

Results from a Statewide Survey of Black Women Voters in Tennessee

The Lives and Voices of Black Women in Tennessee

COMMISSIONED BY IN OUR OWN VOICE: NATIONAL BLACK
WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AGENDA

CONDUCTED BY PERRYUNDEM

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voice
IN OUR OWN

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Introduction.

Black women represent decisive forces in elections, yet surveys among them are rare. Even rarer are state-level surveys among Black women.

For the past few elections, National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda: In Our Own Voice has invested in rigorous and robust national and state-level surveys to better understand the voting and policy priorities, needs, and views among Black adults and women.

In 2017, early in the Trump administration, we explored the attitudinal landscape among Black adults related to race, policy, and reproductive justice. In December 2020, prior to Biden taking office, we went back in the field to listen to Black adults' experiences and views over the past few years. Prior to the 2022 midterm elections, we conducted a national survey and several state surveys to better understand Black women voters' issue priorities, values, and reactions to news dominating the headlines at the time.

Here we are in 2024, near the end of the Biden administration, with the country heading into another consequential election. How are Black women in Tennessee feeling about the upcoming election? What voting issues are on their minds? What is motivating them to vote? What are their views on abortion and reproductive issues, given the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the current abortion ban in Tennessee?

These are the questions we set out to answer, with the goal of providing data as a resource for policymakers, the media, and other parties who want to understand the views and lives of Black women in Tennessee.

This report provides findings from a statewide survey among $n = 507$ Black women* registered voters. The survey was conducted January 22 through February 20, 2024 via Ipsos' KnowledgePanel, an online panel constructed from address-based probability sampling. The sample was supplemented by off-panel, opt-in sample. The data are weighted to reflect a representative sample of Black women registered voters in Tennessee. The margin of sampling error is ± 6.0 percentage points. Many other types of errors can contribute to overall survey error.

This survey is part of a larger project that includes [national data](#) among all Black adults.

** Our future surveys will use expansive questions around gender identity. This survey used a standard binary variable. Transgender individuals who identify as women and chose it in a binary question are included in the survey. Typically, surveys tend to find about < 1% to 2% of respondents identifying outside of the binary.*

Here is the demographic composition of the survey respondents.

	Weighted %	Unweighted N
Total	100%	507
Black or African American	100%	507
2+ races	8%	37
Hispanic / Latina/o/x	1%	9
18 to 29	15%	142
30 to 44	30%	154
45 to 59	24%	104
60+	30%	107
HS or less	34%	154
Some college	39%	199
College +	27%	154
Democrat	62%	311
Independent	31%	151
Republican	7%	45
Urban	74%	346
Suburban	21%	93
Rural	5%	29

Key findings.

Here are 10 key findings.

1

Young Black women may feel particularly unmotivated to vote in the fall elections.

Just 40% of 18-to 29-year-old respondents say they are “almost certain” to vote this fall, compared to 82% of respondents ages 60 and older.

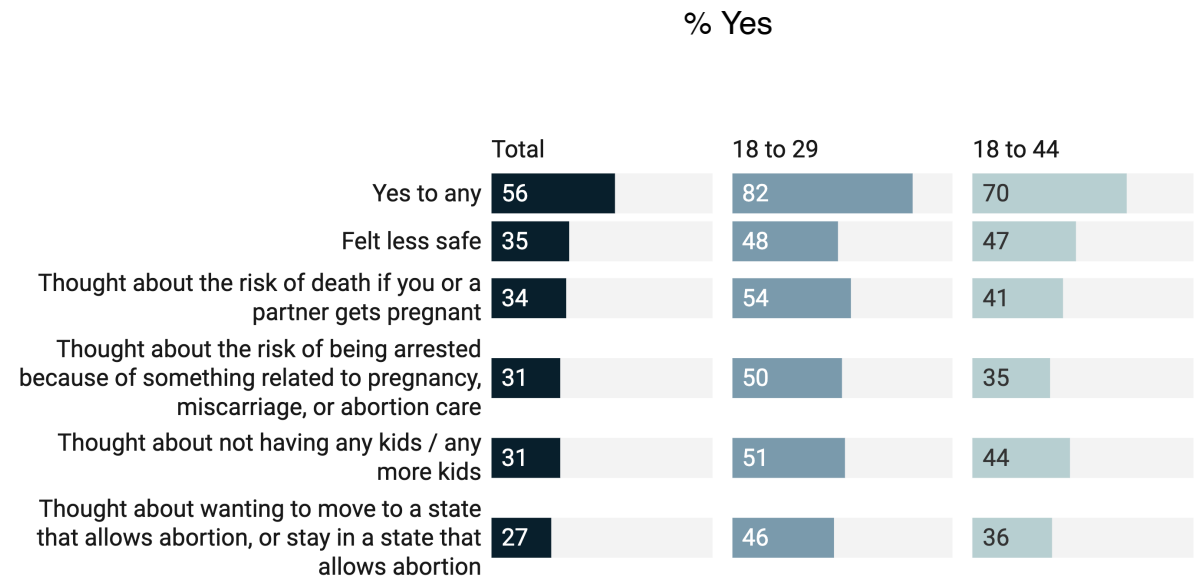
About a third of 18- to 29-year-olds (37%) says they’ve thought about not voting in 2024 as a form of protest. Insights from our national data suggest that young people are discouraged by the choice of candidates. In this survey, 82% of 18- to 29-year-olds say it’s extremely or very important that more Black women are elected and nominated to political offices.

2

Abortion bans have affected young people's sense of safety and their thinking about profound life decisions.

Half of 18- to 29-year-olds says recent abortion bans have made them think about the risk of death and of arrest. Bans have also made half of these young voters think about not having any / any more kids.

As a result of recent abortion bans and restrictions, have you...



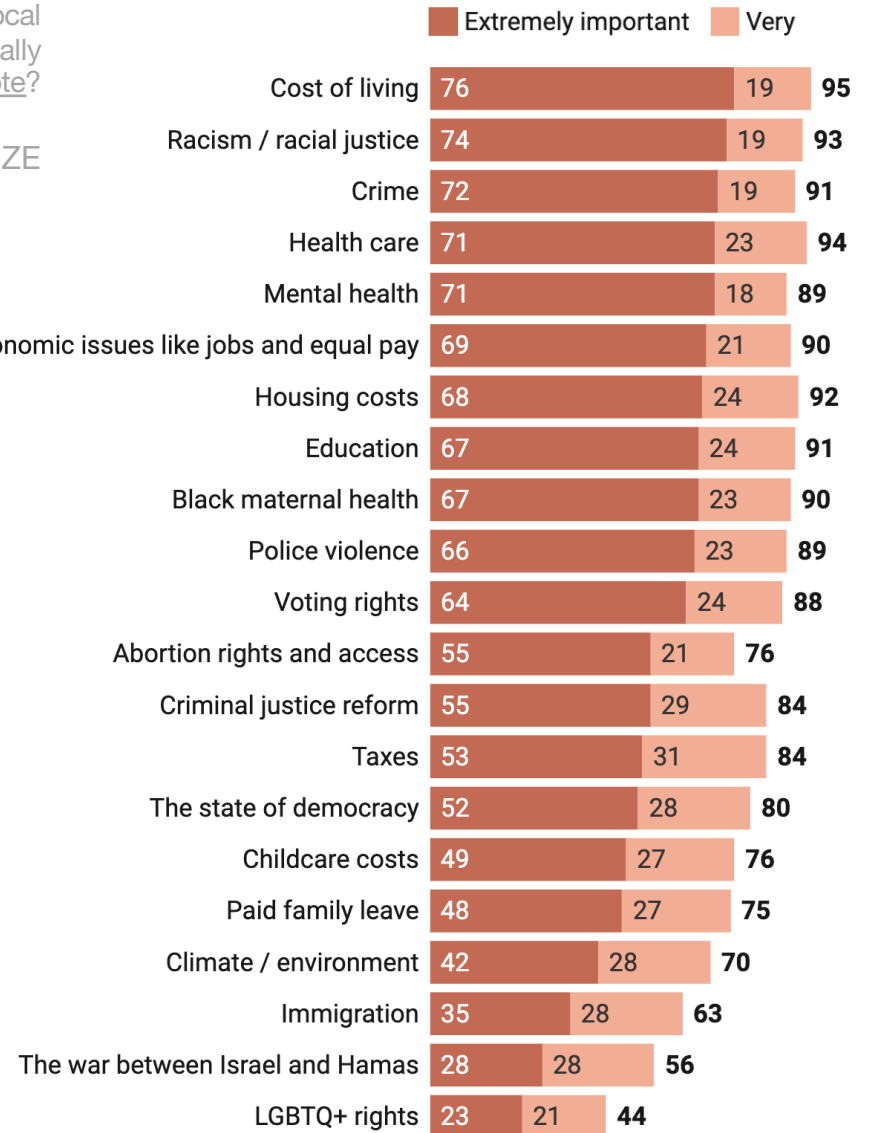
This fall there will be elections for US Congress, state, and local offices. How important is each of these issues to you personally when thinking about getting out to vote?

RANDOMIZE

3
Many issues are on the minds of Black women. Cost of living, racism / racial justice, crime, and health care top the list.

For 18- to 29-year-olds, abortion rights and access is among the top.

Many respondents also say Black maternal health is an important voting issue.



4

When asked about 20 discrete policy positions, mental health, economic, education, and elections-related policies are among the most salient.

Getting rid of abortion bans and restrictions is also a priority for young respondents.

Election and voting related policies are among the top priorities for older women.

IMPORTANT POLICY POSITIONS

- Increasing access to mental health care (90% extremely or very important when thinking about getting out to vote this fall)
- Ensuring equal pay for equal work (89%)
- Lowering the cost of living and inflation (88%)
- Creating equal access to resources and opportunities (87%)
- Increasing funding for local public schools (87%)
- Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour (86%)
- Making sure schools teach children about American history, including the impact of slavery and racism (85%)
- Making sure our elections are free from political interference and manipulation (85%)
- Lowering taxes for the middle and lower classes (85%)

5
**In a list of 11 motivations to
vote, these three rise to the top.**

1
People fought and died for the right to vote
28% say this is in the top 1 or 2 motivations to vote

2
People's rights and freedoms are at stake
22%

3
It gives me a voice in the future
20%

These are additional motivating factors among many respondents.

- Voting is the main way I have power in what happens
- It's a chance to exercise my right to vote
- My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections
- Voting will affect who has the power in my state to make laws

6
Black women in Tennessee are strongly supportive of abortion rights and access.

Large majorities of respondents support abortion rights and access, including those who attend religious services regularly. This tracks with Black women nationally.

74%

Say abortion should be legal in all or most cases

71% of those who attend religious services regularly

83%

Say they'd vote in favor of a state amendment that protects pregnancy and abortion decisions

83%

86%

Agree: Each person should have the right to make their own decision on abortion, even if I may disagree with it

85%

81%

Say having an abortion can be the responsible choice

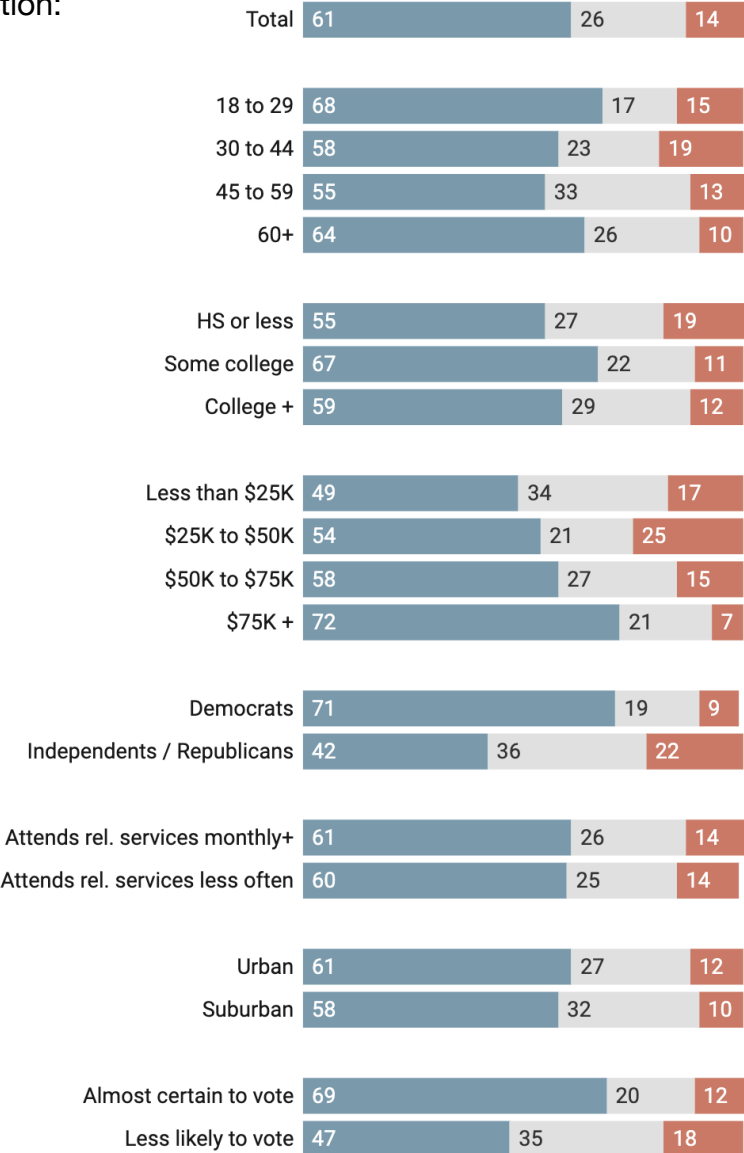
79%

Are you more likely to vote for a candidate for state legislature who _____ access to abortion:

Supports No difference in my vote Is against

7
Respondents are four times more likely to vote for a candidate who supports abortion access than one who opposes it.

A majority of Black women who attend religious services regularly says they're more likely to vote for a candidate who supports abortion access.



Note: The sample size is too small to analyze respondents from rural areas.

8

A majority of Black women of reproductive age are interested in getting birth control pills over the counter.

The retail price, however, is out of reach for 78% of these women.

58%

Of women 18 to 44 say they are interested in accessing birth control pills over-the-counter (including 69% of 18- to 29-year-olds)

78%

Of women 18 to 44 could not afford to pay \$45 or more for a three-month supply

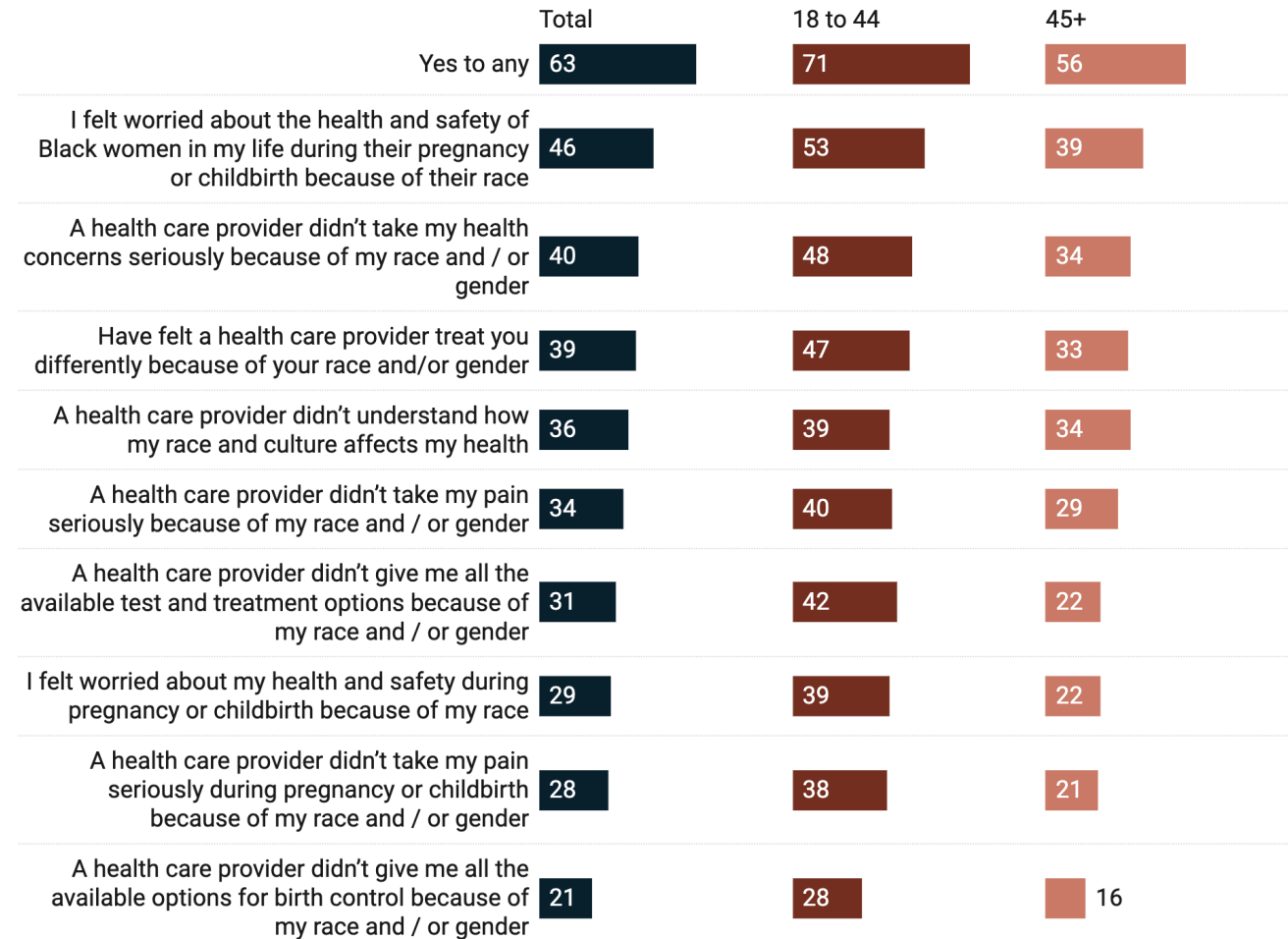
Note: A three-month supply will retail at \$49.99

9
Close to two-thirds of Black women (63%) say they have felt the effects of racial / gender bias in the health care system.

Younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to cite these experiences.

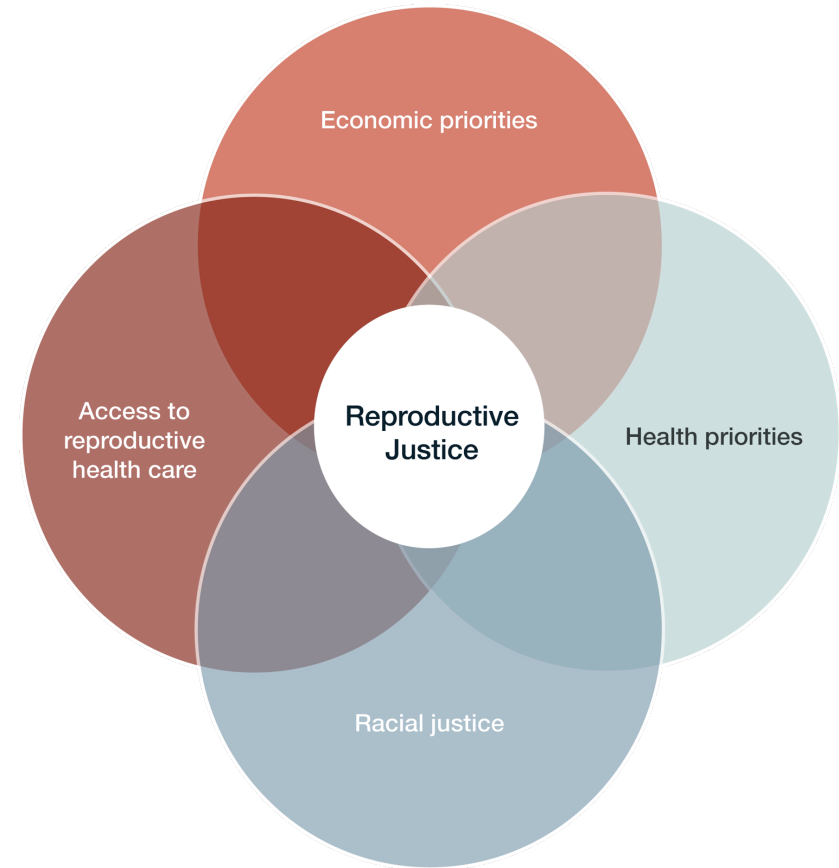
Have you ever felt this way?

% Yes



10
Reproductive Justice is at the intersection of top priorities and policy preferences among Black women in Tennessee.

Many women of reproductive age are profoundly impacted by abortion bans. Getting rid of abortion restrictions and bans is a top voting issue for 18- to 29-year-olds. A large majority of women of reproductive age can't afford the price of over-the-counter birth control pills. Large majorities support access to abortion, comprehensive sex ed, and sex-positive communication with health care providers.



Economic issues top the list of voting priorities – including the cost of living, the minimum wage, housing costs, and equal pay.

Health care is also a top voting issue. Majorities are mobilized by policies to end Black maternal mortality, to increase access to mental health care, and to expand Medicaid.

Racial justice is top voting issue. Many have experienced gender / racial bias in the medical system.

Detailed findings.

SECTIONS

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Voting in the 2024 elections

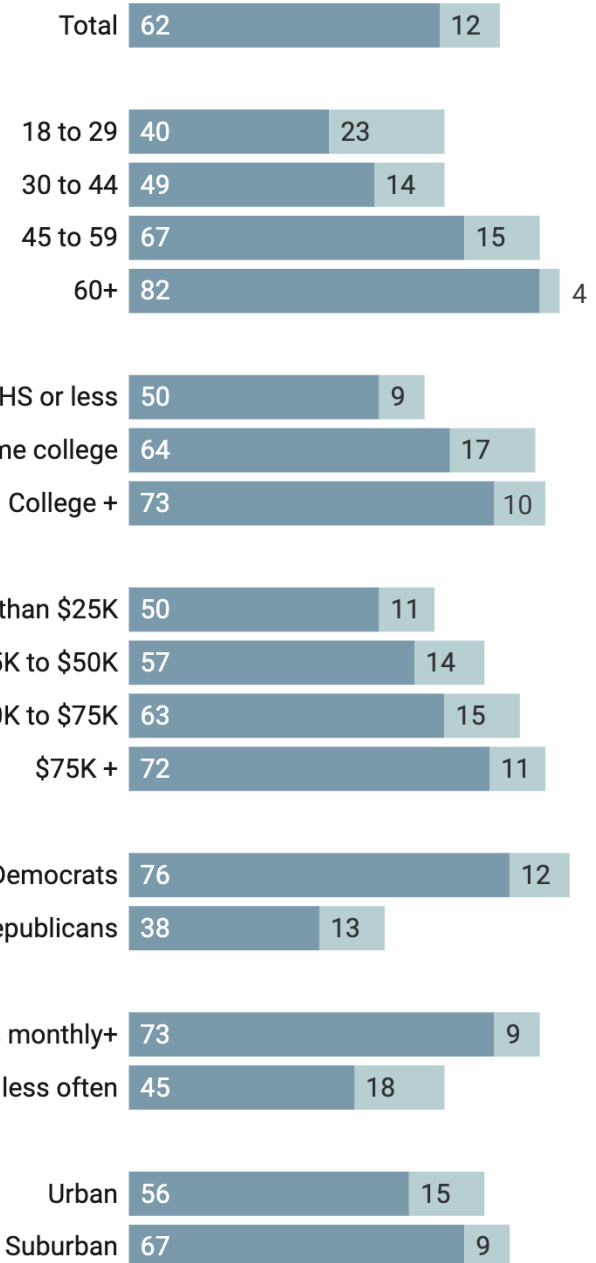
This fall there will be elections for President, U.S. Congress, and other offices. Would you say you are:

■ Almost certain to vote
 ■ Will probably vote

A majority of women (62%) says they're “almost certain” to vote this fall.

Women who are least certain to vote include:

- Independent / Republican women (38% almost certain)
- 18- to 29-year-olds (40%)





For you personally, how important is voting in the 2024 elections this fall?

1 to 7 scale
Not at all important to extremely important
Base n = 259

A majority of women says voting in the 2024 elections is “extremely important.”

That said, just four in ten 18- to 44-year-olds (42%) say the same.

61%

Rate 7 – extremely important

42% 18 to 44
76% 45+

74% Democrats
40% Inds / Reps

20%

Rate 5 or 6

23% 18 to 44
18% 45+

20% Democrats
21% Inds / Reps

19%

Rate 1 to 4 – toward not important

36% 18 to 44
5% 45+

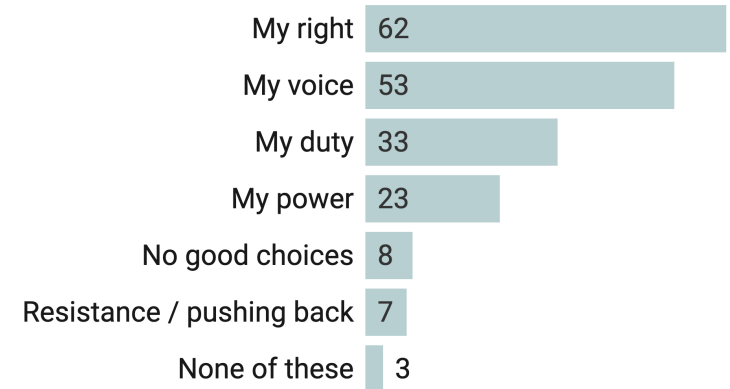
7% Democrats
38% Inds / Reps

Respondents are most likely to say voting in the 2024 elections is about “my right” and “my voice.”

Finish this sentence. For me, voting in this year’s election is about: _____ .

Select up to 3

RANDOMIZE UP TO NO GOOD CHOICES



Eight in ten respondents feel the Black community has the power to change the outcomes of elections.

Do you feel the Black community has the power to change the outcomes of elections, or not?

82%

18%

Yes

No

91% 18 to 29
76% 30 to 44
75% 45 to 59
88% 60+

76% HS or less
84% Some college
86% College+

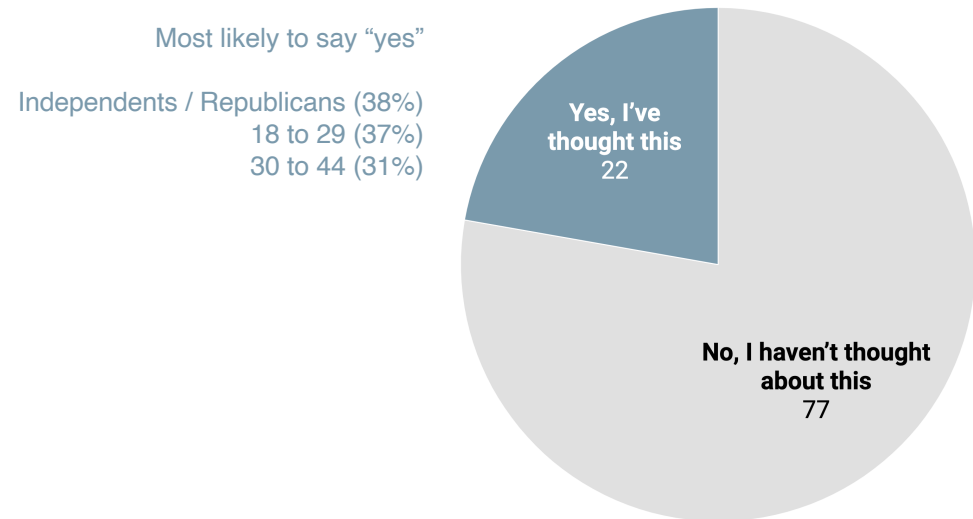
71% Less than \$25K
85% \$25K to \$50K
78% \$50K to \$75K
90% \$75K+

One in five says they've thought about not voting as a form of protest.

What might they be protesting? In our companion national survey, we asked a random subset of respondents to explain in an open-ended question. Here are the main themes:

- Bad candidates, candidates who don't represent their views, Biden / Trump being old white men
- Feeling their vote doesn't count
- Protecting Palestine / protesting what's happening in Gaza

Have you thought about not voting in the 2024 elections as a form of protest?



If the presidential election were held today, a majority (60%) says they'd vote for the Democratic candidate.

Among those most certain to vote, 74% say they'd vote for the Democratic candidate v. 7% for the Republican.

See the next page for breakouts by demographic segments.

If the 2024 presidential election were held today, would you vote for:

Base n = 503

60%

Democratic candidate
74% of women almost certain to vote

8%

Republican candidate
7%

6%

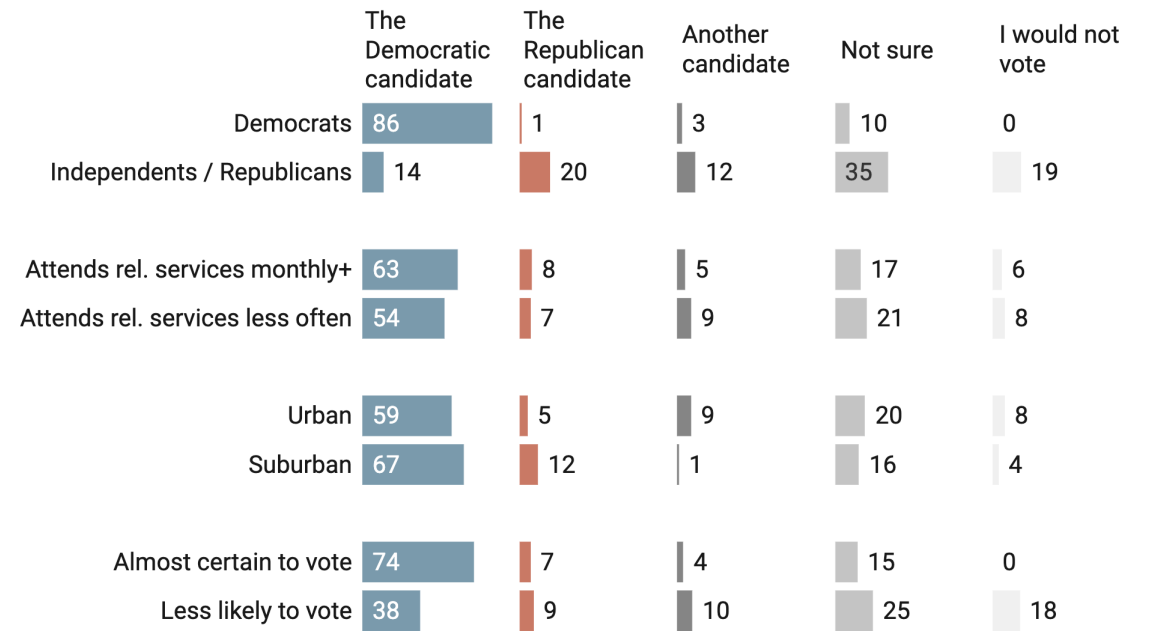
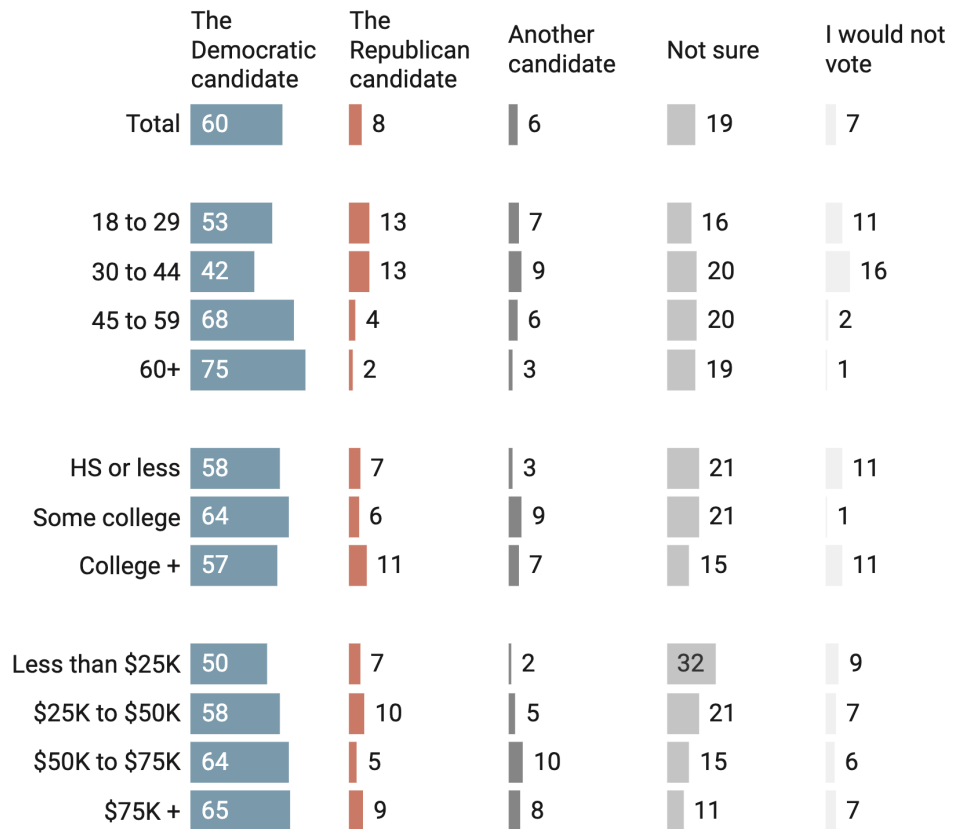
Other
4%

19%

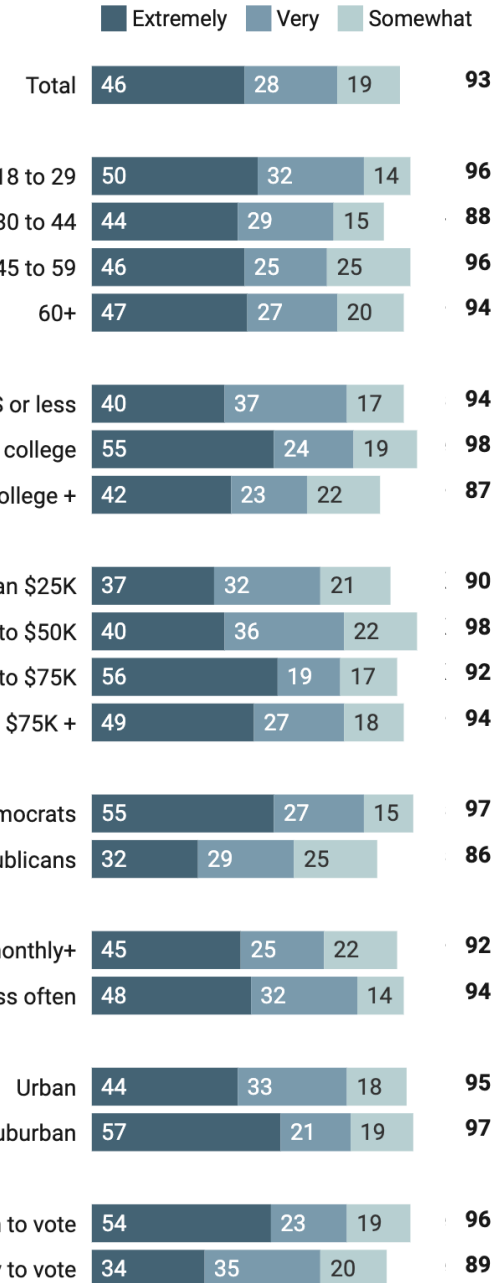
Not sure
15%

7%

Would not vote
0%



How important is it that more Black women are elected and nominated to positions of power in our government?



Nine in ten respondents (93%) say it's important that more Black women are elected and nominated to positions of power in government.

This sentiment is particularly strong among Democrats, likely voters, and young voters.

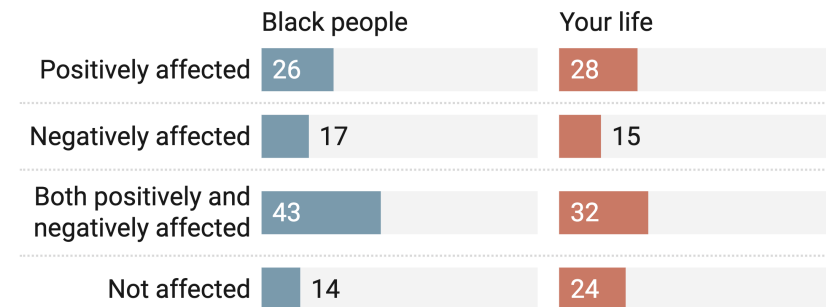


Impact of the Biden administration

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A plurality of respondents feels President Biden's policies have both positively and negatively affected their life.

In general, do you think President Biden's policies have _____:
"Black people" (n = 259) / "your life" (n = 248)



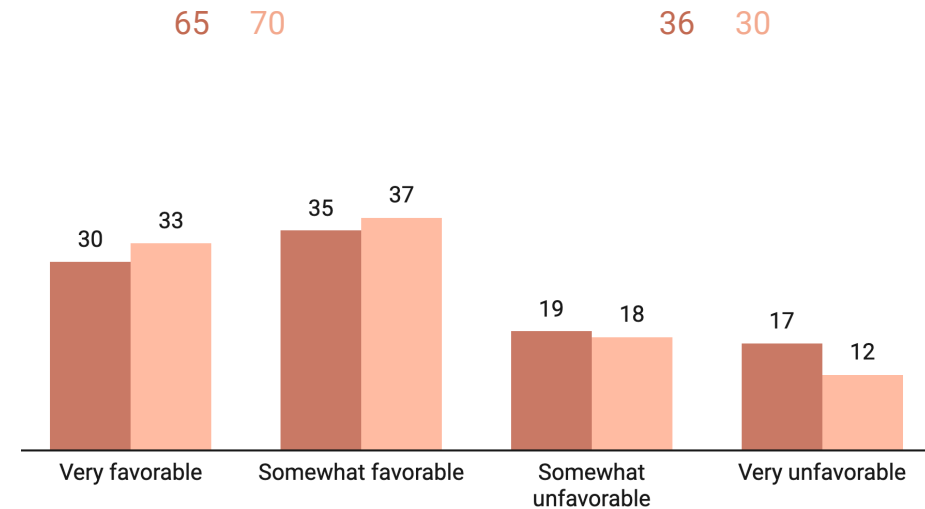


That said, most have favorable impressions of President Biden and Vice President Harris.

Older respondents and those more certain to vote feel more favorable toward Biden and Harris than others.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of:

President Joe Biden Vice President Kamala Harris



Most likely to be favorable:

- Democrats (82% Biden, 86% Harris)
- Ages 45+ (77%, 80%)
- Almost certain to vote (74%, 77%)

Most likely to be unfavorable:

- Independents / Reps (66%, 57%)
- 30 to 44 (60%, 50%)



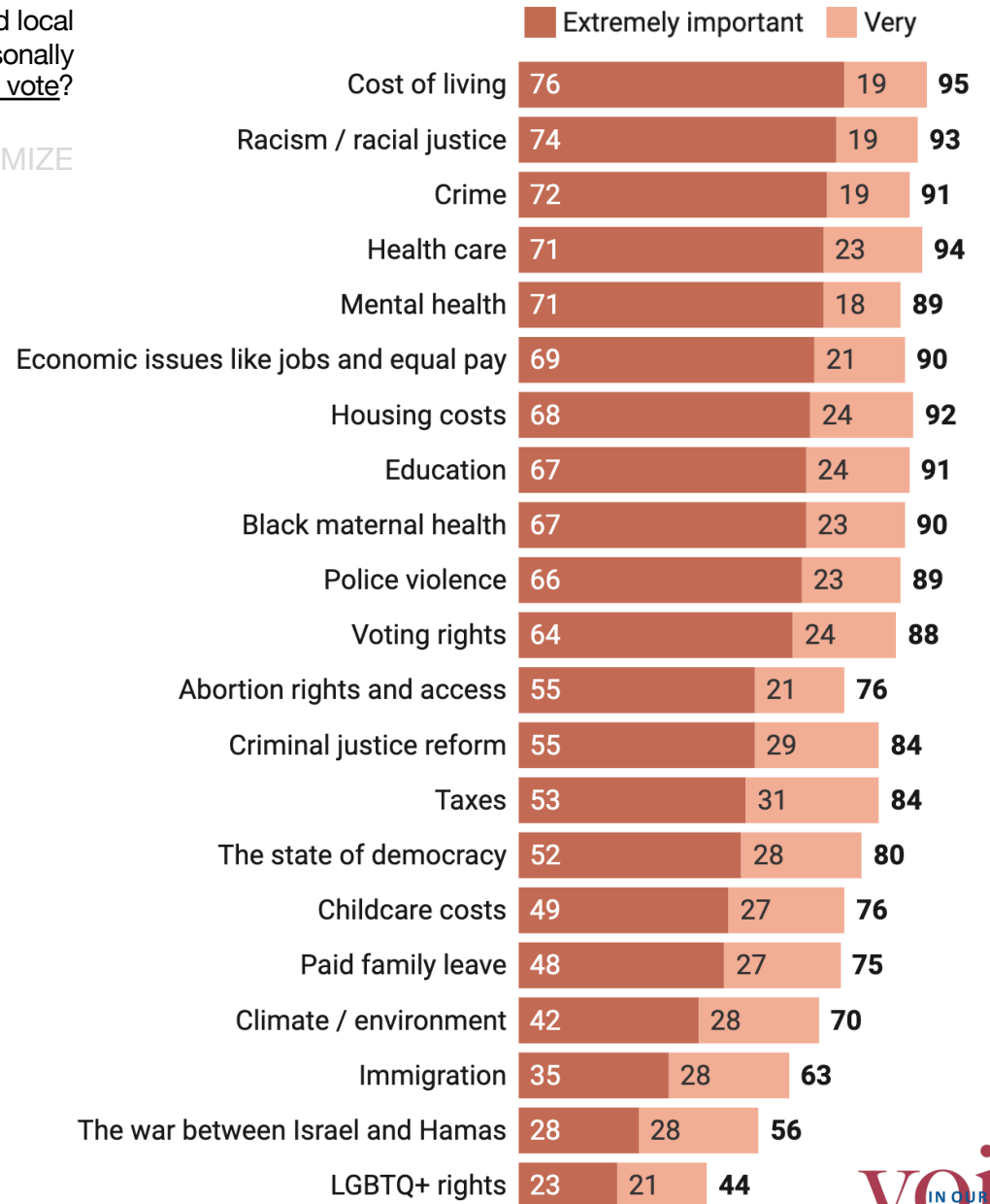
Issue priorities

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This fall there will be elections for US Congress, state, and local offices. How important is each of these issues to you personally when thinking about getting out to vote?

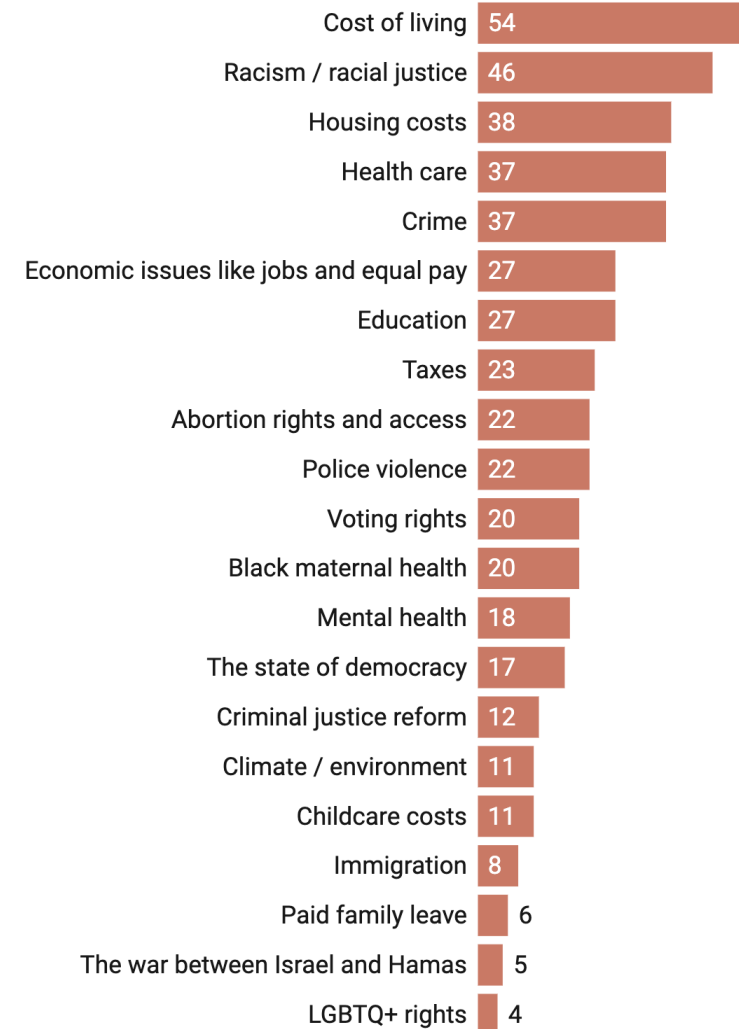
RANDOMIZE

Many issues are on the minds of Black women.



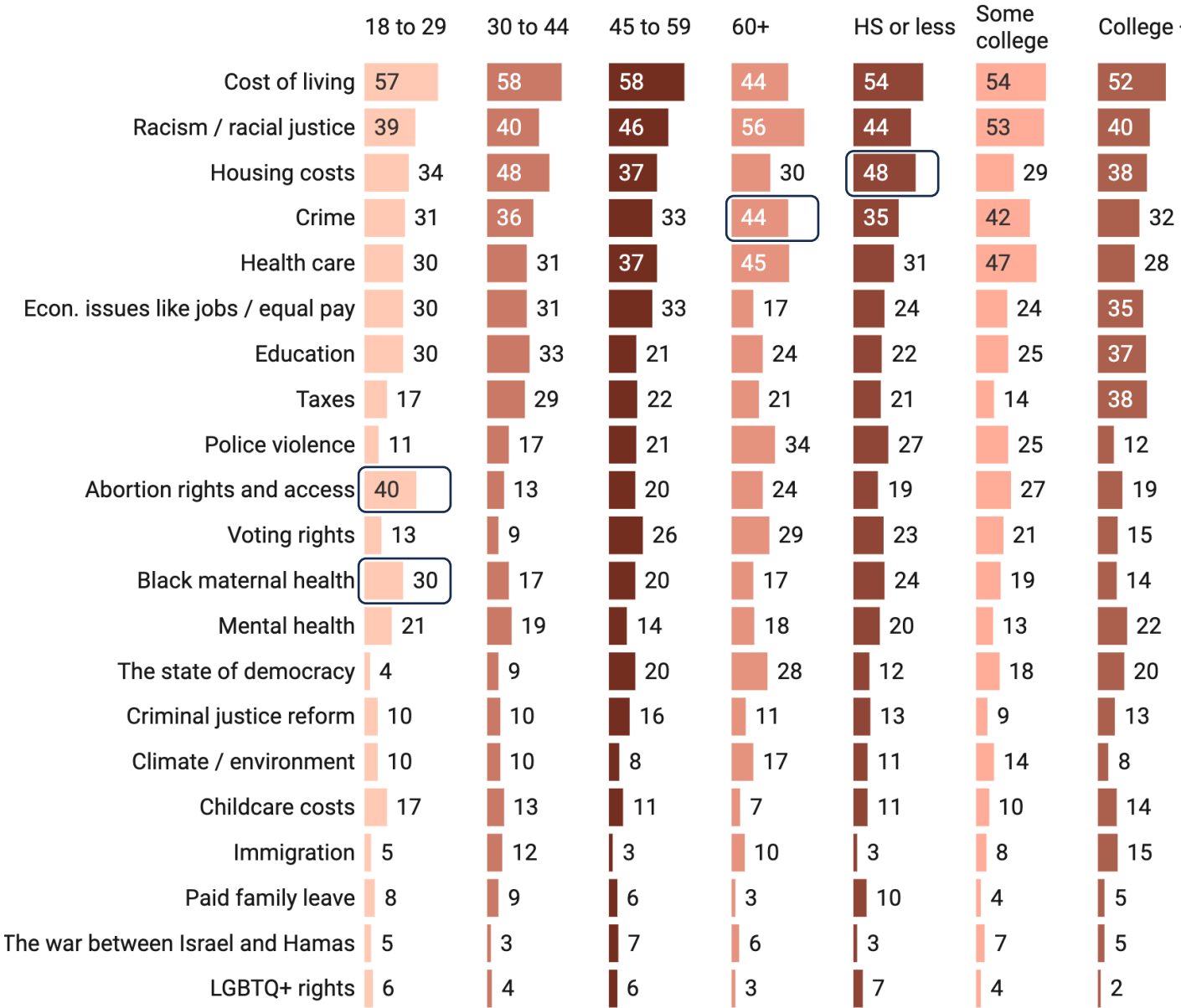
Choose the top 5 issues that matter most to you when voting in elections.

% In top 5



When asked to prioritize their issues, cost of living and racial justice top the list.

% Chosen as a top 5 issue

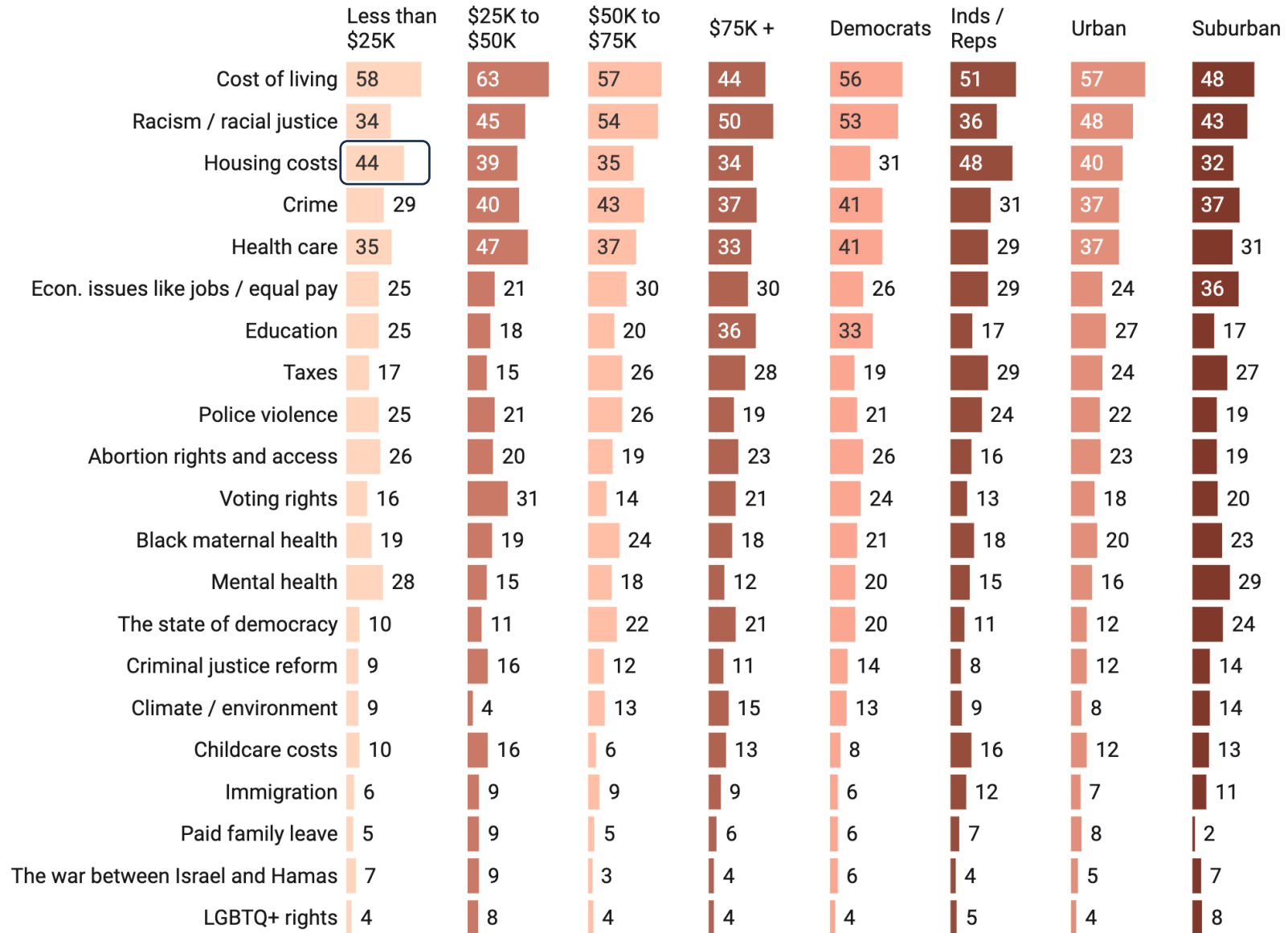


Abortion access is a top issue – after cost of living – for 18- to 29-year-olds. Black maternal health is also top for many.

Crime is among the top issues for older voters.

Housing costs are an especially pressing issue for respondents with less education, and lower incomes

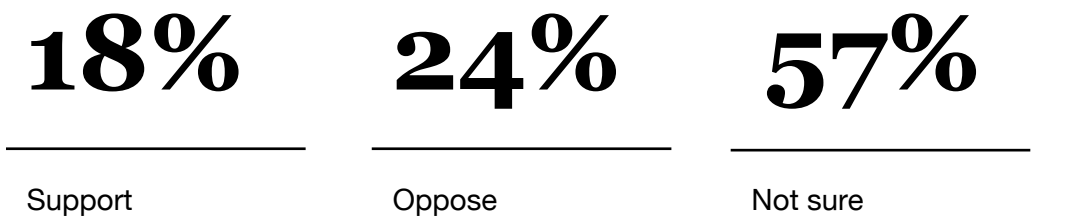
% Chosen as a top 5 issue



We also explored views toward the war between Hamas and Israel.

Respondents are more likely to oppose than support the way Israel has responded to events of October 7th – but more than half is unsure.

Do you support or oppose how Israel has responded to the events of October 7th?



- Most likely
- Attends rel. services less often (68%)
 - 45 to 59 (67%)
 - Less than \$25K (66%)



Do you approve or disapprove of the way
President Biden has dealt with the war
between Israel and Hamas?

**Respondents are split on
how Biden has dealt with
the war.**

Older women are among the most likely to
approve. Younger women are among the
most likely to disapprove.

36%

Approve

- Most likely
- 60+ (59%)
 - Democrats (48%)
 - Almost certain to vote (48%)

30%

Disapprove

- Most likely
- 18 to 29 (50%)
 - Independents / Republicans (43%)
 - 30 to 44 (40%)

34%

Not sure

- Most likely
- 30 to 44 (43%)



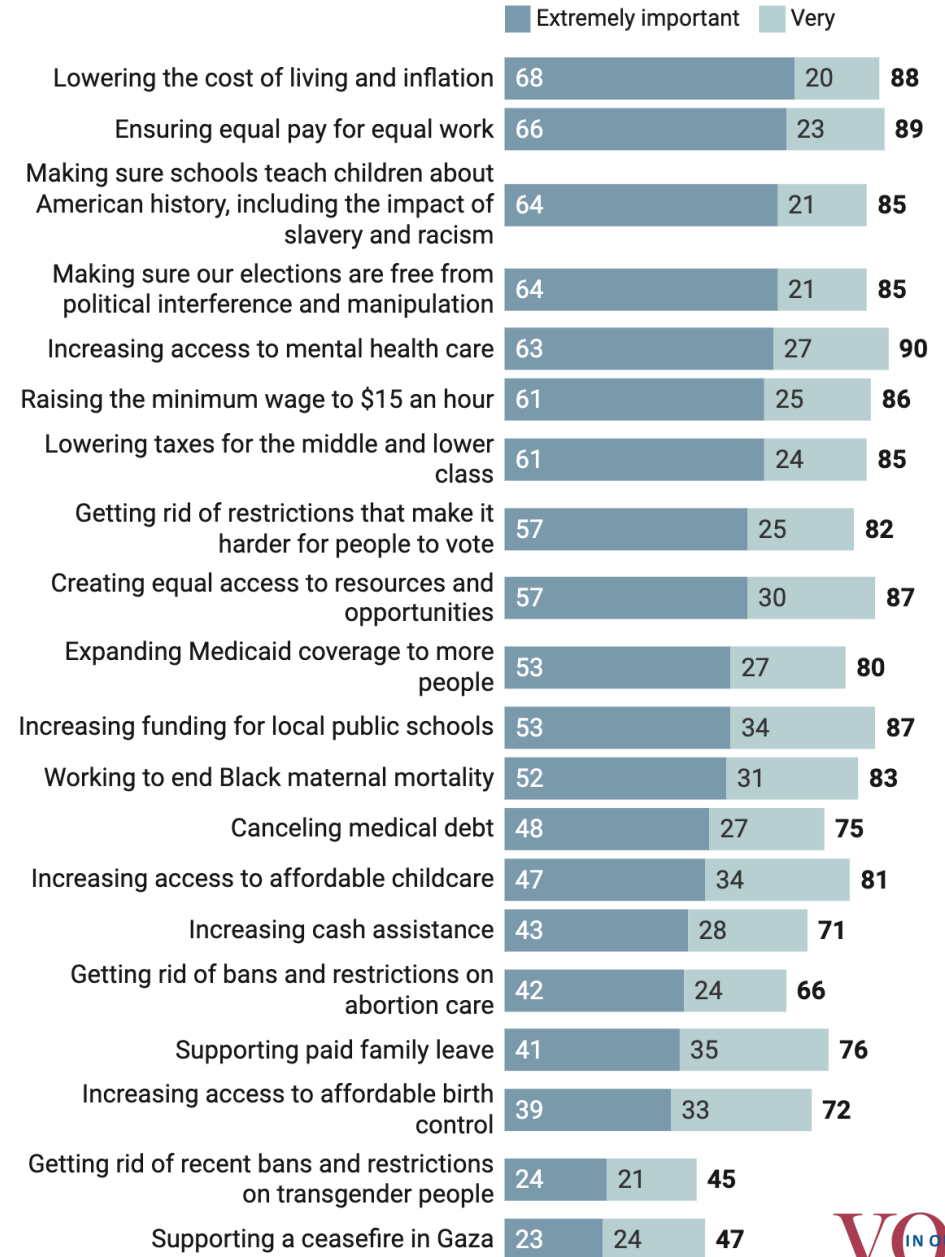
Policy positions

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Here are positions some candidates will take in the November elections. How important would each of these issues be to you personally when thinking about getting out to vote?

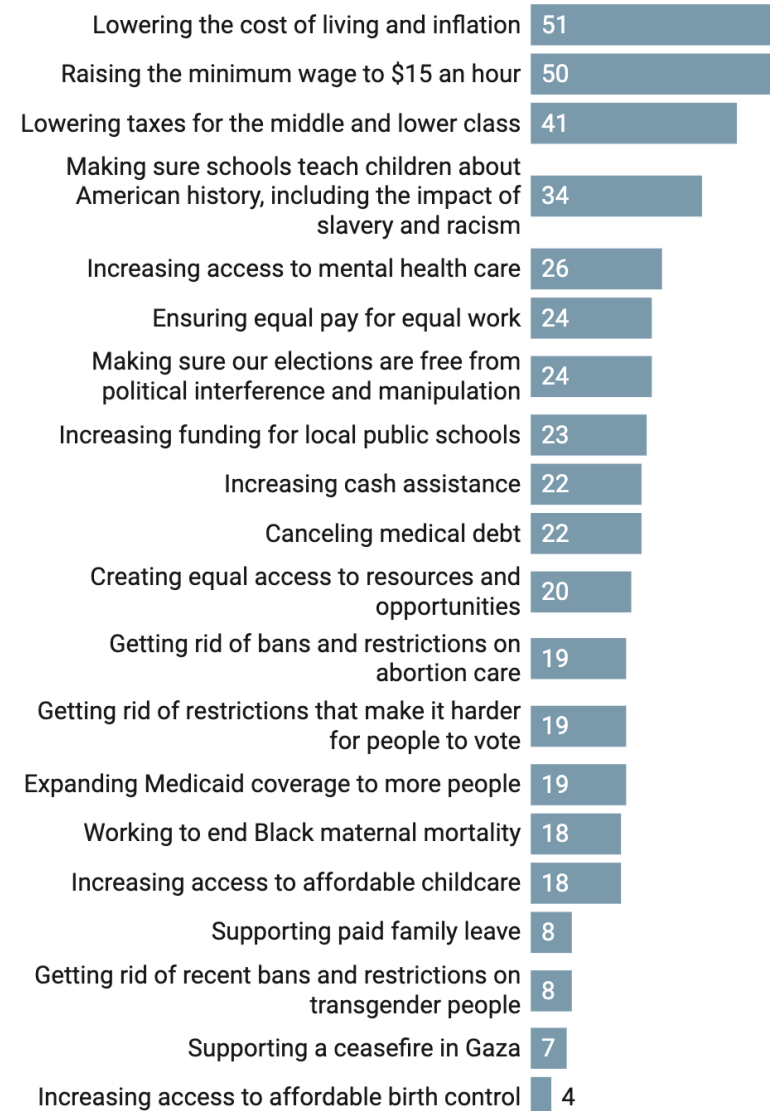
RANDOMIZE

Majorities say candidate policy positions relating to economic factors, health, education, and elections are extremely important.

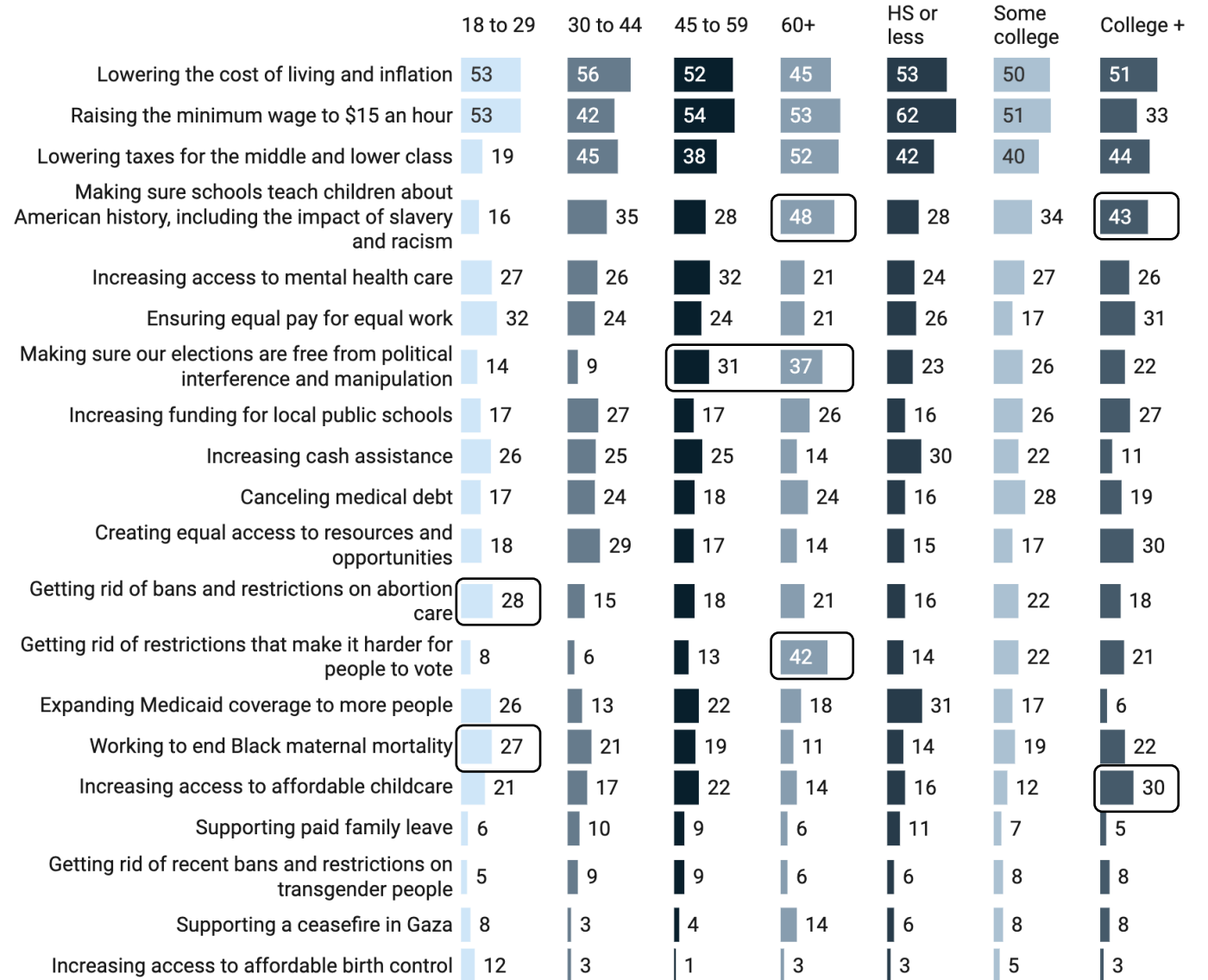


When asked to narrow down to the most important policy positions, economic policies rise to the top.

% Chosen as a top 5 policy position



% Chosen as a top 5 issue

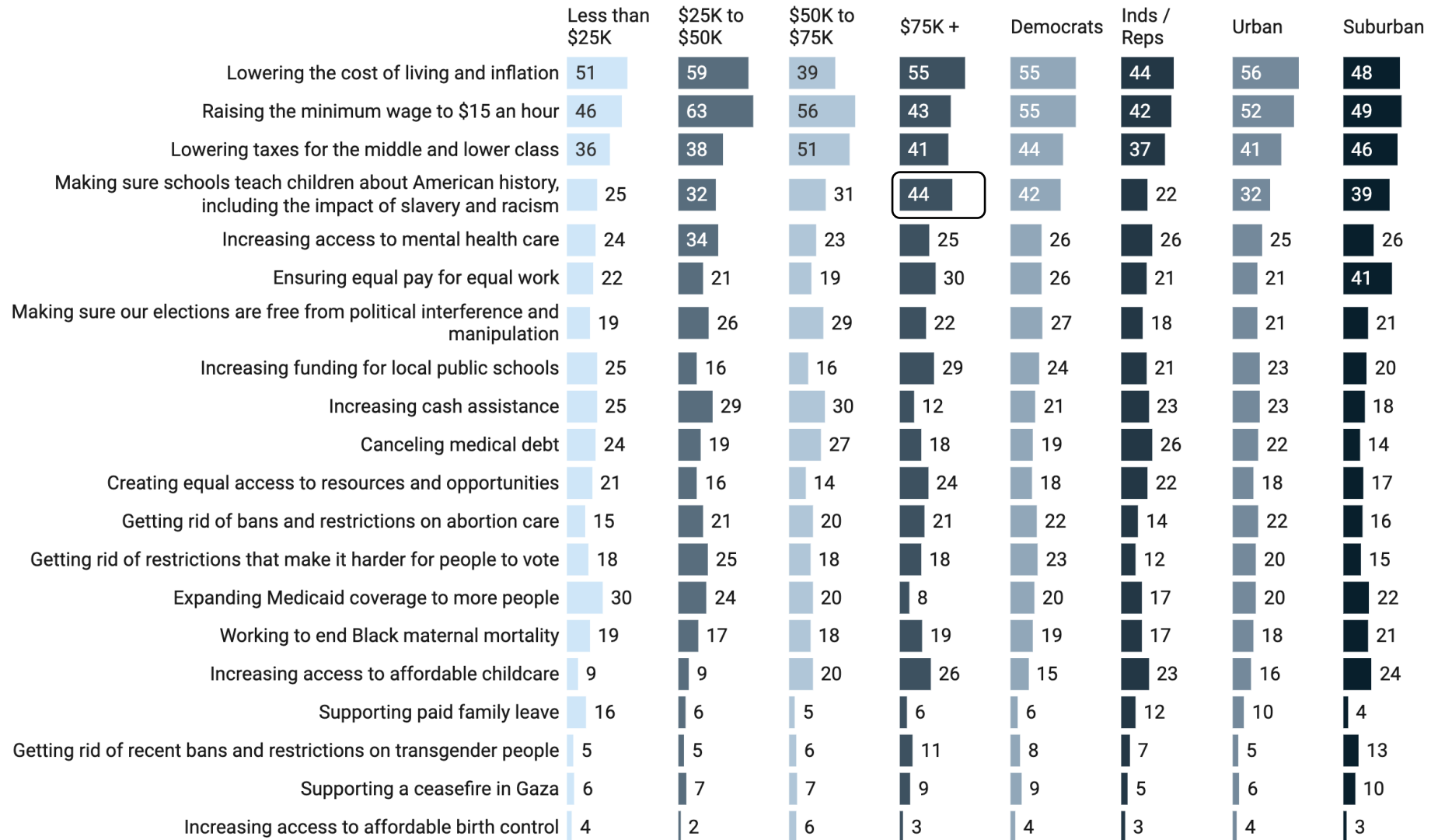


Getting rid of abortion bans and ending Black maternal mortality are also priorities for young respondents.

Policies relating to free and fair elections are higher priorities for older v. younger respondents.

Teaching accurate history is more of a priority for older respondents, college-educated respondents, and respondents with higher incomes.

% Chosen as a top 5 issue





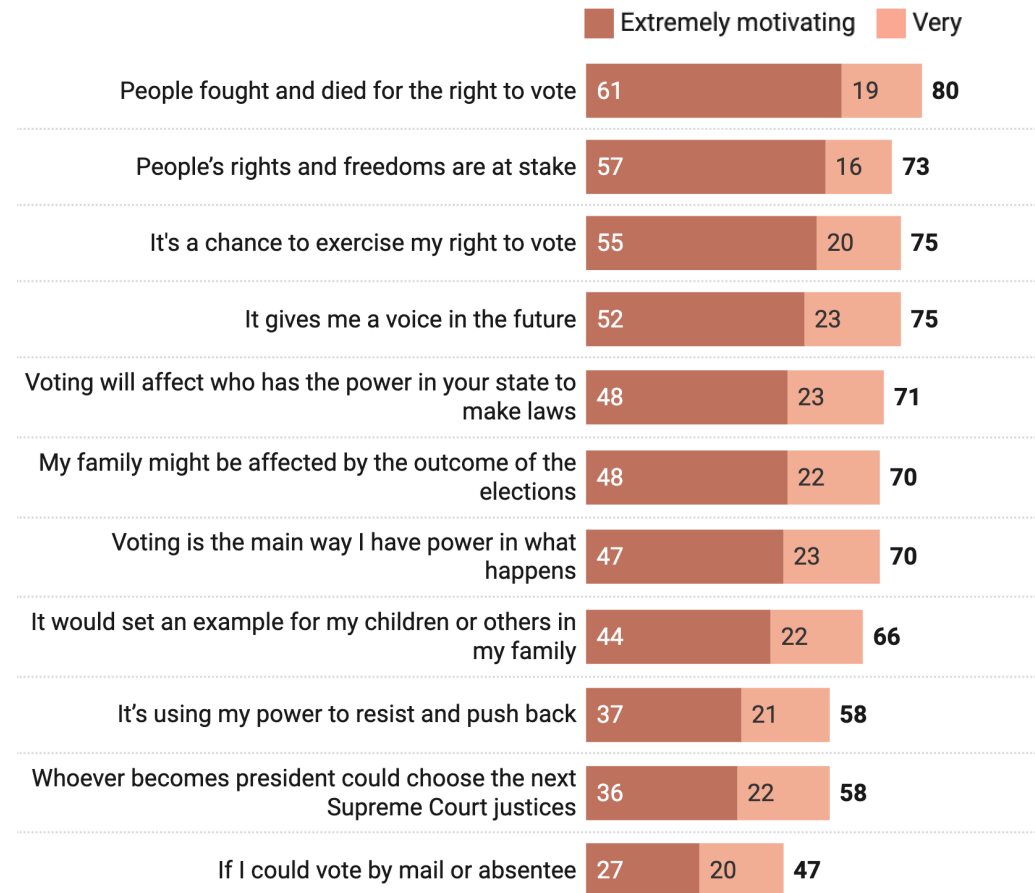
Why vote?

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We explored several motivations to vote in the elections this fall.

There are many motivations. At the top is people having fought and died for the right to vote.

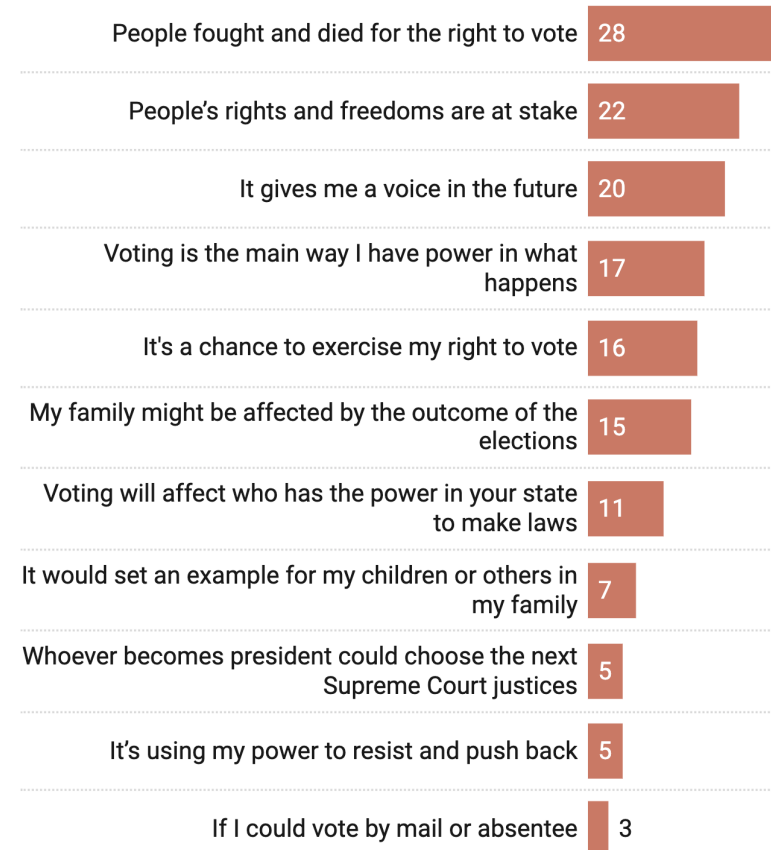
For you personally, how motivating is each of these to get out and vote in the elections this fall?



Here's what they say when forced to choose the top 1 or 2 motivations.

The table on the following page shows the top motivations by demographic group.

Of these, which might be most motivating for you personally to vote this fall?
Choose 1 or 2.



Here are the top 5 motivations by demographic segment.

18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60+	HS or less	Some college	College +
People's rights and freedoms are at stake	People fought and died for the right to vote	It gives me a voice in the future	People fought and died for the right to vote	People fought and died for the right to vote	People fought and died for the right to vote	It gives me a voice in the future
It gives me a voice in the future	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	People fought and died for the right to vote	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	People fought and died for the right to vote
People fought and died for the right to vote	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	It gives me a voice in the future	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	People's rights and freedoms are at stake
My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	It gives me a voice in the future	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	It gives me a voice in the future	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections
It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	Voting will affect who has the power in your state to make laws	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	It gives me a voice in the future	Voting will affect who has the power in your state to make laws

Here are the top 5 motivations by demographic segment.

Less than \$25K	\$25K to \$50K	\$50K to \$75K	\$75K+	Urban	Suburban	Almost certain to vote	Less likely to vote
Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	People fought and died for the right to vote	People fought and died for the right to vote	People fought and died for the right to vote	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	People fought and died for the right to vote	People fought and died for the right to vote	People's rights and freedoms are at stake
People's rights and freedoms are at stake	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	It gives me a voice in the future	People fought and died for the right to vote	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	It gives me a voice in the future	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections
People fought and died for the right to vote	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	It gives me a voice in the future	It gives me a voice in the future	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	People fought and died for the right to vote
It gives me a voice in the future	It gives me a voice in the future	It gives me a voice in the future	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	It gives me a voice in the future
Voting will affect who has the power in your state to make laws	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections	Voting is the main way I have power in what happens	People's rights and freedoms are at stake	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote	It's a chance to exercise my right to vote



Views toward reproductive policies

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**Three in four respondents
say abortion should be legal
in all or most cases.**

Which comes closest to your view.
Abortion should be:

74%

Legal in all or most
cases

26%

Illegal in all or most
cases

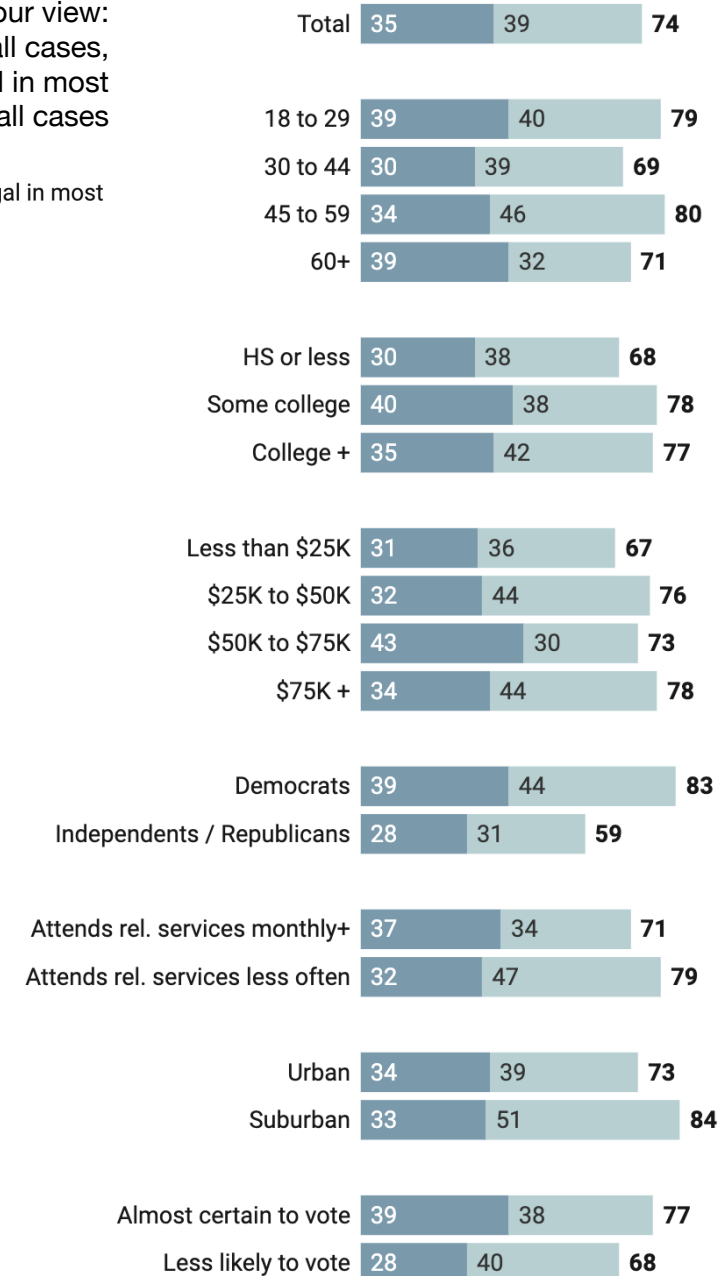
*6% illegal in all
cases*

Which comes closest to your view:
Abortion should be legal in all cases,
legal in most cases, illegal in most
cases, illegal in all cases

Legal in all Legal in most

Majorities across every demographic group think abortion should be legal in all or most cases.

Seven in ten women (71%) who attend religious services regularly say abortion should be legal in all or most cases.



Eight in ten say they'd vote in favor of a state amendment to guarantee the right to make decisions about pregnancy, including abortion.

Let's say there was a proposed amendment to your state constitution. You could vote on it. The amendment would guarantee the right to make all decisions about pregnancy and abortion care, without the state interfering. Would you vote:

ROTATE

83%

17%

In favor of this

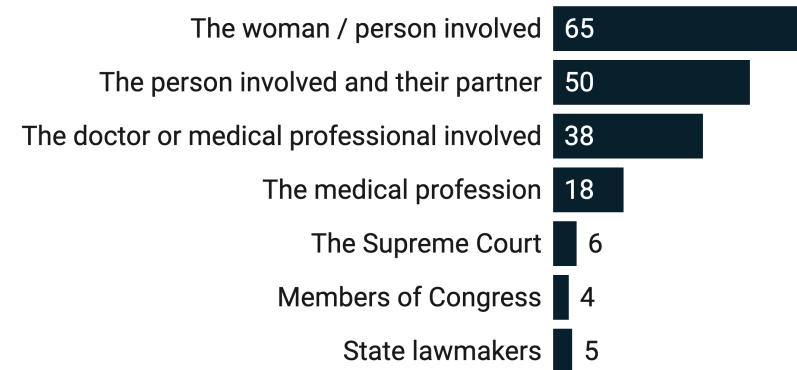
Against this

78% 18 to 44
88% 45+

A majority wants decisions about abortion to rest in the hands of the people involved.

In your view, who should make decisions about when and how someone can get abortion care in your state?
Select any that apply:

RANDOMIZE



Large majorities value each person and circumstance driving decisions, including later in pregnancy.

86%

Agree: Each person should have the right to make their own decision on abortion, even if I may disagree with it

71% Strongly agree
15% Somewhat agree

83% 18 to 44
88% 45+

80%

Agree: People should be able to get abortion care as early as possible and as late as necessary. Abortion care provided later in pregnancy occurs under complex and unpredictable circumstances. Medical professionals should be able to care for patients without government interference or fear of punishment

(Base n = 248)

54% Strongly agree
26% Somewhat agree

71% 18 to 44
88% 45+

81%

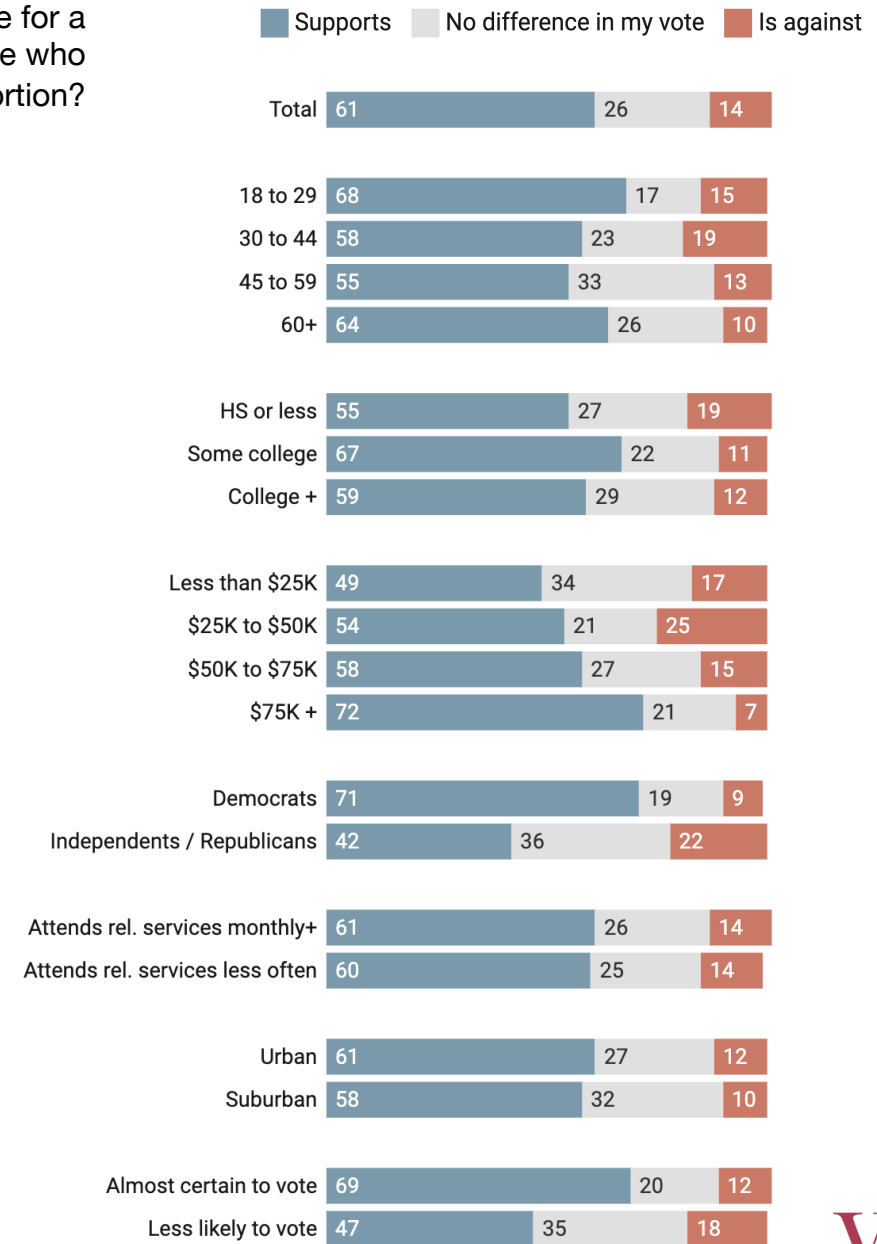
Say having an abortion can be a responsible choice

78% 18 to 44
83% 45+

Are you more likely to vote for a candidate for state legislature who _____ access to abortion?

Respondents are four times more likely to vote for a candidate who supports abortion access (61%) than one who opposes it (14%).

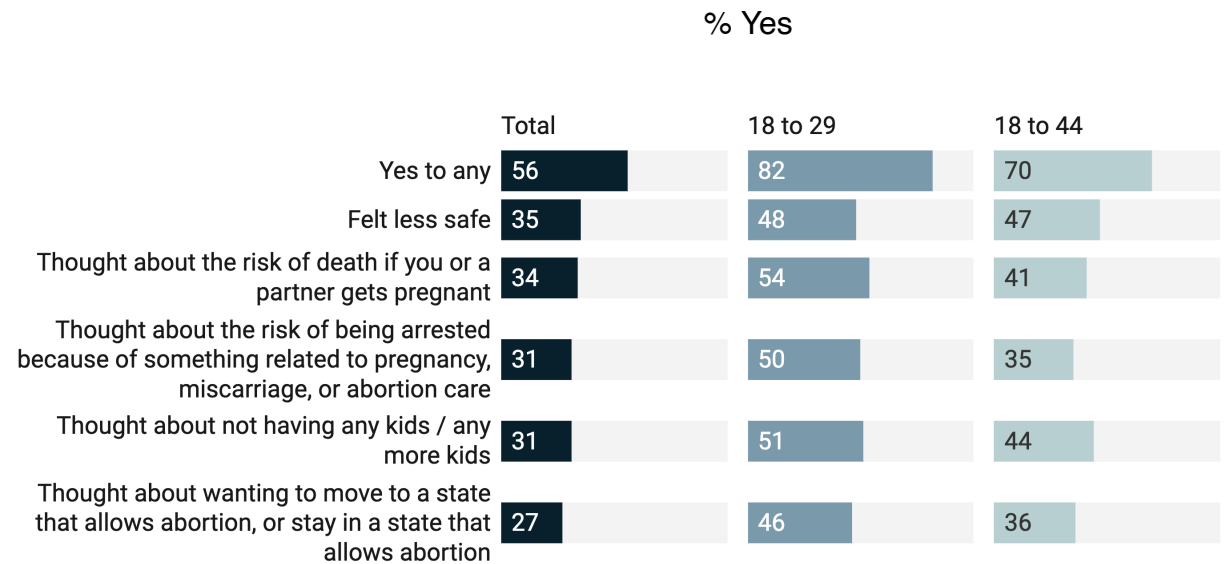
Those most likely to vote are also among the most likely to support a candidate who supports abortion access.



Recent abortion bans are having a personal impact on Black women of reproductive age.

Half of 18- to 29-year-olds says recent abortion bans have made them think about the risk of death and of arrest. Bans have also made half of these young voters think about not having any / any more kids.

As a result of recent abortion bans and restrictions, have you...



Nearly half of women of reproductive age knows someone who has tried to have an abortion in the past year or two.

Do you know anyone who has had an abortion or tried to have an abortion in the past year or two?

27%

Of all women say yes

45%

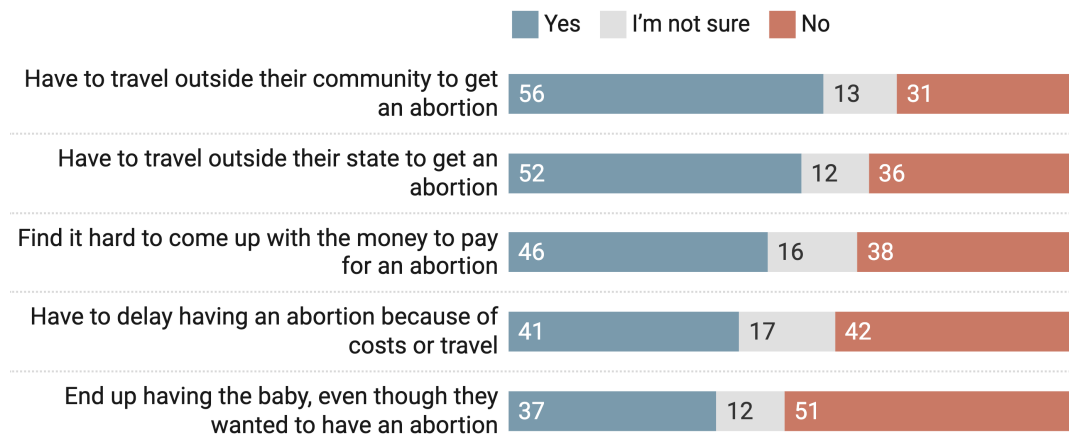
Of women 18 to 44 say yes

Three in four (76%) say the person(s) they know faced at least one of these barriers to care.

Half says the person had to travel out of state.

Did [ONE PERSON: that person / MORE THAN ONE: any of the people you know]:

Base n = 183 who know someone who has had an abortion or tried to have an abortion in the past two years



A large majority of women support comprehensive sex ed in high school.

Majorities of women who regularly attend religious services also support comprehensive sex ed.

Do you support or oppose comprehensive sex ed in high school that covers topics such as abstinence, birth control, abortion, preventing HIV and other sexual transmitted diseases, different sexual orientations, gender identity, sexual violence, consent, and healthy relationships?

83%

Support

16%

Oppose

82% Attends rel. services monthly+
85% Less often

Nearly four in five women agree that health care providers should create space for conversations about sexuality, including sexual pleasure.

Do you agree or disagree: Our health care providers should create space for education and non-judgmental conversations about sexuality, including how we can experience pleasure.

78%

Agree

22%

Disagree

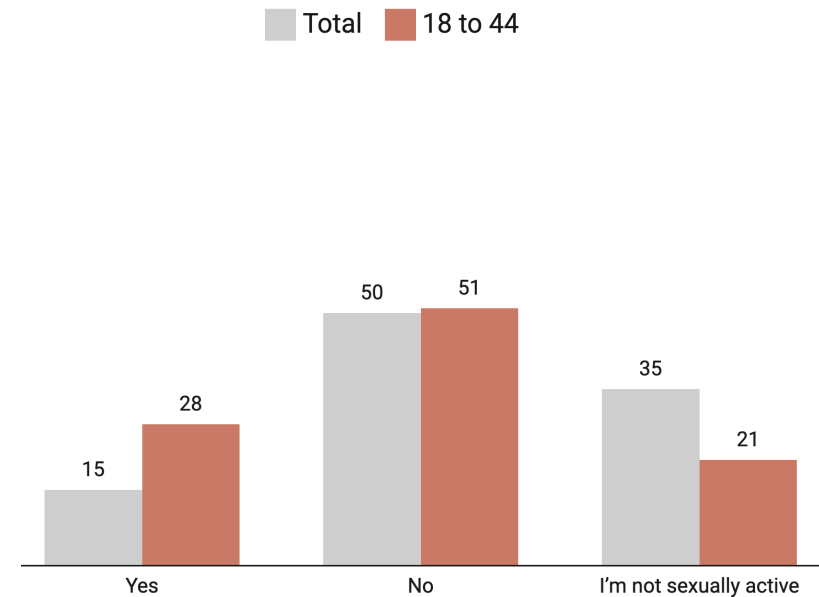
77% Attends rel. services monthly+



Access to birth control

Roughly one in four women of reproductive age (28%) says they or a partner are currently using birth control.

Are you or your partner currently using birth control?

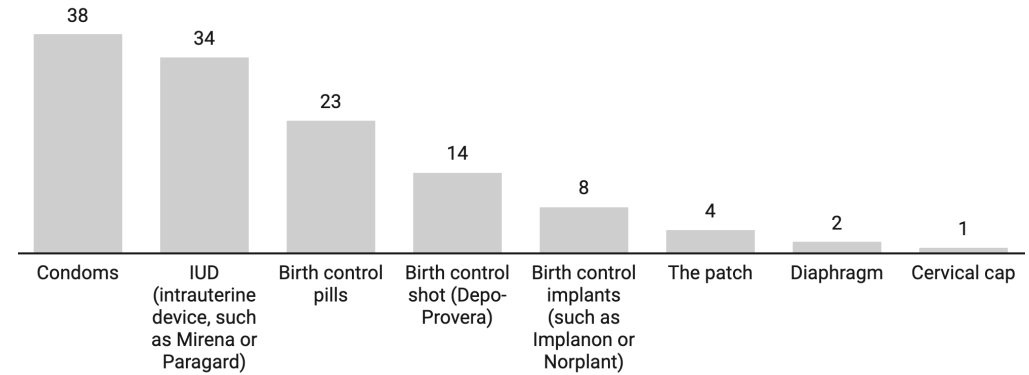




What type(s) of birth control are you or a partner using now? Select any that apply.

Base n = 102 self or partner is currently using birth control

Condoms and IUDs are the most common birth control methods.



A majority of women of reproductive age expresses interest in getting birth control over the counter.

Soon people will be able to get birth control pills over-the-counter. They will be available at the drugstore, like condoms and other birth control methods. How interested are you in getting birth control pills over-the-counter for you or a loved one?

% Very or somewhat interested

58%

Women 18 to 44

69%

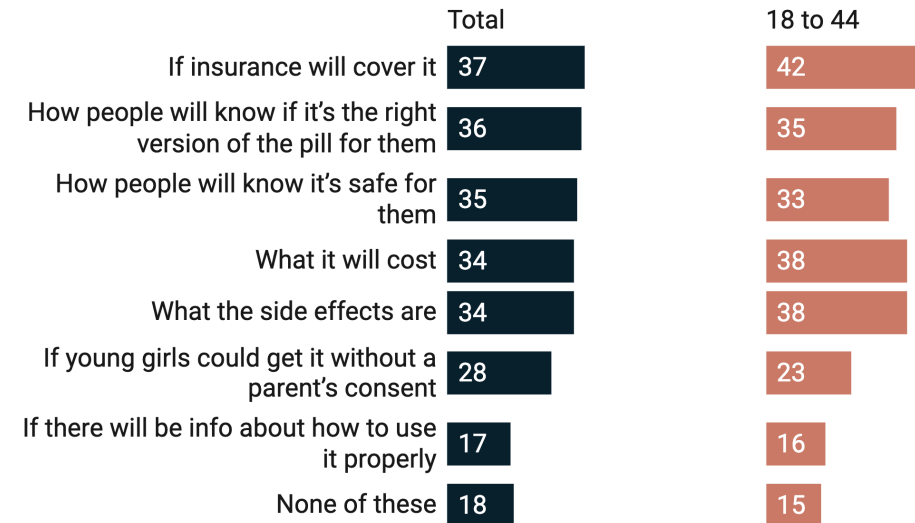
Women 18 to 29

The most common questions about over-the-counter pills include those related to insurance coverage, costs, and side effects.

What would you want to know about birth control pills being over-the-counter?

Select the top 3 things you'd want to know.

RANDOMIZE



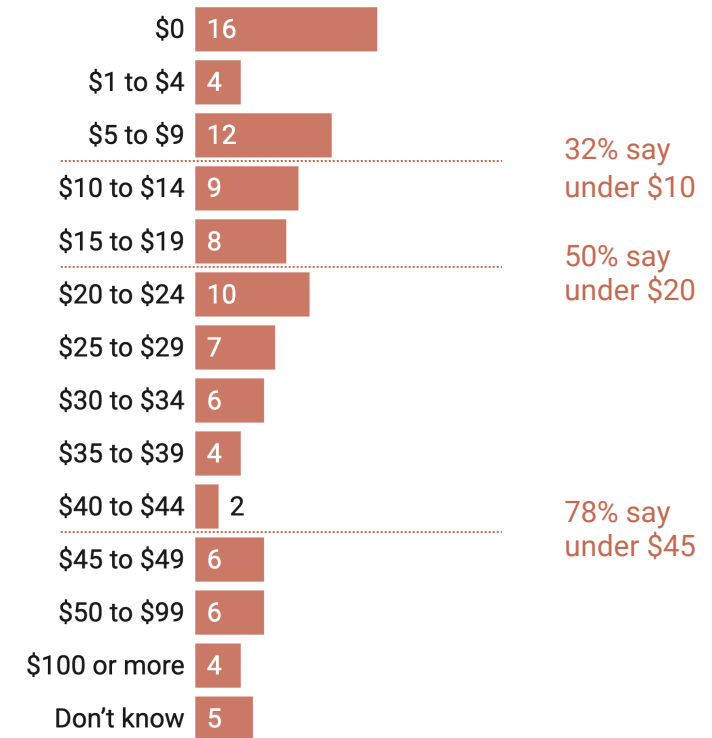
The retail price for over-the-counter birth control (\$49.00) is out of reach for 78% of respondents of reproductive age.

Let's say you or a loved one needed a 3-month supply of birth control pills. How much would you be able to pay for it, out-of-pocket, today?

Even if you don't need birth control pills, please imagine a situation in which you or a loved one does.

Your best guess is fine.

Base n = 296 women 18 to 44



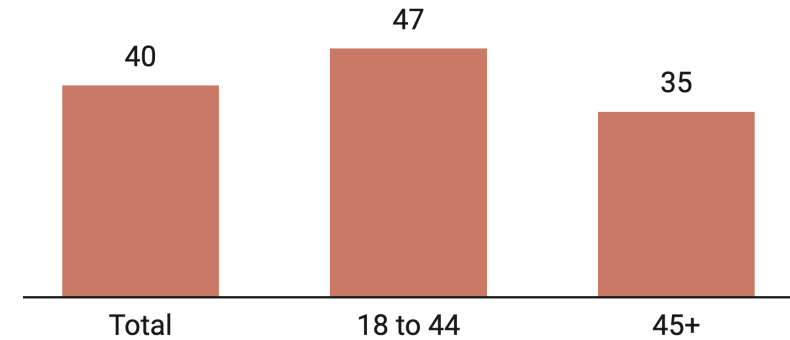
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Four in ten respondents (40%) say they are likely to talk with loved ones about over-the-counter access to birth control.

Women of reproductive age are most likely to say they'll have conversations about the topic.

Soon people will be able to get birth control pills over-the-counter. They will be available at the drugstore, like condoms and other birth control methods. Is this something you'd talk about with partners, family, or friends?

% Yes





Experiences with medical bias

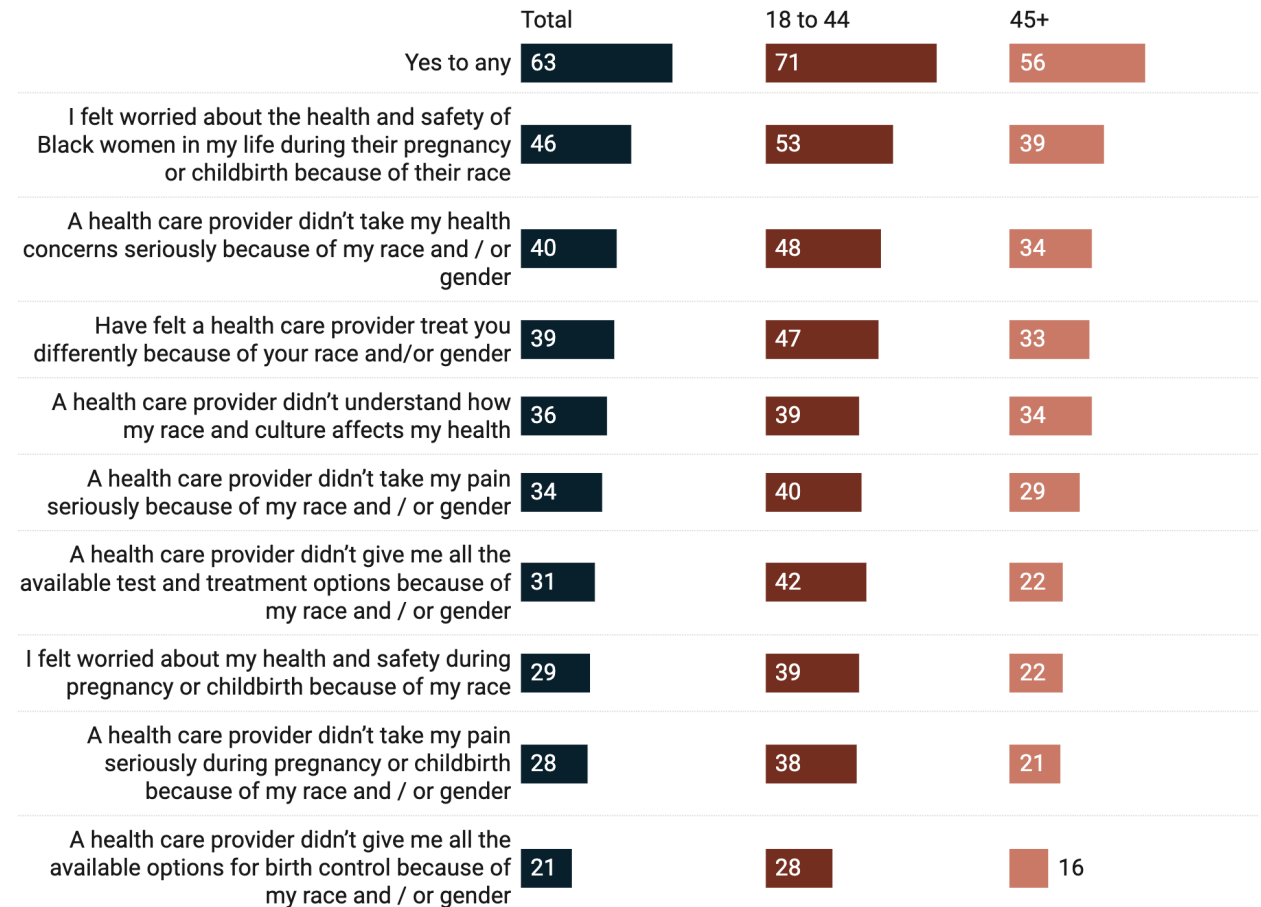
voice
IN OUR OWN

A majority of Black women says they have felt the effects of racial / gender bias in the health care system.

Younger respondents are more likely than their older counterparts to cite these experiences.

Here are things that can happen in the healthcare system due to racial bias or racism. Have you ever felt this way?

RANDOMIZE



voice
IN OUR OWN