

## US elections: a 'referendum on bigotry'

Below are the results of two recent polls on presidential character conducted with YouGov and Ipsos on Avaaz's behalf. Here are highlights:

- 70% (YouGov) 73% (Ipsos) of likely voters see the issue of bigotry as important in this election.
- 32% of voters say "character and values" are more important than "policies and positions" in determining their vote (YouGov)
- The clearest character weakness distinction between Trump and Clinton is on bigotry (YouGov).
- 85% of millennials see racism, and 79% see bigotry, as an important issue in this election (Ipsos).

Our conclusion is that the election result may hinge on questions of character -- for Clinton on dishonesty and Trump on bigotry, specifically. It may be worth considering in your coverage the role that character plays in voting decisions, and which character traits in particular.

### Why The Election Could Turn on Character and Bigotry

It's clear this election is unusual. The candidates are the most unpopular in history, and unprecedented numbers are voting against rather than for someone. Another interesting factor showed by our YouGov poll is that one third of the electorate say that "character and values" are more important to them than the candidates' "policies and positions". This focus is much stronger among Clinton supporters.

Seeing one third of the electorate are "character voters" and that such high numbers are voting against perceived flaws in character, we decided to further investigate which flaws were playing the most significant role via the Ipsos poll. We asked about which traits Americans would associate with both presidential candidates' weaknesses, with the following results:

	Bigotry	Ignorance	Dishonesty	Corruption	Selfishness
<b>Donald Trump</b>	44%	47%	38%	30%	45%
<b>Hillary Clinton</b>	14%	14%	51%	40%	27%

Source: Ipsos poll on behalf of Avaaz. Sample: 1,004 Americans ages 18+, conducted online in English between October 31 – November 1, 2016; margin of Error  $\pm 3.5\%$

The results on balance favor Clinton, [matching a Gallup poll out yesterday](#), that shows that 51% see Clinton as having presidential and leadership qualities vs. 32% for Trump. But our results also show Clinton's perceived flaws on dishonesty and corruption (see graphic above).

We explored the levels of concern about bigotry further and found that very high proportions of the entire electorate rate bigotry, racism, sexism, and xenophobia as very important issues in the election: 70% (YouGov) to 73% (Ipsos) believe the issue of bigotry is important in this election, 76% (Ipsos) believe that racism is an important election issue, and 64% (Ipsos) say sexism is an important election issue. This regard for bigotry and racism as important issues spikes among millennials (79% and 85% respectively in the Ipsos poll).

Elections are never about just one thing. But if bigotry is playing an unusually high role of importance in this election, how important is it? The YouGov poll asked likely voters: which best describes how you see the choice in this election?

<i>Which of the following do you think best characterizes the choice in this election?</i>	
Between corruption and integrity	31%
Between bigotry and openness	30%
Between change and the status quo	39%
Source: YouGov, on behalf of Avaaz. Sample: 2060 Likely voters, conducted between October 26 – 27, 2016; margin of Error $\pm 2.4\%$	

While Clinton and Trump voters are split on the questions of change and integrity, they are not on the question of bigotry. 95% of those who see the election as a referendum on bigotry are not voting for Trump.

I think it's worth considering the degree to which character voters are going to decide the election. We're seeing that if Clinton loses, she may well have lost on character, on dishonesty and corruption. And if Trump loses, he will likely have lost on character, on bigotry and ignorance.

One way we explored this question further was by asking the hypothetical question about how voters would vote if the election were between Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. The logic being that Sanders' and Clinton's policy positions are very similar, and yet Sanders has a strong reputation for honesty and integrity. YouGov results showed Sanders had 54% support over 37% for Trump, a 17 point lead.

We think it's clear that to understand the decision voters make on Nov 8th, and the lesson for the country, we must ask voters about the traits they seek in our political leaders and what role that plays in their voting decisions.

**If you're interested, we can provide all the full reports -- please connect with us at [media@avaaz.org](mailto:media@avaaz.org) or +1-415-217-9392**