



# Engagious

**FPG** Focus Pointe  
Global

## **SWING VOTER PROJECT (SVP) SIX MONTH TRENDS REPORT**

### **OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH:**

Building upon prior swing voter research, Engagious has conducted a focus group each of the last six months (September 2019 through February 2020) with swing voters in Wisconsin (Appleton), Ohio (Youngstown), Iowa (Dubuque), Michigan (Saginaw), Pennsylvania (Wilkes-Barre), and Florida (Port St. Lucie), respectively. Our focus groups have included a total of 54 respondents: 48 who voted for President Obama in 2012 and then President Trump in 2016, and six who voted for Mitt Romney in 2012 and then Hillary Clinton in 2016. We have explored questions and topics surrounding the president, Democrats running for president, and 2020 issues more broadly.

### **DISCLAIMER:**

The key findings in this report are based on the opinions and feedback from 54 swing voters in six locations. They do not represent the views of all swing voters.

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Example: "30% of female respondents disagreed with the Medicare statement" (according to research conducted by Engagious/FPG).

# INTRODUCTION

The Swing Voter Project, co-sponsored by Engagious and Focus Pointe Global, has completed 12 monthly focus groups with swing voters from seven swing states. We are using focus groups with dial testing to deep dive into how these crucial voters are feeling about President Trump, what will affect their vote in the next election, and which issues they consider important. This report discusses the key findings from the past six months, including which issues will likely impact the 2020 election.

The president's political prospects rise and fall with the health of the economy, and it will likely determine the outcome of the 2020 election. Most Obama-Trump voters believe the U.S. economy has gotten better for them, their families, and for America overall since Donald Trump became president. Their confidence in his handling of the economy is high, and most believe they are better off now than they were four years ago. As a result, most are ready to stick with him in the next election. Romney-Clinton voters hold a dimmer view of the U.S. economy since Donald Trump became president, and he has failed to win them over. Among Romney-Clinton voters, only one of six would vote for the president if another Trump-Clinton presidential election were held tomorrow. Obama-Trump voters are focused on his economic performance and what they like about him politically, while Romney-Clinton voters are largely focused on his personality and how seeing him makes them feel worse. His inability to win over Romney-Clinton voters is a major red flag for his re-election campaign.

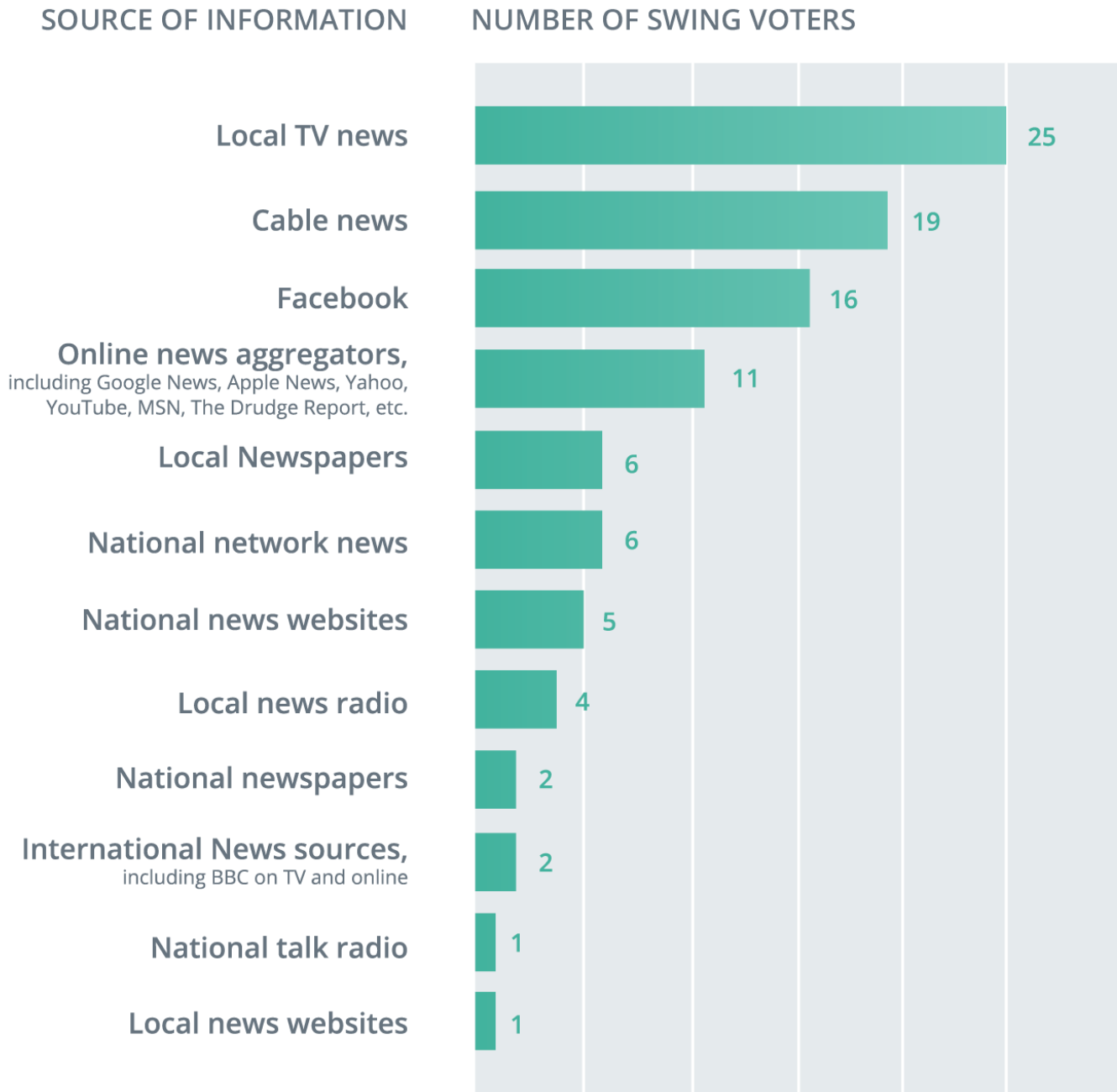
The good news for the Trump campaign is there is virtually no excitement for any of the Democrats running for president, impeachment was a dud, and most Obama-Trump voters are sticking with him.

Consistent with the last six-month trends report, the top issues of concern for swing voters heading into 2020 are the high cost of healthcare, immigration, and the economy. This report discusses these and other issues that will determine the 2020 election.

# 1 THE MOST COMMON NEWS SOURCE FOR SWING VOTERS IS LOCAL TV NEWS.

Any presidential candidate who fails to use local TV news to get their message out is missing an opportunity to reach these key voters.

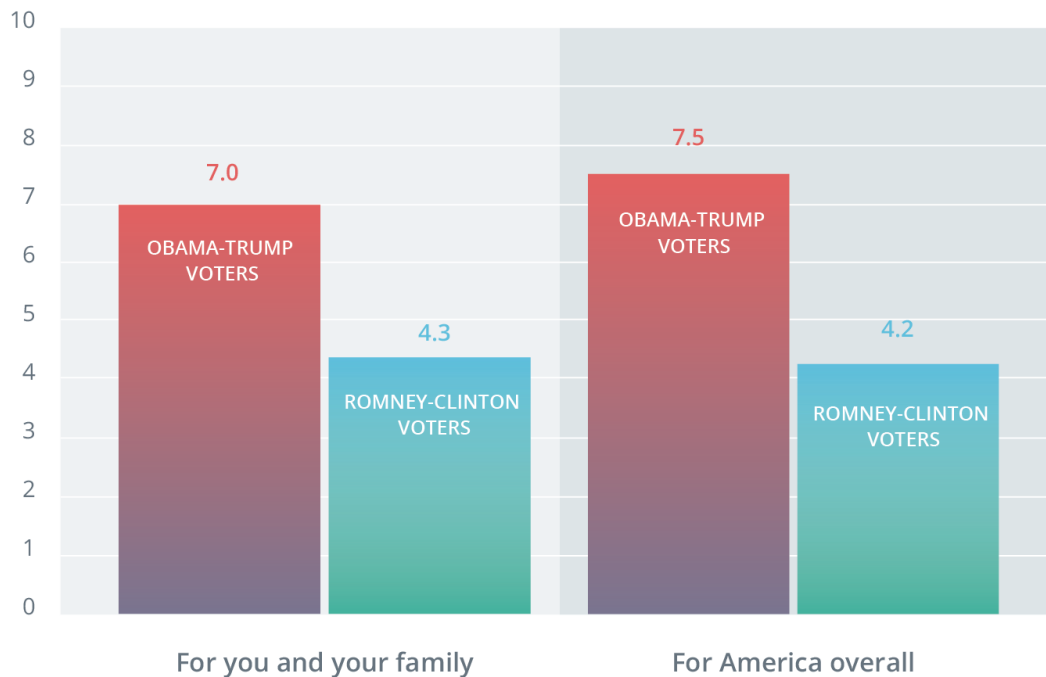
In the last six months, we have asked our 54 swing voters where they get most of their news. The following chart shows their responses in descending order:



Note: Most swing voters named multiple news sources.

## 2 HOW SWING VOTERS FEEL ABOUT THE ECONOMY IN NOVEMBER WILL BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN DECIDING THE 2020 ELECTION.

Each month, we've asked respondents to rate on a scale from zero to 10 how the U.S. economy has been performing for "you and your family" and for "America overall" since Donald Trump became President. Zero means it has gotten much worse since Donald Trump became President, and 10 means it has gotten much better since that time.



There is a sharp difference of opinion between Obama-Trump voters and Romney-Clinton voters about how the U.S. economy has been performing since Donald Trump became president and how they expect it to perform over the next year. Respondents have rated how likely it is that the U.S. economy will enter a recession sometime in the next year, on a scale from zero to 10 (from "no chance it will enter a recession" to "it's already in recession"). Obama-Trump voters and Romney-Clinton voters scored this 4.3/10 and 6.7/10, respectively, on average.

If a recession were to occur before the next election, Obama-Trump voters' support for President Trump would erode slightly (4.7/10), while Romney-Clinton voters' support for him would erode more significantly (3.8/10), on zero to 10 scale (from "my support for him will erode substantially" to "my support for him will grow substantially")<sup>1</sup>.

During the past six months, 28 of our 54 swing voters—all Obama-Trump voters—would describe our economy as "booming," citing low unemployment, increasing wages, the stock market being at an all-time high, low interest rates, and generally, people seem to be living better.

<sup>1</sup>This statement was presented only in Appleton, Youngstown, Dubuque, Saginaw, and Wilkes-Barre (September through January, respectively).

Over the past **three** months, most of the swing voters in our focus groups—consisting of only Obama-Trump voters—have told us they are better off now than they were four years ago, citing:

- I have a full-time job in my field
- I got a job that provides benefits
- I'm making more money now
- My husband has a good enough job that I can stay home with our child
- My children are doing well in the workforce
- I'm able to retire
- I paid off my home and student loans
- People are worrying less about their ability to pay bills
- I have seen less crime as the result of economic gains in the country
- The stock market is doing well/my personal investments are up
- I am no longer on Obamacare, which was a "mess"
- Construction is up
- Higher home values
- Lower gas prices

Obama-Trump voters believe the economy is strong and their confidence in President Trump's handling of it is high, with them scoring it 7.1/10 (from "less confident in President Trump's handling of the economy" to "more confident in President Trump's handling of the economy"). Again, Romney-Clinton Voters see it differently, scoring this only 3.0/10<sup>2</sup>.

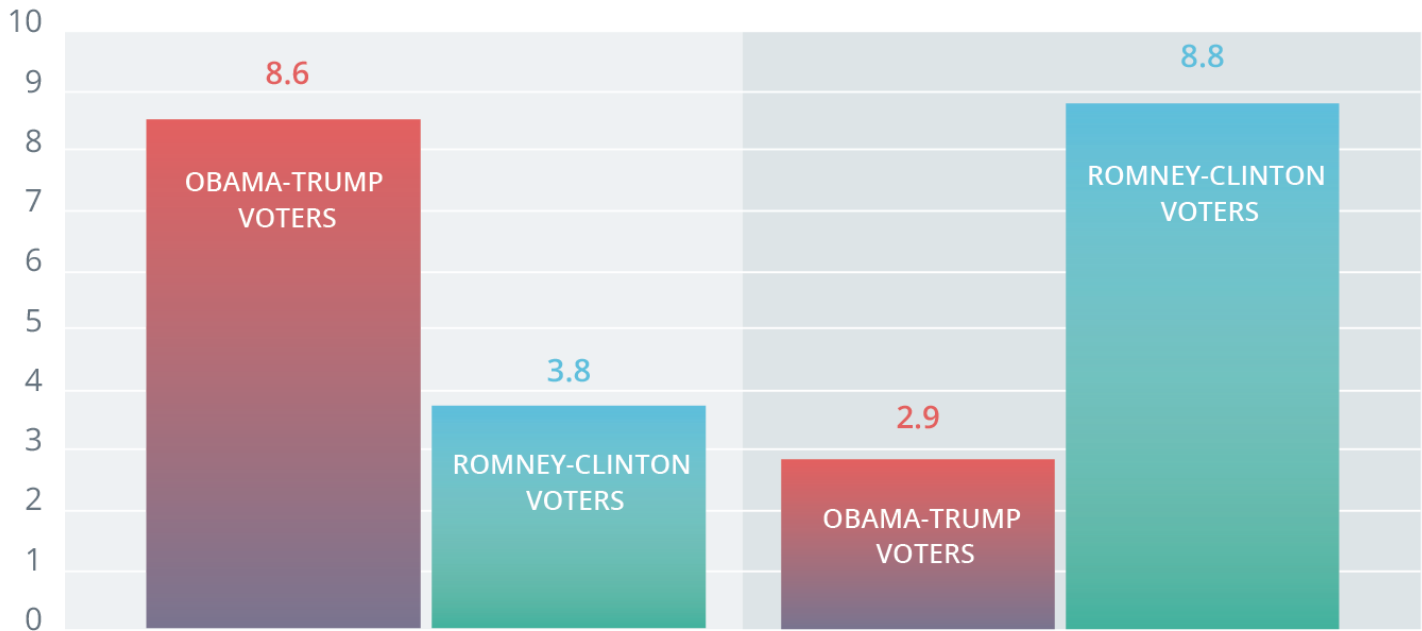
As the chart on the next page shows, the state of our economy in November will have a significant impact on whether our Obama-Trump voters decide to re-elect the president. If their economic optimism continues, President Trump is in a strong position to win re-election. Meanwhile, Romney-Clinton voters are far more interested in getting back to "normal" and moving away from this president.

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<sup>2</sup> We have asked this question in each of the last five months, which includes only four of our six Romney-Clinton voters.

## KEY FINDINGS

Respondents told us how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about President Trump, on a zero to 10 scale. Zero means they totally disagreed, and 10 means they totally agreed.



A lot of chaos swirls around President Trump. He is an unconventional President. On Twitter he regularly makes critical statements about other people, including people in his own party and administration. Allegations of bad behavior are leveled against him regularly. While I'm aware of the controversies involving President Trump, what is likelier to influence my vote is how the economy is doing, and how my family and I are doing, in November 2020.<sup>3</sup>

I just can't take it anymore with Trump's antics, and his being in our faces 24/7. I have no patience for another four years. Things in America just don't feel normal, and we need to get back to normal.

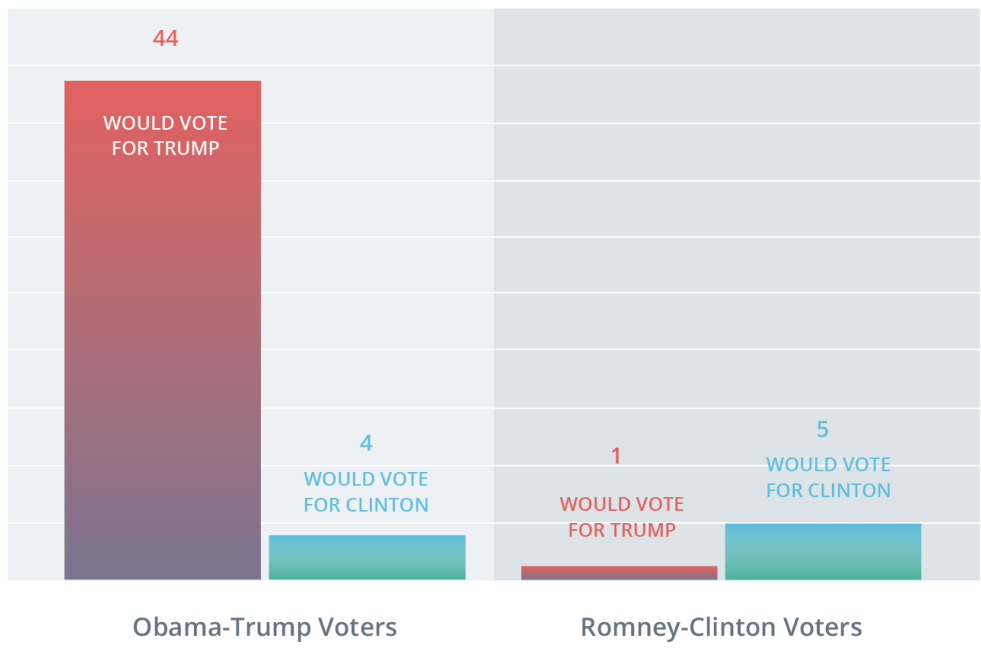
<sup>3</sup> Swing voters rated this statement in July and August (two months).

<sup>4</sup> Swing voters rated this statement from April through August (five months).

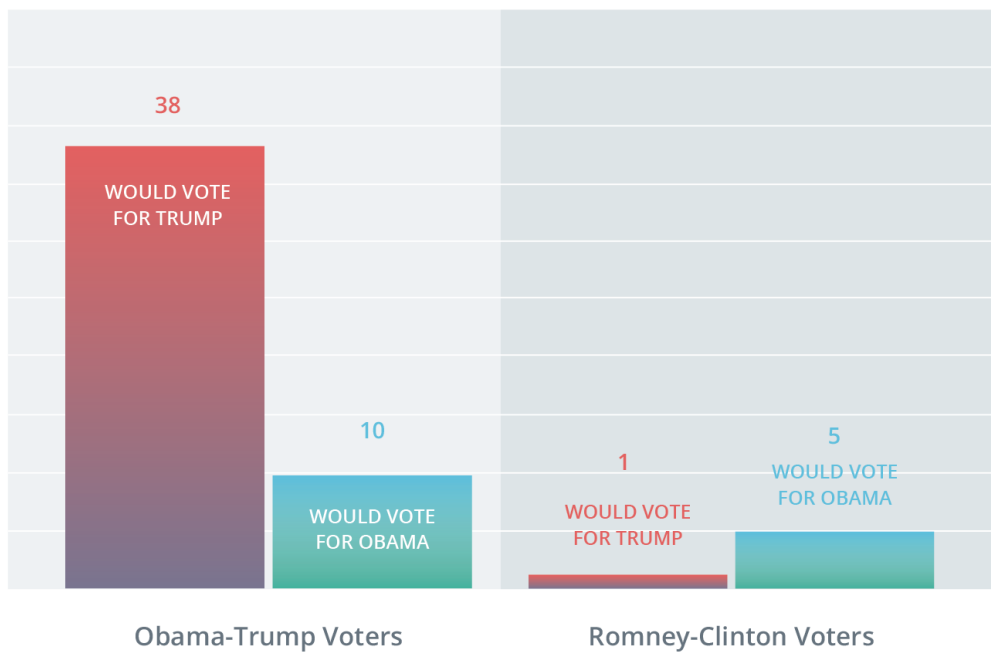


# 3 MOST OBAMA-TRUMP VOTERS ARE STICKING BY PRESIDENT TRUMP, BUT HE HAS FAILED TO WIN OVER ROMNEY-CLINTON VOTERS, WHICH COULD COST HIM IN NOVEMBER.

If another presidential election were being held tomorrow between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, almost all Obama-Trump voters would stick with him, while almost all Romney-Clinton voters would vote for her again.



Hypothetically, if the U.S. Constitution didn't prevent presidents from serving a third term, and former President Obama became the Democratic nominee to challenge President Trump's re-election, we would see a similar, but worse, result for President Trump:



Swing voters listed what they like about President Trump politically:

- He's a businessman, not a politician
- Doesn't talk like a politician— he says what he means instead of telling people what he thinks they want to hear
- He lacks a filter and is “rough” to everybody
- He doesn't care what others think of him
- He follows through on what he says he'll do
- He's assertive and unshaken—he stands his ground, even with so much opposition
- He's standing up for our country, working to improve trade deals, getting other countries to pay their fair share of military expenses overseas, and opposing illegal immigration
- No one bought him
- He has been good for the economy (more jobs, stronger financial base, better stock market)
- He's bold (e.g., he ordered the airstrike that killed Iranian General Soleimani)
- Supports law enforcement

When Obama-Trump voters see President Trump on TV or on their device, many feel a variety of positive emotions, including:

- Proud
- Excited
- Confident
- Good (about having a strong leader)
- Empowered
- Secure
- Engaged
- Comfortable
- Privileged (to be alive while he is president)
- Happy

Other Obama-Trump voters weren't so positive, with some saying they feel:

- Frustration
- Annoyed
- Somewhat hesitant (based on the way he speaks)
- Uncomfortable
- Shocked
- Embarrassed

Romney-Clinton voters listed:

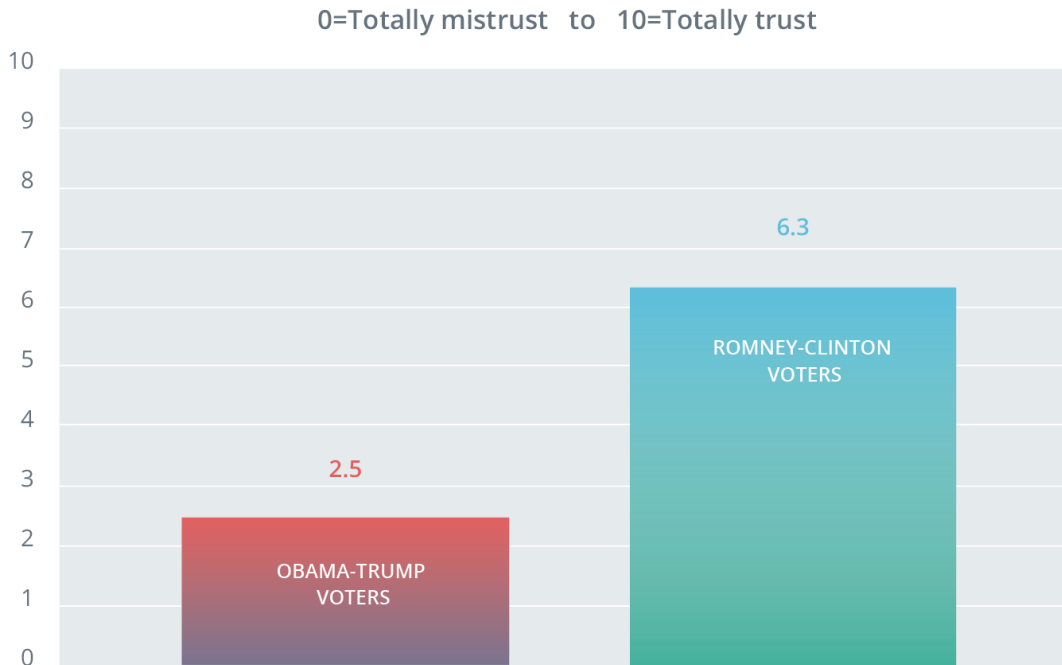
- Upset
- Anxious
- Furious



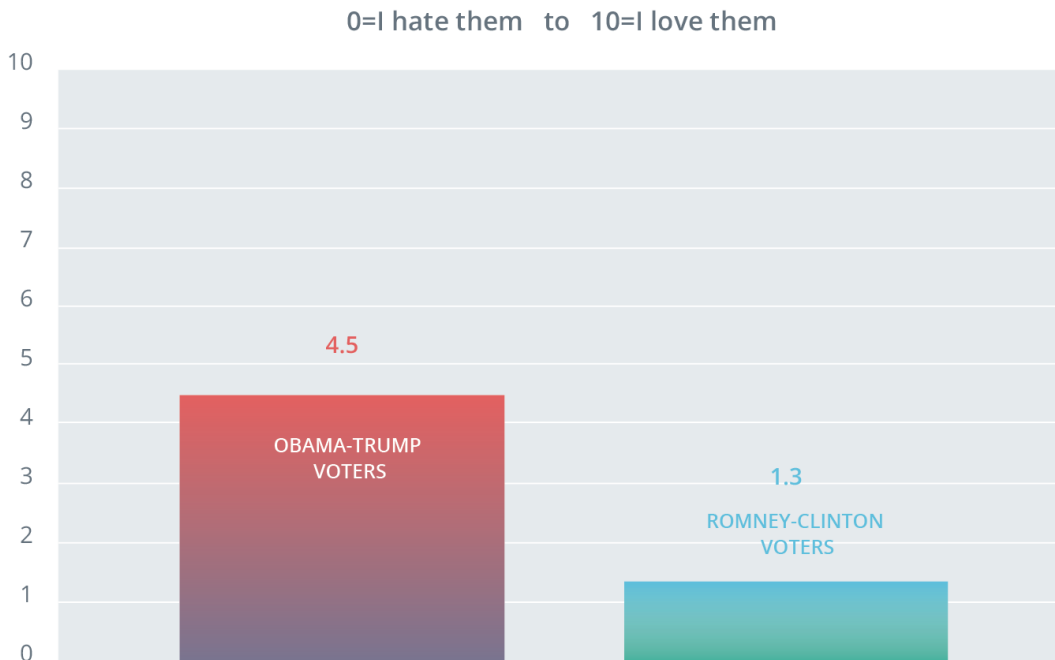
It's notable that President Trump has continuously been unsuccessful garnering the support of Romney-Clinton voters. As they focus on his personality and how seeing him and listening to him makes them feel, they continue to reject him, which is a major red-flag for him as he pursues re-election.

There is a significant split between Obama-Trump and Romney-Clinton voters regarding how they view the media's coverage of President Trump and how they feel about his tweets.

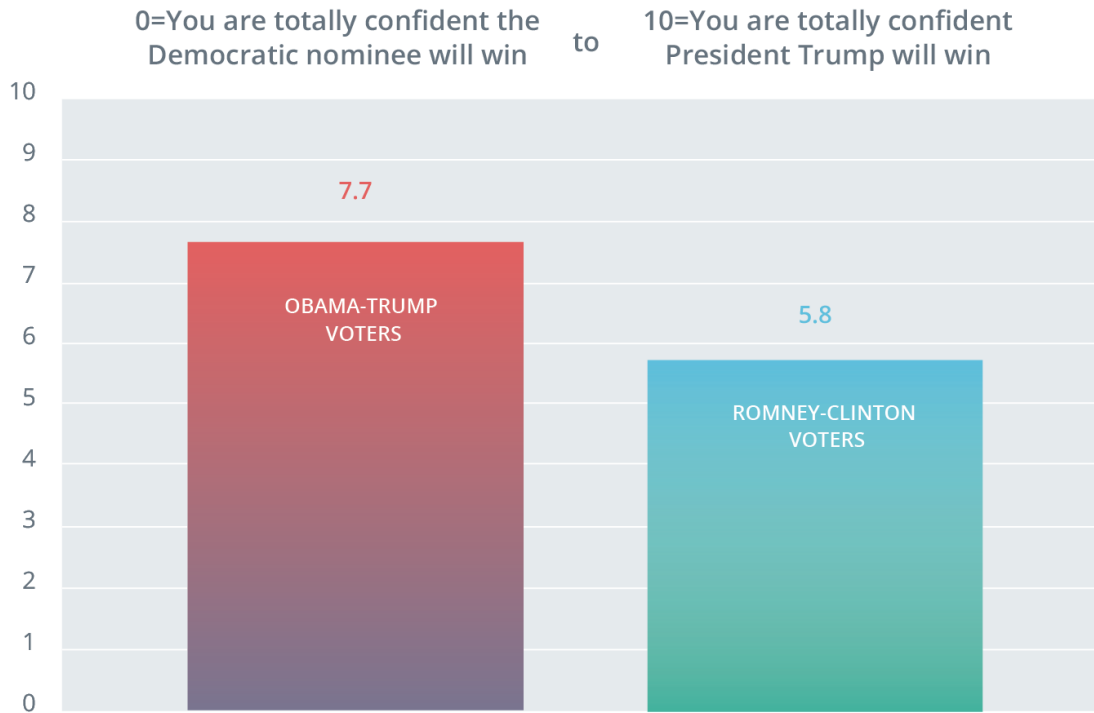
Obama-Trump voters mistrust the media's coverage of President Trump far more than Romney-Clinton voters:



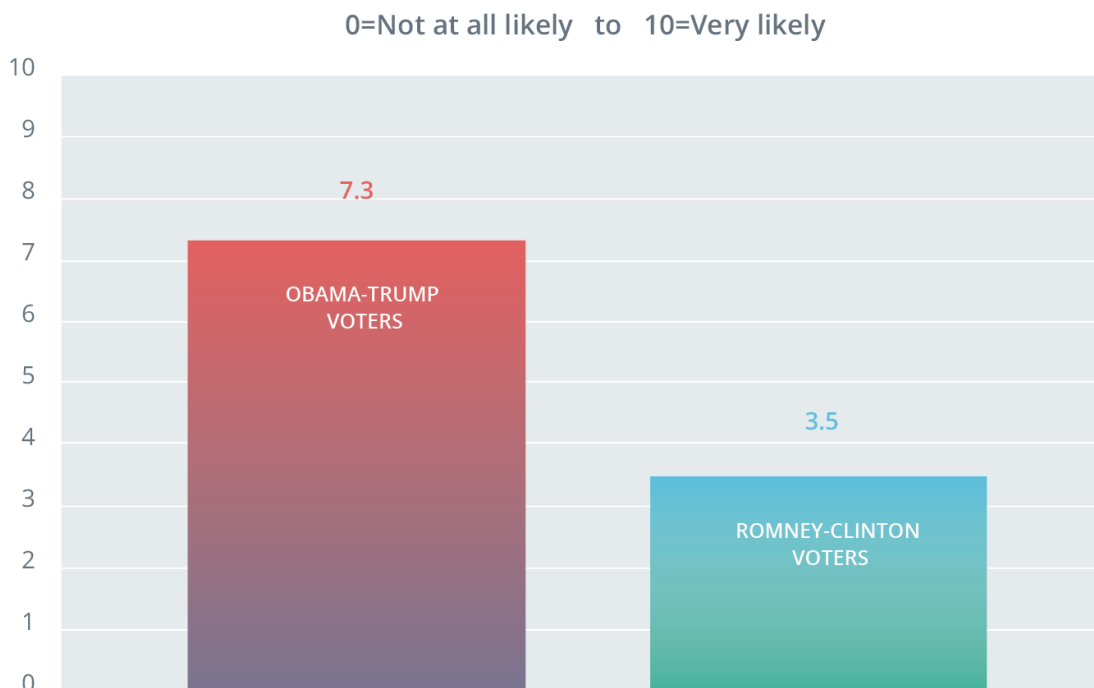
Also, Romney-Clinton voters feel far more negative about the president's tweets than Obama-Trump voters:



Obama-Trump voters have a high level of confidence that President Trump will be re-elected, if they were placing a \$100 bet on the outcome of the election. Romney-Clinton voters also believe the president will win re-election, but they have less confidence in the outcome:



Also, most of our Obama-Trump voters told us they would likely recommend to an adult in their life they can talk to about anything, including politics, and do so comfortably, without feeling at all awkward, that they vote for President Trump in 2020. Romney-Clinton voters indicated they were unlikely to recommend voting for President Trump, on average:



## 4 FOR SWING VOTERS, THE TOP ISSUES HEADING INTO ELECTION 2020 ARE HIGH HEALTHCARE COSTS, IMMIGRATION, AND THE ECONOMY.

In the beginning of each focus group, respondents named their top issue of concern heading into 2020. The most common responses were:

- Healthcare—the cost is too high (10)
- Immigration—border security, build the wall, protect American workers, etc. (9)
- The economy/jobs/the shrinking middle class (8)
- Foreign policy/the possibility of war (6)
- Cuts to public programs, including Social Security (4)

While four of our six Romney-Clinton voters believe the Democrats running for president are speaking about the national issues they care most about, only one-quarter—12 of 48—of our Obama-Trump voters agree.

During the past four months, respondents have also named the one thing a presidential candidate could propose that would help them economically. Their responses include:

- Reduce healthcare costs
- Reduce income taxes for the middle- and lower-class people
- Reduce the burden of student loans
- Increase the minimum wage
- Reduce college tuition rates
- Help create jobs
- Provide tax breaks for veterans
- Provide help for caregivers
- Increase Medicare and Social Security benefits
- Control or cap gas prices
- Quit taxing Medicare and Social Security

Each month, respondents have rated the direction of our country and the direction of their state on a scale from zero to 10 (from “totally wrong direction” to “totally right direction”). Notably, Obama-Trump voters believe the country is going in a better direction than their state, on average, 6.2/10 to 5.2/10. In Saginaw, Obama-Trump voters told us the country is “in a good place,” especially with the strong economy, and they oppose some of the actions of the new Democratic governor, including increasing the gas tax and reversing some of the good things the previous governor did. Romney-Clinton voters have the opposite view, stating that their state is moving in a better direction than the country, on average, 6.2/10 to 4.0/10. In Appleton, Romney-Clinton voters told us they don’t like some of what President Trump has been doing, including on immigration, while they support their new governor’s efforts to improve education.

During five of our focus groups, respondents provided a number of questions they would ask the Democrats running for president, including:

- Why is your only focus trying to bring down President Trump and not helping the people who have elected you to office?
- What are your policies on healthcare, Social Security, education, the economy, and immigration?
- How can you help us?
- How are you going to pay for all your policy ideas, including free healthcare and free college?
- How are you going to unite the party?
- How are you going to defeat President Trump?
- What are you going to do today to make sure our families are safe and secure?
- What's your strategy for getting along with other countries?
- What are your intentions as far as gun laws?
- What are you doing regarding military benefits?

Questions for President Trump included:

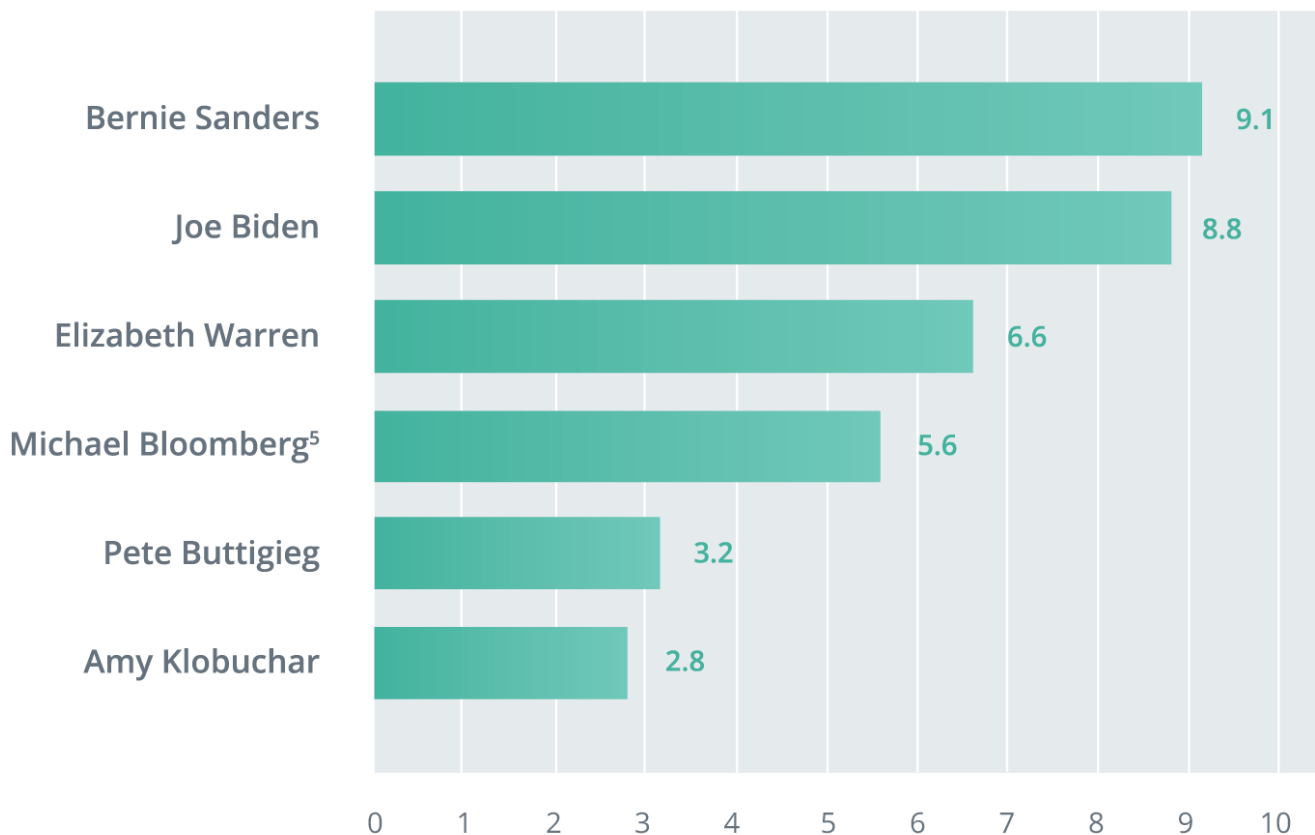
- If you had one day where both sides were united, what is the one thing you'd like to get accomplished in that day where everybody was working together?
- Why did you run for president?
- What ideas are you proposing for the next election?
- Where are you in the process with your border security plan?
- Could you do more on tax breaks for the lower and middle class?
- How are you going to keep developing our local communities?
- Why aren't you talking about the national debt?
- Why are you cutting funding to public health programs?
- Will you tone down your tweets?
- Will you ever release your taxes?

## 5

## SWING VOTERS AREN'T “EXCITED” ABOUT ANY OF THE DEMOCRATS RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT, AND PRESIDENT TRUMP WOULD BEAT EACH HANDILY IN HEAD-TO-HEAD MATCHUPS.

Respondents indicated with their dials their level of confidence in being able to identify unlabeled photos of each of the Democrats running for president in 2020 who made the debate stage last month, on a zero to 10 scale. Zero means they had no idea who the candidate is, and 10 means they were totally confident they know who the candidate is.

The following chart shows the results, on average, in descending order:



More than a year after Democrats began announcing their candidacies for president and following 10 primary debates, swing voters indicated that Sanders and Biden were the most recognizable, while the others had moderate to low recognition levels.

We have also showed an unlabeled photo of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez during each focus group after showing the Democrats running for president. Remarkably, our “AOC test” has revealed that during her short time in Congress, she has found a way to become familiar to swing voters in a way that some Democrats running for Congress have not. She scored at 5.0/10 on average.

<sup>5</sup> We asked about Michael Bloomberg for the last three months after he entered the race in November.

In our focus groups, there was no consensus that any of the Democrats running for president “excites” them. Also, they struggled to name anyone not running for the Democratic nomination who they would like to see run. Here’s what they said about the candidates:

### BERNIE SANDERS

In Appleton, some knew he is a U.S. Senator, but only one knew he is from Vermont.

In Port St. Lucie, he garnered the most positive reaction by far in the dial test, scoring as high as 96/100 (on a zero to 100 scale, from “dislike” to “like”), when he spoke about “the way you bring people together,” which is to “present an agenda that works for the working people of this country, not for the billionaire class.” They told us “he has a heart for the people of America” and he’s more about people than politics. Although they praised his “good intentions,” they were generally skeptical that he would get his agenda passed if he became president.

### JOE BIDEN

In Appleton, most knew he was the Vice President under President Obama and some knew he was a U.S. Senator before that (but none could name the state he’s from). Also, one knew he had a son who died from cancer.

In Wilkes-Barre, PA, which is 20 minutes from Scranton where Biden spent part of his childhood, there was no particular affinity for him among Obama-Trump voters.

In Port St. Lucie, Joe Biden was described as “an old politician” who knows what he needs to say, suggesting he’s insincere. When they imagine Biden debating President Trump this fall, they generally believe it would be a “disaster” for Biden because he would have difficulty holding a conversation, questioning his mental acuity. Also, with details about the Biden family coming to light from President Trump’s impeachment, some look at the Biden family more skeptically now.

### ELIZABETH WARREN

In Appleton, they knew virtually nothing about her, including which job she has now, which state she’s from, or what public policy issue brought her to prominence. When we showed them snippets from a recent Democratic debate and had respondents score them moment-to-moment, Warren’s results were impressive. During one snippets, she spoke about Afghanistan where she said, in part, “We cannot ask our military to keep solving problems that cannot be solved militarily.” She also talked about the importance of working with our allies to address terrorism. This scored in the low 90s, which was the highest-scoring clip for the project up to that point. They also scored her messaging on trade high, in the mid-80s.

In Saginaw, our swing voters viewed her negatively, saying she has “no credibility” because she wants to spend money we don’t have, and they disputed her claims about housing discrimination. They described her as “abrasive,” and none liked her personality.

In Wilkes-Barre, respondents reacted negatively to a debate clip where she was talking about transgender people, scoring as low as 35/100. Our swing voters described this as a “non-issue” with transgender people being such a low percentage of the population. They believe there are more important issues going on in our country.

In Port St. Lucie, swing voters didn’t react well to her, questioning her honesty, saying she would “say anything” to get elected. Also, they questioned whether she would be able to pass her policy agenda.

MICHAEL BLOOMBERG

In Saginaw, we showed Michael Bloomberg's 105-second announcement video and solicited verbal feedback. We learned they don't know very much about him, but they liked his ad overall. It's notable, however, that some were skeptical about some of his claims in the ad, including his desire to raise taxes on wealthy people, which would mean himself.

In Wilkes-Barre, we showed another Bloomberg ad. Respondents were generally split, with those who liked it saying it captured their attention and he makes them feel like he cares about the "everyday man." Those who didn't like it said it highlights the Democrats running for president only care about the first handful of states and not about the people of Pennsylvania. Seven of our 11 respondents in that group have seen his ads and they say being a billionaire is not an attractive feature because he "can't buy" the election. They say he needs to form a base of support. His money allowed him to run TV ads and get in the race late, but they question whether there is any grassroots support for his candidacy.

In Port St. Lucie, our swing voters generally liked Mike Bloomberg, especially those from the northeast who have some familiarity with him as mayor of New York City. However, they wondered whether his successes as mayor would be transferrable to the rest of the country. We heard New York is a much different place than Florida or the Midwest. Interestingly, respondents told us they weren't troubled by his "constant" ads, saying the other candidates would be doing the same thing if they had the money to do so.

PETE BUTTIGIEG

In Wilkes-Barre, his messaging about people not being paid enough in our economy scored well, in the high 70s. They told us "money is pretty much everything," and people cannot afford to live on the minimum wage. Increasing the minimum wage would help a lot of people.

In Port St. Lucie, he was described as "young" and providing no substance to what he was saying. Before we showed the video, only three of our eight swing voters had seen him before.

AMY KLOBUCHAR

In Port St. Lucie, three liked her, describing her as "honest," having a "good heart," and being more relatable to a middle-class person. However, most would describe her as "weak" or "meet" because she had a crackly voice and she looked like she was going to cry while delivering her closing statement. One respondent remarked that it didn't look like she could run the country.

In Port St. Lucie, our swing voters—eight Obama-Trump voters—considered a hypothetical matchup between President Trump and each of the six Democrats running for president—and President Trump would win the majority of the vote against each of them. He would win all eight votes in hypothetical matchups facing Biden, Warren, Buttigieg, and Klobuchar. He would win seven votes against Sanders, and he would garner six votes against Bloomberg.



Our swing voters would give the following advice to Democrats running for president:

- Stop attacking President Trump personally (“people are sick of the negativity”)
- Stick to the issues: Tell the American people what you would do as president, especially for the middle class
- Put forth feasible plans to make America better and describe how you’re going to accomplish your policy agenda
- Be moderate with your policy positions
- Explain how you’re going to pay for your new government programs
- Be honest and down-to-earth
- Don’t promise everything to everybody—prioritize
- Have a strong personality
- Do your homework because President Trump has all his bases covered

As we know, President Trump’s slogan is “Make America Great Again.” If our swing voters were advising the president’s Democratic challenger and were asked to come up with a phrase built upon “Make America \_\_\_\_\_ Again,” they would focus on unity, pride, and compassion. The most common responses were:

- Unified/united/whole (6)
- Proud (5)
- Compassionate/considerate/kind/civil (5)
- Stable (4)
- Successful/greater/profitable/economically viable (4)
- Free (4)
- Honest (3)
- Strong (3)
- Safe (3)

## 6

## SWING VOTERS RESENT THAT DEMOCRATS TOOK THEIR FOCUS OFF THE NEEDS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO SPEND MONTHS ON IMPEACHMENT – AND IT COULD COST THEM IN NOVEMBER.

From November through January, we read the following statement to respondents:

The allegation against President Trump is that in a July 25 telephone call, he asked Ukrainian President Zelensky to “look into” allegations of wrongdoing by Joe Biden, a potential 2020 competitor, and Biden’s son Hunter. A week or more before the call, Trump had directed the withholding of \$391 million in military and security aid that Congress had approved to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia. (Ukraine’s leaders reportedly found out about the withholding of funds in early August; the money was ultimately dispersed to Ukraine on September 11.) President Trump, in that July 25 call and through other actions, was allegedly using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election.

Obama-Trump voters were not particularly troubled by these allegations, scoring them 5.0/10 (from “not at all troubling” to “very troubling”). Our only Romney-Clinton voter scored this 10/10.

Respondents rated several statements about their feelings on impeachment, on a scale from zero to 10 (from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”). The chart on the next page shows how much they agree with these statements, in descending order.

SWING VOTERS

"I wish Democrats would drop their impeachment efforts, and instead focus on issues that would improve the quality of my life, my community, and the country as a whole."<sup>6</sup>

8.8

"Considering it would require 20 Republican senators to join with all 47 Democratic senators to remove President Trump from office, there's virtually no chance he'll be removed."<sup>7</sup>

8.2

"President Trump did something wrong, but he should not have been impeached. Instead, Congress should only censure him, thereby avoiding a Senate impeachment trial, and let voters in November determine whether he deserves four more years in office."<sup>8</sup>

7.1

"The Democrats ultimately couldn't use the Mueller Report to remove President Trump from office, so they've found another excuse to try again, this time using Ukraine and Joe Biden."<sup>9</sup>

7.1

"Impeaching President Trump will harm the U.S. economy."<sup>10</sup>

6.4

"President Trump is trying to drain the swamp in Washington. Impeachment is the way the DC establishment is pushing back."<sup>11</sup>

4.8

"President Trump is trying to drain the swamp in Washington. Impeachment is the way the DC establishment is pushing back."<sup>12</sup>

3.9

"President Trump should be impeached and removed from office."<sup>13</sup>

2.5

"While the allegations regarding Ukraine might be impeachment-worthy if another President behaved this way, it's far less serious because we're talking about President Trump. We know he's an unconventional president, so actions like this are OK only because it's Donald Trump doing it."<sup>14</sup>

2.3

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

<sup>6</sup> This statement was presented only in Youngstown, Dubuque, Saginaw, and Wilkes-Barre (October through January, respectively).

<sup>7</sup> This statement was presented only in Wilkes-Barre (January).

<sup>8</sup> This statement was presented only in Saginaw and Wilkes-Barre (December and January, respectively).

<sup>9</sup> This statement was presented only in Youngstown, Dubuque, Saginaw, and Wilkes-Barre (October through January, respectively).

<sup>10</sup> This statement was presented only in Youngstown, Dubuque, Saginaw, and Wilkes-Barre (October through January, respectively).

<sup>11</sup> This statement was presented only in Youngstown (October).

<sup>12</sup> This statement was presented only in Wilkes-Barre (January).

<sup>13</sup> This statement was presented only in Youngstown, Dubuque, Saginaw, and Wilkes-Barre (October through January, respectively).

<sup>14</sup> This statement was presented only in Dubuque and Saginaw (November and December, respectively).

Among swing voters in Youngstown, Dubuque, and Saginaw (October through December), 16 knew that if the House of Representatives ultimately voted to impeach President Trump, he would not be immediately removed from office and replaced by Vice President Pence. Two thought Vice President Pence would immediately replace President Trump, and eight didn't know one way or the other.

In Youngstown (October), respondents provided a word or phrase that best described how they felt about the prospect of a Trump impeachment.

Obama-Trump voters offered<sup>15</sup>:

- Joke/never-ending drama
- Bad for America
- I don't like the idea
- Not happy
- Definitely not
- Exhausting
- Concerned

Romney-Clinton voters listed:

- Hopeful
- Conflicted
- Not good at this point in his term

Obama-Trump voters generally feel the president's actions don't merit impeachment and this is a distraction preventing our leaders from focusing on the issues they care most about. One respondent explained:

*"I read the transcript. Is it impeachable? I don't know. My concern and my doubt would be not that it didn't happen; I read the transcript. My question would be: Is there a specific—not correlation—causation of 'I will not give you military aid if you don't look into Hunter Biden's oil business dealings?' Is there undeniable proof? If there is, then they should look into it, but I doubt that there is 100% undeniable evidence. We heard all this time about Mueller and this was going to be the whole thing. Now it's this thing. I want to know undeniable 100% proof that there was a connection between the withholding of military aid and a quid pro quo for looking into Hunter Biden's dealings. If that's the case, then they have a point. If not, then the rest of us are struggling here so let's focus on us for a little bit—working people." – Brad, Obama-Trump voter (Youngstown)*

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<sup>15</sup> One Obama-Trump voter didn't provide a response.

In Saginaw (December), our swing voters—all Obama-Trump voters—told us that if they heard the news that President Trump was being removed from office and Vice President Pence was becoming president, they would feel:

- Angry (2)
- Shocked (2)
- Confused (2)
- Frustration (1)
- Disappointment (1)
- Sad (1)
- Fearful (1)

In Saginaw, if Speaker Pelosi were to walk into the room, they would say the following to her about impeachment:

- “Give it up” – President Trump promised to “drain the swamp”
- Why are you wasting time and money on this?
- What are you doing for us? I don't want to hear about impeachment.

In Wilkes-Barre (January), we heard similar comments that they would direct toward Speaker Pelosi. They believe this is a distraction that's preventing Congress from acting on their behalf and in the best interest of the country. For example, some heard the new trade deal with Canada and Mexico was delayed because of impeachment, which they weren't happy about.

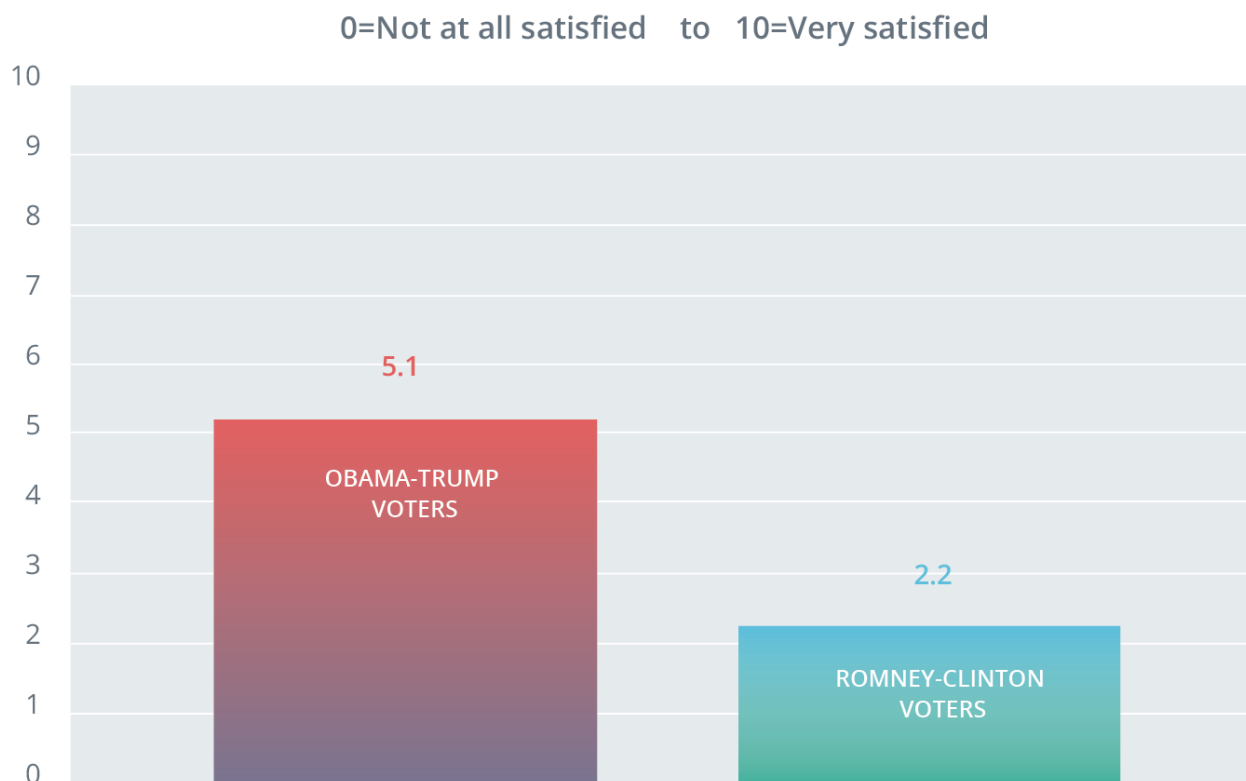
In Port St. Lucie (February), with the Democrats in the House successfully voting to impeach President Trump and the Democrats in the Senate unsuccessfully voting to remove him from office, five of our eight swing voters—all Obama-Trump voters—indicated these actions will make them more likely to vote for the Republicans in November, while two told us they are now more likely to vote for the Democrats. One indicated the Democrats' actions will have no impact at all regarding how they vote in the upcoming election.

They told us impeachment was a “witch hunt from day 1” and Democrats “dug their grave by doing that,” making themselves look “terrible” by looking like they would do anything to remove President Trump from office. They won't forget what the Democrats put the country through when they vote this November, but notably, most believe it's time to move the conversation and the country forward. By the time the election takes place in November, they won't be thinking about the impeachment and Senate trial that just ended very much, scoring it 1.4/10 (from “not at all” to “a lot”). They told us we all know what happened with impeachment and if they were advising President Trump, they would tell him to stop talking about it because “he has enough to do.”

## 7

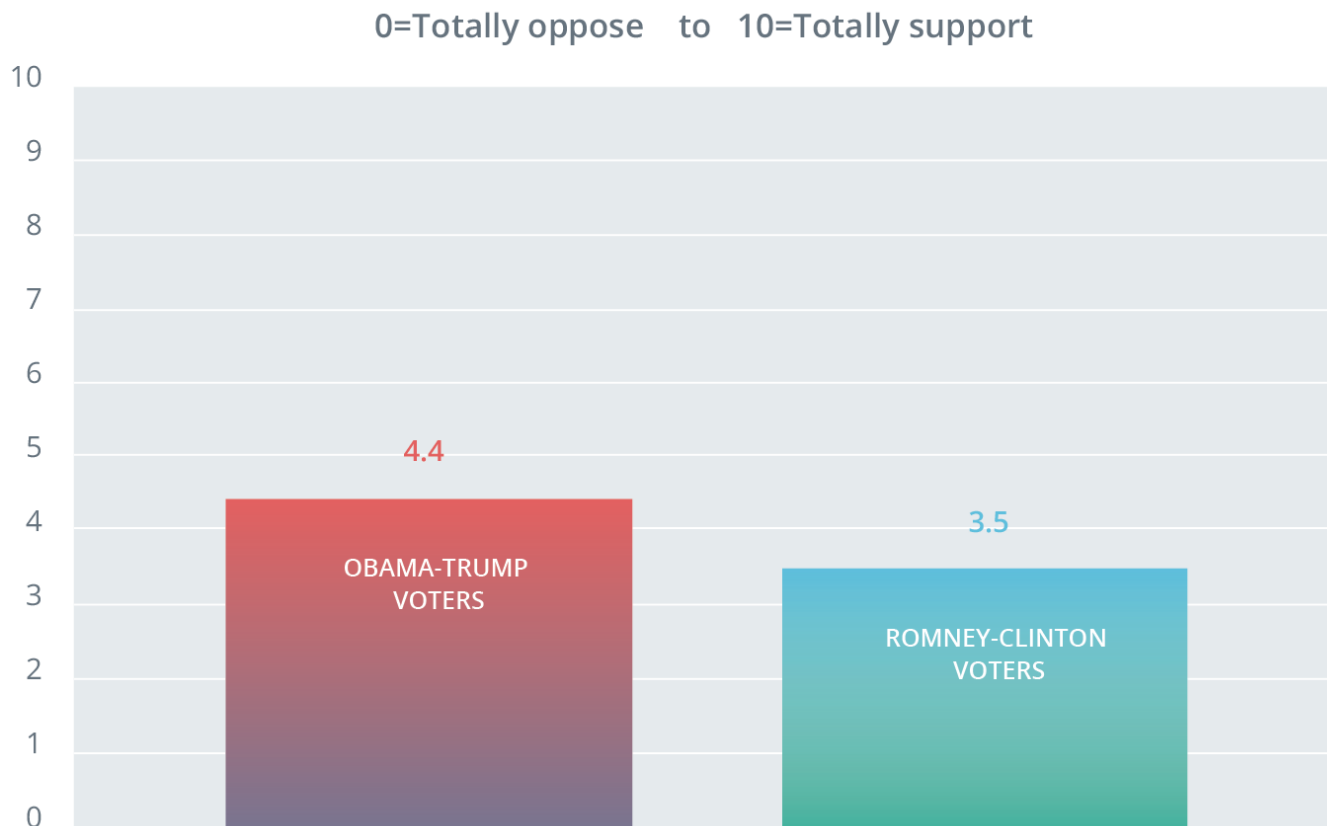
SWING VOTERS GENERALLY FEEL THAT PRESIDENT TRUMP HASN'T DONE ENOUGH TO MAKE HEALTHCARE MORE AFFORDABLE, BUT THEY'RE NOT EMBRACING MEDICARE FOR ALL EITHER.

For each of the last six months, respondents have rated how satisfied they are with President Trump's efforts to ensure healthcare is affordable for them and their family, on a zero to 10 scale (from "not at all satisfied" to "very satisfied"):



They say he hasn't made healthcare more affordable—and their costs continue to rise. He was supposed to create a comprehensive plan to address healthcare costs; some don't believe he had a plan to do that. They generally believe he could have done more to address the issue.

Some Democrats running for president have embraced Medicare for All. Swing voters have heard a moderate amount of news about the concept, with Obama-Trump and Romney-Clinton voters scoring it 5.5/10 and 4.7/10, respectively, on average (from “no news at all” to “a large amount of news”), but that hasn’t lead to support for the idea. Respondents rated how much they would support or oppose eliminating private health insurance and replacing it with Medicare for All:



Even more telling is that 21 of our 29 Obama-Trump voters over the past three months told us they could not vote for a Democratic presidential candidate in 2020 who called for eliminating private health insurance and replacing it with Medicare for All.



## 8

## PRESIDENT TRUMP IS VULNERABLE TO THE APPEAL OF LEFT-WING POPULISM.

During our focus groups in Appleton, Youngstown, and Saginaw, we showed respondents a chart with two columns.

The left column contained the following policy ideas:

- Impose an annual 2% tax on every dollar of net worth above \$50 million, and a 3% tax on every dollar of net worth above \$1 billion.
- Impose an additional 7% tax on any corporation with profits above \$100 million.
- Cancel \$50,000 in student loan debt for every person with household income under \$100,000.
- Pass a Medicare for All plan and make large corporations and wealthy people pay for it.

The right column listed the following policy ideas:

- Build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico.
- Ban citizens from certain countries from coming to the U.S.
- Impose tariffs on goods coming from China and Mexico, to force these countries to negotiate more favorable trade deals with the U.S.
- Weaken Obamacare with the goal of dismantling it.

Then, we told respondents to imagine these are their two policy choices next year—the left column, which represents Elizabeth Warren's policy ideas (and are similar to Bernie Sanders'), and the right column, which represents President Trump's policy ideas. Among our Obama-Trump voters, 11 would choose the left column, and 14 would choose the right column. Four of our five Romney-Clinton voters would choose the left column.

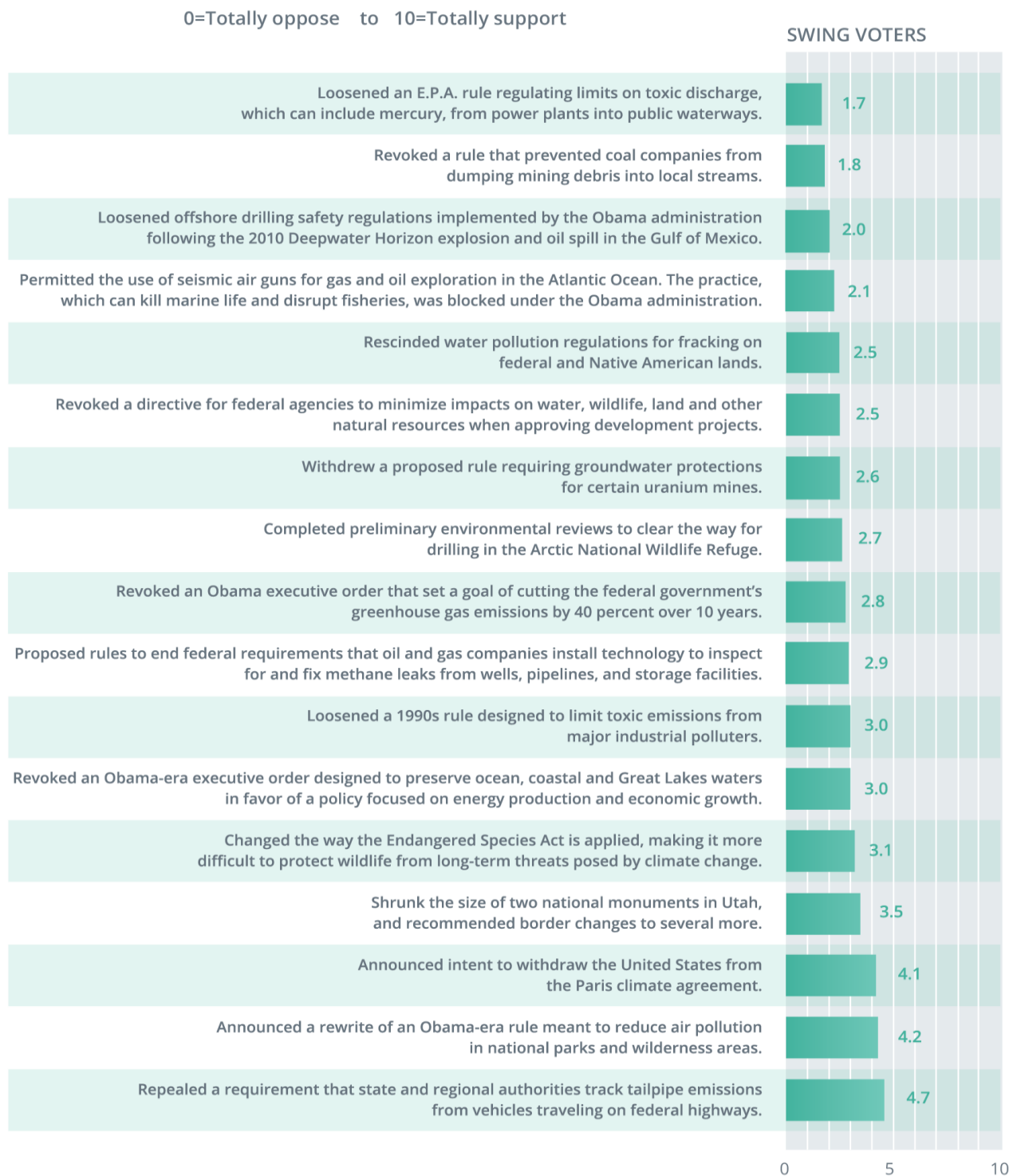
Those who would choose the left column told us “those are all things that I care about,” particularly the student loan debt and healthcare issues. They have financial struggles in those areas and those policy ideas sound appealing. Those who would choose the right column want the wall to be built, Obamacare to be dismantled, and feel that those policy ideas more directly affect their lives. The appeal of the left column's policy ideas to Obama-Trump voters represents a risk to the president's re-election campaign.

It's notable that in Youngstown and Saginaw, only six of our 18 Obama-Trump voters would describe the policy ideas in the left column as “socialism,” while four said they are not, and eight didn't know. None of our three Romney-Clinton voters would describe them as “socialism.” The Trump campaign should be careful about labeling left-wing populist ideas as “socialism” because from the feedback we have received, it's not a winning message.

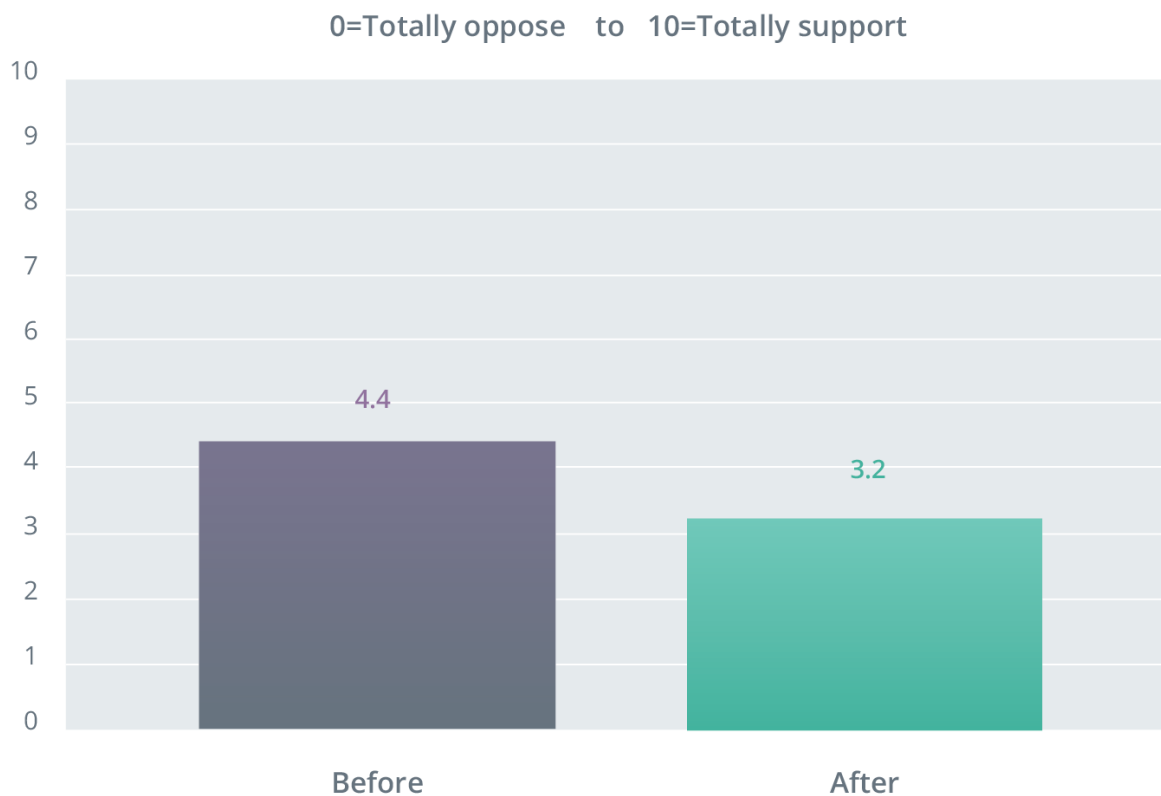
# 9 SWING VOTERS ARE DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO LOOSEN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE AFFECTING AIR AND WATER QUALITY.

For the past four months, respondents have rated a list of steps taken by the Trump Administration as it relates to the environment, on a scale from zero to 10 (from “totally oppose” to “totally support”).

The following chart shows them in ascending order, from most opposed to most supported:



Before and after we read the 17 regulations the Trump Administration has rolled back or is looking to roll back related to the environment, respondents rated how much they support or oppose these efforts, on a scale from zero to 10 (from “totally oppose” to “totally support”):



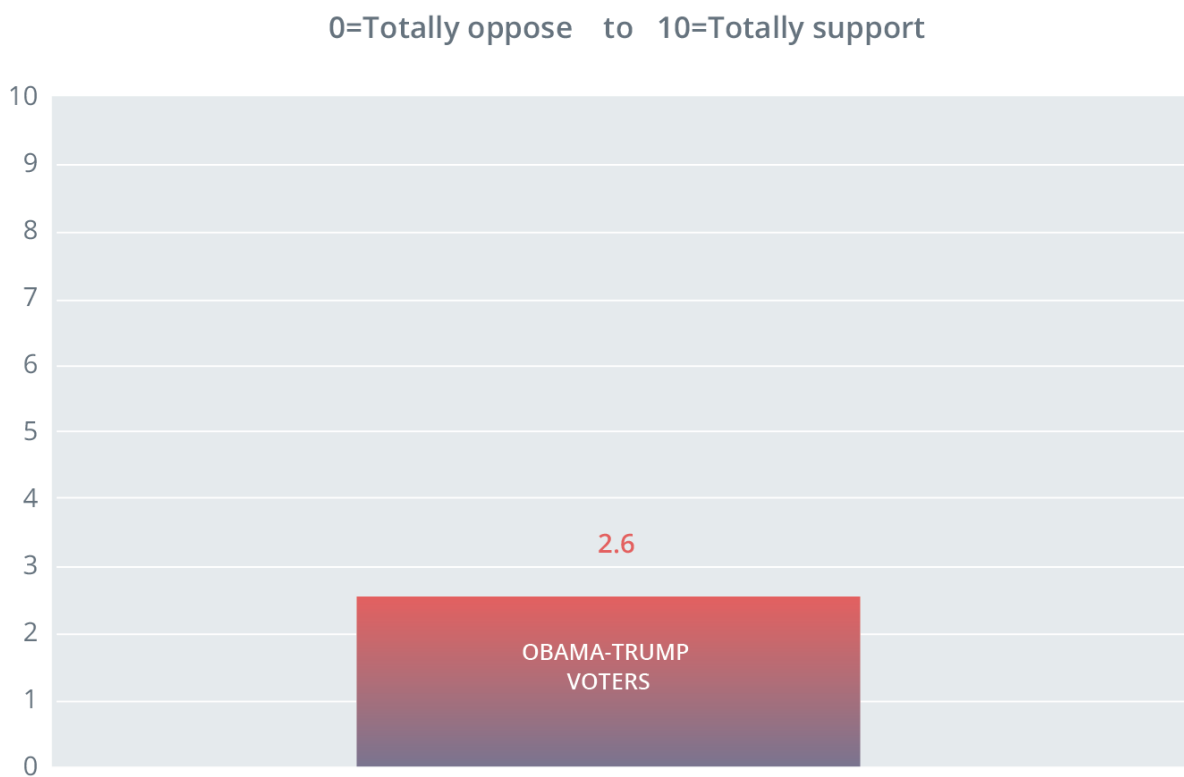
Our 34 swing voters—33 Obama-Trump and one Romney-Clinton—became more opposed to the Trump Administration’s efforts to loosen environmental regulations after hearing the 17 statements.

Our swing voters told us the Trump Administration’s efforts to loosen environmental regulations is “scary,” “disturbing,” and based on “greed.” They believe we have an obligation to protect the country and the world (as a world leader)—and those regulatory changes would be harmful. Seven of our 19 Obama-Trump voters in Wilkes-Barre and Port St. Lucie told us this would be a voting issue for them in November.

They are especially concerned about how these changes could impact them personally. They would be very troubled if they found out that one or more of these rollbacks affected air or water quality where they live, scoring it 8.7/10 (from “not at all troubling” to “very troubling”).

Significantly, after showing the list to Obama-Trump voters in Port St. Lucie and having them rate their support of the president’s overall efforts, which scored 2.6/10 in that group, we presented President Trump’s argument for taking such action:

President Trump has said, “For many decades, an ever-growing maze of regulations, rules, and restrictions has cost our country trillions and trillions of dollars, millions of jobs, countless American factories, and devastated many industries.” He says these are key reasons for rolling back the regulations you heard about—to restore jobs and grow our economy. Knowing this, how much do you support or oppose the Trump Administration’s roll backs of a wide variety of regulations related to the environment?



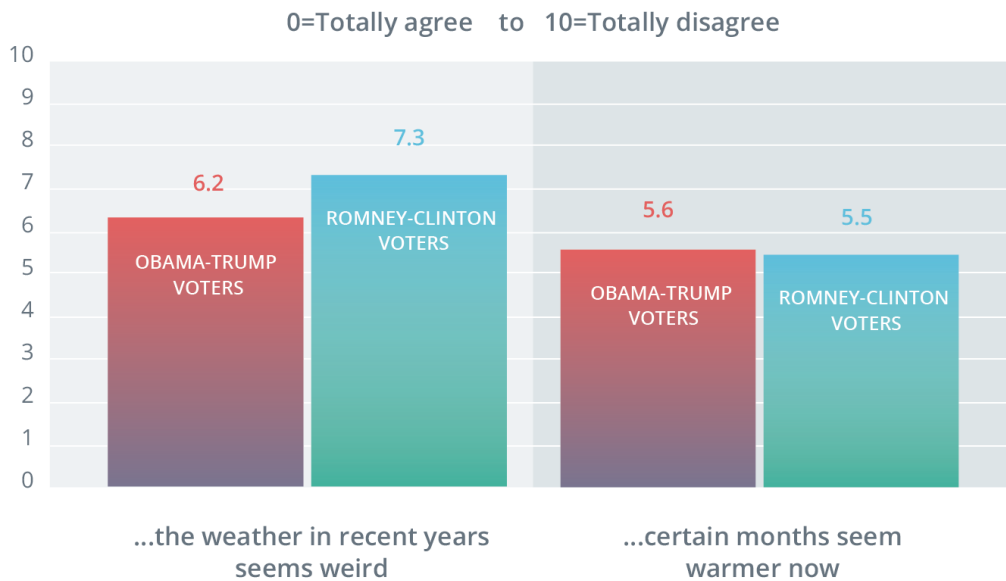
Notably, the president’s argument did not budge that score, meaning he was unpersuasive in garnering support from swing voters to embrace his administration’s efforts as it relates to environmental regulations.

## 10

SWING VOTERS BELIEVE THE WEATHER IN RECENT YEARS SEEMS “WEIRD” AND “WARMER NOW,” BUT THEY HAVE HEARD VIRTUALLY NOTHING ABOUT THE GREEN NEW DEAL.

Respondents have rated how strongly they agree or disagree with two statements. Zero means they strongly disagree, and 10 means they strongly agree.

*Compared to when you were much younger...*

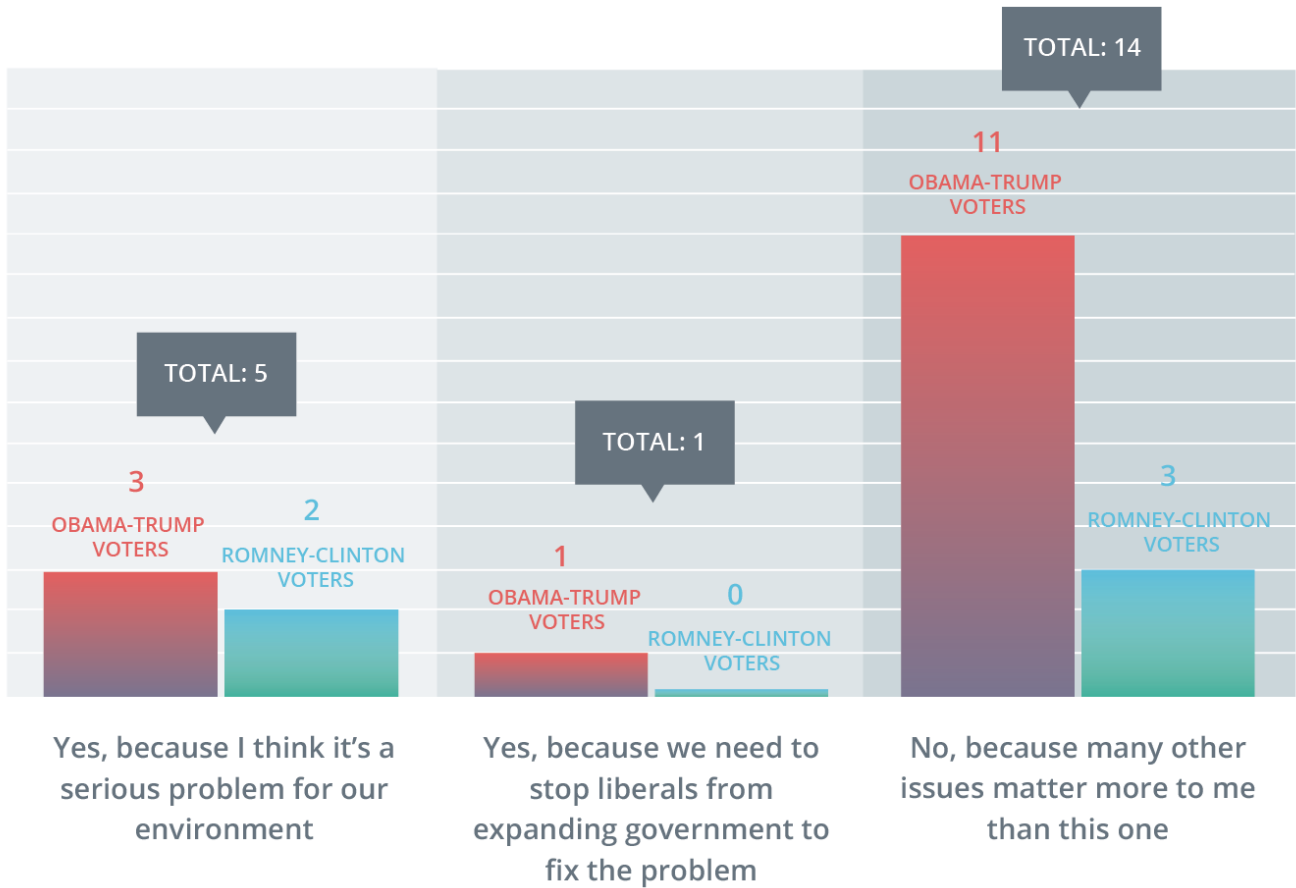


They cited the following examples of how the weather in recent years “seems weird”:

- More extreme temperatures and changes in weather
- More drastic natural disasters, including hurricanes, fires, and tornadoes
- A shift to basically two seasons—winter and summer—with spring and fall having “dropped off”
- Large amounts of rain

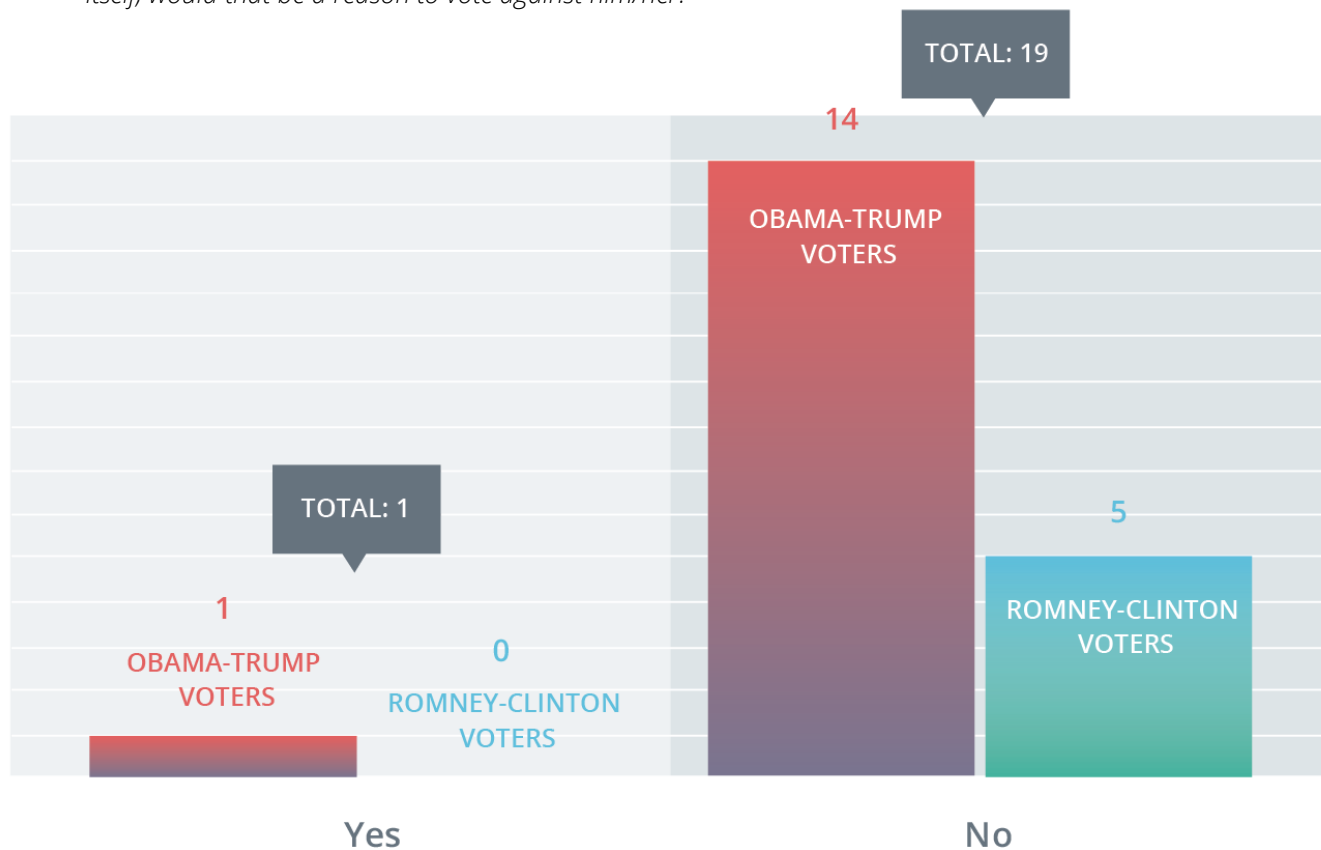
Democrats have introduced the “Green New Deal” to address climate change, but our swing voters have heard virtually nothing about it. Obama-Trump and Romney-Clinton voters scored this 2.0/10 and 1.7/10, respectively (from “no news at all” to “a large amount of news”).

During the first two months of this six-month cycle, swing voters indicated whether climate change is in their top five when they think about all the issue that matter to them when they vote in 2020:



We have also been interested in learning how candidates talking about this as a serious issue may impact their vote. During those two months, we asked:

*Imagine a Republican candidate for Congress is vocal about addressing climate change as a serious issue. By itself, would that be a reason to vote against him/her?*



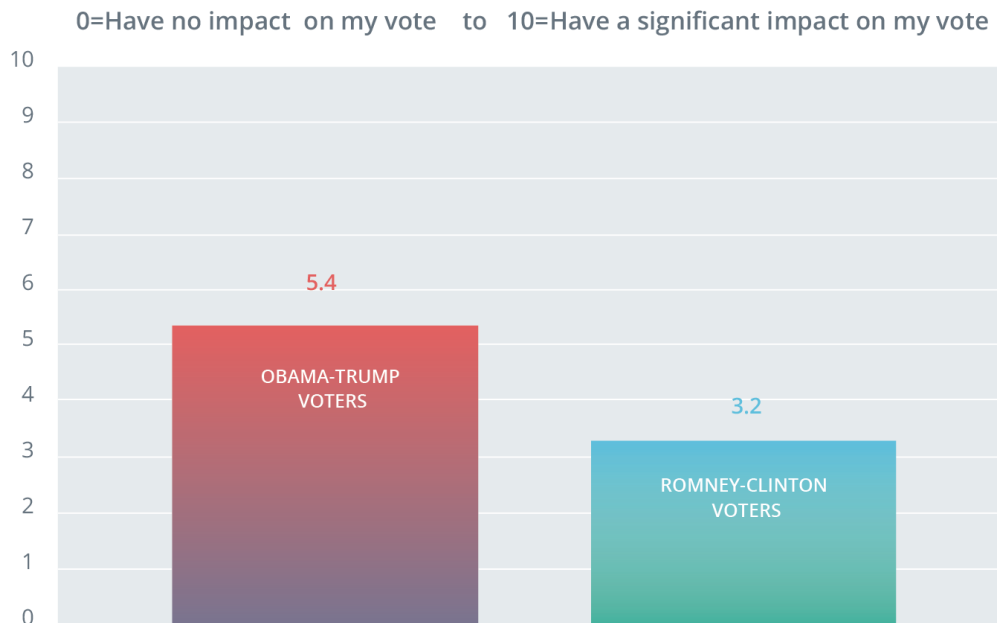
Most swing voters would not be turned off by a Republican candidate for Congress being vocal about addressing climate change as a serious issue. Republican candidates for Congress who fail to do this are missing an opportunity to connect with swing voters and address a major concern some of them have.



11

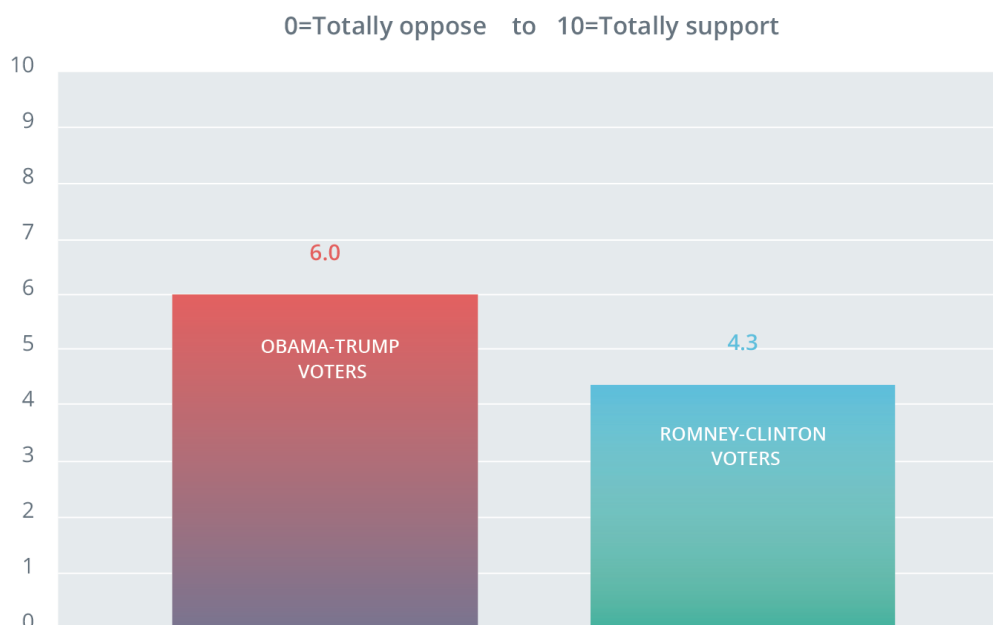
WHILE MOST SWING VOTERS DON'T SEE TRADE AS A KEY VOTING ISSUE, THEY WANT PRESIDENT TRUMP TO SECURE A FAIRER TRADE DEAL WITH CHINA, EVEN IF THEY EXPERIENCE SOME FINANCIAL PAIN, AS A RESULT.

Our swing voters rated how much President Trump's actions on trade will affect their vote in 2020<sup>16</sup>:



One reason why trade isn't a very important issue to them is that virtually no one knows anyone who has been helped or harmed by the president's trade policies.

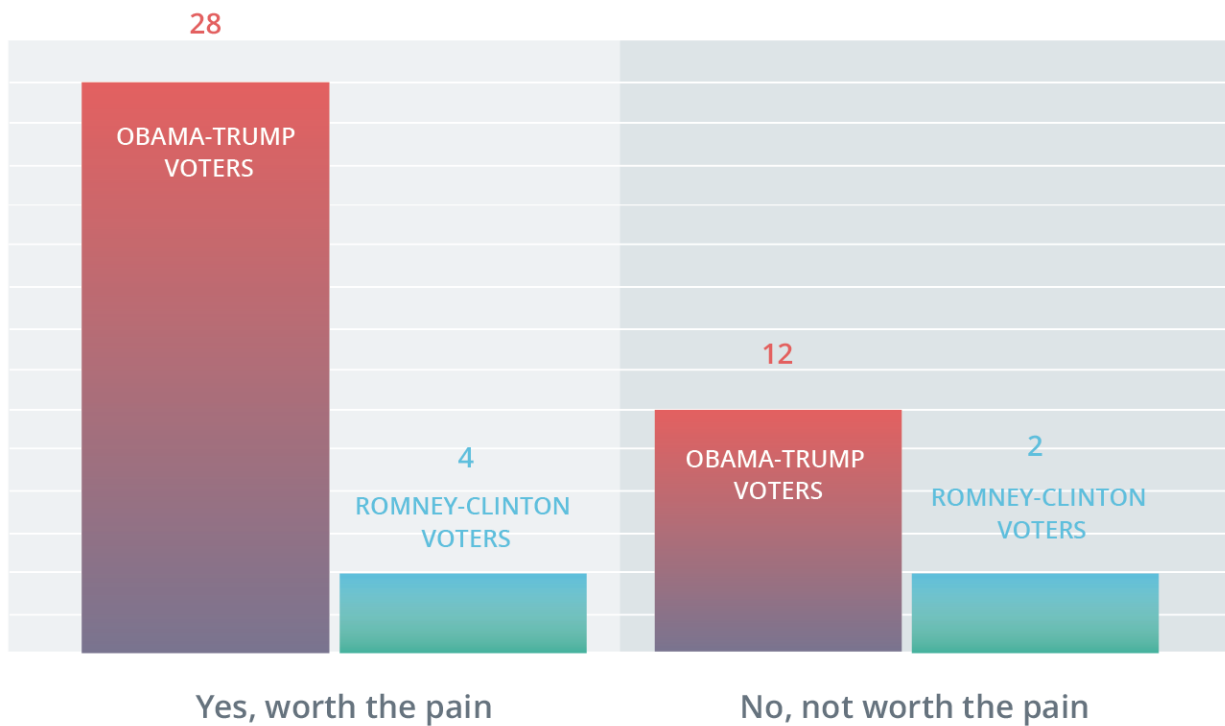
They also indicated how much they support or oppose the tariffs that the Trump Administration has placed on the imports of certain goods:



While most swing voters—40 of 46 overall—believe that American consumers pay for the tariffs imposed on imported goods (not “others”), fewer than half—21 of 46—feel like they’re paying higher prices for goods because of the tariffs imposed by the Trump Administration.

If a “trade war” with China were to cause prices to rise noticeably for them and their family, Obama-Trump voters’ support for the president would decline very slightly (4.8/10), while Romney-Clinton voters’ support would decline more significantly (3.7/10) (from “my support for him will erode substantially” to “my support for him will grow substantially”).

Notably, President Trump has had leeway with our swing voters to implement his trade agenda. Obama-Trump and Romney-Clinton voters agree that America’s efforts to secure a fairer trade deal with China, to help American exporters and to protect intellectual property, are worth the financial pain from higher prices on imports we buy from other countries.



President Trump could have become vulnerable in a prolonged “trade war” with China that caused prices to noticeably increase (but it looks like the U.S. and China will avoid such an occurrence).

# 12 THE HEALTH OF THE ECONOMY IS IMPORTANT TO SWING VOTERS, BUT THEY BELIEVE NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES ARE SLIGHTLY MORE IMPORTANT, ON AVERAGE.

During five focus groups, from September through January, we told our swing voters:

Imagine you're standing in the voting booth in November 2020 and about to cast your ballot. You may be thinking about the issues that matter to you. Compared to the state of the economy, how important are national security issues (North Korea, Iran, Russia, etc.) to you when you vote next year?



The health of the U.S. economy is very important to our swing voters, but national security issues are moderately even more important to them, on average.

One swing voter explained:

*"The economy could be great, but if we're fearful for our lives every day...To me, it's not all about the money. If I can feel safe and sound in my own country and not have to worry about North Korea and not have to worry about every time you turn on the news that some other way that we're fighting with someone else—to me, it's just way more important than the health of the economy is." –Jodi, Romney-Clinton voter*

Notably, we conducted a focus group with Obama-Trump voters in Wilkes-Barre just days after President Trump issued the airstrike order to kill Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. They strongly supported the move, scoring it 7.9/10 (from "totally oppose" to "totally support"), saying President Trump acted in our country's best interest. In fact, they said that decision would make them more likely to vote for President Trump in November, scoring it 6.9/10 (from "much less likely to vote for President Trump in November" to "much more likely to vote for President Trump in November").

Even if the attack against General Soleimani would have led to an all-out war with Iran, they still would have been somewhat more likely to vote for him in November, on average, scoring it 5.6/10, using the same scale (although the average score is less than if there were no war with Iran).

The importance of national security issues is further supported by how our swing voters reacted to this statement, "By taking this action against Iran, President Trump risks dragging America into another costly war. Instead, he should focus on issues that would improve the quality of my life, community, and the country as a whole." Swing voters only somewhat agreed, scoring this 6.0/10 (from "totally disagree" to "totally agree"), showing they're conflicted over being involved militarily in a new conflict vs. focusing on domestic issues, which provides an insight into just how important national security issues are to them.