



THE HIGHLAND PROJECT

Black Women Deserve to Thrive

A national survey of 702 Black women voters in partnership with Cornell Belcher and brilliant corners Research and Strategies



2023



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Introduction

Black women deserve to thrive.

In this moment where our country's historic division over race remains at the heart of so many conflicts we see today, many Americans have felt despair and concern for the direction we are heading in. As news headlines continue to hone in on the devastating issues around us—from the increase in gun violence to the crippling effects of climate change, it has become common practice for our society to stay laser-focused on the issues of the day, instead of also critically examining the conditions in which harm thrives, particularly in Black communities.

This approach is only hurting us all.

To build a just and equitable world—a world of uninterrupted progress for justice, we must center the needs, concerns and dreams of Black communities. **Because to know the lived experiences of Black communities is to know the real American story today.** Recognizing this truth is the key to combating many of the systems that have been failing us, and creating the sustained change that we all deserve.

Across generations, Black women have been a voice for their communities, advocating for their needs and stepping up to develop bold solutions that create sustained wealth and systemic change. By centering these experiences, Black women have extended the scope of justice and civil rights for everyone, from voting rights and healthcare access to criminal justice reform.

For the past three years, we've listened to over 2,100 Black women across America with our partner Cornell Belcher at brilliant corners Research and Strategies to examine how Black women are thinking about wealth. **The goal: to build a five-year data set about how attitudes about wealth are changing.**

At The Highland Project, we know that wealth is about more than just dollars in our pockets—it's about removing any barrier to opportunity. In our most recent study, **Black women across America have come together to share their greatest concern: safety—for their communities today and generations ahead.**

It's past time that we center Black women's voices to finally make true, sustained progress for everyone. **Because we all deserve to thrive.**

In partnership,

Gabrielle Wyatt
Founder and CEO of The Highland Project



Methodology

These findings are from a proprietary survey conducted by brilliant corners Research & Strategies on behalf of The Highland Project. This is a survey of 702 Black women who are registered to vote. The survey was conducted by phone (using professional interviewers) and some text-to-web among younger age groups. The poll fielded July 11th to July 14th, 2023.

The survey's sample was drawn randomly from the voter file and geographically stratified for proportional representation. The data was weighted slightly to adhere to population demographics of voters in the voter file. The margin of error overall is +/- 3.7 percent, with a 95 percent confidence interval. Notably, the margin of error for sub-groups will be higher depending on the size of the sub-group sample and the size of the actual response to any given question.

Where possible, we have shown trend from previous polls conducted by brilliant corners Research & Strategies for The Highland Project in May of 2022 (n=760) and June of 2021 (n=733).

BREAKOUT	PERCENT	DEFINITION
Gen Z / Millennial	37%	Ages 18-41
Gen X	29%	Ages 42-57
Boomers	33%	Ages 58+
Up for Grabs	19%	Likely voters who are not voting for Joe Biden or Donald Trump (includes Cornel West voters, other voters, and undecided voters)
Moms	36%	Those with children under the age of 18 at home



Key Findings

1

A majority of Black women are not satisfied with the direction of the country.

61% of Black women say they are dissatisfied with the direction of the country. Dissatisfaction is highest among Gen Z/Millennials at 69% and Up for Grabs Voters at 73%. A majority, 61%, say the country's economy is getting worse.

2

The rise in hate, economic instability, gun violence, and climate change, are barriers to Black women thriving.

Since our 2021 poll, the percentage of Black women who report experiencing racism and sexism in their everyday lives has increased by 8% and 12% respectively. Nearly half of Black women say their income is falling behind the cost of living. A large majority (66%) of Black women report crime and violence followed by climate change (62%) will majorly impact their lives.

3

Black women's support of leadership across the country is at a crossroads.

While Trump receives about the same share of the Black women vote he received in 2020 (9%), Biden is behind his 2020 support levels by double digits (70% today, compared to 90% in 2020). More than one in five Black women are undecided or don't support either of the major party candidates. It is past time Black women's voices are centered in agendas nationally, locally, and across institutions.

4

A caregiver-centered agenda is essential to the prosperity of Black women and the nation.

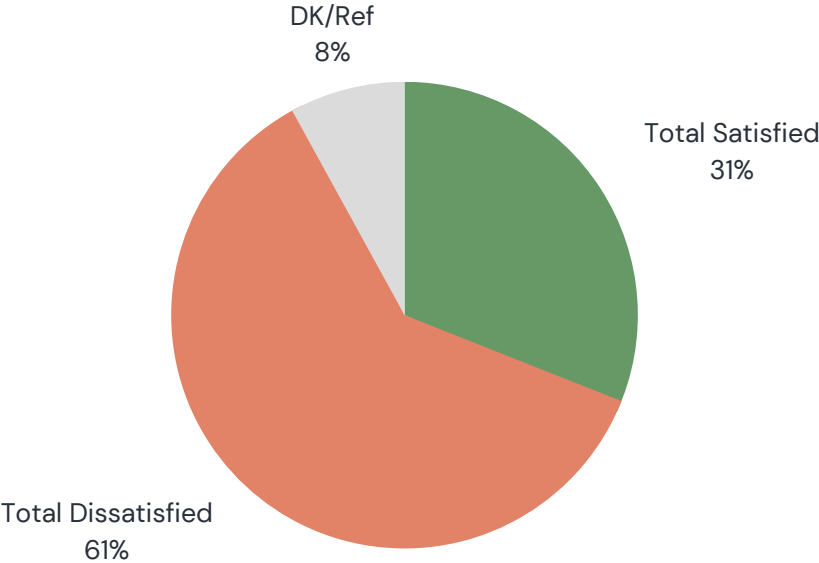
The pathway to Black women thriving includes a broad, caregiver-centered agenda that includes: raising teacher pay, paid family leave, banning assault weapons, treatment for mental illness instead of incarceration, protecting abortion rights, and ensuring history is accurately taught.



Today's America

Black women are not satisfied with the country's direction.

Satisfaction with the direction of the country



61%
of Black women are dissatisfied with the direction of the country

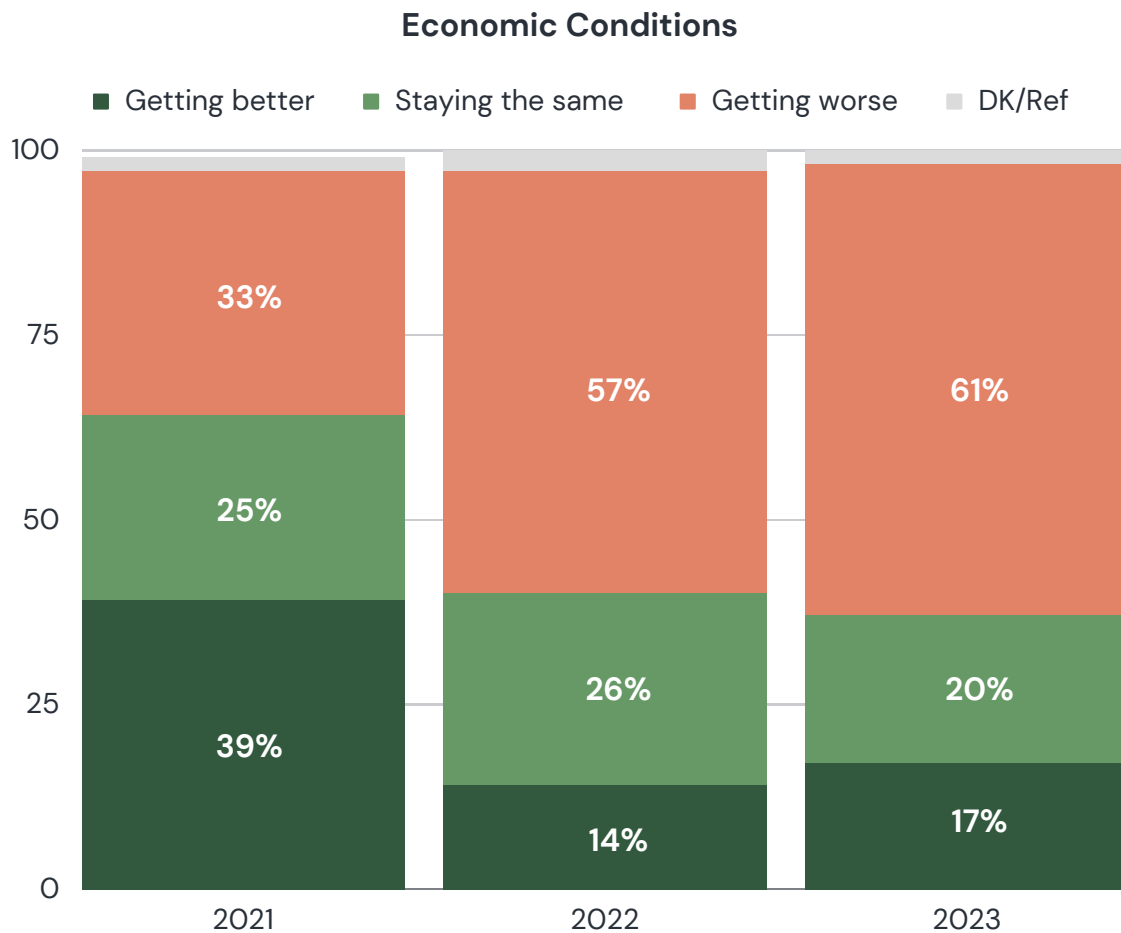
69%
Millennials/Gen Zers are dissatisfied with the direction of the country

73%
Up for Grabs Voters are dissatisfied with the direction of the country

A majority of all key groups are dissatisfied with the direction of the country. Of note, 28% report they are very dissatisfied. However, Boomers are much more satisfied (46%) with the country's direction in contrast to Gen X and younger voters.



A majority of Black women say the country's economy is getting worse.



Perceptions of economic conditions, according to our multi-year polling, have declined since 2021 for Black women by 22%. **In 2021, 39% of Black women felt the economy was getting better. Today, that number is 17%.**



Younger generations and Up for Grabs Voters are especially pessimistic about the economy.

66%

of ALL voters ages
18-50 say the
economy is getting
worse

76%

of Up for Grab Voters
say the economy is
getting worse

In fact, economically anxious voters are younger, lower income, less likely to vote, and more likely to have children. **Black women most likely to say economic conditions are getting worse identify as:**

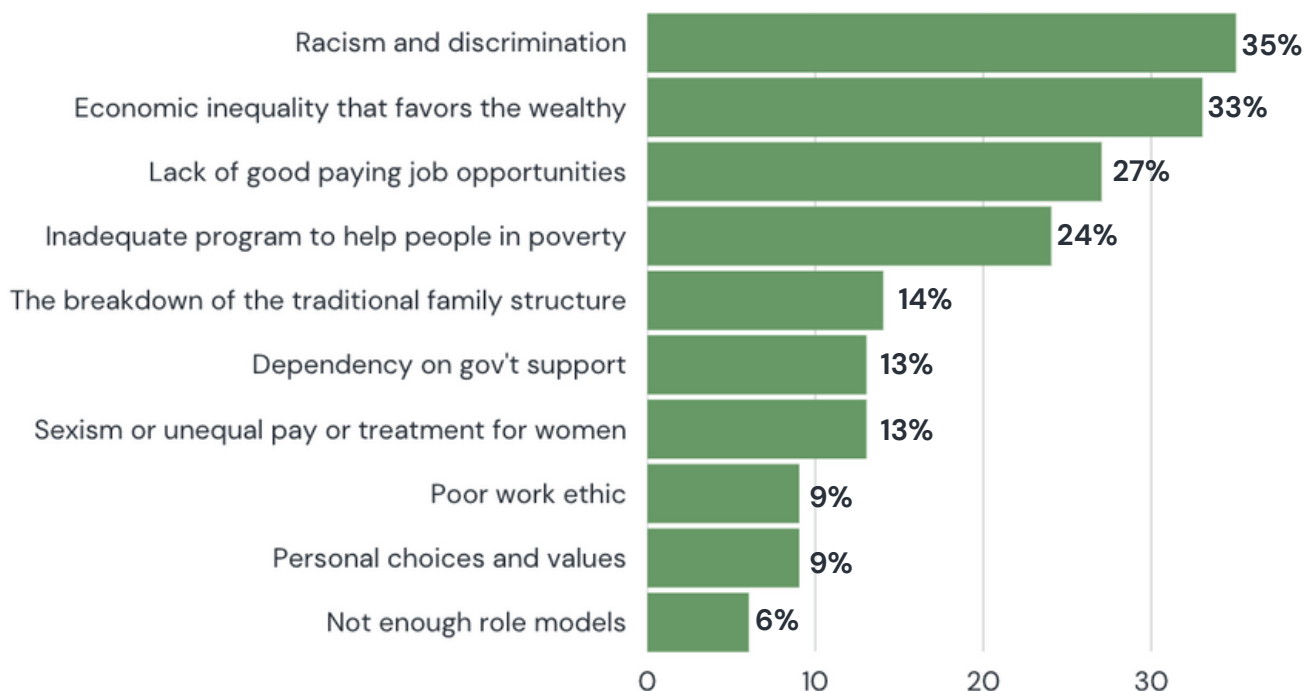
- Accessing Medicaid (77%)
- Single moms (72%)
- Not likely voters (72%)
- Gen X (72%)
- Non-partisan (72%)
- Non-college, age 18-49 (70%)
- Moms (70%)
- Unmarried, age 18-49 (70%)
- Rural (69%)
- Midwest (65%)
- Household income of less than \$50K (65%)



Racism, a rigged economy, lack of opportunity, and inadequate responses to poverty are seen as the primary obstacles to economic success.

Overall, 55% of Black women named systemic factors as the obstacles to economic success and upward mobility. These systemic barriers include racism and discrimination, economic inequality that favors the wealthy, and the lack of good paying job opportunities.

Obstacles to Economic Success and Upward Mobility



Our Future: At a Crossroads

Black women deserve to thrive.

And yet, the very conditions that anchor our ability to thrive – economic security, safety in our communities, and autonomy of our bodies – are deteriorating for Black women according to our multi-year research.

Economic conditions are not the only circumstances Black women see as worsening. The rise in hatred, racism, discrimination, and violence are significant and deeply entrenched barriers to our ability to thrive.

We are at a crossroads: what we choose to do right now as individuals, communities, and leaders across sectors and institutions will impact our national prosperity for the generations to come.

47%

of Black women report experiencing racism every day

39%

of Black women report experiencing sexism every day

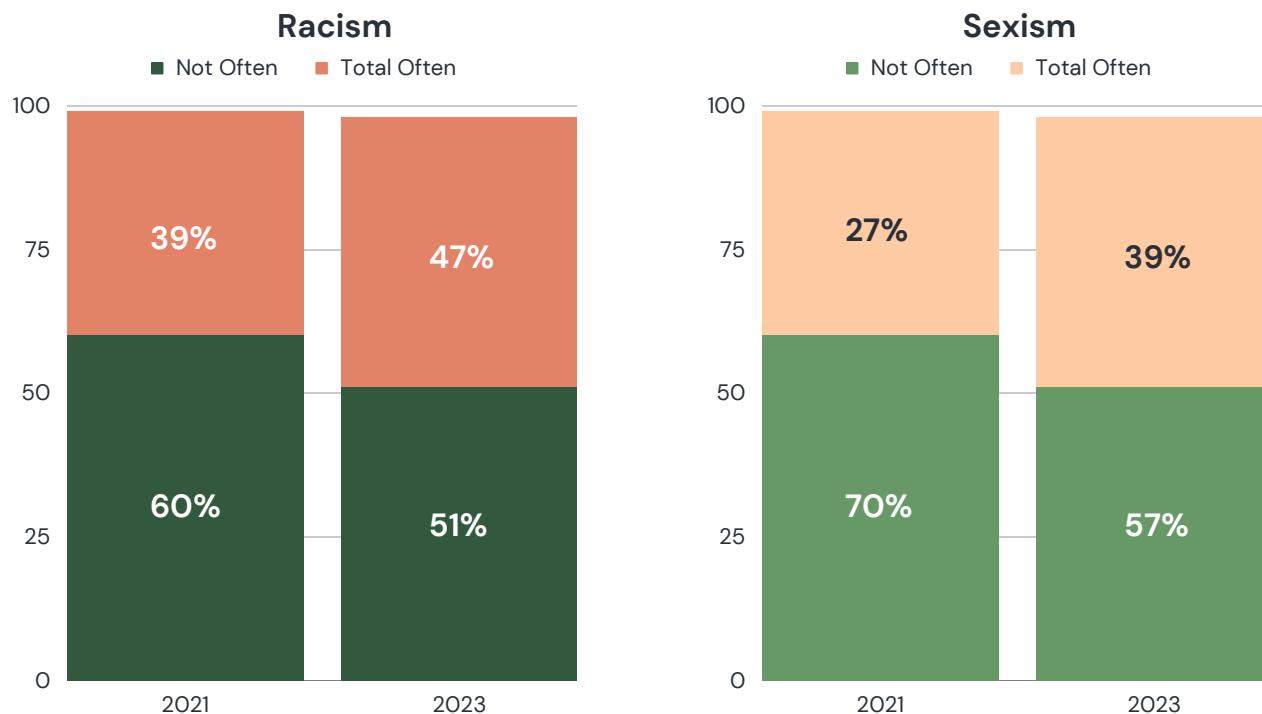
66%

of Black women report crime and violence has a major impact on their lives



Racial discrimination and sexism are on the rise for Black women.

How Often Do You Experience...?

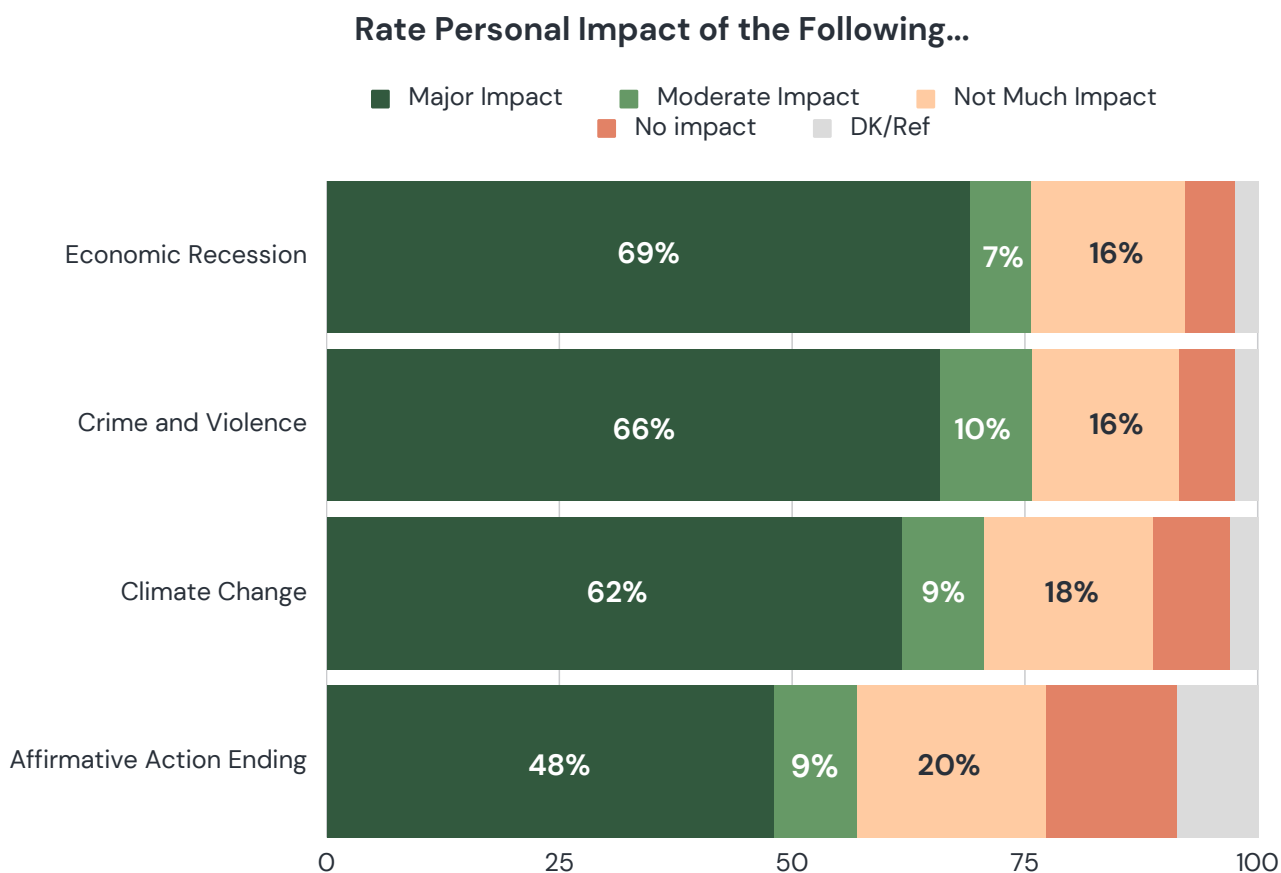


Since our 2021 poll, Black women report an 8% increase in experiencing racism in their everyday lives and a 12% increase in experiencing sexism.

The same trend is true for their experiences with sexism: 39% report experiencing sexism on a daily basis. **This represents a 12% increase since 2021.**



Looking ahead, large majorities feel an economic recession, crime and violence, and climate change will impact their lives.



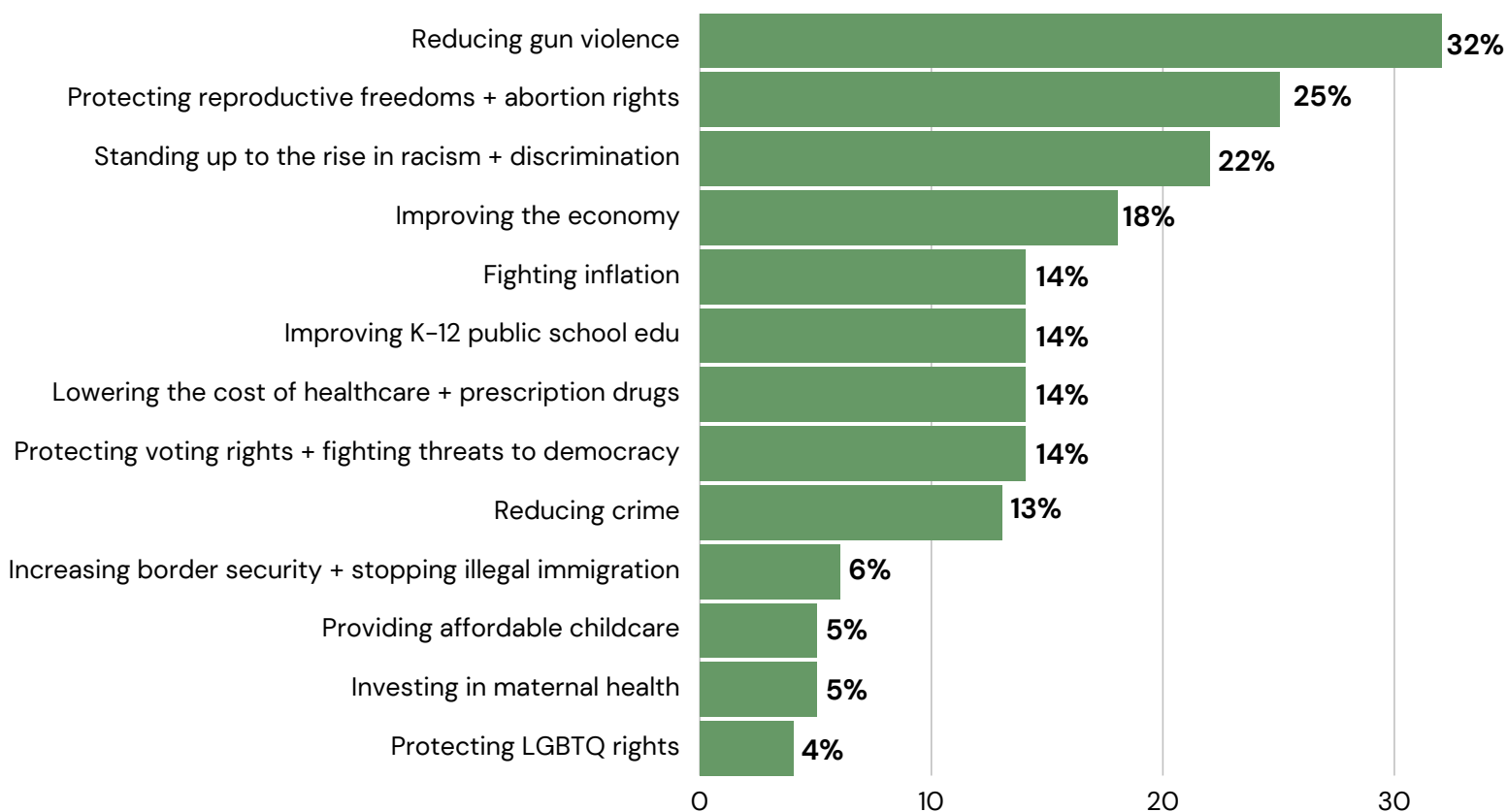
Nearly 70% of Black women say an economic recession will have a major impact on their lives. A large majority (66%) of Black women say crime and violence will have a major impact on their lives, followed by climate change (62%).

Baby Boomers are more likely to say crime and climate change will affect them. 73% of Baby Boomers say crime and violence has a major impact on their life, compared to just 57% of Gen Z/Millennial Black women. 71% of Baby Boomers say climate change will have a major impact on their life, compared to 59% of Gen Z/Millennial Black women.



And, despite strong economic angst, reducing gun violence, protecting reproductive freedoms, and standing up to racism the top priorities for Black women.

Top Two Issues for Congress to Focus on

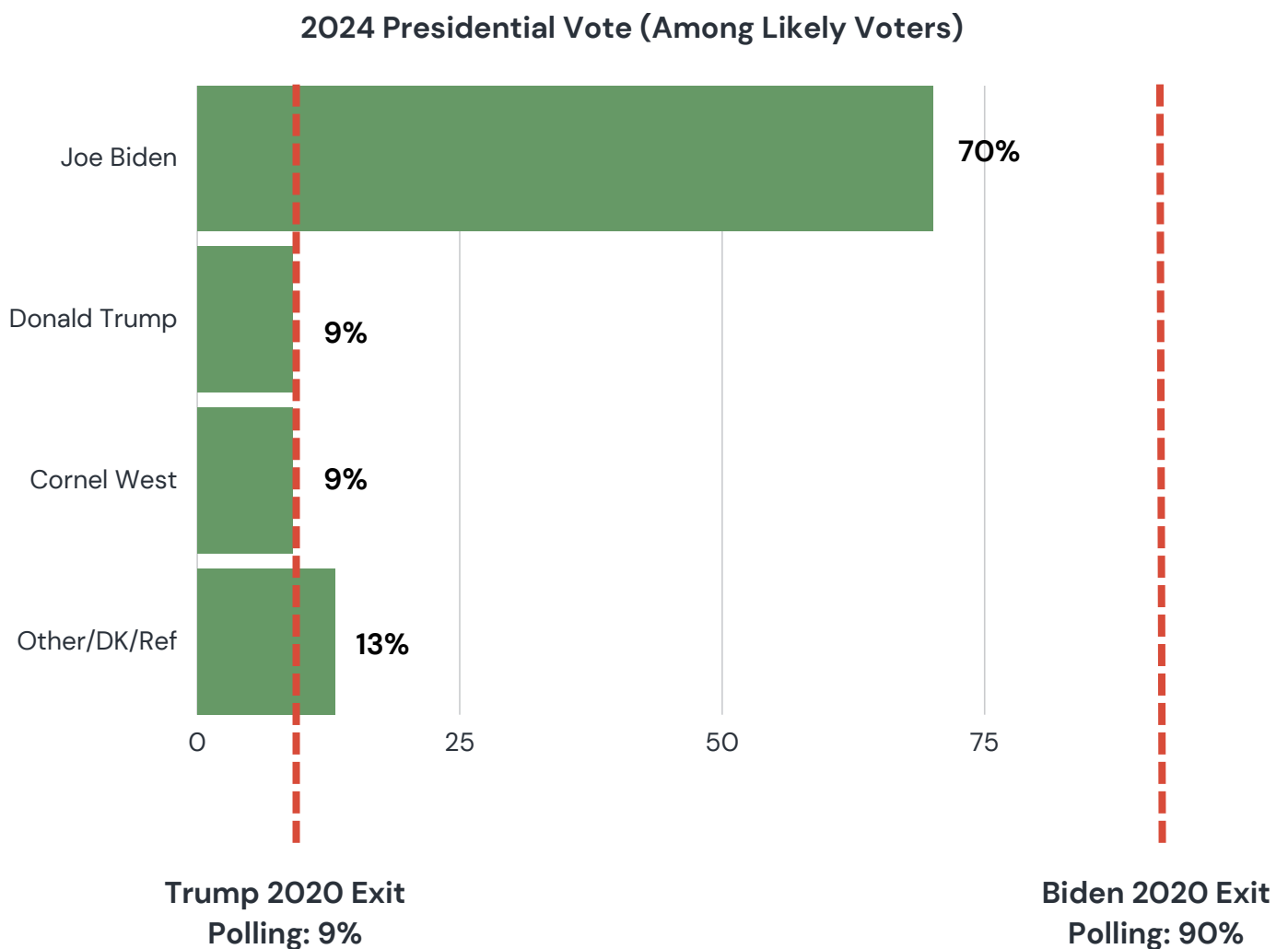


Similar to our 2022 poll, Black women have a full plate of issues they want Congressional leaders focused on. However, their top three priorities in order to move from surviving to thriving are clear: reduce gun violence, protect abortion rights, and fight the rise in hate.



Black women's support of leadership across the country is at a crossroads – and it is past time our voices are centered in their agendas.

President Biden is behind his 2020 support levels by double digits. Support for Donald Trump remains around 9%, roughly the same as in 2020. Gen Z/Mil likely voters are at just 58% support for Biden, 15% support Trump, 27% for other/DK/Ref.



What We Need to Thrive

A broad, caregiver-centered agenda is what we need to move past survival.

Supporting thriving Black communities – and therefore a thriving America – requires leaders across government, institutions, and communities to pursue agendas and investments that truly center the needs and desires of Black women.

Centering Black women looks like pursuing a broad, caregiver-centered agenda, which includes:

- Ensuring history, including racism and slavery, are accurately taught
- Raising teacher pay
- Passing a Federal Paid Family Leave policy
- Banning assault weapons
- Protecting abortion rights

78%

of Black women strongly oppose book bans discussing slavery and racism

95%

of Black women agree government should raise teacher pay

92%

of Black women agree with Federal Paid Family Leave

81%

of Black women want to see government ban assault rifles.

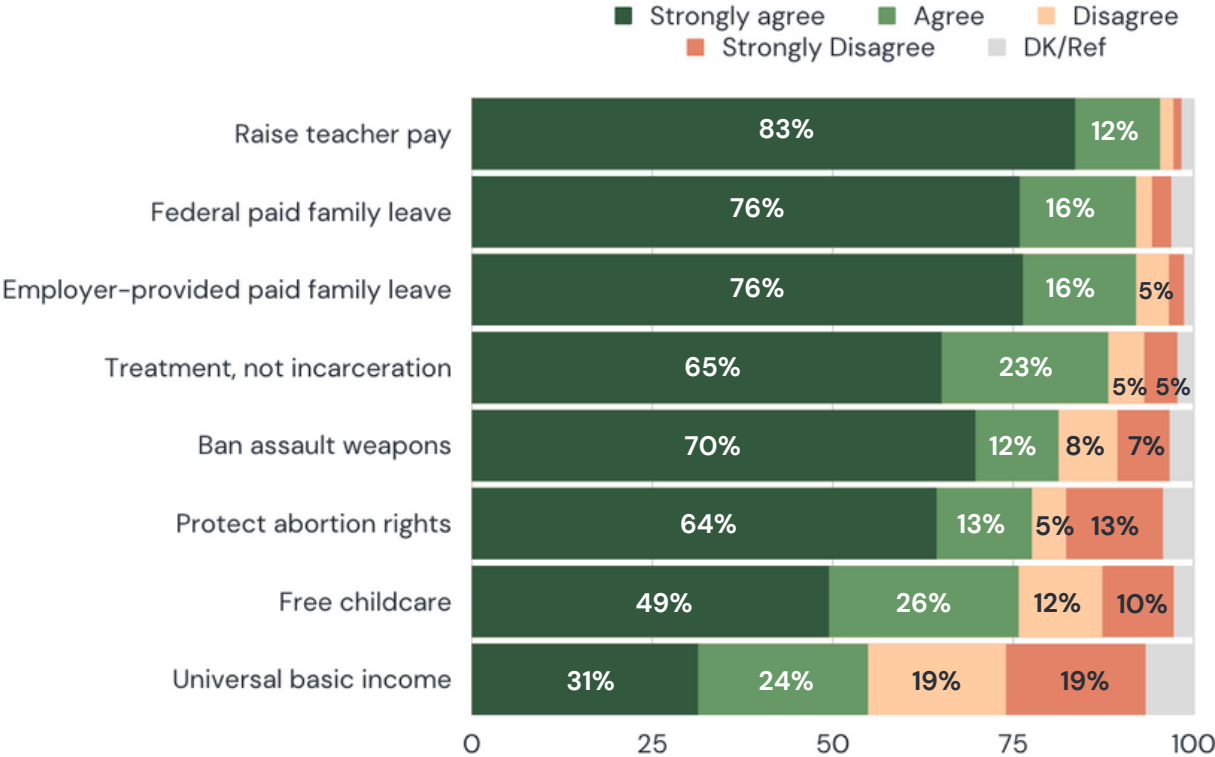
78%

of Black women want legislation protecting abortion rights



The pathway to Black women thriving includes a broad, caregiver-centered agenda.

Policy Statements



Black women want to see the well-being of caregivers and families centered in order to move from fighting to survive to thriving.

Of note, raising teacher pay was the most popular policy proposal for Black women – with near-universal support overall and across key subgroups such as the younger generation (96%) and Up for Grabs Voters (94%). This is followed by federally-mandated paid family leave.



Call to Action

1

Listen and center Black women.

Across generations, Black women have been a voice for their communities, advocating for their needs, concerns and dreams. To radically transform the systems that have been failing us all, we must have an honest understanding of the issues at hand. By listening to and centering Black women, we can finally be on a path to putting forth real solutions that support our full humanity.

2

Invest in Black women.

Driven by their love for their community, Black women have reimagined and rebuilt new solutions, extending the scope of justice and safety for all. But while they've been building new systems, the current system has continued to fail them. As studies show, Black women are reaching record-breaking levels of burnout due to lack of support and financial capital. To build a world of uninterrupted progress for justice, we must invest in the labor and the humanity of Black women.

3

Across sectors, pursue a caregiver-centered agenda.

Although Black women have a history of caregiving, they are often left without care or support when they or their own communities need help. With the rise in hate, economic instability and gun violence, Black women feel that it is essential to have a caregiver-centered agenda that speaks to fairness, dignity, protection, respect, and love. Pursuing this means that we can finally begin to break down the culture of violence that has been normalized in our country.



Gratitude

Thank you to our partner brilliant corners Research and Strategies for their continued dedication to centering the voices of Black women across the country in research and policymaking. Cornell Belcher, Moise Denis-Jean, and Ryan Winter – we could not have done this without you!

Learn more about brilliant corners Research and Strategies: www.brilliant-corners.com.