

National Black Voter Poll 2016

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and

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Introduction

The findings presented here are from a national survey of registered black voters in the 2016 election. Data on which they are based are the result of a poll conducted by a multidisciplinary team of scholars¹ at Howard University commissioned by the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the nation's largest and oldest trade association of Black-owned newspapers and media companies. The study represents a nonpartisan, independent, scientific poll of black voters. Conducted in October 2016, the poll examines the views of more than 900 black registered voters throughout the United States. This report highlights the range of preferences and voting motivation among black voters for presidential leadership. Important results on voter preferences and choices among major public policy options also emerge from the new data.

As long recognized, African Americans and other black voters overwhelmingly prefer Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump for president. However, findings of this poll expose differences among these voters. Highlights of the extent of their preference, how widely it varies, and how it links to big differences within the black community are explored in this report.

It is important to bear in mind that the questions of the HU-NNPA poll were generated within the context of the black experience. Howard University and the National Newspaper Publishers Association have been leading institutions advancing thought and enriching life experiences for black citizens for well over a century. Being intimately involved with the sensibilities of the black community influenced the selection of questions for our poll.

Key Findings

- While voting patterns suggest that blacks are overwhelmingly Democrats, close to a quarter of this poll's respondents report being Independent or Other.
- The poll predicts a strong turnout of black voters in the 2016 election, with 96% of the respondents reporting that they had voted in the past two elections, and 94% reporting they believe their friends will vote in this year's election.
- Claims that the Trump campaign is penetrating the black vote are belied by these data. The lowest percentage of blacks voting Republican in any previous presidential election is 7%. Findings from this poll indicate that less than 2% expect to vote for Trump as the Republican candidate for president.
- The evidence of strong support for Hillary Clinton is supported by these data. There is positive sentiment for her (74% strongly favor the candidate), compared to what is reported for her in the larger electorate. Millennials' favorability for Clinton is softer than for older blacks. However, the lack of enthusiasm for Clinton among black millennials does not appear to transfer into support for the other candidates.
- When asked if race was a deciding factor in voting preference in 2008 and/or 2012, less than a quarter reported that race was a deciding factor. This finding shows that there

were a number of reasons why blacks supported President Obama and race was only one factor. This finding also helps to explain why voter turnout may remain high without President Obama on the ballot.

- Support for President Obama’s policies and leadership remains strong (90% favorable), with the overwhelming majority of African Americans having a favorable view of his job performance.
- While much has been reported in the press that both major party candidates are viewed negatively. This is not true among African Americans. Favorable views for Clinton are held by a large majority of African American registered voters (75% favorable), but Trump’s favorability is substantially lower at just 3%.
- The findings indicate that blacks have positive feelings about the direction of the economy. Over 4 out of 5 respondents report that the current economic conditions of the country are fair to excellent.
- The top five issues influencing preferences for candidates include high quality K-12 education, the economy and jobs, race relations and social justice, college affordability, and income inequality.
- A rather unexpected finding in the poll suggests that black voters reacted to the news of the FBI reopening of the Clinton email investigation by rebounding in her favor. Trump’s already minute support among black voters expressed before Friday’s news reports (Oct. 30) was cut from 2 percent to 1.5 percent.

The Sample

The poll included those who identify as African Americans as well as those who identify as immigrant African or Caribbean Americans. Like all phone surveys, the unweighted data skews heavily toward being female, older and highly educated. The unweighted data for this survey showed that the majority of the respondents identified as female (70%), had attended at least some college (73%), and were 56 years of age or older (57%), but nearly one fourth of the sample were millennials (i.e., 18 to 35-years old). A little over half were employed (53%), and a plurality of those not employed were retired (43%). Of the employed, most had full-time employment (87%), at 18% they were more unionized than the national union density of 13.6% for Black workers and 11.1% for all workers), and were heavily over represented in public sector work at 30% compared to the national share of 14% public sector workers. Respondents were nearly evenly split across the measured income quintiles matched to the Black household income distribution levels, with approximately half making somewhere between \$30,000 and \$49,000 a year or less (51%), the range in which the median Black household income lies. Nearly half of the respondents were married (48%) and most identified as having a religious affiliation (84%), 70% of whom identified as Christian.

Results

Voting Behavior and Decision-Making

“Do you plan to vote?” 96% of the sample responded yes



Figure 1

The data in Figure 1 indicate a high degree of voting participation among respondents. An overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) indicated that they voted during the 2008 and/or 2012 presidential election. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who intend to vote in the upcoming November 2016 election is almost equal to that of those who reported voting the previous presidential elections. This shows that the surge in

voting in the last two presidential cycles among Black voters should not be interpreted as the “Obama effect.” Additionally, a comparable percentage of respondents answered affirmatively to the question, “Do you think most of your friends will vote in the upcoming election?” (94%), and many polls suggest that the view of voting behavior of friends is a more accurate predictor of personal voting intention than the answer about oneself. It is reasonable to surmise that respondents’ friends share similar values and opinions in many (though certainly not all) respects. For this reason, the data reflect the voting behaviors and concerns of a larger number of people than those represented in the sample. And, this may also suggest that a new view might emerge this election on the power of the African American vote.

As might be expected, and as other recent polling has indicated, the vast majority of Blacks identify as Democrats. To the question “In general, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else?” 82% of respondents indicated they are Democrat and only 2% that they are Republican. Surprisingly, 16% of respondents said they are either Independent or “Other” (9% and 7%, respectively), reflecting a level of analysis and political independence that is higher than many might assume. However, among those who identify as Independent, 67% responded that they “normally vote for, or favor Democrats”—adding 6% of Democratic-leaning Independents to the 82% who identify as Democrat for a near 90% chance of voters choosing candidates from the Democratic Party—while only 5% tend to vote for/favor Republicans and 28% indicate no party alignment. Thus, approximately 2.5% of respondents might be considered true swing voters, a number that is comparable to that of respondents who identify as Republican. The nearly 1 in 10 responses of “Other,” however, suggests voters in a significant section of the Black electorate are not confident in the propensity of elected officials of either major party to address their concerns.

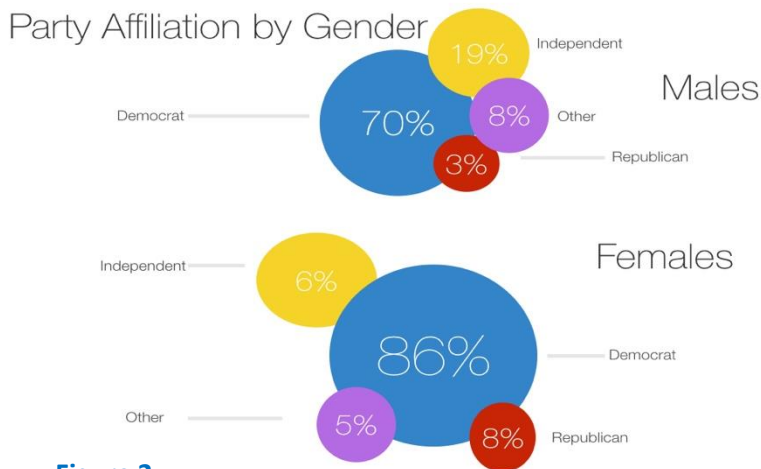


Figure 2

In Figure 2, an examination of party affiliation by gender shows that black female respondents overwhelmingly identified as Democrat at 86%, and were significantly less likely to identify as Republican or Independent than their black male counterparts. Nearly 20% of black male respondents indicated that they are Independent – a rate more than double of the black females.

Reflecting the high percentage of Democratic voters, most respondents have already decided for whom they will vote and have decided to vote for Hillary Clinton. With the question “Have you decided for whom you will vote?” Clinton is the choice for 86% of these respondents, with Donald Trump (Republican) being the choice of just 2%, Jill Stein (Green Party) chosen by less than 1%, and Gary Johnson (Libertarian) by none of them, and the remaining 12% indicating that they will vote for someone else. The higher percentage of support for Clinton over the percentage of respondents who identify as Democrat (89% to 82%, respectively) reflects a decision of Independent and “Other” voters to vote for Clinton. When looking at gender differences in candidate selection the same percentage of men and women are planning to vote for Clinton (88% in each category), but a very slightly larger percentage of men (2%) are voting for Trump than women (1.5%). Most of the Trump supporters in this sample are 46 years of age or older.

Support for candidates is fairly solid. In the follow-up question regarding how much they support the candidate of their choice, 69% of respondents indicated that they “strongly support” their candidate, 21% “moderately support” them, and 10% “lightly support” their chosen candidate. Among those backing Clinton, 73% report strongly supporting the candidate, but only 50% of Trump’s small population of voters report strongly supporting the candidate. Independent of whom they intend to vote for, when asked about their overall feelings toward the candidates 74% of respondents indicated they have overall “favorable feelings toward” Clinton while only 3% have “favorable feelings toward” Trump.

In the final days leading up to the election, a number of news outlets, including Politico, CNN and the *Washington Post*, reported a downturn in black voter turnout in North Carolina and Florida. While some stories sought to blame lower turnout on apathy by black voters, especially the young millennials, our poll finds that assertion to be partially flawed. As we note in this report, enthusiasm for Hillary Clinton by black voters is relatively high at 74% “favorability” and 89% saying they will vote for her. What appears to be more of a factor in lowering black voter turnout may be attributed to voter suppression policies and practices in some states that make it more difficult for blacks to vote. These include the closing of polling places, cutting back on early voting options, and requiring new ID verification, all of which disproportionately impact the black community. In September, the Brennan Center for Justice announced that “In

2016, 14 states will have new voting restrictions in place for the first time in a presidential election. The new laws range from strict photo ID requirements to early voting cut packs to registration restrictions” (Brennan, 2016).

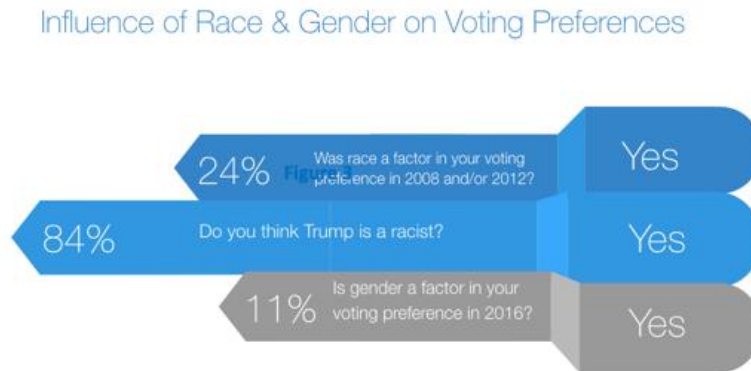


Figure 3

Since race and gender have been regarded as salient factors impacting the voting practices in this year’s and the last two presidential elections, we asked questions about their impact on voting practices. The data in Figure 3 indicate that race and gender are not salient factors in respondents’ voting decisions, though perceived racism may be. In light of the fact that it has been widely reported that many of Donald Trump’s remarks and business practices have been regarded as racist, we thought that it was important to learn if that was the view of black voters. It is instructive to know if the black community perceived Mr. Trump as a racist (84%), which might also explain why he is only attracting a small share of the black vote, even by Republican standards in the modern era. In response to the question “Was race a factor in your voting preference in 2008 and/or 2012?” 76% of respondents said it was not. To “Is gender a factor in your voting preference in 2016?” 89% said it was not. Therefore, the majority of respondents claim to be making voting decisions irrespective of the race or gender of the candidate. However, to the question “Do you think Donald Trump is a racist?” 84% of the respondents replied in the affirmative. That percentage is close to the unfavorable feelings indicated above as well as the percentage of respondents who have decided to vote for Clinton.

Table 1. Issues Influencing Voting Choices

	Level of Agreement		
	Not Important	Moderately Important	Very Important
High Quality Education in Pre-K-12	2%	12%	86%
Economy and jobs	2%	8%	90%
Race relations and social justice	3%	12%	85%
College affordability	2%	10%	87%
Income inequality	5%	17%	84%
Crime	5%	18%	77%
The minimum wage	4%	15%	81%
High rates of mass incarceration	4%	17%	79%
Supreme Court nominees	7%	16%	76%
Terrorism	6%	18%	76%
Environmental pollution	4%	27%	68%
Climate change	7%	37%	56%
Trade and the global economy	7%	29%	65%
Federal government deficit and borrowing	7%	35%	58%
Immigration	10%	34%	55%
Treatment of the LGBT community	21%	28%	51%

Respondents designated a number of issues as those “very important” in shaping their voting choices. As indicated in Table 1, these clustered around education, economics, and race relations. For example, they gave the highest number of “very important” marks to Jobs and the Economy (90%), College Affordability (87%), High Quality Pre-kindergarten through 12th Grade (86%), Income Inequality (84%), and the Minimum Wage (81%). That these issues rose to the top of the “most important” list corresponds with social science research showing that non-white populations see the relationship between economic status and access to good education, particularly in predominantly black urban communities (Adelman & Mele, 2015). Respondents’ giving greatest weight to these concerns showed a likelihood of seeking candidates perceived as more likely to assure such access and economic opportunity. And, it reflects the relative younger age of the Black population, as about 45% of Black registered voters are under 35.

Concerns associated with race relations and social justice (85%), crime (77%), and high rates of mass incarceration (79%) were also identified as “most important” influences in voter preference. While these are not new concerns among African Americans who have come through a long history of racism, there is evidence they have intensified over the last three years with increased numbers of high-profile police shootings of unarmed black men, efforts within some states to suppress the black vote, growing racial wealth gap, and other evidence that race relations are further deteriorating (Thompson & Clement, 2016; Salis, 2015).

Relatively high on respondents’ list of “most important” were Supreme Court nominees (75%) and terrorism (74%). Some also identified related concerns of environmental pollution (66%) and climate change (60%) to be major factors influencing their political choices, as well as trade and the global economy (60%). Immigration, often seen in national polls as important to Trump voters, was not ranked that highly by black registered voters (54%).

Significance of Gender and Age

Black female voters will be significant players in this year’s election. In the most recent Census data for 2014 among registered female voters, 13.5% were Black. Given the extremely high share of black women who back Clinton and the tiny share who back Trump, that makes for a sizable portion of the gender gap that Trump suffers. An analysis of the differences in expected voting preferences between black men and women are virtually insignificant in this sample; however, there are differences in their levels of support for the candidates. Both black men and women report the likelihood of voting for Clinton at relatively the same percentage, with women at 90% and men at 89%. More black men report a likelihood of voting for Trump at 2.5% versus 1.5% of black women. A higher percentage of black women reports strongly favoring their selected candidate at 69% versus 65% of black men. In addition, more black women report having overall favorable feelings toward Clinton than their male counterparts at 77% and 70%, respectively, and a slightly higher percentage of black men report favorable feelings toward Trump at 4% compared to black women at 3%.

While there are mostly slight differences by gender in the sample, there are significant differences by age, particularly between the millennial (18 to 35 years old) and non-millennials. The millennials have attended at least some college at 81% versus 65% of non-millennials, and are less likely to report having a religious affiliation at 62% versus 86% of the non-millennial population. They also report being a member of a union (11%) at a greater rate than their older counterparts (9%).

Table 2. Millennials and Non-Millennials

	Millennials	Non- Millennials
Clinton	75%	91%
Trump	5%	1.5%
Stein	1.3%	0%
Johnson	0%	0%
Other	18%	7%

In regard to their voting decisions, millennials report less likelihood of voting for Clinton than their older counterparts at 75% versus 91% as noted in Table 2. They also report a higher likelihood of voting for Trump at 5% versus 1.5% of the older population, and they are more likely to have a willingness to vote for Stein or another candidate at 18% versus 9% of the older population. They are also less likely to cite gender as a factor influencing their voting preferences at 7% versus 12% of the older population. Additionally, they are more likely to report a higher degree of unfavorable feelings toward Clinton than their older counterparts at 19% versus 7% and also slightly more likely to report unfavorable feelings toward Trump at 88% versus 86.5%.

Black Live Matter Movement

The question of favorability toward Black Lives Matter brought a response rate of 73%, with black males (79%) reporting a higher favorability toward the movement than black women (71%)—in a year with several high-profile cases of police violence against unarmed African Americans, efforts in several states to suppress black citizens from registering to vote, and other evidence of deteriorating race relations. Identification with the Black Lives Matter movement has grown steadily among African Americans since its founding in the summer of 2013, following the murder of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in Florida (Ruffin II, 2016). Incorporating strategies of community organizing from earlier civil rights days, the movement is said to appeal to today’s African Americans because it answers the daily realities around violence and discrimination and it mobilizes its constituents through social media, something particularly appealing to millennials. Especially pertinent to the present study, the movement is said to have pushed the Democratic Party to re-embrace black issues and to take black voters more seriously, something evidenced in both Hillary Clinton’s and Donald Trump’s presidential campaigns (Ruffin II). Conversely, the Trump presidential campaign may be using the Black Lives Matter movement as a foil to engender greater white support with intensified pledges as “the law and order” candidate.

Table 3. Voter Preferences Before and After the October 30 FBI Report

Candidate	Candidate Preference	
	Before FBI Report	After FBI Report
Clinton	89%	89%
Trump	2%	1.5%
Stein	0%	.4%
Johnson	0%	0%
Other	9%	9%

The poll was conducted during a time period that includes the news coverage of the FBI's new investigation into Clinton's emails. The timing of the poll includes four days of data collection prior to the news story and three days after the news coverage. A rather unexpected finding in the survey noted in Table 3 suggests that black voters reacted to the news of the reopening of the Clinton email investigation by rebounding in her favor. There is no change in the percentage of Clinton supports at 89% both before and after the news coverage. However, Trump's already minute support among black voters expressed before Friday (Oct. 30) dropped from 2 percent to 1.5 percent the next day from under 3 percent to 1.5 percent, the support for the other category remained virtually the same, but the support for Stein grew by .4 percentage points. Among those who indicated that they will vote for Clinton, the level of support increased after the news coverage, as 74% of the respondents indicate that they strongly support the candidate, after the news coverage, compared to 66% before the news coverage.

Methodology

The poll was carried out by a multidisciplinary group of scholars at Howard University, namely, Sociology and Criminology; Political Science; Economics; and Communications, Culture, and Media Studies. The methodology for the survey and analysis benefits from and is bound by numerous established research guidelines, as well as the discipline-specific expertise among its researchers. As with other nationally-oriented opinion surveys, researchers sought a random sample of more than 900 respondents by telephone over an eight-day period beginning October 21st. Calls began with a listing of 54,000 both land line and cell phone numbers belonging to black American registered voters, and more than 22,000 calls were made. Under supervision, up to 15 students at a time made calls using a computer assisted telephone interviewing system. More than 50 undergraduate students made the calls and six graduate students exercised leadership in the polling center. Callers posed questions to respondents from a survey instrument that was written by the research team and pre-tested. The phone respondents, who were asked the substantive survey questions, were identified as black and eligible to vote.

The student callers briefly explained the survey along with a statement affirming the confidentiality of the responses. Callers electronically recorded respondents' answers to questions as they were asked. The survey instrument included 23 fixed-choice questions and one open-ended question (see appendix). The data were also tabulated, aggregated, correlated and subjected a variety of statistical tests using pre-programmed soft-ware. Data were then correlated and subjected to other statistical tests using Excel, SPSS, and Stata.

The survey leads to broad demographic, electoral and social classifications of the respondents. Accordingly, the respondents can be categorized by age, education, sex, income, etc. In terms of electoral participation, we learned if they were registered to vote, if they had voted in recent presidential elections, party preference, opinions on several current issues and, of course, candidate preferences. We also learned about respondents' employment status, access to and use of social services, religious activity and organization participation.

The data were weighted to align with the 2014 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey Supplement on Voting and Registration for Black registered voters by age, by gender, and by education. "Black" in this poll means any who identified as Black, African American, African or Caribbean immigrant, or Black and in combination with other races.

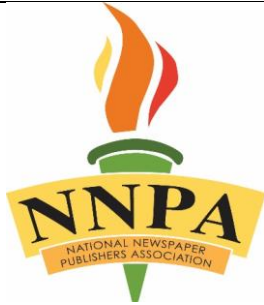
Disclaimer

The results of the poll do not necessarily reflect the views of the administration of the National Newspaper Publishers Association or Howard University.

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¹The multidisciplinary research team consisted of Drs. Lorenzo Morris and Clarence Lusane of the Department of Political Science, Dr. William Spriggs of the Department of Economics, Dr. Carolyn Byerly of the Department of Communications, Culture, and Media Studies, and Drs. Rubin Patterson and Terri Adams of the Department of Sociology and Criminology. The five graduate students who were instrumental in the administration of this polling project were: Clint Walker in Psychology; and Shannell Thomas, Marie Plaisime, Emerald Jones, and Jesse Card, in Sociology and Criminology; and Shadya Sanders in Atmospheric Science.



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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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NATIONAL BLACK VOTER POLL SHOWS EDUCATION, ECONOMY, AND RACE RELATIONS SHAPE STRONG PREFERENCE FOR HILLARY CLINTON AMONG BLACK AMERICAN VOTERS

(WASHINGTON, DC.) With the election only days away, a new national poll shows that Black American voters overwhelmingly plan to vote for Hillary Clinton as their choice for President of the United States. Their choice is influenced by concerns about high quality, affordable education, income inequality, jobs, the economy, race relations and racial justice.

The National Black Voter Poll found a high degree of engagement by registered black voters in the election, with 96% of respondents saying they will cast ballots. The same number said their friends also intend to vote. Nearly all respondents in the survey said they voted in both the 2008 and 2012 elections.

Taken together, the data predict a high voter turnout among Black American voters in the November 8, 2016 election and a strong preference for Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump. A substantial majority (89%) indicated they will vote for Clinton, and two-thirds (67%) said they strongly favor Clinton. Another 23% declared “moderate support” for her. A slightly higher percent (74%) said they have “overall favorable feelings” for Clinton, compared to 2% who said they had favorable feelings for Trump.

When asked “Do you think Donald Trump is a racist?” 84% responded, “Yes.”

In contrast to feelings toward the current election year’s candidates, 90% of respondents said they have “overall favorable feelings” toward President Barak Obama.

Findings are based on a national random sample of more than 900 voters from 22,000 telephone calls made between October 21 and 30, 2016 by researchers in a joint National Newspaper Publishers Association - Howard

University poll. This was the first national-level scientific study focused exclusively on voters who identify as African American, Afro-Hispanic or other black identity.

The goal of the research was to develop a profile of Black American voters in a year when race is believed to be a defining factor in the outcome of presidential and congressional races.

The vast majority of respondents in the survey identified as Democrats. To the question “In general, do you think of yourself as Democrat, Republican, or something else?” 82% of respondents said “Democrat” and only 2% said Republican. Another 16% said they are either “Independent” or “Other” (9% and 7%, respectively).

A large majority of respondents (87%) identified high quality education as an influence in their decisions, and a nearly equal percent (84%) pointed to concerns about college affordability as a factor.

Other concerns shaping decisions were the economy and jobs (85%), race relations and racial justice (84%), and income inequality (82%).

When asked about where they obtain their information about political candidates, nearly half (46%) said from local TV news, and another fourth (24%) said from cable stations. Approximately a fifth (18%) said they rely on black newspapers for information about elections.

Revelations of new FBI probes into Hillary Clinton’s emails occurred in the midst of the research, prompting researchers to compare participant responses to candidates before and after this news. They found that favorable feelings toward Clinton rose slightly and those toward Trump were cut in half.

The sample of more than 900 registered black voters was 70% female and 30% male. When considered alongside the 96% who said they voted in the previous two elections and also plan to vote on Nov. 8, black women show they are at the forefront of social change and political history in the United States, by voting to elect the nation’s first black and now its first female president.

A majority of respondents said they had attended college (73%), and were 56 years of age or older. Millennials between the ages of 18-35 accounted for 11% of the sample.

Those surveyed were nearly equally split between employed and not-employed (53% and 47%, respectively). Of those employed, 30% said they were federal employees, and 18% said they were union members. Of those not employed, 78% were retired and 22% were unemployed. Nearly half (48%) of respondents said they are married and most (84%) have a religious affiliation (a strong majority of those Christian).

The research was conducted using social science survey methods at Howard University. Research findings, however, do not necessarily reflect the personal views of the researchers, the faculty or administration of Howard University, or the members of the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

Principal investigators on the interdisciplinary Howard research team included Dr. William Spriggs, Department of Economics; Dr. Terri Adams and Dr. Rubin Patterson, Department of Sociology and Criminology; Dr. Lorenzo Morris, Department of Political Science; and Dr. Carolyn Byerly, Department of Communication, Culture and Media Studies. Principal liaisons from the NNPA included President and CEO Dr. Benjamin Chavis, and Chairman of the Board Denise Rolark Barnes.