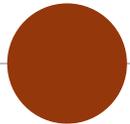
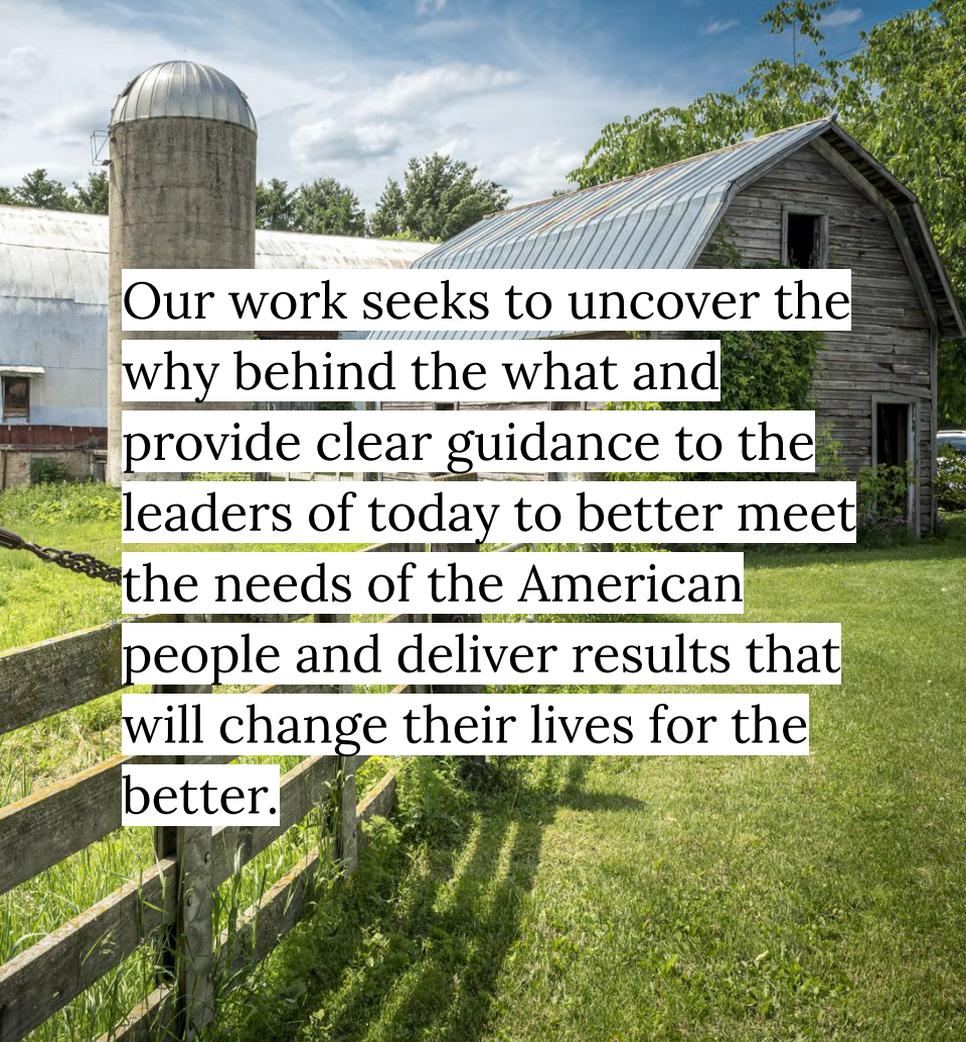


The Heartland Study

A Look into What Gives in Rural America (MN, IA, WI)





Our work seeks to uncover the why behind the what and provide clear guidance to the leaders of today to better meet the needs of the American people and deliver results that will change their lives for the better.

In 2022, with significant changes afoot in the world, Future Majority and Strategic Victory Fund longed to understand what was happening in America's Heartland - how Americans in the small towns and rural communities of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota were thinking and feeling in order to understand how they saw themselves, their country, and the world at large.

The work was to uncover a deeper understanding of what's going on below the surface in America's Heartland to identify what they want, what they need, and how the country can better serve them.

In this study, we explored how small town and rural Americans perceive the federal, state and local levels of government, how they are looking into the future, what matters to them, and how they think about issues that count. What follows is a revealing look into what drives America's Heartland.

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

We used an online ethnographic approach in this research, prompting participants over a series of days to answer questions online through open text responses and metaphorical image gathering, with songs, creative exercises, and more in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how people truly think and feel.

This approach, using metaphor as well as a variety of sensory exercises, was designed around the way that people think and the way thought is structured, leveraging best practices from the world of psychology and neuroscience in order to give participants the time and the space to share what matters most to them in an unfiltered manner.





The Participants

Who: We worked with a sample of **n=38 Rural and Small Town Americans** that included:

- n=13 Minnesotans (MN)
- n=11 Wisconsinites (WI)
- n=14 Iowans (IA)

Of these, we spoke with a representative sample across measures of income, education, location, and gender. We also ensured the sample was representative across attitudinal measures, leveraging the Obi Audiences value segmentation developed by Harmony Labs. The specific breakdown of that segmentation included:

- n=13 Don't Tread on Me (DTOM)
- n=11 Tough Cookie (TC)
- n=8 If You Say So (IYSS)
- n=5 People Power (PP)

All imagery that follows, unless otherwise indicated, was provided by the research subjects.

FOR REFERENCE

Our values-based segments

We chose a values-based approach to ensure a representative sample of the attitudes and values we might find across small towns and rural communities.

We did this because deeper values are a stronger predictor of behavior than any other sociodemographic variables, and layered under our sample, provides a better opportunity to uncover the stories and worldviews reflective of our sampled communities.

Source: Harmony Labs Narrative Observatory

People Power

Community-minded, politically engaged, and ready to fight for system reform to solve social issues like poverty.

Tough Cookies

Family-first rule followers who believe that, while the system might be broken, hard work can create success.

If You Say So

Independent realists who know the system is broken but are skeptical that there are real solutions to society's problems.

Don't Tread on Me

Conservative, achievement-oriented, and strong believers that equal opportunity already exists.



Our Study Overview

Day 1 - Heartland Values

We explored the heart of the Heartland, digging into their values, their hopes and fears for the future, what their ideal country looks like, who they trust, how they're weathering the pandemic and what they'd like to see change.

Day 2 - State Focus

We dug into community and statewide issues against the backdrop of what it means to live in the Heartland, uncovering thinking behind hot topics like child care, drug legalization, the opioid crisis, the environment, abortion, crime and policing and education all while exploring their perceptions of government and ideal leadership.

Day 3 - Federal Focus

We went deep into party perceptions and alignment, feelings about woke culture, patriotism, and their political journey, all while looking into what they perceived to be the most important issues of the day, how they felt about the future of the country, and where they saw themselves in it.

1

Our Heartland Voters

Who they are, what they value, and what they dream of for their future.



ARE YOU IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE & FUTURE?

While a portion of our respondents indicated that they felt a sense of control over their lives, **most did not feel in control**. This **mainly centered around finances**, cost of living issues, and a lack of financial freedom, as well as a deep seated feeling that **they saw the future, but didn't see their role in it**.

We feel trapped, not financially free...

"I feel like I have some control over my future and my life, but I don't feel in control of my financial well-being. **I am tied to over \$100,000 in student loans - I am drowning daily in debt that is impossible to get out of.** I feel at times as though I am being punished for desiring an education that helps me be who I am supposed to be." - *Katherine, IA, TC*

"I would say that I am not. No one is. The voter isn't. The wealth gap is widening and not allowing people to get ahead. Things are becoming more expensive and people trying to afford a "normal life" are being left behind with no way to advance or live comfortably. **There is a lot of aging housing and infrastructure that is trapping people and communities.**" - *Blake, MN, IYSS*

And we don't feel in control of our future...

"I feel in control of my life, yes. My future, I'm unsure. Living in America today we are all fighting a battle. This battle seems to be against one another. These 'leaders' and the media have created the most perfect disaster to pin neighbors against each other. Families are being stripped of their bonds and love. **What does our future hold? I'm unsure. I'm scared, absolutely. It could be very ugly,** we could endure torture I've read about in history books. Or, the clouds could clear. It's so hard to know. **I don't have a tremendous amount of faith in our future.**" - *Sam, IA, TC*

"I feel in control of my life. The future, not so much. My future involves the weather and whatever the markets do to me. I'm just along for the ride." - *Todd, IA, PP*

WHAT OUR HEARTLANDERS WANT

Our Heartlanders described living in an area with beautiful natural resources, great infrastructure, and a wonderful way of life, yet their eden was not quite yet a paradise.

They longed for **more affordable healthcare, more broadband internet, and more bang for their buck**, wanting their **taxes to mean something**, for life to be more affordable and for them **to be able to stretch their dollar further**, without accepting help from others. They also **wanted to ensure good stewardship of their land, to keep government as an assistant, not an imposition, and to keep safe, leveraging the police and the military to do so, but not without some caveats.**

This was a group who wanted freedom - true freedom - to live their lives without the heavy weight of debt on their shoulders or government telling them what to do. They saw life outside their community as an extension of their household and wanted fair, honest dealings, the ability to move forward into the future, and transparency from those they put in power.

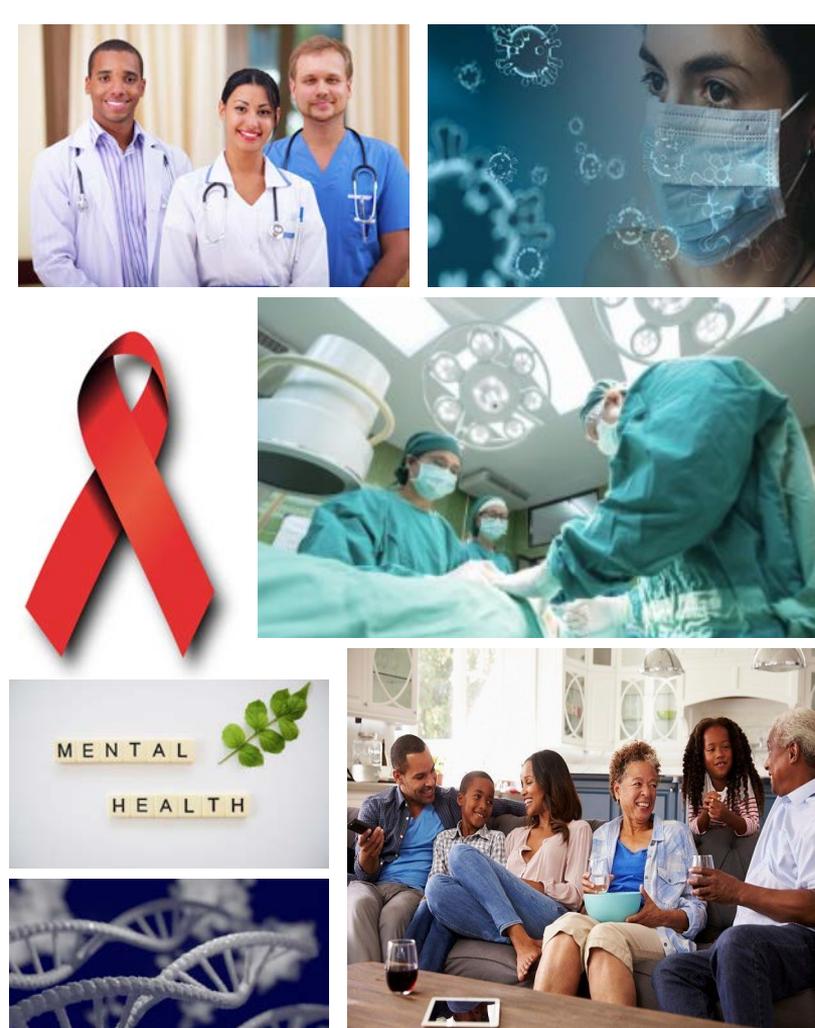
MORE AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE



When given “a magic wand” to pass any law that would make their lives easier, our Heartlanders overwhelmingly chose two things - 1) to kill government corruption and 2) to achieve universal healthcare which looked like **more affordable healthcare than our current system allows**, where it’s either die or go bankrupt. Some Heartlanders suggested eliminating health insurance, others free healthcare, others still just more affordable healthcare. **Any way you sliced it, Heartlanders want better when it comes to the healthcare that they can afford and have access to.**

Citing astronomical costs and the financial stress that comes along with them, **a redesign of the healthcare system would go a long way toward making Heartlanders feel like the government was working for them.**

What Heartlanders Want



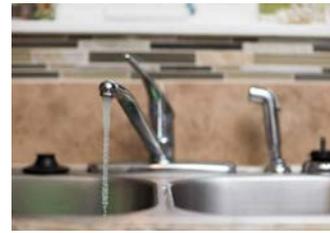


KEEP INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING

Heartlanders reported an unusually high degree of satisfaction with their local infrastructure - from clean air and water to working roads without potholes, to firefighters, police, postal workers and teachers who all took care of them.

When asked to bring in images of working government, it was all images of infrastructure they brought in, sharing that they were pleased with the infrastructure they had come to rely on.

The only quibble? The desire for better broadband access, which some had, but others were missing.





GET MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK



Heartlanders, who deeply value freedom, continually reported irritation and anxiety over money, describing money issues as a weight on their shoulders, a trap, a pit, and as something holding them back. While many reported that they were keeping up with the cost of living, a deeper look showed us that in fact they were just running faster on their personal financial treadmills, trying to muscle their way through.

The financial stress our Heartlanders reported manifested in frustration over taxation and tax season, in government agencies collecting fees (e.g. the DMV) and not using their money well, and concerns generally that the government, “don’t give a hoot about your time.” **Our Heartlanders wanted to be better able to afford the cost of living and retire someday. And they wanted to be able work to get there, all while seeing where their tax dollars were going and feeling a return for them.**



What Heartlanders Want



BE GOOD STEWARDS OF OUR LAND

Stewardship of the land for our Heartlanders was **incredibly important**, even for those who didn't work in farming. Our Heartlanders strongly valued the land they lived on, its natural beauty and what it could do for them as a resource.

While some spoke of climate change, looking at the environment through a global lens to protect the earth and its people, **most spoke of land as a resource that should be managed, maintained and protected by small town and rural inhabitants.**



What Heartlanders Want



GOVERNMENT NOT IMPOSING, BUT ASSISTING



As much as our Heartlanders were keen on honoring tradition, they were eager to move forward into the future. In many ways, they felt the government was holding them back.

Heartlanders spoke with irritation about perceived government oversteps (especially around COVID), corruption, and described a government that was too caught up in political infighting to actually move things forward.

From imposing term limits to voting reform and everything in between, **Heartlanders felt strongly that our political system needs an overhaul in order to create a government that gets things done and doesn't unnecessarily impose.** Primarily, they're concerned about the effect of money on the system, calling for the elimination of super PACs, spending caps for campaigns, and not allowing churches to donate to campaigns, allowing for greater transparency into where legislative priorities come from.

CONFIDENTIAL

Employee/Volunteer Request for Religious Exemption Related to Required Vaccination

provide an exemption for religious beliefs and/or practices which prohibit the employee/volunteer from receiving the required vaccine. To request an exemption, complete this form and return it to Human Resources. If approved, Human Resources will return this completed form to you to upload to the system.

Check one: COVID-19 Vaccination or Influenza Vaccination

Check one: Employee or Volunteer

Name (print): _____ Date of Request: _____

Explain below why you are requesting an exemption:
I have sincere and strongly held religious beliefs through conviction of the Holy Spirit and me



Screening

My Symptoms (to determine access for today)

Did you have or feel like you have had a fever in last 24 hours?*

No Yes

Do you have a new or worsening cough? *

No Yes

Are you having trouble breathing?*

What Heartlanders Want



KEEP US SAFE

While many Heartlanders were concerned about government overreach into the little details of the day, when it came to corporal safety, they appreciated the role that government had to play through the military, through the police and even through building regulations, which they felt were important to follow in order to keep them safe.

For them, one of the big points of government was to ensure the safety of its citizens.

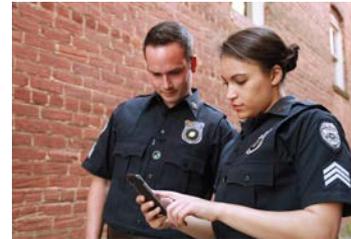
That being said, the police and military did not enjoy a complete windfall of support, financial or otherwise.

When budgeting for their ideal government, most Heartlanders indicated that they'd like to reduce funding to the police and military, and while they felt strongly about supporting the police, they also felt that resources had been mispurposed and wanted to “refresh” the existing policing system.



CITY OF NEW YORK
CODE OF ORDINANCES
CHAPTER 5
*BUILDING CODE

Art.	Effective	Page
1. General provisions	March 14, 1916.....	4
2. Materials	March 30, 1915.....	11
3. Working stresses and loads...	March 30, 1915.....	15
4. Classification of buildings....	March 30, 1915.....	21
5. Restricted areas	March 30, 1915.....	28
6. Height, size and arrangement.	34
7. Light and ventilation.....	March 14, 1916.....	34
8. Exit facilities	March 14, 1916.....	37



What Heartlanders Want

WHAT OUR HEARTLANDERS DON'T WANT

They don't want to be “cancelled,” disrespected, underestimated, or overlooked

They're used to not being listened to or taken into account and they wish people would really LISTEN to them. They want education to be depoliticized and to just make education better so their kids have a better future.

They don't want the US to be constant in battle

They hated the divisiveness in America that they felt was perpetuated by the media, larger culture, and politicians. They really don't like defining people by their race first and they're not eager to get involved in fights that aren't ours.

They don't want their resources wasted

They saw the government as an extension of their household and expected it to use its limited resources (their tax dollars) well.

They don't want their freedom restricted

They feel trapped by their finances and at times, perceived government overregulation. They are like a country within a country and want their boundaries to be respected.

They don't want weak, unreliable leadership

The purpose of government is to be strong to protect and to deliver on promises. They have no time for talkers and not doers..

They don't want to coddle people

Hard work is a huge core value for our Heartlanders. Their compassion stops when laziness enters the picture.

WHAT IS THE HEARTLAND, REALLY?



“This image represents being tied together. I feel as though our community is stronger when we’re together. If someone has a hardship, it’s not just one person that steps up to help out, the whole community comes together to lift that person up.” -Matt, MN, TC

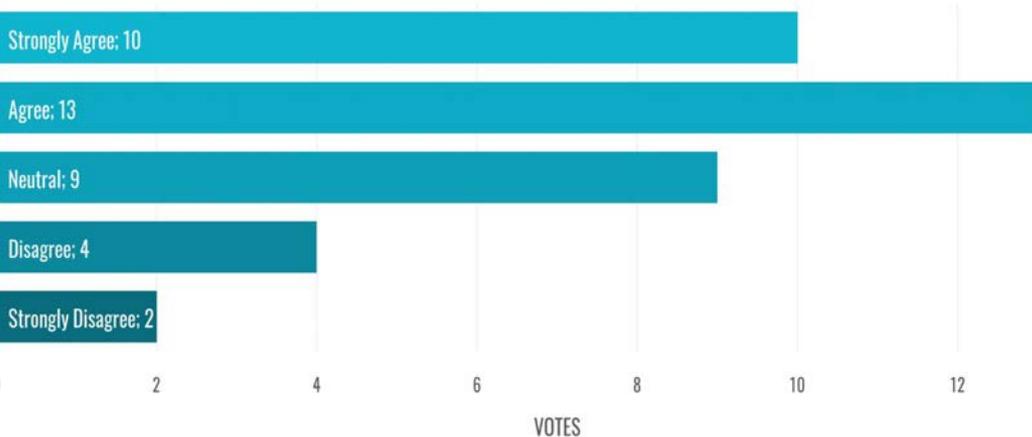
When asked what made our rural and small town Heartlanders most proud, they talked about coming together after tragedy, supporting each other and helping each other get back on their feet.

Despite an intense pride in their self-sufficiency and self-reported insularity (at times), this coming together and connection with each other, to go through tough times together was striking.

SMALL TOWN RURAL AMERICA

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:

Small towns and rural America represent what's best in America.



Iowa

71%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Minnesota

46%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Wisconsin

64%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Close-knit Ties,
a Sense of
Community,
Stability, &
Support

Affordable
Housing

Safety from
Crime

Better
Opportunities
to Effect
Change at the
Community
Level

Peace & Quiet

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Limited
Opportunities
and Distance/
Accessibility to
do Work

Community's
Inappropriate
Interest in
What Others
are Doing &
Gossip

A Lack of
Diversity &
Social
Intolerance

A Lack of
Restaurants,
Cultural
Activities, &
Conveniences

Absent the Luxuries
& Conveniences of
Big Cities,
Community Members
are More Reliant on
Each Other, &
Independent as a
Whole

2

Current State of the Country

How the Heartland is processing current cultural and political happenings

WHAT PATRIOTISM MEANS TO HEARTLANDERS

SACRIFICE & UNITY

For our Heartlanders, **patriotism was almost synonymous with the sacrifice to maintain freedom**. Bringing in pictures of fallen servicemen and women, tombstones, and the destruction in the wake of 9/11, their respect for this sacrifice was evident. However, there was still a positive undertone, with our participants hoping for **a more unified country** as a result.

“This symbolizes the **sacrifices our men and women have made for this great nation**. Our **soldiers died for the rights of... all who live here**. My grandfather was a POW/MIA in WW2, captured by the Nazis at the Battle of the Bulge. He was shot and nearly survived. I wouldn't be typing right now if it wasn't for his sacrifice and grit, which personifies the American dream. I want all Americans to appreciate how lucky they are to have the opportunities in this country and **what was involved to protect our freedoms**.” - Bryan, WI, TC

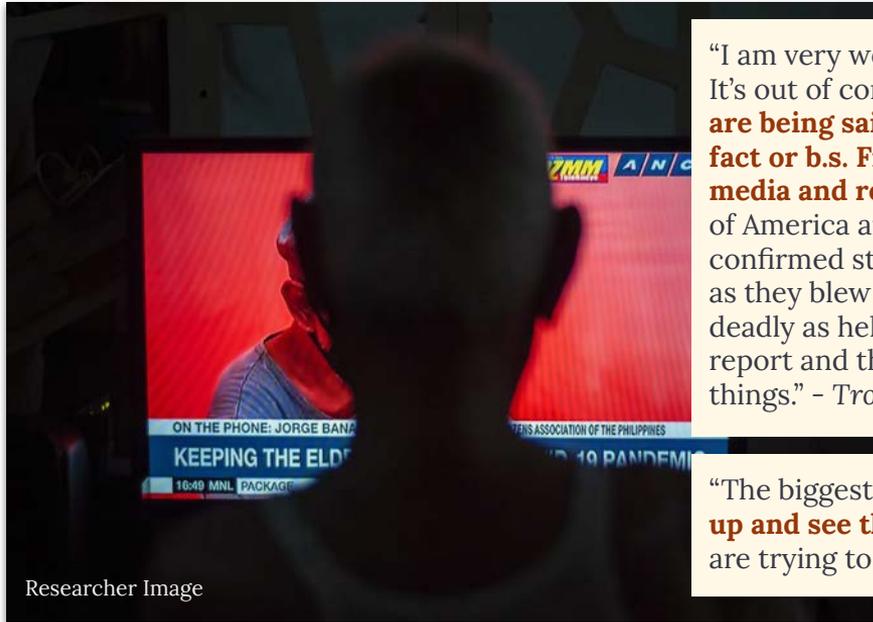
“The **terrorism attacks on September 11, 2001** was a time when the United States all agreed that what had happened actually happened, that it was wrong, and that we had to do something about it... **Americans collectively came together** to mourn, came together to act, and came together **to care for each other and serve and protect each other—this is true patriotism**.” - Sean, MN, IYSS





REGARDING THE CURRENT STATE OF THE COUNTRY, THE MEDIA IS SPREADING LIES!

Our Heartlanders are **worried about the effect the media is having on the country and its citizens**, feeling that it's driving us apart, focusing more on sensationalism than facts.



Researcher Image

“I am very worried about the state of things here, from Covid 19 and its mutation... It's out of control and the CDC has NO clue. **Many of their statements of late, things are being said just to say something, [it] doesn't matter if it is true or not, based on fact or b.s. Filling the air with useless words which in turn get absorbed by the media and regurgitated out to the public by any means of social media.** The people of America are hanging on[to] every one of those words as a tried [and true] and confirmed statement. **The media should be held accountable for some of this mess** as they blew everything out of proportion at the beginning, making it larger than life, deadly as hell... We had to stop watching the news due to the opening Covid-19 report and the visuals. My mother was scared to death seeing and hearing these things.” - Troy, WI, DTOM

“The biggest thing that I would want to tell everyone in America is to wake up. **Wake up and see that they are painting us against each other.** Wake up and see that they are trying to destroy us. **Turn the news off, don't listen to the media.**” - Sam, IA, TC



REGARDING THE CURRENT STATE OF THE COUNTRY, WE NEED TO OVERCOME OUR DIVISIONS

Quick to point out the rampant division and selfishness in the country, **our Heartlanders expressed a desire for unity** – to start caring about others so we can **come together and ultimately achieve great things as a nation.**

“Living in this moment of history, **it's time to set the partisan differences aside.** It's time for everyone to pay their fair share. **It's time for everyone to do their part to make it possible for everyone to experience the opportunity that is America.**” - Todd, IA, PP

“The country right now is in a strange state. People are very polarized against each other... **We need to work together to try and build a better country for everyone.** Be it education, nature, and relationships with each other, we need to work together to build these things up and improve them. If we can set aside differences and focus on what we all want to see improve, we can do it together.” - Cole, MN, IYSS

“We fight for the betterment of ourselves at the sacrifice of others. **We cannot be a country united if we only look after ourselves.**” - Anthony, IA, TC





**AN UNCIVIL
UNION:
ARE WE
HEADING
TOWARD CIVIL
WAR?**



ARE WE HEADED INTO CIVIL WAR, OR IN ONE NOW? NOT SO FAST

The notion of **a physical war between factions of Americans was one that Heartlanders found hard to believe**, despite the deep political divide they sense in the country. **More plausible was a war of beliefs and rhetoric**, with some feeling as if we're in one now between Democrats and Republicans/liberals and conservatives.

Not a Physical War, but a Rhetorical War of Beliefs

"I don't think we will see an all out military civil war but **a war amongst beliefs is absolutely already happening**." - Jordan, MN, DTOM

"I hear very little of American Civil War but more about current divide (and how that relates to a civil war). **I do not get the impression that people are talking about a violent clash but rather a social divide which results in a POLITICAL civil war.**" - Eric, WI, TC

"It almost feels as if we are in **a virtual civil war**. People are fighting only on the Internet." - Sam, IA, TC

No Way – We're Divided, but Not Civil War Divided

"I see a lot of **extreme political strife**, and I see **a rise in political extremism**, but **I don't believe we are headed into a literal civil war.**" - Logan, IA, IYSS

"I believe that Trump exposed... **a massive divide in our country. I don't believe we are in a Civil War**, but I do worry that **we are a very, very long way away from being a unified country.**" - Brenton, MN, IYSS

"**I don't think we are headed into a civil war** and I haven't heard anything that strongly worded with the issues we are facing." - Sara, WI, DTOM

BUT if it Happened, it Would be Liberals vs. Conservatives

"It would be **Republicans against Democrats**. It would a war over the presidency, and who holds the majority in congress." - Katherine, IA, TC

'Right wing vs. liberal, good people, the fight would be for the constitution." - Maggie, WI, PP

"It would be **the liberals against the conservatives**. The conservatives will be fighting for free speech and freedom of religion. The liberals will fight for their view of America. They believe they are fighting for the rights of minorities." - Beth, IA, DTOM



REGARDING WOKE CULTURE

IT'S NOT ALL BAD

When asked how about the changing cultural landscape of the country, most **Heartlanders were happy with what they saw, believing that changes are natural and even expected.** They were particularly pleased with the shift toward inclusivity on all fronts.

Culture Always Changes & Evolves – It's Natural

“I think **our changing culture is normal.** I think it's being highlighted as dangerous and difficult because of the influence of social media, but I would argue that **it's nothing more than cyclical changes, similar to how the dark ages changed into the middle ages, and the Renaissance changed into another time period.**” - Katherine, IA, TC

“**Culture is always changing.** I'm all for change that is inclusive. It may be difficult to adjust at first.” - Anthony, IA, TC

“America is a melting pot. Its **culture should constantly be evolving as society changes and technology improves.**” - Johanna, WI, PP

& It's a Good Thing! We're Changing for the Better, to be More Inclusive

“I think the woke culture is fantastic and **I would love to see more people learning and educating themselves on concepts they're unfamiliar or uncomfortable with** - appropriate use of pronouns, understanding white privilege if you have it, the right to love whoever you choose, culture appropriation, believing victims, etc.” - Ashley, IA, TC

“**Culture change is a good thing if it means changing things about our culture that were outdated and offensive. If someone wants to be called a certain pronoun, it is not difficult for me to just use a different word.** The fact that people are angry about stuff like that is ridiculous.” - Matthew, MN, IYSS



REGARDING WOKE CULTURE BUT, SOME THINGS HAPPENING NOW ARE WILD!

However, some were **uncomfortable with the idea of pronouns that differ from what they've been traditionally exposed to**, and identity politics in general, feeling they're too lenient. Additionally, they **strongly abhor cancel culture**, feeling that it's too quick to judge and doesn't take into account personal growth.

Pronouns & Identity Politics

"I'm very open to change for the good but **I think alot of things are being overly exaggerated**, like **changing the label for syrup because they thought it depicted support of slavery.**" - Sara, WI, DTOM

"Change is progression, but **some of our change is getting a little wild. People identify themselves as random objects**, announcing our pronouns always, canceling names like 'mother' and 'father'. Mind blowing; **I'm not okay with it all.**" - Sam, IA, TC

"Again I feel like we are on a slippery slope. We are allowing history to be taken away over it and **allowing people to have any identity they want along with a sense of entitlement.** That is scary." - Kassy, MN, TC

Cancel Culture is Ruining Lives

"I think that for the most part, it is a good thing. However, too much of a good thing can be bad. What I mean by this is that **we are often demonizing and condemning people for alleged past actions for misdoings before they are proven innocent or guilty.** Even if they are found innocent, their **lives are often damaged** because of the American culture's reaction before innocence or guilt was determined." - Sean, MN, IYSS

"Cancel culture is awful. **People are having their lives ruined over things done in the decades past. People change.** I have changed. I am not the same person I was 10 years ago. **Why should someone be canceled for something they no longer believe?** We are stomping out people just because we can and it is disgusting." - Blake, MN, IYSS

CAN WE ALL GET ALONG DESPITE OUR DIFFERENCES?

Even though Heartlanders pointed out the divided state of the country, they still **believe that we can get along despite our differences**, but acknowledge that for that to happen, **respect & a willingness to listen and understand** have to be present.



“Yes, if people are willing to. I certainly am willing **so long as people with differences also respect my opinion.**” - Eric, WI, TC

“I do, but people need to start believing it. People refuse to be compassionate and understanding... People need to **take time to listen without the intent of attacking.**”
- Blake, MN, IYSS

“Yes, but that would **require humility and communication, listening.** I think we have many hard headed people on both ends of the spectrum that it makes getting along difficult but I don't believe that it is impossible.” - Annie, WI, DTOM

& We All Share Common Values, Like...

- — Desire for Freedom
- — The Importance of Family
- — Pursuit of Happiness
- — Achievement & Success

3

On Politics and Political Attitudes

What they were escaping, what they see happening now, what they're still hoping for.



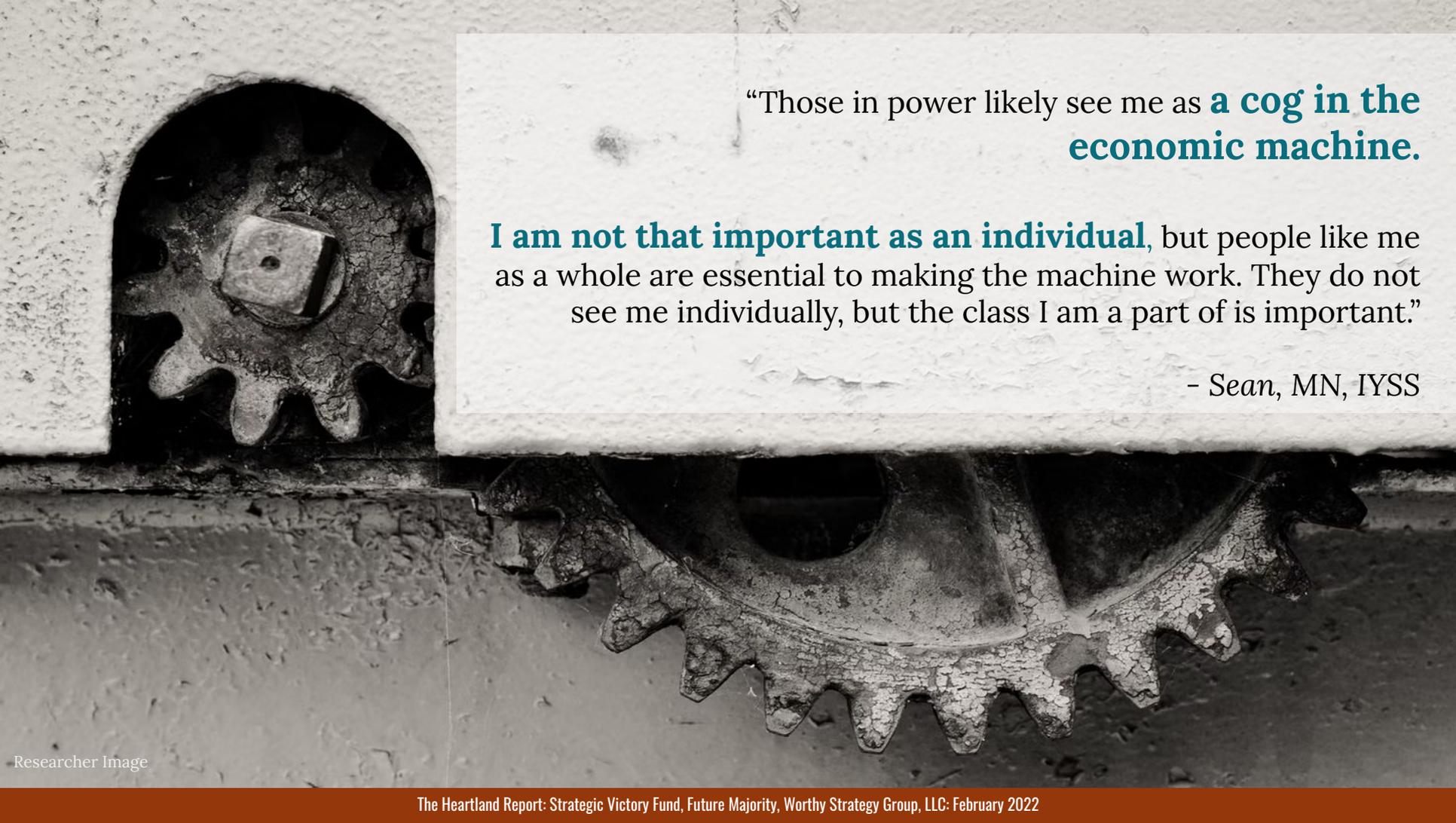
HOW DO PEOPLE IN POWER SEE HEARTLANDERS?

Heartlanders **overwhelmingly feel as if those in power do not see them as individuals to be cared about**, but rather as part of a voting bloc at best, or simply a number or vote at worst.

- “They **only see me when they want a vote.**” - Todd, IA, PP
- “No, I don’t think they see me. **They see percentages and groups of voter blocks they’re trying to obtain.** I think they care about getting my vote.” - Ashley, IA, TC
- “I fit into a demography, **I am just a number noted to fill space.** I do not think they see me as who I am.” - Troy, WI, DTOM
- “I don’t think those in power think about me or who I am except when then are **trying to appeal to me during election time.** Other than that, I would say **I’m not a person that they are thinking about during the majority of their term.**” - Annie, WI, DTOM
- “I believe most of them see us as **a potential vote for them, I do not believe most see me as anything except for that.** They would describe me to others as the one who I’m going to get to vote for me at any cost.” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM



Researcher Image



“Those in power likely see me as **a cog in the economic machine.**”

I am not that important as an individual, but people like me as a whole are essential to making the machine work. They do not see me individually, but the class I am a part of is important.”

- Sean, MN, IYSS

THINKING ABOUT VOTING, I VOTE FOR...



When asked who they vote for – candidates or political parties aside – **Heartlanders overwhelmingly said themselves and their families**, citing the need to **vote in step with their best interests**. However, they also said they **vote with their neighbors and larger community in mind**, living out “love thy neighbor as thyself.”

“I vote for who I think is gonna be the best candidate for **myself and my family**.” – Steven D., IA, DTOM

“I vote for **myself**, sure, but I vote for **my wife and kids, my friends, and my neighbors**.” – Kevin, IA, TC

“I vote for **myself**, my beliefs. At times there have been disagreements in our home about voting choices.” – Marie, MN, IYSS

“Of course when I vote, I am voting for **myself**. But, I also consider **my friends and family and the community** around me.” – Annie, WI, DTOM

“I vote for **myself**, for what I think is best.” – Cole, MN, IYSS



THINKING ABOUT VOTING, I VOTE FOR...

Heartlanders identified **three categories of influence** when it came to voting: **People**, whom they wanted to be cared for; **Progress**, as they want to see the country move forward & keep up with the times; and **Protection** of their rights, freedoms, and things they hold dear.

(Compassion for) People

“I look for candidates that... show that they **care about the people's needs first.**” - *Johanna, WI, PP*

“The primary values that I consider when voting are Christian at the core. **I value caring for people the most.**” - *Annie, WI, DTOM*

“I vote for any and all policies which further pave the way for **those coming after me to have an easier life** and shy away from that which would make it difficult.” - *Tristan, MN, DTOM*

Progress-Minded People and Policies

“It motivates me to vote knowing that maybe **I can help someone get elected that will actually change America.**” - *Antoinette, MN, DTOM*

“I vote for **progress, equality and innovation.**” - *Steven M., IA, DTOM*

“I value women’s rights, social justice, advocating for marginalized communities/groups, the **student loan crisis, climate change, and decriminalizing marijuana.**” - *Ashley, IA, TC*

Protection of Rights & Freedoms

“I vote for people who **protect people's rights, the constitution, our country's borders, and my income.**” - *Emily, WI, TC*

“I am motivated to vote because of **values and social issues in the country that i would like to protect.** Things like abortion, and religious freedom. **I want to protect the freedoms of Americans,** and feel that voting is the least I can do to do my part.” - *Matthew, MN, IYSS*



THINKING ABOUT VOTING, I VOTE AGAINST...

There were also things **Heartlanders readily vote against**, such as **too-liberal policies** that threaten traditional Christian values; **policies and people who spew hatred**; and politicians who have **insidious intentions**.

Liberal Policies that Are Eroding Christian Values (like Abortion)

“I do not want to see **Christian values disappear in favor "progressive" policies.**”

- Kevin, IA, TC

“I vote against the **people that think abortion is ok.**”

- Hunter, IA, DTOM

“I vote against **legalization of drugs and liberal social issues.**”

- Bryan, WI, TC

Hate, Xenophobia, & the Erosion of People's Rights

“I vote against anybody that is going to **take any of our constitutional rights away.**”

- Steven D., IA, DTOM

“I vote against **bigotry, hatred, violence, war, and xenophobia.**”

Katherine, IA, TC

“I vote against **hate and injustice** to all people.”

Beth, IA, DTOM

People Who Get into Politics for the Wrong Reasons

“I would never vote for **someone who is morally corrupt and abuses their power.**”

- Johanna, WI, PP

“I vote against **people that are clearly unequipped for office and are looking for power.**”

- Jordan, MN, DTOM

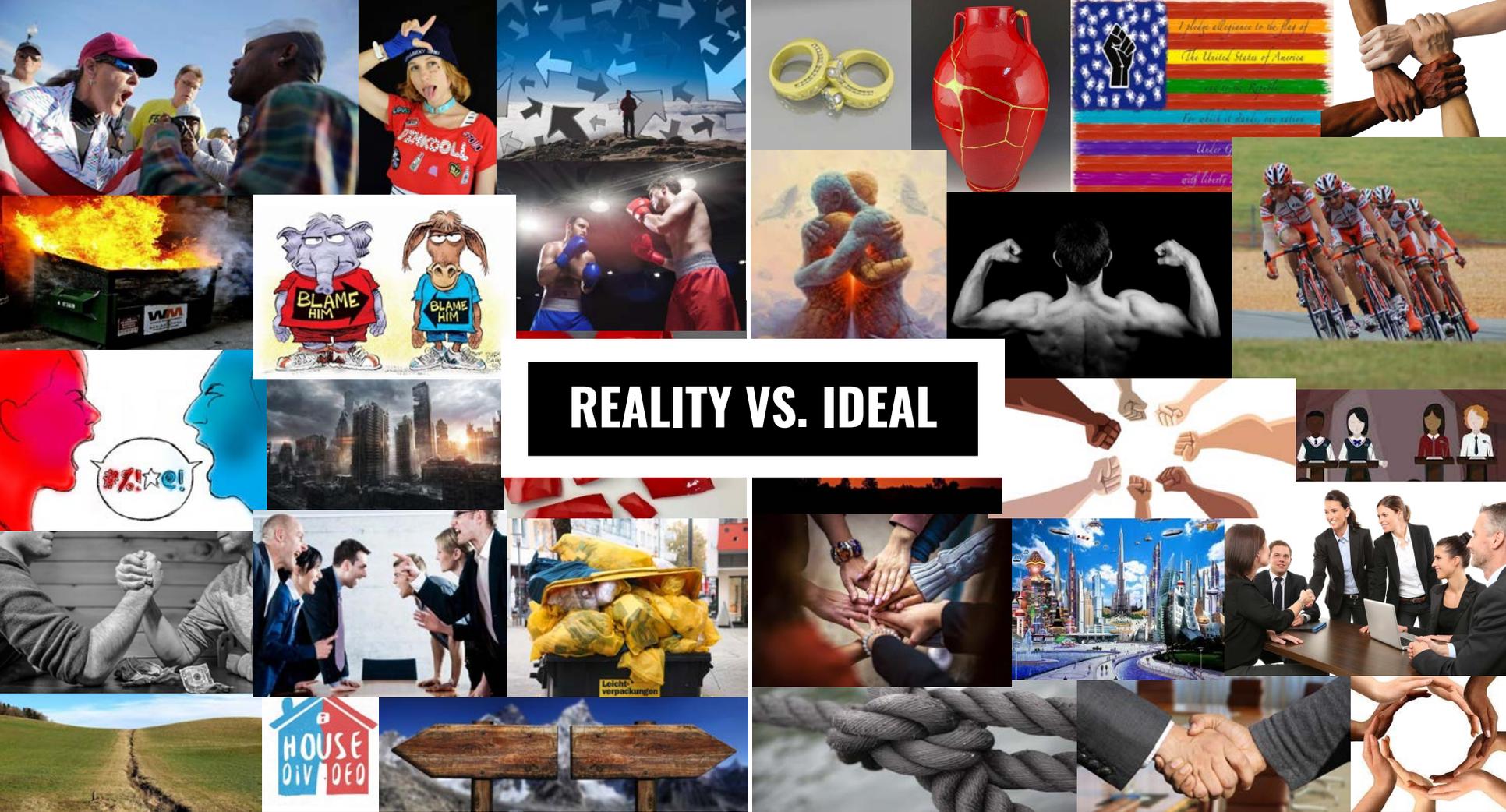
“I would vote against **candidates that are completely influenced by corporations** and their agendas.”

- Anna, WI, DTOM



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Reality vs. The Ideal



REALITY VS. IDEAL

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT THAT WE HAVE

- 1 Too Partisan for its Own Good (& the Good of the People!)
- 2 Divided & Uncooperative
- 3 Chaotic & Messy
- 4 Weak Leaders Lacking Direction





“My images are the same item but in different states. The first image is **the vase broken, which is how I feel the government and country currently are [because of] the previous administration.** The second image is of the **vase put back together using the technique Kintsugi.** It is the practice is known of giving new life, healing or rebirth to damaged or aging ceramic objects by celebrating their flaws and history. The country and government need to heal and come together, but we need to learn from our flaws and the scars that have been left behind.”

© Lakeland - Johanna, WI, PP





THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT THAT WE WANT

- 1 Reaching Across the Aisle to Deliver Solutions for Everyone
- 2 Cooperating & Working Together
- 3 Representing & Working for the People
- 4 Strong Visionaries



My pictures are different because I feel **government today is broken. There is no real direction, and no unity.** It is one person against the next. No strategy and just a bunch of different directions.

If we could spend as much effort working together as we do fighting, we could do great things. ALL people need to come together to work on our problems if we want to be a better America.

- Matt, MN, TC



“Right now the government is sort of **divided between both majority parties** and constantly trying to make deals, but I wish the government was more like the second picture and could get along better and **make better compromises** and resolutions.

I think they could come closer together by listening and compromising and understanding both sides better and **working more for the people vs. working for resolutions that specifically affect their own party.**

- Sara, WI, DTOM



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

WHO DOES IT SERVE?

Compared to other states we've studied, a majority of our participants strongly believe that the **government serves the people**, acting on their behalf and legislating with them top of mind. However, a vocal minority sees it differently – **even though it should serve the people, the government is serving other interests**, leaving someone behind.

The People, Of Course! (As it Should)

“The government is for the people. **It is for everyone** and its future, **regardless of their opinions**.” - Eric, WI, TC

“The government is to serve **the people** of the country. Not the people of the country serving the government.” - Marie, MN, IYSS

“For **all of us as Americans**. It's to serve and protect us. To ensure our rights are protected.” - Sam, IA, TC

“It serves **me and every other person in the United States**.” - Maggie, WI, PP

It Should Serve the People, But it Doesn't

“The government **should be "for the people, by the people"**, but... as of now, the government seems to be for the **middle and upper classes**, where the lower class simply gets left behind.” - Sean, MN, IYSS

“I think the government mostly **serves itself. It currently is more concerned about appearances** and really isn't serving people as much as it is serving ideas.” - Annie, WI, DTOM

“The government **should definitely serve the people**, but it currently seems to serve the **wealthy and corporations** instead.” - Logan, IA, IYSS

“**Poor people and big cities**.” - Scott, MN, DTOM



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DOES IT SERVE YOU?

Most participants feel like the government does serve them. They pointed to the nebulous (safety & security), and the big (government-led programs like Medicare & infrastructure), but **some are left wanting more – a benefit or improvement that directly impacts them** – while **others feel the government doesn't serve them at all, taking advantage of them and their tax dollars.**

Yes, I Benefit from Big Things, like Infrastructure

“Yes. The government provides **security and infrastructure** that I enjoy every day.” - Kevin, IA, TC

“Yes. I receive the benefit of social **infrastructure** through the department of transportation and the the interior and energy.” - Freedom, IA, PP

“It does serve me, it **keeps me safe** and helps me with **Medicare and highways**, that kind of stuff.” - Maggie, WI, PP

Yes, But There's More to Be Desired

“I would say it does serve me. To better fit my needs, I would like more governmental assistance for my education through **loan forgiveness.**” - Sean, MN, IYSS

“Largely, yes... I do think we desperately need to address **wealth distribution** problems in the country, **universal healthcare, and climate change,** though.” - Brenton, MN, IYSS

“Yes for the most it serves me as I am not on any government assistance, but **they could improve on road fixing, health care, and education.**” - Anna, WI, DTOM

Not Really, & I Want Tax Reform on Some Level!

“It doesn't necessarily serve me. **Take away the breaks and cuts from the rich and work towards the middle and lower classes.**” - Anthony, IA, TC

“Right now it's not serving me. The **government is taking more and more of my money in taxes** and using it on programs that I can't agree with.” - Marie, MN, IYSS

“The current government leaves a lot to be desired. **I don't feel like I'm getting my money's worth from all the taxes I pay.**” - Hannah, WI, TC



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WHAT AMERICANS THINK IT SHOULD (OR DOES) DO

Our participants have a clear picture of what government should do: allow them to **move freely via sound infrastructure** (which they do), **keep them safe from threats** (which they do), and most importantly, **look out for the wellbeing of the citizens it represents** (which they don't seem to).

Keep Us Moving by Maintaining & Improving Infrastructure

“Provide security and **infrastructure**.” - Kevin, IA, TC

“**Infrastructure** and military control. We need both of these things to to be a strong country.” - Jordan, MN, DTOM

“They should make sure our **roads and bridges are safe**.” - Beth, IA, DTOM

“They should be focused on the economy, **infrastructure**, and preserving the rights for all.” - Anna, WI, DTOM

Keep Us Safe & Secure

“Make sure **our military is up to date and ready to defend our country**.” - Beth, IA, DTOM

“Our **nation's safety** is the biggest priority. A sworn oath the president takes.” - Bryan, WI, TC

“Building a **strong military**, building a **strong border**.” - Emily, WI, TC

“The federal government's most important role [is] **national security**.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

& They Should Look Out and Provide for the People

“The government should **first and foremost have the wellbeing of its people in mind**. If the government were to make decisions based on that, I think other policies would follow suit.” - Annie, WI, DTOM

“They should provide for their citizens, they should prevent harm from coming to them through war or violence... not lie to them about a global pandemic, and **they should simply give a shit about them**.” - Katherine, IA, TC



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WHAT AMERICANS WANT IT TO STAY OUT OF

Participants are calling out for the **maintenance of their freedoms**, wanting the government to stay out of their personal healthcare choices and their money, along with **international issues and spats** to better focus on Americans at home.

Vaccine Mandates – Looking at You, COVID!

“The government should not be getting involved over **who is vaccinated or not**. It is not their job to mandate if I want to have it or not.” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

“I don't think that the government should be **dictating day to day decisions of its citizens**, in particular **mandatory masking and vaccinations**.” - Annie, WI, DTOM

“Mandating anything for **healthcare freedom**.” - Emily, WI, TC

The Over-Regulation of Money

“**Collecting and redistributing tax dollars**. I am not sure why [the government] thinks it should collect money, lose some, and then **tell the states how they have to spend it**.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

“I think government should really take a step back when it comes to some **regulations regarding small business**.” - Matt, MN, TC

“I don't think the federal government should have so much **power over taxing**.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

Anything Overseas

“They worry about other countries and **what is going on in other countries too much**. They should **worry more about what is going on here in America**.” - Steven D., IA, DTOM

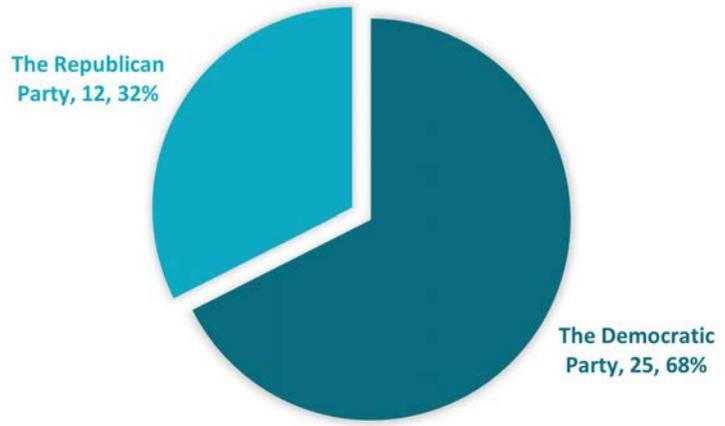
“**Have pissing contests with Russia, North Korea, China** and others. We have enough of our own issues with starting issues with others.” - Katherine, IA, TC

“I don't think we should **insert ourselves into other country's business** because they have a resource we want.” - Johanna, WI, PP

SOCIAL POLICY: POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ALIGNMENT

Democrats or Republicans?

I feel like I align more with _____ when it comes to social policy.



Iowa

77%

of participants answered Democrats.

Minnesota

69%

of participants answered Democrats.

Wisconsin

55%

of participants answered Democrats.



I ALIGN MORE WITH DEMOCRATS WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL POLICY

Overall, **67.6 percent** of Americans say they **align more with Democrats** regarding social policy.
They won big because...

They're Inclusive of All

"They hold more liberal, **inclusive** ideals." - Anthony, IA, TC

"I support efforts to **include everyone in society without judging** (if they are not harming others)." - Kevin, IA, TC

"Due to being an **ally for the various marginalized groups** in society." - Ashley, IA, TC

They Care About Everyone & Want to See Us Prosper

"I care about the **welfare of all rather than the individual** and **want everyone to have access to the same services** and be treated equally." - Johanna, WI, PP

"I believe **people without resources still deserve government** help like the Democratic Party does." - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

"I feel this way because I care about the helping those in need. I think **the democratic party does a good job of caring for everyday people.**" - Annie, WI, DTOM

I Love the Idea of Universal Healthcare (Among Other Things)

"The democratic party wants to create a country with **paid sick leave and better health care access.**" - Freedom, IA, PP

"I believe that we all deserve a **good education** and **universal healthcare.**" - Sean, MN, IYSS

"There are more positive things about **peoples' choice** and trying to get things like **health care provided by the country rather than insurance companies.**" - Cole, MN, IYSS



REGARDING DEMOCRATS

I'M ANNOYED BY...

Participants are weary of Democrats' **free-for-all view on money and finances**, and are frustrated with their **too-liberal policy that's off base & their inability to fulfill promises**.

How They Overspend & Freely Give Handouts

"I am sick of their lack of understanding of how money works. **Printing it doesn't solve debt**, it just makes [it] bigger." - Blake, MN, IYSS

"They are **hurting the working people by taxing them to give more money to the lower class or the people looking for handouts**. I'm not saying... that all of them are looking for handouts, but a large majority are." - Sam, IA, TC

"I feel like **they want to give out too many handouts and it'll cost all the rest of us**." - Steven D., IA, DTOM

How They're Out of Touch & Push Extreme Liberal Policy

"**January 6, 'The Insurrection,'** nobody cares, nobody talks about it, I wish people weren't still held without bail. It wasn't a deadly attack. **It was not Pearl Harbor and it wasn't 9/11. No one outside of DC cares**, but they don't stop talking about it. People are struggling with bills, their health, and the future. **The Democrats need to be prospective and stop dwelling in the past.**" - Emily, WI, TC

"They **push extreme liberal ideas without looking at potential risks or offer gradual transitions.**" - Anthony, IA, TC

Unfulfilled Promises & Weak Appearances

"They could do so much more than they actually do. It's almost like they are afraid to be too progressive, but... the republican party acts like they make all the rules and can do whatever they want. I think the **Democrats need to show their power... and stand up for the people.**" - Matthew, MN, IYSS

"Great ideas but **never seem to be able to execute** all of them." - Johanna, WI, PP

"They are **all bark and no bite**. They will never take it to a place where they will do whatever it takes to get something passed." - Steven M., IA, DTOM



REGARDING DEMOCRATS BUT, I'M INTRIGUED BY...

However, they like how **Democrats truly care about the people** and how their legislative policy (and ideas!) show it.

Their Push for Equal Rights

“They fight for **minority rights.**” - Anthony, IA, TC

“The idea of helping others and **equal rights for all.**” - Johanna, WI, PP

“I am attracted to their policies and beliefs on **equality for all races/genders/sexual preferences.**” - Matt, MN, TC

How They Care About People as People

“They want to **fix people's lives** that are in bad places.” - Hunter, IA, DTOM

“I am attracted to this party because of **the way that they care about the social well being of people** in the the country.” - Annie, WI, DTOM

“The overall **love towards humanity** and end of human suffering.” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

“That **they have people in mind first**, for the better of living conditions to acceptance for all.” - Anna, WI, DTOM

Universal Healthcare!

“They keep fighting for **universal healthcare**, so that's good.” - Freedom, IA, PP

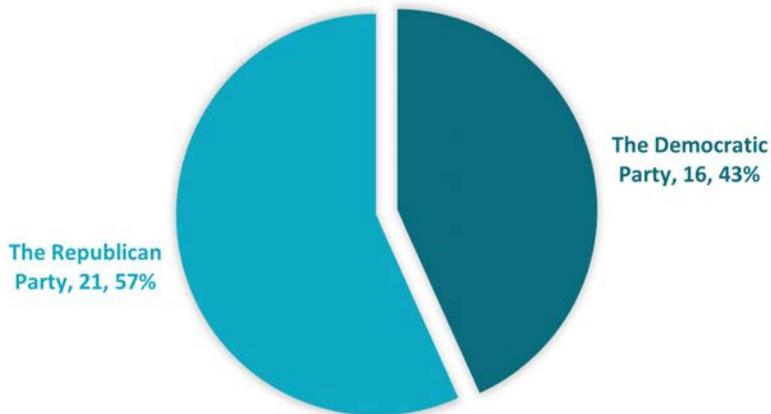
“Policy such as Social Security, **universal health care**, public education, and development of clean energy.” - Joe, WI, DTOM

“Their ideology of **universal healthcare** and education is something I very much agree with.” - Sean, MN, IYSS

ECONOMIC/FISCAL POLICY: POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ALIGNMENT

Democrats or Republicans?

I feel like I align more with _____ when it comes to economic/fiscal policy.



Iowa

46%

of participants answered Democrats.

Minnesota

39%

of participants answered Democrats.

Wisconsin

46%

of participants answered Democrats.



I ALIGN MORE WITH REPUBLICANS WHEN IT COMES TO ECONOMIC/FISCAL POLICY

56.8 percent of Americans say they **align more with Republicans** when it comes to economic/fiscal policy.
Republicans got nods for...

Fiscal Responsibility

“**We can't afford to just keep printing money.** We don't have the growth to support our current expenditures.” - Todd, IA, PP

“We have seen what happens when countries try to “just print more money” - they experience a complete economic collapse. So **we need to be responsible with how that finite resource is spent** and utilized.” - Brenton, MN, IYSS

“The republicans tend to be more **financially responsible.**” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

Their “Work for What You Want” Mentality

“The Democrats are more of a share the wealth kind of party. The Republicans are more **work for what you want**, and that aligns with my values.” - Sam, IA, TC

“They **recognize efforts.** While **supports** are necessary, they **can become crutches to productivity.** We should prevent people from failure while still allowing them the opportunity and motivation to succeed on their own.” - Eric, WI, TC

“The Republican party **wants the people keep their hard earned money.**” - Marie, MN, IYSS

Not Increasing Taxes

“**Flat tax and no state income tax,** keep the pork out. Taxes should be for infrastructure and security.” - Emily, WI, TC

“I don't like taxes and I know the **gross misconduct [government] has with tax money...** The **government is the best at wasting money, so why should I give them mine...** There is no reason to give away all the money the US does. The amount the government waters down our money is huge and I want it to stop.” - Blake, MN, IYSS



REGARDING REPUBLICANS

I'M ANNOYED BY...

Participants took issue with **just how conservative Republicans are** and how closed off they are to change, along with their general **lack of empathy** towards people and how they **favor corporate and wealthy interests** over those of the average citizen.

Their Inability to Modify Their (Very) Conservative Worldview

“**Too strict and reserved and unwilling to change** on some fronts.” - Jordan, MN, DTOM

“In some ways **overly narrow minded**. They need to be more responsive and open to feedback... They need find common ground with all and **be less divisive**.” - Bryan, WI, TC

“It annoys me how far **off the deep end** some Republicans can be. Just **things like abortion and just very old-school views**.” - Sam, IA, TC

They Hold Views that Hurt People & Vote Against Helpful Policy

“They can be **too rigid when it comes to helping the people** and tend to **vote against any support** for them.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

“The **complete hatred of the LGBTQ community**.” - Shari, MN, PP

“I don't like how **they don't take Covid seriously**. How they wanted **get rid of ObamaCare and they didn't have a replacement**.” - Beth, IA, DTOM

“The **lack of empathy** I feel some of them have towards others.” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

How Beholden They Are to Corporations & the Wealthy

“Seems like the **big corporations and wealthy donors control the agenda**.” - Todd, IA, PP

“They seem to **only care about corporations and rich people**.” - Johanna, WI, PP

“The **breaks they give large companies** and [their] ability to avoid taxes **when a middle class worker can barely make it from check to check** and seems to be the first called out when taxes are not paid.” - Kassy, MN, TC



REGARDING REPUBLICANS BUT, I'M INTRIGUED BY...

However, participants are pleased with Republicans **conservative financial philosophy**, along with their **anti-welfare mentality**, which neatly aligns with **the Heartlander's hard-work ethos**.

Their Conservative Fiscal/Economic Approach of Spending Less (or Reining it In)

"I have to think hard on this right now, maybe some ideals on **economic growth**." - Shari, MN, PP

"I do understand wanting to be **conservative when it comes to government spending**. Let's not set our children up with an even higher pile of debt than we already inherited from previous generations." - Ashley, IA, TC

"One or two traditional values such as during days of old, **keeping spending in check**." - Tristian, MN, DTOM

"I believe they are **stronger on economic policy**." - Eric, WI, TC

Their Anti-Welfare Stance

"They spend less money and believe in less government interference and **want people to help themselves and work**." - Sara, WI, DTOM

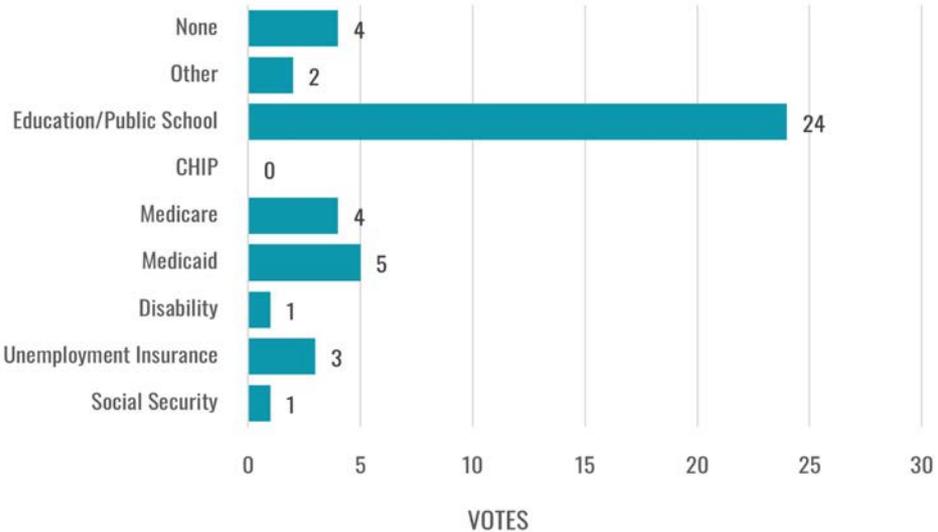
"I like **their focus on the middle and working class, instead of their direct focus on the poor**. The middle class is the bread and butter of this country." - Blake, MN, IYSS

"They want to... try to **get people off of welfare and not be dependent on the government**." - Marie, MN, IYSS

"I like that they are a little **tougher on welfare and handouts**." - Steven D., IA, DTOM

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

What government program or programs have you made use of, if any:



Iowa

93%

of participants answered
Education/ Public
School.

Minnesota

89%

of participants answered
Education/ Public
School.

Wisconsin

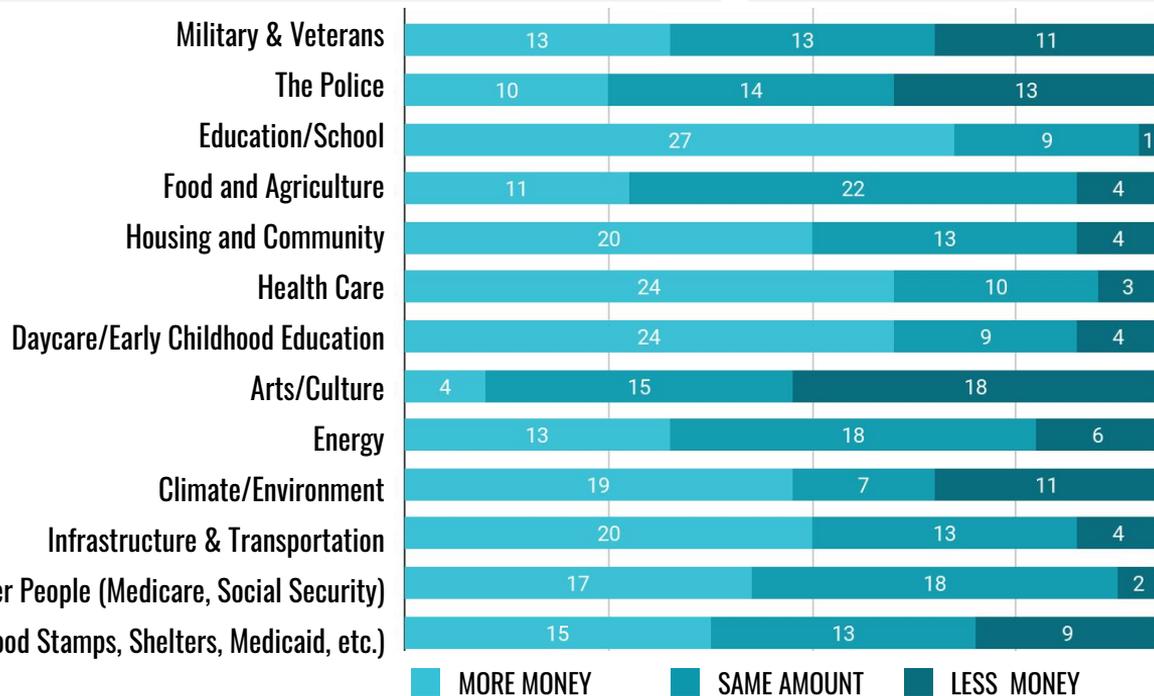
90%

of participants answered
Education/ Public
School.

YOU'RE IN CHARGE: GOVERNMENT SPENDING

If you were in charge, where do you think the money should go?

Our participants sorted the following categories into three groups: Entities that should get more money, entities that should get the same amount of money, and entities that should get less money.



Participants indicated a strong desire for transparency and ensuring that their tax dollars were well spent.

Participants indicated that **Healthcare, Daycare/Early Childhood Education, Education/School in General, and Infrastructure** should receive more funds than they currently do

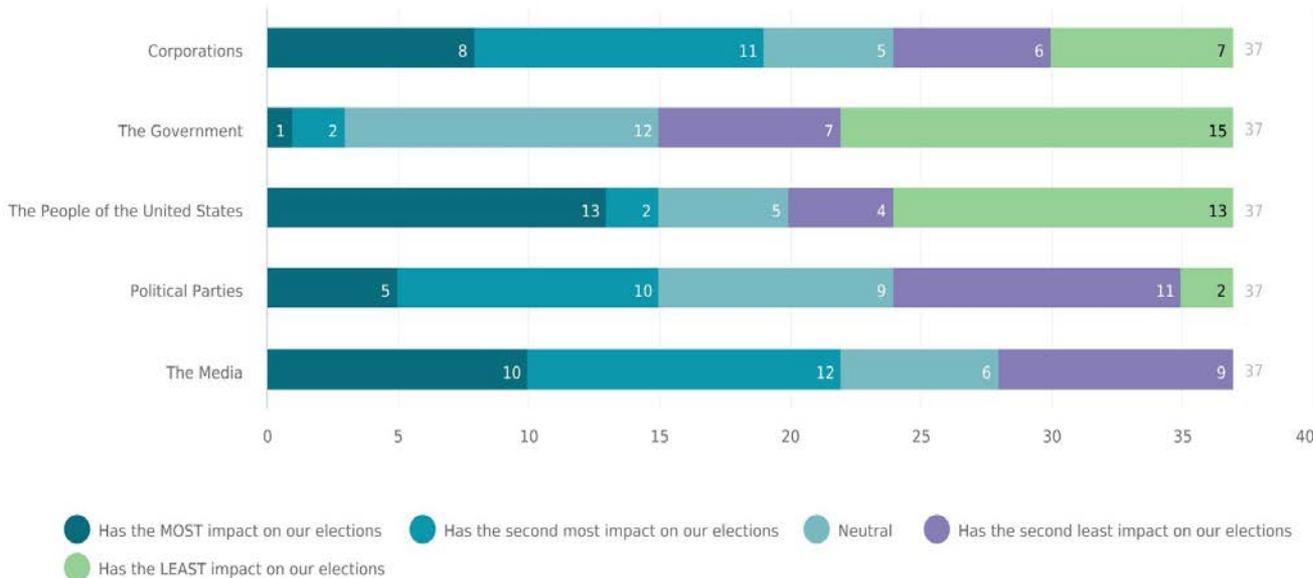
Within the “**same amount of money**” category, **Food and Agriculture**, followed by **Support for Older People (Medicare, Social Security)**, received the most votes.

And overall, **Arts and Culture** was the entity with the **most “less money” votes and received the fewest “more money” votes**, followed by **police funding and military funding**, indicating less funding support for those entities.

IMPACT ON U.S. ELECTIONS

People talk all the time about the impact of different players on our elections and who makes the biggest difference in our electoral outcomes...

Our participants ranked corporations, the government, the people of the United States, political parties, and the media in order of who they thought had the most impact on our elections, to the least.



Participants felt strongly that they, **the people, media, and corporations** have the most impact on American elections.

The government wasn't seen as key player in deciding elections, nor were political parties, who participants said had the power to elevate candidates, and power to back (or oppose) them.

Overall, **participants see the people as having the biggest impact on American elections**, meaning that the system is functioning as it should. But **not far behind, the media and corporations have influence of their own** due to their manipulation of information and financial means to ensure their interests are represented, respectively.



THE MOST IMPACTFUL ENTITIES ON ELECTIONS: BEHIND THE CHOICE

The People

“The **people will always have the most power**. The people **just have to make their minds up**.” - Hunter, IA, DTOM

“The government and political parties change. While corporations have influence, the media shares information (true or false info), but **ultimately the people are the ones who vote/ don't vote and can cause a wave of political shift**.” - Anthony, IA, TC

“**People are the most impactful because they are the voters. All other categories are only their influencers**. Media is second because I believe they impact people the most.” - Eric, WI, TC

The Media

“I would say media has the biggest impact. **There is a reason other countries try to influence out media. It changes perspectives and how people vote**.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

“The **media runs everything**. They are basically a one sided rumor mill, reporting their fake news. This leads to the **citizens of America buying in to their words and changing their beliefs**.” - Sam, IA, TC

“The **media sets the narrative**, the corporations back it and the government puts who they want in power, the people hold no power in federal elections. They are rigged.” - Emily, WI, TC

Corporations

“I believe **the amount of money being poured into congress from donations from corporations** is unreal and should not be allowed. That **immediately negates whatever the will of the people is**, just because some mega corporation has deeper pockets.” - Brenton, MN, IYSS

“**Corporations** are the most influential by far because they **fundamentally create the electoral influence of the parties and media** as well... Despite the people being the ones who cast their votes, I don't think they are truly free with their votes given all the influences they have. They are about as free as kids in a lunch room that are provided what options they are allowed to eat.. **It is a fair and free election that is covertly designed to be controlled**.” - Logan, IA, IYSS

4

Moving Forward

Looking into the Future of the Heartland - what Heartlanders think of their leadership and what they want to see next.



RE: IOWA GOVERNOR KIM REYNOLDS

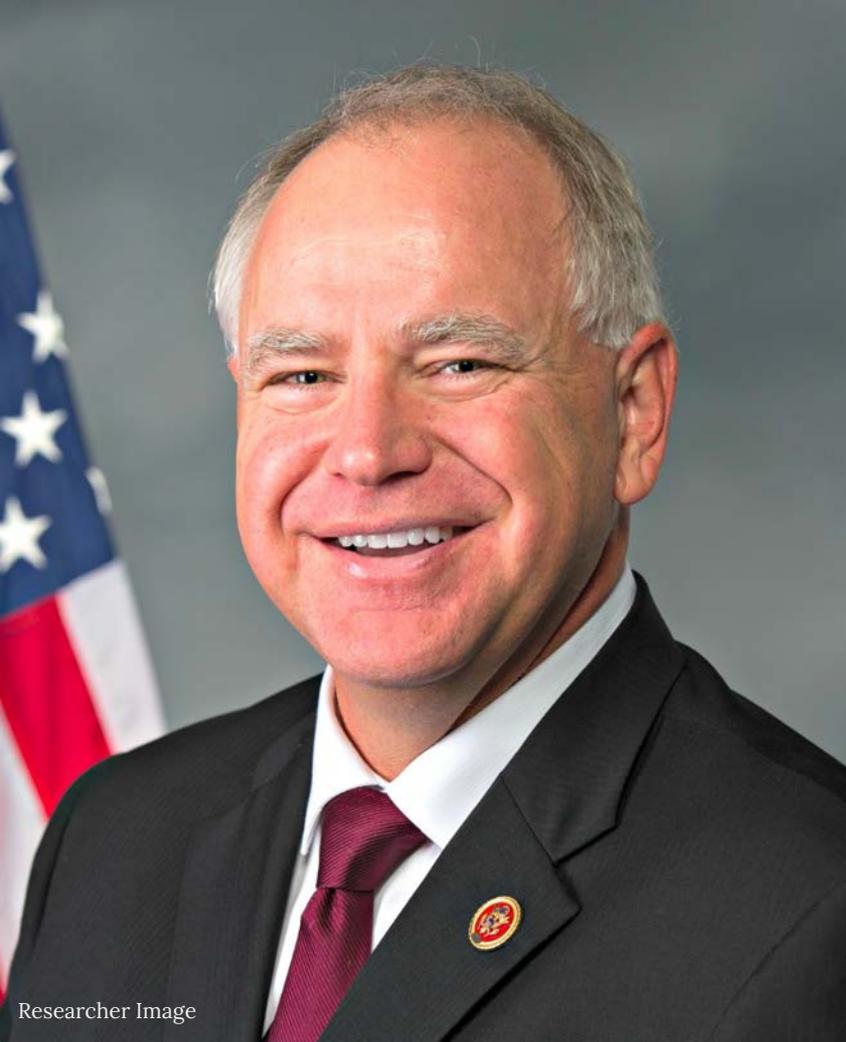
“I don't think she understands America at all, except for the individualism and greed.” - Katherine, IA, TC

To the majority of our Iowan Heartlanders, Governor Kim Reynolds was someone who preferenced policies over people. Many felt that the governor had put the public's safety at risk by “putting students back in schools without masks,” (subsequently 12 teachers died of COVID last year). The governor also got knocks for serving corporate and Republican interests over people, stirring the culture war pot, and cutting public education funding. Further still, many felt that she had made cuts to programs that had the impact of significantly reducing opportunities for Iowans and didn't care about the kitchen table issues - clean air and water, kids fed and housed, etc. - that impacted Iowans day to day.

Still, some of our Heartlanders noted and appreciated the expansion of broadband to rural areas, and many felt that the governor really saw small towns and rural communities and deeply appreciated them and their hard work ethic.



Researcher Image



RE: MINNESOTA GOVERNOR TIM WALZ



“Walz tried adding a pretty heavy gas tax. This could have had a huge effect on the lower and middle class. Gas is expensive and I have no way of getting to my job other than driving. It really hits hard on rural populations because a car with gas in it is the key to a livelihood. There isn’t a good bus system, limited taxis that are expensive, and everything is too far to walk or bike in small towns.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz is known by our Heartlanders for making decisions informed by experts, not just based on what he feels. Many of our Minnesotan Heartlanders talked about his policy of following science and reason, and always trying to do what’s right, even if it’s not popular.

That said, many of our rural and small town Minnesotans struggled significantly with the realities of Governor Walz’s policies on the ground. The shutting down of small businesses and schools during the height of the pandemic really hurt small towns and rural communities, and the gas tax which he floated was starkly unpopular, with many citing that they felt Walz didn’t understand them - the common man, and that he was catering more to folks in Minneapolis over those in more rural areas of the state.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz



RE: WISCONSIN GOVERNOR TONY EVERS

“I think our governor cares about people and working class people and wants to help and bring good Healthcare and education to our state.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers received kudos from about half of our Wisconsinite Heartlanders and indifference from just about everyone else, citing the Governor's handling of Covid-19 and public safety; state employment and attention to the working class as reasons he had their support.

For those who didn't feel the love, concerns with cost of living dominated, citing healthcare costs, inflation, wanting lower taxes, and a desire for an increase in working class wages. Additionally, concerns with transparency and wanting to see where tax dollars were going were raised.



Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers

I think to me a good leader is someone who is always willing to learn and grow. someone that's going to listen to all sides before making a decision.

I think it would be great to have a female leader, one that cares about women's rights and basically equality for all. I would like a leader that is charismatic, strong, reliable and decisive. I would like a leader who cares about the working people and especially Healthcare and reducing taxes on the people.

The ideal leader is kind but firm. Would focus on the issues directly affect most of his or her constituents not just a select few. They would help people from all walks of life to achieve to American dream.

An ideal leader. He has taken a beating trying to protect others and do the right thing. And in a few moments is willing to literally sacrifice himself for the greater good of humanity. While I don't think our elected officials need to literally be willing to die for us, I do believe they should be willing to make very difficult, potentially painful and unpopular decisions for the greater good. Mask mandates clearly were not a popular thing, but they were a necessity for the good of us all.

Someone that helps others and wants others to do well. A positive leader who has a yes I can attitude is what I need. Someone who does what is best for the whole country and all the people, not just a few select people or corporations.

A strong voice protecting the rights of the people, he isn't perfect but he is strong and confident and young enough to make a decision and a difference.

We need a young leader with good ideas who is strong, incredibly driven and intelligent. I think of a calm, thoughtful person with a focus on sexism, racism, and classism.

I feel like a good leader is strong and courageous and can take the heat when put under pressure. Yet they also have a caring side and are able to look at both sides of a situation. They would hold people accountable and not allow financial incentives to influence decisions.

Someone who is strong and for all people, trying to lift people to their highest point in life. When i think of an ideal leader i think of Winston Churchill or a Warren Buffet. Courageous and humble and cares.

Some who does a good job of staying in the middle ground and taking time to list to what people truly feel and is concerned about what people really

care about like Joe Rogan. If you listen to his podcast, you can see that he really cares about the conversations he has and cares about the people he is talking to. He makes a lot of great points on current cultural issue. He is driven and passionate, which we don't see with leaders today. More are boring and run down with little energy or enthusiasm for what they do.

To me, John McCain is an example of a true bipartisan leader. He was always willing to compromise with both sides of the aisle, stood by his moral

IDEAL LEADER **WANTED**

Someone who puts the people first over party, corporations, or talking points. Someone who acknowledges, appreciates, and respects the people and their hard work. Someone who is protective and sacrificial and cares for the people. Works well with others and is willing to compromise - not too far left or too far right and works for everyone. Is transparent in their dealings and willing to admit when they are wrong. Focuses on bread and butter issues (e.g. cost of living, clean air and water) over culture war talking points. Focuses on what really matters.

I pick President Obama. I didn't always agree with his decisions; there were things I thought he could have done better. But he always handled himself with class, he was compassionate and caring, and he thought of the needs of his people ahead of everything else.

We are a divided nation. We need someone who can bring us together. Abraham Lincoln embodies the type of leader we need. He was able "to energize and mobilize the nation by appealing to its best ideals while acting 'with malice towards none' in the pursuit of a more perfect, more just, and more enduring Union."

A man of the people with character that can move our country forward.

We need someone analytical to really put into numbers what is wrong or what is good and figure out where we go from there. Fair, educated, well traveled, personable, great energy, easy on the eyes, not too far left and not too far right. Fair, educated, well-educated and able to

I have chosen a lofty goal -my ideal leader would be Jesus.

Someone who encompasses and advocates for the issues which mean the most to me. He would never be elected in a state like Iowa, but a girl can dream.

I would want someone who is like a hippie who doesn't support violence and war but also someone who is no-nonsense and is badass who will stand up for Mother Earth because if she goes, we go. Focus on correcting our agricultural mistakes because we are the bread basket of the world. We can't keep wasting our top soil with monoculture agriculture practices and washing it down to grow the dead zone in the Gulf. Increase incentives for people to do better but more importantly add some real teeth to the punishments for people who want to continue making problems for others. Maybe they'd hire me.

Someone who is good at research, takes time to think through decisions and weighs all the pros and cons before coming to a conclusion. A great man, kind, fair, smart and gentle, who loves everyone and would work for the people. Maybe an average every day family person because I think that they would be the best representation and be vested in doing what is right for our children and their future



SONGS FROM THE HEARTLAND

Now just for fun, I'd like you to imagine your ideal state leader has a theme song that captures who they are and what they're about.

Please insert a YouTube Link here of your theme song for your ideal state leader. And then here, please describe why this theme song best captures who your ideal state leader is and what they're about.

[Click here to listen](#), with [liner notes linked here](#).



WHEN I LOOK TO THE FUTURE, I AM FEARFUL OF...

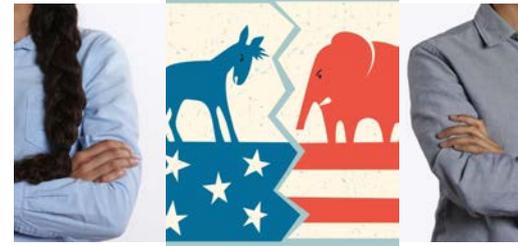
Economic Concerns and Greed - Where we won't be able to have a share of wealth, and where inflation and gas prices will eat up all the money I've worked so hard for and I won't be able to retire.

Constant Fighting and Separation from my Fellow Americans - Where we lose the America we worked so hard for due to radicalism and violence. Where zealots don't listen to moderates anymore and fear is spoon fed to us by the media. Where race and political divisions are continually inflamed and keep us fighting instead of working alongside each other in peace.

Progress Halted - Where progress stalls because of political discourse and corruption, and where people can't get anything done because of misinformation, and because people are too fearful and rooted in the old ways of doing things.

Losing each other to Technology - Where people live life through their phones and lose our most important connections with each other and stop attending to what really matters.

Climate Change - Where our natural resources are destroyed and we're endangered because we weren't good stewards of what we have.



Threats to the Future

WHEN I LOOK TO THE FUTURE, I DREAM OF...



A Restoration of the American Dream and Moral Values - Where values matter, where opportunity abounds, and where children can look toward the future with hope for a better tomorrow.

A Healthier, Abundant Future - Where if you work for it, everyone has enough, where our resources are locally sourced, where there is plenty of green space. We all grow as a society and balance is restored.

A Future of American Strength and Safety - Where we find our way back to being strong again, having weathered tough storms, and are better for it.

Coming Back Together as a Nation - Where despite everything, we work together, embrace our pasts, learn from them together and move forward. Where we try to understand each other and someday, even though we're different, we achieve unity - at the family level up through to the national level.

Freedom to Go Anywhere, Do Anything - Where we can comfortably retire and travel around the world, spending time with family, going on a cruise and just enjoying life together.

Dreams for the Future

5

Hot Topics

Religion & Politics; Work, Jobs & The Economy; Trust, Media & Misinformation; The U.S. Voting System; Childcare & Education; Race & Racism; The Pandemic; Opioids in the Heartland; Healthcare; Marijuana Legalization; Environment & Climate Change; Abortion; Crime & Policing

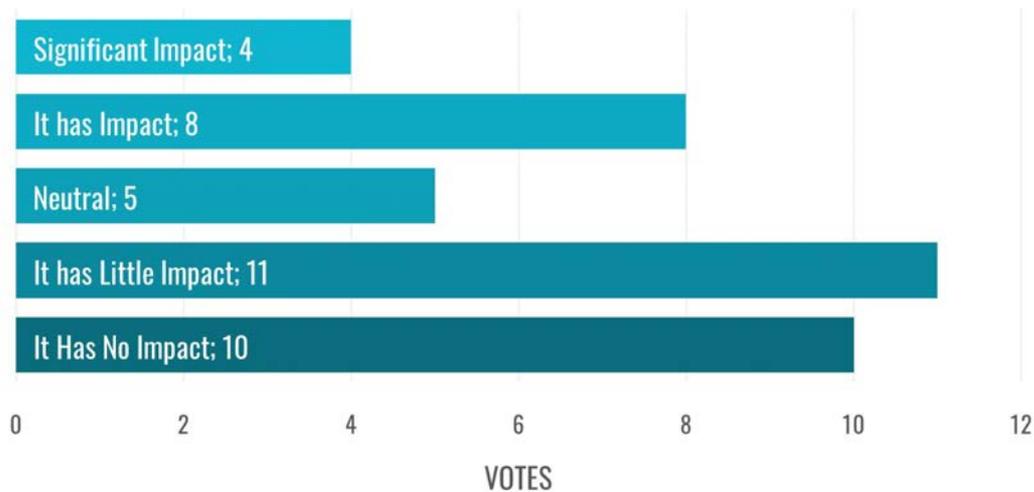


RELIGION & POLITICS

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

From *it has little to no impact* to *it has a significant impact*,
How much does being religious or spiritual inform your politics, if at all?



Iowa

57%

of participants answered **it has little to no impact.**

Minnesota

69%

of participants answered **it has little to no impact.**

Wisconsin

36%

of participants answered **it has little to no impact.**



HOW DOES YOUR RELIGION IMPACT YOUR POLITICS?

While the vast majority of our Heartlanders indicated their religious beliefs were not the primary factor driving their politics, many spoke to their personal values of being kind, as caring for others, as informing them. **Our Heartlanders have deeply held values, regardless of religion, and not surprisingly, factor those into their political decision making.**

Politics and Religion Should be Separate

“I have decided that **religion at its core (aka be nice to one another) is the only important thing.** A lot of what religion does is make exceptions to that rule. I vote for things how I interpret them instead of how the church does.” - *Blake, MN, IYSS*

“The **purpose of politics is supposed to be about finding the best path forward for as many people** in the population as possible, irrespective of their beliefs.” - *Brenton, MN, IYSS*

Religion Underpins an Aspect of my Political Decision Making

“**My spiritual beliefs make me vote for loving, fair minded and loving people.** I don't think I have ever voted against my spiritual beliefs.” - *Maggie, WI, PP*

“My political views are supported more so by my spiritual beliefs. Talking about our future and where the future of this country and where it may lead can become very dark and depressing. **I lean heavily on my spiritual beliefs to find comfort in knowing that my God will not allow those dark things to happen to us.**” - *Sam, IA, TC*

Religion is Everything and Goes Hand in Hand with Politics

“**I only found the true gospel in April 2021, and I know my new religious beliefs will definitely inform my politics.** Mostly in regard to hopefulness that Godly men and women can get into public office and affect change.” - *Hannah, WI, TC*

“**Spirituality and politics go hand in hand for me.** It would be difficult to live with myself knowing the choices I made went against my personal beliefs/made it harder to coexist with myself in this society.” - *Tristian, MN, DTOM*



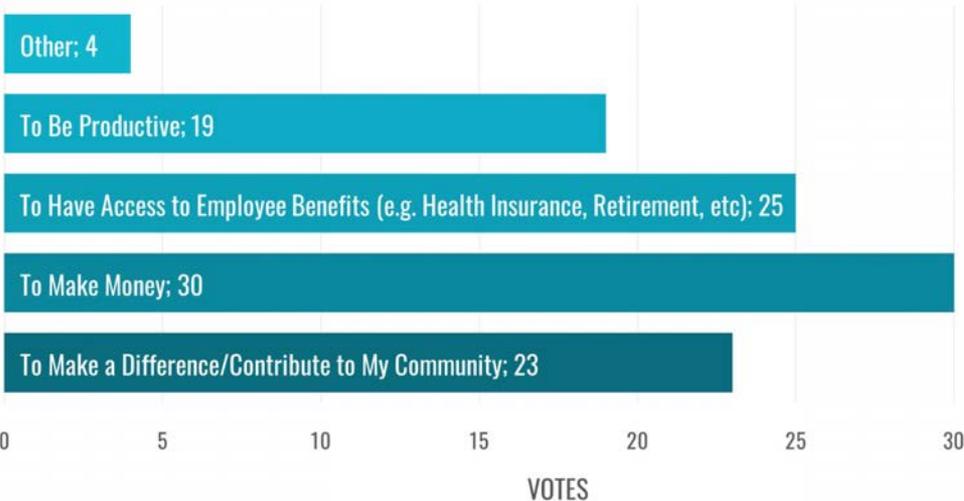
LET'S TALK JOBS & MONEY

PERCEPTIONS OF WORK, JOBS & THE ECONOMY

MEANING OF WORK

38 Participants Were Asked:

What do you hope to get from your job (if you have one)?
Please select all that apply.



Iowa

71%

of participants
voted **to make money.**

Minnesota

77%

of participants
voted **to make money.**

Wisconsin

91%

of participants
voted **to make money.**



WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN JOB CREATION?

By and large, **Heartlanders feel like government is not actively creating jobs, nor should they**. Instead, it should **regulate working conditions** to ensure workers are treated fairly and **keep the country competitive** to attract and keep businesses in the U.S, leaving job creation to businesses.

Businesses Create Jobs, Not Government

“Businesses create jobs, not the government... It's on the people to make it happen.” - Bryan, WI, TC

“I do not believe it is the role of the government to necessarily create jobs.” - Morgan, IA, IYSS

“I don't believe the government plays much of a role in creating jobs in the US. Businesses create and dissolve jobs.” - Anthony, IA, TC

Government Should Regulate & Help Small Business Get Off the Ground

“Jobs come from business expansion or the start of new businesses. The government's role in creating these jobs is to... provide funding in different ways to encourage people to start or expand businesses.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

“The government's role is not creating jobs, it's providing a fair playing field for rules, regulations, standards and taxation.” - Todd, IA, PP

“I think the government should help by helping small business to get their start, a leg up so to say.” - Maggie, WI, PP

& Offer Incentives for Businesses to Stay on U.S. Soil

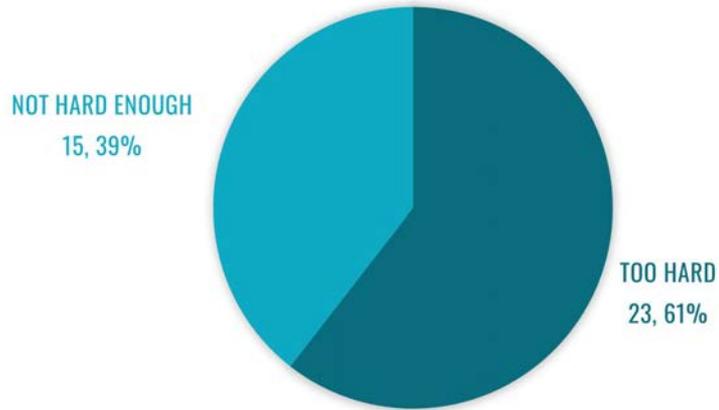
“I think the role of the government in creating jobs is keeping business here in the US and not outsourcing everything.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

“I think the government's role in creating jobs is providing incentives for companies to stay on US soil.” - Matt, MN, TC

“The government's role is to make America competitive from a tax perspective and make sure workers aren't totally exploited, labor laws, etc.” - Bryan, WI, TC

PERCEPTIONS OF WORK & WORK ETHIC

Do Americans work too hard or not hard enough?



Iowa

64% of participants answered **too hard.**

Minnesota

62% of participants answered **too hard.**

Wisconsin

55% of participants answered **too hard.**



DO AMERICANS WORK TOO HARD, OR NOT ENOUGH?

THEY WORK TOO HARD!

Overall, **more than half of Heartlanders feel as if Americans work too hard**, especially given **a lack of living wages**, the **absence of work-life balance**, and the unrealistic expectation thrust upon them that work should take priority over all else in their lives.

One Job Alone Doesn't Provide a Living Wage

"I have a **full time job, a side hustle, a side business** and here I am on a Saturday night filling out this long questionnaire for \$300 bucks." - Steven M., IA, DTOM

"Some [people] have to **take two or even three jobs just to make ends meet**, or [have to] **pick up extra hours as well as work through the weekend to maintain a simple standard of living.**" - Tristian, MN, DTOM

"There is a massive chunk of the population that is being **forced to work more than one job**, or is **forcing both parents to be working jobs just to pay the bills and put food on the table.**" - Brenton, MN, IYSS

& Our Work Culture is One that Doesn't Promote a Work-Life Balance

"The **American dream** has created an illusion that you need to **work hard your whole life until you're old and can't enjoy the spoils of your hard work. We need to take living life more serious[ly] than work.** I'm all about working hard, but we need a culture balance." - Matthew, MN, IYSS

"**We work harder and longer than other countries** because we are a fast-paced nation. We eat on the run, **we work long hours with little breaks. We don't take vacation** enough because then we would need to make up for it later by working even harder and spending more time away from our loved ones. **I don't think our nation values its workers as much as it should** for those reasons." - Sara, WI, DTOM

"We were **conditioned for the work day young**, we work work work, no play." - Marquita, IA, TC



DO AMERICANS WORK TOO HARD, OR NOT ENOUGH?

HOLD ON – NOT HARD ENOUGH!

However, others felt the opposite, citing the **country's laziness** and how **people are happy to do anything except work hard to get what they want**, as reasons why **Americans don't work hard enough**.

As a People, We're Lazy

"Americans are **lazy and want things handed to them.**" - Troy, WI, DTOM

"Hard workers are committed to get their job done. Some people are **lazy and want easy money.**" - Beth, IA, DTOM

"I think **people in our country tend to be more lazy** than hard working." - Annie, WI, DTOM

& Refuse to Work Hard, Too Content to Skimp By

"There are **too many Americans that do just enough to get by or rely on government assistance rather than being willing to get out and work hard** and earn a living." - Kassy, MN, TC

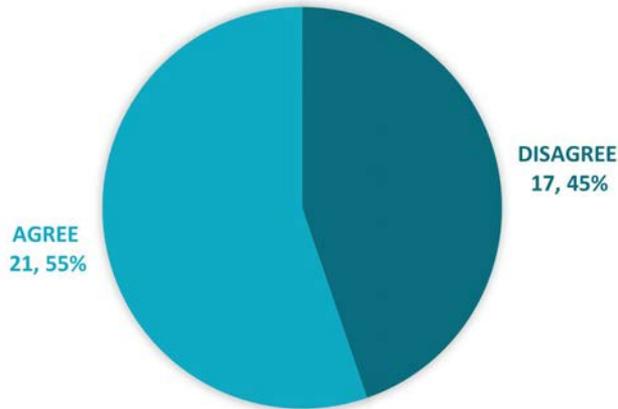
"Success never comes easy. **A person must always look to do more if they want to thrive in a capitalistic society. It's all about effort.**" - Bryan, WI, TC

"A lot of Americans put themselves in situations... **to work minimal hours a week so that they can still get government assistance**, they don't have healthcare, then when something big happens like a surgery, they **rely on Go Fund Me's or handouts** from other people... **Handouts are not the way to obtain a dream or to make a living.** People expect these handouts nowadays." - Sam, IA, TC

PERCEPTIONS OF WORK & WORK ETHIC

Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement?

There are too many people in this country looking for handouts instead of real work.



Iowa

43% of participants answered agree.

Minnesota

54% of participants answered agree.

Wisconsin

73% of participants answered agree.



HOW DO PEOPLE PERCEIVE HANDOUTS VS. REAL WORK?

Slightly more than half of Heartlanders agree that there are too many people in America looking for handouts as opposed to real work. Citing the cyclical nature of welfare, **how people game the system**, and believing that people who seek assistance are lazy, they believe **the system as-is needs overhauling to prevent this type of behavior.**

People Are Taking Advantage of the System...

“Ideally there should be no one looking for a free handout. One example of this ‘working the system’ would be... that **many of the people I know have children but refuse to get married because they will lose the single mom status and lose the free benefits they receive.**” - Joe, WI, DTOM

“First off, I’m completely fine with temporary limited benefits. But that doesn’t mean there aren’t **people taking advantage of that and keeping those funds away from people who need it most.**” - Kevin, IA, TC

“**So many people have the system beat to not have to work.** I fully believe in handing out help to those who do need it, however, **requirements should be more stringent.**” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

Indicating Our Welfare and Social Programs Need to be Revamped as a Whole

“I have worked in a local county human services and the amount of people on assistance and **people cheating the system is unbelievable... The dollars that go out the door that shouldn’t be are astronomical** and would make the normal American sick if they only knew.” - Matt, MN, TC

“I think **our welfare system is flawed and needs revamped.**” - Morgan, IA, IYSS

“I think this is true because if there is even one person doing this, it is too many people. **We need to discourage this behavior** as much as possible.” - Blake, MN, IYSS



HOW DO PEOPLE PERCEIVE HANDOUTS VS. REAL WORK?

However, **others felt strongly that those who “asked” for handouts or utilized welfare programs were people who truly needed it** – people like them who unexpectedly fell on hard times and were left with no alternatives in a society where everything requires money.

“I think **if we focused on meeting the everyday needs of all people, we wouldn't have issues like this.** I don't think this is an accurate representation of the whole. A few people have made this seem like the reality across the board. **While attending graduate school, I worked three jobs and was on food stamps just to survive.** While taking a full load of classes. **We need to pay people living wages, make education accessible and affordable (or free!) and not assume that people are lazy or will take advantage of the system.”** - Katherine, IA, TC

“Those asking for handouts are typically truly in need of a handout - **something unexpected and tragic has happened** in their life that they had little to no control over. I **spent quite a few nights volunteering in a homeless shelter, and most of those men were there because the paper factory they had worked at for 20 years shut down, or they got into a car accident and were buried by medical bills** trying to recover from the accident.” - Brenton, MN, IYSS



WHAT IS THE ECONOMY?

Our participants were asked to personify the economy as a character in their life and explain their choice.

Far and above any other response, participants described **the economy as crazy, variable, and unpredictable**, and frequently characterized the economy as something that owns them, uses them, and as a character that they work for.

This indicates that our participants do not experience or perceive to experience the windfall of a good economy, nor do they feel shareholders to it. Rather, they are beholden to a force that feels out of control and does not directly benefit them.

“

“**I think the economy is like a bully** because there isn't a lot you can do to control it. **You follow its rules to survive until it changes.**”

“The economy would **be a criminal - it's always taking something for nothing.**”

“The economy would be **similar to my boss. He can be nice and mean or in between.** He can provide or take away based on seemingly nothing at all.”

“The economy is a friend, but just like friendships, **sometimes they go along swimmingly, other times it's a fickle bitch and you get stabbed in the back.** Depends who is doing the puppeteering.”

“The economy is my three year old playmate/friend. **Right now we are getting along, but we are one missed nap away from being enemies.**”

”



WHAT ABOUT THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY?

Most Heartlanders felt as if **they, along with everyone, would benefit** from the economic recovery initiatives in some capacity. However, they expressed **annoyance and fear over corporations taking advantage of the recovery**, slighting the middle class, as well as **worries over the future tax burden** on Americans to pay for the package.

It's for Me, and Everyone!

“I think **everyone benefits** from the economic recovery because **there's a little something there for the lower, middle and higher class**, whether it be tax breaks or aid given.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

“I think it's to **help families and other Americans, so that will have the money for living expenses. It will personally benefit me, by helping me to pay my bills** without having to choose between paying one bill over the other bill.” - Beth, IA, DTOM

I'm Worried About the Financial Burden It'll Eventually Incur

“At the beginning, it looked like a good thing but sooner or later **it will have to be paid back by again the taxpayers.**” - Marie, MN, IYSS

“The **economic recovery plan was a disaster.** People were paid to 'not work'. The economic recovery was designed to help all, but it certainly did not. China is laughing. We exposed our weakness as a nation and **our appetite to go so far into debt that will damage future generations.**” - Bryan, WI, TC

Forget the People, It's Going to Benefit Corporations, as Usual

“Many of the laws seem to **benefit corporations...** rather than the working class, **I don't exactly trust that the government is putting the money back towards the people instead of corporations or CEOs.**” - Logan, IA, IYSS

“I hope it is for the needy, but I am afraid **the rich and corporations will try to steal it, they are so greedy.**” - Maggie, WI, PP

“I think they are **too focused on businesses lining their pockets**, and less concerned about the general welfare of the country.” - Brenton, MN, IYSS



IS THE ECONOMY DOING WELL RIGHT NOW?

INDICATORS, FOR WHO, & GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

When it comes to the economy, Heartlanders are split on if it's working well, and for who. Some point to **the stock market's impressive performance and abundant job openings as strong indicators of health**, while others point to **inflation as a sign that the economy isn't working well, and certainly not for them.**

The Stock Market is Performing Well

"Stocks are doing well... I personally do not know anyone that isn't doing well in today's economy." - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

"Things are still volatile, but the stock market seems to be doing relatively well given the circumstances." - Ashley, IA, TC

"Stocks are doing well. Personally, my stock portfolio is going through the roof, and I mostly invest in American businesses." - Bryan, WI, TC

Job Openings Galore & An Increase in Wages

"Yes, there are many jobs. Get to work!" - Scott, MN, DTOM

"So many jobs available but no one wants to work. People got spoiled with the extra unemployment funds and stimulus. **Many people I know are taking a job and working long enough to get one check** and they move on." - Troy, WI, DTOM

"The hourly wage has gone up... It's doing well because the little people are getting more per hour." - Maggie, WI, PP

But, the Inflation is Out of Control, So Maybe Not For Me

"The economy isn't well for me or anyone else who isn't already wealthy. The prices on everything keep going up. **My earnings are not going up to keep up with the inflation.**" - Beth, IA, DTOM

"We are experiencing inflation that has not been seen for a long time... These are **signs of bad times.**" - Blake, MN, IYSS

"Cumulative rate of inflation from 2010 to 2022 is now at over 27%. I know my retirement funds have not grown by 27% in the last 12 years. **Is the dollar even still worth a dollar?"** - Joe, WI, DTOM



WHO IS THE ECONOMY DOING WELL FOR? **NOT ME**

As previously mentioned, some Heartlanders noticed their stock portfolios skyrocketing, which to them, is a sign the economy is working in their favor. However, **most others felt they were just squeaking by while corporations and already-wealthy individuals were reaping the benefits of the economy.**

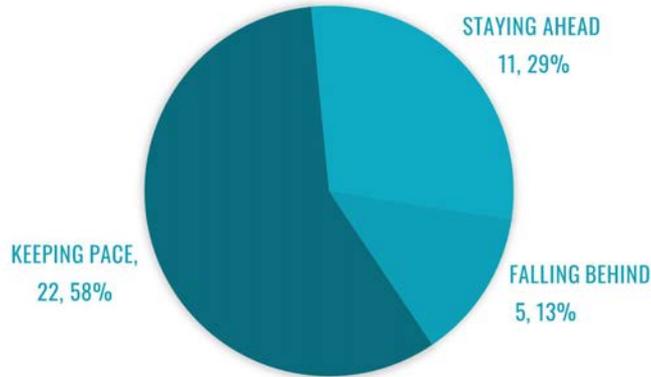
- “I think **the economy works for those large corporations and government.** Small businesses have been crushed through Covid because of shut downs as people moved online and made Amazon rich, and now the labor shortage keeps those small businesses and restaurants struggling.” - *Emily, WI, TC*
- “**The economy works especially well for large, profitable, corporations** who do not have to report to anyone including the government. **The economy does not work is well for individuals who are underprivileged,** never had the means to gain an education, or were unlucky enough to be born in unprivileged communities.” - *Sean, MN, IYSS*
- “It’s **working for those people that have plenty of money already.** Not so much for those of us less financially fortunate.” - *Troy, WI, DTOM*
- “The rest of us are just making it with paying food and healthcare and shelter. **This country is made for just rich people to succeed and everyone else just makes it.**” - *Beth, IA, DTOM*



ABOUT THE CURRENT COST OF LIVING

Reflecting on your own financial situation, which statement best reflects you and your current situation:

I'm keeping pace, staying ahead, or falling behind the current cost of living.



Despite nearly 58% saying they were keeping pace with the cost of living, further examination of the data **suggested that in fact, those keeping pace were just putting on a brave face and running faster than ever on the financial treadmill.**

IOWA

50%

of participants answered **keeping pace with the current cost of living.**

MINNESOTA

46%

of participants answered **keeping pace with the current cost of living.**

WISCONSIN

82%

of participants answered **keeping pace with the current cost of living.**



WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENT BE DOING TO HELP WORKING CLASS AMERICANS?

For Heartlanders, **helping middle class Americans boiled down to having more money in their pockets**, achieved by increasing the minimum wage and taxing them less. However, there were others who firmly believed that **working Americans shouldn't need help, and it's instead those who don't work and need to be incentivized** to do so.

Raise the Minimum Wage

"I think the government needs to help working Americans by **raising the minimum wage to a livable wage.**" - Morgan, IA, IYSS

"**Increase the minimum wage.**" - Ashley, IA, TC

"**Raise the minimum wage.**" - Anthony, IA, TC

Tax Us Less (and Corporations More)

"For working Americans, **tax laws could be amended to award working people and not penalize them.**" - Jordan, MN, DTOM

"I think **bigger corporations should be paying their share of taxes** which could be used to help smaller businesses and workers." - Johanna, WI, PP

"**Not tax them so much, as the working middle class.** That's all I ask for from the government. **I work very hard to support my family and I'm not working hard to support other families who choose not to work.**" - Sam, IA, TC

Nothing – It Should Create Incentives for Those Who Don't to Work

"The government should provide **better incentives to have American's working.** Sometimes **there is too much incentive to not work**, such as expanded unemployment programs." - Matt, MN, TC

"**Incentives for them to work.** Reduce benefits for those who are able to work but chose not to." - Eric, WI, TC

"The amount of tax dollars spent on supporting people to stay unemployed is astounding... **We need to create an incentive and create jobs that get people back to working.**" - Joe, WI, DTOM



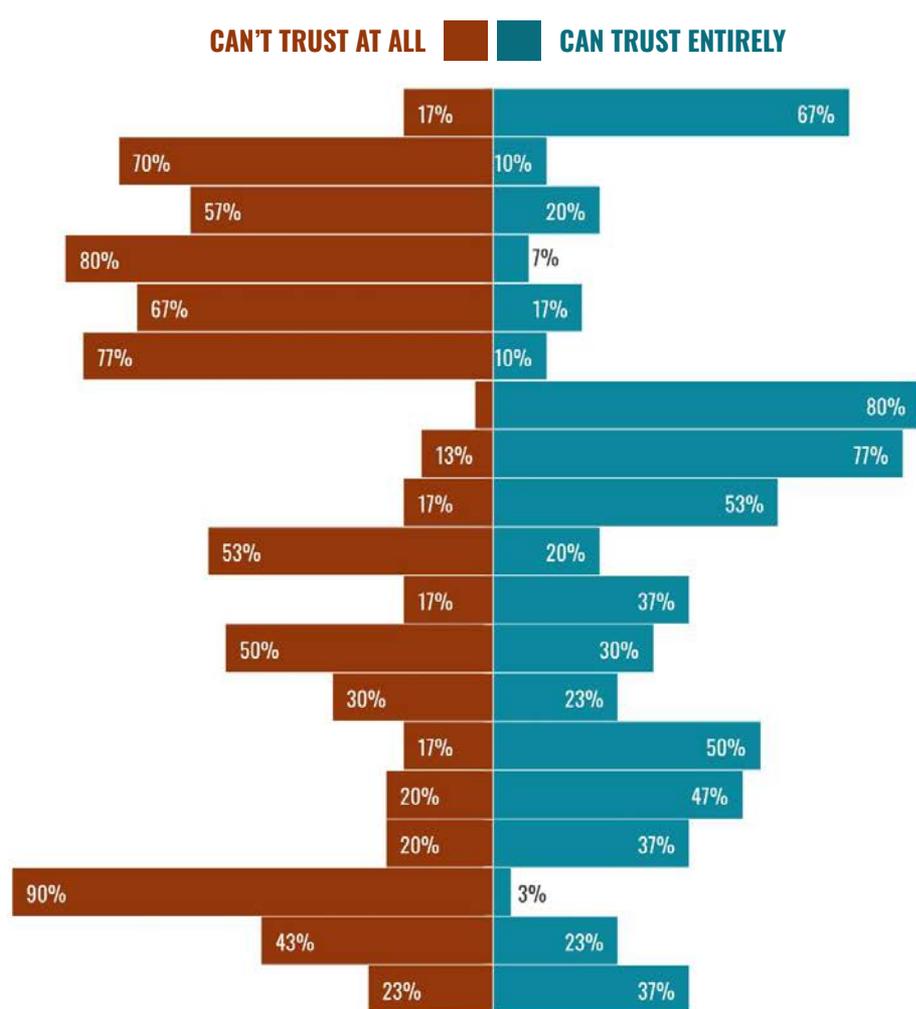
TRUST, MEDIA, & MISINFORMATION

PROCESSING AND THINKING ABOUT NEWS

?

WHO AND WHAT CAN YOU TRUST?

?



38 Participants Rated Their Trust in the Following Categories:

- Your Ability to Achieve the American Dream
- Republicans, in General
- Democrats, in General
- Republican Politicians
- Democratic Politicians
- Drug Companies
- Your Family
- Your Doctor
- Local Businesses
- Corporations
- The Military
- Your State Government
- Your Local Government
- Your Local School Teachers
- Your Neighbor
- Your Community
- Social Media
- National News
- Your Local News Media



HEARTLANDER PRINCIPLES ON HOW TO GET TO WHAT'S TRUE (AND WHAT'S NOT)

These days, there's tons of information out there you can get from just about any source - some of it is true, some of it is not. Now imagine you're going to give me a primer on how to know what's true and what's not. Where would you point me to? Where would you steer me away from? What principles would help me be able to tell the difference?

Do Your Own Research

The best way to figure out the truth is to do your own research. If you find an article or headline that is interesting, search the topic and read a couple of articles on it to get an average truth.

Consider Multiple Sources

Look at multiple sources. Watch the news stations from the left and right. That way you will get different views of the news story. Look for articles about the same topic. Compare them to look for errors. Once you have looked at multiple sites, you should be able to narrow down to your go to news sources.

Leverage Fact-Checkers

Find tools to utilize to check if a resource is factual most of the time. Find a media bias chart or rating to check source. Use multiple fact-checking resources that draw from all spectrums of political thought.

Follow the Money and the Motivations

Research who owns news outlets and what they're open political standings are. Digging behind the statement is important. Look at the funding of the reporting organization and their motives. Examine their historical accuracy and take everything with a large dose of salt.

FAKE NEWS...

According to our Heartlanders,
to avoid fake news, steer clear of:

- Avoid anything from either extreme
- Social Media in general - it is not news, but an echo chamber of personal beliefs. Avoid Facebook and personal message boards.
- Big news networks like Fox and CNN (or go to CNN because it is NOT fake news)
- Avoid Breitbart, Memes in general, Youtube and all status updates
- Media companies that only cover one story all the time. If just one, they're probably pushing an agenda.



AND HOW TO AVOID IT



- Be wary of grammatical errors and fake sounding companies/names/officials.
- Take a step back if website URL is weird, photos/graphics are pixelated, or there are no quotes.
- Be on the lookout for buzzwords or overly sensationalized writing. Avoid articles designed to invoke an emotion in you.
- Go to print media or podcasts only (reputable sources - CNN, NPR, the AP, the NYT); use search engine Duck, Duck, Go
- Go to scientific journals for truth because they use an actual process to find answers - not opinions. Look for peer-reviewed, factual information.
- Study people's behavior - are they being good or hurting people? Consider their character when weighing truthfulness.
- Get to know real people in the community. Talk to them.
- **Listen more to “the people they are trying to silence.”**

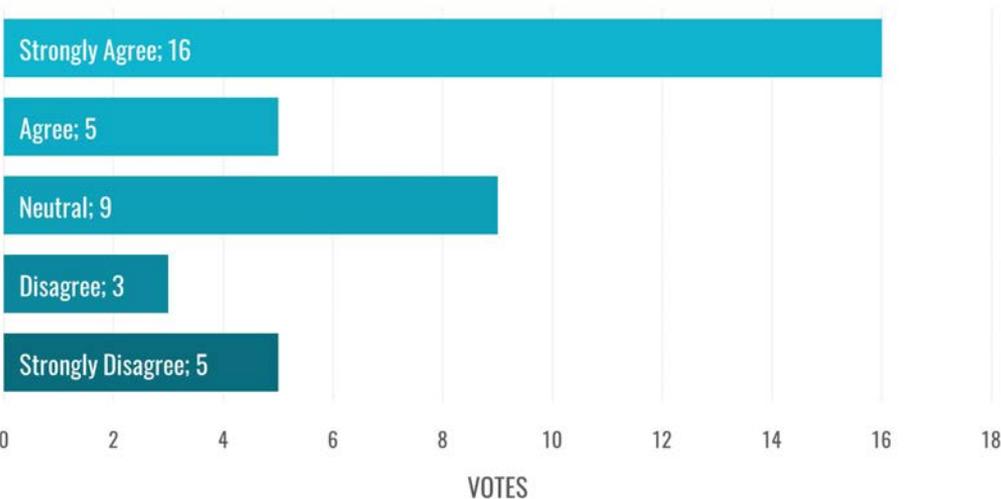


CHILDCARE & EDUCATION

CHILDCARE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:

Childcare is an essential resource and investment in our children that should be funded by the government.



Iowa

64%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Minnesota

46%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Wisconsin

55%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.



THOUGHTS ON **CHILDCARE**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Childcare is an essential resource and investment in our children that should be funded by the government. Why or why not?*

Childcare Should Absolutely Be Subsidized

“If it takes two incomes to survive in this country, childcare should be subsidized.” - Todd, IA, PP

“Absolutely. Our future leaders are the children now. I can imagine how different our world would be if the education and care of children were invested in. Perhaps we’d have less crime, more educated people, further advancements in technology and medicine, and less opportunities for situations of abuse, neglect and hunger.” - Katherine, IA, TC

We Should Provide Subsidies to Lower Income People

“It should be partially subsidized for lower income to encourage involvement in the workforce.” - Bryan, WI, TC

“I believe the government should pay for childcare for the lower income population but not anyone making more than a certain amount of money.” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

Subsidizing Childcare Gives the Govt Power Over Our Children

“We would be giving the government more power over our children. The government would soon be telling the parents what was best for the children.”- Marie, MN, IYSS

“My husband and I had children and worked it out so that we cared for our children and never relied on day care. We made sacrifices in time, money and our schedules. Childcare support may be necessary for single parents potentially but government programs should be bandaid.” - Emily, WI, TC



THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

When asked about the state of education in their state, our Heartlanders had a lot of thoughts, with the core response being that **they wanted the kids to be prepared for life, they wanted to make sure that educators were taken care of and respected, and that school was not a political indoctrination vehicle, but a place to prep their children for success.**

Really Focus on the Practical Needs of Our Kids

“Our **public education does a terrible job at properly teaching youth about sexual exploits and only pushes abstinence** which keeps our teens unprepared for the real world consequences of sex. **They also do not do any good to kids in regards to teaching basic first aid**, all health related courses seem to focus on eating habits and don't be anorexic. or bulimic. Also **they should have taught us what to expect with taxes, filing and paying.**” - *Freedom, IA, PP*

Support/Respect/Pay Teachers More

“**Educators are severely underpaid** in most areas, and are restricted on educating to a program and not to individuals.” - *Jordan, MN, DTOM*

“I don't think they are taking Covid seriously. They don't have mask mandates and **they are putting the teachers and the public at risk.**” - *Beth, IA, DTOM*

“We have to **support (teachers) more and give them compensation** for their critical role in children's lives.” - *Kassy, MN, TC*

Focus on Raising Education Standards, Not Politics

“Kids are **falling behind in math and reading.**” - *Emily, WI, TC*

“Our **education system was severely injured by No Child Left Behind.** It was good in theory, but it meant that the standards for education were lowered; I don't think having low standards provides adequate education.” - *Katherine, IA, TC*

“**Keep politics out of school.** Curriculum needs to be more tightly monitored. Kids should not be taught to challenge their gender identity and this is happening in HS health classes.” - *Bryan, WI, TC*



THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

Our Heartlanders further **expressed deep concerns with the student loan crisis, echoing their own sentiments about being less free because of crushing debt as well as deep support for more of the technology classes in high school and trade schools beyond that.** What's abundantly clear is that our Heartlanders want to set young people up to succeed and want them to have a great start to life through education.

Found a way to Fix the out of Control Student Loan Situation

“I do wish our elected officials would do more to advocate for **the extreme financial burden student loans cause for our young adult population.**” - Ashley, IA, TC

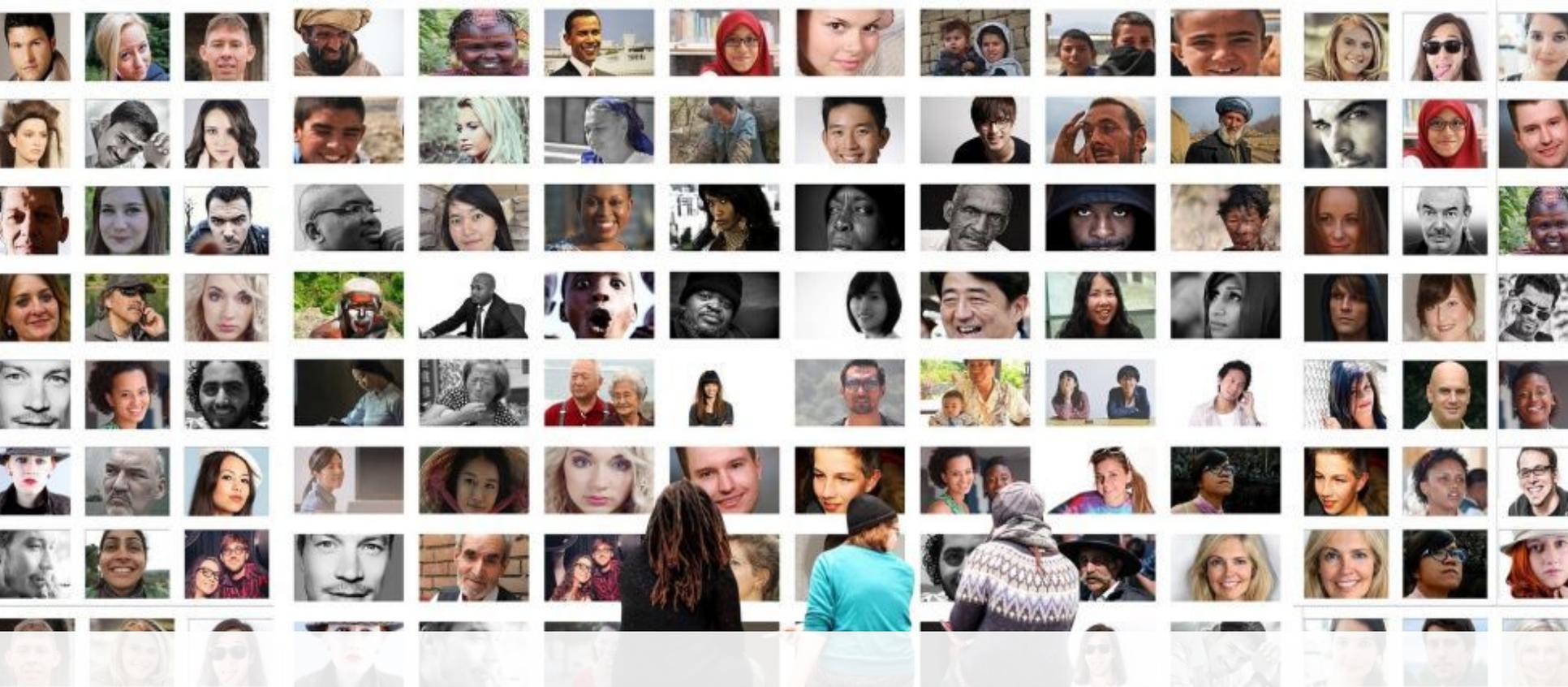
“Nothing has really changed but I thought student loans were going to be forgiven, prices of living has risen but not the wages.” -Marquita, IA, TC

“**Another thing that keeps me up at night is the amount of student loan debt I have. I feel like I will be paying for my education for the rest of my life.** What would help would be loan forgiveness and if the government placed more value in funding education over wars.” - Katherine, IA, TC

Supported More of the Tech Class/Trade Schools

“**Where have all the tech ed classes gone? Auto mechanic, metal work, wood work, electrical, plumbing,** -the trades are hurting and this is why.” -Joe, WI, DTOM

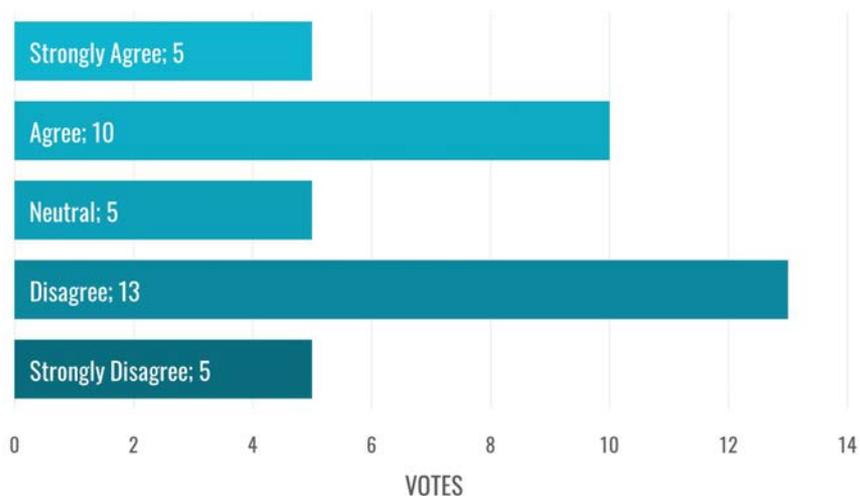
“**Right now, the education system in my state is putting a strong emphasis on growing enrollment in both the universities and technical/community colleges.** The technical and community colleges were largely overlooked for many years, but their important role in preparing essential workers is quickly being realized.” -Sean, MN, IYSS



RACE & RACISM

RACIAL ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:
America is fundamentally **not** a racist country.



Iowa

14%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Minnesota

46%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Wisconsin

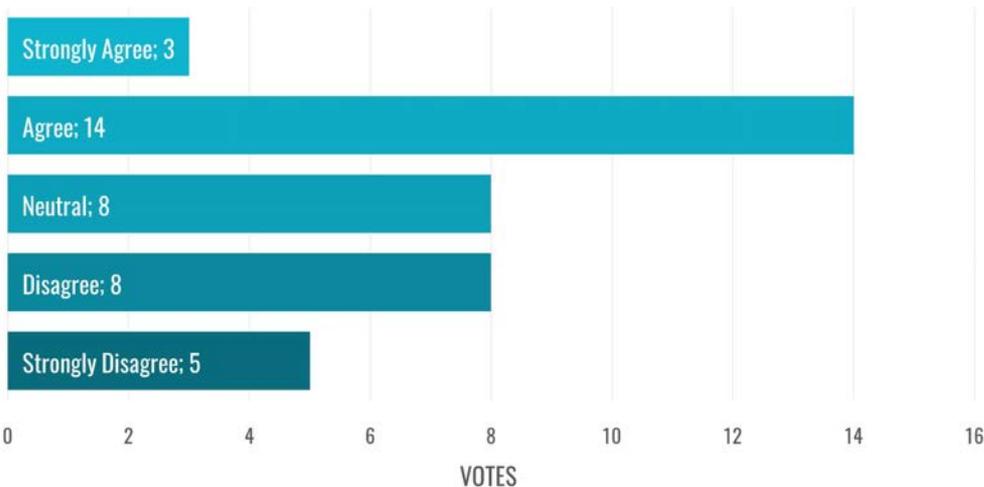
64%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

RACIAL ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:

Living where I do, people who are not white tend to have it harder than white people.



Iowa

57%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Minnesota

46%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Wisconsin

27%

of participants answered agree or strongly agree.



ON RAMPS TO DIVERSITY

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE IN RURAL AMERICA?

Rural America is significantly less racially and ethnically diverse than other parts of the country. Still, **diversity is something that our Heartlanders indicated was appreciated. The first point of entry? Food and cultural events**, which were enthusiastically embraced by our participants.

Where We Live is NOT Diverse

“Pretty plain Caucasian around here... We have lots to learn from others, from other places in the world.” - *Todd, IA, PP*

“Not at all. **Rural/Small Town Minnesota is about as white as white can get**, with nearly everyone here falling under the Catholic umbrella.” - *Brenton, MN, IYSS*

“I’m sure we have people in the area to represent just about every race, but the **numbers from each category are nowhere near equal.**” - *Joe, WI, DTOM*

Love Food from Different Countries, Though!

“It is more diverse now than when I was a child which I think is a very good thing. **Having more diversity exposes to new foods**, customs, religions, etc.” - *Johanna, WI, PP*

“The benefits are learning their culture and trying their cultural foods. Don't really have any drawbacks here, but in bigger cities, there tends to be more crime.” - *Anna, WI, DTOM*

And We Can Only Benefit from Exposure to Different Cultures!

“The different cultures we have here force us to think harder about what others consider important. **We have an international friendship club with 8 different sister cities around the globe and that means that we get bits and pieces of different cultures** in certain circles within our community.” - *Freedom, IA, PP*



RE: RACISM

DOES IT EXIST AND CAN WE FIX IT?

Our participants were strongly split on race and racism with about half saying it's institutional and pervasive and about half saying it's really a problem of complaining and a victim mentality. For the small few who didn't fall in either camp, they indicated that they didn't know and didn't want to presume to know what it was like to be another race.

Regardless, most agreed that the media narrative about rising racism wasn't helping, and some felt that talking about racism was making it worse.

America is Fundamentally Racist

"Sadly, I think **America is fundamentally a racist country. It was born out of colonization**, where one population moved in and took over by gaining significant privileges over the original inhabitants of the land by deceit and genocide. And while discarding of the indigenous people and their culture also introduced slavery to this newly forming country. This country was **born as a white supremacy-minded country.**" - Shari, MN, PP

"Trump did an excellent job of **exposing the massive racism problem we have in America** - when the **KKK and Proud Boys** openly voice support for a singular candidate, and conservative America cheers that is hard to ignore." - Brenton, MN, IYSS

We're the Melting Pot! We're not Racist.

"We're a **melting pot**. It's who we are." - Todd, IA, PP

"We **only hear about the racists because they do something bad and are on the news.**" - Johanna, WI, PP

"I believe **there is more negative impressions against the poor** than due to racial issues." - Eric, WI, TC

"I would argue **this is one of the most diverse countries in the world**. There are people from everywhere here. Unfortunately, this presidency and the last one seems to polarize and divide but I hope that can change." - Blake, MN, IYSS



THE PANDEMIC



HOW HEARTLANDERS EXPERIENCED AND FELT ABOUT THE PANDEMIC

About **half of our Heartlanders were unhappy with the way their community is currently handling COVID.** Of these, all were frustrated by the low vax rates and non-masking. Most voiced that the government response should have gone further in imposing pandemic restrictions. Yet **some felt that the government handled it as well as could be expected.**

If I Had the Power, I'd Rule With an Iron Fist...

"With an iron fist. **Require all the masks given out for free, require all the vaccines given out for free, stop transporting the virus around the country and globe for silly things like vacations and business.** Essential workers should be given absolutely everything they could need. Protocols for everything but make it easy for people. Basically restructure society so that people are allowed to survive comfortably until everyone can safely go back to unhappy jobs and buying stuff they don't need." - *Freedom, IA, PP*

If I Had the Power, I'd Keep Everything Open...

"We need to keep schools and business open. **I really don't think masks work. If you can smell a fart when wearing a mask its not working!** People that are vaccinated are getting sick. Is it really a vaccine?" - *Marie, MN, IYSS*

"**I would not require isolation of healthy people.** It still blows my mind that healthy non-sick or infected people are quarantining when the definition of quarantine has nothing to do with healthy. .. to isolate healthy people **it's just asking for a mental health crisis.**" - *Sam, IA, TC*

And I'm Continually Concerned About my Family Getting it...

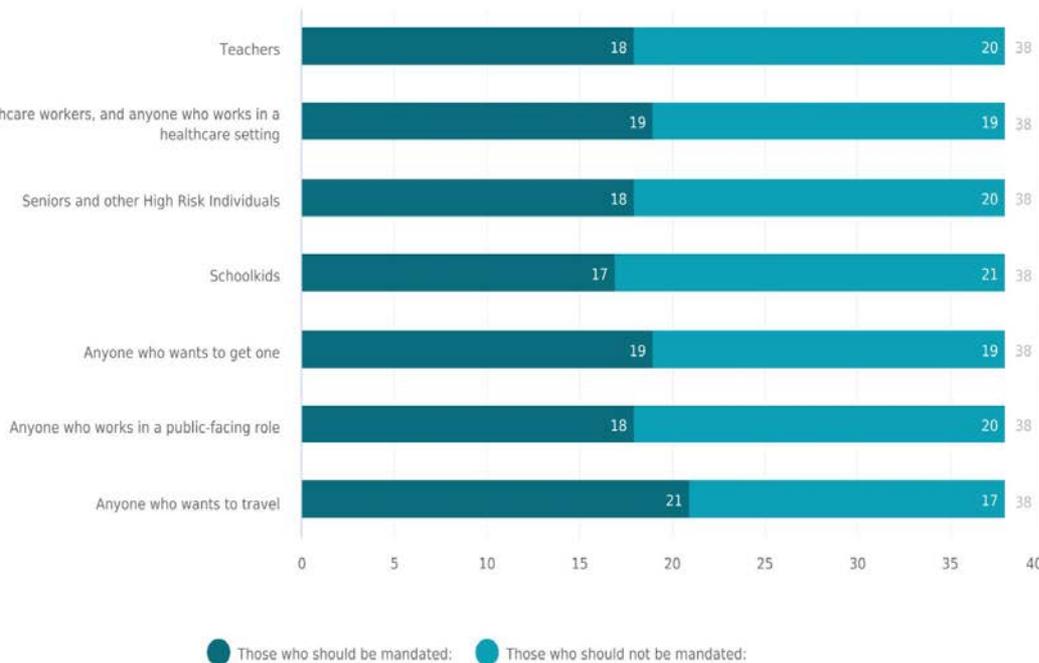
"Yes - **it would kill my mother and has killed 3 extended family members.**" - *Troy, WI, DTOM*

"**My 2 year old son** - his genetic condition is so rare there is no data on how it impacts his population. He **has a heart condition which is a major risk factor. And it will be months yet before he qualifies for vaccination.** The remainder of us are vaccinated, and I trust that it is providing enough protection to keep us out of the hospital." - *Brenton, MN, IYSS*

YOU'RE IN CHARGE: COVID VACCINE

Who do you think should be mandated to get the vaccine?

Our participants sorted the following categories into two groups: Those who should be mandated to get the vaccine and those who should not be mandated to get the vaccine.



Participants were nearly equally split on vaccine mandates and many felt passionately about their views on all sides.

“This is the only way to stop the spread and end this, we have to do it.” - Maggie, WI, PP

*“There should be no mandate for the Covid vaccine. **The people preach my body my choice right, why doesn't that apply here?**” - Sam, IA, TC*

“This should be treated like any other vaccination we had up to this point. The reason diseases like smallpox polio and even more recently chickenpox are not an issue anymore is because of vaccination.” - Joe, WI, DTOM

*“Healthcare is a no brainer, same for Teachers. If you don't like it, quit. If you want to travel, get vaccinated If you want a vaccine, get one. Seniors and high risk individuals, it's up to you. But **I'm not changing my lifestyle for your decision.**” - Todd, IA, PP*

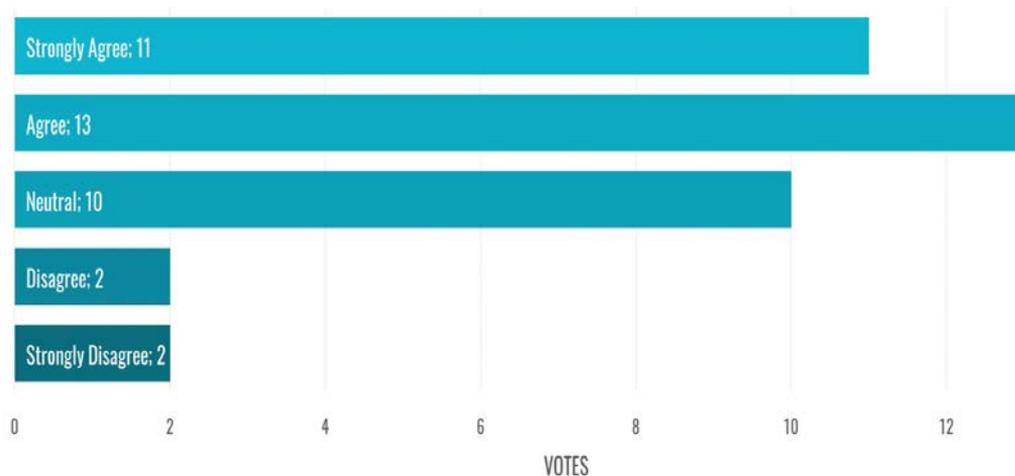
“It is only because of the anti-vax movement that we are even having this conversation, and it is literally killing people.” - Brenton, MN, IYSS



OPIOIDS IN THE HEARTLAND

OPIOID USE IN THE HEARTLAND

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:
Overuse of opioids is a problem in rural/small-town America.



Iowa

50% of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Minnesota

77% of participants answered agree or strongly agree.

Wisconsin

64% of participants answered agree or strongly agree.



THOUGHTS ON THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

While a small few did not see the opioid epidemic as a problem in their communities, a significant majority of our Heartlanders indicated that they were aware of opioid (and meth) addiction as a problem. **Many even indicated knowing someone or being aware of many someone in their lives who had died of opioids and were deeply concerned about it.**

It's Not Just Opioids...

“Overuse of any drug, including alcohol, is a problem here.” - Kevin, IA, TC

“I honestly don't see that as a problem and I haven't heard of anyone really having that addiction in this town. **It is the people on meth that is talked about and tends to stand out when you see them** - you just know.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

And It's Not Just Here...

“I think it's probably **a problem everywhere**, not just smaller areas.” - Cole, MN, IYSS

“I don't think this is isolated to rural/small town America. **It's a problem everywhere because we're a highly over medicated and over diagnosed society. We're all looking for a pill to fix the problems we face** unfortunately. In small towns, it's just much easier to conceal.” - Ashley, IA, TC

And We Don't Know How to Handle It

“I don't think we know how to handle it. Opioids are accessible and easy to get, but the treatment for overdose is not accessible or easy to get. And I think there are systems at play that make it worse. I think many doctors don't consider what other options might be needed for healthcare. I think physical healthcare and mental healthcare should be part of the same package.” - Katherine, IA, TC



HEALTHCARE



THOUGHTS ON: HEALTHCARE

Are you satisfied with your own healthcare? When I ask this, I'm thinking of anything and everything from cost of care, to quality, to ability to access it when you need it. Is your health care situation working for you?

Yes, Absolutely.

"I am currently **still a student** and **am on a form of Medicaid** until I get an income. **I have been very satisfied with the level of care I have received** as my medications are completely covered and appointment costs are low." - Sean, MN, IYSS

"Satisfied. Our care is through my wife's employer. She had a major surgery this year and the provider covered their part. **We live in an area by the Mayo Clinic, so we have access to some of the best healthcare in the world.**" - Bryan, WI, TC

"Yes, for now. **I think so but only because I am young and healthy.**" - Freedom, IA, PP

HOWEVER, the High Cost of Healthcare is a HUGE concern.

"**Healthcare costs are too much** for the little service given. It has cost me **\$1000 to visit the ER for something minor.**" - Anthony, IA, TC

"I have Medicare and so far I am happy with the care. **I think the cost is going up pretty fast and in a few years it will be too expensive.**" - Maggie, WI, PP

"My healthcare situation is working but not ideal. **I recently changed jobs and I almost had to not accept a position that I knew I would enjoy much more than my previous role, all because of healthcare costs.** It is such a large portion of household expenses it is sad that we have to weigh enjoying what we do versus how much healthcare costs." - Matt, MN, TC



ABOUT HEALTHCARE HOW CAN IT GET BETTER?

Aside from wanting more affordable healthcare, our Heartlanders indicated a desire for **quality care that was closer to where they lived, pricing transparency, and universal healthcare.**

Increase Quality of Care in Proximity to Where I Live

“I could get to a hospital in 20 minutes. However the care at this facility is widely known for being poor and offering plenty of malpractice.

Fortunately I am only 40 minutes away from one of the best healthcare systems in the world, so I always have another option if things aren't urgent.”
- Blake, MN, IYSS

We Have to Stop with these Hidden Prices!

“I would change hidden prices, in network negotiated discounts, and universal healthcare for children as a start.” - Shari, MN, PP

“I would change the cost and billing side of healthcare. Healthcare systems not having the ability to decide what they charge for a service based on your insurance. **You could pay \$100 because you have certain insurance and another person may only pay \$80 for the same service because they are uninsured.”** - Matt, MN, TC

Let's Get Universal Healthcare!!!

“Universal healthcare, not private for-profit health insurance. The moment your health insurance is for profit they are incentivized to decline coverage for as many procedures or visits as possible, which leads to folks not wanting to go in for routine checkups that could save numerous lives each year, and lead to a healthier community.” - Brenton, MN, IYSS



ABOUT HEALTHCARE

“THERE’S ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT”

Heartlanders also indicated **strong support for improving access to healthcare generally**, including mental health, fixing dental coverage, and providing better support for our elderly to access quality healthcare.

Fix Dental Coverage

“I would **add more dentists** to the MN care health program. **It is so hard to get in ANYWHERE.** No one takes that insurance. MORE Minnesota Care dentists.” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

Better Support our Elders’ Health

“Big Pharma has to go. **The fact that our elderly population who are living on a fixed income on Medicare cannot afford their insulin or have to choose between paying their electric bill or buying their insulin blows my mind.** Some folks are able to pay out-of-pocket for these costs, but they are astronomical. I know that I hope I don’t work my whole life and save for retirement just to spend it on medication.” - Beth, IA, DTOM

Improve Access to Healthcare (& Don’t Forget Mental Health!)

“I would **make mental healthcare far more accessible, affordable, and available.** I think everyone can benefit from receiving mental healthcare, and I think what prevents people from getting it is the cost and the lack of accessibility. A walk-in mental health clinic that is either completely funded by the government or extremely low cost.” - Katherine, IA, TC

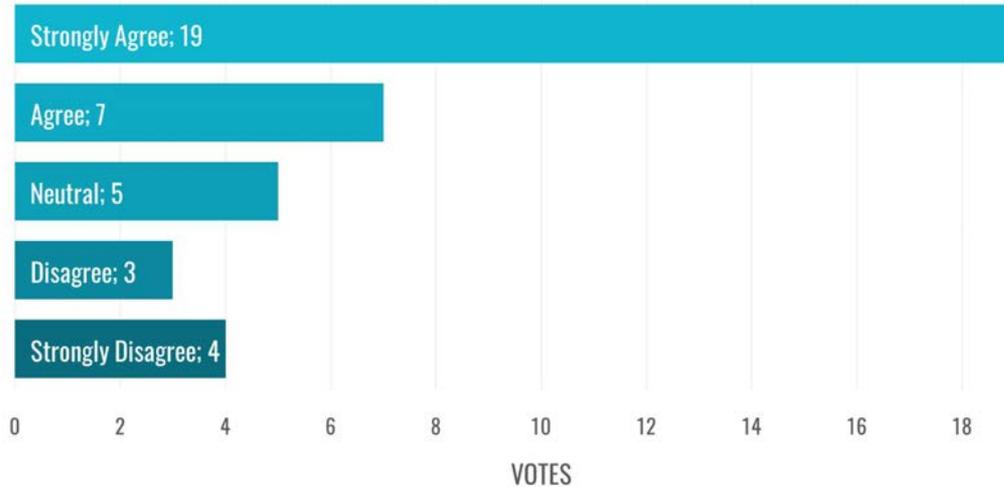


Researcher Image

MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:
Marijuana should be fully legalized in my state.



Iowa

79%

of participants answered
agree or strongly agree.

Minnesota

62%

of participants answered
agree or strongly agree.

Wisconsin

64%

of participants answered
agree or strongly agree.



THOUGHTS ON MARIJUANA

A significant majority of our Heartlanders were both interested in and supportive of marijuana legalization. **Citing numerous benefits, including increased tax revenue, the freeing up of prison space and marijuana's medicinal benefits, for the most part, our participants felt that legalizing marijuana was a no-brainer.** For those who opposed legalization, concerns about morality and the safety of the drug predominated.

I Strongly Believe it Should be Legalized

"It is **not a dangerous drug**, it helps many people." - Maggie, WI, PP

"From a judicial standpoint **it would also clear up jails and keep people out of trouble for something that is minor and not hurting anyone.** People need to be educated on marijuana, like they are on alcohol. **There can be responsible social marijuana use just like there is with alcohol.**" - Blake, MN, IYSS

I Don't Know Enough to Make a Call

"I don't have a real strong opinion on this topic. **I feel I do not know enough about marijuana to make a educated decision on where I stand.** I would need to do some research into the long term effects and habits it may or may not form before I agree or disagree. **With my current knowledge and understanding I feel as though marijuana is very similar to alcohol in that it is a substance that impairs you,** so if we are able to drink alcohol under certain rules than we maybe should be able to use marijuana as well." - Matt, MN, TC

Not So Fast

"Drugs cause a lot of problems in communities and **marijuana is known as a gateway drug.**" - Hunter, IA, DTOM

"**It's a gateway drug that encourages people to fall into a deeper pit.** Also, there isn't a safe way to monitor impairment while using it and poses a **danger on the road.** Also, no one knows if it is laced or where it came from." - Bryan, WI, TC



ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



THOUGHTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

While some were uncertain about the details of climate change, the majority felt that climate change was here to stay. **Of those who felt a sense of agency to do something (but not enough), smart stewardship of resources (natural and financial) was a recurring theme.** Many shared interest in developing renewable energy sources because they felt it'd give their state an economic boost.

Climate Change Makes Me Fearful for What's Next

“Life as we know it will completely change. I don't know what that would look like, but **it makes me fearful for the future.**” - Katherine, IA, TC

“We are in what I call the pre-sunken Miami times. Coastal communities in the arctic circle around Alaska are already **victims of climate change** and the **world's first climate change refugees** because their ice villages have turned to mud or fallen into the ocean.” - Freedom, IA, PP

No Matter What, It Will Impact our Pocketbooks

“Wind/solar energy is a booming concept in Iowa. It would **create jobs in our community and eventually drive down prices of energy!**” - Ashley, IA, TC

“**I would love to have solar panels on my home, but still too expensive.** Other countries have gone solar, wind and water propelled sources of energy, would like to see more of that here.” - Anna, WI, DTOM

“I don't think nuclear energy is environmentally friendly. **How can we afford a electric car.** How much does it cost to charge the car. It is a little scary everytime we get so called change - it always leaves people behind. **Just ask the coal miners in West Virginia that lost their jobs because Obama was trying to stop our country from using coal.** Then they had no way to make a living.” - Beth, IA, DTOM



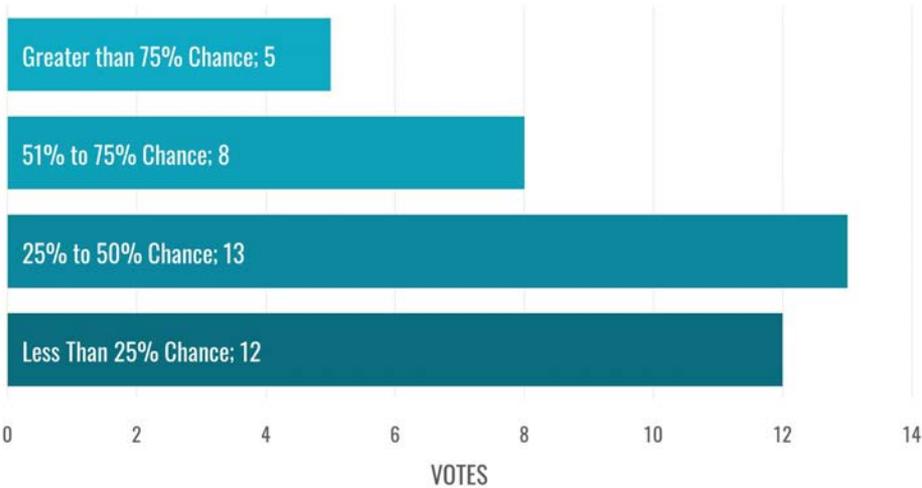
Researcher Image

ABORTION

ABORTION RESTRICTION IN YOUR STATE

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:

What is the likelihood of abortion being outlawed or severely restricted in your state?



Iowa

56%

the average chance of abortion being outlawed or severely restricted according to Iowans.

Minnesota

20%

the average chance of abortion being outlawed or severely restricted according to Minnesotans.

Wisconsin

30%

the average chance of abortion being outlawed or severely restricted according to Wisconsinites.



ABORTION RESTRICTION IN YOUR STATE: BEHIND THE CHOICE

Iowa

“I say 50% because my state is **majority Republican**, and **this is on the Republican agenda.**” - Sam, IA, TC

“**Our governor created a state holiday honoring the unborn**, sanctity of life day or something like that... [and] **performing an abortion is also akin to manslaughter or murder under Iowa law**, so I think it is definitely possible for Iowa to ban or try banning abortion altogether.” - Freedom, IA, PP

“Iowa is **quite red overall** still, so if the state government had to ability to outlaw abortion, I think they're more likely to take a shot at that instead of maintaining the status quo.” - Logan, IA, IYSS

Minnesota

“Minnesota is **a very blue state. It will never be restricted here** unless at a federal level.” - Antoinette, MN, DTOM

“I don't think this is possible. **Minnesota is a fairly progressive state** and [that] doesn't seem like it is in the scope of what could happen.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

“This is **a strong democratic state** in the areas that vote heavily, I don't see them going against it.” - Jordan, IA, DTOM

“I don't think that would ever happen in Minnesota, there are **far too many Democratic roots in our state.**” - Matt, MN, TC

Wisconsin

“I think the more conservative run states like Texas would have a state government more likely in favor of restrictions. **Wisconsin is a much more moderate and left-leaning state** that would protect women's rights.” - Bryan, WI, TC

“I think there are **more people that support [abortion] than don't** in Wisconsin.” - Troy, WI, DTOM

“**I don't think that this restriction is in public favor** here.” - Eric, WI, TC

“**Things tend to stay the way they are** especially with highly sensitive material like this.” - Joe, WI, DTOM



THOUGHTS ON ABORTION

When asked about the recent Texas law banning abortion at six weeks, Heartlanders were split. Some **agreed in principle, believing that abortion shouldn't be used as birth control**, while others felt like eight or ten weeks was more appropriate. On the other side, the law was seen as **government overstep into the private lives of women** making a choice that should be entirely their own.

I Agree In Principle

“**Abortion should never be used as birth control.** We have humane options for birth control.” - Beth, IA, DTOM

“When is it ever alright to take a life of a child? Never. Abortion needs to be outlawed in the United States. It's the **downfall of America.**” - Marie, MN, IYSS

“I agree. I honestly **don't think women should abort babies because they are living beings and could be adopted** out if the woman doesn't want to have the baby for some reason.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

It Infringes Upon Women's Bodily Autonomy

“I find it an infringement of rights. **It infringes on body autonomy.**” - Anthony, IA, TC

“**It goes against my belief that I have a basic human right to bodily autonomy and have the right to make bodily choices** without fear, violence or discrimination.” - Shari, MN, PP

“I feel that **women deserve the choice.** This is, again, where I feel **government oversteps** and places restrictions.” - Kassy, MN, TC

& The Citizen Policing Element is Weird

“I think it's terrible because abortion should be a right of the woman. **I find this particular law a bit silly with how it "deputizes citizens" to enforce the ban...** very unsettling.” - Logan, IA, IYSS

“It is **citizen policed** which doesn't seem like a bad idea in certain circumstances but **this isn't the right scenario for it or the right way to handle it. It feels very wild west.** This rule doesn't make a lot of sense in any way. **I don't see why people who are unaffected should profit from this.** It seems very off.” - Blake, MN, IYSS



DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO'S HAD AN ABORTION?

Despite Heartlanders' differing attitudes on abortion, **at least half of all participants in every state knew of someone who's had an abortion.**

Iowa

50%

of Iowans know someone who's had an abortion.

Minnesota

62%

of Minnesotans know someone who's had an abortion.

Wisconsin

55%

of Wisconsinites know someone who's had an abortion.



IF ABORTION WERE OUTLAWED IN YOUR STATE: THE IMPACT

Most Heartlanders **wouldn't directly feel the impact of abortion being outlawed** in their state for various reasons (old age, infertility, being pro-life, etc.), but believed their communities and society as a whole would **feel the financial strain of unwanted children**, as well as **an increased risk to women's health** due to back alley abortions.

It Wouldn't Affect Me, Personally

"It **will not affect my family** at all. **It will not affect me** at all." - Beth, IA, DTOM

"It would have **very little impact on me or my family as no one in my family is planning to have kids.**" - Sean, MN, IYSS

"I **do not foresee this impacting me** at all." - Troy, WI, DTOM

"Nothing to me as **I'm 58** and no longer of child bearing age." - Anna, WI, DTOM

Children & Families Would Suffer with Financial Strain

"The community could be impacted because there could be **unwanted children being born, then getting neglected or abused.**" - Morgan, IA, IYSS

"I think there would be a lot **more poverty**, actually. If you force women to have babies when they aren't able to mentally or financially, it's just going to lead to **more poverty and more unemployment or financially struggling families.**" - Steven M., IA, DTOM

People Would Still Get Abortions, but They'd Be More Dangerous

"It would make it more dangerous to get one and would result in **more deaths than would happen under safe practices.** It would also result in people taking the decision into their own hands and **using their own practices to make it happen, resulting in more deaths and traumas.**" - Katherine, IA, TC

"**People would still be getting those abortions on the black market** in unhealthy places. **You can't stop it, but you can make it extremely unsafe** and that's what would happen." - Matthew, MN, IYSS



ABORTION THOUGHT STARTERS: FINANCIAL IMPACT ON YOUR FAMILY

This year has been really hard, and for many, access to an abortion means the difference between being financially okay and not okay. Thinking about your finances, are you in a place where your family could comfortably deal with a new baby without it causing financial strain?

Me & My Family Could Handle It

“Yes. **God always provides.**” - Hannah, WI, TC

“Yes, no problem. **It would be a blessing.**” - Emily, WI, TC

“Yes, we can **easily handle the financial strain of a child.**” - Jordan, MN, DTOM

“Yes, I’m **in a place and position to deal with one.**” - Marquita, IA, TC

It May Be a Little Tight, But We’d Make it Work

“I think **it would cause strain, but it would be manageable.** My family would be able to make do, though our lives would probably change a good amount. But **it would at least be possible, and I don’t think we’d be concerned about financial ruin.**” - Logan, IA, IYSS

“I think **it would impact us financially but that wouldn’t change my choice to keep the baby** because I know **there are ways to cut costs** and reduce the strain even if that meant **giving up luxuries** in our day to day living.” - Sara, WI, DTOM

No, A Child Would Cause Severe Financial Strain

“Hell no. Just the **birth part in a hospital would bankrupt me.**” - Steven M., IA, DTOM

“Yes, **that is actually keeping us from having another child.**” - Cole, MN, IYSS

“**I am not financially okay** to handle having a baby.” - Johanna, WI, PP

“No, **I could not financially afford a child** right now.” - Morgan, IA, IYSS



ABORTION THOUGHT STARTERS: IMPACT ON YOUR ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

For many, Planned Parenthood provides essential reproductive care to those who don't have access otherwise. Thinking about your own access to care, would getting rid of Planned Parenthoods impact your ability to access reproductive care or health care, in general?

- “**Not at this point in my life.** I have used their services in the past and think they should be available for anyone that needs it.” - Ashley, IA, TC
- “In general, no, **I would go to my primary [care doctor].**” - Marquita, IA, TC
- “When considering my current medical care, **my access to care would not be impacted.** I did use Planned Parenthood for health concerns when I attended high school and college.” - Shari, MN, PP
- “Planned Parenthood has never played role in my life or the life of someone I had dated. **It would have no impact on me,** but I understand the help it provides to others.” - Blake, MN, IYSS
- “No, that **would not impact us personally,** but I know they provide more than just abortions and it would affect some people's ability to have access to birth control, etc.” - Matt, MN, TC
- “No, **I have other health care programs.**” - Maggie, WI, PP
- “I do not believe getting rid of Planned Parenthoods would impact my ability to access reproductive care. **I have a job with health insurance and there are hundreds of clinics within a 30 mile radius of my home,** that one would be at least semi affordable for me.” - Annie, WI, DTOM



ABORTION THOUGHT STARTERS: MEDICATION ABORTION OVER TELEHEALTH

If Planned Parenthood were to no longer exist, what are your feelings surrounding abortions overseen by a medical professional via telehealth (i.e., over Skype, Zoom, etc.) or delivered through mail-order pills?

That's Absolutely Crazy!

"That's underground, **barbaric**, and completely **unsafe/inhumane.**" - Ashley, IA, TC

"Honestly, all abortion makes me feel sick to my stomach and a virtual abortion with a pill does not make me feel any better about it. **It just seems like this could be a slippery slope and does not promote much accountability for the person requesting the abortion or the medical professional providing assistance.**" - Annie, WI, DTOM

I'm Iffy - I Don't Like That the Human Element Would be Missing

"I think that **it would be very [im]personable** and not work near as well." - Steven D., IA, DTOM

"I'm sorry, what?!?! Choosing to have an abortion is not an easy decision. I think **Planned Parenthood provides more than just abortions or pills. They provide comfort and support** which are almost as important." - Johanna, WI, PP

"I don't agree with it all. **The mother needs to be seen in person so that the doctor can make sure how she is doing.**" - Beth, IA, DTOM

A Great, (and Still) Safe Option

"I feel like this could actually be a great option and may help keep things cheaper overall. It would definitely **grant more access than having to go to a centralized facility**" - Blake, MN, IYSS

"I would be **very comfortable. It is a service that I already use for some medication.** It is very easy and I've had very few issues with it. I am comfortable talking with a doctor through telehealth." - Logan, IA, IYSS

"I'm for it. **Why not, doctors are doctors.**" - Troy, WI, DTOM



ABORTION THOUGHT STARTERS: A FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOM

Some people talk about abortions and access to them as a fundamental freedom for Americans, that is, the government should not get between Americans and their doctor and control Americans' bodies. What do you think about that?

I Totally Agree! Government Has No Place In Policing Bodies

"Absolutely! **The government should have nothing to do with our bodies as Americans.** That is a line that they have crossed." - Sam, IA, TC

"There's **no mention anywhere that the government has the right to decide your medical decisions for you,** so if pro-life people are so convinced they have the right to legislate those medical conditions then they need to shut up about the vaccine, you can't have it both ways." - Steven M., IA, DTOM

"I think **the DECISION to have an abortion should have no involvement from the government.** However I do think **the government has a role to play in monitoring the safety of abortions** being performed. We don't want a rogue clinic to pop up somewhere that is performing medically questionable procedures without consequence." - Brenton, MN, IYSS

Abortion is Just Plain Wrong – I Don't See What Killing Babies Has to do With Freedom

"**Abortion is morally wrong** and should not be reduced to the term 'choice.'" - Kevin, IA, TC

"**I don't believe that anyone should take a life as an option for birth control.** I think that should be regulated!" - Beth, IA, DTOM

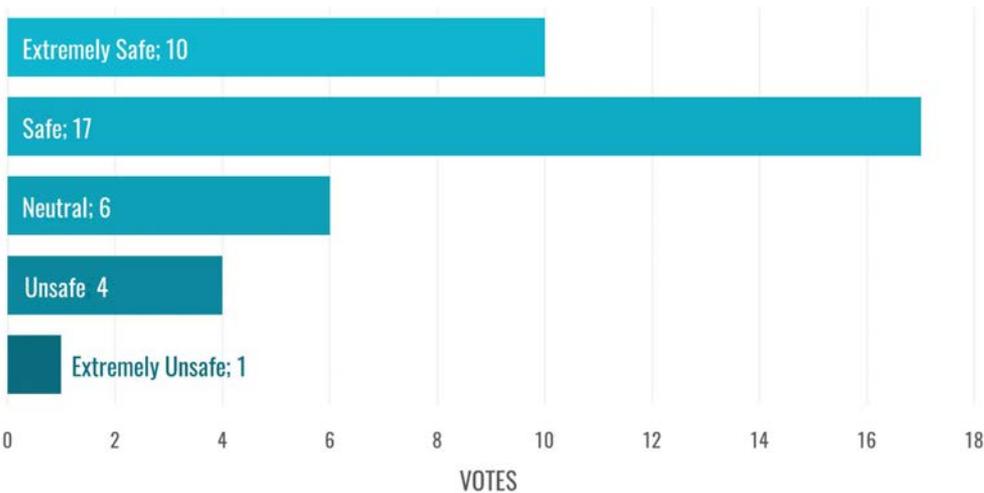
"I would **wonder why so many of these same people who think the government should not get between them and their doctor want the government to mandate the Covid jab.** Also, murder does not become okay because the government says it is." - Hannah, WI, TC



CRIME & POLICING

POLICE EFFECTIVENESS AND SAFETY

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:
Generally speaking, how safe do you feel around the police?



Iowa

71%

of participants answered safe or extremely safe.

Minnesota

69%

of participants answered safe or extremely safe.

Wisconsin

73%

of participants answered safe or extremely safe.



THOUGHTS ON THE POLICE I FEEL SAFE, BUT...

Broadly speaking, our participants reported feeling safe around police. However, the conversation over the past few years regarding the police had clearly made an impact on our Heartlanders, with **many indicating a desire for significant improvement across a number of factors. Minnesotans, in particular, were activated in their desire for better policing.**

I Feel Safe Around the Police

“If I were to get pulled over, I would follow directions and not be resistive. **Seems like common sense to me that resisting would never make the situation better or more safe.**” - Annie, WI, DTOM

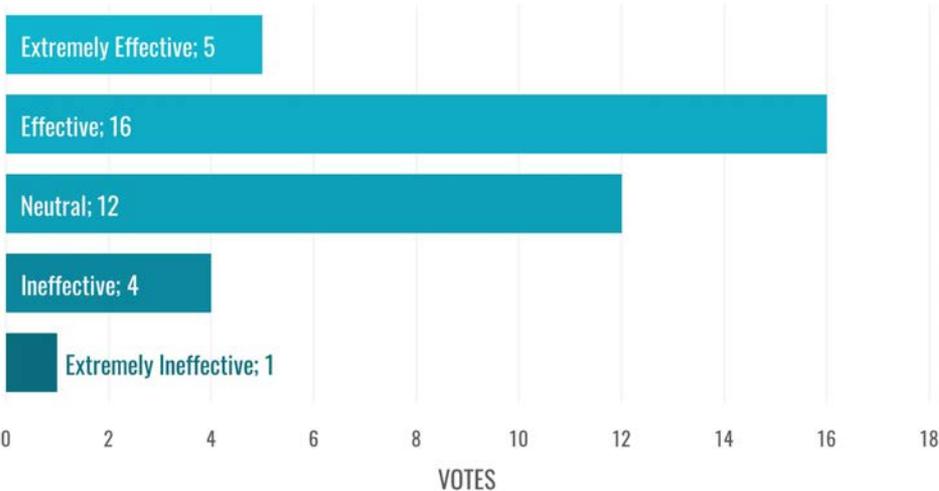
“I actually **went to school for law enforcement.** I also know how they are trained and how to best act around them. I also mind my business. **I definitely have an upper hand in interacting safely and efficiently with them.** However, there are always bad actors and poorly trained individuals that cause reason for concern.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

And They're Pretty Effective, Too!

“We had **an incident here at my home several years back.** I entered the garage and immediately could smell **ammonia.** I called 911 and informed the operator and within a couple minutes **the police and ambulance arrived with the hazmat team.** They took control of the liquid, explained the danger, vacated our house and I was taken to the ER - all in a very calm and timely manner. **It was all very impressive the way they worked together and ensured the safety of our home and the entire neighborhood.**” - Troy, WI, DTOM

POLICE EFFECTIVENESS AND SAFETY

How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statement:
How effective do you feel the police are?



Iowa

57%

of participants answered **very effective** or **somewhat effective**.

Minnesota

46%

of participants answered **very effective** or **somewhat effective**.

Wisconsin

64%

of participants answered **very effective** or **somewhat effective**.



THOUGHTS ON THE POLICE WE NEED TO DO BETTER...

Despite a **broad sentiment of support for the police in general, our Heartlanders had some very specific ways in which they thought the police could and should improve.** When asked about what they thought and felt when they heard the phrase “Defund the Police,” our participants had a lot to say...

Police Need Better Psychological Training & Mental Health Support (for Themselves & to Diffuse Tough Situations)

“Experience matters in a profession such as law enforcement. A better option is **more training, making sure the training is actually happening, and providing better support to our police officers** (mentally and physically).” - Annie, WI, DTOM

“Give them money so they can **go to therapy and seek mental health enhancement so they don't get burnt out** and angry on the job. **These men and women see some of the most horrible things on earth and are rarely offered or encouraged to get mental health assistance** to combat the effects it takes on them. **They are still people** and need help to overcome the things they see.” - Blake, MN, IYSS

The Bad Ones Need to be Removed, Reformed, & Held Accountable

“Police forces have an **alarming numbers of individuals who subscribe to radical or racist ideologies.** These individuals need to be **vettted and removed and educated.**” - Sean, MN, IYSS

“Police brutality! There should be **accountability.**” - Tristian, MN, DTOM

“They need **better training, lots of psych evaluations** and a law that states if a cop is trying to kill you and you “resist” you don't go to jail for it.” - Steven M., IA, DTOM



THOUGHTS ON THE POLICE AND THEY'RE EQUIPPED TO SPOIL FOR A FIGHT...

Furthermore, **broad concerns about the police's ability to consistently de-escalate** and **the militarization of the police** dominated the conversation...

Police are Ineffective at De-escalating Situations & Their Involvement Leads to Violence

"They need more training with using non-lethal methods. They need more choices for non-lethal methods, so that they feel safe using them." - Beth, IA, DTOM

"I think there are many things that happen unnecessarily ending in violence because of untrained or improperly trained individuals with access to weapons who overuse them." - Katherine, IA, TC

And We're Equipping Them With Military Grade Weapons...

"It means stop arming these poorly trained officers with military grade weapons." - Matthew, MN, IYSS

"There is absolutely no reason any police department in the country needs a literal tank. And yet several have one." - Brenton, MN, IYSS



THOUGHTS ON THE POLICE

STILL, DEFUND THE POLICE IS LUNACY

And yet, **despite strong responses in favor of police improvement, a majority reacted strongly and negatively to Defund the Police**, indicating that they felt a strong respect for police, they needed and wanted the police, they just wanted them to be better, which looked like smarter allocation of resources, better support for cops and situations around mental health and cleaning up the force, as needed.

We Need Our Police – They’re Essential & Fight for Us Every Day

“After I saw Democrats go after the police this past year, I was very disappointed that they went so hard on people that fight for us every day. **I have had a bad taste in my mouth with the Democrats ever since.**” - Hunter, IA, DTOM

“It means laws, right and wrong is gone. **We need our police. We need our towns and cities stand with the officers and not against them.** One thing we need more officers everywhere in the state.” - Marie, MN, IYSS

“Lunacy. **The police are a 100% essential part of our society.** Like politicians, they have a moral obligation to do a fair and respectable job for the people.” - Bryan, WI, TC

We Can Respect AND Refresh Them

“That’s silly - we need police. **However, to kind of crack down on our police programs and make sure that things are run effectively is good.** Everything needs a refresh every now and again. If I’m just going off the good, please, no they do not need to change anything. **As a society - we need to respect them and respect the law that is in place.** People have forgotten that the police are our friends are here to keep us safe.” - Sam, IA, TC

THE RESEARCH TEAM



GRETCHEN BARTON is the Research Director for Future Majority and Principal at Worthy Strategy Group, LLC. With a special interest in the psychology underpinning behavior change, Gretchen has designed and delivered a number of initiatives in the policy space, including hazing behavior and how to stop it, poverty in America for the Gates Foundation, and most recently, work on nuclear weapons for NTI.

She has led research and served as a behavioral science strategist for major organizations and campaigns (e.g. the NFL, NextGen, New Moral Majority, Ideas 42, Way to Win and others), uncovering key messaging insights to turn out the youth vote, revealing voters' deepest hopes and dreams for presidential campaigns, and unearthing deep insights for key organizers in the build up to the 2020 election. She recently researched and released “Winning the Future: A Deep Dive into the Unconscious Minds of Voters” in partnership with Wide Angle Research to help understand this strategic moment in American history for the Democratic Party.

Gretchen holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Communications and Planning Campaigns with distinction in research from Cornell University. She has written for the Journal of College Student Development and the American Journal of Health Behavior, and co-authored, “Prevalence and Profiling: Hazing Among College Students and Points of Intervention.” She recently co-authored “The Science of Winning with Stories: Using Agency, Urgency, and Community,” a reflection on the most effective messaging to engage and move a populace.

For more information and/or to get involved in future work, please email:

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Imagine you had a
magic wand
and could
pass any law
at all
that would
help make
your life
easier...





I'D WANT TO PASS A LAW TO...

REFORM OUR CROOKED POLITICAL SYSTEM

From imposing term limits to voting reform and everything in between, **Heartlanders feel strongly that our political system as it is needs an overhaul.** Primarily, they're concerned about the effect of money on the system, calling for the elimination of super PACs, spending caps for campaigns, and not allowing churches to donate to campaigns, allowing for greater transparency into where legislative priorities come from.

"I would enact a law to **remove dark money/political spending by nonprofit organizations** that are not required to disclose their donors. **I would not allow soft-money and super PACs.** It would change my life because I could see who is making contributions to whom and decide if I want to patronize that company of organization."
- Shari, MN, PP

"I definitely think it should be something that promotes **election reform... term limits, spending caps.** We need to change our system of who represents the people, for how long, and how ethically they get there." - Hannah, WI, TC

"Separation of church and state... Religious beliefs have played a large impact of political affairs. I would go as far as **churches cannot donate to political campaigns.**" - Anthony, IA, TC

"I would pass **reform [for] voting. Every vote should count. Everyone should have equal opportunity to vote...** Some current standards are more restrictive, some are more lenient. These differences are not conducive to equality." - Eric, WI, TC





I'D WANT TO PASS A LAW TO...

GIVE THE COUNTRY UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE

Universal healthcare, eliminating health insurance, free healthcare – any way you slice it, **Heartlanders want more affordable healthcare than our current system allows**, where it's either die or go bankrupt. Citing astronomical costs and the financial stress that comes along with them, **a redesign of the healthcare system would go a long way toward making Heartlanders feel like the government was working for them.**

"I would pass **universal health care** as the current system we have denies people procedures because it costs too much and, gee, just lets them die or go bankrupt to get it done." - *Anna, WI, DTOM*

"It would be a law that **eliminates health insurance and de-commodifies the services and medication** so that people don't have to have this be one of the larger financial stresses they have to be strong armed into. Personally, it would make my life a lot easier, and I would feel like it was clearly a move that has the government serving me because it would go completely against all the corporations that make a profit from that industry instead of treating it like a basic human need." - *Logan, IA, IYSS*

"**Free healthcare for everyone** would probably be at the top." - *Cole, MN, IYSS*

"**Universal Healthcare.** I would immediately save thousands of dollars every year in medical costs for my son born with Williams Syndrome. It would eliminate the stress and anxiety I have over how he will be able to afford the treatments he needs lifelong, even when my wife and I have passed away and are unable to help him further." - *Brenton, MN, IYSS*

