



Center for Communication and
Civic Renewal at the University of
Wisconsin-Madison

The American Voter in 2024

A Survey Report on What Unites and Divides Us

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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Introduction

As Donald Trump is inaugurated as president, we analyze the complex divides that shaped the votes Americans cast in the 2024 election.

The 2024 presidential election was a nail-biter. Neither candidate won a majority of votes, and Trump edged out Kamala Harris among voters by just 1.5%. The Electoral College vote came down to the same few battleground states as 2020 and 2016.

In this pre-election survey report, we investigate divisions in the days leading up to the 2024 presidential election. Many of the divides we find are large, but it is important to remember that neither party is a monolith, and our survey data show some cross-party agreement and substantial disagreements within parties too.

This report builds on our separate, concurrent [Midwest battleground state survey](#), and the national results we report below are similar to those we found in the Midwestern states. However, our analysis of economic perceptions and antisemitism are unique to this national report.

Key Findings

American Voting Patterns

- **Turnout:** Republicans expressed slightly more certainty about voting than Democrats – 80% to 74% -- which corresponds with lower Democratic turnout in voter files.
- **Loyalty:** Republicans and Democrats supported their own party's presidential candidate at similar levels (87% and 86%), 2020 voters stuck with the same party in 2024 at similar rates. Party loyalty was somewhat lower in Senate and gubernatorial votes, where some split-ticket voting appeared.

Voter Divides on Group Attitudes

- **Recognizing systemic anti-Black racism:** 64% of Democrats agreed that Black people are hindered by past and present discrimination, compared with just 14% of Republicans. Independents split the difference at 38%.
- **Big business & labor unions:** Party polarization was low on distrust of big business (10-point gap) but large on labor union trust (38-point gap).
- **Hostile sexism:** Partisanship distinguishes hostile views of women much more than sex – the average Democratic man has less hostile views toward women than the average Republican woman.

- **Antisemitism:** the parties have similar levels of endorsement for classic antisemitic tropes, but they are sharply divided on scathing judgments against Israel’s violence against Palestinians.

Economic Perceptions & Pocketbook Voting

- **National, state, local, and family economic views:** Before the 2024 elections, Republicans saw worse economic conditions than Democrats at every level, from their own families to national conditions, and Independents are closer to that view than to Democrats, partly explaining the behavior of swing voters backing Trump over Harris.
- **Inflation views and actions:** Republicans were more likely than Democrats to perceive inflation worsening, but they also reported higher levels among a range of personal cost-cutting behaviors than Democrats.
- **Financial precarity:** Democrats and Republicans have similar levels of financial precarity across several measures, undermining the common narrative that economically insecure Americans are flocking to Trump.

Foreign Policy: Ukraine, Israel, & Palestine

- **Polarized views:** We find sharp partisan polarization on views of US military aid to Ukraine, US military aid to Israel, US recognition of Palestinian statehood, and UN punishment for Israel’s illegal settlements on Palestinian lands.
- **Democratic disillusionment over Biden’s Israel policy?** 84% of Democrats who strongly disagreed Israel should be punished said they were certain to vote. That number fell to just 67% of Democrats certain to vote among those who strongly agreed that Israel should be punished. Many other factors likely contribute to that difference, but the case for demobilization is plausible.

News Diets in the Electorate

- **Avoiding the news:** The most common American news diet is no *regular* news consumption, especially among Independents.
- **Partisan news:** 21% of Republicans regularly consume only pro-Republican media, versus 3% of Democrats who regularly get only pro-Democratic news.
- **Traditional, mainstream news gaps:** 70% of Democrats consume traditional news, compared with 45% of Republicans and 41% of Independents.

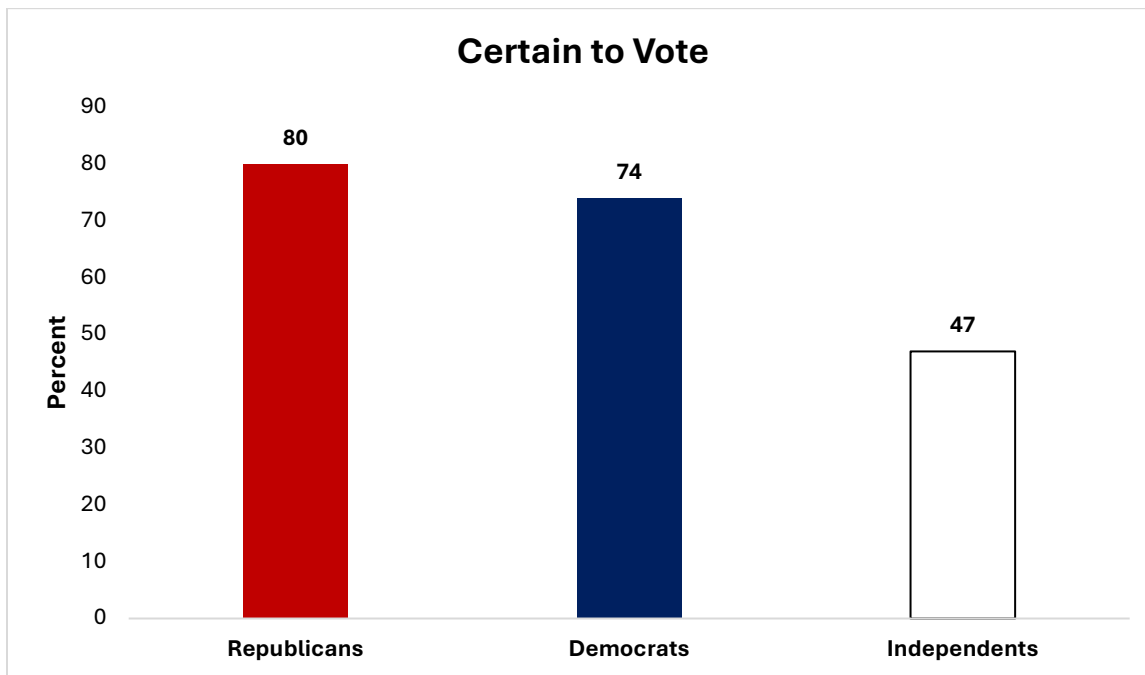
American Voting Patterns

Partisan Voting Enthusiasm

Seventy percent of respondents told us they were certain to vote or had already voted early.¹ Why were the rest thinking they might stay home?

Naturally, people who identify with a party or who consistently lean toward one are more motivated to support their “team.” However, partisans may feel more motivated (or not) to vote in a particular election based on the broader political context. People who don’t feel any attachment to a party may feel more conflicted over their vote choices in ways that keep them home or simply have less interest in politics. Which party turns out their base of supporters best is the most important factor in who wins elections.

42% of survey respondents identified as Democrats or consistently leaned toward the party, compared to 43% Republicans, and 15% who had no party attachment or leaning.



Republicans were most likely to report certainty about voting – 80%. Democrats trailed them, with 74% sure they’d vote. That 6-point turnout difference helps explain why the presidential result flipped from “blue” in 2020 to “red” in 2024 – Democrats were less

¹ This percentage is higher than known turnout among eligible voters. Even with efforts to get representative samples, survey respondents still are routinely more politically interested and engaged than the general public, and others are reluctant to say (even in an online survey) that they aren’t planning to vote, for social desirability reasons.

successful at motivating their supporters to vote – or helping them overcome voting barriers. Only 47% of people without party attachments said they'd surely vote.

76% of Republicans strongly disapproved of Joe Biden's presidential performance, compared to just 24% of Democrats who strongly approved, suggesting a substantial gap in partisan satisfaction with their party.

Republicans who strongly disapproved of Biden were far surer they'd vote than Republicans who felt otherwise – 84% vs. 64%.

And Democrats who strongly approved of Biden were somewhat surer they'd vote than Democrats who didn't – 76% vs. 73%.

Partisan Loyalty

86% of self-identified Republicans chose Trump for President, while 87% of Democrats chose Harris. These numbers are similar to party loyalty levels in recent presidential cycles.

92% of Trump voters in 2020 supported him again in 2024 compared to 90% of 2020 Biden voters who supported Harris in 2024.

2020 non-voters who planned to vote in 2024 split evenly between Trump and Harris. Notably, 2020 third-party voters were much likelier to support Trump (33%) than Harris (17%).

Similarly, 85% of Trump voters and 87% of Harris voters supported the same party's U.S. Senate candidates (in those states with a Senate vote).

Far fewer people had a vote for governor, but among them, 73% of Trump voters supported a Republican candidate compared to 80% of Harris voters supporting a Democratic gubernatorial candidate.

Sharply Distinctive Group Attitudes

Since the 1960s, Republicans and Democrats nationwide have grown increasingly divided on views related to civic equality by race, sex, religion, and class. These group-based attitudes are the most important dividing lines between the parties and the most powerful influences on who calls themselves a Republican or a Democrat.

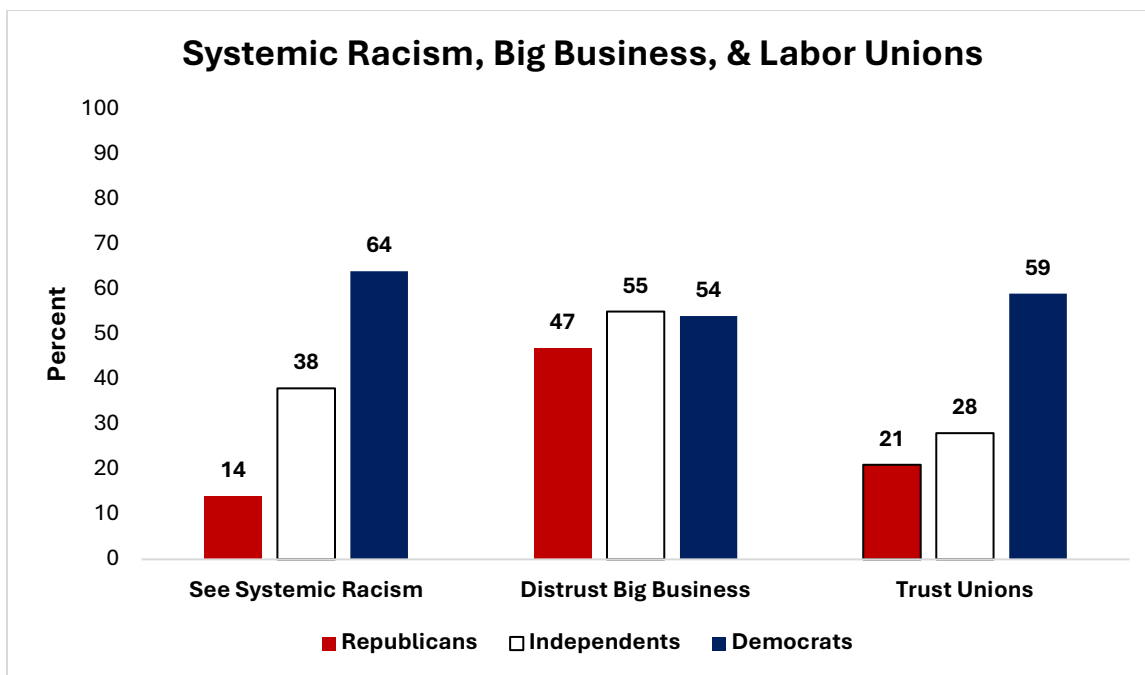
Nationally, Republicans tend to favor maintaining long-standing group hierarchies that advantage wealthy, whites, men, and Christians, while Democrats are more likely to favor reducing those gaps in power, opportunities, and resources.

Acknowledging Systemic Racism

We asked respondents whether they believed that a history of systemic discrimination against Black Americans has produced massive racial disparities in wealth and other measures of opportunity and well-being. “Agree or disagree? Generations of slavery and discrimination make it difficult for African Americans to advance.”

64% of Democrats agreed or strongly agreed, compared with just 14% of Republicans. Independents split the difference at 38%. Moreover, the differences were not solely due to Democrats being the primary home of Black voters. The numbers were nearly identical among *white* partisans – 63% for Democrats vs. 11% for Republicans.

Put differently, partisanship distinguished views about the contemporary consequences of systemic anti-Black racism much more strongly than race.



Big Business vs. Labor

Those running large corporations have long held outsized economic and political power over workers and government. Arrayed against them, labor unions have led the fight to provide more economic power and political influence for everyday workers, their families, and their communities.

For a century, Big Business has generally favored Republicans over Democrats, while national unions have generally backed Democrats over Republicans. However, the Democratic Party’s embrace of wealthy donors and flagging support for unions since the 1980s has accelerated a neoliberal turn that reduces those distinctions.

We asked partisans about their levels of trust in big corporations and labor unions. Partisans looked similar in hostility toward Big Business, as “populist” Republicans moved toward Democrats. 54% of Democrats said they distrust or strongly distrust Big Business, with 20% expressing some trust. 18% of Republicans expressed some trust in large corporations, while 47% indicated distrust, with the rest in the middle. Independents share Democrats’ distrust of big corporations, with 55% distrusting, and only 6% expressing some trust.

People vote for lots of reasons, but Democrats who pull their punches toward Big Business may be losing a significant pool of votes to Republicans. The question is whether interracial class solidarity can trump racial divides for whites.

Views on labor unions are almost a mirror image: 59% of Democrats trust or strongly trust unions, with only 10% distrusting them. 21% of Republicans trust unions, while 53% distrust them. Independents were split: 28% trust unions and 29% distrust unions.

Fully 26% of Republicans distrust large corporations *and* labor unions. 23% of Independents feel the same. Despite many Republican-leaning and mixed-party locals, distrust toward unions even among those who distrust Big Business impedes both these voters’ economic opportunities and Democrats’ electoral chances.

Hostility toward Women

Since the 1980s, the parties have sharply diverged on their views of women’s roles in society, and whether steps should be taken to address social, political, and economic inequalities by sex that disadvantage women.

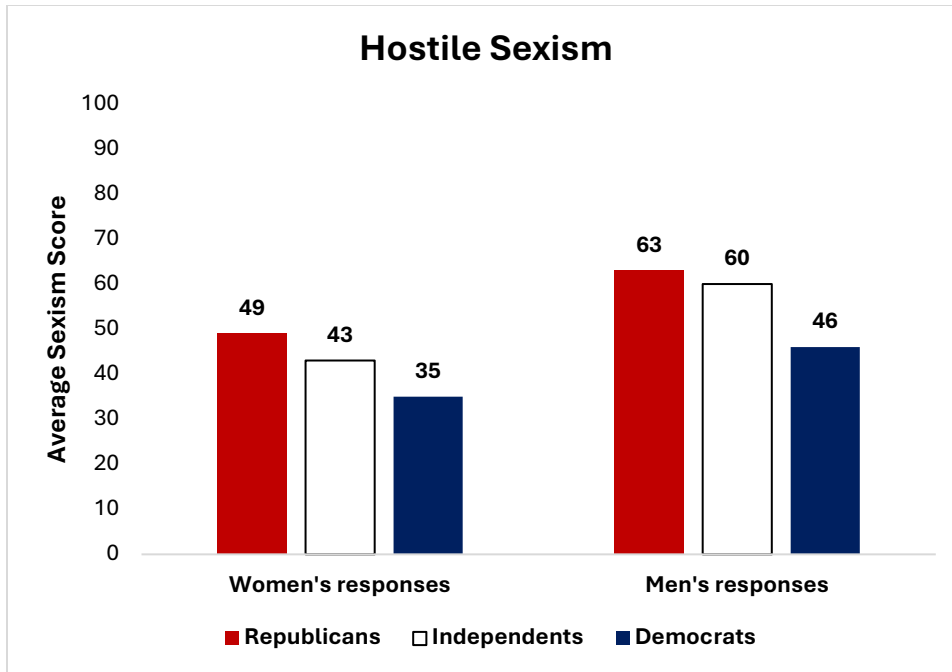
We asked respondents their views related to what is called hostile sexism – whether they strongly agreed, strongly disagreed, or something in between, that “most women fail to appreciate all that men do for them,” and that “most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.” We combined answers to both questions on a scale from 0 (least sexist) to 100 (most sexist).

Democratic women averaged 35 out of 100, while Democratic men had an average score of 46.²

Republican women averaged 49 out of 100, while Republican men had an average score of 63.

Put differently, party distinguished views on women much more than sex. Independents split the difference, with women averaging 43, and men averaging 60 out of 100.

² 1% of respondents identified as non-binary, which is too few to analyze separately with any precision.



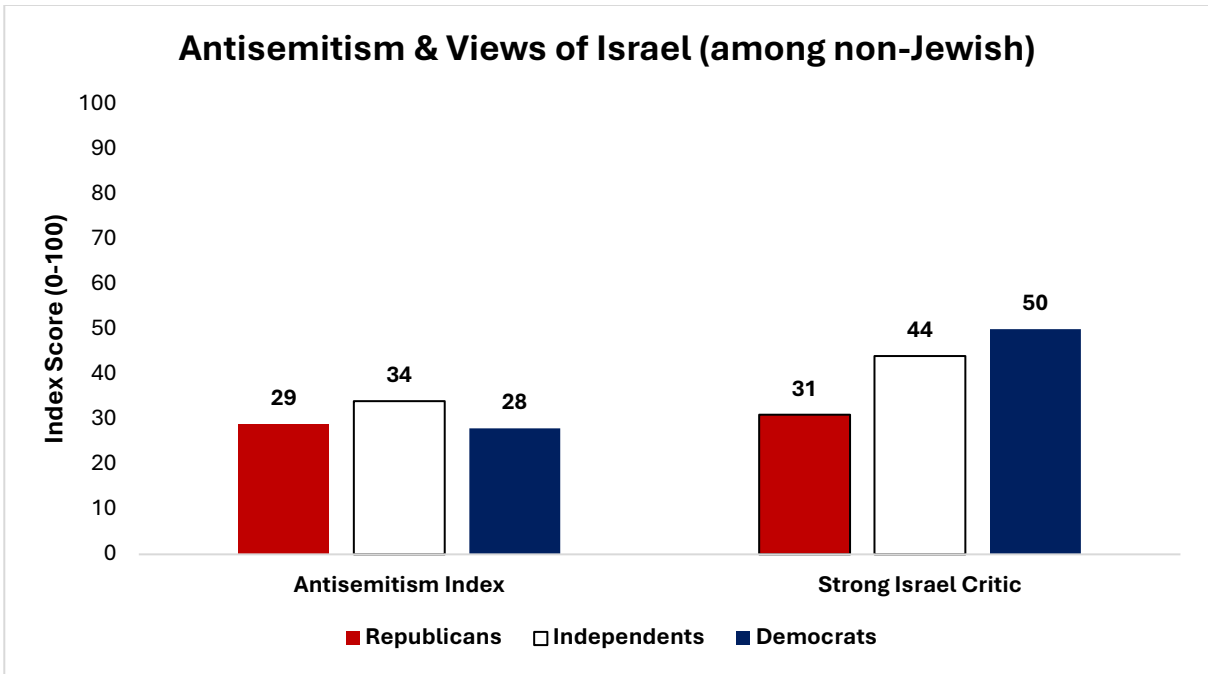
Antisemitism

Jewish Americans have faced bigotry and discrimination since the national founding. Typically, that hostility has come most from Christian nationalists. That American history joins two millennia of persecution around the world, most prominently in Nazi extermination camps during World War II.

In 2024, debates over U.S. military support for Israel's war in Gaza, Lebanon, and beyond became a major wedge issue among Democrats, leading to claims that opposing the Israel's actions was antisemitic simply because Israel represents the Jewish people.

We asked three sets of questions to probe these views. The first two assessed agreement with classic antisemitic tropes: false claims that Jews control the media and that Jewish Holocaust deaths are exaggerated. The media question was worded so that agreement indicated that it was a dangerous myth, so we reverse-code responses, then combine the two items into a 0-100 scale, where 100 is most antisemitic.

We find no difference between Democrats or Republicans on clear antisemitism, with notable levels of clear antisemitism in both parties, and even higher levels among Independents.



In contrast, we see substantial party differences in harshly criticizing Israel. We asked agreement that 1) Israel’s national establishment in Palestine was racist, and 2) that comparing Israel’s conduct with Nazis is never OK (reverse coded).

The two primary definitions of antisemitism disagree on whether Israel criticism is inherently antisemitic or not. The [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance](#) definition of antisemitism says it is, while the [Jerusalem Declaration](#) definition says it’s not. These two sets of items were designed to distinguish between the two definitions.

Notably, the two measures do not correlate closely, suggesting that clear antisemitism and views about Israel are largely unrelated, regardless of how one ultimately classifies harsh criticism of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians inside and outside of Israel.

Economic Perceptions & Pocketbook Voting

Economic perceptions and self-interest are common explanations for voting behavior, but the evidence is quite mixed in political science research. To the extent that economic well-being matters in votes, it tends to be based on perceptions of how the economy is in general rather than personal circumstances. People reward or punish presidents in particular for economic conditions, even though many parts of government are responsible, and the economy is affected by many global economic trends beyond the government’s control.

Moreover, these perceptions tend to be driven by partisan leaders more so than facts on the ground (especially among Republicans in recent years). In 2024, with a Democratic



president, Republican leaders had incentives to characterize the economy as worse than it was, while Democrats had an incentive to overstate how good the economy was.

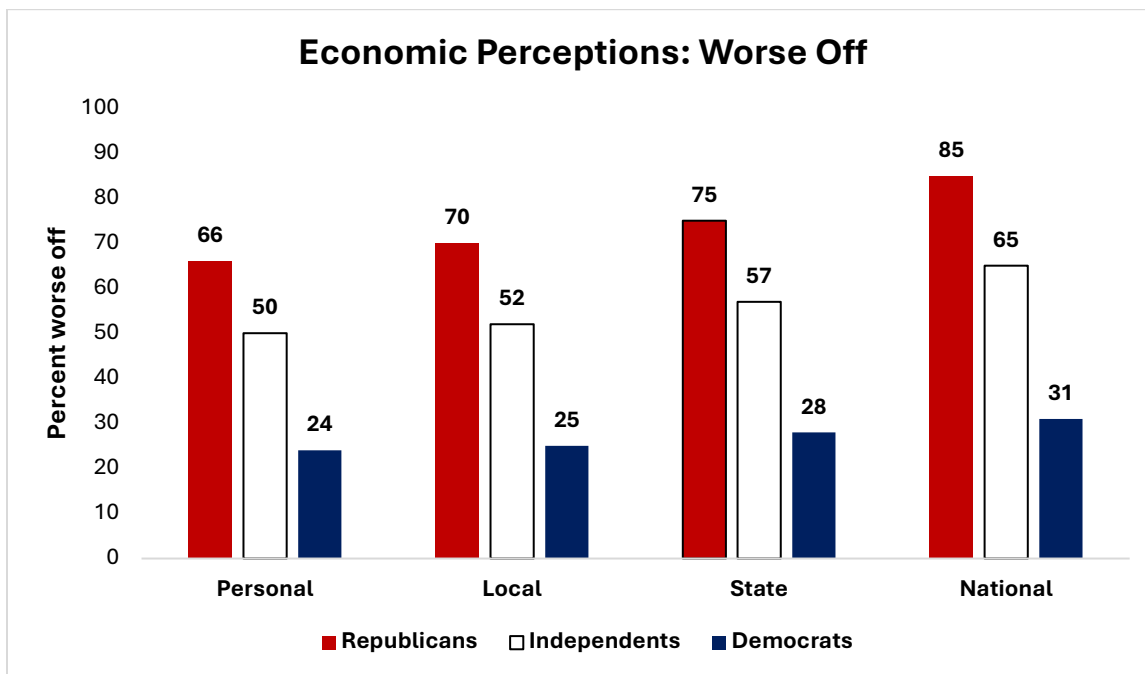
In other words, economic perceptions – even personal ones – tend to be driven by who people already plan to vote for, rather than shaping who they plan to vote for. But they still provide a snapshot of what people are thinking, and the perceptions matter more for how Independents vote.

National, state, local, and family economic views

We start with perceptions of whether the economy is better or worse off at several levels. Republicans were much likelier to evaluate the economy negatively at all levels, but especially at the national level, ranging from 66% to 85%.

Democrats followed the same trend, but with far lower levels perceiving a worsening economy, ranging from 24% in their families up to 31% at the national level.

Independents fell in between, but majorities saw negative economic conditions at every level, from 50% in their families up to 65% at the national level.

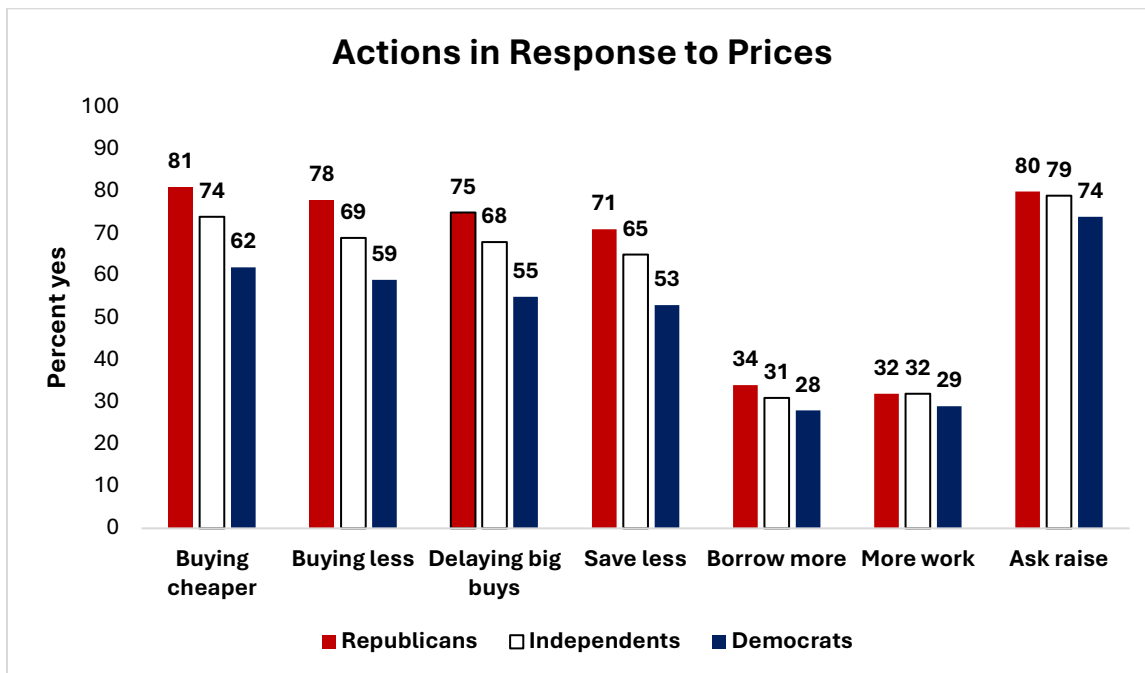


Inflation perceptions & actions

Higher levels of inflation was a particularly big talking point for Republicans, and thus for news media, despite U.S. inflation levels staying lower than most other developed economies around the world and improving inflation number throughout 2024.

We asked whether prices had gotten better or worse on a 5-point scale. Republicans were especially likely to say prices had gotten much worse (44%) and another 40% said prices had gotten somewhat worse. Just 12% of Democrats said inflation was much worse, but 34% said it had gotten somewhat worse. Views among Independents were closer to Republicans, with 31% saying much worse and 38% saying somewhat worse.

We also asked actions respondents had taken in response to higher prices (yes/no): buying cheaper products, fewer products, delaying major purchases, putting less in savings, borrowing more, taking on more work, and asking for a raise. These answers are still be subject to partisan biases, rather than fully accurate reports of behavior, but they may also be less subject to bias than broader economic perceptions.



On each question, Republicans were substantially more likely to say yes than Democrats, especially on purchases and savings – roughly 20 to 30 percent differences. Independents fell in between.

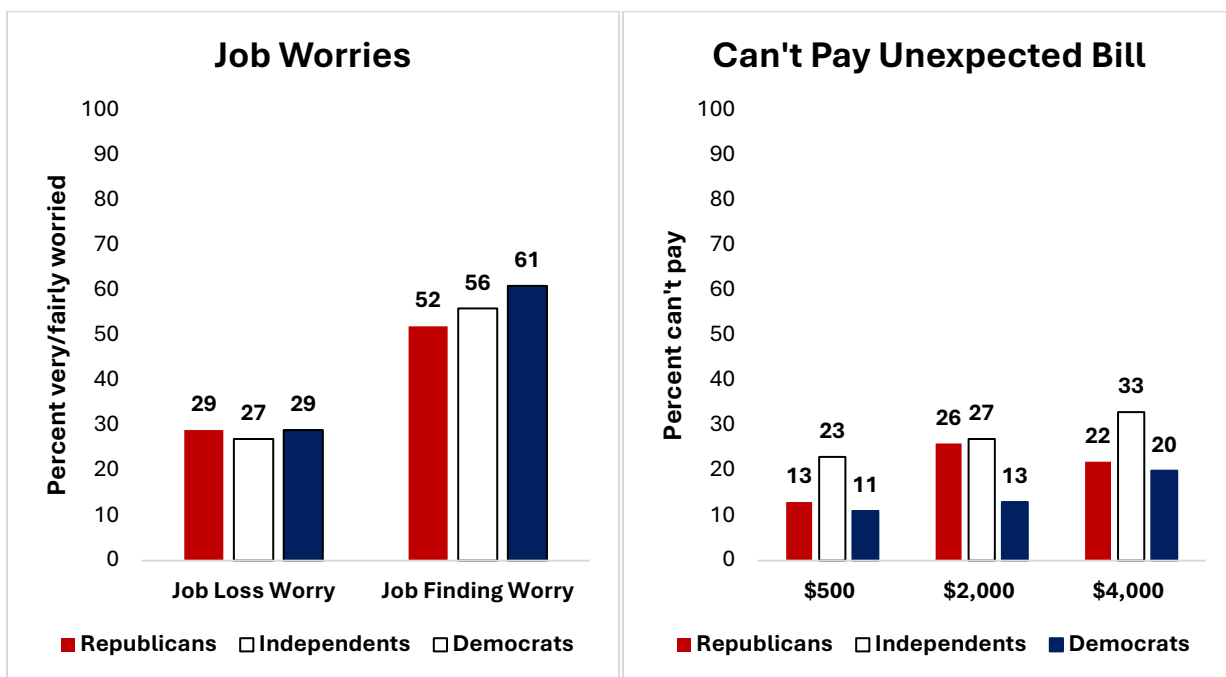
We see the same party patterns for borrowing, working more, and asking for a raise, but substantially muted compared to the other questions.

Financial precarity

Next, we asked about job worries – trouble finding a job or losing a job. Republicans, Democrats, and Independents were similarly worried about losing their job – 29% for both parties and 27% for Independents. But Democrats were more worried about finding a job (61%) than Republicans (52%) or Independents (56%).

Finally, we asked about respondents' ability to pay an unexpected bill. We randomly divided respondents up into three groups to ask about a \$500 bill, a \$2,000 bill, or a \$4,000 bill. Each respondent only answered one of those three bill levels. We gave respondents several options to respond, including paying the bill from cash reserves, a range of ways to borrow the money, or a complete inability to pay. We focus on complete inability to pay here.

At each bill amount, Independents were least able to pay, followed by Republicans and then Democrats close behind. At the \$500 level, 23% of Independents, 13% of Republicans, and 11% of Democrats could not pay. At the \$2,000 level, 27% of Independents, 26% of Republicans, and 13% of Democrats could not pay. And at the \$4,000 level, 33% of Independents, 22% of Republicans, and 20% of Democrats could not pay.³



These results complicate the common narrative that Trump voters face unique economic precarity, which motivates their “populist” support for Trump – the “economic anxiety” argument. Critics of that view argue that Trump voters are actually well off and that Trump support is motivated most by prejudices.

Our results suggest it's true that substantial numbers of Trump voters are financially insecure. However, similar portions of Harris voters are economically vulnerable too. Both candidates drew support from voters in economic precarity, based on differing

³ The slight decline in inability to pay among Republicans at the \$4,000 level compared to the \$2,000 level is illogical, but it is not statistically significant, and so the most plausible interpretation is no difference between the two levels among Republicans.



visions and promises related to the economy and beyond. But that means economic precarity wasn't a distinctive motivator for partisan vote choice.

Foreign Policy Views

It's no surprise that partisans are divided on policy, though they are less divided on some policies than others. Foreign policy views in particular often show a polarization between elected leaders and the public, rather than between partisans, except when foreign policy takes center stage in partisan conflict. Two major international conflicts have come to the fore in party politics and the 2024 presidential campaign: Russia's war against Ukraine, and Israel's war against Palestine.

We asked about funding or defunding US military support for Ukraine. Democratic leaders have almost unanimously supported that aid, while Republicans have been split between traditional Republican hostility toward Russia and the Trump wing's admiration and friendliness toward Putin.

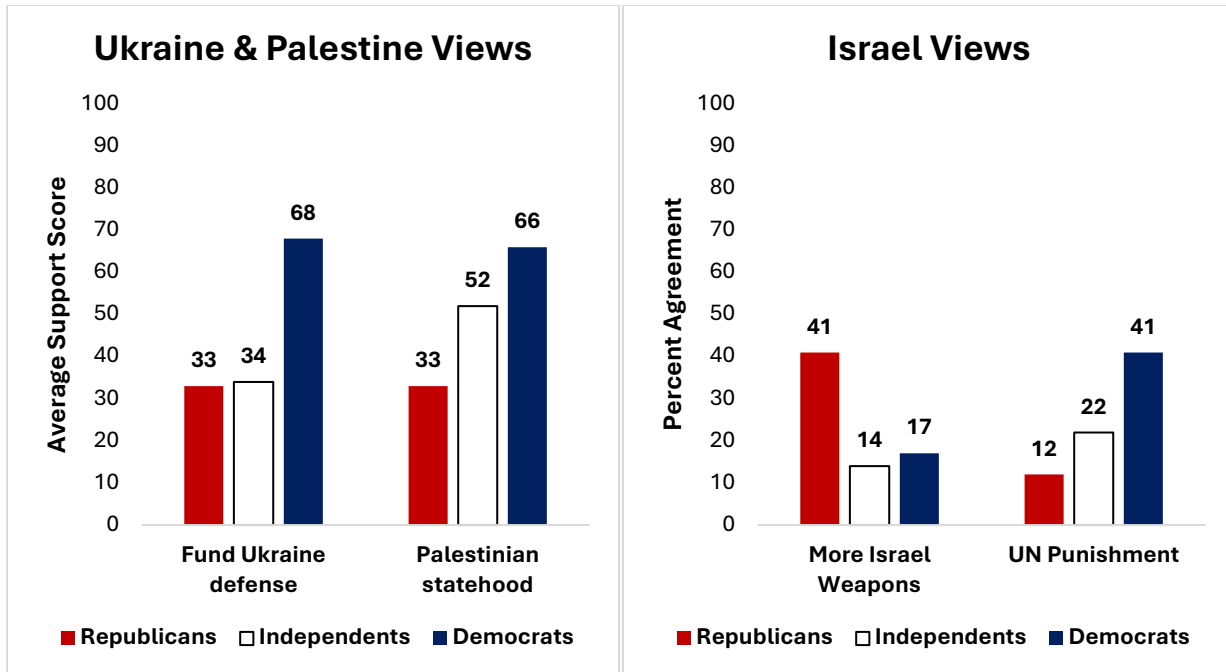
The question was asked on a 5-point support scale. We report average scores scaled from 0 (support the opposite) to 100 (fully support), rather than percentages.

Democrats scored 68 on the 0-100 Ukraine support scale (substantially supportive), while Republican support was 25 points lower, at 33 (substantially opposed), along with Independents at 34.

We also asked about support or opposition to Palestinian statehood, also on a 5-point support scale – a position espoused rhetorically by the U.S. government but not meaningfully supported in practice.

Democrats averaged a score of 68 (substantially supportive) compared to 33 for Republicans (substantially opposed), and 52 for Independents – right in the middle.

Democratic voter support for Palestinian statehood stands in notable contrast with Democratic leaders, most of whom have not supported Palestinian national self-determination, independent from authoritarian Israeli rule.



In 2024, U.S. military support for Israel’s war in Gaza, Lebanon, and beyond became a major wedge issue among Democrats. President Biden continued U.S. aid to Israel despite Israel’s mass killing of Palestinian civilians, which renders military aid illegal under U.S. law. Many Democratic leaders opposed Biden’s actions, along with a majority of Democratic voters.

In contrast, Republicans almost uniformly supported aid to Israel and opposed any progress toward Palestinian statehood.

On a 5-point agree/disagree scale, 41% of Republican citizens agreed that the U.S. should send more weapons to Israel compared to 17% of Democrats and 14% of Independents.

Second, Israel has built hundreds of illegal settlements on Palestinian territory. We asked agreement with the statement, “the United Nations should punish Israel for hundreds of towns Israel built illegally in Palestinian territory.”

41% of Democrats agreed with U.N. punishment compared to 12% of Republicans and 22% of Independents.

Did Biden’s Israel Support Demobilize Democrats?

We can also examine whether Democrats who agreed that Israel should be punished were less likely to be certain to vote, perhaps a sign of disillusionment that most Democratic leaders expressed unwavering Israel support despite its war crimes.



84% of Democrats who strongly disagreed Israel should be punished said they were certain to vote. That number falls to just 67% of Democrats certain to vote among those who strongly agreed that Israel should be punished.

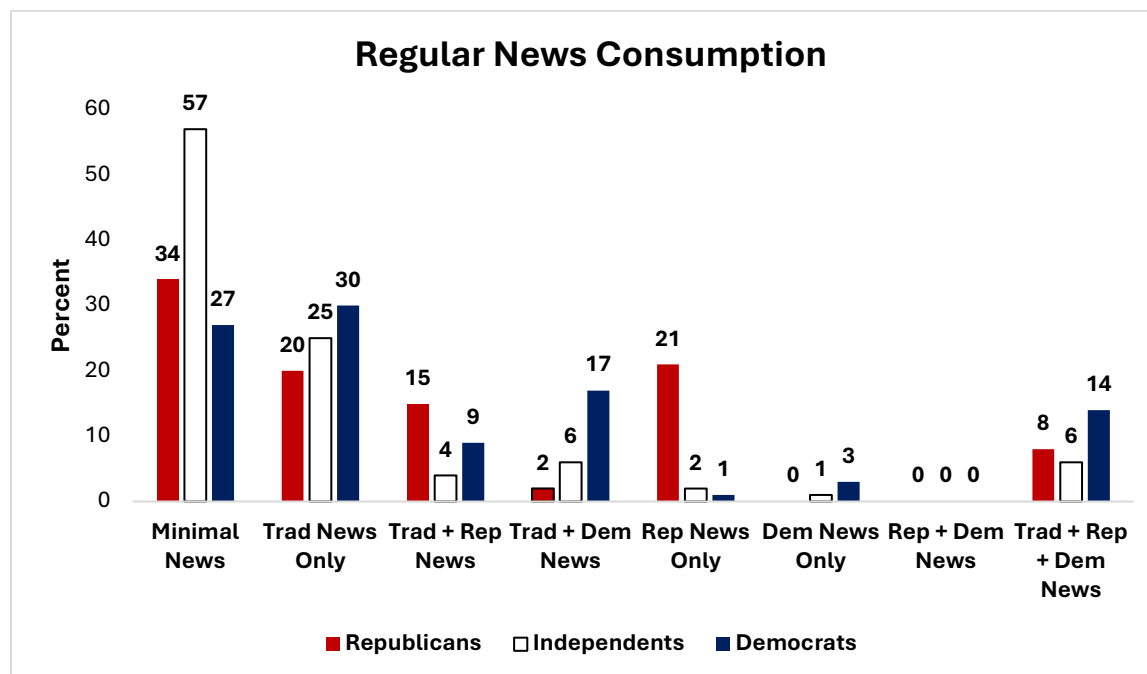
This is suggestive evidence that some Democrats were demobilized by Democratic leader positions on Israel, but it is not definitive. Other demographic and political factors may partly account for the relationship.

News Diets among Voters

What types of media sources do Americans get their information from? Are we stuck in partisan media bubbles or exposed to a broader range of political information?

We compiled media sources into three categories – mainstream news (including sources like national network television news, national newspapers, local newspapers, CNN, NPR),⁴ pro-Republican news (Fox News, Breitbart, Daily Caller, conservative talk radio, conservative podcasts), and pro-Democratic news (MSNBC, Huffington Post, liberal podcasts). Various combinations of mainstream news, Republican, and Democratic media types produce 8 news diet categories.

The most prevalent news diets for Republicans and Independents involve not consuming much news at all – 34% for Republicans and 57% for Independents. Minimal news is a close second for news diets among Democrats at 27%.



⁴ The full list also includes *Politico*, *Vox*, *Buzzfeed*, fact check websites, state newspapers, international news, *USA Today*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *NPR*, local TV news.)



Democrats are more likely than Republicans to only consume traditional news, at 30% vs. 20%. 15% of Republicans and 17% of Democrats regularly consume both traditional news and media from their own side. Perhaps surprisingly, 9% of Democrats and less than 1% of Republicans regularly consume traditional news and an *opposing* party media source.

Aggregated across all the news diet categories, 45% of Republicans consume traditional news, compared with 70% for Democrats and 41% of Independents. In some ways, Republican consumption of traditional news is still surprisingly high given decades of vilification by conservative leaders.

20% of Republicans regularly consume only Republican-sourced media content, contrasted with just 3% of Democrats.

Finally, 14% of Democrats and 8% of Republicans regularly consume news from all three categories – traditional, Republican, and Democratic. Overall, Democrats have more diverse news diets than Republicans, meaning they are more likely to hear a diverse range of political views. Consistent with other research teams' investigations of news selection, Republicans are more likely to select media environments that regularly advance their party's views.

About the 2024 Wisconsin Communication & Election Study

The 2024 Wisconsin Communication & Election Study (pre-election wave) was administered online by [YouGov](#) from October 17 to November 4, 2024. YouGov supplied a demographically weighted representative opt-in sample of 2,000 American residents. We apply demography-based survey sample weights to better align estimates with state populations.

Although non-probability samples do not have traditional margins of error, percentages from the full sample have a virtual margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points for estimates near 50%, with smaller margins for estimates as they move toward 0% or 100%. Estimates for Democrats in the two states have margins of error of +/- 3 percentage points, and estimates for Republicans are +/- 3 percentage points.

We also fielded a Midwestern regional survey with many of the same questions, and we're fielding post-election surveys for additional insights, all for later reports and scholarly work.

The 2024 Wisconsin Communication & Election Study was supported by the John S. and James L. [Knight Foundation](#), which advances research at the intersections of media and democracy.

About the Center for Communication & Civic Renewal

The Center for Communication & Civic Renewal (CCCR) is an interdisciplinary research team housed in the School of Journalism & Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. CCCR's research aims to understand Wisconsin public opinion and the state's broad political communication ecology, drawing upon frameworks and methods foundations in communication, political science, sociology, psychology, and computer science. Dr. Michael Wagner leads the Center as Faculty Director, Dr. Dhavan Shah is the Center's Research Director, and Dr. Nathan Kalmoe serves as Executive Administrative Director for the Center.

The Center's public opinion polling is one of three analytical components in its broader efforts studying political communication in Wisconsin, the Midwest, and beyond. Over the years, we have also conducted in-depth interviews with hundreds of citizens throughout the state to understand how they're talking and thinking about politics. And we have conducted large-scale computational analyses of social media and news media content throughout the Wisconsin, the United States, and the world.

CCCR's past research is synthesized in the book, [*Battleground: Asymmetric Communication Ecologies and the Erosion of Civil Society in Wisconsin*](#), published by Cambridge University Press in 2022, along with several peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals, and public-facing essays published in national news outlets including the *Washington Post*, *Vox*, and *TechStream* as well as local outlets like the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the *Capital Times*, and the *Wisconsin State Journal*

Our March 2023 report, "[Civic Fracture & Renewal in Wisconsin](#)," assessed the public's civic attitudes and behaviors and found worrisome signs of social and political conflict in 2022 Wisconsin and U.S. midterm election survey comparisons. These included ending relationships over politics, safety fears in politics, and views supporting for political violence among a minority of citizens – but we also identified vital agreement across divides in ways that may help repair American democracy.

Our December 2024 report, "[Understanding 2024 Voters in Midwest Battleground States](#)," assessed Midwestern voting patterns, group and policy divides, and the nature of political conversations and news consumption. The study found lower anticipated voting levels among Democrats, low-income people, and people of color; large party divides in views of marginalized groups; some surprising levels of party agreement on many policy views, and substantial echo chambers for political talk and news.