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New Survey Findings: The conservative talking point of "exoneration" has failed to break through.

The president has trumpeted Attorney General William Barr's 4-page "summary" of the recently completed Special Counsel report as a "total exoneration," but Americans are not buying it.

Americans are very aware of the completion of the Special Counsel investigation, submitted by Robert Mueller to the Department of Justice in late March. Nearly every respondent polled (97%) had heard at least a little about the end of the investigation, including 41% who had heard a lot. The survey was conducted April 1-7, roughly a week after Barr went public on March 25.

But the share who accept the Trump administration narrative that the yet-to-be-released full report conclusively "exonerates" the president of wrongdoing is much smaller: just 30%. Most Americans either believe the report was inconclusive (45%) or don't know enough to say (18%). Even among self-identified Republicans, nearly four in ten (38%) do not agree that Trump has been exonerated.

With so many Americans ready to "wait and see," there is an opening for progressives to continue to make the case for continued scrutiny from Congress. **Arguments that work: point to the bigger picture.** Immediately following Democrats' takeover of the House, Americans split evenly over the risks of overreach by congressional investigators versus the risks of lax oversight. Several months later, the public is more concerned the president and his associates will get away with wrongdoing. Views have shifted among independents, who leaned toward concern about overreach in December (36% to 32%) but now worry more about lax oversight by a marginof 11 points (46% to 35%).

Regardless of whether you fully agree with either statement, when it comes to congressional oversight and the Trump administration, which of the following concerns you more?

		April 2019	Dec 2018	Nov 2018
That Trump administration officials will get away with corruption, unethical behavior or mishandling important problems.	Overall	51%	45%	43%
	Independents	46%	32%	40%
That Democrats will go too far and abuse congressional oversight powers to attack the Trump administration	Overall	42%	43%	43 %
	Independents	35%	36%	35%

...It's not just Mueller. Supporters of congressional investigators should respond to Trump's complaints about exoneration (or wasted time and money) by emphasizing that Mueller's work was only one piece of a larger puzzle. Potential "collusion" and "obstruction" are not the president's only problems.

Those who say the Special Counsel investigation is only one of many mounting investigations around Trump, his administration, and his inner circle. With these other ongoing investigations by U.S. attorneys in New York and daily scandals — alleging abuses of power, self-dealing, illegal use of charity funds, and pay-to-play corruption — the American people deserve answers, so Congress should keep investigating.

Those who say the Special Counsel investigation is finished, and President Trump has been completely exonerated, with no collusion and no obstruction of justice by the president. This was an expensive, wasteful misuse of taxpayer dollars on a political witch hunt by Democrats who would rather attack the president to undo an election than get anything done or help grow the economy and create jobs.

Total	•	-
	56	44
Independents		
	63	37

When the full Special Counsel report is released, newly revealed facts may dictate the next steps for communicators as the public learns more about the findings. In the meantime, progressives should focus on current wrongdoing in the Trump administration (e.g., obstruction and abuse of power) rather than on what may seem like re-litigating the 2016 election (e.g., collusion). In a split sample experiment, Americans were more likely to support continued investigation related to obstruction (by 50% to 40%, 49% to 33% among independents) than coordination with the Russians (45% to 43%; 32% to 48% among independents).

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About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO Strategies along with an advisory committee, including: Andrea Purse, The Hub Project; Arkadi Gerney, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; Delvone Michael, Working Families; Felicia Wong, Roosevelt Institute; Mike Podhorzer, AFL-CIO; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Ron Klain, Revolution; and Stephanie Valencia, Latino Victory Project; Symone Sanders, progressive strategist; Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood.

To learn more about Navigator: http://navigatorresearch.org/

About the Study

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among a sample of 1,005 registered voters between April 1-7, 2019. 207 additional interviews were conducted among political independents with no partisan lean. The survey was conducted online, recruiting respondents from multiple opt-in online panel vendors. Respondents were verified against a voter file and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of the national registered voter population across a variety of demographic variables.

For press inquiries contact:

press@navigatorresearch.org