

## Arizona voters have common concerns, poll shows

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Arizona voters overwhelmingly agree that there is a need for more affordable housing in their communities, support comprehensive immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship and believe private schools receiving state funding should be held to the same standards as public ones, according to a new poll.

The survey, from the Center for the Future of Arizona in conjunction with HighGround Public Affairs, aims to counter narratives of political division by finding topics and policies that voters across the political spectrum agree should be priorities.

It resulted in the Arizona Voters' Agenda, a list of policy points reflecting key issues for voters. Sybil Francis, president and CEO of the Center for the Future of Arizona, said the agenda is designed to prompt candidates for elected offices to consider how they might address issues of public consensus.

"What we're very focused on is: How do we bring the voices of Arizonans to our election cycles," she said. "We hear a lot from candidates; we hear a lot from national media about all sorts of issues. But what is it that Arizona voters really care about? And that's really at the heart of why we've done this voters' agenda."

For a policy point to make it onto the list, it needed a majority of respondents to indicate that they strongly supported the issue. In addition, the issue needed more than 50% support among every political affiliation and age group surveyed.

The survey establishes outcomes that voters largely agree with, but in most cases, don't address the different ideas voters might have about how to accomplish them.

Issues such as investing more in child care assistance programs and doing more to provide safe, affordable housing for homeless people made the list. Proposals around specific funding levels for education vouchers, using

money from Arizona's rainy-day fund to balance the state budget and reducing restrictions on multifamily development did not meet the support thresholds.

The new findings add to a previous Center for the Future of Arizona poll. That survey, conducted in 2022, found likely midterm voters agreed on increasing teacher pay, creating a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and the importance of securing the state's water future. It also showed voters across the political spectrum largely trusted the election system.

The recent poll was conducted in March and recorded responses from 500 likely voters with a history of electoral participation, balanced to model the likely turnout of voters in the 2024 general election across party, age, region and gender.

Based on previous election year trends, the partisan advantage was set at 4 percentage points for Republicans. The margin of error was plus or minus 4.3 percentage points.

Francis said another survey focused on water, elections and other issues is planned for later this year.

Here are the areas where the new poll found common ground.

### Top concerns and voter viewpoints

Paul Bentz, senior vice president of research and strategy at HighGround, said survey respondents ranked immigration and border security, long-term water supplies and education as top issues.

He noted the survey was conducted prior to the Arizona Supreme Court upholding a pre-statehood abortion ban on April 20. Only about 6% of respondents listed abortion as the top issue facing the state, putting it around the middle of the pack compared to other topics.

"I would suspect if we were to go out in the field right now and ask an abortion question or ask this issue that abortion would be higher," Bentz said. "But, you know, polls are a snapshot in time."



The results roughly align with other recent surveys of Arizona voters, including a poll from Emerson College Polling and a survey from the Arizona Citizens' Clean Elections Commission in conjunction with Noble Predictive Insights.

A majority of voters surveyed for the Center for the Future of Arizona poll said they weren't confident that Arizona is prepared for future growth. About 62% said they prefer candidates who are willing to work across the aisle to find bipartisan solutions to issues facing Arizona.

Roughly 85% also said they believe news coverage of candidates has created more political division among Arizonans. That survey question simply asked respondents about the "news media," and didn't make any distinction between national, local, broadcast, radio, print, for-profit or nonprofit outlets.

Previous research on Americans' attitudes toward news sources by numerous polling outlets found that local news is generally more trusted than national media.

## Education

Large majorities of surveyed voters support investing in K-12 public schools. Other education findings included:

- 80% of those surveyed support holding private schools receiving state funding to the same financial and academic reporting standards as public schools.

- 94% are concerned about literacy rates and say teachers should be trained in the most effective approaches to teach reading.

- 93% say the state should ensure every high school student can access dual-enrollment courses or other opportunities to earn college credit.

- 77% support increasing need-based state financial aid to encourage more students to pursue higher education.

## Immigration

A majority of survey respondents said Arizona needs immigration reform and solutions to issues at the U.S.-Mexico border. The new data shows:

- 77% support enacting comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship.

- 89% say creating a functioning border for commerce and immigration should be a priority for political leaders.

- 82% say the influx of migrants at the border is a humanitarian crisis and leaders should find a bipartisan solution to the problem.

## State spending

The new poll shows voters overwhelmingly oppose spending cuts to essential services. Among the findings:

- 87% oppose cuts to K-12 education.

- 82% oppose cuts to public safety.

- 81% oppose cuts to health care.

- 90% support investments in transportation infrastructure, including freeways, streets and transit systems throughout the state.

- 77% support investing more in child care assistance programs.

## Housing

The poll found voters have deep concerns around housing affordability. Findings included:

- 84% said rents are too high in Arizona.

- 80% said home prices are too high statewide.

- 71% said homelessness in Arizona is a crisis.

- 78% said more affordable housing was needed in their community.

- 82% said state and local governments should ensure affordable housing was available to middle- and low-income earners.

- 81% said political leaders should do more to ensure homeless people can access safe, affordable housing.

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