

G B A O

Voter Participation Center Unregistered Voter Focus Group Findings

March 2024

Focus Groups



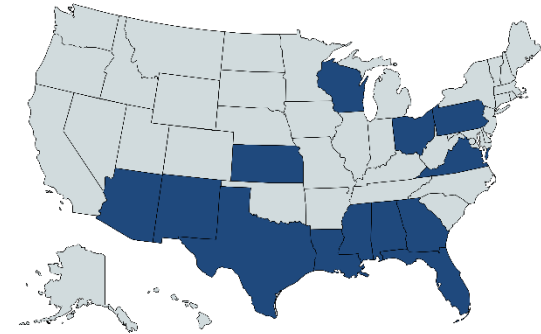
- Conducted 4 focus groups on February 21-22, 2024
- Each 90 min in length, online, and with 6-7 participants from a mix of states
- Qualitative research findings are directional and not projectable onto the population at large

FEBRUARY 21ST

- **Group 1:** Unmarried women over 35, not registered to vote
- **Group 2:** Women under 35, not registered to vote

FEBRUARY 22ND

- **Group 3:** Latinos & Latinas, not registered to vote
- **Group 4:** Men under 35, not registered to vote



● States participants were recruited from

Participants self-report they are not registered to vote, which likely makes them less available than the many people who overreport their registration but are not actually registered.

- Unregistered voters feel burdened but hold hope for the future.
- Many feel disconnected from their local communities, finding more meaning in communities based on shared values and interests rather than just proximity.
 - Cultural differences can deepen feelings of exclusion among people of color.
- Most participants are deeply uninterested in registering and voting, which they see as intertwined.
- Abortion, local issues, and social pressure can prompt non-voters to reconsider their stance on voting.
- Barriers and obstacles to voter registration range widely from logistical and informational challenges to doubts about the impact of their vote.
- Some feel powerless, believing elections are predetermined by powerful entities and influenced by money in politics. Only a few believe in the power of collective action.



Understanding Unregistered Voters



Social Media Exerts Significant Influence On These Audiences

Figure 5



Participants spend a substantial amount of time consuming information on social media platforms. TikTok is by far the most used platform for this audience.

- Topics include cleaning, cooking, health and wellness, travel, beauty, car shows, or even how to invest in cryptocurrencies.

*“My guilty pleasure is TikTok. I’m **addicted to TikTok**, I can scroll through it for hours and not realize what’s going on.”*

Older Woman

*“It’s **really easy [for TikTok] to get my attention**. So, I’ll watch a whole 2-hour movie in 30 second intervals on TikTok.”*

Younger Woman



YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook are also widely used social media platforms.



Some also mention watching a variety of TV shows on cable or streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, or Paramount Plus.

Notably, none of the participants voluntarily mention they follow the news.

Unregistered Voters Feel Overwhelmed, Stuck, Or Strained

Figure 6

Personal Situation

- A majority express stress about their current situations and concerns about what might come next.
- Some are concerned with the economy and the rise in prices and difficulties of job prospects.
- Others are stressed about managing their daily lives, from parenting to school to work.

Latino

“Prices went up on everything. Things are definitely more expensive and harder to get these days.”

Older Woman

*“I **can't afford to go out** and do the things in the community that's going on [since COVID]. It's just not like it was, you know.*

Younger Man

*“I'm **afraid of making mistakes when it comes to parenting** because I didn't have great role models growing up. Everything that I'm doing is new and I'm trying to avoid the same pitfalls.”*

Younger Woman

*“I'm so focused on school, I **don't have a lot of time to talk to people.**”*

Latino

*“I'm kind of in a new career... **ever since I've started, I'm having these panic attacks** and my heart rate jumps around, it skips... because I'm out of my norm... the stress is getting to me.”*

Life Decisions Make Younger Participants Anxious But The Future Offers Hope; Older Participants Exhibit More Confidence In Life Choices

Figure 7

Younger participants are anxious about making the right decisions.

*"I think I already made a little mistake in my career, and I realized I wanted to do something different... but I'm **scared of making that mistake now.**"*

Younger Woman

*"I'm wondering if college was the right option right out of high school. A lot of my buddies started working right out of high school and they're making pretty decent money. I'm **thinking about what my future is going to be and if I made the rights choices.**"*

Younger Man

Older respondents tend to feel proud of where they are in life.

*"I've accomplished something in every arena... there's a lot left to accomplish, but I can **feel myself stacking wins and rolling with the punches better than I used to.**"*

Latino

*"I feel accomplished in my business. I feel accomplished with my children. They're grown. They're doing well for themselves. I feel proud of that. **Some of my dreams that I used to have are now my reality.**"*

Older Woman

Younger participants balance their concerns with hope for what the future holds.

*"I would like to say my school career is going well, I just started. I'm a freshman. I think I'm **off to a good start.**"*

Younger Woman

*"Just thinking about what my future is going to be and if I made the right choices... **I think I'm on the right track.**"*

Younger Man

Participants Utilize A Range Of Coping Mechanisms, With Self-Reflection And Meditation Being Prevalent

Figure 8

Meditation/Self-Reflection



*"I just write on a paper, just a list of some things I'm looking towards to do and just do a **vision board**."*

Younger Woman

*"I do a lot of meditation... I meditate and **I sit there and close my eyes, and I just breathe**... I do my affirmations, and it makes me feel better, and I feel proud of myself..."*

Older Woman

Talking to Trusted People



*"I have a lot of like-minded people around me, some of which have 10-year gaps on me, and **they just instill wisdom and help me persevere** through certain hard moments."*

Younger Man

Online Forums



*"I'm a big fan of researching things. Using forum boards and stuff like that to see how I can figure out what's going on with whatever I'm being uncertain about. **I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia early last year and [Reddit] has been a godsend.**"*

Latina

An illustration of a diverse community. The top half shows a man in a blue shirt and a woman in a purple headscarf looking at a large, colorful, abstract structure. The bottom half shows a group of people: a woman in a wheelchair, a young boy with his arms raised, a man with a ladder, a man with a large cardboard box, a young girl, and a man and woman walking together. The background features stylized clouds and a city skyline.

Communities

Local Connection To Community Comes In Many Forms, Big And Small

Figure 10

Small businesses and local events connect some to their communities



“The city has a lot of traditions. Right now, the month of February, we have festivals, where we celebrate Black history... there’s all kinds of **events, music, art, speakers.**”

Older Woman



“I would say there’s some farmers around us and some farmers markets, local shops like butchers and different coffee shops that we try to visit as frequently as possible within reason, just to **support the local community.**”

Latino

Some find community through shared interests



“I tend to **spend a lot of time with my gym buddies** and people that I’m close with at work that are my age. So, Sundays [we’ll] watch football together, grill out. We go to local competitions if there are any.”

Younger Man



“There’s a **free yoga class** every first Friday of the month. It’s a really good time, **I always go with friends. We meet different people.**”

Younger woman

Helping Others Can Also Mean Many Things

Teaching Crochet



Helping Carry Furniture



Sharing Beauty Tips



Mentoring Others



Volunteering



Translating



Many Do Share A Feeling Of Isolation From Their Local Communities

Figure 12

Isolation from Community

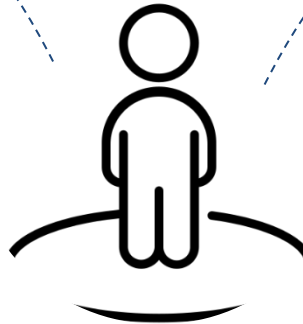
- This lack of connection stems from less daily interaction with neighbors, which some attribute to growing time spent online, children not playing together outside as much, or small neighborhood disputes.
- Some say this feeling has grown over time and recall communities feeling more connected before.

*“Growing up, I feel like community was more of a thing than it is now. It’s almost like **everyone has their own house or their own stuff going on, and it’s easy to become isolated.**”*

Latino

*“The **children are not outside.** And usually sometimes you’ll make friends through the children, you know. You’ll meet other parents and things like that. But there’s no one outside. **Everyone just goes about their day and does what they’re doing.**”*

Older Woman



*“It could be not necessarily the community that’s so in their own bubble. It might be **myself as well that’s in a bubble.**”*

Older Woman

*“My neighborhood has an HOA, and the members were pretty active there, and it **got pretty hostile...** It’s just funny that it was **such petty things that people are fighting over.**”*

Younger Man

Cultural Differences And Misunderstandings Can Exacerbate Feelings Of Exclusion Among People Of Color Within Their Communities

Figure 13

Some respondents of color voice unique difficulties and challenges they have experienced in their communities, facing discrimination, ignorance, and difficulties in making connections.

*"I live in Miami... I think I speak English good, but **sometimes people say, 'you don't speak English,** like I don't understand what you're saying.' **So, you prefer not to talk, not to open up.**"*

Younger Woman

*"I am Latina, but I don't look Latina. I don't sound Latina... I have **experienced discrimination in other ways with people speaking in front of me in Spanish and not realizing that I understand what they're saying,** I speak fluent Spanish."*

Older Woman

*"I was out the other day... in the grocery line... **the person behind me is like, 'What's Black History Month?' And I thought they were joking.** She's like: 'Oh, I've never known. I thought it was just February, like I thought it was Valentine's month.'"*

Younger Man

*"Because I'm **from a different country**... it's so hard for me to find someone here with my same mindset. So, **it's hard to fit in**... that's where you feel less connected. It's like the closed-minded thing, culture differences and all of that."*

Young Woman



Voter Registration: Opportunities & Barriers

In This Hard-To-Move Audience, There Are Some Opportunities For Openness To Registering To Vote

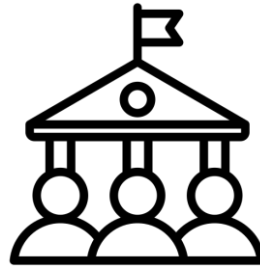
Figure 15



Abortion

*“The only time I thought about voting was for the abortion bill that was proposed [in Ohio]. I didn't vote for that one either, clearly because I'm not registered, but **I would have applied or registered to vote to solely vote for the abortion bill because I was highly [for] it.**”*

Younger Woman



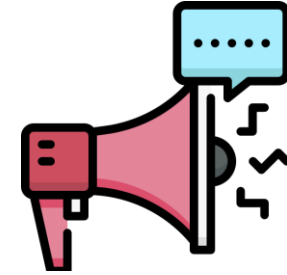
Local Issues

*“There's probably **more power in smaller communities to get who they want to be elected but I always forget about that.** And I always just say presidential when I think of voting.”*

Latino

*“Maybe you could **make more of an impact** if you are really looking at local [issues].”*

Older Woman



Influence from Family/Friends

*“The first time I voted was a midterm and my sister and I were roommates... **she just bugged me: come, vote with me, we're going together.** So, I did it then. I've just been gradually less interested personally. **But that time I was like, 'Okay, you know, whatever you say. If it's really important to you. I'll come with you.'**”*

Younger Man

Barriers And Obstacles To Voter Registration

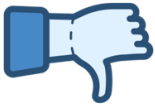
Figure 16



Feeling Uninformed

“I’m not up on my hind legs about any sort of issue. As far as politics go, **I don’t follow politics at all**, so really I don’t feel like I have the right to vote.”

Older Woman



Disdain for Politics

“I’m not interested in the candidates. I don’t really get too into politics, but **I don’t think there’s a good choice on either side**, whichever way you lean, the candidates suck.”

Younger Man



Skepticism about Fairness

“Even if we vote, **maybe they’re playing with the numbers of votes or something**... like somebody’s already decided who’s going to win right now. And we’re all just sort of watching the election.”

Younger Woman



Lack of Change

““**I’ve seen four Hispanic grandmas do more for the community** than Democrats or Republicans, whatever kind of people.”

Latino

Barriers And Obstacles To Voter Registration

Figure 17



Logistical Challenges

“I tried to do it twice, but I got lazy. In Texas you can do it online, but then you have to download a form, and they have to sign it. And they have to scan it. And then email it. I'm like, **it's too much.**”

Latina



Concerns about Jury Duty

“It might be a myth, but I was always told that if you registered to vote **you might be called for jury duty.**”

Younger Man



Apathy Towards Elections

“We don't want to invest the time and energy to be a part of something that's so divisive and half and half if we can't be sure of the outcome. So, **we'd rather just focus on the things that are going right in our lives and what we can control** rather than taking the time to be a part of registering to vote or picking one or the other.”

Younger Man

Participants see registering to vote and actually voting as part of the same process. Registering to vote makes no sense unless you plan on voting.

Some Believe Elections Are Predetermined Or Manipulated By Powerful Entities And Note A Strong Link Between Money And Politics

Manipulated Elections

- Some wonder if a group of people who have an agenda are manipulating the process and the results of elections for their self-interest but are not clear on who is pulling the strings.
- Other participants connect the extreme wealth corporations and CEOs have with advertising and media manipulation.

*"I feel like corporations and people with money, like the powers that be, **are still going to be the powers that be and whoever is in that chair as President doesn't matter.** All the same people who are pulling the strings are going to probably keep on pulling the strings."*

Younger Man

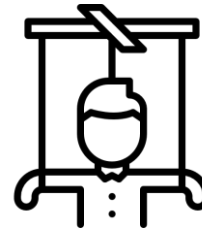
*"The election has already been decided? **Yes, because once again, money controls everything.** If you have enough money, you can control anything you want."*

Younger Woman



*"Pretty much, **it feels like there's a puppet master** that organizes all these things, all the manipulative tactics they have in the media, they have a way to sway the vote or change the votes after you voted. **Feels like it's already been decided.**"*

Younger Woman



*"It's rigged, it's a scam. **It's already predetermined, the president is just a face.**"*

Older Woman

Voting As A Means To Change Things Through Collective Action Appeals To A Small Handful

Figure 19



“If everyone has the mindset that my vote doesn’t count, that’s also a main reason why nothing’s getting changed. Because the people who have the power to actually change something sit back and say: ‘Oh, my one vote isn’t going to work.’”

A lot of things in the world got changed from people coming together and actually using their voice to do something.”

Young Woman



*“Strength in numbers. Maybe not one person, but there’s strength in numbers. **Teamwork makes the dream work.** When you band together, your voice is heard!”*

Older Woman

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