

CROSS STATE MEDIA STUDY

ON THE ROAD TO THE MIDTERMS





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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Reserve the Extremist Label for Republicans. Participants feel Republicans have turned significantly more extreme in the past few years. We should not be afraid to call Republicans Extremists and on the flip side, there is a danger in voters seeing Democrats and Republicans as equally extreme. So we must not call other Democrats extreme and reserve that label for Republicans.

Democrats Must Show How They Are For The People. While voters are currently pessimistic, they want a more positive view of the future. Yes, Democrats must acknowledge voters' pain but Democrats must communicate to voters that our best times are ahead of us, and Democrats are vital to getting us there. Voters are craving community as the desire for people to be closer and reunite as a country is vital to voters. Democrats must emphasize the need to build a community to continue to rebuild our country and highlight how some Republicans are trying to divide and make power for themselves.

Contrast Messaging Is A Winner. Messaging that highlighted the multiracial coalition through Race Class Narrative-inspired language performed well. So too did speech content that drew a strong contrast between Democrats and Republicans by highlighting the difference between the QAnon Republicans of today and Republicans of yesteryear. Contrast and coming together messaging work, as well as messaging that reminds voters what they're capable of and how powerful they are when they work together. There is a great desire for the government to deliver more, but significant bureaucratic reform must be implemented before that can happen. The desire for a better functioning government is a contrasting opportunity for Democrats, as we have made government-run much smoother than it did during the Trump administration. We must highlight how we have made a better government and make the government work better for the people.

With an uncomfortably close margin in the 2020 presidential election and key races unfolding in 2022, Way to Win and Future Majority have joined forces to uncover a deeper understanding of the electorate. With deep dive studies in Texas, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Virginia, and across key senate states, we've leveraged a combination of research methodologies to uncover a rich understanding of what Americans are thinking, why they think and feel as they do, and how the Democratic Party can better connect with them.

In this study, we explored how a diverse group of American voters see the world, how they are looking into the future, what matters to them, how they think about issues and what makes them tick. What follows is a revealing look into what voters are thinking and what the Democratic Party needs to know before November 2022.

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



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.

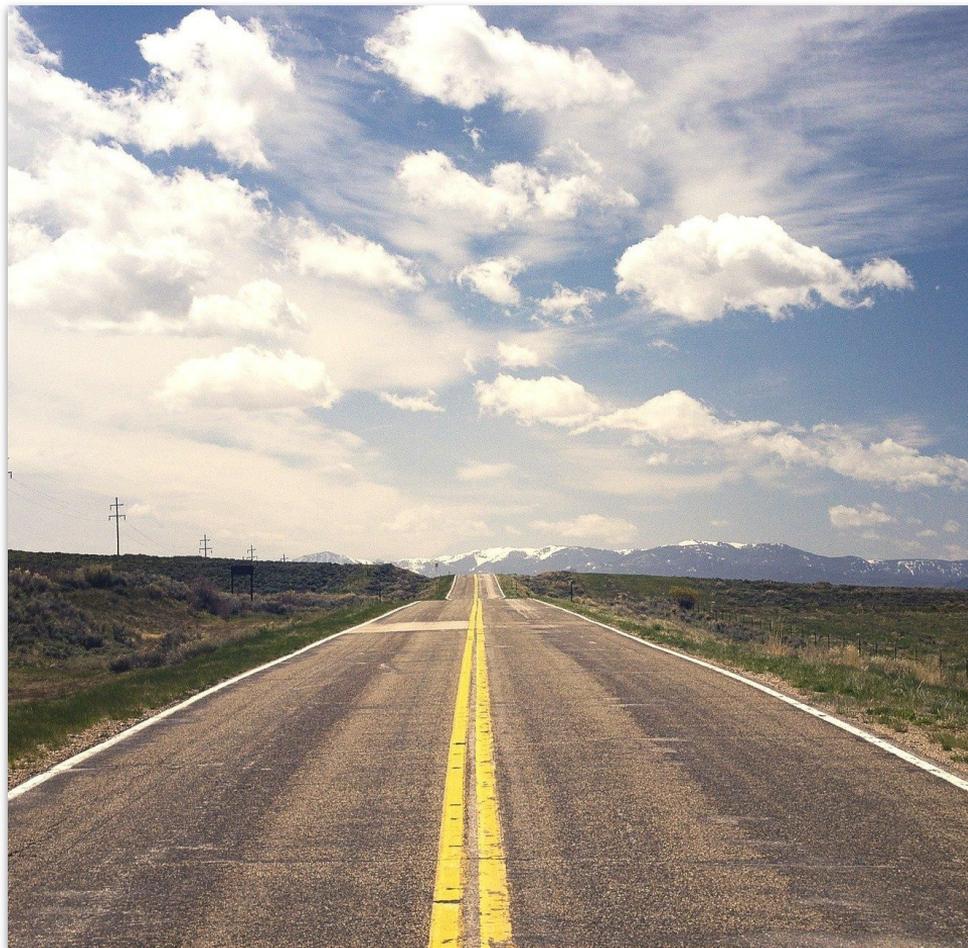
THE PARTICIPANTS

WHO: We worked with a diverse group of **100 registered voters** (Democrats, Independents, and Republicans) with very liberal to moderately conservative views who were willing to vote for Democrats. No Trump Republicans.

Our sample included a representative mix of backgrounds including voters who identified as:

- Hispanic/Latino/a/ Voters
- Asian-American/Pacific-Islander/AAPI Voters
- African-American/Black Voters
- Caucasian/White Voters

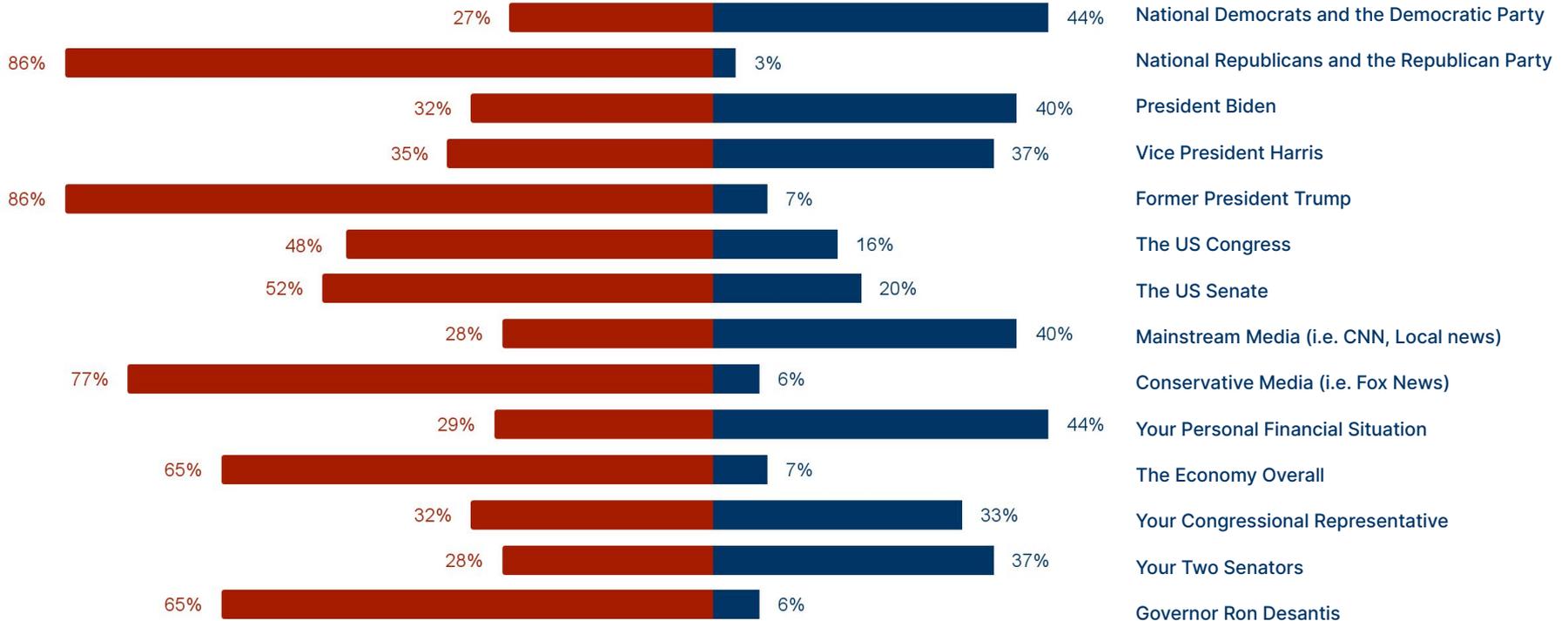
WHERE: Our voters came from all across WI, PA, AZ, NC, MI, GA, and NV and were a roughly equal mix of genders and background.



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

TEMPERATURE CHECK

If your temperature were taken on the following, how **NEGATIVELY** or **POSITIVELY** would you feel?

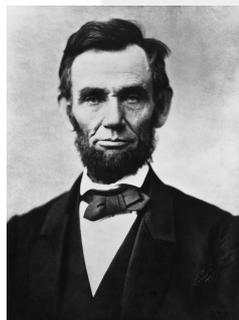


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YOUR IDEAL LEADER

Participants are looking for an ideal leader who is **“open-minded and willing to listen to others,”** including **“perspectives that aren’t their own,”** who **“knows how to make a difference”** and **“wants to enact change,”** and **does “what’s right for the people, not for just those who voted for them.”**

They want someone who’s intelligent, articulate, and a good communicator. Someone who possesses integrity and **can’t be “bribed or bought,”** who remains humble despite sizeable power, and who’s reasonable and respectful. A **“person of the people”** who is empathetic and compassionate, who **“fights to make everyone’s lives better, including the lives of those that oppose [them]”** and doesn’t only cater to the wealthy. Someone who will **“get their hands dirty [and] show up”** and be decisive, making tough decisions when necessary. Their ideal leader would focus on pocketbook issues affecting the middle class, like **“getting on the economy back on track”** and making healthcare more affordable in addition to education.



AMERICAN FEELINGS

CONTROL

Deep concerns persisted about how much our participants felt like they were in control of their lives, their future, and their bodies in America.

A big source of this lack of control came from increased cost of living, leading them to feel financially trapped.

Another came from the persistent feeling that as much as they voted, called, marched, wrote postcards or did anything to get the attention of the government they lived under, that they were not being listened to or told they matter.

And finally, many feared that the government was inches away from taking control over women's bodies in the form of eliminated abortion right.

“I do not feel like I have control. I vote and that can make a difference. At the same time I am one person. **The control I have is to vote.** The climate we are in is difficult to say I am open to being an activist.”

“I feel like **we are losing control of our bodies.** As a black women, so much control is already gone. **I am starting to regain some control, but the government needs to back off a bit.** I want more control over any medical situation I might have, and not worry about being in debt for it.”

“**There isn't even an illusion of control. I'm a slave in this capitalist hellhole that I can't afford to leave.** I'm in so much debt for the "essential" student loans I took out, the car I need because we can't have walkable communities. The government needs to do something.”

“**I am not in control because of the cost of living in the country.** I feel that the government needs to cut the amount of taxes paid by the poor and middle class and raise the taxation of the rich.”

“I feel like **I am in as much control as possible given the situation of our country today.** Lowering the tax rate would help the economy and my finances. I am retired but working part time because I feel like I cannot just stop with all the expenses we have.”

AMERICAN FEELINGS

MATTERING

When asked if, living in America today, our voters felt like they mattered in America, a significant majority of voters indicated that they did not. Those who indicated that they did matter, perceived that they mattered to their families and communities, but certainly did not matter to the federal government.

Who or what does matter? According to our voters, the ultra-wealthy matter all the time, their vote matters, their taxes matter, but those should matter more.

If they did matter, these voters would know it because they'd see the government listening to them, they'd pass bills to help them and not restrict them, they'd take care of big problems and not leave voters to face them alone, and they'd acknowledge the good work Americans do each and every day to make the country better.

“Living In America, I DO NOT MATTER AT ALL. Since I am the product of a Hispanic Mother and Black American Father, when people see me, they automatically treat me with disrespect and feel that my life and value are worthless.”

“I feel like I matter less now than I did in my younger years. I have more access and more of a say. I can vote. I can do more. I still feel stagnate. I don't feel that we live in a space to be communal. We are more divided than I have ever experienced.”

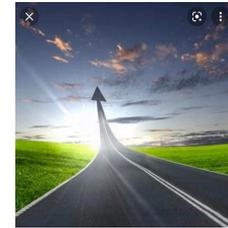
“I could disappear tomorrow and there would be very little impact to anyone.. As far as the government is concerned, they make it very clear the vast majority of citizens don't actually matter to them.”

“I don't matter. Born free, taxed to death. World's biggest economy should be able take of the people far better than this. If I matter and government wants to show that then protect my employment, if I lose job you take care of me, you take care of my health. If I work hard, you the government take care of me when I fall, unconditionally. You protect my basic right to live, not to get shot by cops or criminals. In the name of free of speech, stop bullying me.”

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

POSITIVE

When asked about their dreams for the future, overwhelmingly, our participants shared their deep desires for the country to come back together, achieving a future where **“everyone is getting along despite skin/color/education/cultural values,”** **“all Americans work together with mutual respect and integrity,”** and **“everyone is treated equally and with respect.”** They also shared dreams for **“a better, sustainable future to help our grandkids and beyond,”** where **“we value the planet and each other.”** Many also shared dreams of freedom - being **“able to access opportunities for the future and go as far as their dreams could take them”**, of the right leadership in power - with a **“government that listens to them,”** and **ultimately, they dreamed of rest** - being able **“to just relax,” “to retire,” to vacation,”** and just **“get going back to life and shopping.”**



VISION FOR THE FUTURE

THREATS



Yet while our Americans dreamed of a better future, they saw many threats that would hold them back from achieving it.

Topping the list were fears of **“insane leaders,” “extremists on the Republican side,”** and Trump leading to **“evil,”** and **“social decay,” “division,”** and **“hysteria.”** Right behind those fears were **“cost of living and education disproportionate to wages”** and **“greedy people squeezing [them] out,”** from achieving their own Americans dreams. Many cited greed as a top concern for the future of the country as well as a variety of threats - **“a world destroyed by climate change,”** and **“destruction of the environment,” “a severe pandemic,” “the surveillance state,” “racism against my children,”** and **“war.”**

VOICEMAILS

HOW TO WIN AMERICAN PEOPLE'S SUPPORT

Broadly speaking, the voicemails Americans left overwhelming focused on fixing government itself, asking for the government engage in deep bureaucratic reform, “get rid of corporate bribes,” “stop gerrymandering, filibustering, and address massive disinfo campaigns,” and start functioning as a government should - to listen to [them,” “ stop fighting - listen to the people, not your agenda or ego,” and deliver an “actionable agenda, not just empty promises.”

Our Americans believed that those in power didn't care about them, saying, “I wish I mattered in America,” “I want to count,” and “show me that I matter.”

They also believed that action on both healthcare (“get universal healthcare for everyone” and “protect female reproductive rights”) and the cost of living (“Us small fries are feeling the heat - we need more tax breaks,” and “we need living wages, blanching with inflation” was critical.

They also shared deep concerns about the cost of education, feeling that “student loans should be interest free,” and that “higher level education should be accessible to all.”

Other concerns focused on delivering increased support for families in the form of parental leave and investing in the American people (“stop sending money overseas - do we matter at all?”), delivering gun reform with “stricter laws and stronger consequences for offenses” and “fixing the environment.”

Still others highlighted the need to deliver racial justice and fix criminal justice, while others spoke to the need to rebuild society - “stopping the unrest,” and “rebuilding public service to truly build back better.”

To see a full list of the voicemails, [please click here.](#)

VOICEMAILS

HOW TO WIN AMERICAN PEOPLE'S SUPPORT



Show what you stand for. **Focus on achieving short term wins** you can deliver right now. **Show the voter that they matter.**



Do something meaningful. Give us comprehensive gun reform. We can do healthcare so much better - universal healthcare. Police reform - I'm constantly worried about a traffic violation turning into the death of my kids. **It's okay to let a woman lead - a person of color - a younger person.**
It's time.



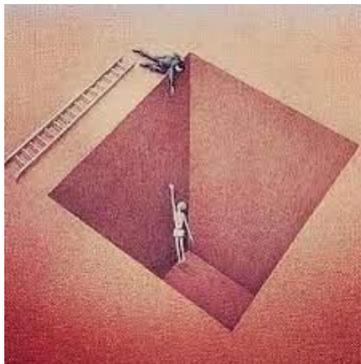
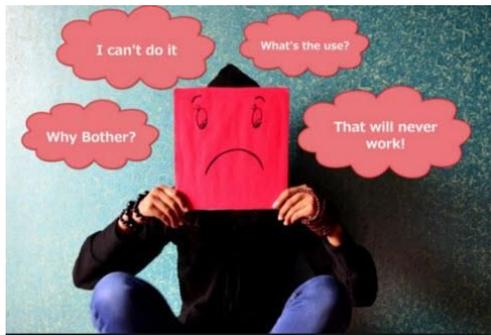
Help me. **Bring back the American dream - for my family, for everyone.**
Let's leave a legacy. Make housing affordable. Help the little people that have a 9-5 job. **Take my struggles into consideration and help me.**

Hello federal government, I would like to start off by telling you that you need better leaders by your side who care about people, we want leaders who are not racist, who have good morals and values, who love family and God. Someone who respects life, who cares about our social issues, wants to make a change in the world. **I want a leader who would come down to those really small towns and spend a day with the regular normal people** have lunch, socialize, come get to know us and what our worries are. I would like you to focus on health care, make it more affordable, look at Canada or other countries that have a better system than we do and try to implement that to help us the USA to have better health and care, especially to those families who have chronic illnesses, it is such a hardship to keep up with medical bills. I am leaving this voicemail for all federal government employees and politicians. **My hope is that you will listen** with an open mind and take some action. Please think about the Americans that have voted for you not the big corporations or lobbyists that have given you money but us ordinary Americans. **Let's not think about Republicans versus Democrats but listen to both sides of the problem and come up with a honest fair and equitable solution** for the problems and issues that are facing our nation...Please stop sending billions of dollars to other nations. **Please stop sending my friends, cousins, nieces, nephews, sons to die in senseless wars. We've reached a time where we should be able to achieve peace.** We have all the resources we need to live a fruitful life as a peaceful society. Stop choosing wrong...**Hello Fed Government. I would like to you to really step up and put our taxes and communities to better use. We need to make sure resources you are providing and using are actually necessary resources, like supporting improving our education systems, our safety, and help get those hurting financially in better places,** help us become more sufficient. Hello, this is Shari in Georgia. I'm calling to give you some tips on winning the support of the underserved. We want to live a safe, clean, happy existence. To do that, we need healthy, clean food that is affordable in all neighborhoods. We need safe housing for all people. We need to have a living wage. I want there to be true justice for all. I want there to be equality in the justice system, one justice system for all the people. I want to know that when I retire, I won't have to cut corners to live. I want my grandchildren to have the opportunity to receive the education of their choice. **I want to count!!!** Hey guys, this is Allison in Michigan. I need to discuss some stuff with you. Millennials are 40 now, that means they are parents, homeowners, business owners and everything in between and yet we are still being disregarded and dismissed. Those of us who don't have rich parents faced serious challenges as we attempted to buy homes, invest capital into a business, and achieve affordable higher education. We watched New York City get terrorist attacked on live TV and our collective mental health is in crisis. For most or all of our lives, there has been civil unrest both domestically and internationally. And we have a mental health and substance abuse crisis that weakens our numbers every minute of every day. **We are not happy, and shouldn't that make our leaders unhappy?** You must condemn white nationalism and racism in all its forms to be punished as a federal crime. POC are counting on you to remove all the systemic barriers to health and prosperity. And last but not least. Let's all agree that a childbearing person has full bodily autonomy to make their own private decisions around reproductive health. If men could get pregnant, they would put birth control in beer. So enough with the double-standard, codify Roe as law.. **Just remember at the end of the day you cannot eat money when the planet is burning...** I need you to keep me safe. Get the guns out of the bad guy's hands. Let all citizens who are contributing have equal rights and opportunities. Don't allow unreformed violent people to be free to wreak havoc in our communities.Dear Federal Government - It's time to grow up. We can't keep living in the past. There is too much work to be done. America is on a precipice - we can reinvigorate our core beliefs or we can sweep them aside in a tidal wave of mistrustful tribalism....Dear federal government, you need to truly look out for the people and help.

PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRATS

While many indicated that Democrats represented a party that's for the lower, middle, and working class and **is one that's in touch with what people want** and **is looking out for everyone's interests...**





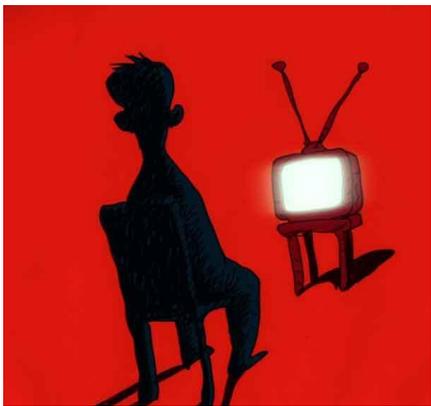
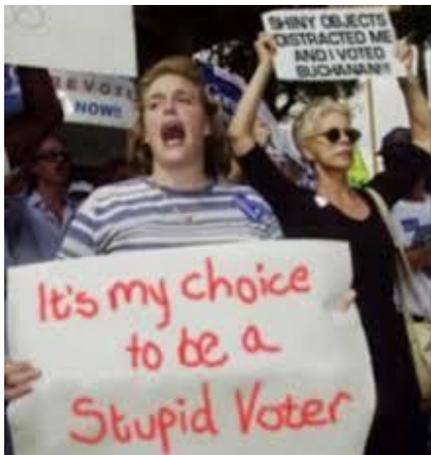
PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRATS

Democrats are also perceived as a party that **hasn't upheld its promises and can't get anything done**, that's "reflexive instead of reactive" when it comes to the concerns of voters, would rather protect the establishment and uphold the status quo instead of pushing for change, and **lacks a backbone to stand up to Republicans and do what's right for the people.**

PERCEPTIONS OF REPUBLICANS

For our voters, the perception of Republicans among our voters was that of a party synonymous with **selfishness and greed** – one that **only cares about the rich** and protecting their interests at the expense of everyone else.



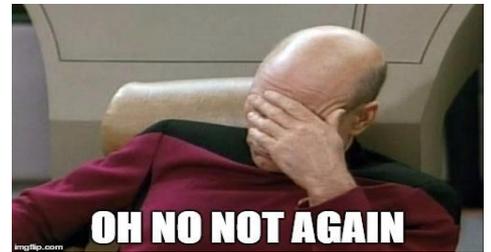
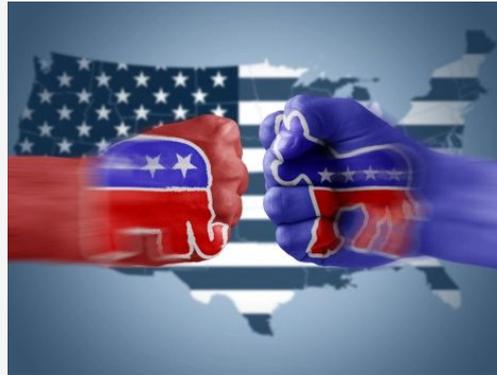


PERCEPTIONS OF REPUBLICANS

Republicans were also perceived as **a party not interested in progress**, but rather more interested in arguing than getting things done in an effort to thwart the Democratic agenda; one that is being **controlled by religion and brainwashed by Trump and his MAGA philosophy**; and one with archaic views they're unwilling to change.

PERCEPTION OF BOTH PARTIES

Overall, participants indicated that **they're disillusioned with both parties**, and annoyed and disappointed that both Democrats and Republicans put their party over the people and are controlled by their donors and their interests. **Neither party is willing to meet in the middle, back down when they lose, and would rather bicker than take action** – and participants feel as if Democrats and Republicans are two sides to the same coin, furthering their sense of disillusionment.



PERCEPTIONS OF EXTREMISM

DEMOCRAT VS. REPUBLICAN



Overwhelmingly, **participants feel that Republicans have become significantly more extreme** in the past few years, with over half of respondents indicating this. However, roughly about a quarter of participants feel that both parties have become more extreme, revealing that both parties are susceptible to messaging on extremism, though Republicans are perceived as much more so.

Participants perceived Democrats to be “pandering to social justice activists” and pushing diversity and inclusion efforts too far; to be ready and willing to overspend and too generous with “handouts;” and moving toward socialism as voices like Bernie Sanders and AOC are amplified.

However, the perception that Democrats are becoming more extreme doesn’t have a negative connotation for all voters, with some pointing out that the proposals and viewpoints of “extremist” Democrats would improve our quality of life in the United States.

“I can't see 'extremist' leftism as necessarily a bad thing - **the beliefs that more people should have rights, that the government should spend more funding on schools and less on police, those are all things I think people will benefit more from than be hurt from.**” - *Emma*,

In comparison, participants believed Republicans to be going “down the rabbit hole” as they embrace and push conspiracy theories (QAnon) and disinformation, particularly around COVID. They see the insurrection on January 6, 2021, as a direct result of the party pushing the stolen election conspiracy theory. Additionally, they see the party openly embracing bigotry, racism, and white supremacy, and seeking to control our lives through policy like abortion bans and overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Trump’s culpability in all of this is up for debate among our participants, but his involvement is certain: He enabled the Republican base who held these views to come out of the shadows and helped normalize their rhetoric and actions, giving them a platform and resulting in a “new breed of Republicans” like Marjorie Taylor Green.

“**Republicans have become increasingly more extreme since the Trump era** which has included extremism, white supremacy, misinformation, lies, conspiracy theories, and unqualified politicians.” - *Derek*,

PERCEPTIONS OF EXTREMISM

REPUBLICANS

RACISTS & WHITE SUPREMACISTS

“I think about how **they're no longer afraid to hide the racist, hateful elements of the party, and instead openly embrace that.** They **support white supremacists for example.** They openly embrace racist terrorist groups and murderers. They have politicized science and place an emphasis on not being smart.” - Dawn,

“The **blatant racism that is encouraged** by people who refer to themselves as Republicans... That party has become a bunch of deplorable people.” - Meka,

REJECTING REALITY FOR CONSPIRACY & LIES

“Republicans are getting more extreme by **throwing all of these conspiracies or "fake news" out left and right.** It is like **they have lost sight of reality,** and they are going down a very scary and troubling path. I think of when terrorists stormed the United States Capitol last year, injured several people, got people killed, and it was under the belief that the election was stolen.” - Jason,

“Republicans have **gone down the rabbit hole.** So much division and hatred coming from that party, **especially those that still believe the lies about the election and the Q movement.**” - Owen

THE NEED TO CONTROL AT ALL COSTS

“The republicans are **against abortion, and they are trying to limit mail in voting.** They want to block democrats from being elected in the future and do not care about females.” - Jon,

“I think of unabashed support for overturning elections, **diminishing support for democratic ideals,** more overt flirting with Christian nationalism and white supremacy, and **a rededication to infringing on the rights of anyone who is not a rich white cisgender male.**” - Gary,

PERCEPTIONS OF EXTREMISM

DEMOCRATS

Voters' feelings about Democrats when it comes to extremism were less intense and more vague overall than they were for Republicans. Democrats should avoid calling other Democrats extreme and save that label for Republicans.

PANDERING TO SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISTS

“They are **getting more into the feelings** of others, **trying to capture the votes of the immigrants, of the transgender** and those communities. So **they focus on them instead of the real issues.**” - *Anahi,*

“Democrats seem to be more extreme when it comes to pushing a certain agenda because **it may be the new cool thing or it will piss off the Republicans.** I am all for putting various people in charge and it seems like that is the mission of the democrats. **I don't know if the person is the best candidate for the job or just fits the new idea of including everyone.**” - *Bobby R.,*

PUSHING SOCIALISM

“**AOC and her squad.** They have loud mouths and **ridiculous ideas.** If they would temper their words, they might provide useful ideas.” - *Emily,*

“I think of **Bernie Sanders, and his push for socialism** here. I know people who have come from other countries to escape socialism, and they are scared of what the democrats are doing.” - *Julie,*

FRIVOLOUS WITH MONEY

“Dems are almost as far to the left as republicans are to the right. **They are too generous with their handouts.**” - *Ben,*

“I believe **democrats are spending too much** which will have **repercussions on our country's future.**” - *Marc,*

BEING A CITIZEN

IF LEFT IN CHARGE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Participants overwhelmingly believe that the country needs to **come together**. Love, respect, equality, and unity – these are the characteristics that our participants want to see from their government and their fellow citizens again. The notion that **every life matters** came up numerous times, specifically in the context of mental health, universal healthcare, and gun reform. Some participants also mentioned that **our economy is in need of great assistance**. With the rising costs of living, extreme housing market, and never ending student debt, more and more families are being put in difficult situations.

COME TOGETHER

“Unite and embrace differences because otherwise we will become increasingly polarized and hostile which will lead us absolutely nowhere in terms of helping one another and keeping one another safe.”

- Derek D, Dem, PA, White

“I would want them to treat everyone equal. I would love to see no division in this country. Everyone is human and should be treated with respect. Equal opportunities for everyone. No color or status should be in our country.” - Lenora H, Dem, PA, Black



BEING A CITIZEN

IF LEFT IN CHARGE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

EVERY LIFE MATTERS

“I'd want the country to show that every life matters by creating national healthcare. This would be **the easiest way to immediately improve the lives of ALL citizens**. It would improve our quality of life to not have healthcare tied to jobs. It would **improve the quality of life and safety of our most vulnerable members**. It would put us on the same level as other First-World countries.” - Dawn K, Dem, MI, LatinX

OUR ECONOMY NEEDS HELP

“**Help people of all economic backgrounds**. What happened to the middle class? It's like they're trying to get rid of it. I would want to help hard working families. I don't mean by handing out free money. I just mean breaks with college tuitions, medical, etc. Adjusting the income brackets depending on inflation and the cost of living. It seems like low income is strictly "low income".” - Vanessa A, Dem, AZ, LatinX



BEING A CITIZEN

IF LEFT IN CHARGE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Stop the fighting, stop the killing, and stop the innocent deaths--participants are adamant about getting the country to **stop with the thoughts and prayers and start taking action against the divisive nature of our country**. They simply **want to feel safe**, safe from the increase in gun violence, the abortion restrictions, the “idiots in politics,” rogue cops, and the racism/sexism/classism that runs deep throughout the U.S. Participants also mentioned spending less time and money in other countries and focusing on “our own issues here in America.”



LESS DIVISION & HATE

“One thing I would want the country to stop doing is dividing the people between colors, race, and social status.” - *Saralyn D, AZ, Dem*

“Defending racists and insurrectionists while murdering and assaulting Black/Brown/POC people. Because it is dangerous to be a POC person in this country and it should not be so at all.”

- *Tarah D, Indy, WI, LatinX*

BEING A CITIZEN

IF LEFT IN CHARGE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

SAFETY FOR EVERY "BODY"

“How accessible guns are to the general public. It has be a reoccurring issue when talking about gun control and **there have been multiple cases where innocent lives are lost due to the government not putting stricter gun regulations,** especially in the South of the U.S. It is sad to say that our country cannot pay attention to such tragic events and instead redirect their attention to less-pressing matters. There should be multiple background/mental health checks when obtaining a gun, many who have mental illnesses or disorders obtain a gun and utilize it as a tool when dealing with their illness. **The country needs to recognize that gun violence will not stop until there are stricter regulations in place.**”

- Lisa U, Dem, PA

“**I want the country to stop trying to take women's rights away.** We are regressing as a country with the possible reversal of Roe v Wade. It is a slippery slope we are on and **I am scared for what's to come next.**”

- Nicolas S, Dem, PA, LatinX



STOP THE CLOWN SHOW

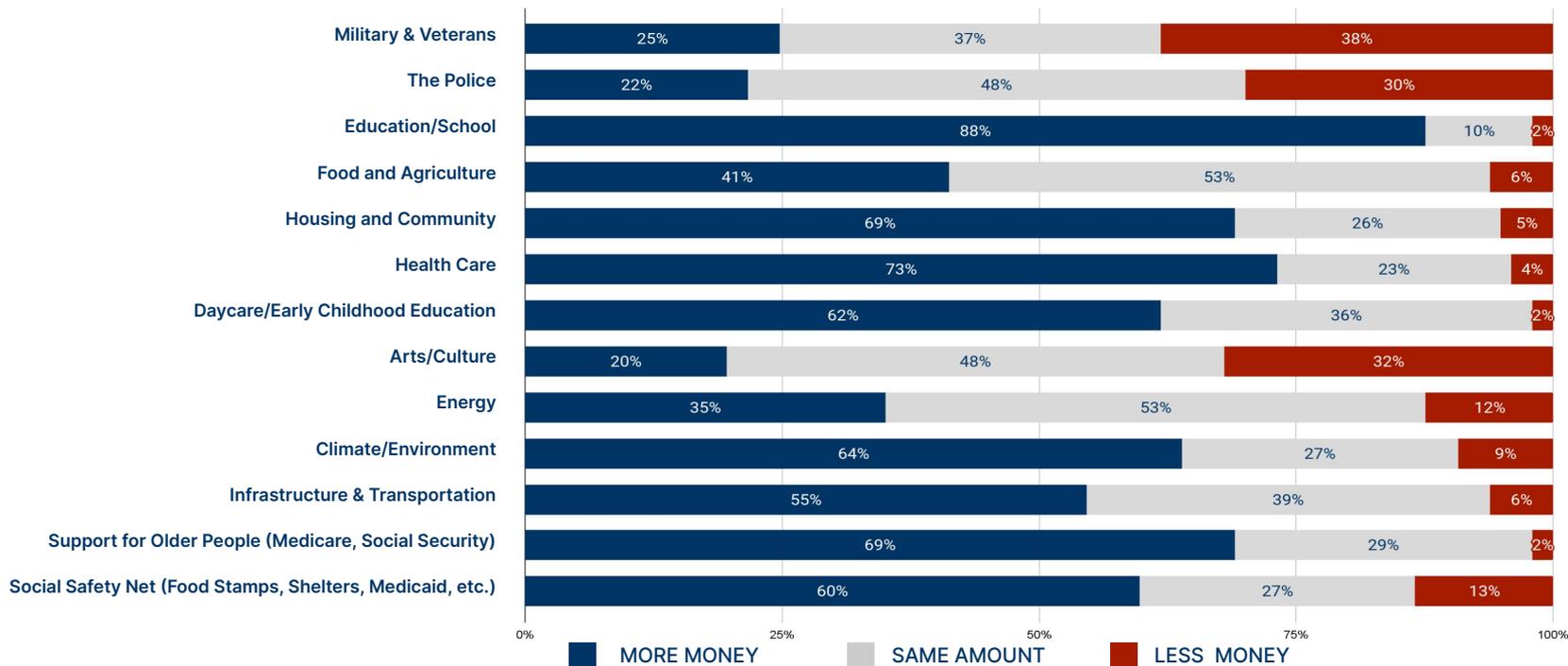
“I want to **stop the clown show that politics has become.** I hate that it is now becoming commonplace for unqualified, celebrity stars to run for office when they cannot and will not serve the people and effectively improve their lives. Politics needs to become a respected profession with **qualified individuals in office to better this country.**”

Derek D, Dem, PA, White

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**.



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 that they'd like to see education (88%), followed by healthcare (73%), housing and community (69%), support for older people (69%) then climate/environment (64%), daycare/early childhood education (62%) and the social safety net (60%) receive more funds than they currently do, which tracks with our voters telling us elsewhere their deep concerns about their ability to access a high-quality, affordable education and pay off their current student loans, about their fears around the cost of healthcare and broadly around cost of living concerns, including the price of housing.

Within the "same amount of money" category, food and agriculture (53%) and energy (53%) received the most votes.

And overall, military and veterans (38%), arts and culture (32%) and the police (30%) topped the list for less funding support for those entities. This tracks with what we've seen elsewhere across the country, and seems to indicate a response to the larger national conversation about military and the police as well as a ongoing devaluing of arts and culture funding.



CONCEPT TESTING

CREATIVE TRACKING

We asked participants to read and watch a number of political concepts and indicate, in real-time, their emotional response to the concept, and share their thoughts about how they felt about the concept, if they connected with it, and if they'd share it. What follows are the results of those tests.



INFORMATION HIGHWAY



If a political candidate said the message that is in this video, would you vote for them?

YES

43% of participants answered YES.

NO

11% of participants answered NO.

NOT SURE

46% of participants answered NOT SURE.

INFORMATION HIGHWAY

The Information Highway ad talked about the pathway to the American Dream, highlighting how America's past success on physical roads connected with America's future success in building the information highway and supporting the Biden-Harris American Jobs plan.

Reaction to the concept was largely positive, with many indicating the concept made them feel "hopeful," "nostalgic," and "cautiously optimistic."

Some did indicate confusion as to how the American Jobs Plan, connected with the information highway, while others expressed concerns about the potential cost of the American Jobs plan. Still others expressed a bit of cynicism, acknowledging that while they appreciated ads trying to "win folks over - how about actually delivering on the concepts the ad depicts?"

"Yes, I strongly believe equitable access to internet services and devices to access the internet are necessary for a future where everyone has a chance to succeed in America."

"There are many parts of the country that don't have internet and they need the resource to communicate and bring other parts of the country to the information age. It's vital for our kids and students to Georgia."

"It does resonate with me, it makes me feel good to be an American, positive outlook for the country."

"I connect with this concept. I do think it was a little slow at first, but then I connected with where it was going. It resonates a lot with me because the internet is the future of the whole world. If we do not get behind it, we will fall behind in retrospect. I am not sure if others will resonate as easily because there are other issues they are primarily concerned with."

"Although it will help the country thrive, there are more urgent issues right now, like housing, education, and healthcare."

WIN THE FUTURE



If a political candidate said the message that is in this video, would you vote for them?

YES

52% of participants answered YES.

NO

10% of participants answered NO.

NOT SURE

38% of participants answered NOT SURE.

WIN THE FUTURE

With a forward looking tilt, the Win the Future ad referenced America's existing, broken infrastructure while indicating that it was possible to "Win the Future" by investing in America's infrastructure.

Overall, responses to the concept were largely positive, with many indicating a strong desire to move forward, build a better America, and win the future for the next generation.

That said, it did, at times, stir up cynicism in some respondents, who shared that the concept didn't address everything that needed doing, that it shared "all of the problems and no solutions," and that while infrastructure was important - other social support services - were even more important to everyday Americans.

"I felt very proud of the history of the USA when the NASA frame was shown. It felt hopeful, that even though things feel broken now, leadership very much wants to put them back together again."

"Yes, I'm a citizen of the United States so our lack of resources and infrastructure putting us on par with second and third world countries."

"Yes I connect with it it resonate with me because win the future mean the world to me and winning for the next generation kids. "

"I think there are basics that could be provided to the American people that would inspire them to get out and get working. Safe housing, healthy food, affordable healthcare, and affordable daycare. Without those things, the American Dream is out of reach."

"I see news items every day of people being injured or killed by faulty roads, bridges, dams, etc. Time to take care of our own."

"We need to build for the next generation. We need to ensure we are thinking about the future."

"I definitely do connect with this message but I would love to see more things being done than just talked about. There are so many roads and highways that are in such bad shape but nothing is being done about it."

MADE IN AMERICA



If a political candidate said the message that is in this video, would you vote for them?

YES

63% of participants answered YES.

NO

15% of participants answered NO.

NOT SURE

22% of participants answered NOT SURE.

MADE IN AMERICA

One of our highest rated concepts, the Made in America Video received strong support from our voters, inspiring participants with its music and message to support their fellow citizens and invest in ourselves, while shoring up critical supply chains, bringing back jobs and creating new ones.

Investing in ourselves was an especially resonant idea, with many indicating that America has been delivering aid and spending money in every country but the United States, and they were eager to see their tax dollars supporting their fellow citizens.

The one negative point? A handful of our voters expressed concern that this was just the same old, same old, and that while government had promised change in the past, they didn't quite believe it could actually happen and were fearful of being duped again.

“LOVED the music - I want to support my fellow citizens - good message.”

“This concept resonates with me because I think we focus too much offshore and not here in America. We saw what COVID did to our supply chains - we need to step up and bring those jobs here. We need to figure out what we can do to make it work here instead of elsewhere.”

“It resonates because I can see the future in this video. It makes me want to bake cookies, share with my friends and family and encourage their kids to shoot for the stars.”

“I liked the idea of my tax dollars going to America made brands and products. I also love the ideal of that creating more jobs for our people.”

“This concept resonates with me because I feel too much of our business and money is spent in other countries. If we are supposed to be one of the wealthiest, if not THE wealthiest countries in the world, why are we so dependent on the business and goods of others?”

“It makes me want to research more into the plan and feel invigorated to be a voter for Biden-Harris.”

THE SPEECH

You learn a lot about people when you're caring for their kids. I am a Pediatric Hospitalist, meaning I care for hospitalized children from newborn to age 21. They come to our medical center from all over the state - cases of pneumonia, seizure, dehydration, diabetes, child abuse, gunshot wounds, and attempted suicides. The parents I meet are, without exception, terrified. They want to know that their child is going to be okay. They want to know that there is a plan. Some, sadly, are underinsured and want to know how on Earth they're going to pay for a miracle. The questions are always rapid-fire and urgent. Do you know what no parent, in all my years of practicing medicine, has EVER asked me? *"What are your politics? Which party are you in?"* When it's your kid, and their life is on the line, party doesn't matter. Competence does. So does Community. I think that's where we find ourselves today.

The fact that you're sitting here, hearing me out, giving me a chance, says a lot about you. It means you love your country. It means you value community more than partisanship. It means you're tired of being told to hate your neighbors simply because they disagree with you. It also means you no longer recognize the party you used to know so well. I grew up here in Indianapolis, well-versed by my fellow Hoosiers in Republican orthodoxy! I had the kind of background Dan Quayle used to point to as the "real America." My parents met in high school. Mom became a teacher. Dad turned his Bachelor's Degree from Ball State into a successful business career. They had three kids. I was the one on in the middle. My first job was on a strawberry farm. I decided to be a doctor at the age of four, and never stopped working to get there. I wasn't political as a kid. And I was never a Republican, but I used to UNDERSTAND the Republican Party. Small government, personal freedom, individual responsibility, law and order, hawkishness on Russia. Got it.

Sadly, today's GOP, as all of you know, stands for something else. Today's GOP is about 'owning the Libs' at any cost, making neighbors hate one another, turning people against their own government and the democracy that makes it Possible. Today's GOP is Madison Cawthorn openly thumbing his nose at law and order and Marjorie Taylor Greene talking about Jewish Space Lasers, and JD Vance saying Trump voters are racists and then pretending he didn't. It is Kevin McCarthy and Mitch McConnell so desperate for political power that they will knowingly allow their party's fringe to become its Mainstream.

It is about FIVE COPS dying as a result of January 6, and another 150 being injured - crushed cervical discs, broken ribs, traumatic brain injury - and an entire party deciding that NONE of that should be investigated. It is about 26 Q-Anon candidates running for the United States House of Representatives, and no one in that party raising an objection. Today's GOP is about swearing allegiance to a former President who left office in disgrace. It is about banning books and being tough on Mickey Mouse but somehow being SOFT on Putin. What would Ronald Reagan or Dwight Eisenhower have said about that? Or John McCain? This is NOT the party of Lincoln that you once joined. It is NOT a reflection of the inherent goodness and greatness of the American people. It is, in fact, chaos and corruption and Cruelty.

America is a community. And Americans have become exhausted by the vitriol in our politics. They want their neighbors back. They want Bake Sales and Little League Games to feel friendly again. They want to know that if they're on the shoulder of the road with a flat, someone's going to stop to lend a hand WITHOUT asking first for their party affiliation. They want church to be about church again. Not politics. THAT is the platform of my campaign. That is, and always has been, my goal. The American Community, the genius of our shared vision of democracy. No, we do not always agree. But we are always Americans.

THE SPEECH

I decided to run because I live in a district in which my elected representative does NOTHING to fight for kids or for the kinds of families that come into my hospital every single day. I decided to run because I am tired of the greed and corruption that guide her decision-making because she embodies none of the values my Indiana parents instilled in me. And because I want my kids to be proud of what I did in this pivotal moment. It's not easy, running against an incumbent in a place like South Carolina. It means knocking on a lot of doors, asking volunteers for a lot of help, and depending on patriotic strangers like all of you for the fuel that makes a campaign Possible. Plus, I'm still working in my hospital one week every month.

But every voter I meet reminds me of why this is all worth doing. With every door I knock on, I see that my constituents are looking for a different kind of Representative. They THANK me for running, especially the ones with small children and a busy life. They want someone who is honest, who won't embarrass them on the national stage. These are people working more than one job, commuting too many hours each day. They don't have time to think about politics. They don't ask me about filibusters. They ask me about inflation, the cost of Insulin, and PARTISANSHIP. And they complain to me about my opponent, Nancy Mace, despite the fact that many of them voted for her, just two years ago. They resent her constant attempts to become a cable-news celebrity. And they cannot understand her voting record. She voted against capping the cost of Insulin at 35 dollars per month, largely because she is in the pocket of Big Pharma. She also voted against Childhood Nutrition, and against standing beside Ukraine, against investigating the crimes of January 6.

My district is desperate for government action on Climate Chaos. Bridges aren't a luxury there; we're incredibly vulnerable to rising sea-levels. Yet she voted against the Infrastructure Bill that would have made them safer. She has voted against Climate Rescue every time. Her record on women's issues is equally appalling. Ditto Education. She makes ads in which she's standing on our Mexican border because those ads raise her a lot of money... but she's got NOTHING to say in those ads about the South Carolina Low Country that put her in office. People dislike that. She, like the fringe of her party - which is now the VOICE of her party - is without a moral compass. Power without principle. Regurgitated talking points without purpose. She has an answer for everything and a solution for nothing. She also mistreats her staff, many of whom have quit. That is NOT South Carolina.

And so our campaign is growing. Voters who've been Republicans for so long that they've begun to think of their political affiliation and their religious affiliation as the SAME THING suddenly find themselves asking "Can we do Better?"

I'm hoping you'll ask yourselves that same question. I'm hoping that this year you'll choose Community over Chaos, Competence over Corruption, Laws over Lies, Books over Bias, Votes over Violence, and Democracy over Demonization. I'm hoping you'll make this vote about YOU. Not Q. ...because right now, YOU are that parent walking into my hospital with an ailing child. That's our country on the gurney, torn apart by division and enmity. She can recover and turn back into her beautiful self, or she can become something uglier, something none of us recognize.

It all depends on which doctor you hand her off to. I thank you for your time and your openness today. This Hoosier is always glad to come home.

SPEECH

WHAT WORKS:

- Leaning into community and how we miss it and want it back
- Drawing a contrast between the QAnon Republicans of today and the Republican party of yesteryear
- Leading with values, specifically “Community over Chaos, Competence over Corruption, Laws over Lies, Books over Bias”
- Talking about when it comes time to help someone, party doesn’t matter

VOTER CONCERNS:

- Worried that the speech was just platitudes, voters asked for more specific plans

Would you share this?

YES

45% of participants answered YES.

NO

25% of participants answered NO.

MAYBE

30% of participants answered NOT SURE.

SPEECH

The stump speech we tested was designed to both introduce a candidate and offer broad appeal to voters across the spectrum in this moment.

Reception was largely positive, with voters sharing how pleased they were to see a candidate who talked about the importance of community and bringing the country back together. They also appreciated how the speech talked about Republicans, drawing a line between the QAnon followers and the Republicans of yesteryear. Furthermore, voters appreciated how the speech led with values and a personal story, while weaving those values into how they'd perform as a lawmaker.

A few concerns were raised along the way, namely around questions if the values and ideas expressed in the speech led to actual plans to make the country better.

“The thing that sticks out most to me is he is speaking directly to the person reading this and focusing on issues that affect each one of us.

“I like when this candidate says that he or she would like to turn the GOP back to how it used to be. Nothing like how they are now. I totally agree because my views of the GOP are like that now too. They have done so many bad things that I don't see them as part of the government that is helping America. Only making it worse.”

“I like how she made the distinction between the "old" and new Republicans, the silliness of the "Q" movement, naming the truly reprehensible figures on the right that are "the face" of the party right now.”

“When it's your kid....party doesn't matter"...that is how it should be, across all occupations in dealing with the public. It's sad that we are no longer people first, we have reduced ourselves from people to political party members. Also wanting a sense of returning to normalcy-stopping the infiltration of politics into every part of our lives.”

THE STAKES

President Biden and Democrats are For the People, and they've worked hard on an agenda most Americans favor – putting money in people's pockets to help with the pandemic, making life-saving vaccines widely accessible and vaccinating 70% of the country, and funding much-needed infrastructure like roads, bridges, and broadband internet. Democrats' policies led to the greatest year of job creation and new business formation in American history, the quickest recovery from a recession ever. Now we can safely see our family and friends again, small businesses are thriving, and our kids are back in school.

Yet too many Republicans stopped more of what the majority of Americans want from getting done. They tried to use violence to overturn the election, and that was just the beginning of their obstruction. Now these Trump Republicans are trying to distract and divide us by pitting parents against teachers, banning books, opposing helping the Ukrainian people, attacking our freedom to vote, and even taking away our freedom to decide whether and when to grow our families.

The reason they're doing all this is because the more divided, scared, and distracted we are, the less possible it is for us to build a fair system that works for the many – not just the few.

Despite the progress we have made, there is a LOT more work to do. Democrats are committed to taking on big challenges: going after big monopolies gouging us with high prices, cutting costs for families, making the wealthiest pay what they owe, building enough homes to address the ongoing housing crisis, and taking strong action on climate and energy to make it harder for tyrants like Putin to have power over us. Most Americans agree on the policies we need to move our country forward after the pandemic exposed just how connected we all are. It's the Democrats who are the party working to make government an assistant to our success, rather than an obstacle.

Millions of us came together across our differences - young and old; white and Black; Latino and Asian - and voted in record numbers to stop Trump Republican chaos and division in 2020. We can do it again in 2022.

THE STAKES

WHAT WORKS:

- Unity persuasion
- Democrats are for the people
- Reminding people what they're capable of doing
- Reminding people that most of us want the same thing, regardless of our political affiliation

VOTER CONCERNS:

- Focus on Republicans too much - feels too divisive
- Talk about economic recovery didn't ring true in the current climate

Would you share this?

YES

40% of participants answered YES.

NO

32% of participants answered NO.

MAYBE

28% of participants answered NOT SURE.

THE STAKES

The Stakes was a concept designed to tee up support for the midterms and vote Democratic by reminding voters where they had come from, what the stakes were, and how we must all come together to win.

The concept resonated with many, with a number indicating support for the value proposition that Democrats offer - protecting democracy and freedom and trying to bring people together across all backgrounds - and for reminding voters of their ability to come together and overcome Trumpism.

At the same time, concerns about Democrats being able to actually deliver on their promises came up as well as concerns about some, but not all being included, and a number indicated frustration with the calling out of Republicans, saying that in order to move forward, we need to work together.

"I like this, because if we stopped Trump once, we can do it again. Hopefully we come together one more time to stop him one more time."

"I agree that despite any progress we've made, there is much more that needs to be done. The price of groceries and gas are extremely high. Products that were readily available, are no longer available or in very limited supply. There is an overwhelming sense of tension and fear as we wait for the next variant of Covid to emerge or the next shutdown."

"Democrats are for the people. They fight as much as they can to protect our democracy and freedom."

"What I disliked the most was this statement, "Millions of us came together across our differences - young and old; white and Black; Latino and Asian..." because they excluded Native American people in this statement."

"People are frustrated with how little has been done by the Democrats, and this message feels like you're not taking responsibility for that, or explaining how electing more Democrats could overcome that."

THE RESEARCH LEAD



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, and most recently, poverty in America for the Gates Foundation.

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.

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