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Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories

An examination of the 2018 electorate, based on validated voters

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to understand how Americans voted in 2018 and how their turnout and vote choices differed from 2016. For this analysis, we surveyed U.S. adults online and verified their turnout in the two elections using commercial voter files that aggregate official state turnout records.

We surveyed 10,640 U.S. adults online in November 2018 and 4,183 adults in November and December 2016. Everyone who took part is a member of Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel recruited through national, random sampling of telephone numbers or, since 2018, residential addresses. This way nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The surveys are weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and many other characteristics. Read more about the [ATP's methodology](#). Verification of voter turnout involved matching the panelists to two or more commercial voter files. Panelists for whom a record of voting was located are considered validated voters; all others are presumed not to have voted.

Here are the [questions used for this report](#) and its [methodology](#).

Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories

An examination of the 2018 electorate, based on validated voters

Compared with Hillary Clinton's [2-point popular vote advantage](#) over Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election, the Democratic Party expanded its margin over the Republican Party to [9 points](#) in votes cast for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018, a gain of 7 percentage points. This increased support was sufficient for the Democratic Party to gain the majority in the House with a net pickup of 41 seats. Voter turnout as a share of the eligible population was 49%, the highest for a midterm election in 100 years. A new analysis of verified voters from Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel examines what 2016 voters and nonvoters did in the 2018 midterm elections and offers a detailed portrait of the demographic composition and vote choices of the 2018 electorate. It provides an update and comparison with findings from our [study of the 2016 electorate](#).

Compared with how Clinton fared in 2016, Democratic candidates for Congress in 2018 made gains from several sources. Among Americans who voted in both elections, Clinton's 2016 voters supported Democrats in 2018 at a slightly higher rate than Trump's voters supported Republican candidates. Slightly more of Clinton's than Trump's voters turned out to vote in 2018. In combination, party loyalty, defection and turnout differences among 2016 voters accounted for a little less than half of the Democratic gains over Clinton's two-point margin.

Nonvoters in 2016 who turned out in 2018 voted heavily for Democratic candidates, accounting for about half of the Democratic gains. Additionally, a small share of the gains came from people who voted for third-party candidates in 2016; they favored Democratic candidates over Republican candidates in 2018 by a narrow margin.

Voting patterns in 2018 reflected a great deal of continuity with 2016, though Democratic candidates in 2018 did better among a few groups, notably men, young people and secular voters. Voting patterns among several other large groups changed less, including Black voters, voters ages 65 and older, Protestants, regular churchgoers and women.

Given their relatively lower turnout, midterm elections are not necessarily predictive of what will happen in the next presidential election, when many more American voters will take part.

This analysis is based on interviews with 10,640 members of Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel conducted Nov. 7-16, 2018, shortly after the general election. It also draws on

interviews conducted among 3,770 of the panelists from Nov. 29 to Dec. 12, 2016, after the general election that year and interviews conducted Aug. 20 to Oct. 28, 2018 among all members of the panel at that time. Researchers attempted to match the panelists to two different [commercial voter files](#) that contain official records of voter registration and turnout for 2016 and 2018. For the panelists interviewed in 2016, their 2016 vote history is based on verification with three additional commercial voter files, as described in an [earlier report](#). (For more details, see “[Methodology](#).”) This process of verifying voter turnout helps to correct for the tendency of some people to [overreport voting](#) and is generally regarded as providing a more accurate picture of the electorate.

Where the 2018 Democratic advantage came from: 2016 nonvoters, higher turnout by Clinton voters, and vote switching

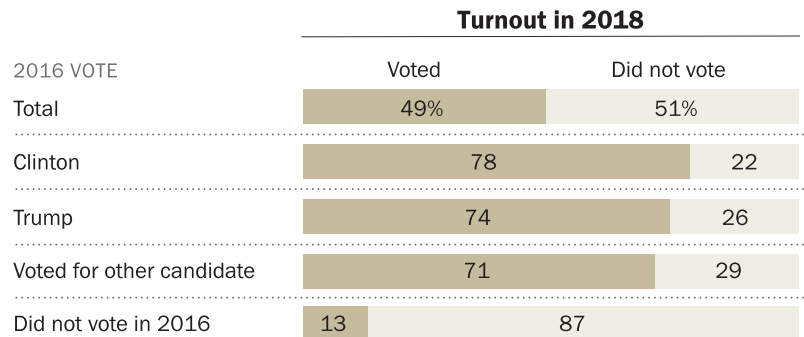
Midterm elections consistently experience lower turnout than presidential elections. Yet while the 2018 turnout of 49% did not match turnout in the 2016 presidential election (59%), it was far higher than usual.

Midway through President Trump's first term in office, both Democrats and Republicans were energized. A large majority of people who voted in 2016 (76%) also voted in 2018. But somewhat more of Clinton's 2016 voters (78%) than Trump's 2016 voters (74%) turned out in 2018.

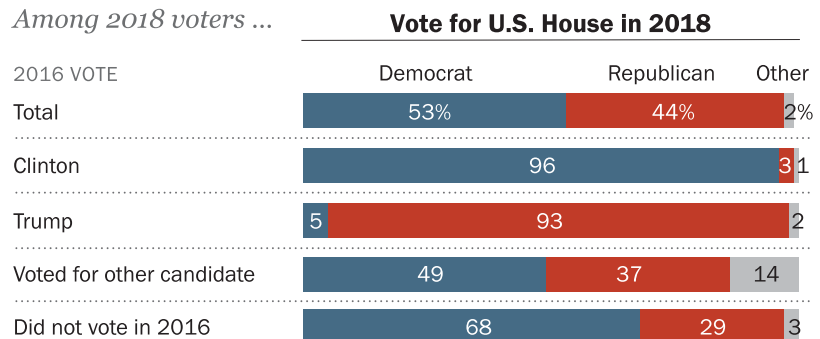
Overwhelming majorities of both Trump's and Clinton's 2016 voters remained loyal to their respective parties in their 2018 U.S. House vote, though Clinton's 2016 voters who turned out in 2018 were slightly more loyal to

Democratic 2018 candidates (96%) than Trump's 2016 voters were to 2018 GOP candidates (93%). Among the share who voted for someone other than Trump or Clinton in 2016, 71% voted in 2018. These voters favored Democratic candidates over Republican candidates by a margin of 49% to 37%.

Democratic House candidates gained from 2016 nonvoters and third-party voters



Among 2018 voters ...



Share of 2018 voters ...



Notes: Based on 6,789 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters and 2,363 2016 and 2,559 2018 validated nonvoters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice are from post-election surveys and the 2018 ATP profile survey. See Methodology for full details.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018. "Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories"

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Voters in 2018 who did not vote in 2016 were a small group (about 11% of all 2018 voters) but an important part of why the Democratic Party made gains. Among the 2016 nonvoters who voted in 2018, Democratic House candidates led Republican House candidates by a more than a two-to-one (68% to 29%) margin.

Of everyone eligible by citizenship and age to vote in 2018, 44% voted in both the 2016 and 2018 elections; 36% voted in neither; 14% were drop-off voters (voting in 2016 but not in 2018) and a small share (6%) were new voters – voting in 2018 but not in 2016.

Few defections from party affiliation

As they did in 2016, Republicans and Democrats voted almost unanimously for House candidates of their own party in 2018. Among those who do not initially identify with either party (including leaners, members of third parties and “pure” independents), Democratic candidates picked up 13 percentage points of support in 2018 over Clinton’s levels. Democratic candidates also made gains among Republicans and leaners who describe themselves as moderate or liberal (from 8% for Clinton to 15% for Democratic House candidates).

Party loyalty remained strong in 2018 midterm vote

% of validated voters who reported voting for ...

POLITICAL PARTY	2016			2018			Share of electorate	
	Share voting for ... Clinton	Share voting for ... Trump	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	Share voting ... Dem.	Share voting ... Rep.	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	2016	2018
Republican/lean Rep.	4%	89%	85	6%	91%	85	48%	45%
Democrat/lean Dem.	89	5	84	95	3	92	51	53
Republican	4	92	88	4	95	91	31	31
Democrat	94	5	89	97	2	95	35	35
Independent/Other	42	43	1	55	40	15	34	33
PARTY/LEAN AND IDEOLOGY								
Conservative Rep./lean	3	94	91	2	96	94	30	33
Moderate/liberal Rep./lean	8	79	71	15	80	65	17	12
Conserv./mod Dem./lean	85	8	77	91	7	84	27	23
Liberal Dem./lean	94	2	92	98	1	97	25	29

Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018.

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Democrats did better in 2018 than 2016 among men, young voters

Among most groups, voting patterns in 2018 were generally similar to those in 2016, albeit with most reflecting somewhat greater support for Democratic candidates for the U.S. House compared with Hillary Clinton. Men, young people and secular voters were notably more supportive of Democratic candidates in 2018 than these groups had been in 2016.

Democratic gains among men resulted in some narrowing of the gender gap. In the 2016 election, Donald Trump won men by 11 points (52% to 41%) and Hillary Clinton won women by 15 (54% to

39%), for a difference of 26 points. In 2018, women supported Democratic candidates by a similar margin (18 points, 58% to 40%) but the GOP advantage among men vanished (50% voted Democratic, 48% Republican). Trump carried White men by 30 points in 2016 (62% to 32%), a Republican advantage that shrank to just 12 points in 2018 (55% to 43%).

Democrats fared much better among men in 2018 than in 2016, narrowing the gender gap

% of validated voters who reported voting for ...

	2016			2018			Share of electorate	
	Share voting for ... Clinton	Trump	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	Share voting ... Dem.	Rep.	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	2016	2018
Men	41%	52%	11	50%	48%	2	45%	49%
Women	54	39	15	58	40	18	55	51
White men	32	62	30	43	55	12	33	37
White women	45	47	2	50	48	2	41	38
Black men				92	6	86	4	3
Black women				93	5	88	6	6
Hispanic men				69	27	42	5	4
Hispanic women				75	23	52	5	4
Married	39	55	16	46	52	6	52	58
Unmarried	58	34	24	64	33	31	48	42
Men, married	32	62	30	43	55	12	27	30
Women, married	47	48	1	50	48	2	26	28
Men, not married	54	39	15	61	36	25	19	19
Women, not married	60	31	29	67	31	36	29	23

Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018.

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Much as the gender gap shrank from 2016 to 2018, so did the marriage gap. Married voters in 2016 voted for Trump by a 55% to 39% margin but supported GOP House candidates in 2018 by only a 6-point margin, 52% to 46%. Unmarried voters were strongly Democratic in both years (58% to 34% for Clinton in 2016 and 64% to 33% for Democratic House candidates in 2018). Much of the decline in the marriage gap came from men. Trump won married men by a 30-point margin in 2016, but this group backed GOP House candidates by 12 points in 2018. Married women were evenly divided between the parties in both elections. Among unmarried voters, women were more supportive of Democratic candidates in 2018 than they had been of Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Young voters ages 18-29 were solid supporters of Clinton in 2016, but as a group were even more Democratic in 2018. In 2016, voters ages 18-29 voted for Clinton over Trump by a 58% to 28% margin, with 14% casting votes for third party candidates. In 2018, this group's votes went 72% for Democratic candidates and 23% for Republican candidates. Young voters, however, were significantly underrepresented in the electorate due to low turnout (as they usually are). In 2018,

Young voters supported Democratic candidates in 2018 at higher rates than Clinton in 2016, but continued to lag in turnout

% of validated voters who reported voting for ...

	2016			2018			Share of electorate	
	Share voting for ... Clinton	Trump	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	Share voting ... Dem.	Rep.	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	2016	2018
18-29	58%	28%	30	72%	23%	49	13%	11%
30-49	51	40	11	59	38	21	30	30
50-64	45	51	6	50	48	2	29	29
65+	44	53	9	46	52	6	27	31
White	39	54	15	46	52	6	74	75
Black	91	6	85	92	6	86	10	9
Hispanic	66	28	38	72	25	47	10	8
Other/mixed race	59	32	27	67	30	37	5	6
Urban	70	24	46	73	25	48	22	23
Suburban	45	47	2	52	45	7	50	53
Rural	34	59	25	38	59	21	27	24
White urban	59	37	22	64	34	30	17	19
White suburban	38	54	16	47	51	4	52	53
White rural	30	62	32	33	64	31	30	27

Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018.

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they made up 11% of all voters, significantly below their 21% share of the voting eligible population. Nonetheless, 37% of young voters in 2018 had not voted in the 2016 election, a far higher share than in any other age group.

By contrast, older voters continued to be the Republican Party's most loyal age group. Trump carried voters ages 65 and older by a 9-point margin in 2016; Republican candidates for the House won this group by 6 points in 2018 (52% to 46%). Older voters were nearly one-third of all voters

in 2018 (31%), about three times the share of those ages 18-29, despite making up about the same overall share of the voting eligible population.

Support for Republican candidates among Black voters in 2018 was minimal (92% Democratic vs. 6% Republican in 2018, similar to the 91% to 6% margin for Clinton in 2016). Republicans had more support among Hispanic than Black voters, but there were still lopsided majorities for Democratic candidates (72% vs. 25% in 2018 and 66% for Clinton and 28% for Trump in 2016). There were too few Asian American voters in the sample to yield a reliable estimate, but among Asian and other voters of color collectively the 2018 vote was 67% Democratic and 30% Republican. White voters backed GOP candidates over Democrats by 6 points in 2018 (52% to 46%), though this represents a narrowing of Trump's 15-point margin over Clinton among White voters.

Geography remained a strong correlate of vote choice in 2018, with urban voters breaking Democratic by about a three-to-one margin (73% to 25%), similar to their split in 2016 (70% Clinton, 24% Trump). Republicans had about a two-to-one advantage over the Democrats with rural voters in both presidential voting and in 2018. Meanwhile, the Democrats made gains among suburban voters. While Trump and Clinton had roughly divided the suburban vote in 2016 down the middle (47% Trump, 45% Clinton), Democratic House candidates won the suburban vote by 7 percentage points two years later (52% to 45%).

Voters of color generally voted Democratic regardless of where they lived, though Republican candidates received 37% of the votes of suburban Hispanics and 12% support among rural Black voters. White urban voters supported Democratic candidates by a roughly two-to-one margin (64% to 34%) while rural White adults were a near mirror image (64% Republican, 33% Democratic). Suburban White voters, who favored Trump by 16 points in 2016, were more divided in 2018 (51% Republican, 47% Democratic).

Already a strong Democratic group, those unaffiliated with a religious tradition became more so

In 2018, voters were highly politically polarized by religious affiliation and attendance at worship services, as they have been for many years in the U.S. Solid majorities of Protestants supported Republican candidates in 2018, while Catholics were more divided and the less religious were strongly Democratic in their votes.

White evangelicals remained loyal to Republican candidates, but Democrats made gains among secular voters

% of validated voters who reported voting for ...

	2016			2018			Share of electorate	
	Share voting for ... Clinton	Share voting for ... Trump	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	Share voting ... Dem.	Share voting ... Rep.	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	2016	2018
Protestant	39%	56%	17	40%	58%	18	47%	43%
Catholic	44	52	8	46	52	6	20	19
Unaffiliated	65	24	41	75	22	53	26	30
Other	61	33	28	66	33	33	8	8
White evang. Prot.	16	77	61	17	81	64	20	18
White non-evang. Prot.	37	57	20	42	55	13	15	14
Black Protestant				94	5	89	7	7
Other race Protestant				47	50	3	5	4
White Catholic				39	59	20	14	14
Hispanic Catholic				71	27	44	5	3
Jewish				72	28	44	2	3
NET Unaffiliated	65	24	41	75	22	53	26	30
Atheist				88	9	79	6	7
Agnostic				79	18	61	6	7
Nothing in particular				68	29	39	14	16
Other	61	33	28	66	33	33	8	8
ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES								
Monthly or more often	37	58	21	40	58	18	35	33
Yearly or less often	54	38	16	61	37	24	65	66

Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018.

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The Republican Party's most supportive demographic group (other than voters who identify as Republican or who are conservative) were White evangelical Protestants (81% voted Republican and 17% voted Democratic). This margin was very similar to 2016 (77% Trump vs. 16% Clinton). A sizable majority of White Catholics also supported Republicans (59% to 39%), with White non-evangelical Protestants close behind (55% to 42%).

Unaffiliated voters – and especially atheists and agnostics – were even more supportive of Democratic candidates in 2018 than they had been of Hillary Clinton, with at least some of the change coming from those who had supported Gary Johnson or Jill Stein in 2016. The margins among voters who describe their religious affiliation as “nothing in particular” were fairly similar in 2016 and 2018. Atheists (7% of voters in 2018) supported Democratic candidates by an overwhelming 88% to 9% margin, rivaling Black support for the Democrats. Agnostics (also 7% of voters) were not far behind, supporting Democratic candidates by a 79% to 18% margin.

The solid support for Democratic candidates among the unaffiliated is also reflected in voting patterns by attendance at worship services. Among those who attend a few times a year or less often, 61% voted Democratic and 37% voted Republican. In 2016, this group voted 54% to 38% for Clinton. By contrast, voters who attend services monthly or more often voted 58% to 40% Republican in 2018. Two years earlier, they voted for Trump by a 58% to 37% margin.

Democrats made modest gains in 2018 among non-college White voters

Perhaps the most important political trend reflected in the 2016 outcome was the continued movement of working-class White voters toward the GOP. Hillary Clinton lost White voters who did not have a college degree by a wide 36 percentage points (64% for Trump vs. 28% for Clinton). But in 2018, Democratic candidates managed to narrow the gap somewhat, losing this group by 61% to 36%, a 25-point margin.

At the same time, the Democratic Party maintained a wide margin among college-educated White

2018 electorate highly polarized by education among White voters

% of validated voters who reported voting for ...

	2016			2018			Share of electorate	
	Share voting for ... Clinton	Trump	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	Share voting ... Dem.	Rep.	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	2016	2018
Postgrad	66%	29%	37	68%	30%	38	14%	19%
4-year college	52	41	11	58	41	17	23	24
Some college	42	49	7	48	49	1	34	32
HS or less	44	51	7	47	51	4	30	25
College grad+	57	36	21	62	36	26	37	43
Some college or less	43	50	7	47	50	3	63	57
White college grad+	55	38	17	58	40	18	30	34
White non-college grad	28	64	36	36	61	25	44	41

Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018.

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adults. In 2016, Democrats won this group by 17 points (55% to 38%) and in 2018 by a nearly identical 18-point margin (58% to 40%).

Democratic candidates in 2018 did well among both the highest- and lowest- income voters. Voters reporting annual family incomes of \$150,000 or higher voted for Democratic candidates by a 59% to 39% margin. At the other extreme, those with incomes below \$30,000 voted 62% to 34% Democratic. Even among White low-income voters, Democratic and Republican candidates battled to a tie (48% each). Among White voters with incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999, Republican candidates had a 54% to 44% majority.

Democratic candidates had wide advantages among the highest- and lowest-income voters

% of validated voters who reported voting for ...

FAMILY INCOME	2016			2018			Share of electorate	
	Share voting for ... Clinton	Trump	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	Share voting ... Dem.	Rep.	Margin (Dem.-Rep.)	2016	2018
\$150,000 or more	51%	44%	7	59%	39%	20	7%	12%
\$100,000-\$149,999	48	45	3	51	47	4	11	16
\$75,000-\$99,999	39	55	16	52	46	6	15	15
\$50,000-\$74,999	48	46	2	54	44	10	18	17
\$30,000-\$49,999	42	54	12	51	46	5	20	17
Less than \$30,000	58	32	26	62	34	28	28	17
\$75,000 or more	45	49	4	54	45	9	33	43
\$30,000-\$74,999	45	50	5	52	45	7	38	35
Less than \$30,000	58	32	26	62	34	28	28	17
WHITES								
\$75,000 or more	39	55	16	50	49	1	27	34
\$30,000-\$74,999	37	58	21	44	54	10	28	26
Less than \$30,000	44	43	1	48	48	0	18	11

Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018.

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The parties' coalitions, 2018 vs. 2016

People who voted for Democratic vs. Republican candidates for the House in 2018 were quite different demographically, in ways consistent with previous elections including 2016. The Republican coalition is more likely to be older, male, White, somewhat less educated and Protestant or Catholic.

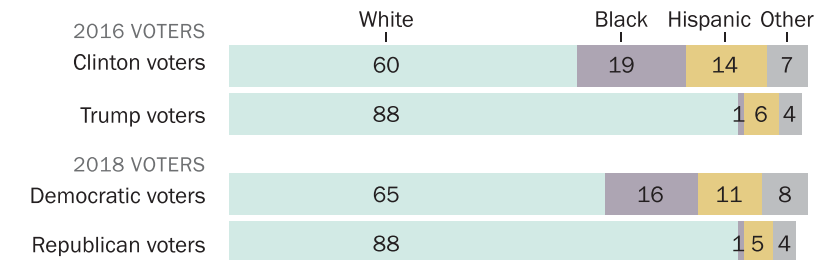
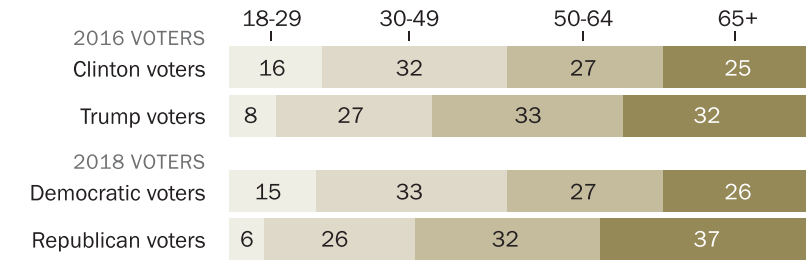
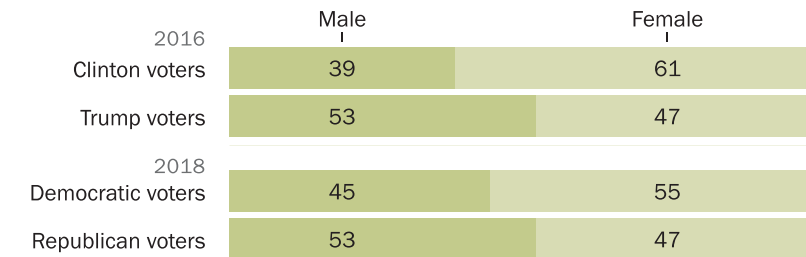
In 2016, men made up only 39% of Hillary Clinton's voters. This share grew to 45% for Democratic House candidates in 2018. But other than a slight increase in the share of Republican voters ages 65 and older, there was little change in the respective age profiles of the two parties' voters. Nearly half of those who voted for Democratic candidates were under 50 years of age, compared with almost a third (32%) of Republican voters.

Non-Hispanic White adults made up nearly nine-in-ten Republican voters (88%), compared with just two-thirds

(65%) of Democratic voters. Only 1% of voters who chose Republican House candidates were Black (16% of Democratic voters were Black). Hispanics were 11% of the Democratic voter coalition, compared with 5% for the Republican coalition.

Democratic voters in 2018 were younger, much more racially diverse than Republican voters

% composition of those who voted for Democratic and Republican candidates



Notes: Based on 1,552 Clinton and 1,283 Trump (2016) and 4,495 Democratic and 2,899 Republican House (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

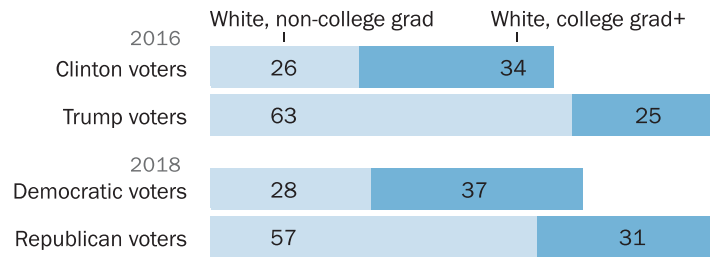
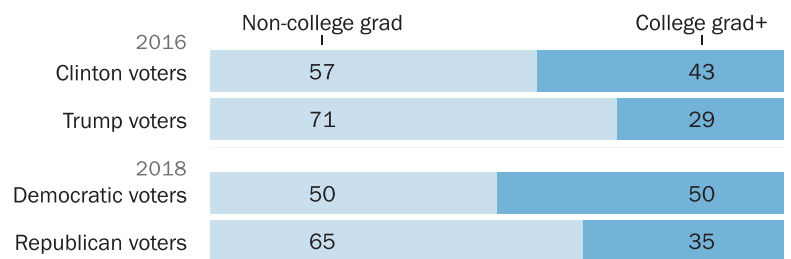
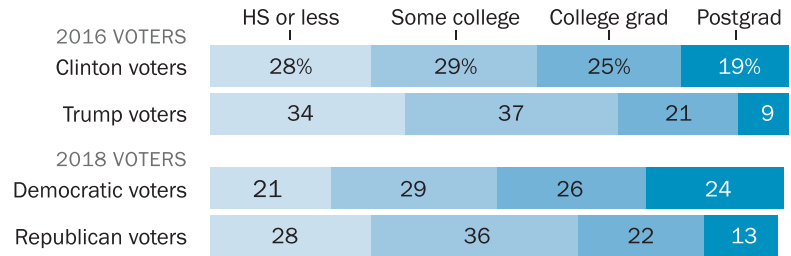
Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018. "Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories"

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Half of Democratic voters in 2018 had a four-year college degree or more, compared with 35% of Republican voters. Voters with postgraduate degrees made up nearly a quarter (24%) of the Democratic electorate, compared with 13% among Republican voters. Combining this with the racial profile of the parties' supporters, 57% of GOP voters were White adults with no college degree, compared with 28% among Democratic voters.

Half of Democratic voters in 2018 were college graduates, compared with 35% of Republican voters

% composition of those who voted for Democratic and Republican candidates



Notes: Based on 1,552 Clinton and 1,283 Trump (2016) and 4,495 Democratic and 2,899 Republican House (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

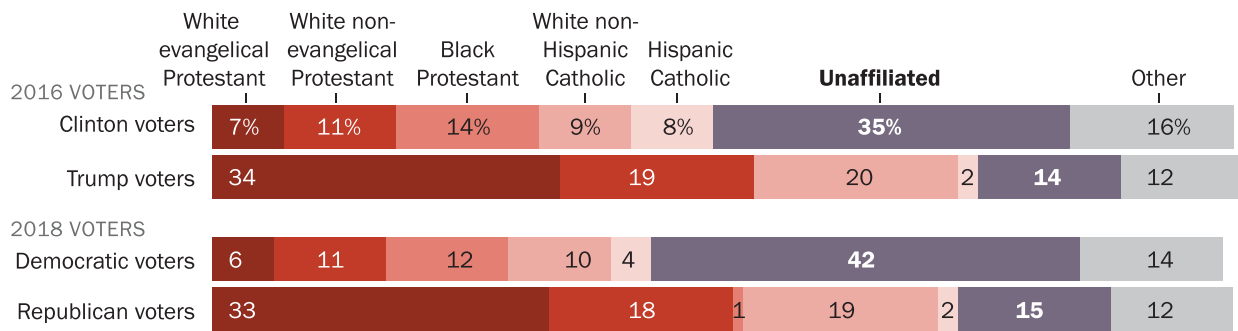
Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29 - Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018. "Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories"

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Protestants made up a majority of those voting Republican in 2018, just as they did in 2016. Overall, 57% of GOP House voters were Protestant, compared with just a third (32%) of Democratic voters. Catholics made up a slightly higher share of Republican voters as well (22% vs. 16% of Democratic voters). Voters who were unaffiliated with any religious tradition (atheists, agnostics and those who describe themselves as “nothing in particular”) make up 42% of Democratic voters but just 15% of Republican voters.

Religiously unaffiliated were a bigger share of Democratic voters in 2018 than 2016

% composition of those who voted for Democratic and Republican candidates



Notes: Based on 1,552 Clinton and 1,283 Trump (2016) and 4,495 Democratic and 2,899 Republican House (2018) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29 - Dec. 12, 2016 and Nov. 7-16, 2018. "Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories."

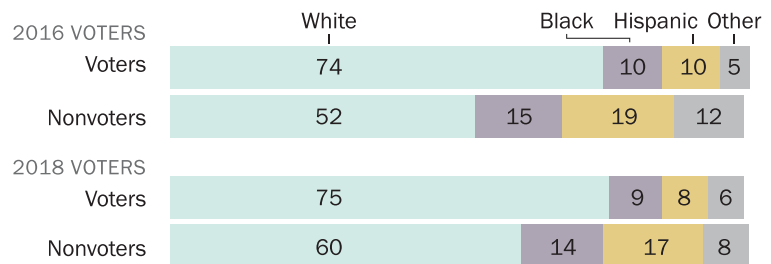
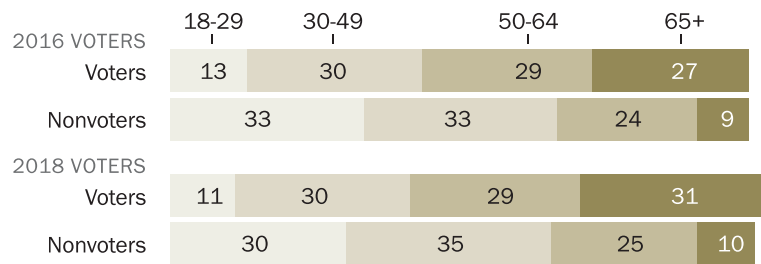
The demographic profile of voters and nonvoters is very different

The roughly half of Americans who voted in 2018 differ from the voting-eligible adult population in some key respects. There were sizeable, if familiar, demographic and political differences in who did and did not turn out.

Compared with citizens who did not vote, voters were older, more likely to be college educated, better off financially, more likely to be White Protestants or Catholics and more Republican in party affiliation and candidate preference. These differences are regular features of U.S. elections, as a comparison with voters and nonvoters in 2016 makes clear.

As in 2016, 2018 nonvoters were younger and more racially diverse than voters

% composition of validated voters and nonvoters



Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters and 756 (2016) and 2,559 2018 validated nonvoters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Nonvoters were citizens who were not found to have a record of voting in any of the voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018. "Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories"

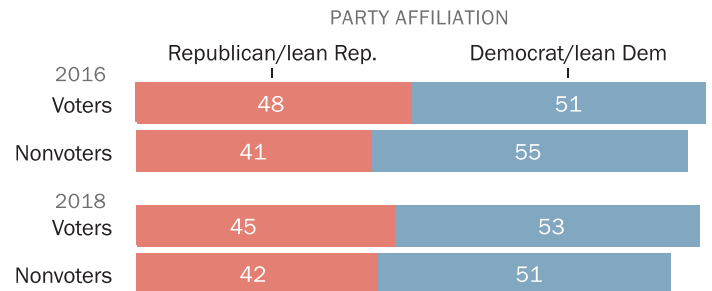
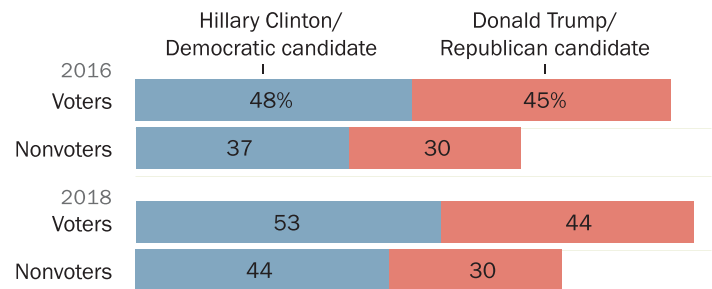
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All citizen panelists – whether voters or nonvoters – were asked which U.S. House candidate they supported in the general election.

Nonvoters tend to express more uncertainty about the choice, owing in large part to the fact [that many of them pay little attention to politics](#). But among those who did express a preference, Democratic candidates led Republican candidates by 14 percentage points (44% to 30%) a larger margin than among voters (9 points, 53% to 44%).

Compared with 2018 voters, nonvoters preferred Democratic candidates by a wider margin, but many declined to express a preference

% composition of validated voters and nonvoters



Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters and 756 (2016) and 2,559 2018 validated nonvoters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Nonvoters were citizens who were not found to have a record of voting in any of the voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. Don't know responses not shown.

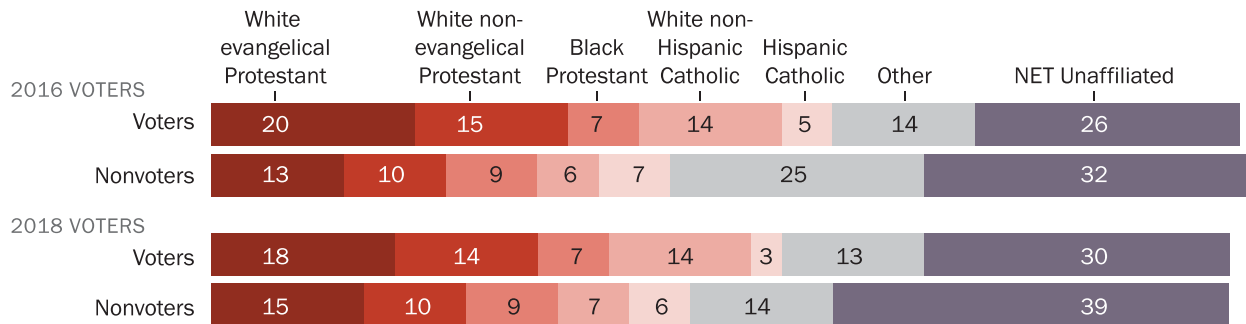
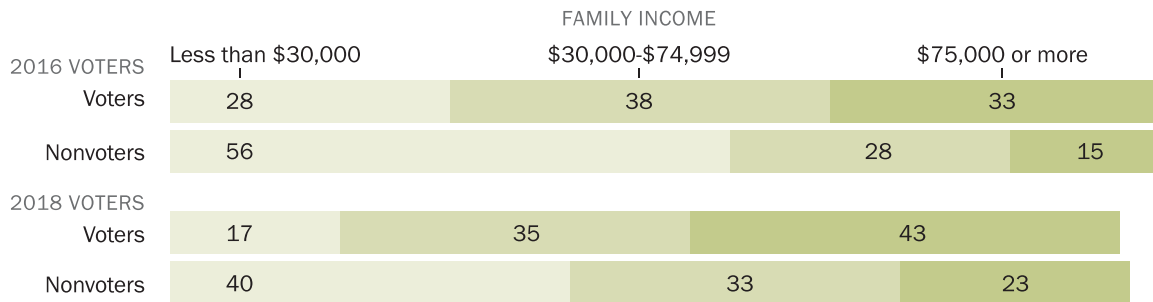
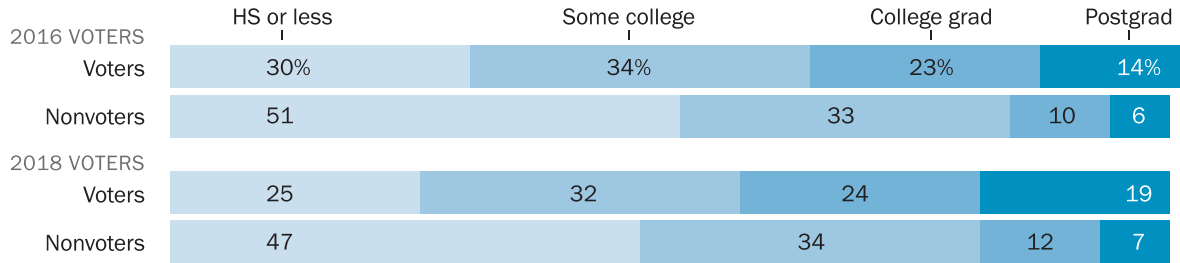
Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018. "Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories"

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Demographically, the contrast between voters and nonvoters is most stark on age, race, education and income. Voters in 2018 were considerably older than nonvoters: 31% of voters but just 10% of nonvoters were ages 65 and older. At the other end of the age spectrum, just 11% of voters were under 30 years of age; 30% of nonvoters fell into this category. These gaps are quite similar to those seen in 2016.

As in 2016, voters in 2018 were more affluent and more highly educated than nonvoters

% composition of validated voters and nonvoters



Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016) and 7,585 (2018) validated general election voters and 756 (2016) and 2,559 2018 validated nonvoters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Nonvoters were citizens who were not found to have a record of voting in any of the voter files. Vote choice for both years is from a post-election survey. See Methodology for full details. White and Black adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown. Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and Nov. 7-16, 2018.

"Democrats Made Gains From Multiple Sources in 2018 Midterm Victories"

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Similarly, three-quarters of voters (75%) were non-Hispanic White adults, while 60% of nonvoters were White. Hispanics, in particular, were underrepresented as voters. Just 8% of 2018 voters were Hispanic. Among the voting-eligible nonvoters, 17% were Hispanic. Black adults were 9% of voters but 14% of nonvoters.

Voters tend to be more highly educated and more affluent than nonvoters. One-quarter of voters had only a high school education, but 47% of nonvoters did so. More than four-in-ten voters (43%) were college graduates, compared with only 19% of nonvoters. The differences by income were similarly substantial. Just 17% of voters had annual family incomes of less than \$30,000. Among nonvoters, 40% did so.

White Protestants and White Catholics make up nearly half of all voters (46%) but just 32% of nonvoters. People who describe their religious affiliation as “nothing in particular” are underrepresented among voters, constituting 28% of all nonvoters but just 16% of voters.

Methodology

American Trends Panel Methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. This report is based on interviews with respondents to two waves of the panel, one conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, and the other conducted Nov. 7-16, 2018. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. At the time of the Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016 survey, the panel was managed by Abt, and it is currently being managed by Ipsos, which oversaw data collection for the 2018 survey.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment Dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining (as of December 2018)
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,515
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,471
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	806
Aug. 8, 2018–Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	8,778
	Total	29,114	18,720	13,570

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey.

The 2016 survey

The 2016 survey was conducted between Nov. 29 and Dec. 12, 2016, with 4,183 respondents. Noncitizens and panelists who declined to provide their names and thus for whom a match to a voter record could not be attempted were removed from the analysis, leaving 3,770 panelists for analysis. An effort was made to match the panelists to five commercially available databases that contain information about voter registration and turnout for nearly every U.S. adult. In total, 91% of panelists were located in at least one of the files. Panelists who were verified as having voted in at least one of the commercial voter databases were considered to be validated voters (3,014 individuals) and are included in the tabulations here. Panelists for whom no turnout record was located were considered to be nonvoters (756 individuals).

Details about the validation process are discussed in a more general report about commercial voter files published in February 2018, "[Commercial Voter Files and the Study of U.S. Politics.](#)"

The 2016 vote choices reported here are based on panelists who said that they voted and were verified as having done so. Those who refused to state their vote choice or who reported voting for a candidate other than Clinton, Trump, Johnson or Stein were excluded from the analysis.

The resulting sample of verified voters mirrored the election results very closely. After the validation was done and the sample was limited to those for whom a turnout record could be located, 48% reported voting for Hillary Clinton and 45% for Donald Trump. By comparison, the [official national vote tally](#) was 48% for Clinton and 46% for Trump.

2016 vote choice measures for panelists who did not participate in the 2016 survey

A large number of those who participated in the 2018 survey had not been in the panel in 2016 or had not taken the 2016 post-election survey. For these panelists, their 2016 vote choice was measured in a survey of all panelists conducted Aug. 20 – Oct. 28, 2018. The vote choice question asked whether panelists voted for Clinton, Trump or someone else. These were used to supplement the 2016 post-election survey for the analysis of individual-level change from 2016 to 2018 (e.g., how Trump and Clinton voters voted in 2018). All other 2016 numbers reported here use only the 2016 post-election survey, as found in [this report](#).

The 2018 survey

The 2018 survey was conducted Nov. 7-16, 2018 with 10,640 panelists. Noncitizens, those who refused to answer the vote choice question and panelists who declined to say for whom they voted

or provide their names and thus could not be matched to a voter record were removed, leaving 10,144 panelists for analysis. An effort was made to match the panelists to two commercial voter files. Overall, 94% of panelists were matched to at least one file and a turnout record for 2018 was located for 7,585 panelists. Panelists who could not be matched or for whom no 2018 turnout record could be located were considered to be validated nonvoters (2,559 panelists).

Weighting

The 2018 ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight that reflects each panelist's probability of selection for their initial recruitment. The base weights for panelists recruited in different years are scaled to be proportionate to the effective sample size for all active panelists in their cohort. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table. These weights are trimmed (typically at about the 1st and 99th percentiles) to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights.

Variables used to align the 2018 sample to the population are shown in the table. The procedure for weighting the 2016 post-election survey that provides most of the 2016 estimates differed slightly from the 2018 survey. In 2016, a mild propensity adjustment was applied to the base weights to correct differential panel attrition. It also used a different set of population benchmarks. For the 2016 survey, gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region parameters came from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey. The county-level population density parameter (deciles) came from the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census. The telephone service benchmark came from the July-December 2015 National Health Interview Survey and was

Weighting dimensions for 2018 survey

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2017 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Region x Metropolitan status	2018 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2015 CPS Volunteer Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.
Internet access	2018 Pew Research Center internet core trends telephone survey
2016 presidential vote choice and 2018 generic congressional ballot choice	Official vote tabulations by the Federal Election Commission
2016 and 2018 voter turnout estimates	Voter eligible population turnout based on ballots counted for highest office, compiled by the United States Elections Project . Share of adults who are eligible voters based on 2018 American Community Survey.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from [Hur, Achen \(2013\)](#) and rescaled to include the total US adult population.

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projected to 2016. The volunteerism benchmark came from the 2013 Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement. The party affiliation benchmark was the average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys. The Internet access benchmark came from the 2015 Pew Survey on Government. Respondents who did not previously have internet access were treated as not having internet access for weighting purposes. The frequency of internet use benchmark was an estimate of daily internet use projected to 2016 from the 2013 Current Population Survey Computer and Internet Use Supplement.

Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the American Trends Panel's Hispanic sample was predominantly U.S. born and English speaking at the time these surveys were conducted. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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