

**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Andrew Baumann, Geoff Garin, and Jill Normington  
**Date:** December 9, 2020  
**RE:** Climate Change and Clean Energy in 2020 Battleground States

## Key Findings

### Climate change was a clear net positive issue for Joe Biden and contributed to his victory.

- Almost two-thirds (65%) of people who voted for Biden called climate an important issue for their vote. That put the issue 4<sup>th</sup> out of 11 tested among Biden’s coalition, behind only the pandemic, health care, and racial equality and justice and ahead of jobs and the economy.
- Of the 39% of voters who said climate was an important issue for their vote, Biden won them 83% to 15% (68 points)—a much larger margin than their partisanship would predict (+49).
- Biden was preferred over Trump on “climate change, clean energy, and the environment” by 30 points – by far his strongest showing on 11 issues tested. Among swing voters who considered voting for both Biden and Trump, Biden won this issue by a 58-point margin and among voters who considered not turning out to vote but then did, he won this issue by a 42-point margin. These turnout targets were critical to his victory.

### In Pennsylvania, where climate and energy issues were aggressively litigated by both sides, the climate issue helped Biden more than the fracking issue helped Trump.

- A post-election survey of Pennsylvania voters found that voters there cared more about electing people who will “support action on climate change” than who will “support fracking” by a 53% to 30% margin.<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly one third (31%) of Pennsylvania voters said they were less likely to vote for Trump because of his position on climate change, compared to 23% who said they were less likely to vote for Biden because of his position on fracking.
- And, in eight of the top 10 fracking counties in Pennsylvania, Joe Biden improved on Hillary Clinton’s 2016 margin.<sup>2</sup>

### Virtually all Biden voters, as well as a third of Trump voters, believe President-elect Biden has a mandate to act on his clean energy agenda because he ran on it and won the election.

- Nearly two-thirds of voters believe Joe Biden has a mandate to act on climate after campaigning on a plan to move the country to 100% clean energy; including 96% of Democrats, 65% of Independents, and 26% of Republicans.
- Biden’s plan to invest \$2 trillion in clean energy enjoys majority support among Black (94%) and Hispanic voters (79%) as well as whites both with (57%) and without college degrees (53%).

### Voters believe that “bold action to combat climate change” will have a positive impact on many aspects of life, including the economy.

- Overall, voters believe climate action will be positive for future generations (+40 positive impact), their family’s health (+28), and the American economy (+19).
- More voters believe that such action would have a positive impact on their own family’s finances (41%) than negative (35%).

## Climate Change and Clean Energy as an Issue in the 2020 Elections

While climate and clean energy may not have been the dominant issue in 2020, it played a critical role in Joe Biden’s victory.

Voters believed that Biden would do a far better job than Trump on the issue (+30), his strongest advantage of the 11 issues on which the GSG/NPA poll compared him to Trump. Biden’s margin on “climate change, clean energy and the environment” was even higher among people who considered not turning out but then did (+42). Those turnout targets

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<sup>1</sup> Hart Research Survey of 800 PA voters for Climate Power 2020, conducted November 4-8.

<sup>2</sup> David Roberts [tabulation](#) of county-level data and top-producing natural gas counties.

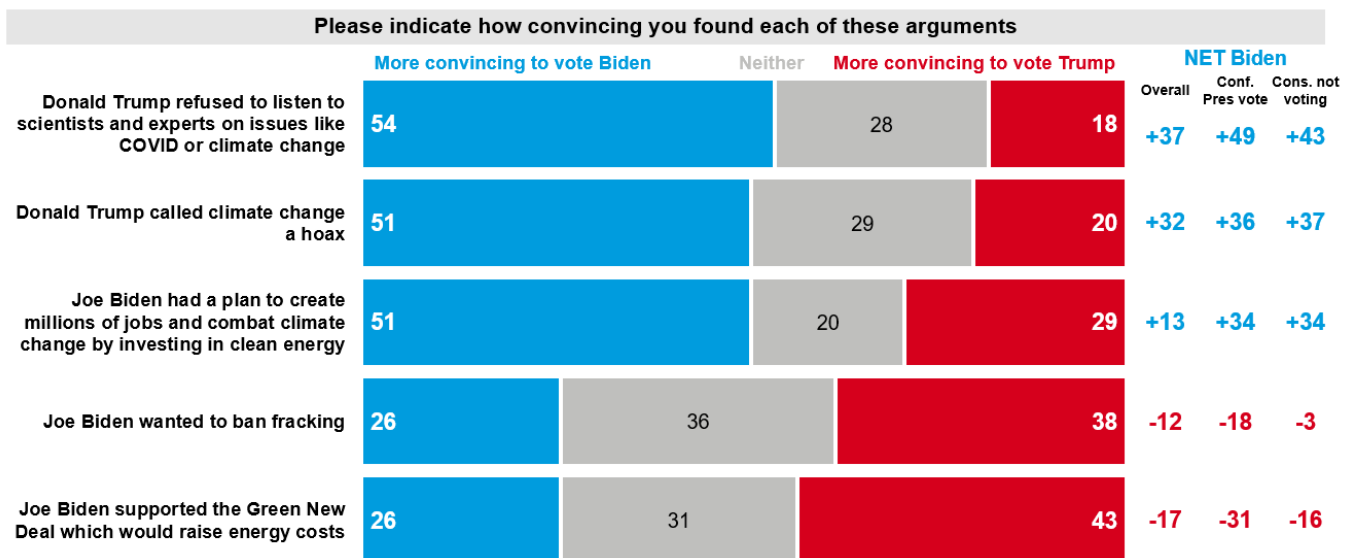
were 16% of the electorate and they ended up breaking for Biden, 52% to 44%. It was an astounding +58 among the 13% of voters who were swing and considered voting for both major candidates (a GOP-leaning group that ended up breaking for Trump by a 38% to 53% margin).

Not only did Biden enjoy an advantage on the issue, climate was important to his coalition. While 39% of all voters in the Battleground states said climate was important to them as they made their decision, that jumps to 65% among people who voted for Biden including 51% of voters who switched from Trump in 2016 to Biden in 2020 (see Table 1). Among Biden voters, climate goes from being a middle tier to a top tier issue – even ahead of the economy.

	Overall	Biden Voters	Trump 2016/ Biden 2020 Voters
The coronavirus pandemic	64	87	76
Health care	63	77	58
Racial equality and justice	45	71	48
Climate change, clean energy, and the environment	39	<b>65</b>	<b>51</b>
Jobs and the economy	71	60	56
Gun violence	33	46	27
Immigration	48	42	36
Law, order, and public safety	53	40	58
The Supreme Court	39	40	25
Abortion	37	35	24
Taxes	47	34	33

Table 1. % of Electorate Saying the Issue was Important as They Made Their Decision in This Election

The manner in which the issue was used in the actual campaign benefitted Biden as well. Arguments that Trump ignored experts or called climate change a hoax were more persuasive than attacks on Biden for banning fracking or supporting the Green New Deal (see Figure below). That was true overall, among voters who were conflicted about their vote choice, and people who considered not voting but did.



This data is backed up by a post-election survey of Pennsylvania voters conducted by Hart Research for Climate Power that found Trump’s position on climate change was more impactful than Biden’s position on fracking. Specifically, when asked directly, 31% of voters say that Donald Trump’s position on climate change made them less likely to vote for him—significantly more than the 23% who say Joe Biden’s position on fracking made them less likely to vote for Biden. Pennsylvania voters also cared more about electing people who will “support action on climate change” than who will “support fracking” by a 53% to 30% margin. Importantly, the impotence of the fracking attack on Biden is borne out by election results in Pennsylvania itself. In eight of the Commonwealth’s top ten fracking counties, Trump lost ground relative to his 2016 margin.

County	2016 Margin	2020 Margin	Change
Allegheny	Clinton +16.5	Biden +20.3	Trump -3.8
Bradford	Trump +45.3	Trump +44.9	Trump -0.4
Butler	Trump +36.6	Trump +32.6	Trump -4.0
Greene	Trump +40.1	Trump +43.4	Trump +3.3
Lycoming	Trump +44.2	Trump +41.4	Trump -2.9
Sullivan	Trump +48.9	Trump +47.3	Trump -1.6
Susquehanna	Trump +40.8	Trump +41.3	Trump +0.4
Tioga	Trump +52.5	Trump +51.2	Trump -1.3
Washington	Trump +24.5	Trump +22.7	Trump -1.8
Wyoming	Trump +37.9	Trump +35.2	Trump -2.7

Table 2. 2016 and 2020 Margins for President in Top 10 Fracking Pennsylvania Counties

**Younger Voters.** Biden’s embrace of an ambitious climate change plan also played a key role in motivating and consolidating younger voters. According to an analysis of states that have updated their voter file by TargetSmart, younger voters increased their share of the electorate relative to 2016. According to exit polls, Biden increased his share of the youth vote by five points compared to Hillary Clinton in 2016 (60% for Biden, 55% for Clinton).<sup>3</sup>

This was not a foregone conclusion. In GSG’s polling of young voters for NextGen America in June 2020 Biden was only converting 51% of young registered voters, fully 36% of whom agreed, at the time that “on the issues important to me, there is no real difference between Joe Biden and Donald Trump” and only 50% said Biden would be better on climate than Trump. Over the course of the campaign, we saw Biden expand his margin on climate more than any other issue (see Figure below) and, with that, also drive home that there were real differences between the two candidates and boost his vote share.<sup>4</sup>

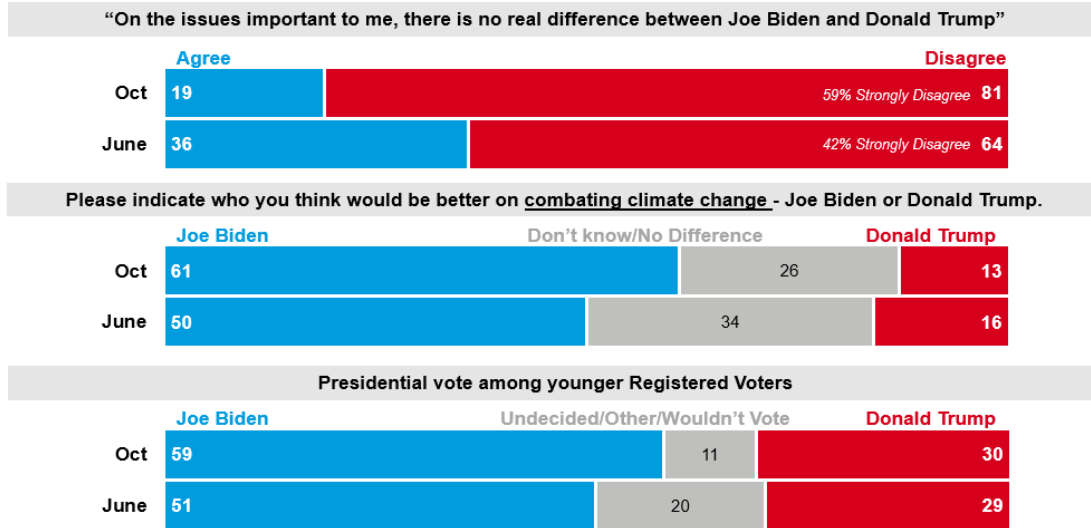


Figure 1. Data from NextGen survey of Younger Voters

The importance of climate to younger voters was confirmed in the GSG/Normington Petts post-election survey. Not only did 49% of younger voters say that climate was important to their vote (10% points higher than the electorate as a whole), but younger voters said that Biden’s plan was a convincing reason to vote for him over Trump by 64%-16% margin and that Trump calling climate change a hoax was a convincing reason to vote for Biden over him by a 62% to 13% margin.

<sup>3</sup> TargetSmart and exit poll [analyses](#)

<sup>4</sup> Global Strategy Group polling for NextGen America

It was also confirmed by a new post-election survey from Navigator Research, which showed that climate change was the number one reason to support Biden (out of the 12 tested) among voters under the age of 45 who voted for Biden in 2020 but did not vote in 2016. Climate was clearly a significant help in bringing these voters into the electorate.<sup>5</sup>

### Climate Change in the Biden Administration

Not only was climate change and clean energy a winning issue for Biden, but there is a nearly universal view among President-elect Biden’s supporters that he has a mandate to act on his climate and clean energy agenda. A majority of voters agrees with all five of the statements about climate change and clean energy (see Table 2); which indicates broad support for taking action on these issues and provides guidance about the intensity of the desire to enact these policies.

	Overall	Biden Voters	Trump Voters	Conf. Pres. Voters	Cons. not Voting	White	Black	Hispanic
We should let science and experts guide our response to climate change.	79	96	61	80	82	76	90	86
America should make significant investments in clean energy as part of our efforts to rebuild the economy.	74	97	50	82	83	70	94	87
As we move the country to clean energy, we should make sure that our investments benefit the communities most impacted by pollution, including Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous communities.	74	95	52	77	78	69	96	84
Joe Biden and the Democrats campaigned on a plan to move the country to a 100% clean energy economy and net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and won the election. <b>Now they have a mandate to make that happen.</b>	63	92	32	<b>74</b>	<b>71</b>	57	95	73

Table 3. % Agree With Statements About Climate Change by Subgroups

Of course large swaths of voters support following the advice of experts, but it is notable how many Battleground voters agree that attention should be paid to communities of color (74%) as part of a movement towards clean energy as well as the breadth of that agreement across all constituencies. These data also clearly show that **voters believe that Biden and Congress have a mandate to act on the climate policies on which he campaigned and won.** Importantly, voters who were conflicted about who to vote for as well as those who considered not voting show an even higher level of agreement that Biden has a climate mandate. That has clear implications for future turnout and persuasion efforts.

The plan on which Biden campaigned is also very popular with nearly two-thirds (62%) of Battleground voters supporting it (see Figure below). His plan enjoys broad support by partisanship, across all ethnic groups and is particularly high among voters under age 45. Biden’s \$2 trillion climate plan is described as “ambitious” and “irreversible” and garners higher support among voters who considered supporting both candidates for president and people who thought about not turning out but ultimately did.

**As you may know, during the campaign, Joe Biden highlighted his plan to combat climate change and move the country to clean energy. Here is a summary of Biden’s plan:**

Joe Biden will **move the country to a 100% clean energy economy and net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.** He'll start by investing \$2 trillion over the next five years to create the jobs we need to build a modern, sustainable infrastructure now and deliver a just and equitable clean energy future. His plan is paid for by eliminating tax breaks and subsidies for oil and coal companies and other corporations and **will set the country on an irreversible course to meet the ambitious climate progress that science demands.**



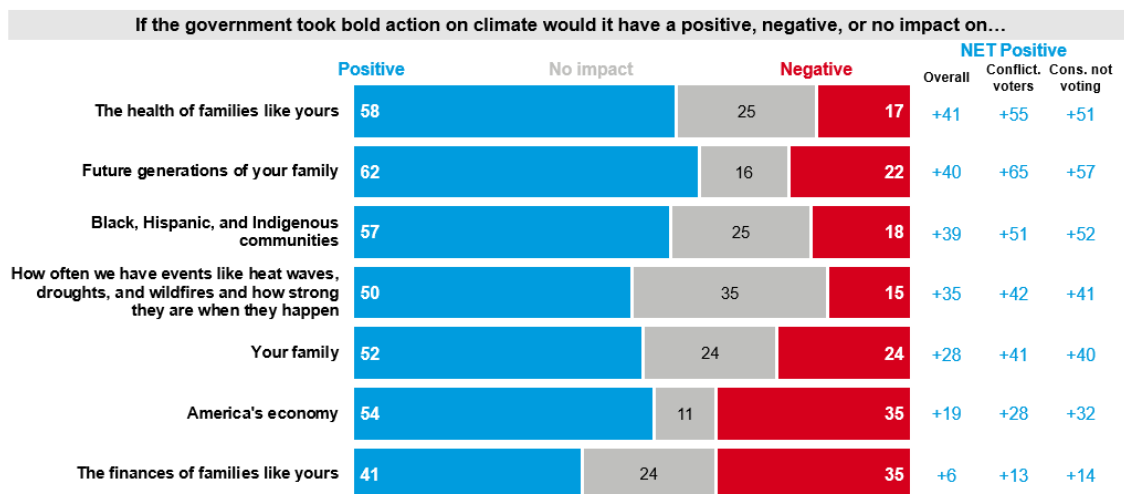
<sup>5</sup> Navigator Research post-election [survey](#) conducted by Global Strategy Group and GBAO.

**Voters of Color.** Support for Biden’s plan is highest among center-left voters, voters of color, and white college-educated voters. However, its potential positive political impact is, by no means, limited to those groups. When we compare support for Biden’s plan to the presidential ballot by different subgroups, his climate plan overperforms the presidential ballot by a net of at least 13 points among every subgroup except Democrats and Black voters (where the two are about equal because there is not much room to grow from the presidential ballot). Counter to conventional wisdom the climate plan’s biggest over-performance is actually with center-right voters (especially center-right women), white non-college voters, and rural voters.

	Overall	Hispanic	White Non-College	White College	Dem	Ind	GOP	Rural	Suburban	Urban
<b>PRESIDENTIAL VOTE</b>										
Joe Biden	50	67	38	48	95	50	6	35	50	64
Donald Trump	48	32	60	50	5	45	94	63	48	34
Net	+2	+35	-22	-2	+90	+5	-88	-28	+2	+30
<b>BIDEN'S CLIMATE PLAN</b>										
Support	62	79	53	58	96	65	26	49	61	74
Oppose	38	21	47	42	4	35	74	51	39	26
Net	+24	+58	+6	+16	+92	+30	-48	-2	+22	+48
Climate Plan v Pres Vote	+22	+23	<b>+28</b>	+18	+2	<b>+25</b>	<b>+40</b>	<b>+26</b>	+20	+18

Table 4. Comparison of Vote for President and Support for Joe Biden's Climate Plan

Climate change and clean energy were important issues for Biden in his victory and there is clear support for his plan on this issue, but it is also important to understand why this issue works. The majority of voters (58%) in battleground states agree that “climate change is already having a serious impact on the state where you live,” including a majority in every region of the country (especially the Western US), a majority of both men and women, and a majority of Black, Hispanic and white voters. Americans see this problem reflected in their everyday lives. In addition to that recognition, they also believe that bold action to combat climate change will have a positive impact on their family’s health, future generations, and their country (see Figure below). Perhaps most importantly they believe that acting boldly on climate change will have a positive impact on the American economy (54%) and more battleground voters believe it will positively impact “the finances of families like theirs” (41%) than negatively (35%).



This memo is based on a variety of sources including: 1) on an online survey of voters in battleground states conducted by Global Strategy Group and Normington Petts on behalf of LCV from November 8-16, 2020 consisting of 2,002 actual 2020 voters in AZ, CO, FL, GA, MI, MN, NV, NC, PA, and WI (about 200 voters per state) plus an oversample to achieve 428 actual 2020 Black voters and an oversample to achieve 435 actual 2020 Hispanic voters in these battleground state; 2) Hart Research survey of 800 Pennsylvania voters for Climate Power 2020 conducted November 4-8, 2020; 3) GSG surveys of 1,000 registered voters age 18-34 across a 10-state presidential battleground, conducted in June and October, 2020.