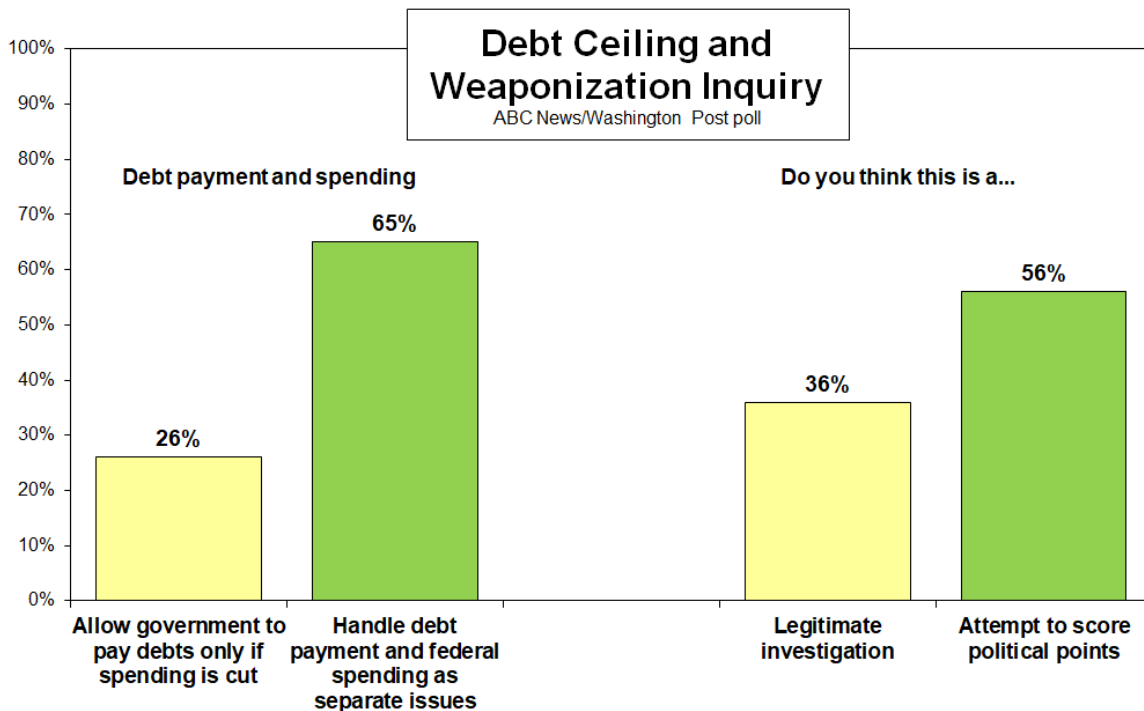


Poll Finds Low Confidence in Leaders, Risks to the GOP in Political Disputes

Americans express scant confidence in Joe Biden and his party heading into the 2023 State of the Union address. Yet wide majorities also lack faith in their Republican counterparts, and a new ABC News/Washington Post poll finds the GOP at risk on two fronts, the debt ceiling debate and its inquiry into alleged federal bias against conservatives.

Biden faces deep challenges of his own, including record economic discontent and weak job approval. Few give him credit for a range of accomplishments he may try to claim in tomorrow's address, from infrastructure to prescription drug prices.

But the public takes Biden's side in the debt ceiling debate, with broad support for handling debt payments and federal spending as separate issues, along with extensive worry about the impacts of a default. The GOP leadership also faces skepticism about its probe of anti-conservative bias in federal agencies; most see this as an attempt to score political points, not a legitimate inquiry.



Among other issues, while Biden is calling on Congress to renew the long-expired ban on assault weapons, the public now is divided on the question: Forty-seven percent support such a ban, 51 percent oppose it. That reflects a 9-point drop in support since 2019, surprising given recent gun violence but confirming other data.

Internationally, the survey, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds a substantial rise in the sense that the United States is doing “too much” to assist Ukraine in its war with Russia – 33 percent say so, up from 14 percent last spring. Still, that leaves about six in 10 saying the United States is doing the right amount (40 percent) or too little (19 percent, down from 37 percent as weapons shipments have soared).

The shift toward saying the United States is doing too much peaks among Republicans and conservatives, up 32 and 30 percentage points, respectively. Those compare with non-significant changes of +5 points among Democrats and +6 points among liberals.

There’s also the issue of confidence in the country’s leadership. As detailed below, it’s sorely lacking, with 68 to 72 percent of Americans expressing little or no confidence in Biden, newly elected Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and both their parties in Congress.

DEBT DEBATE – Biden has a wide advantage on one urgent and contentious issue, the debt ceiling. Just 26 percent of Americans adopt McCarthy’s position that Congress should allow the government to pay its debts only if the administration agrees to cut federal spending. A broad 65 percent instead align with Biden’s view that the issues of debt payment and federal spending should be handled separately.

Even among Republicans, fewer than half – 48 percent – support coupling debt payment with cuts in federal spending. That drops to 22 percent among independents and 10 percent of Democrats.

Underlying these results is broad worry about the consequences of default: A vast 82 percent are very or somewhat worried that a government default would damage the economy. That includes a majority, 53 percent, at the top end of the scale, “very” concerned.

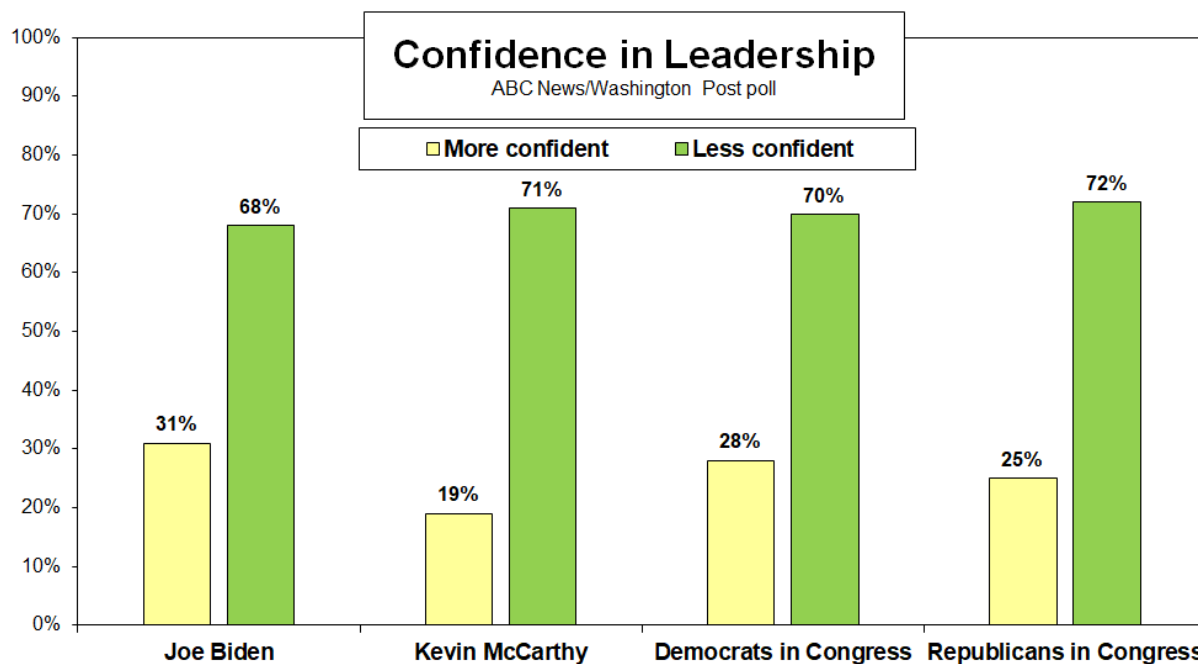
Notably, this concern is bipartisan – about eight in 10 adults across the political spectrum are concerned about the economic impacts of a default, and being very concerned peaks among Republicans, at 59 percent.

Debt debate and default concerns				
<i>ABC News/Washington Post poll</i>				
	Debt limit debate		Concerned about default	
	Link with spending	Keep separate	Very	Somewhat
All	26%	65%	53%	29%
Democrats	10	83	53	32
Independents	22	73	51	30
Republicans	48	41	59	25
Liberals	9	87	56	28
Moderates	23	70	50	33
Conservatives	42	46	52	25

That said, about two-thirds of Americans favor separate discussion of the debt limit and federal spending regardless of whether they're more or less worried about the impacts of nonpayment.

CONFIDENCE – Most broadly, the survey shows a now-common result: A disgruntled public with deep economic dissatisfaction, sharp polarization and little faith in leaders on either side of the aisle. These attitudes are informed by the fact that, as [reported](#) Sunday, 41 percent say they've gotten worse off since the president took office, a high in polling back 37 years.

The public by an extensive 68-31 percent expresses just some or no confidence in Biden to make the right decisions for the country's future. It's a similar 70-28 percent for the Democrats in Congress. But it's even worse for McCarthy – a vast 71-19 percent lack confidence in his leadership. And it's 72-25 percent for his party.



In a burn for McCarthy, confidence in Democratic former Speaker Nancy Pelosi, while not high, was 11 points higher in early 2019 than his rating now. That said, confidence in Biden's leadership is no better than it was for Donald Trump, the most consistently unpopular president in modern times.

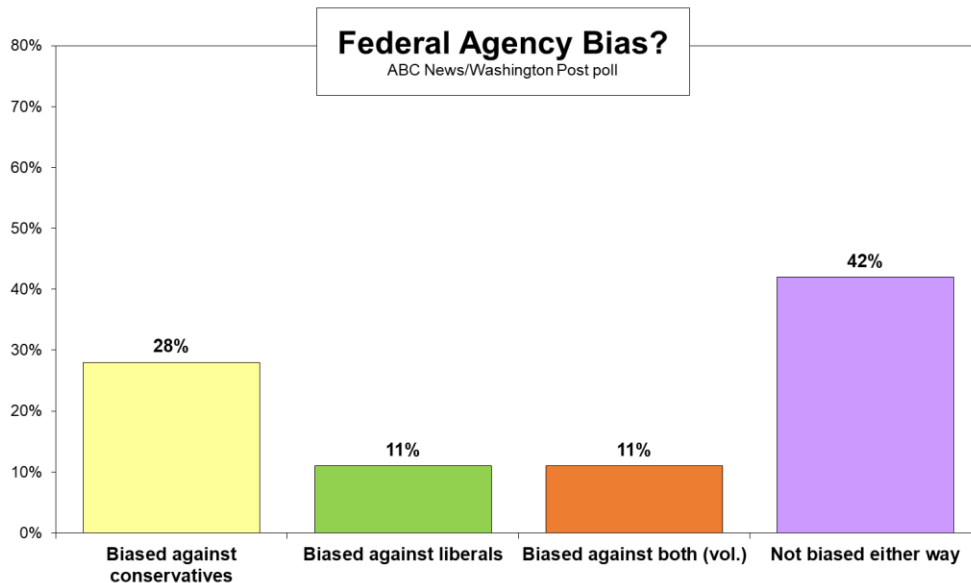
Confidence Ratings			
<i>ABC News/Washington Post polls</i>			
McCarthy	Pelosi 2019	Biden	Trump 2019
19-71%	30-62%	31-68%	35-64%

WEAPONIZATION? – In addition to the debt ceiling debate, as mentioned, the GOP faces headwinds in its inquiry into alleged anti-conservative bias in federal agencies by the newly created House Judiciary Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government. Americans by a 20-point margin, 56-36 percent, see the probe as “an attempt to score political points” rather than a legitimate investigation.

Indeed, while views are highly partisan, even among Republicans, 34 percent see the weaponization inquiry as an attempt to score political points, and a tepid 57 percent think it’s a legitimate investigation. Results among conservatives are almost identical.

Weaponization Inquiry		
<i>ABC News/Washington Post poll</i>		
	Legitimate investigation	Attempt to score political points
All	36%	56%
Democrats	14	76
Independents	38	57
Republicans	57	34
Liberals	23	71
Moderates	29	65
Conservatives	56	34

Part of the GOP’s problem is widespread doubt about its premise. Relatively few Americans, 28 percent, think federal agencies in fact are biased against conservatives. Eleven percent think they’re biased against liberals; an additional 11 percent volunteer that they’re biased against both. A plurality, 42 percent, think federal agencies are not biased against either group.



Among conservatives themselves, 55 percent think federal agencies are biased against them. That's 47 percent among people who define themselves as somewhat conservative, rising to 66 percent of those who say they're very conservative (15 percent of all adults).

ASSAULT WEAPONS – While Biden has undertaken a new push to ban assault weapons, public views on the issue are now closely divided: Forty-seven percent support a ban, 51 percent oppose it. That reflects a 9-point drop in support for an assault weapons ban, and a 10-point rise in opposition, since last measured in an ABC/Post poll in September 2019. (Results were roughly similar, 49-45 percent, in a Quinnipiac University poll last July.)

Support for an assault weapons ban was this low just once before, a 45-53 percent result in December 2015; that poll, and this one, are the only two in which more than 50 percent have opposed a ban. In most other polls since 1995, majorities have supported an assault weapons ban, peaking at 79 percent in May 1999. It was 62 percent as recently as April 2018.

The decline in support for an assault weapons ban since 2019 is broadly based across groups. It would take a study focused in more detail on the issue to assess its reasons, but other studies provide clues. In a Pew Research Center poll last year, the public divided on whether or not making it harder to get guns would reduce mass shootings. And in a Pew study only among parents of children under 18, fewer than half, 45 percent, thought an assault weapons ban would be extremely or very effective at preventing shootings in schools specifically.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS? – Presidents typically tout their accomplishments in a State of the Union address. It can be a tough sell: Just 36 percent of Americans think Biden has accomplished a great deal or good amount as president; 62 percent say he's accomplished not very much or nothing. In an ABC/Post poll in January 2018, Trump was in about the same boat.

Nor does Biden get much credit for a disparate list of items he might raise in tomorrow's address. Unemployment has dropped from 6.3 percent when Biden took office to 3.4 percent now (a low since 1969) and the economy added a robust 517,000 jobs last month – yet the public by 60-34 percent says he has not made progress “creating more good jobs in your community.”

Other efforts largely have yet to hit the ground, making it difficult for Biden to claim credit. Despite the huge infrastructure bill he signed into law in November 2021, the public by 60-32 percent says Biden has not made progress “improving roads and bridges in your community” – perhaps because much of the actual work is yet to be done.

Similarly, legislation Biden signed in August includes a tax credit up to \$7,500 for buying an electric vehicle. But it took effect just this year; so far, the public by 56-26 percent says Biden has not made progress “making electric vehicles more affordable.” (A substantial 18 percent are undecided.)

Lastly, despite measures to lower prescription drug prices for people on Medicare, the public by a closer 47-30 percent says Biden has not made progress “lowering prescription drug costs,” with 23 percent unsure. Again, some of the bill's provisions take effect this year; others are years off.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone Jan. 27-Feb. 1, 2023, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 percentage points, including the design effect. Partisan divisions are 26-25-40 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), with sampling and data collection by Abt Associates of Rockville, Md. See details on the survey’s methodology [here](#).

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com. Join our [mailing list](#) to get updates on all new poll releases.

Media contacts: [Van Scott](#) (212-456-7243) or [Caragh Fisher](#) (212-456-3437).

Full results follow.

Q1-2, 7-8, 13, 15-18 previously released. *=less than 0.5 percent.

3. How much confidence do you have in [ITEM] to make the right decisions for the country's future - a great deal of confidence, a good amount, just some or none at all?

2/1/23 - Summary table

	-- More confident --			- Less confident -			No opinion
	NET	Great deal	Good amt	NET	Just some	None at all	
a. Biden	31	14	17	68	23	45	1
b. the Republicans in Congress	25	9	16	72	37	36	3
c. the Democrats in Congress	28	12	16	70	30	39	2
d. Kevin McCarthy, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives	19	5	13	71	35	36	11

Trend where available:

a. Biden

	----- More confident -----			----- Less confident -----			No opinion
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Just some	None at all	
2/1/23	31	14	17	68	23	45	1
1/13/21	49	26	23	50	19	31	1

Compare to:

Trump

	----- More confident -----			----- Less confident -----			No opinion
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Just some	None at all	
1/24/19	35	21	14	64	16	48	1
11/1/17	34	20	15	65	19	46	1
1/15/17	38	15	23	61	27	34	1

Obama

	----- More confident -----			----- Less confident -----			No
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Just some	None at all	opinion
1/23/14	37	17	19	63	28	35	*
7/11/10	43	24	19	57	28	29	*
1/15/10	47	24	23	53	26	27	*
10/18/09	49	29	20	50	27	24	*
8/17/09	49	28	21	50	26	24	*
4/24/09	60	31	28	40	25	15	1
1/16/09	61	31	30	37	28	9	2

b. the Republicans in Congress

	----- More confident -----			----- Less confident -----			No
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Just some	None at all	opinion
2/1/23	25	9	16	72	37	36	3
1/24/19	30	10	20	69	39	30	2
11/1/17	21	6	14	76	48	28	3
1/23/14	19	5	14	80	47	34	1
7/11/10	26	8	18	73	43	29	1
1/15/10	24	6	18	75	47	28	1
10/18/09	19	4	15	79	46	33	2
8/17/09	21	4	16	78	45	33	1
4/24/09	21	4	16	78	50	28	2
1/16/09	29	8	21	69	49	21	2

c. the Democrats in Congress

	----- More confident -----			----- Less confident -----			No
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Just some	None at all	opinion
2/1/23	28	12	16	70	30	39	2
1/24/19	34	12	22	65	36	29	1
11/1/17	27	8	19	70	42	28	3
1/23/14	27	9	17	72	38	34	1
7/11/10	32	12	20	67	35	32	1
1/15/10	32	11	21	68	33	35	1
10/18/09	34	12	23	64	37	27	2
8/17/09	35	14	21	63	35	29	1
4/24/09	36	12	24	63	38	25	1
1/16/09	43	15	28	56	37	19	2

d. Kevin McCarthy, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

	----- More confident -----			----- Less confident -----			No
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Just some	None at all	opinion
2/1/23	19	5	13	71	35	36	11

Compare to:

Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

	----- More confident -----			----- Less confident -----			No
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Just some	None at all	opinion
1/24/19	30	13	17	62	24	37	8

4. During his time in office, would you say Biden has accomplished a great deal, a good amount, not very much or little or nothing?

	Grt deal/Good amount			-- Not much/nothing --			
	NET	Great deal	Good amount	NET	Not much	Little or nothing	No opinion
2/1/23	36	12	25	62	23	39	1

9/21/22	40	16	25	57	23	34	3
11/10/21*	35	8	27	63	18	45	2

Trump:

1/18/18**	37	18	19	60	23	37	3
11/1/17	35	12	23	65	22	43	1
4/20/17	42	16	27	56	21	35	2

Obama:

1/15/12	47	12	35	52	25	27	1
1/15/10	47	12	35	52	30	22	1
10/18/09	49	14	35	50	27	23	1
4/24/09	63	24	39	36	21	15	1

Clinton:

8/16/94	36	6	30	64	39	25	*
1/23/94	47	11	36	53	33	19	1
4/26/93	37	5	32	63	38	25	*

**Biden has been president for about ten months..."

**Question updated for passage of time

5. Do you think Biden has or has not made progress in each of the following areas? First, [ITEM]? Next, [NEXT ITEM]?

2/1/23 - Summary table

	Has	Has not	No opinion
a. making electric vehicles more affordable	26	56	18
b. lowering prescription drug costs	30	47	23
c. improving roads and bridges in your community	32	60	8
d. creating more good jobs in your community	34	60	7

6. Do you think the United States is doing too (much), too (little) or about the right amount to support Ukraine in its war with Russia?

	Too much	Too little	Right amount	No opinion
2/1/23	33	19	40	7
4/28/22	14	37	36	13

9. Do you think federal government agencies are biased against (conservatives), biased against (liberals), or not biased either way?

	Biased against conservatives	Biased against liberals	Not biased either way	Biased against both (vol.)	No opinion
2/1/23	28	11	42	11	9

10. The Republicans in Congress plan to investigate claims that federal agencies are biased against conservatives. Do you think this is (a legitimate investigation) or (just an attempt to score political points)?

	Legitimate investigation	Attempt to score political points	No opinion
2/1/23	36	56	8

11. Congress typically passes legislation on a regular basis to allow the government to pay its debts. Without this step, the government could default on its debts. How concerned are you that a government default on its debts would seriously damage the

economy - very concerned, somewhat concerned, not so concerned or not concerned at all?

	-- More concerned ---			----- Less concerned -----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	
2/1/23	82	53	29	17	7	10	2

12. Do you think Congress should allow the federal government to pay its debts ONLY if the Biden administration also agrees to cut federal spending, or should the issues of debt payment and federal spending be handled separately?

	Allow government to pay debts only if Biden agrees to cut spending	Issues of debt payment and federal spending should be handled separately	No opinion
2/1/23	26	65	9

Thinking about gun issues,

14. Would you support or oppose a nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
2/1/23	47	39	8	51	11	41	2
9/5/19	56	46	10	41	8	33	4
4/11/18	62	51	12	35	8	26	3
2/18/18	50	38	12	46	11	36	4
6/23/16	51	41	10	48	10	37	2
12/13/15*	45	34	10	53	12	41	3
4/14/13	56	45	11	42	12	30	2
3/10/13	57	46	11	41	11	30	2
1/13/13	58	50	9	39	12	26	3
1/19/11**	63	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	3
4/26/09**	54	"	"	41	"	"	5
4/22/07***	67	54	13	30	10	21	3
5/10/00	71	60	11	27	11	16	2
3/21/00**	70	NA	NA	25	NA	NA	6
9/2/99	77	68	9	22	8	14	1
8/16/99**	76	NA	NA	21	NA	NA	3
5/16/99	79	67	12	19	7	12	2
4/22/99**	71	NA	NA	25	NA	NA	4
1/3/96**	65	"	"	30	"	"	5
4/25/95**	64	"	"	30	"	"	6
2/25/95**	69	"	"	27	"	"	4
1/3/95**	67	"	"	27	"	"	6

*December 2015 and prior "Would you support or oppose a law requiring a nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons?"

**CBS News/NYT and CBS News "Do you favor or oppose the nationwide ban on assault weapons"

***ABC News

*** END ***