



Date: October 2, 2020

To: Interested Parties

From: Page Gardner & Tom Lopach, Center for Voter Information
Stanley Greenberg, Greenberg Research & Democracy Corps

Moving reluctant voters to choose Biden

America is at a decision point — as are so many voters who will decide the scale of President Trump’s potential repudiation. Biden’s VP selection, the DNC, the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the rushed Supreme Court nomination have super consolidated and energized Democrats and their Rising American Electorate base. That clarifies the targets in the coming month: they all voted for Donald Trump who led a Tea Party-dominated Republican Party or joined the white working-class revolt against the elites and establishment in 2016. Unpacking the complicated mix of emotions, values, psychology, identity, and beliefs is key to getting them to abandon Trump and decide to vote for Joe Biden — if not Biden, then vote third party or abstain from voting.

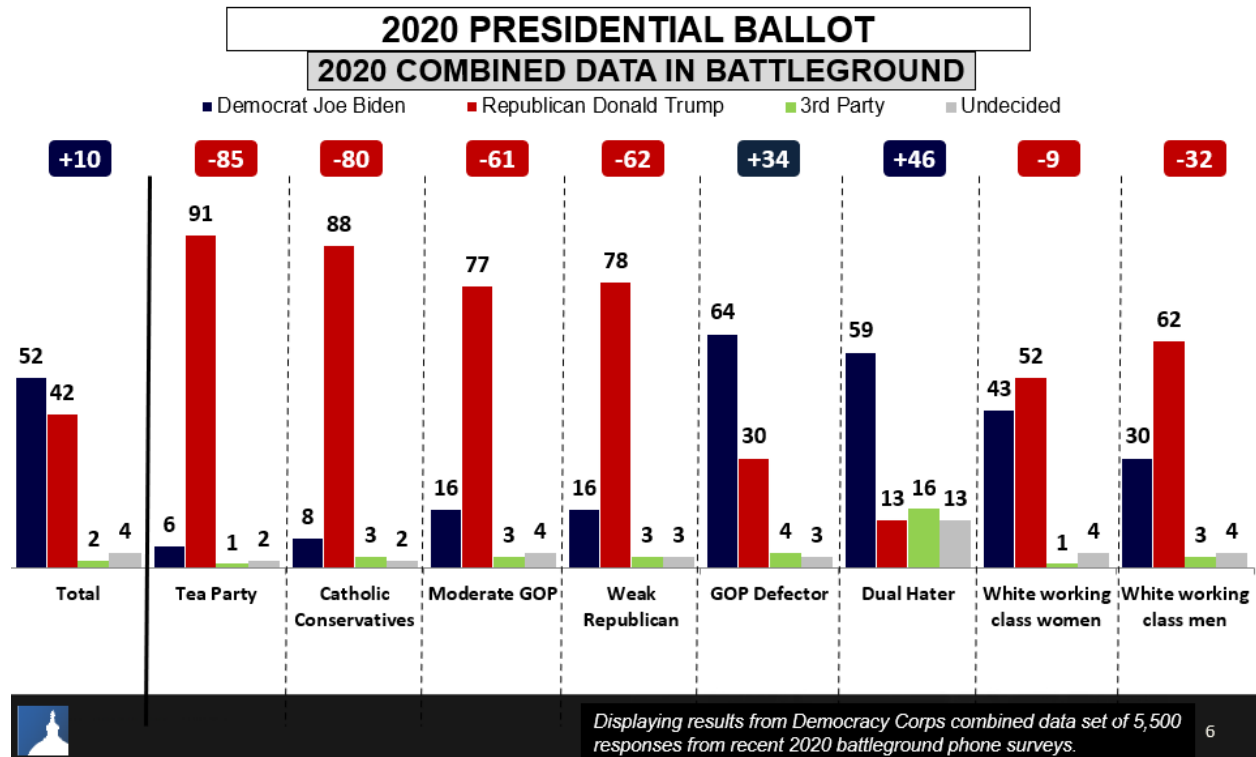
This final report is based on waves of qualitative and quantitative research over the past three months that we conducted for Democracy Corps, CVI/VPC, and the AFT. It shows what it takes to get these voters to make this fateful choice.

The starting point

Our targets are wavering Republicans (weak Republicans, moderate Republicans, Catholic Republicans, and McCain conservatives). But because the Republican Party is a fragmented and diminished party, it includes the 17 percent of the country who are “GOP defectors”: voters who say they were Republican until the last few years. And it includes the “dual haters” who dislike both Biden and Trump, as the “dual haters” contributed mightily to Trump’s win in 2016.

And then the biggest targets, we need to reach the non-Republican partisans, white working-class men and women who voted for Trump in 2016. The goal is to win more of their votes and avoid any rush back to support Trump.

The starting targets who have already moved away from Trump



Reduced health care costs for all

Biden and progressives do not get heard, this research shows, unless they are angry about the out of control health care costs and feature their plans to address them. It is the number one economic issue and number one voting issue for Democrats, as it was in the 2018 midterms. (See the focus groups conducted for this project and reported in *American Prospect*, [link](#).) White working-class and rural voters disliked ‘Obamacare’ because it fails to address their impossible costs, and critically, resent that Trump and the Republicans never delivered affordable health care.

That is why they search any policy list we give them and look for what is the policy that addresses health care. Here is the Biden policy that they chose, particularly the white working-class women.

He has a plan to reduce healthcare costs for every American by forcing insurers to keep premiums and deductibles low and lowering out of pocket expenses and prescription prices for everyone.

They are also angry that the pharmaceutical companies control the politicians and block government from limiting the most out of control expense, drug costs. This got harder, our

debate dial test showed, when Trump got the upper hand on health care and drug costs, particularly with the white working-class women.

So Biden’s health care narrative has to include his describing the uncertainty created by Trump’s attempts to destroy the ACA, his failure to confront the pharmaceutical companies, the cost spikes that bankrupt people, and that most working people live day to day and have not seen much benefit from the macro economy under both President Obama and President Trump. They resent the power of big corporations and CEOs that call the shots in Trump’s Washington.

Biden’s sharp middle class, anti-elite values choice

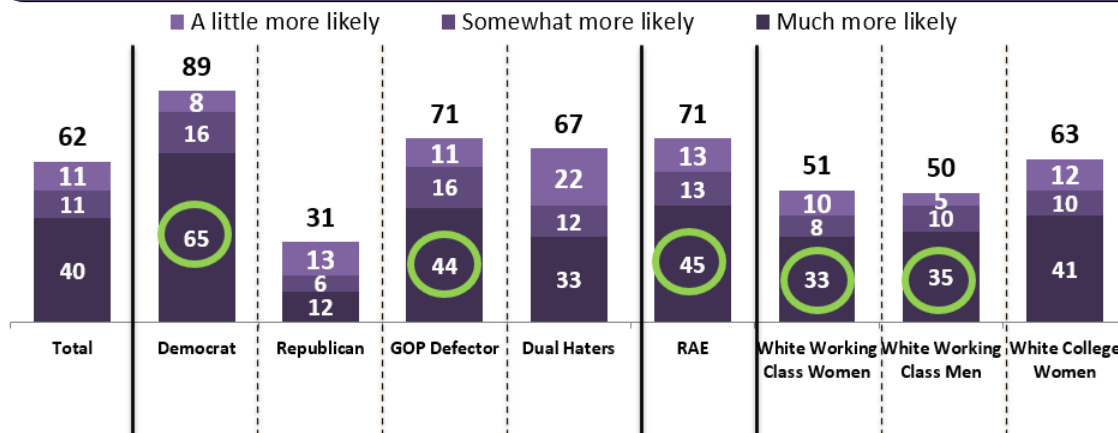
In this message choice that evolved with Biden’s own speeches, he defines himself by his working class family from a working class town who went to a state university, a man who respects their hard work and personal responsibility. He declares: the working people need a president who will build back jobs for the middle class, not one at the beck and call of the investor class and CEOs. They certainly do need not Trump who never takes personal responsibility, like the middle class. He inherited his billions, went to an Ivy League school, lives on 5th Avenue, and enriches his rich friends. Biden lives the values that can get America back.

This message choice is deeply motivating for the base of Democrats and Rising American electorate, but also for GOP defectors. Half of white working-class voters say it makes them more likely to vote for Biden. The percentage of white working-class men who say it makes them, “much more likely,” exceeds Biden’s current vote with them.

Biden’s middle class, anti-elitist choice intense for base but also GOP defectors and white working class – where for the men, ‘much more likely,’ exceeds vote

Now please read what Joe Biden says this election is about. Please mark whether this makes you much more likely, somewhat more, a little more, or no more likely to support Joe Biden.

Biden is from a middle class town, with working class parents and went to a state university. He cares about what happens to working class communities and farms. He believes in hard work and that personal responsibility should be rewarded. He wants to build back American jobs for the middle class families like he came from, not the wealthy investor class. They don’t need help, but working families do. Trump is a billionaire, inherited his money, went to an Ivy League university, and lived on Fifth Avenue. He shows little sympathy for the struggling working class and mainly worked to enrich his friends. He blames others instead of taking personal responsibility. Those aren’t the values that will get America back.



Reassurance

In our most recent research, reassurance on the violence has newly pushed itself to the top of our battery that was previously dominated by health care. The statement below gets its highest marks from Democrats and Black voters, but also critically, GOP defectors.

I condemn violence no matter who does it, anarchists or white nationalists, and every police officer must be safe, unlike Trump who never condemns the white nationalists and racists.

Republican voter conservative validation

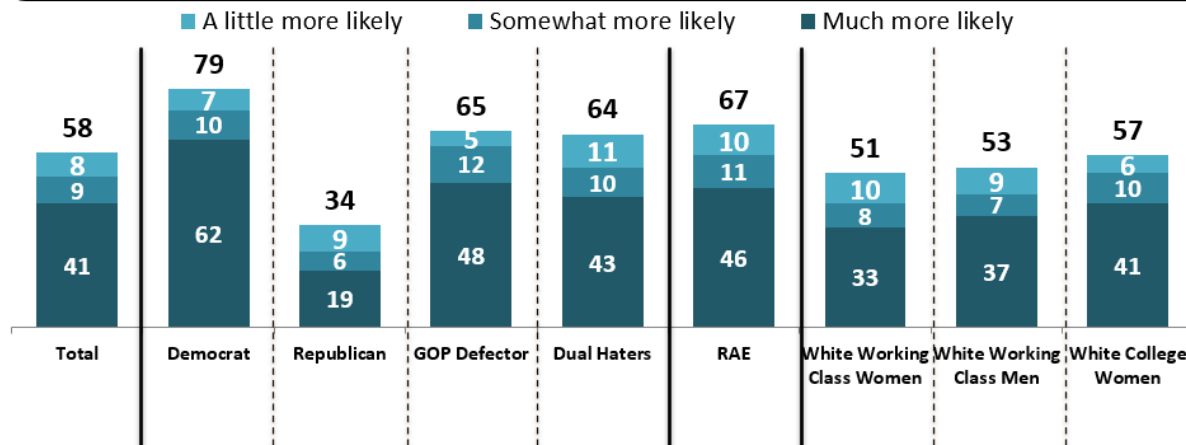
Our strongest and most persuasive messenger is an individual Republican voter who shows his bona fide Republican credentials by saying he voted for Nixon, but just as important, asserts that Trump disdains conservative values, sensibilities, and culture. He accuses Trump of being dishonest, immoral, undisciplined, blaming others, and not taking personal responsibility.

While in the voice of a Republican voter, it gets the strongest response with Democrats and Rising American Electorate, but also with GOP defectors. It gets an intense and broad response with white working-class men.

Republican voter conservative attack – lack of discipline and personal responsibility – gets both GOP defectors, dual haters, and RAE base

Now you will read some things from four real people who voted for Donald Trump in 2016, about why they will not support him again in this year's election. Please indicate which one raises the most doubts for you about President Trump.

Republican voter from Arizona: I've been a Republican since Richard Nixon. I was heavily invested in what I thought was The philosophy of the party, which was fiscal restraint, strong defense, family values, and more reliance on individual efforts. But Donald Trump doesn't display these values. I've never seen a man in public view act so dishonest, immoral, and undisciplined. He called our FBI scum and insulted decorated combat war heroes, and I have to say Joe Biden looks like more of a Republican.



Respecting and opening up the 2016 Trump voter to a different choice

This simulation campaign works because in the end, Biden and Democrats are respecting and listening to working people. That is vocalizing an understanding of why many of them voted for Trump in 2016.

We do not ask 2016 Trump voters to regret that vote, because they do not. They regret that Trump forgot the forgotten Americans and governed only for his own party and billionaire elites and to enrich himself. They are angry it did not deliver on affordable health care.

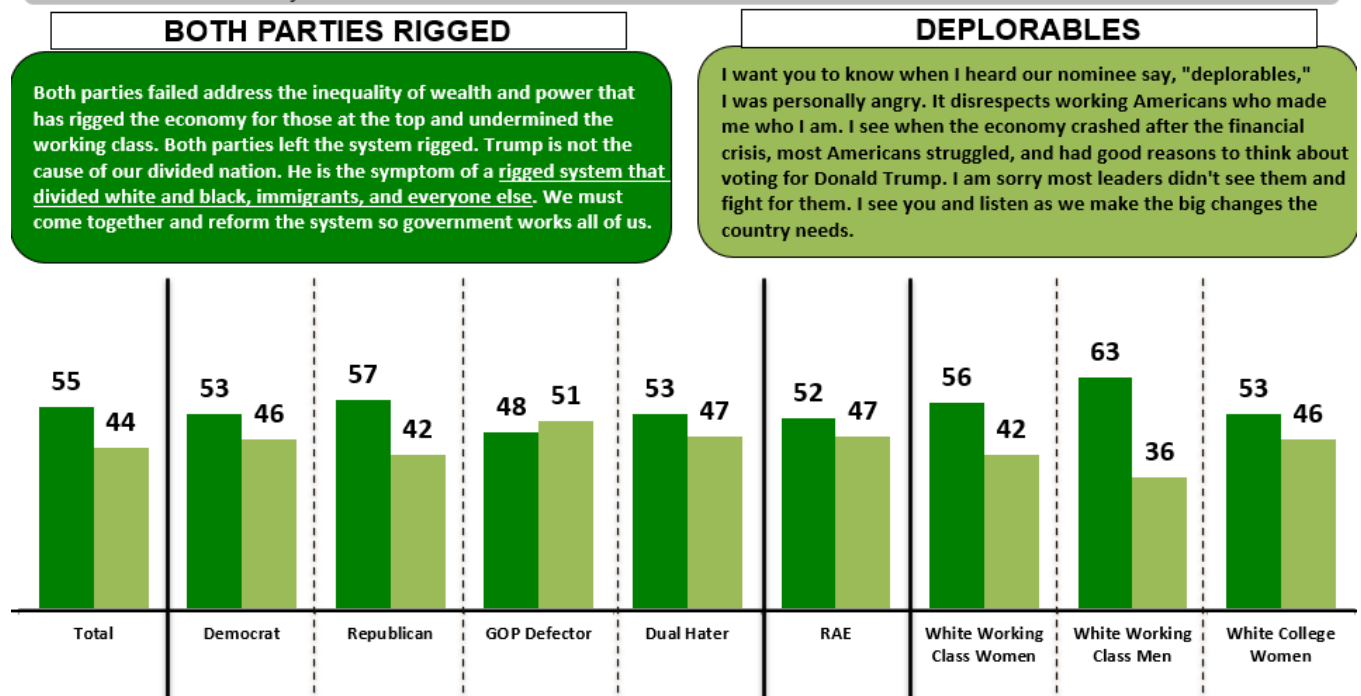
Biden gets heard in one message by saying Trump was not the cause of this being a divided nation. In fact, both parties left the system rigged against working people. He gets heard in the other message by Biden saying, he was angry when he heard “deplorables.” Biden concludes, I see you and I am listening and can make the big changes the country needs.

The rigged message includes a very prominent “race-class narrative” where Biden reminds us of “a rigged system that divided white against black, immigrants, and everyone else.”

The both parties rigged message is slightly stronger than deplorables, but not by a lot. They rank comparably with the most important group, GOP defectors. They are with dual haters too. But critically, both parties rigged is dominant for the white working class, particularly the men.

Closing messages: Trump not cause; both parties rigged & angry about deplorables – both key to RAE & GOP defectors, but rigged highest for white working class

Now you will see two things that Joe Biden said to working people who voted for President Trump. Please read them both and then indicate which ONE made you think the most.



Raising Biden margin

This simulated middle class, anti-elite, conservative values message pushes up Biden’s margin by 2 points overall. It is one part base consolidation, as it pushes up the Black margin, millennials, and white millennial women. But most important, it raises the Biden margin by 6 points with the GOP defectors and 4 with dual haters. It gets them to decide and across the line.

Simulated campaign raises Biden margin by finishing the job for GOP defectors and dual haters, while helping with Black voters, college women, & millennials

