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THE COVID STATES PROJECT: A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY REPORT #92: THE MAR-A-LAGO SEARCH

USA, September 2022

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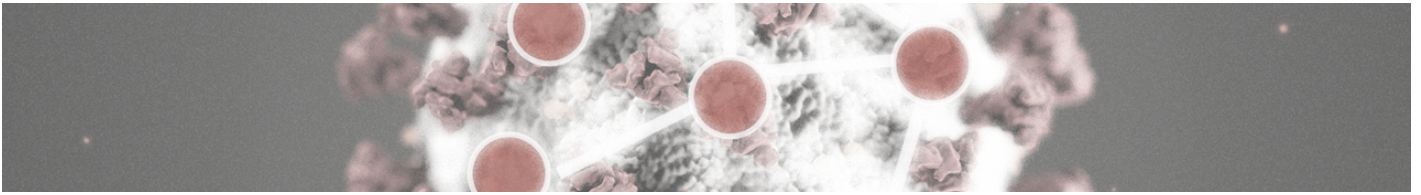
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Report of October 20, 2022, v.1

The COVID States Project

From: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

A joint project of:

Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

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Northeastern University
Network Science Institute



COVER MEMO

Summary Memo — October 20, 2022

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Note on methods:

Between August 11, 2022 and September 13, 2022, we surveyed 26,616 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on the other waves, see covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to 2020 vote choice and turnout, race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the latest in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors regarding COVID-19 in the United States.

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The Mar-A-Lago Search

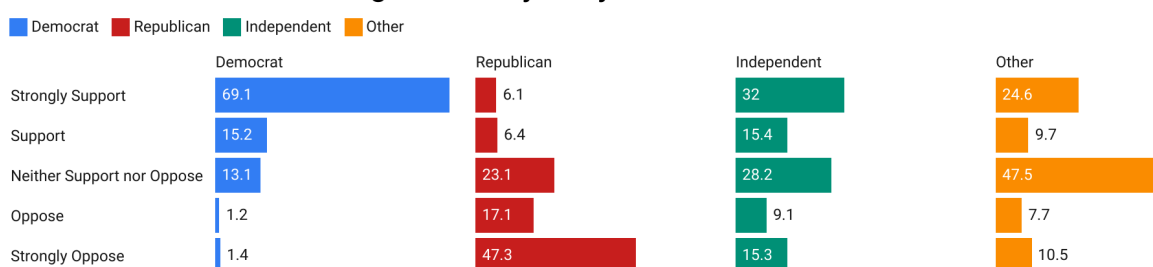
This report contains some key takeaways, a brief write-up, some summary statistics, and a collection of open-ended responses surrounding public opinion of the August 8, 2022 FBI search of Donald Trump's estate, Mar-A-Lago.

Key takeaways

- A large majority of Americans quickly became aware of the Mar-A-Lago search. Overall, 81 percent reported that they were aware of the search. Additionally, 82 percent of those who took the survey within a week after the search were already aware of it.
- Overall, Americans approved of the search by a 51-27 margin. Another 22 percent neither supported nor opposed the search.
- Democrats overwhelmingly supported the FBI search of Mar-A-Lago by an 84-3 margin. Over two thirds (69 percent) of Democrats strongly supported the search.
- A strong majority of Republicans opposed the search by a 64-13 margin. Additionally, 47 percent of Republicans strongly opposed the search.
- Independents were nearly twice as likely to support the search as they were to oppose it, with a 47-24 margin. Close to a third (32 percent) of independents strongly supported the search.
- The intensity of Republican opposition to the search decreased slightly as time following the search increased. While Republican support for the raid remained very low in both cases, those strongly opposing the raid dropped from 54 percent of Republicans who responded within a week of the search to 46 percent of Republicans who responded at least one week after the search. Very few Republicans supported the search regardless of when they took the survey, but the percentage of those *strongly* opposing it dipped over time.

The most recent wave of our survey unsurprisingly revealed a drastic partisan gap in support for the FBI search of Mar-A-Lago. While the public generally supported the search by a 51-27 margin, Democrats (84-3 support) were significantly more supportive of the search than Republicans (64-13 oppose). Independents supported the search by a 47-24 margin. Partisanship, ideology, and Trump thermometer score were all strong predictors of attitudes towards the search. For example, a one degree increase in Trump's thermometer score was associated with nearly a one percent decrease in probability of support for the search.

Attitudes Towards Mar-A-Lago Search by Party



Source: Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1.

Data collection for this wave began on August 11, three days after the search, so we are not able to capture the most immediate reactions to the search. We can nevertheless break down attitudes by proximity to the search to look for any temporal differences.

Here, we found that Republican support for the raid was very low regardless of when the survey was taken, but the intensity of Republican opposition to the search did decrease as time following the search passed. Fifty-four percent of Republicans who took the survey within one week of the search (August 11-August 15) strongly opposed the search, which dropped to 46 percent among those who responded at least one week after the search.

Among Republicans, support for the search remained between 11 and 13 percent regardless of which period respondents took the survey in, suggesting that even though the initial intense opposition to the search declined over time, few Republicans fully switched their view and supported the search. Democrats steadfastly supported the search regardless of when they took the survey.

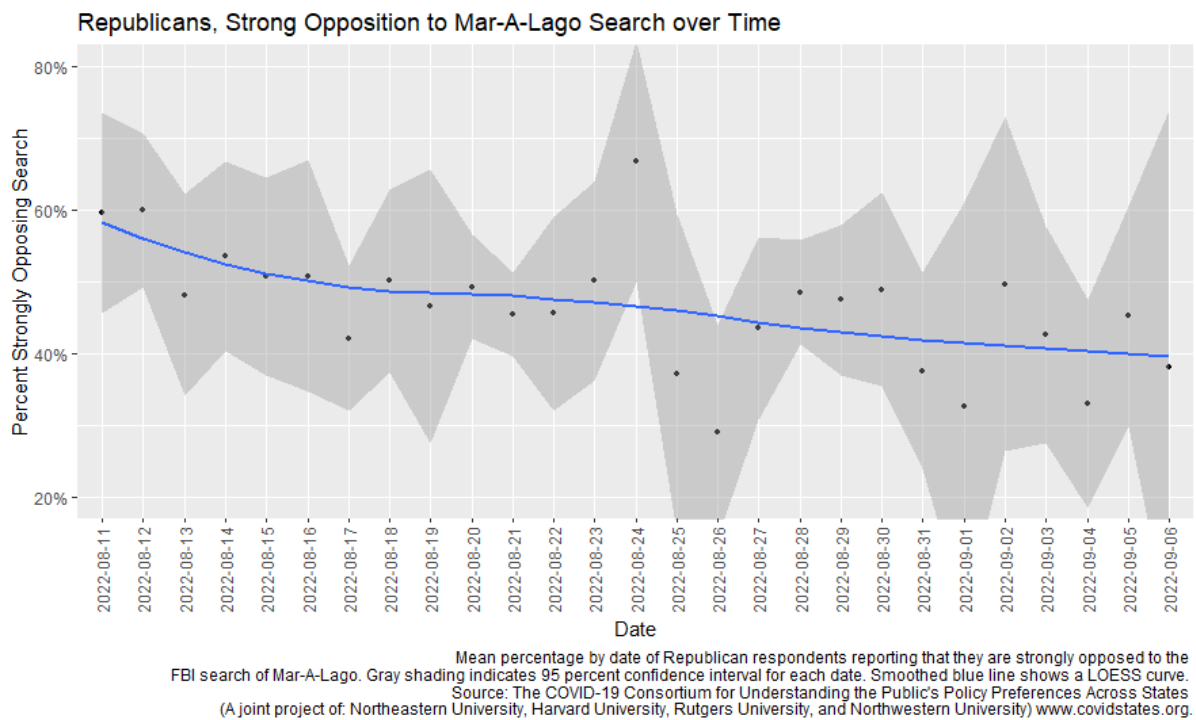


Figure 2.

The open-ended responses lend support to the notion that respondents based their opinion on the search on how they felt about Trump. Among pro-search respondents, we observed five overlapping themes motivating their support for the search: general disdain of Trump, the belief that nobody is above the law, trust in the FBI, Trump having nothing to worry about if he did not do anything wrong, and the argument that some sort of action from the FBI or Department of Justice was long overdue and should have happened sooner.

Anti-search Republicans regularly repeated five rival themes: that the search was an abuse of power, that it was “political” and a “witch hunt,” that prominent Democratic leaders should be investigated instead, that it was an invasion of Donald and Melania Trump’s privacy, and that it was a Democratic attempt to distract the public from Biden’s policy failures. Examples of quotes from respondents falling under each of these themes are below.¹

¹ Open-ended responses edited for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The content of the comments was not edited.

Table 1. Common pro-search comments

Comment	Example
Justice/nobody is above the law	<p><i>He's no better than anyone else. He has to abide by the law just like ordinary citizens.</i></p> <p>- 71F moderate Democrat. Strongly supported search.</p>
General anti-Trump attitudes	<p><i>I'm glad it's happened, though I don't know much about it. Trump is a jackass egotistical piece of shit so I really don't care what happens to him as long as he doesn't run again.</i></p> <p>- 34F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.</p>
Trust in FBI	<p><i>I don't know much about the search but have faith that the FBI had probable cause to conclude that the search was necessary and legal.</i></p> <p>- 61F slightly liberal Democrat. Supported search.</p>
Nothing to worry about if he has nothing to hide	<p><i>If Donald Trump did nothing illegal, then he should not have a problem with the search.</i></p> <p>- 63F slightly conservative Republican. Supported search.</p>
Should have been sooner, long overdue	<p><i>It's about time some real actions are taken against Trump's criminal behavior.</i></p> <p>- 75F liberal Democrat, strongly supported search.</p>

Table 2. Common anti-search comments

Comment	Example
Abuse of power	<p><i>The search was just another in a long line of witch hunt hoaxes generated by the liberal left Democrats. They are still mad that Hillary lost the 2016 election. Trump is not part of the political establishment that protects their own at all costs - even illegal.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 69M very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.
Politically motivated, "witch hunt"	<p><i>It's a political attempt to discredit Trump since he's a threat to the Democrats.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 69F very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.
Investigate Bidens/Clinton/Obama/Pelosi	<p><i>I feel that boundaries were overstepped big time. I ponder why this type [of] action hasn't been used towards the Clintons, Bidens, Pelosi, and the thousands of other politicians. I just know we'd find as much or more treasonous backstabbing, cheating, lying things in those others' closets.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 59F slightly conservative Republican. Neither opposed nor supported search.
Invasion of privacy/harassment/ "Leave him alone"	<p><i>Terrible. What is this government coming to? How could they break into a prior president's home [and] go through his private things and his wife's? If this continues and Trump or a conservative candidate doesn't take the White House, there is going to be an uproar in this country and I'm going to get a gun.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 73F very conservative independent. Strongly opposed search.
Distraction from Biden	<p><i>This is a distraction from what Biden is doing to destroy America.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 64F conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

Appendix A: Additional Tables

Awareness of the search

	Proportion aware of the search	SE
8/11-8/15	0.82	0.0116
8/16-8/22	0.82	0.0075
8/23-9/6	0.79	0.0066

Support for the search

Strongly Support	Support	Neither Support nor Oppose	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
38.7%	12.5%	21.9%	8.2%	18.7%

Support for the search by party

	Democrat	Independent	Other	Republican
Strongly Support	69.1%	32.0%	24.6%	6.1%
Support	15.2%	15.4%	9.7%	6.4%
Neither Support nor Oppose	13.1%	28.2%	47.5%	23.1%
Oppose	1.2%	9.1%	7.7%	17.1%
Strongly Oppose	1.4%	15.3%	10.5%	47.3%

Average support for the search by party

	Support for the search (1=strongly support, 5=strongly oppose)	SE
Democrat	1.51	0.02
Independent	2.60	0.03
Other	2.70	0.07
Republican	3.93	0.03

Average support for the search by ideology

Ideology	Support for the search (1=strongly support, 5=strongly oppose)	SE
Very Liberal	1.35	0.04
Liberal	1.50	0.04
Slightly liberal	1.70	0.04
Moderate	2.41	0.03
Slightly Conservative	3.11	0.06
Conservative	3.94	0.04
Very conservative	4.20	0.06

Changes in responses by survey start date

	Support for the search (1=strongly support, 5=strongly oppose)	SE
Within one week	2.59	0.05
One to two weeks	2.63	0.03
More than two weeks	2.48	0.03

Changes in Responses Based on Survey Start Date (Republicans)

	Support for the search (1=strongly support, 5=strongly oppose)	SE
Within one week	4.08	0.07
One to two weeks	3.97	0.04
More than two weeks	3.84	0.05

Changes in Responses Based on Survey Start Date (Democrats)

	Support for the search (1=strongly support, 5=strongly oppose)	SE
Within one week	1.44	0.04
One to two weeks	1.52	0.03
More than two weeks	1.52	0.03

Changes in Responses Based on Survey Start Date (Independents)

	Support for the search (1=strongly support, 5=strongly oppose)	SE
Within one week	2.66	0.09
One to two weeks	2.63	0.06
More than two weeks	2.57	0.05

Within one week of search

	Democrat	Independent	Other	Republican
Strongly Support	72.8%	32.1%	32.2%	4.7%
Support	14.9%	16.0%	16.6%	5.9%
Neither Support Nor Oppose	9.3%	23.8%	27.5%	20.7%
Oppose	1.4%	10.5%	2.7%	14.5%
Strongly Oppose	1.5%	17.7%	21.0%	54.2%

One to two weeks after search

	Democrat	Independent	Other	Republican
Strongly Support	68.9%	33.9%	20.8%	5.0%
Support	15.0%	14.3%	12.2%	5.8%
Neither Support Nor Oppose	13.1%	25.5%	48.2%	23.1%
Oppose	1.1%	7.7%	9.7%	19.3%
Strongly Oppose	1.8%	18.5%	9.1%	46.7%

More than two weeks after search

	Democrat	Independent	Other	Republican
Strongly Support	68.1%	30.5%	25.4%	7.7%
Support	15.4%	16.0%	6.4%	7.1%
Neither Support nor Oppose	14.3%	31.9%	51.7%	24.1%
Oppose	1.2%	9.7%	7.5%	15.9%
Strongly Oppose	1.0%	12.0%	9.0%	45.1%

Support among Republicans over time

	Within one week	One to two weeks	More than two weeks
Strongly Support	4.7%	5.0%	7.7%
Support	5.9%	5.8%	7.1%
Neither Support nor Oppose	20.7%	23.1%	24.1%
Oppose	14.5%	19.3%	15.9%
Strongly Oppose	54.2%	46.7%	45.1%

Appendix B: Open-ended Responses

Overall, 35% of respondents left an open-ended comment. Our team sifted through 9,334 open-ended responses and identified five major themes on both sides:

Themes

Oppose Search	Support Search
Abuse of power	Justice/nobody is not above the law
Politically motivated, "witch hunt"	General anti-Trump attitudes
Investigate Bidens/Clinton/Obama/Pelosi	Trust in FBI
Invasion of privacy/harassment/"leave him alone"	Nothing to worry about if he has nothing to hide
Distraction from Biden	Should have been sooner, long overdue

Below we include assorted responses, many of which also fit into the five themes on each side listed above. The responses were edited for spelling and grammar but left unchanged in content. These include the examples listed in the report, as well as other comments.

Terrible. What is this government coming to? How could they break into a prior president's home [and] go through his private things and his wife's? If this continues and Trump or a conservative candidate doesn't take the White House, there is going to be an uproar in this country and I'm going to get a gun.

- 73F very conservative independent. Strongly opposed search.

I am positive towards the FBI for showing all Americans that no one is above the law. I am disgusted by the Republican reaction to the FBI search.

- 67F moderate independent. Strongly supported search.

I think that it was justified. The former president was advised that he was not to remove items that were considered the property of the government. He disregarded that information and did things his way. If you commit the crime, you should pay the time.

- 67F liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

Anything legal that can be done to stop Trump should be done. The man is a cancer that has metastasized to the entire country.

- 59F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It was a wholly political act that has never happened to any other President.

- 60M very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

If Donald Trump did nothing illegal, then he should not have a problem with the search.

- 63F slightly conservative Republican. Supported search.

They wouldn't have done it if it weren't necessary - it indicates to me that he was still holding onto documents he shouldn't ever have taken, and they didn't believe he could or should be trusted with them any longer.

- 68F liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It was clearly felt to be needed. I support it.

- 63M liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

Under normal circumstances I would not agree with the search of Mar-a-Lago by the FBI, but due to the circumstances and undeniable evidence, on this occasion, I could not agree more with the decision to search the home of Donald Trump in Mar-a-Lago.

- 31F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

Because Trump is a crook!!!

- 63F very liberal, "other" party ID, Strongly Supported search.

Trump has done many wrong things and he deserved his place being investigated, although I feel our government is afraid to take actions against him..He has committed many crimes against our nation, but nothing is being done about him. Anyone else would have been judged and given jail time.

- 66F moderate independent. Strongly supported search.

Totally disgusted by the FBI, DOJ, and all Democrats involved

- 71F very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

It was a raid not a search. The contents of the warrant have not been released yet. Why not?

- 69F conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

I think they did it just to take the spotlight off other problems that face our government at the moment. They are searching hard to find things that they can use in the upcoming elections.

- 74F slightly conservative Republican. Opposed search.

At its core, it seems to be politically motivated.

- 67M slightly conservative Republican. Opposed search.

I think some people in the government are highly afraid of Trump getting back in the White House. Always remember...Trump has LOTS of money and the government hasn't ever had to face a man with more cash and assets than all of Congress.

- 61F moderate Democrat. Strongly opposed search.

It was a disgrace what the FBI did to President Trump and his family.

- 65F very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

I feel that they needed strong evidence to obtain a search warrant. If they found nothing, it will surely look poorly upon the FBI.

- 33F moderate Independent. Strongly supported search.

I can see it both ways. Trump probably did have classified documents but I could also see it as a continuation of the witch hunt or him having some kind of proof of the election being rigged.

- 36M moderate Independent. Neither supported nor opposed search.

I think it was justified considering what Trump has done regarding other records, and it makes me angry that so many people believe the FBI was out of line and have threatened the FBI director and others. The Trump supporters are as crazy as he is and very dangerous. I'm all for doing what is necessary to bring Trumps' crimes to the public, put him on trial for his many crimes, and put him in jail for the rest of his miserable life.

- 79F liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

I'm sick of this witch hunt on President Trump. If he is what the American people want then they should just leave it alone instead of trying to find dirt on him so he can't run again. They need to be looking at Hunter Biden, and look at Ms. Clinton, they didn't do anything to her about her emails. I'm just sick of it all!

- 61F slightly conservative Democrat. Strongly opposed search.

I believe it was justified. A search warrant had been issued prior to the search. There are very serious crimes being investigated and the American people MUST KNOW THE TRUTH.

- 78F slightly liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

This is politically motivated.

- 61F very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

Invasion of privacy.

- 30F conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

I think it is time they start investigating people that are in office now. Them and their families.

- 75F very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

I think it is a bit of a publicity stunt.

- 35M slightly conservative Independent. Neither supported nor opposed search.

Needs to be done, Trump is a crook.

- 56M liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

He's no better than anyone else. He has to abide by the law just like ordinary citizens.

- 71F moderate Democrat. Strongly supported search.

I think it was a ploy orchestrated by the Democrats.

- 69M moderate Republican. Opposed search.

If he has nothing to hide, he shouldn't be worried, but seeing how he behaved as our president, I don't trust him at all. He has divided this country and acted like a dictator. Not good at all, and sad to say I voted for him!!!

- 79F slightly conservative Independent. Strongly supported search.

Trump is a lying conman and he took documents that belong to the government and has been dragging his feet in returning them. He's a felon and a traitor and belongs in prison. The big lie & the big liar.

- 77F liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

-

This guy is so egotistical he will do anything that benefits him.

- 65F slightly liberal Democrat. Supported search.

It was justified - Trump is not above the law.

- 56F slightly liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

I feel like they have gone after him more than they ever went after Hillary Clinton. They are playing unfair politics and they will always be after him no matter what.

- 33F conservative Republican. Opposed search.

I feel like they wouldn't have executed that warrant if they didn't think he was hiding information. Trump is very distrustful and I am sure he had private documents that would try to send to countries like China and Russia to use against us. He is un-American and only thinks the world revolves around him.

- 51F slightly liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It was an unethical, illegal invasion, done totally improperly and bogus. And the White House is lying about it, and they took things they had no right to take and did not produce the warrant properly nor to the right people. It goes against all our rights and laws in all aspects.

- 73F conservative Independent. Strongly opposed search.

It was another breaking of the law and constitution by the Democrats, trying to set Trump up again. Democrats, most, not all, are only out to cover their own asses and those of their law breaking family and friends!

- 55F moderate Republican. Strongly opposed search.

I hope they find something extremely critical to convict him of something, anything because it would be pure poetic justice if he got locked up and Hilary Clinton didn't. He should have already been convicted of something.

- 51F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It's about time some real actions are taken against Trump's criminal behavior.

- 75F liberal Democrat, strongly supported search.

Politically motivated by the Democrats.

- 66M very conservative Republican, strongly opposed search.

Completely political. Never search Democrat.

- 73M moderate Republican, strongly opposed search.

Find out what that idiot had hidden.

- 70M slightly liberal Democrat, strongly supported search.

A complete farce. This is no longer America, we are now a complete banana republic. Where laws are no longer equally applied, just anyone who opposes the regime is targeted.

- 37M conservative Independent. Strongly opposed search.

Hilarious, I can't wait to see what they find and then see his support try to justify or diminish the findings.

- 34F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

I think it's long overdue, but I'm worried about the backlash by Trumpsters and Republicans, who are looking for a reason for violence.

- 69F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

This is a distraction from what Biden is doing to destroy America.

- 64F conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

Trump should be in jail, a more evil asshole has rarely existed outside of Satan himself.

- 69M somewhat liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

Completely political and unjustified. Overkill. If it was legitimate there would have been only a few agents but there were 50-100 on land, air, and sea. They would have not objected to the Trump lawyer being present instead of having her wait outside without even offering her somewhere to sit and water.

- 75F conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

I hope it leads to the arrest of Donald Grump! My misspelling of Trump is deliberately intentional.

- 40M very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It seems legit. Donald Trump is an ABYSMAL person, and it looks like it's finally catching up with him.

- 49M very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

I was so happy when I heard. Trump is a criminal who should be in jail.

- 36F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

I feel that the raid at Mar-a-Lago was not necessary. The Democrats are so afraid that Donald Trump is going to make another run for the White House and they are fishing for something to hang on him. If they come up with something, it will most likely be something that they planted. The manner that it was conducted was totally unethical.

- 65M conservative Independent. Strongly opposed search.

Another witch hunt. The Democrats, using the FBI, did this to Former President Trump for nefarious reasons. It's suspicious they wanted the security cameras turned off. Why? Not only did they go in there for no reason but I believe they went in there hoping to find something to use against him again (another witch hunt) because all prior attempts "to

get him" have failed, because the fact is he is an honest and open man. But because of the security camera request (very odd and suspicious) I think it is possible they have planted either listening devices in the home or have planted fake evidence against him in the home and then will conduct another raid and say, "oh look what we found," therefore another scandal based on a set up.

- 66F conservative Independent. Strongly opposed search.

Not sure what they were hoping to find or what they hoped to accomplish, although I feel Trump is a criminal.

- 59F conservative Republican. Neither supported nor opposed search.

I support it because he is a horrible human.

- 20F liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It should have been done a long time ago. Trump obviously committed numerous criminal activities while in office.

- 42F slightly liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

I don't know much about the search but have faith that the FBI had probable cause to conclude that the search was necessary and legal.

- 61F slightly liberal Democrat. Supported search.

This was nothing but a ploy created by the Democratic Party to destroy his credibility which would keep him from becoming the next President. The Democratic Party, not all Democrats, but many in the highest positions of our Government, are self-serving. They have come to the realization that they have little or no chance of holding onto the House, Senate and the Presidency in 2024. Even if they keep Trump off the ticket, any Republican will beat them!!!

- 79M very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

It was done just for the Democrats to keep their failures out of the news. Nothing but a witch hunt and was most likely illegal.

- 76F conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

Donald Trump is not someone I admire. He may have done some good for our country but personally his attitude makes me want to vote for anyone who is against him. He is rude, ruthless, lies, corrupt, and is not a decent person by the way he treats people in general. He's like a spoiled child that needs to go sit in a corner and keep his mouth shut. I have no respect for him at all.

- 75F slightly conservative Democrat. Supported search.

Trump is a crook, liar, cheater, racist, divider, and one of the most evil people I have ever seen. They should have searched his home to recover documents he should have never removed from the White House.

- 70F slightly conservative Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It's a political attempt to discredit Trump since he's a threat to the Democrats.

- 69F very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

Trump has committed more crimes than he will ever be convicted of. He is a pimple on the butt of life. The FBI had more than enough probable cause to search Mar-A-Lago. They need to dig up his ex-wife and see what's really in that casket. They need to search all his properties. He's a self centered narcissist who would sell his kids to make a buck.

- 62F slightly liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

The search was just another in a long line of witch hunt hoaxes generated by the liberal left Democrats. They are still mad that Hillary lost the 2016 election. Trump is not part of the political establishment that protects their own at all costs - even illegal.

- 69M very conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.

It was one of the greatest moments in the history of our country. Trump is a traitorous asshat and hopefully he will go to prison. I doubt it and it is astonishing that so many people still support him, but after spending a week on vacation in the midwest, nothing surprises me. This country is full of uneducated dipshits who are easily fooled because they want to believe the most unbelievable things about the worst people on the planet.

- 49F very liberal Democrat. Strongly supported search.

It was a witch hunt brought on by the Democrats because they just will not stop trying to get President Trump elected again. Pelosi and Schumer should be hung up by their toes for about a week and then they will realize what they are doing is not only against the law but also not obeying God.

- 67F conservative Republican. Strongly opposed search.