

THE BIDEN 100 DAY AGENDA: SUBURBAN AMERICA REACTS

10 Key Findings

JANUARY-MARCH 2021

On behalf of N2 America, Public Opinion Strategies conducted weekly qualitative research among a panel of 40 suburban, college-educated men and women from the following states: Arizona, California, Georgia, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin.

This group of suburban voters convened weekly online and discussed questions ranging from politics to recent events in the news. The goal of this project is to produce a qualitative assessment of the subject. As such, comments cannot be projected to the total population as is the case if we had conducted a quantitative survey.



01

While there is clearly optimism about turning the corner from the coronavirus pandemic, many suburban voters still believe the country is off on the wrong track and “*divided*.”

✱ Over the past few months, most suburban voters have begun to believe things are moving in the right direction. Still, many think the country is off on the wrong track and describe the country as “*divided*,” “*chaotic*,” and “*dysfunctional*.”

Generally speaking, suburban voters “*don’t think things are going great, but [are] cautiously optimistic that positive changes will be made*” because the country is “*correcting*” and getting back on track. For most suburban voters, this “*optimistic*” view comes from a renewed sense of normalcy, the country opening back up “*and people getting back to work*,” and the positive progress of vaccinations.

Still, many suburban voters comment how they “*can never remember a time when there was so much division in the country*.” They want to see the country come together, but voters think too many people “*are becoming more radicalized on both sides of the political aisle*” for it to happen.

A female Georgia voter shares, “*everywhere I look, I see people at extreme polar opposites...the comment sections of news articles, my friends’ newsfeeds, neighborhood talks...it sometimes feels like it is becoming increasingly hard for people to find common ground*.”

02

Suburban voters believe the worst of the coronavirus is behind us.

*** As vaccines continue to rollout and infection rates fall, these suburban voters nearly all believe the worst of the coronavirus is (finally) behind us.**

They feel like the country finally has a good understanding of the virus and more people are taking it seriously. But, despite the feeling that the worst is behind us, many feel only cautiously optimistic since the country surpassed the 500K death mark.

A Florida male voter says, "I feel that the worst is behind us because we are past the point of not knowing much about this virus. While there is still a lot yet to learn, I think that promising vaccines and many studies done by the brightest minds in the world have given us a much better handle on this virus and how to combat and beat it."

An Arizona female voter adds, "we've got a vaccine that is being distributed pretty quickly. We know more than we have ever known before about this virus and will continue to beat it with immunity."

A Pennsylvania female voter says the country is "slowly improving. A competent vaccine rollout is a huge improvement to the complete lack of leadership under Trump."

03

Echoing what we are seeing in national polling, suburban voters softly approve of the job President Biden is doing.

While they like him personally, they are concerned about his ideology and policies and don't think he is accomplishing unity.

✱ **Most suburban voters tend to approve of Biden, but this approval is tepid at best – as many couch their approval with concerns over his non-virus agenda.**

Suburban voters praise Biden on his handling of the pandemic. They think he *"appears more calm and steady"* than President Trump and *"that there has not been as much drama associated with the White House"* lately. But, while they might like what he is doing with the pandemic, there are concerns with policy, such as the current border crisis, how *"he is planning on raising taxes," "the cost of the stimulus,"* and the *"lack of promised unity."*

An Arizona male voter says, *"so far he seems to be addressing all of the important and pertinent issues, including the 3rd stimulus passing and the vaccines being distributed in a timely manner; I am not real sure what he intends to do with the proposed income tax hike; not a real good time to be raising taxes until the economy has improved."*

A Minnesota male voter adds, *"I like his efforts surrounding the pandemic and getting vaccines rolled out, and listening to the science behind it, not whims. I do appreciate the latest stimulus package, but as with any I'm sure there's unnecessary pork built in. I'm hesitant on his immigration policies yet, need to get a better understanding of what his plan is around mass migrations and how those are being dealt with."*

Another Arizona male voter shares, *“while he has brought a calming influence to Washington, I don't believe that he has really done that good of a job. He had stressed bipartisan discussions and agreements but has been as closed minded as Trump. It's his way or no way. The stimulus bill had too much junk added to it.”*

A New York female says, *“while President Biden has brought more order to a seemingly chaotic White House under the prior administration, I find the growing crisis at the Mexican border is clearly his doing and may be his undoing so early into his first year as POTUS.”*

**There are also doubts from some about *“how much power/control he has.”*
Some think *“he is a pawn.”***

A Pennsylvania male voter says, *“how is President Biden performing his job? HE, really hasn't showed up for the job as of yet. My belief is he's just along for the ride, someone is directing him what to do and say, it doesn't look like he has much input and they're not his ideas. Doesn't seem to be much of a leader.”*

An Arizona female voter adds, *“he just seems like a puppet honestly. He doesn't do his own press conferences without his handlers nearby. They won't let him answer any questions. He just seems lost. It's very sad. Now with the state of the economy he is wanting to do tax increases which will hurt everyone. They've re-opened the border and let so many people through it's ridiculous.”*

It is worth noting most suburban voters like President Biden as a person.

An Arizona male voter says, “as a person, I think President Biden is okay. He has had many years of service in congress and seems like a good person. However, I don’t like his policies because I don’t think they are his. Also, don’t like the fact that he talks about bipartisanship but really just uses that as a photo opportunity...doesn’t really listen or try to compromise.”

And, a Florida male voter adds, “he does definitely seem like a nice person. But, his job is to be president, and I definitely don’t agree with some of the policies that he’s putting in place.”

But, Biden’s calls for government spending, raising taxes, and his handling of the border stand out as key policy concerns for these suburban voters.

A California male voter says, “I like Biden’s positive character but I am concerned about his spending more money than we can afford. The \$1.9 trillion stimulus was absurd. Many of those receiving a stimulus will not need it while some who are very poor will get little or none. I also would like Biden to be more bipartisan and he adopted very little from the ten Republicans that he met with.”

A Florida male voter shares that his concerns are Biden “raising taxes and general inflation around this country. Gas has skyrocketed, interest rates will rise, and everyday

04

With the coronavirus pandemic approaching the rearview mirror, suburban voters worry about fiscal issues first (economy/taxes/spending) and then immigration.

* Suburban voters voice concerns primarily about the economy.

This is their top priority and focus after the coronavirus pandemic (with many seeing the two intertwined).

They worry about all parts of the economy: inflation, re-opening businesses, jobs, spending in general but in particular *“the large stimulus packages that have been passed [and that they] will adversely affect the economy and that taxes will be raised.”*

A Florida male voter says, *“I am concerned about inflation. You are already seeing it with gas stations and gas prices rising, and I think interest rates will be the next to follow. I feel that taxes and other basic necessities will continue to rise and the cost of living might get out of hand.”*

An Arizona female voter shares, *“my top concern would be the economy and jobs. I am most concerned with this because it was a huge unintended consequence of the pandemic - losing jobs, people hurting. Moving forward it will not be quick or easy to recover from all the losses.”*

A Michigan female voter says, *“the economy”* is her top concern because *“with all the stimulus checks the payment of it back is going to be back breaking”* and she *“assume[s] it is going to fall onto the working class to take care of it.”*

And, a New York female voter adds, *“we are spending ridiculous amounts of money by completely abandoning the idea that large deficits are a bad thing. Trillions of dollars have been spent, with trillions more to be railroaded through Congress in the coming months, which will surely lead to the largest tax increases across the board in American history. You can see it coming a mile away. Internet taxes. New gas taxes. Subscription service taxes. New taxes on purchases. So, while the Federal Reserve will say there is relatively little inflationary fear, the realities for the average American will be quite different.”*

A Pennsylvania male voter says he wonders *“how we will pay for the major major major amounts of money we are spending now and will be spending to fight covid both medically but also economically. Literally spending trillions like it’s pocket change even if needed worries me.”*

And, the next biggest concern is immigration and “lack of border control.”

A Minnesota male voter says, *“it seems like we need to get our arms around immigration. We need firm policies in place and they need to be adhered to. I think we should welcome immigrants, but there needs to be a firm process and path to citizenship.”*

An Arizona female voter agrees about the problem of immigration saying, *“I live in a border state and the amount of people being dumped off at the bus stop in town with nowhere to go is ridiculous. I feel for the hard-working immigrants who are just trying to find a better life but the problem arises with none of them being vetted before they get dumped off. Nothing like letting the drug dealers and criminals off with no hope of ever showing up to their court dates.”*

And, a California male voter adds, *“illegal immigration”* is his top concern because as he says, *“you currently have a mass surge of immigrants entering this country without any deterrence for doing so. On top of that, you have a President that claimed there would be transparency but is actively preventing any media from reporting on the issues. i.e. no access to the facilities.”*

05

Suburban voters are very concerned about Democratic control of DC, and *really* hope Democrats won't raise their taxes or over-spend.

✱ Suburban voters aren't excited about Democrats having full control of Washington.

These voters *"prefer to have some of the power divided between the branches so that nothing extreme will be passed."* This group likes to have checks and balances of power in government with the hopes that it forces compromise.

By far the biggest concern voters have with Democrats in charge are *"higher taxes and higher prices everywhere."*

With Democrats in charge of both Congress and the White House, suburban voters call out higher taxes and spending as their key concerns. There is a sense among these voters that Democrats, including President Biden, are *"looking to spend money."*

Whether it's for COVID-19 Relief or infrastructure or other various policy proposals, it has these fiscally-worrisome suburban voters concerned.

06

Suburban voters assume any tax increase – including Biden’s plan – is bad news for them and their families.

The more suburban voters learn about Biden’s tax plan, the more negative they become.

✱ Most suburban voters haven’t heard many specifics on Biden’s tax proposal plan and can only really cite the tax increase for *“those earning over \$400,000,”* yet a majority assume it’s bad news for them and their family.

Suburban voters believe any tax increase will *“trickle down”* to them through *“cost of goods”* or have a negative effect on business—which could then affect employment and the economy.

A Georgia female voter says, *“a tax increase will hurt everyone in my opinion. Tax increases cause less money to be donated to charities, less money to be spent in stores and less money invested in growth in businesses. Many who make less money are usually for ‘taxing the rich’ but don’t realize they are the ones who ultimately pay.”*

An Arizona male voter says, *“while I don’t think it will increase my taxes. I don’t believe it will help me either. In that case I don’t think that change just to say you are making a change is good. This tax change will also decrease the economic growth of the country by 1.5%. It also increases the estate tax which I believe is the government stealing from successful family businesses (mom and pop).”*

A North Carolina female voter shares, *“repealing the tax cuts on individuals and corporations is going to be bad on everyone. Corporations will leave the country or increase prices- and individuals who think their taxes will not increase are [fooling] themselves (unless they are already not paying tax)- it has already started. Originally they said no tax increases for families under 400K- now they are saying 200K. They need to raise BIG money and they need for MANY people to be paying more. Not just the relatively few ‘wealthy.’”*

A Nevada female voter says, *“we don’t make \$400k, but we make enough where tax time hurts. The first time we have seen a refund has been when Trump changed the tax laws.”*

And, a Georgia male voter alludes to the possible changing standards of a tax increase saying Biden *“wants to increase the tax rate. He wants to rise even the middle class. It won’t be good for my family or the middle class.”*

When asked who will suffer the most from tax increases needed to pay for new programs, these suburban voters say it is the middle class (including themselves) and small businesses.

07

Suburban voters believe there is a crisis at the border right now.

Suburban voters see Biden's policies as encouraging illegal immigration.

* Almost all suburban voters believe there is a crisis right now at the border.

Some of these suburban voters blame Biden and his *"rolling back of the Trump policies"* or his *"encouraging"* rhetoric for the massive increase in migrants.

There are many voters who say illegal immigration has been an ongoing issue for years. Voters believe illegal immigrants are coming here *"looking for a better life"* because they're trying to escape *"terrible governments, poverty, drug cartels"* and more. And, due to *"decades of mismanagement from both parties"* the issue has never been solved.

A California male voter says, *"The problem is becoming more urgent as the numbers of illegals coming across are mostly increasing making it more difficult to handle the crowds correctly. Yes, we want to help people from dangerous areas elsewhere, but it will become more and more difficult to handle the growing crowds. Why are they coming? It seems both economic and for survival considering the harmful conditions elsewhere."*

Suburban voters see the Biden administration's immigration policy as likely to encourage more people to make the dangerous journey to the U.S.

These voters do see a *"less restrictive border...lead[ing] to more illegal immigrants"* who will attempt to cross the border.

While they didn't approve of Trump's rhetoric or some of his hardline policies, they don't want an *"open door"* or too *"accommodating"* policy.

A more Democratic leaning Georgia female voter says, *"I agree that the policy will encourage more people to go to the U.S. If you know that if you make it, you can stay, then why not? Even if the policy is only for those already in the country, it still raises the hope of more amnesty in the future."*

A Minnesota male voter says, *"wow...was this even thought through? This will encourage lots of people to make dangerous trips and lots will get killed. People should not be allowed into the USA without a reason. We can't be responsible for everybody. I do not like or support this."*

08

On the issue of energy, suburban voters raise concern over Biden's executive order related to the Keystone Pipeline.

* Most of these suburban voters shared an unfavorable view of President Biden's Executive Order to reverse construction of the Keystone Pipeline. ,

These voters dislike it because there is now a massive loss in jobs, especially during a pandemic, the price of oil/gas increasing as a result and moving the country away from being energy independent.

An Arizona female voter says, *"I think the cancelling of the Keystone Pipeline was a big error in judgement and immediately cut off thousands of jobs for people in areas that are already struggling."*

A Georgia female voter says, *"Biden's revoking the permit for the Keystone pipeline is an example of what I was afraid would happen. The loss of jobs, the tremendous waste of the money already spent on the pipeline and the loss of revenue from the completed pipeline damage the American economy."*

A North Carolina female voter says, *"gas prices are already rising- and it won't get any better. We need fossil fuel and energy independence. Biden trying to choke out gas will only hurt the American people. 'Green alternatives' just don't cut it."*

09

Suburban voters express concern about the social welfare and taxes/costs of Biden's "Build Back Better" infrastructure proposal.

- * Suburban voters read a few details about Biden's infrastructure proposal and then asked what they think:

The Biden proposal is a massive, \$3 trillion-plus package that will have two main themes: an infrastructure portion that will total more than \$2 trillion, and a social welfare element estimated at roughly \$1 trillion or more.

The infrastructure portion will focus on investments in roads, bridges, infrastructure, public housing, schools, water, and manufacturing and be paid for by increasing the corporate tax rate.

The "social welfare" element is roughly \$1 trillion, and includes free community college, universal preschool, childcare, paid leave, long-term care and prescription drug overhaul and will be paid for by increasing the individual tax rate and closing the carried interest loophole.

After reading more specifics of the proposal, suburban voters are concerned mainly about two things: the social welfare component and taxes and/or how the country will pay for this plan.

Most voters were not aware of the social welfare component of the proposal. And, while most believe *“we are long overdue”* for infrastructure improvements, they are less certain about the *“laundry list of social welfare components.”* Quite a few in the group are very against free community college and the government paying for childcare.

A Georgia female voter says, “I would vote against the ‘social welfare’ element if I could. These things should be handled by state and local govts. For example, Georgia pays through lottery proceeds for college and preschool. States should take care of their people and our state elected officials should be responsible to us as citizens for knowing what we need help with. I’m very much against the ‘freebies’ in the social welfare proposal.”

An Arizona male voter says, “I think the infrastructure portion is needed and is a positive, I think the social welfare is well meaning but is a negative. The education money will most likely be wasted. I could support work on universal preschool and long-term care. The majority of the rest is a negative.”

A North Carolina female voter shares, “it will certainly hurt the economy- as businesses will not hire new people and may not open new offices or move parts of their business or production out of the country. Washington needs to at least leave taxes alone—they just need to stop spending so much in such a stupid manner.”

10

Suburban voters have heard of *“cancel culture”* and they’re NOT fans of it.

Suburban voters believe conservatives are the likely group to get cancelled.

* Nearly all suburban voters are familiar with the term *“cancel culture.”*

For the most part, voters describe the idea as *“stupid”* or *“dumb”* at best and *“dangerous”* at worst.

A Minnesota male voter describes it as *“cancel culture is the practice of calling out, boycotting, or otherwise shaming people or practices that may be offensive to someone.”*

An Arizona male voter shares, *“it’s the next generation of the political correctness movement. The cancel culture people want to get rid of things that offend them. If we get rid of everything that offends someone, there will not be anything to talk about or history to remember. It’s just dangerous.”*

And, a Georgia female voter says, *“it’s overall the idea of trying to basically blacklist people from society or crimes (or ‘crimes’) they commit. In practice it’s usually used when people try to ruin someone’s life over something that’s not actually that bad.”*

Three quarters of suburban voters think conservatives are more likely to be “cancelled.”

There is a belief that *“liberals control more of the media and it’s the media that decides who is cancelled.”* According to these suburban voters, this media also includes social media.

Voters believe *“liberals have more clout and can do more damage”* in the area of *“cancel culture”* as they’re quite *“effective [at it] through social media”* because that’s what has *“the ‘power’ to cancel.”* Voters say they see more *“far left liberals”* doing the cancelling than other groups.

A Georgia female voter says, *“I think the liberal party/media/social media tends to push the ‘cancel’ button more than the conservatives. Mainly because it has been a large weapon for social reform, which conservatives are not pushing as much.”*