

What Gen Z Thinks About U.S. Foreign Policy

Christopher S. Chivvis and Lauren Morganbesser

Gen Z (born between 1997-2012) is coming of age politically. Their viewpoints will shape the future of U.S. foreign policy. We surveyed 800 Gen Z to find out where they agree and differ from older generations on key foreign policy issues.

Top Takeaways

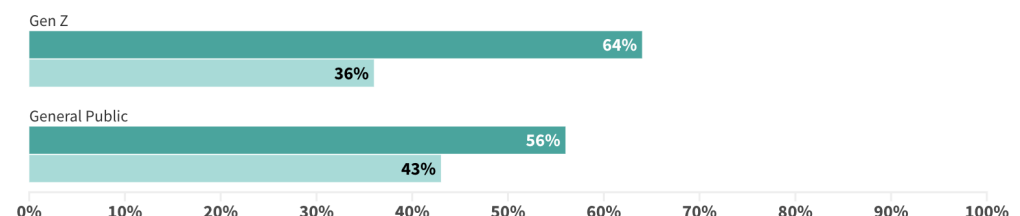
1. Gen Z Holds Broadly Internationalist Views

- Gen Z believes the United States should take an active part in world affairs.
- The difference between Gen Z and older generations was particularly pronounced for Republicans: Gen Z Republicans were 13 percentage points more likely than Republicans from the general population to favor “an active part in world affairs,” indicating that the MAGA movement could shift in a more internationalist direction over time.

According to a recent poll, Gen Z strongly believes the United States should take an active part in world affairs.

Do you think it would be better for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs?

Take an active role Stay out



N = 800 Gen Z and 2,106 General Public
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and YouGov survey, “Gen Z Attitudes Toward U.S. Foreign Policy,” January 31, 2025–February 11, 2025; and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, “America’s Foreign Policy Future: Public Opinion and the 2024 Election,” November 1, 2024, <https://globalaffairs.org/research/public-opinion-survey/americas-foreign-policy-future-public-opinion-and-2024-election>.

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2. Gen Z Is Less Exceptionalist About U.S. Leadership on Several Policy Challenges

- Even though Gen Z is more internationalist than older generations, it sees a more modest role for the United States. Our poll found Gen Z was less likely than the general public to say it was “very important” for the United States to be a world leader in economic strength, military strength, and democratic values.
- Gen Z Trump voters were significantly less focused on the military dimension of U.S. leadership than their older cohorts.

3. Polarization by Party Was Clear on Most Issues, Except for Climate Change

- For most foreign policy issues, Gen Z was polarized along party lines. For example, Gen Z Trump voters were far more likely than Gen Z Harris voters to support the use of troops to halt immigration from Mexico.
- An important exception to this partisan lens appeared when we polled views on climate change. Gen Z polled somewhat more likely overall to see climate change as a serious problem and support U.S. action in international efforts to combat it. The most striking difference was among different generations of Republicans. Trump Gen Zers were significantly more likely than older Republicans to consider climate

change a serious problem, with 35 percent of Gen Z Trump voters saying it was very important for the United States to take a leading role in combating it, compared with only 18 percent of Republicans overall.

4. Israel

- In our poll, 44 percent of Gen Zers opposed U.S. military support to Israel, and 24 percent favored only defensive aid. Partisan divides were stark: more than half of Gen Z Harris voters said the United States should not be supporting Israel militarily, while a plurality of Gen Z Trump voters supported both defensive and offensive aid.

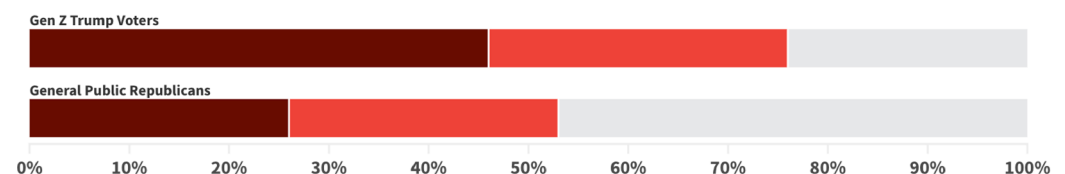
5. Where Does Gen Z Get Its Information on Foreign Policy?

- Social networks in general were Gen Z’s top sources of foreign policy information. Most reported getting news from social media, followed by conversations with friends. There was limited use of print journalism among Gen Z (only 7 percent), although 41 percent reported the use of online journalism.
- Faith in traditional newspapers was also limited—only 22 percent responded that traditional newspapers were “very trustworthy,” while 16 percent said the same of social media, showing that Gen Z might be a generation of “media skeptics.”

Gen Z Trump voters were 20% more likely than Republicans from the general public to see climate change as either an “extremely” or “very” serious problem.

In your view, climate change is a:

■ Extremely/very serious problem ■ Somewhat serious problem ■ Not too serious/not a problem



N = 800 Gen Z and 8,842 General Public

Sources: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and YouGov survey, “Gen Z Attitudes Toward U.S. Foreign Policy,” January 31, 2025–February 11, 2025; and the Pew Research Center, “How Americans View Future Harms from Climate Change in Their Community and Around the U.S.,” October 25, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2023/10/PS_2023.10.25_climate-change-harms_REPORT.pdf



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