



To: ParentsTogether Action
From: Betsy App, Change Research
Date: August 2nd, 2024
Re: Parents are a key voting bloc in 2024

Candidates and their campaigns are asking themselves two fundamental questions in the weeks and months leading up to the 2024 election: who do we talk to and what do we say? **One segment of voters that has not received much notice from Democratic strategists is parents.** Around one in five people who cast a vote in the November 2024 election will be a parent raising one or more children under 18, and polling from Change Research suggests that this could be the voting bloc that determines who wins up and down the ballot in November. Many campaigns aren't paying attention to parents, and few polls include results broken out by parental status. What are campaigns (and their pollsters) missing by not thinking about parents as a unique and important slice of the electorate? Maybe a lot.

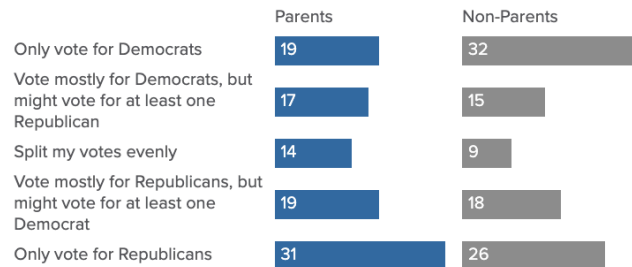
KEY INSIGHTS

1. Parents are an important voting bloc, and this should be reflected both in research and in communications. Parents raising children under 18 comprise a large swath of the electorate, and **several indicators suggest that they are more persuadable than non-parents.** For these reasons, candidates and campaigns should:
 - Regularly examine parents vis-à-vis non-parents in polling and other electoral research.
 - Use polling insights to develop parent-specific communication strategies and messages.
2. Democrats have been losing parent support up and down the ballot since 2020, with Democrats down 14 points in key states, underlining the importance of parent persuasion.
3. Younger parents (under the age of 35) are ripe for mobilization efforts. These parents have been far less motivated to vote in the 2024 election than parents over the age of 35, yet they share the same concerns as parents 35 and older.
4. From parents' perspective, raising a family is harder than it's ever been. Effective messaging to parents should:
 - First, acknowledge the struggles parents are facing.
 - Frame messages in a way that invokes their parental identity, which is as important to their sense of self as their fundamental values.
 - Speak to parents' core concerns: the economy and rising costs, particularly the price of groceries and food, but also pro-family policies generally that will make their jobs as parents easier. Consider contrast messaging that demonstrates how Democratic policies are aimed at helping families cover their costs while Republican policies (new tariffs, mass deportation) are actually inflationary and will cause families' bills to go up.

Democrats have been losing parent support up and down the ballot since 2020

A 2023 poll commissioned by ParentsTogether Action (December 8-12, n=1,034 likely voters) surveying parents and non-parents in nine battleground states showed that **Democrats are down 14 points among parents in key battleground states when it comes to down ballot races: 36% of parents say they will vote for all or mostly Democrats, while 50% say they will vote for all or mostly Republicans.** In contrast, down ballot Democrats are up 3 points among non-parents in these battleground states.

In the November 2024 elections for Congress, state, and local offices, will you:



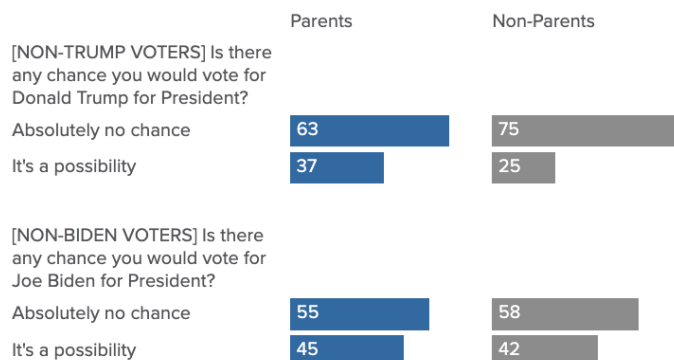
Source: Change Research/ParentsTogether, Battleground Likely Voter Poll (December 8-12 2023, n=1,034)

At the presidential level before Biden’s withdrawal from the race, his support going from 2020 to mid-2024 slipped far more significantly among parents than among non-parents. The 2023 battleground poll also showed larger declines in Biden support among parents, especially moms, relative to non-parents. In 2020, 39% of parents in these battleground states voted for Biden (48% voted for Trump), but just 26% said they would vote for Biden in 2024—a 13-point decline. Among moms, just 30% said they would vote for Biden in 2024, compared to 47% who voted for the President in 2020.

Parents’ persuadability means they could continue sliding even further to the right, or swing back left

A national poll of 1,533 likely voters conducted February 6-8, 2024 showed that parents on both sides of the partisan spectrum express more openness to voting for a non-preferred presidential candidate relative to non-parents.

Parents are more open to voting for a non-preferred candidate



Source: Change Research, National Likely Voter Poll (February 6-8 2024, n=1,533)

Among voters who were not currently supporting Trump, 37% of parents said there was a chance they would vote for him versus just 25% of non-parents. The difference is less pronounced among non-Biden supporters but directionally consistent: 45% of parents who were not currently supporting Biden said there was a chance they would vote for him versus 42% of non-parents. There’s a clear opportunity for Democrats in 2024 to stem the bleeding with a new presidential candidate and new messaging that can win parents back in November.

The December 2023 battleground poll also provides evidence that **parents are more responsive to messaging than non-parents**. Respondents were asked to consider four messages from unnamed candidates from the opposing party and indicate whether they would consider voting for that candidate. More than one in three (36%) parents said they would consider voting for at least one of the unnamed candidates from the opposing party compared to just 26% of non-parents who said the same. This holds true even after accounting for differences between parents and non-parents in terms of self-reported party affiliation and demographics (gender, age, race/ethnicity); parental status is a significant predictor of openness to voting for a candidate from the opposing party ($p < .05$).

What do parents care about heading into the 2024 election? It's (mostly) the economy, stupid.

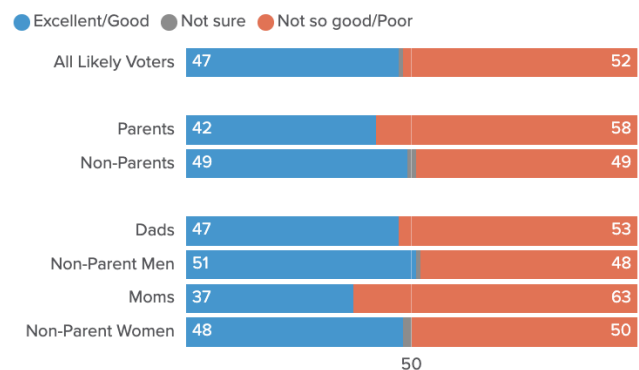
Inflation and rising costs top parents' list of most important issues, tied with immigration. More than one-third (36%) of parents cite inflation and the rising cost of goods as a top issue, compared with just 29% of non-parents.

Parents have higher household incomes than non-parents, yet parents rate their personal financial situation worse than non-parents. In a national likely voter poll (June 24-27 2024, n=1,524) just 42% of parents said that their personal finances were good or excellent compared to half (49%) of non-parents. These parents report a median annual household income between \$100,000 and \$150,000—far higher than the median household income reported by non-parents (\$50,000-\$75,000).

What is it about the economy that parents are taking issue with? Several polls suggest that **parents are struggling with rising costs of everyday essentials, especially food and groceries**.

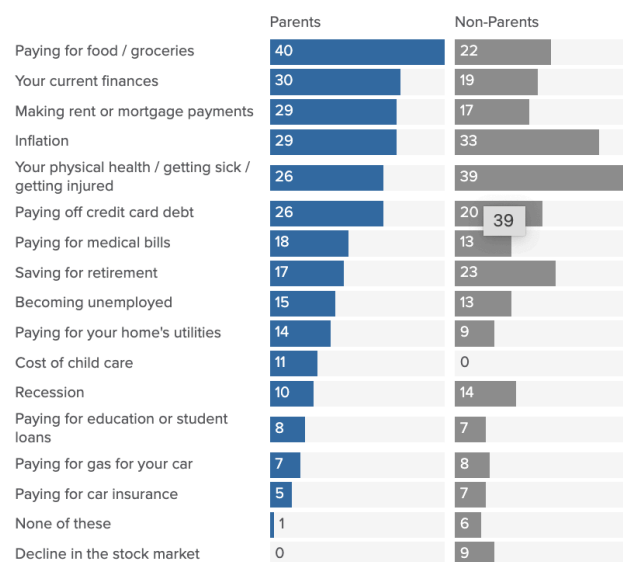
In a nationwide survey of adults with an annual household income between \$30,000 and \$130,000 (June 8-11 2024, n=1,027), three-quarters (77%) of parents reported that their income had fallen behind the cost of living in just the past three months, compared to 65% of non-parents who said the same. These parents worry most about paying for food and groceries, with 40% citing this as a top worry

How would you rate your personal finances?



Source: Change Research, National Likely Voter Poll (June 24-27 2024, n=1,524)

Which of the following things do you worry about the most? Select up to THREE.



Source: Change Research/Primerica, Middle-Income Adults (June 8-11 2024, n=1,027)

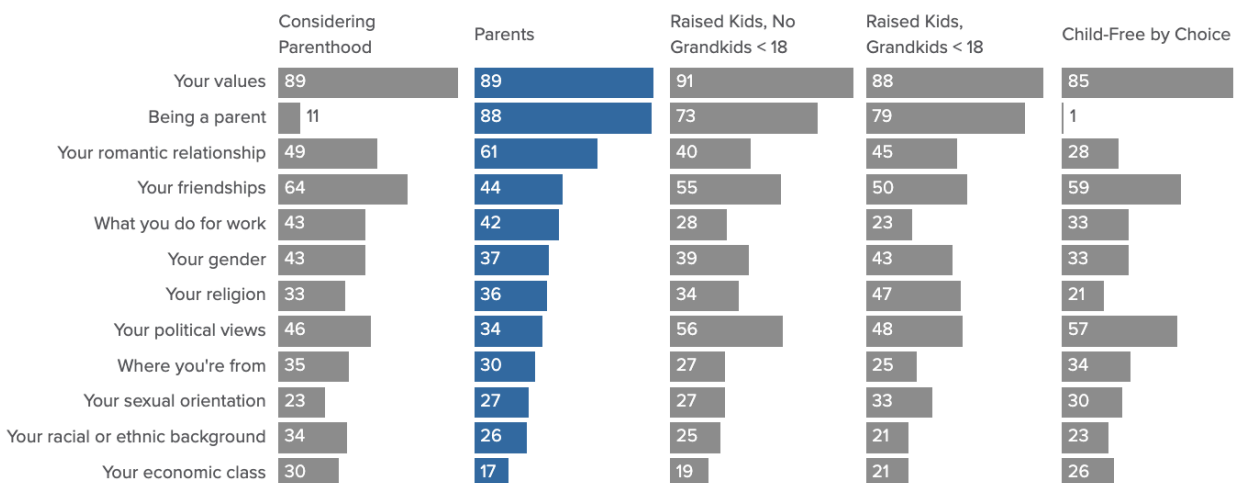
(48% of moms). Non-parents, on the other hand, worry more about their physical health and just 22% name food and groceries as a top worry.

Young parents—parents under the age of 35—are especially sensitive economically. Nearly all (93%) young parents say that rising costs of food and essentials makes it challenging to raise a family today. Their next biggest challenges are the rising cost of housing (85%) and childcare (68%). Young parents voted for Biden by an 11-point margin in 2020 but have been far less motivated to vote in 2024 (60% extremely motivated) relative to parents 35+ (77% extremely motivated).

Parent voters are driven by their identity as parents

In spite of the difficulty for families and parents today, or perhaps *because* of the difficulty, the overwhelming majority (88%) of parents say that being a parent is a big part of their identity.

To what extent are each of the following a part of your identity? (% 'A big part')



Source: Change Research, National Likely Voter Poll (June 24-27 2024, n=1,524)

Being a parent is as core to parents' identity as their fundamental values, and even more central (on average) than their gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and the political views they hold.

Parents are attracted to candidates who invoke this identity and speak to their core concerns: making it easier to raise a family, primarily through reducing costs. Nearly all parents (96%) say they are more likely to support a candidate who wants to reduce the cost of living, and most (84%) say they are more likely to support a candidate who wants to make housing more affordable. Parents and non-parents report high rates of support for a candidate who would push for policies that make it easier to raise a family (91% and 86%, respectively), but parents are more intensely attracted to a pro-family candidate, with nearly three-quarters (72%) saying they are *much* more likely to support them compared to 58% among non-parents.

As noted above, the December 2023 battleground poll shows that parents are more likely to consider voting for candidates from their non-preferred party relative to non-parents. When it

comes to issues and platform, **the messages that parents find most compelling—that make them say they would at least consider voting for a candidate from their non-preferred party—highlight economic policies and other policies that make raising a family easier.** Among Republican-voting parents (i.e., those who say they’ll vote for all or mostly Republicans in 2024), two in five (42%) say they would consider voting for a Democrat focused on a policy agenda that puts families first, including paid leave, the expanded Child Tax Credit, and holding Big Tech responsible for keeping children safe online. More than one-third (36%) say they would consider voting for a Democrat who champions federal programs that help families cover their expenses (i.e., WIC, SNAP, and the expanded child tax credit). These messages were more attractive to parents than messages centering on restoring abortion rights to those guaranteed under *Roe v Wade*, and messages underscoring the dangers of MAGA extremism ($ps < .05$).

On the flip side, nearly two in five (38%) of parents who plan to vote for all or mostly Democrats say they would consider voting for a Republican who promises to rein in spending and boost the economy through smart investments. This economic-centered message outperformed Republican messages on parents’ rights to control what their children are taught in the classroom, anti-trans messaging, and the dangers of liberal extremism ($ps < .05$).

In sum, parents are less persuaded by social issues and political extremism and more persuaded by candidates who message on parents’ core concerns around the economy, making it easier to afford everyday essentials, and other policies that would make it easier to raise a family.