

To: Interested Parties, URGE

From: Ashley Aylward, Senior Research Manager; Erica Tebbs, Senior Analyst; and Michelle Whitlock, Analyst

Date: August 27, 2026

Re: New research shows the strongest characterization of Gen Z in 2026 is not "apathetic," but politically engaged, economically stressed, and institutionally skeptical.

Gen Z is an emerging electorate with undeniable influence; their behaviors, attitudes, and cultures are shaping the present and future of our country. However, they are often overlooked by elected officials in favor of more "reliable" voting blocs, thus exacerbating the disconnect with Gen Z. New polling results seek to close this gap and uplift how Gen Z voters¹ feel about the state of the country, their plans and perceptions about the upcoming midterm elections, and the issues that concern them. Gen Z voters are often misunderstood and perceived as apathetic. These findings reveal that, in reality, Gen Z voters are affected by and care about many political issues, but they recognize flaws and a power imbalance in electoral and economic systems that influence their voting behavior and approach to politics in general.

On behalf of URGE (Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity), HIT Strategies conducted a poll of almost 3,000 Gen Z registered voters (aged 18-29) nationwide, including oversamples to ensure representation among race and target state subgroups. See full methodology at the end of this report.ⁱ

- [Gen Z voters are dissatisfied with the direction of the country and want to make change, but they predict voter suppression tactics will impact the outcomes of the midterm elections.](#) Eight in ten (83%) Gen Z voters are dissatisfied with the direction of the country. They want to vote to "make change on issues that matter to them" (38% say this is the most motivating reason to vote), but they also doubt the fairness of the voting process. Gen Z voters predict misinformation and disinformation will impact midterm results (87%), along with many voter suppression tactics, including gerrymandering / unfair redistricting (87%) and election interference by the Trump administration (68%).
- [Gen Z voters are struggling to get by amid unprecedented economic challenges.](#) Gen Z voters are struggling to make ends meet. They are personally concerned about affording their basic needs (87%) and housing costs (95%). Anxiety about the job market exacerbates financial insecurity, such as concern about mass layoffs affecting their job security (83%) and AI making it harder to get a job (81%).
- [Gen Z voters express concern about a variety of issues that affect their safety, stability, and opportunities.](#) Gen Z voters are united across party lines on issues regarding the abuse of political and economic power – they report high levels of concern about the power of billionaires and the 1% (92%), the United States' role in war and unrest globally (90%), and lack of accountability for bad actors named in the Epstein files (88%). They also report concern about an array of other issues: climate change and pollution (87%), laws restricting or banning abortion (83%), discrimination against immigrants (79%), discrimination against transgender people (78%), and the ending of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies (78%) – depicting the context behind their deep dissatisfaction with the direction of the country.

¹ "Gen Z voters" throughout this memo refers to registered voters ages 18-29.

- [Gen Z voters are politically engaged but institutionally skeptical.](#) Gen Z voters report planning to vote in the upcoming midterms and have taken a variety of political actions beyond the ballot box, but systemic factors decrease motivation to vote, such as the influence of corporations and the ultra-wealthy on politics (49%). Acknowledging and addressing these systemic factors is vital when connecting with and mobilizing Gen Z.

Gen Z voters are dissatisfied with the direction of the country and want to make change, but they predict voter suppression tactics will impact the fairness of upcoming midterm elections.

Eight in ten (83%) Gen Z voters are dissatisfied with the direction of the country, and a majority are dissatisfied across partisan identity. However, they are not apathetic. Instead, Gen Z mostly feels anxious (42%), frustrated (41%), and angry (29%) about the state of the country.

- LGBTQ+ voters are more likely to be angry (41%) about the state of the country.

Soon, Gen Z voters will be going to the ballot box to make their voices heard, but they are anticipating that the upcoming elections will not be conducted fairly, with many predicting voter suppression tacticsⁱⁱ² and election interference will impact outcomes. Sixty-eight percent (68%) predict election interference by the Trump administration will likely impact results, compared with 32% who believe the Democratic Party would be responsible for election interference that impacts results. These findings suggest that their apprehension about the midterm results primarily stems from systemic efforts to manipulate information, restrict participation, or engineer electoral outcomes - not from individual voters breaking the law.

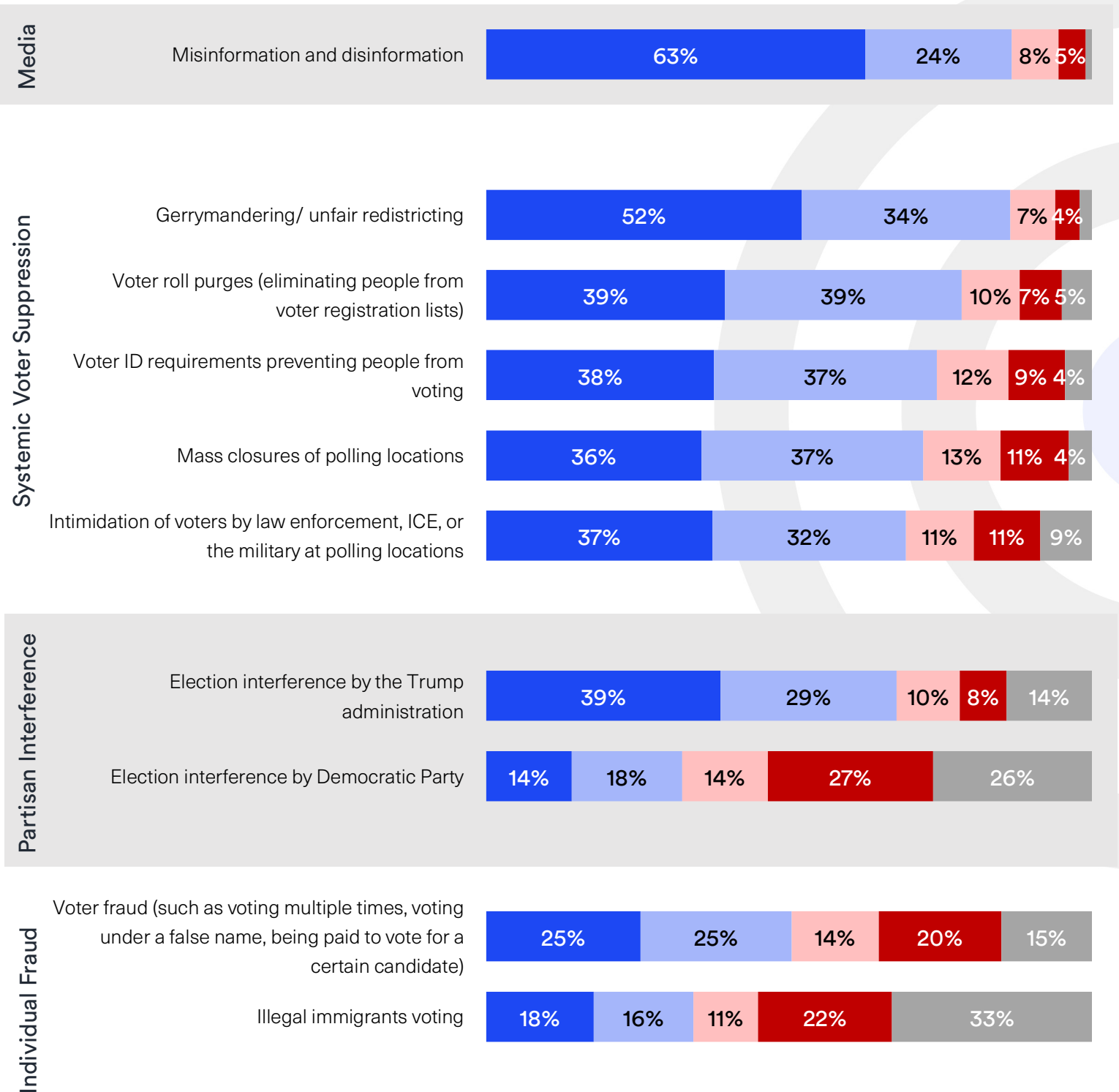
[FIGURE] Gen Z voters predict misinformation and disinformation will meaningfully impact midterm results, cited as likely by 87% of Gen Z voters.

- A majority believe several institutional voter suppression tactics will impact the midterm results, including gerrymandering (87%), voter ID requirements that prevent eligible people from voting (74%), and intimidation of voters by ICE, law enforcement, or the military (69%).
- Notably, fewer Gen Z voters believe voter fraud (50%) or illegal immigrants voting (34%) will impact 2026 midterm election results – those who do believe this is likely are primarily 2024 Trump voters (51%).

² Each response option in Voter Suppression section was split sampled.

FIGURE A: How likely or unlikely is each of the following to impact who wins the upcoming midterm elections? [EACH OPTION SPLIT SAMPLE] [Note: Not displaying percentages less than 3% in chart]

- Very likely to impact who wins
- SW likely to impact who wins
- SW unlikely to impact who wins
- Very unlikely to impact who wins
- Will not happen



Gen Z is struggling to get by amid unprecedented economic challenges.

Gen Z is coming of age at a time of significant social instability and an economy that is not working for them. They are struggling to make ends meet as they navigate high inflation, new tariffs, and an expensive housing market.

- Roughly nine in ten Gen Z voters are personally concerned about numerous pocketbook and “kitchen table” issues³, including housing costs (95%) and affording their basic needs (87%) **[FIGURE B]**. They are also highly concerned about healthcare affordability and accessibility (90%).
- Three in four are either struggling to pay bills or only making enough to pay bills (76%) **[FIGURE C]**.
- All the while, Gen Z voters are seeing significant cutbacks to social safety nets. For example, 82% are concerned about cuts to Medicaid and SNAP.
- Black Gen Z women are especially concerned about affording their basic needs (71% a lot of concern).

A weak job market further exacerbates financial concerns, especially for those just starting their careers.

- Eight in ten Gen Z voters report they are personally concerned about AI making it harder for them to get a job (81%), which is consistent across college and non-college educated voters.
- Mass layoffs are another concern when it comes to their job security, with a large majority reporting a lot of personal concern about this (83%), regardless of education level.

While Gen Z struggles to get by and get ahead, they see the power of the extremely wealthy.

- Across demographics, Gen Z voters are united in their concern about the power of billionaires and the 1% (92%). This is true for majorities of Democrats (96%), Independents (96%), and Republicans (78%).

³ Each response option in Issues section was split sampled.

FIGURE B: For each of the following issues, please [PHONE: tell me ONLINE/TTW: indicate] if you personally have a lot of concern, some concern, only a little concern, or no concern at all about each issue. *[EACH OPTION SPLIT SAMPLE]*

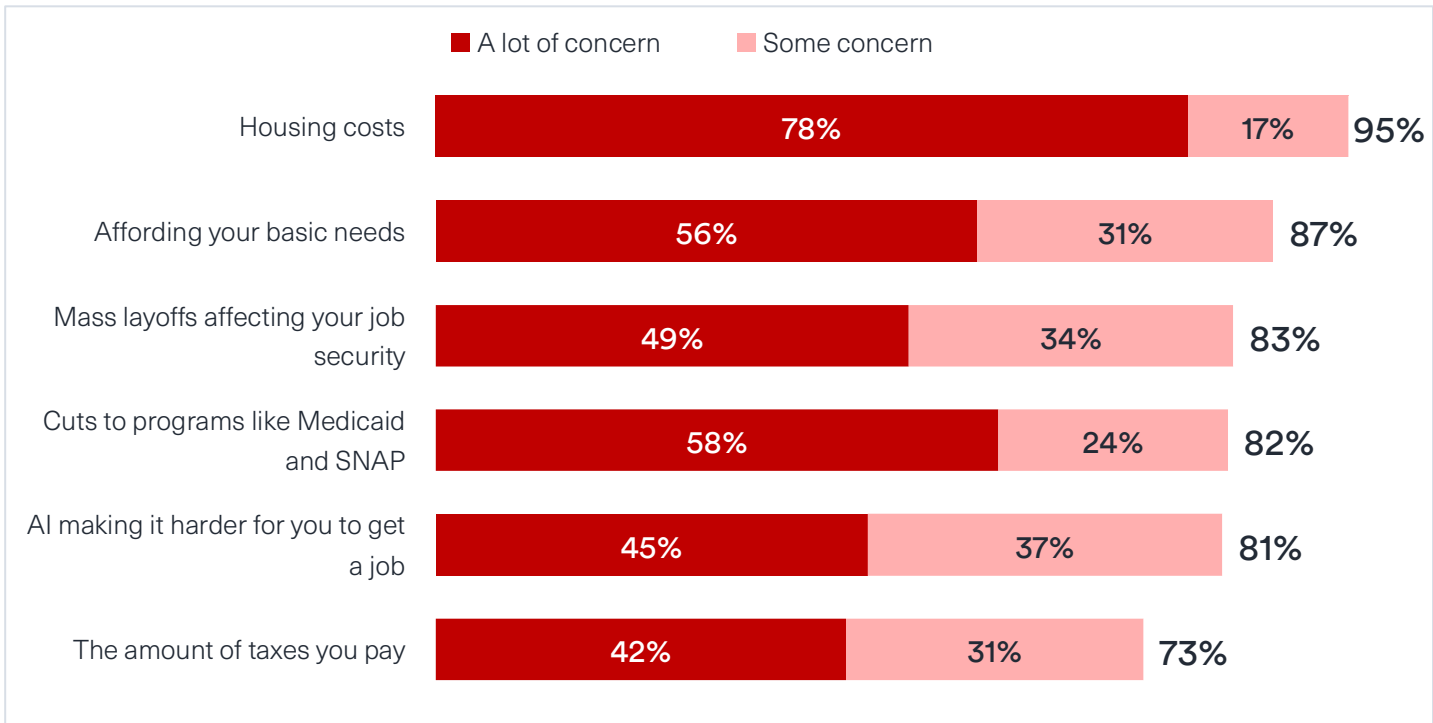
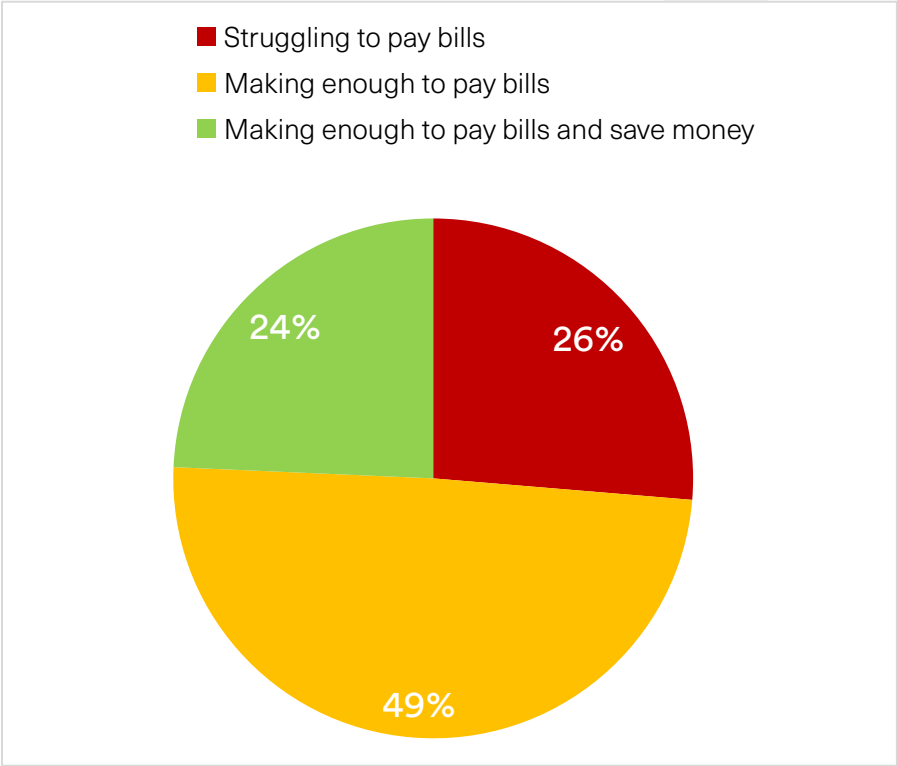


FIGURE C: How would you describe your own personal financial situation? Would you say you are...



Gen Z voters express concern about a variety of issues that affect their safety, stability, and opportunities.

While there are partisan and demographic distinctions within issues⁴— especially those that have been heavily politicized by partisan rhetoric – there is shared concern among Gen Z voters about the government inflicting harm rather than protecting and addressing the needs of young people. Evidence across numerous issues shows that the current reality is not what Gen Z voters want from their government and society; they want support, accountability and an alternative vision for the future. [FIGURE D]

There is high concern among Gen Z voters about the treatment of immigrants.

- They are concerned about ICE tactics (80%) specifically, and discrimination against immigrants in general (79%). Voters of color and LGBTQ+ voters are especially worried about ICE tactics (86% and 91%, respectively).
- Democrats (91%) and Independents (78%) are more concerned than Republicans, but a majority (57%) of Gen Z Republicans still report at least some concern about discrimination toward immigrants.

While the government cracks down on everyday people, Gen Z voters see predators in power getting away with their crimes.

- A sizable share (88%) of Gen Z voters have concern about lack of accountability for bad actors named in the Epstein files.
- This concern is shared across gender (95% of women and 90% of men) and party identity: 89% of Democrats, 89% of Independents, and 85% of Republicans report concern about this.

Though climate change has not been at the forefront of mainstream national discourse lately, it continues to be an issue of urgent concern for Gen Z voters.

- Nearly nine in ten (87%) of Gen Z voters report concern about climate change and pollution.
- Unlike other generations, among Gen Z voters concern about climate change and pollution is shared across partisan identity and ideology, including 93% of Democrats, 85% of Independents, and 76% of Republicans.

Gen Z voters are also at odds with the agenda to restrict abortion rights and it affects them personally.

- A large share of Gen Z voters (83%) report concern about laws restricting or banning abortion. Democrats (92%) and Independents (87%) are more concerned than Republicans (52%), half of which still express concern about this.
- Men and women both express concern about laws restricting or banning abortion (80%, 85% concern respectively), but women with higher intensity (men 46% a lot of concern, women 59%).
- Three in four (77%) Gen Z voters are personally concerned about themselves or a loved one being able to access abortion or other reproductive care, men (73%) and women (79%) alike. Black voters

⁴ Each response option in Issues section was split sampled.

(89%), AAPI voters (85%), and Latina women voters (80%) feel especially concerned about their or their loved ones' abortion and reproductive care access.

Many Gen Z voters are concerned about being mistreated or denied opportunities because of a part of their identity (62%). Meanwhile, efforts to ensure equal opportunity are being rolled back.

- Black women (85%), Black men ages 25-29 (80%), Latina women ages 25-29 (81%), AAPI voters (79%), and transgender⁵ voters (92%) are especially concerned about being mistreated or denied opportunities based on identity.
- Gen Z voters are concerned about the end of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies at institutions and companies (78%). Notably, a majority of Republicans also are concerned about this (59%), though concern is greater among Democrats (92%) and Independents (72%).
- More than three in four Gen Z voters are concerned about discrimination against transgender people (78%), and LGBTQ+ voters are especially concerned about this (92%). Republicans, however, are far less concerned (44%) than Democrats (90%) and Independents (79%).
- Among white and Latino Gen Z voters, women express greater levels of concern than men about discrimination against transgender people (White women: 53% a lot of concern v. white men: 38%, Latina women: 57% a lot of concern v. Latino men: 42%).

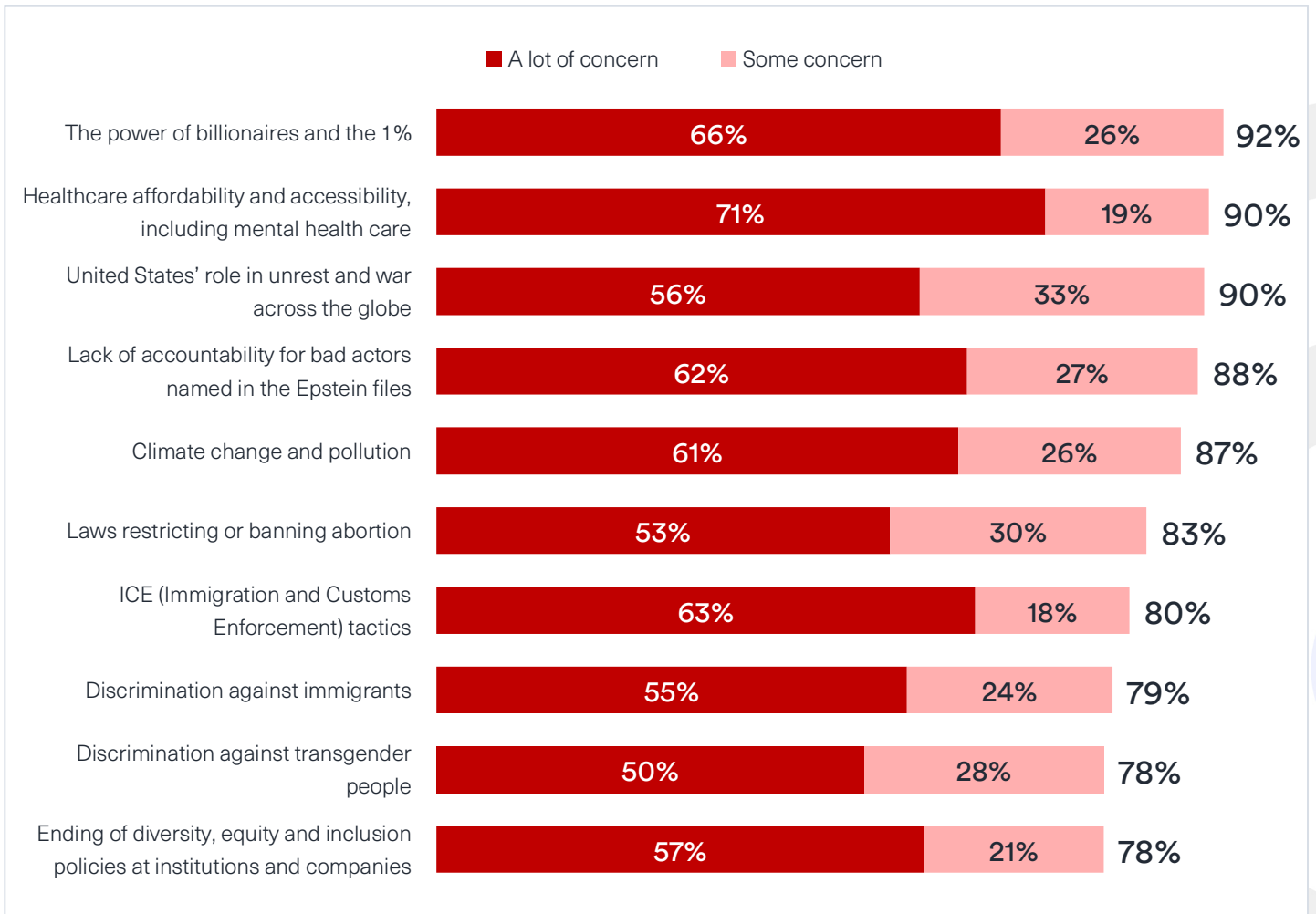
Gen Z voters are not only concerned about issues at home, but abroad as well.

- Nine in ten Gen Z voters are concerned about the United States' role in unrest and war across the globe (90%).
- This is a concern across party identity, including 94% of Democrats, 85% of Independents, and 88% of Republicans.

Gen Z's most motivating reason to vote is to make change on issues that matter to them (38%), so addressing these issues is key to connecting with and mobilizing them.

⁵ Small sample size - interpret directionally

FIGURE D: For each of the following issues, please [PHONE: tell me ONLINE/TTW: indicate] if you have a lot of concern, some concern, only a little concern, or no concern at all about each issue. *[EACH OPTION SPLIT SAMPLE]*

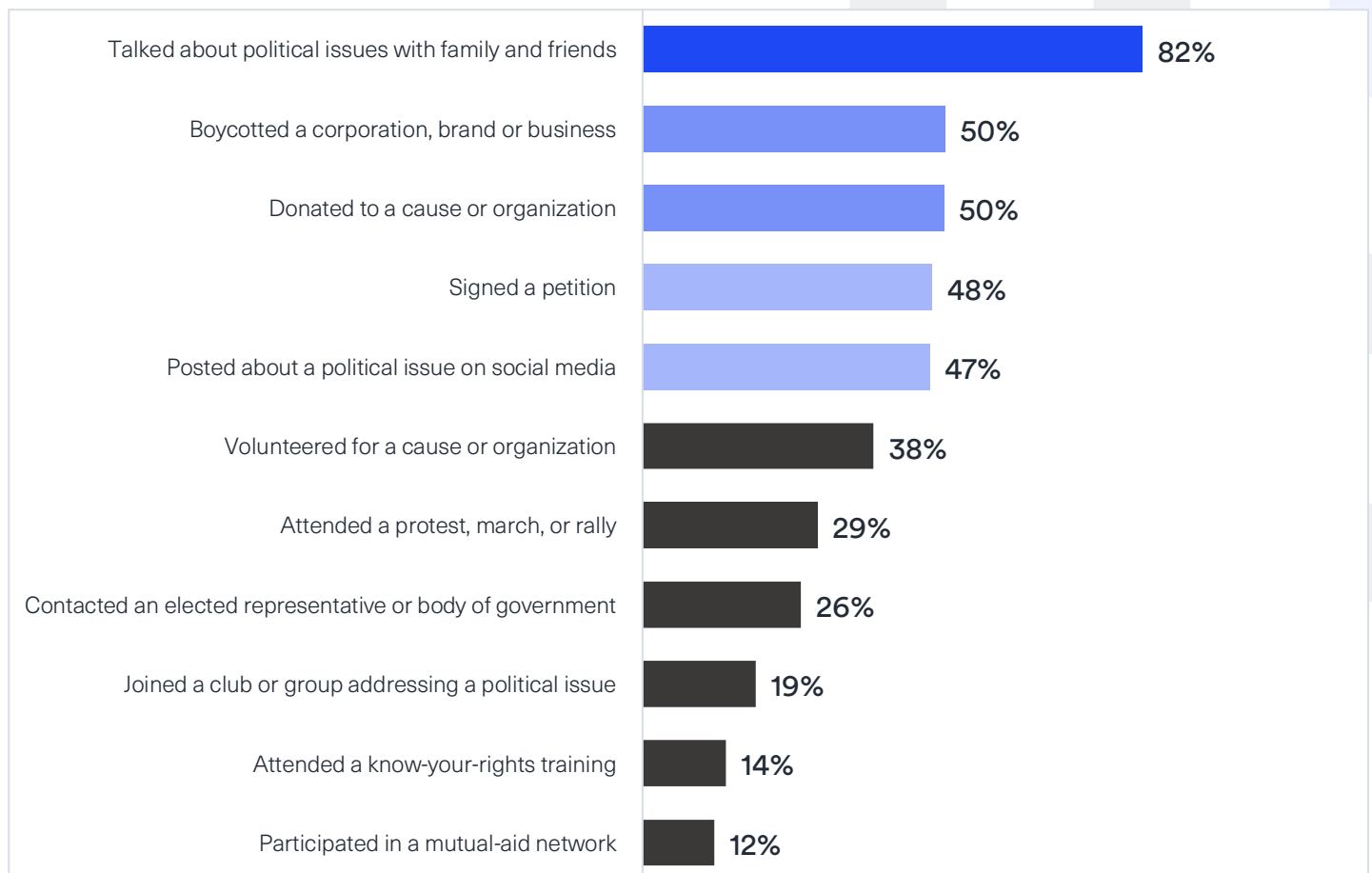


Gen Z voters are politically engaged, but institutionally skeptical.

Gen Z voters care about political issues, but they are dissatisfied with the limitations that the political system puts on the power of their own voice. Across partisan identity, the top reason why voters feel less motivated to vote in the midterms is the influence of corporations and the ultra-wealthy (49%). The second most demotivating factor is the two-party system (35%). Neither of these issues can be fixed without substantial systemic reforms to our election system.

It is therefore unsurprising that Gen Z voters are also taking action beyond the ballot box towards the changes they want to see **[FIGURE E]**. Roughly half of Gen Z voters have personally boycotted a business (50%), donated to a cause or organization (50%), signed a petition (48%), or posted about an issue on social media (47%). Fewer are engaging in more organized activism, like protesting (29%), joining political clubs (19%), or participating in mutual aid networks (12%). One element that may be contributing to lower protest participation is related to safety - violence against protesters is causing concern for most Gen Z voters across party identity (85%). However, witnessing unified action is uplifting; a majority of Gen Z voters say they feel encouraged by mutual aid networks meeting needs in local communities (70%) and people coming together to protest and boycott (70%) despite fewer having participated in these actions themselves.

FIGURE E: For each of the following, please [PHONE: tell me ONLINE/TTW: indicate] if you have or have not done the activity in the last year.



ⁱ On behalf of URGE, HIT Strategies conducted a poll of N=2,950 registered voters nationwide between the ages of 18-29 from June 24 – July 9, 2026. This included 3 national oversamples of N=200 Black voters, N=300 AAPI voters, and N=200 LGBTQ+ voters, and state oversamples of N=400 registered voters in Texas, N=400 registered voters in Georgia, N=400 registered voters in Alabama. The survey was administered online using an opt-in web panel vendor and text-to-web. To ensure a representative sample, weights were applied to variables and the oversamples were downweighed to their proper proportion of the total sample size. The demographic targets were based on voter file data and census data. The margin of error is +/- 2.85 points.