

CLASS DISMISSED

III

The Journeymen Join the GOP



KEY FINDINGS

1 **Republicans have become a party of the working class as much as, if not more than, the Democrats.** In 2024, working-class voters were the most Republican of the six education-and-income groups this paper tracks. In a September 2026 national survey for this paper, they were the only group that favored Republicans on the generic congressional ballot, 48 to 42 percent, while registered voters overall favored Democrats, 49 to 41 percent.

2 **The shift is a national trend.** Working-class voters gave Republican presidential candidates 46 percent of their two-party vote in 2008 and 57 percent in 2024, and the share rose in every election in between. The numbers are consistent with Rep. Jim Banks's argument in 2021 that Republicans have an opportunity to build an enduring working-class coalition.

3 **District data confirm it.** In the five states where Republicans redrew congressional lines (Texas, Florida, Missouri, North Carolina, and Louisiana), Republican-leaning districts rose from 68 to 77, and six of the nine added districts are working-class or mixed-class. Working-class adults living in Republican-leaning districts in those states rose by 1.34 million, to 12.95 million. Where Democrats redrew (California and Virginia), four of the ten added Democratic-leaning districts are working-class or mixed-class. Both counts include the Missouri and Virginia maps as drawn; courts kept both out of the 2026 elections.

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Introduction

The term “working class” is a familiar concept that took shape during the Industrial Revolution, and which became a fixture of American politics during the Progressive and New Deal eras. Based on elections and political trends, its precise conceptual boundaries (specifically, who its members are and how they vote) have shifted over time. Today, on the eve of the 2026 elections, we can say those boundaries are firmly wrapped around the GOP.

This paper, the third in our “Class Dismissed” series, will provide fresh analysis of a new, enduring working-class political identity, one determined far more by socio-cultural than economic concerns, and one that jibes far more with Republicans than Democrats. In fact, that new identity has spurred a political realignment in which the GOP is now the party of “working people,” with repercussions for the party itself. As we wrote last year in “Working Class: Standing Athwart History,” a “new [Republican] party” is “forging a new path, with a new coalition of voters,” which means “new priorities, new ideas, a shedding of the old skin.”

For starters, let’s be clear about what we mean by “working class,” or more pointedly here, “working-class” (or “blue-collar”) *voters*. The term has long referred to those whose economic livelihoods come from work in the skilled trades, as well as production, construction, and other similar occupations. But there is another essential part of the definition, and it is this part that now, more than any other, separates the working class from everyone else, and separates those who vote for the GOP from those who don’t.

Democratic political scientist Ruy Teixeira, coauthor of “America’s Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters,” captured it when he said that the “standard definition” of working class is “those voters lacking a four-year college degree.” Of course, we’ve known this for some time. But the results of our analysis show that a majority of non-college-educated voters now see the Republican Party as their political home. And the feeling is mutual: Republicans engaged in redistricting are

increasingly sweeping those voters into Republican districts. As we explain below in our research:

“Population-level data confirm the trend: Republicans have become a party of the working class as much as, if not more than, the Democrats. Where Republicans redistricted, they were able to increase the number of Republican-leaning districts, which meant they also increased the total population under their auspices.

Results from our polling only reinforce this trend. National Research, Inc., in a poll conducted for this paper, found that Republicans have a 9-point generic-ballot advantage (50% to 41%) over Democrats among voters lacking a four-year college degree who work in a job that doesn't require one. When asked, “Which party is more the party of working people today,” those same voters said Republicans over Democrats, 45% to 30%. As for voters with a college degree in jobs that require one, *Democrats were favored 50% to 22% over Republicans.*

This is a far cry from Karl Marx's nebulous working class “proletarians.” These were people, according to Marx, who lacked ownership of the means of production and therefore had to sell their labor power to earn a living. His capacious conception could even capture salaried professionals. American Democrats, Progressives, and Socialists of an earlier era were similarly broad in how they conceived of this group. For example, Socialist presidential candidate Eugene Debs, in a 1925 speech, included “all useful workers of brain and brawn, all who usefully serve society in any trade, occupation, or profession” in his definition. President Franklin Roosevelt saw workers joined together in an uber class, when he said in 1933, “by workers, I mean all workers, the white-collar class as well as the men in overalls.”

For political purposes anyway, those days are over. For instance, a plumber making \$95,000 a year or a self-employed electrician making \$150,000 a year could be, in some areas, comfortably middle to upper middle class. But they are not considered, nor do they consider themselves, to be part of the so-called “cognitive elite,” or those with bachelor's and graduate degrees, especially from top-tier schools. Many working-class

people instead complete trade-school programs or apprenticeships, including those sponsored by building-trades unions.

Thus, to be in the working class is not solely determined by income level or earning a wage, or the type of work done. These days, it's predominantly about education. Not having a college degree and working mainly in blue-collar jobs (see above) puts one in a very different cultural milieu, with a very different set of assumptions about the world and how it works, than the barista at Starbucks, earning low wages while studying post-structuralism in a doctoral program at Columbia University (having earned her B.A. in Gender Studies from Swarthmore).

In this example, she suffers from rage-filled grievance because she doesn't make enough money. By her lights, corporate billionaires are exploiting her surplus value, or so she's read in Marx's "Das Kapital" (one of the few who have). As such, she sees herself as firmly and proudly in the working class. Yet under the definition used here, she is *not*, precisely because of her elite background as defined by her academic credentials.

That word, "elite," is driving a new working-class identity, standing against those who assume culturally superior status based solely on having a "B.A." on their resume. Our polling from National Research, Inc. shows a 19-point swing of approval, from 62% to 81%, when the word "elites," rather than "people," is inserted into this statement: "The elites in this country do not care what people like me think." It's this feeling that has pushed the new working class toward the GOP.

This is precisely what we meant twelve months ago when we wrote, "Class Dismissed II: Secession of the Successful." As we said then:

“*This reality is fueling the most significant political realignment in the post-war era, and why the two parties stand, at times, in mutual incomprehension of each other...the composition of the two parties now looks very different than even a decade ago. The GOP is no longer dominated by Izod-wearing denizens of the Shaker Heights Country Club, and the Democrats are no longer the party of working-class locals in Youngstown's Royal Oaks Bar and Grill.*

Just who is and who isn't in the working class has been among the most prominent, and pressing, political questions over the last several U.S.

election cycles. How they are answered could determine political control of Congress and the White House for many years to come. Which party actually represents working-class voters? And can either party sustain electoral majorities over time without those voters firmly in their camp?

We captured the political realignment of working-class voters that accelerated with President Trump's election in 2016, and that grew in intensity over the next four years. In 2021, we wrote a memo titled, "The Party They'll Get, Not the Party They Want." In it, we drew from the work of then-Rep. Jim Banks (R-IN), now a senator, and one of the leading lights of the new GOP.

After President Biden's election in 2020, Banks described the Republican Party's voters as growing more hostile to corporations and their interests, in line with the party's growing ranks of blue-collar workers. As Banks wrote, "President Trump gave the Republican Party a political gift: we are now the party supported by most working-class voters. The question is whether Republicans reject that gift or unwrap it and permanently become the Party of the Working Class." Echoing Banks, we put it this way in our 2021 memo:

“Where one sits on the political spectrum has reliably been determined by class. As these new leaders see it, that seat for Republicans is no longer “the country club.” And with the party in thrall to former President Trump, and a conservative base feeling besieged by cancel culture, congressional Republicans are responding to constituents’ grievances about a country they don’t recognize. These members are growing not just in number, but in influence.

These GOP members over time have come to represent more blue-collar voters and their interests, a fact we wrote about in 2025, in “Class Dismissed II: The Working Class, Standing Athwart History”:

“These [working class] voters expressed their anger by moving uneasily to President Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 but remained dissatisfied with the status quo. Then came 2015. Donald Trump ventured down an escalator, announced his presidential candidacy, and, just as Buckley did, said to the

establishments of both parties, “Stop.” That is, in Trump’s telling: stop illegal immigration, stop endless foreign wars, and stop technocratic and cultural elites who monopolized power at the expense of everyday Americans. This is exactly what working class voters wanted to hear. And with Trump, they felt that, for the first time in many years, they were being heard. So they voted for him in 2016, 2020, and 2024.

The media seem to revel in the claim that Republicans are indifferent to, or even despise, “working people.” Consider Will Bunch, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, who wrote in 2023 that “the frauds of the Republican Party are not on their side.” Indeed, working people, we are confidently told, are represented by Democrats, because it is they who support their true interests through the litany of familiar policy proposals, ranging from increasing the minimum wage to Medicare for All and the Green New Deal.

That characterization of the parties’ electoral bases is contradicted by our empirical research and polling. Republicans are the party of working-class, non-college-educated voters, while Democrats are the party most congenial to elites with college and post-graduate degrees. This is now a firmly entrenched fact of American politics, and one that will determine which party holds not just political, but also cultural, power for years to come.

Analysis

When a political party controls redistricting in the United States, it draws district lines to win as many seats as possible. Mapmakers weigh their party's standing among different social groups, most often accounting for wealth, race, and education. Because group loyalties shift over time, the political math behind redistricting changes with them.

The past decade shows how fast those loyalties can flip. For much of the twentieth century, lower-income and less-educated voters anchored the Democratic coalition while affluent professionals leaned Republican. Since roughly 2012, that alignment has inverted. College-educated voters have moved toward the Democratic Party, while wage earners without a college degree, including growing numbers of Hispanic and Black voters, have shifted toward the Republicans. The same pattern is visible in other Western democracies as well as in the United States.¹

CGCN's research has tracked this inversion from its early stages, with particular attention to its consequences for the Republican Party. *Class Dismissed I* (January 2024) found that Washington's influence economy had yet to catch up with the voters. Wealthier, centrist electorates still dominated swing districts, and members of the three wealthiest caucuses held over 60 percent of toss-up seats. Members representing poorer districts drew the extreme label and correspondingly less of the corporate money that follows moderation, even as those districts were becoming the party's growth market.² *Class Dismissed II* (October 2025) documented the completed swap at the level of the parties themselves. Democrats now represented 23 of the 30 wealthiest districts, while the responsibility of representing poor America, together with its five-year life-expectancy gap and elevated opioid mortality, had migrated to the Republican side of the aisle. Lower-income, less-educated voters had become the population on which Republican majorities depend.³ In this paper, we refine the definition of working class to incorporate education alongside income.

In doing so, we find more evidence of the Republican Party both becoming more popular with the working class and embracing this popularity. We use the 2025-2026 redistricting cycle to show the latter.

1 What We Mean by Working Class

There is no settled definition of the working class. In Europe, Marxist theory defined the working class by its position in relation to production: lacking ownership of the means of production and needing to sell labor to survive. In the United States, the term has at times encompassed wage earners, farmers, and small employers, and free labor ideology emphasized independence and upward mobility. After World War II, the GI Bill helped expand middle-class self-identification among people in manual jobs. Most recently, education has served as the standard journalistic definition. Each American redefinition has made the term easier to use in print and worse at picking out the working-class population.⁴

In our earlier reports, *Class Dismissed I* and *II*, we used income as a simple shortcut for class, one that is easy to understand and capture. However, with the rise of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and the shift of highly educated, low-income voters toward the DSA, it is important to consider education as an intervening variable.⁵

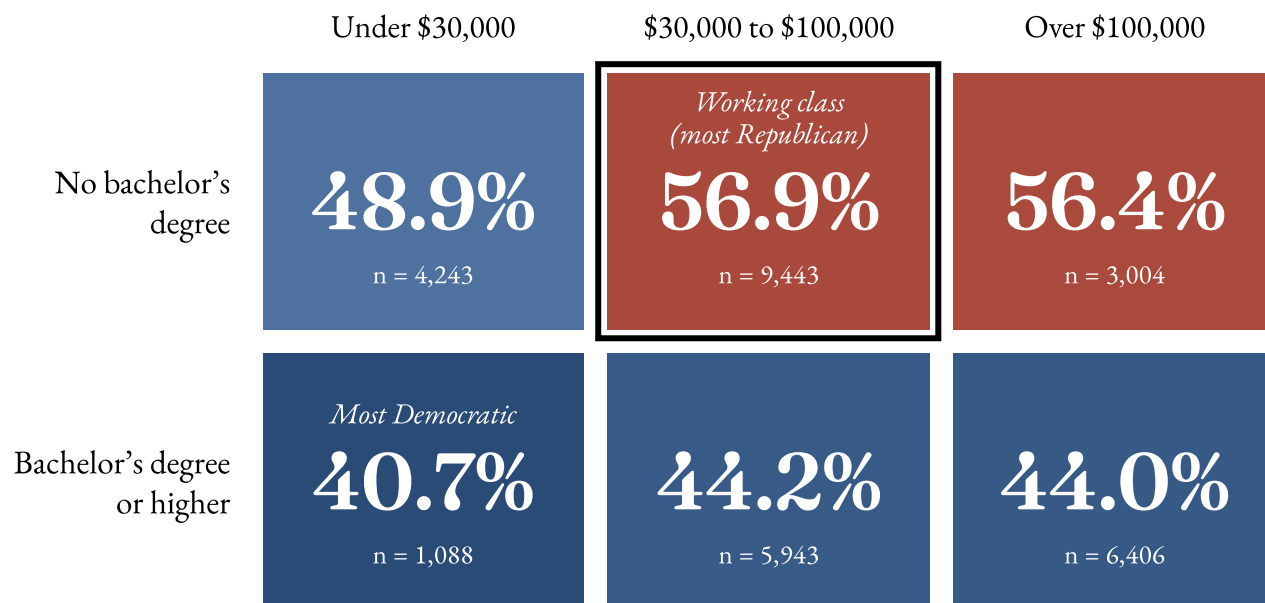
Here is an example of why.

Start with two households, each earning \$55,000 a year and living on a paycheck. One belongs to a machine operator without a college degree. The other belongs to a nonprofit program officer with a master's degree. An income-only definition puts both in the working class, even though these two households live very different lives. If income alone determined political leanings, our hypothetical machine operator and nonprofit program officer would have similar political preferences. Our analysis of the Cooperative Election Study (CES), a national survey that has interviewed more than 700,000 Americans since 2006, shows that they do not. The survey does not record these two specific jobs; the households stand in for the education-and-income groups in Figure 1, which shows how each group voted in 2024.⁶

FIGURE 1

How Education and Income Shaped the 2024 Presidential Vote

Donald Trump's share of the two-party presidential vote, with household income in 2024 dollars



Trump's share of the two-party vote, 2024. **Red:** Republican majority; **blue:** Democratic majority.

Key finding: Among the six education-and-income groups studied, voters without a college degree earning \$30,000 to \$100,000 gave Trump the highest share of the two-party vote (56.9%), narrowly ahead of non-college voters earning over \$100,000 (56.4%).

Source: Cooperative Election Study, 2024 (30,127 validated voters). Percentages are weighted using the CES validated-voter weight.

Voters with bachelor's (BA) or postgraduate degrees and household incomes below \$30,000 formed the single most Democratic cell in the 2024 electorate, closely followed by similarly educated voters with higher incomes.⁷ Looking at the figure above, higher educational attainment appears to be a strong indicator of a Democratic vote within these income-and-education groups. At the other end, voters without a bachelor's degree in households earning \$30,000 to \$100,000 formed the single most Republican cell.

Going back to our two households, we see that they are likely to have very different political preferences. The first is the backbone of the Republican realignment. The second is among the most reliable Democratic voters in the country. Treating them as the same "working class" blurs the

educational and occupational divide that is currently reshaping the electorate. When we account for this, working-class support changes, moving away from the Democratic Party and toward the Republicans.

Based on these patterns, we operationalize the working class as people without a bachelor's degree living in households with annual incomes between \$30,000 and \$100,000. We explain our choice for the income bracket in Appendix A, which describes our methodology. To account for differences in purchasing power, we divide household income by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Regional Price Parity (RPP) for the household's state and apply the \$30,000 and \$100,000 cutoffs after that adjustment, with all incomes in 2024 dollars. BEA expresses each region's price level as a percentage of the national average and adjusts income by simple division: real income equals nominal income divided by (RPP/100).⁸ In the 2024 estimates, California (110.7), Hawaii (110.0), the District of Columbia (109.9), and New Jersey (108.8) sit at the top of the distribution, while Arkansas (86.9), Mississippi (87.0), and Iowa and Oklahoma (87.8) sit at the bottom.⁹ A \$100,000 household income in California is therefore worth about \$90,300 at national prices, while \$29,000 in Louisiana (88.2) is worth about \$32,900 and falls inside the band.

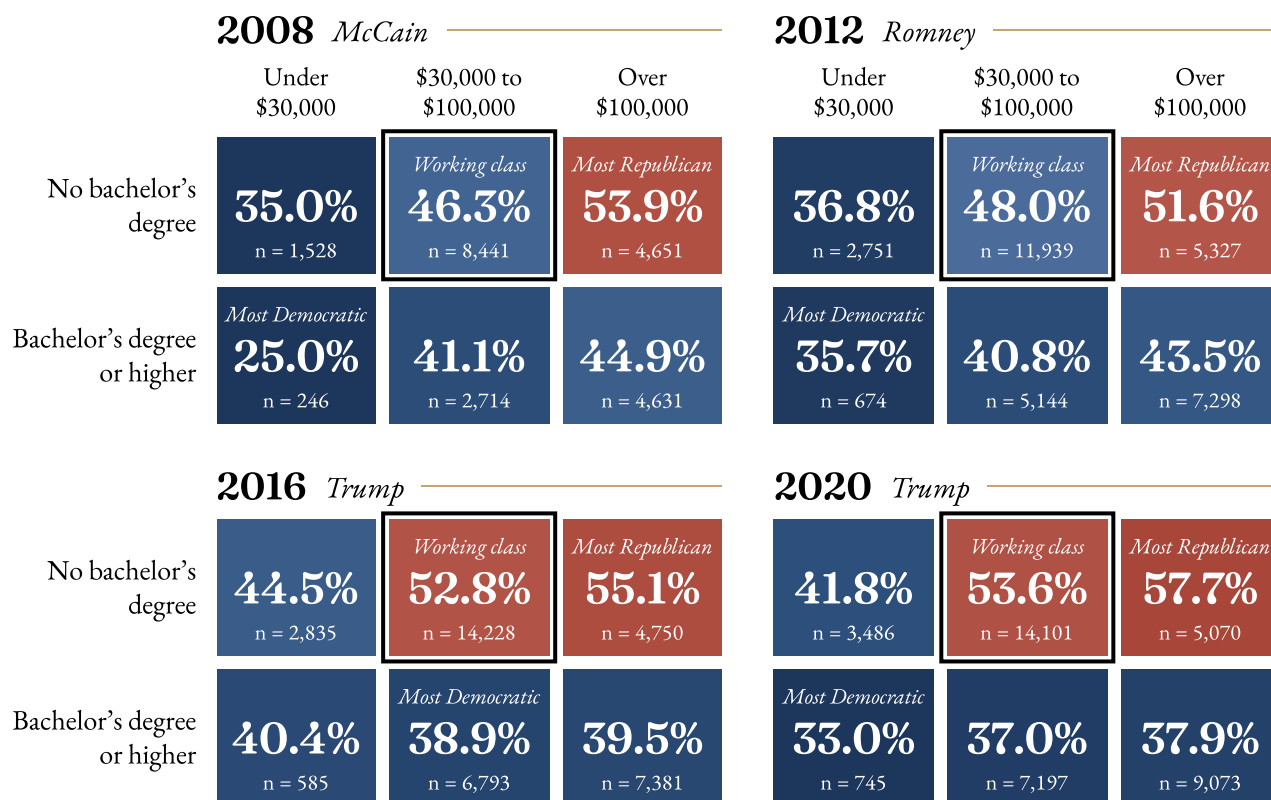
2 How the Working Class Shifted Republican

To see how working-class voting has evolved at the national level, we look at presidential elections going back to 2008. We want to know whether Republican gains among the working class are a one-time occurrence or a trend. The figures below clearly indicate the latter. Voters without a bachelor's degree in households earning between \$30,000 and \$100,000 moved consistently from voting predominantly Democratic to voting predominantly Republican: 46 percent Republican in 2008, 48 percent in 2012, 53 percent in 2016, 54 percent in 2020, and 57 percent in 2024 (Figures 1 and 2). They crossed from a Democratic majority to a Republican majority between 2012 and 2016.

FIGURE 2

How Republican Support Changed Across Education and Income Groups, 2008 to 2024

Republican share of the two-party presidential vote in 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020 (Figure 1 shows 2024). Income bands are held at constant 2024 dollars, so each band reflects the same purchasing power in every year.



Each grid shows the Republican candidate's share of the two-party vote.

Red: Republican majority; **blue:** Democratic majority.

Key finding: Republican presidential support among the study's working-class voters rose from 46% in 2008 to 57% in 2024.

The boxed cell in each grid is the working class as defined in this paper. Source: Cooperative Election Study, presidential election years 2008 to 2020. Percentages are weighted using CES survey weights.

Among voters without a bachelor's degree, the \$30,000 to \$100,000 band became more Republican in every presidential election from 2008 through 2024. The numbers are consistent with Jim Banks's argument in 2021 that Republicans have an opportunity to build an enduring working-class coalition.¹⁰

3 How Redistricting Reflects Changing Party Coalitions

As telling as the national averages are, they cannot substitute for the importance of local conditions in the U.S. After all, we know all too well that “all politics is local.” Thus, we examine politics at the district level.

A party can pursue voters in two fundamental ways: by persuading voters, election by election, to change their minds and votes, and by redrawing electoral districts around its existing supporters to maximize seats. Parties routinely use both strategies, and both lend themselves well to data-driven analysis, which we employ to determine whether what Banks says is true for the Republican Party, i.e., whether it should heed the working-class direction. Maps reveal something polls cannot: when a party draws its own lines, it shows, district by district, which voters it is prepared to build its seats around.

To this end, we use data from seven states where one party drew new congressional districts ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Five maps were redrawn by Republican legislatures: Texas, Florida, Missouri, North Carolina, and Louisiana. California and Virginia redrew districts by Democratic ballot measure; in Virginia, voters approved a constitutional amendment that cleared the way for a map passed by the Democratic legislature. Ohio and Utah also adopted new maps, through a bipartisan commission and a court order respectively, so they fall outside a comparison of party-drawn lines.

Courts ultimately blocked the Virginia and Missouri maps. The Supreme Court of Virginia voided the state’s constitutional amendment on May 8, 2026, and the Missouri Supreme Court ruled on September 3, 2026, that the Missouri map cannot take effect unless voters approve it in the November 3 referendum. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to restore either map, so both states vote in 2026 on their previous lines. The other five maps govern the 2026 elections, although litigation continues in several states (Table 1; status as of October 28, 2026).¹¹

We use the Virginia and Missouri maps regardless since what we want to explore is the potential effect on the working class and how each party

TABLE 1

How Seven States Redrew Their Congressional Districts for 2026

The seven maps in this study, status as of October 28, 2026

STATE	WHO HELD THE PEN	WHAT THE MAP DID	EFFICIENCY GAP
Texas	GOP legislature; in effect for 2026	37 districts touched; TX-9, TX-32, TX-35 flipped	R+13 to R+20
Florida	GOP legislature; in effect for 2026	21 of 28 touched; 20R-8D toward 24R-4D	Not available
Missouri	GOP legislature; blocked for 2026 pending a November 3 referendum	Kansas City split three ways; MO-5 flipped	R+10 to R+21
North Carolina	GOP legislature; in effect for 2026	Only two districts touched; the flat exception	R+26, unchanged
Louisiana	GOP legislature; in effect for 2026	4R-2D to 5R-1D; the VRA seat dismantled	Not available
California	Democratic ballot measure; in effect for 2026	The mirror image, graduates harvested	D+8 to D+20
Virginia	Democratic legislature; struck down May 8, 2026	Would have gone 6D-5R to 10D-1R on the 2024 presidential vote	R+4.3 to D+34.6

Key finding: Republicans drew five of the seven maps and Democrats two, and every map with an efficiency-gap estimate except North Carolina’s moved the gap toward the party that drew it. Missouri’s map is blocked pending a November 3 referendum and Virginia’s was struck down.

Status as of October 28, 2026. Districts are classified by how they voted for president in 2024, not by the party of their current representative. Efficiency gap: the difference between the two parties’ wasted votes as a share of all votes cast; R+ means the map wastes more Democratic votes. Not available: no published estimate on the same basis. Sources: Inside Elections’ detailed

analyses of the Texas, Missouri, North Carolina and California maps, computed on 2024 presidential results;¹² Virginia computed from certified 2024 presidential results reagggregated to the current and HB29 lines (Virginia Legislative Information System block files); state enactment records and the court rulings cited in the notes.

related to that outcome. We use party redistricting efforts as a proxy for strength of the party in the state and its ability to determine which voters are included in each district. We expect that the parties want to maximize seats in the states, not the districts. Thus, they will spread their support rather than concentrate it in one spot. The overwhelming consideration is an electoral win, not a specific population group. Those are mixed and matched as needed. What we measure is whether the belief in what would

give a party a win includes the working class, and to what degree. We do not, in any way, aspire to measure or predict the final results of the 2026 elections.

Figure 3 shows what the redraws did to individual districts, using the simplest marker of class, the share of adults with a bachelor's degree.

At this stage, we no longer look at individual voters. Now, we look at electoral districts, as these are the most important for parties when they determine their electoral strategies. The electoral composition of the district is critical for party results, especially in House races, which are won district by district.

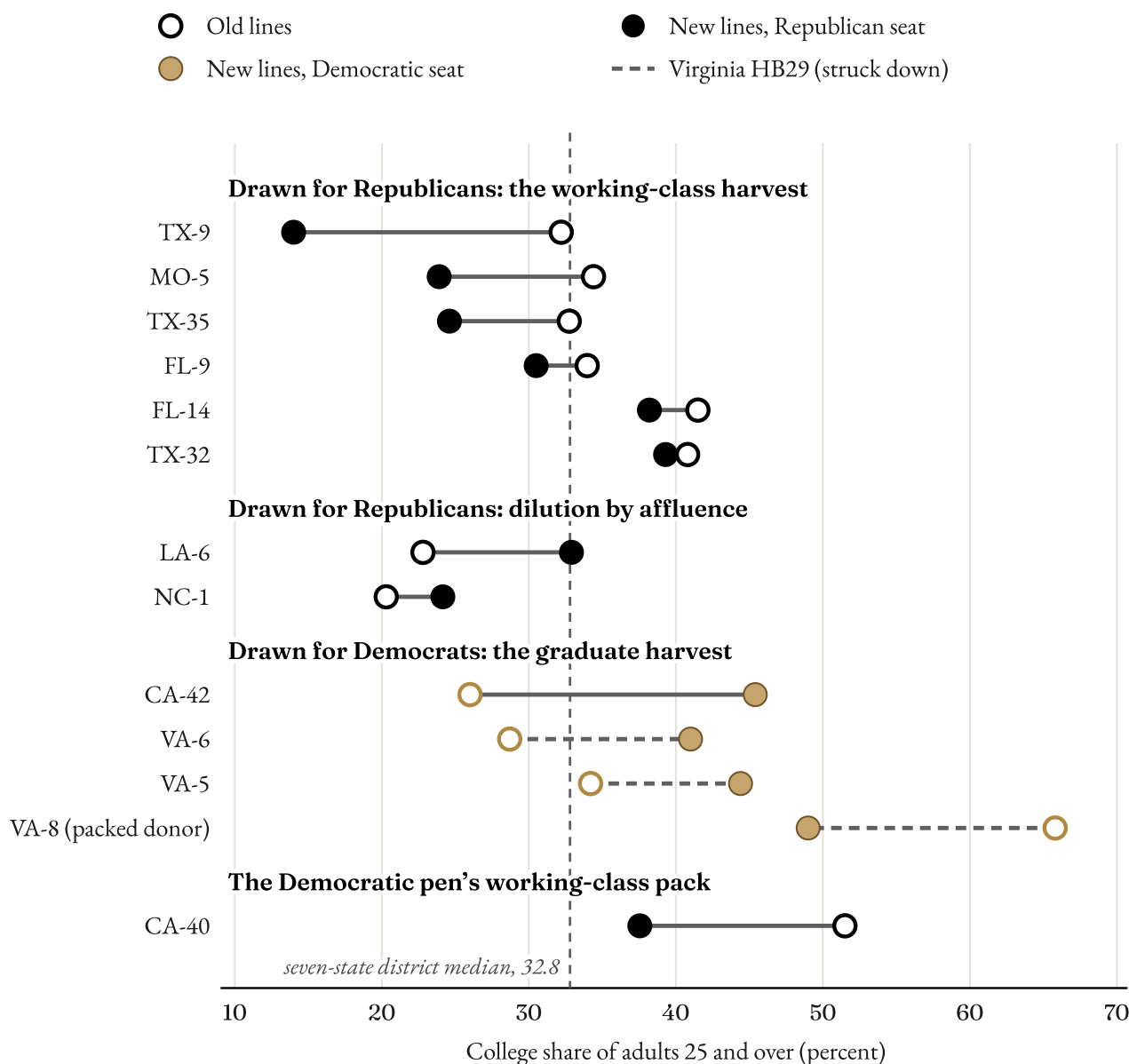
In this study, a district's working-class share is the percentage of its adults aged 25 and older who meet our working-class definition. We compare every district with a single benchmark: the working-class share of all adults aged 25 and older across the seven states under the pre-redistricting lines, 29.27 percent. A working-class district is one whose working-class share is at least 5 percent above that benchmark, or about 1.5 percentage points (a share of about 30.7 percent or more). A mixed-class district sits within 5 percent of the benchmark on either side (about 27.8 to 30.7 percent). The two categories do not overlap. In six of the seven states, every working-class district is also one where working-class adults form the largest of the six education-and-income groups; the exceptions are three California districts under the old lines and two under the new, where adults without a bachelor's degree in households earning more than \$100,000 form the larger group. In mixed-class districts, the working class is the largest group about two times in three. In this study we mostly focus on the Republican districts, but we provide Democratic district data for comparison, especially since the Democrats have been traditionally known as the party of the working class and have tried to claim this mantle today.

Tables 2 and 3 present the before-and-after counts of working-class and mixed-class districts for the Republican and Democratic maps. Since we do not have data on income for 2026, our study holds the population at its 2024 profile: education and household income come from the Census Bureau's 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) microdata, matched to each district's 2020-2024 ACS education counts (Appendix A). For each party, we count the districts that lean toward that party based on the 2024

FIGURE 3

How Redistricting Changed the Share of College Graduates in Selected Districts

College share of adults 25 and over on the old lines (hollow) and the new (filled)



Key finding: In the districts shown, Republican-drawn lines mostly lowered the share of college graduates, as in TX-9 (32% to 14%), and Democratic-drawn lines mostly raised it, as in CA-42 (26% to 45%).

Across all 128 districts redrawn in the seven states, the average change in the share of college graduates was just +0.02 percentage points. When weighted by adult population, the change was zero. This is because redistricting changes which residents fall within each district, not the total number of residents. The largest changes occurred in individual districts rather than across the states as a

whole. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020-2024 five-year estimates; Cook Political Report House ratings, July 15, 2026; Virginia Legislative Information System. College shares are computed on the old and new lines of each district.

presidential vote, recounted on each set of district lines. Table 2 counts Republican-leaning working-class and mixed-class districts in the five states Republicans redrew, and Table 3 counts Democratic-leaning working-class and mixed-class districts in California and Virginia, before and after redistricting.

TABLE 2

Republican-Leaning Working- and Mixed-Class Districts: Before and After Redistricting

In the five states Republicans redrew

Republican Party				
STATE	WORKING-CLASS DISTRICTS		MIXED-CLASS DISTRICTS	
	BEFORE	AFTER	BEFORE	AFTER
Texas	12	13	4	6
Florida	14	15	4	4
Missouri	4	4	0	1
Louisiana	3	3	0	1
North Carolina	8	8	3	3
District Total	41	43	11	15

We counted each district under both the old and new boundaries to see how the totals changed. Party lean is based on the 2024 presidential vote within each set of boundaries. Missouri’s new map was blocked for the 2026 election pending a November 3 referendum, so the “After” figures show what the enacted map

would have produced. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey microdata and 2020-2024 estimates; BEA Regional Price Parities; 2024 presidential precinct results. Working-class shares are computed for each district as described in Appendix A.

We find that for both parties the number of working-class districts increases; the Democratic Party adds one working-class district (in Virginia) and the Republican Party adds two, in Texas and Florida. An even larger rise, 3 for Democrats and 4 for Republicans, can be seen in the mixed-class category, where the working-class share sits close to the seven-state benchmark. These are net changes: we count each category on the old lines and again on the new lines and compare the totals. The movements for both types of districts are as expected for the Democrats but may be surprising for some when it

TABLE 3

Democratic-Leaning Working- and Mixed-Class Districts: Before and After Redistricting

In the two states Democrats redrew

STATE	Democratic Party			
	WORKING-CLASS DISTRICTS		MIXED-CLASS DISTRICTS	
	BEFORE	AFTER	BEFORE	AFTER
California	15	15	5	8
Virginia *	1	2	1	1
District Total	16	17	6	9

Key finding: Both parties’ redrawn maps increased the number of working-class and mixed-class districts leaning toward their respective parties.

** Virginia’s new map was struck down in May 2026; its “after” columns show the map as enacted. Sources are the same as for Table 2.*

comes to the Republicans. In 2026, based on 2024 electoral results, both parties redistricted in a way that created more leverage for the working class. In addition, an argument can be made that at the district level the movement toward working-class representation in the Republican Party is stronger. Republican-leaning districts in the five Republican-drawn states rose from 68 to 77, and six of those nine added districts (two working-class and four mixed-class) fall in the two categories. Democratic-leaning districts in California and Virginia rose from 47 to 57, and four of the ten added (one working-class and three mixed-class) do.

Population-level data confirm the trend: Republicans have become a party of the working class as much as, if not more than, the Democrats. Where Republicans redistricted, they were able to increase the number of Republican-leaning districts, which meant they also increased the total population under their auspices. As Table 4 shows, the working-class population in Republican-leaning districts has also grown proportionally, by 11.5 percent (1.34 million adults, to 12.95 million), close to the 13.0 percent rise in all adults aged 25 and older. This would not have been the

case if Republicans believed that only the support of the rich could help them succeed.

TABLE 4

People Living in Republican-Leaning Districts Before and After Redistricting

Working-class adults, all adults aged 25 and older, and total population, in the five states
Republicans redrew

Republican Party						
	TEXAS	FLORIDA	MISSOURI	LOUISIANA	NORTH CAROLINA	FIVE-STATE TOTAL
WORKING CLASS						
Before	4.15M	3.86M	1.02M	0.65M	1.94M	11.61M
After	4.60M	4.41M	1.18M	0.82M	1.94M	12.95M
Change	0.46M	0.56M	0.16M	0.17M	0.00M	1.34M
% Change	11.0%	14.4%	15.6%	25.5%	0.0%	11.5%
ALL ADULTS 25+						
Before	14.11M	11.72M	3.19M	2.08M	5.81M	36.91M
After	15.64M	13.96M	3.72M	2.59M	5.81M	41.72M
Change	1.53M	2.24M	0.53M	0.51M	0.00M	4.80M
% Change	10.9%	19.1%	16.6%	24.3%	0.0%	13.0%
TOTAL POP. (ALL AGES)						
Before	20.71M	15.38M	4.62M	3.11M	8.20M	52.02M
After	23.01M	18.46M	5.39M	3.88M	8.20M	58.94M
Change	2.30M	3.08M	0.77M	0.78M	0.00M	6.92M
% Change	11.1%	20.0%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%	13.3%

Key finding: Under the new boundaries, 12.95 million working-class adults would live in Republican-leaning districts across the five states, an increase of 1.34 million (11.5%). This includes Missouri's blocked map. The increase reflects changes to district boundaries, not population growth.

Missouri's new map is blocked for 2026; its "after" columns show the map as enacted. Sources are the same as for Table 2; total population is the 2020 Census count on each district's blocks.

California Democrats followed a similar pattern: the working-class population in Democratic-leaning districts rose 17.0 percent, against 14.7 percent for all adults aged 25 and older (Table 5). In Virginia, the

TABLE 5

People Living in Democratic-Leaning Districts Before and After Redistricting

Working-class adults, all adults aged 25 and older, and total population, in California and Virginia

Democratic Party			
	CALIFORNIA	VIRGINIA *	TWO-STATE TOTAL
WORKING CLASS			
Before	5.50M	0.67M	6.16M
After	6.43M	1.30M	7.73M
Change	0.93M	0.64M	1.57M
% Change	17.0%	95.6%	25.5%
ALL ADULTS 25+			
Before	21.40M	3.23M	24.63M
After	24.54M	5.43M	29.97M
Change	3.14M	2.20M	5.34M
% Change	14.7%	68.3%	21.7%
TOTAL POP. (ALL AGES)			
Before	31.13M	4.70M	35.83M
After	35.70M	7.85M	43.54M
Change	4.57M	3.14M	7.71M
% Change	14.7%	66.8%	21.5%

Key finding: Under the new boundaries, 7.73 million working-class adults would live in Democratic-leaning districts across California and Virginia, an increase of 1.57 million (25.5%). This includes Virginia’s struck-down map. The increase reflects redistricting, not population growth.

* Virginia’s new map was struck down in May 2026; its “after” columns show the map as enacted. Sources are the same as for Table 4.

struck-down map would have gone much further, as changes in population coverage reached the mid-60-percent range for the general population and the mid-90-percent range for the working class. The arithmetic behind these numbers is simple. The map would have raised the number of Democratic-leaning districts from six to ten, and because districts hold equal populations by law, the population living in them would have risen by about two-thirds (66.8 percent, from 4.70 million to 7.85 million people). The working-class population in those districts would have nearly doubled (up 95.6 percent, from 0.67 million to 1.30 million adults) because the territory the map added was more working-class (29 percent of adults aged 25 and older) than the six districts Democrats already held (21 percent).

4 What Voters Think About the Two Parties

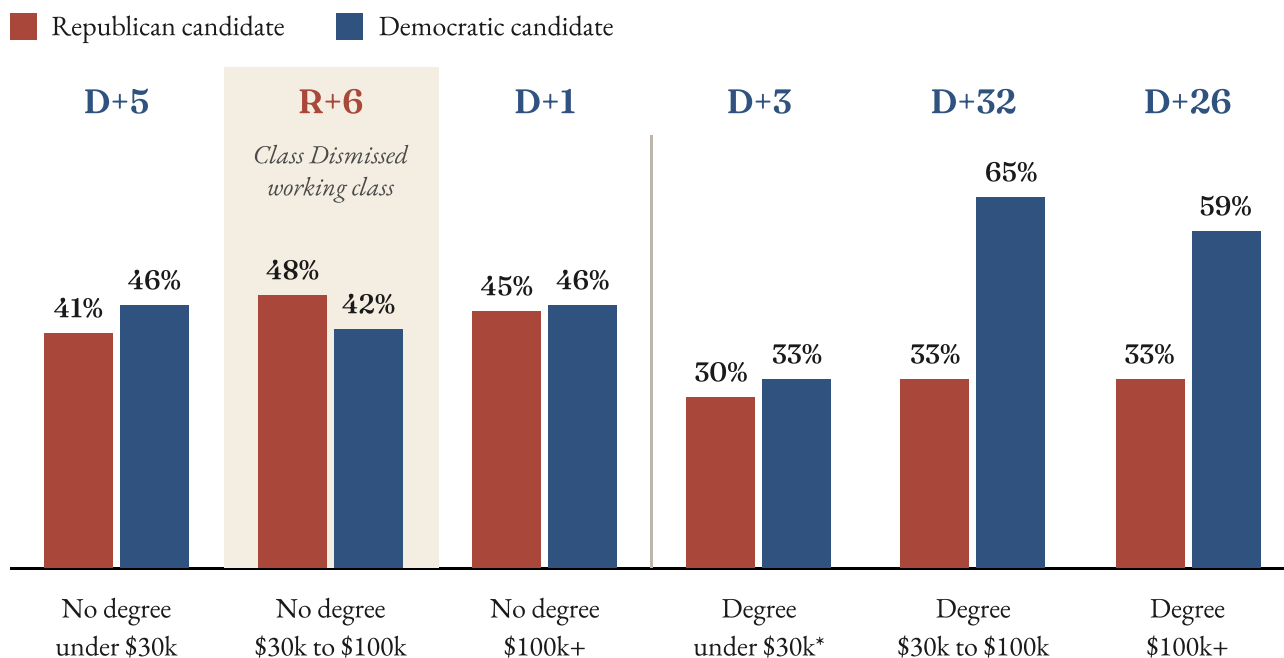
National Research, Inc. surveyed 1,000 registered voters for this paper from September 14 to 19, 2026.¹³ The survey applies the same working-class definition as our district analysis, with one difference: respondents report their own household income, without an adjustment for state price levels. Four findings matter most for this paper; Appendix B reports the full results.

Registered voters as a whole favor Democrats on the generic congressional ballot, 49 to 41 percent. The working class as defined here is the only education-and-income group that favors Republicans, 48 to 42 percent (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

How Voters Would Vote for Congress, by Education and Income

Generic congressional ballot across the education-by-income grid



*Only 19 respondents fell into this group, too few to draw reliable conclusions. The results are shown for completeness.

Key finding: Working-class voters were the only group in the grid to favor Republicans for Congress, 48% to 42%. College graduates in households earning \$30,000 to \$100,000 favored Democrats by the widest margin, 65% to 33%.

Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey, September 14-19, 2026 (Q10 by Q67 and Q69). Weighted; excludes the 13 percent who declined to report income.

Voters see the shift themselves. Asked which party was more the party of working people thirty years ago, 53 percent name the Democrats and 20 percent name the Republicans. Asked about today, the Democratic edge narrows to 39 percent against 34 percent for the Republicans, and a quarter of voters name neither party (Figure 5).

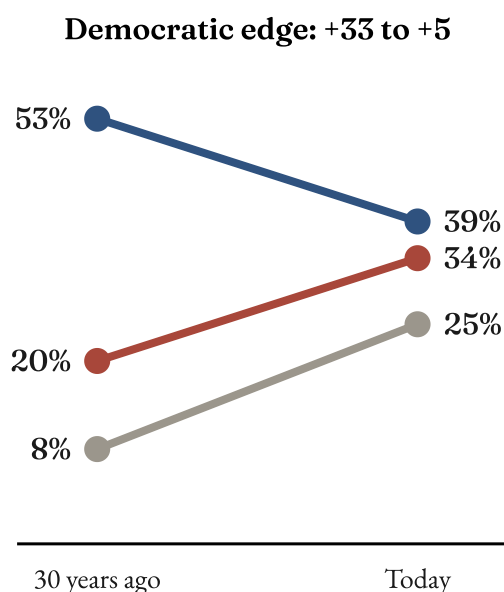
FIGURE 5

Which Party Do Americans See as the Party of Working People? Then vs. Now

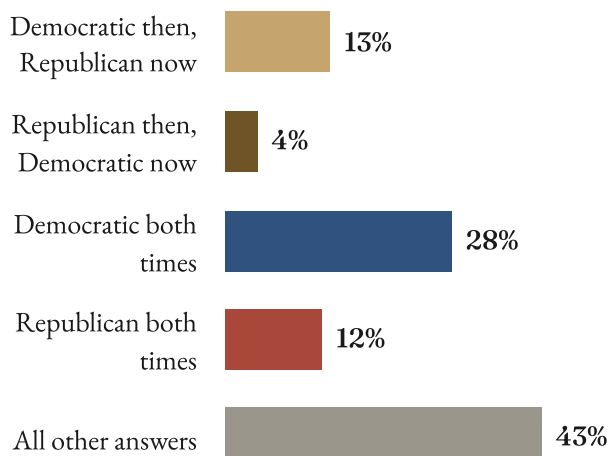
Which party is more the party of working people, thirty years ago and today

■ Democratic Party ■ Republican Party ■ Neither

(a) Which party is more the party of working people?



(b) Each voter's answer, then and now



Net movement toward GOP: 9 points

Key finding: When asked which party represented working people 30 years ago, voters favored Democrats over Republicans by 33 percentage points (53% to 20%). Today, that lead is just 5 points (39% to 34%). Thirteen percent named Democrats for the past and Republicans for today, while 4% gave the opposite answers.

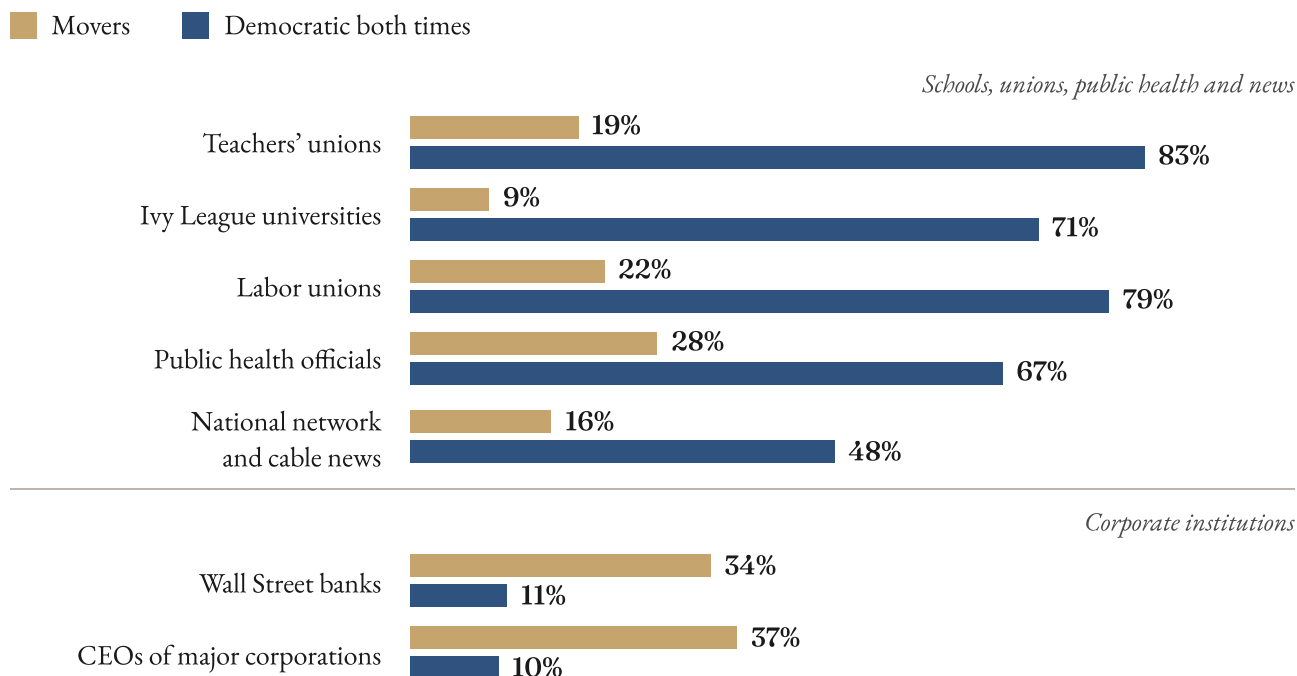
Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey, September 14-19, 2026 (Q62 and Q63). Weighted, $n = 1,000$.

Thirteen percent of voters name the Democrats for thirty years ago and the Republicans for today; we call them “movers.” Compared with voters who named the Democrats both times, movers report far less trust in teachers’ unions, Ivy League universities, labor unions, public health officials, and national news, and more trust in Wall Street banks and the chief executives of major corporations (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6

Which Institutions Do Voters Trust to Represent Their Interests?

Trust that each institution acts in the interest of “people like you”: movers and voters who named the Democrats both times



Key finding: Movers trusted teachers' unions far less than voters who named the Democrats both times, 19% versus 83%, and trusted the chief executives of major corporations far more, 37% versus 10%.

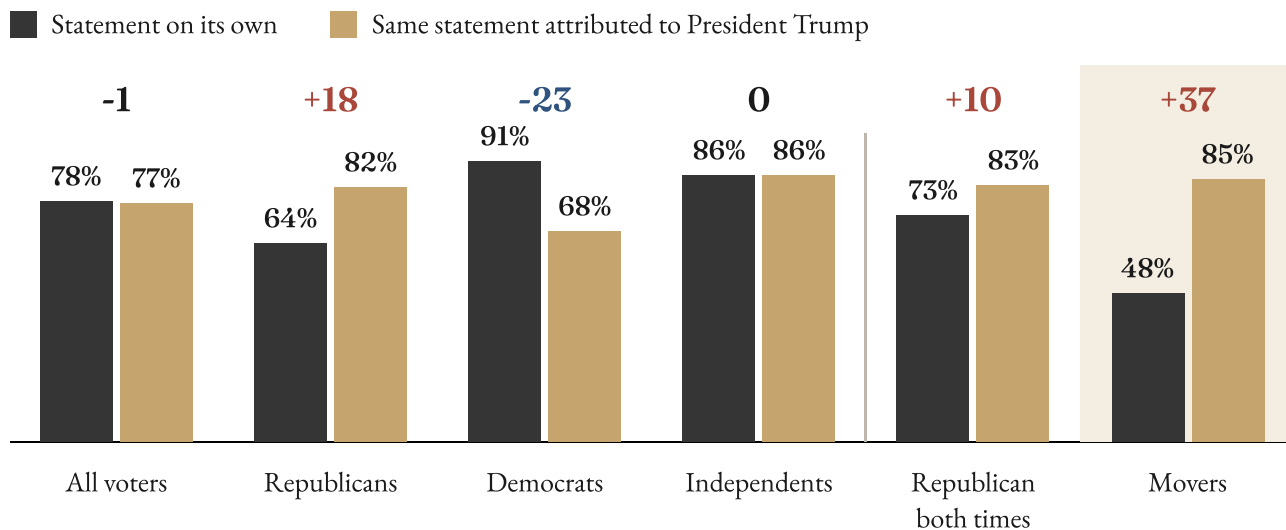
Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey, September 14-19, 2026 (Q20-Q38). Weighted; movers $n = 129$, Democratic both times $n = 278$.

Part of the movers' attachment to Republicans runs through Donald Trump. Half the sample read “The economy in this country is rigged by a handful of billionaires, and both political parties in Washington work for them, not for you”; the other half read the same sentence attributed to President Trump. Among movers, agreement rises from 48 to 85 percent with the attribution (Figure 7). With 72 and 57 movers answering the two versions, that 37-point gap carries a margin of error of roughly 15 points, so it holds. Whether the loyalty carries over to Republican candidates in elections without Trump on the ballot is beyond what one survey can establish.

FIGURE 7

How Trump's Name Changes Agreement with an Economic Message

Agreement with a populist statement, unattributed and attributed to President Trump



Key finding: Among voters who believe Democrats represented working people 30 years ago but Republicans do today, agreement with the economic statement rose from 48% to 85% when it was attributed to Trump. The two versions were shown to 72 and 57 respondents, respectively. The estimated margin of error for the difference is roughly 15 percentage points.

Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey, September 14-19, 2026 (Q64C and Q64D, split sample, $n = 500$ each). Weighted.

Data and Methods

A.1 Who counts as working class

An adult counts as working class in this paper when two conditions hold: the person does not have a four-year college degree (adults with some college or an associate degree count as non-college), and the person lives in a household earning between \$30,000 and \$100,000 a year after adjusting for the state's cost of living. Education is the best census measure of the labor side of class, and household income measures the money side. Either condition by itself picks out a very different population.

The \$30,000 floor separates the working class from the poorest households, a distinct group for policy purposes whose votes split almost evenly in 2024: non-college voters in households earning under \$30,000 gave Trump 48.9 percent of the two-party vote. The \$100,000 ceiling keeps out affluent non-college households, such as owners of established businesses and senior tradespeople. To test whether our findings depend on these cutoffs, we re-ran the district analysis under four alternative definitions: all adults without a bachelor's degree; adults without a degree in households earning \$30,000 or more; adults without a degree in households earning less than \$100,000; and all adults, at any education level, in households earning \$65,000 to \$135,000, a band many Americans associate with the middle class. Under every alternative, the share of the group living in Republican-leaning districts across the five Republican-drawn states rose by about 9 percentage points (from about 74 to about 83 percent), and the share living in Democratic-leaning districts across California and Virginia rose by about 17 percentage points. These are shares of each group's total population in those states, a different measure from the counts in Tables 4 and 5. The conclusions do not depend on the exact income band.

A.2 The national survey analysis (Figures 1 and 2)

Figures 1 and 2 draw on the cumulative file of the Cooperative Election Study.¹⁴ We analyze each presidential election year separately, crossing two education levels (no bachelor's degree; bachelor's degree or higher) with three household-income bands. For 2024, we use respondents whose turnout was validated against voter files (30,127 two-party voters, weighted with the CES validated-voter weight). For 2008 through 2020, we use self-reported vote and the standard survey weight (23,585 respondents in 2008, 37,909 in 2012, 40,891 in 2016, and 43,890 in 2020). We hold the income cutoffs at constant 2024 purchasing power using the Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index for urban consumers (CPI-U) and match them to the nearest income brackets the survey offered that year: \$20,000 and \$70,000 in 2008 and 2012, \$20,000 and \$80,000 in 2016 and 2020, and \$30,000 and \$100,000 in 2024.¹⁵ We do not apply the state price adjustment to the survey, because the figures compare voters nationwide rather than across states, and the survey's income brackets are too broad for a state price index to move most respondents across a cutoff. The survey covers voters aged 18 and older.

A.3 Adjusting income for the cost of living

In the district analysis, before applying the income cutoffs, we divide each household's income, in 2024 dollars, by its state's 2024 Regional Price Parity for all items, published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis on February 19, 2026 (United States = 100).¹⁶ The values for the seven states are California 110.7, Florida 103.4, Virginia 101.1, Texas 97.1, North Carolina 94.3, Missouri 90.8, and Louisiana 88.2. Because the adjustment is statewide, it cannot distinguish high-cost Houston from rural Texas. We also ran the analysis with unadjusted incomes as a check.

A.4 Working-class shares for each district

No published census table crosses education with household income for congressional districts, so we build each district's estimates from the Census Bureau's 2024 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), which records both characteristics for each person.¹⁷ Microdata

are published for Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) of at least 100,000 people. We allocate each record to districts through the census tracts that make up each PUMA, weighting by the share of each tract's voting-age population that falls inside each district, block by block.¹⁸ We then calibrate each district so that its split between adults with and without a bachelor's degree matches the ACS 2020-2024 five-year education counts (Table B15003) for the block groups that make up the district.¹⁹ The analysis covers adults aged 25 and older living in households, the standard census universe for educational attainment, so students still completing a degree are not counted as non-college. People in group quarters such as dormitories and prisons have no household income and are excluded. Total population is the 2020 Census count of each district's blocks. Every step is repeated for the old and the new lines.

A.5 The benchmark and the district categories

We compare each district's working-class share with a single benchmark: the working-class share of all adults aged 25 and older across the seven states under the pre-redistricting lines, 29.27 percent. Because the benchmark is a population-weighted average, every adult counts once and California's 52 districts carry more weight than Missouri's eight; giving each state equal weight instead yields 29.72 percent and the same conclusions. We compute the benchmark on the old lines and hold it fixed for the new maps, so a district can cross a threshold only when its own lines change (recomputed on the new lines, the benchmark is again 29.27 percent). To classify districts, we divide each district's working-class share by the benchmark and multiply by 100, which sets the seven-state average at 100. A working-class district scores 105 or higher, which is the main text's rule of at least 5 percent above the benchmark (a working-class share of about 30.7 percent or more). A mixed-class district scores between 95 and 105, within 5 percent of the benchmark (about 27.8 to 30.7 percent). Because any threshold involves judgment, we also recounted every table at scores of 100 and 110 and with unadjusted incomes; those recounts are available on request.

A.6 District lean

A district leans Republican or Democratic according to the 2024 two-party presidential vote within its lines. We allocated precinct results to census blocks and summed the blocks into each map's districts.²⁰ Outside Virginia, our district results match the Redistricting Data Hub's independent district reports to within 0.14 percentage points. A district's lean can differ from the party of its current member: on the old Texas lines, 27 districts voted for Trump in 2024, while Republicans hold 25 of the state's 38 seats. Virginia's figures use certified 2024 presidential results reaggregated to the current map and to HB29.

A.7 How the counts work

Tables 2 and 3 count the districts in each category on the old lines and again on the new lines, and compare the totals. District numbers serve only as labels: the new 9th District of Texas covers different ground than the old 9th, so we compare map totals and never pair old and new districts by number. Each table counts only districts that lean toward the party that drew the map: Republican-leaning districts in Texas, Florida, Missouri, North Carolina, and Louisiana, and Democratic-leaning districts in California and Virginia. Tables 4 and 5 add up the working-class adults, all adults aged 25 and older, and total population living in those districts. Because districts within a state must hold equal populations, total population moves in steps of one district: each added Republican-leaning district in Texas brings about 767,000 people.

A.8 The maps

The seven maps, with their status as of October 28, 2026:²¹

Texas: Plan C2333 (2025), in effect for 2026 after the U.S. Supreme Court stayed a lower-court injunction.

Florida: the 2026 congressional plan, in effect for 2026; a state-court challenge is pending.

Missouri: HB 1 (2025), blocked for 2026 pending a November 3, 2026 referendum.

North Carolina: S.L. 2025-95, in effect for 2026.

Louisiana: Act 2 of the 2026 Regular Session (SB 121), in effect for 2026; a federal challenge is pending.

California: Proposition 50 (2025), which adopted the map in AB 604, in effect for 2026.

Virginia: HB 29 (2026 Acts of Assembly, chapter 7), struck down on May 8, 2026; the 2021 map remains in use.

A.9 Limits

The district crosstabs are estimates built from microdata; tying each district to its published education totals limits the error. Income belongs to the household and education to the person, so an adult without a degree who lives with a high earner is counted at the household's income. The price adjustment is statewide. Districts near a threshold can change category under a slightly different rule, which is why we recounted every table at other cutoffs. Counts of districts depend on the benchmark; the population figures in Tables 4 and 5 do not, and they are the firmer measure of how the maps placed working-class voters. Appendix B, the survey evidence, follows as a separate section.

APPENDIX B

How Voters View the Parties and Why

National Research, Inc. fielded a national survey of 1,000 registered voters for this paper on September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 percentage points). The questionnaire was built around the Class Dismissed definition of the working class: no four-year degree and a household income between \$30,000 and \$100,000. Income in the survey is self-reported and unadjusted for regional prices, so the survey's working-class cell approximates the RPP-adjusted definition used in the district analysis without reproducing it.

Two questions anchor the findings of the survey. Respondents named the party that is “more the party of working people” today (Q62) and the party that held that title thirty years ago (Q63). Respondents who answer “Democratic” for thirty years ago and “Republican” for today are labeled **movers**. They make up 13 percent of the respondents (129 of 1,000). Voters who named the Democrats at both points are stable Democrats (278 respondents), and voters who named the Republicans at both points are stable Republicans (124 respondents). The figures below illustrate who is moving, how much, what distinguishes the movers, what the poll suggests about their reasons, and what remains uncertain about their attachment to the Republican Party.

The second critical question, Q63, measures a voter's memory of each party's reputation. It does not record a respondent's own past vote, so movers are voters who have reassigned the working-people label. Some of them have switched parties, but the survey cannot say how many: a voter who has always voted Republican can still remember the Democrats as the party of working people. Mover estimates rest on 129 interviews, and split-sample estimates on 57 to 72; sampling error on these runs from roughly ± 9 to ± 13 points before any design effect.

1 How the working class votes

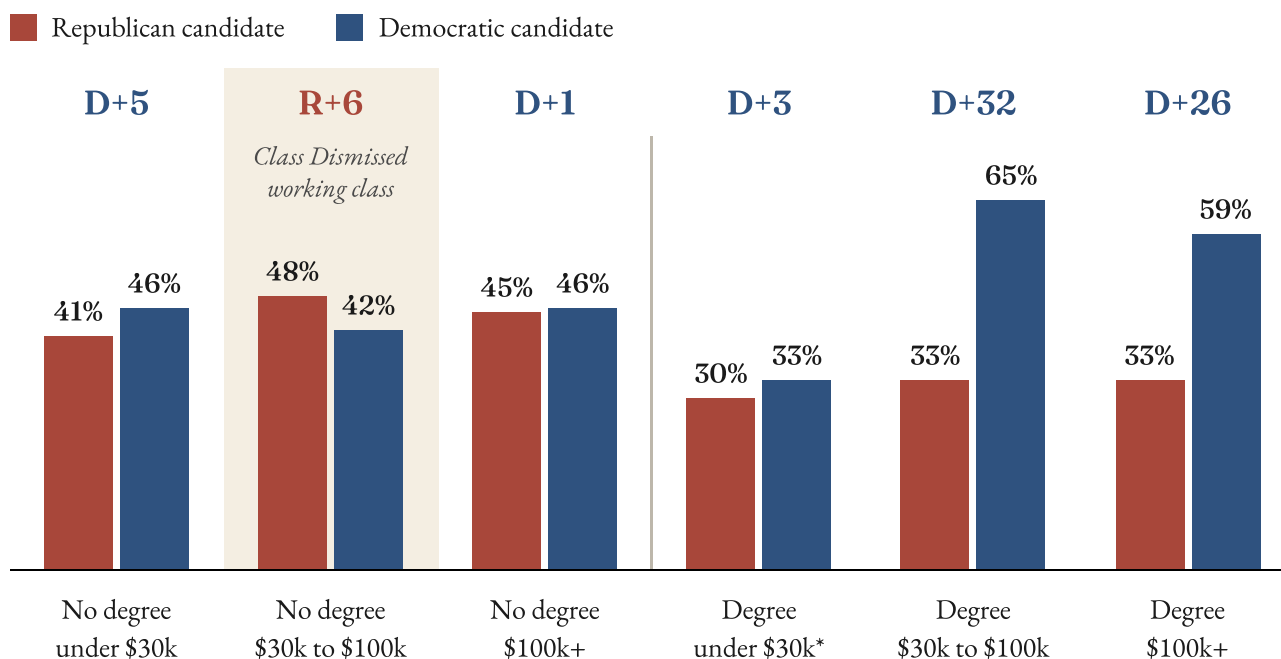
Only one cell of the education-by-income grid prefers Republicans on the generic congressional ballot: voters without a degree earning \$30,000 to \$100,000, at 48 to 42 percent (Figure B.1). These are precisely the voters we classify as the working class.

Non-college voters below and above that band split evenly or lean Democratic. Every college-educated cell above \$30,000 leans Democratic, by 26 to 32 points. The full sample favors Democrats 49 to 41 percent, which puts the working-class cell 14 points to the right of the electorate.

FIGURE B.1

How Education and Income Shape Congressional Voting Preferences

Generic congressional ballot across the Class Dismissed education-by-income grid



Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs p. 118 (Q10 by Q67 and Q69). Excludes the 13 percent who declined to report income. Cell bases $n = 59, 242, 214, 19, 118, 211$. *Only 19 respondents fell into this group, too few to draw reliable conclusions. The results are shown for completeness. Weighted.

The job a voter holds sharpens the finding (Figure B.2). Among voters with no degree (and whose job does not call for a degree), Republicans lead 50 to 41 percent. A degree requirement at work pulls non-college voters to a 4-

point Democratic lean, and graduates in degree-required jobs favor Democrats by 29 points. Occupation returns the same result in the terms Jim Banks used in 2021: manual and service workers back Republicans by 13 points and small business owners by 12, while credentialed professionals back Democrats by 20.

FIGURE B.2

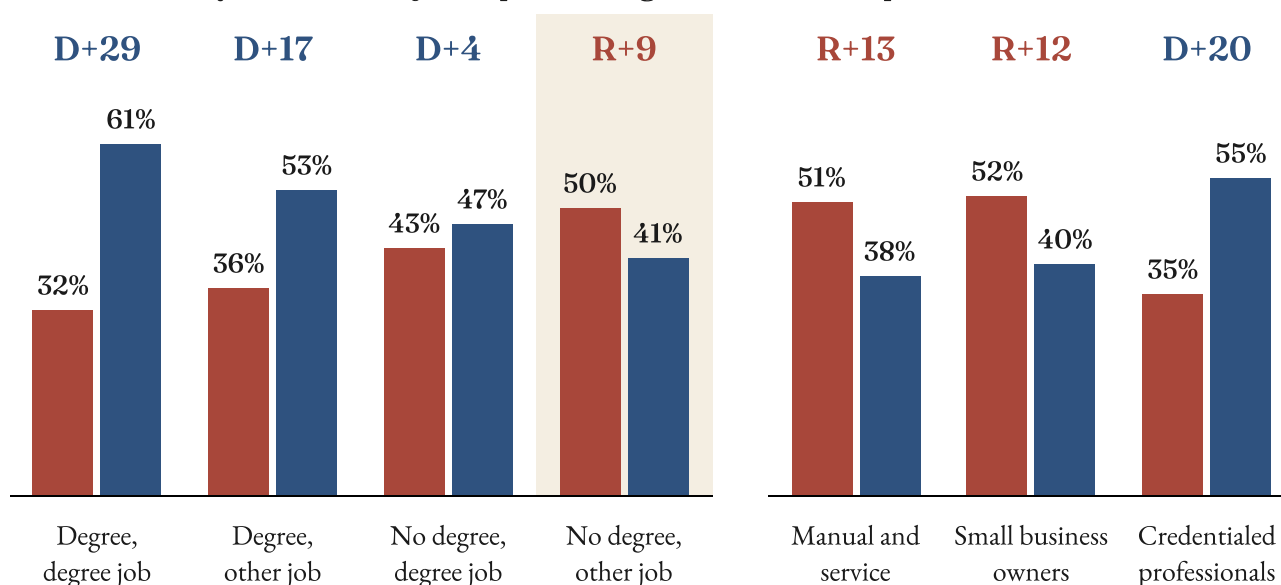
How Education, Job Requirements, and Occupation Affect Voting Preferences

Generic congressional ballot by degree, job requirement, and occupation

■ Republican candidate ■ Democratic candidate

(a) Education by whether the job requires a degree

(b) Occupation



Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs pp. 119-120 (Q10 by Q67, Q70 and Q71). Panel (a): A “degree job” is a job that respondents said required a college degree. This refers to their current or most recent job ($n = 244, 143, 166, 400$). Panel (b): manual and service covers

trades, construction, manufacturing, transport, retail and food service, cleaning, healthcare support and farming ($n = 229$); small business owners $n = 80$; credentialed professionals covers teaching, healthcare professionals, law and finance, and technology and engineering ($n = 379$). Weighted.

2 How far the label has moved

Voters register the shift themselves. Asked which party was more the party of working people thirty years ago, 53 percent name the Democrats and 20 percent the Republicans. Asked about today, the split narrows to 39 and 34 percent. The Democratic edge falls from 33 points to 5. The share of voters who name neither party triples, from 8 to 25 percent (Figure B.3, panel a).

Individual answers indicate a trend running toward the Republican Party. Thirteen percent of voters name the Democrats then and the Republicans now; only 4 percent make the reverse switch. Net, 9 percent of the electorate has handed the working-people label to the GOP (Figure B.3, panel b).

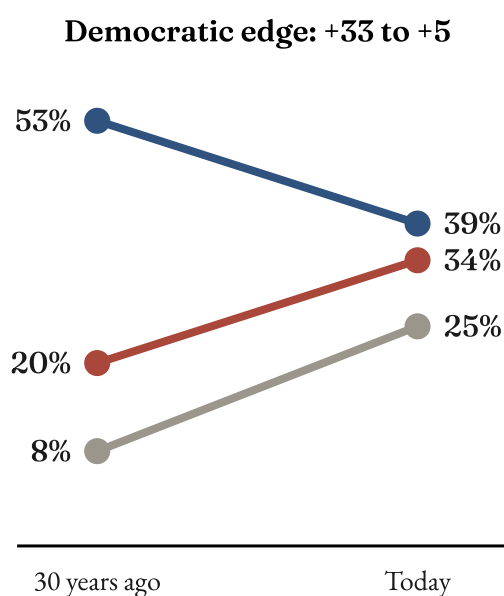
FIGURE B.3

How Perceptions of the Working-People's Party Have Changed

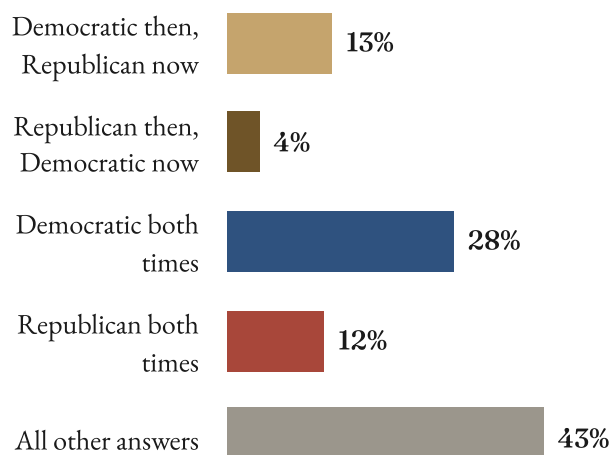
Which party is more the party of working people, thirty years ago and today

■ Democratic Party ■ Republican Party ■ Neither

(a) Which party is more the party of working people?



(b) Each voter's answer, then and now



Net movement toward GOP: 9 points

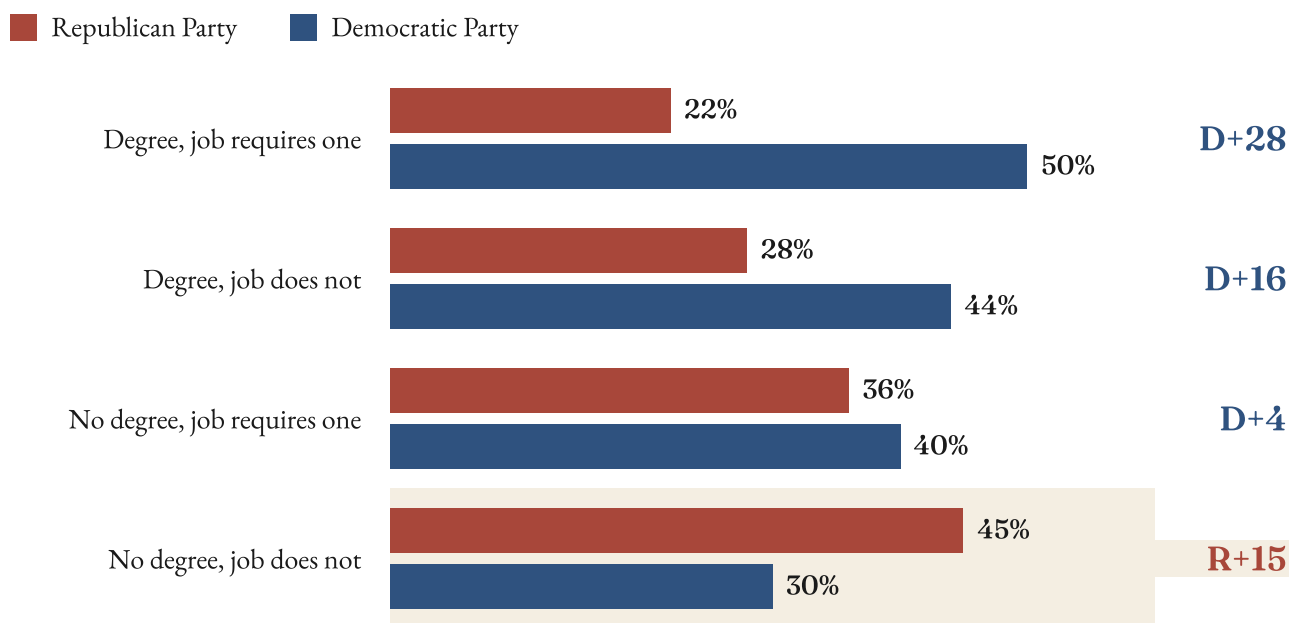
Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs pp. 957, 965 and 980 (Q62, Q63, and the combined Q62-Q63 banner). "All other answers" includes respondents who chose neither party, were unsure, or said they were too young to remember 30 years ago. Weighted, $n = 1,000$.

Today's perceptions follow the same education-and-work gradient as the ballot (Figure B.4). Graduates in degree-required jobs call the Democrats the party of working people by 28 points; non-college voters in jobs without a degree requirement give the title to the Republicans by 15. The 43-point spread between the two ends of the grid is the clearest single measure of how far the label has moved away from the Democratic Party.

FIGURE B.4

Which Party Represents Working People? Views by Education and Job Type

Party of working people today, by degree and job requirement



Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs p. 960 (Q62 by Q67 and Q71). Remaining respondents said neither or not sure. $n = 244, 143, 166, 400$. Weighted.

3 What distinguishes those voters?

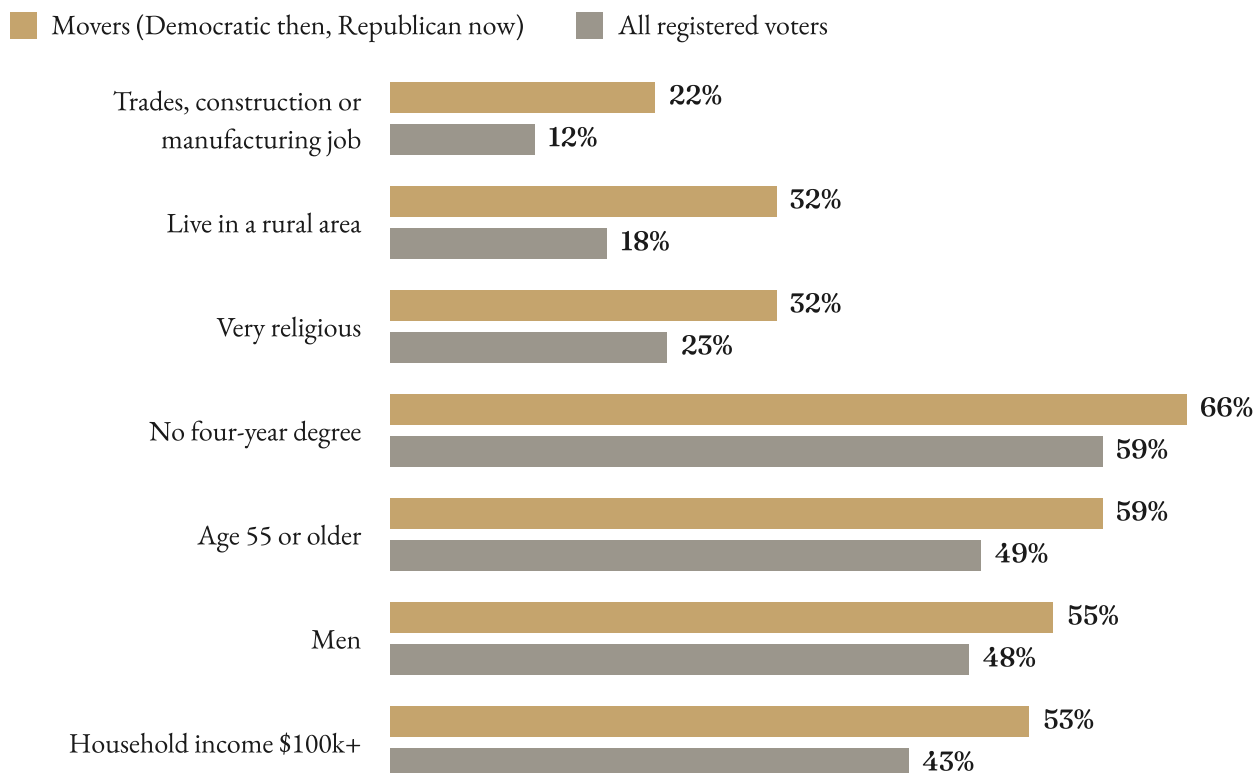
Movers are older, more male, more rural, and more religious than the electorate, and nearly twice as likely to work in the trades, construction, or manufacturing (22 against 12 percent) (Figure B.5). Two-thirds lack a four-year degree.

They are no poorer than other voters: 53 percent report household incomes above \$100,000, against 43 percent of all voters. About 21 percent of movers fall inside the Class Dismissed working-class cell, close to that cell's 24 percent share of the full sample. A third are non-college voters earning more than \$100,000. Education and occupation mark the movers far more sharply than income does. Movers and the working class as defined in this paper are therefore different groups. The label is moving among non-college voters at every income level, including the well paid, which suggests the coalition reaches beyond the income band used in the district analysis. Ninety-six percent voted for Donald Trump in 2024.

FIGURE B.5

Who Now Sees Republicans as the Party of Working People?

Profile of the movers, who named the Democrats for thirty years ago and the Republicans for today, against all registered voters



Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs pp. 29, 50, 91, 99, 1031, 1070, 1095 and 1111 (Q6, Q7, Q67, Q69, Q70, Q73, Q75). Movers named

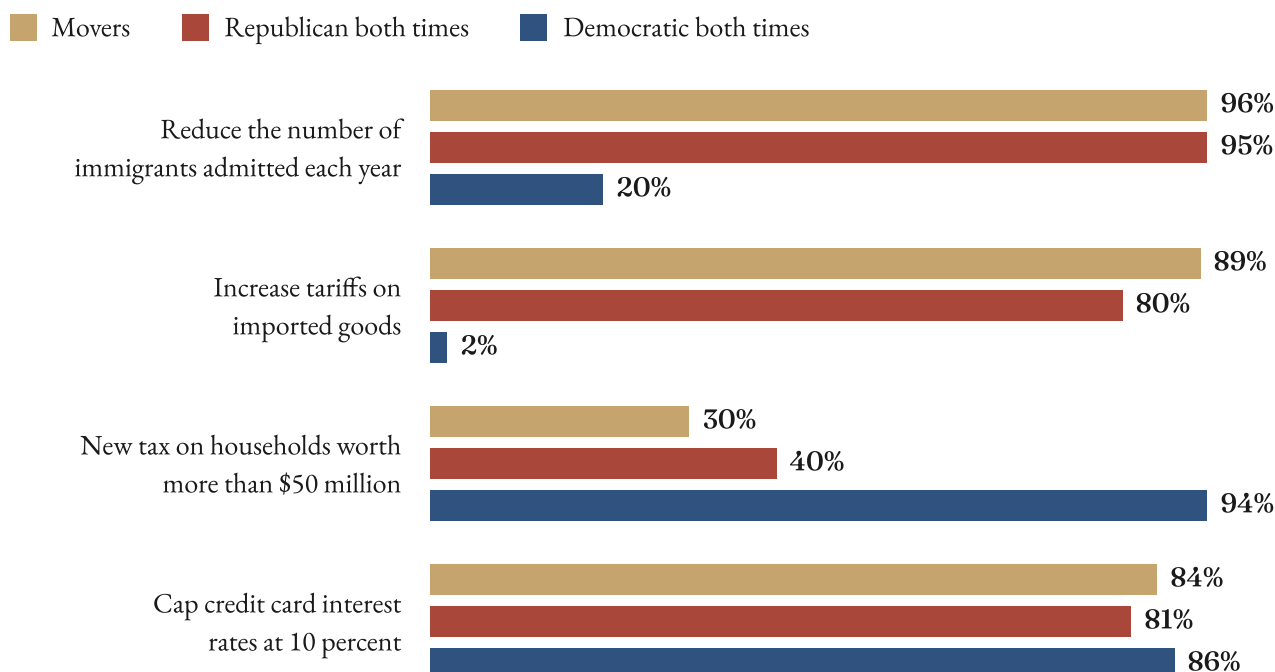
the Democratic Party as the party of working people thirty years ago (Q63) and the Republican Party today (Q62), $n = 129$. Income share for movers computed from the non-college and college \$100,000-plus voter groups. Weighted.

On policy, movers sit with voters who have called the GOP the party of working people all along (Figure B.6). Ninety-six percent favor reducing annual immigration and 89 percent favor higher tariffs, at or above the levels of the stable Republican group. Only 30 percent back a new tax on fortunes above \$50 million, which stable Democrats support at 94 percent. A 10 percent cap on credit card interest is the only cross-party item, with 81 to 86 percent support in all three groups.

FIGURE B.6

How Voters Differ on Immigration, Trade, Taxes, and Interest Rates

Policy support among movers and voters whose answer did not change



Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs p. 771 (Q46, Q51, Q52, Q53). Percentages include respondents who strongly or somewhat support each policy. Republican both times $n = 124$; Democratic both times $n = 278$; movers $n = 129$. Weighted.

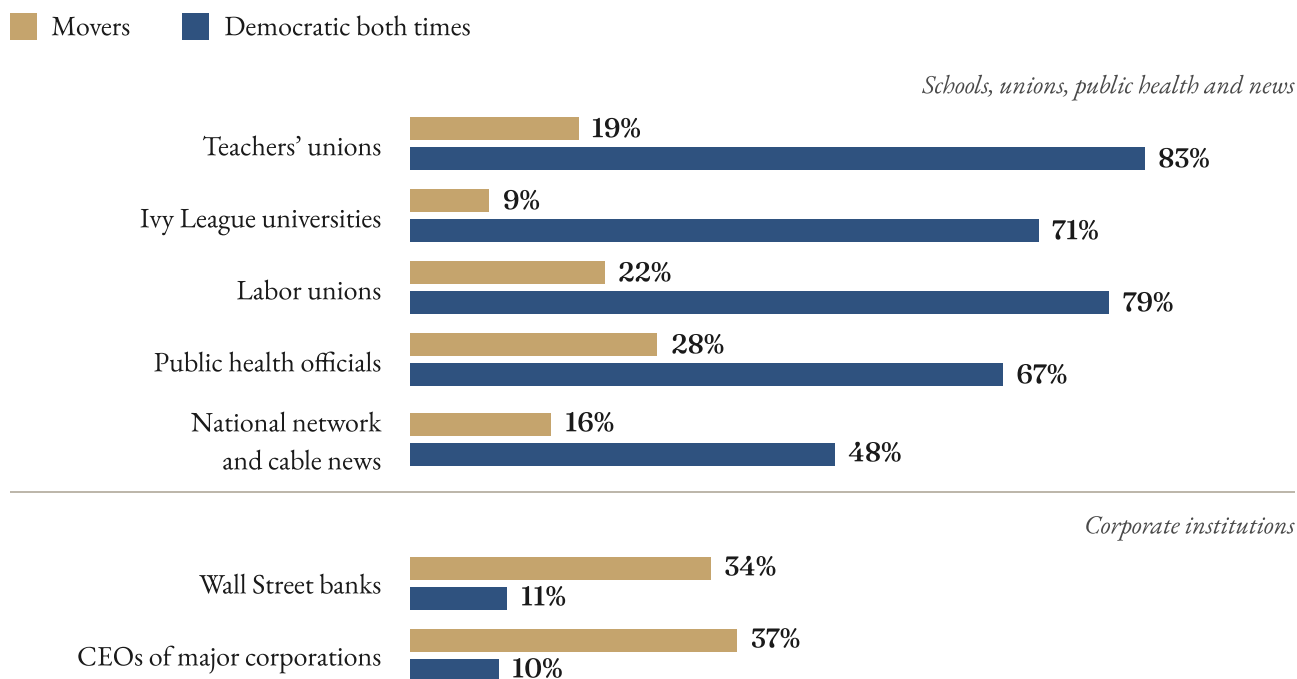
4 What does the poll suggest about the reasons?

Movers report far less trust than stable Democrats in schools, universities, unions, public health officials and national news. Fewer than one in five trust teachers' unions (19 percent), and fewer than one in ten trust Ivy League universities (9 percent), against 83 and 71 percent among voters who named the Democrats at both points (Figure B.7). Public health officials and national television news do not fare better. The opposite is true for corporate power: movers trust Wall Street banks and the chief executives of major corporations more than stable Democrats do, 34 and 37 percent against 11 and 10. One reading of these results is that the movers' rejection of the Democratic label follows their distance from these institutions more closely than any resentment of business.

FIGURE B.7

How Trust in Major Institutions Differs Across Voter Groups

Trust that each institution acts in the interest of “people like you”



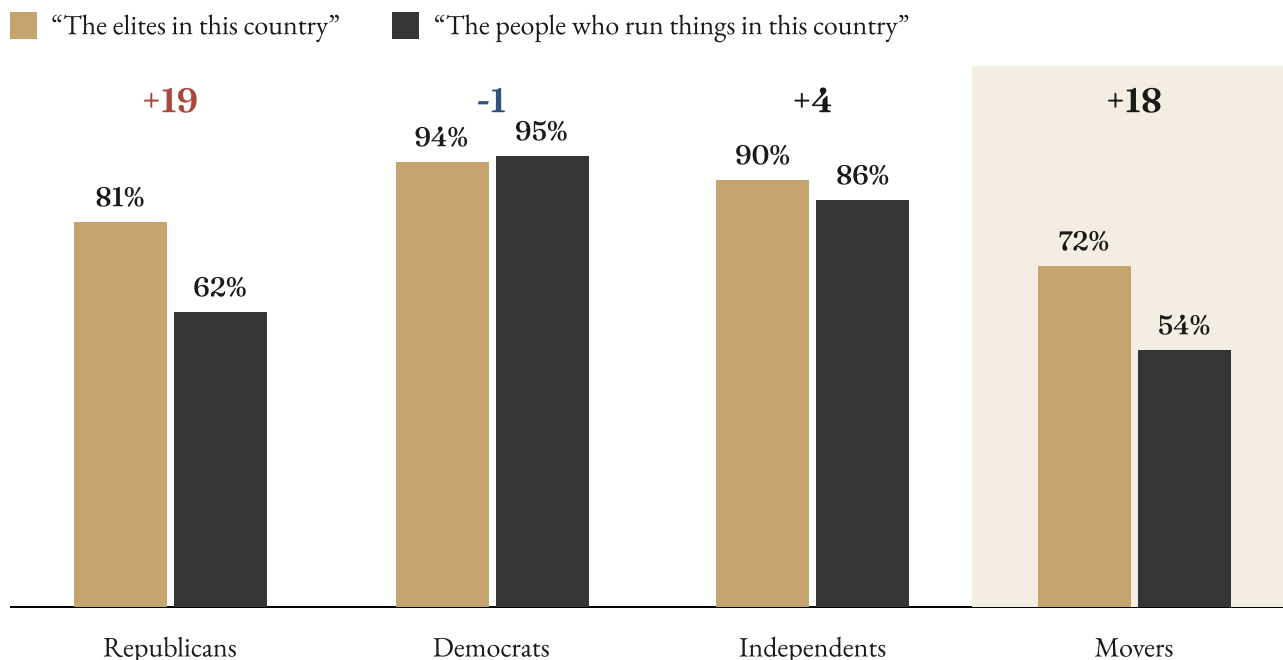
Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs pp. 259, 323, 371 and 475 (Q20-Q38). Percentages show respondents who reported either a great deal or a fair amount of trust. Movers $n = 129$; Democratic both times $n = 278$. Weighted.

A split-sample wording test isolates the cultural charge (Figure B.8). Half the sample read “The elites in this country do not care what people like me think”; the other half read the same sentence with “the people who run things in this country.” Republicans agree at 81 percent with the first wording and 62 percent with the second, a 19-point gap. Movers show an 18-point gap, 72 against 54 percent. Democrats answer the two versions almost identically (94 and 95 percent). For movers and Republicans, the word “elites” itself draws the stronger response. Read alongside the trust results, one interpretation is that they have the credentialed elite in mind more than power in the abstract; the wording test alone cannot show which elite respondents picture. With 57 and 71 movers answering the two versions, the movers’ 18-point gap is about the size of its margin of error (roughly 16 points); the Republican gap rests on much larger groups. Across the full sample the gap is 9 points, 88 against 79 percent.

FIGURE B.8

Does Calling Powerful People “Elites” Change Voters’ Responses?

Agreement with the same statement under two wordings, “the elites in this country” and “the people who run things in this country”



Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs pp. 238, 243, 246 and 251 (Q19A and Q19B, split sample). Respondents were randomly divided into two groups of 500. Each group saw a different version of the

statement. Republicans and Democrats include leaners; independents are pure independents. Mover bases $n = 57$ (“elites”) and $n = 71$ (“people who run things”). The numbers above the bars show the difference in percentage points between the two versions. Weighted.

5 What remains uncertain about their attachment to the GOP?

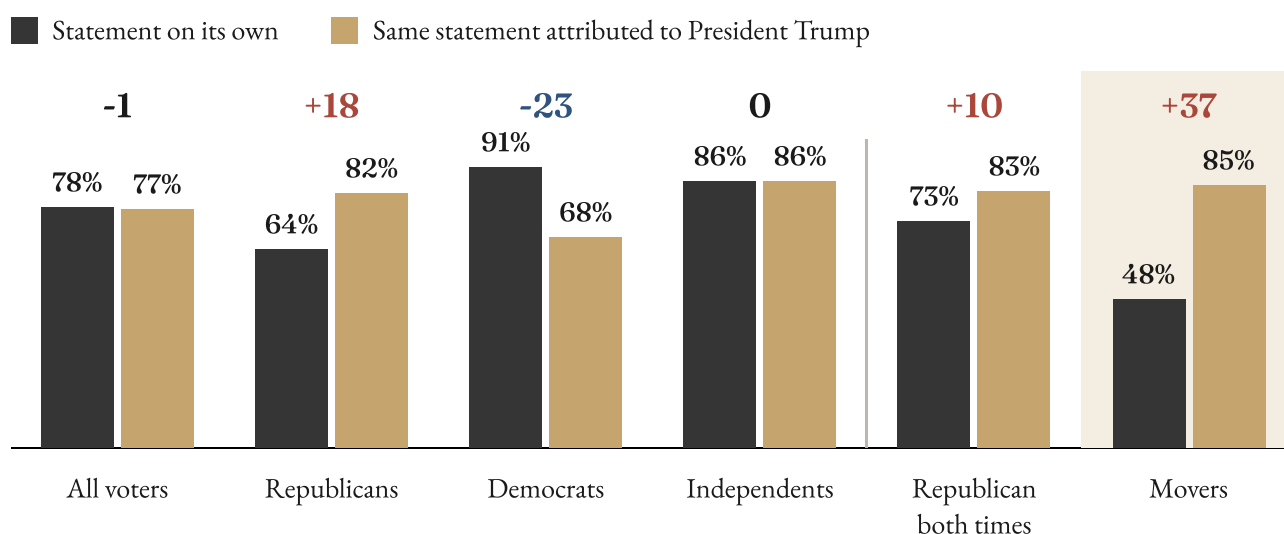
Three findings warrant caution. The first is that some of the attachment runs through Donald Trump. Half the sample read “The economy in this country is rigged by a handful of billionaires, and both political parties in Washington work for them, not for you”; the other half read the same sentence attributed to President Trump. Overall agreement barely moves, 78 and 77 percent, while partisans trade places: Republicans gain 18 points and Democrats lose 23 (Figure B.9). Among movers the attribution adds 37 points, from 48 to 85 percent, far more than the 10-point gain among stable Republicans. With 72 and 57 movers answering the two versions, the margin of error on that gap is roughly 15 points, so the difference holds. Movers accept a populist economic message on Trump’s authority far more

readily than on its own terms. Whether that loyalty carries over to Republican candidates in elections without Trump on the ballot is beyond what a single cross-sectional survey can establish.

FIGURE B.9

How Attributing an Economic Message to Trump Changes Agreement

Agreement with a populist statement, unattributed and attributed to President Trump



Source: National Research, Inc., National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026 (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs pp. 991, 996, 999 and 1004 (Q64C and Q64D, split sample, $n = 500$ each). Republicans and Democrats include leaners; independents are pure independents.

Bases for Republican both times $n = 63$ and 61 ; movers $n = 72$ and 57 . The numbers above the bars show how much agreement changed when the statement was attributed to Trump, measured in percentage points. Weighted.

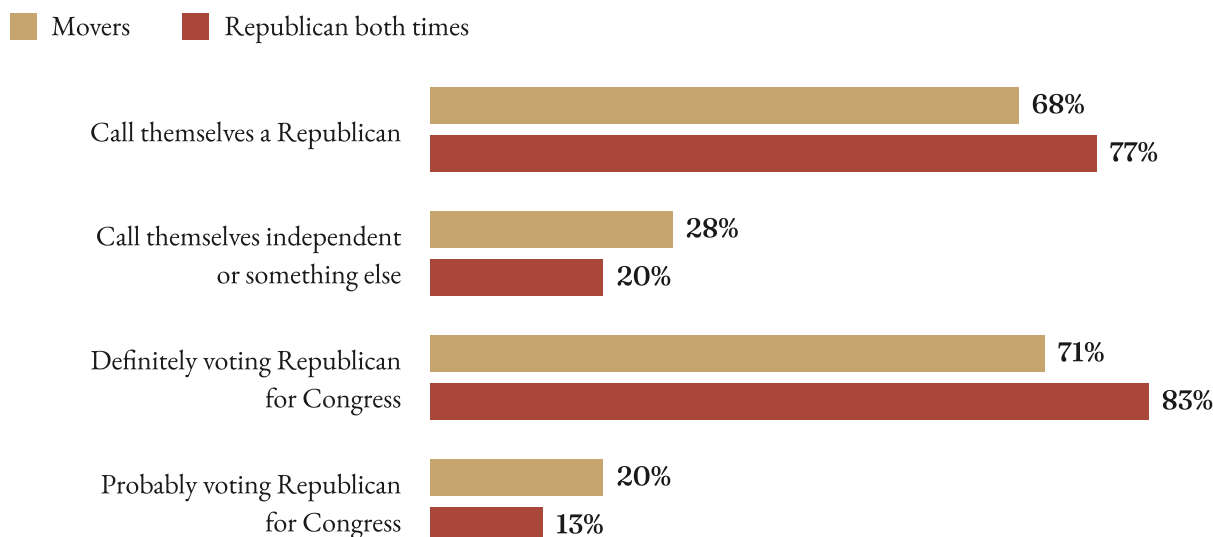
Secondly, the survey suggests that the party label is not well established. Only 68 percent of movers call themselves Republicans, against 77 percent of stable Republicans, and 28 percent identify as independents or something else (Figure B.10). On the generic ballot, 71 percent of movers are definitely voting Republican, 12 points below the stable group, and one in five is only probably Republican.

Thirdly, the economic program remains unsettled. Movers are less likely than either stable group to agree that “the economy is rigged to benefit people at the top”: 44 percent, against 52 percent of stable Republicans and 97 percent of stable Democrats. Their alignment with the GOP rests on immigration, trade, and distrust of credentialed institutions. It has yet to be

FIGURE B.10

How Strongly Do These Voters Identify with Republicans?

Strength of Republican attachment: movers and stable Republicans



Source: National Research, Inc., *National Class Survey of 1,000 registered voters, September 14-19, 2026* (text-to-online; margin of error ± 3.1 points), crosstabs pp. 67 and 123 (Q4 and Q10). Movers $n = 129$; Republican both times $n = 124$. Weighted.

tested on the redistributive economics that parts of both parties now court in the name of working people.

A quarter of all voters, meanwhile, name neither party as the party of working people, up from 8 percent recalled for thirty years ago. All in all, the survey shows a real and measurable shift in which party voters see as the party of working people, which can lead to a realignment as party identities solidify. The voters who name neither party are a pool left unclaimed, and the direction they move will be consequential for both parties.

Notes

- 1 Matt Grossmann and David A. Hopkins, *Polarized by Degrees: How the Diploma Divide and the Culture War Transformed American Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024); Pew Research Center, “Behind Trump’s 2024 Victory, a More Racially and Ethnically Diverse Voter Coalition,” June 26, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/06/26/behind-trumps-2024-victory-a-more-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-voter-coalition/>; Amory Gethin, Clara Martínez-Toledano, and Thomas Piketty, “Brahmin Left versus Merchant Right: Changing Political Cleavages in 21 Western Democracies, 1948–2020,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 137, no. 1 (2022): 1–48, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjab036>. Pew’s validated-voter study finds that Trump’s share of Hispanic voters rose from 28 percent in 2016 to 48 percent in 2024, and his share of Black voters from 8 percent in 2020 to 15 percent.
- 2 CGCN Group, “Class Dismissed: Reframing Political Bias in Congress,” January 9, 2024, <https://cgcn.com/issues/class-dismissed-reframing-political-bias-in-congress/>.
- 3 CGCN Group, “Class Dismissed II: The Secession of the Successful,” October 2025.
- 4 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (London, 1848), part 1; Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers, *America’s Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu, “The White Working Class and the 2016 Election,” *Perspectives on Politics* 19, no. 1 (2021): 55–72, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720001267>. Carnes and Lupu show that the education-only definition common in 2016 election coverage counted many affluent voters as working class.
- 5 Nate Silver, “The DSA Sweet Spot: Highly Educated, Downwardly Mobile,” *Silver Bulletin*, July 21, 2026, <https://www.natesilver.net/p/the-dsa-sweet-spot-highly-educated>. In the DSA’s 2021 member survey, 80 percent of members aged 25 and older held a bachelor’s degree, while 45 percent lived in households earning \$60,000 or less.
- 6 Prepared based on Shiro Kuriwaki, “Cumulative CES Common Content,” Version 12, Harvard Dataverse, July 14, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/II2DB6>. The cumulative file holds 718,955 interviews conducted from 2006 to 2025. Figure 1 uses the 2024 post-election wave: 30,127 respondents whose vote was validated against voter files, who reported voting for Donald Trump or Kamala Harris, and who reported both education and household income, weighted with the CES validated-voter weight. Figure 2 repeats the analysis for each presidential election from 2008 to 2020, each year on its own (Appendix A.2). Occupation does not enter the analysis.
- 7 In 2024, 40.7 percent of college-educated voters in households earning under \$30,000 voted for Trump, against 44.2 and 44.0 percent of college-educated voters in the two higher bands. The most Republican group, voters without a degree earning \$30,000 to \$100,000, gave Trump 56.9 percent, just ahead of non-college voters earning more than \$100,000 (56.4 percent). With the standard CES survey weight in place of the validated-voter weight, the same two groups remain the most Democratic and the most Republican.
- 8 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, “Regional Price Parities by State and Metro Area,” accessed September 8, 2026, <https://bea.gov/data/prices-inflation/regional-price-parities-state-and-metro-area>.
- 9 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, “Real Personal Consumption Expenditures by State and Real Personal Income by State, 2024,” news release BEA 26-10, February 19, 2026, <https://bea.gov/news/2026/real-personal-consumption-expenditures-state-and-real-personal-income-state-2024>.
- 10 Rep. Jim Banks to House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, “URGENT: Cementing GOP as the Working-Class Party,” memorandum, March 30, 2021, <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/20613471/working-class-memo-updated.pdf>.

- 11 Virginia: Supreme Court of Virginia ruling of May 8, 2026, and the U.S. Supreme Court's denial of emergency relief on May 15, 2026; see Virginia Mercury, "US Supreme Court Decision Ends Virginia's Redistricting Fight, Reshapes 2026 Races," May 18, 2026, <https://virginiamercury.com/2026/05/18/virginias-redistricting-amendment-was-struck-down-whats-next/>. Missouri: Missouri Supreme Court ruling of September 3, 2026, and U.S. Supreme Court orders of September 10 and September 25, 2026; see Missouri Independent, "Missouri Supreme Court Blocks Gerrymandered Congressional Map, Orders Referendum Vote," September 3, 2026, <https://missouriindependent.com/2026/09/03/missouri-supreme-court-blocks-gerrymandered-congressional-map-orders-referendum-vote/>; Amy Howe, "Supreme Court Grants Request to Prevent Missouri from Using Congressional Map Expected to Aid Republicans," *SCOTUSblog*, September 10, 2026, <https://www.scotusblog.com/2026/09/supreme-court-grants-request-to-prevent-missouri-from-using-congressional-map-expected-to-aid-re/>. Two more states changed their maps for 2026 after the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* on April 29, 2026: Tennessee enacted a Republican map in May 2026 that splits Memphis among three districts, and on June 2, 2026, the Court allowed Alabama to use its 2023 map. Neither is part of this analysis. See Associated Press, "A New Tennessee Congressional Map That Splits Memphis Is Making Its Debut in the State's Primary," August 6, 2026, <https://wtop.com/national/2026/08/a-new-tennessee-congressional-map-that-splits-memphis-is-making-its-debut-in-the-states-primary/>; WAFF, "Supreme Court Rules Alabama Can Use 2023 Congressional Map for 2026 Election Cycle," June 3, 2026, <https://www.waff.com/2026/06/03/supreme-court-rules-alabama-can-use-2023-congressional-map-2026-election-cycle/>.
- 12 Inside Elections, "A Detailed Analysis of Texas' New Congressional Map," <https://insideelections.com/a-detailed-analysis-of-texas-new-congressional-map/>; "A Detailed Analysis of Missouri's New Congressional Map," <https://insideelections.com/a-detailed-analysis-of-missouris-new-congressional-map/>; "A Detailed Analysis of North Carolina's New Congressional Map," <https://insideelections.com/a-detailed-analysis-of-north-carolinas-new-congressional-map/>; "A Detailed Analysis of California's (Maybe) New Congressional Map," <https://new.insideelections.com/a-detailed-analysis-of-californias-maybe-new-congressional-map/>; all accessed October 28, 2026.
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