Environmental Drop-off Voters in Battleground States

The Potential Midterm Electoral Power of Environmental Voters who typically vote only in Presidential Elections

Environmental Voter Project

1. Key Findings

- Environmental voters with a history of voting in presidential years—but skipping midterms—could easily swing 2022 midterm elections if they cast ballots in key battleground states like Arizona, Nevada, New Hampshire, and North Carolina.
- These environmental drop-off voters are disproportionately young, with 18-24 year-olds making up 45.8% of this population in Arizona and 46.7% in Pennsylvania.
- Women outnumber men among environmental drop-off voters in all eight of the states in this report, with particularly large gaps[1] in Pennsylvania (+18.3 percentage points) and New Hampshire (+16.2 percentage points).
- Environmental drop-off voters in these battleground states are disproportionately Hispanic and Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI), while they are less likely to be white or African-American.[2]

2. Introduction

This report highlights key findings from eight battleground states where the Environmental Voter Project (EVP) has built predictive models to identify registered voters who (a) have a high likelihood of listing "climate change or the environment" as their top priority, (b) voted in the 2020 presidential election (primary or general), but (c) did *not* vote in the 2018 midterm elections or any other election since November of 2016. In this report, these voters are referred to as "environmental drop-off voters." The states covered in this report are Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

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[1] 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 analagous to gender, this report presents only the "male" and "female" identifiers categorized as sex in NGP/VAN 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.

[2] When presenting charts of racial subgroup data in this report, we have chosen to retain the subgroup-identifying nomenclature found in NGP/VAN voter files: African-American (Af-Am), Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian, and Native American (Native Amer). In this report's narrative discussion, we use the more commonly-accepted terminology of AAPI and white. We do not replace African-American with Black or replace Hispanic with Latinx because Black is not completely analogous to African-American, nor is Hispanic completely analogous to Latinx, and we want to avoid misrepresenting any voter file data.

Typically, drop-off voters are considered the most "gettable" voter-turnout targets during non-presidential elections because they have at least some history of voting, even if it is not in the applicable election. Heading into the 2022 midterms, these drop-off voters will become increasingly important to campaigns, and environmental drop-off voters could be particularly sought after because data show they are so numerous that they could swing elections in almost every battleground state.

In five of the eight states studied in this report—Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, and North Carolina—the populations of environmental drop-off voters far surpass their state's deciding vote margin in the 2018 midterms. In Pennsylvania, the population of environmental drop-off voters is almost 2.5 times larger than the state's 2020 presidential vote margin. In Texas and New Hampshire, although the populations of environmental drop-off voters are not decisive by historical standards, the 117,923 voters in Texas and 26,216 in New Hampshire are certainly large enough to make a significant impact even if only some of them show up on Election Day.
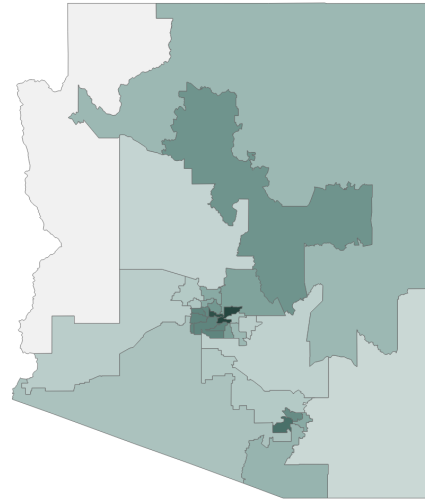
Predictive modeling data also show that these environmental drop-off voters are disproportionately young, female, and Hispanic or AAPI. They are also largely concentrated in urban and suburban areas, albeit with some notable exceptions in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Arizona.

How Maps are used in this Report: The maps included in this report are normalized to show the *comparative density* of environmental drop-off voters—rather than their absolute numbers—in the lower chamber legislative districts of each state. This way—instead of the maps largely mirroring overall population densities—they show where environmental drop-off voters make up a *disproportionately* large or small percentage of a jurisdiction's population of registered voters.

The maps' color coding is constant across all eight states, with the darkest shade representing a state legislative district where environmental drop-off voters make up more than 5% of the district's entire population of registered voters.

3. Arizona

101,334 environment-first[3] Arizonans voted in the 2020 presidential election but have not voted in any other election since November of 2016. This population is so large that it would equal 4.3% of all ballots cast in Arizona's 2018 midterm election, and it is almost 10 times the size of Joe Biden's AZ margin of victory in 2020. Although mostly urban and suburban, Arizona's environmental drop-off voters are more rural than in many other states, and almost 1 in 3 of them are Hispanic.

A. Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: US Senate, Governor

B. Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters

- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 101,334 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 2,384,308 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 US Senate Election: 55,900 votes
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2020 Presidential Election: 10,457 votes

C. Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

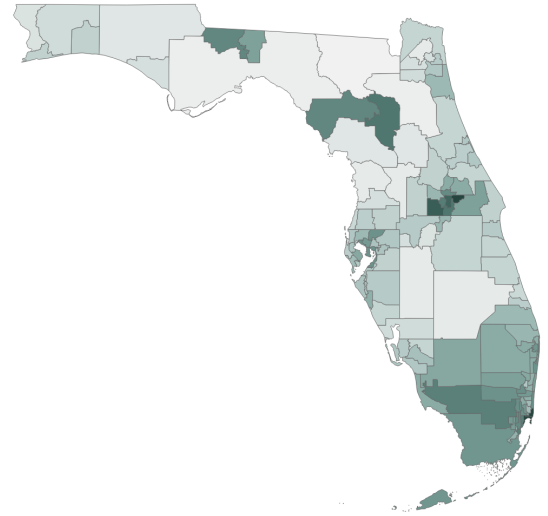| Voters	Age (%)					Sex[4] (%)			Race (%)					
	18–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	45.8	38.4	8.4	3.7	3.7	37.2	43.2	19.6	61.2	0.9	27.5	1.3	2.5	6.5
All Reg'd Voters	10.1	17.9	22.6	23.6	25.9	45.2	47.0	7.9	74.8	1.1	17.1	0.7	1.7	4.7

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[3] In this report, "environment-first" refers to registered voters who have a high likelihood of listing "climate change or the environment" as their top priority according to EVP's predictive modeling.

[4] Arizona does not supply data about the sex of voters, so data must be commercially sourced and is therefore incomplete.

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4. Florida

Florida's population of 259,703 environmental drop-off voters is 8 times bigger than the margin of victory in the state's 2018 gubernatorial election and more than 25 times the margin in that year's US Senate election. These environmental drop-off voters are fairly dense in almost every part of the state, with particularly large clusters in South Florida and around Orlando, Gainesville, and Tallahassee. A stunning 30.5% of these drop-off voters are Hispanic, compared to Hispanic voters comprising 18.1% of total registered voters in Florida.

A.   Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: US Senate, Governor

B.   Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters
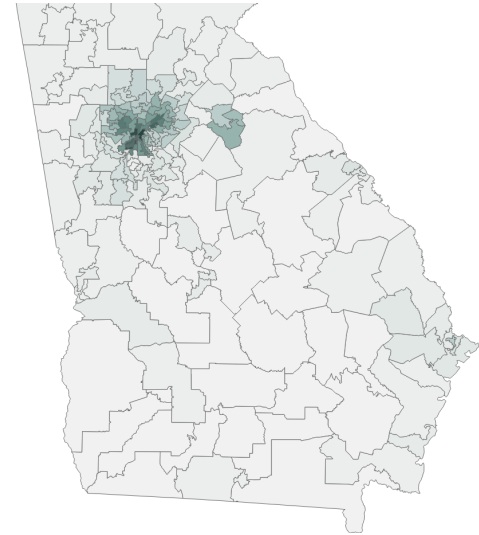
- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 259,703 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 8,318,824 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 US Senate Election: 10,033 votes
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 Gubernatorial Election: 32,463 votes

C.   Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

Voters	Age (%)					Sex (%)			Race (%)					
	18–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	40.1	40.1	10.0	4.6	5.3	43.4	55.2	1.4	52.9	7.0	30.5	4.0	0.3	5.3
All Reg'd Voters	8.6	15.9	22.0	25.4	28.2	46.4	53.2	0.5	62.9	13.9	18.1	2.1	0.3	2.6

5. Georgia

Although Georgia's population of 63,842 environmental drop-off voters isn't as proportionately large as those in many other battleground states, the state's drop-off voters still far surpass the margins of victory in Georgia's 2018 gubernatorial election and 2020 presidential election. Hispanic and AAPI voters are 3 times as prevalent among this population as in the overall electorate, and the voters are overwhelmingly concentrated in the Atlanta metro area.

A. Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: US Senate, Governor

B. Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters[5]

- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 63,842 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 3,949,905 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 Gubernatorial Election: 54,723 votes
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2020 Presidential Election: 12,670 votes
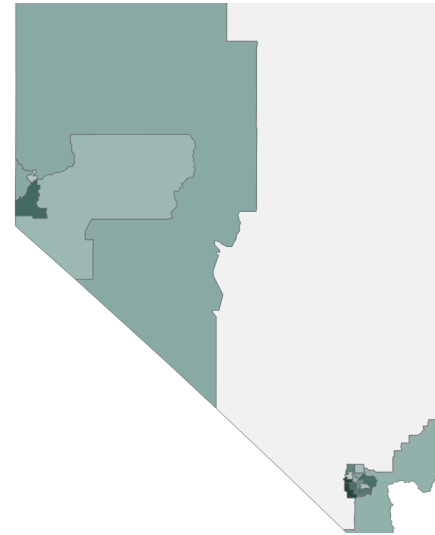
C. Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

Voters	Age (%)					Sex (%)			Race (%)					
	18–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	36.1	45.5	10.1	4.5	3.8	42.5	57.4	0.1	54.4	16.9	12.3	9.0	0.5	6.9
All Reg'd Voters	11.3	19.7	24.8	24.7	19.5	46.7	53.2	0.1	58.2	32.1	4.0	2.8	0.3	2.5

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[5] Since there was almost presidential-level turnout for Georgia's 1/5/21 US Senate runoffs, this report does not remove those 2021 runoff voters from the "drop-off" category if they would otherwise fit the criteria.

6. Nevada

At 56,290 voters, Nevada's enormous population of environmental drop-off voters would equal 5.8% of all ballots cast in the state's 2018 midterm election. This large pool of potential political power is disproportionately Hispanic and broadly distributed across the state, but with particular concentrations around Carson City, Reno, and Las Vegas.

A. Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: US Senate, Governor

B. Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters

- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 56,290 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 975,980 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 US Senate Election: 48,869 votes
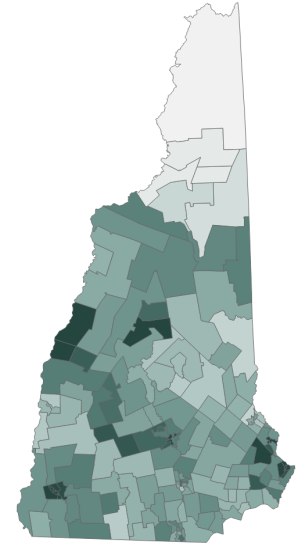- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 Gubernatorial Election: 39,687 votes

C. Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

Voters	Age (%)					Sex[6] (%)			Race (%)					
	18–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	43.5	36.4	9.7	4.6	5.9	38.8	39.6	21.6	61.0	1.7	23.8	5.4	0.3	7.7
All Reg'd Voters	10.3	18.7	23.8	23.9	23.0	45.0	43.9	11.1	72.1	3.7	15.6	3.3	0.1	5.2

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[6] Nevada does not supply data about the sex of voters, so data must be commercially sourced and is therefore incomplete.

7. New Hampshire

New Hampshire's population of 26,216 environmental drop-off voters might seem small, but it equals 4.5% of all ballots cast in the state's 2018 midterm election. These potential midterm voters can be found in large concentrations across almost the entire state, albeit with more dense clusters in urban and suburban areas.

A.   Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: US Senate, Governor

B.   Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters

- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 26,216 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 580,568 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 Gubernatorial Election: 40,405 votes

C.   Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

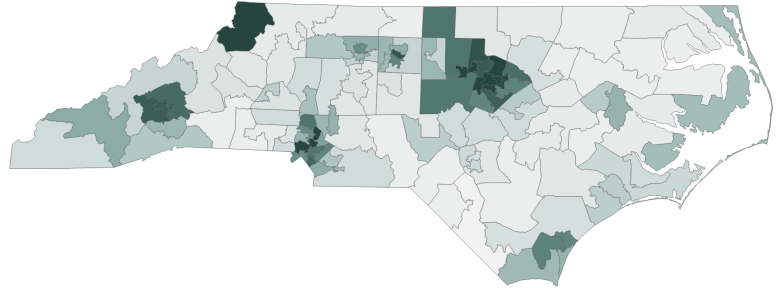| Voters	Age[7] (%)					Sex[8] (%)			Race (%)					
	18–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	5.2	23.2	20.2	16.7	10.6	37.5	53.7	8.9	94.4	0.2	0.6	1.0	0.0	3.8
All Reg'd Voters	1.2	7.6	18.1	30.6	28.6	46.5	49.3	4.2	96.8	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.0	2.2

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[7] New Hampshire does not supply data about the age of voters, so data must be commercially sourced and is therefore incomplete. 13.9% of NH registered voters are of unknown age, and 24.1% of environmental drop-off voters are of unknown age.

[8] New Hampshire does not supply data about the sex of voters, so data must be commercially sourced and is therefore incomplete.

8. North Carolina

152,539 environment-first North Carolinians voted in the 2020 presidential election but have not voted in any other election since 2016. This population of environmental drop-off voters equals 4.1% of all ballots cast in North Carolina's 2018 midterm election, and it is twice the size of Donald Trump's margin of victory over Joe Biden in 2020. AAPI voters are more than 3 times as prevalent among these environmental drop-off voters as they are in the state's overall electorate, and these environmentalists are disproportionately found in and around large cities and college campuses, with a particularly dense population around Appalachian State University in the northwest corner of the state.

A. Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: US Senate

B. Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters
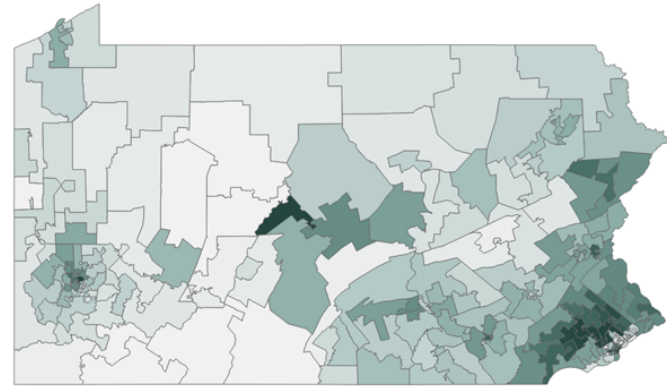
- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 152,539 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 3,755,778 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2020 Presidential Election: 74,481 votes

C. Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

Voters	Age (%)					Sex (%)			Race (%)					
	18−24	25−34	35−49	50−64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	40.9	38.4	10.7	5.1	5.0	40.9	56.1	3.0	65.2	14.3	8.0	5.3	0.3	7.0
All Reg'd Voters	11.7	16.9	22.6	25.3	23.5	45.7	53.4	1.0	70.0	21.7	3.4	1.6	0.8	2.5

9. Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's population of 185,792 environmental drop-off voters is more than twice the size of Joe Biden's margin of victory in 2020 and 4 times the size of Donald Trump's in 2016. These voters are most prevalent in the Philadelphia suburbs and around Penn State's main campus, but they're surprisingly also in exurban and rural Lancaster, Berks, Bucks, Monroe, and Pike counties. In fact, this population of environmental drop-off voters is unexpectedly exurban and rural. Additionally, although environmental drop-off voters are disproportionately young in every state in this report, Pennsylvania's population is by far the youngest, with a stunning 86.3% of the state's environmental drop-off voters being 18-34 years old.

A.   Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: US Senate, Governor

B.   Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters

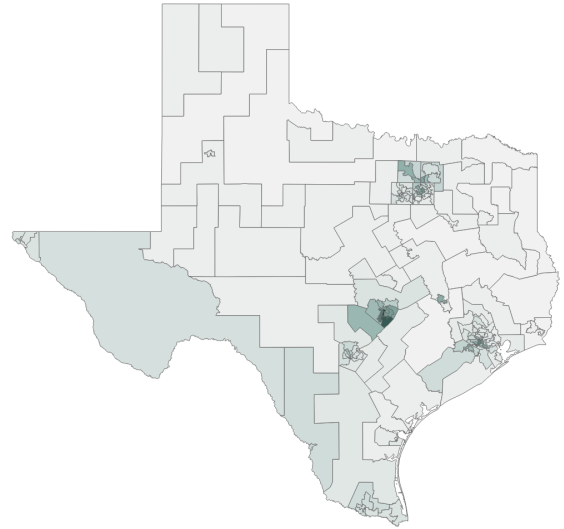- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 185,792 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 5,043,029 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2020 Presidential Election: 80,555 votes
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2016 Presidential Election: 44,292 votes

C.   Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

Voters	Age (%)					Sex (%)			Race (%)					
	18–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	46.7	39.6	8.3	2.8	2.6	39.1	57.4	3.5	83.0	3.2	2.6	3.8	0.0	7.4
All Reg'd Voters	8.6	16.9	22.8	26.2	25.5	46.9	51.5	1.6	85.3	7.7	2.6	1.0	0.0	3.5

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10. Texas

Although large in absolute numbers, Texas's overwhelmingly urban population of 117,923 environmental drop-off voters is not as proportionately large as the populations in many other battleground states. If environmental voter turnout is going to be a difference-maker in Texas in 2022, *first-time* environmental voters—and not just the drop-off voters covered in this report—will likely have to turn out in large numbers on Election Day.

A.   Prominent Statewide Elections in 2022: Governor

B.   Potential Political Power of Environmental Drop-off Voters

- Environmental Drop-off Voters: 117,923 voters
- Total Turnout in 2018 Midterm Election: 8,375,000 ballots
- Deciding Vote Margin in 2018 US Senate Election: 214,921 votes

C.   Demographic Overview of Environmental Drop-off Voters

Voters	Age (%)					Sex (%)			Race (%)					
	18−24	25−34	35−49	50−64	65+	Male	Female	Un-known	Cauc-asian	Af-Am	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer	Not Coded
Enviro Drop-off Voters	37.8	44.3	9.6	4.2	4.1	41.7	57.3	1.0	57.3	3.0	24.9	6.6	0.0	8.2
All Reg'd Voters	11.5	17.8	25.3	24.4	21.0	47.1	52.7	0.3	62.3	7.3	23.8	2.1	0.0	4.4

11. 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. Working in 17 states with over 6,000 volunteers, EVP will canvass, text, call, mail, and send digital ads to over 5 million low propensity environmental voters in hundreds of local, state, and federal elections in 2022.

12. Methodology

From January 22 to March 1, 2021, the Environmental Voter Project and Civis Analytics surveyed 8,800 registered voters in 17 states over a variety of online 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 data to build models identifying how likely each voter in these 17 states is to list "climate change or the environment" as a top 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 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 (in this case) to list "climate change or the environment" as a top priority.

In this memo, voters identified as "environmental" or "environmentalists" are registered voters with a 75.00 – 99.99% likelihood of listing "climate change or the environment" as their top priority. "Environmental drop-off voters" are a subset of that group who (a) voted in the 2020 presidential general or primary but (b) did *not* vote in any other election since November of 2016.[9]

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[9] Since there was almost presidential-level turnout for Georgia's 1/5/21 US Senate runoffs, this report does not remove those 2021 runoff voters from the "drop-off" category if they would otherwise fit the criteria.