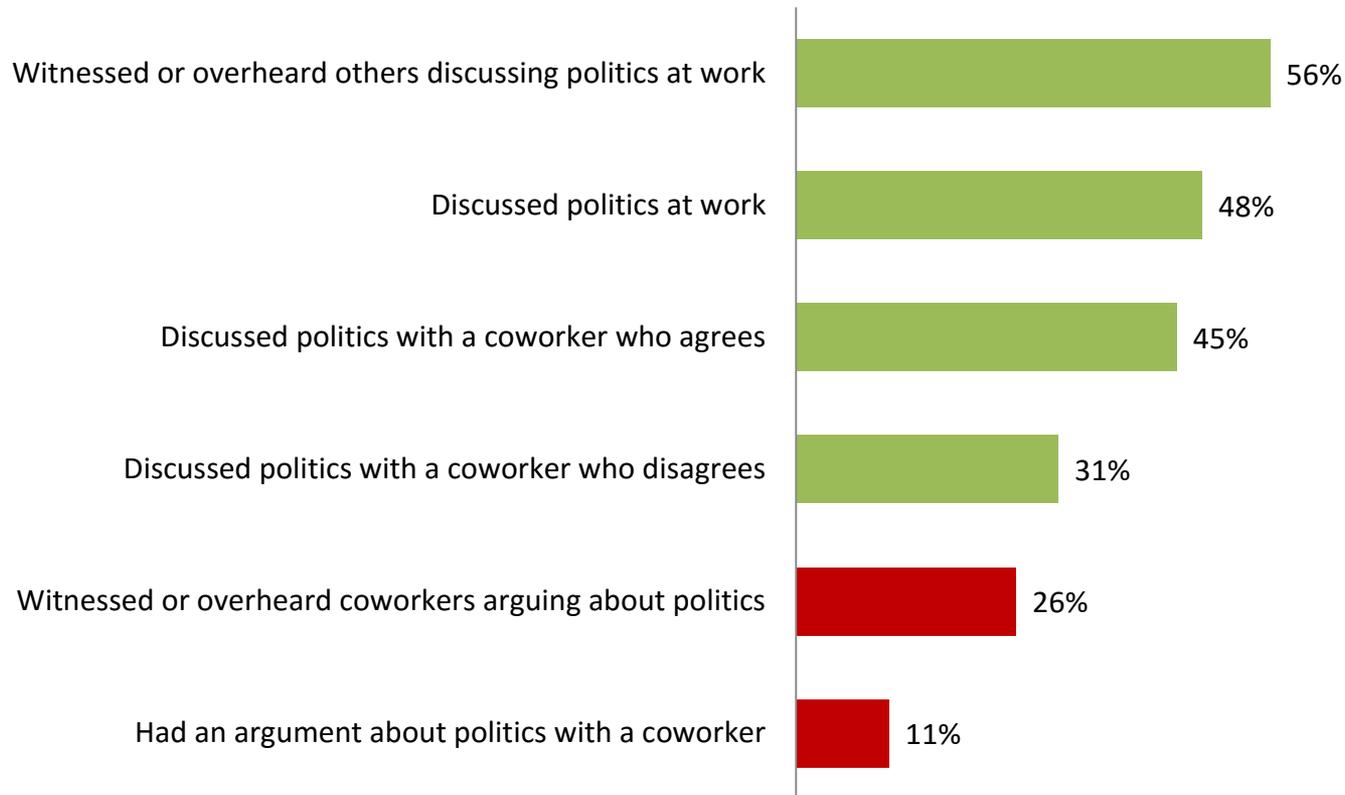
% Strongly Agree/Agree



Discussions and Arguments About Politics

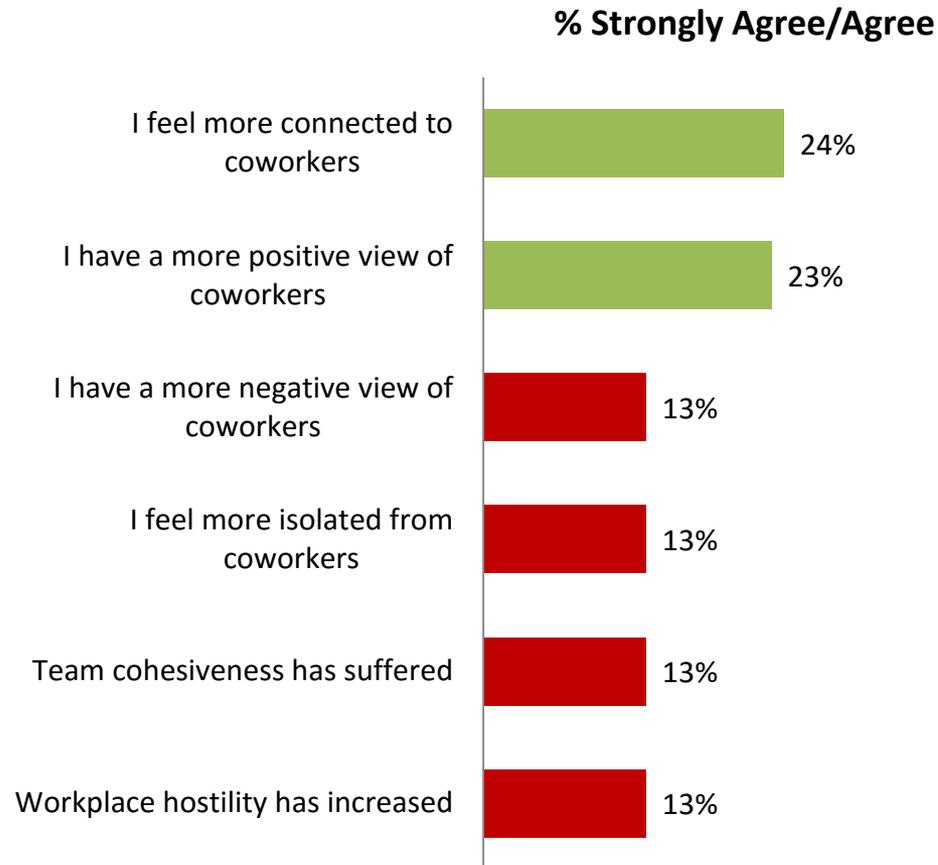
During this U.S. presidential election season, I have...

% Yes



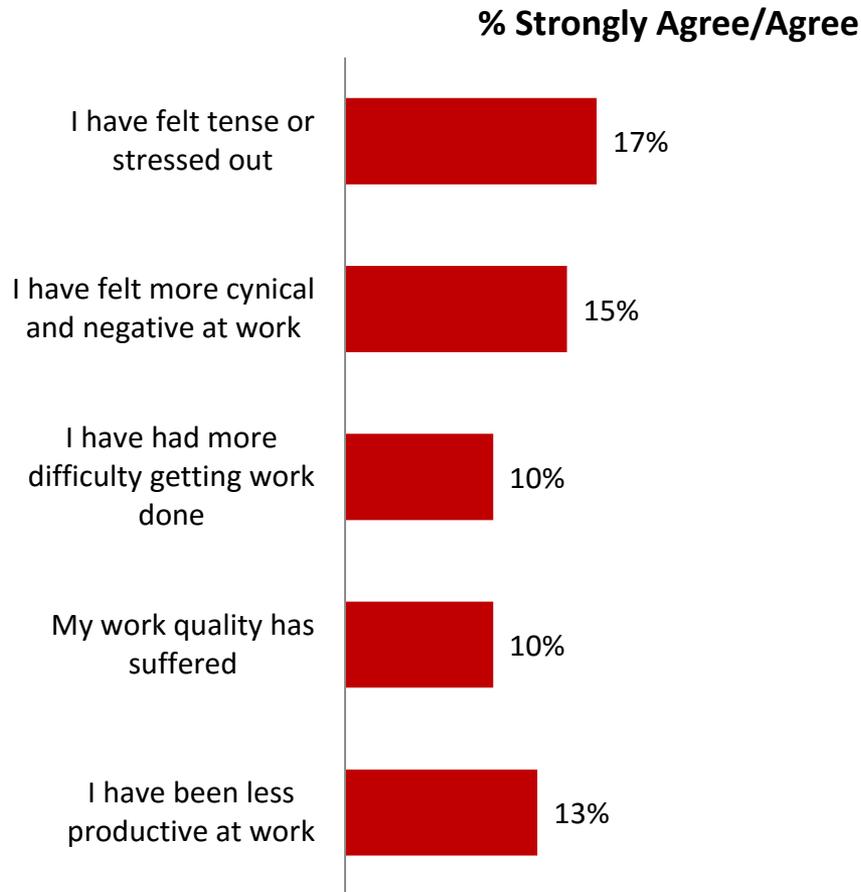
Politics and Work Relationships

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...



Politics, Well-Being and Work Performance

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...



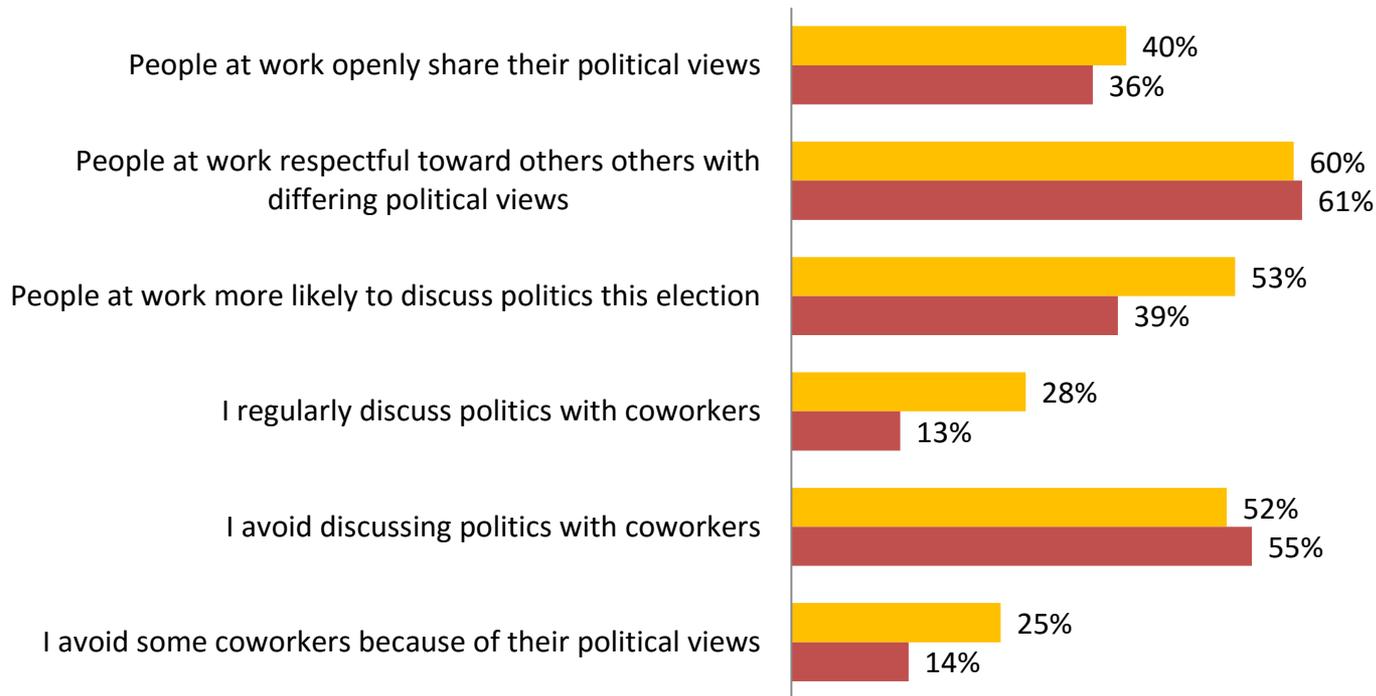
Gender Comparison



Discussing Politics at Work by Gender

% Strongly Agree/Agree

■ Men ■ Women

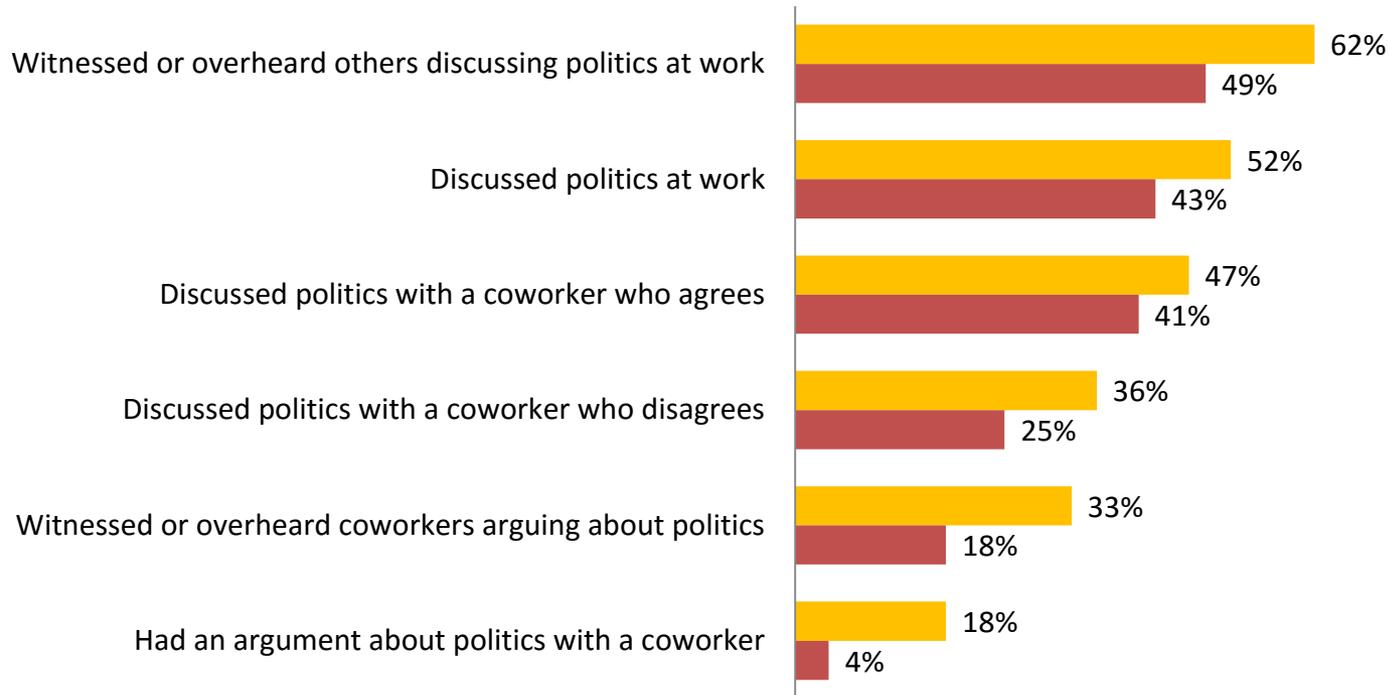


Discussions and Arguments About Politics by Gender

During this U.S. presidential election season, I have...

% Yes

■ Men ■ Women



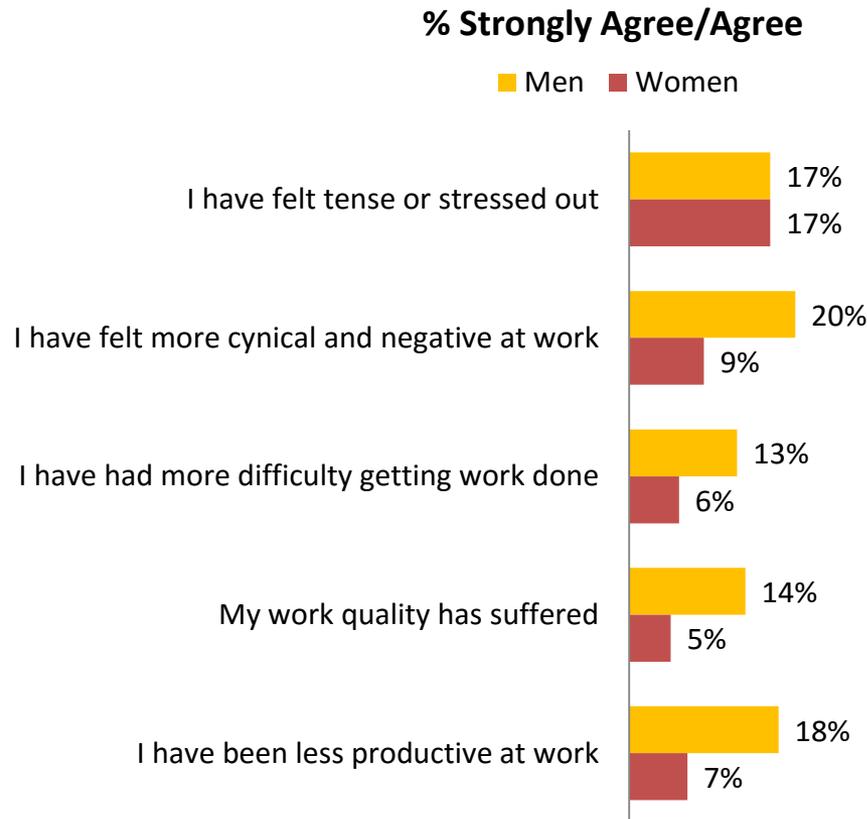
Politics and Work Relationships by Gender

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...



Politics, Well-Being and Work Performance by Gender

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...



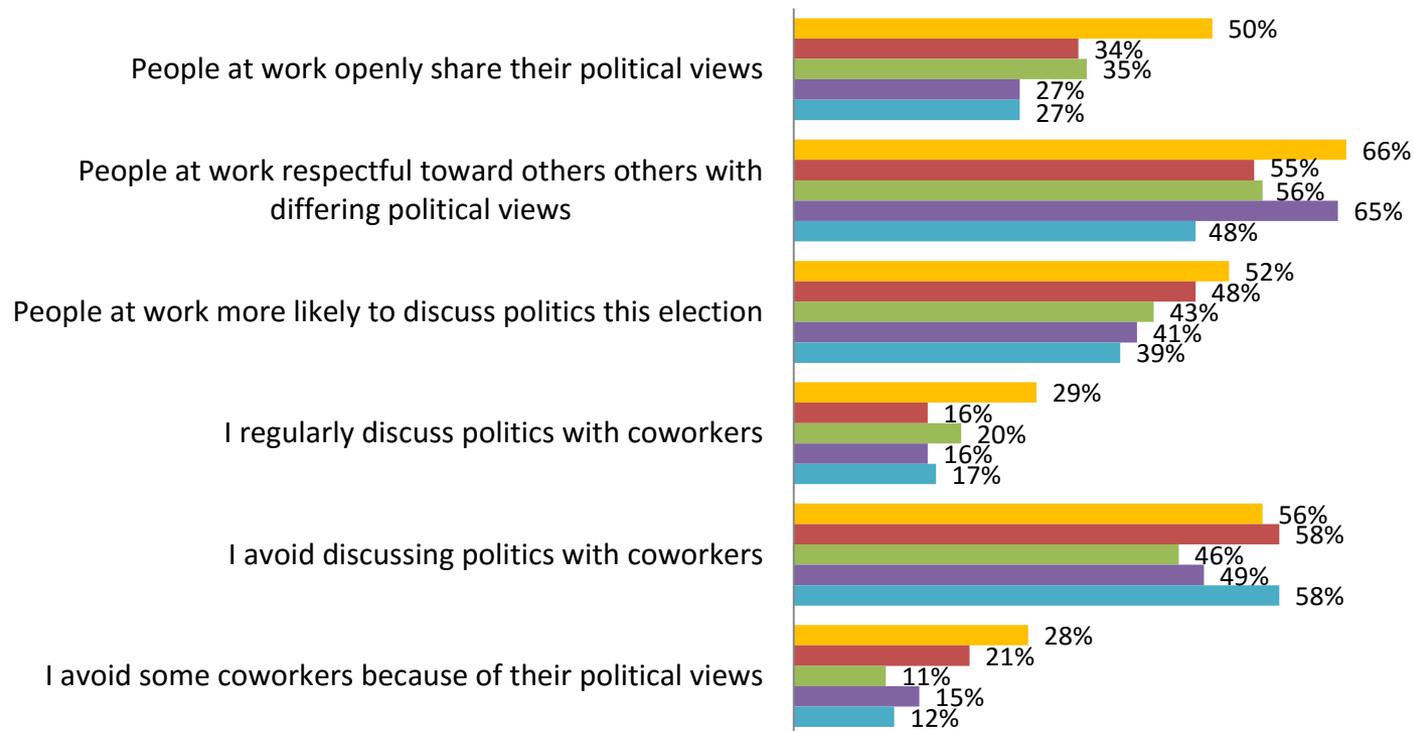
Age Comparison



Discussing Politics at Work by Age

% Strongly Agree/Agree

18-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

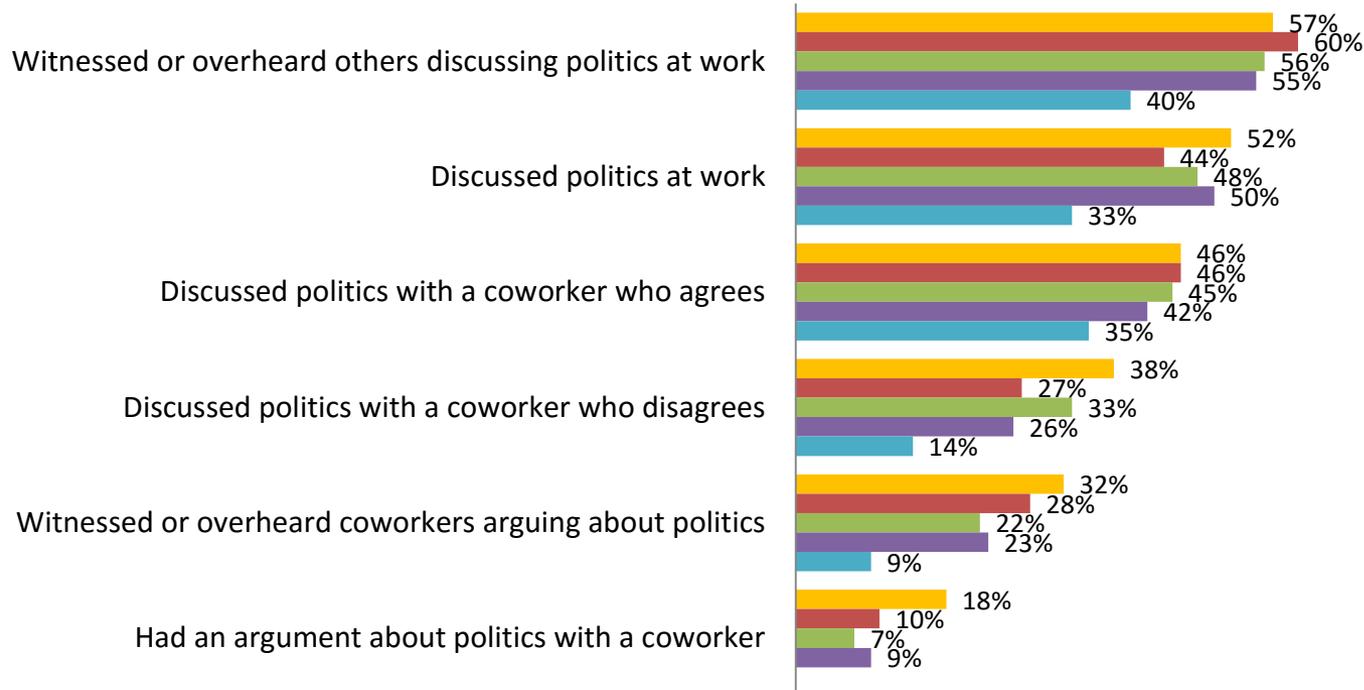


Discussions and Arguments About Politics by Age

During this U.S. presidential election season, I have...

% Yes

18-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

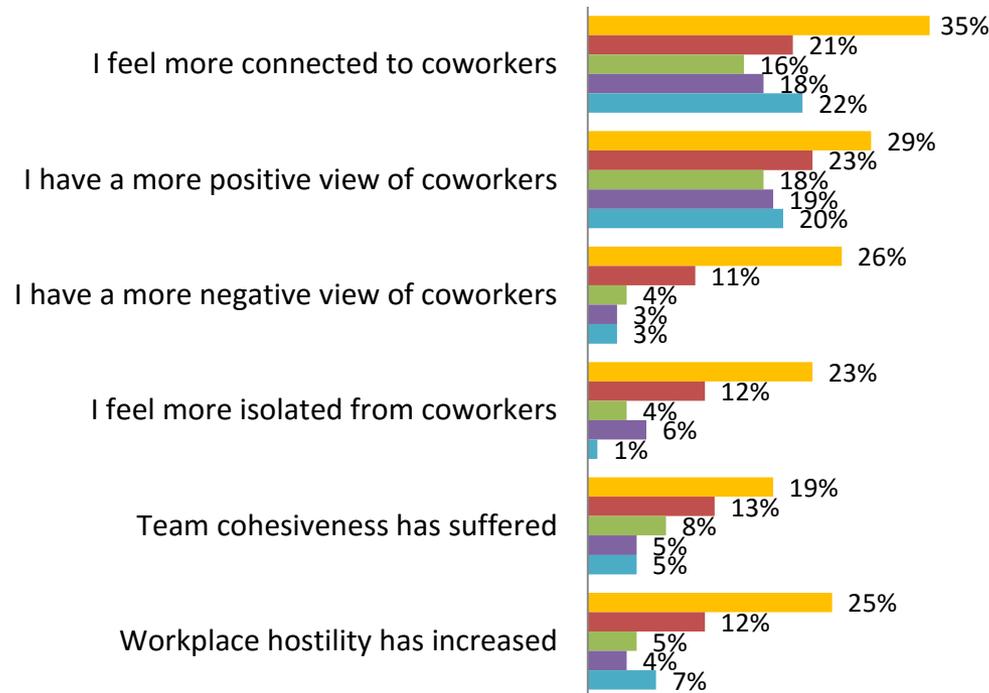


Politics and Work Relationships by Age

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...

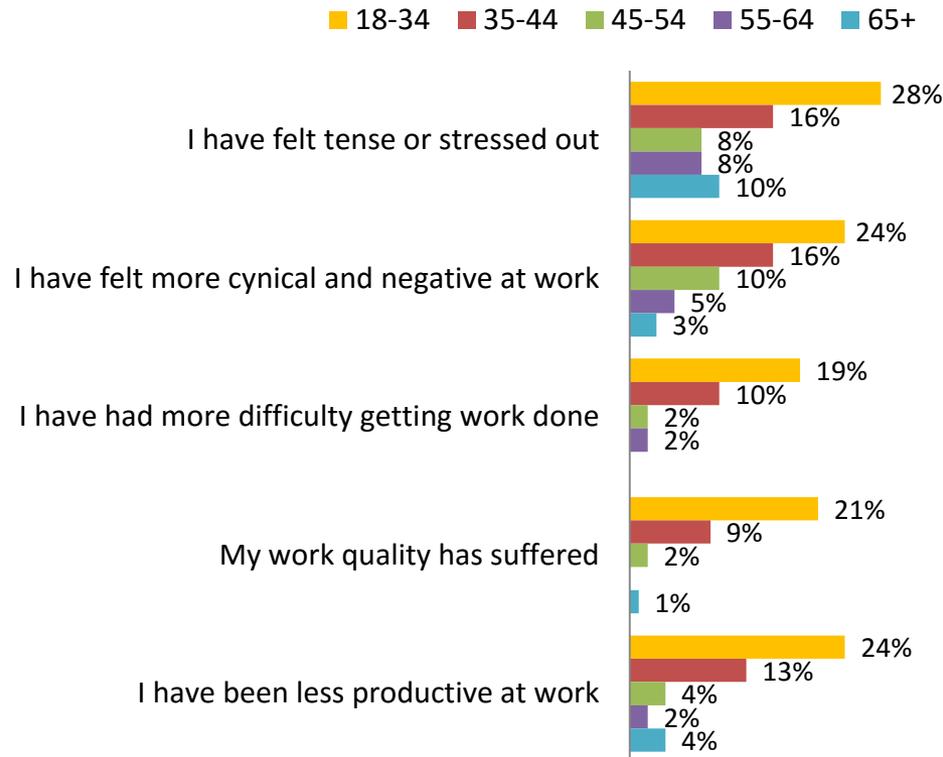
% Strongly Agree/Agree

18-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+



Politics, Well-Being and Work Performance by Age

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...
% Strongly Agree/Agree



Parental Status

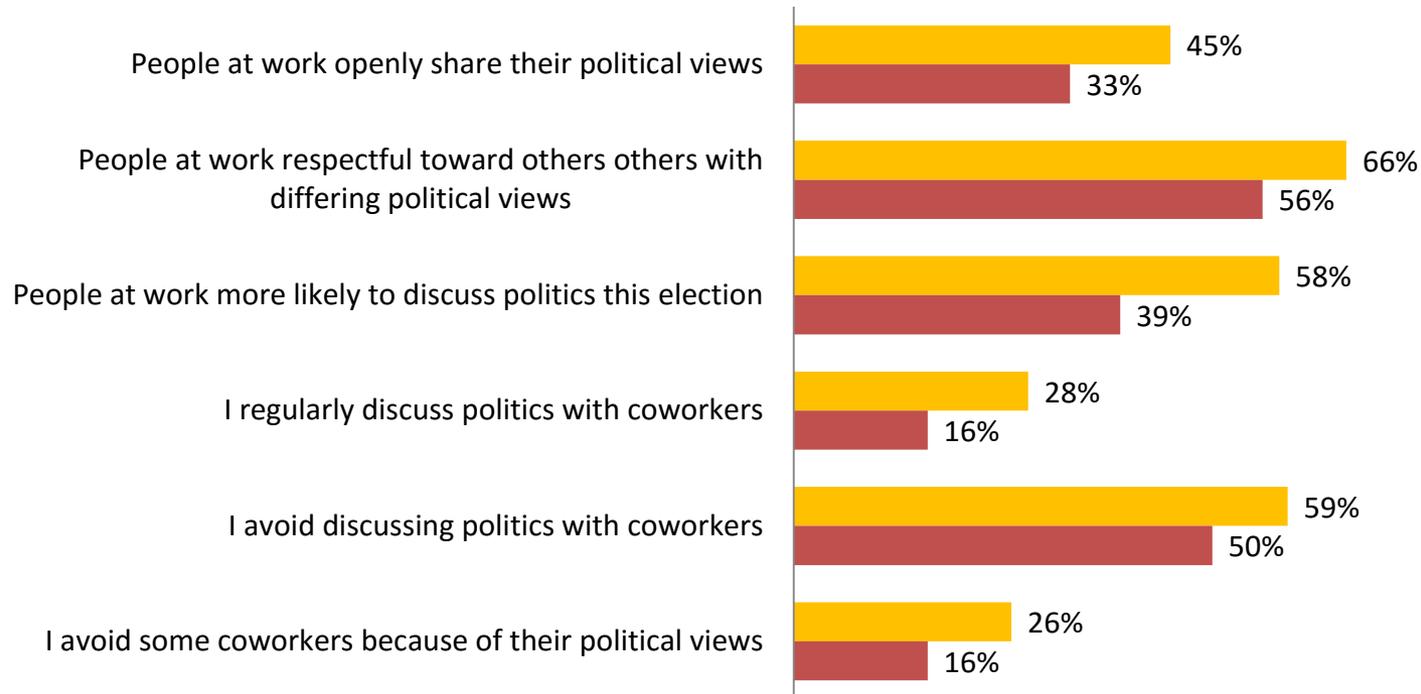


Discussing Politics at Work by Parental Status

% Strongly Agree/Agree

■ Child < 18 in Home

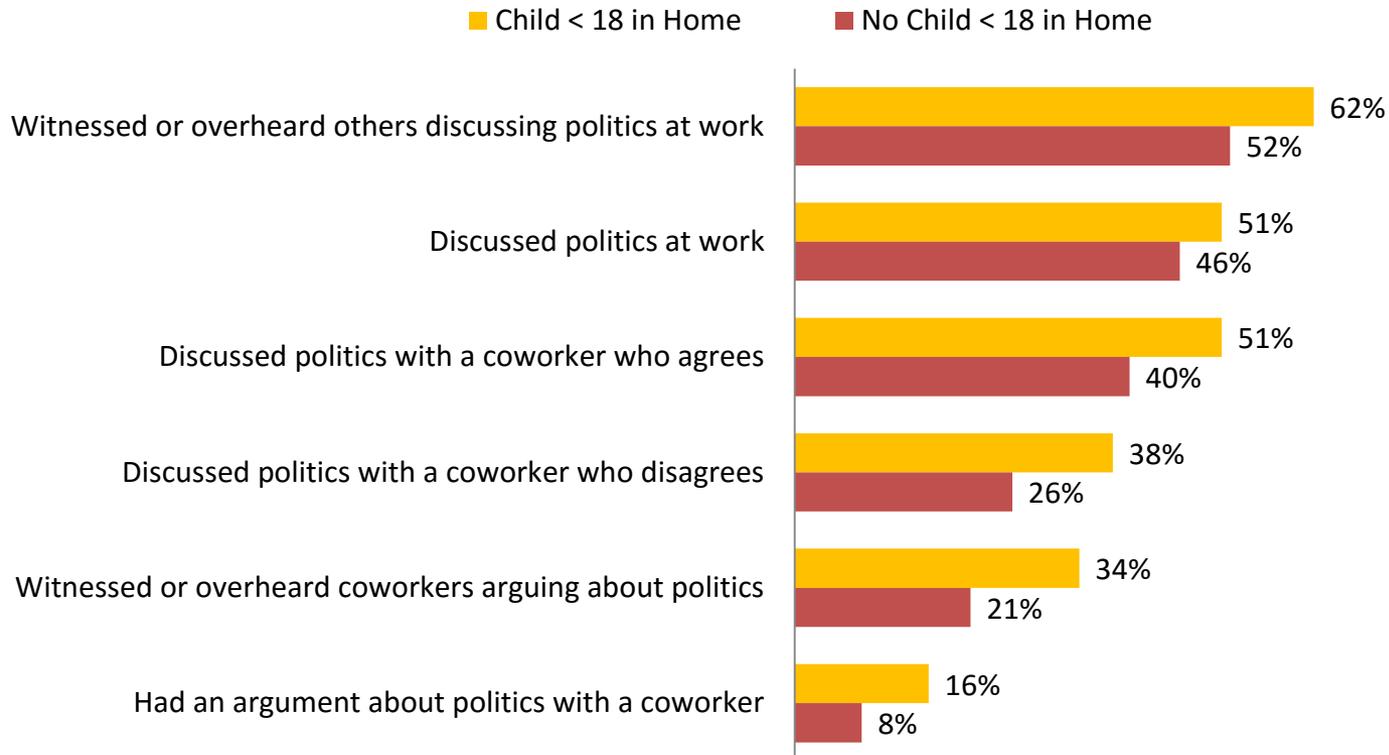
■ No Child < 18 in Home



Discussions and Arguments About Politics by Parental Status

During this U.S. presidential election season, I have...

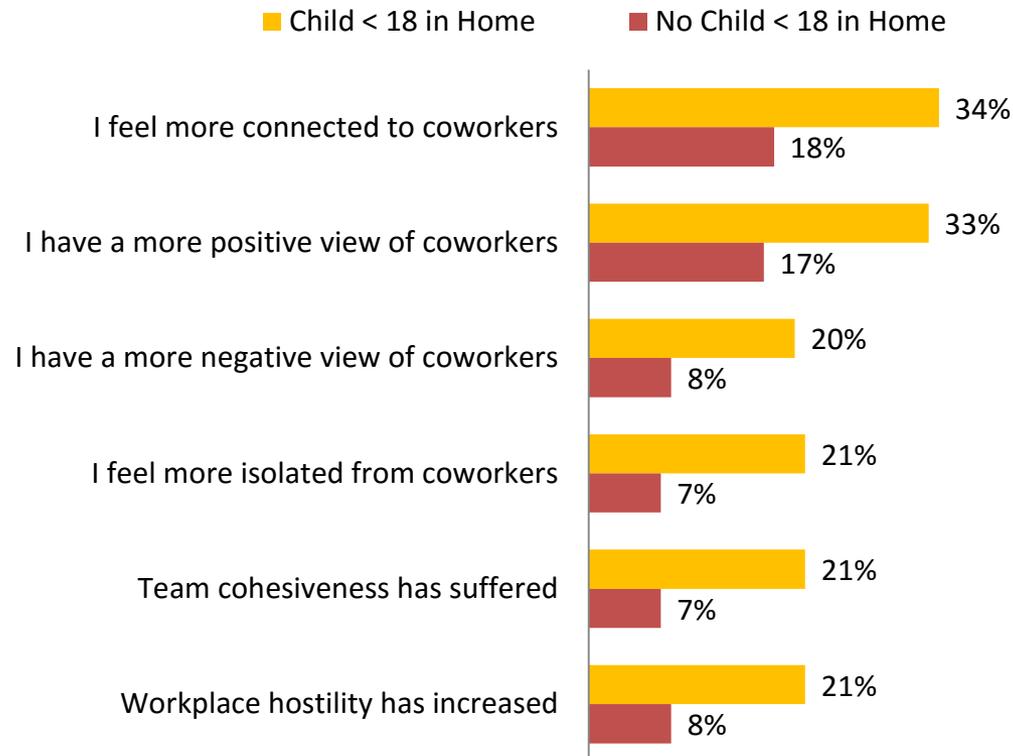
% Yes



Politics and Work Relationships by Parental Status

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...

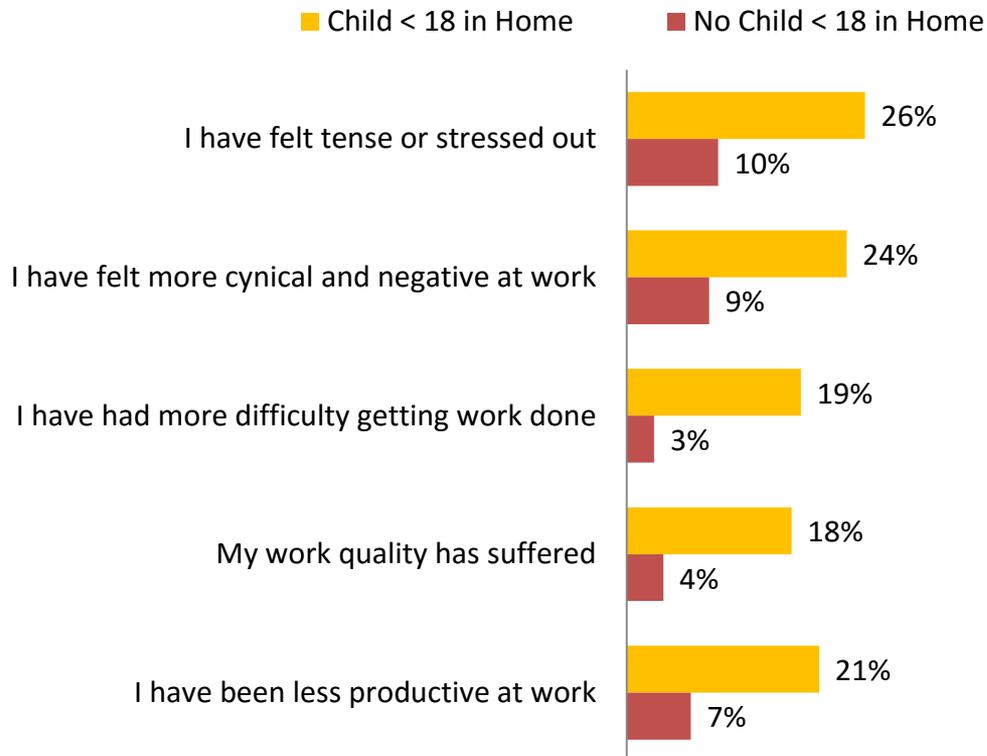
% Strongly Agree/Agree



Politics, Well-Being and Work Performance by Parental Status

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...

% Strongly Agree/Agree



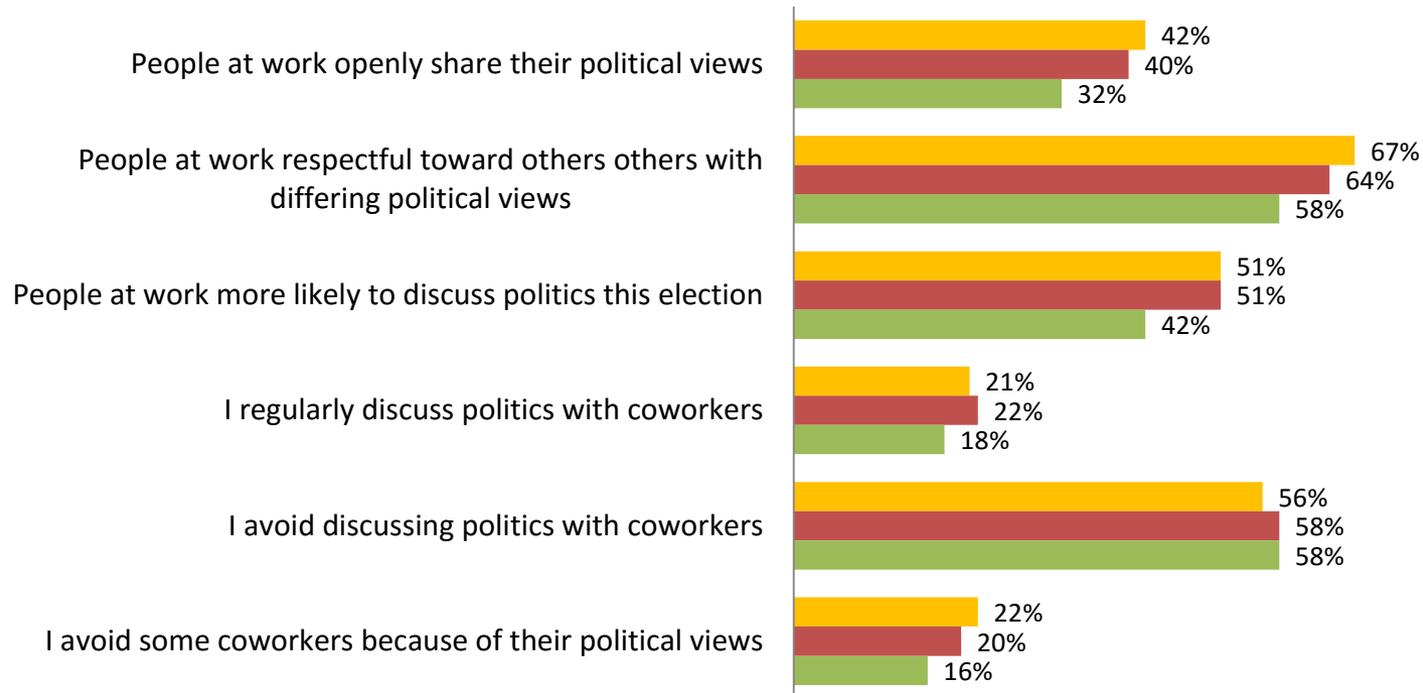
Political Party Comparison



Discussing Politics at Work by Political Party

% Strongly Agree/Agree

Democrat Republican Independent

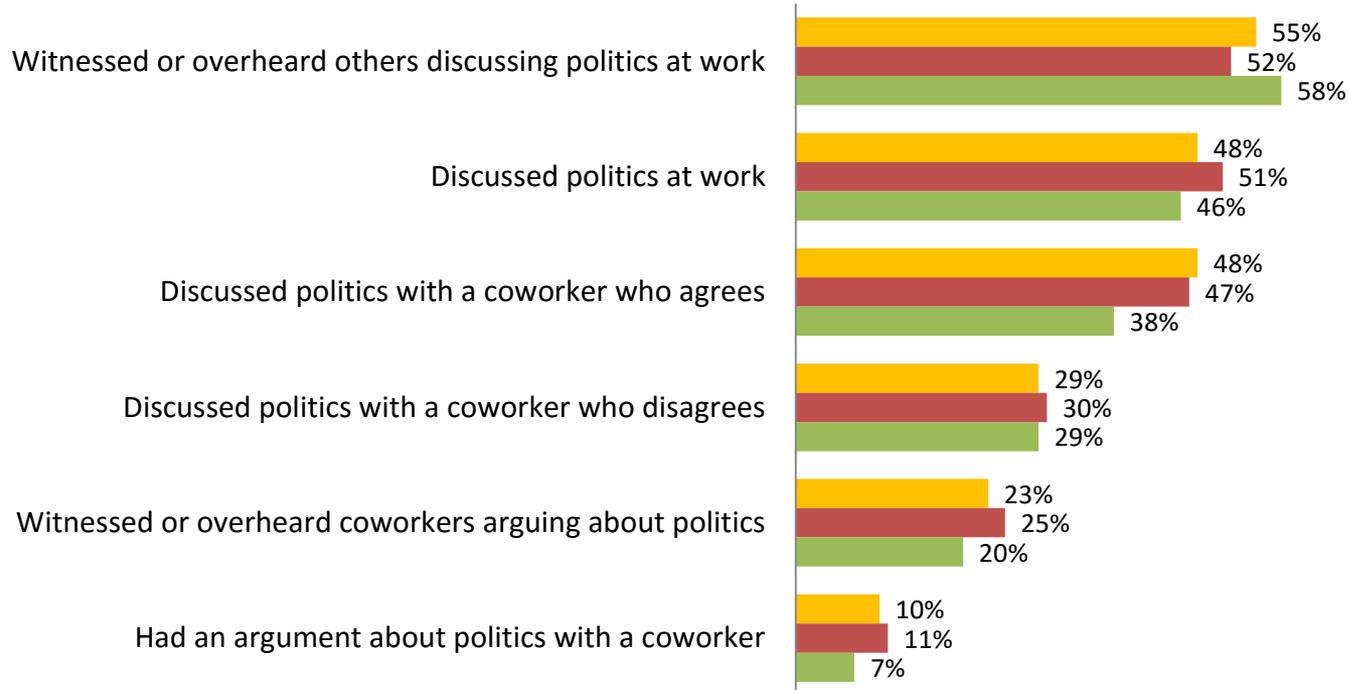


Discussions and Arguments About Politics by Political Party

During this U.S. presidential election season, I have...

% Yes

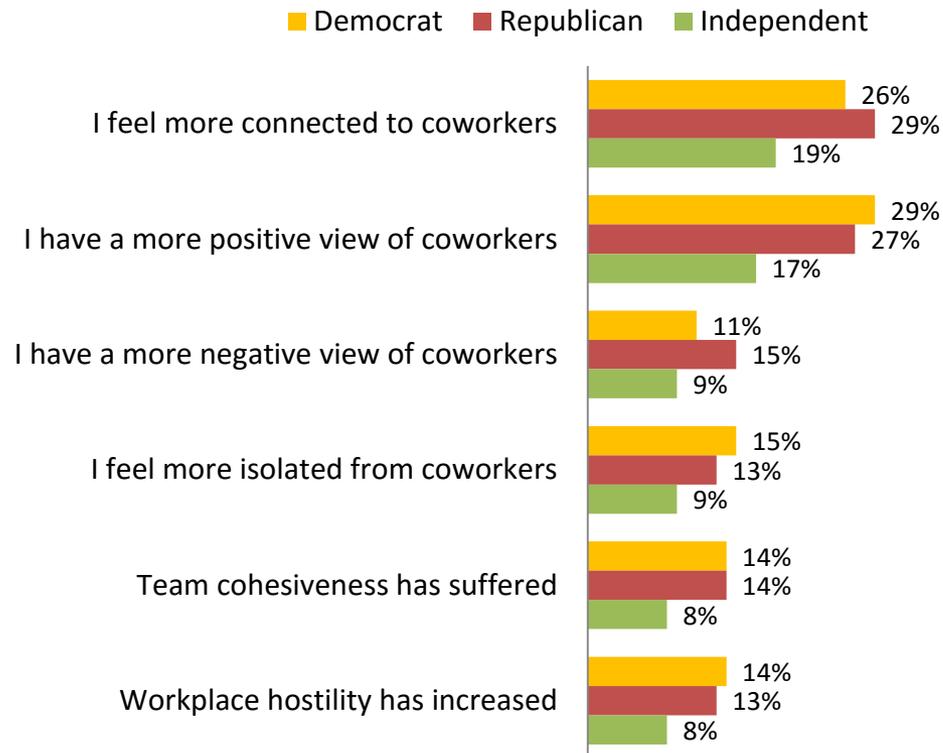
Democrat Republican Independent



Politics and Work Relationships by Political Party

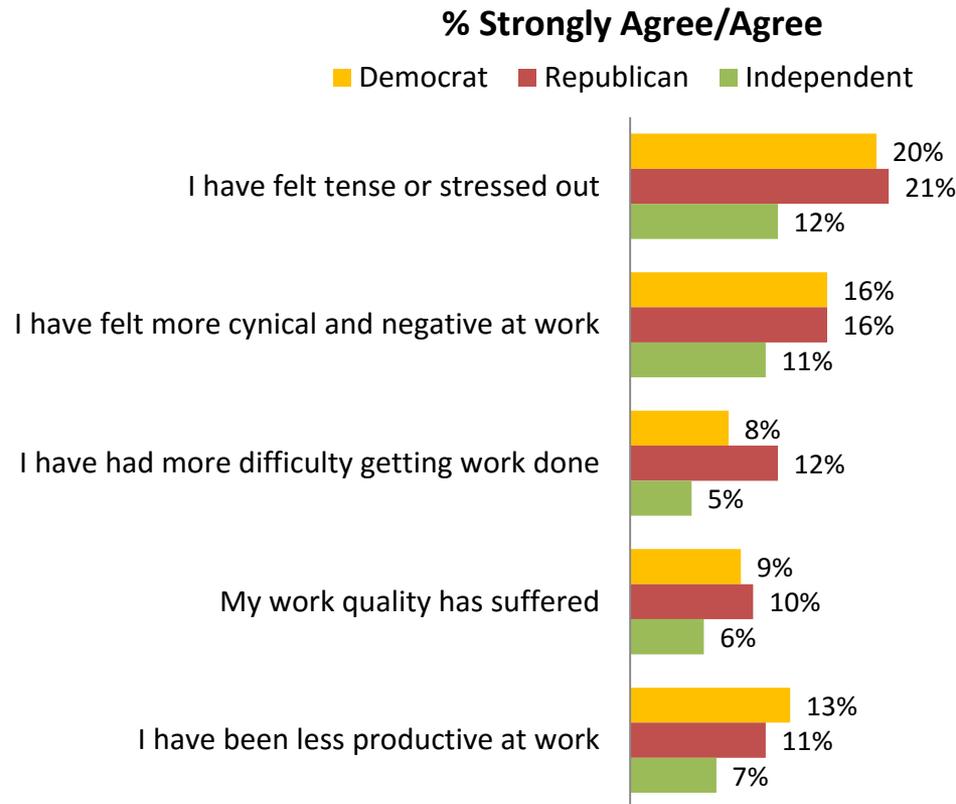
As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...

% Strongly Agree/Agree



Politics, Well-Being and Work Performance by Political Party

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...



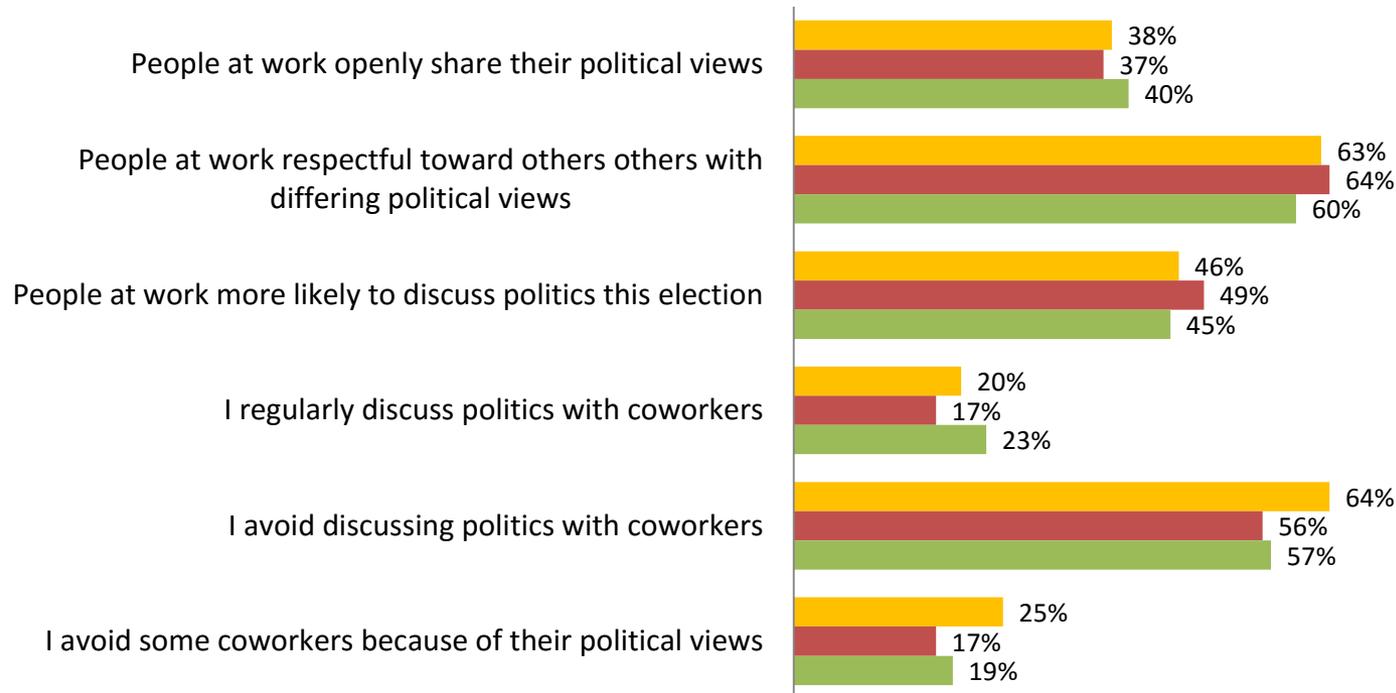
Political Philosophy Comparison



Discussing Politics at Work by Political Philosophy

% Strongly Agree/Agree

■ Liberal ■ Moderate ■ Conservative

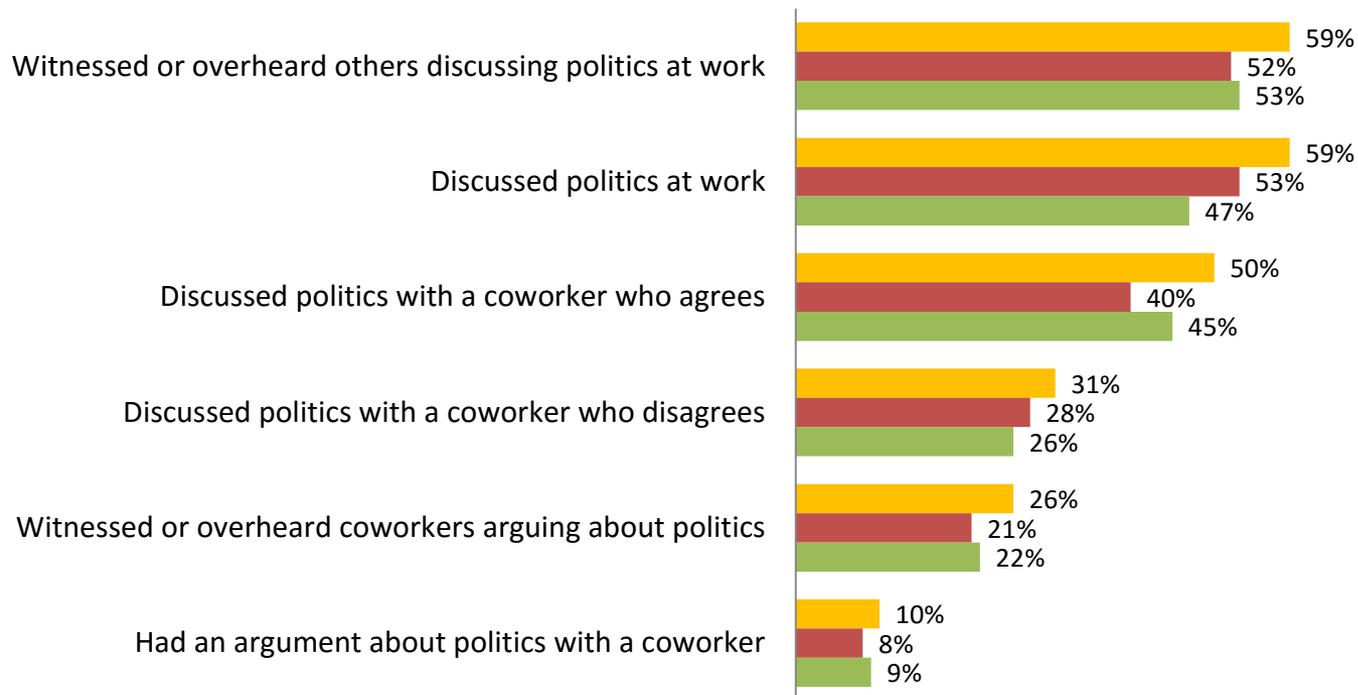


Discussions and Arguments About Politics by Political Philosophy

During this U.S. presidential election season, I have...

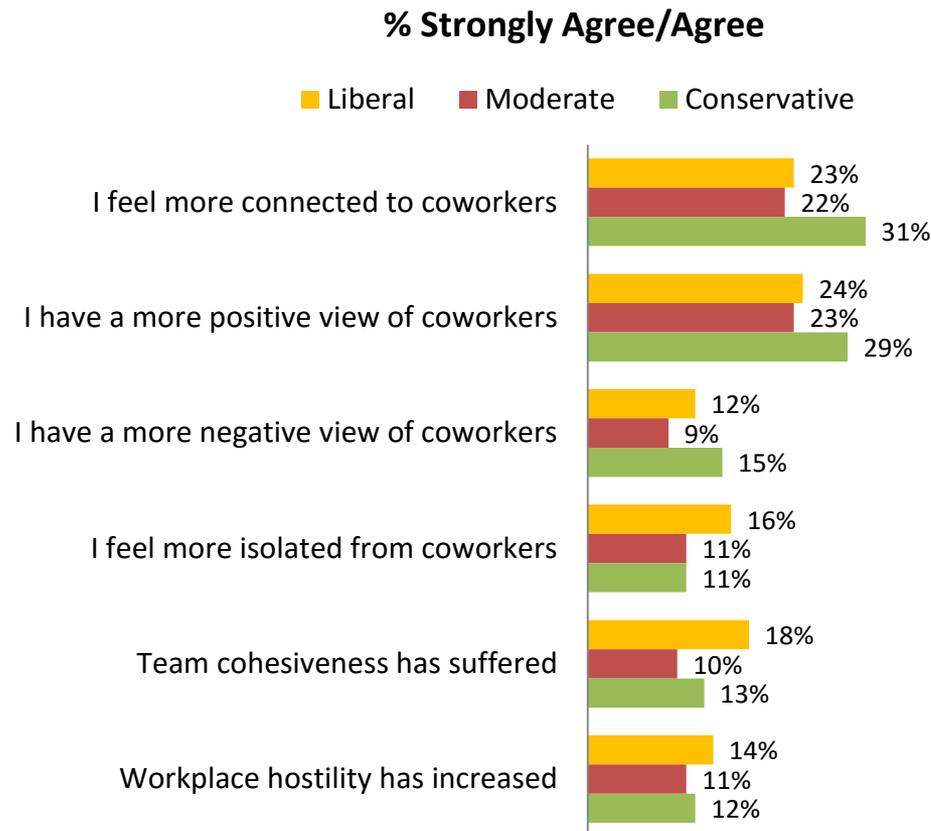
% Yes

■ Liberal ■ Moderate ■ Conservative



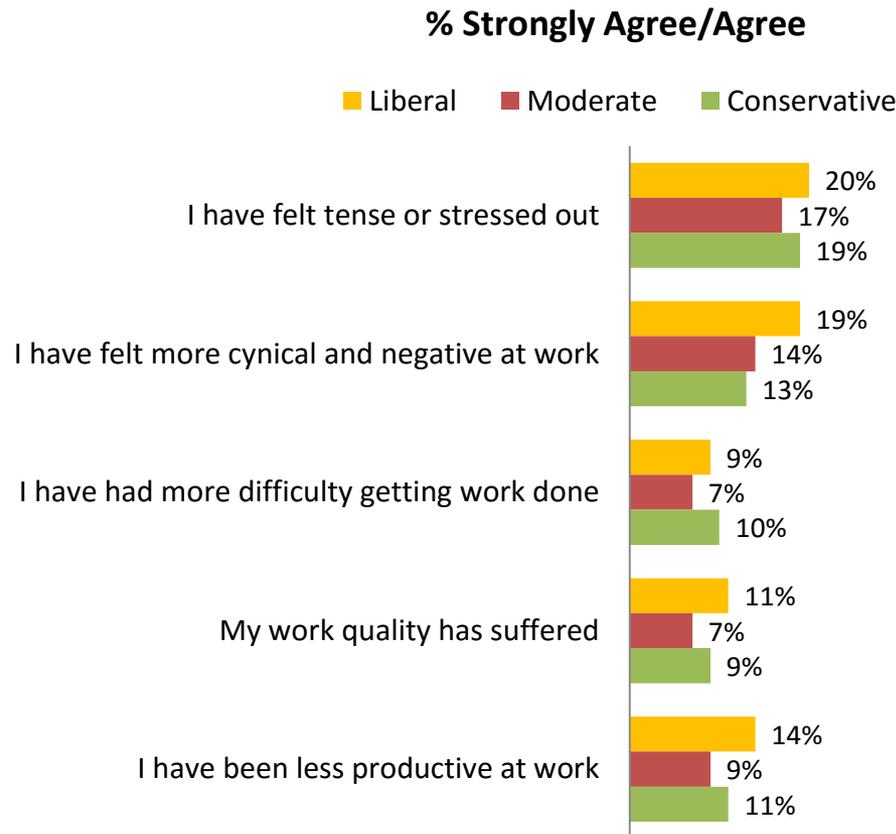
Politics and Work Relationships by Political Philosophy

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...



Politics, Well-Being and Work Performance by Political Philosophy

As a result of political discussions at work during this election season...



Methodology

APA's "Politics in the Workplace: 2016 Election Season" survey was conducted online within the United States on APA's behalf by Harris Poll from Aug. 10-12, 2016, among a nationally representative sample of 927 U.S. adults who are employed full or part time. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Poll avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Poll panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.



About the American Psychological Association and APA's Center for Organizational Excellence

The [American Psychological Association](#), in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes more than 117,500 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.

[APA's Center for Organizational Excellence](#) works to enhance the functioning of individuals, groups, organizations and communities through the application of psychology to a broad range of workplace issues. The center houses the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Program, a public education initiative designed to engage the employer community, raise public awareness about the value psychology brings to the workplace and promote programs and policies that enhance employee well-being and organizational performance. Connect with APA's Center for Organizational Excellence on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

