



September 6, 2023 – For Immediate Release

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Suffolk University/USA Today Poll: Unlikely Voters Could Have Outsized Impact on 2024 Presidential Election

BOSTON – Former President Donald Trump has helped persuade millions of Americans that elections are rigged and the government corrupt, but that could cost him in his effort to regain the White House, according to an exclusive Suffolk University/*USA TODAY* poll of *unlikely* voters.

Respondents who termed themselves “not very likely” or “not at all likely” to vote in the 2024 presidential election cited the candidates, the election process, and the government they lead after they win as reasons for their lack of participation. With likely voters split evenly on the race, the mood of the unlikely voter—who is intentionally screened out of most surveys by pollsters—may have an outsized impact on the 2024 election outcome.

"My vote doesn't matter" was one of the most frequent responses among those who are not registered, with 10% of those polled listing that as their top reason. Other top reasons included "don't care" (12 %), "don't believe in the voting/political system" (6 %), and "system is rigged/corrupt" (5%). Nearly one in ten respondents cited "poor candidate choices."

Among respondents who don't plan to vote, but are registered to do so, more than a third (37%) said they did not like any of the candidates. Just over 10% of that group said their top reasons for not voting were corruption/unfair practices or the election is “rigged.”

Sixty-eight percent of all unlikely voters agreed or strongly agreed that they don't pay much attention to politics “because it is so corrupt.” Three out of four also agreed or strongly agreed that it was because "nothing ever gets done—it's a bunch of empty promises."

According to the poll, Americans who are most skeptical of politics and politicians still prefer Trump over Biden. Registered voters who say they aren't likely to go to the polls backed Trump over Biden by more than 2-1, or 32%-13%. Citizens who are eligible to vote, but have not registered, also favor Trump 28%-15%.

According to the US Elections Project, 80 million US citizens eligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election did not cast ballots, despite a record-breaking number of votes cast overall. Some analysts speculate the total of non-voters could top 90 million Americans next year because of widespread voter dissatisfaction with candidates and the process. That's more potential voters than Joe Biden received in the 2020 Presidential election.

“In a year of major political ironies, this is the irony of all ironies: that some turned-off Trump voters have grown so disgusted with the election process that they've soured on voting altogether,” said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. “One might point out, ‘But these respondents are saying they aren't voting next year, so who cares?’ My response: Unlikely voters represent a massive block of potential voters in the US.”

More than one in four, or 28%, of the unlikely voters polled said that it would take "better choices" and an "honest candidate that I like" to get them to vote. But nearly half could not produce a potential contender that would prompt them to bother. Eight percent said Trump; no other name was cited by more than 2% of those surveyed. The second most frequent response to the question of what would get them to vote was "a miracle" or "nothing."

There was one reason that resonated with most nonvoters. Seventy percent of Trump supporters said they would vote if they knew their vote would help swing a close election to their candidate; a nearly equal 68% of Biden supporters said the same thing.

Methodology

The national poll of 900 non-voters, taken by landline and cell phone August 19-27, has a margin of error of 3.3 percentage points. Marginals and full cross-tabulation data are posted on the [Suffolk University Political Research Center](#) website. For more information, contact David Paleologos at 781-290-9310, dpaleologos@suffolk.edu.

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