



Eyes Wide Open

Trump, Harris, the voters and the 2024 election

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC
December 2024

Lord Ashcroft Polls
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Contents

Methodological note	2
What was at stake	3
Kamala Harris	16
Donald Trump	25
The decision	32
Key attitudes	35
About Lord Ashcroft	37

Methodological note

20,528 adults in the US were interviewed online between 16 October and 3 November 2024. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in the US. Full data tables are available at LordAshcroftPolls.com

Since fieldwork was completed before polling day, the definition of Trump and Harris voters was derived from a combination of:

- Declared likelihood to vote
- Aggregate position on 'dividing-line' political issues
- Stated likelihood to support each candidate on a 0-100 scale

This approach generated voting intention of 49.8% for Trump and 48.5% for Harris (the actual outcome was of Trump 49.9%, Harris 48.3%).

29 focus groups were held between 7 and 30 October 2024 in Phoenix, AZ; Las Vegas, NV; Milwaukee, WI; Detroit, MI; Philadelphia, PA; Charlotte, NC; and Atlanta, GA. Participants were drawn from a wide range of social, economic and political backgrounds.

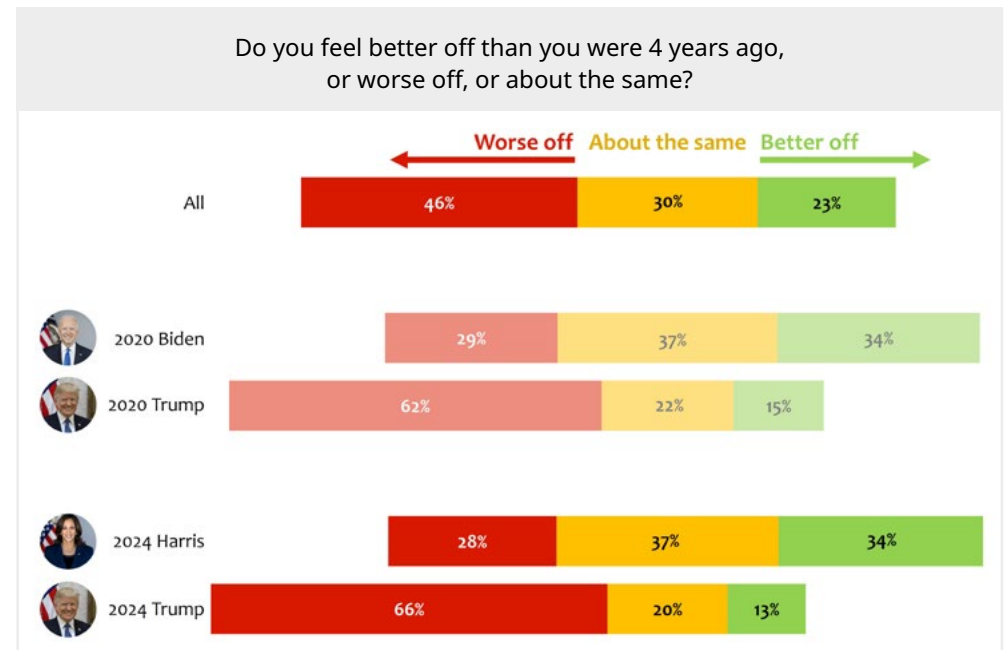
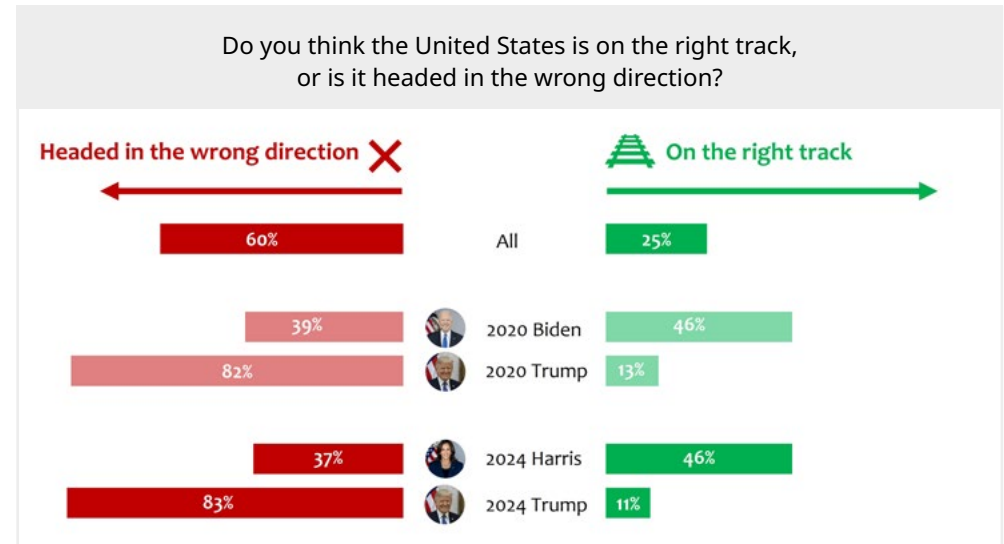
What was at stake

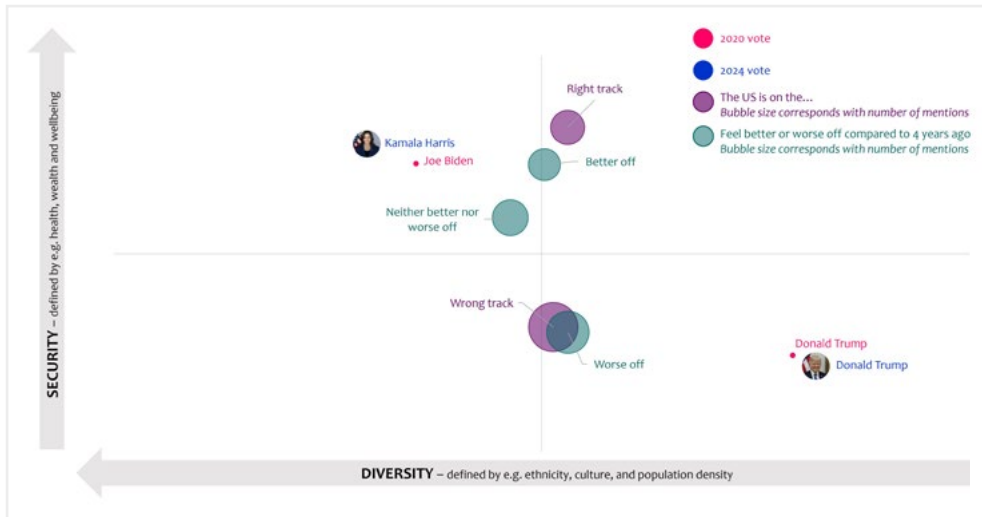
How is it going?

In our focus groups we asked participants what issues they were concerned about and what they felt was at stake in the election. Answers included rising prices, taxes, jobs, manufacturing, housing, schools, overseas conflicts, crime, immigration and the border, abortion and women’s rights, tariffs, student loans, the national debt, healthcare, race relations, privacy, teaching of LGBT and transgender issues in schools, homelessness, hurricane relief, the justice system, political and social division and climate change.

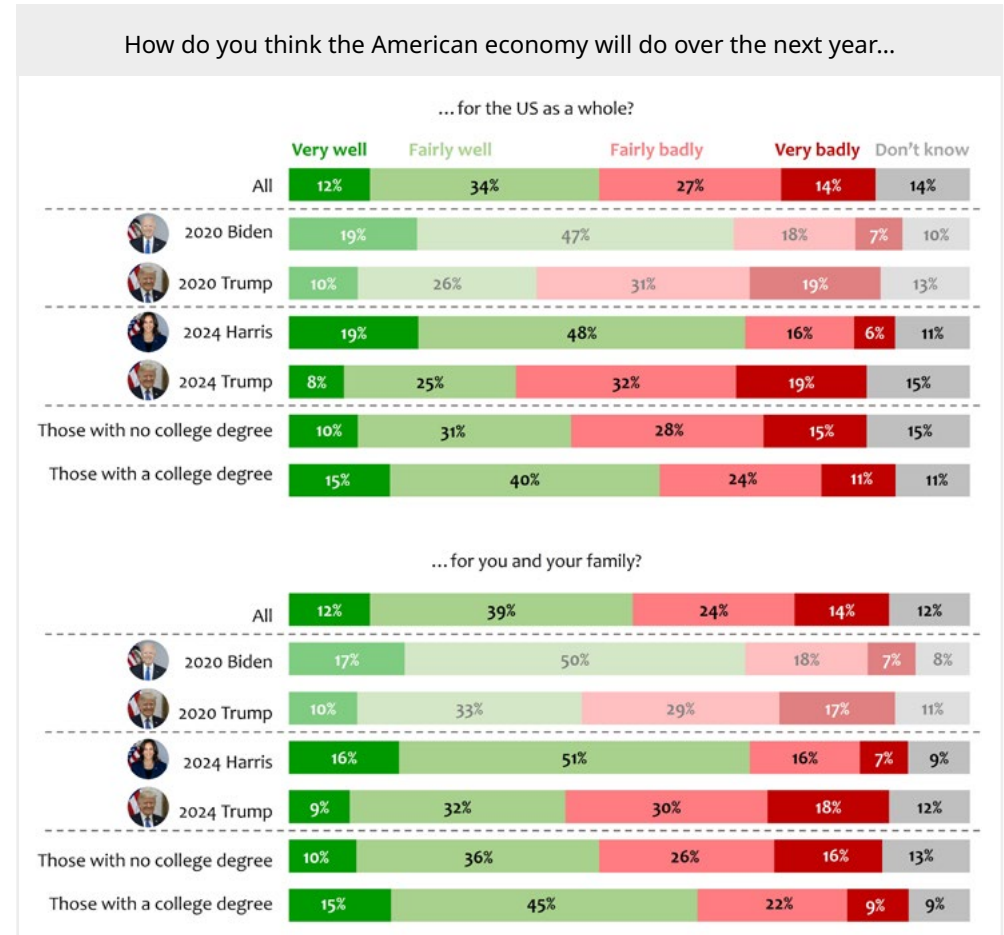
In our poll, a quarter (25%) of Americans said they thought the US was on the right track, while 60% thought it was heading in the wrong direction. Majorities of all demographic groups said the country was heading in the wrong direction except African Americans, who thought so by 49% to 33%. Fewer than half of Democrats (44%) and 2020 Biden voters (46%) thought the country was on the right track. This was also the case for 2024 Harris voters (46%). Only just over one in ten 2024 Trump voters thought the US was on the right track; 83% thought it was heading in the wrong direction.

More Americans said they felt worse off than they were four years ago (46%) than better off (23%); 3 in 10 said they felt about the same. Nearly half (48%) of those without college degrees said they felt worse off, compared to 40% of graduates. Nearly 3 in 10 2020 Biden voters (29%) said they felt worse off than at the last election. Two thirds of 2024 Trump voters said they felt worse off than four years ago, compared to 28% of 2024 Harris voters.

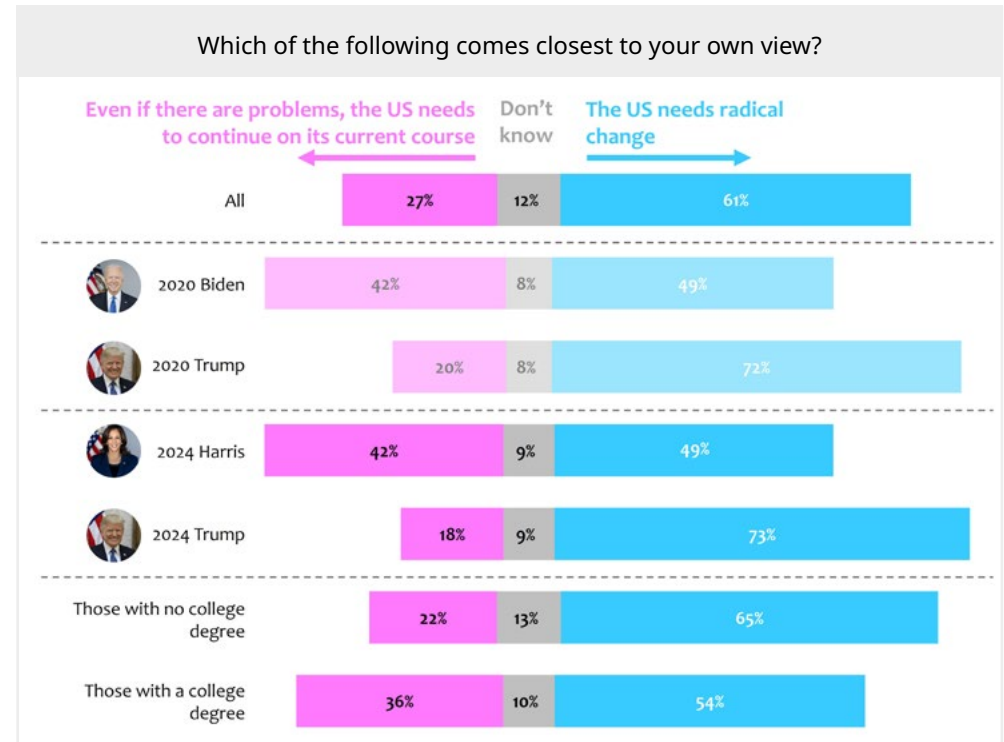




Our political map shows how different issues, attributes, personalities and opinions interact with one another. Each point shows where we are most likely to find people with that characteristic or opinion; the closer the plot points are to each other the more closely related they are. Here we see that those who say the US is on the wrong track overlap strongly with those who feel worse off than they did four years ago, and that those giving these answers are most likely to be found in the less prosperous and secure parts of the electorate.



Overall, Americans were slightly more likely to think the US economy would do well over the next year for them and their families than for the country as a whole. Men were more optimistic than women on both questions. Those with college degrees were more likely to be personally optimistic (60%) than those without (46%). Two thirds of Harris voters were optimistic both for the country and for themselves and their families; Trump voters were more likely to think the economy would do well for them (41%) than for the country as a whole (33%).

































More than six in ten Americans said they thought the US needs radical change, compared to 27% saying that even if there are problems, the country needed to continue on its current course. The proportion wanting radical change was highest among younger voters (68% of those aged 18-34), falling to just under half (47%) of those aged 65 or over. African American and Hispanic or Latino voters were more likely to want radical change (65%) than white voters (61%), and those without college degrees more likely to think so (65%) than college graduates (54%). Those who voted for Biden in 2020 were more likely to say the country needed radical change (49%) than that the US should continue on its current course (42%).

Nearly three quarters (73%) of 2024 Trump voters said radical change was needed in the US, while Harris voters were closely divided between those wanting change (49%) and continuity (42%).

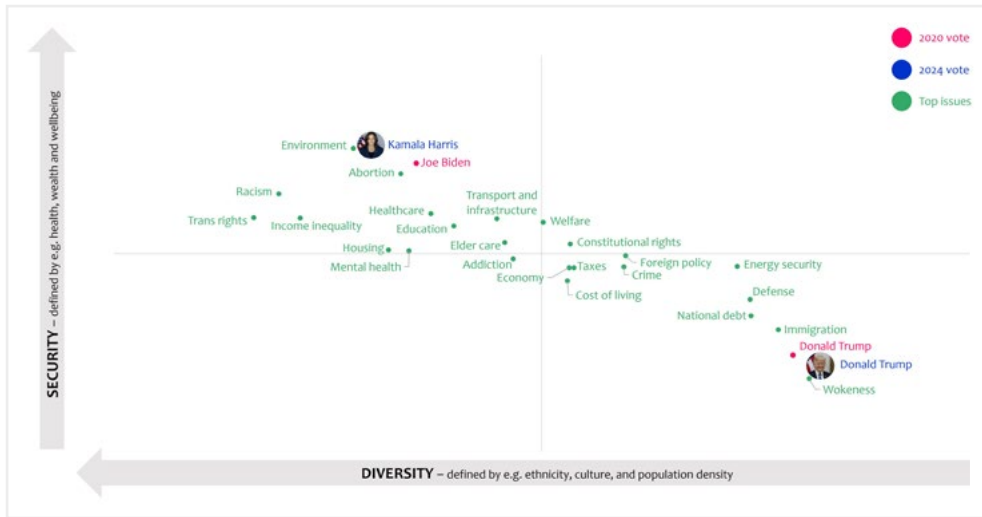
Most important issues

Which of the following do you think are the most important issues facing the US at the moment?

All	2024 Trump	2024 Harris
 Inflation and the cost of living 44%	 Immigration and border control 56%	 Abortion 39%
 Immigration and border control 29%	 Inflation and the cost of living 55%	 Inflation and the cost of living 37%
 The economy and jobs 27%	 The economy and jobs 32%	 Climate change / the environment 29%
 Abortion 21%	 Crime 16%	 The economy and jobs 22%
 Healthcare 16%	 Defense and national security 13%	 Healthcare 21%
 Climate change / the environment 15%	 Taxes 12%	 Social security / welfare 18%
 Crime 14%	 Government borrowing and debt 12%	 Immigration and border control 13%
 Social security / welfare 14%	 Social security / welfare 11%	 Defending constitutional rights 12%
 Housing 12%	 Stopping the 'woke' agenda 9%	 Housing 12%
 Taxes 12%	 Defending constitutional rights 9%	 Income inequality 11%

For 2024 Trump voters, the single most important issue facing the US was immigration and border control, closely followed by inflation and the cost of living: more than half named them among the top three priorities. One in three mentioned the economy and jobs, and crime was in fourth place.

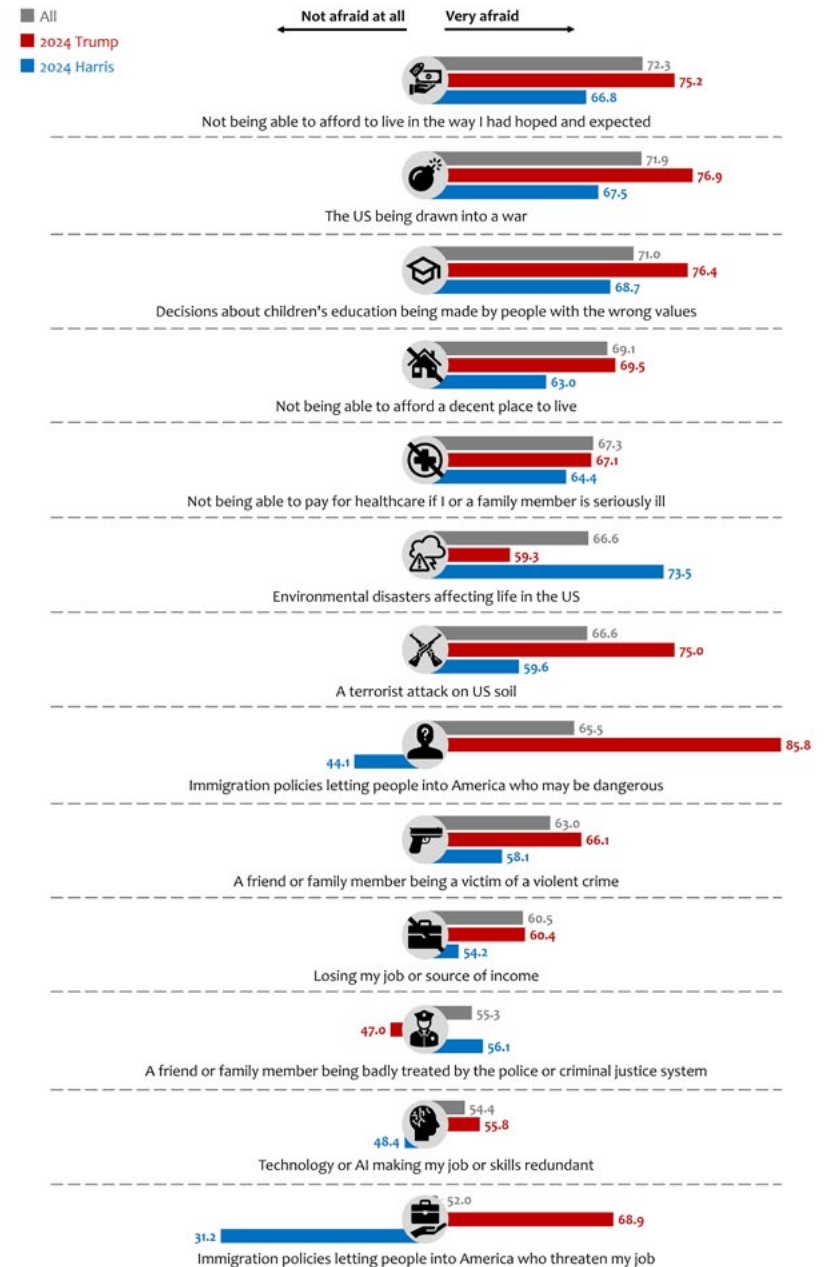
Inflation and the economy were also two of the top four issues for Harris voters, though they were chosen by smaller proportions. Abortion topped the list for Harris voters, with climate change and the environment in third place.



Our political map shows more clearly how voters' priorities are distributed among the electorate. Those who prioritise the environment or abortion rights are most likely to be found in the more diverse, prosperous and urban top left quadrant, while those naming immigration are most likely to be found in the less well-off, less secure, Trump-backing bottom right. The fact that the cost of living is close to the centre of the map shows it to be a near-universal concern.

We also asked our poll respondents how afraid they were that various things may happen. For 2024 Trump voters, top of the list was immigration policy letting dangerous people into America, followed by the country being drawn into a war. For Democrats, the biggest fear was the possibility of environmental disasters affecting life in the US. While white voters most worried about the country being drawn into war, Hispanic voters were more worried about not being able to afford to live in the way they had hoped and expected, and African Americans feared a friend or family member being badly treated by the police or the criminal justice system.






On a scale of 0 (not afraid at all) to 100 (very afraid) please say how afraid you are that the following things may happen.



On a scale of 0 (not afraid at all) to 100 (very afraid) please say how afraid you are that the following things may happen.

[Top 5 fears]






All

 Not being able to afford to live in the way I had hoped and expected	72.3
 The US being drawn into a war	71.9
 Decisions about children's education being made by people with the wrong values	71.0
 Not being able to afford a decent place to live	69.1
 Not being able to pay for healthcare if I or a family member is seriously ill	67.3

2024 Trump

 Immigration policies letting people into America who may be dangerous	85.8
 The US being drawn into a war	76.9
 Decisions about children's education being made by people with the wrong values	76.4
 Not being able to afford to live in the way I had hoped and expected	75.2
 A terrorist attack on US soil	75.0






2024 Harris

 Environmental disasters affecting life in the US	73.5
 Decisions about children's education being made by people with the wrong values	68.7
 The US being drawn into a war	67.5
 Not being able to afford to live in the way I had hoped and expected	66.8
 Not being able to pay for healthcare if I or a family member is seriously ill	64.4






White

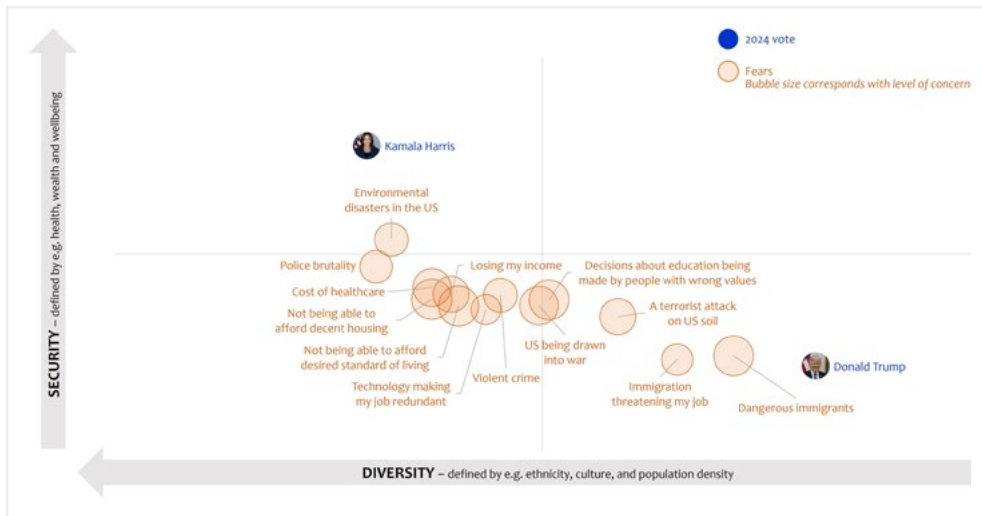
 The US being drawn into a war	71.9
 Not being able to afford to live in the way I had hoped and expected	71.6
 Decisions about children's education being made by people with the wrong values	70.6
 A terrorist attack on US soil	67.8
 Immigration policies letting people into America who may be dangerous	67.3

Hispanic

 Not being able to afford to live in the way I had hoped and expected	75.8
 Not being able to afford a decent place to live	75.6
 The US being drawn into a war	73.6
 Decisions about children's education being made by people with the wrong values	72.4
 Not being able to pay for healthcare if I or a family member is seriously ill	71.8

African American

 A friend or family member being badly treated by police or criminal justice system	72.3
 Not being able to afford a decent place to live	71.1
 Not being able to afford to live in the way I had hoped and expected	71.1
 Decisions about children's education being made by people with the wrong values	70.8
 The US being drawn into a war	70.1



Our political map gives another perspective on where these fears are most likely to be found within the electorate. With the exception of environmental disasters, all of them are most prevalent among less secure voters. Those worried about the effects of immigration are more likely to be found in the bottom right, with more general concerns about living standards or healthcare costs in the more diverse and urban bottom left.



Jobs, the economy and the cost of living

The economy, especially inflation and the cost of living, was among the first issues to be raised in nearly all our focus groups. Over the last four years many said prices had outstripped incomes – especially when it came to groceries, gas and rent – so even those who had had pay rises often felt worse off. Some argued that inflation had been a global phenomenon and that there was little a president could do about it. However, others felt that the government's response to people's struggles was to tell them the economy was in good shape, rather than to understand or do anything to help.

- “It's food on the table. It's being able to find a job. It's being able to pay all the bills and worrying about our business. I'm not interested in what's happening down at the border or in other countries. Maybe that's selfish, but I'm worried about what's happening in the four walls of my house.” [NV]
- “There's a lot of gaslighting. They're telling us everything's really good and couldn't be better. But in reality, everyone's making the same amount of money but everything's more expensive.” [AZ]

- “I'm making more money, but the bar is raised every time I get an increase. Housing affordability is one step further, and it just seems like we're never going to catch up.” [NV]
- “My dollar went further when Trump was in office. Gas was cheaper, we were able to afford things. I went on vacation when Trump was in office but I can't now. She was right under Biden and doing nothing while inflation was going up.” [MI]
- “Trump's not great. But I'm a bartender and I was making a ton of money. And this economy is just the worst I've ever seen. Times are tough right now.” [NV]
- “There are so many countries that are having issues with high prices. We just saw friends recently who live in Switzerland and the cost of living is up everywhere. So I feel like any president who comes in, I don't think they can bring down everything just because they're president.” [NC]

Reproductive rights

The issue of abortion and reproductive rights was raised spontaneously in many of our focus groups, usually but certainly not exclusively by women. Although most understood that the issue was now a matter for individual states, many felt it was still an important issue at the presidential election, for three main reasons: that whoever succeeded President Biden would probably get to make new appointments to the Supreme Court, which could be asked to make further rulings on this or similar issues; that the president helps set the tone and direction, whatever their formal power; and that it was important to show politicians how they felt about the issue – whether as payback for the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* or as a signal about future policy. Some feared a Trump administration would go further and institute a national abortion ban, despite Republican denials.

- “We’ve already lost so much; we’re trying not to lose any more. If they can change that, what else can they change?” [NV]
- “You’re putting up someone to represent us. If you’re putting up someone who is for getting rid of women’s rights, we’ll never go in the right direction.” [WI]
- “I believe Trump would enact a federal abortion ban, even if he sometimes says he won’t. I think that’s the Republican aim, and it’s Harris’s goal to enshrine those rights in whatever way possible.” [MI]
- “It’s making a statement that that’s what people want.” [WI]

At the same time, some argued that the question of the best candidate to protect women’s rights was not altogether clear-cut, especially when it came to the debate over transgender rights and women’s spaces.

- “When it comes to a woman’s right to choose, Trump’s on one side. But when it comes to women in sports and women having their own private spaces, Harris doesn’t have our back in that. It’s scary that teenage girls can’t go to the bathroom without having to worry about a man.” [NC]

Immigration and the border

Immigration and border control were regularly mentioned as a concern in focus groups in all seven states, not just those closest to the border. Many noted that controls were considerably looser and illegal crossings higher than in Trump's first term. People worried about the consequences for crime, national security, migrants' integration into American society, as well as competition for jobs, housing and scarce government resources. Those whose families had come to the US legally often resented people seeming to be rewarded for bypassing the system.

- “Normal people can't just go out and support their families with any old job because they're either taken or the employer is not inclined to pay a living wage because they know they've got these people coming in who will take what they can get.” [AZ]
- “A lot of companies I talk to tell me they're getting undercut all the time for building projects by people who are getting paid under the table. They're losing these jobs because people are willing to do it for cheaper using this labour.” [NV]
- “Spies could be infiltrating there. You see videos of 20 or 30 guys, military age men coming over with no restriction. And that's one state away.” [NV]

- “Trump was on it with the immigration stuff. He had the wall being built; he was more of a pusher. Now they're more like, just let them in.” [MI]
- “I'm the son of an immigrant so I have no problem with immigrants coming over here but do it the right way. My father had to spend ten, twelve grand to get a green card. I'm OK with it, just do it the right way.” [GA]
- “I have a problem with them giving money to people who can't even vote. You've got Venezuelan gangs taking over communities in Chicago. She hasn't got an answer to that.” [NC]
- “We are going to be edged out of the vote. We give them money and allow for their first-generation children to be born, and now they are a part of the voting populace. And obviously, once your family's in, you're born, you have a child, they're going to stick to the party that got them there. They're going to vote Democrat. So not only does it diminish black power, it also takes away funds that could have been allocated to those blacks in that community.” [NC]

Ukraine, Israel and foreign affairs

US involvement in overseas conflicts was a cause of concern for many in our focus groups. In particular, they were worried about spending scarce resources that would be better used at home, the risk of escalation and the country being dragged further into wars in which people felt it had no real interest, and even the prospect of US forces becoming involved. Some even worried about the possibility of young Americans being drafted for military service. Many in our groups argued that a number of current conflicts were largely down to a perception of weakness on the part of the US and President Biden in particular.

“All the billions of dollars we’re giving away across the sea to kill innocent people. Why isn’t that money used here for loan forgiveness, for roads, for our schools? You got homeless people all across the street.” [MI]

“I think strength with the rest of the world is very important. This past administration with Biden, it’s been terrible. And because of that weakness, Putin felt inclined to go into Ukraine, and we had Hamas and Hezbollah attacking Israel. All of these wars that are going on right now are directly a result of Biden being seen as weak.” [WI]

“My son has just turned 18 and I’m worried he’s going to get drafted to go to war. He’s worried about it too.” [MI]

Some participants felt that as a forceful and unpredictable personality, Donald Trump would do a better job of protecting America’s interests abroad, ending current conflicts and dissuading foreign leaders from mischief. A suggestion during the campaign that Trump had had a number of telephone calls with President Putin since leaving office caused little alarm – many liked the idea that he could talk to world leaders, friendly or otherwise, and use his relationships to America’s advantage.

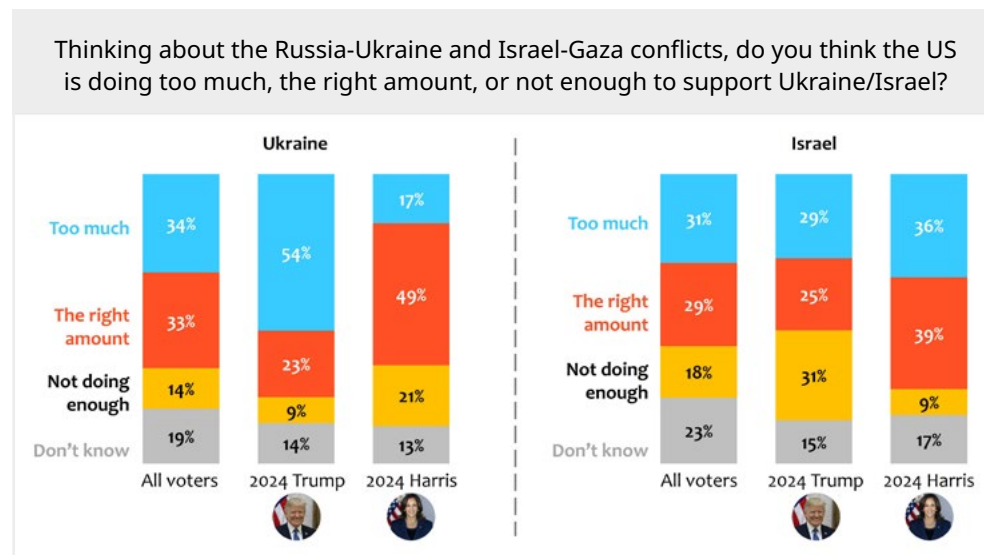
“Eventually, unless you’re planning on them all killing each other, you’re going to have to talk and figure out a way to stop the war. [By talking to Putin] he might be greasing the skids – ‘if I do get into office, is there something I can do here?’ Nobody wants to talk to Biden and Harris, there’s just no fear. Trump likes to keep other world leaders guessing.” [AZ]

“Trump is a psycho, but he’s the kind of psycho we might need because people might say, OK, we don’t know what he’s going to do if we mess around.” [WI]

“He’s a real negotiator. When it comes to the international stage there’s nobody who’s going to dupe him. You know he’s pulling all the shots. He always has something up his sleeve.” [MI]

The question of Gaza was of particular concern to young Muslim voters we spoke to in the area around Detroit, which has one of the highest concentrations of Arab-American voters in the US. Several were perturbed by what they saw as excessive support for Israel from the Biden administration, including Kamala Harris. Though they often felt Donald Trump and the Republicans were at least as pro-Israel as the Democrats, some had detected efforts by Trump to reach out to their community. Some said that since little seemed to separate the parties on the Gaza issue, their vote would be determined by other things, such as the economy and reproductive rights. Some were prepared to withhold their vote from Harris on this issue alone, sometimes saying they could consider backing Green candidate Jill Stein, who had been vocal on the issue.

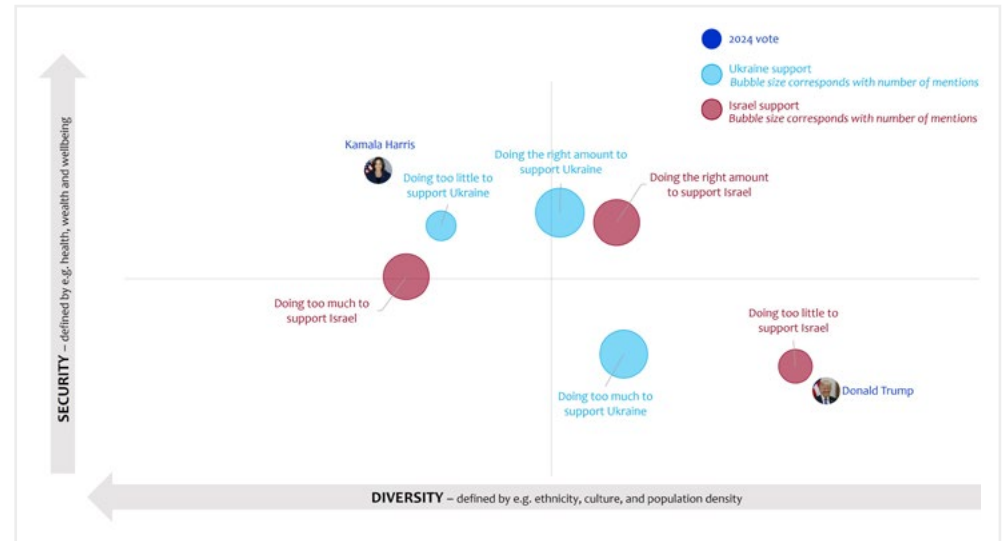
- “ Harris is supporting genocide. There’s not one interview where she’s standing up for Palestinians or Muslims or Arab Americans. We have family in Palestine, in Lebanon and those areas, so it’s important to us.” [MI]
- “ At least Trump is going to Muslim mayors in Michigan and shaking their hand. Kamala won’t touch them. Twenty years ago, this would not be going on with the Republican and Democratic parties.” [MI]
- “ They both very pro-Israel, so I’m voting on the other stuff, such as reproductive rights, student loans, lowering prices. What we can accomplish here.” [MI]
- “ Jill Stein got arrested for protesting for Palestine as a Jewish woman. That alone makes me want to support her. The Democrats have to regroup.” [MI]



When we asked whether the US was doing too much, too little or about the right amount to support Ukraine and Israel, the proportions giving each answer were similar for both countries. However, the make-up of those proportions were dramatically different.

More than half (54%) of 2024 Trump voters said the US was doing too much to support Ukraine, with only 9% saying it was not doing enough. Only 17% of 2024 Harris voters thought the US was doing too much, with 7 in 10 saying either that the US was doing the right amount (49%) or too little (21%).

On the Middle East, the situation was reversed. 2024 Trump voters were fairly evenly divided between saying the US was doing too little to support Israel (31%), too much (29%) or the right amount (25%). 2024 Harris voters were more likely to think the US was doing too much (36%) than too little (9%), with 39% thinking America was doing about the right amount.



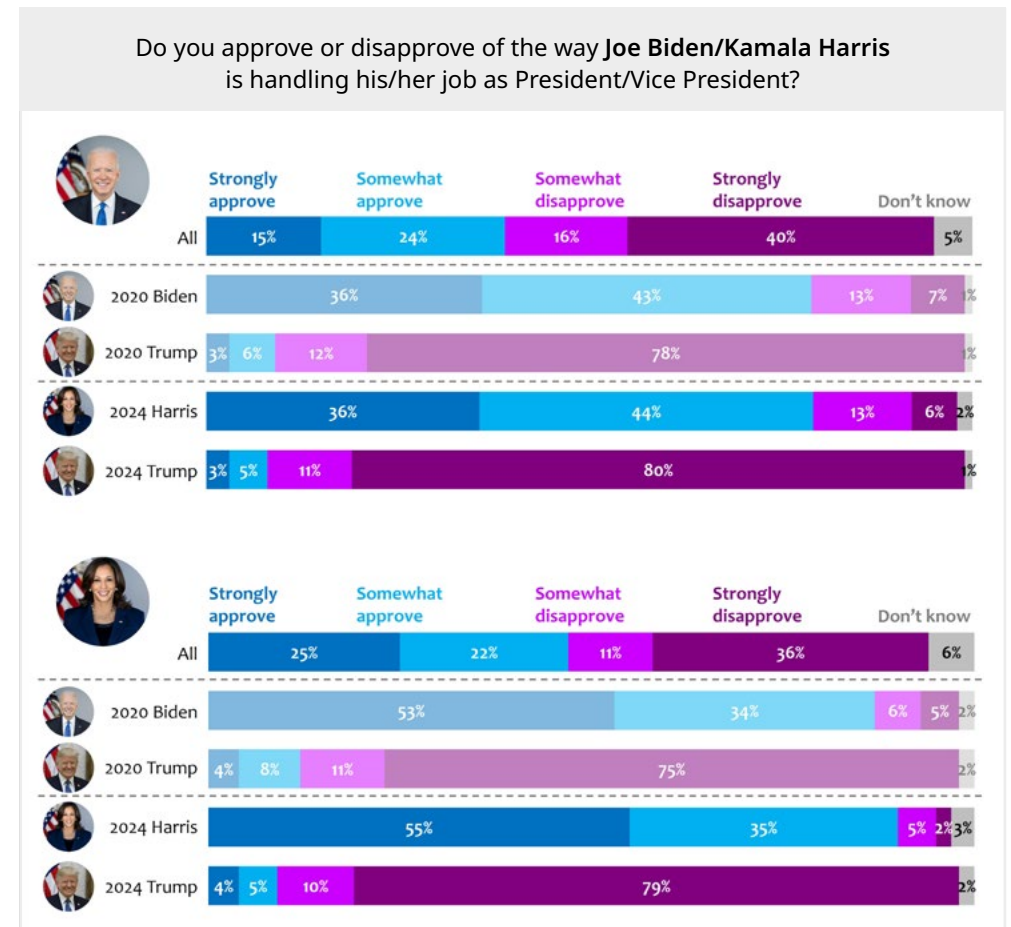
Our political map puts these differing viewpoints into clearer perspective. Those who think the US is doing too much to support Israel and those who think the US is doing too little to support Ukraine are both most likely to be found in the largely Harris-voting left-hand side of the map. Peak support for the opposite view in each case – that America is helping Israel too little and Ukraine too much – occurs in the Trump-voting bottom-right quadrant.

Kamala Harris

The Biden-Harris administration

We found 39% saying they approved of the way Joe Biden had handled his job as president, compared to 56% saying they disapproved (including 40% who strongly disapproved). Disapproval was slightly higher among men, among younger voters and those without a degree than women, older voters and college graduates.

Opinion on Kamala Harris's performance was evenly divided, with 47% approving and 47% disapproving. However, Americans were more likely to say that they strongly disapproved (36%) than that they strongly approved (25%).



The case for Kamala

In our groups, participants often contrasted Harris favourably with Joe Biden, saying she was more energetic and engaged and made them feel more hopeful and optimistic. Some also believed that as president she would listen and collaborate with others, and would seek to bring people together. Some were surprised how well she had campaigned having been out of the limelight as vice president. Most could imagine her in the Oval Office and as commander in chief, and some felt she was more dignified and presidential than her opponent.

- “ She’s young and she’s going to be the first woman, the first woman of colour. So all that stuff, I think she’ll be way more involved.” [MI]
- “ She’s refreshing. I was feeling very down about the election until two months ago, but just having a new face and something new. Even though she’s part of the administration already, it feels like we’re re-energized, like Democrats have something to stand behind now other than just ‘not Trump’.” [AZ]
- “ She would be a more sane president.” [PA]
- “ I think voting for Harris comes with a certain level of decorum and respect for people, whether she believes in what they believe in or not.” [MI]
- “ When Biden stepped down and nominated Kamala, that was a significant moment for me in terms of feeling a little bit more optimistic. I immediately saw excitement among my peers.” [PA]

- “ She’s more stable and she’ll listen to experts, where he thinks he’s the expert in the world. Typically, you don’t know everything, you take into account the information you receive and make the best decision with that.” [MI]
- “ She’s more positive. It’s not doom and gloom and talking about eating dogs. It’s refreshing to have hope rather than everything negative.” [WI]
- “ When she has to speak in a debate or something she comes across as very calm and articulate, she doesn’t fly off the handle like Trump. She seems a bit more on top of it, a bit more presidential.” [AZ]
- “ She’s got a little bit more fire under her tail. She’s a little spicy.” [MI]
- “ I think she’s more open for a lot of things. She said the other day she would be willing to have a Republican in her cabinet. She’s trying to unify and bring everybody together.” [MI]
- “ She’s more assertive and straight to the point, more motivating. She talks about women’s rights, and that got my attention right away.” [WI]
- “ If it was this bottle against Donald Trump, I’d vote for this bottle.” [NC]
- “ I don’t think she would do anything to embarrass the country.” [NC]

The Harris nomination: who is in charge?

As the campaign progressed, more participants in our focus groups commented that Harris had been handed the Democratic nomination without having been through the usual primary election process. Some accepted this, or felt it was a relatively trivial complaint given the imperative of stopping Trump. Others found it more of a concern, however, for three main reasons: they did not feel they knew her as well as they would after the standard process; it undermined trust in the Democratic party, which until recently had been claiming Biden was more than capable of a second term; and it gave the impression that whoever was making such decisions behind the scenes would probably still be doing so if Harris were elected president.

“She didn’t go through the process that everyone else went through for the nomination. She fell into it, she inherited it because he was senile. There were other people I would have picked before her. Newsom, Shapiro, Gretchen Whitmer, Kelly. Someone else would have beaten her.” [PA]

“Normally we get to vote on who our candidate is going to be, but we didn’t get any choice. This was thrown to me in a rush. We haven’t really had the chance to get to know her.” [PA]

“I was not happy when that happened. I felt like I didn’t have a say-so in who was going to be running.” [PA]

“They put him up knowing he wasn’t competent for a second term. That gives me mistrust in the Democratic party.” [GA]

“They say Trump is against democracy, then they rig the primary system for Biden and then just anoint Kamala to get in.” [MI]

“I feel like she’s a piece of paper. Someone’s telling her what to say. She has this puppeteered vibe.” [MI]

“She obviously has some idea where she wants to go, but Biden got pushed pretty hard behind the scenes and I’m afraid she’s going to get the same kind of pressure.” [PA]

“It’s like a machine in place with the Democrats. And I’m not going to be fooled again, so I’m voting for Trump this time.” [MI]

“If she wins, she’s not really going to run things. Someone else is going to run it for her. I want her to lead as a leader and not feel like she has someone’s hand on her shoulder.” [PA]

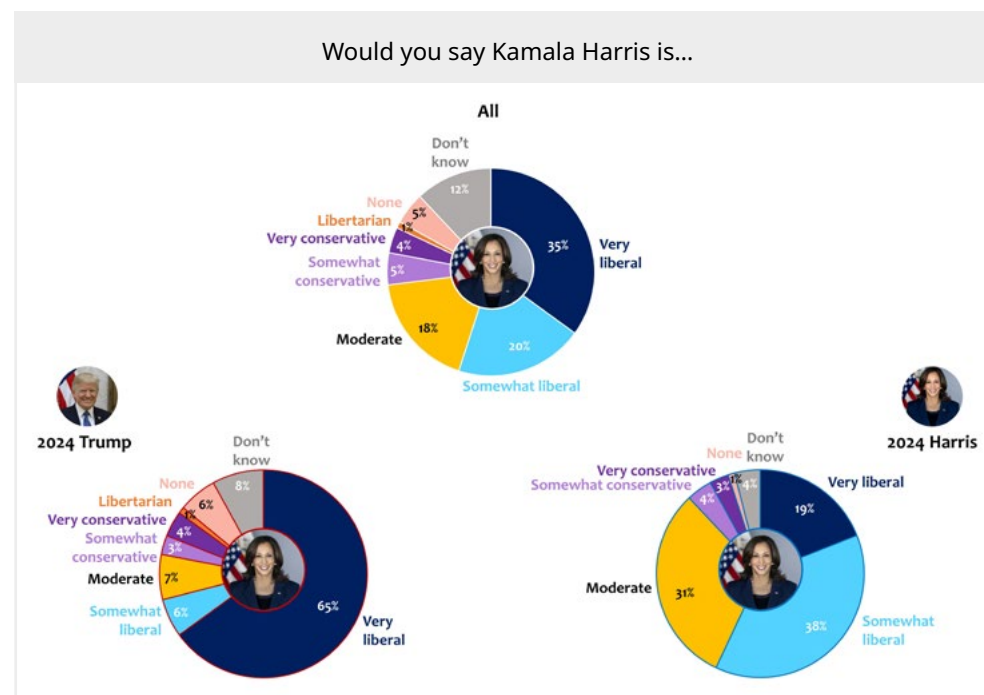
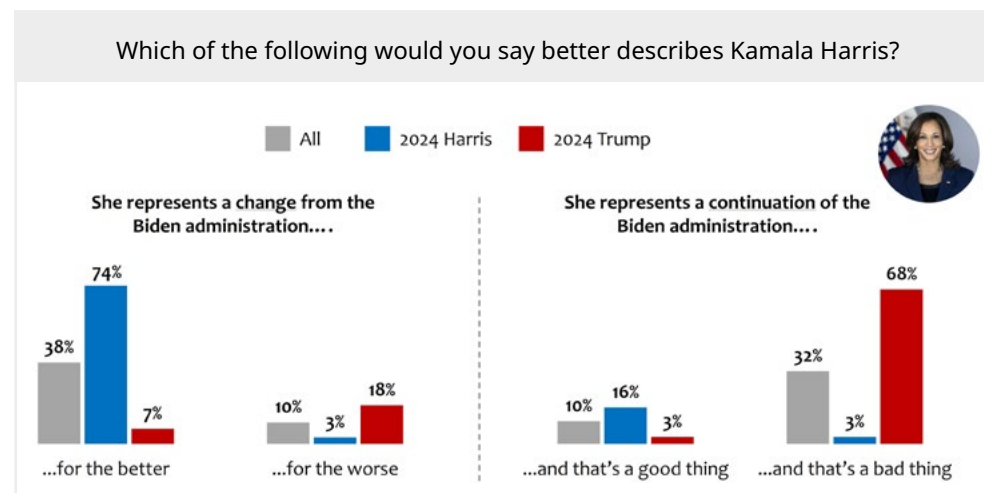
“All Kamala Harris would be is a pretty puppet to stand in front of the microphone and say ‘we’re going to do this or this’. But it’s going to be a decision made amongst the group behind the Wizard of Oz curtain.” [NV]

Continuity or change?

Nearly three quarters (74%) of 2024 Harris voters saw her as a change for the better from the Biden administration, while a further 16% saw her as a continuation and thought that was a good thing. Conversely, more than two thirds of 2024 Trump voters saw Harris as a continuation of the Biden administration and considered that a bad thing, with just under one in five seeing her as a change for the worse.

While nearly two thirds of 2024 Trump voters saw Harris as very liberal, Harris voters were more likely to describe her as somewhat liberal (38%) or moderate (31%), with only 19% seeing her as very liberal.

Our groups had heard Harris talk about helping the middle class and had registered a number of policy proposals, including extending student loan “forgiveness”, downpayment assistance for first-time homebuyers, raising the child tax credit, higher tax credits for small business start-ups, tackling price gouging, building more homes and legalising marijuana, as well as her well-known stance on reproductive rights – some of appealed to some of our participants. However, those who were not impressed with the Biden administration’s record did not tend to believe she would represent a substantial change, especially after an interview in which she said she could not think of anything she would have done differently over the last four years. If anything, many thought her instincts would be more progressive than Biden’s, an impression reinforced by her previous support for state-funded gender transition surgery for prison inmates.



Participants often said Harris seemed to avoid questions about her policies and positions, some of which seemed to have shifted over time, and instead tried to turn the focus onto Trump. Some said she seemed to have good intentions and that was enough, but people often said they wished she would be clearer about her plans. They were not sure whether this apparent vagueness was deliberate, so as to avoid putting anyone off, or if she herself was unclear on where she stood.

- “ She’s very evasive on some of her stances and why she would have changed. She was against fracking and now she’s for fracking. So it’s hard to tell.” [PA]
- “ When they ask her what she’s going to do, she beats around the bush and says she came up middle class and we all cut our lawns. She won’t answer the question. She says she’ll help the middle class and go after companies that are gouging at the grocery store, but how are you going to do that? I can’t trust what she’s saying because she doesn’t answer any of the questions.” [PA]
- “ She lost me with the sex changes for prison inmates. I see no point in doing that.” [MI]

- “ I think she’s going to be a little further to the left. When Bernie Sanders comes out and says she hasn’t changed her beliefs, I get the feeling he’s probably right. I don’t think she’s for fracking, she was ‘defund the police’, she was for bailing out rioters. I can’t trust what she says.” [PA]
- “ You know exactly what you’re getting with Trump. There’s no more left to discover with him. But with Harris, I think people can decide what they want.’ [MI]
- “ I think she’s more left than Biden and the larger Democratic party, but she knows she needs moderates so she’s moving a bit more to the centre. But that’s not her personal beliefs.” [MI]
- “ I don’t really see the difference between what Biden is doing and what Kamala is going to do. It feels like a continuum for the most part.” [GA]
- “ A new face of the same old.” [AZ]
- “ She’s saying ‘turn the page’. But it’s the same book.” [NV]
- “ I feel she has good intentions, even if I don’t know what her policies will be.” [MI]

- “ She was on The View and they asked her, what would you change in the last four years? She said, ‘I can’t think of anything’. So that was just mind blowing.” [NV]
- “ She was DA in San Francisco where she was a moderate, then attorney general for California where she was a moderate, then had a year in the Senate where she became an extreme progressive based on her voting record there. That’s what gives me so much pause. I don’t think it’s authentic and I don’t know what to expect from her.” [AZ]
- “ She did an interview with Fox News and they asked her what she would do about the border and she said ‘wait, let’s talk about what Trump did’. It’s like, no, tell us what you’re going to do! It frustrates me every time she brings him into the conversation.” [AZ]
- “ They have a transgender rights policy for children under 18. A lot of kids are confused but they want to rally behind them changing their genders or being something they weren’t born to be. It’s not peaceful, coming into parents’ homes and telling them how to parent their children.” [GA]



Character, authenticity and minority voters

This uncertainty about Harris extended beyond her policy positions. Some wondered if she had the strength to protect America's interests and stand up to hostile foreign leaders. There were also concerns about her authenticity, with many saying she seemed excessively scripted and that she appeared to change her persona depending on her audience.

“ I don't know that she's strong enough to stand up to Putin or Xi in China. I don't know if she'd be good if Iran gets more aggressive. I think she might be too soft for that kind of station.” [WI]

“ She falls apart when the teleprompter goes down. I don't think she improvises well or speaks for herself. If that flustered her, what's going to happen when she's speaking to world leaders?” [NV]

“ She panders to whatever audience is in front of her. So it's hard to know who she really is. What's important to me is to know who you are and what you stand for. If you change your mind about who you are when it suits you, you're just putting on a different mask every day.” [GA]

“ She'll be in different states and have a different accent. Like, you grew up in Canada. Why are you talking like you're from Louisiana?” [NC]

“ I don't think it's authentic. Not 1% of it. It feels like a mask. It's not giving anything real. It's like any conversation I have witnessed her have is like premeditated.” [PA]

“ I feel like she's a little sneaky. I feel like she's smiling at me and trying to confuse me.” [MI]

These concerns about authenticity were particularly acute among some of the African American voters we spoke to. Some felt she was pandering to black people or resented what they felt to be the message that as a woman of colour she should be able to rely on their support.

“She’s contradicted herself a couple of times. There have been so many instances where she was a proud Indian woman, but now all of a sudden, it’s time to be black. When Trump said, ‘all of a sudden she’s black,’ I gotta give it to him. That was kind of funny, I got it.” [NC]

“They’re saying she’s black, but she’s not my type of black. Whatever race she is, I don’t identify with her race. I don’t see her as me. She’s not a relatable black woman for me.” [GA]

“The Democrats are expecting you to vote for them. They’re not really listening to what it is black people are saying and what we want at the end of the day.” [NC]

“I was with my AK sisters, I had cookouts, I worked at McDonalds, I made so many greens I had to put them in the tub’. No black person is putting greens in the tub. That’s the stupidest thing I ever heard. Saying things that are so blatantly outlandish to connect with black people is so pandering.” [NC]

“The campaign has been about identity politics. It’s ‘let’s tote out these black celebrities because they’re going to give us this sense that we’re for you’, but you’re not. You’re taking rich people and putting them on a platform and telling them to tell us how to vote.” [NC]

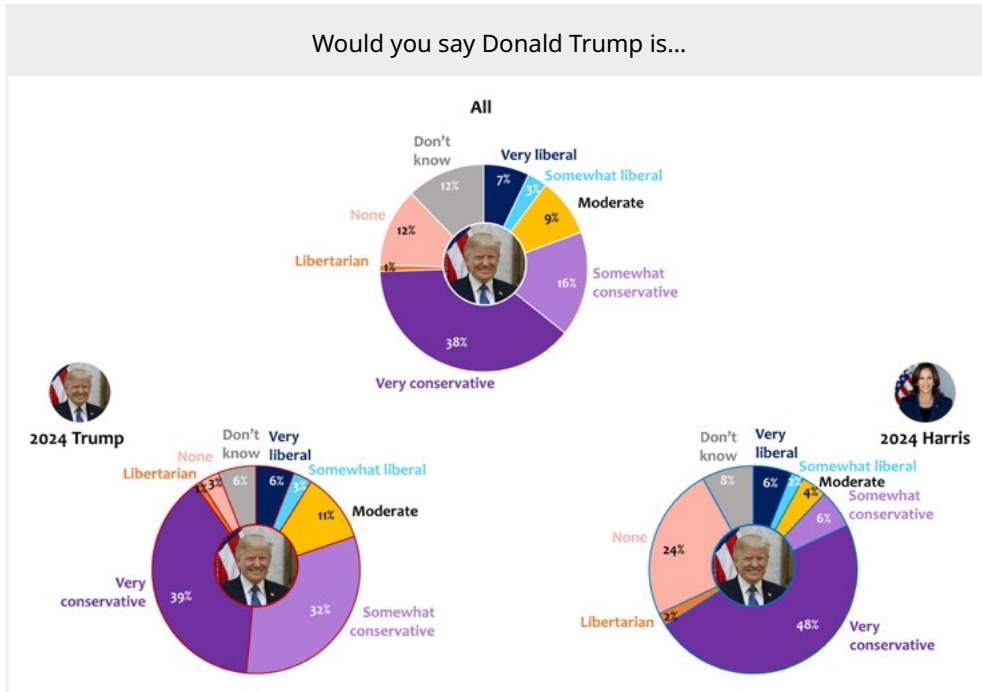
“We don’t want an ‘agenda’. We just want a fair opportunity. You don’t have to give us any more or any less. She’s just undermining our intelligence.” [GA]

“I was appalled at the rally with Megan Thee Stallion. It was a mess. It was embarrassing. Was it supposed to be empowering? It was just unclassy.” [NC]

“In her time as a DA in California, a lot of black men went to jail. She prosecuted a lot of African American men more harshly than she did others. They talk about us supporting black women, but where was she supporting black men?” [GA]

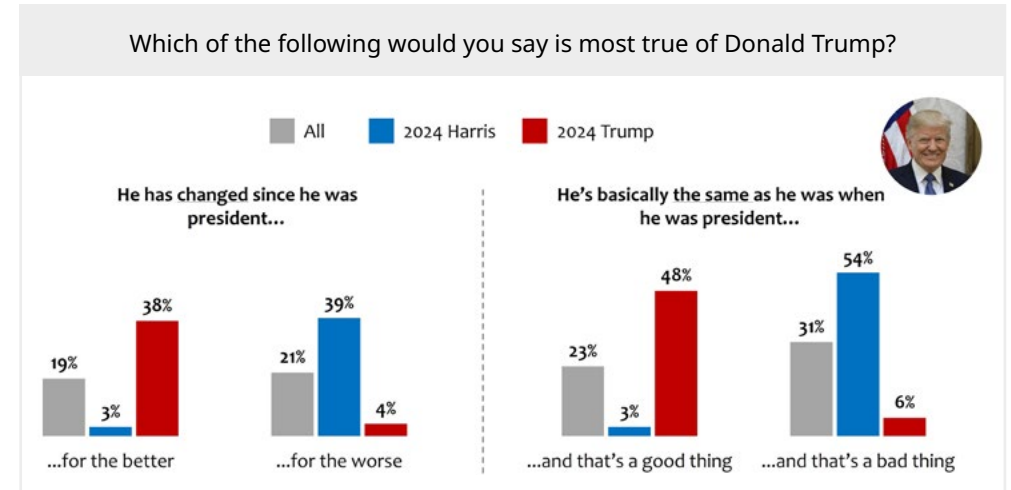
Donald Trump

Where does he stand?



More than 7 in 10 Trump voters said they saw him as a conservative, compared to only just over half of Harris voters – nearly a quarter of whom thought he had no definable political position. Trump voters were fairly evenly divided as to whether he was very or only somewhat conservative, and more than one in ten of them said they saw him as a moderate.

Has he changed?



Just over half of Americans said they thought Donald Trump was basically the same as when he was president – though they were more likely to say this was a bad thing (31%) than a good thing (23%). The four in ten who thought he had changed were divided as to whether this was for the better (19%) or for the worse (21%). Only just under half (48%) of 2024 Trump voters thought he was the same as he was during his first term; a further 38% thought he had changed for the better.

Most in our focus groups felt that Donald Trump was, for better or worse, much more of a known quantity than Kamala Harris. As has been the case in all our research since he entered politics, opinion was divided between those who found Trump or his agenda so unappealing that they would never vote for him; those who liked both his agenda and the way he went about things; and (probably the biggest group) those who disliked aspects of his character but were prepared to look past them because they preferred his policies to the Democrats' agenda or thought he would be a more effective president.

“ I agree about his corruption and the way he treats women and all the other stuff, but I've also seen how he cares about the country and doesn't want to see it go into this socialist hellscape that I believe we're going into.” [MI]

“ Yes, he's an idiot in the sense of dividing us, but he ran our country well and did good things. You can work for a corporation and not like the CEO. Are you going to quit? Everything can't be unicorns and rainbows. We don't want World War Three. We don't want our borders down. We want the economy better, we want jobs. I don't want my groceries to go up 60% again. When he was in office, none of that happened and gas was down. People just see, oh, he's mean and she's nice. But at the end of the day, that's not who you want to run a country.” [NC]

“ I think he's a narcissist and a bully but he does have good business sense and he puts good people around him to make the economy better. He's not afraid to stand up to someone and say 'no, this is what we need'.” [NV]

“ I can do a better job separating his personality from his results this go round.” [WI]

“ I think he'll get stuff done. We know who he is.” [PA]

“ Trump's ego is so big that whatever he says he's going to do, he's going to do it. He wants to be known as something, so he actually wants to make a complete change.” [PA]

Trump policies that had registered with participants included no tax on overtime or tips, stricter border controls, tariffs, tax cuts, promoting domestic energy production, reducing US involvement in overseas conflicts, and an end to what they would loosely describe as the “woke agenda”. Many simply said they felt life had been better during Trump’s first term and had more faith in him to restore living standards than they had in Harris. This was particularly true for those planning to back Trump who had not voted for him in 2020.

“ Trump is very Trump-like. He’s not hiding anything. But I don’t want to vote based on personality. Neither one is perfect. I’m going to vote based on what you’ve done, what you can do.” [PA]

“ The Milwaukee area used to be heavy manufacturing. One of the reasons they moved was that we have all these environmental standards for manufacturing, whereas in China they don’t. Same with labour costs. So I think I’d be pro-tariffs. Rip off the band aid, see how it goes.” [WI]

“ I think we have context now. In 2020, I just looked very optimistically like many others, but now we have this mess.” [MI]

“ He’s already proved himself. Our country was safer back then. We had more money back then. Those things are important to me. I have two little girls, and I want our country to be safe.” [GA]

“ It’s amazing, I don’t have to send my child to the neighbourhood school because of his policy. I don’t remember gas prices increasing. I don’t remember AmazonFresh or grocery deliveries being so high when he was president. I’m going based off what I saw when he was there.” [NC]

“ One of the first things Biden did was shut down the pipeline. How many people lost jobs over that? To open that up, what a domino effect to get our energy prices down and then food prices would come down. They talk about him being a dictator but that’s what Biden did that first day.” [GA]

“ We’ve now had four years of Trump and four years of Biden. There’s a stark contrast between the two and this is why some people are looking back. While he was president, he had a big mouth, but gas was cheap, taxes were low and we were living a lot better.” [GA]

Some (by no means all) believed Trump had calmed down or become more disciplined since his first term, which they tended to find reassuring – though a few seemed to find him less exciting as a result. Others thought he had deteriorated and was showing signs of ageing. The long interlude at a rally shortly before the election during which he danced and swayed to music on stage for half an hour was often mentioned.

- “ He’s got more big-headed, especially after the assassination attempts and the whole court fiasco. Now he’s like, I’m untouchable. He’s gotten away with so many things that he thinks he can literally walk on water.” [NV]
- “ It seems like he’s aged a lot. I was watching the debate between Hillary and Trump in 2016 and he was saying some crazy shit but at least he was coherent. Now he’s acting like an 80-year-old man, which he is.” [MI]
- “ I think the assassination attempt was a wake-up call. It made him more humble and mellow.” [NC]
- “ I think he’s toned down a lot, he’s become more professional. He’s never going to be presidential, he’s a blue-collar guy, and that’s why a lot of people like him. But I think he’s toned down his rhetoric.” [NV]

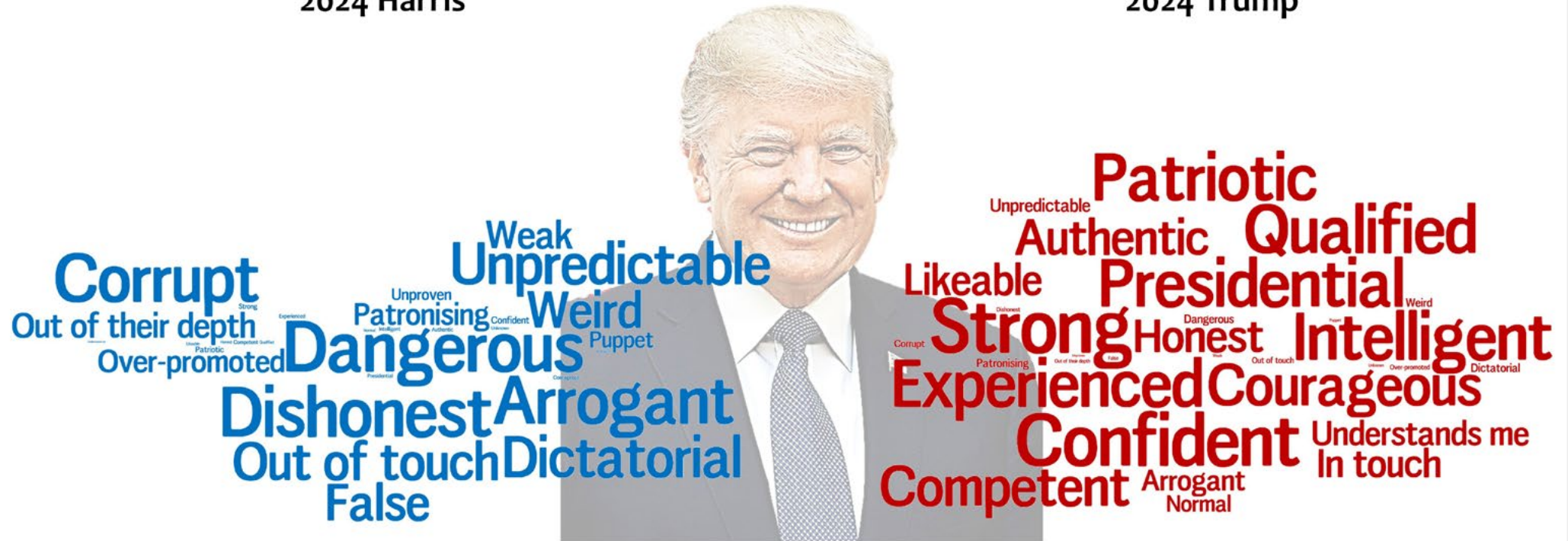
Among those considering voting for Trump who had not made up their minds, reservations included the impact of tariffs, the Republican position on reproductive rights, race relations and police immunity, and a return to what felt like the more chaotic elements of the Trump presidency.

- “ The only thing I didn’t like about Trump when he was president was that he had the platform for the racists to come out and be racist, with the stuff he says. All the cuckoos came out of nowhere.” [MI]
- “ I’m leaning towards Trump more. It’s just that I can’t get over the fact that he’s trying to give the police full immunity. That’s one of the things that’s bugging me.” [GA]
- “ His slogan bothers me because I wish I could speak to him personally and ask him, when was America great? Which era? For which people? Because there’s a time in there that wasn’t great for me.” [MI]
- “ I feel like he doesn’t really speak to me. Kamala doesn’t speak to anyone. But Trump just speaks about himself. That’s one thing she said in the debate that was spot on. That all he does is talk about himself.” [MI]
- “ Trump talks more about bringing jobs back to America. He had the tariffs but they’re a double-edged sword. They can drive inflation for consumers, and on the other side they can create jobs.” [WI]
- “ With Trump it’s always a pony show. I think he’s funny and I think he’s entertaining. I’m just not sure he’s right to be president.” [WI]

Which of the following words do you think best describe Donald Trump?

2024 Harris

2024 Trump



Asked which of a wide range of words and phrases best applied to Donald Trump, 2024 Trump voters were most likely to pick strong, confident, intelligent, presidential, qualified, experienced and patriotic. 2024 Harris voters were most likely to choose dangerous, dishonest, arrogant, corrupt, unpredictable and dictatorial.

Minorities for Trump?

There has been considerable discussion about Trump's appeal to minority voters, winning a bigger share of the Hispanic and African American vote than any recent Republican in a presidential election. From our research, the factors outlined above – the view that the economy was in better shape under Trump and that he would be a stronger president despite his flaws – were as much a factor for minority voters who were drawn to him as for others, especially with the weakening of traditional party loyalties.

A few more specific factors could be identified, however. One was that some felt taken for granted or pandered to by the Democrats, or that the Democratic party's values seemed ever further removed from the more traditional values that their communities still embraced.

“I think in general, over time, black people are straying away from the Democrats. With Obama, we thought so much was going to change, but it didn't change. So I think a lot of black people and black men in particular started thinking for themselves.” [GA]

“It's an unspoken expectation that black people will vote Democratic. At one point when Biden was running, he was like, 'if you don't vote for me, you ain't black'. The white man is going to tell me I ain't black? Really?” [NC]

“The times we're in, there is I guess you could call it an attack on the man. And you have more masculine men saying we're voting for Trump, because when is enough enough? Let's take back some of this authority we've given away. Trump can be very ignorant, but he's like, I'm fighting for families, an actual family unit, husband, wife and children. And I think a lot of black people are starting to resonate with that.” [NC]

“It's a reaction to the hyper-liberalism that we see. A lot of people are tired of the pronoun thing. Trump is a symbol of being anti-PC and woke and people being cancelled.” [MI]

“I think it's because of the traditional values of the Republican party. A lot of minorities, what we hold close to us is family values. We like to stick together and stuff. So I think that resonates with them a bit more. And he has money, so why not go with that?” [AZ]

Trump's persona and outspoken approach were also an attraction for many. His stances on immigration and the border were another factor, as was his association with enterprise and wealth creation – though some (usually Trump opponents) argued that some may have been attracted by financial assistance from his administration during covid.

“A lot of black men see themselves in Donald Trump. They see negative stories targeted at him. I don't agree with it, but I see the logic.” [GA]

“A lot of minorities are upset that they're just giving out citizenship to anyone, and they don't have to work for their citizenship like they did. They're getting benefits and money, when they had to work from the ground up.” [NV]

“He keeps it real. He doesn't hold back, he doesn't sugarcoat anything. He may say things or move in a certain way that I don't agree with politically, but he's honest and I respect the man for his honesty.” [PA]

“Now more than ever, black and brown men are investors. They're business owners. And they want their money like everyone else.” [NC]

“When Trump was in office a lot of people saw the most money they'd ever seen in their lifetime between PPP loans and the different things they did because of covid. That was the best time of some people's lives at the time. When you ask another black person why they're voting for Trump they say, 'he gave us a stimulus check'.” [MI]

“If you're chasing the American dream from the outside in, he kind of represents it.” [NV]

The decision

Best job on issues

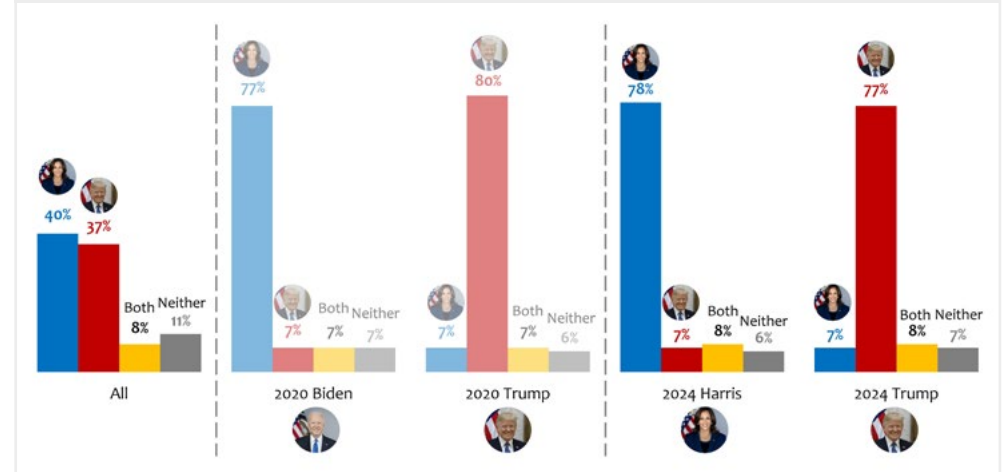
Which of the following do you think are the most important issues facing the US at the moment? And who do you think would do a better job on each of the following issues if they were president after the next election – Kamala Harris or Donald Trump?



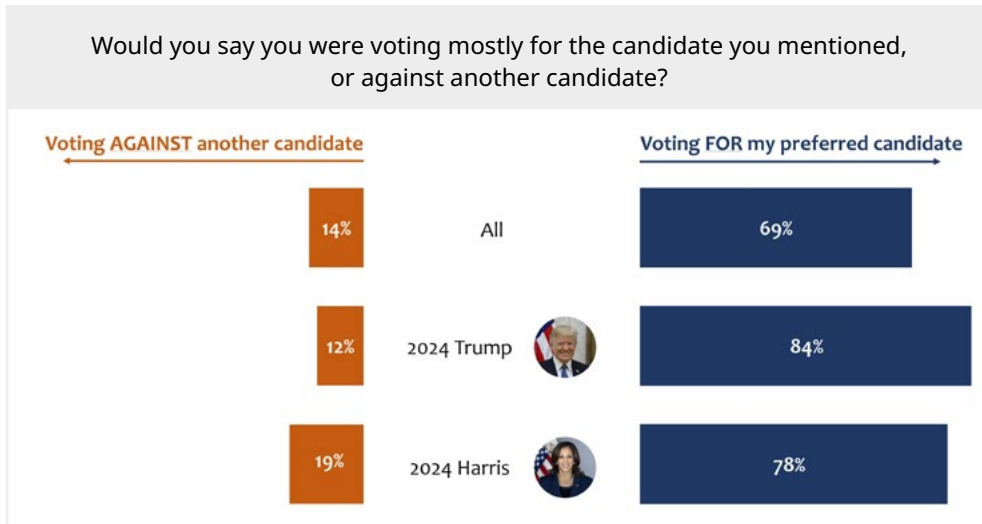
Having asked our poll respondents which issues were the most important to them, we asked who would do a better job on each of the things they cared about. Those who put inflation, the economy and (especially) immigration and border control in their top three were more likely to think Trump would perform best on those issues. Harris had strong leads on abortion, climate change and healthcare, but with fewer voters naming those among their top priorities.

Who is the change?

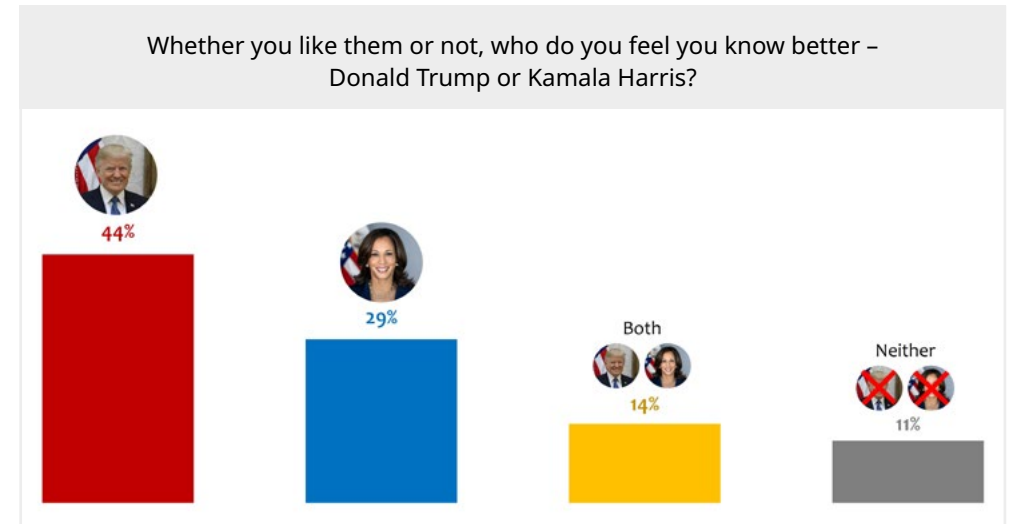
Who do you think represents the bigger change?



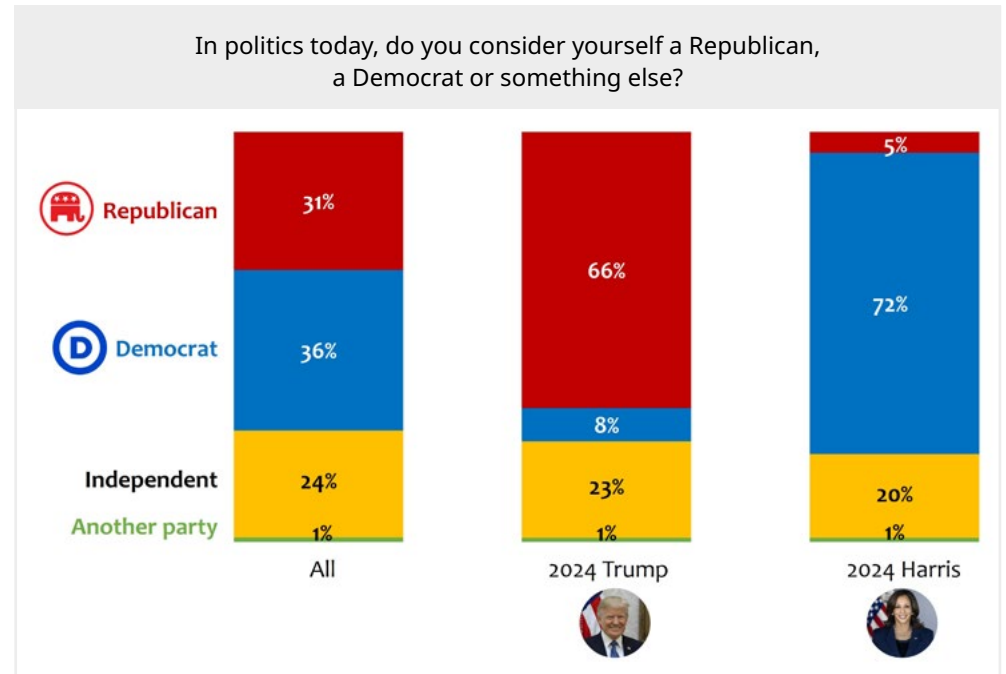
2024 Trump and Harris voters both saw their candidate as the bigger change. Overall, just over one in ten said neither represents change, while a further 8% said they both do.



2024 Trump voters were more likely than Harris voters to say they were voting for their preferred candidate rather than against their opponent. 84% of Trump voters said they were voting positively, compared to 78% of Harris voters, of whom nearly one in five (19%) said they were voting mostly against Trump.



Americans as a whole were more likely to say they knew Trump better than Harris than the reverse. Only 14% of voters said they thought they knew them both well. Only just over half (55%) of 2024 Harris voters said they felt they knew Harris better than Trump, though just over 1 in 5 (22%) said they felt they knew both well. More than three quarters of 2024 Trump voters said they felt they knew Trump better than Harris.



More than 7 in 10 Harris voters (72%) said they considered themselves Democrats, with a further 20% saying they were independents. Meanwhile, only 66% of Trump voters said they were Republicans, while 23% said they were independents.

Key attitudes

We asked a series of “mini-referendum” questions on bigger-picture issues to assess their importance to the voting decisions of different kinds of Americans. These included illegal migration, the Supreme Court, America’s role in the world, what was responsible for recent rises in the cost of living, and whether or not the election result would make a big difference to the country.











The strength of the relationship between these attitudes and people’s votes varies between groups. In this chart, the darker the square, the stronger the correlation between the issue and the voting decision.

Our analysis shows that people were more likely to vote for Trump if they blamed the government for inflation, thought illegal migration was causing serious problems, would prefer to have a government they agreed with on economic rather than social issues, think the Supreme Court is doing its job and want to see the US disentangle itself from international conflicts.

They were more likely to vote for Harris if they thought it was more important to invest in national infrastructure than cut taxes, that the issue of illegal migration was being exaggerated for political reasons, that the Supreme Court was straying too far into politics and the cost of living is down to factors beyond the government’s control.

Which statement from the following pairs do you agree with more?

[Correlation: If negative (-) there is a correlation between the first statement (-) of the pair and stated likelihood to vote for that candidate.
If positive (+) there is a correlation between the second statement (+) of the pair and stated likelihood to vote for that candidate.
The higher/lower the number, the stronger the correlation between the statement and voting intention.]

Levels of agreement	White, Male, College		White, Female, College		White, Male, No College		White, Female, No College		Black, Male, College		Black, Female, College		Black, Male, No College		Black, Female, No College		Latino, Male, College		Latino, Female, College		Latino, Male, No College		Latino, Female, No College		Asian, Male, College		Asian, Female, College		Asian, Male, No College		Asian, Female, No College		
	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	2024 Harris	2024 Trump	
																																	
 <p>- The US will be pretty much the same no matter who is elected President + I expect the result to make a big difference to the US</p>	25%	0.00	+0.05	+0.08	0.00	-0.03	+0.12	+0.03	+0.12	+0.05	-0.06	+0.14	-0.09	+0.11	-0.05	+0.13	-0.07	0.00	+0.03	+0.07	+0.08	-0.02	+0.05	+0.04	+0.06	+0.13	0.00	-0.02	-0.03	+0.02	-0.08	+0.04	+0.06
	75%																																
 <p>- Cost of living is fault of government + Cost of living is down to factors beyond government's control</p>	74%	+0.39	-0.35	+0.38	-0.35	+0.30	-0.25	+0.20	-0.19	+0.05	-0.04	+0.02	0.00	+0.06	+0.01	0.00	+0.04	+0.17	-0.08	+0.20	-0.08	+0.07	-0.05	+0.03	0.00	+0.11	-0.11	+0.19	-0.06	+0.18	-0.09	+0.02	+0.05
	26%																																
 <p>- It is more important to Invest in national infrastructure and government services + It is more important to cut taxes</p>	44%	-0.44	+0.42	-0.39	+0.37	-0.28	+0.25	-0.22	+0.17	-0.18	+0.16	-0.03	+0.04	-0.08	+0.01	-0.03	-0.06	-0.25	+0.23	-0.09	+0.14	-0.14	+0.14	-0.04	+0.01	-0.33	+0.29	-0.07	-0.01	-0.14	+0.08	+0.11	-0.01
	56%																																
 <p>- The US should defend freedom around the world + The US should disentangle itself from conflicts around the world</p>	49%	-0.30	+0.26	-0.36	+0.33	-0.27	+0.21	-0.26	+0.18	-0.23	+0.16	-0.19	+0.07	-0.21	+0.14	-0.12	+0.07	-0.34	+0.38	-0.26	+0.24	-0.17	+0.12	-0.23	+0.16	-0.27	+0.16	-0.16	+0.16	-0.23	+0.16	-0.26	+0.12
	51%																																
 <p>- There is a candidate who will make a good President + Neither will make good President</p>	72%	-0.10	-0.04	-0.17	+0.02	-0.05	-0.14	-0.08	-0.10	-0.12	-0.07	-0.29	+0.07	-0.17	+0.06	-0.24	+0.06	-0.24	+0.18	-0.22	+0.05	-0.07	-0.06	-0.12	-0.04	-0.20	0.00	-0.08	0.00	-0.06	-0.12	-0.18	-0.09
	28%																																
 <p>- I would rather have a government I agreed with on social issues + I would rather have a government I agreed with on economic issues</p>	35%	-0.35	+0.33	-0.41	+0.40	-0.24	+0.22	-0.24	+0.23	-0.20	+0.18	-0.09	+0.07	-0.10	+0.06	-0.05	+0.06	-0.20	+0.13	-0.25	+0.17	-0.12	+0.08	-0.16	+0.09	-0.21	+0.17	-0.25	+0.27	-0.16	+0.06	-0.09	+0.05
	65%																																
 <p>- In American politics democracy is under threat + American politics has been tough but it still basically works</p>	69%	-0.16	+0.20	-0.19	+0.19	-0.06	+0.08	-0.05	+0.05	-0.10	+0.14	-0.08	+0.14	-0.07	+0.13	+0.01	+0.06	-0.15	+0.22	+0.03	+0.11	-0.10	+0.17	-0.05	+0.07	-0.08	+0.13	-0.11	+0.12	-0.01	+0.01	-0.05	+0.01
	31%																																
 <p>- US Supreme Court is doing its job + US Supreme Court is straying too far into politics</p>	36%	+0.42	-0.48	+0.43	-0.47	+0.32	-0.36	+0.20	-0.23	+0.14	-0.21	+0.12	-0.15	+0.05	-0.12	-0.01	-0.10	+0.18	-0.20	+0.11	-0.28	+0.12	-0.18	+0.07	-0.15	+0.18	-0.22	+0.10	-0.17	+0.08	-0.12	+0.04	-0.08
	64%																																
 <p>- Illegal migration is causing serious problems + Issue of illegal migration is being exaggerated for political reasons</p>	60%	+0.55	-0.54	+0.57	-0.57	+0.49	-0.46	+0.42	-0.42	+0.29	-0.29	+0.13	-0.15	+0.21	-0.20	+0.10	-0.18	+0.34	-0.38	+0.43	-0.38	+0.28	-0.31	+0.28	-0.31	+0.27	-0.33	+0.26	-0.20	+0.34	-0.27	+0.25	-0.38
	40%																																

About Lord Ashcroft

LORD ASHCROFT KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. He is a former treasurer and deputy chairman of the UK Conservative Party. He is also honorary chairman and a former treasurer of the International Democracy Union. He is founder and chairman of the board of trustees of Crimestoppers, vice-patron of the Intelligence Corps Museum, chairman of the trustees of Ashcroft Technology Academy, a senior fellow of the International Strategic Studies Association, former chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University and a former trustee of Imperial War Museums.

His political books include:

- Smell the Coffee: A Wake-Up Call for the Conservative Party
- Call Me Dave: The Unauthorised Biography of David Cameron
- Hopes and Fears: Trump, Clinton, the Voters and the Future
- Well, You Did Ask: Why the UK Voted to Leave the EU
- The Lost Majority: The 2017 Election, the Conservative Party, the Voters and the Future
- Jacob's Ladder: The Unauthorised Biography of Jacob Rees-Mogg
- Diagnosis of Defeat: Labour's Turn to Smell the Coffee
- Going for Broke: The Rise of Rishi Sunak
- Reunited Nation? American Politics Beyond the 2020 Election
- Red Knight: The Unauthorised Biography of Sir Keir Starmer
- First Lady: Intrigue at the Court of Carrie and Boris Johnson

- All To Play For: The Advance Of Rishi Sunak
- Red Queen? The Unauthorised Biography of Angela Rayner
- Blue Ambition: The Unauthorised Biography of Kemi Badenoch

His other books include:

- Victoria Cross Heroes, Volumes I and II
- Special Forces Heroes
- George Cross Heroes
- Special Ops Heroes
- Heroes of the Skies
- White Flag? An Examination of the UK's Defence Capability
- Unfair Game: An Exposé of South Africa's Captive-Bred Lion Industry
- Life Support: The State of the NHS in an Age of Pandemics
- In the Shadows: The Extraordinary Men and Women of the Intelligence Corps

