

Republicans and Democrats disagree on direction of US science

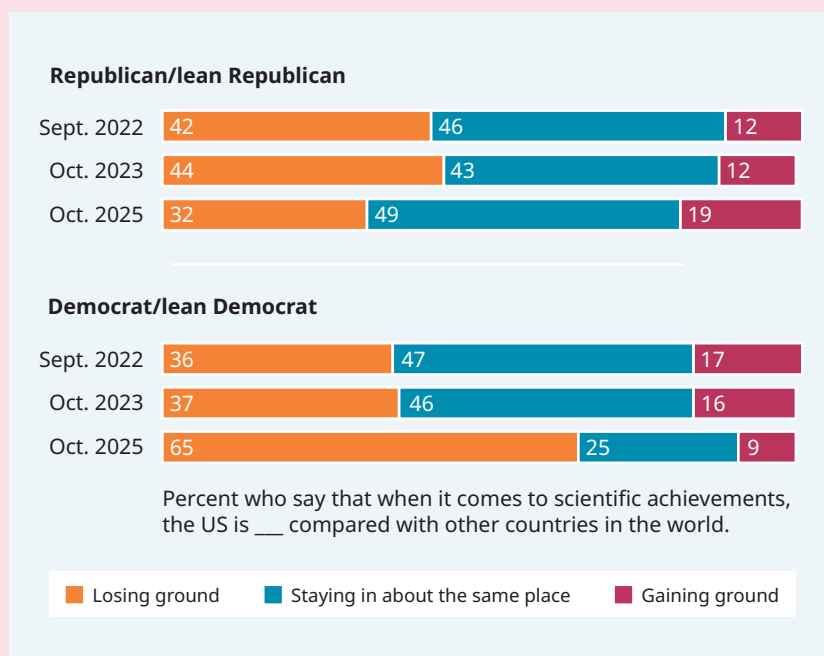
By **Jenessa Duncombe**

A survey last fall of US adults shows diverging public opinion on whether the US is gaining ground, losing ground, or staying in about the same place with respect to its scientific achievements relative to other countries. Overall among respondents, 13% said that the US is gaining ground, 38% said maintaining, and 47% said losing. Nearly two-thirds of Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic party said that the US is losing ground. That's more than twice the share of Republicans and those who lean Republican who said the same.

The nonprofit Pew Research Center conducted the survey of more than 5000 US adults in October 2025 and published the results in a January report titled *Do Americans Think the Country Is Losing or Gaining Ground in Science?*

Questions were given online and over the phone in both English and Spanish. The weights of different demographic groups were adjusted to be proportional to the US population.

When Pew asked about the direction of US science in 2023, Republicans and Republican leaners were 7 percentage points more likely to say the US was losing ground. In 2025, Democrats were more likely to say that, and the difference between parties was larger (33 percentage points). The margin



(Figure adapted from B. Kennedy, E. Kikuchi, *Do Americans Think the Country Is Losing or Gaining Ground in Science?*, Pew Research Center, 15 January 2026.)

of sampling error was plus or minus 1.6 percentage points in 2023 and 1.7 percentage points in 2025. A small percentage of respondents both years chose not to answer.

Last year, the Trump administration made cuts to federal grant funding, laid off federal scientists, and retired federal databases. The introduction of tariffs, travel restrictions, and student visa disruptions altered the collaboration of US scientists with their global peers.

Nearly identical shares of both

parties in the 2025 survey said that it is very or somewhat important that the US be a world leader in scientific achievements. Republicans and Republican leaners were more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to say private companies contribute a great deal or quite a bit to scientific achievement in the US. Democrats and Democratic leaners were more likely than Republicans and Republican leaners to say that colleges and universities and federal government agencies were key contributors.

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