

To: Page Gardner, PSG Consulting
From: Hart Research
Re: Demographic and Attitudinal Profile of Double-Negative Voters
Date: July 11, 2024

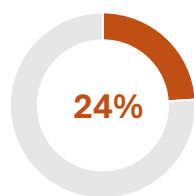
At a time of widespread polarization and deep political divides, cynicism, and frustration with both presidential candidates unites voters of diverse ideological stripes. Heading into November, the growing presence of voters who feel unfavorably toward both President Biden and Donald Trump hangs over the presidential contest and trickles down to congressional, state, and local races. To be sure, the emergence of a “double-negative” class within the electorate is both widely acknowledged and documented. Yet, despite the centrality of the phenomenon of Double-Negatives as a historic moment in American history, the profile and attitudes of “Double-Negative voters” are not well understood.

To address this gap, Hart Research conducted a survey on behalf on PSG Consulting of 1,154 “Double-Negative” voters, including 882 hardcore Double-Negatives” between June 7 and 18, 2024. This memo sketches the demographic and attitudinal profile of these elusive voters.

PROFILE OF DOUBLE-NEGATIVE VOTERS

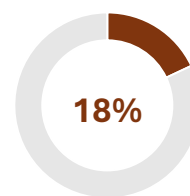
Far from being an obscure minority, Double-Negative voters comprise a substantial portion of the overall electorate: one in four voters is a double-negative voter, and close to one in five voters is a hardcore double-negative voter.

For the purposes of this survey, we define a “**Double-Negative**” voter as someone who holds unfavorable opinions of both Joe Biden and Donald Trump OR supports a third-party candidate against them in the multi-candidate trial heat. A “**Hardcore Double-Negative**” voter is equally unfavorable to Biden and Trump (very unfavorable to both or somewhat unfavorable to both) OR supports a third-party candidate against them in the multi-candidate trial heat.



Double Negatives

Unfavorable opinions of both Joe Biden and Donald Trump OR supports a third-party candidate against them in the multi-candidate trial heat.



Hardcore Double Negatives

Equally unfavorable opinions of Joe Biden and Donald Trump (very unfavorable to both or somewhat unfavorable to both) OR supports a third-party candidate against them in the multi-candidate trial heat.



Double-Negative voters are demographically diverse, but they largely hover in the middle of the partisan spectrum and self-report weak-to-no partisan affiliations. At the same time, Double-Negatives slightly skew toward a Democratic-leaning profile in terms of age, gender, and how they voted in 2020.

- Only 8% and 7% of Double-Negative voters are strong Democrats and strong Republicans, respectively.
- Whereas women comprise fifty-two percent of the overall electorate, they comprise fifty-six percent of Double-Negative voters.
- Forty-four percent of Double-Negative voters report voting for Biden in 2020 and only 32% voted for Trump. Among Hardcore Double-Negatives, 43% are 2020 Biden voters, about a third (30%) are 2020 Trump voters, and the rest did not vote for either of them.
- Double-Negative voters also skew younger--while 54% of the electorate is over the age of 50, only 44% of Double-Negatives and 40% of Hardcore Double-Negatives are 50 or older.

	All voters %	Double-Negative %	HC Double-Negative %
Women	52	56	58
Men	47	42	40
White	70	68	68
Black	12	11	12
Latino	12	12	13
White women college	14	15	15
White women noncollege	22	22	23
White men college	19	13	12
White men noncollege	14	17	17
Biden 2020	46	44	36
Trump 2020	42	32	33
Strong Democrats	21	8	7
Soft Democrats	25	35	36
Independents	8	18	20
Soft Republicans	25	32	31
Strong Republicans	21	7	6
18-34	23	32	34
35-49	23	24	26
50-64	25	20	20
65+	29	24	20

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CANDIDATES AND THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS

All Double-Negative voters are, by definition, much more likely than the electorate at large to say they will vote for RFK, Jr., but Hardcore Double-Negative voters have a notably higher incidence of third-party defection.

- RFK, Jr./Third party voters represent 14% of the electorate overall. This number goes up to 48% among double-negatives and to 64% among hard-core negatives.

	Biden %	Trump %	RFK, Jr./Other %
All Voters	40	41	14
Double-Negative	14	14	48
Hardcore Double-Negative	5	7	64

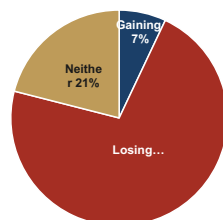
While Double-Negative voters feel unfavorably toward both Joe Biden and Donald Trump, the roots of their discomfort are categorically different. Concerns about Biden are founded on the perception that he does not have the physical and mental capacity to serve and has mishandled the economy. Concerns about Donald Trump, on the other hand, are embedded on the belief that he creates and encourages division and just can't be trusted to care about anyone but himself.

- Those who feel unfavorable towards Biden primarily focus on his age, mental capacity, and handling of the economy, while those who feel unfavorable towards Trump describe him as a criminal, a liar, immature, and just an overall bad person.
- When given a list of emotions to describe their feelings toward both candidates, 54% of Double-Negative voters say Donald Trump makes them feel disgusted, and 51% report feeling uninspired by Joe Biden. Both candidates leave these voters feeling scared, but presumably for different reasons.

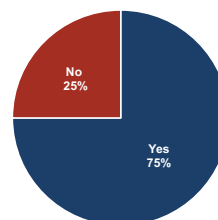
These voters are strikingly pessimistic about their own standing and outlook in American society--three in four believe they are losing power. Yet, remarkably, they have not yet become desensitized from the implications of the presidential election results--a firm majority say they care about who wins or loses in November.

- Seventy-two percent of Double-Negative voters believe they are losing power in America today, but an almost identical proportion (75%) say it matters to them personally who wins the election in November.

Are people like you are mostly gaining power or losing power in our country today?



Do you care about who wins in November or would you say it does not really matter to you?

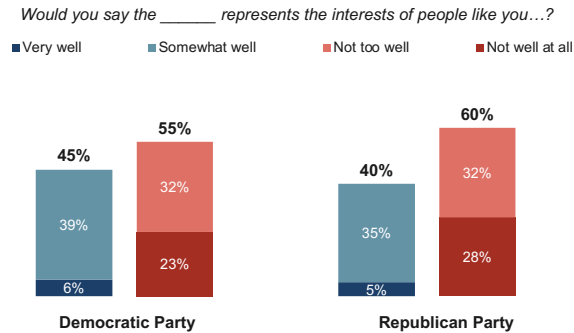


- The reasons why they remain invested in the results of the election are varied. At some level, they understand that elections have consequences. Their conundrum is that they believe there would be negative consequences as a result of either candidate winning: a weak presidency and economy under Biden and an authoritarian and dangerous presidency under Trump.

ISSUES AND MESSAGING

Double-Negative voters don't feel well represented by either party but give a slight edge to the Democrats.

- Sixty percent of voters believe the Republican party does not represent them well, which is slightly higher than the 55% who report feeling the same way about Democrats.



Lukewarm feelings about both parties notwithstanding, Double-Negative voters have clear views on which issues are areas of strength and weakness for both parties. Democrats have an advantage when it comes to the rights and benefits that government can provide, while Republicans have an edge on issues related to security and law enforcement. Interestingly, voters give Republicans only modest advantage when it comes to addressing the cost of living, which is noteworthy considering the longstanding perception that Republicans are better on the economy.

- By 71% to 29%, these voters believe Democrats have a better approach to abortion. They also believe Democrats are better at handling healthcare (68% to 32%) and Social Security (63% to 37%)
- At the same time, there is a clear preference for how Republicans approach border security (72% to 28%), crime and public safety (61% to 39%), and immigration (60% to 40%).
- Notably, Double-Negative voters are relatively split when it comes to who is better at taking on the cost of living--the most important issue priority for voters this election cycle. Fifty-five percent say Republicans are better and 45% believe Democrats have a better approach.

There is an opportunity built on existing Democratic branding strengths (healthcare, abortion) and addressing Democratic vulnerabilities on economic issues, like taxes, to elevate Biden's standing with Double-Negative voters in a way that draws them toward supporting Biden over Trump.

How important is this as a reason to vote for Joe Biden over Donald Trump?	
Healthcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 52% very important ■ 76% very/fairly imp. 	Joe Biden is committed to protecting Social Security and Medicare and to ensuring access to affordable healthcare. Donald Trump proposed cutting Social Security and Medicare every year as president, and now supports a dangerous plan to eliminate a major source of funding for them. He wants to totally repeal the Affordable Care Act with no plan to replace it.
Taxes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 44% very important ■ 73% very/fairly imp. 	Joe Biden says working Americans, not billionaires, need tax breaks. That is why Biden supports tax cuts for people earning under \$400,000 and making the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share. Donald Trump helps those at the top and passed tax cuts that mainly benefited the richest one percent. Now Trump wants even more tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires.

Democracy

- 50% very important
- 71% very/fairly imp.

Donald Trump is a threat to our democracy and a danger to our Constitution. He tried to overturn one election and Trump has said repeatedly that he wants to be a dictator on day one. Since his first days in office, Joe Biden has prioritized strengthening our democracy and protecting the sacred right to vote.*

Abortion

- 49% very important
- 70% very/fairly imp.

Joe Biden believes women must be able to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions, and he is committed to restoring the protections of Roe v. Wade. Donald Trump says there must be some form of punishment for women who have an abortion, and he brags about appointing the justices who overturned Roe v. Wade.*

Litigating Trump’s criminal charges is less persuasive with Double-Negatives as a reason to vote for Joe Biden over Donald Trump.

How important is this as a reason to vote for Joe Biden over Donald Trump?

Criminal Charges

- 38% very important
- 64% very/fairly imp.

Trump is running for president to stay out of prison. He faces criminal charges in four different states, including attempting to overturn the 2020 election, inciting a mob to attack the Capitol on January 6th, and taking classified documents from the White House after leaving office. Since his first days in office, Joe Biden has prioritized strengthening our democracy and protecting the sacred right to vote.**

President Biden certainly faces no shortage of challenges ahead of November with Double-Negative voters. That said, these voters are not unmovable, and Biden has more potential to capture the support of Double-Negative voters than does Trump. While they start off evenly split in terms of the personal impact of Biden and Congress passing a liberal Democratic agenda and President Trump and Congress passing a MAGA Republican agenda, we are able to move them post-messaging toward seeing a bigger threat from Trump and a MAGA-controlled Congress.

- In the initial ask, voters think Trump and a MAGA Congress would have a worse impact than Biden and liberal Congress by 8 points (54% to 46%). By the end of the survey, that margin goes up to 18 points (59% to 41%).

Which do you think would have the worst impact in your life?

	Initial %	Final %
President Biden and Congress passing a liberal Democratic agenda	46	41
President Trump and Congress passing a MAGA Republican agenda	54	59

- To win them over, Double-Negatives need to see a clear choice for president that shifts them from a “lesser of two evils” perception to a positive view of Biden as the better option relative to the profoundly detrimental impact of another Trump presidency. The strongest contrasts highlight the differences between Biden and Trump on healthcare, democracy, and abortion.