



# MAKING *Joy* POSSIBLE

A partnership between The Highland Project, brilliant corners Research and Strategies, and Springboard to Opportunities





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# BLACK WOMEN VOTERS IN MISSISSIPPI KNOW WHAT WHOLENESS REQUIRES — AND WHAT'S BREAKING IT



**Black women voters in Mississippi are offering one of the clearest pictures of where America is failing — and what it would take to build something rooted in joy and dignity.**

## 9 IN 10

Black women voters in Mississippi are dissatisfied with the direction of the country

**Their dissatisfaction is not abstract.** It is grounded in daily economic strain, experiences of racism, distrust in systems that do not listen, and a deep desire for a life defined not only by survival or success, but by joy, peace, faith, family, and freedom.

**This poll tells two stories at once:** Black women in Mississippi have a vision of wholeness for the future, and they have a precise understanding of what is breaking that possibility now.



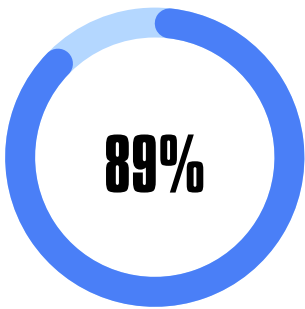


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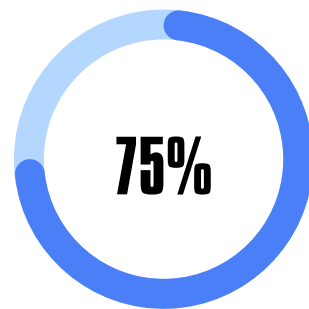
# BLACK WOMEN VOTERS IN MISSISSIPPI ARE NOT DISENGAGED



The majority are dissatisfied with the direction of the country – but they have not tuned out politics or written off the power of their vote.



**DISSATISFIED WITH THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY**



**HIGHLY MOTIVATED TO PARTICIPATE IN 2026 MIDTERMS**

Dissatisfaction is not despair. It is a clear diagnosis of lived experiences.

**90%**

Say economic conditions are getting worse

**55%**

Say their wages are falling behind the cost of living

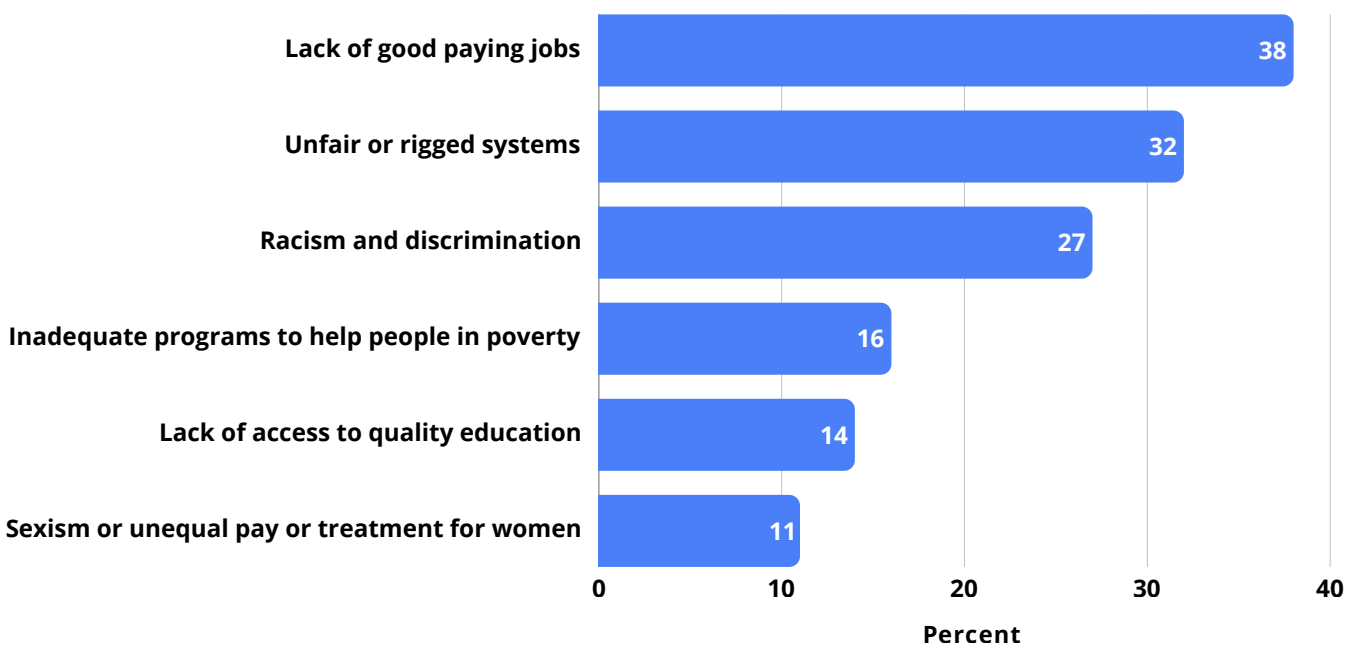
**44%**

Say they often experience racism



The economy is not working for Black women in Mississippi – and they are clear about why.

## TOP BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC MOBILITY



**Grit is not a substitute for good jobs and wages, affordable care, and fair systems.**

Black women voters in Mississippi point to lack of good-paying jobs, an unfair economy, racism and discrimination, inadequate assistance programs, and limited access to quality education.

They broadly reject the idea that poverty is simply personal failure. They are naming the systems that make stability harder to reach.



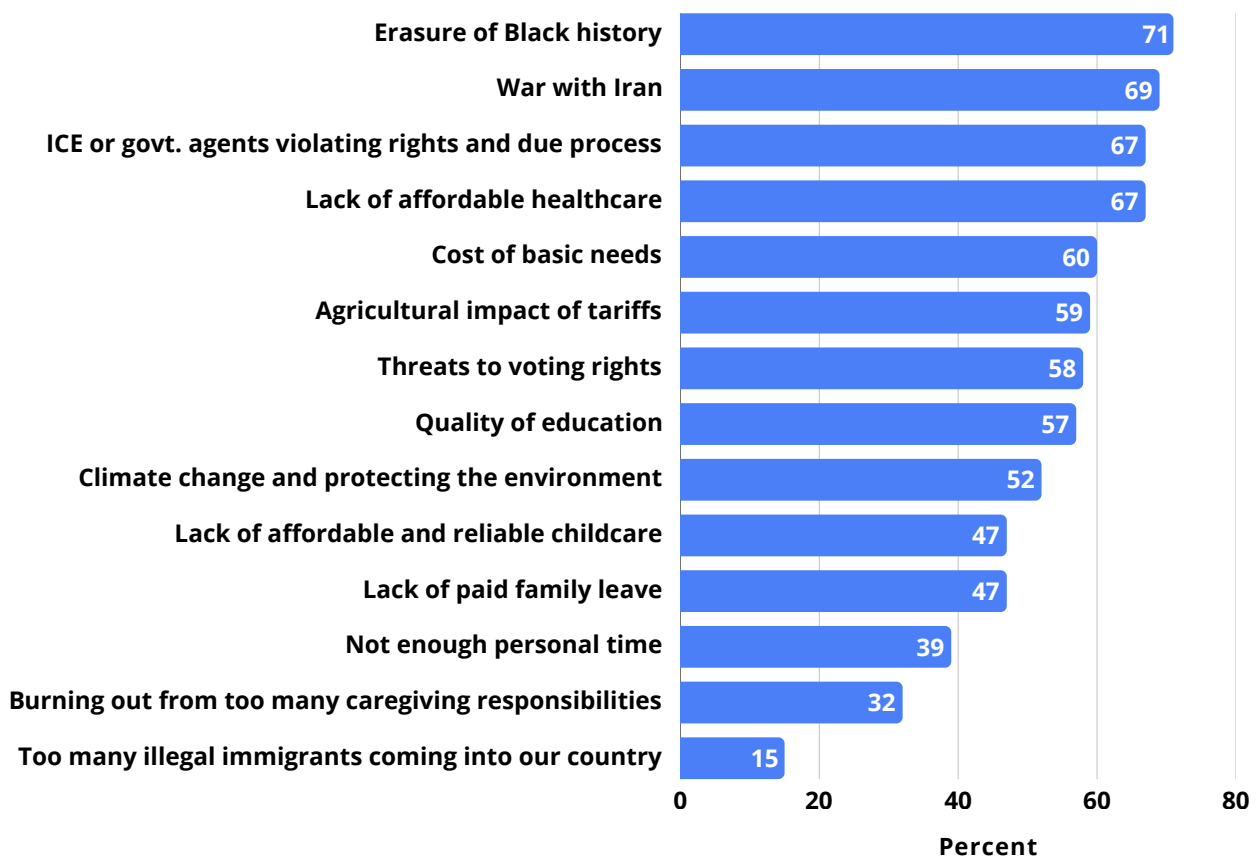
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# CONVENTIONAL NATIONAL NARRATIVES DO NOT REFLECT BLACK WOMEN'S REAL CONCERNS



**Black women voters in Mississippi are telling a different story about their concerns.**

## VOTERS ARE VERY WORRIED ABOUT



**The contrast is powerful: Black women are not locating crisis in their neighbors.**

Their top worries are not rooted in the fear-based narratives often projected onto the South. Their top worries center the erasure of Black history, war, healthcare, government overreach, economic pressure, voting rights, and education. Only 15% say they are very worried about “too many illegal immigrants” in America.

Their concerns are rooted in dignity, history, due process, economic security, and whether government is protecting people rather than deepening harm. And if their worries tell us what they are trying to protect, their definitions of success and joy tell us what they are trying to build.





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# BLACK WOMEN ARE DEMANDING CONDITIONS THAT MAKE JOY, DIGNITY, AND WHOLENESS POSSIBLE.



**They are offering more than a warning. They are offering a vision of wholeness.**



**Their vision of wealth is about peace, not status.**

For Black women in Mississippi, having enough money to live comfortably is not primarily about achievement. It is about breathing room: the ability to rest, plan, care for family, and enjoy the life they are building.

**SUCCESS IS NOT THE SAME AS JOY, AND POLICY SHOULD CARE ABOUT BOTH.**

- ⊕ Faith is an anchor for how Black women define a good life of both success and joy
- ⊕ Family is the top driver of joy and second highest driver of success
- ⊕ Financial security is more associated with joy than success
- ⊕ Rewarding work is more associated with success than joy
- ⊕ Hobbies and creative interests are more associated with joy than success



**The deeper message is clear: women closest to economic and racial strain are not asking to be praised for resilience. They want real opportunity — where work, care, faith, and joy become stability, dignity, and a fuller life.**

Black women in Mississippi feel the weight of responsibility, achievement, work, health, and giving. But joy is anchored in family, faith, financial comfort, and personal freedom. A life can look successful from the outside and still not feel joyful.

Their vision of wealth is peace: the freedom to enjoy life without fear that everything could unravel.



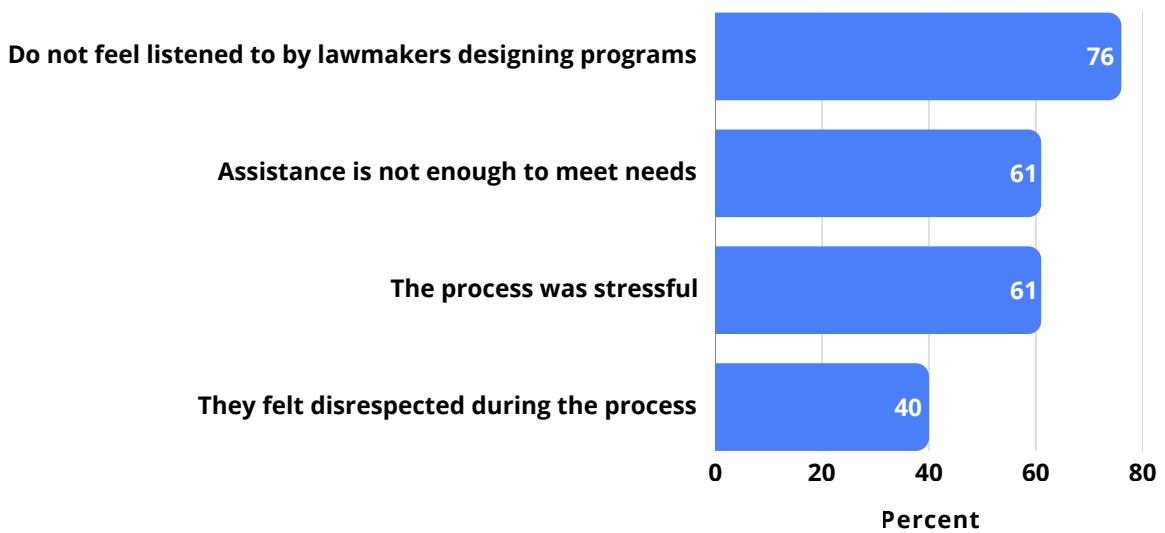
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# FINANCIAL SECURITY IS NOT ONLY MATERIAL SUPPORT. IT IS PEACE.



**Black women voters say government assistance programs do not do enough, are stressful to access, and sometimes disrespectful.**

## WHAT VOTERS ARE SAYING ABOUT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS



# \$1K

When asked how they would use an extra \$1,000 a month, many pointed toward immediate stability: basic expenses like housing and food, debt, and savings.

**This is why the gap between success and joy findings matter. Policy must do more than exist. It must meet people with dignity.**

Government assistance is too often experienced as insufficient, stressful, and undignified. A safety net that leaves people stressed, disrespected, and unheard is not enough.



**THE PATH FORWARD IS NOT RESILIENCE.  
IT IS CHANGING CONDITIONS.**

Black women's resilience is not in question. What is in question is whether our systems will finally match the clarity, care, and vision Black women are already bringing.

This poll is a call to build what wholeness requires: good jobs, fair wages, affordable healthcare, dignified public systems, protection from discrimination, and the freedom for families and communities to live fully.



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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

## **Making Joy Possible - Spring 2025 Poll of Black Women Voters in Mississippi**

This poll is part of The Highland Project's multi-year research effort with brilliant corners Research and Strategies to listen to Black women's economic, civic, and well-being perspectives and translate that wisdom into a broader vision of multigenerational wealth and opportunity. Across years of national polling, Black women have consistently named that wealth is not only what people earn or own. It is whether families and communities have the conditions to live fully — with financial freedom, abundant choice, belonging, and thriving health.

The Mississippi findings deepen that lesson. Black women in Mississippi are naming what wholeness requires and what is breaking it: economic strain, public systems that too often fail to meet people with dignity, and a civic landscape where participation should not be mistaken for satisfaction. Their responses remind us that civic life, economic life, family life, and wellbeing are deeply connected — and that systems cannot earn trust by treating them as separate.

### **Methodology**

These findings are from a proprietary survey of 701 African American women registered voters in Mississippi, conducted by brilliant corners Research & Strategies on behalf of The Highland Project. The survey was conducted by phone using professional interviewers starting on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and ending on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The survey's sample was drawn randomly from the voter file and weighted slightly to adhere to the voter file's population demographics. The margin of error overall is +/- 3.7 percent, with a 95 percent confidence interval.

### **About The Highland Project**

The Highland Project is a values-aligned coalition designing and leading a multi-generational vision of wealth and opportunity for all, anchored in belonging, abundant choice, thriving health, and financial freedom.

### **About brilliant corners Research and Strategies**

Founded by Cornell Belcher in 2001, brilliant corners is a nationally and internationally recognized polling firm. In addition to conducting polls for political candidates and campaigns, brilliant corners assists nonprofits, labor organizations, and high-profile corporate clients with their branding and research needs.

### **About Springboard to Opportunities**

Springboard to Opportunities is a community partner committed to listening and responding to the needs and perspectives of families with limited financial resources. Through personalized navigation support, we connect residents to essential services, coaching support, opportunities to build social capital, and much more. Resident relationships drive our work, ensuring that all programs and initiatives align with community voices and continuously evolve to meet residents' shifting needs.



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