Fire and Ice Revisited: American and Canadian Social Values in the Age of Obama and Harper

Presented by

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Woodrow Wilson Center

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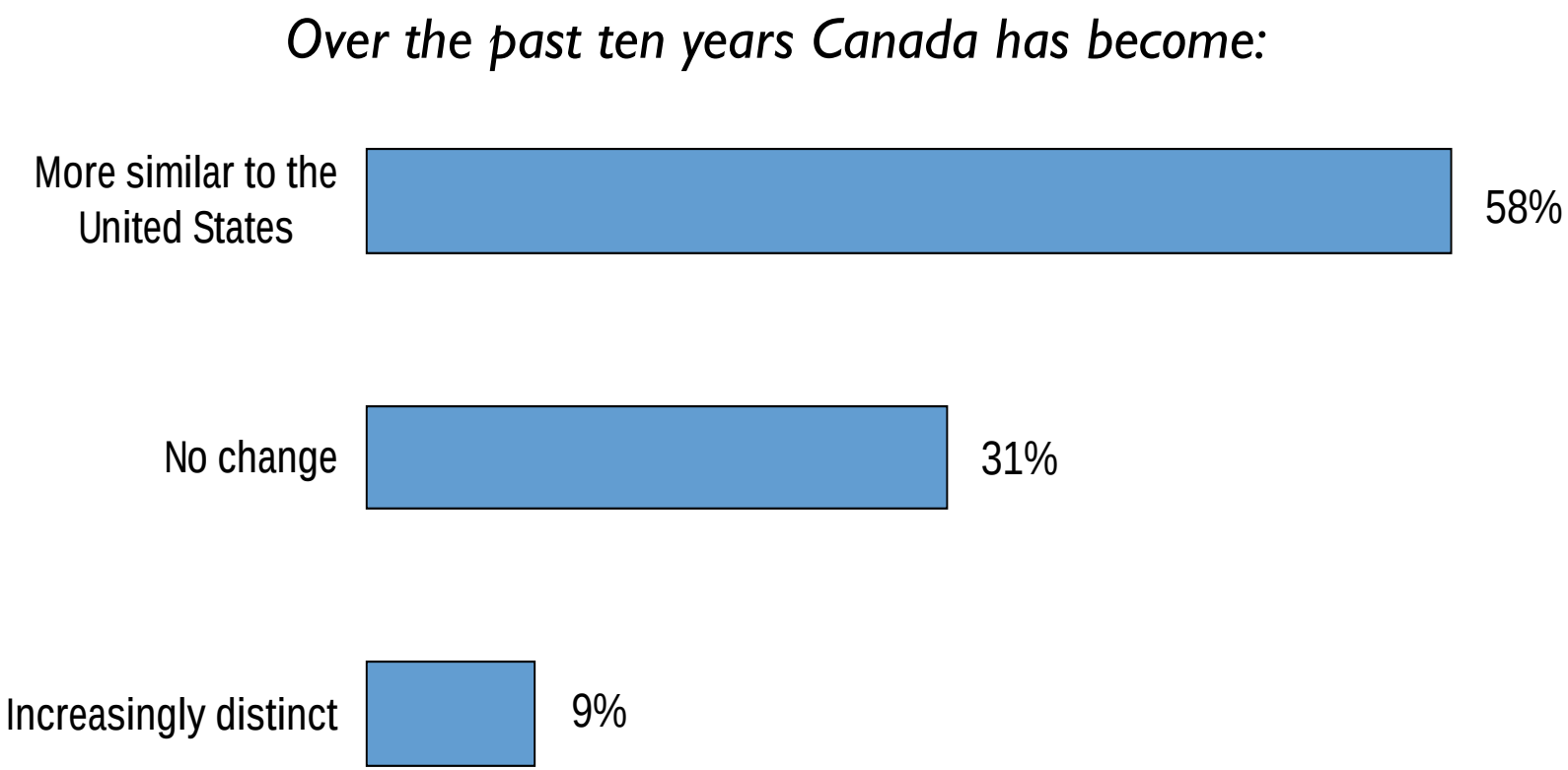
THE ENVIRONICS INSTITUTE

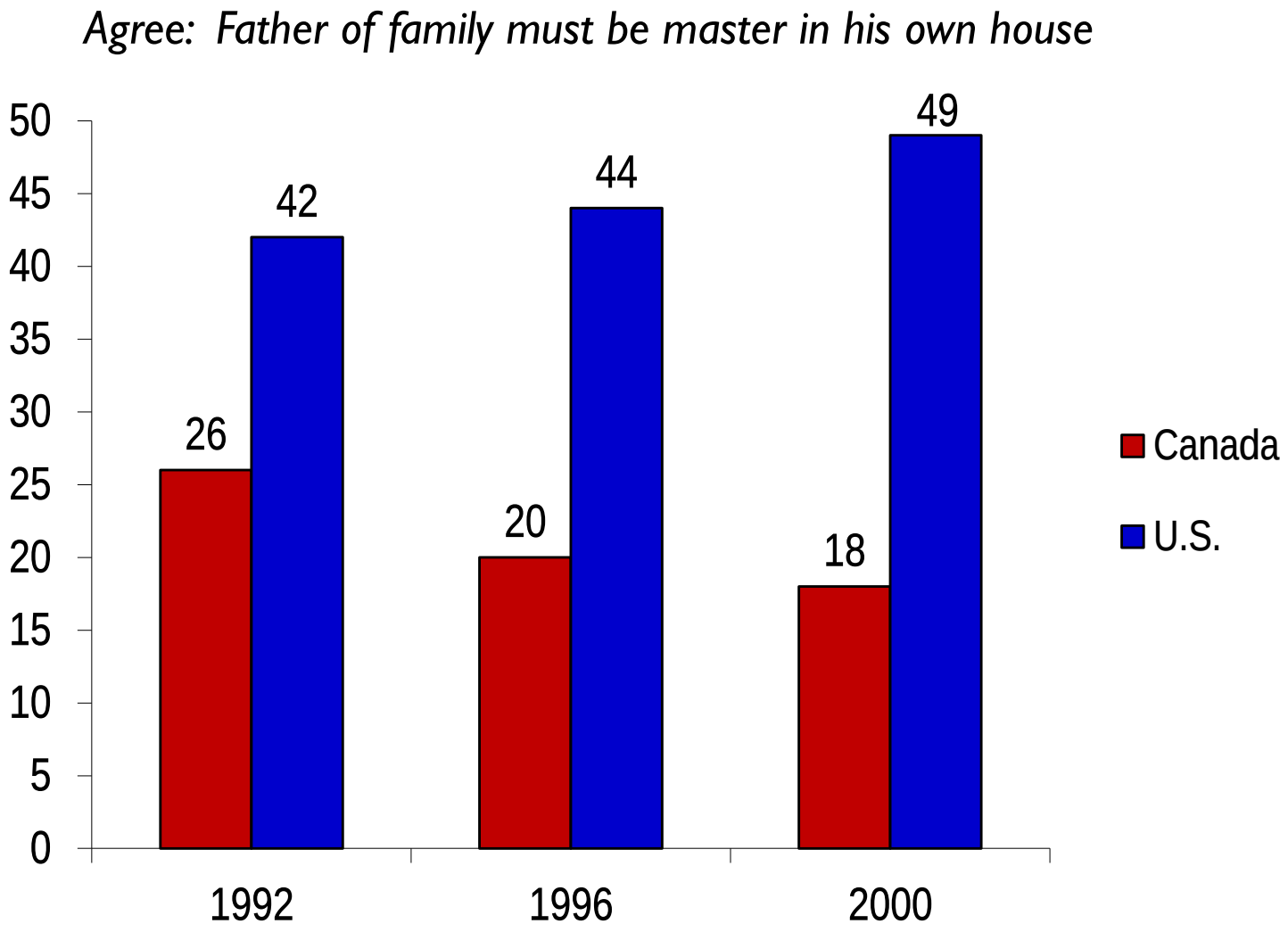
2003

Most Canadians held the view that Canadian and US cultures were converging*



*Source: EKOS, May 2002

But our social values research was telling a different story



In fact, US and Canada are distinct cultures, with unique socio-cultural trajectories

Religious

Risk-taking

Aspiration

Money is everything

Winner takes all

Highest standard of living

Will win the lottery

Capricious philanthropy

Put down humor

Secular

Risk-averse

Accommodation

Money is suspect

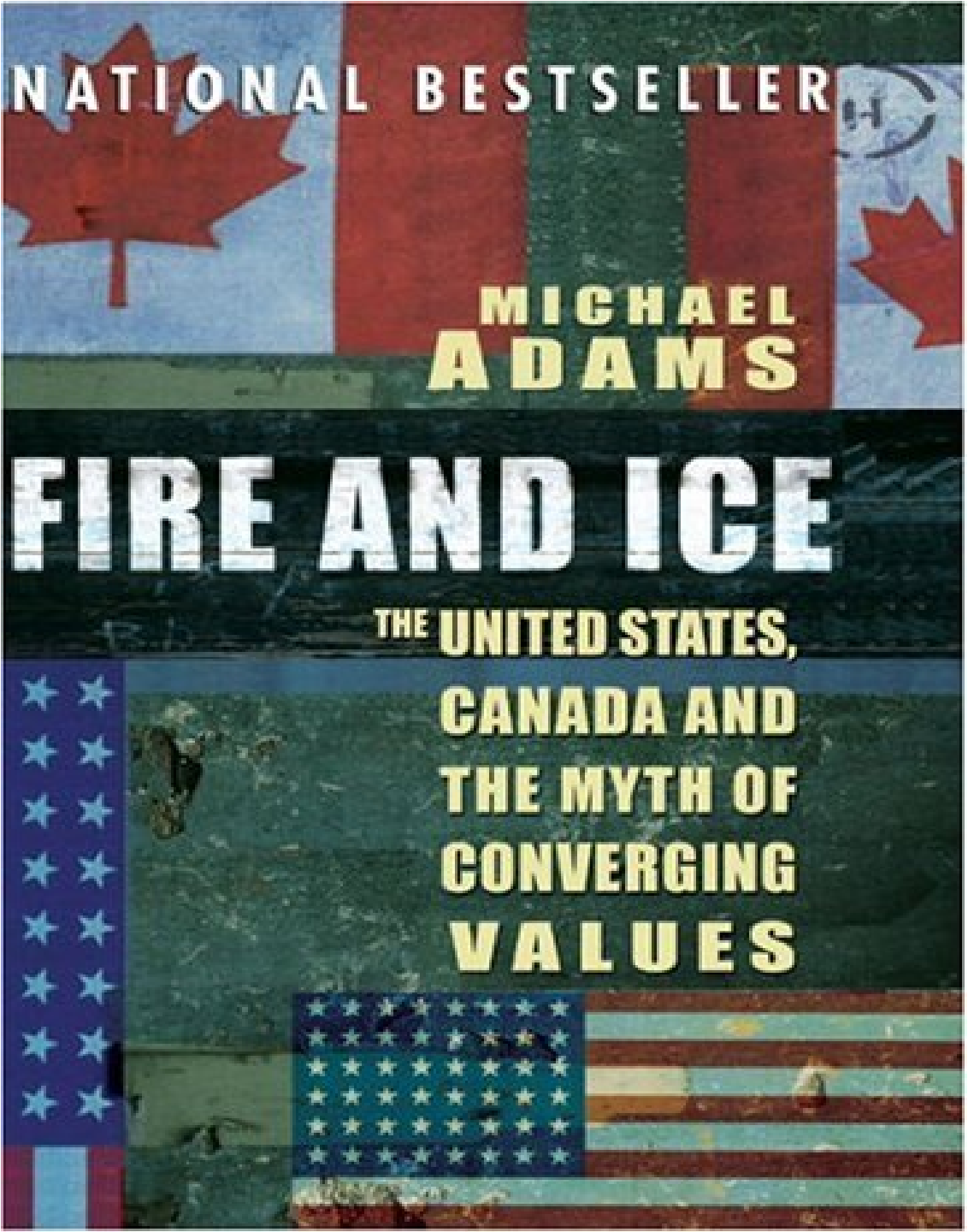
Income redistribution

Best quality of life

Have won the lottery

Compulsory philanthropy

Self-effacing irony



Which led to a book

A Donner Prize later, what seemed counter-intuitive became obvious

2013

So are Americans and Canadians trading places?

Research Methodology

- The Environics program tracks people's personal values, motivations and mindsets
- Multiple statements are used to ensure the robust measurement of several facets of each social value
- Fielded among nationally representative samples aged 15+ in the United States in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2007 and 2012 and annually in Canada since 1983
- In 2012, we tracked 60 values dimensions with 109 items in each country

Beyond the Morality of Good and Evil

Examples of the 60 values we track:

- Acceptance of Violence
- Adaptability to Complexity
- American Dream
- Attraction to crowds
- Concern for Appearance
- Duty
- Flexible Families
- Global Consciousness
- Joy of Consumption
- Just Deserts
- Obedience to Authority
- Patriarchy
- Penchant for Risk
- Personal Challenge
- Question Authority
- Religiosity
- Sexism
- Sexual Permissiveness
- Spiritual Quest
- Xenophobia

Examples of Social Values

Religiosity

Placing great importance on religion as a construct which guides one's life. Also, placing great significance on having an affiliation with an organized religious faith. Tendency to consider that religion represents the essential values.

Agree:

- My religious beliefs are important to me.
- I consider myself to be a member of a religious faith.
- I would like to have a religious service at my funeral.
- It is important for children to receive a religious upbringing.

Examples of Social Values

Personal Challenge

Setting difficult goals, even just to prove to themselves that they can do it. People strong on this trend finish what they start, persevering until their self-assigned task is completed to their satisfaction.

Agree:

- I often do something simply to prove to myself that I am able.
- When I really want to do something, I almost always do it.
- Once I start something, I stick with it until I am satisfied with the results.

Examples of Social Values

Acceptance of Violence

People highest on this trend believe that violence is an inevitable fact of life that must be accepted with a certain degree of indifference. Belief that violence can be both cathartic and persuasive.

Agree:

- Violence can sometimes be exciting.
- When a person can't take it anymore and feels like he/she is about to explode, a little violent behavior can relieve the tension.
- Violence is a part of life. It's no big deal.
- It's acceptable to use physical force to get something you really want. The important thing is to get what you want.

Examples of Social Values

Just Deserts

Confidence that, in the end, people get what they deserve as a result of the decisions they make, both positively and negatively.

Agree:

- People get what they are entitled to have.
- People get what they deserve.
- Rewards and punishments are fairly given.
- People who meet with misfortune have brought it on themselves.

AUTHORITY

The Socio-Cultural Map

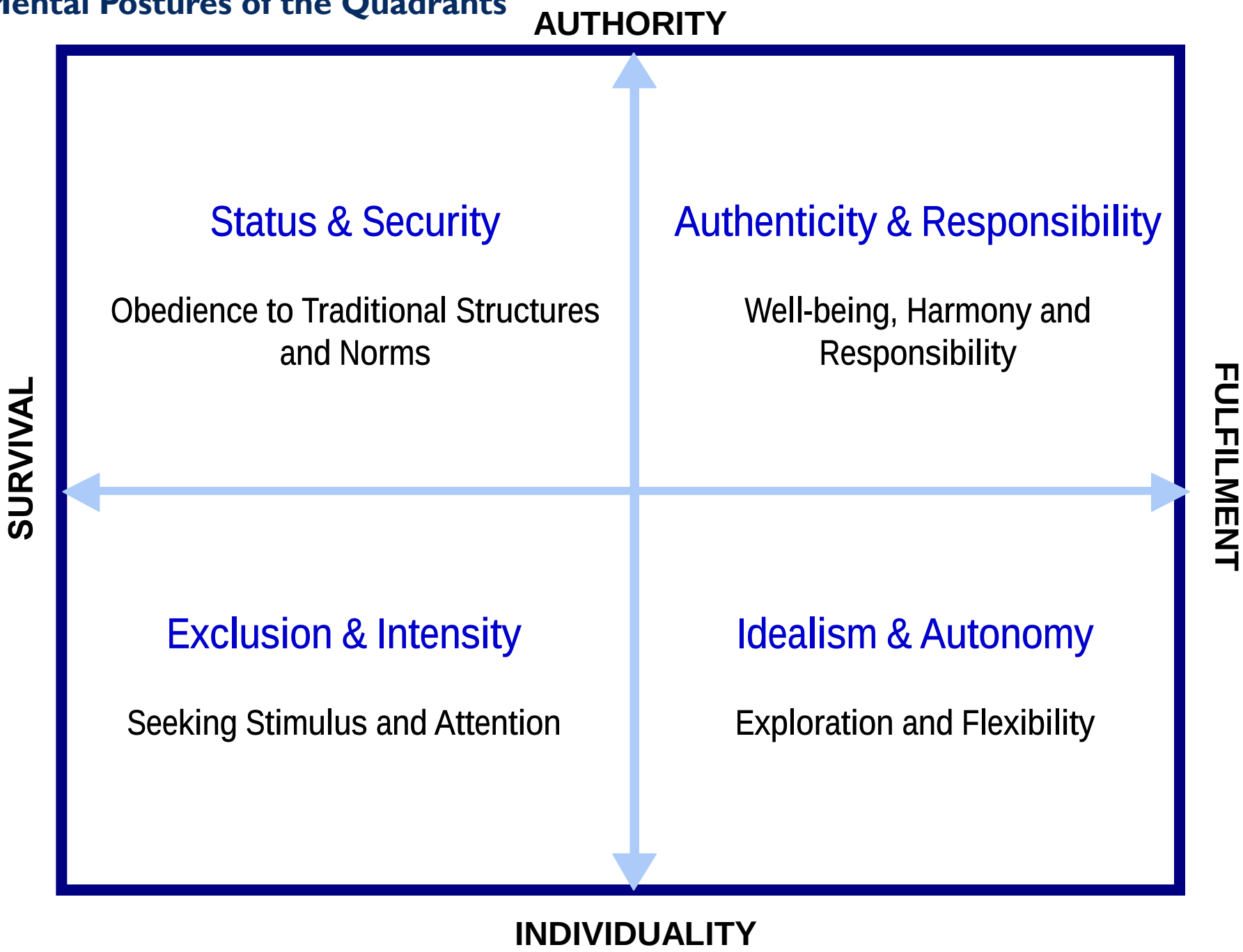
Traditional Family
Religiosity
Obedience to Authority
Duty
Spiritual Quest
Patriarchy
Emotional Control
Personal Challenge
Social Intimacy
Cultural Assimilation
Concern for Appearance
Confidence in Advertising
Aversion to Complexity
Personal Expression
Xenophobia
Saving on Principle
Sexism
Joy of Consumption
Ecological Concern
Attraction for Crowds
Parochialism
Financial Security
Ecological Fatalism
Need for Status Recognition
Adaptability to Complexity
Ostentatious Consumption
Scepticism of Advertising
Personal Creativity
Global Consciousness
Multiculturalism
Pursuit of Intensity
Acceptance of Violence
Penchant for Risk
Sexual Permissiveness
Rejection of Authority
Flexible Families
Equal Relationship with Youth

SURVIVAL

FULFILLMENT

INDIVIDUALITY

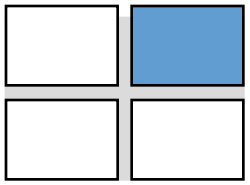
Mental Postures of the Quadrants



Status & Security Quadrant

- Pursuing the American dream by following accepted rules and norms
- Strong work ethic
- Desire for achieving material success and demonstrating social standing
- Belief in traditional institutions and identities

Authenticity & Responsibility Quadrant

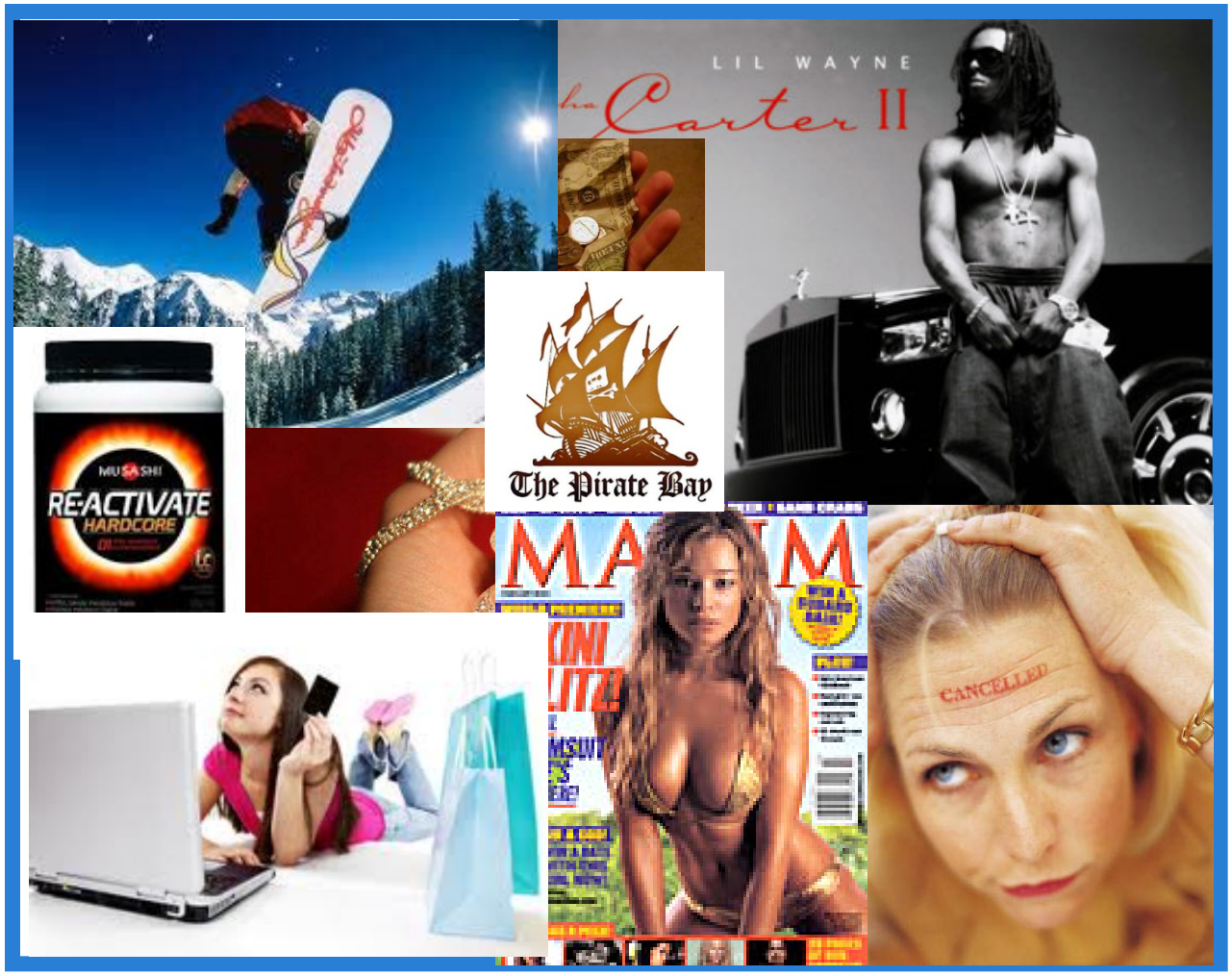


- Strong sense of duty and responsibility to others
- Care deeply about ethics and fair-mindedness
- Take care of mind, body and spirituality in the face of daily challenges

The Idealism & Autonomy Quadrant

- Self-reliant and in control of their own destiny
- Idealistic and open-minded
- Rejecting what they believe are “out-dated” norms and institutions

Exclusion & Intensity Quadrant

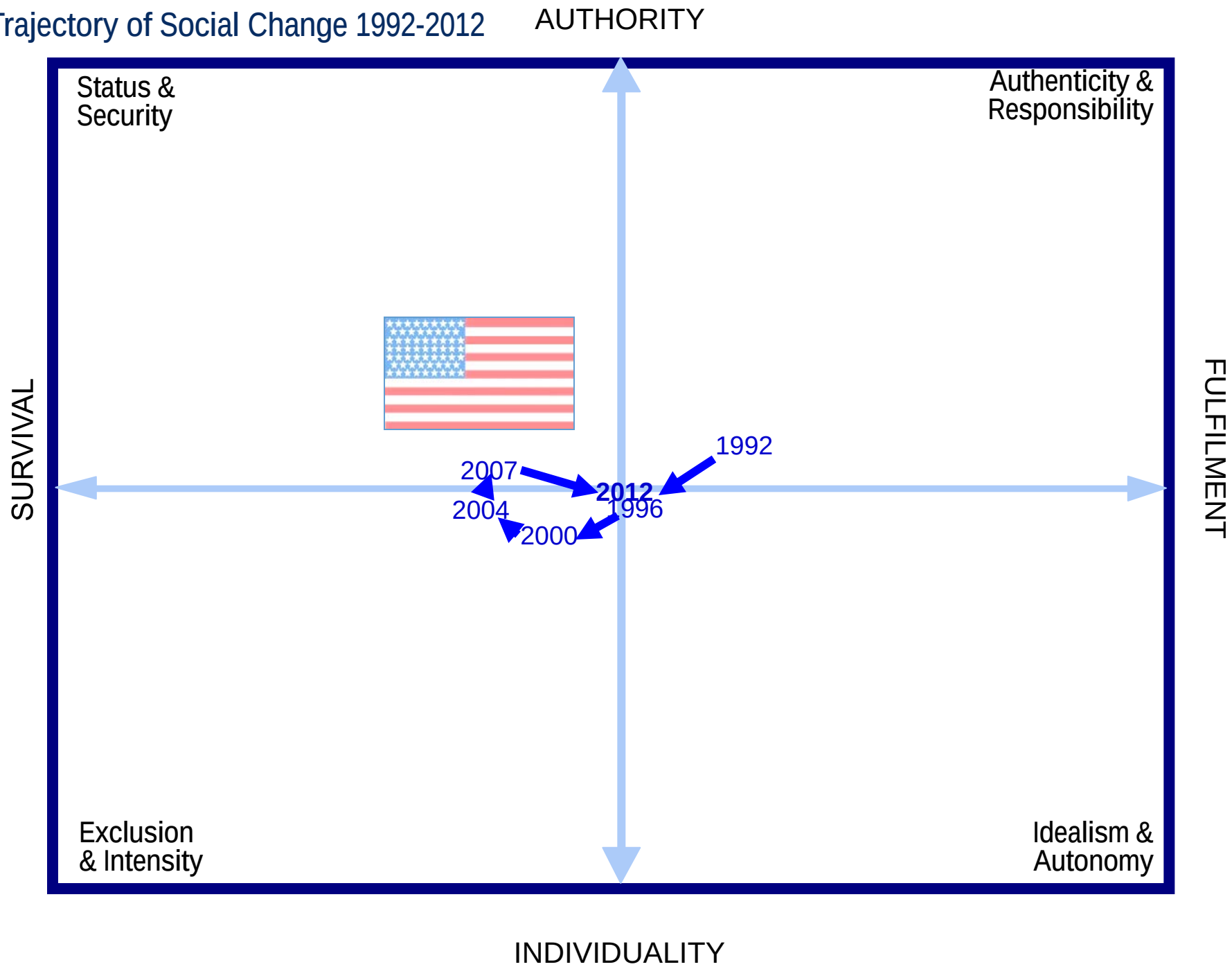


- Taking risks and challenges for the thrill or for personal gain
- Flaunting one's success and material possessions
- Craving constant attention, excitement and distraction
- Living on the edge with risky, anti-conformist behaviour

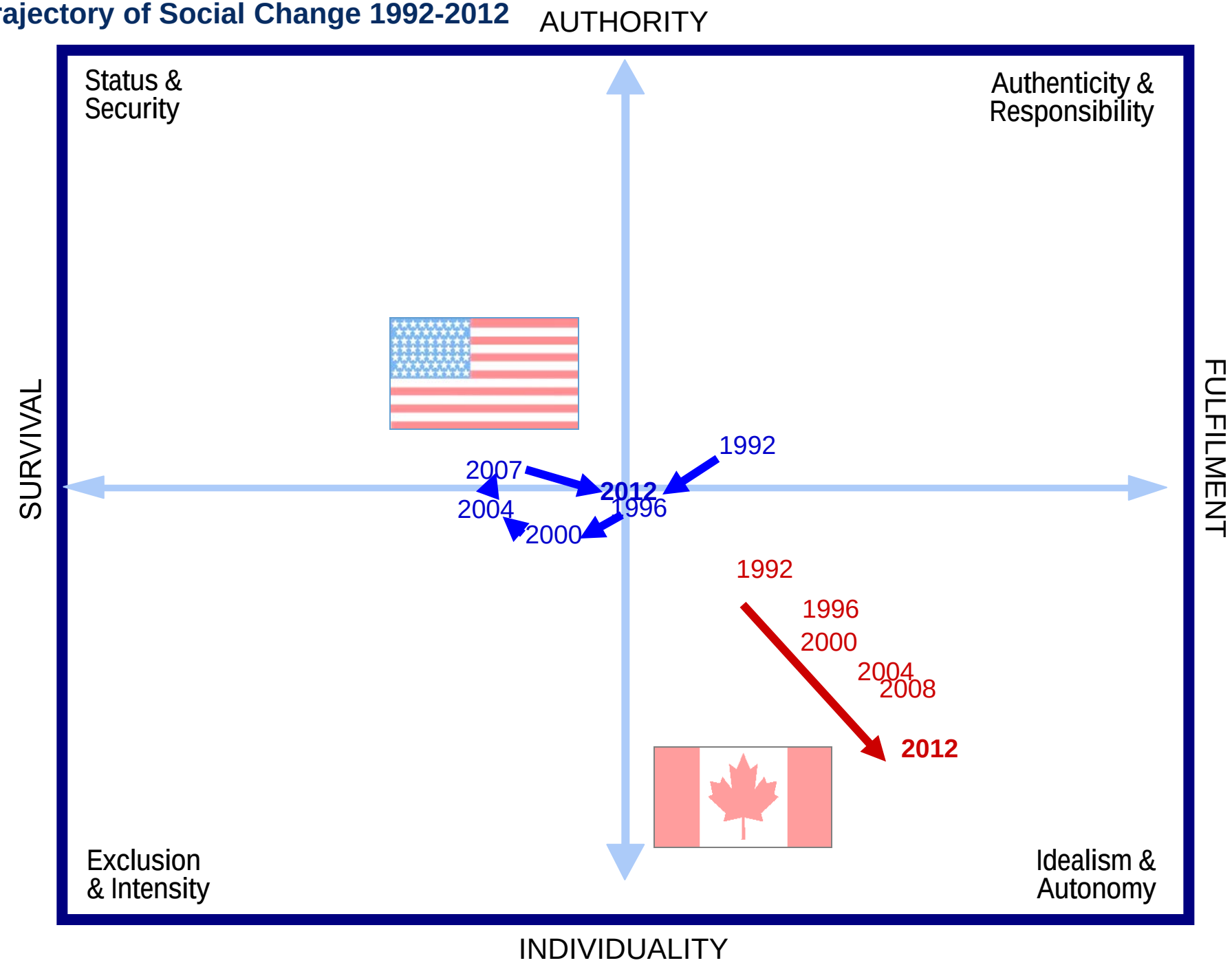
The evolution of social values

US and Canada: 1992 - 2012

Trajectory of Social Change 1992-2012



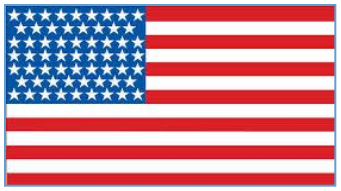
Trajectory of Social Change 1992-2012



On which values do Canadians and Americans differ the most in 2012?

Stronger in Canada

- Flexible Families
- Ecological Concern
- Cultural Assimilation



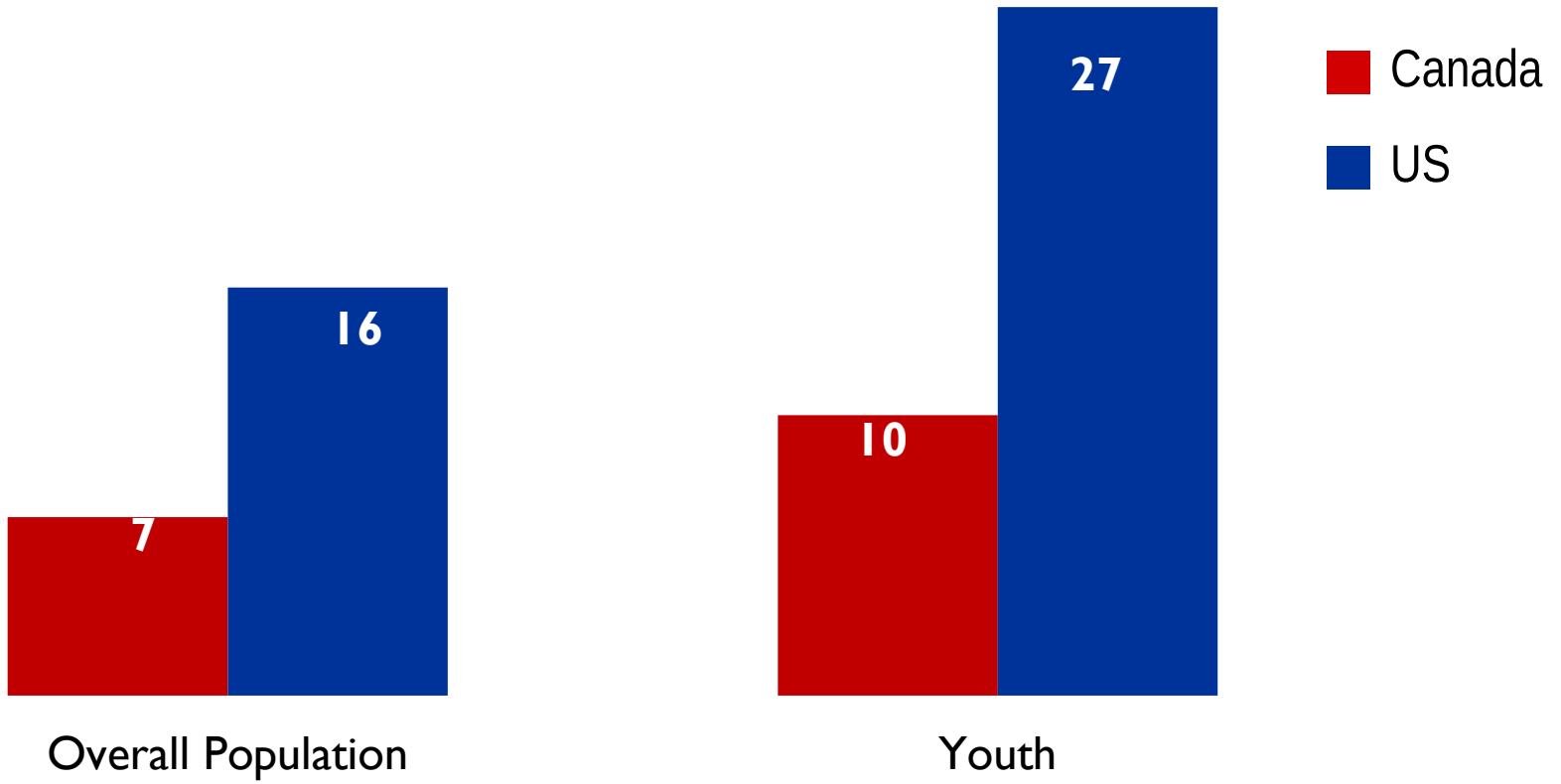
Stronger in the US

- National Pride
- Fear of Violence
- Work Ethic
- Spiritual Quest
- Propriety
- Religiosity
- Patriarchy

Canadians and Americans also differ on Acceptance of Violence, especially among youth

Violence is a part of life. It's no big deal.

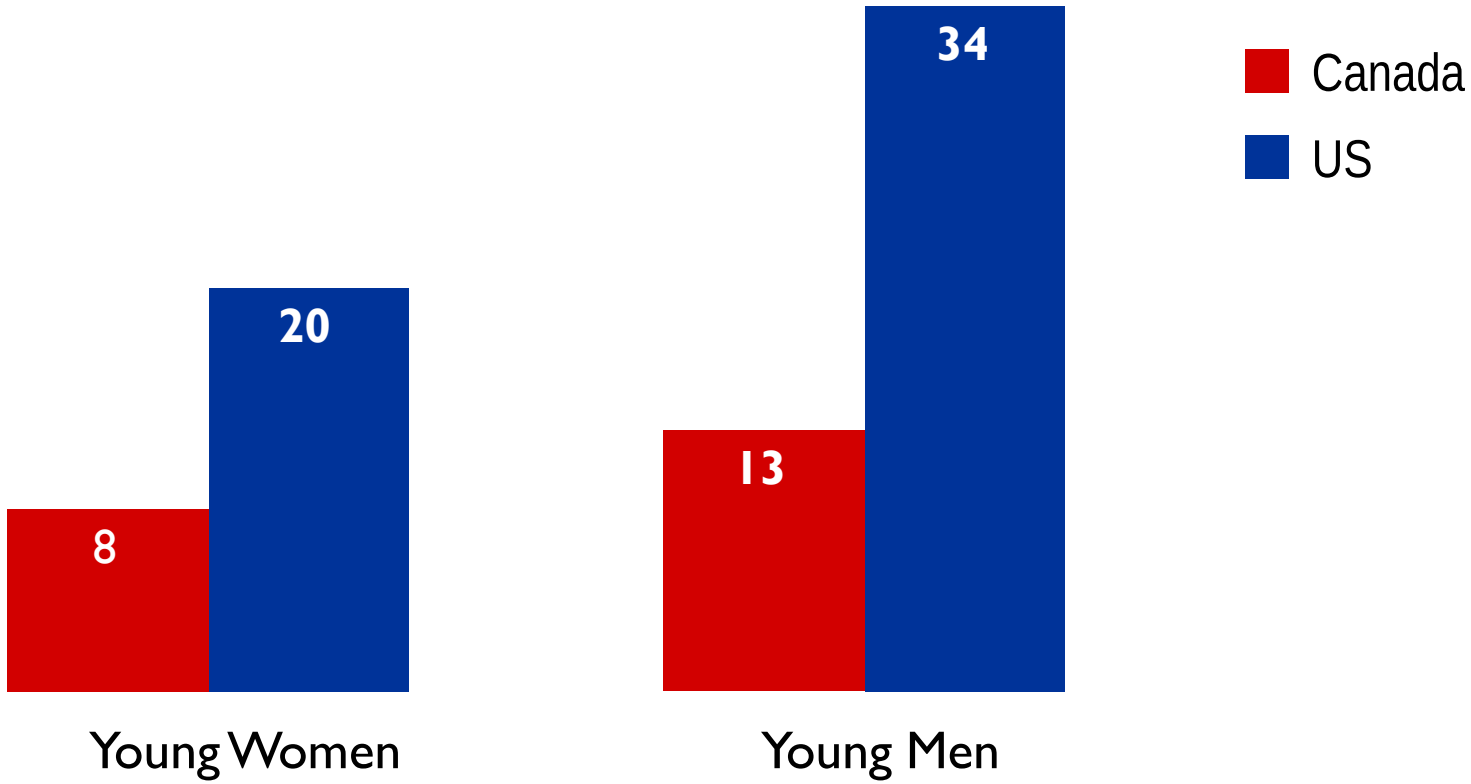
Agree: Canada and USA vs. Youth (15-24): 2012.



Young American men are especially comfortable with violence

Violence is a part of life. It's no big deal.

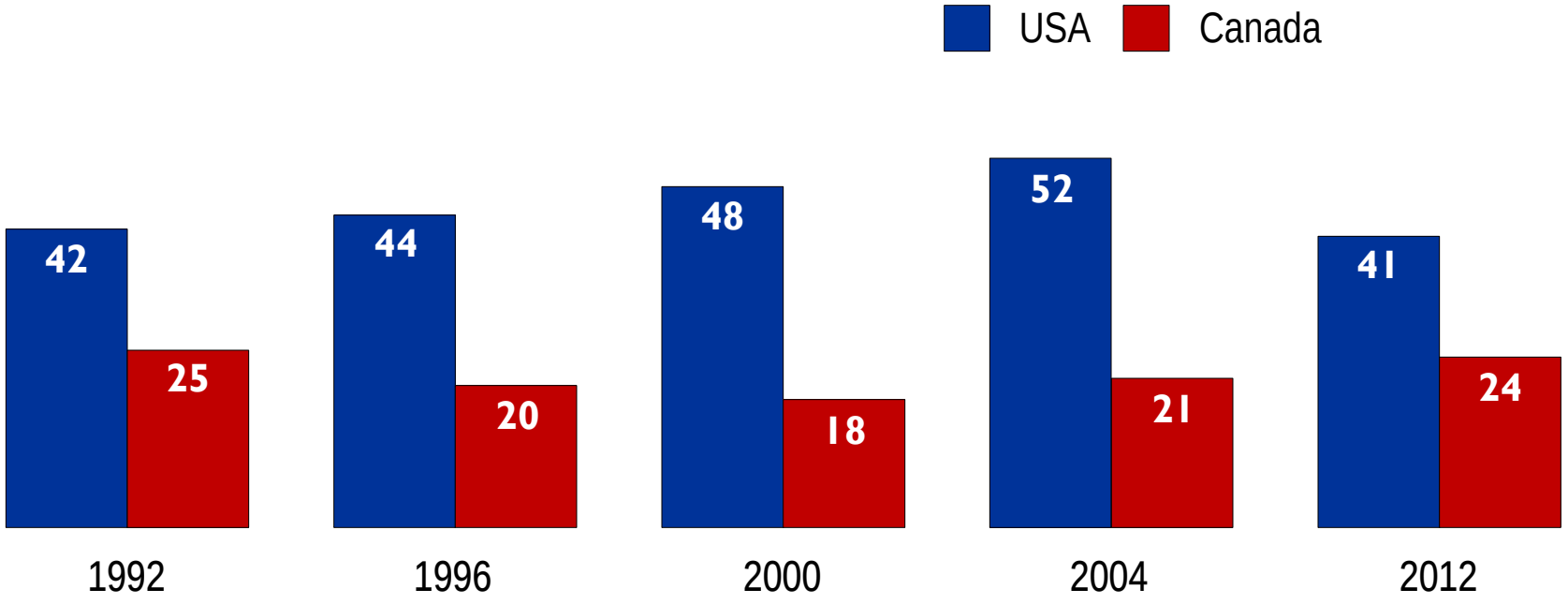
Agree: Canada and USA Youth (15-24): 2012.



Although we have seen that Americans are more patriarchal than Canadians, recent data has shown that the gap is narrowing

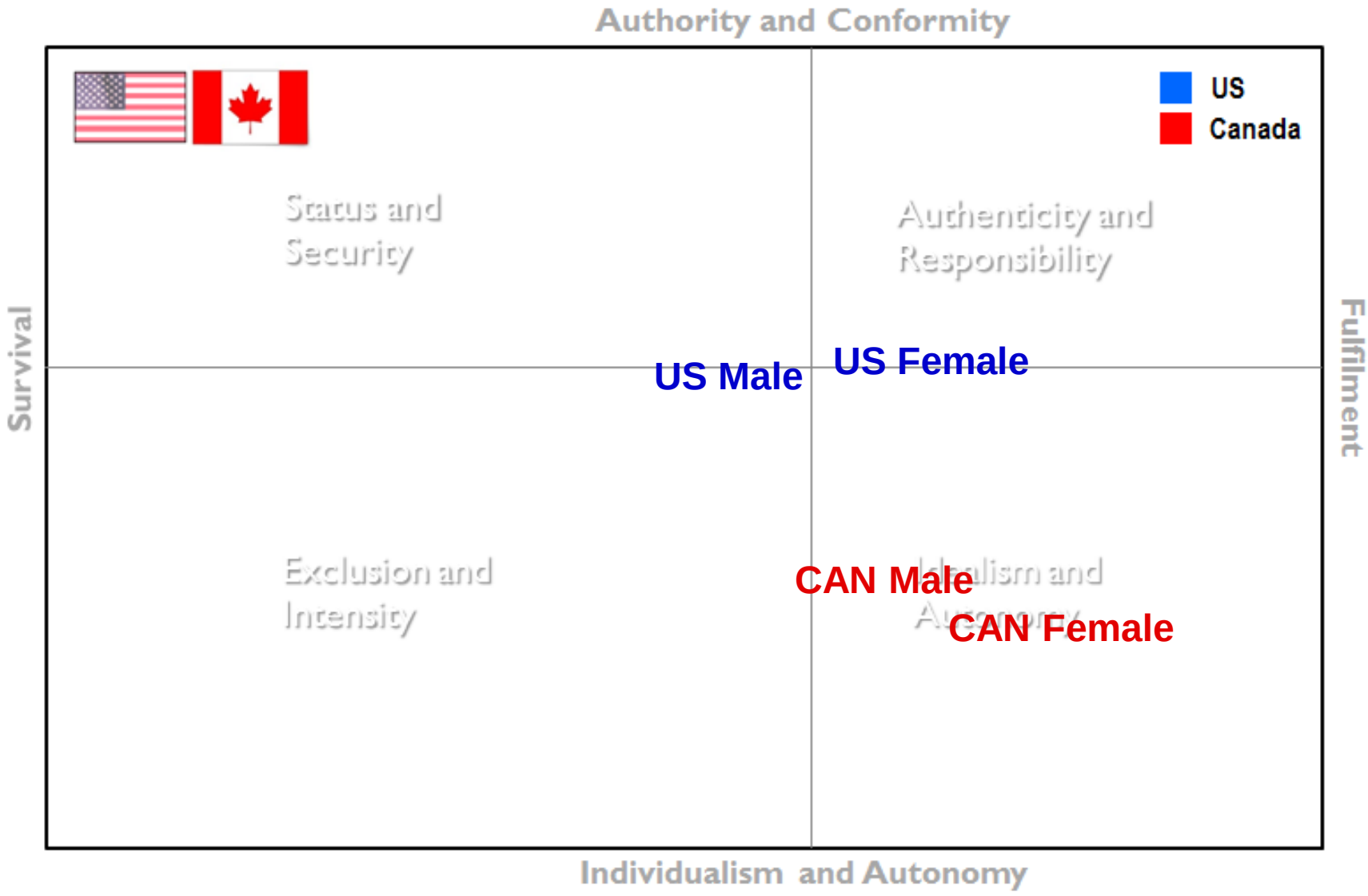
Father of the family must be master in his own house

Agree: USA and Canada:1992 – 2012

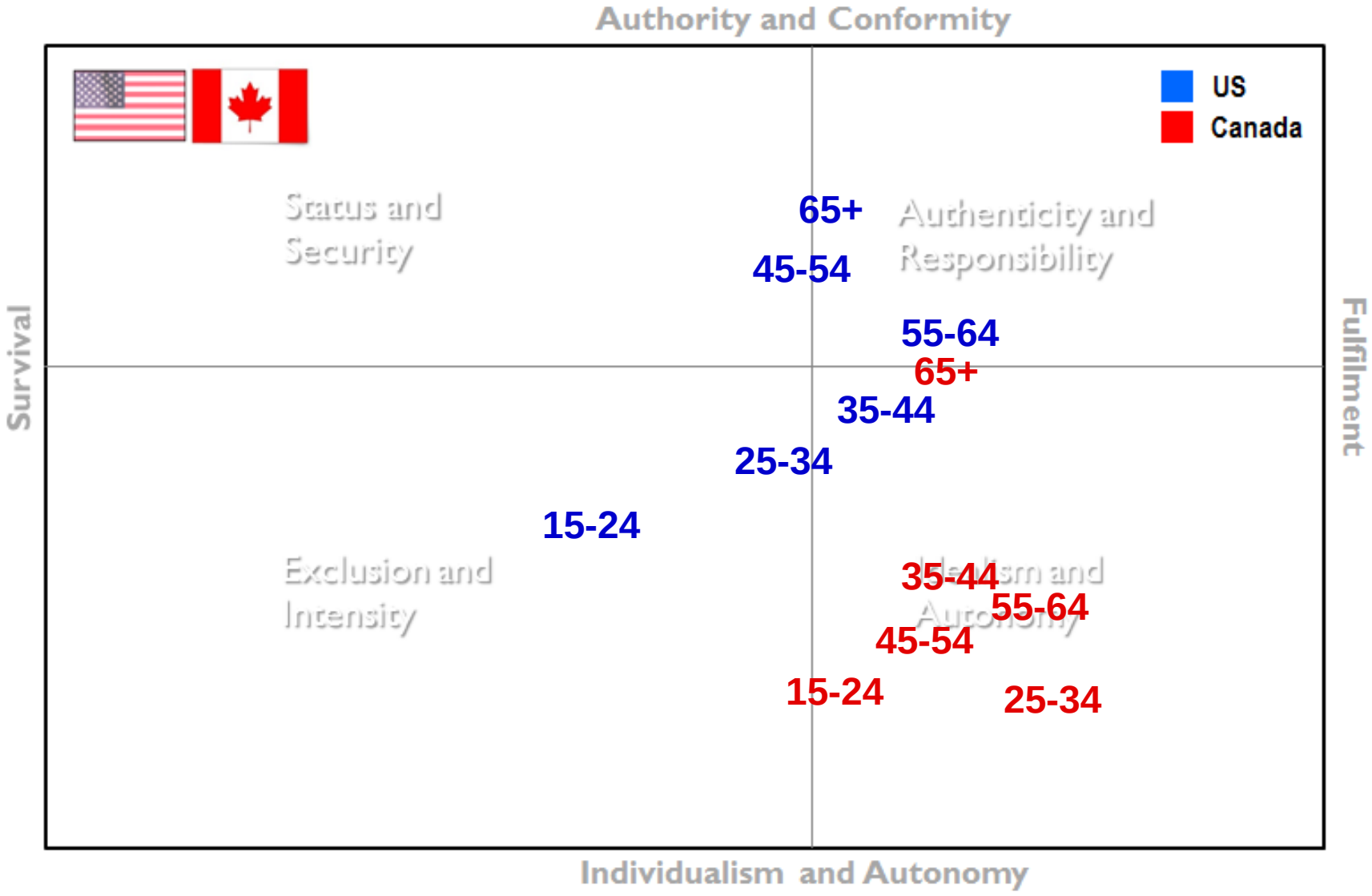


Comparing American
and Canadian Values
by Demographics

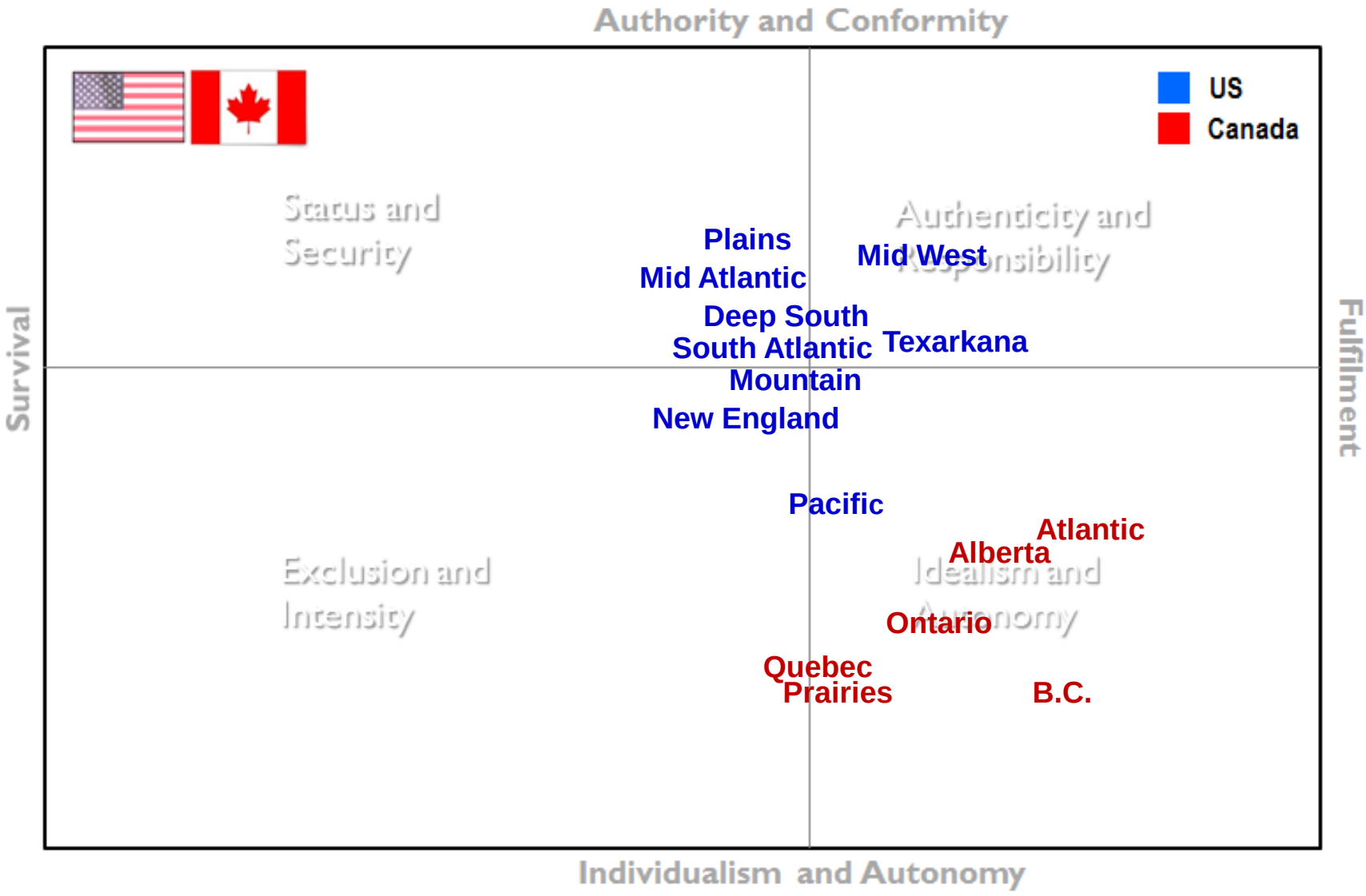
Gender


Authority and Conformity
US
Canada
Status and Security
Authenticity and Responsibility
Survival
Fulfilment
US Male
US Female
Exclusion and Intensity
CAN Male
CAN Female
Individualism and Autonomy

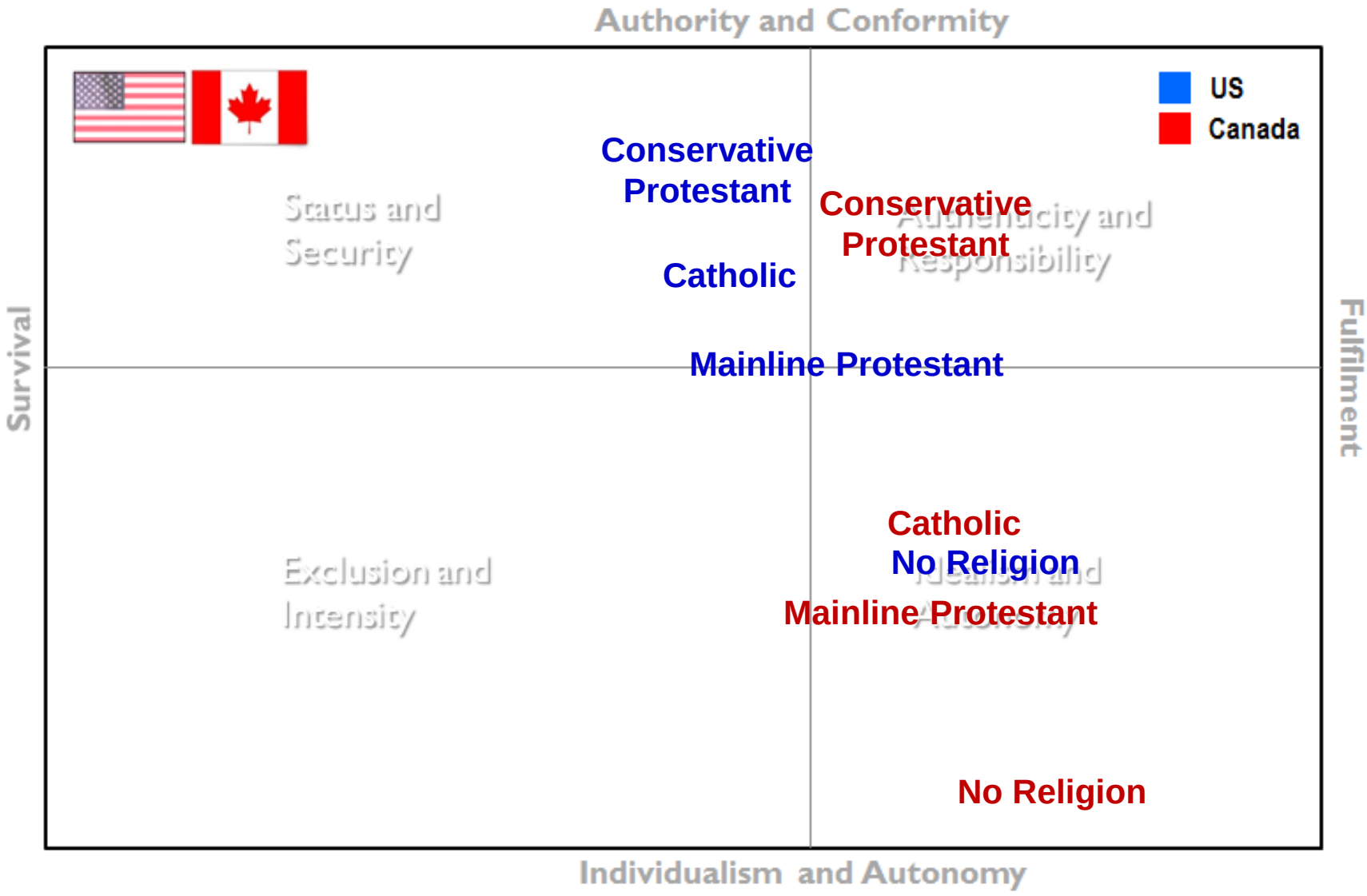
Age Group


Authority and Conformity
US
Canada
Status and Security
Authenticity and Responsibility
65+
45-54
55-64
65+
35-44
25-34
15-24
Survival
Fulfilment
Exclusion and Intensity
35-44
55-64
45-54
15-24
25-34
Individualism and Autonomy

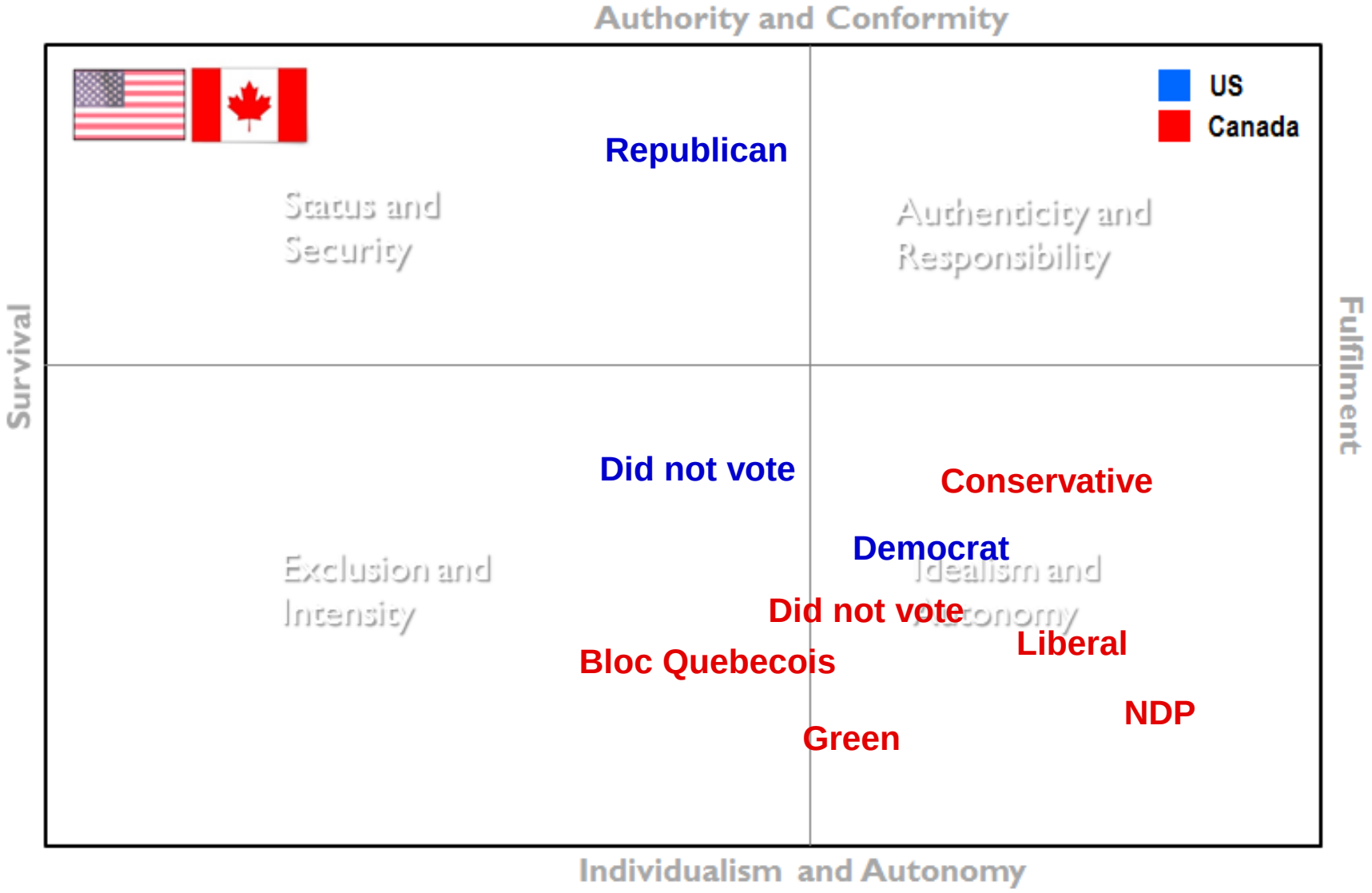
Region


Authority and Conformity
US
Canada
Status and Security
Authenticity and Responsibility
Plains
Mid West
Mid Atlantic
Deep South
South Atlantic
Texarkana
Mountain
New England
Survival
Fulfilment
Pacific
Atlantic
Alberta
Exclusion and Intensity
Idealism and Autonomy
Ontario
Quebec
Prairies
B.C.
Individualism and Autonomy

Religion


Authority and Conformity
US
Canada
Conservative Protestant
Conservative Protestant
Catholic
Mainline Protestant
Status and Security
Authenticity and Responsibility
Survival
Fulfilment
Catholic
No Religion
Mainline Protestant
No Religion
Exclusion and Intensity
Individualism and Autonomy

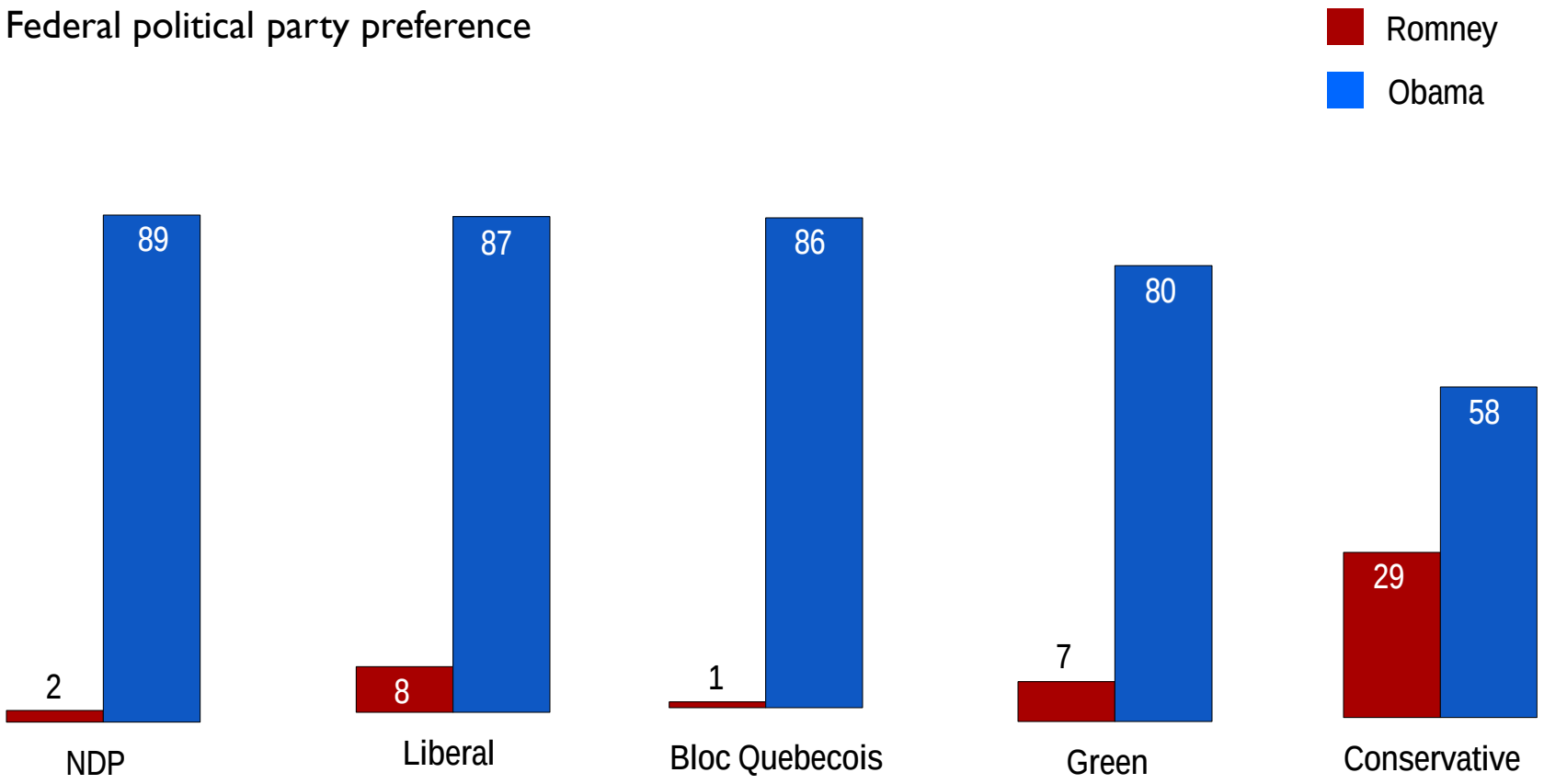
Political Party Preference (2012)



Obama was the clear choice among Canadians for US President – even among Conservatives

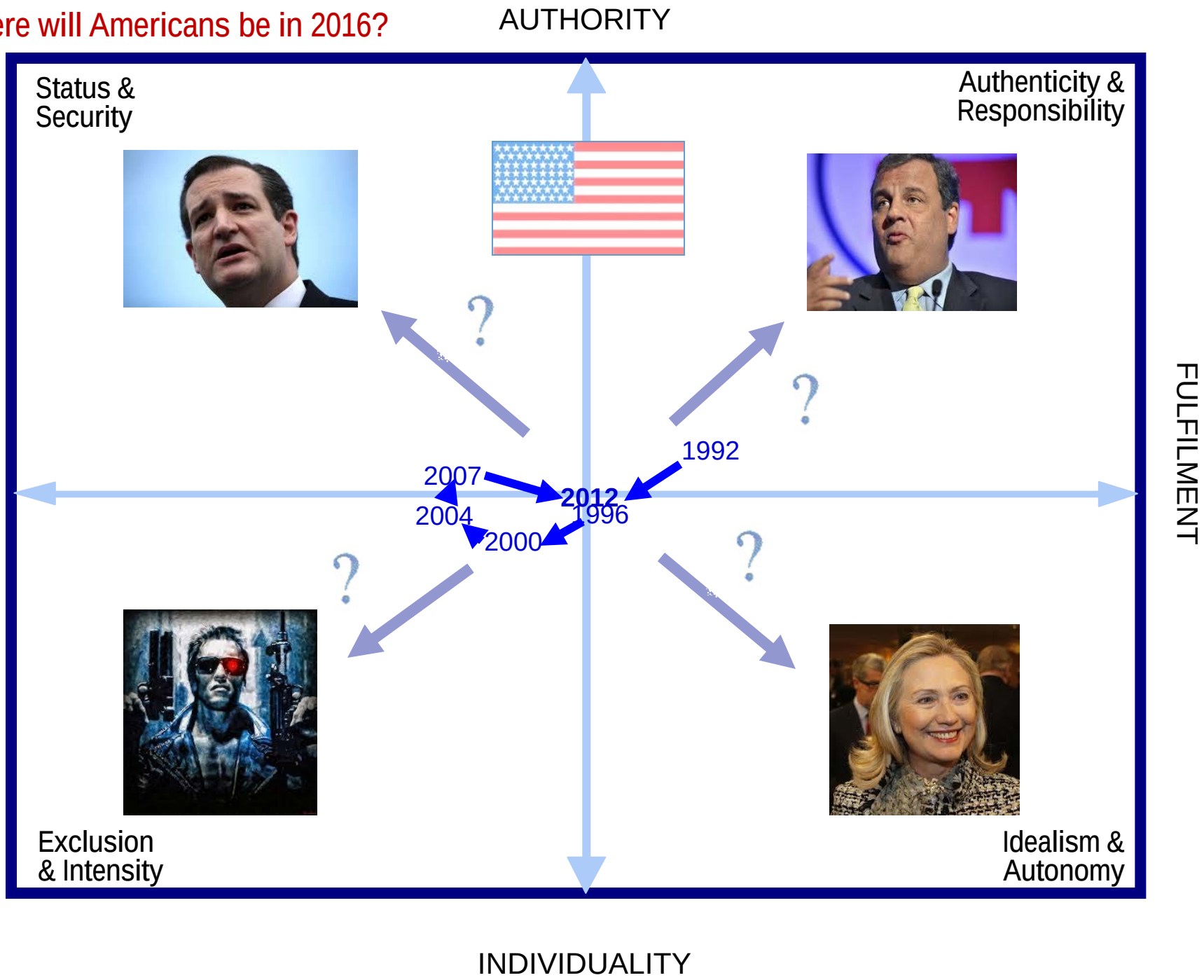
Preference for US President (2012)

By Federal political party preference



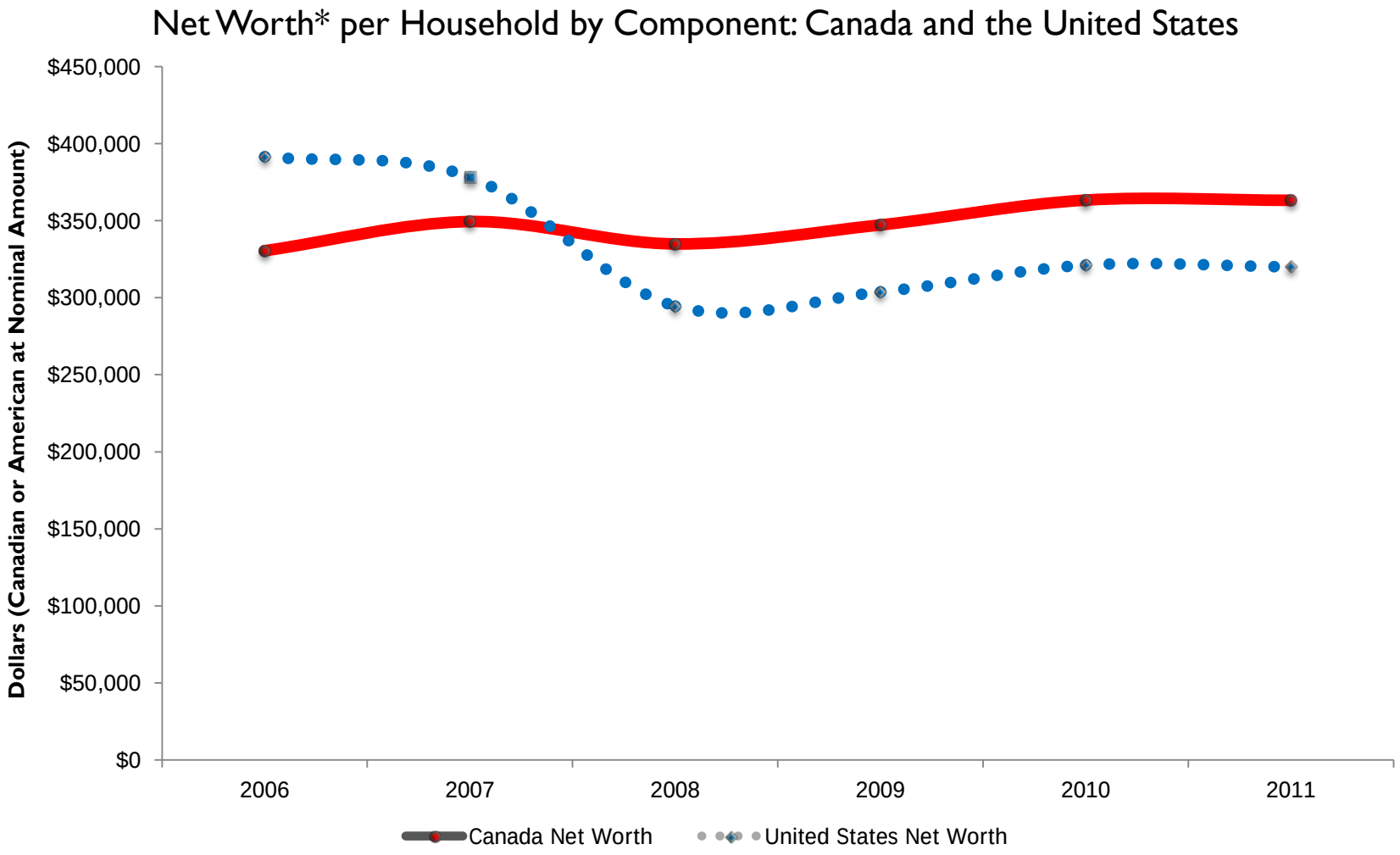
Where are American values heading in 2016?

Where will Americans be in 2016?



Now that we know that
Canadians are avant-garde progressives . . .

. . . they are now also wealthier than Americans



***Net worth**: Total combined of assets (liquid & real estate) minus debt

Sources: Environics Analytics WealthScapes 2011 & U.S. Federal Reserve

The Environics Institute for Survey Research

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