

Ground Truth Q1 2026 Update



Swing Left's innovative [Ground Truth](#) program is proving that a fundamentally different approach to voter contact works—one that starts earlier, listens deeply, and expands the universe of voters we engage.

To build durable governing majorities, we have to reach and persuade more people to vote for Democrats—cycle after cycle. That's how we protect democracy and build lasting power. This work begins with the 2026 midterms and is designed to scale in 2028 and beyond.

In the first quarter of 2026 (Q1), **we scaled Ground Truth rapidly across 29 House districts, generating more than 4,400 substantive conversations** and identifying **a meaningful pool of persuadable voters** typically missed by campaigns. At the same time, we're producing **a new form of real-time qualitative intelligence** and **building a stronger, more durable volunteer base**.

In this Q1 update, you'll see:

- How the program is scaling and performing on the ground.
- What we're hearing directly from voters—and how it's shifting over time.
- Evidence of untapped persuasion opportunities.
- Volunteers' more positive and meaningful experience, which is driving repeat engagement and will be core to scale.
- Key partnerships with campaigns, parties, and movement leaders.
- Growing press coverage and national visibility.



Story in the Data: An Overview

In the first quarter of 2026, Ground Truth went from a promising pilot to **a proven new model for voter contact**. Across 29 of Swing Left's [targeted U.S. House districts](#) in 13 states, the program is already making available new types of actionable insights to campaigns and state parties and identifying and reaching persuadable voters. Ground Truth is poised to expand further to Senate races alongside additional House targets in Q2.

This report details what we've found so far from the program, in which volunteer canvassers and phone bankers guide open-ended conversations about what voters actually care about, then capture what they heard in a voice-to-text note immediately after. Those notes are analyzed using AI and made available to campaigns, state parties, and other key stakeholders.

Four Key Findings at a Glance:

1. **People across party affiliation, geography, and demographics are eager to talk.** Ground Truth canvassers have maintained an extremely high conversation rate—over 7 in 10 people who answered the door engaged in substantive conversations. Ground Truth conversations are much longer than those in traditional voter contact campaigns; for example, in recent phonebanks calling Alaskans, conversations averaged 9 minutes long.
2. **Ground Truth is successfully mapping a persuasion audience typically skipped over by Democratic campaigns.** Roughly 40% of our conversations happened at doors Democrats would never normally knock on. AI analysis of those interactions identifies a significant population of "Disillusioned but Reachable" voters, "Dissatisfied Republicans," and "Waning Democrats" who are ripe for follow-up persuasion touches across campaign tactics.
3. **Ground Truth is generating a new kind of political intelligence: scaled qualitative data that tracks voter sentiment in real time and longitudinally, complementing polling and focus**

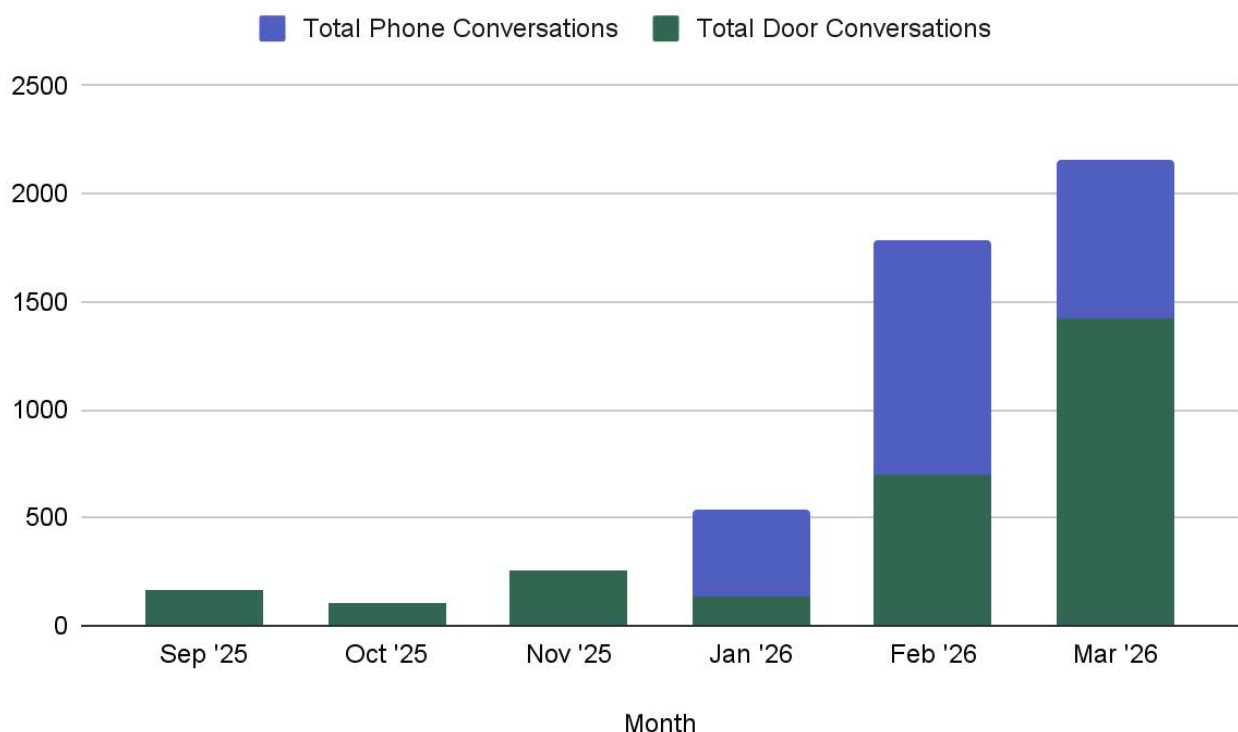
group data. “System Integrity & Trust” has been the defining concern across nearly every district and demographic group since September, reflecting deep disillusionment with the two parties and our country’s institutions. “Immigration & Border” surged following the escalation of ICE operations in January, then pulled back as “International Conflicts” emerged from zero and climbed sharply after the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February. “Cost of Living & Inflation” is a consistent top theme and showed a steady upward trend throughout the program—suggesting deepening economic anxiety even as more acute crises compete for attention.

4. **Volunteers keep coming back for more.** With the average volunteer ranking their likelihood of recommending the program at 9.1 out of 10, Ground Truth is proving that deep listening doesn't just generate better data—it generates a more motivated, higher-retention volunteer base than traditional canvassing. When volunteers feel the impact of their conversations, they don't just finish a shift—they sign up for the next one, enabling the program to grow in volume and quality.

Program Scale

After the 2025 pilot, Ground Truth underwent strategic expansion throughout Q1. From just 14 initial pilot districts, the program scaled more than seven-fold to reach 29 congressional districts by March 30th. Across 95 organized field events (83 canvasses and 12 phone banks), 1,703 volunteers had **4,444 substantive conversations** with voters.

The chart below shows the total number of conversations we’ve had each month since our pilot started in September. And the table below shows summary statistics from September through Q1.



Metric	Canvass	Phone Bank	Total
Unique Volunteers	857	846	1,703
Total Shifts Completed	1,162	2,001	3,163
Total Reach (Doors/Calls)	11,985	187,198	199,183
Total Answered	3,507	17,132	20,639
Substantive Conversations	2,569	1,875	4,444
Conversation Rate (Answered to Conversation)	73.2%	10.9%	21.5%

As we have grown the in-person canvassing operation, phone banking has enabled immediate scale. The length of phone calls—in a recent Alaska phone bank they averaged 9 minutes—and our extraordinary 73% conversation rate on in-person canvasses reinforces our conviction to focus on deep listening over overly-scripted transactional interactions.

The map below shows the geographic range of Ground Truth. Each circle is a phone bank (blue) or canvass (green) in a target district. The larger the circle, the more conversations volunteers have had in that area.



State	Districts
AK	AK-AL
AZ	01
CA	13, 22, 45, 48
CO	08
IA	01, 03
MI	04, 07, 08, 10
NE	02
NJ	07, 09
NY	03, 04, 17, 18, 19
OH	01, 13
OR	05
PA	07, 08, 10
WA	03
ALL	29 Districts

What People Talked About

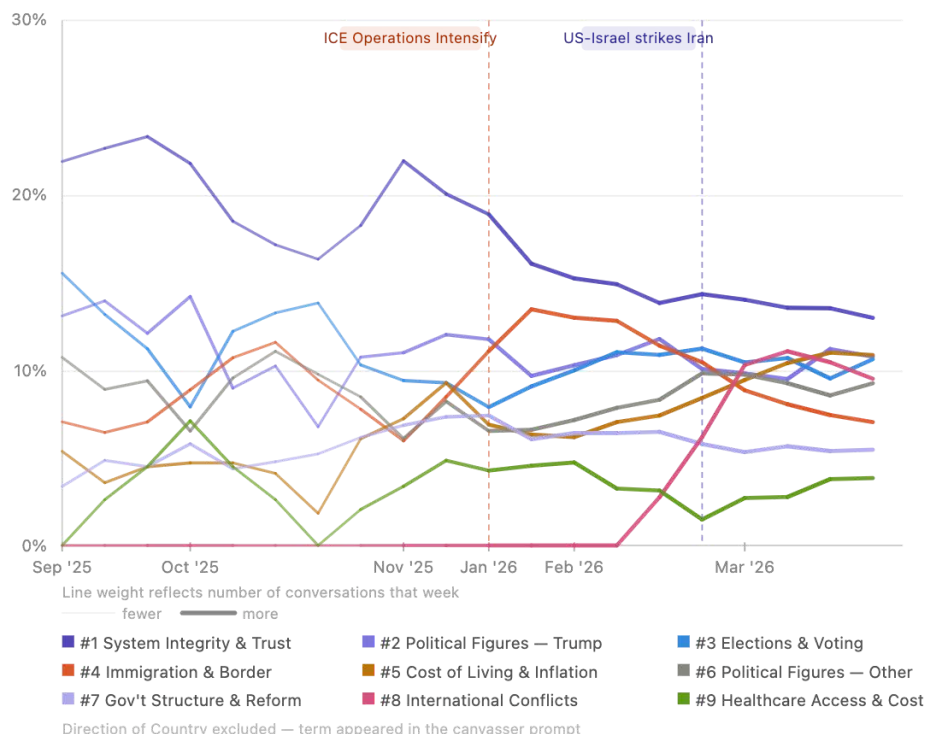
One of Ground Truth's core advantages is the depth of insight it generates. Because volunteers record detailed notes from every conversation, we can analyze what's actually on voters' minds—not just which box they check on a survey. This added texture is a critical input to Democrats' efforts to rebuild trust with voters and to anchor their messages, policies, and strategies closer to the ground.

Each conversation is analyzed by an AI language model trained to classify what voters said against a fixed topic taxonomy developed by Ground Truth—organized into broad themes like governance, economy, and healthcare, with more specific subtopics beneath each. The same model also extracts named entities: the specific people, agencies, and organizations voters mentioned by name.

The charts below show how the topics and entities that came up most frequently in conversations shifted over the course of the program, measured as a share of all conversations each month. Tracking share rather than raw volume allows for an apples-to-apples comparison across months, regardless of how many conversations were happening at the time. Line weight reflects the number of conversations that week—thinner, faded lines indicate weeks with fewer conversations and therefore less certainty in the trend.

Topics

System Integrity & Trust was the defining topic of the program, starting as the dominant concern in the fall and remaining the top theme throughout—reflecting a persistent, cross-partisan frustration and disillusionment about government and political institutions.



The sharpest single movement in the data is **International Conflicts**, which registered at essentially zero through January and then surged sharply following the U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran beginning February 28. At the same time, **Immigration & Border**—which had climbed steadily and peaked in the weeks after ICE operations intensified in January—began pulling back as Iran overtook immigration as the defining concern of the moment.

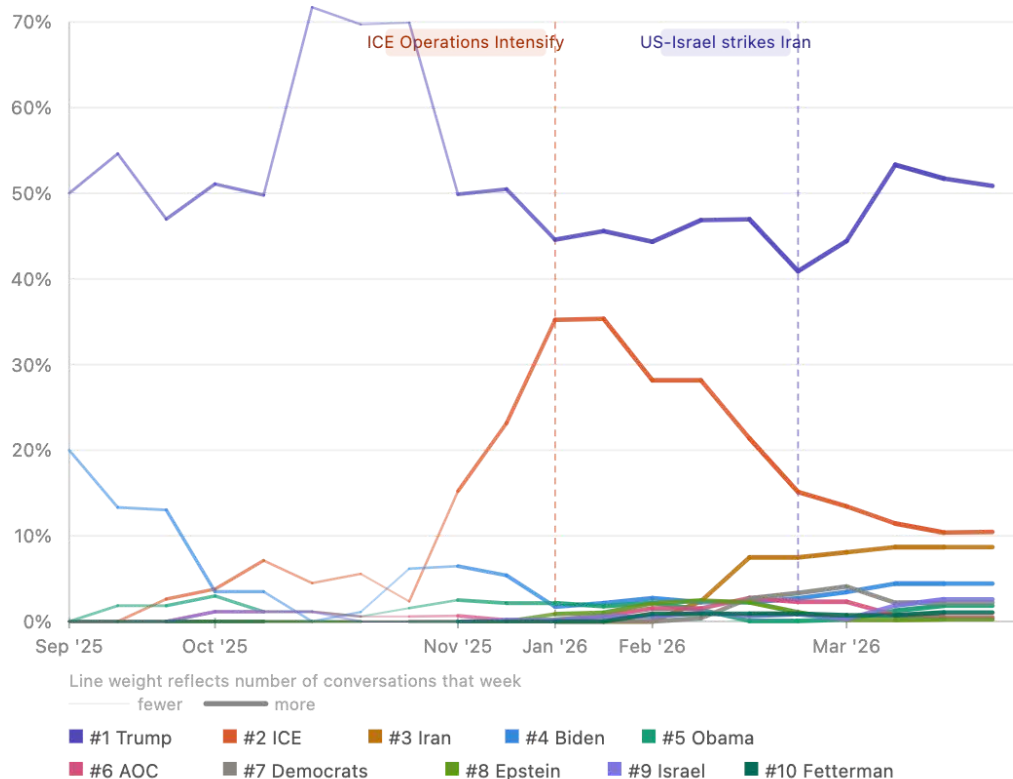
Cost of Living & Inflation is a pervasive topic throughout the period and exhibits a slow, steady upward trend across the entire program, suggesting that economic anxiety is deepening rather than fading, even as more acute news events compete for attention.

Entities

When we look at the specific people, agencies, and places voters mentioned by name, the dominance of Trump is striking—he accounts for roughly half of all named entity mentions in every month of the program, with no close second.

ICE tells the sharpest story in the data. Virtually absent from conversations in the fall, it surged to nearly 40% of all entity mentions in January as the ICE operations in Minnesota intensified—then dropped back sharply as the Iran war displaced it as the dominant news event. Iran, meanwhile, barely registers before February and then jumps to nearly 9% in March, closely tracking the outbreak of the war.

Biden, Obama, and the remaining entities stay relatively flat and low throughout, suggesting voters are largely focused on the present rather than relitigating the past.



Demographic Subgroups

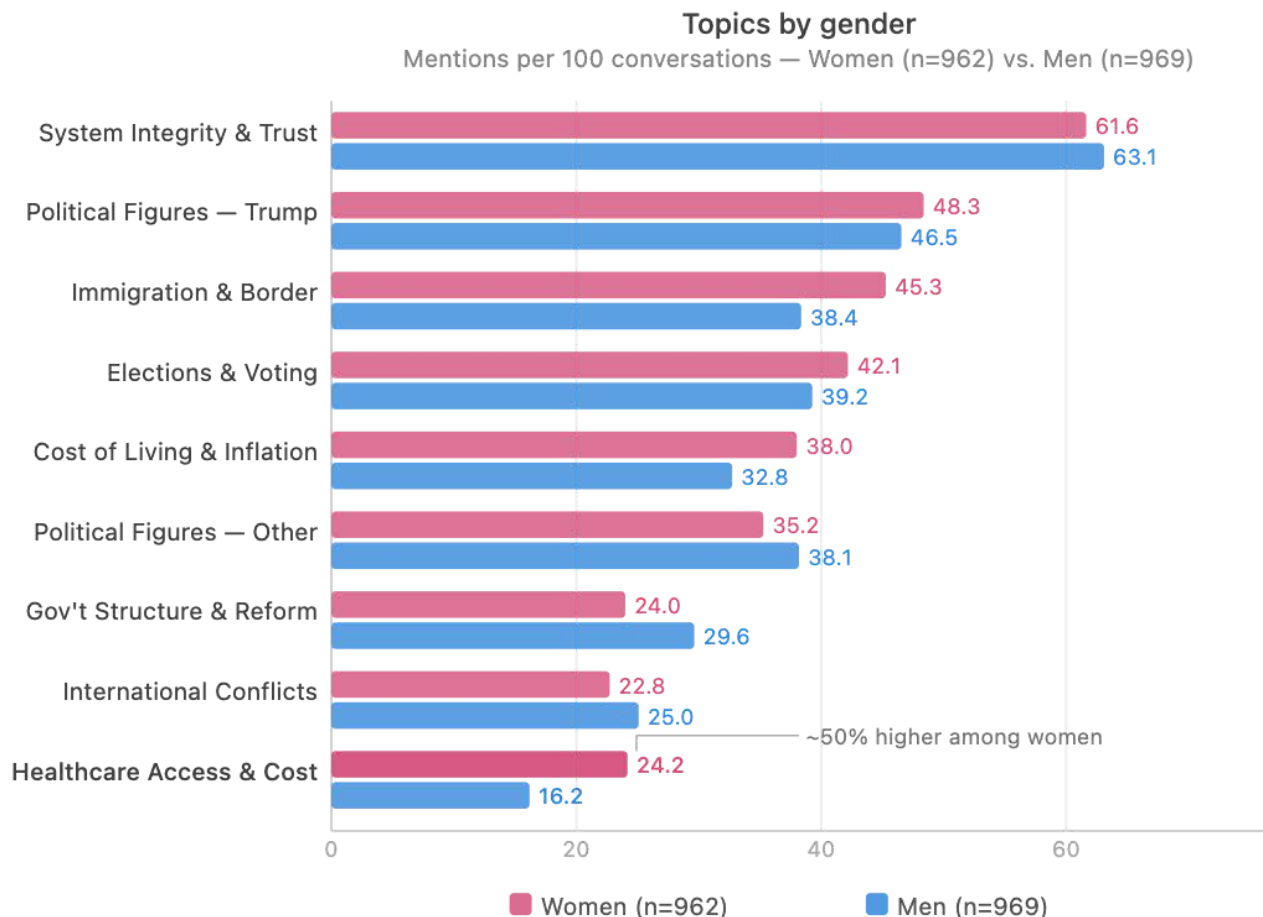
Ground Truth's data reveals meaningful differences in what voters prioritize based on their age, gender, and race—differences that can inform how campaigns message to and mobilize distinct communities.

Gender

Gender differences in what issues voters raise are real but modest. Across most major topics, men and women are raising the same concerns in roughly equal measure, suggesting that the issues animating voters right now cut across gender lines.

The clearest exception is health care. **Women raised health care access and cost in conversations at a rate 40% higher than men.** This gap appears consistently across districts and is not explained by age or other demographic factors.

Men were somewhat more likely to raise concerns about political figures beyond Trump, international conflicts, and system integrity—suggesting a slightly more external and institutional orientation in how men, on average, are processing the current moment.

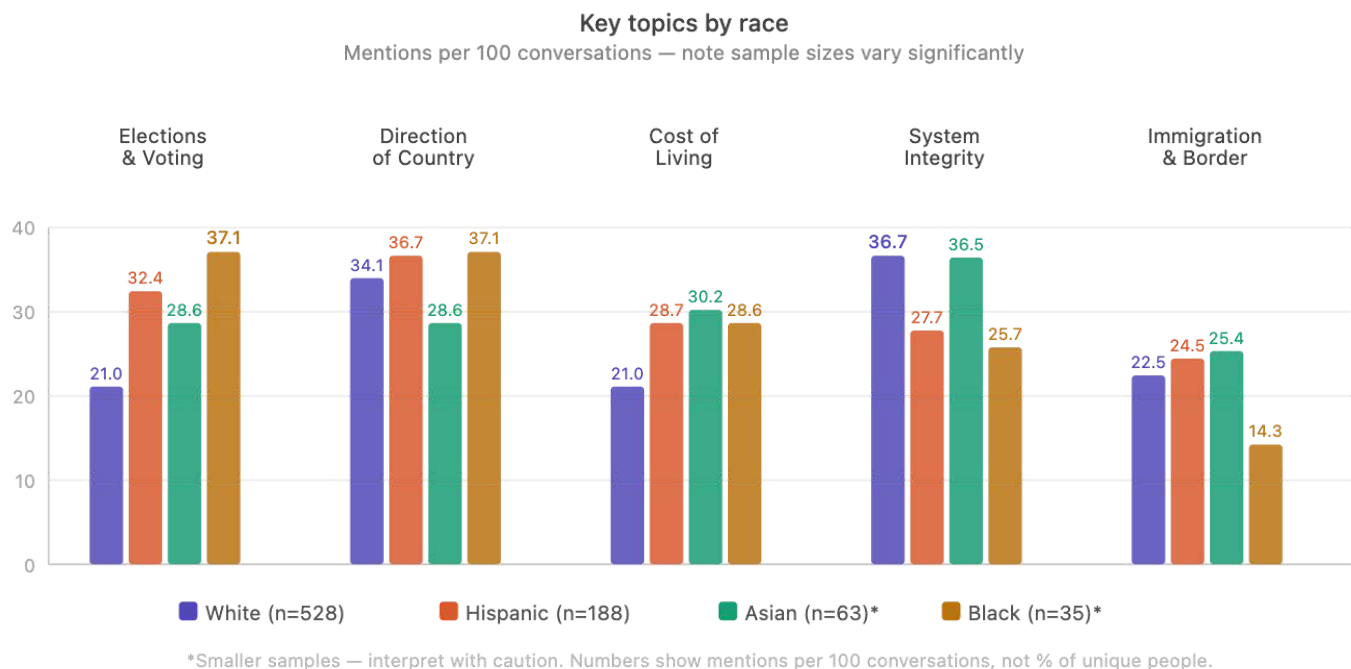


Race

Among the groups with sufficient sample sizes to draw confident conclusions, the most striking difference is on elections and voting. **Hispanic voters raised elections and voting integrity at roughly 32 mentions per 100 conversations, compared to 21 for white voters**—a gap that likely reflects heightened concern about threats to voting rights and electoral processes.

Hispanic voters also raised cost of living and inflation at notably higher rates than white voters (roughly 29 vs. 21 per 100 conversations), pointing to economic concerns as a particularly salient entry point for this community.

White voters were most differentiated by system integrity and trust, which ranked as their most frequently raised subtopic at 37 mentions per 100 conversations.¹



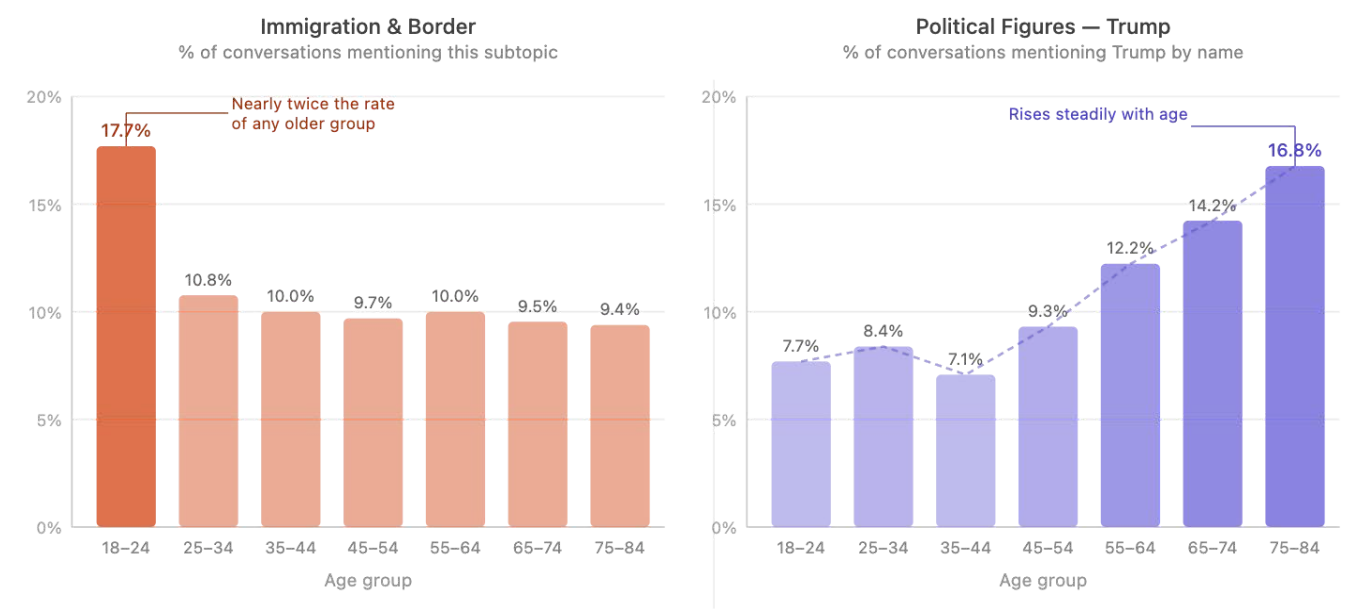
Age

Two age-related patterns stand out clearly in the data.

First, **younger voters are significantly more animated about immigration**. Among voters 18 to 24, nearly 1 in 5 conversations touched on immigration and border policy—nearly twice the rate of every other age group, where the figure hovers consistently around 10%.

¹ Our samples of Black (n=35) and Asian (n=63) voters are not yet large enough to draw statistically meaningful conclusions. We include them in the chart to illustrate the kinds of demographic comparisons Ground Truth is designed to generate as the program expands.

Second, **older voters are substantially more focused on Donald Trump as a named figure.** Among voters 75 to 84, Trump came up by name in nearly 1 in 6 conversations—more than double the rate among voters under 35.



In Their Own Words

Note: We have removed the district numbers below for campaign privacy reasons. However, the quotes below represent voter insights gathered in a wide range of our target districts.

System Integrity and Trust

Democrat Female 60s	Republican Female 60s	Unaffiliated Male 25
"Very concerned about the lack of cooperation in DC. Everyone in government should be working for the people and they aren't. It feels like the system is being used for personal gain rather than the public good. Deeply worried about the future of the country if this continues; we need the system to work for the average citizen again."	"Voter shared that her whole family feels a sense of despair over the current political discourse. While she has voted across party lines in the past, she primarily worries that people can no longer trust what they hear from their leaders. She believes we need to get back to a place of truth and institutional stability to protect our communities."	"Does not believe the political parties actually deserve our votes. He is a data engineer who views the system as being captured by corporate interests and 'Citizens United' money. He wants to see a government that self-regulates and focuses on the national debt rather than one that treats voters as monolithic demographic blocks to be manipulated."

Immigration & the Border

Democrat Female 60s	Republican Male 60s	Unaffiliated Male 30s
"Special education teacher concerned for her students, especially those who are undocumented and living in fear of ICE. Heartbroken by the division caused by current politics, she mentions the 'freedom to read' and attacks on libraries as signs things are changing for the worse. She feels national politics are attacking the wrong things instead of helping neighbors who are struggling."	"Nicaraguan immigrant who first said he didn't think he wanted to talk because he was a Republican. He warmed to us over ten minutes and shared his pride in being an American. He feels the 'culture' of the neighborhood is changing in a negative way, but shook hands at the end, grateful for a conversation where he felt heard and respected."	"Ecuadorian American construction worker worried about the impact of national rhetoric on his community. Very motivated to vote, shared that a relative picked up by ICE and feels that hardworking people are being targeted unfairly. He fears that our ability to express opinions freely is under threat and that the social fabric of the country is becoming un-American."

Cost of Living & Inflation

Democrat Female 60s	Republican Female 50s	Unaffiliated Male 20s
"Worried about the future for her kids; even with her salary, her 25-year-old daughter can't afford to move out. She spoke about 'bullying' prices at the grocery store and feels big companies take advantage of global instability to jack up prices. Wants to see leaders stand up for the average worker—right now it's too hard to get ahead."	"Identifies the rising cost of health care as her most important issue, noting that insurance should not 'cost you a mortgage payment.' While she supports some of the previous admin's policies, is desperate for both parties to stop fighting and cooperate on reducing taxes and energy costs for families who are struggling on fixed incomes."	"Said he feels like he's gambling just to survive. Homeownership is a joke at current rates. He said he's stopped saving for a down payment because the target keeps moving. Government is focusing on 'culture war' stuff while his utility bill went up 40% in two years. Needs real help."

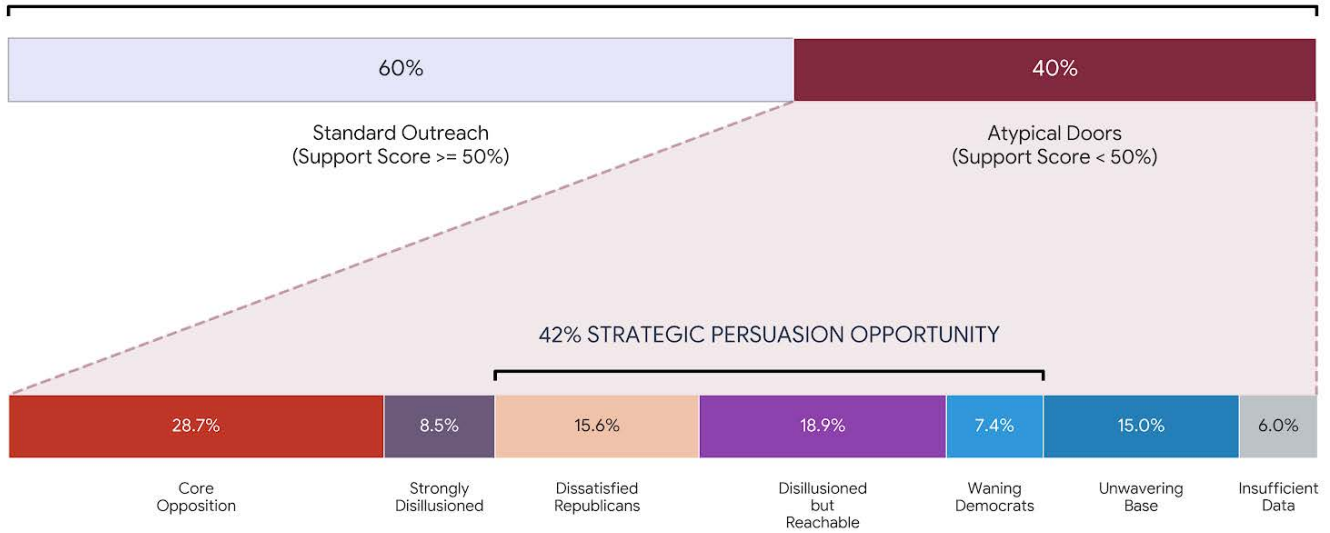
Analysis: What Knocking Every Door Can Do

Knocking every door is different from traditional canvassing. Instead of heading out into a neighborhood with a map filled with dots of specific people to talk to, Ground Truth volunteers are encouraged to talk to everybody.

With limited resources and time, campaigns typically only contact voters they expect would lean their way to remind them to vote. And when they have a bit more time, they target those who they calculate are persuadable based on their support score (which runs from 0%, extremely unlikely to support a Democrat, to 100%, extremely likely to support a Democrat).

We took a look at the people Ground Truth canvassers talked to so far. If you assume campaigns typically don't reach out to those with support scores lower than 50% (a generous assumption), about 40% of Ground Truth knocks are at doors that would not typically be knocked by Democrats. About 16% of those "atypical" knocks were answered and resulted in meaningful conversations.

THE GROUND TRUTH MODEL: EVERY DOOR



As expected by their support scores, this group was, on average, more likely than not, opposed to voting for Democrats. But that did not mean the conversations weren't worthwhile.

Deeper investigation of the conversations themselves, illustrated in the chart above, suggests that there is an audience within this low-support score group that is chronically ignored by Democrats, but could represent a strategic opportunity for persuasion. The second bar zooms in on the 40% of doors that typically would not be knocked on due to support score.²

Using AI to classify these "atypical conversations," **we estimate that 42% of them were with a potentially persuadable audience that is typically ignored by field campaigns.** 18.9% of conversation notes ("Disillusioned but Reachable") indicated they were politically disengaged or unaffiliated, but warm to Democratic policy ideas. 15.6% of notes ("Dissatisfied Republicans") indicated they lean Republican but expressed discomfort with the current administration. And 7.4% ("Waning Democrats") indicated they identified with Democrats but felt abandoned, unheard, or frustrated with the party.

Finally, this 42% number is actually undercounting the value of knocking every door because doing so also uncovered additional "Unwavering Base" voters who can now be properly identified in the voter file and included in turnout efforts, solicited for donations, or asked to take some further action. This preliminary analysis is meant as an exercise to illustrate the opportunities created by knocking every door; at this point, it is for explanatory purposes only. We will continually refine our analyses of notes as we grow and refine our program strategy and targeting.

² For simplicity, this chart assumes the entire 40% with low support scores is similar to the 16% of them who answered their doors and had conversations with volunteers.

The Volunteer Experience

Volunteers are loving the knock-every-door, deep conversational approach of Ground Truth. They report finding it refreshingly different from other voter contact they've done and that it is bringing them meaning and hope for the future of our country.



Traditional “check-the-box” canvassing often leads to volunteer burnout; however, the Ground Truth model does the opposite. On average, **our volunteers rank their likelihood of recommending a Ground Truth canvass to a friend at 9.1 out of 10**. So far, even though we’ve still only done a handful of events in any specific area, more than 20% of volunteers have already come back for another event. When volunteers feel the impact of their conversations, they don't just finish a shift—they sign up for the next one, enabling the program to grow both in volume and quality simultaneously.

Here are some unfiltered volunteer reflections from feedback surveys:

Mary <i>Experienced Canvasser in AZ-01</i>	Sam <i>Returning Canvasser in OR-05</i>	Joanna <i>Experienced Canvasser in CO-08</i>
"As a Democrat, I have heard many times that our party does a poor job listening to our constituents. This contributed to our losses in 2024. We have to do something different, and Ground Truth canvassing will help us win precinct by precinct."	"In order to have messaging that will be persuasive to swing or unlikely voters, we need to listen to people carefully and not just rebut Republican talking points. This is how we find the real concerns that standard polls miss."	"The conversations felt deeper than traditional canvassing. People seemed relieved that someone was actually listening instead of trying to persuade them. It turned a 'political task' into a real human connection."



Jennifer <i>Returning Canvasser in CA-45</i>	Patricia <i>First-Time Canvasser in OR-05</i>	Linda <i>Returning Canvasser in NY-03</i>
"Refreshingly innovative way to connect with voters and their worlds. The conversations are not transactional—asking support for Candidate X. Instead they empower voters to open up with heartfelt observations that we otherwise would never hear."	"I had never canvassed before and was pretty sure I wouldn't like it. It seemed too much like selling Girl Scout cookies—and I loathed Girl Scout cookie season. But I soon discovered that when my only job is listening... knocking on doors was a great experience. My first canvass won't be my last!"	"Today reminded me that most people actually want to talk when you approach them with curiosity rather than an argument. The conversations felt real and respectful, and that gave me hope for our ability to actually talk to one another again."

Partnerships & Presentations

Winning back power in 2026 and 2028 will require some material shifts within the Democratic ecosystem. We believe that the tactics we're creating with Ground Truth can be a significant part of that. By partnering with various leaders and organizations across the party, we're using our influence and expertise to encourage change and improvement, maximize the scale of our program, and spread the word about our work and learnings.

- **Representatives Pat Ryan & Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez:** On March 8, we were thrilled to [partner with Reps. Ryan and Ocasio-Cortez](#) on our [biggest canvass event yet](#), with more than 100 volunteers joining us to knock doors in Congressman Ryan's Hudson Valley district. As he says: *"We need to reimagine how our party operates—that means going everywhere and listening to everyone. Ground Truth is what Democratic representatives and candidates in every district should be doing."*
- **Third Way:** On March 2, Executive Director Yasmin Radjy [presented at the Third Way conference](#) in Charleston, focusing on how Ground Truth can help win back the trust of voters.
- **Democratic National Committee:** We're proud to be among the volunteer organizations that the DNC has featured recently. On March 18, Yasmin and our Managing Director Zack Malitz presented about Ground Truth on a DNC-organized Zoom for grassroots volunteers with 525 attendees. In addition, the DNC included Ground Truth as a featured case study in their [Playbook: A Guide for Coordinated Campaigns and State Parties](#) on how Democrats can run winning organizing programs in 2026.
- **Colorado Democratic Party:** In January, we [announced a close partnership](#) with the Colorado Democratic Party, aimed at flipping CO's 8th Congressional district this year. With this partnership, Ground Truth is acting as the official canvassing program for the race and the state party is encouraging its volunteers to participate.
- **AFL-CIO:** Alongside representatives from Equis Research, CIRCLE, and Working America, on March 19, our team presented about Ground Truth's innovative approach to technology, data, and research at an AFL-CIO event for labor and cross-movement leaders.
- **Analyst Institute:** In February, we presented at the [Analyst Institute's Research Rundown](#), sharing new evidence to inform 2026 strategy with practitioners across the progressive and Democratic ecosystem.
- **Coming Soon:** Later in April, we will be presenting at the **America Votes** and **Democracy Alliance** conferences.

Press Attention

Press coverage is a key part of our strategy to recruit enough volunteers to achieve the scale we envision for Ground Truth to help drive big midterms wins. The more the word is out, the more volunteer sign-ups we see. These are some highlights of our media coverage this quarter:



[The Guardian](#): "Among the reasons for the distrust [in Democrats], argues Swing Left . . . is a broken voter contact model in which Democrats are too transactional, too last minute and too dependent on outdated technology. It is aiming to fix the problem ahead of November's midterm elections."



[MSNOW: Chris Jansing Reports](#): "So many people want to do something that meets this moment. Volunteers want to sink their teeth into something they know will make a difference."



[The Daily Beans Podcast](#): "Ground Truth is going to be so essential."

The Connector

[The Connector by Micah Sifry](#): "Swing Left is attempting to get their arms around a hard problem: why are so many ordinary people alienated from the Democratic Party and how to fix that."



[The Grassroots Connector by Steve Schear](#): "[Ground Truth is] a 'knock on every door, talk with anyone, listen to everyone' strategy. After years of losing voters, Ground Truth is designed to expand the number of Democrats."



[KSQD Community Radio](#): "With the largest volunteer force in elections today, [Swing Left] empowers citizens to know what to do, how to do it, and why it makes a difference."