

INDEPENDENT CENTER VOICE

Survey Toplines — Montana — U.S. Senate

Statewide Benchmark Survey · 2026 Election Cycle

Methodology

Survey of 793 Likely 2026 General Voters statewide; margin of error ± 3.48 percentage points; field date: 07/13-16/2026.

All percentages are weighted to the study's demographic and partisan quota targets. Each figure is the Total % of the stated base, rounded to whole numbers, so responses may not sum to 100%. Multiple-response questions (e.g., top-three issue selection and racial identification) and per-candidate blocks may sum to more than 100. Aggregate rows (e.g., TOTAL DEMOCRAT) are sums of the categories that follow and are shaded for reference. Question codes in brackets match the analysis report and banner books. This study utilizes a multi-frame, probability-based sampling design combining live telephone calls and Short Message Service (SMS) outreach. To correct for non-response bias, the final sample was adjusted against U.S. Census Bureau and national voter databases to ensure accurate representation across core demographics, specifically gender, geographic region, age, race and ethnicity, political affiliation, educational attainment, household income, and population density, ensuring statistically valid generalizability.

Q1. How likely are you to vote in the November 2026 midterm elections? [Screener 3]*Base: Total sample*

Response	%
Very likely	95%
Somewhat likely	5%

Q2. Thinking about the upcoming election this November, which of the following best describes the MAIN reason you are motivated to turn out and vote? [Screener 4]*Base: Total sample*

Response	%
There is a specific candidate running who I really like and want to support.	8%
I am primarily voting to oppose a specific candidate and make sure they do not win.	7%
I always vote because I see it as my civic duty, regardless of who is on the ballot.	67%
I am motivated to vote because of a specific issue or policy that is deeply important to me.	15%
I never usually vote, but I am thinking that I will this year	0%
Unsure	3%

Q3. In politics today, and regardless of how you are registered, do you consider yourself to be a...

[Party ID]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL DEMOCRAT	27%
Strong Democrat	23%
Not so strong Democrat	4%
TOTAL INDEPENDENT	29%
Independent leaning Democrat	13%
Independent	9%
Independent leaning Republican	7%
TOTAL REPUBLICAN	43%
Not so strong Republican	10%
Strong Republican	34%

Response	%
Other	0%
Unsure	0%

Q4. Your gender identification? [Gender]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Female	51%
Male	49%
Other	0%

Q5. In which county do you currently reside? [County]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Beaverhead	1%
Big Horn	0%
Blaine	0%
Broadwater	1%
Carbon	1%
Carter	0%
Cascade	8%
Chouteau	0%
Custer	2%
Daniels	0%
Dawson	1%
Deer Lodge	1%
Fallon	0%
Fergus	1%
Flathead	10%
Gallatin	11%
Glacier	0%
Golden Valley	0%
Granite	0%
Hill	2%
Jefferson	1%
Judith Basin	0%
Lake	2%
Lewis And Clark	6%
Liberty	0%
Lincoln	1%
Madison	2%
McCone	0%
Meagher	0%
Mineral	0%

Response	%
Missoula	11%
Musselshell	0%
Park	2%
Phillips	0%
Pondera	1%
Powell	1%
Ravalli	5%
Richland	1%
Roosevelt	0%
Rosebud	0%
Sanders	1%
Sheridan	0%
Silver Bow	4%
Stillwater	2%
Sweet Grass	0%
Teton	1%
Toole	0%
Treasure	0%
Valley	0%
Wheatland	0%
Yellowstone	15%

Q6. What is your race or ethnicity? [Race]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
White or Caucasian	91%
Black or African American	0%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1%
Native American or American Indian	6%
Other	4%

Q7. Which of the following categories best describes your age? [AgeRange]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
18 to 24	5%
25 to 34	11%
35 to 44	15%
45 to 54	16%
55 to 64	20%
65 or older	33%

Q8. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed? [Education]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
High School or Less	29%
Some college, Associate degree, or technical school	34%
4-year college graduate (Bachelor's degree) or higher	37%

Q9. We want to classify households into broad income groups only. Would you estimate your total annual household income to be...? [Income]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Less than \$30,000	8%
\$30,000 to \$54,999	17%
\$55,000 to \$100,000	27%
More than \$100,000	38%
Prefer not to answer	10%

Q10. If the election were held today, for whom would you vote? [Statewide ballot]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Seth Bodnar, the Independent	24%
Alani Bankhead, the Democrat	22%
Kurt Alme, the Republican	36%
Another candidate	1%
Unsure	17%

Q11. And would you say you are definitely supporting them, or just somewhat? [Strength of support (by candidate)]

Base: Among each candidate's current supporters

Response	%
Seth Bodnar — Definitely supporting	52%
Seth Bodnar — Somewhat supporting	29%
Seth Bodnar — Unsure / could still change my mind	19%
Alani Bankhead — Definitely supporting	59%
Alani Bankhead — Somewhat supporting	29%
Alani Bankhead — Unsure / could still change my mind	12%
Kurt Alme — Definitely supporting	74%
Kurt Alme — Somewhat supporting	18%
Kurt Alme — Unsure / could still change my mind	9%

Q12. At this time next year, do you think that you will personally be better or worse off than you are today? [GSPS]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL BETTER OFF	43%

Response	%
Much better off	13%
Somewhat better off	30%
TOTAL WORSE OFF	23%
Somewhat worse off	15%
Much worse off	8%
Unsure	34%

Q13. At this time next year, do you think America will be better or worse off than it is today? [GSAS]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL BETTER OFF	39%
Much better off	15%
Somewhat better off	24%
TOTAL WORSE OFF	38%
Somewhat worse off	16%
Much worse off	22%
Unsure	23%

Q14. Please select and rank the top three most pressing issues in America today from the list below, where 1 is the most pressing, 2 is the second most pressing, and 3 is the third most pressing. [Most pressing issue]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Economy	32%
Immigration	19%
Government	18%
Health Care	14%
Social Issues	6%
Environment	5%
International concerns	3%
Education	3%

Q15. Regarding the economy, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTEC]

Base: Most Pressing On Economy Issue

Response	%
Jobs	16%
Unemployment	1%
Taxes	17%
Food prices/inflation	62%
Other	4%

Q16. Regarding social issues, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTSI]*Base: Most Pressing On Social Issue*

Response	%
Crime	20%
Equality	19%
Civil liberties	37%
Abortion	22%

Q17. Regarding education, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTED]*Base: Most Pressing On Education Issue*

Response	%
School choice	3%
Student loans	26%
Testing standards	24%
Other	47%

Q18. Regarding the environment, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTEV]*Base: Most Pressing On Environment Issue*

Response	%
Climate change	85%
EPA	6%
Energy regulations	2%
Other	7%

Q19. Regarding international issues, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTIN]*Base: Most Pressing On International Issue*

Response	%
Trade	8%
Foreign policy	14%
Global affairs conflicts	73%

Q20. Regarding health care, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTHC]*Base: Most Pressing On Health Care Issue*

Response	%
Medicare	18%
Medicaid	8%
Affordable Care Act	16%
Cost of health care	56%
Other	2%

Q21. Regarding the government, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTGA]

Base: Most Pressing On Government Issue

Response	%
Political extremism	59%
Polarization	16%
The role of elected officials	22%
Other	3%

Q22. Regarding immigration, which of the following do you see as the most important aspect of that issue? [GSTIM]

Base: Most Pressing On Immigration Issue

Response	%
Legalization & citizenship	23%
Border security	66%
Refugee resettlement	2%
Other	9%

Q23. Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Donald Trump is doing? [STA]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL APPROVE	46%
Strongly approve	31%
Somewhat approve	15%
TOTAL DISAPPROVE	52%
Somewhat disapprove	4%
Strongly disapprove	49%
Unsure	1%

Q24. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the U.S. Congress is doing? [GSCA]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL APPROVE	23%
Strongly approve	2%
Somewhat approve	21%
TOTAL DISAPPROVE	72%
Somewhat disapprove	21%
Strongly disapprove	51%
Unsure	5%

Q25. When it comes to your political philosophy, where would you place yourself on the following scale? [PSY]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
0 - Very liberal / Progressive	9%

Response	%
1	3%
2	7%
3	6%
4	8%
5 - Moderate / Centrist	19%
6	5%
7	7%
8	9%
9	7%
10 - Staunch / Strong conservative	18%

Q26. In the perfect world, where on the following scale, would you like to see America's elected officials stand politically? [PSEO]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
0 - Strongly along Democratic lines	9%
1	3%
2	4%
3	5%
4	7%
5 - Centrist / Independent	27%
6	6%
7	8%
8	7%
9	2%
10 - Strongly along Republican lines	21%

Q27. You will now read a list of political officials and entities in the United States. After each, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each. If you don't know or haven't heard of the subject, please note that. [Favorability — Donald Trump]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	43%
Very favorable	31%
Somewhat favorable	12%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	56%
Somewhat unfavorable	4%
Very unfavorable	52%
Never heard of	0%
Unsure	1%

Q28. You will now read a list of political officials and entities in the United States. After each, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each. If you don't know or haven't heard of the subject, please note that. [Favorability — The Republican party]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	43%
Very favorable	22%
Somewhat favorable	22%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	54%
Somewhat unfavorable	12%
Very unfavorable	41%
Never heard of	0%
Unsure	3%

Q29. You will now read a list of political officials and entities in the United States. After each, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each. If you don't know or haven't heard of the subject, please note that. [Favorability — The Democratic party]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	36%
Very favorable	12%
Somewhat favorable	24%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	60%
Somewhat unfavorable	15%
Very unfavorable	45%
Never heard of	1%
Unsure	4%

Q30. You will now read a list of political officials and entities in the United States. After each, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each. If you don't know or haven't heard of the subject, please note that. [Favorability — A politician willing to work with both sides of the aisle]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	81%
Very favorable	45%
Somewhat favorable	36%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	11%
Somewhat unfavorable	6%
Very unfavorable	5%
Never heard of	4%
Unsure	5%

Q31. You will now read a list of political officials and entities in the United States. After each, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each. If you don't know or haven't heard of the subject, please note that. [Favorability — A bipartisan candidate]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	54%
Very favorable	16%
Somewhat favorable	38%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	18%
Somewhat unfavorable	10%
Very unfavorable	8%
Never heard of	7%
Unsure	21%

Q32. You will now read a list of political officials and entities in the United States. After each, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each. If you don't know or haven't heard of the subject, please note that. [Favorability — A non-partisan candidate]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	49%
Very favorable	13%
Somewhat favorable	36%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	20%
Somewhat unfavorable	11%
Very unfavorable	8%
Never heard of	7%
Unsure	24%

Q33. You will now read a list of political officials and entities in the United States. After each, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each. If you don't know or haven't heard of the subject, please note that. [Favorability — A politically Independent candidate]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	58%
Very favorable	12%
Somewhat favorable	46%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	16%
Somewhat unfavorable	10%
Very unfavorable	6%
Never heard of	6%
Unsure	19%

Q34. Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person. [Favorability]

— Seth Bodnar (Independent)]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	35%
Very favorable	12%
Somewhat favorable	23%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	23%
Somewhat unfavorable	11%
Very unfavorable	13%
Never heard of	18%
Unsure	24%

Q35. Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person. [Favorability]

— Alani Bankhead (Democrat)]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	34%
Very favorable	10%
Somewhat favorable	24%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	25%
Somewhat unfavorable	9%
Very unfavorable	16%
Never heard of	16%
Unsure	25%

Q36. Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person. [Favorability]

— Kurt Alme (Republican)]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL FAVORABLE	34%
Very favorable	17%
Somewhat favorable	17%
TOTAL UNFAVORABLE	39%
Somewhat unfavorable	8%
Very unfavorable	31%
Never heard of	11%
Unsure	16%

Q37. Overall, how would you rate the current health of American democracy? [MSOH]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL HEALTHY	24%
Very healthy	7%
Somewhat healthy	16%
TOTAL UNHEALTHY	74%

Response	%
Somewhat unhealthy	27%
Very unhealthy	48%
Unsure	2%

Q38. How do you think federally elected officials in Washington, DC are doing at their job? [MSEO]*Base: Total sample*

Response	%
They're doing fine	4%
We can do better	95%
Unsure	1%

Q39. Thinking about your role as a voter in the upcoming 2026 elections, which of the following best describes how you intend to use your vote to ensure the continued health of our democracy? [MSRV]*Base: Total sample*

Response	%
I will vote for candidates who will go to Washington to work and vote with Republicans to advance a conservative agenda and ensure that Democratic policies do not pass.	32%
I will vote for candidates who will go to Washington to work and vote with Democrats to advance a progressive agenda and ensure that Republican policies do not pass.	18%
I will look past party labels to vote for candidates who prioritize bipartisan cooperation and seek to modernize the system to make it more accountable and stable for the people.	37%
I do not believe that my choice of candidate has a significant impact on the long-term health of our democracy.	7%
Unsure / Other	6%

Q40. Regardless of your past voting history or political affiliation, which of the following do you find to be the most compelling reason to support an independent candidate? [GSTI]*Base: Total sample*

Response	%
The "Problem Solver" Argument: Independent-minded leaders are free to look at problems from many angles and find the best solution, rather than being forced to view every issue through a single partisan lens.	20%
The "Competition" Argument: In every other aspect of American life, choice and competition yield better results, ending the two-party duopoly would force politicians to work harder to earn our support.	7%
The "Gridlock" Argument: Because they don't answer to party leadership, Independents are uniquely positioned to bridge the divide, de-escalate anger, and force the two sides to work together.	5%
The "People over Party" Argument: Political parties have become too focused on special interests and self-preservation, an Independent is beholden only to their constituents, not a national party agenda.	27%
The "Revolution" Argument: The two-party establishment is fundamentally corrupt and beyond repair, electing Independents is a revolution that will strip power from party elites and completely overhaul the system.	12%
None of these / Other	18%
Unsure	12%

Q41. Which of the following statements or priorities would you most need to hear from an independent candidate running for office to seriously consider supporting their candidacy? [GSTL]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
A clear commitment to work across the aisle with both parties to bring the best ideas to the forefront and get things done.	18%
A promise to listen to regular people and be beholden strictly to local voters and constituents, not national political parties or special interests.	16%
A focus on lowering the toxic political rhetoric, reducing partisan division, and restoring common sense and sanity to government.	21%
A concrete plan to immediately lower the daily cost of living, combat inflation, and rein in wasteful government spending.	16%
A common-sense commitment to strictly enforce border security and fix the immigration system without playing political games.	10%
None of these / Other	12%
Unsure	7%

Q42. Which of the following statements comes closer to your own opinion about independent candidates running for elected office, even if neither is exactly right? [GSSA]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Independent candidates offer a new, fresh perspective to move the country forward, free from partisan gridlock and beholden only to the voters	37%
Independent candidates just pull votes away from a major-party candidate, ultimately helping the side that the voter least wanted to win.	47%
Unsure	16%

Q43. Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view about the role independent candidates could play in our political system, even if neither is exactly right? [GSSI]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Electing a few independent candidates could provide a necessary, stabilizing voice, acting as the adult in the room to lower the temperature and bring both sides together to get things done.	65%
The current system is not broken, and the two major parties remain the most effective and stable way to pass laws and represent the country.	14%
Unsure	21%

Q44. Which of the following candidates would you prefer to represent your district in the U.S. House of Representatives, even if neither is exactly perfect? [GSSZ]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
A candidate who goes to Washington to caucus, vote, and work on legislative committees exclusively within one political party, giving them more institutional power to pass legislation.	26%
A candidate who does not caucus with either major political party, so that they can independently evaluate every single bill that crosses their desk based entirely on what is best for the people of their district.	58%
Unsure	16%

Q45. Thinking for a moment about your social, economic, and political views...Do you consider yourself to be... [Ideology]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
TOTAL LIBERAL	32%
Very Liberal	14%
Somewhat Liberal	18%
Moderate	19%
TOTAL CONSERVATIVE	43%
Somewhat Conservative	16%
Very Conservative	26%
Libertarian	3%
Unsure	3%

Q46. Do you consider yourself to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning? [LGBTQ+]

[LGBTQ+]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Yes	6%
No	89%
Unsure	0%
Prefer not to answer	5%

Q47. What would best describe your marital status? [Marital Status]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Single or never married	14%
Married	64%
Separated	1%
Divorced	12%
Widowed	6%
Other	2%

Q48. Do you have children currently living in your household? [Children]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Yes	31%
No	65%
Refused	3%

Q49. Would you best describe the neighborhood or area you live in as... [Neighborhood]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Urban	18%
Suburban	28%

Response	%
Rural	51%
Unsure	3%

Q50. Do you invest into an IRA or 401k? [401K]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Yes	68%
No	32%

Q51. Please describe your current occupational status. [Occupation]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Employed (Government)	10%
Employed (Private Sector)	35%
Small Business Owner	13%
Student	2%
Homemaker	2%
Retired	32%
Unemployed	1%
Other	4%
Unsure	1%

Q52. Do you currently own (outright/pay mortgage) your residence? [Homeowner]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Own (outright/pay mortgage)	77%
I do not own my residence (rent/other)	23%

Q53. Method [InterviewMethod]

Base: Total sample

Response	%
Phone	1%
Text	99%