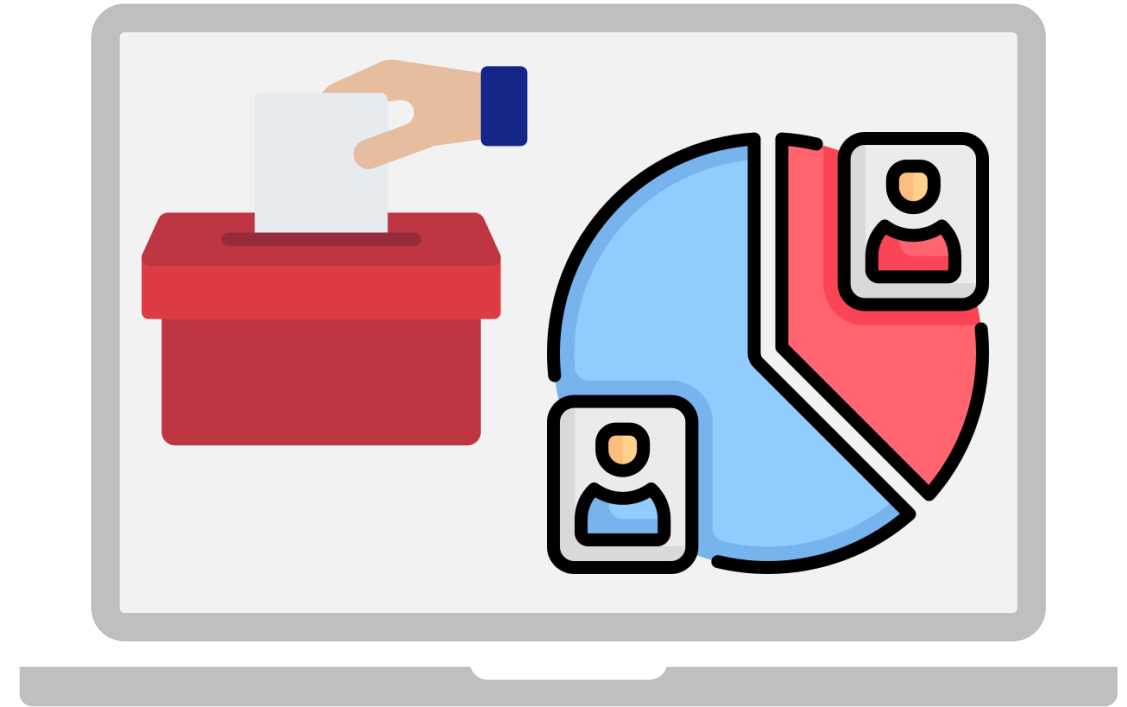


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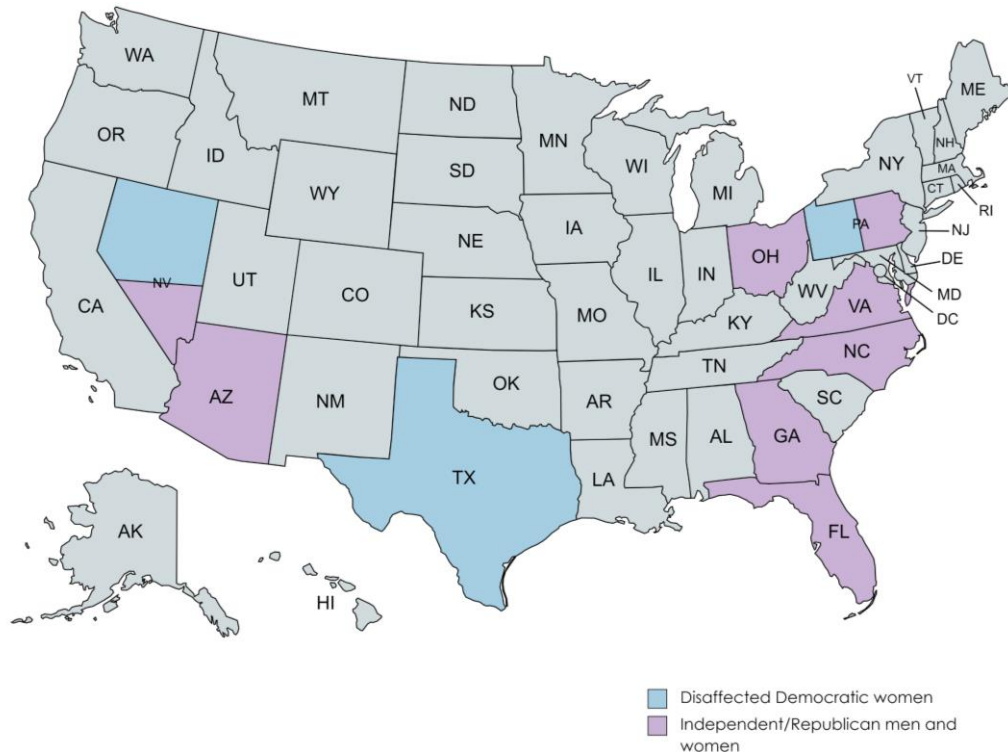
Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Younger Americans on the State of the Country, Voting, and Political Extremism



Methodology

On November 1-2, 2023, GBAO conducted six online focus groups with young voters under 36: three groups among disaffected Democratic women of color, one group among Independent men, one group among Independent women, and one group among young Republicans.

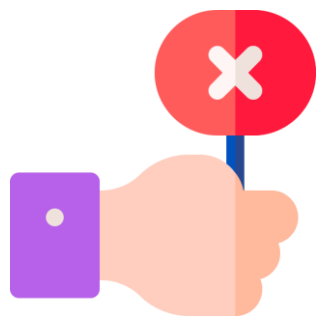


- ❖ **Group 1:** Young Republicans
- ❖ **Group 2:** Young disaffected Black Democratic women in PA
- ❖ **Group 3:** Young disaffected Hispanic Democratic women in NV
- ❖ **Group 4:** Young Independent women
- ❖ **Group 5:** Young disaffected AAPI Democratic women in TX
- ❖ **Group 6:** Young Independent men

Key Takeaways

- Young people across party lines continue to be pessimistic.
- Voting is seen as important, even if it is sometimes faced with reluctance.
- Extremism often seems right-leaning, but not everyone shares the same understanding of January 6.
- A 2024 presidential rematch between Biden and Trump evokes frustration, yet Democratic women of color in particular are galvanized against Trump.
- While some are third party curious, many see voting for a third-party candidate as “a waste of a vote.”

Many Young People are Pessimistic About the Direction of the Country



Moderator: What's going well in the country today?

"Nothing comes to mind. That's a shame but nothing comes to mind about anything that's doing well right now." – Democratic woman, PA

"Probably gun violence is something that's definitely not going well at all." – Democratic woman, TX

"Just nothing's getting better. Everything just keeps getting worse. And then we're getting band-aids for replacements for things that should just be fixed entirely and they're wondering why band-aids aren't fixing it." – Democratic woman, NV

"I say nothing simply because I don't think anybody's particularly pleased at this point, neither side when it comes to politics, social issues. I feel like everyone has a gripe with something. And with that being said, **when nobody is satisfied, I have a hard time believing things are going well.**" – Republican man, GA

"Yeah, I feel like at the current time there are very few winning sides. We're all feeling the same strains of inflation, rising house costs, social justice problems. So, no one's side really feels victorious. **I think everyone's, for the most part, in the pits.**" – Republican woman, FL

"I got nothing." – Independent woman, GA

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Many Share Personal Economic Concerns

"I think that wages, and salaries, and as well as inflation are something that are really important to me because that's something that is suffocating as well to me at the current moment. **I do definitely feel like I'm drowning in society and that society is not created for single women in middle age...** Well, I work three jobs. I have a bachelor's degree and have been going to school for my master's... **I'm 33 years old and I cannot survive without a roommate and that's frustrating...** Even though it's a great salary in comparison to when [older people] were at my stage of life, it is just above poverty line where I don't qualify for food stamps, but I also am not capable of surviving alone. So, the fact that I don't have a husband or a partner to share those bills, I'm not able to survive and I have three jobs."
– Independent woman, NC

"So, I have about three issues that's on my mind. The first one would be I care about universal healthcare. **Perhaps I'm biased because I have my own health issues and sometimes I'm in the ambulance and having \$1,000 bills per trip is a bit insane.** Also, the interest rate hikes is at a ridiculous point, and the third issue would be college tuition. It really shouldn't be that much, especially for public universities."
– Independent woman, PA

"I think the economy right now is putting a lot of folks in a tough spot in terms of inflation. I see a lot of that from my staff and we're trying to do our best to help them out. So that's another big thing just to see if we can turn a corner and start to bring prices down a little bit for people."
– Independent man, AZ

"**What matters to me the most really is just my own cost of living.** If I'm making X amount of dollars, but groceries are super expensive and gas is super expensive, how can I get to work if I'm making less money? Again, also healthcare. If I get sick, can I afford going to the doctor to get medicine? I don't know."
– Democratic woman, TX

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Voting Viewed With Some Skepticism Though Participants See its Importance

"I think it's important, but I don't really feel like my vote matters that much... Obviously every vote matters, but I feel like if I didn't vote, it wouldn't be the end of the world." – Republican man, NC

"Very rarely have there been candidates that I felt excited to go to the ballot box for. But at the same time, I [know] the civic duty of voting and trying to choose what direction I would like the country to go in and doing my part in that." – Republican woman, FL

"I lean towards the side of that there could be some manipulation [in counting the votes]." – Republican man, PA

"Most of the time I didn't really like the options I had. I **wasn't very enthusiastic, but, I mean, I still voted anyway.** But yeah, most of the time, it was just like, 'Okay, I'm just going to vote,' because that's just something that I do as a citizen. But it's not like, 'Oh, yeah, I'm really pumped up,' for someone." – Democratic woman, PA

"I feel like voting is very important. However, sometimes I feel like when I do vote for an elected official, I don't know if that official is going to really do what they say they're going to do. **So, sometimes I'm kind of going back like, 'Is it even worth voting? We're going to all be in the same boat again,'** but I think it's very, very important..." – Independent woman, PA

"I think that **every vote counts.** Every single person, it all adds up. Just like every penny counts to make up a dollar, I feel like every single person's vote counts." – Democratic woman, NV

"I **want to also be heard, even if my small vote.** But at least I feel like I did something to be heard." – Democratic woman, TX

"**Voting is super important to me.** I vote in the primaries, local elections, midterms, all of it, because if I can make any kind of effect. **Even though a lot of the times it feels like it's fruitless...** And it's, do we really get to choose those two choices? It doesn't feel like it... and that can be disheartening. But I still try to keep in there just in case I have that little bit of a chance of affecting something." – Independent man, NV

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Most See “Political Extremism” as Right-Leaning

Moderator: When I say the phrase “political extremism,” what comes to mind?

“The storming of the Capitol.” – Democratic woman, NV

“Historically, things like the KKK and organizations like that where their goals [go] against humanity [and] basic ethical practices.” – Republican woman, FL

“The thing that immediately comes to my mind is groups like QAnon and [those] kinds of really, really extreme political ideas that she was just talking about get pushed on social media.” – Independent woman, GA

“Donald Trump.” – Democratic woman, NV

“Trump supporters.” – Democratic woman, TX

“January 6th, I think that is an example.” – Independent man, AZ

“I think about outright extremists, just like over the top outright far, far right, that side of the political spectrum.” – Democratic woman, PA

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Not All Have a Shared Understanding of January 6

“You're just going to let people walk in the front door? It just doesn't make any sense to me.” – Republican man, PA

“But [Michael Fanone] lost me when he said thousands of Americans that stormed into the Capitol, because that's not true. It was just a couple of men that did that. Isn't that right?” – Republican woman, GA

“There were definitely thousands of people in the White House, and there were a few extremists for sure. I would say most of the people that actually stormed the White House were pretty extreme.” – Republican man, NC

“Oh, they're storming the Capitol. They're attacking the Capitol. They're defending.’ Those words, in my mind, make it seem like there's dudes with guns trying to break down the door, and there are cops behind barricades with guns, and they're having a firefight in the hallway, and stuff like that. But I don't know [if that happened]...” – Independent man, AZ

“I don't think it was so much Trump himself. I don't think that he went on and was like, ‘If you support me...’ whatever. I think it was, a group of his supporters thought like, ‘What's the best way to prevent this from being counted, with the votes being counted?’ I think whoever their group leader was initiated like, ‘Well, this is what we believe in. This is who we want. Let's just take things into our own hands.’ And they decided to go do it.” – Democratic woman, TX

“What happened January 6th? I'm so sorry.” – Democratic woman, TX



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However, Those Aware of the January 6 Events Acknowledge the Chaos

“The January 6th riot, just how extreme that was all for Donald Trump and whatever he conjured up. I just feel like... **That's a great example of extreme...**” – Democratic woman, PA

“There was disruption in family dynamics. Individuals lost family members, so now they have to forever undergo therapy systems to try to rehabilitate themselves from the loss of a loved one. **And not to mention some of those officers were parents, so these are children now growing up without their parent.**” – Hispanic woman, NV

“It was kind of severe. I've never really seen something happening like that before. I would consider myself pretty young. I'm in my early 20s but growing up I **don't recall seeing something as dramatic as that happened before in our Capitol**, so I thought that was pretty severe examples of political extremism, people just taking whatever side of politics they're on so severe that they have to inflict violence and danger. I just thought that was a little bit wild and insane. **So, it kind of showed us a side of our country and the amount people are willing to go to get their point across, and that to me can be a little bit dangerous.**” – Independent woman, PA

“**A bunch of cops got really hurt bad. Cops had to shoot a lady. Windows were broken and everything.** And the senators and people that were in there, they had to use the tunnels to escape and stuff. It was pretty bad.” – Independent man, NV

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Young People Not Excited About a Rematch

Moderator: What comes you mind when you think about a 2024 presidential rematch between Biden and Trump?

"It's a recurring nightmare. Because both choices are terrible. To be fair, it's like one slightly less worse than the other... It's just I don't think we're going to get anywhere either way whoever [is] re-elected, it's not going to be a positive thing in my opinion really." – Independent man, NV

"Not this again. That's just what comes to mind. Why can't we just have something new? It's just ridiculous in my opinion." – Republican woman, GA

"Deja vu." – Democratic woman, NV

"Idiocracy if we're going to do this exact same song and dance over again." – Democratic woman, NV

"Can we get new people running? Is that an option?" – Democratic woman, TX

"I thought we had already gotten over this. I just think it's kind of ridiculous on both parties." – Democratic woman, PA



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Women of Color in Particular are Galvanized Against Trump



"I feel like I know I'm not going to pick Donald Trump, and that's really what my decision is based on. That's what it was based on the first time. That's what it will be based on this time... Yeah, anybody but him. They could put a dog in. I'll pick the dog." – Democratic woman, PA

"Trump doesn't exactly represent peace. His image, the image he's created these past years don't represent peace. So, I think Biden will be a better option for us." – Democratic woman, PA

"[If Trump wins the election] I think that would personally suck from my standpoint and seeing or experiencing Trump as a president for four years... I would definitely feel heartbroken if Trump was president because the strife I feel right now with Biden as president would intensify if he was president because it'd be like what Biden is doing internationally plus what Trump would do domestically in the United States." – Democratic woman, TX



"I don't think that Donald Trump should be allowed to run again. I definitely don't agree with any of the views he had on immigration for one for sure." – Democratic woman, NV



"I definitely feel like he brought out racism a lot more. I know it's always been a thing, but as soon as he got elected, it was just so ugly. So, I feel like that is one thing that will definitely get way worse if he comes back, as well as the immigration stuff that he was trying to do that would negatively impact my family for sure." – Democratic woman, NV

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Yet Nearly All are Third Party Curious

"[Voting third party] would just simply be a protest vote from my end." – Independent man, OH

"If it's a Biden-Trump ticket, I'm just not so sure that I would vote for either of them. If there was a third-party candidate, I would probably go third party." – Independent woman, VA

"I'm definitely going to be looking at the other candidates from the third parties." – Republican woman, GA

"You never want to be voting for the lesser of two evils. So hopefully a third option means you vote for somebody you actually believe in. Because I do find that **whenever I'm even thinking about a third option, it's because I feel like the other two just aren't good enough.**" – Republican man, GA

"Hopefully, instead of voting for the lesser of two evils, **you might find someone who is more moderate.**" – Republican woman, VA

"I feel like I don't align with either candidate, so I'd rather vote third party instead of not voting at all." – Democratic woman, PA

"I definitely thought of [voting for a third-party candidate] because honestly, I really don't care for either party. I have seriously thought of it, but for other elections, I didn't think of it [in 2020] because, with Donald Trump possibly being elected, that was something that I wanted to make sure that my vote didn't sway towards him being elected." – Democratic woman, PA



Though Some See Voting for a Third Party as a Waste of a Vote

“I've thought about a third party, but then I've thought about the majority rule again of if the house is on fire and there's two hoses and a bucket, you're going to want to grab a hose versus the bucket. It's not the way that you want it to go... It's harder for [third-party candidates] to even get their voices heard. Even if it aligns perfectly with what you want, it's still harder to even, **it feels like almost your vote's a waste if you vote for them** because it's just getting pushed aside.” – Democratic woman, NV

“I would [consider a third-party candidate] if it was more realistic. I would love to vote for a third party. I would love to, but **as it stands now, they get like, what, 2% of the vote, 3% of the vote. It's a waste of a vote.**” – Independent man, AZ

“**It's a protest vote.** That's what it'll be... So, if you're leaning towards one direction, say you're leaning towards Biden or Trump, **if you do your protest vote, and then the person that's leaning the opposite direction from you wins, you weren't able to assist with getting the less shitty option.**” – Independent man, NV

“It's been seen that whenever people vote for third-party candidates, those votes, that could have helped a person that was the lesser of the two evils. **It often doesn't go their way, and we end up having the most of the evils.**” – Republican woman, GA

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Few Know Much About the Current Third-Party Candidates

"The last election I was more aware. I think there was Andrew. I don't remember his last name. Yang?" – Democratic woman, TX

"Was Bernie Sanders [running this time] or no?" – Democratic woman, NV

"Honestly, I don't really follow super closely because I'm an independent. So, prior to the main election, it's not something that I keep my eye on too closely." – Independent woman, VA

"I don't know anything about [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.], so I'm not going to lie." – Independent man, AZ

"The Kennedy one sounds familiar." – Republican man, NC



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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: Jessica Floyd, 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 six online focus groups November 1-2, 2023 with young voters under 36: independent and Republican men and women across the country who are undecided about their vote preference in the 2024 presidential election. 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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