

## Poll: Growing number of US adults support the use of political violence

by [Fiona André](#)

October 26, 2023



Support for political violence and concern over the state of democracy are both on the rise, with 75 percent of people in the United States believing the future of democracy is at risk in the next presidential election, according to a report released Wednesday by the Public Religion Research Institute and the Brookings Institution.

Twenty-three percent of US adults said they believe “true American patriots may have to resort to violence to save the country,” versus 15 percent in 2021. One-third of White evangelical Protestants support the idea, significantly more than any other religious group.

The findings appear in the 14th edition of PRRI’s annual [American Values Survey](#), in which 2,525 US adults were asked their views on economic and cultural issues ahead of the 2024 election.

Those who believe the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump are more likely to support the use of political violence than those who don't think so (46 percent versus 13 percent). Among those who believe in the replacement conspiracy theory, which holds that immigrants or Jews are coming to the United States to dilute White people's cultural dominance, 41 percent support using political violence.

According to the survey, 38 percent of US adults believe the country needs an authoritarian figure to put the country back on the right track. Hispanic Catholics support this idea far more than any other religious groups, with 51 percent agreeing. Black Protestants, at 35 percent, are the least likely to agree.

At a [panel discussion](#) organized by the Brookings Institution on Wednesday, Lilliana Mason, associate professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University's Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute, noted that the findings could be the consequence of each party viewing their political opponents as more violent.

"It is important to remember that these numbers can also be context-dependent," said Mason.

The survey also delves into White Christian nationalist ideology. According to 33 percent of US adults, God gave the US to European Christians as a promised land where they could create an exemplary society. More than half of White evangelical Protestants agree with this statement; 77 percent believe the founders intended to create a Christian nation.

Those who believe God wanted the US to be a promised land for European Christians in turn are more likely (39 percent) to support the use of political violence to save the country than those who disagree (16 percent).

For 55 percent of US adults, the country's culture has changed for the worse since the 1950s. White Christians believe it is the case more than any other religious groups: 77 percent of White evangelical Protestants, 60 percent of White mainline or non-evangelical Protestants, and 57 percent of White Catholics agreed.

Joy Reid, an MSNBC host and political analyst who participated in the panel discussion, said the increasing support for political violence results from competing visions of US society. Many voters' main concerns are cultural issues that can't be solved politically.

“People do not have confidence in democracy as a way to solve their fundamental concerns,” Reid said.

“What’s so striking here is we’re having elections in two different countries,” said Eugene J. Dionne, chair and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, referring to the two parts of a divided US.

The survey also examined people’s main political concerns. For 62 percent of US adults, the increasing cost of housing and everyday expenses is a critical issue, followed by crime and health care.

The survey was conducted between August 25-30 and has a margin error of 2.19 percentage points. The confidence level is 95 percent. —Religion News Service