

**Battleground Civility Poll**  
**An Unprecedented Election but Voters Still Want Solutions**

*Republican Analysis*  
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**Introduction and Overview**

This latest edition of the Georgetown University Institute of Politics and Public Service national poll on political civility, which fielded November 12-14, and 17, 2024, finds that even after a contentious Presidential election, voters still have hope for the future and want their representatives in DC to seek solutions. A fractured media landscape will make these efforts challenging, but voters do clearly want their representatives to cooperate to find solutions.

**The 2024 Presidential Election: Unprecedented events but familiar voter attitudes**

*“When life is hard, you have to change”*

– Shannon Hoon

The 2024 Presidential election had a remarkable number of unprecedented or unusual events. The Democratic Party changed their Presidential and Vice Presidential nominees less than 120 days before the election. This change led to the Democratic ticket being led by a woman of color for the first time ever.

The Republican party nominee was running for a third consecutive cycle. There were two serious assassination attempts on the GOP nominee. The Republican Vice Presidential nominee had been in public office for less than 2 years.

For much of 2024, the Presidential election looked to be a slog between two well-known politicians who had already run against each other just 4 years earlier. Indeed, our March 2024 poll found 13% of voters with an unfavorable view of both Trump and Biden versus just 2% of voters with a favorable version of both men.

Any reader of this analysis is probably quite familiar that despite the changes in candidates, the 2024 Presidential campaign was a remarkably contentious one. Terms like fascism and communism were regularly used. The Trump campaign and its allies made a major push on paid media to characterize Harris as the candidate of “they/them”. The Harris campaign and its allies made a major push to contend a Trump Presidency would be the end of democracy.

However, this data finds that rather than the resignation of voting for the lesser of two undesirable candidates, the electorate reverted to an expected level of partisan driven polarization. In looking at voter views on both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, just 4% of voters have an unfavorable view of both of them. In contrast, 2% of voters have a favorable view of both of them. Among partisans, fully 93% of partisan Republicans have a favorable view of Trump while 93% of partisan Democrats have a favorable view of Harris.

In fact, 79% of voters indicate that they made their final decision on their Presidential vote before September. So, in the sprint from Labor Day to Election Day as the campaigns engaged in extraordinary amounts of paid media and voter outreach, they were talking to just over one-in-five voters who had yet to make a decision. On another question, just 8% of voters say that there was ever a time that they reconsidered their vote or changed their mind. This is a remarkable level of stability in voter attitudes during a time of massive persuasion efforts by both campaigns.

In addition, just 29% of voters agree with the statement that “For President, I felt like I was picking between the lesser of two evils.” Fully 67% of the electorate disagrees with this statement. Overall, only 23% of Trump voters and 30% of Harris voters agree with this assertion. For both candidates, a strong majority of their voters felt like they were not stuck picking between the lesser of two evils.

However, there certainly is a desire among voters for more viable candidates. A majority of voters (59%) agree with the statement: “I wish there were more viable candidates for President to choose from.” Overall, 48% of Republicans, 81% of Independents, and 66% of Democrats agree with this statement. Voters may not have felt they were picking between the lesser of two evils, but many would have liked to have had other options.

Regarding the Presidential campaigns, there is a strong partisan division about the themes of the campaigns. A plurality of voters (48%) think Trump ran a more negative and divisive campaign while 31% of voters think it was Harris who ran a more negative and divisive campaign. Among partisans, 62% of Republicans think it was Harris who ran the more negative and divisive campaign while 88% of Democrats think it was Trump who ran the more negative and divisive campaign.

On the positive side, 44% of voters think Harris ran a campaign more focused on hope and the future while 41% of voters think it was Trump who ran a campaign more focused on hope and the future. Among Republicans, 82% think Trump ran the more hopeful and future focused campaign. In contrast, 81% of Democrats think it was Harris who ran a campaign more focused on hope and the future.

This certainly was a contentious Presidential campaign that was filled with heated rhetoric and tough contrast messaging. However, in the view of most partisans, it was the other side running a negative and divisive campaign while their candidate focused more on hope and the future.

### **Talking about issues – Trump advantages were important**

*“The desire of gold is not for gold. It is for the means of freedom and benefit.”*

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Exit polling consistently showed that most voters were focused on pocketbook issues like inflation, the economy, or jobs while a notable segment of the Republican electorate was focused on immigration and a notable segment of the Democrat electorate was focused on abortion and preserving democracy.

This survey asked voters to select whether Trump or Harris did a better job of talking about a variety of issues or topics. As seen below, Trump has the advantage on pocketbook issues like inflation, the economy, and jobs as well as immigration. Harris has the advantage on abortion and protecting democracy along with more ephemeral qualities like shared values and caring about people like me.

<b>Better job talking about this issue/quality</b>	<b>Trump</b>	<b>Harris</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>DK/ REF</b>
Inflation	50%	45%	3%	2%
Economy	51%	46%	3%	1%
Jobs	49%	46%	4%	1%
Immigration	50%	47%	3%	1%
Protecting democracy	43%	52%	3%	2%
Abortion	36%	53%	3%	2%
Sharing my values	42%	52%	4%	2%
Caring about people like me	42%	53%	4%	2%
Able to get things done	50%	46%	3%	1%
Will bring the country together	42%	52%	5%	1%
Protecting our freedoms	48%	50%	2%	1%

On the 11 issues/qualities tested, Harris has majority support on 6 issues/qualities while Trump has majority support on 4 issues/qualities plus plurality support on 1 issue. However, Trump had the advantage on the key issues of the campaign – inflation, the economy, jobs, immigration, and able to get things done.

For many voters, the decisive issue in their vote was which candidate was likely to make their personal economic situation better. Trump has the advantage on these issues, and it clearly served him well at the ballot box.

## **Thanksgiving and Beyond: Hope for the Future**

*“Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future.”*

— Robert H. Schuller

Every year, there are opinion pieces offering strategies for surviving Thanksgiving with relatives whose views you find loathsome. This survey finds that this is not a dilemma for most voters. Indeed, fully 61% of disagree with the statement: “This election season, I’ve decided I can no longer talk with certain family members and close friends because our views on politics and current events differ too much.” Even majorities of partisan Republicans (75%) and partisan Democrats (52%) disagree with this statement. Despite a notably intense Presidential election and some highly competitive down ballot races across the country, most voters are still able to talk with their close family and friends.

Looking further ahead into the next Congress, voters want collaboration but have concerns that collaboration will not be a top priority for the Trump administration. As seen below, most voters do not think that President Trump will be able to unite the country and think that President Trump will be more focused on revenge than collaboration.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
President Trump will be able to unite the country.	42%	3%	55%
I think President Trump will be focused more on getting revenge on his political enemies than getting things done for the country.	51%	2%	47%
I want President Trump, Republicans in Congress, and Democrats in Congress to work together to solve the major problems facing this country.	95%	1%	4%
It will be good for the country if President Trump and Congress compromise to find solutions even if this means I will not always get everything I want.	82%	5%	13%
I want Democrats in Congress to be a check on President Trump.	59%	11%	30%

However, the vast majority of voters want all parties to work together to solve problems and favor compromises, even imperfect ones. A majority of voters want Democrats to be a check on President Trump, including 30% of Republicans and 28% of Trump voters.

President Trump won the election, but the outcome most voters want is for their representatives in Congress to focus on solving problems and finding common ground.

In fact, two additional questions reinforce this high level of voter interest in compromise and bipartisan solutions. First, given two choices, voters break more than three-to-one in favor of bipartisan solutions:

- 72%: President Trump and Congressional Republicans should work with Democrats to pass bipartisan laws even if this means both sides will not get everything they want.
- 23%: President Trump and Congressional Republicans should stick to their values and only enact policies that they completely support even if that means breaking some old traditions.

In a similar way, voters overwhelmingly prefer a politician who is willing to work with others to get things done over a fighter with fewer accomplishments:

- 70%: A politician who is willing to work together to get things done, even if it means compromising on my values sometimes
- 25%: A politician who consistently fights for my values, even if this means not finding a solution very often

We also continued the time series questions to ask voters about political division on a 0-100 scale where 0 is no division and 100 is on the edge of civil war. For today, the mean score from voters was 66.5, the lowest score so far. Asked to assess where things will be in one year, the mean score is 61.0, also the lowest score so far and an improvement from today.

Voters want solutions and think political divisions are improving. This is an ideal political environment for President Trump and Congress to work together on solutions.

## **Breaking through with messages to voters will be a challenge**

*“A lie will gallop halfway round the world before the truth has time to pull its breeches on.”*

Cordell Hull

This Presidential campaign and indeed many of the contentious races this cycle were marred by misinformation – some deliberate efforts and some perhaps inadvertent. Operatives from both sides can cite many times when frustratingly false narratives arose about their candidate. Given the extraordinary level of interconnectedness in our society, it has become easier than ever to use social media and interpersonal communications to spread misinformation.

The challenge found in this data is that political media news consumption is more fractured than ever. Presented with a variety of sources of political news and information, voters were asked to assess how frequently they used that particular source of information. As seen below, the two most frequent sources for “a lot of time” spent consuming their political news are talking with friends and family and local news. Looking down this list, these are also the two most challenging and disparate news sources to manage. It will be a formidable challenge to correct misinformation being spread by word of mouth discussions or by the countless number of local news outlets.

<b>Political news sources</b>	<b>A lot of time</b>	<b>Some time</b>	<b>A little time</b>	<b>No time</b>	<b>DK/ REF</b>
Fox News	12%	25%	11%	52%	1%
CNN	9%	29%	16%	46%	0%
MSNBC	9%	21%	16%	54%	0%
Large newspapers like the Washington Post and the NY Times	10%	18%	13%	59%	0%
Tik Tok and other short form video sites	4%	17%	14%	64%	1%
X or Twitter	6%	14%	7%	72%	2%
Facebook	4%	19%	16%	61%	0%
Podcasts	11%	21%	11%	57%	1%
You Tube	10%	21%	13%	55%	1%
Epoch Times or other digital news services	7%	24%	11%	56%	2%
Alternative cable news services like One American News Network and News Nation	6%	14%	11%	68%	2%
Talking with friends and family	<b>21%</b>	45%	21%	13%	0%
Truth Social	3%	12%	7%	76%	3%
Local News	<b>20%</b>	34%	19%	27%	0%

This data is also an important reminder that most voters consume political news in a far more disparate and informal way than many people imagine. For all the handwringing over social media, majorities of voters say they spend “no time” consuming political news on Tik Tok (64%), X/Twitter (72%), Facebook (61%), or Truth Social (76%). For all the partisan complaints on both sides about cable news, majorities of voters indicate they spend “no time” consuming political news on Fox News (52%), MSNBC (54%) or alternative cable news services (68%). The Washington Post had a significant and public upheaval in the newsroom over their decision to not endorse a Presidential candidate – 59% of voters say they spend “no time” consuming political news from major newspapers. The final weeks of the campaign saw much paid media attention to the appearances of Trump and Harris on popular podcasts and Harris’s decision to not go on a popular podcast – fully 57% of voters say they spend “no time” consuming political news from podcasts.

From this data, it is clear that cultivating relationships with key local news outlets and having well informed opinion leaders supporting your campaign are the most impactful ways to communicate with much of the electorate.

### **Conclusion**

*“... a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace.”*

Ronald Reagan

The success of the United States experiment with representative democracy should be a cause for massive optimism. Our nation and our government have survived a war in 1812 with the most powerful empire on earth, a Civil War, involvement in two World Wars, contentious debates over civil rights for women and for minorities, massive economic upheavals, a Cold War, and a variety of colorful and quirky leaders. Through all of these changes, representative democracy has survived and the United States has thrived.



This data shows that even after a tumultuous and contentious Presidential campaign, many desires of voters remain static. They want their leaders to work together to tackle the major problems facing the country, even if the solutions are imperfect and even if these solutions are created through compromise. Ronald Reagan was fond of the metaphor of the United States as a “shining city upon a hill” to describe the sense of welcome and hope our country exudes. As campaigns draw sharp contrasts and it becomes easier than ever for voters to insulate themselves with political news to suit their predispositions, it becomes all the more important for our political leaders to reach out to the colleagues and seek solutions to keep the United States in its place as beacon of hope for the world.

**Final note on methodology/election outcome:** As of this writing on Monday November 19, Trump has 76.6+ million votes, a substantial increase over the 74.2+ million votes he received in 2020. In contrast, Harris has 74+ million votes, a substantial decrease over the 81+ million votes that President Biden received in 2020. This 2024 electorate is a smaller and different one that participated in the 2020 election. This difference is notable and important when assessing gains and losses among demographic groups between the two Presidential elections.