

Domestic Issues Overshadow Foreign Conflicts in Voting Decisions

Dina Smeltz, Vice President and Senior Fellow, Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Lama El Baz, Research Assistant, Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

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The 2024 US presidential election is shaping up to be a race like no other in American political history. According to the 2024 Chicago Council Survey (CCS), fielded June 21–July 1, 2024, most Americans are paying close attention to the electoral contest and intend to vote in November. The data show economics, immigration, and democracy are the most salient issues to American voters. When it comes down to the integrity of the election, many think foreign interference, political violence, and weakening democracy are critical threats.

Key Findings

- Seven in 10 Americans (68%) say they are somewhat (35%) or very (33%) closely following news about the election.
- More than half of Americans say issues like democracy (59%), the economy (58%), and inflation (53%) will be important in their voting decisions in November.
- The wars between Russia and Ukraine (50% great deal + fair amount) and Israel and Gaza (47%) play a lesser role in electoral decisions than other domestic issues like immigration (73%), crime (70%), and abortion (64%).
- Majorities of Republicans say the economy (76%), inflation (75%), and immigration (69%) will play the greatest role in their voting decisions, while Democrats say democracy (69%) and abortion (63%) will most affect their votes.
- Prior to the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, roughly half of Americans considered the possibility of political violence

(49%) or foreign interference (54%) related to the 2024 presidential election a critical threat.

Many Watching Election Developments Closely

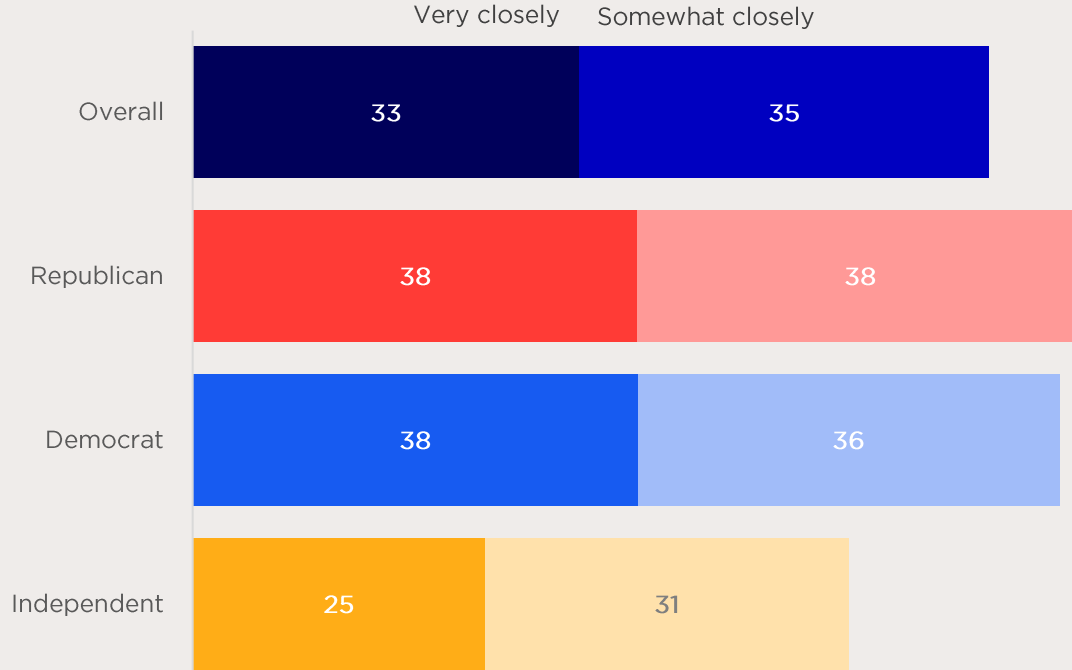
The [assassination attempt](#) on former President Donald Trump, [withdrawal of President Joe Biden](#) from the race, and his subsequent [endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris](#) as the Democratic nominee have reshaped the race late in the campaign cycle.

Data from the 2024 Chicago Council Survey, which was conducted after the first presidential debate, but before President Biden dropped out of the race, show that seven in 10 Americans (68%) say they are very (33%) or somewhat closely (35%) following news about the election.

Across partisan affiliations, Republicans (76%) and Democrats (74%) are more likely than Independents (56%) to say they are following the race very or somewhat closely (identical percentages of Republicans and Democrats are following very closely). [Gallup surveys](#) show that in May, Democrats were following the presidential election more closely than previous races, while Republicans were paying about as close attention to the election as they did in 2000, when George W. Bush and Al Gore competed for the presidency.

Following the 2024 US Presidential Elections

How closely are you following news about the following issues? The 2024 US presidential elections (%)



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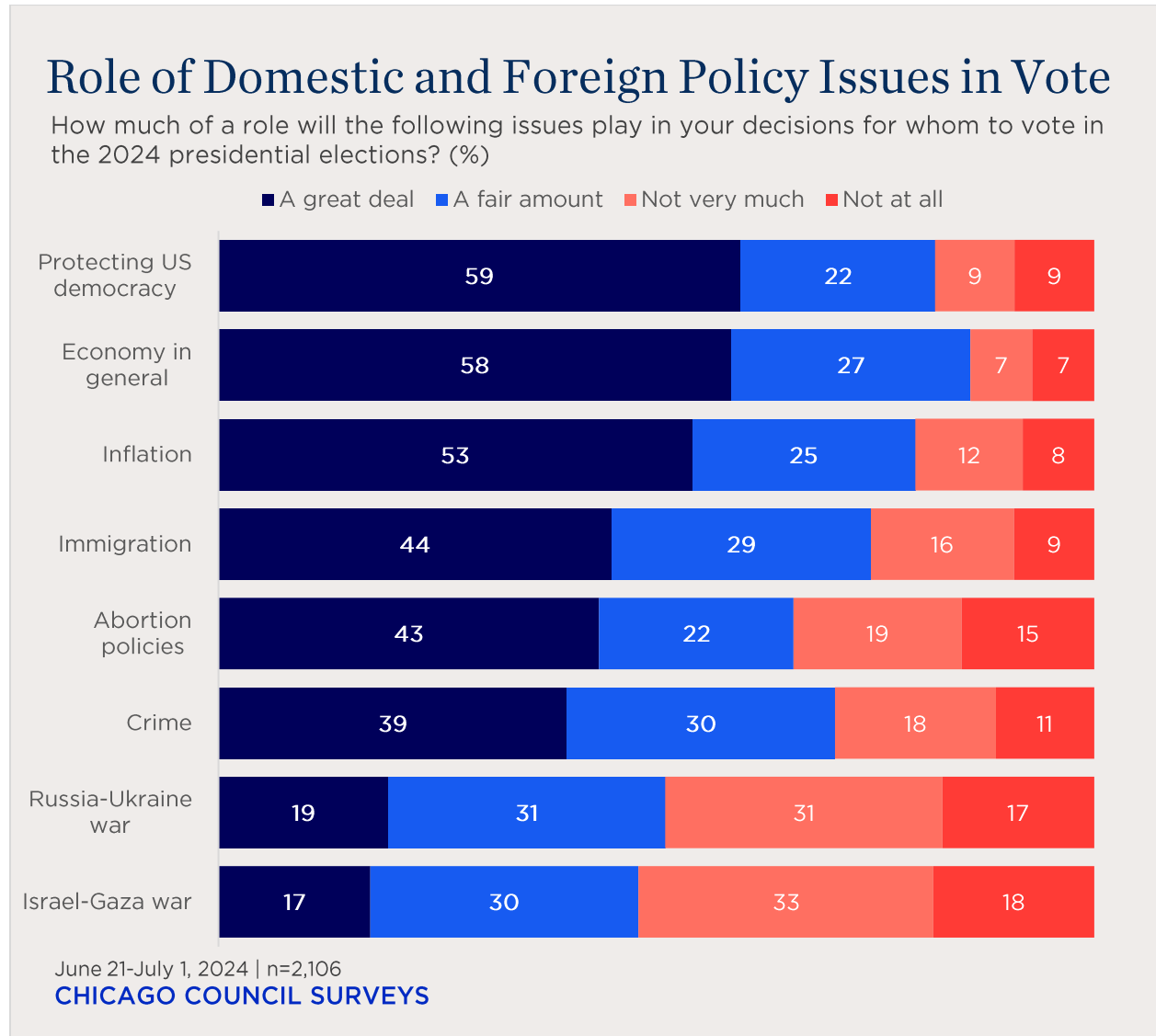
Americans are more likely to report following news about the presidential election than news about any other domestic or foreign policy issue asked about in this survey. However, news about the economy (29% very closely) is a close second, with immigration (21%) attracting very close attention from two in 10 Americans.¹

Economy, Inflation, and US Democracy Core Issues for Voters

The news stories that matter most to constituencies generally land as top voting factors for them. When asked how much of a role various domestic and foreign policy issues would play in their electoral decisions, majorities of Americans say protecting US democracy (59%), the economy (58%), and inflation (53%) will impact their voting decisions a great deal. Roughly four in

¹ Different partisan groups are also attentive to news about different issues. Republicans are particularly watchful of news about the economy and the elections (38% follow each very closely) and immigration (34% very closely). Democrats are most focused on the elections (38% very closely), followed by climate change (25%) and the economy (23%). Independents are most likely to follow news about the economy very closely (29%), more so than news about the presidential election (25%). See appendix figure 1 for full breakdown.

10 Americans also say immigration (44%), abortion policies (43%), and crime (39%) matter greatly when deciding for whom to vote.



Protecting democracy is not only a high voting priority for Americans, but a major concern. Two-thirds (67%) believe weakening democracy in the United States is a critical threat to the United States (75% Democrats, 62% Republicans, 62% Independents). In a March 2024 [AP-NORC survey](#), just over half of Americans overall said US institutions and political leaders like Congress (54%), Donald Trump (53%), and the Republican Party (52%) do a poor job of upholding democratic values. Just under half say the same about Joe Biden (48%), the Supreme Court (45%), and the Democratic Party (44%).

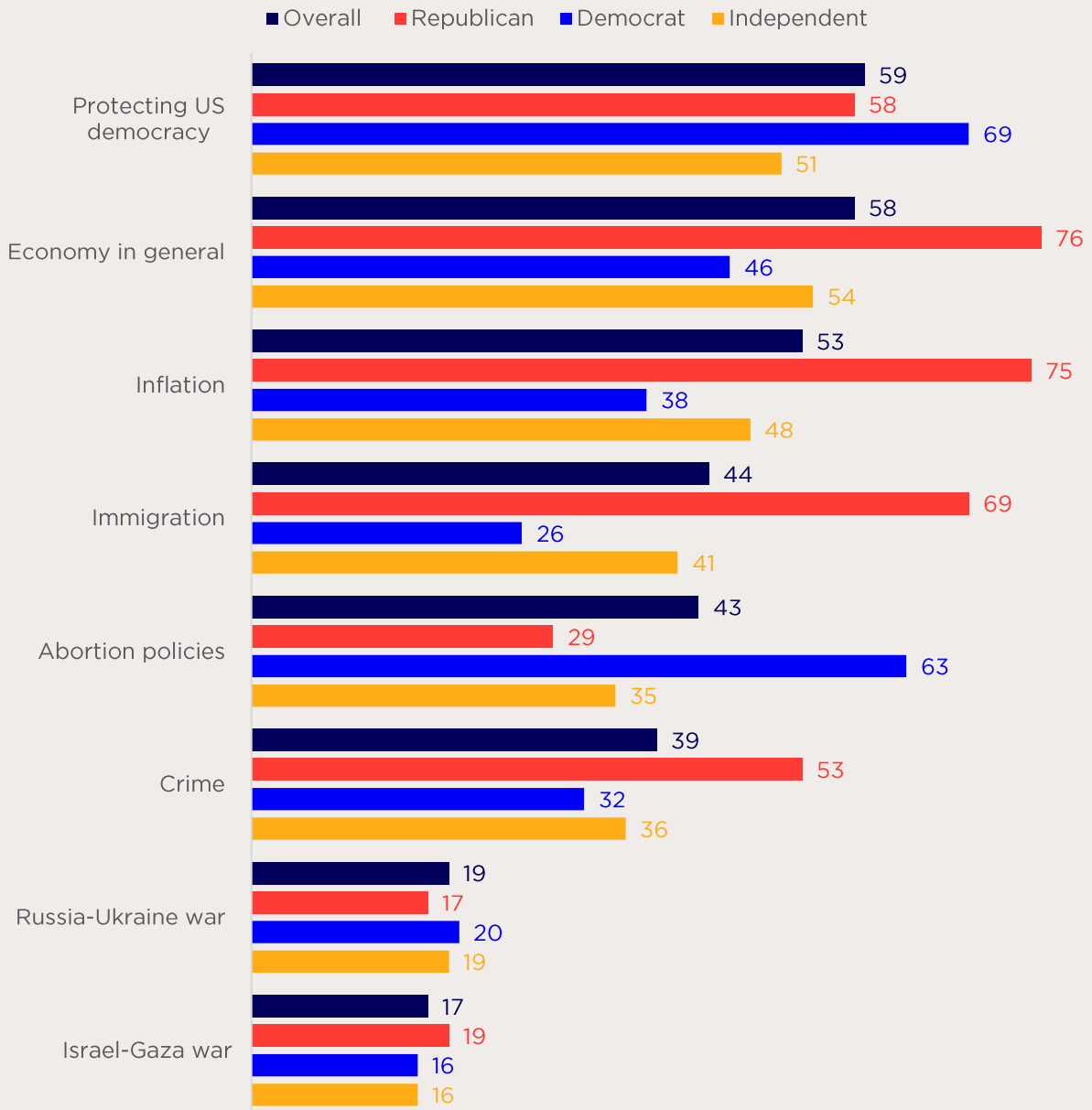
While large majorities of Americans say inflation, the economy, protecting democracy, crime, and immigration are factors in their voting decisions, there

are differences in the extent to which each issue will factor in decisions across partisan affiliations. When it comes to issues that weigh most heavily on their voting decisions, Republicans are most likely to consider the economy (76%), inflation (75%), and immigration (69%). On the other hand, Democrats say that protecting democracy (69%) and abortion policies (63%) will influence their votes.

Despite high-profile [coverage of antiwar protests](#) across the United States and recent focus on the war in [Ukraine during the NATO summit](#), 2024 Council data show that foreign conflicts are less influential to voting decisions (among those issues presented). While roughly half of Americans say the Russia-Ukraine war (50%) or the Israel-Gaza war (47%) will play a great deal or fair amount of a role in their presidential vote, no more than two in 10 say it will impact their decisions a great deal (19% Russia-Ukraine war; 17% war in Gaza).

Role of Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues in Partisan Votes

How much of a role will the following issues play in your decisions for whom to vote in the 2024 presidential elections? (% great deal)

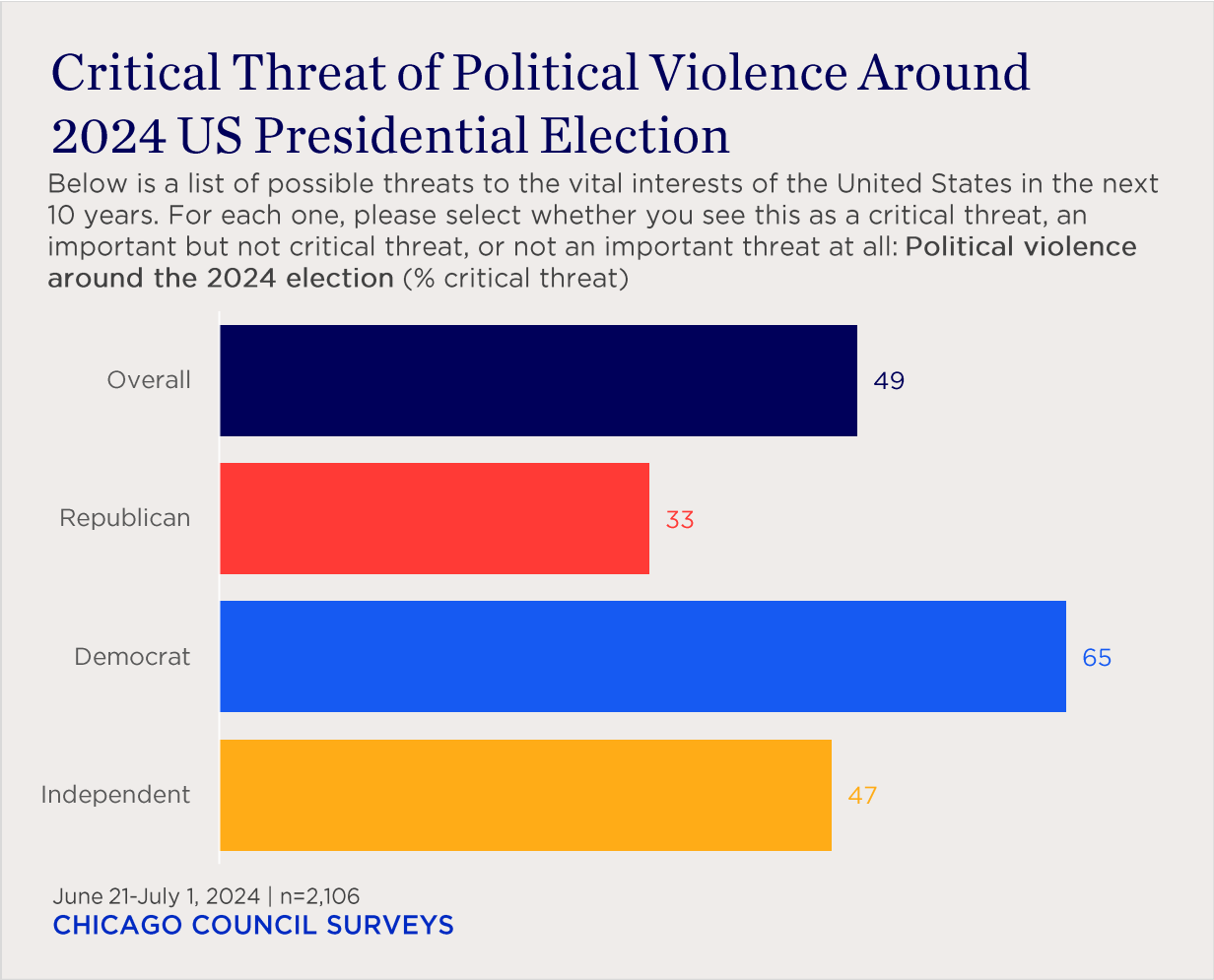


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The voters most likely to turn out to vote (“very likely” voters; see page 9) are more keenly focused on these issues than average Americans. For example, they are 12 percentage points more likely to say the issue of democracy will greatly affect their voting decisions (71%, compared to 59% of overall Americans). They are also slightly more likely than the general public to greatly consider abortion, immigration, inflation, and crime when voting. However, when it comes to the influence that the wars in Gaza and Ukraine will have on their voting choices, very likely voters look similar to other Americans (see appendix tables 3-4).

Before Trump Assassination Attempt, Half of Americans Feared Political Violence and Foreign Interference in Elections

Even before the assassination attempt on former President Trump on July 17, half of Americans (49%) said they were concerned about political violence around the 2024 election. Two thirds of Democrats (65%), nearly half of Independents (47%) and a third of Republicans (33%) consider the possibility of violence around the election a critical threat facing the country.



Made all the more relevant in light of what the Trump campaign characterizes as [a hack conducted by Iranian actors](#), half of Americans (54%) also consider foreign interference in US elections to be a critical threat. Democrats and Independents express greater concern about this possibility than Republicans (see appendix table 1).

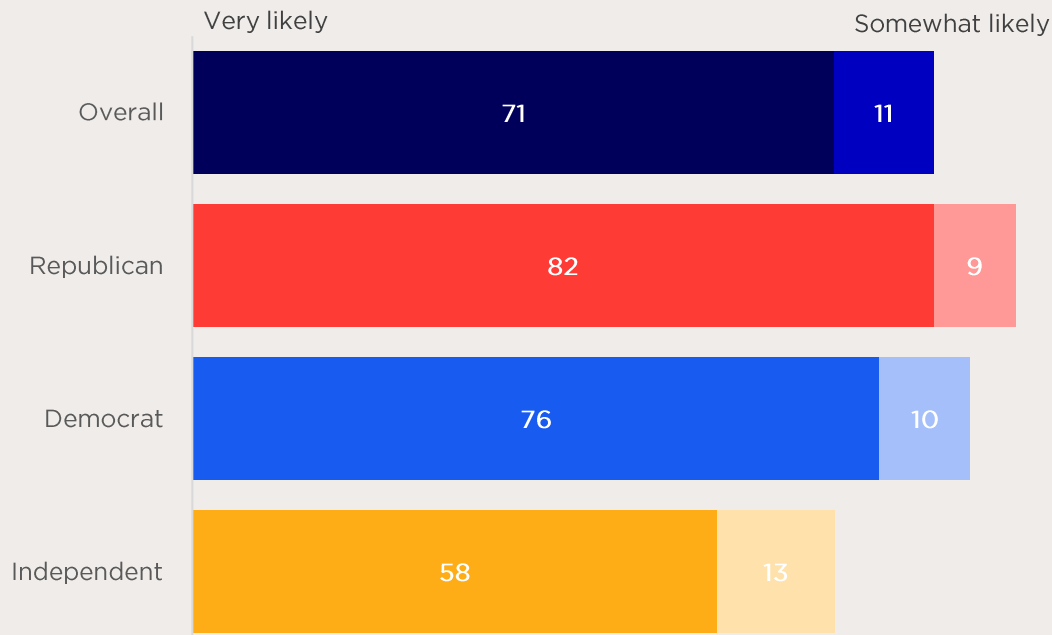
The [2023 Chicago Council Survey](#) also found that 62 percent of Americans consider political polarization in the United States a critical threat, up from half when first asked in 2018. While this is a bipartisan concern, Americans do not seem to hold themselves accountable for this increase in polarized opinion. As [Pew research](#) has shown, many Americans express deeply negative views of Americans who affiliate themselves to the other party.

[Most Americans Intend to Vote in 2024 Election, but Independents Less Likely](#)

In 2020, 67 percent of eligible voters voted in the presidential election, marking the [highest voter turnout](#) of the 21st century. Today, eight in 10 Americans say they are very (71%) or somewhat likely (11%) to vote in the 2024 presidential election; however, actual turnout is likely to be lower. Across partisan groups, a higher percentage of Republicans say they are very likely to vote (82%), followed by Democrats (76%). Independents—a battleground group for the 2024 candidates—are the least likely to say they are very likely to turnout on Election Day (58%).

Likelihood of Voting in Presidential Election

How likely are you to vote in the upcoming 2024 presidential election? (%)



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Conclusion

With Kamala Harris as the new Democratic nominee, some analysts say that a national debate over issues, rather than the top candidates' fitness for the presidency, could return to the fore. On Election Day, a candidate's position on democracy and abortion will have the greatest bearing on the votes of Democrats, who largely believe that the two would be at risk under former President Trump's conservative administration. On the other hand, Republicans will take a candidate's proposed economic policies, measures to curb inflation, and stance on immigration into the greatest consideration when voting.

Methodology

This analysis is based on data from the 2024 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2024 Chicago Council Survey was conducted June 21-July 1, 2024, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, in English and Spanish among a weighted national sample of 2,106 adults 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is ± 2.3 percentage points,

including a design effect of 1.1229. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups (± 4.2 points for Republicans, ± 3.9 points for Democrats, and ± 3.8 points for Independents.) or for partial-sample items.

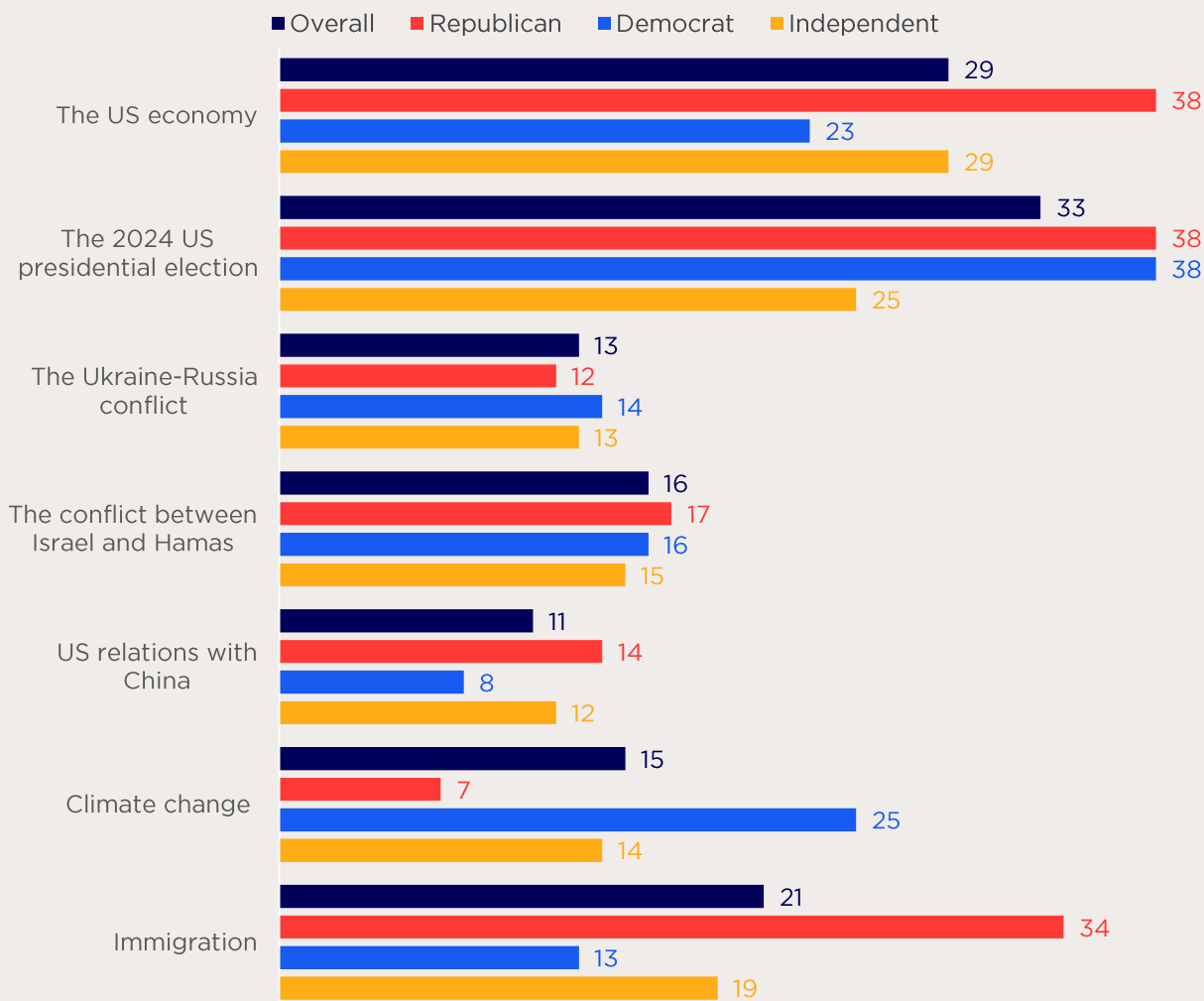
Partisan identification is based on how respondents answered a standard partisan self-identification question: “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”

The 2024 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family, the Korea Foundation, and the United States-Japan Foundation.

Appendix

Figure 1: Close Attention to News Stories

How closely are you following news about the following issues? (% very closely)



June 21-July 1, 2024 | n=2,106

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Table 1. Critical Threats to Vital US Interests in 10 Years

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all. (% critical threat)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the US	50	83	27	45	56

Climate change	47	17	72	48	-55
International Terrorism	53	65	51	43	14
North Korea's nuclear program	52	59	53	45	6
Iran's nuclear program	53	62	52	45	10
Lack of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians	31	27	39	26	-12
The war between Israel and Hamas escalating into a wider war in the Middle East	41	42	49	34	-7
Weakening democracy in the United States	67	62	75	64	-13
Russia's territorial ambitions	50	48	60	42	-12
China's territorial ambitions	48	61	49	36	12
Economic competition from China	33	45	25	30	20
Political violence around the 2024 election	49	33	65	47	-32
Foreign interference in American elections	54	51	61	50	-10

Table 2. Critical Threat of Political Polarization in the United States Over Time					
<i>Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all. Political Polarization in the United States (% critical threat)</i>					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2018	50	41	57	50	-16
2019	49	43	51	50	-8
2020	55	52	59	56	-7
August 2021	63	63	67	61	-4
March 2022	55	54	58	54	-4
2023	61	62	64	58	-2

Table 3. Weight of Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues on Vote Between Overall Partisans and Those Very Likely to Vote

How much of a role will the following issues play in your decisions for whom to vote in the 2024 presidential election? (% great deal)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Protecting US democracy	59	58	69	51
Economy in general	58	76	46	54
Inflation	53	75	38	48
Immigration	44	69	26	41
Abortion policies	43	29	63	35
Crime	39	53	32	36
Russia-Ukraine war	19	17	20	19
Israel-Gaza war	17	19	16	16

Table 4. Weight of Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues on Vote Between Overall Partisans and Those Very Likely to Vote

How much of a role will the following issues play in your decisions for whom to vote in the 2024 presidential election? (% great deal among very likely voters)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Protecting US democracy	71	64	81	68
Economy in general	64	82	48	64
Inflation	57	80	37	55
Immigration	51	77	27	51
Abortion policies	50	31	72	45
Crime	44	58	31	42
Russia-Ukraine war	22	19	23	24
Israel-Gaza war	19	20	17	20

About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at thechicagocouncil.org and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

Established in 2018 with a transformative gift from the Crown Family, the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy is driven by the belief that the public plays a critical role in determining the direction of US foreign policy and that an informed and engaged public is critical for effective policymaking. The centerpiece of the Lester Crown Center is its annual survey of American public opinion and US foreign policy, the Chicago Council Survey, which has been conducted since 1974. For the latest research from the Crown Center, follow [@ChiCouncilFP](https://twitter.com/ChiCouncilFP).