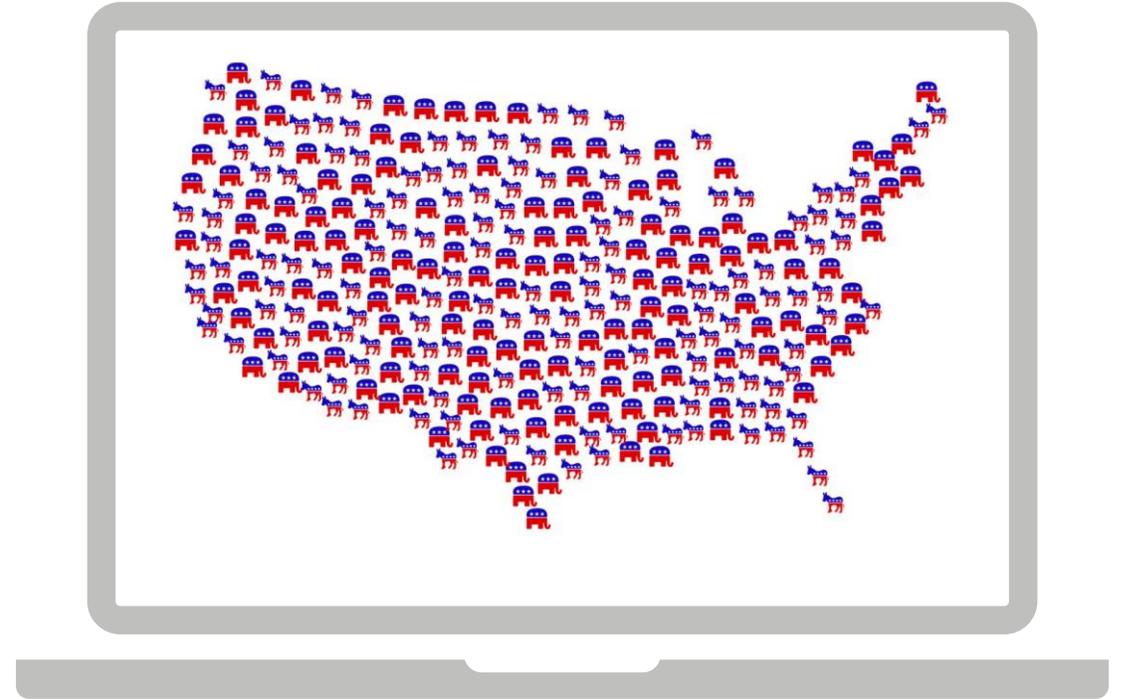


navigator*

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Update:
Thursday, June 24

Navigating The Recovery &
Hyperpartisanship



Methodology

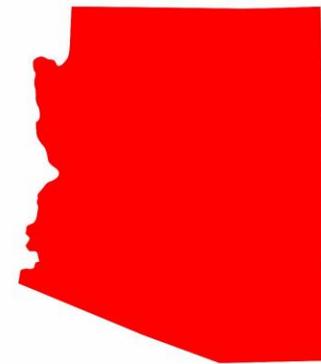
On June 16, 2021, GBAO conducted three focus groups online with respondents that varied across demographics—age, gender, and race/ethnicity.



Mixed partisans who have been on unemployment insurance within the past year in Ohio



Democrats and Democratic-leaning voters in Georgia



Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who aren't very unfavorable toward Biden or very favorable toward Trump in Arizona

Key Takeaways

- Economically, people are increasingly optimistic personally.
- Yet with COVID-19 and a recession in the rear-view mirror, many worry about Unemployment Insurance discouraging a return to work.
- Politically, participants across party lines lament our polarized country.
- However, on questions of race, voting reform, and media bias, voters are deeply divided along party lines, with few charitable words about the other side.
- Despite disagreements on race, we see no support for anti-CRT legislation.

Many Feel Their Personal Situation Has Improved



"I'm good. I mean, things are humming along where I live. In terms of COVID it seems to be turning the corner. So we'll say things are getting back to normal. So I don't really have any complaints." – GA man, Biden voter

"As a one-man consulting firm, I just feel the energy coming back into the business environment... So you can really feel things revving up again. And about half of my clients are from outside the US. They're revving up a little bit again, too. So you feel this energy coming and building. I'm really excited about that." – OH man, Biden voter

"I'm doing a lot better now. Last year with the whole pandemic situation... I have a mother that's in the nursing home, and so I hadn't seen her for over a year. But now since a lot of things have been lifted, I've had the opportunity to see her now. And I also work from home as well, and so my life has definitely improved." – OH woman, Biden voter

"Blessed. I have hope that things will continue going in the upward direction. Hit a hiccup [as] of recent, but then the hiccup is covered by other things that are very positive and I believe everything will just end up working out all right for our circumstances." – AZ man, Trump voter

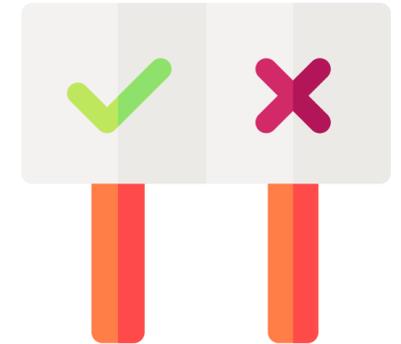
"Oh, personally, I think things are going better. I would say, well, I just recently retired and I retired early. So I'm looking forward to traveling at some point. I'm just getting my feet wet with retirement. So I would say that process is going well. We are also selling a cabin. Prices are high in Arizona, so I think that contributes to me feeling good right now. And maybe repurchase when the market cools down. So, personally pretty good." – AZ woman, Trump voter

Yet Many Still Lament Our Deep Societal Divisions, Citing Race In Particular

*"[I] think we're making strides in trying to get some resolution or trying to get on the [same] page together. But a lot of the things that I see where I live, **there's such resentment and polarization**, because one group is extreme, **wants change, and they understandably want it now**. But this other group of people that have lived in this mindset, it's taking them longer than one group wants to accept that **we need to all revisit our mindset and see the world differently than we've always looked at it in our society...** but the outright hatred that people are spewing towards each other is concerning to me." – GA woman, Biden voter*

*"Just seeing the **whole racial problems going on in America, it's very sad**. And for me to look at my children and see this is what they're going to have to deal with." – GA woman, Biden voter*

"My biggest concern is that most people don't have respect for one another to the fact of just because [someone's] experience is not their own, it's almost like it didn't exist or it doesn't happen. And I'm kind of in a unique position where I grew up in [the] inner city, but I had an opportunity to see things that most inner-city kids would never see and a different way of life. And in that, I've been building bridges and challenging people for the past 30+ years just to consider another person's point of view because a lot of [it is] just a misunderstanding. We don't have to agree, but we at least have to have basic respect and to work together." – OH man, Trump voter



Many Feel Unemployment Relief Is Important, Even If They Disagree On The Current Need

*"It's pushed out more so in the food and beverage business that's out there, that's saying that there's such a lack of employees to be able to cover those spots. And the fact that they could **probably make more money** if they actually went and worked, but they could take a little bit of a loss and just stay home instead. And that's where it's to me just crazy... I feel like there's a bunch of jobs that are out there and if people want to work, they can find a way to work." – AZ man, Trump voter*



"So I think it's essential that we have that program in place and those programs to provide support when people need it. But definitely also agree that there are a lot of people that take advantage of it and stay on longer than needs to be." – AZ woman, Trump voter

*"I think there are many people that need it desperately and it has helped. And then now I walk down the street, there are so many 'help wanted' signs that people choose to stay on their unemployment because they're making more. **And I can't blame them.** They're making more by getting to stay home with their family than they are to go out and work in a restaurant or a store." – GA woman, Biden voter*



*"But I do think that **we need to have discussions about an actual livable wage**, because there are plenty of people that I know that, in some cases, **they haven't returned to those jobs because for right now, you're still putting them in a dangerous environment, on a wage that they can't live off of.**" – OH woman, Biden voter*

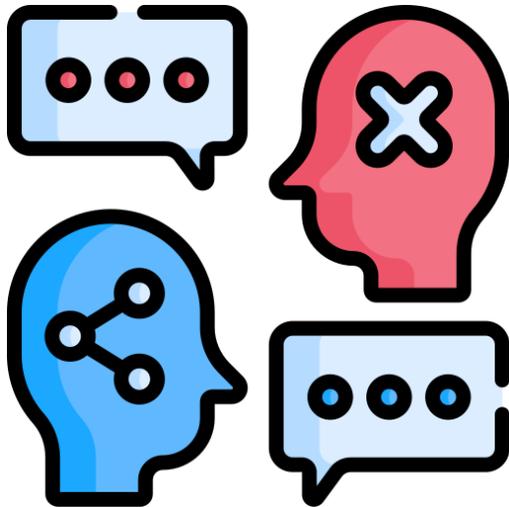
Some Democrats Suggest Many Jobs Are Likely Underpaid

*“That's what capitalism is. So yeah... Pay your employees less so you can gain and you can have your yachts and things, and it's like, but then want to complain that people are on unemployment still. Then pay your employees what they deserve. **They're coming and leaving their family so you can go on a vacation with your family. So it's like, pay your employee. Why is it so hard for people to get it? Just pay them what they're due. They're working five to nine jobs. Just pay them what you would pay anyone else to do that same job.**” – GA woman, Biden voter*



*“There seems to be a little bit of evidence that some people are not going back to work because of the fact that they're getting this extra benefit. **But that's tied to the fact that they were making crap wages to start with. So why go back until you absolutely have to?**” – OH man, Biden voter*

Many Seek Out “Different Perspectives” From Multiple Media Sources



“I listen to a little bit of everything, and I try not to get too much of anything... I don't just listen to one channel. I kind of like to hear what everybody's spin is on the same scenario. So to me, it's sort of interesting. This channel, in particular, like say Fox versus CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, they all have their own little take on things. And I just find it interesting that we're all seeing the same basic numbers and yet they have very different takeaways.” – AZ woman, Trump voter

“And I try to use multiple sources because you can get different information. I try to not just look at one thing, look at multiple stories and then I try to draw my own conclusion, because I know that there's going to be some lean here and there, but I try to get what I need from it to draw my own conclusion.” – OH woman, Biden voter

Republicans In Particular Equate “Media Bias” With Trump Criticism



“... I was reading an article recently about, I think it was about the January 6th protest or riot at the Capitol and the author of the article said the people were there supposedly protesting fraud in the November election, but there wasn't any. I mean, they came right out and said that, 'but there wasn't any fraud.' And it's like, okay, there was some fraud, maybe not enough to overturn the election, but to come right out and say, 'there wasn't any fraud' just totally, kind of tells you what their point of view is. And I think a good journalist, you shouldn't be able to tell what their point of view is politically. This was supposedly a straight news article, not [an] editorial.” – OH woman, Trump voter

“Like CNN uses language that typically has negative connotations towards Trump when he was in office. And if you were to maybe put some of the same material or same types of subjects involved with this current president, there would be positive connotation[s]. For the most part, I just want my news to not tell me how to feel or tell me what I should be feeling or what I should not be feeling. I just want it to be straightforward. I'm an adult. I can make my own decisions and let my values and let my experiences guide me to make the decision from the facts.” – AZ man, Trump voter

Some Voters Have Mixed Views On Their Own Parties

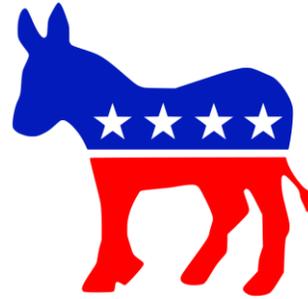
Democrats and Democratic Leaning Voters

"I feel **frustrated**. And my answer would be the same for the other party. They both just annoy the heck out of me." – GA woman, Biden voter

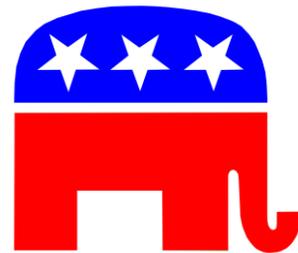
"I think frustrated is the word. I was going to say **confused**, but it's more like frustrated in that it's like they're tearing [each other] apart as opposed to working together." – GA man, Biden voter

"I feel **bleh**. I just feel like they're, honestly, they're better than the opposite choice." – GA woman, Biden voter

"**Somewhat satisfied**." – OH woman, Biden voter



"**Disappointed**... But I would stretch that both ways." – OH woman, Other



Republicans and Republican Leaning Voters

"Trying to look for another word besides **uncompassionate**." – OH man, Trump voter

"I think they're **unfocused**. I don't think they know what their message is going forward so I'm disappointed." – OH woman, Trump voter

"**Divided**. I just see it as too divided, the Trump side and then the status quo type of a Republican or a more trending towards the establishment is the word I'm looking for. Establishment Republicans and Trump Republicans." – AZ man, Trump voter

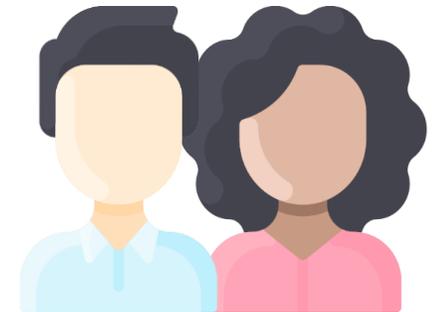
Democrats Describe Their Party's Vision As Focused On Race And Economic Equality

If the Democratic Party had its way, what would its vision be? What would life be like?

*"I think there would be more of a focus on helping out minorities, those groups that are overlooked. So if they could have their way, I think that's something that we would see, a lot of things changing definitely for the minority groups."
– OH woman, Biden voter*

"There would be a stronger social safety net than we have now. We'd have a single payer healthcare, which is not a national healthcare service, and there would be more emphasis on public infrastructure because [that is] one of the things that Biden has been pushing that is different from the past..." – OH man, Biden voter

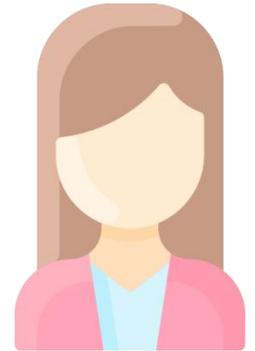
"It would be pretty similar, but I would like to believe that there would be a lot more equality." – GA man, Biden voter



In One Exchange, Participants Disagree On Democrats' Prioritization Of Race

If the Democratic Party had its way, what would its vision be? What would life be like?

"Probably government run healthcare system. Higher taxes on pretty much everyone to pay for it. Printing all this money to gift to their favorite groups. I think the Democratic Party wants to pick winners and losers in society and benefit their favorite groups." – OH woman, white, Indep/GOP, Trump voter



"When I look at the actions of the Democrats, just since the beginning of the year, they passed the anti-Asian hate law. They have not passed one for Black people. They have not passed police abuse reform. They just unanimously voted for Juneteenth to be a federal holiday. Who cares about it? I don't care about that... I think that both parties are doing exactly what they want to do... But politicians all come from the same background in education and most of their experience and it is not the mainstream experience of the people on this panel right now. So they're doing what they have been doing forever and that's taking care of themselves." – OH man, Black, Indep/GOP, Trump voter

Three online focus groups were conducted on June 16: One of mixed partisans in OH who had received UI within the past year, one of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents in Georgia, and one of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents in Arizona. Groups conducted June 16, 2021. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org

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Republicans See Their Party's Vision As A Meritocracy

If the Republican Party had its way, what would its vision be? What would life be like?

"Well, there would be, you wouldn't have these quotas for this, that. And that racial group, gets so many spots in college. If you're going for a job and you're white, that doesn't mean that you automatically have points deducted, and somebody else gets put ahead of you because they're in a favored racial group. Or, it's just white people are the new boogeyman in society and it's okay to dump on white people, but we should all be treated the same. The whole Martin Luther King thing should be what's in play in society, not favored group based on skin color." – OH woman, Trump voter

"I think there's more of a commitment in the Republican party to have a smaller federal government and not have government overreach and steps and all these rules where it leaves more flexibility for the states as well as individuals. And going back to me being an optimistic person, I think most individuals are hard workers, want to better themselves, want to better their communities and basically getting the government out of the way of that, would enable that to happen." – AZ woman, Trump voter

*"I think it would be **more universal prosperity**. I don't mean that everyone's a millionaire. That's not what I mean... [I] think if you take it from the middle class on down, I think that most people would be doing better." – AZ man, Trump voter*



Democrats See The Republican Vision As Retrogressive And Dystopian

If the Republican Party had its way, what would its vision be? What would life be like?

"Klan marches. We'd be back in 1850, and I'll probably work [on] someone's plantation." – GA woman, Biden voter

*"[Someone] said her favorite TV show is **Handmaid's Tale**. It would look like a utopian society with the rich people being served by all the poor people. As long as you follow their rules... Oh, and there would be lots of guns. Even more than now." – GA man, Biden voter*

*"Women's rights. **The heartbeat bill**. So that's the kind of thing I think about. When I think about marriage equality, just the social causes that the majority of Republicans use religion to argue against really hurt my heart." – GA woman, Biden voter*

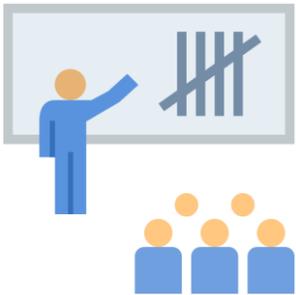
*"I think the hierarchy of classes would be even bigger to where I think there **would be sections of the country that would just be all the poor people**, all of these people over here, and then have the rich people live in New York or California or wherever they want to live with all these benefits and wonderful cities. **And people who don't matter would be put somewhere else**. So it would just tear everybody further apart." – GA man, Biden voter*



In Arizona, Most Republicans Doubt The Election Results Can Be Overturned But Are Still Open To Investigating Fraud Allegations And Worry About Bias

"I get annoyed by it because we don't know that it's misinformation. I really thought that that was really a half-ass effort in trying to get to the bottom of it, whether it's at the state level or at the federal level. Or at the media level, even more so. I just thought they [the media] wanted so badly for Biden to win that they didn't do their due diligence and kind of look into it more." – AZ man, Trump voter

"I think there's enough stories out there that there was some issues with voting and such, but not enough that it drove him enough to be a winner. But there are definitely voting issues or the way how it's done, that there are some issues that are out there and it seems like we should have a better way of doing this as a country at this point." – AZ man, Trump voter



"... It's hard to know... We've done this recount or we're doing, in the process or whatever, but then we say, 'Nope, we're solid in our voting process and it's a standard error that we would see in any given year. And had Trump won there would be no contesting or everything would have been fine with the voting.' I think the whole voting process does need to be taken a look at. I do." – AZ woman, Trump voter

"And again, I just think that they're [Ducey & other officials] of the mindset that we want to move on and we want to go forward in spite of any possible irregularities or any issues with what happened with the voting. I think that they're of that mindset. I'm more of the mindset where I want to make sure that everything is on the up-and-up. And if you reveal everything, if there's something that uncovers something, investigate it, don't declare a winner." – AZ man, Trump voter

“Critical Race Theory” – Despite Confusion Of Its True Meaning – Represents The Debate Over Teaching Race In Schools

“I guess it’s being taught somewhere, maybe it’s in New York City or more liberal areas that they started teaching it and some Republican guy got ahold of it, because you know, it could be a Republican in New York City who says, “Well, I don’t think this is right. And so it just it’s become a political issue now.” – GA man, Biden voter

“It’s probably not going to be a bold lesson plan that says critical race theory, but it would be how you instruct on a daily basis, how you teach historical things. Even when we have to do cultural sensitive activity training or [those] type [of] things at work, it should be something that is all inclusive and more understanding about other cultures, but it kind of turns into, well, white people have done a lot of things that we need to make up for.” – AZ woman, Trump voter

“I think in some districts it’s more overt and I think it’s more subtle in other districts. I think I live in a district where maybe it’s more subtle, but I know that there is districts across the valley where that would be more overt. So in terms, when I say that, I mean in terms of the language or the examples that they may use.” – AZ man, Trump voter

*“It’s one of those things that I was saying, the Democrats come up with something new every day. **Where did this term come from? Why is it now taking over our schools within the last month? Who made this up?**” – AZ woman, Trump voter*



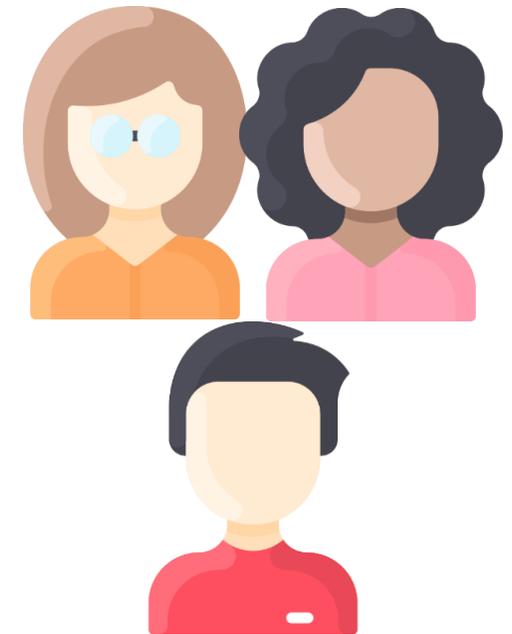
Arizona voters

Democrats Want To See More Robust, Complete Teaching Of Race

"It's teaching the reality versus our misconception. What I grew up with going to school was the white bread, Wonder bread little society versus the reality, which I have learned a lot more of in these past couple of years. And that's what... they don't want to change, the history books." – GA woman, Biden voter

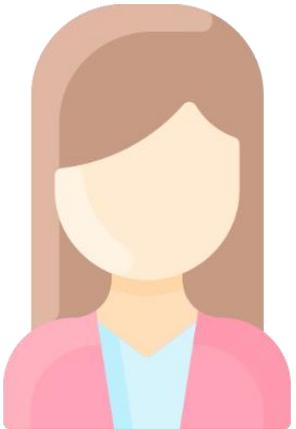
"And they don't want to teach that because they don't want to be held responsible. And they know if they teach it, they'll have to pay African Americans reparations." – GA woman, Biden voter

"I've heard the phrase. I know that it involves the way they teach race relations and history to kids in school. It's become a politicized issue, obviously. Right versus left. The right doesn't want to teach it. And I can't for the life of me figure out why because, to me, it's truth. So it was the history of America built on the backs of slave labor. And I mean, we kind of know underneath that it happened. But why they're so afraid of all the little details that they don't want to come out, I don't know. They just want to teach George Washington and the white guys beating the British, but they don't want to teach all the other stuff." – GA man, Biden voter



Georgia voters

Despite Opposition To CRT, Republicans Do Not Seem To Support Politicians Preventing Teachers From Teaching Facts



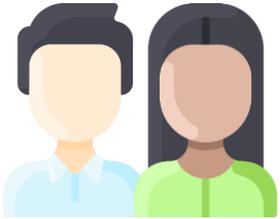
Arizona Women

*"Why would we not **teach all the facts?**" – AZ woman, Trump voter*

"I don't think it should be legislated." – AZ woman, Trump voter

*"Yeah. I think **the whole truth should be shared**, but I also think it's the books that are selected, it's the curriculum that's selected, the instructor or professor's view on things. It just naturally comes out." – AZ woman, Trump voter*

Many Do Not See A Problem With Voting In Need Of Solving— Either It Being Too Easy Or Too Hard To Vote



“Everyone that I know of has been able to vote if they wanted to vote. – OH man, Trump voter

“I think certainly anyone who wants to vote shouldn't have any problem doing so. I mean, this whole idea of having a month before Election Day, being able to vote in person, by mail, at the board of elections or at your local precinct. Anyone who wants to vote should not have any excuse for not doing so. – OH woman, Trump voter

“They made it as easy as possible to vote. – GA man, Biden voter

“I think the absentee ballot during COVID was great. I mean, or when you can't get out or if you're older or if you don't have a car, but I think you should prove who you are. I don't understand why you can't show an ID. I don't understand that portion of it, but I think if you can prove who you are, then you have a right to vote if you're an American citizen.” – GA woman, Biden voter



“I think it's right where it should be. For the most part, it's pretty easy to show up and vote.” – AZ man, Trump voter

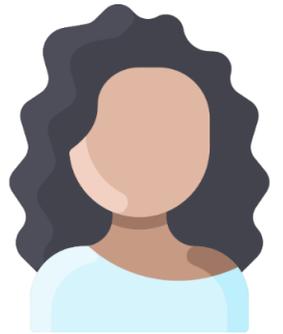
“In Arizona, yes. I wouldn't say it's too hard or too easy. So I guess that leaves me in the middle.” – AZ woman, Trump voter

Democrats In Georgia See Legislative Efforts As Motivated Clearly By Partisanship Or Race

“It seems to me that based upon what I've heard and read that those type of law efforts to pass are happening in places that either were won by Biden or demographics are steering in a direction such as Texas, where the state is not blue yet, but it's heading blue.” – OH man, Biden voter

*“They are literally targeting African Americans because the statistics have proven that Georgia won, became a blue state because of African Americans. They showed up and showed out. And now they are doing that because that's what Jim Crow is. That's what they're doing. They're doing Jim Crow laws, plain as day for everyone to see. That's why it's critical that our kids learn this stuff in school. So they can know that this isn't them just re-enacting, **this is them doing Jim Crow**. This is what Jim Crow is based off of. **They're just not saying it's Black people**. That's all they're saying. They're not saying that anymore, **but the way they're doing it is majority Black people**.” – GA woman, Biden voter*

*“The time that they're spending in lines, because they've cut down the number of voting booths or they made the times inaccessible... And it's a sign of the times that people are seeing how much more sense the Democratic party is making versus the Republican party. **So if everybody's allowed to vote, then people who make sense are going to win the election.**” – GA man, Biden voter*

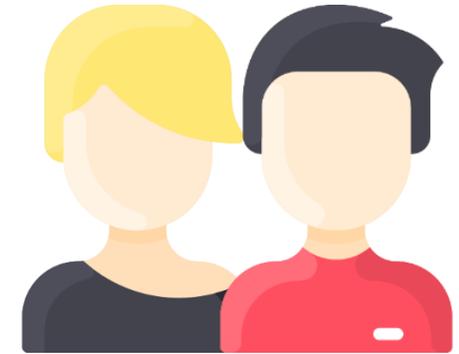


Republicans See Voter Suppression Rules As New, Needed Controls And Oversight Over A Flawed Voting System

*"This is the response as a result of the flawed system. So these are the **attempts of putting controls in place to make sure that the process is more buttoned up, shall I say?**" – AZ woman, Trump voter*

*"Because you could still receive ballots and those can be harvested for a certain political candidate in one way. So let's say you're automatically registered to vote via driver's license and then you select to have it sent to you by mail, you could have somebody who doesn't plan on intending to vote or wants to sell their vote, **they can manipulate the system and give it to a certain political party so they can take advantage of it.**" – AZ man, Trump voter*

*"I don't think they're trying to make it harder for people to vote. **They're just trying to make it more secure so that one person gets one vote and you don't have people collecting blank ballots and voting or harvesting votes. I think those state legislatures are just trying to make it more secure with more integrity to the voting process.**" – OH woman, Trump voter*



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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 along with an advisory committee, including: Andrea Purse, progressive strategist; Arkadi Gerney, The Hub Project; Joel Payne, 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; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

About the Study

GBAO conducted online focus groups on June 16, 2021, with voters in three states: Ohio (mixed partisans who have been on unemployment insurance within the past year), Georgia (Democrats and Democratic-leaning voters), and Arizona (Republican and Republican-leaning voters who aren't very unfavorable toward Biden or very favorable toward Trump). Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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