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## FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Friday, July 26, 2024

Democrats, Independents, and  
Republicans on Project 2025 and the  
Supreme Court



# Methodology

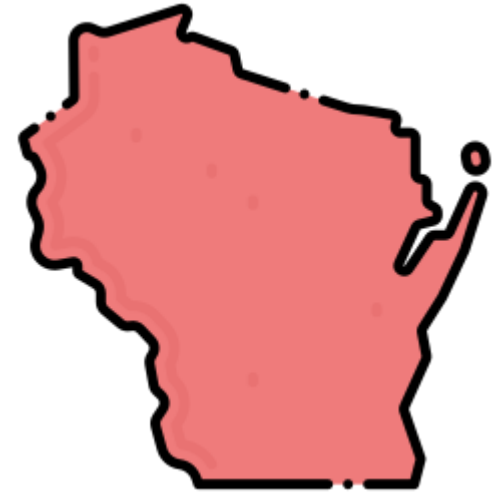
On July 17, 2024, GBAO conducted three online focus groups with Democrats, independents, and Republicans across various demographics who were all politically engaged – including a mix across education, gender, race.



Independents in Pennsylvania



Democrats under the age of 30 in Michigan



Republicans who want the Republican Party to make changes and move in a new direction in Wisconsin

# Key Takeaways

- Project 2025 is widely known by engaged Americans—particularly Democrats and independents.
- More information about it alarms participants across party lines.
- Many find Trump’s involvement with Project 2025 to be obvious, with Republicans more skeptical.
- The court is seen as too politically conservative, even beyond the overturning of *Roe*.

# Despite Some Modest Signs of Economic Improvement, Most Feel Pessimistic About the Country

Moderator: Fill in the blank: I feel [BLANK] is going well in the country today.

"I feel like the **stock market is doing well.**" – PA man, independent lean Democrat

"I was going to say the stock market, but more specifically I **think inflation is headed in the right direction.**" – PA man, independent

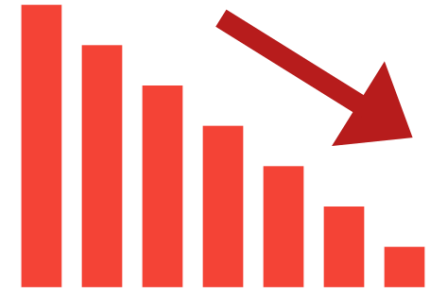
"**Well, women's rights [is not going well], it just seems that they are just being taken away.** I'm 58 years old, I have my rights, I've been through all that and whatever, but the younger girls and the younger generation, for their basic rights to be taken away, I just think is ridiculous." – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

"**My knee-jerk reaction was to say nothing,** but I don't think that's true. I think there are things that are going well in the United States." – MI man, strong Democrat

"**The economy [is not doing well].**" – MI woman, weak Democrat

"I know there's a lot of inflation, but at the same time it feels like jobs are up and things are going well." – WI man, weak Republican

"**Not a lot.**" – WI man, independent lean Republican



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# Divisiveness and Tone Are Still Pervasive Worries

*Moderator: What isn't going well in the country today?*

"It seems that the country is, you're this side or you're this side. You're either the strict conservative or the bleeding-heart liberal. **There really doesn't, to me, seem to be too much in between.**" – WI man, independent lean Republican

"**It's been so divisive**, and the current age is so far apart that it feels hard to even figure out how we can come back to a point where people could actually talk to each other. **It's depressing.**" – WI man, independent lean Republican



"**I feel like there's really no conversation anymore. It's just anger.** And I feel like there's one side of the political divide where they are still playing by the old rules, and then there's another that is not. And you have these two sides with conflicting beliefs and tactics, and sometimes things get done, but more often than not nothing gets done and it's just a battle of who's going to win. And most times it's not the everyday person." – PA man, independent lean Democrat

"I said hatred because **everybody's against each other.**" – PA woman, independent

"**Our political culture is becoming more divisive than it's ever been**, people aren't able to see eye to eye on things that we used to see eye to eye on five years ago. **So, I think generally [things are] bleak.**" – MI man, strong Democrat

"Some people disagree with someone immediately because of their political views or anything wrong about them, whether that's gender, race, whatever. **And now I feel like tensions are even higher because of politics.**" – MI woman, strong Democrat

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# The Assassination Attempt—and Reactions to it—Is Yet Another Symptom Rather Than a New Inflection Point

“I couldn't believe it. I was in shock. I would've never thought that this would happen. And then I watched all the news alerts and whatnot, and it just blew my mind. It's very scary. **It's a scary world that we're living in today.**” – PA woman, independent

“I don't want that to happen. I **don't want that to be a tool for how we get things done and resolve differences in the country.**” – PA man, independent lean Democrat

“It was definitely a very complex situation for sure. **My general feeling on the matter has been that an assassination attempt isn't the answer, but I also understand that there's a lot of discontent with the presidential candidates** and it just has been complicated further with the more information that we've had about who the shooter was, what their affiliations were. And it's just been kind of a mess.” – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

“I definitely thought it was crazy to live through something that we read about in history books, and I think it also goes along with the political extremist **and just both sides going too far in their hate and dislike for each other over disagreements.**” – MI woman, weak Democrat

“I feel like people think... For example, the thing that happened this past weekend with Trump, **people think that the Democrats hired the shooter. That's not really nice to say because you don't have any proof of that now.** You don't know who did it, but that makes [it] a Republican coming after a Democrat...” – WI woman, weak Republican

“I don't know, I **expected it. Not necessarily against Trump, but again, the conversation, that track of how divisive things are.** It wasn't a big surprise to me, which is sad. It's really a sad thing to have to say.” – WI man, weak Republican

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# The Media Is a Consistent Source of Ire and Blame

*Moderator: Who or what do you blame for the state of the country right now?*

**“And with both the mainstream media and alternative sources of media, it's become an eyeball game of who can grab your attention for the longest. The way the news is even broken up now, most people get their news from the social media, so you get it in a 7 to 10 second bite or whatever. So, it's just all really compact and extreme media.”** – MI man, strong Democrat

**“I think [most media sources are] fueling the fire. I think toning it down means to calm people's emotional reactions and to think more logically. I think that the news and other sources of media are just making the issue worse by being 24/7 and constantly having talking heads with opinions instead of reporting on just the facts of situations happening in this country and in the world.”** – MI woman, weak Democrat

**“With social media stuff taking off, now everybody has an opinion, and so we're oversaturated with everybody's opinion and it's allowing people who shouldn't have, I don't want to say a voice, but shouldn't say certain things, they're saying it and they're getting away with it too.”** – MI man, strong Democrat



**“I feel like everything is made for TV. It's all for as big and as crazy, and as you say, divisive and just how big can we make this? How much can we make people have to choose a side and have to feel they get sucked into whatever the narrative is.”** – WI woman, strong Republican

**“You watch one channel, they say something, you watch Fox News, they're crazy out there with conspiracies and everything. That doesn't help us. That doesn't bring us together. And I don't think it's going to change.”** – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

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# Project 2025 Is Widely Known Among Independents and Democrats, but Less so With Republicans

*Moderator: What have you heard about Project 2025?*

“Like some big bill that can restructure how the government is run? I don't know, that's what I got the gist of.” – WI woman, weak Republican

“Yeah, I've heard of it. I've not done deep dives into it or anything like that... I'm sure there are good ideas in there. **Some of the things I've heard, can you actually do that? I don't think you can.**” – WI man, independent lean Republican

“I'd be interested in seeing those 920 pages. I hadn't seen anything about it yet. I have heard of it, but I don't know the details of it. My concern is while I identify with being somewhat conservative, I'm bothered that everyone just has to toe the line and they're not allowed to think individually.” – WI man, weak Republican

“I actually read it. **And Project 2025 is from the Heritage Foundation**, and most of the people that came up [with] this plan for Project 2025 actually served under Donald Trump, and his name is in it like 300 and some odd times. But anyway, **Project 2025 is really there to take away a lot of our rights. They want to clean up the homeless and put them in practically concentration camps.** There's just so much in there that people should really take the time to learn about it. Everybody's talking about it.” – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

“I would define Project 2025 as a pamphlet of how to quick-start a Trump presidency. It's been backed by a lot of Republican political scientists... They already planned the pre-work of what happens, so as soon as Trump becomes elected, boom, they can just get going with these things. **It's something that the Democrats talk a lot about. It's something to be afraid of.**” – MI man, strong Democrat

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# Many Say They Are Hearing About Project 2025 on Social Media and Online

"I don't know much about it. It was just a little bit posted on social media. I'm delighted to learn. I'm not sure where to find out [about] the actual Project 2025." – PA woman, independent lean Republican



"People started talking about it actually on TikTok. When I was flipping through, they were talking about this Project 2025. I haven't really heard about it before until several months ago. And then that's when I started to read it." – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

"I've only seen it a lot on social media. I think from what it sounds like, it doesn't sound good." – MI woman, weak Democrat



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# Initial Messages Evoke More Questions and Concerns About Project 2025

*Supporter statement: "Project 2025 is a policy plan that represents the next conservative Republican president's last chance to save the republic, rescuing the country from the grip of the radical left through the right governing agenda and right leadership."*

"That's a concerning thing, but also I guess I don't have a good enough understanding of politics, how a plan that the president hasn't necessarily even said that he would agree to yet could demolish our system of checks and balances as they are. We made the government so that this kind of thing can't happen. I just get question marks in my head." – MI man, strong Democrat

"Just what I've heard, there was some meeting where people were talking about it, the supporters and the creators of it, and I think the main proponent was talking about how they're going to enact it and as long as the left complies, it'll be bloodless, which is a threat. So in that way, I think they're the extreme ones." – MI woman, weak Democrat

"Yeah, it's just the way that the agenda of the Republican Party right now has gone and how it's gone further right and more extreme and less mainstream. And then you hear the ideas, it's like, well, that is a little frightening." – PA man, independent lean Democrat

*Opponent statement: "Project 2025 is an extreme Republican takeover that will give the president new and unchecked powers over federal agencies threatening Americans rights and freedoms, our democracy, and the middle class."*

"Well, unchecked power is definitely something I think his administration has been going for and I'm not a fan of that for any president, right, or left, or middle, or anything. I think all actions need to be checked by other branches of the government. So, I know that was the opponent's summary, but it seems fitting." – PA man, independent

"I also agree with the opponent [statement] because every time the Republicans take the power over, they take a lot of rights from the middle-class people." – PA woman, independent

"The opponent's statement was less instantly polarizing, but at the same time, it offered no fact to actually support their position. Neither side did." – WI man, independent lean Republican

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# After Additional Information, Participants See the Plan as a Power Grab That Disregards Democracy

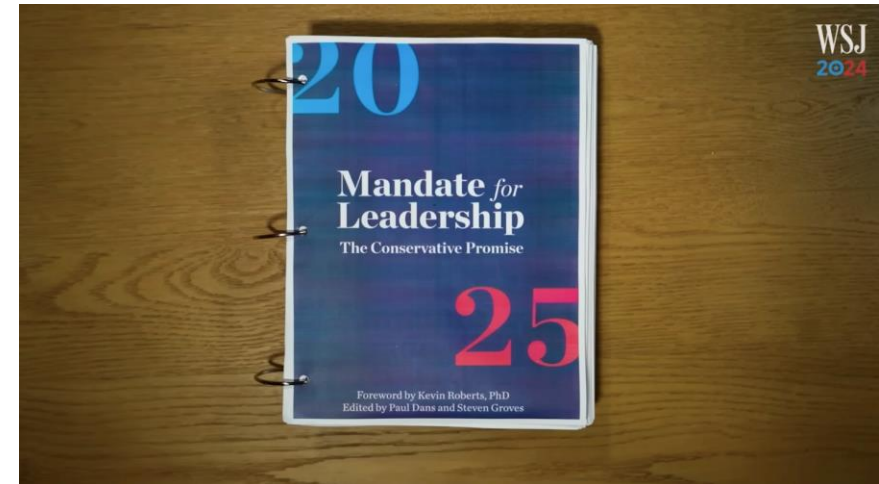
*Moderator: What do you think after hearing more information on Project 2025?*

“There is nothing in there that makes any kind of sense to me as a registered voter that would make me want to say, ‘You know what, yes, I’m all for this. Let’s give the President of the United States of America every legal power we can possibly give that person and let him go.’” – WI woman, strong Republican

“I think it’s giving us a king again, where’s democracy? No, you’re making a dictator. It’s a slippery slope. They’ve been saying a snowball effect to put this man in so much power when no person should have so much control over the United States of America.” – WI woman, weak Republican

“Shocking. Because we were founded on democracy, we should keep our democracy. I don’t think a president should have free rein over everything, going after who he doesn’t like, or making up laws or whatever.” – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

“I don’t like one person having that much control over somebody. [It should] not [be] about your personality, but it should be about your background, or they earned the job, not if you’re a Republican or if you agree with what I want to do.” – MI man, strong Democrat



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# The Overhauling of Federal Institutions and Safeguards Also Seen as Dangerous

“They want to take away all these rights. The veterans, like the homeless veterans, they want to take away that, their jobs, they want to eliminate the Department of Education. And that's something that we need. People need to be educated, our children need to be educated. So, taking those rights away would be troublesome.” – PA woman, independent



“It's basically going to get rid of the Department of Education, which I think is a huge concern. But again, I think that's something that's in there is almost like bait. To me, it's not something that could get removed. It's been there as long as I know.” – MI man, independent lean Democrat

“Well, there could be pieces in there that I agree [with]. Let's say there are too many government employees, but that they're going to turn [them] into little political disciples? Almost insulting.” – WI man, weak Republican



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# There Is Some Confusion as to What Can Be Done to Stop its Implementation

“Some Republicans are definitely more extreme than others... and they might believe in Project 2025 too and will aid [Trump] in whatever way possible if he gets reelected to implement at least some of the policies that Project 2025 outlines. So, it definitely makes me fearful for this upcoming election season and beyond.” – MI woman, strong Democrat



“I think [Congress] could maybe have an influence, but I don't think they could ultimately stop it.” – MI woman, weak Democrat

“I think if Trump gets elected it's going to be implemented. I think the GOP has done a pretty good job with the Supreme Court and the federal judges on the lower levels as well. And it doesn't really matter who's in Congress, if Trump says this is my executive order, we're going to do this. And if the Supreme Court keeps batting it down, then there's no way to really check that power.” – PA man, independent lean Democrat



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# Republicans Are Skeptical of Trump's Involvement, but Others Find the Connection Clear



"I do not think Trump's affiliated with that. Trump is very radical sometimes, but I don't think that is his doing." – WI woman, weak Republican

"It's almost too outlandish to believe that it could necessarily be aligned with anyone in particular. It's more generated for a reaction than it would be to try to get someone to align with one side or the other." – WI man, weak Republican

"He is not a religious man. I think he hides behind [religion] to gain supporters on the right. I think he is behind whatever gives him the most power and gives power to people that support him monetarily and he helps them to enact what they want to see, what they envision." – MI woman, weak Democrat

"I think he's lying [about his involvement with Project 2025]. He also said that he likes some stuff, but there was some stuff that he didn't like. So, I think if he was to become president, he would definitely follow through, but he will probably even tweak it even more and make more stuff that he wants." – MI man, strong Democrat

"Some of those things in there are stuff that Trump said... Like using the Justice Department to investigate certain people and not others and that the president should be there. So, he might not endorse it, but he's endorsed different policies in it. So, even if it's not by him, he still probably agrees with a lot of it." – PA man, independent

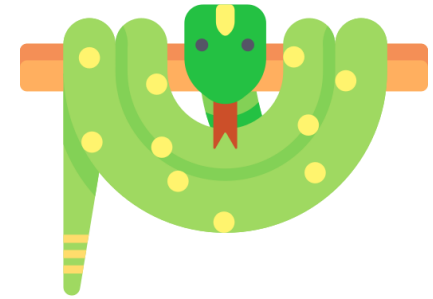


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# If Project 2025 Were an Animal, It Would Be “Scary” or “Dangerous”

Moderator: If you had to describe Project 2025 as an animal, what would it be?

“Cobra... Because it's looking to poison and kill from within.” – WI man, independent lean Republican



“I'm going to say a cockroach. It'll never die now [that] the idea is out there.” – WI woman, weak Republican



“Probably a rabid dog...It seems like it's a thing that could cause very big problems if it were to get near anybody. It needs to be put down.” – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

“I'm thinking a Tasmanian devil... It would just cause havoc. I can't think of the correct animal.” – PA man, independent

“A bear. Because it's scary.” – MI woman, weak Democrat

“I was thinking a lion that wants to protect the people who are in the herd, but then to everyone else it could be seen as a predator.” – MI woman, strong Democrat



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# The Supreme Court Is Seen as Too Political, Even by Trump Supporters

*Moderator: What comes to mind when you think of the Supreme Court?*

“Just packed. Just being packed with Republicans that specifically align with Trump's agenda as things have been happening in recent events.” – PA woman, independent lean Democrat

“I think it stacked a little bit too much in conservative Republican favor... I think Trump made the most appointments to the court, if I'm remembering that correctly. And they have a lifetime of power, so they have a lot of power in that branch of government.” – MI woman, weak Democrat

“The thing that comes to mind for me is decision-making, because recently the Supreme Court is a branch that seems to have a lot of impacts on people, especially with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. The first thing that comes to my mind. And it seems that it's becoming politicized, even though it is supposed to be an impartial branch of government, and that's politicized because of the split of power between the conservatives and the Democrats.” – MI woman, strong Democrat

“Conservative. Totally conservative and Trump controlled. It can't be a positive. It's supposed to be a completely nonpartisan type of institution, so by having it so partisan, it defeats the purpose of having it.” – WI man, independent lean Republican

“I used to have them on a very high pedestal, but not so much anymore. Just the things that have happened in the last year. All the kickbacks for Judge Clarence. They should be unbiased, and their decisions should really be supporting the constitution.” – WI man, weak Republican



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# Beyond the Overturning of *Roe*, Some Are Already Aware of the Immunity and *Chevron* Decisions

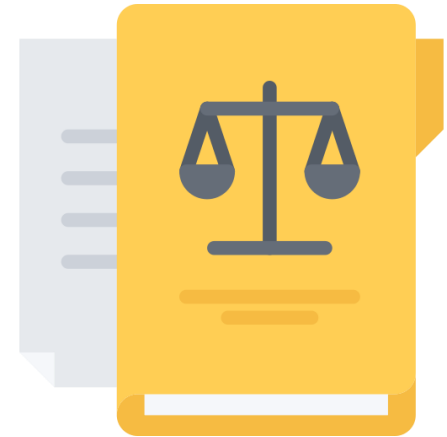
Moderator: What have been recent Supreme Court Decisions that you are aware of?

"I just saw [the *Chevron* decision] hashtagged on TikTok." – MI woman, weak Democrat

"Well, the recent one that everybody's talking about is the immunity given to the executive branch. The language they use is unclear what would be included and what a president is allowed to do, but it basically gives them a lot more immunity than before." – MI woman, weak Democrat

"[The immunity decision] was just recent. Part of one of Trump's many lawsuits against him. They determined that if he is, or not he, but if a president is committing an official act, they cannot be liable or prosecuted for that." – PA man, independent lean Democrat

"The immunity decision, the *Chevron* decision. There are a lot of things that they're inferring apparently a legal reason that has no basis in reality. It's very hard to reconcile that. Especially if you go back and look at previous rulings." – WI man, independent lean Republican



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# Few See an Advantage to Having Courts Interpret Regulations

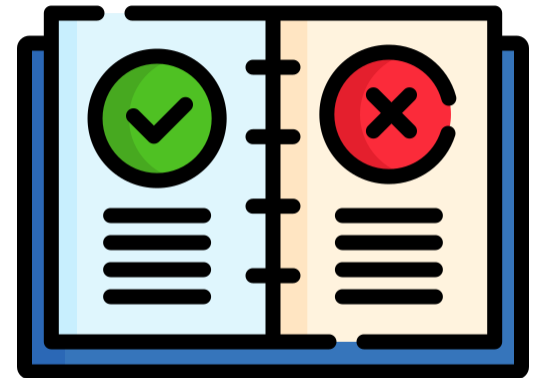
"I just get really mad at that. The one that the courts don't listen to the experts. That one just irks me." – WI woman, weak Republican

"I think it's taking away democracy, and it's more just having dictators in place that can say, 'This is what is going to happen,' without even looking at facts, without looking at what's proven." – WI woman, strong Republican

"Experts should be in charge of policy and not appointed judges that have no experience in certain topics. I know that happens with the Supreme Court when all the old people don't understand what technology is and they have no idea what they're ruling on." – PA man, independent

"I don't like [the *Chevron* decision] either because I would rather trust an expert, especially when it comes to the Food and Drug Administration, something where it could affect easily everyone in a matter of days or something." – MI man, strong Democrat

"It, once again, gives certain people more power, even when they don't necessarily have the knowledge. The first thing that came to mind is, it's the equivalent of a cashier at Meijer writing you a prescription. They don't have the knowledge, they're just doing what they think will be best, but they don't have knowledge to back it up." – MI woman, weak Democrat



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# Both Court Decisions and Project 2025 Are Viewed As Having Hidden, Negative Impact



[Moderator: If you had to write a letter to your elected officials in Washington about Project 2025, what would it be?] **“Please light this document on fire.”** – WI woman, independent lean Republican

**“I think that if left unchecked, and that's what our country was founded on, is checks and balances. If it's left unchecked and one of the three areas, either the executive legislative or Supreme Court gets too much power, it could really affect the government and the people of the country.”** – WI man, independent lean Republican

**“I just would [want to] say [to elected officials], ‘Please be wary of Project 2025. There's a lot of people who have hidden agendas.’”** – MI man, strong Democrat



**“I think [Project 2025 is] a blueprint to end democracy and to have a consolidation of power that won't be given up. And I think it's terrifying. And I think that if we want to remain a country it can't ever see the light of day.”** – PA man, independent lean Democrat

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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 three online focus groups July 17, 2024 with Democrats, independents, and Republicans in PA, MI, and WI. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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