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# Understanding the Texas Electorate on Abortion

RESEARCH FINDINGS

AUGUST 8, 2022

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# Purpose of research.

## MAIN GOALS / OBJECTIVES

- Gain a better understanding of voters' awareness and views related to abortion access and restrictions
- Identify the relative importance of access to abortion and reproductive care as mobilizing issues
- Test values-based messages about abortion in the context of the elections

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# Methods.

- Statewide survey of n = 2,000 registered voters in Texas, including:
  - N = 510 Latina/o/x voters
  - N = 265 Black voters
  - N = 150 Asian-American / Pacific-Islander voters
- Conducted June 15 - 24, 2022
- Using YouGov's online panel
- Margin of sampling error for total:  $\pm 3$  percentage points
- Qualitative research among 50 Texas voters post-Dobbs decision (7/27 – 8/2)

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# Summary of key findings.

#1  
Texas politicians are out of  
step with 9 in 10 Texas voters.

Should abortion be...

11%

Not be available at  
all

29%

Not available in  
most cases

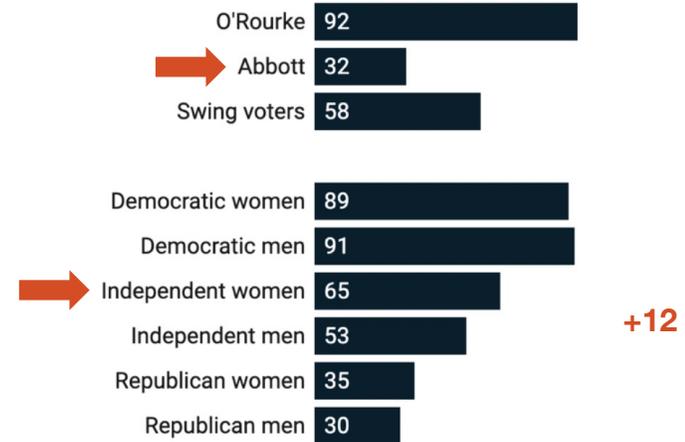
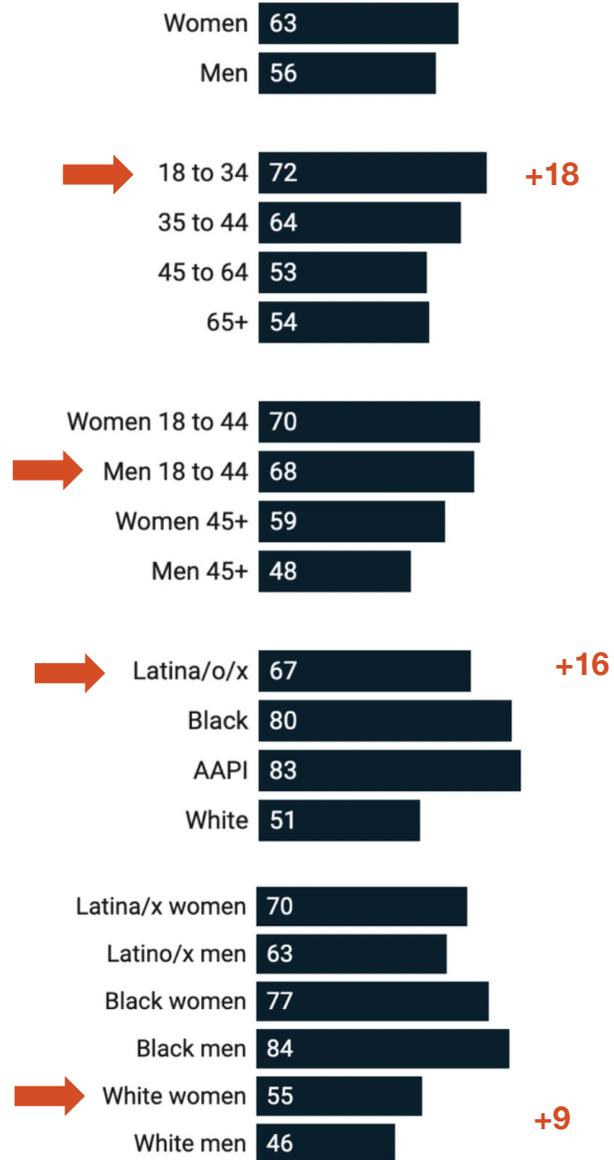
60%

Available in all or  
most cases

+9 points from a  
December  
Quinnipiac poll



Avail. all / most cases



**#2**  
The data challenge myths  
about abortion opinion.

72%

Say they do not struggle with their views on abortion

68%

Of voters of reproductive age (18 to 44) say they can envision a scenario in which abortion may be the best option for them or a partner

64%

Say rights and access to abortion are an important part of women's rights

60%

Say abortion is not a religious issue for them

80%

Agree that abortion is ending a life or a potential life

67%

Agree that people should be able to make their own decisions on abortion without the government interfering

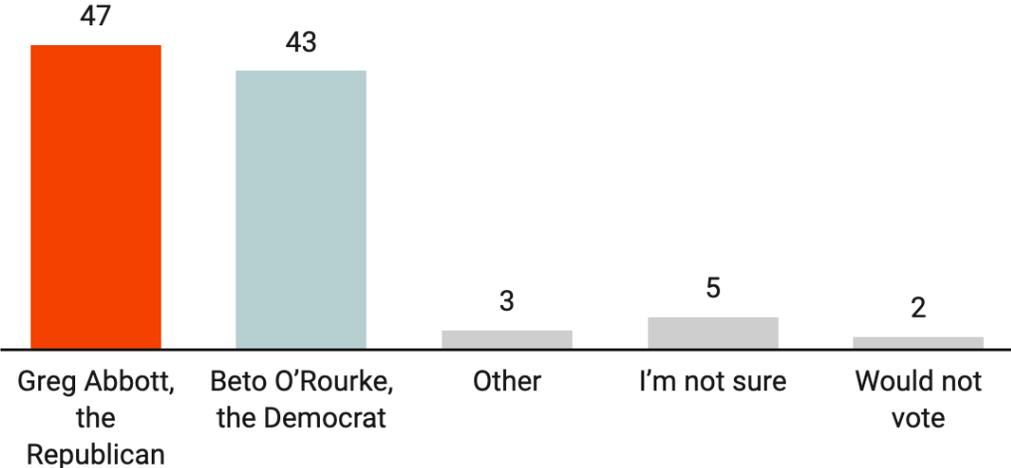
Thinking about the upcoming elections for governor... if the elections were held today, would you vote for [ROTATE: Greg Abbott, the Republican or / Beto O'Rourke, the Democrat?]

**#3**

**The governor's race narrowed.**

This is essentially the same spread as found in an earlier June Quinnipiac poll (+5). Abbott was up by +15 points last December (Quinnipiac).

Now about +7 points.



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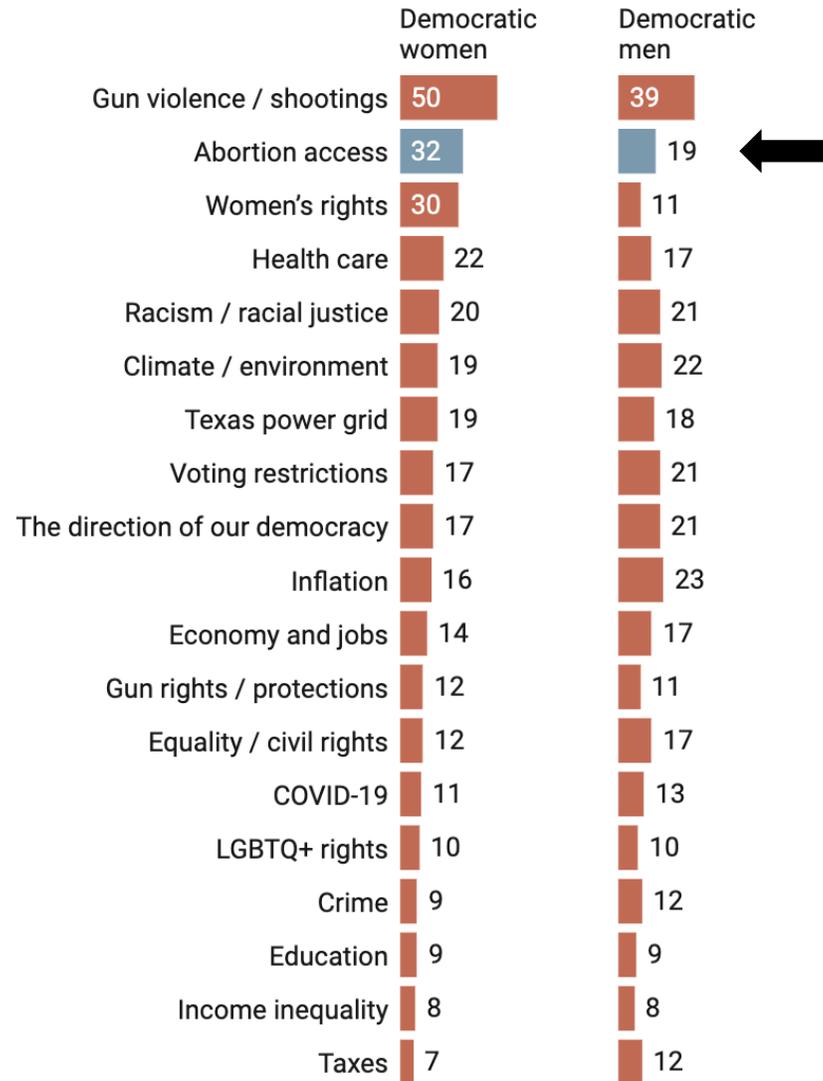
#### #4

**Several pieces of data suggest the issue of abortion can be mobilizing for key audiences.**

#### **WHY ABORTION MIGHT MOBILIZE VOTERS**

- Abortion is a top issue for several mobilization segments
- SB 8 had a mobilizing effect on some voters
- Shift pre to post after messaging
- Texas politicians have enforced an extreme law on abortion that does not represent 9 in 10 Texas voters
- All other recent key indicators: KS, special election results pre and post Dobbs, spike in registration among women, generic congressional ballot poll shift

% Top 3 or 4 issues that matter most when thinking about voting this fall



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Yes, it's almost the main reason I would vote. Nothing else really affects me as much as this.... I feel disgusted and shocked honestly [about Roe and SB8]....I hate it, I couldn't believe it, and to know Texas led this change is even more disappointing. – AAPI man, 30 to 44, Democrat, urban, lower propensity voter

I always vote in elections, but these changes have motivated me more because [I don't] want to have Abbott as our Governor if he doesn't care or understand a woman's rights. – Latina/x woman, 30 to 44, Democrat, urban, lower propensity voter

YES, as mentioned earlier, a politician should have no authority on what I do (or others) to their own body. The politicians care more about their guns than the lives/wellbeing of pregnant mothers. – Latino/x man, 18 to 29, independent, urban, swing voter

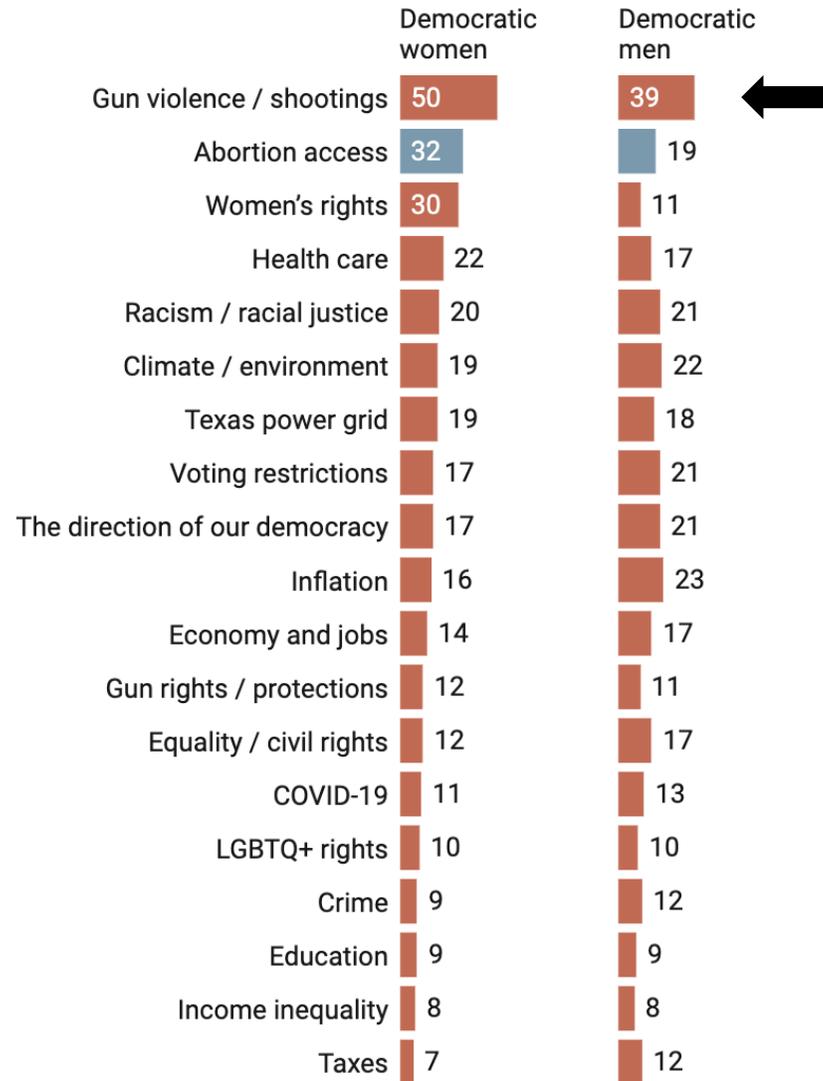
Yes! It makes me want to vote even more just to show the current leadership they don't have a quorum. – White man, 30 to 44, independent, rural, swing voter

I feel like we're going back to the past times. I don't like that Governor Abbott wants to put his personal beliefs with politics. Taking away the right of what a woman can do with reference to abortion is very wrong. I feel like Texas wants everything to be like it was in 1950. – Latina/x woman, 30 to 44, Democrat, urban, lower propensity voter

I have always been pro-choice as there are many many things that can go wrong where its not feasible for someone to have children. Taking away the most basic human right from women is shocking. Not having the right to choose is making me consider either moving out of state and following the local and state level elections closely. – AAPI woman, 30 to 44, independent, suburban, lower propensity swing voter

I was soooooo incredibly sad when evil lawmakers attacked women. I could not believe that they had the nerve to tell women that they were less than. This is not Texas. I am so inspired to see that the movement Beto is leading is going to stop these evil actions. – White man, 45+, Democrat, rural, swing voter

% Top 3 or 4 issues that matter most when thinking about voting this fall



**What do these two issues have in common?**

**1**

Extreme right wingers, hyper-conservative movement, Republican goals, political gain, acting selfishly, issues Republicans use to keep power, decided upon by delusional, out-of-touch Republicans, reckless decisions

**2**

Both make us less safe

- Both have adverse effects on safety, put people in danger of dying
- Will cause more chaos in the world
- Makes me uncomfortable
- Reflects mindset of officials who don't care for people's safety
- Hypocrisy pretend to care about children before they are born, but not safety afterward
- It will harm minority communities most (young voter of color)

**Abortion access is a top issue among several key segments.**

#1 issue	#2 issue (after gun violence / school shootings)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Voters who want abortion available in all cases (tied with inflation), 28% of the sample</li><li>• Independent women who want abortion available in all or most cases, 10%</li><li>• Atheists/agnostics, 10%</li><li>• Democratic white surge voters, 4%</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• O'Rourke voters, 43%</li><li>• Democratic women, 20%</li><li>• DFW metro women (among other top), 14%</li><li>• White women 18 to 44 (after inflation), 10%</li><li>• Democratic surge voters (tied with health care), 9%</li><li>• 18- to 34-year-old Dem surge voters, 5%</li></ul>

Note: Abortion access is in the top several issues for Latina/x women and 18- to 44-year-old Latina/o/x voters.

<i>Mobilization audiences (Ordered by least likely to vote)</i>	Abortion is a top 1-3 tier issue	Percent of sample
AAPI voters*		4%
Surge^ voters 18 to 34*	2	5%
Black voters 18 to 44*		6%
Surge voters of color	3	5%
Black evangelical voters		6%
18 to 34*	3	24%
Black voters in DFW metro		5%
Women 18 to 44*	2	22%
Independent men, 1s and 2s	3	9%
All surge voters	2	9%
Non-college voters of color		30%
Latinx voters 18 to 44	2	14%
Men 18 to 44		19%
Independent women, 1s and 2s*	1	10%
White voters 18 to 44*	2	19%
35 to 44 voters*	3	17%
Latinx urban voters		10%
Latinx Catholic voters		13%

	Abortion is a top 1-3 tier issue	Percent of sample
Abortion 2s		32%
Unmarried men		21%
Latinx men		12%
Suburban independent women*	3	7%
North Texas		6%
Independent women*		15%
Black women*		7%
Rio Grande		15%
High school or less		29%
Latinx women	3	14%
Republican-leaning women*		10%
Unmarried women	2	26%
City dwellers		32%
Suburban 1s and 2s	2	26%
Women in Houston		11%

\* Also persuasion (among the most likely be undecided in gov. race)

^ Voters who voted for Biden in 2020 but did not vote in 2016

Blue = Abortion is a top 1 to 3 tier issue.

**Data suggest abortion messaging has mobilization power.** After messaging, sizeable proportions of segments move toward feeling voting this fall is extremely important.

Messages about faith and the harm to marginalized communities fall further down the list (including among religious voters and communities of color).

TOP

“People should be able to make their own decisions on abortion without the government interfering.”

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Participants talk about these concepts as well:

- Women's rights
- Going backward
- Bodily autonomy
- Choice
- Safety, security

I feel incredibly disappointed and let down as an immigrant women living in this country and state where women back in my home country of Pakistan have more rights over their body than I do in a country which I thought would be more progressive towards women's rights... It is frustrating looking at privileged men in their late 50s and 60s making and passing laws over what a woman can and cannot do with her body. – *AAPI woman, 18 to 29, Democrat, suburban voter*

More on safety...

When I first found out about it, I was angered for a short while. Now I just feel defeated and scared. I don't know what I'd do if I get raped and am forced to carry out the pregnancy...[Yes abortion is motivating,] the safety and rights of myself and my friends are important to me, and I think voting Democrat is our best shot at having that. – *Latina/x woman, 18 to 29, Democrat, suburban, lower propensity voter*

[Texas] would be a place where my children can grow up safely, not influenced by the poor decisions of others. Free to make up their own minds about who they are and have a fair shot at life. – *Black woman, 18 to 29, Democrat, suburban, lower propensity voter*

It would look like a safer, more educated Texas where people didn't have to be afraid of stepping outside of their home in fear of being shot, where women can choose to continue a pregnancy if they want to or not and have safer abortions in case of an emergency, where the Texas government was more prepared in case of a natural disaster, and where schools could get more funding in the arts. – *AAPI woman, 18 to 29, Democrat, suburban, swing voter*

All people would have equal rights, would be safe, and would have access to proper education and medical services. – *White woman, 30 to 44, Democrat, suburban, swing voter*

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**#5**

**Top motivation and barrier to voting.**

**MOTIVATION**

Change. Participants do not like the current direction of Texas, including a regression in abortion rights, social issues, and lack of action on guns. Organically, they say the main reason to vote is to see change

**BARRIER**

Seeing the state or one's district as mostly conservative, lacking the votes for change

One important persuasion element may be to emphasize the importance and / or likelihood of many people voting in the elections. This theme comes up in a few different places in the research.

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Let's do something creative. Think about what would really encourage you to vote in the elections this fall (even if you already plan to vote). I want you to design an ad that is specifically for you personally. Don't worry, you don't have to be an artist or a writer! Be creative, have fun with it and don't worry about how it's written. Think about an ad you might see online or maybe it's a social media graphic or video. Remember, this is only for you.

Here are some questions to help you think about it (you don't have to answer all of these - just to get you thinking):

- If you pause, close your eyes, and get quiet for a minute, what bubbles up around voting?
- Are there any people or objects in the ad?
- What is being said to you?
- Is someone saying it, or is it text?
- What's the tone or feeling of the ad? How does it make you feel?
- What might happen if you or people like you don't vote?
- What might happen if you and people like you vote in large numbers?

### DIY GOTV ad

#### Main themes

- Time for change
- Change is possible with many people
- Many people working together
- Voices
- Happy families (Spanish speakers)

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



We open on a massive tree that fell down and is blocking a road, one person gets out of their car to try and move it. Nothing happens as it's much too large to move. We then see other people get out and move it together and it starts to budge. After that, everyone gets out of their car and they all work together to move the tree out of the road. Scene ends and says, "change comes when we work together." – *Multi-racial man, 18 to 29, independent, suburban, lower propensity voters*

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Are you ready for change? Do you believe you deserve better wages? Are you tired of empty promises from your governor? Do you want to see your child or grandchild get the education that would excel them to the next level. You are the change we need. You matter. Your vote counts. Come out, support your beliefs, and make the difference in your town, in your community, in your state. The change starts with you. So can we count on you this election? – *Black woman, 45+, Democrat, small town, lower propensity voter*

Voting is in the center of my design. Bubbles surrounding it say things like free speech, gun control, women's rights, mental health, education reform. There is a small crowd of people below the thought bubbles, and multiple people are thinking about many of these issues, and even more issues not mentioned. If I don't vote, and people like me don't vote, we will not get the change we need to create a true democracy. If people like me vote in large numbers, we can push the country in a better direction. – *White woman, 30 to 44, Democrat, suburban, swing voter*



**#6**

**Testing content concepts.**

## #1 Best long form

Full picture, vision, contrast, not for the people

### TEXAS POLITICIANS SHOULD BE IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITIES AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- Keeping kids safe at schools
- Decreasing gun violence
- Addressing inflation
- Lowering the cost of living
- Improving access to good-paying jobs
- Improving the power grid
- Making health care more affordable
- Protecting our rights and freedoms

### INSTEAD, HERE'S WHAT TEXAS POLITICIANS HAVE DONE:

- Passed a law to allow people to carry handguns without a concealed carry license
- Passed a law that makes all abortion illegal, a crime punishable by life in prison
- Passed a law to ban schools from teaching about race and slavery
- Proposed a law to restrict voting hours and vote-by-mail options
- Ordered the state to conduct child abuse investigations into parents of transgender children

These politicians  
don't represent the  
majority of Texans.

**BE A VOTER.**

**VOTE FOR CHANGE.**

**NOVEMBER 8.**

**PASS IT ON.**

Learn more [here](#).

## #2 Best short form

Emotional, succinct, change

People should be able to make their own decisions on abortion without the government interfering.

We can't sit by while radical, extremist politicians interfere with our lives and take away our freedoms. Texas deserves better.

BE A VOTER.

VOTE FOR CHANGE.

NOVEMBER 8.

PASS IT ON.

Learn more [here](#).

# VOTE FOR SAFETY VOTE FOR CHANGE

Safe kids  
Safe schools  
Safe and legal abortion  
Safe to be yourself  
Safe communities

Governor Abbott and state politicians have passed reckless laws that are making us less safe.

**BE A VOTER.**

**VOTE FOR CHANGE.**

**NOVEMBER 8.**

**PASS IT ON.**

Learn more [here](#).

# Considerations.



# 11 Considerations.

**1**  
Core theme: Vote for change.

**2**  
Demonstrate the collective.

**3**  
Other ways to lift efficacy: past closes races, suburbs tilting more progressive, what happens when young people vote.

**4**  
Prioritize top issues: shootings/gun violence and abortion. Tie both together via people in power being extreme, reckless, only caring about political gain, and not caring about people's safety.



## 11 Considerations.

**5**

Build awareness: All abortions are now banned in Texas, at every stage and for almost all situations.

**6**

Center core value on abortion: People should be able to make their own decisions on abortion without the government interfering.

**7**

Nuance for persuasion audiences: We might not all agree on every aspect of this issue, and that's okay. Pregnancy and health decisions are personal. There are many different circumstances. That's why each Texan should be able to make their own decision – not the government.

**8**

Safety themes may be very important for young women (and moms of kids under 18), voters of color, transgender, and non-binary individuals.

**9**

Other themes might include: women's rights, bodily autonomy, regression on rights/moving backward.

## 11 Considerations.

### 10

Key messengers and validators:

- Family
- Peers, friends (young voters)
- Social media influencers (young voters)
- Beto O'Rourke #1 political figure
- Planned Parenthood
- Sheila Jackson Lee

### 11

Target key audiences (see next page).

## Audiences

### These are top potential mobilization audiences on abortion

*Less likely to vote and abortion is a top 1-3 tier issue*

- Independent women who think abortion should be available in all or most cases
- Women 18 to 44
- Unmarried women
- Suburban voters who think abortion should be available in all or most cases
- White voters 18 to 44
- Latina/o/x voters 18 to 44
- Democratic surge voters (including young and of color)
- Latina/x women
- 18 to 44 voters
- Suburban independent women

### Persuasion audiences

*More likely than others to be undecided on vote*

- Women 18 to 44
- Black 18 to 44 (abortion is not a top issue – shootings, racial justice, inflation)
- AAPI voters (abortion is not a top issue – climate, inflation, shootings)
- Black women (abortion is not a top issue, but women’s rights is after shootings and racial justice)
- Black voters in DFW metro (abortion is not a top issue – racial justice, shootings, health care, inflation)

	Ind women, 1s and 2s	Women 18 to 44	Unmarried women	Suburban 1s and 2s	Suburban ind. women	White voters 18 to 44	Latinx voters 18 to 44	Latinx women
<b>Top sources of info</b>	Local news Local papers Friends and family Facebook	Local news Friends and family Facebook TikTok	Local news Friends and family Facebook YouTube	Local news Local papers Family Facebook Friends	Local news Local papers Friends and family YouTube Facebook	Local news Friends and family Facebook Local papers	Local news Facebook Family YouTube Friends	Local news Friends and family Facebook Local papers
<b>Most favorable messenger</b>	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Joe Biden Dem. Party	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Dem. Party	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Joe Biden Dem. Party	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Joe Biden Dem. Party	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke	Planned Parenthood	Planned Parenthood	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke

	Dem surge voters	Dem surge voters 18 to 34	Dem surge voters of color	18 to 34	35 to 44	Persuad-ables*
<b>Top sources of info</b>	Local news YouTube Facebook Local papers Friends and family	Local news YouTube TikTok Instagram Facebook	Local news YouTube Facebook Local papers Family	Local news YouTube Family Facebook Friends	Local news Facebook Friends and family Local papers YouTube	Local news Facebook YouTube Friends and family
<b>Most favorable messenger</b>	O'Rourke Planned Parenthood Dem. Party Joe Biden	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Dem. Party	O'Rourke Planned Parenthood Joe Biden Dem. Party	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Dem. Party	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Dem. Party Joe Biden	Planned Parenthood O'Rourke Dem. Party

\* Abortion 1s and 2s who shift toward thinking it's extremely important to vote after messaging.