

Republican Reckoning: Most GOP voters want Trump-style politics to continue but one-in-four call for change

2020 GOP voter motivations split between affection for Trump & policies and disdain for Biden and DNC

January 18, 2021 – One of the most unprecedented transitions of U.S. power in modern history – set for Wednesday – will for millions of Americans simultaneously evoke anxiety over safety, celebration among those who voted for the winner, Joe Biden, and either anger, despair, or disappointment among those who backed the loser, Donald Trump.

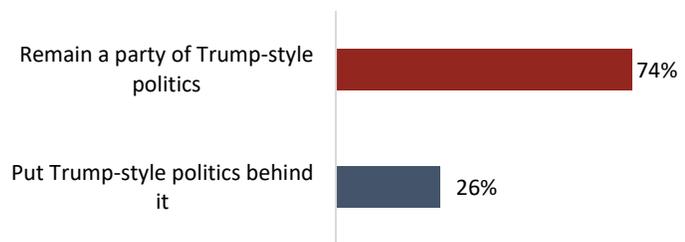
A new Angus Reid Institute public opinion survey finds that while Trump voters' deference to his style, legacy, and future influence remains strong, a significant minority would like to turn the page.

Asked why they supported the Trump-Pence ticket in 2020, GOP voters fall into four distinct camps based on personality and policies. About a quarter point to admiration for Trump as their number one reason for voting Republican. A slightly larger segment (30%) chose support for GOP policies as their primary motivation. The rest say their vote was driven by a dislike for the policies of the Democrats or disdain for Biden-Harris leadership.

Those choosing Trump himself as their number one motivation display almost total devotion to every dimension of his narrative. A majority (71%) believe that Trump "definitely won" the election. A further 20 per cent say Trump "probably won". Three-quarters believe that he should be the Republican presidential nominee in 2024 and almost as many (74%) say he is one of the greatest presidents in American history.

But for most the Republican voter universe – those driven by GOP policy or a dislike of the Democratic ticket – the change in administration marks a period of reckoning about what comes next. Even among this latter group, a majority continues to believe in a future party molded by Trump-style politics, while about one-third of those who voted Republican – but not because of Trump – say it's time for a different approach.

Lately, there's been some discussion about the Republican Party's future. Should the Republican Party:
(Responses among 2020 Trump voters, n=1,412)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 14 – 15, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 3,452 American adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum USA](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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More Key Findings:

- Asked to judge Trump’s legacy, just over half (52%) of 2020 Republican voters proclaim he was one of the “greatest presidents ever” while nearly one-third (29%) say he was “above average”; one-in-ten (8%) dismiss him as one of the “worst presidents ever” while nevertheless voting GOP.
- Income and education levels were significant drivers of why Republican voters chose the GOP. Those in a lower income and education strata were more likely to cast their ballot based on the candidate; those in higher income and education brackets say they were motivated by GOP policies.
- Regardless of why they voted Republican, GOP voters are seized by rejection and doubt over the 2020 election results; more than half (54%) say Trump “definitely” won the election while about half that number (28%) say he “probably” won. The rest are divided between their belief that Biden “probably” (12%) or “definitely” (5%) won.

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Part One: The Republican Universe

Last week’s vote in the House of Representatives to impeach President Donald Trump for an unprecedented second time carried with it another unique distinction: it was the most bipartisan impeachment in American history. Ten Republicans voted with the unanimous house Democrats to impeach Trump, the most partisans to ever vote against their own president. Among the many inflection points America is experiencing in these times, included is a period of reckoning over the future direction of the Republican Party.

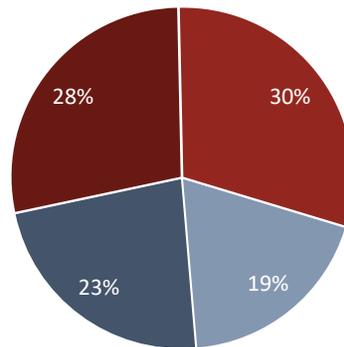
Trump voters equally motivated by president versus party

To identify different factions within the GOP base, the Angus Reid Institute asked those who supported the Trump-Pence ticket in November for their primary motivation. Equal numbers, about three-in-ten in each case, say they voted for the ticket because they like Trump himself (28%) or that they are supporters of GOP policy and priorities (30%). The rest voted specifically against the Democrats’ goals and policies or against Democratic candidates Joe Biden and Kamala Harris themselves:

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**Which of the following was the most important reason that you voted for Donald Trump?
(Asked among 2020 Trump voters, n=1,412)**

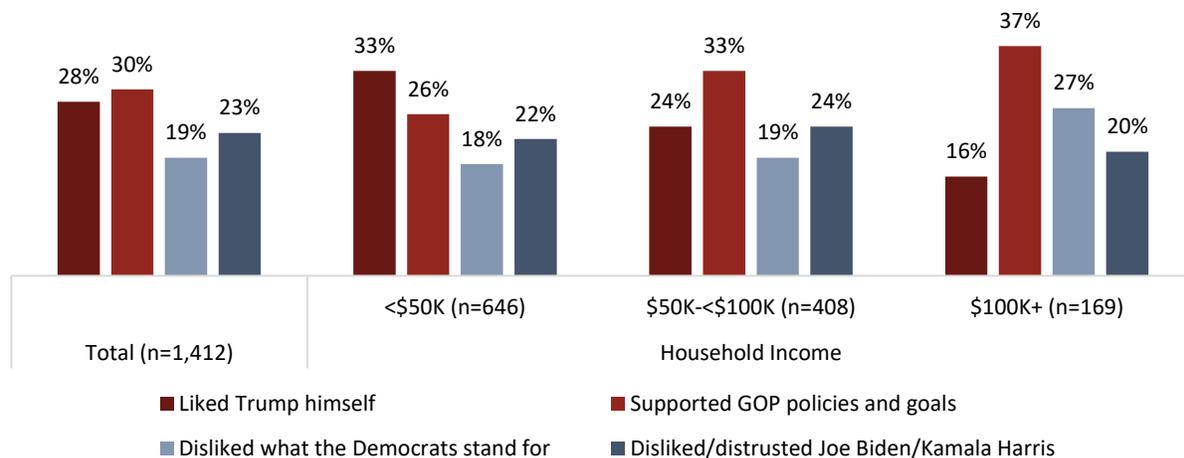


- Liked Trump himself
- Supported GOP policies and goals
- Disliked what the Democrats stand for
- Disliked/distrusted Joe Biden/Kamala Harris

Income and education of voters a factor

Motivations among Trump voters are disparate when viewed across income and education levels ([see detailed tables](#)). Most prominently, those with lower household income levels, earning less than \$50 thousand a year, are twice as likely to be motivated by Trump himself, as those who earn incomes over \$100 thousand a year. This higher income group are the most likely to say they are motivated by being against what Democrats stand for, suggesting that much debated approaches to tax policy play a role in these machinations:

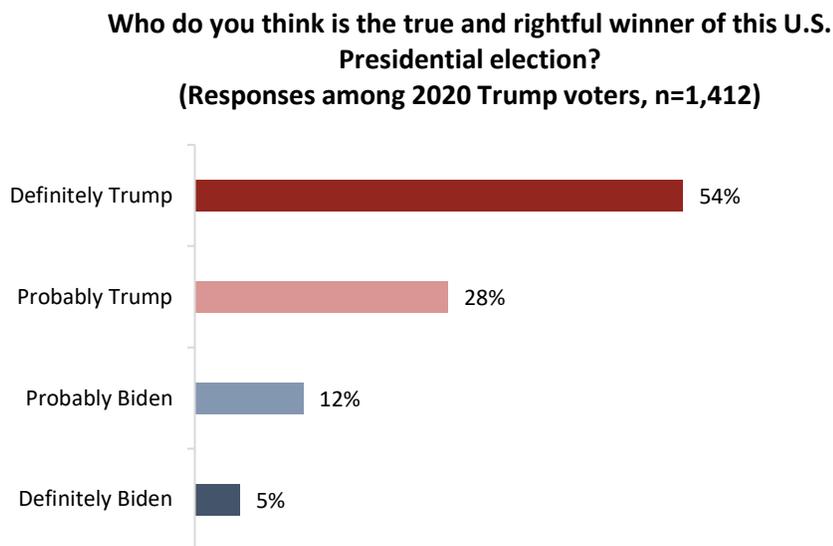
**Which of the following was the most important reason that you voted for Donald Trump?
(Asked among 2020 Trump voters)**



Part Two: Divide between Trumpists and party loyalists

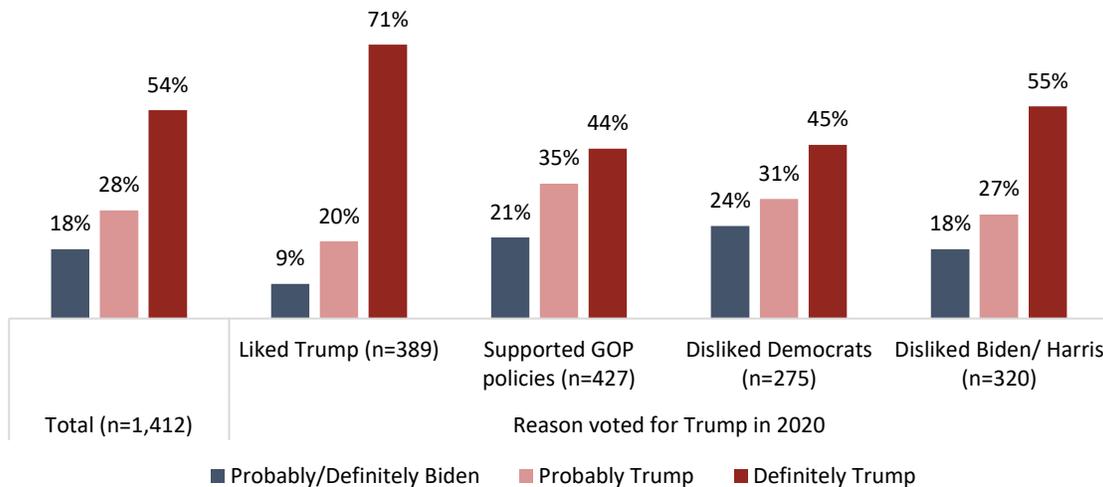
Trumpists most certain he won the election

One of the biggest questions posed by Trump and his supporters after the November election result was “who actually won?”. Many Republicans have and continue to support the President in his claims that the election was fraudulent, though not all:



It is worth noting that Trump’s most ardent supporters are far more likely than others to be certain he won. Seven-in-ten of those who supported the ticket because of Trump say he definitely won. This opinion drops below a majority for those who say their support was motivated by GOP policy:

Who do you think is the true and rightful winner of this U.S. Presidential election? (Responses among 2020 Trump voters)

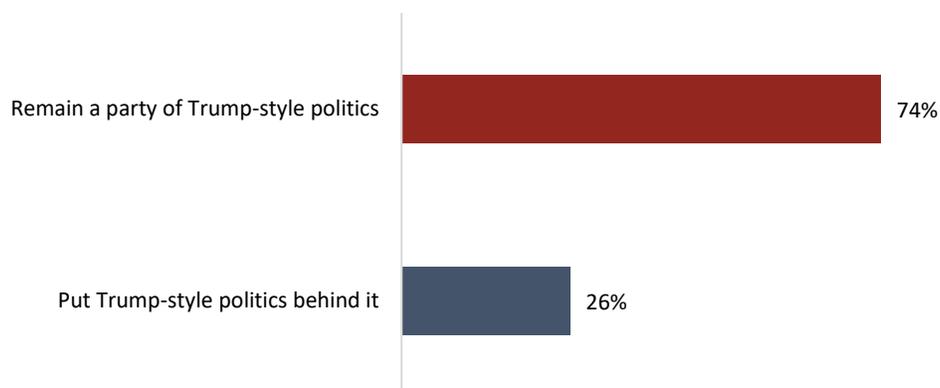


Should the GOP continue with Trump-style politics?

While Donald Trump’s legacy isn’t yet set, the more immediate concern for the Republican Party is what to do in his absence. Trump’s brand of “in your face” politics dominated the party for the past five years (though it was arguably a powerful and growing presence well before that). Should the party continue to steer the same course?

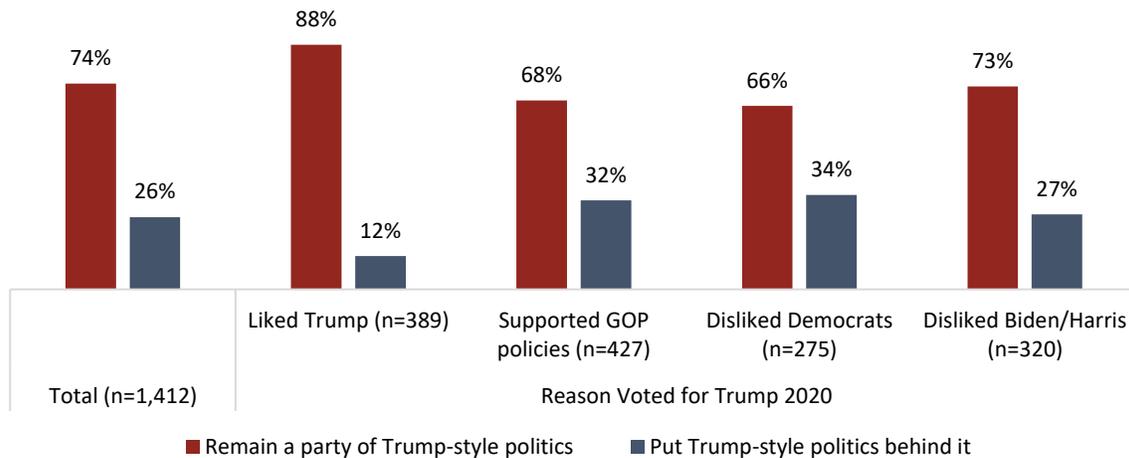
For three-quarters of Trump voters, his style of politics is something they would like to see continue. One-in-four (26%) say the time has come to put that approach in the past and move on to something different:

Lately, there’s been some discussion about the Republican Party’s future. Should the Republican Party: (Responses among 2020 Trump voters, n=1,412)



The party is hardly unified in the desire to continue forward with Trump’s style under different leadership. That said, at least two-thirds of these four groups say that his approach to politics should continue:

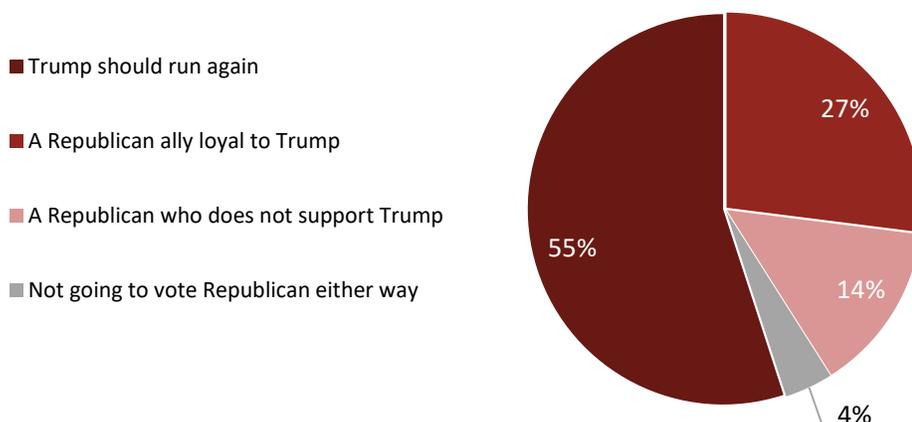
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Just over half of his voters want Trump to run in 2024

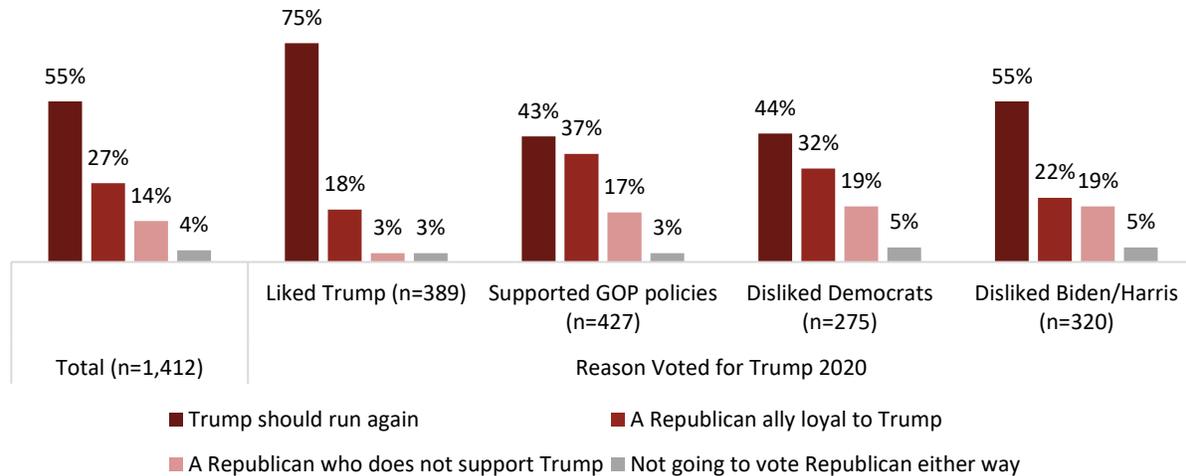
For many Republican voters, the easiest way to continue Trump-style politics is for the man to simply run again. The outgoing president has reportedly told those close to him that **he will do just that**, but the reality of this remains unclear as long as the impeachment trial remains unsettled. Nonetheless, at least half of those who voted for Trump two months ago say he should run again (55%). If he doesn't, there is a clear preference for a Republican ally of his to run, as opposed to someone who has distanced themselves from him during his term:

**If you had a choice for the next Republican candidate for President in 2024,
who would you prefer:
(Responses among 2020 Trump voters, n=1,412)**



Trump loyalists are by far the most likely group of voters to say that he should run again. Notable however, is the split between those who supported him due to his enactment of GOP policies. This group is divided near evenly between his return and his passing the torch to someone new, but of the same type:

**If you had a choice for the next Republican candidate for President in 2024, who would you prefer:
(Responses among 2020 Trump voters)**



Part Three: Legacy

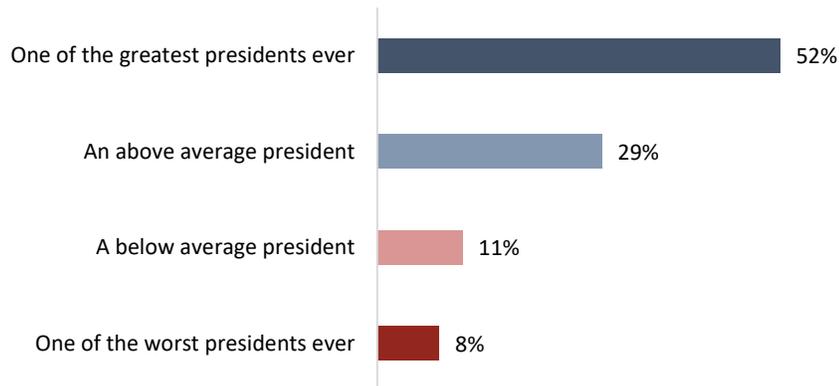
One-in-five Trump voters say he will go down as below average or terrible president

Throughout his administration, Donald Trump has claimed to be in the midst of an historic presidency, accomplishing more than anyone else before him. There are those among the Republican Party that evidently believe Trump’s claims, with half of his voters saying that he is going to be remembered as an all-time great. That said, despite having voted for him, one-in-five (19%) say that he will go down as either below average or one of the worst presidents ever:

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**How do you think Donald Trump – as a president – will go
down in history?
(Responses among 2020 Trump voters, n=1,412)**



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here.](#)

For detailed results by reason for voting Trump-Pence in 2020, [click here.](#)

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