

mothering
JUSTICE



**NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER**

Justice for Her. Justice for All.

2022 SURVEY: BLACK WOMEN & BLACK MOM VOTERS IN MICHIGAN

Authors: Jenalyn Sotto, *National Women's Law Center*; **Eboni Taylor**, *Mothering Justice*



SUMMARY

Despite the dual crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic recession it triggered, and national and state efforts to restrict reproductive rights, Black women voters in Michigan remain optimistic about the impact of their vote and the future that lies ahead.

Across the board, Black women voters, as well as white voters, said that their top motivating issues are reproductive freedom—chiefly abortion rights—and ensuring that everyone can afford to meet their families' basic needs. But while they remain highly optimistic, Michigan's Black women, and their white women and men counterparts, are still experiencing economic hardships. While policies that address systemic inequities and positively impact all Michiganders—especially women, families, young people and LGBTQI+ community members—were popular among all survey respondents, Black women are even more likely to strongly support these policies.



OVERVIEW

Between efforts to expand voting rights protections for all Michiganders and codify and expand reproductive freedom for all—including access to abortion, contraception, and maternal health care free from bias—policymakers, gender justice advocates, and everyday Michiganders are working to create a more just and prosperous Michigan, including for Black women.

These efforts come at a time where disparities persist for Black women in Michigan. For example, Michigan has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality for Black women and birthing people. Black women in Michigan are [three times more likely to die](#) of [pregnancy-related complications](#) compared to white women in Michigan. Two major contributing factors to the high maternal mortality rates for Michigan's Black women are racism and economic insecurity.

According to the [Detroit Area Workforce Funders Collaborative](#), workers of color across Michigan are twice as likely as white workers to experience working poverty—defined as working full time and

having a family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Moreover, job opportunities remain deeply segregated in Michigan, [according to the fund's latest report](#). Workers of color—in particular [Black women—tend to be overrepresented in lower-paying and lower-opportunity jobs](#). As [women were more likely to be pushed out of the recession-impacted workforce, especially in Michigan](#), Black women have been disproportionately pushed out and excluded from jobs. And without access to a good job with benefits and a livable wage, Black women, other women of color, and their families are further pushed into greater chasms of financial uncertainty, housing instability, lack of health care access, and food insecurity.

To better understand the disparities—especially across race and gender—the National Women's Law Center and Mothering Justice commissioned this survey to understand how Black women are faring and what issues are critical to their well-being. This report presents findings from a survey conducted to understand sentiments and perceptions of Black woman voters in Michigan, as compared to white women and men voter counterparts, including an understanding of how Black women voters (1) perceive the impact of their vote, (2) are focused on key issues, and (3) perceive current government officials guiding policy in their state.



METHODOLOGY

These findings are part of additional data collection across key states. In collaboration with state-based partners, the National Women's Law Center commissioned an online survey to assess the policy needs of women of color voters in Michigan, Nevada, and Georgia.

In Michigan, the National Women's Law Center collaborated with Mothering Justice to commission this poll. The survey was administered by Vision Strategy and Insights during a three-week period, from August 4 through August 21, 2022. To draw a more dynamic picture about Black women in the state of Michigan, the survey encompassed a total of 528 online interviews: 327 among Black women voters and 201 among white voters (101 women and 100 men). Our focus on Black women led to our omission of Black men in order to provide a clear picture of Black women's needs and concerns and to shift government officials' disproportionate emphasis on white voters. The survey also included a readable sample of lower-income voters (under \$60,000) and women with children. Respondents were specifically targeted as likely to vote in the November 2022 midterm election (6 or more on a 10-point scale) and represent a diverse spread across political ideologies.



KEY FINDINGS: IMPACT & MOBILIZING ISSUES

Two-thirds of Black women voters in Michigan believe that their vote will have an impact at the federal, state, and community levels. This is on par with white voters.

Sixty-two percent of Black women voters said they believe their vote for federal officials has an impact on how the country is governed. The percentages increase when asked about state-specific leadership: 66 percent of Black women voters said they believe their votes for state officials and local officials have an impact on the way their state and communities, respectively, are governed.

Roughly the same percentages of white voters said they believe their votes have an impact on governance. Sixty-seven percent of white voters said they believe their votes for federal officials impact the way the country is governed, while 67 percent and 68 percent said they believe their votes have an impact on state and local governance, respectively.

Despite high confidence in their impact, most Black women voters do not see their government officials engaged within their communities, nor do they feel that government officials and candidates listen to and work on their concerns.

Overall, Black women voters did not feel that their government officials or political candidates at the local, state, or federal level are particularly visible in their communities, listen to their concerns, or work to address the issues most important to

these voters. In terms of visibility, only 33 percent said federal government officials show up, while 37 percent and 45 percent of Black women voters said state and local government officials, respectively, show up in their communities. As for engaging on their issues, 37 percent of Black women voters said they think government officials and political candidates work to address the issues most important to this constituency. Meanwhile, 37 percent and 38 percent said the same of state and local government officials and candidates, respectively.

Interestingly, Michigan's white voters report less confidence that government officials and political candidates at the local, state, or federal level are engaged within their communities and working on the issues most important to them. In terms of visibility, only 25 percent of white voters said federal government officials show up, while 27 percent and 36 percent of white voters said state and local government officials, respectively, show up in their communities. As for engaging on their issues, 26 percent of white voters said they think government officials and political candidates work to address the issues most important to this constituency. Meanwhile, 29 percent and 30 percent said the same of state and local government officials and candidates, respectively.

The core issues mobilizing Michigan's Black women voters are issues that are fundamental to everyone's ability to live, work, and play at their fullest potential. All respondents were asked to name the one issue that keeps them up at night by filling in a blank dialog box. A large sample of Black women voters said they were predominantly preoccupied with inflation, the cost of living, and abortion rights. Racism was also noted as a key issue among this group. Associated issues included the rising costs of gas, food, and housing, as well as the economy, jobs, and low wages.

Among white voters, a large sample also noted inflation, the cost of living, and abortion rights as the top three issues keeping them up at night on an unaided basis. However, the economy, finances, crime, and climate change were mentioned more often by this group than by Black women voters.

Michigan's unemployment rates remain above the national percentage. Among those leaving the labor force, [people of color, those previously working in low-paid jobs, and Michiganders without four-year college degrees are more likely to be unemployed](#) than other residents. And as the National Women's Law Center and GQR found earlier this year, [women are more likely to have been pushed out of the recession-impacted workforce entirely, especially in Michigan.](#)

Reproductive freedom, specifically access to basic care like abortion and contraception, is inextricably connected to economic stability. In fact, [the decision of whether and when to have children is one of the most important economic decisions most people will make.](#) Removing this freedom to choose would [disproportionately disadvantage Michigan's women of color](#) and those already struggling to make ends meet.

Women's educational attainment is highly correlated with earnings. But if women and birthing people cannot decide if and when to have children, it is [harder to finish high school or college](#), which has direct ramifications for women's lifetime economic security.

More generally, women's experience in the workforce is deeply impacted when people cannot access abortion care. Unplanned births make it harder for women to work, especially when children are young. Women already face barriers to full-time work, due in no small part to the pregnancy and

sex-based discrimination plaguing workplaces across industries as well as the lack of supports that enable caregivers to successfully meet both work and family responsibilities—like pregnancy accommodations, [paid family and medical leave](#), [high-quality, affordable child care](#), [predictable yet flexible schedules](#), and a [decent wage](#).

Michigan's Black women voters highly support the policies that protect all Michiganders, especially all women, families, young people, and LGBTQI+ community members. Black women voters in the state are more likely than Michigan white voters to support protections against harassment and discrimination, meeting the basic needs of individuals and families, safe learning environments for all students, better jobs and wages for all, and reproductive freedom.

Overall, Black women voters were significantly more likely to find these issues—protections from harassment and discrimination, meeting everyone's basic needs, building safe learning environments for all students, creating better jobs and wages for all working people, and reproductive freedom—extremely important (5 on a scale of 1 to 5) compared to white voters. The exception is increased law enforcement and policing, which ranked less important to Black women overall and comparatively high for white voters.

PROMOTING DIGNITY, SAFETY, AND HEALTH FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

- Nearly eight in 10 Black women voters (78 percent) rated meeting the basic needs of individuals and families as extremely important compared to more than seven in 10 (72 percent) of white voters.
- Black women are significantly more likely to rate measures that provide quality, affordable child care (87 percent) as important. In comparison, 67 percent of white voters said measures that provide quality, affordable child care are important.
- An overwhelming majority of Black women voters (85 percent) and white voters (70 percent) agreed that the government should fund child care workers to help increase access to quality child care services and supports. A similar majority of Black women voters (86 percent) and white voters (70 percent) said they support legislation to provide Michiganders with universal high-quality affordable child care.
- While issues like expanding access to low-cost quality health care and expanding gun laws to increase public safety were popular among Black women and white voters, they were even more popular among Black women voters. Eighty-six percent of Black women voters rated measures that expand access to low-cost, quality health care as important, and 82 percent rated gun laws to increase public safety as important. Of white voter respondents, 82 percent found expanding access to low-cost, quality health care extremely important, and 66 percent agreed that gun laws to increase public safety are important.
- Three-fourths (73 percent) of Black women voters agreed that the wealthy should be taxed to fund services like public infrastructure (roads and bridges), housing, education, and health care. White voters also expressed support for this idea, with 58 percent saying they agree that the wealthy should be taxed their fair share.

WORKPLACE JUSTICE: BETTER WAGES, BETTER BENEFITS, AND BETTER PROTECTIONS

- Black women voters strongly support expanding protections against harassment and discrimination for all. Nine in 10 Black women voters (91 percent) rated expanding protections against harassment and discrimination as important compared to 70 percent of white voters.
- Nearly nine in 10 (89 percent) Black women said creating better jobs and increasing wages for all is important compared to nearly seven in 10 (68 percent) white voters.
- Nearly nine in 10 Black women voters (88 percent) stated their support for a state-wide paid family and medical leave program for Michigan mothers and families (4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5), while over seven in 10 (71 percent) said this was extremely important (5 on a scale of 1 to 5). Older Black women and those with higher incomes had the highest support for this state-wide paid family and medical leave program targeted to mothers and families. There was no difference between women with children and women without children—87 percent of Black and white moms surveyed said they support this program, and 82 percent of total women respondents said they would support this program. Strong majorities of white voters also support a state-wide paid family and medical leave

program, though at a lower level of support than Black women. Two-thirds of all white voters (68 percent) said they support the creation of state-wide paid family and medical leave program.

- A strong majority of Black women voters said they agree or strongly agree (4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5) with workplace justice measures that enable all Michiganders to thrive in the workplace: provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers at work (81 percent); establish strong protections against workplace sex harassment and discrimination (83 percent); ensure equal pay and establish pay transparency measures for employers to practice with employees and applicants (83 percent); enact fair scheduling practices for workers with variable hours (72 percent); and raise the minimum wage to at least \$15/hour for all workers (82 percent). These policies were also popular for white voters, but the intensity of their agreement was slightly lower than that of Black women voters: provide reasonable accommodation for pregnant workers in the workplace (80 percent); establish strong protections against workplace sex harassment and discrimination (75 percent); ensure equal pay and establish pay transparency measures for employers to practice with employees and applicants (80 percent); enact fair scheduling practices for workers with variable hours (64 percent); and raise the minimum wage to at least \$15/hour for all workers (64 percent).



REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

- Most Black women voters and white voters said it is important for government officials to establish the right to reproductive freedom to choose if, when, and how an individual begins a family; however, Black women voters are much likelier than white voters to say this. Eighty-seven percent of Black women said that the freedom to choose, if, when, and how to start a family is important compared to 78 percent of white voters.
- Almost eight in 10 (77 percent) Black women voters believe that government officials should ensure that people have access to abortion care. In contrast, 59 percent of white voters said they believe that government officials should ensure people have access to abortion care.
- Seventy-five percent of Black women believe that government officials should protect access to legal abortion for all, regardless of personally held beliefs. Meanwhile, 62 percent of white voters said they believe that government officials should protect access to abortion for all, regardless of personally held beliefs.
- When asked about the Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, most voters, particularly women of color voters, agreed that because the Supreme Court took away the constitutional right to abortion it is more important than ever that elected officials create rights to abortion that stop abortion bans and guarantee that access to abortion does not depend on where a person lives. Seven in 10 (71 percent) Black women voters said they agree, and six in 10 (59 percent) white voters said they believe the same.

- Over eight in 10 (81 percent) Black women voters said they believe government officials should ensure access to pregnancy-related services and other supports. A strong majority (74 percent) of white voters said they believe the same.
- Seventy-six percent of Black women voters and 65 percent of white voters said they believe that government officials should ensure pregnancy-related services extend beyond health care to include stable housing, food access, paid leave, and child care for other children during health care visits.

PROVIDING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL STUDENTS TO LEARN

- Ninety-one percent of Black women voters and 82 percent of white voters rated ensuring students can learn in a safe and culturally competent environment as important.
- Most Black women voters agreed (74 percent), and more than half strongly agreed (55 percent), that schools should be allowed to teach students that racial and gender inequality can exist in society and institutions. While still popular, white voters were less likely than Black women voters to agree (52 percent) that schools should be allowed to teach that racial and gender inequality can exist in society and institutions.
- An even stronger majority of Black women voters (81 percent) and mom voters across race (81 percent) reported agreeing with policies that enable all students to learn in environments that are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. Though slightly less, a strong majority of white voters across genders (75 percent) also agree that schools should be safe learning environments free from discrimination, harassment, and violence.

KEY FINDINGS: VOTER PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Respondents were asked to rank their perceptions of how government officials at the local, state (governor and state legislators), and congressional levels prioritized certain gender justice policy issues as well as certain “dog whistle” issues that do not necessarily support communities and women of color. Respondents rated their perception of elected officials’ efforts to prioritize these issues from a scale of 1 (not at all a high priority) to 5 (extremely high priority).

Black women voters only moderately felt that the issues that were extremely important to them were being prioritized by government officials at the local, state legislature, and congressional levels.

These issues include: expanding protections against harassment and discrimination; meeting basic needs of individuals and families; establishing safe learning environments for all students; creating better jobs and wages for all; and protecting and expanding reproductive freedom.

Expanding protections to ensure that all people can live free from harassment and discrimination, especially women and people of color:

- Nearly half of Black women voters said they believe that their U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives (48 percent) and their state representatives in Lansing (48 percent) prioritize expanding protections against harassment and discrimination, while just over two in five (44 percent) believe the same of their county commissioners.
- White voters agree at similar levels, except for county commissions—white voters reported significantly less confidence in their county commissioners, prioritizing this issue at only 33 percent.

Ensuring everyone can meet their families’ basic needs, such as food and shelter, especially in the face of rising costs:

- The majority of Black women voters do not think their federal, state, and local elected officials are working to prioritize this issue: 36 percent said they think their U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives are working to prioritize this, 44 percent said this of their state representatives, and 45 percent said this of their county commissioners (45 percent).
- Black women voters are more likely than white voters in Michigan to assess their government officials as prioritizing ensuring everyone can meet their families’ basic needs: 36 percent of white voters said they believe their U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives are working to prioritize this, 35 percent said this of state representatives in Lansing, and 32 percent said county commissioners prioritize this issue.

Ensuring students can learn in a safe and culturally competent environment, free from violence and harassment:

- Just over half of Black women said they believe that members of Congress (53 percent) prioritize building safe and culturally competent learning environments for students, while just under three in five Black women voters said state representatives in Lansing (59 percent) and county commissioners (58 percent) prioritize this issue.
- In contrast, only 36 percent of white voters believe this of their members of Congress, 56 percent said this of state representatives in Lansing, and 44 percent of white voters said this of their county commissioners.

Creating better jobs and wages for all, especially working women and people of color:

- Only 40 percent believe that their U.S. senators and representatives prioritize creating better jobs and wages for all. Meanwhile, 47 percent of Black women voters said they believe state representatives are prioritizing this issue, and 45 percent said they believe their county commissioners are prioritizing better jobs and wages for all.
- White voters' confidence in other levels of office prioritizing better jobs and wages is on par with Black voters: 46 percent said they believe members of Congress are prioritizing this issue, while 47 percent said they believe in their state representatives in Lansing, and only 35 percent said they believe in their county commissioners' prioritization of better jobs and wages for all.

Ensuring everyone has the freedom to choose if, when, and how to start and raise a family in safety and with dignity:

- Six in 10 Black voters (60 percent) and white voters (56 percent) said they believe their state representatives in Lansing are prioritizing reproductive freedom for Michiganders.
- Forty-six percent of both Black women voters and white voters said they believe members of Congress are prioritizing reproductive freedom.
- Meanwhile, county commissioners are ranked at the bottom—46 percent of Black women voters and only 35 percent of white voters said they believe that this group of government officials are prioritizing this issue.

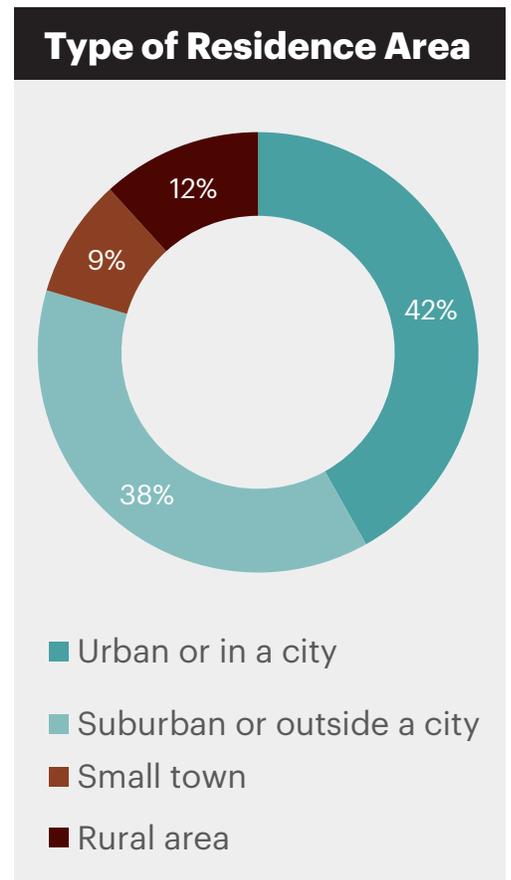
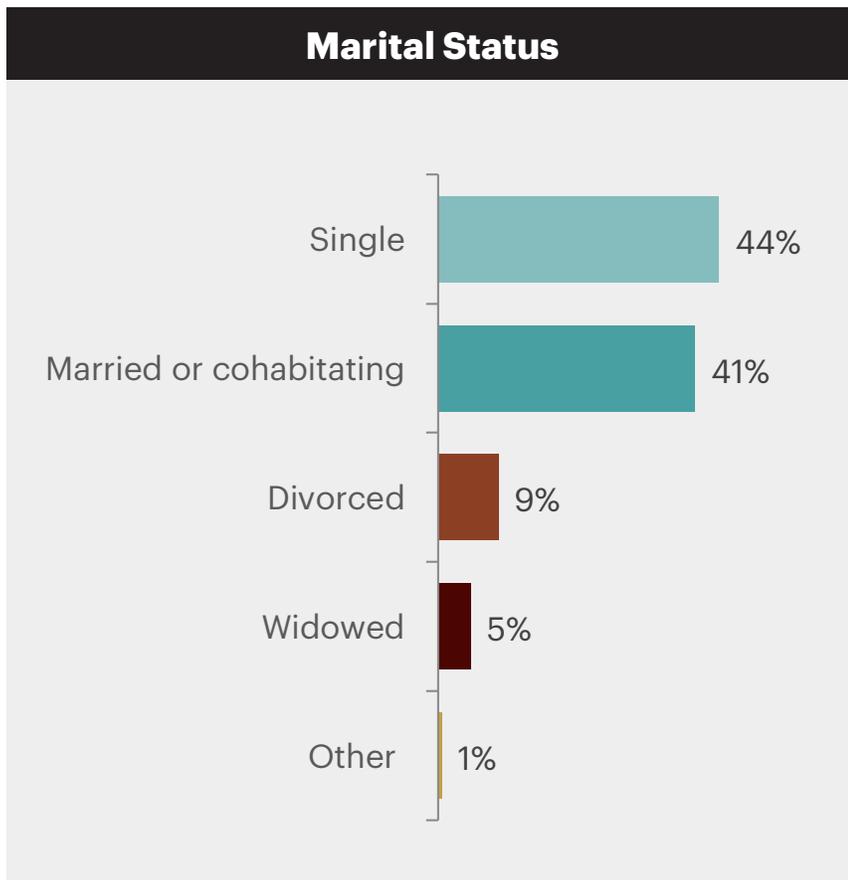
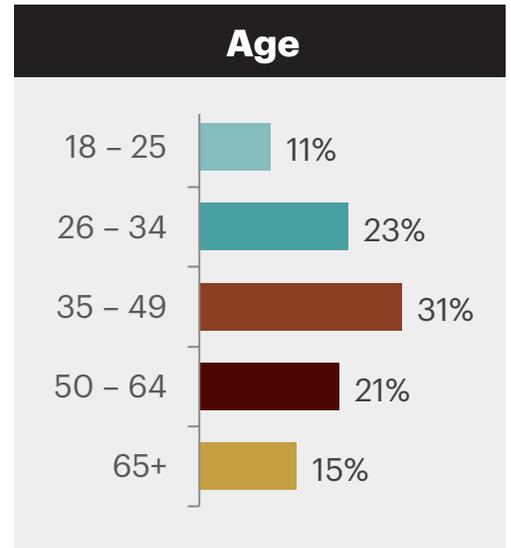
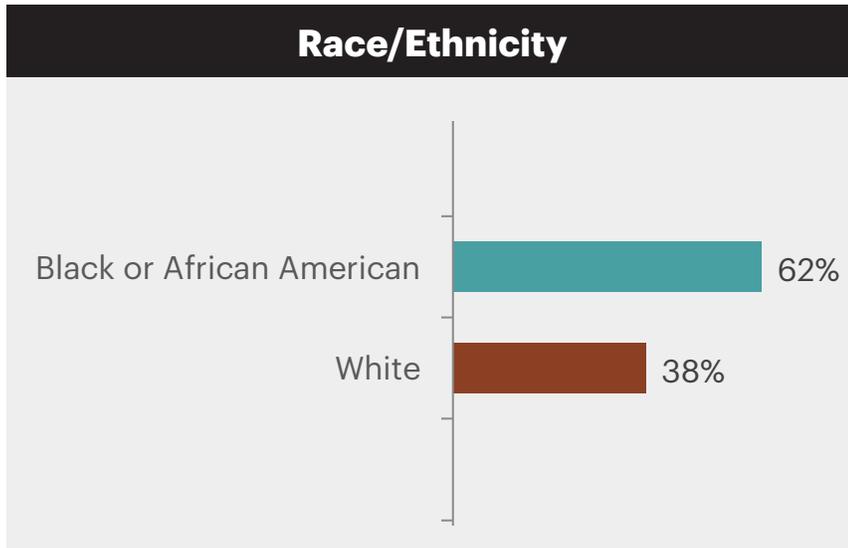
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors want to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the following people, without whom this project would not have been possible: Elishia “Jayye” Johnson, Tyler Hayes, Nkenge Browner, Aisha Wells, Shanayl Bennett, Kalisha Dessources Figures, Erin Weber, Sofia Hay, Uma Iyer, Hilary Woodward, Maria Patrick, Lark Lewis, Melissa Boteach, Whitney Pesek, Karen Schulman, Amy Matsui, Sarah Hassmer, Kathryn Menefee, Gretchen Borchelt, Heather Shumaker, Dorianne Mason, Leila Abolfazli, Mara Gandal-Powers, Emily Martin, Sabrina Bernadel, Shiwali Patel, Bayliss Fiddiman, Julie Vogtman, Andrea Johnson, Gaylynn Burroughs, Jasmine Tucker, Shengwei Sun, Marie Cole, Sarah Javid, and Brooke LePage.

We also thank Brenda Lee and Michele Cordoba of Vision Strategy and Insights and Andres de la Roche of ADELAROCHE DESIGNS.

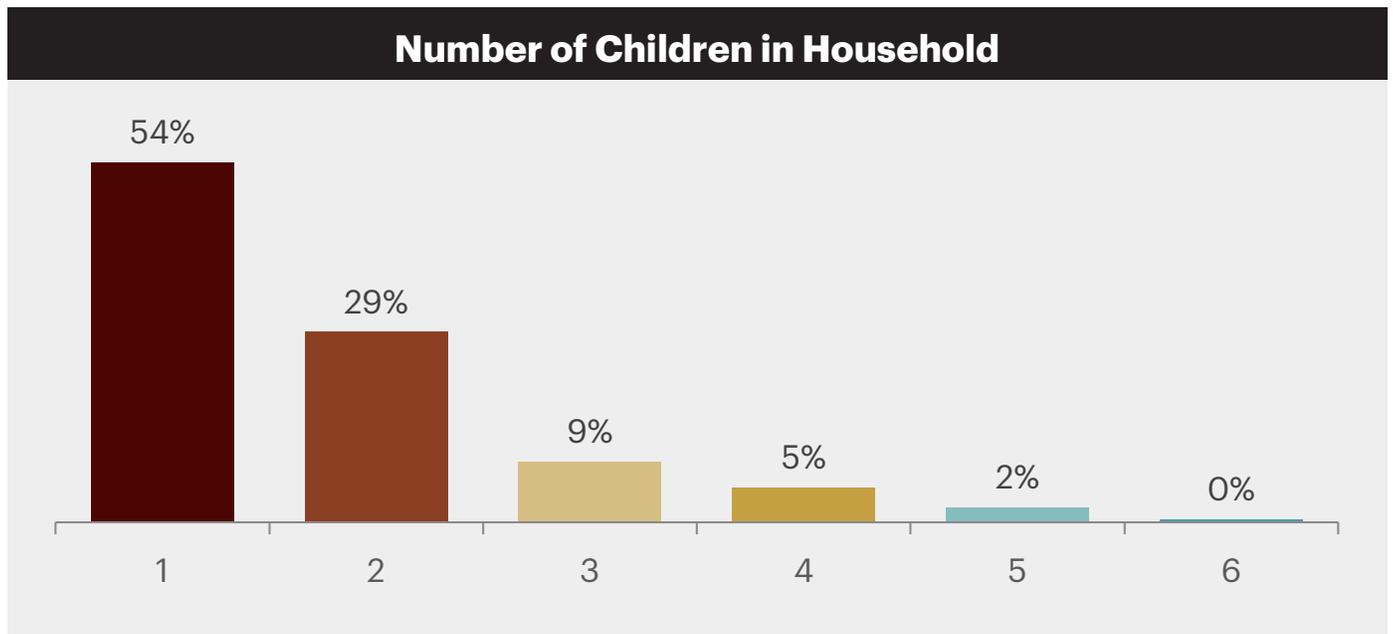
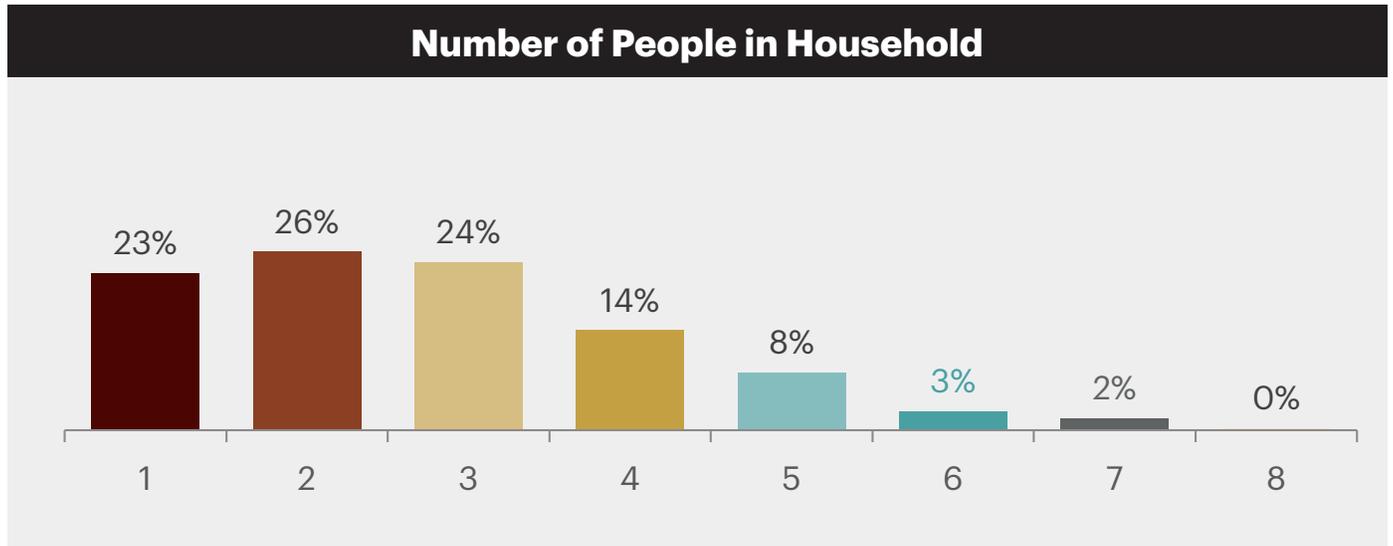
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Total Sample = 528



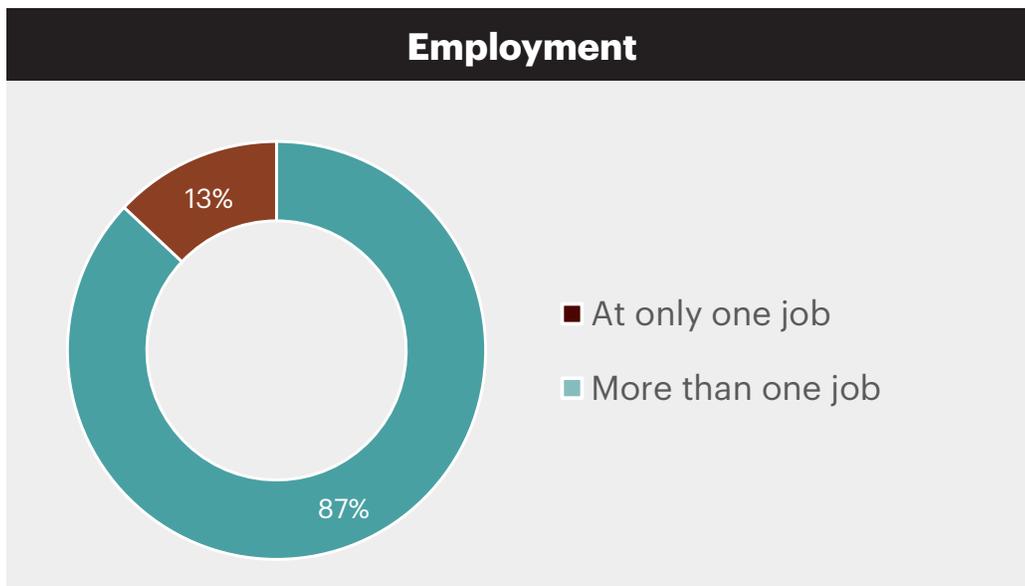
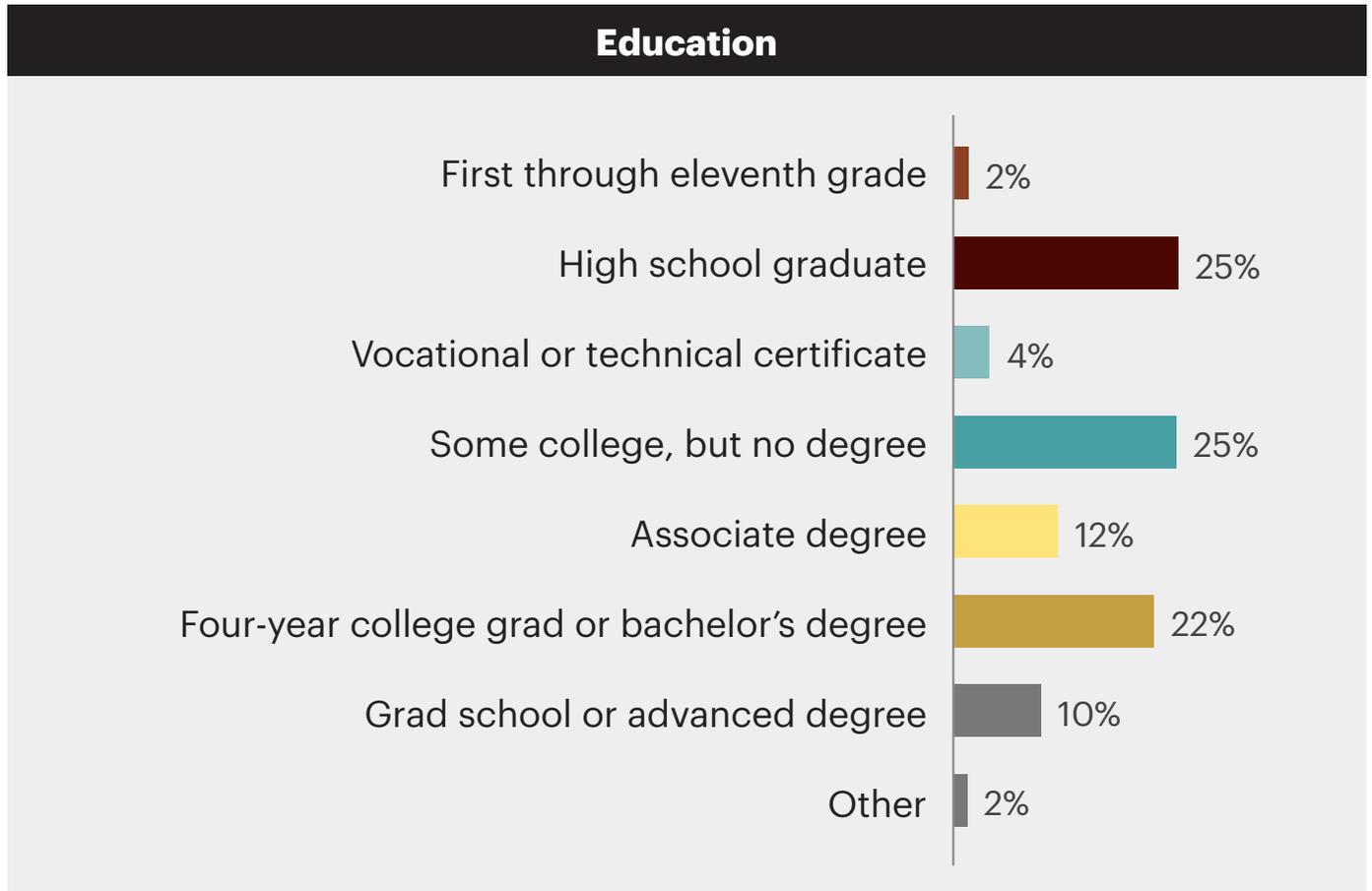
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Total Sample = 528



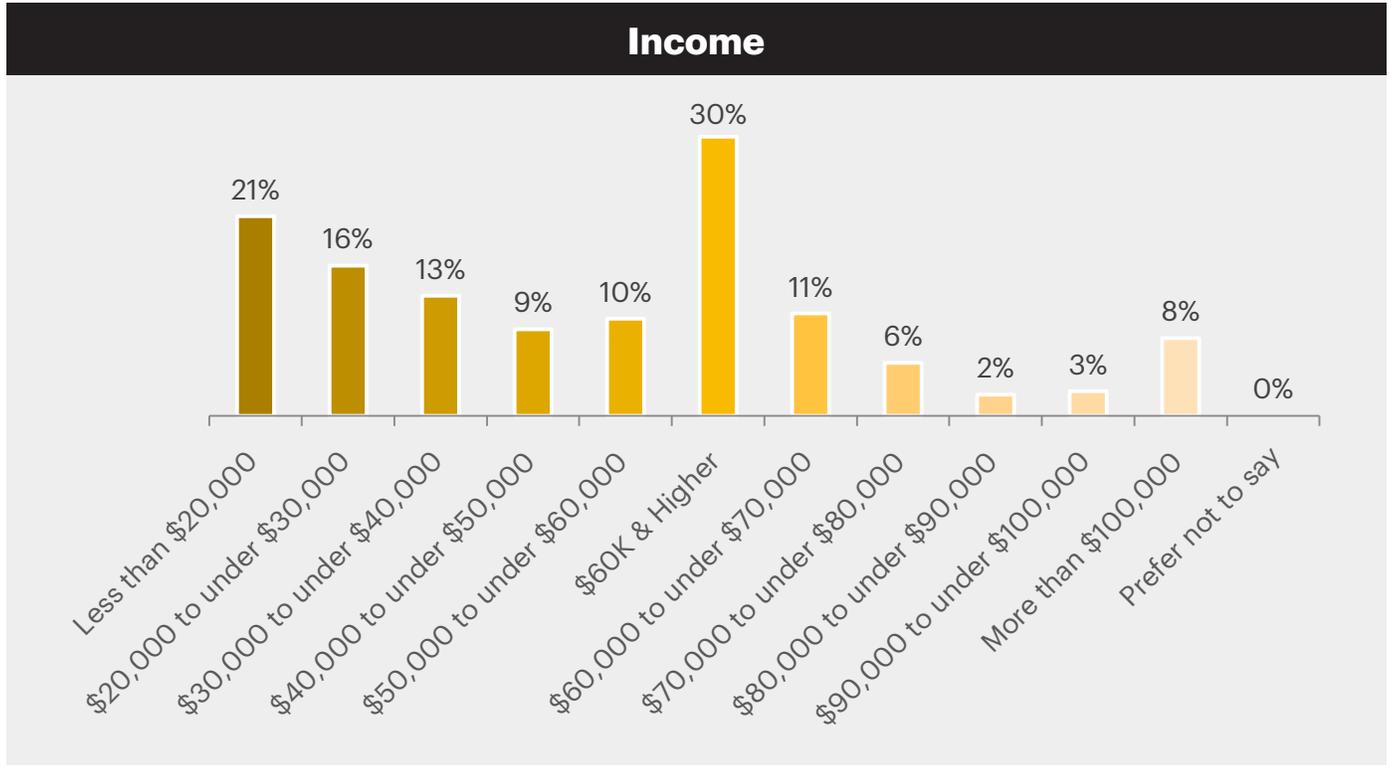
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Total Sample = 528



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Total Sample = 528



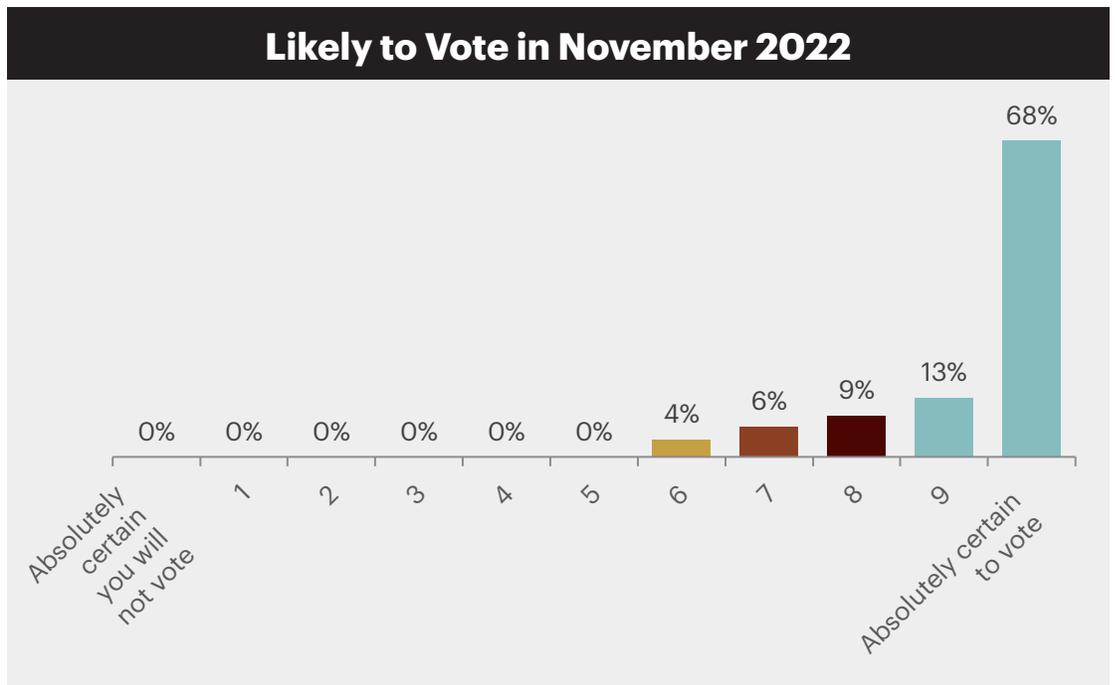
Registered Voter



Yes
100%

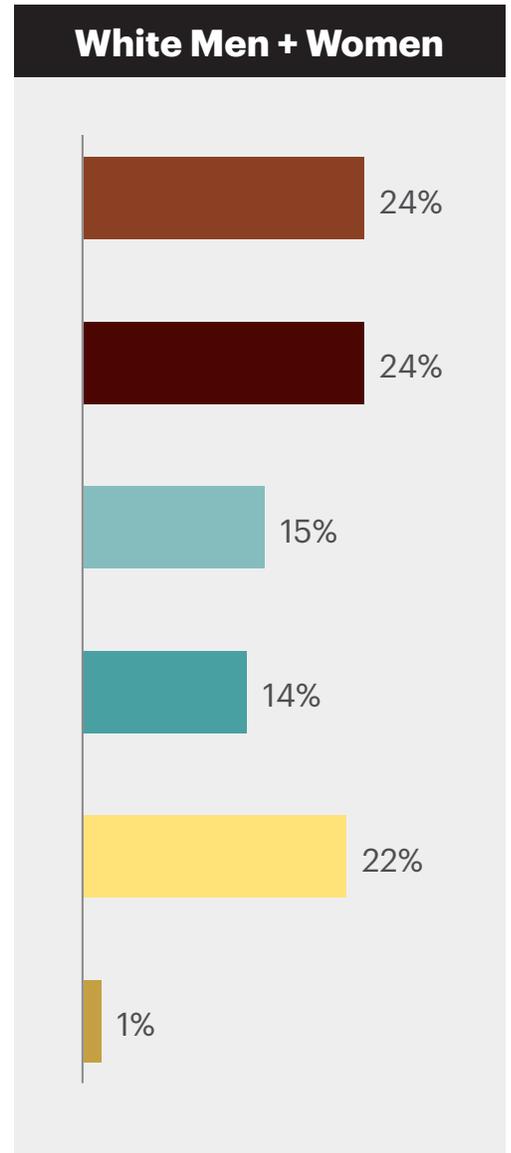
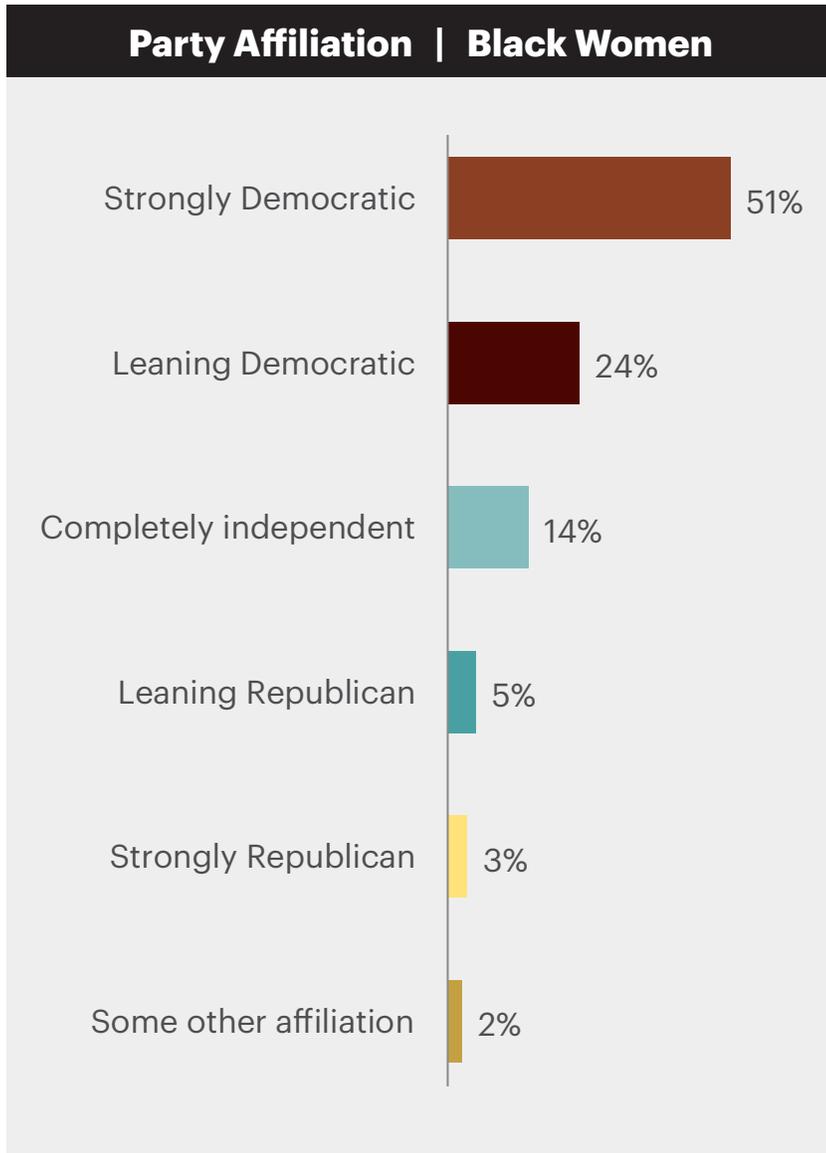


No
0%



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Total Sample = 528



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Total Sample = 528

