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The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

2023: THE PUBLIC'S PRIORITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and facing the highest inflation in years, economic issues are topping the public's agenda for the federal government in the coming year. Inflation continues to be a major concern going into the new year, but fewer mention gas prices as a top issue compared to June 2022. Most Americans do not expect things to get better in the upcoming year.

To explore the public's agenda for 2023, The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a poll in December 2022, in which respondents provided up to five volunteered issues that they believe should be priorities for the federal government in 2023.

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Immigration remains a major priority and climate change is mentioned more frequently as a priority than it was in June. Mentions of education have remained basically unchanged over the last several years. Crime and violence are another high-ranking priority area, though gun issues are not mentioned as often.

Both Democrats and Republicans cite economic issues as top priorities, but their top issues diverge from there. Democrats are most concerned about climate change and guns, while Republicans tend to prioritize immigration and inflation.

While the public has a wide-ranging agenda for the federal government, they are not confident that it will be able to address these concerns. Seventy-three percent have very little confidence in the ability of the federal government to make progress on important issues facing the country, including 39% who are not confident at all.

Three Things You Should Know

About The AP-NORC Poll on the Public's Priorities and Expectations Among Americans Age 18 and Older:

1) The economy in general—and specifically inflation—are the public's top policy priorities.

2) Forty-five percent of Republicans cite immigration as their top concern, as do 27% of the public overall.

3) The environment and climate change are a top issue for 26% overall and number one for Democrats at 40%.

The nationwide poll was conducted December 1-5, 2022, using the AmeriSpeak Panel®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,124 adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points.

Findings from the poll include:

- Abortion is considered a top priority by 11%, down from 16% in June. Eighteen percent of Democrats name abortion as a priority; 23% did in June. Five percent of Republicans name abortion; it was 9% in June.

- Thirty-seven percent name personal financial issues as pressing for 2023, similar among both Republicans and Democrats. That includes 14% who specify gas prices, named by 22% of Republicans and 7% of Democrats.

- Only 21% expect 2023 to be better than last year for the nation. Fifty-three percent think 2023 will look much like 2022, and 24% anticipate a worse year. Members of the public are just about equally negative about their own personal prospects for the coming year. Twenty-six percent are looking forward to a better year, and 22% think they will have a worse year in 2023. About half (52%) expect things in their life to stay pretty much the same.

ECONOMIC ISSUES DOMINATE THE PUBLIC'S AGENDA FOR 2023

Members of the public were asked about which problems facing the United States and the world today they would like the government to work on in 2023. Among all policy areas, domestic issues continue to be cited most frequently as the public's most pressing policy concerns. This has been the case since 2015, the first time The AP-NORC Center asked members of the public what problems the government should be working on in the next year.

Looking at specific domestic policies, economic issues are the public's top priority. The biggest concern is the economy in general, with 31% mentioning it as a top priority, slightly more than in June; however, it is cited at a similar rate as on the December 2021 survey. The second most cited issue, inflation, is down from June 2022, but up sharply from December 2021.

The third most frequently cited issue, immigration, is mentioned by 27%, which is largely unchanged since June, and down slightly from last December.
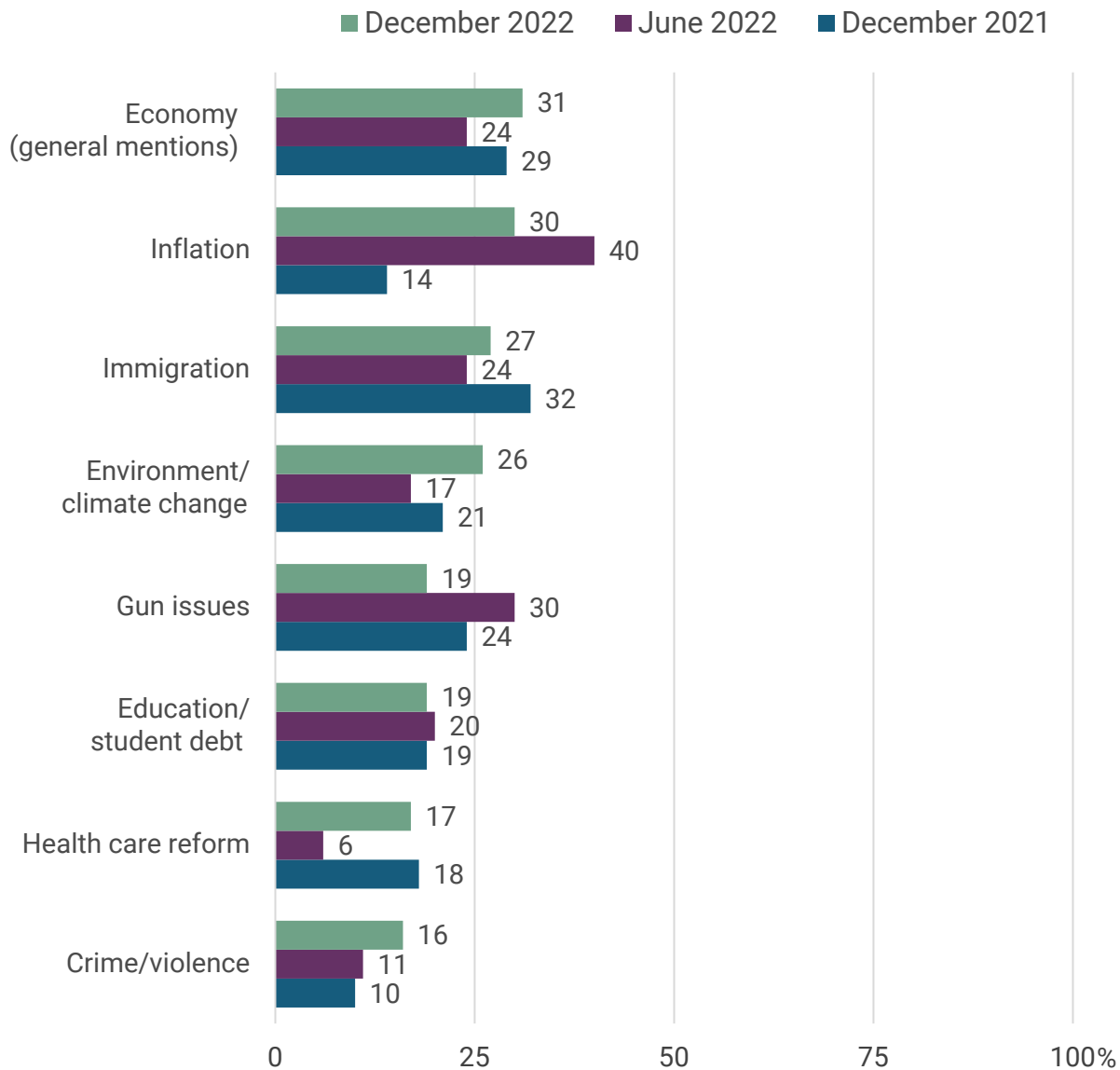
Sixteen percent cite crime and violence as a top priority, up from June and December 2021.

COVID-19 was the top priority in December 2020, cited by 53%. A year later, while still the top issue, it was named by 33%. Although the coronavirus pandemic is still ongoing, by June, only 4% named COVID-19 as a priority, and, in the latest poll, just about the same—5%—mentioned the coronavirus.

The June survey was conducted in the wake of the leaked draft opinion that suggested the Supreme Court would eliminate the constitutional right to an abortion, and 23% of the public cited abortion or women's rights as one of their top five priorities, more than in any year since 2015. Six months later, 16% cited these issues as a top concern, down from June but still twice as many as in December 2021.

What problems would you like the government to work on in the coming year?
Percent of adults

Legend: December 2022 · June 2022 · December 2021

Problem	December 2022	June 2022	December 2021
Economy (general mentions)	31	24	29
Inflation	30	40	14
Immigration	27	24	32
Environment/climate change	26	17	21
Gun issues	19	30	24
Education/student debt	19	20	19
Health care reform	17	6	18
Crime/violence	16	11	10

Question: Thinking about the problems facing the United States and the world today, which problems would you like the government to be working on in the year 2023? Please list up to five problems. (Percentages above among those who provided at least one problem. Problems named by at least 15% in December 2022 are shown above).
Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted December 1-5, 2022, with 1,124 adults nationwide.
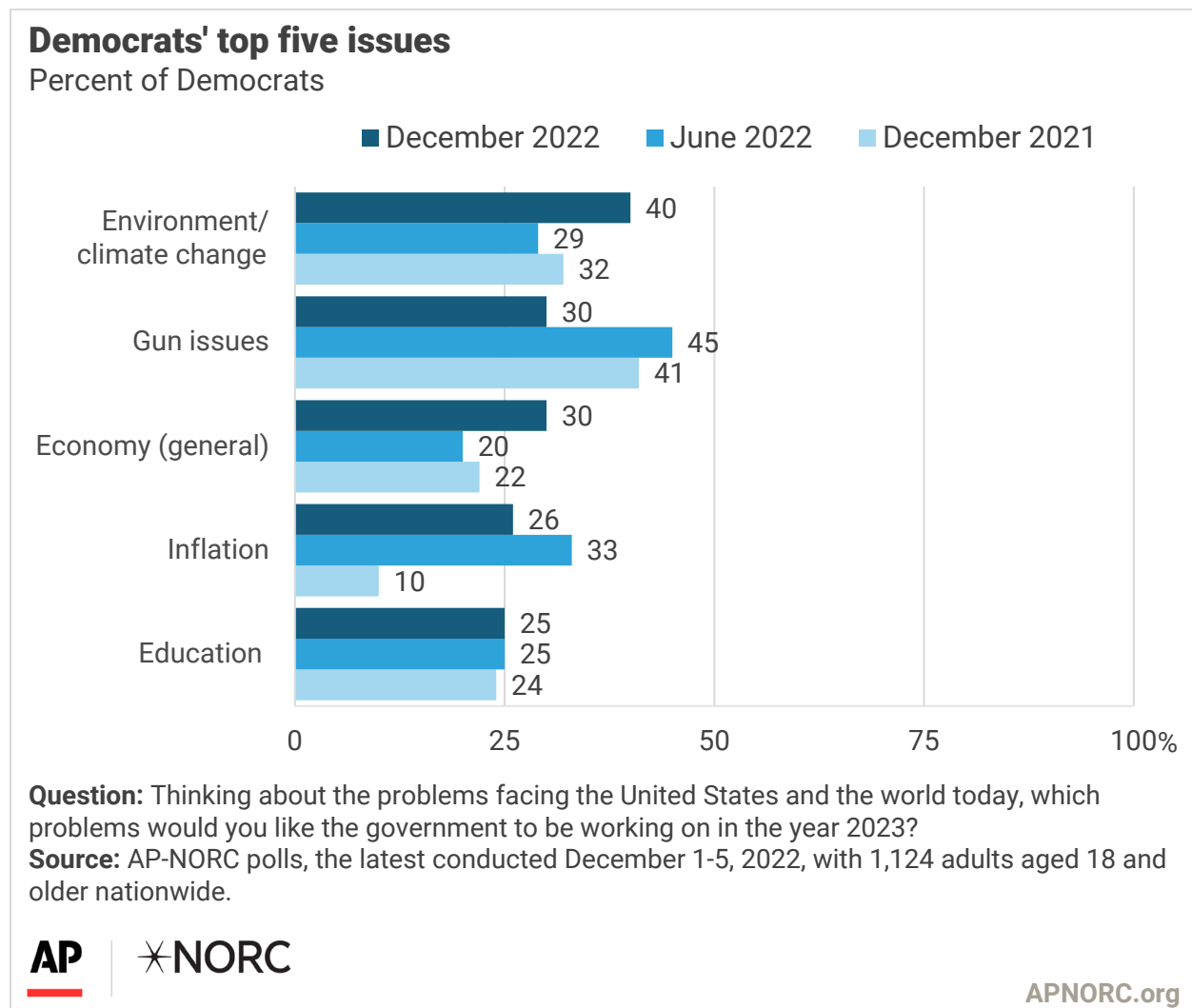
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As in June, economic issues are top priorities, regardless of party identification. Independents cite inflation, and the economy in general, as their biggest concerns. These issues are also among the top five for Democrats and Republicans.

The environment and climate change have replaced gun issues as the top priority for Democrats.
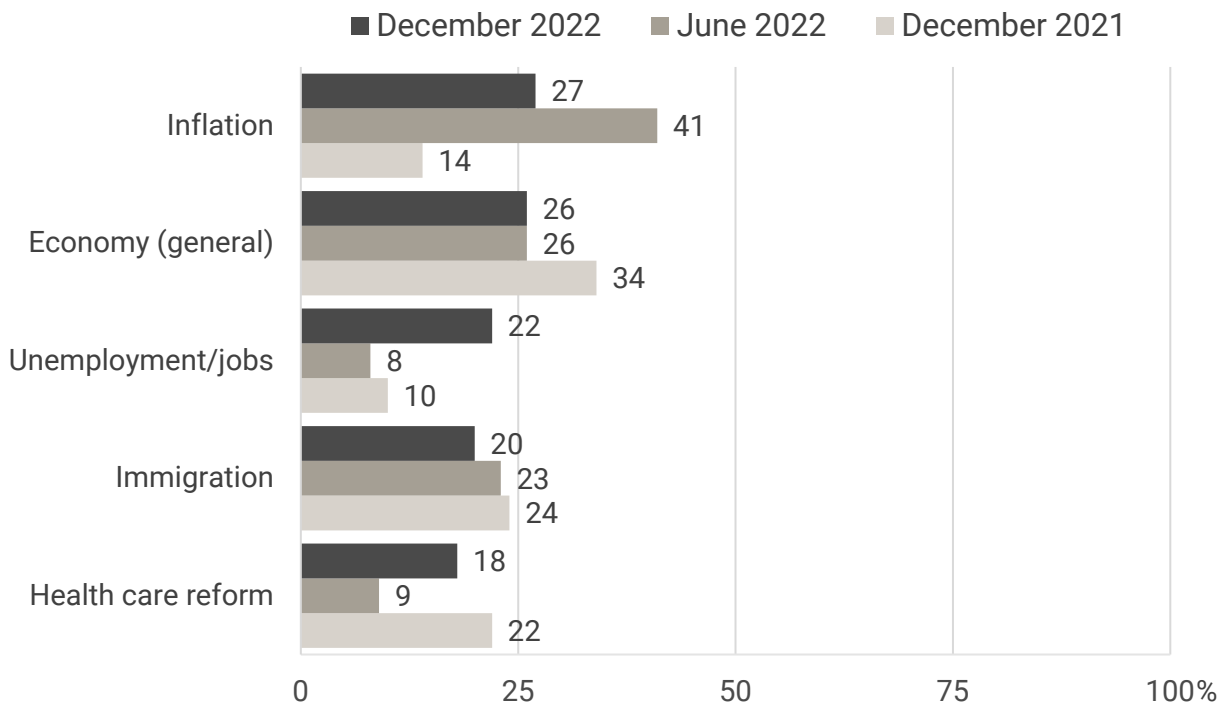
In addition to inflation and the economy in general, independents are more than twice as likely to cite unemployment and jobs as a top problem this year compared to last year.

Immigration continues to be the top issue for Republicans. Although economic issues are large priorities, fewer are currently citing inflation. And concern about gas and fuel prices declined since June.

Democrats' top five issues
Percent of Democrats

■ December 2022   ■ June 2022   ■ December 2021

Issue	December 2022	June 2022	December 2021
Environment/climate change	40	29	32
Gun issues	30	45	41
Economy (general)	30	20	22
Inflation	26	33	10
Education	25	25	24

Question: Thinking about the problems facing the United States and the world today, which problems would you like the government to be working on in the year 2023?
Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted December 1-5, 2022, with 1,124 adults aged 18 and older nationwide.

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Independents' top five issues

Percent of independents

■ December 2022   ■ June 2022   ■ December 2021

Inflation
- December 2022: 27
- June 2022: 41
- December 2021: 14

Economy (general)
- December 2022: 26
- June 2022: 26
- December 2021: 34

Unemployment/jobs
- December 2022: 22
- June 2022: 8
- December 2021: 10

Immigration
- December 2022: 20
- June 2022: 23
- December 2021: 24

Health care reform
- December 2022: 18
- June 2022: 9
- December 2021: 22

0   25   50   75   100%

Question: Thinking about the problems facing the United States and the world today, which problems would you like the government to be working on in the year 2023?
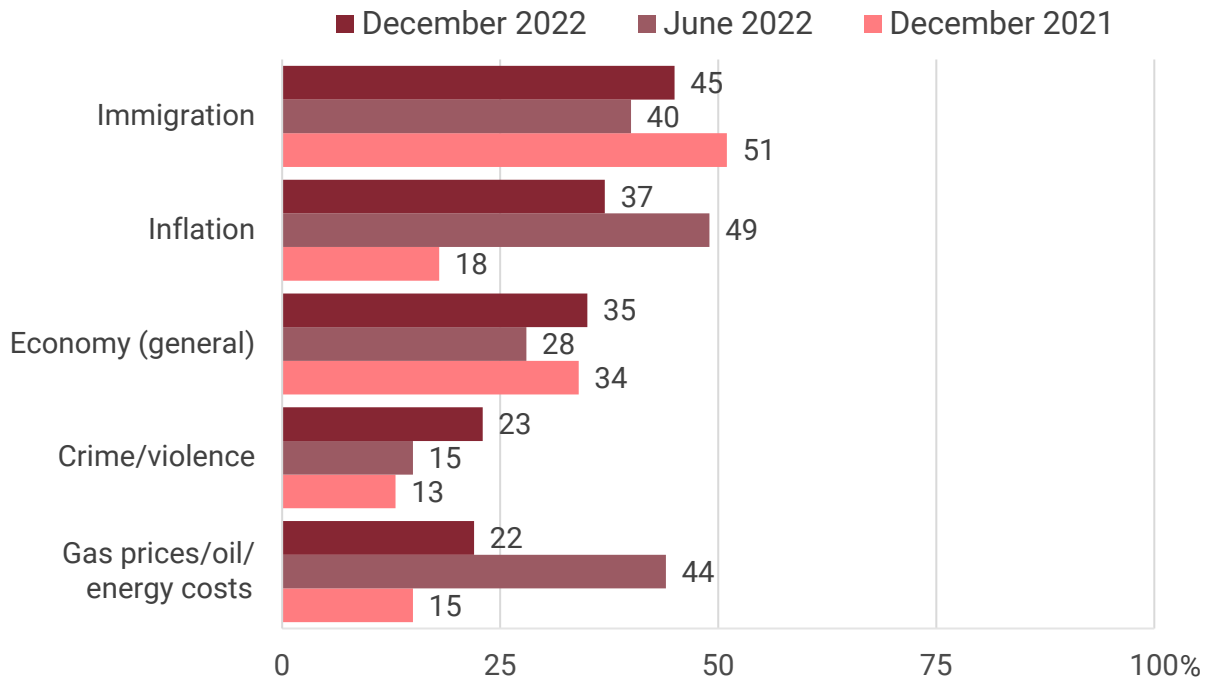**Source:** AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted December 1-5, 2022, with 1,124 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

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Republicans' top five issues
Percent of Republicans

■ December 2022 ■ June 2022 ■ December 2021

Issue	December 2022	June 2022	December 2021
Immigration	45	40	51
Inflation	37	49	18
Economy (general)	35	28	34
Crime/violence	23	15	13
Gas prices/oil/energy costs	22	44	15

0   25   50   75   100%

Question: Thinking about the problems facing the United States and the world today, which problems would you like the government to be working on in the year 2023?
Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted December 1-5, 2022, with 1,124 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

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Confidence in the ability of the federal government to address policy concerns is low, regardless of party identification. Sixty-eight percent of Democrats and 78% of Republicans are slightly or not at all confident in the federal government. Overall, only 4% have much confidence in the government's ability to make progress on important problems, 22% are somewhat confident, and 73% have little or no confidence in the government's ability to address the country's problems.

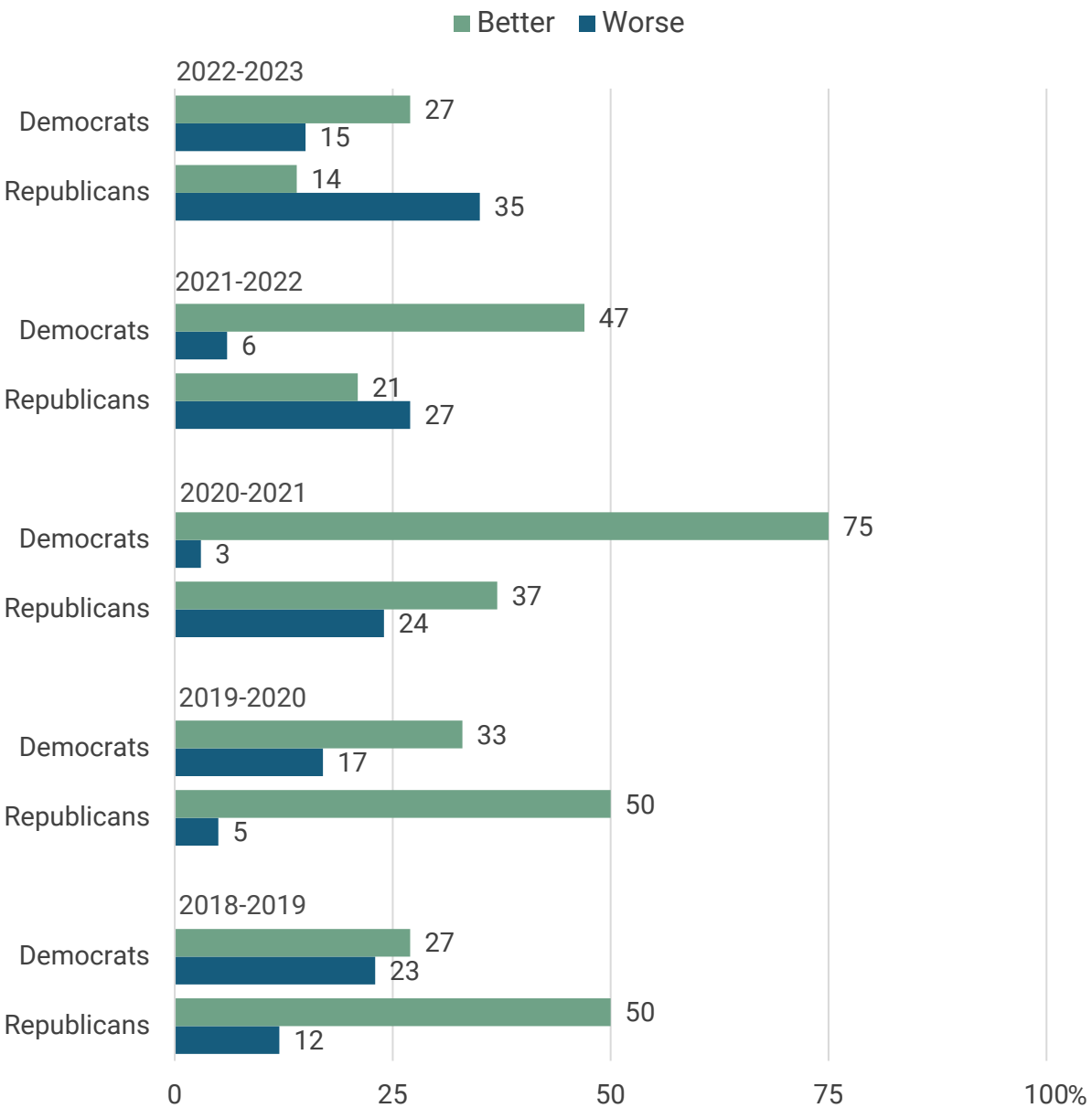## DEMOCRATS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN REPUBLICANS ABOUT 2023

Overall, members of the public are not optimistic that their lives will improve in 2023. Only 26% expect 2023 will be a better year than 2022, and 22% think it will be a worse year.

People are slightly more pessimistic about what will happen to the United States in 2023. Twenty-one percent think 2023 will be a better year than 2022, and 24% say it will be a worse year.

While the outlook of Democrats is less positive than it was last year, they are more hopeful about the direction of the country than Republicans. Twenty-seven percent of Democrats believe the country will improve in 2023, and 35% of Republicans think the country will get worse.

Will next year be better or worse for you?
Percent of adults who say better or worse

■ Better ■ Worse

2022-2023

Democrats
- Better: 27
- Worse: 15

Republicans
- Better: 14
- Worse: 35

2021-2022

Democrats
- Better: 47
- Worse: 6

Republicans
- Better: 21
- Worse: 27

2020-2021

Democrats
- Better: 75
- Worse: 3

Republicans
- Better: 37
- Worse: 24

2019-2020

Democrats
- Better: 33
- Worse: 17

Republicans
- Better: 50
- Worse: 5

2018-2019

Democrats
- Better: 27
- Worse: 23

Republicans
- Better: 50
- Worse: 12

(x-axis: 0, 25, 50, 75, 100%)

Question: Looking ahead to 2023, which of the following comes closest to your opinion? For you personally, 2023 will be a better year than 2022, 2023 will be a worse year than 2022, there won't be much of a difference between 2023 and 2022.
Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted December 1-5, 2022 with 1,124 adults nationwide.

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STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from The Associated Press and NORC at the University of Chicago.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between December 1 and 5, 2022 with adults aged 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak®, and 1,124 completed the survey—1,045 via the web and 79 by telephone. Panel members were invited by email or by phone from an NORC telephone interviewer. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. The final stage completion rate is 16.6 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 20.8 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.7 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 2.7 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/-3.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error, and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 41 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them, for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample, or for straight-lining all grid questions asked of them. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design.

Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2022 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults aged 18 and over.

For the open-ended question PROB1, responses were classified using Canvs AI, an online platform that codes open-ended data. These codes were validated by a human coder and were then collapsed into more general categories based on topic for reporting.

Complete questions and results are available at: apnorc.org.

Additional information on the AmeriSpeak Panel® methodology is available at: https://amerispeak.norc.org/about-amerispeak/Pages/Panel-Design.aspx.

For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHERS

From NORC at the University of Chicago

Marjorie Connelly
Michelle Whitlock
Alice Tracey
Betsy Broaddus
Jennifer Benz
Trevor Tompson

From The Associated Press

Emily Swanson
Hannah Fingerhut

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The two organizations have established The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals. The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more. Learn more at www.apnorc.org.