

# THE RESISTANCE

A report on the views of the Elite 1%, Federal Government  
Managers, and Everyday Americans concerning the  
new Trump Administration



A PROJECT OF THE  
NAPOLITAN INSTITUTE

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# NAPOLITAN INSTITUTE MISSION STATEMENT

We recognize that the only legitimate authority for government comes from the consent of the governed. Our mission is to amplify and magnify the voice of the American people so clearly and powerfully that it becomes the driving, framing, and shaping force for the crucial conversations of our nation.

*"Never underestimate the intelligence of the voters, nor overestimate the amount of knowledge at their disposal."*

-Joseph Napolitan

*"In the elite political bubble, Napolitan's wise advice is not only rejected, but turned upside down. Too many political elites mistakenly believe both that voters are stupid and that they hang on every word uttered in official Washington."*

-Scott Rasmussen

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Napolitan Institute commissioned RMG Research to conduct surveys measuring attitudes towards the Trump Administration among three separate populations: Registered Voters Nationwide, Federal Government Managers in the National Capitol Region, and the Elite 1%.

The same questions were asked of each population in December, midway between the election and the inauguration of Donald Trump as president. Interviews were completed with 1,000 Registered Voters, 500 Federal Government Managers, and 1,000 members of the Elite 1%.

These surveys reflect a continuation of research done on the Elite 1% that launched in 2023. In 2023, two Elite 1% surveys were commissioned by the Committee to Unleash Prosperity. In 2024, prior to this study, the Napolitan Institute conducted six surveys of the Elite 1%. This influential group is identified by three characteristics: they have postgraduate degrees, live in densely populated urban areas (more than 10,000 people per square mile), and earn at least \$150,000 a year.

The earlier research found that the Elite 1% held views on a number of issues and topics that were wildly out of touch with the American people. Core differences were discovered around issues of individual freedom and trust in government.

- By a 57% to 16% margin, voters believe there is not enough individual freedom in America.
  - Among the Elite 1%, half (47%) believe the American people have too much freedom, and only 21% say not enough.
- Seventy percent (70%) of the elites trust the federal government to do the right thing most of the time.
  - Among voters, just 22% share that level of trust.

The Napolitan Institute also commissioned a previous survey of Federal Government Managers which found the government leaders held views more aligned with the elites than with voters.

A report on the preliminary research can be found at [theeliteonepercent.org](https://theeliteonepercent.org).

# TERMINOLOGY

The Napolitan Institute has developed a specific terminology to define various subsets of both the Elite 1% and everyday Americans.

**Elite 1%:** People in this group have postgraduate degrees, earn more than \$150,000 annually, and live in densely populated areas (10,000 people per square mile in their zip codes). An extremely influential group, they represent approximately 1% of the U.S. population. Members of the Elite 1% tend to place a lot of trust in government, and many are concerned there is too much individual freedom in America.

**Main Street Americans:** This group, representing approximately 70-75% of the U.S. population, are the antithesis of the Elite 1%. They have none of the three attributes of the Elite 1%. They do NOT have postgraduate degrees, do NOT live in densely populated urban areas, and earn LESS than \$150,000 annually. On many foundational issues, the gap between Main Street views and Elite 1% views is enormous. Main Street Americans have little trust in government, and most believe there is not enough individual freedom in America today.

**Elite Adjacent:** This group sits between Main Street and the Elite 1%. They have at least one of the three Elite 1% attributes, but not all of them. On many issues, their attitudes are different from Main Street views but not as extreme as the Elite 1%. One reason for tracking this group is that a credible sample of Elite Adjacent voters can be found in a standard national opinion survey of approximately 1,000 voters. Where sizable gaps on a topic exist between Main Street and Elite Adjacent Americans, it may be an indication of an especially large gap between Main Street and the Elite 1%.

**Ivy Plus Schools:** This refers to a list of 16 elite colleges and universities: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, Stanford, University of Chicago, UC Berkeley, Johns Hopkins, MIT, Cornell, Northwestern, Dartmouth, Brown, Caltech, and Duke.

A significant portion of the Elite 1% have attended at least one of these schools at the graduate or undergraduate level. On many issues, this group holds views that are further removed from the general public than other members of the Elite 1%.

In the earliest version of research on the Elite 1%, a similar category was focused on only 12 schools. Earlier research by [Thomas R. Dye](#) found that half of the political, corporate, and philanthropic elites attended one of those 12 schools.

**Federal Government Managers:** For Napolitan Institute surveys, Federal Government Managers are defined as federal employees living in the National Capitol Region and earning at least \$75,000 annually.

**Politically Active:** These are people who talk politics every day or nearly every day. Among voters, approximately 8% talk politics daily. Among the Elite 1%, that total is generally in the 25% to 30% range. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 13% talk politics daily.

**Politically Engaged:** This includes people who talk politics daily and those who talk politics on most days. Among voters, approximately 31% are politically engaged. Among the Elite 1%, that total is generally around 65%. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 39% are politically engaged.

**Politically Disengaged:** People who discuss politics once a week or less. Among voters, roughly 68% fall into this category including 28% who talk politics rarely or never. Among the Elite 1%, approximately 35% talk politics once a week or less. Among Federal Government Managers, approximately 59% are politically disengaged.

## KEY FINDINGS

Over the next four years, 56% of voters nationwide say their political efforts will primarily be intended to support the Trump Administration. A Napolitan Institute survey of 1,000 Registered Voters found that just 29% will focus their political energies on resisting the incoming administration.

However, among the Elite 1% and Federal Government Managers, support for the new administration is weaker and resistance is stronger.

- Just 48% of the Elite 1% will work on supporting the Administration, while 39% will resist.
- Forty-four percent (44%) of Federal Government Managers plan on supporting the new Administration while 42% will resist.

The scale of potential challenges can be seen by reviewing the intensity of support or resistance among the Elite 1%, Federal Government Managers, and Main Street Americans.

- Among Main Street Americans, 44% plan to Strongly Support the Trump Administration, and just 24% will Strongly Resist. That's a net +20 points.
- Among the Elite 1%, enthusiastic support is much lower and intense resistance a bit higher. Just 25% of the Elite 1% will Strongly Support the new Administration, while 32% will Strongly Resist (net -7 points).
- Twenty-six percent (26%) of the Managers plan to Strongly Support the Trump Administration, while nearly the same number (23%) will Strongly Resist (net + 3 points).

It is worth noting that Donald Trump received just under 50% of the vote but 56% of voters are now willing to support his administration.

That's because 12% of Harris voters say they will now work to at least Somewhat Support the new Administration. These results are consistent with other survey research showing that most voters give the president-elect positive reviews for the way he has handled the transition.

That same dynamic was found even more dramatically among the Elite 1%.

On Election Day, 64% of the elites voted for Vice President Kamala Harris while just 34% preferred Trump. However, among the Elite 1% who voted for Harris, a quarter (26%) are for the moment working to support the new Administration. Another 15% of these elite Harris voters plan to remain neutral.

Among both voters and the elites, many who cast their ballots for the vice president will remain neutral rather than engage in resistance. However, that is not the case among Federal Government Managers.

- Forty-five percent (45%) of them voted for Trump and just 44% will work to support his Administration.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) voted for Harris and 42% will focus on resisting the incoming president.

Among Federal Government Managers who voted for Harris, just 1% are even willing to Somewhat Support the new Administration. Fully 80% are committed to resisting the team elected by the American people. Along with other data discussed later, this suggests that the Trump Administration can expect to encounter substantial efforts by government leaders to block the president’s initiatives.

*Looking ahead to the next four years, will your political efforts be primarily to support the Trump administration or resist the Trump administration?*

<b>Totals</b>				
	<b>Voters</b>	<b>Main Street</b>	<b>Gov Mng</b>	<b>Elites</b>
<b>Strongly support the Trump administration</b>	41%	44%	26%	25%
<b>Somewhat support the Trump administration</b>	15%	15%	18%	23%
<b>Neither support nor resist</b>	14%	12%	13%	13%
<b>Somewhat resist the Trump administration</b>	5%	4%	19%	7%
<b>Strongly resist the Trump administration</b>	24%	24%	23%	32%
<b>Not sure</b>	2%	1%	1%	1%

**Source: RMG Research, Inc.**



## **PARTISAN DIVIDE AMONG FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS**

There is an enormous partisan divide among Federal Government Managers. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of Republican managers plan to support the Trump Administration, while 73% of Democratic managers intend to resist. The intensity gap is very wide—52% of GOP managers will Strongly Support the Administration, while 40% of Democrats will Strongly Resist.

Given that there are similar numbers of Republicans and Democrats in the ranks of Federal Government Managers, this partisan divide may well foreshadow a turbulent time of conflict within the government itself.

The scale of that conflict and resistance can be seen in how Federal Government Managers would react if President Trump gave them a legal order which they thought was bad policy. Just 17% of Democratic Managers who voted for Vice President Harris would follow the president's order. Three times as many (64%) would ignore the order and do what they thought was best. Not surprisingly, Republican managers overwhelmingly said they would follow the president's order.

If a government leader refuses to follow a legal order from the president, 54% of Main Street voters believe that person should be fired (just 30% disagree).

- Members of the Elite 1% agree by nearly the same margin (52% to 32%).
- However, government managers are divided along partisan lines. Seventy-four percent (74%) of Republican managers believe someone should be fired for refusing a presidential order. Just 23% of Democratic managers agree.

It is worth noting that the strong support of Republican managers is likely different from eight years ago when Donald Trump first took office. While there were no comparable surveys conducted at that time, there is strong anecdotal evidence that many Republicans were not supportive of the unconventional new president.

## ISSUE PRIORITIES

Throughout the 2024 election, the Biden/Harris campaigns and others expressed frustration with voter concerns about the economy. However, it was then and remains today the top issue for voters.

- In response to an open-ended question about the most important issue, 40% of Main Street voters named some aspect of the economy as the most important issues.
- Just 26% of the Elite 1% and 18% of Federal Government Managers named the economy as the most important issue.

Immigration was the top issue for 18% of Main Street voters but only 11% of Government Managers and 7% of the Elite 1%.

- Among the Elite 1%, nearly one-out-of-five (18%) named either American politics or Donald Trump as the top concern. That's far higher than Elite concern about immigration.
  - In this influential segment of the population, healthcare (6%) and abortion (5%) were each considered roughly as important as immigration.
- Among Federal Government Managers, 11% named immigration as the top issue, 10% said healthcare, 10% guns and crime, 6% climate change, 5% education, 5% equality, and 5% cybersecurity. Other than immigration, none of those issues were mentioned by even 1% of voters.

*In just a few words, please let me know what you consider to be the most important political issue right now.*

<b>Totals</b>				
	<b>Voters</b>	<b>Main Street</b>	<b>Gov Mng</b>	<b>Elites</b>
<b>Economy</b>	39%	40%	18%	26%
<b>Immigration</b>	17%	18%	11%	7%
<b>America's politics</b>	6%	4%	-	11%
<b>Abortion</b>	5%	6%	-	5%
<b>Trump</b>	5%	4%	-	7%
<b>Healthcare</b>	-	-	10%	6%
<b>Guns and crime</b>	-	-	10%	-
<b>Climate change</b>	-	-	6%	-
<b>Education</b>	-	-	5%	-
<b>Equality</b>	-	-	5%	-
<b>Cybersecurity</b>	-	-	5%	-
<b>Other</b>	25%	24%	30%	26%
<b>No answer</b>	3%	3%	0%	2%

**Source: RMG Research, Inc.**

Part of Donald Trump’s success in 2024 is likely the result of campaigning against the status quo led by Federal Government Managers whose priorities are much different from Main Street Americans.

It also helps explain why just 22% of voters trust the federal government to do the right thing most of the time. Trust will never be restored until government officials focus on issues of concern to voters and address them in a meaningful way.

## PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of Main Street Americans approve of the way Donald Trump has handled his role as president-elect. Just 39% disapprove (net +19).

- Among the Elite 1%, 48% approve and 50% disapprove (net -2).
- Among Federal Government Managers, 46% approve and 50% disapprove (net -4).

Particularly stunning is the gap between perceptions of Trump and the current president. Main Street Americans give Trump (58%) a far higher rating than Biden (40%).

- The Elite 1% hold Biden in much higher regard than Trump. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the elites approve of Biden's performance. That's 24 points higher than their approval of Trump.
- Federal Government Managers give Biden a 68% approval rating, 22 points higher than their approval of Trump during the transition.

The ongoing elite and government leadership approval of Biden is another example of just how differently they view the world compared to most Americans.

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of Main Street Americans expect the economy to be better at this time next year. That view is shared by 56% of the Elites and 43% of Federal Government Managers.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of Main Street Americans believe cutting government spending would be good for the economy. That view is shared by 60% of the Elites and 50% of Federal Government Managers.

- Eighty-two percent (82%) of Republican Government Managers believe cutting government spending would be good for the economy.
- Democratic Government Managers disagree: 61% say cutting spending is bad for the economy while just 27% say it would be good.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of Main Street Americans favor making the Trump tax cuts permanent. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the elites and 51% of Federal Government Managers agree.

- Once again, there is a yawning partisan gap among Federal Government Managers. Ninety percent (90%) of GOP Managers favor making the tax cuts permanent.
- Among Federal Government Managers who are Democrats, 76% oppose making the Trump tax cuts permanent.

Totals				
	Voters	Main Street	Gov Mng	Elites
Strongly favor	33%	35%	23%	23%
Somewhat favor	27%	28%	28%	34%
Somewhat oppose	12%	11%	30%	14%
Strongly oppose	16%	14%	16%	22%
Not sure	12%	12%	3%	7%

Source: RMG Research, Inc.

## ELITE GENDER GAP

During the 2024 presidential campaign, many news stories suggested that a record setting gender gap might sink the Trump campaign. When the votes were counted, the gap was fairly normal.

One reason the media driven narrative may have taken hold is that there is an enormous gender gap among the Elite 1%.

- Among Elite 1% women, 53% will work to resist the Trump Administration over the next four years. Just 32% will be supportive.
- Among Elite 1% men, the numbers are reversed: only 27% will resist, and 59% will try to be supportive.

This gender gap among the Elite 1%, combined with a condescending attitude towards Main Street voters, may help explain the Julia Roberts commercial reminding women that their husbands wouldn't know how they voted.

The president-elect currently has a 61% approval rating among elite men and a 32% rating among women. Curiously, there is no comparable gap on opinions of Biden (76% rating among elite women, 69% among elite men).

## **REVERSAL OF POLITICALLY ACTIVE ELITES**

Prior to Election Day, surveys of the Elite 1% found that elites who talked politics every day were even further out of touch with the American people. For example, while 47% of the elites thought the American people had too much individual freedom, that figure was 69% among those who talked politics daily.

In this survey, however, that dynamic was reversed on many questions. For example, among elites who talk politics daily, 55% approve of the way Donald Trump has handled the transition. That's very close to the 58% approval rating among Main Street Americans. However, among the Elite 1% who don't talk politics every day, Trump's approval was only 46%.

This may simply be the result of the winning team being more excited and following the news more closely, a phenomenon that happens often in the world of sports. It may also reflect a temporarily heightened interest in politics during the election season and transition.

As 2025 unfolds, the Napolitan Institute will look to see if this trend continues. Is this just a temporary blip or will the elites who hold extreme views return to more active political engagement?

## **IMMIGRATION**

No issue has been identified with President Trump more than border security. The underlying public attitudes on the topic of immigration have remained stable for decades. Currently 72% of voters believe that legal immigration is good for America and illegal immigration is bad. The rest of the population is evenly divided between those who say all immigration is good (13%) and all immigration is bad (12%).

The broad public belief that legal immigration is good and illegal immigration is bad is not reflected among Federal Government Managers. Half of the managers believe either that both legal and illegal immigration are good (25%) or that both legal and illegal immigration are bad (25%). Fewer than half (46%) share the public consensus that legal immigration is good and illegal immigration is bad.

- Among Federal Government Managers who are Democrats, just 36% share the public view distinguishing between legal and illegal immigration. Thirty-eight percent (38%) believe that all immigration is good while 22% believe all immigration is bad.
- Among Republican Federal Government Managers, 64% see legal immigration as good and illegal immigration as bad. Twenty-six percent (26%) say all immigration is bad and 8% say all immigration is good.

On this topic, the Elite 1% is somewhat closer to public attitudes than the government managers.

*Which of the following best describes your views on immigration?*

<b>Totals</b>				
	<b>Voters</b>	<b>Main Street</b>	<b>Gov Mng</b>	<b>Elites</b>
<b>Both legal and illegal immigration are bad for the United States.</b>	12%	12%	25%	11%
<b>Legal immigration is good for the United States, but illegal immigration is bad.</b>	72%	71%	46%	63%
<b>Both legal and illegal immigration are good for the United States.</b>	13%	13%	25%	24%
<b>Not sure</b>	3%	4%	3%	3%

**Source: RMG Research, Inc.**

Seventy-four percent (74%) of Main Street Americans favor elimination of all government payments to illegal immigrants. Sixty-two percent (62%) of Elites agree along with 60% of Government Managers.

However, enthusiasm for this proposal is higher on Main Street, where 47% Strongly Favor the proposal. Among the Elite 1%, that figure is 29%. It's two points lower among Federal Government Managers.

## GOVERNMENT WASTE

Since Election Day, there has been a lot of attention paid to the proposed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Most Main Street voters (51%) believe at least half of all government spending is waste and fraud. That view is shared by just 31% of Elites and 37% of Federal Government Managers.

At the other end of the spectrum, one out of four Elites (28%) believe less than 10% of federal government spending is waste and fraud. Twenty-one percent (21%) of federal government managers agree along with 9% of Main Street Americans.

## TRIMMING THE FEDERAL PAYROLL

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of Main Street voters favor a proposal requiring every federal agency to reduce its payroll by 1% a year for ten years. Not surprisingly, a majority (55%) of Federal Government Managers are opposed.

However, the gap between Main Street and Federal Government Managers may be even wider than those numbers suggest. The Federal Government routinely uses Current Services Budgeting terminology. In this approach, if spending was expected to go up 5% but only goes up 3%, it's considered a spending cut. So, it is possible that the Managers were thinking about a 1% cut from expected growth.

Voters, on the other hand, see it differently. If spending was expected to go up 5% but only goes up 3%, most voters call that slowing a growth of spending rather than a cut.

So, voters are likely thinking of a 1% cut from the existing payroll levels, which would eliminate all payroll growth going forward and generate significant savings. Federal Government Managers are likely thinking of a cut from the Current Service Budget, which would be a minor tightening of the belt.

Supporting this interpretation is the fact that 50% of Federal Government Managers believe it is possible to cut the federal payroll by 1% without harming essential government services. Fifty-four percent (54%) of Main Street voters agree.

These conflicting understandings will be explored in future research.



## CONCLUSION

Following President Trump's victory on November 5, just 29% of voters nationwide will use their political efforts to resist the incoming Administration. Resistance is higher among the Elite 1% (39%) and among Federal Government Managers (42%).

Additionally, even among the elites and government managers who will work to support the new Administration, enthusiasm is far lower than among the voting public. Forty-four percent (44%) of voters will Strongly Support the new Administration. Just 25% of the Elite 1% offer such support along with 26% of Federal Government Managers.

Elite resistance is far higher among women than men. Resistance among federal government managers is divided on a partisan basis.

These results are unsurprising in light of the fact that much of President Trump's campaign focused on themes of empowering voters and reducing the power of elites and government managers. That perception is reflected by the fact that members of the Elite 1% preferred Vice President Harris over President Trump by a two-to-one margin (64% to 34%).

Given those numbers, elite resistance to Trump's second term is also unsurprising. It's worth noting, however, that a significant share (41%) of the elites are willing— at least for now— to give the incoming president the benefit of the doubt. While 64% of the Elite 1% voted for Harris, just 39% are currently committed to resisting the president.

Unfortunately, the willingness to give the new president the benefit of the doubt is not found in the managerial ranks of the federal government.

In theory, employees of the federal government are supposed to fill an administrative function only. In a nation founded on the belief that governments derive their only just authority from the consent of the governed, voters are supposed to be in charge.

However, among Federal Government Managers who voted for Harris, there is no willingness to accept the decision made by voters on November 5. Not a single one of these Harris voting managers are willing to Strongly Support the new Administration. In fact, just 1% are even willing to Somewhat Support it.

In fairness, such unwillingness to support the opposing team is not unreasonable. However, respect for voters and the American system of government would require these Harris voting Federal Government Managers to remain neutral in implementing the policies of the Trump Administration. Rather than respecting the voters, however, fully 80% of these government leaders are committed to resisting the incoming team.

These result give voters legitimate reasons to suspect the existence of a Deep State pursuing its own agenda rather than implementing the agenda selected by voters.

## METHODOLOGY

The surveys for this study were conducted online by Scott Rasmussen. Field work was conducted by RMG Research, Inc.

The survey of 1,000 Registered Voters was conducted December 12-13, 2024.

The survey of 1,000 Elite 1% Voters was conducted December 9-19, 2024.

The survey of 500 Federal Government Managers was conducted December 9-23, 2024.

The Elite 1% are defined as those having postgraduate degrees, having household incomes of more than \$150,000 annually, and living in zip codes with more than 10,000 people per square mile. Approximately 1% of the total U.S. population meets these criteria.

These parameters were determined after the observation of numerous surveys indicated that these elite segments of the population consistently exhibited views that were distinct from the general population. For additional background information on the Elite 1%, see the report issued by the Napolitan Institute in [September 2024](#).

Federal Government Managers were defined as those working for the federal government or federal government agencies, having household incomes of more than \$75,000 annually, and living in the National Capitol Region (the D.C. metro area).

For the survey of Registered Voters, certain quotas were applied, and the sample was lightly weighted by geography, gender, age, race, education, internet usage, and political party to reasonably reflect the nation's population of Registered Voters. Weighting for political partisanship was determined through the standard Dynamic Weighting process developed by [RMG Research](#).

For the survey of Elite 1% voters, the sample was lightly weighted to reflect aggregated survey results from the three months leading up to Election Day. In this sample of Elite 1% voters, 69% were Democrats or leaned Democrat, while 26% were Republicans or leaned Republican. That is slightly less Democratic than earlier surveys of the Elite 1%. This difference may merely be statistical noise, or it may reflect a modest shift in elite views following high-profile examples like Bill Ackman.

For the survey of Federal Government Managers, the sample was lightly weighted by gender, age, and race. Forty-eight percent (48%) were Democrats or leaned Democrat, while 41% were Republicans or leaned Republican. This is modestly more Democratic leaning than the Napolitan Institute's prior survey of Federal Government Managers. In the May 2024 survey, 44% were Democrats and 43% were Republican. Once again, this shift could be merely statistical noise. The changes are within the survey's Margin of Sampling Error.

The margin of sampling error for the full sample and for the Elite Voters is +/-3.1 percentage points. The margin of sampling error for the Federal Government Managers is +/-4.4 percentage points.

It's important to note that sampling error is only one potential source of error in any survey. That's especially the case with surveys of rarely measured populations such as the Elite 1% or Federal Government Managers.