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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Harris Voters on the Trump
Administration and Political
Engagement



Methodology

On March 25, 2025, GBAO conducted three online focus groups among 2024 Kamala Harris voters across various demographics—including a mix across education, gender, and race.



Women under 40 who voted for Harris in the 2024 presidential election, mixed levels of political engagement in New York



Black men under 50 who voted for Harris in the 2024 presidential election, mixed levels of political engagement in Georgia



Men and women who voted for Harris in the 2024 presidential election, high levels of political engagement in Virginia

Key Takeaways

- Harris voters feel largely pessimistic about the country and Trump's term so far.
- Even those who are less engaged are well informed, and most are extremely alarmed by Trump's early actions.
- Most want to see a Democratic party that is tougher, younger, and more poised to fight.
- Engagement has many forms and motivations, with many seeing it as a way to connect to others and feel less politically isolated.

Harris Voters Have a Dismal View of the Country

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

"Disillusioned." – VA woman, strong Democrat

"I was going to say **hopeless and depressed.**" – NY woman, strong Democrat

"I remember seeing Obama get elected when I was in middle school and suddenly, everything seemed a little bit brighter for a while, and nothing has felt like that in quite a while." – NY woman, strong Democrat



"It just seems like there's a lot of negative things that have been happening and **nothing positive.**" – GA man, weak Democrat

"Frustration and confusion." – GA man, strong Democrat

"Divided." – VA man, weak Republican

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News of the Trump administration Actions Have Been Breaking Through

Moderator: What have you heard about what The Trump Administration is doing?

"I've heard a lot about **federal funding cuts at universities** and I know my school in particular even sent out an email to all the administrators and faculty employees here about what that could possibly mean for the future." – NY woman, strong Democrat



"It's just like one thing after another is just blowing up. I work in a non-profit, specifically a transportation non-profit. So it was like federal funding, bam. And then it was like New York City's emissions thing, which we were rooting for years, nope, no more. It's like, what's next?" – NY woman, weak Democrat

"I feel like the **tariffs are crazy**. I feel like how he went about it and the connections he had and how they're creating these problems with Canada and Mexico. And how he had bonds with them and he's publicly destroying them." – GA man, independent lean Democrat

"Well, the **trading and the tariffs**, I got to learn more about it, but I don't think that's going to work out the way he thinks it is." – VA woman, independent lean Democrat

"I think his **wiping out DEI is really affecting a lot of people too...** I just feel like things have gotten kind of out of control and people's lives have been turned upside down with the massive **firings and shutdowns. Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security.** I think our well-being is being threatened." – VA woman, independent lean Democrat

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Trump Is Described as a “Dictator” Or “King,” While Terms Like “Authoritarian” and “Oligarchic” Also Seem to Fit

Moderator: How well do you think the following term describes what is happening in the country right now?

“Authoritarian”

“I know we’ve seen other presidents kind of act like this, but this is on a whole other level, and it doesn’t seem like it has anything to do with true democracy.” – GA man, strong Democrat

“I think authoritarian[ism] is control. So pretty much, I feel like Trump, he controls the entire office.” – NY woman, strong Democrat



“Oligarchy”

“Clearly, the federal government has kind of become an oligarchy where it’s just kind of President Trump and then Elon Musk exacting whatever power they wish.” – GA man, strong Democrat

“It seems like [Trump] just has his own group of people he's trying to look out for, Elon Musk and the one-percenters and two-percenters of pretty much the country, and everyone else don't matter. And the way he's going about it. He's just pretty much trying to act like a king.” – GA man, strong Democrat

“Constitutional crisis”

“If he’s trying to change the way America runs, the way our law is, that’s a constitutional crisis.” – VA man, independent lean Democrat

“That's pretty accurate, I think. Yeah, what was particularly concerning is the Congress one long day thing, where they basically ceded their power to vote on the tariffs. And whenever people talk about checks and balances, that's the first step, is ceding your power for Congress. And there's so many other dictatorships that have started that way.” – NY woman, weak Democrat

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Project 2025 Does Not Come Up Unaided, Yet Many See It Being Implemented

Moderator: Are you seeing Project 2025 being implemented? How?

“Line by line.” – GA man, strong Democrat

“Things like getting rid of the Department of Education, obviously, he’s in the midst of trying to do that as we speak. Things like that. And essentially, it feels like every day, you don’t remember the exact things, but sort of the sentiment and the aim is happening step by step, day by day.” – GA man, strong Democrat



“Literally, play-by-play. This is the man who said he had never read it and didn’t know anything about Project 2025, mind you. And **you can go through exactly every action that he is taking**, like you said, to try to solidify the power in the executive branch to minimize the power in the other branches, including the judicial, which we have, to do away with the agencies that he considers superfluous. What we have, he’s following the guidebook.” – VA woman, strong Democrat

“Yeah, it’s definitely happening. I agree that at first I thought it was fearmongering or just so far right. It’s not even right. It’s a whole different thing.” – NY woman, weak Democrat

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Democrats are Described by These Participants as “Soft,” “Fragile,” “Vulnerable”

Moderator: What word or phrase would you use to describe the Democratic Party? Why?

“Disappointed... I’m not quite sure. It doesn’t feel like they’re thinking... they’re not strategizing. I don’t know what goes on. There could be things going on that we don’t know about, obviously, but what looks to me, to the public, I feel like, is that they’re not strategizing on how to rebuild, so that they can win in four years.” – VA woman, independent lean Democrat

“I said fragile, but maybe vulnerable is probably a better word to use. And I think we saw it when they were trying to pass the funding bill or didn’t know what to do to try to veto or block the funding bill and just whether we should vote for it or not. **They’re in a bad spot.**” – VA man, weak Republican



“All bark, no bite.” – NY woman, strong Democrat

“Soft... It just feels like they’re not strong enough to do anything about this. And when you were talking about non-existent, it’s kind of like even when you ask that question like, ‘Oh yeah, Democrats exist? I forgot.’” – NY woman, weak Democrat

“I’d **say in shambles**. There’s no way that they figured, with the whole Biden administration, how that would go down. It’s like, okay, holy crap, who else do we have? We got to hurry up and do this whole campaign thing and rally around someone. Oh, Kamala Harris. And then it’s just maybe they didn’t really have a fair shot in their opinion because of what happened. **So just, what do we do next?**” – GA man, strong Democrat

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Some Struggle to Identify Who Symbolizes the Democratic Party, Though the Bernie/AOC Tour Is Breaking Through

Moderator: Who would you say symbolizes the Democratic Party as it stands today?

"I think speaking directly to the people is something that the Democrats have not been great at and something that Trump really succeeded in... and the Democrats don't have any leaders like that. So, I think if they were to be more vocal, reach out to us in the ways that they can. I mean, social media is obviously huge, and I think there's a big gap. I know AOC is on TikTok, but I don't think Bernie's on TikTok, I don't think a lot of them are." – NY woman, strong Democrat

"I would say Joe Biden, AOC, and Gavin Newsom. I think Joe Biden is very representative of what the party has been probably for the last 8 to 10 years, kind of your older, established politician that doesn't really stand on any particular values or whatnot, but is seen in the Democratic machine as a good face to put in front of people. I think AOC is very representative in that she is a bit of a grifter in the sense that she panders pretty often to what is believed the masses want to hear, but so few times you see her stick to a point over the course of time. And then Gavin Newsom is kind of a combination of both." – GA man, strong Democrat

"I had heard that a national poll had said that AOC was the one that was considered leading the party. I don't necessarily agree with that, but I think it's real interesting that you have a Bernie Sanders at his generation and an AOC way over here, and they're touring the country together and getting massive turnout." – VA woman, strong Democrat

"I don't know either. I like that Bernie Sanders has really stepped up, but again, that's somebody who's older, but I don't know that the Democrats have a really good face right now." – VA woman, independent lean Democrat

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Some Believe Democrats Need a New, Bold Face



"[The Democrats need to] find a young, well, not too young, but younger charismatic figure to all back behind." – NY Woman, strong Democrat

"There isn't anybody, and I think that's the Democrats' job for the next election is to find a **strong Democrat or candidate** to make a little bit more of a change..." – VA woman, weak Democrat



"The main thing for me is just I'd like to see **better candidates... better candidates and being progressive.**" – GA man, weak Democrat

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Participants Want to See the Democratic Party Be More Assertive in Fighting Against Trump

Moderator: What would the Democratic Party fighting against Trump look like in your opinion?

"What I see happening is an abuse of power, and I think that's where the Democrats should be fighting, is to not allow this to continue on." – VA woman, independent lean Democrat

"I think maybe they need to get, pardon the expression, but if you grow a pair and **you're willing to stand up without being too afraid to risk your own position next election**, then maybe you have more freedom to stand up for what you think is right." - VA woman, strong Democrat

"I would like to see them just stand up for what they're saying they believe in and implement that in the power that they do have, versus just being like, well, this is what it is." – GA man, independent lean Democrat

"I don't know how to really make it nice and elaborate, but it's like, **what are y'all scared about with Trump? Just... can we just call a spade for what it is? Come on now.** We have all this information, facts, we know about what happened with the whole storming of the Capitol. There's a laundry list of things. We know the facts. Why not just call him out on it and be confident about it?" – GA man, strong Democrat

"I think that they should **stand firm and stand strong on what they say and what they believe in** because no matter [what]... It just takes one person. ... I just think they have to be stronger, come together more, and just be, again, very more assertive in things and put their foot down when they know things are wrong." – NY woman, independent lean Democrat

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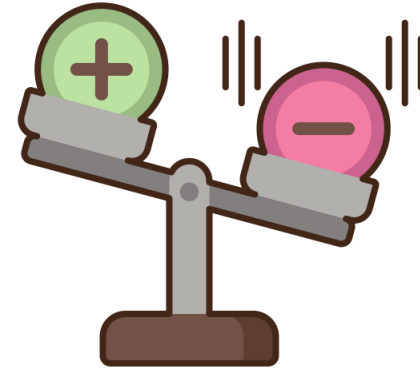
However, Few Recognize the Disadvantages Democrats Face in All Three Branches of Government

“I don’t think [the Democrats] can do anything because they’re not in the majority, but it’s hard for them to do anything when they’re not in the majority.” – GA man, weak Democrat

“I feel like unfortunately, together with the Republicans, Republicans need to work together with Democrats. If you want to get a vote passed in a Democrat-leaning way, you need Republicans to agree.” – NY woman, Independent lean Democrat

“Because I feel like right now the Democrats are so overrun in the House and that they can’t really win.” – VA woman, independent lean Democrat

“It seems that [the Democrats] keep saying stuff and giving their opinion, but there’s more Republicans than Democrats who are just pushing the Democratic opinion down. The Republicans seem like, they’re the majority, and so they just get shot down anytime they try to talk.” – VA woman, weak Democrat



Making One's Voice Heard Online or With Friends and Family Can Be Its Own Reward

Moderator: What do you do to express your political beliefs or get involved politically?

"I'm on Instagram and TikTok, and I have not such a big following, but I have viewers from high school, from different places that I'm at, different events. I've been to different states and countries and stuff, **so just sharing, reposting certain things just so that other people know what's going on, I feel like that also helps in a way.**" – NY woman, independent lean Democrat

"Obviously, social media is a huge part now. **So, expressing yourself on social media, getting things out here.** And you'll see that there'll be certain events or certain developments that might not be broadcasted on a wide scale on a traditional news platform, or by certain journals or whatnot, and **people kind of take a responsibility for themselves to get the word out.**" – GA man, strong Democrat

"Boycotting is one, and then social media is another. There's a lot of information on social media. And so, **you just have to pick and choose which news outlets you source the information from to share with whoever you want.** And just communicating with people that you know." – GA man, weak Democrat

"I think it always helps individually to be with people, [likeminded], like I said. But I also think it's important to know just knowing that there are other people out there who are motivated too. So, it's a little bit like the ball keeps rolling. I come home, I **post some pictures on social media, all my friends' comment.** I'm like, 'Okay, well the next one is so and so date,' and a couple more people **might join me and bring signs.** And it's not going to change the world, but what it is going to do is keep people interested and active, and that's going to be ultimately what makes a difference." – VA woman, strong Democrat

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Boycotts and Protests Can Feel Impactful, Empowering, Performative, or Unsafe Depending on the Person

"I have a young 26-year-old daughter, and we went to the big march after Trump's last election because I thought it was important to show her that you can be active. You can have your voice heard with others of common ilk... it's easy to slip into apathy when you feel like you're helpless. That's the danger. You got to motivate yourself to stay involved if you're going to want to see change." – VA woman, strong Democrat

"I went to the Women's March and the March for Gun Control in D.C. and saw nothing happen after. So, I still go to protests here in the city and when I was in Ohio, but it doesn't feel like they have the same impact on the people in power as they used to." – NY woman, strong Democrat

"I feel like protesting is beneficial, but it can also be chaotic, and it leads to people getting locked up, fights. I haven't been part of a protest before, but I know I've seen it on TV, and it always leads to something bad most of the time." – NY woman, strong Democrat

"I was of the opinion that boycotts don't really work, and I felt like it was kind of performative if nothing else. Because it's like, 'Okay, maybe I won't buy from Starbucks, but millions of people still will. They're not really going to care that I don't buy from them.' But I do think in these months it has actually become a way of at least you feel like you're standing on your morals, and this company does not care about Latinos. I don't buy Coke anymore because they sold out their employees to ICE. It's like those kinds of things, where it's like you stand on your own morals at least, then maybe Coke doesn't care, but I buy Pepsi." – NY woman, independent lean Democrat

"I think boycotting for sure. I think what we're doing with Target is great, and not going to certain companies is a great way where you're not putting your life in danger. You're still able to get by, do the things that you need to do, but choosing to spend your money wisely." – GA 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; Mike Podhorzer; 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 March 25, 2025, 2024 Kamala Harris voters in NY, GA, and VA. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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