



# Rise of the Asian American Environmental Voter

Key findings from predictive models in 19 states showing the growing prominence of Asian American & Pacific Islander environmental voters.

May 2023



# Executive Summary

This report highlights key findings from 19 states<sup>1</sup> where the Environmental Voter Project (EVP) built predictive models to identify registered voters who have a high likelihood of listing either “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 or its subgroups, 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.

The Environmental Voter Project’s February 2023 predictive modeling data has identified disproportionately large numbers of Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) environmentalists across all 19 states, and we have further found that this prevalence of AAPI environmental voters has steadily grown over the past four years. This report details EVP’s findings on AAPI environmentalists, while also highlighting multi-year trends, state-specific demographic data, and AAPI environmentalists’ voting propensity.<sup>2</sup>

## Disproportionately Large Numbers of AAPI Environmentalists.

- **1 in 4 AAPI voters are environmentalists.** Across the 19 states studied, 24.8% of AAPI registered voters were likely to consider either “climate change” or “clean air, clean water, and the environment” as their top issue priority.
- **Both AAPI and African-American environmentalists are becoming more prevalent over time.** Over the past four years, AAPI and African-American voters have steadily emerged as the two racial groups with the greatest percentage of environment-first voters.

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<sup>1</sup> The 19 states included in this study are Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> Voters identified as “environmentalists” or “environmental 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 February 2023 predictive models.

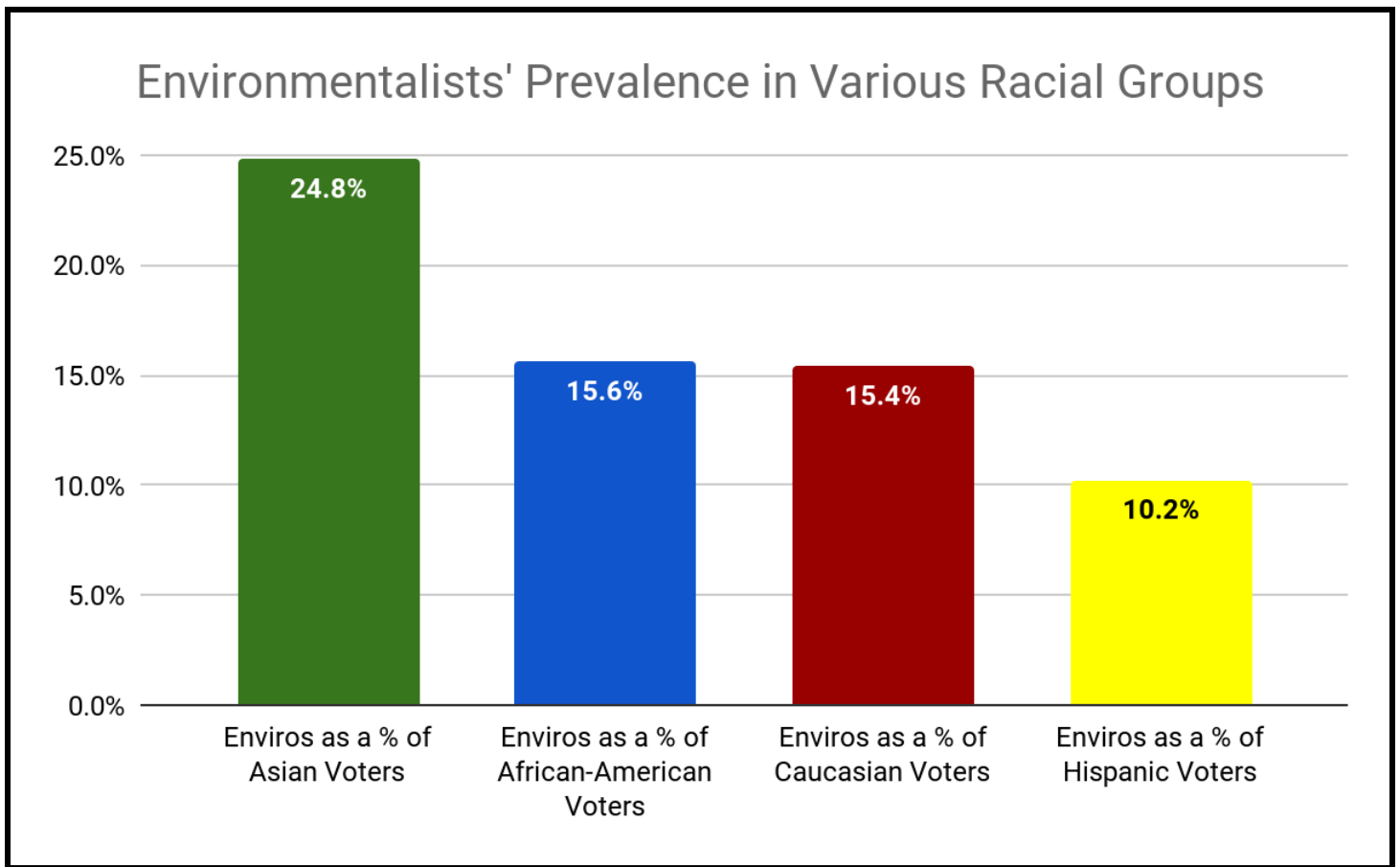
- **The Potential Impact of AAPI Environmental Voters in Pennsylvania.** In Pennsylvania – perhaps the biggest of all swing states – fully one-third of all AAPI voters are likely environment-first voters, which is more than twice the percentage of environmentalists found in any other racial group in Pennsylvania.

### Who Are These AAPI Environmentalists?

- **Overwhelmingly Young.** Across the 19 states studied, almost 59% of AAPI environmentalists are between the ages of 18-34, compared to just 50.6% of non-AAPI environmentalists. Among all registered voters, only 26.2% are ages 18-34.
- **Disproportionately Female.** Female AAPI environmentalists outnumber male AAPI environmentalists 53.9% to 41.3% (with 4.8% unknown). This 12.6-point gender gap is much larger than the 5.3-point gender gap which exists among all registered voters, although not quite as large as the 16-point gender gap among non-AAPI environmentalists.
- **AAPI Environmentalists Vote Less Often than Other Environmentalists.** Only 68.9% of already-registered AAPI environmentalists voted in the 2020 presidential election, compared to 72.6% of non-AAPI environmentalists and 73.2% turnout among all registered voters.

# 1. AAPI Voters are the Most Likely to List Climate or Environment as a Top Priority

Across the 19 states studied, 1 out of every 4 AAPI voters (24.8%) were likely to list either “climate change” or “clean air, clean water, and the environment” as their top issue priority, compared to only 1 out of every 10 Hispanic voters (10.2%). 15.6% of African-American voters and 15.4% of white voters were likely to hold climate or the environment as a top priority in the states studied.<sup>3</sup>

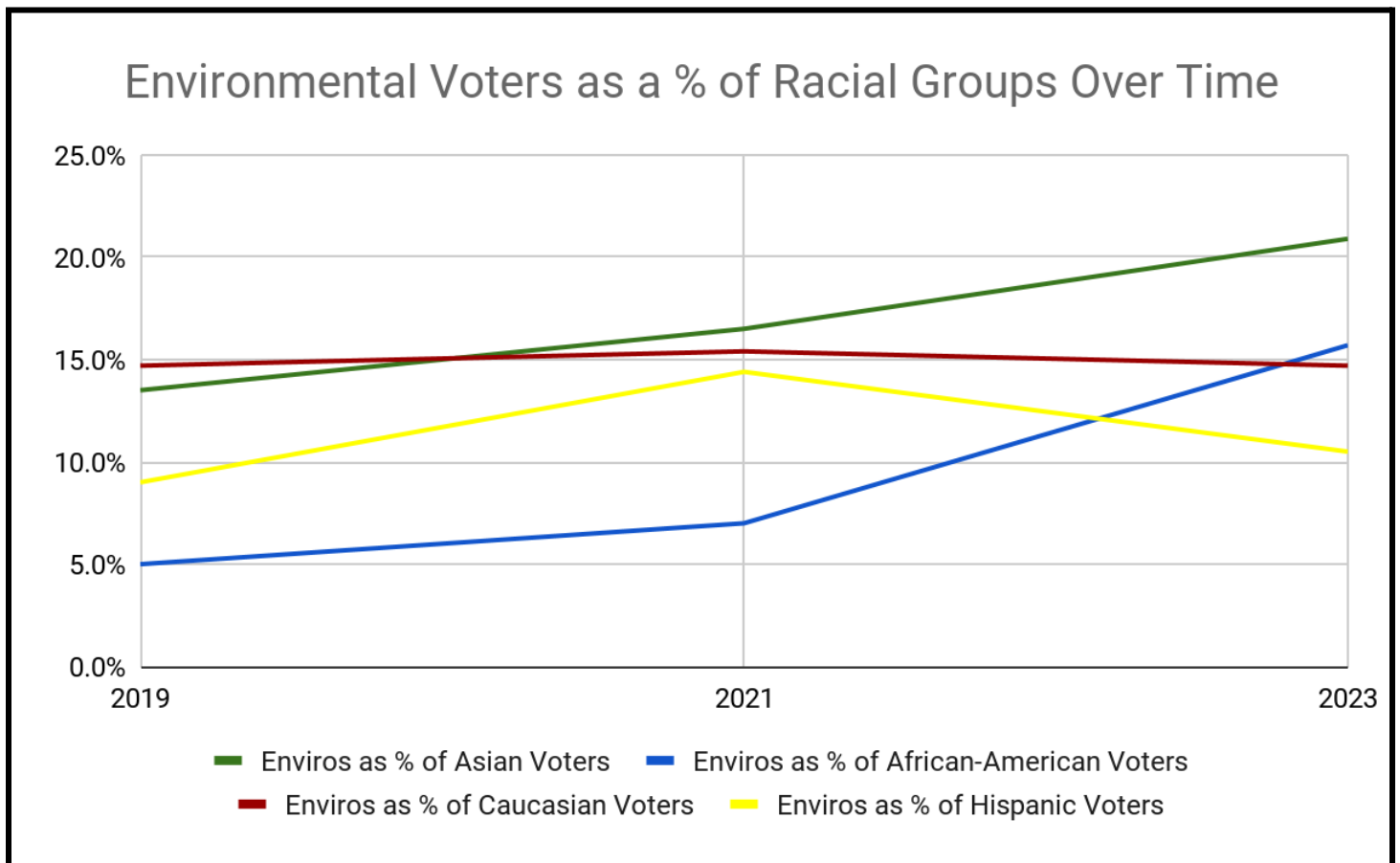


<sup>3</sup> When presenting charts of racial subgroup data in this report, we have chosen to maintain the subgroup-identifying nomenclature found in Smart VAN voter files: African-American (Af-Am), Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian, and Native American (Nat-Am). In this report’s narrative discussion, we use the more commonly accepted terminology of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and white. We do not replace African-American with Black, Hispanic with Latinx, or Native American with Indigenous because these terms are not necessarily analogous, and we want to avoid misrepresenting any voter file data.

## 2. Growth of AAPI Environmental Voters Over Time

To track the prevalence of environmental voters within different racial groups over time, the Environmental Voter Project focused on 12 of this report's 19 states where EVP had built a series of three predictive models over the past four years.<sup>4</sup>

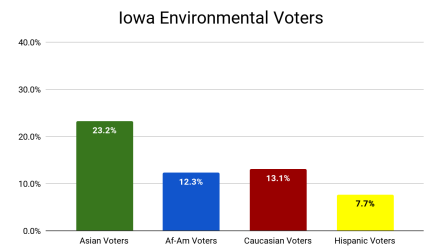
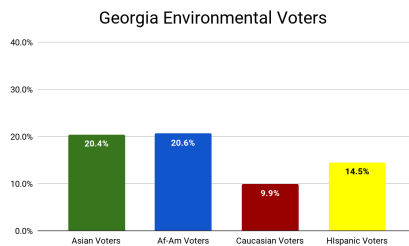
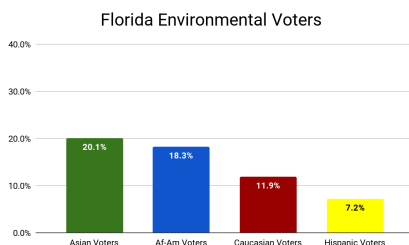
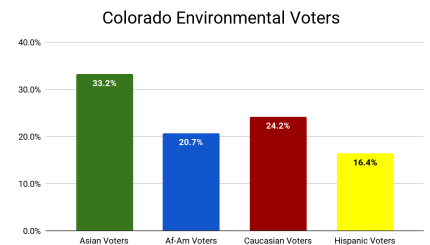
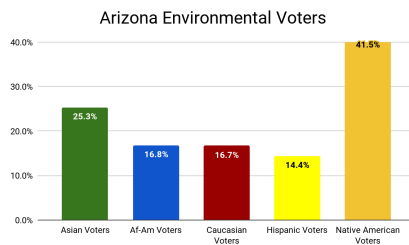
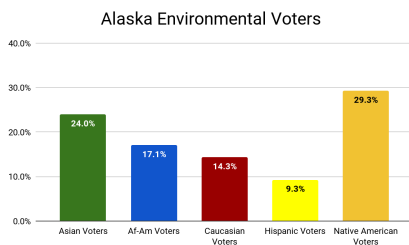
Although three data points over four years does not constitute a robust trend, the limited data does reveal that the prevalence of AAPI environmental voters has been consistently large and growing over time. Across the 12 states in this multi-year dataset, 13.5% of AAPI voters were environment-first voters in 2019, then 16.5% in 2021, up to 20.9% in 2023. The data also shows consistent growth of African-American environmental voters since 2019.



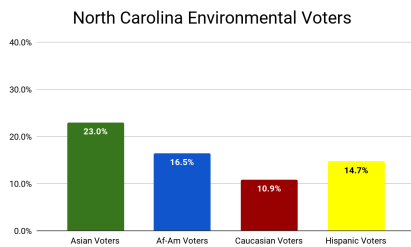
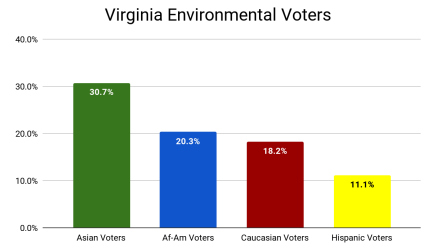
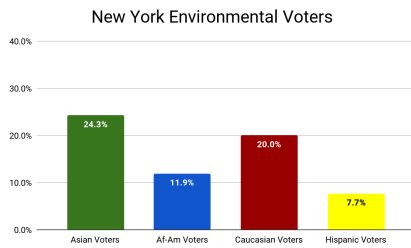
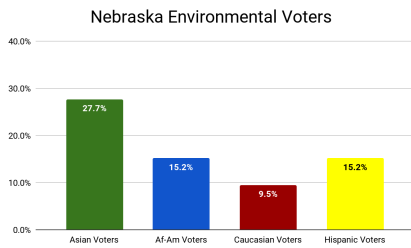
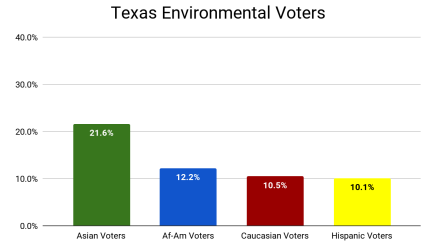
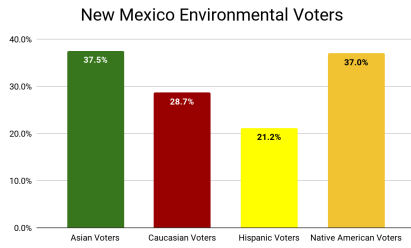
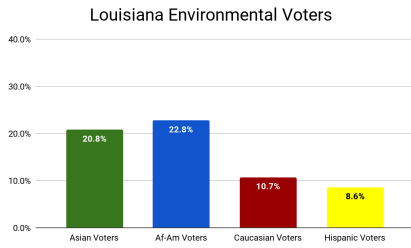
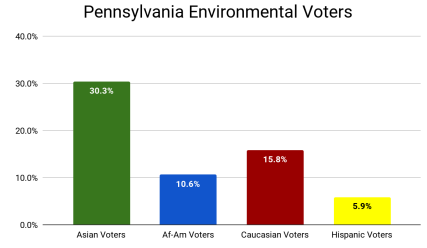
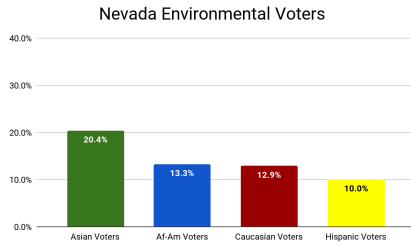
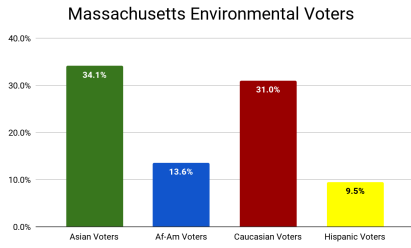
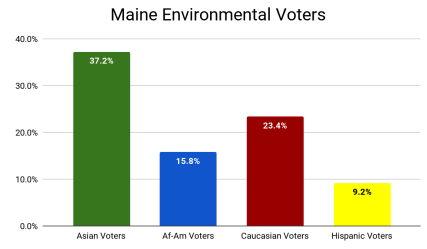
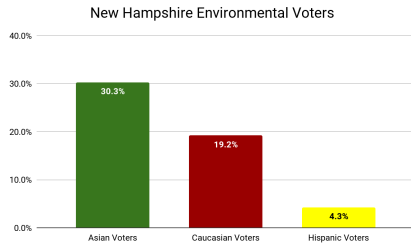
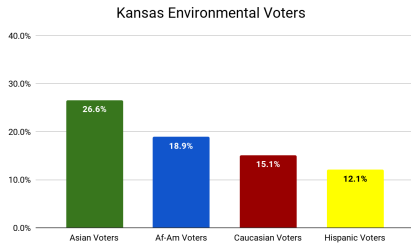
<sup>4</sup> This longitudinal data covers voters from the following 12 states: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia

### 3. State-Specific Data on the Prevalence of Environmental Voters by Race

As shown in the charts below, the percentage of environmental voters in different racial groups<sup>5</sup> can vary – sometimes dramatically – from state to state, but two trends are clear: (a) the consistent over-representation of environmentalists among AAPI voters, and (b) their consistent under-representation among Hispanic voters. AAPI voters have the highest percentage of environmentalists in 15 of the 19 states studied, second only to Native Americans in Alaska and Arizona and to African-Americans in Georgia and Louisiana. Hispanic voters include the smallest percentage of environmentalists in every state except for Georgia, Nebraska, and North Carolina. The rarity of Hispanic environment-first voters runs somewhat counter to [recent polling](#) showing high numbers of Hispanics as “alarmed about global warming,” but this apparent contradiction is likely due to many Hispanic voters viewing climate change as a high, but not top, priority.

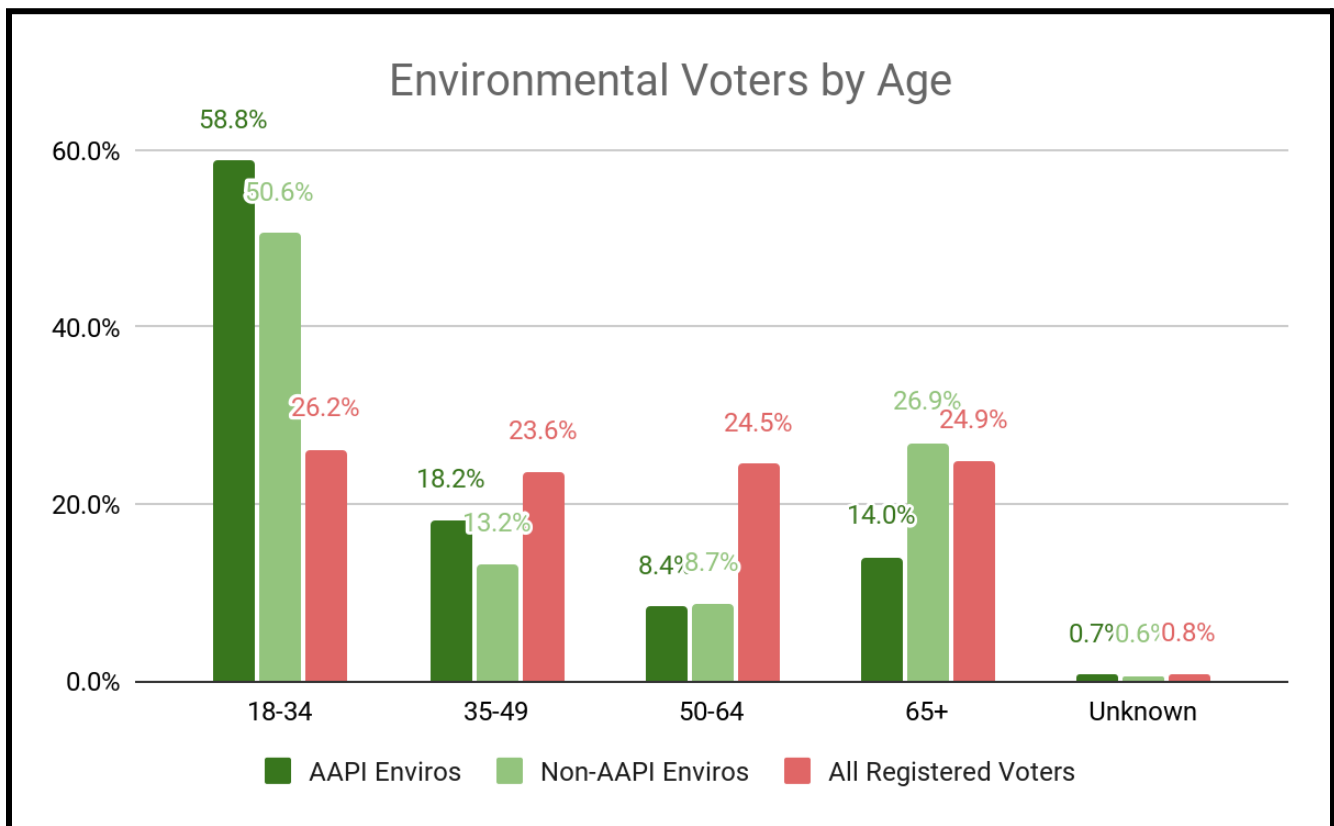


<sup>5</sup> Voters of a particular race are only included in a state’s chart if they represent more than 1% of the state’s registered voters.



## 4. Who are these AAPI Environmental Voters?

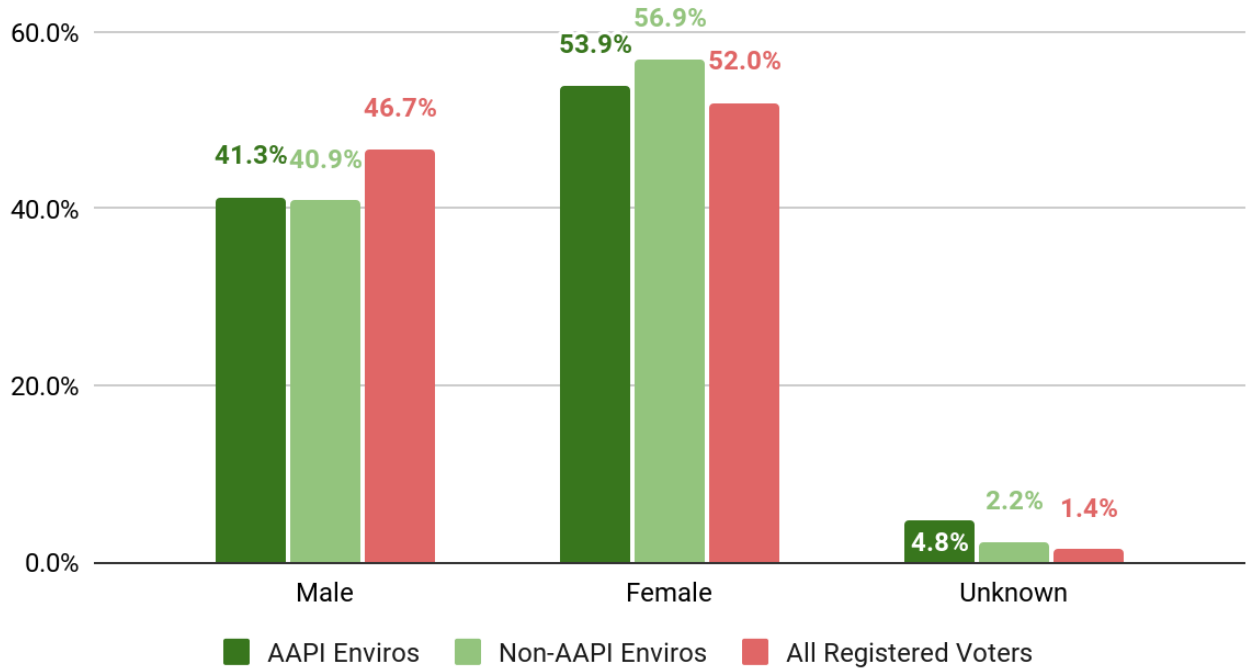
When focusing on the demographic and behavioral characteristics of this large population of AAPI environmental voters, we find that (a) they are disproportionately young (compared to registered voters, but also to non-AAPI environmentalists), (b) there is a significant gender gap,<sup>6</sup> with AAPI women disproportionately prioritizing environmental issues compared to the overall electorate (although the gender gap among AAPI environmentalists is slightly smaller than the gap among non-AAPI environmentalists), and (c) AAPI environmentalists voted at a significantly lower rate in the 2020 presidential election than all registered voters and also non-AAPI environmentalists.



<sup>6</sup> 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 Smart 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. 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.



## Environmental Voters by Sex



## 2020 Presidential Voting Rates of Environmental Voters



# 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 will canvass, call, mail, and send digital ads to non-voting and seldom-voting environmentalists in over 300 local, state, and federal elections in 2023.

## Methodology

From January 13 – 23, 2023, the Environmental Voter Project and TargetSmart Communications 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 “environmentalists” 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, sex, and vote history data has been sourced from Smart VAN voter files.