



STATE NAVIGATE POLL BRIEFING • IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WEST VIRGINIA STRONG

WEST VIRGINIA

REGISTERED INDEPENDENTS - STATEWIDE SURVEY

A likely-voter survey of West Virginians registered as independents, ahead of the November 2026 general election.

AT A GLANCE



FIELD DATES

Aug 1 - Aug 3, 2026



ELECTORATE

Registered indies



SAMPLE SIZE

n = 714 LV



MARGIN OF ERROR

±3.7%

West Virginia registered independents - modeled to the likely-voter electorate

METHODOLOGY

State Navigate, in partnership with West Virginia Strong, surveyed 714 likely voters who are registered as independents across West Virginia from August 1-3, 2026. Text messages were sent to voters by AllianceForge, which directed them to an online survey hosted on the SurveyMonkey platform. Results were weighted by age, gender, race, education, region, and voter registration date to reflect the likely-voter independent electorate. The margin of error is 3.7% at a 95% confidence level. This survey was designed and conducted by the State Navigate Polling Team together with West Virginia Strong, a 501(c)(4), and was not sponsored by any candidate or candidate's committee.

THE WEST VIRGINIA ELECTORATE

West Virginia's general-election electorate by party registration over the last four cycles (shares rounded to the nearest point). Republicans have made up a plurality of every recent electorate, but registered Democrats and independents together remain a substantial share of the vote.

PARTY REG.	2024	2022	2020	2018
GOP	48%	49%	46%	45%
Dem	28%	30%	30%	34%
Ind	23%	20%	23%	20%
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%

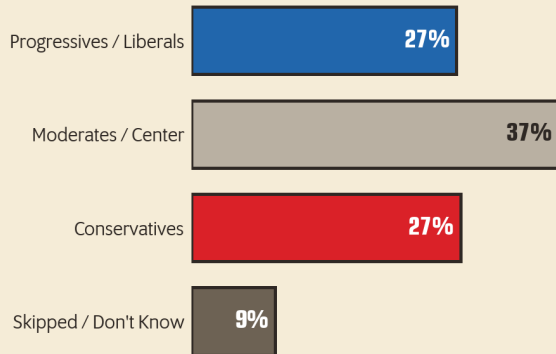
Figures reflect the party registration of each general-election electorate; shares rounded to the nearest percentage point.

DOWNBALLOT STRENGTH

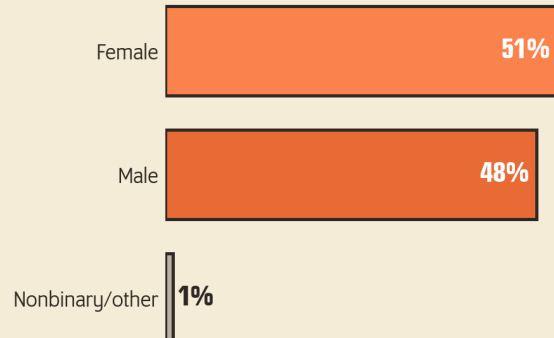
West Virginia is the most downballot-friendly state to Democrats of anywhere in the country for candidates running for state legislature. In 2024, the average Democratic candidate running for the West Virginia legislature ran ahead of Kamala Harris by 7.3%. The results varied wildly by candidate quality, ranging from one Democrat ran 51 points ahead of Harris, to another running 8 points behind her. West Virginia's legislature may be overwhelmingly Republican, but there are many voters across the state who vote Republican at the federal level but Democratic at the state level. Polarization has decreased West Virginia's ticket-splitting rate over the decade and thus is decreasing its ticket-split rate, but given the national environment the average West Virginia Democrat running for state legislature will likely overperform Kamala Harris by a double-digit margin.

STATE DNA - SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

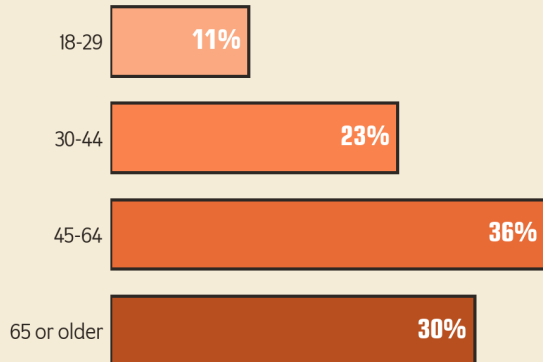
IDEOLOGICAL SELF-ID



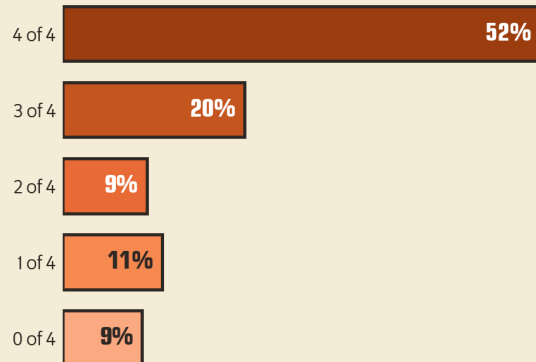
GENDER



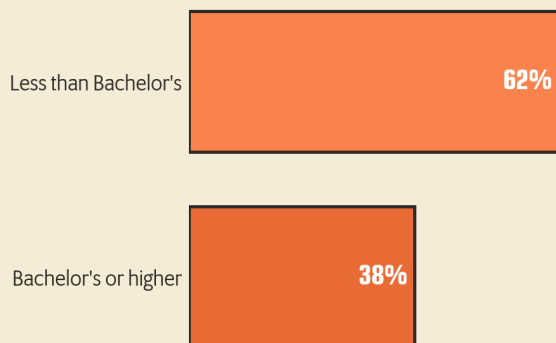
AGE



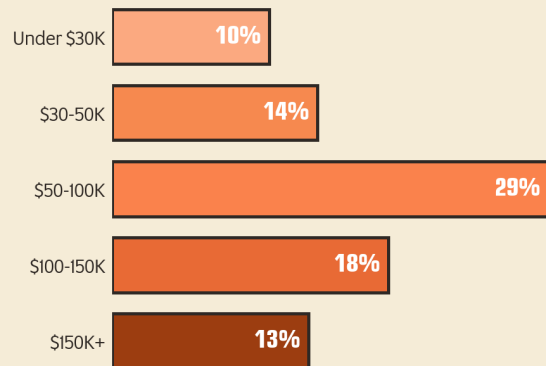
VOTER PROPENSITY (LAST 4 GENERALS)



EDUCATION



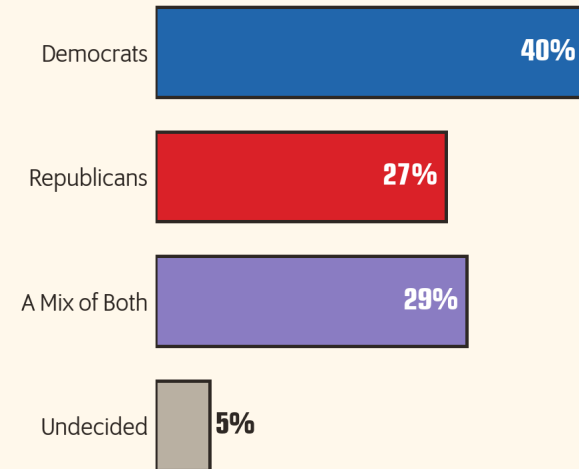
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



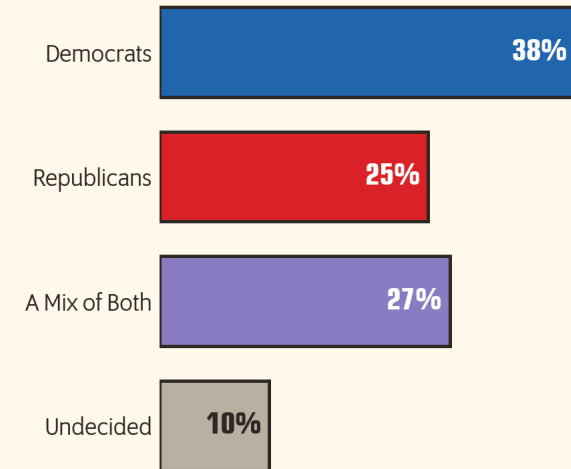
THE SNAPSHOT - 2026 GENERIC BALLOT

Our topline: the 2026 West Virginia state-legislative generic ballot among likely voters - post-leaner push (top-left) and before the push (top-right) - alongside whom they say they typically vote for in federal and state elections.

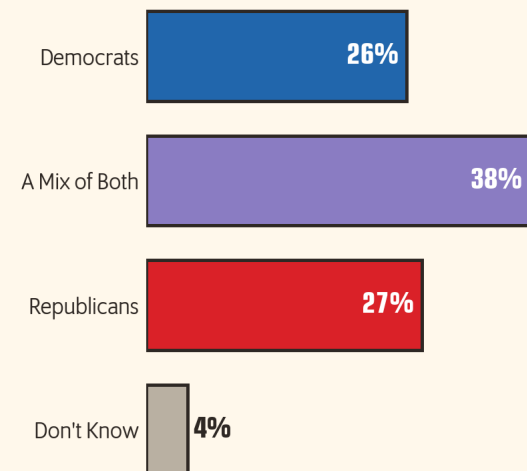
STATE LEGISLATURE - WITH LEANERS



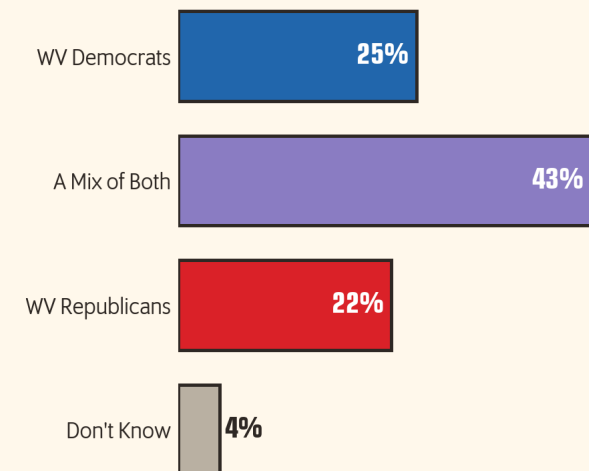
STATE LEGISLATURE - BEFORE LEANERS



TYPICALLY VOTE - FEDERAL



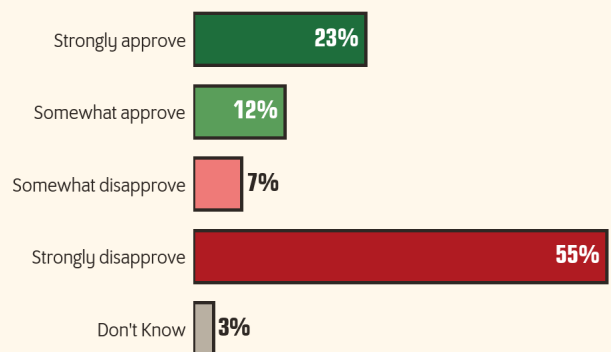
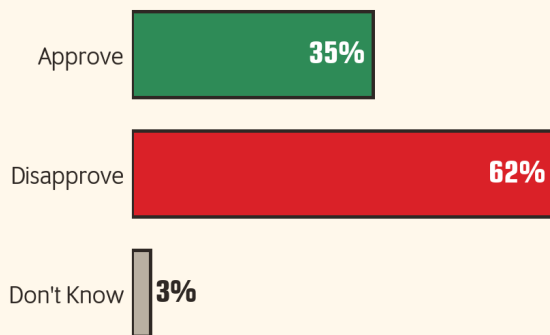
TYPICALLY VOTE - STATE



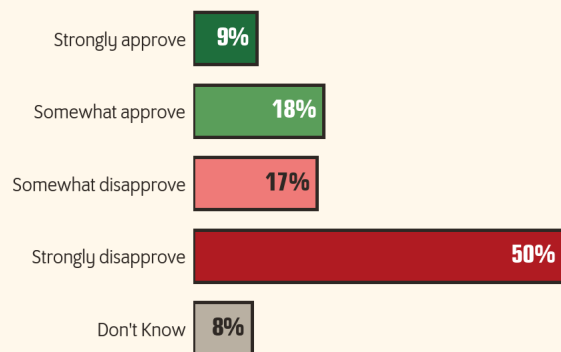
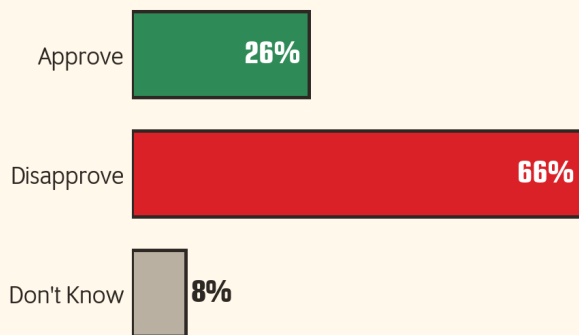
Democrats lead the legislative generic ballot 40-27 with leaners (29% want a mix) - even though these same independents lean Republican in federal elections.

EXECUTIVE & LEGISLATIVE APPROVALS

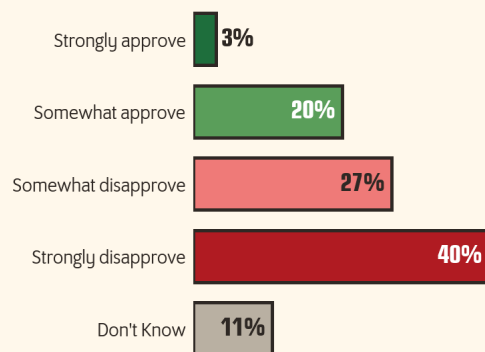
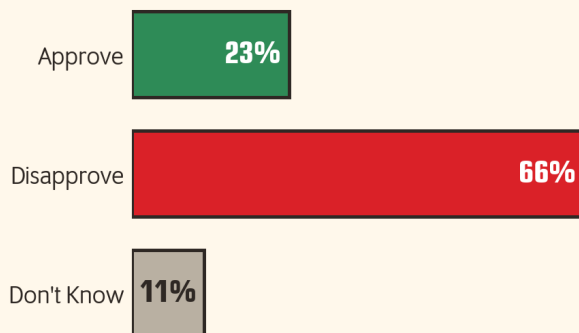
DONALD TRUMP · PRESIDENT



PATRICK MORRISEY · GOVERNOR



WEST VIRGINIA STATE LEGISLATURE



These independents disapprove of all three: Trump 62% disapprove, Morrisey 66%, and the state legislature 66%.

[illegible]

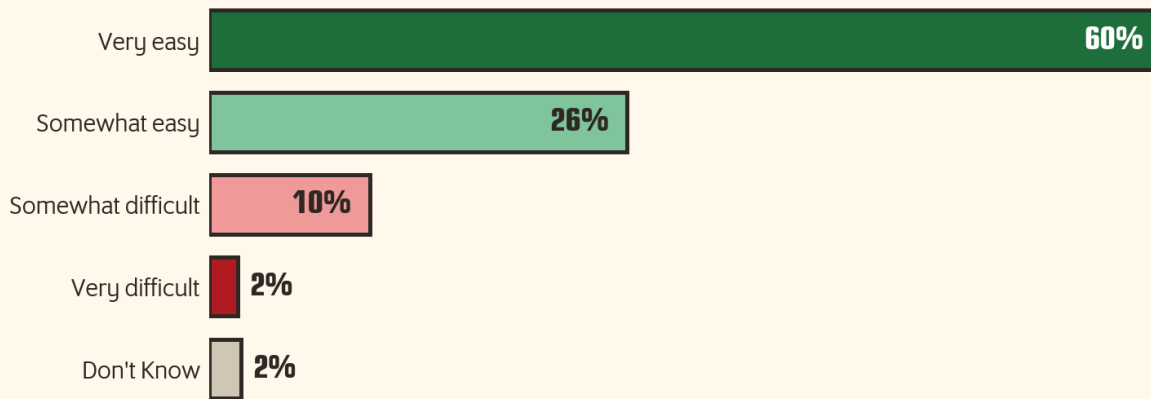
Issue	Percentage
Economy & Cost of Living	28%
Other	15%
Oppose Republicans/Support Democrats	13%
Candidate Qualities & Good Governance	12%
Rights & Social Issues	8%
Infrastructure, Utilities & Roads	8%
Education	7%
Data Centers, Tech & AI	7%
Oppose Democrats/Support Republicans	5%
Healthcare	4%
Immigration	4%
War & Foreign Policy	4%
Taxes	3%
Environment	3%
Jobs & Labor	2%

A horizontal bar chart with eight categories of reasons for not voting. The bars are color-coded and arranged in descending order of percentage. The percentages are displayed at the end of each bar.

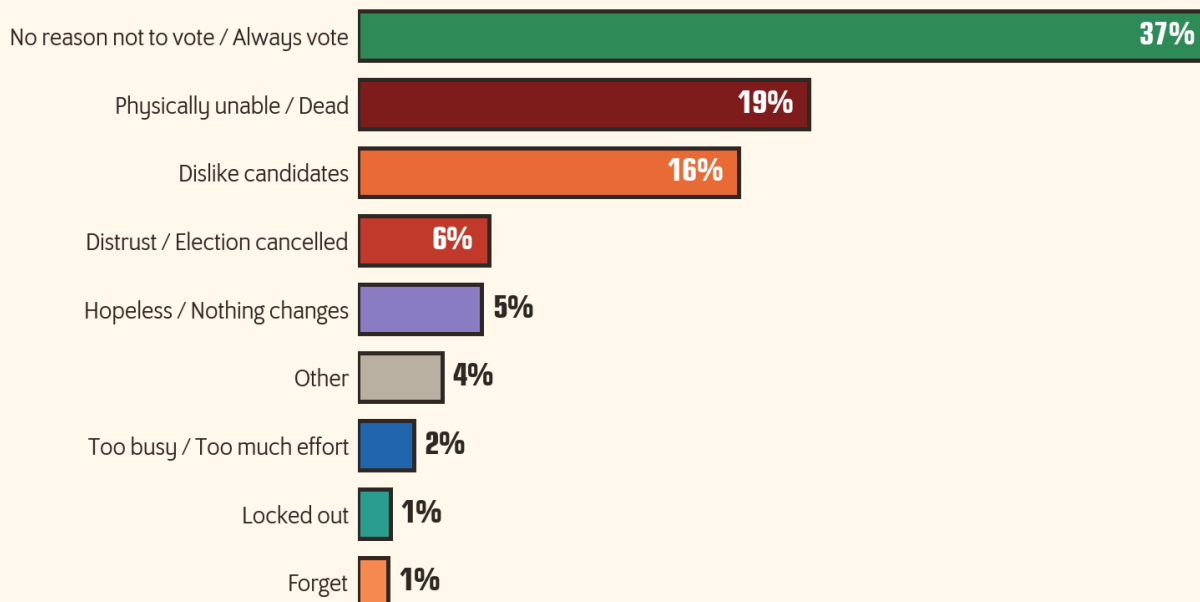
Reason	Percentage
Dislike the two-party system	12%
Vote the person / issues, not party	19%
In the middle / neither side	7%
Disillusioned / distrust both	4%
Independence / freedom to choose	9%
Lean left / progressive	2%
Lean right / conservative	0%
Other	48%

VOTING EASE & REASONS NOT TO VOTE

HOW EASY OR DIFFICULT IS IT TO VOTE IN AN ELECTION?



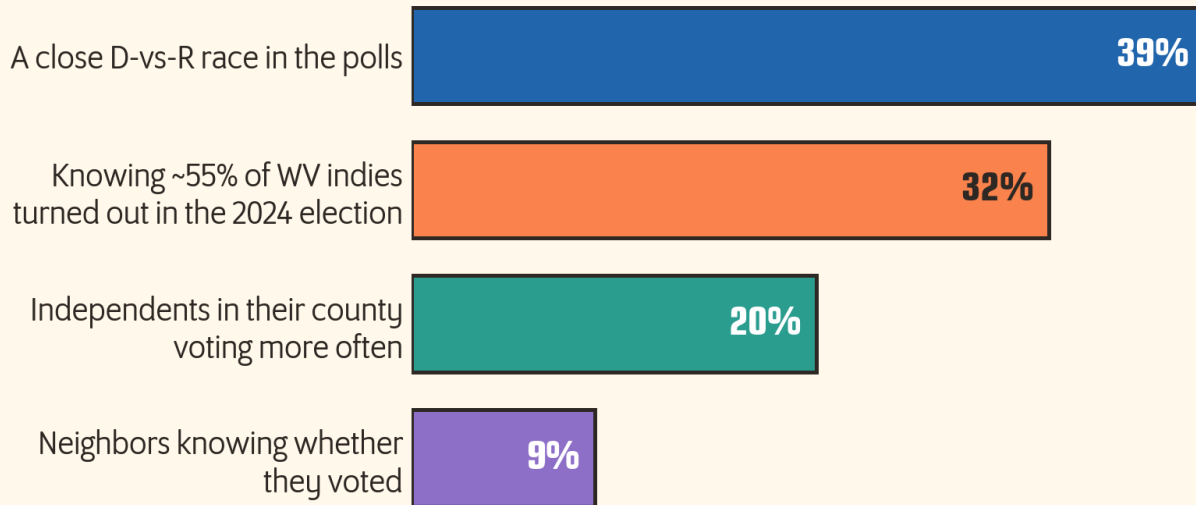
"IF YOU CHOSE NOT TO VOTE, WHAT WOULD BE A REASON?" • OPEN-END THEMES



WHAT MAKES THEM MORE LIKELY TO VOTE

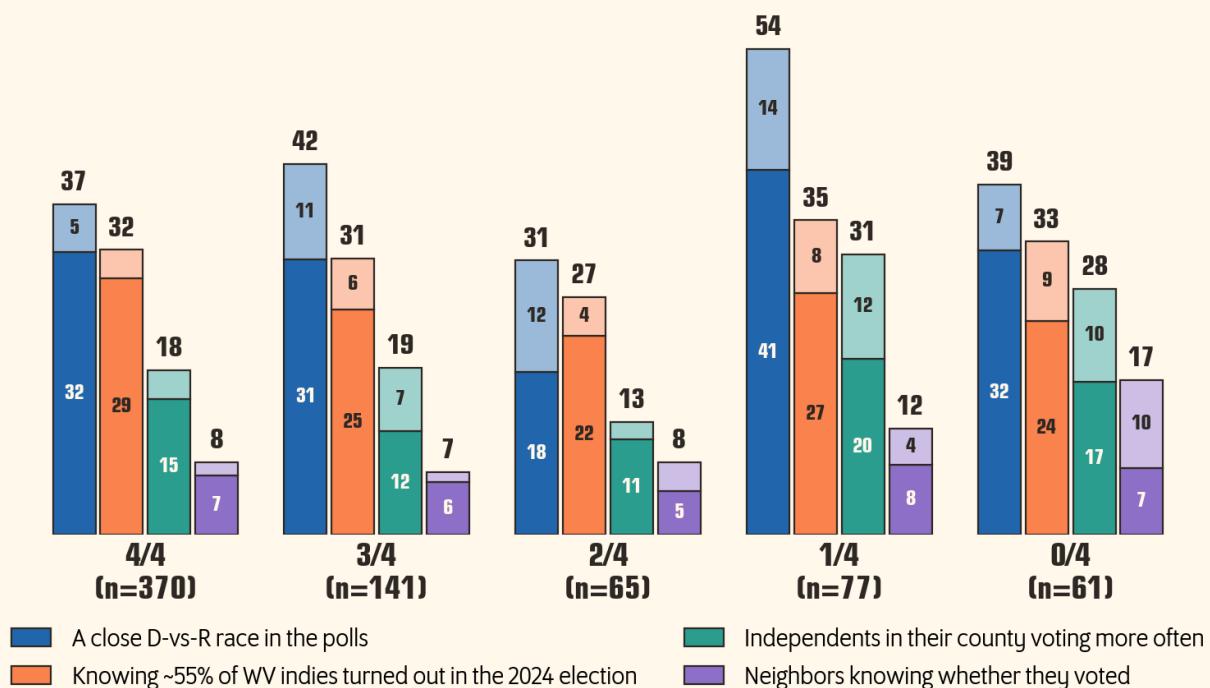
Share who say each scenario would make them MORE likely to vote (combining “much more” and “somewhat more”). Each bar is one scenario we tested.

% MORE LIKELY TO VOTE, BY SCENARIO



% MORE LIKELY TO VOTE, BY VOTER PROPENSITY (LAST 4 GENERALS)

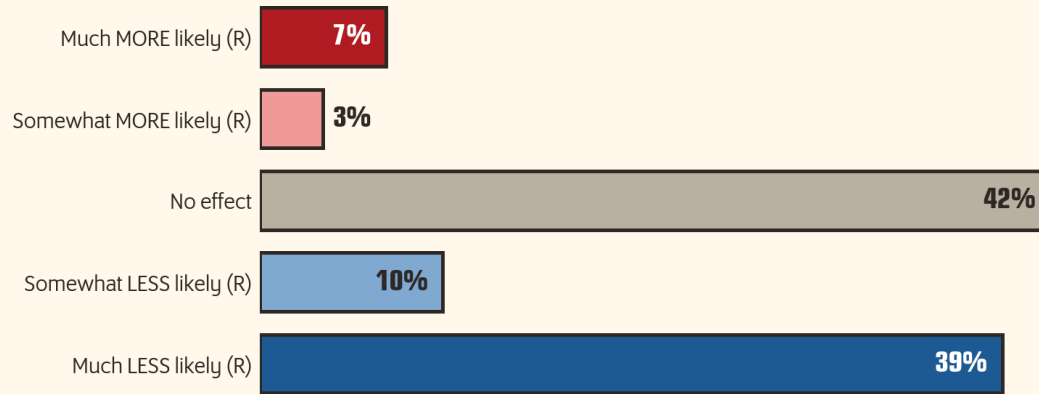
Darker = Much more likely • Lighter = Somewhat more likely



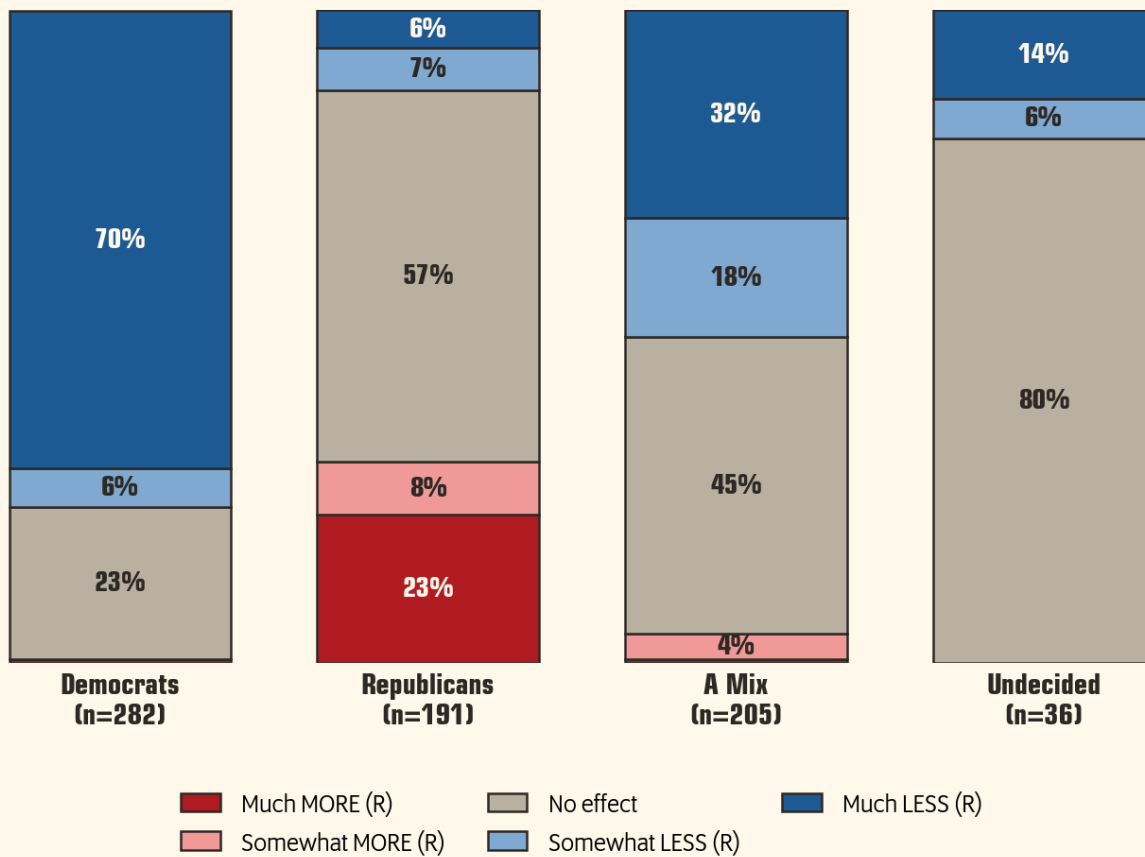
THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY EXCLUSION

In May 2026, the Republican Party of West Virginia moved to exclude independents from its primary elections. We asked how that news affects respondents' likelihood of voting for a Republican in November - overall, then broken out by their state-legislative generic-ballot choice.

OVERALL EFFECT ON LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING REPUBLICAN



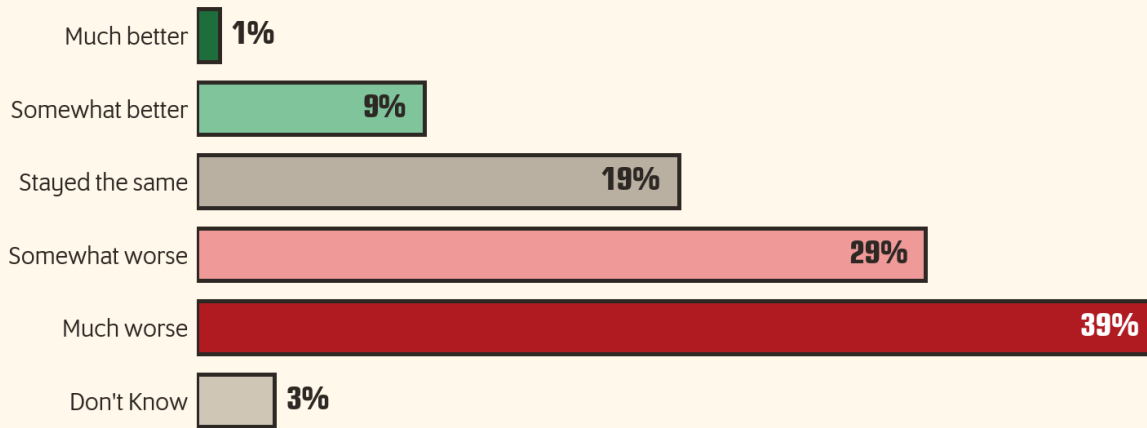
BY 2026 STATE-LEGISLATIVE BALLOT CHOICE



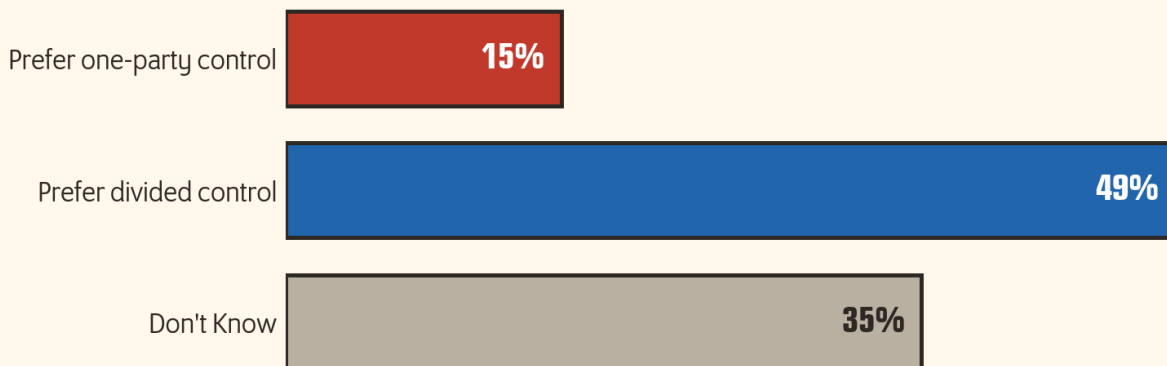
Overall, 49% are less likely to vote Republican vs. 10% more likely - and the backlash is sharpest among mixed-ballot and Democratic-leaning independents.

THE ECONOMY & DIVIDED GOVERNMENT

OVER THE PAST YEAR, WEST VIRGINIA'S ECONOMY HAS...



PREFER ONE PARTY TO CONTROL GOVERNMENT, OR DIVIDED CONTROL?



68% say the state's economy has gotten worse over the past year, and these independents tilt toward divided government over one-party control.

TEAM NOTES & ANALYSIS

Analysis from the State Navigate polling team on this survey of West Virginia registered independents.

CHAZ NUTTYCOMBE

On The Calculus of Voting

One of the most famous political scientists of the 20th century, Anthony Downs, created a formula known as the “calculus of voting.” $V = pB - C$; V is the probability that the voter will turn out, p is the probability of the vote mattering, B is the benefit of a candidate winning to the voter, and C is the cost of voting. Our survey finds that this formula holds up 70 years later.

CHAZ NUTTYCOMBE

On “p” / probability activating Democratic-leaning independents

Our survey finds that the “p” part of Downs’ equation is an incredibly effective motivator for Democratic-leaning and lower propensity independents in West Virginia to vote. 39% of voters said they’d be either much more or somewhat more likely to vote if they saw polls showing candidates in their district in a close race in the general election, the biggest mover for voters in all of our vote likelihood questions. This segment of the electorate is more Democratic-leaning in 2026: 51% say they’d vote for Democrats in November, 11 points more than our topline. This is due in part to the lowest propensity voters in our survey being more Democratic-leaning. It makes sense that in a state as red as West Virginia, there are Democratic-leaning voters who don’t turn out to vote because they live in a reliably red state or district; they likely feel that the probability that their vote matters is close to zero.

CHAZ NUTTYCOMBE

On the “soft disapprovers”

Much has been written about voters who “somewhat disapprove” of President Trump nationwide. These voters are unhappy with President Trump but are mostly planning to vote Republican nevertheless, and the same story repeats in West Virginia. 59% of voters who somewhat disapprove of President Trump plan to vote for a mixture of Republicans and Democrats this November, with 21% planning to vote for Republicans only and 6% Democrats only. 41% of voters who somewhat disapprove of Governor Morrissey plan to vote for a mixture of Republicans and Democrats, with 36% planning to vote for Democrats and 20% for Republicans; voters who somewhat disapprove of the state legislature have a similar topline.

CHAZ NUTTYCOMBE

On divided government

One of the most fascinating findings in our survey is that voters who say they prefer a divided state government are the most Republican-leaning in their state legislative vote choice this year, despite voting Republican in the state legislative races this year meaning upholding the Republican trifecta in West Virginia. Among voters who prefer divided control (49% of our survey), 38% plan to vote for Democrats, and 36% for Republicans. Republicans could possibly lose among this bloc of the electorate if Democrats run campaigns focused on being a check on the Governor.

TEAM NOTES & ANALYSIS

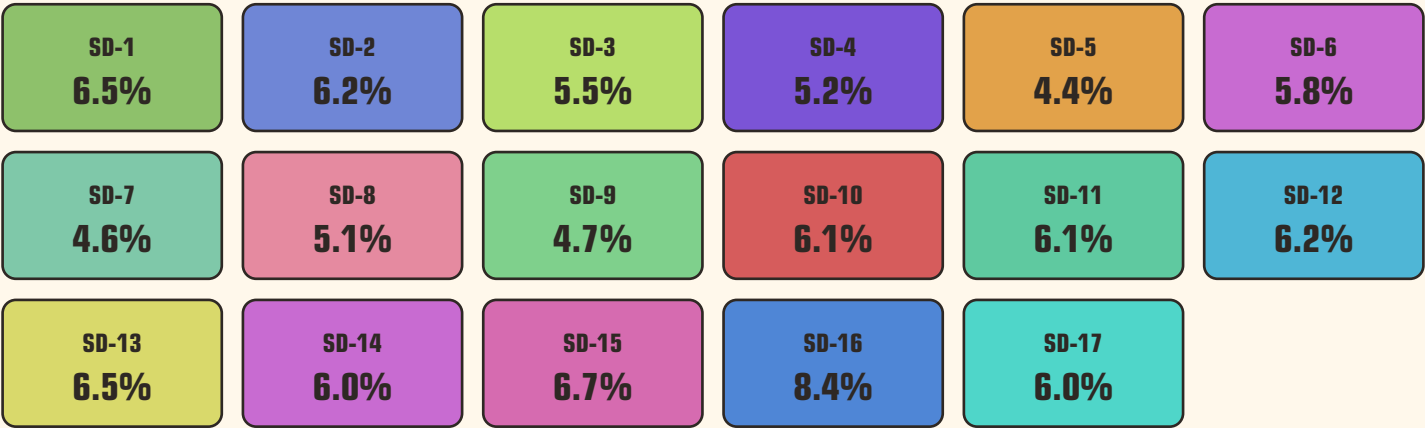
MARY RADCLIFFE

On issues

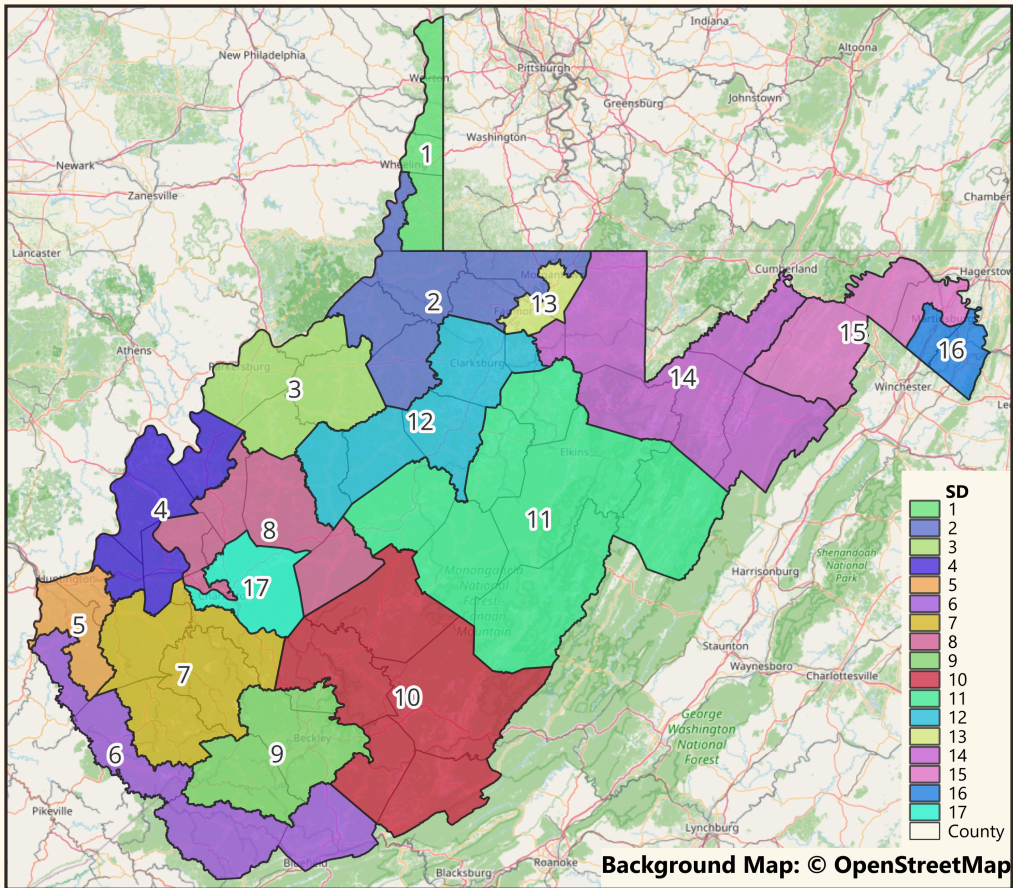
Like voters around the country, West Virginia independents say the economy is among the most important factors influencing their vote. Given an open-ended question about what might motivate their vote in November, 24% mentioned issues related to affordability, cost of living, and the economy. These voters lean Democratic in November: 37% say they will vote for Democrats for state legislature, while 20% will vote for Republicans and 36% say they'll vote for a mix of Democrats and Republicans. Excluding those that mention explicitly partisan reasons for voting, Republicans only lead with voters that mention immigration as a reason to vote (3% of the sample); they lead this group 60% to 17%. Among all other issues, Democrats hold at least a modest lead, with their strongest issues being healthcare (60% lead among 3% of the sample), the environment (45% lead among 3% of the sample), and education (44% lead among 6% of the sample).

APPENDIX • REGIONS & WEIGHTS

State Navigate's West Virginia analysis regions, keyed to State Senate districts (SD) and numbered to match the map below. Cards show each region's share of the likely-voter sample.



WEST VIRGINIA REGIONAL MAP



State Navigate is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to becoming a compass for state legislatures everywhere. Our bipartisan polling team consists of alumni of FiveThirtyEight, political scientists, and polling experts. Last year, State Navigate was the most accurate pollster in the country for the 2025 election cycle. To learn more about our poll sponsorship opportunities, [click here](#)! Public polling on state governance, especially state legislatures, is rare, so we try to make our polling as affordable as possible for sponsors to help fill this gap.

OUR POLLING TEAM

CHAZ NUTTYCOMBE

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chaz was the Director of CNalysis.com, the only website dedicated to state legislative election forecasting. He has successfully forecasted thousands of state legislative elections since 2017 during his senior year in high school. Chaz leads the polling team and works with them on survey design, field work, weighting, and written analysis.

MICHAEL FOLEY

ELECTIONS COORDINATOR

Michael is an expert in GIS technology and has experience in coding and scraping technology. He is a graduate of Fordham University and the University of Chicago Law School. In our polling, Michael conducts fieldwork, setting up surveys and texts, and exports/designs crosstabs.

MARY RADCLIFFE

DATA MANAGER

Mary Radcliffe is a mathematician and data analyst from Pittsburgh. She earned a PhD in Mathematics from the University of California, San Diego in 2012. Mary has previously worked as a Teaching Professor at Carnegie Mellon University and Researcher at FiveThirtyEight. In our polling, Mary helps with survey design, keeps our polling operations ethical, creates topline, and writes analyses of results.

G. ELLIOTT MORRIS

POLLING COMMITTEE MEMBER

Elliott Morris is a data-driven journalist and author living in Washington, DC. He's the author of *STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: How Polls Work and Why We Need Them*. Elliott was most recently the Editorial Director of Data Analytics at ABC News, where he developed polling aggregation and election-forecasting models and managed the research and data visualization teams for ABC's data-journalism website FiveThirtyEight/538. In our polling, Elliott helps with survey design and writing weighting scripts.

NICHOLAS GOEDERT

POLLING COMMITTEE MEMBER

Nicholas / "Nick" is an assistant professor of Political Science at Virginia Tech with expertise focused on legislative elections and American politics. He is the author of *GROUND WAR: Courts, Commissions, and the Fight over Partisan Gerrymanders* (Oxford, 2022). He served as an expert witness in the Wisconsin redistricting case *Whitford v. Gill*. He holds a Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton and a J.D. from Georgetown Law. In our polling, Nick helps with survey design and gives academic feedback.

Your compass for state legislatures

PEACE OUT. THAT'S ALL.

