

American Politics and Foreign Policy

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**A survey sponsored by
University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll
fielded by Nielsen Scarborough**

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted April 12-17, 2017 with a panel consisting of a probability-based representative sample. The panel was recruited by Nielsen Scarborough from its larger probability-based national panel, which was recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households provided by Survey Sampling International. A total of 2,138 panelists completed the survey. Responses were weighted by age, gender, income, education, race, and geographic region using benchmarks from the US Census. The survey was also weighted by partisan identification. The margin of error is 2.12%

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Key Findings

- **The Critical Issues Poll finds little evidence of buyer’s remorse among Trump voters. Voters overwhelmingly say that President Trump has done what they expected, and those who voted for Trump say they would likely vote for him again if given the chance. Americans who voted for Trump also accept many of Trump’s claims. These voters want Congress to investigate potential wiretaps of Trump’s office during the campaign, but see less need for Congress to investigate Russian interference in the election. While Trump’s base appears to be sticking with him, the poll shows evidence of remorse among non-voters. Democrats who did not vote especially regret their decision to stay home, but we also see evidence of regret among significant portions of independents and Republicans.**
- **In an open-ended question, Americans identify President Trump as the leader they ‘dislike’ most among national and world leaders, well ahead of Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin. Partly, this is a product of the deep partisan divide, with a majority of Democrats naming Trump, while Republicans name Kim Jong-un. But it is notable that independents also name Trump as their most disliked leader.**
- **A large majority of Americans, including an overwhelming majority of Democrats said there was Russian interference in the 2016 election, with 69% of Democrats also saying the interference influenced the election outcome. Republicans were nearly evenly divided among themselves on whether or not Russia had interfered. Among Republicans who said there was Russian interference, most said it probably did not alter the outcome. Additionally, while a majority of Americans see Russia as a foe, Republicans are divided with about half saying Moscow is a foe.**
- **Democrats show renewed enthusiasm and unity in opposition to the Trump agenda. We also find that political independents are opposed to key Trump policy proposals.**
- **Half of all Americans, including an overwhelming majority of Democrats oppose Trump’s proposed border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Support is strongest among Republicans, especially those who voted for Trump. Regardless of support or opposition to the wall, only one third of Americans say the wall will actually be built; Among Republicans, 55% say the wall will be built.**
- **While Americans are polarized on whether President Trump’s proposals will help or hurt the job prospects of minority groups in the country, we find evidence that voters think his policies will do more to help African Americans than Latinos. Voters in these minority groups, however, are generally skeptical that Trump’s policies will be beneficial.**

- **The Critical Issues Poll reveals a strong correlation between media trust and where people go for news. Individuals who primarily get their news from Fox News or social media exhibit low levels of trust in the media, while those who go to public television, newspapers, or cable news sources beyond Fox News exhibit high levels of trust.**
- **Despite the deep political divisions in the country, both Democrats and Republicans generally agree that effective checks and balances are critical for maintaining the health of American democracy.**

Central Findings on Enthusiasm and Remorse in the Electorate

Take Away #1: While a number of stories in the news media focus on Donald Trump's failure to negotiate the passage of landmark pieces of legislation, his core constituency continues to back him almost completely. This runs counter to the [narrative](#) that a significant portion of Trump's backers are experiencing buyer's remorse. The Critical Issues Poll affirms what a [Washington Post-ABC](#) poll recently found: few Trump voters regret their choice at the 100-day mark of his presidency. Moreover, those who voted for Donald Trump accept many of the President's claims. Trump backers think investigations should be launched into potential wiretaps of Trump's office, but reject the need for investigations into the Trump campaign's contacts with Russia.

But while Trump's base seems to be sticking with him, there is evidence that Trump is energizing opponents and potential opponents. There is remorse for not voting in the 2016 election especially among Democrats who stayed home, but also some independents, and Republicans.

Little Remorse Among Trump Voters:

- When we asked individuals whether Trump had so far done what they expected, 70% of Trump voters¹ saw the President as meeting their expectations. Only 2% of Trump voters claimed that he had not met their expectations, while another 28% said it was too early to tell.
- Ninety-six percent of Trump voters said that, knowing what they know now, they still would have voted for Donald Trump. Only 1% claimed that they would not vote for Donald Trump again. This is, in fact, higher than the level of support for Clinton. Ninety-four percent of Clinton voters² said they would still vote for her, knowing what they now know. Another 6% said they would vote for someone else or were unsure.

Remorse Much Higher Among Non-Voters:

- While Trump voters show little signs of regret, Americans who did not show up to the polls expressed a great deal of regret in our sample. Forty-three percent of non-voters said they regretted their decision to abstain from the election this past November. Among Democrats, this rate was 55%, whereas among Republicans remorse was at 40%.
- Remorse among non-voters is likely the byproduct of recent news events that have pushed non-voters to develop stronger opposition against President Trump. For example, news stories since the election have established a strong connection between the Trump Campaign and Russian operatives seeking to influence the outcome of the election. We find that, among those who regretted not voting, 63% believed the Trump campaign had contact with operatives for the Russian government during the campaign cycle. In

¹ Those who say they voted for Donald Trump in the November 2016 Election.

² Those who say they voted for Hillary Clinton in the November 2016 Election.

contrast, among those who did not regret abstaining, only 30% believed there was contact between the Trump campaign and operatives for the Russian government.

Trump identified as most disliked “national or world leader” not only by Democrats but also by independents

- In an open-ended question, Americans identify President Trump as the leader they ‘dislike’ most among national and world leaders, well ahead of Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin. Partly, this is a product of the deep partisan divide, with a majority of Democrats naming Trump, while Republicans name Kim Jong-un. But it is notable that independents also name Trump as their most disliked leader.

Poll Suggests Trump Voters Accept Trump’s Assertion that President Obama Wiretapped him, and Reject the Notion that Russia Interfered in the Election

- Donald Trump has [accused](#) former President Obama of wiretapping his office building in New York during the presidential campaign. Despite the [lack of evidence](#) to support this claim, Trump voters overwhelmingly accept it. When asked whether Congress should investigate allegations of wiretapping or allegations of the [widely-reported](#) interference of Russia in the 2016 election, Trump voters say by a margin of 78%-17% that Congress should investigate the wiretaps.
- Clinton and third party voters, by large majorities, think the allegations of Russian interference are worthier of investigation. Ninety-five percent of Clinton voters prioritize investigating Russian interference in the election, while the same is true for 68% of third-party voters.
- When faced with the question of whether Russia interfered in the election, 46% of Trump voters said there was no interference. An additional 35% of Trump voters said there probably was interference, but that it probably did not alter the outcome of the election. Only 4% of Trump voters said that Russia interfered in such a way that may have impacted the outcome of the election.
- In contrast, a full 72% of Clinton voters said that Russia probably interfered in the election in such a way that it influenced the outcome, while only 1% said they did not think there was interference. Unaffiliated voters were more evenly split, with over 50% saying there was likely interference, but only 21% saying that the interference probably made a difference in the outcome of the election.

Despite Reports to the Contrary, Trump Voters Continue to Reject the Assertion that there was Contact between Russian Operatives and the Trump Campaign

- When asked whether the Trump campaign had any contact with operatives for the Russian government, Trump voters resoundingly reject the idea by a margin of 67%-10%, with an additional 23% claiming they are not sure.

- Clinton voters claim the Trump campaign had contact with operatives for the Russian government by a margin of 83%-2%, while third party voters also believe the reports of Russian contact with Trump's campaign by a margin of 36%-18%.

Fox News Viewing is Strongly Correlated with Accepting Trump's Assertions While Rejecting Those Reported in Many Other Media Outlets

- Some of the views among Trump voters regarding Russia and allegations of Obama's wiretapping may be a product of where they get their news. The Critical Issues Poll revealed that 41% of Trump voters list Fox News as their primary source for political information, compared to only 4% among those who voted for other candidates. Among Americans whose primary source for political information is Fox News, 80% said wiretapping merited greater congressional attention than allegations of Russian interference.
- In addition, only 13% of those who identify Fox News as their primary source for political information said they thought the Trump campaign had contact with Russian operatives. This number is far lower than the 55% who listed a source other than Fox News as their primary source for political information.

With Deportations Rising for Non-Criminals, Trump Voters Say Immigration Raids Target Only Undocumented Immigrants with a Criminal Record

- Recently, the Trump administration has carried out [immigration raids](#) that have resulted in the deportation of individuals without a criminal record. Yet when asked who these raids targeted, 55% of Trump voters said they only target those with a criminal record rather than all undocumented immigrants.
- Among Clinton voters, only 5% said the immigration raids targeted exclusively individuals with criminal records, while 73% said the raids did not distinguish among those with a criminal record. The breakdown among third-party candidates was 17%-38%, suggesting that their views fall further in line with Clinton voters.
- A sizable portion of Americans (24%) remained uncertain as to who the immigration raids were targeting.

Central Findings on Polarization and Trump's Foreign and Domestic Policy During The First 100 Days

Take Away #2: Despite the continued support among Trump voters, Democrats show renewed signs of enthusiasm and unity in their opposition to President Trump, and our findings suggest that independents are against President Trump's core policy initiatives. A lack of support for his policies among this crucial political bloc could pose a major obstacle to the success of Trump's key initiatives.

Support for the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall Restricted to Trump's Most Ardent Supporters

- Only 38% of respondents supported building the border wall, compared to 48% of respondents who opposed the wall.
- Among Republicans, support was relatively high, at 73%, yet when we look only at those who voted for Trump, we find 83% support. This demonstrates that a small but significant portion of Republicans who didn't support Trump in the election are reluctant to support the wall. It is only among those who voted for Trump that we find the highest degree of support for the border wall.
- The issue is polarized, with Democrats uniformly opposed to the wall by a margin of 83%-7%.
- The issue of the border wall is a tenuous one for Trump, our data suggests, as independent voters oppose the wall by a margin of 45%-31%. However, almost a quarter of independents (23%) remain undecided on the wall, meaning Donald Trump may still be able to persuade enough independents on this issue.

Major Uncertainty as to Whether the Wall Will Be Built

- While Republicans and Trump voters believe in the need for a border wall, relatively few are certain it will be built. Only 55% of Republicans believe it will be built, compared to 16% of Democrats and 25% of independents.
- Overall, Americans are evenly split on whether they believe the wall will be built, with 33% saying it will happen, 36% saying it won't, and 31% saying they are not sure.

Americans are Polarized on What to Do with Undocumented Immigrants, but Majority Believe They Should Be Allowed to Stay

- When asked what should be done about undocumented immigrants already in the United States, 51% said they should be allowed to stay and eventually apply for citizenship. Thirty-seven percent supported requiring those individuals to leave the United States. A relatively small percent (10%) said they should be allowed to stay but not be allowed to apply for citizenship.
- Among Republicans, however, 61% favored requiring undocumented immigrants to leave the United States, whereas 76% of Democrats favored allowing them to stay and eventually apply for citizenship.
- Independents, again, leaned slightly in favor of the position of Democrats, with 44% saying they should be allowed to stay and eventually apply for citizenship, while 40% favored requiring undocumented immigrants to leave the U.S.

Despite Polarization on DACA, Majority Support Keeping the Program

- While Republicans, by a 65%-33% margin, disapprove of the DACA policy, which allows children of undocumented immigrants to stay in the country, a majority of Americans (62%) approve of the program.
- Support for DACA comes almost entirely from Democrats, who overwhelmingly support it at 88%, and independents, with whom this policy has 59% approval.

Broad Support Exists for Single-Payer Healthcare System

- By a margin of 55%-37%, Americans support the creation of a single-payer system to provide healthcare in the United States.
- The high level of support for a single-payer system comes largely from Democrats (81%-12% margin of support), but a significant number of Republicans also support it (27%). In addition, independents side with the more liberal position by a margin of 51%-28%, almost perfectly reflecting the overall electorate.

Republicans Remain Far More Open to Russia than Other Groups

- While Americans generally view Russia as a foe, important partisan differences exist in how the country is perceived.
- Seventy-one percent of Democrats viewed Russia as a foe, whereas only 49% of Republicans said the same.
- While very few Republicans and Democrats named Russia as an ally (9% vs. 6%), Republicans were far more likely to say Russia was neither ally nor foe, at 41%, compared to Democrats at 22%.

Central Findings on Race, Ethnicity, and the Political Perceptions

Take Away #3: Americans are, predictably, polarized as to whether Trump will deliver good jobs to minority groups, with Trump voters claiming he will deliver for all groups and Democrats believing the exact opposite. Despite this polarization, our poll reveals important differences in who exactly Americans expect Trump will help the most. Additionally, our polling numbers demonstrate that Trump has a long way to go before minorities themselves believe he will do right by them.

Trump Voters Believe He Will Help Latino Job Prospects, but Others Disagree, Including Latinos

- Forty-eight percent of Trump voters said that they believe his policies would help Latino job prospects, while only 4% said they would hurt them (another 47% believe he would neither help nor hurt them). This contrasts strongly with the 47% of Clinton voters who

said that his policies would hurt Latino job prospects against 8% who said they would help.

- Forty-two percent of Latinos said they did not expect Donald Trump's policies to help or hurt their job prospects. Overall, however, Latinos were negative on their perception of Trump. Thirty-three percent said he would make things worse, while only 24% said he would make them better.

Trump Voters Also Believe he will Have a Positive Impact on the Job Prospects for African Americans, though African Americans are Less Optimistic

- Sixty-one percent of Trump voters said Trump's policies would help African American job prospects, while only 1% said he would hurt them. Clinton voters, however, said by a margin of 40%-11% that his policies would hurt job prospects for African Americans. Overall, however, the opinion of 46% of respondents was that Trump's policies would neither help nor hurt African American job prospects.
- African Americans were less bullish than Trump voters about their job prospects under a Trump presidency. Only 18% of African Americans believed Trump would help, while 42% said his policies would hurt their job prospects.

Trump Voters Believe Trump Will Help African Americans More than Latinos

- While Trump voters overall believe his policies would create jobs for all minority groups, important differences exist across the racial and ethnic categories.
- Only 48% of Trump voters said Trump's policies would benefit the job prospects of Latinos, while 60% believed he would help African Americans. This suggests that some Trump voters believe he will target some minority groups at over others.

Central Findings on News Consumption and Media Trust

Take Away #4: Americans are getting their news from a wider variety of places than ever before. We find that Americans who get their news from Fox News and social media are far less likely to trust the news media than those who get their news from other cable news sources, public television, or newspapers.

- Sixty-two percent of Americans whose primary source for political information is newspapers said they have at least some confidence in the news media. That figure was 70% for individuals who indicated that public broadcasting was their primary source, and 69% for CNN. The highest level of confidence was among those who listed MSNBC as their primary source for political information, at 82%.
- Only 17% of those who selected Fox News as their primary source for political information had at least some confidence in the news media, the lowest of any category. Thirty-two percent of individuals who rely on the internet or social media as their primary source for news have at least some trust in the news media.

Central Findings on the Health of American Democracy

Take Away #5: While Americans are more divided than ever along partisan lines and policy preferences, they are in agreement about what makes American democracy work. We find that Americans across the partisan spectrum point to checks and balances as the single-most important feature of American democracy. This is somewhat surprising for Republicans, as one might expect them to favor greater power for the executive over the other branches of government so that Trump could accomplish his policy goals more easily.

- When offered a list that included trust, transparency, accountability, integrity, and moderation, more Americans chose “effective checks and balances” as the key feature for ensuring the health of American democracy. Thirty percent of our sample chose effective checks and balances, while integrity was second most popular choice at 22%.
- Impressively, effective checks and balances was the most popular choice among both Democrats (34%) and Republicans (27%), making this one of the few areas in our poll where we found agreement across partisan lines.
- Moderation was the least-selected option, coming in at 4% among both Democrats and Republicans. This is a surprising finding, given the degree to which many in the country [bemoan](#) the extremism and polarization that plague our politics.
- Partisan lines reappear when we ask which institutions are doing the best job with regard to particular features of democracy. For example, with respect to accountability, 50% of Republicans said the White House was doing a good job living up to that ideal whereas only 5% of Democrats said the same.