



## Exclusive Preview: *Winning Muslim Votes: A Policy Priority Analysis in Swing States*

**JULY 31, 2024**—This exclusive preview of key findings from *Winning Muslim Votes: A Policy Priority Analysis in Swing States* sheds light on Muslim voter preferences and opinions compared to the general public in three key swing states (Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Michigan) fielded between June 20-July 8, 2024.

A full report is forthcoming, but in light of President Biden's July 21 decision to withdraw as Democratic presidential candidate and Vice President Kamala Harris' expected nomination at the DNC in August, we are releasing these key findings. To receive the full report, [sign up for our newsletter](#).

This research was conducted by the [Institute for Social Policy and Understanding \(ISPU\)](#) in partnership with [Change Research](#), with generous support and partnership from the [Emgage Foundation](#). [Explore the methodology](#). This report is authored by ISPU scholar and former Director of Research Dalia Mogahed ([bio](#)).

A record number of voters showed up to the polls for the 2020 general election, including Muslims. President Joe Biden was elected by a narrow margin, powered by electoral wins in swing states like Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, where he inched out Trump by just tens of thousands of votes. [Significant numbers of Muslims](#) reside in these swing states, and, coupled with Get Out The Vote campaigns and voter registration efforts led by Muslim civic engagement organizations over the past decade, these Muslim voters have the potential to influence the outcome of close elections. Research shows [Muslims](#), as a group, are both highly politically engaged and more likely than any other religious group measured to identify as Independents. This means Muslim votes cannot be taken for granted by either party, and must be earned.

While election season always comes with high numbers of polls breaking public opinion down by race, gender, education level, and partisanship, this poll stands apart, highlighting Muslim voter opinions during a time when the war on Gaza is galvanizing this electorate. These findings illustrate where this small but incredibly important group of voters may fall during an election that may come down to the margins.

## Analysis: Winning Muslim Votes in 2024

For the purposes of this analysis, “Muslim Biden voters” or “Muslim Trump voters” refer to weighted representative samples of Muslims across the three swing states who chose these candidates in 2024 before Biden dropped out of the race. We refer to Muslims who were neither committed to Trump or Biden at the time of the poll as “Muslim swing voters.” This group includes those who plan to vote for a third party candidate or write in, are undecided, or do not plan to vote. A representative sample of the general population in each state was also collected for comparison. While President Biden is no longer the Democratic nominee, insights from this survey are still just as relevant to any candidate of any party wishing to win Muslim votes in three key swing states.

In 2020, 65% of Muslim voters across the swing states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Georgia voted for Biden in what would become a narrow victory for the Democratic candidate. Before Biden exited the 2024 race in July, only 18% of Muslims across these states who voted for him in 2020 still planned to vote for him in 2024. Our study shows few of those who abandoned Biden planned to switch sides of the aisle and vote for former President Donald Trump, whose support among Muslims remained fairly unchanged, with 22% of Muslim voters planning to support Trump in 2024 compared to 18% in 2020. Muslim voters who say they do not plan to vote edged up only slightly from 9% in 2020 to 13% in 2024.

Instead, most of those who had decided against voting for Biden again intended to either vote for a third party candidate or write in a candidate (30%), or are as yet undecided (17%). Muslims (18%) in this survey are also more likely than the general public (11%) to identify as Independent, a finding that is consistent with ISPU's nationally representative studies over the years showing that Muslims are the most likely religious group to consider themselves Independent. Muslims in these three swing states (20%) are also more likely to choose "other" for their political ID compared to the general public (8%). This means that many Muslims were still uncommitted to a presidential candidate, even before Biden dropped out, and therefore could be won over by political hopefuls in any party willing to address their concerns. This group of Muslim swing voters includes those who plan to vote for a third party candidate or write in, are undecided, or do not plan to vote.

#### **Ending the war in Gaza:**

Muslim swing voters' top issue is the war in Gaza. The war in Gaza is the top issue among all Muslims, regardless of partisanship, but especially among Muslim swing voters. When asked "What are the three most important policy priorities on which you will judge a candidate this November?" 71% of Muslim swing voters chose the war in Gaza, compared to 46% of Muslims who plan to vote for Trump and 37% of those who had planned to vote for Biden this election.

When respondents were asked to indicate how a presidential candidate's support for a number of issues will impact their likelihood to vote for them in the 2024 presidential elections, support for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza increased the support of the majority of Muslims, with 91% of Muslim swing voters, 89% of Biden voters and 72% of Trump voters saying it would make them more likely to choose a candidate who supported this policy. This was also true of the majority of Democrats in the general public (57%), with just 3% saying it would decrease their likelihood to vote for the candidate.

Reduction of military aid to Israel also garnered the support of the majority of Muslim voters, regardless of party. Muslim swing voters (88%), Biden supporters (80%) and Trump supporters (75%) all overwhelmingly see support for this policy as a reason to vote for a candidate. It is also a net positive among those who had planned on voting for Biden in the general public, with 41% saying it would increase their likelihood to support a candidate, and 11% saying it would decrease their support and 35% saying it makes no difference.



This issue sets Muslim Trump voters the most apart from their partisan counterparts in the general public, with the majority of Trump voters in the general public (53%) saying reducing military aid to Israel would decrease their support for a candidate, compared to 10% of Muslim Trump supporters. Just 18% of Trump supporters in the general public say it would increase their likelihood of supporting a candidate compared to 75% of Muslim Trump voters.

**Staying out of foreign wars:**

Keeping the United States out of foreign wars is popular across the board, regardless of partisanship or faith background, especially among Muslim swing voters. A strong majority of Muslim swing voters (83%) say a candidate's support for staying out of foreign conflicts would make them more likely to vote for that candidate. Roughly the same portion of Muslim Trump voters (80%) say the same. The majority of Muslims who supported Biden in 2024 (64%) hold the same view.

In the general public, this position is popular with the majority of voters across the partisan spectrum. The majority of Biden voters (52%), Trump voters (82%) and swing voters (66%) say a candidate's support for staying out of foreign wars would increase their likelihood of voting for that candidate. Staying out of foreign wars is second only to the war in Gaza as the most frequently mentioned top issue for Muslim swing voters (24%) and Muslim Trump voters (28%), but only 3% of Muslim Biden voters.

**Countering Islamophobia:**

Countering Islamophobia, predictably, would make the majority of Muslims, regardless of partisanship, more likely to vote for a candidate. Among most Muslim Biden voters (85%) and Muslim swing voters (87%), a candidate's support for combating Islamophobia would increase their likelihood of voting for that candidate, with only 5% and 2%, respectively, saying it would decrease it. Among Muslim Trump voters, 63% agree with their fellow faithful across the aisle, with 10% saying it would make them less likely to vote for a candidate on account of this position. This marks one of the issues Muslim Trump voters stand sharply apart from those in the general public.

This position is a net negative for Trump voters in the general public, where 9% say it would increase their support and 31% say it would decrease it. In contrast, it is a net positive among the majority of Biden voters in the general public where 53% say it would increase their likelihood to vote for a candidate with only 2% saying it would decrease their support.

**Support for traditional family and gender structures:**

Support for traditional family and gender structures was not a top policy priority for Muslim voters. There were many other policy issues like the war in Gaza, keeping the United States out of foreign wars, healthcare, the economy and job creation, student loan forgiveness, and freedom of speech on college campuses that ranked higher. In fact, only 6% of Muslim voters stated preserving traditional values concerning gender and marriage is a top policy issue for them. However, whereas Gaza and Islamophobia set Muslim Trump voters apart from their partisan counterparts, support for traditional family and gender roles distinguishes Biden Muslim voters from their party members. Among Muslim Biden voters, 40% say support for this position would increase their likelihood to vote for a candidate compared to 18% who say



it would decrease their support. Among Biden voters in the general public, it is roughly reversed, where 18% say it would increase their support compared to 47% who say it would decrease it. Among Muslim swing voters, this position is a net positive, with 58% saying it increases their support and 8% saying it decreases it. Muslim Trump voters are on par with their counterparts in the general public, with 76% of Muslim Trump voters saying it increases their support and only 8% saying it decreases it. Eighty-two percent of Trump supporters in the general public say the same, and only 3% say it would decrease their support.

#### **Affordable Healthcare and Environmental Protection:**

Support for affordable healthcare is a net positive across the partisan spectrum, but especially among Muslim Biden voters (85% say increase support vs. 2% say decrease support) and swing voters (83% increase support vs. 2% decrease support). The majority of Muslim Trump supporters (63% increase support vs. 9% decrease support) also regard a candidate's support for affordable healthcare as a net positive for their vote. In the general public, a near consensus of Biden voters (94% increase support vs. 1% decrease support) say the same.

A strong majority of Muslim swing voters (72%) and Biden voters (88%) say a candidate's support for protecting the environment would improve their chances of voting for that candidate. This is similar to Biden voters (91% say increase support vs. 1% say decrease support) in the general public. Among Muslim Trump voters, this position is a net positive (43% increase support vs. 11% decrease support), but a net negative among their partisan counterparts in the general public (19% increase support vs. 24% decrease support).

## **Selected Key Findings:**

### **War in Gaza Dominates Muslim Concerns**

**The war in Gaza is the top issue for Muslims regardless of gender, age, race, nativity, or political affiliation.**

- The majority of Muslim voters (61%) include the war in Gaza as one of the top three most important policy priorities on which they will judge a candidate (without specifying presidential) this November, compared to 4% of the general public.
  - This is by far the most salient concern. The next most frequent response is staying out of foreign wars, at 22% (also a foreign policy issue).
- Gaza is a top issue for Muslims across gender (60% of men and 63% of women). Among Muslims, young people and their elders do not differ significantly on the importance of Gaza and it is the top issue in all age groups (67% of 18-34 year olds, 59% of 35 to 49 year olds, 61% of 50-64 year olds, 56% of 65+).
- Gaza is a top issue for all Muslims regardless of race: Arab (74%), Asian (63%), white (53%), and Black Muslims (38%).
- Among Muslims, Gaza is a top issue across partisan lines: Gaza is most often chosen among both those who voted for Biden (68%) and those who voted for Trump (47%) in 2020, as well as those who voted for a third party (51%).
  - There is a similar trend when breaking Muslim voters by party ID.



- Among voters who voted for Biden in 2020 and are no longer planning to vote for him in 2024, the top issue for them (67%) is Gaza, without a close second.
- Muslim voters who intend to vote for Biden in 2024 still rate the war in Gaza as among the most important issues more frequently than any other issue (37%), but less so than those who intend to vote for Trump (46%), and half as likely as those who intend to vote third party (71%), or write in. This suggests the Muslim migration away from Biden is primarily animated by anger at his Gaza policy.

**Securing a permanent ceasefire improves candidate electability among all Democrats.**

- The majority of Biden voters in the general public would be more likely to vote for a 2024 presidential candidate if they secured a ceasefire in Gaza at 57%, vs. 3% that would be less likely and 34% for whom it makes no difference.
- Among Muslims, regardless of their chosen candidate for 2024, the majority say a permanent ceasefire in Gaza would make them more likely to vote for a candidate. This includes 89% of those who had planned to vote for Biden, 72% of those who chose Trump and 91% of “swing voters.”
- The plurality of Trump voters say a ceasefire makes no difference (45%) with equal portions saying it would improve their chances of voting (23%) and saying it would lessen their likelihood to vote for a candidate (21%), marking a critical issue of distinction between Muslim Trump voters and their partisan counterparts.

**Biden Loses Significant Muslim Support, Driven by His Gaza Policy; Gained Mostly by Third Party, Not Trump**

**Only 18% of Muslims who voted for Biden in 2020 still planned to vote for him in 2024.**

- In 2020, 65% of Muslim voters chose Biden. In 2024, 12% say they intended to vote for the current president when he was still the nominee.
  - By race, this breaks down as 14% of white, 25% Black, 10% Asian, and 5% Arab Muslims for those who intend to vote for Biden in 2024.
  - Just 18% of Muslims who voted for Biden in 2020 still plan to vote for him in 2024.
- In contrast, Muslim support for Trump has remained roughly the same, where 18% say they voted for him in 2020 and 22% plan to vote for him in 2024.
- Among the general public, 46% said they voted for Biden in 2020, while only 37% say they intend to vote for him in 2024, three times as likely as Muslims.
- In contrast, Trump voter support in the general public has remained unchanged at 45% in 2020 and 2024.
- In 2020, Biden (46%) narrowly beat Trump (45%) in these three swing states among the general public, suggesting the strong Muslim support Biden enjoyed in 2020 (65%) was critical to his victory.
- Muslim voters are more than twice as likely to say they will vote third party or write in (30%) than for Biden (12%), and nearly twice as likely (22%) to say they will vote for Trump as Biden (12%).
- Biden's approval ratings in each group roughly mirror those who intend to vote for him, where again the general public is three times as likely (33%) as Muslims (10%) to approve of his job performance.
  - Nationally, Biden's approval rating among Muslims in 2022 was 60% according to ISPU's [American Muslim Poll](#).



- This suggests that the Muslim migration away from Biden is, for the most part, not being absorbed by Trump, but rather moving to third parties and undecided.
  - Nearly a third of Muslim voters (30%) will either vote third party (27%) or write in (3%).
  - Muslim voters are more likely than the general public to say they do not plan to vote (13% vs 3%). This is not much higher than in 2020, where 9% did not vote.
  - Of Muslims, 17% say they have yet to decide on a candidate vs. 6% of the general public.

## Muslims Distinct from Partisan Counterparts on Key Issues, While Sharing Others

### **Gaza and Islamophobia separate Muslim Trump voters from partisan counterparts in the general public.**

- Trump voters in the general public favor military aid to Israel and see securing the border as their top issue. Muslim Trump voters oppose military aid to Israel and choose the war in Gaza as their top issue.
  - Muslims who favor Trump are significantly different from their counterparts in the general public who favor the same candidate when it comes to military aid to Israel. There is little difference among Muslims on the question of reduction of military aid to Israel improving their likelihood of voting for a presidential candidate, where a strong majority across political persuasions (75%-88%) say this proposed change would improve their likelihood to vote for a 2024 presidential candidate. While the question of military aid to Israel divides other Americans along partisan lines (41% of those who favor Biden stated the reduction of aid to Israel improves their likelihood of voting for a presidential candidate compared to 18% of those intending to vote for Trump), it does not do so for American Muslims.
  - While "keeping the US out of foreign wars" is a top issue concern for Trump voters regardless of faith, the majority (53%) of those who choose him as their 2024 pick in the general public say that reducing military aid to Israel would make them less likely to vote for a candidate, suggesting that these voters make a striking exception for Israel when it comes to American isolationism.
- Trump voters in the general public are three times as likely (31% vs 9%) to say combating Islamophobia would make them less likely than more likely to vote for a candidate as more likely. Half (50%) say it makes no difference.
  - The majority of Muslims, across political persuasions, say combating Islamophobia would make them more likely to vote for a candidate (85% of Biden voters, 63% of Trump voters and 87% of all others<sup>1</sup>).

### **Muslim Trump voters share partisan concerns about staying out of foreign wars, gender and sexuality.**

- Those who chose Trump as their 2024 presidential candidate indicated "keeping the United States out of foreign wars" as one of their top three priorities in both the Muslim (second most frequently chosen) or the general public (third most frequently chosen).
- The majority of Americans of all political opinions, in the general public or the Muslim community, say a candidate keeping the United States out of foreign wars increases their chances of voting for that candidate.

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<sup>1</sup> Others includes: third party, write-in, would not vote, undecided



- This especially resonates among Trump voters (82%) in the general public, as well as Biden (64%) and Trump (80%) voters in the Muslim community.
- When asked if a presidential candidate's support for traditional gender roles and family structures would increase, decrease, or make no difference to their likelihood of voting for that candidate, Muslims (76%) are as likely as general public Trump voters (82%) to say it would improve their chances of voting for the candidate, with just 8% of Muslim Trump voters and 3% general public Trump voters saying it would decrease their chances.

**Issues of gender and sexuality separate Muslim Biden voters from Biden voters in the general public.**

Although issues of gender and sexuality are not a top priority for Muslim voters, Muslim Biden voters differ from their political counterparts in the general public on the question of traditional gender roles and family structures, highlighting an area where Muslims often feel alienated from their partisan counterparts.

- When asked if a presidential candidate's support for traditional gender roles and family structures would increase, decrease, or make no difference to their likelihood of voting for that candidate, Muslim Biden voters (40%) are more likely than general public (18%) Biden voters to say it would improve their chances of voting for the candidate.
- Far more (47%) Biden voters in the general public would be less likely to vote for a candidate on account of their support for this issue, while this is true for only 18% of Muslim Biden voters.
  - Muslim swing voters roughly mirror Muslim Biden voters (58% increase support vs. 8% decrease support), suggesting their choice to *not* vote for Biden is not on account of gender or sexual identity issues.

**Muslim Biden voters share partisan concerns on the environment, combating Islamophobia, and the desire for a ceasefire in Gaza.**

- The majority of Muslim Biden voters (88%) and Biden voters in the general public (91%) say a candidate protecting the environment improves their likelihood of voting for them.
- The majority of Biden voters in the general public (53%) say combating Islamophobia would improve their likelihood to vote for a candidate, while only 2% said it would make them less likely to do the same. The majority of Muslims, across political persuasions, say combating Islamophobia would make them more likely to vote for a candidate (85% of Biden voters, 63% of Trump voters, and 87% of swing voters).
- The majority of Biden voters in the general public would be more likely to vote for a 2024 presidential candidate if they secured a ceasefire in Gaza (57%) vs. 3% that would be less likely and 34% for whom it makes no difference.
- Among Muslims, regardless of their chosen candidate, the majority say a permanent ceasefire in Gaza would make them more likely to vote for a candidate.
- Biden voters in the general public are almost four times as likely (41%) to say reducing military aid to Israel would make them more likely to vote for a candidate in 2024, rather than less likely (11%).



**Exclusive Preview: 2024 American Muslim Voter Intentions and Policy Priorities**

*For more information on these findings:*

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Explore methodology and more at [ISPU.org/winning-muslim-votes](https://www.ispu.org/winning-muslim-votes)