

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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NOVEMBER 14, 1997

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INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

CC: Maria Echaveste, Assistant to the President and Director, Office of Public Liaison

FROM: *ymat*
Sylvia Matthews, Deputy Chief of Staff
Regala
Audrey Tayse Haynes, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director, Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach

SUBJECT: RESEARCH AND POLL RESULTS OF "NEW WOMEN VOTERS IN 1996 AND BEYOND"

I. SUMMARY

Attached are research and poll results conducted for the Women's Vote Project (a nonpartisan vote initiative of the Council of Presidents--a coalition of 110 national women's organizations) by Celinda Lake and Linda Divall. The results included focus groups in Denver and Atlanta and a survey of new women voters who voted in 1996, but not in 1992 or 1994, in five targeted states: Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri, and North Carolina. Also included in this information is a report on the size of the gender gap by state based on CNN exit polling.

II. DISCUSSION

The information is divided into sections: Research/Methodology/Summary; Messages; and CNN Gender Gap. Celinda Lake believes this is the first poll ever conducted of *new* women voters, looking specifically at the process and messages to determine what triggered their participation. Ms. Lake and Ms. Irene Natividad, Chairman of the Women's Vote Project, are available to answer further questions.

ATTACHMENTS:
as stated

New Women Voters in 1996 and Beyond

Presentation of findings from focus groups
and a national survey

Prepared for the Women's Vote Project
Irene Natividad, Chair

by

Lake Sosin Snell Perry & Associates

American Viewpoint

September 1997

Research Methodology: Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted on June 30 and July 1, 1997. Participants were women who public records indicated had voted in 1996, but had not voted in either 1992 or 1994.

Group 1: Denver, white women

Groups 2: Denver, Latina women

Group 3: Atlanta, white women

Group 4: Atlanta, African American women

Each group included 8-10 participants, recruited at random and offered an incentive for their participation, and was led by a professional moderator.

Focus groups are a form of qualitative research that help us to understand the "why" behind people's opinions. They are open-ended discussions which permit us to explore people's thoughts and opinions at a much deeper level than survey research allows. They are idea-generators, helping us to understand the language that people use to describe their own opinions. By making groups demographically homogeneous, we maximize respondents' willingness to be as candid as possible in discussing their views and perceptions.

Research Methodology: Survey

620 interviews were conducted among women who did not vote in either 1992 or 1994, but who were registered to vote by October 1996. This sample included a base sample of 500 divided in 100 interviews from each of five states in which the Women's Vote Project had coalition partners: Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri and North Carolina. An additional 50 interviews were conducted among African American women in the five states, and an additional 70 interviews were conducted among Latina women in Colorado and Massachusetts.

The survey was conducted August 20 to August 28, 1997. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 3.9 percent.

Summary

- ✓ The goal of this project was to better understand both the obstacles and motivations facing new women voters in 1996.
- ✓ With both focus groups and a national survey, we interviewed women in five states who had not voted in either 1992 or 1994, but who joined (or rejoined) the electorate in 1996.
- ✓ We found that three things were critical in bringing these women to the voting booth:
 - Information -- about the issues, about the candidates, and about the process.
 - Relevance -- a personal link between the elections and their own lives.
 - Time -- a process that made voting easy, requiring a minimum amount of time.

Information

- ✓ Providing information is one of the most effective tools in encouraging more women to register and vote.
 - Information on the candidates and issues: The biggest problems women said they faced in voting were getting enough information -- both about the issues on the ballots, and about the candidates. Two-thirds said that getting a non-partisan voter guide in the mail, before election day would make a difference in whether or not they voted.
 - Information on the process: One in five said that knowing how to use a voting machine was a problem in voting, including one in three women who registered at a DMV.
- ✓ Because of the role of basic information about the process, mobilizing women to vote the first time is different than mobilizing them to vote once they have voted before. Voters worry about not having a say; non-voters worry about making a mistake.

Relevance

- ✓ Messages that draw a connection between the political process and women's lives -- that is, their day to day concerns -- are most effective in motivating these women to vote.
 - Issues that are close to home: References to children, to education, and to immediate economic issues, such as pay and health care, elicit the strongest response.
 - A personal link: Women in our focus groups described being motivated to vote when a change in their own lives -- having a child, buying a house, facing retirement -- prompted them to make a link to the political process.
 - Voting for others: Women respond more to messages asking them to vote for their children, families, and community than for themselves.

Time

- ✓ In an environment where voters are cynical about the probability of election results changing anything, where they lack information and where their lives are already busy and hectic, time is a significant obstacle to voting. Moreover, surveys show that women feel even shorter of time than men. Thus, many of the election day reforms with the highest support from the women surveyed diminish the amount of time required to vote.
 - Hours in the day: When time is scarce, the prospect of long lines at the polls is daunting. Extending election day hours is one good remedy to this.
 - Voting by mail: The option to vote through the mail makes a lot of sense to many women.

Messages that Mobilize

- ✓ Messages that draw on concerns about children are strongest -- particularly with younger women, women with children, and women of color.
- ✓ Women respond to the issues of education and economic security. Explicit references to equal pay also boost responses.
- ✓ Older women in particular respond to messages of personal responsibility.

Messages

"Vote for children and economic security."

Many women were motivated to vote by a personal life change that got them interested in politics.

- ✓ [I didn't vote before] because I was single and I didn't have kids. And I was able to pay my rent, do my job. And I didn't think the issues outside of my own world really affected me. But now that I am a mom and have all the other concerns and jobs and so, between being single and becoming a parent, I think, made a big difference to me. (Denver, white)
- ✓ That was never a big impact on me -- and especially being in the military where things are taken care of for you. And then you get out and you see there's a whole new world out there as far as being able to be covered [by health insurance]... It's a big shock. (Denver, white)
- ✓ [What motivated you to vote?] My grandma... Well, she was just concerned about Medicare... I wanted to put my vote in so that they would continue to get that. (Denver, white)
- ✓ I had absolutely no interest in it until I was 40 years old... When you are younger and you are working, and you are between 20 and 35, you don't think about retirement. As soon as it gets to you, you start to think about retirement. Then you become affected more by politics. (Atlanta, white)

More...

-
- ✓ I'll be 38 in a couple of months and I had never voted until this last presidential election. It was only because I just didn't care. I didn't have any interest in politics. I didn't think any of them were good, so why help put one in office? Then when I had my daughter, my values changed. Different things became important to me. I wanted to contribute in some way. That's why I choose to vote. (Atlanta, white)
 - ✓ In four years I had a lot of major life changes -- between a career change, getting married, having family. Those three alone prompted me to get off my rear end and do something. (Atlanta, white)
 - ✓ I didn't in the past, but this year I was forced to because my son is in third grade, and... he did a project on how to become President of the United States, so I was forced to get involved. So I think it is good because the children are our future, so I think I haven't in the past but now I will. (Atlanta, African American)
 - ✓ I didn't take the time to do it. I just didn't care. I didn't pay attention. Things changed for me a lot after I had my daughter. I feel like that I have to do things for her. (Atlanta, African American)

Voting for their children was a frequent theme in the focus groups.

- ✓ I already felt like I had to vote because of my kids. (Denver, white)
- ✓ I felt like I was doing something for myself and for my children. I wish I would have voted in the previous election. (Denver, Latina)
- ✓ I feel like I am empowered more just to vote for my child... I look more toward my daughter's future and what is best for her. That makes me feel good and I feel like I have all the power in the world. (Atlanta, African American)
- ✓ I think it is important that you vote if you have children. (Denver, Latina)
- ✓ Get the women together and teach them the power of the vote. If you talk about issues that are very close to them like their children and the things that are going to happen to the children... it might motivate them to go out and vote more. (Atlanta, white)

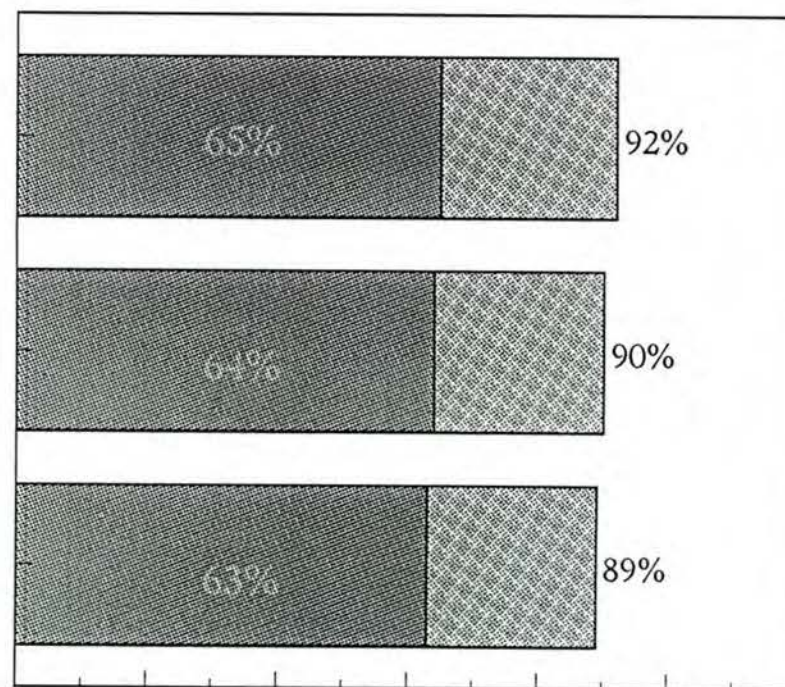
In the survey, messages about children and economic issues are the most convincing reasons to vote.

Now, I am going to read you some reasons people have given for voting. Please tell me how convincing each is as a reason to vote -- is it *VERY* convincing, *SOMEWHAT* convincing, *NOT* too convincing, or not *AT ALL* convincing?^{*}

It is important for women to vote to make sure their issues are heard. For example, it is important for women to vote so that things important to our economic security, like equal pay, education, jobs and health care are priorities for elected officials.*

The most important investment we can make in the future is in our children. We all need to vote to make sure our children are put first as we head into the 21st century.*

Our children have a lot at stake in the outcome of elections. Elections affect the future of our schools, our job opportunities, and the availability of health care and child care. Women need to vote to stand up for children.*

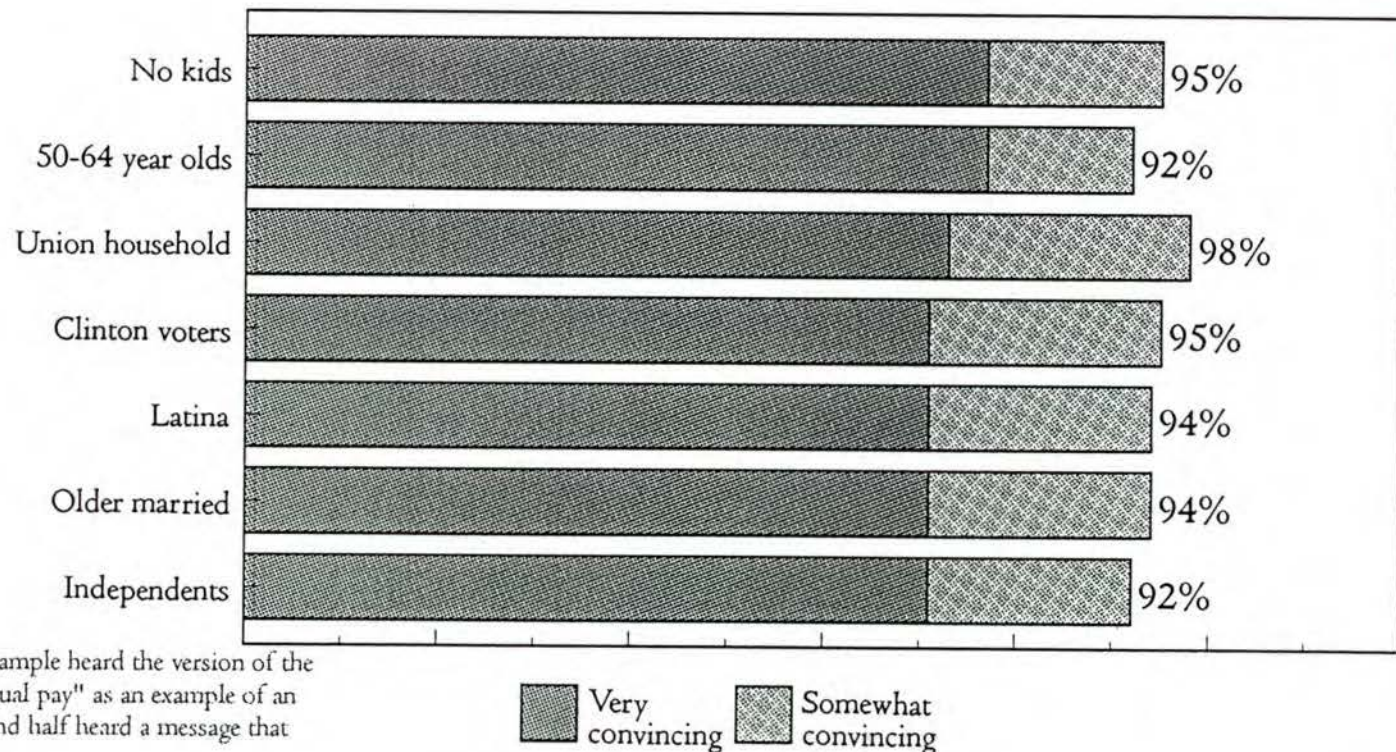


^{*} Each message was asked of half the sample. The other half heard messages with slightly different language.

Very convincing Somewhat convincing

Equal pay gets a particularly strong response from women who live in union households, women without kids, and women nearing retirement age, as well as from Latinas.

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* Split sample - half the sample heard the version of the message that includes "equal pay" as an example of an economic security issue and half heard a message that mentions only equal pay.

In the focus groups as well, economic security issues were prominent.

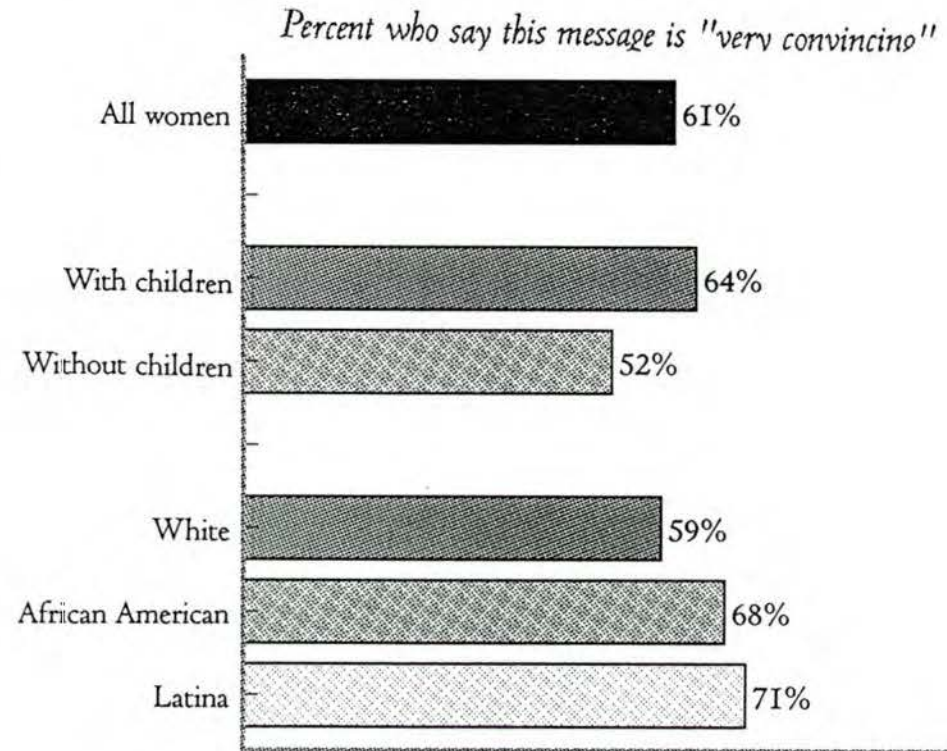
- ✓ In terms of what government can do, I think they need to promote social policies that bring about education and economic welfare of everybody in this country. We ought to be able to achieve that. (Denver, white)
- ✓ You've got to think about what are you going to do when it comes time for you to leave [your job]. How are you going to save for your retirement? How are you going to exist if it is not there for you now? In order for people to make money for your Social Security, you've got to have a decent salary. (Atlanta, African American)
- ✓ When you are younger and you are working, and you are between 20 and 35 you don't think about retirement. As soon as it gets to you, you start to think about retirement. Then you become affected more by politics. (Atlanta, white)

Messages about children have the most power for women with children -- and thus younger women -- and for women of color.

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The most important investment we can make in the future is in our children. We all need to vote to make sure our children are put first as we head into the 21st century.*

*Half the sample heard a message saying "we all" need to vote; half heard a message saying "women" need to vote. These results combine responses to both versions.

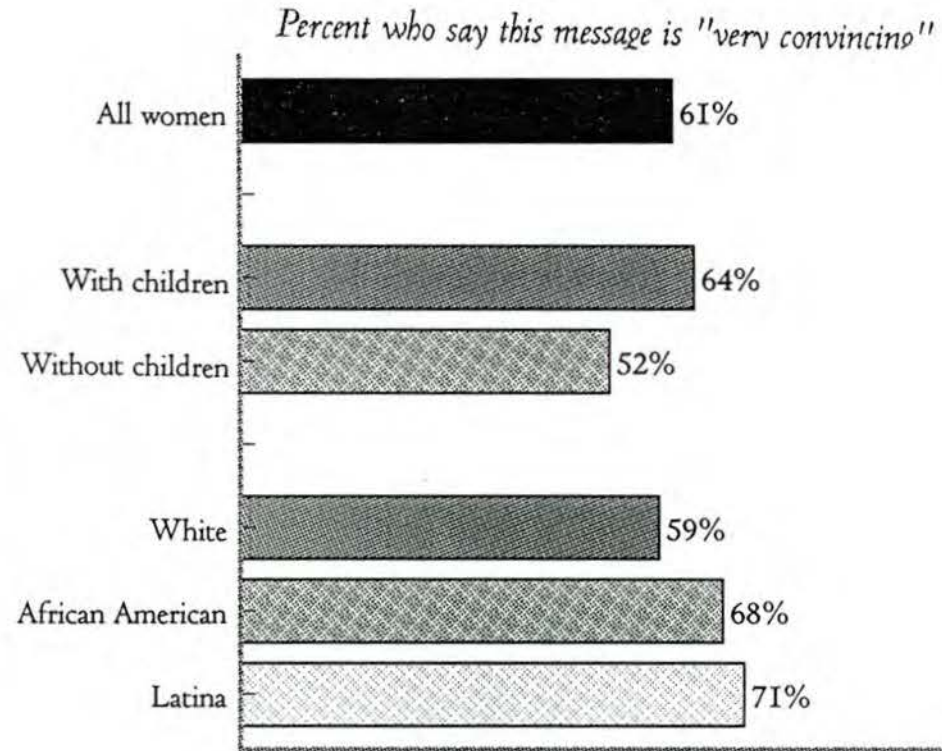


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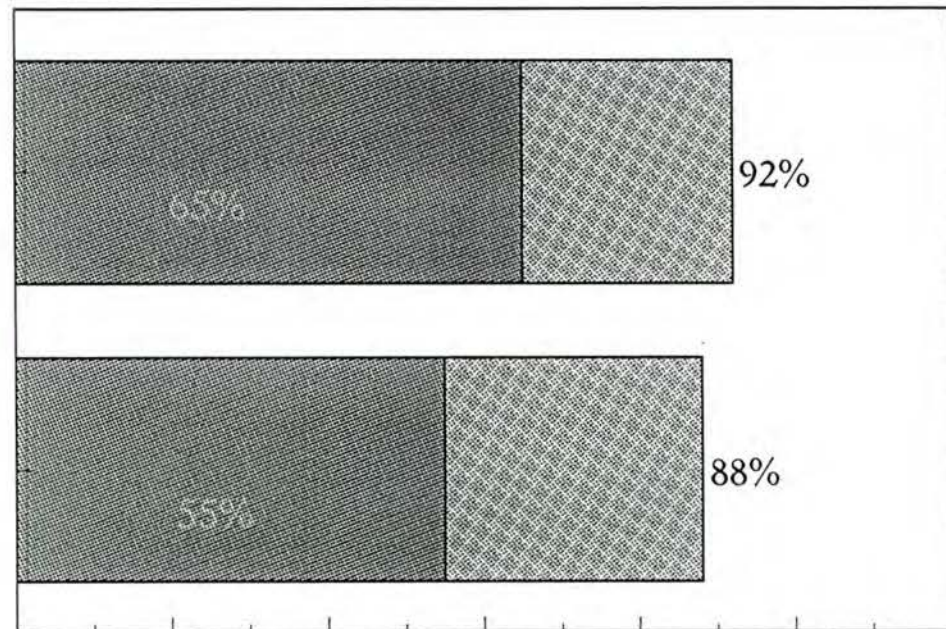


Mentioning equal pay makes an economic security message even stronger.

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* Split sample - half the sample heard the version of the message that includes "equal pay" as an example of an economic security issue and half heard a message that mentions only equal pay.

Very convincing Somewhat convincing

Mentioning equal pay adds 10 points to those who find an economic security message very convincing.

Voting made women in the focus groups feel proud and responsible.

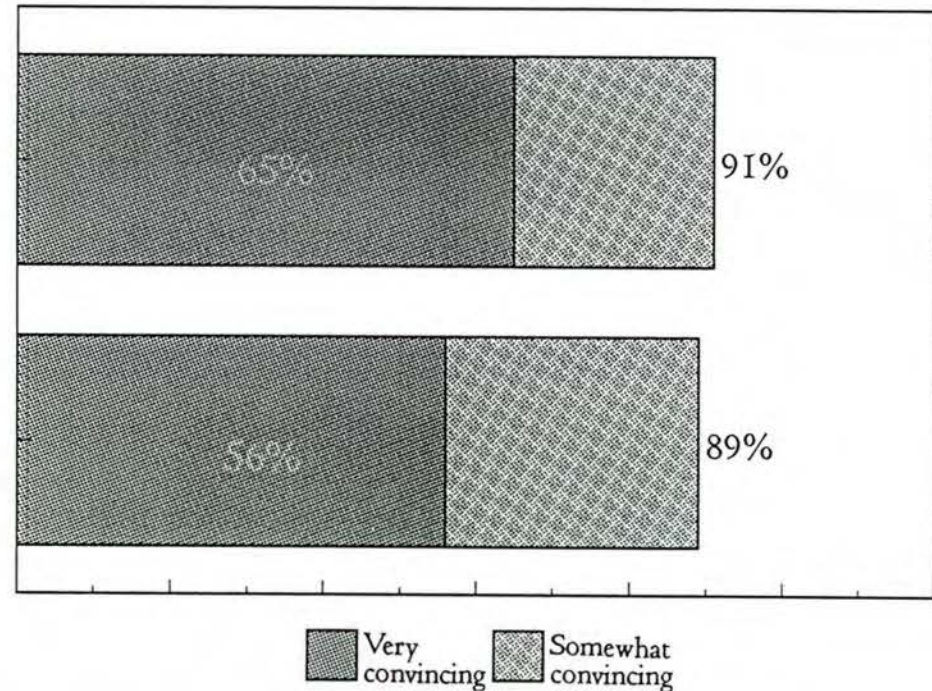
- ✓ I felt proud... I felt like I accomplished something. I took a step towards making more decisions for myself and taking responsibility for me. (Denver, white)
- ✓ I felt I was taking some type of responsibility for what's going on. (Denver, Latina)
- ✓ I was very proud of myself. (Atlanta, white)
- ✓ I just felt my vote would make a difference... It was just a personal thing with me. I felt like I needed to go vote and so I did. (Atlanta, African American)

These are values-oriented voters and a message about taking personal responsibility is also convincing.

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Voting is an important part of being an American citizen. It is important for women to vote because voting is a way to take personal responsibility for the direction of our lives and our country.*

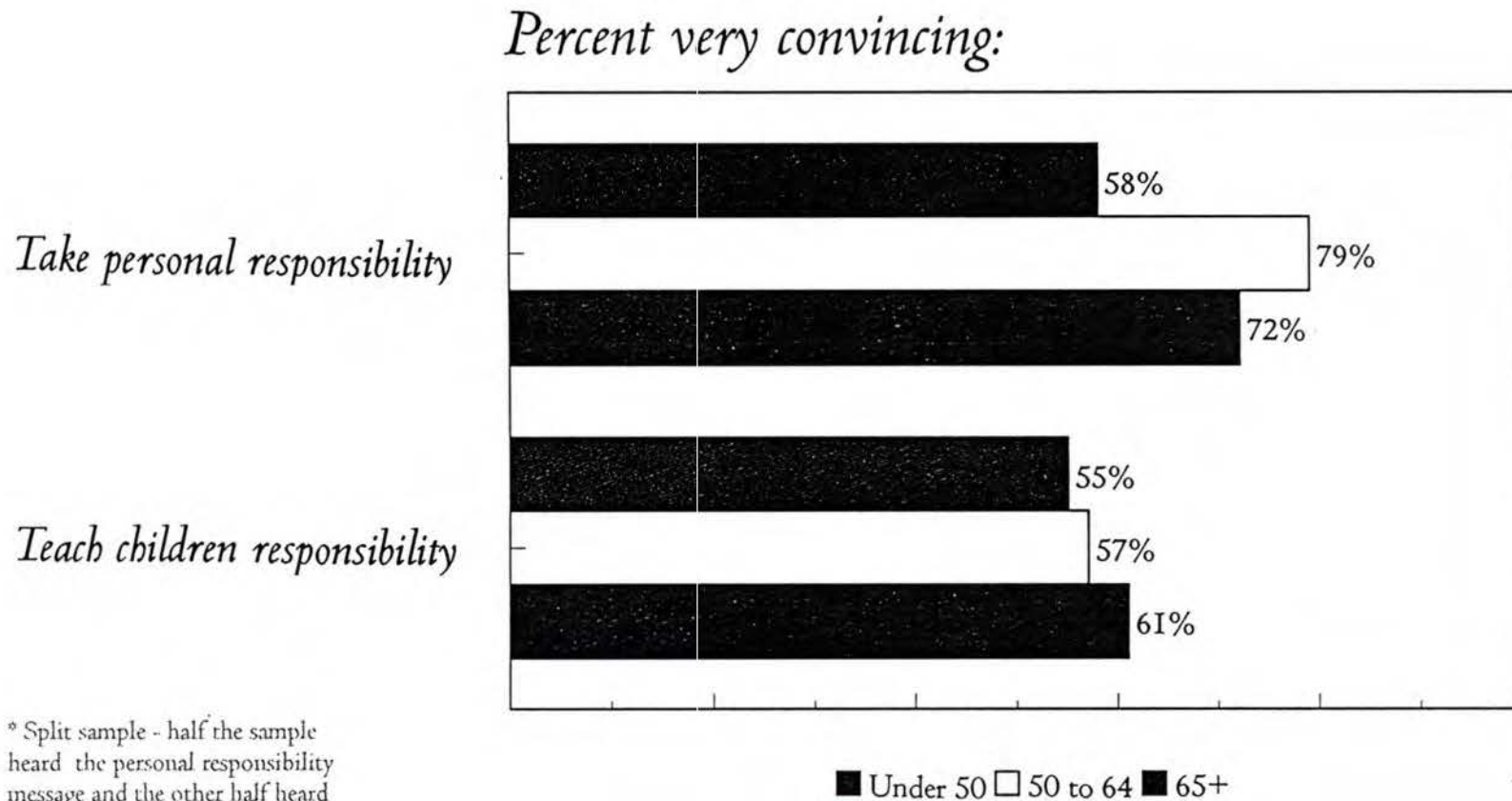
We want our children to know right from wrong, to have confidence in their opinions, and to take responsibility for their actions. It is important for women to vote so that we set the right example for our children and teach them responsibility.*



* Split sample - half the sample heard the personal responsibility message and the other half heard the message about teaching children right from wrong.

Taking PERSONAL responsibility is more convincing than teaching one's CHILDREN responsibility.

Messages about "personal responsibility" were particularly convincing to older women.*



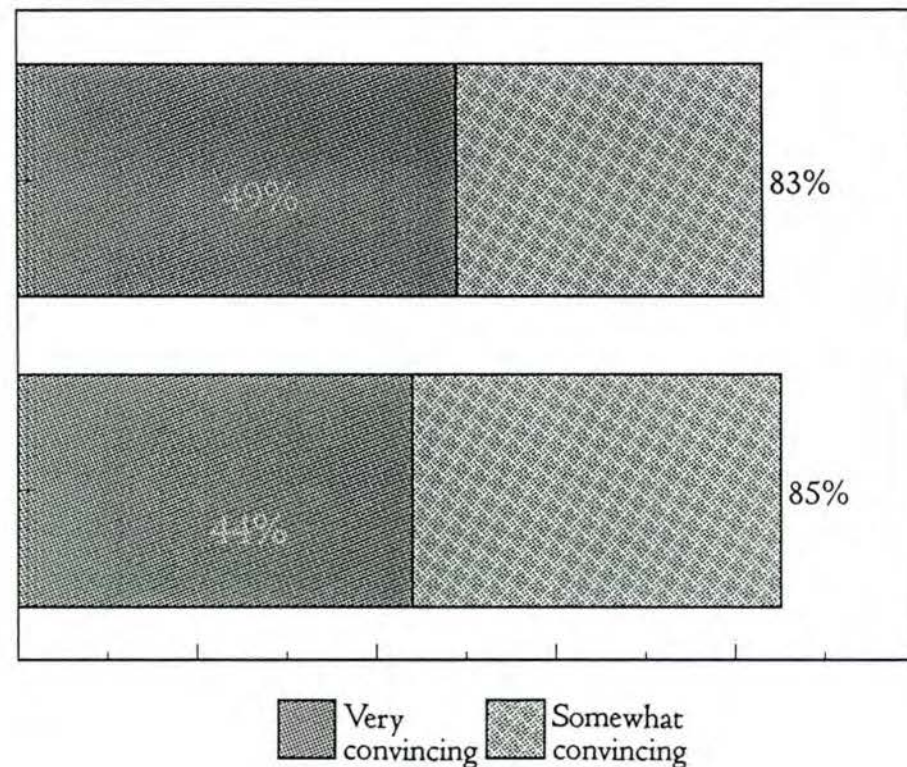
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Messages that emphasize the role of *women* per se are also less powerful, but half find them "very convincing."

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There is power in the vote. A number of elections are decided by fewer than 25 votes. In 1996, ten million more women than men voted, and it was women who determined the outcome of the elections for president and Congress. By voting, women can impact how elections are decided and the policies we have as a result.²²

Women bring a unique perspective. We know first hand what matters for children, families, and our community, and voting is an important way to make sure elected officials pay attention to our perspective.²³



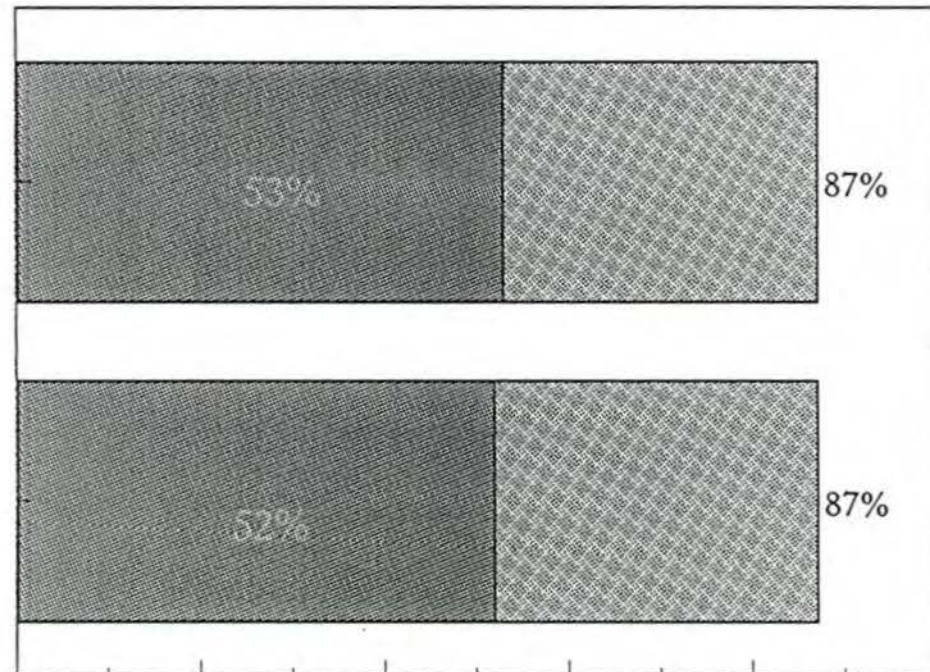
²²Each message was heard by half the sample.

budget and taxes are less powerful, lacking urgency, though appealing overall.

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American families and society are disintegrating. Values have declined, violence is on the rise, and there's no end in sight. Women know this and it's important for them to vote so that reducing violence and increasing safety for our children are priorities for our elected officials.*

It is important for women to vote to make sure their issues are heard. For example, it is important for women to vote so that balancing the budget and keeping taxes and government in check are priorities for elected officials.*



* Half of the sample heard the values message and half heard the message relating to fiscal issues.

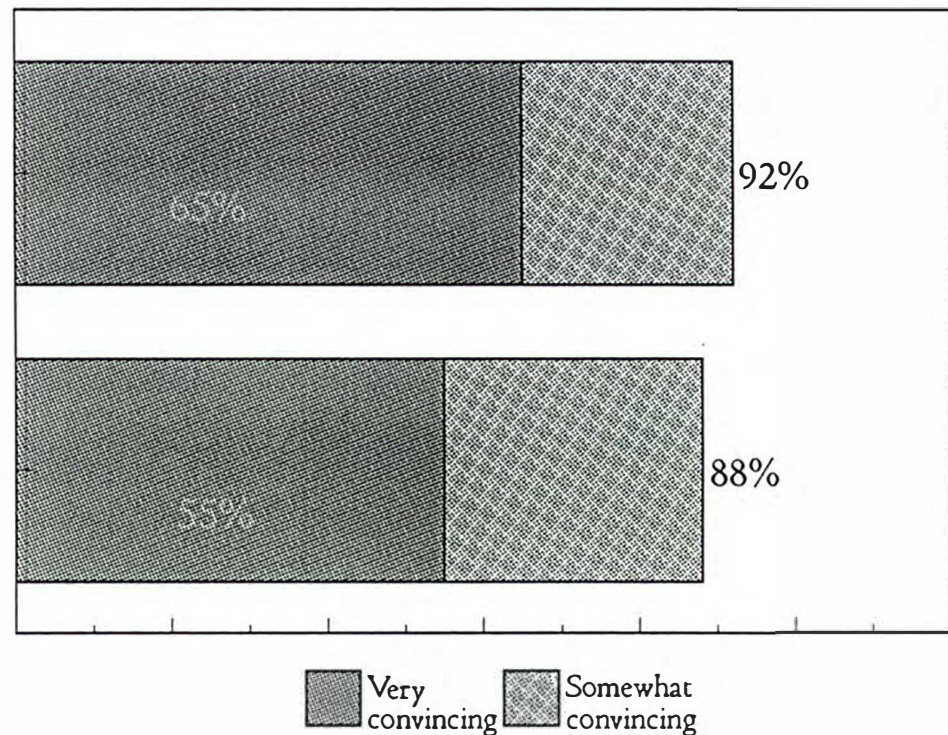
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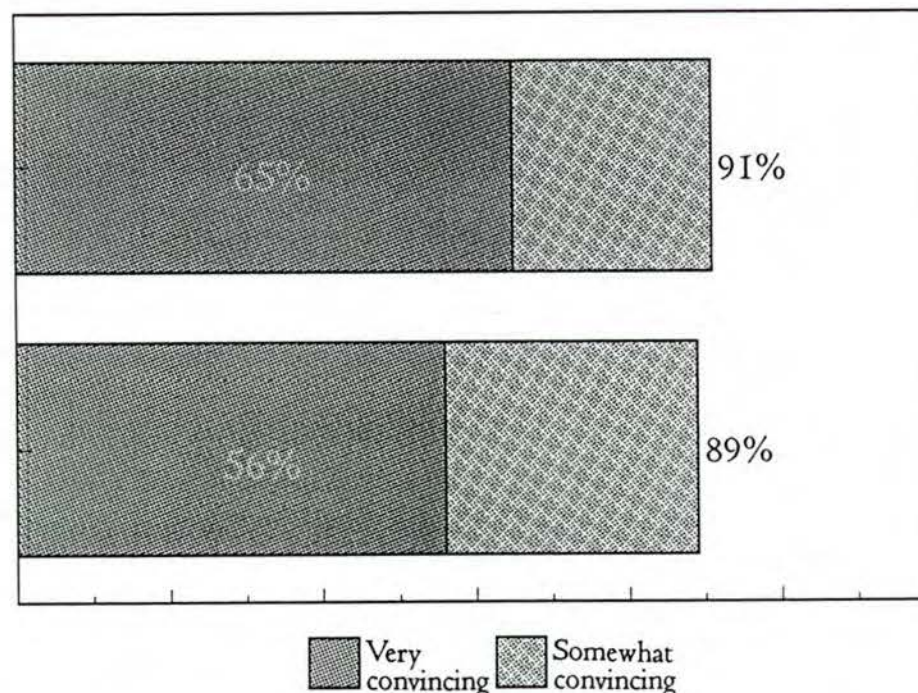
- ✓ I felt proud... I felt like I accomplished something. I took a step towards making more decisions for myself and taking responsibility for me. (Denver, white)
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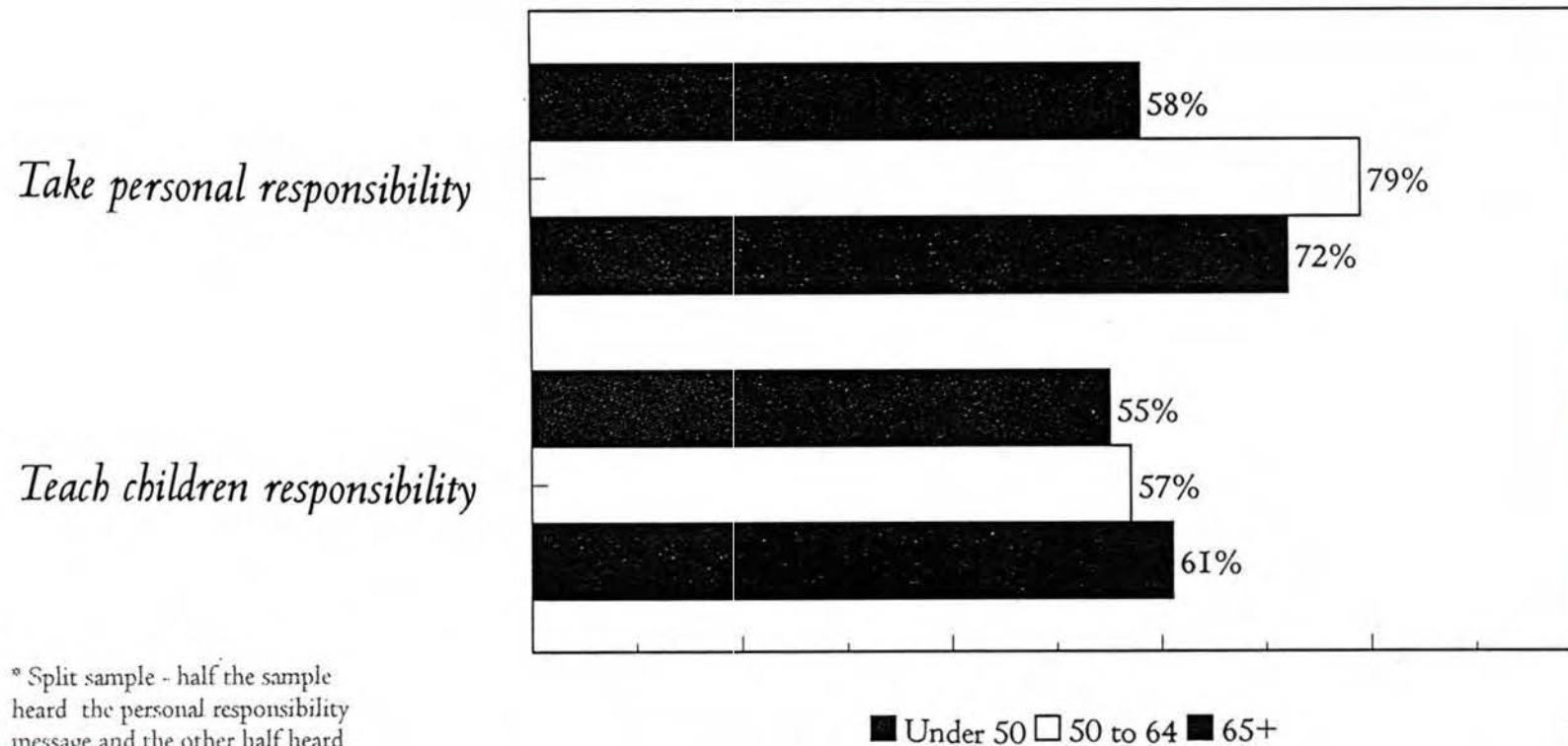


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Percent very convincing:



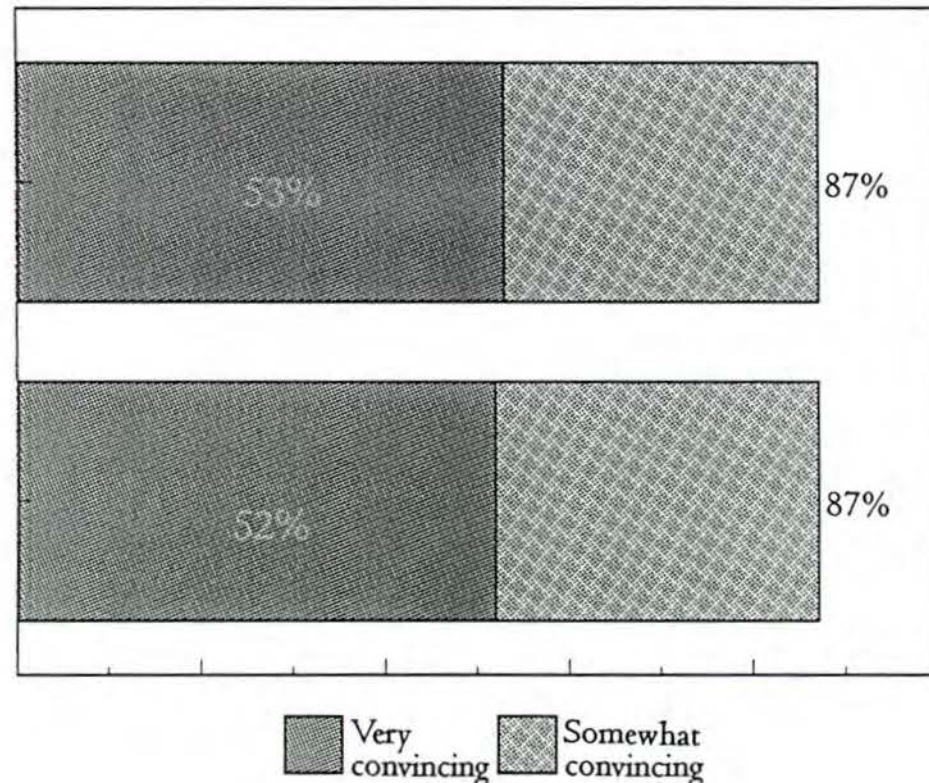
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Messages about values and violence generally or about the budget and taxes are less powerful, lacking intensity, though appealing overall.

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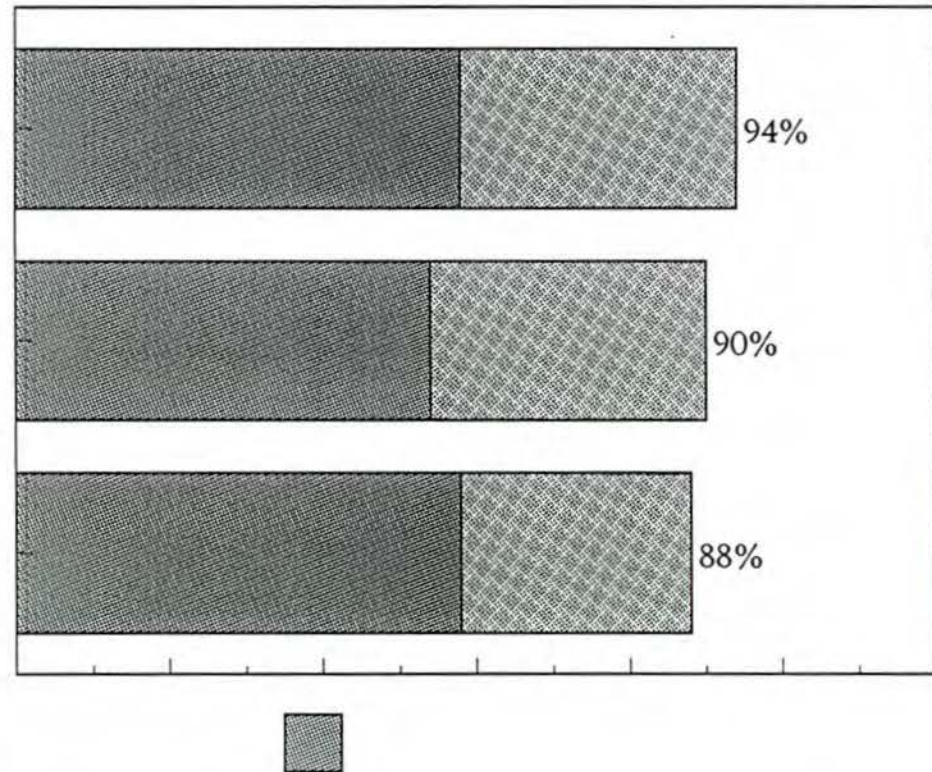
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For Republican-leaning women, messages about children were somewhat more convincing than the taxes and budget message.*

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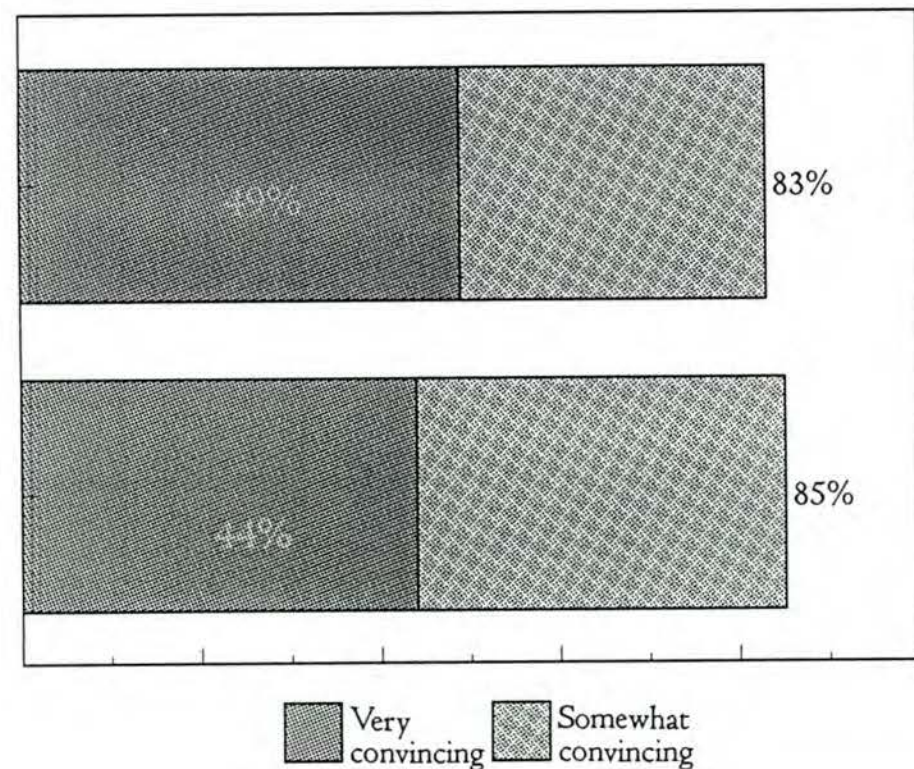


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Women bring a unique perspective. We know first hand what matters for children, families, and our community, and voting is an important way to make sure elected officials pay attention to our perspective.*



*Each message was heard by half the sample.

In the focus groups, both Latina and African American women were comfortable talking about the importance of women voting.

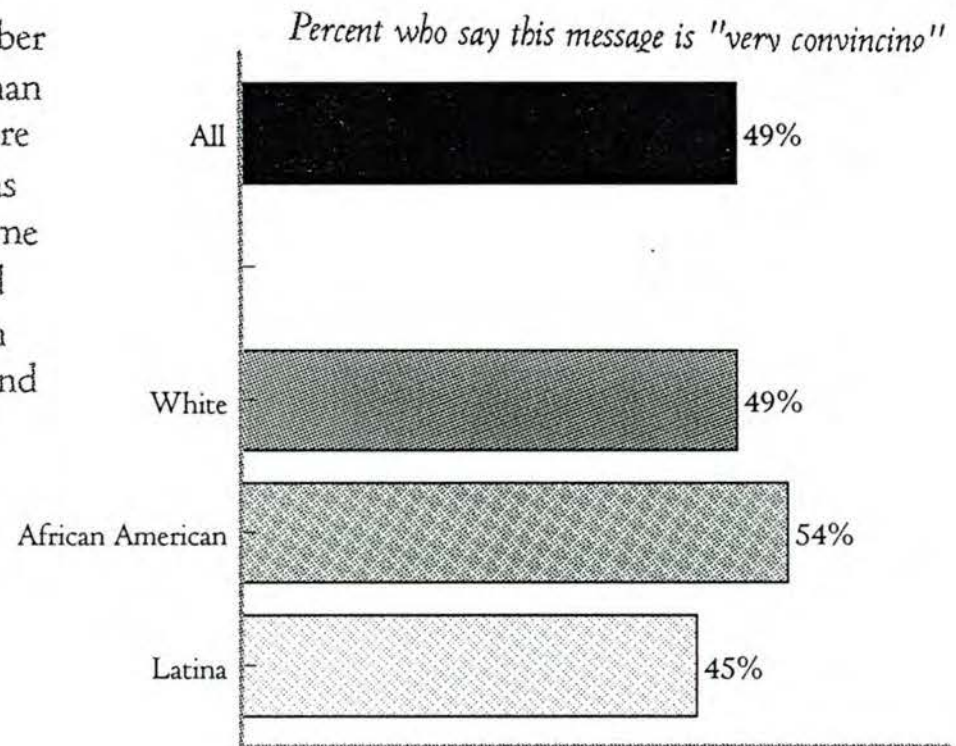
- ✓ If more women voted, more family issues will be more recognized. I just think women bring out more feelings toward family issues. (Denver Latina)
- ✓ Women don't really get recognized as much as men... There's no women in office. Everybody is always men and there's women around everything. (Denver Latina)
- ✓ [Talk to women and if you could touch them just to show how important it is to vote for the future for your children. I think if you ... can get through to them about their children, you can get them to do that. (Atlanta, African American)]
- ✓ Knowing that I... am empowered in this way to make a difference in my life and my children's life. It's important and I think we need to be recognized. (Denver Latina)
- ✓ [There] was a time when women could not vote at all. Let them see that now that they can do it, just get out there and be equal with the men or whatever. (Atlanta, African American)

A majority of African American women say the message about women's power is very convincing.

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**1/2 the sample heard this message; half heard a version without the middle sentence. These results combine responses to both versions.*



Latina women responded positively to materials in Spanish.

- ✓ My husband is from Mexico and we speak both languages in our house, and... my family all speaks English, but...they feel more comfortable speaking Spanish.
- ✓ Perhaps if the individuals who have very broken English speak mostly Spanish, if they're drawn in to politics and voting, it might actually give them more incentive to learn English.
- ✓ There are different populations that are more receptive to the Spanish and they would be regardless of how much [English] they understand. They're just more receptive to the Spanish.

WOMEN'S VOTE PROJECT '96
THE DECIDING VOTE

NEWS RELEASE
October 14, 1997

CONTACT: Lisa Lederer
Gretchen Wright
Nancy Thompson
202/371-1999

**GIVE US THE FACTS AND WE'LL GIVE YOU OUR VOTES:
AMERICAN WOMEN SAY LACK OF INFORMATION
KEEPS THEM AWAY FROM THE POLLS**

Washington, DC -- What if we called an election and no women came? Millions of American women are not turning out to vote, and many say it is because they lack time, information, and the belief that elections are relevant to their lives. That is a key finding of *New Women Voters, 1996 and Beyond*, a report on new public opinion research that explores what motivated women to vote in 1996, the obstacles that prevent women from voting, and the specific issues that are likely to motivate women to vote in the future.

"Women want more reliable, nonpartisan information about issues, candidates and the process," *Women's Vote Project* Chair Irene Natividad said. "Lack of information about candidates, referenda and ballot initiatives is the biggest obstacle to women's voting. Women are more likely to vote on behalf of others than themselves; they respond most strongly to messages about their children, families and communities. Messages about kids, education and the economy resonate most strongly. And women need voting to fit more easily into their time-strapped lives. Extending election day voting hours and allowing voting by mail would be powerful incentives for more women to vote."

The research was conducted for the Women's Vote Project by Celinda Lake of Lake, Sosin, Snell, Perry & Associates and Linda Divall of American Viewpoint. It included focus groups in Denver and Atlanta and a survey of new women voters -- women who registered to vote in 1996 but not in 1992 or 1994 -- in Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri and North Carolina. Among the findings:

- New women voters are somewhat younger and less educated than women voters overall. Nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of new women voters are married, three in four (75 percent) have children, 30 percent are college graduates, and 59 percent work outside the home.

more

1211 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Suite 504 • Washington, D.C. 20036
202/835-3875 • 202/466-6195 FAX

- ▶ Two in five women surveyed (39 percent) have difficulty getting enough information on ballot initiatives and referenda to know how to vote. One-third (33 percent) have trouble getting information on candidates. Twenty-four percent are deterred by long lines at the polls; 22 percent have trouble finding time to vote; and 21 percent aren't sure how to use a voting machine. For older women, knowing how to use a voting machine is nearly as big a problem as getting information. Women of color are more likely than white women to be concerned about long lines, lack of child care, and knowing where to go to vote.
- ▶ Sixty-nine percent of women surveyed said that getting a nonpartisan voter guide in the mail before election day would encourage people to vote. Fifty-three percent favor being able to vote by mail, and 48 percent want more information on when and where to vote.
- ▶ Sixty-two percent of women who voted in 1996 remember receiving mail or a flyer on the importance of voting, and 43 percent remember receiving a phone call encouraging them to vote. In general, white women were more likely to be contacted than women of color, although African American women were more likely to discuss voting at church.
- ▶ Nearly one in three women (29 percent) say they registered to vote at a town hall or courthouse, 18 percent at a school, and 16 percent at a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Twenty-eight percent of Latina women, 16 percent of white women and 12 percent of African American women registered at a DMV. More than half of women respondents (57 percent) made a special trip to register to vote.
- ▶ Two in three women (63 percent) get most of their information on government and politics from television news, and 21 percent get most of their information from newspapers. Local television news is the source of most women's information.
- ▶ Non-voters are more pessimistic about the country's direction than voters. Just one in four women (24 percent) who say the country is going in the right direction did *not* vote in 1996, compared to half of women who say the country is on the wrong track (50 percent).
- ▶ Messages with direct relevance to women's lives -- such as those about children and economic issues -- continue to have the most powerful resonance among women voters. Mentioning equal pay makes economic messages resonate even more with women. Messages about taking personal responsibility are also convincing, particularly to older women and women of color.

more

Add Two

"We found that what motivates women to vote for the first time is different from what motivates women to return to the polls," Natividad added. "Women voters worry about not having a say, while non-voters worry about making a mistake. We have to address both sets of concerns in order to increase the women's vote in the future."

The Women's Vote Project plans to share this information with its colleagues in the states, Natividad said, to support even more effective voter registration, outreach and turn-out in 1998.

The survey consisted of 620 interviews conducted August 20 to August 28, 1997. The base sample was 500 women -- 100 each in Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri and North Carolina. Fifty additional interviews were conducted among African American women in the five states, and 70 additional interviews were conducted among Latina women in Colorado and Massachusetts. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.9 percent.

The nonpartisan Women's Vote Project of the Council of Presidents is a coalition of 110 national women's organizations. In collaboration with corporate and media partners, the Women's Vote Project conducted voter registration drives, voter outreach and get-out-the-vote efforts around the country in 1996. The Project targeted Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas for extensive outreach last year.

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NOTE: Copies of *New Women Voters, 1996 and Beyond* are available to media from Lisa Lederer, Gretchen Wright or Nancy Thompson at 202/371-1999.

WHAT IS THE GENDER GAP?

The Gender Gap is **defined** as the point spread between **how women** voted for the major candidates versus **how men** voted.

NATIONAL GENDER GAP 1996 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
Clinton/Gore	54%	44%
Dole/Kemp	37%	44%
Point Difference	17	0
Dole/Kemp Men		
0		Clinton/Gore Women + 17

Total Point Spread Between Men and Women: 17 points

National Gender Gap: 17 Points

Women's Vote Project '96 is a nonpartisan voter outreach coalition of 110 national women's organizations. The Project is Chaired by Irene Natividad who also Chairs the National Commission on Working Women.

WOMEN'S VOTE PROJECT 1996

PRESIDENTIAL GENDER GAP - 1996 ELECTION

States ranked highest to lowest by
gender gap point spread

Gender Gap	State	%Women for Clinton	%Women for Dole	%Men for Clinton	%Men for Dole
37	Massachusetts	67	23	49	42
35	Georgia	53	37	37	56
34	Missouri	56	34	38	50
33	Kentucky	57	40	37	53
32	Colorado	55	36	39	52
29	New Hampshire	58	33	42	46
27	Maine	59	25	44	37
24	Michigan	58	34	44	44
24	Oklahoma	46	44	32	54
24	Washington	59	32	44	41
23	South Dakota	49	42	36	52
22	Wisconsin	55	35	42	44
21	Arkansas	59	35	47	44

WOMEN'S VOTE PROJECT 1996

Gender Gap	State	%Women for Clinton	%Women for Dole	%Men for Clinton	%Men for Dole
21	Florida	54	38	41	46
21	Hawaii	63	27	51	36
21	Nevada	50	39	38	48
21	Rhode Island	66	23	54	32
19	North Carolina	52	44	41	52
19	Virginia	49	43	39	52
18	Louisiana	57	37	46	44
18	Mississippi	49	46	38	53
18	Utah	39	51	27	51
18	Vermont	58	27	49	36
16	California	55	36	45	42
16	Idaho	39	50	28	55
16	Kansas	40	51	31	58
16	New York	64	29	53	34
16	Oregon	51	34	43	42
14	Alabama	46	48	37	53
14	Illinois	58	34	50	40
14	Montana	44	41	37	48

WOMEN'S VOTE PROJECT 1996

Gender Gap	State	%Women for Clinton	%Women for Dole	%Men for Clinton	%Men for Dole
14	New Mexico	53	39	45	45
13	Maryland	58	36	50	41
12	Iowa	54	38	46	42
12	Minnesota	58	36	49	39
11	Alaska	41	46	31	47
11	District of Columbia	88	7	80	10
11	Pennsylvania	53	38	46	42
11	Texas	45	48	39	53
11	West Virginia	55	36	46	38
10	Delaware	56	38	47	39
10	Ohio	51	41	46	46
9	North Dakota	42	46	36	49
9	South Carolina	46	48	41	52
8	New Jersey	55	35	50	38
7	Nebraska	39	50	30	56
5	Indiana	43	47	39	48
5	Tennessee	51	45	48	47
4	Connecticut	52	40	48	40
3	Arizona	48	44	44	43
2	Wyoming	35	49	38	50