

Wisconsin Public Opinion Research

Presidential Election and Climate/Clean Energy Messaging

April - May 2024

A note on research design



We began research with robust open-ended discussions via in-person focus groups. These groups allowed us to discover not only what opinions voters hold but also the underlying reasons and factors behind them. After hearing from voters in their own words, we refined our messaging for the quantitative phase.

• Focus group audiences were segmented in such a way that we were able to reach key persuasion and motivation targets – with a particular focus on younger voters (ages 18-34), Black voters, and white swing women.



In the survey, we continued to prioritize key targets: sampling a smaller base audience so that we had room to oversample our most important communication targets – including robust oversamples among young, Black, and middle partisan voters. This design ensured we had enough respondents to study subgroup demographics within these audiences with more precision.



Methodology

Phase 1: In-Person Focus Groups

Global Strategy Group conducted three online focus groups with Wisconsin voters on April 3 and April 4, 2024:

- Younger registered voters (ages 18-34)
- Black registered voters
- White swing women likely voters

Phase 2: Context & Messaging Survey

Global Strategy Group conducted a phone and text-to-web survey of **500 registered voters in Wisconsin** with additional interviews among **Black, young, middle partisan voters** for a total of **800 interviews** between May 9 and May 14, 2024.

The margin of error for the full sample at the 95% confidence level is +/- 4.4%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

Oversample Group	Oversample N-size	Total N-size	Margin of Error
Black voters	100	135	+/- 8.4%
Young voters	100	218	+/- 6.6%
Middle partisans	100	367	+/- 5.1%



Key Takeaways: Electoral Landscape

Wisconsin holds a competitive political environment for Biden. Biden currently trails Trump by 3 points in the multi-candidate race.

RFK Jr. draws a significant 7 percent of the initial vote, but third-party voters are less solid in their support. While RFK pulls from Biden and Trump about equally, he has many weak supporters among younger voters who would otherwise likely choose Biden. Our focus groups and evidence from other states suggests that minimal negatives against Kennedy (especially when paired with positives on Biden) can quickly move these voters towards the president.

Biden's successful record on climate and clean energy and Trump's disastrous record are not fully known in Wisconsin. The impact of our positive messaging and credibility of our negative messaging is generally well-received, as voters are already predisposed to believing that Trump puts profits over people – it's just a matter of reminding them.



Key Takeaways: Vote Movement & Targeting

Climate and clean energy messaging results in a notable net 6-point shift in the margin toward Biden. Contrast messaging on climate and clean energy moves voters toward Biden—turning his 3-point deficit into a 3-point lead.

Messaging on clean energy and climate increases Biden's vote margin among Black voters by an impressive 21 points and among younger middle-of-the-road voters by 12 points. It also significantly boosts motivation among younger voters and Black women.

It also boosts perceptions that Biden has gotten important things done – including on the economy. It also makes the case that Biden is for the people while Trump only cares about profits, and it adds value by layering on top of messaging that the Biden campaign and other allies are likely to use to make these arguments.

Key communication targets in Wisconsin are Black voters (especially women), younger women, and younger middle partisans.



Key Takeaways: Messaging Strengths

Highlighting Biden positives in Wisconsin is a must, but we will be most effective when we contrast those with Trump negatives.

Regression analysis shows that messages that can drive the following frames are most likely to boost Biden's vote share in Wisconsin:

- Positive: "As president, Joe Biden has been able to get important things done."
- Contrast: "Donald Trump prioritizes profits over people, while Joe Biden stands up for the greater good."
- Contrast: "Joe Biden has a better approach to dealing with the economy than Donald Trump."
- Negative: "A second Trump presidency would be bad for future generations."



Messaging Recommendations

Most effective pro-Biden message: Biden's clean energy law is creating jobs and creating a better and healthier future in Wisconsin. Environmental Justice messaging is potent with Black voters.

Wisconsin voters are concerned about the state of the economy and view Trump as a business-first candidate – which can have both positive and negative connotations. We need to redefine Trump as a self-serving, profit-first candidate willing to sell out our health, climate, and clean energy progress to benefit himself and his Big Oil allies.

Effective messaging on Trump in Wisconsin should highlight four categories of voter concerns:

- Trump's denial of climate change raises concerns about his fitness for office.
- Voters are also concerned about Trump's "dictator on day one" comment and refusal to listen to the experts.
- Voters are turned off by Trump's giveaways to Big Oil, which illustrate that Trump sides
 with wealthy corporate profiteers and polluters rather than regular Americans.
- Relatedly, voters easily internalize messaging that points out that Trump's support for Big Oil also means more profits for himself.

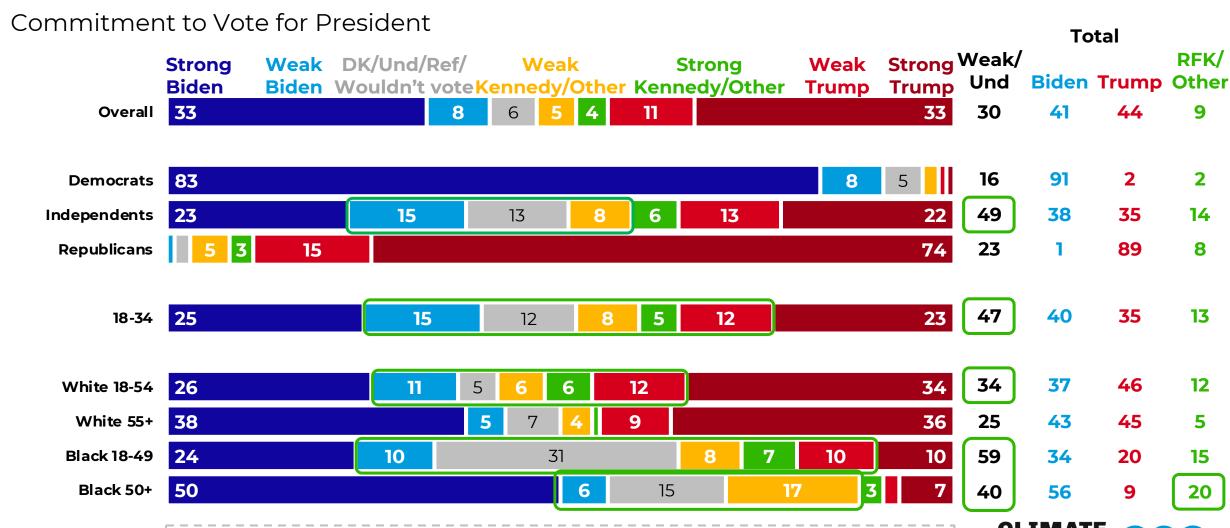




Landscape & Vote Movement



Less partisan, younger voters, and older Black voters are more likely to be weakly committed in their vote for president

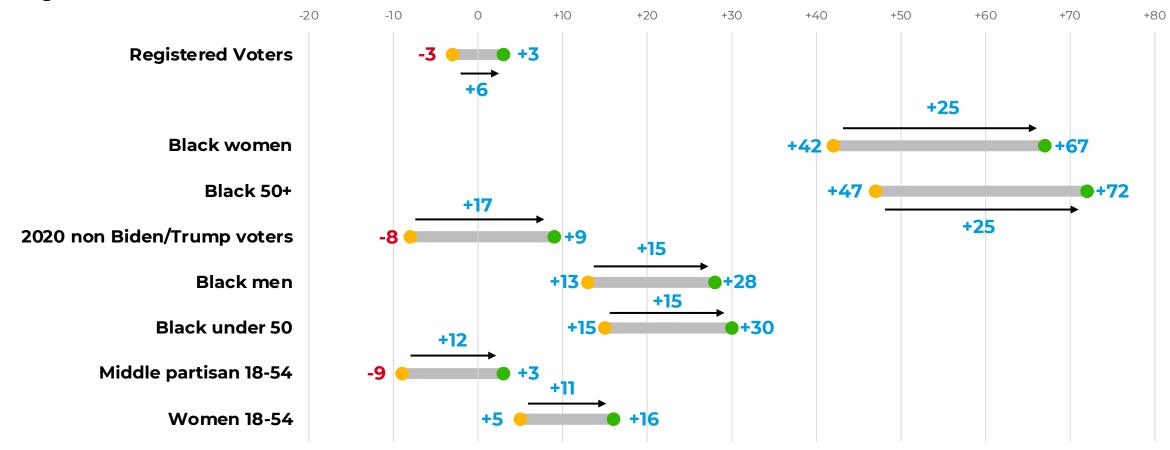


"Weak" voters are those who made a selection in the presidential vote, but also said there is a chance they would consider a different candidate.



After voters are exposed to climate and clean energy messaging, we see solid gains in Biden's margins among key subgroups

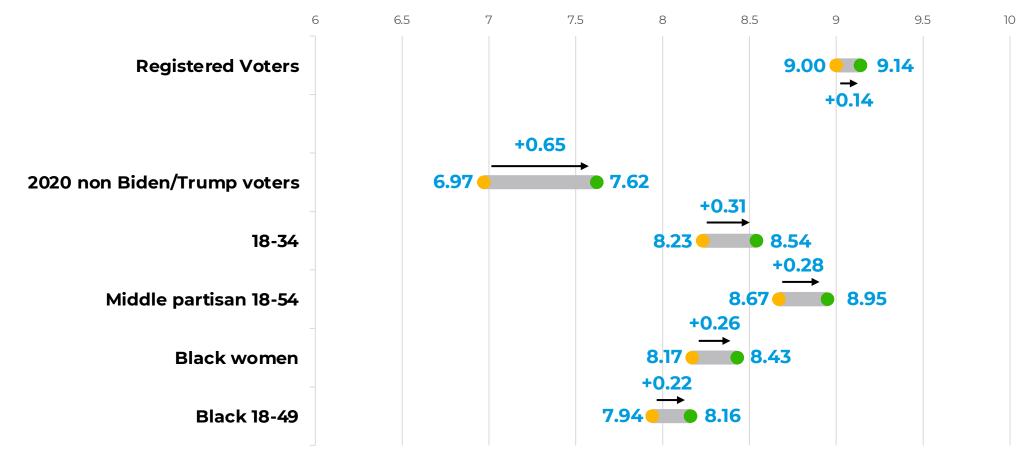
Change in NET Biden – Initial Vote to Final Vote





Climate and clean energy messaging also increases the motivation of key groups to vote, especially younger voters

Change in Vote Motivation – Initial to Final

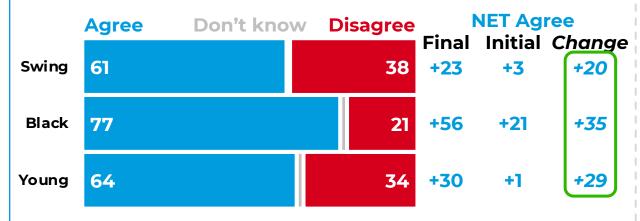




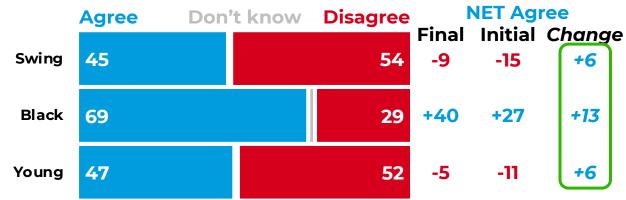
Climate and clean energy messaging boosts positive perceptions of <u>Biden's effectiveness</u> with swing, Black, and young voters

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Joe Biden has taken strong action to combat climate change and expand clean energy.



As president, Joe Biden has been able to get important things done.

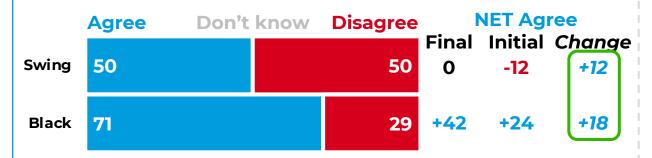




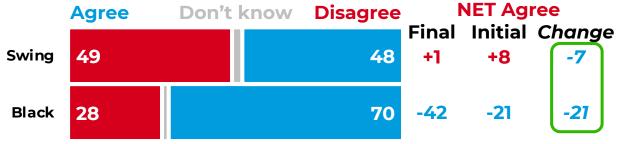
Climate and clean energy messaging also drives <u>contrasts with</u> <u>Trump on priorities and the economy</u> with swing and Black voters

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Donald Trump prioritizes profits over people, while Joe Biden stands up for the greater good.



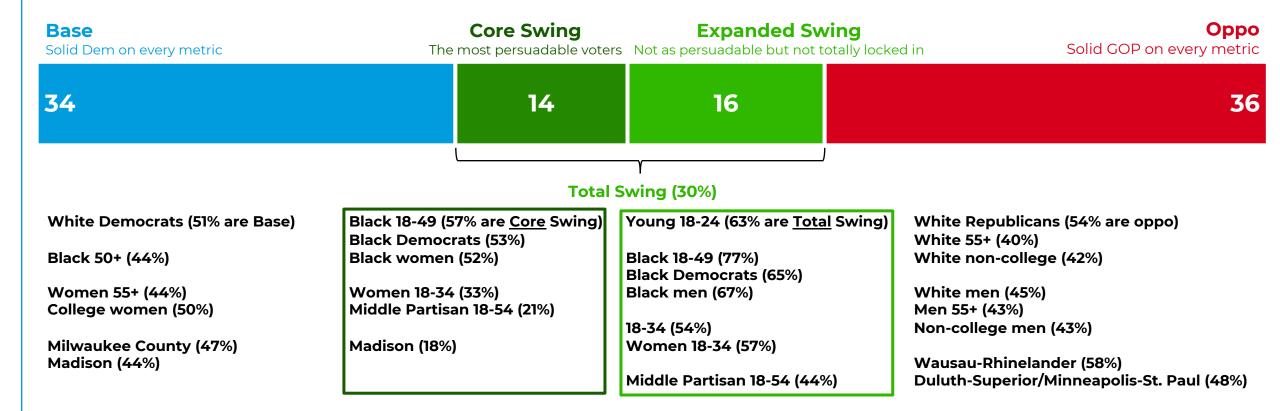
Donald Trump has a better approach to dealing with the economy than Joe Biden.





Black, young, and middle partisan voters are more likely to be persuadable

Vote Targets





Focus groups showed that support for RFK is soft. Attacking him injects doubts about his character and sincerity of his beliefs

Initial RFK Sentiment

RFK is boosted by frustration with the two major parties. His supporters in focus groups don't initially know much about him or believe he can win but want to support a candidate they feel has a strong character.

"It goes back to **character**... We've been there and done that with Biden and Trump."

"I feel like the two-party system in America is so ingrained... at the end of the day my **conscience has to be clear**."

Post-Messaging RFK Sentiment

After we give more information, voters become concerned about RFK's character and beliefs. We initially had three respondents who supported RFK. They all questioned their support for him after hearing more about his record and status as a spoiler for Trump.

"This whole conversation **made me question him**...
I realize I need to do more research on him."



[RFK Negative - Climate] Kennedy used to be a lead activist in the environmental community, but he abandoned those efforts to focus on conspiracy theories. Like Donald Trump, Kennedy rejects the scientific consensus that climate change is mainly caused by carbon pollution. Like Trump, Kennedy opposes efforts by the federal government to expand clean energy, even though clean energy means more jobs, lower energy bills, and less pollution. And, like Trump, Kennedy has had financial ties with Big Oil companies.

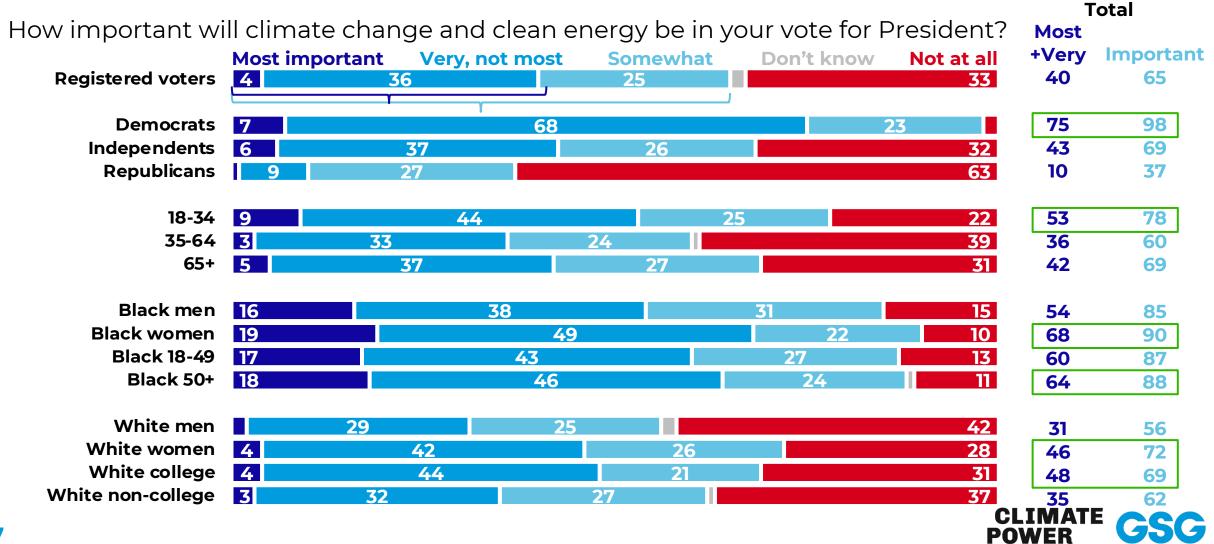
[RFK Negative - Spoiler] It's no wonder that Donald Trump's biggest funders are also funding Kennedy's campaign. They know that Kennedy can't win but that he CAN help Trump win by pulling votes away from Joe Biden. That's why Trump said "I love that he's running," and that Kennedy is "great for MAGA." Kennedy even admitted this himself, saying "our campaign is a spoiler."



Building Effective Contrast



Key Democratic constituencies consider climate change an important factor in their vote for president – especially women, older Black, younger white, and white college voters



Focus groups: Biden's climate and clean energy accomplishments are not well known – but voters react positively when they find out, particularly about the economic benefits

Biden's party affiliation gives the impression that climate and clean energy are part of his agenda, but few know what Biden has accomplished on the issue:

- "I think renewable energy is seen as a Democratic issue and not something that a lot of Republicans focus on."
 young (18-34) voter
- "I know Biden **at least acknowledges it**." Black voter

But when voters hear about Biden's accomplishments, they are pleasantly surprised – and significantly so:

- "Getting more jobs created and more money back to Americans, and the attack on big oil, that's very impressive."
 young (18-34) voter
- "He's done a lot more than I thought... If you asked me what Biden's done for me, I wouldn't know. But just seeing these things, now I have something to say." Black voter
- "It was interesting **the tie between the economy and his policies**... it's something Biden did that's **affecting lots** and lots of people in a positive way." Black voter



Making the case for Biden: what resonated with Wisconsin voters in focus groups

Economic messaging was key in moving persuadable voters to Biden – especially around jobs. Voters did not initially recognize clean energy as being a great job creator, but statistics like creating nearly 300,000 new jobs nationally and saving households nearly \$100 a month helped voters see Biden's actions as having a tangible impact on their lives.

Clean water is a top-of-mind concern and made voters think of local, everyday impacts. Many Wisconsin voters thought of the Flint water crisis in neighboring Michigan and reports of PFAS in the Great Lakes and waterways. They naturally linked their families' and communities' health to clean water.

Voters were attracted to Biden's understanding of our responsibility to leave a better world for future generations by investing in clean energy and tackling climate change and noted how important that was for their own children (particularly white swing women).

We saw pushback against language they viewed as too rhetorical, which amplified concerns that our claims might be "too good to be true." Voters sometimes interpreted rhetoric meant to frame the importance of Biden's accomplishments as "spin" while responding more positively to a straightforward, statistic-driven approach.



Using findings from the focus groups, we refined several pro-Biden messages in our survey

Biden Positive Messaging

[SPLIT A] [CLIMATE- 100% CLEAN ENERGY] Joe Biden understands that we have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for future generations, and that's why he passed and signed into law the largest climate and clean energy plan in history. Biden's new law will put us on the road to a 100% clean energy economy and cut the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate nearly in half by 2030.

[SPLIT B] [CLIMATE- TRIPLE CLEAN ENERGY] Joe Biden understands that we have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for future generations, and that's why he passed and signed into law the largest climate and clean energy plan in history. Biden's law will triple the production of clean energy and cut one billion tons of the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate by 2030.

[HEALTH] Joe Biden understands that pollution from dirty energy sources is putting the health of our families at risk. That's why he doubled down on clean energy, strengthened the Clean Air and Water Acts, passed a law to replace 100% of the lead pipes still in use across America, and now announced the first ever limits on cancer-causing "forever chemicals," which will protect the drinking water of 100 million Americans.

[YOUNG/BLACK] [ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE- HEALTH + INVESTMENT] Joe Biden understands that low-income communities have paid the highest price for our dependence on dirty energy sources in the form of polluted air and water and greater levels of asthma and cancer. That's why, in his first week in office, Biden launched the most ambitious environmental justice agenda in history and has invested over \$75 billion to clean up air and water in underserved communities.

[COSTS] Our dependence on oil, coal, and gas means that Big Oil CEOs make record profits by gouging us, but Joe Biden is changing that by investing in cleaner, cheaper energy choices for everybody. The cost of wind and solar energy is already cheaper than coal and gas, and it continues to drop. Biden passed a law to triple the production of clean energy and save the average American household more than \$1,000 a year on energy bills.

[INCREASED US OIL PRODUCTION] Under Joe Biden, U.S. oil and gas production is at an all-time high at 12.9 million barrels of oil a day, and, according to JP Morgan, the U.S. has achieved energy independence for the first time in 40 years. But Biden knows the future is clean energy, which is why he has also made record investments to shift the U.S. to affordable, efficient clean energy in the long-term - to reduce energy prices further and protect our environment.

[BIG OIL ACCOUNTABILITY] For decades, the Big Oil CEOs spent billions to lobby Congress and prevented investments in clean energy. But Joe Biden took them on and won. He spent a year personally negotiating with Congress to break through the gridlock and beat the Big Oil lobbyists, ending their special tax loopholes and passing and signing into law the largest clean energy plan in history which will triple the production of clean energy.

[JOBS] Joe Biden's clean energy law is already giving our economy a much-needed boost. In just over a year since Biden's law passed, companies around the country have announced over 500 new clean energy projects that will create over 270,000 new good-paying jobs - including \$920 million in investments and over 1,000 jobs in Wisconsin - most of which don't require a college degree.

Health and clean energy jobs are strong with key groups. **Environmental Justice messaging is very strong with Black voters**

Biden Positive Messaging

					Middle	AAIIICE	
	Overall	Swing	18-34	Black	Partisan	Women	
[ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE- HEALTH + INVESTMENT]	N/A*	N/A*	3.97	5.13	N/A*	N/A*	
[HEALTH]	3.89	3.94	3.94	4.85	3.94	4.18	
[CLIMATE- TRIPLE CLEAN ENERGY]	3.72	3.77	4.08	5.08	3.75	4.09	
[JOBS]	3.71	3.78	3.91	4.96	3.78	3.96	
[CLIMATE- 100% CLEAN ENERGY]	3.64	3.49	3.00	4.60	3.72	3.71	
[INCREASED US OIL PRODUCTION]	3.61	3.48	3.56	4.94	3.69	3.88	
[BIG OIL ACCOUNTABILITY]	3.60	3.53	3.60	4.88	3.57	3.87	

3.57

3.48

He cares about communities of color. He could just say, 'Let them continue to have their lead water.' **But he wants to stop this and fix injustice."** – Black voter

[COSTS]

Overall health is a big concern of mine and my family's. So hearing that someone's making an effort to help eliminate and bring those to the attention of the American people makes me feel really, really good." - Young woman

4.95

Mean (Convincing Scale 1-7)

Middle

3.55

White

3.77

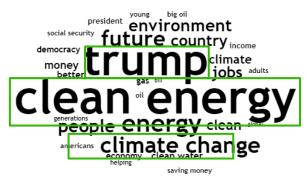
3.52

^{* &}quot;EJ" message only asked of certain subgroups

"Clean energy jobs" and "not being Trump" stick with voters after messaging

Most convincing reasons to vote for Joe Biden

Registered Voters



Swing



Black

global warming
environment evils
clean air trump issues
water
two gas oil clean jobs prices
work
terms environment evils
climate
climate
able
air income
selector
pockets
system people
money care economy
clean energy

Middle Partisans

clean water democracy democracy even us president economy focused climate

Clean environment even us president economy focused economy

creation

"Trump is a megalomaniac"

"For the climate, and to stop large corporations from getting a break"

18-34



"Record levels of energy production"

"Becoming energy independent and investing in clean energy products"

Focus groups: Voters need to know about Trump's specific, harmful actions, which are most powerful when contrasted with Biden positives

Voters are largely unaware of the scale of the destructiveness of Trump's record and his future plans. They especially struggle to point to any specifics of Trump's climate record.

Reminding voters of Trump's destructive record and positions drove home existing negative perceptions of Trump. Nearly all voters found negative Trump messaging to be credible based solely on what they already think of his character. We need to make sure they are informed about his record and his plans.

Trump's proposed rollbacks of clean air and water protections represent a clear contrast with Biden that draws voters' attention to Biden's concern for everyday people.



Making the case against Trump: what resonated with Wisconsin voters in focus groups

Trump's climate denial turned voters against him, and served as proof that Trump is careless and indifferent to the issues that impact their lives.

Voters reeled at Trump calling himself a "dictator," along with his refusal to listen to experts.

They both believed and were deeply disturbed by Trump's desire to be a dictator, and immediately associated the comment with authoritarian entities (e.g., mentions of "Putin," "Hitler," and "North Korea").

Rolling back protections for clean water was a dealbreaker for voters, who view clean water as a right all Americans should be entitled to and see Trump helping corporate polluters as unacceptable.

Trump rolling back environmental protections and siding with corporate polluters helped drive the contrast that Biden is for the people and Trump only cares about corporate profits, not regular people.



Similarly, using findings from the focus groups, we refined several anti-Trump messages in our survey, too

Trump Negative Messaging

[YOUNG/BLACK] [ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE - HEALTH OUTCOMES] Black and Latino communities have been subject to environmental racism for decades, poisoned by higher levels of toxic pollution and dirty air. Yet, when he was president, Donald Trump and his corporate polluter buddies rolled back dozens of environmental protections and allowed Big Oil and Coal CEOs to spew more pollution into communities of color. Now, if he wins, the same environmental protections are at risk again.

[PERSONAL GAIN] Donald Trump had major investments in Big Oil companies like Chevron and Exxon. And Saudi Arabia, one of the biggest oil producers in the world, is in business with Trump's family. So, it's no surprise that Trump put oil company lobbyists in charge of protecting the environment or gave Big Oil CEOs massive tax breaks. In a second term, Trump would be looking out for himself.

[CLIMATE DENIAL] Our leaders have a duty to listen to our nation's most respected experts, but even though 99% of scientists, NASA, and the Department of Defense all agree that climate change means a future filled with increased storms, extreme heat, and water shortages, Donald Trump has insisted that climate change is "a hoax," and even says that the sound from wind turbines "causes cancer."

[SPLIT A] [BIG OIL - PRICE GOUGE] The Trump administration gave oil companies \$25 billion in tax breaks, and his tax plan allowed companies like Chevron to pay \$0 in federal taxes while paying their CEO more than \$30 million and laying off thousands of workers. Now, Trump wants to do it all over again - despite Big Oil making record profits by gouging us at the pump.

[SPLIT B] [BIG OIL - TRUMP'S "DEAL"] The Trump administration gave oil companies \$25 billion in tax breaks, and his tax plan allowed companies like Chevron to pay \$0 in federal taxes. Now, Big Oil is funding Trump's campaign and he is promising to crush clean energy while Big Oil keeps charging us excessively at the pump. Trump recently held a fundraiser with Big Oil executives where he promised that he would do what the executives wanted "on Day One."

[DICTATOR/REPEAL] When Donald Trump was president, he refused to listen to anyone with a difference of opinion. Now, Trump says he would be a "dictator" on day one. Trump says that if gets re-elected, he would repeal the record new investments in clean energy, eliminate climate, clean air, and clean water safeguards, gut the Environmental Protection Agency, and use his second term to "drill, drill," even on our public lands.

[LOBBYISTS/ROLLBACKS] We have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for future generations - but as president, Donald Trump put climate deniers and former oil and coal lobbyists in charge of protecting our environment. They immediately went to work rolling back more than 100 environmental safeguards and allowing corporate polluters to pump more toxic pollution and chemicals into our air and water, putting the health of our families at risk.



Strongest messages against Trump highlight his close ties to Big Oil, his political extremism, and him only looking out for himself

Trump Negative Messaging

Mean	(Convincing	Scale 1-7)
1.1CGII	(0011711101119	0001017

	Overall	Swing	18-34	Black	Middle Partisan	White Women
[ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE - HEALTH OUTCOMES]	N/A*	N/A*	4.40	4.61	N/A*	N/A*
[PERSONAL GAIN]	3.98	4.28	4.44	4.46	3.92	4.33
[CLIMATE DENIAL]	3.98	4.17	4.63	4.51	3.97	4.27
[BIG OIL - PRICE GOUGE]	3.95	3.95	3.81	3.55	3.90	4.28
[DICTATOR/REPEAL]	3.93	3.92	4.60	4.03	4.00	4.33
[BIG OIL – TRUMP'S "DEAL"]	3.92	4.30	4.77	4.97	4.07	4.33
[LOBBYISTS/ROLLBACKS]	3.91	4.01	4.38	4.05	3.91	4.22
[PFAS]	3.84	3.87	4.26	4.36	3.78	4.12

11

He really definitely doesn't care about the regular person. Definitely more about his big wig friends or keeping people happy in the 1%." – Black voter

He's a blowhard. He just says whatever comes out of his mouth without thinking first... 'The sound from wind turbines causes cancer?' I mean I can just picture him saying that." – White swing woman

^{* &}quot;EJ" message only asked of certain subgroups

Trump's climate denial and "dictator" comments stick with voters. Black, swing, and young voters dislike his selfishness

Most convincing reasons to vote against Donald Trump

Registered Voters



Swing



Black



Middle Partisans



18-34



"Dictator and climate deregulation"

"His need to put himself before the people and the greater good"

"He's funded by big oil and acts like a dictator"

"Clean air and pollution, [and] tax breaks for the rich"





We'll be in the strongest position with contrast messaging but driving awareness of the significance of Biden's accomplishments is of paramount importance. Combining Biden positives and Trump negatives will move voters better than either alone, but Wisconsin voters need to know more about Biden's achievements right now. Additionally, for younger voters (especially younger Black voters), who are far more open to third-party candidates, contrasting Biden positives with RFK negatives should be considered.

The core Biden positive makes the case that he has gotten important things done, including for the economy, by tripling clean energy:

CLEAN ENERGY/JOBS: For decades, the Big Oil CEOs spent billions to lobby Congress and prevented investments in clean energy. But Joe Biden took them on and won, passing and signing into law the largest clean energy plan in history. Biden's law will triple the production of clean energy and it's already giving our economy a much-needed boost.

In just over a year since Biden's law passed, companies around the country have announced over 500 new clean energy projects that will create over 270,000 new good-paying jobs - including \$920 million in investments and over 1,000 jobs in Wisconsin - most of which don't require a college degree.



Talking about health, water, and climate in the framework of protecting future generations is a strong secondary message:

LEGACY/HEALTH/CLIMATE: Joe Biden understands that we have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for future generations but pollution from dirty energy sources is putting the health and future of our children at risk.

That's why he passed and signed into law a plan to triple the production of clean energy and cut one billion tons of the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate by 2030.

And it's why he strengthened the Clean Water Act, passed a law to replace 100% of the lead pipes still in use across America, and announced the first ever limits on cancer-causing "forever chemicals," which will protect the drinking water of 100 million Americans.



Environmental Justice messaging is very effective with Black voters – both as positive and negative.

EJ-POSITIVE: Joe Biden understands that low-income communities have paid the highest price for our dependence on dirty energy sources in the form of polluted air and water and greater levels of asthma and cancer. That's why, in his first week in office, Biden launched the most ambitious environmental justice agenda in history and has invested over \$75 billion to clean up air and water in underserved communities.

EJ-NEGATIVE: Black and Latino communities have been subject to environmental racism for decades, poisoned by higher levels of toxic pollution and dirty air. Yet, when he was president, Donald Trump and his corporate polluter buddies rolled back dozens of environmental protections and allowed Big Oil and Coal CEOs to spew more pollution into communities of color. Now, if he wins, the same environmental protections are at risk again.



Beyond environmental justice, anti-Trump messaging should focus on Trump's climate denial (working in our Dictator/Repeal messaging) and fealty to Big Oil and himself.

CLIMATE DENIAL/DICTATOR: Our leaders have a duty to listen to our nation's most respected experts, but when Donald Trump was president, he refused to listen to anyone with a difference of opinion. Even though 99% of scientists, NASA, and the Department of Defense all agree that climate change means a future filled with increased storms, extreme heat, and water shortages, Donald Trump has insisted that climate change is "a hoax." Now, Trump says that if he gets reelected, he would be a "dictator" on day one, eliminate climate, clean air, and clean water safeguards, and gut the EPA.

BIG OIL/PERSONAL GAIN: Donald Trump had major investments in Big Oil companies like Chevron and Exxon. And Saudi Arabia, one of the biggest oil producers in the world, is in business with Trump and his family. So, it's no surprise that Trump put oil company lobbyists in charge of protecting the environment and gave oil companies \$25 billion in tax breaks - allowing companies like Chevron to pay \$0 in federal taxes. Now, Trump wants to do it all over again - despite Big Oil making record profits by gouging us at the pump.



Thank You