

To: Interested Parties

From: Global Strategy Group

Date: November 2024

Re: NEW POLL RESULTS: Even as Some Voters Were Skeptical of a National Ban, Abortion Messaging Helped Win Key Senate Races

The enormous headwinds Kamala Harris and the Democrats faced in the 2024 election have been well-documented: widespread frustration over high costs, concerns about rising immigration, general backlash against incumbent parties globally in the post-pandemic era, and so on. But few issues have received as much scrutiny in the post-election analyses as abortion. In a post-*Dobbs* world, abortion has become even more of a pressing issue, and many questions remain on how Democrats can – and should – leverage this to their advantage in elections.

To assess the role abortion played in this election, Global Strategy Group conducted a poll of 1,400 2024 voters across the presidential battleground states – Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Georgia – as well as a qualitative, fully anonymous online discussion board with 50 swing voters across these same states. Global Strategy Group also conducted polls of 600 2024 voters in seven of the ten states with abortion-related ballot initiatives – Florida, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Montana, Missouri, and Nebraska – as well as another online discussion board with 50 swing voters across these amendment states.

While there is much to be learned from research among presidential swing voters (defined below*), two key findings stand above the rest:

1. Majority of the voters who decided the presidential election did not believe the threat of a national abortion ban.
2. Yet, abortion messaging was very effective in winning key Democratic Senate races.

While other issues weighed more heavily on the voters who decided the presidential election, these voters – who largely support abortion legality – were unable to fully recognize the link between a Trump presidency and further restrictions on abortion.

- Consistent with the overall electorate, these voters prioritized inflation and costs above all else (55% top two issue; 72% top four issue) when deciding which candidates to vote for in this election. Still, abortion was not a moot point: nearly 40% of swing voters identified it as a top four issue in deciding who to vote for in this election, and 66% of these voters want abortion to be legal in all or most cases – 7 points MORE than the average voter. Harris held a 42-point trust advantage with these voters on abortion.
 - Nearly six-in-ten swing voters (59%) were under the age of 45, and these voters were more likely to be voters of color than the electorate overall, with 18% of swing voters identifying as Black (compared to 14% in the overall electorate) and another 13% Latinos (7% overall). Despite abortion ultimately not being the deciding factor for many of these voters, they remain amongst the most supportive blocs of voters on this issue: 67% of voters ages 18-44, 66% of Latinos, and 74% of Black voters believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases.
- But many of these voters ultimately did not vote for the candidate that aligned with their view on abortion – for a number of reasons. First and foremost, less than a third of swing voters (31%) report hearing a lot about Trump’s stance on abortion throughout the campaign, and only 14% felt this was a top two issue Trump was focused on. Instead, they viewed Trump as much more concerned with immigration and the border (60% top two issue) and inflation and costs (31%).

*Presidential “swing” voters (11% of the battleground electorate) are defined as those who considered voting for the opposing candidate at some point throughout the campaign before ultimately settling on their choice. These voters were far more likely to be “late deciders” than the average voter (60% made their final decision on who to vote for in the last couple weeks or later, compared to just 16% of voters overall), and they ultimately broke for Trump 57% to 43% for Harris.

- Further, the abortion messaging that was levied against Trump faced a major believability hurdle in the face of Trump's continued perceived moderation on the issue. In continually emphasizing his support for "reasonable" abortion laws including exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the woman, Trump convinced nearly 60% of swing voters that he wanted either legal abortion with restrictions or illegal abortion with key exceptions. Only a third of these voters believed Trump wanted abortion to be illegal in ALL cases. Latino voters who broke for Trump were particularly susceptible to his muddying on the issue, with a mere fifth believing Trump wanted abortion to be completely illegal.
- Perhaps Trump's most successful counternarrative to Democrats' messaging on abortion was his retort about "leaving it to the states." Less than half of swing voters (46%) believed Trump would sign a national abortion ban, and only 15% believed this to be *definitely* true. A mere fifth of swing voters under the age of 45 believed Trump would definitely sign a national ban, along with just a quarter each of Latino and Black swing voters. When digging into this credibility issue in our qualitative research, it became clear that voters took Trump at his word when he said – repeatedly – it was now a state issue. Absent any direct quotes from Trump where he expressed support for a ban (as many Republican Senate candidates did), this "states' rights" argument left some with the feeling Democrats were lying about and hyperbolizing Trump's position and the consequences of a Trump presidency. Some quotes from this qualitative research that speak to this point are below.

They talked about how Trump wanted to ban abortion and not give women the right to choose. This made me mad because Trump clearly talks about how he wants the government to have less control and the states to have the control to vote how they see fit... He may not agree with abortion but agrees that women should have the right to choose and would never stand for a total abortion ban. – Latina woman, 38, Nevada, Trump voter

I heard a lot of lies about abortion because it truly isn't in the hands of the federal government anymore. Kamala tried to make it seem like Trump would have a federal abortion ban but 1. He never said that and 2. That's impossible because the rights have been given to the states to decide. It made me feel irritated. – Latino man, 26, Wisconsin, Trump voter

I heard about the national abortion ban a lot through bad commercials from the Harris party to one-sided news channels. I never heard it out of Trump's mouth and only heard him saying that he never said that and he has wanted to leave it up to the states. – White woman, 50, Wisconsin, Trump voter

Abortion messaging was very effective in winning key Democratic Senate campaigns. Abortion was one of several factors that helped Democratic Senate candidates win in Arizona, Nevada, Michigan, and Wisconsin, even as Harris lost. Abortion was a dominant topic in these campaigns, with Democratic Senate campaigns and allied groups [spending \\$175 million on broadcast TV ads on abortion](#), far more than any other issue in the Senate races. And in many of these ads, Democrats successfully used their opponents' [own statements about abortion and the women who seek them](#) to hold their feet to the fire and push back against Republicans' attempted moderation. Post-election research now shows that nearly 40% of swing voters across these states believed their Republican Senate candidate wanted abortion illegal in all cases (compared to just a third who believed this about Trump), and 55% believed they would vote for a national abortion ban (46% believed Trump would sign one). The voters who believed the Republican Senate candidate would ban abortion but that Trump would not were in large part younger voters, and especially younger women. With the consequences for abortion clearer for voters in the Senate races than in the presidential race, our qualitative research revealed that abortion was a bigger factor in many of these voters' decisions down-ballot than at the top of the ticket, as evidenced in the quote below.

“I voted for Trump even though I don’t agree with him on some important issues but thought he would be better than Kamala. I usually vote Republican but this time I voted for some Democrats as well, which is unusual for me. I feel strongly about abortion because I don’t think that’s something someone else should decide for me. I mostly voted for candidates that have the same opinion.” – White woman, 47, Arizona, Trump/Gallego voter

Additional Key Findings

The success of Trump and Republicans in Congress should not be taken as support for further restrictions on abortion. Nearly 60% of voters across the battleground support legal abortion, including nearly 40% of those who voted for Trump and the Republican Senate candidate. These abortion-supportive Republican voters largely consist of voters under 45 and white non-college voters, and many of these voters (in states where applicable) explicitly voted to protect abortion rights through ballot initiatives while still supporting the Republican candidate. Future analysis will dig more into how these voters made the decision to vote “yes” on these amendments and for Republican candidates.

Further, a robust 64% of voters oppose their representatives voting for laws that place additional restrictions on abortion nationwide, including half of those who voted for Trump and/or a Republican Senate candidate. In fact, many voters in qualitative research told us they were comfortable voting for Trump *because* they did not believe he would ban abortion nationally.

“Everyone seems to have this idea that Trump will take away birth control and reign like a dictator. I don’t think he will, I think he just wants to get things under control and he was frustrated sitting on the sidelines watching things he would fix (border, inflation, war overseas).” – White woman, 39, Wisconsin, Trump voter/Believes abortion should be legal

“Hearing [Trump] take back his abortion comment on Roe v Wade and what his plans are to close the border... made me feel more positive that he is not completely off his rocker.” – White woman, 50, Wisconsin, Trump voter/Believes abortion should be legal

- **Elected officials who break voters’ trust on this issue will be viewed unfavorably.** Over half (53%) of voters across the battleground say they would be *much* less favorable to an elected official who votes to ban abortion nationwide. And should Republicans think they can pull one over on voters by chipping away at abortion rather than outright banning it, another 45% of voters still say they would be much less favorable to an elected official who uses existing laws to further restrict abortion access nationwide – and only 15% would be much *more* favorable to an elected official who did this. Groups that are most likely to have negative views of their elected official for further restricting abortion rights include young women (49% much less favorable), Latinos (45%), Black voters (42%), and independents (43%).

Abortion was far more important to low turnout Democrats than the average voter, confirming the issue as a key base motivator. Nearly 70% of these low propensity voters – comprised predominantly of voters under 45, nearly half voters of color, and 80% non-college educated voters – say they were motivated to vote in this election by a specific issue that felt important to them. In a follow-up open ended question, abortion pops above all else as the motivating issue. Further, these voters were 12 points more likely than voters overall to say abortion was a top two issue in influencing their voting decisions in this election. These voters were also far more likely than the average voter to believe both Trump and Republicans in Congress would pass a national abortion ban, amping the stakes of this election and further galvanizing them behind Democrats. Had more low-propensity voters believed Trump would ban abortion, we may very well have seen higher base turnout as many hoped in the lead up to the election.

ABOUT THE POLL

Battleground Research

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 1,400 2024 voters in Arizona, Nevada, Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Georgia, plus oversamples to achieve interviews with 300 Hispanic voters and 300 Black voters between November 4 and November 11, 2024. The survey has a confidence interval of +/-2.6%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented. Additionally, the oversamples of Black and Latino voters have been weighted to their appropriate proportions of likely voters overall.

Amendment States Research

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 2024 voters in Arizona, plus an oversample to achieve interviews with 200 Hispanic voters between November 4 and November 10, 2024. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented. Additionally, the oversample of Latino voters has been weighted to its appropriate proportion of likely voters overall.

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 2024 voters in Nevada, plus an oversample to achieve interviews with 200 Hispanic voters between November 5 and November 10, 2024. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented. Additionally, the oversample of Latino voters has been weighted to its appropriate proportion of likely voters overall.

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 2024 voters in Florida, plus oversamples to achieve interviews with 200 Hispanic voters and 200 Black voters between November 4 and November 10, 2024. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented. Additionally, the oversamples of Black and Latino voters have been weighted to their appropriate proportions of likely voters overall.

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 2024 voters in Nebraska between November 4 and November 7, 2024. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented.

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 2024 voters in Missouri between November 5 and November 10, 2024. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented.

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 2024 voters in Colorado between November 4 and November 7, 2024. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented.

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 2024 voters in Montana between November 4 and November 7, 2024. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented.