



est. 2025

Speaking with American Men

2025 Strategic Plan



Speaking with American Men

SAM seeks to deeply understand the values, frustrations, and motivations driving the political shifts among young men ages 18 to 29. Through in-depth research, engagement, and content creation, the SAM project will ensure that future Democratic messaging and policy is rooted in what young men are telling us they actually need. By addressing economic realities, acknowledging cultural concerns without pandering, and meeting young men where they are, we can reverse the current trend and build lasting political alignment.

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WHAT DO YOUNG MEN THINK ABOUT...

WORK

“You can’t follow your dreams when you’re worried about survival.”

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

“Empty promise, like, hope, I guess. That I mean, that’s just me, though. I’ve been so disillusioned by the Democratic party. There’s an agenda on both sides, and it doesn’t include you.”

HOUSING

“I don’t have any intentions of ever doing the old fashioned American Dream. Every month it’s like, can I make rent? Will I need another roommate? When will they raise it again?”

FUTURE

“When you asked the question, what do you cling to for hope? I couldn’t think of anything... There’s really no reason for someone to look forward to the future at this time.”



UNDERSTANDING THE SHIFT

The 2024 election demonstrated a stark reality: young men (18-29) shifted toward Donald Trump by a striking 12-point margin. This was not just a failure of messaging—it was a failure to engage with and understand a demographic that increasingly feels disconnected from the Democratic Party.

Young men are facing challenges in education, employment, and social mobility, while also navigating evolving societal expectations around masculinity. Many feel sidelined by progressive narratives that do not fully acknowledge their struggles or aspirations. The Democratic Party's failure to engage them has allowed conservative influencers to dominate the conversation, offering them a sense of identity and purpose that Democrats have neglected.

However, these voters are not lost. In fact, many share core Democratic priorities, like affordable housing and good paying jobs. To win them back, Democrats must engage young men where they are, addressing their concerns with authenticity, and offer a compelling vision of belonging and empowerment. Above all, we must shift from a moralizing tone to an aspirational and inclusive message that positions progressives as champions of opportunity, resilience, and economic justice. Only then can we counter right-wing narratives and reestablish trust with this critical voter bloc.

STRATEGIC PILLARS FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT

This initiative will focus on three key areas:

- 1. Purpose Built Research Hub**
- 2. Authentic Upstream Cultural Positioning**
- 3. Engagement and Persuasion**

+11 pts



BIDEN
2020

-1 pt



HARRIS
2024

1. PURPOSE BUILT RESEARCH HUB

To meet the moment, the SAM research hub will create a real time feedback loop, using the most up to date AI tools and innovate how to engage young men in the spaces they occupy most frequently.

Build the foundation: To date, research on young men has been disparate and cobbled together. SAM will fill the desperate need to aggregate, analyze and provide insights on what has already been done and fill gaps through a robust quantitative and qualitative analysis that begins before this demographic reaches voting age.

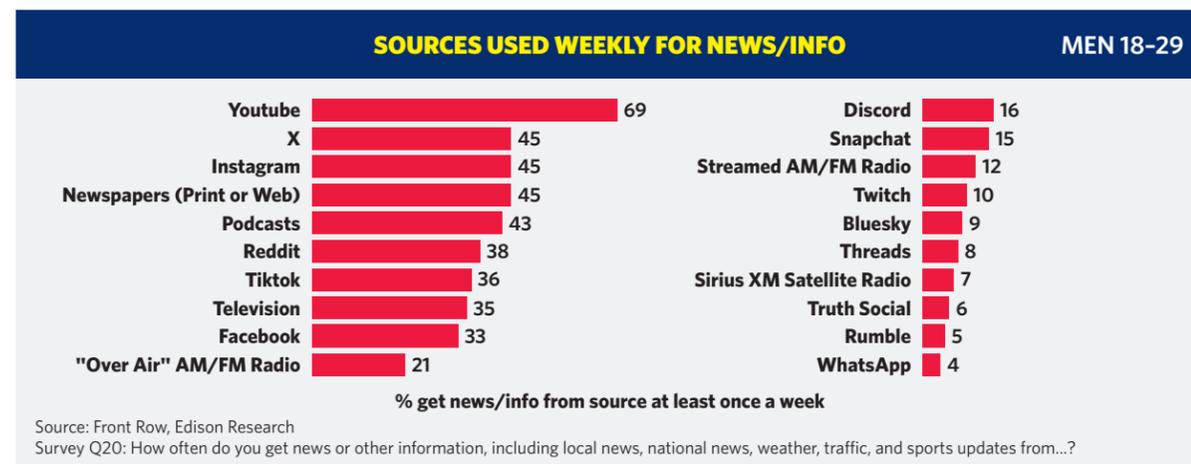
Focus on sentiment analysis: The right has succeeded with this cohort by meeting them where they're at emotionally and leveraging those feelings to their benefit. We need to start now exploring and internalizing the emotional drivers of their cultural preferences and political opinions. There's a gap in research that connects the feelings resulting from their challenges and positions to their behavior in civic spaces. We need to fill in those lines to be effective.

Authentic engagement: SAM will engage young men directly and early through online focus groups, town halls, and interactive discussions that prioritize moving beyond traditional activist circles and incorporate forums that reflect the realities of economic instability, job insecurity, and cultural alienation. By creating structured conversations in places they are most comfortable that resonate with their lived experiences, we can ensure that outreach efforts are not just performative but genuinely effective in mobilizing this critical demographic. Invest in **ongoing rather than one-time research**, ensuring messaging remains adaptive and responsive to shifts in young men's priorities and concerns.

Super charge social listening: Traditional polling methods—utilize **AI sentiment analysis, Discord engagement tracking, Twitch chat monitoring, and deep-dive qualitative ethnographic research** to gain real-time insights into political shifts. This approach should include sentiment mapping across various online subcultures, engagement with working-class digital communities, and tracking the evolution of political discourse in spaces traditionally overlooked by mainstream polling. By embedding ourselves in these digital ecosystems, we can develop more authentic and adaptive messaging strategies that respond dynamically to young men's evolving concerns and priorities. Establishing dedicated research teams that engage with online communities, track sentiment fluctuations, and test messaging efficacy will be crucial to maintaining relevance and effectiveness.

Understanding and utilize media consumption patterns: SAM is conducting the largest media consumption study on young American men to date. We will have the most robust data set in the field to understand where, how and when young men are getting their information, so we can also compete in those spaces.

These Men are Consuming News, But It Looks Different



2. AUTHENTIC UPSTREAM CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

SAM is already working overtime to establish a beachhead and authentic presence in the online forums where young men explore and establish their identities. Creating a dynamic feedback loop for this work with the research is crucial to the success of the program.

Identify and build trust with organic leaders in the largest, relevant online communities in Discord/Reddit and other online platforms: Platforms are teeming with conversation and communities that have their own formal and informal leadership hierarchies. Mapping these spaces and building relationships with the leaders will allow us to influence the conversation effectively and elevate those leaders who express liberal values.

Engage in aspirational conversations: Engage in online conversations about root causes, not behaviors. Many young men feel shame about their diminished economic and social prospects which can be parlayed into grievance politics of the right. Tell a different story that points to structural reasons they are not getting ahead and address with specific solutions.

Deepen cultural literacy: Study the syntax, language and content that gains attention and virality in these spaces.

Develop and test messaging that speaks directly to young men's concerns about career stability, starting families, and navigating modern relationships without falling into the right-wing culture war framing.

Track user journeys: Young men don't get radicalized by accident. They go online looking for information and the right has become very adept at utilizing the algorithms to cycle them into a right-wing funnel. By better understanding this journey, we can be where they are routing alternative pathways through content and conversations.

Develop disseminate and test high-quality, meme-friendly content that young men are likely to share organically, leveraging humor, storytelling, and aspirational messaging rather than overly didactic or partisan framing.

Issue distillation: Reflect, test, and promote a **young men's economic agenda** that addresses the core financial concerns of this demographic: job security, home ownership, wage growth, and affordable education/trade programs.

Cultural wrappers: Develop specific language for policies like expanded child tax credits, homebuyer incentives, and workforce training as a **path to economic empowerment rather than government dependency**. Promote a **positive vision of modern masculinity** that balances personal responsibility with economic opportunity.

Develop and test opposition frames: Young men gravitate towards a lot of the individuals and characteristics that Democrats like to demonize. SAM will invest in the study of how to frame right-wing influencers as **profiteers exploiting male insecurity** for personal gain, emphasizing their financial motives and lack of real solutions for young men's struggles.

Highlight the ways in which **billionaire-backed culture war distractions** serve as a smokescreen to divert attention from economic inequality, stagnating wages, and corporate exploitation.

Attack **corporate exploitation** instead of reinforcing culture war divisions by exposing wage stagnation, exploitative labor practices, and monopolistic business models that limit job growth, while advocating for policies that prioritize workers rights, fair wages, and economic empowerment for young men.

3. ENGAGEMENT AND PERSUASION

Enter 2026 with a first mover advantage to win the cultural narrative and the elections necessary to regain power.

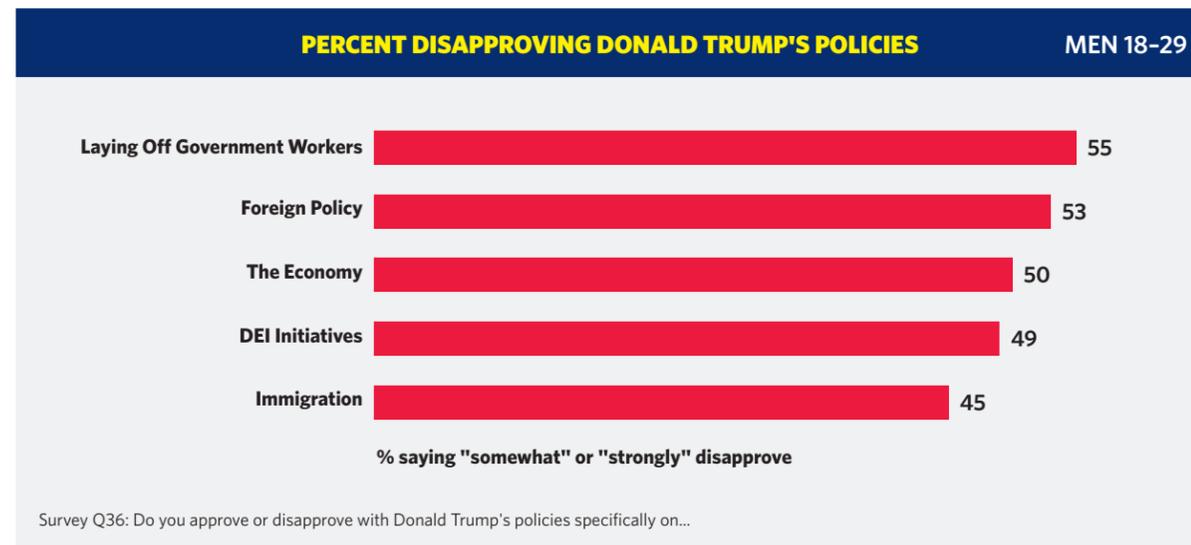
Develop a cohort of credible voices (progressive veterans, blue-collar leaders, athletes, and educators) to promote a **constructive, aspirational vision of manhood** that aligns with Democratic values without alienating other core constituencies.

Research and brief the field on trip lines and **backlash** to ensure our messages not only resonate with young men, but don't turn other voters away at the same time.

Share research findings with Democratic candidates and organizations to **create a unified, evidence-based strategy** that integrates real-world concerns of young men into policy discussions. This effort should include regular briefings, digital dashboards for real-time insights, and collaboration with grassroots organizers who can translate data into effective, locally tailored outreach. By ensuring candidates and organizations have access to actionable intelligence, we can build a strategy that is responsive, authentic, and capable of competing with right-wing narratives in key digital and cultural spaces.

Young Men are Closely Following, And Disturbed by, Many Trump Administration Actions

Young men are keenly following the news of President Trump's tariffs and government layoffs, and are able to articulate how they are being affected directly or indirectly by them. The #1 issue they disapproved of Trump's policies on was laying off federal workers.



Build a **Democratic media ecosystem** that continuously tracks, analyzes, and counteracts conservative narratives while actively testing and creating compelling, shareable content that resonates with young men. This ecosystem should include a network of progressive influencers, digital media outlets, and independent content creators who can effectively communicate economic and social policies in culturally relevant ways. Additionally, it should monitor and debunk misinformation in real-time, leveraging AI-driven trend analysis to respond dynamically to conservative narratives and ensuring that progressive messaging reaches young men in their preferred digital spaces.

Develop content and investigative reports that **expose the hypocrisy and contradictions** of conservative media figures who profit from outrage while living lives detached from their audience's economic realities.

Counter right-wing media dominance by investing in **progressive influencers, viral content, and an appealing vision of progressive masculinity** rooted in resilience, opportunity, and economic justice, aligning with the aspirations of young men who seek stability and success.

Identify, resource, and utilize micro-influencers (YouTube, Twitch, TikTok creators with 50K-500K followers) who can reach specific communities authentically, prioritizing voices that connect with working-class and politically disengaged young men. SAM will feed them regular content and messages to allow them to interpret fights of the day for their audiences.

Build a media roadmap to advise Democratic candidates on how to reach this cohort including:

- Expand beyond traditional digital advertising—invest in **YouTube commentary shows, in-game digital ads, sports/gaming podcasts, and emerging platforms like Rumble and Kick**, ensuring outreach efforts span the entire digital ecosystem.
- Build interactive engagement strategies, including **live Q&A sessions, digital town halls, and Discord/Reddit communities**, where young men can directly engage with progressive voices in an unfiltered, conversational manner.
- Develop partnerships with content creators who emphasize **entrepreneurship, self-improvement, and financial literacy**, positioning progressive values as pathways to personal success and independence.



IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

PHASE 1

RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT

- **Launch Young Voters Advisory Council**, ensuring representation from working-class, non-college, and politically disengaged young men to provide firsthand insights.
- **Conduct extensive digital consumption analysis**, mapping out key online spaces, discussion forums, and content ecosystems where young men are engaging in political discourse.
- **Develop partnerships with sociologists, behavioral economists, and digital anthropologists** to deepen our understanding of young men's motivations, barriers to political participation, and pathways to engagement.
- **Begin informal influencer networking and testing messages** by embedding progressive narratives into casual discussions, digital commentaries, and viral content.
- **Establish direct engagement channels**, such as AMA (Ask Me Anything) sessions on platforms like Reddit and Discord, to initiate organic conversations with young male voters.

PHASE 2

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & TESTING

- **Develop culturally relevant, research-backed content** tailored to the diverse interests and concerns of young men, ensuring it aligns with economic security, personal growth, and social mobility.
- **Utilize iterative content testing** across Discord, YouTube, Twitch, and other emerging platforms to refine messaging in real-time based on audience feedback and engagement metrics.
- **Experiment with various content formats**, including short-form videos, interactive Q&A sessions, podcasts, and meme-based messaging to determine the most effective communication styles.
- **Implement A/B testing strategies for different narratives**, analyzing which messages resonate best with key audience segments, particularly working-class and non-college young men.
- **Evaluate effectiveness** through engagement analytics, sentiment tracking, and digital focus groups to ensure content is adaptive and responsive to shifting opinions and trends.

PHASE 3

FULL-SCALE DEPLOYMENT

- **Expand influencer partnerships and organic content strategies**, ensuring long-term collaboration with trusted voices that resonate with young men's interests, including self-improvement, financial literacy, and career development.
- **Launch digital ad campaigns based on tested content**, integrating nuanced messaging that aligns with young men's concerns about economic security, opportunity, and social mobility, while countering right-wing disinformation. Coordinate with Democratic campaigns for local outreach efforts, incorporating on-the-ground engagement through mentorship programs, town halls, and interactive events that provide direct access to policymakers and progressive advocates.
- **Strengthen community-building efforts by establishing sustained engagement channels** such as Discord servers, YouTube community discussions, and Reddit AMAs, where progressive leaders and influencers can foster ongoing dialogue and trust.
- **Implement post-campaign analytics and feedback loops** to refine future outreach efforts, ensuring that lessons from digital and in-person engagement inform continuous improvement in messaging and strategy.

BUDGET & TEAM

This budget optimizes investments by enhancing research capabilities, expanding influencer outreach, and refining ad spending for efficiency. By prioritizing authentic engagement, digital content creation, and real-time adaptation, the "Winning Back Young Men" strategy is positioned for maximum effectiveness and long-term impact.

2025-26 BUDGET

Research & Communications	\$4.5M	Expanded funding for real-time analysis, sentiment tracking, and focus groups.
Organic Influencer Outreach & Media	\$6.5M	Scaling micro/mid-tier influencer networks and authentic storytelling initiatives.
Digital & In-Game Ads, Strategic Placements	\$6M	Refining ad targeting and investing in interactive and gamified messaging.
Community Engagement (Events, Advisory)	\$3M	Strengthening grassroots organizing, mentorship, and online engagement.
TOTAL	\$20M	Optimized for maximum outreach impact.



COLIN ALLRED

Former Congressman Colin Allred was born and raised in Dallas by a single mom who was a public school teacher. With the help of his community, Allred earned a full-ride football scholarship to Baylor University, and after college, he deferred his acceptance to law school to play in the NFL where he was a linebacker for five seasons. A career-ending injury then opened the door for him to fulfill his other dream—becoming a civil rights attorney. After law school, Allred worked in voting rights across the country and in Texas to combat voter suppression and make sure that no eligible voters were denied access to the ballot box.

Allred also served as an appointee in the Obama Administration before he returned home to Dallas to run for Congress. In 2018 he defeated an entrenched Republican incumbent and represented Texas' 32nd District for three terms. In Congress, Allred was repeatedly recognized as the most bipartisan member of the Texas delegation while also being chosen as a leader among his peers as the elected co-President of the Class of 2018 and the Caucus Leadership Representative in the 118th Congress. His accomplishments include opening a VA hospital and other facilities across the state of Texas. In 2023, Allred launched an historic campaign against Ted Cruz and fought to bring Texans the representation they deserve, launching the first coordinated campaign in Texas, shattering fundraising records, and over-performing the top of the ticket by over 5 percentage points. His campaign elevated the voices of Texas women who deal with the heartbreaking consequences of our Country's strictest abortion ban, and held Cruz accountable for his self-serving record and dereliction of duty at our Southern border. Allred and his wife Aly, live in Dallas where they are raising their two sons, Jordan and Cameron.



JOHN DELLA VOLPE

John Della Volpe is the nation's leading authority on youth polling and public opinion, known for humanizing data and turning insights into deeply resonant narratives. As Director of Polling at the Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics since 2000, he has led the definitive studies on young Americans' attitudes toward politics and public life. As founder and CEO of SocialSphere, he has advised heads of state, blue-chip companies, global brands, Hollywood, sports organizations, nonprofits, and civic institutions on navigating public opinion and building meaningful connections. He served as a pollster and advisor to President Biden's 2020 campaign. A regular contributor to NBC, MSNBC, and The New York Times, he is the

author of the best-selling book *Fight: How Gen Z is Channeling Their Fear and Passion to Save America* (2022). An Eisenhower Fellow, his global work includes research across Asia and service on the US-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission on Media. He is also the executive producer of *Power of Z* and associate producer of *De Slag om Florida* (The Battle for Florida). A University of San Diego alumnus, Della Volpe has received its Author E. Hughes Career Achievement Award and an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Stonehill College.



ILYSE HOGUE

Ilyse Hogue is a Senior Fellow at New America and the Cofounder of the Democratic Futures Institute. Her focus is on fighting authoritarianism and building conditions for resilient democracy. Ilyse has spent years researching and writing about the role of gender oppression and gender backlash in authoritarian movements, authoring a best selling book on the topic. Titled *The Lie That Binds*, it explores the weaponization of reproductive rights in service of an anti-democratic agenda in post-World War II America. Ilyse produced a limited series podcast by the same name. As a trained scientist, Hogue has always taken a data-driven and research-grounded orientation to effective strategies to advance social and

economic progress, honing those skills in her time as a leader at MoveOn.org where she led the communications and advocacy efforts for the six-million-plus member organization. Hogue has also served as Senior Advisor to Media Matters for America where she grew a sharp instinct for how narratives move through the information ecosystem before co-founding a SuperPAC designed to expose and counter dark money in politics. Hogue spent close to a decade as President and CEO of NARAL Pro-Choice America (now Reproductive Freedom for All). Under her tenure, the organization tripled in size and Hogue designed and led initiatives to raise the salience of reproductive freedom in political and cultural discourse, dissecting and leveraging how to undercut its potency as a rallying cry for authoritarian forces. After leaving NARAL, Hogue served as the President of Purpose Campaigns, a global evidence-driven strategy firm, where her focus was on rising global authoritarianism and disinformation. Hogue's work has been published in *Time*, the *Guardian*, *USA Today*, *Democracy: Journal of Ideas*, and she's a regular contributor to the *Bulwark*. She serves on the boards of American Bridge and The American Independent.



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