



**CLIMATE
POWER**

North Carolina Public Opinion Research

Presidential Election and Climate/Clean Energy Messaging

March - April 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 registered Democratic and independent 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 North Carolina voters on March 20 and 21, 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 **400 registered voters in North Carolina** with additional interviews among **Black, young, registered Democratic, and registered independent voters** for a total of **850 interviews** between April 17 and April 22, 2024.

The margin of error for the full sample at the 95% confidence level is +/- 4.9%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

Oversample Group	Oversample N-size	Total N-size	Margin of Error
Black voters	100	204	+/- 6.9%
Young voters	150	347	+/- 5.3%
Registered Democrats	100	350	+/- 5.2%
Registered Independents	100	354	+/- 5.2%

Key Takeaways: Electoral Landscape

North Carolina holds a tough, yet competitive political environment for Biden. Biden currently trails Trump by 6 points in the multi-candidate race, in large part because Democrats are much less consolidated than Republicans.

RFK Jr. draws a significant 8 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, especially younger Black voters, that would otherwise likely choose Biden. While we didn't test a negative on RFK in the focus groups or survey, we have seen evidence in other states that 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 North Carolina. 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 is both persuasive and a motivating factor in North Carolina. Contrast messaging on climate and clean energy moves voters toward Biden (cutting his deficit from 6 to 2 points) and significantly boosts motivation among Democrats, younger, and Black voters.

Messaging on clean energy and climate boosts perception that Biden has gotten important things done and adds value by layering on top of messaging that the Biden campaign and other allies are likely to use to make these arguments.

Among Black voters, our messaging successfully boosts perceptions that a second Trump presidency would harm the Black community. This helps translate to solid gains in Biden's margin among Black voters, especially Black women (+8 pp) and older Black voters (+9 pp).

Key communication targets in North Carolina are registered Democrats (especially men), Black voters, white voters under age 35, and white swing women (especially non-college).

Key Takeaways: Messaging Strengths

Contrast messaging about Biden and Trump is most effective in moving voters.

To maximize gains, we need messaging that contrasts Biden positives and Trump negatives, the combination of which is stronger than the sum of its parts.

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

- **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."

Messaging Recommendations

Most effective pro-Biden message: Biden took on the Big Oil lobbyists to pass the largest clean energy plan in history – which is already creating jobs in North Carolina. Messaging on health and climate also resonate with many groups while Environmental Justice messaging is potent with Black voters.

Voters view Trump as a business-first candidate, which has both positive and negative connotations. We need to define him as a profit-first candidate willing to sell out our health, climate, and clean energy progress to benefit himself and his Big Oil cronies.

Effective messaging on Trump in North Carolina should highlight three categories of voter concerns:

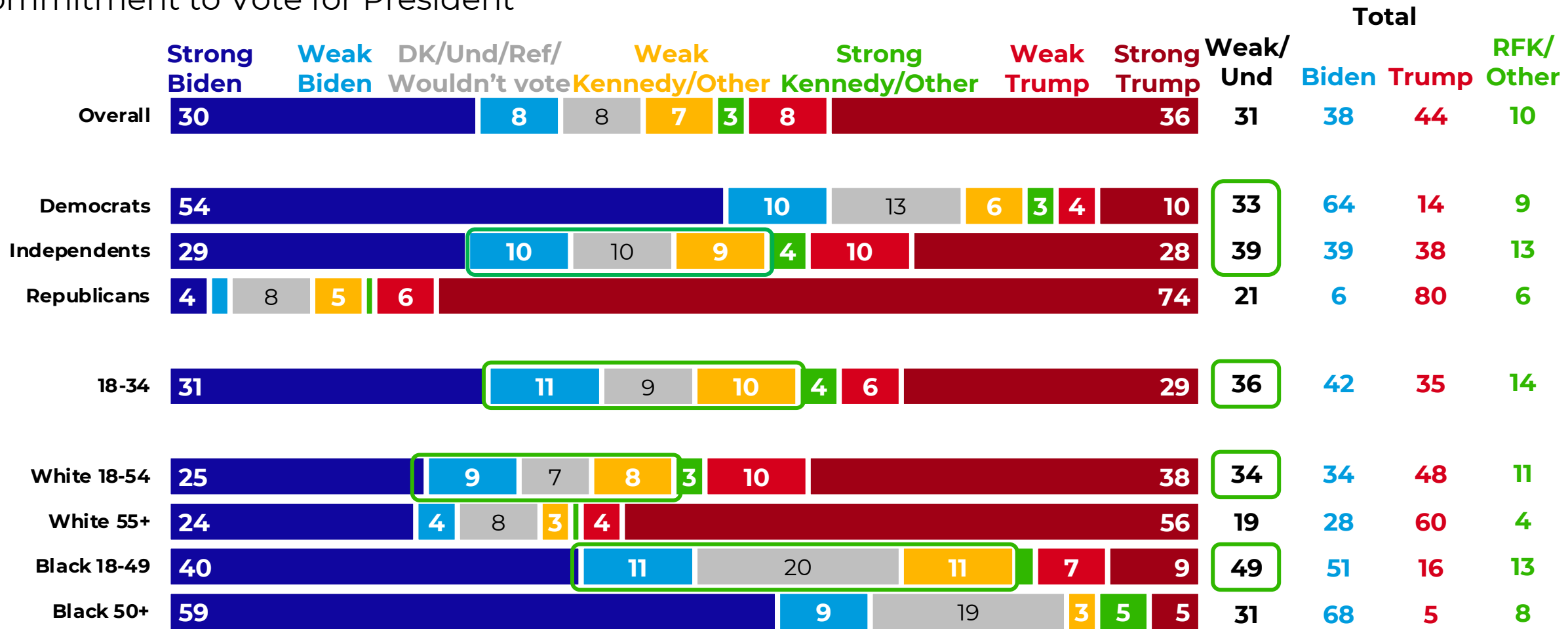
- Trump's **denial of climate change** and refusal to listen to experts raises concerns about his fitness for office.
- Voters are also concerned about Trump's **“dictator on day one”** comment. **Repealing Biden's climate and clean energy accomplishments** is also concerning as voters strongly support the progress made so far.
- 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

Biden's base is much less consolidated. Independents and younger voters (especially Black) are more likely to be weakly committed.

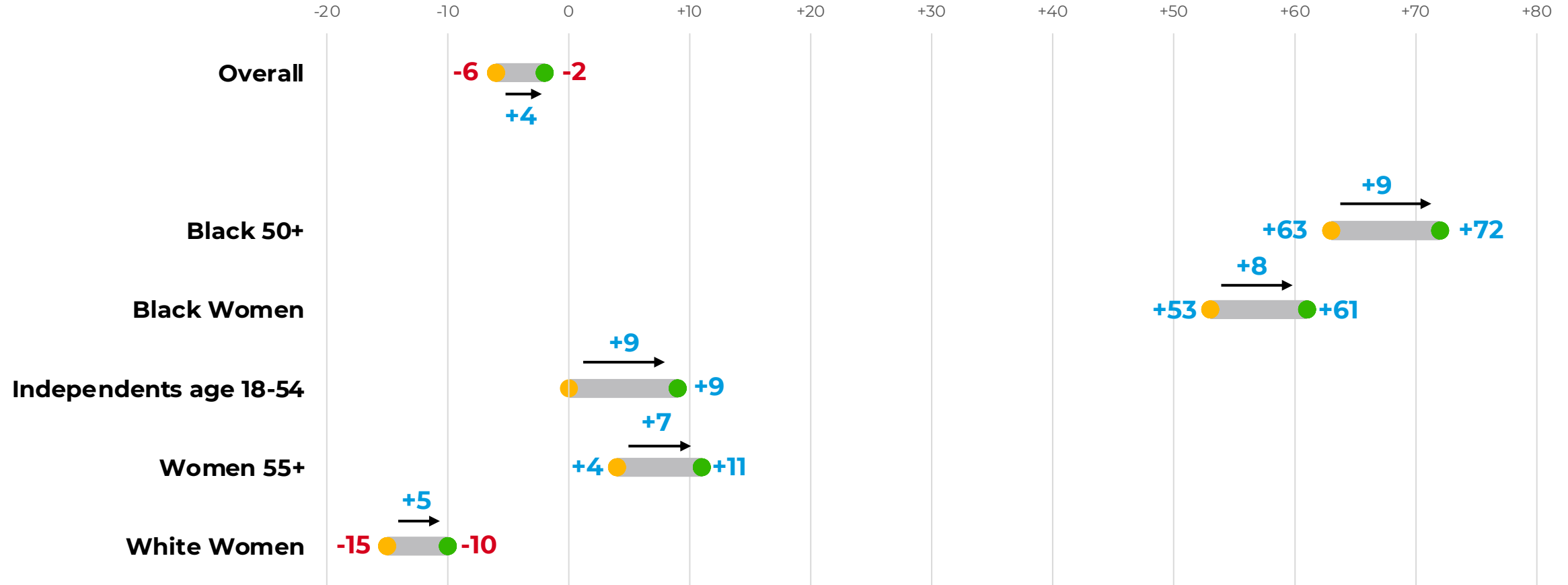
Commitment to Vote for President



“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.

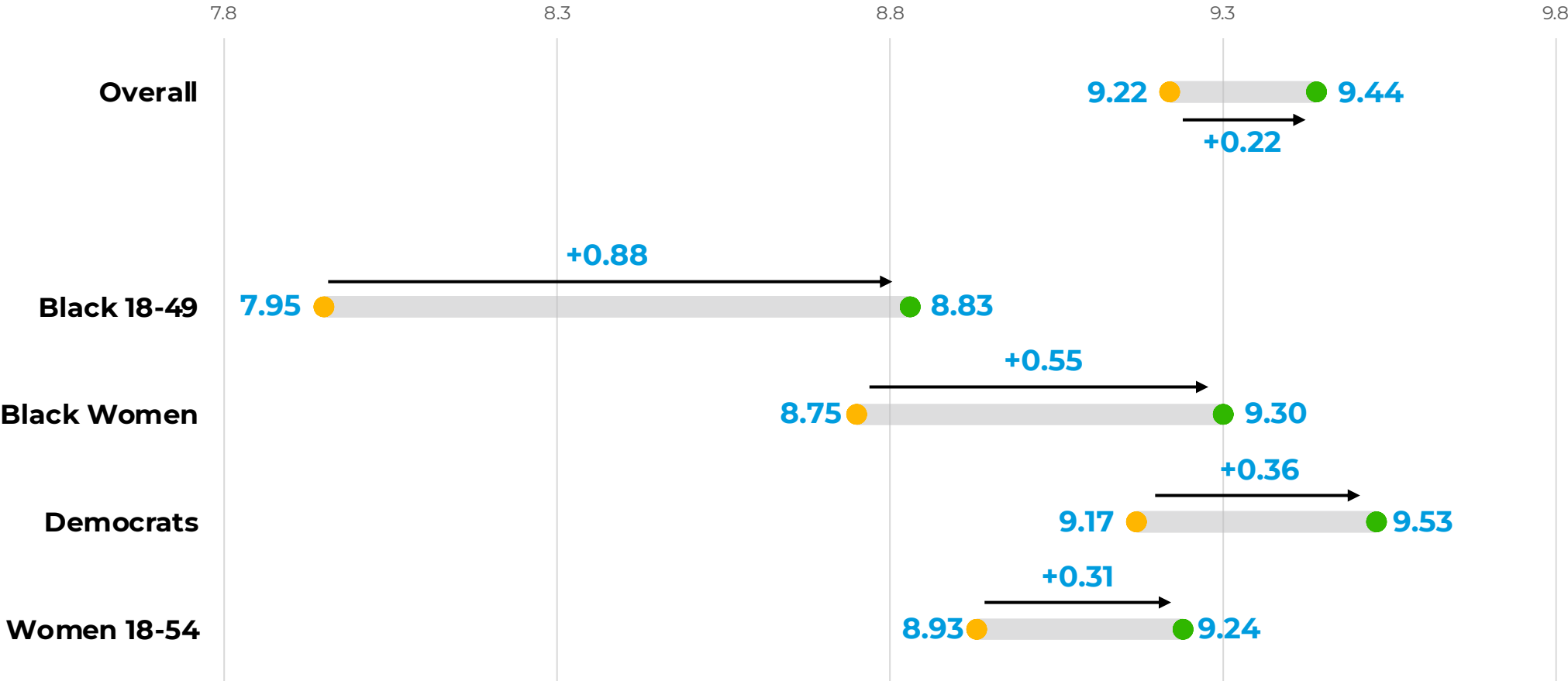
After voters are exposed to climate and clean energy messaging, we see solid gains in Biden's margins among key subgroups

Change in NET Biden – Initial Vote to Final Vote



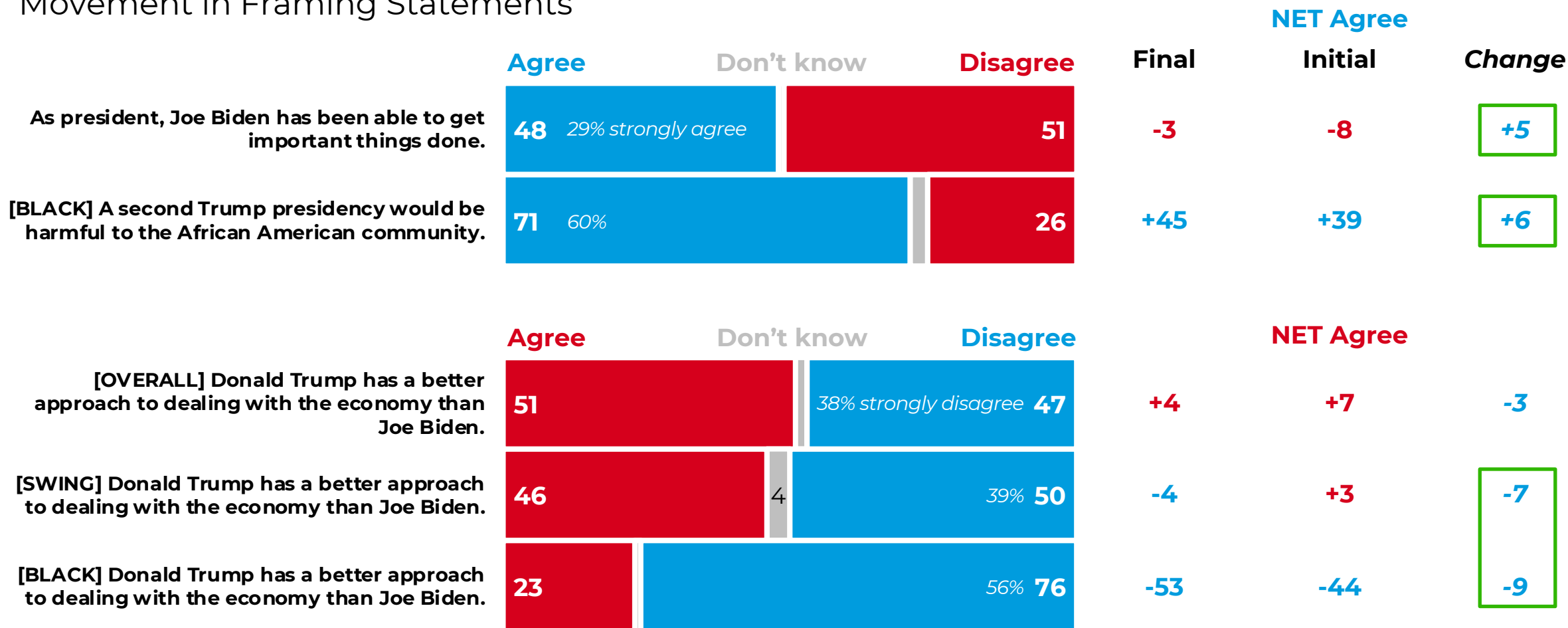
Climate and clean energy messaging also increases the motivation of key groups to vote, especially younger Black voters

Change in Vote Motivation – Initial to Final



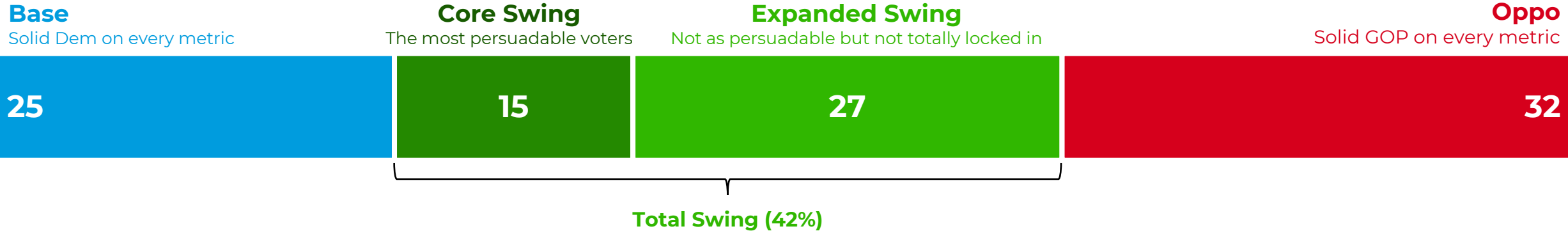
Climate and clean energy messaging boosts perceptions that Biden gets thing done on the economy – and that Trump is a danger to Black communities

Movement in Framing Statements



Younger Black voters, younger independent voters, Black women, non-college women, and Democratic women are more likely to be persuadable

Vote Targets



White Democrats (52% are Base)
Black Democrats (46%)

Black women (38%)
Women 55+ (36%)

College graduates (37%)

- College women (44%)
- White college (35%)

Raleigh (34%)

Black 18-49 (45% are Core Swing)

Democratic women (25%)
Non-college women (19%)

Independents 18-55 (23%)

Charlotte-Mecklenburg (23%)
Western/Blue Ridge DMAs (18%)

Independents 18-55 (56% are Total Swing)

Independent men (53%)
Non-college independents (50%)
Non-college women (47%)

Black 18-49 (77%)
Black women (60%)

Western/Blue Ridge DMAs (56%)
Charlotte-Mecklenburg (51%)
Down East/Shore DMAs (45%)

Republican men (70% are Oppo)

White Republicans (69%)
White 55+ (49%)
White non-college (46%)

Men 55+ (51%)
White men (46%)
Non-college men (39%)

Charlotte-Other (40%)
Greensboro (38%)

Focus groups in other states showed that support for RFK is soft and easily moved when given facts about his positions

Initial RFK Sentiment

RFK is boosted by the “Kennedy” name. His supporters in focus groups don’t initially know much about him or necessarily believe he can win but want to support a candidate that they believe puts the people first.

“I think [RFK] is more concerned about people than about himself. They [politicians] all lie, but I think the way he talks, he’s more about the people.”

Post-Messaging RFK Sentiment

After we give more information, voters are concerned with RFK’s flip flop on climate and ties to Trump. Across all focus groups we initially had five respondents who supported RFK, four of whom moved to Biden following the negative attack.

“He’s totally against the climate.” “It sounds like he’s in cahoots with Trump...It’s very disturbing.”



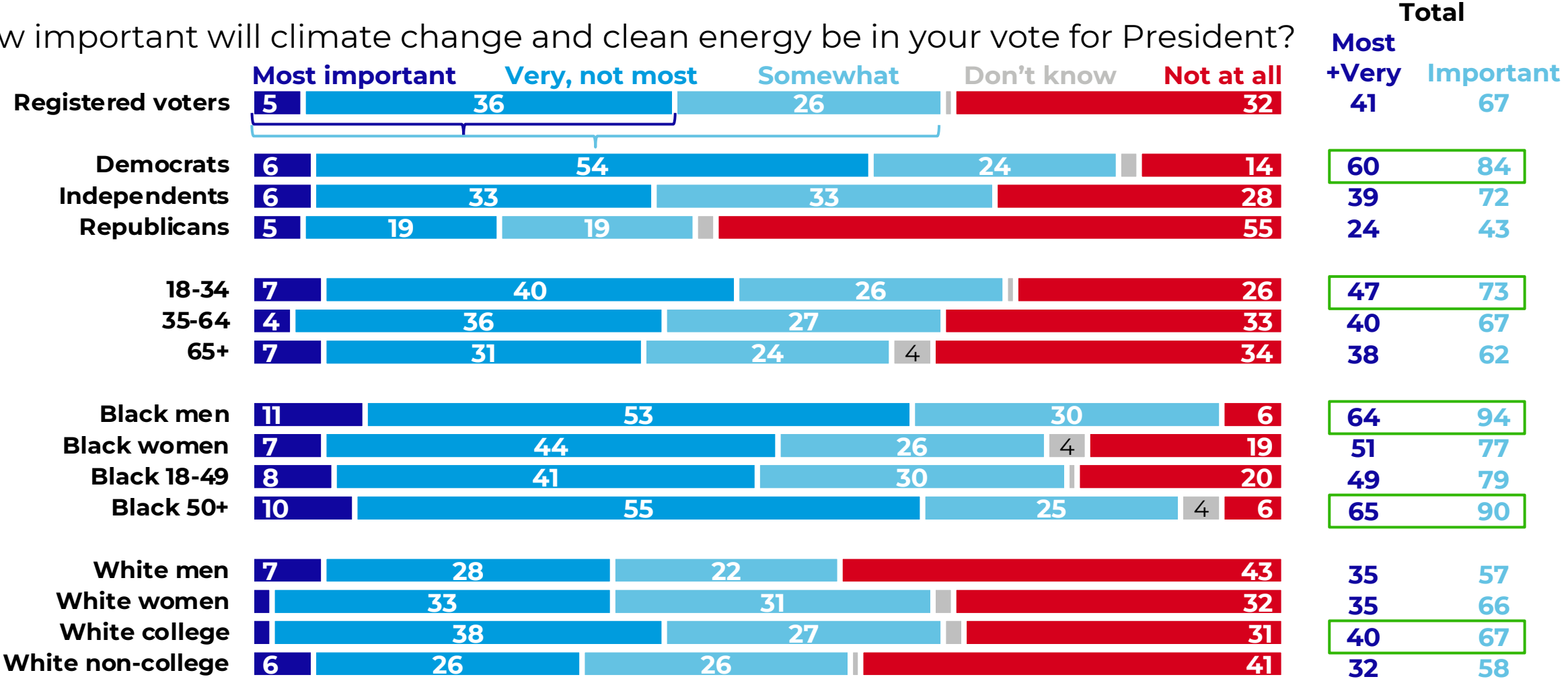
[RFK Negative] Kennedy used to be a lead activist in the environmental community, but he abandoned those efforts to focus on conspiracy theories. Like Donald Trump, Kennedy rejects the scientific consensus that climate change is mainly caused by carbon pollution. Like Trump, Kennedy opposes efforts by 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. So, it’s no wonder that 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 Black men and older Black voters

How important will climate change and clean energy be in your vote for President?



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

Biden isn't credited for having a strong position on climate: Biden's party affiliation gives the impression that climate is part of his agenda but few think Biden has actually accomplished much of anything on the issue: *"I don't think [Biden] cares that much either. I think Trump is worse, in this regard, but when it comes to stuff I've actually heard about Biden – I can't say anything comes to mind."*

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

- *"He's been doing **more than a lot of people think.**"* – young (18-34) voter
- *"When you see it in totality, it does make me feel a little **more optimistic.** ... It shows [that] his policies can be **highly effective.**"* – Black voter
- *"The key things I care about it seems **he cares about as well.**"* – white swing woman

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

Voters were drawn to accomplishments they saw as significant in scale, including tripling the production of clean energy and cutting 1 billion tons of carbon pollution.

Economic messaging was a key factor in moving persuadable voters to Biden – especially around jobs. Statistics like creating 10,000 new jobs in North Carolina and saving households \$1,000 a year helped voters see Biden's actions as impactful, rather than as nebulous plans.

Clean water was tangible and made voters think of local, everyday impacts. Many voters naturally linked their families' and communities' health to clean water. Thus, Biden's work to replace lead pipes and clean up "forever chemicals" resonated.

We saw questions about whether Biden had really gotten things done or if he just had plans. In some materials, we presented the climate pieces of the IRA as Biden's "plan" which caused some to assume that it was not something that had passed into law. Meanwhile, some young voters argued that Biden's accomplishments were not impressive because, in their view, they were obvious and easy actions. We can combat this sentiment by pointing out that Big Oil CEOs have blocked progress and Biden was the first to take them on and win.

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

Biden Positive Messaging

[YOUNG AND AA ONLY] [EJ] 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 to make sure that everyone, regardless of race, income, or ZIP code has clean air and water.

[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.

[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 nearly 10,000 in North Carolina - most of which don't require a college degree.

[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.

[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.

[TOOK ON BIG OIL] 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 finally expanding clean energy.

[US OIL PRODUCTION] Under Joe Biden, U.S. oil and gas production is at an all-time high, gas prices dropped 36% from their post-pandemic peak, 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.

[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. 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.

Environmental Justice messaging is very strong with Black voters. Climate, health, and jobs are highest with swing

Biden Positive Messaging

Mean (Convincing Scale 1-7)

	Overall	Swing	18-34	Black	Ind.	Dem.	White Women
[ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE]	N/A*	N/A*	4.08	5.36	N/A*	N/A*	N/A*
[HEALTH]	3.89	4.21	4.10	5.25	3.98	5.17	3.84
[JOBS]	3.75	4.04	4.03	5.22	3.83	5.05	3.62
[CLIMATE- TRIPLE CLEAN ENERGY]	3.71	4.09	4.15	5.16	3.83	5.10	3.58
[CLIMATE- 100% CLEAN ENERGY]	3.63	3.92	3.92	5.06	3.69	4.87	3.30
[TOOK ON BIG OIL]	3.63	4.01	4.03	5.16	3.67	4.96	3.46
[US OIL PRODUCTION]	3.59	3.79	3.95	5.16	3.73	4.86	3.41
[COSTS]	3.54	3.81	3.90	4.93	3.59	4.87	3.50

“*Biden is truly stimulating the economy by investing in clean energy which will create more than 270,000 jobs with 10,000 of those being here in North Carolina.*” – Black voter

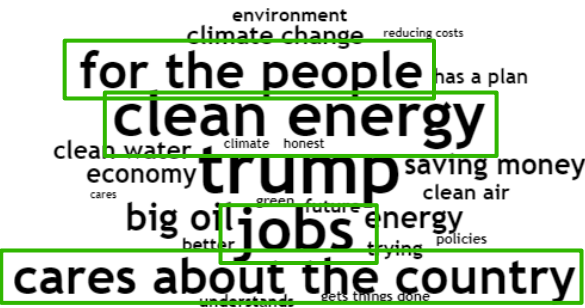
“*It just comes back to leaving a better earth, cleaning up after ourselves, taking accountability for what we did, and also making a better future for future generations.*” – Young voter

* “EJ” message only asked of certain subgroups

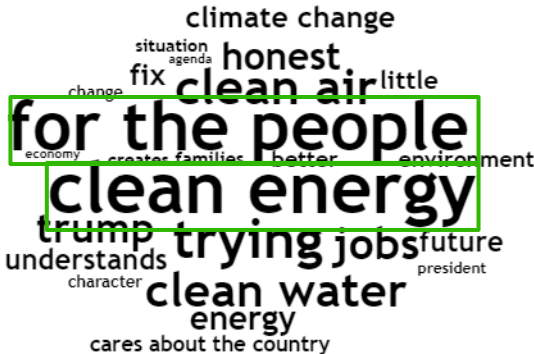
Clean energy jobs, Biden being for the people/country, and not being Trump stick with voters after messaging

Most convincing reasons to vote for Joe Biden

Registered Voters

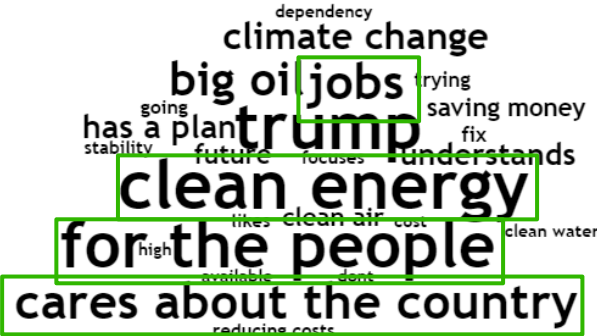


Black

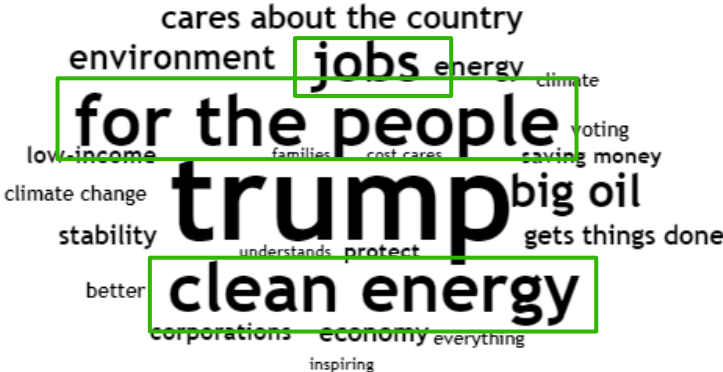


“Clean water and energy act and how he is trying to do things for people”

Swing

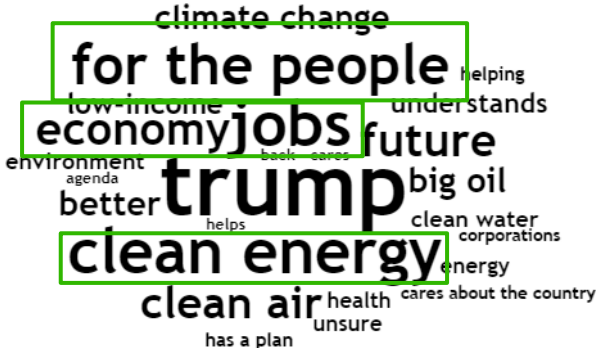


Independents

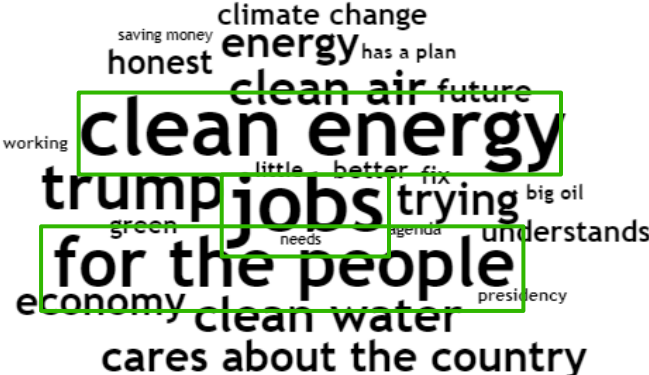


“Clean energy to create new jobs in NC”

18-34



Democrats



“He actually cares about his country”

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

Trump is seen as prioritizing himself and corporate profits over climate and the good of the people, but voters aren't familiar with the destructiveness of his record.

- Trump's business background gives voters the impression that his position on climate and clean energy would put business interests first.
- However, voters are largely unaware of what that means and the scale of the destructiveness of Trump's record and plans. They struggle to point to any specifics of Trump's climate record.

When we reminded voters of Trump's destructive record and positions, they 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 actions.

When we asked voters to make their own strongest case for Biden over Trump, many of them naturally contrasted pieces of Trump's record with pieces of Biden's.

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

Trump giving tax breaks to corporate polluters that laid off workers (which resulted in Chevron paying \$0 in taxes) was seen as particularly egregious – and proof that he is out for himself and his wealthy corporate allies at the expense of average families.

Voters volunteered their own criticism of Trump's potential motives, with some calling him greedy and suggesting he must be personally benefitting from helping Big Oil CEOs.

Trump's denial of climate change and ignoring experts raised concerns about his overall fitness for office and judgment on other pressing issues.

Trump rolling back environmental protections and enabling pollution in communities of color helped drive anti-Trump opinions among Black voters.

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

Trump Negative Messaging

[YOUNG AND AA ONLY] [EJ] 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.

[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, drill,” even on our public lands.

[BIG OIL] 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.

[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”.

[PFAS] When Donald Trump was president, he opposed plans to clean up toxic, cancer-causing “forever chemicals” contaminating our water, including chemicals found near military bases. Trump repeatedly rejected legislation to remove these chemicals from our water - and even created a loophole that allowed certain corporate polluters to avoid disclosing how much of these chemicals they release into the environment.

[LOBBYISTS/ROLLBACK] We have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for future generations - but as president, 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.

[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 or gave Big Oil CEOs massive tax breaks. In a second term, Trump would be looking out for himself.

Environmental Justice stands out as a potent negative with Black voters. Giveaways to Big Oil, climate denial, and authoritarianism solid with swing

Trump Negative Messaging

	Mean (Convincing Scale 1-7)						
	Overall	Swing	18-34	Black	Ind.	Dem.	White Women
[EJ]	N/A*	N/A*	4.33	5.51	N/A*	N/A*	N/A*
[DICTATOR/REPEAL]	4.18	4.39	4.46	5.34	4.30	5.26	4.20
[BIG OIL]	4.09	4.40	4.46	5.35	4.23	5.20	4.04
[CLIMATE DENIAL]	4.07	4.32	4.49	5.22	4.23	5.07	4.05
[PFAS]	4.06	4.32	4.52	5.33	4.29	5.01	3.98
[LOBBYISTS/ROLLBACK]	3.95	4.09	4.26	5.05	4.01	5.10	3.90
[PERSONAL GAIN]	3.94	4.31	4.38	5.34	4.23	5.12	3.91

“ Giving giant tax breaks to the oil companies like Chevron and ExxonMobil, where they don't pay any money in federal taxes, but they're making billions upon billions of dollars, usually record profits, and they're paying their CEOs thirty million dollars while still laying off people. Like, how can you do that? – Black voter

“ The [environmental justice message] was very concerning to me for choosing him as president, because how can you be subject to letting any community suffer? No matter if they're black, white, Latino, Hispanic, it don't matter. – Black voter

* “EJ” message only asked of certain subgroups

Trump's climate denial sticks with voters. Democrats, Black, and young voters especially dislike his selfishness and ties to Big Oil

Most convincing reasons to vote against Donald Trump

Registered Voters



Swing



18-34



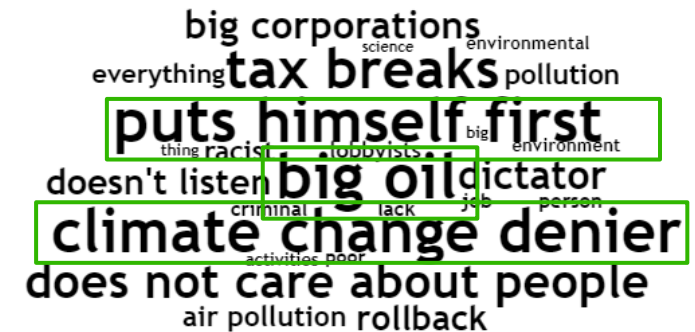
Black



Independents



Democrats



"[Trump] denies climate change"

"He's in the pockets of big oil."

"Caters to the interests of oil corporations"

"He's against legislation on climate change and he cut taxes to big oil companies"



Messaging Guidance

Messaging Guidance

We'll be in the strongest position with contrast messaging, but that contrast must drive awareness of the significance of Biden's accomplishments. Additionally, for younger voters (especially Black voters) who are open to third-party candidates, including RFK negatives could move votes to Biden.

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

CLEAN ENERGY/JOB: 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 nearly 10,000 in North Carolina - most of which don't require a college degree.

Messaging Guidance

Messages on health and looking out for future generations are good secondary pro-Biden messages:

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.*

LEGACY/CLIMATE: *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.*

Messaging Guidance

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 to make sure that everyone, regardless of race, income, or ZIP code has clean air and water.*

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.*

Messaging Guidance

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 re-elected, 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

New York | Washington, DC | Chicago | Denver | Hartford | Los Angeles | Nashville | Seattle