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support. Will she be the first female Presidential candidate who galvanizes enough women to vote her into office?

> That question, according to political scientists, should be broken down into smaller demographics. Women have never behaved in a monolithic voting bloc and given the intractable partisan divide in this country, it's unlikely that they're going to start now. Instead, it's important to look at how much Harris will appeal to different types of women: White women, Black women, and mothers.

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"There is a strong tendency to generalize about women and their political behavior in a way we don't do for men," said Kelly Dittmar, director of research at Rutgers University's Center for American Women and Politics. "We allow men the very real diversity that exists among them both in ideology and policy priorities, and historically we don't see that with women. We see assumptions that women would and should behave uniformly in who they support and how they engage in US politics."





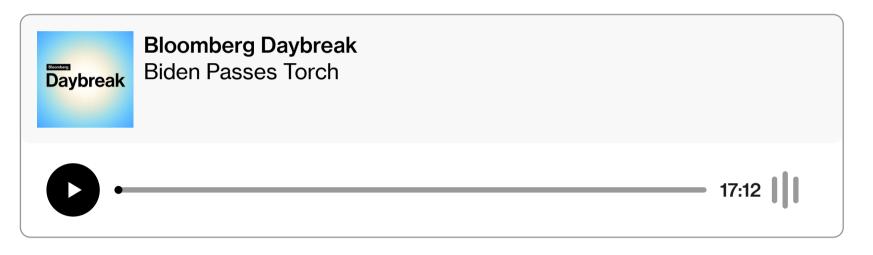
Harris speaks during a campaign event in Milwaukee on July 23. Photographer: Daniel Steinle/Bloomberg

Take Hillary Clinton for example. When she lost to President Donald Trump in 2016, political pundits expressed shock at how millions of women voted for her opponent. But she did win the support of a majority of female voters; 54% of women voted for her. What Clinton lost, however, was the backing of White women. As had Barack Obama, (in both 2008 and 2012) and Biden. In fact, White women have voted Republican in all but two Presidential elections since 1952.



"For those of us who knew the data, we could have told you the answer before the [2016] election," said Dittmar. "White women vote Republican."

Harris may not be able to reverse that trend, but her candidacy seems to have re-energized other female voting demographics: women of color and mothers. On Sunday night, just hours after Biden endorsed Harris, <u>44,000 Black women joined a fund-raising</u> Zoom call on which they raised \$1.5 million for the new presumptive Democratic nominee. Harris hasn't always engendered such enthusiasm among Black voters. Biden captured the nomination in the primaries on the back of a dominating win in South Carolina, with a predominantly Black electorate, and the backing of leading Black congressman Jim Clyburn.



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Boosting support from Black women could be significant for Harris to pull ahead in the polls against Trump. More than 90% of Black women had voted for Biden in 2020, but then increasingly soured on him, according to a survey of 1,200 Black women in June by The Cut. Some 18% of Black women said they preferred Trump, more than double the percentage who voted for him in 2020, according to the survey, completed before Biden's disastrous debate against Trump.

The other voting bloc that Harris is already courting is mothers.

There's been a boom in political advocacy groups for mothers in recent years, focused on paid parental leave, affordable child care, and better maternal health – issues Harris has long supported. She had the most generous paid leave proposal of all the 2020 Democratic primary candidates, proposing six months for new parents. In 2021, as vice president, she called on the Department of Health and Human Services to push states to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage.



Guests listen as Harris speaks to the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Grand Boule in Indianapolis, Indiana, on July 24. Photographer: Scott Olson/Getty Images

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President Biden supported paid leave and affordable child care too, but didn't always put them front and center.

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"During the debate, CNN asked a question about child care and both candidates [Trump and Biden] started talking about golf. It was so deeply dismissive," said Erin Erenberg, who heads the nonprofit group Chamber of Mothers, which was formed in November 2021 in response to Democrats' stripping of affordable child care from their Build Back Better plan.

Harris, on the other hand, mentioned paid family leave and child care in her first campaign speech.

"When she platformed these issues in her speech, I truly felt the emotional climate go from tired and confused, to maybe hopeful, to excited," said Erenberg, who happened to be in Washington ginning up bipartisan support for the latest version of the Momnibus Package, a collection of Congressional bills aimed at reducing the maternal mortality rate, when news broke that Harris would become the new Democratic nominee.

"This shift in nominee is an opportunity for us," said Erenberg. "It just feels different."

While it's hard to quantify the political impact of this kind of vibe shift among voters, experts said it will likely benefit Harris.

"Excitement means something. If a person is excited for a candidate, they're not just going to vote for them, they'll talk about the campaign, they'll mobilize other voters," said Pearl Dowe, a political science and African American studies professor at Emory University.

Harris has also been more frank than Biden about abortion, which is also likely to galvanize voters. Biden, a devout Catholic, sometimes hesitated to use the word in speeches while the vice president uses the term forcefully. After the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, she embarked on a national "reproductive freedoms tour," hosting rallies in battleground states and meeting with state attorney generals about how to preserve women's access to abortion.

An overwhelming number of Americans think abortion should be legal in at least some circumstances and polls have consistently found that despite the waning enthusiasm for Biden, states with abortion-related ballot initiatives are expecting higher Democratic turnout in November. A <u>Washington Post/Ipsos poll</u> from earlier this month found that a quarter of voters listed it as one of their top issues, including 45% of Democrats. If Harris keeps the issue at the forefront of her campaign, experts said she may be able to generate higher voter turnout even in states without ballot initiatives.

The National Organization for Women, The National Women's Political Caucus, and Women for American Values and Ethics are among the political groups that have rallied behind Harris in the few days since she started her campaign for office. In all, her team raised more than \$81 million in the 24-hour period since Biden's announcement, a record, according to the AP. Many were grassroots donors, and more than half a million people were contributing for the first time this election cycle, the AP reported.

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Whether any of this is enough to shift the electoral map in Harris'

favor is still unclear.

"So many things are going to happen between now and November, it's a very unpredictable election," said Erenberg. But, she said, there's a sense of optimism among the 52 million mothers her organization engages with that she hadn't seen when Biden was campaigning.

"People are feeling more hopeful," she said. "Perhaps they do want

to turn out and vote, perhaps they do want to be more engaged."

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