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FOCUS GROUP REPORT

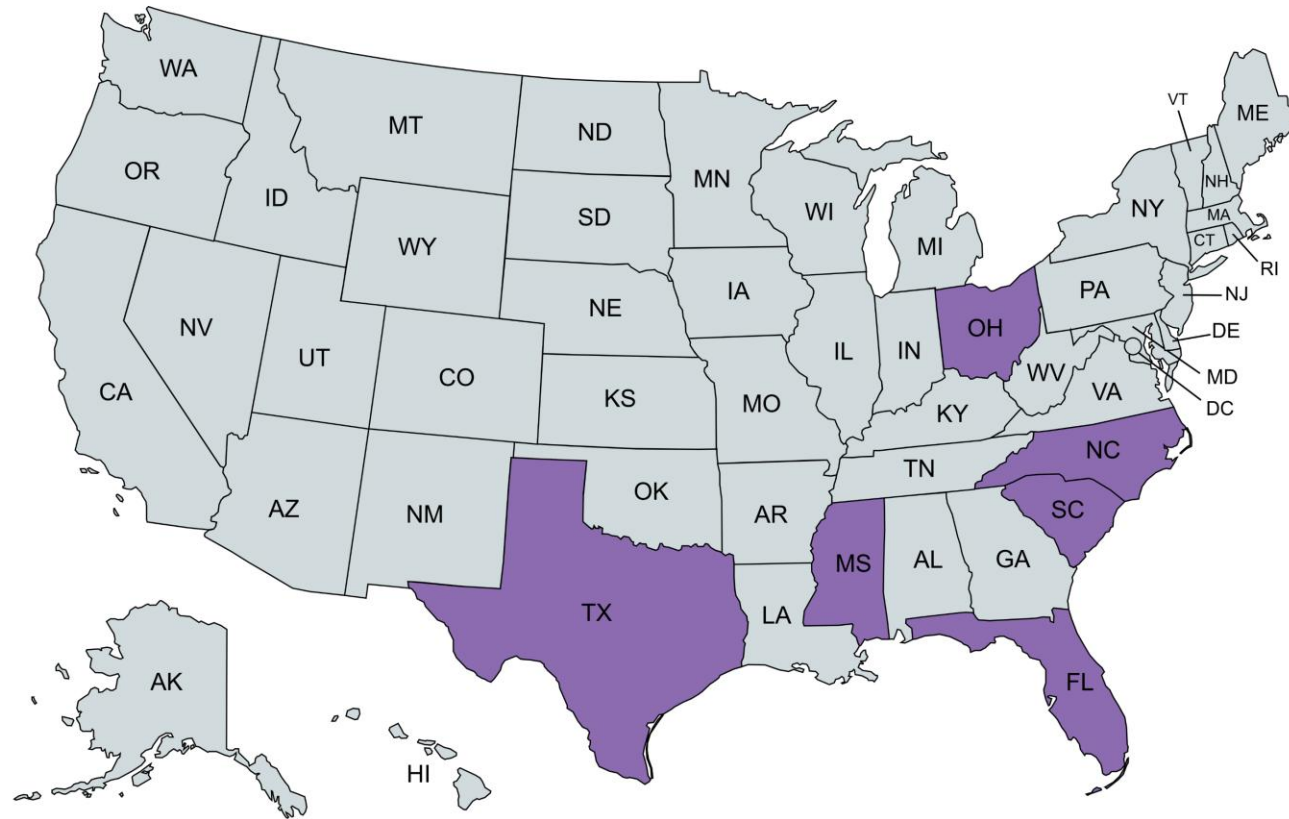
Friday, October 16, 2026

Gen Z Trump Regretters



Methodology

On October 8, 2026, GBAO conducted one online focus group with Gen Z voters from Senate battleground states* who voted for Trump in 2024 and now regret their vote or are disappointed in Trump's performance.



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*FL, MS, NC, OH, SC, TX

Key Findings

- The economic mood is bleak.
- Trump gets weak grades and is seen as “breaking promises.”
- Trump regret doesn’t always mean a swing toward Democrats.
- Even these frequent AI users worry deeply about the downsides, including their own ability to learn critical thinking.

The Economic Outlook Is Bleak

Moderator: What grade would you give the economy, like school?

Grade	Participants
A	0
B	0
C	2
D	3
F	3

"Personally, I just feel like my finances have been affected the most in the past year or two years, so that's why I personally give it an F. The only good thing is I guess we're not at a supposedly recession, but I **feel like soon we may be, or even a depression. I just feel like inflation is sky-high.** Gas prices, rent is still very high, mortgages, just everything is just, I don't know, incredibly high." – FL man, Black 29 year old

"I feel like the **economy's worse than it was a couple of years ago** in terms of inflation, crisis of things, the immigration that Trump is holding on, ICE, the nationalization. I say basically everything happening in the country. It's gotten worse than it was before." – TX man, Black 29 year old

"The whole reason I didn't say F [for the economy] is because this is not a recession or a depression, and people don't realize, even though it says that it's the first time the gas prices have hit \$6, when they put the gas prices from 2008 or other times where the economy has been really bad through an inflation calculator, they were, like, \$6-7 for now, today's prices. So, once we're at that level, I would say it would definitely be an F." – SC woman, white 20 year old

Many Worry About High Prices



"A lot of people are looking for jobs and they can't find jobs. **There's people who graduated who can't find jobs.** And there's also a lot of businesses that have been closing down. So I just feel like nothing's really going up and up like before." – FL man, Black 29 year old

"I'm a real estate agent...I see firsthand how hard it is to own a home and stuff like that. And I hear it all the time from first-time homebuyers and stuff, and they're in their late 30s, 40s, and they're like, '**I've been trying to own a home since I was 20.**' And I'm 20, and I want to own a home." – SC woman, white 20 year old

"It's gas prices right now that costs \$5, almost \$5, 4.59, and I see that all the time....I'm a college graduate, and it's so hard to get on my career field with no experience. I went to school for political science...We going to school paying all this money to go to college, get degrees. And **when it's time to find a good job in this economy, we can't.** I feel like it's not enough." – OH woman, Black 25 year old

"One of the reasons why people are having a hard time finding a job is just the fact that the job market is changing. AI, automation, that's playing a big role in many jobs....Over the past 20-plus years, college has gotten more expensive, but also the doors of opportunities have been closing." – TX man, Black 25 year old



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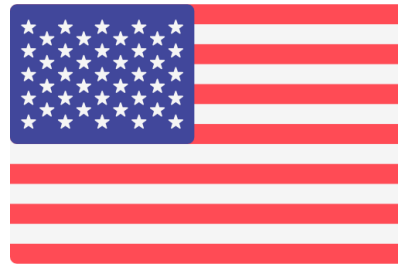
For Most, The American Dream Seems Further Out Of Reach Than It Was For Their Own Parents

"I feel like [the American Dream is] way harder right now. I would say in terms of, let's say, owning a home, rent is so way high now, **owning a home is almost unimaginable** in years to come. So, it's way, way harder than it was in the past." – TX man, Black 29 year old

"With the American Dream, I think certain generations can be out of touch from each other. You look at my generation compared to my parents' generation, **I don't think they really understand the easiness or the ease in their youth** regarding just navigating life economically and just in general. I think there are a lot of different things that come into play for my generation in regards to social media and things like that." – MS man, Black 21 year old

"[The American Dream is] definitely harder...here I am going to graduate with my degree in tech soon, and **everybody who recently has graduated is struggling beyond recognition.**" – SC man, white 26 year old

"I've heard a lot of people say the American Dream is gone and stuff just because of the economy, but I do absolutely think it's just **the same level of difficulty, if not easier**, to start your own company and be able to sell everything online." – SC woman, white 20 year old



"**I think we got it way easier [than our parents].** I think we got so much technology to help us....We learn faster, we adapt to newer things, and we just got more things that help us out in this economy versus them when they was there. It's like they have to do stuff manually, and we got all this technology." – OH woman, Black 25 year old

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Many Wish The U.S. Spent Less Overseas – And Focused More On Issues At Home

"I feel like all of those things, the education, the economy, everything else would be so much better if we weren't **pumping money out into other countries that aren't ours**....At the end of the day, what we do in the Middle East is going to be not at all up to party." – SC woman, white 20 year old

"A lot of people have been exposed by both sides of the political aisle for getting funding from AIPAC. There's nothing wrong with Israel defending themselves. I don't really think that it's the battle that's going to really help any of us...**I think we've helped [Israel] a little bit enough, and I think that they need to not rely on us so much**....We're pretty far away from Israel last time I checked." – TX man, Black 25 year old

"**We saw our government funding basically the wars, not just in Israel, but in Ukraine**. And look, I'm all for Russia not getting any territory whatsoever, because I think they have more than enough territory. But I do think instead of giving money to them, there should have been more diplomacy under the last administration." – TX man, Black 25 year old

"[Trump cares] **more about foreign affairs than American people**. And so, that's where it's lost on me." – TX woman, white 26 year old

"The underlying thing of foreign affairs, AKA **us being sold out and being a puppet for another country**, I think that would be the same [if Kamala had won]. There's too much money accepted from both sides." – TX woman, white 26 year old

"You look at Pete Hegseth...and just the back-and-forth comments that he's made on that. Like, **have we won the war?** Have we finished what we need to finish?" – MS man, Black 21 year old

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Trump's Grades Are Weak, And "Breaking Promises" Looms Large

Moderator: What grade would you give Trump for how he's doing in his second term?

Grade	Participants
A	0
B	0
C	2
D	3
F	3

"I think what motivated [my] vote was really just more so the promises made....Many of the promises he made just sounded logical to me. They just made sense." – MS man, Black 21 year old

"One of the largest things for me is **the complete backtracking, backpedaling**. The whole campaign was built upon draining the swamp and shedding light on a lot of issues, and now turnaround, and I think a lot of people had hope that maybe, yes, he's not a great person, but maybe an outside, not career politician....But then just complete opposite is what happened." – TX woman, white 26 year old

"[My grade for Trump] was a D. **He's just made a ton of false promises. Man lies for a living....**A lot of the things he promises to do or things he's promised to do, he's done almost none of them. He's tried to get people to basically keep him in office or something like that to promise money that he didn't give last time something went his way." – SC man, white 26 year old

"The reason why I grade what I grade, which was C, is because he has accomplished some things that I do appreciate....I feel like **he's done a really good job closing the border**. I also do appreciate his efforts in trying to end some of the conflicts that began under the last administration. Besides the fact that the Iran conflict hasn't really worked the best." – TX man, Black 25 year old

"In my city with our Cincinnati Public Schools, the education system is horrible. Nothing has changed with the education system. **[Trump's] not making it better. He's just making it worse.**" – OH woman, Black 25 year old

Many Lament Trump's Corruption And Demeanor

"Even regarding my cryptocurrency investment, that's down the toilet because dude is too corrupt. He stole all the money in crypto. **It's one corruption after another.** And I just feel like there's certain things he should definitely focus on, but I feel like **he's distracted by 101 different things.**" – FL man, Black 29 year old

"Seeing what [Trump]'s done during this term, the way he's carried himself, the language that he's used, I just feel as though **there's something new every day.** Just recently, I know he banned the press from the White House." – MS man, Black 21 year old

"[Trump's] turning around and calling followers all these names for wanting information on the **Epstein files,** wanting to hold people accountable when that was what your platform was...I feel like it took **very little time** for the right offers, the right threats, the right donors to get involved to get him and whole administration to **switch up.** But then there's also the thought of, 'Okay, was this the long con from the beginning, is, pretend to care about these things and then once you're in, switch over?'" – TX woman, white 26 year old



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Those Uneasy About The Word "Regret" Still Wish His Term Was Going Differently

Moderator: What about regret? How well does that word fit? If not regret, what other word?

"I voted for the first time in the last election, and not to say that I wasn't happy with my vote, but just still, it's hard making a vote, especially when stuff is so complicated right now. I think there's just a lot to think about....I don't know how I'm going to figure it out....Honestly, mine isn't really regret because...I just really do feel like we would be in this situation either way." – SC woman, white 20 year old

"Do I think things would be in a better state had me and the other people that maybe regret our votes voted differently? No...Friends echo the same thing of I don't fully regret my decision to vote that way. It's more so just things came crashing down and I wish it had gone differently." – TX woman, white 26 year old

"I never really thought [Trump] was a good guy. Mostly I voted him because of tax reasons and because of investment reason, business reasons. But I thought at least he could be how he was when he first, I guess, was in office." – FL man, Black 29 year old

"I think [Trump's] doing the best he can, because according to what I've done my research, he has tried to end more conflicts across the world or preventing more conflicts across the world than any other president." – TX man, Black 25 year old

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"Regret" Conversations With Friends Have Mixed Results

Moderator: Have you talked about it with anyone else? How did that conversation go?



"It's been isolated, just a few people here and there, but it's been the same feelings on both sides, me with my husband, with some close friends." – TX woman, white 26 year old

"My friends, their opinions really don't change....They do one-problem politics, so they voted specifically on things like gun reform....I don't know if they regret it because I haven't really spoken to them about it since, but I'm pretty sure their opinion's still the same....I think that [my fiancé] was very strong about it. Her family was very strong about it. I didn't understand why, but now I do....I'm still getting stuff about it years later." – SC man, white 26 year old

"[I] mostly [talked to] my brother....We talked about the decision we made, how [Trump's] campaign and wishes he said influenced us and how **we somewhat regret that decision now** because of how the country has gone." – TX man, Black 29 year old

"When I talk about voting, I try to talk about it with **people who follow closely politics.**" – OH woman, Black 25 year old

"Just **one of my friends, I guess, was staunch, anti-Trump, basically told me not to vote for [Trump]....**Since that's impacted me greatly now, I do regret my vote." – FL man, Black 29 year old

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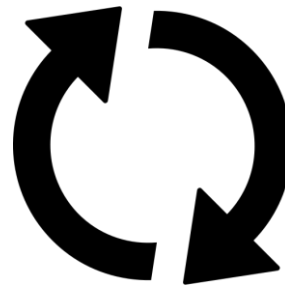
Some See Their Midterm Vote Through The Lens Of "Change" From Trump

Moderator: How do your feelings about Trump now make you feel about voting Democratic or Republican?

"I believe the voices of people right now are louder than ever....I find **this season as an important season...I think just the principle of seeking change**, because, obviously, before it was Republican....I'd be curious to see what track would we be on if a different party was in power at this moment in time from an economic standpoint and any other standpoint." – MS man, Black 21 year old

"[I'm voting Democratic] **mostly for change**, mostly to get something different than I did in previous election, people who can tackle the economy and the hunger crisis more better." – TX man, Black 29 year old

"I just feel like Republicans have gone crazy....I just feel like life in Florida got worse. It's more expensive. Property insurance keep going up, health insurance, everything just keep going up. I don't feel like they're really looking out for us....I'm **willing to give the other side a chance**, see how that works." – FL man, Black 29 year old



"I will also say [the upcoming election is] a mess....I guess the [2024 voters] thought they were using it in a very positive way, and a lot of those same people are now like, 'Oh my goodness.' And **hopefully they have a different opinion this year**." – SC man, white 26 year old

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Yet Others Say Trump Matters Little To Their Vote

Moderator: How important are your views of Trump in the governor and Senate races?

"[Candidates' views on Trump are] not that important to me....**My beliefs are just a lot more with the Republican Party.** So I stick with it because I just don't think anything that I dislike right now would be different....And I think there'd be more that I dislike if I voted Democratic." – SC woman, white 20 year old

"I'm very loyal to my party because I believe that if it wasn't for the party that currently runs my state, then we will have not seen so much economic development happening in the state of Texas...The reason why I like the Republican candidates is because **they have experience when it comes to a higher office.** Democratic candidates in Texas, they have been just Texas state representatives for a handful of years." – TX man, Black 25 year old

"I don't put too much stock in [candidates' views on Trump] because, one, **people can say whatever they want to say,** and that may not be how they actually feel....When it comes down to it, if the lesser of two evils that I want to vote for is [a MAGA] person, I'm still going to vote for them" – TX woman, white 26 year old



"[I'm less motivated to vote] because I honestly don't see anything changing....I'm just like, 'If this going to keep on happening, **I don't even want to be in the voting process.** I'll look at the candidates and watch this stuff, but I just don't want to put my vote in.'...I'm still on a fence because I was still researching the parties a little bit. But I was thinking about Republican if I had to choose." – OH woman, Black 25 year old

Dolphins, Chameleons, And Chihuahuas Can Illustrate The Democratic Party

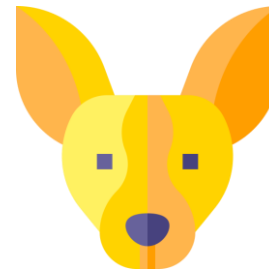
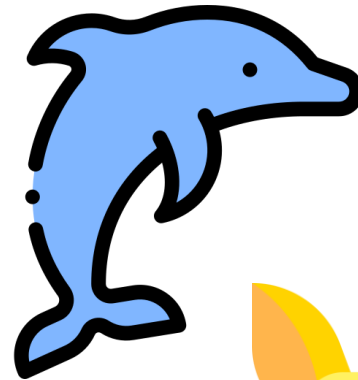
Moderator: If the Democratic Party was an animal, what animal would it be?

"I think I would say [the Democratic Party] would be a **dolphin**....Because I feel like the Democratic Party is **more cooperative, intelligent**. I don't know. I feel like they're more understanding to me, and they'd be a little bit more helpful. Also, I feel like the Democratic Party, they work together a lot. Like, when it comes to stuff at the state level and trying to help, they stick together like flies." – OH woman, Black 25 year old

"Maybe a dog like **chihuahua**....The one thing I don't like about a Republican Party now is it feels like it's just the Trump party now, which I feel like it really shouldn't be. But the issue is **I don't feel like the Democrats have any leadership at all**....I guess the last leadership they really had was Obama." – FL man, Black 29 year old



"I will say **chameleon**....I don't know where [Democrats] stand on when it comes to certain issues....I feel like **they switch their values and their viewpoints** depending on who they're talking to, depending on the cycle." – TX man, Black 25 year old



"I'm going to say **tigers** because they're pretty eager to get in here and try to make these changes." – SC man, white 26 year old

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Many Worry About AI Causing Problems Like Weaker Critical Learning And Job Loss

"I'm in the middle. It's a good tool...but I also feel like it would definitely negatively impact workers, the cost of electricity, and also cost for water and all that....We're going to start using our mind less and less, and I feel like it's going to have a negative impact on us, because **we're not going to be able to critically think** without using Gemini, ChatGPT, Claude, or some other AI service." – FL man, Black 29 year old

"I use AI every day for everything, like for work, to draft stuff, to send messages, to make it professional. I feel like AI will take over everything like grocery stores and jobs and learning, education....I noticed that **I was reliant on AI and not learning**. So it was like, when I was ready to do something or if somebody asked me a question, I'm like, 'I don't know,' because I just AI'd it." – OH woman, Black 25 year old

"I think there are moral, economic, social, several large reasons that it's going to be our downfall, and it's already been shown to be the case....How do you kill a frog? You put it in a pot of water and slowly turn the temperature up. You don't throw it in boiling. I think we're seeing people just accept [AI] for this and this and this task until they're using it to **completely outsource their creativity, their social skills, their cognitive reasoning**." – TX woman, white 26 year old

"I feel like pretty soon, a lot of the jobs that we work so hard for, not all of them, **but a good portion, will be probably be replaced by AI automation** by these corporations. And that's going to make a lot of people's hard work and dedication all for nothing at that point." – TX man, Black 25 year old

"I feel like over the past few years, **I've been depending on AI** to help me a lot in my work that I would normally draw from scratch or sketch from scratch." – TX man, Black 29 year old

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And Trump Symbolizes Weak AI Guardrails And Proximity To "Tech Bros"

Moderator: What do you think should be done about AI? Any sort of regulations or guardrails?

"I believe [Trump] doesn't want to slow down generative AI...**He's in bed with the tech bros.** So, I mean, I'm not surprised." – FL man, Black 29 year old

"**There need to be a lot of roadblocks when it comes to generative AI**...until some sort of safeguards can be put in place...then it needs to be shut down until roadblocks can be put in place to protect people, to protect victims like that, to protect artists whose work gets stolen. I work in the arts, that's a big issue for me. Safeguards have to be put in place." – TX woman, white 26 year old

"I don't like [what Trump said about data centers]. I **definitely don't think AI is fully bad, but I think companies use it a lot**, too, more than people even realize....I can't talk to a real person about it." – SC woman, white 20 year old

"I know the people that monitor most of our information is people like the NSA and these giant tech companies, and I think that they all need to come together and petition for **some kind of hold on generative AI** or some kind of roadblock for it, because, yeah, generative AI specifically is pretty bad. AI in general, just getting direct links and everything's fine, but when it becomes a generative thing, it can just get out of hand." – SC man, white 26 year old

"I think everyone is responsible for AI and regulation. It has to be a cooperation between the local, states, national, and also corporations as well....I think it's very, very important that we do have **checks in place and regulations** to ensure that we never get to that point where AI becomes too powerful to control." – TX man, Black 25 year old

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They Imagine Their 50-Year-Old Selves Would Report Things Get Better

Moderator: Your 50-year-old self wrote you a letter. What do you think it would say?



"Even though what's going on right now is difficult, **things can always change later on.** So just keep pushing and just keep on going." – FL man, Black 29 year old

"I will say that the time you're living is a crucial point in American history, but over time, **this country will become a bigger and stronger union** and more united and less divisive." – TX man, Black 25 year old

"I would tell myself there will always be good days, there will always be bad days, but **just be hopeful for the best.**" – TX man, Black 29 year old

"No matter how bad things get, you may feel like everything is harder or this is impossible, narrow your focus down to your family, your circle, what you can control and affect, focus on that, and that's all you can do....You're not in the wrong time. **You're exactly where you're supposed to be.**" – TX woman, white 26 year old



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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.

About the Study

On October 8, 2026, GBAO conducted one online focus group with Gen Z voters from Senate battleground states* who voted for Trump in 2024 and now regret their vote or are disappointed in Trump's performance.

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To learn more about Navigator:

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