

Section 1: Introduction & Consent

Thank you for participating in the Bright Line Watch survey of political scientists. The purpose of this survey is to measure expert opinions about the state of American democracy.

Your responses will be anonymous. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. No information that identifies you will be collected or retained by the researchers, and all of the information we collect will be stored securely. However, any online interaction carries some risk of being accessed. Please contact Brendan Nyhan by email at nyhan@dartmouth.edu with any questions or concerns.

If you have any questions or comments about this survey, or if you would like to be removed from the mailing list for future surveys, please email survey@brightlinewatch.org.

I agree to continue

I do not agree to continue

Section 1. 1: Imp / Perf intro

On the next several screens you will see a series of statements related to democratic government. The first group of questions will ask you to evaluate the importance of certain principles or values to democracy in general. Then, you will be asked how well those principles or values are being upheld in practice in the United States. Statements have been randomly selected from a set of 30 (the full list will be available at the end of the survey).

Section 1: Importance

How important are these characteristics for democratic government?

	Not relevant. This has no impact on democracy.	Beneficial. This enhances democracy, but is not required for democracy.	Important. If this is absent, democracy is compromised.	Essential. A country cannot be considered democratic without this.
Political competition occurs without criticism of opponents' loyalty or patriotism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All adult citizens have equal opportunity to vote	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elected officials seek compromise with political opponents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Not relevant. This has no impact on democracy.	Beneficial. This enhances democracy, but is not required for democracy.	Important. If this is absent, democracy is compromised.	Essential. A country cannot be considered democratic without this.
Politicians who lose free and fair elections publicly concede defeat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Executive authority cannot be expanded beyond constitutional limits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government officials do not use public office for private gain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section 2: Performance

How well do the following statements describe the United States as of today?

	The U.S. does not meet this standard	The U.S. partly meets this standard	The U.S. mostly meets this standard	The U.S. fully meets this standard	Not sure
Elections are conducted, ballots counted, and winners determined without pervasive fraud or manipulation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government protects individuals' right to engage in peaceful protest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information about the sources of campaign funding is available to the public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	The U.S. does not meet this standard	The U.S. partly meets this standard	The U.S. mostly meets this standard	The U.S. fully meets this standard	Not sure
The legislature is able to effectively limit executive power	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parties and candidates are not barred due to their political beliefs and ideologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government officials do not use public office for private gain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section 3a: Overall Evaluation

On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 is least democratic and 100 is most democratic, how would you rate the political system of the United States as of today?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

United States today

Section 3b: 2027 Ratings

What rating would you expect to give the political system of the United States in 2027?
You rated the US now as $\{q://QID714/ChoiceNumericEntryValue/1\}$

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Threat/ benefit intro

In this section of the survey, we ask you to assess a series of events that recently occurred. What impact (if any) has each had on American democracy?

Section 5a.2: threats to democracy

Elon Musk's role as a supporter of and adviser to Trump.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 5a.3: threats to democracy

Trump asks candidates for Senate majority leader to commit to using recess appointments.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 5a.4: threats to democracy

Stephen Miller named Trump's deputy chief of staff for policy.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 5a.5: threats to democracy

Trump announces he is nominating Pete Hegseth for Secretary of Defense.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 5a.6: threats to democracy

Trump announces he is nominating Matt Gaetz for Attorney General.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 5a.10: Threats to democracy

You indicated that the following are benefits to American democracy. We would now like you to rate the degree to which they are a benefit to democracy.

	Little benefit to American democracy	Moderate benefit to American democracy	Serious benefit to American democracy	Extraordinary benefit to American democracy
Elon Musk's role as a supporter of and adviser to Trump.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump asks candidates for Senate Majority Leader to commit to using recess appointments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stephen Miller named Trump's deputy chief of staff for policy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump announces he is nominating Pete Hegseth for Secretary of Defense.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump announces he is nominating Matt Gaetz for Attorney General.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You indicated that the following are threats to American democracy. We would now like you to rate the degree to which they are a threat to democracy.

	Little threat to American democracy	Moderate threat to American democracy	Serious threat to American democracy	Extraordinary threat to American democracy
Elon Musk's role as a supporter of and adviser to Trump.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump asks candidates for Senate Majority Leader to commit to using recess appointments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stephen Miller named Trump's deputy chief of staff for policy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Little threat to American democracy	Moderate threat to American democracy	Serious threat to American democracy	Extraordinary threat to American democracy
Trump announces he is nominating Pete Hegseth for Secretary of Defense.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump announces he is nominating Matt Gaetz for Attorney General.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

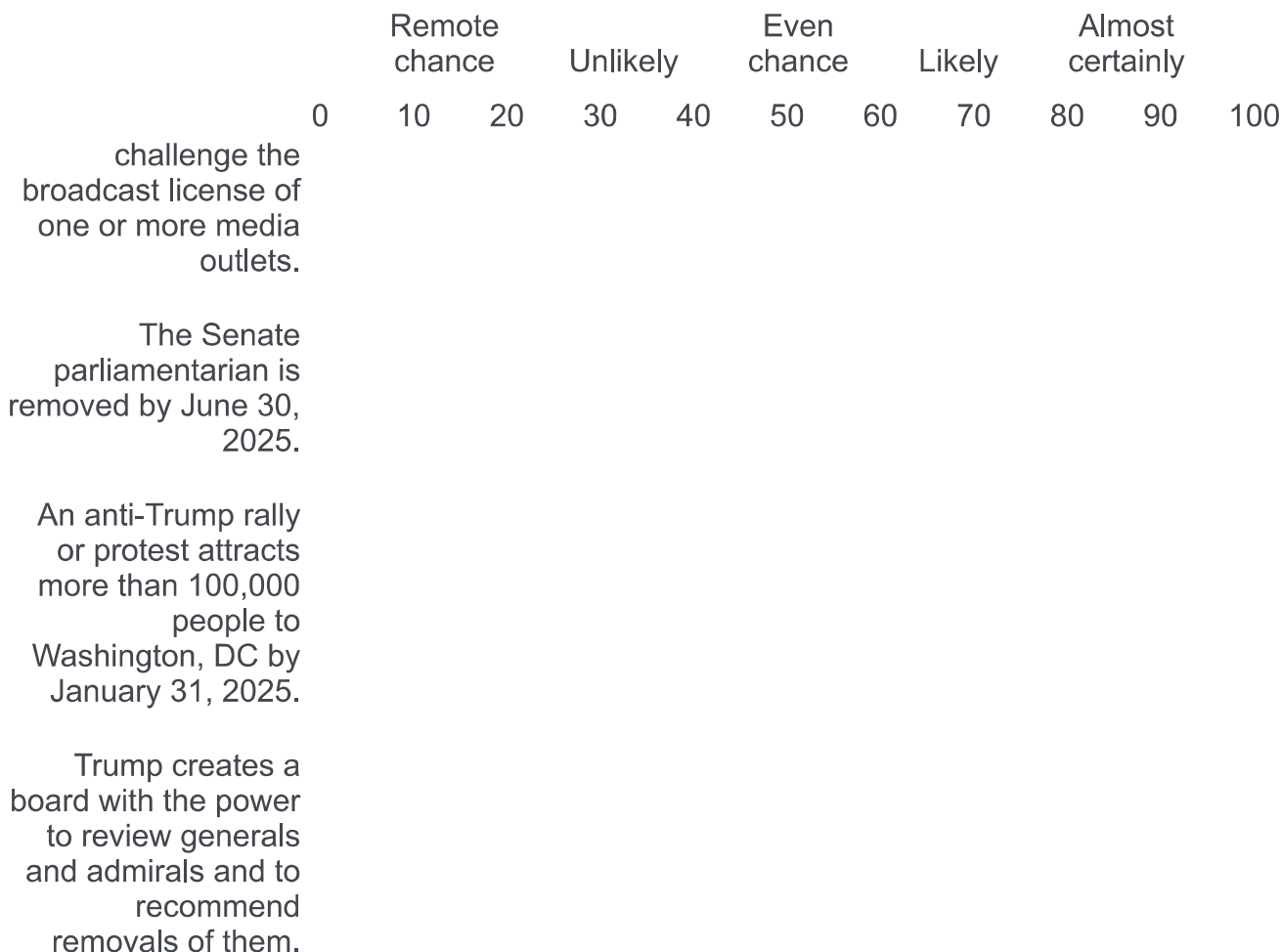
Section 7A: Future scenarios

Observers have discussed possible actions that might be taken during a second Trump administration. In this portion of the survey, we will ask you to assess the likelihood of different scenarios after he returns to the White House.

We ask you to provide your answers using numeric percentages. If you think the scenario will occur with near certainty, then you would give an answer close to 100%. If you think there is only a remote chance that the scenario will occur, then you would give an answer close to 0%, and if you think the scenario is as likely to occur as not to occur, then you would give an answer close to 50%.

	Remote chance	Unlikely	Even chance	Likely	Almost certainly						
	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
The Trump administration directs the Department of Justice to suspend the prosecution of at least one person accused of crimes related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6, 2021.											
Trump issues a pardon to himself for											





Future threat / benefit intro

In this section of the survey, we ask you to assess a series of events that may materialize in the future. What impact (if any) would each have on American democracy?

Section 7a.1: future threats to democracy

The Trump administration directs the Department of Justice to suspend the prosecution of at least one person accused of crimes related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6, 2021.

- Benefit to American democracy
- Will not affect American democracy
- Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.2: future threats to democracy

Trump issues a pardon to himself for any federal charges he faces.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.3: future threats to democracy

Trump attempts to stay in power beyond the end of his term in office in January 2029.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.4: future threats to democracy

The Trump administration directs the Department of Justice to investigate Joe Biden or another leading Democrat.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.5: future threats to democracy

The Trump administration seeks to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare).

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.6: future threats to democracy

The Trump administration withdraws the U.S. from NATO.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.7: future threats to democracy

The Trump administration detains and deports millions of undocumented immigrants.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.8: future threats to democracy

The Trump administration fires tens of thousands of civil servants who work for federal government agencies.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.9: future threats to democracy

Trump's appointees use the powers of the Federal Communications Commission to challenge the broadcast license of one or more media outlets.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.10: future threats to democracy

The Senate parliamentarian is removed by June 30, 2025.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.11: future threats to democracy

An anti-Trump rally or protest attracts more than 100,000 people to Washington, DC by January 31, 2025.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.12: future threats to democracy

Trump pardons one or more individuals accused of crimes related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6, 2021.

Benefit to American democracy

Will not affect American democracy

Threat to American democracy

Section 7a.13: future threats to democracy

Trump creates a board with the power to review generals and admirals and to recommend removals of them.

- Benefit to American democracy
- Will not affect American democracy
- Threat to American democracy

Section 7b: Future threats to democracy

You indicated that the following are benefits to American democracy. We would now like you to rate the degree to which they are a benefit to democracy.

	Little benefit to American democracy	Moderate benefit to American democracy	Serious benefit to American democracy	Extraordinary benefit to American democracy
The Trump administration directs the Department of Justice to suspend the prosecution of at least one person accused of crimes related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6, 2021.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump issues a pardon to himself for any federal charges he faces.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump attempts to stay in power beyond the end of his term in office in January 2029.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration directs the Department of Justice to investigate Joe Biden or another leading Democrat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration seeks to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Little benefit to American democracy	Moderate benefit to American democracy	Serious benefit to American democracy	Extraordinary benefit to American democracy
withdraws the U.S. from NATO.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration detains and deports millions of undocumented immigrants.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration fires tens of thousands of civil servants who work for federal government agencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump's appointees use the powers of the Federal Communications Commission to challenge the broadcast license of one or more media outlets.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Senate parliamentarian is removed by June 30, 2025.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An anti-Trump rally or protest attracts more than 100,000 people to Washington, DC by January 31, 2025.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump pardons one or more individuals accused of crimes related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6, 2021.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump creates a board with the power to review generals and admirals and to recommend removals of them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You indicated that the following are threats to American democracy. We would now like you to rate the degree to which they are a threat to democracy.

	Little threat to American democracy	Moderate threat to American democracy	Serious threat to American democracy	Extraordinary threat to American democracy
The Trump administration directs the Department of Justice to suspend the prosecution of at least one person accused of crimes related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6, 2021.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump issues a pardon to himself for any federal charges he faces.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump attempts to stay in power beyond the end of his term in office in January 2029.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration directs the Department of Justice to investigate Joe Biden or another leading Democrat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration seeks to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration withdraws the U.S. from NATO.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration detains and deports millions of undocumented immigrants.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Trump administration fires tens of thousands of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Little threat to American democracy	Moderate threat to American democracy	Serious threat to American democracy	Extraordinary threat to American democracy
civil servants who work for federal government agencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump's appointees use the powers of the Federal Communications Commission to challenge the broadcast license of one or more media outlets.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Senate parliamentarian is removed by June 30, 2025.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An anti-Trump rally or protest attracts more than 100,000 people to Washington, DC by January 31, 2025.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump pardons one or more individuals accused of crimes related to the 2020 election or the events of January 6, 2021.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trump creates a board with the power to review generals and admirals and to recommend removals of them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section 8a.1: Mandate

People have offered a number of different explanations for why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election. We will show you several pairs of them below. In each case, please select the explanation that you think better explains why Trump won.

In your view, which of the following better explains why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election?

Biden refused to withdraw until it was too late for a primary
Americans preferred Trump to Harris as a candidate

Section 8a.2: Mandate

People have offered a number of different explanations for why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election. We will show you several pairs of them below. In each case, please select the explanation that you think better explains why Trump won.

In your view, which of the following better explains why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election?

Americans were unhappy with immigration
Americans were unhappy with the economy

Section 8a.3: Mandate

People have offered a number of different explanations for why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election. We will show you several pairs of them below. In each case, please select the explanation that you think better explains why Trump won.

In your view, which of the following better explains why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election?

Harris's racial and gender identity
Biden refused to withdraw until it was too late for a primary

Section 8a.4: Mandate

People have offered a number of different explanations for why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election. We will show you several pairs of them below. In each case, please select the explanation that you think better explains why Trump won.

In your view, which of the following better explains why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election?

Harris focused too much on threats to democracy

Biden refused to withdraw until it was too late for a primary

Section 8a.5: Mandate

People have offered a number of different explanations for why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election. We will show you several pairs of them below. In each case, please select the explanation that you think better explains why Trump won.

In your view, which of the following better explains why Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election?

Americans were unhappy with immigration

Harris focused too much on threats to democracy

Section 8b.1: Mandate

Do you think Trump has a mandate to carry out the agenda he presented during the presidential campaign, or should he compromise on the things the Democrats strongly oppose?

Has mandate

Should compromise

Section 8c.1: Mandate

Please indicate whether you believe the following statement is accurate or not:

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election means Americans support Trump's plans to...

impose tariffs on most imported goods.

Very accurate

Somewhat accurate

Not very accurate

Not at all accurate

Section 8c.2: Mandate

Please indicate whether you believe the following statement is accurate or not:

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election means Americans support Trump's plans to...

detain and deport millions of undocumented immigrants.

Very accurate

Somewhat accurate

Not very accurate

Not at all accurate

Section 8c.3: Mandate

Please indicate whether you believe the following statement is accurate or not:

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election means Americans support Trump's plans to...

pardon rioters who entered the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Very accurate

Somewhat accurate

Not very accurate

Not at all accurate

Section 8c.4: Mandate

Please indicate whether you believe the following statement is accurate or not:

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election means Americans support Trump's plans to...

withdraw US support for Ukraine.

Very accurate

Somewhat accurate

Not very accurate

Not at all accurate

Section 8c.5: Mandate

Please indicate whether you believe the following statement is accurate or not:

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election means Americans support Trump's plans to...

fire thousands of federal civil service employees.

Very accurate

Somewhat accurate

Not very accurate

Not at all accurate

Section 8c.6: Mandate

Please indicate whether you believe the following statement is accurate or not:

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election means Americans support Trump's plans to...

stop government support for transgender health care.

Very accurate

Somewhat accurate

Not very accurate

Not at all accurate

Section 11: Occupation

Finally, we have just a few questions about you.

Which of the following best describes your occupation?

Graduate student

Post-doctoral fellow

Adjunct faculty

Full-time faculty

Emeritus faculty

Other

Section 13: Field of study

What is your primary field of study?

American politics

Comparative politics

International relations

Political theory

Another field of political science

Something other than political science

What is your specific area of study?

Section 14: Comments

Do you have any comments about this survey?

Thank you for answering these questions. This research is not intended to support or oppose any political candidate or office. The research has no affiliation with any political candidate or campaign and has received no financial support from any political candidate or campaign.

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