

Targeted Demographic Focus Groups

Swing Voters 20 to 64 Years of Age

Presented By:

John McLaughlin

January 7, 2022

 McLaughlin & Associates



Methodology

These swing voter focus groups were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since our last set of focus groups in September of 2021, the severity of the pandemic has increased once again, specifically with the introduction of the Omicron variant. And while the stock market has reached record highs and unemployment statistics have improved, inflation continues to rise at nearly 7% to date. It is important to consider these factors as they are the primary contributors to the political atmosphere and the overall narrative of the findings.

- The goal of this qualitative research is to ascertain a firm grasp of cultural perspectives among a diverse array of voter segments. The issues include economic issues, forms of economic theory such as socialism and capitalism, education, perceptions of race, and overall attitudes as to what it means to be an American.
- To date, McLaughlin & Associates has conducted 2 rounds of focus groups, for a total of 16 swing-voter focus groups. Each round of focus group consisted of 8 focus groups. The two flights were segmented by age:
 - September: 65 and Older
 - Late November and into mid-December: 20-to 64-year-olds.
- Given safety considerations and the restrictions and limitations imposed by the COVID-19 protocols, all focus groups were conducted online via a secured video platform.

Methodology

Participants have been screened and identified as swing voters through a series of identifiers as it relates to their political and voting behavior. These include political ideology (excluding “very liberal” and “very conservative”), voting behavior (excluding “always vote Republican” and “always vote Democrat”), and the generic ballot (excluding “definitely vote Democrat” and “Definitely vote Republican”).

The participants were then segmented into racial and ethnic cohorts. These include white, black, Hispanic, Chinese, and Hindu voters. The first round of focus groups consisted of voters 65 years of age and older; the second set of focus groups consisted of voters 20 to 64 years of age. The targeted voter segments included:

- September 22, 2021: White Female + Male Voters Over 65
- September 23, 2021: Black Female + Male Voters Over 65
- September 29, 2021: Hispanic Female + Male Voters Over 65
- September 30, 2021: Chinese Female + Male Voters All Ages
- November 29, 2021: White Female + Male Voters 20 to 64
- December 1, 2021: Black Female Voters 20 to 64
- December 2, 2021: Black Male Voters 20 to 64
- December 6, 2021: Hindu Females – All Ages
- December 7, 2021: Hindu Males – All Ages
- December 16, 2021: Hispanic Female + Male Voters 20 to 64

Disclaimer: Focus groups are an excellent qualitative tool to gain insights into **how** and **why** people think the way they do. Focus groups allow researchers to delve into issues in ways that cannot be done by quantitative research. It is important to note that focus groups are **not** projectable onto a larger audience as survey research measures quantitative results.





Findings

 McLaughlin & Associates

Overview

This second round of qualitative research focused on swing voters between the ages of 20 to 64 (save for Hindu/Indian voters who included all voters over 20 years of age). The focus between the two age cohorts identified some significant differences by age and race.

- **Inflation** was a universal concern between the two age cohorts. Both segments cited concerns about the overall cost of living, but voters over 65 were clearly influenced by a more limited income. While voters under 65 were also concerned about the cost of living, the discussion primarily revolved around the cause – Stimulus checks are keeping people from working, supply constraints, and COVID related issues in general. While the 65 and older segment more readily cited government spending as a cause for inflation, these younger voters were more inclined to say inflation was caused by COVID related concerns.
- **Big Government Socialism** may have been largely rejected by the over 65 cohorts, but opinion was more varied among these 20-to 64-year-old voters. There was less resistance among Black voters in the 20 to 64 age cohort. Hispanic voters had nuanced opinions regarding “big government socialism”. They did not connect big government socialism or intrusiveness, but rather a government with more services. While there was more resistance among white and Indian/Hindu voters in this round of qualitative research. Resistance tended to focus on the misallocation of funds, increased inflation, higher taxes on the middle class (and loopholes for corporations and the wealthy) and a disincentive to seek employment. Support was stronger with Hispanic and Black voters under 65 years of age who saw government spending as helpful to society at large, especially as it relates to education and childcare.

Overview

- **Education**, or more specifically the failure of education, was a unifying issue. All voter segments (racial and age) saw education as failing our students and a threat to the country. Causes and solutions differed between the different voter segments, but all agreed it must be fixed. Parental involvement, funding for the classroom, and higher teacher pay were universal. Standardized testing and teachers' unions were less unifying. Swing voters over 65 saw a need for a return to the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic. Younger voters were more accepting of social teaching, but even here, respondents were polarized by race.
- While **Critical Race Theory** was extremely polarizing among voters over 65 years of age (primary by race), there was greater acceptance among these younger voters across racial lines. There was near universal approval among Black voters of the concept of Critical Race Theory and its curriculum. Compared to the **over** 65 year old voters, there was more middle ground on Critical Race Theory among these **under** 65 year old voters. While all other non-black racial segments OVER 65 rejected it, there was greater approval among these younger non-black voters. Black participants considered Critical Race Theory to be essential in solving race issues. Similarly, non-black participants under the age of 65 also approved (to a degree) of Critical Race Theory as a tool to teach students the history of racism and how it has impacted society today.

Inflation

INFLATION CAUSED COVID RELATED SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS

“From the pandemic, a lot of companies stopped producing products. No one was buying things. They were trying to play the waiting game to figure out what was going to happen next. And two months later the demand started piling up and then we never caught back up. The supply is less than what the demand is asking for, so the price is going to go up and up and up.”

- White Male, Under 65

INFLATION CAUSED BY GOVERNMENT SPENDING

“Stimulus and unemployment money given by the government gives people incentive not to work. These worker shortages force companies to pay employees higher wages and pass the increase along to the consumer. People are given “free money.”

- Hindu Male

Inflation – Under 65

Voters under 65 had several theories as to what is causing the current inflation rates, but there was no consensus as to the root cause. Many feel that labor shortages caused by increased stimulus welfare spending, supply chain constraints, and rises in demand due to panic mentality from coronavirus contributed to the issue. They feel that unemployment benefits mean that people sit at home and don't come into work. There's no incentive. The term "free money" was cited.

- A majority of white voters under 65 feel the recent increase in government spending on social programs and welfare triggered a series of events that lead to inflation. The increase in government spending, specifically the stimulus checks, are seen as a contributing factor to inflation. Other factors are also believed to contribute to inflation, including US dependency on foreign countries for energy and goods, supply chain shortages and government waste.
- Black respondents largely felt COVID has caused inflation. They felt companies inflated prices to make up for the economic lull during the pandemic. Additionally, Black female respondents felt that the segment of the population protesting vaccines have caused the labor shortage that has also caused inflation. Black male respondents also mentioned how COVID has impacted the supply chain.
- Indian/Hindu voters showed a strong, well-educated awareness of how the government spending has impacted inflation. Some mentioned printing more money, raising the debt ceiling, keeping interest rates low and increasing government spending. As it was mentioned in the female group that less investment choices hurt the individual, it was mentioned in the male group that lower interest rates mean that your money in the bank is not growing as fast as consumer prices.

Inflation – Voters Under 65

As we saw among voters over 65 years of age, voters under 65 also saw government spending as the root cause of skyrocketing inflation.

“I look at the government spending as inflation because that’s my taxes.”

Black Female, Under 65

“The Government spending more money outside the country than inside the country is causing inflation.”

Black Male, Under 65

“Inflation is coming as a part of all the stimulus payments which are being injected into the economy”

Indian Female, under 65

“It’s taking money out of the economy and not necessarily putting it back into the economy itself and produce businesses and jobs.”

White Male, Under 65

“It’s a domino effect... our government’s allocation of funds has made it challenging for our economy to be thriving”

White Female, Under 65

Inflation – White Voters under 65

“The unemployment checks were pretty big... \$600 increase and then \$300 increase. Also, the stimulus checks.”

White Male, over 65

“I think it comes down to the fact that we outsource all of our materials”

White Female, under 65

“You can offset inflation by technological advances we have going on from private companies that create them.”

White Male, under 65

“The attack on petroleum producers in this country, that tied in with the increased spending, has caused inflation everywhere.”

White Male, under 65

Inflation – Black Voters Under 65

Black respondents under 65 had a diverse list of what has caused inflation. Some felt that **excessive government spending** has led to inflation. Some mentioned foreign aid was also seen as taking away from domestic spending on programs that would otherwise benefit American citizens. Additionally, Black males listed corporate greed as another possible cause for inflation. They felt that corporate greed has impacted inflation more than spending on social programs

“The basic essentials, food, shelter, we can't afford it anymore”

Black Female, Under 65

“I don't think that unemployment is a reason... I think there's just greed in companies, that's the reason.”

Black Male, Under 65

“What is causing the price increases is the amount of people protesting the shot, which is causing a labor shortage.”

Black Female, under 65

“COVID-19 slowed down manufacturing in certain countries like China producing semiconductors... you end up in a situation of supply and demand, where demand is still there but the supply is diminished, so they get to sort of set the price where you are going to end up paying more”

Black Male, Under 65

Inflation – Hindu Voters

Some Hindu participants felt inflation was a result of government stimulus checks acting as a disincentive to work.

“There are a lot of containers stuck in Los Angeles and nobody is there to unload because they can’t find people”

Hindu Male

“Now people are not coming to work because they are getting more money sitting at home, they are giving incentives to people who don’t want to work and they get more money”

Hindu Male

“The stimulus checks that we received... At the time, everyone saw that as just money coming into their bank accounts and it had to be made up somewhere and the government’s money and that’s a direct impact.”

Hindu Female

“It’s the general population rise. The coronavirus has also had an impact on how things are inflated.”

Hindu Female

Inflation – Hispanic Voters Under 65

Multiple Hispanic voters in both age segments suggested the “printing of money” by the government as the primary cause of inflation.

“...print money, you give out these stimulus checks and with unemployment we are giving an extra \$300”

Hispanic Male, under 65

“We are printing money to satisfy our debt. That’s why the dollar is weakening...”

Hispanic Female, over 65

“Everything is going up, and the salaries don’t match the cost of living. Gas prices, basic needs... especially when you have kids.”

Hispanic Male, over 65

“For an example, dollar tree was always a dollar, the other day I went in, and everything is \$1.25... They say they are trying to recoup everything that has happened to them in the last year and a half”

Hispanic Male, over 65

Democrat Welfare Spending

“...but I think most people want to work. As I mentioned before, a job is more than money. You can believe me or not. So, okay, you get a nice amount of money to stay home and do nothing. But you’ll feel better about yourself if you went to work and earned even more than that money. Let’s say it’s the same money, the same money that you can get from watching television, you can get for getting up and going to being a janitor. The janitorial position is much more rewarding. You will find that out when you sit around and watch your life pass you by and all you had is ‘oh Wednesday, I’m going to get my check in the mail and then I can go and do whatever.’ You see, for me, and I say it to everybody, you have to have a purpose.”

Black Male, over 65

Democrat Welfare Spending Bill

Awareness of the Democrat Welfare Spending Bill increased between the first round of focus groups held in September and the second round of groups held in December.

- *Previously there was little awareness of the Democrat Welfare Spending Bill. Today most of the under 65-year-old participants were aware of it.*
- Popular components of the BBB plan include childcare provisions, education, and healthcare. In contrast, to these popular aspects, the narrative should revolve around increased taxes on the middle-class and a move towards socialism. The participants are naturally inclined to perceive BBB plan on these terms when they are presented with the contrast between social benefits and socialism.
- We must use the opportunity to define the Democrat Welfare Spending Bill as a cultural transformation of the United States, from a free, capitalist society to a controlled welfare state that inhibits wealth, growth, and opportunity.

Democrat Welfare Spending Bill – White Voters Under 65

White participants under 65 were mostly opposed to the BBB plan and saw the Welfare spending bill as “Nail in the coffin” for the country and likely resulting a “welfare state”.

“If they had passed this bill, it is the nail in the coffin for the way society was – the country that we live in today.”

White Male, Under 65

“This one, is for Critical Race Theory education and Defund the Police and whatever else is on their [Democrats] agenda”

White Male, Under 65

“I don’t think it’ll help anything, that’ll just leave more people at home, kind of welfare state.”

White Male, Under 65

“I think its too much for the government to be spending. Ultimately our taxes will get raised because of it”

White Female, Under 65

Democrat Welfare Spending Bill – Black Voters Under 65

In contrast to Black voters OVER 65, *black voters under 65* expressed significant opposition to the Democrat Welfare Spending Bill. These younger black voters were convinced they would end up paying for it (as opposed to corporations or the rich). “They will want it back ten-fold” and “breaking our back” were statements they used to describe the impact of the Democrat Welfare Spending Bill.

“Every time the government gives you something it’s guaranteed they’ll get it back tenfold.”

Black Male, Under 65

“I strongly oppose the bill because you know it’s... breaking our back, my back personally too.”

Black Female, Under 65

“Our taxes are going to pay for the bottom line. The rich tax is not going to pay for it.”

Black Female, Under 65

“This more like a political game to be honest with you. I don’t think they take any of us that are in the middle class or living below poverty line into consideration”

Black Male, Under 65

Democrat Welfare Spending Bill – Hispanic Voters Under 65

There was less resistance to the Democrat Welfare Spending Bill among Hispanic women under 65. They saw positive social impacts of the plan. Hispanic men however saw the plan as very unfair and resulting in increased taxes.

“I did a little independent research and reading and I think it’s a plan to make people more dependent on the government so that they can control us even more than they are controlling us now. If they control your money, your everything, they pretty much have you, they can do whatever they want. .”

Hispanic Male, under 65

“what happens to all the people that paid their hard-earned money towards the student loans and paid those off. They can’t get that money back. Me, personally, I have about \$70,000 in student loans.”

Hispanic Male, under 65

“I’ll piggyback what everybody is saying as far as whatever that we’re going to do, it’s definitely going to be a tax. I agree with what Victor said as far as any of us that are middle class or even kind of close to it, we’re going to get taxed hard.”

Hispanic Male, under 65

“...ensuring that everyone has better housing or at least better access to housing or for healthcare. It covers childcare I guess what you mentioned. It goes into climate, taking care of climate change..”

Hispanic Female, under 65

“If it means more taxes for these child tax credits, yes, I have two children, small ones. To me, that’s not money that you pocket, you spend it on them. They require clothes, sneakers, school supplies, you have to take them out. I think it will be positive.”

Hispanic Female, under 65

Democrat Welfare Spending Bill – Hindu Voters

Some Hindu voters saw the Democrat Welfare Spending Bill as more “free money” and reminds respondents of the stimulus.

“I support it, but it is going to increase the taxes on my income bracket, we never got any stimulus checks.”

Hindu Female, Under 65

“There are hidden things there. It looks more like the kind of stimulus that they were trying to keep promises Biden made”

Hindu Female, Under 65

“I definitely think it will affect the middle class and upper middle class for sure... corporations have all these loopholes, and they are not even looking at them.”

Hindu Female, Under 65

“Yes, definitely a good thing, like free community college, education and all those child tax credits...”

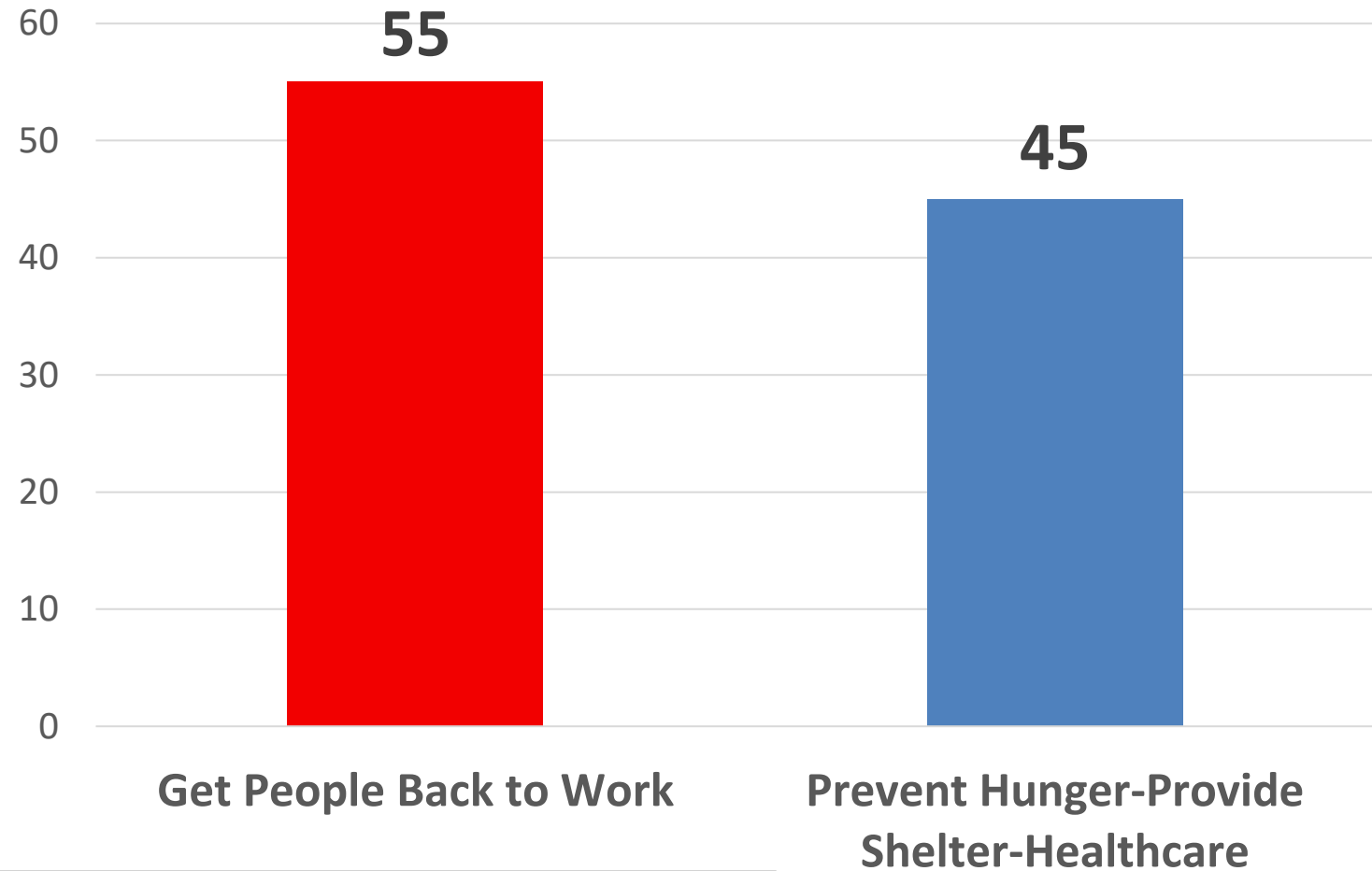
Hindu Male, Under 65

Workfare

There is universal agreement among the focus group participants that any welfare recipient should be working, attempting to find employment, or pursuing an education/job training in order to collect welfare benefits. Exceptions were made for individuals who cannot work for health or other reasons. It is one of the few issues that did not realize significant differences in opinion.

While the benchmark survey showed support for the goal of preventing hunger, shelter, and healthcare, (45%), there was still majority support for the goal of “helping people get back to work”.

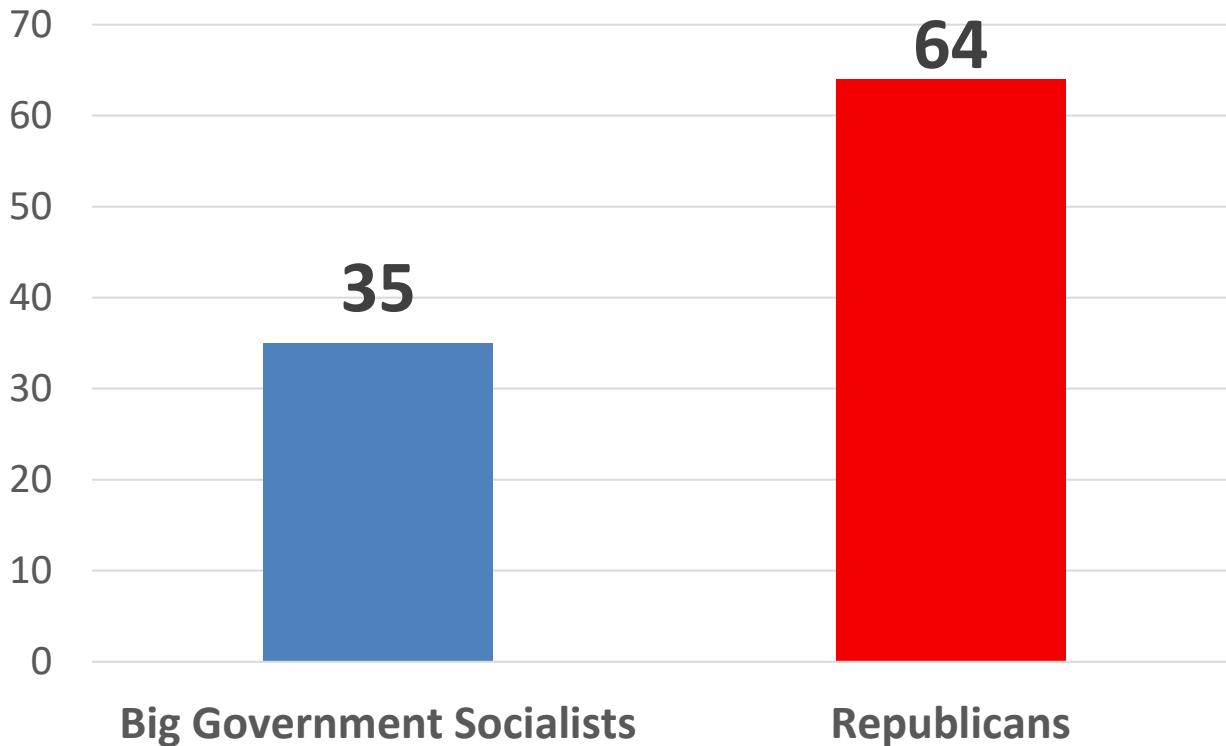
Which of the following positions on current issues most represents your views? Welfare programs should be geared toward helping people get back to work. OR, welfare programs should be geared toward preventing hunger, providing shelter, and health care.



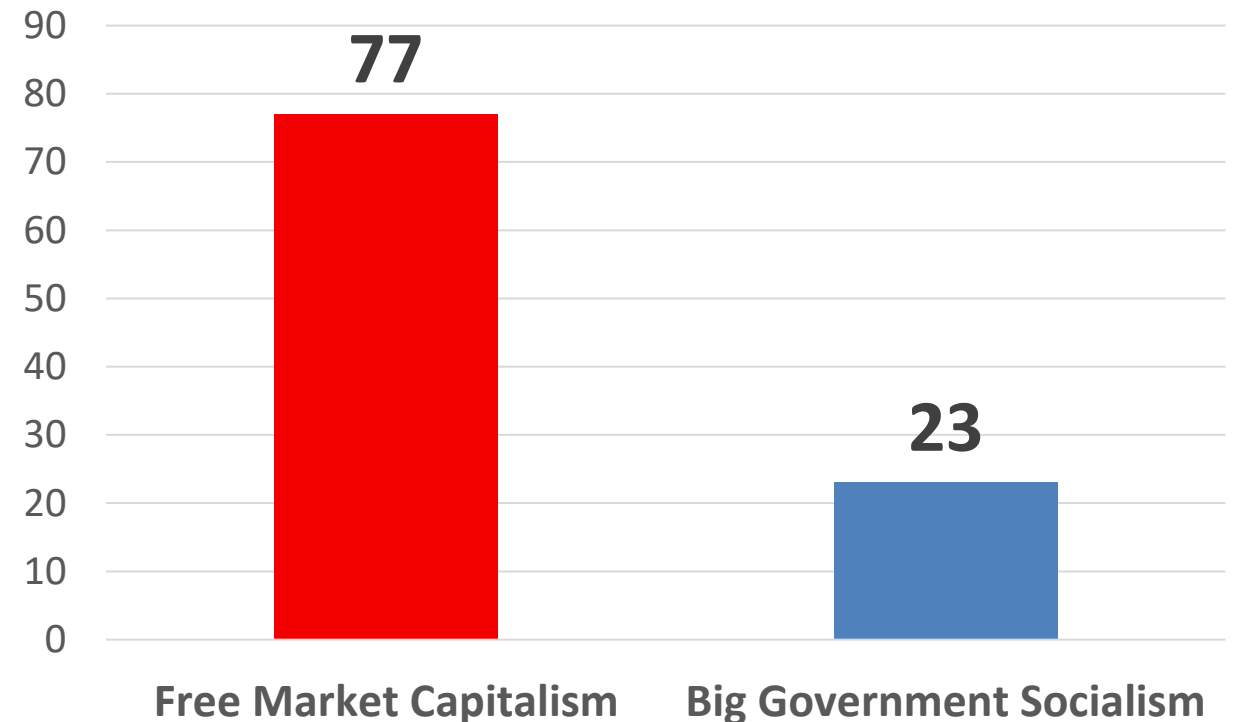
Socialism + Capitalism

We must develop resonant language surrounding Big Government Socialism, capitalism, and free-market capitalism. The survey respondents made a clear distinction between Capitalism and Big Government Socialism, but the focus group participants showed less awareness...

If the next election comes down to choosing between big government socialists or Republicans, who would you vote for?



Which do you think is more-fair?



Socialism + Capitalism – Under 65

- White voters under 65 view the phrase, “big government socialism” as a negative term, implying a loss of freedom, having the government make all of the decisions for citizens, more government involvement in everyday life and limiting choices for things like education and healthcare, with potentially reduced quality of programs. A few males feel the term, “big government socialism” is a scare tactic used by the media to “rile” people up. Respondents tend to think of “big government” as being similar to “big government socialism,” again feeling that it implies increased government control, power or overreach, limiting options and choices or an intrusion of privacy (“The government is spying on you or tracking you.”)
- Black respondents under 65 listed different social programs that they felt benefitted the public such as student loan forgiveness and social security. While Black respondents liked the idea of the government being hands off, some respondents believed that the “greed of humanity” could lead to abuse but some government regulations could be beneficial for society to insure the fair treatment of consumers and workers. One black female respondent felt that the terms around government and the individual should be changed. The focus should be on how the individual can be proactive part of the government process, using words such as partnership, investment, and relationship
- Hindu / Indian voters used phrases such as “take from the rich and give to the poor”, “charity”, and “more regulations.” In particular, females felt that it would really be taking from the upper middle class and middle-class and giving to the poor, as again corporations would be able to take advantage of rebates and tax loopholes and pass on their increased tax burden in the form of increased consumer prices. In the male group, it was mentioned that Big Government socialism meant “buying people’s votes” by giving “free handouts.” Again, a reference to “free money.” Males also said that “raising taxes and regulations” and “getting involved in your day-to-day lives” is big government socialism.
- For both Hispanic groups, the worst of what the term “socialism” brought up is increased spending that doesn’t necessarily reach those who need that they fear results in higher taxes. This was especially the case for the women. Some women voiced concern over there being corruption on behalf of contractors as a problem. Men tend to see this as another example of necessary expenditures which while not perfect in execution, is still needed. The women’s group was more critical of this aspect of government spending, citing fraudulent claims by those who don’t need it and the dependence it creates for those who do as reasons against these expenditures, but not necessarily against “big government.” Virtually none from either group equates “big government” with either excessive spending or intrusiveness.

Socialism + Capitalism – Under 65

“In my mind, it translates to loss of freedom and the government deciding things for us.”

White Female, Under 65

“It means more government involvement in everyday life and more control over our social understanding of what’s going on around us.”

White Male, Under 65

“Health care for everyone. Those types of things. Being able to take care of everyone. Taxing the rich to be able to pay for the less wealthy and poor people ”

Hindu Male, Under 65

“It’s a gang of people... They do what they want, they have no rules, the rules don’t apply to them ”

Black Female, Under 65

Big Government – Under 65

“Big Government” was identified with words such as “control”, “more rules and regulations”, “overreach”, and “involved in every aspect of your life”.

“It’s good for the people who are really in need of government. But at the same time, the person who really doesn’t need it is being taken advantage of”

Hindu Male, Under 65

“I think it’s a stupid phrase that is intended to get people riled up. It’s just kind of a scare tactic.”

White Male, Under 65

“Big government is basically the government intruding on the lives of the citizens. When we get taxed for things that other people are highly benefitting from, that’s big government.”

Hindu Female, Under 65

“Big government has a negative connotation in my mind. Like big government spying on you and tracking you. ”

White Female, Under 65

Equal Opportunity Capitalism

The majority of participants prefer the phrase “equal opportunity capitalism” as a label for the American economic system. Equal Opportunity Capitalism equates to “a level playing field” where everyone can compete on their merits. When given a choice between “big government socialism” or “free market capitalism”, participants largely preferred “free market capitalism” for reasons similar to their preference for “equal opportunity capitalism”, but “free market capitalism” was less understood as a concept. Equal Opportunity Capitalism strongly resonated. As one participant noted, “Big Government Socialism takes away opportunity”.

“The word, ‘opportunity’ makes it sound a little bit more like everyone has the opportunity.”

- White Female, Under 65

“When it comes to big government it does kind of feel balanced, but **with equal opportunity, everyone is on a level playing field**, it’s a blank slate and you can actually fend for yourself. You have that ability for every single person to be on the same balanced level... right now its such a euphoric ideal its an ideal at this point.”

Hindu Female, Under 65

“I like the equal opportunity capitalism part because I think the issue we have is the inequality of opportunity for people to get up the social, economic ladder and that is one of the reasons this is a hugely divided country right now.”

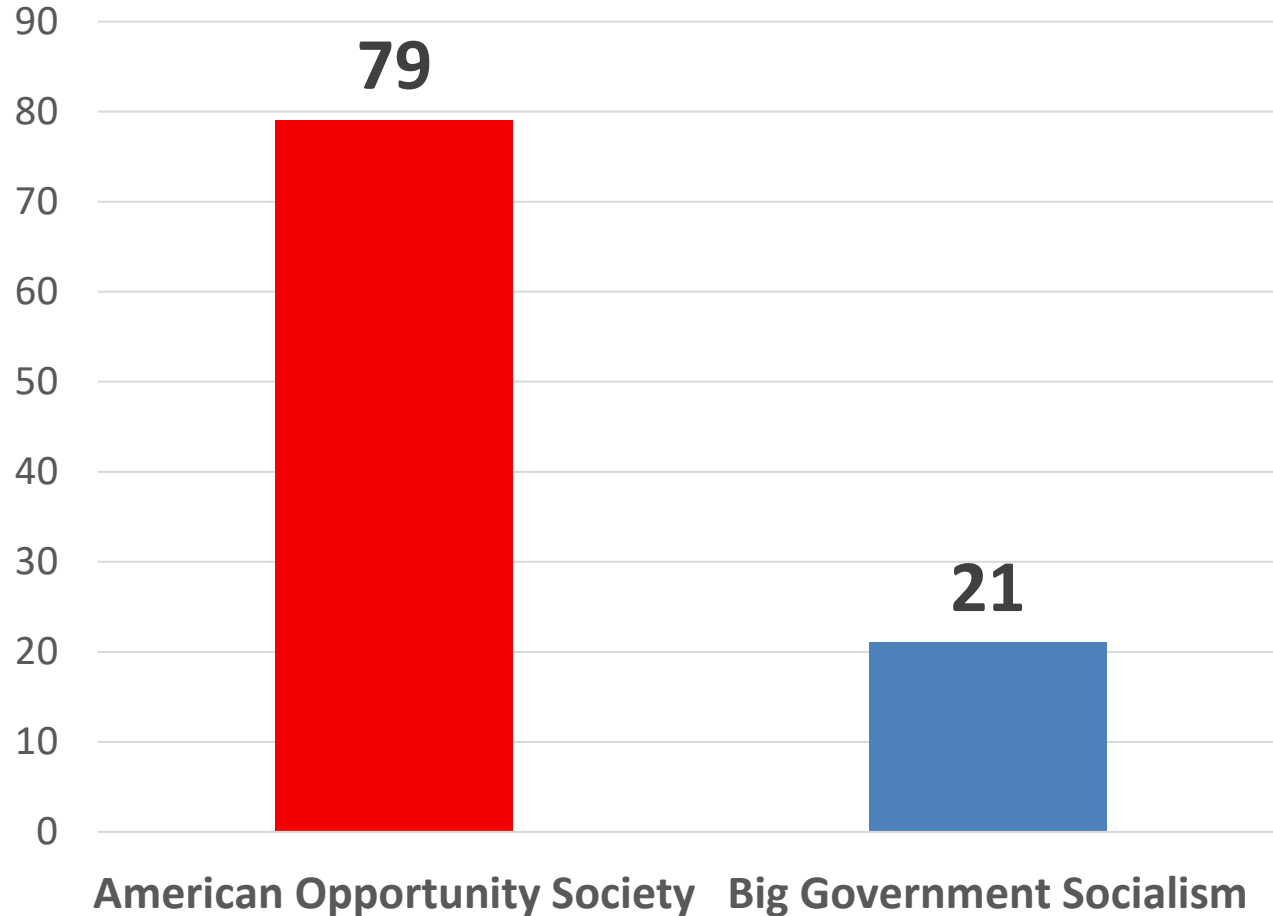
“White Male, Under 65

“Equal Opportunity Capitalism is equal for everybody. An even playing field. That’s why it appeals to me the most”

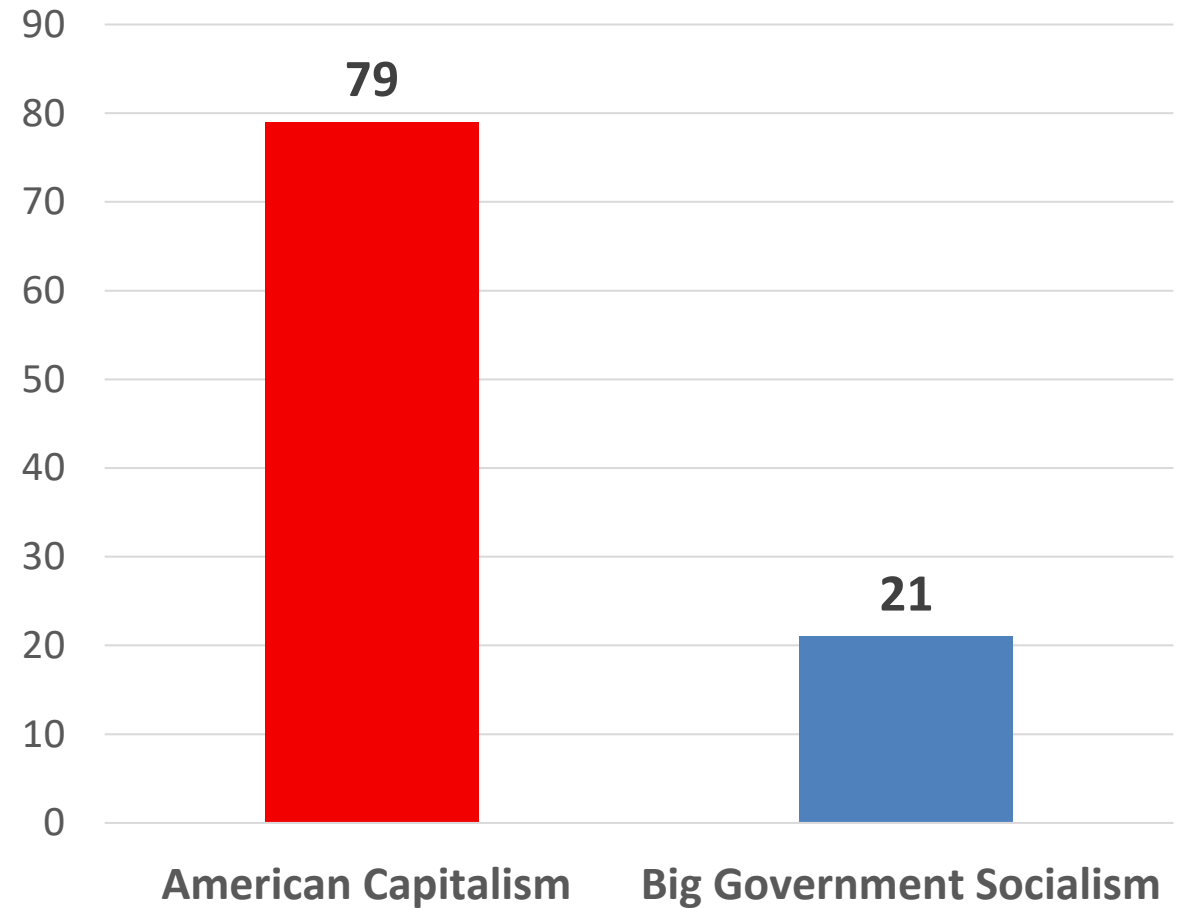
Hispanic Male, Under 65

American Capitalism

Which do you think leads to a better future?



All things being equal, do you prefer...?

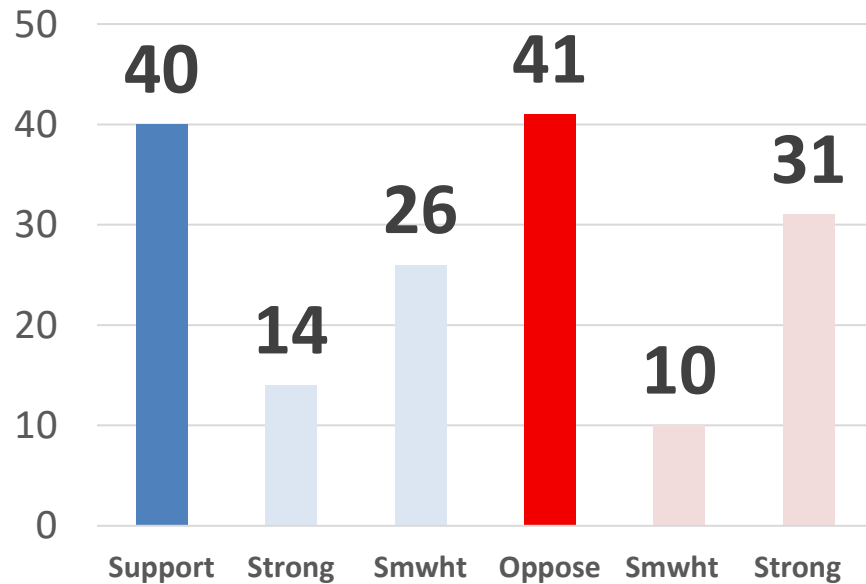


Race & Critical Race Theory

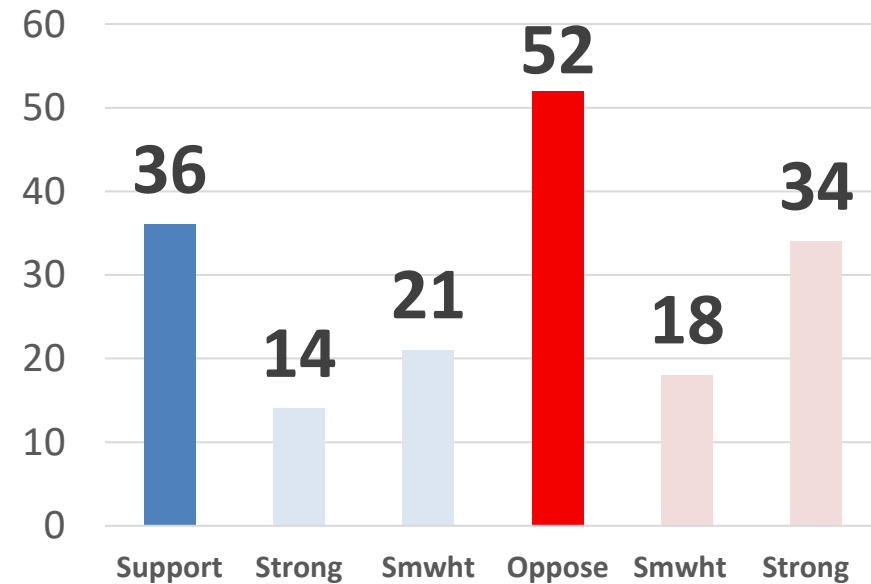
Critical Race Theory is a complex issue. On its surface, Critical Race Theory is a positive ideal. When provided with a more detailed explanation of the CRT, voters become less favorable towards it. Further, as our polling showed, the issue is polarizing. The prevailing narrative is that Critical Race Theory teaches the history of slavery in the United States, which is universally approved of. But participants were unaware of the controversial aspects of Critical Race Theory. It is these less well-known components that are strongly rejected. Changing the narrative from teaching the impact slavery has had on society, to teaching children to acknowledge white privilege, will be a challenge. Voters largely reject the controversial aspects of Critical Race Theory, but it will be precarious to change the narrative given the heightened racial environment we are currently in.

Participants lacked any significant understanding of Critical Race Theory; and this lack of awareness presents the opportunity to define the issue. To this end, the curriculum needs to be better defined and research should identify the specific aspects of Critical Race theory that generate the most rejection of the program.

**Support / Oppose:
Teaching critical race theory in schools**



**Support / Oppose:
Acknowledging White privilege**



CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Education in America has come under attack by a left-leaning coalition of ideologues aimed at degrading educational standards for the benefit of a few. This is resulting in the degradation of the entire educational system and the children it serves.

Proponents of these policies are determined to implement a series of reforms aimed at lowering education standards, empowering teachers' unions, rewriting American history to promote a political narrative, and eliminating programs that recognize excellence among students who excel.

The result of this movement will not only eliminate successful educational policies, and potentially more importantly, will perpetuate policies that fail students most at risk.

Our qualitative research examined voter perceptions of the policies surrounding CRT and its implications.

These subjects included:

- The Lowering of Standards
- The Elimination of Gifted & Talented Programs
- The Role of Teachers' Unions
- Critical Race Theory Curriculum – White Privilege,

Important to note – Critical Race Theory, while strongly rejected by the non-white participants, was embraced by the black participants. This is a highly polarizing issue, which can serve to increase opposition to CRT supporters, but it will alienate the Black voter segment.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – Black Voter Discussion

Most black respondents feel it is important for Critical Race Theory (CRT) to be taught in schools - Most respondents felt it was important for American children to know the complex history of race in America because it is American history. Some Black male respondents felt that a lot of societal issues, such as racial inequality, stem from slavery. They believe it is important to know that history so that all Americans can work towards solving these issues of inequality that is still happening today.

Changing the narrative of black history in America, from that of victims of slavery, to that of an essential part of the development of the country is a clear finding. One participant expressed great frustration that the focus of black history is that of being a victim. He worried that this narrative reinforces a negative image of black Americans

“It means stop teaching Black kids that we’ve been slaves and all that, we need to move past that already, we need to get to the future. Oh this person is this, you can’t do this because you’re Black, we’re teaching them all the wrong things. And putting that negative seed in their head and it’s going to grow. It happened to me it took me years to break out of that and I did. When I realized nobody is holding me down but myself.”

Another suggested...

I’m serious, I’m sick of it. I’ve been living through this for 37 years with the same talking points. Yo, straighten up or get our bro. I am over here with my background too, look at me, I grew up rough too, I’m a hard-working man just like you, had the same choices. Let’s just do right already. If you can’t get with it, get lost.

While colorblindness can be a goal, it requires a more nuanced approach- Both female and male respondents felt that it was important to acknowledge ethnicity. They believe that ethnicity has most likely influenced life experiences and it is important to consider that. However, for most that does not necessarily translate to treating people differently. Black respondents felt that one should still try to treat people equally, while acknowledging individual experiences of different races.

White privilege – The concept of white privilege strongly resonates with black voters. The Kyle Rittenhouse case, was referred to as an example of white privilege. For Black female respondents, white privilege to them is the ability for white people to get away with crimes that they feel would incarcerate a black person if they did it. They felt that justice and law enforcement should be equally applied but was not the same for white people versus people of color.

- One Black male respondent listed nepotism as an example of white privilege in government and colleges (legacy students).

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – Black Voters Under 65

Most black participants under 65 years of age felt it is important for American children to know the history of race in America because it is American history. Some Black male respondents felt that a lot of societal issues, such as racial inequality, stem from slavery. They believe it is important to know that history so that all Americans can work towards solving these issues of inequality that is still happening today.

“Most of us have lived it, it should be a part of the [curriculum] because it is a part of our daily lives in which it shaped America”

Black Female, Under 65

“They’ve been sprinkling it in... just teaching us the speech “I have a dream. It’s already been highly influenced. We need an equal history taught”

Black Female, Under 65

“The fact of the matter is we really, we don't know our history and because we don't know our history you can't go forward to the future. It's the reason why you have this, it takes us longer to do stuff. We need to have these things to encourage us to go to college and stuff like that.”

Black Male, under 65

“They rarely teach Black history anyway. A lot of stuff that happens in the world stems from slavery, especially of Black people. A lot of the stuff happening now comes from back then. If you don't teach it, how would you know why stuff is happening or why people think what we think.”

Black Male, under 65

“My opinion of it is that knowing your history is essential because knowing your history, because racial inequality still exists and there's a reason it still exists so unless you are enlightened to the fact that these things have a history dating back to the 60s with the civil rights movement, anytime people, a minority, or anytime a subjugated people will try to progress it is going to try and create a force to try and repress them to try and maintain a status quo.”

Black Male, under 65

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – White Privilege

“Eighty-four percent (84%) of voters believe public schools should teach the truth about slavery. At the same time, a Scott Rasmussen national survey found that 81% believe public schools should teach that America was founded on the ideals of freedom, equality, and self-governance. Combining the results shows that 72% of voters believe both should be taught. Another question found that 42% believe the schools should teach that America was founded on racism, slavery, and white supremacy. Forty-four percent (44%) disagree. – Rasmussen Survey, January 7, 2022

There was strong emotional feelings against teaching the concept of White Privilege among non-black voters. It is an important factor in American history, but slavery should not be the “founding narrative” of the country. Other things helped to found and create the country. Further, white (or unearned) privilege exists, but teaching it can be polarizing.

Some white participants agreed that there is value is being more open an honest about the past.

“You can’t just wipe out the entire history that we’ve grown up with and say that this isn’t what happened, this isn’t how it happened and expect the result to be everybody being ok with that. You want to divide the country into two camps and start another civil war. Keep pushing that narrative and that’s how it’s going to end up.”

Others felt Critical Race Theory can ultimately cause division.

“I think what they are doing through critical race theory is awful and disgusting and the true definition of racism.”

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – Non-Black Voters – Under 65

Non-black voters opposed the reframing of the country's history to center around slavery, but they did agree the history of slavery needs to be taught. Again, they strongly opposed defining America as a racist nation.

“It should be taught to some degree because with the US it really depends where you learn history from. We want to right some of the wrongs we did in the past.”

Hindu Male, Under 65

“I don’t know if it needs to be reframed but that should be taught.”

White Female, Under 65

“It shouldn’t be an either/or situation. It should be — it’s all of our history. It’s the history of the United States.”

White Female, Under 65

“It’s giving an understanding of how important it is to the kids. It should be taught.”

Hindu Male, Under 65

“...Its kind of unveiling, which is seen as a political thing... For me I see it as a modern-day history lesson. We kind of touch on civil rights and things like that, but I see it as a social way of teaching kids' what's happening in the culture in a way about embracing diversity”

White Male, Under 65

“It’s a way of teaching kids of what’s happening in the culture in a way and it’s kind of more about embracing diversity .. kind of a reversal of what we were taught growing up.”

White Male, Under 65

“I think from earlier ages, children should be taught about inclusion, they should be taught about tolerance and this theory or this lessons will help them to understand that everybody is equal.”

Hindu Female, Under 65

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – The Lowering of Standards

We provided the participants with a case study in Oregon, where proficiency testing has been eliminated for reading, writing, and arithmetic. The elimination of a minimum level of proficiency has been implemented in government run schools in an effort to lower the standards required to graduate. By eliminating standardized testing, government run schools also eliminate the ability to compare the academic performance of successful schools to that of failing schools and ineffective teachers. This is a blatant attempt to level the academic playing field for the benefit of underperforming students and schools, instead of addressing the real problem of underperforming schools and teachers.

“Oregon recently implemented school regulations that eliminate proficiency testing in reading, writing, and arithmetic before graduating. It also eliminated standards that hold schools accountable for educating their students.”

- Some suggested it is to push students who attend underperforming schools, and as a result, cannot meet minimum academic standards. This in turn will ensure high graduation rates and ensure continued government funding.
- Other participants suggested that the elimination of proficiency standards is tied to the No Child Left Behind Act. They saw schools pushing students who are struggling with the basics of education through the system. There needs to be a “standard” for academic performance and schools should be required to hold back student until they perform up to par.

“Why are we graduating people that can’t read or write?”

Too much emphasis is put on standardized testing. Teachers “teach to the test,” focusing their classroom time on preparing students to perform well on standardized tests, rather than focusing on their overall education.

“It’s not necessarily what’s best for the child and the best way to learn. It’s just meeting some sort of criteria that’s imposed on them.”

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – The Lowering of Standards

The lowering of education standards was universally agreed upon. Not a single participant suggested that education standards have improved. They offered a diverse array of reasons, from a lack of regulations and the need to hold teachers accountable. While teachers enjoy an intense level of support in general, there is also an underlying concern that teachers do bear some responsibility for the failures in education.

“There should be a federally standardized education system because if you go in different regions of the US, the curriculums aren’t all the same. Some states are smarter than other states and they are getting a better education.”

Hispanic Male, Under 65

“When they started no child left behind, I think that’s what messed a lot of kids up because you were passed onto the next grade even if you didn’t meet your grade requirements.”

Black Male, Under 65

“We need accountable teachers. If someone doesn’t hit the right criteria, they need to take the test again. Why do we graduate people who can’t read?”

White Male, Under 65

“[India and China’s] education standard is much higher than the US. We rank very low in math, in English... China would pose a big threat to the US economically and military wise.”

Hindu Male, Under 65

“Because in my opinion, I think that they are focusing more on testing these kids on things that they are not worried about – they are focusing more on test-taking versus the actual skill that you are learning or teaching. This doesn’t apply to every teacher, this is obviously my case, my experience, but they focus a lot more on testing and training you to take the test and to learn how to take that test.”

Hispanic Female, Under 65

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – The Lowering of Standards

Note, there was some sympathy as it relates to the lowering of standards in some districts. The discussion surrounding New York and Oregon’s lowering of standards revolved around socioeconomic issues. Black and white women expressed concern that less affluent students and schools would lack the same opportunities afforded to non-black students. Some cited access to computers at an earlier age.

Well, you’re talking about I think minorities here. So, if those percentages are lower in the Latino and the African American portion of the statistic is that because they’re not getting as good of an education and the areas that they live. So, is it — you know, are the teachers; are the school systems has an impact on ultimately the overall percentage numbers of those races, then it doesn’t sound like it’s equitable? Like, we know that there are marginalized. They’re not getting the same healthcare. Or education; and many times though if it’s not the same level of education then the number’s going to be — how are they going to be similar?”

White Female, Under 65

“It's all relative because like someone mentioned earlier, little Bobby got his computer at 5, but that may not be the case in another person in Harlem that grew up, you know, not until they got to high school or whatever. That’s going to affect the intelligence of you know, when you’re putting it on a pen and paper test, yeah then it's going to come out different.”

Black Woman, Under 65

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – Eliminating Gifted & Talented Programs

“I can’t believe you won’t find gifted kids in black communities.”

The elimination of Gifted & Talented programs, a main component of Critical Race Theory, was met with strong resistance. By eliminating Gifted & Talented programs, students who have a natural capacity to excel in academics will be throttled and limited to basic or remedial levels of academic teaching. This misguided policy is yet another attempt to level the playing field to benefit students who are already suffering due to the failed education policies of CRT proponents.

Save for a contingent of Black voters, non-black participants strongly disagreed with this policy.

Proposed CRT Curriculum	Black Respondents	Non-Black Respondents
Ending grouping students by ability level, which would end gifted and talented tracks or programs, because of unequal racial representation in the tracks.	<p>Respondents felt the issue is more nuanced than presented. There are POC students in these tracks that deserve to be challenged</p> <p>One respondent believed if low-income schools could improve access to quality education, then more students of color would qualify for these tracks</p>	<p>Majority of non-Black respondents do not agree. Unfair to students.</p> <p><i>“Just as someone needs extra help, I feel if someone has abilities that they can tap into to better themselves, they should have every right to do that as well.”</i></p> <p><i>“Both of those extremes are hurt by either being moved ahead or back where it’s inappropriate.”</i></p>

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – Eliminating Gifted & Talented Programs

Gifted and talented programs received support from all voter segments. It should be noted though, Black voters cited socio-economic concerns and suggested that gifted and talented programs would disproportionately benefit wealthy districts and students who had access to better schools.

Conversely, non-black voters showed more consistent support for gifted and talented programs and felt strongly that it is unfair to hold back students who have the intellectual capacity to excel.

“Would they end the programs for children who need the extra help in the same respect? Because just as someone needs extra help, I feel like if someone has abilities that they can tap into to better themselves they should have every right to do that as well.”

White Female, Under 65

“I think gifted programs should exist because like there’s certain – like certain kids are born with higher IQs and therefore I think they should be given programs that will help stimulate them. For example, so certain kids have a higher learning capacity than others. So those – I’m not trying to discriminate but those who have lower learning capacity, they should be given work that can like you know, that they can handle; whereas those with higher learning capacity, they should be given what they can handle.”

Indian Male, Under 65

I feel like students who excel should be able to, if there’s a program that gives them the ability to learn faster, have some type of a fast track that they shouldn't be held back because of other people that are not on their level. “

White Male, Under 65

“It’s more complex than that.... In a metropolitan setting, we have a mix of all colors and creeds, if you only have a certain color it is unthinkable that you don't have people of color who aren't also gifted. So you have to both bring up those that aren't at that level and you also keep it, but be mindful that you can't create such an exclusionary track that you are creating a segregated way of educating so you, so it's a combination that you've got it you have to have all of those things available.”

Black Female, Under 65

“I completely agree with Donna. I think that it’s something that you shouldn’t stop someone’s ability to continue to learn; nor should you stop the ability to help someone catch up.”

White female, Under 65

CRITICAL RACE THEORY – The Role of Teachers’ Unions

Teachers’ Unions, and teachers by extension, are beginning to be seen as a major contributing factor the problems with education. Unions are seen to be protecting bad teachers and acting as one of “the biggest obstacles” to eliminating bad teacher and improving education.

“In most school districts you can’t fire the people... It’s a joke... In Chicago the average graduate has about a 3rd grade education. Why would we keep those people employed...”

White Male, Under 65

“I think the biggest obstacles is the teachers’ unions. It doesn't matter if you are competent, I mean quite frankly take a look at the documentaries on New York City, you have people they suspect as pedophiles, and they’ve been paid to not go in a classroom for 20 years. You can’t fire them.”

White Male, Under 65

“I heard a story where they keep teachers that are the worst teachers and cannot be fired because they are protected by the teacher’s union. So, teacher’s unions are the problem.”

Hispanic Male, Under 65

“I think they have agendas. Each union is different, they each have different agendas instead of having the kids at the forefront, its more the teachers, the teachers are there for the kids so you’re not doing that for the teachers to help the kids.”

Black Male, Under 65

“I agree with unions and disagree with unions. Sometimes help us from getting terminated . But the union is there sometimes to keep bad teachers employed because some of us go to school, we just there for a paycheck okay we’re not there for the best interest of the kids. Some kids come out of school without learning anything so if we have that union they keep them there, you know it keeps them back. We should be able to get rid of some of them.”

Black Female, Under 65

Education Overview

“I think it comes down to educators. (Teaching) theory is good, but also putting into practice real life scenario practices that can propel you for the future and that you will utilize in a corporate setting. I think it also has to deal with a morale of the school system. A lot of people both at the educational level, from education staff and also that carries over to the students. If the educators and staff aren't happy, that transfers over to the students.”

- Hispanic Female, under 65

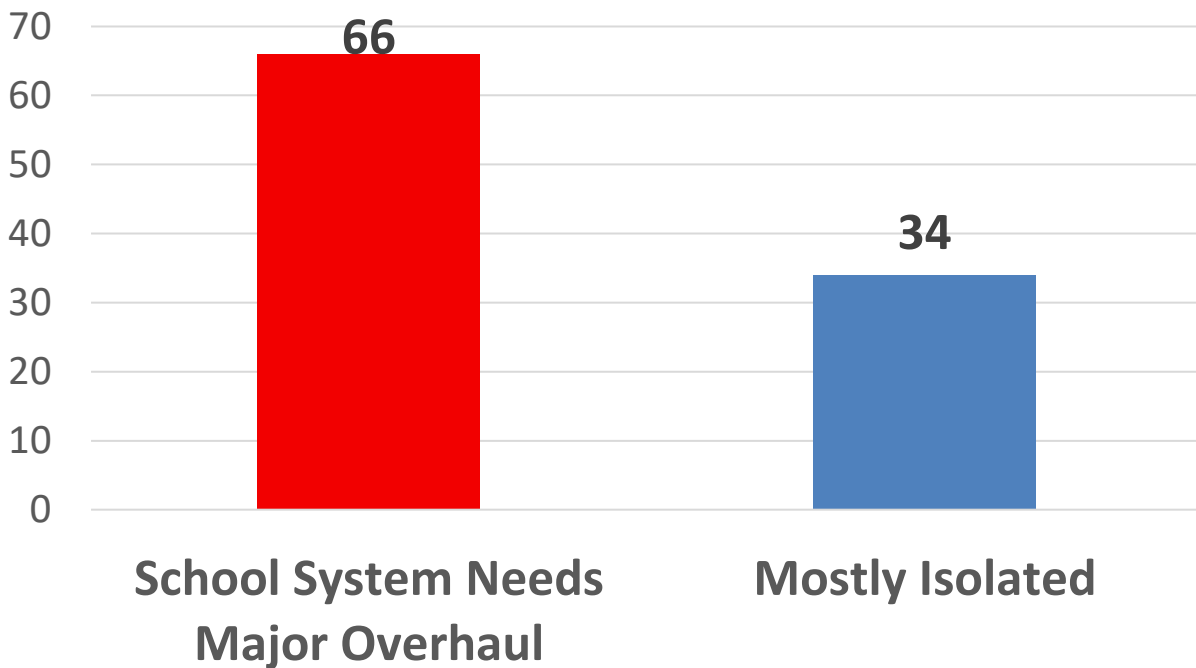
“...I think that when they started that no child left behind thing, I think that's what messed a lot of kids up because you were passed onto the next grade even if you didn't meet your grade requirements. I think that that messes up kids too because if you can't read or write and you are being passed to the next grade you are moving on but you are not catching up, you are not moving on with your class in that same regard so if you are being held back you are forced to learn that stuff all over again and hopefully you pass again.”

- Black Male, under 65

Education

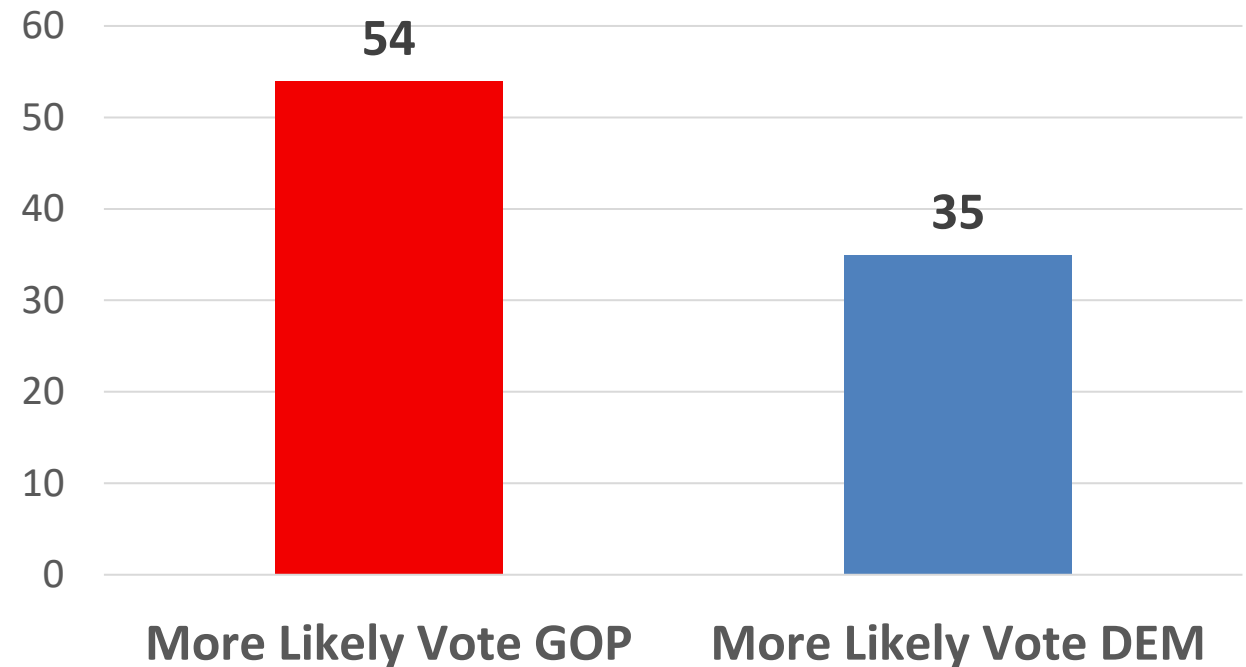
The need for a major overhaul of the US education system garners near universal agreement. Interestingly though, different voter segments have differing ideas on what an overhaul of the education system would look like. White and Chinese voters want to see an emphasis on the “Three R’s”, reading, writing and arithmetic. In addition to the basics, black voters support implementing social justice teachings that incorporate the impact that racism has had on society. The Black and Hispanic segments suggested that taking steps to encourage more parental involvement is one of the most important changes that can be made. We should consider language/policy that addresses this concern.

Which of the following statements about current issues facing America most represents your view? America’s public school system needs a major overhaul. OR. The problems with America’s public schools are mostly isolated to a few troubled school districts.



G360 | M&A: Swing Voters – August 2021

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CANDIDATES ARE YOU MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR CONGRESS? A REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE WHO SUPPORTS ALLOWING SCHOOL CHOICE FOR EVERY AMERICAN CHILD. OR, A DEMOCRAT CANDIDATE WHO SUPPORTS MORE FUNDING FOR GOVERNMENT RUN SCHOOLS AND RAISING SALARIES FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYED TEACHERS.



G360 | M&A: Swing Voters - October 2021

Education – Wasteful Spending

INCREASED EDUCATIONAL SPENDING DOES NOT EQUAL BETTER EDUCATION. Most feel that there is *not* a direct correlation between money being spent on education and academic performance. Respondents pointed to a number of reasons why the US schools underperform, despite having more funding, with most agreeing that there is too much wasteful spending in the education system.

One **white respondent** pointed out that charter and private or religious schools spend less than public schools, but yet, their achievement is significantly higher.

Black female respondents want school funding to be more equitable – Black female respondents believe that the disparity in education is because American public schools are funded by the real estate taxes in the community/town they are based in. They also believe that while as a whole America spends a lot on education, schools in lower income areas are still underfunded. Some female respondents want a level playing field for public schools –finding a way to balance the funding of schools among neighborhoods of different tax brackets. **Black male respondents** felt that not enough funding was going into K-12 education specifically, as opposed to college. They also felt that the funding that schools did receive was likely being spent wastefully.

Hispanic participants believe there is corruption and inappropriate spending, they also believe more needs to be spent on education, specifically teachers' salaries. Regardless of the fact that they believe more needs to be spent on education, most across both groups believe there is significant waste. When told...*"In 2017, the United States spent \$14,100 per student on elementary and secondary education, which was 37 percent higher than the average other developed nations who spent \$10,300. Why do you think the US spends more than its peers on education?"* ...both men and women thought this had mostly to do with poor allocation of funds and corruption.

Indian participants – When first asked whether having the largest education budget in history would help achieve excellence and education, both *male and female Indian groups* responded that it depended on how the money was spent. The females felt that a redistribution of educational funds towards classes that taught actual life skills would be appropriate. On the other hand, the males focused on how administrations paid teachers, again going back to their overall theme teachers are not paid enough.

Education – Wasteful Spending

“Allocating the money to the wrong places instead of focusing on things we are down on they are focusing more of an emotional and like equality and inclusive type of things instead of real-life skills, real world life skills like this. Like math, science, math is the language of science so if we’re down on that we don’t have nothing, everything is a mathematical equation or scientific evaluation so if we’re down on that we are gown on life period.”

Black Male, Under 65

“We spend the most amount of money per child in Washington DC district and they have some of the worst test scores in the entire nation. Throwing more money at it is not the answer.”

White Female, Under 65

“They don't necessarily need more money in education maybe just a redistribution of what's already there. Putting more money in is not going to really solve anything.”

White Male, Under 65

“As far as budget goes [for K-12] it needs to be managed better. I don't think increasing it would help until it is managed better...”

Hindu Female, Under 65

So in in 2017 the United States spent a \$14,100 per student on elementary and secondary education which was 37% higher than the national, average other developed nations... Why?

“What are they spending that much money on? The education process, like I don't see it in our kids.”

Hispanic Female, Under 65

“First of all if you look at how can we put so much money in there and they don't have the simplest things like pencils or a chalk board or a smart board they are using, most public schools do not have smart boards and that puts them way behind before any book is opened up.”

White Female, Under 65

Education – Teachers’ Pay

In spite of concerns over how money is spent, participants agreed that teachers’ salaries were not high enough to attract high caliber teachers. Many believed the narrative that increased teachers’ salaries would improve the quality of education. There was strong reaction to the fact that teacher salaries decrease while education spending increases.

“It comes down to finances to be honest. If you look at average teacher’s salary state by state its all different. If you have a great teacher, she could be making 3 times that at a private [institution].”

Hispanic Male, Under 65

“They are with my son 6 hours a day. They are not paid enough. Nowhere near enough. My son’s teacher, she cares. She genuinely cares. She is not paid enough at all.”

White Female, Under 65

“I also feel like they are under appreciated, underpaid, this is not a job that is 9 to 5, they have to go home and work on projects for the kids for the next day, it’s a constant thinking process, they are never not working you get what I’m saying. So yeah. .”

Black Male, Under 65

On the US having the largest Education Budget in history:

“Probably for certain schools but it’s probably not in any low-income neighborhoods. You know the teachers don’t make a lot of money.”

Hispanic Female, Under 65

“I think teachers are underpaid. There should be a focus on inner cities that have lower testing rates. They should have different teachers that are skilled in different ways that get paid more.”

White Female, Under 65

Education – White Participants under 65

Interestingly, there was significant sentiment among white voters under 65 is that the quality of education is not equitable by race. Sharp differences are seen between schools located in affluent areas versus those in inner cities. *“If you look at the redline districts and inner-city schools, they’re far below standards across the nation. They’ve been left behind and I don’t see any major changes to help those populations succeed.”* It was suggested that there needs to be a redistribution of funding so that schools with less money have the resources to provide their students with equal education and more opportunities

“It depends where you are. There are different school districts. Where I live, where I grew up, in a suburb of Connecticut, we were surrounded by a lot of affluent wealth towns. I lived in a town that wasn’t affluent. A lot of my classmates got pregnant and didn’t graduate. But the schools around us were fabulous.”

White Female, Under 65

“The biggest obstacle is the teacher’s union.”

White Male, Under 65

“Reinvesting in education because that is how people get upwards mobility and opportunities.”

White Male, Under 65

“Personally, I think tenure needs to be done with.”

White Male, Under 65

Education – Black Participants under 65

Coupled with the “school to prison pipeline”, black respondents under 65 feel the American education system is making sure kids don’t succeed. Almost all respondents recognized that teachers were underpaid, overworked, and in need of resources—especially for teachers in low-income schools. More education funding is seen as vital to improving education

“I don’t think [the education system] is serving our children well when our kids finish college, we are in so much debt that we can't move forward... By the time you graduate from college you owe \$100,000 to the government.”

Black Female, Under 65

“If you are holding the teachers that are not being accountable to a higher standard that they can’t reach... Not everybody has a family system at home, not everybody has met those one or two teachers that encourages them to do well.”

Black Male, Under 65

“Educational standards should be raised... We are all supposed to leave from home with some sort of standard, back then we used to say something starts at home and ends abroad.”

Black Female, Under 65

“...they don't give teachers the resources, they don't give them a lot of mental health resources, for themselves or for like the students to educate them, and it's like they don't get a lot of money lot of funding the funding is cut in education so it's like a constant struggle in this a battle and then our kids are losing our educators are losing, so then we all lose.”

Black Female, Under 65

Education – Hispanic Participants Under 65

Most Hispanic voters under 65 define a successful education system as one that prepares students to function in the real world, namely teaching practical skills to help find a job where they can earn a reasonable salary. Consensus across both groups is that students are not prepared to follow a career path once they leave the public school system. Respondents across both groups mentioned similar points including: Increasing pay for teachers to attract the best and brightest to teach our children. Members of both groups say that attracting a higher caliber of teacher as well as modifying curriculum as described above is needed in order to “restore excellence.”

“For a successful education system, they have to teach common sense because there’s a lot of things that’s not useful that they teach in our education system now.”

Hispanic Male, Under 65

“The most important thing in a successful education system is hiring the correct teachers, educated teachers and the security of the students.”

Hispanic Female, under 65

“They have public schools for kids for K-12, but then in college they charge you for all 12 years they didn’t charge you before.”

Hispanic Female, Under 65

“I see a successful education system teaching, bringing financial literacy in the school systems... stop with the BS classes that have nothing to do with real life and how to navigate the real world”

Hispanic Male, Under 65

Education – Hindu Voters

There were some varying answers across the groups as to what constitutes a good education system. Female Indian voters emphasized teaching practical life skills, such as financial skills, such as offering internships to allow students to learn on the job before they get into the real world. Females also felt that we do not spend enough time in K through 12 education helping students figure out what they want to do with their life, but instead focus on general knowledge topics, like history. Conversely, males felt that students should have at least a bachelor's degree and that there should be more resources available to teachers. Similar to the white and black voters, Indian voters said that children should have equal access a quality education regardless of where they live.

“I think in terms of having education available for everybody until grade 12 for free, that is huge. Not every country has that right.”

Hindu Female, Under 65

“Definitely more resources available to teachers. I know teachers out there who have to pay out of pocket for their own supplies.”

Hindu Male, Under 65

“You can tell that the education wasn’t balanced throughout the whole district, throughout the whole state...”

Hindu Male, Under 65

“I feel like a lot of students aren’t taught about the issues that are going around and history in terms of racism and equality for all and stuff like that”

Hindu Female, Under 65