What will they do without him?

Post-Trump politics in the US

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC
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Lord Ashcroft Polls
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Contents

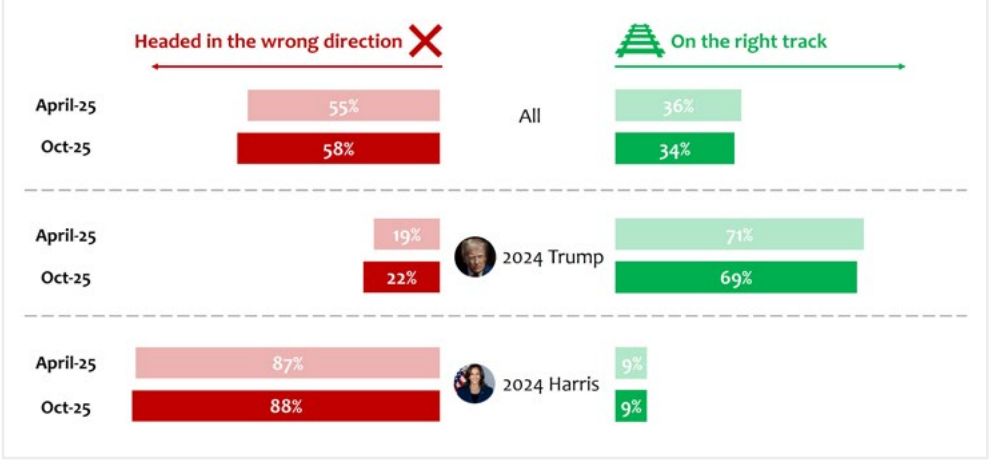
Methodological note

10,028 adults in the US were interviewed online between 6 October and 1 November 2025. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in each country. Full data tables are available at LordAshcroftPolls.com

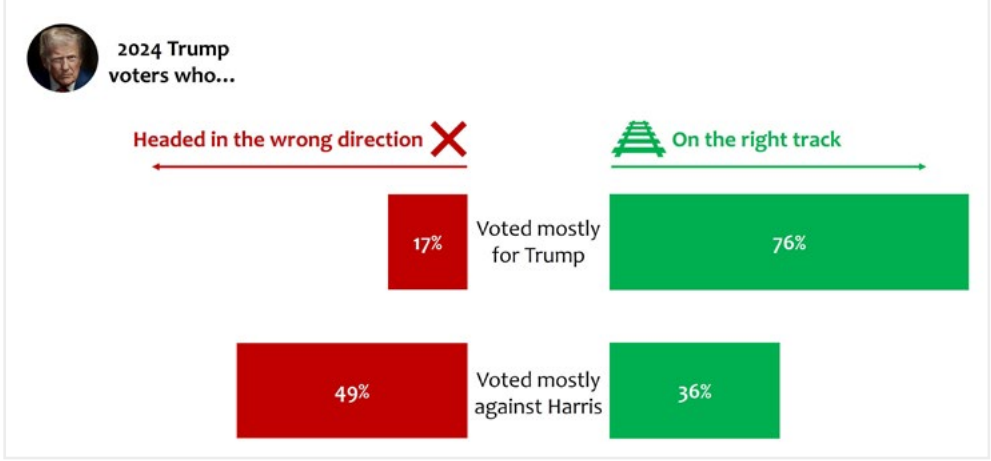
12 focus groups were held between 2 and 10 October in Phoenix, AZ; Chicago, IL; and Philadelphia, PA. Separate groups were held of 2024 Trump and Harris voters. Participants were drawn from a wide range of social, economic and political backgrounds and the groups comprised equal numbers of men and women overall. In the report, quotes from Trump voters are highlighted in red, and quotes from Harris voters in blue.

State of the nation

Do you think the United States is on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?



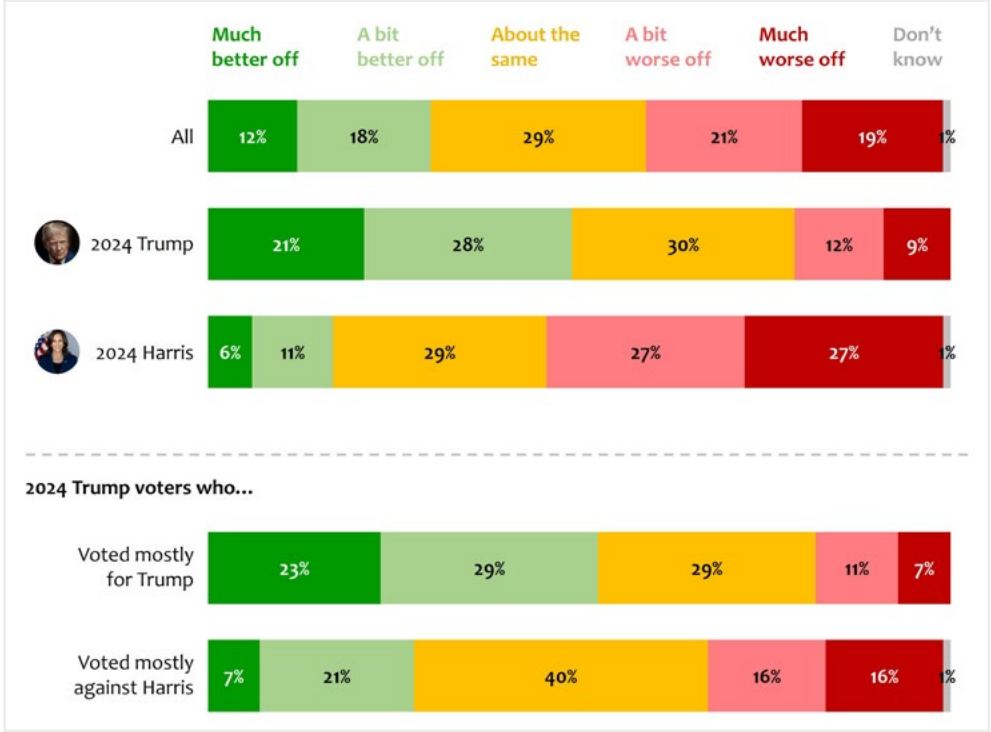
Do you think the United States is on the right track, or is it headed in the wrong direction?



Nearly 6 in 10 Americans said the **US was heading in the wrong direction,** with 34% saying the country was on the right track. 2024 Trump voters said things were on the right track by a 47-point margin, while Harris voters disagreed by 88% to 9%. However, while three quarters of those who voted positively for Trump thought things were heading the right way, those who backed him as the lesser of two evils thought things were going in the wrong direction by 49% to 36%.

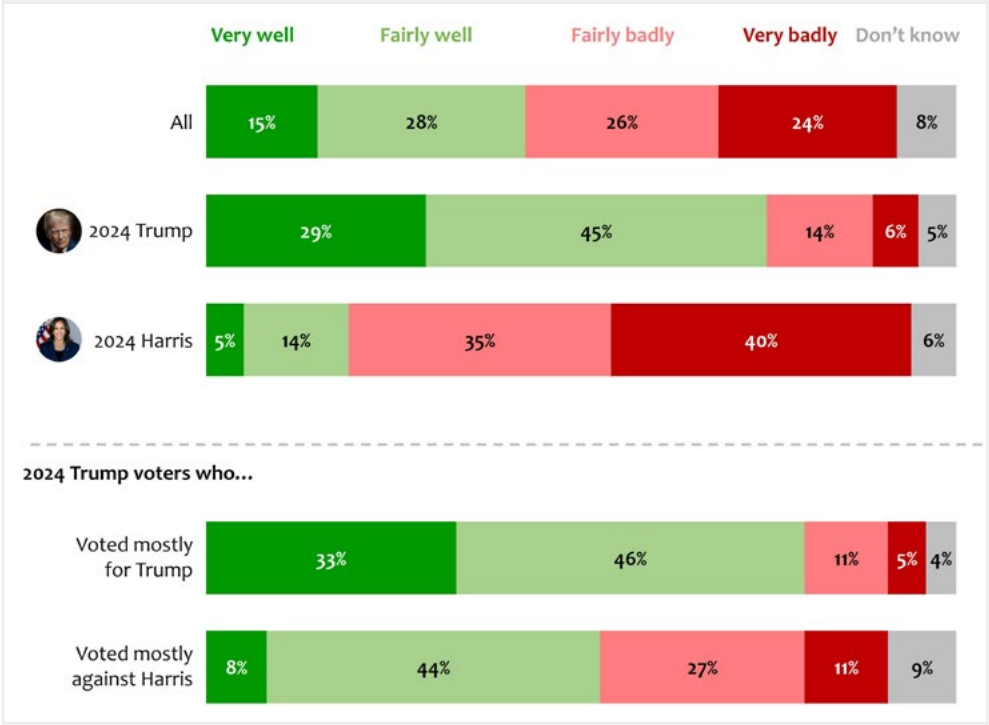
Would you say **the US** is better ot worse off than it was this time last year?

Would you say that you **personally** are better or worse off that this time last year?

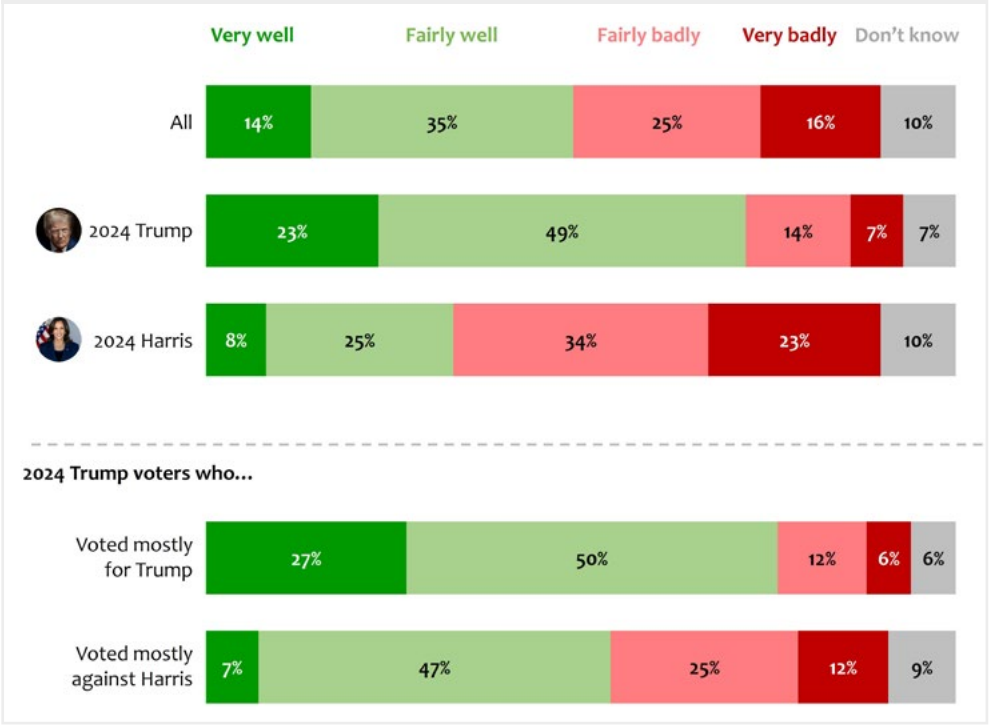


More than 7 in 10 positive Trump voters said they thought the **US was better off than it was a year ago,** but only a minority (41%) of his more reluctant voters agreed. There was a similar contrast when we asked about their personal circumstances: negative Trump voters were more likely to say they felt worse off (32%) than better off (28%) compared to a year ago, with 4 in 10 saying there was no difference.

How do you think the American economy will do over the next year for the **US as a whole?**

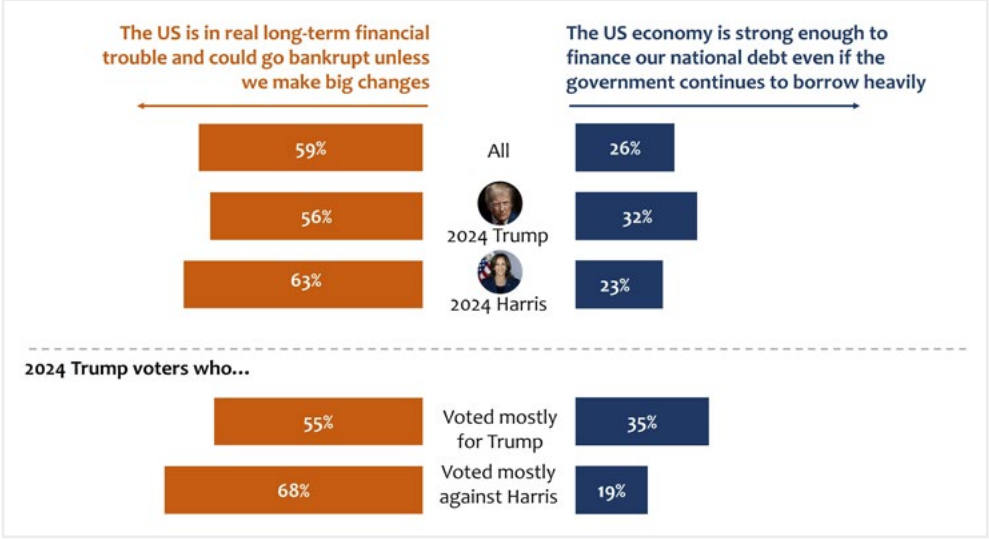


How do you think the American economy will do over the next year for **you personally?**

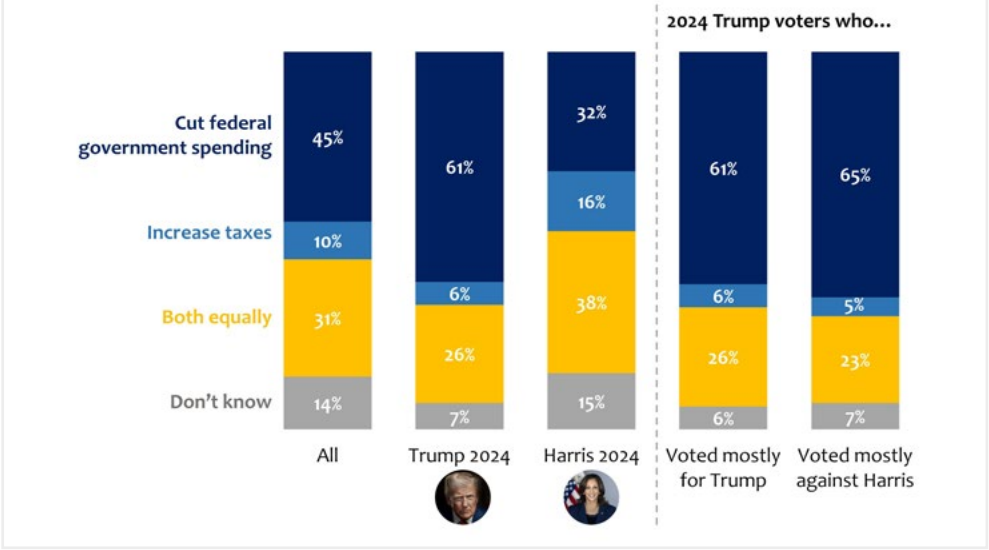


Similarly, only just over half of negative Trump voters **expected the American economy to do well** over the next year, whether for the country as a whole (52%) or for them personally (54%), while more enthusiastic Trump voters were overwhelmingly optimistic. Voters as a whole tended to be optimistic for themselves (by 49% to 41%) but pessimistic for the US in general (by 50% to 43%).

Thinking about the US economy, the amount of federal government borrows each year and the size of the national debt, which of the following comes closer to your view?



If the federal government needs to reduce its borrowing and debt over the next few years, which of the following should it do more of?



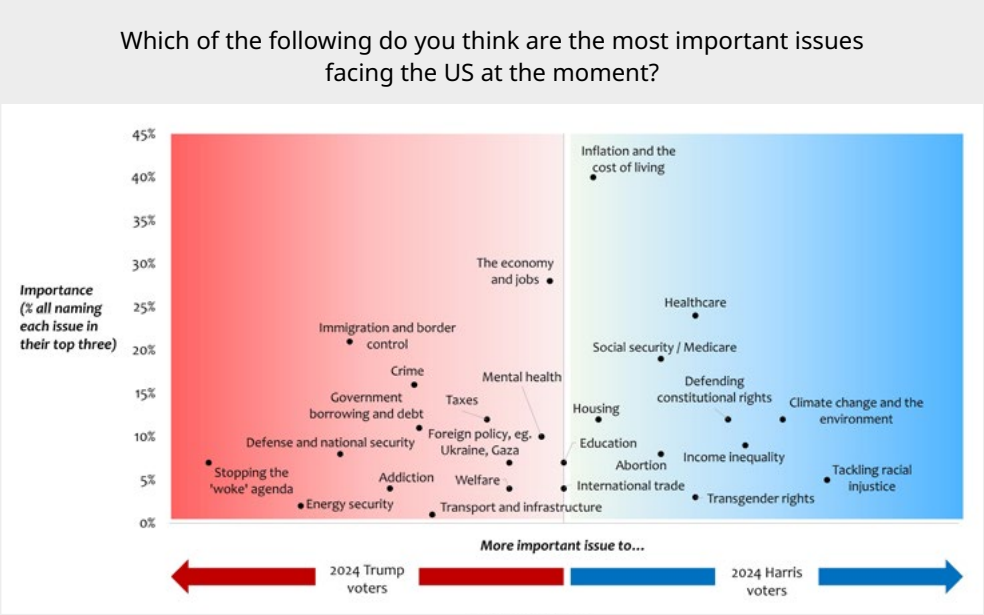
Most Americans – including clear majorities of both Trump and Harris voters – agreed that the **US was in real long-term financial trouble** and could go bankrupt unless big changes were made. Only just over a quarter disagreed. However, there was a political divide as to the remedy. Voters as a whole – and especially Trump voters – thought the way to cut the deficit was to cut federal spending, while Harris voters were more likely to favour higher taxes or a mixture of the two.

In our focus groups, voters acknowledged that the state of the national finances was a potentially serious problem, but admitted it was low on their list of personal priorities.

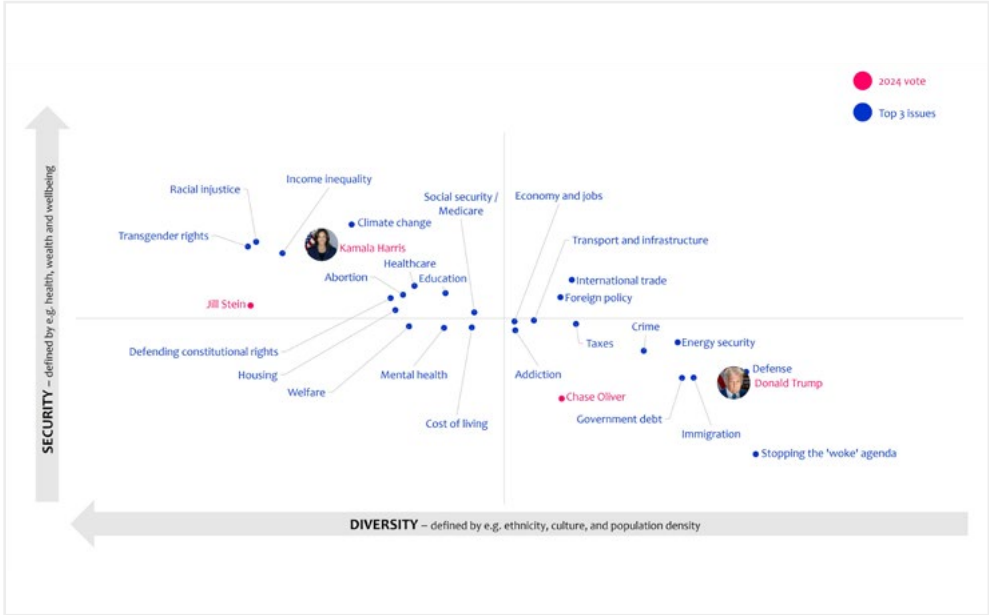
> “It will eventually matter. The bubble will burst. Something’s got to give.”

> “Do I wake up in the night thinking about that? No, I think about my family, still having a job, being able to afford a place, a roof over their heads.”

> “It doesn’t worry anybody, but nobody understands it either.”

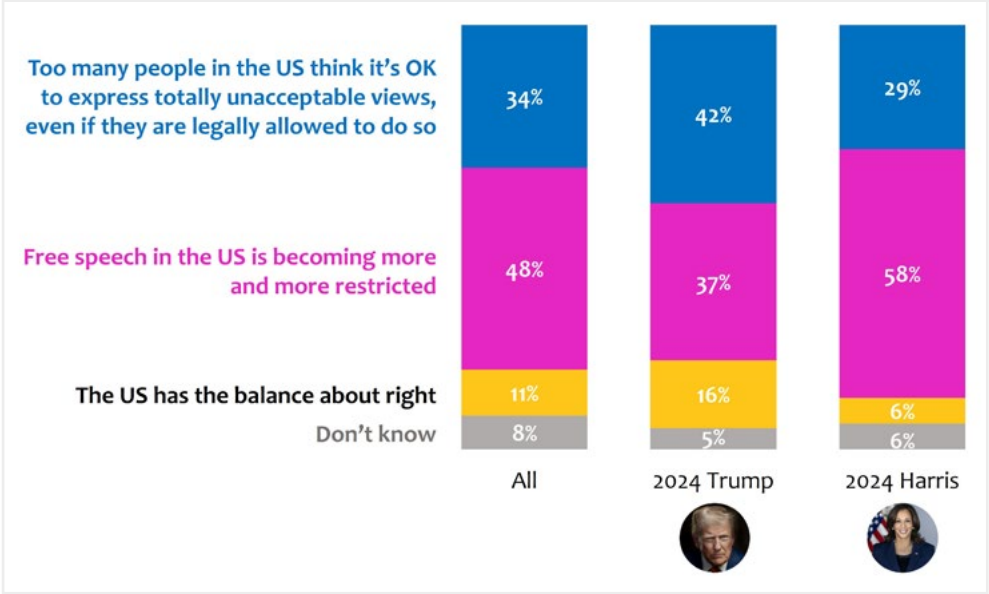


This chart shows the issues mostly likely to be named among voters' top three priorities, and their relative importance to Trump and Harris voters. The two biggest issues – inflation and the cost of living, and the economy and jobs – were high on the list for both groups. Immigration and the border, crime, national security and stopping the 'woke' agenda were significantly more likely to be mentioned by those who voted for Trump, while healthcare, social security, climate change and income inequality were relatively more likely to be chosen by Harris voters.

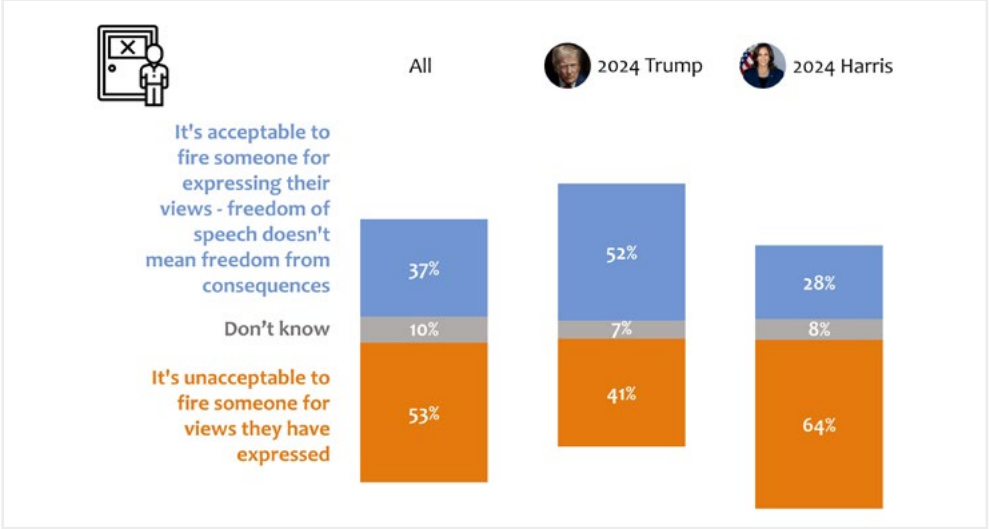


Our **political map** shows how different issues, attributes, personalities and opinions interact with one another. Each point shows where we are most likely to find people with that characteristic or opinion; the closer the plot points are to each other the more closely related they are. Here we see how political views and voting patterns are distributed throughout the electorate, with Trump voters most likely to be found in the less diverse, less prosperous and more rural bottom right quadrant. This is also where we are most likely to find voters who prioritise immigration, defense, taxes, government debt and tackling the 'woke' agenda. Harris voters are most likely to appear in the more prosperous, diverse, urban and liberal-leaning top left, where we are also most likely to find voter whose priorities include climate change, transgender rights, abortion and social security. The economy and the cost of living appear close to the centre of the map, showing these are near-universal concerns not confined to any one part of the electorate.

Which of the following comes closest to your own view?

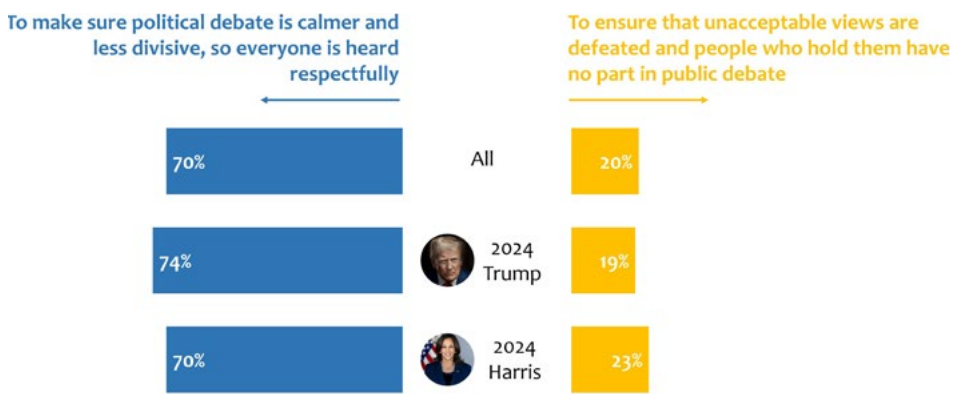


Do you think it's acceptable or unacceptable for an employer to fire a staff member for publicly expressing very controvercial views, even though free speech is protected by the Constitution?

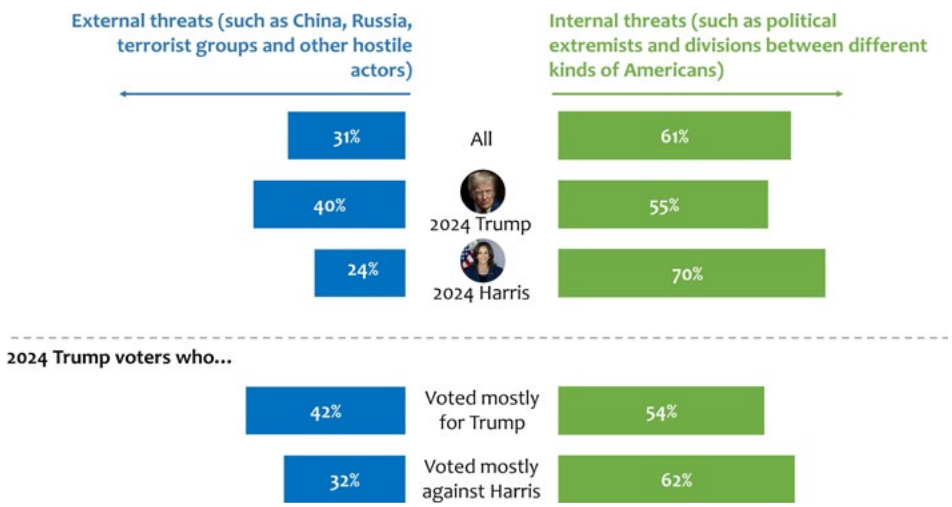


We also asked a number of questions about the **current political climate** in America. Just under half of all voters (48%) said they thought free speech in the US was becoming more and more restricted – more than took the opposing view that too many people think it's OK to express totally unacceptable views, even if they are legally allowed to do so. Harris voters were more likely than Trump voters to feel that free speech was increasingly restricted. Following the controversy over people losing their jobs after appearing on social media to justify or celebrate the murder of Charlie Kirk, nearly two thirds of Harris voters said it was unacceptable to fire someone for views they have expressed. Most Trump voters said it was acceptable to do so even though speech is protected by the Constitution, because freedom of speech doesn't mean freedom from consequences.

Which do you think is the more important priority in the US today?



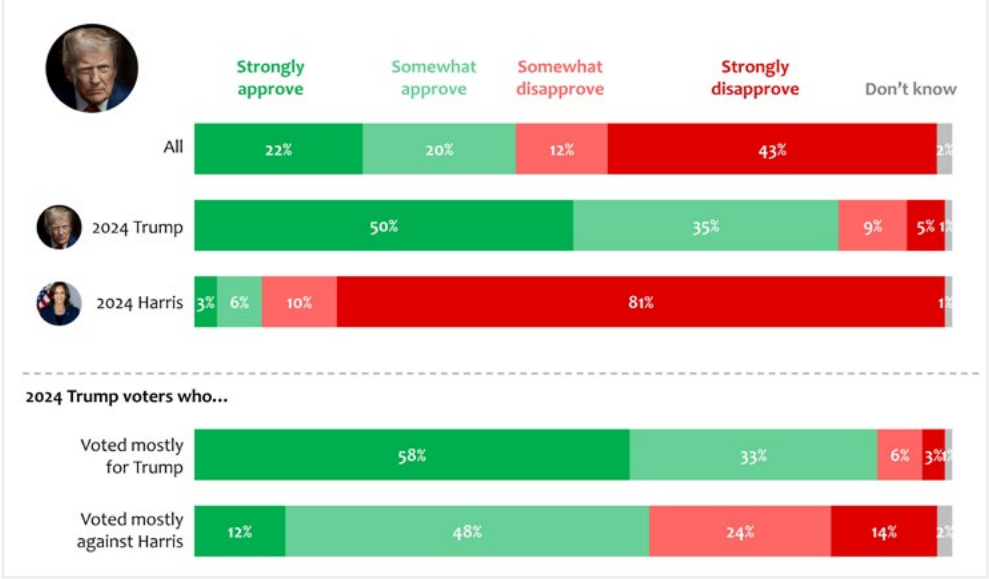
Which of the following do you think is the biggest threat to the US and American society?



Large majorities on both sides agreed that **making political debate calmer and less divisive** so everyone is heard respectfully was more important than ensuring that unacceptable views are defeated and those who hold them have no part in public debate – though nearly a quarter of Harris voters chose the latter statement. Majorities on both sides also agreed that internal threats, such as political extremists and divisions between Americans – were a bigger threat to the US and American society than external threats such as hostile overseas countries and groups.

President Trump and the Republicans

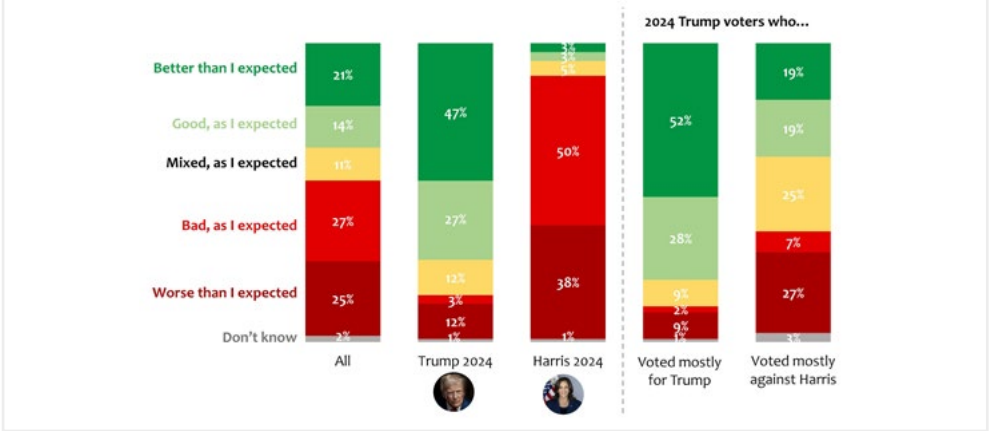
Do you approve or disapprove of the way **Donald Trump** is handling his job as President?



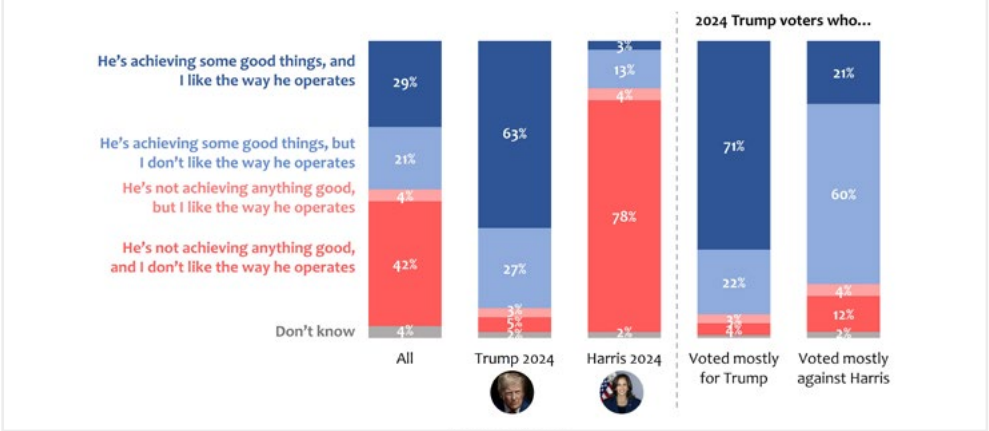
Do you approve or disapprove of the way **JD Vance** is handling his job as Vice President?

Americans as a whole said they disapproved of **Trump's performance as president** by 55% to 42%. While Trump voters as a whole approved by a 71-point margin, negative Trump voters did so by 60% to 38%. There was a similar pattern for approval of JD Vance's performance as vice president, though with a higher proportion saying "don't know".

Would you say that Donald Trump's second term as president has so far been:



Which of the following best describes your view of Donald Trump's presidency?



Nearly half (47%) of Trump voters said his second term so far had been **better than they expected**, but those who voted for him as the lesser of two evils were considerably less likely to do so (19%). More than one third of this group said that his second term had been either bad or worse than they expected.

More than 7 in 10 of those who voted enthusiastically for Trump said they thought he was **achieving some good things,** and that they liked the way he operates. However, only one fifth of those who voted for him more reluctantly said the same. Six in ten of this group agreed that "he's achieving some good things, but I don't like the way he operates".

In our focus groups, those who had voted for Trump reluctantly gave him credit for a number of things including action on border control, scaling back DEI initiatives, banning biological males from women's sports, and a generally more disciplined and focused approach than in his first term. However, some said they had yet to see any improvement in the economy or the cost of living, the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and what one described as his "revenge tour" of legal action against critics and opponents.

"I'm still waiting for eggs to go down in price, and orange juice and everything else. I'm waiting for housing to go down so my adult children can get an apartment."

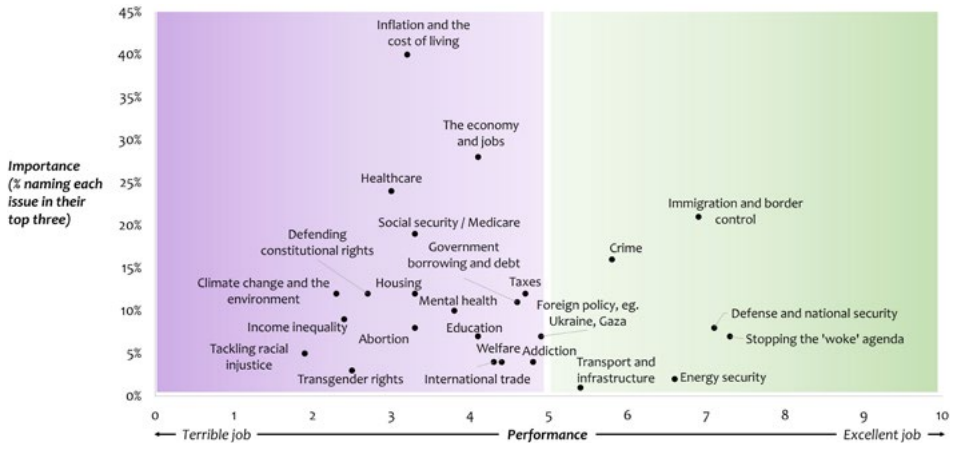
"He's not a magician. I mean, you can't just snap your fingers and it's fixed. But I expected him to take steps to fix it."

"It's like the revenge tour, going after people that said things that hurt his feelings. I wouldn't care if he did what he was supposed to be doing. Then I could turn a blind eye to it. We want him to take care of the economy first. I don't care what he does after that."

"We want people to be here legally, but these are witch hunts. They're sending ICE troops to American cities and going into businesses and snatching people. That's not American. That's not for me."

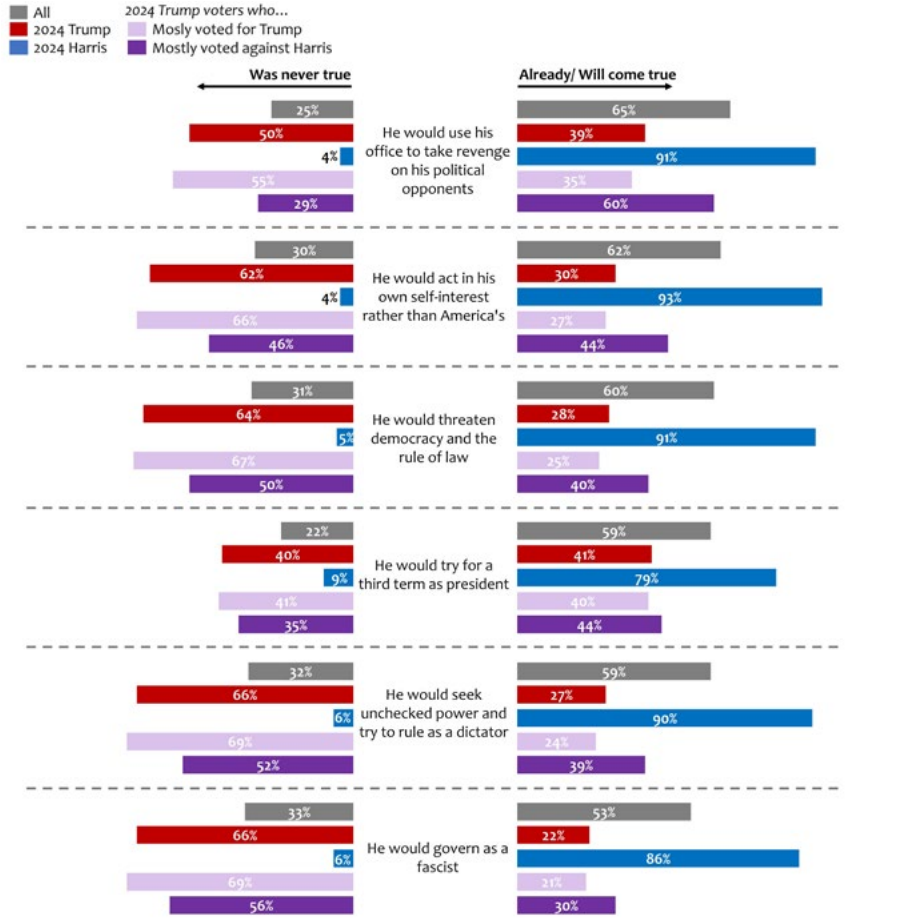
"Nothing has changed. Granted it's only been a year, but it hasn't been a good year. There should have been at least some positive light. But it seems like every day you turn round and something crazy is going on."

Which of the following do you think are the most important issues facing the US at the moment? And how good a job do you think President Trump and his administration are doing on the issues you choose?



This chart shows how voters rate President Trump's performance on the issues they regard as important. As we saw above, inflation and the cost of living top the priority list by some way, but those who name it in their top three give Trump a mean score of just 3.2/10 for his performance on the issue so far. He also averages 4.1/10 for his performance on the economy and jobs. He scores relatively high marks on immigration and border control, crime and national security, though are top-three issues for smaller numbers of voters.

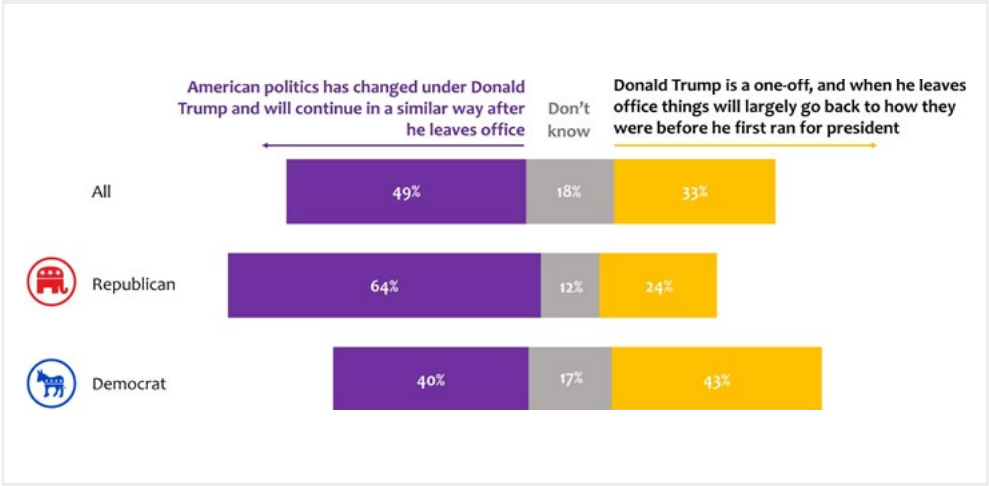
Here are some things that people warned might happen if Donald Trump was elected last November. Please say if you think each one is already coming true, will come true in the future, or was never true.



We asked whether or not people thought some of the various warnings Trump's opponents gave about giving him another term as president were coming true. Around two thirds (including 6 in 10 reluctant Trump voters) thought was using his office to take revenge on political opponents, while around 6 in 10 thought he was acting in his own self-interest rather than America's and that he was threatening democracy and the rule of law.

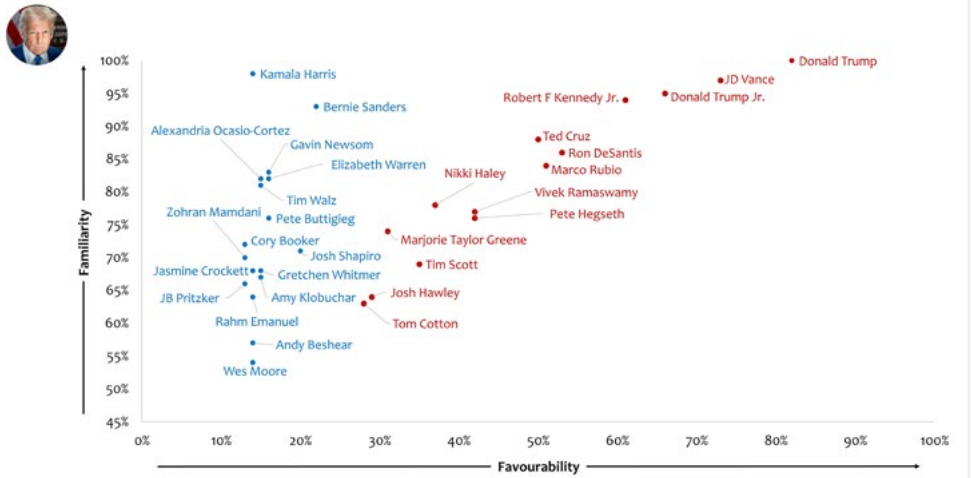
Which of the following is closer to your own view?

[NB showing Republican identifiers and Democrat identifiers]



Voters as a whole, including nearly two thirds of Republicans, said they thought American politics had changed under Donald Trump and would continue in a similar way once he leaves office. Democrats were slightly more likely than not to take the opposite view, that Trump is a one-off and that when he leaves the scene things will largely go back to how they were before he was president.

Familiarity and Favourability among Trump voters



This chart shows how **favourable Trump voters are to various political characters,** and also how familiar – that is, the proportion who have an opinion one way or the other. Everyone has an opinion about Donald Trump, and nearly 9 in 10 of his enthusiastic voters say their view is positive – but this falls to just over half of those who voted for him more reluctantly.

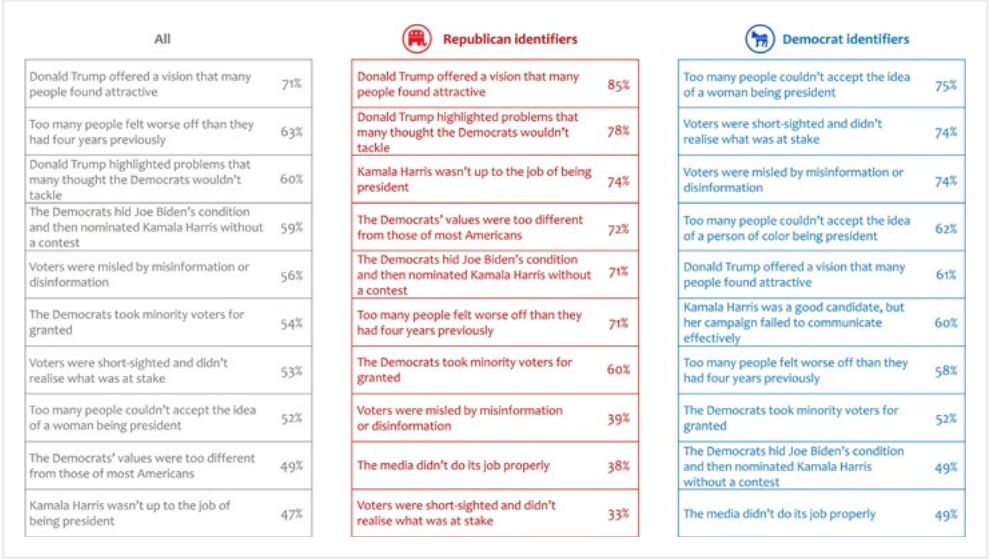
Vice President JD Vance is also near-universally known but his favourability rating, though high among Republicans, is a few points below Trump's. We found in our groups that while many see Vance as a more disciplined face of Trumpism, and some were enthusiastic ("he's young and he's got some great ideas"), his loyalist status cuts both ways – some who voted for Trump see Vance as a "yes-man" or a "puppet", who seems less authentic and relatable than his boss.

Next in terms of both familiarity and favourability is the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., who commands similar ratings among Republicans as a whole but significantly lower numbers among our reluctant Trump voters.

The Democrats

Here are some reason's people have given why Donald Trump won last year's presidential election. How big a factor do you think each one was in the election outcome?

[NB showing SUM Big Factor: very big factor + fairly big factor; showing top ten]



All		Republican identifiers		Democrat identifiers	
Donald Trump offered a vision that many people found attractive	71%	Donald Trump offered a vision that many people found attractive	85%	Too many people couldn't accept the idea of a woman being president	75%
Too many people felt worse off than they had four years previously	63%	Donald Trump highlighted problems that many thought the Democrats wouldn't tackle	78%	Voters were short-sighted and didn't realise what was at stake	74%
Donald Trump highlighted problems that many thought the Democrats wouldn't tackle	60%	Kamala Harris wasn't up to the job of being president	74%	Voters were misled by misinformation or disinformation	74%
The Democrats hid Joe Biden's condition and then nominated Kamala Harris without a contest	59%	The Democrats' values were too different from those of most Americans	72%	Too many people couldn't accept the idea of a person of color being president	62%
Voters were misled by misinformation or disinformation	56%	The Democrats hid Joe Biden's condition and then nominated Kamala Harris without a contest	71%	Donald Trump offered a vision that many people found attractive	61%
The Democrats took minority voters for granted	54%	Too many people felt worse off than they had four years previously	71%	Kamala Harris was a good candidate, but her campaign failed to communicate effectively	60%
Voters were short-sighted and didn't realise what was at stake	53%	The Democrats took minority voters for granted	60%	Too many people felt worse off than they had four years previously	58%
Too many people couldn't accept the idea of a woman being president	52%	Voters were misled by misinformation or disinformation	39%	The Democrats took minority voters for granted	52%
The Democrats' values were too different from those of most Americans	49%	The media didn't do its job properly	38%	The Democrats hid Joe Biden's condition and then nominated Kamala Harris without a contest	49%
Kamala Harris wasn't up to the job of being president	47%	Voters were short-sighted and didn't realise what was at stake	33%	The media didn't do its job properly	49%

When we asked Americans as a whole to choose the **reasons for last year's result,** the most popular were that "Donald Trump offered a vision that many Americans found attractive" and that "Too many people felt worse off than they had four years previously".

For Democrats, however, the single most important reason was that "Too many people couldn't accept the idea of a woman being president" (75% named it as a big factor). Almost as many thought "The voters were short-sighted and didn't realise what was at stake" and that "Voters were misled by misinformation or disinformation". Next was that "Too many people couldn't accept the idea of a person of colour being president". Only just over half (58%) thought voters feeling worse off than they had four years previously had been an important factor in determining the outcome.

This was reflected in our focus groups of Democrats, who often put the election result down to a combination of racism, misogyny, bad decisions by voters, and President Biden's late withdrawal from the race.

> "It was a triple – her coming in late, her not being white and her being a woman."

> "I feel like some of these people need a colouring book. The needed pictures to show them what was actually going to happen."

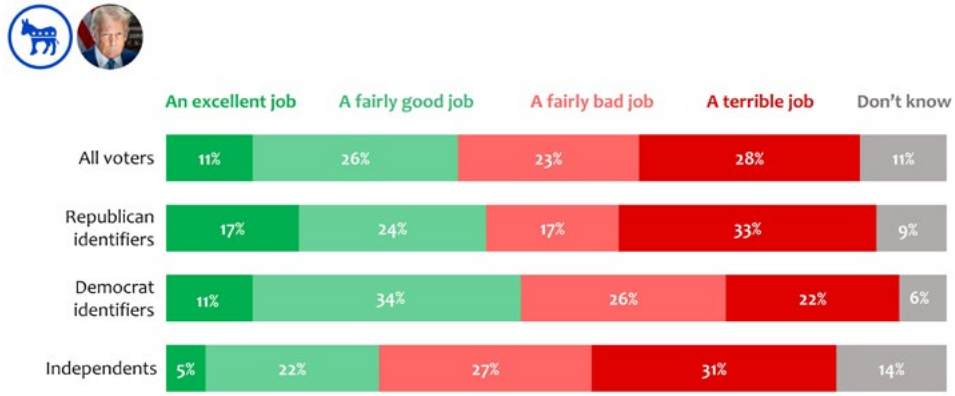
> "A lot of people who didn't vote for her just weren't aware what she stood for. They didn't do their research."

> "All these people who voted for Trump, the Hispanics, the Arabs, they thought the bad things were going to happen to someone else and not to them."

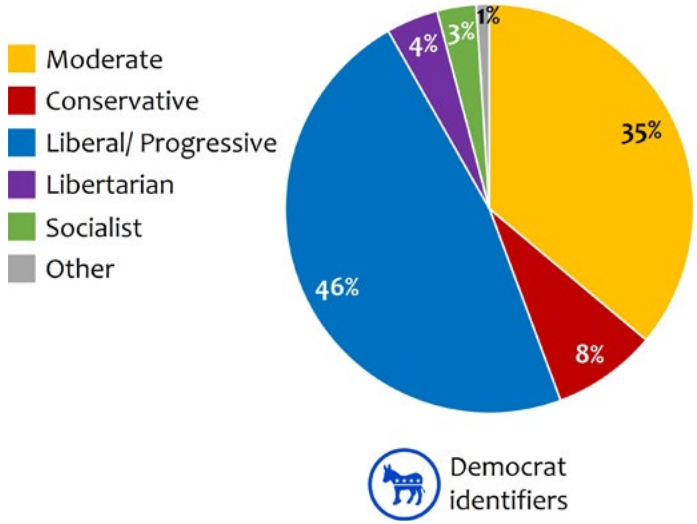
> "A lot of poor white folks vote against their own interests because our politicians sell fear. 'The brown people are coming, they're going to take our jobs!'"

> "I don't think we could change their minds, though. I think they almost have to feel the pain themselves. The people who voted for him, those crazy nut heads and their old no-teeth Grandmama and them folks in the trailer. Those are the ones that are losing their jobs."

How good a job would you say the Democrats are doing at opposing President Trump and his agenda?



In general, which of the following describes your political views?



Democrat identifiers (48%) were nearly as likely as voters as a whole (51%) to think their party was doing either a fairly bad job or a terrible job when it came to opposing President Trump and his agenda. Independent voters (58%) were the most likely of all to think this.

There was some debate in our Democrat focus groups as to what the party should do if it takes control of the House in the 2026 midterms. Some were keen to begin impeachment proceedings for a third time – though others argued that this would be pointless and counterproductive.

> "He's a crook. He needs to pay for the things he does."

> "Hopefully people will see that if he's impeached, he's impeached for a reason."

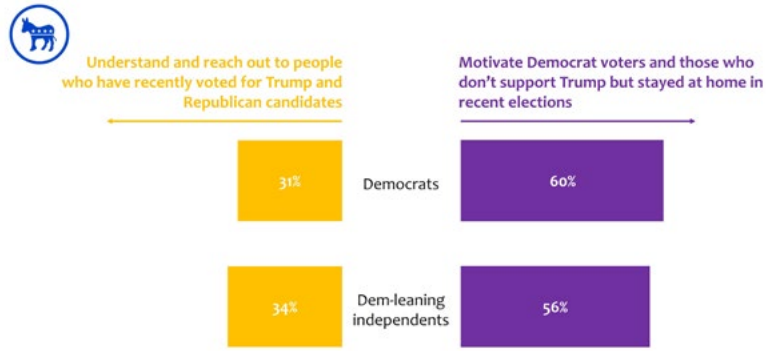
> "We've already tried it in the past, twice. It didn't have that effect and now he's president again."

> "We need to start talking about local stuff, what's affecting people right now. So if they do get control of the House, what are we going to do to start turning round the economy? What are we going to do to get more people jobs? That's what people are going to be asking and expecting."

Just under half of those who identified as Democrats described themselves as liberal or progressive, while just over one third (35%) described themselves as moderate. Socialists made up 3% of Democratic identifiers.

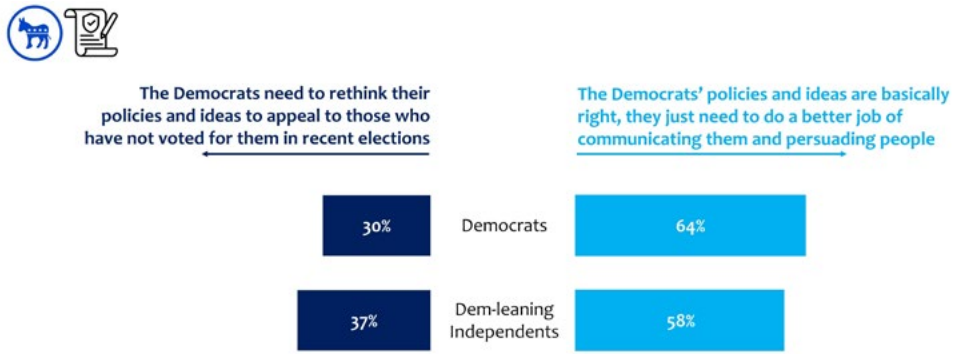
Which of the following is it more important for the democrats to do in order to win future elections?

[NB showing those who identify as Democrats and Dem-leaning independents]



Which of the following comes closer to your own view?

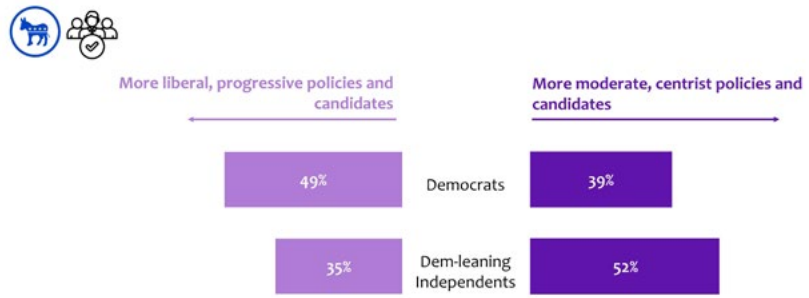
[NB showing those who identify as Democrats and Dem-leaning independents]



A clear majority of Democrat identifiers, and a slightly smaller majority of Democrat-leaning independents, said that **motivating the party's voters** and those who have stayed at home in recent elections was more important than understanding and reaching out to people who have recently voted for Trump or Republican candidates. By an even bigger margin, Democrats said their policies and ideas were basically right, they just needed to do a better job of communicating them and persuading people; only 3 in 10 thought the party needed to rethink their policies and ideas in order to appeal to people who have not recently voted for them.

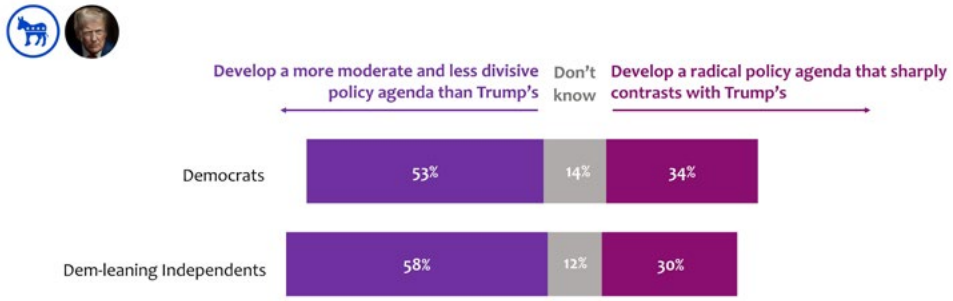
Which of the following would you most like to see from the Democrats in the next few years?

[NB showing those who identify as Democrats and Dem-leaning independents]



Which of the following do you think would be the better way for Democrats to respond to President Trump and his agenda

[NB showing those who identify as Democrats and Dem-leaning independents]



Similarly, Democrat identifiers were more likely to want to see more liberal, progressive policies and candidates (49%) than more moderate, centrist policies and candidates (39%). Democrat-leaning independents took the opposite view, by a 7-point margin. At the same time, however, Democrats said they wanted to develop a more moderate and less divisive policy agenda than Trump's, rather than a radical policy agenda that contrasts sharply with the president's.

Trump voters who were disappointed with his administration tended to be very wary of the Democrats. They were put off by the party's approach to social issues, borders, welfare and identity politics, felt that the Democrats took minority voters for granted, and could not trust the party that had hidden Biden's health condition and replaced him with Harris at the last minute.

> "The Democratic Party scared me with the way they pretended that Biden was OK at the end. And although I still don't like Trump, it was just a better option. The wokeness and the transgender stuff – I just felt like our country was going in a really bad direction, and Trump was going to level it off a little bit. I could be a Democrat, but not with the progressive stuff."

> "When they were in office they tried to pull the wool over our eyes, like we weren't seeing what we were seeing. There was no accountability. I just don't believe anything they say."

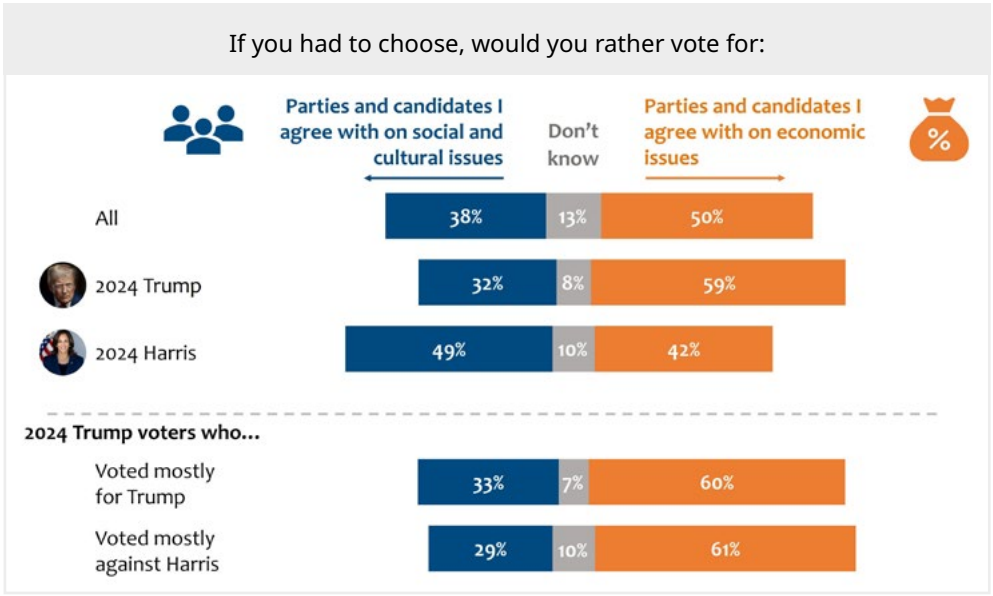
> "The last two administrations, the right has been a lot more down to earth, a lot more grounded as opposed to living in la-la land with the identities and the bathroom thing. That's when I started to lose faith in the left, letting boys use girls' bathrooms in schools."

> "They think they're entitled to the black and brown vote. They take it for granted and feel they're entitled to it."

A few in our Democratic groups also felt that the party had lost touch with mainstream voters who might otherwise have been within its reach.

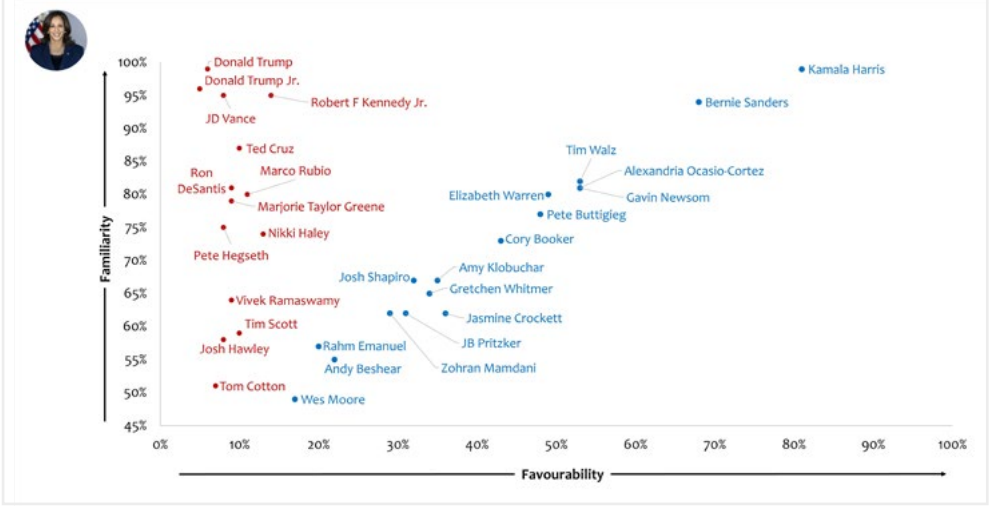
> "I think border control is an issue where views that a lot of people hold who consider themselves centrist became unspeakable within the Democratic party because of certain progressive orthodoxies. So then the candidate looks out of step with the country on a national scale."

> "People in the middle of the US are worried about paying taxes and their kids being safe. In a big blue city like Chicago you're in a bubble because the majority think like you do. But in reality, there are millions of people who don't agree with gender neutral bathrooms or biological men in women's sports. So if that's the main topic on your agenda, it turns off a whole segment of the population."



Nealy 6 in 10 Trump voters said that if they had to choose, they would rather vote for parties and candidates they agreed with on economic issues than on social and cultural issues. Harris voters prioritised social and cultural issues, by 49% to 42%.

Familiarity and Favourability among Harris voters



The Harris-voting equivalent of our familiarity and favourability chart shows Kamala Harris well ahead of the field on both measures. However, when we asked our focus groups of Democrats who they would like to see in the running for 2028, her name was barely mentioned. Bernie Sanders was next, although most conceded that he was now too old for a viable campaign. Other names regularly mentioned in the groups included California Governor Gavin Newsom, New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and former transportation secretary Pete Buttigieg, who occupy similar positions on the chart. Jasmine Crockett, another outspoken Congresswoman from Texas, is also clearly making an impression among younger Democrats, judging from our groups.

The Democrats in our groups debated the kind of candidate they needed to take on the Republicans in 2028. Some felt the nominee should be moderate enough to appeal to waverers and some of those who had backed Trump last time. However, there was also a feeling that the Democrats needed their own version of Trump, or at least to adopt Trump's approach to politics and campaigning.

> "I think they need to be more moderate and willing to listen to both sides, versus just yelling at each other because that's not going to work."

> "You have to be the louder voice. You have to drown out whatever narrative the Republicans are pushing. How do you combat that when you have all these bots and AI creating all these fake videos? People have a hard time deciphering what is and is not real."

> "The problem with the Democrats is that they always hold their punches because they want to be the better party, but that's getting us nowhere."

> "If you can use Trump's tactics for actual progress and solutions that benefit the country, I'm all for it."

> "Democrats don't play dirty enough. If you're sparring with someone and they're not following the rules, what's the point of you following the rules? You look like a fool because he's going to do whatever he wants."

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
- Red Flag: The Uneasy Advance of Sir Keir Starmer

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