

State of the Congress 2024

An Assessment of the Civility, Functionality,
and Capacity of the 118th Congress by
Senior Congressional Staff

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About the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF)

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit founded in 1977 dedicated to strengthening Congress and building trust in its work with and for the American people. CMF works to revitalize Congress as an institution; promotes best practices in congressional offices; and helps Congress and the people they represent engage in a constructive and inclusive dialogue toward a thriving American democracy.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	8
About the Respondents	10
Key Findings	11
Finding 1: Senior staffers generally believe Congress is not functioning as it should.	11
Finding 2: Senior staffers believe there have been improvements to the capacity and infrastructure in Congress, but feel Congress still needs improvement.	18
Finding 3: Senior staffers are grappling with anxiety about their safety and that of their colleagues and Members.	23
Finding 4: Senior staffers think it is very important for Members and staffers to be civil and to work across party lines.	30
Finding 5: Senior staffers believe polarization and rhetoric are making it more difficult to get things done in Congress and are causing them to consider leaving Congress.	34
Finding 6: Staff are essential to the effective functioning of Congress, but many senior staffers are showing signs that may lead to burnout.	39
Finding 7: Senior staffers have mixed feelings about congressional accountability and accessibility to the public, but they agree these are important aspects of congressional functionality.	43
Acknowledgements	48
About the Author	50
Methodology and Sample	51
Select Resources for Legislative Benchmarking and Assessment	53

Executive Summary

Between August and November 2023, CMF invited via email more than 2,700 senior staffers in the House and Senate to participate in a survey about civility, capacity, and functionality in Congress. Of those invited, 138 completed the survey, a response rate of 5%. The respondents are experienced, with 55% having worked for Congress for more than 10 years. Almost three-quarters (74%) are Chiefs of Staff, Deputy Chiefs of Staff, Legislative Directors, committee or subcommittee Staff Directors, or District or State Directors, and 53% were born before 1980. They lean slightly Democrat (57%) and female (57%), and, like most of the senior positions in Congress, they lean heavily White (86%).

What we found offers both hope and reason for concern. Based on results comparing the 2023 survey to the 2022 survey Congress may have improved in some important areas of legislative functionality including: access to high-quality, nonpartisan policy expertise within the Legislative Branch; the technological infrastructure; congressional capacity and support; human resource support; Members' and staffers' understanding of Congress' role in democracy; and accessibility and accountability to the public. But there is still a lot of room for continued improvement. Both Democrats and Republicans strongly feel that civility and bipartisanship among Members and staff are requirements for a functioning Congress, but they do not view it as easy to build cross-partisan relationships, nor is there much incentive to do so. Regrettably, they also agree that Congress is not functioning as a democratic legislature should, and they are dissatisfied with many aspects of its performance.

Most concerning, however, is that most of the participants are feeling anxiety about their work, their safety, and the safety of their Members and colleagues. And many of them are at least somewhat frequently considering leaving Congress due to safety concerns and the heated rhetoric of some Senators and Representatives, with a higher percentage of Republicans than Democrats feeling this way about the rhetoric of their own party.

We collected more data than we can include in a single report, so we present here what CMF considers the most relevant findings for the current state of the Congress. These are that:

1. Senior staffers generally believe Congress is not functioning as it should.

Only 12% of Democrats and 31% of Republicans agreed that "Congress is currently functioning as a democratic legislature should." There has been no change or improvement of this metric since 2022. When asked if they thought "Congress is currently an effective forum for debate on questions of public concern," Democrats (87%) were more likely than Republicans (71%) to disagree with that statement. Democrats (55%) were also much more likely than Republicans (19%) to believe "current procedures used by Congress to

"Both Democrats and Republicans strongly feel that civility and bipartisanship among Members and staff are requirements for a functioning Congress, but they do not view it as easy to build cross-partisan relationships, nor is there much incentive to do so."

extract necessary information from the Executive Branch are sufficient to fulfill Congress' constitutional responsibilities.”

2. Senior staffers believe there have been improvements to the capacity and infrastructure in Congress, but feel Congress still needs improvement.

In 2022 we measured eight internal factors related to the capacity of the institution to perform its role in democracy. Uniformly, staff feel there have been improvements in nearly all categories from 2022 to 2023. The biggest improvements in percentages of staffers who were “very satisfied” were that: Members and staff have access to high-quality, nonpartisan policy expertise within the Legislative Branch (+20%); Congress' human resource support and infrastructure is adequate to support staffers' official duties (+8%); and the technological infrastructure is adequate to support Members' official duties (+6%). CMF concludes this is likely due to the recommendations and work of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress and the Modernization Subcommittee of the Committee on House Administration. Additionally, the institutional offices in the House and Senate have brought attention and context to persistent operational and procedural challenges in the Congress and offered pragmatic solutions with bipartisan support.

3. Senior staffers are grappling with anxiety about their safety and that of their colleagues and Members.

Staffers of both parties (72% Republican and 78% Democrat) consider it “very important” that “Members and staff feel safe doing their jobs.” Alarming, only 21% of Democratic staff said they were satisfied with the current environment compared to 61% of Republican staff. Additionally, 68% of Democratic staffers and 73% of Republican staffers report they somewhat frequently, frequently, or very frequently personally receive “direct insulting or threatening messages or communications.”¹ Many experience anxiety for their safety and that of their colleagues (63%) and Members (74%), though significantly more Democrats (73%) than Republicans (47%) worry about their safety and that of their colleagues. Based on the tenor of comments we received, bolstered by our regular interactions with staffers of both parties in recent years, the aftermath of January 6, 2021 is still impacting the daily work lives and relationships of many Democrats.

¹ In a [July 26, 2023 Oversight of the Capitol Police Board joint hearing before the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and the House Administration Committee](#) J. Thomas Manger, Chief of the U.S. Capitol Police, indicated that threats to Members of Congress had increased 300% and that “threats not just to Members, but to staff, to families, visitors remain historically high.”

4. Senior staffers think it is very important for Members and staffers to be civil and to work across party lines.

Civility and bipartisanship were important to almost all senior staffers we surveyed, but few said they were “very satisfied” with the current state (1% civility and 0% bipartisanship). Republicans (85%) were even more likely than Democrats (70%) to consider civility to be “very important.” Staffers of both parties (96% of Democrats and 98% of Republicans) also consider it “necessary for Senators and Representatives to collaborate across party lines to best meet the needs of the nation,” and a majority (60% of Republicans and 51% of Democrats) believe encouraging bipartisanship is “very important” for Congress to function.

5. Senior staffers believe polarization and rhetoric are making it more difficult to get things done in Congress and are causing them to consider leaving Congress.

Senior staffers were almost unanimous, and about two-thirds of both Republicans (66%) and Democrats (68%) “strongly agree” that “congressional leadership should enforce the rules and norms of civility and decorum in Congress,” but they differ on the finer points. More than half of Republicans (56%) felt “the agreed-upon rules and codes of conduct for Senators and Representatives are sufficient to hold them accountable for their words and deeds,” but 84% of Democrats *disagreed*. And Democrats (80%) were far more likely than Republicans (43%) to “strongly agree” that, “in the past few years, otherwise non-controversial legislative ideas have failed due to polarization among Senators and Representatives.” (Nonetheless, 88% of Republicans agreed with that statement.) A significant number of staffers of both parties (44% of Republicans and 51% of Democrats) are “considering leaving Congress due to heated rhetoric from the other party,” but significantly more Republicans (59%) than Democrats (16%) are considering leaving Congress due to “heated rhetoric from my party.”

“Most concerning, however, is that most of the participants are feeling anxiety about their work, their safety, and the safety of their Members and colleagues. And many of them are at least somewhat frequently considering leaving Congress due to safety concerns and the heated rhetoric of some Senators and Representatives.”

6. Staff are essential to the effective functioning of Congress, but many senior staffers are showing signs that may lead to burnout.

Most staff surveyed (84%) consider it “very important” to the effective functioning of Congress that “staff knowledge, skills, and abilities are adequate to support Members’ official duties,” and 54% are satisfied with the current state. More than three-quarters report feeling overwhelmed by the demands of their jobs (81%) and frustration at not being able to help or achieve as much as they’d like (84%), factors which may lead to burnout. Senate staffers (42%) and longer-tenured staffers (36%) were more likely to be “very frequently” experiencing frustration at not being able to help as much as they’d like, and younger staffers (36%) were more likely to “very frequently” experience being overwhelmed by the demands of their jobs.

7. Senior staffers have mixed feelings about congressional accountability and accessibility to the public, but they agree these are important aspects of congressional functionality.

Staffers were generally much more satisfied with the public-facing aspects of congressional functionality we explored than they were with the more internal institutional factors discussed in Finding 2. Most were satisfied with Congress' physical (96%) and technological (85%) accessibility to the public. Though similar percentages of Republicans (71%) and Democrats (70%) consider it "very important" that "constituents have sufficient means to hold their Senators/Representative accountable for their performance," Republicans (50%) are much more likely to be "very satisfied" with the current state than Democrats (18%). Republicans (67%) were also more likely to agree with the statement that "the current means of public engagement/input—advocacy and lobbying directed to individual Senators and Representatives—are adequate for understanding the needs of U.S. residents" than Democrats (36%). Only 15% of staffers were "very satisfied" that "Congress is transparent to the public in the conduct of its business."

Introduction

Congress is broken. It seems like we've heard that refrain for decades. The public witnesses a highly partisan legislature bickering, seemingly with little concern for the welfare of the nation. And yet that simplistic narrative not only oversimplifies the nuanced nature of the ills of our national legislature, it also leaves reformers with little guidance on how to repair the Congress.

For more than 45 years, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) has been working with staff in Congress to help improve their management skills, job performance, office operations, constituent engagement, technology adoption, and institutional capacity. During those years, we have seen Congress face uncharted challenges and helped support the institution through them. We have supported the work of innovative staffers, institutional offices, committees, and select committees as they envision how to modernize and reform the Senate and House of Representatives. We continue to deeply respect the dedicated public servants—Republicans and Democrats—who facilitate our national conversations and decision-making, and this research is offered in that spirit.

To help identify, benchmark, measure, and discuss the non-political institutional issues Congress faces CMF began surveying senior staffers in the Senate and House to get a sense of the state of the Congress. Our original 2016 survey was based on select benchmarks for democratic legislatures developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union for use by its 180 member parliaments (of which, oddly, the United States Congress is not a member). The results formed the basis for the 2017 report [State of the Congress: Staff Perspectives on Institutional Capacity in the House and Senate](#), which was used by the then-nascent Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress (or "Fix Congress" committee) as it began to consider its purview and begin its work in 2019.

In early 2022, as the Select Committee was winding down and focusing on implementation of its 202 recommendations, CMF and the Partnership for Public Service collaborated to conduct a second *State of the Congress* survey to benchmark where things stood, help maintain the momentum and positive impact of the committee, and enable us to measure change over time. Importantly, in addition to measuring the *capacity* of the institution to perform its role in a democracy, we also measured *functionality* and *civility*. This resulted in the [State of the Congress 2022](#) report. We believe it is a far superior tool for measuring the state and performance of the Congress than the media-driven horse race reporting or conventional metrics—number of bills passed or number of days in legislative session—typically used to assess Congress' performance. Our hope is to conduct these surveys regularly to better understand core factors, and to document timely issues, impacting congressional health and performance so Congress and those who study and support it can consider where attention might be needed.

"The decisions that will lead us to a better Congress rest in the hands of the officials for whom our survey respondents work and the people throughout the country who elect those officials. Until we, the People, decide we want to see the seat of our democracy improve, elect individuals dedicated to making that happen, and hold them accountable for how they and the institution perform, we will not see change."

This report is based on our latest survey of senior congressional staffers. For the past few years CMF and other nonprofits have been supporting staff through the trying times of extreme political polarization, pandemic, and the aftermath of the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol. We are aware of extreme levels of stress, anxiety, and fear in many staffers on both sides of the aisle. As we have documented elsewhere, the extraordinary staff in Congress are dedicated, high-intensity, and high-performing compared to the average American worker, even in the best of times. These times are trying them and, in many cases, are causing them to consider leaving Congress. Historically turnover is high on Capitol Hill, as it is a very demanding work environment with long hours and comparatively low pay. But the staffers we survey are senior staffers, many of whom have dedicated their careers and their lives to Congress and the country. These are the experienced, knowledgeable employees that keep the institution running, and the nation can ill afford to lose them. Some are considering leaving Congress as a result of safety concerns, others due to the heated rhetoric of Senators and Representatives, and many are simply feeling they can't accomplish as much as they'd like to. They are dissatisfied with how Congress is functioning, and they want to see the institution do better. Be better.

But the decisions that will lead us to a better Congress rest in the hands of the officials for whom our survey respondents work and the people throughout the country who elect those officials. Until we, the People, decide we want to see the seat of our democracy improve, elect individuals dedicated to making that happen, and hold them accountable for how they and the institution perform, we will not see change. We will continue to hear about the bomb-throwers, the radicals, and the least-collaborative voices rather than those—by far the majority—who want to see Congress perform as the democratic legislature it is designed to be. Congress has always been contentious and messy. It is where the representatives of people throughout the country come together to work out our differences and decide on the course of the nation. One report or one nonprofit organization cannot provide all the answers to fix the institution of Congress. Yet we hope these findings offer some direction for good-intentioned reformers, inside and outside Congress, so they may help us continue the path toward a more perfect union.

About the Respondents

Chamber (n = 138)	
House of Representatives	69%
Senate	30%
Both/Legislative Branch Agency	1%

Party (n = 138)	
Democratic	57%
Republican	35%
Nonpartisan	7%

Workplace (n = 138)	
Member's Personal office in Washington, DC	57%
Member's Personal office in District or State	20%
Committee Office	14%
Leadership Office	0%
Institutional/Support/Agency/Other Office	9%

Job Title (n = 138)	
Chief of Staff	28%
Deputy Chief of Staff	10%
Legislative Director	10%
District or State Director	14%
Communications Director or Press Secretary	8%
Committee or Subcommittee Staff Director	12%
Other	17%

Tenure in Congress (n = 138)	
Less than two years	3%
Two to five years	13%
Six to 10 years	30%
11 to 20 years	33%
More than 20 years	22%

Generation (n = 138)	
Generation Z (after 1996)	4%
Millennial (1981-1996)	42%
Generation X (1965-1980)	41%
Baby Boomer (1946-1964)	12%

Sex (n=138)	
Male	42%
Female	57%
Other	0%

Hispanic, Latino, and/or Spanish Origin (n = 138)	
Yes	8%
No	89%

Race & Ethnicity (n = 138)	
Asian/Asian American	4%
Black/African American	6%
Middle Eastern/North African/Middle Eastern American	2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%
White/Caucasian	86%
Multiracial	2%
Other	3%

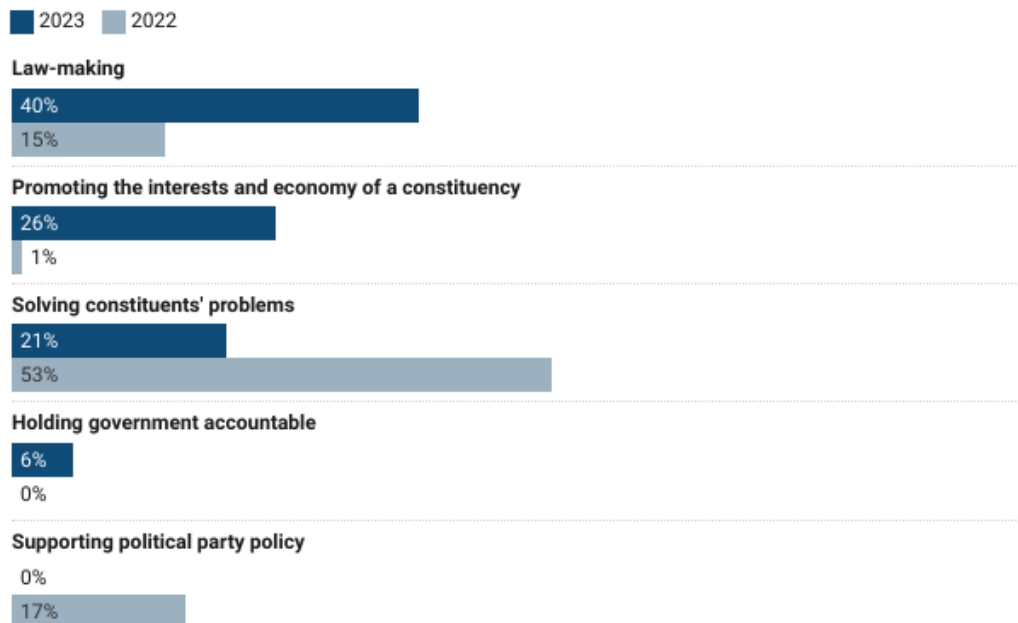
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to some participants indicating "Choose not to respond" in response to some demographic questions.

Key Findings

Finding 1: Senior staffers generally believe Congress is not functioning as it should.

Figure 1.1 | Between 2022 and 2023 senior staff opinion about the most important role of Senators and Representatives shifted.

In 2022, during pandemic recovery, solving constituents' problems was the top response. In 2023 it was law-making.



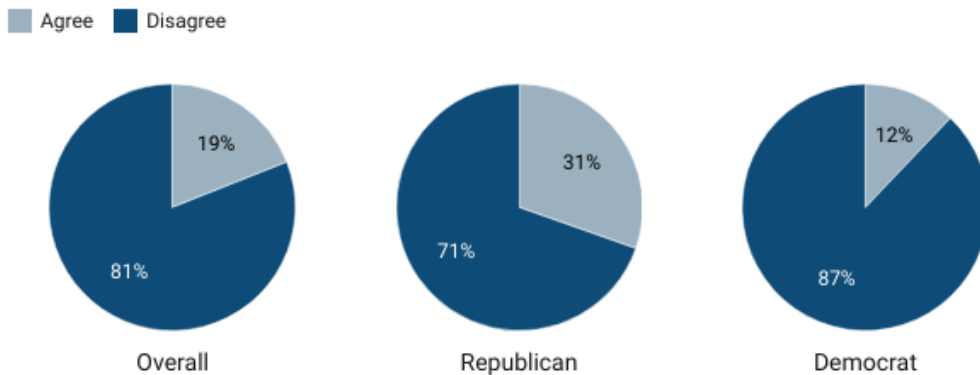
Q: In your opinion, what is the most important role of Senators and Representatives? n-2023=138, n-2022=127.

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“The way the House is ‘functioning’ is frustrating many members. We have to placate [certain] members and in my nearly ten years of working here I have never felt more like we're on the wrong track. We are not advancing legislation that is beneficial for the nation.”

— House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

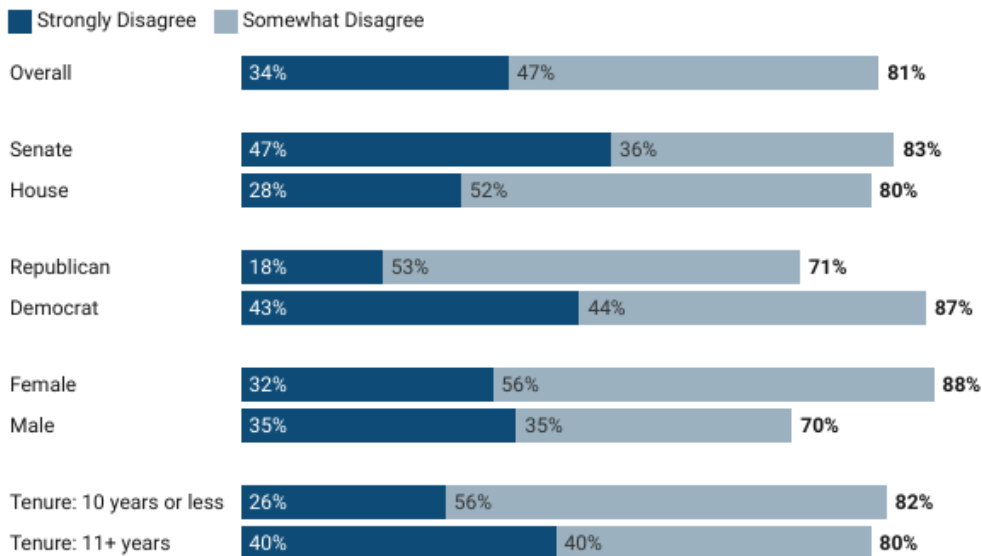
Figure 1.2 | Republicans were more likely than Democrats to agree that “Congress currently functions as a democratic legislature should.”



Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n=119 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 72 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1.3 | Senate staffers, Democrats, and longer-tenured staffers were more likely to “strongly disagree” that “Congress currently functions as a democratic legislature should.”

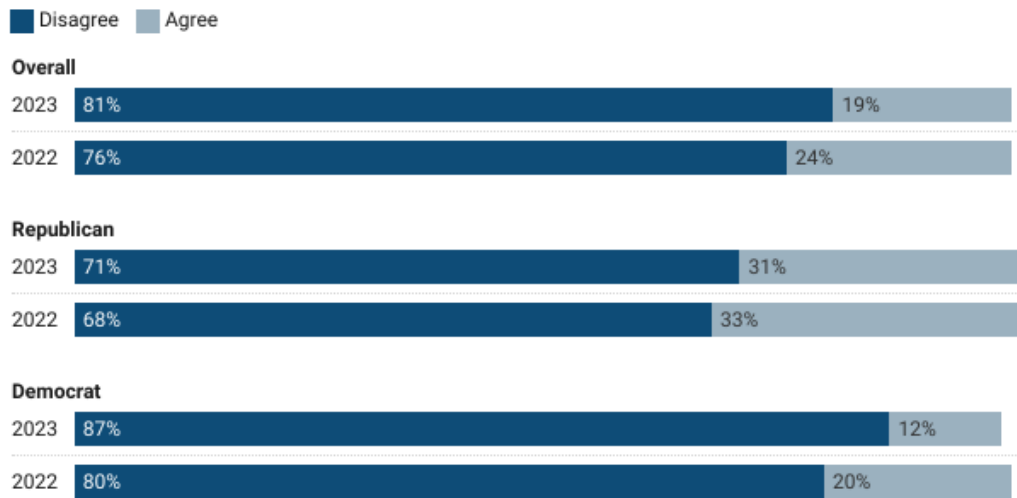


Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n = 119 (Overall), 36 (Senate), 83 (House), 40 (Republican), 72 (Democrat), 68 (Female), 51 (Male), 54 (Tenure 10 years or less), 65 (Tenure 11+ years)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1.4 | Whether senior staffers agree that "Congress currently functions as a democratic legislature should" has not changed much since early 2022.

Democrats controlled both chambers in 2022, and currently control the Senate while Republicans control the House of Representatives.



Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-2023 = 119 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 72 (Democrat); n-2022 = 117 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 55 (Democrat)

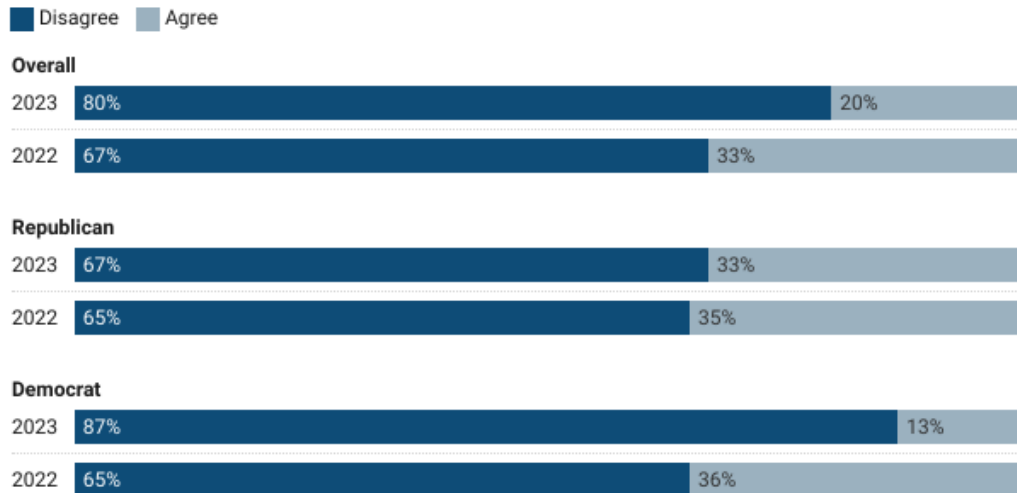
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“I’m not sure everyone who is in Congress would currently agree that Congress functioning well is a good thing. Until that problem is solved it will be hard to make things better.”

– House Chief of Staff (D)

Figure 1.5 | By large majorities, senior staff disagree that "Congress is currently an effective forum for debate on questions of public concern."

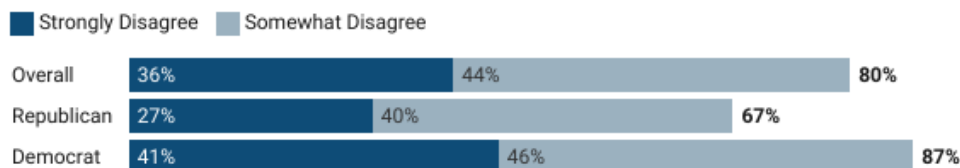
In 2023 Democrats were more likely than Republicans to disagree.



Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-2023 129 (Overall), 45 (Republican), 76 (Democrat); n-2022 119 (Overall), 48 (Republican), 56 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1.6 | Senior staff don't believe that "Congress is currently an effective forum for debate on questions of public concern," with Democrats feeling more strongly than Republicans.



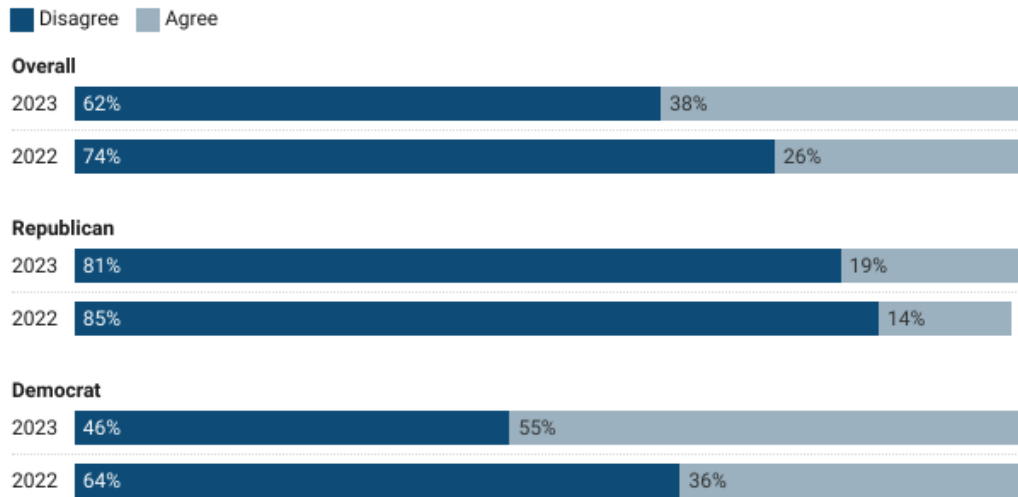
Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n- 129 (Overall), 45 (Republican), 76 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“[Certain] Members and staff have different interpretations of what they are here to accomplish. Perhaps courses on the constitutional role of Congress would help enlighten them on how representation is intended to work, and we could govern properly.”

– House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

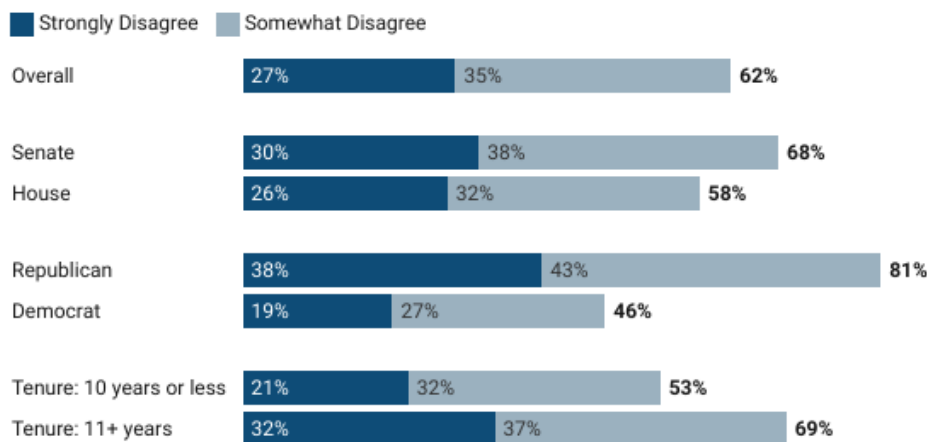
Figure 1.7 | Republicans were more likely than Democrats to disagree that "Current procedures used by Congress to extract necessary information from the Executive Branch are sufficient to fulfill Congress' constitutional responsibilities."



Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-2023 115 (Overall), 42 (Republican), 64 (Democrat); n-2022 105 (Overall), 42 (Republican), 47 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1.8 | Republicans and longer-tenured staffers were more likely to "strongly disagree" that "current procedures used by Congress to extract necessary information from the Executive Branch are sufficient to fulfill Congress' constitutional responsibilities."



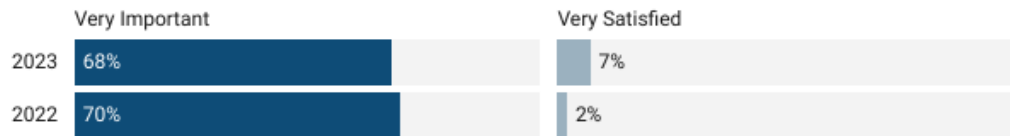
Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n- 115 (Overall), 37 (Senate), 77 (House), 42 (Republican), 64 (Democrat), 53 (Tenure: 10 or less years), 62 (Tenure: 11+ years)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“The political incentives are increasingly divorced from policy. Tribalism and cults of personality value symbolic goods for leaders rather than material outcomes for the people.”

– House Legislative Director (D)

Figure 1.9 | It was “very important” that “Members have adequate time and resources to understand, consider, and deliberate policy and legislation,” but few were “very satisfied” with the current state.



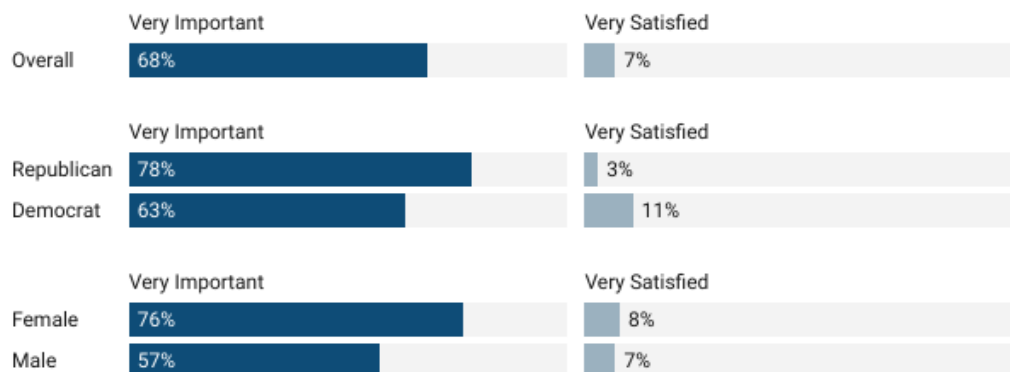
Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress’ performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-2023 120 (Important), 108 (Satisfied); n-2022 122 (Important), 106 (Satisfied).

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“The increase in the amount of time Members spend fundraising has no doubt limited the amount of time spent on other aspects of lawmaking/oversight.”

– House Committee Clerk (D)

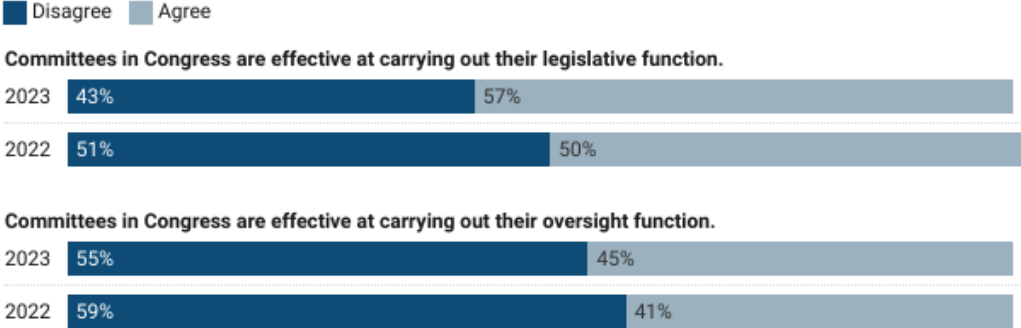
Figure 1.10 | Republicans and women were more likely to consider it “very important” that “Members have adequate time and resources to understand, consider and deliberate policy and legislation.”



Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress’ performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 120 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 70 (Democrat), 71 (Female), 49 (Male); n-Satisfied 108 (Overall), 36 (Republican), 63 (Democrat), 62 (Female), 45 (Male)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1.11 | Senior staffers were split in their opinions on current committee legislative and oversight effectiveness.



Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-Legislative 119 (2023), 111 (2022); n-Oversight 115 (2023), 115 (2022)

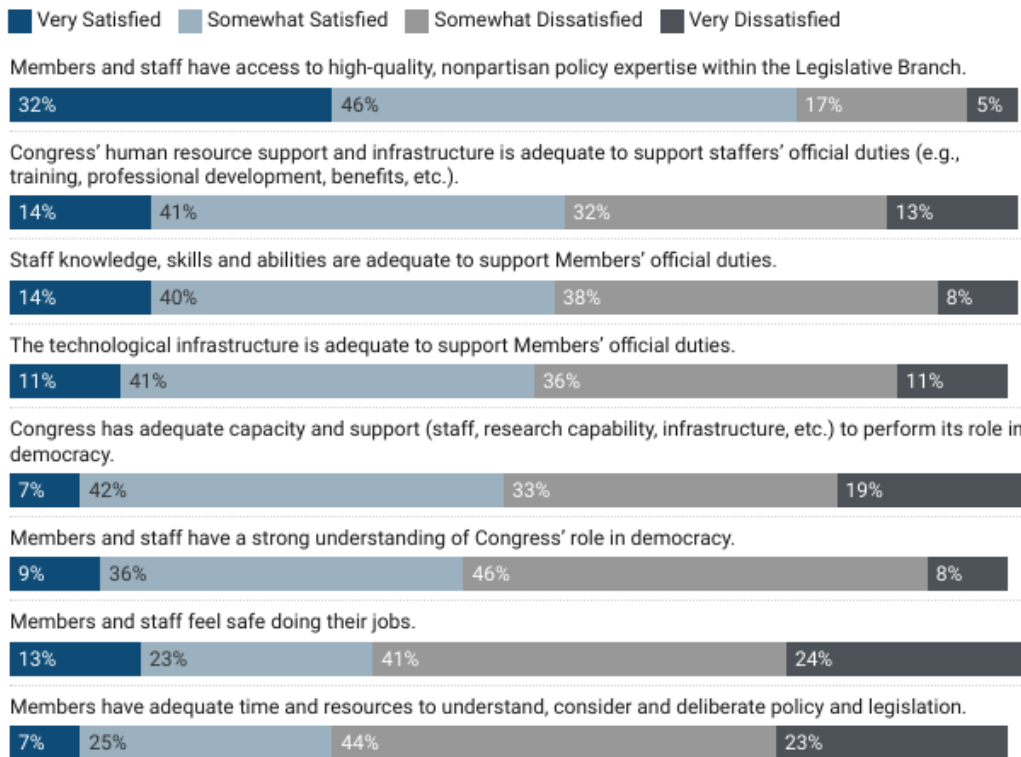
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper



Finding 2: Senior staffers believe there have been improvements to the capacity and infrastructure in Congress, but feel Congress still needs improvement.

Figure 2.1 | Staff are torn about most institutional aspects of functionality about which we asked, with about half satisfied and half dissatisfied.

Notable exceptions are satisfaction with access to high-quality policy expertise and dissatisfaction with the time and resources Members have to digest and deliberate policy and that Members and staff feel safe doing their jobs.



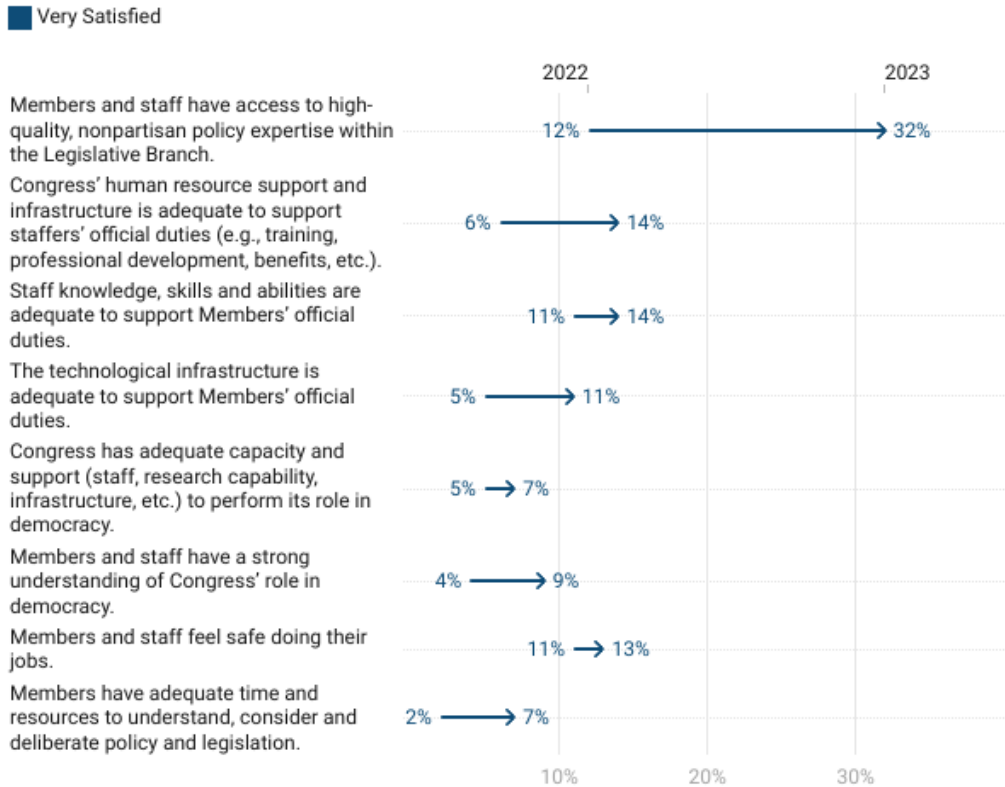
Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n-2023 97-111; n-2022 96 - 113

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Congress needs more respect and investment.”

– Senate Legislative Director (D)

Figure 2.2 | Between 2022 and 2023 the percentage of senior staffers who were "very satisfied" that "Members and staff have access to high-quality, nonpartisan expertise within the Legislative Branch" increased significantly.



Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n-2023 97-111; n-2022 96-113

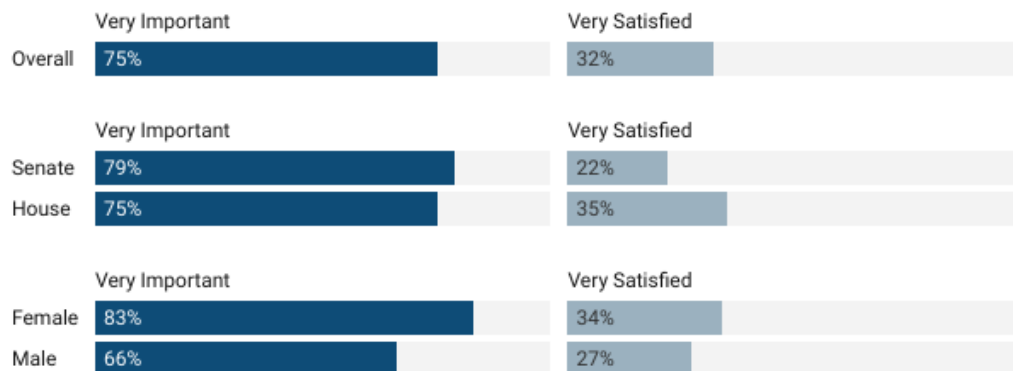
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“America gets the Congress it pays for: it funds the Legislative Branch at a total funding level that I believe is less than one percent of the Executive Branch funding levels ... no one should be shocked [that] overloaded, overwhelmed, unprepared staff fail--in general and on a consistent and sustained basis (there are isolated exceptions)--to conduct effective oversight of the Executive Branch and seek out compromised assistance from private sector entities with conflicted interests to do work that Member Offices and Committees simply lack the resources to perform.”

– Senate Legislative Director (D)

Figure 2.3 | Women were more likely to consider it "very important" that "Members and staff have access to high-quality, nonpartisan policy expertise within the Legislative Branch."

House staffers were more likely to be "very satisfied" with the current state.



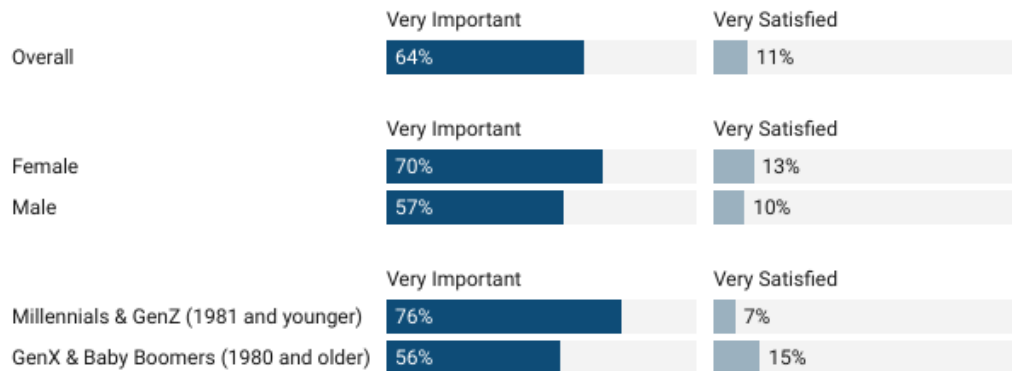
Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 122 (Overall), 33 (Senate), 88 (House), 71 (Female), 50 (Male); n-Satisfied 111 (Overall), 32 (Senate), 79 (House), 67 (Female), 44 (Male)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Congress shouldn't cut its budget! It needs more money and resources otherwise it will continue to be at a disadvantage to the executive and to special interests.”

– House Institutional Manager

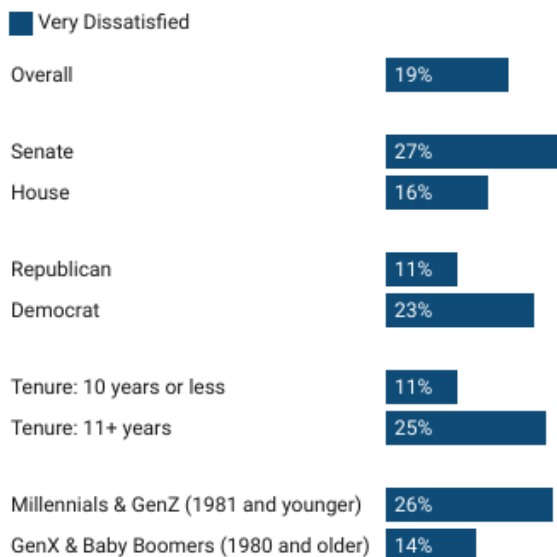
Figure 2.4 | Women and younger staffers were more likely to consider it "very important" that "the technological infrastructure is adequate to support Members' official duties," but few were "very satisfied" with the current state.



Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 117 (Overall), 69 (Female), 47 (Male), 49 (Millennials & GenZ), 68 (GenX & Baby Boomers); n-Satisfied 105 (Overall), 63 (Female), 41 (Male), 43 (Millennials & GenZ), 62 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2.5 | Senate staffers, Democrats, longer-tenured, and younger staffers were more likely to be "very dissatisfied" that "Congress has adequate capacity and support (staff, research capability, infrastructure, etc.) to perform its role in democracy."



Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n- 106 (Overall), 30 (Senate), 76 (House), 45 (Tenure: 10 years or less), 61 (Tenure: 11+ years), 43 (Millennials & GenZ), 63 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

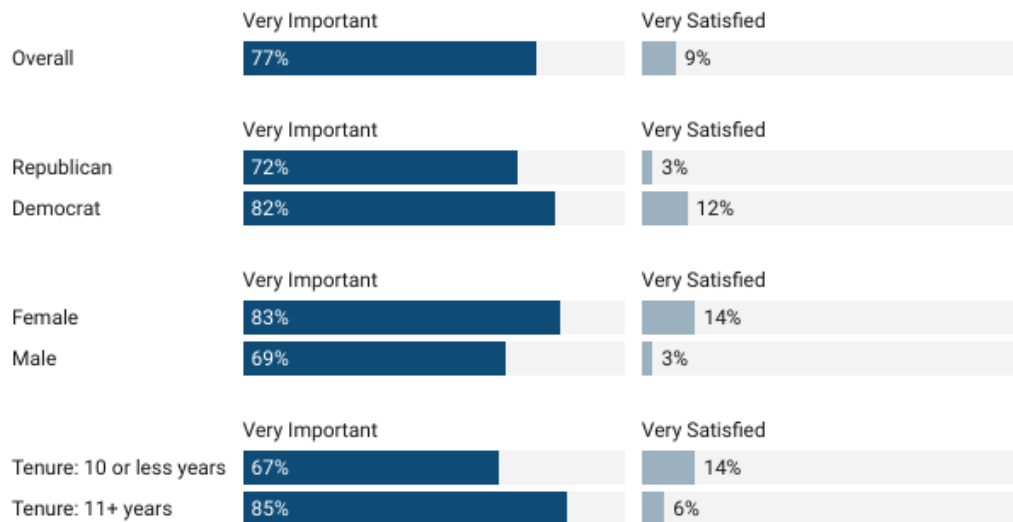
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Under current circumstances, offices cannot afford to hire the number of staff necessary to adequately perform responsibilities and it is an increasing challenge to get experienced staff to stay on the Hill due to the workloads, burnout, dysfunction and inability to pay experienced senior staff anywhere close to what they could make elsewhere.”

– House Chief of Staff (D)

Figure 2.6 | Democrats, women, and longer-tenured staffers were more likely to consider it "very important" that "Members and staff have a strong understanding of Congress' role in democracy."

However, few were "very satisfied" with the current state.



Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 121 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 71 (Democrat), 71 (Female), 49 (Male), 54 (Tenure 10 or less years), 67 (Tenure 11+ years); n-Satisfied 97 (Overall), 31 (Republican), 58 (Democrat), 59 (Female), 37 (Male), 43 (Tenure 10 or less years), 54 (Tenure 11+ years)

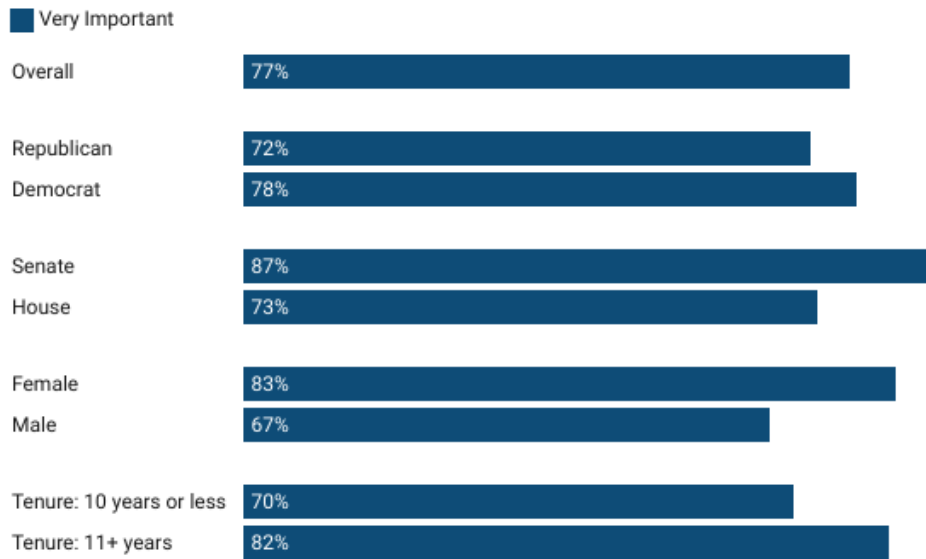
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Congressmen are unqualified and unfamiliar with how to do their jobs.”

– House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

Finding 3: Senior staffers are grappling with anxiety about their safety and that of their colleagues and Members.

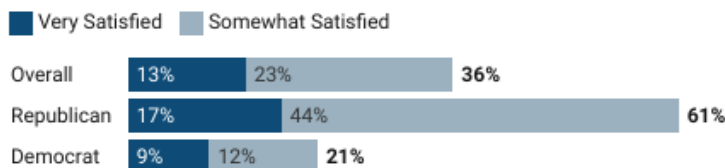
Figure 3.1 | Senate staffers, women, and longer-tenured staffers were more likely to consider it "very important" that "Members and staff feel safe doing their jobs."



Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? (very important, somewhat important; somewhat unimportant; very unimportant). n- 120 (Overall), 36 (Republican), 73 (Democrat), 31 (Senate), 88 (House), 71 (Female), 48 (Male), 54 (Tenure 10 or less years), 66 (Tenure 11+ years)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

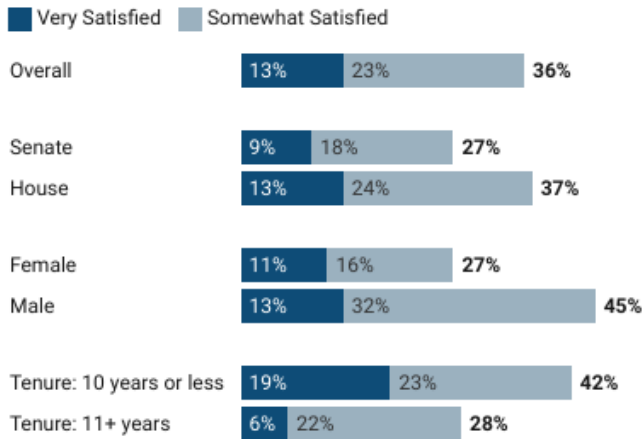
Figure 3.2 | Republicans were much more likely than Democrats to be satisfied that "Members and staff feel safe doing their jobs."



Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n- 111 (Overall), 36 (Republican), 68 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3.3 | House staffers, men, and shorter-tenured staffers were more satisfied that "Members and staff feel safe doing their jobs."

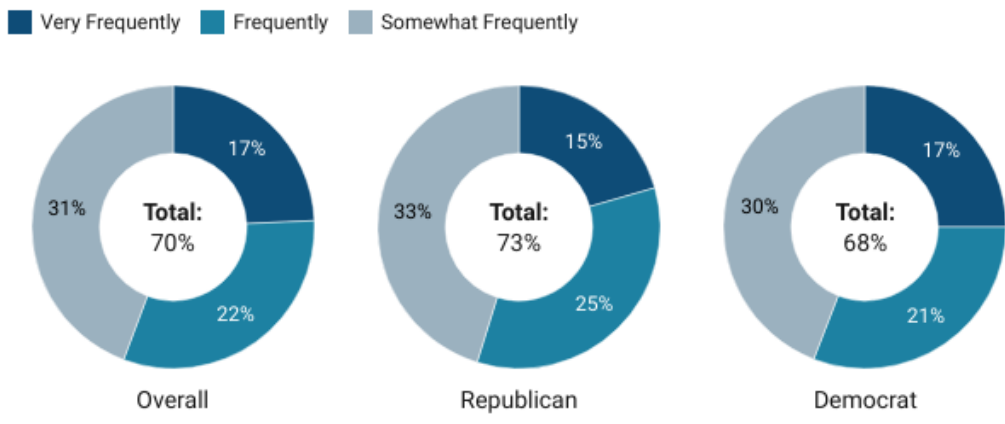


Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied) n- 111 (Overall), 33 (Senate), 78 (House), 64 (Female), 47 (Male), 48 (Tenure 10 or less years), 63 (Tenure 11+ years)
 Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“The physical and psychological toll of this place cannot be understated. We are in danger as a nation.”

– House Staff Director (D)

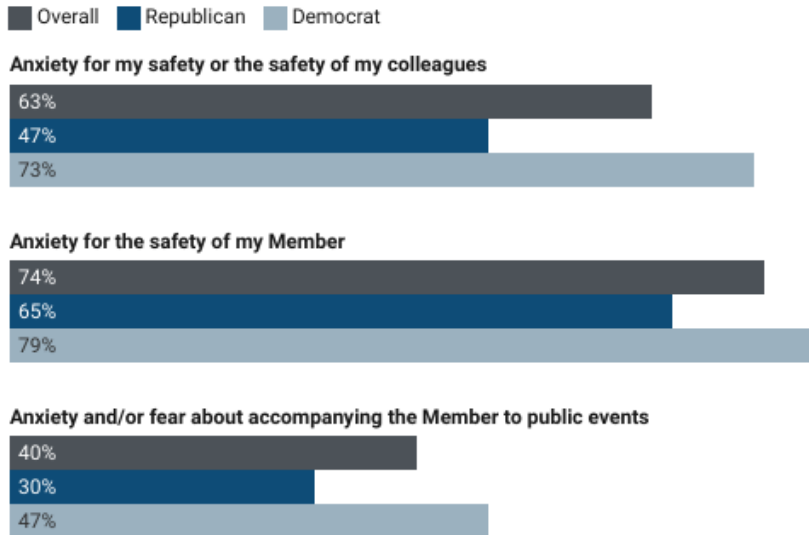
Figure 3.4 | Both Republicans and Democrats are personally experiencing "direct insulting or threatening messages or communication" at least "somewhat frequently."



Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently) n- 118 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 70 (Democrat)
 Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3.5 | Democrats are more likely than Republicans to be experiencing anxiety about their safety and that of their colleagues and Members at least "somewhat frequently."

Figure represents those who answered "very frequently," "frequently," or "somewhat frequently."



Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n-Me/colleagues 122 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 72 (Democrat); n-Member 115 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 71 (Democrat); n-Accompanying 112 (Overall), 38 (Republican), 69 (Democrat)

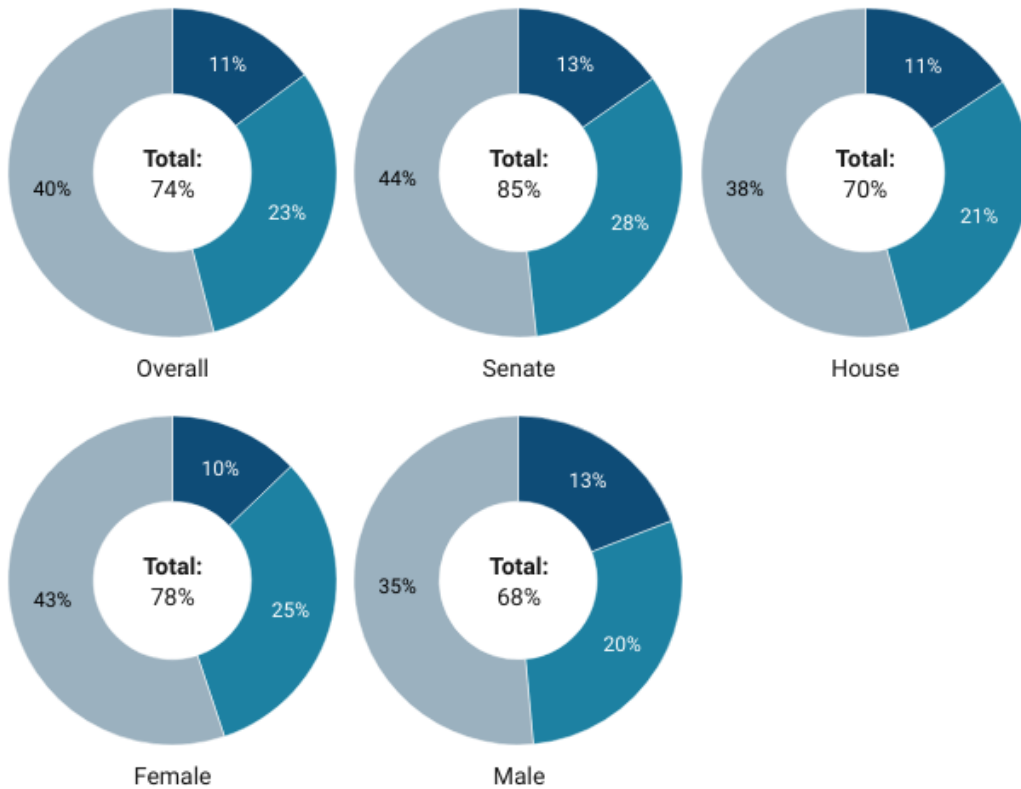
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“... the mental strain of dealing with constituent anger is burdening and I worry for our staff and interns. I certainly understand the balance of access to our elected officials and safety but the vitriol has gotten worse every year that I have worked for Congress.”

– House District Director (D)

Figure 3.6 | Senate staffers and women are more likely to be experiencing "anxiety for the safety of my Member" at least "somewhat frequently."

Very Frequently Frequently Somewhat Frequently



Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n- 115 (Overall), 32 (Senate), 82 (House), 68 (Female), 46 (Male)

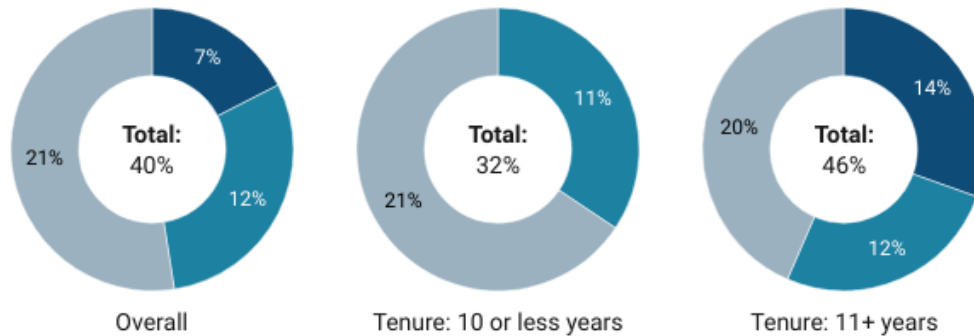
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“District staff burnout is very, very real. District staff are on the front lines of the rhetoric spewed within the Beltway Webinars on how to manage these circumstances are helpful, but the physical infrastructure to deal with these issues BEFORE they turn into an altercation would go a long way.”

– House District Director (D)

Figure 3.7 | Longer-tenured staffers are experiencing "anxiety and/or fear about accompanying the Member to public events" more frequently than shorter-tenured staffers.

Very Frequently Frequently Somewhat Frequently

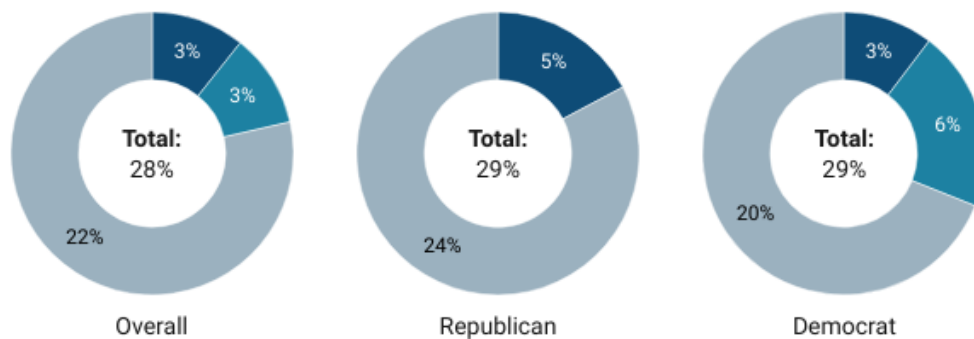


Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n- 112 (Overall), 53 (Tenure: 10 or less years), 59 (Tenure: 11+ years)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3.8 | Few senior staffers of either party are "frequently" or "very frequently" questioning whether to stay in Congress due to safety concerns.

Very Frequently Frequently Somewhat Frequently

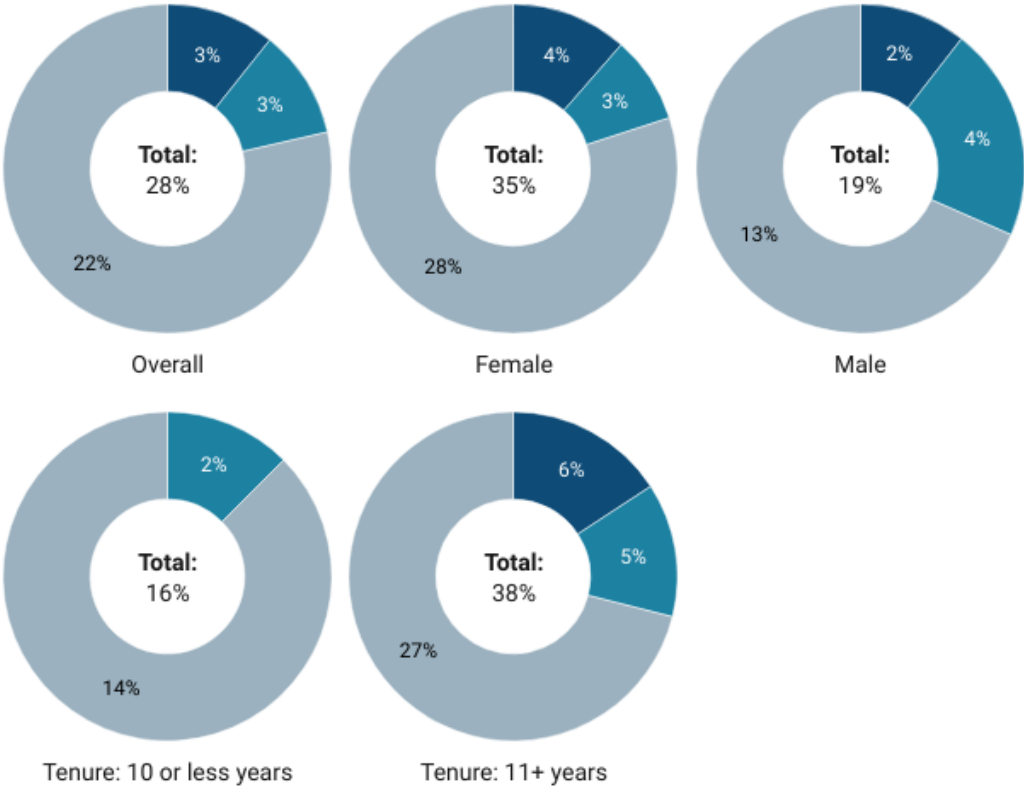


Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n- 116 (Overall), 37 (Republican), 69 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3.9 | Women and longer-tenured staffers are more likely to be "questioning whether I should stay in Congress due to safety concerns."

Very Frequently Frequently Somewhat Frequently



Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n- 116 (Overall), 68 (Female), 48 (Male), 50 (Tenure 10 or less years), 66 (Tenure 11+ years)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

For some Democrats, the aftermath of January 6, 2021 still impacts their day-to-day work in Congress.

“Safety issues are always in the back of everyone's mind especially post January 6th. That trauma has not dissipated This impacts civility (or lack thereof) and willingness to collaborate across party lines and for me at least is at the heart of many of my concerns about the institution today. Clearly some of these people have come to Congress to tear it down and do not care about the institution, what it can do to improve the lives of Americans, or its role in democracy overall.”

– *House Chief of Staff (D)*

“It has been very hard to trust in the good faith of people of the opposite party, post-January 6th.”

– *House Leadership Manager (D)*

“Jan 6 broke my heart to see and hear the support that came from inside the House and Senate. Being locked in on that day and watching the rhetoric since makes me fear the country will never be able to recover.”

– *Senate Administrative Director (D)*

“It's ridiculous and childish how some lawmakers behave. And yet, I do understand the preference of some Democrats to not want to work with the 149 members who voted with the insurrectionists on January 6. That's a principled stand not partisan.”

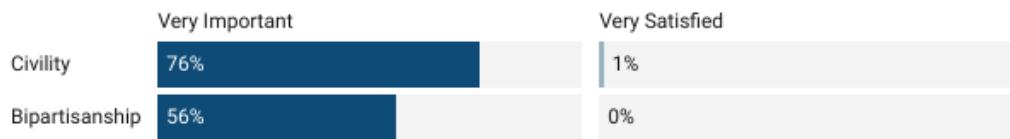
– *House Chief of Staff (D)*

“The leaders of this institution are not honest in understanding the hurt, the paralysis and damage that January 6th and the state of affairs is having on the staff, Members and others. We all deserve better!”

– *House Staff Director (D)*

Finding 4: Senior staffers think it is very important for Members and staffers to be civil and to work across party lines.

Figure 4.1 | Senior staffers consider civility & bipartisanship among Senators and Representatives to be "very important," but few are satisfied with the current state of either.



Q: In your opinion, how important is it to encourage civility/bipartisanship among Senators and Representatives? How satisfied are you with the current state of civility/bipartisanship? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Civility 131 (Important), 124 (Satisfied); n-Bipartisanship 125 (Important), 115 (Satisfied)

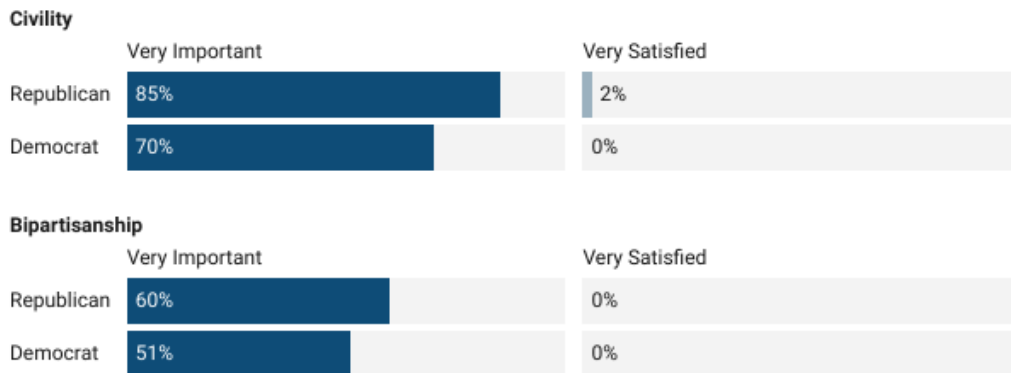
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Typically when asked about civility I think of it in the bipartisan context, but its important for CMF to know that civility between members of the same party has declined dramatically.”

– House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

Figure 4.2 | Republican staffers were more likely than Democrats to consider civility among Senators and Representatives to be "very important."

However, almost none of either party were "very satisfied" with the current state of either civility or bipartisanship.



Q: In your opinion, how important is it to encourage civility/bipartisanship among Senators and Representatives? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Civility Important 47 (Republican), 73 (Democrat); n-Civility Satisfied 45 (Republican), 69 (Democrat); n-Bipartisanship Important 43 (Republican), 72 (Democrat); n-Bipartisanship Satisfied 36 (Republican), 70 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

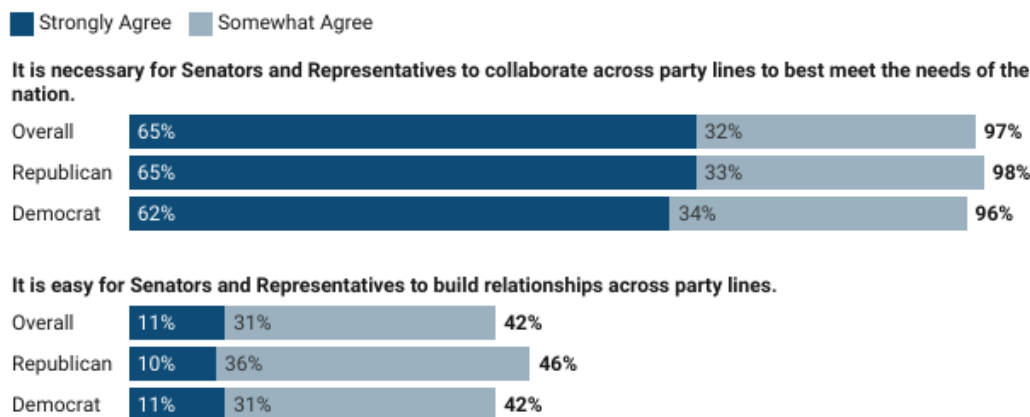
“What we need is more people on both sides of the aisle who are more interested in persuading with facts, rather than saying nonsense that gets them on TV or a bump in their fundraising.”

– House Chief of Staff (R)

“The former system where members had a buddy of opposite party and were encouraged to go to dinner monthly was good for the institution. They are no longer friends outside the office which contributes to the problem.”

– House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

Figure 4.3 | Senior staffers agree it is necessary for Members to collaborate across party lines, but they do not think it is easy for them to build cross-partisan relationships.



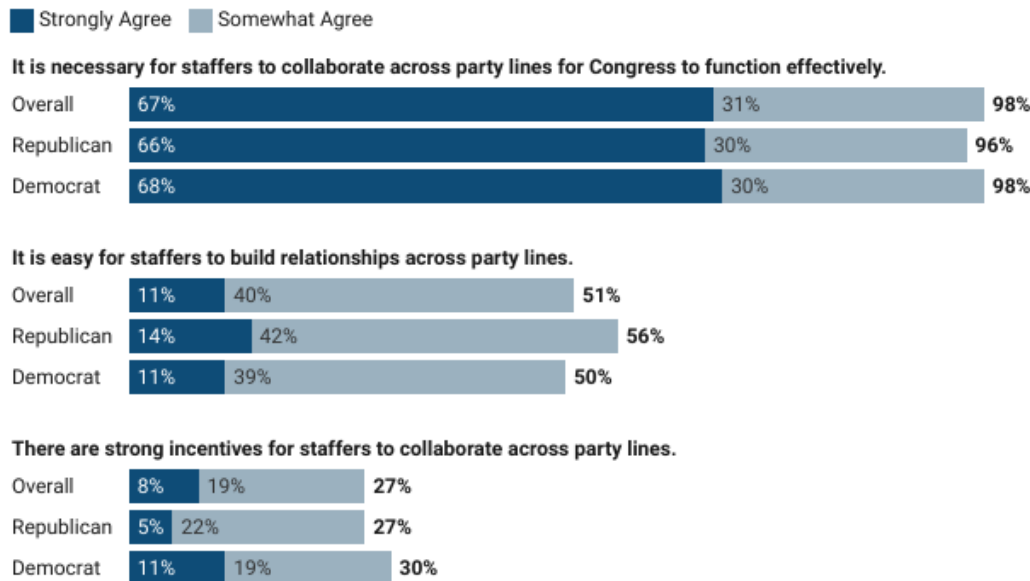
Q: Next, please consider the activities of Senators and Representatives themselves, and indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-Necessary 127 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 76 (Democrat); n-Easy 112 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 64 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Once everyone in Congress discovered we have the means to get work done adequately while remote, the morale to complete work in-person declined rapidly. For Staff and Members alike.”

– House District Director (D)

Figure 4.4 | Senior staffers of both parties agree that it is necessary for staffers to collaborate across party lines, but they differ on whether it is easy and most feel there are not strong incentives to do so.



Q: Next, please consider the activities of staffers in committees and Senators'/Representatives' personal offices and indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-Necessary 131 (Overall), 44 (Republican), 76 (Democrat); n-Easy 110 (Overall), 36 (Republican), 66 (Democrat); n-Incentives 112 (Overall), 41 (Republican), 64 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

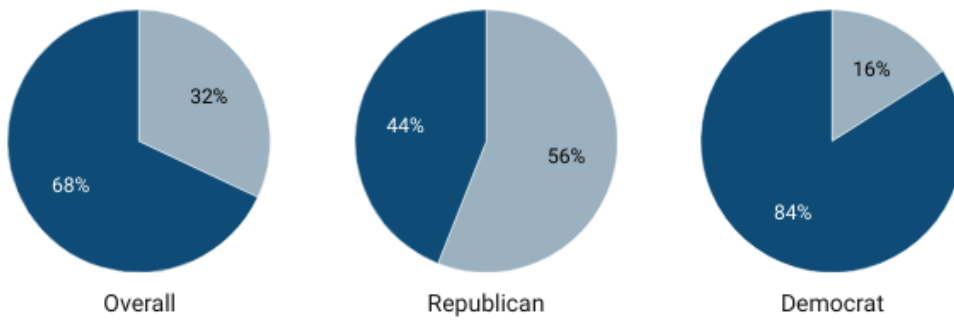
“There are truly not enough forums for staffers to come together. There needs to be dedicated and formalized channels and in-person events/meetings that allow for formal and informal discussion about ideas and actions.”

– Senate Legislative Director (D)

Finding 5: Senior staffers believe polarization and rhetoric are making it more difficult to get things done in Congress and are causing them to consider leaving Congress.

Figure 5.1 | Democrats do not believe that "the agreed-upon rules and codes of conduct for Senators and Representatives are sufficient to hold them accountable for their words and deeds."

■ Agree ■ Disagree



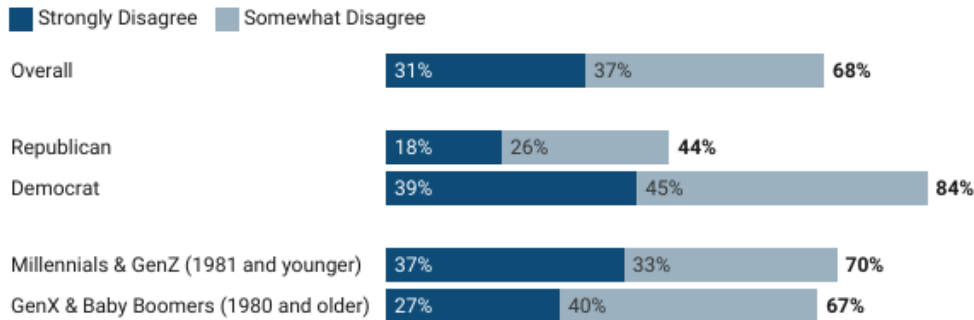
Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-119 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 71 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“The current system rewards extremist points of view on both ends of the political spectrum while ignoring the wishes of the majority of Americans.”

– House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

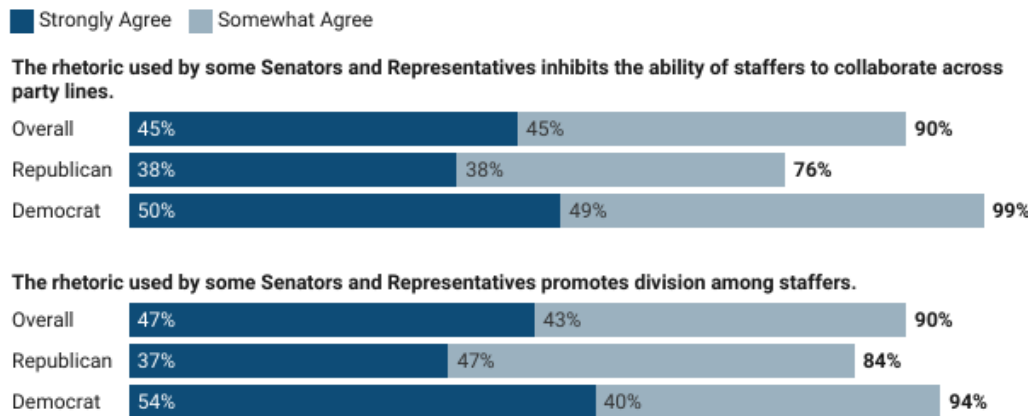
Figure 5.2 | Democrats and younger staffers were more likely to "strongly disagree" that "the agreed-upon rules and codes of conduct for Senators and Representatives are sufficient to hold them accountable for their words and deeds."



Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-119 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 71 (Democrat), 52 (Millennials & GenZ), 67 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 5.3 | Democrats were more likely than Republicans to "strongly agree" that the rhetoric by some Senators and Representatives impacts staff behavior.



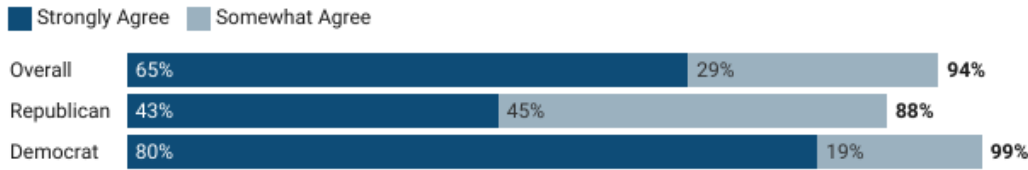
Q: Next, please consider the activities of staffers in committees and Senators'/Representatives' personal offices and indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n-Inhibits 121 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 72 (Democrat); n-Promotes 118 (Overall), 38 (Republican), 70 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Relationships among staff appear to be much better than at the elected level. However, Members and Senators polarizing comments discourage staff from working together even when there is a good personal relationship.”

– House District Director (D)

Figure 5.4 | Democrats were more likely than Republicans to "strongly agree" that "in the past few years, otherwise non-controversial legislative ideas have failed due to polarization among Senators and Representatives."



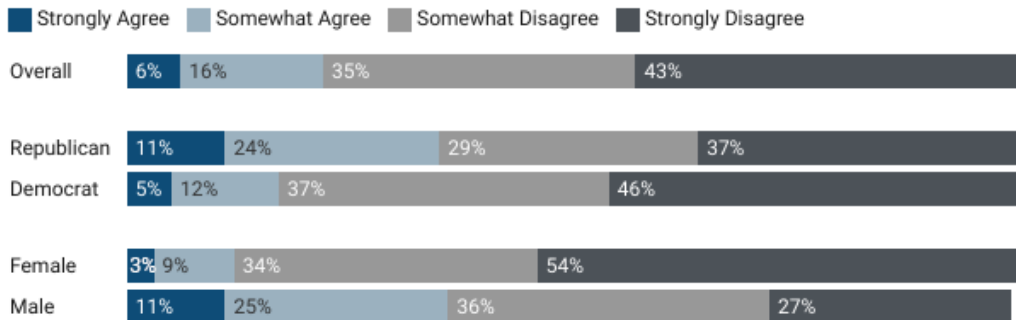
Q: Next, please consider the activities of staffers in committees and Senators'/Representatives' personal offices and indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n- 126 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 75 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“The ‘my way or the highway’ attitude that certain members of both parties have - and in certain cases combined with an apparent opinion that they alone are fighting for the 'best' version of the United States of America - is not beneficial to our constitutional republic. Dictating is not governing and governing requires compromise, which seems to be more difficult to obtain with recent classes of Representatives.”

– House Legislative Director (R)

Figure 5.5 | Republicans and men were more likely to agree that "it is more important for Senators and Representatives to be able to speak as they wish than to adhere to the rules and norms of civility and decorum in Congress."



Q: Next, please consider the activities of Senators and Representatives, themselves, and indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree) n- 112 (Overall), 38 (Republican), 65 (Democrat); 67 (Female), 44 (Male)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“It's not due to inadequate rules and norms -- or their enforcement or lack of enforcement -- that results in reduced civility and polarization. It's [the] growing number of members elected to the House who disdain civility and who seek to advance polarization and dysfunction. They view this as their purpose, their mission, if you will.”

– House Legislative Director (D)

Figure 5.6 | Both Republicans and Democrats "strongly agree" that "congressional leadership should enforce the rules and norms of civility and decorum in Congress."



Q: Next, please consider the activities of Senators and Representatives, themselves, and indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n- 125 (Overall), 44 (Republican), 71 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 5.7 | Women were more likely than men to "strongly agree" that "congressional leadership should enforce the rules and norms of civility and decorum in Congress."



Q: Next, please consider the activities of Senators and Representatives, themselves, and indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n- 125 (Overall), 73 (Female), 52 (Male)

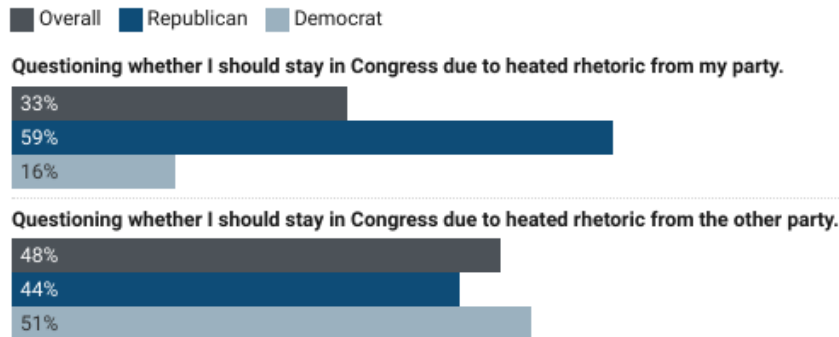
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“When I first started on Capitol Hill, there was respect and honor amongst members of both the House and Senate. They had morals, values and decency that you don't see anymore nowadays. It's disheartening that one can't have their own opinion without being shunned by their party.”

– House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

Figure 5.8 | Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to be at least "somewhat frequently" questioning whether to stay in Congress due to the heated rhetoric of their own party.

Figure represents those who answered "very frequently," "frequently," or "somewhat frequently."



Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n-My Party 113 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 67 (Democrat); n-Other Party 116 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 70 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

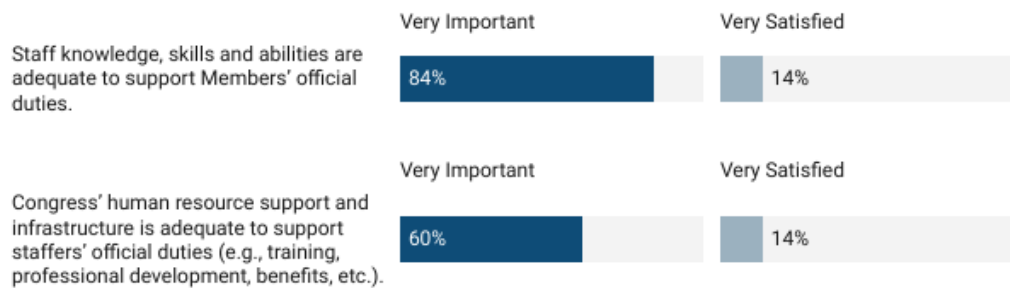
“The extremes at each end of the party spectrum and the mutual demonization of opposing views is unhealthy for honest debate and the understanding necessary for productive and effective legislation and leadership of the country. 15 years ago you could acknowledge the practical need for cooperative effort and working with the other side of the political spectrum. Over the past decade the practical meaning of compromise has come to be viewed politically as capitulation. Political purity is increasingly becoming the standard within both parties.”

– House District Director (R)

Finding 6: Staff are essential to the effective functioning of Congress, but many senior staffers are showing signs that may lead to burnout.

Figure 6.1 | Senior staffers consider staff knowledge, skills and abilities – and the human resource support and infrastructure to support them – "very important" for supporting Members' official duties.

However, few were "very satisfied" with the current state of either.



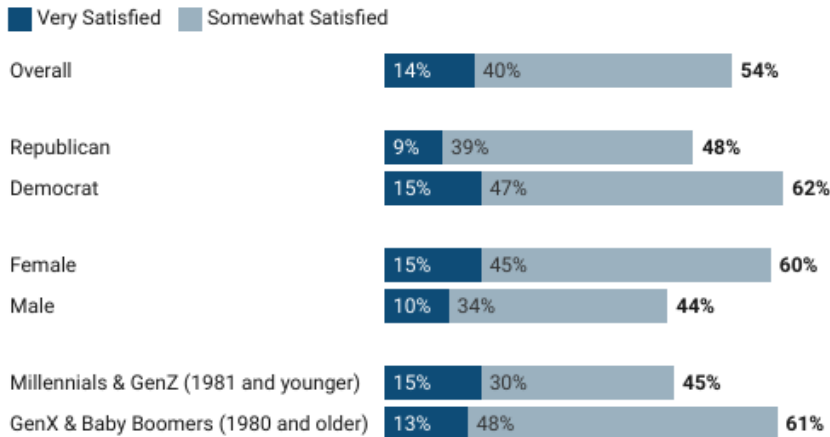
Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Staff Knowledge 119 (Important), 102 (Satisfied); n-Human Resources 116 (Important), 102 (Satisfied)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Congressional staffers should be far more experienced and have far more substantive knowledge than is often the case.”

– House Staff Director (D)

Figure 6.2 | Democrats, women, and older staffers were more likely to be satisfied that "staff knowledge, skills and abilities are adequate to support Members' official duties."



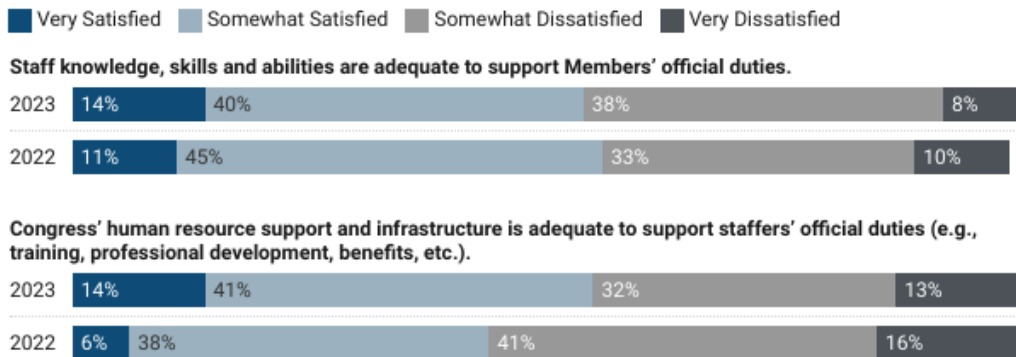
Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n - 102 (Overall), 33 (Republican), 59 (Democrat), 60 (Female), 41 (Male), 46 (Millennials & GenZ), 56 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“While there is always more that can be done, over the years I've worked at the House I think there's been an impressive evolution in support services offered to employees . . . There is always more that can be done but I do think there has been improvement over the years.”

– House Chief of Staff (D)

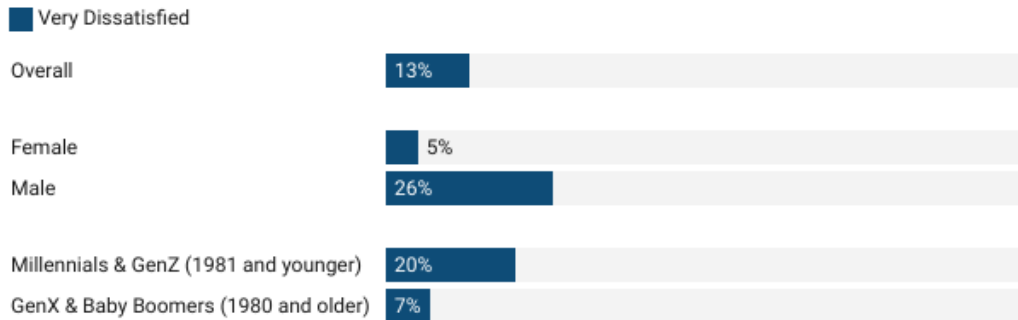
Figure 6.3 | Senior staffers remain torn about staff knowledge, skills, and abilities, but there has likely been improvement in Congress' human resource support and infrastructure to support staffers' official duties.



Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n-Staff Knowledge 102 (2023), 105 (2022); n-Human Resources 102 (2023), 106 (2022)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 6.4 | Men and younger staffers were more likely to be "very dissatisfied" that "Congress' human resource support and infrastructure is adequate to support staffers' official duties (e.g., training, professional development, benefits, etc.)."



Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n- 102 (Overall), 64 (Female), 38 (Male), 45 (Millennials & GenZ), 57 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

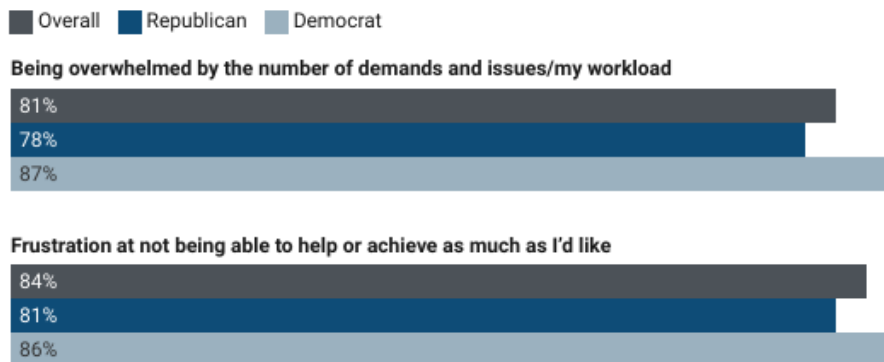
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“Leadership has done a lot to try to improve staff training and retention, but the work is more demanding than ever. Leadership should consider ways in which to improve member training and familiarity with how things work.”

– House Deputy Chief of Staff (R)

Figure 6.5 | Most senior staffers are at least "somewhat frequently" feeling frustrated and overwhelmed while working in Congress which could lead to burnout.

Figure represents those who answered "very frequently," "frequently," or "somewhat frequently."



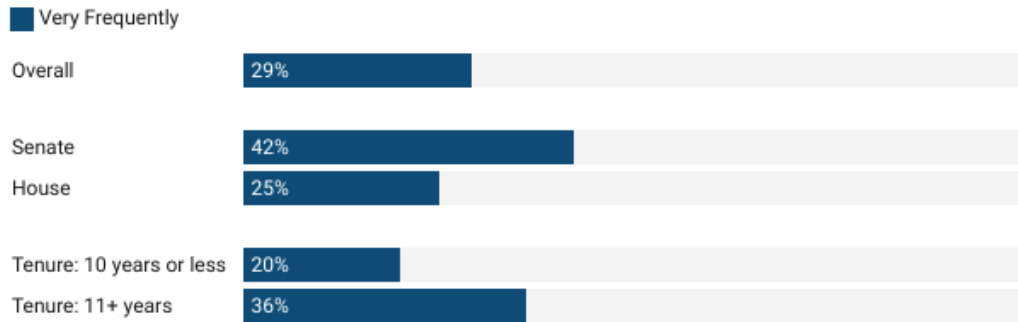
Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n-Overwhelmed 123 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 72 (Democrat); n-Frustration 123 (Overall), 40 (Republican), 73 (Democrat)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“... the whole place is broken and the incentive structures no longer match the proper functions of a democratic republic.”

– House Chief of Staff (R)

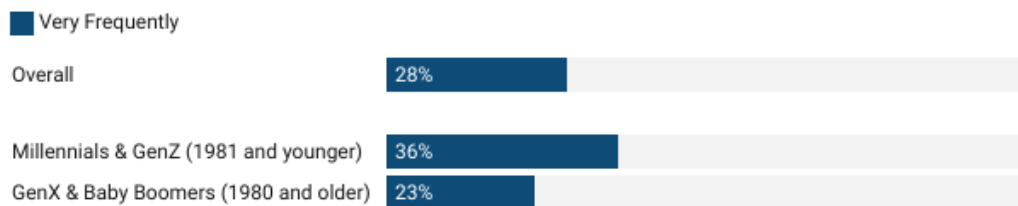
Figure 6.6 | Senate staffers and longer-tenured staffers are more likely to "very frequently" experience "frustration at not being able to help or achieve as much as I'd like."



Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n- 123 (Overall), 33 (Senate), 89 (House), 54 (Tenure: 10 or less years), 69 (Tenure: 11+ years)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 6.7 | Younger staffers were more likely than older staffers to report "very frequently" "being overwhelmed by the demands and issues/my workload."

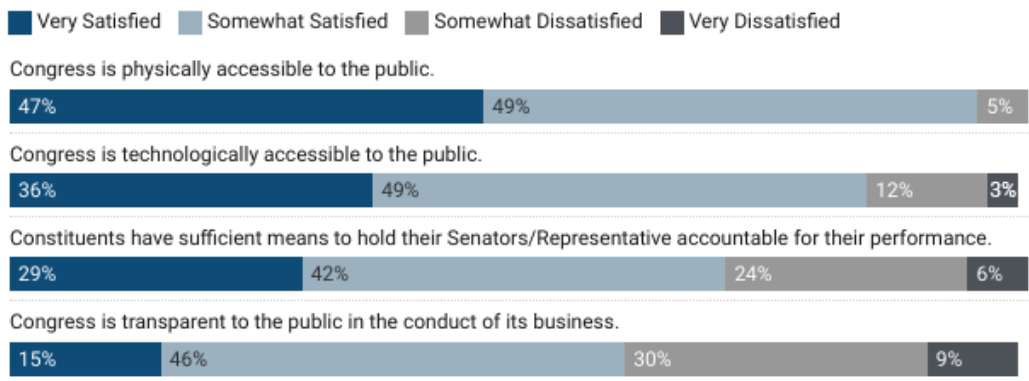


Q: How often are you personally experiencing any of the following while working in Congress? (very frequently, frequently, somewhat frequently, not at all frequently). n- 123 (Overall), 53 (Millennials & GenZ), 70 (GenX and Baby Boomers)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Finding 7: Senior staffers have mixed feelings about congressional accountability and accessibility to the public, but they agree these are important aspects of congressional functionality.

Figure 7.1 | Senior staffers were generally satisfied with congressional accessibility and accountability to the public.

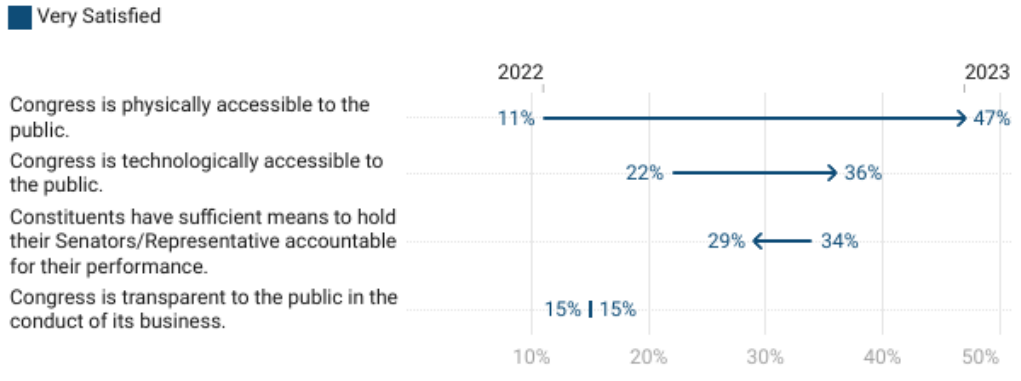


Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n-Physically 107; n-Technologically 108; n-Accountable 106; n-Transparent 107

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 7.2 | Satisfaction with physical and technological accessibility to the public increased from 2022 to 2023.

This might be explained by reduced physical access to the Capitol and many offices due to coronavirus restrictions, and increased dependence on technological access when the survey was fielded in 2022.



Q: How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very satisfied, somewhat satisfied; somewhat dissatisfied; very dissatisfied). n-2023 106-108; n-2022 96-110

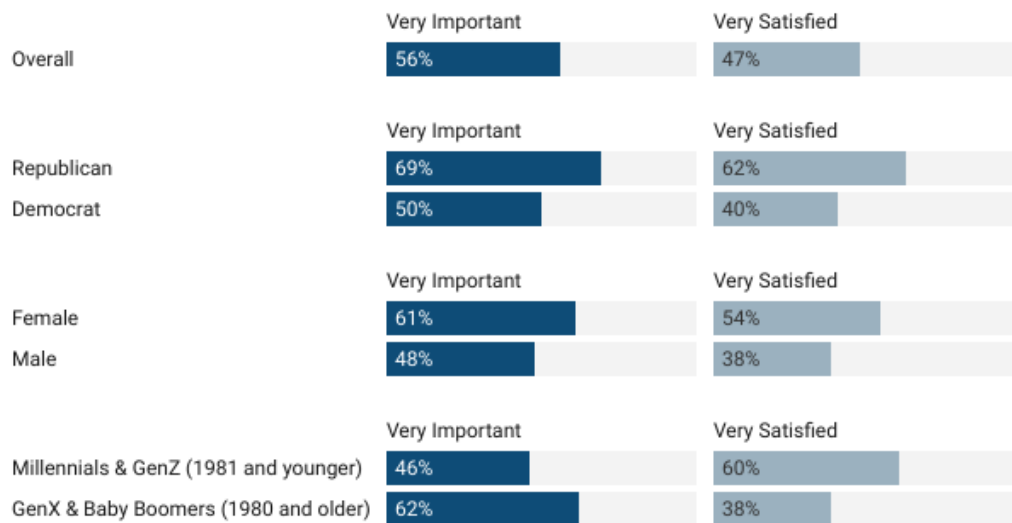
Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“... and with the nation being in a self-sort mode, it is easy to never hear a dissenting opinion in many areas of the country. People in DC, who work in the Capitol, generally have a collegiate approach to one another. The American people don't get to see that - at all. From the outside it appears to be a Royal Rumble and bloodsport. It's reflected in the view people, regular citizens, now view one another.”

– Senate Communications Director (R)

Figure 7.3 | Republicans, women and older staffers were more likely to consider it "very important" that "Congress is physically accessible to the public."

Republicans, women, and younger staffers were more satisfied with the current state.

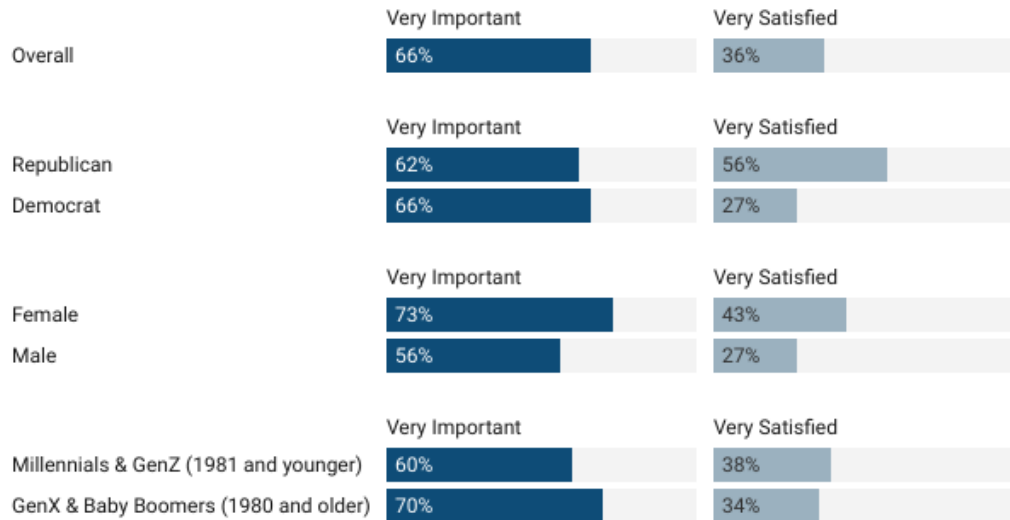


Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 117 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 68 (Democrat), 70 (Female), 46 (Male), 48 (Millennials & GenZ), 69 (GenX & Baby Boomers); n-Satisfied 107 (Overall), 34 (Republican), 62 (Democrat), 61 (Female), 45 (Male), 43 (Millennials & GenZ), 64 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 7.4 | Women and older staffers were more likely to consider it "very important" that "Congress is technologically accessible to the public."

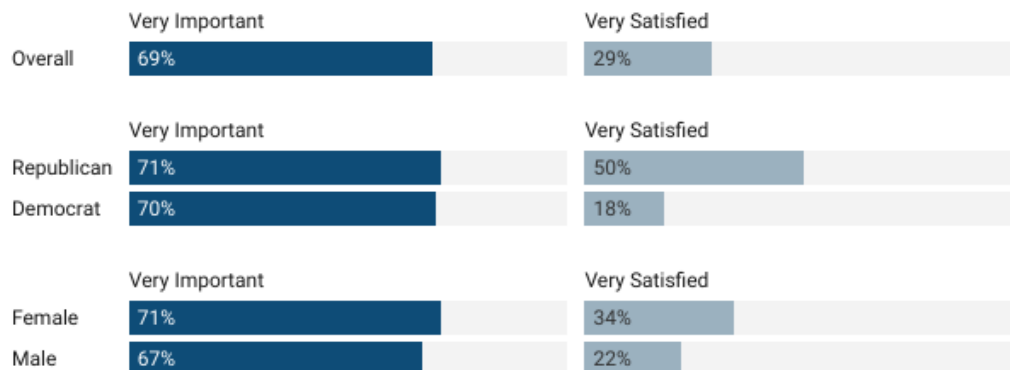
Republicans and women were more likely to be "very satisfied" with the current state.



Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 122 (Overall), 39 (Republican), 74 (Democrat), 70 (Female), 52 (Male), 53 (Millennials & GenZ), 69 (GenX and Baby Boomers); n-Satisfied 108 (Overall), 36 (Republican), 62 (Democrat), 63 (Female), 45 (Male), 47 (Millennials & GenZ), 61 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 7.5 | Though staffers hold it about equally important, Republicans and women are more likely to be "very satisfied" that "constituents have sufficient means to hold their Senators/Representative accountable for their performance."



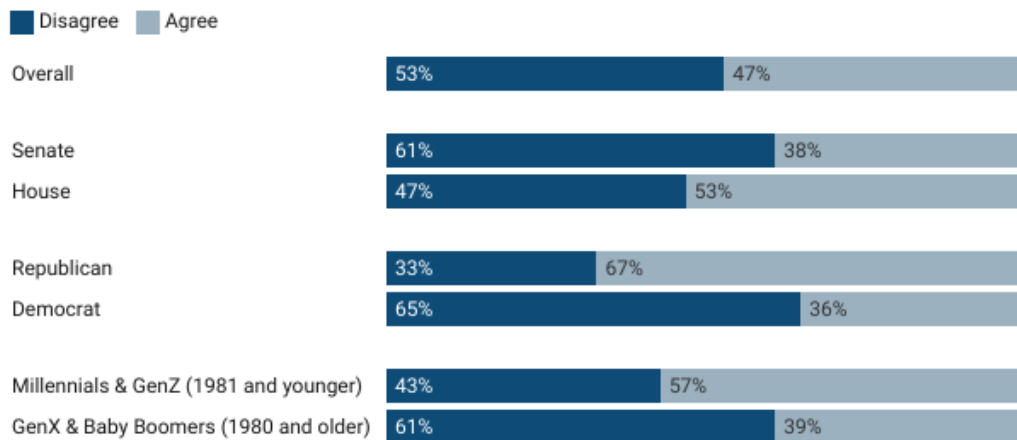
Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 118 (Overall), 38 (Republican), 71 (Democrat), 70 (Female), 48 (Male); n-Satisfied 106 (Overall), 36 (Republican), 62 (Democrat), 61 (Female), 45 (Male)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“The people need to demand better and Congress needs to show them that we can be better too.”

– Senate Legislative Director (D)

Figure 7.6 | House staffers, Republicans, and younger staffers were more likely to agree that "the current means of public engagement/input – advocacy and lobbying directed to individual Senators and Representatives – are adequate for understanding the needs of U.S. residents."



Q: Thinking of Congress, as a whole, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). n- 108 (Overall), 39 (Senate), 68 (House), 36 (Republican), 65 (Democrat), 51 (Millennials & GenZ), 57 (GenX & Baby Boomers)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper

“These bodies are representative of their constituencies, and because the constituencies are very divided so is Congress.”

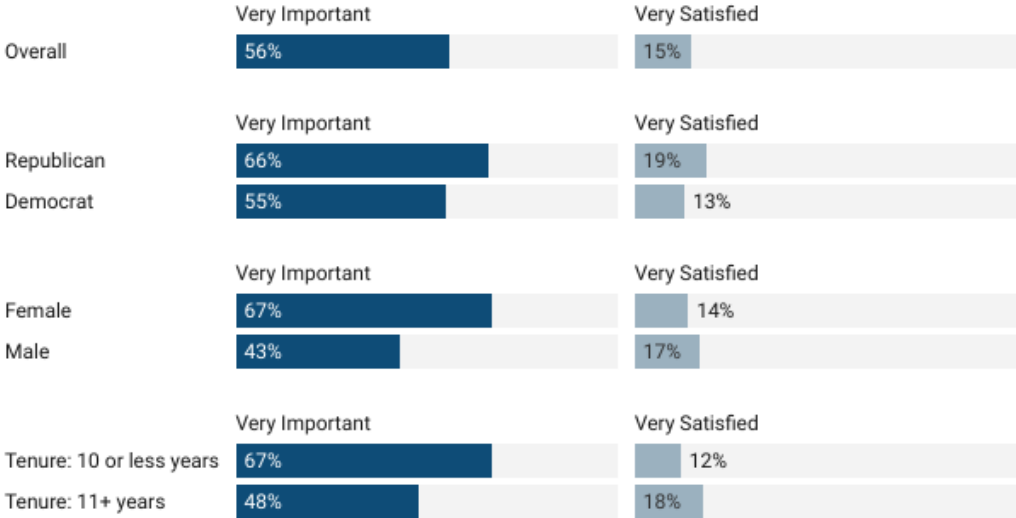
– House Committee Manager (D)

“... it's a representative body and a reflection of the People writ large. When they demand something different from their leaders, their leaders will respond (or they will elect different leaders).”

– House Staff Director (R)

Figure 7.7 | Democrats, women, and younger staffers were more likely to consider it "very important" that "Congress is transparent to the public in the conduct of its business."

However, few are "very satisfied" with the current state.



Q: In your opinion, how IMPORTANT are the following for the effective functioning of Congress? How SATISFIED are you with Congress' performance in the following? (very important/satisfied, somewhat important/satisfied; somewhat unimportant/dissatisfied; very unimportant/dissatisfied). n-Important 121 (Overall), 41 (Republican), 69 (Democrat), 69 (Female), 51 (Male), 52 (Tenure: 10 or less years), 69 (Tenure: 11+ years); n-Satisfied 107 (Overall), 36 (Republican), 60 (Democrat), 64 (Female), 42 (Male), 50 (Tenure: 10 or less years), 57 (Tenure: 11+ years)

Chart: State of the Congress 2024 • Source: Congressional Management Foundation • Created with Datawrapper



Acknowledgements

CMF must first thank our former collaborators on this project, the Partnership for Public Service. For most of their history the focus of their mission to build a better government and a stronger democracy has focused on the Executive Branch, but during the tenure of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress they turned their sights toward the Legislative Branch. They took a leadership role in the cohort of individuals and organizations supporting the “FixCongress” Committee, and they were excellent collaborators with CMF on [State of the Congress 2022](#). They have returned their focus to the Executive Branch, but we must acknowledge the important role they played in our work and in the modernization of Congress.

We must also honor the work of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, the Modernization Subcommittee of the Committee on House Administration, and the FixCongress cohort. Through their work more attention has been given to the challenges Congress faces as an institution and the importance of congressional modernization and reform. There are now more staffers, academics, and organizations focused on the critical role Congress plays in our democracy and the ills that happen when Congress is not performing it at peak effectiveness. We are thrilled to continue to engage in the research, discussion, and planning that continues around modernizing Congress.

And none of this work—ours included—would have been possible without the foresight and support of Democracy Fund and the Hewlett Foundation. These organizations turned their attention to legislative strengthening and the democracy ecosystem in the United States years before the FixCongress Committee was ever considered. We especially thank Jean Bordewich, Chayenne Polimédio, Lara Flint, Daniel Stid, Betsy Wright Hawkings, and Sean Raymond for their leadership, insight, support, and continued effort to strengthen the key levers of our democracy.

Of course, we thank the senior staffers who have taken our surveys. This work is critical for measuring and better understanding key elements of congressional capacity, function, and performance and it would be impossible without those who contribute their views. It is a difficult time for our democracy, and you are in the trenches. We thank you for your continued work and dedication to the institution we all hold so dear.

We also profusely thank our data scientist friend Abigail Kielty for providing support and insight on our methodology and data analysis and CMF Research Assistant *par excellence* Phuong Tran for carefully checking and rechecking every data point and reviewing every line of writing to ensure it is all correct. Their contributions were imperative to ensure the quality of our data, findings, and writing.

Finally, I personally extend my deep respect and appreciation for my colleagues, contributors, and dear friends Brad Fitch and Nicole Folk Cooper. For 23 years we have collaborated on this and so many other important projects. We have grappled with analysis and wording and design. We have laughed and commiserated and created excellent products together. This report will likely be our last together, and I will dearly miss working with you both.

Kathy Goldschmidt

About the Author

KATHY GOLDSCHMIDT, SENIOR FELLOW

Kathy Goldschmidt is a strategic thinker who has been engaged in plotting the Congressional Management Foundation's course for more than 25 years. She joined CMF in 1997 after working in the House of Representatives. She was involved in much of CMF's research during her tenure, with a focus on legislative capacity, strengthening and technology use. She was integral to seminal CMF projects, including State of the Congress to benchmark and measure congressional modernization over time and The Future of Citizen Engagement to envision ways to modernize the relationship between Senators and Representatives and their constituents. She also helped lead the Resilient Democracy Coalition and the Congress 3.0 project, which considered different aspects of congressional capacity-building and modernization. She was co-creator and lead researcher for the Congress Online Project—through which CMF developed the Gold Mouse Awards for congressional websites and social media practices—and the National Science Foundation-funded Connecting to Congress project. She was also instrumental in envisioning and planning for the *Partnership for a More Perfect Union*.

Kathy led a number of contracts with the Congress to develop strategies for legislative information and communications technologies. One of these was an intensive, two-year project to develop a 10-year vision and strategy for technology in the House of Representatives, on which she testified before the Committee on House Administration.

Kathy also co-created the *Communicating with Congress* project and has authored or contributed to dozens of research reports, publications and articles on Congress. She retired from CMF in 2023 to travel full time with her family and continues to serve as a consultant to CMF on select projects.

Methodology and Sample

OVERVIEW

Between August and November 2023, the Congressional Management Foundation conducted a survey of senior staff in the House and Senate to gain current insight into civility, functionality, and capacity in Congress. We invited by email staff in the following positions: Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, Legislative Director, District/State Director, Communications Director, Press Secretary, and Committee and Subcommittee Staff Director. Additionally, we invited staff recruited as Congressional Exemplars in 2022 and 2023, including several key stakeholders in institutional support offices. Approximately 2,723 staff were invited and 138 staffers participated, yielding a 5% response rate.

In this report, we present only what we deemed the most critical findings from a large data set. The topline and select crosstabs are available in a separate workbook for further review and analysis. Following is information that clarifies the non-contextualized findings, figures, and quotes included in this report.

THE SURVEY

The participants responded to a nine-question demographic profile and a 17-question survey with many multi-part questions and five open-ended questions from which we drew select quotes. We made the questions as clear and straightforward as possible, but intentionally chose not to define terms (e.g., “functionality,” “civility,” “decorum,” “capacity,” etc.) to allow participants’ own definitions to guide them. The survey was organized as follows:

- **Functionality:** We asked about the role of Senators and Representatives and level of agreement with eight statements about select functions of Congress adapted from Inter-Parliamentary Union benchmarks for democratic legislatures. We also asked an open-ended question about their sense of Congress’ functionality. These questions were identical to questions asked in 2022.
- **Civility & Bipartisanship:** We asked about the importance of civility and bipartisanship in Congress and satisfaction with the current state of each. We then asked level of agreement with six statements about Members and five statements about staffers in Members’ personal offices and committees. Finally, we included an open-ended question about civility and bipartisanship in Congress. These questions were identical to questions asked in 2022.
- **Capacity:** We asked the importance of 12 aspects Congress’ operations and satisfaction with each, as well as an open-ended question about Congress’ capacity to perform its role in democracy. These were identical to questions asked in 2022 and slightly modified from questions asked in 2017.

- **Personal Safety:** We included a new question probing the frequency with which participants are personally experiencing nine dimensions of personal safety and comfort while working in Congress. Finally, we asked an open-ended question inviting participants to tell us anything additional they wanted us to know.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

We chose to streamline the figures to make them as easy to read and understand as possible, so details are excluded. Unless otherwise noted, the following are applicable to data depicted throughout this report:

- Percentages reported were derived by removing the neutral and “don’t know” responses. They indicate the percentage of those who had an opinion on the question. As a result, the number of respondents varies from figure to figure and ranges from 97 to 138.
- Percentages for a question may not total 100% due to rounding.
- Percentages for a question may not total 100% if some responses are excluded (e.g., we presented only the most relevant options given for Senators’ and Representatives’ role in democracy).

GENERALIZATION OF RESULTS

As with all research, it is important to note that the results presented are only truly representative of the survey respondents and readers should exercise caution when generalizing results. While we cannot statistically validate these opinions, CMF is confident in this research and these findings. Our firsthand experience in working with the Congress corroborates the results published in this report.

Select Resources for Legislative Benchmarking and Assessment

[*Benchmarking and Self-Assessment for Parliaments*](#); Mitchell O'Brien, Rick Stapenhurst, and Lisa von Trapp, Editors; World Bank Group, 2016.

[“Common Ethical Principles for Members of Parliament,”](#) Open Government Partnership’s Legislative Openness Working Group, 2015.

[“Common Principles for Support to Parliaments,”](#) Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014.

[“Comparative Research Paper on Parliamentary Administration,”](#) Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020.

[*Evaluating Parliament: A Self-Assessment Toolkit for Parliaments*](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008.

[*Global Parliamentary Report 2022: Public Engagement in the Work of Parliament*](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022.

[“Guidelines for Parliamentary Research Services,”](#) Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015.

[“Indicators for Democratic Parliaments.”](#) Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023.

[“Putting Parliamentary Self-Development into Practice,”](#) Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019.

[*World e-Parliament Report 2020*](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021.

We also direct attention to the important work of the now-retired [Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress](#)—especially its [final report](#)—and the new [Modernization Subcommittee of the Committee on House Administration](#).



CONGRESSIONAL
MANAGEMENT
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State of the Congress 2024

An Assessment of the Civility,
Functionality, and Capacity
of the 118th Congress
by Senior Congressional Staff

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