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Engaging Unmarried Women Key Progressive Group Insufficiently Courted

To: The Progressive Community
From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund

Unmarried women represent the largest block of progressive voters in the American electorate, accounting for 26 percent of the voting age population. And yet, for too long, these voters, and would-be voters, have remained untouched by progressives and under-represented in the American electorate. In 2004, for example, 20 million unmarried women did not vote. Given the fact that John Kerry won unmarried women by a 62 – 37 percent margin, this effectively left 12 million progressive votes on the table.

A new battleground survey commissioned by the Women's Voices. Women Vote Action fund demonstrates both the on-going failure to effectively engage unmarried women and, more dramatically, the opportunity cost for this failure.¹

Some key highlights:

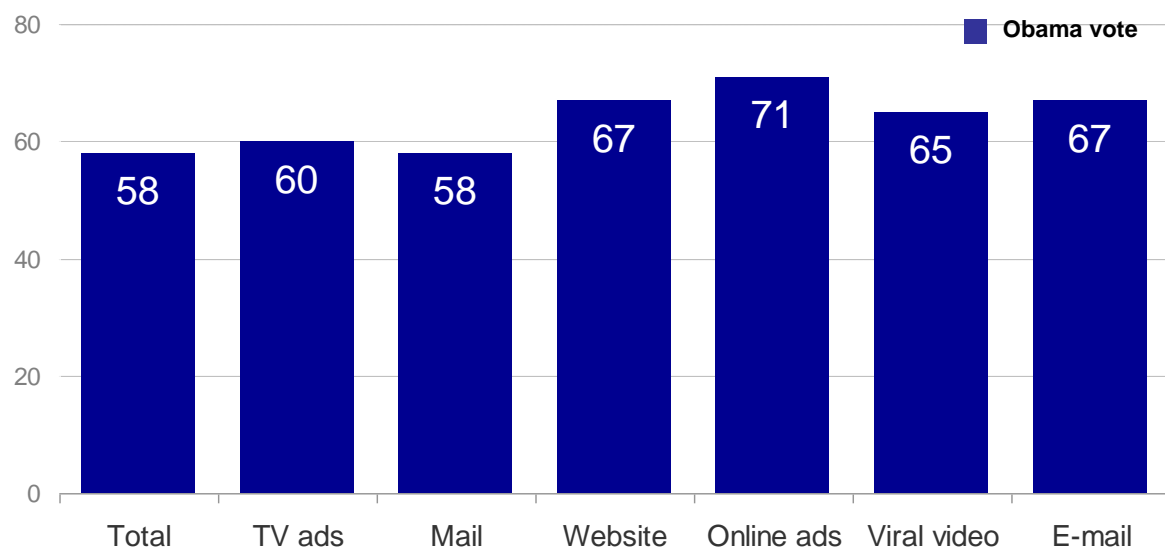
- Unmarried women continue to deliver huge margins to Democrats. Barack Obama leads 58 – 31 percent among registered, unmarried women and Democratic congressional candidates lead Republican congressional candidates 61 – 29 percent in a named trial heat.

¹ The survey was conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner from August 12-18, 2008, and sponsored by the Women's Voices. Women Vote Action Fund. The survey results are based on telephone interviews with a random sample of 500 registered unmarried women. In order to amplify the sample size, this report includes 281 interviews cases from a Democracy Corps and a NPR survey. The battleground is defined here as the states of Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin.

- However, relative to the rest of the electorate, unmarried women remain unengaged. A 64 percent majority of unmarried women describe themselves as very interested (rating their interest level a 10 on a 10-point scale). This compares unfavorably to the 73 percent of voters who describe themselves as very interested in an identically worded likely voter battleground survey conducted by National Public Radio over the same time period. Among married women, the number reaches 78 percent.
- On balance, unmarried women report the same level of campaign contact as other voters. That is to say, they have received roughly the same number of phone calls and have seen the same number of ads. Internet activity is slightly, but notably, less pervasive among unmarried women. *More important, given their progressive instincts and the fact that they are less likely to participate in politics, unmarried women should be getting more campaign contact than average.*
- This point is vividly demonstrated in some of the results of the survey. Among unmarried voters who have heard from the campaigns—either Democratic or Republican campaigns—the progressive margin increases. Some of this movement reflects a Democratic bias among some of these voters, but the margins often exceed Democratic expectations among many of these groups. The impact of Internet activity is particularly notable.

Figure 1: Obama Strong on the Internet

Now I am going to name several mediums people get information from about this year's presidential election. Please tell me, for each, if you have gotten information through these specific mediums.



Conclusion

Every election is a numbers game. Unmarried women supported progressive candidates by nearly a 2:1 margin in 2004, better than a 2:1 margin in 2006 and continue that trend today. And yet, they do not participate at levels comparable to other groups, leaving millions of unharnessed progressive votes at home on Election Day. This new survey reinforces both these trends and demonstrates the potential profit to progressives of seriously engaging these voters.