

Getting the Edge: Proactive Abortion Messaging to Seize the Debate

September 2020



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About our research



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Research team - psychology, linguistics, etc.



Methodology - focus groups

November 2019 to May 2020:

- 19 in-person focus groups and three online focus groups (including one to account for COVID)
- A total of 246 Black, white, Hispanic, API voters ages 19 to 59
- Based in Arizona, Iowa, Michigan and North Carolina
- Focused on understanding people's mindsets and values; testing messaging

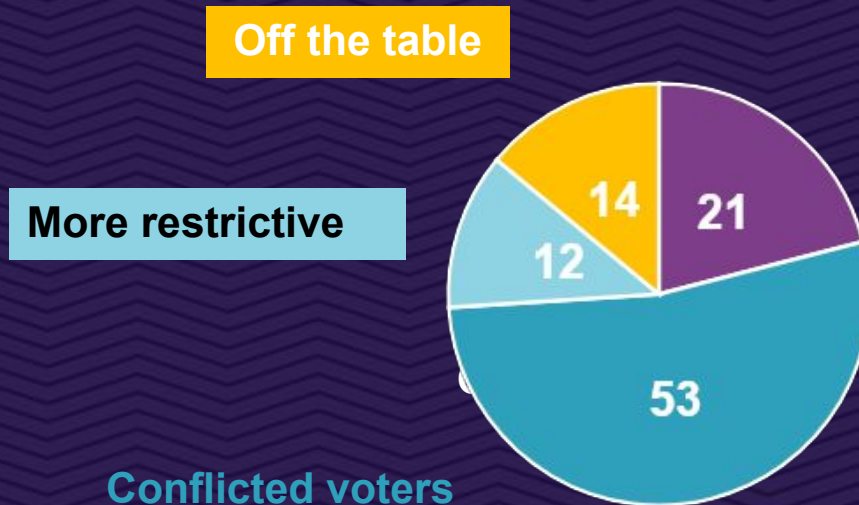


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Methodology - national survey

Goodwin Simon Strategic Research and Benenson Strategy Group worked collaboratively to survey 1,473 registered voters across the U.S. This includes large samples of people of color, including:

- 340 Black, 329 Hispanic, 327 API, and 106 mixed race voters
- The sample did not include the roughly 14% of voters who believe the law should change to make abortion illegal.



Base
Abortion is morally acceptable and should be legal AND laws do not need to be more restrictive



Message research findings

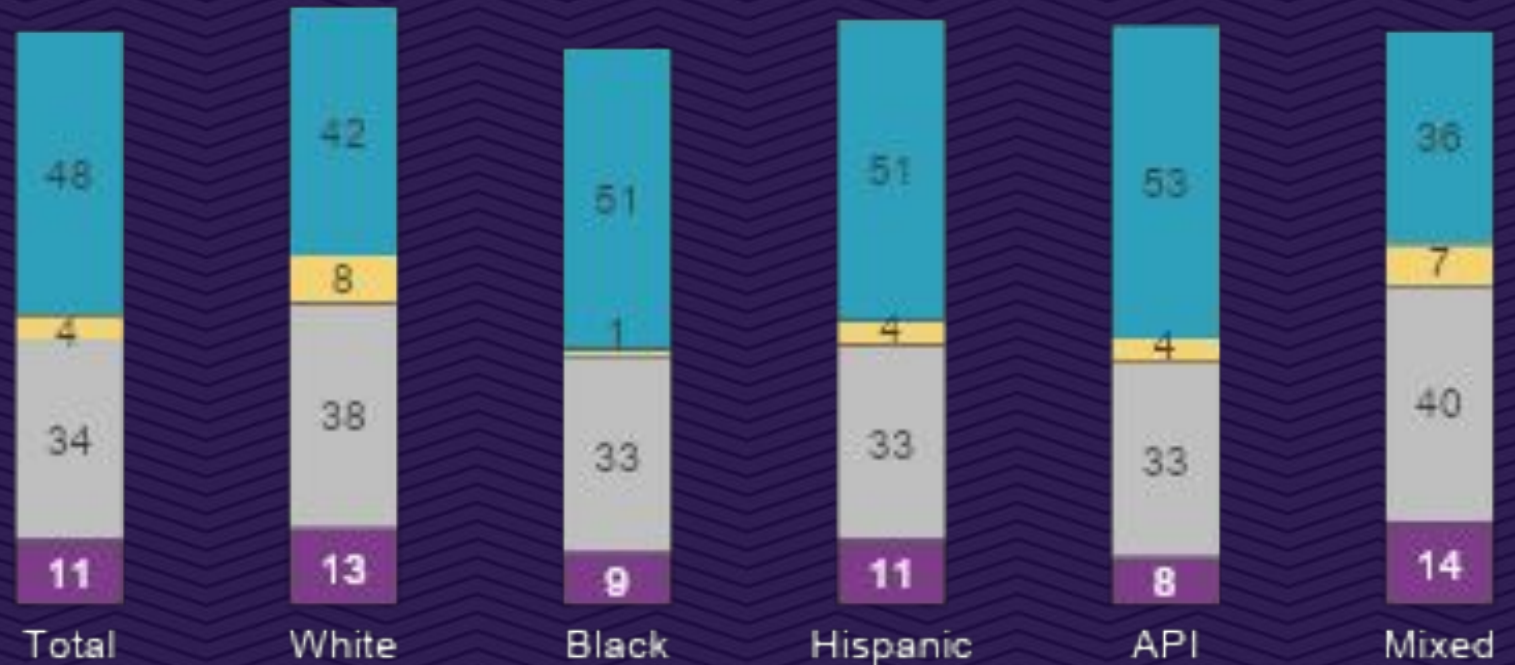
- Freedom (to decide, vs. control)
- Aspirational visions
- Restrictions / the barrage of laws



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Key insight #1: Freedom is the core value, much more so than choice

- Pro-choice
- Both/unsure
- Neither
- Support women having freedom to decide



“Senator X is a pro-choice champion”



“Senator X [champions/protects/respects] our freedom to decide”

Support vs. Identity

“I **am** pro-choice” vs. “I **support** reproductive freedom.”

The perception that you have to share an identity in order to support a policy can be limiting.

Emphasis on **supporting, protecting, respecting the freedom to decide** provides more space for our movement to grow.



Freedom and decision language rise to the top – across all audiences

	All Voters	Base Voters	Conflicted Voters	Black Voters	Hispanic Voters
A Woman's Freedom To Decide	1	1	3	2	2
My Decision For My Life, Your Decision For Yours	1	3	2	1	1
Power To Decide	1	5	1	2	2
Our Bodies, Our Choice	4	1	4	4	4
Respect Women's Decisions	5	4	5	4	4
Protect The Freedom To Decide	6	6	6	6	6
Respect Personal Decisions	7	8	8	7	7
Protect People's Freedom To Make Personal Decisions	7	11	7	9	9
Reproductive Rights Are A Human Right	9	7	11	12	12
Our Bodies, Our Families, Our Future	10	13	10	8	8
Keep Abortion Legal	15	9	19	13	13
Pro-Choice	15	15	16	18	18
Abortion Is A Human Right	18	12	21	15	15
I Support Reproductive Rights	21	19	21	23	23
No Forced Births	22	18	23	23	23
Stop Reproductive Oppression	26	20	27	30	30
Abortion Is Health Care	26	22	27	27	27
Unite For Reproductive Justice	29	28	27	30	30

Recommendation: Freedom vs. control

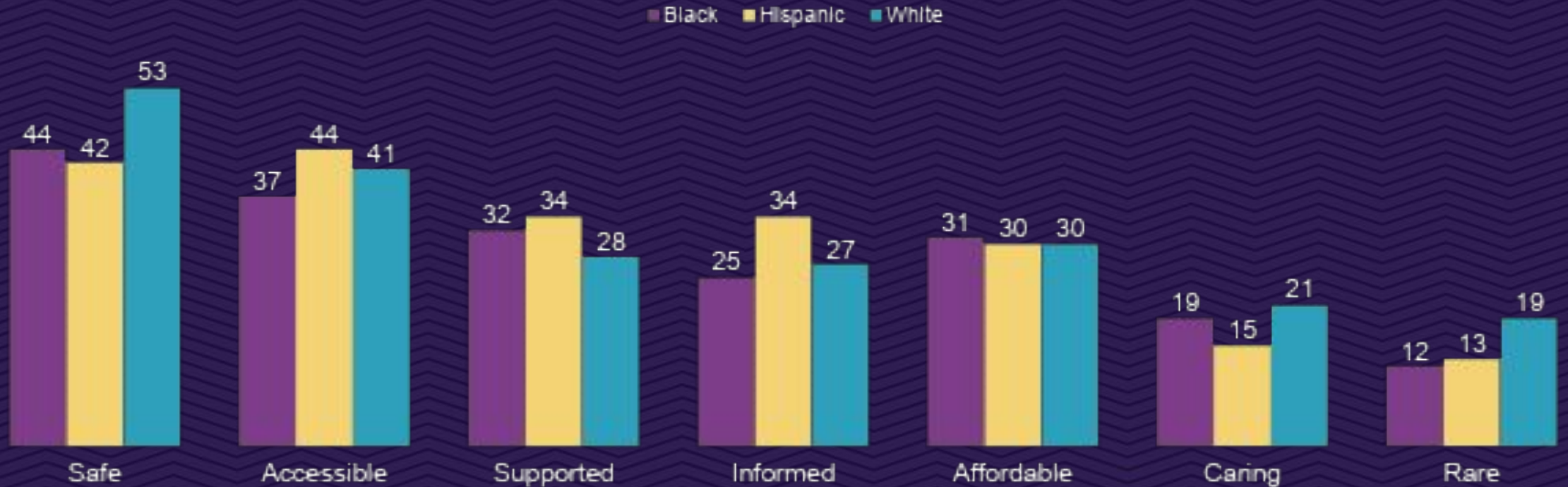
- Our value: **The freedom to decide**
 - Plus, freedom from political interference
 - Key verbs: support, protect, respect
- The anti-choice, anti-freedom movement: **Control**
 - Natural opposite of freedom
 - Controlling women's bodies and lives
 - (More on this when we talk about restrictions)



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Insight #2: Safe and accessible are the aspirations (NOT rare)

Which three of the following words, if any, best describe what you personally think abortion in America should be like?



Recommendation: Embrace proactive visions

A world where people **respect other people's personal decisions around parenthood and pregnancy**—whether those decisions involve *giving birth, putting a child up for adoption, having an abortion, or choosing not to have children at all.*

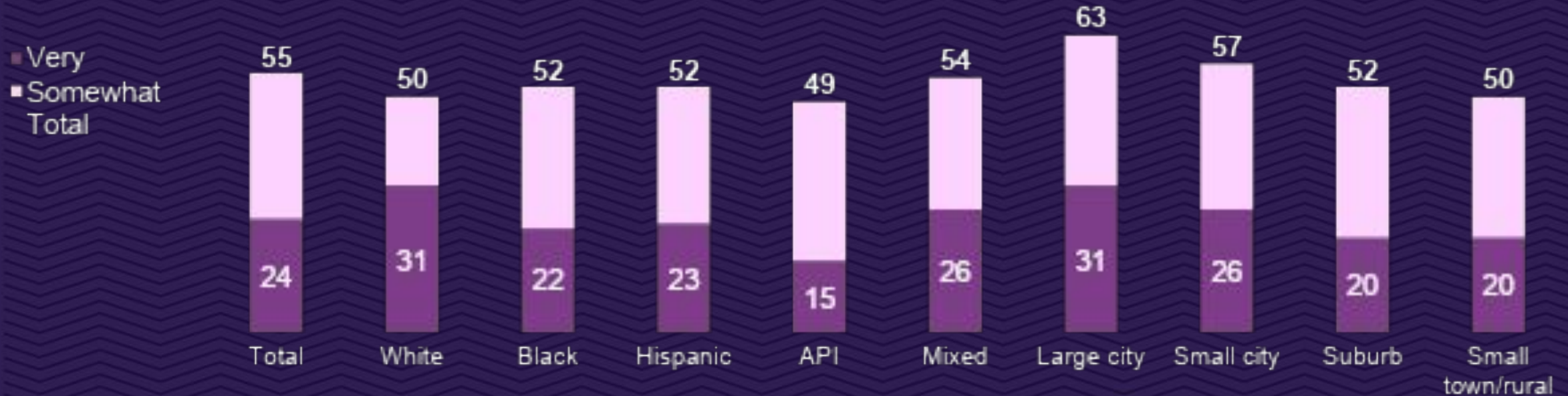
A world where people **get accurate, unbiased medical information**, so they can make **the best health care decisions they can** for themselves and for those they love—including decisions about abortion.

A world where a woman considering an abortion would have **local access to a safe, caring, and affordable clinic** with a professional staff of doctors, nurses, and counselors, and she *wouldn't be restricted by laws that dictate her decision or place unnecessary barriers on the process.*



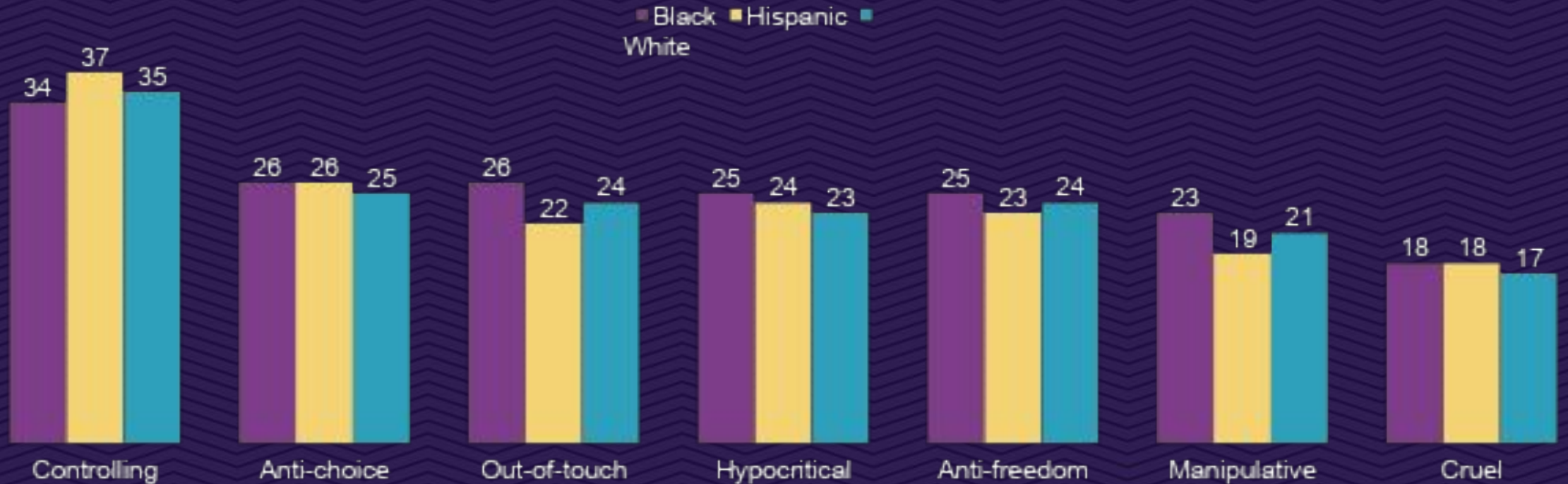
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Insight #3: We can't keep playing whack-a-mole with restrictions



How to talk about the people who pass these restrictions

Which come closest to your own personal description of the people promoting these laws?



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Recommendation: The barrage of laws

Showing the full barrage of anti-freedom laws is powerful. It helps people see the motivations behind these restrictions - and it is critical for people to see *who* is passing these laws and *why*:

- Desire for control
- Self-interested focus on political gain
- Lack of care for women, pregnant people, and families
- Exacerbating existing injustices

Note: *restrictions, not regulations.*



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The impact of these laws

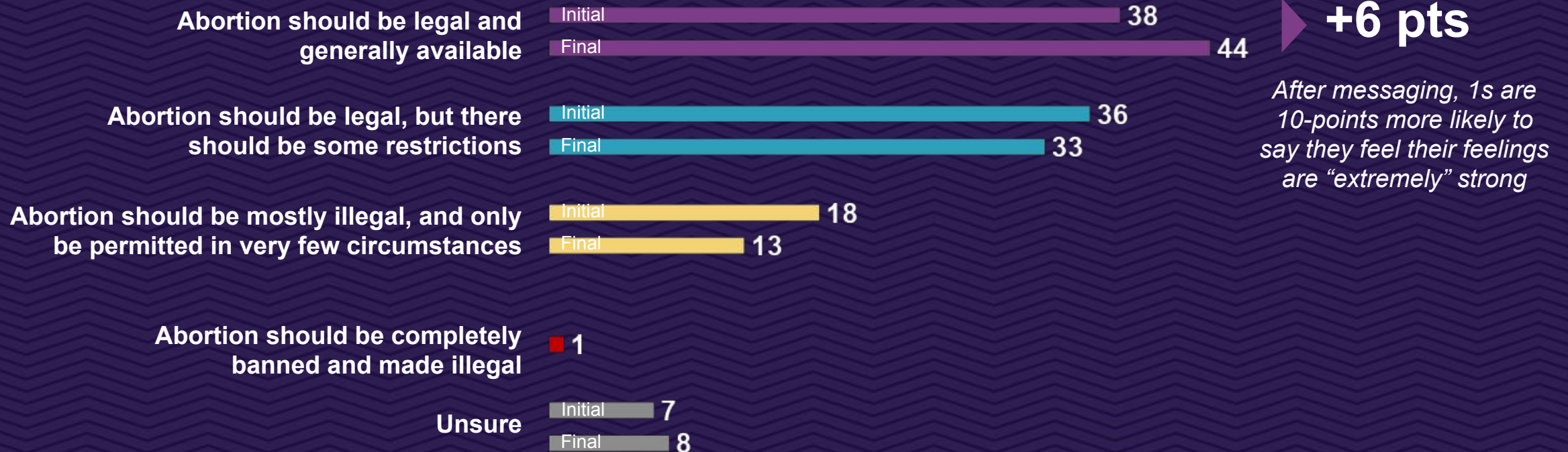
- “I don’t understand how they hope to enforce these laws. If abortion is banned, what happens if someone has one? **Would law enforcement go after her?**”
- “There’s no medical way to tell the difference between an abortion and a miscarriage, so **any woman who loses a pregnancy could be subject to this type of investigation.** This proposal means setting up a surveillance state.”
- “These laws **require me to interrogate my patients.** I don’t think people in our state need or want politicians interfering in the doctor patient relationship.”



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After messaging, we see real movement on metrics that almost never move within one poll

Which of the following statements comes closest to your point of view?



Results with people of color and older votes are especially encouraging

	Initial	Final	Change
All voters	40	50	+10
Black Women	47	59	+12
Black Men	27	36	+9
Hispanic Women	43	51	+8
Hispanic Men	42	55	+13
API Women	42	52	+10
API Men	46	54	+8
Ages 18-23	57	58	+1
Ages 24-34	38	44	+6
Ages 35-59	34	44	+10
Ages 50-64	42	55	+13
Ages 65+	41	57	+16

	Initial	Final	Change
High School	34	43	+9
Some College	41	52	+11
College Grad	43	52	+9
Grad School	44	54	+10
Base voters	87	83	-4
Conflicted voters	31	45	+14
Oppositional voters	2	15	+13
Battleground voters	38	51	+13
Democrats	47	58	+11
Independents	39	47	+8
Republicans	23	32	+9

Key takeaways

- Describing abortion care
- The freedom to decide
- Restrictions and control
- We are the majority



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Describing abortion care

Abortion care should be:

- Safe
- Accessible
- Supported
- Affordable

We can and should discuss our vision for a world with reproductive freedom.



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The freedom to decide

Instead of...	Consider...
“Senator X is a pro-choice champion”	“Senator X champions our freedom to decide”
	“Senator X protects our freedom to decide”
	“Senator X respects our freedom to decide”



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Restrictions and control

- No more whack-a-mole: Describe **the full barrage of laws** and restrictions
- Talk about **enforcement**: What would these laws mean for women and pregnant people's lives?
- Describe the motivations: Be clear about why politicians are passing all of these laws -- **control, self-interest, and political gain**



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We are the majority

The vast majority of people - in whichever state you serve - support reproductive freedom.

We don't have to stay on the defensive -- we can and should move to offense and speak proactively about these issues.



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Questions?



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