

To: VPC and CVI  
From: Celinda Lake, Joshua Ulibarri, and Jamie Lee, LRP  
Re: Key Takeaways from a Motivation Survey of Young Unmarried Women and Women of Color in Battleground States  
Date: September 11, 2020

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Recently, LRP conducted an online survey on voter motivation in battleground states among unmarried women under age 55 and women of color.<sup>i</sup> This survey looked at voter motivation – how motivated they are to vote, who and what motivates them, and their ultimate reasons for going to the polls or voting for a certain candidate. Outlined below are the major takeaways and recommendations for motivating this group of voters and getting them to turn out for the election.

### Major Takeaways Heading Towards Elections

- This is a very motivated segment of the electorate (61% very motivated)
  - Married women of color are even more motivated at 66%, and when combined with older single women of color, 72% are very motivated.
- The main challenge to overcome with this group of voters is the cynicism they have towards politicians and the way things are going right now.
- They are concerned about the pandemic and the economy, and they need to view these concerns as a reason to vote for good and better leaders rather than a reason to turn away from politics and elections entirely.
- They are hungry for change in this country that will make things better for people like them, but they need to be convinced that the candidates on the ballot will actually work to represent them and the issues they care about, like cost of living and health care.
- These voters respond most strongly to messages invoking community and change. They are concerned about the future of their own communities and families, and they need to believe that voting will bring about palpable change.

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## Challenges Heading Towards November

1. **Twenty-four percent of voters would consider voting for a third party.** This is largely driven by women under age 40, independents, those with children under 18 in the household, and those who have moved since January 2017. And, while only 10% of voters say they feel less motivated to vote than they did previously, the number one reason for feeling less motivated is disliking both presidential candidates (42%). This is especially true among Latinx voters, among whom 50% of less motivated voters attribute this change to disliking both candidates. That being said, there is no energy for equivocating the two presidential candidates as two old white men who should not be President; less than 20% of voters strongly agree with this comparison, regardless of which split message they received – they aren't buying into the equivocation narrative.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. While still not a strong comparison, there is more energy for the equivocation statements among younger women. Only 18% of this population overall strongly agrees that both Biden and Trump are out of touch with Americans, but 26% of white women under age 40 and 25% of women of color under age 40 strongly agree.
2. **These voters are cynical about politics.** Sixty-three percent of voters say that removing bad people from office is a very important reason to vote. In fact, this is the most important reason to vote among this group of women. A few key exceptions are Latina women and married women of color, who rank creating change as more important. Additionally, most Biden voters say they are voting for him because they dislike Trump (43%). The exception is older/married women of color; 47% of these women say they are voting for Biden because they like him and think that he has the qualifications for the job. The overall focus of this group on voting bad people *out*, rather than voting good people *in*, may be a challenge, as this cynicism, combined with the obstacles posed by the pandemic, could deter them from making it to the ballot box.

## Opportunities Moving Forward

1. **When asked whether Joe Biden's pick of Kamala Harris as his Vice President made the voters feel more or less excited to vote, fifty-six percent in this demographic group said they are more excited to vote, with 31% much more excited.** And, while the addition of her name on the ballot shows no increase in support for the Biden ticket, it DOES increase the percentage of young unmarried white women who say they are casting their ballot FOR the Biden/Harris ticket rather than against the Trump/Pence ticket (39%

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<sup>1</sup> **SSA:** Both Joe Biden and Donald Trump are two old, white men who are out of touch with what real Americans want, and there really isn't any difference between them.

**SSB:** Both Joe Biden and Donald Trump are two old, white men who are out of touch with what real Americans want.

FOR Biden alone, 45% FOR Biden/Harris). This shows that Harris can be used as a to turn out voters, if not to gain support.

2. ***The top concerns for these voters are working class issues.*** They want to vote for leaders who care about people like them and have the same interests in mind when they vote. Sixty-five percent say that caring about people like them is a very important quality in a candidate, and 59% say that a candidate caring about the issues that they care about is very important. Their top concerns are the cost of living (69% very important), prioritizing working-class interests regardless of background (68%), and the cost of health care and prescription drugs (67%). These priorities are largely consistent across race, but younger unmarried white women tend to rate social justice and equality issues higher. Twenty-seven percent of those who were employed before the pandemic have seen reduced hours since, and 21% of have their job entirely. These voters want to vote for people who will protect them in these tough times. Focusing on these basics and how they relate to voting in November will be key.
3. ***There is plenty of energy for change among these voters.*** Some of the top testing messages throughout the survey are those about using their vote to create change or joining together to create change. In fact, the most important reason to vote for this group, after removing bad people from office, is to create change that will lead to a better future for our children (59% very important). Fifty-eight percent of voters strongly agree that they are the changing face of the country and that it is important for them to participate in elections (80% of women on color ages 40 and over), and 58% also strongly agree that we must create change by joining together with others. These voters are conscious of their role in the upcoming election, and they want to make a difference in their communities.

## Recommendations Looking Ahead

1. ***Focus messaging around the need for people like them to create change.*** These voters know that their vote is becoming increasingly important with every election as they make up more and more of the electorate. They are concerned about what events the future holds if things don't improve, such as another surge in coronavirus cases (41% very worried), the effects of COVID-19 on education (31%), and continued police violence (31%). They also have a strong desire to see change in their communities. In fact, each creative tested (involving themes of change, community, and defiance against a system that has oppressed people like them) was received very positively; roughly 40% of voters report feeling very motivated to vote after reading each piece. By intertwining these themes, we can create a strong message for this group of voters.
  - a. Each mailer has much stronger motivating effect on women ages 40 and older than they do on women under age 40.

- b. While most demographic groups rate each message similarly, Latinx women are less responsive to “Defiance” than to the other letters. Forty-six percent of Latinas say they feel very motivated to vote after reading the “Stronger Community” and “Be the Change” messages, but only 38% are very motivated after reading “Defiance.”
2. **Issues messaging should focus on the economic concerns of working- and middle-class people.** Personal financial and economic concerns are at the top of voters’ minds, especially in the midst of the pandemic. After the coronavirus, the economy and jobs is the second most important issue for the next president to address (37%). And, on a personal level, these voters rank issues like cost of living, working class interests, health care costs, and wealth inequalities as their top concerns. Issues like criminal justice reform (64% very important for women of color) and gender and racial inequalities are important to these voters as well and can be used in tandem with the economic concerns addressed above.

## Appendix

### Defiance (Letter 1)



Dear Jane,

Thank you for being a registered voter in New Mexico. It may not seem like it to you, but voting is an act of defiance.

Over 250 hundred years ago, the right to vote was a radical idea. 150 years ago, it was radical for Black men to vote. 100 years ago, it was radical for women to vote. Make no mistake voting is a big deal.

You’ve shown that you were brave when you used your voice to vote in 2016 and again in 2018\*.

Take action this year – don’t allow your voice to be silenced. Be brave, use your voice, and vote by **Tuesday, November 3**.

Sincerely,

Page S. Gardner  
Board Chair  
The Voter Participation Center

P.S. We hope to see your name on the list of people who voted in 2020, and we look forward to hearing about your experience voting.

\*This data comes from publicly available state voter files.  
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## Stronger Community (Letter 2)



Dear Jane,

Communities are strong because people rely on each other when they need help. Everyone has a role to play: first responders, teachers, nurses, and you Jane.

You lock your doors every night. You wear a seat belt. You look both ways before crossing the street. These every day actions keep you and those you love safe, so why wouldn't you vote in this year's General Election?

You have the opportunity to teach the next generation that voting is not just a right, it is a safeguard to protect us from tyranny. Your vote keeps democracy safe – for you, your family, your friends, and America.

We want to thank you. Publicly available records show that you voted in 2018\* and gave your community a voice. You've shown voting is important – now we're challenging you to do more. Ask 3 friends or family members to join you. Can we count on you? The best encouragement comes from the people we know.

Join your community and cast your ballot by **Tuesday, November 3**.

Sincerely,

Page S. Gardner  
Board Chair  
The Voter Participation Center

P.S. We hope to see your name on the list of people who voted in 2020, and we look forward to hearing about your experience voting.

\*This data comes from publicly available state voter files.  
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## Be the Change (Letter 3)



Dear Jane,

Thank you for being a registered voter in Florida. You have chosen to take part in one of America's longest and proudest traditions – democracy.

I know America has not always gotten things right the first time. But we can be proud that brave Americans always stood up for what was right and fought for change.

The General Election, on Tuesday November 3, it's our turn. Our turn to fight for a fairer, more sustainable America that we all can be proud to call home.

Our forefathers made mistakes. Together, we have righted many of them. There is still more work to do. Today we vote. Tomorrow we call our representatives, we volunteer, we march. We will not stay silent.

The next generation is counting on us. Publicly available records show that you took part in the historic 2018 General Election\*. Cast your ballot in the General Election by Tuesday November 3, and ask 3 friends to join you. We can be the change we have been waiting for – but we have to vote.

Sincerely,

Page S. Gardner  
Board Chair  
The Voter Participation Center

P.S. If you have questions about your mail ballot, please contact your county Supervisor of Elections office. You can find their information at [sos.gov](http://sos.gov).

\*This data comes from publicly available state voter file

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<sup>i i</sup> Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey with 1,097 unmarried women under age 55 and women of color in select battleground states. This survey was conducted online from a national sample of registered voters. The survey was conducted from August 20 – 27, 2020. The data were weighted slightly by age, region, party ID, race, education, marital status, and parental status. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.0% and larger for the sub-groups (5.7% for unmarried women of color under age 55, 5.1% for women of color who are married or age 55+, 4.7% for white unmarried women under age 55, and 5.1% for Black women).