ARAB & MUSLIM AMERICAN PRE-ELECTION STUDY REPORT 2024

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PRE-ELECTION STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

These findings are part of a forthcoming academic project that examines the political attitudes and sentiments of Arab & Muslim Americans around the elections. Our preliminary pre-election results offer insights into the distinctive voting preferences in the 2024 national election cycle among likely voters. We invite scholars and practitioners to offer feedback as we prepare our post-election study.









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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the voting preferences and factors that may have influenced candidate choices in the 2024 election. Our preliminary results compare Arab and Muslim eligible voters with White eligible voters.

JILL STEIN FAVORED CANDIDATE AMONG LIKELY ARAB & MUSLIM VOTERS 33.3% favored Jill Stein

27.1% favored Kamala Harris

15.4% favored Donald Trump

DRASTIC SHIFT IN CANDIDATE CHOICE FROM 2020

The most significant shift in voting patterns among Muslims and Arabs was observed among those who voted for Biden in 2020.

IDEOLOGY DOES NOT MAP ON TO VOTE PREFERENCES AMONG ARAB & MUSLIM VOTERS Muslims and Arabs express more diverse voting preferences, with weaker alignment with major party candidates. Whites show clearer ideological divide between support for the major party candidates.

THE VIOLENCE IN GAZA WAS A KEY ISSUE FOR ARABS AND MUSLIMS

The violence in Gaza was top policy concern for Muslim and Arab American voters; 68.9% reported this issue as a key concern.

VIEWS ON GAZA WERE SIGNIFICANT FOR STEIN LIKELY VOTERS The personalization of the violence in Gaza and perceptions of Harris's culpability, significantly predicted intentions to vote for Stein.

INTRODUCTION

U.S. elections often come down to narrow margins, making voting of ethnic and racial minorities increasingly pivotal in determining outcomes, particularly in swing states that can sway national results. While much research has been devoted to understanding the political behavior of African American, Hispanic, Latino, and Asian American voters, the political and psychological dynamics of Muslim and Arab communities remain largely unexplored.

In the lead-up to the 2024 national election, Arab and Muslim voters became a significant focus of public discourse. This attention was particularly pronounced during the 2024 Democratic primaries and amid calls for President Biden to be replaced at the top of the ticket. With President Biden facing increasing criticism for his handling of Middle Eastern affairs—particularly his support for Israel during the rise of violence in Gaza-Arab and Muslim American communities were more vocal in their concerns. This discontent ignited debates about his leadership and led to scrutiny of how his policies aligned with the needs of these communities. Several movements and campaigns emerged, aiming to amplify the voices of Arab and Muslim Americans, advocate for more attention to their concerns, and push for greater political engagement. Scholars studying Arab and Muslim voters cautioned that the 2024 election margins would likely be narrow, stressing that the electoral choices of these communities could significantly influence the outcome (Sedige, 2024). These developments have raised an important question: How do the concerns and attitudes of these communities shape their voting behavior?

Our study seeks to address this question by examining presidential candidate preferences among Arab and Muslim voters in the 2024 election and whether traditional factors (e.g., ideology) or issue-specific concerns (e.g., violence in Gaza) influenced their preferences in unique ways relative to the White majority population.

History of Arab and Muslim Voting Behavior: Over the past 20 years, Arabs and Muslims have supported many Democratic-leaning policies and consistently voted for the Democratic ticket (Ocampo et al., 2018). During the 2020 election, for example, a representative sample of Arabs showed that Joe Biden (Dem) received 59% of the Arab vote, whereas Donald Trump (Rep) received 35% (Arab American Institute, 2020). In addition, prominent Arab American leaders have emerged within the Democratic party, such as former Senator James George Abourezk (SD), former Congressman Justin Amash (MI-3) and the currently elected state legislator, Rashida Tlaib (MI-13). Similarly, prominent American Muslims have emerged within the Democratic party, such as Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Andre Carson (IN-07).

INTRODUCTION

Arab and Muslim Political Concerns: The policy concerns and preferences of Arab Americans and American Muslims largely align with those of the general public, particularly regarding issues like the economy and healthcare (ISPU, 2020; Zogby, 2020), but a meaningful departure has centered on issues like discrimination, Islamophobia post 9/11, and foreign policy towards conflicts in Arab-majority and Muslim-majority nations like Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. The escalation of violence in Gaza ensuing after October 7th, 2023 became a central concern for Arab and Muslim Americans, particularly as the civilian death toll escalated, with estimates ranging from 45,000 to 186,000 deaths (Khatib et al., 2024).

Since then, pro-Palestine protests in the United States have surged, reaching a record 1.74 million participants across 21,588 events, with Arab and Muslim communities playing a pivotal role in these protests (Harvard Crowd Counting Consortium, 2024). This solidarity with Palestine is rooted in the cultural, political, and faith-based connections many Arabs and Muslims share with Palestinians. Additionally, the ongoing struggle for Palestinian self-determination resonates with broader concerns about justice, human rights, and anti-colonial resistance.

Amid these movements, several polls have indicated that the Biden administration's support for Israel during the increasing violence in Gaza, coupled with concern about the rise in Islamophobia and anti-Arab sentiment, could potentially impact the voting decisions of these communities in the 2024 presidential elections (CAIR, 2024; EMGAGE, 2024; ISPU, 2024). This growing disillusionment was also evident in political mobilization. Loyal Democrats such as Dearborn City Mayor, Abdullah Hammoud, publicly expressed a sense of "betrayal" from the Democratic party, and highlighted the growing fractures within the party.

The Uncommitted campaigns led by Arab and Muslim organizers in Michigan escalated efforts to have Democrats vote uncommitted in the Democratic primaries and send a signal to Democrats to take the issue of Gaza more seriously. Their goal of having 10,000 voters cast an 'uncommitted' vote in the Democratic primaries was exceeded, and approximately 100,000 Democrats selected the 'uncommitted' option in the Michigan primaries. This sparked a nationwide 'uncommitted' movement. On the heels of this dissatisfaction, third-party candidate Jill Stein began actively courting Arab and Muslim American voters.

INTRODUCTION

In light of these developments, it was critical to better understand the political engagement and candidate preferences of Arab and Muslim American voters in the run-up to the 2024 presidential elections. Our research team conducted a preelection study in the three weeks leading up to the elections to examine the attitudes, motivations, and voting intentions of these communities.

The Current Study

What factors shaped Arab and Muslim American voting in the presidential election?

Research on American politics has shown that ideological orientation is an important predictor of voting. Ideology can shape voters' party preferences and inform their stance on key issues such as healthcare, the economy, and foreign policy. As political divisions deepen in the U.S., voters increasingly align themselves with one of the two dominant parties based on their ideological leanings (Smidt, 2015). In the current study, we explored how these ideology-voting dynamics manifest within Arab and Muslim communities. This focus is driven by the recognition that American Arabs and Muslims might experience and respond to political issues differently than the predominantly White electorate due to unique socio-cultural, religious, and geopolitical factors. While the White electorate are likely to follow ideological alignment and partisan cues, we anticipated that ideological orientation might not be as strong a predictor of voting for Arabs and Muslims.

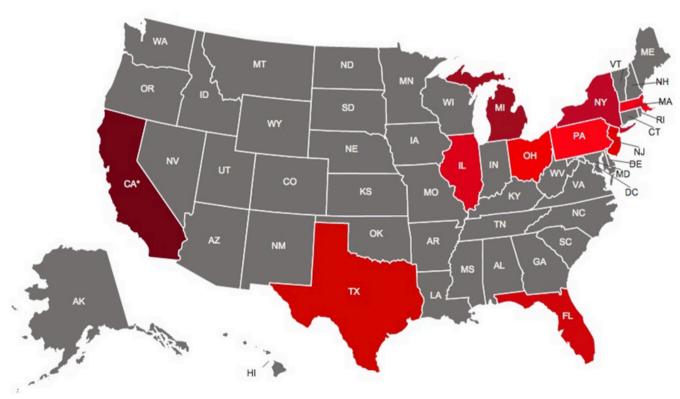
We anticipated that additional factors, such as policy positions—particularly those related to the violence in Gaza and views on the killing of Palestinians—could play a more significant role in shaping voting preferences. In the following sections, we present our analysis of various factors, including participants' policy positions and their alignment with the major candidates, candidate assessments (e.g., electability), and identity-related factors (e.g., ethnic identification). comprehensive approach allowed us to examine not only ideological leanings but also consider additional explanations and the potential role of specific policy concerns that may have influenced decisions at the polls.

WHO ARE ARAB AMERICANS

Arab American History

Arab Americans are a culturally and linguistically distinctive group with ancestral ties to the 22 Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

The earliest Arab Americans were Christian Arabs who arrived in the United States near the turn of the twentieth century. With the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act and recent resettlement of Arabs from Iraq, Yemen and Syria in the last 20 years, the Arab American population is a heterogeneous community within the United States. Arabic-speaking Americans now have a sizable Christian and Muslim population and live in geographically concentrated areas across the United States, in areas such as Southern California and Southeast Michigan.



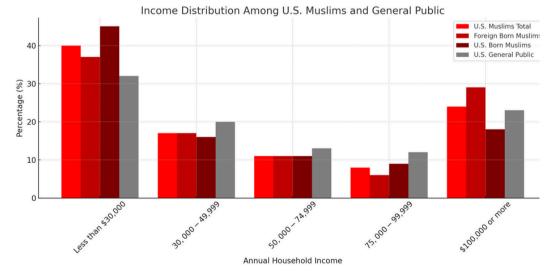
Arab American population size by state in the U.S. On this map, darker shades indicate states with larger Arab American populations. CA has the highest concentration, with 533,307 Arab Americans, followed by MI with 392,733. (Source, American Community Survey, 2017 and Arab-American Institute, 2019; 2022)

WHO ARE MUSLIM AMERICANS

Muslims are a racially diverse community White (including Arab, Middle Eastern) 41% Asian 28%

Muslim American History

American Muslims trace their origins to the transatlantic slave trade and the enslavement of Muslim Africans forcibly brought to the U.S. Since that time-period, Black Muslims have accounted for the foundations of American Muslim presence in the U.S. and comprise 20% of the electorate. The ethno-racial diversity of Muslims includes early Eastern European, Afghan, Arab and Bengali immigrants. With the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, an influx of Muslim immigrants from Pakistan, India and Arabic-speaking countries arrived to the U.S. In addition, recent resettlement of Somalis, Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis have diversified the the Muslim American population. Fifty percent of Muslim Americans are native-born.



Source: Pew Research, 2017

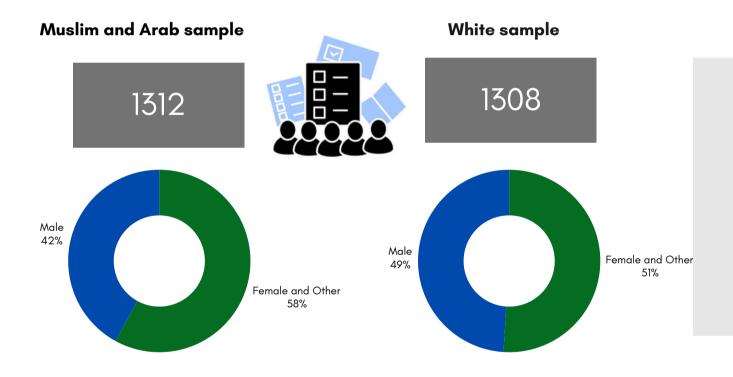
Muslims have varied socio-economic status, but the lowest income compared to general public

Pew Research Center, 2017

page

METHODOLOGY

We surveyed 2,620 participants aged 18 and older, 1312 Muslim and Arab Americans (Median age = 37; 42% men) and 1308 White Americans (Median age = 65; 49% men). A variety of sampling methods were employed. White participants were recruited exclusively via Cint, whereas Muslim and Arab participants were recruited through multiple sample providers, including Cint, Prolific, and Connect. Given the limited availability of Arab and Muslim Americans on these platforms, snowball sampling was also utilized to supplement recruitment, with support from the National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC) and the Center for Arab Narratives (CAN).





METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted between October 16 and November 4, 2024. It included questions about demographics (age, gender, ethnicity/race, national identification, income, education), voting choice in 2020, voting intentions for the 2024 election, and political ideology. Respondents were also asked to identify the three most important issues to them from a list of 13 issues, including the violence in Gaza, healthcare, and the economy. Furthermore, participants rated their own policy positions on five politically salient issues—Gaza, healthcare, LGBTQ education, immigration, and abortion—and evaluated where they believed the major political party candidates (Trump and Harris) stood on these issues. These issues were chosen for their political relevance and to explore potential heterogeneity in preferences, providing insights into how these positions align with ideology and vote choice across a range of social and political concerns.

In addition to assessing their own and the candidates' policy positions, participants rated the extent to which they believed the major party candidates were responsible for events in Gaza (referred to as perceived culpability) and the perceived likelihood of each candidate winning the election (referred to as perceived electability). They also evaluated the extent to which they felt the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza impacts them directly (referred to as personalization of the events in Gaza). The survey further included identity-related measures, such as participants' identification with their ethnic or racial group, their national identification, and their sense of responsibility toward their religious group (referred to as religious responsibility).

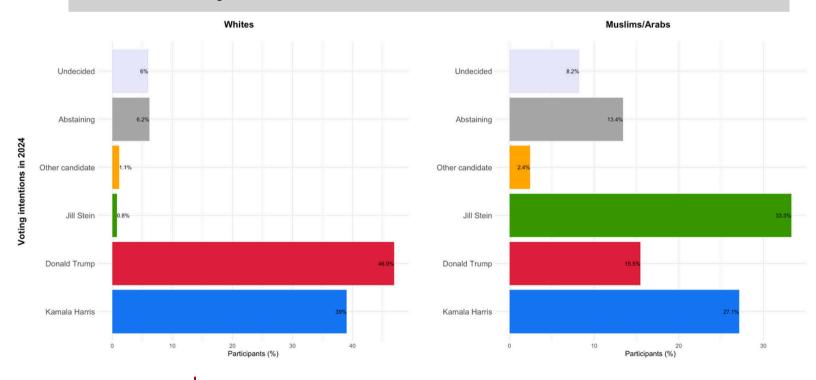
Given that the median age of White respondents exceeded the median age of the general White voter population (approximately mid-50s; Pew, 2020), we controlled for age in all analyses reported in this study. While no official estimate exists for the median age of Muslims and Arabs, a recent poll by CAIR (2024) suggests that the median age for Muslim voters likely falls between 38 and 40. Therefore, we did not adjust for age within this group.

PRE-ELECTION VOTING INTENTIONS

Muslims and Arabs show a notable divergence from Whites, with stronger support for Jill Stein and a higher tendency to abstain from voting.

Our study shows distinct differences in voting preferences between White and Muslim/Arab respondents. Among Whites, Donald Trump received the highest level of support (46.9%), while Kamala Harris received only 39%. Among third-party candidates, Jill Stein and other candidates received minimal support from Whites, collectively accounting for a maximum of 2% of White respondents. Finally, abstaining (6.2%) and undecided voters (6%) made up a small portion of the White respondents. Among Muslim and Arab respondents, voting preferences were far more diverse. Jill Stein emerged as the most favored candidate (33.3%), with a level of support far exceeding that among White voters. Kamala Harris followed with 27.1% support, while Donald Trump garnered 15.4%. Additionally, 13.4% of respondents stated that they intended to abstain from voting, and 8.2% were undecided. A smaller portion of 2.6% expressed an intention to vote for other candidates.

Overall, this suggests, compared to White respondents who predominantly support major party candidates, Muslim and Arab respondents showed less alignment with these candidates. Instead, they were more likely to favor Jill Stein and were also more inclined to abstain from voting.



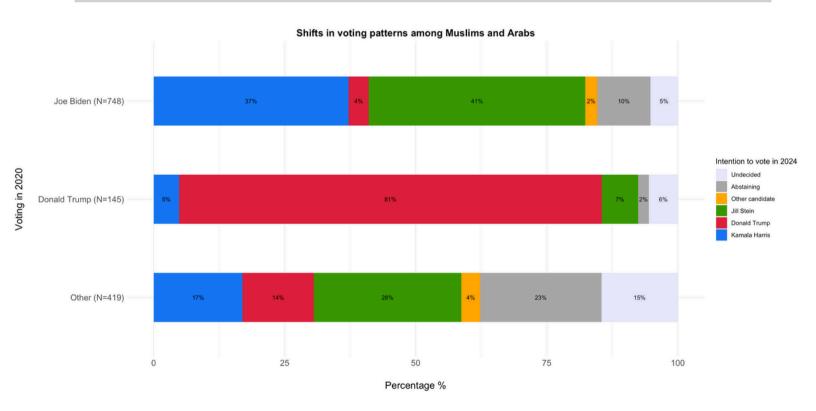
SHIFTS IN VOTING PATTERNS AMONG MUSLIMS AND ARABS

Stein had significant support from 2020 Biden voters, while Trump voters showed consistency.

Given that Jill Stein was the most preferred candidate among Muslims and Arabs, we examined participants' self-reported voting behavior in 2020 to better understand the shifting dynamics among this group.

Among those who voted for Joe Biden in 2020, 41% expressed their intention to vote for Jill Stein in 2024, while 4% indicated support for Donald Trump, signaling a notable shift away from the Democratic Party. In contrast, 81% of participants who voted for Trump in 2020 expressed continued support for him in 2024, with only 12% planning to vote for Stein or Harris, indicating strong consistency within this subgroup. Additionally, among respondents who voted for a third-party candidate, abstained, or were ineligible to vote in 2020, 28% expressed their intent to support Stein, 17% planned to vote for Harris, and 14% for Trump.

These findings suggest that the largest shift in voting behavior among Muslims and Arabs occurred among those who voted for Biden in 2020.



IDEOLOGY & VOTE CHOICE

Arabs and Muslims demonstrate more diverse voting preferences, with weaker ideological alignment with major party candidates, while Whites show a clear ideological divide between support for the major party candidates.

As political polarization has intensified in the U.S., ideological alignment has become an increasingly strong predictor of voting behavior, with voters more likely to support candidates who represent their core ideological values and priorities.

We define liberals as those who scored between 1 and 3 on our ideology scale, moderates as those who scored between 3 and 5, and conservatives as those who scored between 5 and 7.

Whites

Among White respondents Kamala Harris had the strongest support from liberals with a predicted probability over 76.78%. support significantly However, her diminished among conservatives where probability dropped to 20.49%. On the other hand, Donald Trump's support followed the opposite trend. He received considerable support from conservatives, with a probability over 64.01%, whereas his support among liberals fell below 10.95%. Jill Stein and other candidates had consistently low probabilities (<5%) across all ideological levels for Whites.

These trends highlight a strong and clear alignment between ideology and voting intentions among White respondents, with liberals favoring Harris and conservatives favoring Trump.

Arabs and Muslims

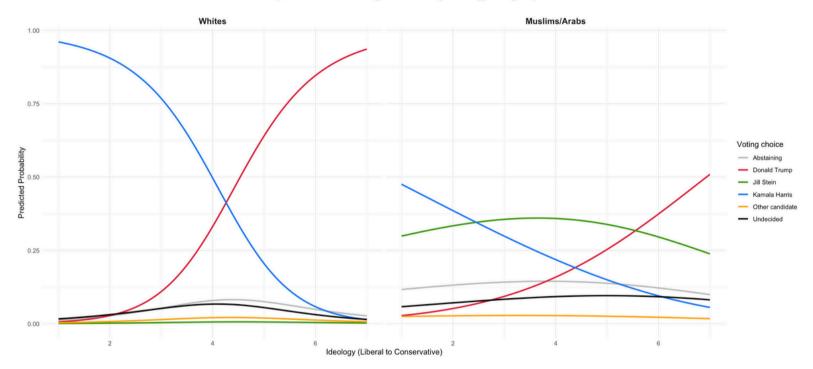
For Arab and Muslim respondents, the probability of supporting Kamala Harris was moderate among liberals, ranging from 29.83% to 47.53%. This support was notably lower than that observed among White liberals. Similarly, among conservatives, the probability of supporting Donald Trump was moderate, ranging from 25.32% to 50.9%, and was also considerably lower than the support seen among White conservatives.

Additionally, Arab and Muslim voters exhibited greater diversity their in preferences compared to Whites, with notable support for third-party candidates like Jill Stein. Notably, Jill Stein garnered relatively stable support across ideological spectrum among Muslim and Arab respondents, but her support was highest among moderates with a peak probability of 36.01%. These results indicate that the relationship between ideology and voting observed among White votership does not generalize to Arab and Muslim voters.

IDEOLOGY & VOTE CHOICE

Arabs and Muslims demonstrate more diverse voting preferences, with weaker ideological alignment with major party candidates, while Whites show a clear ideological divide between support for the major party candidates.

Predicted probabilities of voting intentions by ideology and group

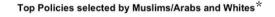


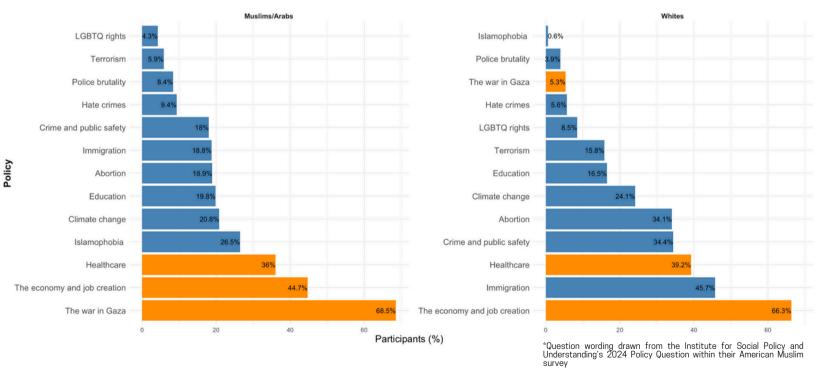
In logistic regression terms, a significant interaction between ideology and group membership is observed, such that the effect of conservative ideology on voting for Trump (compared to Harris) is weaker for Muslim/Arab individuals. For Muslim/Arab individuals, each 1-unit increase in ideology increases the log-odds of voting for Trump by 0.84, compared to 1.54 for White individuals. This suggests that Muslim/Arabs' ideological position has less influence on their voting preferences compared to White individuals.

POLICY PRIORITIES AHEAD OF THE ELECTION

Arabs and Muslims overwhelmingly prioritized the violence in Gaza as a key factor in their voting decisions, compared to Whites, who ranked this issue among the least important.

We asked respondents to select the 3 issues they considered most important for their voting decisions from a list of 13 options. The violence in Gaza emerged as the most pressing issue for Arabs and Muslims, with 68.5% of respondents selecting it as a top policy priority, compared to only 5.3% of White participants. The other two policy priorities for Arabs and Muslims were the economy and job creation (44.7%), and healthcare (36%). For White respondents, the top three policies were economy and job creation (66.3%), immigration (45.7%), and crime and public safety (39.2%).





VIEWS ON ALIGNMENT WITH MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATES

Arab and Muslim respondents overwhelmingly opposed U.S. military aid to Israel in Gaza, perceiving significant misalignment with both Harris and Trump. In contrast, White respondents showed a varied range of positions, perceiving more alignment with Trump on supporting military aid.

Respondents were asked to position themselves as well as the major party candidates on multiple issues on a scale ranging from -5 to 5, including military aid to Israel in Gaza, healthcare, LGBTQ education, immigration and abortion.

Whites

On the issue of Gaza, White respondents showed a more distributed range of positions compared to Muslim and Arab respondents, with a tendency toward supporting military aid and aligning more with Trump's stance as by the sample overall. perceived healthcare, opinions were polarized, with some supporting government-provided care and others preferring private options. Regarding immigration, LGBTQ education, and abortion, White respondents perceived themselves as aligning more with Trump on supporting stricter immigration policies and limiting LGBTQ content in schools, while they perceived stronger alignment with Harris's position on protecting abortion rights.

Arabs and Muslims

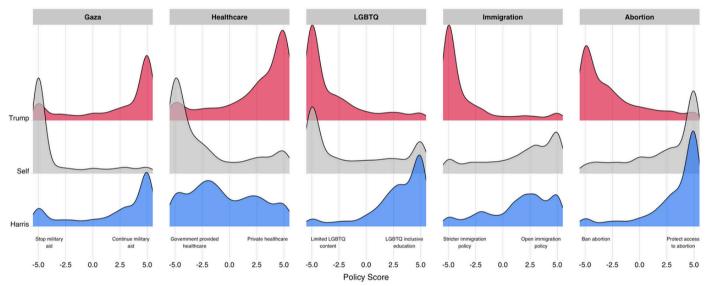
Arabs and Muslims respondents laraely perceived misalignment with both Harris and Trump on the issue of U.S. military aid to Israel in Gaza. The vast majority of Arab and Muslim respondents (Median = -5) strongly believed that the U.S. should stop providing military aid to Israel, whereas they perceived both Harris (Median = 3) and Trump (Median = 4) as strongly favoring the continuation of such aid

On several other political policies, Arabs and Muslims consistently aligned with liberal or leftist stances. This was true for healthcare open immigration policies, and abortion rights. Participants tended to view Trump and Harris as politicians on opposite ends of the spectrum on these issues. In contrast, Arab and Muslim respondents tended to show a preference for limited LGBTO content in schools and perceived more alignment with Trump than Harris (see Figure on page 15).

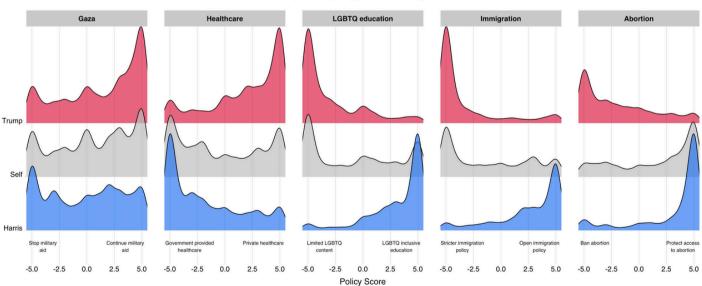
VIEWS ON ALIGNMENT WITH MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATES

Arab and Muslim respondents overwhelmingly opposed U.S. military aid to Israel in Gaza, perceiving significant misalignment with both Harris and Trump. In contrast, White respondents showed a varied range of positions, perceiving more alignment with Trump on supporting military aid.

Perceptions of policy positions among Muslims and Arabs



Perceptions of policy positions among Whites



PREDICTORS OF VOTING INTENTIONS AMONG MUSLIM AND ARAB AMERICANS

Since Arabs and Muslims deviate from major party candidates on the issue of Gaza, further investigation is essential to understand the factors shaping this group's voting behavior. We conducted multiple regression analyses to examine voting intentions for Stein, Harris, and Trump. Each model tested the predictors of voting intentions for one candidate relative to other voting choices.

Our models included a variety of factors as outlined in the methodology section including demographic variables (age, gender, income, and education), ideology, and psychological motivations such as ethnic identification, national identification, global religious responsibility, and the personalization of the events in Gaza. We also considered perceptions of major candidates (culpability for the loss of life in Gaza and perceived electability), and policy positions (perceived alignment with major party candidates on Gaza, healthcare, LGBTQ education, immigration, and abortion).

We expected that a lack of alignment, or misalignment, with both Harris and Trump would explain intent to vote for a third-party candidate, particularly Stein, while intent to vote for Harris or Trump would be explained by the relative alignment with their respective policy positions.

To quantify misalignment with major party candidates, we calculated the absolute differences between a respondent's stance and the perceived positions of Harris and Trump on each policy. Total misalignment thus indicates the overall deviation from both candidates. Relative alignment, on the other hand, was determined by calculating the difference between the distance from the respondent's stance on each issue to Trump's perceived position and the distance to Harris's perceived position. This measure of relative alignment thus indicates which candidate, Harris or Trump, has policy positions that are closer to the respondent's own views.



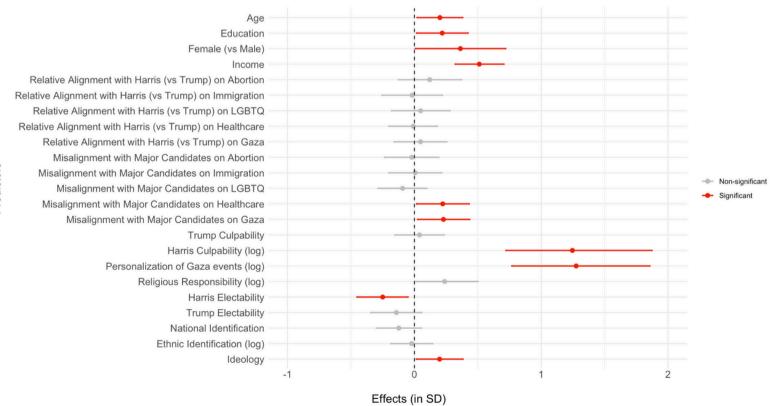
WHO WAS LIKELY TO VOTE FOR JILL STEIN?

The personalization of the events in Gaza and the attribution of culpability to Harris are key predictors of voting intentions for Stein among Arab and Muslim voters.

Our results show that personalization of events in Gaza and perceptions of Harris's culpability in the bloodshed emerged as the strongest predictors of Stein support. Respondents who felt personally affected by the events in Gaza reported significantly higher intent to vote for Stein (β = 1.271, p < 0.001). Similarly, those who attributed culpability for the loss of life in Gaza to Harris were more likely to express intent to vote for Stein (β = 1.242, p < 0.001).

Support for Stein was also explained by perceived (mis)alignment with the major party candidates. Greater perceived misalignment with both Harris and Trump on U.S. military aid to Israel in Gaza (β = 0.229, p = 0.029) and healthcare (β = 0.216, p = 0.041) were associated with higher intent to vote for Stein. Higher intent to vote for Stein was also associated with beliefs that Harris had a low chance of winning the election (β = -0.250, p = 0.015), as well as among individuals with higher income levels (β = 0.511, p < 0.001), higher education (β = 0.219, p = 0.034), and older age (β = 0.200, p = 0.029).

Predictors of voting for Jill Stein among Muslims and Arabs



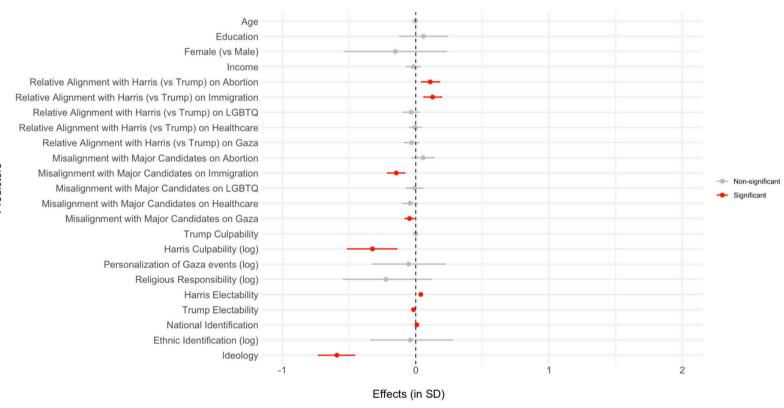
WHO WAS LIKELY TO VOTE FOR **KAMALA HARRIS?**

Liberal ideology and perceived low culpability in Gaza are key predictors of voting intentions for Harris among Arab and Muslim voters.

Ideology and perceived culpability emerged as the strongest predictors of intent to vote for Harris. Liberals (β = -0.591, p < 0.001) and individuals attributing more responsibility for the loss of life in Gaza to Harris (β = -0.324, p < 0.001) were less likely to express intent to vote for her. Stated differently, those perceiving Harris as less culpable for events in Gaza were more likely to vote for her.

Some policy positions demonstrated smaller yet significant effects on Harris support. Greater alignment with Harris over Trump on the issues of abortion and immigration were associated with higher intent to vote for Harris, while misalignment with both Harris and Trump on immigration was linked to lower intent to vote for her.

Predictors of voting for Kamala Harris among Muslims and Arabs



Dots: Each dot on the graph represents the mean effect size (in standard deviations) of a predictor on voting intentions for Stein. Lines: Lines extending from each dot depict the 95% confidence intervals, showing the probable range of the true effect size for

each predictor.
Significance: If a predictor's line and red dot are to the right of the zero line, it indicates a statistically significant positive effect on voting intentions for Stein; if to the left, it indicates a negative effect.



Predictors

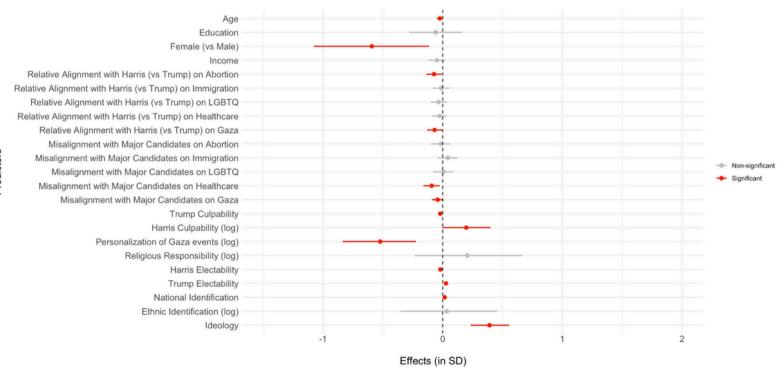
WHO WAS LIKELY TO VOTE FOR DONALD TRUMP?

Low personalization of the events in Gaza, being male and holding conservative ideologies are key predictors of voting for Trump among Arab and Muslim voters.

Gender and personalization of the Gaza events emerged as the strongest predictors of Trump support. Women demonstrated significantly lower intent to vote for Trump compared to men (β = -0.592, p = 0.014), and respondents who felt less personally affected by the Gaza events expressed higher intent to vote for Trump (β = -0.522, p < 0.001). Ideology and perceived culpability were also significant factors. Intent to vote for Trump was higher among conservatives (β = 0.39, p < 0.001) and those attributing responsibility for the loss of life in Gaza to Harris (β = 0.196, p = 0.048).

Additional predictors showed smaller albeit significant effects. National identification and perceptions of Trump's electability positively predicted higher intent to vote for Trump. Conversely, individuals perceiving greater alignment with Harris on the issues of Gaza or abortion were less likely to intend to vote for Trump.





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