



## FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

# National Suburban Women

28 March 2022

### TOP TAKEAWAYS

- Voters believe the government is partially to blame for inflation, and they don't trust the government to fix the problem. Inflation is causing participants to hold off on making non-essential purchases, both large and small, including family vacations and smaller, "fun" activities.
- Government spending is a bridge issue that touches both inflation and welfare concerns.
- Voters want programs that provide a "roadmap to the middle class," such as regulations, like work requirements, that move people off government assistance programs and into the workforce and that provide information on post-secondary education to empower future generations to succeed.

### THE BIGGEST ISSUES

**Inflation:** Voters tend to be most concerned about fiscal issues, and this group was no exception—the soaring inflation level currently is hitting respondents square in the pocketbook.

**Government spending:** Voters blame out-of-control spending as the cause of both historic inflation and the refusal of individuals to return to work post-pandemic. These consequences are hurting voters financially, both as consumers and as taxpayers.

**Welfare:** Voters recognize that welfare programs involve minimal accountability for enrollees and for government. Voters want to see reforms that help people become self-sufficient.

## WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS THINK?

### **Government is a major contributor to inflation, and participants do not believe government is able or committed to fixing inflation.**

- While participants recognize that government is only one part of the inflation problem, voters identify out-of-control government spending (broadly) as a major driver of inflation and (specifically) COVID-19 stimulus checks as “the beginning of inflation” the country is currently facing.
- Voters recognize that reducing government spending (particularly to pre-COVID levels) and getting out of the way of the economy could help alleviate inflation, but they don’t trust government officials to do anything about it. Voters view inflation-fixing promises as all talk and no action.
- Candidates who talk about inflation and make promises to reign it in are viewed with skepticism: “They all talk about it.” They are more compelled by specific solutions and how they will work, not simply on hollow or empty promises.

### **Inflation is causing participants to hold off making non-essential purchases, both large and small.**

- Several voters indicate they are holding off on taking vacations and other family trips because more of their income and savings is being consumed by gas prices and continually increasing grocery prices.
- Due to higher gas prices, participants say they are doing fewer small, “fun” activities so they can make sure they have enough gas to get to and from work and daycare.

### **Overwhelming support for the Keystone XL Pipeline is driven by a desire for energy independence.**

- Voters say that relying on foreign sources of oil and gas drives up costs, not only of petroleum products but also the costs of other goods in the supply chain because of higher fuel prices for transportation. Voters view energy independence as a way to reduce inflation.
- Voters view claims about saving the climate as dubious, with one saying we’re not “fighting climate change by buying fossil fuels from other countries.”
- When it comes to energy independence, they believe the Biden administration is stonewalling domestic production in order to serve political ends.

**Voters strongly support work requirements for individuals who receive welfare benefits.**

- Although voters are somewhat supportive of providing short-term welfare for those in need, voters say that they work hard to earn a living and provide for their families, they are frustrated when the system is taken advantage of, when government pays people to not work, and when their tax dollars are spent on ineligible recipients or fraudulent claims.
- Voters think that the government is “too willing to give up money,” and that willingness has contributed to people not returning to work. Also, they believe the government does not put in place proper safeguards to ensure integrity in the system.

**Respondents say that attaining middle-class status is hard work and can come with greater information and transparency on secondary education.**

- Respondents think information on college costs, earning potential, in-demand careers, and more is already available, and students and parents should seek it out. They agree that the information should be made more prominent, giving parents the information they need to guide their children in making smart decisions.
- Voters think college is not the only path to success, but government (and society) treat it as if it is a silver bullet. Participants view trade schools as a way to earn a good income and provide for one’s family, while community colleges are viewed as a cost-saving alternative for college-level general education coursework that can be transferred to a university.
- Participants do not like “fast-track” language because getting to the middle class is hard work and there are no easy solutions. They prefer language like “roadmap” because it can show you the way, but you still have to put in the effort.