



The 5 Basic Types of Trump Voter, According to a Revealing New Poll

The president's base is more fragile than it looks. Here's where Democrats can make real inroads.

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The Cato Institute has produced a fascinating report classifying five types of Trump voters that strongly suggests where his base is breaking apart, as seen by plummeting [polls](#) setting record lows for public approval.

But if the libertarian Institute's analysis is correct, it also strongly suggests Democrats could have won the presidency had they put forth an economic populist like Bernie Sanders and not a corporate-affiliated establishment insider like Hillary Clinton.

Indeed, of the five groups classified by Emily Ekins, Cato's polling director and author of the [report](#), "The Five Types of Trump Voters: Who They Are and What They Believe," perhaps one-fifth of Trump's base sounds like disaffected Democrats—especially those drawn to Sanders.

Why didn't they vote for Clinton? The report suggests that not only did they distrust her relationship with corporate power—which they view as deeply oppressive, but they are a slice of white America that feels threatened by diversity at home and immigration from abroad, which Trump exploited.

The other factions identified have long been opposing Republican camps: conservatives who would never support Democrats, and Cato's primary audience, libertarians or free marketers, who also oppose Democrats as the primary party of the regulatory state.

"There is no such thing as 'one kind of Trump voter' who voted for him for one particular reason," the report said. What follows are excerpts from Ekin's report. As you read through, you can see where they would begin to question Trump's presidency, and how some could be drawn to a Democratic populist.

1. Staunch Conservatives (31 percent). "They are steadfast fiscal conservatives, embrace moral traditionalism, and have a moderately nativist conception of American identity and approach to immigration," she writes. They "are the most loyal Republican voters, and they have maintained highly favorable views of Trump since the election. Staunch Conservatives tend to be slightly older, more male than female, and upper middle class with moderate levels of education. They are the most likely group to own guns and to be NRA members. They are the most politically

interested and aware group and one of the most likely groups to have correct knowledge of political facts.

“While not as hardline on immigration as the American Preservationists, they are deeply skeptical of it—both legal and illegal—and worry particularly about Muslim immigration. They feel that having lived in the U.S. for most of one’s life and being Christian are very or fairly important components of being a real American. Although their attitudes toward racial minorities are similar to the attitudes of non-Trump voter groups, they are more worried that discrimination against whites is a major problem.”

2. Free Marketeers (25 percent). This segment is the libertarian wing of the party, and were voting more against Clinton than for Trump. “They are small government fiscal conservatives, free traders, with moderate to liberal positions on immigration and race,” Ekins said. “Although they are a loyal Republican voting group, Free Marketeers are the most skeptical of Trump. A minority voted for him in the early primaries, while Ted Cruz was their other favorite. For the general election, most say their aversion to Clinton, not support of Trump, was their true motivator.”

“More likely to come from the West, Free Marketeers skew male, are middle-aged, and are the most educated and highly paid of the Trump groups (and non-Trump voters),” she said, adding that many are in high-tech and financial services. “They are the most likely to be working full time, own their own homes, and have private health insurance. They are more cosmopolitan, the most likely group to know LGBT people, and they are least likely to watch TV or to smoke. Along with Staunch Conservatives, they are one of the most politically engaged and informed voter groups. They align with Staunch Conservatives’ steadfast fiscal conservatism—except that they are even more supportive of free trade. Nearly 100 percent of them believe that the free market better solves complex economic problems than strong government.”

3. American Preservationists (20 percent). This segment begins to overlap with many Sanders voters, although, unlike his base, they express strong pro-white and pro-religion leanings. Those later prejudices are what propelled them toward Trump, Ekins said.

“These Trump voters lean economically progressive, believe the economic and political systems are rigged, have nativist immigration views, and a nativist and ethnocultural conception of American identity,” she said. “Although American Preservationists are less loyal Republicans than other Trump voter groups, and nearly half had positive views of Clinton in 2012, American Preservationists comprise the core Trump constituency that propelled him to victory in the early Republican primaries.”

“American Preservationists have low levels of formal education and the lowest incomes of the Trump groups—and non-Trump voters as well. Despite being the most likely group to say that religion is “very important” to them, they are the least likely to attend church regularly. They are the most likely group to be on Medicaid, to report a permanent disability that prevents them from working, and to regularly smoke cigarettes. Despite watching the most TV, they are the least politically informed of the Trump groups.”

Ekins said this group also said this group is the most traumatized, fearing non-whites, supporting the Muslim travel ban, and fearing other immigrants will take their jobs. The Democrats didn't offer them any hope, so Trump lured them by playing on their fears.

“American Preservationists appear more likely to desire being around people like themselves, who have similar backgrounds and cultural experiences,” Ekins said. “They are far more likely to have a strong sense of their own racial identity and to say their Christian identity is very important to them. They take the most restrictionist approach to immigration— staunchly opposing not just illegal but legal immigration as well, and intensely supporting a temporary Muslim travel ban. They feel the greatest amount of angst over race relations: they believe that anti-white discrimination is as pervasive as other forms of discrimination, and they have cooler feelings (as measured on a feeling thermometer scale) toward minorities. They agree in overwhelming numbers that real Americans need to have been born in America or have lived here most of their lives and be Christian.”

4. Anti-Elites (19 percent). This is the segment of Trump supporters that the Democrats lost by not choosing Sanders as their candidate, or not selecting him as vice presidential nominee. Hold that thought as you read Ekins' description.

“This group of Trump supporters leans economically progressive, believes the economic and political systems are rigged, and takes relatively more moderate positions on immigration, race, and American identity than American Preservationists,” she said. “They are also the most likely group to favor political compromise.”

“Anti-Elites have relatively cooler feelings toward Donald Trump than American Preservationists, and nearly half had favorable opinions of Clinton in 2012. This group shifted most dramatically, however, against Clinton by November 2016. They were the least likely group to mobilize in the Republican primary, but of those who did, they disproportionately turned out for John Kasich,” Ekins continued. “Anti-Elites are middle-class voters with moderate levels of education, and they skew slightly younger than other Trump groups. They are the least likely group to own guns, go to church, and be politically informed.”

This describes most Berniecrats, but for lingering racist undertones.

“Anti-Elites believe that moneyed and political elites take advantage of the system against ordinary people and they support increasing taxes on the wealthy. Compared to the American Preservationists, they take more moderate positions on immigration, race, American identity, religious traditionalism including gay marriage, and the environment,” Ekins said. “Why are they not Democrats? Perhaps because they take less liberal positions on legal immigration and the temporary Muslim travel ban. Democrats who moderate their positions on immigration might win over some Anti-Elite voters.”

5. The Disengaged (5 percent). This group is the know-nothings of American politics, Ekins writes, people who really don't follow events and get played by negative ads into voting impulsively based on grievances and insecurities.

“This group does not know much about politics, but what they do know is they feel detached from institutions and elites and are skeptical of immigration,” she said. “The Disengaged are less loyal Republicans who largely came to vote for Trump in the general election. They skew younger, female, and they are religiously unaffiliated. They are not very politically informed and have limited knowledge of political facts. The Disengaged do not reveal many strong preferences on surveys, but what they do reveal is they are concerned about immigration and support the temporary Muslim travel ban. They feel unable to influence political and economic institutions and believe the system is biased against them.”

This profile of five sectors of Trump voters is informative, even if some other recent analyses contradict some of its element, namely that two-thirds of Trump's voters without college degrees were not poor. As the Washington Post found, one third made the median household income and one third made more than \$100,000. But polling isn't a precise science; it's a snapshot of the moment. Cato's analysis suggests where Trump's base is fragile and where Democrats could make inroads, if candidates connected in ways that offered hope and put to rest fears about America's increasing diversity.