

navigator*

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Update:
Wednesday, February 9

Black Voters On Kamala Harris
And The Teaching Of Black
History



Methodology

On January 25, 2022, GBAO conducted three focus groups online with respondents that varied across demographics—age, gender, and education.



Black Democratic men in Michigan who are politically less engaged (and most participated in our Feb '21 group)



Young Black Democratic men in Georgia ages 18-39 with mixed views on Biden and Harris



Young Black Democratic women in Texas ages 18-39 with mixed views on Biden and Harris

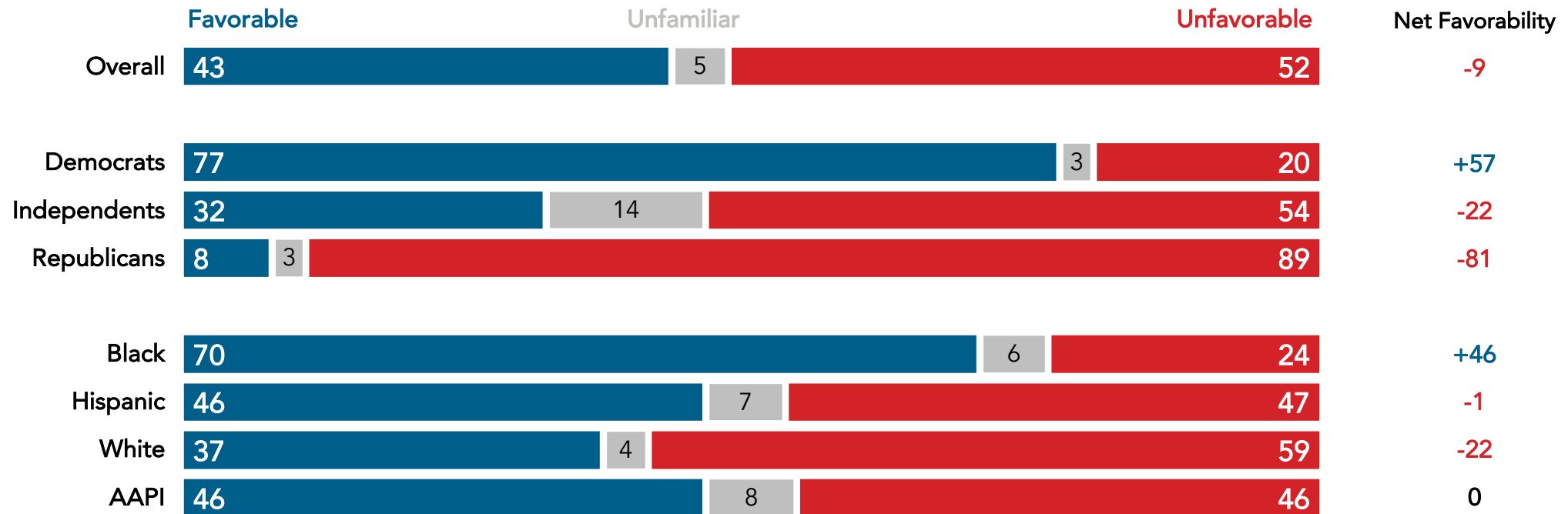
Key Takeaways

- Many struggle to evaluate Harris, with many giving her a grade of “incomplete.”
- Yet they want her to succeed.
- Participants criticized what they perceived as an overly superficial approach to teaching Black history and express a desire to have schools teach “real history,” even if it makes some people uncomfortable.

Vice President Harris Rated Favorably By Democrats And Black Americans

Black Americans rate Harris favorably by 46 points, with 42% rating her “very favorable.”

Please indicate how favorable or unfavorable you are to: Kamala Harris.



Nationwide surveys of registered voters; Each wave represents approximately 1,000 interviews taken over the prior three-five days. Latest wave conducted February 3 – February 7, 2022. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org

Harris' Record Is Largely Unknown, Even When Discussion Reveals Awareness Of Issues In Her Portfolio



HARRIS' GRADES:

Michigan: C, incomplete, incomplete, incomplete, C/incomplete, incomplete (2.00 GPA)

Georgia: can't rate, ?, C (2.00 GPA)

Texas: A/B, C, C, no idea (2.75 GPA)

"I'm retired. I watch a lot of news. I see Biden starting to come on every day, but I just don't know what Kamala's doing." – Michigan man

"I haven't really heard that much... She was assigned to deal with the border. Nothing's really come of that. So it's, what's going on? Basically, the fact that we don't know too much is just like, she hasn't really left much of an impact at the moment." – Georgia man

"It's hard just to say, 'yeah, shining recommendations,' but I'd like to believe it's getting better, she's doing better. And until I see further, it's just... I guess she technically gave me what I needed, but not much else." – Texas woman



navigator*

Harris Being The First Black Female Vice President Is Important; Participants Want To See More From Her

"I would love to see her step up and be a voice for the women, the young Black women that can't really speak up for themselves and the whole culture. And not even just Black people, but just people in all races and do something great with her position and not just let it go to waste." – Michigan man

"I think a lot of us probably had the same hope going forward with her. But right now, I fear that she's becoming more [of a] figurehead and just that, just the first Black vice president. And that's it, just to be able to say that it happened." – Michigan man



"I expected her to do more for Black women... because just going back to Michelle, it seems like First Lady Michelle, she had more of an input. She was more out than [Harris]... And she was only the President's wife. So you would expect more from the Vice President to stand up, at least for Black women." – Georgia man



"I know that she used to be the DA of California and under that skillset, I would think like, 'oh, maybe she might be interested in dealing with police brutality.' That seems to be what your wheelhouse might be. That's something that the country's currently struggling with." – Georgia man

Participants Expand On The Symbolic Importance Of Kamala Harris



“I feel like Kamala was an inspiration to a lot of people. And it showed that there is [an] opportunity to become something that the country has never seen and do things that have never been done, which is empowering to a person that comes from inner cities or places of lack of resources.” – Michigan man

“I think it's very inspiring for the younger people, so they have something to look towards. They can actually do that, too. So I think it's very inspiring as Black women.” – Texas woman

“I also like the idea that she graduated from Howard. Possibly the younger generation, it may be more of them maybe go to [an] HBCU.” – Texas woman

“I think considering the legacy that she'll probably leave behind is probably the best thing that will come out of the Vice Presidency for [the] extremely long term, 100 years from now, for example.” – Texas woman

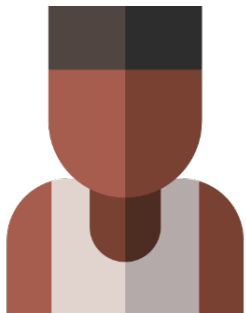


navigator*

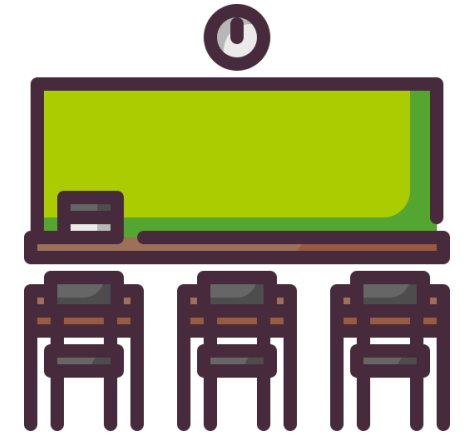
Most Lament How Black History Is Taught In Schools, And Believe It Should Be Part Of The Curriculum Year-Round

"I was saying that the high school I went to was a private, predominantly white school, and pretty much Black history wasn't even really taught at all. But if you do go to a public school or majority Black school, Black history is typically only taught the month of February still. So, I would prefer it to... be deeper than just Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X." – Michigan man

"There were a lot of people in Black history that had paved the way and that had paid the price, and yet we only see one or two because that's what they want us to see. We got to step out there and let the world know that there are more than just these people that you allow us to talk about or the ones that you promote most." – Michigan man



"You're still putting us in a box. The moment the 28th hits, then it's like, we're over. And that's how they always typically try to look at us, is an afterthought. So they give us a token in February and then move on. It needs to be broadened and explained more throughout the year instead of just putting the focus on 28 days." – Georgia man

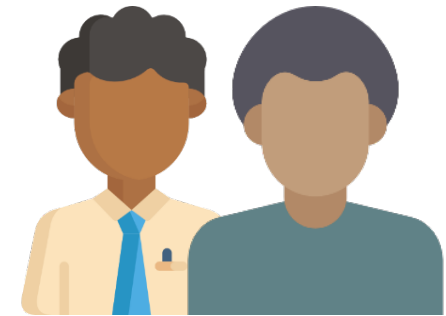


navigator*

Participants Want To Normalize Teaching Black History As U.S. History In Classrooms

“Yeah, it shouldn't be abnormal to have a discussion about Black history. We feel like it's something special if we have a conversation about Black history. It should be the norm. It shouldn't be something deemed as special, it should be the norm.” – Michigan man

“I believe it's Morgan Freeman that was talking about how he doesn't really like Black History Month, and it's not because we don't like Black history, it's that I don't like the fact that it's just confined to a month. Black history is American history. It just needs to be [taught] throughout school, period, all year round. So maybe a bigger emphasis on having a curriculum that integrates Black history, what we know as Black history, in the curriculum all year. It should just be history because it is what happened to our country.” – Georgia man



“I feel like it shouldn't just be a month thing. I feel like it should be a year-round thing. The same way we learn about George Washington, all the other white presidents, all the white people who have done stuff. I feel like we should also do it for Black people. Every month should be Black History Month, not just one month.” – Texas woman

navigator*

Many Say Black History Education Should Go Beyond The Struggle For Equality

“When you think about Black history, they bring up just the Harriet Tubmans, the Frederick Douglasses and things like that. But open it up, see what the real actual origins are, the origins of descendants of kings and queens. Let's not just channel basically what they want. Get the rhetoric of what Black history is. **Black history is much more deeper than slavery. Because a lot of times when I hear Black history, it's about oppression, and that's what's focused on, but it's a lot deeper than that.**” – Michigan man



“And even going back to music, even back to the music, Black History Month in music class when we was coming up, they had the drums, they would bring out drums, African drums. They would teach us hymns that our ancestors was singing. None of that is on the curriculum. And that's our real history. **If you're going to say Black history, teach the real history, not just what you want to be seeing, the prettiness of it and what our people did.**” – Georgia man

Others Suggest “Real” History Makes White People Uncomfortable

“I think what it really is for some, they don't want to deal with that transparency. It's almost as if to say certain things that happened in history, we all know it happened, but there are some that would like to just move on and not ever have to revisit it again.” – Michigan man

“[White people] cannot handle the truth. And until you get to the absolute truth, we're not going to change anything. That's why we're dealing with some of the things that we're dealing with today, because many of them have the same perspective today as they had back then. They don't want to consider themselves to be, whether it be racists or supremacists or whatever the case might be, they cannot handle the truth. We know the truth because we lived it. Our ancestors told us about this all along, so we know. There's enough information out there, but they are the ones that are denying what really happened. It's a problem.” – Michigan man

“But I would like them to acknowledge that this country is built off of Black people's backs, right from the beginning. And they should stop their bull about critical race theory isn't needed when half of them can't even define it.” – Texas woman

“Considering I live in Texas, and the different laws that they enjoy passing here, so on and so forth, it just feels like an academic form of white supremacy. It's [Black history] not to make you feel ashamed. It's to make you feel aware because, especially back in school, teachers like to tell us, ‘You learn about this history so it doesn't happen again...’ I'm not going to say like North Korea, necessarily, but it looks like you're taking a few pages out of their books.” – Texas woman

navigator*

Participants Explain Black Youth Miss Out When Curricula Are “Watered Down”



“They taught us some when I was in middle school, the basics, Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks and stuff like that. But now, I've heard that [they're] not even trying to teach that anymore. So you basically have to show kids yourself what's been happening because **it's like [they're] not even trying to bring it up to the younger kids.** My elementary kids don't hardly know anything about that. **So I have to show them different things on social media,** or Google and stuff, about it because they're not really trying to give them anything about that anymore.” – Texas woman

“I know for us and my little brother, which he's 10 years younger than me. When he was in elementary school, they had no plays. They took out the plays. It kind of seemed like they kind of watered it down. **And they're watering it down to wash the truth away. And I think it shouldn't be watered down, just give it to kids how it is.** And they said that they kind of watered it down in elementary school because of the graphic photos that we used to see in elementary school. Which, I mean, that's what it was. The videos, that's what it was. When I was in elementary school, they showed the videos, and I could see 10 years later, I would ask, ‘Hey, did you see that?’ So I would say that they should mandate it to be shown and just let the truth be known.” – Georgia man



navigator*

navigator*

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: Arkadi Gerney, The Hub Project; Joel Payne, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; 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 three online focus groups on January 25, 2022 with Black voters in three states: Michigan less politically engaged men (most of whom were in our February 2021 group), Georgia younger Democratic men, and Texas younger Democratic women. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

For Press inquiries contact:

press@navigatorresearch.org

To learn more about
Navigator:

<http://navigatorresearch.org>

@NavigatorSurvey on Twitter

navigator*