



DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

Measuring the Swing: Evaluating the Key Voters of 2024

May 2024

Measuring the Swing: Evaluating the Key Voters of 2024

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Introduction

The 2024 presidential election is unlike any in modern history. The American electorate is both highly polarized and deeply familiar with the two major party presidential candidates, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and former President Donald J. Trump. For the [first time in decades](#), a third-party presidential candidate, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., is [averaging nearly 10 percent](#) of the vote less than six months before the election. With most public polling placing the presidential election within the margin of error, the voters who are uncertain of their choice — commonly referred to as “swing voters” — may decide the outcome of the election.

As [defined](#) by political scientist William G. Mayer, a swing voter is one “who could go either way: a voter who is not so solidly committed to one candidate or the other as to make all efforts at persuasion futile.” Despite a [focus](#) on these types of voters in political media, there is limited public opinion data detailing more granular quantitative insights on their demographics and priorities for this election cycle.

In recent years, analysts have used various methods to identify swing voters. Commonly used metrics include voters who support different parties in different elections, voters who say they are “undecided” about whom they plan to vote for, and voters who feel similar levels of favorability toward both major party candidates.

Each of these methodologies is useful for identifying a specific type of swing voter, but may not capture other persuadable voters. In this presidential election, swing voters are a diverse group. They include Biden 2020 and Trump 2020 voters who are now considering voting third-party or for the other major party's candidate, voters who say they're undecided about whom they'll vote for, and new or first-time voters who are weighing multiple options, among others.

As a result, Data for Progress devised a methodology that strives to capture all of these voters — those who are not certain to vote for Biden, Trump, or a third-party candidate in 2024.

This report presents a **new approach to identifying swing voters in the 2024 presidential election**. We use a comprehensive scoring method that incorporates a respondent's full set of responses across multiple survey questions — not just how they answer a single question. Specifically, **we combine multiple prevailing methods for identifying swing voters into one score**.

Then, we examine who these voters are. We explore their demographics, their general political ideologies, and their views on the 2024 election. Finally, we explore the key issues that matter most to their vote choice in November — and what can win them over. **Cumulatively, this is our inaugural guide to the swing voters of the 2024 presidential election.**

Key Takeaways

- **The swing voters of the 2024 election are younger and more diverse than the composition of the overall 2024 likely voter population.** Forty-three percent of swing voters are under 45 (compared with 33% of likely voters overall), and only 62% are white (compared with 71% of likely voters overall).
- **Swing voters reject ideological and partisan labels.** They are especially likely to describe themselves as “moderates” and to not identify with or lean toward either major political party. However, some take clear left or right ideological positions on economic or social issues, aligning with [existing data](#) showing that voters who self-describe as “moderate” are not always coherently moderate on the issues.
- **Swing voters broadly lean left on government spending, taxes on the wealthy, and social equity.** A majority of swing voters (60%) think the U.S. should increase spending on social programs and raise taxes on businesses and wealthy Americans, and a majority (52%) say they favor accepting non-traditional values and embracing diversity and inclusion efforts.

- **Swing voters are politically disengaged.** They broadly dislike Biden and Trump and do not pay much attention to politics. Many are not sure which candidate they trust more on major political issues. They also demonstrate low interest in national politics and less enthusiasm for the 2024 election than likely voters overall.
- **Swing voters slightly prefer Trump over Biden in a race between the two candidates, but many are unsure and defect to third-party candidates.** In a two-way race between Biden and Trump, Trump (32%) holds a slight advantage over Biden (29%) with swing voters, while a plurality (39%) are not sure. In a six-way race, with third-party candidates included, only 4% of swing voters back Biden, while 7% back Trump. A majority say they would back either Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (46%) or one of the other third-party candidates (12%). Thirty percent say they'd still be unsure.
- **Their focus is on the economy.** To the extent they do care about politics, it is focused heavily on the economy, with a plurality (33%) ranking it as their top issue in the 2024 election.
- **Swing voters say they want Biden to take more action — not less.** Sixty-one percent say that “Biden needs to take more action to solve our country's problems” (compared with 49% of likely voters overall), while 22% say that “Biden has taken too much action that has made our country's problems worse.”
- **Swing voters' main concern is Biden's age and ability to handle the job — not his ideology.** Swing voters select Biden being too old (55%) and being incompetent (40%) as reasons they might not vote for him. Ideological concerns do not rise to the top: Only 16% select “Biden is too liberal” and only 5% select “Biden is too conservative.”
- **That said, swing voters are more concerned about Trump's criminal charges and threats to democracy (48%) than Biden's age and mental and physical health (41%).**
- **Swing voters trust Trump more than Biden on the economy, immigration, and foreign policy.** Biden holds an edge on other key issues including abortion, health care, and climate change. However, swing voters say they're not sure whom they trust more on these issues at a higher rate than likely voters overall.
- **There is no evidence that a rightward ideological pivot would solve Biden's problems with swing voters.** The top two policies that swing voters say would make them vote for Biden are left-leaning economic policies — raising taxes on the wealthy (23%) and raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour (18%) — while the third-most cited is increasing border security (17%). Lower-ranked policies are a mix of left- and right-coded issues, including extending the Child Tax Credit, increasing oil drilling, conditioning military aid to Israel,

adding work requirements to SNAP, legalizing marijuana, and increasing funding for police officers.

Methodology: A New Approach to Identifying Swing Voters

The 2024 presidential election is unique in several ways. For one, it is a rematch of the 2020 election, the first presidential rematch of its kind since 1956, and this time it's between a current and former president. The two leading candidates have nearly universal name recognition, but they are also both relatively unpopular with voters, and there are also several third-party candidates running who are capturing a higher portion of the vote than they did in the previous election cycle.

Given this dynamic, there are various types of swing voters in the 2024 election: Biden 2020 and Trump 2020 voters who are now considering voting third-party or for the other major party's candidate, voters who say they're undecided about whom they'll vote for, and new or first-time voters who are weighing multiple options, among others. Our scoring method captures **various types of swing voters** by identifying respondents who show a **consistent swing pattern across multiple indicators**.

In recent years, analysts have used various methodologies to identify swing voters, including [vote-switchers](#) (Biden-to-Trump or Trump-to-Biden), [undecided](#) voters, and those who report similar [favorability ratings](#) toward the major candidates.

Each of these indicators is useful, but they all have limitations when solely relied on to determine the swing voters of the 2024 election. Below, we discuss how each of these indicators can *exclude* voters who should be classified as swing voters (false negatives), and may *include* voters who are actually set on their vote choice (false positives).

Looking exclusively at those who switch their vote from Biden in 2020 to Trump in 2024 (or vice versa), without also considering other swing indicators, is limiting. This methodology does not include Biden or Trump voters who are now choosing a third-party candidate, Biden or Trump voters who say they are undecided this time around, or new or first-time voters. This methodology also includes vote-switchers who are not necessarily persuadable swing voters, such as voters who say they picked Biden or Trump in 2020 but say they are “definitely” voting for the opposite candidate this year.

Looking exclusively at voters who say they are “undecided” about whom they will vote for is also limiting because it does not account for voters who currently lean toward one candidate or the other, but could still change their minds.

Additionally, “double haters” — voters who say they are unfavorable of both Biden and Trump — are not fully representative of swing voters on their own. Voters across party lines have expressed dissatisfaction with both major candidates, and about 1 in 3 voters indicate that their vote this year is [driven by opposition to the other candidate](#), rather than approval of the candidate they support. As a result, many voters may be unfavorable of Biden or Trump but are still certain they will vote for them.

To address the limitations and gaps in these individual metrics, we found that **looking at a respondent’s cumulative pattern of responses** was most effective at identifying **various types of swing voters for the 2024 presidential election**.

Our Scoring Method

From April 19 to May 4, 2024, Data for Progress conducted 4,923 respondent interviews of U.S. likely voters nationally using web panel respondents pooled over four surveys. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and voting history. The surveys were conducted in English.

In our surveys, we asked respondents various questions to create our scoring method. These include:

- Whom a respondent voted for in the 2020 presidential election;
- Whom a respondent would vote for in a two-way 2024 race between Biden and Trump;
- Whom a respondent would vote for in a six-way 2024 race between Biden, Trump, Libertarian candidate Chase Oliver, Green Party candidate Jill Stein, and Independents Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Cornel West;
- Whom a respondent would vote for in a generic congressional race between an unnamed Democrat and Republican;
- A respondent’s levels of favorability for Biden and Trump on a five-point scale;
- A respondent’s level of approval for Biden’s job performance on a five-point scale; and
- Whether a respondent says they are considering Biden, Trump, a third-party candidate, and/or not voting in 2024.

If a respondent meets **three of the four indicators** below, they are considered a swing voter. (We found that requiring all four indicators to be met was overly restrictive, capturing too few respondents, while requiring just two of the four to be met was overly inclusive, capturing too

many).

1. Their vote choices between 2020 vote recall, the 2024 two-way ballot, and the 2024 six-way ballot are not consistent.
2. Their vote choices between the 2024 two-way ballot, the 2024 six-way ballot, and generic congressional ballot are not all consistent.
3. They report similar ratings for Biden favorability and Trump favorability, or for Biden job approval and Trump favorability.
4. They say they are considering at least two options in 2024 (Biden, Trump, third-party, not voting).

As additional controls, we also exclude all voters who say they are "definitely" voting for a certain candidate on the six-way ballot, along with voters who say they will "definitely not vote" at all in the 2024 presidential election.

When applied to four pooled surveys from April 19 to May 4, 2024, this methodology produces a [sample of 690 likely voters](#) (14% of the total likely voter sample).

Demographics and Ideology: Who Swing Voters Are

Demographics

A clear pattern of swing voters is that they are **younger than likely voters overall**. Nearly half (43%) are under 45 — a 10-point increase compared with likely voters overall (33%), echoing a pattern also found in [analyses](#) of swing voters prior to the 2020 election.

Swing voters are also **more racially diverse**. Only 62% are white, compared with 71% of likely voters overall.

Demographics of Swing Voters, Compared to All Likely Voters

	All Likely Voters	Swing Voters
Gender		
Female	53%	60%
Male	47%	40%
Age		
Under 45	33%	43%
45+	67%	57%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	71%	62%
Hispanic or Latino/a	13%	15%
Black	11%	11%
Asian	4%	7%
Education		
No College	64%	67%
College	36%	33%

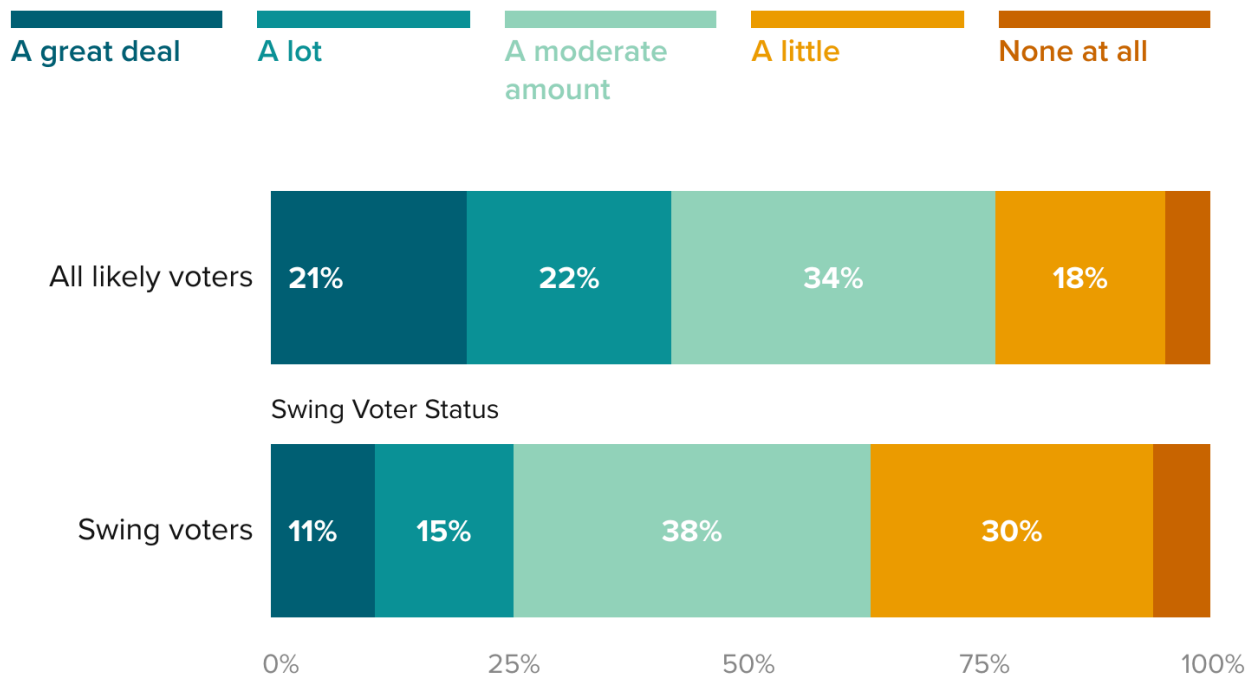
They also include a higher percentage of women (60%) than likely voters overall (53%).

Political Engagement

Consistently, swing voters **are less interested in politics than all likely voters**. Only 26% of swing voters say they pay “a great deal” or “a lot” of attention to national politics, compared with 43% of likely voters overall.

Swing Voters Consume Less Political News Than Voters Overall

How much attention do you pay to news about national politics on TV, radio, newspapers, or the Internet?



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Partisanship and Ideology

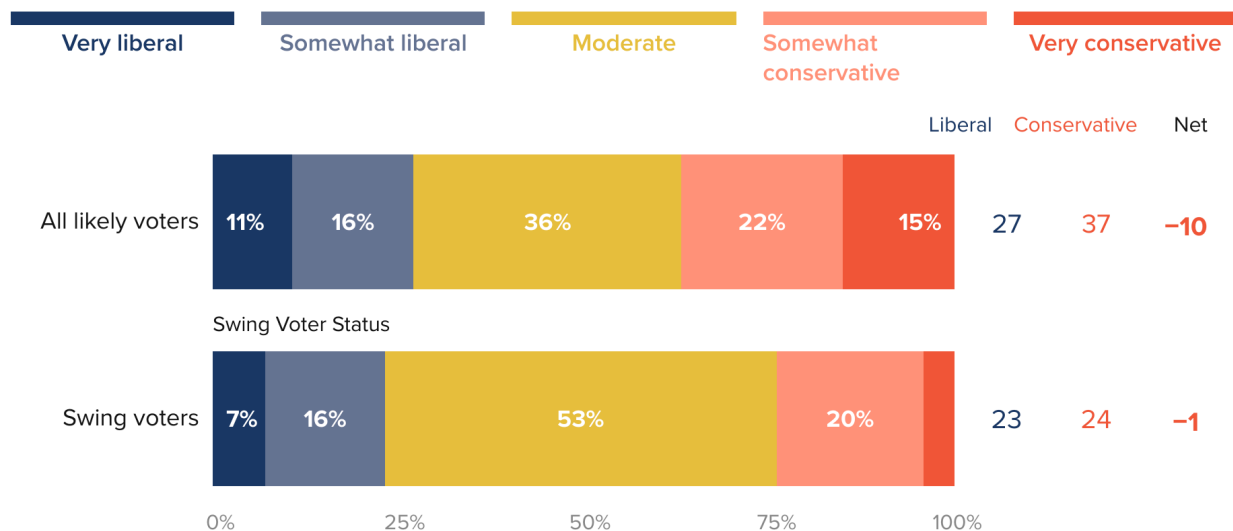
Compared with likely voters overall, a higher percentage of swing voters are **true Independents** who do not lean toward either party. One-quarter (25%) are true Independents with no lean, compared with just 10% of likely voters overall. Within the swing voter sample, 43% identify as a

Democrat or as an Independent who leans toward Democrats, while 31% identify as a Republican or as an Independent who leans toward Republicans.

On a five-point scale (from “very liberal” to “very conservative”), swing voters **identify as moderate at a higher rate than all likely voters**: 23% say they’re liberal, 53% say they’re moderate, and 24% say they’re conservative. Among likely voters overall, 27% say they’re liberal, 36% say they’re moderate, and 37% say they’re conservative.

Swing Voters Are Especially Likely to Identify as Moderate

Using the following scale, how would you describe yourself politically?



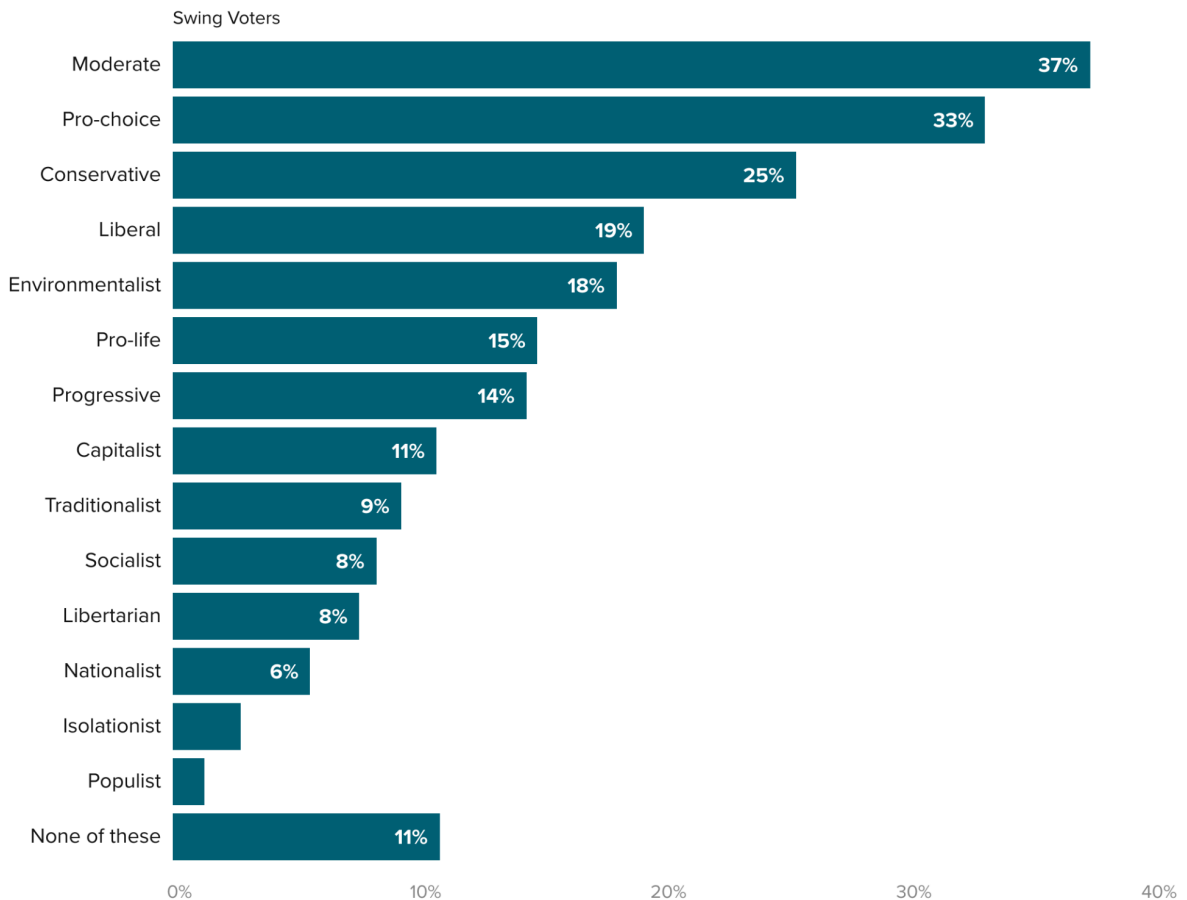
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In a separate ideology question, respondents were presented with various ideologies and asked to select all that apply to them. Of all the options listed, **swing voters are most likely to pick “moderate”** (37%), followed by “pro-choice” (33%), “conservative” (25%), “liberal” (19%), and “environmentalist” (18%).

Swing Voters Are Most Likely to Describe Themselves as Moderate

Which of the following describe your political ideology? Select all that apply.



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Stances on Economic and Social Issues

While many swing voters embrace a “moderate” label, they tend to favor liberal positions on economic and social issues.

A majority (60%) think the U.S. should increase spending on social programs and increase taxes on businesses and wealthy Americans, while 23% think the U.S. should cut taxes and spending. This is in line with the opinion of likely voters overall.

A majority (52%) of swing voters also say they favor accepting non-traditional values and embracing diversity and inclusion efforts, while 27% favor a restrictive approach to non-traditional values and diversity and inclusion efforts. Swing voters choose a conservative approach to social

issues at a rate that is 8 points lower than likely voters overall, but they also indicate higher “don’t know” rates for this question (20% vs. 14% overall).

Swing Voters Prefer a Left Position on Economic and Social Issues

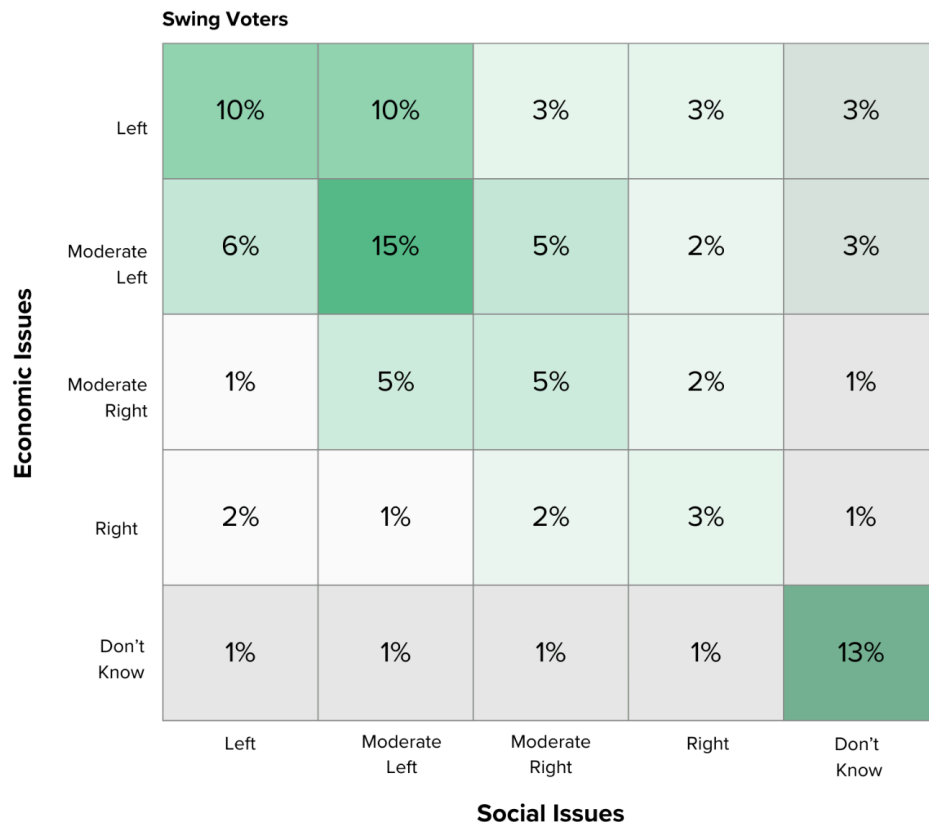
Which of the following comes closest to your view on how President Biden should handle **[Q1: the economy/Q2: social issues]**, even if none are exactly right? *(Respondents were given four response options for both questions, condensed and labeled below).*

[Left/Moderate Left]: Biden should [significantly/slightly] increase spending on social programs, with [aggressive/moderate] tax increases on businesses and wealthy Americans.

[Right/Moderate Right]: Biden should [significantly/slightly] decrease spending on social programs, with [aggressive/moderate] tax cuts for businesses and wealthy Americans.

[Left/Moderate Left]: Biden should [strongly/somewhat] accept non-traditional values and [require/encourage] diversity and inclusion efforts in the public and private sectors.

[Right/Moderate Right]: Biden should [strongly/somewhat] promote traditional values and [ban/discourage] diversity and inclusion efforts in the public and private sectors.



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Views on Key Issues

Top Issues

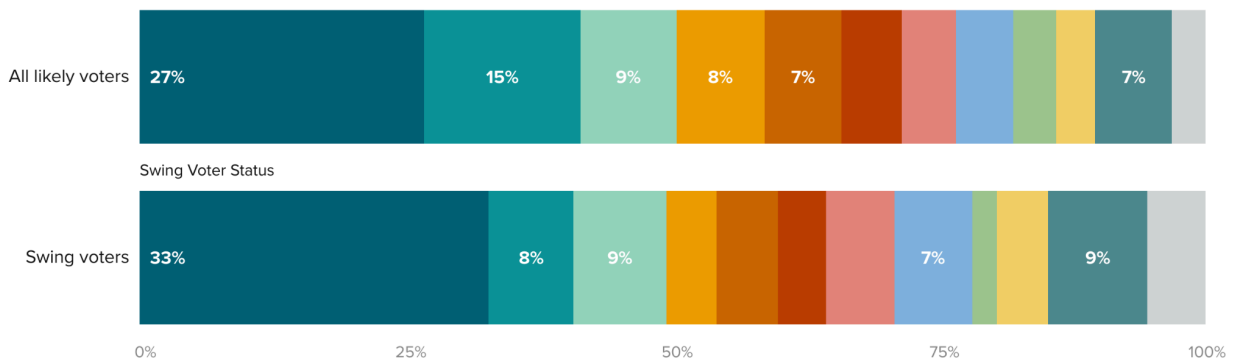
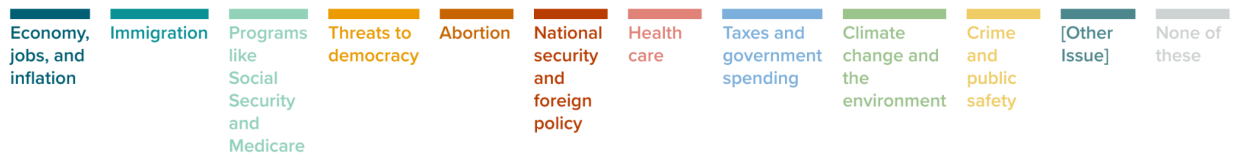
Swing voters **cite the “economy, jobs, and inflation” as their top issue** when deciding whom to vote for in the 2024 election. One-third (33%) select this as their top priority, compared with 27% of likely voters overall. This issue dominates all others for swing voters: The second-most selected issue, “programs like Social Security and Medicare,” is selected by 9% of voters, followed by 8% who select immigration and 7% who select government spending.

Of the swing voters who select “economy, jobs, and inflation” as their top issue, when asked to choose which economic issue is most important to them, 55% select inflation, 15% select economic growth, 10% select “creating more good paying jobs,” and 8% select wages. And of the swing voters who specifically prioritize inflation, 62% say they are most concerned about the cost of food and groceries, while 18% say the cost of rent or home prices, 5% select the cost of gas, and 5% choose the cost of utilities and home energy prices.

The largest gap between swing voters and all likely voters exists on the issue of immigration: 15% of all likely voters say this is their top issue (primarily due to [higher numbers](#) among Republicans), compared with 8% of swing voters.

Swing Voters Especially Prioritize the Economy, Jobs, and Inflation

In the voting booth, which of the following issues do you consider **most** when deciding which candidate to vote for?



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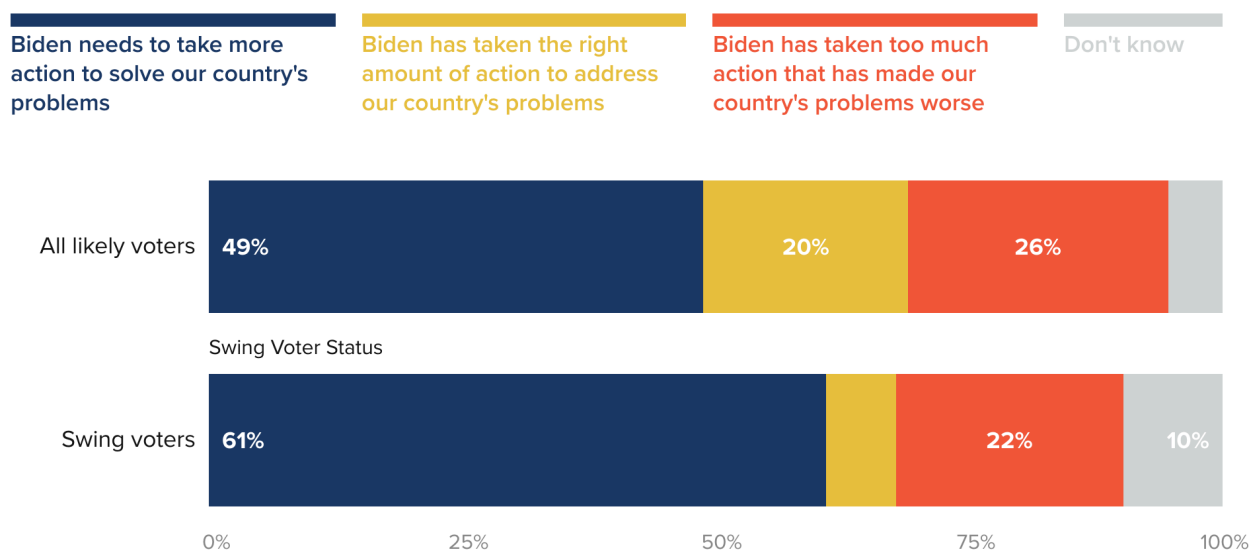
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A key theme for swing voters is that they **think Biden needs to take more action to solve the country's problems.**

Overall, 49% of likely voters say that “Biden needs to take more action to solve our country's problems.” Among swing voters, this rises to 61%. Compared with likely voters overall, a significantly smaller percentage of swing voters say that Biden has taken enough action (7% vs. 20%), and fewer swing voters say that “Biden has taken too much action that has made our country's problems worse” (22% vs. 26%).

Swing Voters Strongly Believe That Biden Needs to Take More Action to Solve Our Country's Problems

Which of the following comes closest to your view about Joe Biden, even if none are exactly right?



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Trust of Biden vs. Trump on Key Issues

On the issue that's most important to them — the economy — swing voters (like voters overall) are more trusting of Trump. Swing voters **trust Trump more than Biden on inflation (+20-point Trump advantage) and jobs and the economy (+15-point Trump advantage).**

Trump also outperforms Biden on immigration (+15-point Trump advantage), national security and foreign policy (+10-point Trump advantage), and crime and public safety (+9-point Trump advantage).

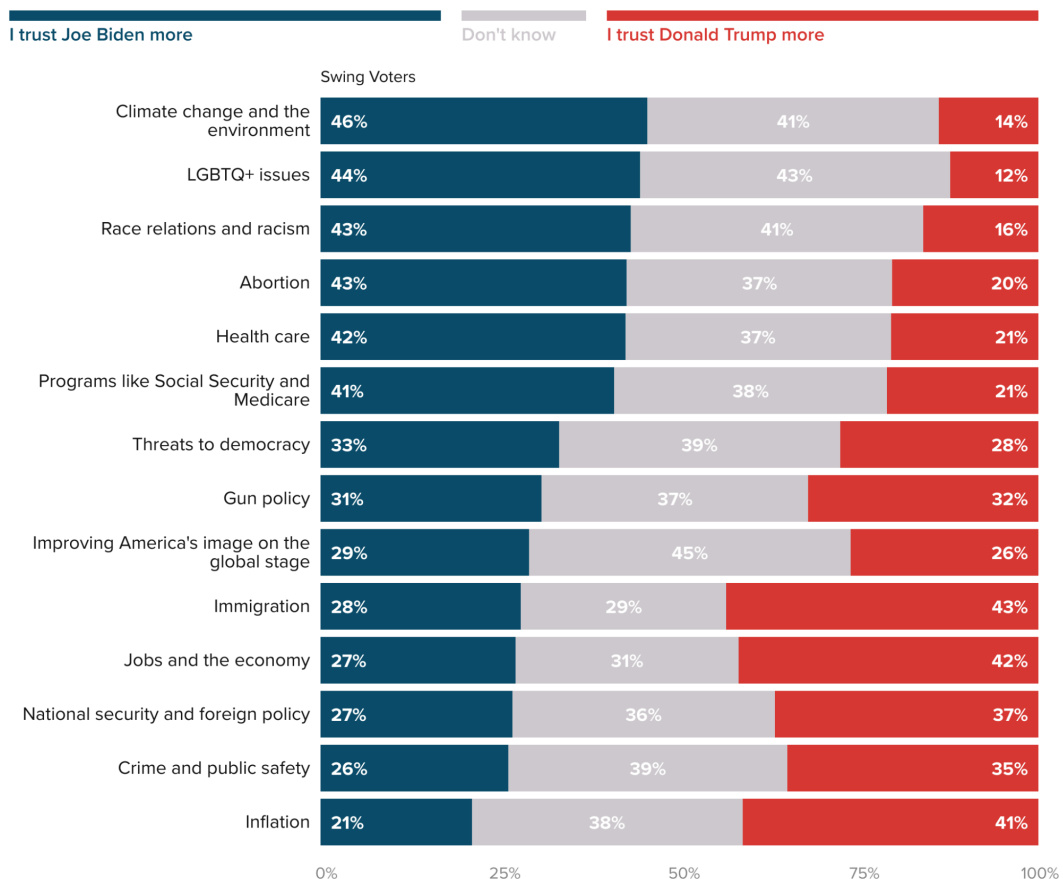
However, **Biden holds a significant edge over Trump on other issues.** These include LGBTQ+ issues (+32-point Biden advantage), climate change and the environment (+32-point Biden advantage), race relations (+27-point Biden advantage), abortion (+23-point Biden advantage), health care (+21-point Biden advantage), and programs like Social Security and Medicare (+20-point Biden advantage).

The candidates perform similarly on threats to democracy (+5-point Biden advantage), improving America’s image on the global stage (+3-point Biden advantage), and gun policy (+1-point Trump advantage).

On all of these measures, swing voters **are less certain than likely voters overall in whom they trust to handle each major issue.** In most cases, about three times as many swing voters say they are not sure whom they trust more compared with likely voters overall, who report an average “don’t know” rate of 14%.

Swing Voters Trust Biden and Trump on Different Issues — But Largely Say They Don't Know Whom to Trust

Who do you trust more — Joe Biden or Donald Trump — to handle each of the following issues?



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Plans for Voting in the 2024 Election

Enthusiasm and Engagement

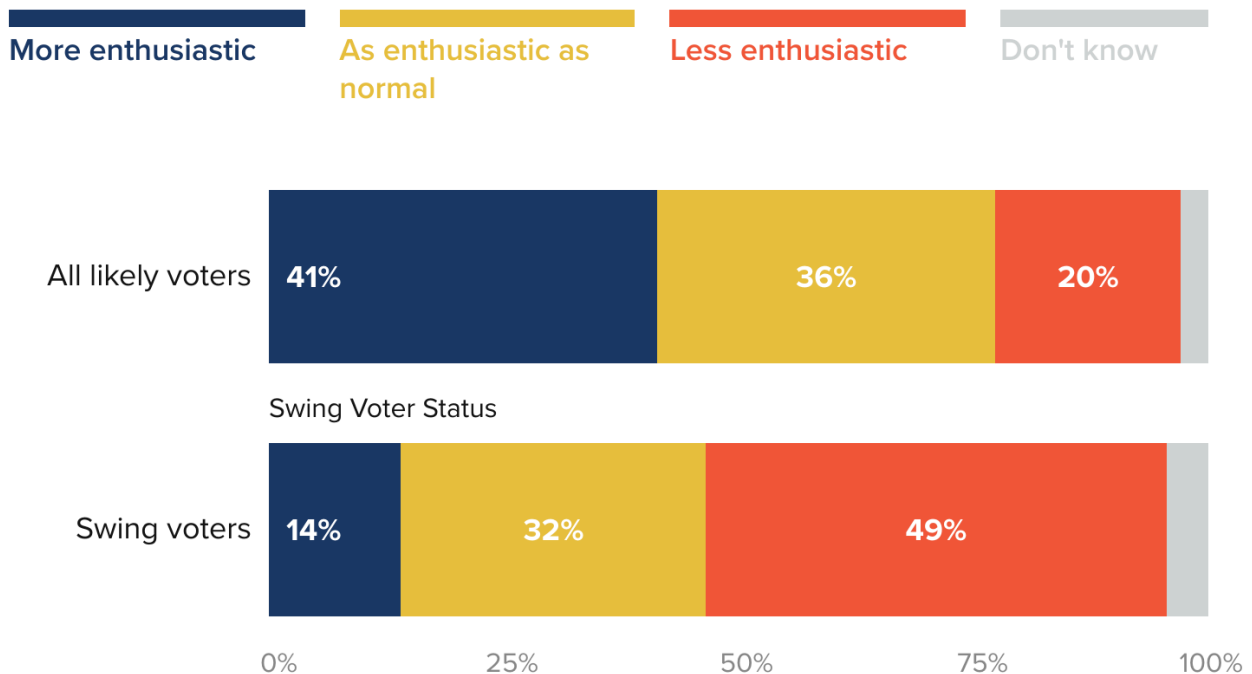
Swing voters are firmly less enthusiastic about the upcoming election than likely voters overall.

While 41% of likely voters overall say they're more enthusiastic than usual about the 2024 election, only 14% of swing voters feel the same way.

Nearly half of swing voters (49%) say they're less enthusiastic than normal, compared with only 20% of likely voters overall.

Swing Voters Are Less Enthusiastic About Voting in 2024 Than Voters Overall

Compared to previous elections, are you more enthusiastic about voting in 2024 than usual, or less enthusiastic?



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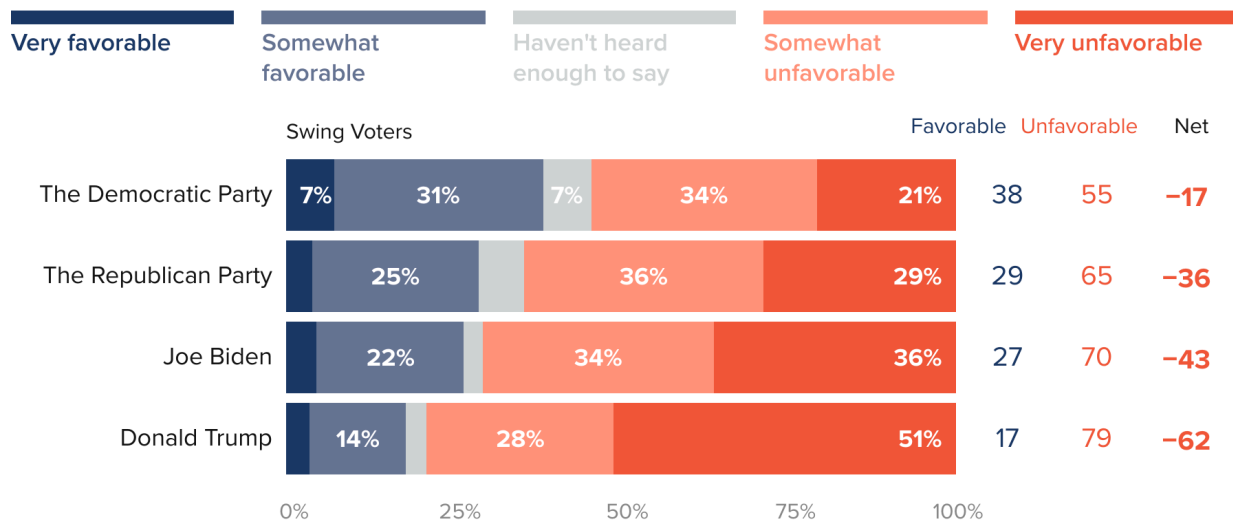
Favorability of Biden and Trump

Swing voters are particularly unfavorable of both Biden and Trump.

Biden has -43-point net favorability and Trump has -62-point net favorability with these voters. Interestingly, the parties fare somewhat better than the candidates themselves, with -17-point net favorability for the Democratic Party and -36-point net favorability for the Republican Party.

Swing Voters Are Unfavorable of Biden and Trump

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following people or institutions?



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BY XOU26Z

Vote Choice

A plurality of swing voters (48%) say they voted for Biden in 2020, while 31% say they voted for Trump. About 1 in 6 report having not voted in the last presidential election (17%).

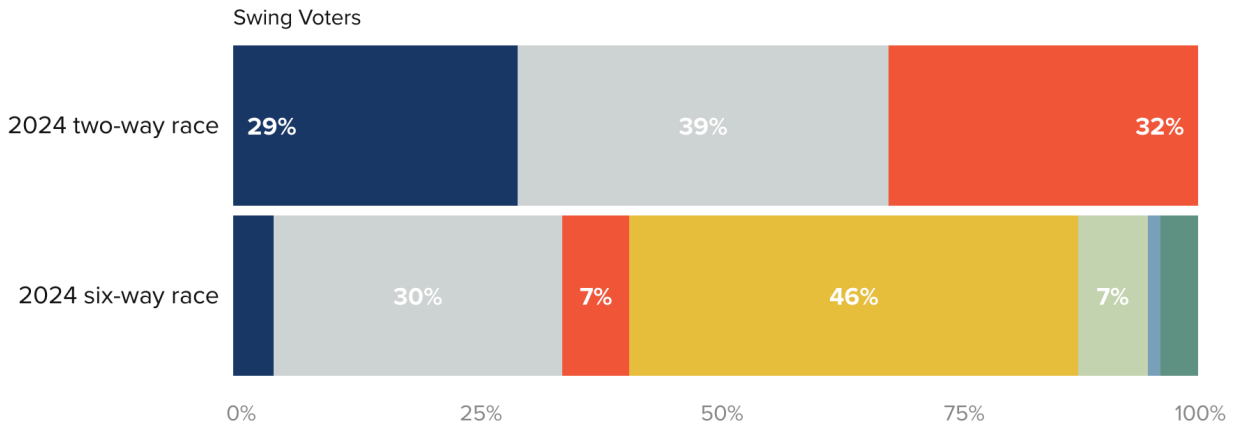
Looking ahead to 2024, in a two-way race, **Trump (32%) holds a slight advantage over Biden (29%)** with swing voters. A plurality of swing voters (39%) **say they are not sure whom they'd vote for** (this is even after receiving a follow-up question pushing them to make a choice).

In a six-way 2024 race, **with third-party candidates included, support for Biden and Trump drops much further.** In this scenario, **only 4% of swing voters back Biden, while 7% back Trump.** **A majority say they would back either Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (46%)** or one of the other third-party candidates (12%). Thirty percent say they'd still be unsure.

Swing Voters Defect Heavily to Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in a Six-Way Race

If the November 2024 election for U.S. president was being held tomorrow, and these were the candidates, who would you vote for?

Democrat Joseph R. Biden
 Not sure
 Republican Donald J. Trump
 Independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
 Independent Cornel West
 Libertarian candidate Chase Oliver
 Green Party candidate Jill Stein



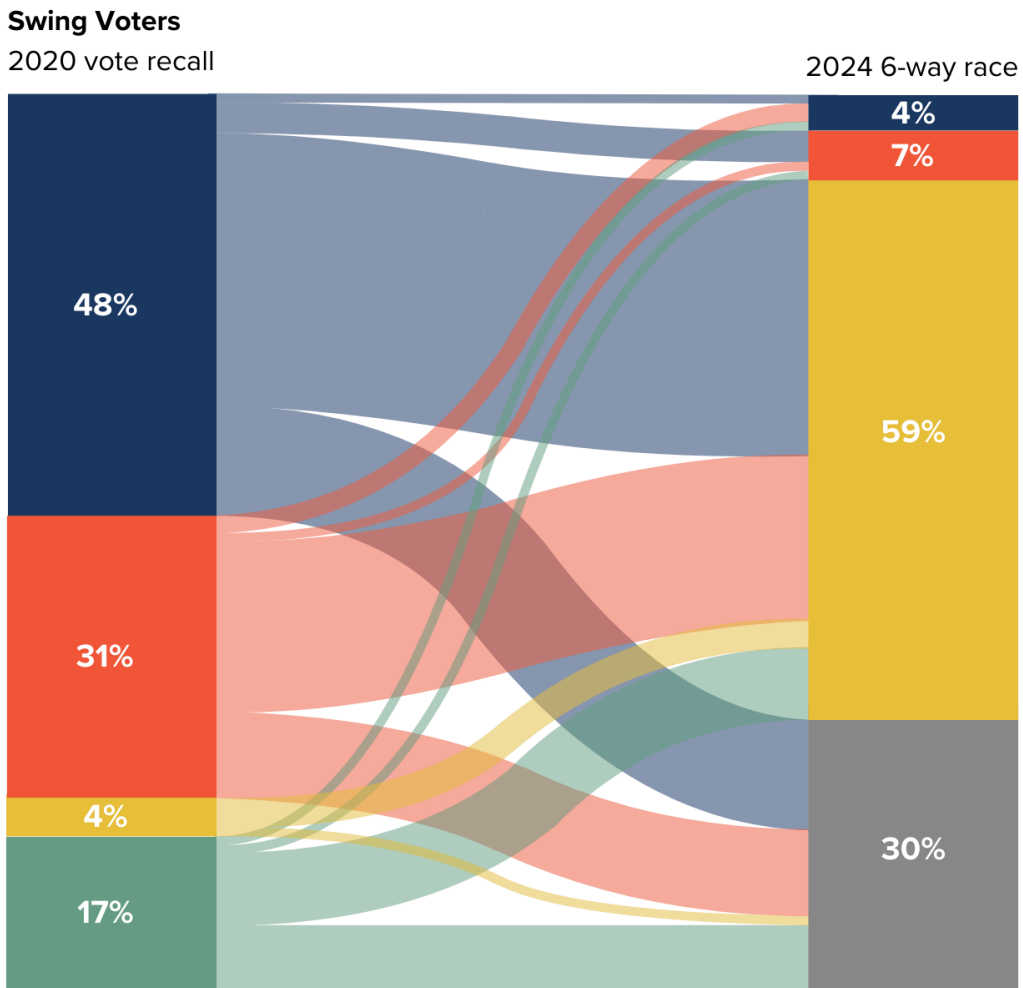
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Collectively, here is a breakdown of swing vote choice between the **2020 election** and **2024 six-way race** (see [crosstabs](#) for full percentage breakdown):

Most Swing Voters Select a Third-Party Candidate on a 2024 Six-Way Ballot

Respondents were asked which candidate they voted for in 2020 and which candidate they intend to vote for in 2024 between Biden, Trump, Kennedy, West, Oliver, and Stein. See crosstabs for full question wording.



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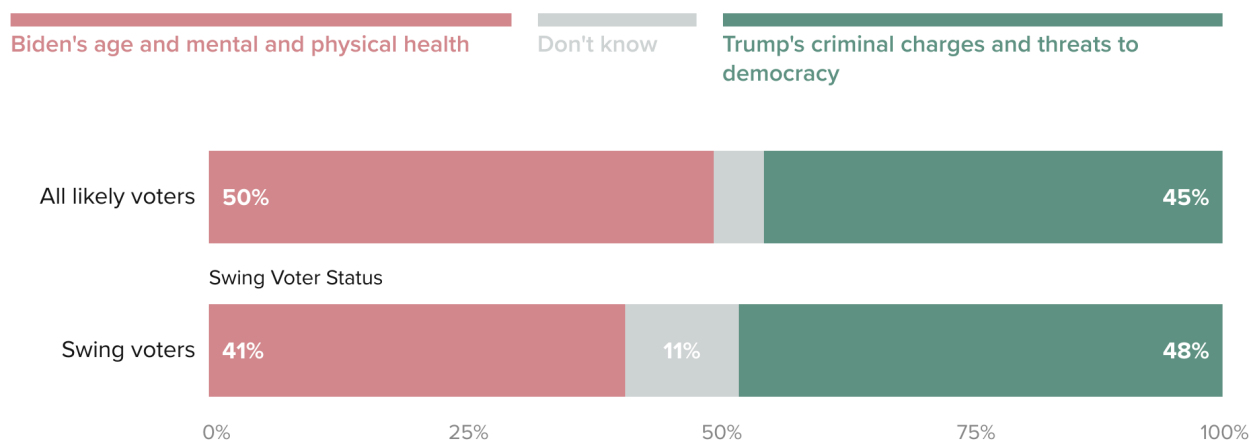
How Biden Can Win — or Lose — Swing Voters in November

What Turns Swing Voters Away From Biden

Swing voters take issue with both Biden’s age and Trump’s criminal charges. When asked to choose which candidate trait they’re more concerned about, 41% pick Biden’s age and mental and physical health, while 48% say they’re more concerned about Trump’s criminal charges and threats to democracy. Eleven percent say they’re not sure which concerns them more.

Swing Voters Are More Concerned About Trump's Criminal Charges and Threats to Democracy Than Biden's Age and Mental and Physical Health

Which of the following are you more concerned about?



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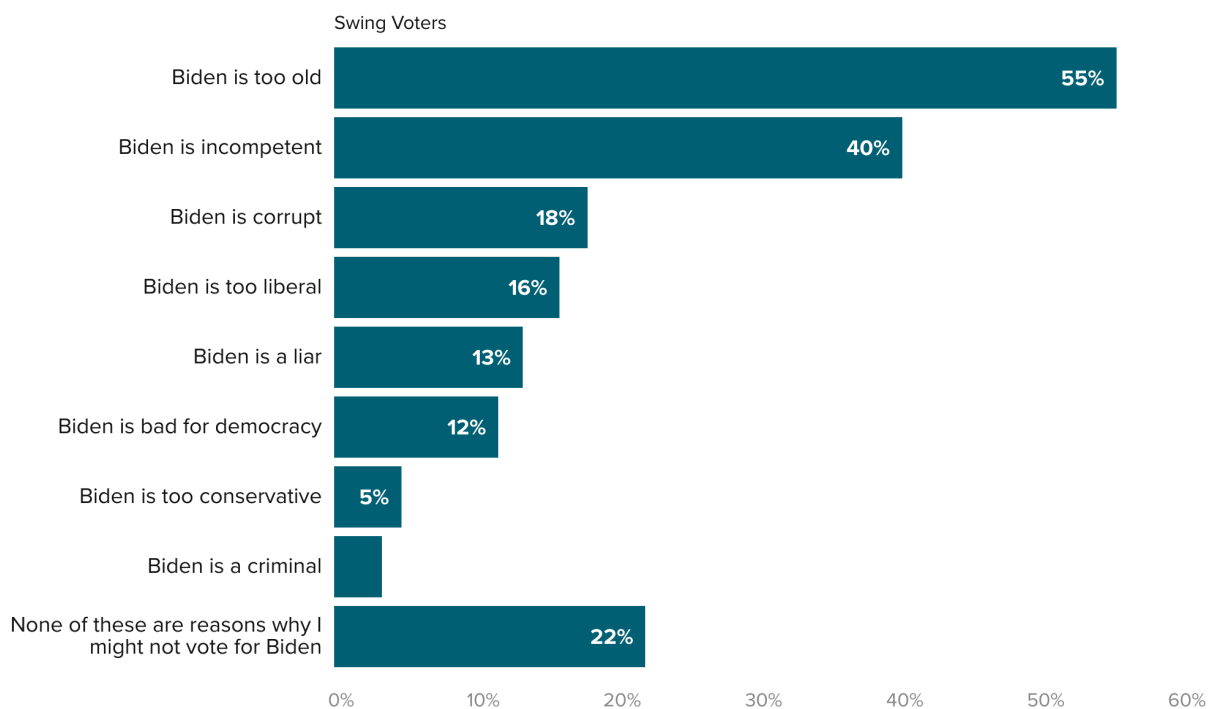
Later in the survey, respondents were provided a list of statements about Biden, and asked which — if any — are **reasons they might not vote for him**. These response options were chosen based on Data for Progress’ previous open-ended data research, where swing voters were asked to state reasons they might not vote for Biden in their own words, and common themes were identified.

Of the options provided, the most selected, by a notable margin, is that Biden is too old (55%). This is followed by Biden being incompetent (40%). These two reasons are selected by significantly more respondents than any other listed; all other reasons — including “Biden is too liberal” and “Biden is too conservative” — are selected by less than 20% of swing voters.

This indicates that **Biden’s age and competency are the clear, prevailing concerns for swing voters.**

Swing Voters Mainly Cite Age and Incompetence as Reasons They Might Not Vote for Biden

From the following options, are any of these reasons that you **might not** vote for Joe Biden in the upcoming 2024 presidential election? You may select up to three options.



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What Could Make Swing Voters Definitely Vote for Biden

Finally, swing voters were asked what Biden could do that would **make them definitely vote for him**, given a list of limited policy options that include both liberal and moderate policies.

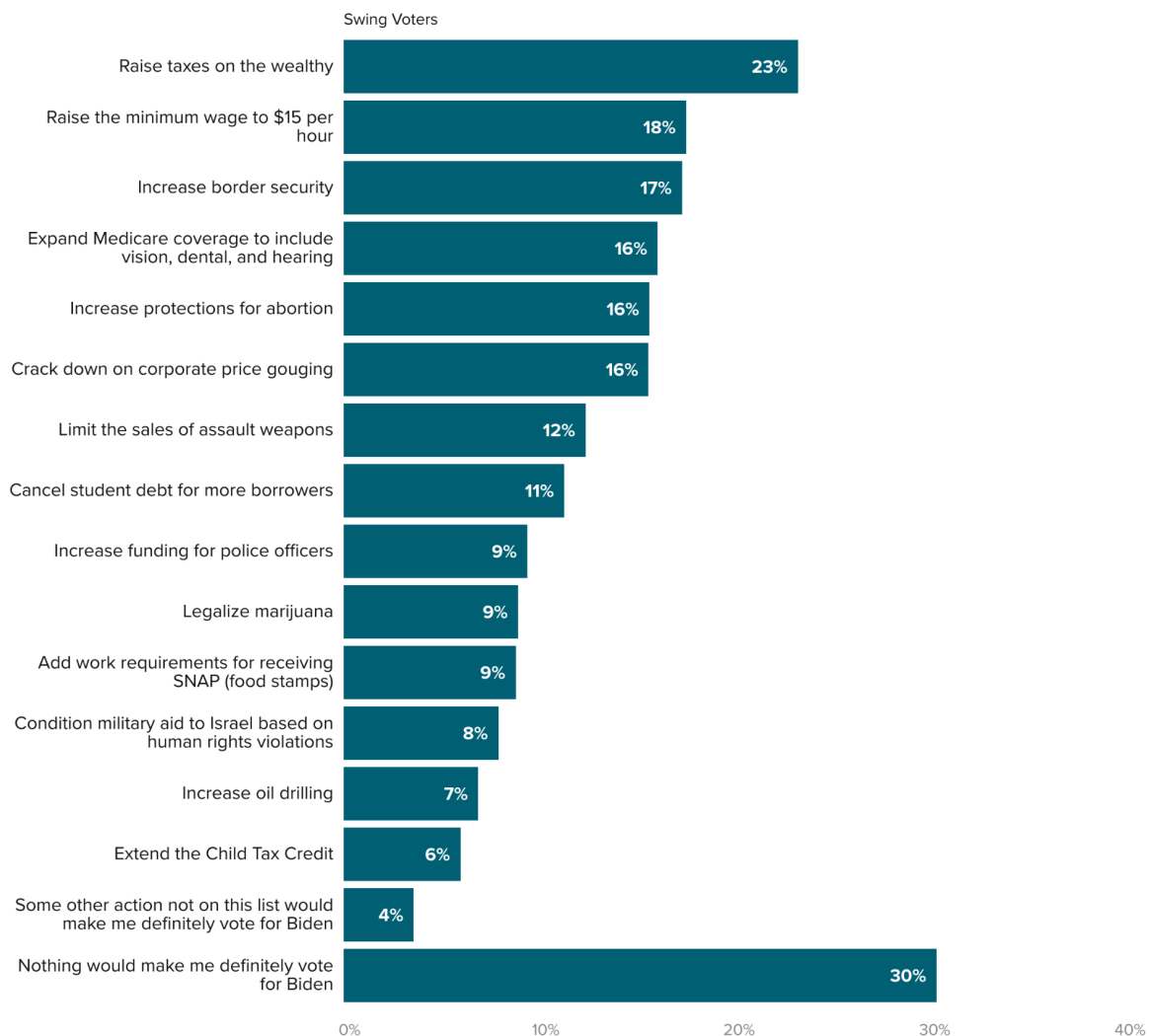
There is limited consensus among swing voters around clear policy actions that Biden could take to win them over, despite strongly indicating that they think Biden has not taken enough action to solve our country’s problems. Nearly one-third of this group (30%) reports that “nothing would make me definitely vote for Biden.”

The most selected action is **raising taxes on the wealthy** (23%) as something that would make swing voters definitely pick Biden. This is followed by raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour (18%), increasing border security (17%), expanding Medicare coverage (16%), increasing protections for abortion (16%), and cracking down on corporate price gouging (16%).

The policies selected by less than 10% of swing voters are a mix of moderate- and liberal-coded policies. These include extending the Child Tax Credit, increasing oil drilling, conditioning military aid to Israel, adding work requirements to SNAP, legalizing marijuana, and increasing funding for police officers.

Among Policies That Could Be Part of Biden's Second Term, Swing Voters Are Split on Which Would Make Them Vote for Him

For each of the following actions, would any of these actions cause you to **definitely** plan to vote for Biden if he did them? You may select up to three options.



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Further Insights

Our report finds that swing voters are an especially politically disengaged group that is younger and more diverse than likely voters overall and unenthusiastic about the 2024 election. They prioritize the economy, particularly high prices caused by inflation, over other issues.

Rather than believing that Biden has overstepped his power or that he has moved too far to the left, swing voters largely indicate that Biden's age and perceived incompetence are driving factors for why they are considering not voting for him this November.

This survey finds no evidence that a rightward ideological shift would solve Biden's problems with swing voters. Swing voters broadly think Biden needs to take more action to solve our country's problems and broadly lean left on economic and social issues. Only 16% say that Biden being "too liberal" is a reason they might not vote for him.

The top two issues swing voters select as actions that would make them definitely vote for Biden are raising taxes on the wealthy (23%) and raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour (18%).

"Increasing border security" ranks third among actions Biden could take that would make swing voters choose him. This aligns with previous Data for Progress [polling](#), which found that likely voters overall view securing the border as a high priority, along with reforming the legal immigration system and addressing the root causes of immigration. Data for Progress' polling has also found that a majority of likely voters prefer a [humane approach](#) over a punitive one to asylum seekers, and think harsh border enforcement tactics like family separation and indefinite detention are ineffective.

Additionally, more moderate and conservative policies like "increase oil drilling," "add work requirements for receiving SNAP (food stamps)," and "increase funding for police officers" do not stand out as policies that would draw swing voters to Biden.

To win over swing voters, the Biden campaign must meet them where they are and show them that he is taking action on the issues they care about. Swing voters are highly disengaged with politics, they pay little attention to political news, and many say they don't know whom they trust on the issues that matter to them most. They also say that they want to see Biden take more action as president, yet select policies that Biden already supports — such as raising taxes on the wealthy, raising the minimum wage, expanding Medicare coverage, and protecting abortion access — as top actions that would make them vote for Biden.

In response, Biden should **turn up the volume** on his efforts and plans to address the country's problems. Previous Data for Progress [polling](#) has shown that, given low awareness of Biden's policies, increasing likely voters' awareness of Biden's agenda can improve his standing in the

2024 election. Showing voters that Biden is working for them can win over new voters to Biden's side, particularly the swing voters who could determine the outcome of the presidential race.

Finally, this report is meant as a first iteration at analyzing this segment of the electorate, but certainly not the last. Data for Progress will continue analyzing the attitudes and voting behaviors of these swing voters throughout the election cycle, including future explorations of their perceptions of Biden and Trump, as part of our organizational efforts to analyze the contemporary electorate.

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