



Public Wise

Research & Education Fund

The War in Gaza: Voter Dynamics and Insights for 2024

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction and Research Objectives

This spring, Public Wise embarked on an ambitious research project to quantitatively and qualitatively assess how the War in Gaza might affect voter participation and election outcomes in November. We decided to gather quantitative data to help us understand the true size and scope of the impact that the War in Gaza may have on voter turnout as well as qualitative data to understand the contours of voter opinion among some key constituencies that are thought to be at highest risk of sitting out the election.

While this project may initially seem a bit outside the typical scope of Public Wise's research purview, we have previously conducted research to better understand non-voters including what factors have led to eligible voters choosing not to participate in an election. Past findings have shown that the decision not to vote is not typically born out of apathy, as the dominant narrative suggests. Instead, high levels of disillusionment and lack of trust in government are major barriers to individuals turning out to vote. Our ultimate goal with this project was to determine how many voters, and who, are at risk of sitting out this election, and explore whether there are effective messages that could persuade them to remain in the electorate.



Key Findings

Vote Intentions

- **11% of 2020 Biden voters nationally are not committed to Biden for the 2024 election, but have persuadable vote intentions.** We define someone as having “persuadable vote intentions” if they are not currently planning to vote for Biden but still planning to vote, or are considering voting and are undecided about for whom.
- **Another 9% of 2020 Biden voters are not committed to Biden and have less persuadable vote intentions.** We define individuals as having “less persuadable vote intentions” if they plan not to vote or plan to vote for someone other than Biden (Trump or a third party candidate).
- **9% of 2020 Trump voters nationally are not committed to Trump for the 2024 election, but have persuadable vote intentions.** Again, we define someone as having “persuadable vote intentions” if they are not currently planning to vote for Trump but still planning to vote, or are considering voting and are undecided about for whom.
- **Another 8% of 2020 Trump voters nationally are not committed to Trump for the 2024 election and have less persuadable vote intentions.** 5% said they either will vote for Biden, 2% will vote for someone else, and 1% will definitely or probably not vote.

Biden’s Handling of the War in Gaza

- **Approval of Biden’s handling of the War in Gaza is lower among Biden 2020 voters who are not yet committed to voting for him.** Among 2020 Biden voters, disapproval of Biden’s handling was largely due to wanting the US to stay out of the conflict or perceptions that he is favoring the Israelis too much.
- **Among Trump 2020 voters, just 9% of 2024 committeds approve of Biden’s handling of the conflict, while 28% of 2024 defectors approve.** This may point to Trump 2024 defectors holding more moderate views overall and less animosity towards President Biden.
- **Among Trump 2020 voters, a plurality of both 2024 committeds (42%) and 2024 defectors (38%) believe the U.S. should stay out of the conflict.**

Single Issue Voting

- **The War in Gaza is unlikely to be the centrally defining issue of the 2024 Presidential election.** Among both 2020 Biden Voters and 2020 Trump voters, 2% indicate that the War in Gaza is so important to them that it could determine their vote in November. It is one important issue among a bundle of issues, including abortion, cost of living, and protecting democracy, that are shaping voters’ November 2024 intentions. For certain voters, the War in Gaza may constitute a tipping point issue.

- **A plurality of 2020 Trump Voters (37%) say that immigration/border security is so important to them that they would vote for or against a candidate based solely on that issue.** This is more than double the response of any other issue, including inflation/cost of living, which was selected by 18% of 2020 Trump voters.
- **Younger voters are more likely to cast their vote solely based on the War in Gaza, but they are also more open to casting their vote based on other single issues.** Among 2020 Biden voters, young voters have the lowest level of support for Biden going into 2024 compared to other age brackets. A plurality of young 2020 Biden voters indicated that cost of living and inflation is the issue that could influence their vote.

Qualitative Findings

In our qualitative study of swing-state among Jewish voters, Muslim voters, Arab-American voters, Gen Z voters, and Black progressives in the South, we found that, indeed, many individuals within these populations have strong opinions about the War in Gaza, but it is not the only thing on their mind. Cost of living and inflation, immigration, and abortion, are also impacting their decision about who to support and whether or not to vote in November.

We offered three messages and attempted to gauge which, if any, these populations found persuasive in the context of encouraging someone to show up to vote in November. The first message, which we are calling “Me and My Family, Not a Single Issue,” received the most positive feedback. This message acknowledges that there are many issues that affect us, and voters have to weigh the candidates’ track records and cast their vote for the person that reflects what is best for them and for their family. Many respondents appreciated the personal appeal and that it centered the voter and the voters’ loved ones, not politicians.

The other message, which we shorthanded as, “Pick the Lesser of Two Evils” performed less well and received much more critical feedback from respondents.

METHODS, SURVEYS, AND SAMPLING

This research project rests on two pillars of data.

First, in partnership with YouGov, we conducted a nationally representative survey of 5,125 registered voters with oversamples from Pennsylvania (n = 519), Michigan (n = 520), and Wisconsin (n = 501). Quotas and weights were implemented to be representative of the national registered voter population on age, gender, race and ethnicity, 2020 Presidential vote, party identification, voter turnout, and region. The weighted margin of error for the base sample is 1.4%.

Our survey differs somewhat from many other surveys conducted on this issue in that we offered more diversity of possible responses than other public polls in our questions about views on the War in Gaza to better capture the nuances of public opinion on this issue among registered and likely voters. We also ask specifically about single-issue voting, rather than just what issues matter to voters generally. This offers voters an opportunity to acknowledge that many issues may matter to them, but also specify if there is one single issue that could affect their vote.

Secondly, working with PSB insights, we conducted online bulletin boards (also known as qual boards), which are asynchronous, online, one-on-one interviews, in eight swing states: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, in order to better understand how Jewish Americans (n = 14), Muslim Americans (n = 13), Arab Americans (n = 13), 18+ Gen Z Americans (n = 15), and Black progressives in the South (n = 14) are feeling about the War in Gaza and other issues affecting their vote intentions.

These populations were selected because they're thought to have the highest likelihood of voting based on the War in Gaza in November. Beyond the criteria listed above, participants' demographics varied by age, gender, income, education, and state. It is also worth noting that the categories above were chosen as baseline quotas according to one characteristic, but many of our participants also had characteristics of more than one of our target categories, so for example, we had participants who were both Muslim and Black progressive, or who were both Gen Z and Jewish.

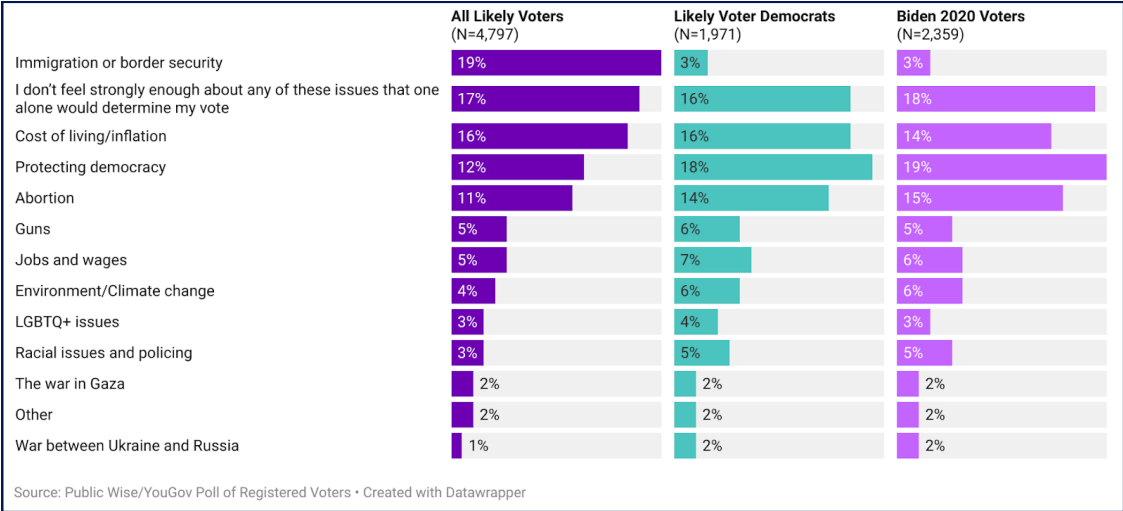
In addition to asking about views on single-issue voting, vote intentions in November, and views on Gaza, democracy, and other issues, we also undertook message analysis in these online bulletin boards to better understand what kind of messaging could persuade "protest nonvoters" or "single-issue voters" to remain in the electorate in 2024.

SINGLE ISSUE VOTING

Our first analysis focuses on how many voters might consider voting exclusively based on their feelings about the War in Gaza. We offered respondents a list of issues and asked whether any one issue on the list is so important that they would vote for or against a candidate based on that issue. Among likely voters, most respondents did choose an issue, although a substantial percentage of every group said that no one issue was so important that it could determine their vote.

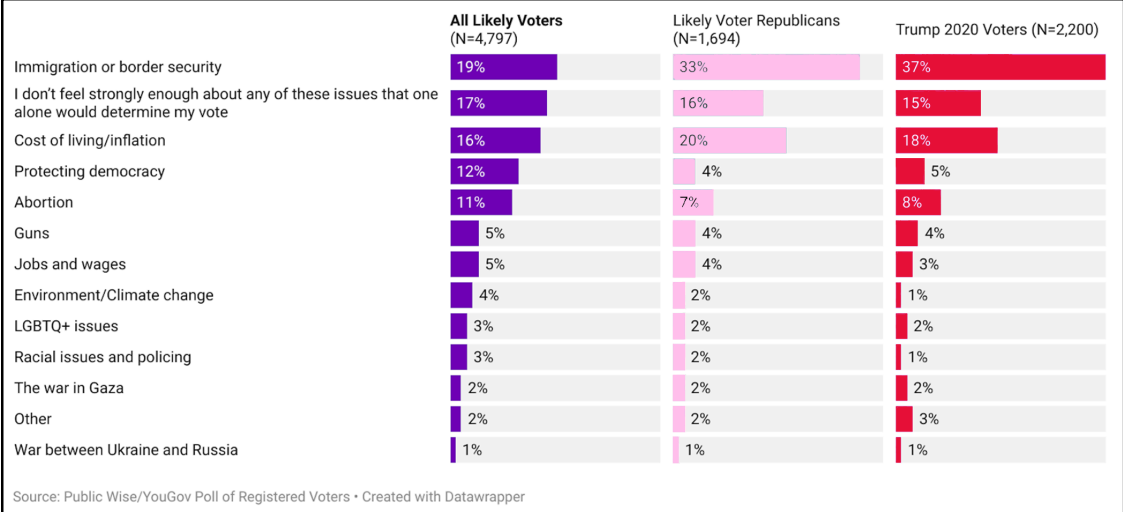
Likely Voters - Likely Voter Democrats - Biden 2020 Voters

Please indicate if there is any one issue on this list that is so important to you that you would vote for or against a candidate based only on their position on that issue?



Likely voters - Likely voter Republicans - Trump 2020 voters

Please indicate if there is any one issue on this list that is so important to you that you would vote for or against a candidate based only on their position on that issue?



For all likely voters, immigration or border security is the most chosen single priority issue followed by inflation, but this is heavily driven by GOP voters: one-third of likely Republican voters said immigration is the single issue that could change their vote, and nearly 40% of Trump 2020 voters said the same. Democratic likely voters were most likely to choose protecting democracy and inflation, while Biden 2020 voters were most likely to choose protecting democracy and abortion as their single-issue choices.

2% of likely voters indicated that Gaza is a singular priority that could sway their vote, and this 2% figure was consistent across different partisan IDs and 2020 vote history. Our analysis found that a majority of these voters disapprove of Biden's handling of Gaza. Around half of Gaza priority voters specifically disapprove of Biden's handling because they think he favors Israelis too much whereas just around 10% disapprove because they think he favors Palestinians too much.¹

In our *high-risk electoral groups*² from the online bulletin boards, we asked specifically what participants thought of single-issue voting. Many respondents approach elections holistically and do not see themselves as voting based on just one issue, like Louise, a Gen Z Democrat from Michigan:

I have not considered voting based on only one issue because I try to look at all issues that are important to me and see what the candidates say about each one. I would maybe consider this [voting based on a single issue] if both candidates are similar yet disagree on one or two issues. This could be any issue but I would especially look at ones most important to me like gun control and reproductive rights.

We also heard from several respondents who had the War in Gaza as a singular issue that could sway their vote. Mohamed E., a Muslim American, Gen X, Michigan Democrat, said he would be unlikely to vote for Biden because he believes the President favors Israel too much:

Normally I think [single issue voting] is irresponsible. I understand that there's usually 2-3 issues that sway people... A union person that votes for a candidate who [disagrees] with his/her right to collectively bargain, but will vote for them because that candidate is pro gun or pro life is not right. But I find myself doing that. I don't think I could support Trump or a Republican running for senate. But I could vote for a 3rd party candidate or leave it uncommitted and vote for other candidates in local offices.

¹ Because the number of single issue Gaza voters is so small (n=90), we have rather large margins of error for our analysis of Biden's handling within this subgroup. With 95% confidence intervals, we found that 52% (42-62% CI) of Gaza priority voters disapprove of Biden's handling because they think he favors Israelis too much, 7% (2-13% CI) disapprove because they want the US out of the conflict, and 10% (4-16% CI) disapprove because they think he favors Palestinians too much.

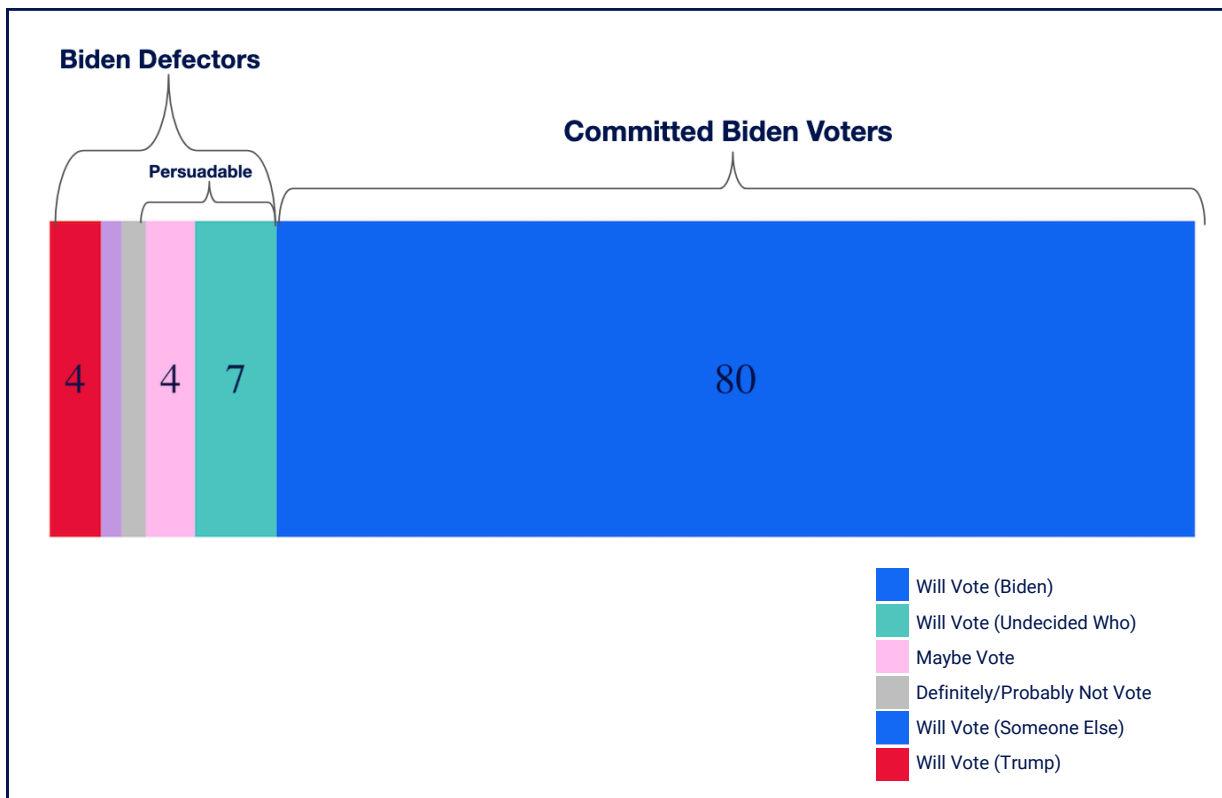
² Throughout the report we use a few shorthand terms for various sub groups in our data analysis. While we define these terms when we first introduce them, we also offer a section with all the key terms at the end of the report.

ANALYSIS OF 2020 BIDEN AND 2020 TRUMP VOTERS

ELECTORAL INTENTIONS

Our second analysis focuses on Americans who voted for Biden in 2020 and Americans who voted for Trump in 2020. We look at how these two populations are intending to vote in November 2024, their views on Gaza and Biden’s handling, and how these issues are correlated.

Vote Intent of 2020 Biden Voters

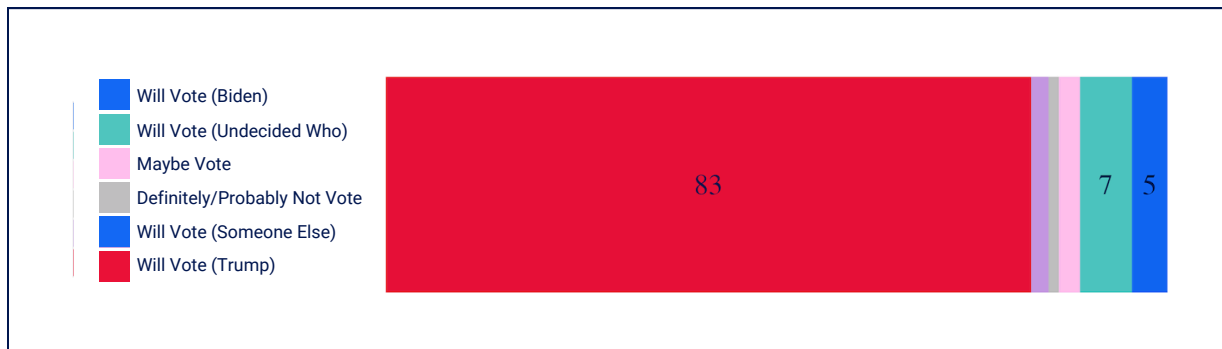


Source: YouGov Public Wise Survey of 5125 Registered Voters; 2495 Biden 2020 Voters

First, among Biden 2020 voters, we found that 80% are committed Biden voters, that is, they say they definitely or probably intend to vote for president in 2024 and that they will vote for Biden. Trump 2020 voters stated statistically similar levels of recommitment, with 83% saying they intended to vote for Trump again in 2024.

We found that 20% of Biden 2020 voters are *Biden defectors*, that is they previously voted for Biden but haven't committed to voting for him again in 2024. We classified Biden defectors into categories of being *more persuadable* or *less persuadable*, depending on their response about vote intent. Those who said they would "maybe" vote (with candidate unspecified) or that they would "probably" or "definitely" vote but had not decided for whom yet, we classified as *more persuadable Biden defectors*. This group is 11% of all 2020 Biden voters. We classified those who said they were committed to voting for Trump, another candidate, or would "definitely" or "probably not" vote as *less persuadable Biden defectors*. This group is 9% of all 2020 Biden voters.

Vote Intent of 2020 Trump Voters



Source: YouGov Public Wise Survey of 5125 Registered Voters; 2200 Trump 2020 Voters

As for Trump 2020 voters, 83% are committed Trump voters in 2024, leaving 17% as Trump defectors. 8% of Trump 2020 voters are less persuadable defectors, that is they either will vote for Biden (5%), will vote for someone else (2%), or will definitely or probably will not vote (1%). Another 9% are persuadable Trump voters: either they will maybe vote (2.7%) or will vote but are undecided for whom (6.6%).

Electoral Intentions in Battleground State Oversamples

	2020 Biden Voters	2020 Trump Voters
Michigan	76% committed 10% less persuadable defector 14% persuadable defector	82% committed 4% less persuadable defector 14% persuadable defector
Pennsylvania	80% committed 6% less persuadable defector 14% persuadable defector	83% committed 7% less persuadable defector 10% persuadable defector
Wisconsin	81% committed 6% less persuadable defector 13% persuadable defector	75% committed 11% less persuadable defector 14% persuadable defector

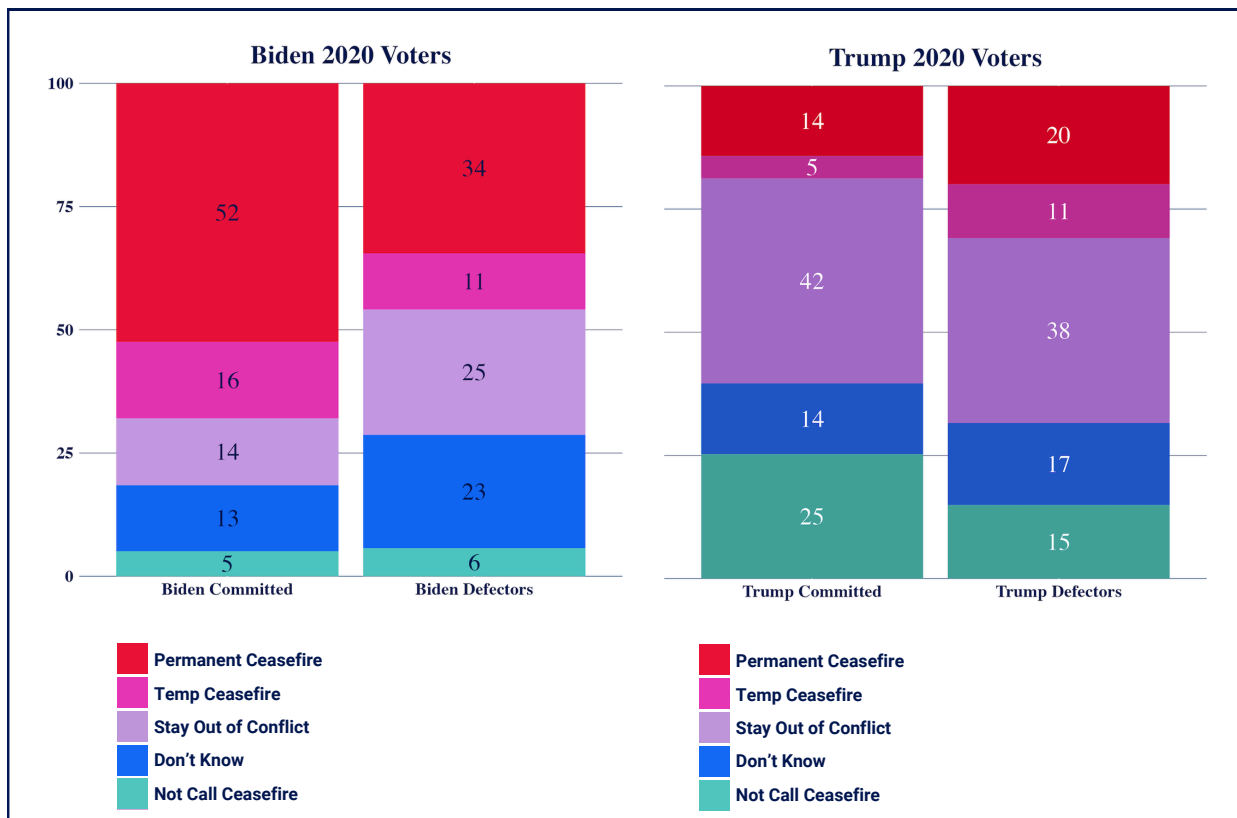
In our battleground state oversamples, we saw slightly higher percentages of persuadable Biden defectors: 13% in Wisconsin, 14% in Pennsylvania, and 14% in Michigan (compared to 11% nationally). Biden 2020 voters in Michigan were less likely to re-commit to him than they were at the national level (76% versus 80%).

Trump 2020 voters in Michigan and Pennsylvania were roughly as likely to recommit their vote to him in 2024 as at the national level, but were much less likely in Wisconsin, where only three-fourths (75%) of Trump 2020 voters said they planned to vote for him again this November. Meanwhile, greater percentages of Trump 2020 voters in Michigan and Wisconsin fell into the category of persuadable defectors than at the national level.

VIEWS ON US ROLE IN GAZA

For both presidential candidates, we divided up their 2020 voters into committed and defectors to see how these groups' respective views differ on the role the US should take in Gaza. We asked, "Which one of the following positions do you think the U.S. government should take with regards to the war in Gaza?" and we offered a range of five options, including call for a permanent ceasefire, call for a temporary ceasefire, stay out of the conflict, don't know, and do not call for a ceasefire.

What Role Should the US Take in Gaza?



Source: YouGov Public Wise Survey of 5125 Registered Voters; 2495 Biden 2020 Voters and 2200 Trump 2020 Voters

We found that despite Biden not having yet called for a ceasefire at the time our survey was in the field, the vast majority of Biden committed voters are supportive of a ceasefire solution (68% across permanent and temporary ceasefire responses) and are more supportive of a ceasefire than Biden defectors.

Among Biden defectors, 45% support a ceasefire solution, and nearly half are unsure or would prefer to stay out. Fully one quarter are unsure about what to do in the conflict and another 23% would prefer the US to stay out of it.

The higher percentage of “don’t know” responses suggests that the Biden defector population may be, on the whole, lower information voters. We ran some separate analysis to investigate that possibility and found that Biden defectors are much less likely to say they follow what’s going on in government and public affairs compared to committed Biden voters. 12% of defectors say they don’t follow government affairs or politics at all, compared to 3% of Biden committed voters.

Biden defectors also have slightly less confidence in their ability to evaluate the US government’s position on the War in Gaza: half of defectors (51%) feel somewhat or very confident in their knowledge to evaluate the US position in Gaza compared to two-thirds of committed Biden voters. Yet large majorities of both groups had heard some or a lot about the war (73% defectors vs 86% of committed voters).

For Trump 2020 voters, we did not find notable differences between Trump committed and defectors in terms of what the US should do in regards to Gaza. In comparison to Biden voters, Trump voters voiced much higher levels of support for the US staying out of the conflict, with 42% of Trump committed and 38% of Trump defectors choosing this option. Trump voters were also much more supportive than Biden voters of not calling a ceasefire at all – a quarter of Trump committed thought this should be the US course of action.

In our asynchronous online interviews, we heard from different high-risk electoral constituencies about their views on the US’ role in the War in Gaza. Here are some examples of what we heard from different types of voters.

Rahim is a Gen X, Asian and Muslim man from rural Georgia; he is an Independent voter who leans Democrat and voted against Trump in the last two elections. He articulated the view of wanting the US to stay out of the conflict altogether, an option that was chosen by a high percentage of our respondents across different political orientations and groups, but has not often been offered as an option in much of the polling of US public opinion on Gaza:

Firstly, with the state of the economy and with the aid we already give to other countries, we need to spend that money at home. We've already given Ukraine millions of dollars and now we've given more to the effort in Gaza. We have to stop policing the world and take care of our citizens especially our veterans. In addition, we have aging infrastructure that needs attention.

Hindy is a Gen X, White, Jewish Woman from Georgia who identifies as an Independent and leans Republican. She agreed with the quarter of Trump committed who wanted continued US support for Israel in its current course of action in Gaza.

I am Jewish and very Pro-Israel! The terrorism and torture that occurred on October 7 and the hostage issue is unforgivable and needs to be taken care of with military and financial support. I will vote for the candidate who supports Israel! I have to support the ones [candidates] who support Israel and will continue to fight anti-semitism.

Looking at our swing state oversamples³, we note similar trends, with Biden committeds showing higher support for ceasefire than Biden defectors. In Michigan, a higher percentage of Biden defectors than committeds want the US to stay out of the conflict. As at the national level, a plurality of Biden voters across all categories in all states started a preference for the US to call a ceasefire. Our smaller sample sizes in the battleground states made it difficult to establish the statistical significance of differences for other responses.

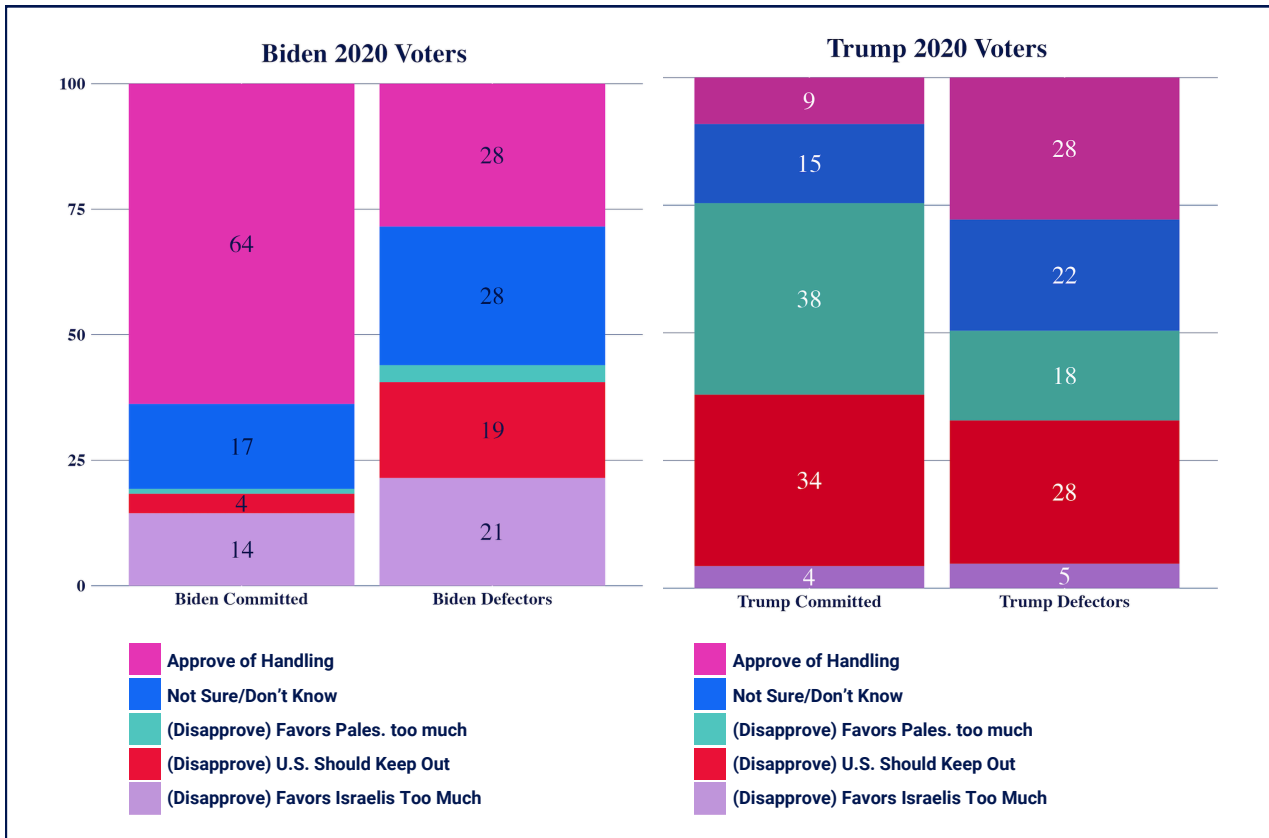
A plurality of both categories of Trump 2020 voters in every oversample state said their preference was for the US to stay out of the conflict altogether, and Trump 2020 voters in battleground states were much more supportive of not calling a ceasefire than Biden 2020 voters overall. As at the national level, we did not find many notable differences in regards to Trump committeds and Trump defectors in regards to views on Biden's handling of Gaza. In Michigan, Trump defectors were less likely to support not calling for a ceasefire than Trump committeds

³ See appendix for battleground state oversamples.

BIDEN'S HANDLING OF GAZA WAR

Once again, we divided up the candidates' committed and defectors to see how their views of Biden's handling of the War in Gaza differed.

Biden's handling and US role in Gaza



Source: YouGov Public Wise Survey of 5125 Registered Voters; 2495 Biden 2020 Voters and 2200 Trump 2020 Voters

Among 2020 Biden voters, approval varies substantially between those who intend to vote again for Biden in 2024 and those who haven't recommitted to Biden. While most committed Biden voters approve of his handling of the War in Gaza, under a third of Biden defectors do. Additionally, nearly a third of Biden defectors don't know how Biden is handling the conflict. The most common reason for disapproving of his handling of the conflict for both groups is due to favoring the Israelis too much. Notice that 40% of Biden voters say they disapprove because they either want the US to stay out or they say Biden favors the Israelis too much.

Mohammed K., a middle-aged Muslim Democrat in Michigan, said Biden's handling of the conflict might sway him away from voting in November:

I voted in 2016 for Hillary Clinton because I felt Trump was unqualified/unfit to be president. In 2020 I voted for Biden since Trump completely botched the pandemic and did not navigate the country well when we needed competence the most. In 2024, I do not know who I will vote for as of yet, however, the situation in the Middle East will be a factor in who I choose. I have voted in every election in I [sic] was able to in [sic] 1996. I will say that abstaining in 2024 has crossed my mind.

Jenean, a Jewish Gen X Democrat from Florida, similarly said the war could sway her vote:

I will most certainly vote regardless, but my decision will be swayed to the leader that has a hand in ending the war. Whatever candidate wants to either have a hand in ending the War or will send more humanitarian aid to those that need it.

Among Trump 2020 voters, there were notable differences in the views on Biden's handling of the War in Gaza among those who have committed to him again in 2024 and those who are defecting from Trump. For instance, approval of Biden's handling of the War in Gaza is very low (9%) among Trump committed, but more than a quarter of Trump defectors approve of Biden's handling. Furthermore, while only a fifth of Trump defectors disapproved of Biden's handling because they think he favors Palestinians too much, this percentage was doubled for Trump committed. Consistent with our findings on Trump 2020 voters' views of what the US should do in Gaza, large minorities of both Trump defectors and Trump committed said they disapproved of Biden's handling specifically because they want the US to stay out of the conflict.

From our high-risk electoral group, Chere, a Black, Muslim, Gen X, conservative Republican from Florida articulated the view of opposing U.S. support to Israel from a fiscally conservative standpoint:

"So far the US has spent billions of tax dollars to support this war that has been going on for more than 60 years. Tax dollars that can essentially help the American community." She said that if both Trump and Biden supported the continuation of the War in Gaza, she planned to vote third party.

In our battleground state oversamples, we note similar splits in approval rates between Biden committed and Biden defectors, with majorities of committed voters in every state approving of Biden's handling of the War, and only small percentages of Biden defectors approving. We also note that around a third of Biden defectors in each of our oversampled swing states say they don't know or are unsure how Biden is handling the war. Extremely small percentages of every Biden 2020 group in every state believe that Biden is favoring the Palestinians too much.

IEWS OF BIDEN'S HANDLING IN STATE OVERSAMPLES

Table A1: US Role in Gaza in Michigan Subsample

Biden's Handling	Biden Committed	Biden Defectors	Trump Committed	Trump Defectors
Ceasefire	71% (66-76)	44% (28-59)	18% (13-23)	19% (8-30)
Don't know	16% (12-20)	23% (9-36)	9% (5-12)	22% (10-33)
US stay out	10% (7-13)	28% (14-43)	45% (39-51)	47% (33-61)
Not call ceasefire	3% (1-5)	5% (0-12)	28% (23-34)	13% (3-22)
<i>N of Row</i>	242	36	182	35

Source: Public Wise/YouGov Survey of Registered Voters; Michigan Oversample n = 520; 90% conf. interval

Table A2: US Role in Gaza in Pennsylvania Subsample

Biden's Handling	Biden Committed	Biden Defectors	Trump Committed	Trump Defectors
Ceasefire	68% (63-74)	61% (44-77)	22% (17-27)	27% (15-40)
Don't know	15% (11-20)	27% (12-42)	12% (8-16)	17% (7-28)
US stay out	14% (9-18)	12% (1-23)	39% (33-44)	28% (16-41)
Not call ceasefire	3% (1-5)	0% (0-0)	27% (22-32)	27% (14-39)
<i>N of Row</i>	280	35	203	34

Source: Public Wise/YouGov Survey of Registered Voters; Pennsylvania Oversample n = 519; 90% conf. interval

Table A3: US Role in Gaza in Wisconsin Subsample

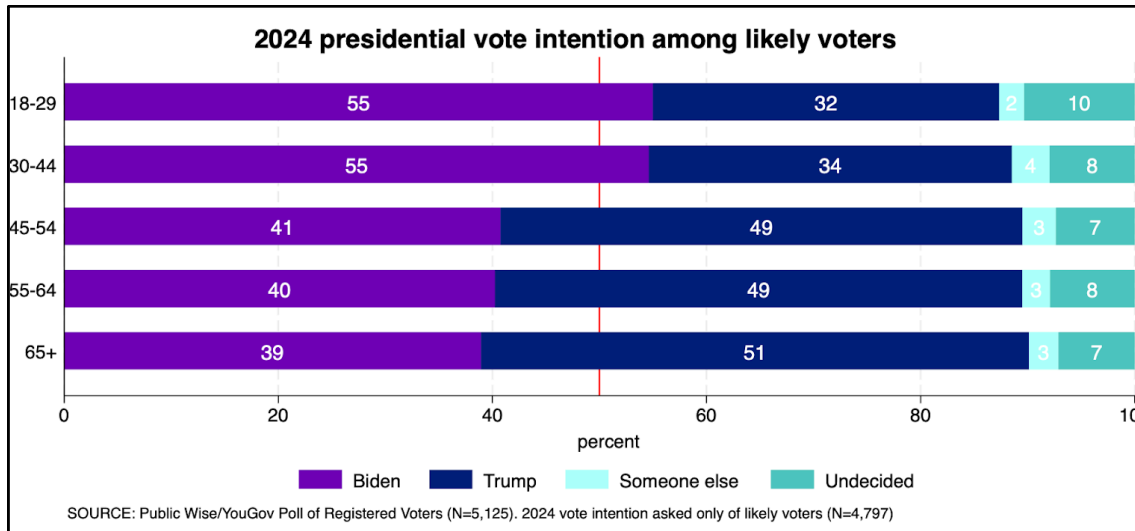
Biden's Handling	Biden Committed	Biden Defectors	Trump Committed	Trump Defectors
Ceasefire	71% (65-76)	47% (34-60)	15% (11-20)	29% (18-41)
Don't know	19% (15-24)	33% (20-45)	11% (7-14)	17% (8-26)
US stay out	7% (4-11)	17% (7-27)	49% (43-55)	36% (24-48)
Not call ceasefire	3% (1-5)	3% (0-7)	25% (20-31)	18% (9-27)
<i>N of Row</i>	244	39	175	46

Source: Public Wise/YouGov Survey of Registered Voters; Wisconsin Oversample n = 501; 90% conf. interval

Trump 2020 voters in our battleground states all had low levels of approval of Biden's handling of the war. Like at the national level, a somewhat larger percentage of Trump defectors than committed in Michigan and Pennsylvania, but not in Wisconsin, approved of Biden's handling. We also found no difference in the percentage of Trump committed and defectors in Wisconsin who thought that Biden was favoring the Palestinians too much, whereas a higher percentage of Trump committed held this view in Michigan and Pennsylvania, similar to what we found at the national level. As at the national level, substantial minorities of Trump 2020 voters (around a third) in all three battleground states disapproved of Biden's handling because they wanted the US to stay out of the conflict altogether.

YOUTH VOTE ANALYSIS

Especially with the recent events around campus protests, we wanted to undertake a special analysis of young voters and how the War in Gaza might be shaping their voting intentions specifically.

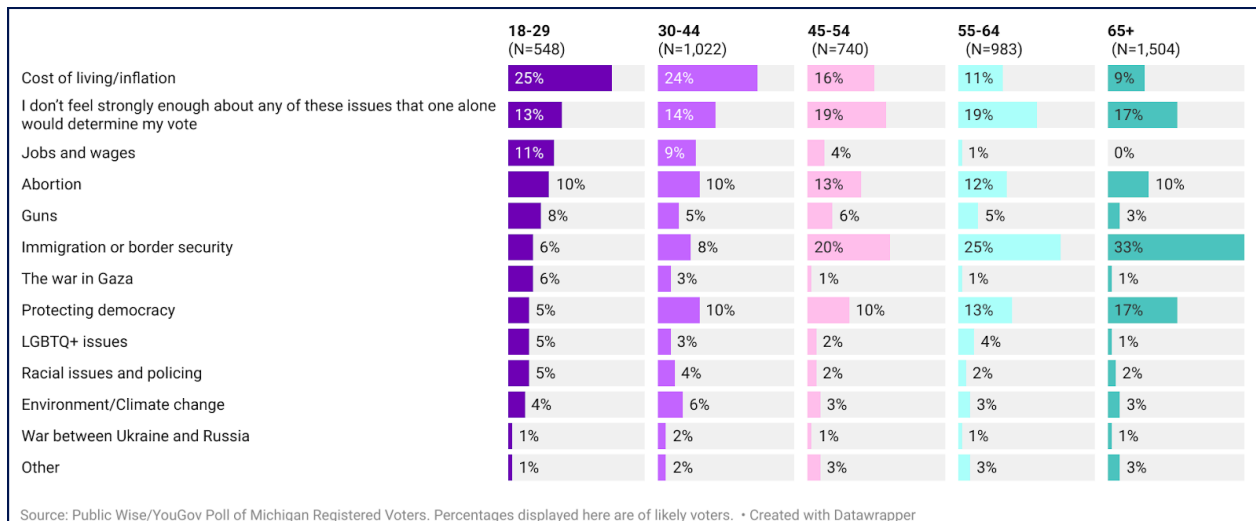


First, we note that likely voters from our two youngest age brackets, those aged from 18 to 29 and 30 to 44, are more likely than not to say that they will vote for Biden in 2024. These age groups also have higher rates of being undecided relative to other age brackets: 10% of likely voters under 30 are undecided who they will vote for in 2024, compared to 7% of those over 65.

To compare these numbers to the age breakdown from the previous presidential election: In 2020, Biden earned the vote of 59% of 18-to-29 year-olds and, in our poll, he would receive 55%. Trump earned the vote of 35% of 18-to-29 year-olds in 2020 and, in our poll, he would receive 32%. With one-tenth of these young likely voters still undecided as to their choice, which way they shift will matter a great deal in November.

We also looked at the breakdown of potential single-issue priorities among likely voters by age.

Please indicate if there is any one issue on this list that is so important to you that you would vote for or against a candidate based only on their position on that issue?



For likely voters under 45, a quarter say they will base their vote on a candidate's position on cost of living/inflation, whereas among older voters (those over 55), the most important single issue is immigration or border security.

The youngest voters were the most willing to vote on a single issue in general. While economic issues and abortion were the top issue priorities for this age bracket overall, this age bracket had the largest percentage (6%) naming the War in Gaza as the single issue that could influence their vote.

Many of the young respondents from our high risk electoral constituencies voiced the importance of the economy to their vote. Anna, a Gen-Z, Hispanic Woman from Rural Georgia; who is a Democrat-leaning Independent, said:

The cost of anything now has gone up and it's scary to think that in the future we won't be able to afford anything. For future generations, there won't be an option to buy a house or car just because it's very expensive. I feel like it's hard to get a decent paying job or even a job in general. Other [sic] have to work two jobs or more just to make ends meet . I feel like inflation was caused because of the war that has been going on . The resources that we depend on are becoming more scarce. Our economy is getting worse with all the things that have been happening.

Nakia, a Gen Z, Black, Christian, Democrat in North Carolina brought up some of the top priorities we saw among young Biden 2020 voters in our survey:

I think the main ones I would say would and could potentially sway my decision to vote or abstain from voting would be the issues surrounding the economy as well as the issue with reproductive rights, but I definitely think the War in Gaza would be a close third. I feel like all three of those decisions and issues really need to be dealt with now at this moment, and if there was a political figure that mention [sic] otherwise, then I would immediately change my decision on who to vote for.

Jenean, a Jewish Gen X Democrat from Florida, similarly said the war could sway her vote:

I will most certainly vote regardless, but my decision will be swayed to the leader that has a hand in ending the war. Whatever candidate wants to either have a hand in ending the War or will send more humanitarian aid to those that need it.

Among Trump 2020 voters, there were notable differences in the views on Biden's handling of the War in Gaza among those who have committed to him again in 2024 and those who are defecting from Trump. For instance, approval of Biden's handling of the War in Gaza is very low (9%) among Trump committeds, but more than a quarter of Trump defectors approve of Biden's handling. Furthermore, while only a fifth of Trump defectors disapproved of Biden's handling because they think he favors Palestinians too much, this percentage was doubled for Trump committeds. Consistent with our findings on Trump 2020 voters' views of what the US should do in Gaza, large minorities of both Trump defectors and Trump committeds said they disapproved of Biden's handling specifically because they want the US to stay out of the conflict.

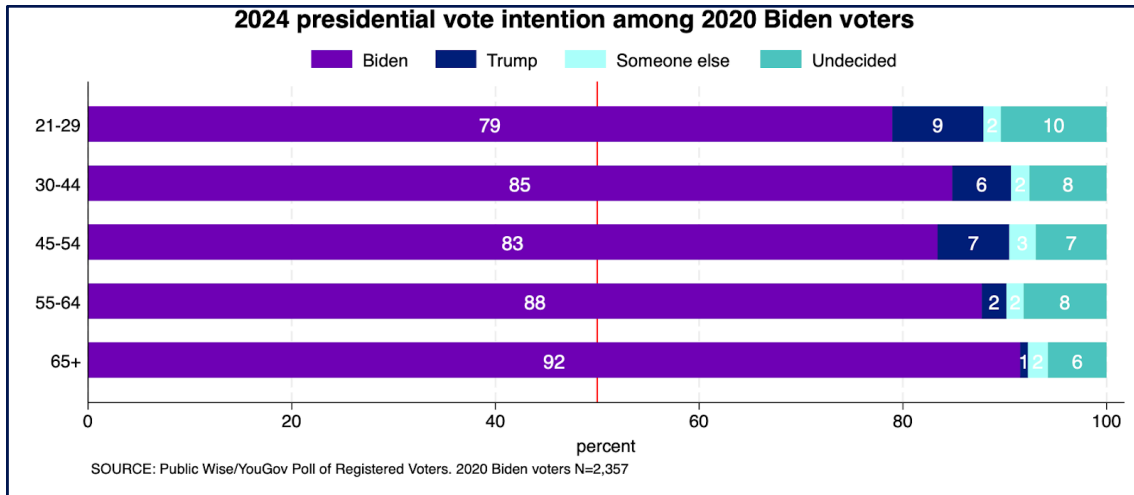
From our high-risk electoral group, Chere, a Black, Muslim, Gen X, conservative Republican from Florida articulated the view of opposing U.S. support to Israel from a fiscally conservative standpoint:

"So far the US has spent billions of tax dollars to support this war that has been going on for more than 60 years. Tax dollars that can essentially help the American community."

She said that if both Trump and Biden supported the continuation of the War in Gaza, she planned to vote third party.

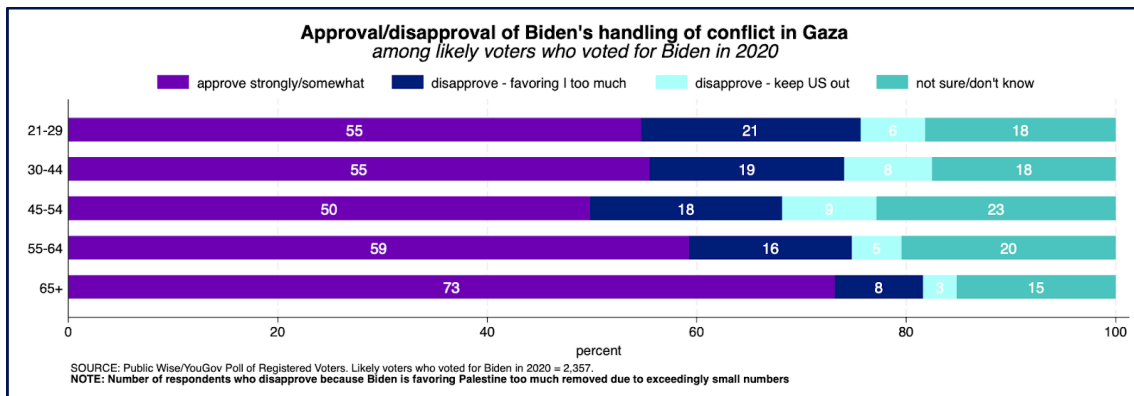
BIDEN 2020 YOUTH VOTE

What about the intentions of young voters who cast their votes for Biden in 2020?



Our analysis finds that compared to other age groups, young voters have the highest Biden defection rate, at 21%, with just under half of these young Biden defectors (9%) saying they intend to vote for Trump, and another half (10%) still deciding who will earn their vote in 2024.

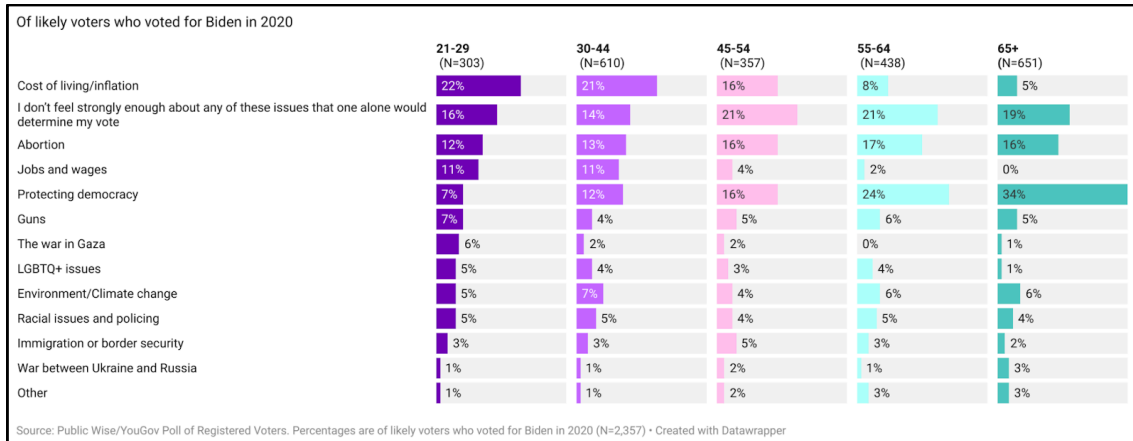
Next, we looked at how different age groups view Biden’s handling of the War in Gaza.



Among Biden 2020 voters, approval of Biden’s handling of the conflict has a somewhat u-shaped relationship with age – the age bracket with the lowest levels of approval is that of 45- to-54 year olds, just half of whom approve of his handling. This group also had the highest rates of saying they were not sure or did not know how Biden was handling the conflict. Older (65+) Biden 2020 voters have the highest levels of approval for Biden’s handling of the Gaza conflict, with around three-fourths voicing approval.

Across age brackets in this group of voters, the most common reason for disapproval is the belief that he is favoring Israel too much, and this was a more widely held view among younger age brackets, where one-fifth of former Biden voters disapproved for this reason. While we included an option for voicing disapproval because of the belief that Biden is favoring the Palestinians too much, this was chosen by less than 3% of any age bracket, which is why it does not show up in our graph.

Please indicate if there is any one issue on this list that is so important to you that you would vote for or against a candidate based only on their position on that issue?



As with likely voters, Biden 2020 voters under 30 were the most likely to say that the War in Gaza is the singular issue that could sway their vote (6%), though 16% said no single issue could determine their vote, and economic issues and abortion were the most chosen single issues in this age bracket.

Protecting democracy was chosen as a single issue priority at progressively higher rates moving from younger to older age brackets, with over a third of 65+ former Biden voters choosing this as the single issue which could determine their vote. Abortion was consistently one of the most-chosen single-issue priorities by Biden 2020 voters of all ages.

In our online asynchronous interviews with high-risk constituencies, the War in Gaza was brought up as an issue of concern for many of the young voters we talked to. More of our young respondents who did mention the War in Gaza sounded like Sophia, a Gen Z Democrat, Black & Arab American Woman from Michigan:

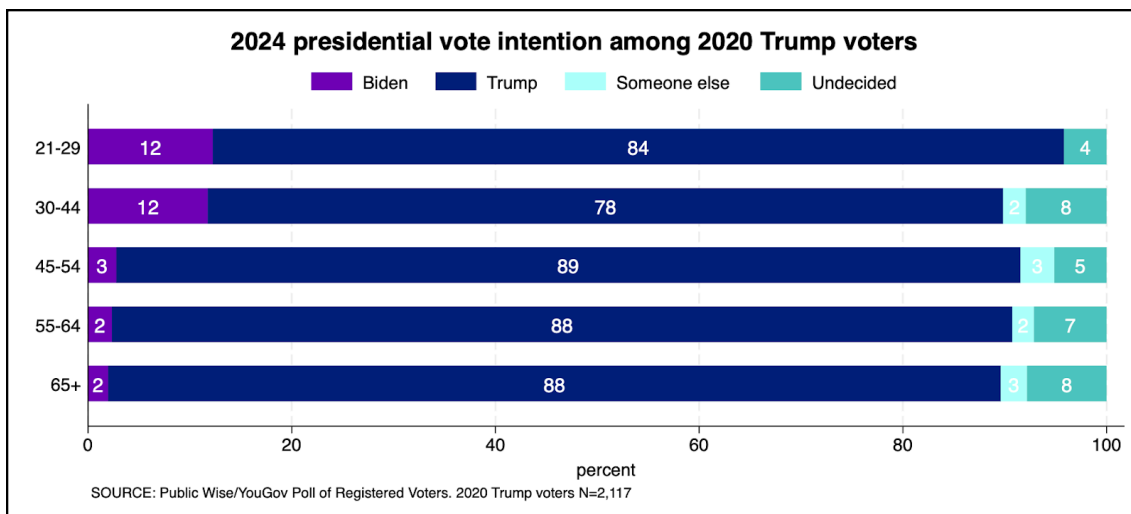
As I mentioned earlier, Joe Biden's (and the larger American government's) active participation in the genocide of Palestinians has eliminated themselves from the possibility of receiving my vote (Donald Trump was never going to get mine in the first place). When I choose who I will vote for, that candidate must be a loud activist against the crimes against humanity that are being done in Gaza, as well as against the Western governments and puppets that are making it happen!

But we also heard from young voters like Myles, a Gen Z Democrat, White Jewish Man from Pennsylvania:

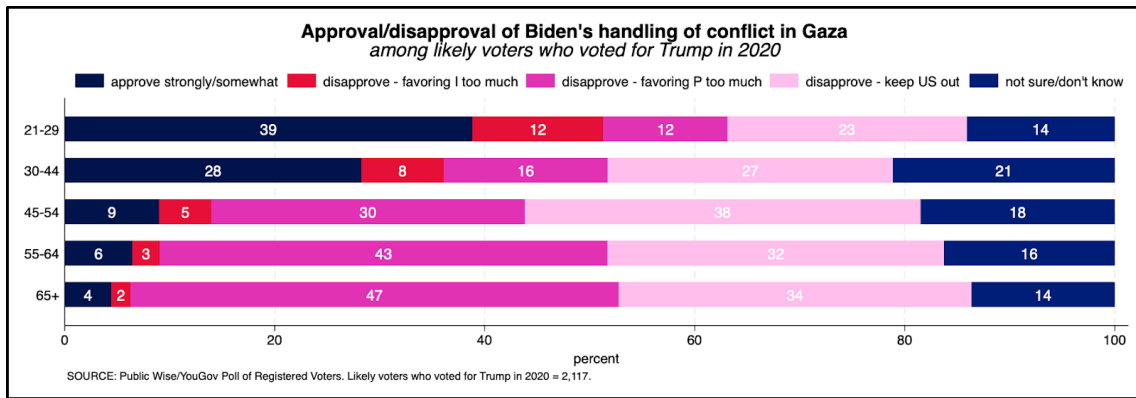
I am Jewish and I have experienced immense antisemitism from left groups at college. It is insane that this hatred is being deemed normal. I also have family in israel and it's very important to me that they're safe. Whoever supports israel the most, but also ensures we don't get directly involved [will impact who gets my vote].

TRUMP 2020 YOUTH VOTE ANALYSIS

Younger 2020 Trump voters are slightly less committed to voting for Trump again in 2024 compared to older age groups. 12% of 21-29 year olds and 30-44 year olds say they will vote for Biden in 2024. The youngest 2020 Trump voters have the smallest share of “undecided” voters compared to other age groups. **Overall, in the under-45 age brackets, larger percentages of Trump 2020 voters have flipped to Biden than the opposite.** Meanwhile, the percentage of undecided Biden 2020 voters decreases with age, but there is no clear age-based pattern in terms of undecideds among Trump voters.



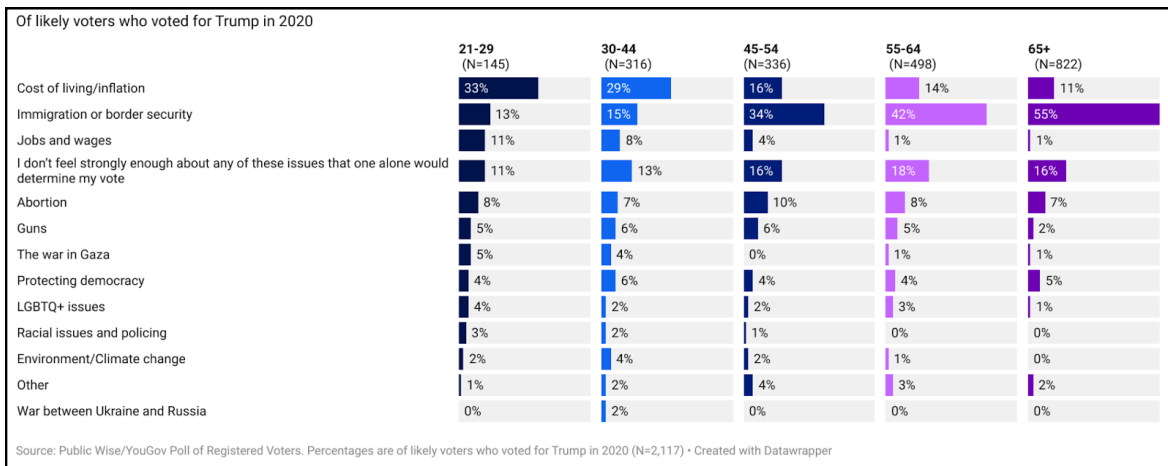
Older voters who voted for Trump in 2020 have the highest levels of disapproval of Biden’s handling of the conflict in Gaza, primarily because they think he is favoring Palestinians too much. Alternatively, younger age groups (under 55) who previously voted for Trump mostly disapprove because they think the US should stay out of the conflict all together. The youngest 2020 Trump voters have the highest level of approval for Biden’s handling of the conflict compared to other age groups.



Those who voted for Trump in 2020 are more likely to say they will base their vote on a single issue compared to Biden 2020 voters. Over half of the oldest voters (65+), 42% of 55-64 year olds, and a third of all 45-54 year olds say they will base their vote entirely on immigration or border security. Alternatively, the top single issue for younger Trump 2020 voters is COL/inflation, followed by border security/immigration.

Like Biden 2020 voters, younger Trump 2020 voters are more likely than other age groups to vote solely based on the War in Gaza. Still, only 5% (N=7) of the youngest Trump 2020 voters selected the war in Gaza as the single issue they will base their vote on, compared to 1% (N=8) of the oldest voters.

Please indicate if there is any one issue on this list that is so important to you that you would vote for or against a candidate based only on their position on that issue?



STRATEGIES TO PERSUADE VOTERS

We tested two main messages that might persuade potential “protest nonvoters” or “single-issue voters” to remain in the electorate. After sharing the messages, we asked respondents what they liked about these messages and what they didn’t.

Most Persuasive Message: “Me and My Family, Not a Single Issue”

There are a lot of issues that affect Americans – climate change, the economy, democracy, reproductive rights, and many issues in between – and when we go to the ballot box, no single issue is so much more important that it outweighs the rest. When I go to cast my vote in November, I will weigh the candidates’ track records and cast my vote for the person that reflects what is best for me and my family – not just on any single issue, but all of them.

People liked two aspects in particular about the “Me and My Family, Not a Single Issue” message: First, the personal appeal to them and family and second, the idea that voters should weigh many issues, not just one.

Stephen, an Arab American, Independent Millennial from Michigan said:

“I think this is a well-rounded and rational message. It makes me think of the whole picture instead of focusing on sensationalistic ‘gotcha’ points.” Rahim, a Muslim American, Gen X Liberal Independent from Georgia told us, *“I think it personalizes the reason to vote. When one goes to vote, you have to think about the benefits to yourself and loved ones.”*

But respondents also raised some concerns. In particular, a subtle distinction that seemed to arise in the discussion of the message was that while participants themselves often liked to weigh a variety of issues, they were sympathetic to the idea that some people might vote based on one important issue. Respondents also thought that the message “lacks a clear call to action.”

Kathleen, a Gen Z, Liberal, Asian-American Woman from Michigan explained:

“I think it can be seen as a bit like telling people what to do, even though [sic] in my opinion it is true. There might be some who disagree and are very narrowly focused on one issue.”

Tafarrah, a Black Progressive Millennial Woman from N. Carolina shared that view:

“I think that that could be looked at as coming off as a little offensive because there are people who believe that one single issue is important and enough to vote for that one single issue so I think that that’s not persuasive that’s kind of condescending.”

This leads us to conclude that while single issue voting is generally not very common, among non-single issue voters there is a great deal of empathy for individuals who may be single-issue voters for a cause that is very important to them.

Less Persuasive: “Pick the Lesser of Two Evils, Regardless of your Gaza Stance”

Recently an elected official said that even if you don’t agree with President Biden on his response to the war in Gaza, you should still vote for him because a vote for someone else or sitting out the election in protest actually benefits former President Trump in November. Regardless of where you stand on the war in Gaza or your political affiliation, what do you think about a get out the vote message that tells you to vote for someone you disagree with on an issue because the other candidate will be worse?

In terms of what did and didn’t resonate with this message: The more abstract "lesser of two evils" aspect of the argument received mixed reviews.

Sam, a Gen X Christian Arab American in Arizona expressed the view shared by many respondents that this message felt too fear-mongering:

“I think the whole message is not persuasive and tries to instill fear into voters. It does nothing to explain Bidens response, instead it aims to insult Trump.”

But almost all respondents bristled specifically at the phrase "regardless of your Gaza stance." Again, this demonstrates that even among voters who might not be especially focused on a single issue or on Gaza, people in general are empathetic with others who have strong feelings on the war in Gaza and with those who choose to vote on a single issue more broadly.

Stacey, a Jewish, Liberal baby boomer from Nevada said that she found the less evil argument persuasive:

“Laying out that just because you don't agree with every decision or action of a candidate or politician doesn't mean you should give up on him or her being in office. Explaining that the outcome could benefit the incumbent's rival is also persuasive, as the past few years have been very divided between political parties,”

yet the part of the message she found particularly unpersuasive was: “Discussing the War in Gaza, which seems to be a nightmare.”

TURNING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

Based on our findings, we have a few strategic recommendations for organizations on the ground that are seeking to keep voters in the electorate to maximize turnout and civic participation in 2024.

First, when crafting messages for voters, whether it's phonebank and door-knocking scripts or paid media, keep the focus on the voter.

Utilize messages that rely on personal appeals and remind voters that they need to choose what is best overall for them and their family's future.



Second, do not be afraid to integrate multiple issues into a single communication to voters.

While there are single issues that have the potential to sway a voter's opinion, most voters approach elections holistically and see themselves as weighing many issues when voting.



Third, do not disparage or degrade single-issue voters or voting (even when talking to non-single issue voters).

Among non-single issue voters, we found high levels of empathy for people who may be single issue voters, especially on issues that are emotionally charged like abortion or the War in Gaza.



FINAL TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Spring 2024, there were countless reports in the press about how the War in Gaza may or may not be the one issue that will act as a litmus test in the Presidential Election. In conducting this research, our ultimate goal was to determine the electoral risk posed by the War in Gaza and understand what might persuade voters with strong feelings on this issue to remain in the electorate.

Our democracy is strongest when every voter has the opportunity to make their voice heard. Continuing the work to turn out young voters, Arab-American voters, Muslim voters, Black progressives, Jewish voters, and Gen-Z voters in 2024 to support candidates who will protect our democracy is important and necessary for the preservation of our rights and civil liberties.

Organizers on the ground, and the political punditry class, should not disparage or degrade single-issue voters or voting (even when talking to people who intent to vote holistically), as we found high levels of empathy for people who may be single-issue voters, especially on emotionally charged topics like the War in Gaza. In our research, messages that encourage voters to consider many issues and vote for the candidate that reflects what's best for them and their family overall generated the most positive feedback. We encourage further testing of variations of this message for specific communities.

KEY TERMS FROM REPORT

[Biden/Trump] Committeds- Respondents who voted for Biden in 2020 and are committed to voting for him again in 2024, or who voted for Trump in 2020 and are committed to voting for him again in 2024.

[Biden/Trump] Defectors - All respondents who previously voted for one of the candidates but haven't committed to voting again for that same candidate in 2024.

Persuadable Defectors - a group of "Biden defectors" who might vote or will vote, but are undecided who they will vote for in 2024. This group is 11% of all 2020 Biden voters.

Less Persuadable defectors - a group of "Biden defectors" who have committed to voting for Trump or to not voting at all in the 2024 election. This group is 7% of all 2020 Biden voters.

Likely voters - Respondents who said they would "definitely" or "probably" vote in 2024.

Online Bulletin Boards - asynchronous, online, one-to-one interviews. In this study, we focused these on strategic groups which are thought to be at high risk of sitting out the election due to the War in Gaza.

Oversamples - Additional survey samples taken in three key swing states: Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

APPENDIX: VIEWS ON US ROLE IN GAZA IN STATE OVERSAMPLES

Table A1: US Role in Gaza in Michigan Subsample

Biden's Handling	Biden Committed	Biden Defectors	Trump Committed	Trump Defectors
Ceasefire	71% (66-76)	44% (28-59)	18% (13-23)	19% (8-30)
Don't know	16% (12-20)	23% (9-36)	9% (5-12)	22% (10-33)
US stay out	10% (7-13)	28% (14-43)	45% (39-51)	47% (33-61)
Not call ceasefire	3% (1-5)	5% (0-12)	28% (23-34)	13% (3-22)
<i>N of Row</i>	242	36	182	35

Source: Public Wise/YouGov Survey of Registered Voters; Michigan Oversample n = 520; 90% conf. interval

Table A2: US Role in Gaza in Pennsylvania Subsample

Biden's Handling	Biden Committed	Biden Defectors	Trump Committed	Trump Defectors
Ceasefire	68% (63-74)	61% (44-77)	22% (17-27)	27% (15-40)
Don't know	15% (11-20)	27% (12-42)	12% (8-16)	17% (7-28)
US stay out	14% (9-18)	12% (1-23)	39% (33-44)	28% (16-41)
Not call ceasefire	3% (1-5)	0% (0-0)	27% (22-32)	27% (14-39)
<i>N of Row</i>	280	35	203	34

Source: Public Wise/YouGov Survey of Registered Voters; Pennsylvania Oversample n = 519; 90% conf. interval

Table A3: US Role in Gaza in Wisconsin Subsample

Biden's Handling	Biden Committed	Biden Defectors	Trump Committed	Trump Defectors
Ceasefire	71% (65-76)	47% (34-60)	15% (11-20)	29% (18-41)
Don't know	19% (15-24)	33% (20-45)	11% (7-14)	17% (8-26)
US stay out	7% (4-11)	17% (7-27)	49% (43-55)	36% (24-48)
Not call ceasefire	3% (1-5)	3% (0-7)	25% (20-31)	18% (9-27)
<i>N of Row</i>	244	39	175	46

Source: Public Wise/YouGov Survey of Registered Voters; Wisconsin Oversample n = 501; 90% conf. interval

Public Wise

Research & Education Fund

The Public Wise Research & Education Fund conducts nonprofit, nonpartisan polling and research to fill the gaps in voter and voting rights research to complement ongoing studies being conducted by others in the field. We also work with Public Wise's partner organizations to advise on research best practices and ensure organizers are using evidence based messaging when they are working in their communities.

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