

## 2024 Presidential Greatness Project – Vice Presidential Greatness Results Summary

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The 2024 Presidential Greatness Project Expert Survey was conducted online via Qualtrics from November 15 to December 31, 2023. For more on the overall results of the survey, as well as how it was conducted, please click [here](#). In addition to the questions that focused on presidential greatness, we also added several new questions that focused on the American Vice Presidency. This brief report outlines the results of these questions.

The primary purpose of this battery of questions was to create a ranking of vice presidential greatness that covered all vice presidents from the modern era (i.e., Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s first vice president, John Nance Garner, through Joe Biden’s vice president, Kamala Harris). To do this, we asked respondents to rate each vice president on a scale of 0-100 for their overall greatness, with 0=failure, 50=average, and 100=great. We then averaged the ratings for each president and ranked them from highest average to lowest. Overall, Vice President Al Gore topped the list, followed by Joe Biden, Lyndon Johnson, and George H.W. Bush. Spiro Agnew ranked last, joined by Dan Quayle, Henry Wallace, and John Nance Garner at the bottom of the rankings.

### Modern Vice Presidential Greatness by Rank (1933-Present)

Vice President	President Served	Rating	Rank
Al Gore (1993-2001)	Bill Clinton	68.00	1
Joe Biden (2009-2017)	Barack Obama	67.99	2
Lyndon B. Johnson (1961-1963)	John F. Kennedy	63.25	3
George H.W. Bush (1981-1989)	Ronald Reagan	62.40	4
Walter Mondale (1977-1981)	Jimmy Carter	61.95	5
Gerald Ford (1973-1974)	Richard Nixon	56.07	6
Harry S. Truman (1945-1945)	Franklin D. Roosevelt	55.74	7
Hubert Humphrey (1965-1969)	Lyndon B. Johnson	52.92	8
Richard Nixon (1953-1961)	Dwight D. Eisenhower	50.82	9
Dick Cheney (2001-2009)	George W. Bush	49.79	10
Kamala Harris (2021-Present)	Joe Biden	46.03	11
Nelson Rockefeller (1974-1977)	Gerald Ford	43.63	12
Mike Pence (2017-2021)	Donald J. Trump	43.01	13
Alben W. Barkley (1949-1953)	Harry S. Truman	41.18	14
John Nance Garner (1933-1941)	Franklin D. Roosevelt	39.79	15
Henry A. Wallace (1941-45)	Franklin D. Roosevelt	39.06	16
Dan Quayle (1989-1993)	George H.W. Bush	34.48	17
Spiro Agnew (1969-1973)	Richard Nixon	17.06	18

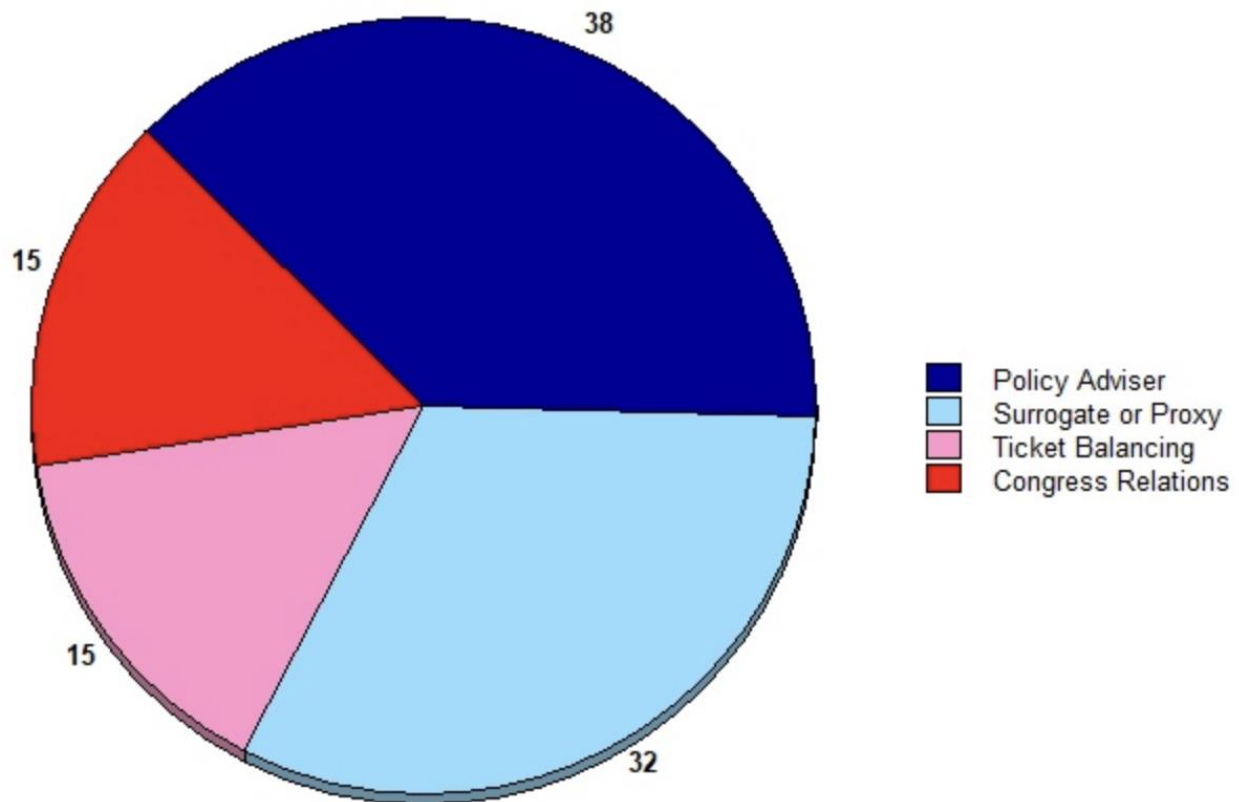
We also sought to have experts evaluate contemporary vice presidents (i.e., those since Walter Mondale reinvented the institution) across several key dimensions of the contemporary vice presidency: balancing the ticket, serving as a surrogate or proxy for the president, maintaining relations with Congress, and serving as a policy advisor to the president. There was interesting variation between each of these categories. Al Gore, who was the top-rated overall vice president, was also the top-rated vice president in the policy advisor and surrogate/proxy categories, while Joe Biden, who was the second highest-rated vice president overall, was the top-rated vice president in the ticket-balancing and congressional relations categories. Our most recent vice presidents, Kamala Harris and Mike Pence, both did particularly well as ticket-balancers, even though neither was highly rated overall. Similarly, Dick Cheney did particularly well for serving as a surrogate/proxy and especially as a policy advisor, though he also was not highly rated overall.

**Contemporary Dimensions of Vice Presidential Greatness (Ranked by Overall Greatness)**

<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Overall Greatness</b>	<b>Ticket Balancing</b>	<b>Surrogate or Proxy</b>	<b>Relations w/ Congress</b>	<b>Policy Advisor</b>
Al Gore (1993-2001)	68.00	45.69	71.73	65.32	75.52
Joe Biden (2009-2017)	67.99	71.99	69.74	78.87	74.19
George H.W. Bush (1981-1989)	62.40	63.44	66.2	60.02	63.72
Walter Mondale (1977-1981)	61.95	58.9	62.11	63.48	67.42
Dick Cheney (2001-2009)	49.79	49.65	62.3	54.2	74.42
Kamala Harris (2021-Present)	46.03	67.71	47.24	46.67	44.1
Mike Pence (2017-2021)	43.01	57.14	43	45.11	33.7
Dan Quayle (1989-1993)	34.48	40.75	32.96	37.61	31.14

The secondary focus of this battery of questions about vice presidents was to better understand how experts evaluate the vice presidency. We did this in two ways. First, we asked a ballot-style survey question concerning the characteristics that are most important in being a good vice president. Offered four choices, being an adviser to the president on policy was the most popular option (38%), though there was no clear consensus as each of the other options also received significant support, with being a surrogate or proxy for the president being selected by 32%, followed by balancing the ticket (15%) and maintaining relations with Congress (15%).

## Most Important Dimension of Vice Presidential Greatness



The second way we did this was by asking for our respondents to describe briefly, in their own words, what constitutes vice presidential greatness. The open-ended responses run the gamut, covering everything from specific moments of vice presidential greatness (or lack thereof) to dismissal on the very idea of vice presidential greatness. There is tremendous overlap in most of the comments, as would be expected. Below are several illustrative quotes that represent the ideas that are conveyed through the bulk of the responses:

- From my perspective as a political science scholar, 'greatness' in a vice-president is characterized by their adept support and counsel to the president, significant influence in policymaking, and their ability to independently handle major national and international responsibilities effectively.
- A "great" vice-president is characterized by their ability to effectively support and complement the president, demonstrating loyalty, wisdom, and initiative. They should be prepared to lead in times of crisis, offer insightful counsel, and actively engage in policy-making and diplomatic efforts.
- The greatness of a vice president can usually only be demonstrated in times of marked crisis, such as when a president leaves office for whatever reason (especially death). Usually, vice presidents are only noted for high-profile

