To: Protect Democracy
From: YouGov America, Inc.
Re: Presidential Pardons Poll
Date: Jan 16, 2025

On behalf of Protect Democracy, YouGov fielded a survey of 1,200 voterfile-verified registered voters in 43 battleground congressional districts, as defined by 2024 Cook Political Report House Race Ratings at the time of fielding of the first wave of this survey (June 17, 2024). This recent survey focused on respondents' views on presidential pardons, particularly the possibility of Donald Trump pardoning participants in the January 6 2021 protests and subsequent rioting. The survey fielded from January 9th through January 16, 2025. This memo briefly summarizes the key results.
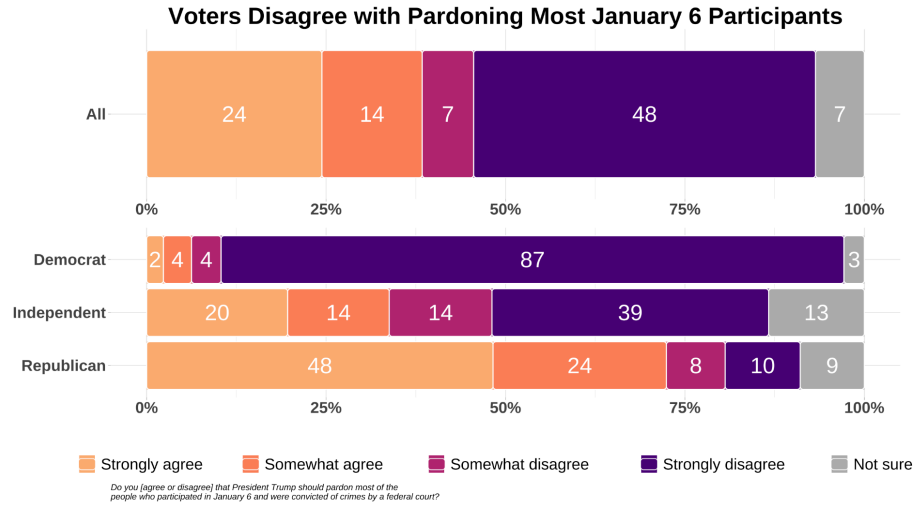
Key Takeaways

- **Pardons for those convicted for crimes on January 6 are broadly unpopular**, but partisanship drives some of the support for considering pardons for these events. Additionally, strong majorities believe Trump should let juries and courts decide the fate of January 6 participants rather than intervening. This support has marginally softened since the first wave of this survey was conducted in mid-2024.
- **Pardoning non-violent January 6 participants is more popular than pardoning those convicted of violent crimes.** The partisan impulse to pardon January 6 participants weakens when asked to consider specific elements of a pardon such as which crimes to pardon, whether Trump should intervene in ongoing cases, or how many people should be pardoned.
- Voters regardless of party affiliation see **tackling inflation and combatting illegal immigration as the top priorities for the new administration** and pardoning the January 6 participants as far less important.
- **Voters recognize that pardons for January 6 may lead to further democratic instability and may contribute to future instances of political unrest;**

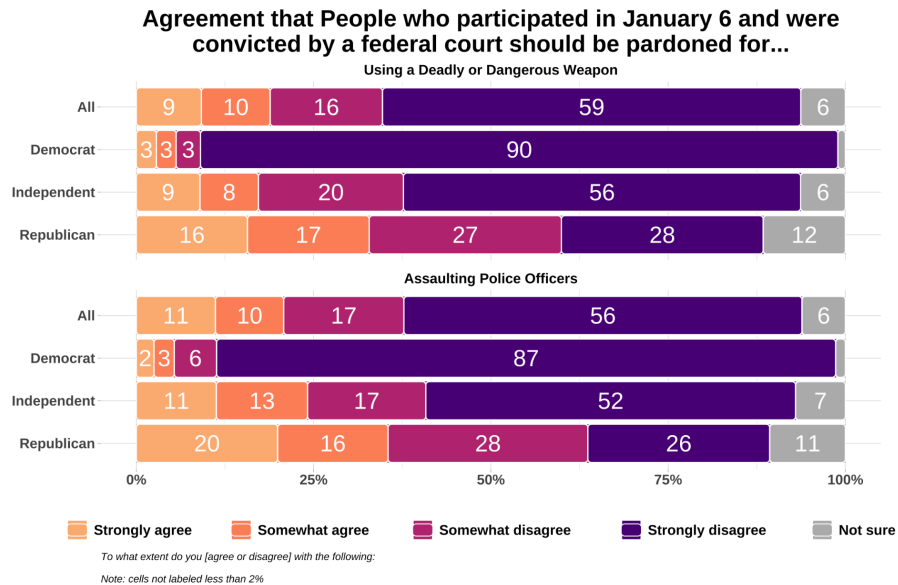## There is broad opposition to January 6 pardons

A significant majority of respondents (55 percent) in this poll disagree with pardoning most people who participated in the January 6 attack on the US capitol and who were duly convicted of crimes related to those events. However, these views are deeply polarized along party lines, with 91 percent of Democrats and 53 percent of Independents disagreeing with pardoning these individuals, while 72 percent of Republicans agree with pardoning them. Support for January 6 pardons was strongest among self-identified 'MAGA Republicans', among whom 88 percent agreed with pardoning most January 6 participants.[1] Respondents held similar views on pardoning participants convicted of organizing the January 6 attack (57 percent disagree) and pre-emptive pardons for those involved in January 6 who have not yet been charged (54 percent disagree).

[1] These respondents make up 19 percent of the sample and 44 percent of Republicans surveyed.

Voters Disagree with Pardoning Most January 6 Participants

Do you [agree or disagree] that President Trump should pardon most of the people who participated in January 6 and were convicted of crimes by a federal court?

While the January 6 attack has become deeply politicized in the years since it occurred, questions about specific crimes that occurred during the attack lead to a slightly less polarized response. When asked if people who participated in January 6 and were convicted for using a deadly or dangerous weapon should be pardoned, only 33 percent of Republicans and 20 percent of Independents agreed, with 56 percent Republicans and 74 percent of Independents disagreeing. Near unanimous disagreement with such a move among Democrats (93 percent) meant that, **overall, 75 percent of respondents disagreed with pardoning January 6 participants convicted of using a deadly weapon**. This opposition is particularly strong among traditionally Republican groups with an affinity for law and order such as current and former military, where 69 percent disagree that January 6 participants convicted for using a deadly or dangerous weapon should receive pardons.

Agreement that People who participated in January 6 and were convicted by a federal court should be pardoned for...

To what extent do you [agree or disagree] with the following:
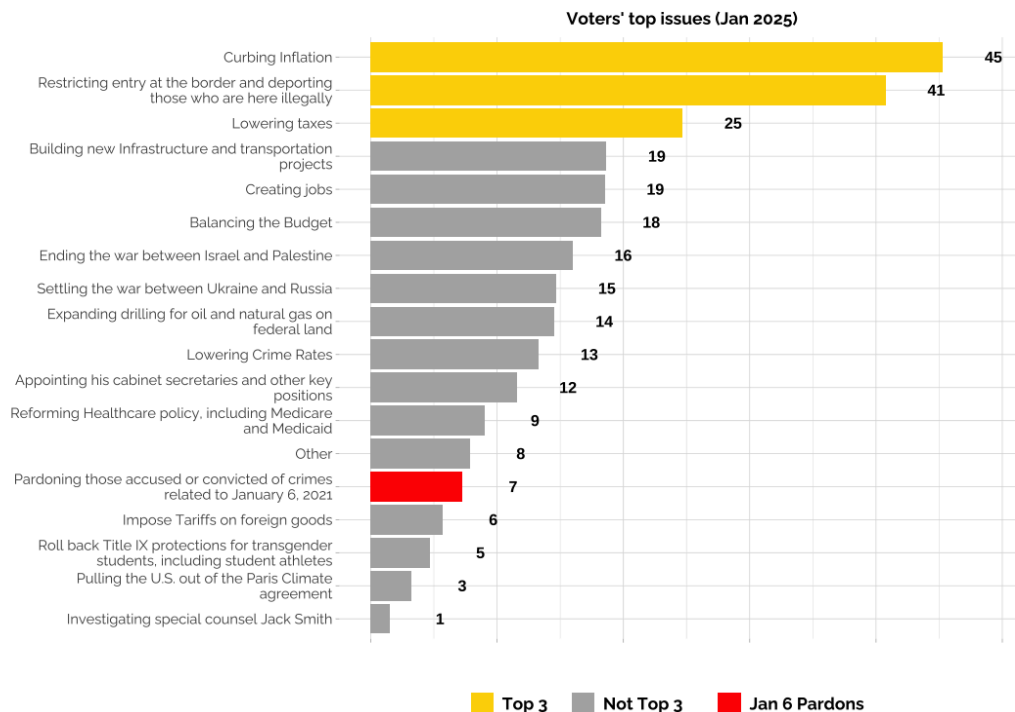
Note: cells not labeled less than 2%

This strong disagreement with pardoning specific January 6 related crimes is evident with both the January 6 crimes we asked about, with assaulting police officers also generating significant disagreement (73 percent) Throughout these questions we observe the same

pattern where nearly all Democrats are in opposition of the pardons, but in some cases a majority of Republicans oppose them as well. Overall, this suggests that support for pardoning January 6 participants could be a liability for Republicans if voters were confronted with the specific crimes they were being pardoned for – particularly those who assaulted police officers or used a deadly or dangerous weapon.

This pattern where respondents are more opposed to Trump pardons when motivated to think through the specifics of what the pardons mean is also visible in the questions about whether Trump should intervene in the trials of January 6 defendants. **Two thirds of respondents think Trump should let the courts and juries of America decide the fate of nonviolent January 6 defendants and nearly 4 in 5 feel the same way (77 percent) about violent January 6 defendants.**

Voters want Trump to prioritize other issues above January 6th pardons
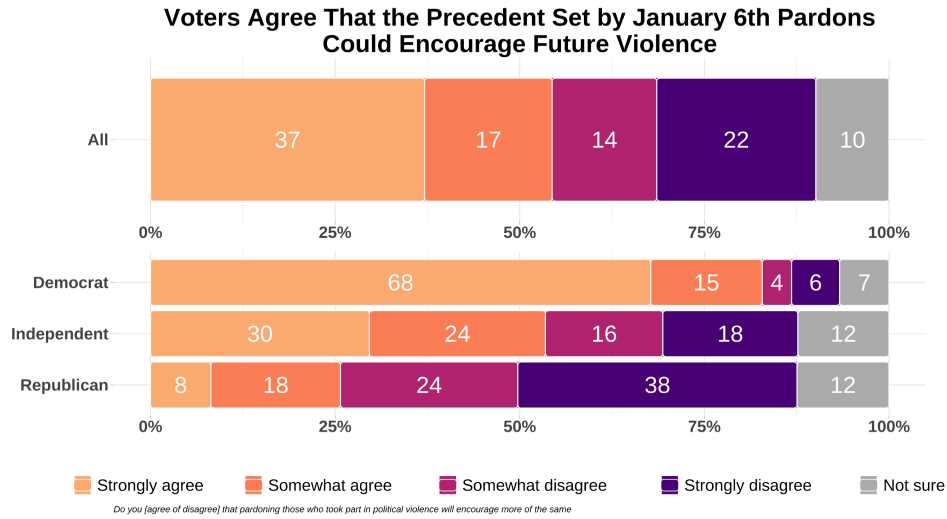
Voters were shown a list of potential priorities for the incoming Trump administration that Donald Trump and his allies have discussed. When asked of these, which should be the top three priorities for the incoming Trump administration, 45 percent of respondents chose curbing inflation and 41 percent chose restricting illegal immigration, two issues Trump premised his campaign to return to office on. Other traditional Republican priorities such as lowering taxes, balancing the budget, and creating jobs were also selected by many respondents (25 percent, 18 percent, and 19 percent respectively). **By contrast, only 7 percent of respondents choose pardoning January 6 participants as a top issue.**

Voters' top issues (Jan 2025)

Issue	Value
Curbing Inflation	45
Restricting entry at the border and deporting those who are here illegally	41
Lowering taxes	25
Building new Infrastructure and transportation projects	19
Creating jobs	19
Balancing the Budget	18
Ending the war between Israel and Palestine	16
Settling the war between Ukraine and Russia	15
Expanding drilling for oil and natural gas on federal land	14
Lowering Crime Rates	13
Appointing his cabinet secretaries and other key positions	12
Reforming Healthcare policy, including Medicare and Medicaid	9
Other	8
Pardoning those accused or convicted of crimes related to January 6, 2021	7
Impose Tariffs on foreign goods	6
Roll back Title IX protections for transgender students, including student athletes	5
Pulling the U.S. out of the Paris Climate agreement	3
Investigating special counsel Jack Smith	1

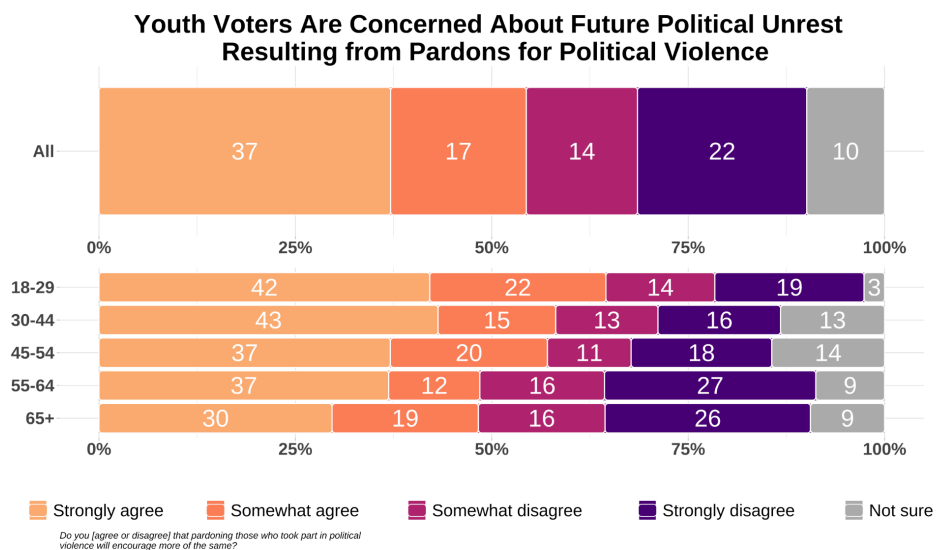Top 3 / Not Top 3 / Jan 6 Pardons

As he approaches the start of the new term, President Trump has discussed various policies and issues to focus on during his first month in office. Whether or not you agree with these policies, which do you think should be his top priorities in the new term? Please select up to 3.

3

Voters are concerned about the precedent pardons may set for stability

When asked 'Do you agree or disagree that pardoning those who took part in political violence will encourage more of the same?,' **voters expressed significant concern with the precedent a pardon for engaging in political violence such as January 6 would set**.

Voters Agree That the Precedent Set by January 6th Pardons Could Encourage Future Violence

Do you [agree of disagree] that pardoning those who took part in political violence will encourage more of the same
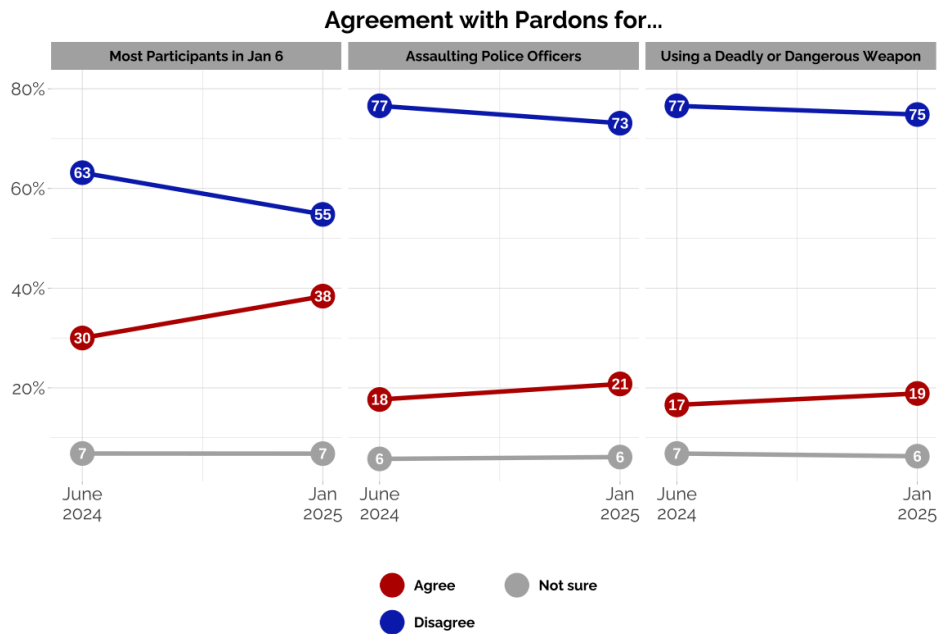
A majority of respondents agree (54 percent) that granting pardons for political violence can encourage future instances of violence. Partisanship divides how voters think about the precedent being set if pardons for political violence are issued. A majority of Democrats (83 percent) and Independents (54 percent) believe pardons for insurrectionists will lead to future political unrest, while just 26 percent of Republicans are concerned about the precedent this may set, Voters under 30 are significantly more concerned about the precedent for January 6 pardons, with nearly 2/3rds of young voters (63 percent) thinking that pardons for political violence, if granted, will encourage more of the same in the future.

Youth Voters Are Concerned About Future Political Unrest Resulting from Pardons for Political Violence

Do you [agree or disagree] that pardoning those who took part in political violence will encourage more of the same?

This concern about how January 6 pardons might impact future behavior can also be seen in respondents' reactions to the possibility of state governors emulating it. 86 percent of respondents disapproved and with nearly three quarters strongly disapproving (74 percent) of the possibility of their state's governor pardoning violent convicts that supported his or her campaign.

Attitudes towards pardons have marginally softened since wave 1 in June 2024

With Trump returning to office, respondents are about 8 percentage points more likely to agree with pardons for most January 6 participants than they were in June 2024. However, there is still a significant majority opposed to the idea of pardoning January 6 participants. Support for pardoning January 6 participants for specific crimes such as assaulting police officers and using a deadly or dangerous weapon is within the margin of error of the result from last wave, suggesting that voters are still quite opposed to this idea when primed with the specific crimes committed by many January 6 participants.

Agreement with Pardons for...

Most Participants in Jan 6	Assaulting Police Officers	Using a Deadly or Dangerous Weapon

Most Participants in Jan 6: June 2024 — Disagree 63, Agree 30, Not sure 7; Jan 2025 — Disagree 55, Agree 38, Not sure 7

Assaulting Police Officers: June 2024 — Disagree 77, Agree 18, Not sure 6; Jan 2025 — Disagree 73, Agree 21, Not sure 6

Using a Deadly or Dangerous Weapon: June 2024 — Disagree 77, Agree 17, Not sure 7; Jan 2025 — Disagree 75, Agree 19, Not sure 6

● Agree   ● Not sure
● Disagree

To what extent do you [agree or disagree] with the following:

Methodology

This survey is based on 1,200 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of validated voters in 43 battleground congressional districts. Battleground districts are defined by the 2024 Cook Political Report House Race Ratings at the time of fielding of the first wave of this survey (June 17, 2024).. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and U.S. Census region based on voter registration lists, the U.S. Census American Community Survey, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, as well as 2020 Presidential vote. Respondents were selected from YouGov to be representative of registered voters living in battleground congressional districts. The weights range from 0.13 to 6.02 with a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.57.

The margin of error (a 95% confidence interval) for a sample percentage *p* based upon the subsetted sample is approximately 3.3% The margins of error are calculated using the formula:

$$\hat{p} \pm 100 \times \sqrt{\frac{1 + \mathbf{CV}^2}{n}}$$

where *CV* is the coefficient of variation of the sample weights and *n* is the sample size used to compute the proportion. This is a measure of sampling error (the average of all estimates obtained using the same sample selection and weighting procedures repeatedly). The sample estimate should differ from its expected value by less than margin of error in 95 percent of all samples. It does not reflect non-sampling errors, including potential selection bias in panel participation or in response to a particular survey.