NOVEMBER 2026

INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNANCE & CIVICS
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

IGC POLL REPORT

Which Issues Move Candidate Support?

Policy Tradeoffs in a 2026 Survey Experiment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Which issues most influence Americans when choosing between candidates who share some views but differ on others? To answer this, the Institute for Governance and Civics at Florida State University surveyed 1,036 U.S. adults from October 16 to 22, 2026. Respondents indicated their preferences on eight policy issues, then choose between hypothetical congressional candidates in six comparisons. Each comparison showed randomly assigned candidate positions on four of the eight is-sues. By measuring how much these positions affected support, we identified which policy alternatives most influenced respondents' candidate choices. Key findings include:

- **Different issues shifted candidate support most among Democrats and Republicans.**
  Among Democrats, the largest shifts in support resulted from positions on tariffs, Medicaid, and deportation. For Republicans, abortion produced the largest swing, followed by military assistance to Israel and the Iran war.
- **Positions on tariffs and Medicaid moved candidate support most overall.**
  Candidates who favored lowering tariffs received **18.2 percentage points** more support than those who favored raising them. Maintaining Medicaid funding and eligibility drew **18.1 points** more support than cutting funding and limiting eligibility. Both gaps were significantly larger than those on any of the other six issues tested.
- **Positions on the Iran war produced the smallest overall shift in candidate support, even as support moved in opposite directions among Democrats and Republicans.**
  Compared with candidates who favored ending U.S. military involvement as soon as possible, those who favored continuing until the stated objectives were met drew **10.2 percentage points** less support among Democrats and **13.4 points** more among Republicans. Among the 45% of respondents who favored neither approach, were unsure, or had not thought much about the issue, the two positions made al-most no difference in average candidate support.

INTRODUCTION

Election surveys often ask Americans which issues matter most to their vote. However, voters may care deeply about several issues at once, and candidates rarely share all their views. For example, a voter who wants to preserve Medicaid funding and end the Iran war might face a candidate who agrees with them on Medicaid but not Iran, and another who agrees with them on Iran but not Medicaid. This raises the question: "Which disagreement would they be more willing to accept?"

To learn how Americans weigh such tradeoffs, the Institute for Governance and Civics at Florida State University commissioned Ipsos to survey a nationally representative sample of 1,036 U.S. adults from October 16 to 22, 2026. We first asked respondents about their preferences on eight policy issues, including tariffs, Medicaid, deportation, the Iran war, and military assistance to Israel—issues prominent in the 2026 midterm election campaigns.[1] We then showed each respondent six pairs of hypothetical candidates running for Congress in their district and asked which candidate they would be more likely to vote for in each pair. Each comparison showed the candidates' positions on four of the eight issues.[2]

Because candidates' positions varied at random, we could estimate how much changing a position on one issue shifted support while accounting for the other positions respondents saw. Comparing those shifts across issues shows which policy alternatives carried the most weight in respondents' choices.

Overall, candidates' positions on tariffs and Medicaid shifted support the most, while their positions on the Iran war shifted it the least. Which issues mattered most, however, varied greatly by party. The largest estimated shifts among Democrats came on tariffs, Medicaid, and deportation, while among Republicans they came on abortion, military assistance to Israel, and the Iran war. The Iran result, in particular, shows how the national average can hide partisan differences. Favoring continued U.S. military involvement cost candidates support among Democrats and gained them support among Republicans, leaving the two positions nearly tied overall. At the same time, the two Iran positions made almost no difference to candidate support on average among the 45% of respondents who identified with neither position, were unsure, or had not thought much about the issue.

1 Our selection of policy issues was informed in part by a July 2026 Pew Research Center survey, one of the few available assessments of voters' priorities for the upcoming midterm elections at the time we designed the experiment. We sought to translate broad electoral concerns into concrete policy questions on which candidates could take distinct, competing positions. The eight issues were not intended to constitute an exhaustive or ranked list of voters' priorities.

2 Appendix A includes an example candidate comparison and explains how issues and policy positions were assigned.

POSITIONS ON TARIFFS AND MEDICAID PRODUCED THE LARGEST SHIFTS IN CANDIDATE SUPPORT OVERALL

Figure 1 shows the gap in candidate support between the most- and least-favored positions on each of the eight issues tested in the experiment. These estimates account for the candidates' positions on the other issues shown in each comparison, allowing us to compare how much changing a candidate's position on each issue moved support. Figures B1–B3 in Appendix B provide detailed results for each policy position, both overall and by party.

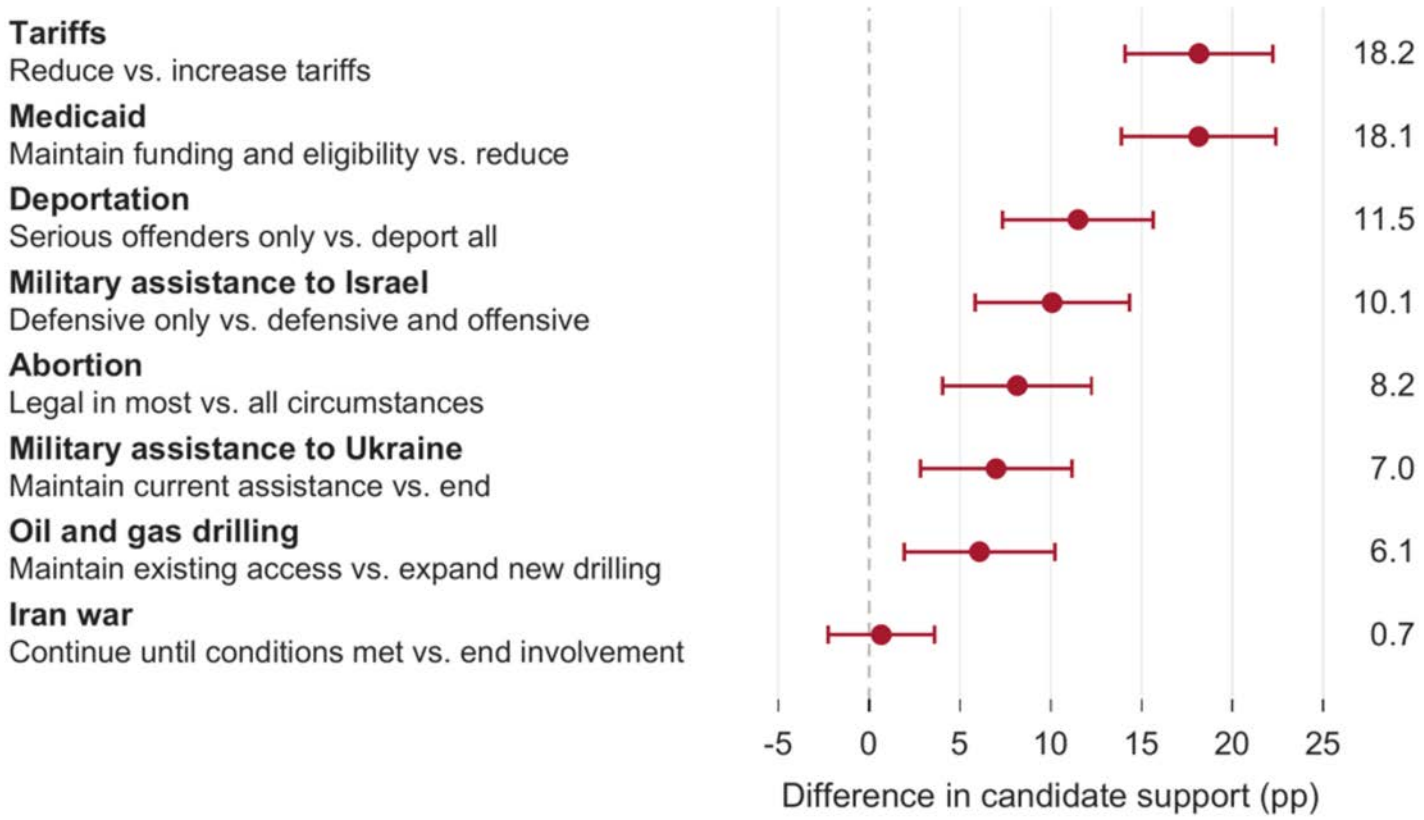

Figure 1. Largest Estimated Differences in Candidate Support Across Tested Policy Positions, by Issue
Note: Points show the largest estimated difference in candidate support between the policy positions tested within each issue, expressed in percentage points. Each comparison lists the position receiving greater estimated support first. Horizontal bars show 95% confidence intervals, with Bonferroni adjustments across the available pairwise comparisons within each issue where three positions were tested. Estimates use national survey weights and standard errors clustered by respondent, accounting for the candidate's other displayed policy positions, task, and candidate label. Comparisons depend on the policy alternatives tested; the ordering does not establish statistically significant differences between every pair of issues.

Overall, candidates gained and lost the most support on tariffs and Medicaid. Candidates who proposed lowering tariffs drew 18.2 percentage points more support than those who proposed raising them. Candidates who favored maintaining Medicaid funding and eligibility drew 18.1 points more support than those who proposed cutting funding and limiting eligibility. Both gaps were significantly larger than the largest estimated gap on the other six issues tested. The results suggest higher tariffs and Medicaid cuts were among the hardest compromises for respondents to accept. Either proposal could lead respondents to

choose another candidate, even if they agreed with the first candidate on other issues.

On deportation, military assistance to Israel, abortion, military assistance to Ukraine, and oil and gas drilling, the largest shifts in candidate support ranged from about 6 to 12 percentage points. At the upper end of the range, candidates who would limit deportation to undocumented immigrants who had committed serious crimes, whether violent or nonviolent, drew 11.5 points more support than candidates who would deport all undocumented immigrants. Candidates who favored continuing defensive assistance to Israel while ending offensive assistance drew 10.1 points more support than those who favored continuing both forms of assistance.

Despite the Iran war's prominence in campaign debates and postmortems of the 2026 election, the two positions tested on the war produced the smallest gap in nationwide candidate support. Candidates who favored continuing U.S. military involvement until free passage through the Strait of Hormuz was restored and Iran's nuclear capabilities were eliminated or significantly reduced drew just 0.7 percentage points more support than candidates who favored ending involvement as soon as possible, even if Iran retained control of the strait and its remaining nuclear capabilities. This difference was smaller than the largest shift on every other issue tested, including oil and gas drilling.

One clue to why the overall gap on Iran was so small comes from the preference questions. Forty-five percent of respondents either favored neither approach (16%) or were unsure or had not thought much about the issue (29%). Even respondents who favored neither approach might have found one closer to their own views. Yet the two positions made almost no difference to candidate support on average in either group (Appendix Figure B9, panel F). The contrast mattered much more among respondents who favored one of the two approaches, shifting support by more than 20 percentage points in opposite directions. The war's prominence in election debates thus obscures how unevenly these positions mattered to respondents' choices.

As the next section shows, the partisan breakdown offers another clue. Continuing U.S. military involvement cost candidates support among Democrats and gained them support among Republicans so the two shifts largely offset each other in the national average.

THE TWO PARTIES FOCUSED ON DIFFERENT ISSUES

Figure 2 compares the largest shifts in candidate support on each issue separately for Democrats and Republicans. Among Democrats, candidates' positions on tariffs and Medicaid produced the largest estimated swings, at about 28 and 27 percentage points, followed by deportation at 24 points. The largest swings on the remaining five issues ranged from about 10 to 17 points, with military assistance to Israel at the upper end and oil and gas drilling at the lower end.

Among Republicans, the ordering differed markedly. Abortion stood out as the only issue on which the positions tested shifted candidate support by at least 20 percentage points, with an estimated swing of 21.9 points. The next largest swings were on military assistance to Israel (14.7 points) and the Iran war (13.4 points). Swings on the other five issues ranged from 6.6 points for military assistance to Ukraine to 11.5 points for Medicaid.

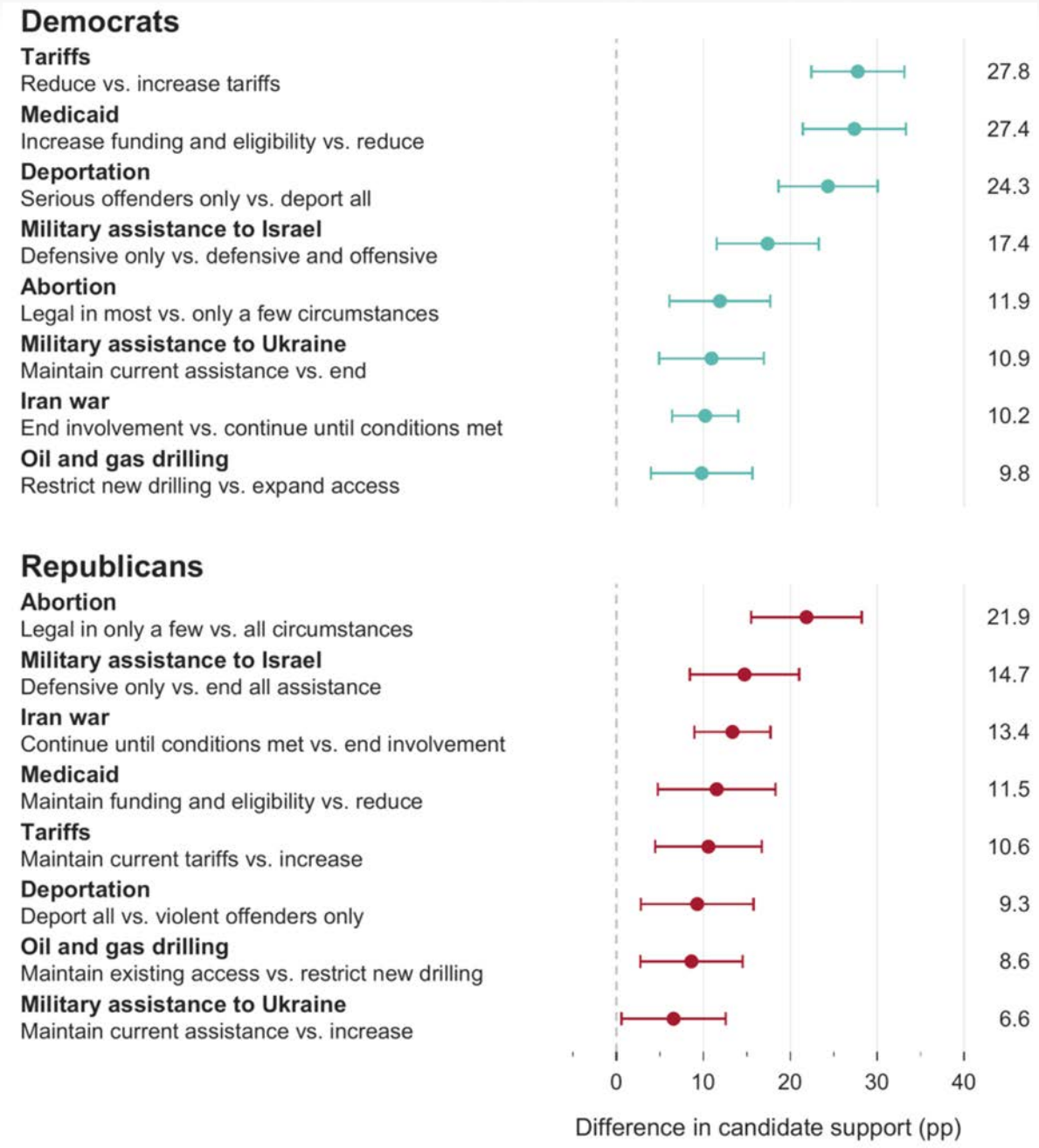

Figure 2. Largest Estimated Differences in Candidate Support Across Tested Policy Positions, by Issue and Respondent Party Affiliation

Note: Points show the largest estimated difference in candidate support between the policy positions tested within each issue, separately for Democrats and Republicans, including independent respondents who lean Republican or Democrat. Each comparison lists the position receiving greater estimated support first; the positions compared can differ by party. Issues are ordered by the size of the estimated difference within each panel. Horizontal bars show 95% confidence intervals, with Bonferroni adjustments across the available pairwise comparisons within each issue and party where three positions were tested. Estimates use national survey weights and standard errors clustered by respondent. Nonleaners and respondents who refused party identification remain in the model but are not shown. The ordering does not establish statistically significant differences between every pair of issues.

In addition to showing which issues Democrats and Republicans were least willing to compromise on when choosing between candidates, the party breakdown explains why the two positions on the Iran war barely moved the needle on overall support. The Iran positions produced statistically significant swings in support among members of both parties, but in opposite directions. Compared with candidates favoring ending U.S. military involvement as soon as possible, those favoring continuing until the stated objectives were met drew 10.2 percentage points less support among Democrats and 13.4 points more among Republicans. Among respondents overall, these swings largely canceled out.

The Democratic and Republican groups above include both party identifiers and independent respondents who lean toward the respective party. In a close race, voters who do not identify with either major party can help decide the outcome, even if many lean toward one party. We therefore analyzed the 372 respondents Ipsos classified as Democratic leaners, Republican leaners, or nonleaners/refusals separately.

As shown in Figure B10 in Appendix B, this pooled group shared its top three issues with the Democratic group shown in Figure 2. Medicaid produced the largest estimated swing in candidate support at 21.6 percentage points, followed by tariffs at 19.8 points and deportation at 14.8 points. Iran produced the smallest swing in the pooled group, at 1.9 points. The small gap again hides opposite reactions among Democratic and Republican leaners. Compared with ending U.S. involvement as soon as possible, continuing until the stated objectives were met drew an estimated 8.1 points less support among Democratic leaners and 6.3 points more among Republican leaners.

YOUNGER AND OLDER ADULTS RESPOND DIFFERENTLY TO CANDIDATE POSITIONS ON IRAN AND ISRAEL

Although some of the largest differences in candidate support across issue positions appear between partisan groups, notable differences emerge between age groups on two issues: the Iran war and military assistance to Israel.[3] Figure 3 shows these differences among adults under 50 and those ages 50 and older, adjusting for party identification, gender, race and ethnicity, education, and household income.

On the Iran war (panel A), adults under 50 were 4.5 percentage points less likely to back candidates favoring continued involvement until the stated objectives were met (47.9%) than those favoring an end to involvement as soon as possible (52.4%). Adults ages 50 and older showed the opposite pattern: continuing involvement increased support by 6.2 points, from 46.7% to 52.9%. Both effects were statistically significant.

On military assistance to Israel (panel B), adults under 50 were significantly more likely – by 11.9 and 9.5 percentage points, respectively – to select candidates favoring defensive assistance alone (54.8%) or ending all assistance (52.4%) than those favoring continued defensive and offensive assistance (42.9%). For adults 50 and older, continuing defensive assistance alone produced a significant 7.8-point increase in support (57.4%) relative to continuing both (49.7%). Ending all assistance produced a significant 6.0-point decrease in support, from 49.7% to 43.7%.

3 We also examined whether the effects of candidate positions varied by gender, race and ethnicity, education, or household income. Some differences were statistically significant in individual tests, but none remained significant after accounting for the number of subgroup tests conducted. The two age differences highlighted in the text remained statistically significant after Holm adjustment across 105 demographic contrasts.

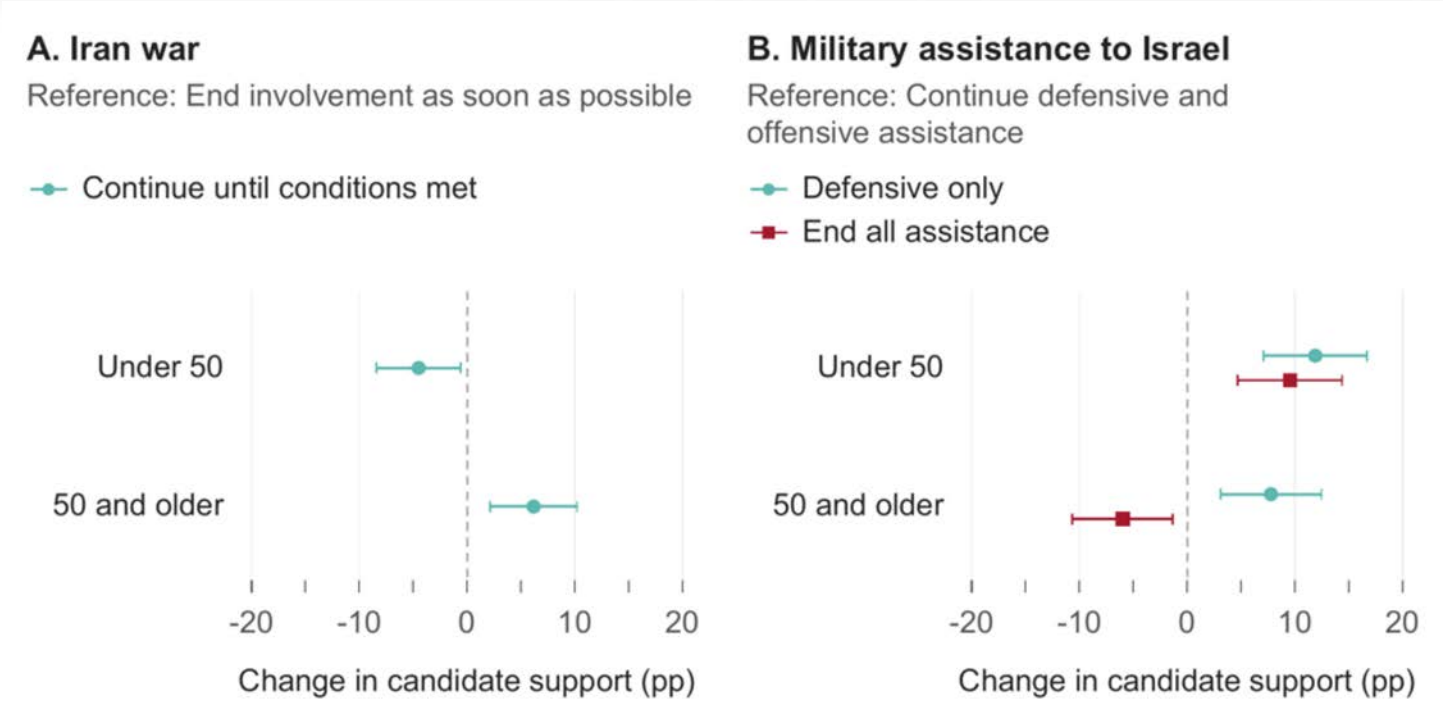

Figure 3. Effects of Candidate Policy Positions on Support, by Age Group: Iran and Military Assistance to Israel
Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (991 respondents; 11,360 candidate evaluations). Markers show changes in the probability of choosing a candidate, in percentage points, relative to the reference position listed in each panel. Estimates account for party identification, gender, race and ethnicity, education, household income, task number, and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. The model allows policy effects and task differences to vary across these characteristics and age groups. Both age groups are compared using the same distribution of the other characteristics. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy descriptions are abbreviated.

This age divide in responses to candidates' positions on assistance to Israel is consistent with a broader gap in views of Israel. In a spring 2026 Pew Research Center survey, 74% of U.S. adults ages 18 to 34 and 65% of those ages 35 to 49 viewed Israel unfavorably, compared with 49% of adults 50 and older.[4] One question following from such data is whether young Americans will actually factor positions on Israel into their political decisions. Our experimental findings suggest they do, even as other issues—including Medicaid, tariffs, and deportation—matter.[5]

4 See Pew Research Center. (2026, June 4). Views of Israel by age [Chart]. https://www.pewresearch.org/chart/pg_26-05-00_israel_tableage/
5 Among adults under 50, the largest estimated differences in candidate support between positions tested on each issue were 16.9 percentage points for Medicaid, 15.9 for tariffs, and 14.3 for deportation, compared with 11.9 for military assistance to Israel.

CONCLUSION

When candidates agree with voters on some issues and disagree on others, voters must decide which disagreements they can accept. In our experiment, candidates gained or lost the most support overall on tariffs and Medicaid. Higher tariffs and Medicaid cuts appeared to be among the hardest compromises for respondents to accept. A respondent who wanted to end the Iran war or cut military assistance to Israel might still choose another candidate if the one who agreed with them pro-posed raising tariffs or cutting Medicaid. The tradeoffs differed by party. Tariffs, Medicaid, and deportation produced the largest estimated swings among Democrats. Among Republicans, abortion produced the largest swing, followed by military assistance to Israel and the Iran war.

The Iran result shows why an issue's prominence in a campaign can tell us only so much about its electoral impact. Continuing U.S. military involvement cost candidates support among Democrats and gained support among Republicans. Overall, the two positions drew nearly equal support. They made almost no difference to candidate support on average among the 45% of respondents who favored neither approach, were unsure, or had not thought much about the issue. How much a candidate's position on Iran mattered in a given race would depend in part on how many voters who turned out had a clear preference about how and when U.S. involvement should end, what each candidate proposed, and which disagreements on other issues those voters were willing to accept.

Postmortems of the 2026 midterms must distinguish between the issues drawing attention and the positions moving candidate support. Headlines tell us what dominated the debate, and surveys tell us what voters said was important. But when voters care deeply about several issues at once, it is harder to determine which issue takes precedence. To understand what drove voters' choices, we need to ask which concerns carried the most weight when backing a candidate and where voters were willing to accept disagreements on other issues.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY AND EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

SURVEY SAMPLE

Ipsos conducted the survey online from October 16 to 22, 2026, using Knowledge-Panel, a probability-based panel recruited through address-based sampling. The national sample included 1,036 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. The Florida sample included 388 adults. We weighed the national and Florida results separately to represent their respective adult populations. The margin of sampling error for the full national survey was ±3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, accounting for the survey design. Table A1 below presents the weighted demographic characteristics of the survey samples.

Category	National Adults n = 1,036	Florida Adults n = 388
Sex		
Female	51.3%	51.7%
Age		
18 to 29	19.2%	16.8%
30 to 49	34.3%	32.2%
50 to 64	22.7%	22.0%
65 or older	23.8%	28.9%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	59.2%	51.7%
Black	11.3%	13.4%
Hispanic	18.2%	27.7%
Other	11.3%	7.1%

Category	National Adults n = 1,036	Florida Adults n = 388
Education		
Less than HS	10.1%	9.8%
HS Graduate	26.7%	27.3%
Some college	28.1%	28.8%
BA Degree	22.0%	21.5%
Postgrad/Prof. Degree	13.1%	12.6%
Income		
Less than $50,000	23.1%	24.0%
$50,000–$74,999	14.3%	15.8%
$75,000–$149,999	33.2%	34.7%
$150,000 and over	29.4%	25.5%
Partisanship		
Democrat	28.6%	21.5%
Lean Democrat	18.7%	23.1%
Independent/Other	9.8%	7.9%
Lean Republican	15.1%	17.4%
Republican	27.8%	30.1%

Table A1. Descriptive Characteristics by Survey Sample

CANDIDATE-CHOICE EXPERIMENT

Before the experiment, respondents reported their own preferences on eight policy issues. Figure B4 in section B summarizes those preferences for the national sample. We then showed each respondent six pairs of hypothetical candidates running for Congress in their district. In each comparison, both candidates took positions on the same four issues, and we asked respondents which candidate they would be more likely to vote for. Table A2 shows an example of one such comparison.

Suppose the following two candidates were running for Congress in your district in this November's election. Based on their policy positions below, which candidate would you be more likely to vote for?

Policy Issue	Candidate A	Candidate B
Tariffs	**Increase** current U.S. tariffs	**Reduce** current U.S. tariffs
Abortion	Legal **in most circumstances**	Legal **only in a few circumstances**
Iran war	**End** U.S. military involvement as soon as possible, even if Iran retains its remaining nuclear capabilities and control of the Strait of Hormuz	**Continue** involvement until free passage through the Strait of Hormuz is restored and Iran's nuclear capabilities are eliminated or significantly reduced
Military assistance to Israel	Continue **both defensive** military assistance and assistance that can be used for **offensive** military operations	Continue **defensive** military assistance, but **end** assistance that can be used for **offensive** military operations

Table A2. Example Candidate Comparison Presented in the Experiment
Note: This example combines policy positions used in the experiment; it does not reproduce a particular respondent's comparison. Bold text highlights differences between positions. The relative order of issues was randomized across respondents and retained across their comparisons. Appendix Table A3 provides all policy positions tested.

Informal pilot testing found how showing all eight issues at once made the comparisons too time-consuming. As such, we used four issues per comparison to reduce the reading burden, particularly on mobile devices. The six comparisons followed a balanced schedule, so each issue appeared three times for every respondent. We randomized the order of the eight issues once for each respondent and kept the relative order whenever an issue appeared in a comparison.

For each displayed issue, we randomly assigned each candidate one of the positions listed in Table A3 on the next page. If the two candidates initially received identical positions on all four displayed issues, we randomly selected one of those issues and reassigned Candidate B to a different position on it. As a result, the candidates took different positions on at least one issue in every comparison.

Policy Issue	Position 1	Position 2	Position 3
Tariffs	**Increase** current U.S. tariffs	**Keep** current U.S. tariffs at about current levels	**Reduce** current U.S. tariffs
Deportation	Deport **all immigrants** living in the U.S. illegally	Deport **only immigrants who have committed serious crimes**, whether violent or nonviolent	Deport **only immigrants who have committed violent crimes**
Abortion	Legal in **all circumstances**	Legal in **most circumstances**	Legal **only in a few circumstances**
Medicaid	**Increase** Medicaid funding and **expand** eligibility	**Maintain** existing Medicaid funding and eligibility	**Reduce** Medicaid funding and **limit** eligibility
Oil & gas drilling	**Expand** access for new oil and natural gas drilling	**Maintain** existing policies on oil and natural gas drilling	**Restrict** new oil and natural gas drilling
Iran war	**End** U.S. military involvement as soon as possible, even if Iran retains its remaining nuclear capabilities and control of the Strait of Hormuz	**Continue** U.S. military involvement until free passage through the Strait of Hormuz is restored and Iran's nuclear capabilities are eliminated or significantly reduced	---
Military assistance to Israel	Continue **both defensive** military assistance and assistance that can be used for **offensive** military operations	Continue **defensive** military assistance, but **end** assistance that can be used for **offensive** military operations	**End all** U.S. military assistance to Israel
Military assistance to Ukraine	**Increase** current U.S. military assistance to Ukraine	**Maintain** current U.S. military assistance to Ukraine	**End** current U.S. military assistance to Ukraine

Table A3. Candidate Policy Positions Tested in the Experiment
Note: The experiment tested two candidate positions on the Iran war and three on each of the other seven issues.

ANALYSIS OF CANDIDATE CHOICES

Respondents could leave a comparison unanswered. Of the 6,216 comparisons presented to the national sample, 536 (8.6%) were skipped. Forty-five respondents skipped all six. The national experiment analysis included 991 respondents who completed at least one comparison, yielding 5,680 completed comparisons and 11,360 candidate evaluations. We retained completed comparisons from respondents who skipped other tasks. These counts and the skip rate are unweighted.

We coded each candidate as chosen or not chosen and estimated a survey-weighted linear probability model. The model estimated how changing a candidate's position on one issue shifted the probability of being chosen, accounting for the candidate's other displayed positions, the number of comparisons, and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. We calculated 95% confidence intervals using standard errors clustered by respondent to account for repeated choices by the same person.

The main text compares issues using the largest estimated difference in support between any two candidate positions tested on each issue. We calculated these differences separately for the national sample and for Democrats and Republicans, including independents who leaned toward either party in the corresponding party group. The positions defining the largest difference could vary by group. To test whether the largest estimated shifts differed across issues in the national sample, we directly compared the selected contrasts using the model's respondent-clustered covariance estimates. We applied the Holm adjustment for multiple comparisons. Appendix B presents the detailed comparisons between positions within each issue.

APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES AND FIGURES

OVERALL EFFECTS ON CANDIDATE SUPPORT BY POLICY

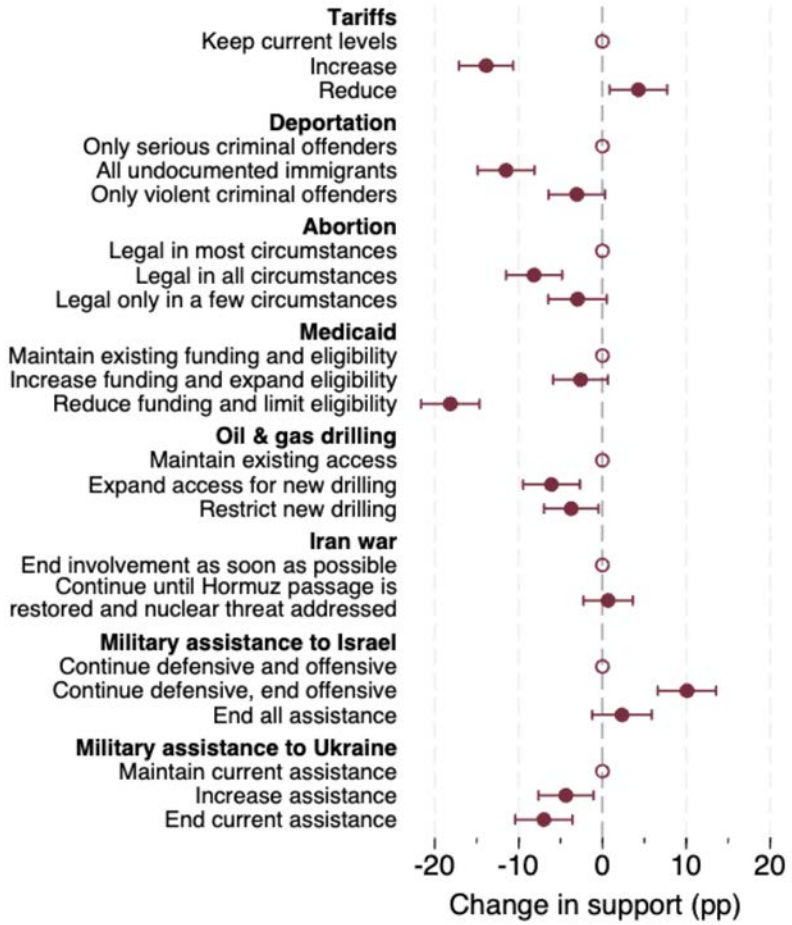

Figure B1. Effects of Candidate Policy Positions on Candidate Support

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (991 respondents; 11,360 candidate evaluations). Filled circles show the change in the probability of choosing a candidate, in percentage points, relative to the position marked by an open circle for the same issue. Open circles are set to zero as comparison benchmarks; they do not indicate equal support across issues. Estimates account for the candidate's other displayed policy positions, task number, and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy descriptions are abbreviated.

Figure B1 shows how changing a candidate's position on each issue affected the probability of being chosen, accounting for the candidate's other displayed positions. Each estimate shows the change in support, in percentage points, relative to the reference position marked by a hollow circle.

Overall, results show how support for changing an existing policy depended on what candidates proposed instead. Raising tariffs cost candidates 13.9 percentage points relative to maintaining current tariffs, while lowering them gained 4.3 points. Cutting Medicaid funding and limiting eligibility cost candidates 18.1 points relative to maintaining both. Expanding funding and eligibility produced a much smaller, statistically insignificant change. On deportation, candidates who would deport all undocumented immigrants drew 11.5 points less support than candidates who would limit deportation to serious offenders. The 3.0-point decline for limiting deportation to violent offenders was not statistically significant.

On military assistance to Israel, candidates who would end offensive assistance while retaining defensive assistance gained 10.1 points relative to continuing both forms of assistance. Ending all assistance produced a smaller, statistically insignificant gain of 2.3 points relative to the same benchmark. On Ukraine, candidates who would maintain current assistance drew more support than those who would increase or end it. Maintaining existing oil and gas drilling policies likewise drew more support than either expanding access or restricting new drilling.

On abortion, candidates who favored legality in all circumstances drew 8.2 points less support than those who favored legality in most circumstances and 5.2 points less than those who favored legality in only a few circumstances. Both differences were statistically significant. On the Iran war, the two positions drew nearly equal support overall, as discussed in the main text.

EFFECTS ON CANDIDATE SUPPORT BY POLICY POSITION AND PARTY

Figure B2 shows the same reference-position comparisons separately for Democrats and Republicans.

Both Democrats and Republicans penalized candidates who favored raising tariffs or cutting Medicaid, but they responded differently to changes in the other direction differed. Lowering tariffs gained 11.7 points among Democrats and produced no statistically significant shift among Republicans, compared with maintaining current tariffs. Expanding Medicaid funding and eligibility cost candidates 10.3 points among Republicans and produced no statistically significant shift among Democrats, compared with maintaining existing funding and eligibility. For both proposals, the dif-ference between the parties' responses was statistically significant.

Ending all military assistance to Israel produced opposite responses. Compared with continuing both defensive and offensive assistance, a full cutoff gained candidates 14.9 points among Democrats and cost them 12.5 points among Republicans. Keeping defensive assistance alone gained 17.4 points among Democrats, while the estimated 2.2-point gain among Republicans was not statistically significant.

The deportation and abortion results show which positions drove the large swings highlighted in the main text. Compared with limiting deportation to serious offenders, deporting all undocumented immigrants cost candidates 24.3 points among Democrats and produced no statistically significant shift among Republicans.

Limiting deportation to violent offenders cost candidates 6.2 points among Republicans. On abortion, favoring legality in only a few circumstances instead of most circumstances cost candidates 11.9 points among Democrats and gained them 7.5 points among Republicans. Favoring legality in all circumstances instead of most cost candidates 14.3 points among Republicans and produced no statistically significant shift among Democrats.



Figure B2. Effects of Candidate Policy Positions on Candidate Support, by Party Affiliation

Note: Estimates are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (991 respondents; 11,360 candidate evaluations). Markers show changes in the probability of choosing a candidate, in percentage points, relative to the reference position listed in each panel. Democrats and Republicans include respondents who lean toward the respective party. Nonleaners and respondents who refused the party-identification question (n = 66) are included in the model but omitted from the figure. Estimates account for the candidate's other displayed policy positions and allow policy effects and task differences to vary by party; the model also accounts for whether the candidate appeared as A or B. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy descriptions are abbreviated.

ESTIMATED SUPPORT BY POSITION

Figure B3 shows the estimated probability of choosing a candidate who took each position, overall and separately for Democrats and Republicans. These probabilities are averaged over the other policy positions shown in the experiment.

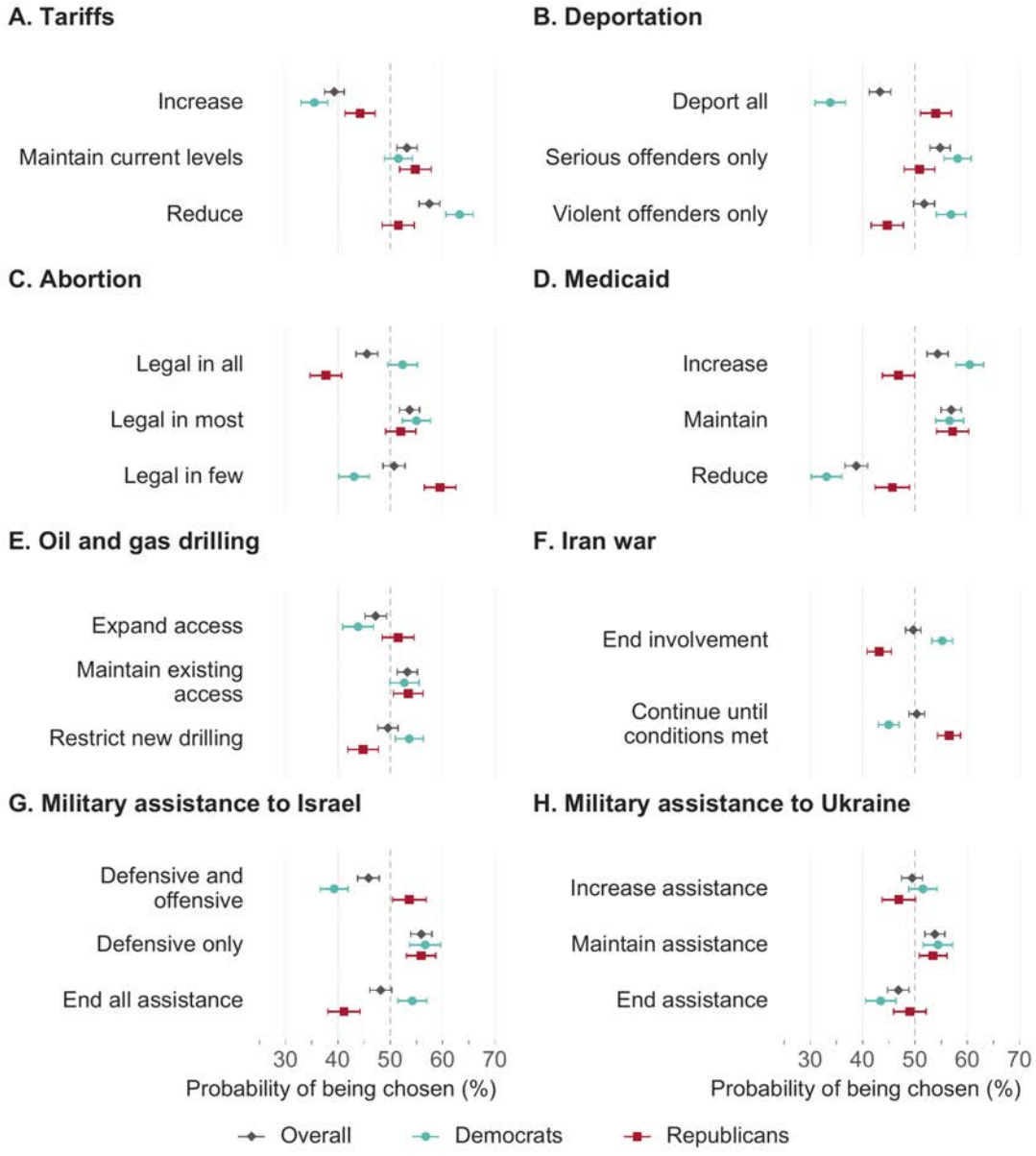

Figure B3. Estimated Candidate Support by Policy Position, Overall and by Party Affiliation

Note: Points show model-predicted probabilities of choosing a hypothetical candidate with the specified policy position, averaged over the candidate's other displayed positions. They measure candidate support, not approval of the policy itself. Estimates use national survey weights and account for task number and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. Party-specific estimates allow policy effects and task differences to vary by party. Democrats and Republicans include leaners; nonleaners and respondents who refused party identification remain in the model but are not shown separately. Horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. The dashed vertical line marks 50% candidate support. Analyses include 991 respondents and 11,360 candidate evaluations. Policy descriptions are abbreviated.

RESPONDENTS' POLICY PREFERENCES

Figure B4 shows respondents' preferences on the eight policy issues before they evaluated the hypothetical candidates. Figure B5 shows responses to the same eight policy questions among Florida adults.

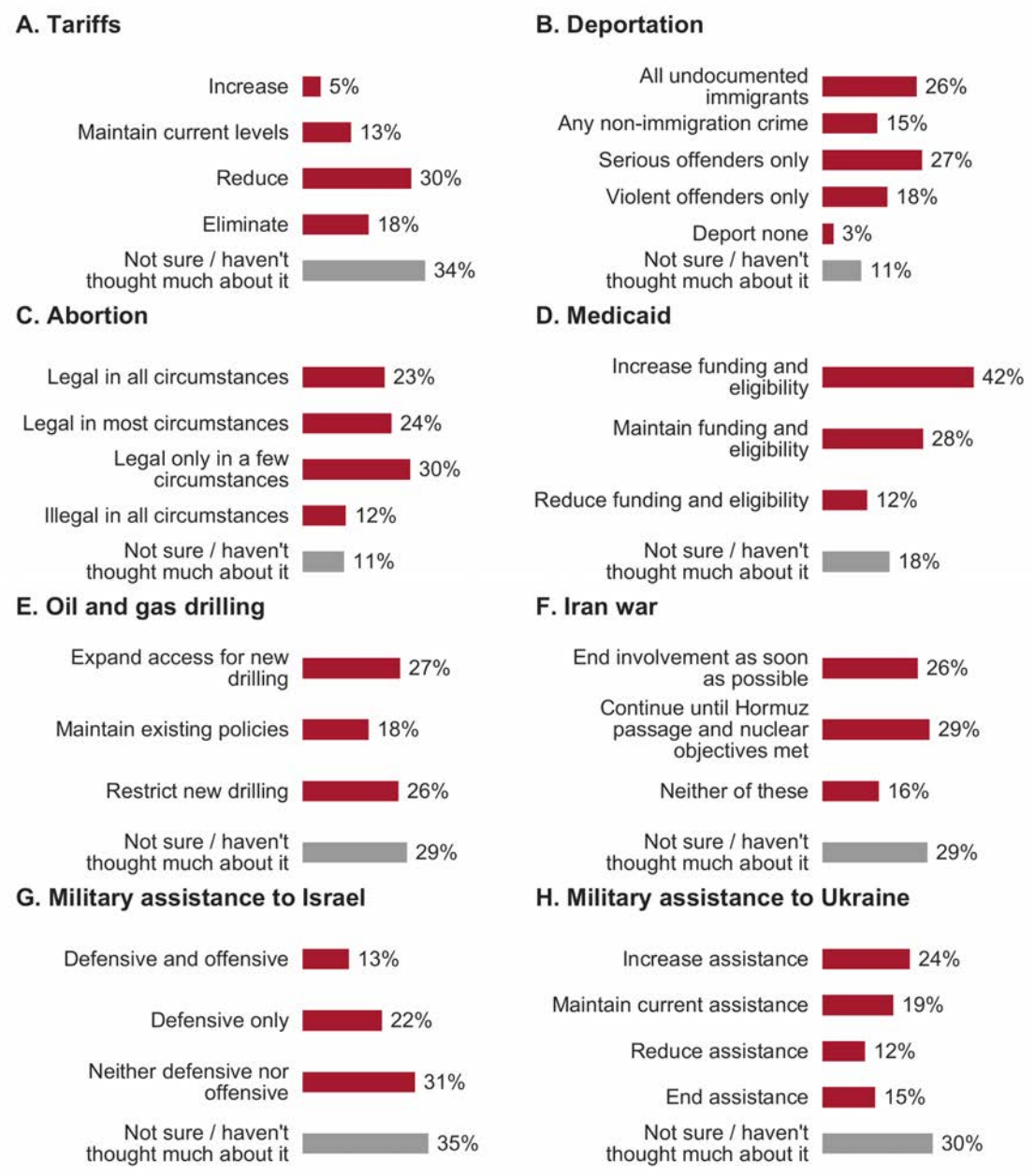

Figure B4. Public Policy Preferences Across Eight Political Issues

Note: Percentages are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population (n = 1,032—1,034 across items). "Not sure" and "Haven't thought much about this" responses are combined, while "Neither of these" remains separate for Iran. Question and response wording is abbreviated for display. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not sum to 100%.

The preference questions help put the candidate-choice results in context. Nearly half of respondents favored reducing or eliminating tariffs (48%), and only 12% favored cutting Medicaid funding and limiting eligibility. Candidates who proposed raising tariffs or cutting Medicaid drew some of the largest penalties in the experiment. On military assistance to Israel, 31% favored ending all assistance and 22% favored retaining defensive assistance alone. In the experiment, however, keeping defensive assistance while ending offensive assistance gave candidates a clear advantage over continuing both forms of assistance. Ending all assistance produced no clear advantage over the same benchmark.

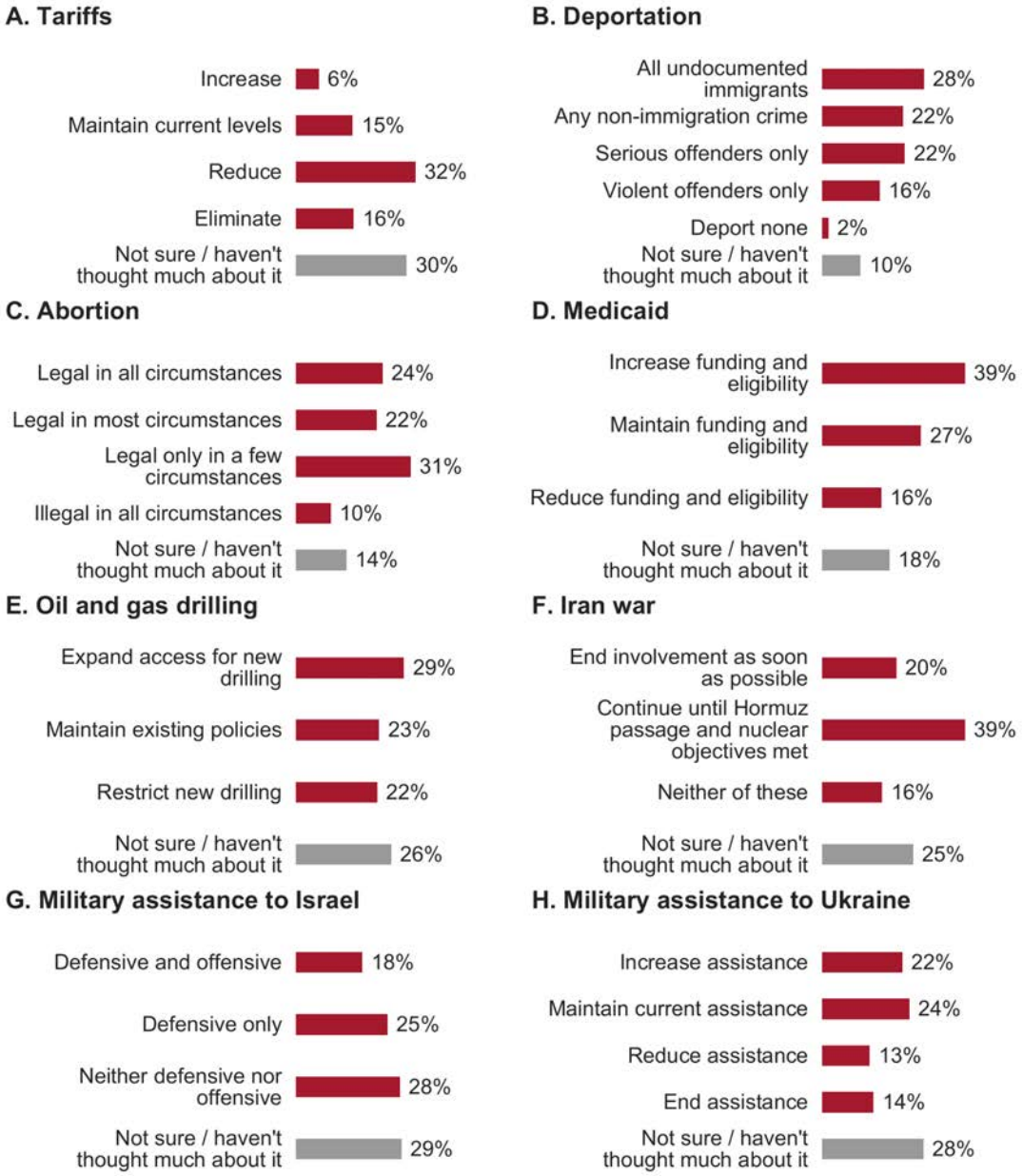

Figure B5. Policy Preferences Among Florida Adults

Note: Percentages are weighted to represent Florida adults (n = 383—388 across items). "Not sure" and "Haven't thought much about this" responses are combined, while "Neither of these" remains separate for Iran. Question and response wording is abbreviated for display. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not sum to 100%.

CANDIDATE SUPPORT AMONG FLORIDA ADULTS AND 2024 PRESIDENTIAL VOTERS

Figure B6 shows the effects of candidate policy positions among Florida adults, and Figure B7 shows the effects among respondents who reported voting in the 2024 presidential election. In both groups, candidates who proposed raising tariffs or cutting Medicaid lost substantial support. Continuing U.S. military involvement gained about six percentage points of support in each group, compared with less than one point in the full national sample. Figure B8 shows how responses to the positions tested differed between respondents who reported voting for Harris and those who reported voting for Trump.

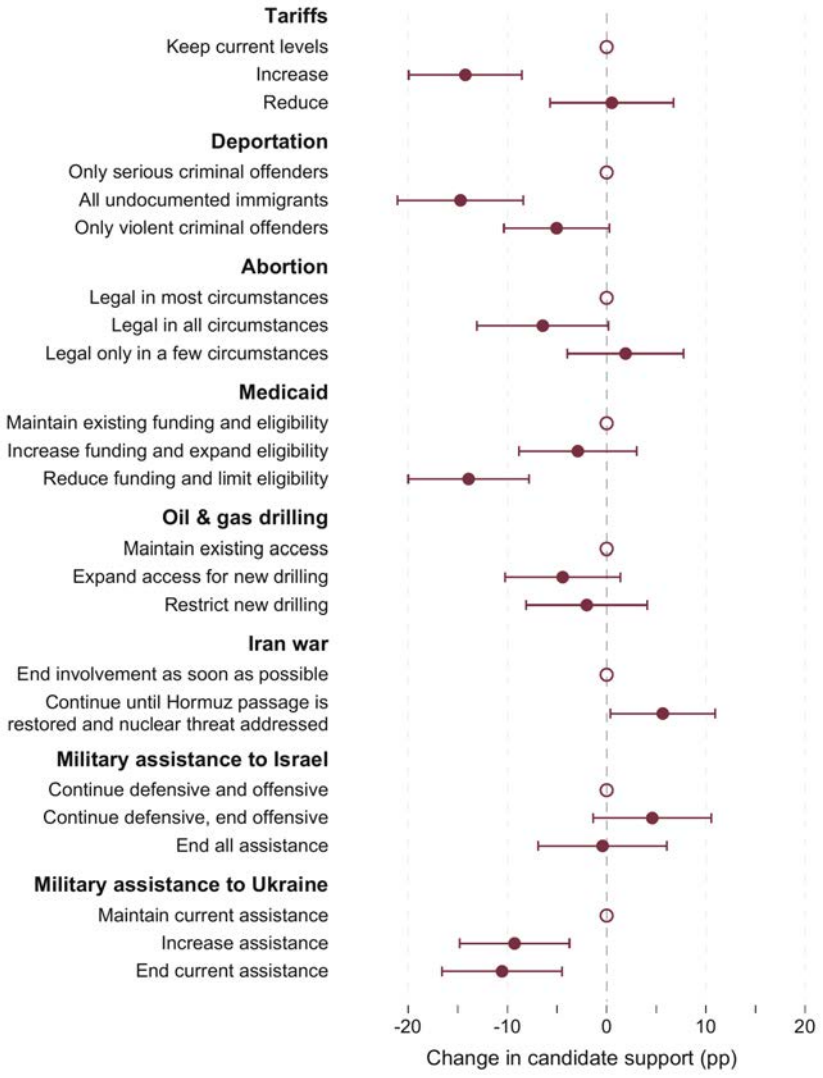

Figure B6. Effects of Candidate Policy Positions on Candidate Support Among Florida Adults

Note: Estimates use Florida-specific survey weights and include 373 respondents who completed at least one candidate comparison, contributing 4,216 candidate evaluations. Filled circles show changes in the probability of choosing a hypothetical candidate, in percentage points, relative to the position marked by a hollow circle for the same issue. Hollow circles are set to zero as comparison benchmarks; they do not indicate equal support across issues. Estimates account for the candidate's other displayed policy positions, task number, and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy descriptions are abbreviated.

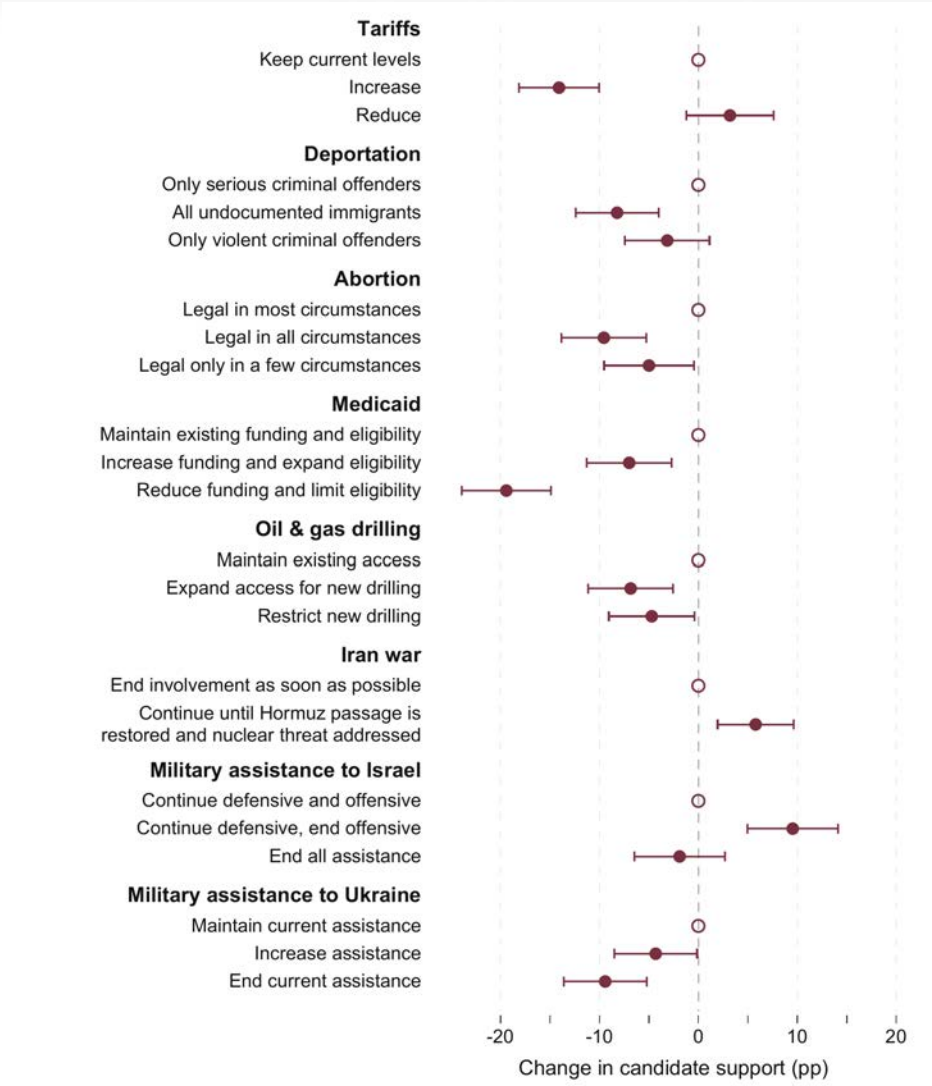

Figure B7. Effects of Candidate Policy Positions on Candidate Support Among Reported 2024 Presidential Election Voters
Note: Estimates use national survey weights and include 617 respondents who reported voting in the 2024 presidential election, contributing 7,076 candidate evaluations. This group includes those who reported voting for Harris, Trump, or another candidate. Filled circles show changes in the probability of choosing a hypothetical candidate, in percentage points, relative to the position marked by a hollow circle for the same issue. Hollow circles are set to zero as comparison benchmarks; they do not indicate equal support across issues. Estimates account for the candidate's other displayed policy positions, task number, and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy descriptions are abbreviated.

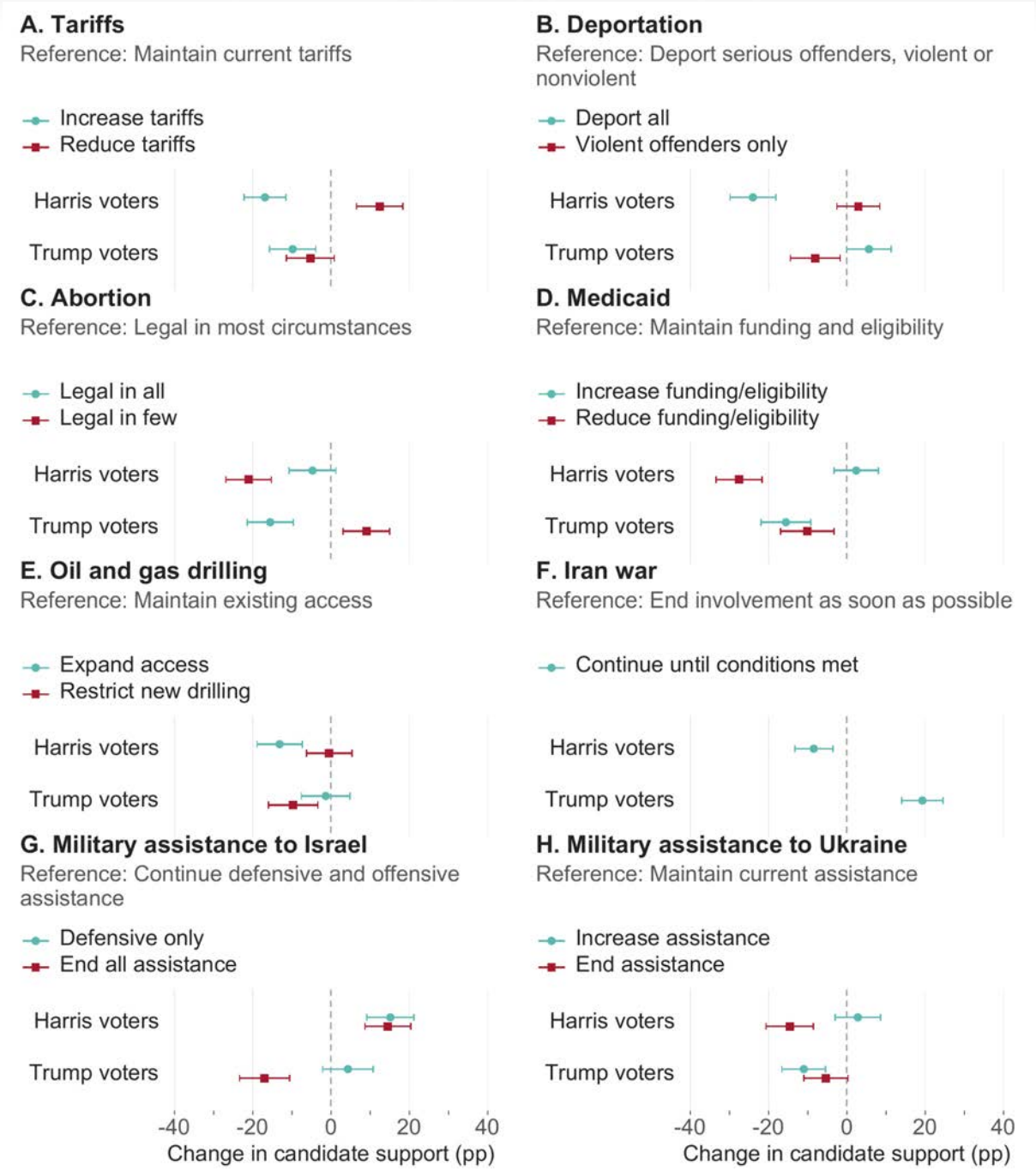

Figure B8. Effects of Candidate Policy Positions on Candidate Support, by Reported 2024 Presidential Vote

Note: Estimates use national survey weights and include 291 respondents who reported voting for Harris and 310 who reported voting for Trump in 2024, contributing 6,898 candidate evaluations. Markers show changes in the probability of choosing a hypothetical candidate, in percentage points, relative to the reference position listed in each panel. Colors and marker shapes distinguish candidate policy positions. Estimates account for the candidate's other displayed policy positions and allow policy effects and task differences to vary by reported 2024 vote; the model also accounts for whether the candidate appeared as A or B. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy descriptions are abbreviated.

CANDIDATE SUPPORT BY RESPONDENTS' OWN POLICY PREFERENCES

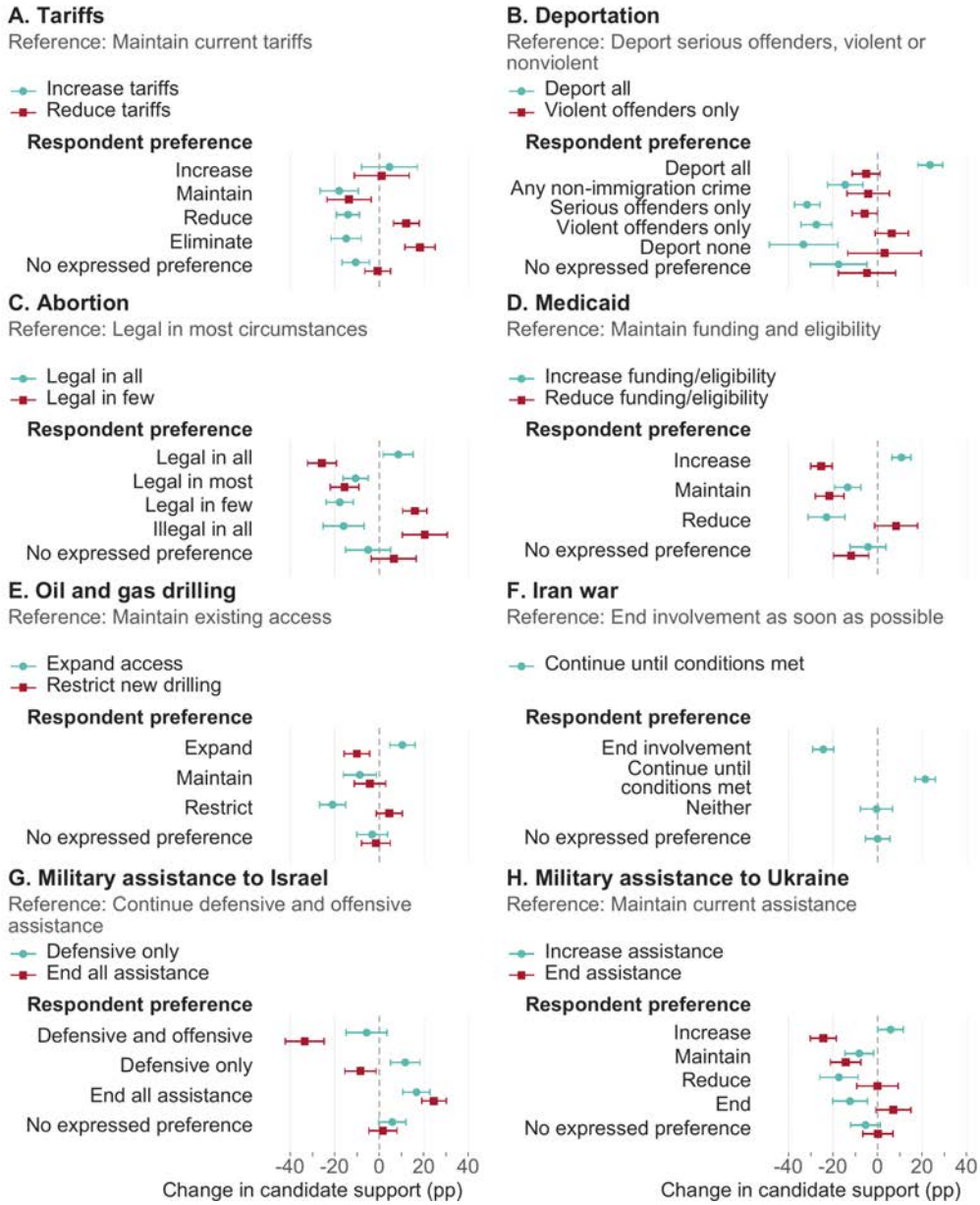

Figure B9. Effects of Candidate Policy Positions on Candidate Support, by Respondents' Own Policy Preferences

Note: Estimates use national survey weights and include 978 respondents, contributing 11,222 candidate evaluations. Respondents are grouped separately for each issue according to their preferences measured before the experiment. Markers show changes in the probability of choosing a hypothetical candidate, in percentage points, relative to the reference position listed in each panel. Colors and marker shapes distinguish candidate policy positions. Estimates allow policy effects to vary by respondents' own preferences and account for issue display, the candidate's other displayed policy positions, task number, and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. "No expressed preference" combines "Not sure" and "Haven't thought much about this"; "Neither of these" remains separate for Iran. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy and preference descriptions are abbreviated.

Figure B9 shows how responses to candidates' positions varied with respondents' own policy preferences, measured before the experiment. Respondents generally favored candidates who shared their views, though the gains from agreement and the losses from disagreement sometimes differed in size. Among respondents who wanted abortion to be legal in all circumstances, candidates who shared this view gained an estimated 8.5 percentage points of support compared with candidates who favored legality in most circumstances. Candidates who favored legality in only a few circumstances lost an estimated 25.8 points relative to the same benchmark.

CANDIDATE SUPPORT AMONG LEANERS AND NONLEANERS

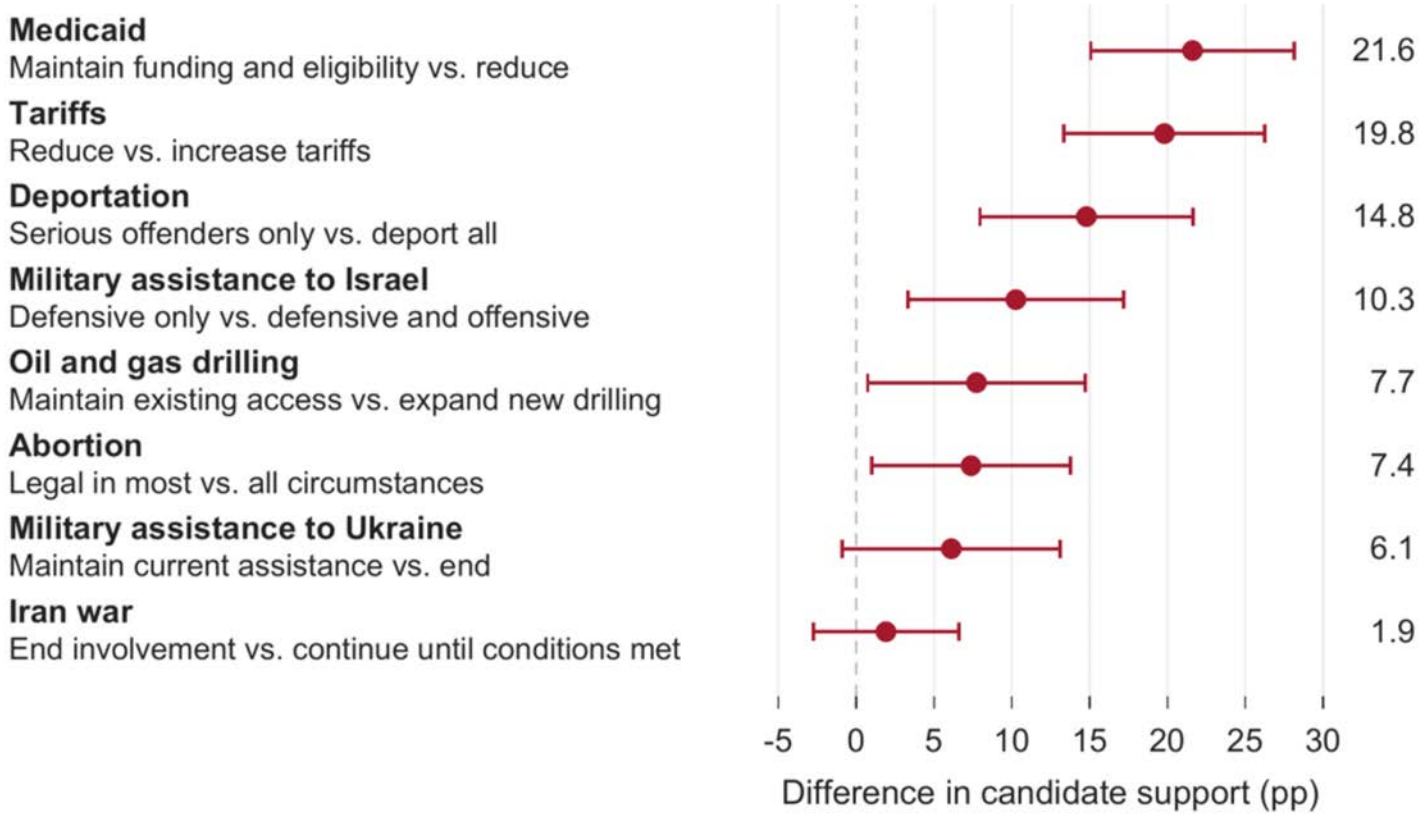

Figure B10. Largest Estimated Differences in Candidate Support by Issue Among Party Leaners and Nonleaners
Note: Estimates use national survey weights and include 978 respondents, contributing 11,222 candidate evaluations. Respondents are grouped separately for each issue according to their preferences measured before the experiment. Markers show changes in the probability of choosing a hypothetical candidate, in percentage points, relative to the reference position listed in each panel. Colors and marker shapes distinguish candidate policy positions. Estimates allow policy effects to vary by respondents' own preferences and account for issue display, the candidate's other displayed policy positions, task number, and whether the candidate appeared as A or B. "No expressed preference" combines "Not sure" and "Haven't thought much about this"; "Neither of these" remains separate for Iran. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Policy and preference descriptions are abbreviated.