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THE McCOURTNEY INSTITUTE  
Mood of the Nation Poll

## Most voters satisfied with their choices, but 12% would vote differently today.

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Everyone experiences buyer's remorse at some point. We might wish we had not splurged on the latest fashions, or sorry we settled for a practical car when we wanted one with a lot more performance. In politics, too, voters can come to regret their choices.

However, a McCourtney Mood of the Nation Poll shows that, only 12% ( $\pm 2.6\%$ ) of registered voters wished they could change their vote choice.

The periodic poll is conducted over the internet by YouGov with the purpose of tracking the mood of the public through both traditional survey questions and open ended questions that allow citizens to express themselves in their own words.

Our February 23-27 poll asked a nationally representative sample of 1,000 Americans to report on how they cast their vote in November. The results of these reports closely align with other national polls with Hillary Clinton voters comprising 49% of the sample, Trump voters 46%, with 3% and 2% for Johnson and Stein, respectively. Because these reports, recalled ten weeks after the election, closely match the actual vote, we feel that recall error is minimal.

Then on the next screen, we asked them,

“Suppose you could go back in time and vote again in the November election. What would you do?”

Respondents were presented with the same choices – Trump, Clinton, Stein, Johnson, someone else, or not vote at all. The results may surprise many readers.

Although some social media sites have given the impression that many Trump voters were having regrets, only 3.4% ( $\pm 2.2\%$ ) of Trump voters surveyed told us they would change their vote. As we reported in the [Washington Post](#), Trump supporters remain very enthusiastic about their President.

**Percentage of voters who would do something different if they could go back in time and vote again:**

<u>Actual vote in November</u>	<u>Would vote differently</u>	<u>N</u>
Clinton	12%	371
Trump	3%	339
Johnson	24%	31
Stein	27%	23
Someone else	19%	31

*Source: Penn State, McCourtney Institute Mood of the Nation Poll, February 23-27, 2017*

The twelve Trump voters who would do something else include just four who would have changed their vote to support Hillary Clinton. Most of the others, knowing that Trump won the Electoral College with room to spare, told us they would have cast more symbolic and expressive votes, for Gary Johnson and other third party candidates.

As a result of these results, it seems virtually impossible that the tiny number of Trump voters expressing buyer's remorse could have changed the outcome of the presidential election.

## Satisfaction is much lower among Clinton’s supporters

Our poll shows one in nine Hillary Clinton supporters would vote differently if they could go back in time (12%, with a margin of error of  $\pm 4.3\%$ ). Of course this hypothetical question means something quite different for Clinton’s supporter than for Trump’s.

**Hillary Clinton voters with regrets: Who they would vote for if they could go back in time and vote again (N = 37).**

<u>Would vote for:</u>	<u>Would vote differently</u>
Trump	6
Johnson	2
Stein	2
Someone else	19
<u>Would not vote</u>	<u>8</u>

*Source: Penn State, McCourtney Institute Mood of the Nation Poll, February 23-27, 2017*

Many were reluctant supporters and, given that they now know that their vote did not help her to victory, would like to go back and cast a vote more in tune with their values and politics. The largest number, more than half, said they would vote for “someone else” and most of them mentioned Bernie Sanders when we asked them why. A 28 year old woman from Minnesota told us that “Bernie Sanders should have been major party candidate,” and a 22 year old man from Kansas said, “I should have voted for Bernie as should have the hundreds of thousands who supported him. We wouldn’t be in the mess we are now.” Others shared their initial ambivalence, like a 41 year old man from Colorado who confided that “I never supported her, I only voted for her to keep Trump out.”

Interestingly, six said they would vote for Donald Trump, more than cancelling out the four Trump voters who now say they would vote for Clinton.

### **What about those who voted for third party candidates?**

In the November election, a total of 5.7% of valid ballots for president were cast for someone other than Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump and in our survey about 9% also report voting for third party candidates. It is natural to wonder if many of these voters, who saw opinion polls pointing to a Hillary Clinton victory, would vote differently today.

When we asked these voters what they would do if they could go back in time, only 22% said they would change their vote ( $\pm 10.8\%$ ). The numbers of poll participants who voted third party is very small, so it is difficult to generalize. But it is clear that they would not be likely to change the outcome if they could vote again.

As the table below shows, some of these voters would switch to a different third party candidate or not vote at all. And the numbers drawn to Trump and Clinton are nearly the same.

**Third party voters with regrets: Who they would vote for if they could go back in time and vote again (N = 22)**

<u>Would vote for:</u>	<u>Would vote differently</u>
Clinton	7
Trump	6
Johnson	1
Stein	2
Someone else	2
<u>Would not vote</u>	<u>4</u>

*Source: Penn State, McCourtney Institute Mood of the Nation Poll, February 23-27, 2017*

## **If the election were held today, would the results be different?**

Of course there is no way to replay history. But the evidence available suggests that the early miscues by the Trump administration – the invalidation of Trump’s travel ban, the resignation of National Security chief Michael Flynn, the steady stream of impolitic tweets and other embarrassments – have not moved the US public enough to weaken Trump’s electoral coalition.

That could change, of course. But early reports that many voters were regretting their vote were anecdotal and perhaps colored by wishful thinking.

The nation is clearly divided, and the President began with only plurality support as evidenced in his popular vote loss. But his coalition of supporters has not changed appreciably and we can expect him to continue to play to his supporters.

## **Contact information**

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## How the Poll was Conducted

This poll was conducted between February 23<sup>rd</sup> and February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 by YouGov in partnership with the Penn State McCourtney Institute of Democracy.

All *Mood of the Nation* questionnaires are designed by the McCourtney Institute polling team, with the fieldwork conducted by YouGov, an online polling organization. The YouGov panel includes over 1.8 million individuals who agree to complete occasional surveys. The 1,000 individuals who completed the McCourtney *Mood of the Nation Poll* were matched to the joint distribution from the Census's American Community Survey in terms of age, sex, race/ethnicity, and years of education. The frame was augmented by matching to the November 2010 Current Population Survey and the Pew Religious Life Survey in order to include voter registration, political interest and party identification in the selection model. The unweighted data are broadly representative of the US population in terms of age, education, and region.

The data have been weighted to adjust for variation in the sample from the adult United States population with respect to demographic variables such as geographic region, gender, race/ethnicity, age, and education, and political variables such as voter registration status and political interest. Weighting details are described in a paper by Ansolabehere and Rivers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Douglas Rivers. (2013) "Cooperative survey research." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16: 307-329.