

Will Your Thanksgiving Table Become a Political Battleground?

Many Americans are wary of uneasy dinner conversations with relatives who voted differently, polling data show.

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A family prays before Thanksgiving dinner in Stamford, Conn., on Nov. 24, 2016. John Moore/Getty Images



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The presidential election is over, and while half of America may be celebrating, the other half may be feeling a mixture of emotions from angst to anger. But when it comes to breaking bread with family for the Thanksgiving holiday, will the politicians hold the upper hand and wreak havoc at your dinner table?

New data from Prolific reveals that many Americans are bracing themselves for potentially uncomfortable Thanksgiving dinner conversations with family or relatives who share opposing political views.



In fact, 20 percent of respondents to a recent poll say they plan to skip the traditional holiday gathering to avoid family interactions. Some indicated they would take a vacation instead, while others intend to spend Thanksgiving alone or with a few like-minded friends.



Prolific, a technology and research company based in California, polled more than 2,000 U.S. residents of different ages, genders, and ethnicities. Of that number, 96 percent reported feeling confident in their voting decisions with no regrets.

While the poll indicated that 62 percent of those surveyed expressed disapproval of the current Biden administration, 58 percent had an unfavorable opinion of President-elect Donald Trump. Some 22 percent already reported increased polarization within families following the election. Among younger voters—ages 18 to 24—that number jumped to 36 percent.

Andrew Gordon, senior consultant at Prolific, told The Epoch Times that researchers were quite surprised by the survey responses.

“While the depth of potential political division within families was striking, it actually aligns well with the trends we’ve been observing in our ongoing polling—extreme polarization within the electorate on any number of key issues,” he said.

“The data underscore just how deeply woven into the fabric of everyday life politics has become, even extending into family

dynamics during traditionally unifying occasions like Thanksgiving.”

More than 23 percent of people living in Northeast states such as Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island believe the election has stirred up political tensions within the family. California and Washington state were the only western states included at that level.

“This year has been marked by a perfect storm of political and societal factors: an extremely polarizing election, a big focus on leadership across party lines, and a worldwide economic slowdown that has led to general dissatisfaction with government performance,” Gordon said. “Add to this social platforms, and politics has become an unavoidable part of daily conversations.”

Tim Ives, a licensed New York psychoanalyst specializing in family therapy, told *The Epoch Times* it’s important that people decide what they want to do before getting into a potentially stressful situation.

“As much as many of us are family-oriented, holidays don’t necessarily look like Norman Rockwell paintings,” he said. “Families getting along together is not always the norm.”

Ives, who is also a minister serving the Scarborough Presbyterian Church in Briarcliff Manor, New York, said the key for those choosing to spend Thanksgiving and the holidays with family is to be non-reactive.

“Politics can be divisive and it’s difficult sometimes to ignore opinions that are different from yours. My advice is to just smile and nod,” he said.

Alcohol can also fuel the fires for controversial discussions, so Ives recommends keeping drinks to a minimum.

“If discussions do get heated, people can always quietly get up from the table and go to another part of the house or outside to avoid

getting caught up in that turmoil,” he said. “A lot of families set a rule of no politics or religion discussions at gatherings.”

Political polarization is nothing new, noted Ives.

“I remember back during the 1964 election when everyone was scared to death of Barry Goldwater—they thought it was going to be the end of the world,” he recalled. Lyndon Johnson eventually defeated Goldwater in a landslide.

Ives has recently been involved with counseling couples who find themselves on opposite sides of the political fence.

“This year’s election has caused some angst among couples, but the bottom line is people have to consider how much this is really going to affect their personal lives,” he said.

Almost 50 percent of the survey respondents living in southern and western states reported that they were not surprised at the outcome of the election. These states included Alabama, Arizona, Idaho, Mississippi, Montana, Texas, Tennessee, and the Carolinas.

Answering the question of whether democracy is alive and well in the United States, 52 percent of those aged 45 to 54 said yes, compared with 47.1 percent of those aged 55 to 64, and 45.2 percent of people in the 65-plus range. Fifty-five percent of those surveyed in Wyoming also provided an affirmative answer to the question, as did 52 percent of those polled in Montana, North and South Dakota, and Utah.

“While we have conducted numerous studies on political sentiment and its impact on societal interactions, this is the first time we have explicitly explored how these divisions might manifest during Thanksgiving,” Gordon said.

“This year’s findings take that dynamic a step further, demonstrating how political tensions are reshaping holiday traditions and prompting Americans to reconsider how they celebrate.”

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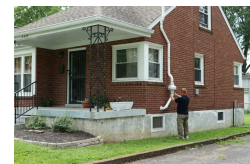
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