



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

2024: THE PUBLIC'S PRIORITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Foreign policy issues top the public's agenda for 2024, followed by economic concerns. Education, the environment and climate change, and health care continue to be major concerns. Most Americans do not expect things to get better for themselves or the country in the upcoming year.

To explore the public's agenda for 2024, The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a poll in December 2023, in which respondents provided up to five volunteered issues that they believe should be priorities for the federal government in 2024.

With ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza and the debate in Congress over immigration, foreign policy has risen to prominence as a major concern compared to previous years. And after several near misses of a government shutdown in 2023, the debt limit and government spending has become a major priority for 2024.

Democrats and Republicans cite immigration, other foreign policy issues, and inflation as a top priority, but their top issues diverge from there. Democrats are concerned about climate change and the environment, education, and health care reform, while Republicans put the economy in general, and government debt in their top five.

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-one percent have little confidence in the ability of the federal government to make progress on important issues facing the country in 2024, including 40% who are not confident at all.



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Three Things You Should Know

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

- 1) Immigration is a top issue for 35%—including 55% of Republicans and 22% of Democrats.
- 2) Inflation is a top concern for 30% overall, 41% among Republicans, and 24% among Democrats.
- 3) 36% of Democrats prioritize climate change and the environment along with only 8% of Republicans

The nationwide poll was conducted November 30-December 4, 2023, 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, 074 adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

Findings from the poll include:

- The public most wants the government to deal with foreign policy with 60% naming issues regarding foreign policy, up from 41% in December 2022. Specifically, 35% cite immigration and the border wall as a top concern, an increase from 27% last year. Other foreign policy issues are mentioned by 38%, up from 18% last year.
- Domestic issues continue to be cited frequently as well. Economic issues are of particular concern, especially inflation with 30% mentioning it as a top priority.
- Only 19% expect 2024 to be better than last year for the nation. Fifty-one percent think 2024 will look much like 2023, and 29% anticipate a worse year. Members of the public are slightly more positive about their own personal prospects for the coming year. Twenty-five percent are looking forward to a better year, and 24% think they will have a worse year in 2024. Fifty percent expect things in their life to stay pretty much the same.

FOREIGN POLICIES ARE TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2024

Members of the public were asked which problems facing the United States and the world today they would like the government to work on in 2024. In the wake of the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine and the debate over immigration, the public is putting a higher priority on foreign policy issues this year. Overall, 60% mention foreign policy issues, up from 41% in December 2022.

Overall, 35% cite immigration and the border wall as a top concern, up from 27% in [December 2022](#). Thirty-eight percent mention other foreign policy issues, up from 18% last year.

Looking at specific domestic policies, economic issues are the public's top priority. The biggest concern is inflation with 30% mentioning it as a top priority and 24% saying the economy in general.

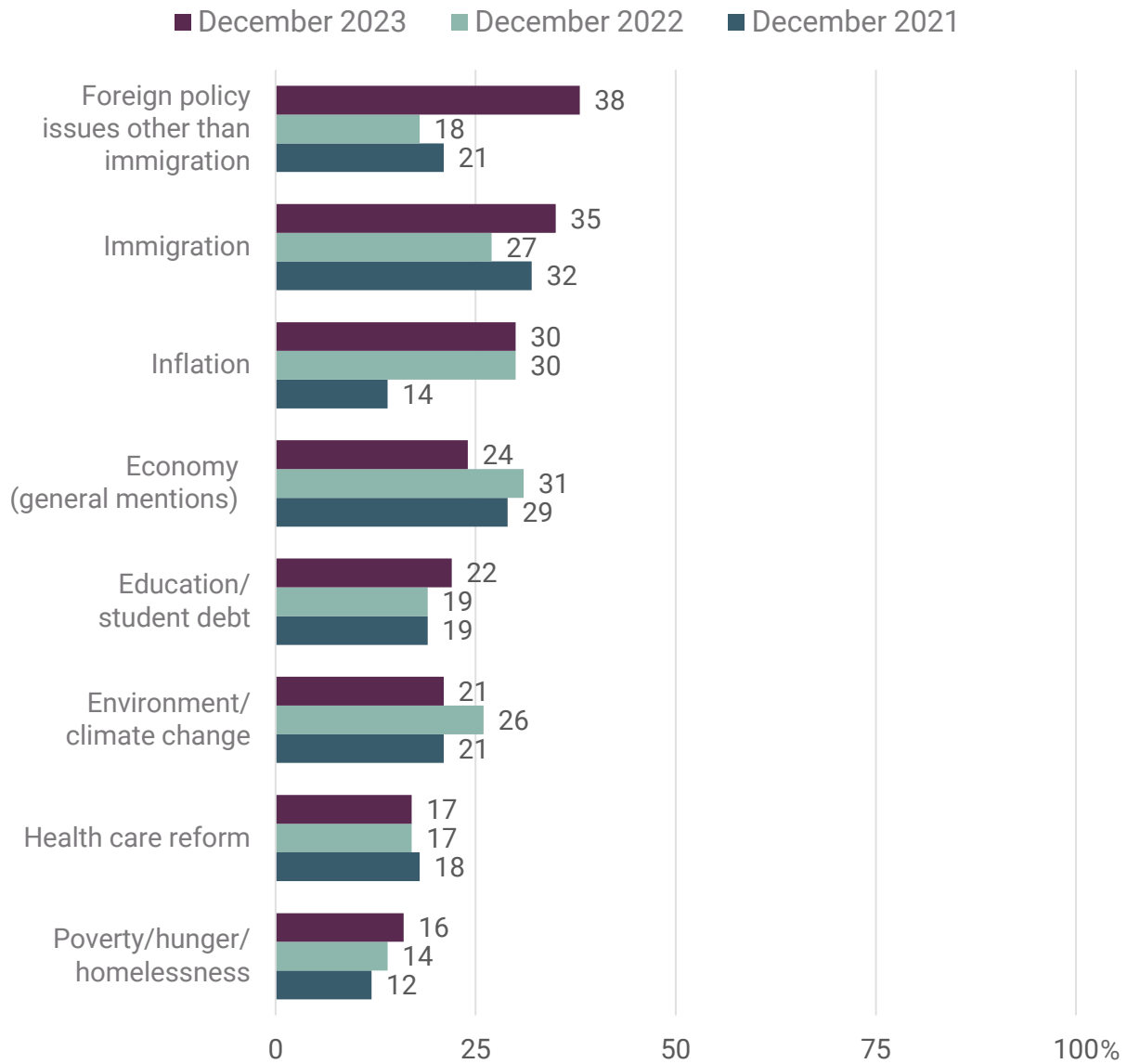
Twenty-two percent name education or student debt and 21% say the environment or climate change should be a government priority.

After a year with multiple close calls for a government shutdown, the debt limit and public spending is a priority for 13%, more than twice as many as mentioned it last year.

Thirteen percent name abortion, women's rights, or women's health as a government priority, down slightly from 16% in December 2022. In an [AP-NORC Center survey conducted in June 2022](#) just after the leaked release of the draft opinion that suggested the Supreme Court would eliminate the constitutional right to an abortion, nearly twice as many (23%) mentioned abortion or women's rights.

Foreign policy issues top the public's agenda for 2024.

Percent of adults



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 2024? Please list up to five problems. (Percentages above among those who provided at least one problem. Problems named by at least 15% in December 2023 are shown above).

Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted November 30-December 4, 2023, with 1,074 adults nationwide.

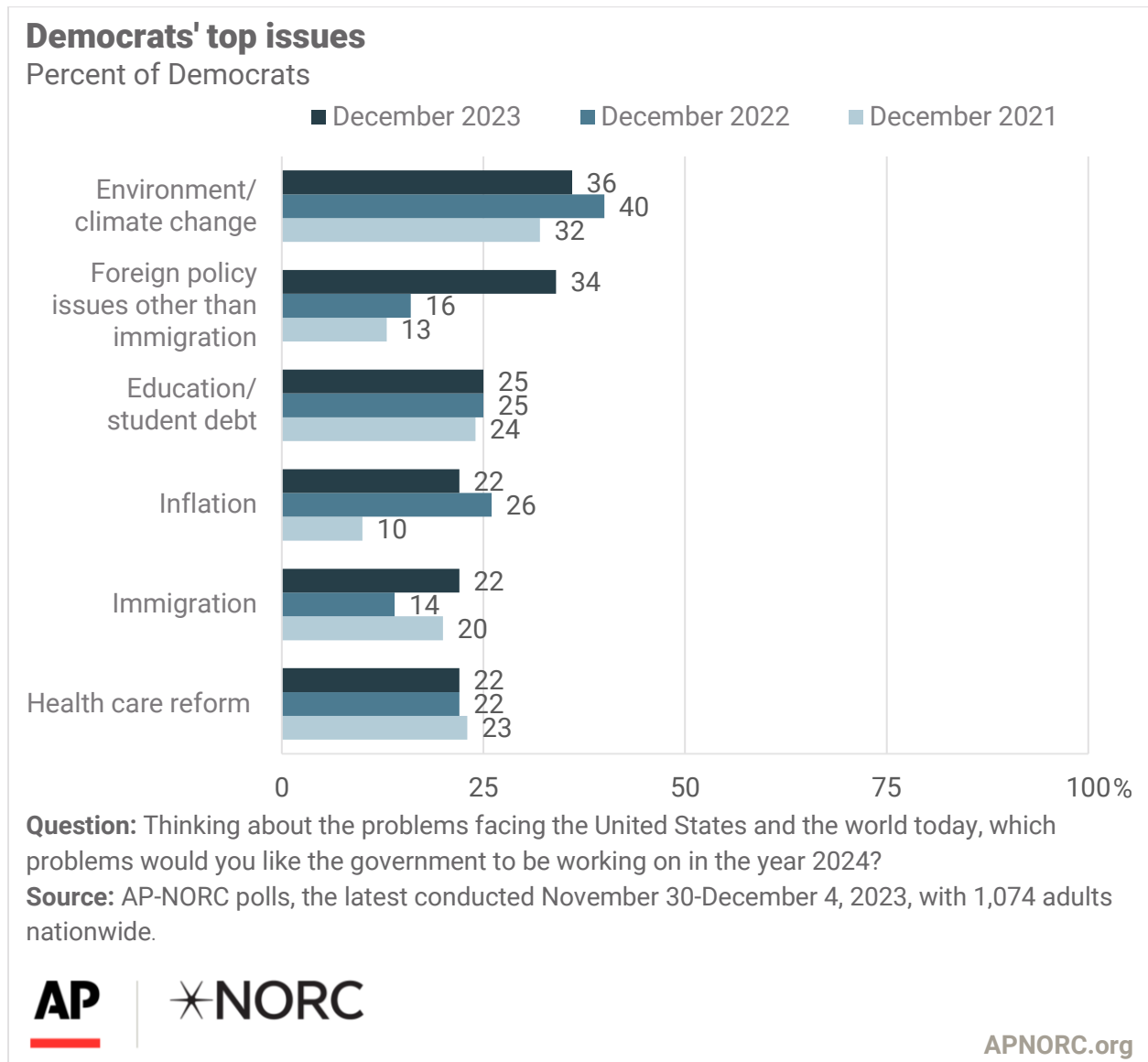


Immigration makes it into everybody's top five, showing up as the most important issue for Republicans. Other foreign policy issues are the top priority area for independents and is included as a priority for Democrats and Republicans.

As in December 2022, economic issues are top priorities, regardless of party identification. Specifically, inflation is in the top five for Democrats, Republicans, and independents. The economy in general is one of the top priorities for both Republicans and independents,

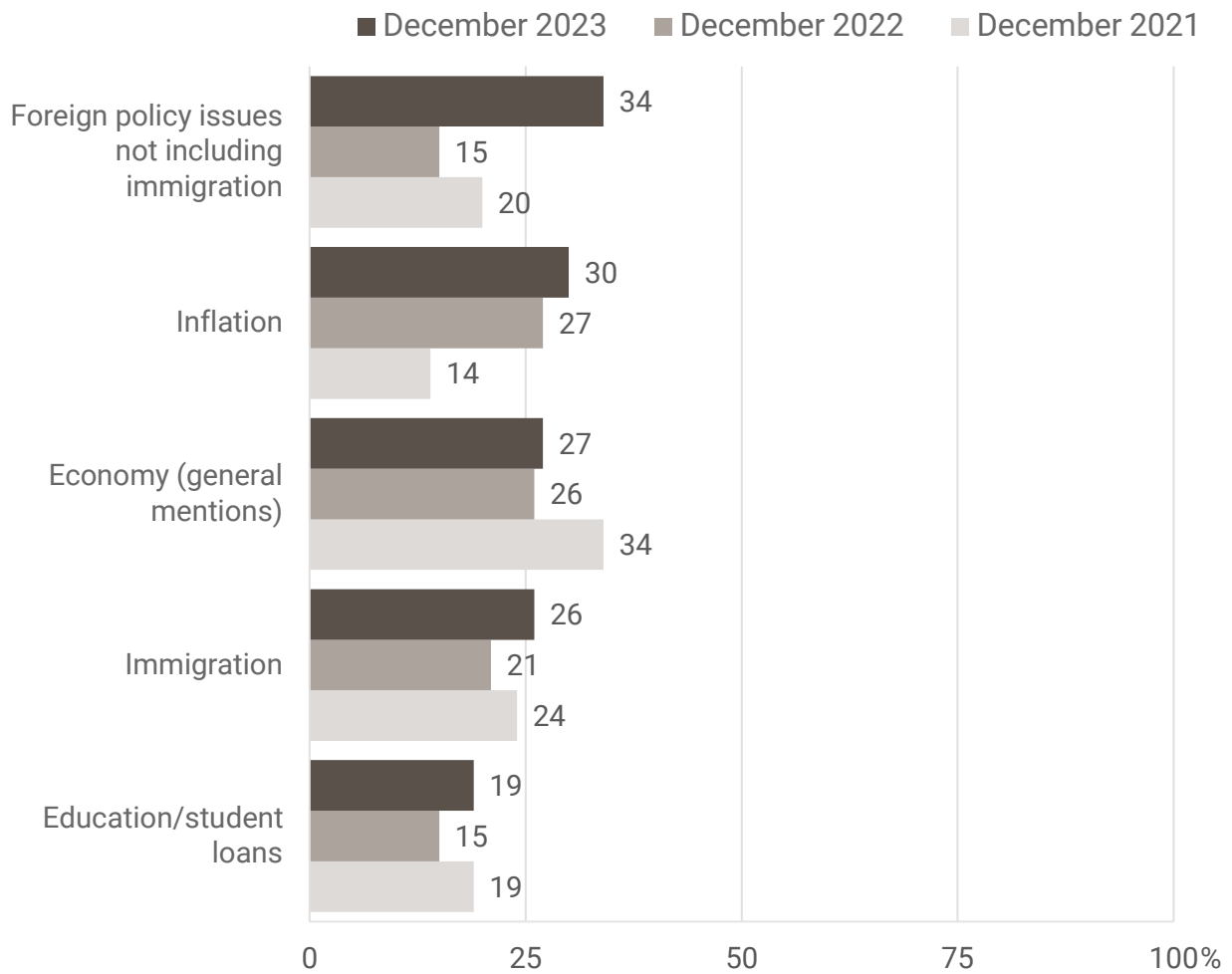
The environment and climate change remains the top priority concern for Democrats. Concern about healthcare reform has remained steady overall and is among the top concerns for Democrats and independents.

As Congress has been working to avoid a government shutdown, government spending, debt, and the deficit is a top issue for Republicans, mentioned by 22%, more than twice as many as in December 2022. Less than 10% of Democrats or independents express concern about these government spending issues.



Independents' top issues

Percent of independents



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 2024?

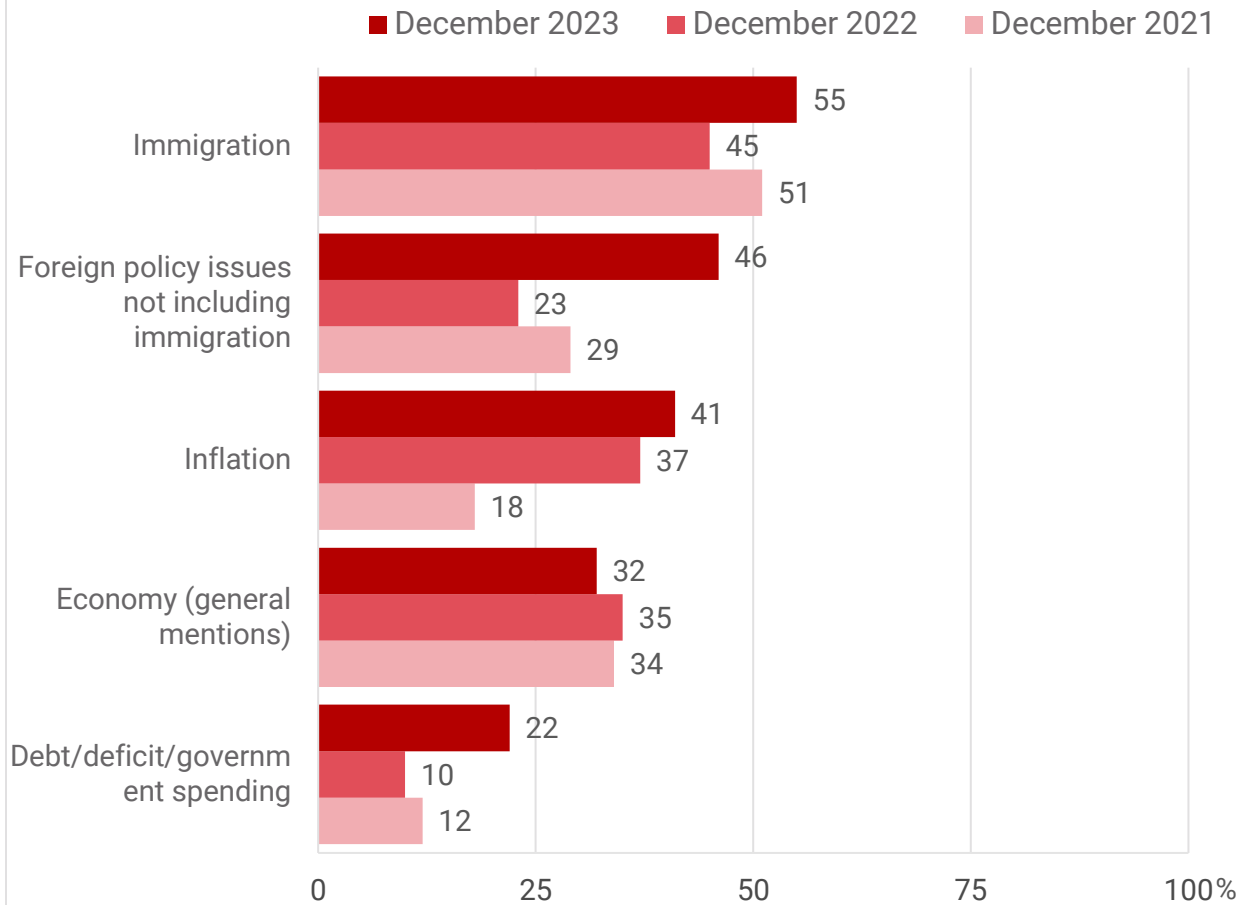
Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted November 30-December 4, 2023, with 1,074 adults nationwide.



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Republicans' top issues

Percent of Republicans



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 2024?

Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted November 30-December 4, 2023, with 1,074 adults nationwide.

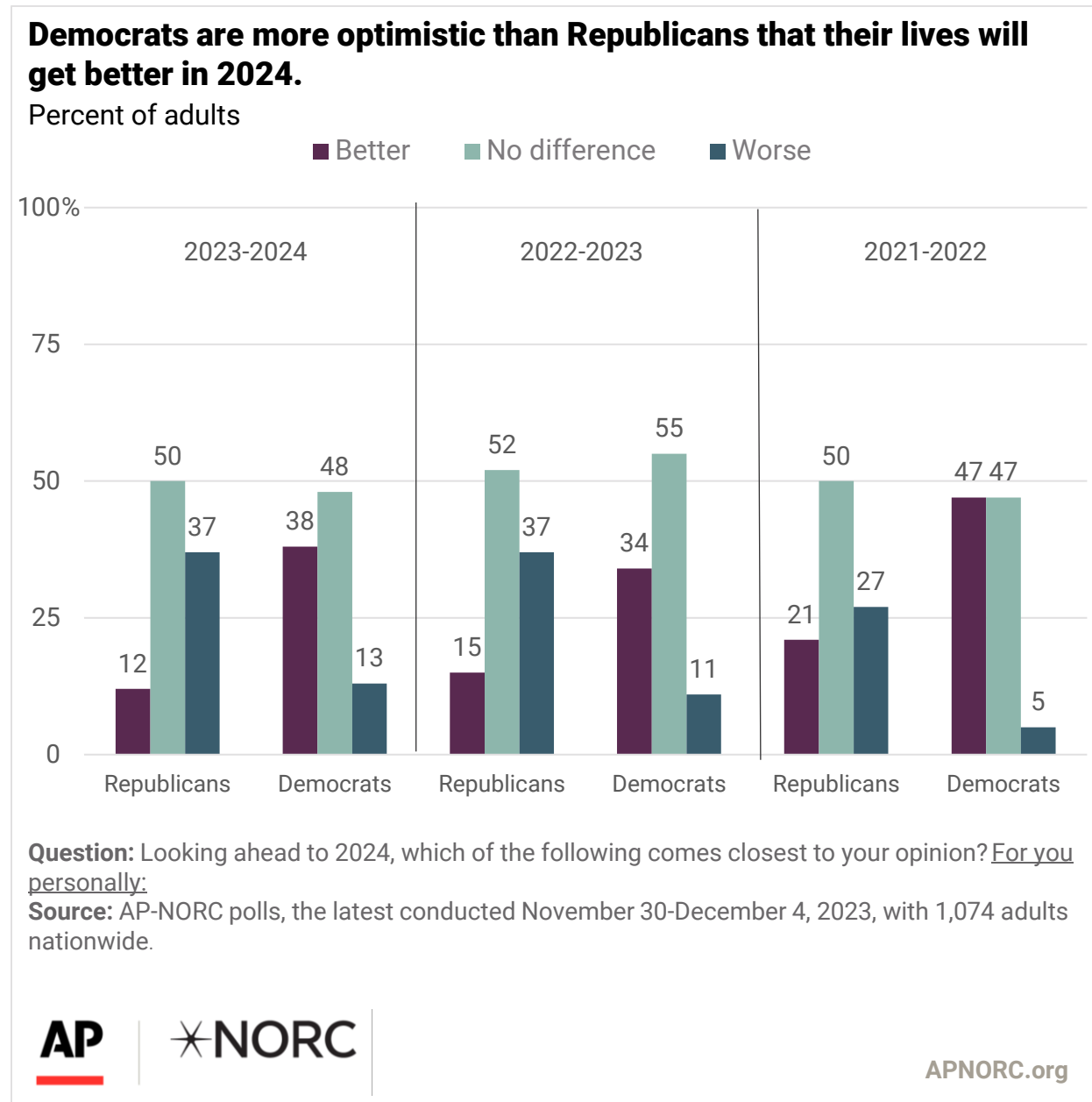


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Confidence in the ability of the federal government to address policy concerns is low, regardless of party identification. Sixty-five percent of Democrats and 83% of Republicans are slightly or not at all confident in the federal government’s ability to make progress in 2024 on the issues they care about. Overall, only 5% have much confidence, 23% are moderately confident, and 71% have little or no confidence in the government’s ability to address the country’s problems.

DEMOCRATS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN REPUBLICANS ABOUT 2024

Overall, members of the public are about equally likely to think their lives will improve in 2024 as get worse. Twenty-five percent expect 2024 will be a better year than 2023, and 24% think it will be a worse year. Half think it will be about the same. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to think that their life will get better in the next year.

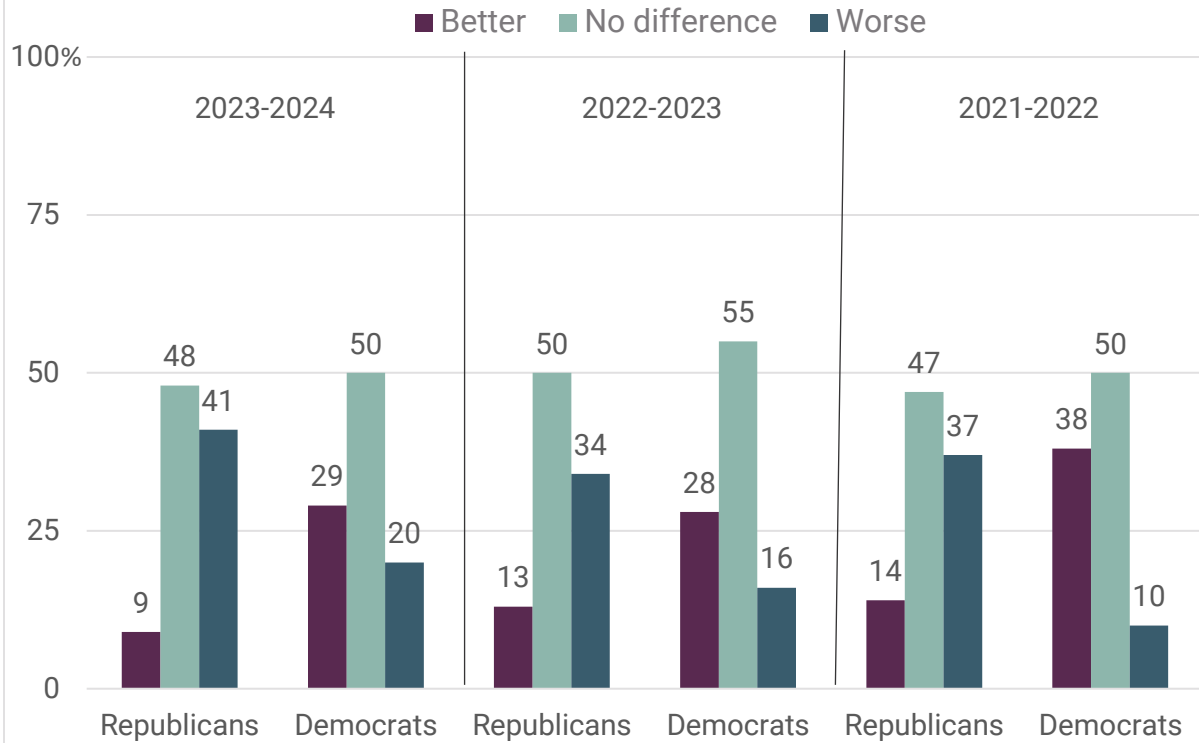


People are slightly more pessimistic about what will happen in the United States in 2024. Nineteen percent think 2024 will be a better year than 2023, and 29% say it will be worse.

Democrats are more hopeful about the outlook for the country in the next year than Republicans. Twenty-nine percent of Democrats believe the country will improve in 2024, and 41% of Republicans think the country will get worse.

Democrats are also more optimistic than Republicans about the coming year for the country.

Percent of adults



Question: Looking ahead to 2024, which of the following comes closest to your opinion? For the United States:

Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted November 30-December 4, 2023, with 1,074 adults nationwide.



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STUDY METHODOLOGY

Interviews for this survey were conducted between November 30 to December 4, 2023 with adults aged 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,074 completed the survey—1,017 via the web and 57 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 14.3 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 21.5 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.9 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 2.4 percent.

The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. For example, the margin of sampling error is +/- 6.0 percentage points for Democrats and +/- 6.4 percentage points for Republicans.

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, 48 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 2023 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over. The sample is also weighted to match the average of self-identified party identification in the previous two waves of the AmeriSpeak Omnibus survey and this current survey.

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: www.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.

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