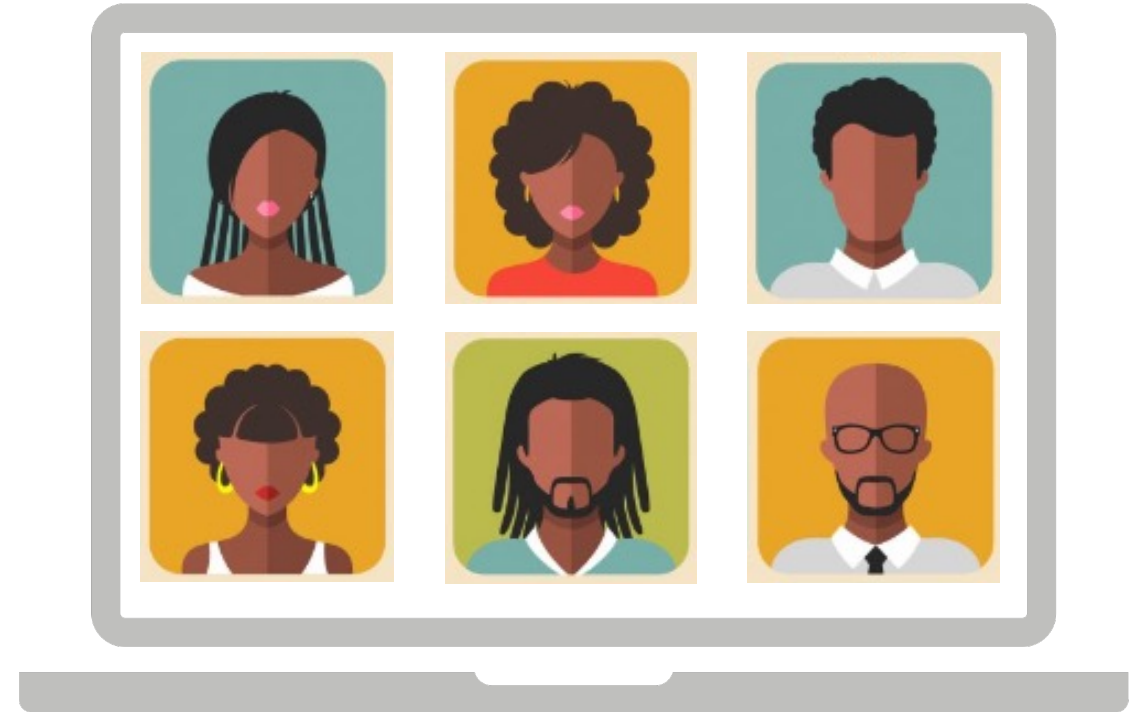


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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Update:
Thursday, February 3

Black Voters on the Biden
Administration's Progress



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

- Participants try to find some silver linings in the country today, mostly around the change in administration and investments in health care.
- Biden gets a mix of grades—neither enthusiastic support nor enthusiastic rejection. No one gives Biden an F, but no one gives Biden an A.
- Most want to see Biden more aggressive.
- Student loan forgiveness looms large – it is associated with Biden and participants see it as having an impact on them and their communities.
- Some are COVID vaccine-converts, and others have seen mandates—formal or informal—make a difference.

Participants Note Some Positives, But Others Struggle To Identify Specific Examples Of Things Going Well

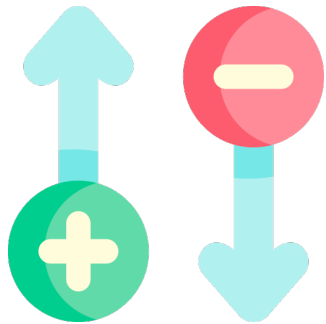
“Health care. Most definitely. The best thing we got going right now... There's more help for those that weren't able to get health care or didn't think they could afford it. It's more affordable at the present time and it's better coverage.”
– Georgia man

“Yeah, just compared to the previous administration, at the very least now we're welcomed back into a global community. So I think that we're a lot better off now in communications and help around the world than we were before. So I think that's improved.” – Georgia man

“I'd have to say progressive conversations on mental health is going better nowadays.” – Texas woman

“I don't think anything, really, is going good in our country right now.” – Texas woman

“I invest in stocks. They're down significantly than where they were a year ago... To me, that's not going well. I was recently laid off. Also, the gas prices. Even though I don't even drive, I drive an electric car, I notice every once in a while gas prices are over \$3 right now... Oh, and of course COVID is going on right now. And I'm sure things are getting better, but I'm just done with COVID.” – Texas woman



Biden's Progress Report Gets A Mix Of Grades, With Little Intensity In Either Direction

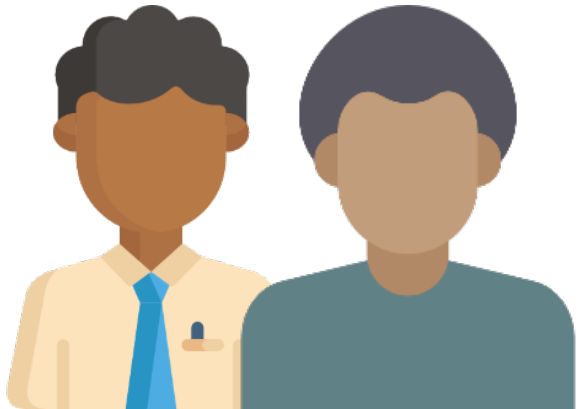


BIDEN'S GRADES:

Michigan: B-, C, C, D+, D, D (1.67 GPA)

Georgia: B-, C, C, C- (2.08 GPA)

Texas: B, C, C, C, D (2.00 GPA)



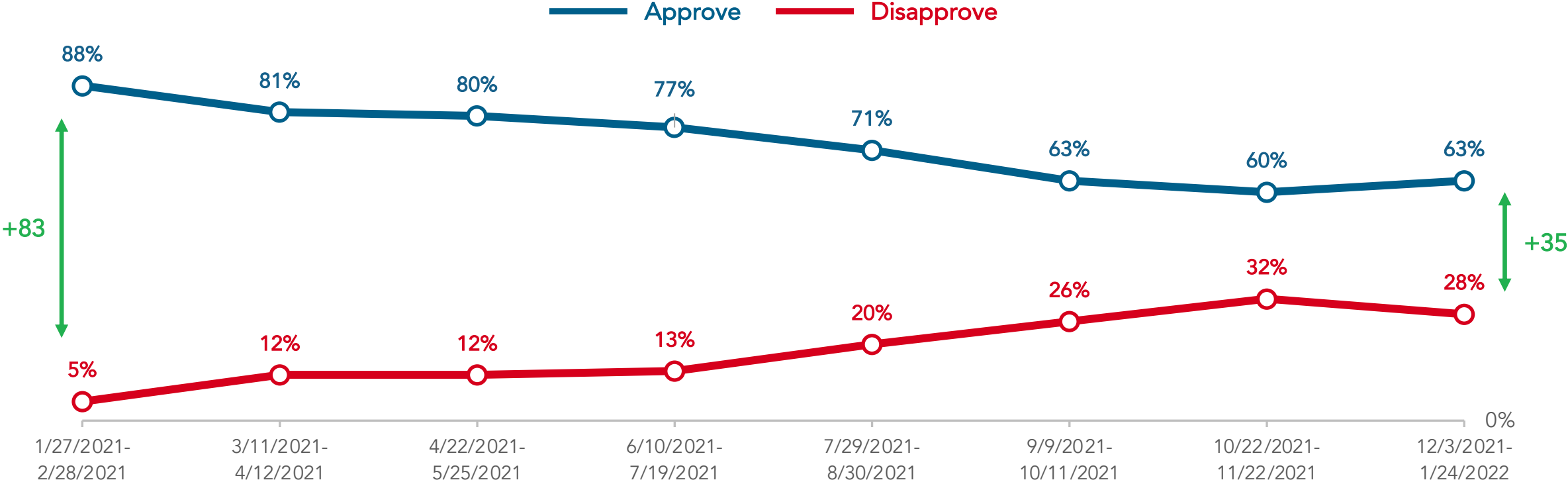
"I think he's had a good COVID response, getting Fauci on board, getting that rolled out. I think, what I said before, repairing relationships with allies. I guess it's more specific. We rejoined the Paris Climate Accord." – Georgia man

"He's not a savior, but he's a darn good advocate." – Michigan man

Biden's Approval Rating Among Black Americans Has Eroded Over The Past Year, Particularly Among Those Under 35

President Biden's approval rating among all Black Americans declined 10 points over the course of 2021 (from 86% to 76%); among those under the age of 35, approval has declined 25 points since this time last year (from 88% to 63%).

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Joe Biden is handling his job as president?



Nationwide survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted January 20-24, 2022. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org

Little Anger Toward Biden, Most Just Want Him To Be More Aggressive

“If you noticed Trump the last four years and how active he was on camera and off camera with stimulus checks or whether it be this or that, you actually saw him doing work, whether it was good or bad. But Biden, you don't even see him at all. What do we know about our wellbeing right now, as far as him being president? He hasn't said anything about helping us get through COVID part two. I just feel like it's a lack of communication between the top and the bottom. We're the ones going through it the most, as far as people that got to file for unemployment.” – Michigan man

“Where I dropped it down a little bit is, I felt like at the very beginning of his term, there were some options out there, in terms of pushing things forward a little bit more than it has been, especially with the Senate. You have control for the first time in a long time, you have the ability to push things through more than you have. And I think he's really been trying to be more diplomatic than I would've liked.” – Michigan man

“What Trump did while he was in there, he pushed the ball to get it to where he wanted to. I think Biden needs to put the same pressure behind the ball. He needs to get on the Senate. He needs to get on Manchin and Sinema and get whatever he's trying to get done. He needs to get it passed.” – Michigan man



“I think he's a C because there's a lot of things he promised. And I feel like Trump had more of an impact, even though I did not like Trump as President. But he had more of an impact than Biden has done for the past few months.” – Georgia woman

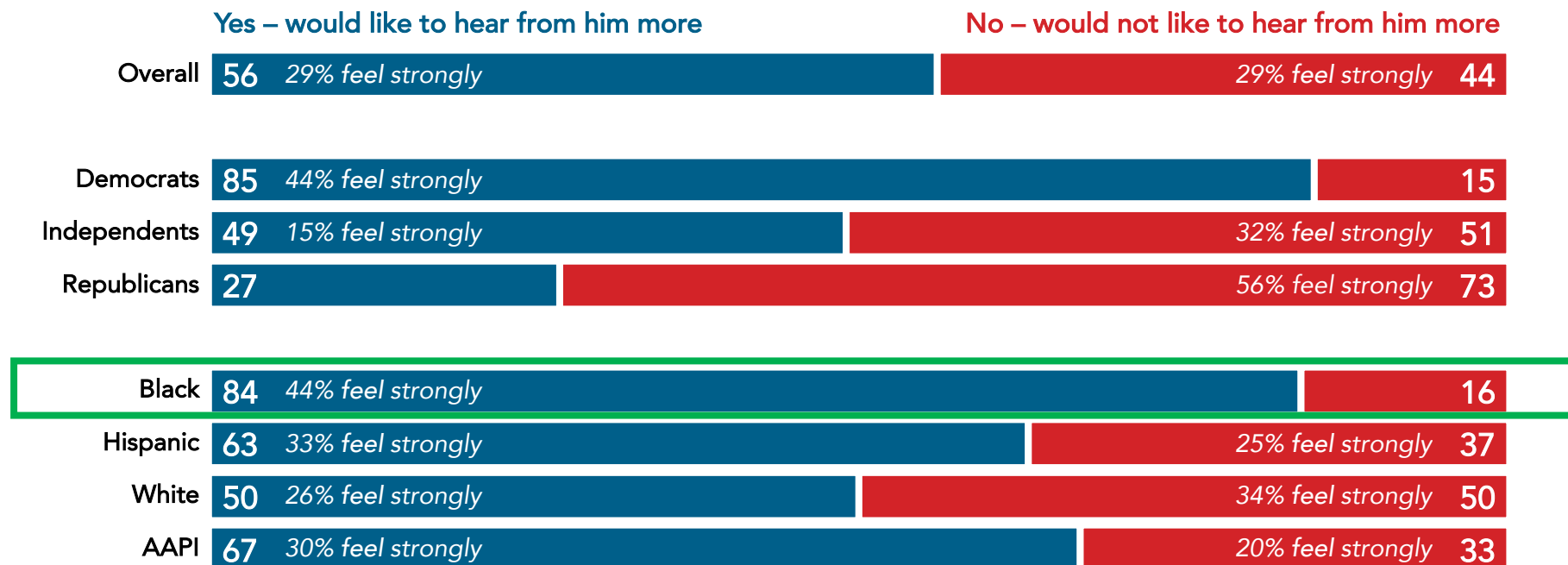
“I blame Biden. He need to put his foot down, grow a pair, and do what he needs to do.” – Texas woman

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A Majority of Americans Would Prefer to Hear from Biden More, Including More Than Four in Five Black Americans

More than two in five Black Americans feel strongly that they would like to hear from President Biden more (44%).

Thinking more about President Biden... whether you approve or disapprove of the job he's doing now as president, would you like to see and hear more from him?



Nationwide survey of 1,000 registered voters conducted January 20-24, 2022.
For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org

Participants View Democrats As Not Adequately Overcoming Republican Obstruction

"You've got the other party, the Republicans, refusing, just like they did with Obama, refusing to do anything, yet the man is still in there and he's doing his best. And when you're fighting uphill, it's going to take you a little bit longer. So if I took it back to when I was in high school, we had four marking periods, he's in his first marking period, I give him a B+. Maybe at the end of the second or the third [marking period] it differs, but he's doing the best that he can." – Michigan man



"But personally, I blame the Democrats. Those Republicans changed the rules for the filibuster. They stopped Barack from putting in a Supreme Court justice. They allowed Trump to get three of them in there. They changed the rules for that specific purpose. And yet the Democrats are saying, 'Yeah, but we're going to play by the rules or we're going to play this way.'" – Michigan man

"The promises made on the campaign for student loans, they haven't been kept. I don't expect something as extreme as a \$10,000 or a \$50,000 elimination of student loans, simply because I don't think people on the other side of the aisle would even allow something like that. But any progress at all would be helpful on that front, maybe cutting interest rates on those loans." – Georgia man



"If it's your party, you should be able to negotiate with them; do some little side backdoor deals or something, so that we can just come out a little bit more successful. It's too many voting against him. And he already have the obstacle of the Republicans, right? So the Democrats, he need to just get everybody on the same page. He's fighting some of the Democrats and, of course, he's fighting the Republicans. He need to straighten that out." – Texas woman

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Most See The Voting Rights Debate As Republicans Aggrieved About Losing



"We've seen how the voting rights things have gone in certain places and you just ask yourself, what is that really all about? **Because the only thing that changed in the past election from the previous one, four years earlier, is one guy lost, and he couldn't admit it and accept it.** And his supporters are doing everything possible to alter, if not just flat out change voting laws, to prevent that from happening again." – Michigan man

"It's getting to a point where the radicalization of one party is not going to be accepted by the masses. And they know it. And the only way to be able to beat that back is by changing voting rights. Or I shouldn't say changing voting rights, but making it more difficult for those of us to get out there and vote." – Michigan man

"I think that they were trying to make it harder for us to vote because they was coming back saying that Biden had the... what was it? The mail-in votes. They're going to try to change those. So with that being said, and it had to be something about ID or something, I feel like it's very unfair, because if it was in their favor and when I say their favor, Trump being back in office, there would be no problems... **I just feel like, just because it didn't go in the favor that they wanted it to go, it's really crazy.**" – Georgia man

"And so, we as Americans like to think we're so star-spangled awesome, but why aren't we also implementing those rules to eliminate gerrymandering, to allow mail-in voting, which no one had a problem with before. Mail-in voting didn't suddenly become a thing randomly. We had it for the military. I used it when I was in college. So it's not like it's new, **but because it was these systems [that] were used in, like you said, in Georgia to help us get in two Democratic senators and the state as a whole voted for Biden, I think people see that as a threat.** Or, at the federal and state level, people see that as a threat and so they're trying to make sure that they can do what they can to stop whatever voting bills or legislation can go through. **So just afraid of losing power at this point.**" – Georgia man

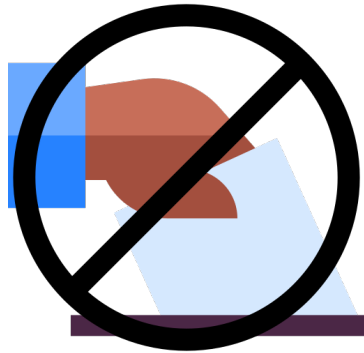
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Georgia And Texas Seen As Ground Zero For Voter Suppression

"[I'm not hopeful, but] anxious, angry, and everything else, because I see what's coming. And I think most of us do. It's [voting suppression] starting in Georgia. It's continuing in Texas. It's probably going to go on in Florida and other places." – Michigan man

"It did start in Georgia. I mean, you see what's happening, but not everybody cares even enough to understand what's happening, to see it." – Michigan man

"I honestly believe it was because of what happened with Georgia more than anything else, in the last election, when everything was happening with Stacey. And so that's what makes me feel like none of this was really an issue until Georgia started having problems as far as trying to get the vote for her to even get into office. And so now, it's showing, okay, the people come out in droves to make sure that the vote is there, but now we need to make sure that they can't do it. So all this [is] unnecessary, something they're doing is now starting to show, so that's where the federal level, I feel like, is coming to place. Now they're trying to make sure that it's harder for the elderly to vote, or somebody that's at work to vote, and it's really starting to show." – Georgia man



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Voting Rights Are Not Top Of Mind For Everyone

Moderator: What have you heard about voting rights in Washington? What has been going on?

“For me, I'm probably the oddball with it. But it could just be a lack of information that I'm receiving. **But I personally haven't listened to or read or heard anything new or different about this topic for real.**”

– Michigan man

“I briefly heard about it. I **briefly heard about it a while ago**, a few months back, how they were changing the... what was it? The conditions of voting.” – Georgia man



“I just know that something happened last week. It was two Democrats that didn't vote, they didn't agree so they threw it... I'm not using the right terms. I'm sorry. I haven't been in school in a long time. They pretty much messed up the bill that he [Biden] was trying to get passed. That's what I remember about that.” – Texas woman

“It's a priority, but it's a lot of our age and younger that I know. When I did vote or whatever, a lot of my friends or family members didn't vote because they feel like it wouldn't count or something like that. But I feel like education is one of them, too.” – Texas woman

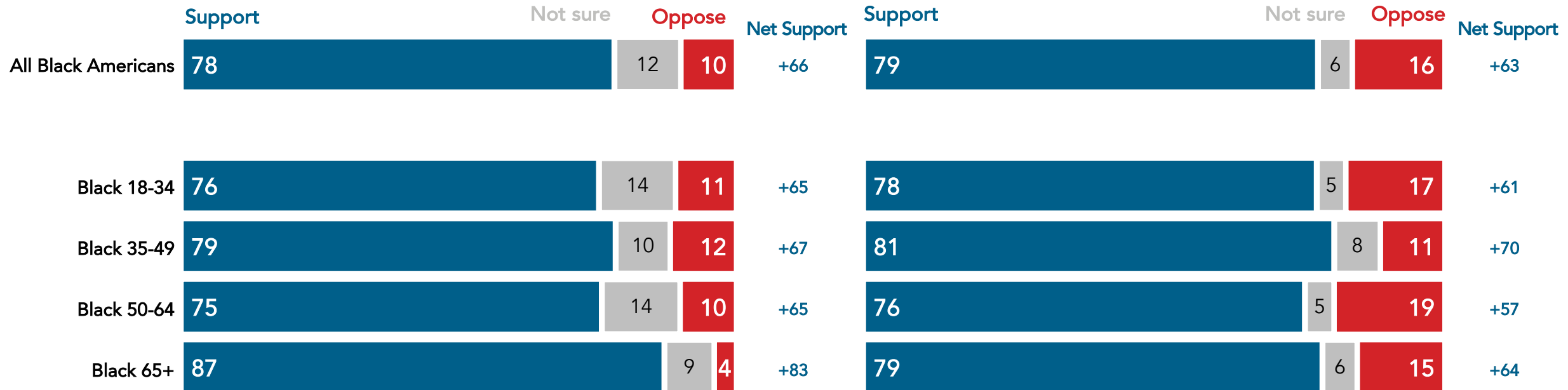
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Black Americans Overwhelmingly Support Biden's Economic Agenda And Voting Rights Legislation

More than three in four younger Black Americans support both Biden's economic agenda (76%) and new voting rights legislation (78%).

Biden and Democrats' new economic plan would be paid for by increasing taxes on billionaires and multi-millionaires with income over \$10 million, creating a minimum 15% tax on corporate profits, adding an additional 1% tax on corporations that use profits to buy back their stock, and cracking down on tax evasion. Knowing this, do you support or oppose this legislation?

Regardless of how much you have heard about the Freedom to Vote Act, do you support or oppose new legislation that would establish national standards to protect Americans' freedom to vote, require every state to have automatic voter registration, make Election Day a holiday, restore federal voting rights to formerly incarcerated Americans, and address "dark money" in the electoral process, by modernizing and expanding federal campaign finance reforms?



Data is from combined data from the last three national surveys conducted December 3, 2021-January 24, 2022.
 *For more info, visit [navigatortorresearch.org](https://www.navigatortorresearch.org)

Many Associate Biden With The Promise Of Student Loan Forgiveness



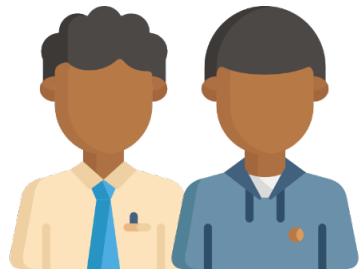
“Biden ran on getting rid of student loan debt. So just curious to see what's going to happen on that.” – Michigan man

“And I really wish he was like putting his foot on student loans because that was his biggest thing on his campaign.” – Georgia man

“And if he did not get re-elected, last day of presidency, kind of like how they hand out the pardon on the very last day. Yeah. I feel like only then it might get canceled. Because if he's not going to be in office anymore, what are they going to do? Just threaten not to pass any of his things anymore? And that's ideally.” – Texas woman

Student Loan Freezes And Forgiveness Are Broadly Understood Policies These Participants Strongly Support

“We encourage them to go into higher education and get better jobs to help this country out, then the first thing the country does say [is], ‘Well, wait a minute, pay me back first.’ So I think that there should be a little more give and take. I had to go, I had to go through it, and I went through it, but it wasn't as bad as it is today, but I think it's completely unfair.” – Michigan man



“I was just going to say probably a scam just from a business standpoint, the return on investment that it used to be years ago is no longer there. So you can pay \$100,000 for a degree and still end up with a \$40,000 a year job. To me, that just doesn't add up. It's no ROI on that, and then you still have people with bachelor's and master's who can't find a job in their field. As far as the repayment, especially the situation now, obviously, if we're able to put it on pause for so long, we're able to just get rid of it completely.” – Michigan man

“It went from \$50,000 to \$10,000. And now we haven't heard about either one of them, now they've gotten certain things, forgiven certain loans, the predatory part of it, they got those forgiven, but for the rest of us, we haven't heard anything else about it. **When I think about student loans and the repayment of it, I think about other countries around the world and how they educate their population.** They don't even put their population in debt to get higher education. In fact, in some countries it's free, **because it benefits the country overall to have everyone educated, so why would they put them in debt that doesn't help the country at all?**” – Michigan man

“I'll be honest, I'm not as well-versed in this as I should be as someone who has student loan debt, and still climbing. Yay college. **But what I think would probably happen, especially because politicians or the general public wants to act like if no one pays their student loans or [it's] just canceled, the economy will crash. Even though we haven't been paying it for over a year now.** I feel like the most likely scenario, if it were to happen, it'd probably be for less than \$50,000, maybe \$10,000. I know that number was floating around a lot.” – Texas woman



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Freezes/Forgiveness Seen As Improving Quality Of Life For Themselves And Others



"I got a lot to pay back, so he [Biden] needs to hurry up." – Georgia man

"I feel like in general it would create a positive money flow. Because we're not having to put \$200, \$300 up a month to go towards our student loans. That's money we're using to invest in our communities, shop in our communities, or however you choose to spend your money, instead of trying to climb out of debt for trying to learn. I never understood that." – Texas woman

"I think that it would, as far as in the Black community, I know I read some statistics that a lot of Black educated people that have student loans, they have so much debt that they can't even qualify for a house, which is my situation. I make pretty good money, but the house that I want, especially with Texas, the prices are going up, I can't afford the house that I really want. So I feel like more Black people would be able to purchase homes. And it'll also help their credit, because there's some people that can't afford to pay their student loans. Well, whenever it was before the freeze." – Texas woman

Revisiting With Michigan Men Shows Many Have Moved On The Vaccine

“I recall we were talking about people worrying about getting the vaccine and why they were or why they were not. It seems like finally, many people have decided to go for it, whether it's because they caught a glimpse of it or somebody in their family.” – Michigan man



“So, for me, the vaccine was always something that I was indifferent about, whether or not I got it, well, I still had the mentality of, ‘I'm going to just stay safe. I'm going to wear my mask out, be mindful of who I'm around,’ and stuff like that, and instead of trying to go the route of trying to find some type of exemption, I just went with it. I think what really led me more so to get it was when the FDA approved the Pfizer vaccine, so once that was FDA approved, I had a little bit more of a comfort with getting the vaccine.” – Michigan man

“I also wasn't vaccinated at the time we had that last meeting, but I had been paying attention to what had been approved and what was out there, trying to educate myself on everything. I knew that the Johnson & Johnson was in the works. **What drew me to getting the vaccine was that I needed it to live on campus,** so I wanted to wait to see what was going to happen, which clearly we all saw what happened with that. At that point, I made my mind up to go ahead and decide between Moderna and Pfizer and just go forward. I mean, I always had it in my mind I wanted to do it, but I just wanted to wait and make sure that I knew everything that I needed to know and not go into it being surprised by anything.” – Michigan man



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Vaccine Mandates—Formal And Informal—Moved Others

“So I want to say a year ago, I was like, ‘No, I’m not taking it.’ And then I ended up doing it because I have some friends in the health care industry. So they were scared, too, and then they took it. Because I saw it as we don’t know what’s in our food. They put all kinds of stuff in our food, but that’s just my opinion.” – Texas woman

“I feel like it’s changed just because I’m in the health care field. Because a year ago, six months to a year ago, I wasn’t for it, to take it. But I knew that I wanted to work in the hospital. So I said, ‘I might as well just take it.’ And I know for my job now, they require the booster shot. So I have to take the booster shot, and I didn’t want to take the booster. I’m fully vaccinated, but I didn’t want to take the booster. But now I have to because of my job.” – Texas woman

“A lot of people in my family unfortunately are still not vaccinated. Even here, I live with my sister, and she was dead set against it the entire time, and she finally went and got it done towards the end of last year, and in fact, gave it to me as a birthday present because she knew I was very concerned about it.” – Michigan man

“Yeah, for me, three of my children got vaccinated since the last time we talked. They were dead set against it. One because they have children that go to school, and another because my wife and I put some restrictions on coming into our house because we were vaccinated, and we didn’t want to be exposed. So, a combination, all I can say is three of my children finally did get vaccinated.” – Michigan man

“It’s too fast. It’s too fast for me to just agree to just get it. I work for myself, so it’s not like, ‘oh, well you have to have it to come to work.’ I know that some people had to have it just to go back to work, but they was totally against it.” – Georgia man



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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: 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, 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>

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