

Fall 2022 Harvard Youth Poll



Thursday, October 27, 2022

A national poll released today by the Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School indicates that 40% of 18-to-29-year-olds state that they will “definitely” vote in the November 8 midterm elections, on track to match or potentially exceed the record-breaking 2018 youth turnout in a midterm election. Young voters prefer Democratic control of Congress 57% to 31% (up five points for Democrats since spring), but 12% remain undecided.

President Biden’s job approval has dropped again to 39% among young Americans, down from **41% in the IOP Spring 2022 poll** and **down 20 percentage points** since our first spring poll after President Biden took office. There is a 20-point job approval gap among those who report that they follow the news closely (48% approve) vs. those who do not follow the news (28%).

The poll finds that nearly 40% of Republicans cited inflation as the most important issue driving their midterm vote; Democrats are moved by abortion (20%), protecting democracy (20%), inflation (19%), and climate change (16%). More than 7-in-10 young Americans (72%) believe that the rights of others are under attack, and 59% believe that their own rights are under attack.

For over twenty years, the Harvard Public Opinion Project has provided the most comprehensive look at the political opinions and voting trends held by young Americans.

The Fall 2022 Harvard Youth Poll surveyed 2,123 young Americans between 18- and 29-years-old and was conducted between September 29 and October 14, 2022.

"In 2018, America's youngest voters ran to the polls in record-breaking numbers to confront the challenges facing our democracy. Our new poll shows that those historic midterm numbers were not a fluke: Gen Z is a formidable voting bloc that demands to be heard," said **IOP Interim Director Setti Warren**. "Across geography, race, gender, and background, young Americans view the world from a starkly different lens than older generations. Elected officials should pay attention."

"Battleground state polling is far from settled, I'm not sure if we will see a Red Wave or Blue Wave on November 8 – but we will see a Gen Z Wave," said **IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe**. "Youth today vote at levels that far exceed millennials, Gen X, and baby boomers when they were under 30. Inspired by the Parkland students in 2018, sparked by fear about their future, the future of our country, and planet, Gen Z is ushering in a new era of sustained political engagement."

"Inflation and economic concerns are top of mind, but young voters also see this election as a referendum on the rights that form the foundation of our society," said **Alan Zhang '24**, student chair of the Harvard Public Opinion Project (HPOP). "For many young Americans, abortion rights, the future of our planet, and our democracy itself are all on the line this November – and they are acting accordingly."

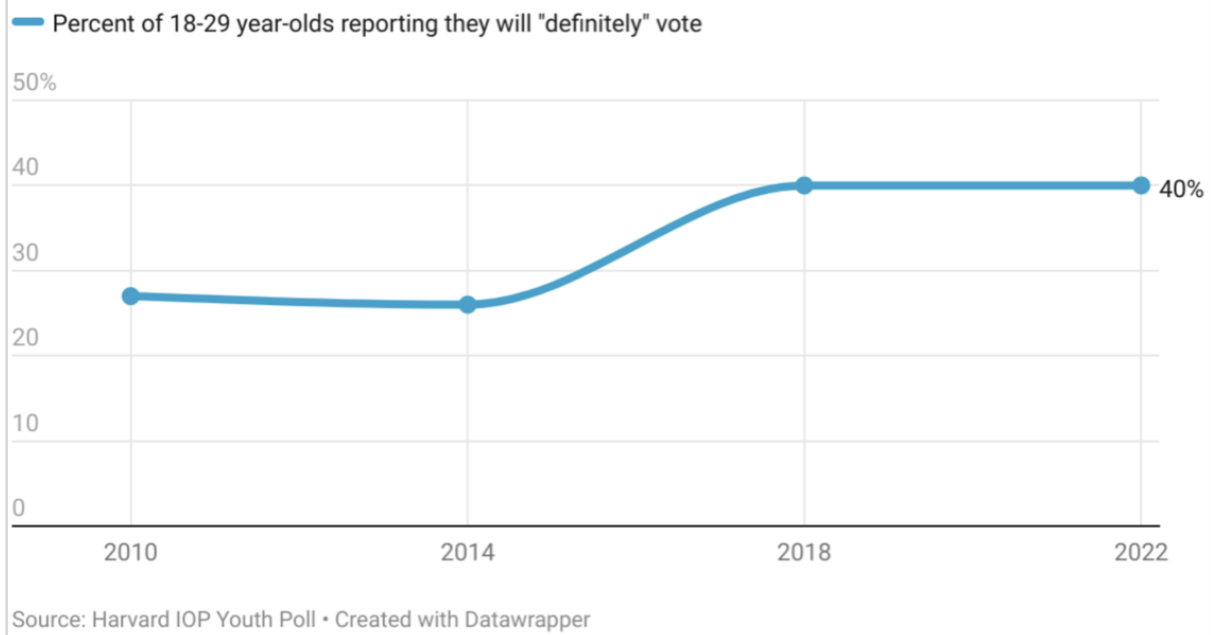
Top findings of this survey, the 44th in the biannual series, include the following:

****1. Youth turnout in the 2022 midterm elections is on track to match – or potentially exceed – 2018's historic level of participation. Young college graduates and those in U.S. Senate battleground states are the most likely to vote in the 2022 midterms.****

Forty percent (40%) of young Americans report that they will "definitely" vote in the upcoming midterms, matching the proportion of young Americans who said the same in the IOP's fall 2018 survey. The number of young Americans likely to vote has increased four percentage points since spring 2022 Harvard IOP polling – and is 14 points higher than 2014 and 13 points higher than 2010 fall benchmarks. (In 2019, the U.S. Census noted that turnout among 18- to 29-year-olds increased from 20 percent in 2014 to 36 percent in 2018, the largest percentage point increase for any age group.)

How likely is it that you will vote in the upcoming elections for Congress?

Midterm Cycle Fall Surveys, 2010-2022



Young Americans under 30 who live in battleground states (45%) are more likely to vote than those from traditional red (33%) or blue states (40%); this cycle's battleground state residents are also more likely to vote than those from similar states in 2018 (38%).

Additionally, a majority (55%) of young Americans with a college degree indicate they are likely to vote in the midterms, which is significantly higher than those currently attending college (44%) and those who do not attend a four-year college or university and do not have a degree (32%). We also find that young whites (47%) are more likely to say they will vote compared to young people of color (30% Hispanic, 36% Black).

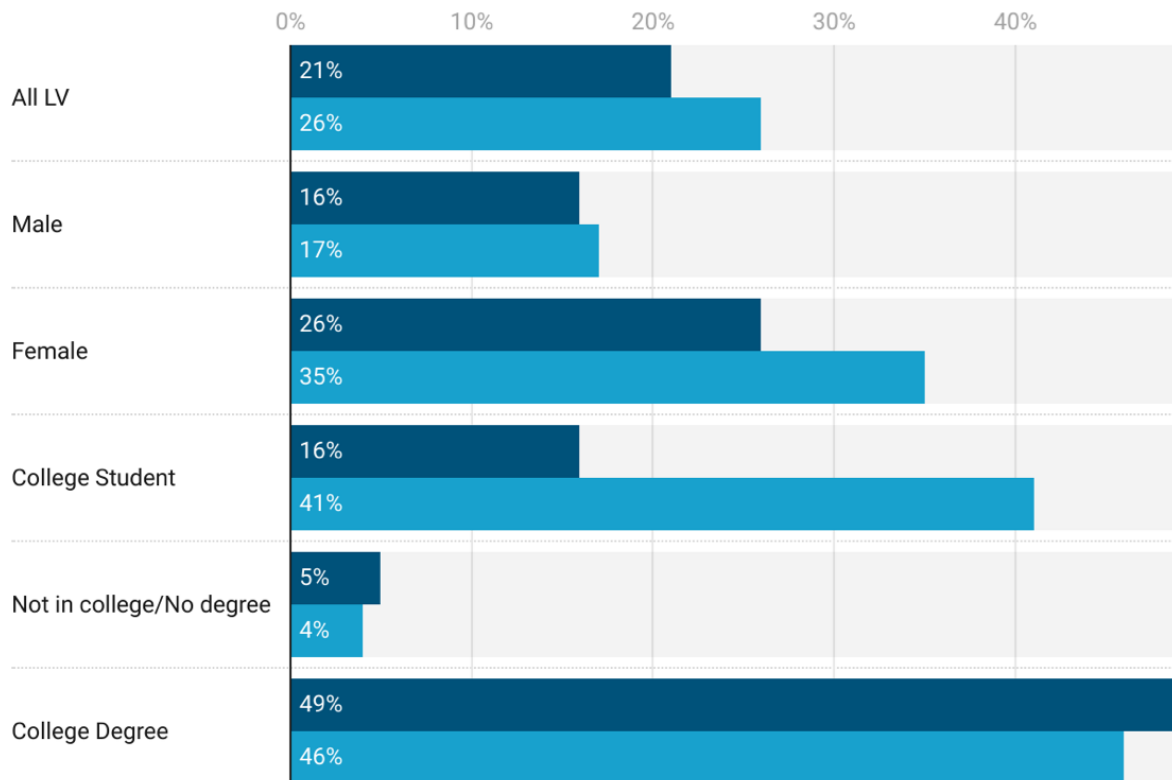
****2. By a nearly two-to-one margin, likely voters prefer Democratic control of Congress, 57% to 31% - 12% remain undecided.****

Since spring 2022 Harvard IOP Polling, the advantage for Democrats has increased 5 points overall (from +21 in spring to +26 in fall) - much of which is driven by heightened support from young women and college students.

Democratic Advantage in Generic Ballot

Among Likely Voters

■ Spring 2022 ■ Fall 2022



What is your preference for the outcome of the 2022 Congressional elections, a Congress controlled by Democrats, or a Congress controlled by Republicans?

Source: Harvard IOP Youth Poll • Created with Datawrapper

- A majority of likely young voters, regardless of race or ethnicity, prefer Democratic control of Congress. Among likely white voters, Democrats lead 52%-35%; among Hispanics, Democrats lead 64%-27%, and among Black voters, Democrats lead 66%-15%;
- Among the 25% of likely voters who are independent or unaffiliated, 49% prefer Democrats and 27% prefer Republicans;
- Likely voters who hold a college degree are significantly more likely to prefer Democratic control of Congress (69%-23%) compared to those not in college and without a degree (45%-41%);
- In battleground states (55%-28%), levels of support for Democrats and Republicans are comparable to support seen amongst likely voters in general (57%-31%).

Similar to what we found in fall 2018, more than three-in-five likely young voters indicate that their vote is more of a sign of support for their party, rather than a rejection of the other. Sixty-two percent (62%) of likely Democratic voters say their vote is for Democrats, compared to 38% who say it's against Republicans. For Republican voters, 65% say their vote is in support of Republicans, while 34% say it is against Democrats.

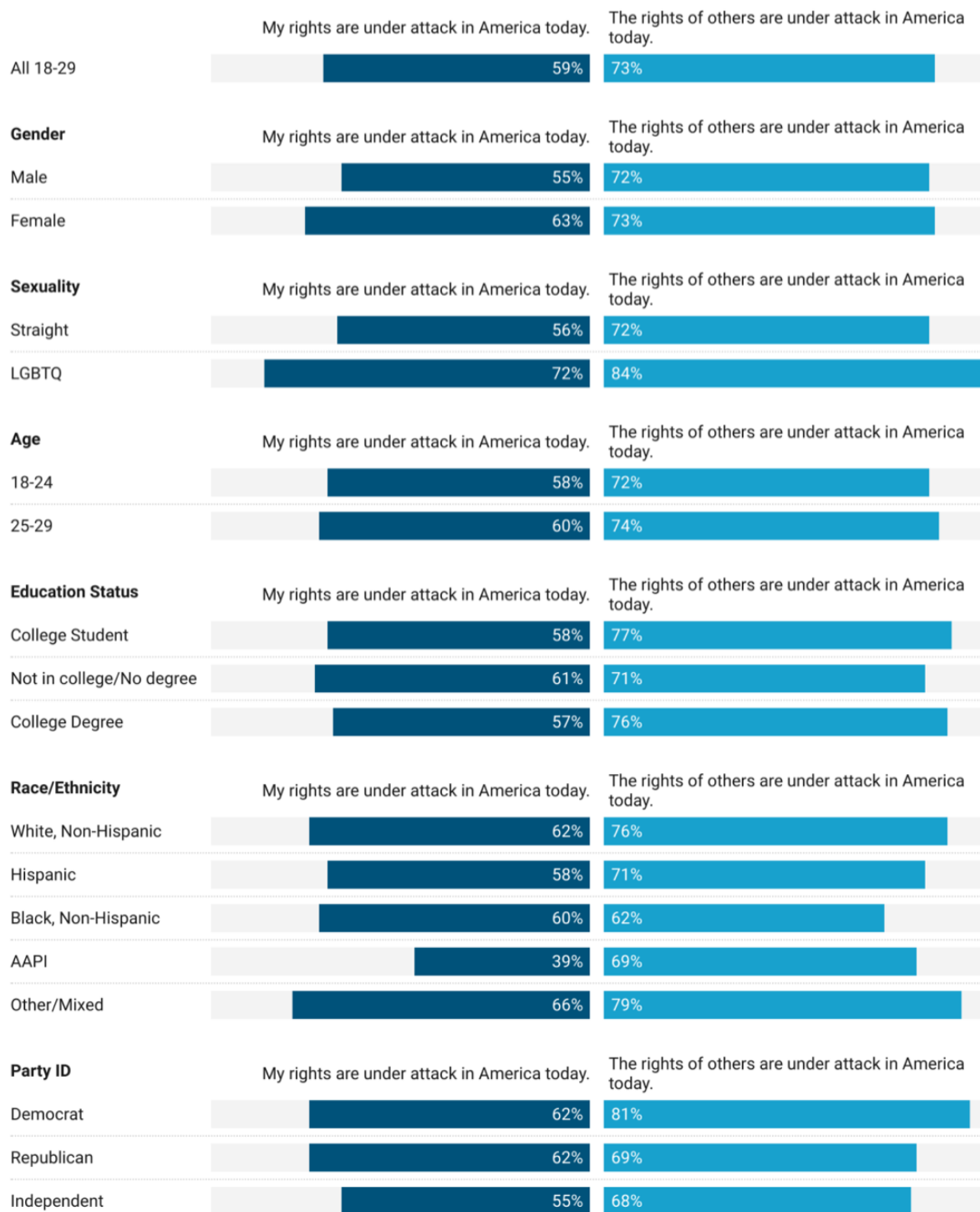
****3. More than 7-in-10 young Americans (72%) believe that the rights of others are under attack; 59% believe that their own rights are under attack.****

Across every major cohort of young Americans, a majority agree that their rights – and the rights of other Americans – are under attack in the country today. Members of the LGBTQ community feel the most pressure, as 72% are concerned about their own individual rights. While 63% of women agree their rights are under attack compared to 55% of men, a similar proportion of women (73%) and men (72%) agree that the rights of others are under attack today.

Young Americans who believe their rights are under attack are more likely to vote (44%) compared to those who disagree (35%). These feelings are also associated with significant mental health effects: those who “strongly agree” that their rights were under attack were more likely than the average young person to report symptoms of hopelessness and depression (58% to 49%) and harbor thoughts of self-harm (27% to 22%).

Most Young Americans Believe Their Rights, and the Rights of Others, Are Under Attack Today

Percent who "somewhat" or "strongly agree" with each statement

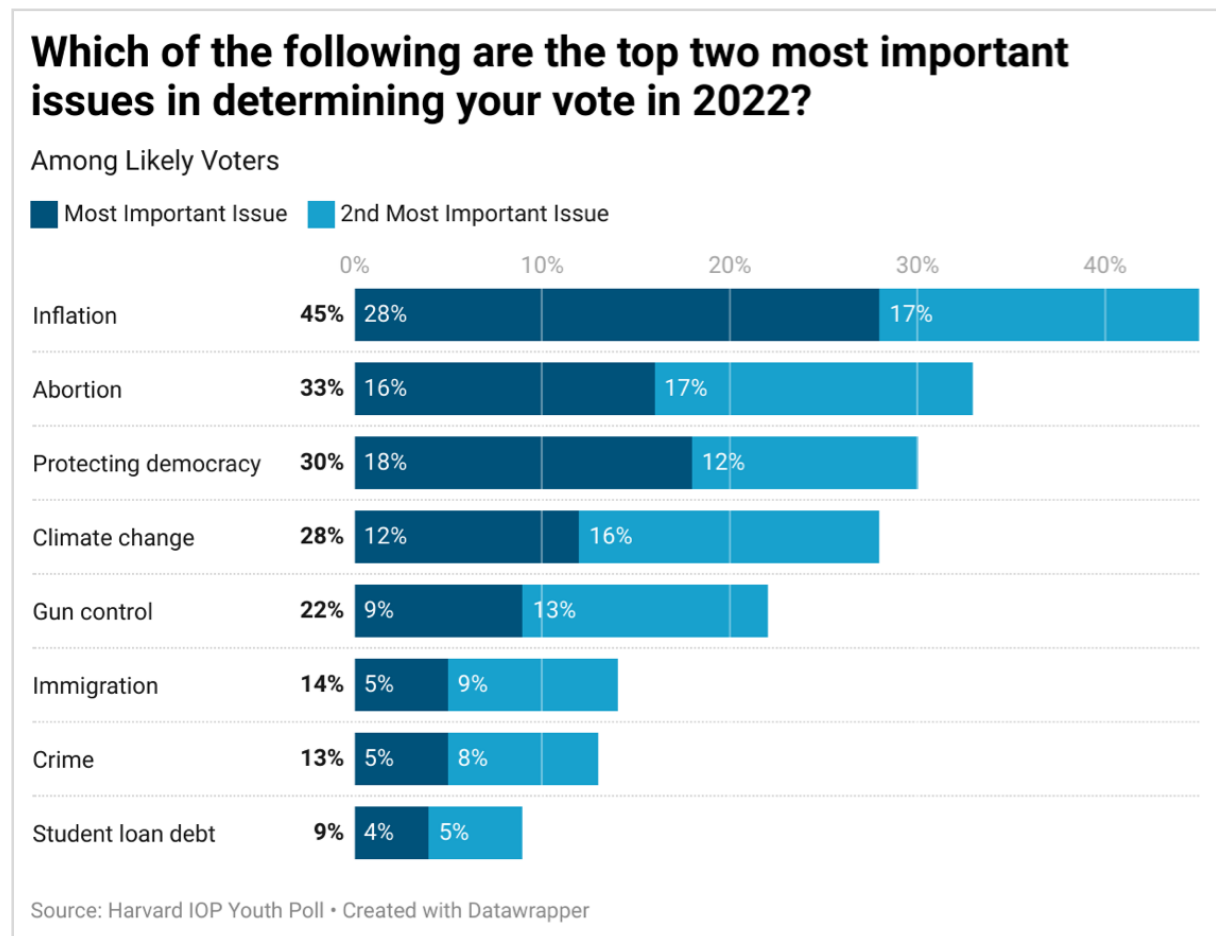


Source: Harvard IOP Youth Poll • Created with Datawrapper

****4.** Two-in-five (39%) Republicans cited inflation as the most important issue driving their midterm vote; Democrats are moved by abortion (20%), protecting democracy (20%), inflation (19%), and climate change (16%).**

When offered a list of eight options, inflation was found to be the most important issue in the minds of likely young voters at this point in the campaign cycle – 28% cited this as most important, and an additional 17% cited this as second most important. A notable gender gap emerged among likely voters:

- 34% of young men cited inflation as the most important issue, 22% protecting democracy, and 10% abortion;
- 24% of women cited abortion, 21% inflation, and 13% protecting democracy.



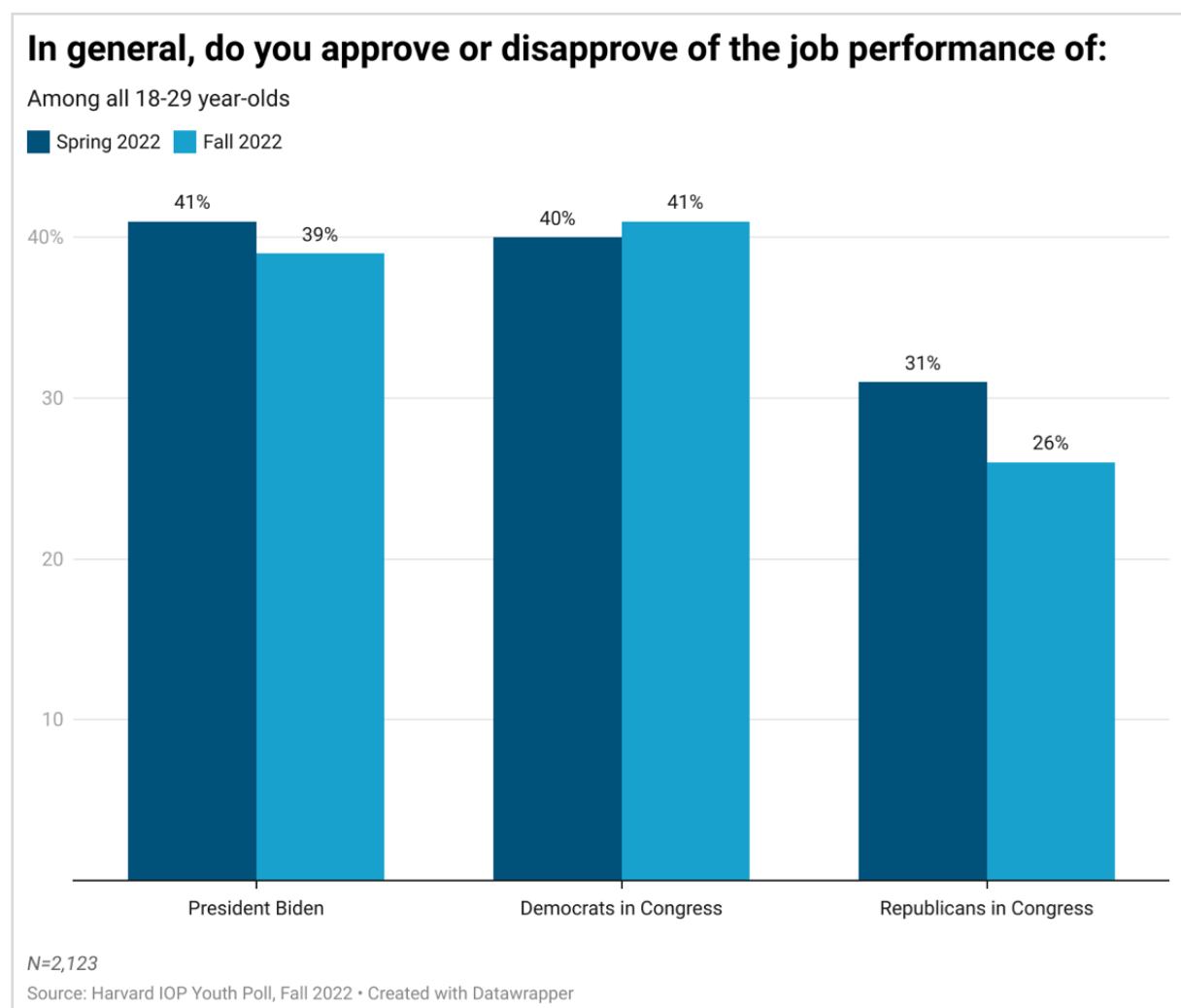
As the importance of protecting democracy emerges as an issue for young Americans, we find that only four percent (5% of likely voters) believe that ours is a “healthy” democracy – while an additional 24% (23% among likely voters) describe it as “somewhat functioning.” This represents a recognition that American democracy has faltered in the last year. Fall 2021 polling showed that 7% rated our democracy as healthy, and 27% “somewhat functioning.”

When it comes to the upcoming elections, three-in-ten (29%) likely voters expect that they will be undermined in some way, roughly the same number (30%) believe they will not – with a plurality (40%) unsure. Democrats (25%) are nearly as likely as Republicans (30%) to say they will be undermined. Probed further, Democrats and Republicans both believe that

any interference will likely come from domestic political forces – and not a foreign state or actor.

****5. Despite support for the Democrats' agenda and accomplishments, young Americans' views of President Biden's job performance (39%) have not improved since the spring survey (41%).****

Among all 18-to-29-year-olds, President Biden's job approval is 39%, but only 31% approve of Biden's handling of the economy and 25% approve of his handling of inflation. Approval of Biden's response to the pandemic (49%) and the war in Ukraine (42%) have slipped three and four points respectively since spring 2022. Among young people most likely to vote, Biden's job approval stands at 45%, which is two points lower than spring 2022.

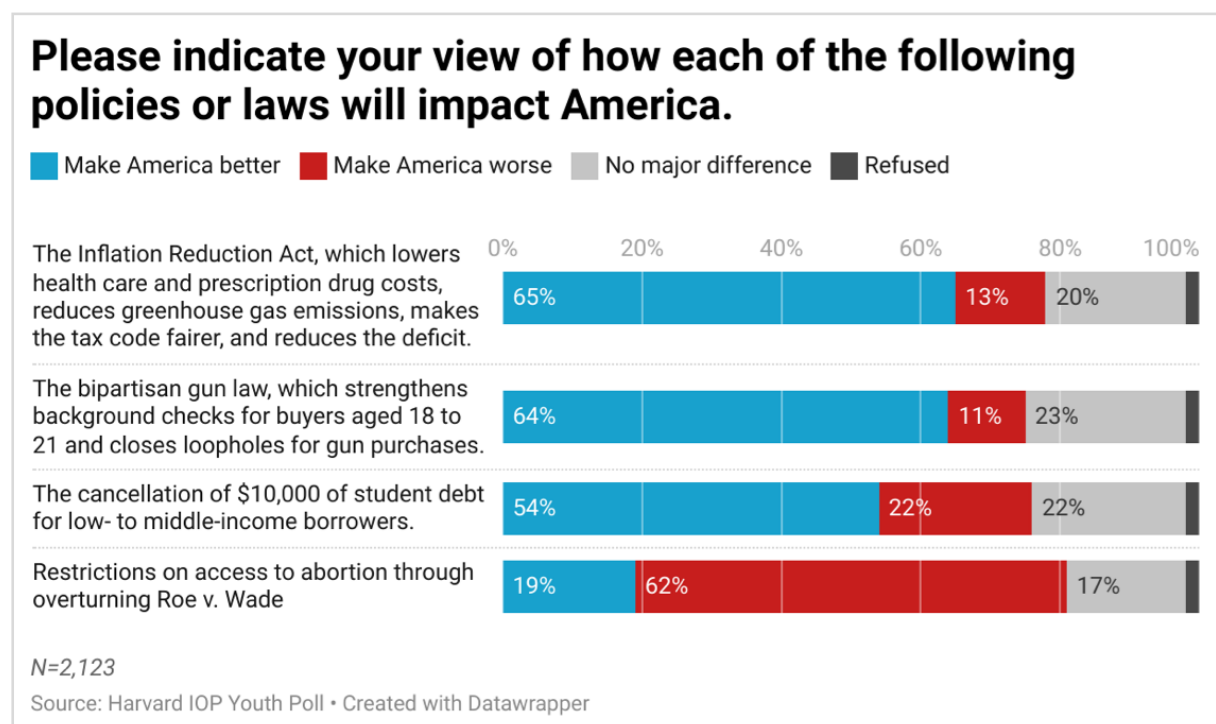


Comparatively, President Trump's overall job approval at this stage in the 2018 cycle in the Harvard Youth Poll was 26%, and President Obama's was 43% at this point in 2014.

The President's job approval is positively correlated with how closely young Americans

follow news about national politics. Biden's standing with those who follow the news very closely (48% approval) is 20 points better than those who do not follow the news (28%). The relationship is particularly significant among Democrats, as 71% who follow the news closely approve of his performance compared to 55% who are less likely to follow current events.

When asked about a series of accomplishments championed by the President and Congress, we found that a majority of young Americans under 30 believe that the recent cancellation of \$10,000 of student debt (54%), the bipartisan gun law (64%), and the Inflation Reduction Act (65%) will make America better (compared to worse, or no major difference).

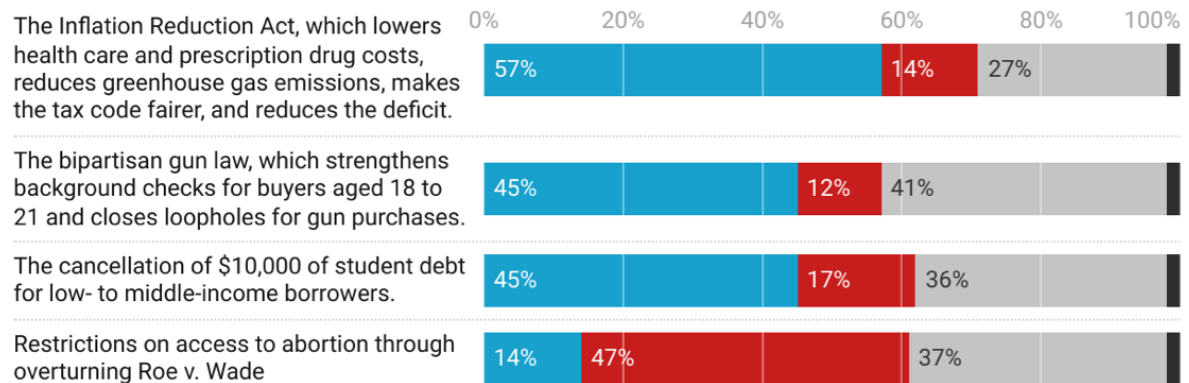


In addition, a plurality of young Americans report that each of the three Democratic accomplishments from the summer will have a positive impact on their lives, or the lives of their family. On the issue of student debt cancellation specifically, 51% of college students, 52% of college graduates, and 56% of young African Americans indicated that this would have a positive impact on them or their family.

On the other hand, 47% of 18-to-29- year-olds say that the reversal of Roe v. Wade will have a negative impact on their lives – including 54% of young women. Female Democrats (65%) were twice as likely as female Republicans (32%) to believe the Dobbs decision will impact them in a negative way.

Please indicate your view of how each of the following policies will impact you or your family in particular.

■ Positive impact ■ Negative impact ■ No major impact ■ Refused



N=2,123

Source: Harvard IOP Youth Poll • Created with Datawrapper

Fall 2022 Harvard Youth Poll

#to read and reference#