# BRIEFING NOTE:

# U.S. CONSUMER TECH PREFERENCES – STRATEGIC INSIGHTS FOR GLOBAL BRANDS

Key factors from our Q1 study on American perceptions of foreign tech and strategies for successful market entry

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# OVERVIEW

A February 2025 study, conducted by PR agency **Proper Propaganda** in collaboration with research firm **Audience Audit**, surveyed 1,001 U.S. consumers to examine key factors influencing their consumer technology purchasing decisions. The data is 97% accurate, plus or minus 3 percent, meaning it is methodologically sound. The study explores how U.S. buyers assess brands—foreign and domestic—through the lens of manufacturing origin, retail channels, AI integration, trade policy, media trust, and product information.

The respondent group mirrors U.S. Census data by age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, and geographic distribution. The findings provide statistically reliable insights into how international tech companies can position themselves for success in the highly competitive U.S. market.

# PURPOSE

For tech brands entering or expanding within the U.S., trust, transparency, and relevance are non-negotiable. This report highlights the attitudes, concerns, and behaviours that shape U.S. consumer expectations, especially toward foreign-made products.

Drawing from proprietary data, it outlines what builds trust (and what breaks it), how buyers respond to tariffs and trade narratives, and where different demographics shop, evaluate, and decide. Whether the goal is launching a DTC brand, securing retail distribution, or refining a media strategy, this briefing note offers evidence-based guidance for global tech firms aiming to win in the U.S. market.

# STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

The U.S. consumer tech market remains one of the most dynamic and demanding in the world. This report identifies key barriers to entry, like origin-based trust issues, pricing sensitivities, AI skepticism, and media fragmentation, and pairs them with data-driven opportunities to overcome them.

The following sections synthesize the most compelling consumer insights from our February 2025 study. Each section includes relevant subgroup differences and ends with actionable opportunities tailored for international brands looking to gain traction and earn trust with American consumers.

# PRODUCT ORIGIN & MANUFACTURING TRUST

Consumer trust in tech products is closely tied to where they are made. This section explores concerns about foreign manufacturing and how brands can build credibility in the U.S. market.

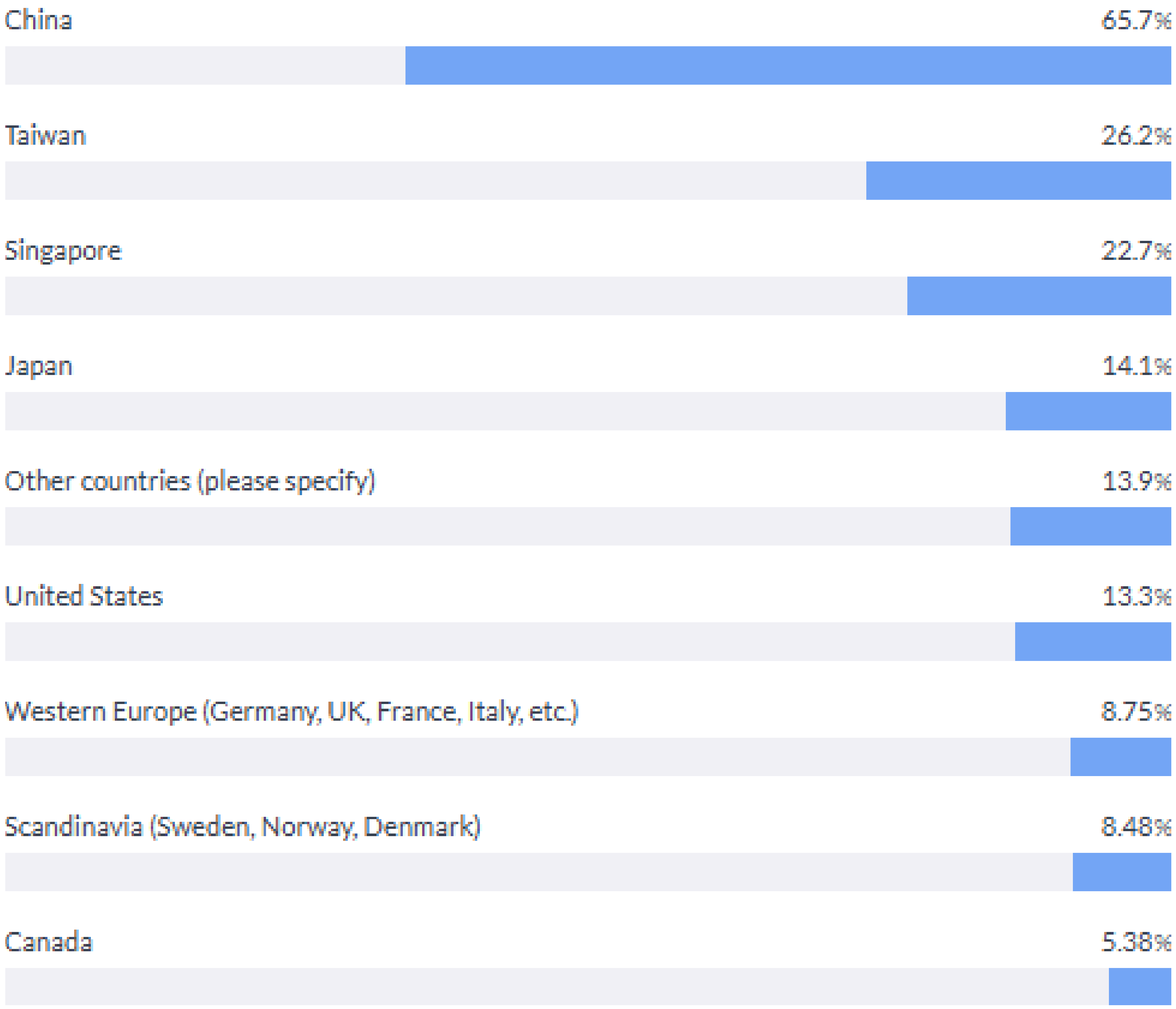
# PRODUCT ORIGIN & MANUFACTURING TRUST

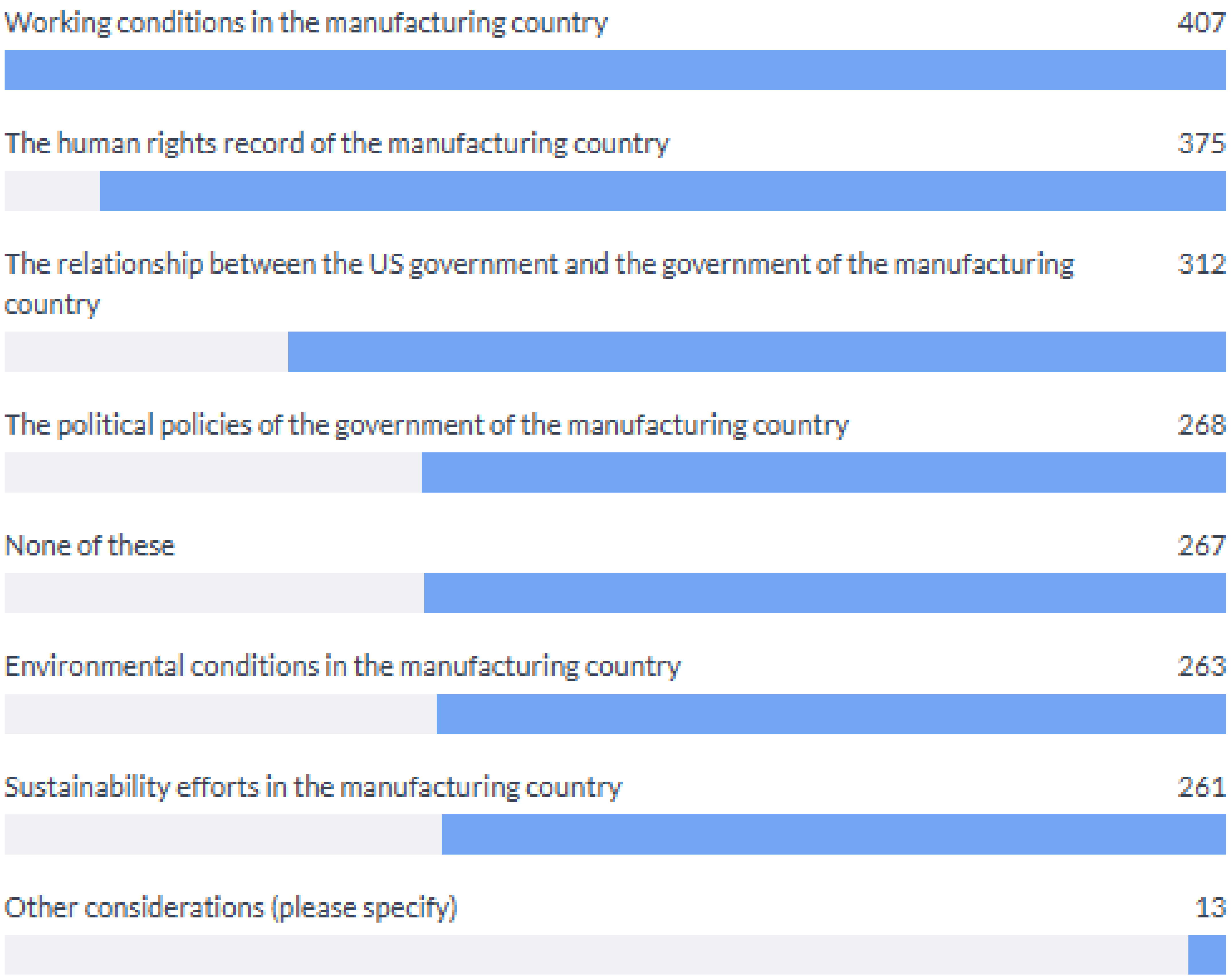
## OVERALL INSIGHTS

- 65.7% of U.S. consumers identified China as a country of concern when it comes to where tech is manufactured (by far the highest among all nations tested)[38].
- Consumer trust in product quality is directly tied to manufacturing origin:
  - American-Made with American Parts: 65% expressed strong or absolute trust[34].
  - American-Made with Chinese Parts: trust dropped to 39.4%[34].
  - U.S.-Assembled with Chinese Workers and Parts: only 33.5% reported moderate trust[34].
  - Chinese-Made with Chinese Parts: just 32.6% reported little to no trust; only 24.8% reported some to moderate trust[34].
- The importance of “Made in the USA” decreases as product price increases: it ranked 6th out of 8 priorities for a $500 item and 7th for a $1,000 item[4, 6, 8]. This counterintuitive trend underscores that even patriotic sentiment gives way to value considerations at higher price points.

- When asked to choose between a product with transparent manufacturing details and one with strong positive reviews, 66.5% of respondents said they trust the product with better reviews[32].
- Top reasons cited for concern about non-U.S.-made products include:
  - Poor working conditions or labour exploitation (63.1%)[40]
  - Data privacy or cybersecurity risks (61.9%)[40]
  - Human rights record of the country (51.5%)[40]
  - Trade or diplomatic tensions with the U.S. (47.7%)[40]
  - Environmental practices (38.9%)[40]

# COUNTRIES THAT RAISE THE MOST CONCERN AS MANUFACTURING LOCATIONS






# FACTORS THAT SHAPE CONSUMER DECISIONS ABOUT TECH MANUFACTURED ABROAD

# SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- 79.4% of U.S. consumers aged 60+ expressed concern about Chinese-made tech products (the highest concern level of any demographic group)[38].
- Among younger consumers (under 40), concern about environmental practices was highest at 49.2%, while older consumers (60+) prioritized data privacy and cybersecurity risks (72.8%)[40].
- Democrats were most likely to cite labour and human rights issues as primary concerns (74.5%)[40].
- Republicans were most likely to emphasize data security concerns, with 69% identifying cybersecurity as a top issue[40].
- Even amongst Trump voters, “Made in the USA” never ranked higher than the 5th priority out of 8 when choosing a tech product, suggesting that perceived quality and value still outweigh origin labeling[4 6 8].

## OPPORTUNITIES

Foreign brands must address origin-based concerns early and directly. Building consumer confidence requires clear communication around ethical labour practices, sustainability, and data security. Companies should prioritize transparency on these fronts, and complement it with third-party validation and quality assurances. For countries already perceived as trustworthy, the opportunity is to emphasize diplomatic alignment, workplace standards, and shared values. For less-trusted origins, credible messaging around worker welfare, manufacturing quality controls, and privacy protections is essential.

# TRADE POLICIES & TARIFFS

Many Americans are unclear how tariffs affect pricing and competition. This section examines consumer attitudes toward trade policies and the opportunity for Chinese brands to shape perceptions.

# TRADE POLICIES & TARIFFS

## OVERALL INSIGHTS

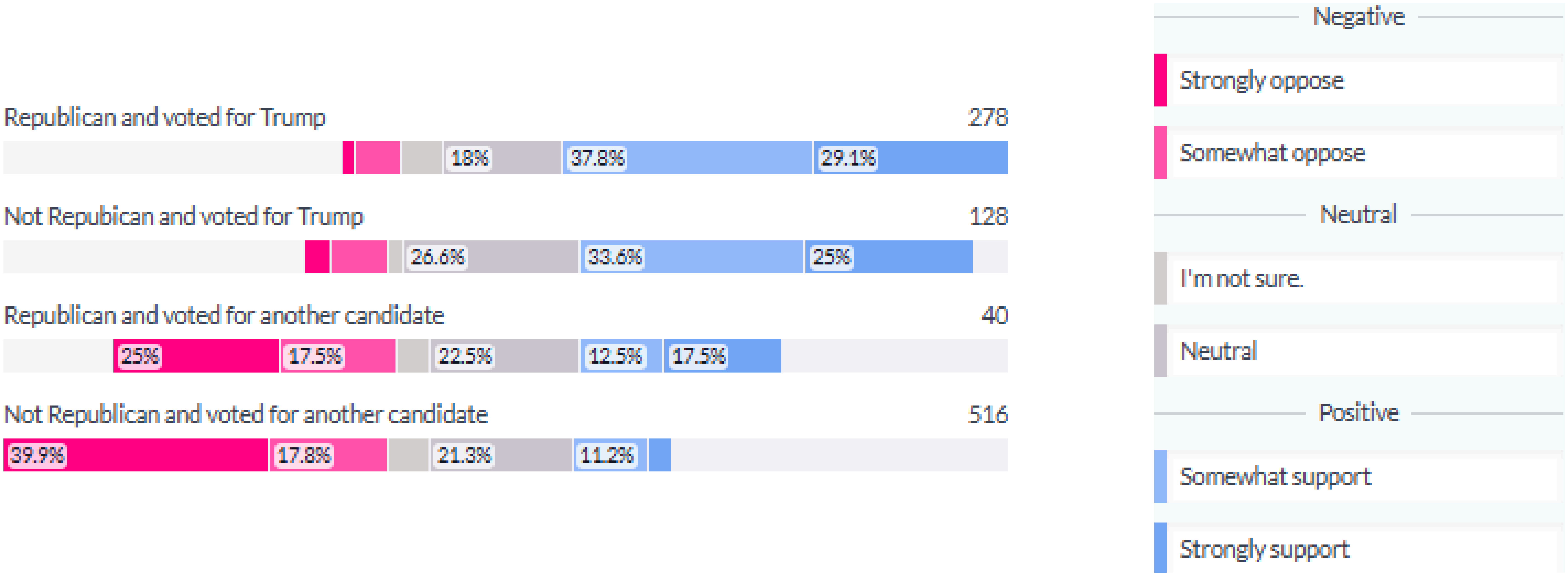
- As of February 2025—before the latest round of tariffs was enacted—only 29.9% of U.S. consumers said they were very familiar with what a tariff is, indicating widespread misunderstanding[50].
- Support for tariffs was also relatively low at that time: just 14.3% of respondents said they "strongly support" their use[51].
- When asked about potential effects of tariffs, few respondents anticipated typical economic outcomes:
  - Only 44.2% expected tariffs to prompt retaliatory trade actions[53].
  - Just 27.7% believed tariffs would impact prices or restrict competition[53].
  - Only 53% believed tariffs would raise costs for U.S. businesses[53].
  - And only 29.9% agreed that tariffs would reduce dependence on foreign suppliers[53].

- In a hypothetical scenario where tariffs triggered a 25% price increase on imported tech:
  - 36% said they would choose the lowest-priced product available[52]
  - 21.2% said they would switch to a U.S.-made product at the same price[52].
  - 21.3% would only buy an imported product if they trusted the brand[52].
  - 15.9% said their buying habits would remain unchanged[52].

## SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Even among Trump voters, just 27.8% said they strongly supported the use of tariffs at the time of the February 2025 survey[51].
- That group was more likely to favour U.S.-made products (31.6%) if priced similarly to imports[52].
- In contrast, Harris voters were more price-sensitive: 41.1% said they would always choose the cheapest product in the event of a 25% tariff-driven price increase[52].

# OPINIONS ON U.S. TARIFF POLICY BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND 2024 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE



# OPPORTUNITIES

With new tariffs now in effect, the gap between public understanding and economic impact has become more consequential. Most U.S. consumers remain unclear on how tariffs influence pricing, supply chains, and product availability—making this a critical moment for brands to educate and clarify.

Messaging that highlights the direct consumer benefits of open trade, including greater product variety, better pricing, and faster innovation, can help counter nationalist sentiment and misperceptions. For price-sensitive buyers, especially those already hesitant about imports, reinforcing value-for-money and brand trust will be essential to maintaining market share in the face of cost-driven scrutiny.

# PERCEPTION OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

U.S. consumers see global trade as a driver of innovation, quality, and access in tech. This section explores how Americans perceive the benefits of a connected economy, and why even traditionally protectionist groups recognize the value of international participation.

# PERCEPTION OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

## OVERALL INSIGHTS

- 82.5% of U.S. consumers believe the global economy has a positive impact on tech product quality, with 18.3% rating it very positive, 33.6% positive, and 30.6% somewhat positive[1].

## SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Trump voters expressed notably high levels of support for global trade benefits, contrary to expectations:
  - 87.4% said the global economy positively affects tech quality[1].
  - 85% said it improves innovation[1].
  - 84.6% said it boosts product availability[1].
- Harris voters were similarly positive, but slightly lower across the board:
  - 80.6% for quality, 83.8% for innovation, 83.3% for availability[1].

- These findings challenge assumptions about protectionist political blocs and suggest room for pro-trade messaging, even among traditionally skeptical segments.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Many Americans recognize the global economy's role in improving product innovation, affordability, and access, even among voter segments perceived as protectionist. For international brands, this creates a messaging opportunity: lean into the idea that global participation delivers local value. Emphasize how international production drives advanced features, better prices, and wider selection. This is especially persuasive in "Red State" markets, where personal benefit outweighs abstract policy concerns. Communicating this personal value of global trade is key to building acceptance across political lines.

# RETAIL CHANNELS & BUYER BEHAVIOUR

Where and how Americans shop for tech is shifting, but trust and convenience remain decisive. This section highlights preferred retail channels, pain points in online shopping, and what buyers expect from both digital and in-store experiences.

# RETAIL CHANNELS & BUYER BEHAVIOUR

## OVERALL INSIGHTS

- General e-commerce sites like Amazon.com, Walmart.com, and Costco.com dominate consumer tech purchases, with 66.6% of consumers preferring to buy from such platforms[15].
- Brick & mortar retail remains relevant: 38.9% of respondents prefer in-store shopping, while 26.9% prefer websites and 34.2% say it depends[19].
- Direct-to-consumer (DTC) websites lag behind, with only 29.9% of consumers buying directly from brand websites[15].
- Online shopping frustrations are a major conversion barrier:
    - 38.8% of respondents have abandoned an online purchase due to poor user experience[24].
    - Key issues include lack of hands-on testing, misleading or vague product descriptions, high shipping costs, unclear return policies, and concerns about authenticity[23].
- Consumer trust in DTC websites is hindered by: High shipping costs (62.1%)[31], Unclear return policies (55.4%)[31], Lack of customer reviews (53.7%)[31], Authenticity concerns (52.6%)[31]

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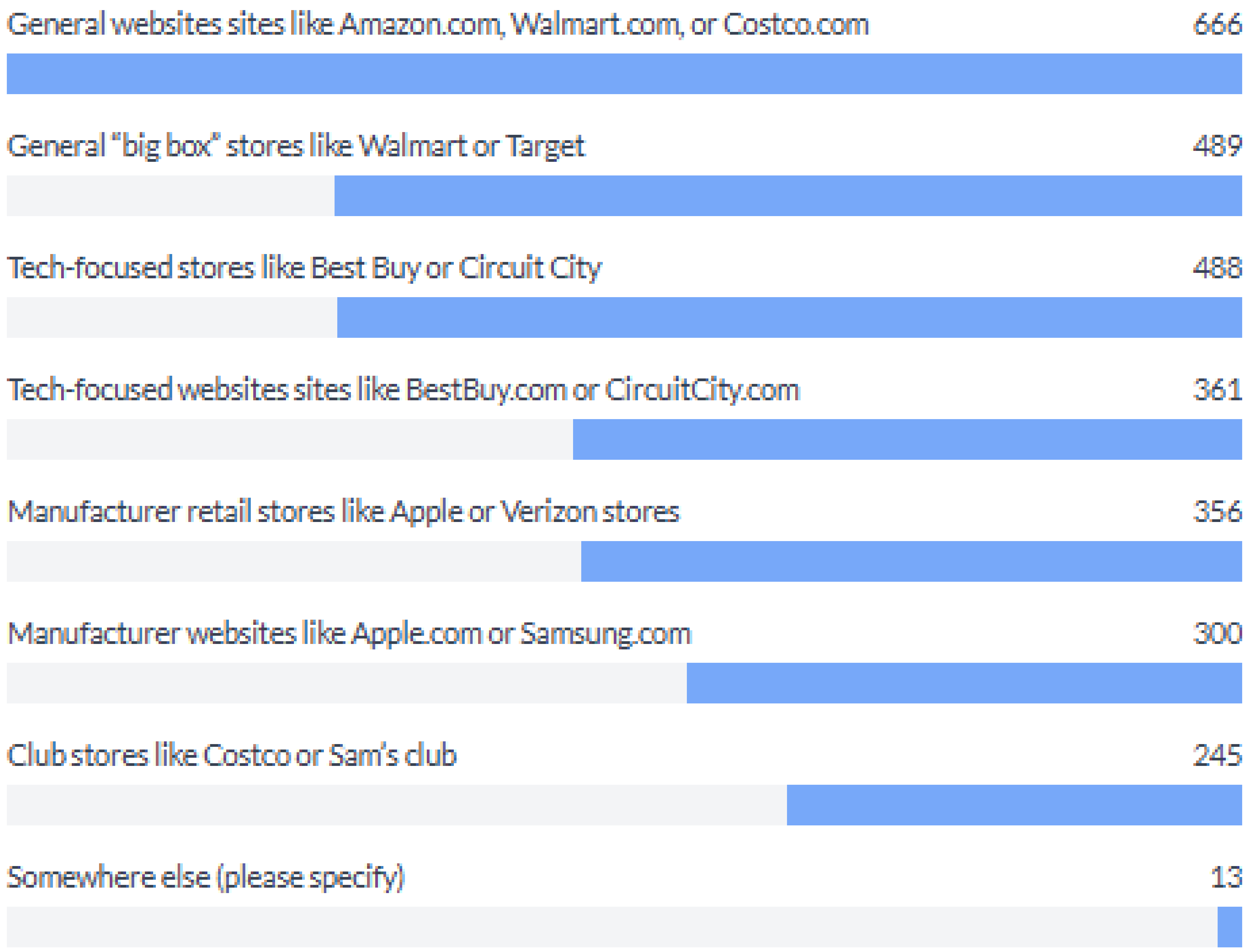
# WHERE CONSUMERS PREFER TO BUY TECH PRODUCTS



# SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Older consumers (60+) are most committed to brick & mortar (47.3%)[19], and highly sensitive to unclear return policies (69.6%)[31] and high shipping costs (74.1%)[31].
- Hispanic consumers are the most confident online shoppers, with 71.4% preferring general websites and 70.7% trusting Amazon listings equally with manufacturer websites[15 30].
- Asian consumers are the most review-driven: 77.8% consult buyer ratings or reviews before purchasing tech online[3]. This demographic is also particularly concerned about secure payments on DTC websites (61.1%)[31].
- Younger consumers (under 40) are the most likely to abandon a purchase due to poor online experience (46.1%)[24].
- Amazon dominates research behaviour: 59.3% of all respondents consult Amazon reviews before buying a $100 tech product[3].

# OPPORTUNITIES

U.S. consumers expect omnichannel convenience, but trust is fragile (especially online). To convert digital shoppers, brands must eliminate friction: offer clear product descriptions, robust return policies, competitive shipping options, and verified reviews. DTC websites, in particular, must address credibility concerns head-on with security assurances, customer support visibility, and authentic peer feedback. For in-store success, prioritize unassisted shopping experiences, with high-impact packaging, signage, and merchandising that supports decision-making without staff interaction. Brick-and-mortar still matters—especially for older buyers, high-ticket items, and communities with digital trust gaps.

# ATTITUDES TOWARD AI IN TECH PRODUCTS

AI-powered technology sparks both interest and skepticism. This section explores consumer attitudes toward AI branding and how brands can communicate its benefits effectively.

# ATTITUDES TOWARD AI IN TECH PRODUCTS

## OVERALL INSIGHTS

- AI marketing has limited impact: Only 25.9% of U.S. consumers say “Powered by AI” branding makes them more interested in a product. A majority (53.7%) are neutral, and 20.4% say the label on its own turns them off[26].
- Consumers strongly prioritize clarity: When purchasing a product that incorporates AI into its operation, 83% say a clear explanation of how AI is used in the product matters more than the price of the product[29].
- AI is generally seen as beneficial:
  - 68.1% say it makes products more efficient and smarter[27].
  - 61.9% expect advanced features or personalization[27].
  - 54.2% view it as cutting-edge[27].
- But skepticism remains:
  - 54.9% worry about how AI is used[28].
  - 50.5% are concerned about ethics and potential AI errors[28].
  - 48.8% cite data privacy concerns[28].

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# SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Older consumers (60+) are the most skeptical:
- 30.1% say AI branding makes them less interested in a product[26].
- 63.4% express concerns about data privacy[28].
- Younger consumers (under 40) are more positive:
- 71.2% say AI improves efficiency, vs. 55.3% of those 60+[27].
- They are also the most concerned about ethics, with 62.1% citing it as a top issue[28].
- Asian consumers are the most enthusiastic:
- 85.7% value AI transparency[29].
- 84% say AI improves efficiency, 76% expect advanced features, and 72% see it as innovative[27].
- Trump voters are more responsive to AI branding (31.8%) than Harris voters (24.9%)[26], and 85.3% of them prioritize AI transparency over price[29].
- Democrats (59.2%) are more concerned about AI-related errors than Republicans (43.9%) or Independents (42.6%)[28].

# OPPORTUNITIES

AI branding alone is not enough. Consumers demand clarity, transparency, and control. Brands should de-emphasize generic “AI-powered” labels and instead explain specific benefits (e.g., improved battery life, smarter personalization) in plain language. With privacy and ethical concerns high across all segments, proactive messaging about how data is handled, what AI is doing, and how users can control it is essential. For older buyers and skeptics, transparency builds trust. For younger audiences and tech-forward demographics, highlight practical utility and user empowerment.

# TRUST IN MEDIA & PRODUCT INFORMATION

The sources consumers rely on to evaluate tech products directly shape brand credibility. This section examines which outlets, formats, and review styles earn the most trust, and how independent, detailed, and peer-driven information outperforms promotional messaging.

# TRUST IN MEDIA & PRODUCT INFORMATION

## OVERALL INSIGHTS

- Consumers overwhelmingly trust peer-generated and independent sources:
    - 74.7% rely on customer satisfaction surveys[9].
    - 68.5% consult in-depth hands-on reviews[9].
    - 61.4% seek product comparisons[9].
- Consumer Reports is the most trusted tech media source, with 69.7% of respondents saying they trust it for tech product information[10]—far ahead of the Wall Street Journal (38.6%), Wired (38%), and CNET (37.9%)[10].
- Detailed, authentic, and critical reviews are more persuasive than positive-only coverage:
    - 64.9% trust reviews with a lot of detail[13].
    - 57.3% trust reviews that include product criticisms[13].
    - 51% value personal stories[13].
    - 48.8% respond to unfiltered discussions[13].
- Fact-checking is routine: 50.1% of consumers say they often or always fact-check online news, while 35% say they do so sometimes[41].

- When asked what builds trust in tech product information, consumers pointed to:
  - Source credibility or reputation (66%)[11].
  - Supporting evidence of product performance (63.4%)[11].
  - Consistency across platforms (57.9%)[11].
  - Recommendations from personal contacts (55.9%)[11].
- Only 17.7% said emotional resonance or feeling understood by a brand increases trust[11].

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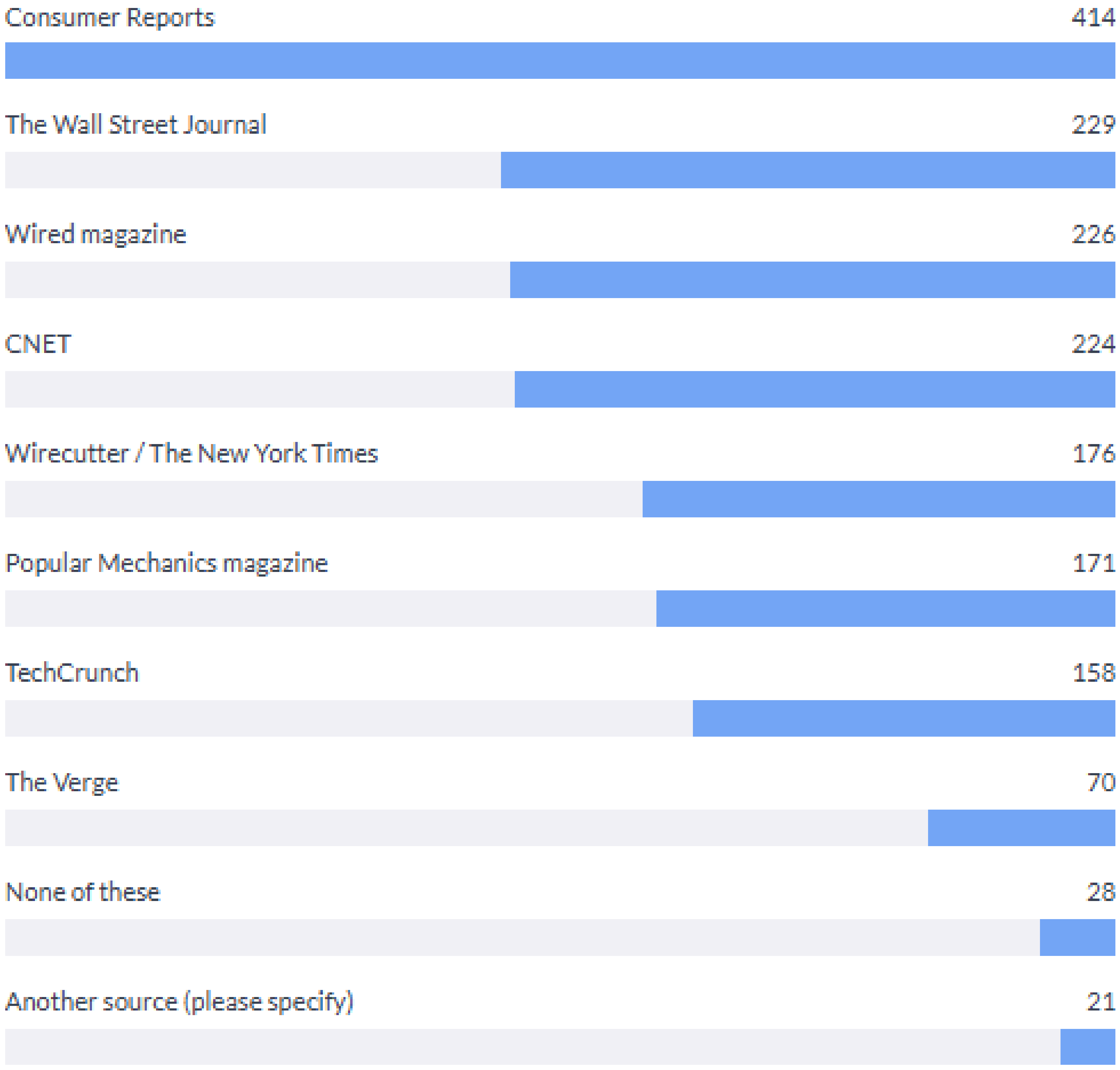
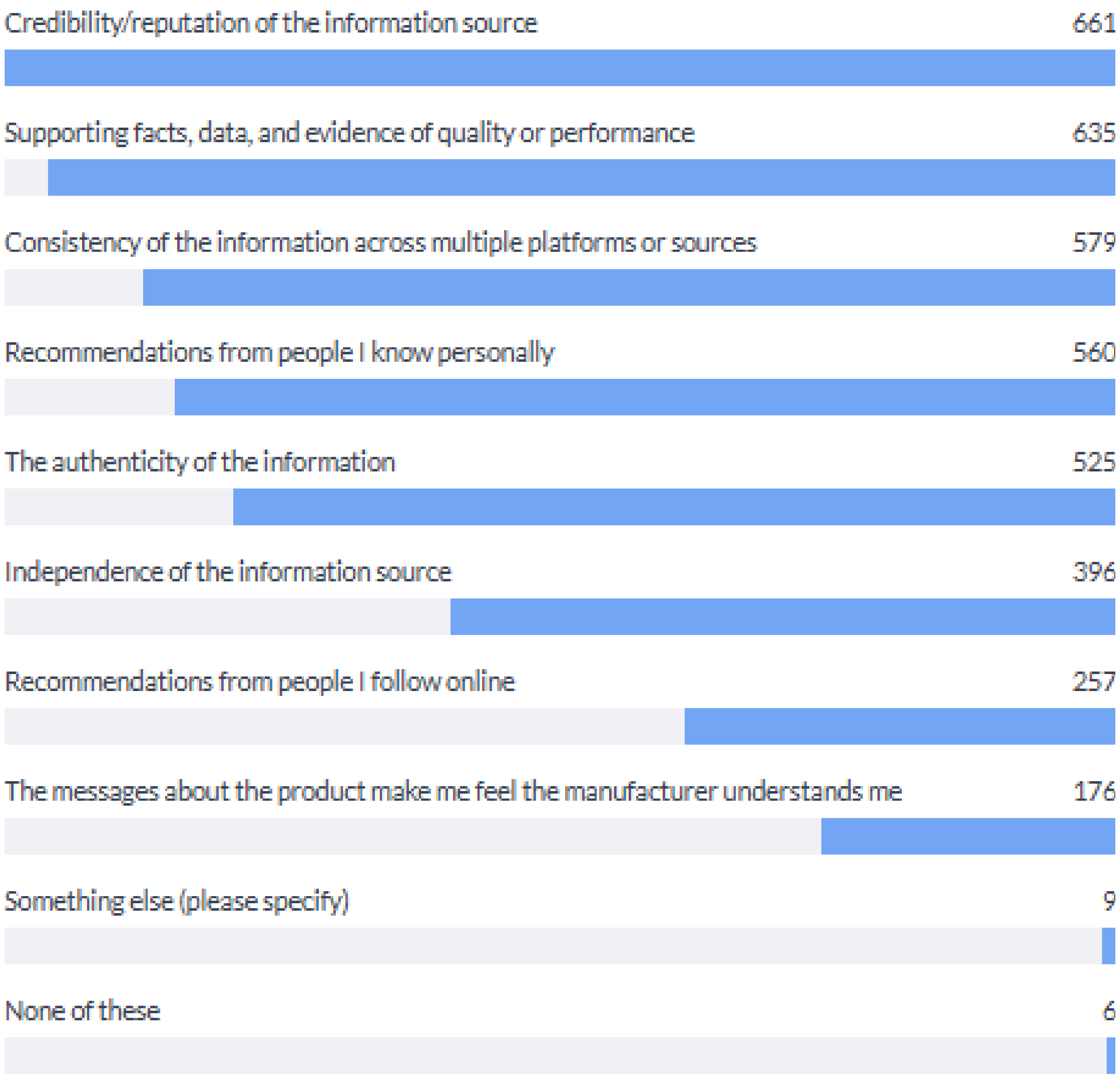
# MEDIA SOURCES U.S. CONSUMERS TRUST FOR TECH PRODUCT INFORMATION



# FACTORS THAT BUILD TRUST IN CONSUMER TECH PRODUCT INFORMATION

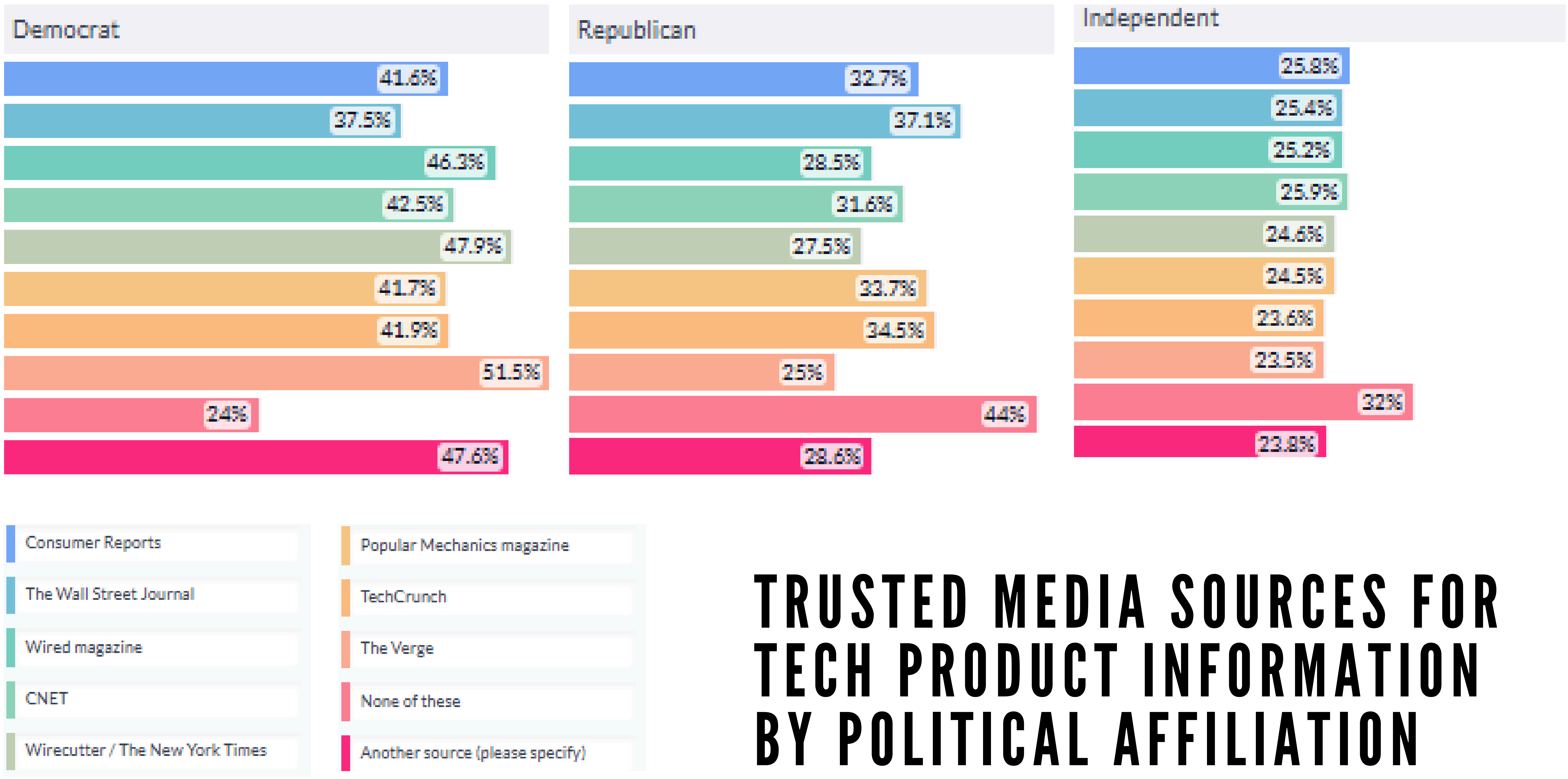


# WHO CONSUMERS BELIEVE WHEN PRODUCT REVIEWS ARE MIXED

# SUBGROUP INSIGHTS

- Under-40 consumers are more responsive to digital and emotional cues:
  - 36.8% trust people they follow online[11].
  - 25.5% say emotional messaging increases their trust[11].
  - 41.6% rely on majority opinion when reviews conflict[12].
- Adults 60+ prioritise credibility and detail:
  - 87.3% trust Consumer Reports[10].
  - 70.6% value the reputation of the source[11].
  - 67.3% rely on supporting evidence of performance[11].
- Asian consumers are highly engaged with reviews and data:
  - 92% use customer surveys, 84% rely on in-depth product reviews[9].
  - 73.6% trust supporting evidence of product quality[11].
  - 58.3% say source independence matters most[11].
- Black consumers are more likely to seek brand-level storytelling:
  - 35.2% seek feature articles about the manufacturer, vs. 24.9% of White respondents and 18% of Asian respondents[9].

- Across political affiliations, promoting a political point of view diminishes trust more than omitting one: 54.5% of Democrats, 52.1% of Republicans, and 58.2% of Independents say bias erodes trust[42].
- There are notable subgroup differences in fact-checking behaviours. While 54.8% of Democrats say they frequently fact-check online news, nearly half of Republicans (46%) report doing so as well[9]. This challenges the assumption that fact-checking is a predominantly left-leaning behaviour, suggesting instead that a desire to verify information spans the political spectrum.




# TRUSTED MEDIA SOURCES FOR TECH PRODUCT INFORMATION BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION

# OPPORTUNITIES

Consumers trust detailed, independent, evidence-backed information over emotional messaging or flashy campaigns. Third-party validation is critical: invest in media reviews, satisfaction surveys, comparison features, and user-generated content. Aim for placement in high-trust outlets (like Consumer Reports) and pair this with peer endorsements and community discussion. Transparency about how products are tested, reviewed, and improved will outperform persuasion tactics. Brands should also tailor messaging by audience—older consumers respond to credibility and consistency, while younger buyers prioritize authenticity and transparency across platforms.

# SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This research report is based on data from an online survey taken from January 29 to February 3, 2025, by 1,001 U.S. consumers aged 18-70 who have purchased a consumer technology product in the last six months. The respondent group was secured through a research panel provider and balanced to match US Census data based on age group, gender, annual household income, ethnicity, and race. The data quality was assured through both pre-survey and post-survey methods. The overall number of respondents exhibits a margin of error of +/- 3.34 percentage points at a 97% confidence level. Some questions were served only to specific subgroups and thus have a higher margin of error.

# ATTRIBUTION

The research was conducted by Proper Propaganda, a public relations firm serving technology companies, in partnership with Audience Audit Inc., a US-based research agency.

All statistics cited in this report must be attributed to "**Proper Propaganda & Audience Audit Inc. (2025). Briefing Note: U.S. Consumer Tech Preferences – Strategic Insights for Global Brands"** when shared or referenced.

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MODERN PR FOR TECH

audienceaudit

# LET'S TALK

Breaking into the U.S. market takes trust, strategic positioning, and the right message.

As a PR agency specializing in international market entry, we help global tech brands build credibility, navigate consumer expectations, and turn insights into action. From managing perceptions around product origin to refining DTC messaging and securing high-trust media coverage, our team knows what it takes to succeed in one of the world's most complex and competitive consumer landscapes.

Let's talk about how to make your U.S. launch resonate.

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# ENDNOTES

[1] Perceived impact of the global economy on consumer tech and quality of life.
[3] Pre-purchase actions for a $100 consumer tech product.
[4] Consumer priorities when purchasing a $100 tech product.
[6] Consumer priorities when purchasing a $500 tech product.
[8] Consumer priorities when purchasing a $1,000 tech product.
[9] Media formats accessed when researching consumer tech products.
[10] Trusted media sources for consumer tech coverage.
[11] What builds trust in consumer tech information.
[12] How consumers resolve conflicting product reviews.
[13] Indicators of authenticity in product reviews (detail, criticism, personal stories, no sponsorship).
[15] Where consumers buy consumer tech products.
[19] Preference for buying consumer tech from brick & mortar stores vs. online.
[23] Biggest frustrations with online consumer tech purchases.
[24] Reasons for abandoning online consumer tech purchases due to a poor shopping experience.
[26] Impact of 'Powered by AI' labeling on purchase interest.
[27] Reasons AI labeling increases product interest.
[28] Reasons AI labeling decreases product interest.

29 Priority when purchasing AI-powered products: usage transparency vs. price.
30 Key factor in confidence about product quality.
31 Factors that discourage purchases from a company's e-commerce website.
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