



MERCURY

The art of simplified finances.

Equality

Women's Groups Rush to Support Harris: Will That Help Her Win?

Don't look at women as a monolithic voting block, political scientists say



Harris on Trump: Will Proudly Put Her Record Against Him Any Day of the Week'

By Claire Suddath

July 25, 2024 at 6:00 AM PDT Updated on July 25, 2024 at 6:28 AM PDT

United States Departme... Spotify Technology SA Apple Inc National Womens Politic... Emory University

Soon after President Joe Biden said he's dropping out of the race for the White House and endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris, a number of significant women's rights groups rushed to show their support.

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.

"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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

"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.

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.

"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 Dove.

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.

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.

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.

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."

Follow all new stories by Claire Suddath

Get Alerts

Have a confidential tip for our reporters? Get in Touch

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal

LEARN MORE

More From Bloomberg



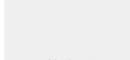
Steven Mnuchin Says It's Time to Kill the New Treasury Bond He Created



Ballyasny Goes on New Hiring Spree With \$200 Million in Payouts



JP Morgan Says Three Quarters of Global Carry Trades Now Unwound



Buffett's Japan Holdings Become 'Bargain' After Stock Meltdown

Top Reads



What Happens When Ozempic Takes Over Your Town



Yosemite National Park Is a Mess



Private Credit Fund Burned by Risky Bets Is Bleeding Cash



Layoffs Are More Expensive for Companies Than You Think

by Madison Muller, Devin Leonard and Tanaz Moghani

by Laura Bliss

by John Sage and Ellen Schneider

by Matthew Boyle and Mathieu Benhamou

Advertisement