

New polling confirms Democrats' left-leaning policies are out of touch

The Democratic Party is perceived by voters as being both ineffective and out of touch and, as a result, stands to suffer substantive seat losses in the midterm elections, [new polling](#) by Schoen Cooperman Research indicates.

Indeed, the findings of our survey — which was conducted among likely 2022 midterm election voters — show that the electorate is increasingly pessimistic about the direction in which [President Biden](#) and Democrats are steering the country and feel that the party's priorities do not align with their own.

In order to have a fighting chance in the midterms — as well as a shot at holding on to the presidency in 2024 — Democrats need to embark on a broader course correction back to the center. The party needs to show voters that they are focused on solving problems and addressing quality-of-life issues and that they reject the progressive left's embrace of big government spending and identity politics.

Indeed, a majority of voters (54 percent) — including 56 percent of independents — explicitly say that they want Biden and Democrats to move closer to the center and embrace more moderate policies versus embracing more liberal policies (18 percent) or staying where they are politically (13 percent).

Most voters (61 percent) also agree that Biden and Democrats are “out of touch with hardworking Americans” and “have been so focused on catering to the far-left wing of the party that they're ignoring Americans' day to day concerns” such as “rising prices” and “combatting violent crime.”

Equally concerning for Democrats, there is a clear sense among the 2022 electorate that the state of the country has deteriorated since Biden became president and that he has not lived up to expectations.

Biden's net approval rating is 9 points underwater (54 percent disapprove, 45 percent approve), which marks a 4-point drop since our December poll (51 percent disapprove, 46 percent approve). A plurality of voters (43 percent) also say that Biden has done worse as president than they expected, rather than better (19 percent).

As inflation has risen, the economy has become a particular area of vulnerability for Democrats. Indeed, voters' growing economic pessimism is one of the driving forces behind their dissatisfaction both with the current state of the country as well as with Biden.

Biden's approval rating on handling the nation's economic recovery is 21 points underwater (59 percent disapprove, 38 percent approve). This marks a notable 17-point decline from our December polling, when Biden's approval rating on the recovery was negative 4 points, 50 percent to 46 percent.

In addition to harboring negative views about the economy generally, two-thirds of voters (68 percent) blame the Biden administration's policies for inflation either fully or partially.

Indeed, inflation — which is at its highest level in 40 years — is the top issue (51 percent) for voters, followed by the economy and creating jobs (32 percent). Yet only 16 percent of voters believe that Biden's main focus is on the economy. Thus, voters trust Republicans over Democrats to manage the economy (47 percent to 41 percent) and control inflation (48 percent to 36 percent).

In addition to the economy, voters see Biden and Democrats as underperforming on other important issues and in key roles, notably on policing and crime.

As violent crime surges across the country — a trend that voters are nearly universally concerned about (85 percent) — by a 2-to-1 margin, voters blame Democrats over Republicans for rising crime rates (52 percent to 25 percent). Further, Republicans are trusted over Democrats to reduce crime (49 percent to 34 percent).

Despite Biden's more moderate rhetoric on law enforcement and policing lately, most voters still agree that Biden and Democrats are soft on crime (56 percent) and a plurality agree that Democrats in Congress support the radical defund the police movement (46 percent).

Notwithstanding Democrats' weaknesses on the economy and crime, our data on the COVID-19 pandemic is relatively encouraging for the party. Indeed, a majority of voters (53 percent) approve of the way Biden is addressing the pandemic.

To be sure, Democrats' success in the midterms hinges partly on Americans feeling like COVID-19 is under control by November — and, positively, nearly one-half of voters (46 percent) now say that the pandemic is either completely or mostly under control, while just 12 percent say it is not under control.

Voters are also notably less concerned about the pandemic now than they were in December. Currently, voters are concerned, rather than not concerned, about the pandemic by a 24-point margin — compared to December, when voters were concerned by a 50-point margin.

That being said, these improving dynamics vis-à-vis the COVID-19

pandemic will likely not be enough to tip the scales in Democrats' favor, given the enormity of the challenges Biden faces at home — and of course, the crisis he's facing in Eastern Europe.

Collectively, our data paints a picture of a Democratic Party that is unable to connect with voters on basic "kitchen table" issues, namely the economy and crime.

In his State of the Union address, Biden attempted to refashion his economic agenda in light of the Build Back Better plan's failure and tried to sell some of the same big-spending proposals as anti-inflationary and deficit-reducing measures.

Instead of repackaging a failed progressive spending bill — one that most voters either don't prioritize or oppose — the president should make a commitment to reducing inflation by practicing fiscal discipline while also ruling out any new spending initiatives that lack bipartisan support.

- [Supporters of Puerto Rico status convention to Hoyer: Our bill or bust](#)

At the same time, though it was encouraging to hear Biden call to "fund the police," rhetoric is just a first step. Absent a Democratic effort to approach criminal justice legislation in a bipartisan manner, the GOP will be able to weaponize the issue against Democrats in the midterms.

Ultimately, if Democrats do not embrace a strategic shift to the political center, they risk historic defeats — worse than 1994 or 2010 — in this year's midterm elections.

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