

# 2024 Retrospective and Looking Forward

March 2025

## Summary

Following the 2024 election and early days of the Trump administration, Democrats need to understand what happened, the driving forces behind it, and how to stay ahead of future partisan re-alignment and political challenges. We found the following:

1. **What Happened:** In 2024, Hispanic, Asian, young voters, and politically disengaged voters swung towards Trump. He also made substantial gains among naturalized citizens.
2. **Why it Happened:** This was the culmination of 4 years of significant decline in Democrats' popularity, with the economy and the cost of living – an issue ranked as the top concern for voters, one with a substantial trust advantage for Republicans, and one that voters ultimately believed that Trump would do more to address.
3. **Where Things Stand:** In the first few months of the Trump Administration, his approval has declined, and while many of his policies are popular, those perceived to increase consumer costs, cut essential benefits, or demonstrate siding with billionaires over working people, present a significant opportunity for Democrats.
4. **What's Next:** To stay ahead of the next economic shock and potential political re-alignment, Democrats must prepare to address rapidly transforming issues like AI, which voters broadly view as a significant negative threat to jobs, and one likely to disproportionately affect Democratic-leaning demographics.

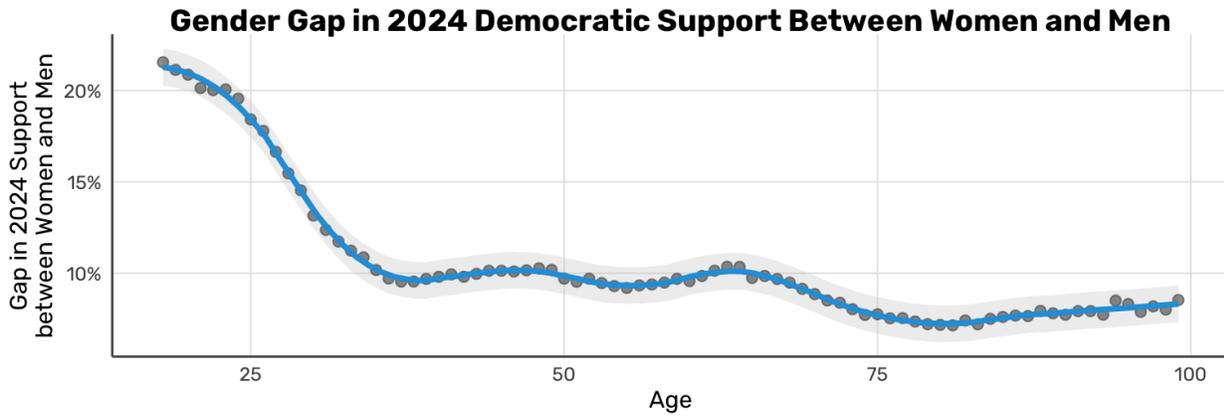
## Election Results and Key Trends

**Race and Ideology:** Hispanic and Asian voters, particularly moderates, swung away from Democrats. Initial estimates suggest that two-thirds of this is attributable to vote switching, and one-third is attributable to changes in voter turnout.

**Political Engagement:** Politically disengaged voters have become significantly more Republican, shifting from slightly Democratic-leaning in 2020 to heavily Republican in 2024. An expanded electorate meant a more Republican electorate in 2024 – and if everyone had voted, Trump would have won the popular vote by a larger margin.

Universe	Harris	Trump	Margin
2022 Voters	50.3%	49.7%	Harris +0.6
2024 Voters (What Happened)	49.3%	50.7%	Trump + 1.4
If Everyone Voted	47.6%	52.4%	Trump + 4.8

**Age:** Voters under 26 years old have become notably more Republican. Only women of color under 26 supported Harris by a majority. The gender gap in political support among voters under 25 has doubled, with men considerably more Republican-leaning than women.

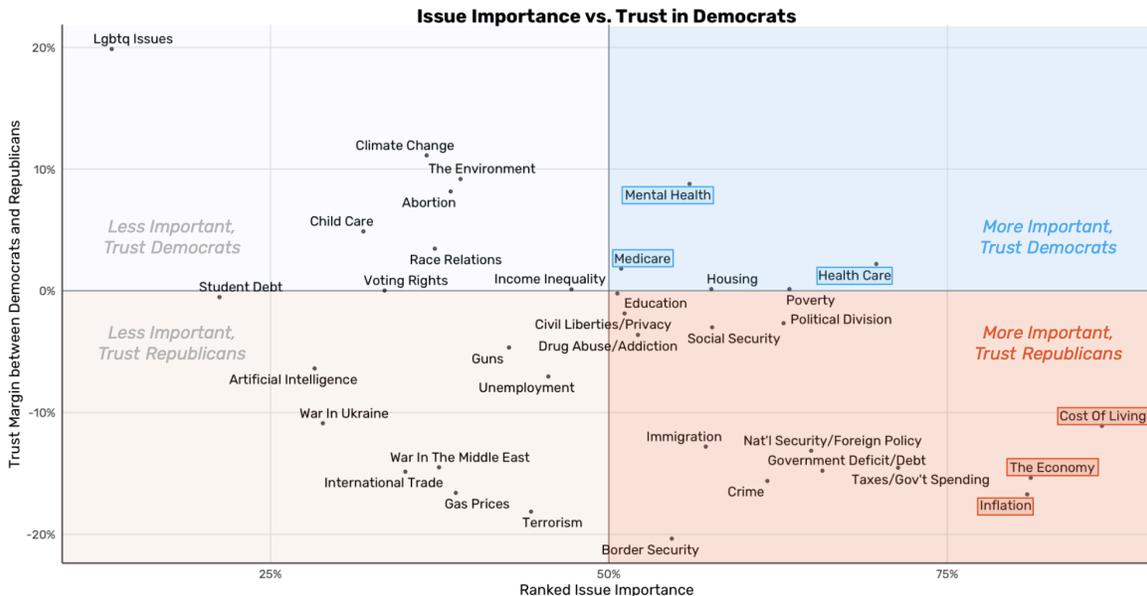


**Immigrants and Naturalized Citizens:** Trump made substantial gains in all kinds of immigrant neighborhoods – and naturalized citizens likely swung from strongly Democratic in 2020 to slightly Republican in 2024.

**Strategic Challenges and Messaging**

**Democratic Brand:** Trump's favorability remained stable between 2020 and 2024 (Trump -6pp to -7pp) – but Democrats became significantly less popular in that timeframe (Biden +6pp to Harris -6pp). Negative public opinion of the Biden administration, particularly following Afghanistan withdrawal and economic challenges (inflation, crime, budget issues), likely hurt Democrats.

**Issue Importance and Party Trust:** Voters overwhelmingly prioritized cost of living and inflation, significantly more than social issues. Republicans held substantial trust advantages on voters' top priorities (economy, inflation, taxes, crime, immigration), while Democrats only narrowly led on healthcare.



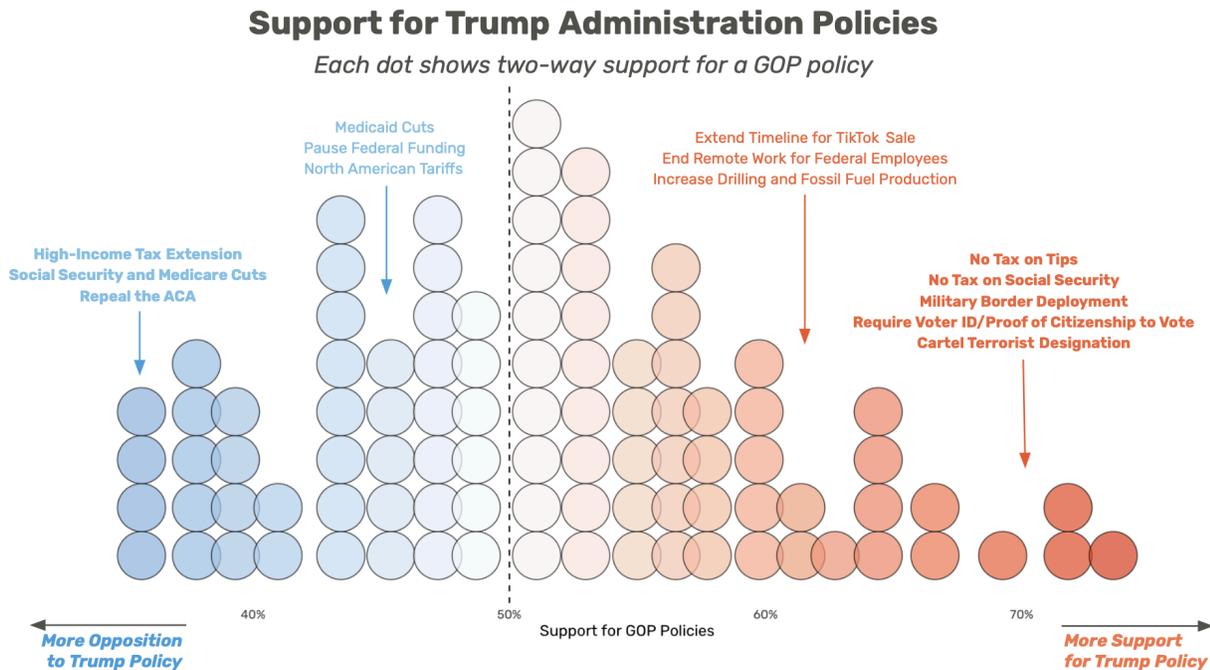
**Messaging in 2024:** Many of our most [successful messages](#) acknowledged economic pressures, connected to policies directly to improving voters' lives, and provided contrast with Trump siding with the wealthy and big corporations. Many down-ballot Democrats performed better than Harris, especially when distancing themselves from the administration and emphasizing economic issues.

**Candidate Perceptions:** Swing voters viewed Harris as more ideologically extreme than Trump, while voters perceived Trump as closer to their own views, especially regarding economic issues. In surveys from the days following the election, a majority of voters believed Trump better understood how to improve their lives compared to Harris.

**Social Media:** Finally, there was rapid growth in the share of voters getting their news from platforms like TikTok – and this was especially true for less politically-engaged voters, the type of voter who swung towards Republicans significantly. Much of this is likely driven by the underlying demographics rather than changes in the platforms itself - but not all of it - and whether due to the nature of the algorithms, Democrats' brand or policy positions, Democrats didn't fare as well as Republicans through this change.

### Where Things Stand

**Support of the Trump Administration Actions:** There is mixed support for Trump's policies, although many are popular – there is most opposition against measures perceived to increase costs or reduce widely-used benefits.



**Effective Messaging:** Messaging highlighting increased costs for consumers, cuts to essential services, and favoritism toward billionaires is resonating most strongly with voters. Effective messaging does not require choosing between swing voters and mobilizing the base; economic messages resonate broadly with both groups.

**Trump's Approval:** Trump's approval is dropping, and he remains vulnerable – effective Democratic messaging can shift voter perceptions significantly.

## *Looking Ahead*

**AI is the Next Battle:** Democrats must focus on future-oriented battles, especially addressing emerging issues like AI impacts, rather than focusing solely on past debates. Rapid advancements in AI pose significant job displacement risks, disproportionately affecting demographics that lean Democratic.

**Voter Perceptions of AI:** A majority of voters believe AI will significantly disrupt jobs within a decade, and a vast majority of voters view this potential change negatively.

**Consequences and Looking Ahead:** Those most vulnerable to AI displacement tend to lean Democratic, suggesting AI-driven economic disruption may exacerbate existing political divides. Democrats must proactively prepare for dramatic societal and economic changes due to AI, avoiding reactive approaches.

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