

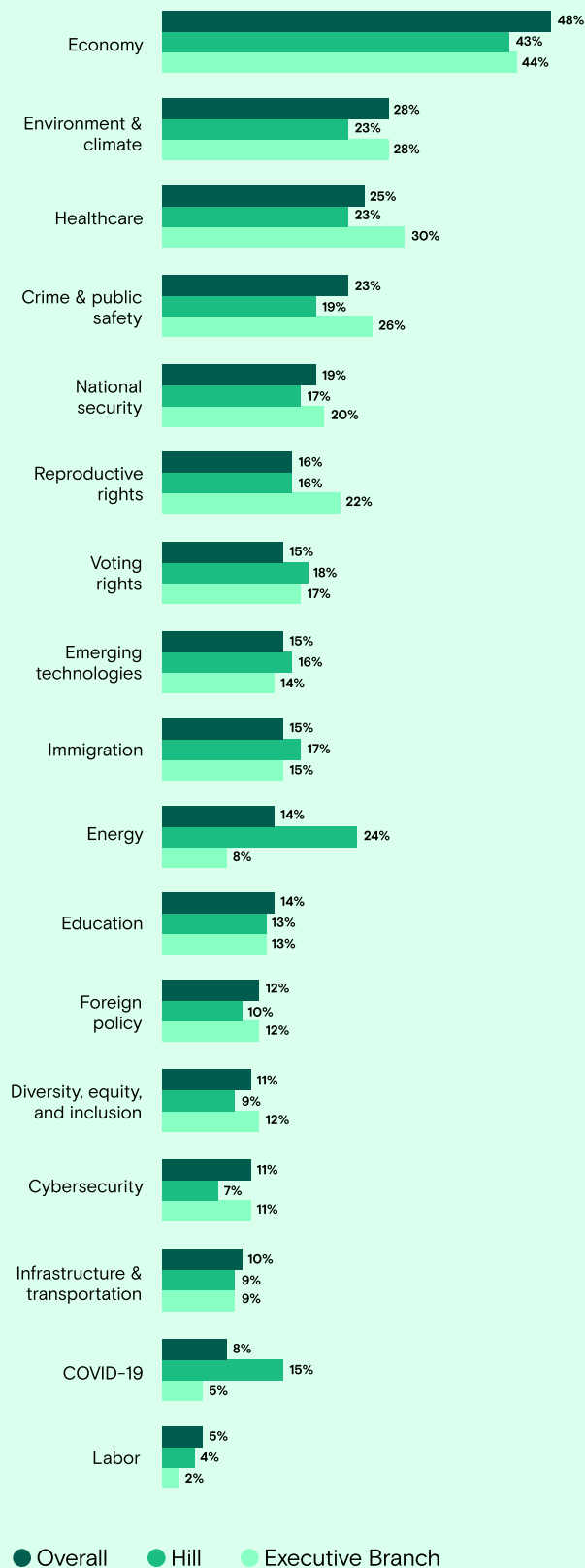
Penta Policy Insiders

Policy Perspectives

Policymaker and Public Priorities

July 2023
policyinsiders.pentagroup.co

Most pressing issues facing the nation



Source: Penta Policy Insiders

Policy perspectives:

Policymaker and public priorities

As part of our annual flagship study on advocacy in D.C., conducted between February and May 2023, we asked federal policymakers – including staff from the Legislative and Executive branches – about the policy issues they are prioritizing.

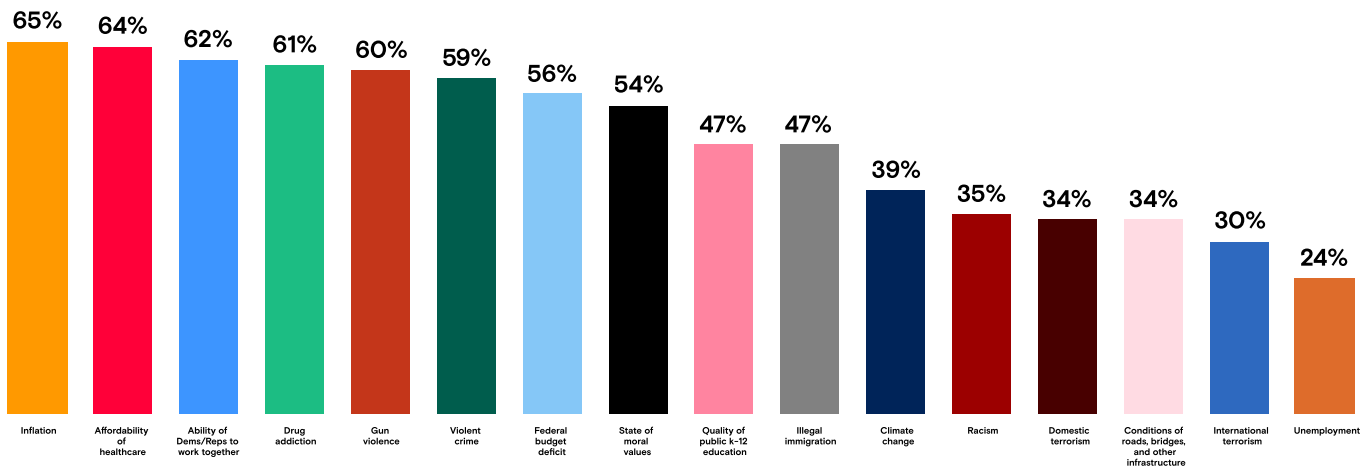
With a new Congress seated and public concerns about partisanship at an all time high,¹ the issues that policy leaders have top-of-mind are of continued interest and importance. Here, we highlight some of those findings.

Economic issues continue to be the leading priority for policymakers both in Congress and Executive Agencies. Lingering concerns about a potential recession, interest rate hikes, and inflation at a nearly-40-year high are all contributing to policymakers' focus on economy-related issues this year.

Inflation is of particular importance to policy staff, with almost two-thirds (63 percent) rating it as the most pressing economic issue currently facing the nation. Given reports that the Federal Reserve will be continuing its interest rate increases,² policymaker prioritization of economy-related issues is not slowing down.

Public perceptions of national problems

Percentage of respondents who say the following are “very big problems” in the country today.



Source: Pew Research Center

The concerns about the economy, and inflation in particular, are not limited to policymakers. A June 2023 study by Pew Research Center found that 65 percent of Americans believe that inflation is currently a “very big problem” in the country.³ Americans are concerned about the impact of inflation across a variety of pressure points. Almost a quarter of the population (22 percent) report food costs to be the most “pressing financial worry.”⁴ Mortgage or rent payments are also of significant concern. The prevalence of these economy-related issues and the resulting focus from both the general public and policy leaders indicates an alignment about the need to address these challenges.

Partisanship concerns still persist

While there is consensus between the American people and its leadership about the importance of tackling economic concerns, there are doubts about how effectively Democrats and Republicans can work together to find and implement economic solutions. In fact, according to Pew Research, 62 percent of the populace believe that the ability of Democrats and Republicans to work together is a “very big problem” facing the country.

This concern is important for policymakers to be aware of as it ranks higher in the minds of the public than many other significant policy issues, including crime, the budget deficit, education, terrorism, and climate change. The American people clearly wants Congress to function in a bipartisan manner, with a recent poll finding that two out of three voters prefer that their member work collaboratively – particularly when it comes to the economy and healthcare.⁵ Working towards bipartisan solutions to the current economic challenges in the U.S. could be the first step in alleviating the perception that Democrats and Republicans can’t effectively work together to solve the issues impacting their districts. It remains to be seen, however, if Congress can rise to meet the expectations of its constituents during this increasingly partisan time period.

About Penta Policy Insiders

Penta Policy Insiders provides direct feedback from policymakers to government relations professionals, improving advocates' ability to understand, validate, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their engagement.

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Citations

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/04/07/in-divided-washington-americans-have-highly-negative-views-of-both-parties-leaders/>
2. <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/interest-rate-hike-july-2023-how-much-higher-federal-reserve-rcna96210>
3. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/06/21/inflation-health-costs-partisan-cooperation-among-the-nations-top-problems/pp_2023-06-21_national-problems_00-05/
4. <https://poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3871>
5. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/majority-of-american-voters-want-congress-to-work-together/>

Quantitative n: 1,208

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