

What's on the Minds of Persuadable Voters in Arizona?

With Arizona's shifting demographic makeup and Kyrsten Sinema's 2018 U.S. Senate win, the state has moved into the top tier of battleground states. Yet, except for Bill Clinton's win in 1996, Arizona has backed Republican presidential candidates since 1952. Donald Trump won the state in 2016 with a plurality of the vote (48.1%), beating Hillary Clinton by 3.5% (a better performance than Obama in either of his elections).

What makes 2020 different? In addition to the demographic trends and recent political history, what's new is the early organizing opportunity for progressives. The successful on-the-ground efforts by organizers in 2018, following the large-scale Red for Ed mobilizations earlier that year, point to a potential path to victory, especially in Maricopa County. While GOP voter turnout has remained relatively flat, organizing efforts are resulting in a steadily growing number of Democratic ballots. In fact, in our modest-sized field program in Mesa, AZ during the 2018 elections, Working America saw a direct impact, increasing turnout by 7 percentage points. Analysis of the Working America programs shows that we added 3,155 Democratic votes. These voters are very responsive to direct engagement.

To unpack the views of Maricopa county voters on a variety of issues, Working America's team of professional canvassers conducted 165 in-depth field interviews with persuadable and Democratic-leaning infrequent voters from January 1-17, 2020, as part of a large national field survey. To identify persuadable voters, Working America's unique targeting model combines analysis of dozens of our randomized clinical canvass trials conducted during elections over the last decade. The persuasion model ranks voters on the likelihood they will change their candidate preference because of conversations with our canvassers. We used past vote history to identify the Democratic-leaning voters.

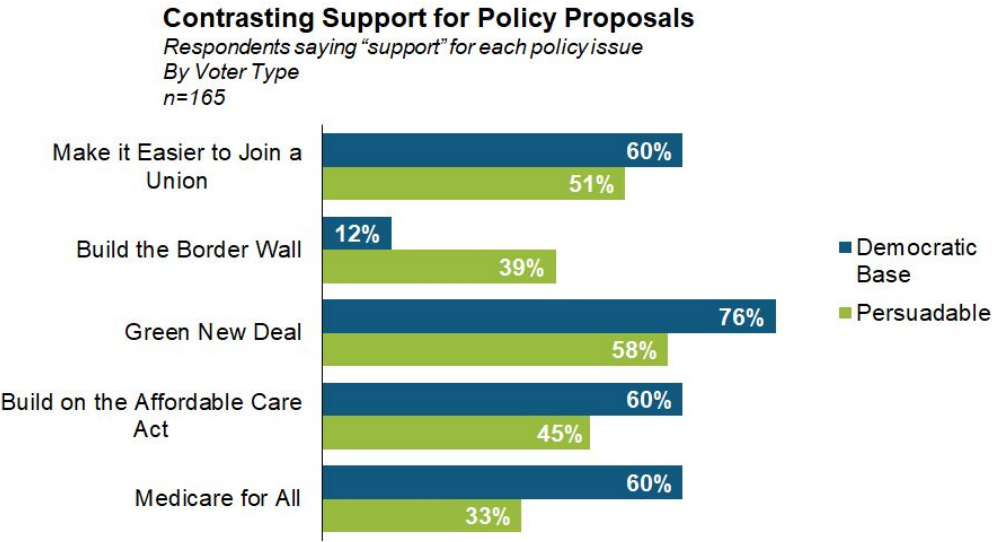
The clear takeaway from these discussions is that progressives have the opportunity to substantially expand their vote share if they engage with working-class voters. When asked how they planned to vote this November, only 62% of Latinx voters said they planned to cast a ballot for the Democratic nominee. There's room for Democrats to improve with white voters as well—only 46% told us they would vote for Donald Trump's opponent this fall.

Recent Findings

As in other states, Working America found that both Democratic base and persuadable voters in Maricopa County are supportive of several important progressive policy proposals, including making it easier to join a union and enacting the types of climate change solutions described in the Green New Deal.

We asked voters for their opinion on various policy proposals at the center of discussion in 2020. The chart below shows the answers to these questions, with responses sorted by Democratic base and modeled persuadable voters.

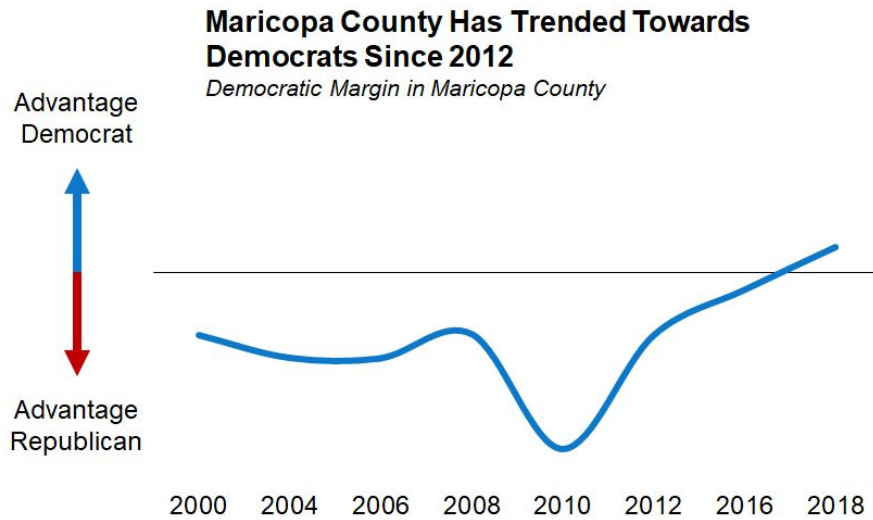
For both Democratic base and persuadable voters, there is strong support for the Green New Deal, making it easier to form a union and building on the Affordable Care Act. While Medicare for All is overwhelmingly popular with Democratic base voters, only roughly 1 in 3 persuadable voters expressed support. The policy details of the Green New Deal or expanding the Affordable Care Act matter less to voters than the need to take action.



Chris, a 62-year-old **Tempe** resident, told our canvasser that he supported President Trump. When the conversation turned to unions, however, Chris said, “We need people to stand behind the working man. A lot of people around here work at temp agencies and get treated like dirt. People are retaliated against for speaking up.”

Gayle, a 67-year-old **Phoenix** resident who works in occupational therapy, responded to the proposal to make it easier for workers to form a union by saying, “Arizona needs that. When I first got here, we were straight up told that if we wanted to work for the hospital, we couldn’t unionize. The people need someone to stand up for them.”

Maricopa County is central to Arizona’s elections, standing at 60% of the statewide vote. The county has trended towards Democrats in recent years.



Maricopa County has a growing share of the statewide vote. In 2008, Maricopa made up 57.9% of the statewide vote. In 2016, the county made up more than 60% of the statewide vote. Given the increasing share of the state’s vote that comes from this county, the shifting partisan preferences of its residents is even more consequential.

Issue priorities

Working America canvassers begin each front-porch conversation by asking the voter to identify the issue that matters most to them. Compared to other parts of the country where health care and jobs dominate the top two spots, a different issue stood out in Arizona: education.

EDUCATION

Nearly one in four Latinx voters (23%) named education as their top issue, compared to just 10% of white voters in Maricopa County. In our conversations, we found many of the sentiments highlighted by the Red for Ed movement, including the need for increased teacher pay and safer schools, resonated with Latinx voters more than white voters.

Cheryl, a 36-year-old Latinx teacher in **Phoenix**, named education as her top issue. When asked to elaborate, Cheryl said, “Where do I start? Big class sizes, not enough resources, not enough pay for what we deal with.”

Top Issue	Persuadable n=69	Democratic Base n=96
Education	10%	21%
Health Care	13%	15%
Public Safety	1%	12%
Immigration	7%	7%
Jobs/Economy	15%	7%
Trump's Policies	6%	6%
Environment	9%	5%

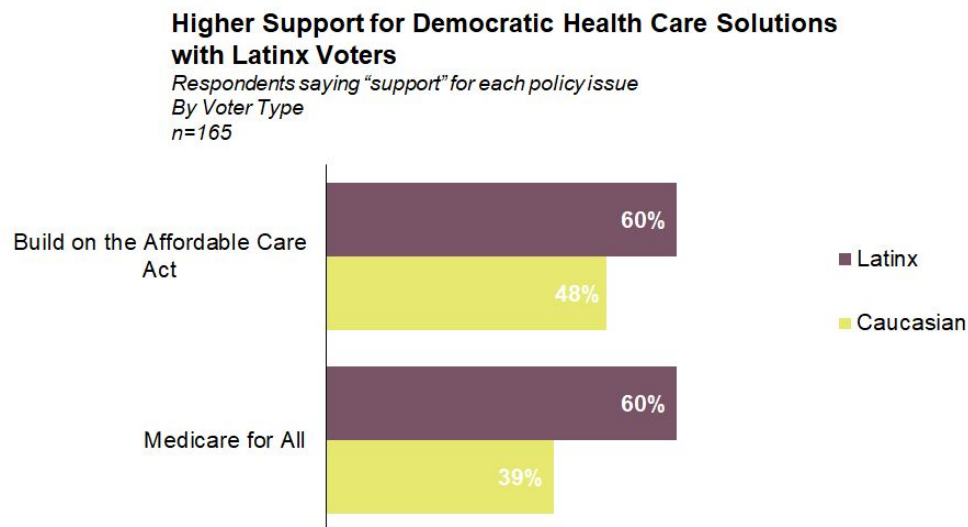
Stephen, a 36-year-old **Phoenix** resident and Trump supporter, also named education as his top issue. When asked to explain why he chose education as his top issue, Stephen said, “Not being well funded, the system in Arizona is the worst in the nation.”

Erma, a 71-year-old **Phoenix** resident, said, “I worked in the Tolleson district schools, and the teachers are underpaid, constantly graded on their own performance and always stressed.”

According to a recent [Morrison Institute poll](#), public education remains a top issue for Arizona voters, with 77% saying public education is important to them. With large swaths of Arizona voters hungry for solutions and results in education, progressives have an opportunity to advance their agenda and connect with voters on an issue that resonates.

HEALTHCARE

Among Latinx voters in Maricopa County, support for Medicare for All and building on the Affordable Care Act was nearly identical. Among white voters, however, we found a sharp drop in support between building on the ACA versus enacting Medicare for All. This preference for improving on the ACA among white voters is consistent with what we’ve seen in other states. It is worth noting, however, that there is an income disparity between the white and Latinx voters in our sample; the different levels of support can likely be explained by class as well as race.



CLIMATE CHANGE

In conversations about climate, we found that more than 2 in 3 Arizonans supported the Green New Deal, including 61% of white voters. This aligns with our work in other states, where we found roughly two-thirds of voters there also supported the Green New Deal in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Minnesota.

Some people we spoke with felt that Arizona would reap the benefits of a Green New Deal. José, a 45-year-old Latinx electrician and registered Republican in **Phoenix**, strongly supported the

Green New Deal, saying, “If they market it right, Arizona and Nevada could power the whole country.”

The Green New Deal wasn’t just popular with Democratic base voters. Jack, a 29-year-old white man in **Tempe**, considers himself an independent and has voted for both Democrats and Republicans in the past. When asked about the Green New Deal, he expressed enthusiastic support. Jack told our canvasser, “I think it’s ridiculous how corporations are so incredibly short-sighted. There’s not going to be much business if there’s no one on the planet to work.”

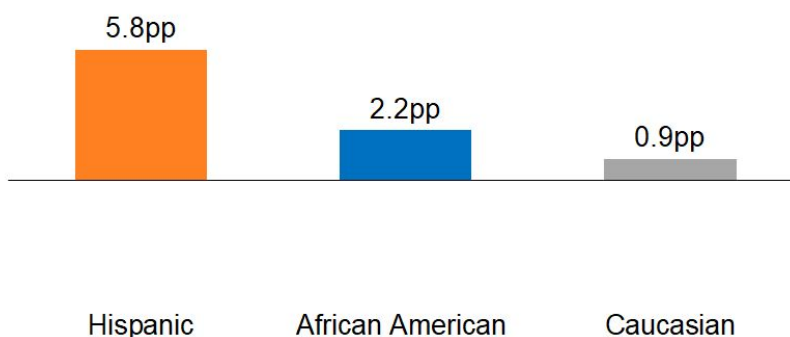
Louise, a 72-year-old **Tempe** resident, echoed Jack’s sentiment, saying, ““What difference does it make whatever happens with the government if the climate is in shambles?”

The Path Forward

Among the pivotal constituencies in battleground states such as Arizona, one thing is clear – this election is up for grabs and candidates must work if they want to win. If you listen to inside-the-Beltway pundits, you would believe that voters are bitterly divided and rigorously committed to their political ideologies. Our view from the ground gives us a different perspective. By starting on people’s doorsteps and engaging them in face-to-face conversation, we help voters connect the dots between their personal experience and their political choices. Our approach centers on listening first, then introducing new information, rather than telling people that what they believe is wrong. Many of these working-class Arizonans are simply struggling to make ends meet for their families, and they don’t always think in clear-cut ideological terms. Through authentic face-to-face engagement, however, Democrats can find common ground and win over these voters.

Our work in the 2018 elections in Arizona identified groups of voters who were remarkably responsive to our contact, particularly in Mesa. For every 100 conversations, we increased turnout by 7 votes. When we combine that work with our meta-analysis of findings, Latinx voters appear more responsive to the Working America canvass than other demographic groups, even

Strongest Increase in Turnout with People of Color
*Turnout: Votes Gained for Every 100 Working America Conversations
By Race*



when comparing vote history. Nationally, canvass contact increased Latinx voter turnout by 5.8pp, versus increasing white voter turnout by 0.9pp.

Since January, canvassers have been building key contacts in these communities that will add votes for the Democratic nominee at a rate of 9 per 100 conversations. [See for yourself](#) how more conversations changes the outcome in Maricopa County and across Arizona by checking out the [Working America vote gain calculator](#).



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