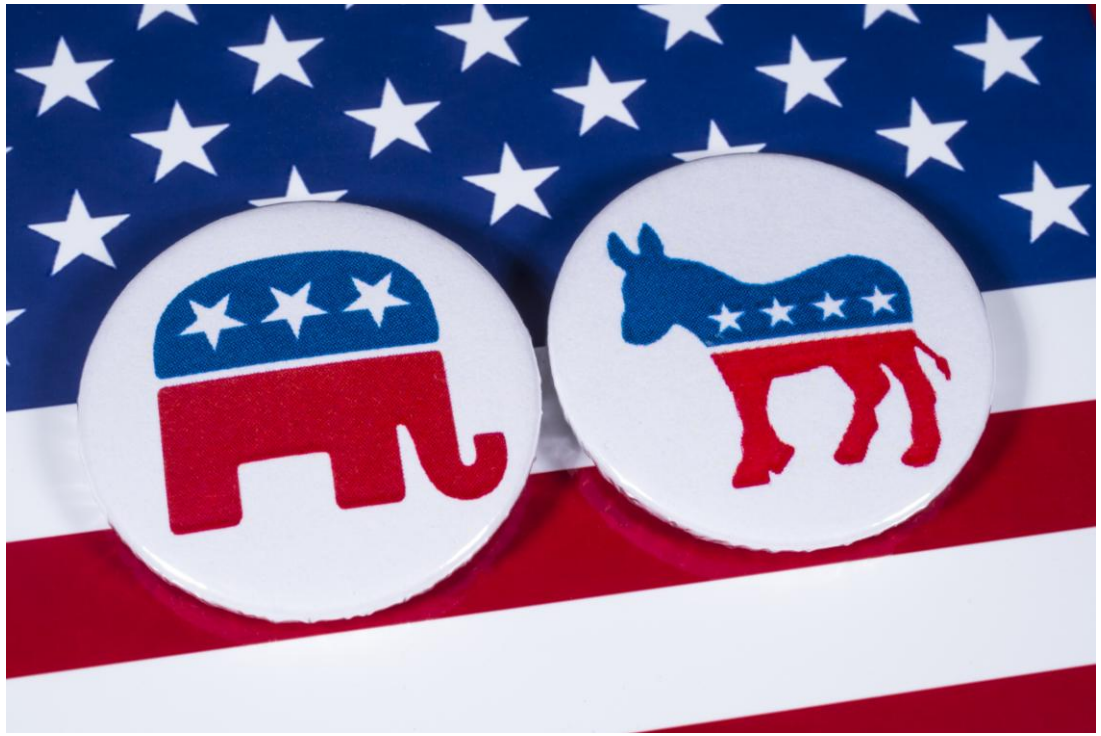
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Credit: Chris Dorney/Shutterstock

Tuesday, November 17th

Reasons for Voting

GSG GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP

GBAO

What We Did

The slides in this presentation are based on interviews with 3,000 registered voters who had already voted or were going to vote in the November election, with interviews conducted October 28th to November 8th, 2026.

Support for Democrats and Republicans in Senate elections and Democrats and Republicans in House elections have been adjusted to reflect the actual expected votes as of November 8th. The analysis aims to provide a tool for Americans to understand what happened in the 2026 election, why it happened, and what's next.

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Key Takeaways:

- Inflation and the cost of living was the top midterm issue this year, and one that Democrats won decisively. Democrats were seen as more focused on inflation and costs than Republicans, and the issue was seen as much more of a reason to vote for Democrats than Republicans.

- Beyond economics, Democrats won on many other issues including the Epstein files, the war, ICE, and data centers. ICE in particular was seen as a top reason to vote against Republicans, particularly among key voting blocs including Hispanic and younger Americans.

- President Trump and a desire for change also played an important role in American's choices. Trump defectors – those that voted for Trump in 2024 but Democrats this year – were particularly likely to say their vote was one against Trump.

- Democratic Senate candidates, including in key competitive races, were seen far more favorably than both their Republican counterparts and also were more popular than the Democratic Party brand.

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The Voter Segments Behind the 2026 Electorate

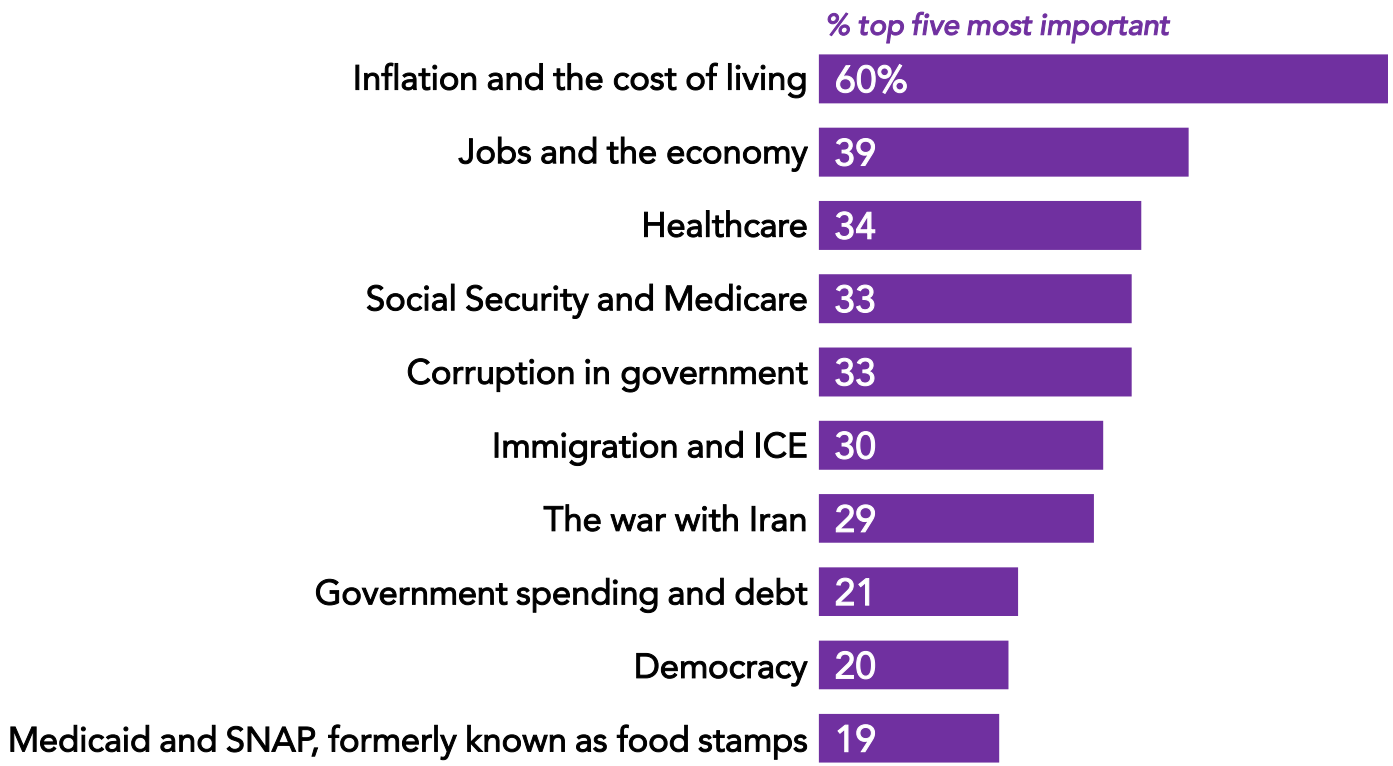
	Segment	Who is in the group	Share
	Consistent Democrats	Those who voted for Harris in 2024, voted for at least one Democrat in 2026, identify as strong Democrats, and always or mostly vote Democratic. Groups most likely to fall into this category include Black women, college educated women, and Americans who live in urban areas.	29%
	Less consistent Democrats	Those who voted for Harris in 2024, voted for at least one Democrat in 2026, do not identify as strong Democrats, and do not always or mostly vote Democratic. This can include independents. Groups most likely to fall into this category include Black men, AAPI Americans, and college educated Americans.	20%
New to Democrats:	Democratic newcomers	Those who voted for neither Harris nor Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. This includes prior non-voters and other-candidate voters. Groups most likely to fall into this category include Gen Z, Hispanic Americans, and women voters of color.	5%
New to Democrats:	Trump defectors	Those who voted for Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. This can include split-ticket voters. Groups most likely to fall into this category include independent women, non-MAGA Republicans, younger men, and Hispanic Americans.	6%
	Core Republicans	Those who did not vote for a Democrat in 2026 for House, Senate, or Governor. Groups most likely to fall into this category include white non-college, men 55+, and white Americans	40%

Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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Inflation Was the Top Voting Issue, Followed By the Economy, Jobs, and Healthcare

Which issues were most important to your vote this year for Congress?



	Core Democrats		New to Democrats		
	Consistent	Less Consistent	Dem Newcomers	Trump Defectors	Core Reps
Inflation and the cost of living	59	62	51	67	59
Jobs and the economy	31	36	41	44	45
Healthcare	37	41	43	32	28
Social Security and Medicare	32	37	32	32	33
Corruption in government	38	34	37	26	28
Immigration and ICE	29	22	29	24	35
The war with Iran	35	30	20	26	25
Government spending and debt	12	24	14	19	28
Democracy	34	27	16	14	8
Medicaid and SNAP, formerly known as food stamps	25	19	23	20	15

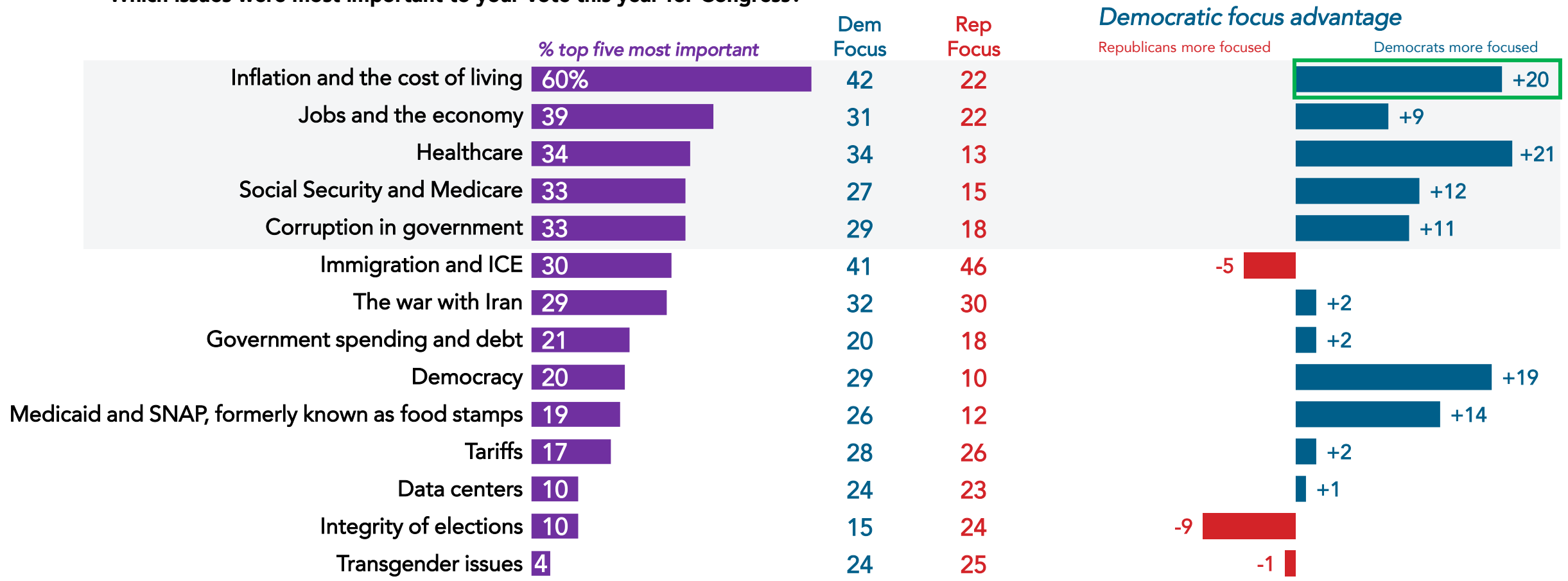
Other issues (overall) Taxes and housing 18% each; tariffs 17%; crime 14%; AI, climate, and abortion 11% each; data centers and election integrity 10% each; Israel/Gaza and education 9% each; Russia/Ukraine 8%; guns 7%; vaccines 5%; transgender issues 4%.

*"Consistent core Democrats" are those who voted for Harris in 2024, at least one Democrat in 2026, identify as a strong Democrat, and always or mostly vote for Democrats. "Less consistent core Democrats" are those who voted for Harris in 2024, at least one Democrat in 2026, do NOT identify as a strong Democrat, and do NOT always or mostly vote for Democrats. "New to Democrats: Democratic newcomers" are those who did not vote for Harris or Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Trump defectors" are those who voted for Trump in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. "Core Republicans" are those who did not vote for any Democrats in 2026. Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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Democrats Were Seen as More Focused Than Republicans on Americans' Top Issues, Including Costs By Twenty Points

Which issues were most important to your vote this year for Congress?

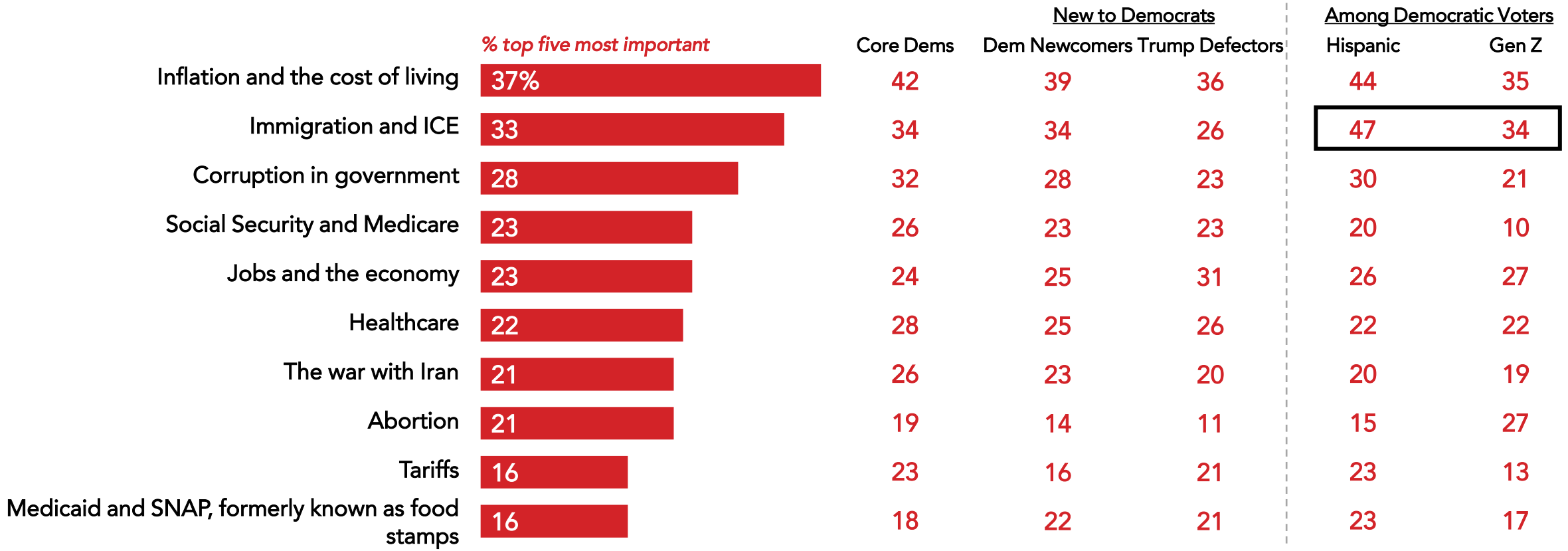


Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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ICE Tactics and Immigration, Not Only the Economy, Turned Hispanic and Younger Voters Against GOP Candidates

Which issues are so important to you that you voted against a candidate solely because you disagreed with them on those issues in this election?



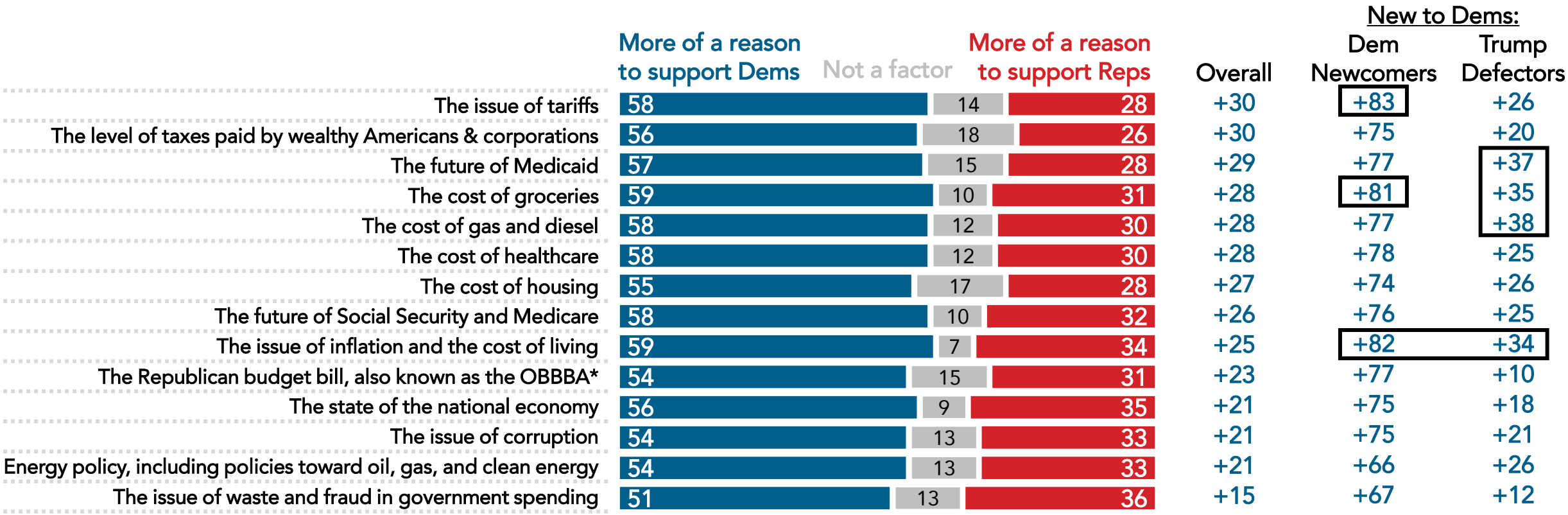
	% top five most important	New to Democrats			Among Democratic Voters	
		Core Dems	Dem Newcomers	Trump Defectors	Hispanic	Gen Z
Inflation and the cost of living	37%	42	39	36	44	35
Immigration and ICE	33	34	34	26	47	34
Corruption in government	28	32	28	23	30	21
Social Security and Medicare	23	26	23	23	20	10
Jobs and the economy	23	24	25	31	26	27
Healthcare	22	28	25	26	22	22
The war with Iran	21	26	23	20	20	19
Abortion	21	19	14	11	15	27
Tariffs	16	23	16	21	23	13
Medicaid and SNAP, formerly known as food stamps	16	18	22	21	23	17

*"Core Democrats" are those who voted for Harris in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Democratic newcomers" are those who did not vote for Harris or Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Trump defectors" are those who voted for Trump in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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Economic Issues: Tariffs, Taxes, and Costs Top the Lists Of Reasons To Vote Democrat

Please indicate whether you personally consider each more of a reason to support Republicans over Democrats, more of a reason to support Democrats over Republicans, or whether it is not a factor in your vote this year. Economic issues



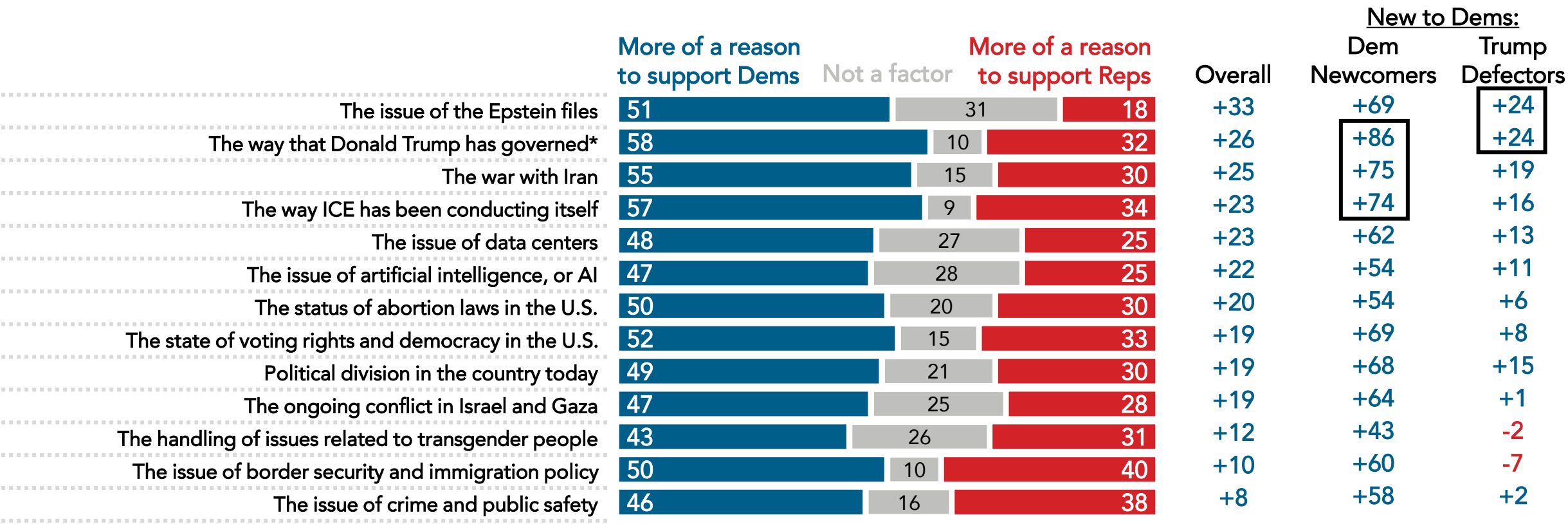
	Overall	New to Dems: Dem Newcomers	New to Dems: Trump Defectors
The issue of tariffs	+30	+83	+26
The level of taxes paid by wealthy Americans & corporations	+30	+75	+20
The future of Medicaid	+29	+77	+37
The cost of groceries	+28	+81	+35
The cost of gas and diesel	+28	+77	+38
The cost of healthcare	+28	+78	+25
The cost of housing	+27	+74	+26
The future of Social Security and Medicare	+26	+76	+25
The issue of inflation and the cost of living	+25	+82	+34
The Republican budget bill, also known as the OBBBA*	+23	+77	+10
The state of the national economy	+21	+75	+18
The issue of corruption	+21	+75	+21
Energy policy, including policies toward oil, gas, and clean energy	+21	+66	+26
The issue of waste and fraud in government spending	+15	+67	+12

*"Full question text read: "The Republican budget bill, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act."
"New to Democrats: Democratic newcomers" are those who did not vote for Harris or Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Trump defectors" are those who voted for Trump in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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Non-Economic Issues: the Epstein Files, the War, ICE, and Data Centers Were Top Reasons To Vote Democrat

Please indicate whether you personally consider each more of a reason to support Republicans over Democrats, more of a reason to support Democrats over Republicans, or whether it is not a factor in your vote this year. Non-economic issues



	Dem	Not a factor	Rep	Overall	New to Dems: Dem Newcomers	New to Dems: Trump Defectors
The issue of the Epstein files	51	31	18	+33	+69	+24
The way that Donald Trump has governed*	58	10	32	+26	+86	+24
The war with Iran	55	15	30	+25	+75	+19
The way ICE has been conducting itself	57	9	34	+23	+74	+16
The issue of data centers	48	27	25	+23	+62	+13
The issue of artificial intelligence, or AI	47	28	25	+22	+54	+11
The status of abortion laws in the U.S.	50	20	30	+20	+54	+6
The state of voting rights and democracy in the U.S.	52	15	33	+19	+69	+8
Political division in the country today	49	21	30	+19	+68	+15
The ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza	47	25	28	+19	+64	+1
The handling of issues related to transgender people	43	26	31	+12	+43	-2
The issue of border security and immigration policy	50	10	40	+10	+60	-7
The issue of crime and public safety	46	16	38	+8	+58	+2

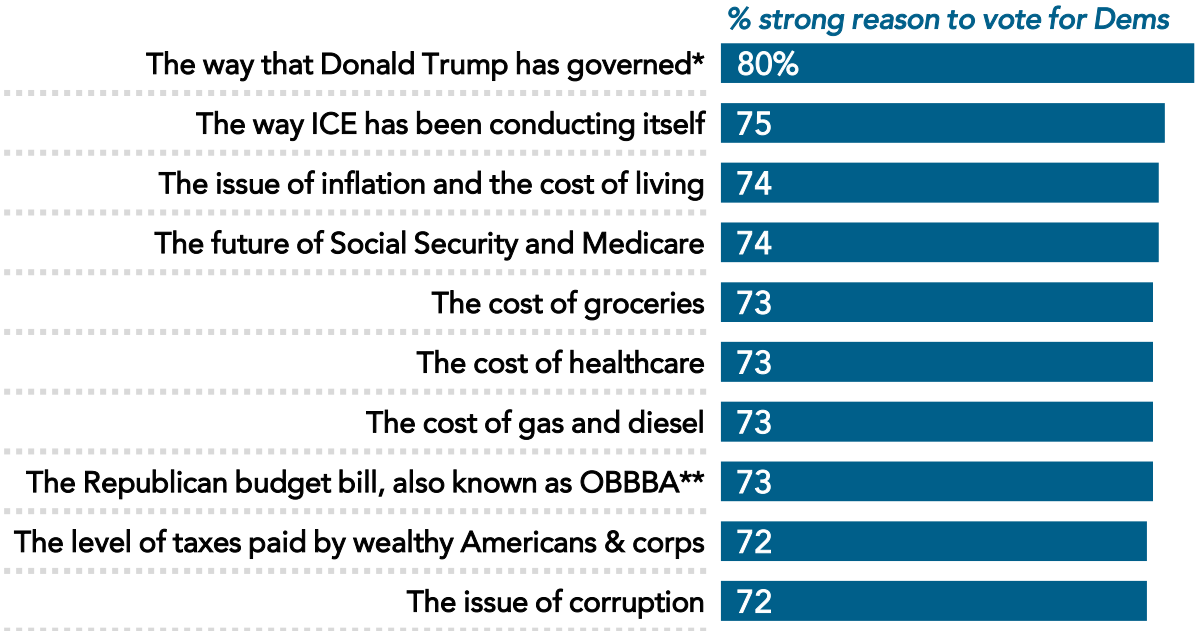
*Full question text read: "The way that Donald Trump has governed in the first two years of his second term."
"New to Democrats: Democratic newcomers" are those who did not vote for Harris or Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Trump defectors" are those who voted for Trump in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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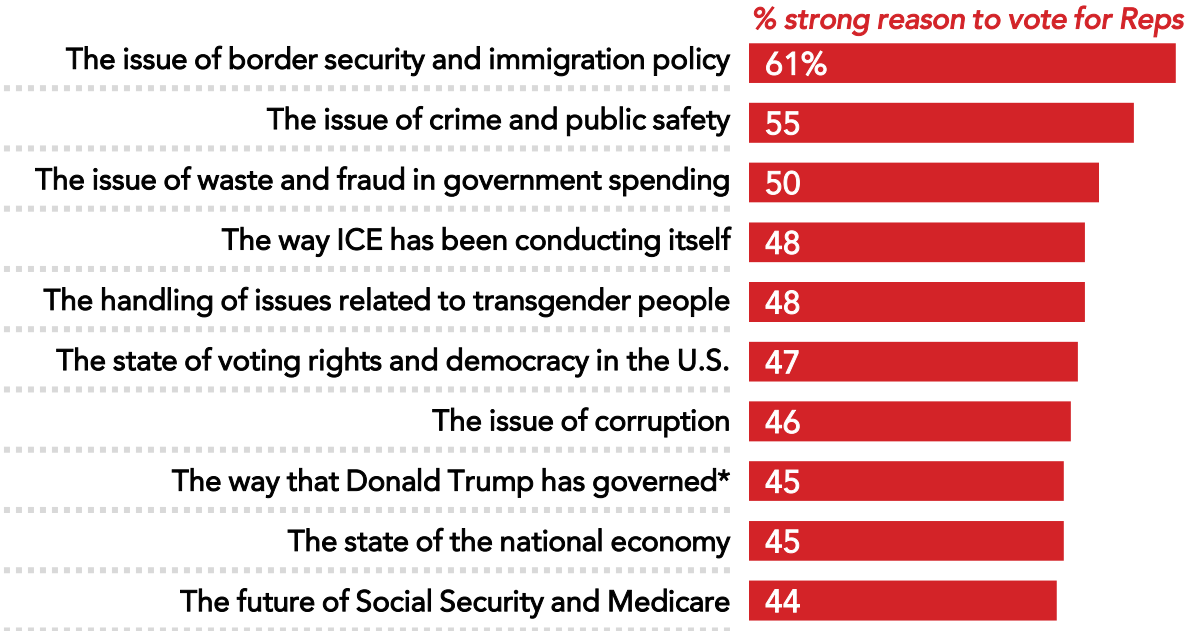
Many Democratic Voters Strongly Motivated to Vote for Dems, While GOP Voters' Issue Motivation Lagged Far Behind

Please indicate whether you personally consider each more of a reason to support Republicans over Democrats, more of a reason to support Democrats over Republicans, or whether it is not a factor in your vote this year.

Voted for the Democratic candidate for Congress



Voted for the Republican candidate for Congress



For 22 of 27 issues

At least 60% said the issue was a "strong reason" to support Democrats

For 1 of 27 issues

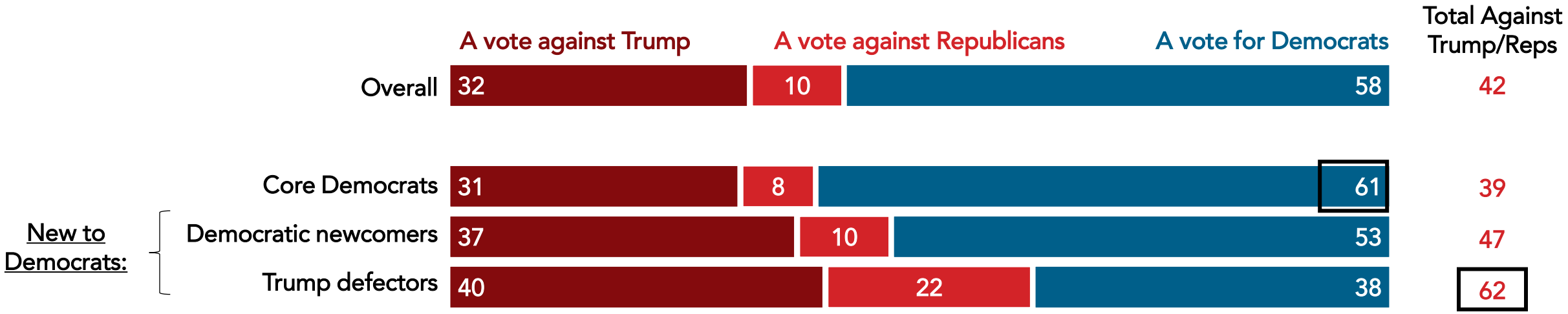
At least 60% said the issue was a "strong reason" to support Republicans

*Full question text read: "The way that Donald Trump has governed in the first two years of his second term." **"Full question text read: "The Republican budget bill, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act." Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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A Majority Of Trump Defectors Said Their Votes Were Against Trump & Republicans, While Core Democrats Voted For Dems

[If voting for a Democrat] Which would you say best describes your vote(s) for Democrats this year?



[If voting for a Republican] Which would you say best describes your vote(s) for Republicans this year?



*"Core Democrats" are those who voted for Harris in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Democratic newcomers" are those who did not vote for Harris or Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Trump defectors" are those who voted for Trump in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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In an Open End, Democratic Voters Said They Were Delivering a Message Of Change and Against Trump With Their Votes

What message, if any, are you trying to send with your vote in the election? [Coded Open End]

Voted for the Democratic candidate for Congress

		New to Democrats:	
		Dem Newcomers	Trump Defectors
Call for Change / New Direction	27%	26	27
Anti-Trump / Stop Trump	24	14	8
Government Corruption / Accountability	15	11	8
Anti-Republican Party	12	15	5
Pro-Democrat / Support Democrats	10	10	4
Democracy / Constitutional Values	10	6	3
Working / Middle Class Representation	9	9	10
Cost of Living / Economic Relief	6	5	10
Voting Rights / Civic Duty	5	7	6
Elect Best Candidate / Vote Wisely	4	7	10
Bipartisanship / Unity	2	1	7
Healthcare / Social Security	2	5	2
Immigration / Border Security		1	1
Pro-Republican / Support Republicans		0	4
Anti-Socialism / Anti-Communism		0	0



"I want change in the government. We need a new party in there."

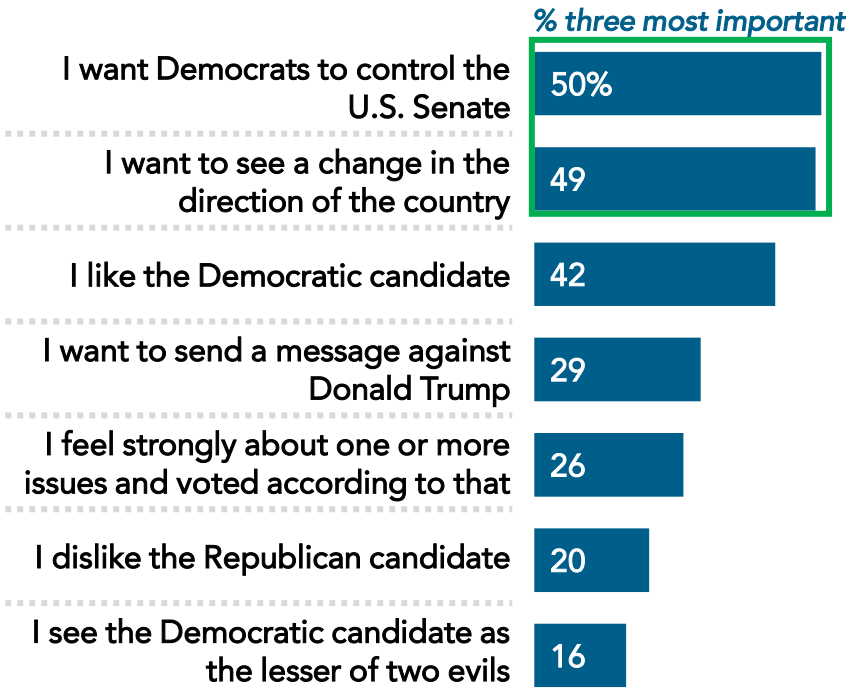
"We need to change how our government works while also holding Trump accountable."

*"New to Democrats: Democratic newcomers" are those who did not vote for Harris or Trump in 2024 and voted for at least one Democrat in 2026. "New to Democrats: Trump defectors" are those who voted for Trump in 2024 and at least one Democrat in 2026. Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

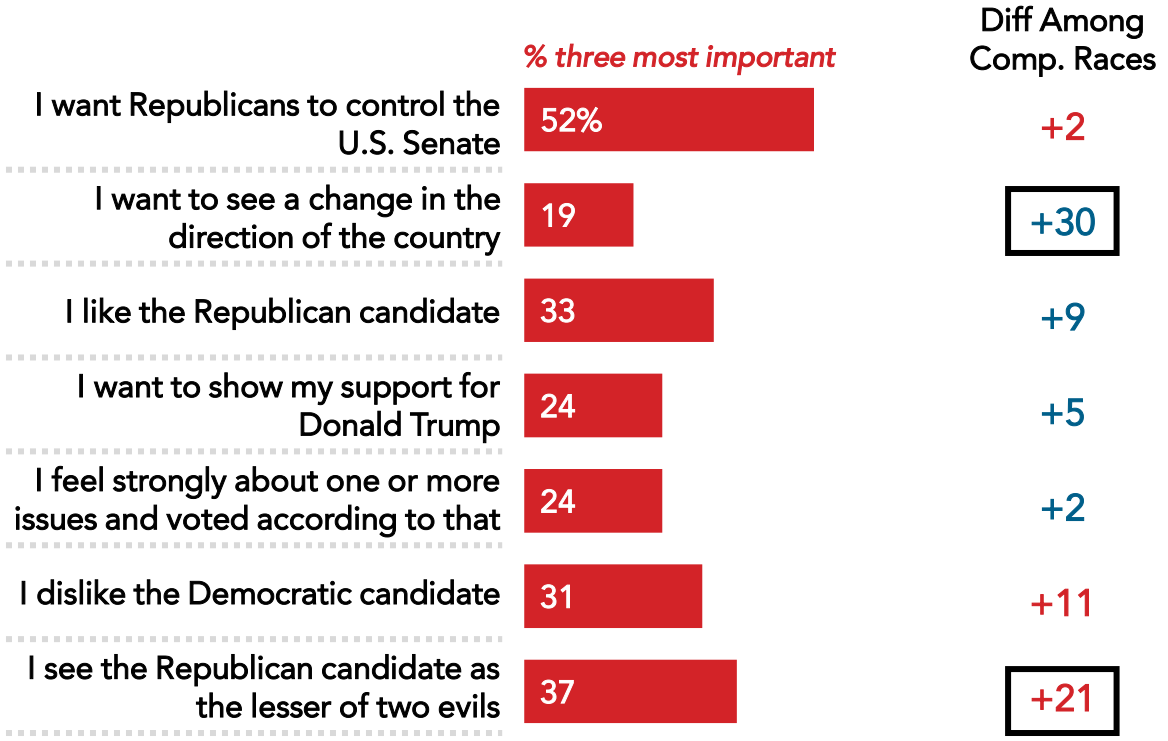
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In Competitive Senate Races, a Desire For Change and Democratic Control Of the Senate Were Key Factors

[If voted for a Democratic Senate candidate] Thinking about your vote for Senate, which of the following best describe why you voted for the Democratic candidate? Among competitive Senate races



[If voted for a Republican Senate candidate] Thinking about your vote for Senate, which of the following best describe why you voted for the Republican candidate? Among competitive Senate races



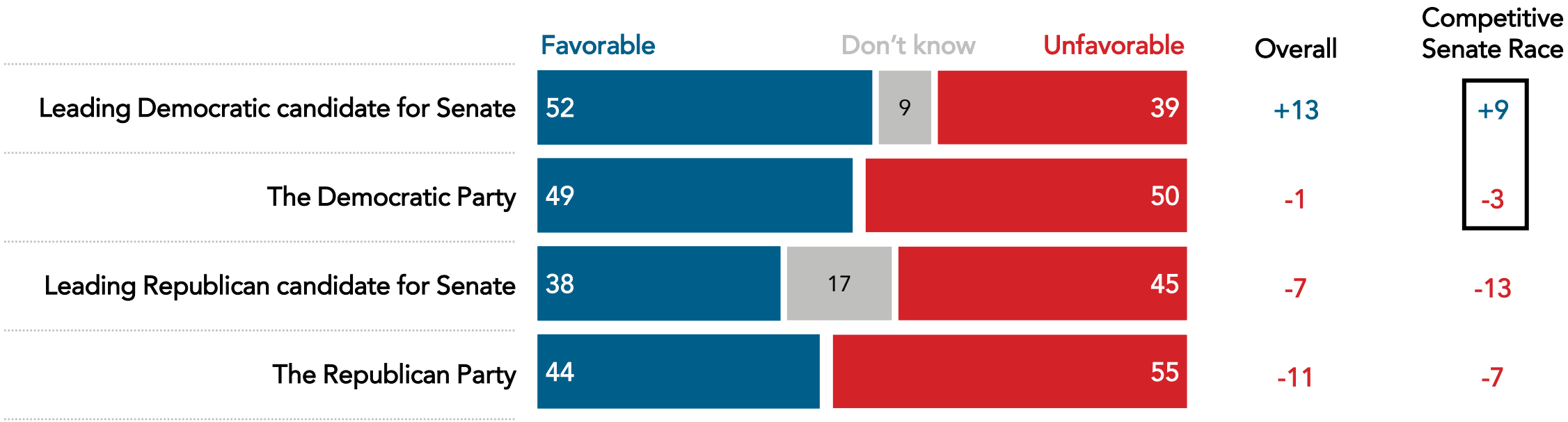
Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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Democratic Senate Candidates Ended the Campaign As More Popular Than the Democratic Party, While Republicans Lagged

Americans in competitive states (as rated by Cook) were more favorable toward the Democratic candidate this election (net +9 favorable) than the Republican (net -13).

Please indicate how favorable or unfavorable you are to each one. Among Americans in states with Senate races



Americans favorable toward the Democratic candidate but not toward the Democratic Party (1% of the electorate) are more likely to be non-college, southern, and Republicans

Nationwide survey of 3,000 self-reported 2026 voters conducted October 28-November 8, 2026. For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org.

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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

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 3,000 registered voters from October 28th through November 8th, 2026, with respondents recruited from opt-in online panel vendors. Of that 3,000, 2,944 respondents were verified against a voter file (and the other 56 were voters who said they were registering before voting if interviewed before Election Day) and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of the sample reflected that of the expected 2026 electorate. The vote shares for House and Senate Democrats, and House and Senate Republicans were adjusted to reflect a preliminary estimate of the vote in the 2026 election. The margin of error for the full sample at the 95 percent level of confidence is +/- 1.8 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

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