

For Our Future & For Our Future Action Fund



Memo: Feedback Loop Insights

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What is the most important concern you'd like to see addressed?

"What is the most important concern you'd like to see addressed?" That is the first question we ask people at the door. Since February of this year, For Our Future ("FOF") has knocked on over 3.05 million doors where, more importantly, we have had conversations with more than 390,000 people. We are talking with Democrats, progressives, and Independents across seven states who are usually less likely to vote in a midterm election. Aside from asking election-oriented questions like "Who are you supporting for Governor or Senate," canvassers are actually listening to the ordinary, substantive concerns of people, and collecting the qualitative and quantitative data from those conversations. In August, we ran a more traditional online panel of 7,000 target prospective voters asking the same question. That data confirmed what we're hearing at the doors.

We've learned a lot about our target voters' concerns. Yes - President Trump is animating the election, firing up activists and progressive voters - but it's issues that really matter to voters. As one successful legislative candidate in Virginia said last year, "you can't just say I hate Trump, vote for me." Candidates have to tell voters what they are going to do once they are elected.

Trump animates the 2018 election

It's fairly accepted that Trump is one of the most polarizing figures, let alone presidents, that we've witnessed in recent history. So it should be no surprise that dislike of Trump comes up as a top five issue in every state but one. Negative feelings about Trump also comes up as a top 5 issue among online panelists everywhere but Michigan.

Speaking of polarization, one of the issues that Trump has put front and center is a huge fault line among voters is immigration. The issue, fueled by the actions of the Trump administration, is motivating activists but more importantly, it's motivating Democratic voters who don't typically vote in midterm elections.

...But issues still matter

While Trump is driving more engagement in the election, what we're actually hearing more of on the doors are issues. National issues like immigration, gun violence prevention, and healthcare, yes, but also education funding and infrastructure problems. In nearly every region of our seven states, some residents are even more focused on what's going on within a 10-block radius than what's going on at the statewide or nationally.

In fact, when we combine similar issues like climate, clean water, and clean air into broader issue "buckets" like environmental issues and infrastructure, it's the issues that we're hearing more about than dislike of President Trump. In Florida, the top issue "bucket" of healthcare beats out gun violence prevention, and dislike of Trump doesn't even remain in the top five. Michigan's top issue remains infrastructure, Nevada's is education, Ohio and Pennsylvania's top issue is healthcare, Virginia's is gun violence prevention and Wisconsin's top issue remains dislike of Trump, followed closely by healthcare.

Education Funding Cuts Across State Lines

The one issue that cuts across state lines, emerging as a top issue not only in every state, but also in nearly every FOF region within each state, is support for more education funding. This issue has come up more frequently than voters' dislike of Trump in most states and in every single region of Nevada and Wisconsin, education funding comes up as a top issue.

Particularly in Wisconsin, not only is education funding the top issue in every region of the state, but voters are linking Governor Walker to the issue, noting their displeasure with his actions when it comes to education.

Concerns about Gun Violence Prevention Widespread, but Particularly Salient in Florida

Gun violence prevention is a stand-out issue for target voters in Florida, Nevada, Ohio, and Virginia. But in Florida, gun violence prevention is by far the most important singular issue in nearly every region across the state. Out of a total of 11 regions in Florida, only in the Gainesville area is Gun Violence Prevention not a top issue.

Education Funding, Clean Water, Gun Violence Prevention Top Voter Concerns in Ohio

While dislike of Trump is the top issue across the state of Ohio, education funding is a top issue in five of eight of Ohio's regions - and gun violence prevention is a top issue for six of eight regions in Ohio. Clean Water, while a top issue across the state, only pops up in the Youngstown, Toledo, and Dayton regions.

In the two regions where Trump wasn't a top issue - Youngstown and Dayton - different issues emerged from the rest of the state, suggesting that those areas have more pressing local concerns. The top issues in the Youngstown area are infrastructure-related (roads & bridges, local infrastructure, clean water, and jobs), while top issues in the Dayton area revolve around crime, drugs, and healthcare (Medicare cuts, gun violence prevention, police brutality, opioids, and clean water).

Virginians Concerned by Trump, Education Funding, Gun Violence but Tidewater Region Differs

Top issues in Virginia center around education funding and gun violence prevention, as well as voters' dislike of Trump. All three of those issues crop up in four of five FOF regions in the Commonwealth. A couple of regions stand out from the rest of the state when it comes to the other issues they are most concerned with. One of Central Virginia voters' top issues is opposition to the proposed natural gas pipelines that would cut through that part of the state.

The Tidewater area differs from the rest of the state almost entirely. Although gun violence prevention is a top issue in the area, the other top issues for voters are more police, police brutality, jobs, and the minimum wage.

Infrastructure and Auto Insurance Trouble Michiganders

Michigan is the one state that stands apart - dislike of Trump isn't a top five issue there. Instead, voters appear to be more concerned about issues they deal with everyday, from infrastructure to housing. In five of the six regions in Michigan, concerns about roads and bridges, and clean water are top issues. Detroit voters we've talked to are anxious about the abandoned houses in their neighborhoods. West Michiganders are concerned about the lack of affordable housing in their area. Flint, Saginaw and Detroit area voters want more jobs in their regions.

Interestingly, a text analysis of canvasser notes of conversations we've had with target voters in Michigan found that car insurance is directly related to some of these top issues from roads and bridges and local infrastructure to clean water and jobs. According to a 2018 report, Michigan had the highest auto insurance rates in the country, with the average annual premium nearly twice the national average, causing constant frustration for Michiganders.

Pennsylvanians Concerned by Local Taxes

From Allegheny and Southwest to the Lehigh Valley and Northeast PA, seven out of eleven regions of the commonwealth have indicated that their local taxes is their top concern. Using text analysis, most of those conversations pointed specifically to property taxes and to a lesser extent, the gas tax.

Wisconsin Voters and the Environment

While education funding is a top issue in all seven regions in the state of Wisconsin, environmental issues are popping up intermittently across the state as well. In the Fox Valley and North Central, voters are concerned about clean water. One of the top issues in Milwaukee is clean energy. And in Northwestern and South Central Wisconsin, voters are concerned with the climate.

Nevadans Concerned with Medicare Cuts, Immigration

While dislike of Trump and education funding top Nevadans' concerns in every single region, there are a few other issues that are cropping up. For Nevadans in every region other than Washoe County, cuts to Medicare are a serious concern. And in Washoe, Central South, and North Las Vegas, pro-immigrant policies are top of mind for voters.

Opioids Emerge As Top Issue in Dayton and Philadelphia

Southwest Ohio voters in the Dayton region vary widely from the rest of the state, centering around drugs, crime, and healthcare. Gun violence prevention, police brutality and opioids are top issues in that area. Similarly, the top issues in parts of Philadelphia differ from other areas in the state. The concerns of those voters focus on opioids, local infrastructure, blight, and gun violence prevention.

Demographic Patterns

Gender Gap Apparent in Top Issue Choice

While 2018 may be the largest gender gap on record when it comes to vote choice, we're finding that across FOF states, that gap is apparent when it comes to the most important issues as well. For women that FOF has spoken with, education funding is the top issue, while the top issue for men is dislike of Trump.

Gun Violence Prevention Top Issue for Black and Latinx Voters

Perhaps unsurprising given our current political climate, we're finding that when we look at race, different groups have differing concerns. Nationally, the top issue for Black and Latinx target voters is gun violence prevention. For white target voters, it's dislike of Trump. And in almost every state, the top issue among Black target voters is not the top issue for white target voters. The top issue among white voters in every state is dislike of Trump, but only in Ohio does that issue top the concerns of Black voters. Latinx voters' top issue in Ohio and Wisconsin is dislike of Trump. The top issue for Black voters in Florida and Virginia is gun violence prevention, which is also true for Latinx and Asian voters in Florida. And the top concern for Black voters in Michigan? Clean water.

Differences Among Age Groups

When we look at the top issue per age group across FOF states, some interesting patterns emerge among our target voters. For voters under 25, gun violence prevention is the top issue. For voters from 25-39 and 40-49, the top issue is more funding for education, perhaps because those age groups are likely to have children at home. And the top issue for voters aged 50 to 64 and 65 and over is dislike of Trump.

Top 5 Issues for Each Region

FLORIDA

Broward	Gun Violence Prevention	Local Infrastructure Blight	HC: Pro ACA	Enviro: Climate	Police Brutality
Gainesville	HC: Medicare Cuts	Edu: More Funding	Jobs: Bring Jobs	Social Security	Small Business
Hillsborough	Gen: National	Local Infrastructure	Economic Security	Gun Violence Prevention	Imm: Pro Immigrants
Miami-Dade	Gun Violence Prevention	More Police	Edu: More Funding	HC: Medicaid Cuts	HC: Medicare Cuts
North Florida	Gun Violence Prevention	HC: Medicare Cuts	Police Brutality	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding
Northeast Florida	Edu: More Funding	Gun Violence Prevention	Gen: Trump / Dislike	More Police	HC: Medicare Cuts
Orange	Gun Violence Prevention	Edu: More Funding	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Envireo: Climate	HC: Pro Universal Healthcare
Oceola	Gun Violence Prevention	NO RESPONSE	Gen: Trump / Dislike	HC: Medicare Cuts	Edu: More Funding
Palm Beach	Gun Violence Prevention	Local Infrastructure	HC: Medicare Cuts	Edu: More Funding	Imm: Pro Immigrants
Pinellas	Gun Violence Prevention	Edu: More Funding	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Local Infrastructure	NO RESPONSE
Space Coast	HC: Medicare Cuts	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Gun Violence Prevention	NO RESPONSE	Social Security

MICHIGAN

Region 1 Detroit+	Edu: More Funding	More Police	Jobs: Bring Jobs	Infra: Abandoned Houses	Infra: Roads & Bridges
Region 2 Macomb & Oakland	Gun Violence Prevention	Infra: Roads & Bridges	Edu: More Funding	Enviro: Clean Water	Local Infrastructure
Region 3 Flint & Saginaw	Enviro: Clean Water	More Police	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Enviro: Anti Pipeline	Jobs: Bring jobs
Region 4 Washtenaw County	Infra: Roads & Bridges	Edu: More Funding	Local Infrastructure	NO RESPONSE	Enviro: Clean Water
Region 5 Capitol Region	Local Infrastructure	Edu: More Funding	Infra: Roads & Bridges	Enviro: Clean Water	Taxes: Local
Region 6 West Michigan	Infra: Roads & Bridges	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Enviro: Clean Water	Edu: More Funding	Affordable Housing

OHIO

Central Ohio (Columbus)	Gen: Trump / Dislike	NO RESPONSE	Edu: More Funding	HC: Medicare Cuts	Gun Violence Prevention
Mahoning Valley (Youngstown)	Infra: Roads & Bridges	Enviro: Clean Water	NO RESPONSE	Local Infrastructure	Jobs: Bring Jobs
Northeast Ohio Akron	Gen: National	Trump / Negative	Infra: Roads & Bridges	Edu: More Funding	More Police
Northeast Ohio (Cleveland)	Gen: Trump / Dislike	NO RESPONSE	Edu: More Funding	Gun Violence Prevention	More Police
Northwest Ohio (Toledo)	Enviro: Clean Water	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Gun Violence Prevention	NO RESPONSE	More Police
Southeast Ohio (Athens)	Opioids	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Gun Violence Prevention	HC: Medicare Cuts
Southwest Ohio (Cincinnati)	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	More Police	Gun Violence Prevention	Jobs: Bring Jobs
Southwest Ohio (Dayton)	HC: Medicare Cuts	Gun Violence Prevention	Police Brutality	Opioids	Enviro: Clean Water

PENNSYLVANIA

Allegheny	Taxes: Local	Edu: More Funding	Gen: Trump / Dislike	HC: Medicare Cuts	Enviro: Clean Water
Central	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Gun Violence Prevention	Edu: More Funding	Gen: National	Taxes: Local
Chester / Delco	Gun Violence Prevention	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Enviro: Climate	Edu: More Funding	HC: Pro ACA
Lehigh Valley	Taxes: Local	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Local Infrastructure	Infra: Roads & Bridges
Montco / Bucks	NO RESPONSE	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Gun Violence Prevention	Enviro: Climate
NEPA	NO RESPONSE	Taxes: Local	Infra: Roads & Bridges	Local Infrastructure	Edu: More Funding
Philadelphia 1	Gun Violence Prevention	Edu: More Funding	Taxes: Local	Local Infrastructure	HC: Medicare Cuts
Philadelphia 2	Opioids	NO RESPONSE	Local Infrastructure	Local Infrastructure Blight	Gun Violence Prevention
Philadelphia 3	NO RESPONSE	Taxes: Local	Edu: More Funding	Opioids	Sen: Protect Social Security
Pittsburgh	Enviro: Clean Water	Enviro: Climate	Gun Violence Prevention	Edu: More Funding	Gen: Trump / Dislike
SWPA	NO RESPONSE	Gen: National	Edu: More Funding	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Taxes: Local

NEVADA

Central East	Edu: More Funding	NO RESPONSE	Gen: Trump / Dislike	HC: Medicare Cuts	Enviro: Clean Energy
Central South	Edu: More Funding	Gen: Trump / Dislike	NO RESPONSE	HC: Medicare Cuts	Imm: Pro Immigrants
North Las Vegas	Edu: More Funding	NO RESPONSE	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Imm: Pro Immigrants	HC: Medicare Cuts
Washoe	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	HC: Pro ACA	Imm: Pro Immigrants	Gen: Polarization
West Vegas	Edu: More Funding	NO RESPONSE	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Gun Violence Prevention	HC: Medicare Cuts

VIRGINIA

Central	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Enviro: Anti Pipeline	Enviro: Climate	Gun Violence Prevention
NOVA	Gun Violence Prevention	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Enviro: Climate	Imm: Pro Immigrants
Richmond	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Gun Violence Prevention	Gen: Polarization	Imm: Pro Immigrants
Tidewater	Gun Violence Prevention	More Police	Jobs: Bring Jobs	Police Brutality	Minimum Wage
Western	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Gen: National	Social Security	Local Infrastructure

WISCONSIN

Region 1 Milwaukee	Imm: Pro Immigrants	Police Brutality	Edu: More Funding	Enviro: Preservation	Enviro: Clean Energy
Region 2 Southeast	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Gen: National	HC: Medicare Cuts	Imm: Pro Immigrants
Region 3 Fox Valley	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	Enviro: Clean Water	HC: Healthcare Costs	Enviro: Climate
Region 4 North Central	Edu: More Funding	HC: Healthcare Costs	Enviro: Clean Water	General National	
Region 5 Northwestern	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	HC: Medicare Cuts	Gen: National	Enviro: Climate
Region 6 Southwest	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Gen: National	Edu: More Funding	Imm: Pro Immigrants	Enviro: Preservation
Region 7 South Central	Gen: Trump / Dislike	Edu: More Funding	HC: Medicare Cuts	Enviro: Climate	Gen: National

Background on Methodology and Purpose

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