



Engagious

FPG Focus Pointe
Global

SWING VOTER PROJECT (SVP)

REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2019

YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH:

Engagious conducted a focus group in Youngstown, Ohio on October 7, 2019 with 11 swing voters: eight who voted for President Obama in 2012 and then President Trump in 2016, and three who voted for Mitt Romney in 2012 and then Hillary Clinton in 2016. We explored questions and topics surrounding the president, Democrats running for president, and 2020 issues more broadly.

DISCLAIMER:

The key findings in this report are based upon the opinions and feedback from 11 swing voters in one location. They are not a representative sample, nor should they be viewed as such.

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Example: "30% of female respondents disagreed with the Medicare statement" (according to research conducted by Engagious/FPG).



1

OBAMA-TRUMP VOTERS ARE FIRMLY OPPOSED TO IMPEACHMENT, AND WANT CONGRESS TO FOCUS ON ISSUES THAT MATTER TO THEM. ROMNEY-CLINTON VOTERS SUPPORT IMPEACHMENT.

Swing voters' awareness of basic facts related to the impeachment inquiry is mixed. Respondents completed a written exercise where we asked them to describe what President Trump did, specifically, according to the Democrats, that prompted the House of Representatives to launch an impeachment inquiry. Seven of our 11 swing voters provided at least a passable explanation about what prompted the inquiry. The 11 responses ranged from "lie" and "upset many Americans" to "illegally talked to someone in another country" to "Trump asked a foreign head of state to investigate a political rival."

Eight of the 11 know it is *untrue* that if the House of Representatives ultimately votes to impeach President Trump, he would be immediately removed from office.

We also asked respondents to provide a word or phrase that best describes how they feel about the prospect of a Trump impeachment.

Obama-Trump voters offered¹:

- Joke/never-ending drama (1)
- Bad for America (1)
- I don't like the idea (1)
- Not happy (1)
- Definitely not (1)
- Exhausting (1)
- Concerned (1)

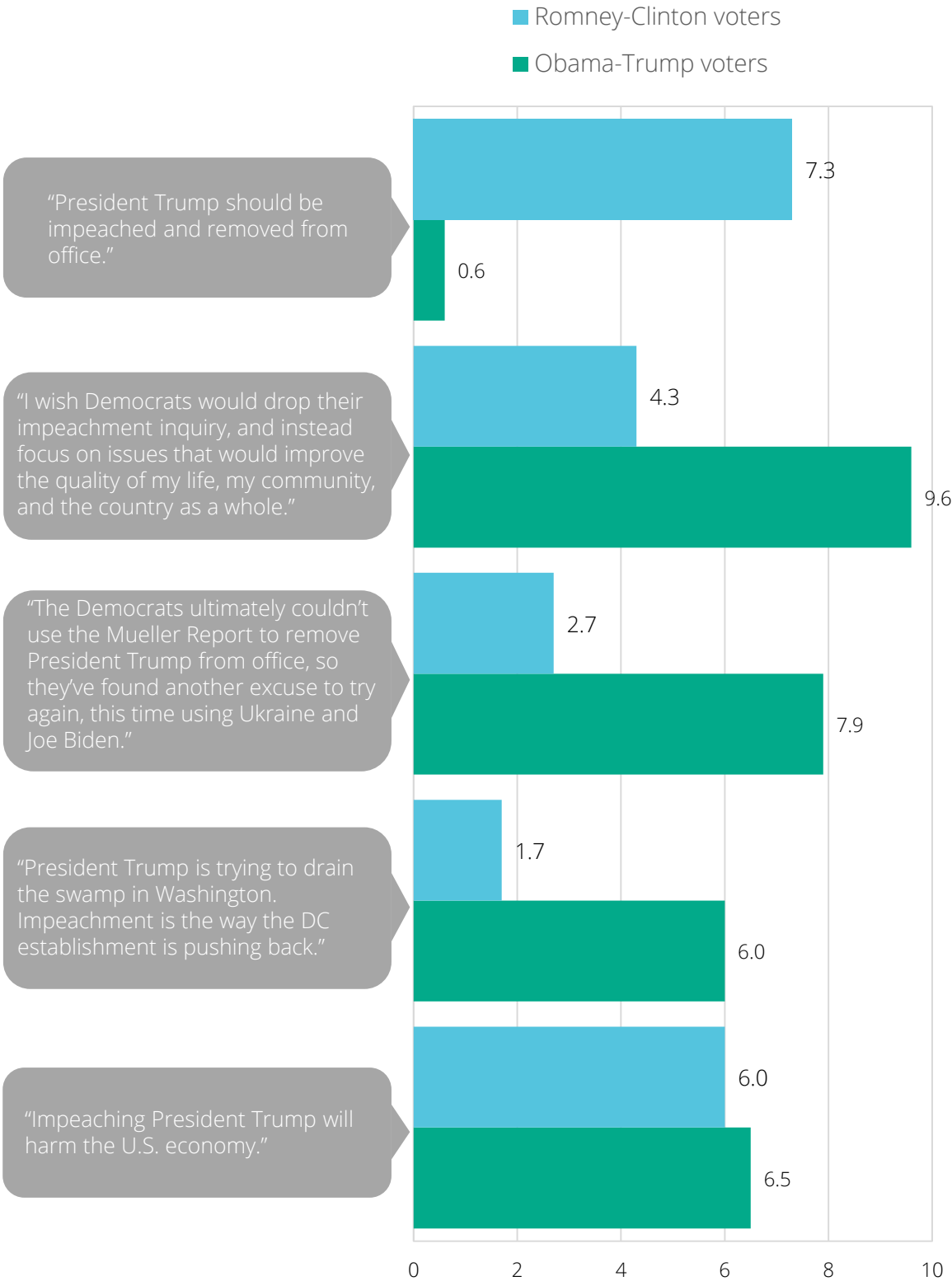
Romney-Clinton voters listed:

- Hopeful (1)
- Conflicted (1)
- Not good at this point in his term (1)

¹ One Obama-Trump voter didn't provide a response.

KEY FINDINGS

We followed this exercise by asking respondents to rate some statements about their feelings on impeachment on a scale from zero to 10, from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”. The following chart shows the greatest divide between the groups of swing voters to the smallest divide, in descending order:





Obama-Trump voters feel the president's actions don't merit impeachment and this is a distraction preventing our leaders from focusing on the issues they care most about. Some believe the Democrats are exaggerating or lying about what happened because they hate the president so much, they want to make him look bad and get him out of office. One respondent remarked that the Democrats can defeat him next year, suggesting impeachment is not the right move.

Another respondent commented:

"I read the transcript. Is it impeachable? I don't know. My concern and my doubt would be not that it didn't happen; I read the transcript. My question would be: Is there a specific—not correlation—causation of 'I will not give you military aid if you don't look into Hunter Biden's oil business dealings?' Is there undeniable proof? If there is, then they should look into it, but I doubt that there is 100% undeniable evidence. We heard all this time about Mueller and this was going to be the whole thing. Now it's this thing. I want to know undeniable 100% proof that there was a connection between the withholding of military aid and a quid pro quo for looking into Hunter Biden's dealings. If that's the case, then they have a point. If not, then the rest of us are struggling here so let's focus on us for a little bit—working people."

– Brad, Obama-Trump voter

Also, we asked respondents to rate the following statement on a scale from zero to 10:

Last week President Trump wrote, "I would be very surprised if the hoax didn't come a little bit from the people that we're taking on... I wouldn't be surprised if it was from some of these industries that we take on, like pharma."

Zero means they totally disagree the pharmaceutical industry is pushing for impeachment, and 10 means they totally agree the pharmaceutical industry is pushing for impeachment.

Obama-Trump voters were neutral, on average, scoring this at 5.0/10. Romney-Clinton voters disagreed with this notion, scoring it at 1.7/10.

2

OBAMA-TRUMP VOTERS ARE STICKING WITH TRUMP
IN 2020, AND THEY EXPECT HIM TO WIN.

If another presidential election were being held tomorrow between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, all eight Obama-Trump voters would stick with the president, and all three Romney-Clinton voters would stick with Clinton.

Hypothetically, if the U.S. Constitution didn't prevent presidents from serving a third term, and former President Obama became the Democratic nominee to challenge President Trump's re-election, all eight Obama-Trump voters would vote for President Trump again, having voted for both men in the past. Among Romney-Clinton voters, two would vote for President Obama and one would switch over to vote for President Trump.

Interestingly, swing voters expect Trump to win. We asked, "Imagine I gave you \$100, and told you to place a \$100 bet on the outcome of the 2020 election. Which candidate or party do you expect to win in November 2020, and how confident are you in your expectation?" Zero means you are totally confident the Democratic nominee will win, and 10 means you are totally confident President Trump will win. Obama-Trump voters scored this at 8.8/10. Notably, even Romney-Clinton voters expect the president to get re-elected, scoring this at 6.0/10.

We followed this up by asking, "I want you to think for a moment about an adult in your life you can talk to about anything, including politics, and do so comfortably, without feeling at all awkward. On a scale from zero to 10, how likely are you to recommend that person vote for President Trump in 2020? Zero means not at all likely, and 10 means very likely." We observed a split among the groups of swing voters, with Obama-Trump voters scoring this at 7.1/10, and Romney-Clinton voters scoring it at 3.0/10.

When we asked respondents what they like about President Trump politically, Obama-Trump voters cited:

- Doesn't talk like a politician—he's an outspoken "straight shooter" who's not worried about being judged (6)
- He's a fighter and he wants results (1)
- He ignores the noise to get things done (1)

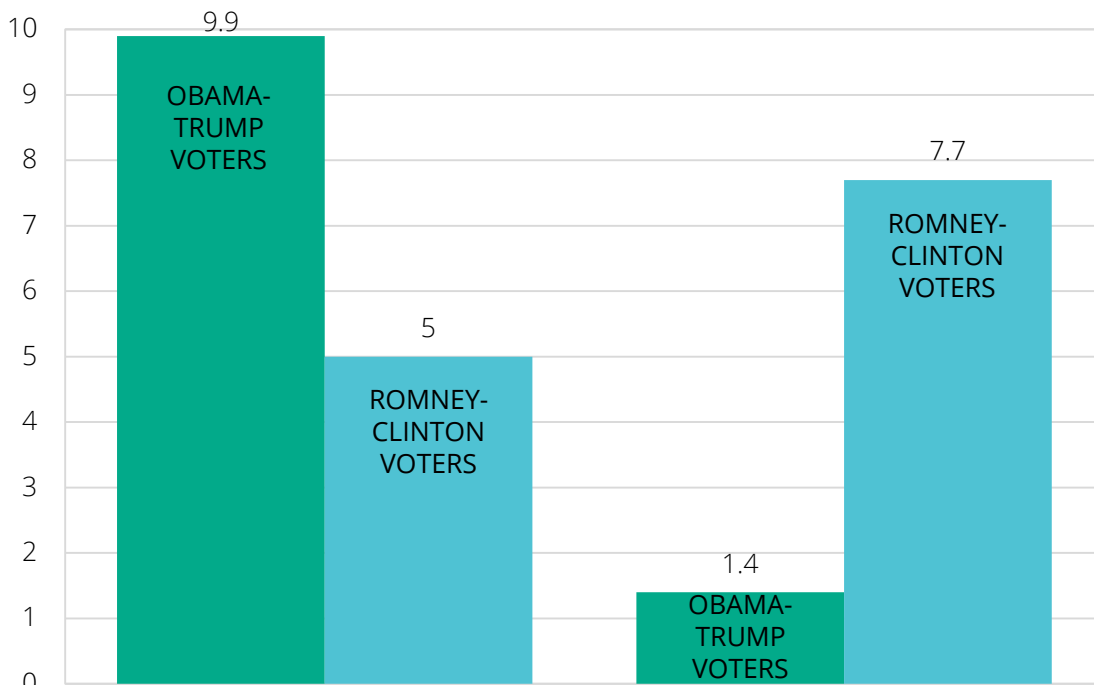
Romney-Clinton voters offered:

- He tells it like it is (1)
- He'll be impeached soon (1)
- He says he's a Republican (1)



Obama-Trump voters' decision to re-elect the president will largely be based on how the economy is doing in November 2020.

Respondents told us how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about President Trump, on a zero to 10 scale. Zero means they totally disagreed, and 10 means they totally agreed.



A lot of chaos swirls around President Trump. He is an unconventional president. On Twitter, he regularly makes critical statements about other people, including people in his own party and administration. Allegations of bad behavior are leveled against him regularly. While I'm aware of the controversies involving president Trump, what is likelier to influence my vote is how the economy is doing, and how my family and I are doing, in November 2020.

I just can't take it anymore with Trump's antics, and his being in our faces 24/7. I have no patience for another four years. Things in America just don't feel normal, and we need to get back to normal.



We asked Obama-Trump voters to tell us how they feel when they watch President Trump on TV or on their device. They offered:

- Motivated (1)
- Unbelievable (can't believe he can do what he does) (1)
- Excited (1)
- Determined (1)
- Glad (1)
- Comedic (he's pretty funny) (1)
- Proud (1)
- Ashamed (1)

When we asked Romney-Clinton voters the same question, they listed:

- Upset (1)
- Anxious (1)
- Furious (1)

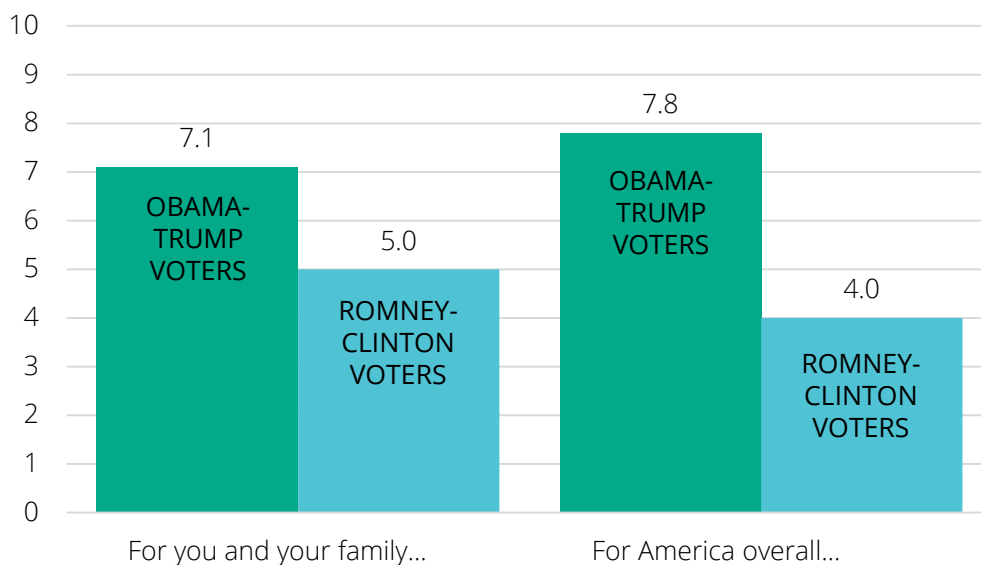
There was a significant split between Obama-Trump voters and Romney-Clinton voters regarding how much they trust the media's coverage of President Trump and their view of his tweets. We asked them to rate on a scale from zero to 10 (from "totally mistrust" to "totally trust") how much they trust the media's coverage of the president. Obama-Trump voters and Romney-Clinton voters scored this at 1.9/10 and 7.3/10, respectively. When we asked how they feel overall about the president's tweets, on a zero to 10 scale, from "I hate them" to "I love them", Obama-Trump voters scored this at 6.6/10, and Romney-Clinton voters scored this at 1.3/10.

Most swing voters don't know that President Trump is being challenged in the 2020 Republican primaries (seven of 11). We asked them to rate the following sentence on a zero to 10 scale (from "totally disagree" to "totally agree"): "It would be good for our country if at least one Republican ran against President Trump in the primaries next year." We saw a huge split between Obama-Trump voters (2.4/10) and Romney-Clinton voters (8.3/10) with this question. Those who say it would be a bad idea for another Republican to challenge the president told us it's "bad optics" for the party to not stand behind your incumbent, and he's in the middle of doing so many things - they want him to finish what he started. Those who would like to see President Trump challenged told us the competition, bringing about different perspectives, would be positive. When we asked if anyone would like to see Mitt Romney challenge President Trump, no one responded affirmatively, not even those who would like to see him challenged in the primaries, arguing that Trump would "quash" him.

3 ROMNEY-CLINTON VOTERS ARE FAR MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT OUR ECONOMY THAN OBAMA-TRUMP VOTERS.

With the unemployment rate at 3.5% nationally, the lowest it has been in five decades, and the stock market hovering near an all-time high, four Obama-Trump voters would say the economy is “booming.”

We asked swing voters to rate on a scale from zero to 10 how the economy has been since Donald Trump became president (from “gotten much worse” to “gotten much better”).



Obama-Trump voters have been feeling a sense of economic optimism since Donald Trump became president, while Romney-Clinton voters don't believe the economy has done well for them and their family, or for America overall, in that time period. Notably, none of our swing voters have seen a noticeable increase in wages since President Trump took office, but they don't blame him for it because they believe there are factors impacting wages that are outside of his control, such as the loss of manufacturing in Ohio.

This is further supported by how they responded when we asked them to rate their confidence in President Trump's handling of the economy over the last several months, on a scale from zero to 10 (from “less confident” to “more confident”). Obama-Trump voters scored this at 7.9/10, while Romney-Clinton voters scored this at a paltry 3.0/10, a huge divide.



There is also a sharp divide over how likely it is that the U.S. economy will enter a recession sometime in the next year, which respondents rated on a scale from zero to 10 (from “no chance it will enter a recession” to “it’s already in recession”). Obama-Trump voters expressed some concern about a looming recession (3.8/10), but the concern from Romney-Clinton voters was far greater (7.0/10).

We told respondents to assume for a moment that an economic recession occurs before the next election. Then, we asked them to rate how that would affect their view of President Trump, on a zero to 10 scale, (from “my support for him will erode substantially” to “my support for him will grow substantially”). Interestingly, Obama-Trump voters’ support for the president would slightly increase, on average, (5.6/10), while Romney-Clinton voters’ view of the president would erode (3.7/10).

We were also interested in finding out from respondents how important the state of the economy is compared to national security issues (North Korea, Iran, Russia, etc.) when they vote next year. We asked them to rate this question on a scale from zero to 10 (from “national security is far less important to you than the health of the economy” to “national security is far more important to you than the health of the economy”). Swing voters believe these are about equally important when they vote next year, with Obama-Trump voters scoring this at 5.0/10, and Romney-Clinton voters scoring this at 4.7/10 (giving the slight edge to the economy).

We asked respondents to rate the direction of our country and the direction of Ohio, on a zero to 10 scale (from “totally wrong direction” to “totally right direction”). Obama-Trump voters have a more favorable view of the direction of our country, 6.0/10, compared to Romney-Clinton voters’ 4.3/10, citing jobs and economic progress. Meanwhile, Romney-Clinton voters have a more favorable view of how Ohio is doing (5.7/10), compared to Obama-Trump voters (5.5/10).

4

SWING VOTERS DON'T SEE THE LEFT-WING POPULIST AGENDA AS "SOCIALISM."



Near the end of the session, we showed respondents a chart with two columns of policy ideas:

Column 1	Column 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impose an annual 2% tax on every dollar of net worth above \$50 million, and a 3% tax on every dollar of net worth above \$1 billion. • Impose an additional 7% tax on any corporation with profits above \$100 million. • Cancel \$50,000 in student loan debt for every person with household income under \$100,000. • Pass a Medicare for All plan and make large corporations and wealthy people pay for it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. • Ban citizens from certain countries from coming to the U.S. • Impose tariffs on goods coming from China and Mexico, to force these countries to negotiate more favorable trade deals with the U.S. • Weaken Obamacare with the goal of dismantling it.

Then, we asked our swing voters to imagine that these are their two policy choices next year, and we asked which one they would select. Five would choose the left column, which is representative of Sen. Warren's policy ideas; six would choose the right column, which is representative of President Trump's policy ideas. Those who would choose Warren's policy ideas told us "those are all things that I care about," particularly the student loan debt and healthcare issues. Those who would choose Trump's policy ideas indicated they want the border wall and to dismantle Obamacare.

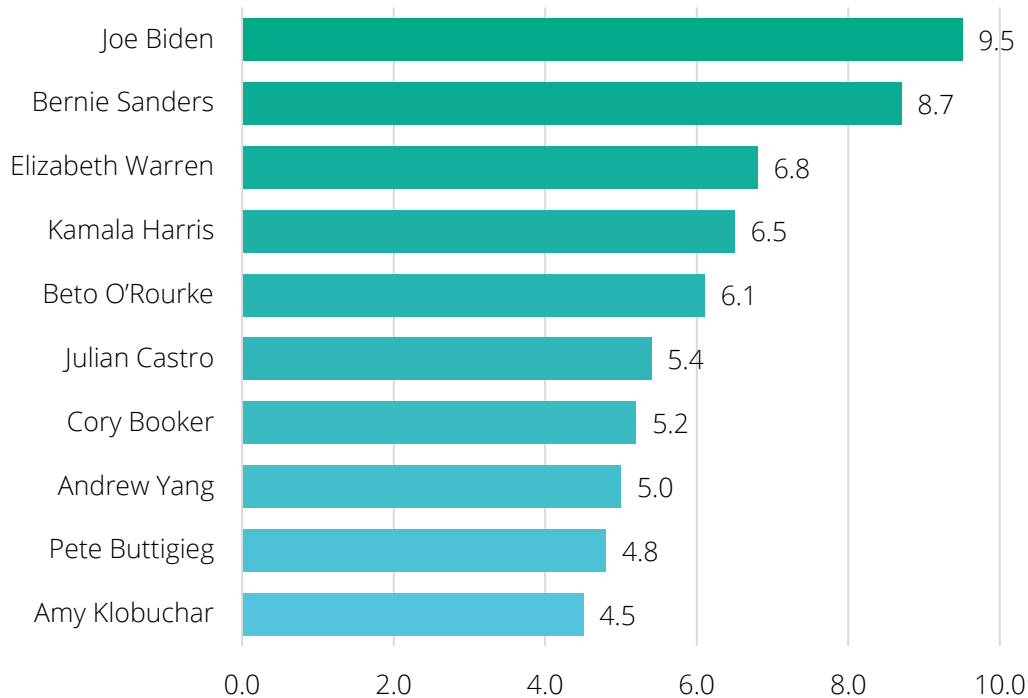
Also, we asked if they would describe the policies in the left column as "socialism." Notably, a slight majority (six of 11) said no, two said yes, and three don't know. Those who would not describe the policy ideas in the left column as "socialism" told us they don't meet the definition of that term (with one respondent describing it as "government ownership of the means of production"), asserting, "I just don't see it as socialism." They asserted that government policies would change, including the wealthy paying more taxes, but there's "nothing transformative" that would change our style of government.

5

SWING VOTERS ARE FINALLY BECOMING MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE DEMOCRATS RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT.

Respondents indicated with their dials their level of confidence in being able to identify unlabeled photos of each of the Democrats running for president in 2020 who made the debate stage last month, on a zero to 10 scale. Zero means they had no idea who the candidate is, and 10 means they were totally confident they know who the candidate is.

The following chart shows the results, on average, in descending order:



Months after Democrats began announcing their candidacies for president, and following three primary debates, swing voters indicated many of the candidates are recognizable to them. These are the highest numbers of the eight focus groups we have now conducted with swing voters since March. Notably, seven of our 11 swing voters are getting at least some of their news from one or more of the cable news networks (e.g., CNN, MSNBC, Fox News), which is likely a significant factor contributing to these high scores. We also showed unlabeled photos of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (6.4/10) and Greta Thunberg (5.8/10) to find out how recognizable they are to swing voters, and remarkably, they are more recognizable than many of the Democrats running for president.

There was no consensus in our focus group that any of the Democrats running for president “excites” them. For most swing voters, no one “excites” them. However, individual swing voters named Bernie Sanders, Andrew Yang, Elizabeth Warren, and Beto O'Rourke as Democrats who would “excite” them, but there was clearly a lack of enthusiasm for any of these candidates. When asked if there is anyone not running who would excite them, respondents named Colin Powell and Congressman Tim Ryan (unaware he is already in the race).

6

THE PRESIDENT IS VULNERABLE ON HEALTHCARE,
GIVING THE DEMOCRATS AN OPENING WITH
“MEDICARE FOR ALL.”

We asked respondents to rate on a scale from zero to 10 (from “no news at all” to “a large amount of news”) how much they have heard over the past several months about “Medicare for All.” This scored at 4.6/10, on average. A number of them know Bernie Sanders is advocating for it, but they don't know many details.

We continued by asking them to tell us how much they support or oppose eliminating private health insurance and replacing it with Medicare for All, on a scale from zero to 10 (from “totally oppose” to “totally support”). Obama-Trump voters and Romney-Clinton voters scored this at 4.9/10 and 4.0/10, respectively. For some, it doesn't sound realistic. They wondered who would pay for it and how we could undo the system we have in place. Some were concerned that when they need help, it may not be available.

When asked to rate how satisfied they are with President Trump's efforts to ensure healthcare is affordable for them and their family, on a zero to 10 scale (from “not at all satisfied” to “very satisfied”), we saw a split between our two subgroups of swing voters, with Obama-Trump voters slightly satisfied (5.1/10) and Romney-Clinton voters dissatisfied (1.3/10). More than half of our swing voters believe the president hasn't done enough to get healthcare costs under control in the United States, and notably, almost half say healthcare affordability will be a major issue for them when they vote next year.

President Trump promised to repeal and replace Obamacare, and to them, he hasn't delivered. Democrats have an opening to present their vision for healthcare. Swing voters have questions and concerns about Medicare for All, but if Democrats can persuasively make the case that their vision will have a meaningful impact in their lives (lowering their healthcare costs), the president's vulnerability on this issue could grow.

7

TRADE CONTINUES TO BE A LOW-PRIORITY ISSUE AS SWING VOTERS CONSIDER THEIR VOTE IN 2020.

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale from zero to 10 how much President Trump's actions on trade will affect their vote in 2020 (from "have no impact on my vote" to "have a significant impact on my vote.") Both groups of swing voters indicated that the issue wouldn't impact their vote very much, scoring it at 3.2/10, on average. Only one said they or someone they know has been helped by the president's trade policies, and only one has been harmed.

They also rated how much they support or oppose the tariffs the Trump Administration has placed on the imports of certain goods, on a scale from zero to 10 (from "totally oppose" to "totally support"), which they scored at 4.6/10, with Obama-Trump voters slightly supportive of them (5.5/10) and Romney-Clinton voters opposing them (2.3/10). Eight of the 11 swing voters believe that American consumers pay for the tariffs imposed on imported goods (as opposed to others), and five feel that they're paying higher prices for goods because of the tariffs imposed by the Trump Administration, citing food and appliances as examples.

Seven of our 11 swing voters—six Obama-Trump voters and one Romney-Clinton voter—believe that America's efforts to secure a fairer trade deal with China, to help American exporters and to protect our intellectual property, are worth the financial pain from higher prices on imports we buy from other countries. If the president can secure a favorable trade deal for the American people, it would work to his advantage politically. However, if a "trade war" with China causes prices to rise noticeably for them and their family, both groups of swing voters indicated their support for President Trump would slightly erode (4.2/10, on average), on a zero to 10 scale (from "my support for him will erode substantially" to "my support for him will grow substantially).



8

CLIMATE CHANGE WON'T BE A TOP-FIVE ISSUE FOR SWING VOTERS WHEN THEY VOTE NEXT YEAR.



When asked to consider all the issues that matter to them when they vote next year, only one swing voter told us that climate change is a top-five issue for them “because I think it’s a serious problem for our environment.” The other 10 swing voters indicated it’s not a top-five issue for them, “because many other issues matter more to me than this one.” Notably, if a Republican candidate for Congress were vocal about addressing climate change as a serious issue, 10 of our 11 swing voters — excluding one Obama-Trump voter — indicated that, by itself, would not be a reason to vote against him or her; only one said it would be.

We asked how much news they have heard over the past several months about the “Green New Deal.” On a zero to 10 scale from “no news at all” to “a large amount of news”, they rated it at 1.5/10. From the little amount of news they have heard about it, they don’t view the concept favorably, scoring it at 2.1/10, on a zero to 10 scale, from “very unfavorably” to “very favorably”.

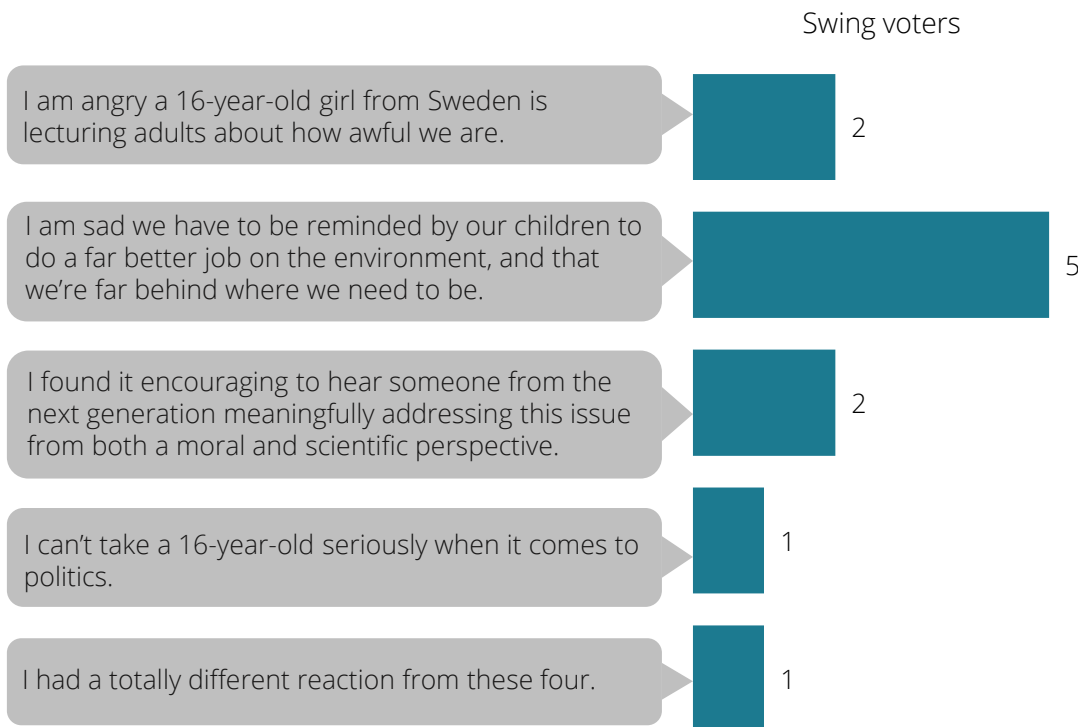
On average, swing voters are neutral to the idea that, “the weather in recent years seems weird” (4.8/10), but they do believe, “certain months seem warmer now” (6.0/10). When asked to cite evidence that, “the weather in recent years seems weird,” they pointed to a large amount of rain they have had, and warm weather in October.

9

A PLURALITY SAID GRETA THUNBERG'S UNITED NATIONS SPEECH MADE THEM FEEL SAD, BUT SHE SHOULDN'T BE THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVISM.

During the focus group, we showed respondents a four-minute clip from an event that took place at the United Nations a couple of weeks ago, where Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish girl, was asked to talk about climate change.

After the video, we asked respondents to tell us which of the following statements comes closest to their reaction to the video:



Those who were "sad" explained:

"The environment is in horrible shape, and people are more concerned about making money than taking care of the environment which we need to live on. We're killing ourselves. And I just think it's sad that children have to get up and say stuff, and people still aren't listening. It's so bad that our children are frightened for their future and their children's future. It's just sad." – Richelle, Obama-Trump voter

"We just get lost in the day-to-day in focusing on improving our own lives that we forget of the future. We're focused on just improving what we have now and aren't looking ahead." – Ian, Romney-Clinton voter



One respondent who found it “encouraging” remarked:

“I work with kids all day long in schools and most of them are worried about playing online. [Greta Thunberg] came through it with actual material. She was ready to go...She had numbers to go along with it. It was just nice. It was almost refreshing to see someone in that age group frankly give a damn about something other than playing online video games. These kids are going to have to deal with the consequences of this stuff...It was nice to see someone who had a passion, brought both the scientific, numerical, and moral perspective with it, and had the guts to go in front of you. That’s not an easy thing to go in front of the United Nations and give that kind of passionate speech with those kind of facts.”

– Brad, Obama-Trump voter

We asked whether it would be a smart or not smart strategy for environmental groups to make Greta Thunberg a face of climate change activism. Notably, eight of our 11 swing voters, including six Obama-Trump voters and two Romney-Clinton voters, said it would be “not smart” to do that. Respondents commented that she comes off as “angry” (although the seriousness in her face could be from being on the autism spectrum). They said people may misunderstand her and they should just let her be a kid. Also, we heard that with climate change being a divisive issue — with some very concerned about its impacts and others saying it’s a hoax — you have to win over hearts and minds. A number of respondents don’t believe a speech like Greta Thunberg gave at the United Nations would achieve that objective.

10

THERE WAS NO CONSENSUS ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR SWING VOTERS HEADING INTO 2020.

In the beginning of the focus group, we asked respondents to name their top issue of concern heading into 2020. They cited²:

- The economy—increasing wages and bringing positive economic change (3)
- Bringing our troops home (2)
- Healthcare affordability—including mental healthcare (2)
- Legalizing medical marijuana nationally (2)
- The ability to make America a world power again (1)
- Border security and curtailing illegal immigration (1)
- Mass incarceration (1)

A slight majority of swing voters—five Obama-Trump voters and one Romney-Clinton voter— feel the Democrats running for president are not speaking about the national issues they care most about.

If swing voters were advising the president's Democratic challenger and were asked to come up with a phrase built upon "Make America _____ Again," they would choose:

- Proud (2)
- Civil (1)
- Kind (1)
- Honest (1)
- Compassionate (1)
- Peaceful (1)
- Livable (1)
- Greater (1)
- Free (1)
- "Bring America Together Again" (1)

² One respondent provided two answers.



11

SWING VOTERS HAVE A LAUNDRY LIST OF QUESTIONS THEY'D LIKE BOTH PRESIDENT TRUMP AND HIS DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGERS TO ADDRESS DURING THE CAMPAIGN.

During the focus group, we asked swing voters to tell us what questions they would ask the Democrats running for president and President Trump.

Swing voters would ask Democrats:

- What evidence do you have to impeach President Trump?
- Why should African Americans support Democrats? What are you doing for them?
- Are you going to take my gun?
- What are you going to do today to make sure our families are safe and secure?
- Is there more to your platform than just being anti-Trump?
- What's your plan to move forward?
- If President Trump is impeached tomorrow, what is the plan? Where are you going to start?
- How are you going to pay for all your policy ideas, including free healthcare and free college?

Swing voters would ask President Trump:

- How are you going to keep developing our local communities?
- Where are you in the process with your border security plan?
- Why are you doing so many drone strikes?
- When you're thinking about your day, who are you thinking about first thing in the morning?
- If you had one day where both sides were united, what is the one thing you'd like to get accomplished in that day where everybody was working together?