



## MEMO TO THE MOVEMENT

### *Issue 1* Youth Vote Exit Polling

November 8, 2023

#### I. OVERVIEW

Yesterday, voters in Ohio approved a ballot referendum, *Issue 1*, which will enshrine the “right to abortion” through all nine months for any reason in their state constitution. Ohio is now another state that has fallen victim to well-funded misinformation campaigns. Passing with a 57% majority, this result should signal two things for the Pro-Life Movement: 1) The Pro-Life movement’s battle following the reversal of *Roe* will be a marathon, not a sprint; 2) We still missed the mark in communicating to voters the extremism of the pro-abortion proposal.

While Americans remain divided on the legality of abortion, several studies have proven [the majority of GenZ and Millennial voters do agree with at least some gestational limits](#). However, when faced with confusing messages, voters will cave to pressure and ultimately vote against their own values.

We conducted our own exit poll to discover what messaging most compelled a youth voter’s “yes” or “no” vote on Ohio’s *Issue 1*.

#### II. METHODOLOGY

Volunteers were stationed outside polling locations on Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>. As respondents exited the polls, they were invited to participate in a 7-question survey through flyers, posters, and personal asks from volunteers. Volunteers remained neutral, dressed in plain clothes, and were not associated with either pro-life or pro-choice groups while conducting surveys.

464 voters participated from across 7 major cities in Ohio. **80%** of respondents were **GenZ** (18-24), **12% Millennials** (25-40), with the remaining **8%** aged **41 and older** or not responding to the question regarding age. Political party affiliation was reported as: **37% Democrat**, **29% Republican**, **13% Independent**, **13% “Other” or none** and 5% not responding to the question regarding political affiliation.

#### III. KEY FINDINGS

- **Three-fourths of respondents reported that abortion was the most important issue they consider when voting.**
  - Republican voters ranked highest in their concern for abortion with 83% reporting it is their most important issue, followed by Democrats at 76%, and

Independent voters at 66%.

- **More than half of those who voted “Yes” on *Issue 1* did not prioritize abortion through all 9 months.**
  - 33% of those who voted in favor of *Issue 1* did so thinking “abortion should be available in certain cases (rape, incest, life of the mother).
  - About 4% prioritized “minor’s rights”, not wanting parent involvement with a minor’s decision to either get an abortion or transgender surgery.
  - 15% reported there was “something else” that was their priority when voting in favor of *Issue 1*.
  
- **85% of those who voted “No” on *Issue 1* prioritized limiting abortion through all 9 months.**
  - A small minority, roughly 8%, valued “parental rights”, for either abortions or transgender surgery, as their main motivation when voting No on *Issue 1*.
  
- **“Word of mouth” and conversations informed voter opinion on *Issue 1* more than any other marketing tactic.**
  - When asked, “What helped inform your vote on *Issue 1*” respondents could choose more than one method that informed their vote.
    - 44% reported that a friend shared information with them
    - 39% were informed through an advertisement on TV, radio, or social media
    - 30% said they saw a display on campus or in the community
    - About 19% said they received information at their home (15% through the mail & 4% at their door). *Keeping in mind, most survey respondents were GenZ and likely living on campus.*

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MOVEMENT

- **Talk about abortion.**

Skirting around the issue of abortion has done zero favors for the Pro-Life Movement, underserved women, and vulnerable babies in the womb. Ohio Exit Polling on *Issue 1* and the passing of pro-abortion ballot referendums in states where pro-life groups have prioritized issues *other than* abortion are now clear evidence that voters need to hear from us about abortion extremism.
  
- **Focus on late-term abortion.**

One-third of those voting in favor did so *not* because they wanted abortion through all 9 months of pregnancy, but because they truly believed without such a constitutional amendment, abortion in rare cases would not be covered. This is a significant group who had the potential to vote against *Issue 1*, if the extreme reality of codifying unregulated late-term abortions was clearly presented to them. Additionally, the exit poll data confirmed that it was, in fact, not wanting abortion through all 9 months that became the biggest influencer of a “No” vote from GenZ.

- **Lead with compassion.**

The Pro-Life Movement must always balance our defense of the preborn with our care for mothers and families. As we know from [previous studies](#) concerning those “in the middle” on abortion, women-centered supportive messages are crucial to attract the middle.

We also saw how stories that included real pain and suffering, such as women who conceived a child following rape or parents who were given a terminal diagnosis for their preborn baby, were swiftly and cruelly broadcasted by pro-abortion groups who used them to their advantage to confuse voters. With 44% of voters reporting their opinion was influenced from conversations with friends, *how* we talk about abortion is critical. The voice of the preborn will only be heard when we simultaneously amplify our concern for women.

## V. CONCLUSION

Social change takes time. Pro-Life Americans know our movement’s victory will come from a marathon, not a sprint...and we are good at that. It took almost 50 years to undo the wrongs of *Roe*. The day after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, we didn’t have a Black president. The day after women got the right to vote, they were not fully recognized and protected in American society. One year after *Roe*, pro-life Americans still have our work cut out for us, but like other great social issue movements, we will continue to stand and fight for those who cannot defend themselves.