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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

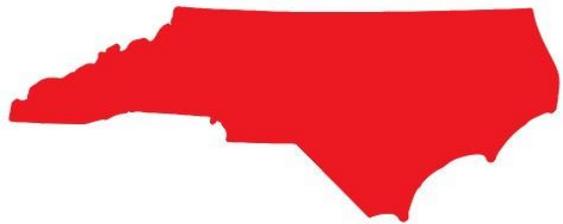
Wednesday, April 20, 2022

Lower Motivation Soft Partisans
And Independents On The
Economy



Methodology

On April 13, 2022, GBAO conducted three focus groups online with lower-motivation respondents who varied across demographics—age, gender, education, and race.



**Republican lower-motivation voters
in North Carolina**



**Independent lower-motivation
voters in Wisconsin**



**Democratic lower-motivation voters in
Nevada**

Key Takeaways

- Inflation fears dominate.
- More have heard about negative economic news than positive.
- Many see positive economic indicators at odds with their personal experiences.
- Even after hearing economic facts, there are questions about how job growth is measured.
- Participants express weariness about political messaging on inflation ahead of the midterms.

With So Little Seeming To Be Going Well, Respondents Sidestep The Assignment

Please fill in this blank: "I feel [BLANK] is going well in the country today."

Not much

My life

Very little

TV

Sports

**Transportation, like
Uber**

My work

**Kids being back in
school**

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Inflation Fears Dominate

“It's terrible. It's terrible. With inflation, gas price is rising, cost of food. I literally just went grocery shopping yesterday, spent \$700 on what? This time, last year would've filled my refrigerator up, and it's barely [enough] because I have three teenagers at home.” – NV woman

“I'm always complaining to my wife about her spending too much in groceries. She's like, ‘I'm buying the same stuff that I did six months ago,’ So I definitely can see it.” – NC man

“The prices are high. The food prices have gone up. The price of food has gone up, and they've taken out. And they've given you less. It used to be 16 ounces. Now it's 13, and they hope you don't notice. And sometimes you can go in the store the next day, a price will be 20 cent[s] higher.” – WI woman

“Inflation has the biggest affect on us, the small people.” – WI man



Corporate Greed Gets Some Blame For Inflation



“I work in supply chain and supply chain costs are just through the roof right now. **But all these companies are making record profits. So is it really COVID? Is it really prices or is it just greed?**”
– NC man

“Businesses, corporations. Yes. They're making record profits. **For us, the people, the consumer, there are few people that are making money. But the corporations are making profit. Paying zero taxes.**” – WI woman



“The oil companies [have] been able to get away with it because, as everybody knows, they support [those] political campaigns. When gas [prices] go up, everything, of course, will go up, food, everything, because transportation [costs] go up. Everything to transport the goods and all that we'd need will go up.” – NV man

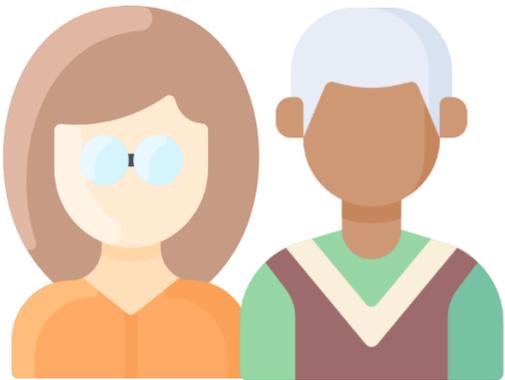
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Beyond Corporate Greed, Supply Chain Challenges, COVID, And Government Spending All Share Inflation Blame

“The government's pumped a lot of money into the economy to try to keep things from getting worse. Of course, if you pump money into the economy, that's going to naturally lessen the value of [the] dollar. **So stimulus checks [are] a part of that.** But honestly, that goes back multiple administrations, who occasionally went to bail out different entities and businesses.” – NC man



“**When the stores have to pay more for everything, everyone has to pay more.** So they have to raise the prices it seems like. Like for restaurants too, otherwise they won't make any money at all. So everything just to get the products, the restaurants, and stores and [all] that [they] need. They're going to have to raise the prices or they won't make any money.” – WI woman



“I do a lot of work in development, construction. **Material costs are through the roof.** A lot of that is just based on production. They either can't produce it because they don't have enough working staff, **employment shortages, even raw material shortages.**” – WI man

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Respondents Read Seven Economic Facts

More than six million jobs were created last year, the largest number of any year on record.

Last year, the U.S. economy (GDP) grew 5.7%, which is the highest rate of growth in almost 40 years.

For the first time in 20 years, the U.S. economy has grown faster than China's.

The unemployment rate fell from 6.2% at the beginning of 2021 to 3.6% as of March 2022.

2021 saw the biggest drop in people receiving unemployment benefits in a single year, from 18 million at the start of the year down to only 2 million.

There are fewer jobless claims right now than any time since 1968.

Since Biden took office, 1.36 million small business jobs have been created.



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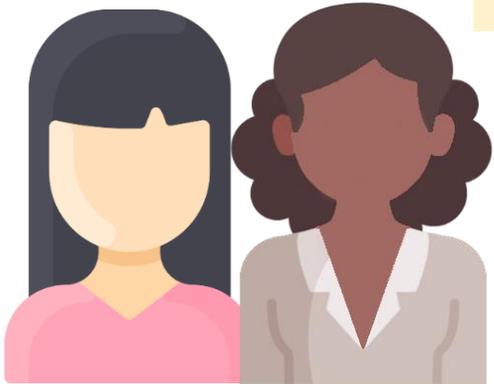
Presenting Economic Facts Only Modestly Moves The Needle

“It sounds like people are going back to work.” – WI woman

“I mean I'm sure they're all, if you're presenting them as facts, I'm sure they're good, it just feels like there's so much on the horizon that we don't know about that people are too nervous to believe that we're bouncing back the way we are.” – WI man



“I mean, I do obviously believe that things will continue to get better because that is the only way that things can go, is to keep moving forward and hope that things are always going to get better than they are today. But I don't think that we'll actually see benefits of things extremely better in everyone's day-to-day life for quite a few years to come.” – NV woman

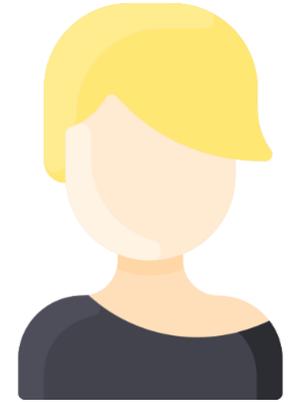


“That the unemployment rate has gone down [from] 18 million at the start of the year down [to] two million, that's impressive. And the jobless claims since 1968, that's impressive. All of it is, but those are the two that stand out the most for me.” – NV woman

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Pervasive Inflation Concerns Outweigh Job Creation, Even When Given Facts

“So you can tell me it's doing great, but if I'm struggling to buy groceries and gas and will be out of a job for real in two months, that to me is saying, no, it's not really doing that great.” – NC woman



“I don't think that the economy's doing any better than it was two years ago. If anything, I feel like it's worse because of inflation.” – NV woman

“And according to them, the six million jobs that were created, good. The economy has rebounded, so they say. But I don't believe it. [Moderator: So what would you want to see in order to feel like, okay, the economy is rebounding? What kind of fact or number would you want to see?] Oh, prices going down. Gas prices down.” – WI woman

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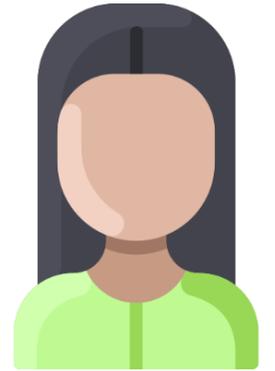
Some Are Not Sure They See Job Creation In Their Areas

“Because people were losing, restaurants were closing, small businesses, other businesses, were closing. **What six million jobs were created last year?**” – WI woman

“I’m just kind of wondering **where the six million jobs are.** What fields were they created in?” – WI woman

“I mean, **just from the ‘I test,’ from what I’m used to in my life as far as going to restaurants, and I can’t be seated because there’s not enough people working.** I mean, I’ve never experienced that. So it’s crazy... I don’t understand it, I guess. How was it better when I’ve never experienced where I’ve seen so many people not working or there’s so many jobs available? It’s just strange. I don’t understand.” – NC man

“Now the six million jobs that they’re saying, **we don’t know if these are temporary jobs, for example. What kind of jobs are we talking about? Are they the high paying jobs that they’re taking care of their family? Are these the temporary jobs that they take during Christmas season, holiday season?** They have a big spike on job creation, and then right after [the] first of the year, these people are not working no more. This unemployment rate also makes us think something. The reason, most of the time, the unemployment rate falls sometimes is because people stop looking for work out there.” – NV man



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Questions About How Job Growth Is Measured In A Volatile Time

“My feeling [is] I have no doubt that all those numbers are factual, but you can do a lot of tricks with statistics, **although it depends on what's your starting point.** What was happening at your starting point? How much money did you pump into the economy to get that? Is that somewhat artificial because of government interaction?” – NC man

“**It's where was the starting point. Unemployment was how high because of COVID then? Then it's saying, well it's dropped.** It was COVID. A lot of people reexamined their lives and decided to start their own business or something. I've heard on the news where they say that small business applications and all that went sky high with COVID.” – NC woman



“I think it's believable, but again if you changed [the economic fact about unemployment] to say from 2019 to now was there a change? **Were we at two million, we went up to 18 million, then we came back down to two million?** I don't know what that really means as a statistic.” – WI man

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Job Growth Numbers Lead Some Republicans And Independents To Wonder If Workers Aren't Participating In The Labor Market



“Yeah. I think because **they're collecting unemployment, they use COVID as an excuse.** Laziness. Like some people are just lazy and don't want to work. There's no other way to put it.” – WI man

“That's what they say, more than six million jobs were created last year, fewer job claims. **There's some people that their unemployment ran out.** So of course there'll be fewer.” – WI woman

“I feel like, yeah, **there's plenty of jobs opening, but nobody wants to work because they make it too easy to sit at home.** That's because there's all the stimulus checks that are going out and the younger generation doesn't want to work.” – NC woman

“I think they feel like they can make just as much money not doing anything and letting the government give them a stimulus check or pay them as they could make coming to actually work. Especially like as a teacher's assistant or something where it's not an extremely high paying job. We are very short on those type of employees. **So there may be a lot of jobs available, but I don't know that the job market's great because some people aren't taking them.**” – NC woman

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Participants Express Weariness Of Economic Political Messaging Ahead Of The Midterms

MODERATOR: “What have you been hearing from the two political parties about the economy and about inflation specifically, which I know is on a lot of people's minds? What are you hearing from the Democratic Party, what are you hearing from the Republican Party?”

“To be honest I've kind of avoided it.... Because **I have very little trust in what the media presents, especially since COVID.** I mean when the schools were virtual and the media was coming out with dates that we were going back into the buildings by, that wasn't even decided yet. Being as I knew that, it's hard for me now to believe anything they say.” – WI woman

“**It's the age-old he said, she said...** The Democrats are saying ‘we've added 200,000 jobs this month or whatever it is, and the economy is going well,’ and the Republicans are saying ‘yeah, look at the inflation, it's all your fault.’ It goes back and forth... That's been my take out of it. It's always between the political parties [so] **it's hard to parse out what is actually the real case.** It's obviously the Republicans' fault, no, it's obviously the Democrats' fault.” – WI 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 April 13, 2022 with low-motivation voters in three states: North Carolina (Republican), Wisconsin (independent), and Nevada (Democratic). Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

For Press inquiries contact:

press@navigatorresearch.org

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