

Biden in 2024 matchup as views on their presidencies diverge

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Reuters/Getty Images

Looking back, 55% of all Americans now say they see Trump's presidency as a success, while 44% see it as a failure. In a January 2021 poll taken just before Trump left office and days after the January 6 attack on the US Capitol, 55% considered his time as president a failure.

Assessing Biden's time in office so far, 61% say his presidency thus far has been a failure, while 39% say it's been a success. That's narrowly worse than the 57% who called the first year of his administration a failure in January 2022, with 41% calling it a success.



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Republicans now are more unified around the idea that Trump's presidency was a success than Democrats are that Biden's has been one. Overall, 92% of Republicans call Trump's time in office a success, while just 73% of Democrats say Biden's has been a success so far. Among independents, 51% say Trump's presidency was successful, while only 37% see Biden's as a success.

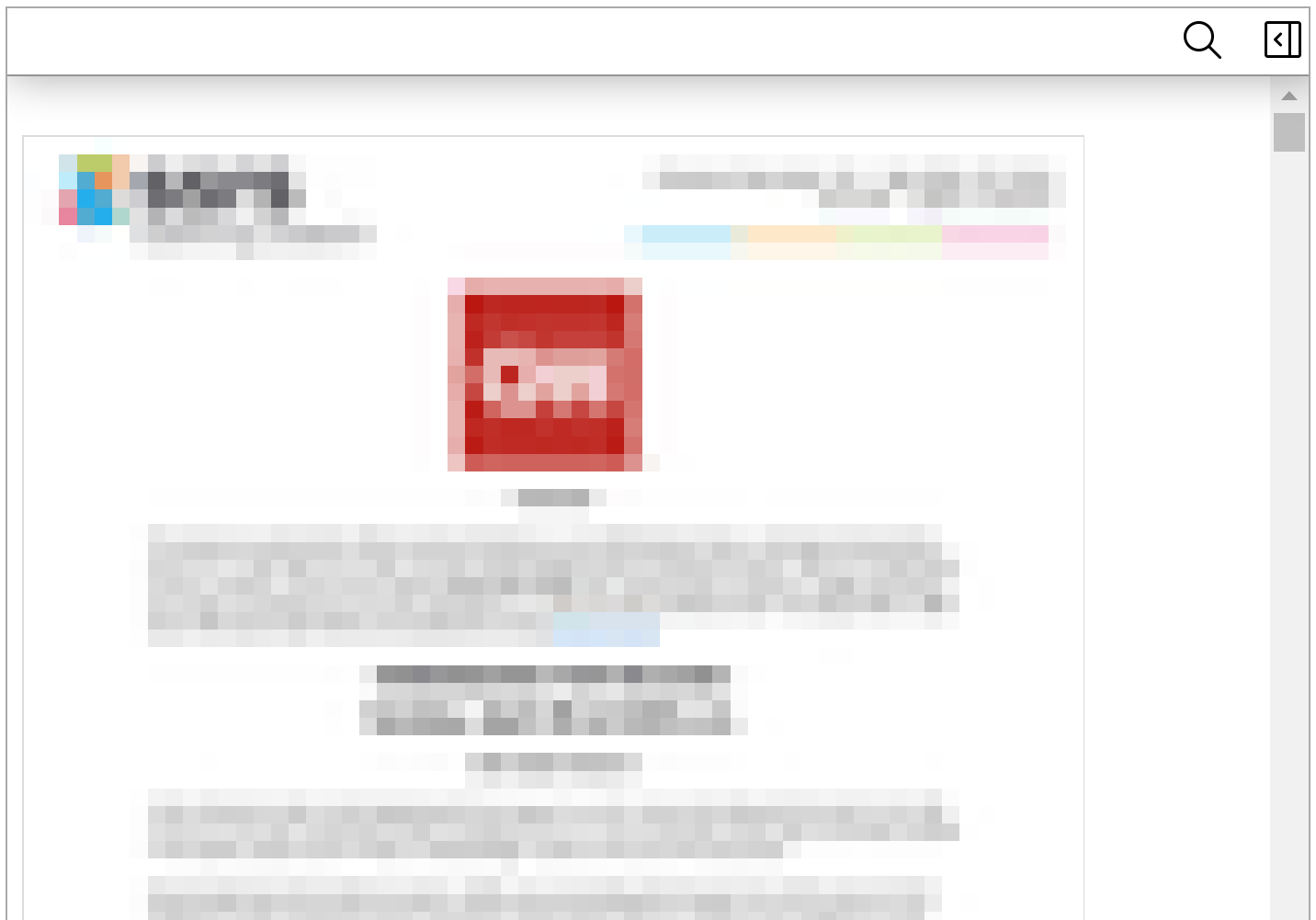
There is some overlap in views of the two most recent presidents' achievements, with 14% of Americans saying they consider both are failures, while 8% say both are successes. About half of registered voters, 47%, consider Biden's presidency thus far to be a failure while saying Trump's was a success, while only 30% say Biden's has been successful and that Trump's was not. Public opinion of former presidents generally rises in retrospect, although no other modern president has attempted a similar return to power after an electoral loss.

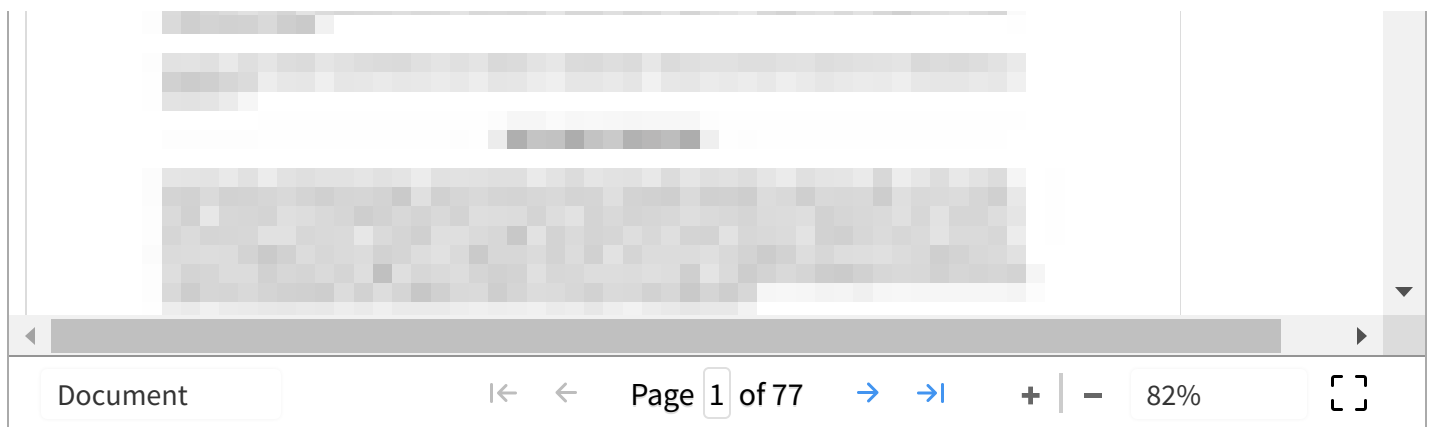
Negative views of Biden's work in office have held for much of his presidency. In the new poll, 60% disapprove of his handling of the job and 40% approve, about the same as it's been in CNN polling for more than a year. Even Biden's strongest issue approval ratings in the poll are

only peaking for more than a year. Even Biden's strongest issue approval ratings in the poll are also in negative territory, with 45% approving of his handling of health care policy and 44% approving his handling of student loan debt. And his worst issue approval rating – for his handling of the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza – yields 28% approval to 71% disapproval, including an 81% disapproval mark among those younger than 35 and majority disapproval among Democrats (53%).

The economy

Biden's approval ratings for the economy (34%) and inflation (29%) remain starkly negative, as voters say economic concerns are more important to them when choosing a candidate than they were in each of the past two presidential contests. In the new poll, 65% of registered voters call the economy extremely important to their vote for president, compared with 40% who felt that way in early 2020 and 46% who said the same at roughly this point in 2016. Those voters who say the economy is deeply important break heavily for Trump in a matchup against Biden, 62% to 30%.





A broad majority of all Americans, 70%, say economic conditions in the US are poor, with many, particularly Republicans, who feel that way saying their views would be more affected by a political shift than a change in the economy itself. About 4 in 10 in that group (41%) say that a change in political leadership in Washington would do more to change their impressions of the economy than a lower rate of inflation, a change in their personal financial situation or a sustained rise in the stock market. About 6 in 10 Republicans (61%) who say the economy is in bad shape say a change in leadership would shift their views, compared with 13% of Democrats who feel that way.

After politics, a decline in the rate of inflation could change the minds of a sizable share of those who feel the economy is in bad shape – 37% feel that way, with far fewer citing a positive change in their personal finances (14%) or a rise in the stock market (3%) as having that same effect.

Americans' perceptions of their own finances also remain negative, with 53% saying they are dissatisfied with their personal financial situation while 47% are satisfied. Dissatisfaction is starkly prevalent among those with lower incomes (67% dissatisfied in households with annual incomes lower than \$50,000), people of color (64% say they are dissatisfied) and younger Americans (61% of those younger than 45 say they are dissatisfied).

Other issues

Considering other issue priorities for the upcoming election, 58% of voters call protecting democracy an extremely important issue, the only other issue tested that a majority considers central to their choice. Nearly half call immigration, crime and gun policy deeply important (48% each), with health care (43%), abortion (42%) and nominations to the US Supreme Court (39%) each deeply important to about 4 in 10 voters. At the lower end of the scale, just 33% consider foreign policy that important, 27% climate change, 26% the war between Israel and Hamas, and 24% student loans.

There remain sharp partisan differences in which issues are most critical to choosing a president. Among Democratic-aligned voters, protecting democracy (67%), abortion (54%), the economy (52%), gun policy (51%) and health care (49%) all rank as key for about half or more, while on the GOP-aligned side, it's the economy (79%), immigration (71%), crime (65%) and then democracy (54%).

Impressions of candidates

Beyond issues, impressions of both candidates remain mostly negative (58% of voters have an unfavorable view of Biden, 55% of Trump), and a narrow majority of voters, 53%, say they are dissatisfied with the candidates they have to choose from in this year's presidential contest.

A sizable 17% of registered voters say they have unfavorable views of both Biden and Trump, and in choosing between the two, they break for Trump, 43% to 31%, with 25% of that group saying they would vote for someone else, skip the contest entirely or just aren't sure who they would support.

Among all voters, when independent candidates Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Cornel West and Green Party candidate Jill Stein are included in the matchup, Trump holds 42% to Biden's 33%, with Kennedy at 16%, West at 4% and Stein at 3%. Kennedy draws 13% each from supporters of Biden and Trump in the initial two-way matchup.

In the Biden vs. Trump matchup, the poll finds Biden faring worse than in previous CNN polls among the youngest voters, trailing Trump by a 51%-to-40% margin among voters younger than 35. Biden's deficit with voters in that group is driven largely by those who did not vote in 2020. With that group excluded, voters between the ages of 18 and 34 in this poll divide 46% for Biden to 47% for Trump. Although not all polls release crosstabs or use the same age breaks when reporting results, other recent polling has shown a wide range of results for younger voters in testing a matchup between Trump and Biden, ranging from an 18-point Trump advantage among those younger than 30 in the Fox News poll in mid-March up to a 21-point Biden advantage among those younger than 30 in the Pew Research survey earlier this month.

Among all voters, Biden remains at a bit of a disadvantage relative to Trump in terms of the share of voters who have ruled out voting for him: 52% say there's no chance they would support him, while 47% say there's no chance they would back Trump, both numbers are similar to the level found in a fall CNN survey. A small share of registered voters – 5% for Biden, 3% for Trump – say that although they are not currently backing that candidate they would consider them.

But the poll finds that Biden voters and Trump voters largely just don't understand each other. Among those who do not currently support Biden, 66% say they don't understand why anyone would support him, and 63% of those not backing Trump say they can't understand why anyone would support him.

The CNN poll was conducted by SSRS from April 18-23 among a random national sample of 1,212 adults drawn from a probability-based panel, including 967 registered voters. Surveys were either conducted online or by telephone with a live interviewer. Results among the full sample have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.4 percentage points. For results among registered voters, it is plus or minus 3.8 points.

CNN's Ariel Edwards-Levy and Ed Wu contributed to this story.

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