



Date: November 9, 2018

To: Interest parties

From: Stan Greenberg, Greenberg Research
Nancy Zdunkewicz, Democracy Corps
Page Gardner, Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

The Rising American Electorate & White Working Class Strike Back

The Democrats had a very big election on Tuesday, with a 7-point national congressional margin that allowed them to pick up 35 House seats, to elect a record-breaking 100 women to the House, and to flip six statehouses and seven governors' mansions. Democrats now occupy nearly half of the 50 governors' mansions, including winning all of the races in the Blue Wall states that allowed Donald Trump to win the Electoral College. In winning control of the House, Democrats shifted the congressional margin [10 points on average from 2016 and 21 points in the seats that flipped](#) to the Democrats.

Democrats also pushed turnout to a stunning [48.1 percent](#) and growing, compared to just 36.7 in 2014. This is thanks to a combination of special candidates, a surge in activism and fundraising catalyzed by the Women's March and Donald Trump's election, and the incredible efforts to register and turnout voters by the *Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund* and the *Voter Participation Center*.

On behalf of *Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund, Democracy Corps* has conducted an 'Election Night' survey of 1,250 registered voters and 2018 voters nationally, including of 900 voters in 15 battleground states in 2018 and 2020, in order to understand the shifts that changed the landscape and balance of power in the country.¹ Below are the key elements that came together to produce major gains for Democrats, despite apportioned districts rigged to be unassailable and election laws engineered to suppress minority votes.

1. The anti-Trump backlash. The shift towards the Democrats was produced in the first instance by an intense anti-Trump reaction among women, particularly those in the Rising American Electorate (minorities, millennials and unmarried women) and in the suburbs, as the President nationalized the election around himself. Fully 46 percent of the country strongly disapproved of Trump – compared to only 34 percent who strongly approved. That intense negative

¹ An election phone poll of 1,650 registered voters, including 900 in a 15-state battleground, was conducted November 4-7, 2018 from a voter-file sample. 1125 nationally and 800 in the presidential 15-state battleground were voters in 2018. Two-thirds of respondents were contacted on cell phones in order to accurately reflect the American electorate. Vote share for key demographics were weighted to the Catalist voter study and votes within key demos were weighted to the Edison Exit poll. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 2.77 and +/- 3.27 in the 15-state presidential battleground at a 95% confidence interval.

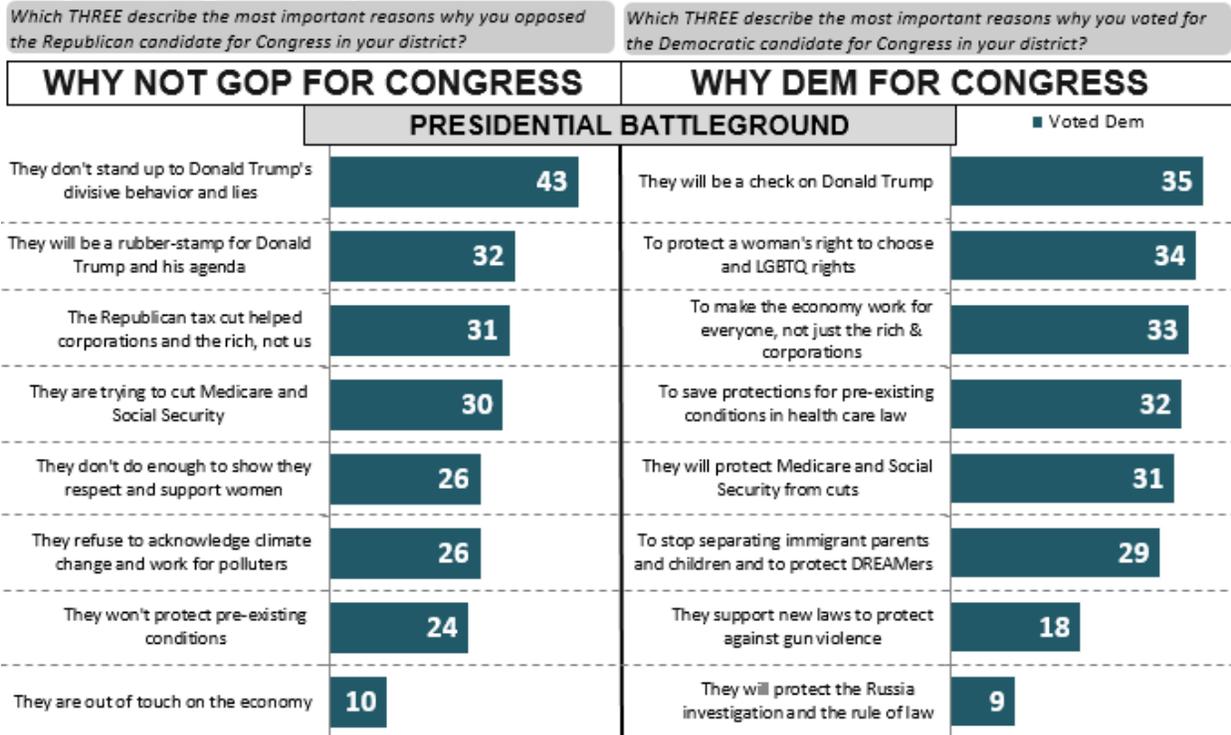
reaction reached 84 percent with African American women, 64 percent with millennial women, and 59 percent with unmarried women and college women.

President Trump’s personalization and nationalization of the election succeeded in raising the stakes with white working class men, two-thirds of whom said this election was much more important than prior midterms, but it also succeed in producing a like level of urgency with African Americans, Hispanics, college women, and unmarried women.

The pro- and anti-Trump sentiment was so strong that three-quarters of those voting in the House and 90 percent of Senate voters never considered voting for another candidate.

The top reason House voters gave to vote *against* the Republican and *for* a Democrat across the presidential battleground was to have leaders who will be a check on President Trump. That was also the strongest reason to vote for a Democrat for Senate in those contested states.

Why voted against Republicans for Congress

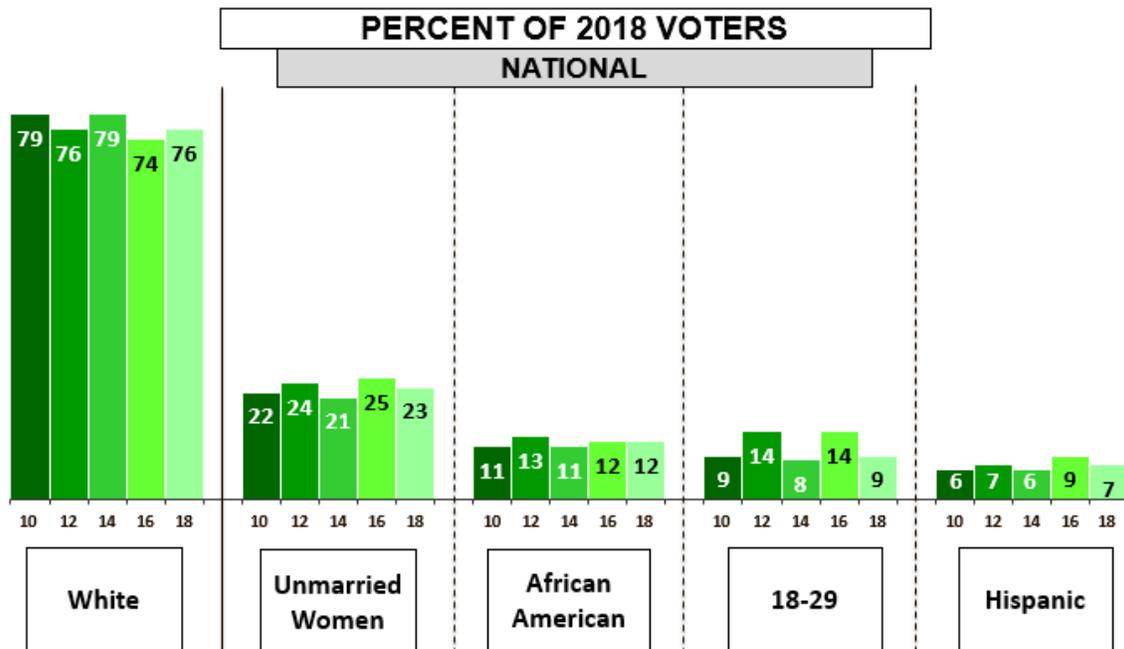
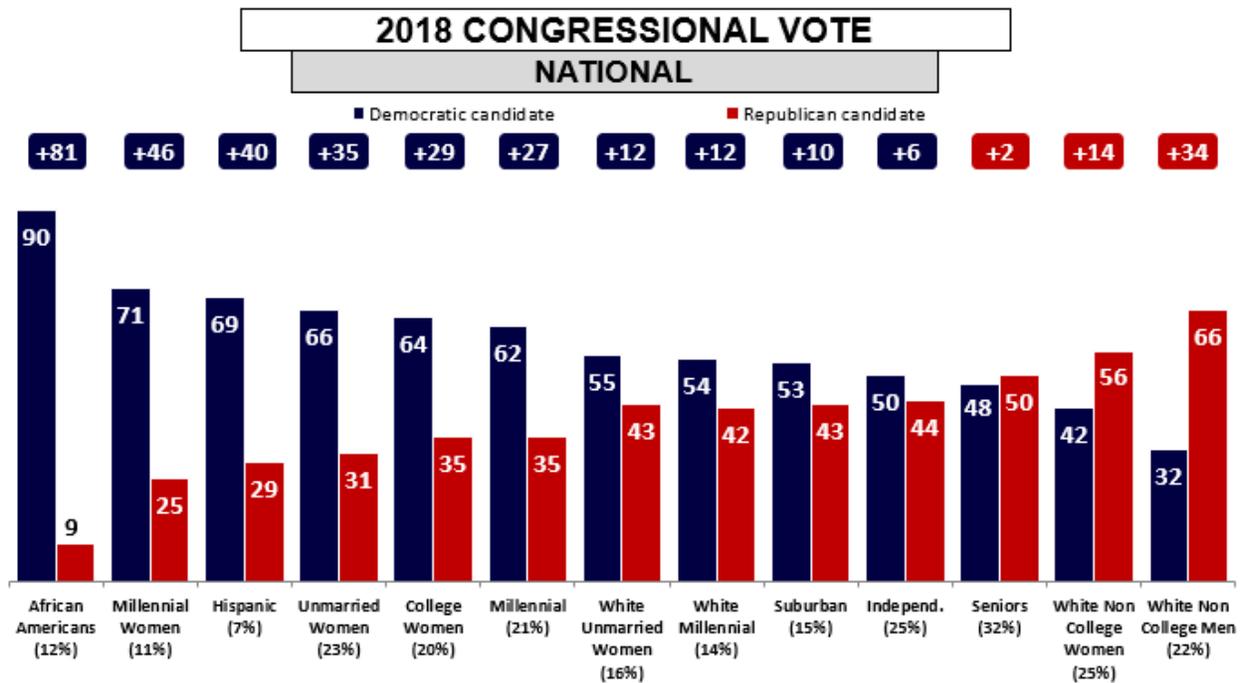


2. The shift across all types of women. The Democrats’ gains in the second place were produced by every type of woman — from white millennial women (+18), white working class women and white college women (+13 points), and white unmarried women (+10 points). The media and pundits put a spotlight on the white college educated women as [“the fuel for this Democratic wave,”](#) but as you can see, there are a lot of women responsible for casting an anti-Trump vote and creating this check.

3. The promise of the Rising American Electorate realized. The Rising American Electorate of African Americans, Hispanics, unmarried women, and millennials who stepped up in every possible way, from their impressive turn out to their unprecedented midterm vote for Democrats. African Americans continued to play their big off-year role with their near universal support for Democrats. Seven-in-ten millennial women and Hispanic voters supported Democrats, putting them at the center of the base with the two-thirds of unmarried women who supported Democrats. African Americans, unmarried women, millennials, and Hispanic voters also delivered their highest midterm vote share ever, thanks in no small part to the work of *WVWVAF* and the *Voter Participation Center*.

How the House vote breaks down

Now let me ask you about the election for Congress. Did you vote for (ROTATE) the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?

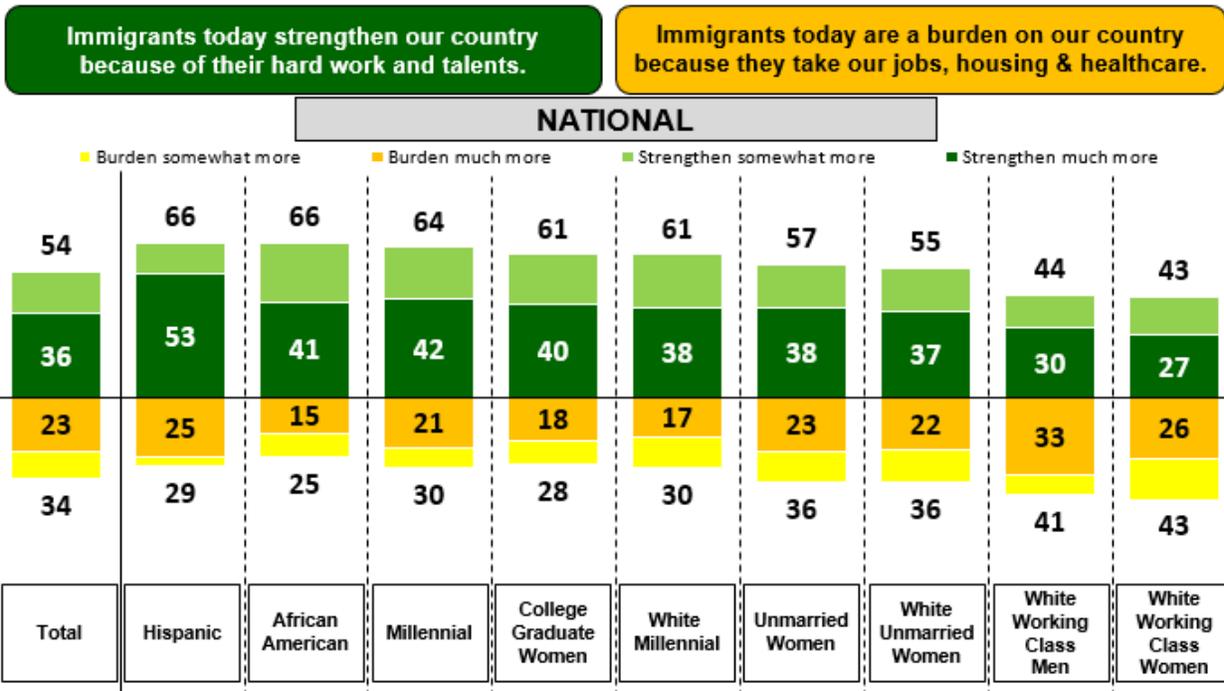


4. A multicultural America pushed back on immigration & diversity. The shift to the Democrats got a further push when President Trump made immigration issue #1 and lost. Democratic candidates wore their diversity on their sleeves, nominated African American candidates for governor in Georgia and Florida, opposed Trump’s border policies, family separation and attacks on the caravan, and supported legalizing DREAMers. Trump and Republicans across the country alleged Democrats supported open borders and often used racially charged terms to attack the historically diverse slate of Democratic challengers. Trump and Republicans closed the campaign by demonizing immigrants and successfully made that the top reason to vote *against* Democrats in 2018.

But a stunning 54 percent of those who voted in the mid-terms said immigrants “strengthen our country” — 20 points more than the number who say they are “a burden.” The level of support for immigration was pushed up by Trump playing the immigration card and the intense reaction in Hispanics, African Americans, millennial, and college women. That was also true in the suburbs, while the white working class was split. After this Trump-led, rancorous debate, only one-third of the country sided with the president’s point of view.

2018 voters believe immigrants strengthen the country, not a burden

Which one of the following statements comes closer to your point of view, even if neither is exactly right?



5. Powerful attacks on the GOP tax cut for the rich & assault on pre-existing conditions.

The Democrats also shifted the vote because they attacked the Republican tax cut for corporations and the rich that threatens Medicare and Social Security, demanded an economy that worked for all, and vowed to protect health care for those with pre-existing conditions. Democratic candidates’ support for protections for pre-existing conditions was the second most cited reason to vote Democratic in the Senate contests, after providing a check on Trump. That pledge

— combined with the focus on the tax cuts and who it enriched, and on the threat to Medicare and Medicaid — ended up as a powerful economic and populist argument that moved voters to the Democrats.

6. The demoralization and defection of factions of the GOP. Democratic candidates got a further edge from 14 percent of the moderate GOP and 27 percent of *The Trump-GOP Project's* “persuadable GOP” targets who voted in 2018. We do not yet know how many more in this fractious GOP might have chosen to stay home.² That might have played a role outside the South and in the suburbs where these GOP types are more likely to live.

President Trump was able to consolidate other parts of the GOP base, particularly the secular conservatives who are strong Republican partisans and conservative, just not Trumpian. Again, we need to determine whether they turned out to vote at the same level as the Tea Party and Evangelical GOP, the Trump loyalists.

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This post-election study shows that Democrats were able to create a powerful brew that produced major gains in the House and states, despite apportioned districts rigged to be unassailable and election laws engineered to suppress minority votes. These victories were powered by shifts in vote and turnout among women and the diverse Rising American Electorate fulfilling their potential. Outside of the RAE, the Democrats have permanently changed their base and the voters open to them, particularly when Donald Trump leads an anti-immigrant Republican Party.

But to break down the walls that Trump has built up, Democrats need to run stronger in the rural areas with the white working class that President Trump won in a landslide. Democrats made significant gains in rural America and with the white working class this year, but still lost them by large margins. That task is for another day.

² The persuadable GOP target group excludes GOP who are likely conservatives and Evangelical or Catholic, as well as strong Republicans or Democrats