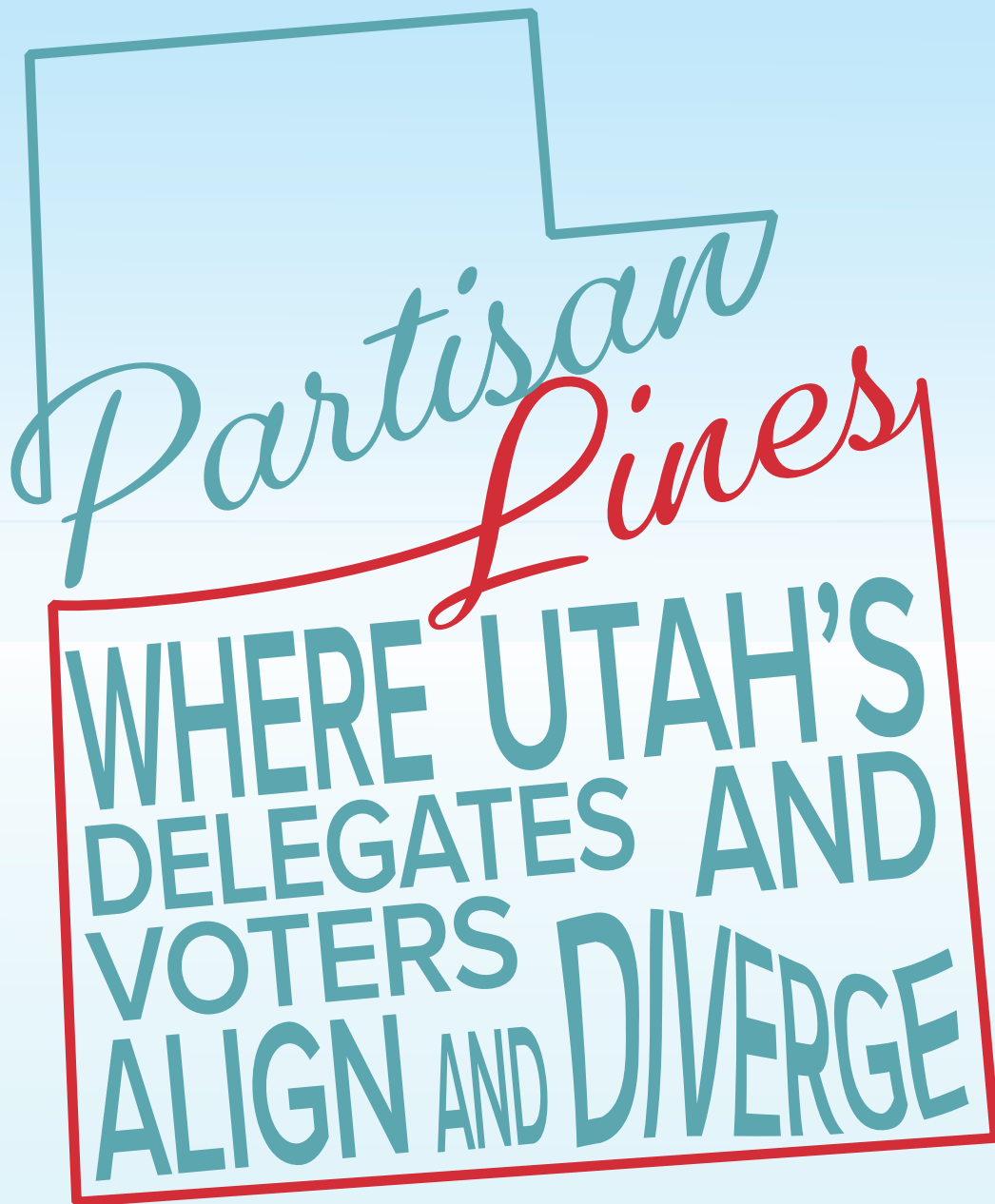




UTAH FOUNDATION
RESEARCH • ANALYZE • INFORM

MAY 2025



UTAH PRIORITIES PROJECT
20 YEARS OF WHAT MATTERS MOST



PARTISAN LINES

WHERE UTAH'S DELEGATES AND VOTERS ALIGN AND DIVERGE

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About the Utah Foundation

Since 1945, leaders, legislators, and community members have relied upon the **illuminating, independent, and nonpartisan public-policy research** produced by the Utah Foundation to support informed decision-making on topics that matter most. As a 501(c)3 with broad community support and an impressive board, the Utah Foundation exists to empower **civic engagement as the foundation for enhanced quality of life for Utahns.**

INTRODUCTION

The Utah political process includes the use of party delegates. Delegates are representatives chosen at a party caucus to represent voters. These delegates then choose party candidates at political party conventions.

This report details party delegates' survey responses to the 2024 Utah Priorities Project. By comparing responses to those of Utah voters, the reports seek to understand how voters and delegates are similar and different across a wide range of topics that affect all Utahns.

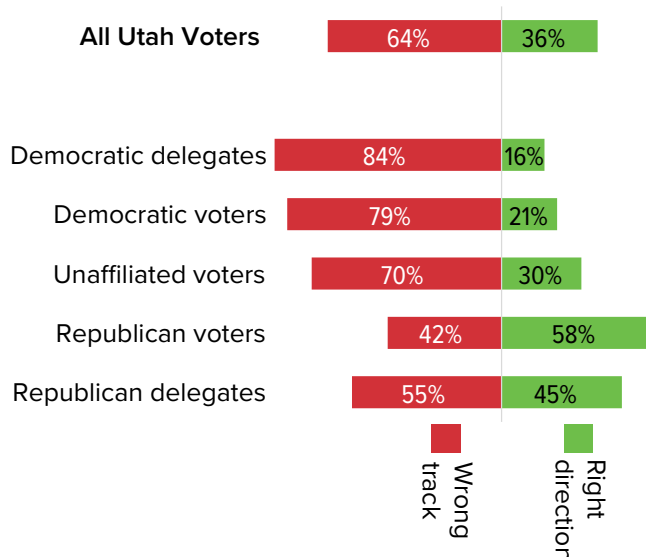
IS UTAH ON THE WRONG TRACK?

As of 2024, 62% of Utah voters reported that Utah was on the “wrong track,” while 38% reported the state was “headed in the right direction.”¹ Republican voters are much more confident that Utah is heading in the right direction, at about 58%. Only 21% of Democratic voters think so.

Delegates from both parties are more pessimistic than their voter counterparts. This was even more apparent for Republicans, where 55% of delegates felt the state was on the wrong track compared to only 42% of voters. (See Figure 1.)

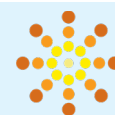
Delegates from both parties are more pessimistic than their voter counterparts.

Figure 1: Utah is Heading in the Right Direction or on the Wrong Track, Delegates and Voters



¹ See the Utah Foundation's report, Priced Out and Fed Up: Cost of Living and Government Dysfunction are Voters' Top Issues, <https://www.utahfoundation.org/reports/priced-out-and-fed-up/>.

KEY FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT



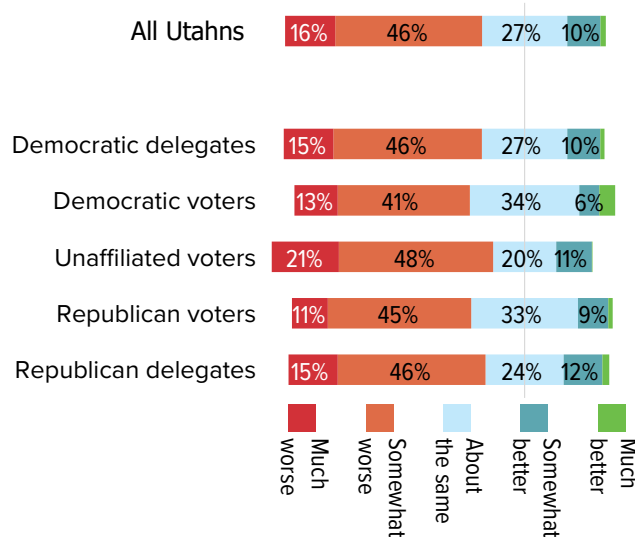
- **Pessimism:** Delegates from both parties are more pessimistic than their voter counterparts, noting that Utah is on the wrong track and that their quality of life has decreased.
- **Ideological differences:** Utah's Republican delegates are somewhat more conservative than Republican voters, while Democratic delegates are about the same as Democratic voters.
- **Issue priorities:** Republican delegates place less importance on housing, roads, air quality, and crime when compared to Republican voters, while Democratic delegates focus more on education content and less on healthcare and homelessness when compared to Democratic voters.
- **Demographic composition:** Both Republican and Democratic delegates are more likely than voters to be men, actively religious, older, and white, and have more education and higher incomes.

UTAH'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Most Utah voters say their quality of life is worse than it was five years before. This sentiment is very similar for Republican and Democratic voters and delegates, though delegates seem to be slightly more pessimistic. (See Figure 2.)

Delegates from both parties are slightly more pessimistic than their voter counterparts.

Figure 2: Quality of Life is _____ Compared to Five Years Ago, Delegates and Voters



20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UTAH PRIORITIES PROJECT

Each gubernatorial election year since 2004, the Utah Foundation has sought to understand what matters most to voters through its Utah Priorities Project. The project uses surveys to inform elected officials, candidates for elected office, civic leaders, and others on voters' priorities.

The 2024 priority list for Utahns overall can be found in the first report of the 2024 series. The second report examines how priorities and issues differ across party and ideological lines, highlighting both similarities and dissimilarities between the groups. Reports briefs further detail Utah voters' perspectives and delve into the top-ranked issues.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In 2024, the Utah Foundation worked with Y2 Analytics to conduct three surveys. The first, in January, was an open-ended preliminary survey with two questions asking Utah voters what they considered the two most important state or local issues for the next Utah governor to address. The Utah Foundation used these 709 responses to create a list of the 17 most common issues, which were then included in the second survey that was emailed and texted to Utah voters in February and March. These 656 responses are used in this report.

Y2 Analytics administered a third survey of Utah's delegates between July 13 and 22, 2024, resulting in 565 responses for an 11% response rate. These responses are also used in this report. This survey had the same language and data analysis as the second survey.

For more details on the 2024 Utah Priorities Project methodology, see the second report in the series, *Bridging Gaps: The Issues that Unite (and Divide) Utah Voters*.

PRIORITIES

As part of the Utah Priorities Project, voters and delegates ranked 17 priorities. Of course, Democrats and Republicans have significantly different opinions regarding the prioritization of most issues.² (See Figure 3 for the top 10 priorities and Appendix A for the complete list of 17 priorities.) However, when comparing party delegates with voters, there are far fewer significant differences across the 17 priorities. Further, the priorities that have differences tend the less important priorities for each party.³

Republican delegates (compared to Republican voters):

- The Great Salt Lake is more important
- Women's rights are more important
- Housing is slightly less important
- Roads are slightly less important
- Density is less important
- Crime is less important
- Air quality is less important

Democratic delegates (compared to Democratic voters):

- Overreach is less important
- Crime is less important

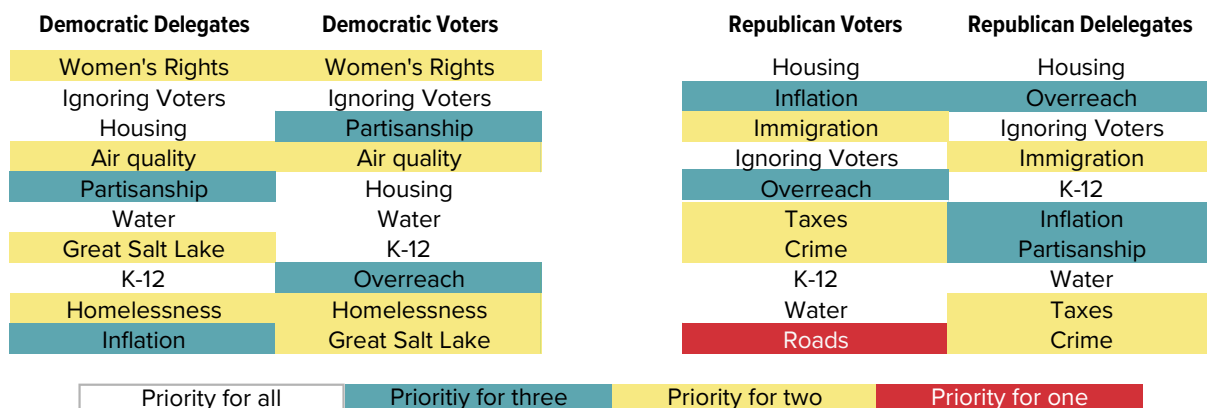
The largest differences in priorities among the parties' voters and delegates are with air quality for Republicans and crime for Democrats. (See Appendix B for all the issues, including margins of error.)

2 See the Utah Foundation's report, *Priced Out and Fed Up: Cost of Living and Government Dysfunction are Voters' Top Issues*, <https://www.utahfoundation.org/reports/priced-out-and-fed-up/>.

3 This refers to statistically significant differences.

The top 10 priorities for each party's delegates and voters are similar, while the differences between parties are stark.

Figure 3: Top 10 Priorities for Delegates and Votes



IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDES AND CONNECTIONS

Since the 2016 Utah Priorities Project, the Utah Foundation has included survey questions to measure Utahns' ideological consistency. The questions mirror those developed and used by the Pew Research Center.⁴

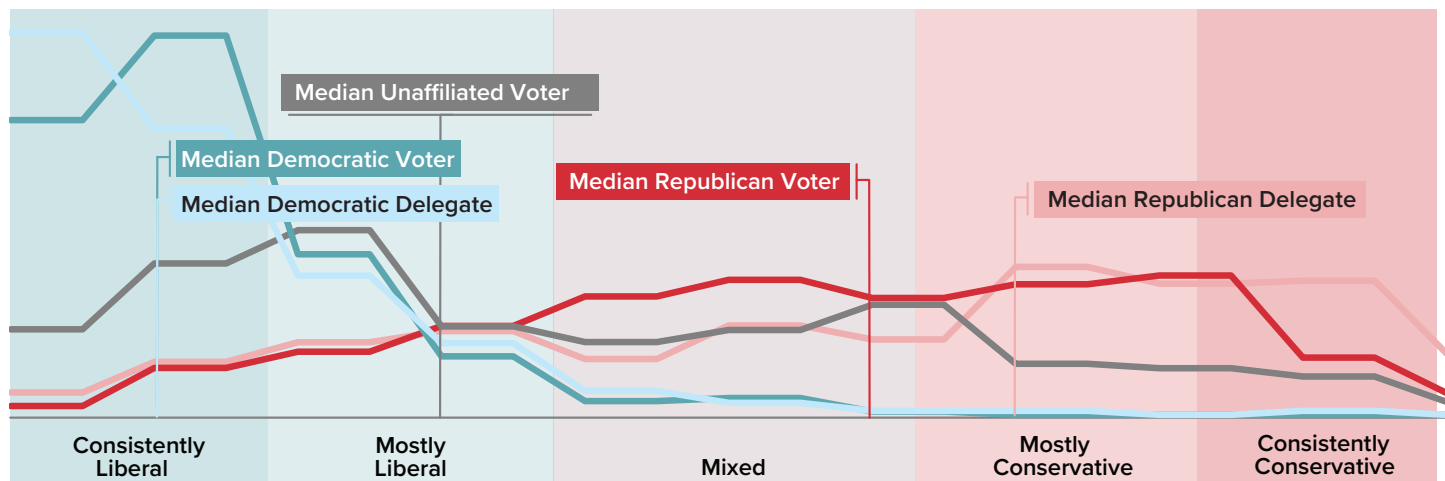
The survey respondents were provided with two opposing positions on a topic, one with a traditionally conservative view and one with a traditionally liberal view, designed to highlight key differences. Respondents were asked which position came closer to their views. Responses were used to create a scale from negative ten for those who chose the liberal position on each of the ten issues to positive ten for those who chose the conservative position on each of the ten issues. This translates respectively into the categorization ranging from consistently liberal to consistently conservative. See *Bridging Gaps: The Issues that Unite (and Divide) Utah Voters* for more details.

⁴ Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, "American Trends Panel wave 53," September 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/dataset/american-trends-panel-wave-53/>; Pew Research Center, "2014 Political Polarization Survey," 2014, www.pewresearch.org/politics/dataset/2014-political-polarization-survey/.



Utah's Republican delegates are somewhat more conservative than Republican voters, while Democratic delegates are about the same as Democratic voters.

Figure 4: Political Parties' Voters and Delegates on Ideological Scale



These differences also show on the -10 to 10 scale when comparing polarization within political parties.⁵ (See Figure 4.) The median Democratic voter and delegate are about the same (-8 on the scale). The median Republican voter is less conservative than the median Republican delegate (2 and 4 on the scale, respectively). The median unaffiliated voter is in-between (-4 on the scale).

In other words, Utah's Republican delegates are more likely to have consistently conservative views than Republican voters, while Democratic delegates are about the same as Democratic voters.

Democratic voters and delegates largely align, showing a high level of being consistently liberal. The typical voter and typical delegate answered 9 out of 10 questions in a traditionally liberal response. Utah's Republican voters and delegates are much less consistently conservative, with voters answering 6 out of 10 in a conservative response and delegates choosing 7 out of 10 in a conservative response. Utah's unaffiliated voters hold mixed views, answering 7 questions in a typically liberal way and 3 in a typically conservative way, midway between the Democratic voters and delegates and the Republican voters.

⁵ For this figure, the political party's voters and delegates are not proportional to the population but are all of equal size: 100%. Utah's ideological consistency among political parties looks substantially different once one accounts for the fact that Democrats make up 21% of Utah's registered voters while unaffiliated voters make up 43%. That means although 72% of Democrats are consistently liberal, they are numerically equivalent to the 38% of Republicans that are either mostly or consistently conservative.

The Utah Foundation also asked voters and delegates whether they identify as conservative, moderate, or liberal. In these self-identification questions, delegates and voters of both parties were not significantly different. (See Figure 5.)

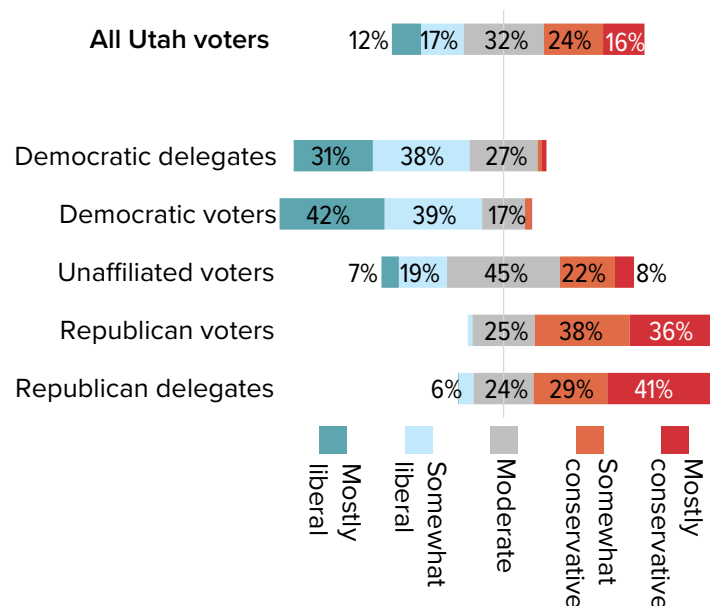
LEVELS OF AGREEMENT

The Utah Foundation asked respondents about their level of agreement on 11 statements, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questions pertained to a wide variety of issues, such as education, immigration, crime, and taxes. The results were detailed in the report *Bridging Gaps: The Issues that Unite (and Divide) Utah Voters*, and Utah Priorities Project briefs.

Republican delegates aligned with Republican voters on all the issues except that delegates are slightly less likely than voters to agree with the statement, “I am willing to drive 20% less over the next year in order to improve air quality.” Democratic delegates aligned with Democratic voters on all the issues except that delegates are slightly less likely than voters to agree with the statement, “I am willing to remove 50% of my lawn or allow it to be brown during summer months to conserve 50% of my summer water usage.” See Appendix C for a graphic of all 11 questions.

Delegates and voters self-identify similarly in terms of their ideological stance.

Figure 5: Ideological Group, Proportionally by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



POSITION STATEMENT

The Utah Foundation also asked respondents which position comes closer to their own views on 13 pairs of statements. Of the 13 pairs, 10 were used to create the ideological scale in the *Ideological Divides and Connections* section of this report. Again, the results were detailed in the report *Bridging Gaps: The Issues that Unite (and Divide) Utah Voters*, and Utah Priorities Project briefs.

When thinking about the differences between voters and delegates, they aligned on most issues. However, for Republicans, there were significant differences with respect to two pairs of statements, both of which were ideological scale questions. Republican delegates were more likely than Republican voters to choose the more ideologically conservative statement

Religion:

- Traditional conservative option: Government policies should support religious values and beliefs.
- Traditional liberal option: Religion should be kept separate from government policies.

Corporations:

- Traditional conservative option: Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit.
- Traditional liberal option: Business corporations make too much profit.

For Democrats, there was a significant difference with respect to one pair of statements, which was also an ideological scale question. Interestingly, Democratic delegates were more likely than Democratic voters to choose the more ideologically conservative statement.

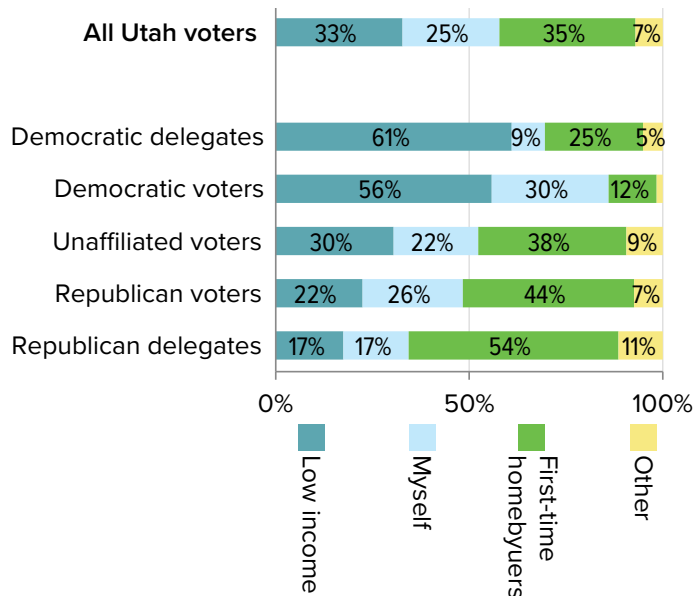
Marriage:

- Traditional conservative option: Society is better off if people make marriage and having children a priority.
- Traditional liberal option: Society is just as well off if people have priorities other than marriage and children.

See Appendix C for a graphic of all 13 questions.

Delegates were less concerned about housing for themselves.

Figure 6: Concerns Regarding Housing Affordability, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



Question: When thinking about your concerns regarding housing affordability, what is your top priority [choose one]: Affordable housing for low-income Utahns; Affordable housing for myself; Affordable housing for first-time home buyers; Other.

ISSUE PRIORITIES

Housing Affordability

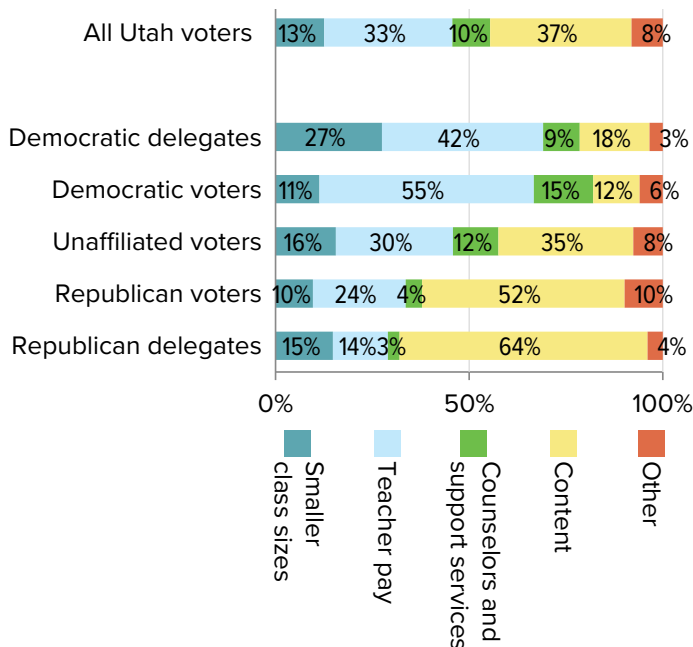
In 2024, housing affordability was an important issue for most demographic subgroups.

About 56% of Democrats were more concerned about affordable housing for low-income Utahns, compared to 22% of Republicans. About 44% of Republicans focus on affordable housing for first-time home buyers, while only 22% of Democrats feel the same way.

Delegates of both parties were slightly more concerned than voters about housing for first-time homebuyers and less for themselves. Republican delegates were less concerned than Republican voters about housing low-income Utahns, while Democratic delegates were more concerned than Democratic voters about housing low-income Utahns.

Delegates of both parties were more concerned about school content.

Figure 7: Priorities Regarding K-12 Education, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



Question: When thinking about kindergarten through 12th grade education, what is your top priority [choose one]: Smaller class sizes; Teacher pay; Counselors and support services; What students are taught in school; Other.

Education

When asked about voters' top K-12 concern, one-third of voters pointed to teacher pay as their top priority, and a similar proportion of respondents pointed to "what students are taught in school." Democrats were more concerned about smaller class sizes, while Republicans were more concerned about the need for counselors and support services.

Delegates of both parties were more concerned about content and less concerned regarding teacher pay. Further, Democratic delegates were more concerned than Democratic voters about class size.

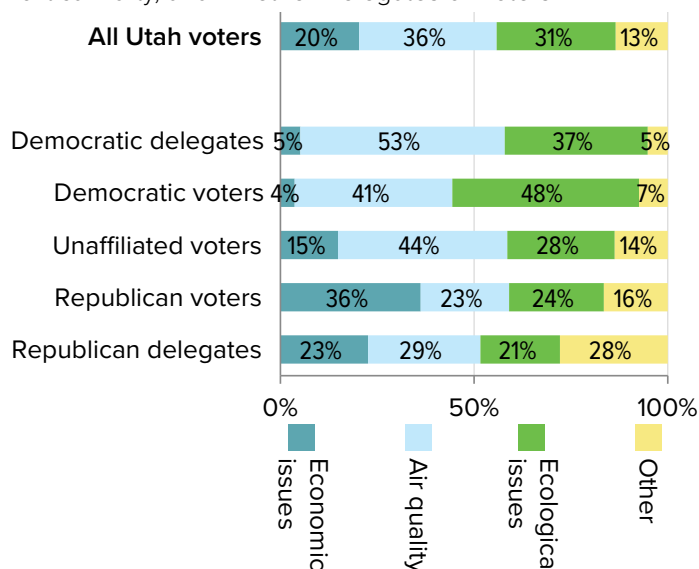
The Great Salt Lake

When thinking about the Great Salt Lake, Republicans tended to be most concerned about economic issues, while Democrats were most concerned about air quality and ecological issues. Moderates prioritized air quality above other concerns.

Delegates of both parties were more concerned than the voters in each of their parties about air quality but less concerned about ecological issues. Further, Republican delegates were less concerned than Republican voters about economic issues.

Delegates of both parties were more concerned about air quality when thinking about the Great Salt Lake.

Figure 8: Concerns Regarding the Great Salt Lake, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



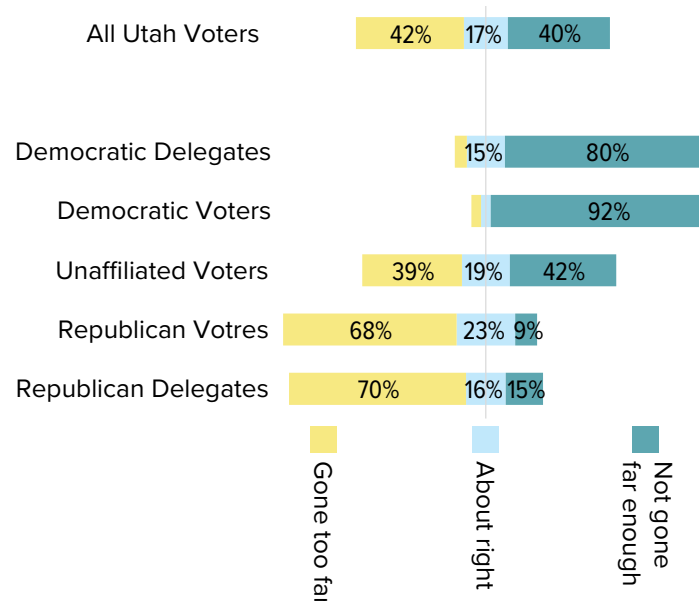
Question: When thinking about the Great Salt Lake water level, are you most concerned about [choose one]: Economic issues; Air quality; Ecological issues, such as bird migration; Other.

Transgender Issues

While the Utah Priorities Project highlights many issues that unite Utah voters, transgender rights and access is not one of those issues. Nearly 17% of Utah voters think the current level of acceptance of transgender individuals in society is about right, 42% of voters believe acceptance has gone too far, and 40% think acceptance has not gone far enough. Delegates of both parties are less likely than their respective voters to take as strident a position.

Democratic delegates are less likely than Democratic voters to believe that society has not gone far enough in accepting people who are transgender.

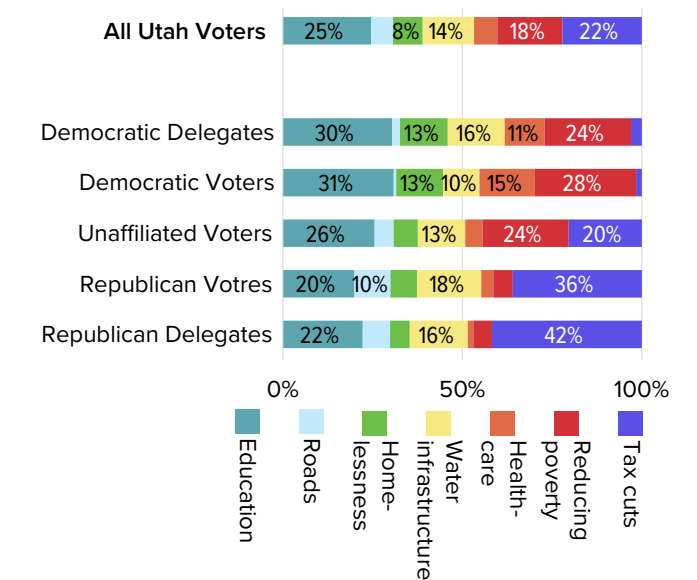
Figure 9: Transgender Acceptance, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



Question: Which of the following statements comes closest to your view [choose one]: Our society has GONE TOO FAR, NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH, or ABOUT RIGHT when it comes to accepting people who are transgender.

Republican delegates were more likely than Republican voters to focus on tax cuts if given the chance.

Figure 10: How Would Respondents Spend \$200, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



Question: If the state had an extra \$200 million, where would you spend it [choose one].

Spending Priorities

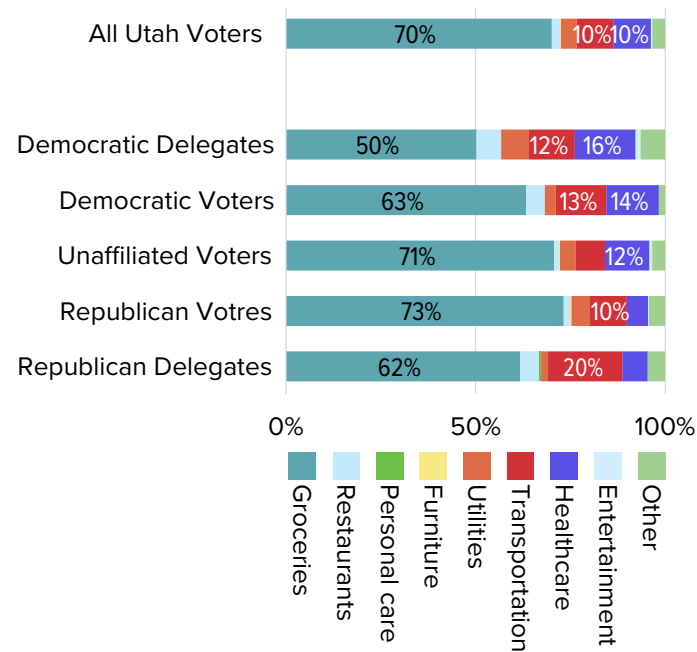
Utah Priorities Project survey respondents were asked how they might allocate funds if the state received an additional \$200 million. Respondents could choose to address any one seven issues. (See Figure 10 for the issues.)

Education and tax cuts topped the list of preferred options, receiving nearly 47% of total responses. Roads, health care, and homelessness were at the bottom of voters’ lists of issues to address.

Republican delegates were slightly more likely than Republican voters to focus on tax cuts. Democratic delegates were slightly more likely than Democratic voters to focus on water infrastructure and less on healthcare and reducing poverty.

Delegates of both parties were considerably less focused on groceries than their voter counterparts.

Figure 11: Impact on Family Budgets, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



Question: When thinking about cost of living other than housing, what has the most impact on your family budget [choose one].

Cost of Living Concerns

Earning enough to pay for non-housing needs was one of the top issues for Utah voters.

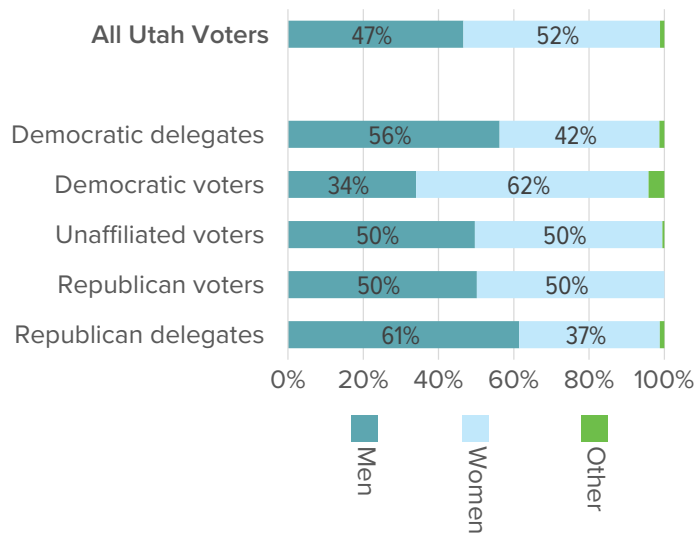
The Utah Foundation asked voters where non-housing price increases most affected family budgets. Of nine possible choices, 70% of voters reported that grocery prices affected them most. This was followed by healthcare, transportation, and utilities. These tend to be difficult-to-avoid expenses for most households. Delegates of both parties were considerably less focused on groceries than their voter counterparts.

PARTY AND POSITION DEMOGRAPHICS

The Utah Foundation also analyzed the demographic similarities and differences between voters and delegates. This section includes figures for each demographic group included in the 2024 Utah Priorities Project survey. However, see the section titled *Ideological Divides and Connections* for the figure regarding ideology.

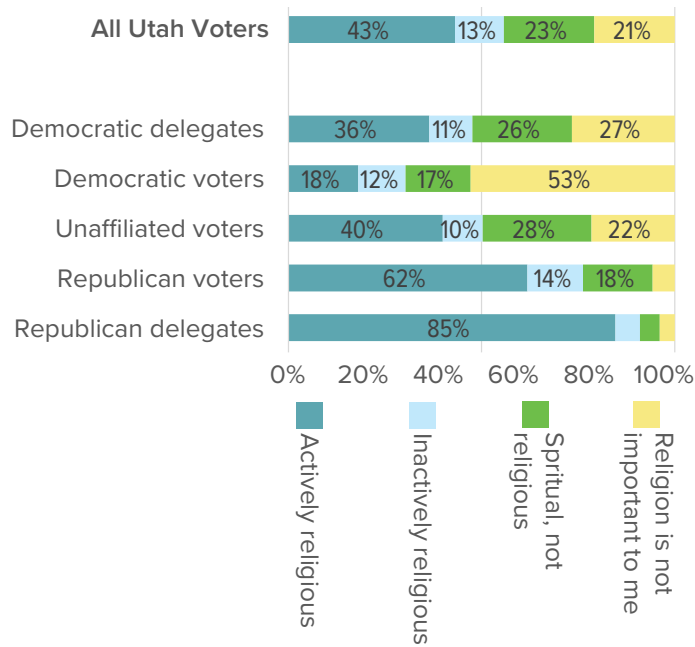
Delegates are more likely than voters to be men than women.

Figure 12: Men and Women, Proportionally, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



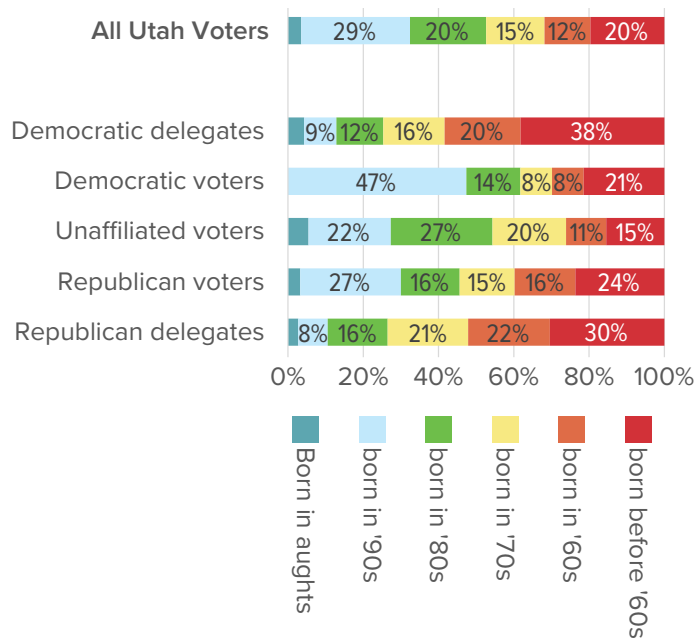
Delegates are more likely than voters of their parties to be actively religious.

Figure 13: Religion and Spirituality, Proportionally, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



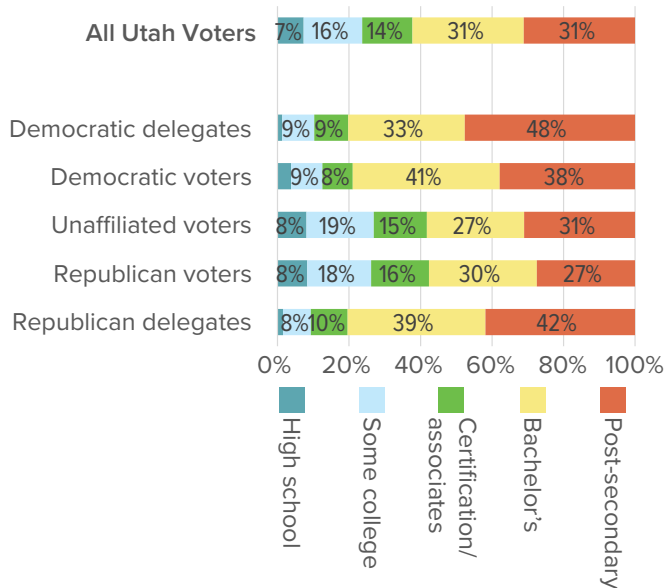
Delegates are far more likely than voters of their parties to be older. This is particularly true for Democrats.

Figure 14: Generational Group, Proportionally, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



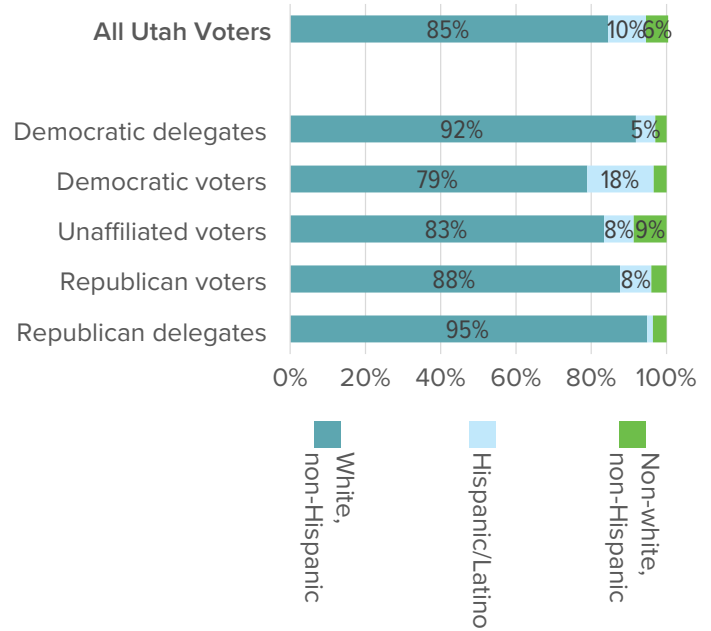
Democratic delegates are about as likely as voters of their parties to have bachelor's degrees or more education, though they are more likely to have post-graduate degrees, while Republican delegates are far more likely than voters to have bachelor's degrees and post-graduate degrees.

Figure 15: Education, Proportionally, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



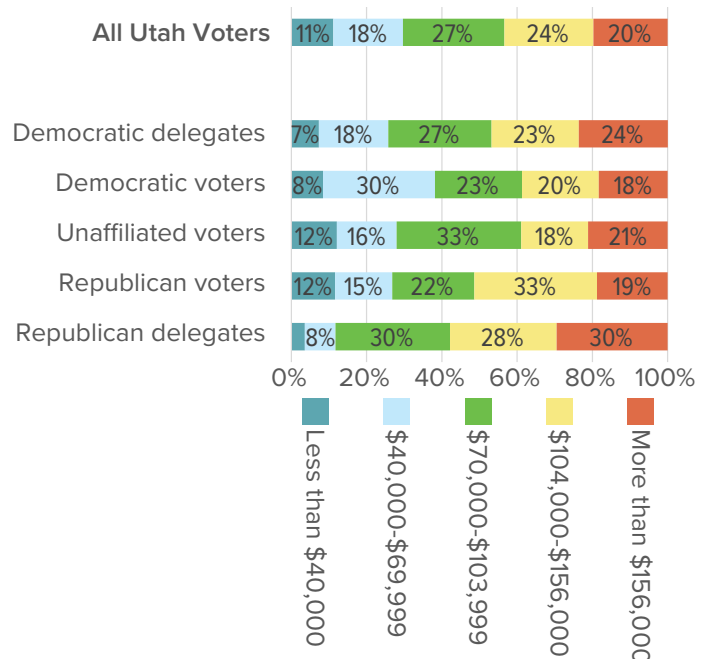
Delegates are far more likely than voters of their parties to identify as white, while Hispanic/Latino voters seem particularly unrepresented by delegates.

Figure 16: Race and Ethnicity, Proportionally, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



Delegates are more likely than voters of their parties to have higher incomes.

Figure 17: Income Group, Proportionally, by Political Party, and Whether Delegates or Voters



CONCLUSION

This report compares the opinions of political parties' delegates and voters. Overall, delegates are more pessimistic than voters about how the state is doing.

Despite this general outlook, their ideological positions show notable alignment with voters. The median – or middle – Republican delegate is slightly more conservative than the median Republican voter. However, the median Democratic delegate is just as liberal as the median Democratic voter. This is partly because Utah's Democratic delegates and voters are very liberal, leaving little room for ideological gaps.

While voters and delegates have similar ideologies, the priorities look a little different for Republicans than they do for Democrats. The largest differences in priorities among the parties' voters and delegates are air quality for Republicans and crime for Democrats, each of which was less important for delegates. Further, there were numerous small differences between delegates and voters for each of the two major parties regarding positions on issues and specific issue priorities.

Delegates were perhaps most different in terms of their demographics. Regardless of party, all delegates are more likely than voters to be men, actively religious, older, and white, and have more education and higher incomes.

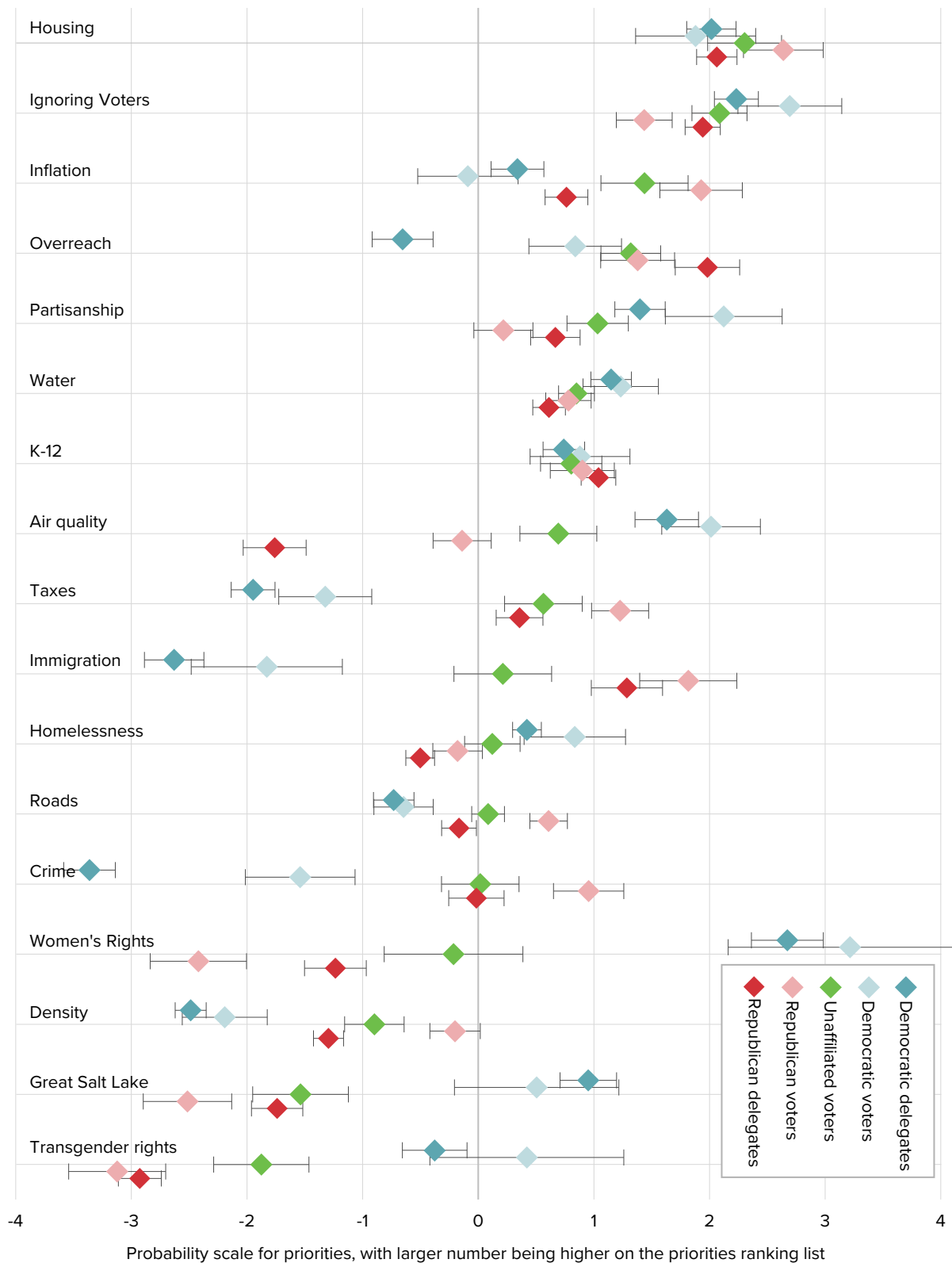
APPENDIX A

Figure A: Top 10 Priorities for Delegates and Voters

Ranking	Democratic Delegates	Democratic Voters	Unaffiliated Voters	Republican Voters	Republican Delegates
1	Women's Rights	Women's Rights	Housing	Housing	Housing
2	Ignoring Voters	Ignoring Voters	Ignoring Voters	Inflation	Overreach
3	Housing	Partisanship	Inflation	Immigration	Ignoring Voters
4	Air quality	Air quality	Overreach	Ignoring Voters	Immigration
5	Partisanship	Housing	Partisanship	Overreach	K-12
6	Water	Water	Water	Taxes	Inflation
7	Great Salt Lake	K-12	K-12	Crime	Partisanship
8	K-12	Overreach	Air quality	K-12	Water
9	Homelessness	Homelessness	Taxes	Water	Taxes
10	Inflation	Great Salt Lake	Immigration	Roads	Crime
11	Transgender rights	Transgender rights	Homelessness	Partisanship	Roads
12	Overreach	Inflation	Roads	Air quality	Homelessness
13	Roads	Roads	Crime	Homelessness	Women's Rights
14	Taxes	Taxes	Women's Rights	Density	Density
15	Density	Crime	Density	Women's Rights	Great Salt Lake
16	Immigration	Immigration	Great Salt Lake	Great Salt Lake	Air quality
17	Crime	Density	Transgender rights	Transgender rights	Transgender rights

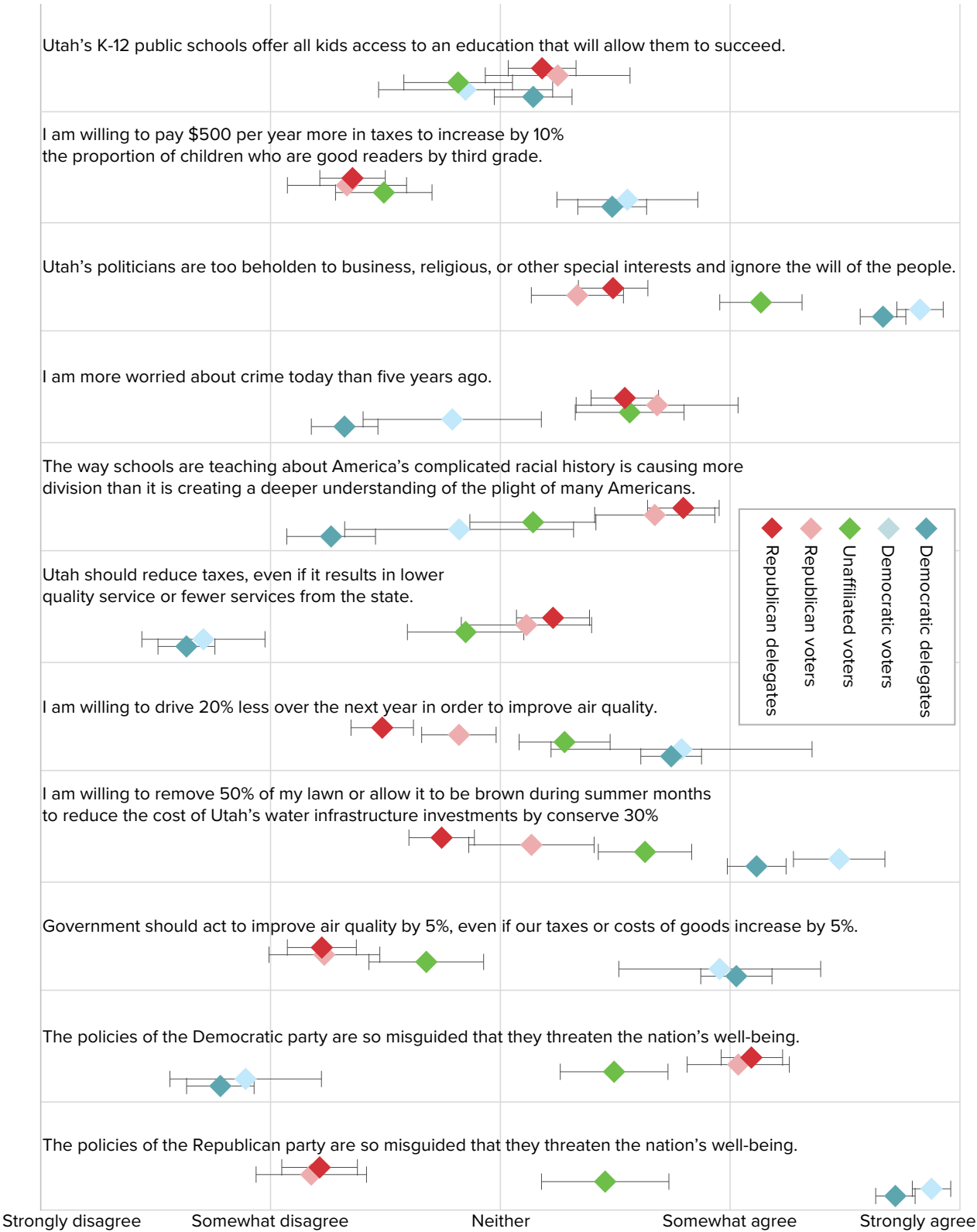
APPENDIX B

Figure B: Priorities for Delegates and Voters, with Margins of Error



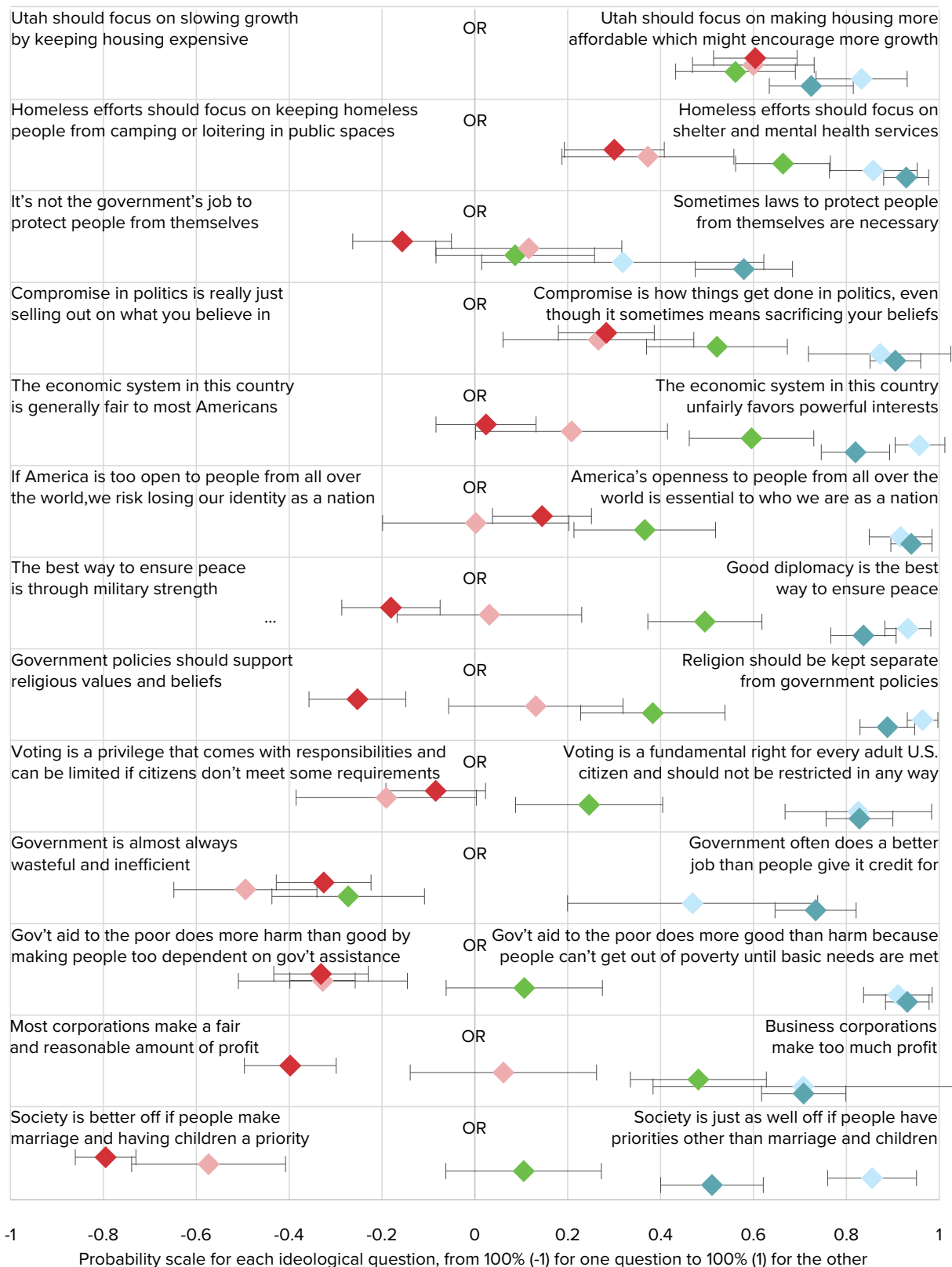
Note: The margins of error were estimated at a 95% confidence interval.

Figure C: Issue Priorities for Delegates and Voters, with Margins of Error



APPENDIX D

Figure D: Ideological Scale Question for Delegates and Voters, with Margins of Error





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