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To: Interested Parties

From: Stanley Greenberg, Greenberg Research

New Democracy Corps national phone poll “Fixed” to accommodate Trump’s right-wing populism

I learned in polling for campaigns in Austria, the U.K., and Israel to respect the role of working class, nationalist voters led by a right-wing populist leader running against the liberal establishment and their ability to upset everyone’s expectations for Election Day. I also learned how to change my polling methods not to be surprised.

I decided to introduce those changes into a national poll conducted by Democracy Corps at the end of February, and it gives you a very different and realistic view of our current period:

- First, it gives you a more accurate view of Donald Trump who maintains a 43 percent approval rating, unchanged after the insurrection. Most polls have reported declines in Trump’s support, but that is not true in this survey, as Trump supporters are no doubt declining to be interviewed by pollsters. Trump and his right-wing populism will continue their presence.
- But Trump’s all out, accelerating race and anti-democratic war against the new America is creating a bloc of former Republicans — now 14 percent of this realistic electorate — who will be part this new period.
- Second, this adjusted survey gives you more modulate positive perceptions of Biden. This poll shows Biden’s approval as 3 points lower than that reported in Real Clear Politics and 538. Biden’s approval at 51 percent is a majority of the country — but just that and no higher than his vote in 2020. (Obviously, this may improve with the passage of his rescue package, but don’t believe those giving him ratings of 60 percent.

Finally, this may all add up to Democrats having a slight edge at this point in this new polarized period, with its glacial changes from 2020. Trump war against Blacks, immigrants, crime, and cancel culture gives him a firm hold on about 43 percent of voters, but Trump no longer has the stage to call his own. Biden is 12 points above water and Democrats have 4-point lead in the generic congressional and larger in the blue wall states (+7) and 2022 Senate and Governors battleground (+11).

My polling reeducation began in Vienna, London, and Jerusalem

I was invited by the Jewish community in Vienna to help Mayor Michael Haupl and the ruling Social Democratic Party fight off a challenge from the Freedom Party led by Jorg Haider that had won an unimaginable and surprising 27.9 percent of the vote five years earlier. This time, Haider said you have a choice “between spin-doctor Greenberg from the East Coast” where Jews yield power from New York City “or the Viennese hearts.”

We were able to drive down his party’s vote by a third, but you cannot forget that one in five voters in one of the most culturally liberal cities in the world voted for the anti-Semite. So, in all my subsequent polls in Austria, I asked people how they voted in the breakthrough election for the Freedom Party and weighted it up to make sure it was over 21 percent.

I worked for Tony Blair and the Labour Party after all polls predicted a Labour victory in 1992, and the polls’ failure was “the most spectacular in the history of British election surveys.” The surveys were not old, working class, or Conservative enough, the last because “shy Tories” eschewed the pollsters.

The tabloids would increasingly lead the nationalist fight against asylum seekers, immigration, and Europe, and my polls to be accurate, had the right proportion of tabloid readers, particularly the *Sun* owned by Rupert Murdoch. It led the fight to “leave” the E.U. in the 2016 referendum when the polls predicted a close contest, but “remain” winning. That striking 52 percent Brexit win is seared in the public consciousness, and all polls today make sure 52 percent of the respondents voted “leave.”

During my entire career polling for the Israeli Labor Party, I watched Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing bloc prove the newspaper polls wrong. The right-wing parties now competed to be the most anti-Arab and Palestinian and most trusted to keep Jews from becoming a national minority. Going into the last weekend in 2015, Likud was losing, but Netanyahu declared there will never be a Palestinian state and warned buses are bringing Arabs to create a “left” government. Likud won by five seats.

At every point, I made changes to my polling that favored the right and most important, just locking in the proportion that identified with the “right,” over 60 percent for Jewish voters at last count.

Fixing the polls

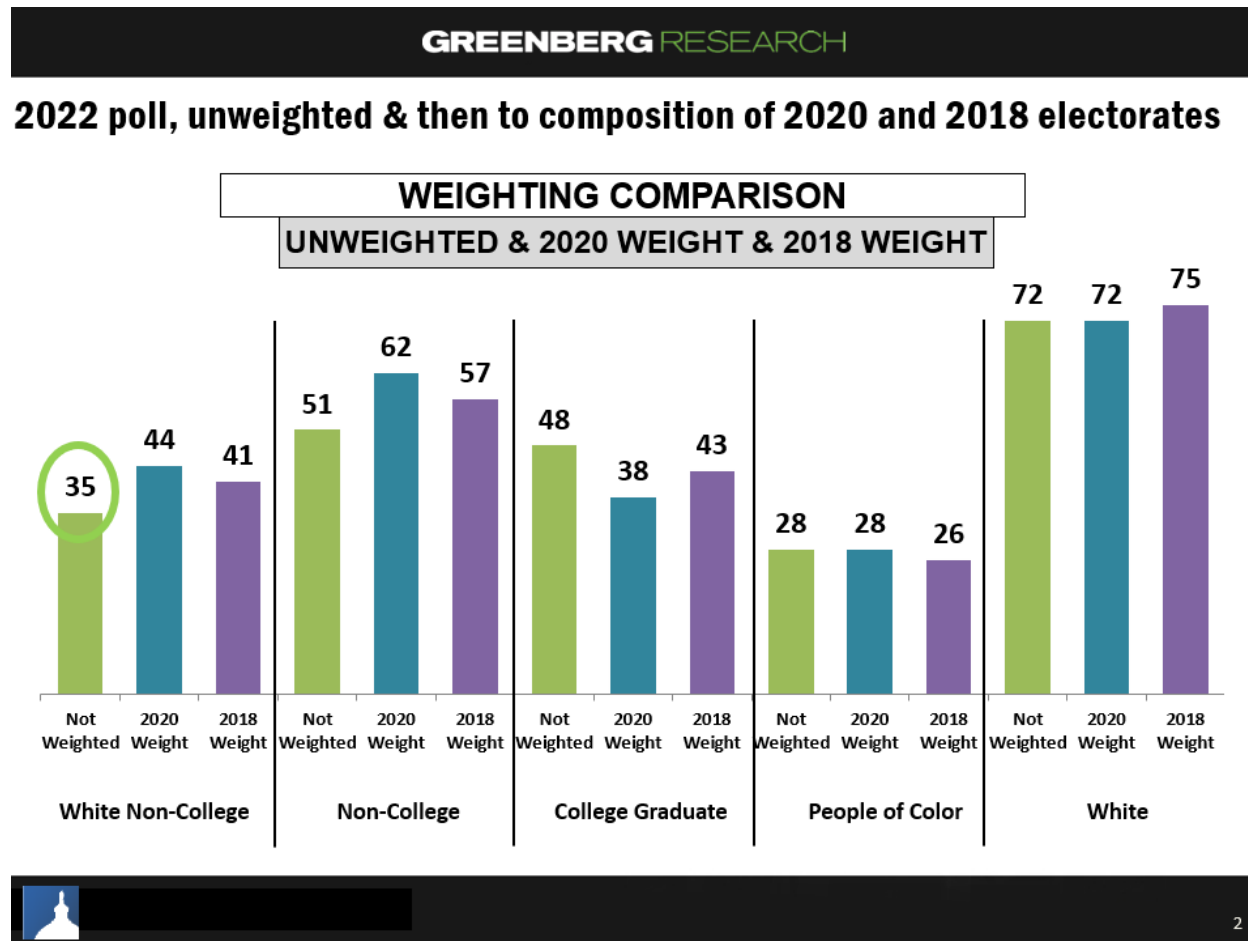
So, I should have known that Donald Trump’s raw anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican campaign to make America great again would upend the polls. He brought in millions of new white working class voters in his first race -- and polls were adjusted in 2020 to expect more whites without a four-year college degree -- but his 2020 war on Blacks to save white America upended those estimates.

I wrote in *American Prospect*,

The proportion of whites without a four-year college degree eligible to vote fell a point from 45 to 44 percent since 2016, and the proportion of voters older than millennials fell 8 points from 71 to 63 percent, according to post-election analysis by the Voter Participation Project and Center for Voter Information. Only Trump’s ferocious campaign, which raised white working-class turnout by 7 points, was able to neutralize the demographic trends, discredit the polls, and make the election much closer than anyone expected.

And those new voters voted straight Republican to save America from the socialist left.

So, I determined to fix Democracy Corps’ national poll in the same way I coped with right-wing populists elsewhere, particularly when I saw that after preliminary weighting, only 35 percent of the respondents were whites without a four-year degree. Do you think they were avoiding pollsters? Do you think the climate around the insurrection has made them even more averse to being interviewed?



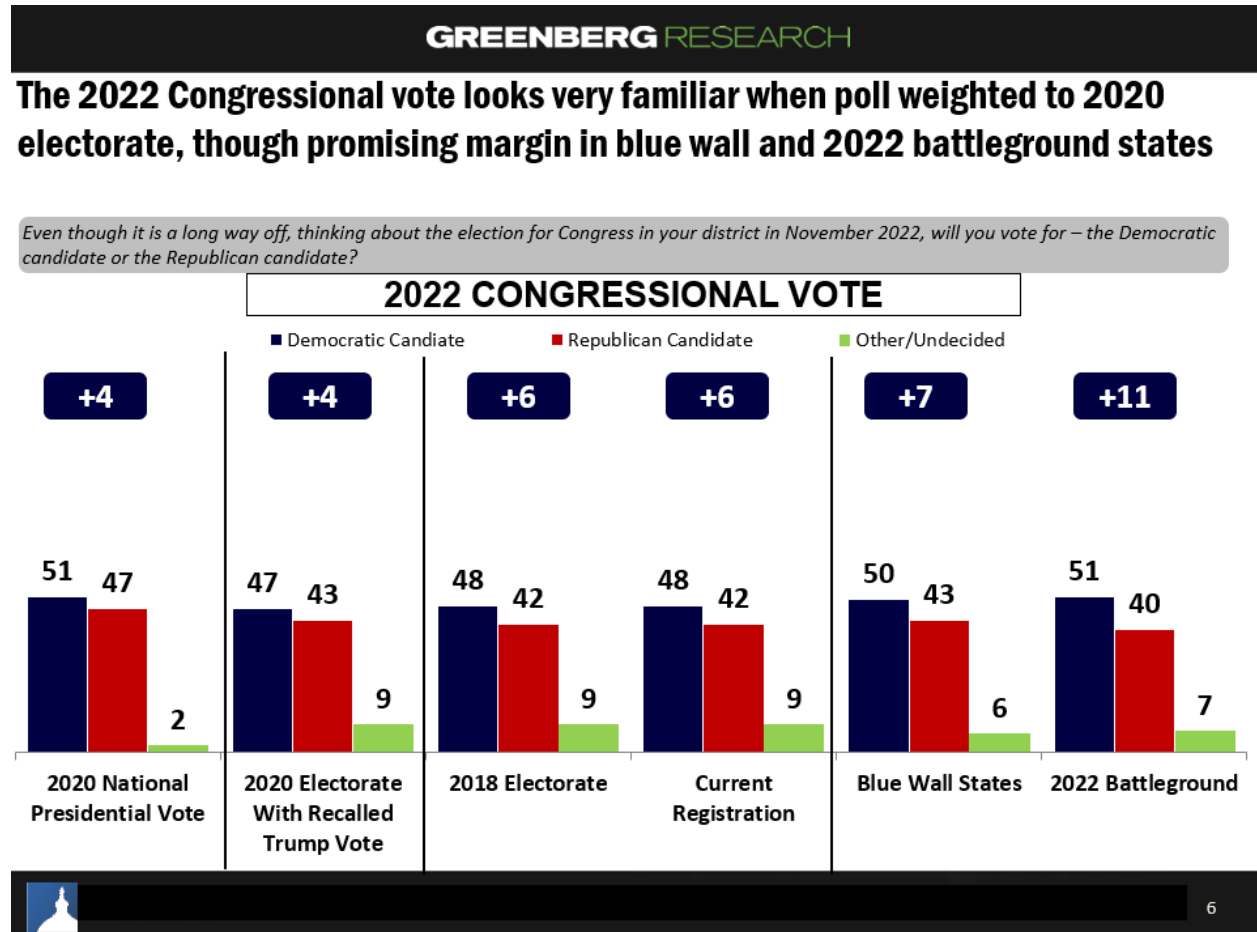
So, I instituted three major changes that I had used elsewhere.

- First, I up-weighted the share of white working class voters to 44 percent of the survey, which is GQR’s best estimate of its share in the 2020 electorate.



- Second and new for the United States, I weighted this bloc’s recalled vote to its actual Trump vote in 2020, 63 percent. (That will change when we get new estimates from Catalyst, particularly for men.)
- Third, I am assuming the presidential electorate is the safest estimate for the likely electorate ahead — rather than the 2018 midterms, the composition of current registrants or some model of likely electorate.

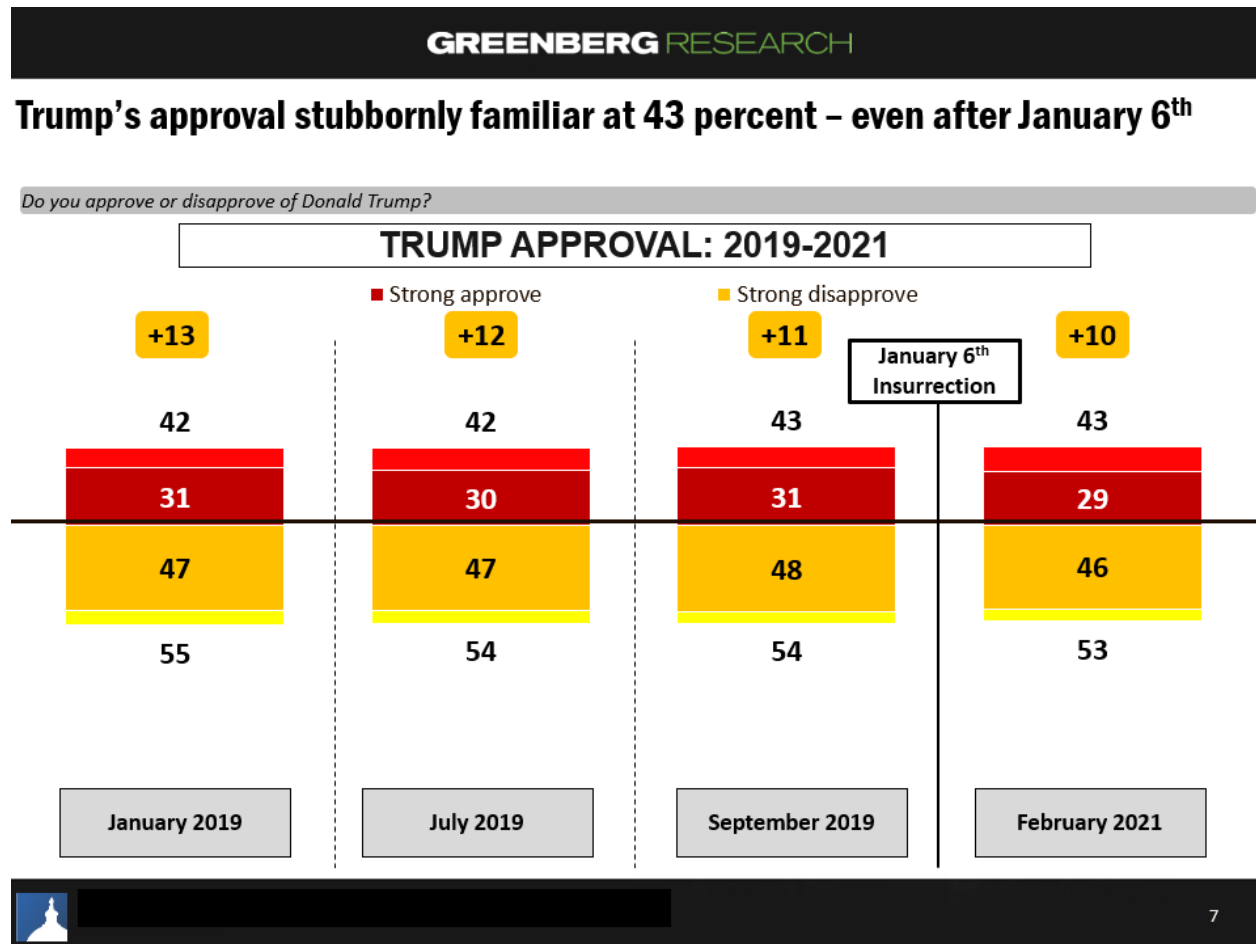
With Trump battling to save America from this radical, elite liberal governance, open borders, and stopping the steal again and saying he will run again, how can you not assume Trump’s right-wing populist won’t shape the electorate again?



This looks prudent and more reliable when this national poll gives Democrats a 4-point lead in the generic congressional vote, identical to Biden’s lead last November.

The Trump presence

This national poll that incorporates learning from right-wing populism forces you to revise your assessment of Donald Trump current standing. Despite the insurrection, 43 percent approve of Trump, unchanged.



While we assumed that demographic changes make it harder for Republicans to create a winning coalition, we did not figure Trump's animated, racist right-wing populist campaign that dramatically changed turnout when contesting these changes. Going forward, we will be recommending vote share and Trump vote for white working class men and rural voters.

Biden and glacial change to Democratic advantage

This poll that accommodates the right-wing populists shows Biden's approval at 51 percent — 3 points lower than the average of Real Clear Politics and 538. It is interesting that there is not much difference on disapprove. This poll that is more likely to include Trump voters takes 3 points off of Biden's approval.

But we should not underestimate the impact over time of having a president with a net 12-positive rating on handling his job — particularly if contrasted with Trump who is under water by 10 points — even in this adjusted 2020 electorate.

The poll shows 14 percent of the electorate who have defected from Trump's right wing populist Party — and right now, they have broken for the Democrats by 66 to 21 percent in the race for Congress.

This poll adjusts for Trump and his potential intervention, but it shows an emerging glacial, polarized politics where Democrats have a 4-point lead in the race for Congress, but much bigger in the 2022 battleground states.

This poll shows the Democrats with an edge — assuming Trump is able to keep motivating his white working class, Evangelical and rural base — but the Democrats' margin would be 2 points larger if turnout patterns looked like 2018 where white college voters played a bigger part and 2 points larger if all groups increased or decreased turnout at the same rate (vote file composition).

In short, there is a long way to go, but let's never underestimate a right-wing populist leader's ability to motivate its base of white working class and rural voters when he can warn of becoming a national minority. This poll addressed that danger and provides a strong starting point.

GREENBERG RESEARCH

Emerging polarized period with Trump still present and under water by 10 and Biden over water by about 10

BIDEN/TRUMP APPROVAL COMPARISON

