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To: Interested Parties
From: Climate Power and Data for Progress
Date: October 18, 2024
Re: MEMO: New Polling Shows Harris Is More Trusted to Handle Extreme Weather Issues Than Trump

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Summary

In light of the devastation caused across the southeastern U.S. by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, Climate Power and Data for Progress recently fielded a [survey](#) of national likely voters, with an oversample of battleground states, to understand public perceptions of extreme weather events and assess the most effective messaging around this topic and the upcoming election.

A majority of voters nationwide believe extreme weather events are happening because of climate change and that these events are increasing in frequency. Furthermore, voters trust Kamala Harris more than they trust Donald Trump to address extreme weather events, with that trust advantage widening further after reviewing a battery of messages about extreme weather and the upcoming presidential election.
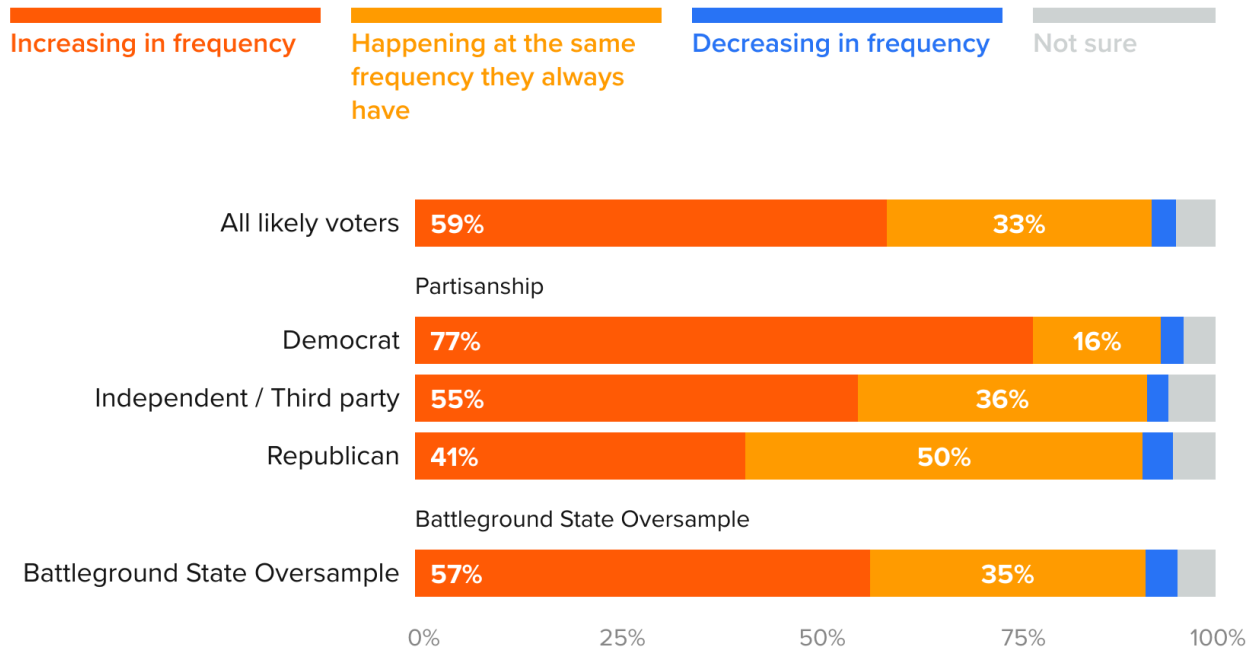
Baseline Views: Voters Believe Climate Change Is a Crisis Already — Or That it Will Become One — and Blame It for Extreme Weather Events

More than one in three voters considers climate change to already be a crisis, including 56% of Democrats. Among those who do not think climate change is a crisis yet, 1 in 4 think it is likely to become a crisis in the foreseeable future and 38% think it is likely to become a crisis in the distant future.

A majority of voters (59%) also think extreme weather events like heat waves, wildfires, flooding, hurricanes, and droughts are increasing in frequency — and 61% say extreme weather events are happening because of climate change, including majorities across all demographic groups except for Republicans.

A Majority of Voters Believe Extreme Weather Events Are Increasing in Frequency, Including Those in Battleground States

Do you think that extreme weather events like heat waves, wildfires, flooding, hurricanes, and droughts are increasing in frequency, decreasing in frequency, or happening with the same frequency they always have?

Increasing in frequency   **Happening at the same frequency they always have**   **Decreasing in frequency**   Not sure

Category	Increasing in frequency	Happening at the same frequency they always have
All likely voters	59%	33%
Partisanship		
Democrat	77%	16%
Independent / Third party	55%	36%
Republican	41%	50%
Battleground State Oversample		
Battleground State Oversample	57%	35%

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

The survey also finds that voters place significantly less trust in elected officials, both at the national and local levels, for reliable and unbiased information about extreme weather events like hurricanes. Voters' most trusted sources for this type of information are meteorologists and scientists, followed by national news, and state and local news. Before messaging, the Biden-Harris administration has a 49% approval rating for their response to extreme weather events, a slim +3-point margin of approval, while Harris holds a +5-point margin of trust over Trump regarding their ability to address extreme weather events (50% and 45%, respectively).

Effective Messaging on Extreme Weather Focuses on Ways Trump's 2025 Agenda Could Weaken Our Preparedness for Disasters, and on Trump's Dangerous Disinformation Sharing

Respondents next read a series of messages within a MaxDiff message test. They were asked to repeatedly rank the most and least convincing messages shown to them regarding reasons not

to vote for Donald Trump in the November 2024 election for U.S. president. The data from this exercise was used to produce an ordinal ranking of the most effective messages to use on this subject. Because these messages explicitly list candidate names, they tend to be polarizing, particularly among conservative-leaning respondents, so there are no standout top messages that work consistently across party lines; however, there are a few messages that are considered more effective when discussing extreme weather and the upcoming election.

Overall, the strongest performing messages discuss specific impacts that Americans may experience under a second Trump administration and that they may already be facing as a result of his rhetoric. The two most convincing messages overall, including among battleground state voters, are:

- **[P2025]** Funded by Big Oil money, Trump's Project 2025 agenda could become law if he is elected and could force Americans to pay for life- saving weather alerts, dismantle the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and privatize disaster relief, making recovery harder.
- **[DANGEROUS DISINFORMATION]** Trump spreads dangerous disinformation about extreme weather events and climate change. When he spreads these lies, he puts Americans' safety at risk, making recovery efforts more difficult by confusing people and making them less likely to seek or receive the aid they need.

Most Convincing Messages Against Trump Related to His Handling of Extreme Weather Events

Below is a list of statements that have been made about Donald Trump's response to recent extreme weather events, including Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton.

For each set of statements you see, select which statement you find most convincing and least convincing as a reason to not vote for Donald Trump in the November 2024 election for U.S. president.

---% Net difference in convincingness

Most Convincing ⬆

- Trump's Project 2025 agenda would make recovery harder (+1.7)
- Trump spreading lies and disinformation about extreme weather events is dangerous (+1.7)
- Trump showed us with COVID-19 that he ignores experts and scientists and cannot be trusted as a leader (+1.3)
- Trump puts the well-being of corporate polluters first, while Harris is working to protect the middle class (+0.1)
- Trump's climate denialism shows he is not serious (-0.3)
- Trump's decisions are heavily influenced by Big Oil (-0.4)
- Trump spreads disinformation while the Biden-Harris admin helps communities recover (-0.5)
- Trump prioritizes corporate interests over everyday Americans (-0.6)
- Trump's climate denial and anti-science policies will leave families vulnerable to disaster (-1.3)
- Trump mismanaged Hurricane Maria (-1.6)

October 11-16, 2024 survey of 1,442 likely voters

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Voters' Trust in Harris to Handle Extreme Weather Events Improves After Being Informed of Trump's Response to Recent Weather Events
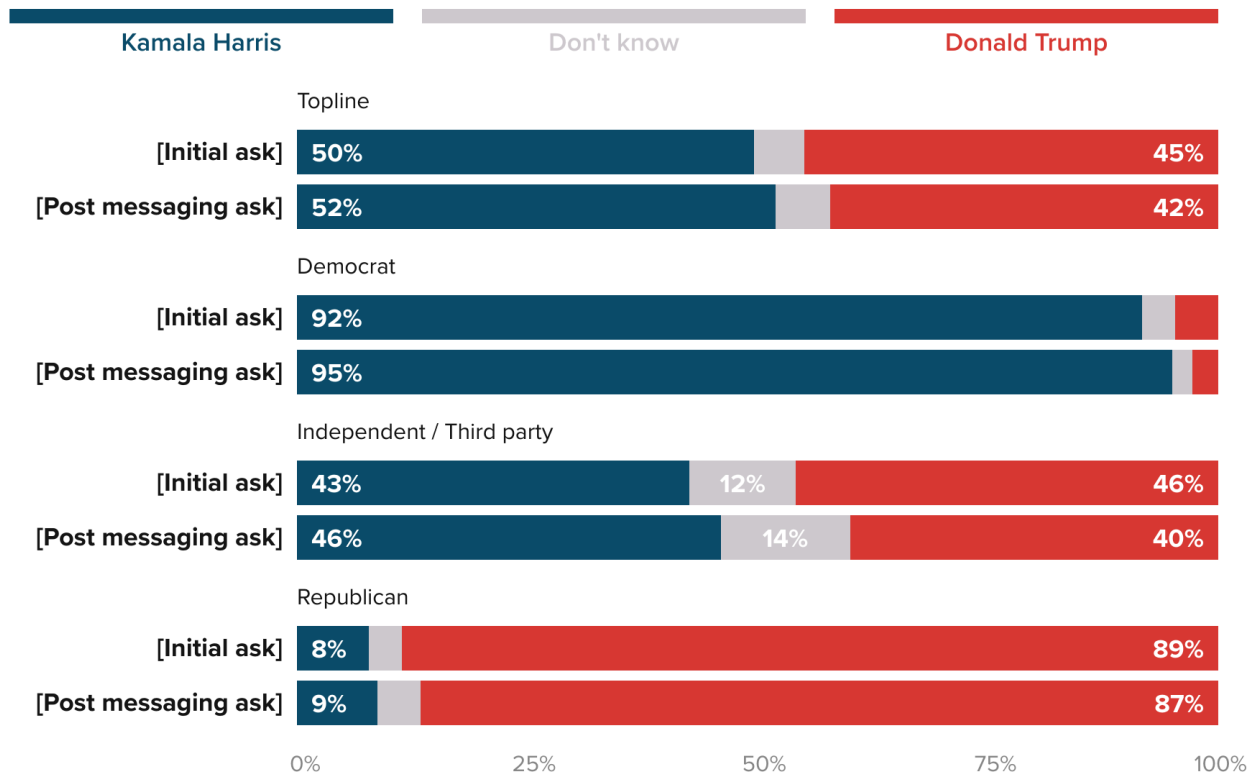
When voters are then asked if they trust Harris or Trump more to handle extreme weather events, half of all voters say they trust Harris more, while 45% say they trust Trump more. Among battleground state voters, trust is tied between the two candidates, with 48% each.

After being presented with statements that have been made about Donald Trump's response to recent extreme weather events, trust in Harris to address extreme weather events improves from

a +5-point margin over Trump to a +10-point margin over Trump — with 52% of voters saying they trust Harris more and 42% saying they trust Trump more.

Trust in Harris to Address Extreme Weather Events Improves to a 10-Point Advantage Over Trump After Messaging

Who do you trust **more** to handle extreme weather events, like Hurricanes Helene and Milton?

	Kamala Harris	Don't know	Donald Trump
Topline			
[Initial ask]	50%		45%
[Post messaging ask]	52%		42%
Democrat			
[Initial ask]	92%		
[Post messaging ask]	95%		
Independent / Third party			
[Initial ask]	43%	12%	46%
[Post messaging ask]	46%	14%	40%
Republican			
[Initial ask]	8%		89%
[Post messaging ask]	9%		87%

October 11–16, 2024 survey of 1,442 U.S. likely voters

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Conclusion

This survey demonstrates that a significant number of voters already see climate change as the crisis that it is, and even those who do not think climate change is a crisis just yet think it will become a crisis in the foreseeable or distant future. However, a strong majority of voters blame climate change for extreme weather events, which they think are increasing in frequency.

Out of 10 messages tested regarding reasons why they should not vote for Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election, the most convincing messages focus on the potential impacts of

Trump's Project 2025 agenda and the dangers of Trump's tendency to spread disinformation about extreme weather events and climate change.

After voters are presented with these different arguments against Trump, Harris' trust advantage in terms of handling extreme weather events improves by 5 points.

Survey Methodology

From October 11 to 16, 2024, Data for Progress and Climate Power conducted a survey of 1,442 U.S. likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and 2020 recalled vote. This sample is also weighted to account for an oversample in battleground states (defined as AZ, GA, MI, NV, NC, PA, WI) with an unweighted N of 573. The oversample was weighted to be representative of its likely voting population proportional to the national likely voter electorate. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error associated with the sample size is ±3 percentage points. Results for subgroups of the sample are subject to increased margins of error. Partisanship reflected in tabulations is based on self-identified party affiliation, not partisan registration.

Data for Progress conducted message testing through maximum difference scaling (MaxDiff) to determine the ordinal ranking of 10 messages as reasons to not vote for Donald Trump. Respondents were shown a randomized subset of 4 of the messages, and asked to pick the most and least convincing messages from those options. They were then asked to do the same across multiple rounds, each time with a new set of 4 randomized messages.

Using these responses, we project what percentage of likely voters would select each message as the most convincing and what percentage of likely voters would select each message as the least convincing from the full set of messages.

For more information please visit dataforprogress.org/our-methodology.