

Messaging Against Trump's Climate Record in 2020

Findings Prepared by Global Strategy Group & Normington Petts for CAPAF & LCV



Methodology

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of **603 persuadable registered voters in the Rust Belt (Minnesota, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) and the Sun Belt (Arizona, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Nevada and Texas*)**, with additional samples of **302 non-Republican Latinx voters** and **300 non-Republican younger voters**. This research was conducted between March 20th and 29th, 2020 and the samples have a margin of error of +/-4.0%, +/-5.6%, and +/-5.7% respectively.

Persuadable are defined as anyone:

- Who is in categories 3-5 on the following scale AND
- NOT a strong Democrat or a strong Republican
 1. Definitely vote for the Democrat, regardless of who the Democrats nominate
 2. Probably vote for the Democrat, regardless of who the Democrats nominate
 3. Undecided/Depends on candidate, but lean Democrat
 4. Undecided/Depends on candidate, no lean
 5. Undecided/Depends on candidate, but lean Trump
 6. Probably vote for Trump, regardless of who the Democrats nominate
 7. Definitely vote for Trump, regardless of who the Democrats nominate

**TX is only included in the Latinx and younger voter samples*

Key Findings

The voters that are up for grabs in the presidential race are fundamentally Republican leaning, but they are also fundamentally pro-climate.

- Though they are split between approving and disapproving of Donald Trump, this group is fundamentally Republican leaning, largely because Democrats are more solid in their decision to vote against Trump.
- While persuadable voters tend to approve of Trump's economic performance, they overwhelmingly disapprove the job he is doing on climate change, and support taking strong action to combat climate change and moving to a 100% clean energy economy by 2050.

There is huge opportunity to move persuadable voters on the Congressional ballot using climate.

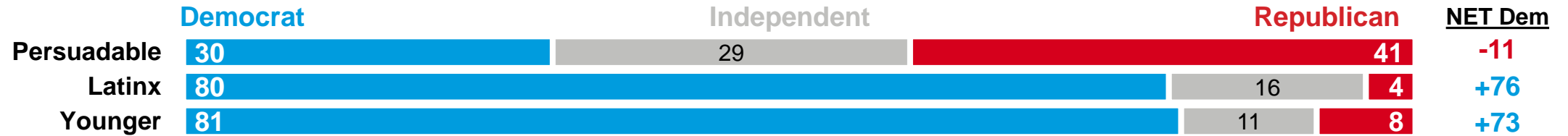
- While Republicans lead the generic ballot with our persuadable voters by 9 points, when that is reframed as a choice between a Democrat who “supports taking strong government action to combat climate change” and a Republican who opposes such action, the generic ballot shifts to a 20-point Democratic lead – a net 29-point shift.

We make real gains with persuadable voters. And we make significant motivation gains with Latinx and younger voters – but we will need Biden to drive an affirmative message on climate to maximize gains.

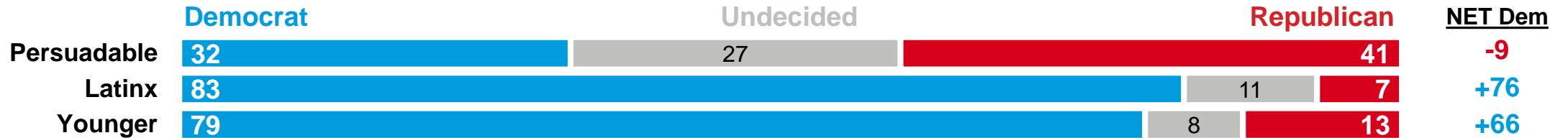
- On metrics like 2020 vote, disapproval of Trump, and key traits like looking out for future generations and ignoring experts, our messaging moves persuadable voters and, to a lesser extent, the non-Republican Latinx sample.
- We also boost the percent of non-Republican younger voters who start out with Biden and say they are extremely motivated to vote by 12 points and boost motivation among Latinx voters who start with Biden by 9 points.

Persuadable voters are fundamentally Republican-leaning, while the non-GOP Latinx and younger voters are Democratic-leaning by design

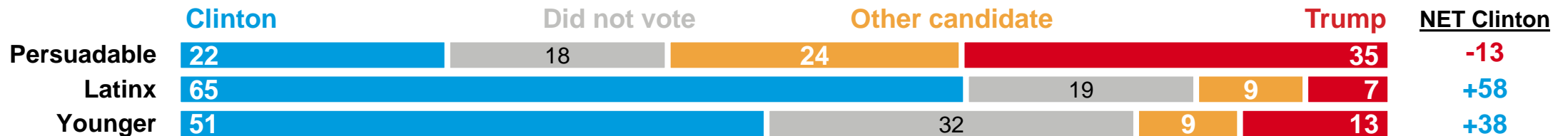
Partisanship



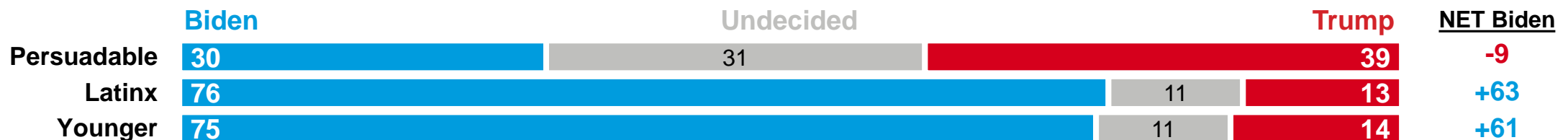
Generic Vote for Congress



2016 Presidential Vote Recall

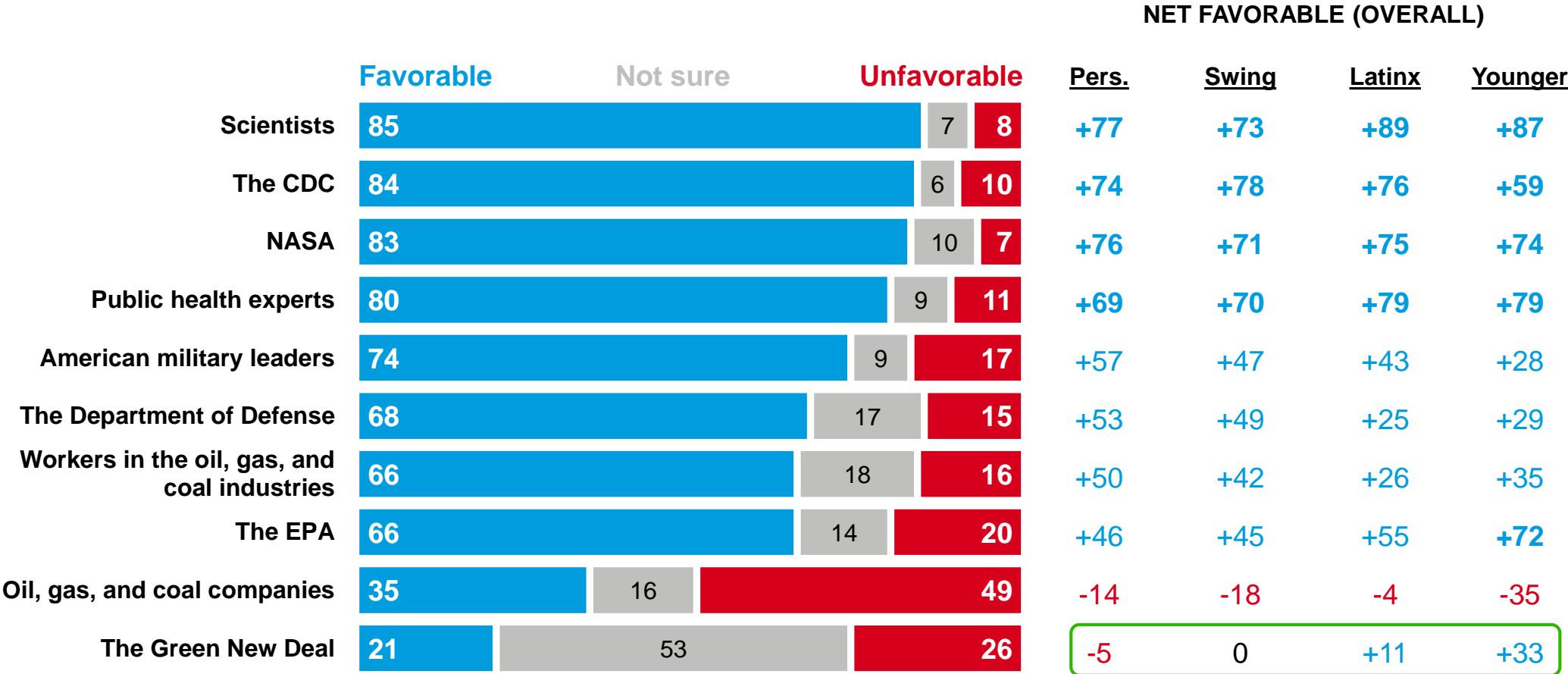


2020 Presidential Vote



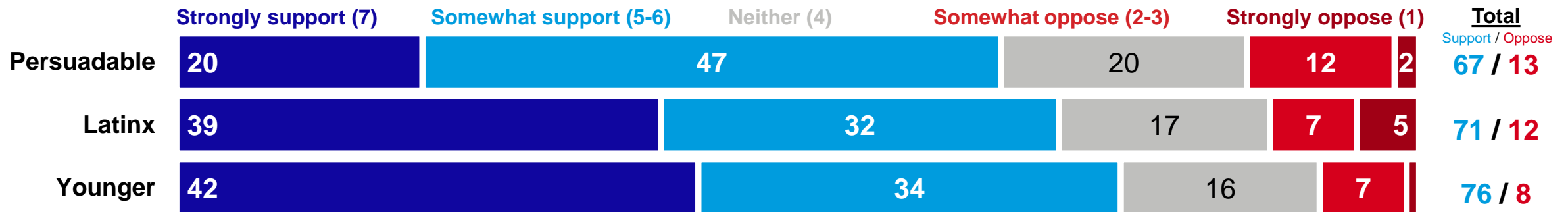
The CDC, public health experts, scientists, and NASA are the best-liked experts. Green New Deal not well-defined.

Favorability of People and Groups

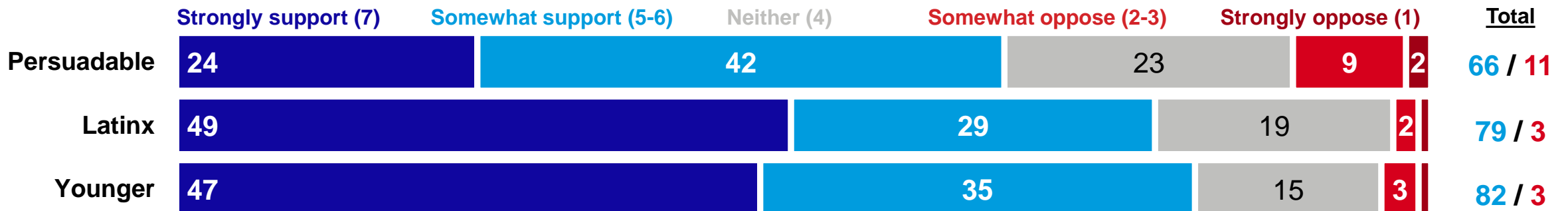


Majorities, especially of non-Republican Latinx and younger voters, support strong action on climate change and a shift to clean energy

How strongly do you support the US government taking strong action to combat climate change?



How strongly do you support a plan to move the US to a 100 percent clean energy economy by 2050?



Large majorities of persuadable, Latinx, and younger voters feel climate action will help the national economy *and* personal finances

Which one comes closer to your own opinion, even if neither is exactly right?

If the US government takes strong action to combat climate change, it will ultimately be good for the economy.

If the US government takes strong action to combat climate change, it will ultimately be bad for the economy.



Which one comes closer to your own opinion, even if neither is exactly right?

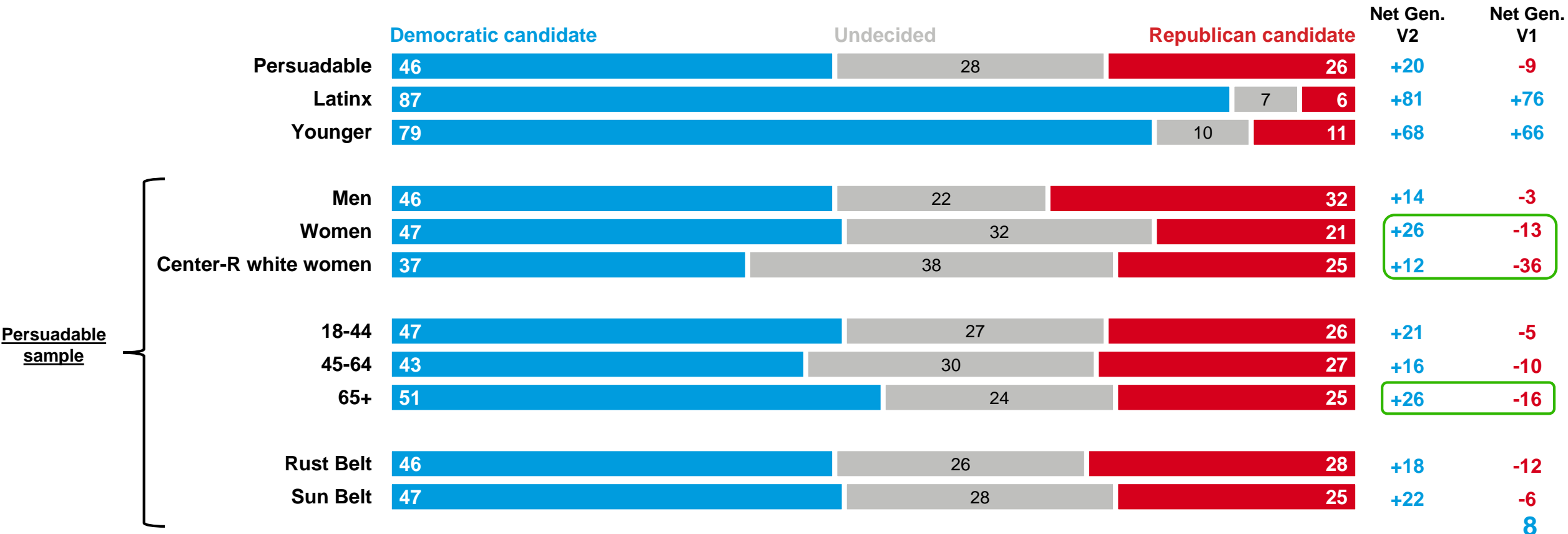
If the US government takes strong action to combat climate change, it will ultimately be good for the personal finances of families like mine.

If the US government takes strong action to combat climate change, it will ultimately be bad for the personal finances of families like mine.



Framing the generic ballot around climate action causes huge shift with persuadables, particularly center-right white women

If the election for Congress were held today between a Democratic candidate who supports taking strong government action to combat climate change and a Republican candidate who opposes taking strong government action to combat climate change, for whom would you vote?



Our messaging generates significant movement on vote and approval among persuadables and a boost in motivation with Latinx and Younger

Vote Movement Throughout the Survey

Persuadable Voters

	Initial	Following Negatives	Δ through full survey
Biden vs. Trump	30 / 39 -9	36 / 30 +6	+15
Trump Job Approval	47 / 48 -1	36 / 56 -20	-19
Trump Economic Approval	59 / 33 +26	48 / 43 +5	-21

Latinx

	Initial	Following Negatives	Δ through full survey
Biden vs. Trump	76 / 13 +63	80 / 11 +69	+6
Trump Job Approval	20 / 78 -58	13 / 86 -73	-15
Trump STRONG Disapproval	63%	72%	+9
Motivation to Vote in 2020 <i>% extremely motivated (among initial Biden supporters)</i>	75%	84%	+9

Younger

	Initial	Following Negatives	Δ through full survey
Biden vs. Trump	75 / 14 +61	76 / 12 +64	+3
Trump Job Approval	17 / 80 -63	15 / 81 -66	-3
Trump STRONG Disapproval	58%	64%	+6
Motivation to Vote in 2020 <i>% extremely motivated (among initial Biden supporters)</i>	67%	79%	+12

Persuadable voters and Latinx voters are most concerned that Trump ignores experts, while younger voters most concerned he denies reality

Trump Traits – Forced Choice Follow-up: Which Descriptions are Most Concerning

	Persuadable: top two responses	TOP TWO		
		<u>Pers. Swing</u>	<u>Latinx</u>	<u>Younger</u>
Trump ignores the advice of trusted figures like military leaders and public health experts	24% Top response 38	38	35	31
Trump denies reality and ignores the truth	18% 35	35	33	36
Trump puts CEOs, the wealthy and corporate special interests ahead of working Americans	12% 22	23	26	27
Trump is putting future generations of Americans at risk	9% 21	22	24	30
Trump consistently lies to the American people	9% 20	18	30	29
Trump is corrupt and uses his presidency to further enrich his donors, family, and himself	8% 19	21	35	23

Our messaging is effective at driving home several negative themes, including putting future generations at risk and ignoring the advice of experts

Below is the same list of descriptions that you saw earlier. Now that you have read more information, please indicate how well you think each item describes Donald Trump.

<u>Persuadable</u>			<u>Latinx</u>			<u>Younger</u>			
Initial	Final	Net	Initial	Final	Net	Initial	Final	Net	
<i>% describes well</i>			<i>% describes <u>very</u> well</i>			<i>% describes <u>very</u> well</i>			
66	76	+10	57	73	+16	52	61	+9	Ignores the advice of trusted figures like military leaders and public health experts
62	71	+9	63	69	+6	55	63	+8	Puts CEOs, the wealthy and corporate interests ahead of working Americans
62	71	+9	63	73	+10	63	68	+5	Denies reality and ignores truth
54	62	+8	61	69	+8	55	62	+7	Consistently lies to the American people
51	65	+14	56	70	+14	52	62	+10	Is putting future generations of Americans at risk* <i>*Regression analysis found that this trait is a significant driver of the vote both before and after messaging</i>
50	59	+9	57	68	+11	51	63	+12	Is corrupt and uses his presidency to further enrich his donors, family, and himself

Persuadables: Trump's hoax comments and aid to big oil/coal companies are most concerning – but the latter two need context. Paris at bottom

Below is a list of things that Donald Trump has done on the environment and climate change as president. For each one, please indicate whether it gives you doubts about re-electing Donald Trump.

		<u>Persuadable</u>			
		% Very Major Doubts (Overall)	% Very Major Doubts (Persuasion Swing)	% Most Concerning in Follow-up	% Most Concerning (Persuasion Swing)
Specifics Matter:	Big oil tax breaks – Chevron	42	47	32	32
	Hoax – scientists and NASA	39	44	35	37
	Hoax – public health experts and doctors	39	36	36	36
	Oil and coal lobbyists – 95 Rollbacks	38	43	35	35
	Banned climate change from reports	36	42	14	11
	Mercury pollution – long	35	29	34	33
	Removed limits on pollution – long	34	31	26	25
	Removed limits on pollution – short	34	37	28	31
	Big oil tax breaks – short	33	31	20	26
	Oil and coal lobbyists – short	32	28	26	24
	Mercury pollution – short	31	31	24	23
	Paris Climate Agreement – 196 countries	28	28	21	23
	Eliminated clean energy tax credits	27	25	18	17
Paris Climate Agreement - short	27	25	11	9	

Incorporating coronavirus in a climate attack and focusing exclusively on climate are both compelling arguments that help drive disapproval of Trump.

(CLIMATE) *“We have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for our children, but 97% of scientists, NASA, public health experts and our military leaders agree that climate change is a threat to the country and our kids' future. Yet, even as we're seeing more strange and severe weather - bigger droughts, wildfires, and floods - Trump has denied reality, ignored the experts, and put our kids at risk. He has repeatedly called climate change a "hoax" and even changed the rules to allow polluters to release unlimited amounts of the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate.”*

	<u>Persuadable</u>	<u>Latinx</u>	<u>Younger</u>
% Very convincing	42	68	66
% Very convincing (Swing)	39	N/A	N/A
Shift in Net Disapproval	+10	+9	+4
Shift in Strongly Disapprove	+5	+6	+3

(CLIMATE + COVID) *“Time after time, Trump has put Americans at risk by failing to prepare for threats and ignoring our nation's best and brightest. He repeatedly ignored the Centers for Disease Control's warnings about the threat of coronavirus, called it a "Democratic hoax" and barred government health experts from speaking to the public about the dangers of the disease for weeks. He is making the same mistakes on climate change - repeatedly calling it a "hoax" even though our military leaders and public health experts say climate change is a threat to our country and our health.”*

68% of persuadable voters agree that “coronavirus is disrupting our lives for a few months, but if we fail to act, climate change will disrupt our lives for decades.”

	<u>Persuadable</u>	<u>Latinx</u>	<u>Younger</u>
% Very convincing	35	74	63
% Very convincing (Swing)	37	N/A	N/A
Shift in Net Disapproval	+16	+8	+6
Shift in Strongly Disapprove	+4	+4	+7

The “Authority/Corona” message appears strongest with persuadables, joined with “Legacy/Hoax,” “Big Energy” and “Populist”

Top Negative Messages against Trump

Persuable

Overall <i>% very convincing</i>	Swing* <i>% top two most convincing</i>	Overall <i>% top two most convincing</i>	Swing* <i>% top two most convincing</i>		
38	39	37	38	Authority/Corona	Our politicians have a duty to listen to our nation’s most respected leaders and experts... <i>Popular among voters who value authority (45% very convincing overall) and nostalgia (44%)</i>
33	35	35	34	Legacy/Hoax	We have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for our children... Yet, Trump.. <i>Popular among voters who value compassion (42%)</i>
33	33	37	35	Big Energy	After oil and coal CEOs donated millions to Trump, he put oil and coal lobbyists in charge of our environment... <i>Popular among voters who equality (45%) and purity (45%)</i>
32	30	33	36	Populist	Trump has given billions in tax breaks to oil and coal companies and their CEOs, while regular people ...
29	29	22	23	Cost of Inaction	...climate-related disasters have killed more than 3,000 Americans and cost the country more than \$450 billion...
29	29	17	16	Moral Imperative	The world’s leading scientists tell us that if we want to avoid the worst impacts of climate change...
26	24	18	18	Strange/Nostalgia	The seasons used to be normal...

*Denotes the most persuadable voters on Trump approval and 2020 vote among the persuadable sample – See Appendix for Full Language Of Messages Tested

Same messages are strongest with Latinx and Younger, but “Authority/Corona” is more clearly at the top, “Populist” a bit lower

Top Negative Messages against Trump

<u>Latinx</u>			<u>Younger</u>	
<i>% very convincing</i>	<i>% top two most convincing</i>		<i>% very convincing</i>	<i>% top two most convincing</i>
62	41	Authority/Corona	61	40
63	32	Legacy/Hoax	55	32
62	33	Big Energy	53	33
59	34	Populist	57	28
63	23	Cost of Inaction	53	29
57	20	Moral Imperative	50	23
52	18	Strange/Nostalgia	43	15

The Three Prongs of Our Climate Critique of Trump

- **Highlight how Trump ignores and dishonors experts on both climate and coronavirus.** Scientists, the CDC, NASA, public health experts and, to a lesser extent, military leaders are all viewed positively by persuadable voters. Further, a message that slams trump for dismissing military leaders and the CDC about both climate change and coronavirus is top testing among persuadable voters and both turnout groups. This concept comes through clearly in text highlighting and the open ends, is the trait that voters rate the most concerning about Trump, and is the trait we get excellent movement on – with 76% of persuadable voters saying it describes Trump well at the end of the survey.
- **And how, instead, he has sold out to big oil and coal companies and their CEOs.** Our “Big Energy” message did well across all three audiences and can be improved by incorporating Chevron not paying taxes last year and Trump-appointed oil and coal lobbyists’ rollbacks of 95 environmental safeguards.
- **As a result, Trump’s denial of reality has put future generations at risk.** Regression analysis shows that a belief that Trump is putting future generations at risk is closely correlated with the vote, and we get excellent movement on this message. Moreover, our message that ties Trump’s repeated labeling of climate change as a “hoax” in the face of expert consensus (which pops throughout the survey, particularly in the open ends) with its impact on our kids’ future is a top message among all groups.

Helpfully, these three lanes are the strongest with all three of our target audiences, meaning we can use the same core messaging with all three. However, there should be modest differences in emphasis. The “Big Energy” piece is more important for persuadable voters. It is helpful with the two turnout audiences, but a step below Trump ignoring/dishonoring experts and denying reality.

Recommended Language

Our Main Message:

Our politicians have a duty to listen to our nation's most respected leaders and experts – and a basic responsibility to leave a better world for our children. Yet Trump puts our kid's future at risk and dishonors our experts by insisting that he knows better.

First, Trump denied reality and dismissed scientists, NASA, and our military leaders when they said climate change was a threat to the country – repeatedly calling climate change a “hoax” and even changing the rules to allow polluters to release unlimited amounts of the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate and putting future generations at risk.

Then, for eight weeks, he ignored the Centers for Disease Control's and other public health experts' warnings about the threat of coronavirus and even overturned their proposed plans to fight it.

Our Secondary Message, Especially with Persuadable Voters – Add in Tax Breaks for Big Energy:

Instead of listening to scientists and public health experts, Trump put oil and coal lobbyists in charge of protecting our air, water, climate, and public lands – and they immediately went to work rolling back 95 different environmental safeguards. And Trump not only helped big oil and coal CEOs boost their profits by pumping more mercury, arsenic, and carbon pollution into our air and water, he gave them hundreds of billions of dollars in new tax breaks and subsidies. Thanks to his plan, Chevron did not pay any federal taxes at all last year.

Thank You

New York

Washington, DC

Hartford

Chicago

Denver

Seattle

Appendix

Trump climate action language

Below is a list of things that Donald Trump has done on the environment and climate change as president. For each one, please indicate whether it gives you doubts about re-electing Donald Trump.

Shorthand	Full Message Text
Oil and coal lobbyists – short	He put oil and coal company lobbyists in charge of protecting our air, water, climate and public lands
Oil and coal lobbyists – 95 Rollbacks	He put oil and coal company lobbyists in charge of protecting our air, water, climate and public lands – and they immediately went to work rolling back 95 different environmental safeguards
Removed limits on pollution – long	He changed the rules to allow coal power plants to release unlimited amounts of the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate
Removed limits on pollution – short	He eliminated all limits on the carbon and methane pollution that are disrupting our climate
Eliminated clean energy tax credits	He eliminated tax credits and other incentives for wind and solar power
Banned climate change from reports	He banned government scientists from using the words “climate change” in government reports
Hoax – public health experts and doctors	He has repeatedly called climate change a “hoax,” even though public health experts and doctors all say it is real and a threat

Trump climate action language (continued)

Below is a list of things that Donald Trump has done on the environment and climate change as president. For each one, please indicate whether it gives you doubts about re-electing Donald Trump.

Shorthand

Full Message Text

Hoax – scientists and NASA

He has repeatedly called climate change a “hoax,” even though 97% of scientists, NASA, and our military leaders all say it is real and a threat

Mercury pollution – long

He rolled back limits on toxic mercury pollution from coal power plants – putting children and pregnant women at risk from this damaging neurotoxin

Mercury pollution – short

He rolled back limits on toxic mercury pollution from coal power plants

Paris Climate Agreement – 196 countries

He pulled the US out of the Paris Climate Agreement – an international agreement of 196 countries to combat climate change

Paris Climate Agreement - short

He pulled the US out of the Paris Climate Agreement

Big oil tax breaks – short

He gave big oil companies hundreds of billions of dollars in new taxpayer-funded subsidies and tax breaks

Big oil tax breaks – Chevron

He gave big oil companies hundreds of billions of dollars in new taxpayer-funded subsidies and tax breaks and, thanks to his plan, Chevron did not pay any federal taxes at all last year

Trump message language

Below is a list of statements that some people have made about Donald Trump. For each, please indicate how convincing of a reason it is to vote against Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

[Big Energy] After oil and coal CEOs donated millions to Trump, he put oil and coal lobbyists in charge of our environment, sold off our public lands for drilling and mining, and allowed corporate polluters to boost their profits by pumping more mercury, arsenic, and carbon pollution into our air and water. And Trump gave oil and coal companies billions in new tax breaks even as they continue to endanger the future for our children and the planet.

[Populist] Trump has given billions in tax breaks to oil and coal companies and their CEOs, while regular people have been left behind. The renewable energy industry employs over three million Americans and is key to combatting climate change. Yet, Trump eliminated tax incentives for wind and solar power and put tariffs on solar panels, making renewable energy more expensive for middle-class American families and costing over 170,000 US workers their jobs.

[Legacy/Hoax] We have a basic responsibility to leave a better world for our children, but 97% of scientists, NASA, public health experts and our military leaders agree that climate change is a threat to the country and our kids' future. Yet, Trump has denied reality, and put our kids at risk. He has repeatedly called climate change a "hoax" and even changed the rules to allow polluters to release unlimited amounts of the carbon pollution that is disrupting our climate.

[Authority/Corona] Our politicians have a duty to listen to our nation's most respected leaders and experts, especially in a time of crisis, but Trump dishonors them by insisting he knows better. First, he dismissed our military leaders when they said climate change was a growing threat to our country. Then, for eight weeks, he ignored the Centers for Disease Control's warnings about the threat of coronavirus and even overturned their proposed plans to fight the virus.

[Strange/Nostalgia] The seasons used to be normal – spring was spring, and fall was fall. Something's changed. People didn't used to have to worry about 500-year storms and floods happening every year. Ice caps are melting, forests are burning, and millions of species are going extinct. Donald Trump promised that he'd preserve our way of life, but instead of leading us back to the days we remember, he's letting polluters make everything worse.

[Moral Imperative] The world's leading scientists tell us that if we want to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and ensure we have a livable world for future generations, we need to commit to action now. That's why youth around the world are demanding action, and it's why this election is the most important of our lifetime. If Trump is re-elected, he will continue to roll back the progress we've made and set us back a decade or more. We can't sit this election out.

[Cost of Inaction] In just the last three years, climate-related disasters have killed more than 3,000 Americans and cost the country more than \$450 billion. Economists say that if we don't act, climate change could cut the US economy by up to 10 percent, kill millions of jobs, and cost Americans tens of trillions of dollars in the coming decades. Instead of preparing for this threat, Trump is making the problem worse by eliminating limits on the carbon pollution that causes climate change.