

The Democratic Establishment Problem

Understanding the Democratic electorate's left-liberal revolt.

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The **HIT** Team

HIT Strategies is a public opinion research firm that goes where traditional research doesn't. Our diverse team specializes in the voters, consumers, and communities that are actively reshaping politics, culture, and markets — delivering the data-driven insights and cultural intelligence that give leaders a clearer picture of what's coming.

Our research is conducted by people with a deep understanding of underestimated communities, delivering nuanced, data-driven insights that traditional firms can't replicate. We give your strategy, the cultural intelligence it needs to connect authentically and win.



The **HIT** Panel



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Thank You to Our Clients



🎯 Why We Are Here: The Left Liberal Shift in the Democratic Electorate

1

The Democratic Party electorate is disgruntled, wants progressive policy changes, and wants assertive leadership against the system, of which Trump is one aspect. Left-Liberal Democrats, spanning DSA members, progressives, and left populists, are credible vehicles for change.

2

The electorate is highly pessimistic about the economy and opposes a political system that does not serve them. They see villains in billionaires and money in politics, and want their corrupting influence out of politics

3

Left-Liberal candidates embody these anti-system attitudes and reflect them back to the electorate. Establishment Democrats do not embody meaningful change.



The Revolt

Select observations from the
2026 Primary season.



2026 House Democrats saw more defeats from left-liberal challengers than Republicans saw defeats from the Tea Party in 2010.



Left-liberal challengers are winning in Democratic strongholds and must-win swing states.



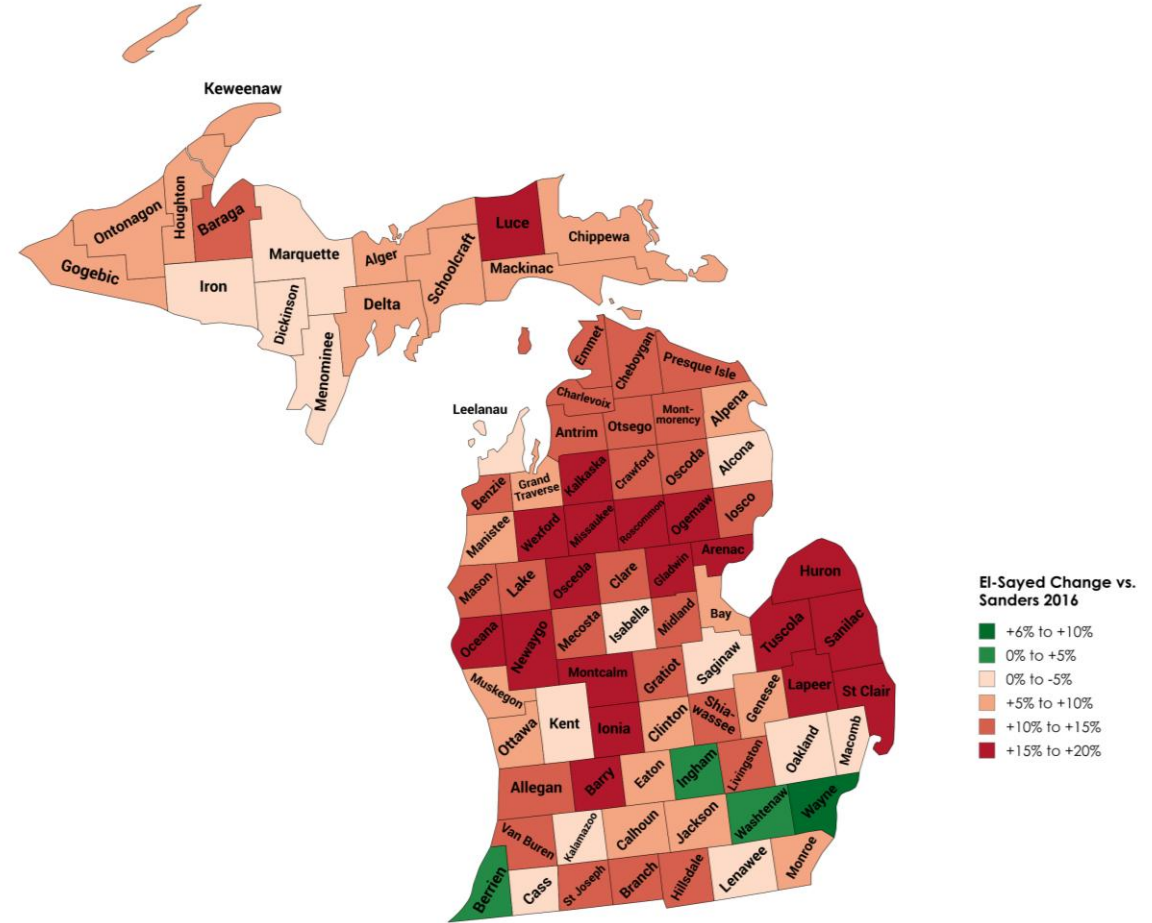
Left-liberal challengers can now win over traditionally Democratic constituencies – not just left-wing urban whites.

- 8
- © Left-Liberal challengers, like AOC in 2018, were limited to winning low-turnout primaries. Valdez and Chevalier won decisively among the emerging electorate in NYC.

Demographic	NY-07 – Valdez Vote Share	NY-07 – Valdez Net Advantage	NY-13 – DAC Vote Share	NY-13 – DAC Net Advantage
White Voters Under 50	69.0%	+45.1	57.9%	+19.6
White Voters Over 50	61.4%	+32.9	55.3%	+14.6
Hispanic Voters Under 50	64.3%	+36.5	47.0%	-1.6
Hispanic Voters Over 50	48.5%	+8.8	41.3%	-12.5
Black Voters Under 50	59.6%	+25.8	52.8%	+11.1
Black Voters Over 50	39.9%	-8.6	46.4%	-1.1
Asian Voters Under 50	62.7%	+24.7	56.1%	+16.9
Asian Voters Over 50	51.3%	+31.3	51.6%	+8.5

El-Sayed: 48.45% - Stevens: 47.55% - McMorrow: 4.0%

Sanders 2016: 49.68% - El-Sayed: 48.45%

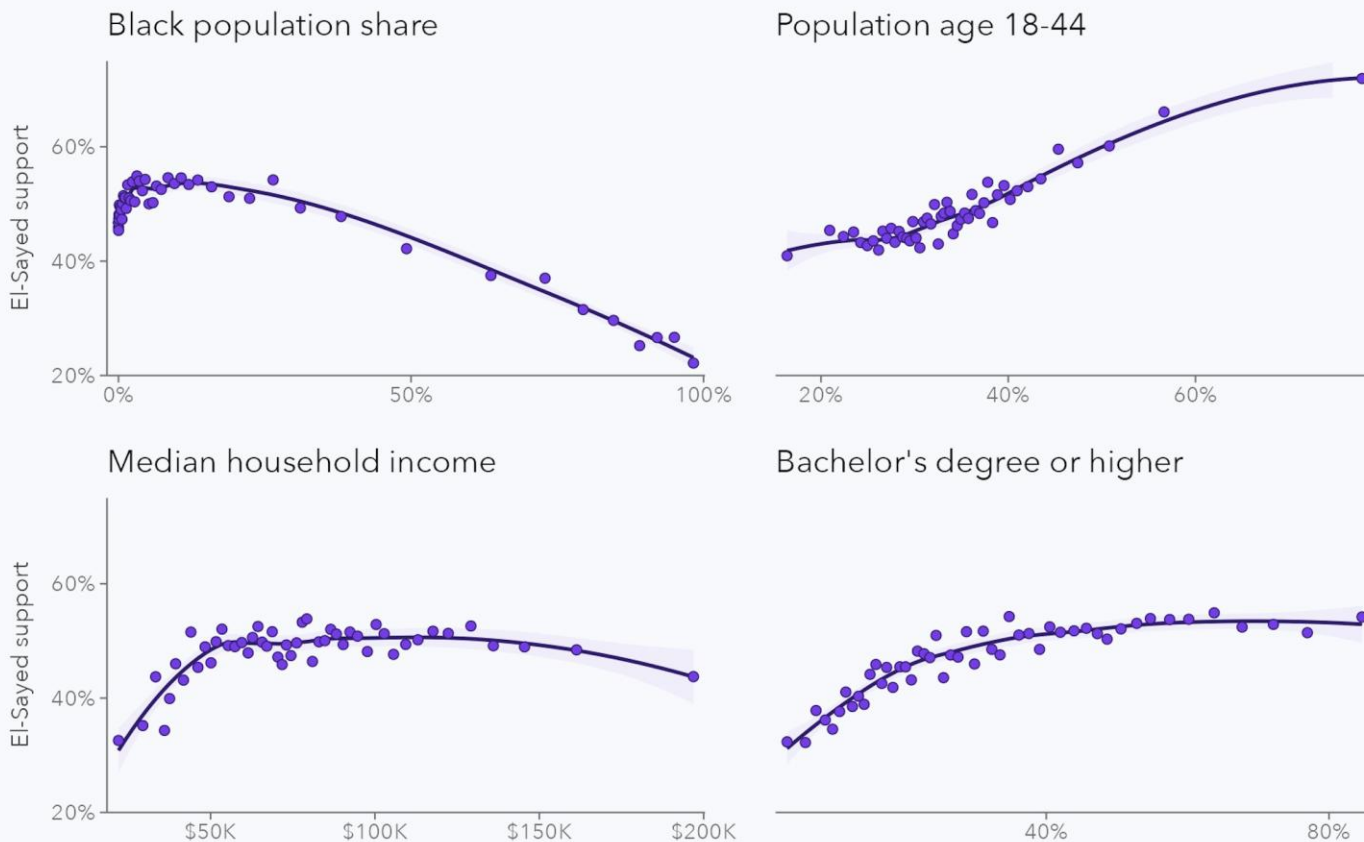




El-Sayed did not win by re-assembling the Bernie coalition from a decade earlier, but by winning over Black voters and surging young voters.

El-Sayed's support rose with youth and fell in the Blackest precincts

Fifty equal-count precinct bins; support is vote-weighted within each bin.



Age 18-44 combines the source file's 18-29 and 30-44 bands.
Chart: Zachary Donnini | Source: VoteHub precinct results and national precinct features

◎ The Coalition: Successful Left-Liberals Win with a Three-Legged Coalition



Voters under 45 – the Emerging Electorate. Age is by far the most reliable indicator for voting for a Left-Liberal candidate.



Voters of Color – the Deciding Electorate. Latinos, Asian-American voters, and *younger* Black voters are the cornerstone of Left-Liberal candidate support.



Middle Income Voters – Left-Liberal candidates dominate the “Coalition of the Middle,” winning the precarious middle-class voters. Establishment candidates perform well among the very richest and poorest.



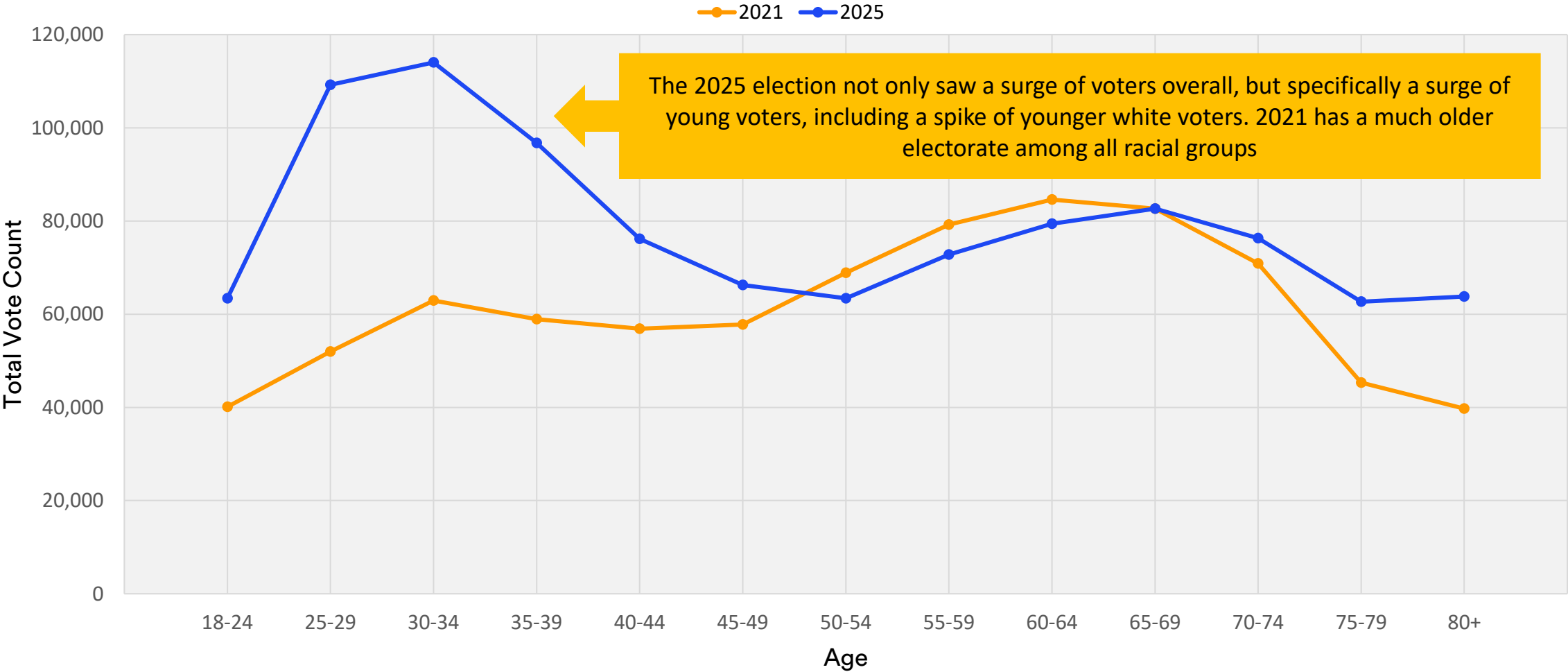
Voters Under 45

The Left-Liberal Backbone.



Voters under 45 elected Mamdani in 2025. The median age dropped from 55 in 2021 to 48 in 2025, almost entirely from voters 25-44.

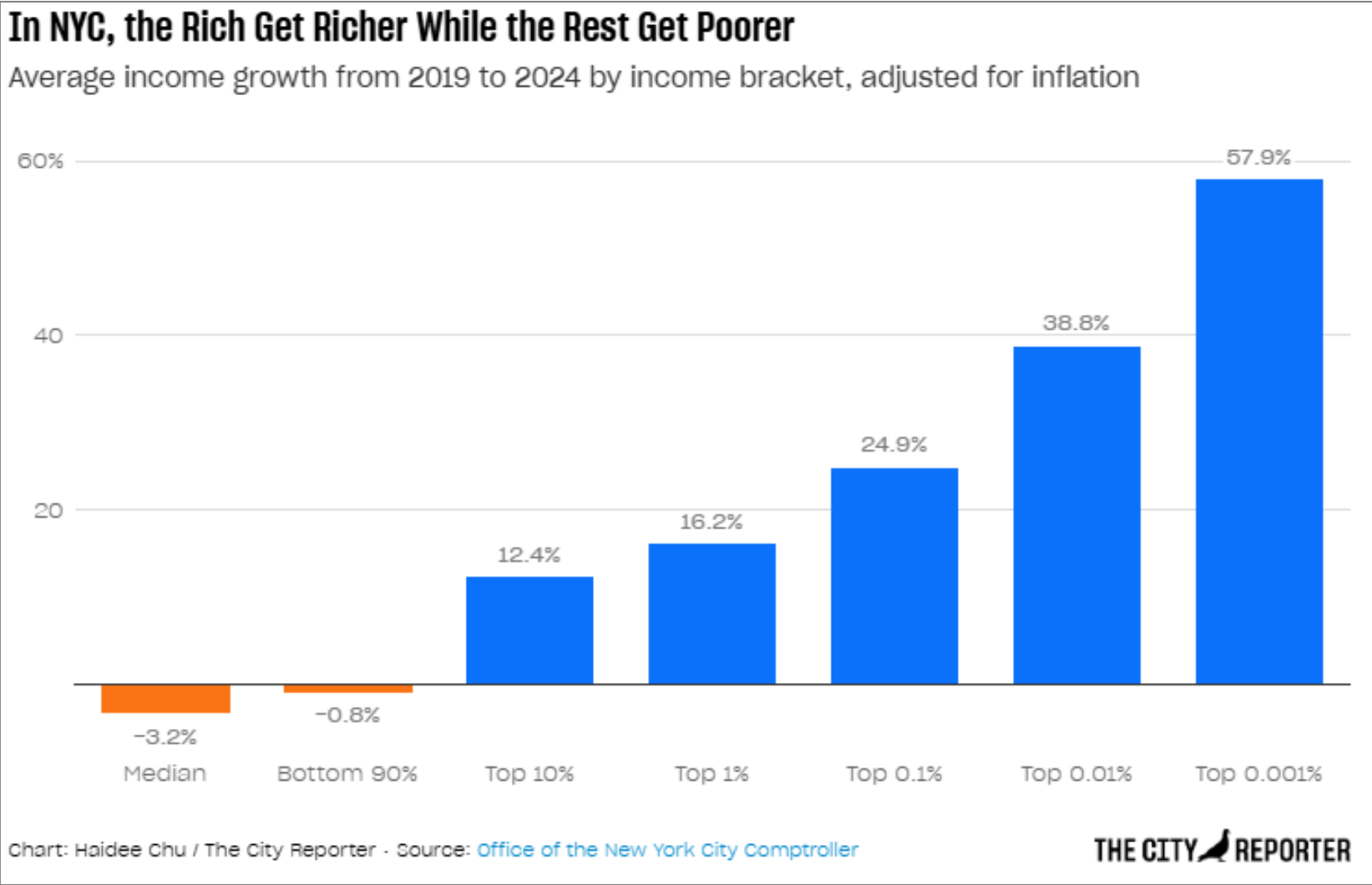
New York City Mayoral Turnout by Age



Source: HIT Strategies Catalyst voter file analysis.



Not coincidentally, New York City has a yawningly unequal economy, with most post-COVID gains going to the wealthiest New Yorkers.



Source: Kaitlyn Schwanemann, [Bottom 90% of New Yorkers’ Incomes Stagnate As Very Richest See Huge Gains Since COVID](#). *The City Reporter*. September 6, 2026

🎯 Solid majorities of voters under 45 are seriously disenchanted with the direction of the country.

Which best describes your view of the direction the country is headed?

Things could be going poorly, and
major, disruptive changes are needed

Things could be going better

Things are going well, and no
major changes are needed

Refuse



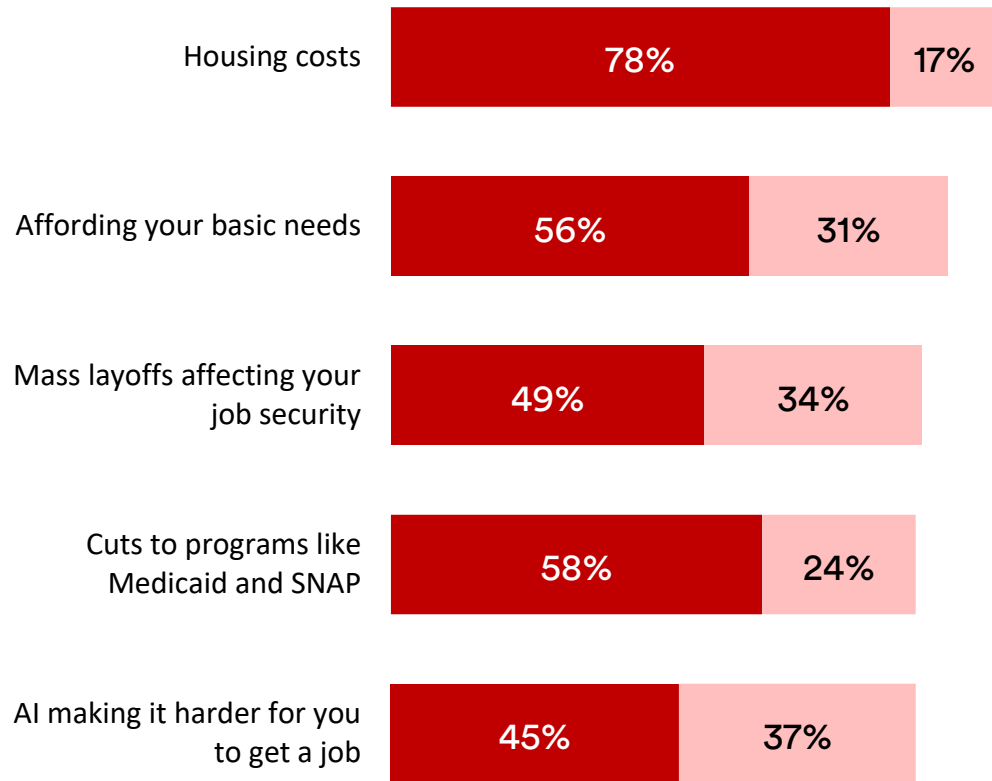
Source: Strength in Numbers/Verasight Poll, August 2026 [Topline Link](#).

The youngest voters are particularly pinched and express strong concern about both their own financial precarity, and the abuse of political and economic power.



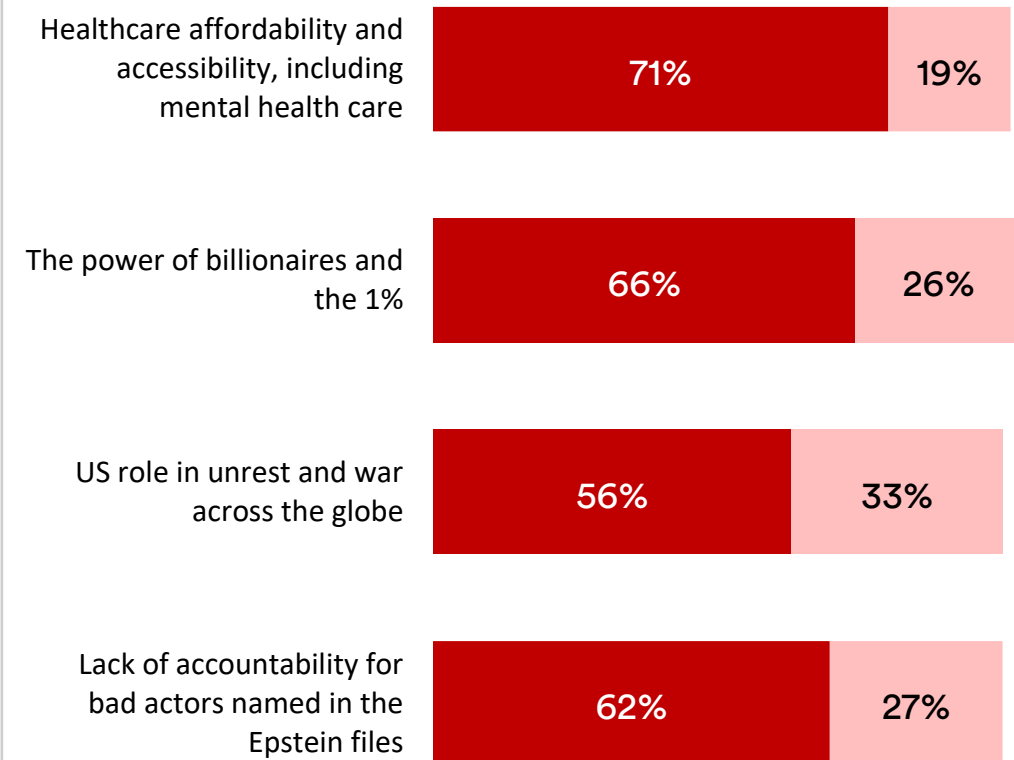
Q15. For each of the following issues, please [PHONE: tell me ONLINE/TTW: indicate] if you personally have a lot of concern, some concern, only a little concern, or no concern at all about each issue. [SPLIT SAMPLE]

■ A lot of concern ■ Some concern



Q17. For each of the following issues, please [PHONE: tell me ONLINE/TTW: indicate] if you have a lot of concern, some concern, only a little concern, or no concern at all about each issue. [SPLIT SAMPLE]

■ A lot of concern ■ Some concern



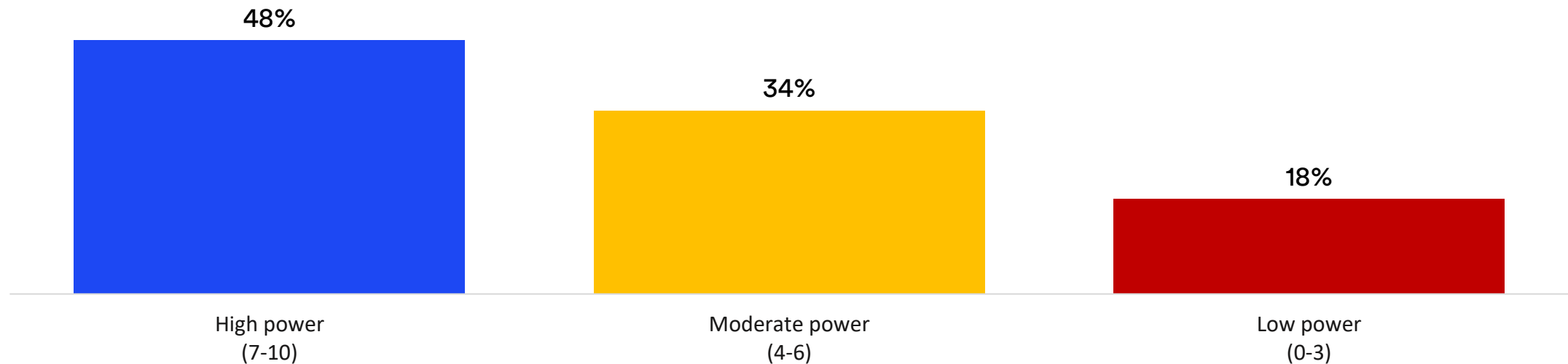
Source: HIT Strategies client poll of N=2,950 registered voters nationwide between the ages of 18-29, including 3 national oversamples of N=200 Black voters, N=300 AAPI voters, and N=200 LGBTQ+ voters, and state oversamples of N=400 registered voters in Texas, N=400 registered voters in Georgia, N=400 registered voters in Alabama. The survey fielded from June 24 – July 9, 2026 and was administered online using an opt-in web panel vendor and text-to-web. The margin of error is +/- 2.85 points.

Gen Z voters may be discouraged but do not think their generation is powerless.



Q9. How much power do you feel your generation – Gen Z – has to make change on issues that matter to you? Please rate the amount of power you feel your generation has on a scale of 0 to 10, where a '0' means no power at all, and a '10' means a lot of power to make change on issues that matter to you.

Gen Z Power to Make Change on Issues that Matter to Them



Source: HIT Strategies client poll of N=2,950 registered voters nationwide between the ages of 18-29, including 3 national oversamples of N=200 Black voters, N=300 AAPI voters, and N=200 LGBTQ+ voters, and state oversamples of N=400 registered voters in Texas, N=400 registered voters in Georgia, N=400 registered voters in Alabama. The survey fielded from June 24 – July 9, 2026 and was administered online using an opt-in web panel vendor and text-to-web. The margin of error is +/- 2.85 points.



Voters of Color

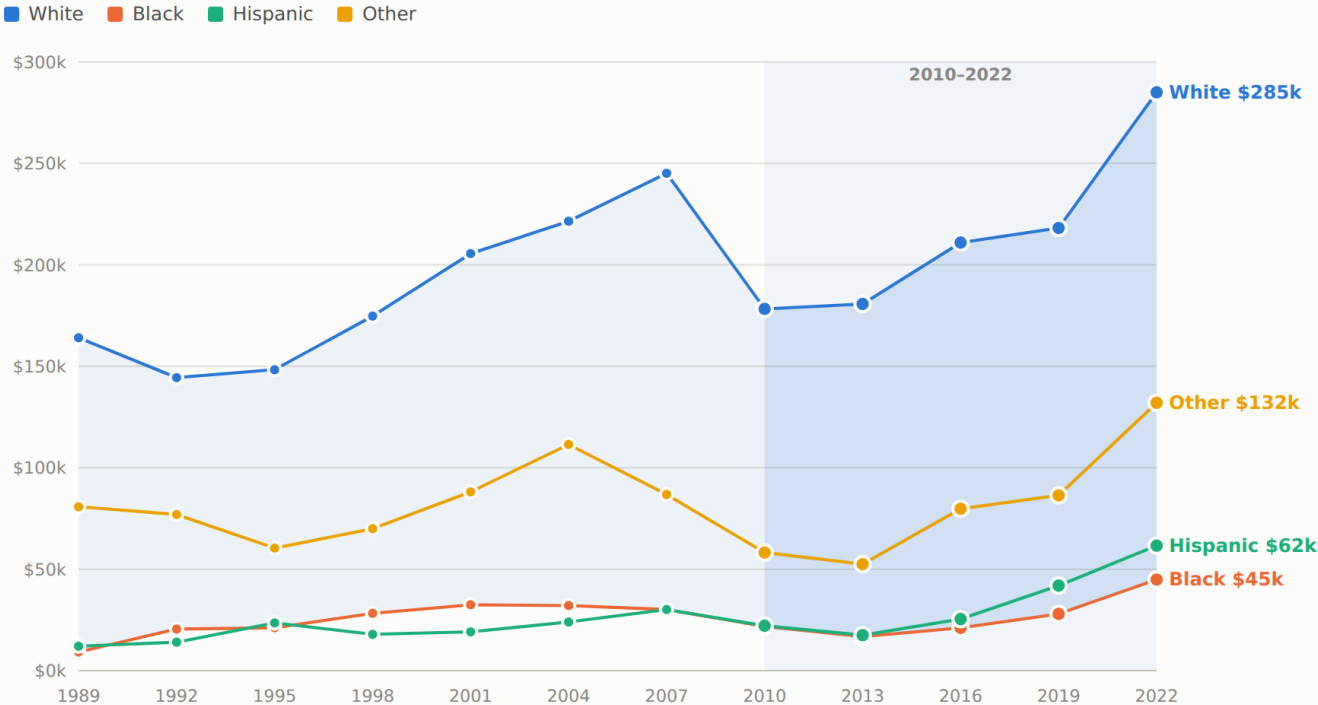
A swing constituency against
the status quo.



The current economic system is not working for Voters of Color. Wealth disparity between white families and non-white families has grown since 2010.

Median family wealth by race/ethnicity, 1989-2022

Thousands of 2022 dollars · Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances (triennial)
Shaded band on the chart marks 2010-2022, the period of focus below. Hover any year for exact values.



White — Black gap

\$240.1k

▲ **+\$83.6k since 2010 (+53%)**

Median wealth was 12% of White median in 2010, 16% in 2022

White — Hispanic gap

\$223.4k

▲ **+\$67.2k since 2010 (+43%)**

Median wealth was 12% of White median in 2010, 22% in 2022

White — Other gap

\$153.0k

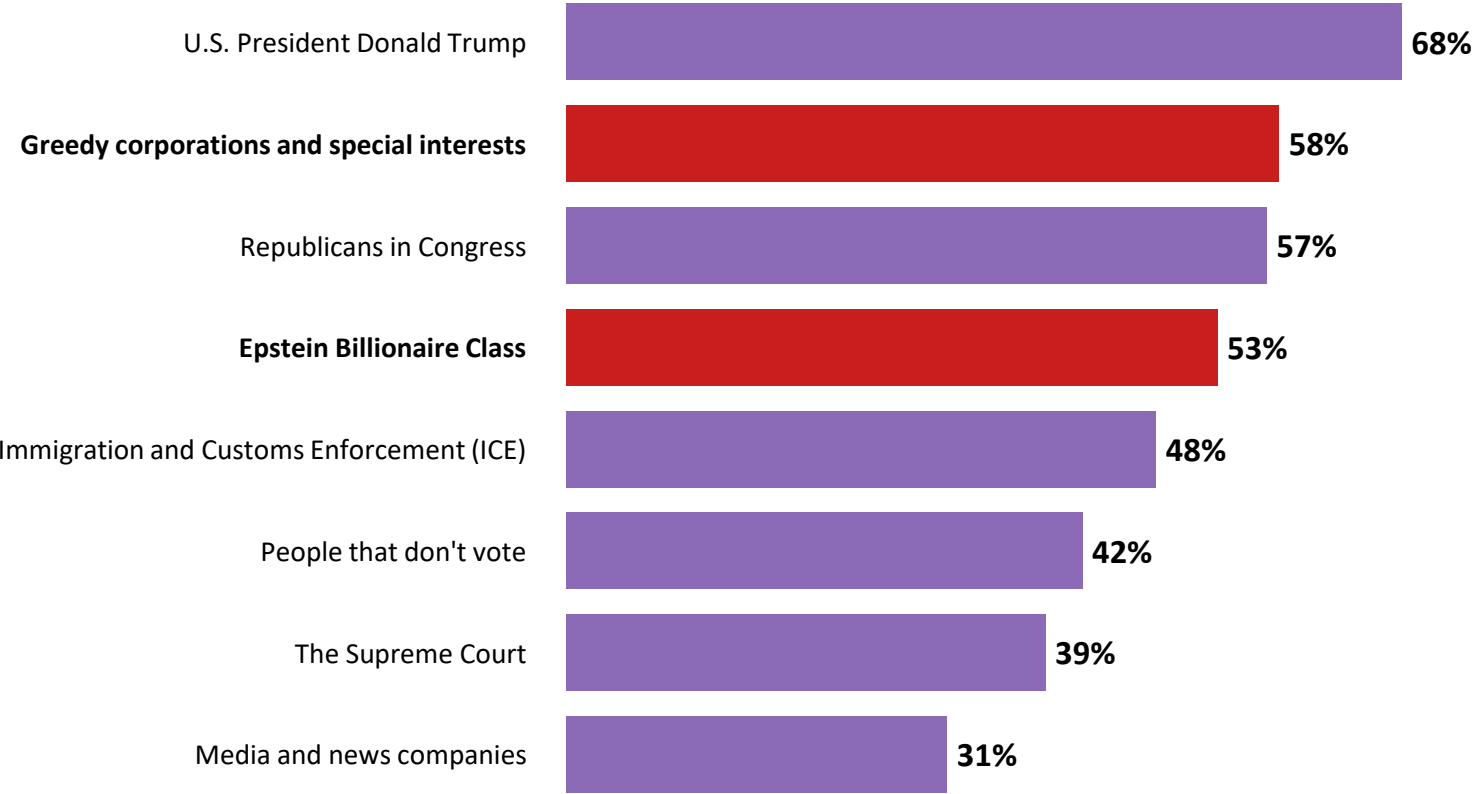
▲ **+\$32.9k since 2010 (+27%)**

Median wealth was 33% of White median in 2010, 46% in 2022



Black voters name greedy corporations and the billionaire class among the top villains in the decline of democracy.

Q: How much is each of the following responsible for the decline of democracy? % of Black voters saying "a lot"



Two of the top four villains named by Black voters are economic actors, the same anti-status-quo critique the anti-establishment left is running on.

🎯 Black and Latino voters are significantly more disenchanted with the direction of the country.

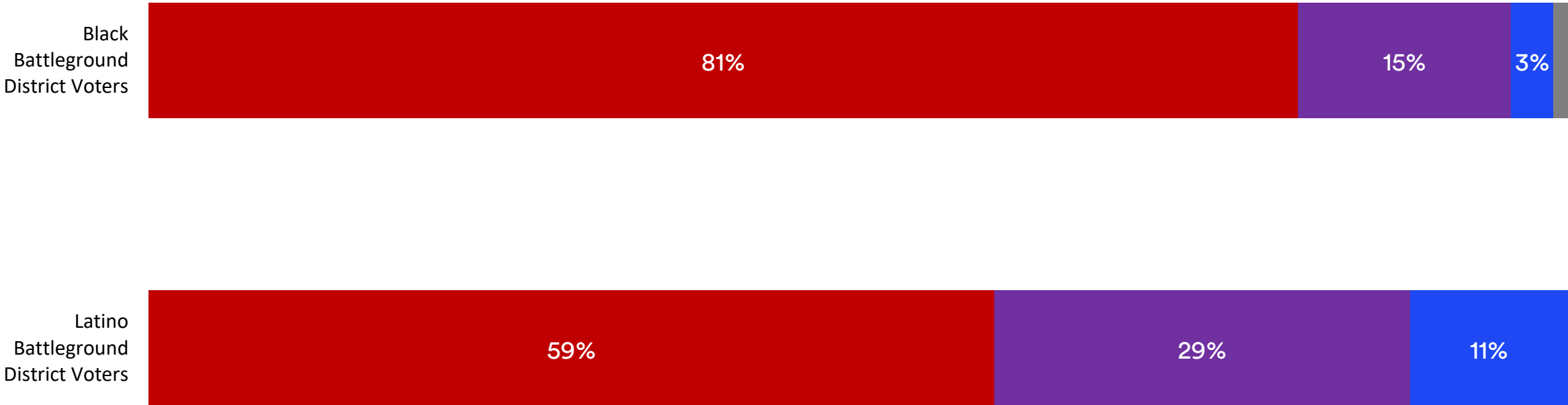
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Things could be going better

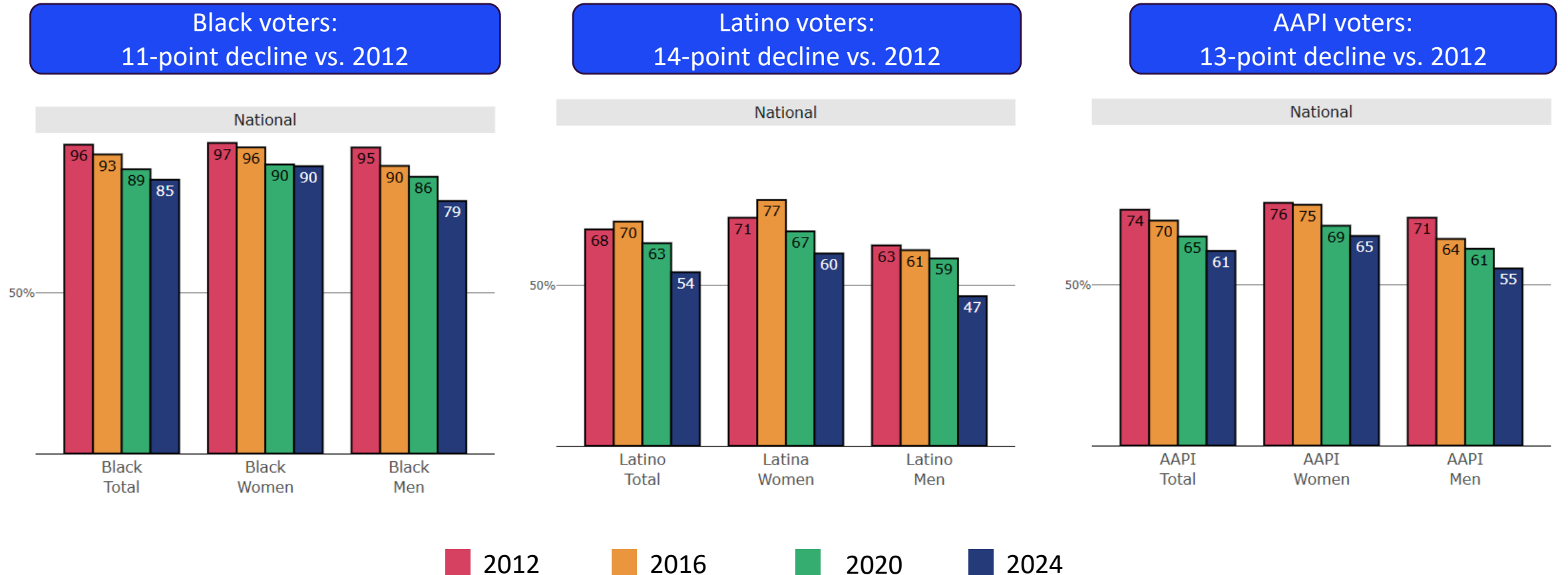
Things are going well, and no major changes are needed

Refuse



Source: HIT Strategies, Battleground District Survey for HMP, June 18-28, 2026.

- 🎯 As a direct consequence, once safely Democratic constituencies have become swing voters.

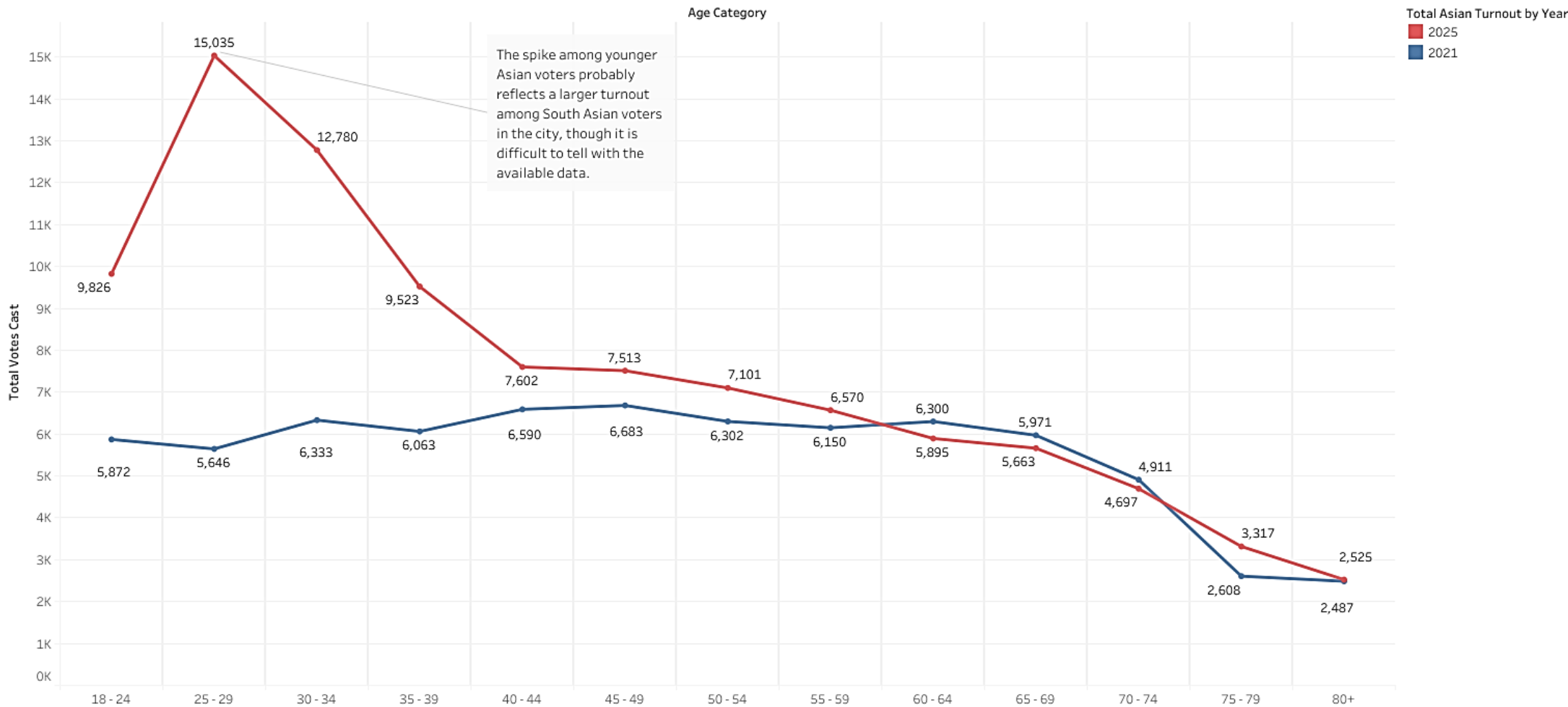




However, when offered a real choice, younger voters of color will choose a Left-Liberal candidate over a moderate one. Mamdani's election spiked Asian youth turnout to unprecedented levels.

Total Asian Turnout by Age - 2025 and 2021

The Asian Democratic Primary electorate was proportionally by far the youngest electorate of all, with younger Asian voters turning out in droves while older voters stayed home.



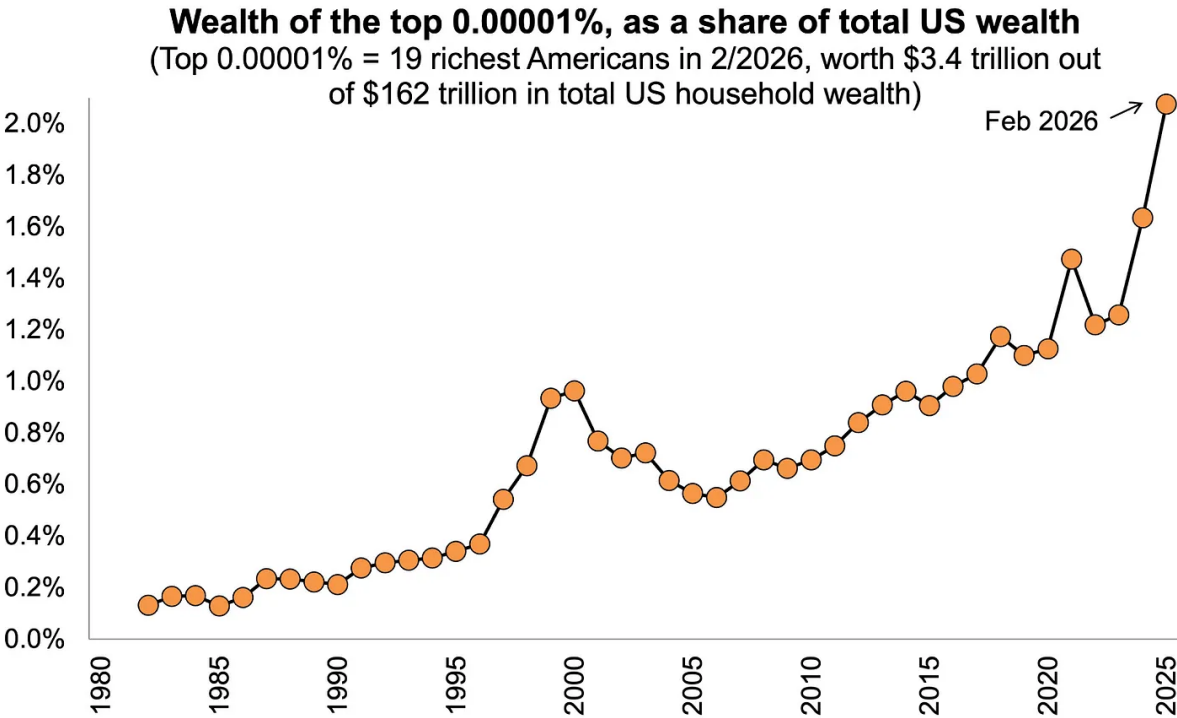
Source: HIT Strategies Catalyst voter file analysis.



The Middle & Working Classes
Pressured constituencies for
change.



Overall income inequality increases, squeezing the middle class and working poor, and leading more people into an anti-system frame of mind.



THE NEW YORK TIMES/SIENA POLL

MAY 11-15

Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

RESPONSES FROM POTENTIAL DEMOCRATIC SUPPORTERS

The economic system in this country is generally ...

... unfair to most Americans.

88%

... fair to most Americans.

11%

The political and economic system in America needs ...

... to be torn down completely.

20%

... major changes.

63%

... minor changes.

... no changes. (1%)

15%

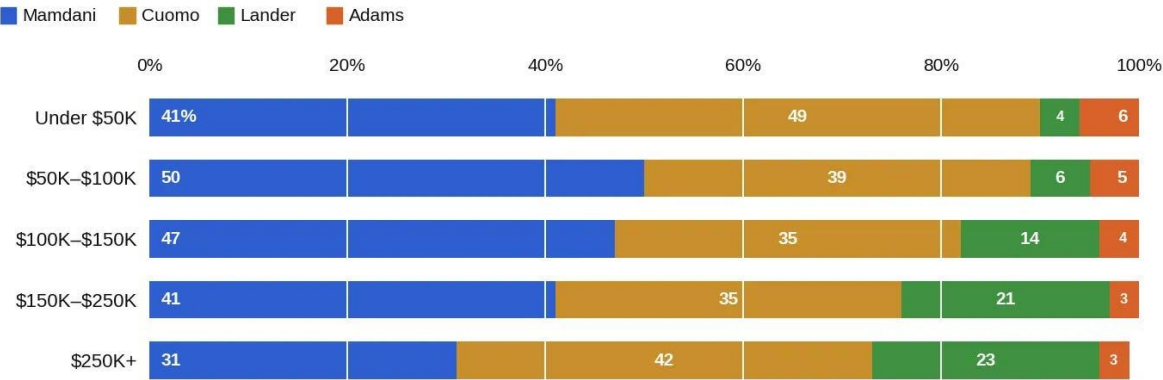
Source: Figure 1., G. Elliott Morris, *Meet America's new swing voter: The anti-system voter*, February 18, 2026. Figure 2., New York Times/Siena Survey, [Survey Link](#), May 11-15, 2026.



Prominent Left-Liberal candidates performed better among the “Coalition of the Middle” – the financially precarious middle-income voters that drive primary election participation.

Cuomo won New York’s poorest, richest voters

Mamdani carried the middle-income brackets.

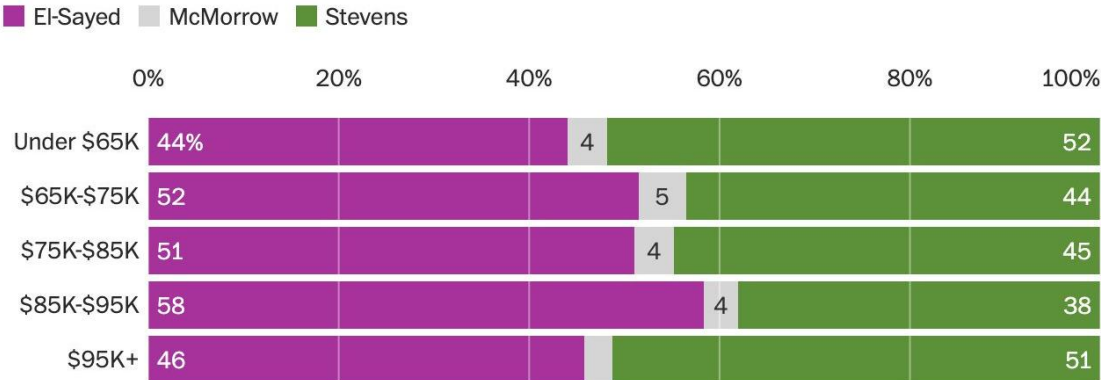


Note: First-round preferences in the June 2025 New York City Democratic mayoral primary. Crosstabs estimated from election district-level results via the homogeneous-precinct method, with demographic data from the L2 voter file and the American Community Survey.
Source: NYC Board of Elections, L2, U.S. Census Bureau

MICHAEL LANGE / THE NARRATIVE WARS

Stevens won Michigan’s poorest, richest counties

El-Sayed carried Michigan’s middle-income counties.



Note: Election results as of 10:20 a.m. Aug. 5. Demographic data reflects county median income according to the 2024 5-year American Community Survey.

Source: AP, U.S. Census Bureau

CLARA ENCE MORSE / THE WASHINGTON POST



Progressive Policy

The Change Agenda

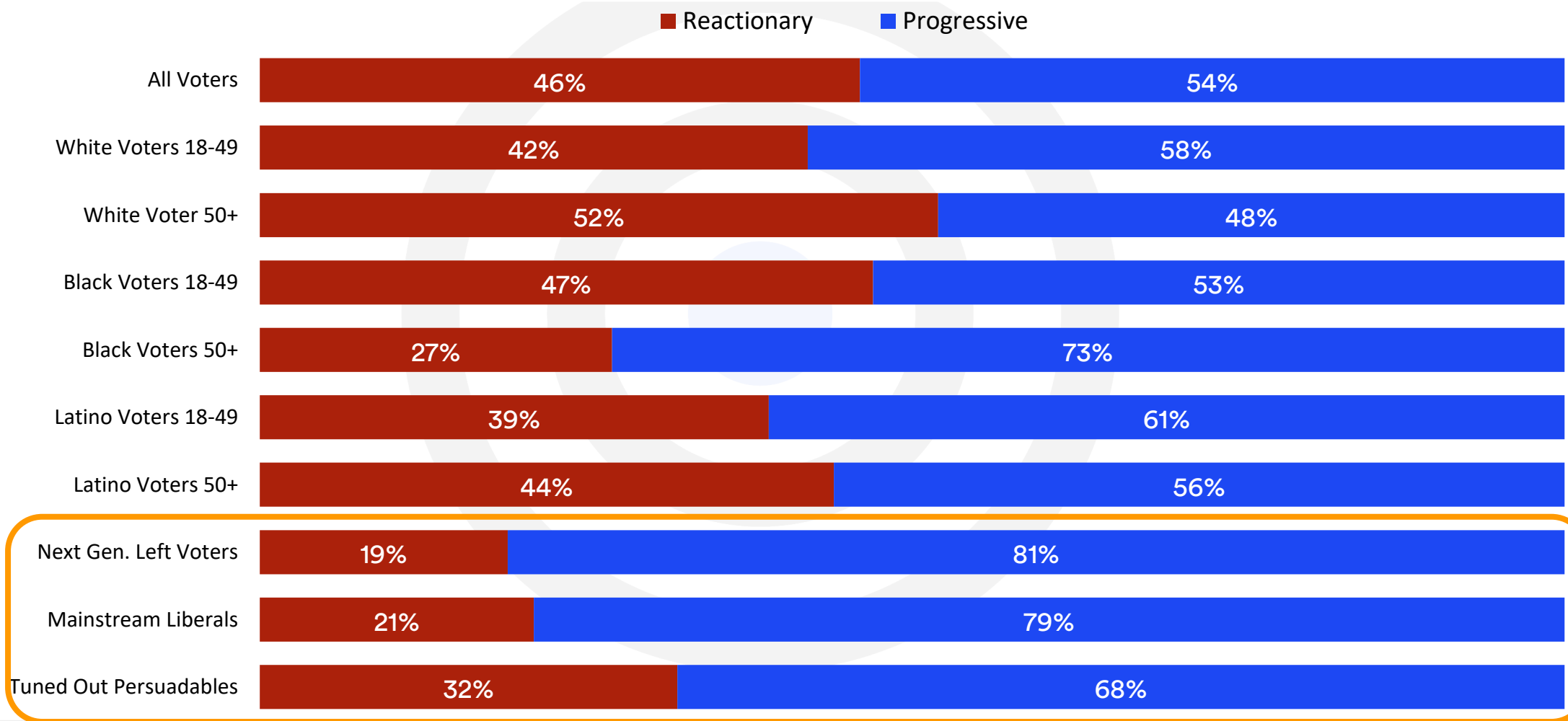


Key Democratic AND persuadable constituencies prefer Left-Liberal framing on the economy, even when it's unfavorable for Democrats. 28

27. Even if none of them are exactly right, which one of these statements come closest to your view?

[INFLATION - REACTIONARY] Out-of-control government spending is causing inflation to spike, harming ordinary people.

[INFLATION - PROGRESSIVE] Rampant price fixing, price gouging, and greedy corporations are inflating our costs of living and profiting off of working families' misery.

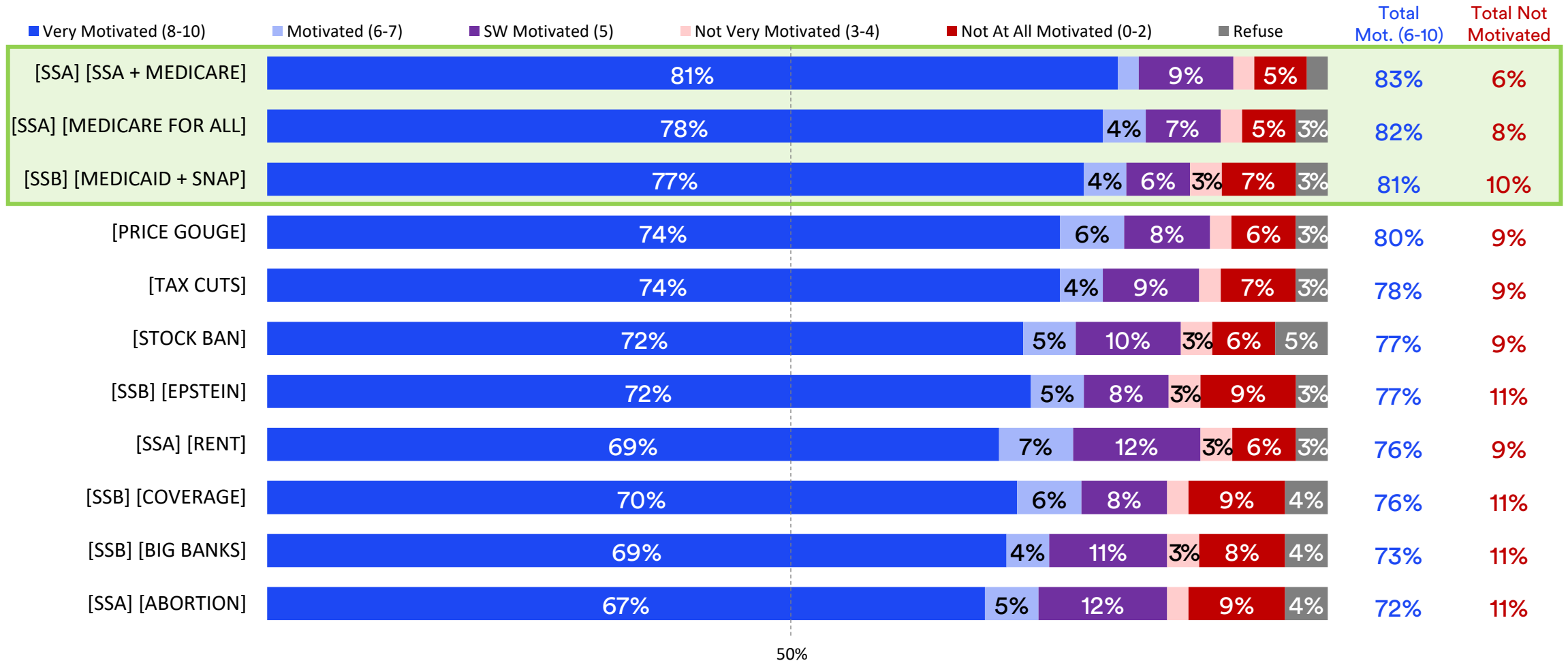




Black battleground voters consistently prioritize securing and expanding the social safety net, speaking to their direct material concerns.

29

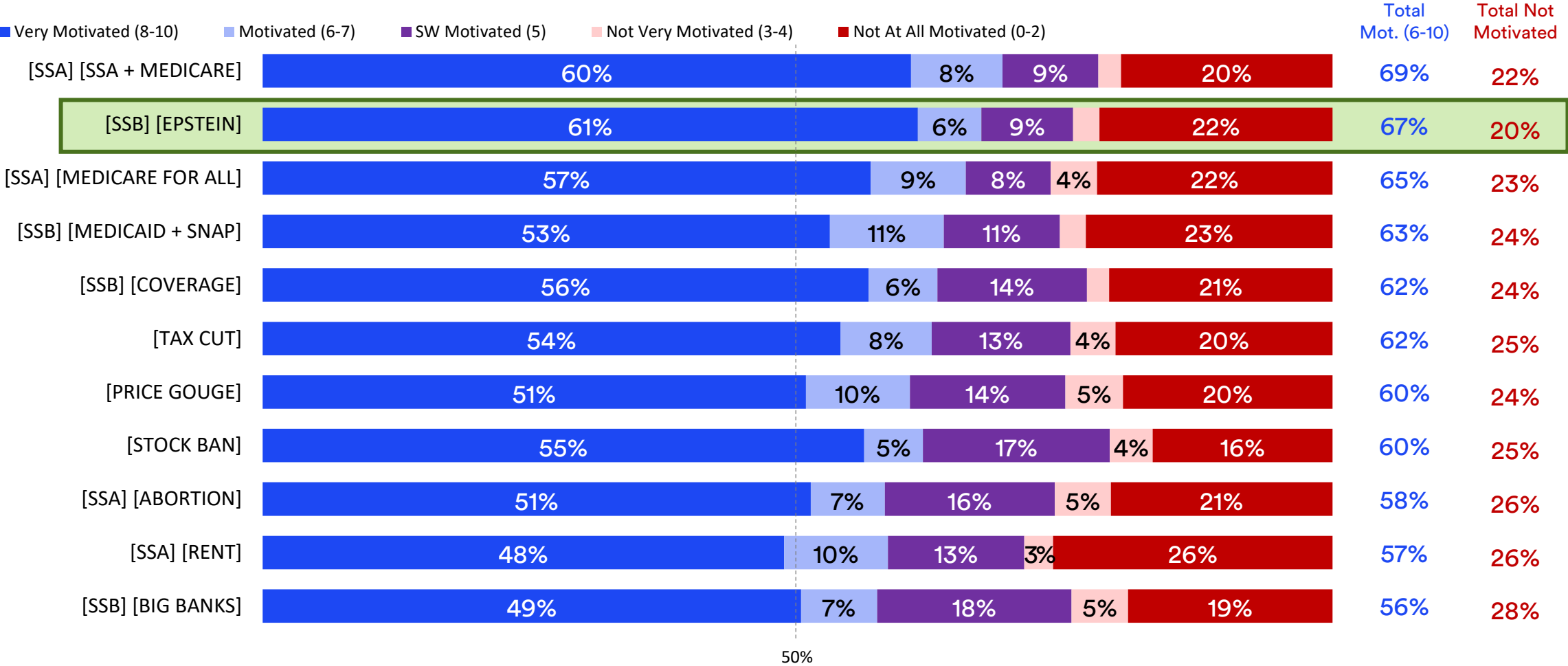
Here is a series of statements people may say about why we should vote for Democrats for Congress. Please rate the statement on a scale of 0 to 10, where a '10' means it makes you extremely motivated to vote for Democrats in Congress, a '5' means it makes you somewhat motivated, and a '0' means it does not make you feel motivated at all.*





Latino battleground district voters also prioritize social safety net expansions, but give greater emphasis to elite accountability measures, such as prosecuting and jailing Epstein’s unindicted co-conspirators.

Here is a series of statements people may say about why we should vote for Democrats for Congress. Please rate the statement on a scale of 0 to 10, where a ‘10’ means it makes you extremely motivated to vote for Democrats in Congress, a ‘5’ means it makes you somewhat motivated, and a ‘0’ means it does not make you feel motivated at all.*



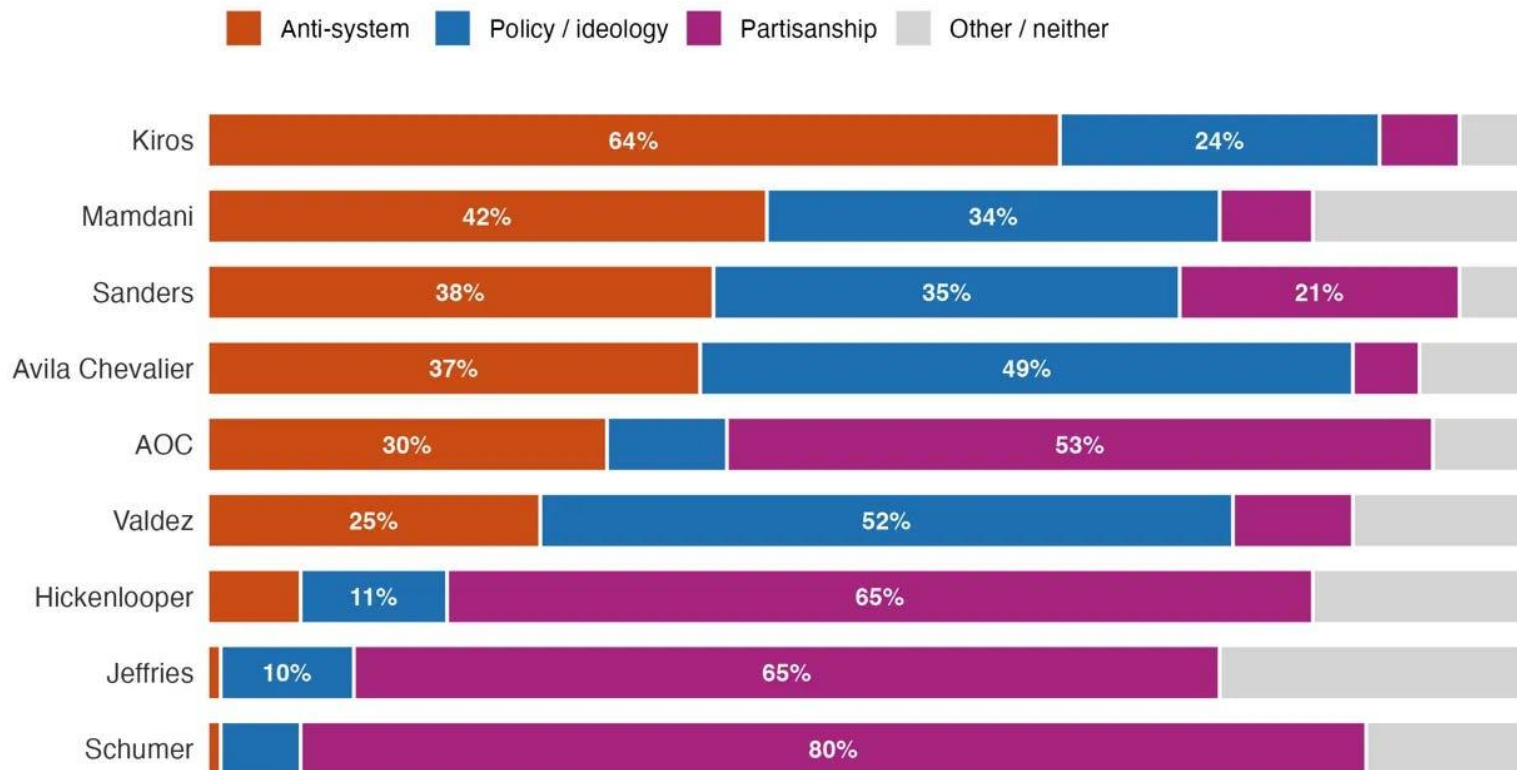
Source: HIT Strategies, Battleground District Survey for HMP, June 18 - 28, 2026.



Establishment Democrats are not capturing this energy. Rather than attacking a failing system, they attack a Republican party that is already discredited. The lack of alternative can be fatal.

DSA candidates spend more time attacking the system

Share of each figure's substantive sentences by message type, from ~2,000 words of their own speeches, interviews, campaign copy, and social posts (averaged over five coding schemes)



Strength In Numbers analysis, July 2026. Estimated ± 10 –15 point margin of error.
"Other / neither" is substantive sentences in none of the three categories.



Credibility and authenticity, not ideology, makes Left-Liberal candidates compelling.

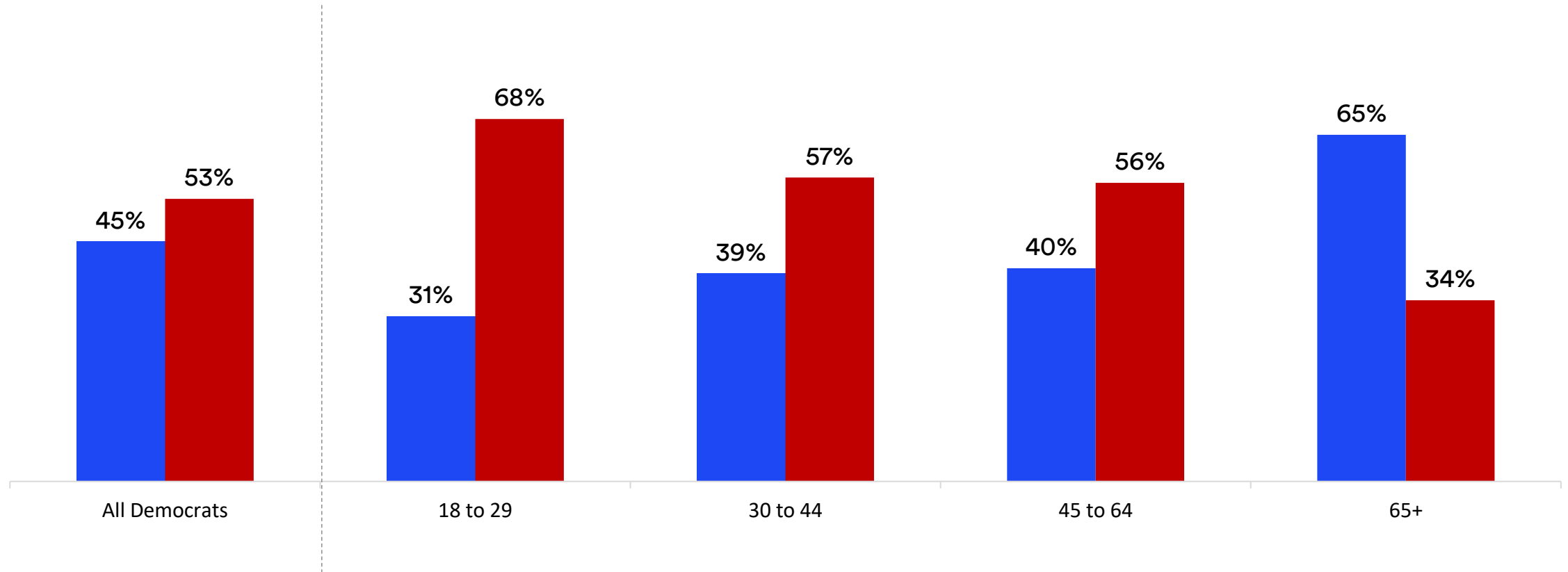
They fight and want to change the system.



Every Democratic cohort other than the baby boomers are dissatisfied with the Democratic Party.

In general, would you say that you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the Democratic Party?
[Asked among Democrats and Democratic-leaning Independents only]

■ Total Satisfied ■ Total Dissatisfied

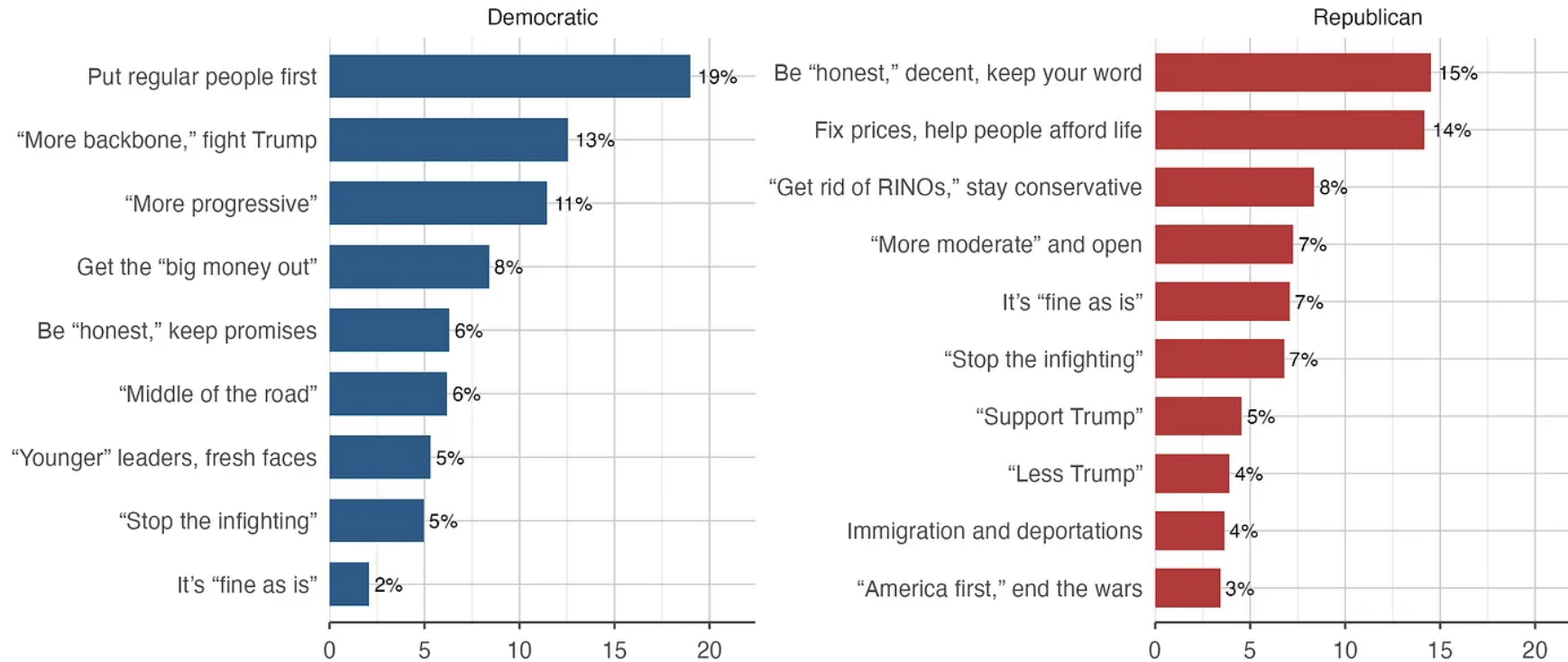




Polling consistently shows Democrats to be highly dissatisfied with the current Establishment-backed path. They want progressive change, opposition to Trumpism, and curbing corporate and billionaire influence.

What Democrats and Republicans want from their parties, in their own words

Categorized open-ended responses to the question “In a few words, what do you think a better {Democratic/Republican} Party would look like?”



Data: Strength In Numbers/Verasight poll of 1,514 adults conducted August 14–19, 2026. Bar for empty or other answers not shown.

Strength In Numbers

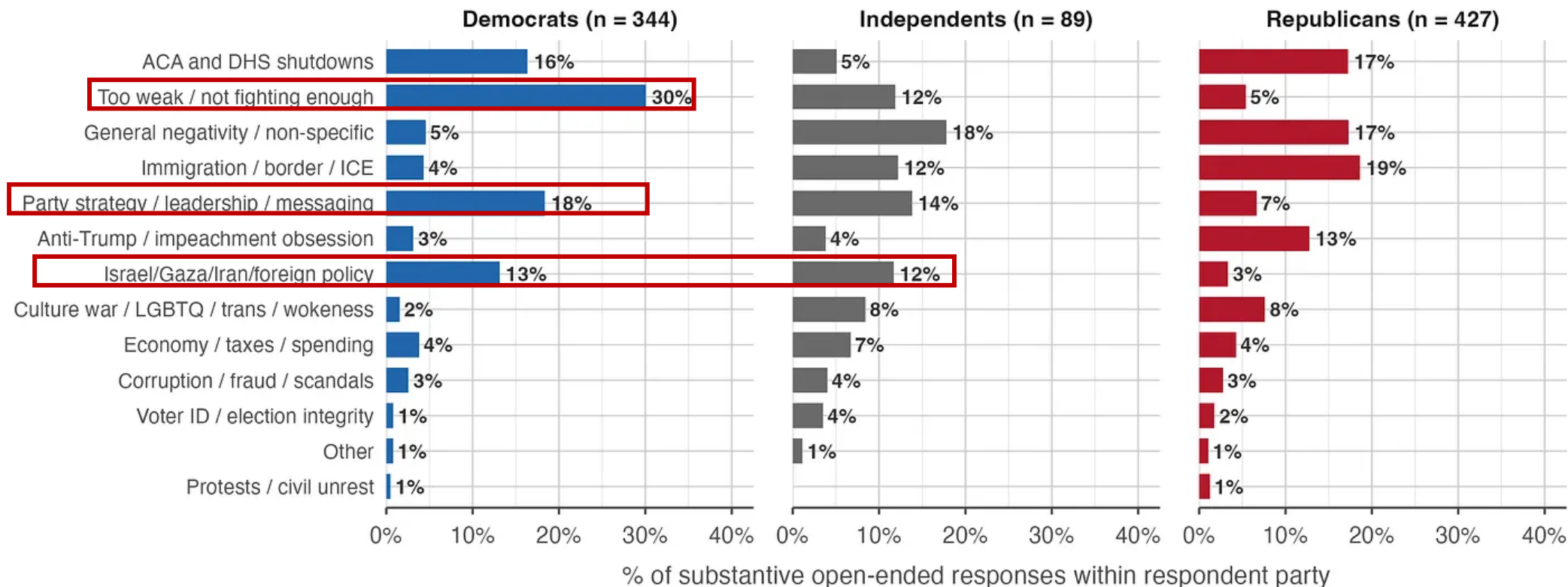
gelliottmorris.com



Weak leadership is not the sole reason for discontent. The Democratic establishment has a clear credibility problem on foreign policy, particularly on Israel and Palestine.

Many Democrats say the party is too weak, has poor leadership

Categorized open-ended responses to the question "What did Democrats recently do that upset you?"



Data: Strength In Numbers/Verasight poll of 1,514 adults conducted April 10-14, 2026.
Substantive-complaint n = 860. Excludes 196 'nothing / no answer' responses. Shares within each party ID.



Opposition to additional military and economic aid to Israel is an uncontroversial opinion among the Democratic electorate. This consensus is not reflected in the congressional delegation or leadership.

Tell me whether you support or oppose the following: Providing additional economic and military support to Israel
[Asked among Democrats and Democratic-leaning Independents only]

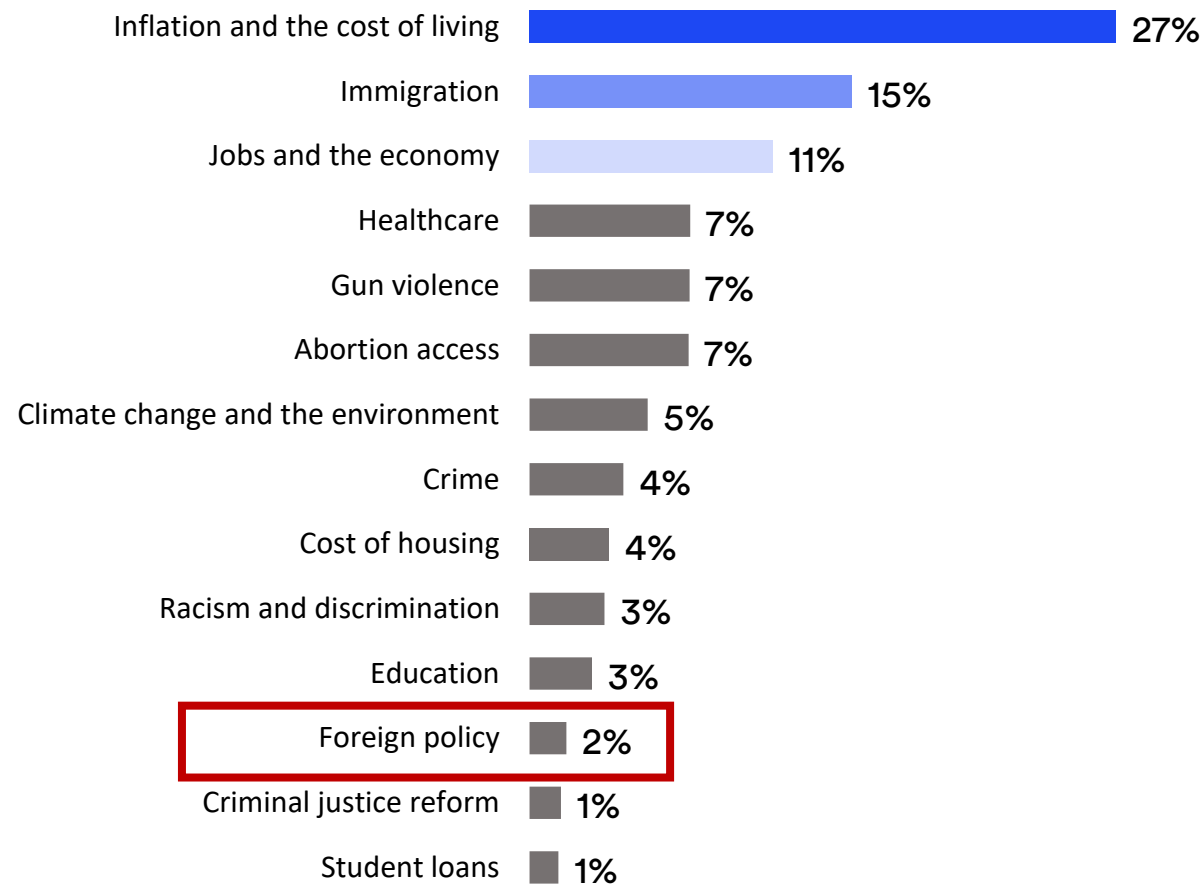
	All Dems/ Lean Dems	White Dems	Hispanic Dems	Black Dems	Asian Dems	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
Support	20%	19%	26%	19%	16%	15%	14%	23%	26%
Oppose	74%	76%	67%	72%	79%	80%	83%	74%	64%
Strongly Oppose	52%	48%	53%	53%	66%	62%	56%	50%	43%

Source: New York Times/Siena Survey, *Siena Crosstabs*, May 21, 2026.



Foreign Policy is a credentialing issue – it is not high salience, but it does signal trustworthiness to voters. Accepting AIPAC funding undermines credibility and makes a candidate seem bought.

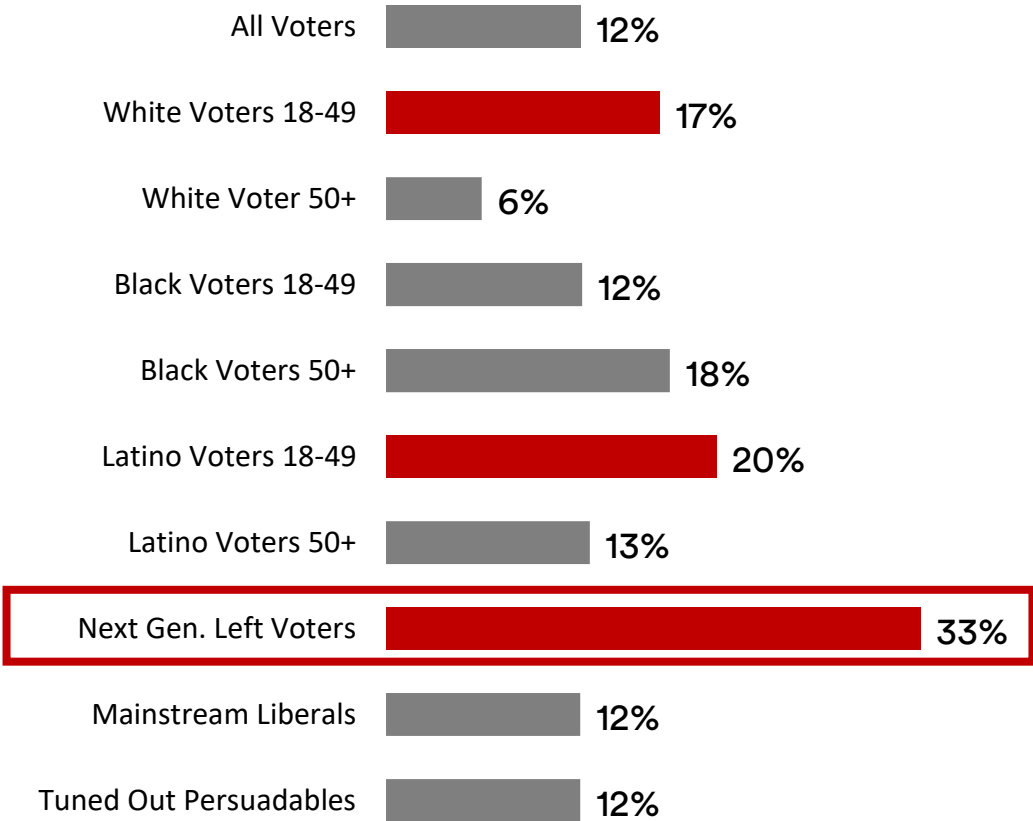
Below is a list of issues that people might think are important when voting. Please rank the top three issues that will be most important when you consider voting this year.



Here is a list of priorities that a candidate might have. [...] Please indicate whether this priority is a Deal Breaker for you and you cannot support a candidate if they have this priority:

“Continuing to fully back Israel in its war in Gaza”

Total Deal Breaker Only



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Tracking Attitudes

How do Democratic voters opinions change over time, and how can we avoid getting caught napping on Primary day?

Candidate and Institutional Trust

How can we restore credibility among the Democratic electorate and gain a positive vote of confidence in the coming election cycles?

Message and Language Testing

How should we frame each issue in our platform so that it resonates with the broad swath of Left-Liberal voters?

🎯 Tap Into Pre-Election Chatter with a Qual Board.

Daily, moderated online conversations that capture how voters are thinking, reacting, and talking as the election approaches, giving you a real-time window into the attitudes shaping Election Day.

WHY QUAL BOARDS NOW?



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Go deeper than a focus group

Collect more qualitative data across multiple days of conversation.



Customize your audience

Target by demographics, geography, ideology, and other criteria.

SERVICE STANDARDS

SAMPLE

25–50

targeted participants

REACH

Flexible

single-state, multi-state, or national

FIELD TIME

3, 5, or 7 days

overall fielding

RECRUITMENT

2–3 weeks

before fielding



Q & A

🎯 Connect with Us!

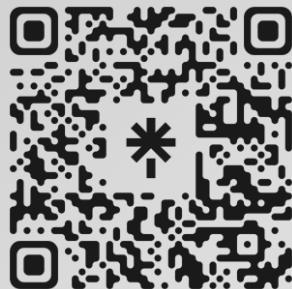


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