

## Introduction

The electorate is traditionally divided between strong and weak supporters of both major party nominees and so-called “swing voters.” However, as we approach the 2024 election, there are other important voters to consider that most campaigns and organizations do not target or understand. These voters can determine elections, and while they have certainly been recognized as influential, they have not been effectively modeled or identified in a meaningful way that leads to programmatic testing and actions. This effort is designed to do both.

Termed as “Double Negatives” or, more technically, “Dual Rejectors,” these voters strongly dislike both President Biden and Donald Trump, preferring the option of “None of the Above.” A large [national battleground survey](#) identified people who repudiate both parties’ likely nominees as a third of the potential electorate. Moreover, one in ten said they would not vote for either. Significantly, when “pushed” into choosing between both major candidates, both of these groups break for Trump.

These voters need to be identified, modeled and targeted by a longer information campaign that is far from the traditional political messaging and message delivery technologies. This research must be a key strategic goal of the 2024 elections. While these voters exist in every election, they will have outsized influence in 2024, especially considering their willingness to consider a third-party candidate.

This proposal is to fund the research and develop a program to reach this critical group of voters.

## Model Development

We will build a “Negative Partisanship/None of the Above” microtargeting model.

Target Smart will conduct a large-scale, mixed-mode survey to train this model that is specific to battleground states (AZ, FL, GA, MI, MT, NC, NV, NH, PA, NC, OH, TX, WI), collecting ~4,000–5,000 voter file matched responses. The responses will be used to train a model that will predict the likelihood of a voter to be a “None of the Above” or “Negative Partisan” voter. The Target Smart team will validate the model, make recommendations for use and work with the [Innovating for the Public Good](#) team to suggest targeted universes scaled to the budget of an informational (as opposed to persuasive) direct mail newspaper program.

That model will be applied to Target Smart's national voter file and made available to approved Target Smart data customers for both online (digital media buying) and offline (field, mail, polling) use, thereby benefiting the whole community.

## Survey

A survey will be conducted in battleground states, focusing exclusively on Double Negatives/None of the Above/Mutual Dislikers. Without the benefit of the model, this would be a very expensive proposition. However, with it as a tool in the arsenal, it will be far more feasible and affordable to get done. This survey would establish a roadmap for credibly connecting with this group of highly cynical voters. This survey will be used to separate those among this cohort who would default to Trump, move to President Biden or opt for a third-party candidate.

This would be a 15–18-minute poll with a sample size of  $n=2000$ , conducted across the battleground.

## Ongoing Modeling

The nature and identification of Double Negative voters will change during the course of the campaign as the contours of the race change and the dynamics become increasingly state-specific. Beginning in the Summer of 2024, state-based models should be built in the most competitive states, and the overall battleground model should be rebuilt and revalidated. Three states will be chosen in addition to the battleground states. The sample sizes will be 2,000 each at the state level and 4,000 nationally. The importance of keeping the model fresh and state-specific as the fall approaches cannot be overstated.

## Focus Groups

The research should include online focus groups among voters in battleground states to better understand the Double Negative voters and design programs aimed at impacting their political behaviors. Qualitative research can proceed in a number of directions. The groups could be segmented by demographics such as Black negative partisans, Hispanic negative partisans, young negative partisans, etc.

The groups could be segmented by other modeled variables, such as high-modeled partisans, low-modeled partisans, and low- to mid-propensity voters layered on top of the new “None of the Above” score. Zoom groups will be used since they allow recruitment across markets, are more convenient for participants than in-person groups and are more affordable. There will be 6-8 participants in each group, and sessions will last 90–120 minutes.

These groups would be important to inform the survey research after the model is built. Alternatively, these groups could be conducted in advance of the modeling in the summer and early fall to inform the updating of the models as well as the construction of the state-based surveys.

## Program to Reach Targets

Newspaper programs that feature hyper-local news, and some political/electoral information aimed at target audiences and delivered by mail, have shown promise in reaching voters and informing them of news in their area as well as political information about various candidates and races. These types of programs have been tried by a number of different organizations that create newspapers for various audiences, and the Right, corporate America and progressive organizations are using this technique more frequently. The information is more credible when seemingly imparted by disinterested entities that appear credible as sources. It is increasingly important that both types of information be imparted given the collapse of local news in a growing number of media markets.

This tactic is important for several reasons. Double Negative voters reject “political” news or seemingly political news from “biased” sources. They are one of the least engaged groups on some level. Providing local news to attract skeptical audiences has proven to be successful. While there have been mixed results on the persuasive effect among other groups of voters, voters like the Double Negatives would be a better target.

Based on the results of the surveys and modeling, there would be two to three different designs. One would be for those who are open to Biden, and another for those open to Trump and/or third parties.

The design would include a layered program. One aspect would include sending newspapers to key geographies in battleground states. The other would include a layered program in which the mail universes are matched to digital audiences through Target Smart's new Media Buying Platform and then divided into treatment and control groups.

The program can be designed to achieve one of three goals:

1. **Stay Home Experiment** — This experimental universe, divided into treatment and control groups, would consist of individual targeted voters who model as both low partisans and high Double Negatives

leaning towards Trump or third party. The goal of the program is to discourage some voters from voting at the top of the ticket.

2. **Persuasion Experiment** — This Democratic-leaning experimental universe, divided into treatment and control groups, would consist of voting precincts with aggregated scores of high partisans and high Double Negatives. The goal of the program would be to drive higher levels of support for Democrats up and down the ballot. The measurement variable would be precinct-level average Democratic performance.
  - a. An additional element could be added to the persuasion experiment and include mid-partisans. This experimental universe, divided into treatment and control groups, would consist of voting precincts with aggregated scores of mid-partisan and high Double Negative voters. The goal of the program is to drive higher levels of support for Democrats up and down the ballot. The measurement variable would be precinct-level average Democratic performance.

The list of targets would be provided by Target Smart.

## The Team

The team would consist of a group of multi-disciplinary experts assembled by **Innovating for the Public Good** that would include, among others, David Broockman and Josh Kalla; Aaron Strauss; Tom Bonior, Ben Lazarus, Christopher Brill and the team at Target Smart; Page Gardner; a survey research consultant; a behavioral scientist; and additional experts in communications and message development.

## Timeline

Ideally, the program would begin in late April/early May, once the Presidential nominees have been decided, as well as the candidates in the majority of Senate/Congressional/State legislative race states.

## Conclusion

The importance of this program cannot be overstated. First, it involves a key voting block that has never been adequately addressed and will most likely be determinative in 2024. Second, it develops resources for the entire community through the development of a model. Third, it can include races up and down the ballot, depending on the state and race structures. It will be high-powered enough to detect statistically significant effect sizes.

As 2024 begins, Double Negative voters are poised to exert a decisive impact on a pivotal presidential election. We need to understand who they are, what they care about, and how to inform, persuade and motivate them. This program is designed to meet this urgent need.