

U.S. STUDIES PROGRAM

AUG 2024



# THE AMERICAN DREAM AT CROSSROADS

Domestic Politics & the 2024  
U.S. Presidential Election

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

While every U.S. presidential election is unique, the upcoming one on November 5, 2024, is unprecedented, to say the least. In addition to being convicted on 34 felony counts, the Republican nominee and former President Donald J. Trump survived an assassination attempt. Moreover, the incumbent President Joe Biden, following mounting pressure from Democratic Party members and fundraisers, has withdrawn himself from the race, making way for a younger candidate. Although most Democratic Party heavyweights, including Biden, have endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, she technically remains a presumptive nominee until the Democratic National Convention (DNC) scheduled for late August. The U.S. presidential election, like national elections in most democracies, will be mostly fought and won on domestic issues that directly affect the day-to-day lives of the American people. This report delves into some of the most contentious and consequential issues in America's domestic politics. It covers topics such as the management of the economy, mounting concerns about unchecked immigration, the raging battle over abortion rights, and the influence of AI and deepfakes on this campaign season. The report attempts to identify why these issues will be prominent in this election and where the presumptive candidate of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party's nominee stand on them.

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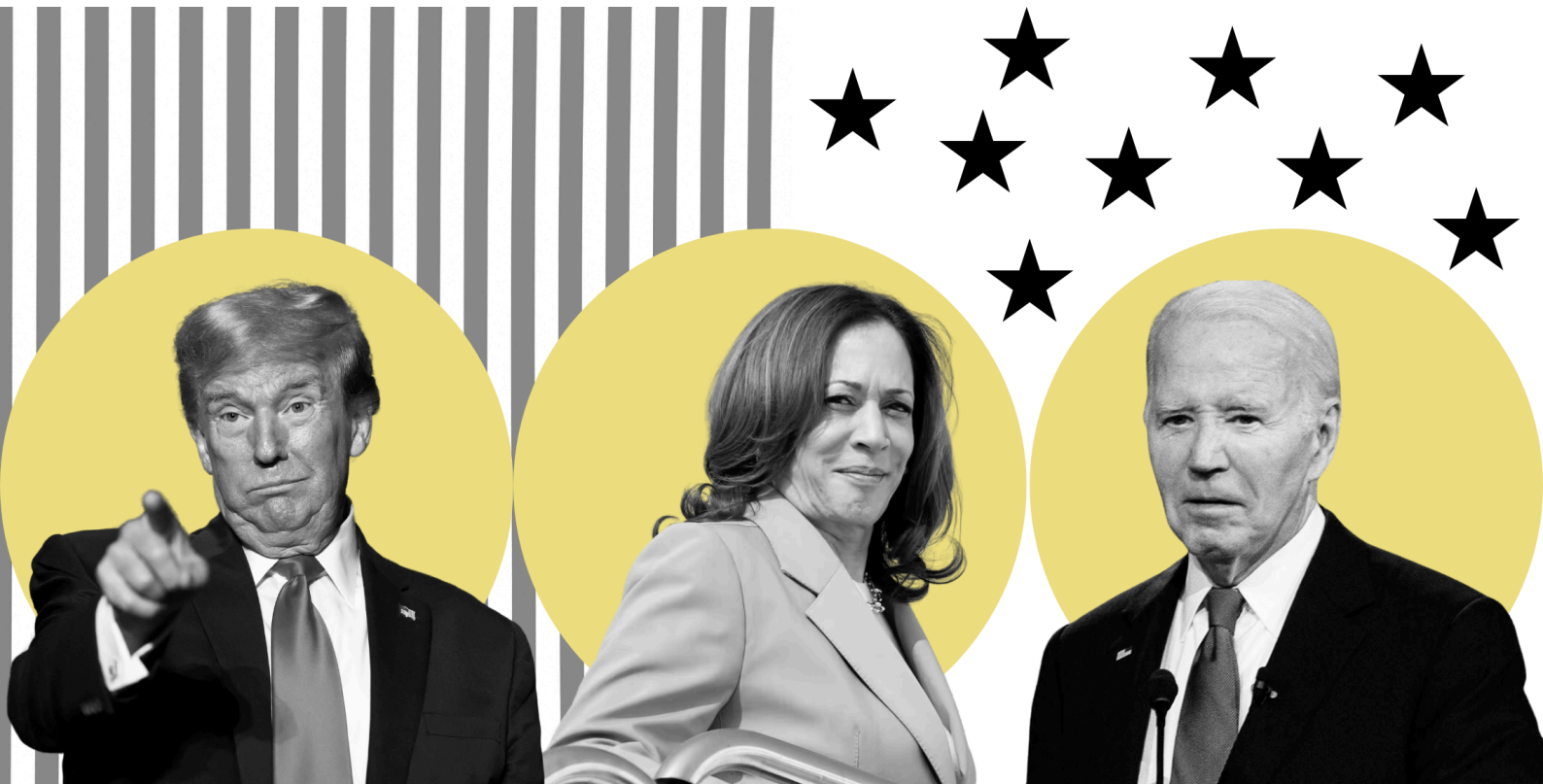
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## Introduction

Every four years, American citizens vote for a presidential candidate to the White House who can best protect and promote their interests. Candidates primarily belonging to the Democratic and Republican Parties (plus those belonging to third parties and independent nominees) vie for the top public office, presenting their case for keeping the interest of the American people foremost. While every presidential election is unique, the upcoming one on November 5, 2024, is unprecedented. The Republican nominee and former President Donald J. Trump has been convicted on 34 felony counts for falsifying business records and has survived an assassination attempt. Once a fierce critic of Trump, having called him a “moral disaster”, Ohio Senator James David (J D) Vance was confirmed as Trump’s running mate during the Republican National Convention (RNC). The incumbent President Joe Biden, following mounting pressure from Democratic Party members and fundraisers, has withdrawn himself from the race, making way for a younger candidate. Although most Democratic Party heavyweights, including Biden, have endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, she technically remains a presumptive nominee until the Democratic National Convention (DNC) scheduled for late August. Moreover, the specter of the previous election in 2020 and the insurrection at Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021, looms large over the peaceful transfer of power, otherwise taken for granted in American democracy. Trump continues to call the election “rigged” and has refrained from promising a peaceful acceptance of the verdict if he were to lose on November 5. For years, deepening polarization has been a critical topic in the discourse about American politics. Still, its manifestation in the electoral landscape is starker than ever, cutting through kitchen table issues and culture wars. Therefore, this report attempts a deep dive into some of the most contentious and consequential issues of domestic politics in the United States, explores why they will occupy prime spots at the electoral grind in 2024, and highlights where the presumptive candidate of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party’s nominee stand on these issues.



## The Missing Middle: Deepening Political Polarization in America

At the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston, in a speech that catapulted him to political stardom, then-Senator Barack Obama of Illinois said,

“Well, I say to them tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America - there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America. The pundits like to slice-and-dice our country into Red States and Blue States; Red States for Republicans, Blue States for Democrats...We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America.”[1]

However, in recent years, major opinion polls have shown the growing political polarization and the widening disagreement between the two major parties on a host of issues, including free trade, gun control, law enforcement, climate change, religion, the role of the government, and race relations. The 2020 presidential election, Donald Trump's refusal to accept the result, and the violent events at the U.S. Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021, raised serious questions on the peaceful transfer of power.

This divide revealed more than just policy disagreements between supporters of the two parties. It also showed fundamental differences in how they viewed their identity as Americans and what they believed their candidate's victory or loss would mean for the country's future.[2] Polls mapping the approval ratings of presidents after World War II have shown that the percentage of Democrats approving of Republican presidents' job performance, and vice versa, have dropped over the years. One of those polls noted,

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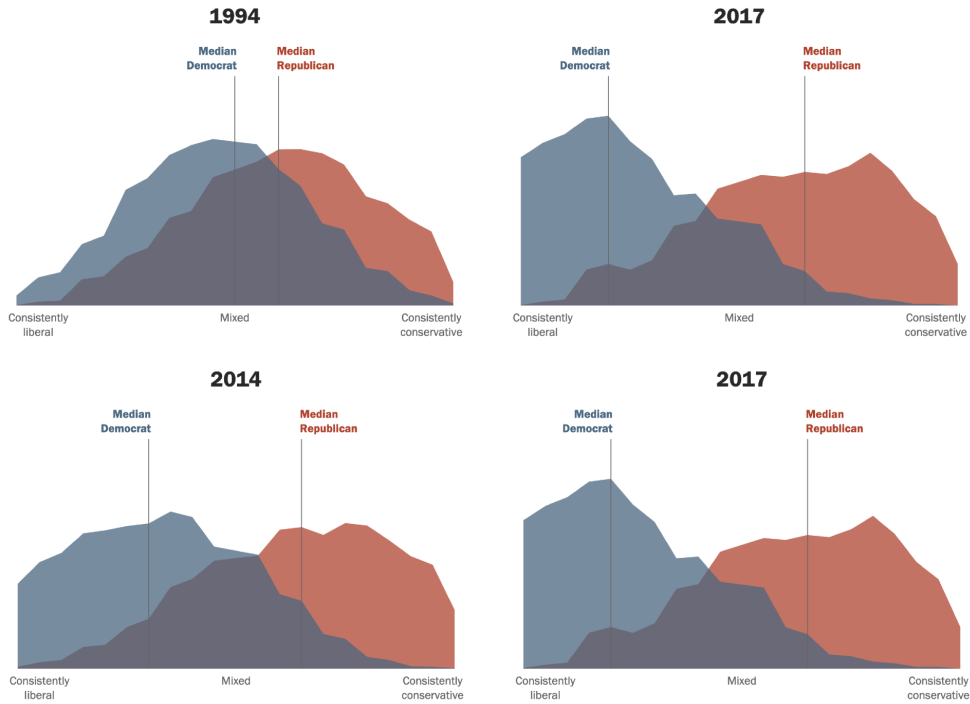
“In the spring before Harry Truman ran for a full term in 1948, two-thirds of Democrats (68%) and even half of Republicans (50%) approved of his job performance. By the time of Richard Nixon in the White House, the gap between his party's approval of him and the opposition party's grew to 47 points. By Barack Obama's time, it expanded to 72 points. And for Donald Trump, it was 79 points, shrinking only by the slightest of margins to 77 points for Joe Biden.” [3]

A study conducted at Brown University revealed that “the average American” in 1978 “rated the members of their political party 27 points higher than members of the other major party.” However, by 2016, “Americans were rating their party 45.9 points higher than the other party, on average.”[4] So, it is clear that Americans have become increasingly polarized in how they view the party's performance that they are not aligned to, reducing the leeway that the two major parties could use to manage differences and strike consensus on issues of national importance. The 2024 Republican National Platform is emphatic in contending, “America needs determined Republican Leadership at every level of Government to address the core threats to our very survival: Our disastrously Open Border, our weakened Economy, crippling restrictions on American Energy Production, our depleted Military, attacks on the American System of Justice, and much more.”[5] Moreover, a sweeping plan of action for the incoming Trump administration, ‘Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise’, released last year under the ‘Project 2025: Presidential Transition Project’, spearheaded by the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, offers a one-stop solution to all of the



country's domestic and foreign policy problems. This buffet of policy proposals that the Trump campaign has tried hard to distance from and has become a pivot of attacks from the Democratic campaign, believes that only a complete Conservative overhauling of governance will rescue the country from what Project 2025 calls "the grip of the radical Left." [6]

### The Shift in the American Public's Political Values



Source: Reprinted from "The Shift in the American Public's Political Values," Pew Research Center, October 20, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/interactives/political-polarization-1994-2017>.

So, why is America experiencing such schisms? The answer is complex and rooted in the country's political, social, economic, and cultural landscape. On issues of identity, including race and religion, the two parties are moving in opposite directions, leading to a trend of homogeneity in both parties, where it is becoming more difficult to find supporters on policy issues that cut across political parties. Then, there is the trend of liberals primarily moving to metropolitan areas in big states, while those living in smaller cities and more rural regions are becoming more conservative.

There is also the controversial case of gerrymandering, whereby state legislatures have become more aggressive in redrawing district boundaries along partisan lines. Moreover, the rise of partisan-driven cable television news and the recent exponential growth in new technology-driven content platforms also seem to be driving a wedge and making it easier for more extreme views on both the left and right of the spectrum to flourish compared to more nuanced and balanced positions. [7]

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## Is American Democracy's Winter Coming?

President Joe Biden, in his last State of the Union Address, called out the threat to American democracy, the high point being the insurrection of January 6, 2021, a violent attack on the peaceful transfer of power. Biden contended, "Not since President Lincoln and the Civil War have freedom and democracy been under assault here at home as they are today."<sup>[8]</sup> Talking of the insurrectionists, Biden said, "They had come to stop the peaceful transfer of power and to overturn the will of the people. January 6th and the lies about the 2020 election, and the plots to steal the election, posed the gravest threat to our democracy since the Civil War."<sup>[9]</sup>

Donald Trump has been criminally convicted for falsifying account records related to the hush-money payment to Stormy Daniels, an adult film actor. Just as Trump had refused to accept the 2020 election result, saying it was a stolen election, he continues to label the verdict that found him guilty as a "rigged trial."<sup>[10]</sup> Given the precedence of the 2020 election and the conditions under which Trump is in a contest with Biden's VP Harris, many fear a replay of the post-result violence and chaos that followed, plunging American democracy to abysmal lows.<sup>[11]</sup> During his debate with Biden (when he was still in the race), when Trump was repeatedly asked, "Will you pledge tonight that once all legal challenges have been exhausted, that you will accept the results of this election regardless of who wins," Trump deflected and gave no clear answer.<sup>[12]</sup>





The perceived threat to democracy from Trump and his hardline supporters has occupied the pivot of the Democratic Party's campaign strategy.[13] Trump, on the other hand, hurled attacks on Biden's democratic credentials, calling him "the destroyer of American democracy", and accusing the President of using political power to launch criminal charges against him. The remaining days of the campaign will show whether the rise of Kamala Harris as the presumptive nominee and her campaign strategy will bring any significant shift in these dynamics.

An electoral landscape filled with misinformation and disinformation campaigns has also led to the current situation, where supporters and politicians of respective parties see the other side as representing the gravest threat to American democracy.[14] The assassination attempt on Donald Trump during an open-air campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, seen on live television across the world, has given a new twist to the 'threat to American democracy' specter. Political violence, such as this, is being called out as a threat to peaceful electioneering where American politicians and voters can engage in free and fair debates without fear for their lives and fellow citizens.[15]

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## Bidenomics: Windfall or a Setback for the Democratic Party?

In elections, people's perceptions of economic performance often matter more than the actual economic data. Opinion polls have been projecting an American public pessimistic of their economic future, with many feeling dissatisfied with inflation. As four years of Biden's presidency near their end, his economic policies are up for a trial, even in his absence from the electoral race, and polarizing views are emerging of how American voters view the economy. The baton now passes to Kamala Harris to defend Biden's economic legacy and fend off attacks from the Trump campaign. Biden had been highlighting economic trends that are broadly optimistic about how the American economy has grown and how jobs have been added under his watch. "Our economy has created 14.8 million jobs since I took office, unemployment has been under 4% for two full years now, and inflation has been at the pre-pandemic level of 2% over the last half year," President Biden said in an official statement after the release of the January jobs report.[16]

In the administration's early days, the Biden team began vouching for a "foreign policy for the middle class," emphasizing making decisions abroad that would eventually uplift American people's lives and economic well-being.[17] Such a "bottoms up" economy aimed at increasing investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, cleaner energy, and increasing job opportunities. Biden's legislative records, including on infrastructure investment, boosting the semiconductor industry plus efforts to ease supply chain pressures, avoid recession, arrest inflation, and add jobs, have seen bright spots. However, voters heading to the ballot box perceive the economy through the choices they have to make on daily food expenses and gas prices, which are rising more than household incomes. In other words, voters seem to care more about the cost of daily commodities, which may remain high despite a slowing down of broad-based inflation. The Trump campaign focuses on inflation concerns, blaming Bidenomics for excessive spending. They promise to bring back an era of reduced taxes and fewer regulations.[18]

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Such perceptions of the economy seem to cast a shadow on whatever progress was made during the Biden presidency and dent any optimism that makes voters appreciate the last four years as they head to the polls. Some opinion polls even show people believing that Trump has done, and will do, a better job at handling the American economy.[19] Across the country, particularly in swing states—like Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin—that will see a close contest, the economy is turning out to be a central issue for voters. Trends clearly show that more than the actual state of the economy, how voters interpret the economy based on their day-to-day expenses and local experiences will indicate voting patterns.[20]

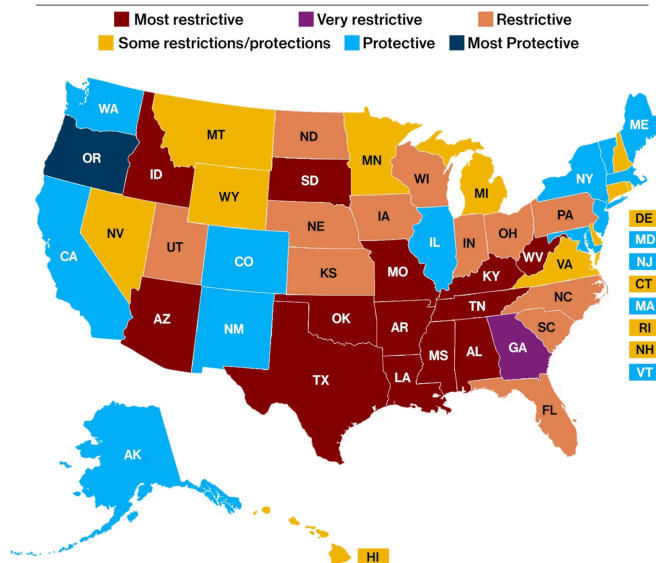
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## Why is Abortion a Major Election Issue?

Abortion rights are emerging to be a big-ticket issue, with widespread implications across different states in the United States and with deeply entrenched differences between the Democratic and Republican Parties. With President Biden’s withdrawal and Kamala Harris’s entry into the race, the reproductive rights issue assumes much more potency. Even as Biden’s running mate, Harris had led from the front on this issue, and their campaign has repeatedly been reminding voters that the Trump-era judicial appointments at the Supreme Court led to the overturning of the decades-old Roe vs. Wade decision, which had provided the constitutional right to abortion. Before Harris, who visited an abortion clinic in Minnesota earlier in March, no other U.S. Vice President or President had ever visited such a facility.[21] A promise to restore Roe vs Wade and push ahead legislation, giving women more freedom, would remain an overwhelming campaign message for the Democratic Party.[22]

### US Abortion Policies and Access After Roe

AS OF SEPTEMBER 23, 2022



SOURCE: ABC NEWS, GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE

ABC NEWS



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Earlier in May, Louisiana's Governor signed a bill that, much to the ire of many medical professionals but with support from anti-abortion advocates, would add two medications, mifepristone, and misoprostol, commonly used to induce abortions, to the state's list of controlled dangerous substances. The legislation would, reportedly, render it illegal, punishable by a prison sentence, to possess these medications without valid prescriptions or orders from medical professionals, except in the case of self-consumption by pregnant women. Medical professionals have raised alarms contending that these medications "have critical uses outside of abortion care, including aiding in labor and delivery, treating miscarriage and preventing gastrointestinal ulcers." President Biden had commented that the bill was "outrageous", calling it "a direct result of Trump overturning Roe v. Wade" and that a Trump 2.0 could make such cases "a reality nationwide." Concerns are also mounting that this legislation would embolden Republican states with abortion bans to go ahead with harsher restrictions on such drugs.[23]



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The Democrats believe that the restrictions and bans on abortions in different states, and the apprehensions it has caused, would push more voters to turn out against Trump's return to the White House. Many also see a reversal of such a landmark decision on women's rights and civil rights in general as a worrying sign for the future of American democracy. Opinion polls have found that abortion rights are a primary issue for the election, not only among women and younger Democratic voters but also among independent voters.[24] In April, a court decision in Arizona, a critical swing state, upheld a 160-year-old abortion ban. The abortion rights issue was widely credited for the Democratic Party's significant performance during the 2022 mid-term elections, with a majority in the Senate and preventing total control of the House of Representatives by the Republicans.[25] Two major abortion rights groups, Emily List and Reproductive Freedom for All, have endorsed Kamala Harris as an effective messenger of the cause.[26]

## Immigration and Border Security

Lately, Republicans in the House of Representatives have been trying to amplify attacks on Kamala Harris for failing to secure the country's southern borders and checking illegal immigration, passing a symbolic resolution against her.[27] Now that Biden is off the radar, Harris will have to face the frontline attacks on this issue that has turned highly potent in this election. President Biden, in early June, announced a presidential proclamation that would bar migrants from being granted asylum in the United States when officials declared that the border with Mexico was overwhelmed. Currently, the upper limit is known to be 2,500 migrants per day. Trump viciously attacked Biden's immigration policy, contending that Biden had "totally surrendered our Southern Border" and that such steps were "all for show." Harris' chief campaign manager, Julie Chávez Rodríguez, reportedly hinted that Biden's proclamation would be continued in the case of a Harris

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Presidency.[28] Earlier this year, Biden had blamed Trump for killing a bipartisan immigration bill that included billions of dollars for enhancing security enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico border, besides massive aid to Ukraine and Israel.[29]

American history is replete with cases of how earlier immigrants respond to later immigrants, and therefore, the issue is permanently potent in the country's political landscape. However, recent election campaigns, and particularly Trump's arrival on the scene in 2016, have added more fuel to hyperbolic references to threats from migrants. In 2020, Biden had fought on a platform opposing Trump's harsh immigrant policy, promising a more humane approach while securing the borders. However, as recent trends and Biden's executive announcement suggest, the massive upsurge in undocumented migrants poses a significant challenge for the Democratic Party's campaign, which cannot toe Trump's path but, at the same time, cannot come across as looking soft on this issue.



A record number of migrants have been crossing America's southern border, compared to any year since 1960, when the government's record-keeping began. During the fiscal year 2023, ending in September, there were 2.4 million apprehensions compared to 2.3 million the previous year and more than 1.7 million during fiscal year 2021. [30] More recently, the rising influx of migrants not into swing states or battleground suburban counties but in the most diverse Democratic-leaning states has exposed schisms within the Democratic Party on how best to handle this issue. While some believe that progressive steps to fix the system will ease anxiety among voters, others are calling for the Democratic candidate to take aggressive steps and more

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conservative positions. Moreover, a trend among Hispanic voters, starting to view illegal immigration as a threat to their well-being and thus supporting more restrictive immigration policies, will make legislative battles more complex. [31]

## The Identity Wars: Race and Religion

Article VI of the U.S. Constitution states, "...no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." [32] However, in his presidential campaign, candidate John F. Kennedy (the first Catholic elected U.S. president), standing before a group of protestant ministers at the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on 12 September 1960 said, "...contrary to common newspaper usage, I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic." [33] President Joe Biden is the only second U.S. President in history who is a Catholic. Still, in 2020, his religious denomination had not stoked conspiracy theories of the U.S. President being more loyal to the Pope in the Vatican than the American Constitution and the American people. This shows a marked shift in how religion plays a role in American politics, but it does not mean that religion no longer affects the voting patterns of America. Religious interpretations of social issues influence campaigns and how voters are enticed or repulsed. While viewpoints and statistics might differ on how faith affects voting patterns in America, its role through individual and group beliefs is a constant feature of the country's political landscape.

Opinion polls suggest that religious identity strongly influences voter preferences in the U.S. White Christians tend to support Trump. At the same time, Black Protestants, atheists, agnostics, and those with "nothing in particular" generally favor Biden. [34] Now, it remains to be seen how Kamala Harris, a woman of African American and Indian American descent, disrupts such poll statistics. Trump has, however, already questioned her Black identity. Speaking at the annual convention of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) in Chicago, he said, "She was always of Indian heritage, and she was only promoting Indian heritage. I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago, when she happened to turn Black, and now she wants to be known as Black. So I don't know, is she Indian or is she Black?" [35]

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Despite polls showing a marked decline in the number of Americans who associate themselves with a particular religion, the U.S. election records still show divisions, with evangelicals showing strong support for Trump. However, in the last election, Biden's candidature attracted Catholics and some evangelicals, as well. [36] Reports show Democrats gaining ground in areas witnessing decreasing identification with organized religion and Republicans gaining support in areas where religious organizations are growing. Affiliation or non-affiliation to organized religion would substantially affect voting patterns on social issues such as abortion rights. Religious non-affiliation among Generation Z is something that campaign strategists in both parties will have to consider. Records show that 46 percent of Biden's votes in 2020 came from non-religious voters. [37]

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A study by the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University found race to be an important variable determining voting patterns in the U.S. presidential election. For instance, more White Americans voted for the Republican Party compared to the much lower number of non-White voters. Black voters have shown relative consistency in voting compared to White and Hispanic voters. The rising percentage of non-whites in the U.S. population means that both the parties, and more so, the Republican Party, need to cater to a multiracial coalition in the coming years. [38] In many states, reports point to a drop in White eligible voters and a marked rise, particularly in Hispanic voters.

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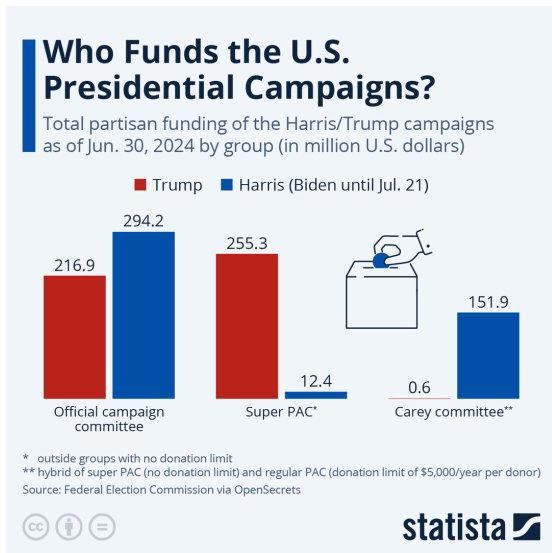
However, the figures related to voter registration and voter turnout also show a racial differentiation, with White adults showing more numbers compared to other racial identities. Certain presidential elections reflect their characteristics, depending on the candidates and the nation's mood. For instance, the record shows Black voters turning out more significantly in 2008 and 2012 when Barack Obama stood as the Democratic nominee. This year will also be one of those special elections where the rise of a non-White candidate might lend surprising dynamics to the poll figures and turnouts, especially among the minorities, younger and independent voters.

Surveys have shown that, in general, the Democratic Party gets more robust support among Black, Hispanic, and Asian American registered voters, while the Republican Party has had a slight advantage among White registered voters. However, a worrying sign for the Democrats is a generational shift among Black and Hispanic voters, with many starting to lean towards the Republican Party, shrinking the lead that the Democratic Party has generally enjoyed.[39]

## Money Never Sleeps: Rising Campaign Costs

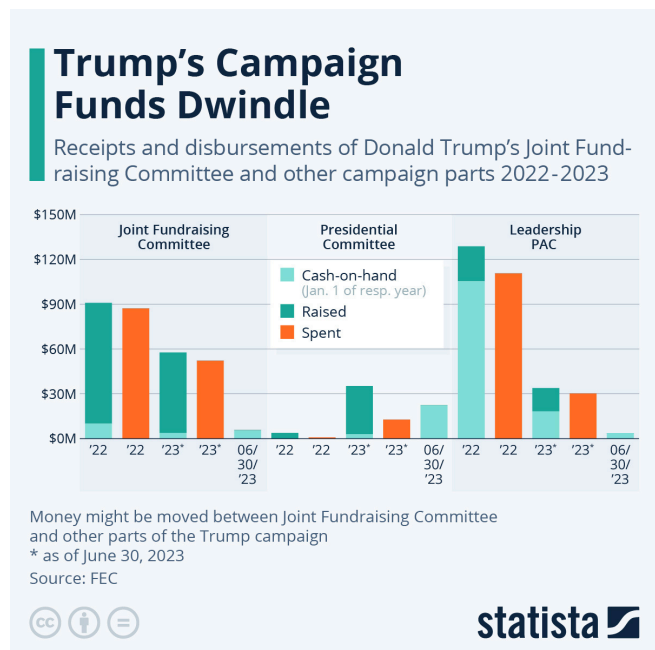
There are no elections without campaigns and no campaigns without money. The amount of funds raised and spent in the 2024 campaign season is expected to be unprecedented. Candidates spend a lot of time and energy speaking to funders and mobilizing donations to fuel their campaigns. For instance, spending on political advertisement reportedly reached \$15.9 billion, increasing 30% from the 2020 election, and is projected to reach \$20 billion by the 2028 presidential election.[40] Presidential campaigns can receive funding through the candidates' campaign committee, which raises money directly to support the contenders, and there are external committees, such as the Super PACs (Political Action Committees), which can raise unlimited funds without directly collaborating with the candidates they support. Super PACs came to the political scene after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2010 in the Citizens United Case that considered monetary contributions as a form of protected speech. On the other hand, Normal PACs have limits set on their contributions and, unlike Super PACs, can coordinate with candidates. This is why presidential candidates announce Super PACs supporting them before officially announcing their presidential campaigns.[41]





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Trump has been accepting cryptocurrency donations and even spoke at the Bitcoin conference in 2024. At the center of this race, groups like Future Forward and Save America are respectively active for the Democratic and Republican campaigns. Among many other logistic-related expenses, massive funds are spent on television and digital advertising campaigns targeting specific voting groups and battleground states. What makes the spending machinery different in 2024 is that unlike in 2020, when the election campaign played out in pandemic-era America, this season will include the familiar juggernaut of cross-country campaign travels and trails.[42]



The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) requires presidential candidates to report “the names of the individuals and political organizations contributing to their campaigns and the amounts; how the candidates spend the money they receive and the amounts.” The Federal Election Commission (FEC) oversees the enforcement of laws specified under FECA by “setting campaign contribution limits for individuals and groups; overseeing public funding used in presidential elections and tracking campaign finance data.”[43] Significantly, Trump’s conviction on 34 felony charges saw a soaring inflow of funding into his campaign, and Kamala Harris, in a week just after emerging as the presumptive Democratic nominee, has reportedly raised \$ 200 million.[44]

## Election in the Era of AI and Deepfakes

Elon Musk, American billionaire and owner of the social media platform X, recently reposted a manipulated campaign video of Kamala Harris without disclosing that it was inaccurate and had been doctored. As threats to American democracy and deepening polarization between the two parties loom over the country’s political and socio-economic landscape, an added concern is the use of advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) and growing cases of highly enhanced deepfakes in political advertising. Last year in August, the Federal

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Election Commission initiated a public debate on how to tackle the malicious use of AI in campaign ads.[45] As extremist views and conspiracy theories receive exponential traffic in the time of digital algorithms, nuance is dying a fast death. Keeping the election free and fair in such times of rampant misinformation and disinformation is becoming a considerable challenge.[46] AI's evolution has brought immense opportunities but also poses a threat of gross misuse during election campaigns.

With growing access to online content around the clock, the digital medium is potent enough to distort information and sway public sentiment. Several deepfake manipulations, ranging from deceptive videos to misleading audio and doctored images, are pouring into personal devices, significantly affecting political conversations and decisions among voters. Such manipulated videos and altered videos of Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, or Donald Trump, along with fictitious comments and actions, have sent alarm signals about the risks that misuse of such technologies can pose.[47] The rapid evolution of tools like ChatGPT significantly alters how content is generated and disseminated to a global audience in real-time.

During the recent Munich Security Conference, some of the world's leading players in this field, including TikTok, Meta, and OpenAI, reportedly pledged "to combat underhanded uses of AI tech during this year's global election cycle." [48] These concerns are rising at a time of growing distrust in the political system and traditional media. Aspen Digital, a program of the Aspen Institute, is launching the AI Elections Initiative to strengthen U.S. election resilience in the face of risks and opportunities from generative AI, involving major stakeholders like election officials, policymakers, the private sector (including tech leaders and experts), and the news media.[49]

Polls also show that a growing percentage of Americans fear that AI might negatively affect the safety of elections and harm national security. For instance, at least 39 states in the United States have introduced more than 100 bills "to limit and regulate AI-generated materials." [50]

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## Conclusion

American democracy is in critical condition, even as U.S. governmental and non-governmental agencies continue to evaluate and judge the democratic processes and elections of other nations. The country has been experiencing growing political polarization and widening disagreement between the two major parties. The economy is becoming a central issue for voters nationwide, most notably in swing states that will see close contests between the presidential contenders. Despite positive news about the national economy and job statistics, what matters more is how voters interpret the economy based on their local experiences of

handling price rises.

Abortion rights are emerging as a big-ticket issue, with widespread implications and deeply entrenched differences between the positions of the two major parties. There is a broad sense that the immigration system has become too dysfunctional in handling the mounting influx of migrants. This has led to cracks within the Democratic Party between those who believe that some progressive steps to fix the system will ease anxiety among voters and those who have called for the Democratic candidate to take aggressive steps, taking positions almost similar to the Republicans. How American voters identify themselves along religious, racial, and ethnic lines continues to affect voting patterns, and the amount of money expected to be raised and spent in the 2024 campaign season is seen as unprecedented. Using advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) and growing cases of highly enhanced deepfakes in political advertising adds new complexities. Moreover, the role of third-party and independent candidates cannot be ruled out in tightly fought-elections. This year, Chase Oliver from the Libertarian Party, Jill Stein from the Green Party, Robert Francis Kennedy Jr., and Cornel Ronald West as independent candidates are notable names in the race.

The 2024 presidential election will be etched in history books for several reasons. The two major political parties accuse each other of being threats to American democracy; the incumbent President has withdrawn his bid for a second term after mounting pressure from his party members; the former President and the Republican nominee survived an assassination attempt besides being convicted as a felon. Moreover, the rise of Kamala Harris, a female candidate of African-American and Indian-American descent, as the presumptive nominee of the Democratic Party is encountering vicious misogyny and racism. Regardless of who emerges victorious, the footprints of this election will continue to reverberate in the country's political landscape, raising vital questions on the process of the U.S. presidential election and the image of American democracy across the world.



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