Gray is the New Green:
The Growing Strength of Older Climate Voters

Key findings from predictive models identifying environment-first voters aged 65 and older across 18 states.

November 2023

Environmental Voter Project

Executive Summary

This report highlights key findings about older climate voters in 18 states[1] where the Environmental Voter Project (EVP) has built predictive models identifying voters who are likely to rank "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top political priority.

Unlike polls, which attempt to measure the attitudes of an entire population, predictive models identify specific individuals who have a high likelihood of prioritizing an issue — in this case, climate change or environmental issues. These individuals can then be targeted for mobilization campaigns, and the aggregate voter data often reveals the relative size of certain voting blocs as well as some of their unique characteristics.

In our 2023 predictive modeling, EVP identified such a large number of climate voters aged 65 and older that these older voters now make up the second largest age cohort of climate voters (after 18–34 year olds) in each of the 18 states studied. This report details EVP's findings on these older climate voters, including demographic data, their state-specific strength, and their potential political power.[2]

Consistently Large Numbers of Older Climate Voters.

- **1 in 6 voters aged 65 and older view climate as a top priority.** Across the 18 states studied, 16.4% of registered voters aged 65 and older were likely to consider either "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top issue priority.

- **After young voters (age 18–34), older voters (age 65+) are now the second most likely age group to prioritize climate.** In each of the 18 states studied, voters aged 65 and older were more likely than 35–49 year olds or 50–64 year olds to list "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top issue priority. Only 18–34 year olds were more

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[1] The 18 states included in this study are Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia. Although EVP also works in Alaska, we have not included Alaska data in this study because Alaskans can choose to keep their age and other data private on voter files, leaving the remaining public data unreliable for inclusion in studies like this.

[2] Voters referred to as "climate voters" are registered voters who have a 75.00% – 99.99% likelihood of listing either "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top priority according to EVP's 2023 predictive models.

likely to prioritize climate than voters aged 65 and older.

- **The Potential Impact of Older Climate Voters in Arizona and Pennsylvania.** In Arizona and Pennsylvania — two crucial swing states in 2024 — the populations of older climate voters are so large that they make up 4.8% and 4.7%, respectively, of the entire electorate in each state.

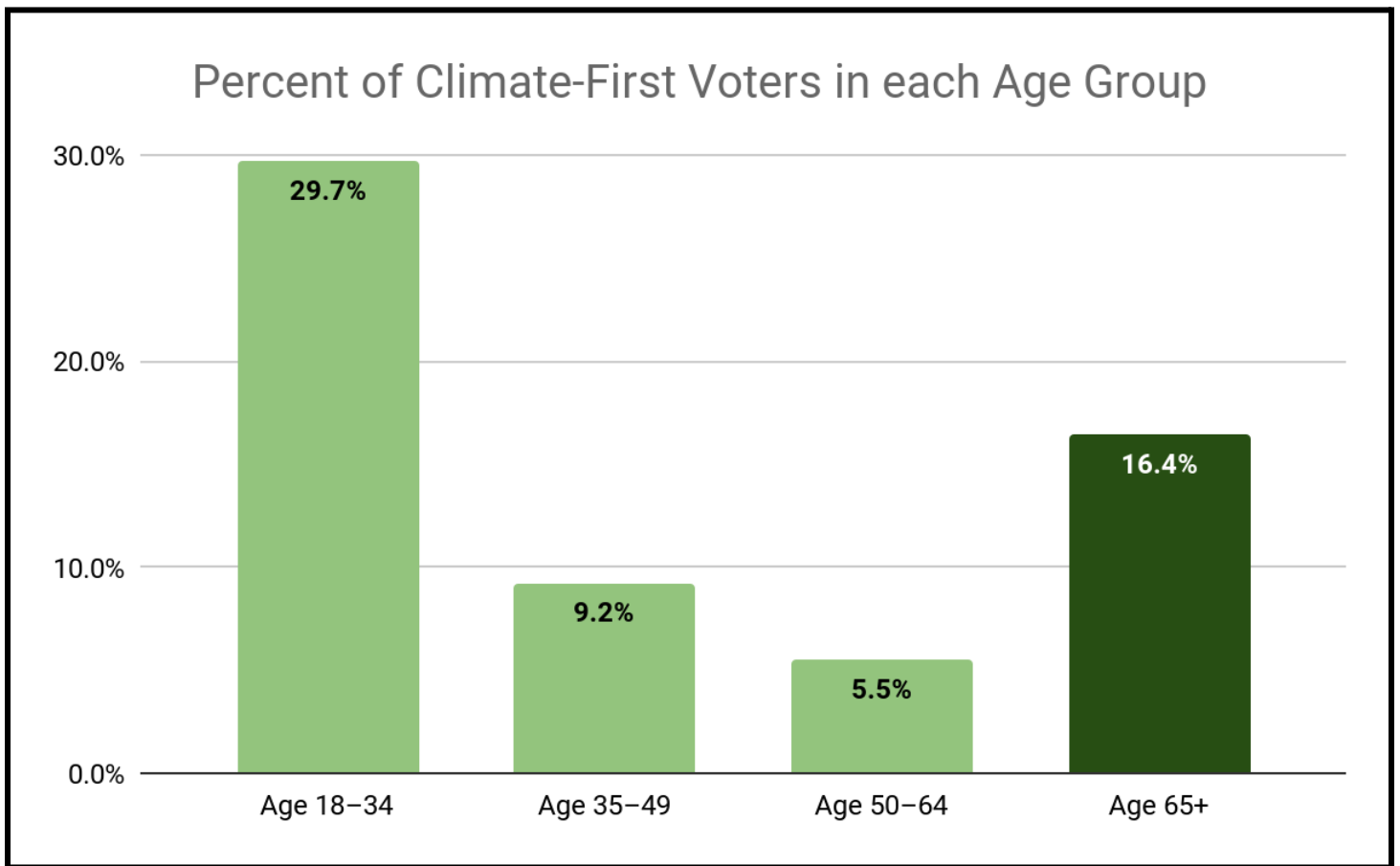## Who Are These Older Climate Voters?

- **Disproportionately Female.** Older female climate voters outnumber older male climate voters 59.3% to 40.4% (with 0.4% unknown).[3] This significant 19-point gender gap is much larger than the 10-point gender gap which exists among all registered voters aged 65 and older.

- **More Likely to be AAPI or White.** 3.0% of age 65+ climate voters are Asian American & Pacific Islander compared to only 2.5% of all registered voters. Similarly, 83.6% of older climate voters are white compared to 77.3% of all older registered voters. Among younger voters, EVP has previously found that voters of color make up a disproportionately large percentage of climate voters.

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[3] Voter file data includes sex — rather than gender — as a demographic category. In some instances, this identifier is self-selected by the voter and in others it is state-identified or modeled. Since sex is not analogous to gender, this report presents only the "male" and "female" identifiers categorized as sex in SmartVAN voter files. In our narrative discussion, we use the term men to encompass the group identified as male and the term women for the group identified as female. Some states do not supply data about the sex of each registered voter, so the data for those states must be commercially sourced and is therefore incomplete, leading to varying rates of "unknown" sex for voters across the states in this report. This report also includes the commonly-used term "gender gap" when referring to aggregate differences in the sex of climate voters.
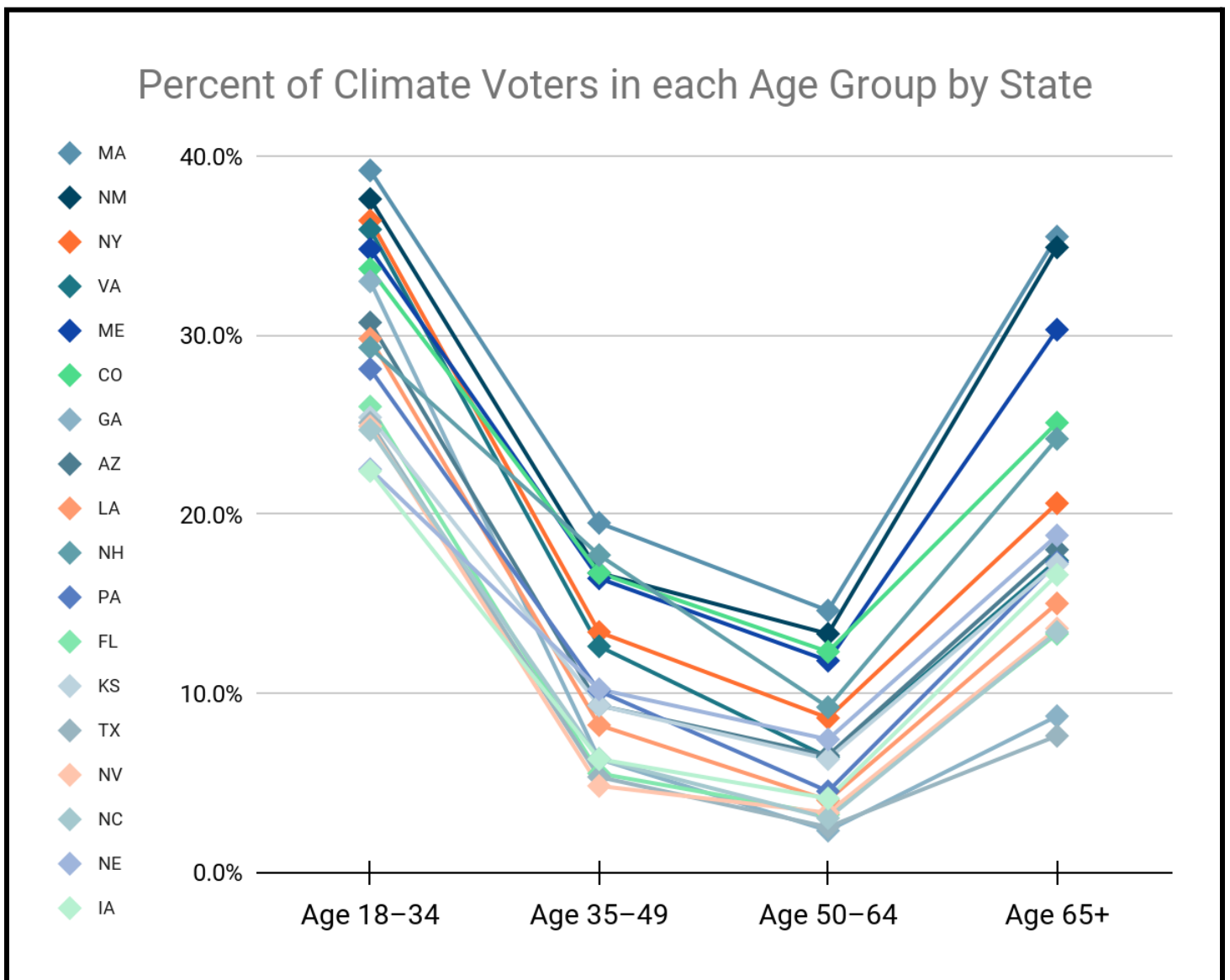
1. Voters 65 and older are now the Second Largest Group of Climate Voters

Across the 18 states studied by the Environmental Voter Project, 1 out of every 6 voters aged 65 and older (16.4%) were likely to list either "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top issue priority, compared to just 1 out of every 11 voters age 35–49 and 1 out of every 18 voters age 50–64. Although 18–34 year-olds still hold the largest share of climate-first voters, these findings show the climate movement isn't as monolithically young as is often expected, and so-called "climate grandparents" are an increasingly powerful voting bloc.

Percent of Climate-First Voters in each Age Group

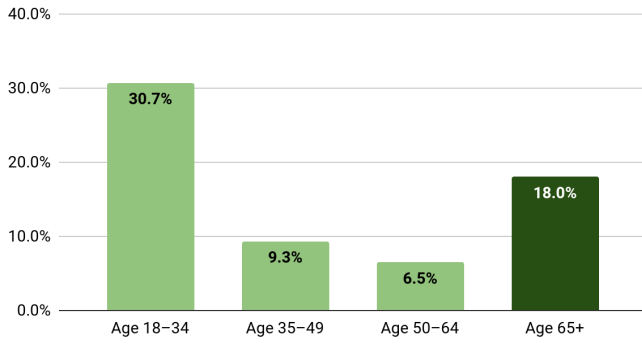| Age Group	Percent
Age 18–34	29.7%
Age 35–49	9.2%
Age 50–64	5.5%
Age 65+	16.4%

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2. Older Climate Voters are Consistently Strong across all 18 States Studied
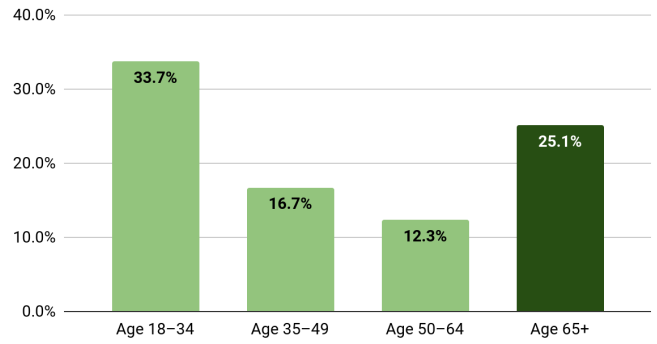
As shown in the charts below, the percentage of climate voters in different age groups can vary — sometimes dramatically — from state-to-state, but the overall trend lines are remarkably consistent across all 18 states. In each state, the youngest voters (18–34) always have the highest percentage of climate voters, followed by the oldest voters (65+), followed by 35–49 year-olds, and then 50–64 year-olds have the lowest percentage of climate voters.
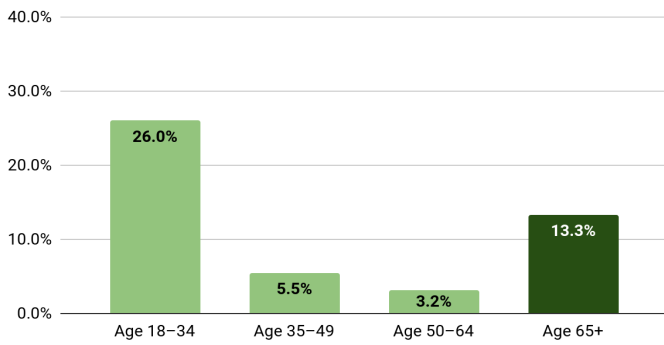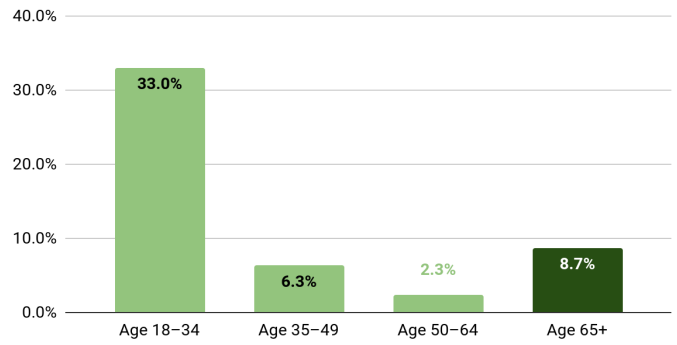

Percent of Climate Voters in each Age Group by State
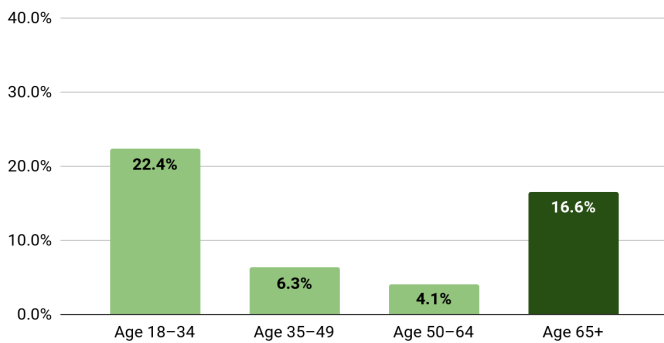
Arizona Climate Voters

Age 18–34	Age 35–49	Age 50–64	Age 65+
30.7%	9.3%	6.5%	18.0%

Colorado Climate Voters

Age 18–34	Age 35–49	Age 50–64	Age 65+
33.7%	16.7%	12.3%	25.1%

Florida Climate Voters

Age 18–34	Age 35–49	Age 50–64	Age 65+
26.0%	5.5%	3.2%	13.3%

Georgia Climate Voters

Age 18–34	Age 35–49	Age 50–64	Age 65+
33.0%	6.3%	2.3%	8.7%

Iowa Climate Voters

Age 18–34	Age 35–49	Age 50–64	Age 65+
22.4%	6.3%	4.1%	16.6%

Kansas Climate Voters

Age 18–34	Age 35–49	Age 50–64	Age 65+
25.4%	9.3%	6.3%	17.2%

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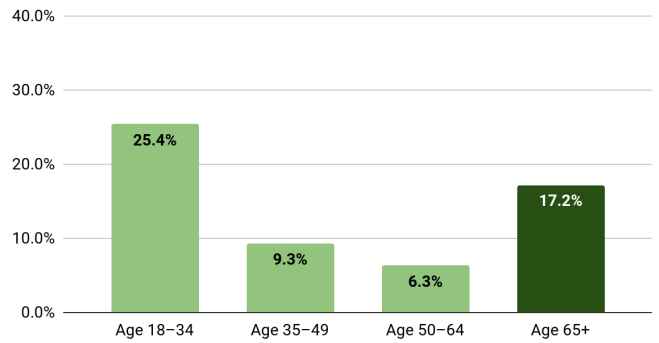
Louisiana Climate Voters

Age 18–34	29.8%
Age 35–49	8.2%
Age 50–64	4.0%
Age 65+	15.0%

Maine Climate Voters

Age 18–34	34.8%
Age 35–49	16.4%
Age 50–64	11.8%
Age 65+	30.3%
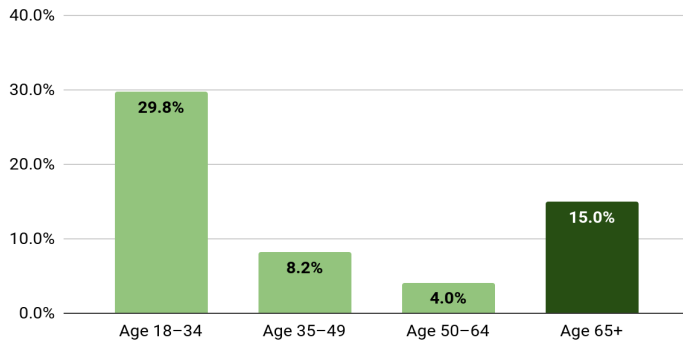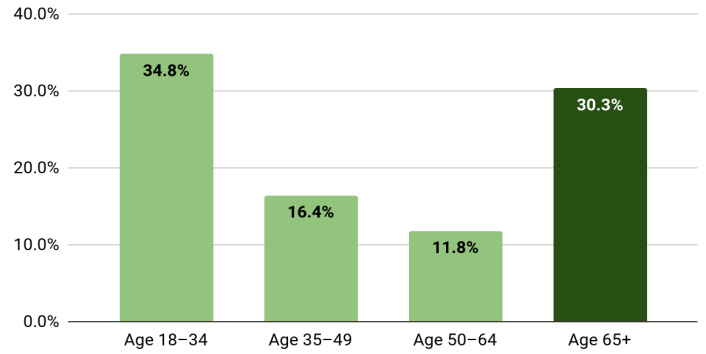
Massachusetts Climate Voters

Age 18–34	39.2%
Age 35–49	19.5%
Age 50–64	14.6%
Age 65+	35.5%
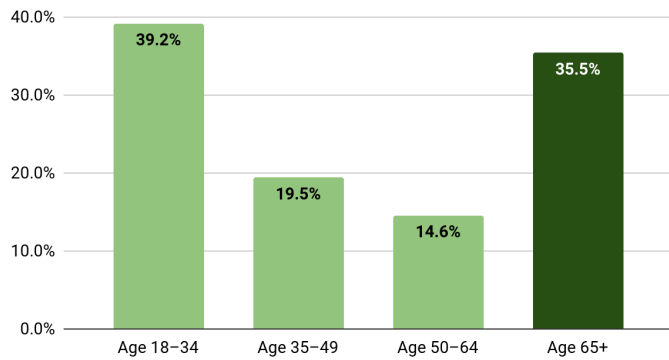
Nebraska Climate Voters

Age 18–34	22.5%
Age 35–49	10.2%
Age 50–64	7.4%
Age 65+	18.8%

Nevada Climate Voters

Age 18–34	24.9%
Age 35–49	4.8%
Age 50–64	3.3%
Age 65+	13.6%
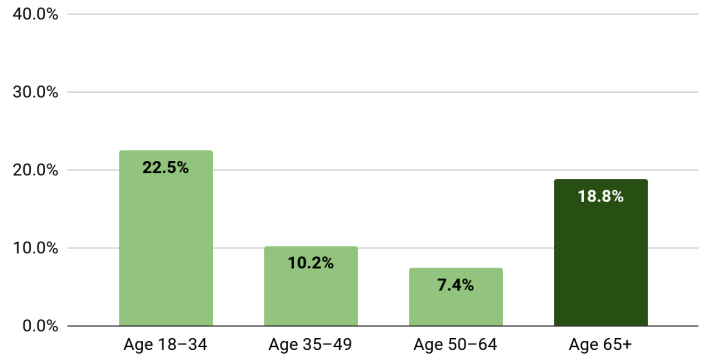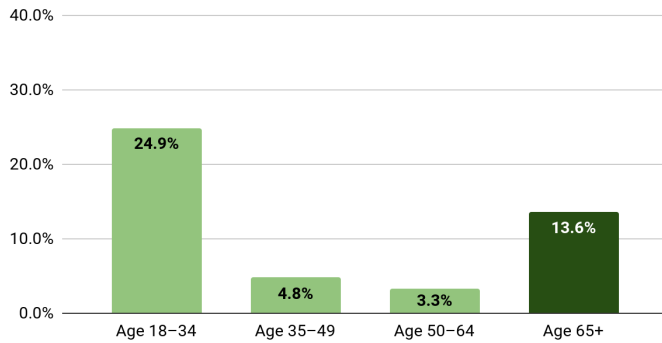
New Hampshire Climate Voters

Age 18–34	29.3%
Age 35–49	17.7%
Age 50–64	9.2%
Age 65+	24.2%
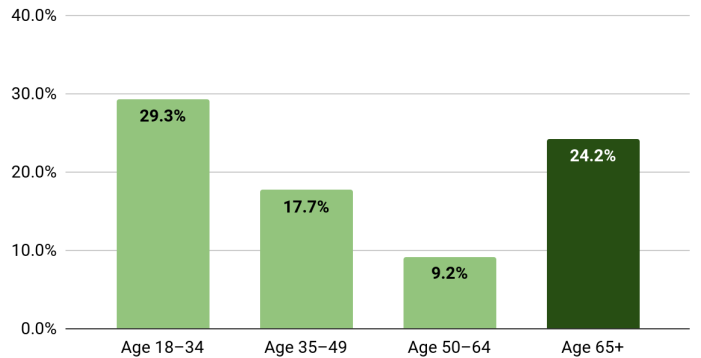
New Mexico Climate Voters
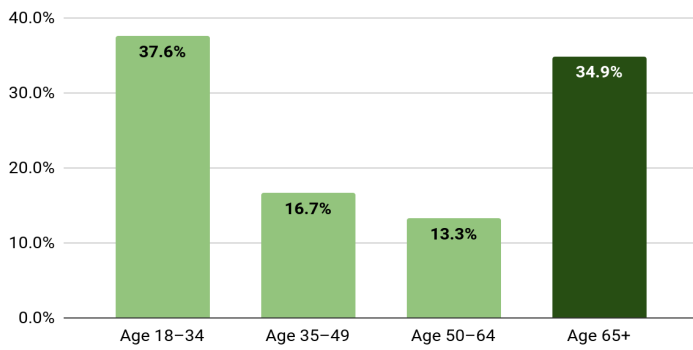
New York Climate Voters
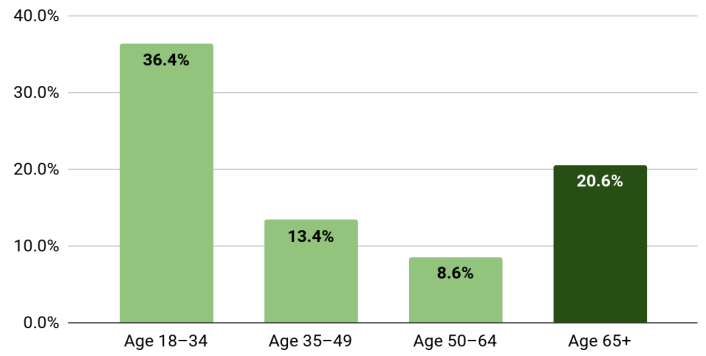
North Carolina Climate Voters

Pennsylvania Climate Voters

Texas Climate Voters
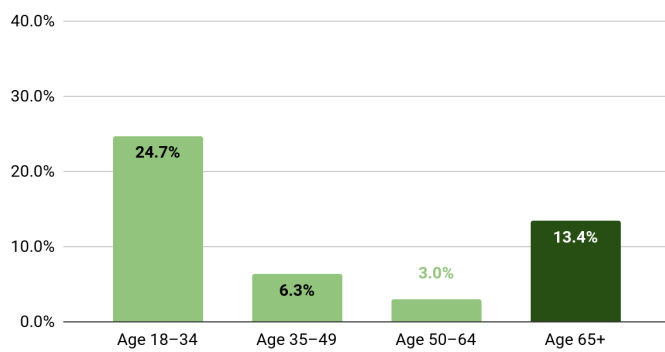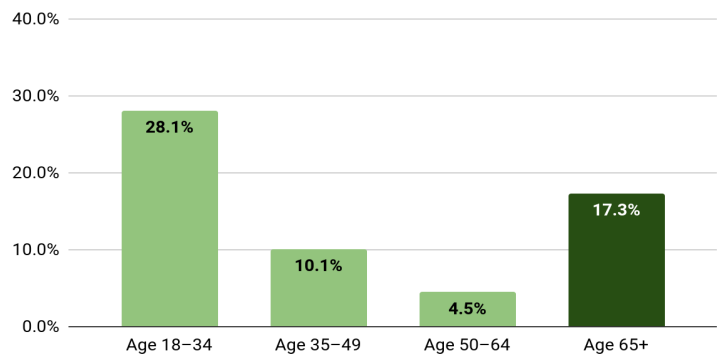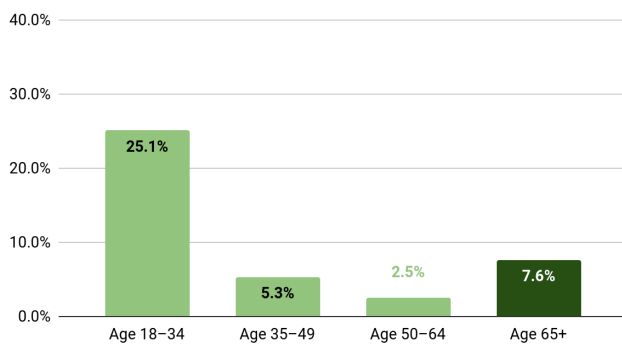
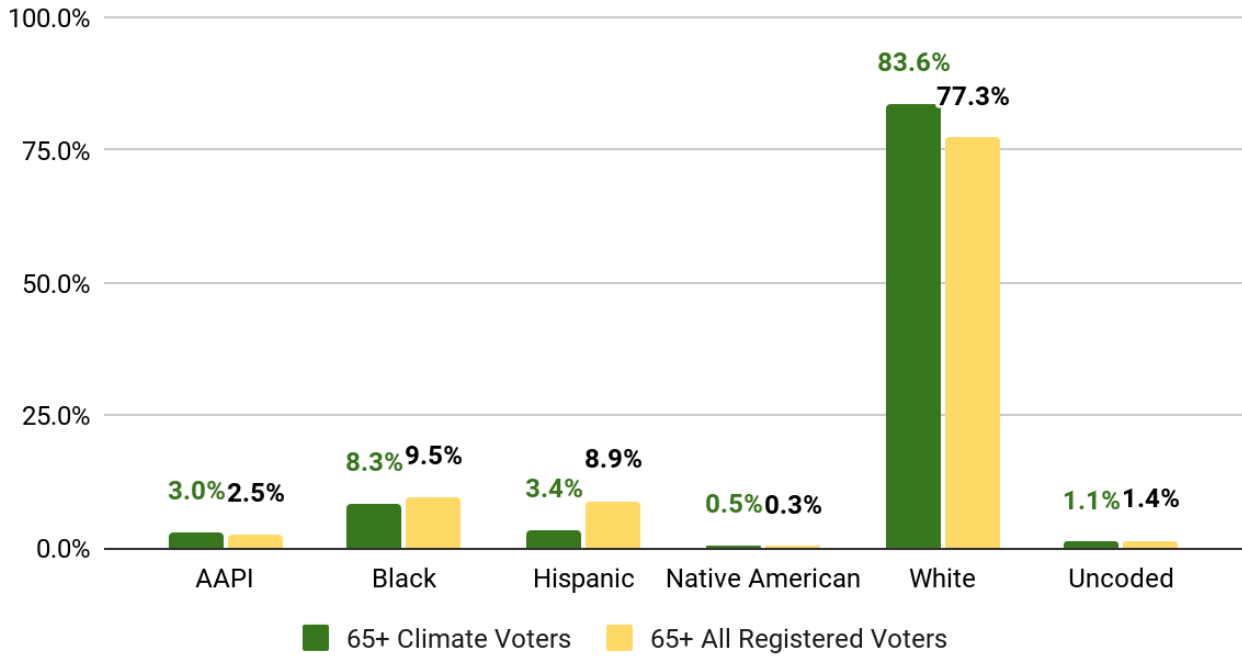

Virginia Climate Voters

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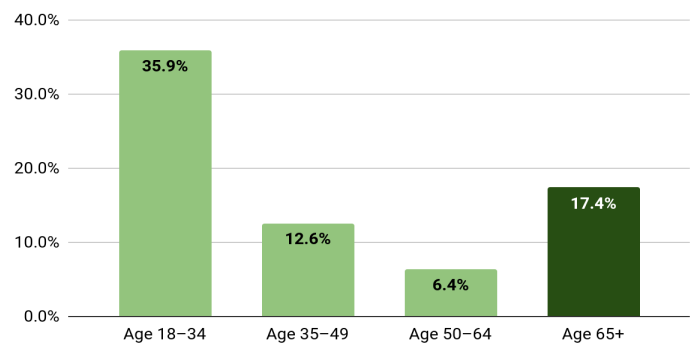
4. Who are these Older Climate Voters?

When looking at the demographic characteristics of this large population of older climate voters, we find that (a) there is a significant gender gap, with female older climate voters outnumbering male older climate voters by 19 percentage points, and (b) older climate voters are slightly more likely to be white and AAPI than the older voters found in the overall electorate.[4]

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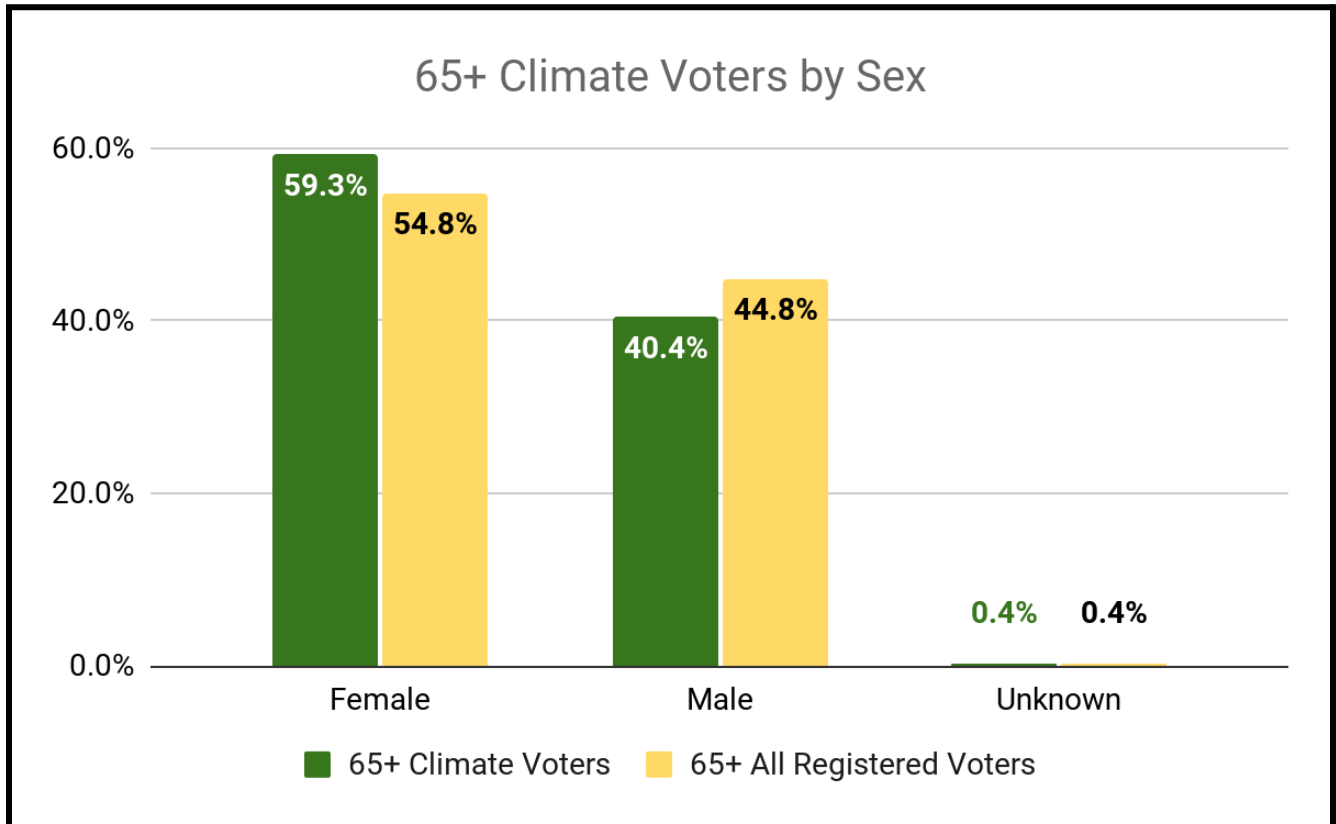
[4] Although EVP's prior research has focused on low propensity environmental voters — rather than environmental voters of all vote propensities — we have consistently found climate-first voters to disproportionately consist of people of color, so these demographic findings on older climate voters run slightly counter to what we see in younger climate voters.

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65+ Climate Voters by Race

Legend: ■ 65+ Climate Voters   ■ 65+ All Registered Voters

Race	65+ Climate Voters	65+ All Registered Voters
AAPI	3.0%	2.5%
Black	8.3%	9.5%
Hispanic	3.4%	8.9%
Native American	0.5%	0.3%
White	83.6%	77.3%
Uncoded	1.1%	1.4%

5. Political Power of Older Climate Voters.

In many states — such as New Mexico, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire — older climate voters make up close to 10% of the entire electorate of registered voters, representing a powerful voting bloc if they are organized accordingly. Additionally, older climate voters occupy a smaller, although still significant, piece of the electorate in important battleground states like Arizona (4.8%), Pennsylvania (4.7%), North Carolina (3.3%), and Nevada (3.1%).

Percent of State Electorates Occupied by Older Climate Voters

State	Percent
AZ	4.8%
CO	5.4%
FL	3.9%
GA	1.8%
IA	4.4%
KS	4.4%
LA	3.8%
ME	9.4%
MA	9.0%
NE	4.9%
NV	3.1%
NH	8.8%
NM	10.2%
NY	5.4%
NC	3.3%
PA	4.7%
TX	1.7%
VA	4.0%

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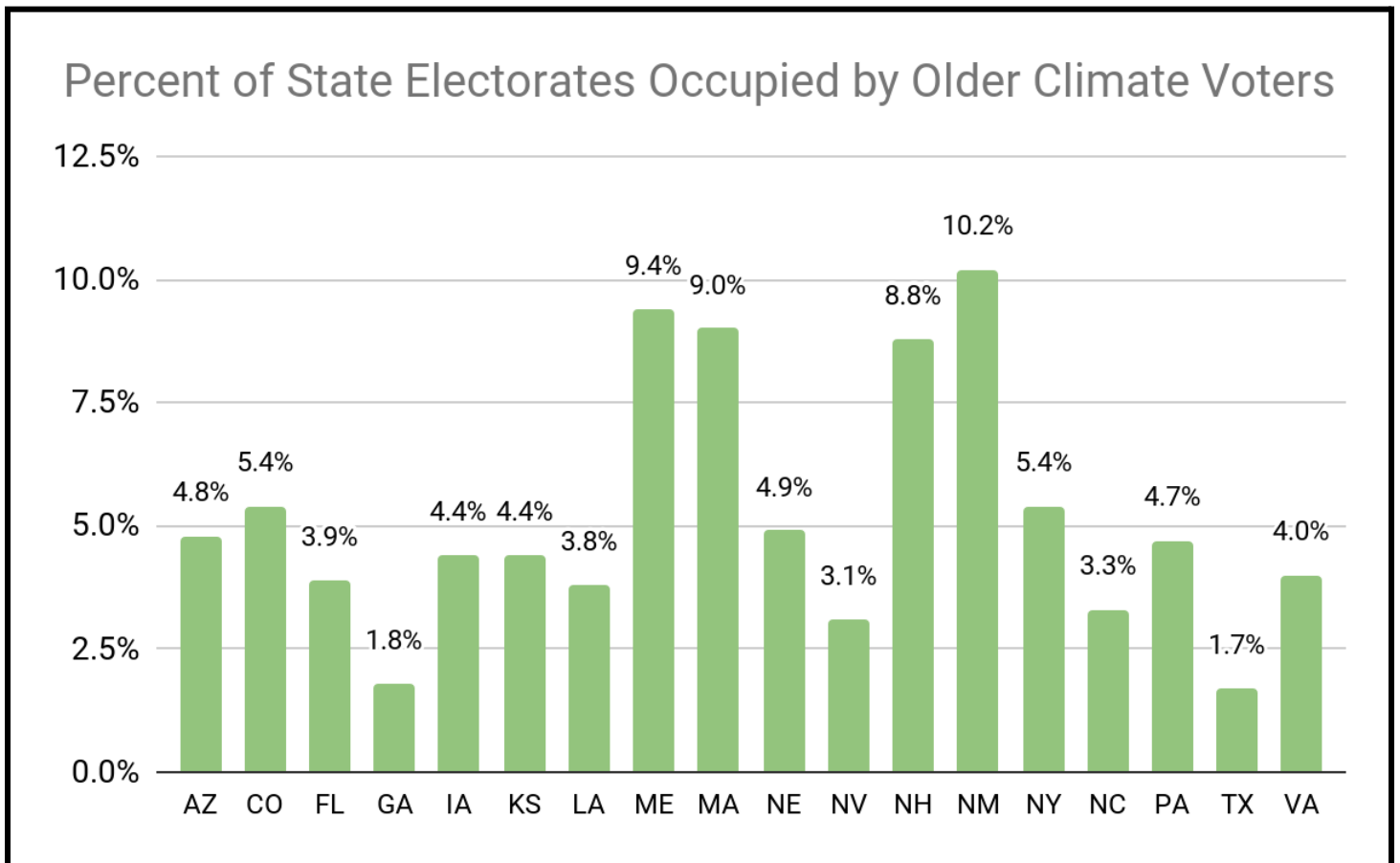
The Environmental Voter Project

The Environmental Voter Project (EVP) is a non-partisan nonprofit that uses data analytics to identify environmentalists who don't vote and then applies cutting-edge behavioral science messaging to nudge them into being more consistent voters. With over 6,000 volunteers, EVP has canvassed, called, mailed, and sent digital ads to non-voting and seldom-voting environmentalists in over 200 local, state, and federal elections in 2023.

Methodology

From January 13 – 23, 2023, the Environmental Voter Project and TargetSmart surveyed 11,091 registered voters in 19 states over a variety of online panels and text-to-web panels. Voters were asked about their top issue priorities and matched to voter file records so their responses could be combined with voter file and other publicly available data to build predictive models identifying how likely each voter in these 19 states is to list either "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top priority over other issues.

Unlike polls — which attempt to measure the attitudes of an entire population — predictive models identify specific individuals who have a high likelihood of prioritizing a particular issue. Thus, the end result of a predictive model is not a representative sample of the population, but rather a set of issue-priority likelihood scores assigned to each single voter in that population, with the highest scores correlating with voters who are the most likely to list either "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top priority.

In this memo, voters identified as "climate voters" are registered voters with a 75.00−99.99% likelihood of listing either "climate change" or "clean air, clean water, and the environment" as their top priority. Race, age, and sex data has been sourced from SmartVAN voter files.