

THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT



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THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT: A 50-STATE SURVEY REPORT #111: AMERICANS OF MIDDLE EASTERN/ NORTH AFRICAN DESCENT (MENA)

USA, November 2024

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Report of November 29, 2024, v.1

The Civic Health and Institutions Project
and
The COVID States Project

A joint initiative of:

Northeastern University,
Harvard University,
Rutgers University,
University of Rochester

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Note on methods:

Between August 30, 2024 and October 8, 2024, we collected a total of 28,025 responses from individuals aged 18 and older across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The surveys were conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample. Extensive data quality checks were employed. The sample included 820 respondents who were self-reported to be of either Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) descent and 755 respondents who were from Pennsylvania. The MENA sample is weighted on age, income, education, and gender to reflect the US national MENA population based on reports by the Cato Institute. The Pennsylvania sample is weighted on gender, age, race, education, urbanicity, and 2020 vote to reflect the state population. Non-responses were excluded from the calculation of reported percentages. More information on methodology is available at www.chip50.org/survey-methodology.

Note: Counts, percentages, and margins of error are weighted for all samples. Any slight discrepancies between the true sample size and weighted sample sizes among the weighted national sample are due to the weighting procedure. Non-responses are not included, so the total number of responses may be below the actual reported sample sizes above.

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Or visit us at www.chip50.org or www.covidstates.org.

North Carolina: 2024 Election and Healthcare Issues

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A national sample of U.S. persons of MENA (Middle Eastern and North African) descent (see below for precise definition) favored Vice President Kamala Harris (56%) over former president Donald Trump (32%).
- MENA respondents nationally ranked the economy, inflation, healthcare, and crime at the top of their list of issues affecting their decision for president.
- The MENA respondents favored Harris heavily on some domestic issues such as abortion: 62% said Harris would definitely or probably handle the issue better, compared to 26% who said Trump would definitely or probably handle better. However, MENA respondents rated abortion as only the 12th most important issue out of a list of 17.
- On handling the economy, 53% of MENA respondents said Harris would definitely or probably handle it better compared to 35% for Trump.
- Regarding the Israel-Gaza conflict, 50% said Harris would definitely or probably handle the issue better compared to 33% for Trump. For MENA respondents, this was the third-least important issue among a list of 17 issues.
- Generally, the MENA sample systematically rated all policy issues as more important than the general population; the biggest gap was for race relations and racism, followed by climate change, where the MENA respondents found the issue significantly more important than the general population.

Introduction

There were 3.5 million persons of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent in the 2020 U.S. Census. As Census Bureau researchers [note](#), “The MENA population, also referred to by the decolonial term, ‘Southwest Asian and North African’ (SWANA), includes people of Arab descent (e.g., Lebanese, Syrian), people of non-Arab descent (e.g., Iranian, Turkish), and people of North African descent (e.g., Algerian, Moroccan).” The MENA population thus is distinct and envelopes people of Arab descent. Recently, the Census counted and analyzed a distinct identity subcategory for people of MENA descent, having traditionally categorized them as White.

During the 2024 U.S. election cycle, there has been intense public interest in the political preferences of this group, as the MENA community has been uniquely responsive to events such as the Israel-Gaza conflict and related military and political events. Due to their large numbers in states such as Michigan, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, the community may play an important role in the presidential election.

This survey report provides insight into the MENA community nationally (sample = 805 persons). We also provide comparisons with the general public nationally (28,025 persons).

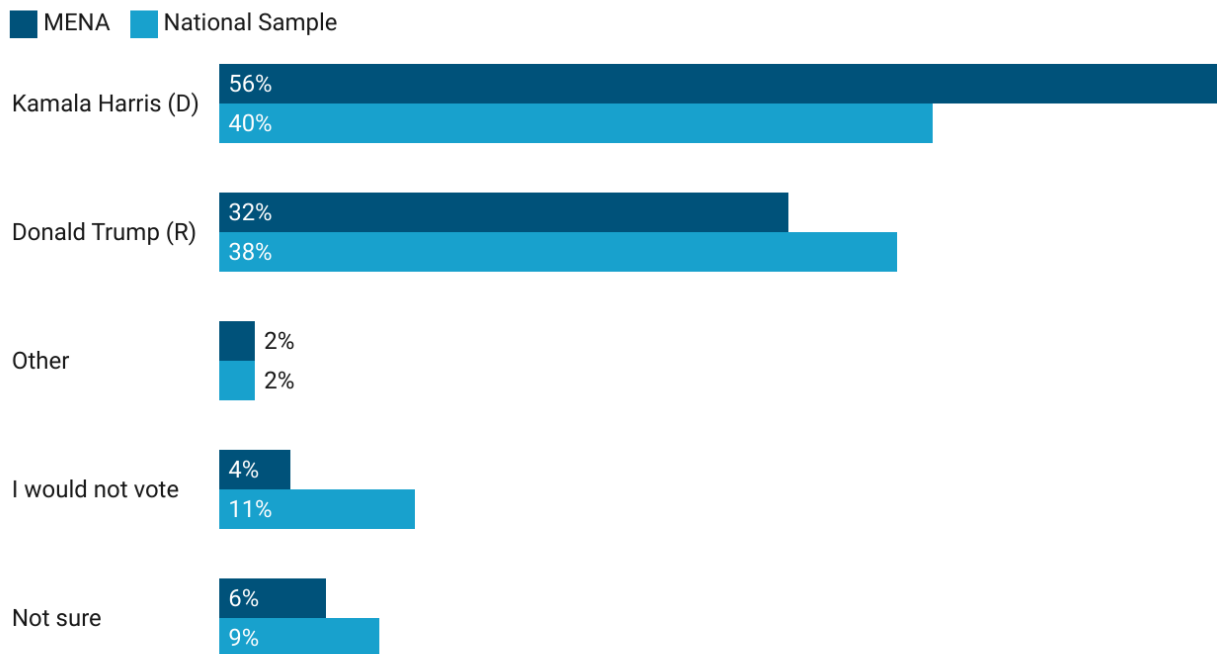
In addition, for a comparative perspective, in Appendix I, we include parallel data from a general population sample in the state of Pennsylvania (755 persons.) To be clear, this is not a MENA sample in that state; we merely include these data in the Appendix as another point of useful comparison for understanding the national MENA data.

Detailed data tables for all questions are included in Appendix II.

Favoring Harris over Trump

MENA respondents favored Vice President Kamala Harris (56%) over former President Donald Trump (32%). In this survey, the general population was almost equally divided (40% for Harris; 38% for Trump.) There had been talk during the 2024 election season that persons of MENA descent might protest the policies toward the Israel-Gaza conflict of President Joe Biden–Vice President Kamala Harris by voting for another candidate, but our finding is that few MENA respondents (2%) said they would vote for a candidate other than Harris or Trump.

If the 2024 U.S. presidential election were held today, which candidate would you vote for?



National Sample, N = 28025, MENA Sample, N = 820, 8/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1.

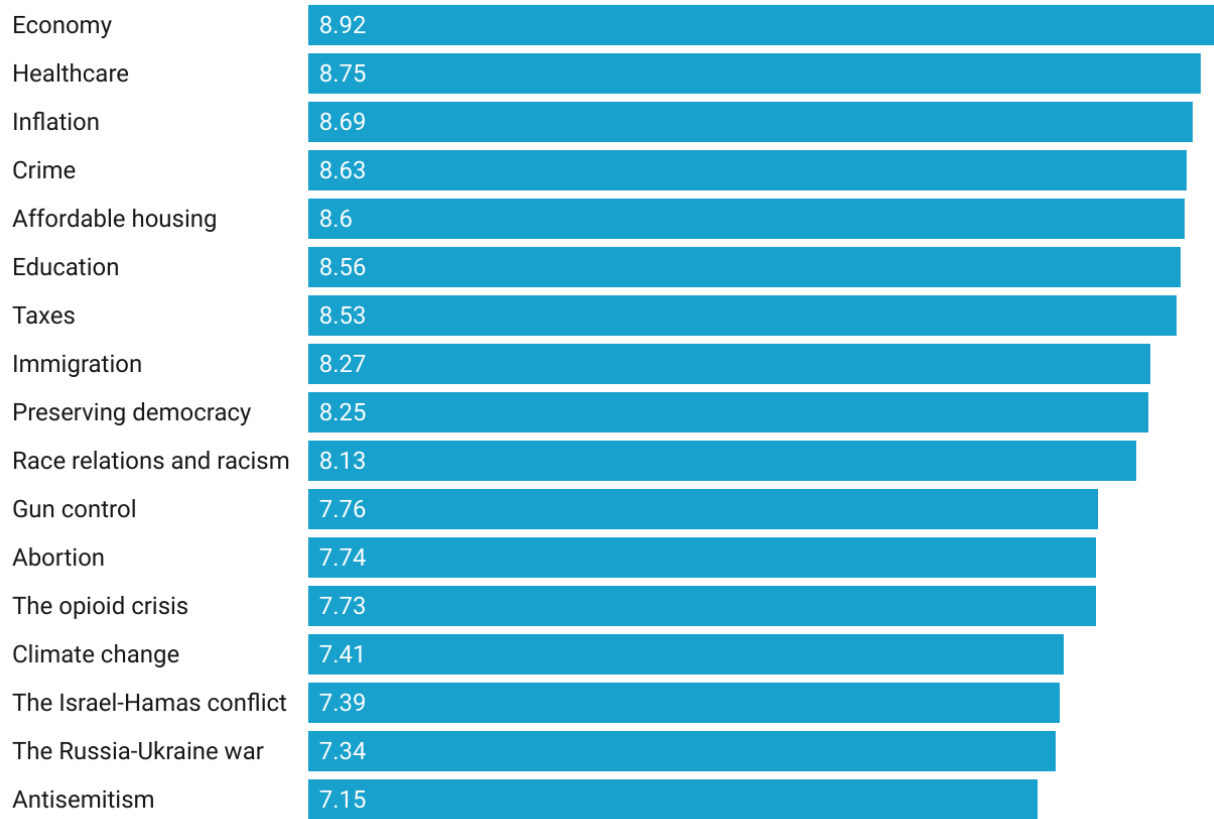
MENA Respondents: Most Important Election Issues

MENA respondents nationally were asked about 18 different issues that might affect how they vote in the presidential election. Among the top were the economy, inflation, healthcare, and crime.

Several issues that have received substantial attention in the media, including the Israel-Hamas conflict, gun control, and abortion – which are often seen in news media as near the top of the agenda for voters – ranked significantly lower, while Antisemitism and the Russia-Ukraine war ranked lowest.

How important are the following issues for your decision on how to vote in the 2024 presidential election? MENA sample

Mean for each rating on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is “Not important at all” and 10 is “Extremely important”.



MENA Sample, N=820, 8/30/2024-10/08/2024

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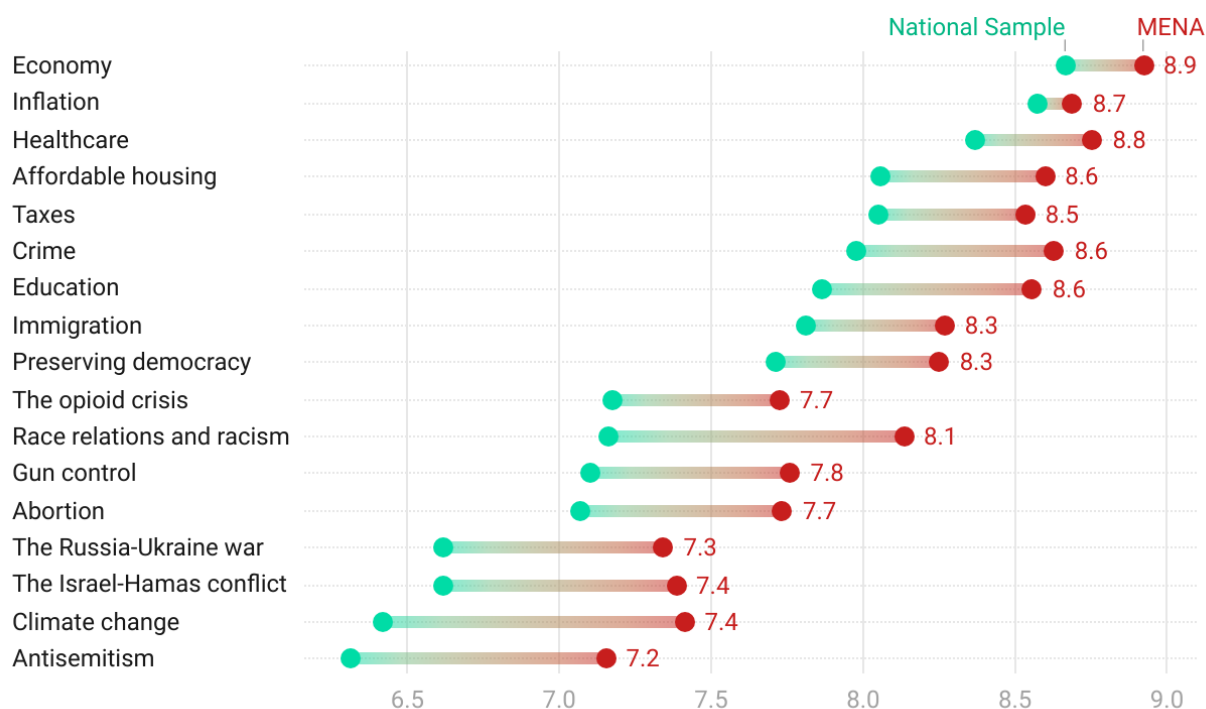
Figure 2.

National vs MENA takes on the Issues

Compared with a national survey sample, MENA respondents generally assigned greater importance to a variety of issues, suggesting more attention among that community toward public policy issues in the United States (relative to the general population). The MENA sample systematically rates all issues as more important than the general population; the biggest gaps are for race relations and racism, followed by climate change, where the MENA respondents find the issues substantially more important than the general population does.

How important are the following issues for your decision on how to vote in the 2024 presidential election?

Mean for each rating on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is “Not important at all” and 10 is “Extremely important”.



National Sample, N = 28025, MENA Sample, N = 820, 8/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3.

MENA Issue Preferences for Trump vs. Harris

The MENA respondents favored Harris heavily on some domestic issues such as abortion: 62% said Harris would definitely or probably handle the issue better, compared to 26% definitely or probably for Trump.

On handling the economy, 53% of MENA respondents said Harris would definitely or probably handle it better compared to 35% for Trump. Regarding the Israel-Gaza conflict, 50% said Harris would definitely or probably handle the issue better compared to 33% Trump.

Which presidential candidate do you think would better handle the following issues?

■ MENA ■ National Sample

Abortion



Immigration



The economy



The Israel-Hamas conflict



National Sample, N = 28025, MENA Sample, N = 820, 8/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 4.

(See chart in Appendix I.)

Conclusion

In general, MENA respondents favored Vice President Kamala Harris over former President Donald Trump both as a candidate and on her potential handling of issues, although in the handling of the Israel-Gaza conflict, Harris's advantage over Trump was (relatively) reduced. Generally, the MENA sample systematically rates all issues as more important than the general population; the largest gap is for race relations and racism, where MENA respondents find the issue significantly more important than the general population does.

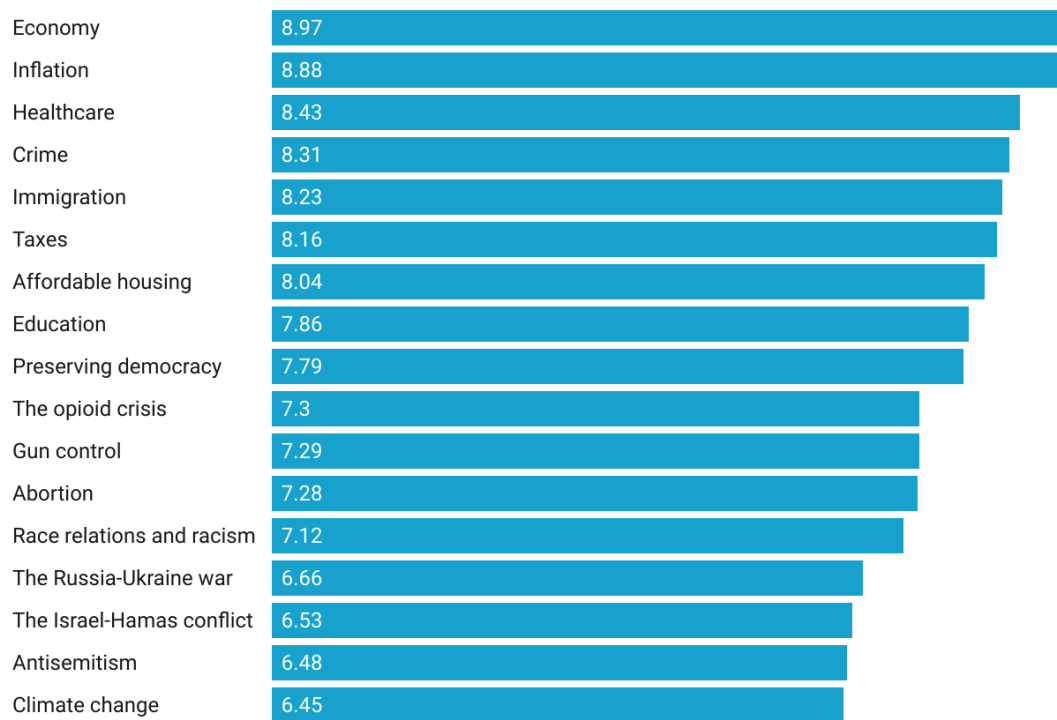
Appendix I: Comparative Perspective

Comparative Perspective: State of Pennsylvania

As part of this report, we also include a perspective on public opinion from the general population of an important swing state, Pennsylvania, where the MENA population is likely to play a role in deciding the election. This survey does not include a MENA sample for the state of Pennsylvania; rather, we merely provide general population data for respondents from this state as a useful point of comparison.

How important are the following issues for your decision on how to vote in the 2024 presidential election? Pennsylvania sample

Mean for each rating on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is “Not important at all” and 10 is “Extremely important”.



Pennsylvania Sample, N=755, 8/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 5.

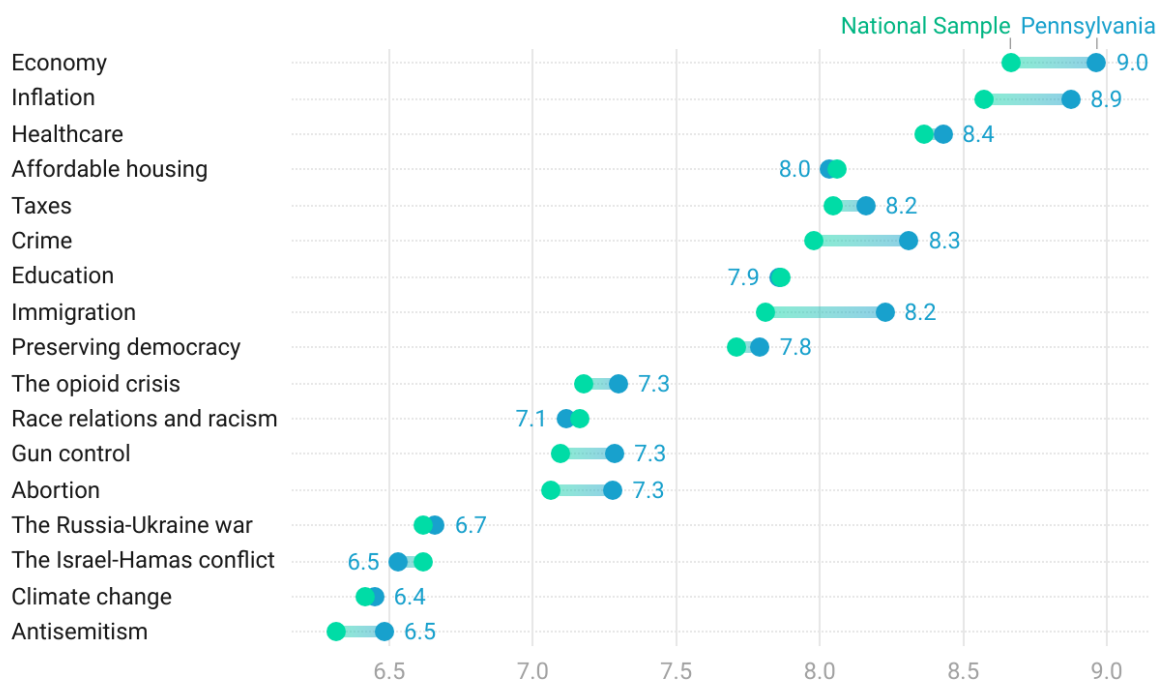
Pennsylvania respondents were also asked about 18 different issues that might affect how they vote in the presidential election. Among the top were the economy, inflation, healthcare, and crime. Again, the Israel-Hamas conflict, gun control, and abortion ranked significantly lower for voters in Pennsylvania, while climate change and antisemitism were rated by these voters as the least important of the 18 issues.

National vs. Pennsylvania’s take on Issues

Compared to a national sample, the general population of Pennsylvania respondents expressed similar views in terms of issues with the most importance for their voting decision in the presidential election. However, Pennsylvania respondents expressed greater concern about crime and immigration, compared with a national sample.

How important are the following issues for your decision on how to vote in the 2024 presidential election?

Mean for each rating on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is “Not important at all” and 10 is “Extremely important”.



National Sample, N = 28025, Pennsylvania Sample, N = 755, 8/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 6.

Comparing National MENA vs. PA residents on the Issues

We also asked a sample of MENA persons nationally as well as a sample of persons from the general population in Pennsylvania whether Harris or Trump would better handle a variety of issues.

Among Pennsylvania respondents, Trump was favored on some issues: On immigration, 36% said Trump would definitely handle the issue better, compared to 30% favoring Harris. On the economy, 34% said Trump would definitely handle it better, versus 30% for Harris.

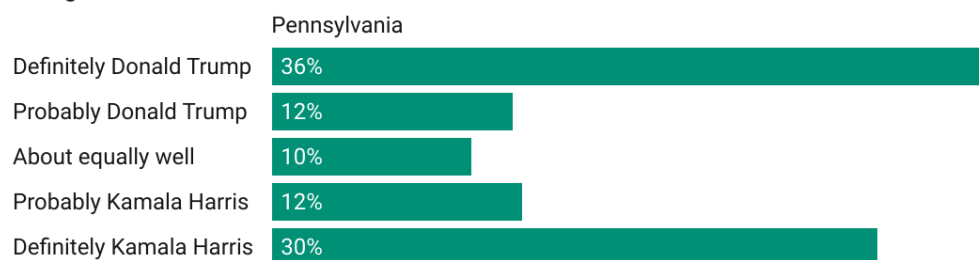
By contrast, on abortion, 44% said Harris would definitely handle the issue better, compared to 19% favoring Trump on his potential handling of the issue. Finally, in the Israel-Gaza conflict, respondents were exactly split statistically, with 41% overall favoring each candidate.

Which presidential candidate do you think would better handle the following issues?

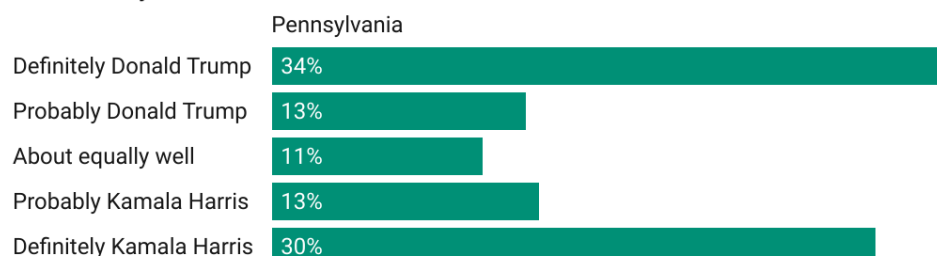
Abortion



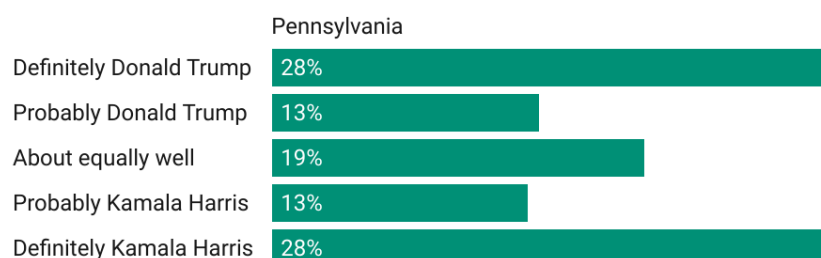
Immigration



The economy



The Israel-Hamas conflict



National Sample, N = 28025, Pennsylvania Sample, N = 755, 8/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (A joint project of Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and the University of Rochester) • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 7.

Appendix II: Data Tables

Table 1: How important are the following issues for your decision on how to vote in the 2024 presidential election? Please rate their importance on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "Not important at all" and 10 is "Extremely important."

Vote Issue	MENA		PA		Full Sample	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Abortion	7.73	2.93	7.28	3.01	7.08	3.06
Antisemitism	7.15	2.8	6.49	2.81	6.32	2.8
Affordable housing	8.6	2.08	8.03	2.38	8.06	2.41
Climate change	7.41	2.95	6.45	3.12	6.42	3.02
Inflation	8.69	1.92	8.89	1.8	8.57	2.08
Education	8.56	2.04	7.86	2.38	7.86	2.3
Healthcare	8.76	1.93	8.44	2.02	8.36	2.11
Race relations and racism	8.13	2.5	7.12	2.77	7.16	2.75
Taxes	8.54	2.09	8.16	2.19	8.04	2.24
Immigration	8.27	2.36	8.22	2.26	7.82	2.47
Crime	8.63	1.9	8.31	2.03	7.98	2.22
Gun control	7.77	2.84	7.28	2.93	7.1	2.93
Economy	8.91	1.84	8.96	1.73	8.67	2.01
Preserving democracy	8.25	2.39	7.8	2.46	7.71	2.62
The Israel-Hamas conflict	7.38	2.84	6.53	2.85	6.62	2.79
The Russia-Ukraine war	7.36	2.85	6.66	2.86	6.62	2.81
The opioid crisis	7.72	2.57	7.29	2.61	7.17	2.63

Table 2: If the 2024 U.S. presidential election were held today, which candidate would you vote for?

	MENA		PA		Full Sample	
	Count	%(MOE)	Count	%(MOE)	Count	%(MOE)
Kamala Harris (D)	459	56.2% (3.4%)	346	46% (3.6%)	11216	40.2% (0.6%)
Donald Trump (R)	260	31.8% (3.2%)	283	37.7% (3.5%)	10604	38% (0.6%)
Other	14	1.7% (0.9%)	11	1.4% (0.8%)	567	2% (0.2%)
I would not vote	32	3.9% (1.3%)	65	8.6% (2%)	3104	11.1% (0.4%)
Not sure	53	6.4% (1.7%)	48	6.4% (1.7%)	2416	8.7% (0.3%)
Total	818	100%	752	100%	27906	100%

Table 3: Which presidential candidate do you think would better handle the following issues?

	MENA		PA		Full Sample	
	Count	% (MOE)	Count	% (MOE)	Count	% (MOE)
Abortion						
Definitely Donald Trump	115	17.3% (2.9%)	115	18.9% (3.1%)	4236	17.5% (0.5%)
Probably Donald Trump	57	8.6% (2.1%)	49	8.2% (2.2%)	2938	12.2% (0.4%)
About equally well	82	12.3% (2.5%)	81	13.4% (2.7%)	4396	18.2% (0.5%)
Probably Kamala Harris	83	12.5% (2.5%)	96	15.8% (2.9%)	3627	15% (0.5%)
Definitely Kamala Harris	328	49.3% (3.8%)	265	43.7% (4%)	8985	37.2% (0.6%)
Total	666	100%	605	100%	24183	100%
Immigration						
Definitely Donald Trump	166	25.1% (3.3%)	213	35.7% (3.8%)	7929	33% (0.6%)
Probably Donald Trump	72	10.9% (2.4%)	71	12% (2.6%)	3149	13.1% (0.4%)
About equally well	72	10.9% (2.4%)	59	9.9% (2.4%)	3621	15.1% (0.5%)

Probably Kamala Harris	122	18.4% (3%)	74	12.4% (2.6%)	3293	13.7% (0.4%)
Definitely Kamala Harris	230	34.7% (3.6%)	180	30.1% (3.7%)	6051	25.2% (0.5%)
Total	662	100%	597	100%	24043	100%
The economy						
Definitely Donald Trump	182	27.4% (3.4%)	202	33.6% (3.8%)	7850	32.4% (0.6%)
Probably Donald Trump	52	7.8% (2%)	76	12.6% (2.7%)	3238	13.4% (0.4%)
About equally well	74	11.1% (2.4%)	63	10.5% (2.4%)	3748	15.5% (0.5%)
Probably Kamala Harris	95	14.3% (2.7%)	81	13.3% (2.7%)	3133	12.9% (0.4%)
Definitely Kamala Harris	262	39.3% (3.7%)	181	30% (3.7%)	6231	25.8% (0.6%)
Total	665	100%	603	100%	24200	100%
The Israel-Hamas conflict						
Definitely Donald Trump	144	21.6% (3.1%)	166	27.7% (3.6%)	6593	27.3% (0.6%)
Probably Donald Trump	70	10.5% (2.3%)	80	13.3% (2.7%)	3369	13.9% (0.4%)
About equally well	121	18.2% (2.9%)	111	18.5% (3.1%)	5605	23.2% (0.5%)
Probably Kamala Harris	123	18.5% (2.9%)	76	12.7% (2.7%)	3266	13.5% (0.4%)
Definitely Kamala Harris	207	31.2% (3.5%)	166	27.8% (3.6%)	5325	22% (0.5%)
Total	665	100%	599	100%	24158	100%