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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

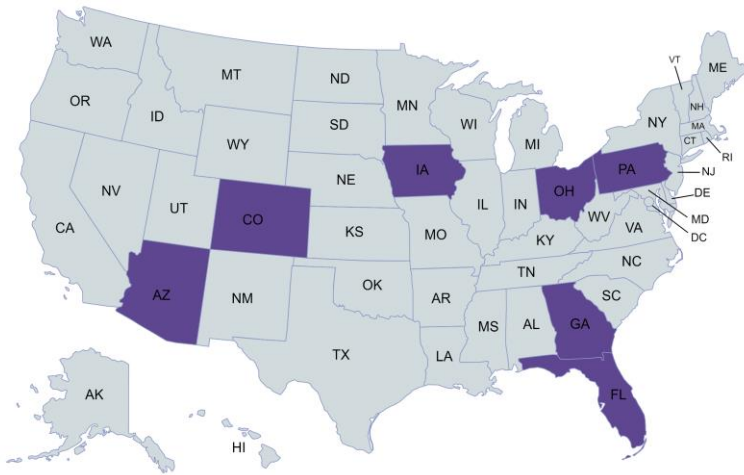
Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Democrats, Republicans, and
Ticket-Splitters on the
Midterms



Methodology

On November 16, 2022, GBAO conducted three focus groups online with ticket-splitters and lower motivation Democrats and Republicans who varied across demographics—age, education, and race.



Ticket splitters from PA, GA, OH, CO, AZ, FL, and IA



Low motivation Democratic voters in North Carolina



Low motivation Republican voters in Arizona

Key Takeaways

- The midterm elections were not top of mind, and few could recall which party won control of each chamber.
- Abortion was seen as a driving issue in the midterm elections to these participants, with important nuances on how important the issue was to their vote.
- The parties diverge dramatically on priorities and hopes for Washington.
- For non-voters, voting is not inconvenient, but rather pointless or suspicious.

Midterms Are Not Top of Mind When Thinking About the Country

"I just feel like everything's going downhill: **the economy, the gas prices, jobs**, nobody wants to work... Everything [is] costing so much more. Housing market is still high." – Ticket-splitter/FL

"Gallon of milk costs \$4 in California or something. **Gas prices are going up.**" – Ticket-splitter/OH



"**Health care, college out of control, childcare is outrageous.** Seems like the climate's not going to get any better and no one seems to want to take any real action. **Violence is also out of control.** I don't know what's going on with Ukraine and Russia, especially recently, I just quit watching. **This is all in the back of COVID.**" – NC Dem

"Well, first it's **COVID**, then we got stuff going on... **school shootings.** We got Ukraine, we got stuff that happened with Afghanistan. There's so many things that just put you on a heightened level of awareness I suppose." – AZ Rep



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In Fact, Not Many Can Recall the Impact on Control



"...From what I've heard, that the Senate's **still up in the air**... The Senate's still up in the air and the House is Democrat control." – NC Dem

"I'm not sure, but it seemed like the Republicans won the House today, **but I'm not sure. I didn't keep up with everything that was going on.**" – NC Dem

"...I've honestly been working, so I haven't really been able to look at the news or see what's really going on in the last day or two, so I'm **really not too sure a hundred percent.**" – AZ Rep

"Well, I know that the Republicans won in my state. And that's Florida. And I had heard something about that the Democrats were going to lead something by just a few votes, but I **wasn't really paying attention to that part because I guess I'm not really too interested in that.**" – Ticket-splitter/FL

"I believe the Democrats have the House, and I **believe the Republicans still have the Senate.**" – Ticket-splitter/CO



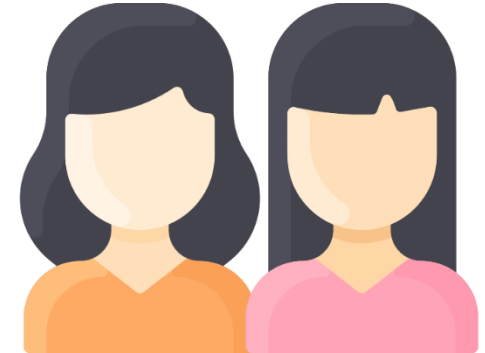
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Abortion Seen As a Driving Issue for the Midterms

"[Moderator: What was the election about, if you had to summarize it?] **Pro-choice about women and legal rights and all that.** And abortion and all that good stuff." – Ticket-splitter/OH

"I know there's a lot of talk about the red wave and trying to get Republicans back in seats and everything and in control. **And I know on the Dems side, I know it was a lot about women's rights and getting back versus *Roe v. Wade* and taking back some of that action.**" – Ticket-splitter/CO

"I don't know. There's the big debate about abortion, naturally, is a big thing. Other than that, I'm sorry." – Ticket-splitter/IA



"**[Abortion] is the biggest [issue] right this minute** because that is going to have a trickle-down effect for years to come. We're going to have, in my opinion, more unwed mothers, a lot more kids that don't have food security. A lot more burden on the system because insurance is crazy expensive." – NC Dem

"I remember a Democratic leader saying that that abortion was on the ballot this time around. And I don't remember who." – NC Dem

"Crime, immigration, **abortion.**" – AZ Rep

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Though Participants Have Nuanced Views on How Important Abortion Is to Them Personally

“Speaking from personal experience, I'm going to be completely honest, yes, I've had an abortion before. I was 17 years old, I'm 58 now. Had I not had that choice, it would've set me... I love children, don't get me wrong, and I have one of my own that's 24, but at that time I was not ready to become a mom. I was glad that I had that freedom to make that choice. Whether I could say that I would do it again, no. **But I'm pro-choice, all the same, but, me personally, it's like, gosh, I would not want that right taken away. I think every woman should have that choice.**” – Ticket-splitter/IA

“**It's not an issue for me, because we don't have children.** There will be no grandchildren to worry about, so it's just a non-issue for our family. – Ticket-splitter/GA

“Abortion for me is, I personally can't comprehend killing a baby. If there is somebody who is pro-abortion, [I'm] against that. I feel so strongly... I just can't. **That's really strong for me.**” – AZ Rep

“**And then the abortion one is big for me.** I personally am not a big fan of abortion, but one-in-five women are sexually assaulted. So that means everybody probably knows somebody that's at least been sexually assaulted, raped, some of those result in pregnancies. **And while I understand other people's beliefs, that's a big thing for me.**” – NC Dem

“...I kept track of it a lot, only because there were a few things that I really was interested in, especially *Roe v. Wade*. **It's a big thing for me. Even though I'm completely against abortion, I still feel like women's rights are above that.** You should have the right to decide what to do with your body.” – NC Dem

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Participants Agree That Divided Control Will Lead to Gridlock



“I think it's going to be hard to get anything passed.” – Ticket-splitter/CO



“Probably nothing's going to get done. **Nothing.**” – NC Dem

“But I don't think anything will move very quickly for the next couple years.” – NC Dem

People Want Collaboration From Washington, Along With Health Care and Inflation Relief

“We can unrig the system if we overthrow the government. It'd be different. I mean, I'm really thinking more like a utopia, but I mean, that's what I would want. I would want a utopia. No stealing, no thievery, no robbing, and universal health care. Those are two elements of my utopia.” – NC Dem

“I would say the cost of food, like groceries. I would say gas but, technically, I don't have to drive, I can walk, so I would just say my biggest thing is the cost of food, because we all have to eat, no matter what. If food keeps rising, no matter what, I have to pay for it, and that's important to me. I need somebody in there that's going to try to keep the price of food lower.” – Ticket-splitter/AZ

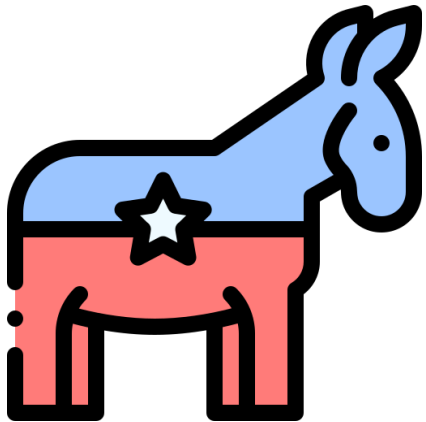
“I'd like them to focus on the job market and housing. I'm trying to move up to northern Georgia and I got the land, but I can't build because it's so expensive. First, it was the wood. Now, it's the inflation and the mortgage rates and everything else and just stuck right now. And immigration too. All the people coming in and all the money that we're giving out. I know that there's a lot of help needed over in other countries and stuff, but we need our own help.” – Ticket-splitter/FL



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Republicans Want to Stop Biden

"I can say that anything that will keep Joe Biden's suggestions from getting passed, I'm for..."
– AZ Rep



"I wanted [to vote for] somebody who was strong enough to stand up to Biden. To stop some of this insanity of a train that's just running away in all different directions that doesn't align with anything I believe in as [an] American." – AZ Rep

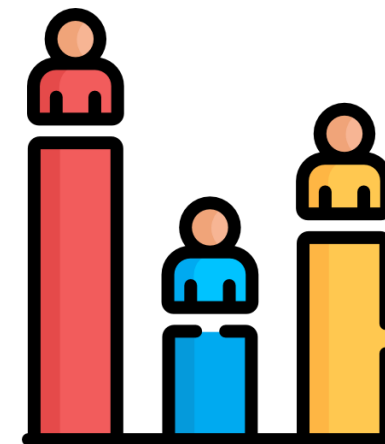
"Just saying I don't like Biden and I want him out. And I think anybody that could help that would be good..." – AZ Rep

When Deciding Whether to Vote, Republicans Invariably Think About Election Integrity

“Just like with the last big election, how they said that the votes, some were being thrown out and some weren't being counted. We don't know. And who's to know what is going on and what's not going on? We can't see it with our own eyes, we're not seeing these people count them. Why don't they just put it all live on national TV, and make cameras all over people, and sit there and count each single one, if it's that difficult? It shouldn't be that hard to count. It really shouldn't.” – AZ Rep

“Well, my concern was about a week before the voting was happening, I found out that Katie Hobbs was Secretary of State. I didn't know that. And then it was concerning to me...I'm not saying that she's done anything, but by principle that's wrong. That's like saying you run a school election and the person who's overseeing is one of the candidates. That was a huge concern to me.” – AZ Rep

“The tabulator is going bad in the Republican districts the morning of, and they had to take the ballots and review them in a different manner that is more open to fraud. And also, there was no corrections on the 2020 elections. The concerns with them weren't addressed fully and answered, in my opinion. I'm not a constitutional scholar on elections or anything, but based on my understanding, I didn't see any of the voters' concerns on election fraud for 2020 satisfied.” – AZ Rep



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Democratic Non-Voters are Fatalistic About Whether Voting Makes a Difference

"[Moderator: What message were you trying to send by not voting?] It's rigged. Everything is just, it's just controlled by the big man, big corporations, the big guy. It's just crazy. Everything's rigged." – NC Dem

"I think that most of the time, it probably doesn't matter. I think in our local elections, it matters. And I voted in the last presidential election because I felt like nobody could be meaner. So, anybody else would be an improvement. But other than that, I really agree with other people that **we're somewhat a little bit powerless because nobody is jumping up and putting laws into effect that they could put into effect to make things more fair.** Not completely fair, but oh my goodness, a little bit better than what we've got now." – NC Dem

"There's that, the part of it is you have to kind of worry, **does your vote even mean anything just the way things are.** But on the slightest percent that it makes a difference, I'd rather do it and have my opinion out there, even though it may not make a difference than to have not done it and just feel like I contributed to the problem, even though realistically I know my vote wouldn't have really made any difference. But I guess it's an attempt." – NC Dem

"So having younger people, people that are actually dealing with today's world, like literally living in it with the economy, regardless whether you have a wonderful salary or not, it's hard. It's almost unbearable... But yet we're still funding wars across the sea. We are helping this, we're helping that, but we're not even helping the people right here in our own country, especially with mental health and it's just disturbing. **So I would rather cut the world out and try to do what I can with what I can, instead of even going and wasting my time on voting.** I'm not going to miss a day from work just to go and vote [for] someone that's never going to listen to anything or even ask me or care about my opinion." – NC Dem

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Even Some Non-Voters Struggle With Not Voting and Agree “You Can’t Complain” if You Don’t Vote

“...I do feel like it is my responsibility as a citizen to be involved. And I can't complain if I didn't vote. And I truly feel that way. But it was just, I don't know, a lot of personal things. But again, I probably will never, never let that happen again.” – AZ Rep

“I've been raised my whole life that not only do we have the right to vote, but we have the obligation to vote. Twenty years ago, I worked for an election, Maricopa County bond election so some of the things that these people were saying regarding counting the vote. I should have voted. Yeah, I feel guilty. It's a weird thing. But I got disgusted.” – AZ Rep

“From now on, no matter what, I will exercise the early voting thing or option and not say, ‘Oh, well I'll take care of it tomorrow.’ And as far as my vote not being counted, even if the votes are counted, I don't mean this to sound bad, there's some knucklehead somewhere jumping up and down saying, oh, well maybe the votes were planted or it's crazy.” – NC Dem

“If you don't vote and the candidate you were [rooting] for loses by one point, your point could have either A) tied them, or B) put them over to be the winner. It's like, oh, **you don't want to be kicking yourself later. Like she said, you know, can't complain if you don't vote.**” – Ticket-splitter/IA

“I know that I'm just one person, but if enough ‘one people’ have a voice, then we make a difference. **My one voice could make or break somebody winning or somebody losing and you never know,** so I'll take the chance of doing my vote and giving my vote because you never know.” – Ticket-splitter/AZ



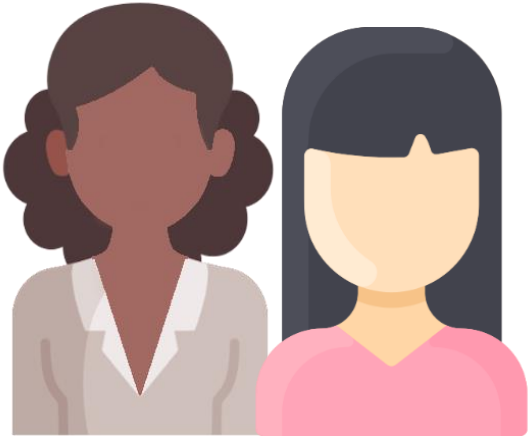
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Reminders to Vote Are Merely Tolerated

“Honestly, I just couldn't wait till it was over, only because of the text messaging and the phone calls.” – Ticket-splitter/PA



“[I] just ignore it.” – NC Dem



“I'm glad that they happen, even though I tend to be somewhat of a hermit, I'm very glad that there is somebody reaching out and encouraging people to vote. It still is our choice whether or not to vote, obviously, but some of the texts that I got were informational in nature. This is where you can early vote, this is where you can do this, go to this link and put your zip in and find out where your polling place is. That kind of information is helpful.” – NC Dem

“Some of it I got was like, seemed like they were trying shame you into voting. Like, hey, people can see that you didn't vote and friends or family or employees, just stuff like that. It was trying to shame you into voting. **Just threw it in the trash.**” – NC Dem

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Ticket-Splitters Cite Candidate Specific Motivations Rather Than Abstractions

"I voted for Kemp for governor because we've had great job growth and great economy under his leadership the last four years. And I voted for Raphael Warnock because he championed some causes that are near and dear to me for my family, like the cap on the insulin costs and Medicare out of pocket costs." – Ticket-splitter/GA

"Pro-choice and all that good stuff... I already voted before because he was our senator before, and he didn't make... Or whatever, the governor, whatever he was. I get him confused. He was our, whatever, DeWine, was our senator [or] governor before. And he had some pretty good choices during COVID." – Ticket-splitter/OH

"I think it'll be good because this person, that one is going to help with the gas price, or saying that we'll help with the gas prices, help with the cost of Medicare and prescription costs and stuff like that." – Ticket-splitter/AZ

"Basically how each candidate would allocate governmental funds, because our current governor, she just doesn't seem to care about the community as a whole or communities. And yeah, the abortion rights was a big thing too. Yeah, she fired the current governor we have now. A couple years ago, fired the CEO of Iowa Medicaid, and it was because he disagreed with how she was going to be paying her employees with what funds, and she wanted him to sign off on it. And he's like, "No, that's not right," but she got away with it anyway... He's been doing a great job all these years, and so I just voted him in again." – Ticket-splitter/IA

"Regarding Polis for governor, it was mainly energy based. He hired or pieced together a pretty biased panel to oversee operations in Colorado, so I feel like I just wanted to get away from that, and that was one of my main motivators. With Senate, I didn't really have a huge motivator. It seemed like things were going right as they should, so I went with who was already in office at that time, Michael Bennet." – Ticket-splitter/CO

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Trump Is Not Much of A Factor and Even His Fans Are Not Excited About Him Running Again

"I don't need any more information from Trump. I think he's a bully. I'm sorry. I'm not a fan of his either. He's a bully when things aren't going his way. He intimidates everybody...I don't want him running. I hope he gets knocked out quick." – Ticket-splitter/FL

"I'm not really sure who [should run], but I hope it [is] not Pence." – Ticket-splitter/CO

"So if it was between [Trump] and another Republican, somebody that has the same values and as far as what he could do for the country, I would say maybe I would probably lean towards somebody else for sure. Just because him as a person, with the way he handles things, putting everything on Twitter and arguing with... I think it's a joke. We're not in high school. Be professional..." – AZ Rep

"I love Trump. I voted for Trump. He does great things. My concern is people vote against him just because of his personality. I think there was a time and place for him and he just is too divisive of us. Even though I like him, I think he did a great job...I think his time has come and gone and I think it was great. But he's too divisive. Too many people just don't like him because they don't like him and so I don't think he's going to fix any of this division that we have. I like DeSantis. That would be my vote." – AZ Rep

"I feel there is a Republican candidate who has that foreign policy agenda that is setting America first and mirrors some of those really strong tactics that Trump amplified in his presidency, however, is more professional, stays off Twitter." – AZ Rep



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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 November 16, 2022 with low motivation Democrats in North Carolina, low motivation Republicans in Arizona, and ticket splitters in battleground states. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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To learn more about Navigator:

<http://navigatorresearch.org>

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