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Harris Leading By 20 Points With Voters Under 30: Results From America's Largest Poll of Young Voters

Voters aged 18-29 and the overall electorate are divided on Supreme Court bias, military aid to Israel

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The Yale Youth Poll, an undergraduate-led research project, today released a new poll of young voters (aged 18-29). It surveys young people's preferences for the 2024 presidential election, their preferred policy positions, their perceived top threats to democracy, and their preferences amongst potential democratic reforms. Simultaneously, it measured each respondent's civics knowledge. The poll sampled 5,500 registered voters, including an oversample of 2,750 voters aged 18-29, enabling a comparison of young voters to the broader electorate.

While Vice President Kamala Harris has a narrow 47-46 lead over former President Donald Trump among all voters, Harris leads 56-35 with young voters. On specific policy positions, young voters are generally more liberal than the electorate overall. Voters overall were tied on whether to end military aid to Israel, but young voters supported ending aid by a 39.6-point margin. While voters overall opposed increasing the number of asylum seekers and refugees admitted to the United States by a margin of 26.3 points, young voters opposed it by a 4.8-point margin.

On economic issues, young voters were more likely to support increased government funding for renewable energy, raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, and increased antitrust enforcement.

With voters overall, a pro-choice policy message scored at +21.3 net support while a pro-life message scored at -65.7. Young voters opposed a policy message modeled after the Florida "Don't Say Gay" law by a margin of 23.1 points, while voters overall narrowly supported the measure by a 2.9-point margin.

Compared to the electorate overall, young voters have generally lower civic knowledge — a smaller share can correctly identify which party controls each branch of Congress, or accurately describe how the Electoral College works.

Young voters identified gerrymandering as the biggest threat to democracy, while voters overall picked extremism from both sides equally as the top threat. The best-testing democracy reform proposal among

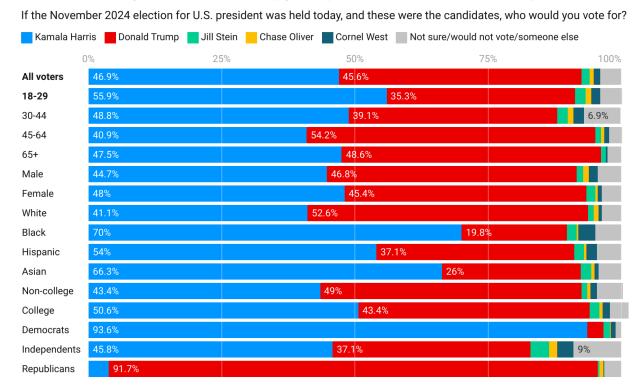
young people was 18-year term limits for Supreme Court justices; among voters overall it was 12-year term limits for members of Congress.

Harris Leads by 47-46 With All Voters, 56-35 With Young Voters; Walz the Most Popular Candidate in the Race

Among voters overall, Harris leads Trump 47-46 (+1.3), with 3.4% of respondents picking third-party candidates Jill Stein, Chase Oliver, or Cornel West. 2.4% said they would vote for someone other than the listed candidates, and less than two percent of voters overall said they were either not sure or would not vote.

Harris leads Trump 56-35 (+20.6) with voters under 30. For comparison, Biden won voters 18-29 by 60-37 (+23) in 2020 according to data from <u>Catalist</u>. It should be noted that some of these changes might be attributed to shifts in the composition of the electorate rather than persuasion: some voters aged 18-29 in 2024 were not eligible to vote in 2020, and others who were 18-29 in 2020 have since aged out of that bracket.

Harris leads by 20 points among young voters, 1.3 points among all voters



National sample of N=5,500 RVs surveyed online from 10/7-10/8, 2024, with an oversample of RVs under 30 of N=2,750. Results weighted for age, sex, race, education, and party ID. MOE \pm 1.9 percentage points for the full sample; \pm 2.4 percentage points for the youth sample. Chart: @YalePolling on X • Source: Yale Youth Poll fall 2024 survey • Created with Datawrapper

Based on Catalist's data, **Harris gained the most relative to President Biden's performance in 2020 with Asian voters** (Harris +40.3, Biden +32, total gain of +8.3), **men** (+3.9 relative to Biden), **and voters**

65 and older (+2.9 relative to Biden). **She has lost the most ground with Black voters** (-31.8 relative to Biden), **women** (-11.4 relative to Biden), **and college-educated voters** (-10.8 relative to Biden).

Among voters overall, **Trump has a net favorability of -13.6**, **JD Vance is at -14.2**, **Kamala Harris is at -9.2**, and **Tim Walz is at -1.5**. Among voters under 30, **Trump's net favorability is -33.5**, compared to **-36.3 for Vance**, **+4 for Harris**, and **+16.1 for Walz**.

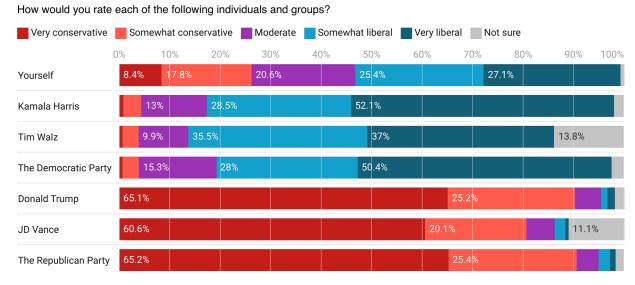
Harris and Walz Are Closer to Young People's Ideological Views Than Trump and Vance; Still to the Left of Most Voters Under 30

When asked to describe their own ideology, voters overall were evenly split: 39.2% said they were somewhat or very conservative; 20.4% said they were moderate; and 39.7% said they were somewhat or very liberal.

Voters overall overwhelmingly described the Democratic ticket as liberal and the Republican ticket as conservative. Among all voters, 86.8% identified Donald Trump as somewhat or very conservative, while just 7% called him moderate. 85.3% said the same of JD Vance, while only 5.1% called the Ohio senator moderate. When asked about the Republican Party, 89% described it as somewhat or very conservative, and 6.3% rated it as moderate.

Harris was seen as somewhat or very liberal by 85.8% of voters and moderate by 8.8%. 9% of voters saw Tim Walz as moderate, compared to 79.1% who viewed him as somewhat or very liberal. The Democratic Party was seen as moderate by 9% of voters and somewhat or very liberal by 85.3%.

Voters under 30 see Harris and Walz as closer to their ideology



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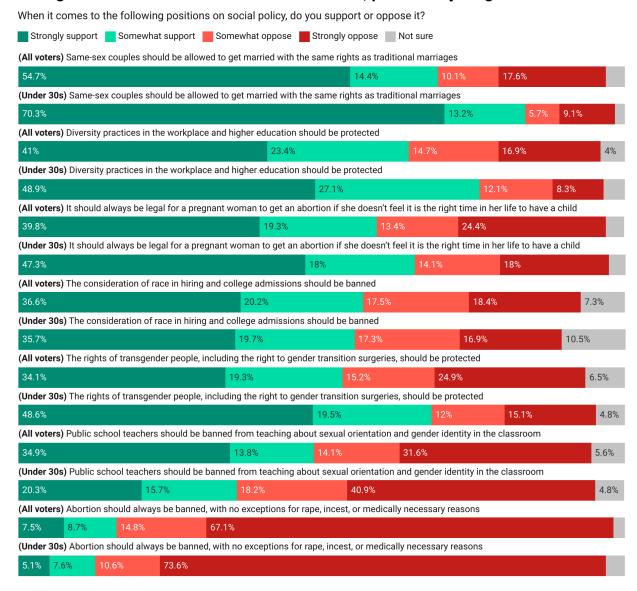
Among voters under 30, however, a slight majority (52.4%) described themselves as somewhat or very liberal. 26.2% called themselves somewhat or very conservative, and 20.6% identified as

moderate. Compared to the electorate overall, young people are more likely to see the Democratic ticket as moderate and the Republican ticket as conservative. Young voters see Harris and Walz as closer to their ideological views than the electorate as a whole does. While young voters see Trump and Vance as far more conservative than they view themselves, more young voters see Harris and Walz as very liberal than rate themselves as very liberal.

Young Voters on The Issues: More Pro-Trans Rights, Pro-Immigration, and Pro-Trade Than Voters Overall

As part of the survey, respondents were asked whether they supported or opposed a series of policy positions, as well as which political party they saw as more supportive of each position. The positions were modeled on proposals or policies from the two major parties, as well as key topics of interest during this election (such as China and trade), and broken out into three categories: social, economic, and foreign and border policies.

Young voters are more liberal on social issues, particularly on gender



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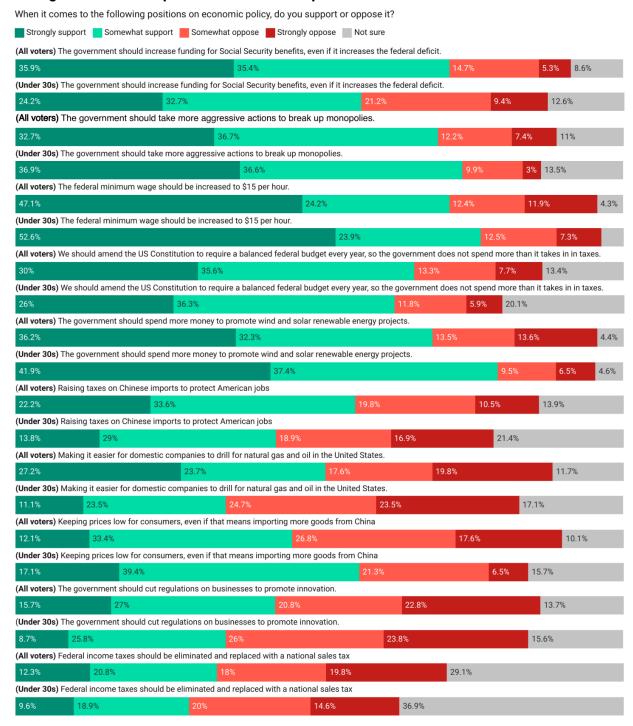
On social policy, the most popular position was a pro-marriage equality statement (+41.5 net support overall, +68.7 among young voters). The least popular position was a total abortion ban (-65.7 overall, -71.5 among young voters).

The largest differences of opinion between young voters and the electorate overall were on transgender rights. Among voters overall, a statement arguing that transgender people's rights, including the right to gender transition surgery, should be protected had +13.3 net support; among voters under 30, the statement had +41.1 net support. The statement that public school teachers "should be banned from teaching about sexual orientation and gender identity in the classroom" tested

at +2.9 with voters overall, but -23.1 among young voters. Interestingly, young voters' views on affirmative action and DEI initiatives were similar to those of the electorate overall — both banning affirmative action and protecting diversity initiatives registered strong net support.

On economics, the top-testing policy among voters overall was a call for increasing Social Security benefits, even if that increased the deficit (+51.3 overall, +26.3 with young voters). For young voters, the most popular economic policy was increasing government funding for clean energy projects (+63.3 with young voters, +41.1 overall). The second most popular issue for both was increasing antitrust enforcement to break up monopolies (+49.7 overall, +60.6 with young voters).

Young voters are less protectionist and less pro-business than electorate overall



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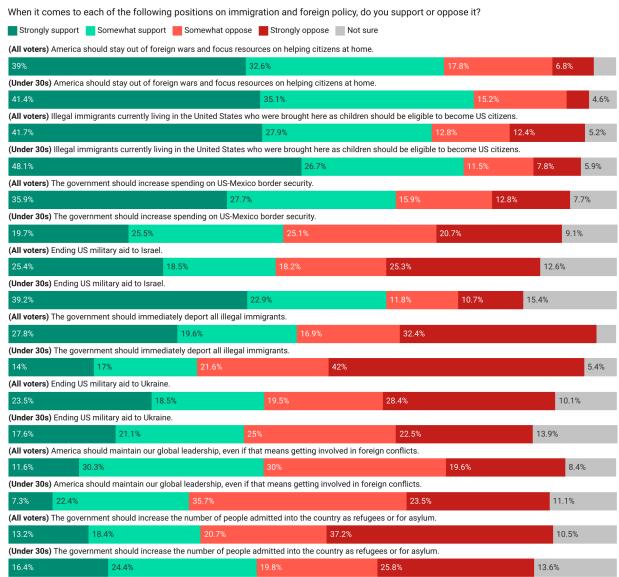
On trade and China, young voters were noticeably less protectionist than the overall electorate. Among all voters, "raising taxes on Chinese imports to protect American jobs" tested at +25.6 net support, while

"keeping prices low for consumers, even if that means importing more goods from China" tested at +1.1. For voters under 30, the tariff proposal tested at +7 net support, while the pro-free trade message tested at +28.7.

While voters overall supported "making it easier for domestic companies to drill for natural gas and oil" by a 13.6-point margin, young voters opposed that position by a 13.5-point margin. While cutting regulations to promote innovation was slightly underwater with the full electorate (-0.9), it was the least popular economic policy among young voters (-15.3). Voters overall saw Republicans as more supportive of a constitutional balanced budget amendment by a 26.7-point margin, compared to a 7-point margin for young voters.

When asked if they supported ending military aid to Israel, voters overall were evenly split: 43.9% supported ending aid while 43.5% opposed ending aid. **But young voters supported ending military aid to Israel by a 39.6 point margin, with 62.1% supporting and 22.5% opposing it.** A plurality of all voters (37.9%) and young voters (38.5%) said neither party supported ending military aid to Israel.

Young voters much more supportive of ending military aid to Israel than electorate overall



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Ending military aid to Ukraine polled at -5.8 net support among the full electorate; among young voters, it was at -8.8 net support. By a 48.3 point margin, voters overall saw Republicans as more supportive of ending military aid to Ukraine, compared to an R+37.6 margin for voters under 30.

Young voters are also much more pro-immigration than the overall electorate. Among all voters, increasing spending on US-Mexico border security tests at +34.8 net support; among young voters, it tests at -0.5 net support. While support for increasing the number of asylum seekers or refugees admitted into the country is negative with both groups, net support is higher among young voters (-4.8) than voters overall (-26.3). While admitting more refugees is the worst-testing foreign or border policy

among voters overall, mass deportation was the worst-testing among young voters (-2 among voters overall, -32.5 among voters under 30).

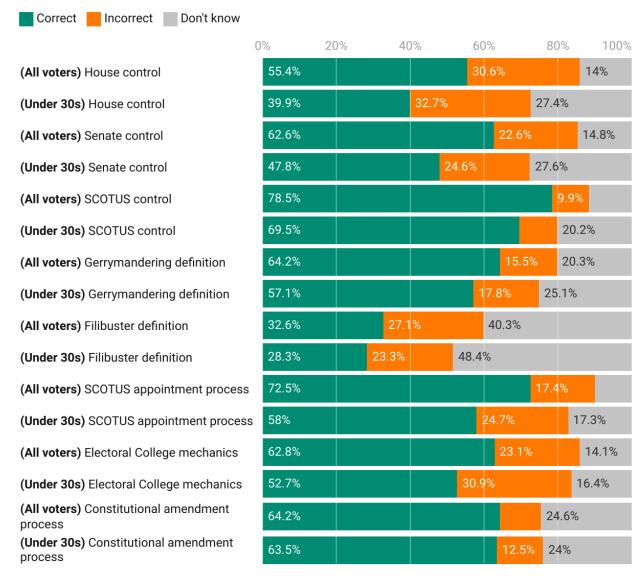
Civics Test: Nobody Knows What the Filibuster Is!

If you're reading this memo, you probably know what the filibuster is. But it turns out that a plurality of Americans don't!

The good news is that voters do know which parties control which branches of the federal government. A majority of voters overall (and a plurality of young voters) were able to correctly identify that Republicans currently control the House of Representatives and Democrats currently control the Senate. Large majorities of both voters overall and voters under 30 correctly identified Republicans as the party that has appointed a majority of sitting Supreme Court justices.

Do Americans understand how our government works?

Respondents were asked three questions about which party controls the House, and Senate, as well as which party appointed a majority of Supreme Court justices. They were also asked to pick the correct description of five political processes — gerrymandering, the Senate filibuster, and how the Supreme Court appointment, Electoral College, and constitutional amendment processes work — out of three options.



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But when asked to identify the correct description of each process out of a list of three (including two incorrect options), there was a substantial age gap: young voters were much less likely than voters overall to identify the correct description of how the Supreme Court appointment, Electoral College, and



constitutional amendment processes work. They were also less likely to identify the correct definition of "gerrymandering" than voters overall. A plurality of both young voters (48.4%) and voters overall (40.3%) said that they did not know which description of the Senate filibuster was most accurate.

This suggests that readers of all ages would benefit from journalists inserting a paragraph or two briefly explaining the mechanics of the filibuster into relevant stories.

What Voters See As Threats to Democracy — And Which Reforms They Prefer

The final segment of the survey focused on democracy — what voters see as the top threats to it, and which democracy reform proposals they like the most.

First, respondents were given three standalone questions, each asking them to pick between two short messages. When asked whether activist groups pushing extreme ideological agendas, wealthy donors and lobbyists, or neither were a bigger problem in politics, 63.8% of voters overall picked wealthy donors, along with 66.8% of young voters.

When asked whether the United States should switch to a popular vote system for electing the president (because the commander-in-chief should be the person who wins the most votes), or stick with the Electoral College (because it is what the Founding Fathers designed), **57.7% of all voters and 58.2% of young voters preferred switching to a national popular vote.**

For the last standalone question, respondents were asked which description of the Supreme Court's recent rulings was most accurate: that the court mostly rules on the legal and constitutional merits of the case at hand, or that the Court mostly rules to advantage one political party or ideological group. By a 46-42 margin, voters overall say that the Court mostly rules on the merits, with roughly 12% saying that they don't know. But young voters say that the Court mostly rules to advantage one political party by a 49-33 margin, with about 17% saying they don't know.

Next, respondents were asked a pair of MaxDiff questions — one on which issue they see as the top threat to democracy, and a second on which reforms they think will improve our government the most. (See index for an explanation of how MaxDiff questions work and full results.)

For young voters, the top threats to democracy were gerrymandering (70.8%), election fraud (67.3%), and left-wing extremism (65.6%), and the lowest-ranked issues were voter ID laws (30.4%), lack of patriotism (31.6%), and immigration bringing in new voters who don't share American values (32.4%). Among voters overall, the top threats to democracy were extremism from both sides equally (69.2%), attempts to overturn elections (64.8%), and the influence of wealthy donors (64.%); the lowest-ranked threats were the control issue "our democracy is not really under threat" (29.3%), the Electoral College (31.2%), and voter ID laws (34.2%).

The most popular reform proposals among young voters were 18-year term limits on Supreme Court justices (69.6%), a call for politicians to moderate by sidelining activists (62.5%), and switching to only paper ballots for elections (62.1%). The least popular reform proposals among all voters were expanding the Supreme Court (28%), statehood for Washington DC and Puerto Rico (29.9%), and eliminating voter ID laws (30%).

Among voters overall, the most popular reform proposals were 12-year term limits for Congress (73.7%), a national ban on gerrymandering (63.6%), and a paraphrase of a quote from Barack Obama's 2004 DNC speech (60.9%). We included a paraphrase of Obama's 2004 speech and a paraphrase of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address to test support for abstract calls for national unity. The full Obama-inspired message is: "The pundits like to slice and dice our country into red states and blue states. But there is not a liberal America and a conservative America, there is the United States of America. We need to move past the division spread by politicians and the media and come together as one country."

Among young voters, the least popular reforms were eliminating voter ID laws (24.3%), statehood for Washington DC and Puerto Rico (31.2%), and restoring the 1965 Voting Rights Act (35.9%).

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For our democracy threat and reform questions, we used a MaxDiff test. The way a MaxDiff test works is that each respondent is given a randomly selected pair of options from the list, and asked to pick between them.

If respondents choose randomly, each option would be picked 50% of the time. To interpret MaxDiff results, look at whether a response choice was picked more or less than 50% of the time. For example, gerrymandering was selected 70.8% of the time by young voters, meaning that young voters see it as the top threat to democracy out of the issues we tested. For both questions, we included a "null" option to serve as a control. The purpose of including these options is to check whether voters actually see democracy as under threat or in need of reform.

In the threat MaxDiff, the null option was: "Our democracy is not really under threat." In the reform MaxDiff, the null option was: "Our system of government isn't perfect, but most changes would make it worse, not better. Lots of proposals sound great on paper, but we don't know how they'd play out in reality. Our current system is what the founders envisioned, and we shouldn't second-guess the wisdom of their design."

Which of the following pairs of issues do you think poses a bigger threat to our democracy?

Issue	Young voters	All voters
Gerrymandering	70.8%	58.7%
Election fraud	67.3%	60.3%
Left-wing extremism	65.6%	53.0%
Extremism from both sides equally	64.5%	69.2%
Voter ignorance of how our government works	60.5%	60.7%
Influence of wealthy donors	57.0%	64.4%
Attempts to overturn elections	55.5%	64.8%
Racism	55.2%	44.5%

Right-wing extremism	55.1%	54.5%
Having only two political parties	52.6%	41.5%
Economic inequality	46.5%	56.4%
Partisanship	46.3%	51.6%
Our democracy is not really under threat	37.2%	29.3%
The Electoral College	34.6%	31.2%
Conservative judges	33.3%	38.2%
Immigration bringing in new voters who don't share American values	32.4%	45.4%
Lack of patriotism	31.6%	38.7%
Voter ID laws	30.4%	34.2%

Which proposal for a democratic reform do you think will improve our government the most?

Reform proposal	Young voters	All voters
We need to place term limits on Supreme Court justices, where each justice would serve for 18 years, staggered so that each president appoints two justices per four-year term. This way, every president has the same influence on the Court's ideological balance.	69.6%	60.4%
The biggest problem in politics is extremism, on both sides. Both parties have been captured by activists who are out of touch with the public and only want to push their own ideological agendas. Politicians need to be more moderate like most Americans are.	62.5%	55.9%
We should only use paper ballots for our elections. Right now, some states use electronic voting machines, where election results can be manipulated. Paper ballots are safe from hacking and can be hand-counted, reducing fraud.	62.1%	38.5%
We need new leadership. The leaders of both parties have been in office too long, and they've proven themselves either incapable of or unwilling to solve problems. It's time for some fresh faces from a new generation.	61.9%	58.5%
The pundits like to slice and dice our country into red states and blue states. But there is not a liberal America and a conservative America, there is the United States of America. We need to move past the division spread by politicians and the media and come together as one country.	60.8%	60.9%
In 1776, the founding fathers brought forth a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.	60.7%	45.7%

Today, each of us as individuals must strive to uphold that ideal, and ensure that that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth.		
We need a national ban on gerrymandering: the process of politicians redrawing legislative districts to unfairly advantage their party. In a democracy, voters are supposed to pick the politicians — not the other way around.	60.3%	63.6%
We need to switch to electing the president by national popular vote. The Electoral College is undemocratic — two of the last four presidents lost the popular vote, and the system lets candidates ignore over 80% of voters. It goes against America's fundamental promise: government of, by, and for the people.	56.4%	56.2%
We need to ban members of Congress from trading individual stocks and bonds. Members of Congress are already paid over \$170,000 per year, almost triple the median income. Elected officials should serve the public interest — not enrich themselves with insider trading.	56.2%	57.6%
The Constitution is meant to be a living document, that American citizens adapt and modify to keep up with changing times. But these days, it's just too hard to change. We need to make it easier to amend the Constitution so it can better address current problems.	56.2%	42.1%
We need to overturn Citizens United, a 2010 Supreme Court case that struck down campaign contribution limits for corporations. The wealthy have too much influence in politics, and corporations making unlimited donations to candidates is just legalized corruption.	56.1%	58.4%
We need to implement participatory budgeting, a system where community members are empowered through civic engagement to suggest and vote on ideas for spending a portion of a state or locality's budget.	54.7	44.1%
These days Congress can't get anything done. It is unable to fix pressing problems because of gridlock. We need a national referendum process where we allow Americans to directly vote up or down on proposed policies, which almost every state already allows.	54.7%	51.9%
We need term limits for Congress. We don't need career politicians staying in office for decades, twelve years is long enough — that's two terms for senators and six terms for representatives.	54.3%	73.7%
We need to prosecute the politicians who supported — and rioters who took part in — the January 6th insurrection. Trying to steal an election is unacceptable and un-American, and any politician who tried to do so must be disqualified from ever holding office again.	53.1%	46.4%
We need to end the Senate filibuster. The filibuster lets just 41 senators block bills, even if they're supported by bipartisan majorities. It's just	52.4%	51.6%



another tool to promote gridlock, and it is time for it to go.		
We need to let the House of Representatives grow with the population. In 1929, the House was capped at 435 members. That means that every 10 years, some states lose representation in Congress, even if their population is growing.	52.2%	40.9%
It is time to take election fraud seriously. Whether it is foreign governments trying to influence our elections or non-citizens casting ballots, we need to take concrete steps to crack down on election interference and make sure that only eligible citizens vote in our elections.	51.6%	51.6%
The problem with our politics is the two-party duopoly that robs voters of a real choice. Independents are the fastest-growing group of voters because Americans are fed up with the existing options. We need a third party that can represent them.	49.8%	54.0%
The problem with our politics is that primary elections are decided by a minority of ideologically extreme partisans. Instead, we should have all candidates run in the same primary, regardless of party affiliation, and then have a runoff between the top two. This will lead to more moderate politicians.	47.2%	47.9%
We need to switch to a ranked-choice voting system, where voters rank candidates in their order of preference. If no candidate has a majority of the votes in the first round, the candidate with the fewest votes has their votes reallocated to their supporters' second choices, continuing until one candidate wins a majority. This eliminates the problem where third parties act as "spoilers" and lets voters better express their views.	44.9%	45.0%
We need to switch to a system of proportional representation for the US House of Representatives. Proportional representation means that a party gets the same percentage of seats in the House of Representatives as the percentage of votes they receive. This way, everyone's opinions are more fairly represented. It makes the system fairer for all parties.	44.6%	49.0%
We need to enact a universal voter ID law, requiring all Americans to show a valid ID before voting in any federal election. This ensures that only citizens are voting which guards against fraud, and ensures trust in the democratic process.	43.4%	50.7%
As a country, we need to lower the temperature on both sides. Rhetoric painting the other side as a threat to our country or democracy is fanning the flames of division — and all too often, fueling political violence.	43.2%	58.8%
We need to restore the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Across the country, voting rights are under threat as politicians use voter suppression tactics to disenfranchise minority voters and violate their 15th Amendment right to vote.	43.1%	35.9%

We need to make Election Day a national holiday. Right now, Election Day is the first Tuesday of November. But not everyone can take the time away from work or taking care of kids, and their voices deserve to be heard too.	40.2%	56.0
We need an age limit on candidates for president. Both the current and previous presidents are showing clear signs of cognitive decline. No person over 75 should be eligible for office, and all candidates should be required to take cognitive tests.	36.3%	56.7%
Our system of government isn't perfect, but most changes would make it worse, not better. Lots of proposals sound great on paper, but we don't know how they'd play out in reality. Our current system is what the founders envisioned, and we shouldn't second-guess the wisdom of their design.	34.3%	40.3%
We need to get rid of voter ID laws. Data shows that voter fraud is exceedingly rare, and voter ID laws are mostly used to justify discrimination, disenfranchising some voters on the basis of skin color.	30.0%	24.3%
We should make Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico into states. Right now, residents of both are US citizens but don't have a say in Congress. Taxation without representation? That's not what America is about.	29.9%	31.2%
We need to expand the number of justices in the Supreme Court. Right now, the unelected conservative majority on the Court is taking away people's rights and forcing extreme rulings on the country. New justices would restore balance to the Court's rulings.	28.0%	39.9%

ABOUT THE POLL

The Yale Youth Poll surveyed an online sample of 5,500 registered voters from October 7 to October 8, with an under-30 oversample of 2,750. The survey was conducted in English, and its post-weighting 95% CI margin of error is ± 1.9 percentage points for the full sample and ± 2.4 percentage points for the youth sample. Full toplines can be found here; crosstabs are available upon request. A full list of questions can be found here.

Results were weighted to ensure a sample that accurately reflects the American population. For the general population sample, results were weighted by age, race, education, gender, and party ID. For the under-30 sample, results were weighted by race, gender, and party ID. The demographics of the post-weighting sample for the general population can be found here. The majority of crosstabs are unweighted, except for the 18-29 subsample (weighted by race, gender, and party ID), and the racial crosstabs (weighted by party ID).

ABOUT THE YALE YOUTH POLL

The Yale Youth Poll is a new undergraduate-led research organization, funded through the <u>Democratic Innovations Program</u> at <u>Yale's Institution for Political and Social Studies</u>.

Polling is our most powerful (albeit imperfect) tool for understanding public opinion. Democracy is about translating public opinion into policy — as Lincoln said, "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Politicians promise a better future for young people in the hopes of winning our votes. However, there is a relative scarcity of high-quality survey data on young voters' opinions. Elected officials can't represent young people's interests without accurate data about what young people think. We provide unbiased, non-partisan data to guide policymakers, advocates, and journalists. In particular, we focus on attitudes towards democracy, comparing the opinions of young voters to the views of the electorate overall.

We would like to thank Professor Josh Kalla for his help getting this project off the ground and his feedback as we crafted this survey.

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Visit our <u>website</u> or follow us on \underline{X} for more information and regular polling updates. Questions can be directed to <u>vouthpoll@elilists.vale.edu</u> or to Milan, Jack, or Karla.