Findings from 2020 Election Omnibus Survey

# Executive Summary

Lake Research and Tarrance Group conducted a pre-election survey of 2,400 likely voters nationwide. Of those interviewed, 364 were people with disabilities (approximately 15.2%) and another 998 (approximately 41.6%) were members of the disability community. Issue questions were given to 1,200 voters.

Like much of the country, the disability community was fairly evenly split when asked whom they support. 51% of voters with disabilities supported President Donald Trump, while 47% backed President-elect Joe Biden. Meanwhile, 51% of the overall disability community backed President-elect Biden and 48% preferred President Trump.

For 24% of voters with disabilities the most important issue in deciding whom to vote for was COVID and for 22% of voters with disabilities the top issue was jobs and the economy, and for 15% the top issue was healthcare. 77% of those who ranked COVID as the top issue supported President-elect Biden, while 21% supported Trump; similarly 74% of those who selected healthcare voted for President-elect Biden, and 25% voted for President Trump. Conversely, 78% of those who selected the economy and jobs voted to re-elect President Trump, while 20% voted for President-elect Biden.

While 81% of voters with disabilities considered it very important for candidates at both the congressional and presidential level to address issues important to people with disabilities, only 41% could recall hearing, seeing, or reading about anything from the candidates about disability issues. In battleground states, where political advertising and voter outreach is more common, that number drops to 33%. Given that 50% of voters with disabilities said that the candidates’ stances on disability issues strongly impacts their vote, the apparent relative lack of outreach signals a missed opportunity.

# Voting Preferences

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voter Category** | **Biden** | **Trump** |
| People with Disabilities | 47% | 51% |
| Disability Community | 51% | 48% |

*Presidential Vote*

A slim majority of voters with disabilities (51%), voted for President Donald Trump. A slim majority of the disability community (people with disabilities and their family and friends) as a whole voted for President-elect Biden – 51% to 48%. In contrast, in 2016, a plurality of voters with disabilities (49%) voted for Clinton and (46%) voted Trump. 48% of voters in the disability community overall voted for Trump in 2016 while 47% voted for Clinton.

Among those in battleground states, 55% of voters with disabilities in battleground states, voted for President Donald Trump. The broader disability community was more evenly divided with 50% voting for President Donald Trump and 49% voting for President-elect Joe Biden.

While support for 3rd party candidates was in the low single digits across all demographics (a finding consistent with the election results) it was noticeably higher among voters with disabilities than the broader pool of voters interviewed. When asked if they were voting for Biden, Trump, Jorgensen (Libertarian) or Hawkins (Green), only 1% of voters interviewed said they were supporting one of the 3rd party candidates, whereas 3% of voters with disabilities were opting to support either of the 3rd party candidates.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voter Category (Among People with Disabilities)** | **Biden** | **Trump** |
| College Educated | 57% | 39% |
| Not College Education | 42% | 57% |
| Under Age 50 | 56% | 40% |
| Over Age 50 | 40% | 59% |
| People of Color | 58% | 40% |
| White | 41% | 57% |
| Women | 50% | 48% |
| Men | 43% | 55% |

*Presidential Vote by Demographic Category*

Like among non-disabled voters, college education, age, race and gender were all correlated with voting preferences. Among voters with disabilities with a college education, 57% backed President-elect Biden while only 39% supported President Trump. However, among people with a disability without a college education we see the inverse, 57% supported President Trump while 42% supported President-elect Biden. Age differences were also correlated with a significant divide in candidate preferences. Among people with disabilities under 50, President-elect Biden was favored over President Trump 56% to 40%. However, among people with disabilities over age 50 we see the near opposite, with 59% backing President Trump compared to 40% supporting President-elect Biden.

Race was also correlated with candidate preference. People of color with disabilities favored President-elect Biden over President Trump 57% to 41%, while white people with disabilities favored President Trump over President-elect Biden 57% to 41%. Finally, gender was shown to relate to voter preferences, though less dramatically than the other categories. 55% of Men with disabilities preferred President Trump and 43% preferred President-elect Biden, women with disabilities were nearly evenly divided with 50% backing President-elect Biden and 48% supporting President Trump.

The political preferences of the broader disability community were typically consistently 1-2 points more favorable to President-elect Biden than people with disabilities specifically. The most notable divergence was the survey’s finding that while 57% of people with disability without college degrees supported President Trump, only 50% of those without college degrees in the disability community did.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voter Category** | **Dem Candidate** | **Rep Candidate** |
| People with Disabilities | 49% | 49% |
| Disability Community | 51% | 48% |

*Congressional Vote*

When it came to their choice for a congressional candidate, voters with disabilities were much more evenly divided. 49% said they were voting or leaning towards voting for the Republican candidate, and an equal number were backing the Democratic candidate. Among the disability community overall, Democrats had a slight edge with 51% either voting for or leaning towards voting for a Democratic candidate for Congress. Among all voters, 51% favored the Democratic candidate and 48% favored the Republican. Like with presidential preference, college education, age, race, and to a lesser extent gender correlated with voter preference. Democratic congressional candidates were favored among people with disabilities who are: college-educated (62%), people of color (62%) under age 50 (59%), and female (53%.) Meanwhile Republican congressional candidates were favored among people with disabilities who are: non-college educated (57%), white (57%), over age 50 (56%), and male (55%).

# Key Findings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **% of Voters with Disabilities Listing as Top Issue in Deciding Whom To Vote For** | **Candidate Preference Among Those who Listed as Top Issue** **Biden Trump** |
| COVID | 24% | 77% | 21% |
| Economy and Jobs | 22% | 20% | 78% |
| Healthcare | 15% | 74% | 25% |

*Top Issues Among Voters with Disabilities*

Voters across the country had COVID-19 and the economy on their minds as they cast their ballots this year. The same is true for the disability community. Among voters with disabilities, 24% cited COVID-19 and 22% listed the economy and jobs as the most important issues in deciding for whom to vote. 26% of the disability community overall said COVID-19 and the economy and jobs were the respectively among the two most important issues in deciding whom to vote for. 77% of voters with disabilities who chose COVID-19 as one of their two top issues voted for President-elect Biden, while 21% voted for President Trump. Voters in the overall disability community who listed COVID-19 as their top issue voted for President-elect Biden by an even larger margin, with 86% voting for the President-elect and just 14% voting for President Trump.

Healthcare was also a top issue, with 15% of voters with disabilities and 19% of individuals in the disability community listing it as key in deciding whom to vote for. 52% of voters with disabilities were very concerned, and 70% were concerned overall, that cuts to health care funding and repeal of the Affordable Care Act will have a negative impact on them.

Across the board, voters with and without a connection to the disability community believed it was very important for candidates to “treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect.” 90% of people with disabilities, 88% of those in the disability community, and 83% of voters surveyed overall said this was very important.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **% of Voters with Disabilities Responding in the Affirmative** |
| Very important for candidates to treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect | 90% |
| Very important for candidates to address issues important to people with disabilities | 81% |
| Candidates’ stances on the issues around disability strongly influence who I voted for | 50% |
| Read /heard presidential or congressional candidates discuss disability issues | 41% |

*Influence of Disability Issues on Candidate Support*

Notably, 81% of voters with disabilities believe it is very important for candidates at both the congressional and presidential level to address issues important to people with disabilities. 54% of voters with a disability, and 43% of the disability community overall, agreed with the statement: “candidates’ stances on the issues around disability influence who I voted for in the election.”

Yet, amongvoters with disabilities only 41% had read or otherwise heard presidential or congressional candidates discuss disability issues. Among the broader disability community, that number falls to 38%, and among people with disabilities and the overall community in battleground states that number falls even further to 33% each. Just 31% of voters surveyed, regardless of connection to disability, had heard, read, or saw candidates discuss disability issues. More than half across all subgroups say they had not heard, read or seen those issues discussed.

This apparent lack of voter education and outreach reveals something of a missed opportunity for candidates. 50% of people with disabilities and 41% of those in the disability community say that issues around disability strongly influence how motivated they are to vote. That reveals a growing emphasis in the importance of this issue since the previous round of surveying in 2019. At that time, only 40% of people with disabilities and 36% of the disability community said these issues strongly influenced how motivated they were. For people with disabilities this represents a 10-point increase. Overall, given the potential impact these issues can have in winning over voters with disabilities and motivating them to cast their ballots, candidates on both sides of the aisle would benefit from further outreach to the disability community.

# Methodology

Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group designed and administered this pre-election and election night survey which was conducted using professional interviewers from October 31 – November 3, 2020. The questions about voting and the demographics reached a total of 2,400 voters nationwide who voted in the 2020 elections or who were planning to vote later on Tuesday – 1,335 interviews among voters who were reached on cell phones, including 600 interviews completed by text-to-online, and 1,065 interviews among voters who were reached on landlines (margin of error +/- 2.0%). Of those interviewed, 364 were people with disabilities (approximately ~15.2%) and 998 (approximately ~41.6%) were members of the disability community. Issue questions reached a total of 1,200 voters nationwide who voted in the 2020 elections or who were planning to vote later on Tuesday (margin of error of +/-2.8%).

Telephone numbers were drawn from the TargetSmart voter file. The sample was stratified geographically based on the proportion of likely voters in each region. The data were weighted to reflect the aggregated Presidential vote as reported in the 2020 exit polls, as well as by gender, age, race, party identification, education, marital status, union household, and census region to reflect the actual proportions of the electorate.

Due to rounding some of the numbers in the presentation will not always add to 100%.

# Questions?

If you are a reporter, candidate, political party, political consultant or non-partisan organization and you would like to learn more, contact Jack Rosen – the National Disability Rights Network’s Voter Engagement Specialist. He can be contacted via email at jack.rosen@ndrn.org. Full versions of the 2020 Election Omnibus Survey and presentations on its findings are available upon request.