



## ISSUE BRIEF

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# A CHANGING ELECTORATE IN DETROIT: THE EFFECTS OF THE SHIFT FROM BIDEN TO HARRIS ON DETROITERS' VOTING INTENTIONS

OCTOBER 2024

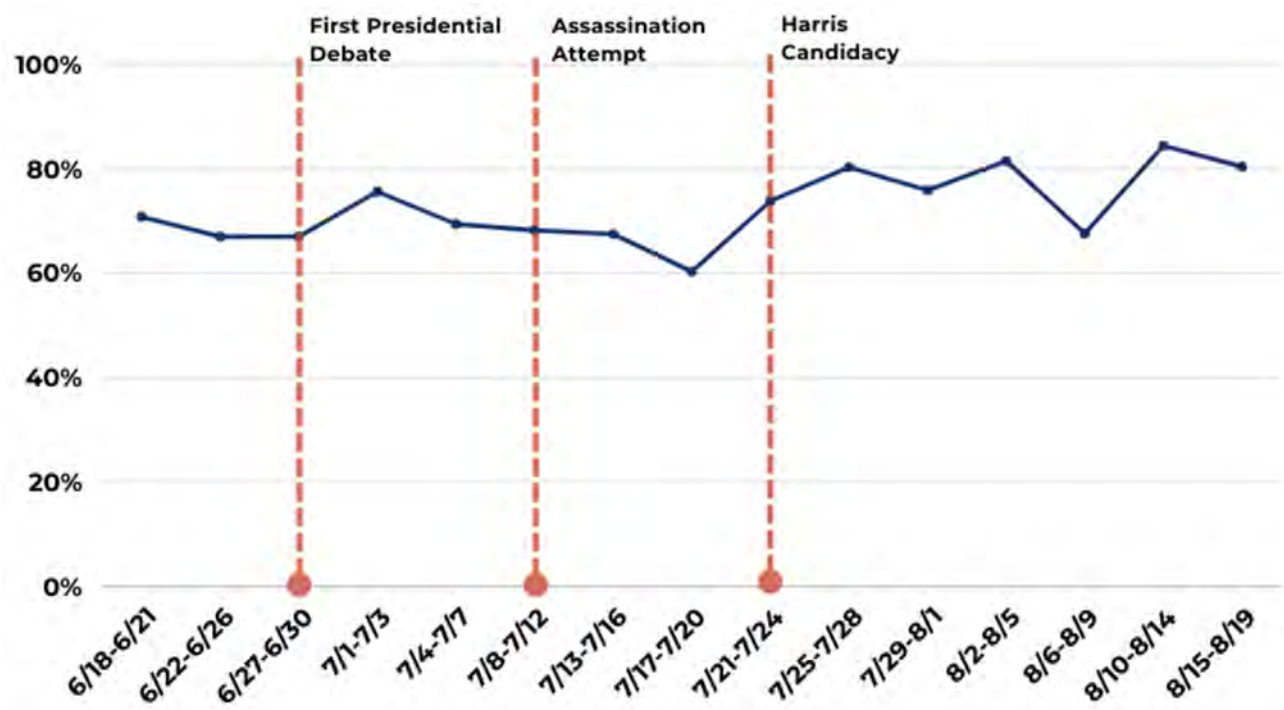
BY MARA CECILIA OSTFELD AND YUCHENG FAN

This report draws on data collected by the [Detroit Metro Area Communities Study \(DMACS\)](#) at the University of Michigan. This survey was administered from June 18 through August 19, 2024, and captures the views of a representative sample of 2,450 Detroit residents. This report explores Detroiters' self-reported likelihood of participating in the 2024 presidential election over the course of the summer leading up to the election – with an eye towards any changes in voting propensity that may have occurred following key events: the first presidential debate on June 27 between former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden, the first assassination attempt on Trump on July 13, and the announcement by Biden to drop out of the race and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic presidential nominee on July 21. We offer evidence of a small increase in Detroiters' intentions to vote after Biden decided not to seek reelection and endorsed Harris. Additionally we identify key groups among whom voting intentions changed over the course of the summer. See an [overview of the methodology for this survey](#) and [full results from DMACS surveys](#).

## KEY FINDINGS

- There was a small but significant increase in the share of eligible Detroit voters who said they would definitely vote in November after President Joe Biden dropped out of the race and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris as the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee.<sup>1</sup>
- The increase in the share of eligible Detroit voters who said they would definitely vote after Harris became the Democratic nominee was most apparent among younger voters and voters living in moderate income households.
- Neither Biden's debate performance in June, nor the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump in July appeared to affect the share of eligible Detroit voters saying they would definitely vote in November.

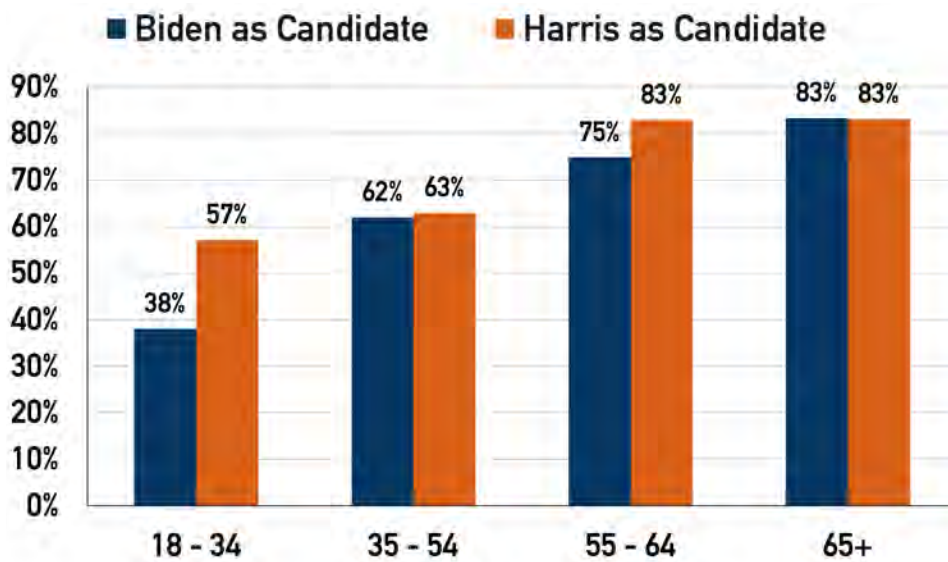
**Figure 1: Percent of eligible Detroit voters who say they will definitely vote in November, by time period**



# THERE WAS A SMALL UPTICK IN THE PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE DETROIT VOTERS WHO SAID THEY “DEFINITELY WILL VOTE” AFTER BIDEN DROPPED OUT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE AND ENDORSED HARRIS AS THE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

- Seventy percent (70%) of eligible Detroit voters who were surveyed during the month preceding Biden’s decision to exit the presidential race (between June 18 - July 20, 2024) said they definitely would vote in November. The average percent of eligible Detroit voters who said they definitely would vote in November ticked up to 77% after Biden dropped out of the race and endorsed Harris.<sup>5</sup>
  - The increase in the percent of eligible Detroit voters who said they were definitely going to vote was most pronounced when comparing the period immediately before (July 8 - July 20, 2024) and after (July 21 - August 19, 2024) Harris became the Democratic presidential nominee. During the roughly two weeks immediately before Biden exited the race, 66% of eligible Detroit voters said they definitely would vote in the November elections.
  - While more Detroiters said they “definitely would vote” after Harris became the Democratic nominee, we did not collect data on who the respondents intended to vote for.
- There was not a significant change in the voting intentions of eligible Detroit voters when comparing the periods before and after the presidential debate between Biden and Trump.<sup>6</sup>
- There was also not a significant change in the voting intentions of eligible Detroit voters when comparing the periods before and after the first assassination attempt on Trump at a campaign rally.<sup>7</sup>

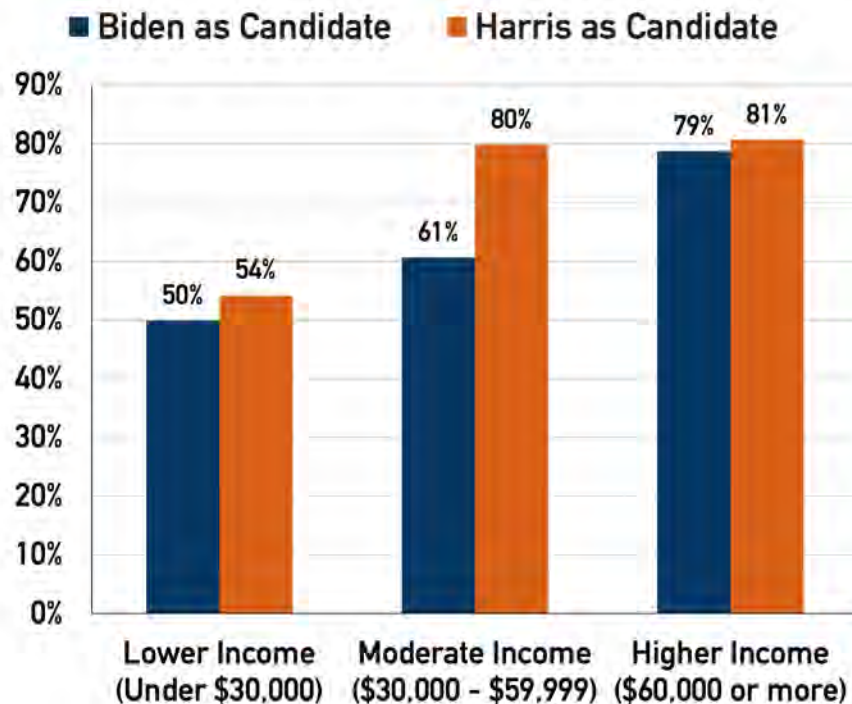
**Figure 2: Percent of eligible Detroit voters who say they will definitely vote in November, by age**



## MORE ELIGIBLE DETROIT VOTERS BETWEEN 18 AND 34 SAID THEY “DEFINITELY WILL VOTE” AFTER HARRIS BECAME THE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE, RELATIVE TO BEFORE HARRIS WAS THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE.<sup>8</sup>

- Prior to Harris becoming the Democratic nominee, eligible Detroit voters between the ages of 18 and 34 were less likely to say they definitely would vote in November than their older counterparts. Only 38% of eligible Detroit voters between the ages of 18 and 34 said they definitely would vote in November before Harris became the presumptive Democratic nominee, compared to 62% of eligible Detroit voters between 35 and 54, 75% of eligible Detroit voters between 55 and 64, and 83% of eligible Detroit voters 65 year and older.
- There was nearly a 20 percentage point increase in the percent of eligible Detroit voters between the ages of 18 and 34 who said they would definitely vote after Harris became the Democratic presidential nominee. Just under 4 in 10 eligible Detroit voters in this age group said they would definitely vote when Biden was still the Democratic nominee, compared to nearly 6 in 10 after Harris became the Democratic nominee.
- The shift in Democratic nominee from Biden to Harris did not have a significant impact on the likelihood of voting in any of the other age groups (35-54, 55-64, and 65 and over) saying that they would definitely vote.

**Figure 3: Percent of eligible Detroit voters who say they will definitely vote in November, by income**



# MORE ELIGIBLE DETROIT VOTERS LIVING IN MODERATE INCOME HOUSEHOLDS SAID THEY “DEFINITELY WILL VOTE” AFTER HARRIS BECAME THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT.<sup>9, 10</sup>

- Prior to Harris becoming the Democratic nominee, eligible Detroit voters living in higher income households (\$60,000 or greater) were more likely to say they definitely will vote in November than other eligible Detroit voters. More than three-quarters (79%) of eligible Detroit voters living in higher income households said they definitely will vote in November before Harris became the Democratic nominee, compared to 61% of eligible Detroit voters living in moderate income households (\$30,000 - \$59,999), and 50% of eligible Detroit voters living in lower income households (under \$30,000).
- After Biden dropped out of the race and endorsed Harris as the Democratic nominee, more eligible Detroit voters living in moderate income households said they definitely will vote in November. Just over 6 in 10 (61%) eligible Detroit voters living in moderate income households said they definitely will vote in November before Harris formally entered the presidential race. The share of eligible Detroit voters in this income bracket who said they will definitely vote in November increased to 8 in 10 (80%) after Harris became the Democratic nominee.

## AUTHORS

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful for the generous support of the Knight Foundation, The Ballmer Group, and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Nominees are considered presumptive prior to their official party nomination. For parsimony, we refer to the leading candidates for each party as the party's nominee throughout this brief.
- 2 Past work has found that only [about 77% of eligible voters who say they "will definitely vote" actually do vote](#), according to validated voter records. Given these patterns, the number of Detroiters who say they "will definitely vote" is likely an overestimate of how many Detroiters will actually vote in November.
- 3 We did not include Detroiters who indicated that they "probably will vote" in our estimates of likely voters because past analyses demonstrate the actual share of these voters who turn out to vote is relatively low. According to [one analysis of validated voting records](#), only about 36% of people who said they "probably will vote" actually voted.
- 4 Survey responses are weighted to match the estimated distributions of Detroit's population based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 1-year estimates from the American Community Survey. Additionally, analyses by time period (noted along the y-axis of Figure 1) include demographic controls to ensure that variation in the composition of the sample within the time periods of interest do not bias estimates.
- 5 To test whether the change in presumptive Democratic nominees from Biden to Harris affected the likelihood of Detroiters stating they definitely would vote in November, we used a logistic regression model that compared all responses from when Biden was the Democratic nominee (between June 18 and July 20, 2024 with 1,960 responses) to all responses when Harris was the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee (between July 21 to August 19, 2024 with 291 respondents).
- 6 To test whether the debate affected the likelihood of Detroiters stating they definitely would vote in November, we used a logistic regression model that compared responses from the week immediately before the debate (between June 18 - June 26, 2024 with 1,033 respondents) to responses from the week immediately after the debate (between June 27 - July 4, 2024 with 450 respondents).
- 7 To test whether the assassination attempt on Trump affected the likelihood of Detroiters stating they definitely would vote in November, we used a logistic regression model that compared responses from the week immediately before the assassination attempt (between July 5 - July 12, 2024 with 314 respondents) to responses from the week immediately after the assassination attempt (between July 13 - July 20, 2024 with 163 respondents).
- 8 These analyses include 2,131 respondents during the period that Biden was the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee (between June 18 - July 20, 2024), including 353 respondents between 18 and 34 years old, 726 respondents between 35 and 54 years old, 447 respondents between 55 and 64 years old, and 605 respondents 65 years old and older. In the period after Harris became the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee (July 21 - August 19, 2024), our analyses include 319 respondents, including 60 respondents between 18 and 34 years old, 102 respondents between 35 and 54 years old, 54 respondents between 55 and 64 years old, and 103 respondents 65 years old and older.
- 9 These analyses include 2,450 respondents during the period that President Biden was the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee (between June 18 - July 20, 2024), including 833 respondents with annual household incomes under \$30,000, 637 respondents with annual household incomes between \$30,000 and \$59,999, and 661 respondents with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more. In the period after Vice-President Harris became the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee (July 21 - August 19, 2024), our analyses include 319 respondents, including 119 respondents with annual household incomes under \$30,000, 73 respondents with annual household incomes between \$30,000 and \$59,999, and 127 respondents with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more.
- 10 In this brief, we use the term "lower income households" to refer to households with annual incomes of \$30,000 or less, "moderate income households" to refer to households with annual incomes between \$30,000 and \$59,999, and "higher income households" to refer to households with annual incomes of \$60,000 or more.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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For more information on DMACS, please contact  
Sharon Sand, DMACS project manager, at  
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Learn more at [www.detroiturvey.umich.edu](http://www.detroiturvey.umich.edu)

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Support for DMACS comes from the University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, Institute for Social Research and Poverty Solutions. DMACS is also supported by the Knight Foundation.