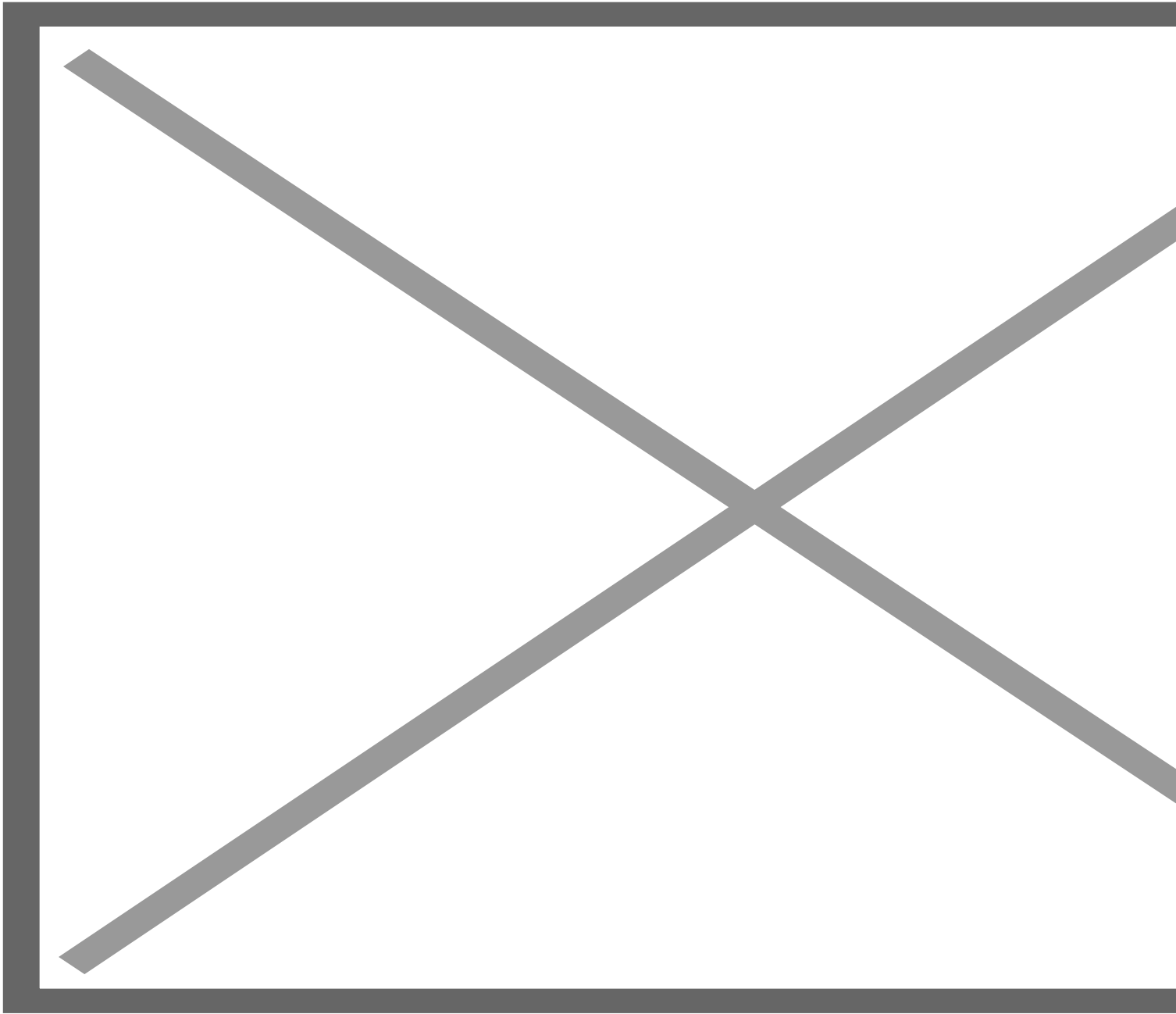


New poll: Muslim voters didn't cost Dems 2024 election, but they may have found their voice

by [Ulaa Kuziez](#)

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Voters depart a polling place at McDonald Elementary School, November 5, 2024, in Dearborn, Michigan. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall)

Since Muslim Americans vocally opposed President Joe Biden's embrace of Israel after the October 7 Hamas attacks, who they would choose at the ballot box has been one of the most studied political questions, inside and outside the community.

Muslim Americans were credited with aiding President Donald Trump's sweeping 2024 victory after many Muslims vowed to sit out the presidential vote or cast a third-party ballot over grievances with the Democratic Party's position on the Israel-Hamas war.

But the idea that Muslim voters cost Vice President Kamala Harris the election is unfounded, according to [a poll of Muslim Americans released October 21](#).

"Muslims were somehow really blamed for this election, and it just wasn't the case," said Saher Selod, director of research for the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, a Muslim research and education organization based in Michigan, which sponsored the survey. "It was a close election, but Trump won all of the swing states, and that you cannot put on this population. It's not Muslims alone that did that."

The survey makes clear, however, that the Democratic Party paid a price for ignoring voters opposed to Israel's war in Gaza. Among Muslim Democrats, 45 percent of those who voted for Biden in 2020 shifted parties or skipped the presidential vote altogether.

ISPU's poll found that 16 percent of those who voted for Biden in 2020 shifted to a third-party candidate in 2024. That shift was even more stark in the swing state of Michigan, where some 31 percent to 40 percent of Arabs voted third party for the presidential ticket, up from just 1 percent in 2020, according to researchers at Michigan State University.

In the 2020 presidential election, 86 percent of Muslim voters went for Joe Biden according to [Emgage USA](#), a Muslim civic organization. Just 6 percent voted for Donald Trump. ISPU's poll puts the percentage of Muslim Trump voters in 2020 at 24 percent.

In recent interviews about the election, Arab and Muslim American political observers said threats to abandon the Democrats were made in hopes of influencing the situation in the Middle East.

"I endorsed Harris not because I agreed with her position on Gaza, but because I thought we could get her to move," said Abdul El-Sayed, a Democratic candidate running for Michigan's US Senate seat. "I watched as the party just completely closed ranks against having to listen. And we watched what happened then."

Jim Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute and a longtime member of the Democratic National Committee's leadership, said that, despite the pressure, the national Democratic candidates ignored opportunities to regain the trust of Arab and Muslim American voters.

Zogby said [research conducted by AAI](#) showed that Arab Americans would have been twice as likely to vote for Harris had she simply allowed a Palestinian American to speak at the convention about Gaza.

The same experts agreed, however, that concerns about immigration and the economy had far more to do with the Democrats' losses than their policy on the Israel-Hamas war. "If every Arab American in the country had voted for her, she still would have lost the popular vote," Zogby said. "So don't blame us for what she blew; it was her mistake, not ours."

Though American Muslims have historically voted out of civic duty, not to get something in return, last year's election showed Muslims the growing power of their small religious community, said Nura Sidiq, an assistant professor of political science at Michigan State University. "Now, Muslims are being more strategic in how they vote and realizing that they can make demands," Sediq said.

Bushra Amiwala, a Democrat running to represent Illinois's 9th congressional district, said last year's election should encourage Muslim Americans to continue to vote as a bloc that cannot be ignored.

"Yes, the Biden-Harris administration was complicit in a genocide in Gaza and did not deserve votes from our community without concrete promises made," she said. "It can also simultaneously exist that our community is not one that has historically engaged enough that would have given them the grounds to, quote, unquote, listen to this community."

Most see their best hope in the Democrats, said Sedique. "They don't want to leave the Democratic Party, but they don't want to be taken for granted," she said. "So they're flexing their muscles to say, 'You have to earn our vote and we're willing to vote third party to show you that we're not willing to go along with the status quo.'"

Sedique analyzed Michigan's voter and demographic data, which showed that Arabs in Michigan and other states voted down-ballot Democrats, even when they took a pass on the top of the ticket.

"I'm rather convinced that the flip that occurred is a soft flip, not a hard one," Zogby said. "And so it's going to be possible to win them back, but there has to be something done to do it."

El-Sayed, who is campaigning fiercely on rejecting corporate money, said Democratic candidates can win votes back by acknowledging "the obvious fact of what our country funded in Israel" and refusing campaign money from pro-Israel lobbying groups.

"For folks who are unwilling to do that, I'm hoping that folks will beat them in elections and change the Democratic Party," El-Sayed said. "The party is not a fixed thing."

For all the talk of a Muslim bloc, however, Selod, of ISPU, cautions that Muslims, the most racially and ethnically diverse religious group in the country, according to ISPU's wide-ranging report, should not be seen as a monolith.

That means that while Gaza was a unifying voting issue for Muslims, the community cares as much as the rest of the country about domestic issues such as the economy and health care.

"The Democratic establishment has to put their money where their mouth is, to start paying attention to this population and what their concerns are, what their issues are," Selod said. "They have to pay attention to these smaller populations that actually could determine an election in a swing state like Georgia or Pennsylvania."

The survey, conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at The University of Chicago, polled 800 Muslims and hundreds of people of other faiths in April and May. It has a total margin of error of plus or minus 4.03 percentage points. —Religion News Service