November 19, 2020
For Immediate Release

Contact: Daniel De Simone
760.703.0948

Women Voters are Key to Biden Victory, Election of First Woman Vice President

President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris relied heavily on women voters within various demographic groups for their electoral success in 2020, according to an initial analysis of exit poll and election survey data by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Specifically, Black women, Latinas, and college-educated white women played key roles in delivering the presidency to the Biden-Harris ticket. In contrast, non-college-educated white women and women who identify as evangelical continued to provide a loyal base of support for President Donald Trump.

In 2020, for the first time in nearly two decades, major media outlets relied on more than one election survey to analyze voter behavior in the presidential election: Edison Research's national exit poll and the Associated Press's VoteCast (conducted by NORC).[1] In light of differences between these surveys and their sampling limitations, CAWP's analyses of gender and voting behavior in 2020 focuses on trends consistent across these surveys and findings from Latino Decisions, recognized for its more sophisticated and robust sampling of racial minority voters and a methodology that includes greater respondent access to multi-lingual surveys than the Edison exit poll, and the Cooperative Election Study (CES). For specific data on gender differences in presidential vote choice across these surveys, see CAWP's Comparison of 2020 Election Surveys.

Women's support for President-elect Joe Biden was especially pivotal to his success among certain groups.

- Across multiple election surveys, including the Edison exit poll, **Black women** proved to be the most reliable base of voters for the Biden-Harris ticket, with about 9 in 10 Black women casting ballots for the Democrats. Consistent with previous presidential elections, Black women's support for the Democratic ticket was greater than the support of any other groups of women voters. Their support for Biden was also greater than Black men, though the large majority of Black men also voted for the Democratic ticket. While complete voter turnout data is not yet available for 2020, Black women are consistently among the voters most likely to turn out in U.S. elections. That appears to be true again this year.

---

[1] Edison Research's national exit poll, which CAWP has relied on in previous presidential elections to analyze gender differences in voting behavior, significantly adjusted their methodology for exit polling this year to account for the historic increase in early and mail-in voting; they expanded their reliance on telephone surveys and in-person interviews at early voting locations. Their exit poll continued to be the source for voter analysis by ABC, CBS, CNN, and CBS. The Associated Press'(AP) VoteCast offered an alternative to the traditional exit poll in 2020 and was adopted as the primary source for voter analysis by major news outlets including Fox News, NPR, PBS NewsHour, Univision News, USA Today Network, and The Wall Street Journal. VoteCast is a telephone survey of registered voters in the days leading up to and including Election Day, conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago.

- **Latinas** cast somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of their ballots for the Biden-Harris ticket, according to this year's election surveys and consistent with the patterns of support among Latinas for the Democratic party in past presidential elections. Latinas' support for the Democratic presidential candidate was greater than the support of Latino men, though the preponderance of Latino men also supported the Democratic ticket. This support, while variable across the full diversity of Latino voters, is especially notable in an election year where Latinas/os were expected to be the largest racial/ethnic minority group among U.S. voters.
- While white women overall continued to support President Donald Trump over Joe Biden in nearly all 2020 election surveys, **college-educated white women** further cemented their shift to Democratic support since the 2016 presidential election. This group backed Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump by seven points, according to Edison's 2016 exit poll. This year, Biden expanded that margin of support among college-educated white women. Importantly, while college-educated white women were more likely than their male counterparts to support the Biden-Harris ticket, Biden also expanded support with college-educated white men.

These data illustrate that women are not a monolithic voting bloc. Further evidence of this is available in identifying the consistent support of some women voters for President Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

- Trump's success in winning the plurality of white women's votes again in 2020 can be credited largely to his support among clear majorities of **non-college-educated white women** across election surveys. While non-college-educated white men remained more likely than their women counterparts to back the Trump-Pence ticket, both groups were key to Trump's support this year.
- **Evangelical women**, according to the Edison exit poll and the CES, also proved essential to President Trump's support in 2020, with around 7 in 10 of them casting their ballots for the Trump-Pence ticket. Evangelical men supported the Republican ticket in even higher numbers, according to the national exit poll.

Much attention has historically, and again this year, been given to a singular gender gap in presidential vote, defined as the difference in the proportions of all women and all men voting for the winning candidate. This difference, whereby women have been more likely than men to support Democratic presidential candidates and less likely than men to support Republican presidential candidates, has been consistent in every presidential election since 1980. In 2020, this trend continues. Edison's exit poll currently reports a gender gap of 12 percentage points between all women and all men, with 57 percent of women and 45 percent of men voting for Biden. VoteCast offers a smaller gender gap (9 percentage points, with 55 percent of women and 46 percent of men voting for Biden), but the gap itself persists. Other presidential elections since 1980 have seen gender gaps ranging from four to eleven percentage points.

As the data above demonstrate, however, there are multiple gender gaps that should be analyzed to fully understand the differential role of women and men in presidential election outcomes. Women across many demographic subgroups – including those highlighted here – were more likely than their male counterparts to support the Biden-Harris ticket, but women within specific groups have contributed more or less to Democratic candidates' advantage with women overall, both historically and in 2020.

For more detailed analyses of gender differences in voting behavior in 2020, see CAWP's *Revisiting the Gender Gap in 2020* symposium, 2020 Presidential Gender Gap Poll Tracker, and Comparison of 2020 Election Surveys.

_____

About CAWP

The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is nationally recognized as the leading source of scholarly research and current data about women's political participation in the United States. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about the role of women in American politics, enhance women's influence in public life, and expand the diversity of women in politics and government. CAWP's education and outreach programs translate research findings into action, addressing women's under-representation in political leadership with effective, intersectional, and imaginative programs serving a variety of audiences. As the world has watched Americans considering female candidates for the nation's highest offices, CAWP's five decades of analyzing and interpreting women's participation in American politics have provided a foundation and context for the discussion.