

Social Listening Threat Analysis

June 1 – Aug 12

Updated scan of emerging threats for
Democratic candidates in target geographies

GSG for Third Way



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Topic Listening

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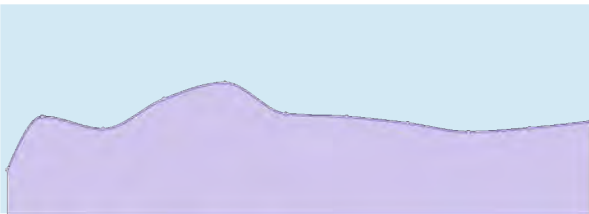
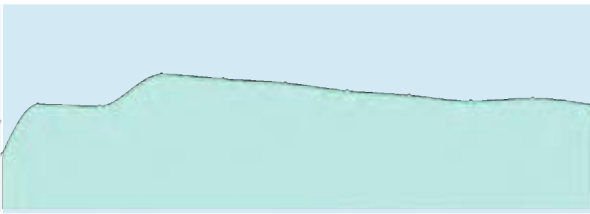
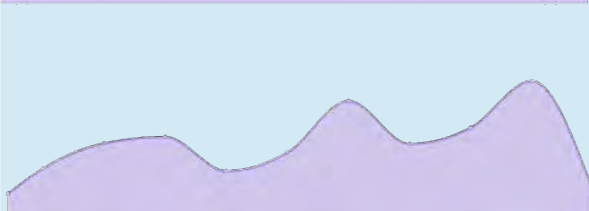
- **TRENDING UP:** The Left/Socialism, Immigration, CRT (though CRT remains at minimal volume)
- **HOLDING STEADY:** Crime and Policing, Abortion, Economic Concerns, COVID-19, Ukraine
- **IN DECLINE:** Gun Violence, January 6, Trans Issues

- **Discussion of Immigration is on a slight upward trend and more focused on Democrats.** While the overall volume of conversation about Immigration falls behind other issues, there is a small upward trend in discussion of the topic. More of the conversation is focused on Democrats and negative in tone.
- **Crime and Policing remained at the center of the online discourse.** With a decreased volume of discussion around COVID, Crime and Policing held steady to become the most discussed issue among the Gen Pop audience in all four geographies. The focus of this conversation is on violent crime with a local and national lens, though some elements of perceived wrongdoing by former President Trump were also included in the conversation.

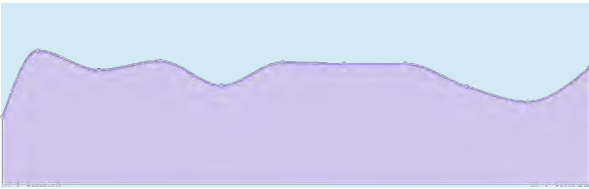
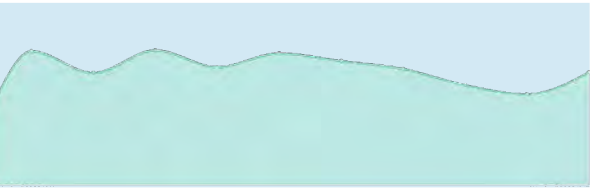
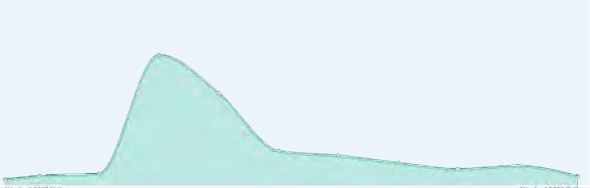
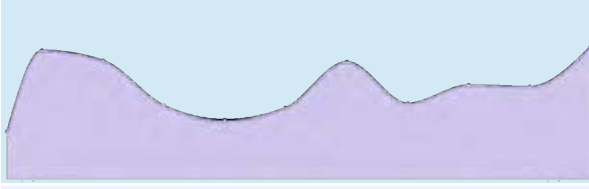
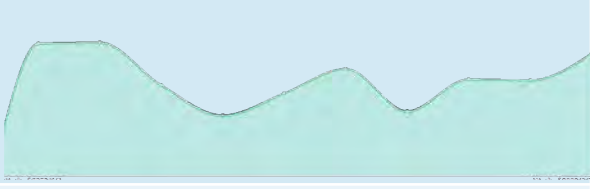
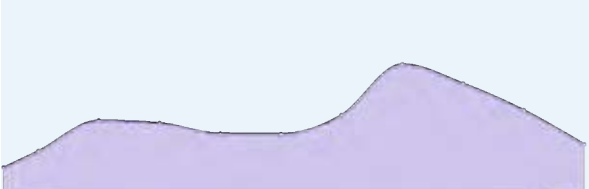
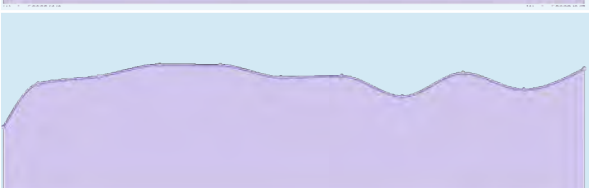
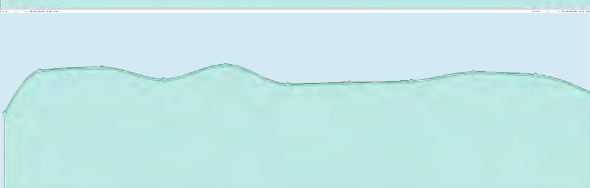
Key Findings – Topic Listening

- **The conversation around Abortion remained elevated – but is not threatening to Democrats.** Since the overturn of Roe vs. Wade, conversation around Abortion has remained elevated and is now the second most discussed issue for the Gen Pop group. However, this conversation is overwhelmingly negative in tone towards Republicans.
- **Economic Concerns mostly fell away.** While a major topic in the last scan, the language used around Economic Concerns has become increasingly positive. The level of the conversation held steady, but users are talking less about the cost of household items and instead discussing the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act.
- **Once again, there was no differentiation in the topics discussed by geography.** As with the previous scan measuring the volume, tone, and content of the conversations around our topics, we saw little distinction between users in Virginia, Midwestern States, Pennsylvania, and Western States.

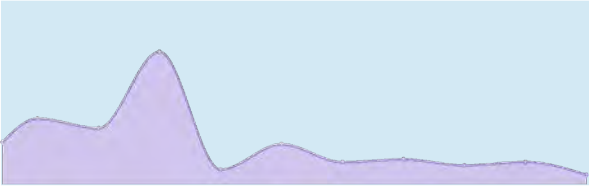
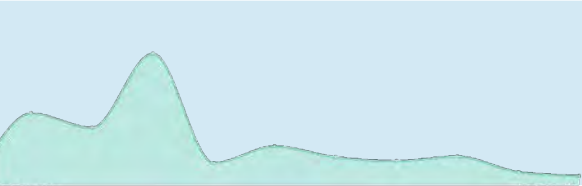
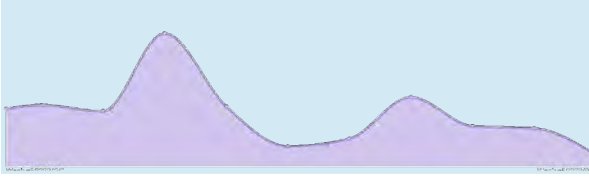
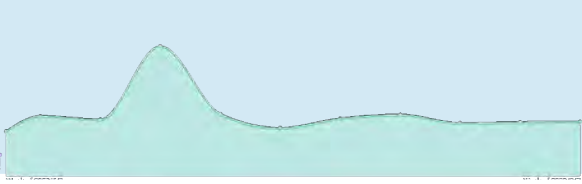
Since the last scan, there has been a slight upward trend in discussion of The Left and Socialism, Immigration, and Critical Race Theory, though overall discussion of Critical Race Theory remains minimal

Topics with Rising Interest (All Geographies)			
Topic	Description	GOP	Gen Pop
The Left/Socialism	Discussion of “The Left” and liberals in general to uncover what topics are growing in alignment with fears of the Left.		
Immigration	Conversation around immigration, illegal immigration, and associated issues.		
CRT	The teaching of Critical Race Theory in schools and parents’ rights.		

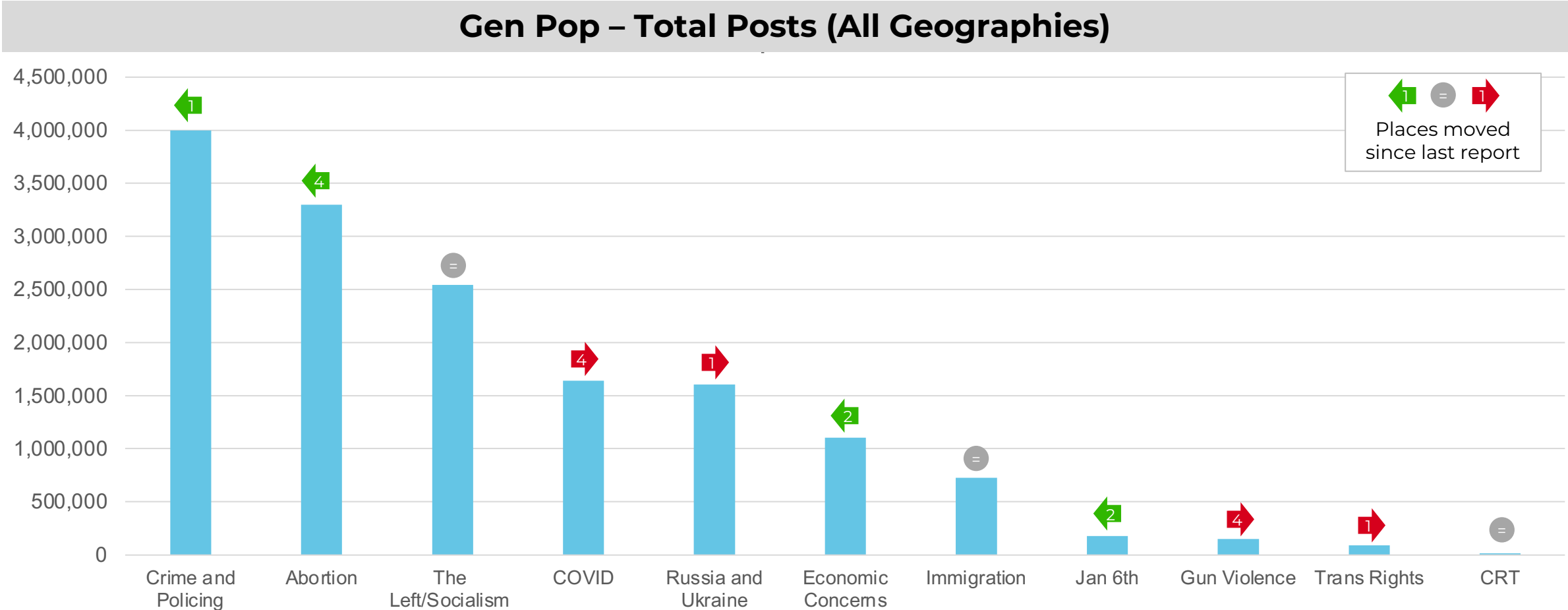
Discussion of Crime and Policing, Abortion, Economic Concerns, COVID-19, and Ukraine remained steady over the period of analysis

Topics with Steady Interest (All Geographies)			
Topic	Description	GOP	Gen Pop
Crime and Policing	Perceptions of crime and its relationship to the movement for police reform.		
Abortion	Discussion of abortion policy generally, the Supreme Court case in Dobbs v. Jackson WHO and the leaked provisional ruling.		
Economic Concerns	Discussion of the economy with a particular focus on inflation and the rising cost of living as well as specific price sensitivities like gas.		
COVID 19	The response to the COVID-19 pandemic and national and local policies associated with it including shutdowns, reopening, and the vaccination program.		
Ukraine	Discussion of the Administration's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.		

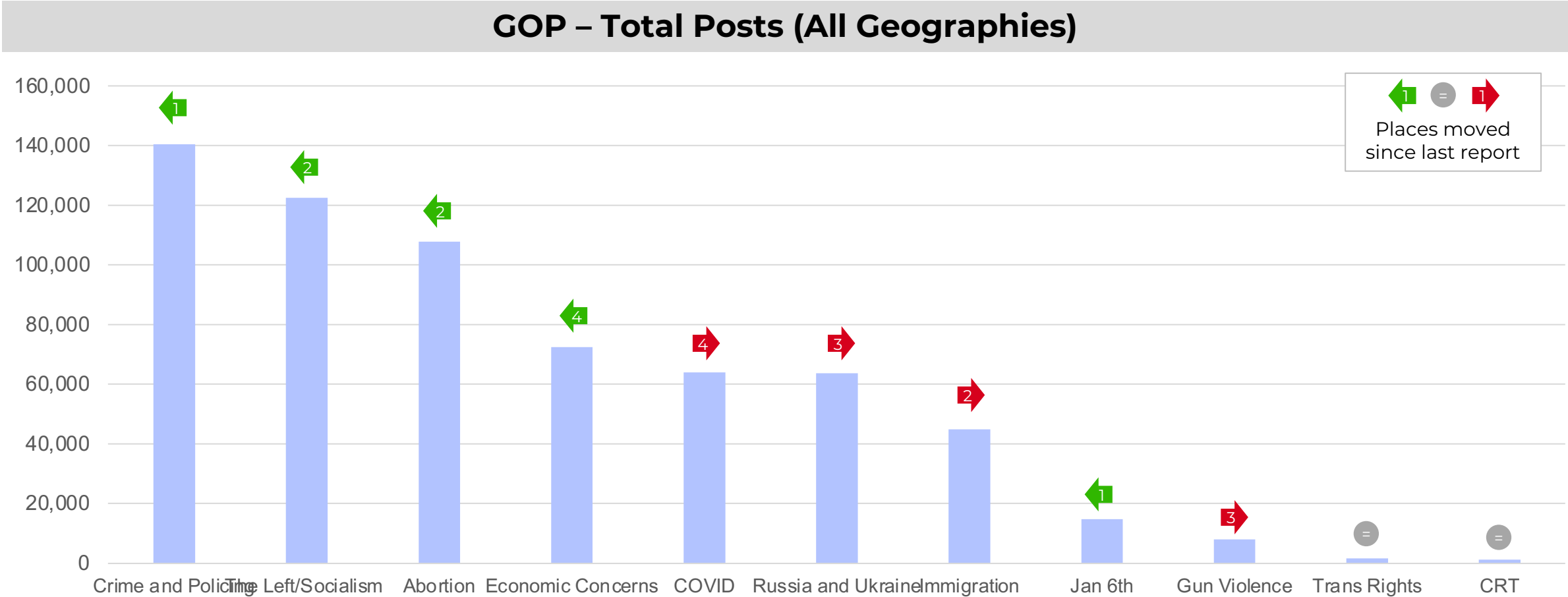
There has been a downward trend in the discussion of Gun Violence, January 6, and Trans Issues since the last scan

Topics with Falling Interest (All Geographies)			
Topic	Description	GOP	Gen Pop
Gun Violence	The 2nd Amendment, gun violence prevention measures, and the response to recent mass shootings in Uvalde and Buffalo.		
January 6	Mentions of the insurrection and the work of the January 6th Committee.		
Trans Issues	Discussion of issues relating to the trans community with a focus on children, schools, and involvement in sporting competitions.		

Among the Gen Pop group, the largest mover in terms of rank of topics was Abortion, which is now the second most discussed after Crime and Policing

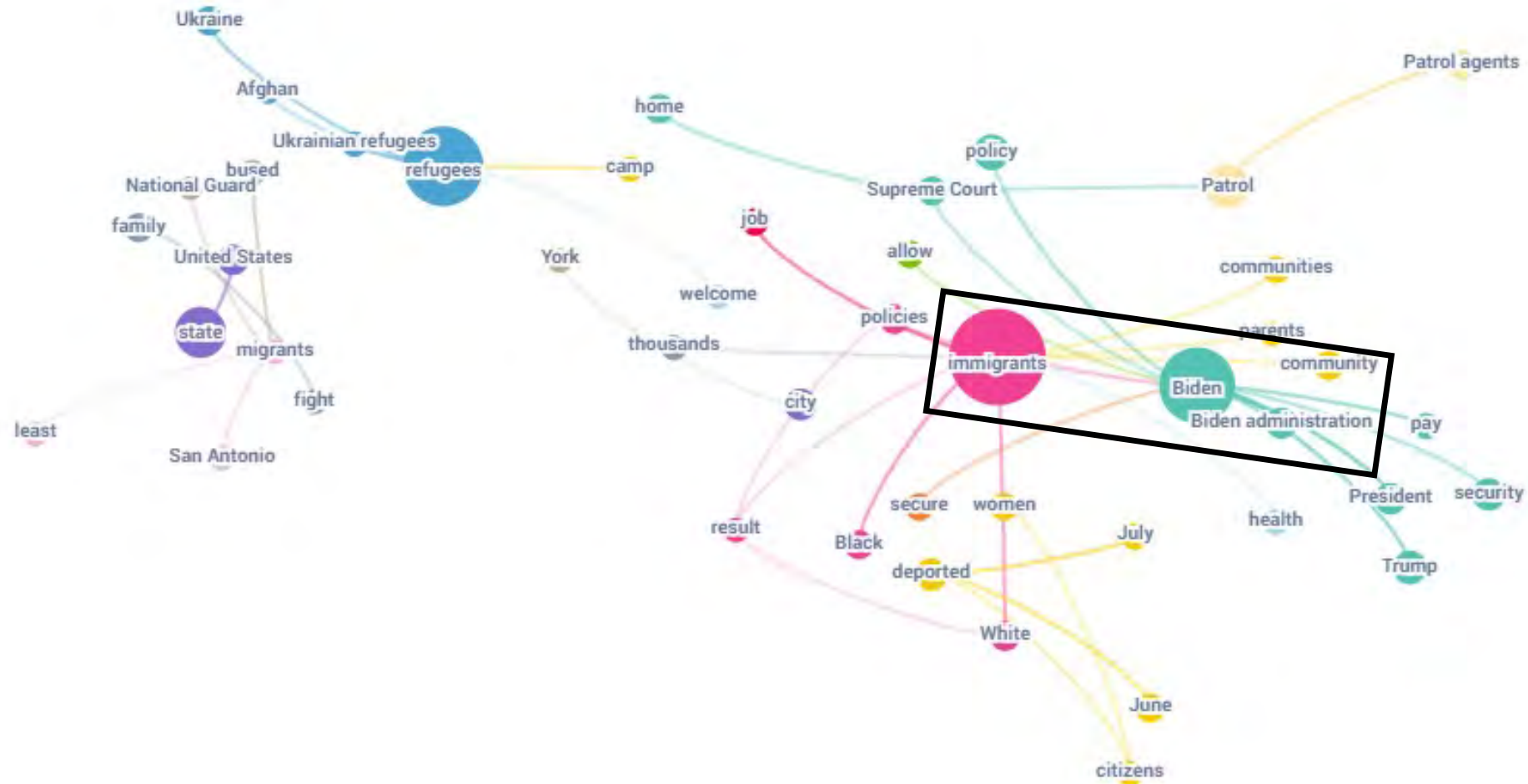


Among the GOP group, Crime and Policing, The Left, and Abortion have driven the most conversation overall, while COVID (previously the top issue) is no longer a focus of discussion



With a slight upward trend in the conversation about Immigration, members of the Gen Pop group continue to link immigrants closely to the Biden Administration

Immigration – Gen Pop Language Analysis (All Geographies)



The discussion around Immigration is becoming increasingly political, with a negative focus on Democrats and Republicans and Biden and Trump

Immigration – Gen Pop Rising and Falling Subtopics (All Geographies)

Falling Subtopics

policies
Supreme Court Join
White seekers Black policy
immigrants Ukraine case June
country family Learn government
U.S. home human program
community support
United States American
refugees

Rising Subtopics

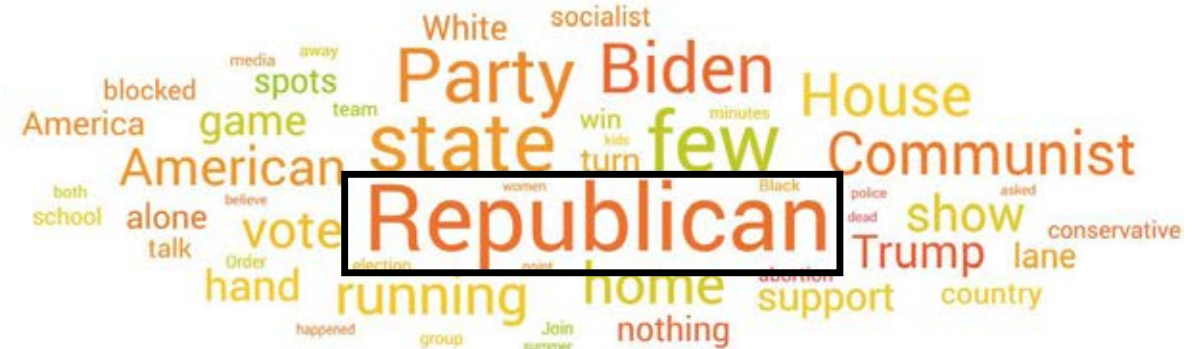
million southern
Biden administration
group President
deported law continue
House issues report crisis
Democrats story children
Patrol city **Republicans** security
Trump Patrol agents **Biden**
crossing

Sentiment

Negative  Positive

The Left/Socialism – GOP and Gen Pop Conversation (All Geographies)

Gen Pop



Negative  Positive

Discussion of Crime and Policing has moved away from a specific focus on the role of guns in criminal activity to violent crime in general

Crime and Policing – Gen Pop Rising and Falling Subtopics (All Geographies)

Falling Subtopics



Rising Subtopics

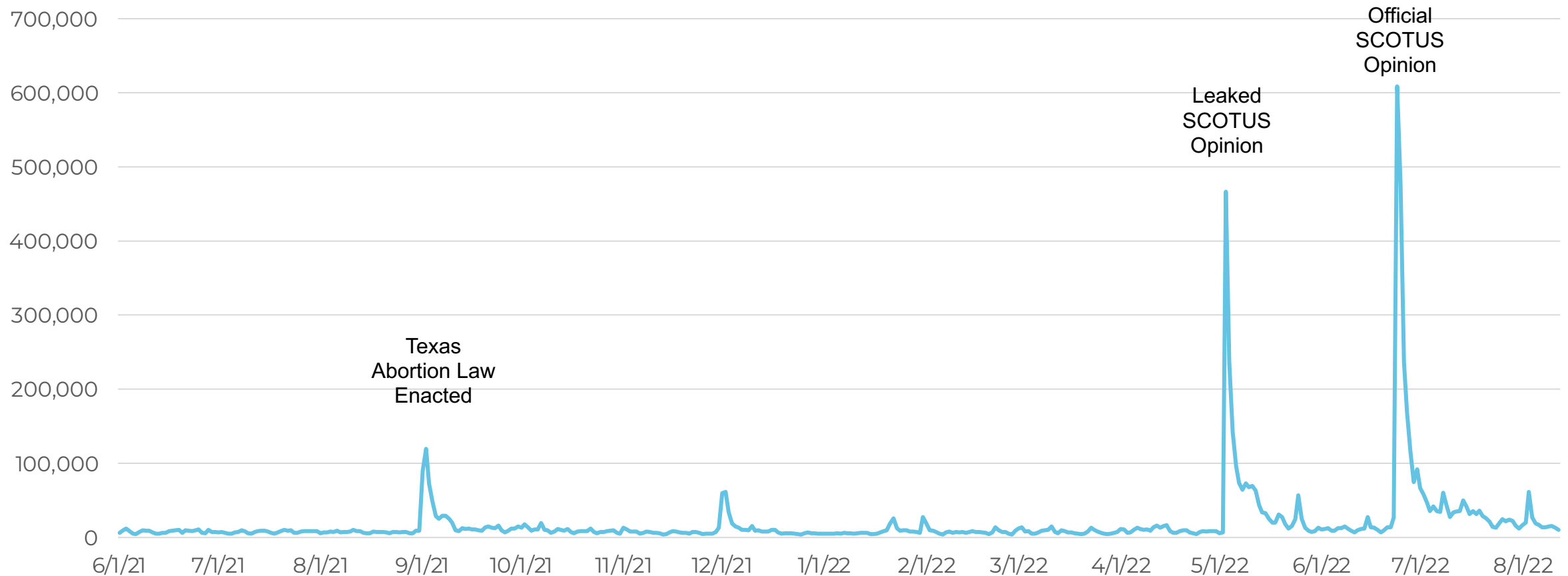


Sentiment



As well as the peaks in conversation, the daily volume of Gen Pop conversation about Abortion is also higher than the period covered by the last analysis

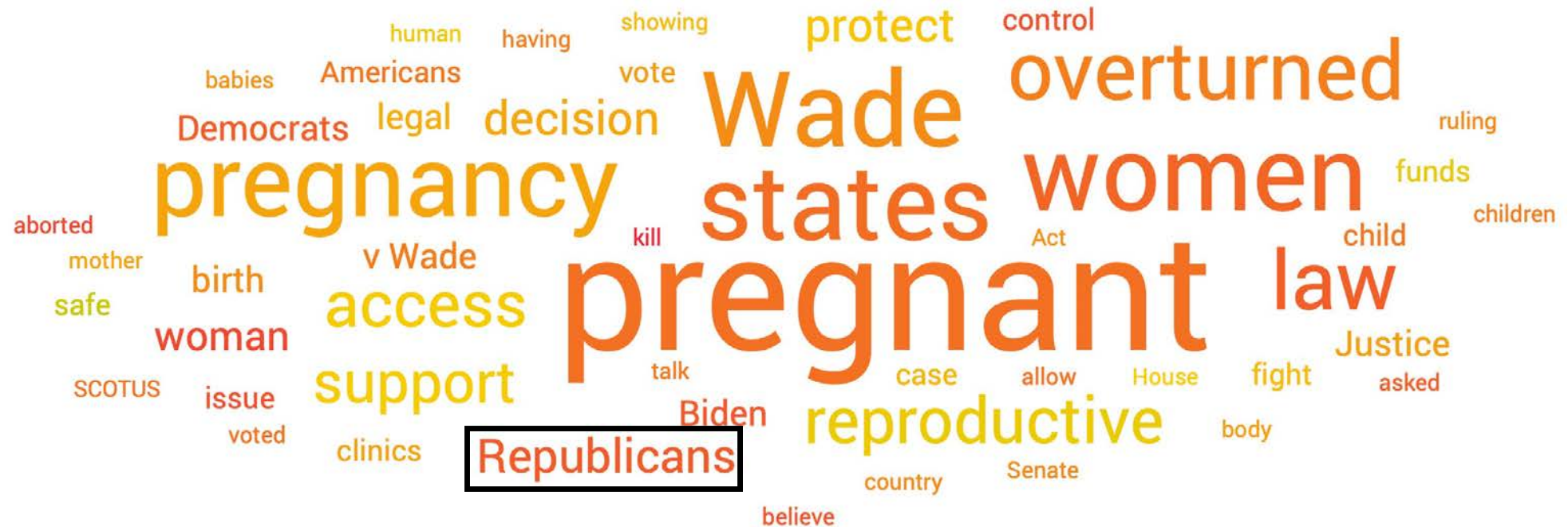
Abortion – Gen Pop Daily Volume (All Geographies)



The conversation around Abortion does not represent a threat to Democrats with Republicans discussed more negatively and in greater volume

Abortion – Gen Pop Conversation (All Geographies)

Abortion – Gen Pop Conversation (All Geographies)

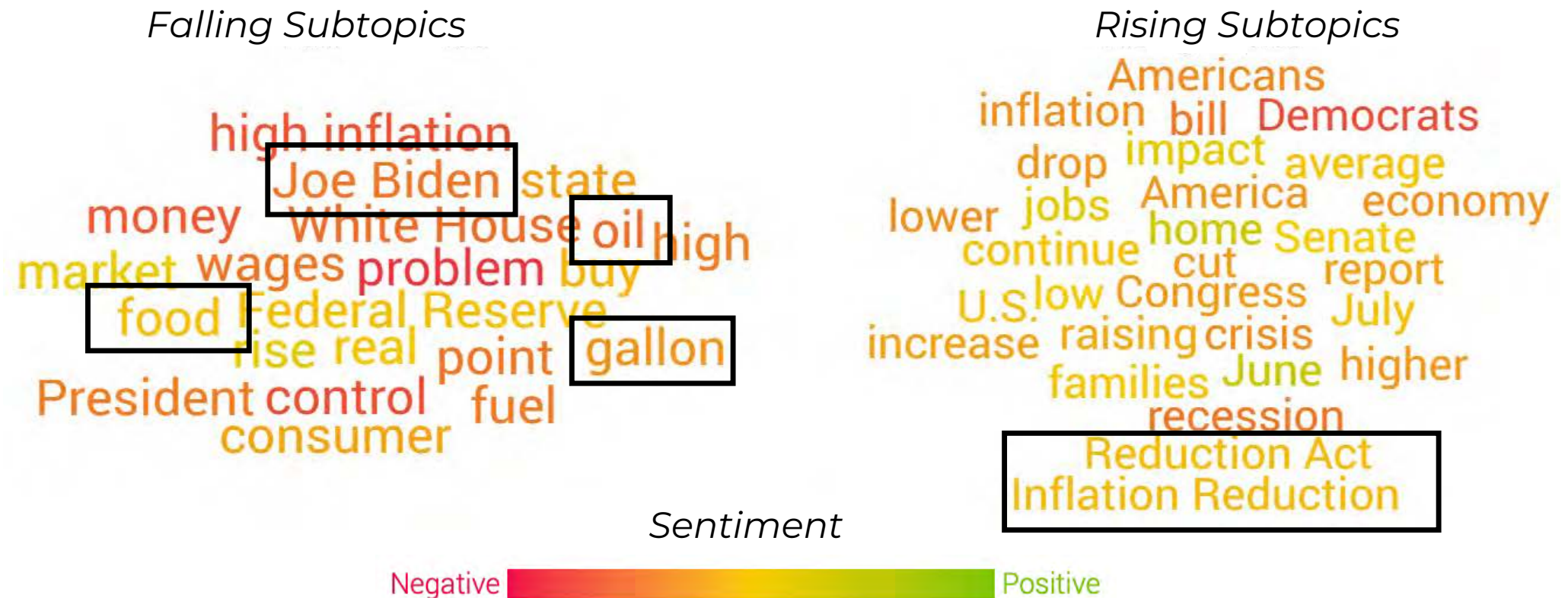


Sentiment

Negative  Positive

While discussion of Economic Concerns has remained steady, the topics discussed have changed from the unaffordable price of gas and food to the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act

Economic Concerns – Gen Pop Rising and Falling Subtopics (All Geographies)



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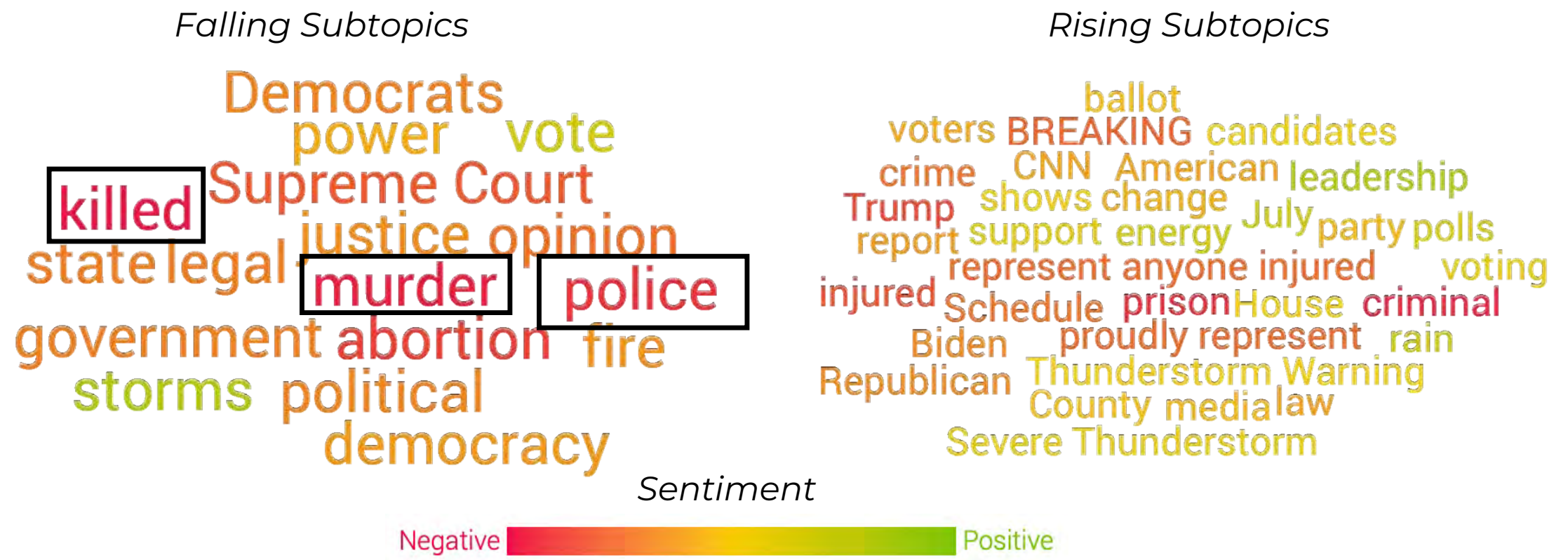
Open-Ended Listening

Key Findings – Open-Ended Listening

- **NOTABLE TOPICS:** FBI Raid on Mar-a-Lago, Hunter Biden, Expansion of the IRS
- **The expansion of the number of IRS agents under the Inflation Reduction Act was discussed negatively.** Both the Gen Pop group and the GOP group talked in negative terms about the expansion of the IRS under the Inflation Reduction Act. Most focused on the increased number of IRS Agents.
- **The FBI raid on Mar-a-Lago provoked an angry response from the GOP group.** The raid drove a spike in discussion of the FBI. However, while the incident itself was discussed in negative terms, there wasn't a single theme around which conversation coalesced.
- **The Biden Family, and specifically Hunter Biden, was an increased topic of conversation among the GOP group.** This discussion was fanned by the FBI's raid on former President Trump. It was not echoed in the Gen Pop group.

In the open-ended listening, some of the topics around violent crime fell away after driving the conversation in the previous scan

Gen Pop Open-Ended Posts – Rising Topics (All Geographies)



Discussion in the GOP group was increasingly focused on Democrats and Biden generally, and was extremely negative in tone

GOP Open-Ended Posts – Rising Topics (All Geographies)

Falling Subtopics

show
Supreme Court
GOP murder left election fire
country Joe Biden U.S. voting
California Constitution abortion
killed control York Fox
disaster America
democracy

Rising Subtopics

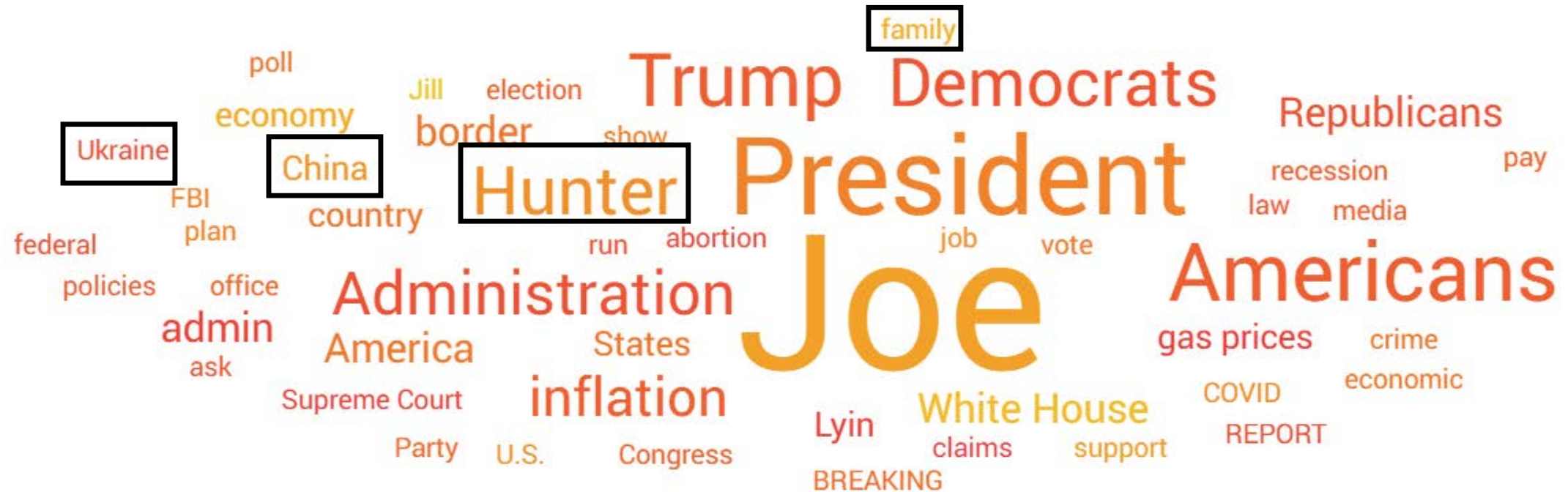
Democrats
Biden leadership Trump
REPORT prison support
arrested office voters criminal
government vote Bill legal police
win run Black conservative
CNN leaders Arizona FBI
BREAKING Wisconsin Americans
polls United States

Sentiment

Negative  Positive

This discussion of Biden and Democrats among the GOP group was increasingly focused on Hunter Biden and the Biden family alongside political issues like inflation

Biden and Democrats – GOP (All Geographies)

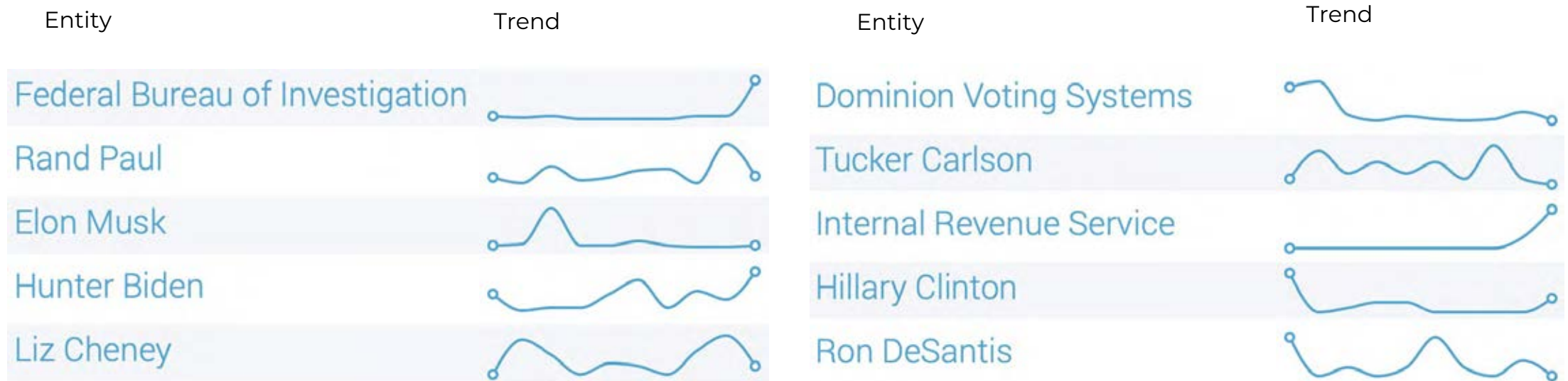


Sentiment

Negative  Positive

The FBI's raid of Mar-a-Lago, and comparisons to the treatment of Hunter Biden, as well as the expansion of the IRS under the Inflation Reduction Act are all spiking among the GOP group

GOP Open-Ended Posts – Top Entities Mentioned (All Geographies)



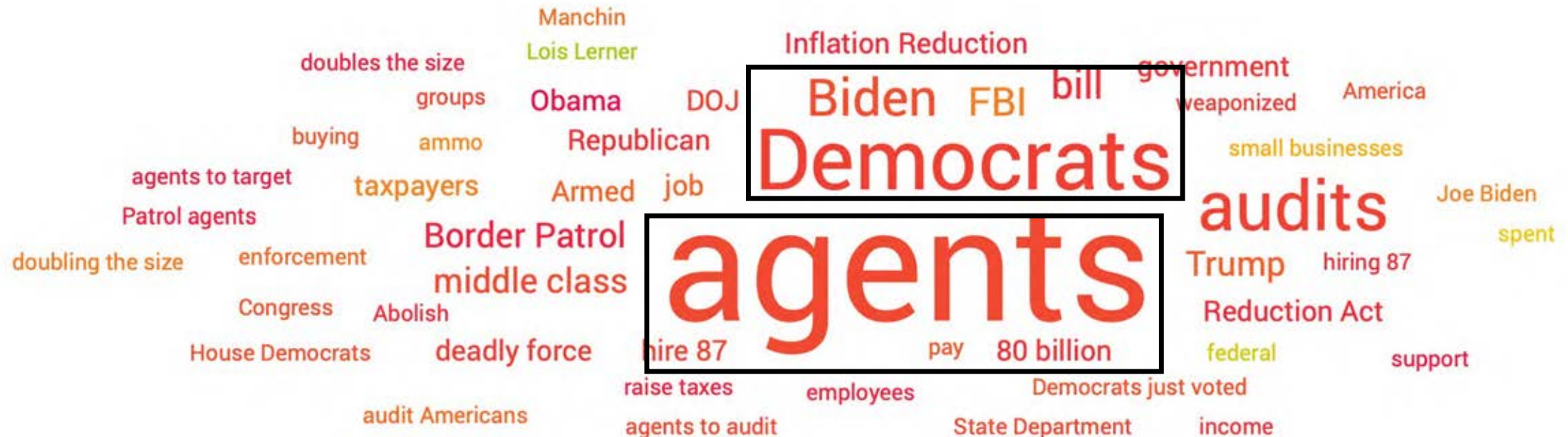
While the raid of Mar-a-Lago produced an angry response from the GOP group, the narrative did not coalesce around a particular response or counter claim

Mar-a-Lago Raid – GOP (All Geographies)



The expansion of the IRS under the Inflation Reduction Act drew an angry response from the GOP audience with most connecting the move to “Democrats” as well as “Biden”

IRS Expansion – GOP (All Geographies)

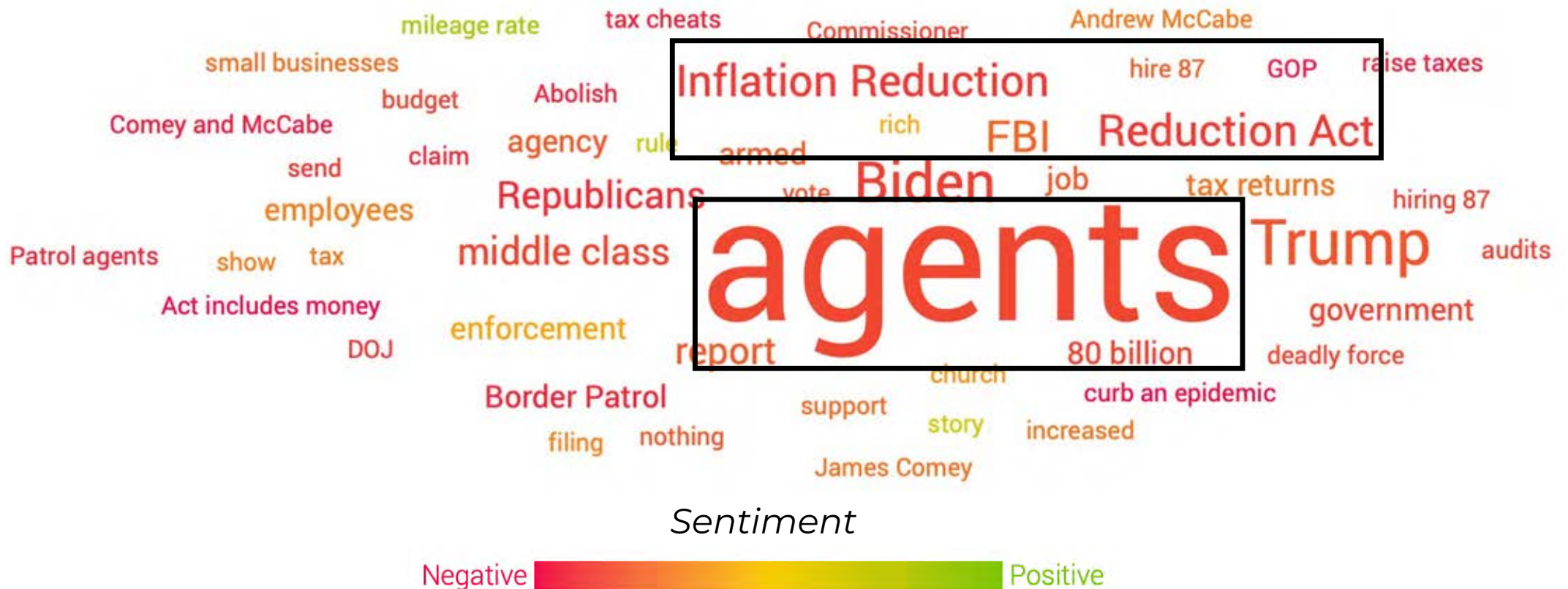


Sentiment

Negative  Positive

The GOP fervor about the expansion of the IRS is echoed in the posts from the Gen Pop group – the Inflation Reduction Act itself is talked about negatively when associated with the IRS

IRS Expansion – Gen Pop (All Geographies)



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Takeaways

Takeaways

- **CRIME REMAINS THE NUMBER ONE THREAT.**

Both groups were still likely to engage in discussion around violent crime. While there was not evidence of them more frequently linking this to Democrats or the Administration, the threat remains substantial. As before, we recommend candidates be proactive in condemning violent crime that is driving local, statewide, and national media coverage and vocal about their policies that would reduce crime.

- **FOCUSING ON ABORTION DOES NOT RISK A BACKLASH.**

The repeal of Roe has made Abortion a high salience issue that is being discussed online more than ever. However, there is little evidence of any emerging harmful narratives for Democrats on the issue. When the Gen Pop group in our target geographies do discuss Abortion, it is with negative sentiment toward Republicans.

Takeaways

- **CLARIFY THE ROLE OF NEW IRS AGENTS.**

In the Open-Ended Listening we saw the Gen Pop group talking negatively about the news of an increased number of IRS agents as a provision of the Inflation Reduction Act. Take time to explain who the new agents will be targeting and why that is important, stressing that they will only be focused on the most wealthy.

- **BE PROACTIVE ON THE EMERGING THREAT AROUND IMMIGRATION.**

This month there were some early indicators of Immigration emerging as an issue in both the GOP and Gen Pop groups. In particular, a slight upward trend in the conversation and an increased focus on the role of Democrats and Biden are worrying signs. Begin to talk proactively about sensible, humane policies for curbing illegal immigration.

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Appendix I: Approach

Approach

We looked to identify the areas that have growing momentum, both on the right and where those narratives have transferred to the general population. In order to achieve this, we gathered information on the issues that are gaining momentum both with the general population and a smaller subset of committed GOP social media users in four target geographies. Our approach included:

- **Topic Listening** – We identified a list of topics that are likely to be the center of Republican attacks on Democrats. The topics identified were Abortion, COVID, Crime and Policing, CRT and Schooling, Economic Concerns, Gun Violence, Immigration, January 6th, Russia/Ukraine, Transgender Rights, and The Left/Socialism. For each we developed expansive queries to identify which are gaining or losing momentum and the subtopics that are driving these changes.
- **Open-Ended Listening** – Analyzing all News and Politics posts among right-wing influencers, the right, and the general population online to identify topics that may not yet seem central to the political discourse but, because of the nature of who is talking about them and how, we can identify them as potential emerging threats for Democratic candidates.

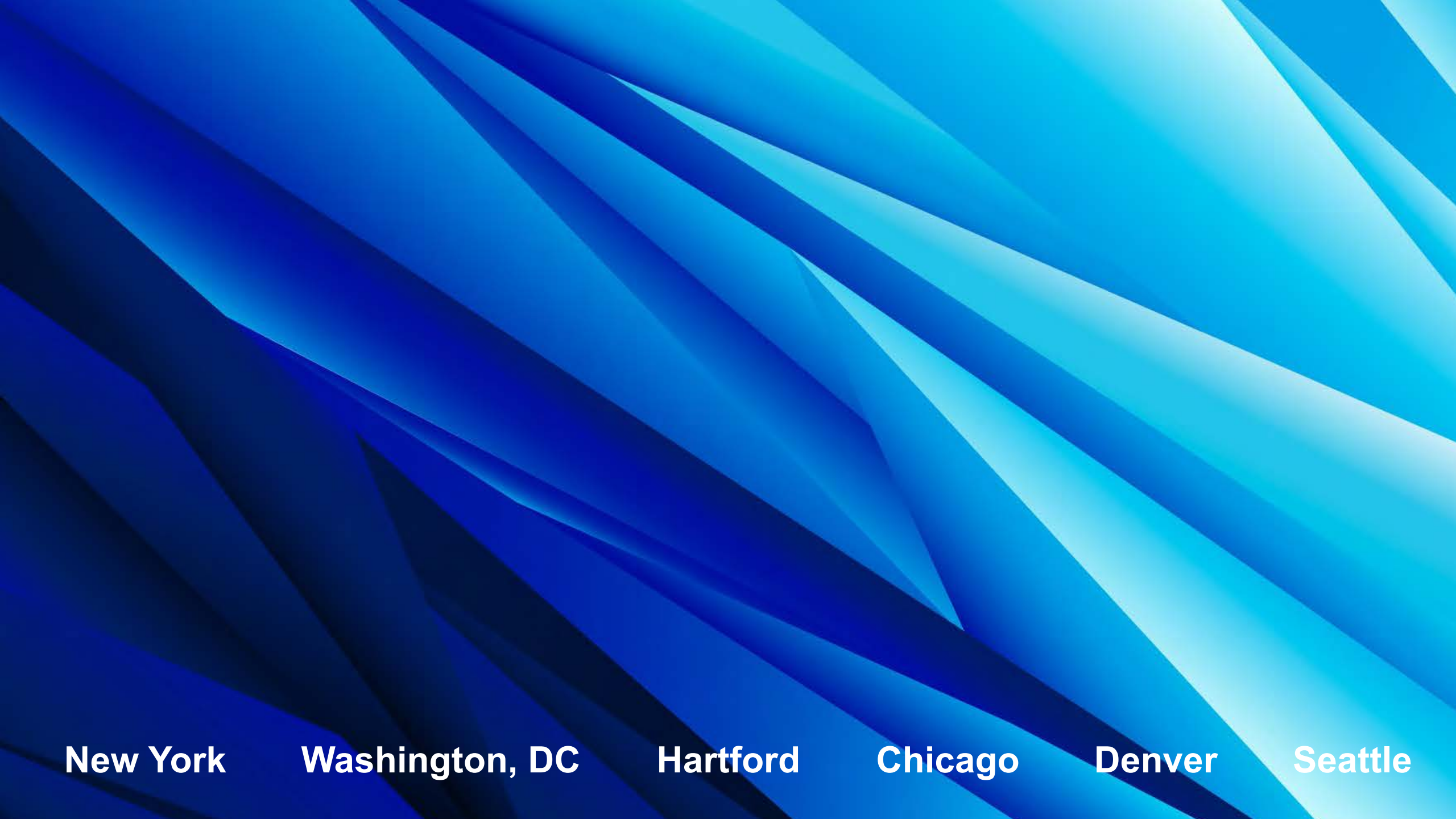
Approach

To complete this analysis, we gathered content from social media users' public posts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook in four target geographies:

- **Virginia**
- **Midwestern States** (Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota)
- **Pennsylvania**
- **Western States** (Nevada, Washington)

These were chosen for their demographic variety and their importance to the November elections. Specifically, Virginia will host a high density of key races, the Midwestern states each have prominent gubernatorial races, Pennsylvania will provide insight into the Rust Belt electorate, and Nevada and Washington will illustrate any differences in the discourse in the West in two states with target races.

In each geography, we looked at both a Gen Pop group and a smaller group of enthusiastic GOP loyalists. This allowed us to measure the momentum of issues on the right and how effectively they were crossing to the population at large.

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New York

Washington, DC

Hartford

Chicago

Denver

Seattle