

Mobilizing Voters of Color around the Freedom to Vote

September 14, 2022
SEIU / HIT Strategies / JG Insights



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Background



Goals of this research

1

Given the high priority of racial discrimination as an issue for voters of color, identify the most mobilizing way to connect voter suppression to racial discrimination.

2

Understand the messaging frame that best mobilizes our voter of color base without generating backlash.

3

Identify whether different messages should be used for different demographic or attitudinal subgroups.

Key Findings

1

Measuring concern around racial discrimination is a useful way to segment voters of color.

2

Racial justice and race neutral voters of color differ in their attitudes, priorities, and response to messaging.

3

For racial justice voters of color, we can use more explicitly race-forward messaging.

4

For race neutral voters and everyone else, existing messaging best practices continue to perform best.

5

Across the board, we need to counter high cynicism by highlighting our successes and moving beyond voting as the sole call to action.

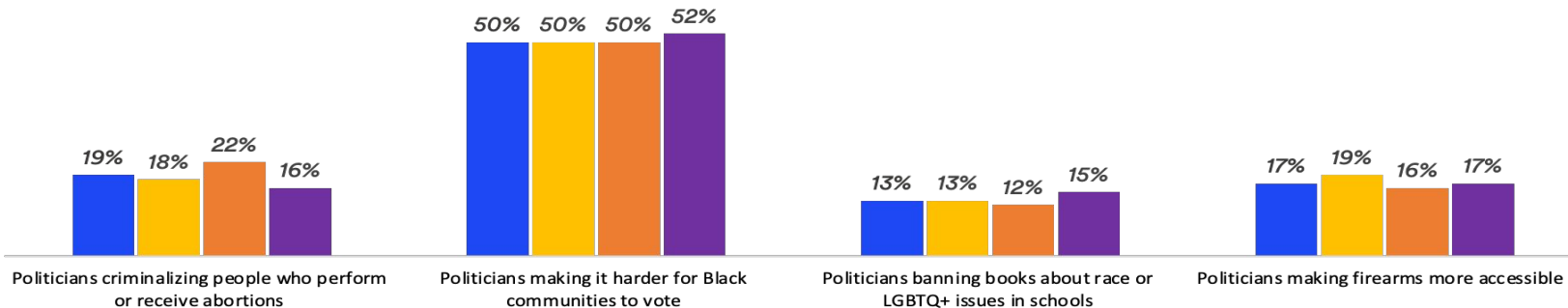
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Using this messaging guidance, we can move racial justice voters on vote power and willingness to wait more than an hour to vote and move race neutral voters on vote power.

The current landscape around democracy

1. The January 6th committee has brought to light the dire threats to democracy at the hands of Republicans.
2. Insurrectionist candidates are running for office across America.
3. Trump is back on the ballot.
4. Millions of people have voted in their primary elections.

Q18. Which of the following issues would MOST motivate you to vote in November?



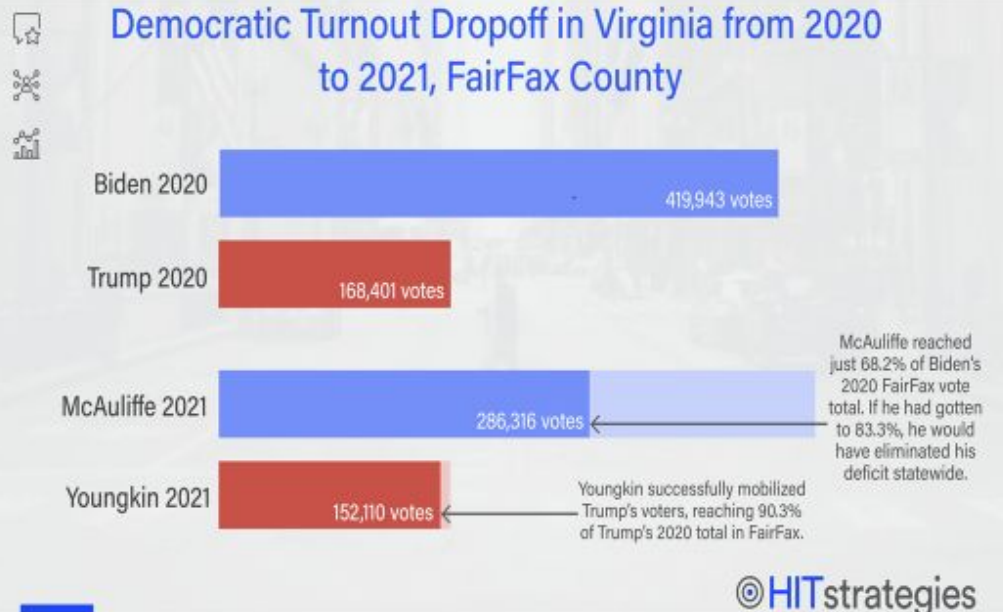
Democratic Base is Eroding

- The 2021 VA electorate was 12% whiter and 7% older. The erosion of **younger and POC voters** explains Dem defeat in a state that Dems had just won by 10 points one year ago

- Young and POC voters** are also the most likely to drop off in midterm elections.

- Young and POC voters** #1 issue = Racism

- Decline in approval ratings of Biden** among POC and Young people: Black **-18%**, Hispanic **-16%**, Youth **-14%** decrease in Biden support from July to September



Sources: <https://www.politico.com/2020-election/results/virginia/>
<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/index.html>
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/09/23/views-of-biden-and-congressional-leaders/>

Recap: Phase 1 + 2 Takeaways

Phase 1: Battleground state survey n2800 voters of color, Oct 18 - Nov 8, 2021

Phase 2: Battleground state survey n2800 voters of color, Oct 18 - Nov 8, 2021

1

Voters of color are not interested in voting or democracy for its own sake. We need to increase salience by linking to other top issues.

2

Voters of color don't equate voter suppression with racism without further explanation.

3

Following the 2020 election, voting is perceived to be getting easier for voters of color.

4

The opposition narrative around voter fraud has also permeated into communities of color.

Phase 3 Methodology

Round One Universe

People of color
Nationwide

Sample Size

Total N =3,535

Methodology

Rapid Message Test conducted by Grow Progress on behalf of HIT, SEIU, and JGI. n3535 nonwhite adults, fielded from June 30th – July 7th, 2022. The margin of error is +/- 1%, with the margin higher among subgroups.

Round Two Universe

Voters of color
Likely voters

Sample Size

Total N =1000
Georgia = 333
Michigan = 333
Arizona = 333

Methodology

Proprietary survey conducted by HIT Strategies on behalf of SEIU and JGI. n1000 nonwhite likely voters, conducted via phone (landline-cell) and text to web, fielded from July 20th – July 29th, 2022. The margin of error is +/- 3.1%, with the margin higher among subgroups.

Round Three Universe

Democratic Voters of color
Nationwide

Sample Size

Total N =2305

Methodology

Rapid Message Test conducted by Grow Progress on behalf of HIT, SEIU, and JGI. n2305 nonwhite Democratic voters, fielded from August 12th – August 12th, 2022. The margin of error is +/- 1.2 %, with the margin higher among subgroups.

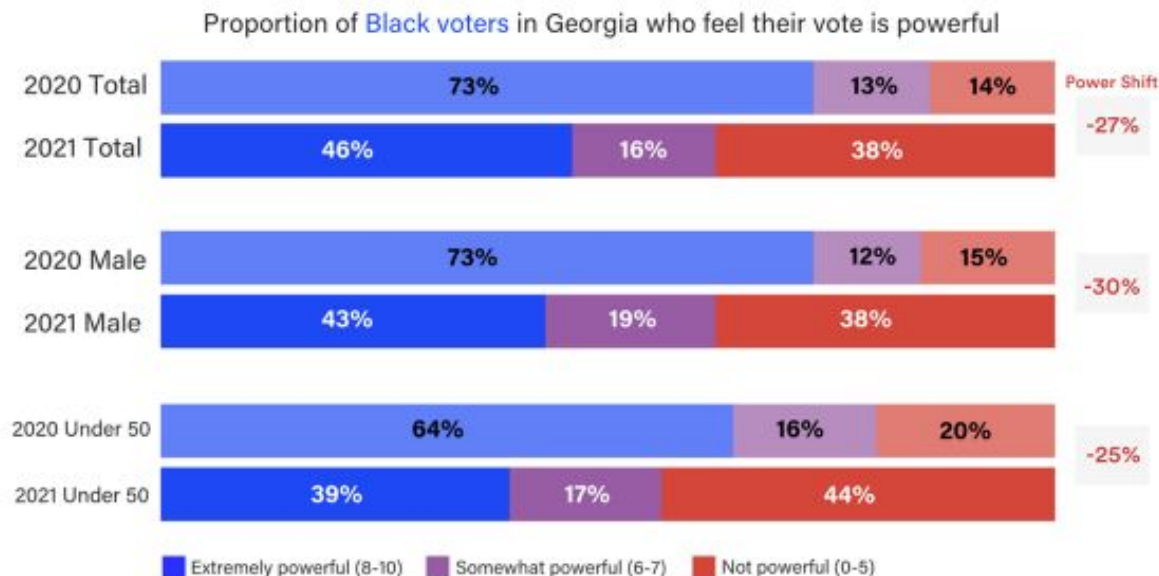
VOC more likely to say their community has power to make change over their own vote

Power of your vote vs. power of your community to make change on issues that are important to you



Since 2020, perception of vote power has eroded amongst voters of color

- Perceptions of Black political power directly correlate with political participation. The less powerful Black voters feel, the less likely they are to vote.
- Perceptions of power are lowest among Black men and Black adults under 50 years old—the two groups most likely to drop off in midterm elections.



Majority of voters only willing to wait up to an hour to cast their ballot

How long would you be willing to wait in line to cast your ballot in the upcoming November elections?

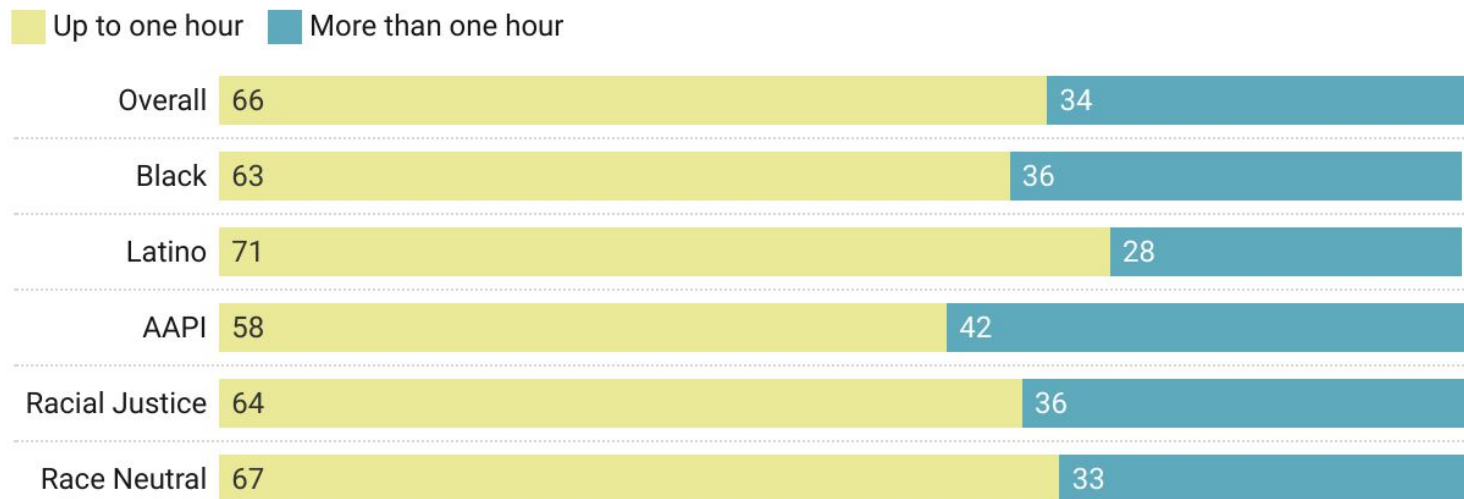


Chart: JG Insights • Source: HIT survey AZ/GA/MI, n1000 likely voters of color, July 20-29, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper



Reminder: Messaging Best Practices



Lead with a shared value → FREEDOM



What values matter most to you as an American?

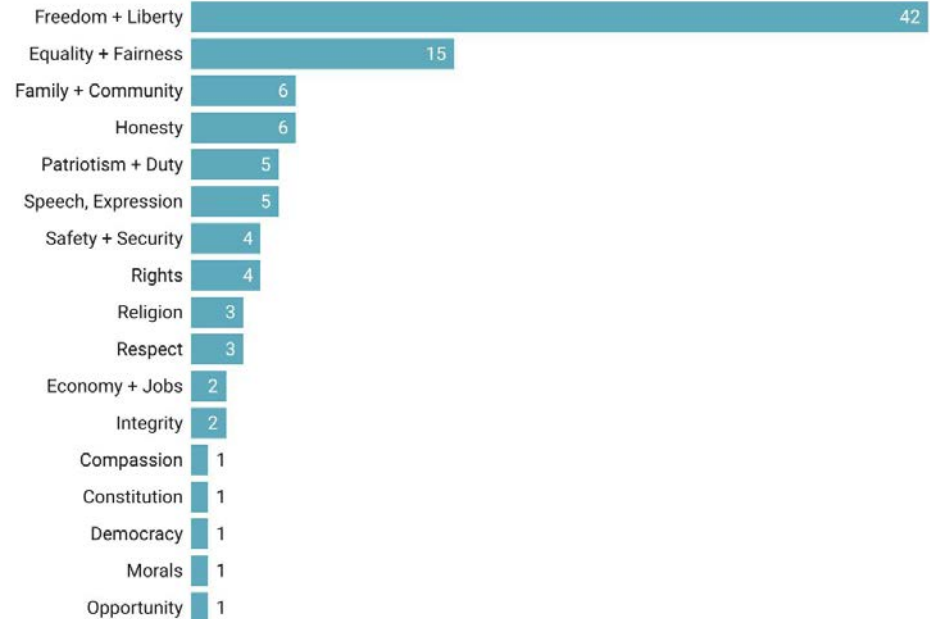
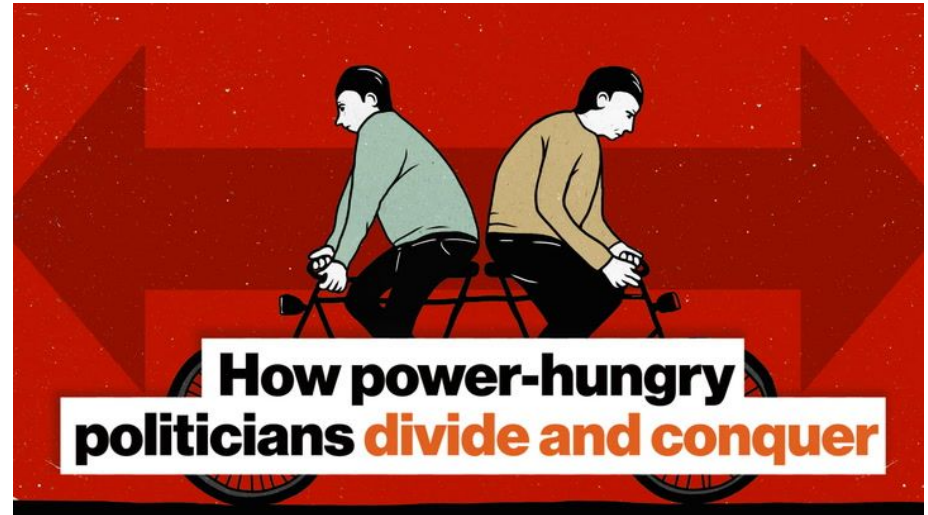


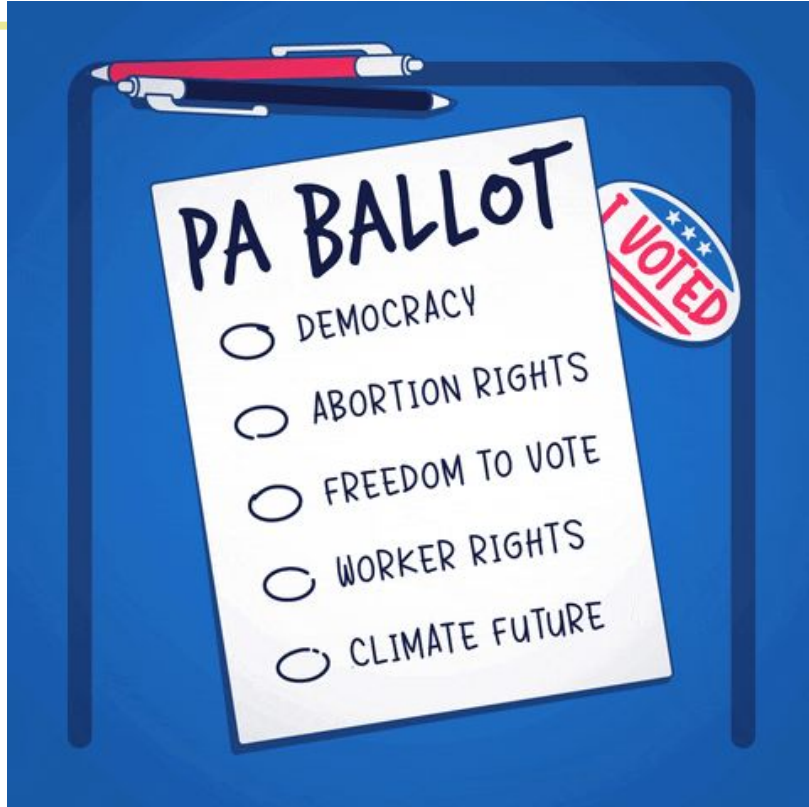
Chart: JG Insights • Source: Avalanche/Research Collab/ASO national survey, n10011, July 13-19, 2021 • Created with Datawrapper

Name the villains and their intentions



Politicians silencing the voices of certain communities so they can continue to rule for the wealthy few

Link to other top of mind issues and have a positive vision of the tangible outcomes



AVOID

1. **Do not repeat** the opposition!!
 - Negation furthers their narrative.
2. **Avoid passive construction** of harms.
 - Name the agent.
3. **Avoid generalizing** the villain.
 - For example, say ‘some politicians’



**US Democracy Under
Coordinated Attack**

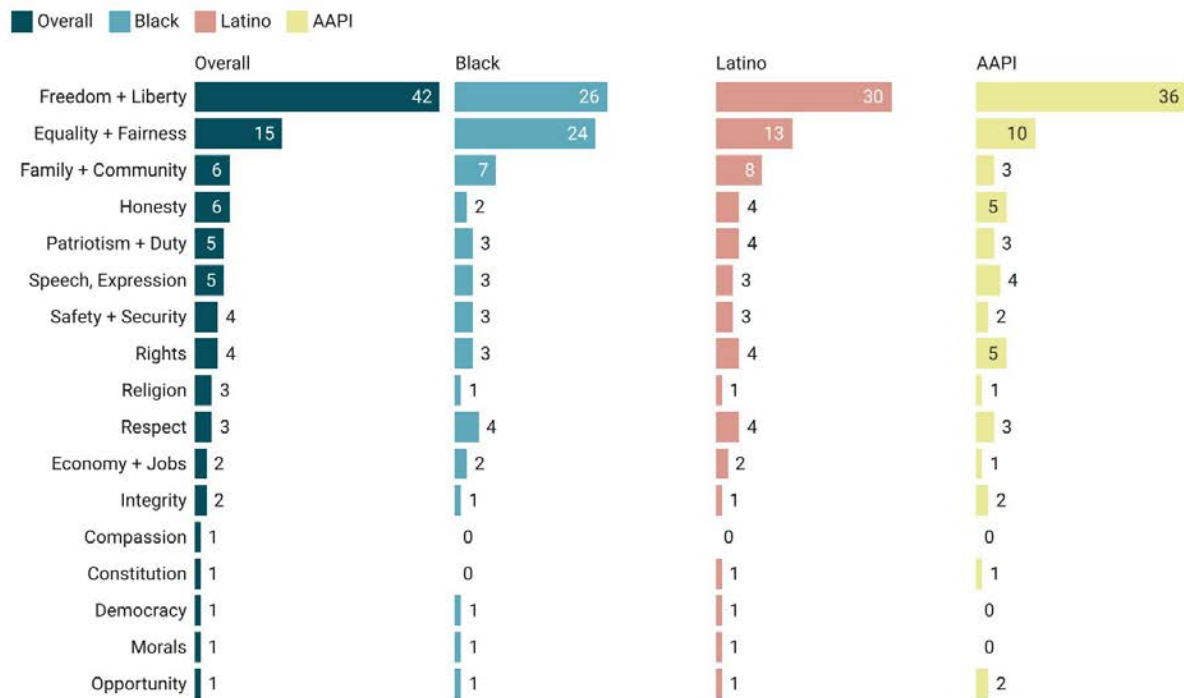


Additional Strategies for Voters of Color



Center equality in addition to freedom, especially for Black voters

What values matter most to you as an American?



Demonstrate the power and success of our votes and action.

Voting in the upcoming 2022 midterm elections is how I have power to make change on the issues that are important to my everyday life.

Baseline with placebo



Race explicit



Class/ Corps



Issue Bridge



Community Power



Legacy / Today

Highlights the successes of our votes in 2020:

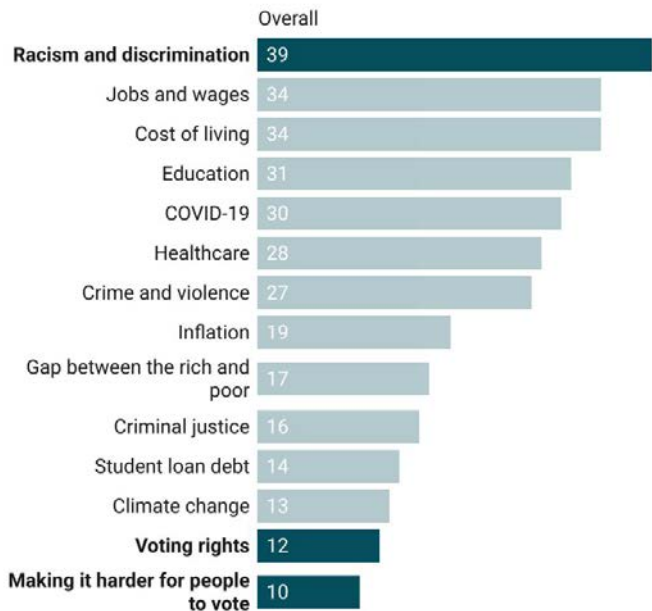
"We showed the country what our collective power could achieve: COVID vaccines for millions, 3 million kids out of poverty, stimulus checks, new gun safety measures, and new leadership."

Names the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement:

"But just like our ancestors rose up in the Civil Rights Movement, we are carrying on that legacy and rising up now..."

We need to paint a picture of voter suppression in order to increase salience

Top issue concerns for voters of color



“Yeah. I don't think that my personal rights are at threat....For me personally, I registered to vote. I'm a born here citizen, so I don't feel like that is a threat for me.”

- Latino Voter, Georgia

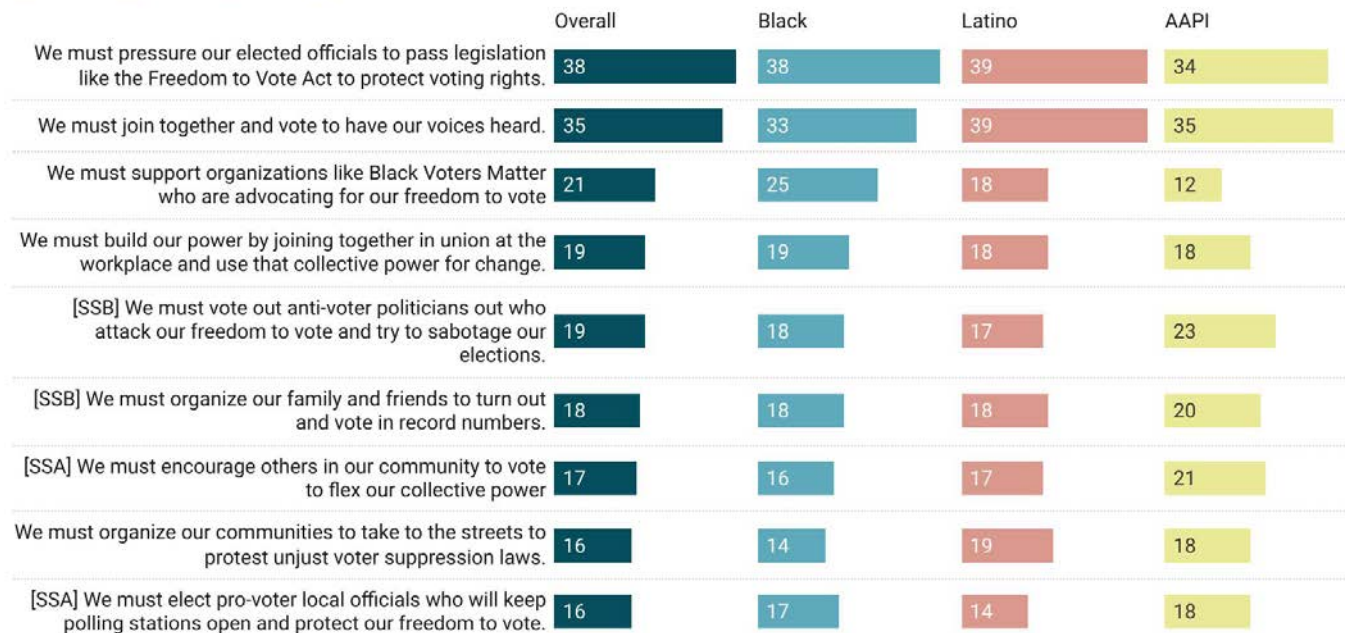
Use compelling descriptive examples of voter suppression tactics


| % Extremely concerning | Overall | Black | Latino | AAPI |
|--|---------|-------|------------|------|
| Closing polling locations so there are less opportunities for voters to cast their ballot. | 73% | 73% | 74% | 68% |
| Making it illegal to pass out water to those waiting in line to vote. | 68% | 69% | 71% | 61% |
| Passing a law that allows voting officials to remove anyone from the voting rolls if they suspect them of not being a citizen. | 64% | 63% | 66% | 57% |
| Denying language translation services at voting locations. | 63% | 62% | 66% | 55% |

Go beyond voting as the call to action


Calls to action to fight back against attacks on our freedom to vote

Overall Black Latino AAPI





Voters of Color Are Not *A* Monolith



Segmenting Voters by Concerns about Racial Discrimination

56%

RACIAL JUSTICE VOTERS

Racism is a big problem in their lives
+
Racism is a big problem in their communities
+
Experienced a lot of racism personally

25%

RACE NEUTRAL VOTERS

Racism is not a big problem in their lives
OR
Racism not a problem in their communities
+
Do not experience racism personally

19%

OTHER

Refused or answered “don’t know” on racism in their community and experience with racism

Segmenting: Attitudes

56% RACIAL JUSTICE VOTERS

Racism is a big problem in their lives
+
Racism is a big problem in their communities
+
Experienced a lot of racism personally

MOBILIZATION AUDIENCE

Think racism is hurting their community

See power as equity/justice/fairness

See voter suppression as way to limit power of people of color

Think voter suppression is hurting their community

25% RACE NEUTRAL VOTERS

Racism is not a big problem in their lives
OR
Racism not a problem in their communities
+
Do not experience racism personally

PERSUASION AUDIENCE

Think racism only impacts if you let it

See power as economic prosperity

See voter suppression as way for elites to protect their power

Think voter suppression only hurts if you let it

19% OTHER

Refused or answered “don’t know” on racism in their community and experience with racism

OTHER AUDIENCE

Think racism only impacts if you let it

See power as economic prosperity

See voter suppression as way for elites to protect their power

Think voter suppression only hurts if you let it

Segmenting: Demos

56% RACIAL JUSTICE VOTERS

Racism is a big problem in their lives
+
Racism is a big problem in their communities
+
Experienced a lot of racism personally

| | |
|-----|--------------------|
| 60% | of Black voters |
| 60% | of 18-49-year-olds |
| 61% | of college grads |
| 61% | of women |
| 59% | of Latino women |
| 56% | of AAPI voters |
| 53% | of Latino voters |

25% RACE NEUTRAL VOTERS

Racism is not a big problem in their lives
OR
Racism not a problem in their communities
+
Do not experience racism personally

| | |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| 29% | of Latino voters |
| 34% | of Latino men |
| 37% | of first-generation immigrants |
| 32% | of 50+ |
| 39% | of conservatives |
| 28% | of non-college grads |
| 26% | of AAPI voters |
| 22% | of Black voters |

19% OTHER

Refused or answered “don’t know” on racism in their community and experience with racism

| | |
|-----|----------------------|
| 25% | of AAPI voters |
| 22% | of 50+ |
| 21% | of Men |
| 19% | of Latino voters |
| 19% | of non-college grads |
| 18% | of Black voters |

Racial justice vs. race neutral voters differ in their attitudes toward racism/voter suppression

Racial justice voters believe racial discrimination and voter suppression impact their communities

Race neutral voters believe both only affect them and their communities if they let it.

Racial discrimination attitudes

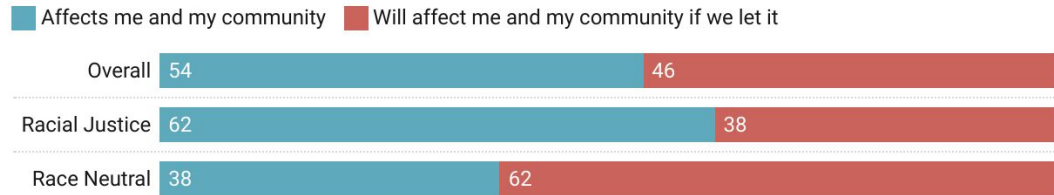


Chart: JG Insights • Source: HIT survey AZ/GA/MI, n1000 likely voters of color, July 20-29, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

Voter suppression attitudes

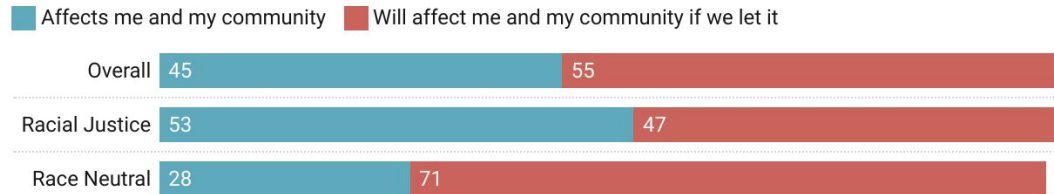


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Racial justice voters prioritize racism while race neutral voters prioritize economics

56% RACIAL JUSTICE VOTERS

Racism is a big problem in their lives
+
Racism is a big problem in their communities
+
Experienced a lot of racism personally

25% RACE NEUTRAL VOTERS

Racism is not a big problem in their lives
OR
Racism not a problem in their communities
+
Do not experience racism personally

Top issue concerns

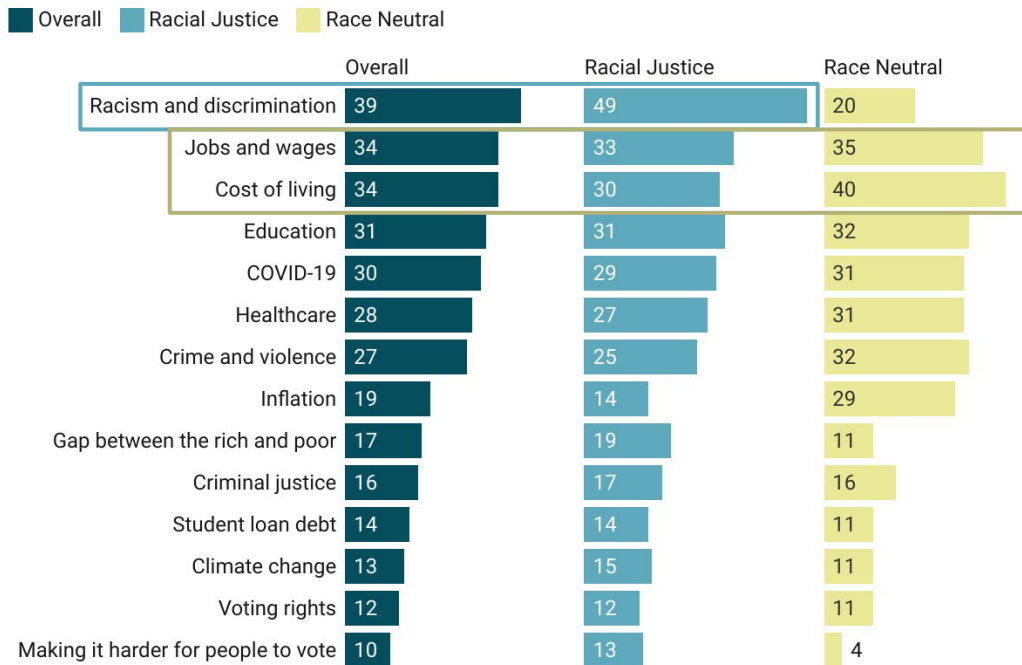
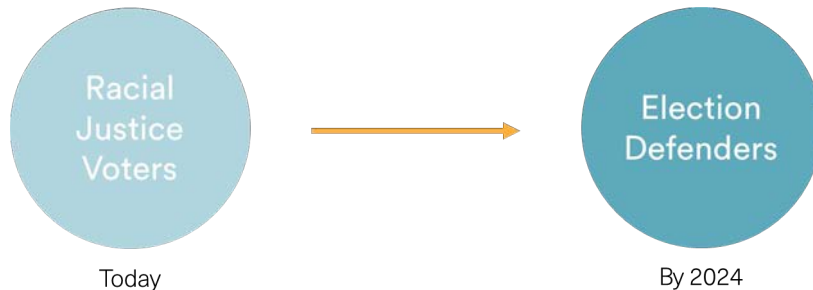


Chart: JG Insights • Source: HIT/SEIU battleground state voters of color survey, n2800, Oct 18 - Nov 8, 2021 • Created with Datawrapper

Messaging to Racial Justice Voters



Proactively name the legacy of racial discrimination + how it shows up today

ROUND 1

Voting in the upcoming 2022 midterm elections is how I have power to make change...

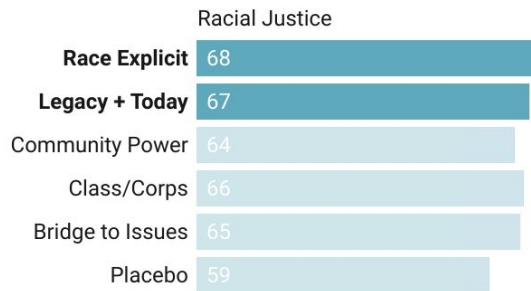


Chart: JG Insights • Source: SEIU/HIT/JGI/Grow Progress RMT, n3535, June 30 - July 7, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

ROUND 2

Message intensity (extremely convincing)



Chart: JG Insights • Source: HIT survey AZ/GA/MI, n1000 likely voters of color, July 20-29, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

ROUND 3

Willing to wait over one hour to cast their ballot

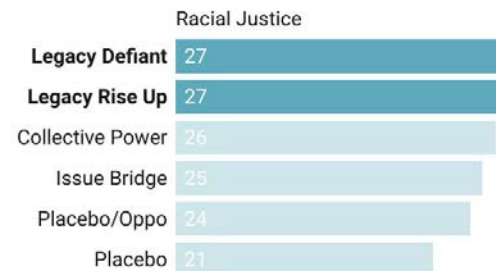


Chart: JG Insights • Source: SEIU/HIT/JGI/Grow Progress RMT, n2305, August 12, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

Discuss voter suppression tactics in a race explicit way, naming impact on communities

Racial Justice Voters: Race-explicit descriptions of voter suppression outperform neutral descriptions



Chart: JG Insights • Source: HIT survey AZ/GA/MI, n1000 likely voters of color, July 20-29, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

Race Explicit Descriptions

[Water in line] Making it illegal to pass out water to those waiting in line to vote, while studies show that voting lines are longer in communities of color.

[Voter purge] Passing a law that allows voting officials to remove anyone from the voting rolls if they suspect them of not being a citizen, allowing them to racially target voters based on ethnicity and name alone.

[Polling place closures] Closing polling locations only in Black neighborhoods, so there are less opportunities for Black voters to cast their ballot.

[Language translation] Denying language translation services at voting locations in Asian neighborhoods, making voting less accessible for voters who speak another language.

Recommended Messaging for Racial Justice Voters of Color

Most of us want America to be a place where freedom, justice, and equity are for all. But ever since our nation's founding, a faction has tried to suppress the power of people of color, from enslavement to Jim Crow segregation. To this day, Trump Republicans in the state legislature continue to try to censor our history, block reforms that would end police brutality, and silence our voices by closing polling places in Black and brown communities. But just like our ancestors rose up in the Civil Rights Movement, we are carrying on that legacy and rising up now by turning out in record numbers in 2022 to elect leaders that respect our voices, pass legislation to protect our freedom to vote, and deliver for our communities.

Open with values: freedom, justice, equity

Highlight the history of racial discrimination in America

Bridge to current ongoing racist policies

Highlight the legacy of the Civil Rights movement

Call to action that includes legislation on top of voting



Messaging to Race Neutral Voters



Bridge voting to other top of mind issues

Voting in the upcoming 2022 midterms is how I have power to make change...

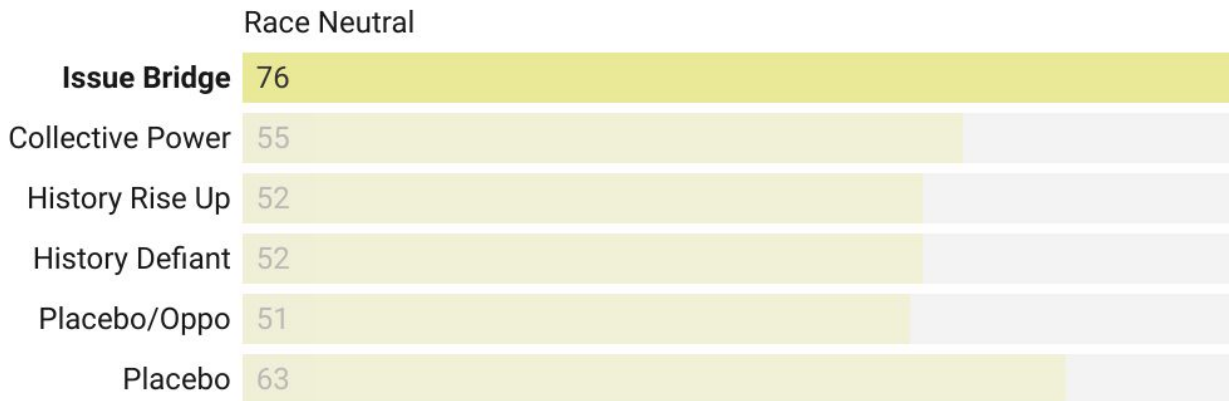


Chart: JG Insights • Source: SEIU/HIT/JGI/Grow Progress RMT, n2305, August 12, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

RN voters also respond well to race-explicit explanations of voter suppression tactics

Race Neutral Voters: Voter Suppression Descriptions



Chart: JG Insights • Source: HIT survey A7/GA/MI. n1000 likely voters of color. July 20-29, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

More vulnerable to opposition narrative; need to inoculate with collective power

Race neutral voters: bigger issue is unnecessary barriers to voting or voter fraud?

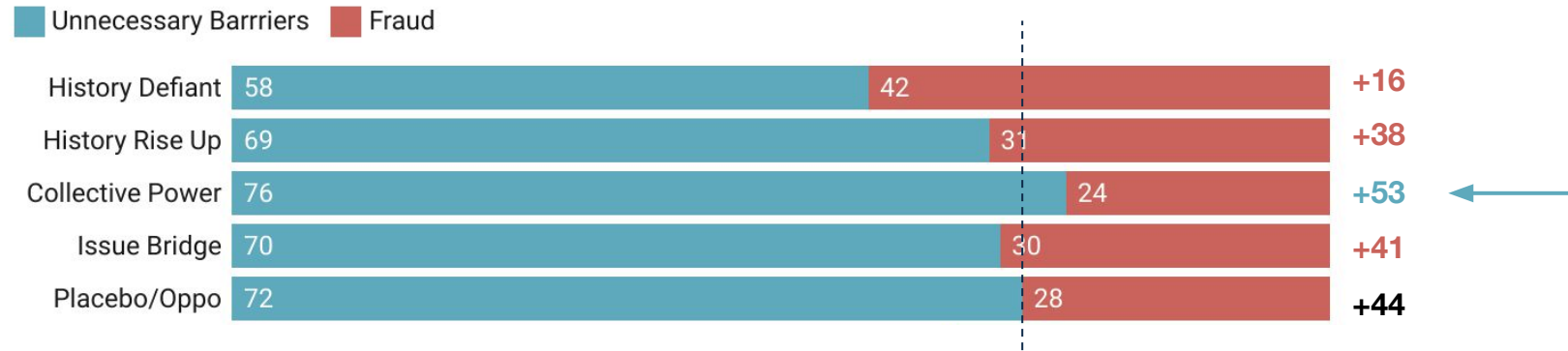


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Suggested Universal Message

Whatever our color, background, or zip code, in America we value our freedom to have a say in decisions that impact us, from feeling safe in our communities to affording our grocery and healthcare bills. But the same politicians that are attacking our reproductive freedom and allowing corporations to hike up our gas prices are also trying to silence our voices by closing polling places in certain communities. Scared of all that our collective power has achieved, they hope to divide and distract us so they can keep ruling for the billionaires and wealthy corporations. We must come together across race and place to vote in 2022 for new leaders who will protect our freedom to vote and pass laws that keep our children safe, allow us to decide if and when to grow our families, and make the wealthy pay what they owe.

Open with value: freedom

Bridge to other top of mind issues for voters

Name and link to other egregious actions by oppo

Reference our collective power achievements

Call out their intentions and link to wealthy elite

Call to action that includes legislation on top of voting

Note: This message also performs well with racial justice voters so can be used universally



Summary



Messaging Racial Justice vs. Race Neutral VOC

Racial Justice VOC

- Tie voting rights to the legacy of racial discrimination
- Name Trump Republicans in the legislature as the villain
- Use race-explicit explanations of voter suppression tactics
- Highlight the success of the Civil Rights movement
- Include legislation as a call to action in addition to voting

Race Neutral VOC / General Public

- Tie voting rights to other issues like rising prices and reproductive freedom
- Name some politicians answering to the wealthy few as the villain
- Use either race-explicit explanations of voter suppression tactics
- Highlight recent successes of our collective power
- Include legislation as call to action in addition to voting

Using these recommendations, we can mobilize racial justice + race neutral voters

RJ Voters: Legacy messaging increases vote power and willingness to wait more than an hour

Voting in the upcoming 2022 midterm elections is how I have power to make change...

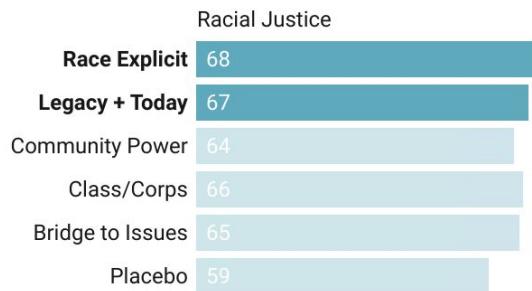


Chart: JG Insights • Source: SEIU/HIT/JGI/Grow Progress RMT, n3535, June 30 - July 7, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

Willing to wait over one hour to cast their ballot

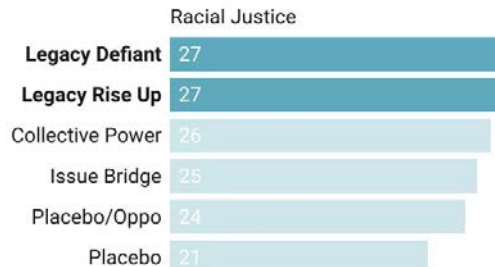


Chart: JG Insights • Source: SEIU/HIT/JGI/Grow Progress RMT, n2305, August 12, 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

RN Voters: Issue bridge messaging increases vote power

Voting in the upcoming 2022 midterms is how I have power to make change...

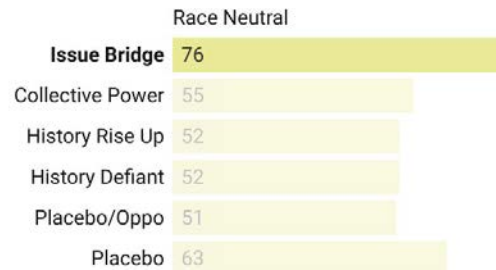


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Key Findings

1

Measuring concern around racial discrimination is a useful way to segment voters of color in determining messaging approach.

2

Racial justice and race neutral voters of color differ in their attitudes, priorities, and response to messaging.

3

For racial justice voters of color, we can use more explicitly race-forward messaging without any backlash.

4

For race neutral voters and everyone else, existing messaging best practices continue to perform best.

5

Across the board, we need to counter high cynicism by highlighting our successes and moving beyond voting as the sole call to action.

6

Using this messaging guidance, we can move racial justice voters on vote power and willingness to wait more than an hour to vote and move race neutral voters on vote power.

Questions?

