

National poll from UT-Civitas Institute shows Americans are deeply concerned about the election and the economy

The Civitas Poll, conducted from March 5-11, 2024, asked 1,200 Americans an array of questions about how things are going in the country, about the status of American democracy and capitalism, about security and immigration concerns, and about the 2024 election.

Here are the top five take-aways...

Number 1: Americans have concerns about the election process.

Sixty-five percent of respondents are confident that the 2024 election will reflect the will of the people (24% are “extremely” confident). One-third of the country is not confident the will of the people will win out. Confidence is correlated with party, as 85% of Democrats are confident but only 55% of Republicans.

When asked about specific aspects of the election process, Americans aren’t terribly knowledgeable and tend to significantly overstate the occurrence of incompetence or malfeasance. For example...

- On average, respondents say there is a 51% chance an outcome in which the candidates were separated by 1,000 votes would change if the votes were recounted by hand.
- On average, respondents think around 30% of the people who are registered to vote at an address do not live there (instead believing that they either live at another local address, out of state, or out of the country).
- Over 50% of respondents don’t know if states have violated the voting rights of individuals in the last 20 years.
- Close to half (47%) of respondents believe eligible voters are frequently turned away at the polls.
- While nearly a quarter of respondents do not know how often voter fraud happens in their state, 22% think it happens somewhat or very often, while over 50% believe it rarely or never happens.

Number 2: Democracy and capitalism are sort of “meh”.

American democracy has a *mostly* positive rating, with 47% viewing it positively and 37% viewing it negatively (15% view it neutrally). When broken down by education, those with no high school education and those with a post-graduate degree both say U.S. democracy is “excellent” at roughly the same rate (14%). But partisan divides are starker: 37% of Republicans rate democratic performance positively, whereas 67% of Democrats rate it that way.

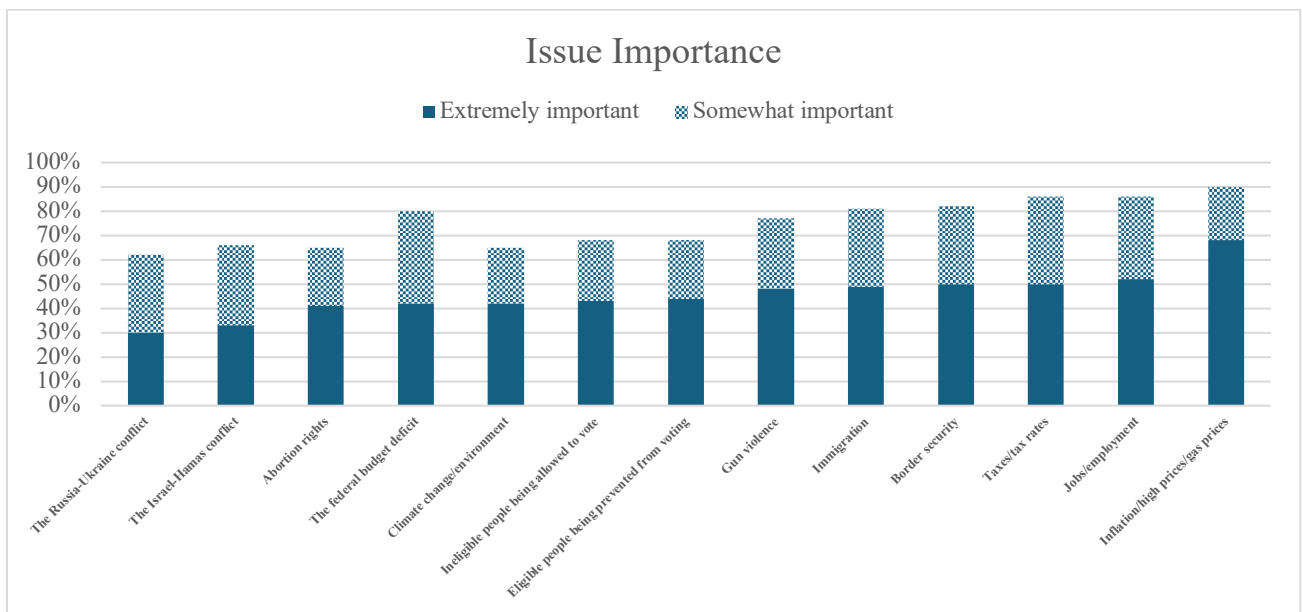
More people have a positive rating of private investment and business ownership in the U.S., as 52% offer favorable views of the economic system. Eighteen percent view it neutrally and 23% view it negatively.

Number 3: The economy is the top concern and Americans remain pessimistic.

Currently, Americans are most concerned with the economy, as 90% of respondents find inflation important (extremely or somewhat). Nearly 90% of respondents find jobs and employment important, and a similar percentage say the same about taxes. The employment results vary a bit with age: only 37% of respondents 65+ find jobs/employment important. Inflation attitudes also vary by party, as Republicans are slightly more concerned about inflation and high prices than Democrats.

Besides the economy, Americans also believe immigration is a key issue. Close to 80% rate immigration and border security as important, with Republicans being particularly likely to view the issue salient. Abortion does not rate as highly (about two-thirds rate it as important), but women are slightly more concerned than men (68% rate it as important). Respondents aged 45-55 have the highest percentage of concern for abortion (73% important). Democrats also find this issue more pressing than Republicans, although Republicans do not find it unimportant.

On foreign policy, there is equal concern for the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine. Partisans on both sides of the aisle hold similar views with respect to the salience of the Israel-Hamas conflict. However, when it comes to the Ukraine-Russia conflict, Democrats are more likely to say that it matters than Republicans.



Number 4: The mood of the country is ... not great, Bob.

Over half of respondents (55%) believe that things in the U.S. are going in the wrong direction. One-third say things are headed in the right direction.

This finding masks the fact that party colors perception. Most notably, 77% of Republicans think that things are headed in the wrong direction. There is also an age effect, as seniors are more likely to say things in the U.S. are headed in the wrong direction.

Number 5: The presidential election is extremely close and already a bit tiresome.

When registered voters in the poll are asked how they would vote if the presidential election were held today, Joe Biden has a 2-point lead over Former President Donald Trump, 37% to 35%. This lead is well within the poll's margin of error. More than one-in-ten voters say they will vote for a third-party candidate, while just under one-in-ten say they don't know what they'll do.

The election for the U.S. House of Representatives is slightly more favorable for the Democrats, as they currently lead by a 40% to 35% margin.

What can we say about the likely effects of the longest campaign in modern presidential history? There are already telling signs of fatigue, as over half of our respondents (51%) say they are tired of hearing about politics and even more (55%) are feeling burned out by politics. Those who have the strongest feelings of political exhaustion are moderates and other non-ideologues. Even so, feelings of fatigue are still evident among the ideologically engaged as 40% of liberals and 35% of Conservatives say they're already tired of hearing about politics.

Methodology

This poll was conducted March 5 – March 11, 2024 by YouGov, this Civitas Institute Poll includes interviews with 1,200 adults nationwide. YouGov uses a unique methodology where a random sample of adult Americans is drawn, and then matched to participants from YouGov's online panel. Currently, YouGov's American online panel has over two million participants. Matching is based on several social and political characteristics, including sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, residential location, and party identification. These matched respondents are then asked to complete the survey online. Results are weighted to subgroup population estimates based on the 2021 American Community Survey (conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau). The Civitas Poll has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2.83 percentage points for all respondents. The error margins are larger for subgroups.