POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF AMERICAN MUSLIMS

MALA
MUSLIM AMERICAN
LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

J.L. PARTNERS.

TABLE OF
CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our poll finds that political diversity in the American Muslim community is strong, not only in party identification but also in views on issues, administrations, and policies. This means that there are several areas in which American Muslim sentiment, be it overall or a specific demographic therein, aligns with GOP sentiment and policies.

The top three priorities that American Muslims take into account when voting include inflation and the economy, border security and illegal migration, and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Each of these issues offers opportunity for GOP engagement, with the strongest alignment manifesting in the economy and immigration. The issues that American Muslims prioritize the least relate to race and gender – another realm of overlap with the Republican party's platform.

While there is negative favorability of both Donald Trump (-14) and JD Vance (-18), American Muslims hold the individuals apart from the party. Support for GOP economic and immigration policies can be capitalized upon in place of strategies more focused on the individual leaders of the party.

This report was commissioned in partnership with the Muslim American Leadership Alliance (MALA).

ONLY ONE-THIRD OF AMERICAN MUSLIMS IDENTIFY AS DEMOCRAT

Gender

Male American Muslims tend to be more strongly aligned with the Republican party. Among the respondents, 35% of men and 29% of women aligned themselves with the GOP. In comparison, 28% of men and 40% of women identified with the Democratic party. A community bias towards either party is mitigated by the strong American Muslim support for an Independent political affiliation: 30% of women and 37% of men identified as Independent, demonstrating an aversion to strict party binaries.

Age

Our poll showed that older American Muslims (aged 50+) are more likely to identify as Democrat or Independent than their younger counterparts. 57% of respondents aged 65+ identified with the Democratic party, and 54% of respondents aged 50-64 identified as Independent. The strongest Republican affiliation appeared in the 30-49 age range, with 43% identification with the Republican party.

Education

The highest percentage of Republican self-identification manifested in respondents with a Masters or PhD, with 50% labeling themselves as Republicans. 41% of college graduates identified with the Democratic party, along with 42% of high school graduates. Respondents with a trade school background or technical training leaned towards an Independent identification, with 56% choosing this as their political affiliation.

Overall Political Affiliation and Voting Intention

There is an even distribution of party affiliations (Republican, 33%; Democrat, 34%; and Independent, 34%) across American Muslims. Interestingly, this distribution becomes slightly more skewed in relation to the 2026 midterms. When asked who they would vote for in the midterms, 45% of respondents said they would vote for the Democratic candidate, while 38% said they would vote for the Republican candidate and 15% were unsure about their choice.

The most uncertainty is seen among Independents, with 29% saying they are unsure about their voting choice. This presents an opportunity space for candidates to win over Independent voters with the right targeting and key issues.

Setting 2026 intentions aside, the majority of American Muslims (60%) embrace political diversity in their community and agree that they should 'support whichever political party best represents their personal beliefs, because not everyone in the community shares the same views'.

ISSUE-LEVEL ANALYSIS

When asked to rank which issues are most important to them when voting in elections, the top three concerns among American Muslims included inflation and the economy, border security and illegal immigration, and the Israel-Palestine conflict. These priorities are consistent across demographics.

Inflation and the Economy

'Inflation and the economy' was the Issue that respondents ranked most consistently as their top choice. 49% of respondents said they either 'Somewhat disapprove' or 'Strongly disapprove' of the Trump administration's work on inflation, and 46% disapproved of their work on the economy as a whole. Negative approval is particularly strong among American Muslims aged 50-64.

However, some respondents were still willing to give the opinion that the Trump administration is doing better than the Biden administration on economy. This indicates that negative sentiment towards the economy is not necessarily attached to Trump (i.e. it's also present in American Muslims' perception of the Biden administration). 38% of respondents said the Trump administration is doing 'Somewhat better' or 'A lot better' than the Biden administration on the economy, and 28% said the same for inflation. There is especially support for the Trump administration's approach over the Biden administration's approach among men, those aged 18-49, and, most strongly, Republicans.

The nuanced economic outlook of Muslim Americans is further supported by their sentiments towards Trump's specific economic policies. There is net positive overall sentiment on a wide range of policies, including the work of DOGE, renewing the 2018 tax cuts, and lowering taxes on businesses. The policy with the strongest approval is removing taxes on tips, which received approval across genders, ages, and political identifications. American Muslims might not approve of the economy as a whole, but there is room for GOP activation and engagement on specific policies and programs.

Border Security and Illegal Immigration

Border security and immigration is a priority where the Trump administration received some of the most positive feedback and approval from the American Muslim community. Out of a variety of issues (e.g. inflation, the Middle East, climate change, abortion), respondents approved most strongly of the Trump administration's approach to energy policy, the southern border, and deportation of illegal migrants. The strongest approval comes from those who identify with the Republican party. Furthermore, deportation of illegal migrants tops the list of issues on which respondents think the Trump administration is doing a better job than the Biden administration, with 43% of respondents saying the current administration's approach is either 'Somewhat better' or 'A lot better' than Biden. In comparison, 34% said the Trump administration is doing 'Somewhat worse' or 'A lot worse'.

Specific approaches to deportation have a more varied approval landscape. Respondents strongly approve of deporting noncitizens who have committed additional crimes while in the US – 65% said they either 'Somewhat support' or 'strongly support' this measure. There is weaker (but still positive) support for federal action taken against sanctuary cities and increased federal spending on border law enforcement to speed up deportations. Almost half (49%) of American Muslims said they would like to see an immigration system that prioritizes immigrants with job skills and the ability to be economically self-sufficient.

The multi-demographic approval of the Trump administration's approach to immigration positions the topic as a productive point of GOP engagement. American Muslims want to see narratives focused on productivity and legality – 41% of respondents said that they think legal migration to the US should stay the same, while 34% said it should increase. Only 14% said they want to see the amount of legal migration decreased.

Social Issues

Gender issues and race issues both fell low in the list of priorities for Muslim Americans, across demographics, along with terrorism and national security and education. Respondents aged 50 and older ranked race and gender as being particularly low on their list of priorities. Furthermore, respondents demonstrate a negative sentiment towards issues such as teaching LGBT issues in schools, using gender pronouns when introducing oneself, teaching transgender issues in schools, and support and financial packages for employees seeking gender affirming care or change services. For each issue, at least 35% of respondents said they have 'Gone too far' in the US today.

At the same time, 51% of respondents felt that diversity/unconscious bias training is a good use of employees' time, and 47% said diversity/unconscious bias training improves equality. 45% of respondents said it is either 'Very important' or 'quite important' to see people of the same religion as them in the workplace, and even more said it's important to see themselves represented in books and media. Almost half (45%) of American Muslims said they are happy with the current level of DEI in the workplace and the hiring process, and over one-third (38%) said they approve of the Trump administration's approach to DEI.

These views—skepticism toward gender transition interventions for minors and selective openness to the Trump administration's DEI policies—highlight a complex landscape that creates opportunities for center-right engagement on social and cultural issues. American Muslims prioritize the representation and equality that DEI works towards, but this doesn't necessarily mean they support a strongly progressive approach to DEI – and it shouldn't be assumed that positive sentiment towards DEI translates to other issues under the 'social issues' umbrella.

Israel-Palestine

Out of all respondents, 44% said they support neither Israel nor Hamas, a sentiment which is reflected across parties. Israel-Palestine was also one of the few issues in our poll on which Republican respondents gave the Trump administration a negative net score, with 47% of respondents saying they either 'Somewhat disapprove' or 'Strongly disapprove' of the Trump administration's approach to the Israel Gaza conflict.

However, alongside such disapproval numbers, respondents also showed a notable level of openness to the future of the Trump administration's approach to the conflict. 26% of respondents said they either 'Strongly support' or 'Somewhat support' President Trump's proposed plan to develop Gaza into a 'Riviera of the Middle East', with less than half (49%) saying they oppose the idea. A majority of respondents (53%) believe that a two-state solution is possible in the Middle East, and a similarly slim majority (52%) believe that the Trump administration's approach is more likely to achieve peace than the Biden administration's approach. This assertion is one that earned cross-party support: 28% of Democrats, 48% of Independents, and 80% of Republicans chose the Trump administration's approach over their predecessor's.

The data indicates that American Muslims' views on Israel-Palestine are not monolithic. While there is pro-Palestine representation – such as the 27% of respondents who believe 'The October 7th attack by Hamas on Israel was justified', and the 29% who actively support Hamas over Israel – there is also a cohort of respondents who show a lack of engagement with the issue. 13% of respondents were unsure of who they support in the conflict, and 39% said that 'American Muslim advocacy groups talk too much about Palestine and not enough about issues facing Muslims in the US and in other parts of the world'. Such diversity is further emphasized by the aforementioned receptiveness to the Trump administration's approach on the issue. It's key that engagement with the community takes this diversity of opinions into account and avoids assumptions or generalizations on the matter of Israel-Palestine.

PERCEPTION OF GOP & CONCLUSION

Overall, American Muslims perceive the Democratic party and high-profile Democrats (e.g. Kamala Harris, Joe Biden) more favorably than their Republican counterparts. JD Vance performs the worst in favorability, with 50% of respondents saying they view him either 'Somewhat unfavorably' or 'Very unfavorably'. However, there is a distinction made between Trump/Vance and the Republican party as a whole, which 40% of respondents view favorably. The Republican party is consistently perceived more positively than Trump/Vance across demographics, with especially strong support from Muslim Americans who identify as Republican themselves and those aged over 50. What's more, while 45% of respondents report that they either 'Somewhat disapprove' or 'Strongly disapprove' of Trump's performance as President, this is a view that must be held in balance with the previously mentioned approval of various Trump administration policies. This is on top of the fact that 38% of respondents said they would vote for the Republican candidate in the 2026 primaries, and 43% said they voted for Donald Trump in 2024.
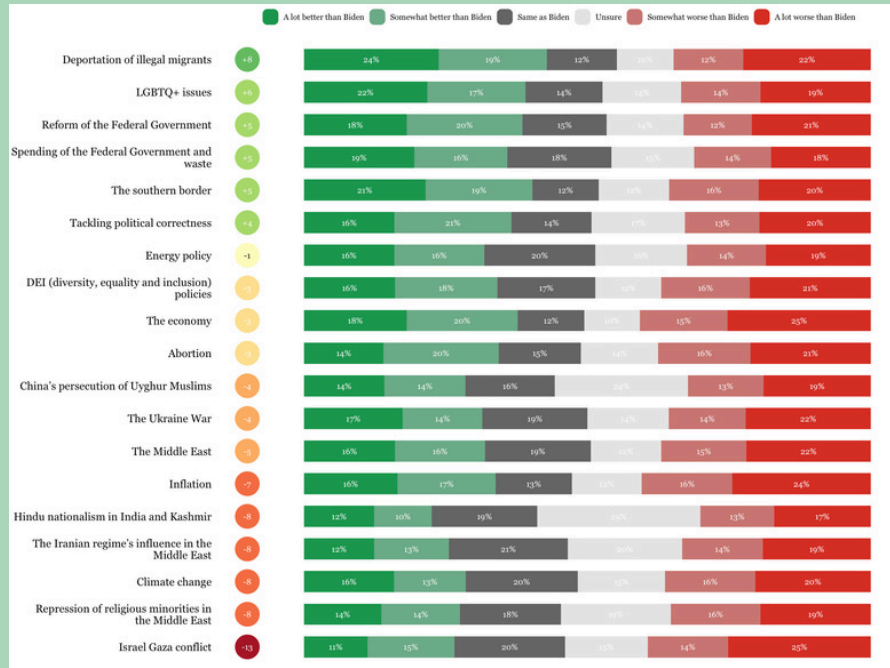
The nuanced perspective that American Muslims hold on the Republican party and the policies of the Trump administration relies on the fact that they rank Trump himself separately from the party as a whole. GOP engagement with the community doesn't need to call on him as a figurehead or key personality, but rather can focus on the key issues that American Muslims prioritize most and how they'd like to see those issues addressed.

There are multiple possibilities as to who should be the main actor representing the community in such engagement. The majority (60%) of respondents said their views are either 'Somewhat represented' or 'Very represented' in the public conversations taking place among Muslim leaders, activists, and organizations in America today. However, a majority (52%) of respondents said that organizations like CAIR, MPAC, and ISNA do an average or below-average job—or they were unsure—when it comes to representing the community's views. Meanwhile, 47% said they believe local imams and community leaders are more in touch with the American Muslim community.

Regardless of the actors involved, the data makes it clear that American Muslims are a politically diverse group who are host to several actionable opportunity spaces for Republican engagement. The lack of an overwhelming Democratic majority in our polling and the presence of a sizeable but uncertain Independent cohort further emphasizes this conclusion. Taxes on tips, deporting illegal immigrants who have committed crimes, and reducing the presence of LGBT issues in the public space are three of the highest potential points of entry.
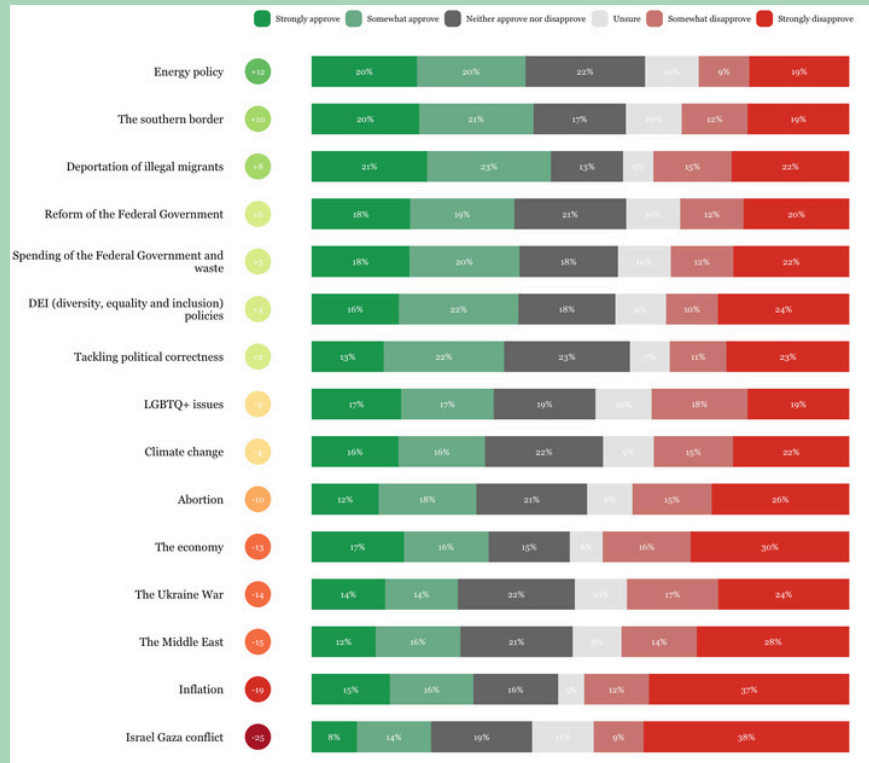
KEY GRAPHS

Question: Do you think the Trump administration is doing better or worse than Biden on each of the following topics?

Question: How favorable or unfavorable a view do you have of the following?

KEY GRAPHS

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of how the Trump administration is doing on each of the following topics?