



Inflation Message Test

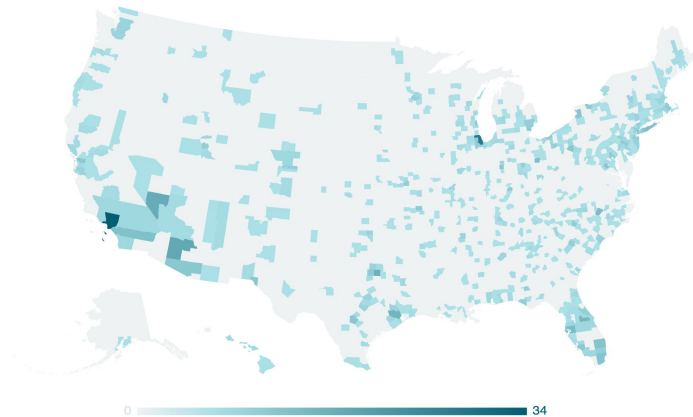
December, 2021



Methodology

From Dec. 7 to 11, 2021, Data for Progress conducted a survey of **1,258 likely voters nationally** using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.

Respondents by County



53% **Female** | 47% **Male**

11% **Black** | 74% **White** | 9% **Latino/a**

39% **College** | 61% **Non-college**

36% **Under 45** | 64% **Over 45**

2020 Vote: 51% **Biden** | 47% **Trump**

23% **Parent of children under age 18** | 76% **Not a parent of children under the age of 18**

Key Findings

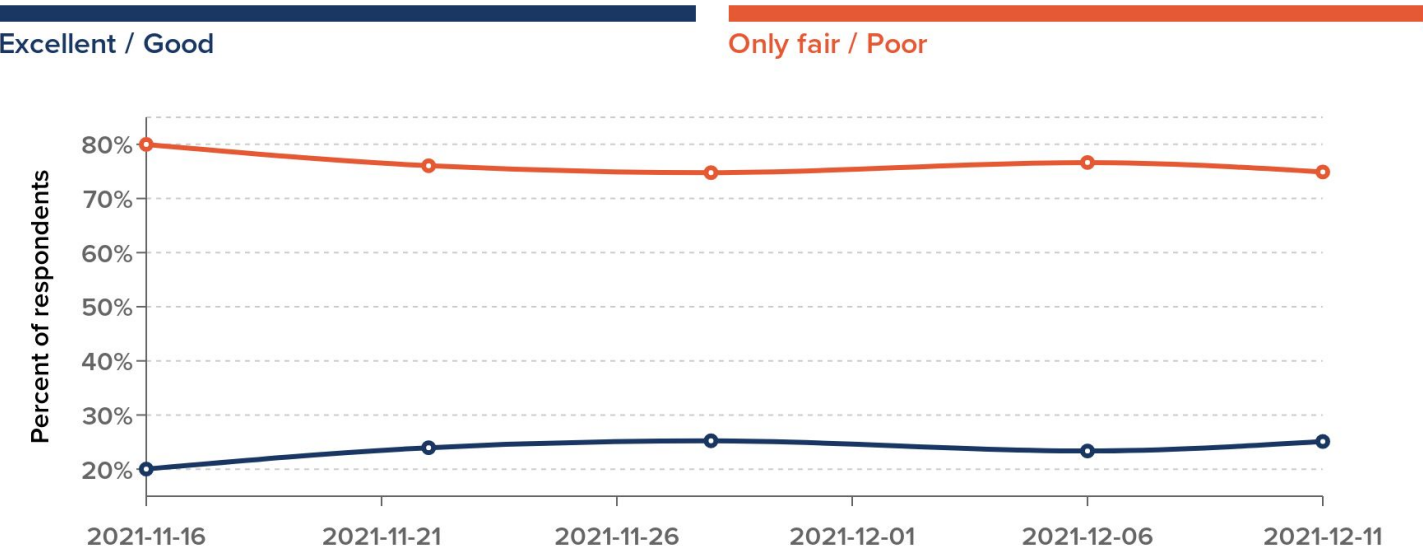
- Inflation represents a serious messaging challenge to President Biden and the Democratic Party more generally. Voters are anxious about the economy broadly as well as their own personal finances.
- The most effective message on inflation for President Biden emphasizes the need to increase **domestic manufacturing jobs**, followed by a message about how the **Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill** will strengthen supply chains, and a message about how **corporations are recording record profits**. Combined, these messages represent many of the core elements of the Biden agenda.
- The messages that are most preferred by Black and Hispanic/Latino voters are also generally the messages most preferred by self-identifying moderate voters and whites without a college degree.
- The overall most preferred message is: *President Biden says that we need to bring back manufacturing jobs in the United States to drive down prices. Our supply chains need to be housed here at home, rather than outsourced abroad.*



Attitudes Towards the Economy

Likely Voters Have a Negative View of Current Economic Conditions

How would you rate economic conditions in this country today?



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Likely voters nationally currently have a negative view of the economy. Less than 30% of likely voters rate present economic conditions as either “excellent” or “good”

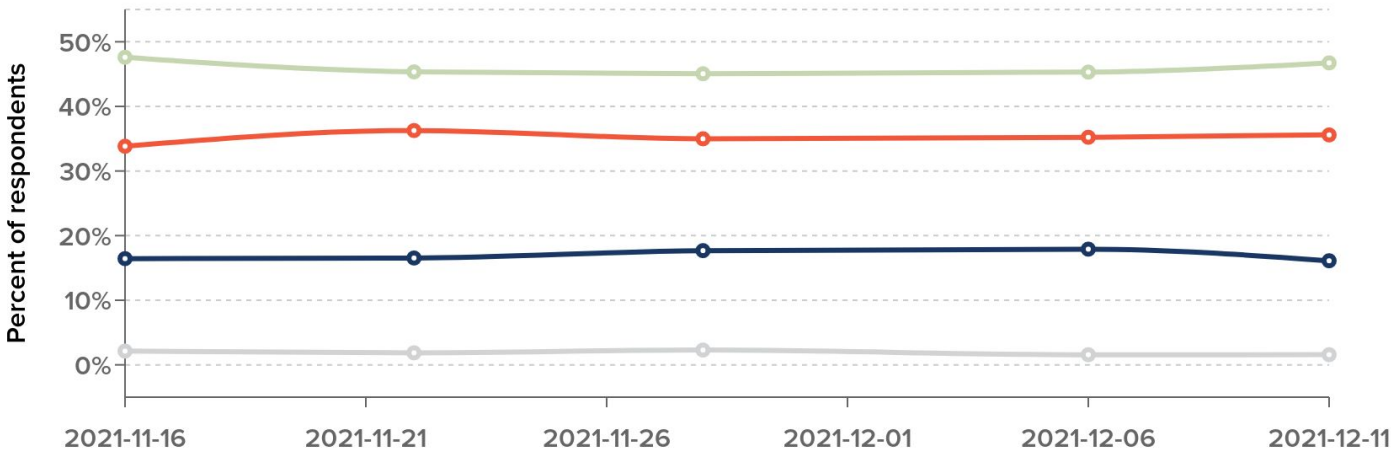
On the other hand, between 70% and 80% of likely voters rate the economy as either in “only fair” or “poor” condition.

Negative feelings about the economy extend across self-identified partisan lines. While there is some partisan sorting on this question, it is muted. Both likely voters who self-identify as Democrats and Republicans have somber ratings of the economy.

These pessimistic attitudes provide an important backdrop to the findings about inflation.

A Plurality of Voters Say Their Finances Are ‘About the Same’ As Last Year

Would you say you're financially better off now than you were a year ago, are you financially worse off, or are you financially about the same as one year ago?



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Across the month of November and into December, nearly 50 percent of voters say their financial situation is “about the same” as last year.

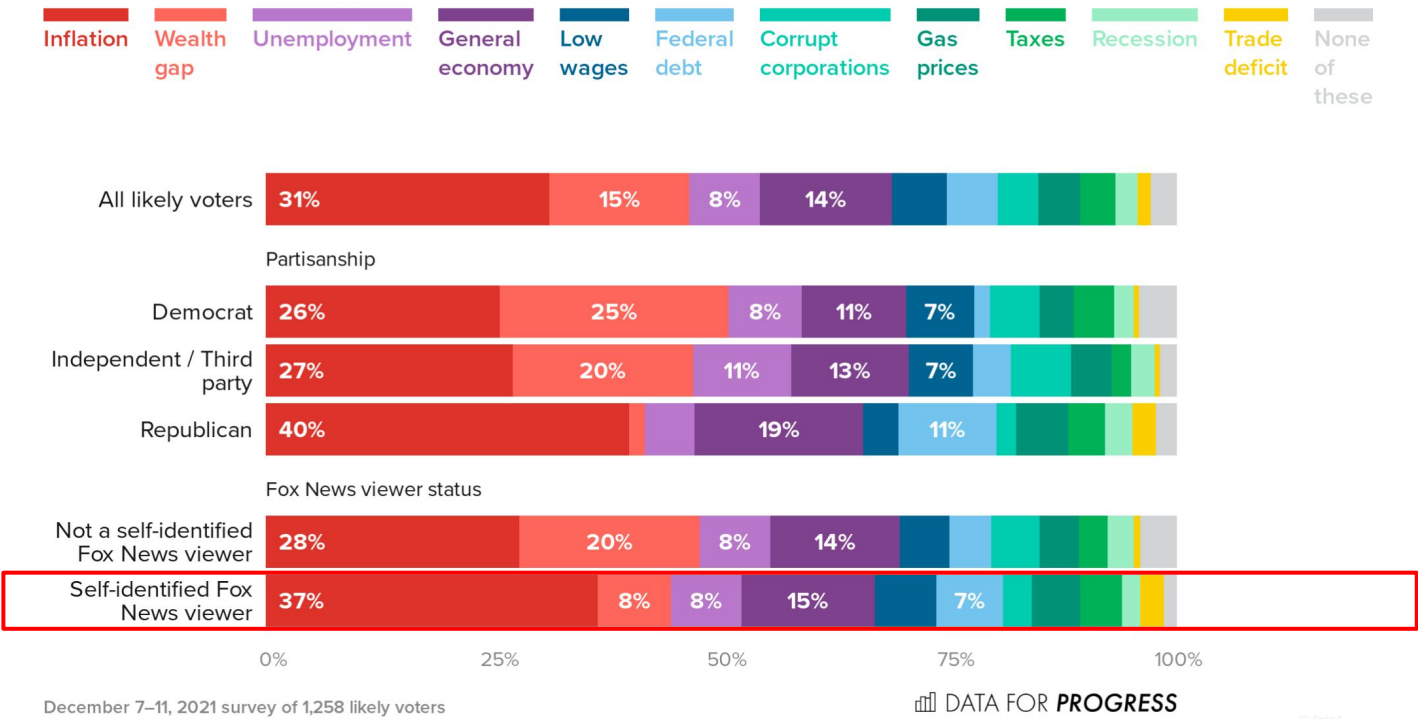
Between 30% and 40% of likely voters say their financial situation is “worse off” than last year.

Roughly 20% of likely voters say their finances are now better off.

While likely voters rate their personal finances in more positive terms than the economy overall, there are high levels of concern among likely voters about their own finances.

A Plurality of Voters Point to Inflation as the Most Important Economic Problem

What do you think is the most important economic problem facing the country today?



Inflation is now the top economic problem of a plurality (31 percent) of likely voters.

There is modest partisan sorting on what the the top economic problem is. Among likely voters who self-identify as Democrats, Independents, and Republicans, 26%, 27% and 40% say that inflation is the top economic problem, respectively.

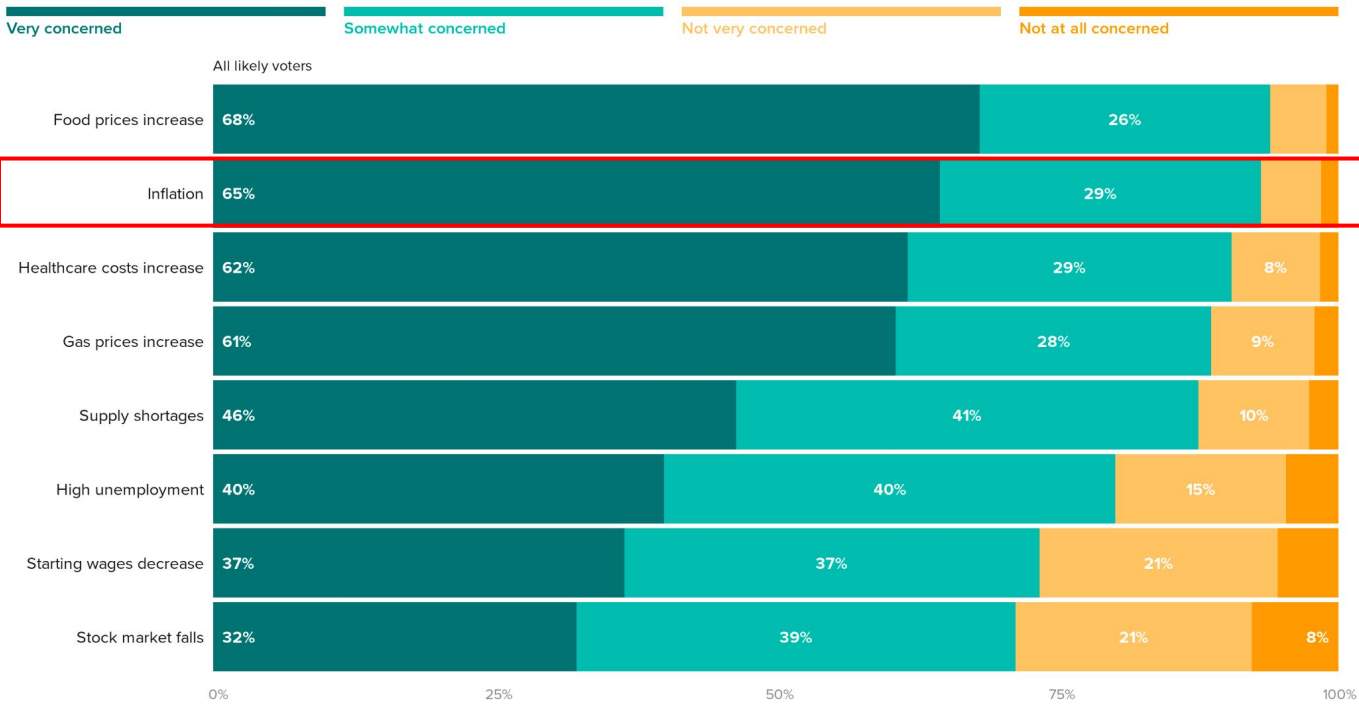
This suggests while worry about inflation is concentrated among Republicans, it is also an issue top of mind for Democrats and Independents as well.

Concern about inflation is also much higher than anxieties about gas prices. This suggests that while gas prices are important, likely voters see inflation as a broader trend.

37% of likely voters who self-identify as Fox News viewers rate inflation as their top economic concern, compared to 28% of non-Fox News viewers. While media consumption may be driving whether or not a voter sees inflation as the top economic issue, this effect should not be overstated. A plurality of both Fox and non-Fox viewers rate inflation as the country's top economic problem.

Concern About Inflation Is Second Only to Worry About the Rising Price of Food

Below is a list of things that might happen in the economy. For each, say how concerned you are.



December 7–11, 2021 survey of 1,258 likely voters

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Likely voters were asked about things that could happen in the economy and then to rate what they would be most concerned about.

An increase in food prices is what likely voters are most worried about, with 68% of likely voters saying they're "very concerned."

Food is followed by inflation, or a general increase in the costs of goods and services, with 65% of likely voters saying they're "very concerned."

Concern that gas prices could continue to rise, while high, still trails fears that the price of healthcare could increase.

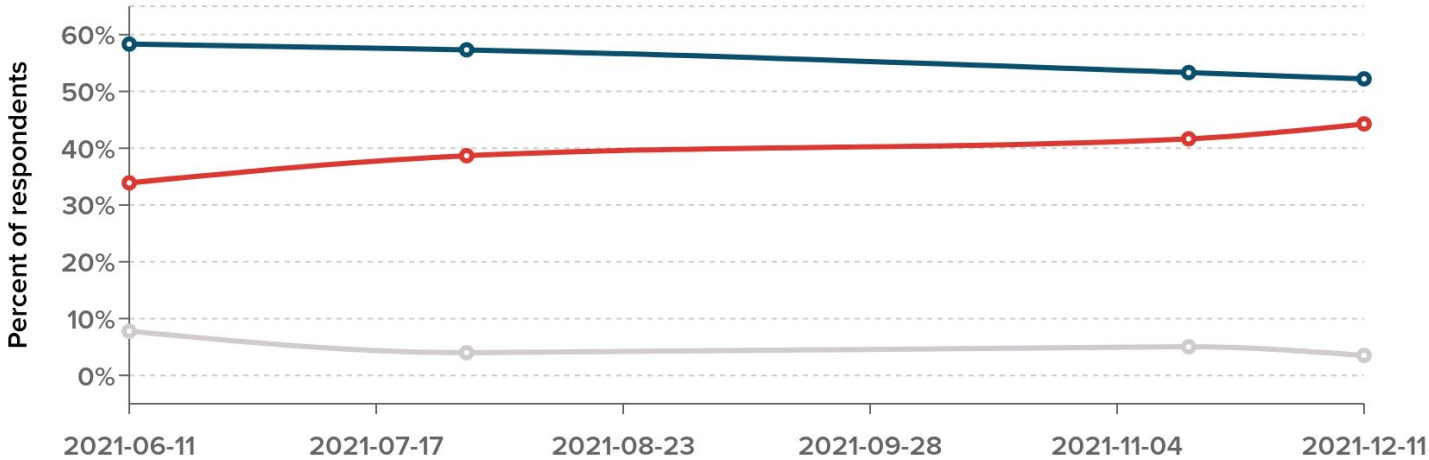
Likely voters are least worried about the potential that the stock market could fall.



A Majority of Voters Still See Jobs and Wages as More Important Than Controlling Prices, Though The Gap Is Narrowing

Which is more important to you? That jobs are plentiful (a lot of opportunities for workers) and wages grow more quickly, OR the costs of things you buy (like clothes and car insurance) don't increase by much.

Jobs and wages more important **Don't know** **Prices more important**



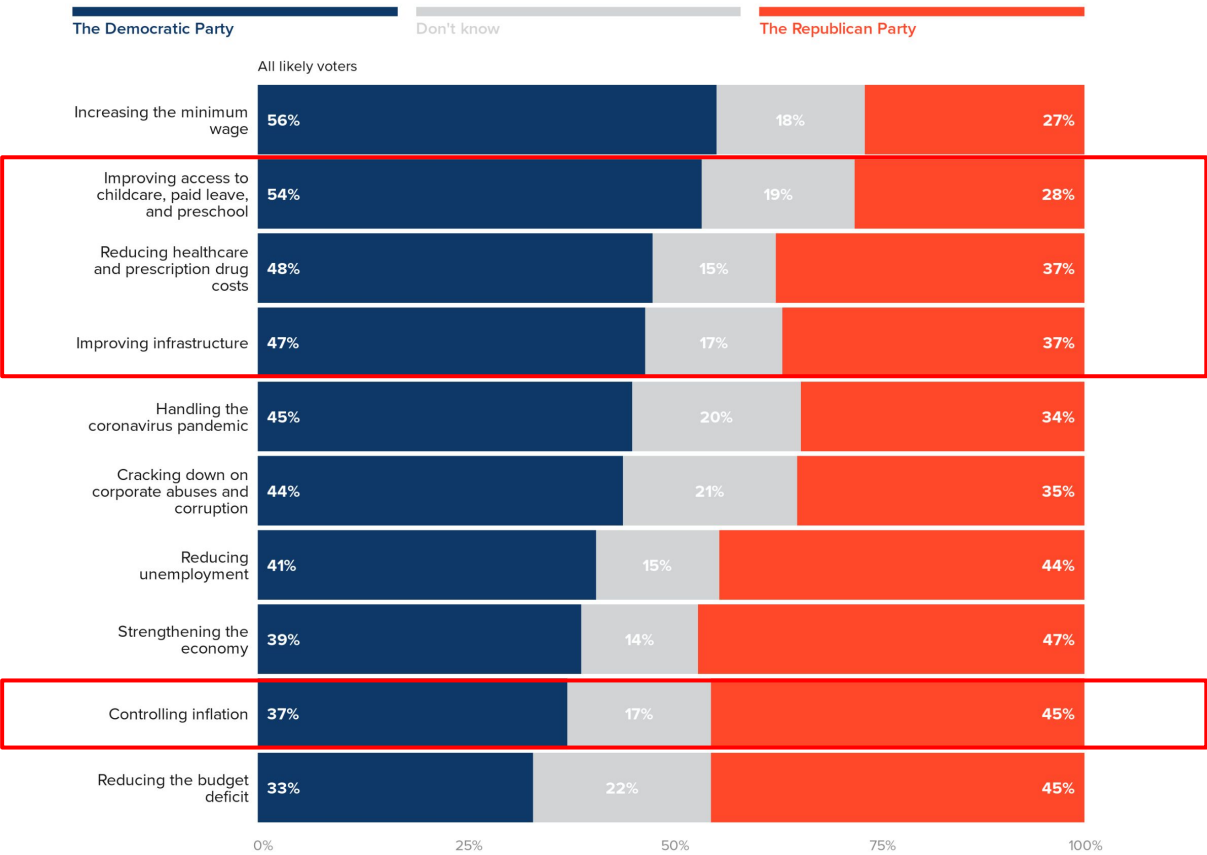
In June, Data for Progress began tracking whether voters see job creation and rising wages as more important than keeping prices from rising quickly.

In June, nearly 60 percent of likely voters nationally said that jobs and wages are more important.

While a majority of likely voters still see jobs and wages as more important, the gap between wages and prices has narrowed.

Voters Trust Republicans More on Inflation and Democrats Hold an Advantage in Issue Areas Covered by the Build Back Better Act

Below is a list of different issues. For each, say which party you trust the most to handle that issue.



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On inflation, the Republican Party is trusted more than the Democratic Party by eight points. This trust gap presents a challenge for Democrats.

The Democratic Party, in contrast, enjoys a trust advantage over the Republican Party on increasing access to childcare, paid leave and preschool, as well as reducing healthcare costs and improving infrastructure.

As much as possible, Democrats should try to shift the lines of debate around inflation away from issue domains where they are not trusted and on to topics where they are.



Voters Associate Price Increases and Government Overspending With Inflation

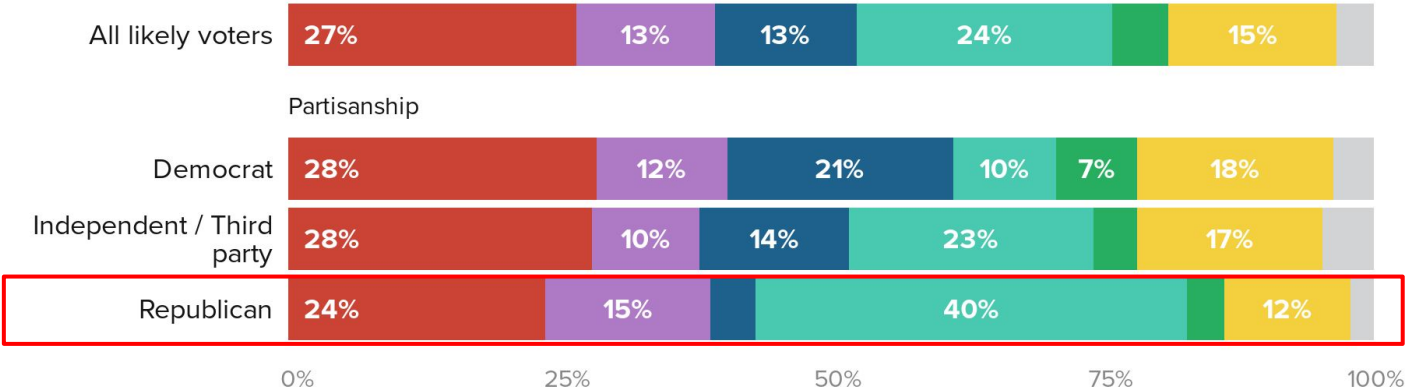
Which option from the list below do you most associate with inflation, even if none of them is exactly right?



Of all likely voters, 27% associate inflation with rising prices generally and 24% most associate inflation with government overspending.

Democratic voters are more likely than other self-identifying partisans to associate inflation with corporate corruption, with 21% saying they associate price gouging with inflation.

A plurality (40%) of Republicans associate government overspending with inflation.



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Results Among all Likely Voters

And Attitudes by Self-Identified
Partisanship

Most Preferred Messages About Inflation

Abbreviation	Message	Utility Score
Domestic manufacturing	President Biden says that we need to bring back manufacturing jobs in the United States to drive down prices. Our supply chains need to be housed here at home, rather than outsourced abroad.	9.65
Bipartisan infrastructure bill	President Biden and Republicans passed a bipartisan deal to invest in America's infrastructure. Biden says this will strengthen our supply chains, helping goods get to market, and lowering costs for consumers.	5.49
Record corporate profits	President Biden says corporations are recording record profits while Americans are paying higher prices. He says we need a fairer economy where workers and consumers, not CEOs and shareholders, come out ahead.	5.08
Pandemic-related bottlenecks	President Biden says price increases are mainly because of temporary bottlenecks and shortages due to the pandemic. Getting the coronavirus under control is the best way to reduce inflation.	1.94
Build Back Better Act	President Biden says his Build Back Better plan will curb inflation by cutting taxes for families and lowering the cost of healthcare, child care, and energy, while creating jobs and getting Americans back to work.	1.78
Shouldn't overreact	President Biden says that the economy is adding back jobs and that wages are rising. We must manage price increases but we shouldn't overreact, potentially risking the recovery, pushing the economy back into recession.	1.62
Foreign oil	President Biden says gas prices are increasing because of America's dependence on foreign oil. He wants to make America energy-independent, lowering costs for consumers and creating jobs.	1.12

In general, the most effective messages are ones that draw thematically from President Biden's legislative agenda. This includes the **U.S. Innovation and Competition Act**, **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**, and **Build Back Better Act**.

These are proposals that would **increase domestic manufacturing**, **invest in supply chains** in the United States, and **lower costs for families**. These three ideas are ones that likely voters see as potential solutions to inflation.

In addition, mentioning that **corporations** are **recording record profits** is a message that resonates with likely voters nationally.

Messages around pandemic-related bottlenecks, how the government shouldn't overreact, potentially hurting the recovery, and the need for America to lessens its reliance on foreign oil are preferred, albeit less so.

The Average Feature Utility is the average calculation across respondents' individual utility scores for each feature. The **higher a feature's average utility** is, the **more it was preferred by customers**. The more negative the average utility, the more likely it was that the feature was indicated as least preferred. **This measure communicates preference intensity.**

Least Preferred Messages About Inflation

Abbreviation	Message	Utility Score
Unpredictable market of gas and oil	President Biden says that inflation is happening because of unpredictable global markets for oil and gas. He says we should invest in producing clean and reliable American-made energy.	-0.01
Corporations aren't valuing workers	President Biden says that corporations haven't been paying workers their fair share, leaving businesses unable to handle high demand. If we treat workers better, we can lower prices.	-0.06
Record profits for oil companies	President Biden says oil companies are earning record-breaking profits as they jack up prices at the pump for consumers. Biden is working to rein in corporate profiteering and reduce gas prices.	-0.46
Renominated Chairman Powell	President Biden says that he renominated Jerome Powell, a Republican appointed by Trump, to run the Federal Reserve, America's central bank. Powell's reappointment represents a bipartisan approach to lowering prices.	-0.52
Tradeoff between full employment and inflation	President Biden says there's a choice between inflation and full employment. We should get Americans back to work and the unemployment rate back to pre-pandemic levels, even if it means temporary higher prices.	-1.01
Corporate greed	President Biden says inflation is caused by corporate greed as they jack up prices so they can earn record profits. Bad actors must be confronted to lower costs for everyday Americans.	-1.24
Consumption returning to normal levels	President Biden says prices are rising because the pandemic is ending and people are consuming goods and services at normal rates again. The economy will catch up to consumers and prices will fall.	-1.82
Global companies hurting consumers	President Biden says that sprawling global corporations are jacking up the cost of groceries, hurting Americans during the holiday season. These businesses are the real culprits for high prices.	-3.13
Black and brown workers hurt as prices rise	President Biden says that prices are going up because Black and brown workers are being squeezed as corporations jack up profits. We need workers, regardless of race, treated well to control prices.	-11.81

Four messages—**Unpredictable market of gas and oil**, **Corporations aren't valuing workers**, **record profits for oil companies**, and **Renominated Chairman Powell**—are generally less preferred, though only weakly.

While the price of gas is highly salient for voters, this finding suggests that likely voters would like to hear about solutions to inflation that will alleviate price pressures across a large set of sectors.

The message about the renomination of Jerome Powell is the sole one to mention former President Trump, which may induce a high degree of polarization in preferences.

The least preferred message references the disparate impacts of inflation according to race.

The Average Feature Utility is the average calculation across respondents' individual utility scores for each feature. The **higher a feature's average utility is, the more it was preferred by customers**. The more negative the average utility, the more likely it was that the feature was indicated as least preferred. **This measure communicates preference intensity.**

Messages Most Preferred Among Likely Voters

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

All likely voters



The most preferred message is **Domestic manufacturing**, with a utility score of more than twice the next two most preferred messages.

The **Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill** and **Record Corporate Profits** are the second two most preferred messages.

From there we see that four messages—**Pandemic-related bottlenecks**, **Build Back Better Act**, **Shouldn't overreact**, and **foreign oil**—all have positive utility scores.

The top two most preferred messages stress *policy solutions* to inflation. They emphasize that America should create domestic manufacturing jobs or that Democrats and Republicans have already taken bipartisan action to shore up the country's supply chains.

The **Record corporate profit** message stresses that to defeat inflation, we need a fairer economy, one that rebalances the ledger so that corporate success doesn't come at the expense of high prices for consumers.

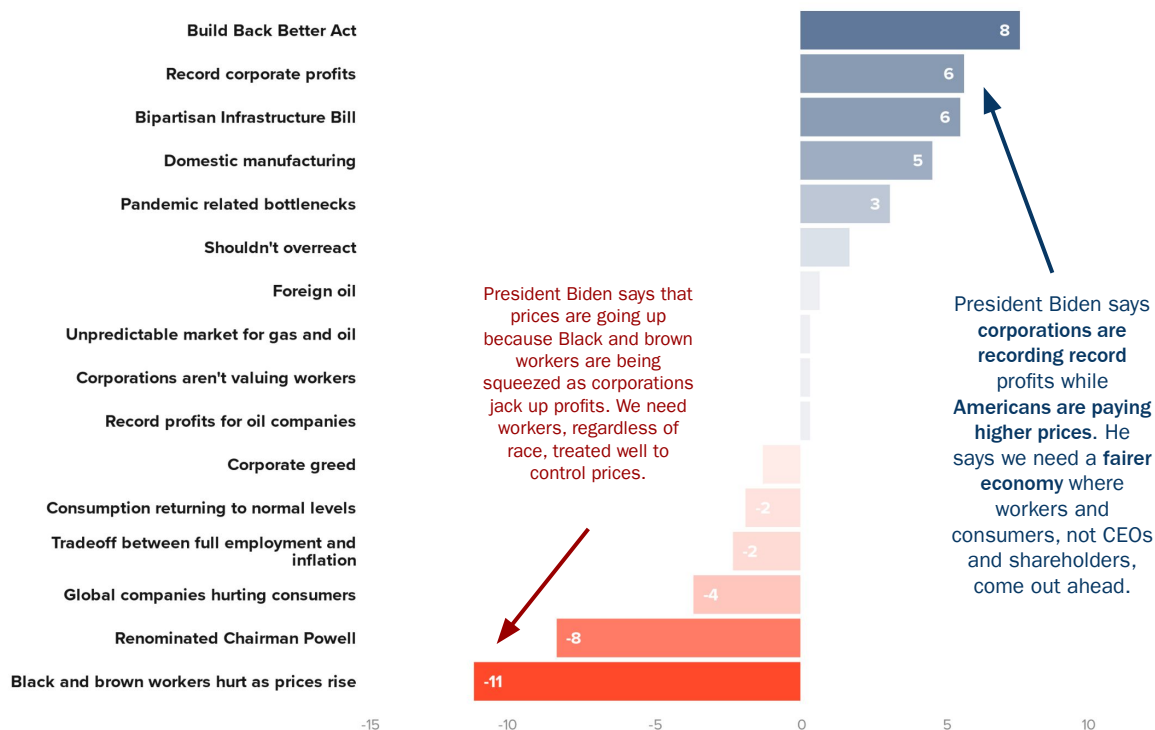
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Messages Most Preferred Among Self-Identifying Democrats

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Democratic voters



The most preferred message with Democrats is saying that the **Build Back Better Act** will lower costs for families. The **Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill**, **record corporate profits** are the second two most preferred message, followed closely by **domestic manufacturing**.

From there we see that six messages—**pandemic-related bottlenecks**, **shouldn't overreact**, **foreign oil**, **unpredictable market for oil and gas**, **corporations not valuing workers**, and **record profits for oil and gas companies**—all have positive utility scores. The top preferred message stresses a *policy solution* to inflation.

The **record corporate profits** message stresses that to defeat inflation, we need a fairer economy, one that rebalances the ledger so that corporate success doesn't come at the expense of high prices for consumers.

In general, Democratic voters see the core elements of the Biden agenda as the best solution to inflation.

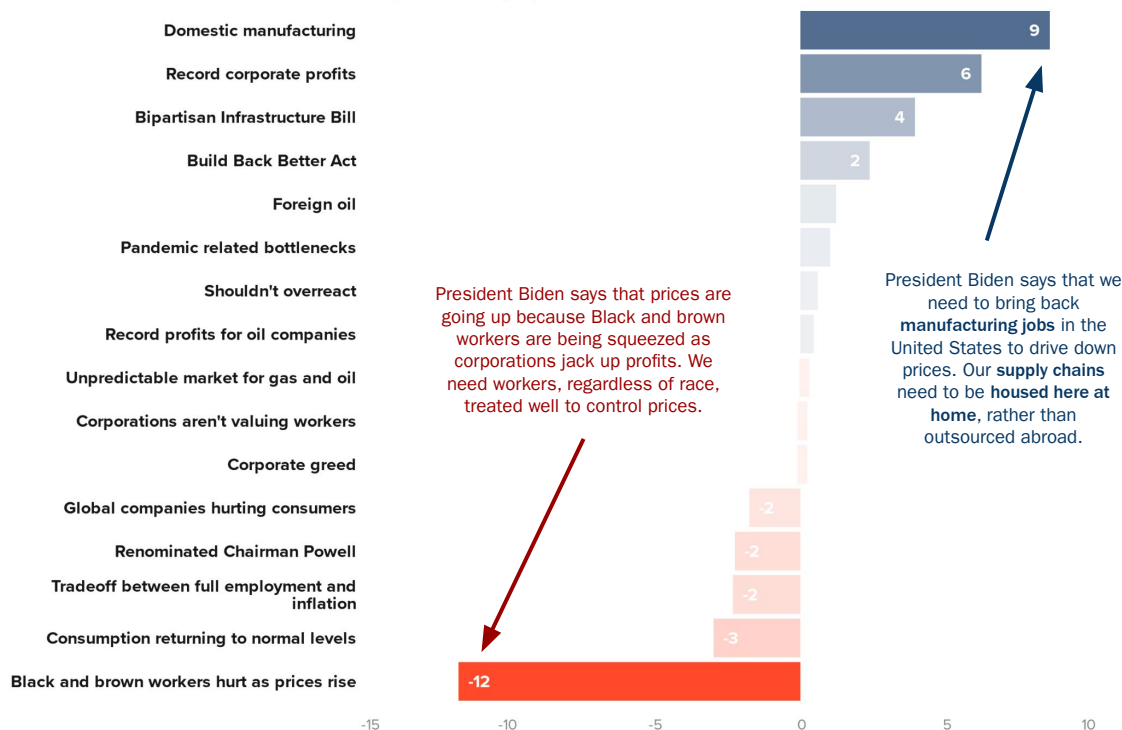
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Messages Most Preferred Among Self-Identifying Independent / Third Party Voters

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Independent / Third party voters



The most preferred message among Independent / Third party voters is **Domestic manufacturing**, with the second most preferred message being **Record corporate profits**, followed by the **Bipartisan infrastructure Bill**.

With Independent / Third party voters we observe a high degree of polarization in message preference. The **Domestic manufacturing** and **Record corporate profits** messages stand out as clear favorites, with **Black and brown workers hurt as prices rise** overwhelmingly being the least preferred.

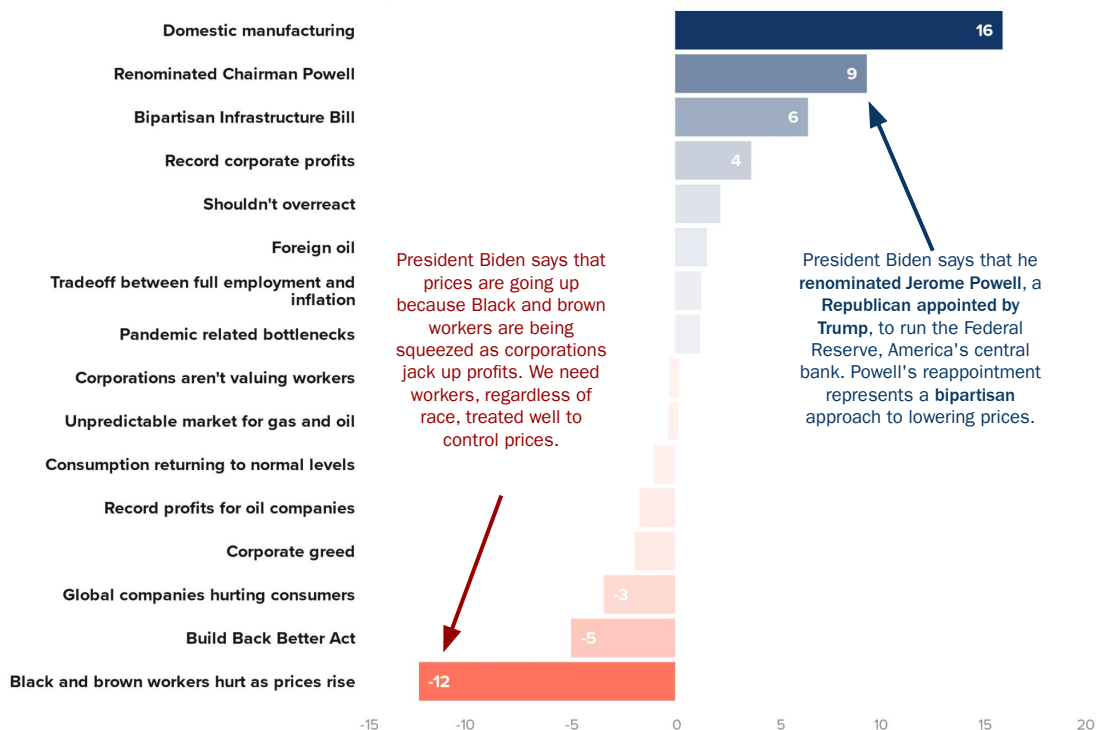
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Messages Most Preferred Among Self-Identifying Republicans

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Republican voters



President Biden says that prices are going up because Black and brown workers are being squeezed as corporations jack up profits. We need workers, regardless of race, treated well to control prices.

President Biden says that he renominated Jerome Powell, a Republican appointed by Trump, to run the Federal Reserve, America's central bank. Powell's reappointment represents a bipartisan approach to lowering prices.

The most preferred message among Republican voters is **Domestic manufacturing**. The second most preferred argument among Republican voters is about the reappointment of **Jerome Powell**. This message is likely strengthened by the mention of former President Trump.

Considering that Republican voters are some of the most worried about inflation, this argument may pay substantial dividends.

In addition, Republicans also prefer the **Bipartisan infrastructure bill** message, which again suggests Biden is adopting an approach to inflation that brings the parties together.

The least preferred message among Republicans is the **Black and brown workers hurt as prices rise. Build Back Better Act** is the second most unpopular message.

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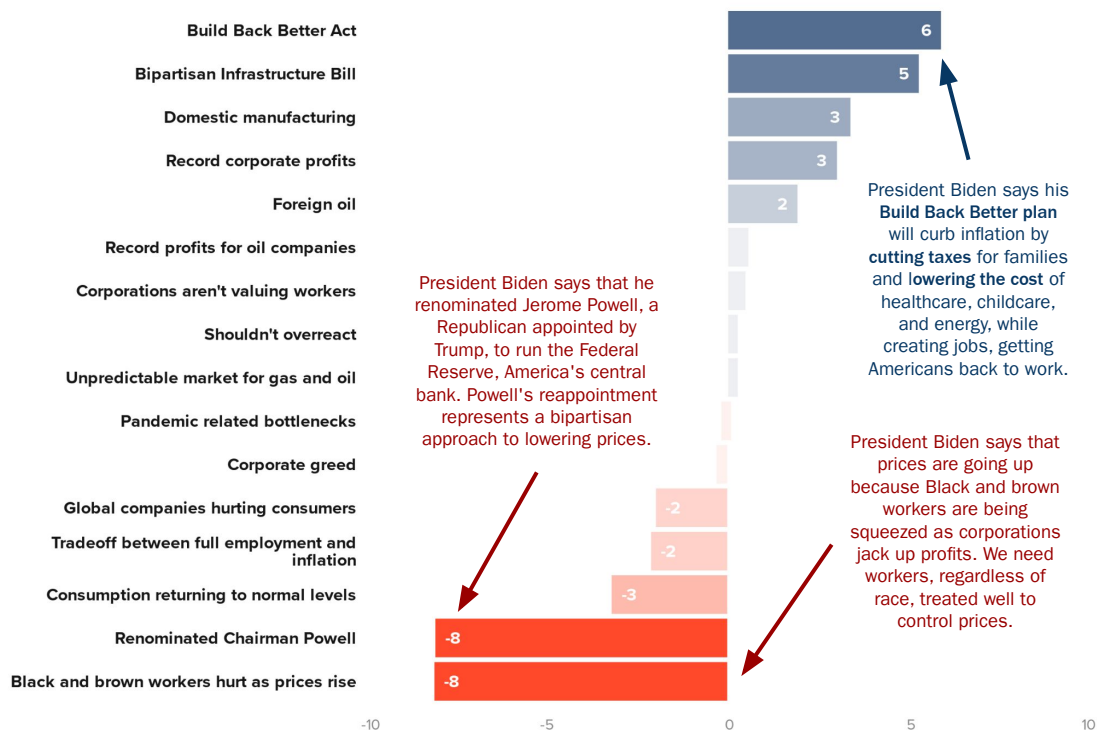
Results Among Women and People of Color

Messages Most Preferred Among Black Voters

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Black or African American voters



The most preferred message with Black voters is saying that the **Build Back Better Act** will lower costs for families, followed closely by the **Bipartisan infrastructure bill**. **Record corporate profits** and **Domestic manufacturing** also do well with this group.

From there we see that five messages—**Foreign oil**, **record profits for oil companies**, **Corporations not valuing workers**, **Shouldn't overreact**, and **Unpredictable market for oil and gas** and—all have positive utility scores.

The top two preferred messages stress *policy solutions* to inflation.

In general, Black voters see the core elements of the Biden agenda as the best solution to inflation.

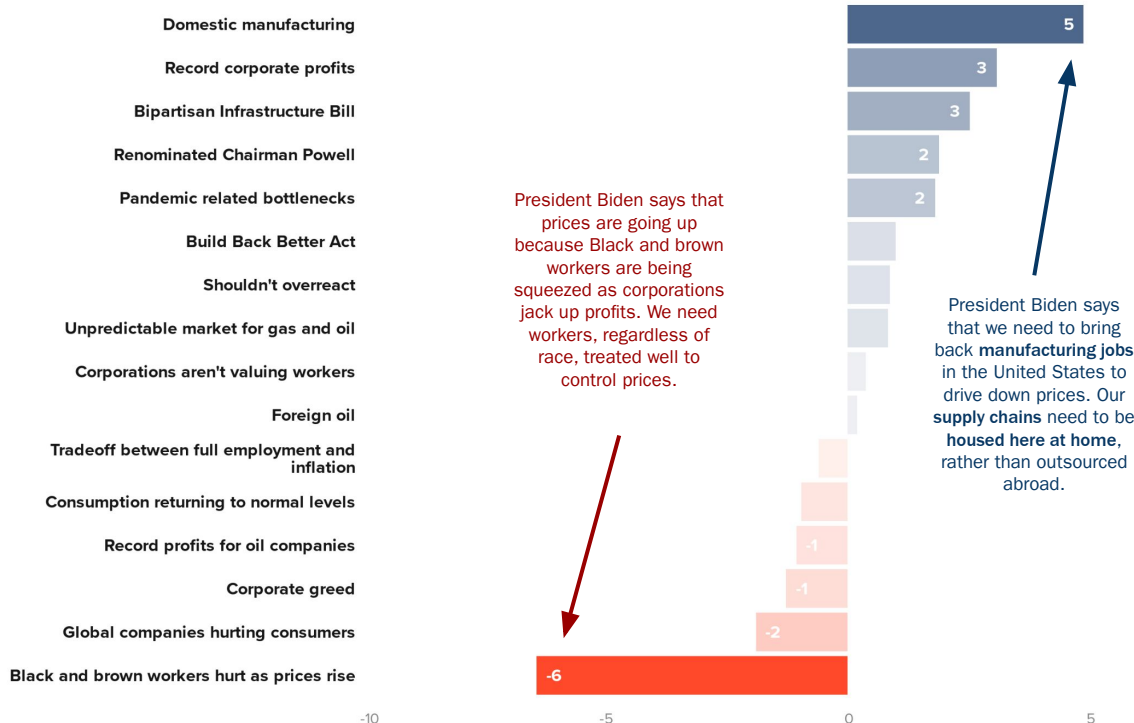
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Messages Most Preferred Among Hispanic/Latino Voters

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Hispanic/Latino voters



The most preferred message among Hispanic/Latino voters is **Domestic manufacturing**, with the second most preferred message being **Record corporate profits** followed by the **Bipartisan infrastructure Bill**.

With Hispanic / Latino voters, **Domestic manufacturing** and **Record corporate profits** messages stand out as clear favorites, with **Black and brown workers hurt as prices rise** overwhelmingly being the least preferred.

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Messages Most Preferred Among Self-Identifying Women

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Likely voters who self-identify as women



The most preferred message among women is **Domestic manufacturing**. The next most preferred message is **Record corporate profits**. The third most preferred message is the **Bipartisan infrastructure bill**.

The messages among the least preferred are **Global companies hurting consumers** and **Consumption returning to normal levels**. The least preferred message by far is **Black and brown workers hurt as prices rise**.

The Average Feature Utility is the average calculation across respondents' individual utility scores for each feature. The **higher** a feature's average utility is, the **more** it was preferred by customers. The more negative the average utility, the more likely it was that the feature was indicated as least preferred. This measure communicates preference intensity.



Results Among Self-Identifying Moderates and White Voters Without a College Degree

Messages Most Preferred Among Self-Identifying Moderates

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Likely voters that self-identify as moderate



The most preferred message among moderates is **domestic manufacturing**. This message is followed by **record corporate profits** and then the **Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill** and **Build Back Better Act**.

Last preferred with moderates are **Consumption returning to normal levels**, **Biden Renominated Chairman Powell**, and **Black and brown workers hurt as prices rise**.

Crucially, there is an alignment between what messages are most preferred by moderates and the core elements of the Biden legislative agenda.

In addition, the top four performing messages among self-identifying moderates matches the top four preferred messages of Black voters.

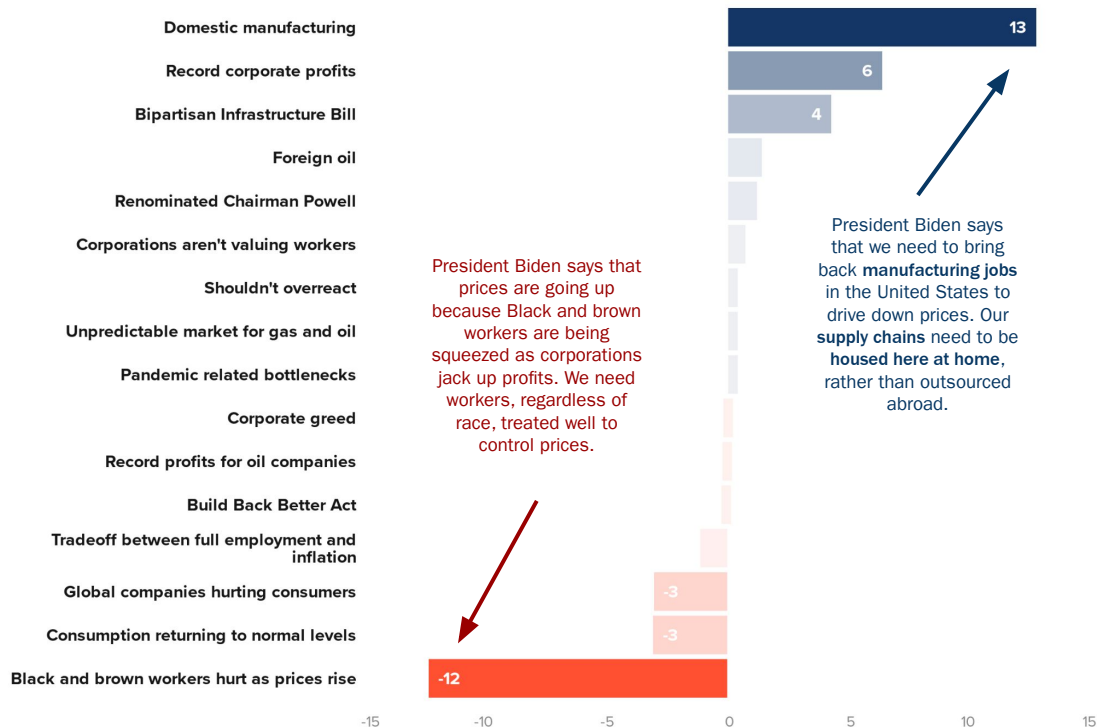
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Messages Most Preferred Among Non-College Educated White Voters

Below is a list of statements from President Biden about inflation, or increasing consumer and household prices. For each set of statements you see, say which argument is **most convincing**, and which is **least convincing**:

The values below are utility scores which measure the average preference level for a message relative to the others (e.g. higher scores mean more preferred).

Likely voters who are white and do not have a college degree



The most preferred message among whites without a college degree is **Domestic manufacturing**. This message is preferred with an intensity more than two times the next most preferred message, **Record corporate profits**. The third most preferred message is the **Bipartisan infrastructure bill**.

We observe a high degree of polarization in message preference. As such, there is little variation in preference intensity between the next seven messages among whites without a college degree.

The three messages that are least preferred are **Global companies returning to normal levels**, **Consumption returning to normal levels**, and **Black and brown workers hurt as prices rise**.

Of note, the ordinal ranking of the top three most preferred messages among white voters without a college degree and Hispanic/Latino voters is the same.

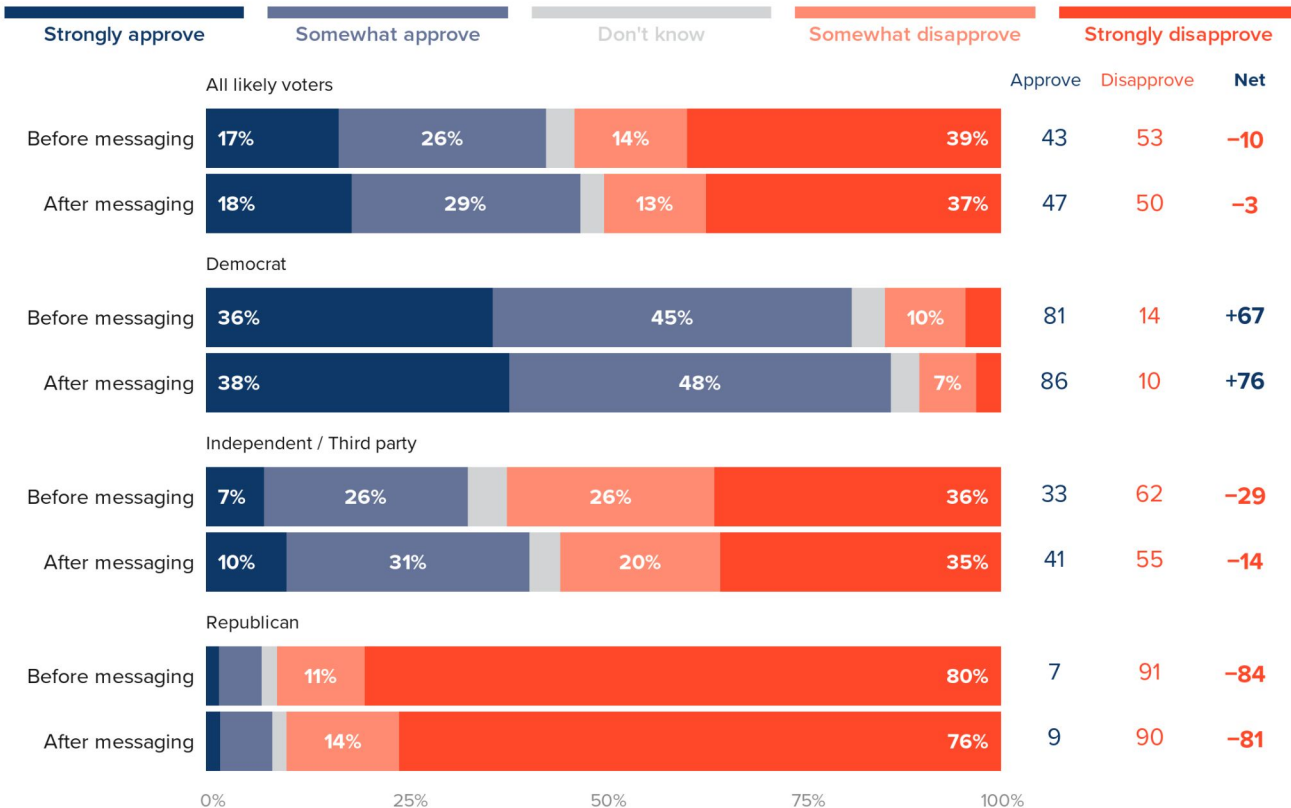
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Messaging Improves Biden Approval on Inflation

Voters Approval of Biden's Handling of Inflation Increases After Messaging

Do you approve or disapprove of President Joe Biden's handling of inflation, or an increase in the cost of goods and services?



Inflation represents a serious though not impossible messaging problem for the Biden Administration and Democrats in Congress.

Before messaging, Biden's approval on inflation is, on net, -10 points among all likely voters.

After likely voters are exposed to a series of messages about inflation, some of which they prefer and others which they do not, Biden's approval on this issue increases by, on net, seven points.

On inflation, Biden gains 9 points after messaging among Democratic voters and 15 points among Independent / Third Party voters. The smallest observed increase in his approval on the topic of inflation comes from Republican voters, where he only gains 3 points.

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About Data for Progress

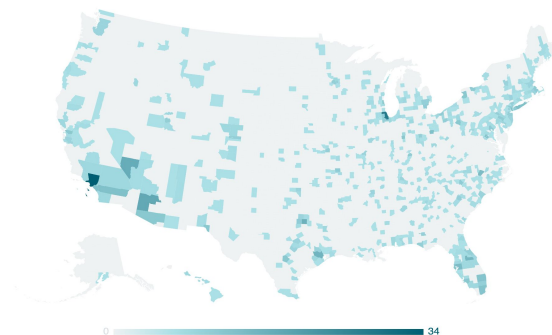
Data for Progress is a progressive think tank and polling firm which arms movements with data-driven tools to fight for a more equitable future. DFP provides polling, data-based messaging, and policy generation for the progressive movement, and advises campaigns and candidates with the tools they need to win.

Learn more at dataforprogress.org or follow DFP on Twitter at [@dataprogress](https://twitter.com/dataprogress).

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Respondents by County



For Inquiries

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