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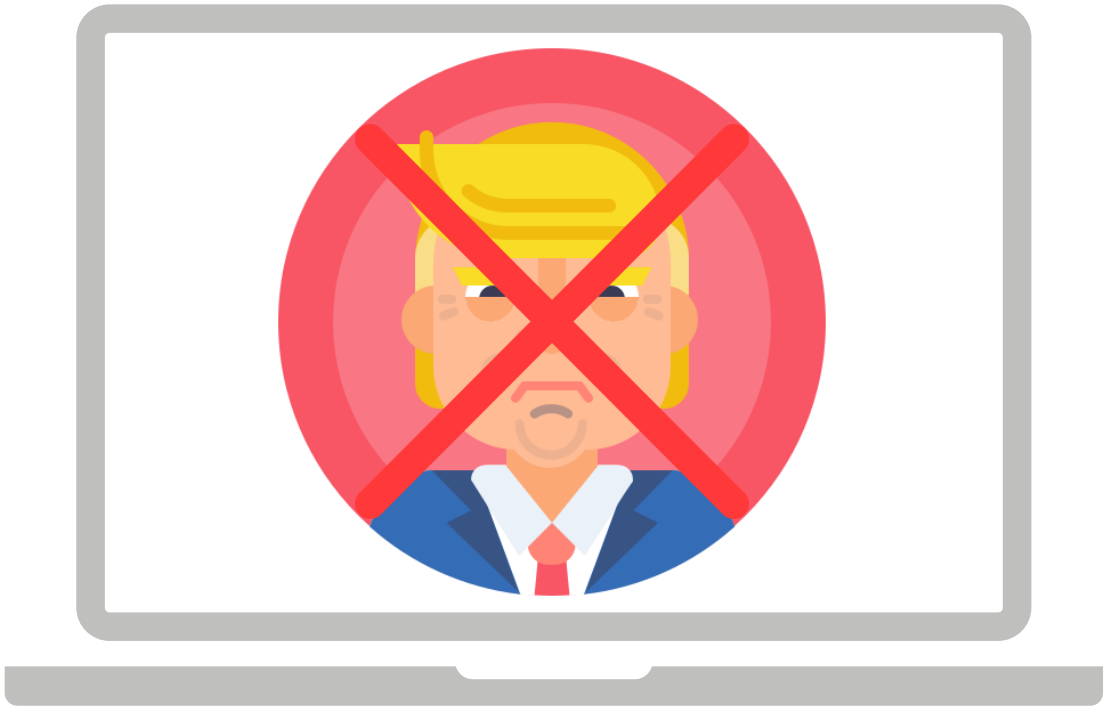
FOCUS GROUP REPORT



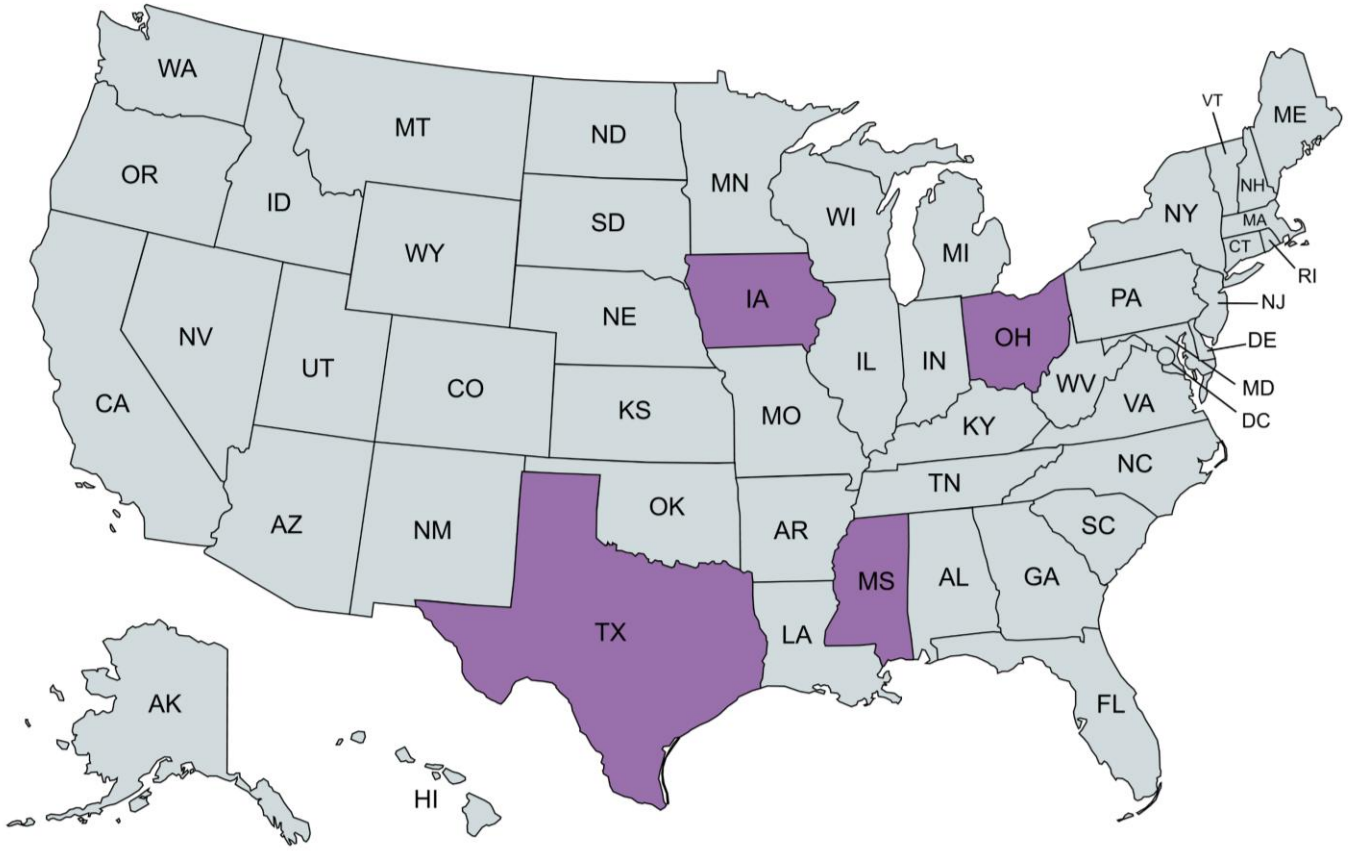
Tuesday, November 24, 2026

2026 Trump Defectors

GBAO

Methodology

On November 17, 2026, GBAO conducted an online focus group with registered voters from Senate battleground states* who voted for Trump in 2024, but at least one Democrat in the 2026 midterm election.



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*IA, MS, OH, TX

Key Findings

- These Trump 2024 voters are souring on him, due to costs, the war in Iran, and his erratic behavior.
- Defectors often split their ticket, skipped races, or were unenthusiastic about their choices.
- Some expect Democrats to focus on healthcare, and most expect political gridlock.

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These Voters Are Glad The Election Is Over

Moderator: What's the emotion you feel now that the election's over?

"Text messages, **absurd amounts of text messages**...I don't know how many numbers I blocked. ...And we also had local elections, so it was like **throwing 10 pieces of mail away a day**." – MS man, white independent lean Republican

"You would just get **so many mailers** and really **they wouldn't even really say anything**. It was more like a kind of synopsis of who they were, or if they were supported by Trump, or if they were supported by the farmers." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"It was terrible. They all **talked about how bad each other was and what crooks they were**. ...**The mailings were out of control**. There were days you'd get six, eight in the mail, and they would be equal, Democrat and Republican. And that was for the last three months." – OH man, white weak Republican

"**I wouldn't say there was anything particularly exciting about it**. I went into it with the idea of, 'I really don't align with this side and **I really don't like these candidates**, but I also really don't like the other side.'" – TX woman, white weak Republican



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Even More Loyal Republicans Feel Disappointed By Trump, Who They See As "Off The Rails"

Moderator: How have your views on Trump changed since when you voted for him in 2024?

"I've been **really disappointed with Trump this time**. I feel like he's been less about making things work and more of trying to take over and showing, 'I can do this because I'm the president,' and just arrogant and I just haven't been happy with him this time. **And I voted for him both times**. ...I think when he started talking about **taking over Greenland, and that he was powerful enough to take over** and just take it away from them." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"It's just **too many fringe people** that he's trying to be with. He was trying to get the UFC guy to be the press secretary, and then that whole UFC nonsense or the American Games at the White House stuff. It's just weird. It was almost comical, like a sketch. **It doesn't seem like we have a real president**." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"Trump is just, I don't know, **it's derailed**. It's like, I don't know, **he lost his mind**. I don't disagree with the war on Iran. That needed to happen a long time ago. ...I feel like it was a distraction from everything else and it's just turning into a drain on resources." – OH man, white weak Republican

"Feels like **he's gone off the rails and let all the power go to his head**. I feel like he promised some things that he has accomplished, and then other things that it's just like, have not even been a thought in their heads with all the taxes and stuff on the things coming into the country." – TX woman, white weak Republican





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The War And Prices Are The Biggest Betrayals

"Why didn't I vote for Trump again, Republicans again? Trump...is **too powerful, too much power grabbing and not really any solutions for gas prices and the tariffs**." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"**I don't think Trump did anybody any favors** in what has gone on the last two years in his presidency, that's for sure. And **he doesn't explain anything**. Well, why are we putting the tariffs on Canada? Well, it's not explained. It's just implemented." – OH man, white weak Republican

"I **didn't agree completely with the tariffs**. I know that wasn't on this particular race, but I did feel that played a part in it because of **the inflation, the gas prices, the grocery prices**, all of that's gone so high when you live on a very limited income, that makes it very difficult to do anything." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"**People voted with their wallets in terms of gas prices and the war** and how tariffs have made it very expensive to go to the grocery store and do other things for Americans. ...[Trump] played into it about 80% of it because of everything. **The gas prices to the grocery store to even the enjoyments I used to have**. ...Couldn't go out to eat no more as frequently as we wanted to." – IA man, white weak Republican

"We're a single-income house, so that does factor into it, but **just the jump from four or five years ago to now is crazy**." – TX woman, white weak Republican



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Voting Democratic Could Mean Split Ticket Voting, Or Skipping Some Races Altogether

"I **didn't vote in particular on [the Senate race]** because I didn't like Paxton either, and he's done a lot of things that I feel were wrong. But the other thing was I've not been happy with a lot of things the Republican has done, so I **tended to vote a little more evenly** because I didn't like what was being done." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"I kind of **vote both parties depending on who was running**. There was a couple that I didn't like either side, so **I chose not to vote on that particular thing**. ...Normally, I vote mostly Republican, whereas this time **I chose to vote for a lot of Democrats** simply because I did not agree with what Republicans were saying all the way through." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"The only Democrat that I can remember off the top of my head was for, I can't think of the titles, like agriculture something, a local office. ...And his was just **the only name that I was familiar with**, and I had seen a lot of his campaign stuff, so I just voted for him." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"It's like, 'I'm **not going to run a full red ticket**, I'm not going to look at both sides of the stories,' but just **how [Scott Colom] carried himself** and that also played a pretty good part of why I voted for him." – MS man, white independent lean Republican

"The Democrat was **more of a local candidate**. ...I **voted with candidates I aligned with**, I guess, more." – OH man, white weak Republican



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For These Trump Defectors, The Trans Attacks Resonated, Though Not Enough To Keep Them Voting Straight Republican

"For me, **the most important thing was gender identity**. It had a lot of talk about women and men in sports and which sex to use which locker room. So that was an important issue for me because I do have children and **I don't believe anybody that was born male should be in a female locker room**." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"A lot of the people that were running on the Democratic ticket have a **history of voting for transgenders in the locker room**, and **it hits home for me** because I do have a daughter, I do have a son, I do have people that would be affected that I do care about." – IA man, white weak Republican



"The Democratic Party here in Mississippi was **not in your face for having trans rights**, transgender people in the bathroom. I think that was completely off the ticket since the city got more of a moderate here." – MS man, white independent lean Republican

"I'm sure there will be some sort of something that [Democrats will] try to pass about **everything involving gender and discrimination** in that area that they'll try to push through." – TX woman, white weak Republican

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The Republican Message Seen As Centered On Money And Negativity

Moderator: What was the Republican message?

"There was really **no specific message**, just, 'Vote for me, I'll fix whatever you need. Supplying money for your lifestyle, I'm going to lower gas,' but really **nothing specific** there. I felt like **the Republican Party was a bit overbearing**." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"Just that [Republicans] were going to **help everybody increase incomes**, and businesses, and **everybody's ability to pay for their lifestyles** and stuff like that." – OH man, white weak Republican

"The Republican [campaign] with Cindy Hyde-Smith was just **'run smear campaigns' and 'MAGA all the way, Trump all the way**, support him or else, Trump 2028 forever,' and it got old." – MS man, white independent lean Republican

"Everything that I heard from the Republican side was just **talking about what the Democrats were going to do and not about what the Republicans were going to do**. It was all just **smearing the other side** instead of focusing on how they were going to improve things." – TX woman, white weak Republican



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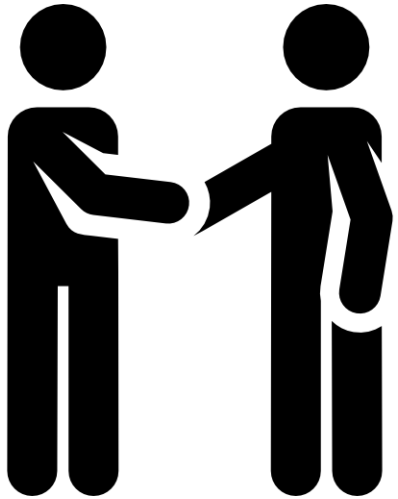
Many Picked Democrats Who They Saw As "Making Sense" And Accessible

Moderator: You voted for Trump in 2024, but voted for a Democrat this time around. Tell me a little bit about what Democrat you voted for.

"Scott Colom was actually out there talking to everybody...I really liked him. ...It's like, okay, **you got [Scott Colom] making sense** and you got another lady who's making no sense." – MS man, white independent lean Republican



"I voted for [Rob Sand] because he has **more of an open view on legalizing marijuana** in our state. Whereas we had Kim Reynolds, which she's the current governor and she bases a lot of her voting and a lot of her political power because she used to be an addict. And so she has a very closed view over legalizing marijuana." – IA man, white weak Republican

"I voted for Rob Sand, he **visited us, visited our church**. Seemed like **a nice person, younger**, so maybe not as malleable as older candidates." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"[The Democrat I voted for] was just talking about **putting restrictions on data centers in the area** and some of the citywide growth relating to residents and stuff like that. ...**I have liked what he said, so I'll just vote for him**." – TX woman, white weak Republican

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Others Also Found Republican Candidates Lackluster, And Voted For "The Lesser Of Two Evils"

"I think **most of the politicians are bought and paid for**, especially at the federal level, because everybody has an interest, especially the bigger the company or the bigger the individual, and they have the money to spread around and **more or less buy their votes**." – OH man, white weak Republican

"Here in the state of Texas, Ken Paxton was one of them, and **I felt like he was very corrupt**. ...There are several in the state of Texas that are corrupt, and I felt like it definitely weighed on me for that. **I chose differently because of that**." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"**Ashley Hinson, her net worth has increased dramatically since she's taken office**. That made me very worried because she does have family to take care of, and yet her net worth has increased so rapidly that, I mean, she used to be driving around town in a Chevy Suburban, **now she's driving around town in a Bentley**." – IA man, white weak Republican

"Just trying to play the **roulette wheel of who is the least person to waste my vote on**, unfortunately. But as part of the democratic process and being American, not having that privilege to vote, so it's like you got to vote for somebody, but **who's the lesser of two evils**." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"I was kind of in the middle where one side I really didn't align with politically, but **the other side just had really sucky candidates**. ...Greg Abbott was, like I said, **one of those yes-men to Trump**, just did whatever he said." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"**Cindy Hyde-Smith was very cold, off-putting, and just rude to everybody.** She was belittling people on her staff." – MS man, white independent lean Republican



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Defectors Have Inconsistent Interests And Candidates Who Excite Them

Moderator: Is there anybody that you were paying attention to not in your state?

"Mayor for Los Angeles. Well, the mayor elect...[Nithya Raman] **seems a little bit more with it. She has a clear plan** on what she wants to do when she gets in office, whereas Karen Bass, because I'm from California, she did screw up one of the biggest fires in history. She did a lot to hurt California." – IA man, white weak Republican

"I followed the **New Mexico governor race** very closely because there was a **Native American running** for that and did win that. I did not like [Michelle Lujan] Grisham at all. She was very against people in general." – TX woman, white weak Republican



"**Thomas Massie** in Kentucky, just because he was really vocal about everything with the Epstein files and seemed to be **one of the only people on the Republican side that was vocal about that** and actually wanting to do something about it." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"The big one was the **Paxton-Talarico** one, also Brandon Herrera too. I was **really pulling for Brandon Herrera** as well, watched him on YouTube, and I think it's kind of cool to see his progression, how he actually got support from other people on YouTube, and it's kind of a **grassroots campaign**." – MS man, white independent lean Republican

"**Brandon Herrera** in Texas, just because he's **a pro 2A and he was new, never been in a political career**, mainly a YouTuber and a gun maker." – OH man, white weak Republican

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Most Expect Gridlock In Congress

Moderator: Let's say Congress passes things...and then Trump vetoes it, then what would be your reaction?

"It'll just be nice to see some type of bipartisanship, but we know that **these two sides are really at odds with each other**, as well as **the president will probably veto anything that has passed**, but hopefully there'll be some kind of sensible coexistence or resolution...I'm thinking something in regards to the war with Iran, maybe they'll pass some type of resolution to get out of that." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"The first thing that comes to mind is the **universal Medicare**." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"I think [Trump is] going to do **massive vetoes**. It's going to be **very difficult for the Democratic Party to pass anything**. He has stated he's going to do it. ...We're going to have a **government shut down again**." – IA man, white weak Republican

"**You're going to have gridlock**. It's going to be a lot of blaming, blame game. The Democrats who did run and saying, 'Hey, we're going to do this, we're going to do that, make it more affordable,' or they're going to have all these huge clusters of bills. I think it's going to wind up going straight [through] Congress and Senate and get passed through, bam, **veto back to the floor**. It's just going to be round and round. ...In my opinion, **Congress is going to be complete gridlock for the next two years**." – MS man, white independent lean Republican

"I have felt like for years that if a Republican says they want to do this, then the Democrats are going to say no, and vice versa. I feel like **they've always just tried to shut the other one down** for the last several years." – TX woman, white weak Republican



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They See Democrats As Focused On Healthcare

"[Democrats will focus on] **expanding social programs like Medicare, universal healthcare**, stuff like that. It's what they were preaching. ...I'm fine with it, but that also means that **you got to be accountable** because a lot of these systems you see so much fraud in it, it's ridiculous." – OH man, white weak Republican

"The standard Democrat boilerplate was, 'We're here for the little guy. We're here to take care of your needs and **expand Medicare and Medicaid and healthcare for everybody**.'" – OH man, white weak Republican

"[I'd want Congress to focus on] **some type of retention of Obamacare** or whatever it's called now, where people that are not working or gig economy people like myself who don't have a full-time job **having some type of medical insurance options**." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"**One of the big talking points of Mississippi was expansion of Medicaid** and also social services. ...People who all of a sudden are **paying $300 a month to get on Medicaid is crazy**, in my opinion, when they didn't have to go for it before." – MS man, white independent lean Republican

"**Veterans rights, more benefits for veterans**. A lot of veterans come home from Iraq, Iran, different things, and **they don't have the proper medical treatment**, mental, and physical." – IA man, white weak Republican

"I feel like from what I saw, [Democrats] were **focused a lot more on what they were going to do towards education, and Medicaid**, and illegal immigrants in the country. ...More focused on the things that they wanted to accomplish." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"**The veterans need so much more than they get**. It's very hard for them to get treatment." – TX woman, white weak Republican

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There Is Some Openness To Oversight Investigations

Moderator: How much of their time do you think Congress should be spending on things like investigating corruption in government, and accountability?

"It should be **a huge priority** due to the net worth. A lot of these people coming in office having a hundred thousand or $200,000 net worth, they're leaving...Nancy Pelosi. I mean, her net worth has jumped so dramatically, skyrocketed from her being in office, and other people have...I mean, **it's mind-boggling how their net worth has gone up just from stock trades**...yet there hasn't been a law passed where they can't have stock." – IA man, white weak Republican

"I feel like [corruption] should be **a huge priority. Huge priority**. ...But I don't think it is. ...To me, **if they're crooked, they ought to be impeached out**." – TX woman, white weak Republican

"Moderately, because we know it's just going to look like it's tit for tat. ...If it was true, like **a bipartisan investigation and they were looking at both parties, great. I'm all for it** because I don't care for [corruption], but I feel like it's just going to go one way until the next time, and then it'll just go back the other way when they're investigating the other party. ...They provide compelling evidence and **I'm all right with it**." – OH man, white weak Republican

"**[Trump family corruption] should be investigated**, but again, he's going to **probably get off scot free** because he's only got, what, a year or two more? And he's already survived one impeachment allegations, assassin allegations. So I don't think there's really much that they're going to do to stop him." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"I wouldn't say I'd feel surprised about it, but **I would definitely be interested to seeing it investigated**." – TX woman, white weak Republican

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Yet Also Resignation That Not Much Would Change, And That All Politicians Are Corrupt

"**There's always going to be some type of corruption in government** and it's more like, 'well, this person is worse than that person.' They might've both did something wrong, but depending on the flavor of the month at the time, it might be more emphasis put on who did what wrong when versus 'let's just eliminate corruption as a whole.' ...**There's always someone more corrupt to take the top person's place**." – IA man, Latino strong Republican

"I'm **not happy with Washington, period**. I don't care who the president is. I don't care who's Senator or Congress or the House of Representatives. **They're crooked, they're unproductive**. I don't think any of them have our best interests at heart. And if they did, the country would be much better. They don't do anything as far as I can tell, except drive up prices, let illegals cross the border and make everybody's life more difficult." – OH man, white weak Republican

"If they want to go after to see where Trump's getting his money from, **they should look into themselves**. ...I think if you want to be transparent, you got to be transparent." – MS man, white independent lean Republican



"I think [Trump's $2 billion in income] should be investigated, but not really a lot because I mean, **all of his assets are in a blind trust**. His family doesn't control the trust. He doesn't control the trust, and it's in a blind trust. He did start up things like shoes and different merchandise, stuff like that, and his crypto. ...You have **people that are in Congress and in the Senate that have no business background** and they jumped from, I think what was $150,000 to $16 million in two years." – IA man, white weak Republican

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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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