

Shaping the Future

KEY ISSUES FOR VOTERS IN 2024



SAFETY AND CRIME

Like other age groups, Young Americans are concerned about their safety and well-being and vote accordingly. Although "safety and crime" can be used to measure vastly different policy agendas, young voters have certainly voiced their priorities. The [Spring 2024 Harvard Youth Poll](#) captures some of these key issues.

I Gun Violence

In the Spring 2024 Harvard Youth Poll, [54% of young voters prioritized Gun Violence](#) as a key election issue — ranking 4th on 16 key priorities (Harvard Youth Poll, 2024). Increases in gun violence and mass shootings, along with tense debates over the role of guns in American society, have significantly affected Young Americans.

- ▶ The United States' gun death rate is [much higher than most developed nations](#) and has increased within the last few decades. In 2021, gun deaths in the United States peaked at 48,430 Americans. The states with the highest gun death rates were Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Alabama (Gramlich, Pew Research Center 2024).
- ▶ The Biden-Harris Administration responded to [increased gun violence rates](#) (and increased demand for intervention) by creating the Office of Gun Violence Prevention (Shivaram, NPR 2024).. 2023 analysis [recorded a historic single-year decline in gun violence deaths](#), down from 2021 and 2022 numbers (Hall, Center for American Progress, 2024).
- ▶ Heading into the election, about 56% of voters polled by [Gallup in November 2023](#) favored stricter gun laws, many of which will be on the ballot. [Criminologists have warned voters to read closely into gun and crime data](#), as statistics and studies are often misinterpreted and misused on both sides of the aisle (Hernández, Stateline 2023).

44% of young voters prioritized Gun Violence as a key election issue



I Crime Levels and Policing

Discussions over crime, safety, and policing have permeated the 2024 election cycle. Through local, state, and national races, candidates have debated the nation's current crime while pledging to create safer communities.

- ▶ There is a marked difference between crime data and American perception of crime. [Preliminary 2024 data reports from the FBI](#) show a 15% decrease in violent crime reports (Smith-Schoenwalder, U.S. News 2024); meanwhile, [77% of Americans believe](#) crime in the nation is still increasing (Gramlich, Pew Research 2024).
- ▶ [The 5 states with the worst crime rates in 2023](#) were New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana, Colorado, and California. States in the South were disproportionately represented across the top 15, with the worst crime rates (Bieber and Johnson, Forbes 2024).
- ▶ [According to a study conducted by Vera Action](#), roughly 66% of younger voters (18-35) preferred a prevention-first approach to safety and crime, expressing a preference for programs that might fund "things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people's quality of life" over traditional "tough-on-crime" policies, like increased spending on police and prisons.

66% of younger voters preferred a prevention-first approach to safety and crime



- Vera Action's study also focused on underrepresented communities, finding that [65% of Black voters and 53% of Latino voters](#) said that crime is a big problem where they live. These voters were more likely to prefer "crime prevention" strategies over "tough on crime," police-heavy policies.

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE 2024 ELECTION?

Campaigns for the 2024 election will take drastically different approaches to issues of gun violence, crime, and safety. The nation will face a referendum [not based on raw data](#) but on how voters *feel* about crime and violence (Smith-Schoenwalder, U.S. News 2024).

- ▶ Many states will vote directly to address gun ownership, safety, and violence. [Michigan and Pennsylvania will vote](#) on several measures intended for gun violence prevention, while Arizona, Georgia, and North Carolina measures would ease procurement and gun carrying. Gun-related bills are also being considered in Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia (Hernández, Stateline 2024).
- ▶ Presidential candidates are expected to follow party ideology in setting platforms for guns and crime:
 - [As 80% of Democrats support increased gun control](#), VP Harris will likely tout the Office of Gun Violence Prevention while proposing community-based, prevention-forward crime mitigation and national gun violence prevention legislation (Pew Research 2024).
 - [Republican voters overwhelmingly prioritize](#) protecting gun ownership, [while 61% also believe](#) the justice system is not tough enough on crime (Pew Research 2024). [Trump's campaign platform](#) has moved to roll back gun restrictions on gun purchasing while increasing policing and harsher sentences (Republican Party Platform 2024).

About **NMAC**: Formerly known as the National Minority AIDS Council, NMAC is a 37-year old community organization that "leads with race" as the only sustainable way to end the HIV epidemic in the United States. We offer educational and capacity building programs, advocacy and mobilization efforts, and we host [Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit](#) and the [U.S. Conference of HIV/AIDS](#).

NMAC's **Coalition for Equality and Justice Across Movements** mobilizes against the growing vitriol against vulnerable and marginalized communities by with uniting other national movement leaders and support the collective with state-of-the-art communications and community mobilization strategies. Get Out The Vote is a Coalition initiative to register people of color to vote and be heard in the November 2024 election.