Run with Ralph

Strategies for Candidates, Campaigns, and Changemakers

25 Key Questions About the 2026 Elections

These questions provide a framework for examining what happened in the 2026 elections and what the results may mean for governing and future elections. They are starting points for investigation, not conclusions. Early explanations should be tested against official results, voter research, and evidence from communities and races across the country.

What drove voters?

1. **Which issues most influenced voters?** How much did household costs, financial insecurity, and the ability to get ahead shape people's choices? What do voter research and results across places and races tell us?

2. **What electoral price did Republicans pay for Trump's tariffs and Iran decisions?** How much did higher costs, opposition to the policies themselves, and perceptions of broken promises affect votes or turnout? How did those factors compare with other concerns?

3. **How did Trump's economic claims compare with voters' lived experience?** Did assurances that the economy was strong persuade voters, or deepen frustration among people struggling with their bills? What evidence helps explain the difference?

4. **Did Trump fatigue affect votes and turnout?** How much did exhaustion with constant conflict, drama, threats, and demands for attention shape voter choices or participation? Did the effects vary across races or groups?

5. **Did corruption and self-enrichment influence voters?** Did perceived abuses of public office carry an electoral cost independent of other concerns? What do voter interviews, surveys, and race results suggest?

6. **Did corruption intensify anger over affordability?** Did financial pressure lower tolerance for misconduct, especially when voters believed people in power were benefiting at their expense? What evidence supports that connection?

7. **How did immigration enforcement and ICE overreach affect the elections?** Did concerns about raids, detention, deportation practices, due process, and disruption to families and communities change votes or turnout? Where were these concerns most visible?

8. **Did AI concerns register at the ballot box?** Did data centers, electricity and water demands, utility bills, job displacement, or broader concerns about AI influence votes or turnout? What can local and state results tell us?

Who moved—and what connections mattered?

9. **Which groups of voters moved, and where did they go?** How did support and turnout change among younger, African-American, Hispanic, working-class, and health-conscious voters? Which changes reflect persuasion, and which reflect differences in who turned out?

10. **How much did individual candidates matter?** Did credibility, constituent service, local records, and independence from party leadership help candidates overcome national trends? Where did candidate qualities appear to make a difference?

11. **How did voters respond to Democratic candidates with religious backgrounds and appeals?** Did voters connect with candidates who linked faith to health care, affordability, dignity, and public service? How important were those appeals compared with other candidate qualities?

12. **How did the Israel–Palestine conflict and U.S. policies affect votes and turnout?** How did Jewish and Muslim Americans' concerns about safety, equal treatment, and belonging influence their choices? How did responses differ within these communities and among Arab Americans and other voters concerned about the conflict?

Did campaigning change the outcome?

13. **Did Trump's campaigning help or hurt Republicans?** Did his appearances and the midterm convention mobilize supporters, reinforce opposition, or have different effects in different races? What evidence helps distinguish those effects?

14. **Did Trump's last-minute promises and patches move voters?** Did proposed payments, refunds, farm relief, or other initiatives change preferences or turnout? Did voters credit the offers, question their credibility, or blame the administration for the underlying problems?

15. **Could Republican spending offset Democratic electoral advantages?** Where did spending differences matter, and how effectively did campaign money translate into persuasion or turnout? What does the evidence show across competitive races?

16. **Did Republican attacks on identity, faith, and ideology work?** Did false claims, religious attacks, and portrayals of Democrats as extremists persuade voters, mobilize supporters, backfire, or get overshadowed by everyday concerns? How did these attacks compare with legitimate scrutiny of candidates' records?

How far did the results reach?

17. **Was it a blue wave, a red undertow, or both?** Did the results reflect enthusiasm for Democrats, rejection of Republican governance, or a combination? What evidence distinguishes those explanations?

18. **Was Democratic competitiveness in traditionally red states durable or specific to this election?** Did apparent openings produce victories, meaningful gains that fell short, or a return to familiar partisan patterns? What can comparisons with earlier elections tell us about what may last?

19. **Did Democrats hold the races they would ordinarily expect to win?** Where did losses in favorable territory offset opportunities elsewhere, particularly in the Senate? What did those results reveal about the map and the candidates?

20. **How deep did Democratic gains go?** How far did gains extend into traditionally Republican congressional districts, Senate seats, governorships, and state legislatures? Did they flip chambers, break supermajorities, or change unified control of state government?

21. **Did Democrats earn trust, receive another chance, or win by default—and what will voters expect them to deliver?** Do the gains indicate durable support or a conditional opening? What can voter research establish about expectations for affordability, opportunity, and governing results?

How did the rules and the process shape the elections?

22. **How did redistricting and Supreme Court decisions shape the results—and did any gerrymanders backfire?** Did maps protect the parties that drew them, or spread their supporters too thinly and expose more seats to a political shift? Which effects shaped these results, and which may matter in future elections?

23. **Did foreign interference affect the elections or confidence in them?** What attempts were documented, whom did they reach, and what effects can be established? What is the evidence that an operation changed behavior or confidence?

24. **Were voting rights protected and election results accepted?** Were there efforts to restrict access to voting or interfere with election administration? Did post-election challenges involve lawful, evidence-based recounts and litigation, or attempts to obstruct certification and overturn valid outcomes? Did winners take office through an orderly process?

25. **What do the combined results reveal about the balance of political power?** How did votes translate into seats and governing authority across Congress and the states? Where did those outcomes match or diverge from the national mood?

Use these questions to examine the results with curiosity—and hold your assumptions open to revision. Look beyond who won to understand what people need, whose concerns were heard, and what the winners have the power and responsibility to deliver.

Follow along at RunwithRalph.com as we examine the results and draw lessons for making life more affordable, expanding opportunity, and building a governing majority that earns lasting support through results.

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- **Affordability and Opportunity Agenda**: Practical proposals to meet people's needs.
- **The Governing Majority**: How to build and sustain the democratic power to deliver results.
- **Playbooks**: Ways to put these ideas into practice in your own work and community.