

PROMISES MADE MUST BE PROMISES KEPT

**AFRICAN
AMERICAN
VOTER
PRIORITIES
2021**





**NOBODY BELIEVES
IN THE PROMISE OF
THIS COUNTRY MORE
THAN BLACK PEOPLE,
AND NOBODY HAS LESS
REASON TO BELIEVE IT
THAN WE DO.**

– Tressie McMillan Cottom

POLITICAL ACTORS HAVE COME, AND POLITICAL ACTORS HAVE GONE,

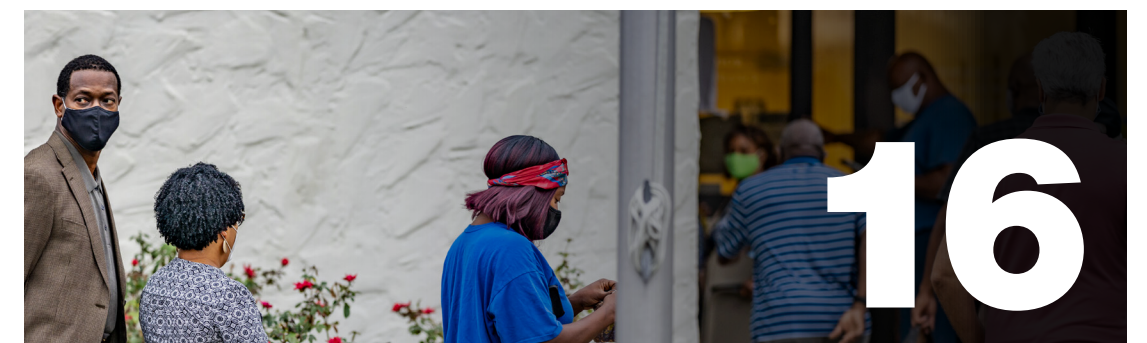
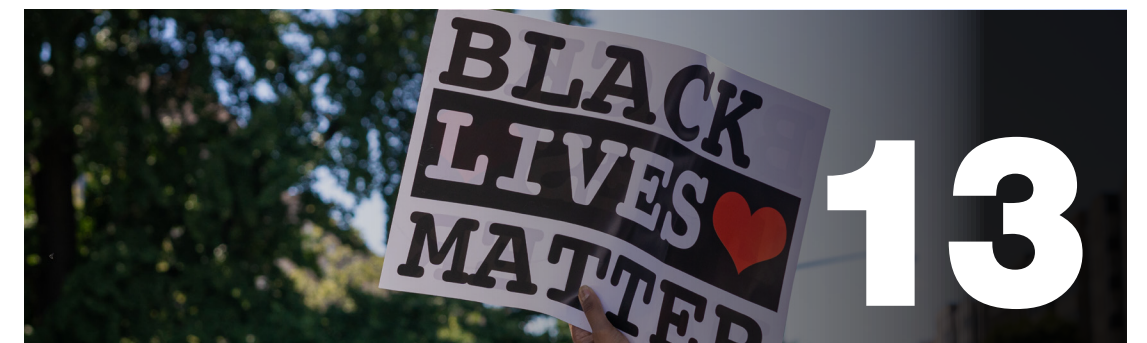
yet very little has changed for too many Black souls here in the land of the free and the home of the brave. If 2020 did nothing else, it outlined in stark relief the racial disparities Black people have been quietly enduring for decades. As Doc Rivers, coach of the Philadelphia 76ers, put so simply last year, “It’s amazing to me... we keep loving this country and this country does not love us back.”

This lack of love has resulted in a growing and persistent sentiment among the Black electorate that not only has implications for America writ large, but also for Democrats and the Democratic Party. Polling has shown that Black America’s ties to the party of FDR and LBJ have been weakening for at least the last 20-30 years. Barack Obama’s election in large part concealed the growing disillusionment Black voters have been feeling toward politics and toward pursuing a legislative strategy to repair the ills that have been haunting Black communities for generations. Underperforming public schools, disproportionate poverty, lack of opportunity, and disparate medical outcomes vie for places at the top of that list.

It is our intent with this research to give voice to those Black Americans who have been ignored and taken for granted for so long. Each generation of Black people in America has borne the responsibility of fighting for their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The burden has always been on African Americans to keep faith in a nation that has expressed little faith in them. Our vantage point as Black political pollsters has compelled us to attempt to quantify what we have been hearing from friends and family, as well as from Black voters in small focus group sessions held across the country, for many years.

But understanding the attitudes of Black voters is just the first step. Ultimately, America – and the Democratic Party – are going to have to deliver for the Black community in a way that finally says, “We hear you. We love you back. And Black Lives do Matter.”

IN THIS YEAR’S REPORT



STILL WE RISE



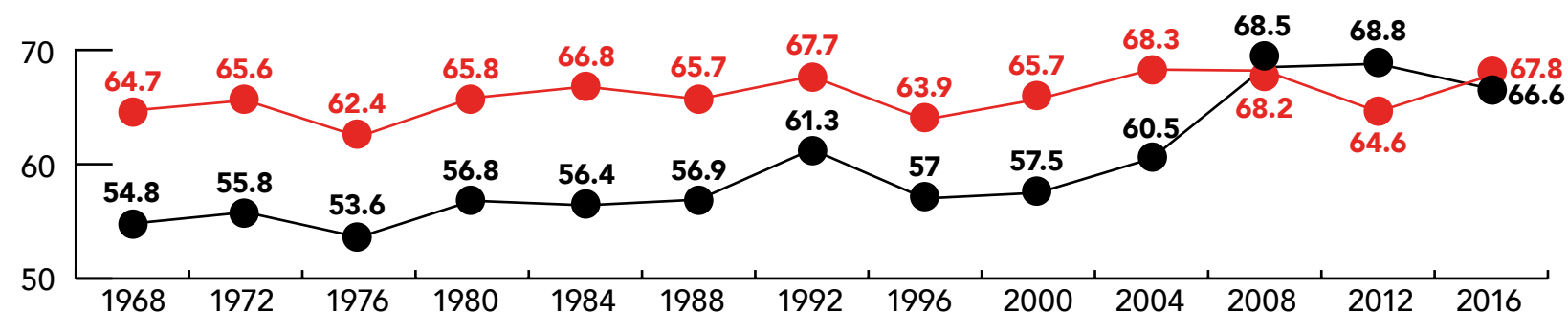
AGAINST ALL ODDS, Black political participation has grown since the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA). Despite attempts at disenfranchisement, Black engagement is at proportional parity with white voters.

Given that Black voter participation is growing, including many first-time and new 2020 voters, we need to understand what motivates them so we can understand how to mobilize them. For these reasons, this report looks at higher versus lower propensity voters ahead of 2022.

“Higher propensity” voters are more likely to show up on Election Day based on turnout history and reported engagement in midterm elections. Their “lower propensity” counterparts are less likely to do this.

Black political participation has grown since the 1965 Voting Rights Act

■ % White ■ % Black



Source: [General Social Survey](#), NORC at the University of Chicago

Electorate by turnout propensity*

Higher Propensity Voters

Lower Propensity Voters

66

34

Seniors 65+ (83% are higher propensity)

College educated (80%)

• College-educated men (84%)

Income \$100K+ (79%)

Strong Democrats (79%)

Ages 45-64 (76%)

Attends religious service frequently (75%)

Income \$50-100K (73%)

Independents (62% are lower propensity)

Younger voters 18-29 (56%)

Weak Democrats (49%)

Rarely/Never attends religious service (44%)

Moderates (40%)

Ages 30-44 (39%)

Non-college educated (39%)

• High-school graduates (51%)

• Non-college men (40%)

Income less than \$50K (38%)

*Based on self-report in a N=800 survey

THE BIDEN FACTOR

IN AN ERA when trust in institutions and faith in our political system is at an all-time low, President Biden is still becoming beloved in the Black community.

This is all the more remarkable given that Black people are rightfully dubious of politicians that perennially pander for their vote, and then back away from lofty campaign promises once in office. "Once burned, twice shy" as the saying goes... and it would be an understatement to say the Black community has been burned before.

Enter Joe Biden, former vice president to President Barack Obama. Whether through faithful service to or mere association with the first Black president, Biden has enjoyed the consistent confidence of Black voters. It is in large part for that reason that, after a brush with political death in the Democratic primary, Biden now sits in the White House.

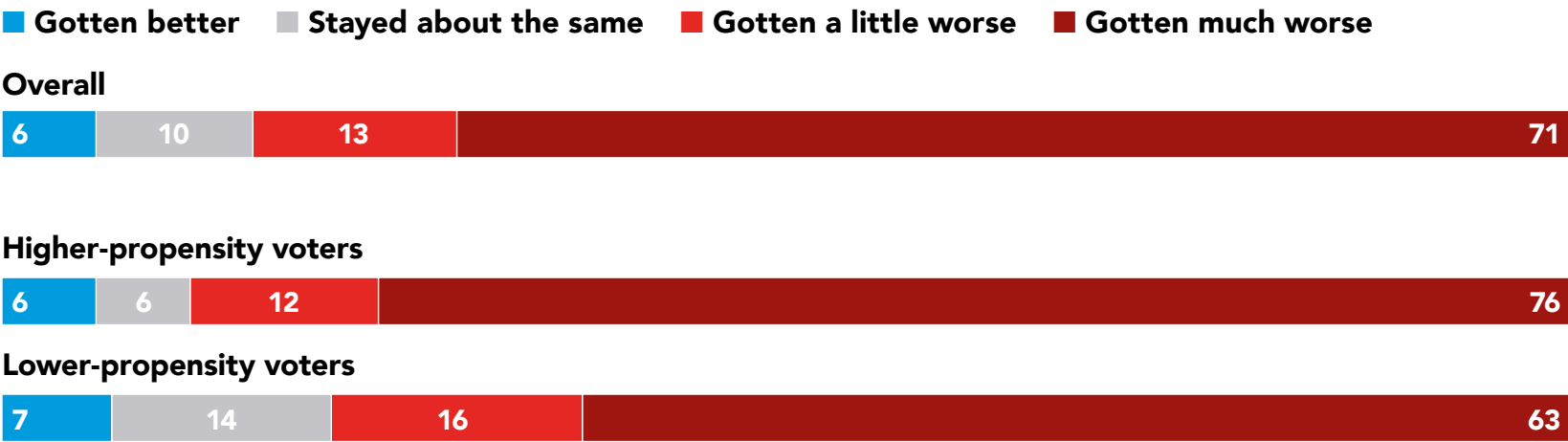
And so Black voters delivered Biden the presidency – and arguably, delivered the Democratic Party full control of Washington. In return, the administration looks to be working to ensure that rhetoric more closely resembles results.



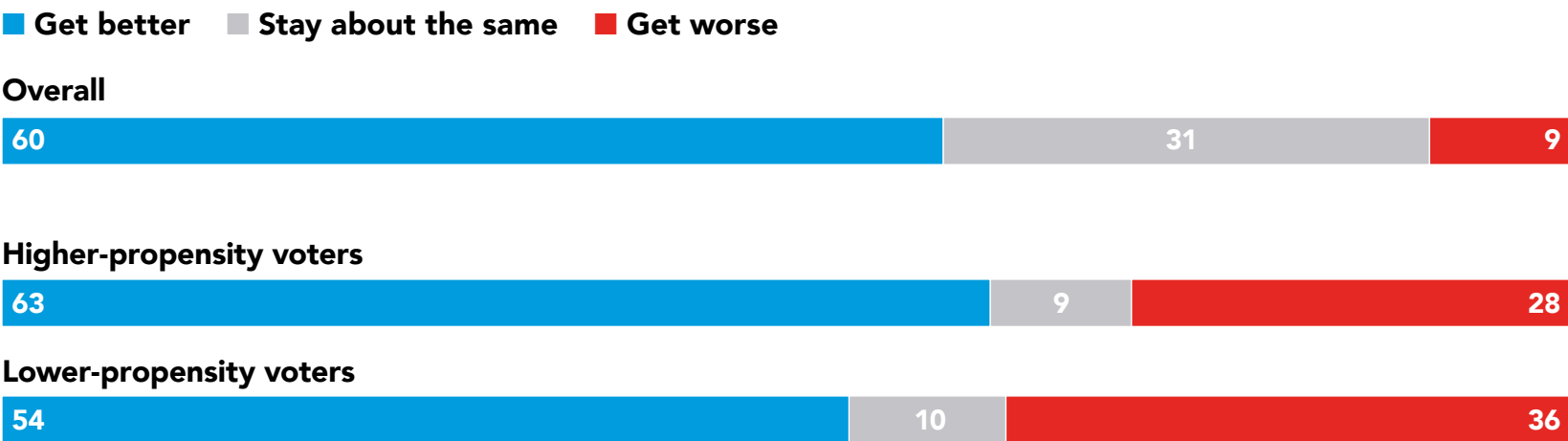
A CHANGE IS GONNA COME.

Race relations deteriorated under Trump. Black voters have high expectations Biden will improve them.

Since 2016 when Donald Trump was elected president, have race relations in America:



Over the next four years of the Biden presidency, do you think that race relations in America will:



HOLDING UP HIS END OF THE BARGAIN.

Even before his administration reached its 100-day mile marker, most Black voters were satisfied that Biden was making a real effort to deliver for the Black community.

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

Joe Biden is making a genuine effort to fulfill his campaign promises to Black people.

Joe Biden is only making a token effort to fulfill his campaign promises to Black people

Joe Biden is not trying to fulfill his campaign promises to Black people

Overall



18-29



30-44



45-64



65+



Higher-propensity voters

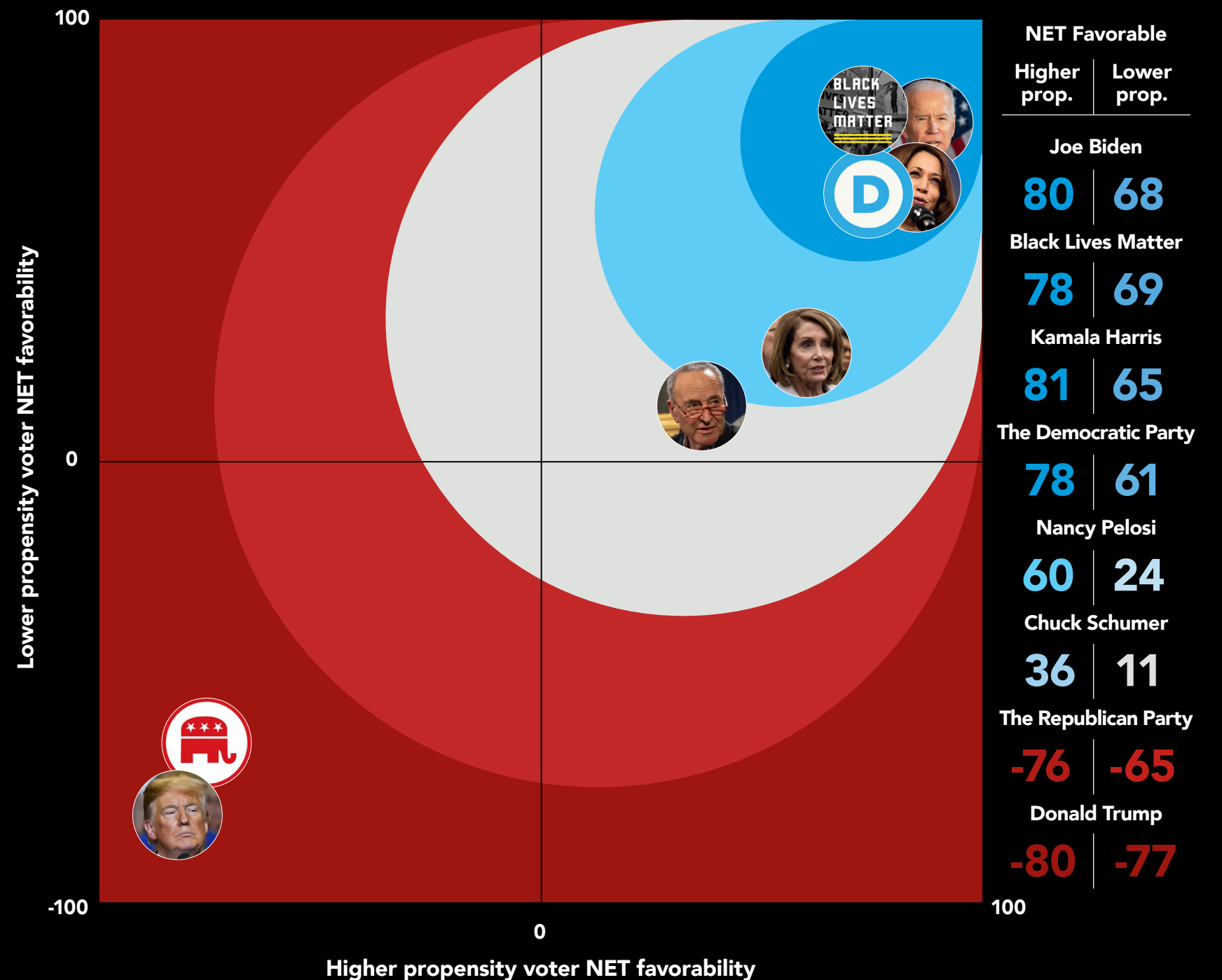


Lower-propensity voters



BUT BIDEN'S NOT GOING TO BE ON THE BALLOT. OR WILL HE?

Democratic candidates for the House and Senate will be running without President Biden's ballot coattails. But even though he's not up for election, campaigns should closely link themselves to the Biden-Harris administration, which is firmly within the circle of trust.





**BLACK PEOPLE, IN
GENERAL, HAVEN'T BEEN
DEMOCRATS BY NATURE,
BUT BY NECESSITY. THEY
HAVEN'T BEEN AS SOCIALLY
PROGRESSIVE AS THE REST
OF THE PARTY, BUT THEY
ABSOLUTELY ABHOR THE
REPUBLICAN ABIDANCE
OF RACISM.**

– Charles Blow, in his latest book *The Devil You Know*

2022: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

SO HOW does the Democratic coalition retain or expand its majorities, when incumbent-party midterm losses are almost as predictable as death and taxes?

There have only been two midterm elections when the president's party gained seats: one year after FDR's offered the country a New Deal – 1934, and in the immediate wake of 9/11 – 2002.

With the expectation that there is no similarly horrific cataclysm on the American horizon, the former is more instructive. The only viable path to midterm success is to produce transformation and deliver the country long-overdue reckonings. Reckonings with our past. Reckonings with the way we envision the future.

Reckonings are challenging. But they are also moments of opportunity.



CHALLENGE:

Threats to (Black) life, (Black) liberty, and the pursuit of (Black) happiness.

How worried are you, if at all, about each of the following?

Not worried Somewhat worried Very worried

The impact of police brutality on African Americans



The mass incarceration of African Americans for low-level, non-violent offenses



The income disparity between African Americans and whites in America



Rising crime rates in predominantly African American neighborhoods



The wealth disparity between African Americans and whites in America



The growing wealth gap between the top income earners and the working class



Being able to earn a living wage and provide for yourself and your family



Overall	NET Worried	
	Higher prop.	Lower prop.
81	86	72
78	82	72
74	74	72
78	78	78
67	72	58
68	72	58
45	46	44

90%

Worried about at least 3 threats to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness



OPPORTUNITY:

The Party and the Black community’s priorities are converging.

The Democratic Party is moving closer to the views of Black voters.

Thinking about the *Democratic Party* as a whole, would you say that it is moving closer to your views?

Thinking about the *Republican Party* as a whole, would you say that it is moving closer to your views?



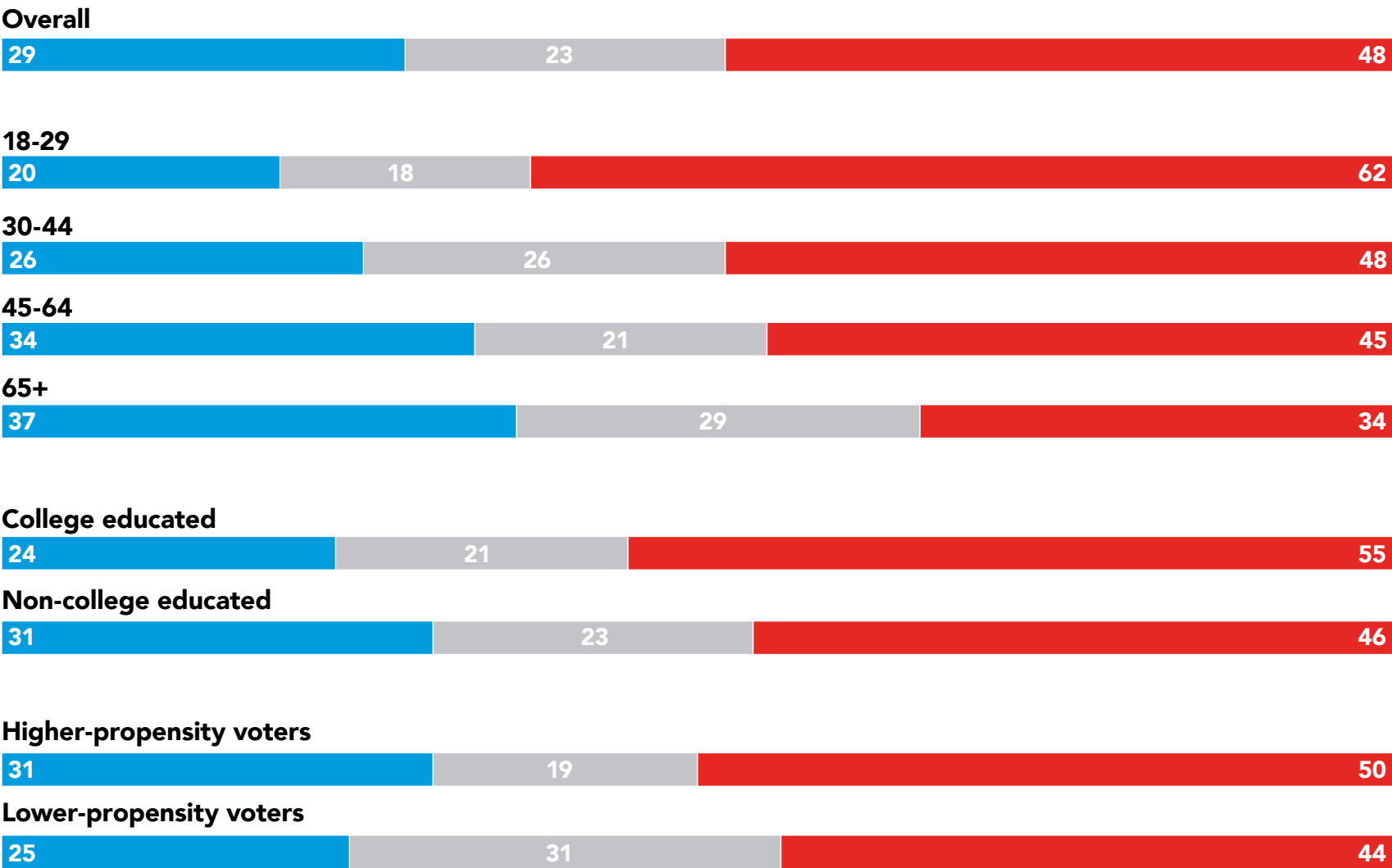
CHALLENGE:

A perceived history of being long on talk, short on action.

Even as the Democratic Party is ideologically moving toward Black voters, it has a poor track record of delivering material gains. This is an unforced error that must be addressed if the electorate is to show up in 2022 and beyond.

Agree or disagree: Democratic Party takes Black votes for granted and does not do enough to help the Black community.

Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree



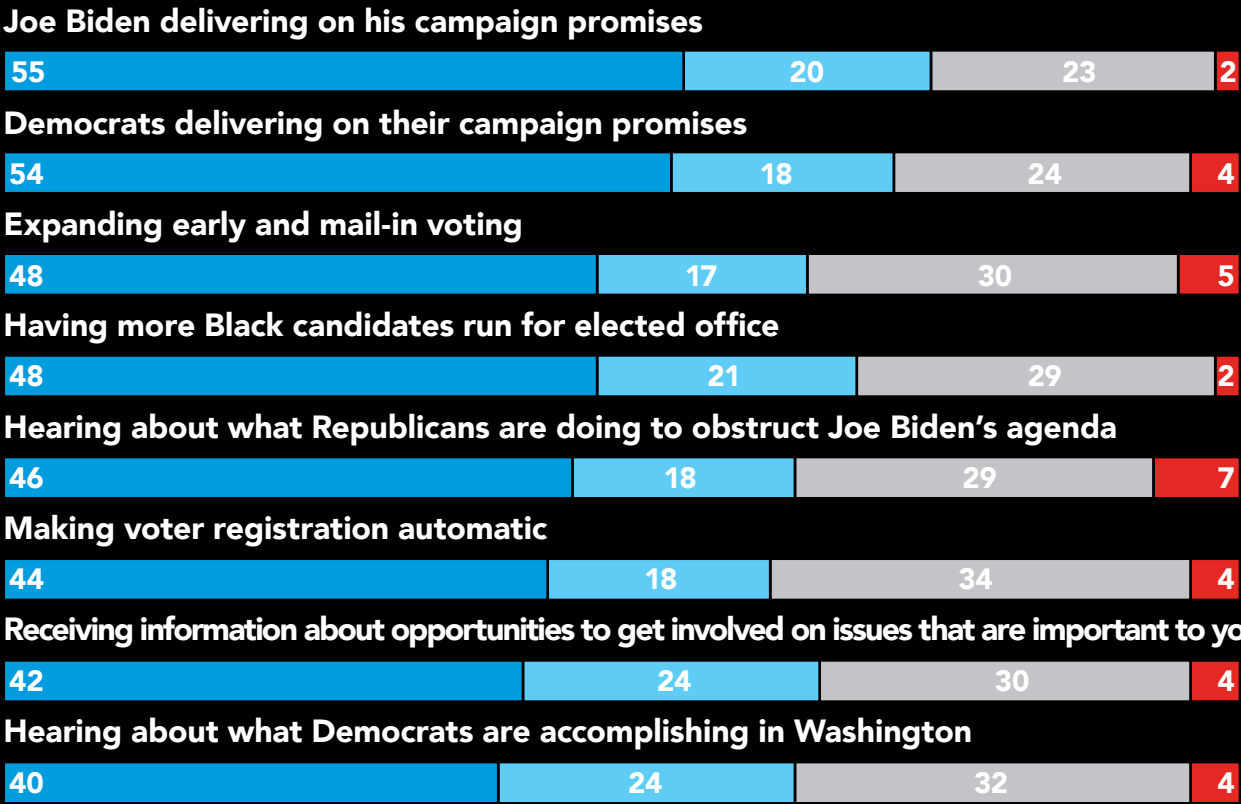
OPPORTUNITY:

Lock in achievements now to boost turnout later.

If President Biden and the Democratic Party deliver on their campaign promises, Black voters will mobilize in 2022.

Please indicate whether each of the following would make you more or less likely to vote in the national elections in 2022.

Much more likely Somewhat more likely No impact/not sure Less likely



THE PLATFORM

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM holds that elections are about “the economy, stupid” and that messaging should lean into “jobs, jobs, jobs.”

That’s unquestionably important, but Black voters want this frame combined with an acknowledgment that deep injustices won’t be tolerated any longer. They say they prefer a candidate who talks about issues like police brutality and the significance of the guilty verdict in the George Floyd murder trial, more than one who has a strict focus on economic matters. At the same time, they are closely split on whether they prefer a party platform that is traditionally labor-centric or more ultra-progressive. And even this is a broad generalization – even a conservative Trump-ist platform garners support in some quarters.

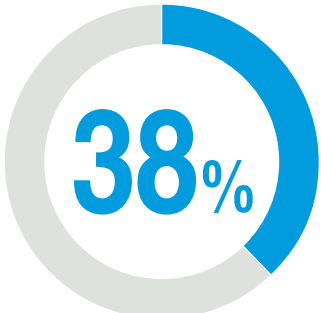
Put differently, ideological labels are less important and a focus on everyday Americans, all everyday Americans, is the mobilizing recipe. That focus must signal a commitment to Black concerns, and have eliminating the systemic roadblocks that have been repeatedly erected in the paths of African Americans as one of its pillars.



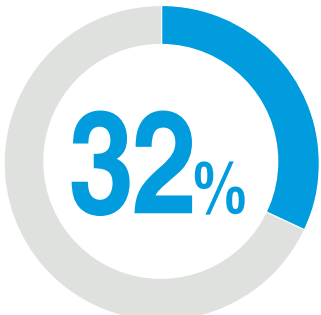
CANDIDATES WILL HAVE TO SAY THAT BLACK LIVES MATTER.

There’s no longer an option – Democratic hopefuls must address the systemic injustice that Black people have shouldered for generations.

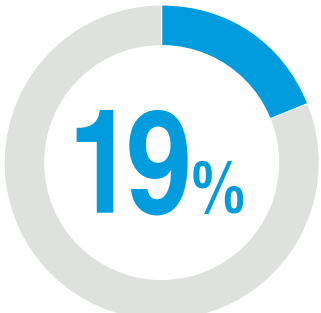
Which ONE factor usually has the largest impact on why you decide to vote for one candidate over another?



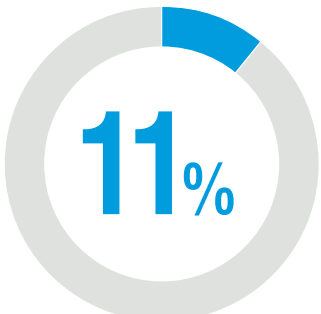
The candidate talks about **social issues** like **mass incarceration, police brutality, and systemic racism** in a way that I agree with



The candidate talks about **economic issues** like **jobs, taxes, and the cost of living** in a way that I agree with



The candidate talks about **issues of crime and violence** like **mass shootings, gun violence, terrorism and domestic violence** in a way that I agree with

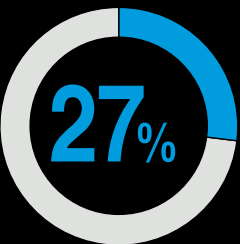


The candidate talks about **issues of morality** like **ethics, values and religion** in a way that I agree with

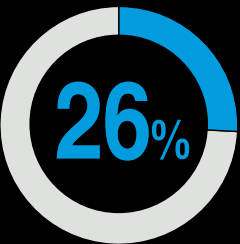
NEW DEAL MEETS GREEN NEW DEAL.

The traditional Democratic political program of labor and economic populism, with a sprinkling of women’s and civil rights, must meet its 21st century counterpart.

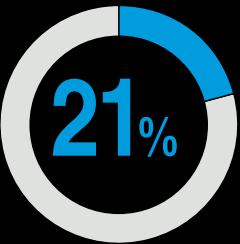
Which ONE political party and ideology would you be MOST likely to support if they were part of our American political system?



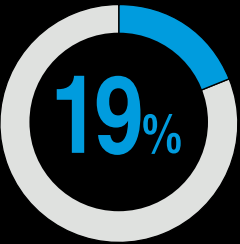
A party focused on putting the middle class first, passing universal health insurance, strengthening labor unions, breaking up big corporations, and raising taxes on the wealthy to support programs for those less well off



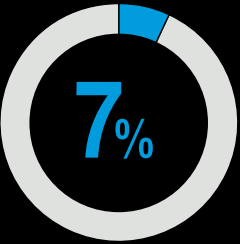
A party focused on passing a Green New Deal to build a carbon-free economy with jobs for all, a federally guaranteed subsidy of \$1000 per month for every adult, ending systemic inequality, and promoting social and economic justice



A party focused on advancing social progress including civil rights, women’s rights – including the right to choose – and LGBTQ rights, cutting the deficit, and working with the international community through free trade and constructive diplomacy



A party focused on defending the American system of free enterprise, promoting traditional family values, protecting religious liberty, and raising taxes on big corporations and the wealthy in order to strengthen the social safety net



A party focused on stopping illegal immigration, putting America first, fighting identity politics and standing up to political correctness

Higher propensity voters	Lower propensity voters
27	26
23	31
24	17
18	20
8	6



**GIVE US THE BALLOT AND
WE WILL BY THE POWER OF
OUR VOTE WRITE THE LAWS
ON...THE STATUTE BOOKS
OF THE SOUTHERN STATES
AND BRING TO AN END THE
DASTARDLY ACTS OF THE
HOODED PERPETRATORS
OF VIOLENCE. GIVE US THE
BALLOT AND WE WILL FILL
OUR LEGISLATIVE HALLS
WITH MEN OF GOODWILL.**

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., March on Washington, August 1963

SOULS TO THE POLLS

REPUBLICAN disenfranchisement efforts are being noticed, and they are primed to backfire.

The modern incarnation of poll taxes creates an ominous sense that past generations' civil rights victories – that they fought and died for – are being rolled back before Black voters' very eyes. This is powerfully motivating. It places current election fights into a broader historical context, and when modern Black voters mobilize, they are participating in the same tradition established by past generations of freedom fighters. Republicans are unwittingly delivering wildly effective mobilization messaging for Democrats.

But this is a new era, and the battle is being fought on new fronts: disinformation online, fragmented news ecosystems, and rock-bottom trust in political messengers. The imperative to communicate earnestly and directly has never been greater.



WE FALL DOWN. BUT WE GET UP.

The Black community fought and won the franchise. There are unwavering efforts underway to steal it back. But supporters of voter suppression are not the only ones who are determined.

Proposed changes to election laws

Please indicate how much you have seen, read, or heard about each proposed change.

■ A lot/some ■ Not much/none

Please indicate whether each of the following changes would make you more or less determined to vote in the national elections in 2022.

■ More determined ■ No impact/not sure ■ Less determined

Requiring a photo ID at polls in order to cast a ballot

Overall



Higher-propensity voters



Lower-propensity voters



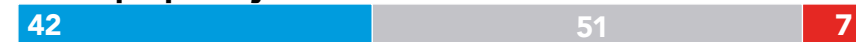
Overall



Higher-propensity voters



Lower-propensity voters



Restricting who can assist voters in collecting and delivering mail ballots

Overall



Higher-propensity voters



Lower-propensity voters



Overall



Higher-propensity voters



Lower-propensity voters



Cutting back on opportunities to register to vote on Election Day

Overall



Higher-propensity voters



Lower-propensity voters



Overall



Higher-propensity voters



Lower-propensity voters



THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED...

...Or at least pass through your newsfeed. But voters increasingly wonder if it's credible, opening the door to demobilization efforts.

Vote propensity targets by media consumption

Higher Propensity Voters

66%

More likely to turn out on Election Day based on turnout history and reported engagement in midterm elections

Among those who name ___ as a main source of news

Politico (87% are higher propensity voters)

Ebony (83%)

MSNBC (79%)

CNN (73%)

Wall Street Journal (72%)

Black Enterprise (72%)

BET (71%)

Local newspaper (71%)

Local TV (70%)

New York Times (70%)

Uses Twitter frequently (70%)

Lower Propensity Voters

34%

Less likely to turn out on Election Day based on turnout history and reported engagement in midterm elections

Among those who name ___ as a main source of news

Social media where news is shared (45% are lower propensity voters)

Trusts no media personalities to provide information on politics (42%)

FOX News (41%)

Uses YouTube frequently (35%)



MOBILIZATION PRINCIPLES

1. CREDIBILITY BY ASSOCIATION.

Building trust is a marathon, not a sprint. If you aren't trusted by Black voters, find someone who is and partner with them.

2. BE REAL.

Remain truthful and lead with emotion. Inspiring rhetoric should rest upon facts, rather than leaning on platitudes.

3. TALK IS CHEAP. DELIVER.

Voters will tune out if you are long on talk and short on action. Elevate your track record to demonstrate longstanding commitment to the Black community.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Global Strategy Group's Survey of African American Voters, now in its second year, is intended to take the temperature of Black America on political issues, social attitudes and voting behavior. Rarely does the public have access to polls conducted singularly among Black Americans, and as a firm GSG is committed to equity not only in hiring, staffing and as an overall guiding principle, but also as it relates to our understanding of communities of color. We are confident you will find this snapshot of Black America as compelling as we do.

GSG conducted a public opinion survey among 804 African American voters between March 24th and April 1st, 2021. The survey was conducted online, recruiting respondents from a leading opt-in panel vendor. Special care was taken by GSG to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of the African American registered voter population on a series of demographic variables including age, gender, region, educational attainment, and urbanity. This study may be downloaded at globalstrategygroup.com.

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ABOUT GSG

Global Strategy Group is the go-to public affairs, communications, and research partner for companies, causes, and campaigns. We work with our clients to build their reputations, tackle big challenges, and win.

Specifically, we:



Understand & Reach
audiences



Advance
legislative, regulatory,
and political goals



Change minds
and influence public opinion



Build & Protect
reputations



Champion
issues and leaders

What sets us apart?

We are data-driven. We have decades of experience deriving insights from research, and interpreting that data to make its implications clear to our clients. We leverage this expertise into innovations across the data, analytics, and digital spaces, always finding better ways to measure, target and persuade diverse audiences.

We are politically-attuned. We operate at the intersection of business and politics. Being in both of these increasingly connected worlds gives us an edge.

We are results-oriented. Going for the win is in our DNA. Driven by our experience on political campaigns and crisis assignments, we measure our success through our outcomes.