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FOCUS GROUP REPORT



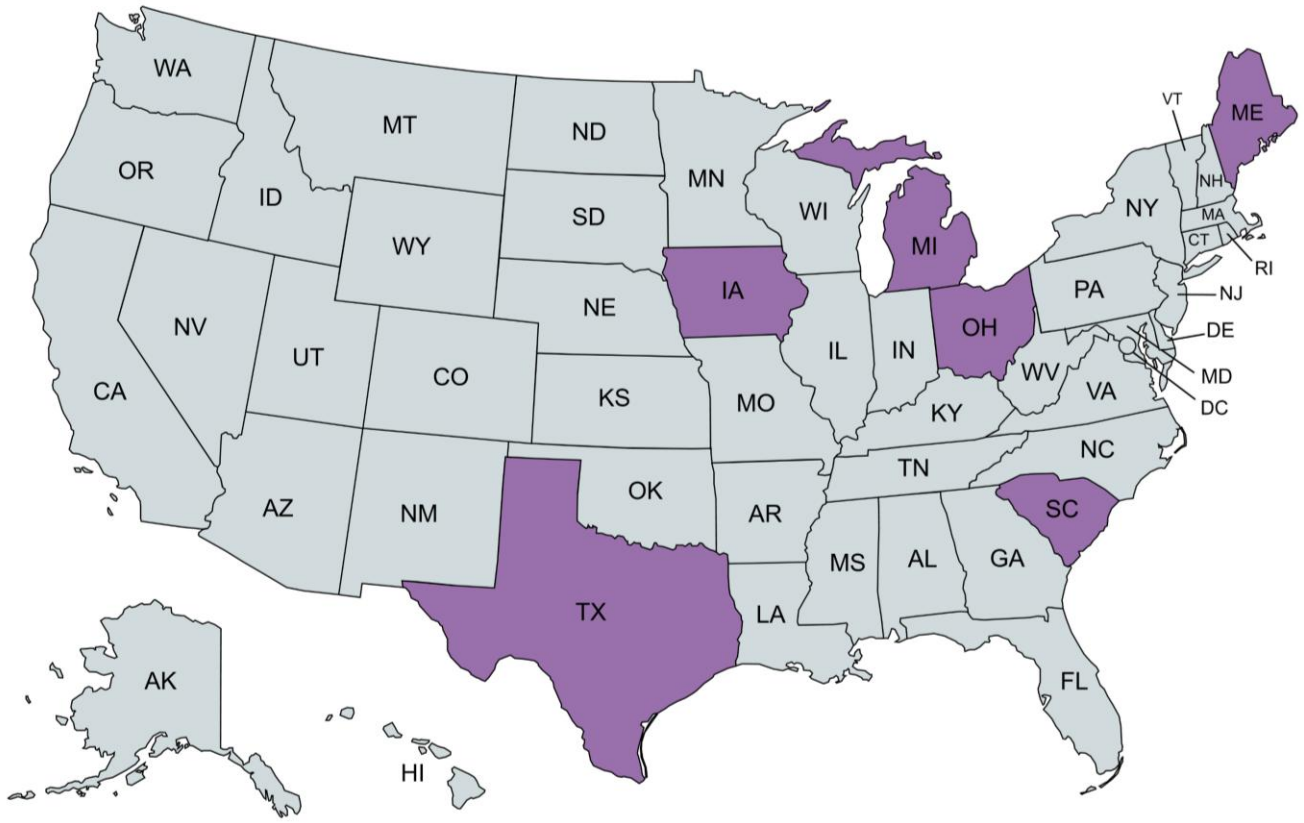
Monday, November 23, 2026

2026 Non-Voters

GBAO

Methodology

On November 17, 2026, GBAO conducted an online focus group with registered voters from Senate battleground states* who did not cast a ballot in the 2026 midterm election.



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*IA, ME, MI, OH, SC, TX

Key Findings

- Despite not participating, many non-voters remain engaged with the midterms.
- Non-voting can stem from inconvenience, alienation, assuming they know the outcome, or a lack of information.
- A handful regret not participating, or plan to vote next time.
- There is hope the new Congress will tackle healthcare and address costs.
- On corruption, there is resignation and skepticism about whether investigations can deliver meaningful change.

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Non-Voters Were Following The Midterms, And Many Had Clear Preferences

Moderator: We had an election. How do you feel about it?

"**Susan [Collins] was** just, I want to say **a creature of habit**… I think that's what basically ticked people off up here, was that **she wasn't really pushing for what the state needs**… But I think people are just tired of the cost of living, especially up here. **Housing is ridiculous. Rents are ridiculous. Groceries are, everything is just going up, up, up, up.** We're not getting a break up here." – ME woman, Hispanic, non-voter

"Politics is really close to religion. I don't get too deep in it, but **I did like the decision that Michigan made** with Abdul [El-Sayed], I believe**. I wasn't really too fond of Mike Rogers.**" – MI man, Black, non-voter

"After not voting, **I'm reasonably pleased with the results** because I personally have two disabled people in my home that require a lot of medical care, and I **feel like the blue Democrat side is more for empowering people** to be able to have access to those things a little bit easier. And it's also expensive in order to have access, otherwise you just don't get it." – OH man, white, non-voter

"I was **glad with our new governor** and I **didn't want Ashley Hinson to win**, and she didn't win." – IA woman, white, non-voter

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Even These Non-Voters Could Recall Ads Or News Stories

Moderator: Is there a news story or ad or a piece of content that made an impact on them?

"My son, he watches YouTube and there's ads…He goes, '**Why does Darline Graham take her oath with her right hand, but trade stocks with her left hand?**' And he was super confused, and all he did was laugh about the commercials. So it was just funny listening to all the crazy things beforehand." – SC woman, white, non-voter

"I had a **creator on TikTok** for Ashley Hinson. And she wasn't for her, she was against her, but she did a really good song and was like, 'It's Ashley Hinson. **Who votes against us? It's Ashley Hinson**.' Anyway, put a little tune in my head and was like, '**Who makes our gas prices higher? It's Ashley Hinson**.' Anyway, it was funny." – IA woman, white, non-voter

"The only thing I really noticed that [El-Sayed] was fighting for was **lowering healthcare for everybody**." – MI man, Black, non-voter



"I wouldn't really say I was excited. Obviously, the dirt-slinging ads got pretty dirty, at least here in Ohio I saw. And then I'm pretty neutral for the most part, but **I was not impressed with the move that Vivek [Ramaswamy] did with trying to drag Amy Acton through that.** My wife is a sexual assault survivor, so it's like it was personal and close to home." – OH man, white, non-voter

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Campaign Communication Felt Relentless And Negative

"Every time I seen Mike Rogers stuff, it would just be more so him downing the Muslim community, **trying to make Abdul [El-Sayed] look like a terrorist**. I mean, you know what I'm saying? In this day and age we live in, you can't be that judgmental with people because the world is so diverse and everybody do got equal rights. So I really didn't like what he had going on." – MI man, Black, non-voter

"That **one with Vivek [Ramaswamy]**…but the one guy [had] literally been **arrested on felony charges for drugs** and a couple other things. And I don't know if it was the same guy even, but somebody else was **arrested for abusing his wife and kids**. And it's like, how are any of these people even allowed to run?" – OH man, white, non-voter

"I **never really saw an ad** for either one **that said what they're actually running for.** It was very negative." – SC man, white, non-voter

"They **put Amy Acton** out there **on blast**, which I didn't agree with whatsoever. I think **they need to leave family out of it**. I think that was wrong on so many different levels… But I think it's just **everybody's power hungry**. And you just got to hope for the best. Give it to God and hope for the best." – OH woman, Black, non-voter



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Non-Voters Concerned About Costs And The Economy

Moderator: What were the issues that were on your mind?

"**Rents have gone through the roof.** I think the last census said that you have to make $60,000 a year in Portland, to live in Portland. So I have to live in the outskirts, suburbs. It's like a 45-minute commute. It means a lot of mileage on the car, tires, gas. And I'm approaching retirement age…but now it's like **I cannot even dream of owning even a condo.** It's just unreachable. I have to work two jobs just to make sure that I can retire comfortably. I don't like the direction the country's going in at all in that sense. It's like **the American dream just doesn't exist anymore**." – ME woman, Hispanic, non-voter



"It's the **cost of living**. I know for our personal household, it's **healthcare**, having good healthcare and you can have good healthcare, but when it comes to **having to pay out of pocket for medications**, I personally have a medication that I have to be on to live. So I mean, paying out of pocket can get very, very pricey." – OH woman, Black, non-voter

"**Everything is too high**. I'm a father of three. I may not look like it, but I'm a father of three girls, so everything is expensive from school, uniforms. And then like she said, most jobs in Michigan is…There's **no job just really paying what it takes to afford a house** out here. I have to drive 45 minutes off of work. And then like I said, wear and tear on the cars, tires, and just like the price of these new cars is expensive." – MI man, Black, non-voter

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A Variety Of Things Got In The Way Of Voting: Convenience, Indifference, Or Caring More About Presidential Elections

Moderator: Talk to me a little bit about not voting this year.

"I was actually **raised in a religious cult** for the first 35 years of my life **and I wasn't allowed to vote**. And so it's been something **that's stayed with me**, but my wife and daughter, my wife was not raised in it, and so we've talked a lot about political stuff since leaving the cult especially." – OH man, white, non-voter

"My **life will pretty much be the same the next day**, regardless of who's there or not, same with presidents. Ever since I was younger, my mom would always be like, 'Oh my gosh, if this president wins the election, I don't know what's going to happen.' And nothing ever happened. Nothing ever changed from president to president really that much. So I kind of just feel like individually **it doesn't impact me all that much**." – SC woman, white, non-voter

"I'm kind of just getting into politics, so I'm mainly focused on the presidential vote. This is my **first year actually noticing that the Senator vote really matters**. And I feel like a lot of people in my generation, it was the first year I seen on my timeline and everything because **all I was really taught was the president**."– MI man, Black, non-voter

"I'm **more concerned about the presidential vote** every four years. So I mean, I was okay with my decision. My husband went and voted, but I was all right." – OH woman, Black, non-voter

"**My company, very late notice, sent me to Texas** for nine days to do some work out there. So I didn't get to vote. I tried to go to the early voting area. It's like a middle school near my house over the weekend, but I guess it wasn't quite open yet, so didn't get to." – SC man, white, non-voter

"There's just so many little things going on every day and it's like just time got away really. I had my absentee ballot come in and I thought I filled that out, but I don't think so. And then I was going to do it in person and then like I said, **little things just got away, distracted, and just didn't vote**." – MI man, white, non-voter

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Some Were Surprised By The Outcome, Leading A Few To Regret Not Participating

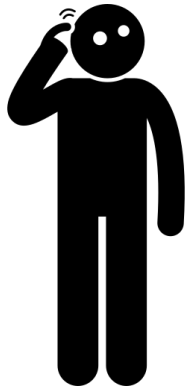
Moderator: After the results, how did you feel about not voting?

"Especially with the wave of change that happened, I mean, **I don't regret it,** but at the same time it's kind of like **you feel you want to be part of the change**. But I'm not even sure how I would have voted if I had gone to vote just because I felt that **I was overwhelmed** by the amount of text messaging I was getting from all the candidates. I mean, it was getting old real quick. So I was just looking forward to just end the midterms and just move on." – ME woman, Hispanic, non-voter

"I honestly **thought [Republicans] would be more dominant**. I definitely regret—**I regret not voting**. I should have." – MI man, white, non-voter

"I normally **assume South Carolina would go red**, but with the candidate we had, I wasn't super confident. I guess I regret not voting, but I think either way, **no matter who wins, I just got to go to work**." – SC man, white, non-voter

"We really get to choose, not just, **'We've been red most of our life, so we're going to be red for the rest of it.'** So now I know, okay. I actually didn't vote this year, but the two years before I did, and he lost, and I was so bummed that **I was discouraged, but now I'm back in**." – TX man, Hispanic, non-voter



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Some View Politics As "Confrontational" And Are Avoidant

"The deeper you get down into it, you will just find yourself clashing with people. **I'm not really a confrontational guy**. I don't like arguing that much, so it's like, I just kind of roll with the punches. I know me. I know I'm only in control of what I'm in control of." – MI man, Black, non-voter

"At this point, I don't know what either one of them are fighting for at this point. I really **think it's just they're fighting for power, who wants to be the biggest, the baddest**, and who wants to be in charge. Ultimately, I think both parties lie to an extent. I mean, it's human nature. That's what everybody does. You just got to hope that they do the best for you." – OH woman, Black, non-voter



"I try not to get too into it because **people clash and I don't like to fight either**, and it's not really worth it sometimes. Sometimes, because **I almost broke up with my husband** over the Trump thing." – IA woman, white, non-voter

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Many Disillusioned By Trump, Leading To Apathy, Skepticism, And A Desire To Check Out

Moderator: Did Trump factor in your decision whether or not you were going to vote or how you might've voted if you did vote?

"I didn't vote because honestly, with Donald Trump winning twice in a row and I did vote, I just thought **it's all a sham**. It doesn't matter who we vote for, **they're going to do what they want to do**." – IA woman, white, non-voter

"I usually see him as Voldemort in Harry Potter, **he who should not be named**." – ME woman, Hispanic, non-voter



"It **didn't influence me** at all." – MI man, white, non-voter

"**Subconsciously I thought about it** because I think I know any of the ridiculous things that he wants to do that might be impactful, the fact that it's turned over in South Carolina, now it's a Democrat kind of evens it out a little bit." – SC woman, white, non-voter

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Most Anticipate Political Gridlock, And Trump To Veto Whatever Democrats Do

Moderator: What would that tell you if Democrats in Congress pass something and Trump vetoed it?

"It's kind of just **toned everything down** a little bit **so he can't do crazy things** that I wouldn't like." – SC woman, white, non-voter

"Not sure what to think of that. And I'm trying to remember my American history and I know the president can veto, but I know **there's certain things that could turn it around**. I'll have to restudy my constitution." – ME woman, Hispanic, non-voter

"When the House, **when they're split** Democratic, **they can only do so much**." – TX man, Hispanic, non-voter

"If you have a blue House and a blue Senate and a red president, then **not much is going to get done**. Same goes vice versa. So when they're all red or they're all blue, the administration is either going to get as much done or **get away with as much as they can**. But when you have red and blue, he's not going to be able to do anything." – SC man, white, non-voter

"I would probably lock in my belief that **it really doesn't matter who you vote for** because it's hard. It's hard to believe that people are going to go in and just do the right thing and not be influenced by only money or whatever or **have somebody else completely derail it**." – OH man, white, non-voter



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Accountability Is Important, But There Is Resignation About Whether Anything Can Be Done About Trump Corruption

Moderator: Should Congress spend time doing accountability and investigations into government corruption?

"I **support the idea of accountability and clarity**. And on that note, I don't know if an investigation would be unbiased. I think that's the ultimate thing that everybody is struggling with because we've all been told a bunch of things that have come out to be lies over the years, and it's come up in so much over so many big things that it's **hard for people to trust anything that comes out**, period." – OH man, white, non-voter

"The thing is that I believe he's been working for just a dollar. So **I don't know what kind of fraud they're going to find** because of that." – ME woman, Hispanic, non-voter

"I think he was a billionaire before he was elected, so it wouldn't be that insane. **Both sides are going to have fraud**. So yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if they go after him and his family legally like they did during his first term." – SC man, white, non-voter

"I think that there's everything to find. **I don't think they will find it** or they will be clear about what it is or we will ever really know. I think it's just a league above what we are.…We think there's hope that they're not. And I think **in reality it's probably, it's a bunch of fraud**, so it doesn't really matter who investigates you. It'll never come down to us really knowing." – SC woman, white, non-voter

"I feel that the 1% of the rich people, whoever's in power, **they're going to do what they want regardless** of who they put in as their puppet for the four months or four years, or however long they decide to be in term for whatever they're doing. And I think that all the congressmen people, they all say what you want to hear just to get in." – IA woman, white, non-voter

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Non-Voters Expect The New Congress To Tackle Healthcare

Moderator: What do you think is going to happen with a new Congress? What will their priorities be?

"**Healthcare** in general." – MI man, white, non-voter

"**Healthcare**, abortion, and marijuana for real." – MI man, Black, non-voter

"**Medicare**, reproductive rights, probably the war in Iran." – SC woman, white, non-voter

"**Something with healthcare** because **healthcare is just absolutely ridiculous**. I need healthcare to benefit me and my family and millions of other people, that it can just be affordable." – OH woman, Black, non-voter



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There Is A Plea For Lower Costs And Focus On Affordability

Moderator: What's your day one priority?

"**I just hope stuff's affordable again**, just life in general. I just want it to be affordable again. I want my husband to be able to retire at a decent age and not have to work the rest of his life is another big— I'm a stay-at-home mom, so I just don't want him to have to work for the rest of his life just to **afford life and healthcare**. I think that's the biggest change that I hope to see." – OH woman, Black, non-voter

"My day one priority would be **jobs**, continuing education, **housing, affordability**, and the affordability of commodities like **gas, groceries**." – SC man, white, non-voter

"I think they should focus on the **people's needs**. The whole thing with **Social Security**, I mean, they need to fix that system. I mean, they keep talking about it going broke, and **there's a lot of Americans that depend on that money** to survive." – ME woman, Hispanic, non-voter

"I don't think marijuana is on that top three list and should be. You got other way more important things, like people said, **affordable healthcare, housing** and just other common-sense stuff." – MI man, white, non-voter



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Some Expect To Vote Next Time Around, While Others Want A "Guarantee" Of Change

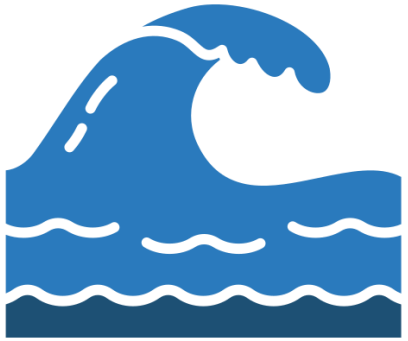
Moderator: What could somebody tell you to convince you to vote next time around?

"To vote again? I think the thing that changed things is this president that we have now, he had never held public office. I wish that we would've **put something in the constitution**, I guess, that **you have to have some experience** and then so to not be able to just do things differently, like a third term" – TX man, Hispanic, non-voter

"**Homelessness** or a major thing. Like a petition, like voting's supposed to be, I guess. I don't know. The **guarantee that something was going to happen** and actually going to happen and it wasn't a lie." – IA woman, white, non-voter

"I feel like my one single vote doesn't really affect all that much. So I think maybe complete ease of access to where **I'm walking out** of something**, I see it**…**If there was something so severely bad was going to happen**, like a new war would break out or something would happen if this person got elected, I guess **something in the negative could also influence me** to seek out voting." – SC woman, white, non-voter

"I'm **going to vote regardless**. I usually vote. I was out of town for work." – SC man, white, non-voter



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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

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