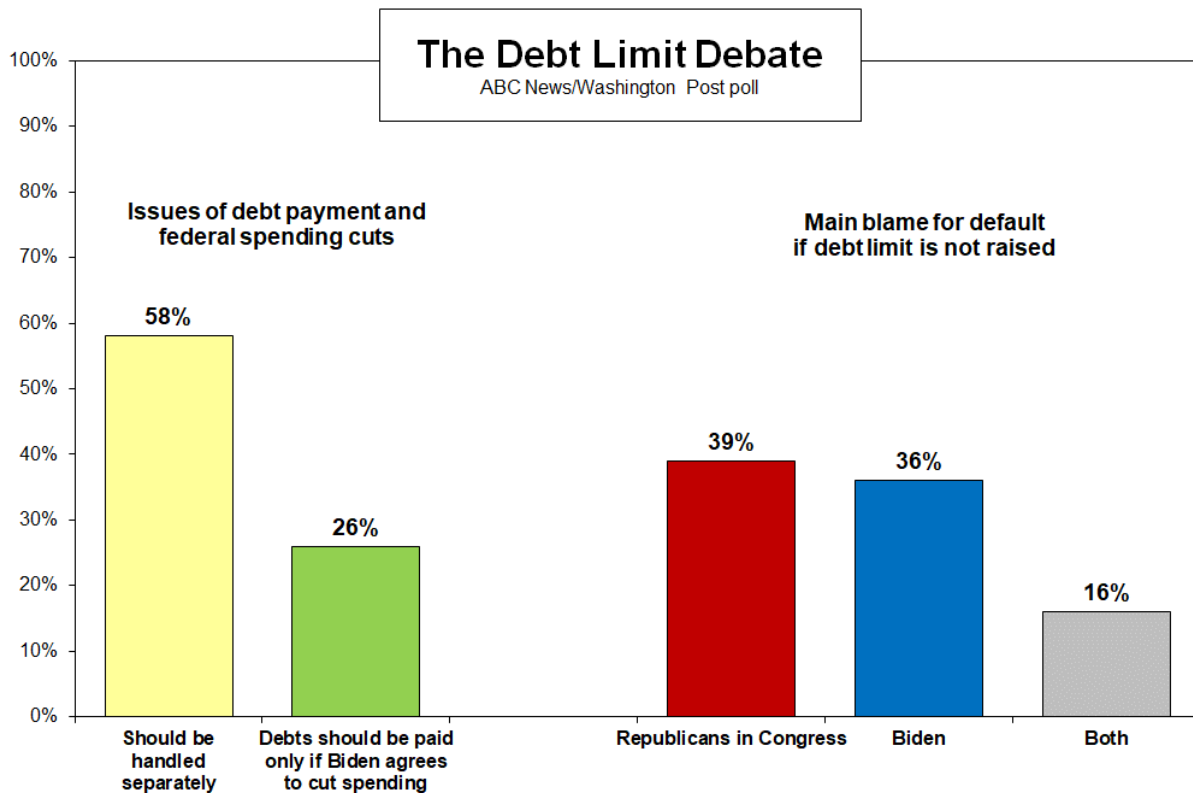


Blame Breaks Evenly if Gov't Defaults, Despite Preference for Biden's Position

Americans divide closely on whom they'd blame if the federal government defaulted on its debts, even as most align with the Biden administration's position on how Congress should handle the issue.

If default occurs – as Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Monday could happen by June 1 – 39 percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll say they'd mainly blame the Republicans in Congress, while virtually as many, 36 percent, say they'd mainly blame Biden. Sixteen percent volunteer that they'd blame both equally.

That looks like a messaging snafu on Biden's part, since many more people take his side than the Republican position on the issue. Fifty-eight percent say debt payment and federal spending cuts should be handled separately, as Biden has argued. Far fewer, 26 percent, take the GOP view that Congress should let government pay its debts only if the administration agrees to spending cuts.



Support for Biden’s position on the debt ceiling has lost 7 percentage points since February, dropping from 65 to 58 percent in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#). However, the share who favor linking the debt ceiling with spending cuts has not grown; instead, more now are undecided.

GROUPS – While there are wide partisan differences in these views, it’s notable that 46 percent of Republicans part company with the party’s leadership in Washington and say the issues should be kept separate; 40 percent of Republicans instead favor linking them. Preference to keep debt payments and federal spending cuts as separate issues reaches 58 percent among independents and 74 percent among Democrats. (Both are down from the levels last month, when the question was preceded by one on concern about a default.)

In ideological terms, 75 percent of liberals and 61 percent of moderates prefer keeping the issues separate – as do 56 percent of people who describe themselves as somewhat conservative. This flips among those who are very conservative – in this group, just 36 percent favor separation, while 52 percent say the government should be allowed to pay its debt only if spending cuts are included.

Who’d actually take the blame in a default depends on the eventual circumstances. But as things stand, views are highly partisan: Among Republicans, 78 percent would mainly blame Biden. Among Democrats, 78 percent would mainly blame the Republicans in Congress. And independents divide three ways, but with a slight tilt in Biden’s favor: Thirty-seven percent say they’d mainly blame the GOP; 29 percent, mainly Biden; and 24 percent, both equally.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone April 28-May 3, 2023, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,006 adults. Partisan divisions are 26-25-41 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 percentage points, including the design effect. Sampling error is not the only source of differences in polls.

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.

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Full results follow.

Q1-2, 5-20 held for release.

3. 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. 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
5/3/23	26	58	16
2/1/23	26	65	9

4. If the debt limit is not raised and the government goes into default, who would you mainly blame for that - (Biden) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

	Biden	Republicans in Congress	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
5/3/23	36	39	16	3	5

END