



THE VETERANS AND
CITIZENS INITIATIVE

Moving Forward Together

Narratives of the Afghanistan War

May 2022

CONTEXT

In October 2021, the Veterans and Citizens Initiative fielded a national survey to assess reactions to the end of the war in Afghanistan. The survey went out to two different population groups: a 2,000-person sample representative of the general American adult population and a 537-person sample representative of the American veteran population ages 18–55. The survey asked respondents a range of questions about their emotional reactions to the end of the war, the social networks they were processing the end of the war with, and their outlook on various ways civil society could help veterans and military families process the end of the war in a healthy manner. We also asked respondents a set of open-ended qualitative questions about their views towards the war in Afghanistan.

On Veterans Day 2021 we published a report, [*After Kabul: Veterans, America, and the End of the War in Afghanistan*](#), that shared a portion of the findings from the survey. That report highlighted the degree to which veterans – especially those who served in Afghanistan – were experiencing a range of intense emotions and a sense of alienation from broader society.

Narratives of the Afghanistan War is the second report in our Afghanistan series. In this report we share new data on narratives of the war, especially narratives of blame. We also share dozens of responses we received to open-ended questions we asked respondents in the survey. These responses elevate the voices of Americans, veteran and non-veteran, and help contextualize the quantitative survey data. We also include data from our first report where it helps identify pathways for generating greater engagement between veterans and the broader society.

Narratives take hold quickly. There are potent narratives of blame, towards the media, senior decision-makers, and the American public in general, that we need to address before they become widely accepted truths. We still have time to break down these narratives of blame and mitigate the extent to which they further divide our society, but the window of time to do this is closing.

THE VETERANS AND CITIZENS INITIATIVE

The Veterans and Citizens Initiative (VCI) launched in 2020 to serve as a connective tissue that elevates civic work being done by veterans and military family organizations and builds connections between such organizations and the broader field of nonpartisan civic renewal efforts. Anchored in More in Common, a nonpartisan research and civic nonprofit, the VCI leads national research and engages with partners to elevate ways for veteran and military family organizations, and civil society groups, to come together around nonpartisan work that strengthens our democracy and builds a stronger shared sense of belonging.

VCI Partners



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

General Population Survey

Results are shown as “U.S. Average”.

More in Common partnered with international polling company YouGov to conduct online survey interviews with n=2,000 Americans from September 29 – October 13, 2021. The data was weighted to be representative of American citizens to a sampling frame built from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS). The data was weighted using propensity scores, with score functions including gender, age, race, education, and region. The weights were then post-stratified on 2020 Presidential vote choice, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (6-category), race (5-category), and education (4-category). The margin of error (adjusted for weighting) is +/- 2.6.

American Military Veteran Survey

Results are shown as “Veterans”.

More in Common also partnered with YouGov to conduct online survey interviews with n=537 American veterans from September 30 – October 13, 2021. The data was weighted to be representative of American veterans between the ages of 18 and 55, using the sample of veterans aged 18-55 from the 2019 American Community Survey as the sampling frame. The data was weighted using propensity scores, with score functions including gender, age, race, and education. The weights were then post-stratified on census region, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-category), race (4-category), and education (4-category). The margin of error for this sample (adjusted for weighting) is +/- 7.2. Within this sample, n=103 veterans identified as having served in Afghanistan. The margin of error for this sub-sample (adjusted for weighting) is +/- 14.2. Results from this subgroup are shown as “Afghanistan Veterans”.

Qualitative Responses and Coding

More in Common fielded three open-ended questions. One question was fielded to both the general population and military veterans samples and two questions were fielded only to veterans. Responses were coded into broad categories and coded individually by researchers based on content. Qualitative visuals show total frequencies of individual responses coded into the given category. Some categories containing a small number of responses were removed from visuals and full response categories are available in the presentation’s appendix.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Main Story: How Americans Feel about the Afghanistan War

When asked about the war in Afghanistan, Americans, including veterans, are split between saying the war was a failure and that it had both successes and failures. Overall, most Americans feel that the war was a waste of resources and lives.

Many Americans felt the war lasted too long, with some mentioning that it should have never happened in the first place. Some veterans believe that the war was initially a necessary response to the 9/11 attacks but then drifted in scope. The Biden Administration is a target of blame for many for what they viewed as a disastrous withdrawal.

2. Thoughts on Sacrifice and Service

A majority of veterans (55 percent) believe that the **sacrifices** of those who fought in Afghanistan only mattered to *some or few* Americans.

Further, in qualitative responses, many veterans felt that the **service** of those who fought in Afghanistan did *not* matter to most Americans, with some viewing Americans' expression of gratitude as mere lip service. Veterans cited many reasons for why they think Americans did not value the service of those who fought in Afghanistan, including the lack of connections between most Americans and the military, Americans' perceived lack of knowledge about Afghanistan, and negative personal interactions.

3. Processing the End of the War

Both Americans in general (57 percent) and veterans (70 percent) feel that America did not leave Afghanistan with honor. Both groups also said the withdrawal was poorly executed, though veterans express more intense emotions around the withdrawal.

Veterans report much higher levels of feeling emotions such as betrayal and humiliation with respect to the end of the war in Afghanistan. This is particularly true for veterans who served in Afghanistan.

Both Americans in general (66 percent) and veterans (71 percent) feel that veterans will have a hard time processing the end of the war.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4. Narratives of Blame about the War

Both Americans in general (60 percent) and veterans (71 percent) feel like America’s senior political and military leadership misled the public about how things were going with the war in Afghanistan. A slight majority of veterans (52 percent), but not Americans in general (41 percent), feel that America could have won the war in Afghanistan if the military had been allowed to fight the war the way it wanted to. Finally, veterans also attribute blame to the media, with 55 percent *disagreeing* with the statement “the American media kept public attention focused on the war in Afghanistan”.

5. The Final Chapters: Resettling Afghan Allies

Veterans — and Americans in general — feel America has an obligation to help resettle our Afghan allies in this country.

Close to two-thirds of veterans and over half of Americans in general say that America has an obligation to allow Afghan allies to resettle in the United States. This sentiment holds across ideological lines.

6. The Final Chapters: Veterans and Citizens

Veterans (59 percent) are much more likely to say they “sometimes feel like a stranger in my own country” relative to Americans in general (41 percent). Seven in 10 veterans also feel like “most Americans stopped caring about the war in Afghanistan a long time ago”.

Veterans and Americans in general say it is important to create more opportunities to come together to build stronger ties, share stories, and work on community projects.

Most Americans do not have strong social linkages with veteran communities. Yet both veterans and Americans in general feel more should be done to foster connections. Many veterans and Americans in general agree on specific actions businesses and civil society can take to create a more robust relationship between veterans and non-veterans.

The Main Story: How Americans Feel about the Afghanistan War

Section 1

Both Americans in general and veterans are split between thinking the Afghanistan war was a *failure* and that it had a *mixed bag of successes and failures*.

Which of the following statements best reflects your assessment of America’s success or failure with the war in Afghanistan? *“The war was a complete failure.”* *“The war had both successes and failures.”* *“The war was a complete success.”*

■ The war was a complete failure ■ The war had both successes and failures ■ The war was a complete success



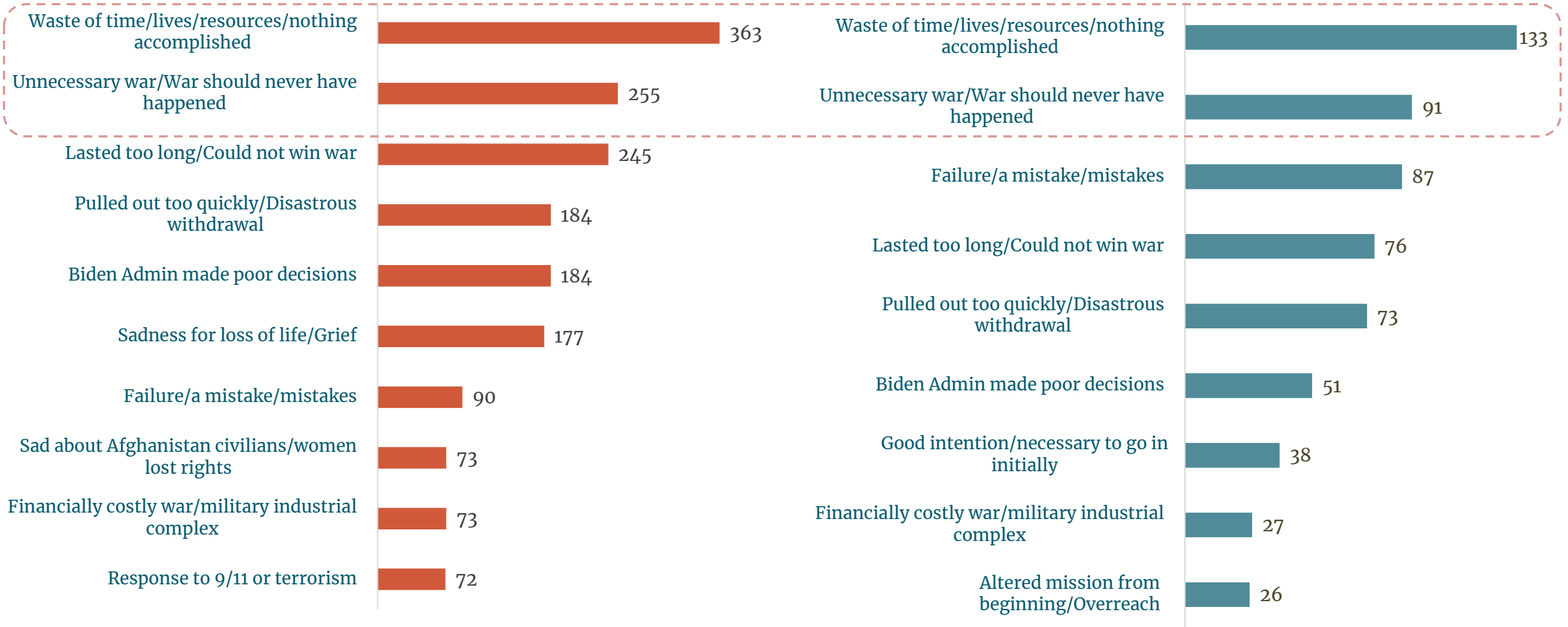
In their qualitative responses, many Americans, including veterans, said that they felt the war in Afghanistan was a waste of resources and human lives.

Many thought that the war was unnecessary or that the US stayed too long beyond its initial involvement.

In two to three sentences, what comes to mind when you think of the war in Afghanistan?

U.S. Average (n=1904)

Veterans (n=529)



Note: Results for the top frequently mentioned response categories are shown here.

Many Americans believed that the war was a waste of resources with few, if any, accomplishments. Some veterans believed the US involvement only benefited the military-industrial complex.

■ U.S. Average

■ Veterans

Waste of resources

“I think the war in Afghanistan was a lost cause – we stayed way too long and accomplished too little. We hurt innocent civilians, and we didn't actually stabilize the Afghan government or the Afghan military. While I'm sure we helped a little, our overall impact was not good enough to merit staying for as long as we did.”

“Waste of national resources, tax money and lives for nothing. A meaningless war that we vets died and injured carrying scars as reminders till we die or commit suicide. Corporate war at the expense of human lives and the debt saddling our nation now to we won't budge on funding social service programs much needed for poor broken vets like myself and all the poor broken people in our own country going by the wayside.”

Military-industrial complex

“It's been a waste of money to feed corporate interests. We weren't there to ‘bring democracy’, merely to give more of the budget to the military-industrial complex.”

“A colossal waste of time, resources, and lives. The U.S. government buckled to pressure from neocon/military-industrial complex to remain indefinitely without installing an actual Army of occupation, allowed the Taliban to regain control, and was too embarrassed to admit defeat for the entirety of the Obama and Trump administrations.”

Survey question: In two to three sentences, what comes to mind when you think of the war in Afghanistan?

A significant number of Americans said that the US should never have started the war. A few believed that the war's pretext was based on lies espoused by politicians.

■ U.S. Average

■ Veterans

Unnecessary war

“It was a waste of a lot of taxpayers' money which could have been used for improving the lives of people living in the United States. Nothing was accomplished with the Afghanistan war. We should have never gotten involved.”

“Though I support the servicemen and women who served in Afghanistan, I strongly oppose the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. So many of our fellow Americans lost their lives and/or are permanently scarred from their service in Afghanistan for someone's political gain. We are not the world's police and should stay focused on domestic matters first.”

Politicians' tools and lies

“An utter and complete disaster that should have never been started as the WMD were based on lies.”

Survey question: In two to three sentences, what comes to mind when you think of the war in Afghanistan?

Many felt that the war lasted too long. Some felt that US involvement in the war was initially necessary and well-intentioned, but that the shifts in goals made the war unwinnable.

■ U.S. Average

■ Veterans

Stayed too long in Afghanistan

“The war in Afghanistan should not have lasted 20 years. It turned from stopping terrorists to nation building. We should have left a long time ago.”

“A poor decision poorly executed and dragged on for years after we should have cut our losses and left. A waste of American lives and money.”

Good intention with changed mission/scope drift

“It had to be done to fight terrorism. But trying to turn the country into a democracy was, if not hopeless, at least extremely difficult. There were no easy answers about what to do after conquering the country.”

“A completely altered policy from the original mission of capturing or killing Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, to nation-building, which was a grave mistake in policy.”

“It started out with good intentions, but we got mission creep. We weren’t making sustainable changes but leaving hurt all the people we said we were there to help.”

Survey question: In two to three sentences, what comes to mind when you think of the war in Afghanistan?

Some Americans were frustrated with the withdrawal and the decisions that the Biden administration made. A few expressed sadness for Afghan citizens who lost their rights under the Taliban regime.

■ U.S. Average

■ Veterans

Upset with the withdrawal

“We did make progress, establish more secure, stable, friendly infrastructure and governance. But the way we pulled out made it all meaningless and ultimately WORSE because now terrorists have SO much of our equipment – wasteful and dangerous.”

Anger towards the Biden administration

“Biden disgraced us and made us untrustworthy. He should have left troops in Afghanistan. Now woman have no rights, Americans are left behind. Terrorism will rise and we will be back there with thousands of lives lost because we lost ground. Biden and his Administration should be held accountable and jailed.”

Sadness for Afghan citizens

“I feel so sad for the oppressed peoples there. I feel deep sadness that for all the time spent there, we were unable to really help the country be livable for its people.”

Survey question: In two to three sentences, what comes to mind when you think of the war in Afghanistan?

Many veterans, regardless of their levels of support for the war, were deeply frustrated and angry with the withdrawal and the decisions that the Biden administration made. Some felt a strong sense of betrayal and loss.

■ U.S. Average

■ Veterans

Upset with the withdrawal

“A terrific job performed by admirable men and women, thrown away by an incompetent administration.”

“We did make progress, establish more secure, stable, friendly infrastructure and governance. But the way we pulled out made it all meaningless and ultimately WORSE because now terrorists have SO much of our equipment – wasteful and dangerous.”

Disappointment and Feeling of Betrayal

“Deep disappointment and a sense of personal betrayal. I feel like literally every bad decision that could be made was made – mission creep from the beginning and through four administrations, and then a catastrophic withdrawal that left thousands of Americans and Afghans who relied on and whom we had promised to help in the lurch. We left military equipment and sensitive databases and technology behind in the hands of the Taliban. And our own government took all the promises that people wearing my uniform made in good faith and made us liars. Who will trust us in the future? How will our friends trust our word? Why would our enemies fear us?”

Survey question: In two to three sentences, what comes to mind when you think of the war in Afghanistan?

Thoughts on Sacrifice and Service

Section 2

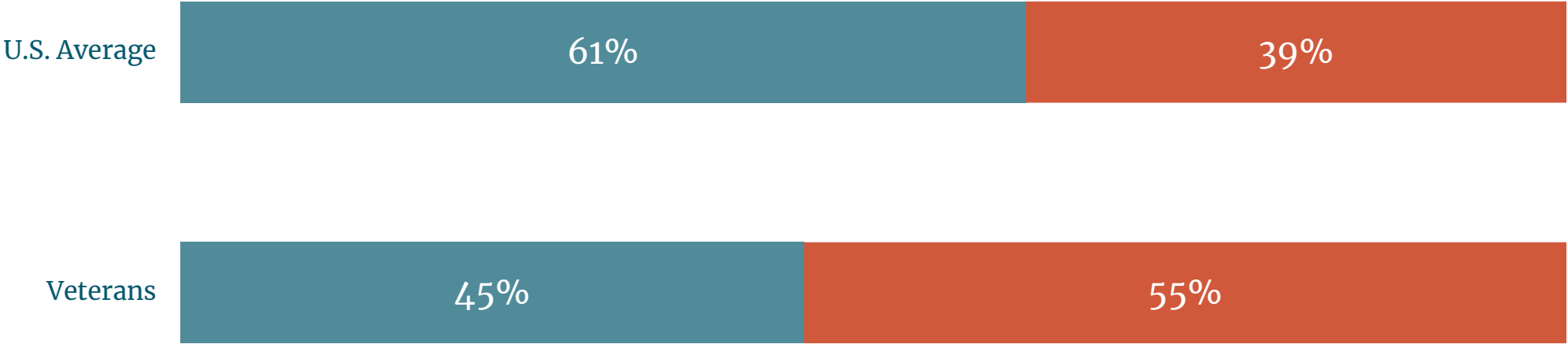
55%

of veterans say the sacrifices of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered **only to *some or few*** Americans, while the majority of Americans (61%) say that the sacrifices of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to ***most or all*** Americans.

Similarly, in qualitative responses, many veterans said that the service of those who fought in Afghanistan **did not matter** to most Americans.

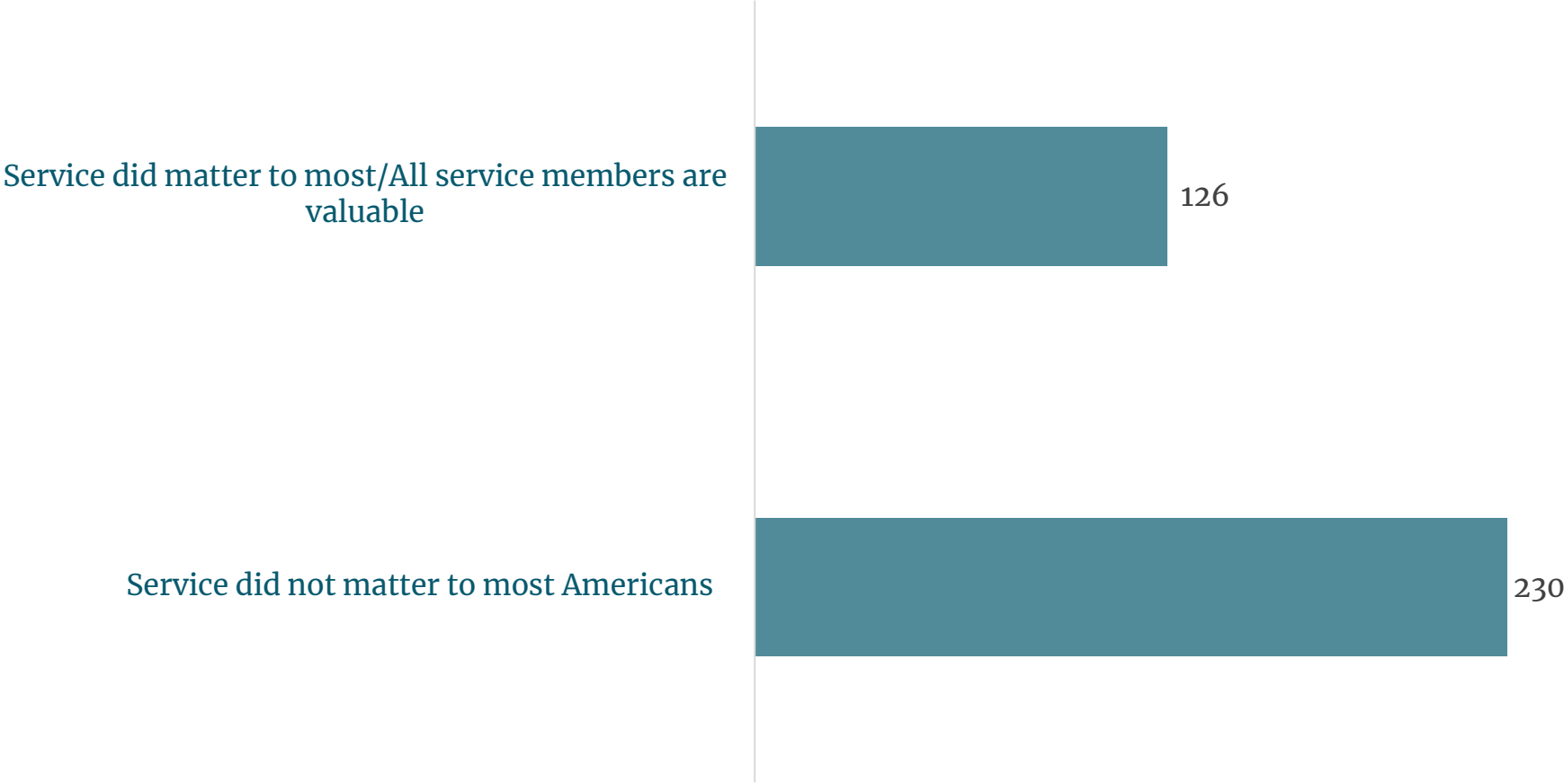
Please complete the following phrase: The sacrifices of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to...?

■ All or most Americans ■ Some or few Americans



Do you feel like the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans? Why or why not? Please write two to three sentences.

Veterans (n=511)



Note: Results for the top frequently mentioned response categories are shown here.

Do you feel like the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans? Why or why not? Please write two to three sentences.

Veterans (n=511)



Note: Results for the top frequently mentioned response categories are shown here.

Many veterans believed the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan *did not matter* to most Americans and cited a variety of reasons:

■ Veterans

Most Americans have little connection or contact with the military and veterans

“No, because most Americans do not know someone in the military, have been in the military, or be able to relate to military people.”

Most Americans are not aware of or familiar with the war in Afghanistan

“America is not at war, America is at the mall, the Marine Corps is at war. Most Americans couldn't find Afghanistan on a map.”

Civilians are unable to understand wars and what soldiers and veterans go through

“No military person matters to most non-military people. They don't understand what soldiers give up for their freedom then they take it for granted.”

Survey question: Do you feel like the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans? Why or why not?

Many veterans believed the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan *did not matter* to most Americans and cited a variety of reasons (cont.):

■ Veterans

Media coverage on the war is not sufficient; coverage is biased against US soldiers and veterans

“Our media is completely geared toward boosting advertising revenue, not keeping people informed about war. War makes most Americans uncomfortable, as they realize some degree of their comfort is based on our global dominance.”

“The mainstream media's smear campaign against veterans has only fueled more apathy and negativity in the public psyche.”

Most Americans don't care about the military and the wars it participated in

“Unfortunately, most Americans only care about themselves. They'd rather watch a Netflix show.”

“My service did not matter to most Americans. The lives of my friends who died in Afghanistan did not matter to most Americans. Americans have notoriously short attention spans when it comes to wars.”

Negative personal experiences with civilians

“When I came back, no one seemed particularly proud of my service. One woman said, ‘there was nothing a soldier could do to redeem themselves.’ She told me that 15 years ago, and it still stings.”

“Non-veterans do not like veterans. It is hard for us to get jobs because employers are intimidated by us, and they give us a very hard time if they ever do employ us.”

Survey question: Do you feel like the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans? Why or why not?

Some veterans expressed a strong sense of cynicism and betrayal: they believed that many Americans only pay lip service when expressing gratitude and do not care about veterans' experiences and wellbeing.

■ Veterans

Lip service and disingenuous appreciation

“For the most part, any American who says ‘thank you for your service’ and is servile to servicemembers prefers them to be dead heroes, rather than live humans with difficult, messy, screwy lives.”

“I think most Americans have no concept of what Service Members go through and how the policies and politicians they support directly affect what Service Members experience. I think people say, ‘thank you for your service’ to distance and absolve themselves from what we go through on their behalf.”

“It mattered to the extent that their trite ‘thank you for your service’ uttered every time they encountered someone in uniform made them feel better about themselves without having to consider how it made the one in uniform feel. Meanwhile, the VA is still underfunded, Veterans continue to commit suicide at a rate that should shock most Americans out of their comfort zone but doesn’t.”

Survey question: Do you feel like the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans? Why or why not?

To some veterans, a person's party affiliation signals their support and appreciation for the service of soldiers who fought in Afghanistan.

■ Veterans

Some believed that the service of veterans did not matter to liberals or Democrats, because of their stance on the war or perceived negative attitudes toward soldiers or the country.

A few believed that expressions of gratitude by conservatives or Republicans are performative.

"I live in a blue state where most people did not support the war period, so of course they don't support us. There are a lot of people who sympathize with Islamic extremists like the Taliban."

"To Democrats, their service did not matter. Democrats hate this country."

"No, all these damn Republicans just tie a stupid yellow ribbon on their tree, porch post, or vehicle while voting only to fund war while neglecting the VA who takes care of returning veterans."

"I'd say from the moderate and conservatives there has been true empathy and love. Understanding even. It's difficult to care for a left wing who views you as monsters, when they were the ones who voted us out there."

"Service members have been fetishized by conservatives, but very few people would be able to actually tell you what the military was doing there. Performative patriotism is meaningless."

Survey question: Do you feel like the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans? Why or why not?

Nevertheless, a significant number of veterans believe that the service of those who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans and cited a variety of reasons.

■ Veterans

The sacrifices mattered to most Americans, even if they did not understand the full story

“Yes, it definitely matters overall, but many don't understand the whole story.”

Personal experience of positive interaction with civilians

“I think our service did matter. Most Americans were very appreciative towards me when I got back, even if they were misguided or didn't have a good understanding of what that war was about.”

Survey question: Do you feel like the service of Americans who fought in Afghanistan mattered to most Americans? Why or why not?

Processing the End of the War

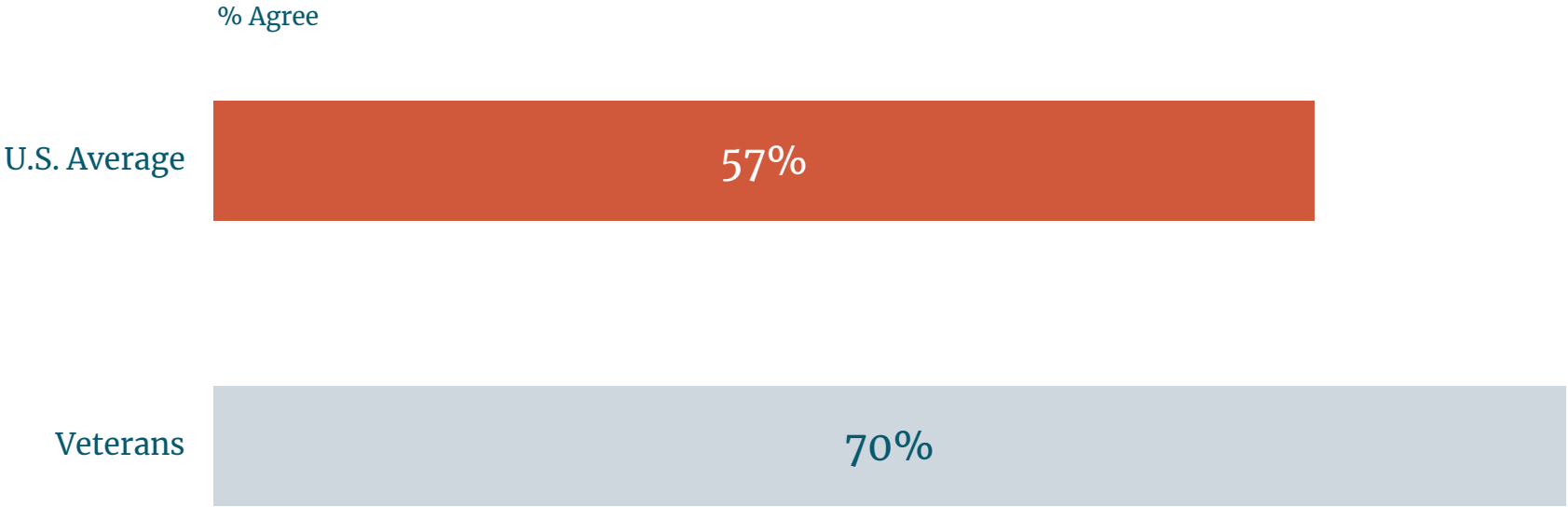
Section 3

57% of Americans in general

70% of veterans

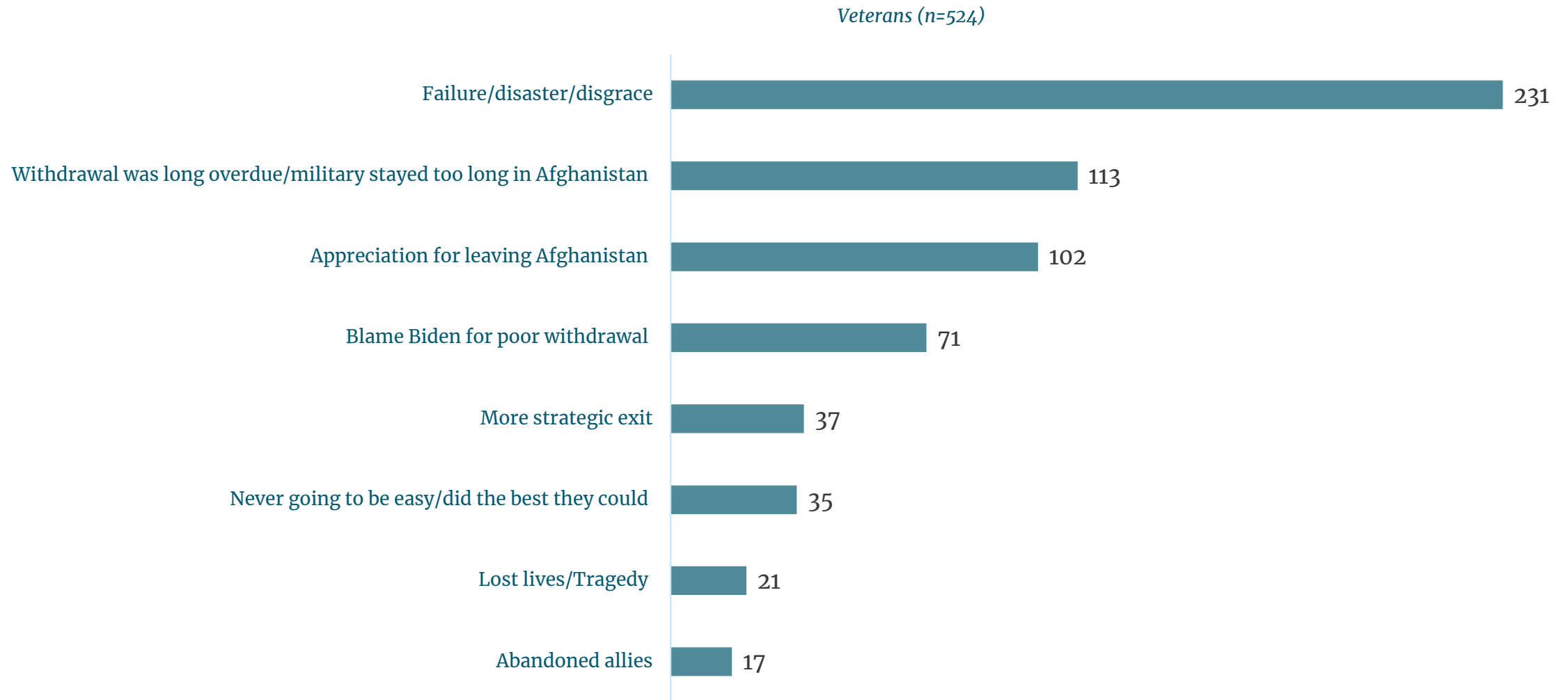
feel that America did not leave Afghanistan with honor.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“America did not leave Afghanistan with honor.”



Regarding the end of the war, intense disappointment and anger were the most prevalent emotions expressed by veterans. Many felt the way the war ended was a personal betrayal and catastrophic failure. A small segment expressed appreciation that the war was finally over and felt the military did the best it could in the situation.

In your own words, how do you feel about the end of the war in Afghanistan?



Note: Results for the top frequently mentioned response categories are shown here.

Regardless of their opinions on the war, many veterans had strong, negative assessments of the withdrawal and deemed it a failure or disgrace. Some felt that the US abandoned its citizens and allies or erased the progress that the troops had made. Some regarded the withdrawal a betrayal of their services and honor.

■ Veterans

Poor planning/failure/disgrace

“Embarrassing failure that led to death and disarray and which could have been avoided via better planning. Rushed execution. I am disgusted by the end of the war in Afghanistan. While I think it was time to wind things down, I don't think giving weapons to our enemies and leaving people behind was acceptable.”

“The withdraw was a disaster. All of the lives lost, and progress made became meaningless and undone in a matter of days.”

Feeling betrayed

“The bungled withdrawal that abandoned our citizens and thousands of local nationals who risked their lives to help us is an utter betrayal of our oaths and honor. I consider Biden and his generals a stain on our history. Our credibility regarding our alliances took a severe blow that will negatively impact foreign relations and future combined operations.

Most of all though, I think of the young generation who tried to live a different way, the girls who went to school and dreamed of independent careers, the young men who volunteered and fought against the Taliban, how they trusted us and we left them to die.”

Survey question: In your own words, how do you feel about the end of the war in Afghanistan?

Some felt an intense anger towards the Biden administration, with a few going so far as suggesting that President Biden should be impeached for the withdrawal.

■ Veterans

Anger towards the Biden administration

“A disastrous event by the leadership of this Nation who had more than enough time to prepare and didn’t.”

“Cowardice by the usurper Biden, abandoning our military, our allies, and those that we swore to help and protect so the usurper Biden could have a sound bite. Shameful!”

“Angry, sad, and embarrassed about the way Biden executed what could have been a clear and simple success on all fronts. I feel distanced from the United States, and its continued open and obvious discrimination against persons deemed less to the white male minority which holds most of the authority in decision making seats in the U.S.

Biden’s failure on Afghanistan, and the lack of any true leadership and accountability, was the nail in the coffin with my relationship and support for U.S. initiatives.”

Call for impeachment

“It made us look like fools. The current president should be put in jail for treason.”

“A crime the way it ended, and the President should be impeached for the actions he took.”

Survey question: In your own words, how do you feel about the end of the war in Afghanistan?

Despite different opinions on the manner or execution of withdrawal, some veterans felt that it was long overdue. A small segment felt relieved and glad. Some noted that any withdrawal would be just as chaotic, and that the military did the best they could.

■ Veterans

Withdrawal was overdue

“Departure was necessary and overdue but should have been conducted less abruptly. The entire war was a waste of lives and money. The failure of ‘nation building’ makes it even more obvious that the US threw away all those lives for no reason.”

“Doubtful that we should have been there in the first place. Could not have ended too soon.”

Appreciation for leaving Afghanistan

“I pleased that the war is finally over. Now we can get back to focusing on the United States.”

“Glad it’s over. A war we should have never gotten involved in.”

Military did the best they could

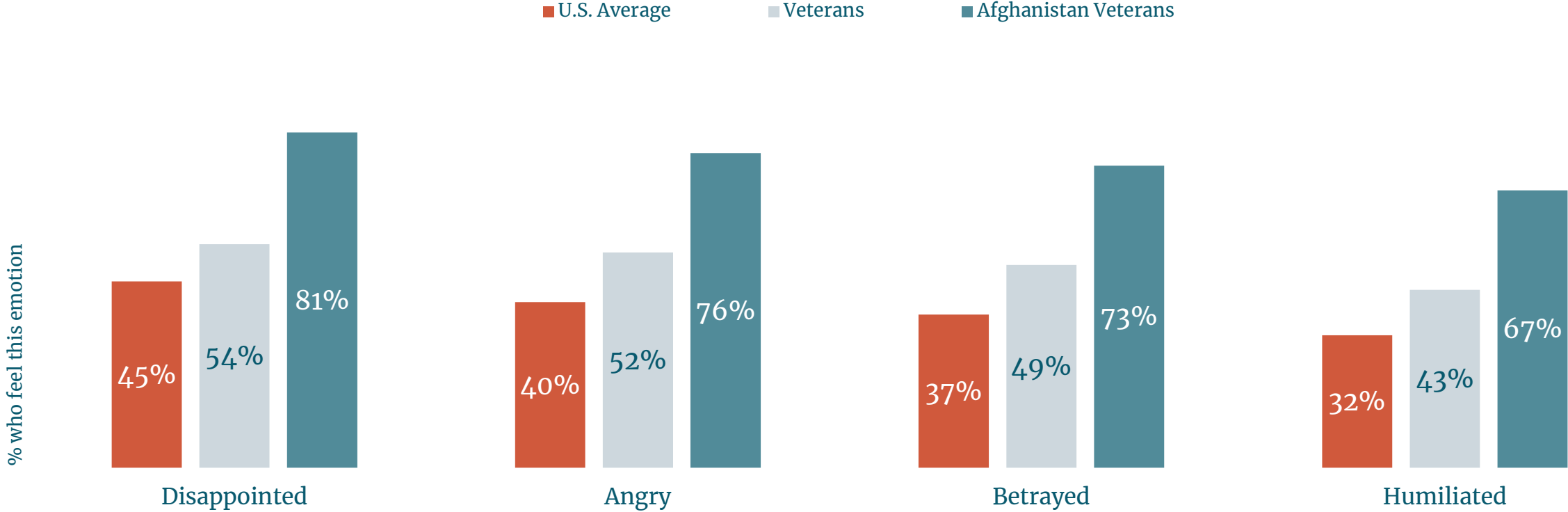
“The exit was bound to be fraught with complications. There is no clean exit strategy or implementation of such when exiting from a failed state.”

“It was never going to end well, just like Vietnam. Perhaps could have been less disastrous, but I am glad we're out.”

Survey question: In your own words, how do you feel about the end of the war in Afghanistan?

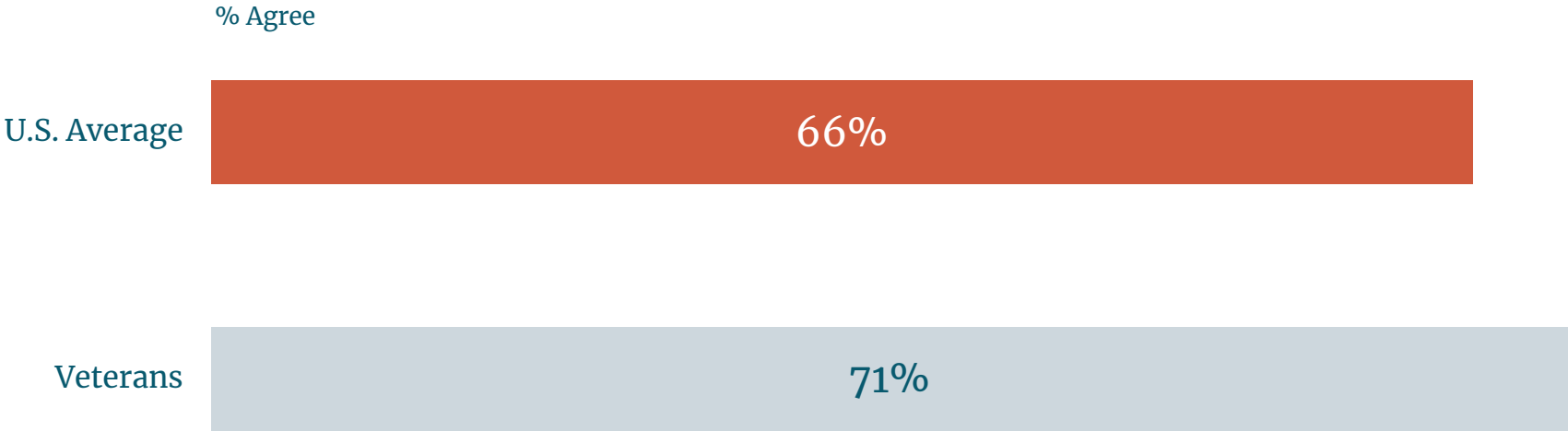
Veterans, especially those who served in Afghanistan, feel an intense array of emotions regarding the end of the war, including disappointment, anger, betrayal, and humiliation.

On a scale of 1-5 (“Not feeling at all” to “Feeling very much”), to what extent are you currently feeling the following emotions about the withdrawal of the American military from Afghanistan? (*Disappointed, Angry, Betrayed, Humiliated*)^{4, 5}



Both veterans and Americans in general feel that veterans of the war in Afghanistan are going to have a hard time processing the end of the war.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Veterans of the war in Afghanistan are going to have a hard time processing the end of the war.”



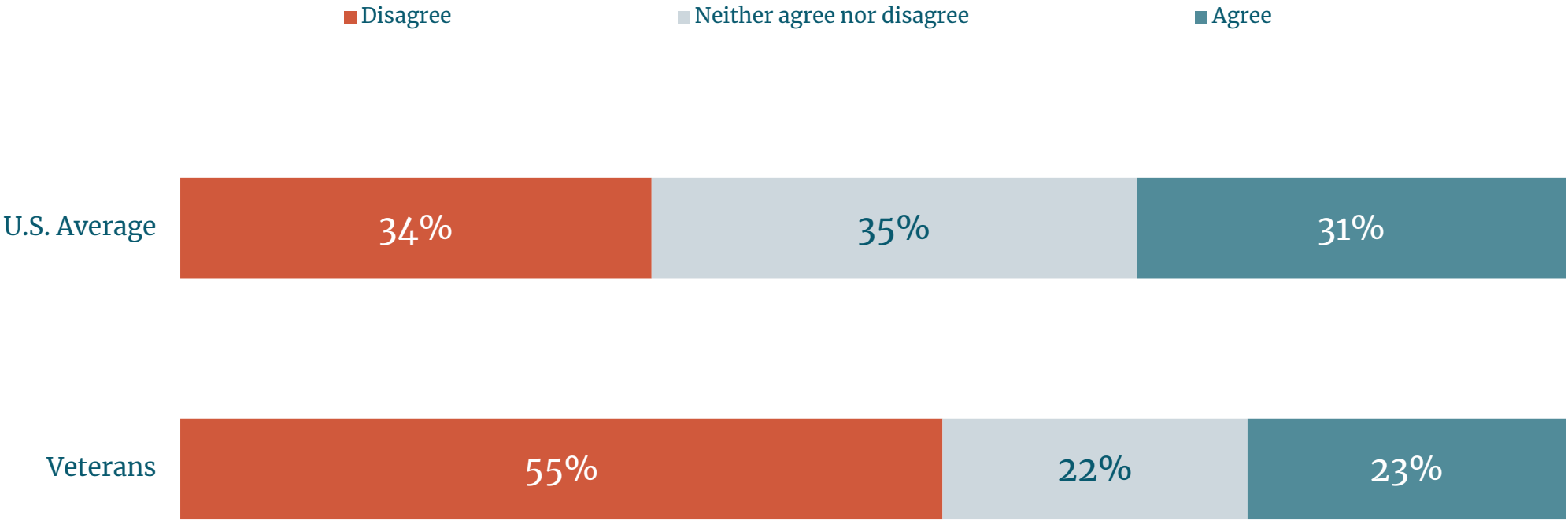
Narratives of Blame about the War

Section 4

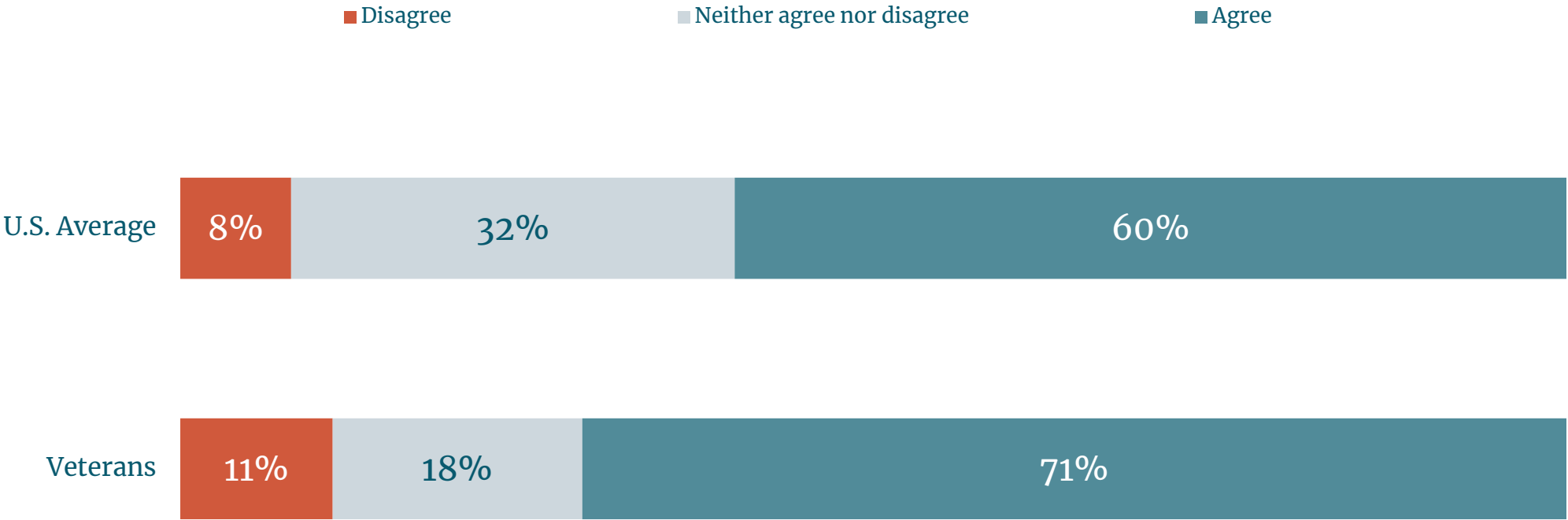
Narratives of blame varied: the majority of veterans said the media did not keep public attention focused on Afghanistan. Six out of 10 Americans in general, and 7 out of 10 veterans said political and military leaders misled the public.

About half of veterans said that America could have won the war if the military had been allowed to fight the war the way it wanted to.

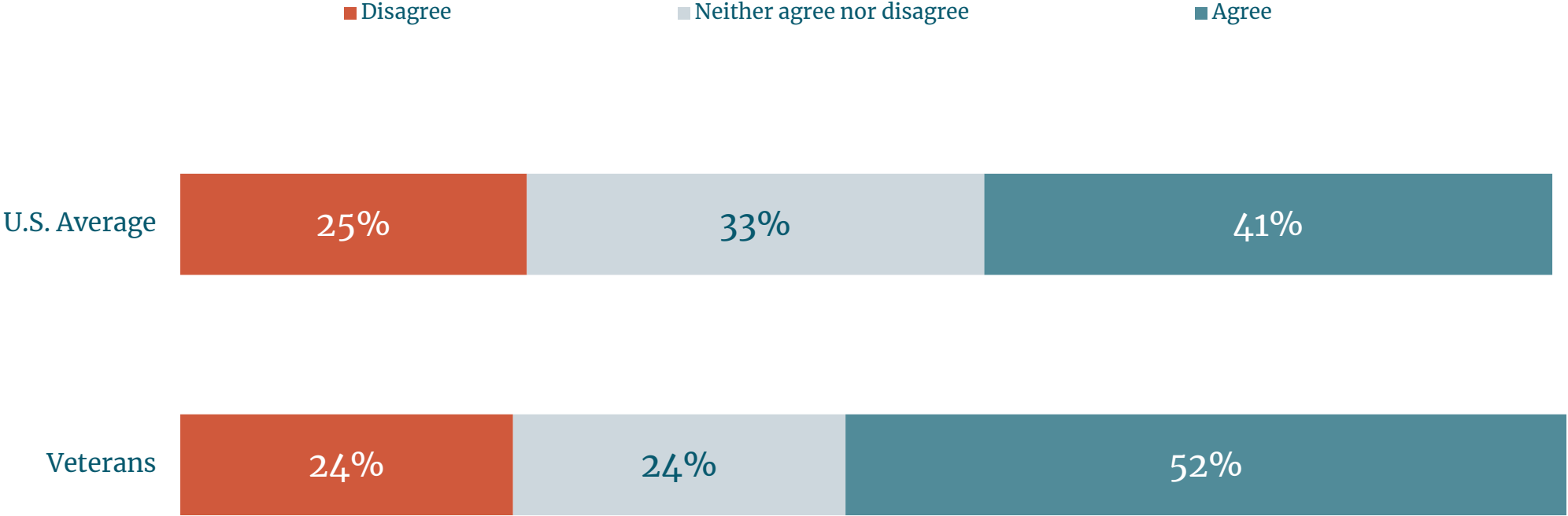
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“The American media kept public attention focused on the war in Afghanistan.”



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“America’s senior political and military leaders misled the public about how things were going with the war in Afghanistan.”



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“America could have won the war in Afghanistan if the American military had been allowed to fight the war the way it wanted to.”

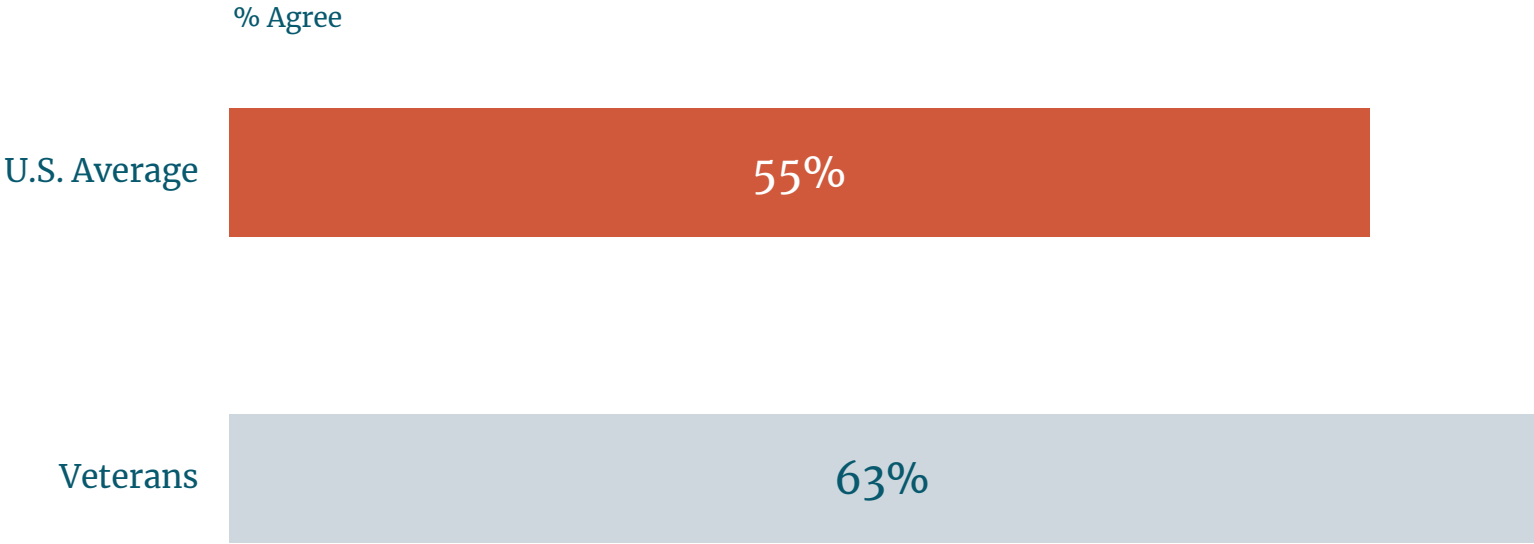


The Final Chapters: Resettling Afghan Allies

Section 5

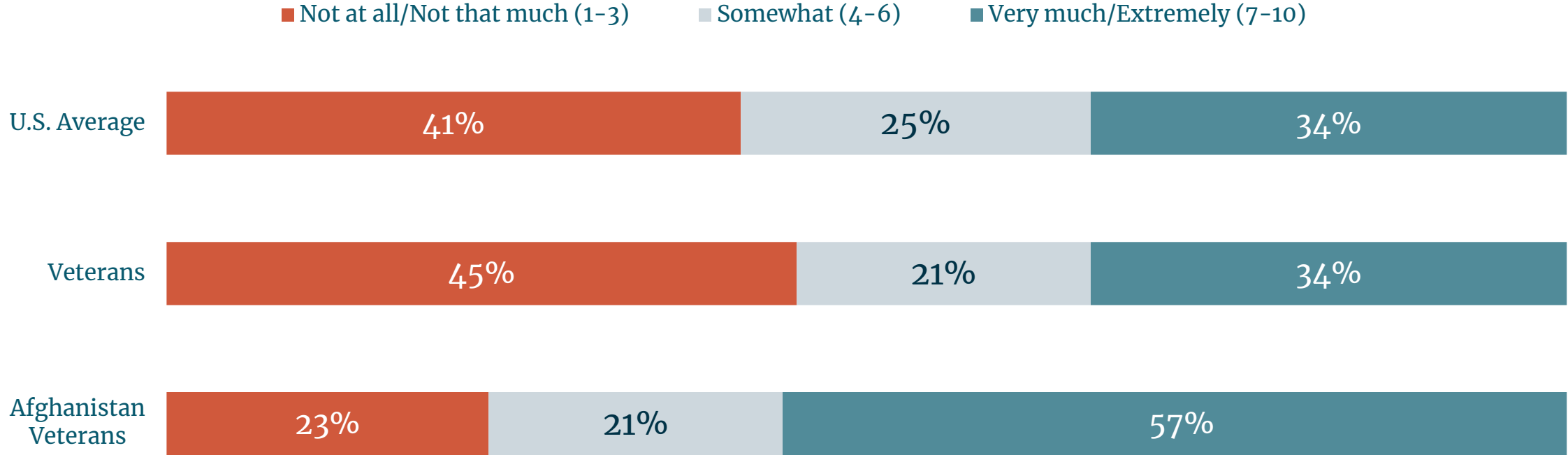
Over half of Americans in general and close to two-thirds of veterans believe that we have an obligation to resettle our Afghan allies in the United States.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“The U.S. has an obligation to allow Afghan allies to resettle in the United States.”



A majority of veterans, and most Afghanistan veterans, said that opportunities to help resettle Afghan allies would improve their mental health or wellbeing.

To what degree would an opportunity to help resettle Afghan allies improve your wellbeing or mental health? Note: Afghan allies refers to Afghan citizens who have supported the American/NATO efforts in Afghanistan, such as guides or interpreters.



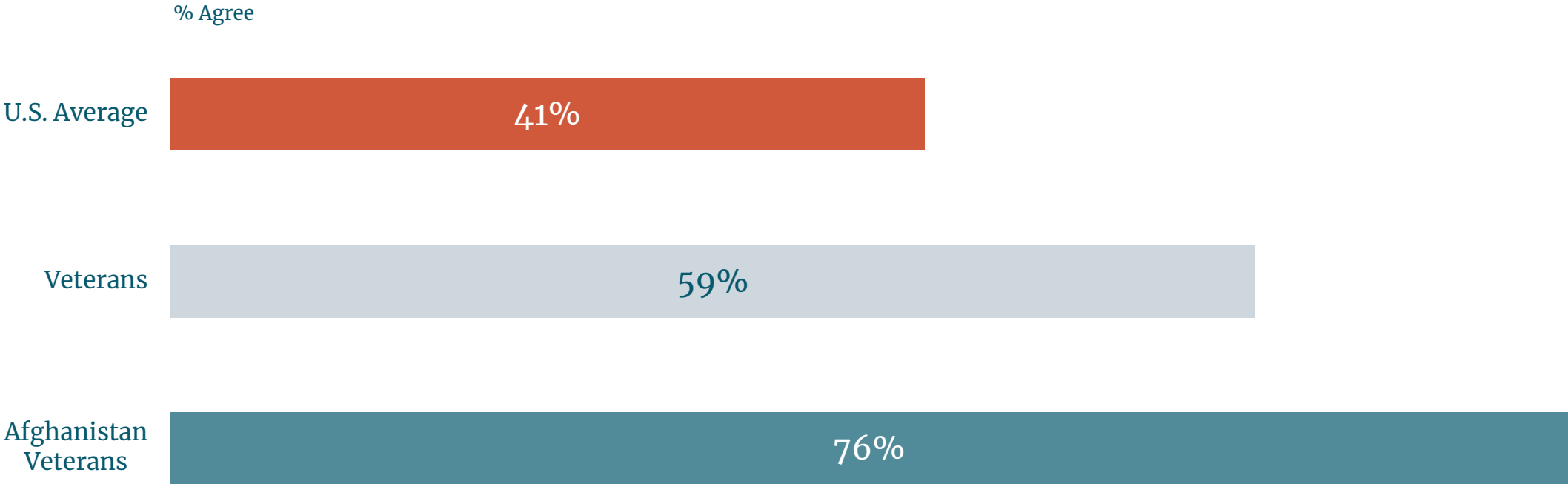
The Final Chapters: Veterans and Citizens

Section 6

3 in 5

Veterans sometimes feel like a stranger in their own country, whereas less than half of Americans in general sometimes feel like a stranger in their own country (41%).

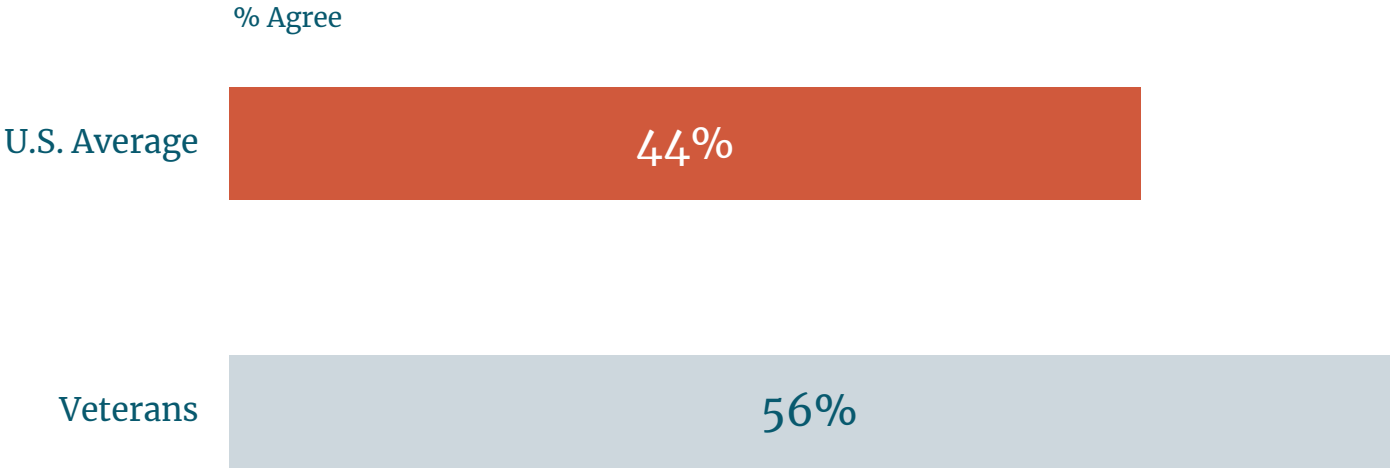
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Sometimes I feel like a stranger in my own country.”



56%

of veterans believe that American society will move on quickly from the end of the war.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“American society will move on quickly from the end of the war.”

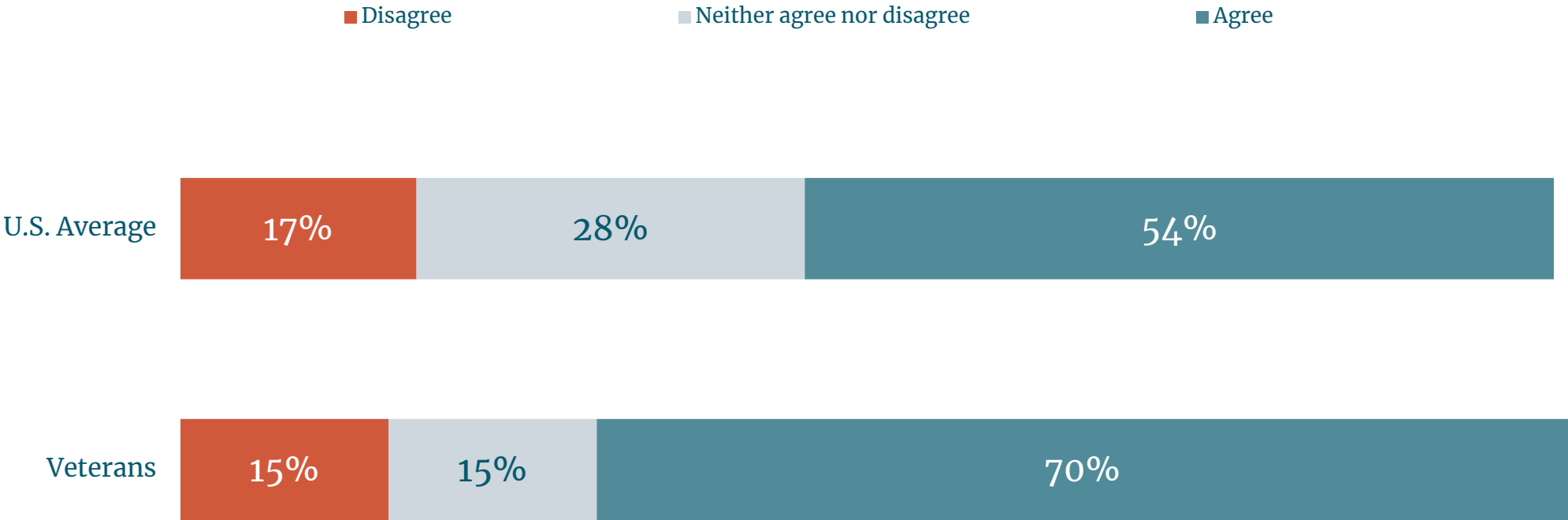


54% of Americans in general

70% of veterans

feel that most Americans stopped caring about the war in Afghanistan a long time ago.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Most Americans stopped caring about the war in Afghanistan a long time ago.”

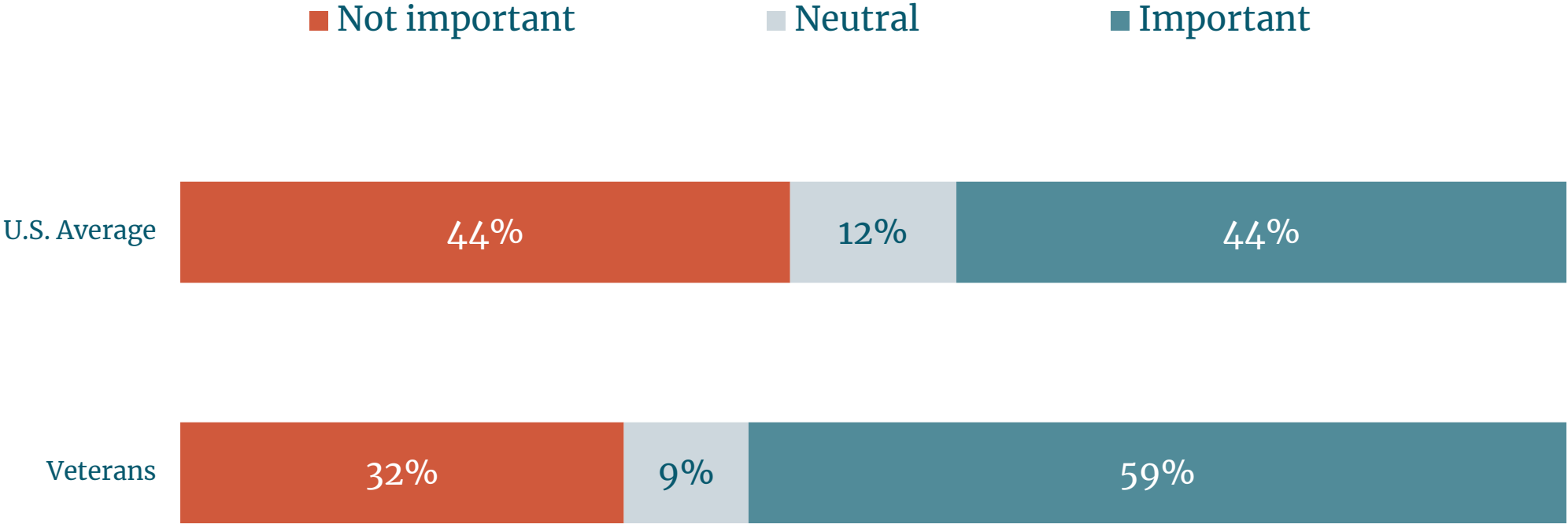


44% of Americans in general

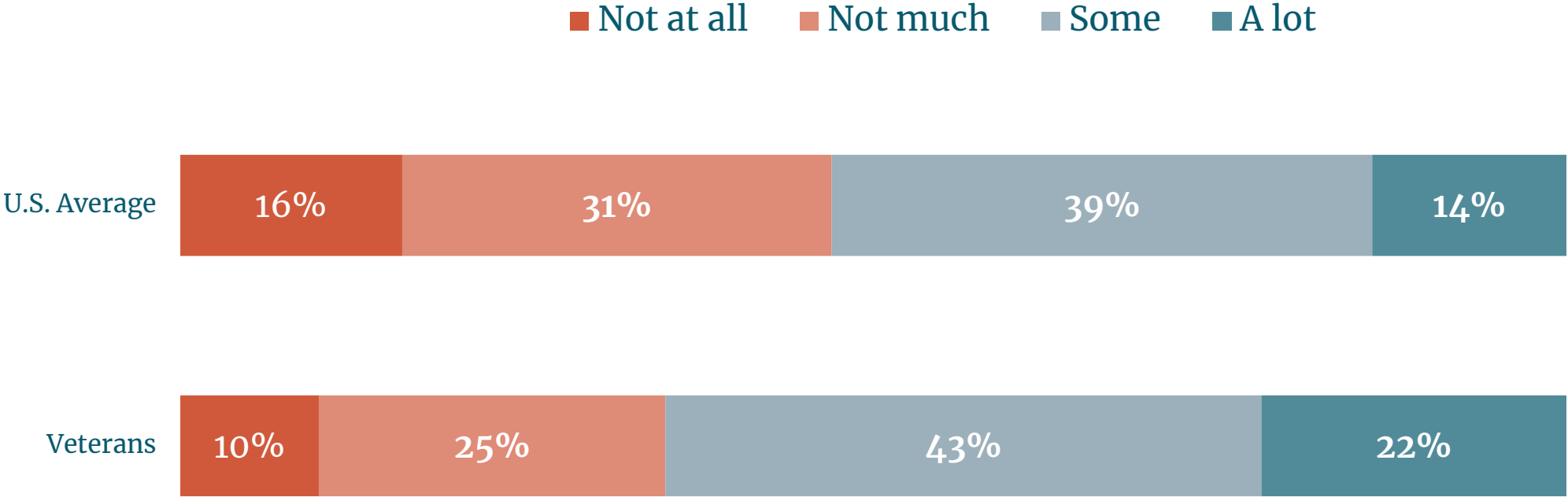
59% of veterans

say the war has been important to them personally.

On a scale of 1-10, how important do you feel the war in Afghanistan has been to you personally?



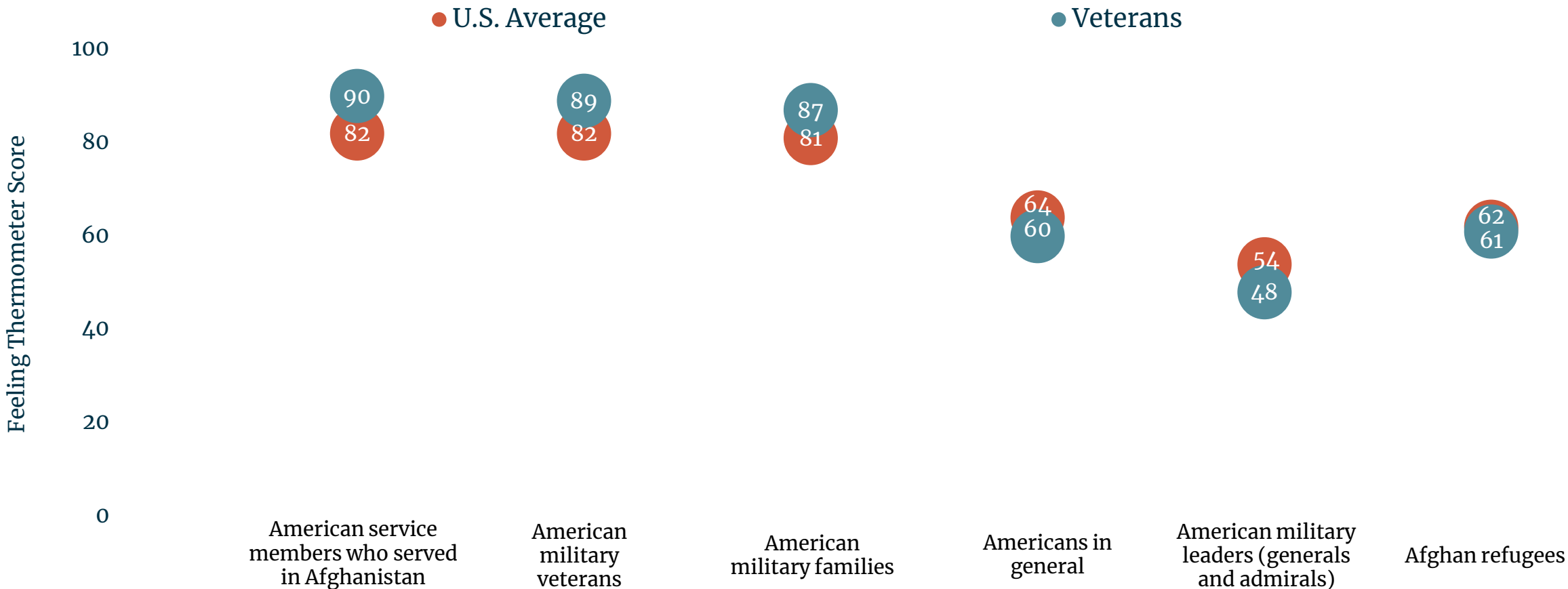
Before August 2021, how much were you paying attention to news about the war in Afghanistan?



Although veterans feel a deep sense of alienation from the broader society, there is no intense animosity evident between veterans and Americans in general. In fact, most Americans express high levels of warmth towards veterans, significantly higher than what they feel towards other Americans in general.

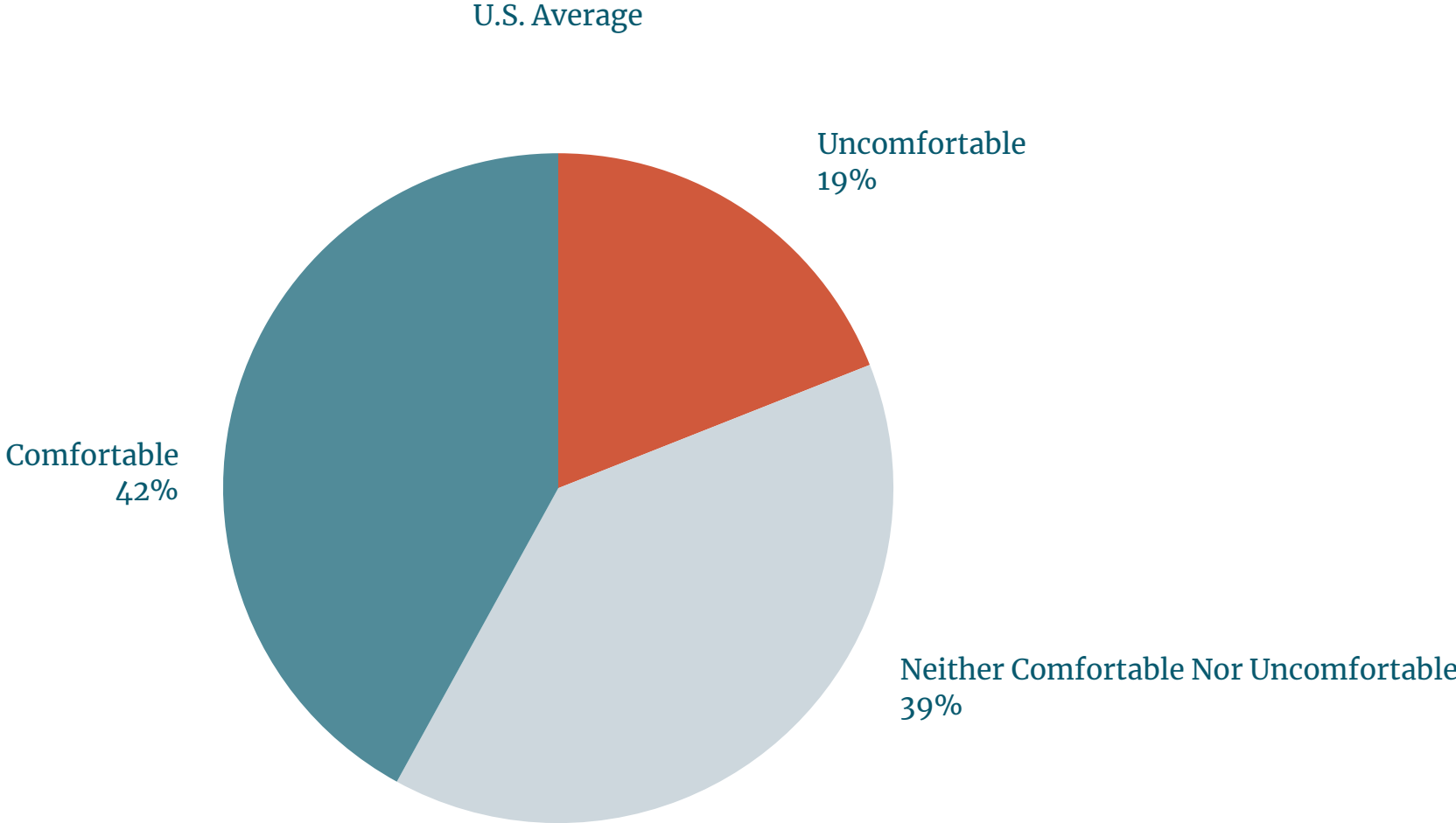
At the same time, both veterans and Americans in general feel much colder towards military leaders (generals and admirals) relative to how they feel towards veterans and military families more broadly.

For each of the following groups, indicate how cold or warm you feel towards them, where 0 means very cold and 100 means very warm.

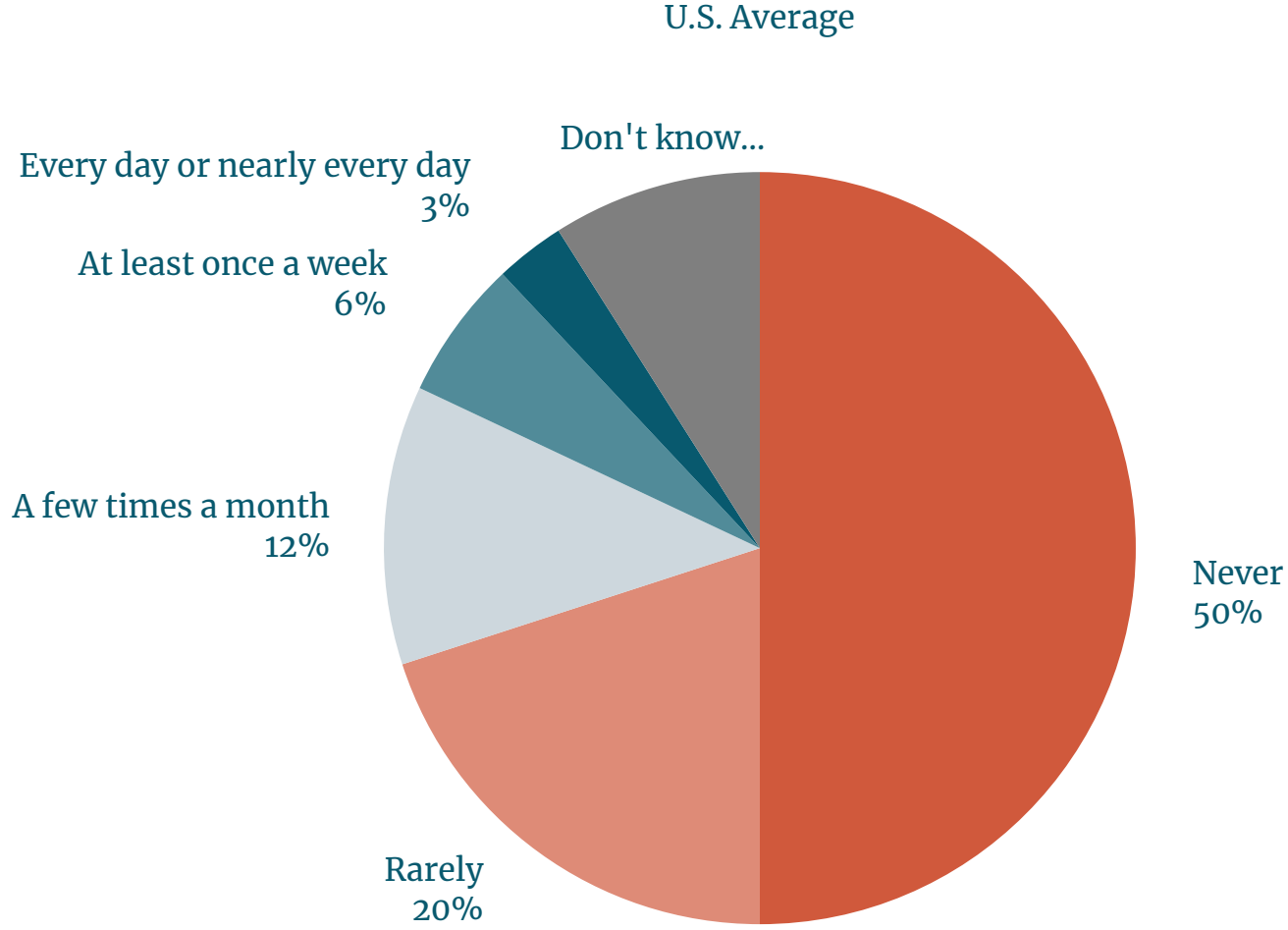


A plurality of Americans say they feel comfortable talking about the Afghanistan war with a veteran. However, most Americans (70%) rarely or never talk to veterans about the war.

On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel talking about the war in Afghanistan with an American who fought in Afghanistan?

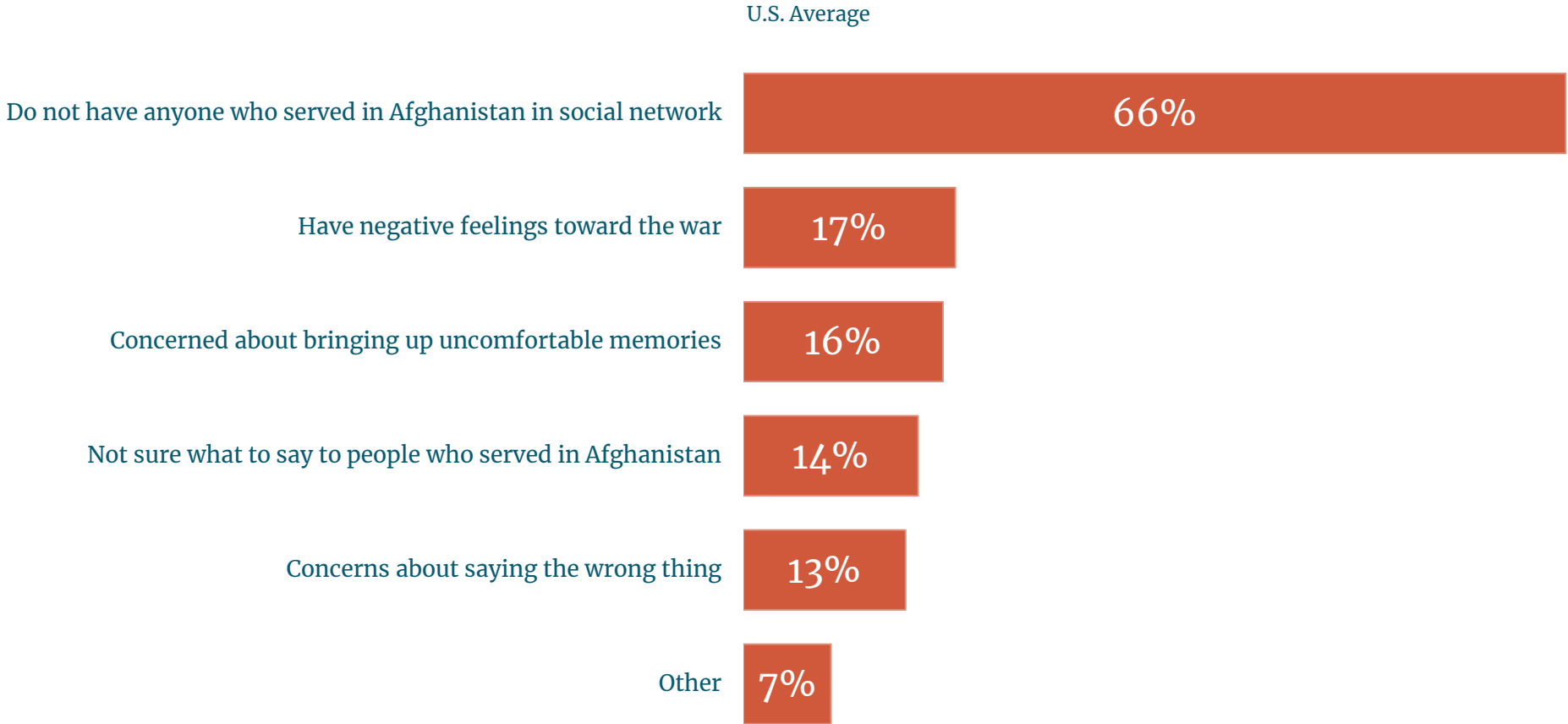


In the past two months, how often have you communicated about the war in Afghanistan in person, on the phone, or online, with American(s) who served in Afghanistan?



Most Americans cite *lack of contact with veterans* in their social networks as the top reason for not having communicated with a veteran about the war.

Which of the following are reasons for why you rarely or never communicated with an American who served in Afghanistan about the war? Select all that apply.

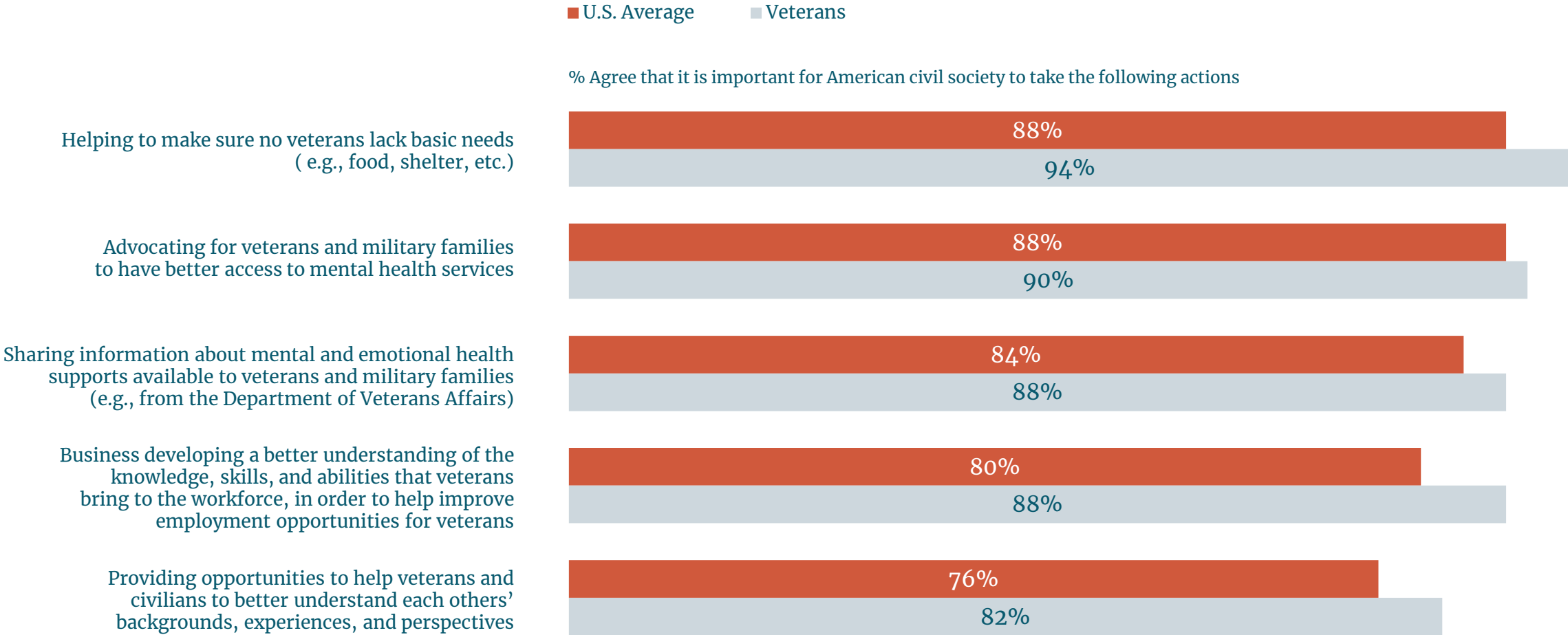


73%

of Americans say it is important for Americans to help veterans and military families process the end of the war in Afghanistan in a healthy way.

In addition to ensuring basic needs and mental health support, both veterans and Americans in general say it is more important to create community engagement opportunities than it is to hold events such as parades to commemorate veterans.

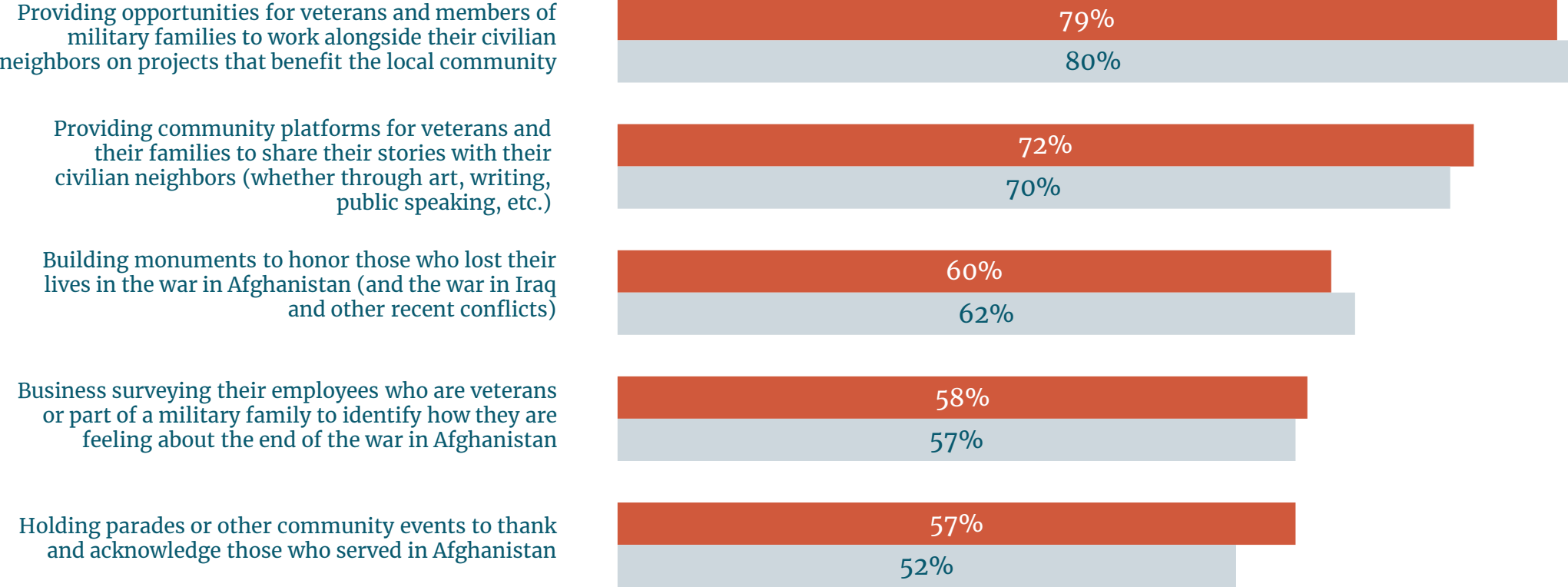
On a scale of 1-4, how important do you feel it is for American civil society (businesses, universities and colleges, faith institutions, and local communities) to take the following actions to support veterans and military families?



On a scale of 1-4, how important do you feel it is for American civil society (businesses, universities and colleges, faith institutions, and local communities) to take the following actions to support veterans and military families?

■ U.S. Average ■ Veterans

% Agree that it is important for American civil society to take the following actions



Thank You

For additional information, email:

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CREDITS

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