From: YouGov
To: Issue One
Date: August 12, 2025
Re: Public opinion toward America's political institutions among voters in Kentucky

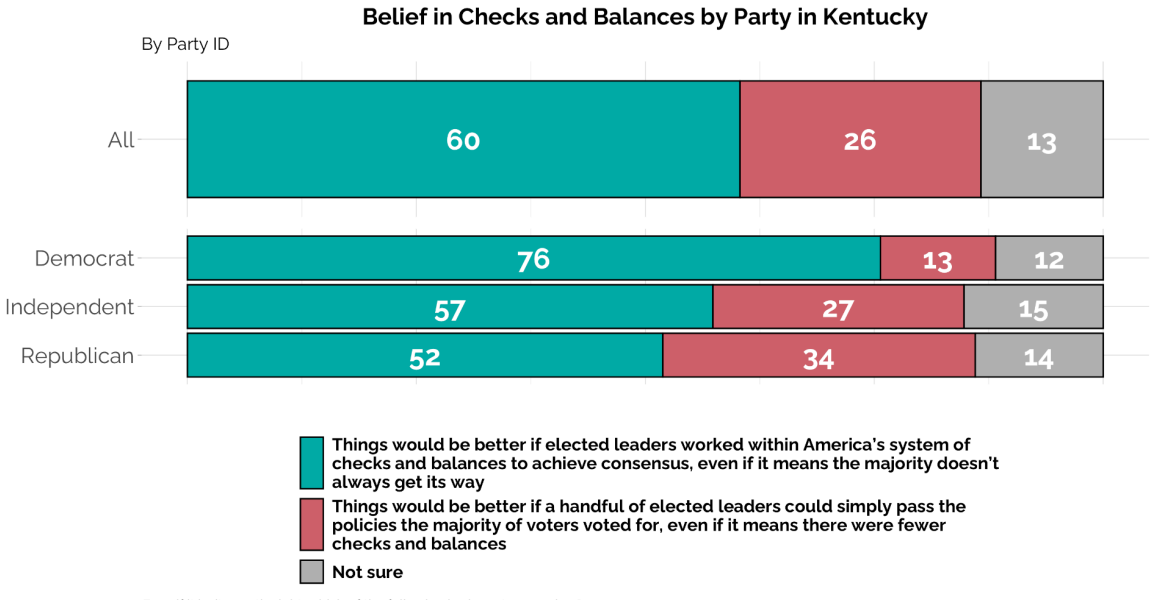
On behalf of Issue One, YouGov fielded a sample of 612 registered voters in the state of Kentucky. The survey fielded from July 16 to July 29, 2025. The survey included measures of Kentuckians' priorities, their views on the current state of the democracy in the United States and President Trump's influence on it, and their support for state politicians based on their attitudes towards democracy and President Trump. This memo briefly summarizes the results.

Executive Summary

- Voters in Kentucky want elected leaders who respect checks and balances. When asked to choose between elected leaders who worked within America's system of checks and balances or leaders who simply respected the will of the majority without regard to our institutions, fully 60 percent of voters in Kentucky prefer leaders who respect our system of checks and balances
- Voters in Kentucky strongly support key features of our Constitutional system. The overwhelming majority believing that Congressional oversight, judicial review, Congressional power of the purse, and other checks and balances within our system "greatly strengthen" our government
- A plurality of voters in Kentucky agree the President should have the ability to deport non-citizens and to fire some federal employees, but most overall agree the President should not be able to cross key "red lines" such as sending Americans to foreign prisons, handing Americans' private data over to private surveillance companies, and using force against peaceful protestors
- Voters in Kentucky are split on whether or not their interests are currently being well represented in Washington. Voters are about equally split on whether or not Trump is doing a good job at representing Kentucky's interests in Washington.
- While voters in Kentucky strongly support our Constitutional system of checks and balances, their top day to day issues mostly concern immigration and the economy. Choosing from a battery of various issues facing America today, voters in Kentucky are most concerned about healthcare, inflation, and immigration

Large majorities of every party, including Republicans, want elected leaders who respect checks and balances

Even when checks and balances are contrasted with greater implementation of policies with majority support, the vast majority of Kentucky including 52 percent of Republicans believe that preserving our system of checks and balances is more important.



Voters in Kentucky believe that Constitutional safeguards against unilateral rule strengthen our government

The survey also asked voters in Kentucky about several key features of the U.S. Constitutional order, including our system of checks and balances. After a brief informative statement about each element of our system, respondents were asked if they generally approved or disapproved of that specific attribute of our system. Specifically, voters were shown:

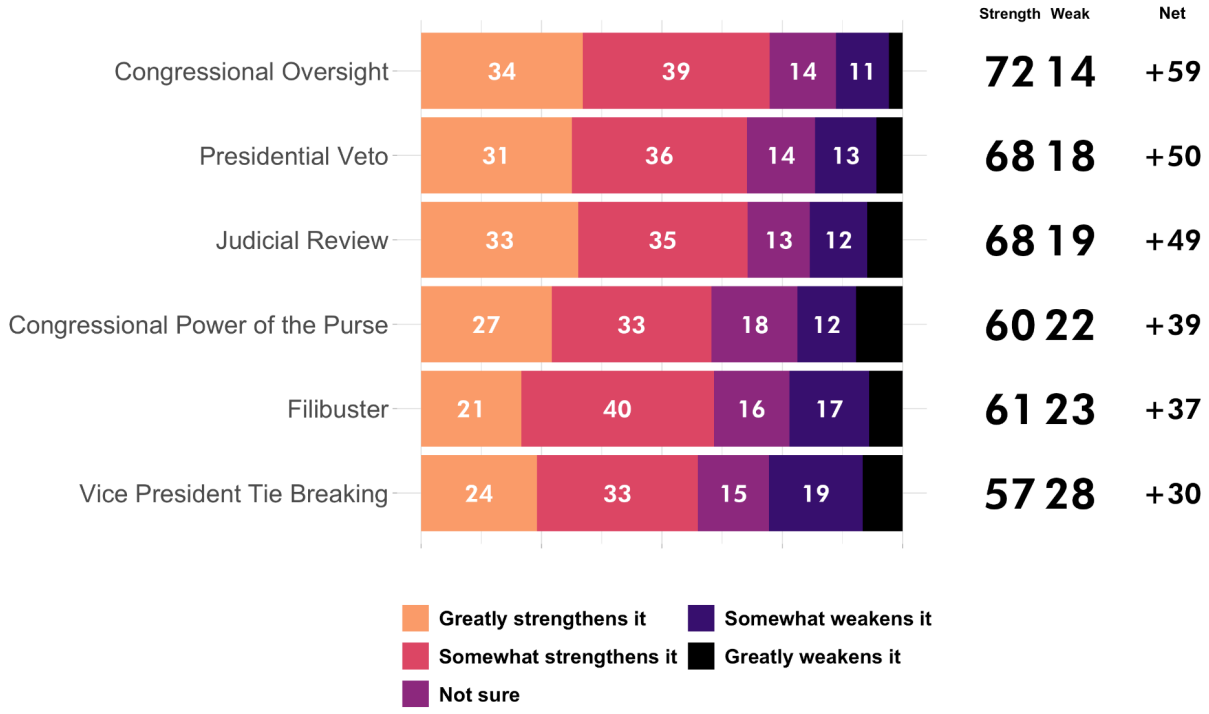
The American government uses a system of "checks and balances". This means that each branch of the government – like the President, Congress, and courts – can limit the powers of the others, so that no one branch becomes too powerful over the rest. In practice, this often means that people in many different parts of the government have to agree in order to make new laws, and if they disagree, new laws may not pass. Next, you will see different parts of this system. For each, please indicate if you believe that it strengthens or weakens our government:

- *The filibuster, which means most new laws need the support of at least 60 out of 100 Senators to move forward.*

- *Vice-President tie-breaking vote, which means that if the Senate is split fifty-fifty for or against a new law, the Vice President may cast a vote in favor of the law*
- *The Presidential veto, which allows the President to reject new laws. Congress can still pass a vetoed law, but only after two thirds of both the House and Senate agree.*
- *Judicial review, which allows courts to partially or fully strike down laws if a judge or majority of Supreme Court Justices believe that law violates the US Constitution*
- *The Congressional power of the purse, which means that Congress – not the President or Supreme Court – has control over how the government spends its money*
- *Congressional oversight, which means Congress has various powers, such as through investigations, hearings, and independent research agencies, to monitor the activity of the federal government*

Each of these features of the U.S. system of checks and balances proved to be popular among Kentucky voters. Overall belief that each feature greatly or somewhat strengthens our government met or surpassed 57 percent among Kentucky voters, and all of them drew skepticism from fewer than 28 percent of Kentucky voters.

Belief in Specific Checks and Balances in Kentucky



Kentucky voters oppose crossing the red lines of the Presidency

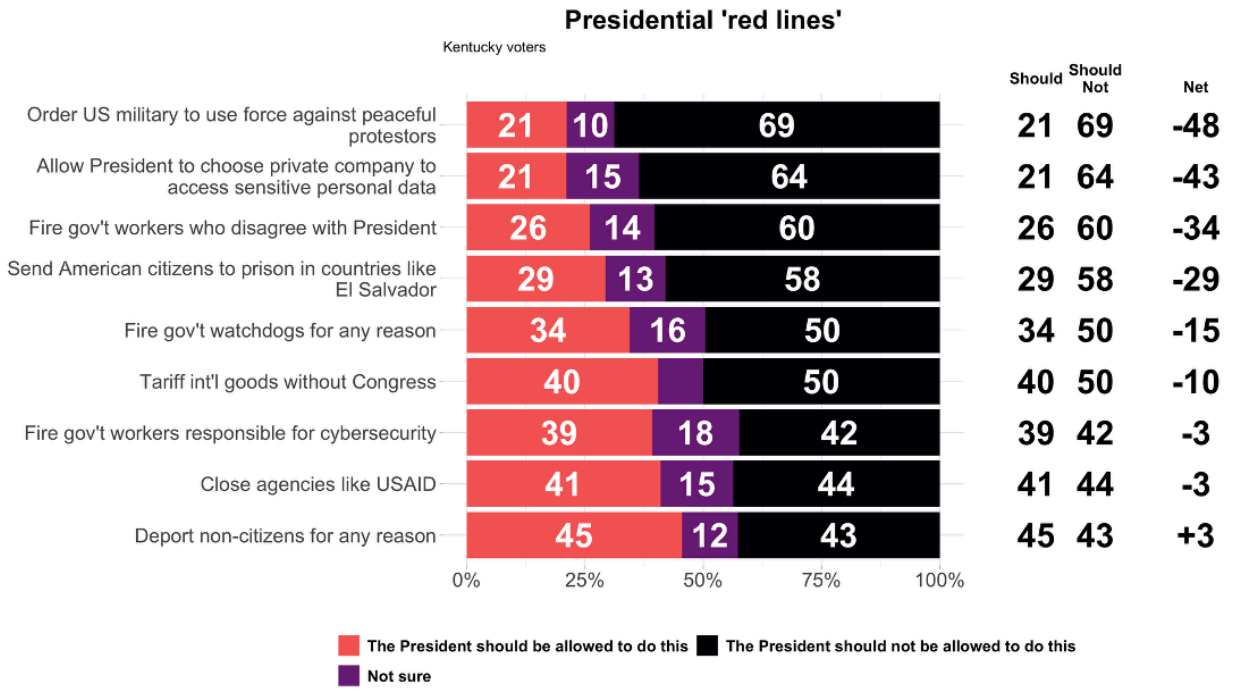
The survey included several measures of various "red lines" a President might face that would generally be considered to go against the Constitution or America's fundamental

values. Respondents were asked whether they believed a President would be going too far by crossing each of those red lines, or not. Specifically, respondents were asked:

> *Next, you will see policies some have proposed recently. For each of those, please say if you believe the President should be able to do this, or should not be allowed to do this*
> - *Order the deportation of any non-citizen in the US for any reason*
> - *Send American citizens convicted of crimes to prison in other countries like El Salvador*
> - *Order the US military to use violent force against peaceful protestors who disagree with the President*
> - *Fire government workers who are responsible for keeping watch over federal agencies, for any reason*
> - *Fire government workers who disagree with the President's political agenda*
> - *Place tariffs on goods from other countries without the approval of Congress*
> - *Allow a private company, chosen by the President, to access and combine sensitive personal data on Americans without public oversight or congressional approval*
> - *Close down federal agencies like USAID*
> - *Fire government workers responsible for the cybersecurity of our nation's election infrastructure*

Respondents were then asked whether they believed the President should be allowed to do each of these, or not. These items did not ask whether they believed the President *should* do any of these things. Rather, they asked whether they believed the President should be able to do them or not.

The following chart summarizes the results. Voters in Kentucky oppose most of these ideas. While voters overall are more supportive of policies such as being able to deport non-citizens, and are mixed when it comes to the ability of the President to fire government workers and close various Executive agencies, they oppose other uses of Executive power.



Kentucky voters are divided on several of these issues. They are split on whether they believe the President should be allowed to deport non-citizens, and on whether the President can shut down agencies like USAID and fire government workers responsible for cybersecurity. Overall, they opposed crossing these other 'red lines' that are regularly discussed. Large majorities oppose the most extreme policies like allowing the President to select a private company to surveil the American people, and allowing the President to use military force against peaceful protestors.

Across the board, Independent voters and moderates tend to oppose these potential expansions of Presidential powers. Even Republican voters in Kentucky on net oppose several of these policies, which is generally atypical when a copartisan controls the Presidency. The following table summarizes partisan differences in net support for Presidential authority to engage in these actions.

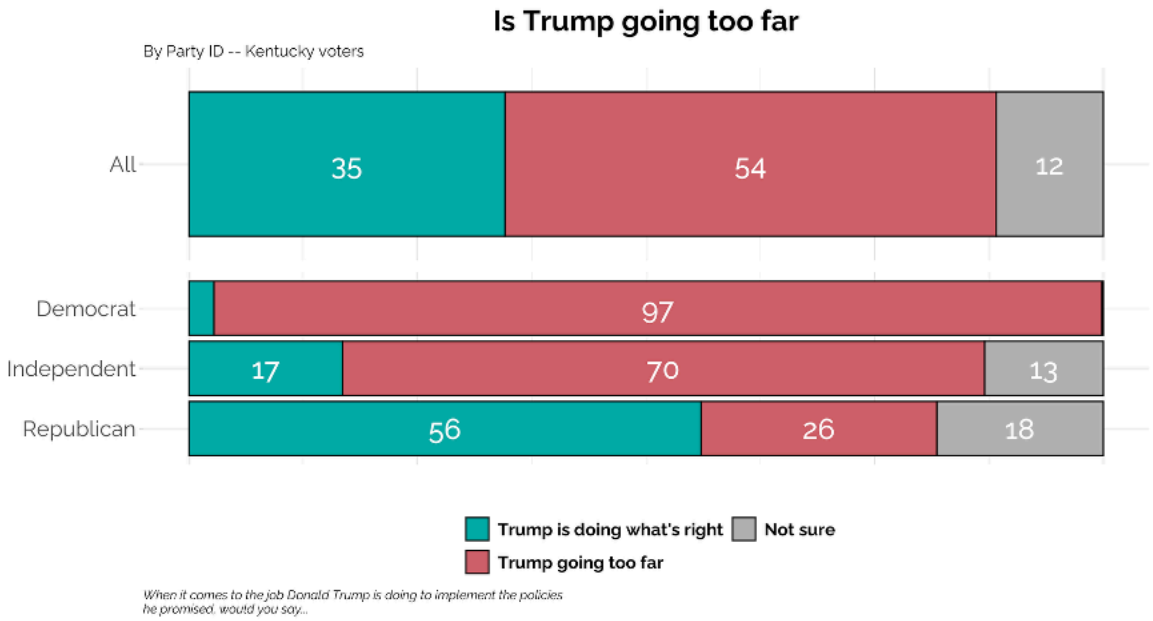
Proposal	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Deport non-citizens for any reason	-77	+10	+48
Send American citizens to prison in countries like El Salvador	-83	-47	+6
Order US military to use force against peaceful protestors	-92	-58	-20
Fire gov't watchdogs for any reason	-83	-23	+26
Fire gov't workers who disagree with President	-87	-62	+1
Tariff int'l goods without Congress	-86	-30	+38
Allow President to choose private company to access sensitive personal data	-88	-53	-14
Close agencies like USAID	-81	-19	+46
Fire gov't workers responsible for cybersecurity	-74	-17	+40

Republicans oppose several of these presidential actions Independents oppose all of them, on net. Democratic voters almost unanimously oppose each of these potential Presidential powers.

Elsewhere in the survey, respondents were asked more explicitly if they worried the current President was going too far to advance his political agenda. Several items measured whether voters believed he was going too far outside the bounds of our system of checks and balances, or if they believed he was doing what's right by prioritizing the policies his supporters care about. For example, respondents were asked:

> *When it comes to the job Donald Trump is doing to implement the policies he promised, would you say…*
> *- President Trump is going too far to get his policies passed, including by going outside the bounds of our system of checks and balances. He should work within the system and try to find consensus.*
> *- President Trump is doing what's right by putting the goals of his supporters first, even if that means not always abiding by the Constitution. He shouldn't have to abide by outdated rules and processes to pass policies that Americans voted for.*
> *- Not sure*

An overall majority of voters in Kentucky said they worried President Trump was going too far. This included majorities of Democratic and Independent voters, and a considerable plurality of Republican voters. In Kentucky, fully 26 percent of Republican voters said they worried Donald Trump was going too far with his approach to advancing his political agenda. The following chart breaks down the share of voters in Kentucky who worry Trump is going too far compared to those who believe he is doing what's right.

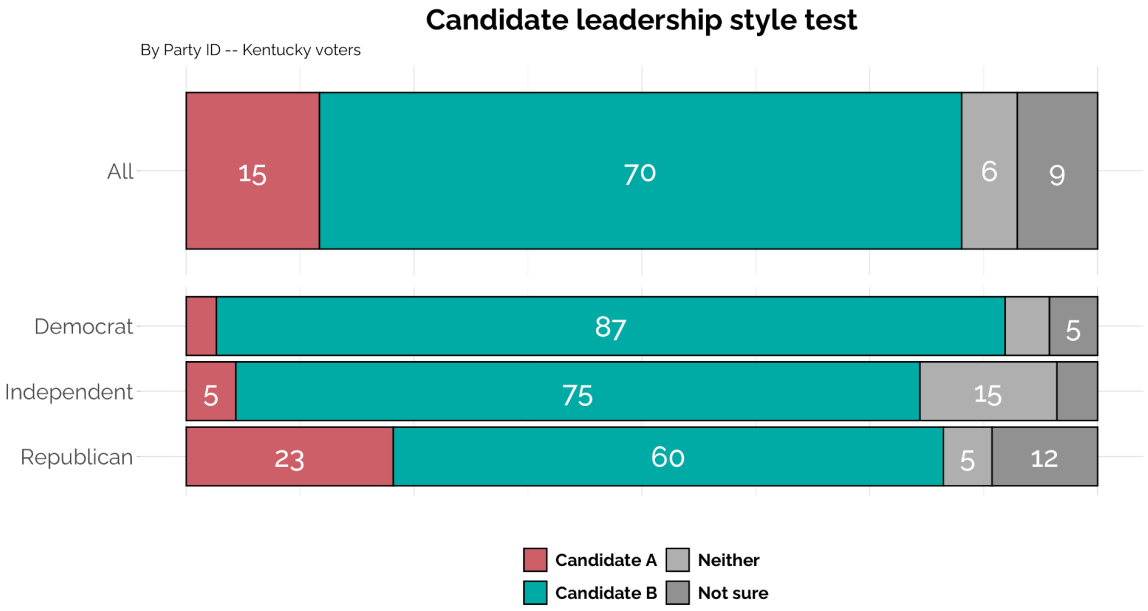


Later in the survey, voters were asked about hypothetical candidates rather than named incumbents. This exercise compared support for two candidates with different governing styles. Candidate "A" prioritized speed and urgency, and believed our system has "too many hurdles." Candidate "B" prioritized operating within the confines of America's rules and institutions, and believed our system had too many politicians trying to "ram through big changes." Specifically, respondents were asked:

> *Next, consider a hypothetical election for your member of Congress.*
> *Candidate "A" says it is important to act with speed and urgency to get what you believe in. This candidate says there are too many hurdles in our system, and it is time to start getting around these hurdles to achieve what voters want–even if it means ignoring the Constitution.*
> *Candidate "B" says it is important to act with respect for the institutions and rules that made America successful in the first place. This candidate says there are too many politicians trying to ram through big changes without following the Constitution, and that it's time to work together to improve our system, even if it takes more time.*
> *If the election for your member of Congress were held today, which candidate would you support?*
> *- Candidate A*
> *- Candidate B*
> *- Not sure*
> *- Neither*

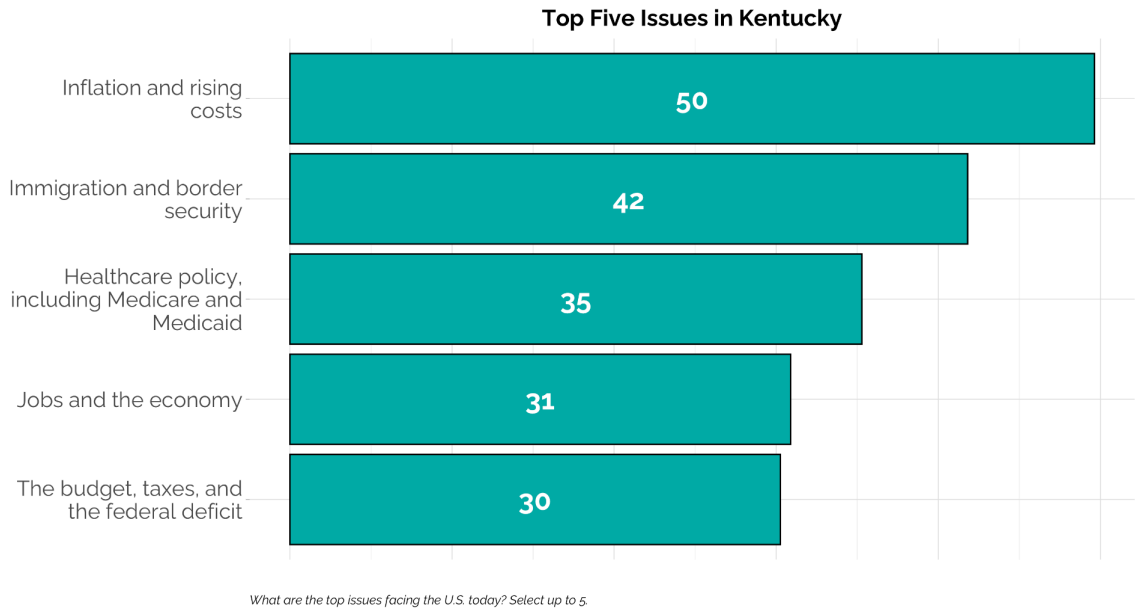
Kentucky voters overwhelmingly prefer the candidate who operates within the bounds of America's core institutions. This includes overwhelming support for this candidate

across key factors like partisanship, ideology, and others. Voters prefer political candidates who are respectful of America's core institutions.



Overall, voters remain most concerned about immigration and inflation

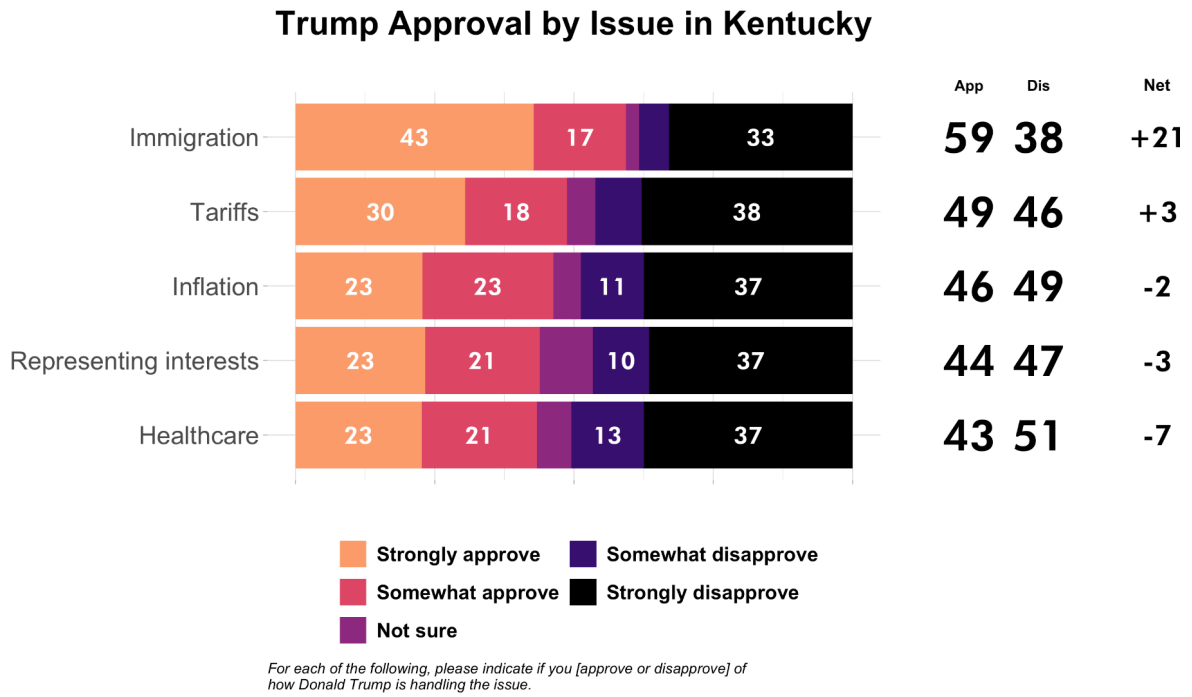
At the beginning of the survey, prior to any information concerning the overall subject matter - i.e., before respondents knew the survey concerned the issue of democracy erosion - respondents were asked about their overall issue concerns. Fully **50** percent of voters in Kentucky said that inflation was their top concern along with immigration and healthcare.



What are the top issues facing the U.S. today? Select up to 5.

Voters in Kentucky give Trump positive numbers on immigration, but are dissatisfied with Trump's handling of inflation and healthcare

President Trump continues to enjoy relatively higher approval of his handling of immigration than of other issues. Across states included in the sample, this remains Trump's strongest issue. Voters are more skeptical that Trump is doing a good job representing the interests of their state, and are less satisfied with his handling of issues like healthcare and inflation. A plurality of voters are currently skeptical of Trump's commitment to representing the interests of Kentucky in Washington.



Conclusion

Voters across Kentucky report they value core American institutions and the system of checks and balances. This includes key functions of the Judiciary and the Legislature to check each other and the Executive, and to ensure that the lawmaking process abides by our Constitution. Even when reminded that abiding by these institutions takes more time, requires more compromise, and does not always ensure that political winners always achieve exactly their desired outcomes, voters continue to prioritize following the system of checks and balances when governing this country.

Voters express concern about several potential "red lines" in our system the President may have crossed or is approaching. They overall do not believe the President should be able to unilaterally levy tariffs against international trading partners without Congress, and worry about extreme elements of the President's deportation policies and his firing of civil servants within certain government watchdog positions. They almost unanimously do not believe the President should have the authority to do things that impose mass surveillance or commit violence against peaceful protestors.

When asked to choose between a candidate who prioritizes speed and urgency, or a candidate who prioritizes building consensus within our institutions, the consensus-builder is the strongly preferred choice. This includes support across partisanship and other key factors. Kentucky voters continue to value core American governing institutions and strongly refer political leaders who do, too.

YouGov

Methods Statement

This survey is based on 612 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of registered voters in Kentucky. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and Kentucky geographic region based on voter registration lists, the U.S. Census American Community Survey, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, as well as 2020 Presidential vote and approximate 2024 Presidential vote based on available results. Respondents were selected from YouGov to be representative of registered voters. The weights range from 0.09 to 6.06 with a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.71.

The margin of error (a 95% confidence interval) for a sample percentage based upon the subsetted sample is approximately 4.9%. It is calculated using the formula:

$$\hat{p} \pm 100 \times \sqrt{\frac{1 + \mathrm{CV}^2}{n}}$$

where *CV* is the coefficient of variation of the sample weights and *n* is the sample size used to compute the proportion. This is a measure of sampling error (the average of all estimates obtained using the same sample selection and weighting procedures repeatedly). The sample estimate should differ from its expected value by less than margin of error in 95 percent of all samples. It does not reflect non-sampling errors, including potential selection bias in panel participation or in response to a particular survey.