

In January 2025, Ipsos conducted a qualitative research project in partnership with Galvanize Action. This included two full days of online diaries, followed by six dynamic focus group discussions.

## METHODOLOGY & TARGET SPECIFICATIONS

### 2-Day Online Boards

We recruited 36 women from:

- Pennsylvania (12)
- Michigan (12)
- Wisconsin (3)
- Ohio (9)

### Dynamic Group Discussions

- Choosing top respondents from the boards, we scheduled six, 90-minute dynamic group discussions with 5-6 per group (n=30+)

### Target Audience Specifications

- All participants were moderate white women (26 women were defined as somewhat conservative, moderate, or somewhat liberal using attitudinal statements to gauge core traits; 10 women self-identified as moderate).
- We recruited equally across the following age groups:
  - 18-34
  - 35-54
  - 55-70
- Mix of rural, suburban, and small towns in each state
- Mix of marital and parental status
- Household incomes <\$100k
- Mix of educational attainment, but primarily less than graduate degree

## KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Many believe it was a fair election with unfair circumstances.** While the majority of participants expressed strong trust in the election results and the voting process, many viewed Kamala Harris's late candidacy and limited campaign time as unfair.
  - 83% rated their trust level of the 2024 election results 8 or higher on a 10-point scale.
  - 84% rated their trust level of the 2024 voting process 8 or higher on a 10-point scale. Of the participants that didn't rate it highly, many said they trust the voting process in their state, but not all other states.

*"I feel the voting process still works and there is a natural back-and-forth in our country. We are a democracy for a reason and the established voting protocols were followed to a T, which yielded the results we have." – 25yrs, PA, Moderate, Single*

*"From everything I've seen, the systems in place worked effectively to ensure that every vote was counted accurately and fairly." – 33yrs, OH, Moderate, Single*

*"I trust the election process because the systems in place worked effectively. However, I do think it was unfair to the Democratic Party for Biden to drop out so late and for Harris to be nominated so quickly without much time to campaign." – 25yrs, PA, Moderate, Single*

*"I think the election was fair in the sense that votes were counted accurately. I don't think it was fair that Harris had so little time to campaign... I think that's really Biden's fault." – 32yrs, PA, Somewhat Liberal, Single*

- 2. Fears of rising authoritarianism led many to question whether democratic institutions can withstand the pressures of the new administration.** Many participants expressed concern about the future of democracy, fearing that the new administration's leadership could lead to authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic norms. Worries centered around the power of the presidency, the lack of checks and balances, and efforts to silence dissent. A few participants, however, expressed confidence in the existing system of checks and balances to protect democratic processes.

*"With Trump in office and with the House and the Senate both being republican, I question how much the democratic process will work. There need to be checks and balances on the power of the President. I worry that Trump will become a dictator and democracy will be history." – 42yrs, WI, Moderate, Single*

*"I worry that Trump will become a dictator and that democracy will cease to exist if there are no checks on his power." – 42yrs, WI, Moderate, Single*

*"I fear for the future of democracy. Trump has already proven that he is out for retribution - he wants to settle the score with people who 'wronged him' and he doesn't see a problem with that. He continues to demean people that he doesn't agree with." – 68yrs, MI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I am a bit fearful for the future of democracy. I believe that our opinions in this country have become extremely polarized which can lead to silencing and censoring of opinions as well as facts." – 34yrs, PA, Moderate, Married*

*"I do trust democratic institutions because they are trying to preserve our democracy. However, I think that these institutions could be corrupted and that change could happen quickly." – 33yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"I feel cautiously optimistic about the future of democracy. While challenges exist, such as political polarization and misinformation, I trust that democratic institutions remain strong overall. They've withstood significant tests over time, which reinforces my belief in their resilience." - 33yrs, OH, Moderate, Single*

**Distrust in the federal government and politicians:** Many participants see the federal government as corrupt, self-serving, and prioritizing the wealthy over average citizens. They have little faith that politicians will act in the best interests of everyday people.

*"I don't trust the government at all. It feels like the rich and powerful get everything, and the rest of us are left behind." – 35yrs, OH, Moderate, Single*

*"I think politicians are shady in general and hard to trust. I think there are always things going on that the American people don't know about." – 43yrs, WI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I don't trust the federal government as far as I could throw a football. Which is not very far. The federal government is always gonna be for themselves. The rich are always gonna be for the rich." – 35yrs, OH, Moderate, Single*

**Defining “preserving democracy”:** For participants, “preserving democracy” means more than just elections: it’s about safeguarding the Constitution, the rule of law, individual rights and freedoms, and ensuring a government that is accountable to its citizens.

*"Preserving democracy means having checks and balances and defending the rule of law. It means having accountability from our leaders and an independent Dept of Justice. It means preventing an authoritarian form of government and preventing misinformation." – 68yrs, MI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"Preserving democracy means preserving the rights of all people. It is essential that individuals in our country have the right to speak freely, think critically, and make their own choices." – 30yrs, PA, Somewhat Liberal, Single*

3. **The new administration amplifies both hopes and fears with this audience on key issues.** Respondents cite the economy, immigration, and social issues (women’s rights/abortion and LGBTQ+) as their top concerns. While some have hope for positive change on these issues, others fear harmful consequences from the new administration’s policies.

*"The new administration has caused me to care much more about these key issues. Being that they stand in opposition to my view, I feel the need to be more involved in advocating for these issues." – 30yrs, PA, Somewhat Liberal, Single*

*"I'm hopeful the new administration can undo/fix what was done. That prices can come down, the economy can flourish, that our borders can be secured." - 43yrs, WI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I think the new administration is going to come in like a storm and start fixing all the problems that have happened in the last 4 years. I think there will be more money for America and less for all the other countries. I don't mind helping out other countries but we need to help our own first." – 55yrs, MI, Moderate, Living with Significant Other*

*"These issues are more important to me than they were before because they are now being attacked, and I feel vulnerable. Part of my family feels anxious about things that could really affect them in the next four years (LGBTQ+ rights)." – 46yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"I'm angry because we're supposed to be living in one of the best countries, yet, people are fighting for their rights/bodies. There are people about to lose everything and have nothing." – 34yrs, MI, Moderate, Single*

**The economy remains the top concern for most.** Rising inflation and the cost of living weigh heavily on many participants, causing significant financial strain. Women expressed worry about their ability to save, retire, and maintain a decent standard of living as prices continue to climb.

*"The economy is killing me. Grocery prices are through the roof, and I feel like my husband's paycheck goes straight to groceries every week." – 33yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"The economy is number one for me right now. I am single and early in my career. It is impossible for me to afford to buy a house at this moment even though any personal finance guru would tell me I have made close to perfect decisions with money over the last four years since college. This is wild to me." – 25yrs, PA, Moderate, Single*

*"Economy/ Inflation/ Cost of living: This is my biggest issue because it is SO expensive to live right now. Grocery prices are what is killing my family the most these days. I feel like I give my husband's paycheck entirely to Walmart for groceries, and I am tired of it." – 33yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"The economy is number one: my retirement depends on how well the stock market does. Prices for gas, groceries, etc., for daily living affect my quality of life and how much enjoyment I can partake in." – 62yrs, MI, Moderate, Divorced*

**Immigration is a significant concern, with respondents divided on how it should be addressed.** Some expressed frustration over "illegal" immigration, while others hoped for bipartisan solutions.

*"Illegal immigration is a major issue for me. People need to go through the proper channels to enter this country." – 43yrs, WI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"Immigration is another important issue for me right now. I can see both sides of the issue and really would like to see some compromises between parties when it comes to this issue." – 25yrs, PA, Moderate, Single*

**Social issues such as abortion and women's rights remain top concerns for those leaning in both directions politically.** Some shared fear that rights are being stripped away.

*"Women's rights are at risk, and I'm worried about how things are going to unfold under the new administration." – 61yrs, WI, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"Abortion/women's rights: It's important because as a woman struggling with infertility, I'm worried about what will happen!" – 34yrs, MI, Moderate, Single*

*"Women's rights have been taken away. We are losing our rights, and things are out of control." – 61yrs, WI, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"I am a Republican but I am pro-choice. I think that abortion considerations should be discussed by the mother and her alone. A man shouldn't be able to tell a woman what to do when it comes to abortion. What upsets me the most is that many women have to put their lives in danger if they get pregnant. Women should be able to get the care that they need without influence from the government. My biggest concern regarding abortion is that politicians are so adamant about women not having access to a safe space to receive an abortion. It annoys me that women can be forced to have a baby but no one cares about the baby after it is born. If a politician is going to make laws to make abortion illegal, they should be financially responsible for raising that baby until they turn 18." – 33yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

4. **While many are uncertain about how they will adapt to the new administration, there's a shared commitment to staying civically engaged.** Participants said they plan to focus on local and state-level elections, advocate for important issues, and hold politicians accountable.

*"I'm still going to local school board meetings and community events. What happens locally has a huge impact on everything else." – 65yrs, MI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I'm going to stay civically active by contacting my representatives, writing letters, and attending rallies." – 58yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"I'm working with the Convention of States group to push for more power at the local and state levels rather than the federal government controlling everything." – 65yrs, MI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I think we need to start working on letting our voices be heard, so at the next election, a brighter future can happen. I will attend rallies, sign petitions, and volunteer my time." – 58yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

**Most participants are taking a cautious "wait and see" approach.** They acknowledge the uncertainty of potential changes while remaining open to adaptation if necessary. Those who align with the new

administration do not anticipate making significant changes in their lives, while those who expressed strong opposition stated they will push back against its tenor and policies, emphasizing the need to combat misinformation and harmful narratives.

*"I will have to see when it gets to that point as I think it's a bit too early to know how to shift and adapt or if it's necessary." – 27yrs, MI, Somewhat Liberal, Living with SO*

*"I'm taking a wait-and-see approach, but I plan to stay informed and be open to adapting if things change." – 33yrs, OH, Moderate, Single*

*"It is hard to say what my response to an unknown change will be. I hope I can stay open to the changes if I see they benefit the country as a whole." – 67yrs, OH, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I don't expect to make any adjustments." – 65yrs, MI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I'm excited I don't have to adapt anything." – 53yrs, PA, Somewhat Liberal, Living with SO*

*"I plan to call out politicians when they lie or act unprofessionally—I will still be respectful of minorities that the new administration will not recognize." – 68yrs, MI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"Don't believe ridiculous lies. Do research. Don't be manipulated by those in power. Don't participate in scapegoating marginalized communities—it's un-American." – 64yrs, PA, Somewhat Conservative, Single*

5. **Feelings about the country's future are deeply divided, ranging from hope to deep anxiety and fear.** Some see potential for economic growth, security, and national unity, while others fear worsening social divisions, economic struggles, and threats to democracy and human rights.

**Hope:** *"I feel hopeful and curious. I just want to see our country thrive. I want her to be a booming economy." – 53yrs, PA, Somewhat Liberal, Living with Significant Other*

*"My biggest hope for the future is that all of our representatives in Washington can put their own personal desires aside and work together." – 70yrs, OH, Somewhat Conservative, Widowed*

*"I don't agree with the new administration and most of their opinions/stances on political issues, but I am going to see how the next few years go, and hope they can make some positive change within the US, and that the country's citizens can come closer together and not have such a big divide." – 33yrs, PA, Somewhat Liberal, Living with Significant Other*

**Anxiety & Stress:** *"I feel apprehensive as I do not know what to expect, and I am anxious." – 46yrs, OH, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"I feel stressed because of the uncertainty of how many of these dramatic changes will impact our country and my family." – 68yrs, MI, Somewhat Conservative, Married*

*"I'm a bit stressed that our newly elected leaders are not going to have empathy for people who are in marginalized groups. I'm stressed for immigrants and LGBTQ people especially. I do not want to see anyone's rights taken away." – 25yrs, PA, Moderate, Single*

**Fears (across ideologies):** *"My fears include loss of financial security in retirement, loss of healthcare, and possibly the country going into recession." – 42yrs, WI, Moderate, Single*

*"I fear a country that will become even more divided—if that's even possible—over the next four years." – 52yrs, MI, Somewhat Liberal, Married*

*"My biggest fear is that President Trump will not be able to repair the damage caused by the Democrats in just four short years. I also fear that the Democrats are going to continue their behavior from his first term—phony accusations, phony court cases, hoaxes, and other things to take time away from governing. I still wonder what more he could have accomplished during his first term if he hadn't had to deal with all of that!" – 70yrs, OH, Somewhat Conservative, Widowed*

**Terror:** *"I feel terrified. It's going to be awful, ugly, and detrimental to our government, our democratic republic, and to all citizens who aren't filthy rich." – 64yrs, PA, Somewhat Conservative, Married*