

Results from a Statewide Survey of Black Women Voters in Virginia

# The Lives and Voices of Black Women in Virginia

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

CONDUCTED BY PERRYUNDEM

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CONTENTS

03 **Introduction**

06 **Key findings**

18 **Detailed findings**

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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.



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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 Virginia 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*?

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 Virginia.

This report provides findings from a statewide survey among n = 524 Black women\* registered voters. The survey was conducted January 22 through February 14, 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 Virginia. The margin of sampling error is  $\pm 5.5$  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%       | 524          |
| Black or African American | 100%       | 524          |
| 2+ races                  | 9%         | 57           |
| Hispanic / Latina/o/x     | 3%         | 27           |
| 18 to 29                  | 16%        | 123          |
| 30 to 44                  | 26%        | 130          |
| 45 to 59                  | 25%        | 119          |
| 60+                       | 32%        | 152          |
| HS or less                | 29%        | 142          |
| Some college              | 37%        | 220          |
| College +                 | 34%        | 162          |
| Democrat                  | 72%        | 361          |
| Independent               | 24%        | 126          |
| Republican                | 4%         | 37           |
| Urban                     | 49%        | 221          |
| Suburban                  | 39%        | 152          |
| Rural                     | 12%        | 49           |

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# Key findings.

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## Here are 10 key findings.

1

### **Younger Black women are less motivated to vote this fall than their older counterparts.**

Roughly half (49%) of 18-to 44-year-old respondents says they are “almost certain” to vote this fall, compared to 77% of respondents ages 45 and older.

One in three younger women says they’ve thought about not voting in 2024 as a form of protest (36% of 18- to 44-year-olds). Insights from our national data suggest that young people are discouraged by the choice of candidates. Of all age groups, 18- to 29-year-olds are most likely to say it’s extremely or very important that more Black women are elected and nominated to political offices (83%).

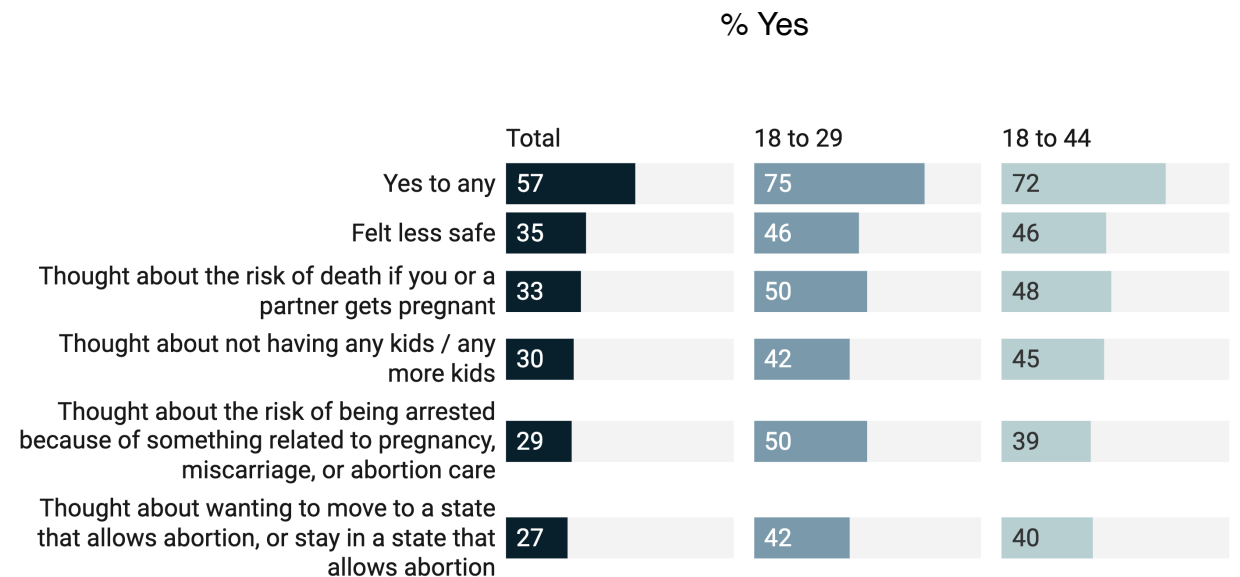


2

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

Half of 18- to 29-year-old respondents (50%) says recent abortion bans have made them think about the risk of death if they or a partner were to get pregnant. Four in ten (42%) say bans have affected their thinking about whether or not to have any / any more children.

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

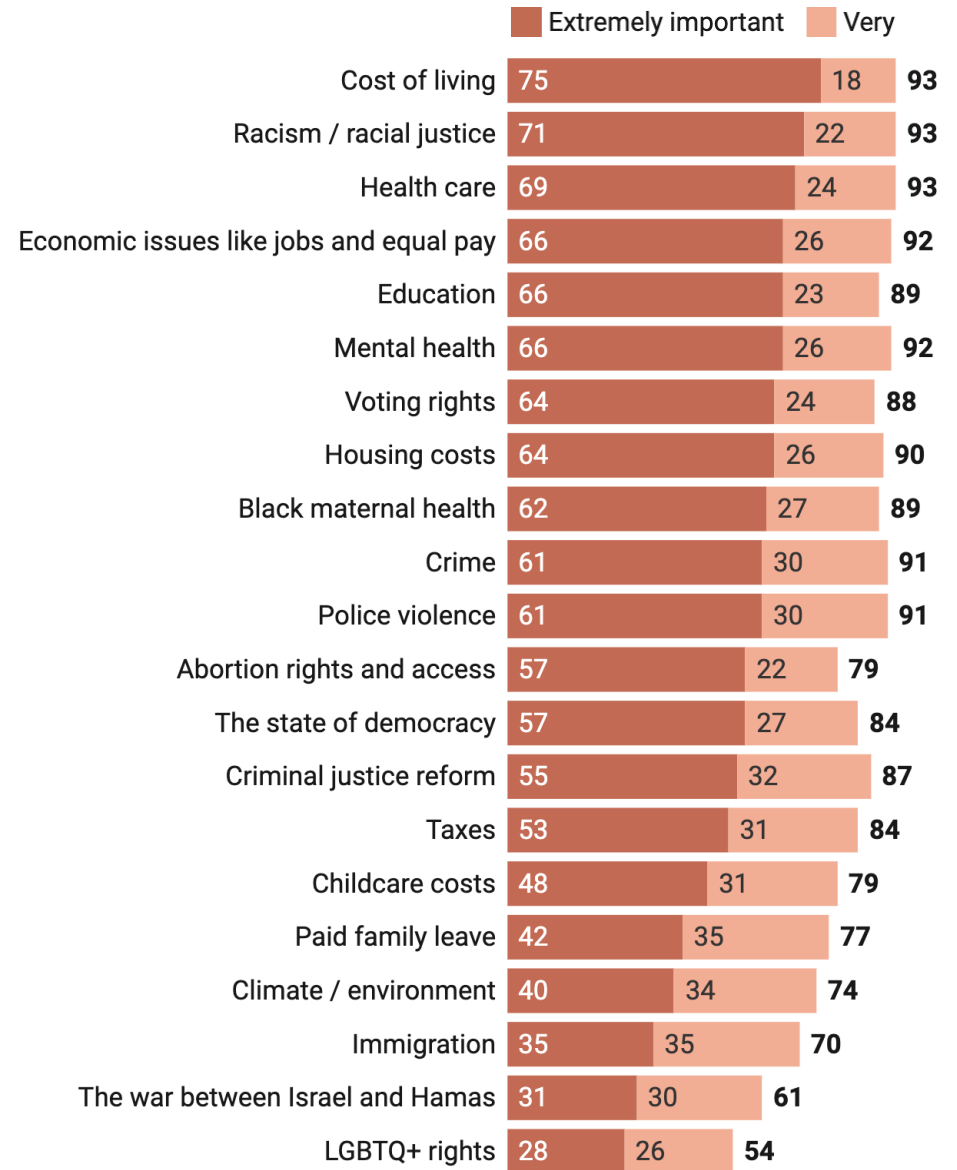


This fall there will be elections for US Congress, state, and local offices. How important is each of these issues to you personally when thinking about getting out to vote?

RANDOMIZE

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

Abortion rights and access is a top issue for women of reproductive age.



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## 4

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

College-educated women also prioritize getting rid of bans and restrictions on abortion care. Expanding Medicaid is among the top for respondents with a high school education or less.

#### **IMPORTANT POLICY POSITIONS**

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



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**5**  
**In a list of 12 motivations  
to vote, these three rise  
to the top.**

**1**  
People fought and died for the right to vote  
27% say this is in the top 1 or 2 motivations to vote

**2**  
People's rights and freedoms are at stake  
25%

**3**  
Virginia is one of the few states that will decide who becomes president and whether the US Congress becomes Democratic or Republican. That means my vote will matter more than in most other states.  
23%

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These are additional motivating factors among many respondents.

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

6  
**Black women in Virginia 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.

81%

Say abortion should be legal in all or most cases

74% of those who attend religious services regularly

86%

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

85%

93%

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

92%

89%

Say having an abortion can be the responsible choice

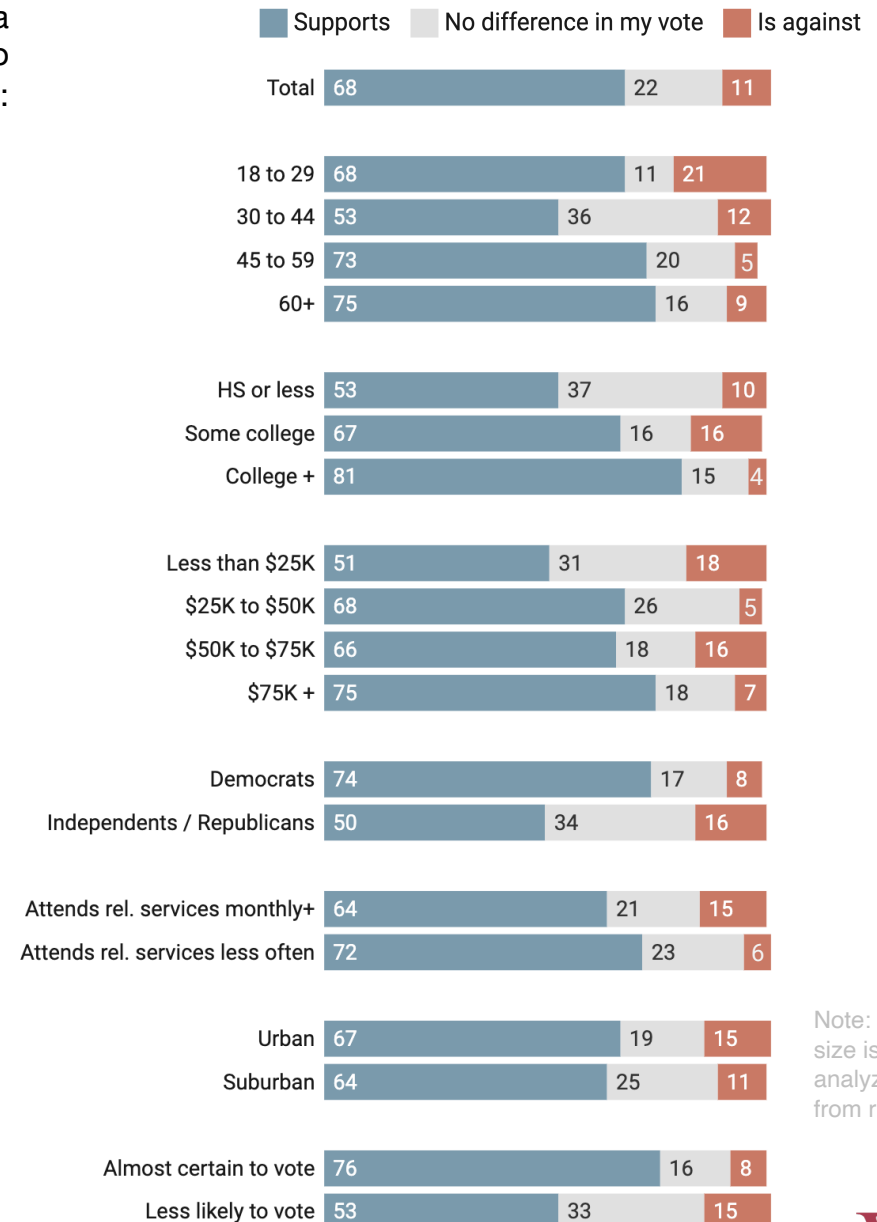
85%



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

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

Almost two-thirds of Black women who attend religious services regularly say 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 is interested in getting birth control pills over the counter.**

The retail price, however, is out of reach for 72% of these women.

57%

Of women 18 to 44 say they are interested in accessing birth control pills over-the-counter

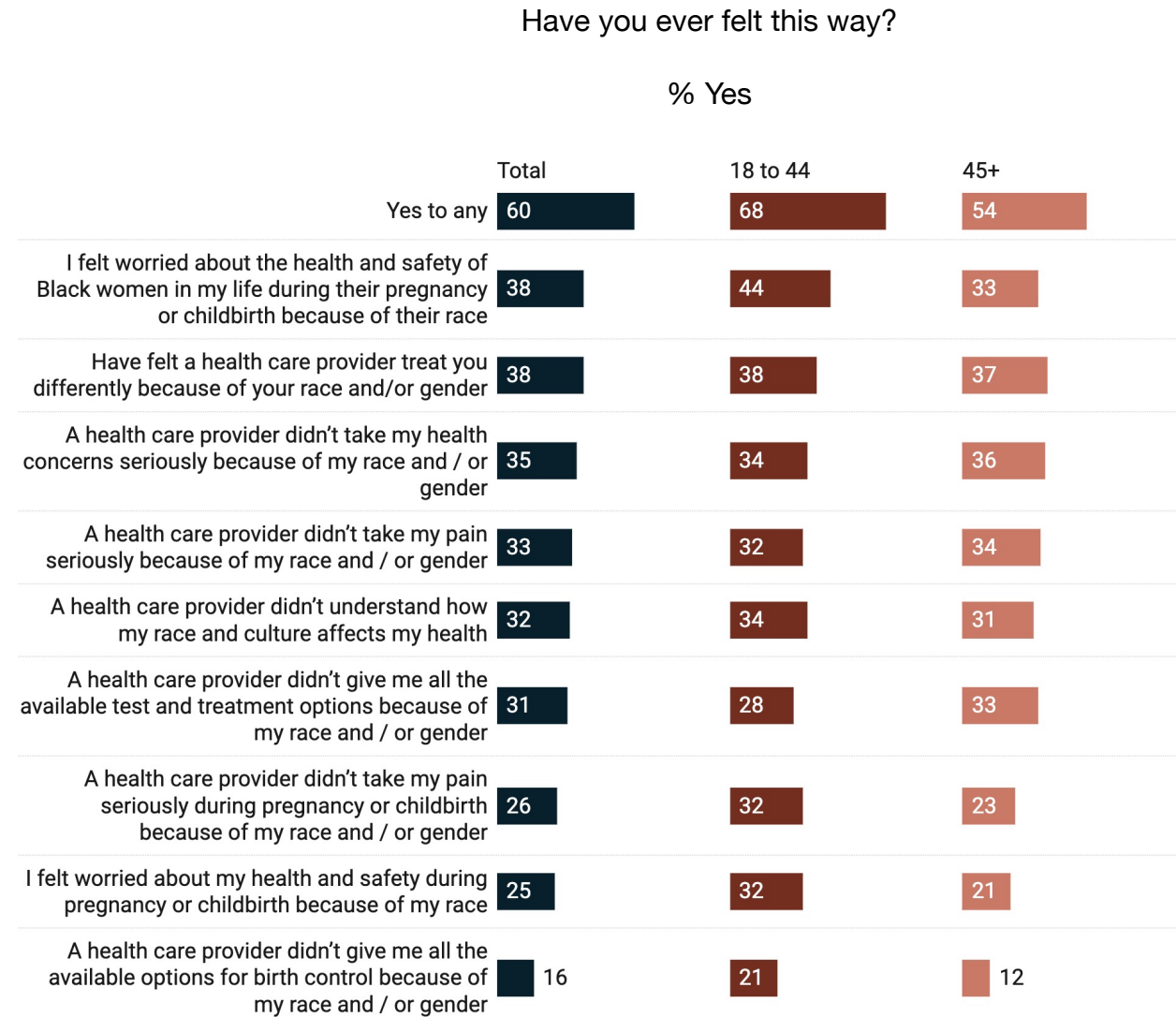
72%

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*

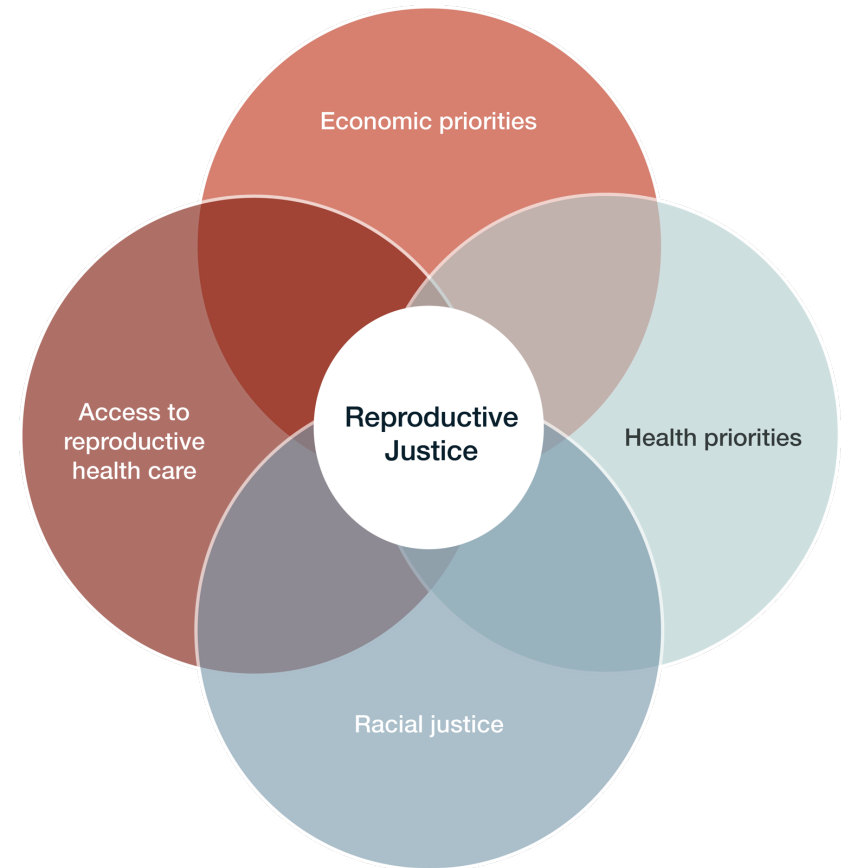
**9**  
**A majority of Black women (60%) says they have felt the effects of racial / gender bias in the health care system.**

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



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

Many women of reproductive age are profoundly impacted by abortion bans. Getting rid of abortion restrictions and bans is a top voting issue for college-educated women. A 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 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.

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**Detailed findings.**



## SECTIONS

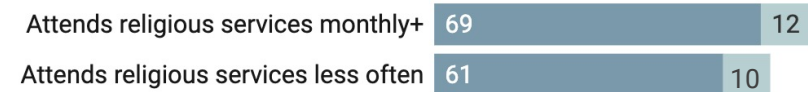
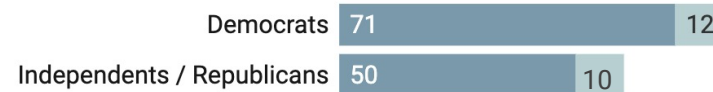
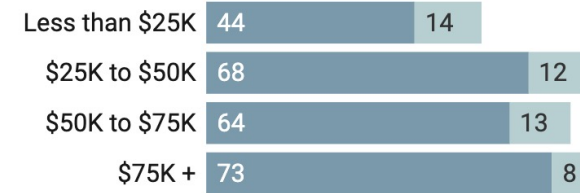
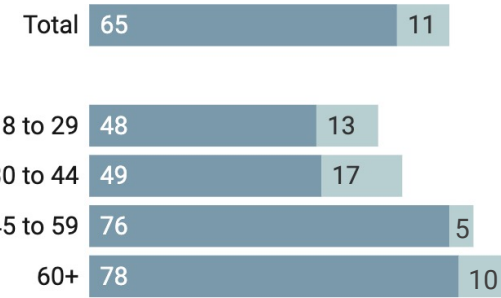
- 20 Voting in the 2024 elections
- 29 Impact of the Biden administration
- 32 Issue priorities
- 39 Policy positions
- 44 Why vote?
- 49 Views toward reproductive policies
- 61 Access to birth control
- 68 Experiences with medical bias



# 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 (65%) says they're “almost certain” to vote this fall.

Women who are least certain to vote include:

- Women with lower incomes (44% almost certain)
- Those with a high school degree or less (47% almost certain)
- 18- to 44-year-olds (48%)
- Independent / Republican women (50%)





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 = 264

**About three-fifths of women say voting in the 2024 elections is “extremely important.”**

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

**60%**

Rate 7 – extremely important

42% 18 to 44  
71% 45+

66% Democrats  
47% Inds / Reps

**16%**

Rate 5 or 6

16% 18 to 44  
17% 45+

16% Democrats  
18% Inds / Reps

**23%**

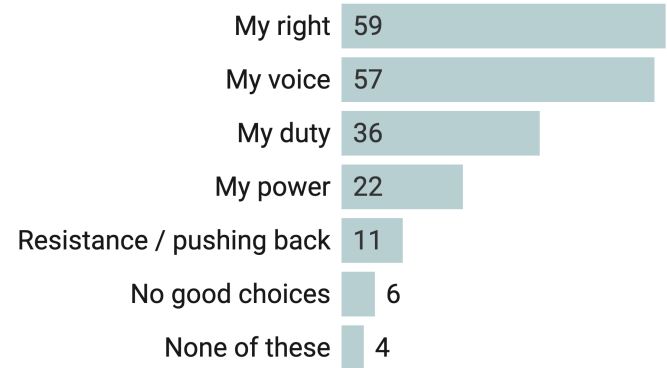
Rate 1 to 4 – toward not important

42% 18 to 44  
12% 45+

19% Democrats  
35% 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



**More than 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?

**85%**

**15%**

Yes

No

88% 18 to 29  
84% 30 to 44  
82% 45 to 59  
87% 60+

82% HS or less  
84% Some college  
88% College+

81% Less than \$25K  
85% \$25K to \$50K  
87% \$50K to \$75K  
86% \$75K+

## One in four 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:

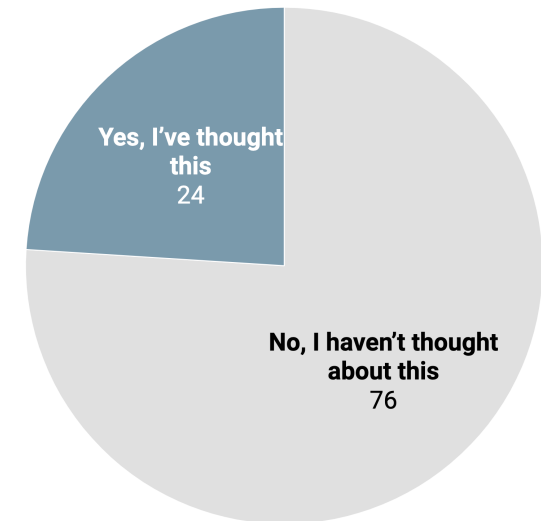
- Bad candidates, candidates who don't represent their views, Biden / Trump being old white men
- Feeling their vote doesn't count
- Protecting Palestine / protesting what's happening in Gaza

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

Most likely to say "yes"

18 to 29 (39%)

30 to 44 (34%)



**If the presidential election were held today, seven in ten (71%) say they'd vote for the Democratic candidate.**

Among those most certain to vote, 81% say they'd vote for the Democratic candidate v. 6% 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 = 516*

**71%**

Democratic candidate  
81% of women almost certain to vote

**6%**

Republican candidate  
6%

**2%**

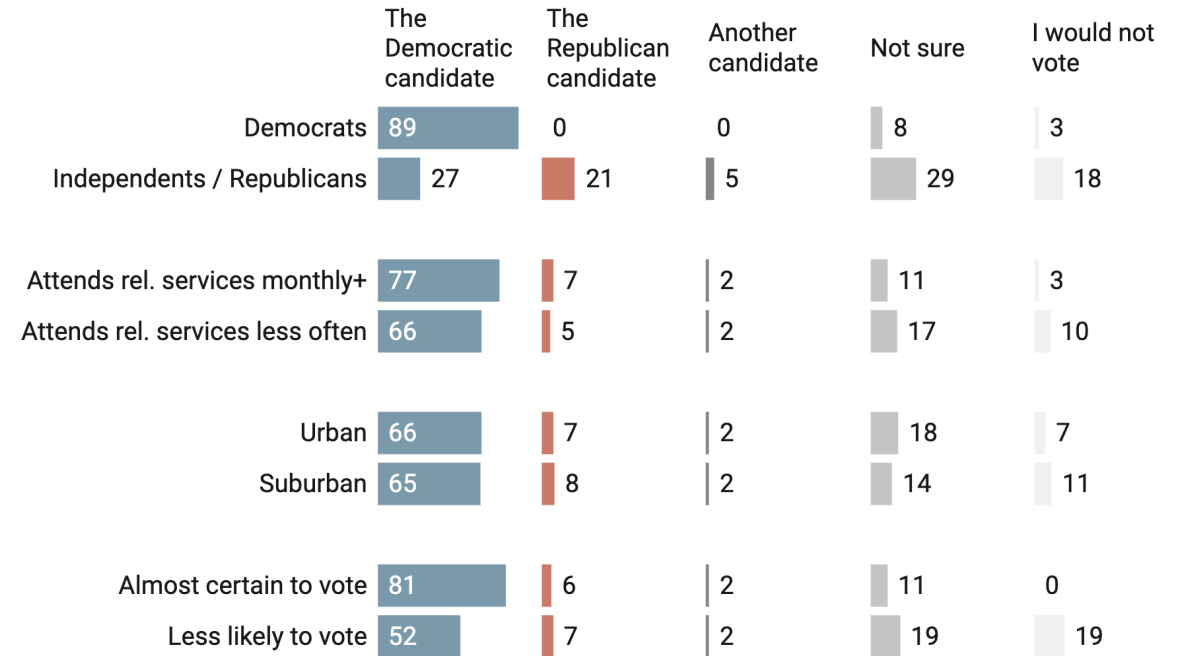
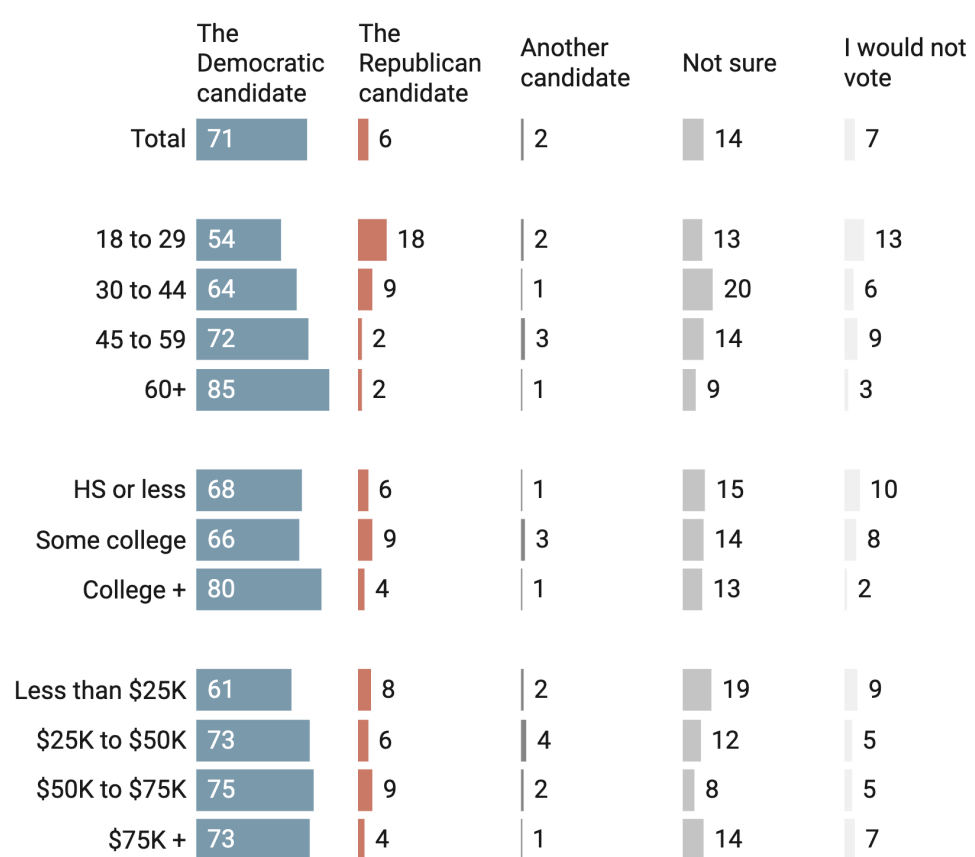
Other  
2%

**14%**

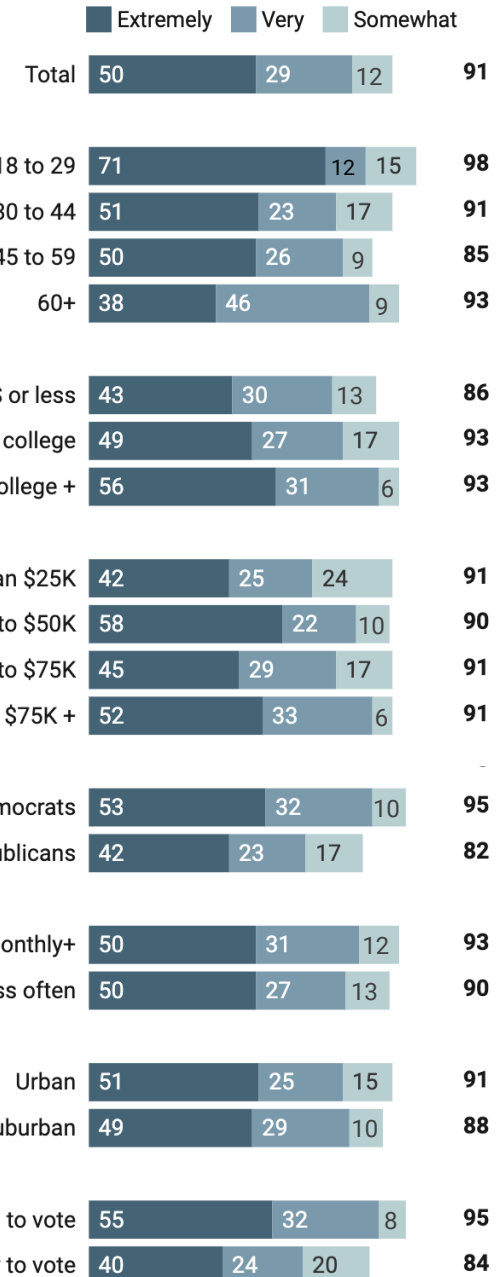
Not sure  
11%

**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 (91%) say it's important that more Black women are elected and nominated to positions of power in government.**

This sentiment is particularly strong among younger women.





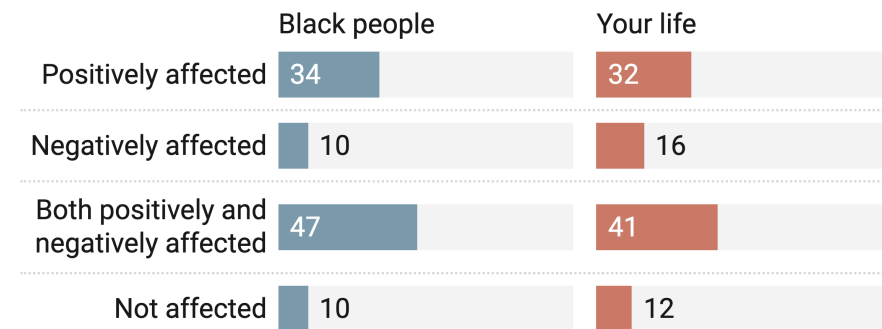
# Impact of the Biden administration

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IN OUR OWN



**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 = 264) / "your life" (n = 260)



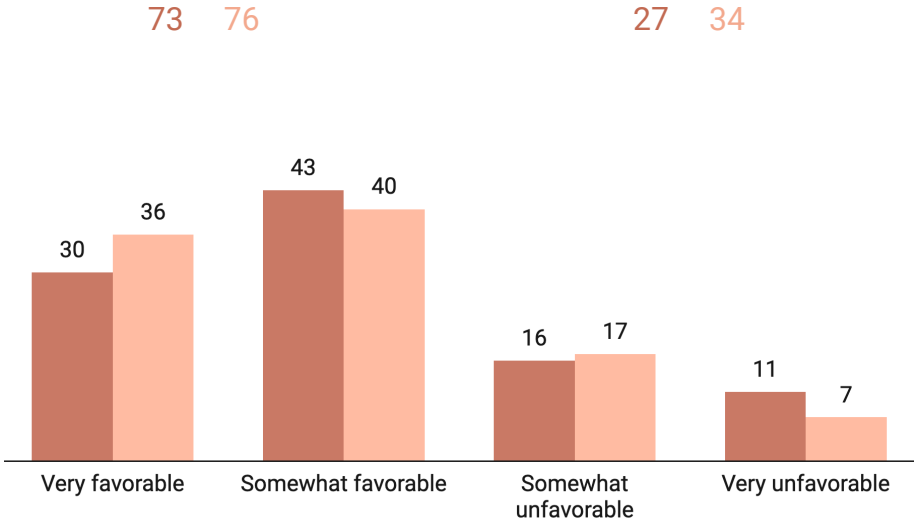


Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of:

President Joe Biden Vice President Kamala Harris

# That said, three in four have favorable impressions of President Biden and Vice President Harris.

Older respondents, Democrats, and respondents likely to vote feel most favorably toward Biden and Harris.



- Most likely to be favorable:
- Ages 60+ (91% Biden, 85% Harris)
  - Democrats (82%, 86%)
  - Almost certain to vote (82%, 84%)

- Most likely to be unfavorable:
- Independents / Reps (50%, 49%)
  - 18 to 29 (46%, 24%)
  - Less likely to vote (43%, 38%)
  - 30 to 44 (37%, 34%)



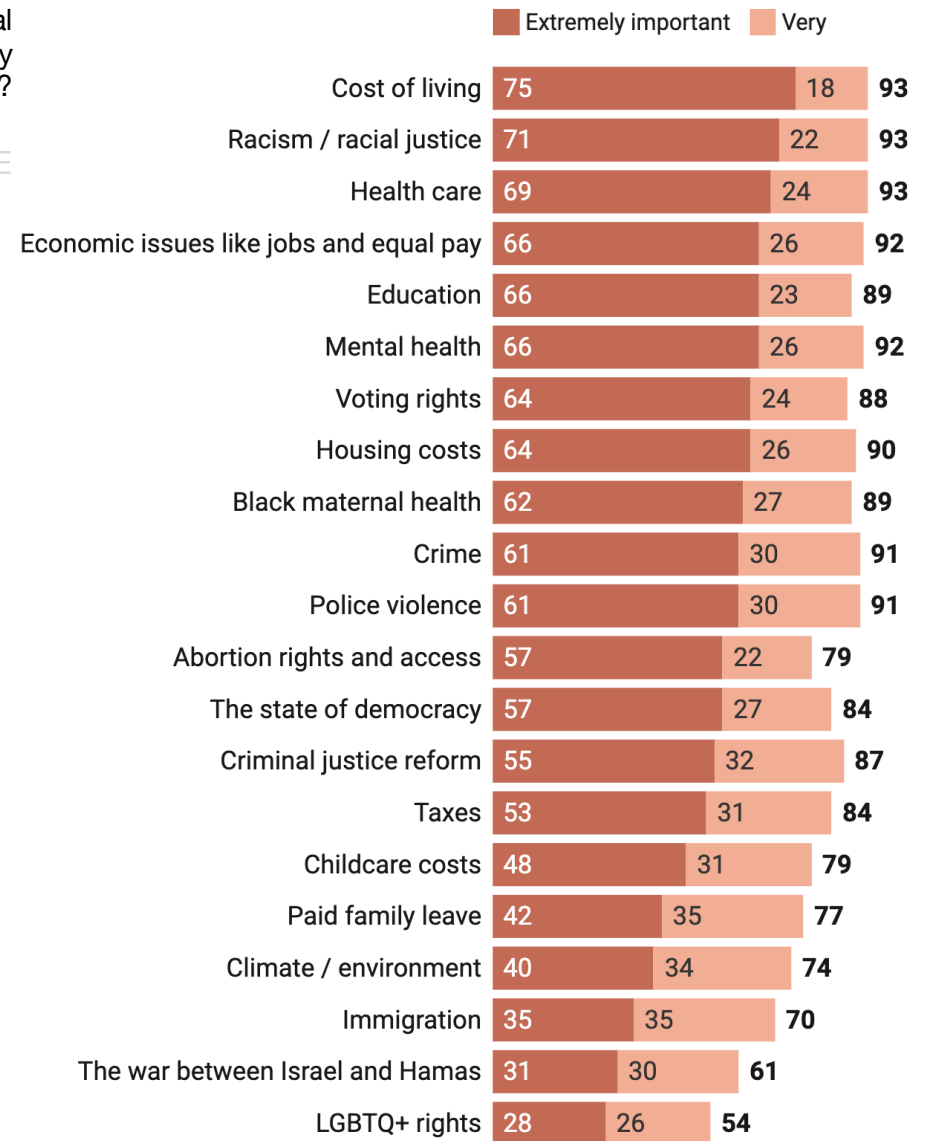
# Issue priorities

**voice**  
IN OUR OWN

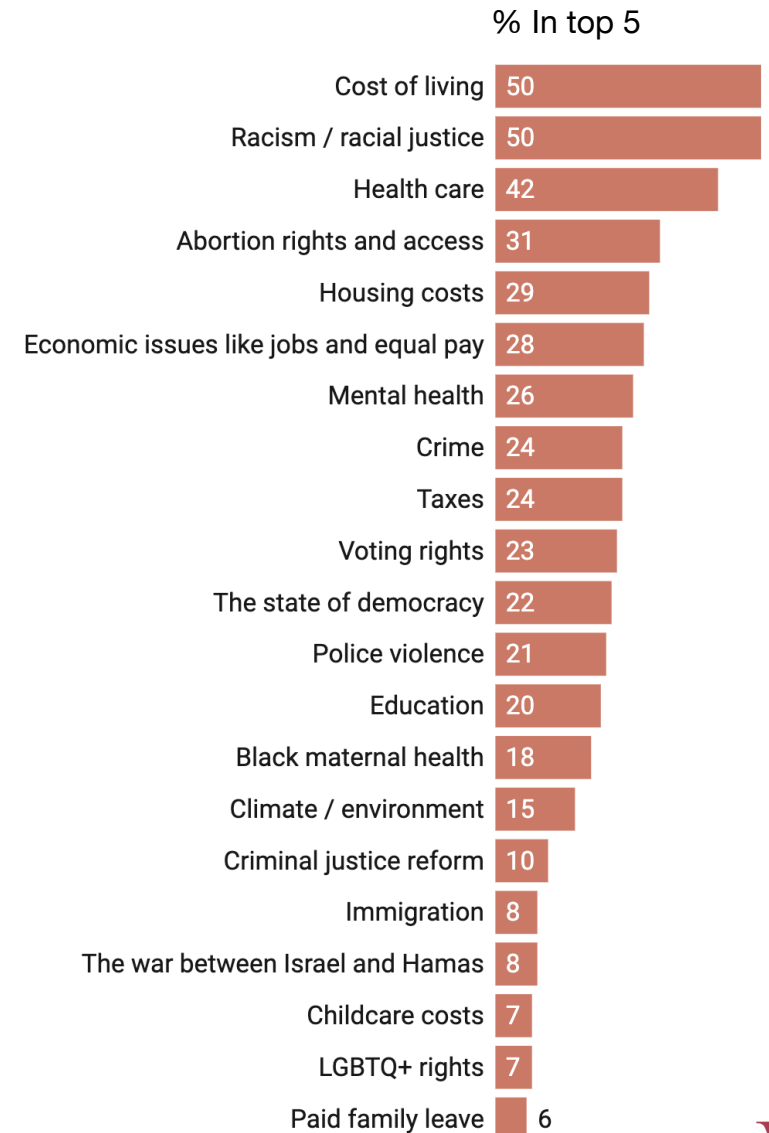
This fall there will be elections for US Congress, state, and local offices. How important is each of these issues to you personally when thinking about getting out to vote?

RANDOMIZE

**Many issues are on the minds of Black women.**

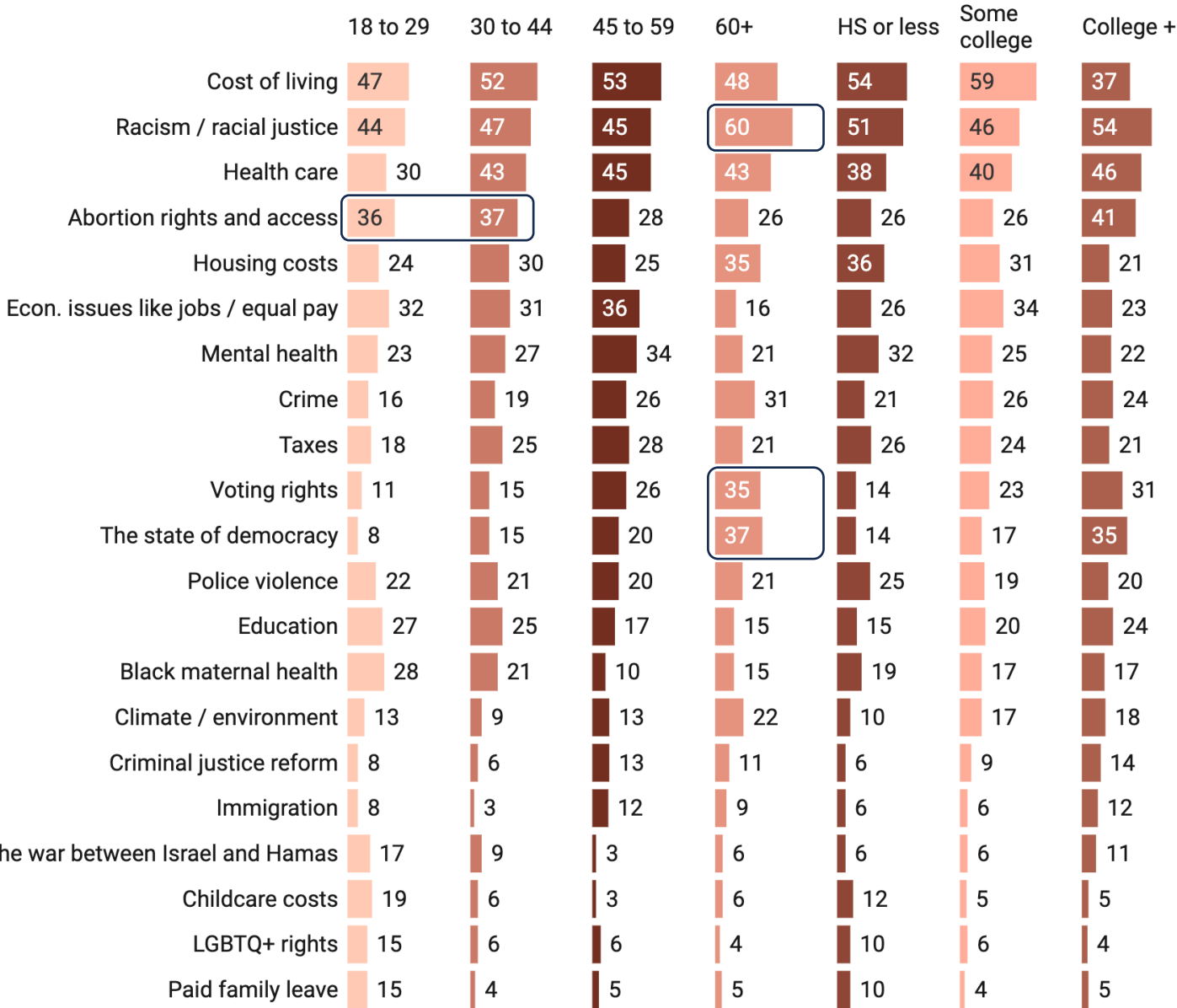


Choose the top 5 issues that matter most to you when voting in elections.



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

% Chosen as a top 5 issue



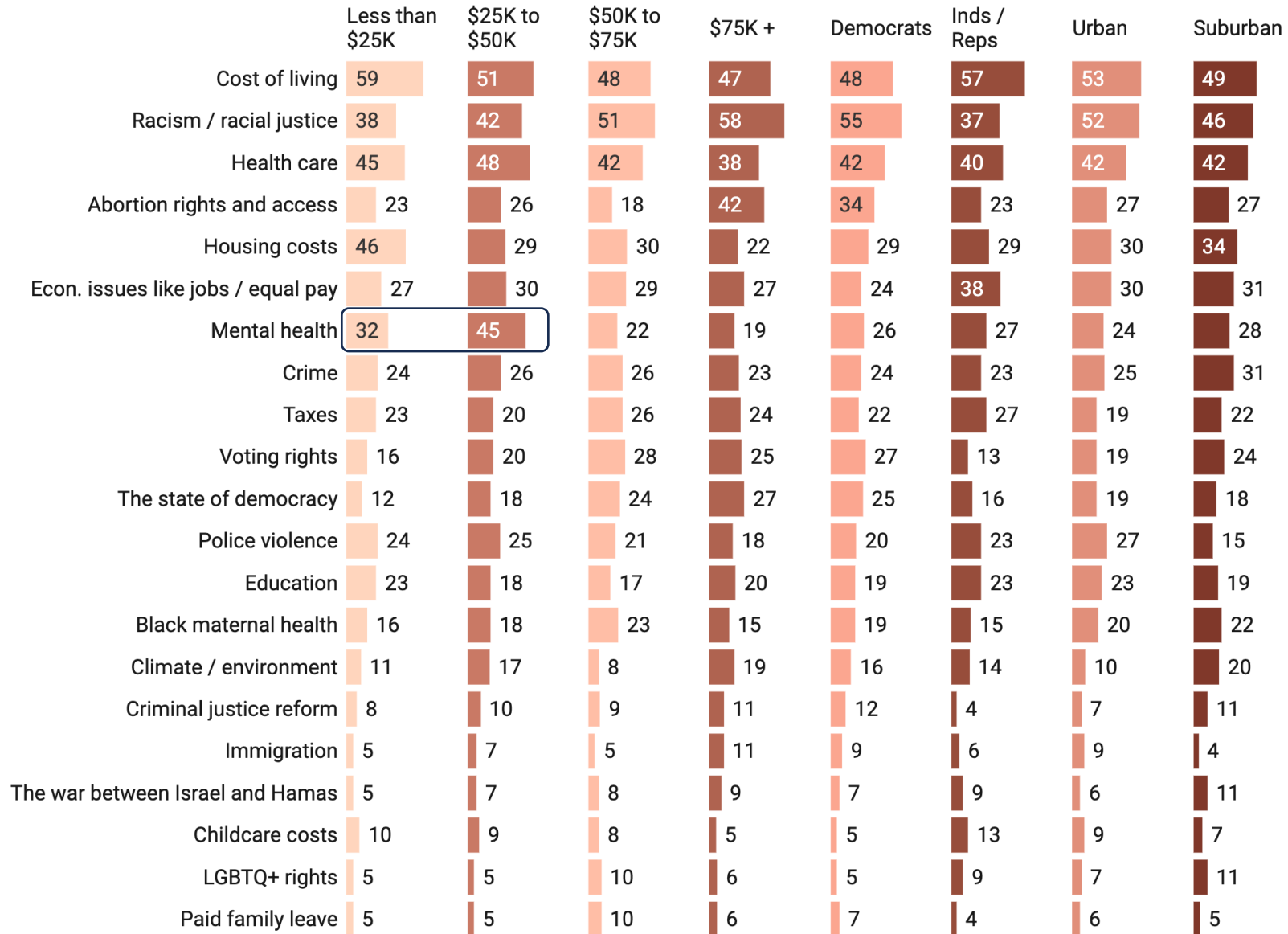
Abortion access is among the top issues for women of reproductive age.

Racism / racial justice, voting rights, and the state of democracy are more pressing for older v. younger respondents.

Respondents with lower incomes consider mental health among their top issues (see next page).



% Chosen as a top 5 issue



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

## 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 7<sup>th</sup> – but nearly half is unsure.

23%

Support

32%

Oppose

Most likely

- 18 to 29 (42%)
- \$75K+ (40%)
- College+ (39%)

46%

Not sure

Most likely

- Less than \$25K (62%)





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.

**38%**

Approve

- Most likely
- 60+ (58%)
  - Attends rel. services  
monthly+ (48%)

**35%**

Disapprove

- Most likely
- 18 to 29 (46%)
  - Independents /  
Republicans (43%)

**27%**

Not sure

- Most likely
- Independents /  
Republicans (38%)



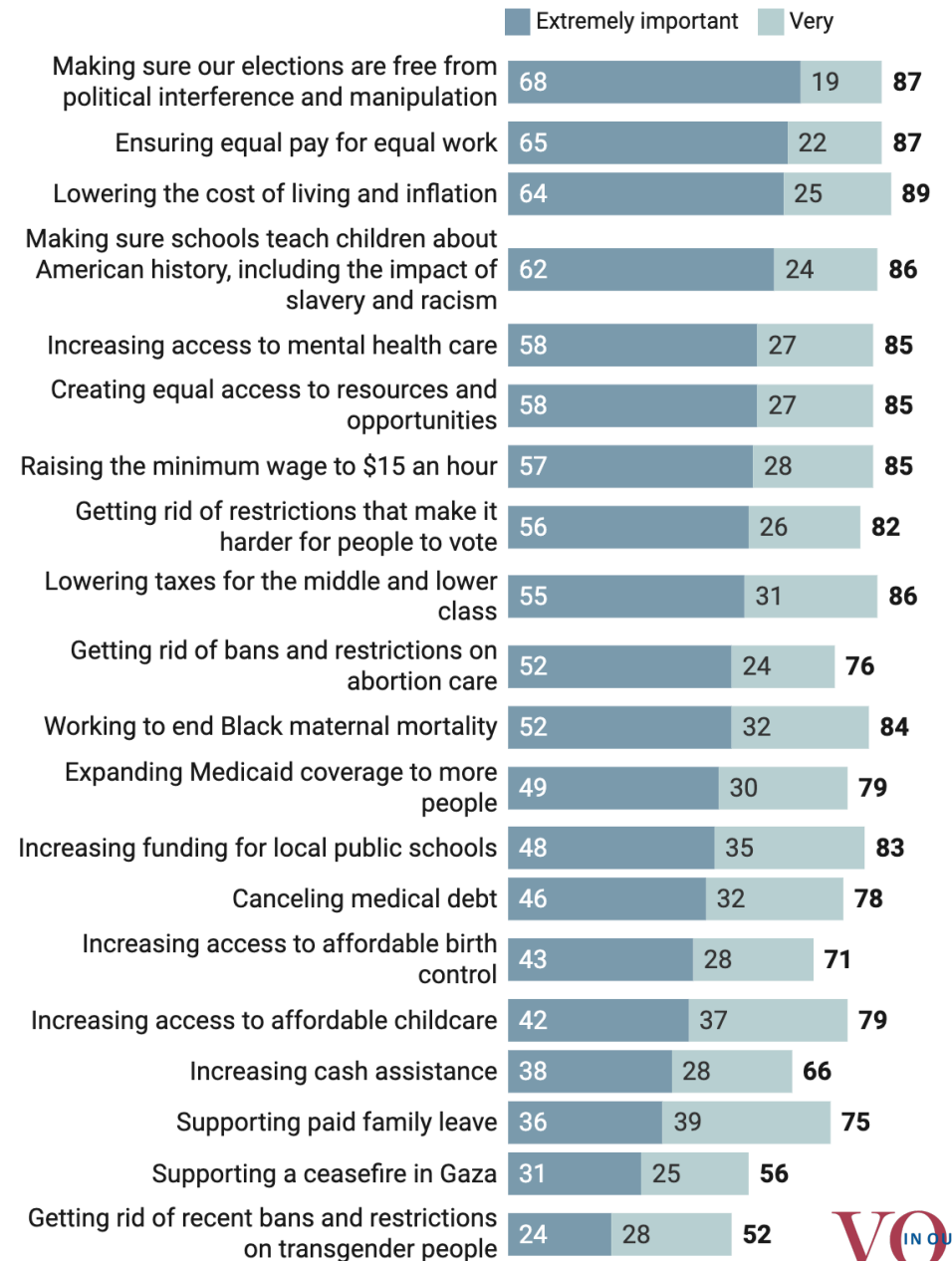
# Policy positions

**voice**  
IN OUR OWN

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?

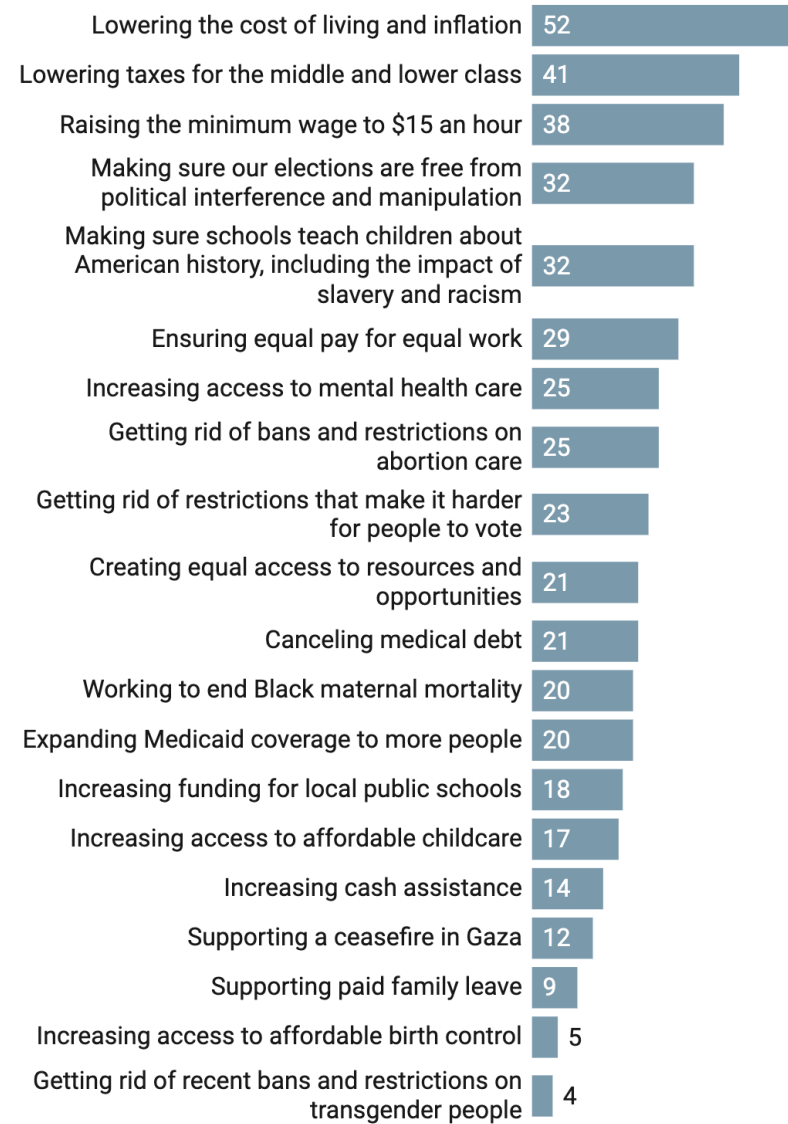
RANDOMIZE

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



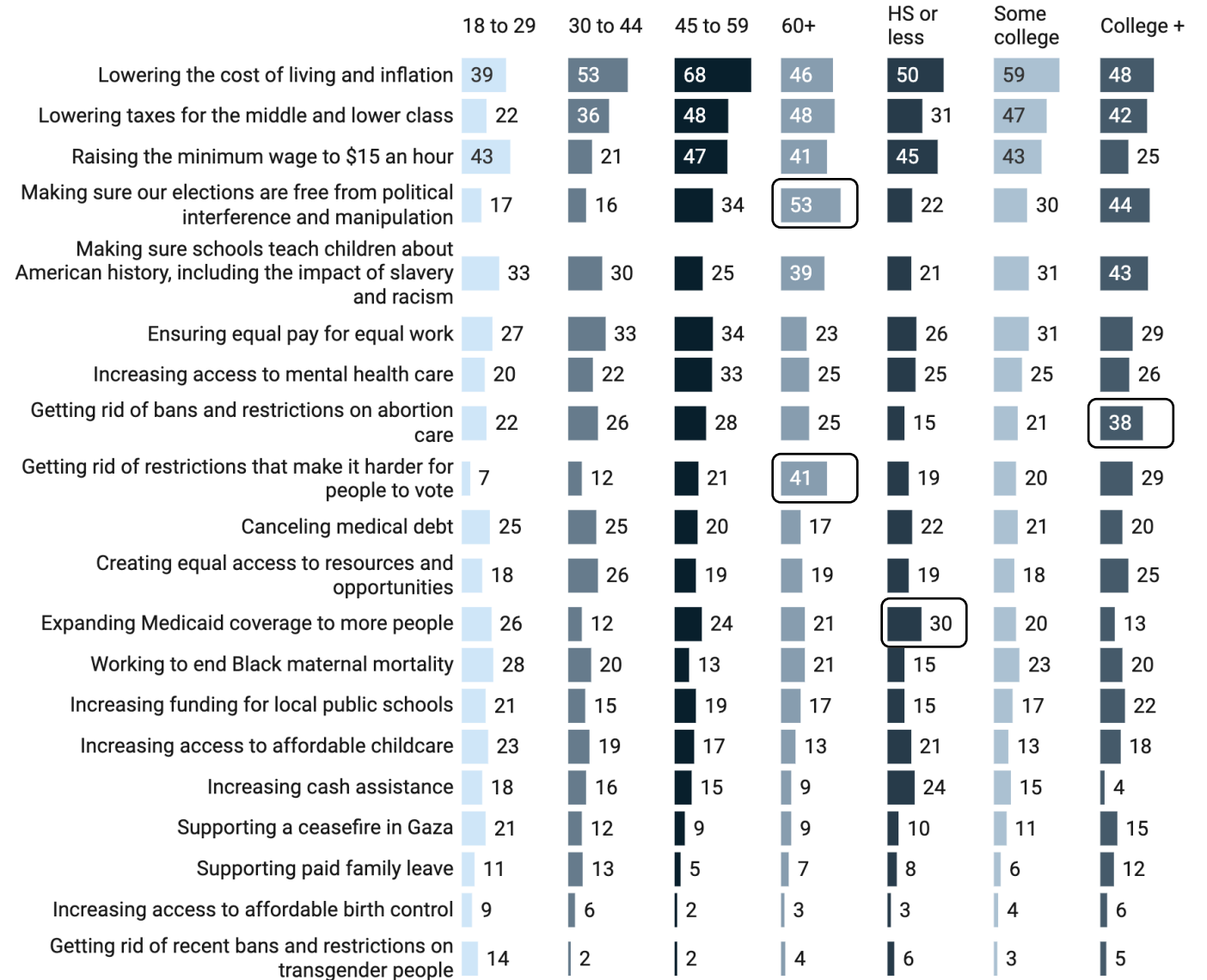
**When asked to narrow down to the most important policy positions, economic policies rise to the top.**

% Chosen as a top 5 policy position





% Chosen as a top 5 issue

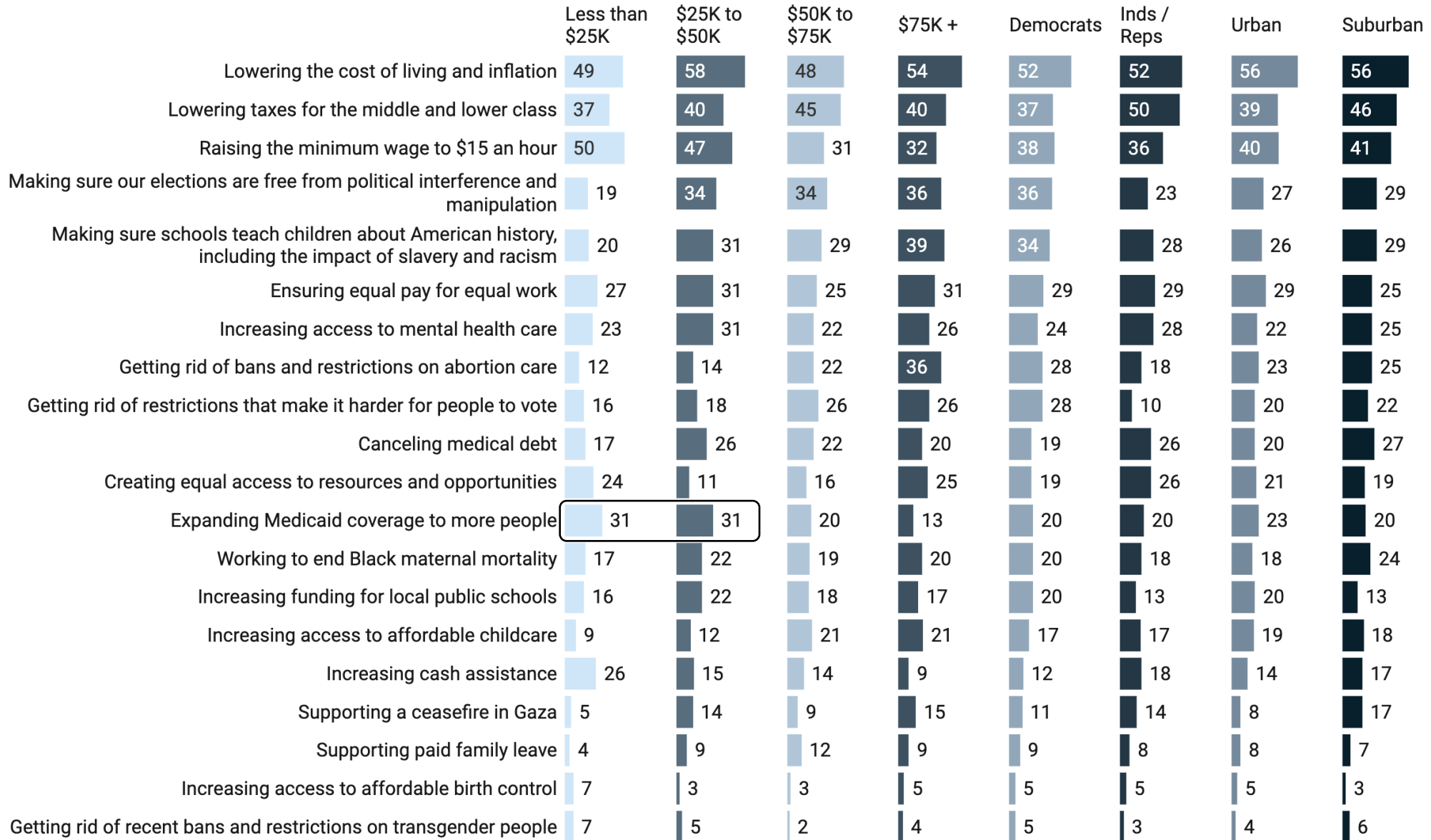


Policies relating to free and fair elections are higher priorities for older v. younger respondents.

Getting rid of bans and restrictions on abortion is among the top policies for college-educated respondents.

Expanding Medicaid is among the top for respondents with lower incomes and those who have a high school degree or less.

% Chosen as a top 5 issue





**Why vote?**

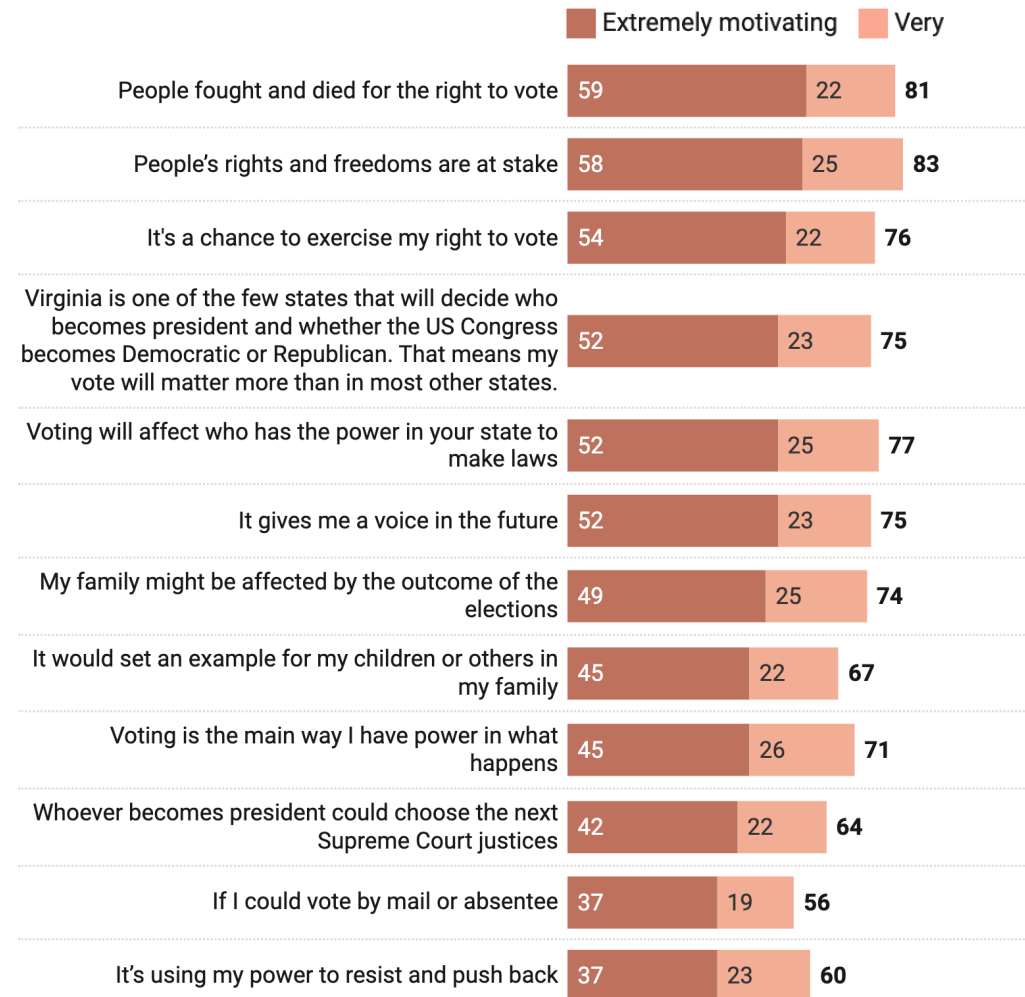
**voice**  
IN OUR OWN



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

There are many motivations. At the top are people having fought and died for the right to vote and feeling that people's rights and freedoms are at stake.

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

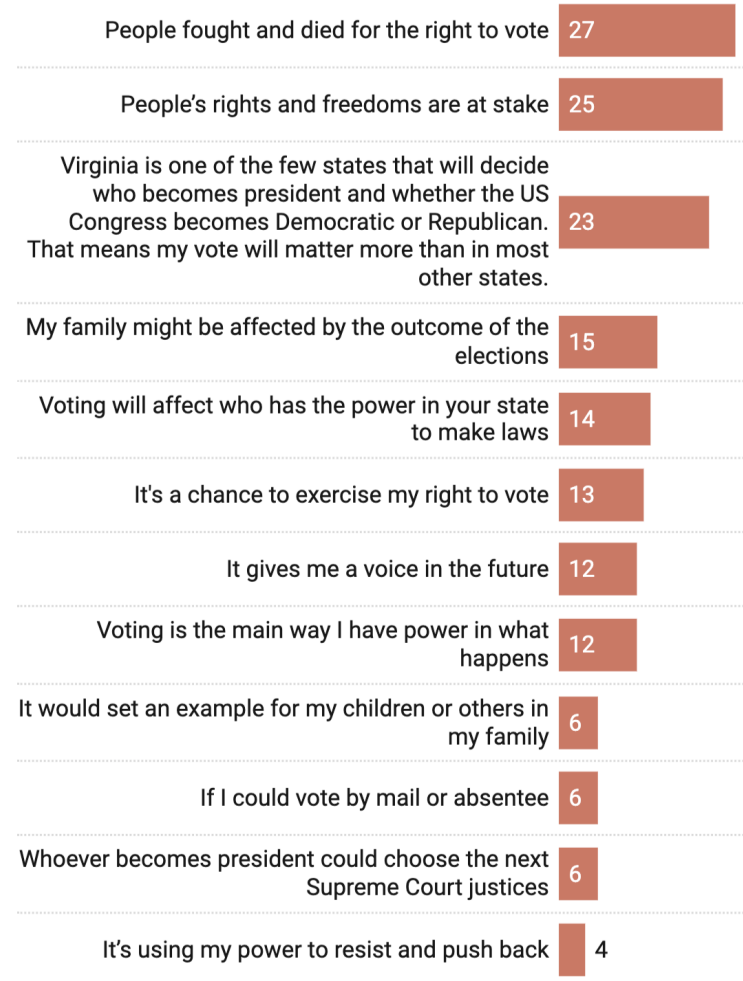




## Here's what they say when forced to choose the top 1 or 2 motivations.

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                   | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...           | 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 fought and died for the right to vote                    |
| My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections | People fought and died for the right to vote                    | People fought and died for the right to vote                | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...           | People's rights and freedoms are at stake                   | People fought and died for the right to vote                | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...           |
| People fought and died for the right to vote                | People's rights and freedoms are at stake                       | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | People's rights and freedoms are at stake                       | It gives me a voice in the future                           | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | Voting will affect who has the power in your state to make laws |
| Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | Voting will affect who has the power in your state to make laws | My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections | Voting will affect who has the power in your state to make laws | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | 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         | My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections     | It's a chance to exercise my right to vote                  | It's a chance to exercise my right to vote                      | My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections | It's a chance to exercise my right to vote                  | My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections     |

## 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                                   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| People's rights and freedoms are at stake             | 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'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             |
| Virginia is one of the few states that will decide... | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | People fought and died for the right to vote                | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...           | People fought and died for the right to vote                | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | 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                   | My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections | People's rights and freedoms are at stake                       | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | People's rights and freedoms are at stake                   | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide... |
| It's a chance to exercise my right to vote            | Voting is the main way I have power in what happens         | Virginia is one of the few states that will decide...       | Voting will affect who has the power in your state to make laws | 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 gives me a voice in the future                     |
| 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                  | My family might be affected by the outcome of the elections | It's a chance to exercise my right to vote                  | Voting is the main way I have power in what happens   |



# Views toward reproductive policies

**voice**  
IN OUR OWN

**Four in five respondents  
say abortion should be legal  
in all or most cases.**

Which comes closest to your view.  
Abortion should be:

**81%**

**18%**

Legal in all or most  
cases

Illegal in all or most  
cases

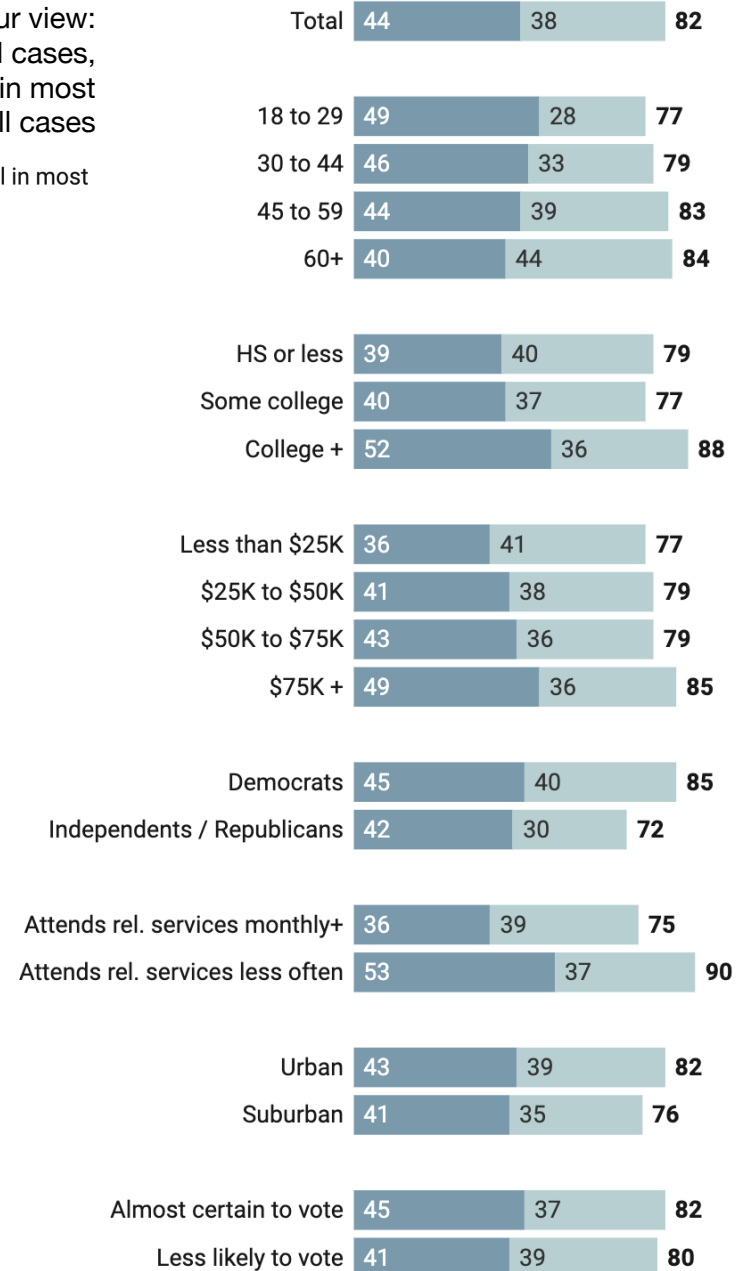
*4% illegal in all  
cases*

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.

Three in four women (75%) who attend religious services regularly say abortion should be legal in all or most cases.





**Close to nine 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

**86%**

**14%**

In favor of this

Against this

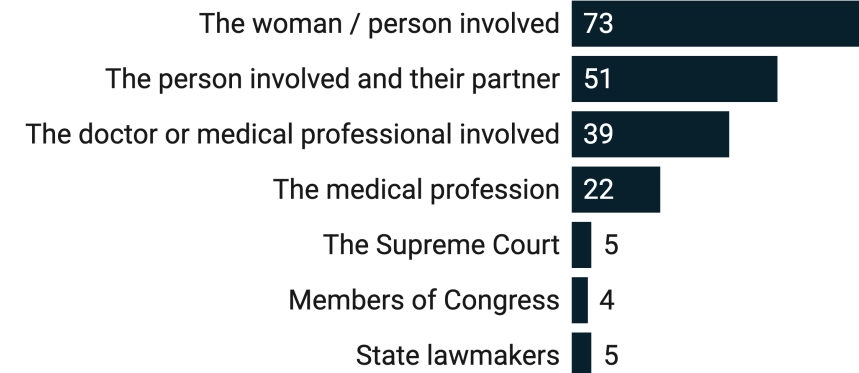
81% 18 to 44  
89% 45+

**A large 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.

93%

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

75% Strongly agree  
18% Somewhat agree

92% 18 to 44  
94% 45+

84%

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 = 260)*

56% Strongly agree  
29% Somewhat agree

81% 18 to 44  
87% 45+

89%

Say having an abortion can be a responsible choice

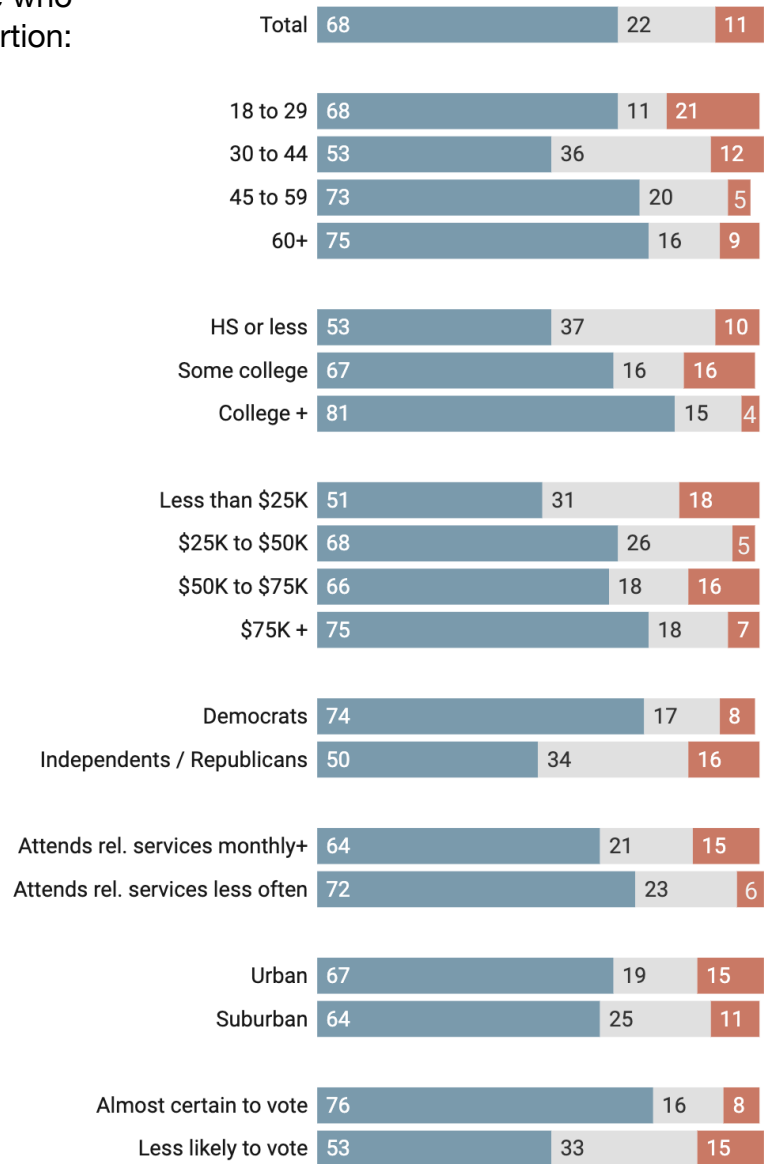
84% 18 to 44  
92% 45+

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

**Respondents are six times more likely to vote for a candidate who supports abortion access (68%) than one who opposes it (11%).**

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

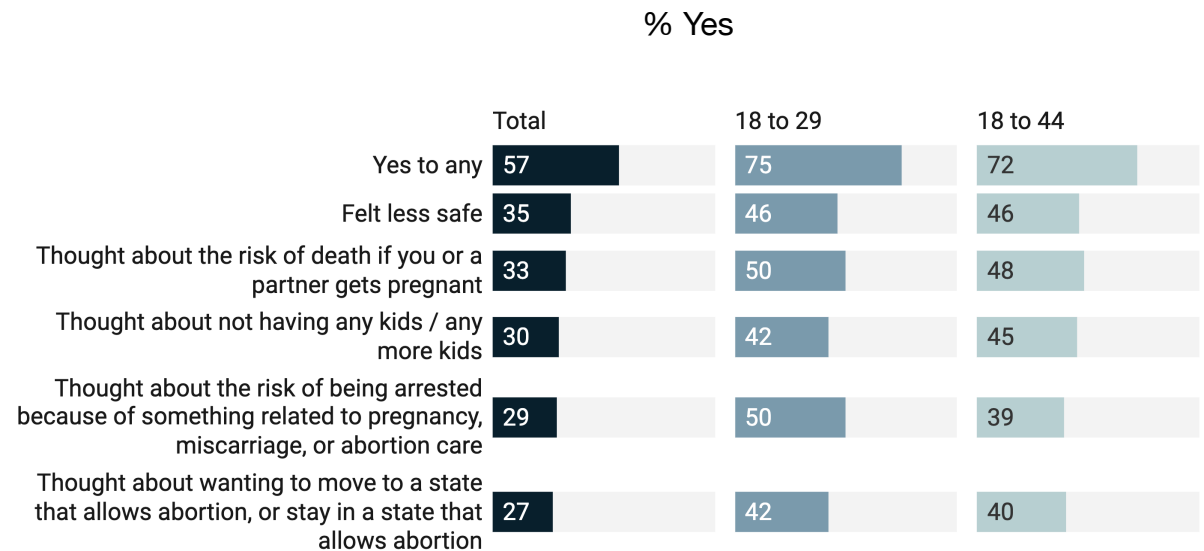
Supports No difference in my vote Is against



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

Half of 18- to 29-year-old respondents (50%) says recent abortion bans have made them think about the risk of death if they or a partner were to get pregnant. Four in ten (42%) say bans have affected their thinking about whether or not to have any / any more children.

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



**One in five women 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?

**21%**

Of all women say yes

**38%**

Of women 18 to 44 say yes

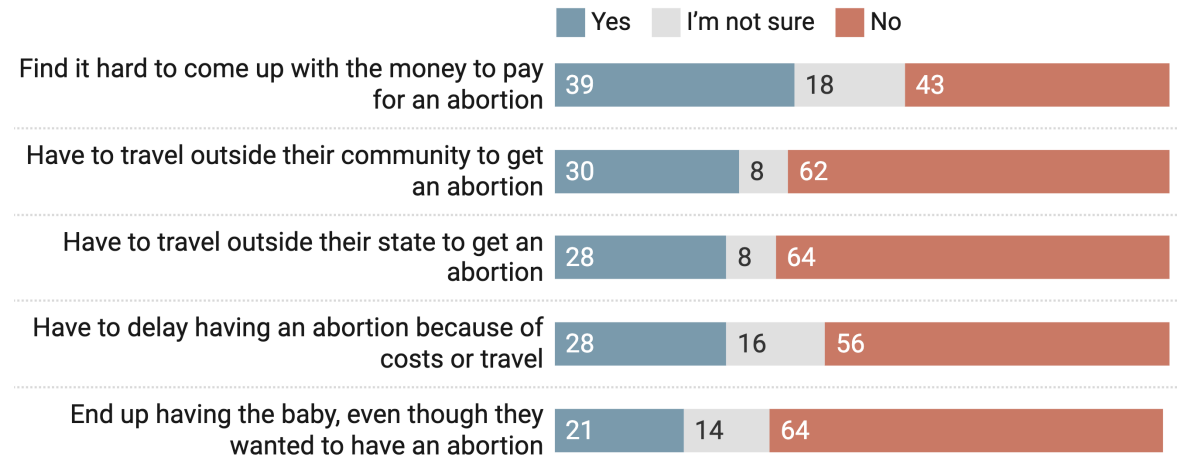


**More than half (57%) says the person(s) they know faced at least one of these barriers to care.**

Cost is the top barrier mentioned.

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

*Base n = 145 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?

**92%**

Support

**7%**

Oppose

93% Attends rel. services monthly+  
91% Less often

**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.

**83%**

Agree

**15%**

Disagree

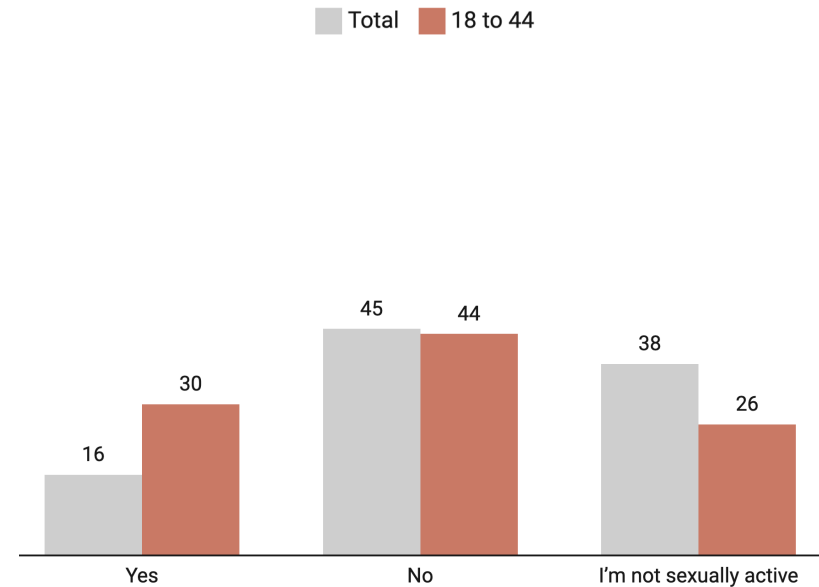
83% Attends rel. services monthly+



# Access to birth control

**Three in ten women of reproductive age (30%) say they or a partner are currently using birth control.**

Are you or your partner currently using birth control?

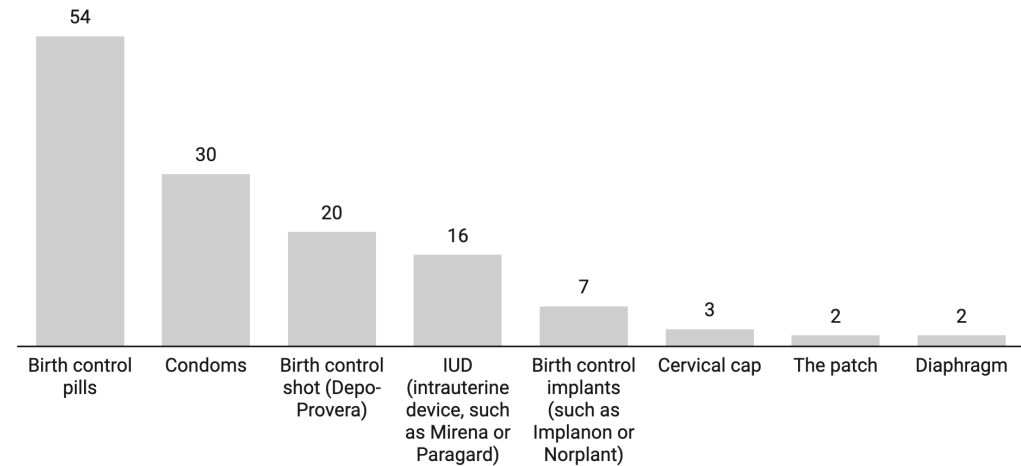




**Pills are the most common birth control method used.**

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

*Base n = 92 self or partner is currently using birth control*





**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

**57%**

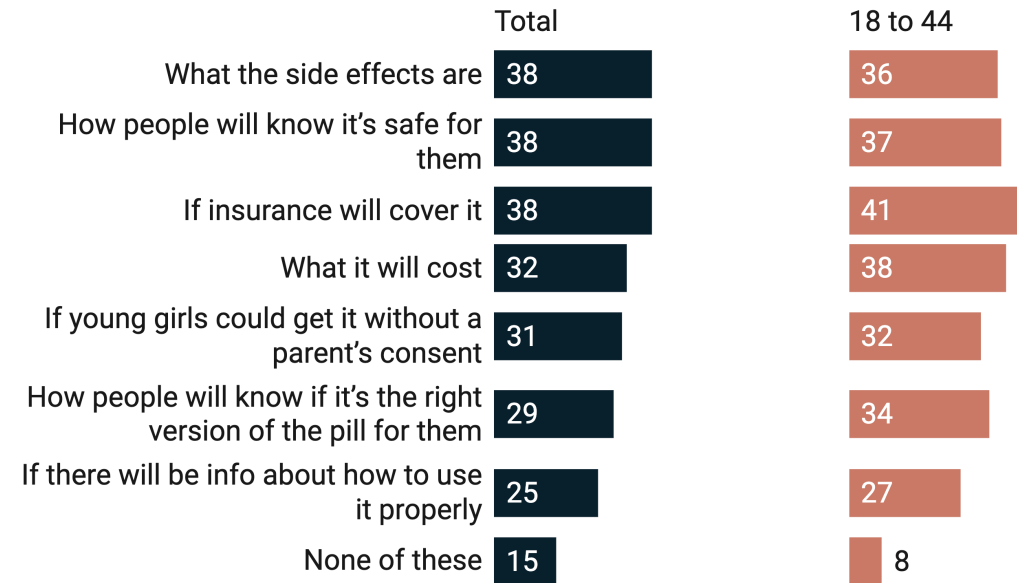
Women 18 to 44

**Insurance coverage and costs are among the most common questions they have.**

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



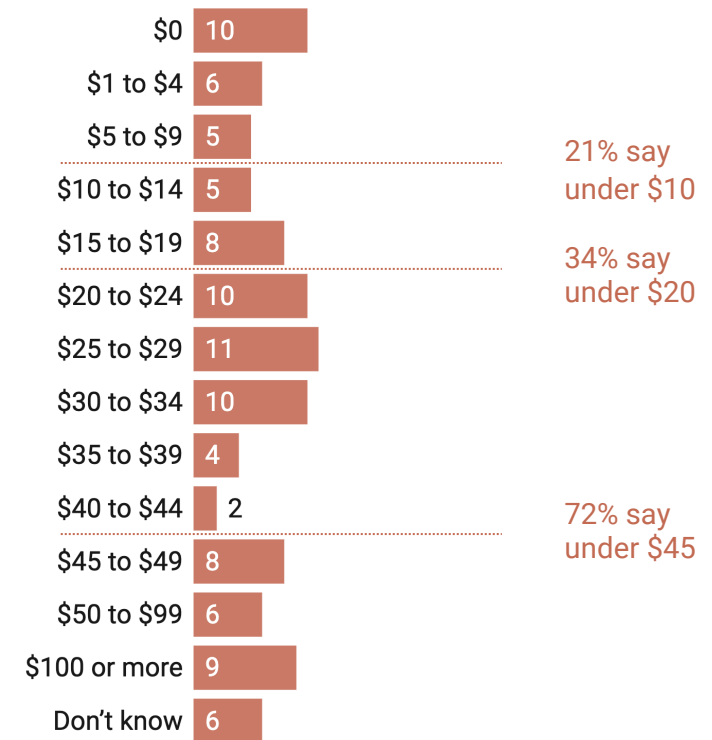
**The retail price for over-the-counter birth control (\$49.00) is out of reach for 72% of respondents of reproductive age.**

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 = 253 women 18 to 44*



**Nearly half of respondents (47%) says they are likely to talk with loved ones about over-the-counter access to birth control.**

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?

**50%**

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Yes



# Experiences with medical bias

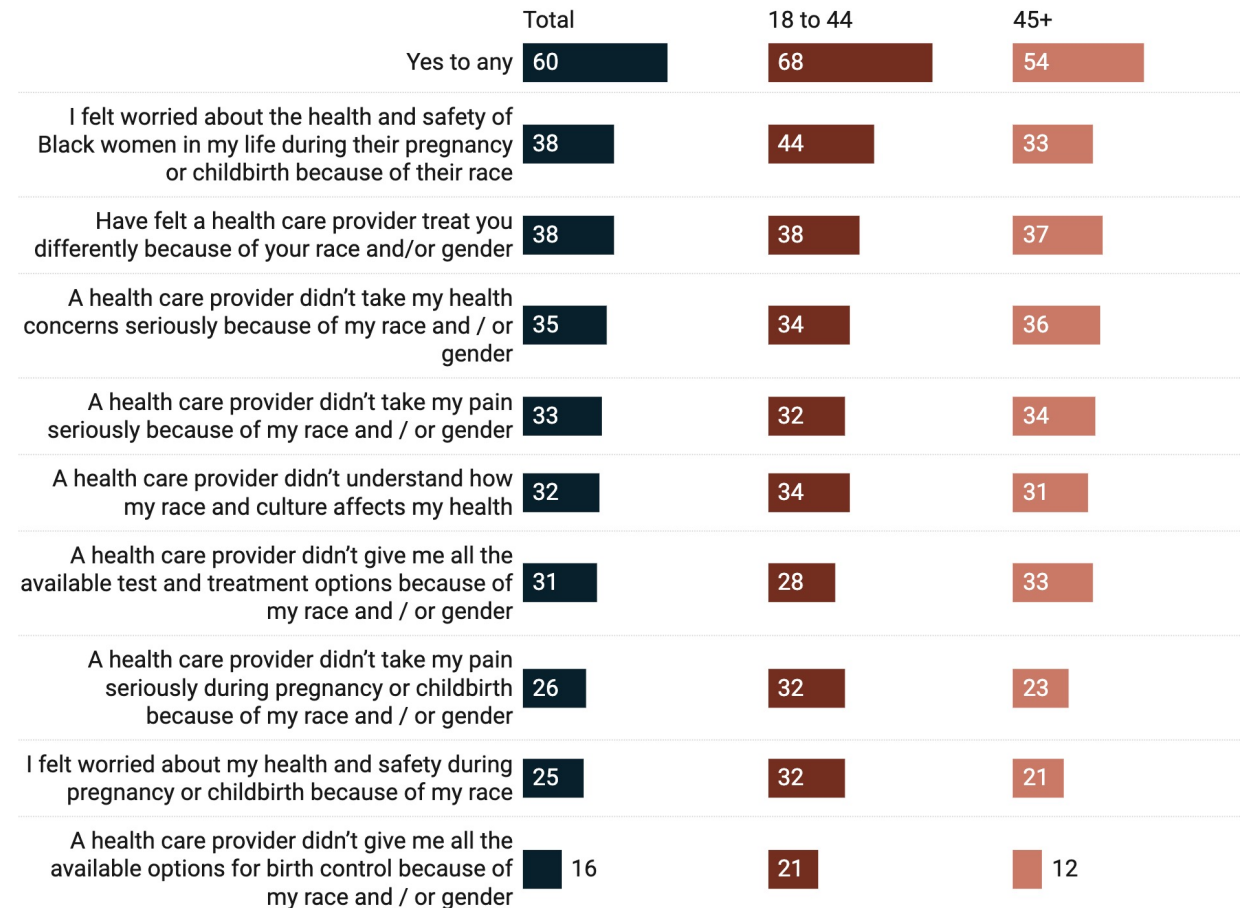
**voice**  
IN OUR OWN

## 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 older respondents to cite some of 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



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voice  
IN OUR OWN