

WORKING CLASS PEOPLE ON JOBS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



**BLUEGREEN
ALLIANCE**

THE LANDSCAPE

Throughout the Midwest, working people want a new plan for the economy that creates good jobs and protects the environment by investing in training for the jobs of today and tomorrow; repairing, modernizing, and upgrading our infrastructure; and making the United States a leader in the manufacturing of cutting edge technologies. They prioritize clean air and clean water, and support clean energy, and they see it as part of the future. Further, working people reject attempts by politicians to divide us by creating a false conflict between good jobs and a clean environment.

These are the results of a two-year research project conducted by the BlueGreen Alliance (BGA), a national partnership of labor and environmental organizations. The following provides a summary of this work and the results.

Listening Sessions

In the spring and summer of 2017, BGA conducted informal “listening sessions” with union members in key areas in the region, including on the Iron Range in Northeast Minnesota, in Macomb and Wayne Counties in Michigan—just outside Detroit, in Canton and Marietta, Ohio, and in Washington and Johnstown, Pennsylvania—the southwestern part of the state. While Pennsylvania is considered part of the Northeast region, areas of this state have experienced similar changes as Midwestern states—including de-industrialization over the last several decades. Many of these areas saw a significant shift—from Obama voters to Trump voters—in the 2016 elections.

Jobs and the economy were the overwhelming top issues for these union members. Throughout the sessions, union members expressed a deep distrust in politicians and their effectiveness, as well as a belief that politicians from both sides of the aisle are controlled by elites and corporations and no longer represent working people or understood their every day concerns about jobs and economic security.

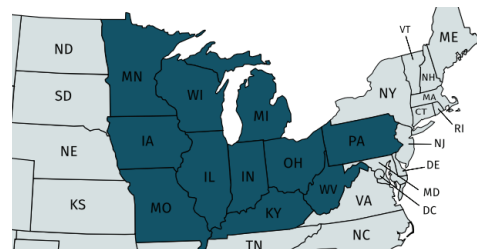
Union members believed climate change is a problem, and clean air and water are essential. However, they felt their jobs should not be sacrificed as part of the solutions to address climate change. In addition, while they expressed the belief that government should address global problems,

like climate change, it should not be done unilaterally or at the expense of their jobs. While favorable toward clean energy jobs, union members did not see them as a solution because they felt that these jobs typically replaced better power sector jobs and were often not in the same geographic area.

Throughout these sessions, participants expressed a deep anxiety about the state of the middle class in America, which in the past allowed some workers the opportunity to get a good-paying job in trades or manufacturing that supported a family without a heavy investment in post-secondary education. No longer seeing those opportunities, members were concerned for their children, as they also did not see college as a probable ticket to the middle class, since 70% of jobs in America don’t require a college education. Many expressed concern about the deterioration of their communities—with rampant drug problems taking over many rural and de-industrialized areas.

Public Opinion Research

Building on the results of these listening sessions, BGA worked with Hart Research to conduct qualitative and quantitative public opinion research. In December 2017, we conducted six focus groups in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Participants included white, non-college educated swing voters—those who identified as independent, leaning Republican, or leaning Democrat—and non-college educated voters of color in union and non-union households. In May 2018, we conducted an online survey with 1,000 white swing voters and 400 voters of color—both union and non-union—in 11 states (Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). Respondents of color were African American (63%), Hispanic (23%), Asian (8%) or other (6%). The intention of the survey was to understand the values and beliefs of working class people in the Midwest on a variety of issues, as well as to discover the commonalities and differences in opinions between working class white voters and working class voters of color.



ON THE ECONOMY

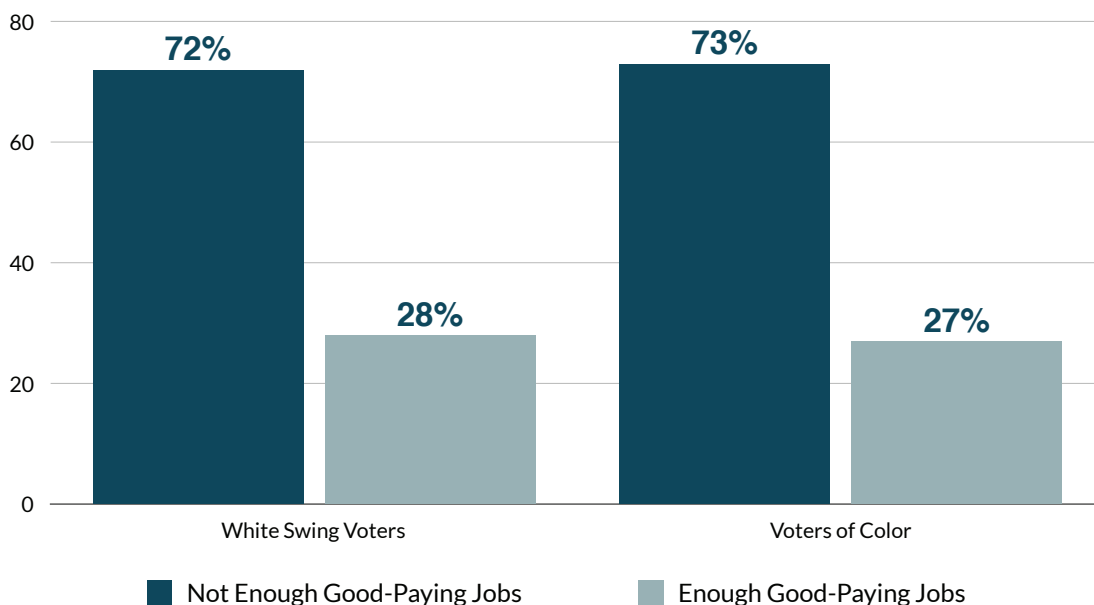
White working class people are more satisfied than not with economic conditions overall. Working class people of color in particular expressed dissatisfaction with the national economy (61% dissatisfied) and they are split 50/50 on the state of their local economy. However, both white working class people and working class people of color were concerned about their personal economic situation and the lack of good-paying jobs in their community.

Working people felt there was a deficit of good-paying jobs in their communities. In addition, people in the Midwest have acutely felt the impact of the

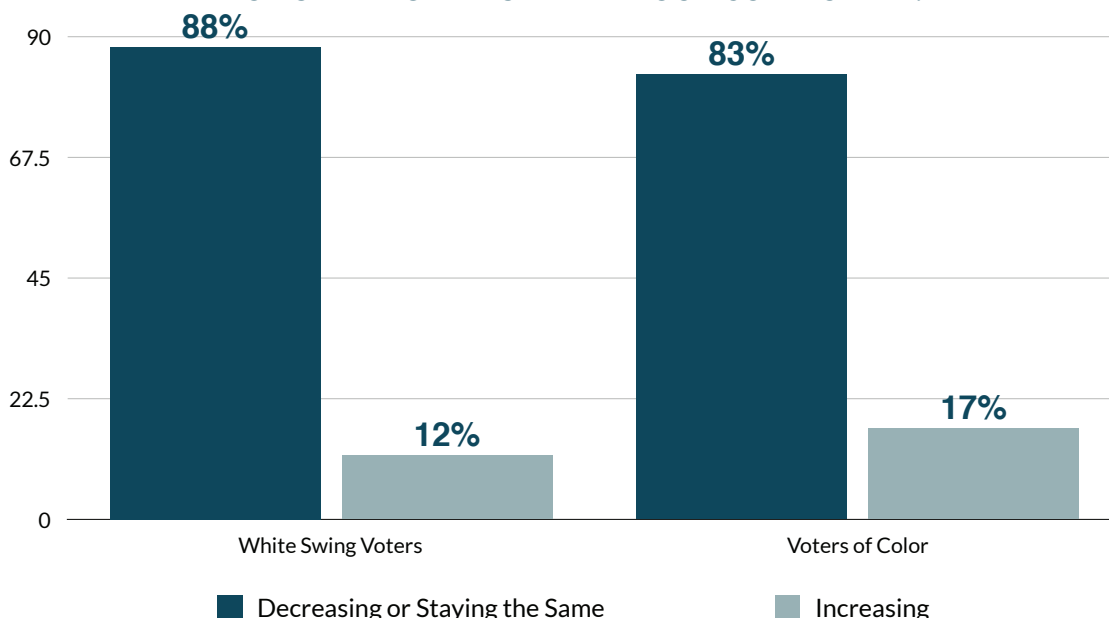
decline in American manufacturing. Majorities (72% white working class people and 63% working class people of color) said that jobs in manufacturing have stayed the same or declined in the last decade.

Meanwhile majorities of both white working class people and working class people of color said their incomes were either just staying even with or falling behind the cost of living. Respondents were also asked to choose their single biggest concern from a list of three—the cost of healthcare and other necessities, a clean, healthy environment and clean air and water, or the availability of good-paying jobs.

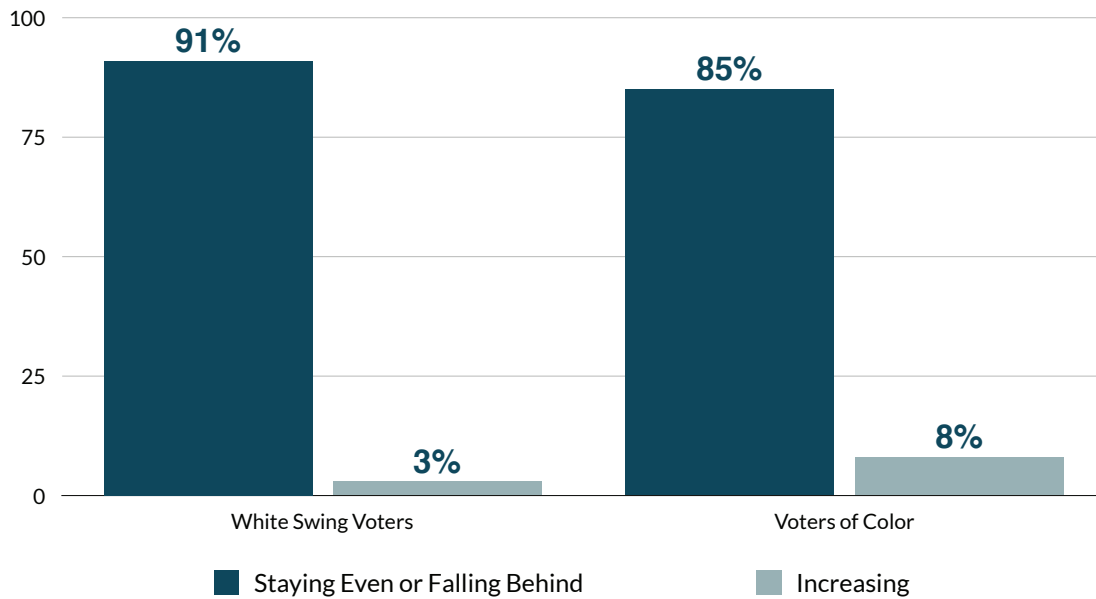
ARE THERE ENOUGH GOOD-PAYING JOBS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



ARE THE NUMBER OF GOOD-PAYING JOBS INCREASING, DECREASING, OR STAYING THE SAME IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



IS YOUR INCOME KEEPING UP, STAYING EVEN, OR FALLING BEHIND THE COST OF LIVING?



Fifty-six percent of white working class people and 40% of working class people of color said that healthcare and other necessities was their single biggest concern—followed closely by jobs. Working people overwhelmingly believed that unchecked corporate greed and outsourcing were the major reasons America is losing good-paying jobs, followed by a lack of investment in education and training.

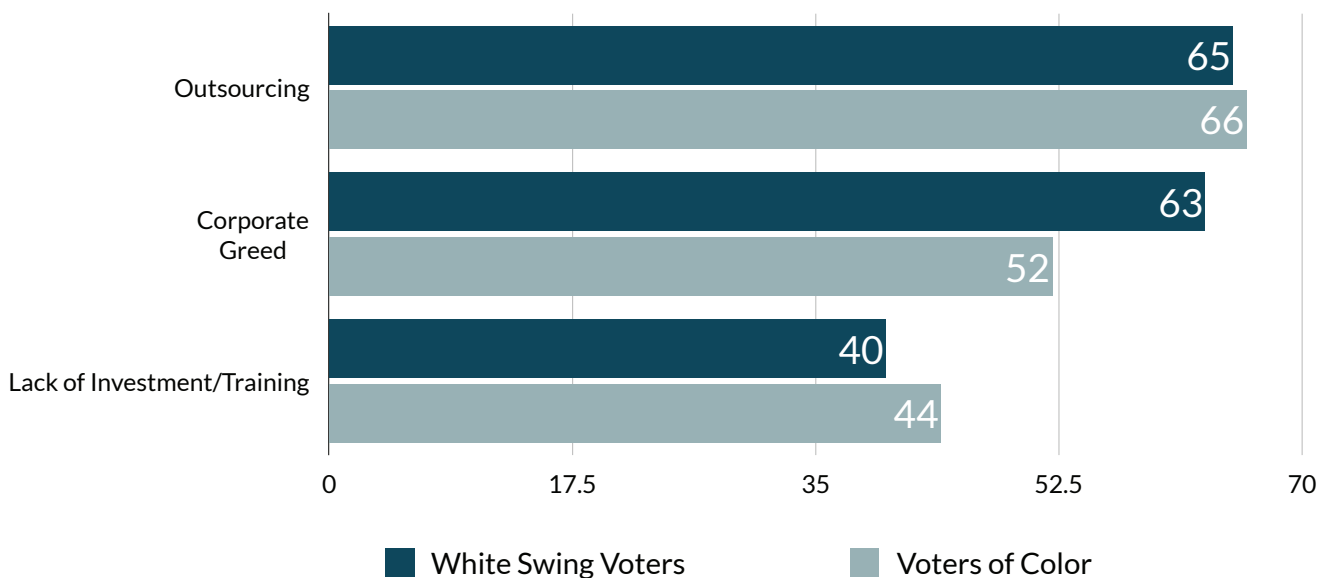
In addition, while 48% of white working class people approve of the job President Trump has done, two in three (64%) believe that he looks out for the wealthy and big corporations over regular people.

Working class people of color overwhelmingly disapprove of the job President Trump is doing (78%).

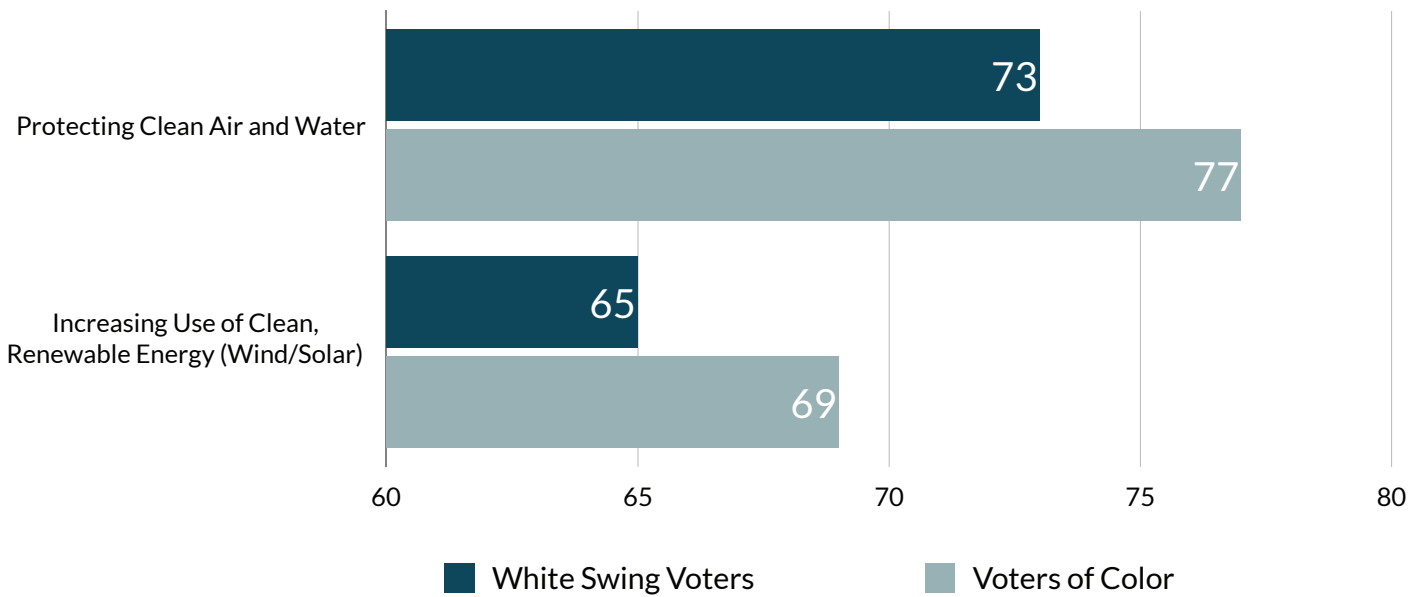
ON CLEAN ENERGY, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Working people prioritized clean air and water, and working class people of color prioritized addressing climate change at higher rates than do white working class people. While a significant portion of working class people believe climate change is a problem, many felt it was only a somewhat serious problem.

TOP REASONS WHY AMERICA IS LOSING GOOD-PAYING JOBS



VOTERS' VERY IMPORTANT PRIORITIES



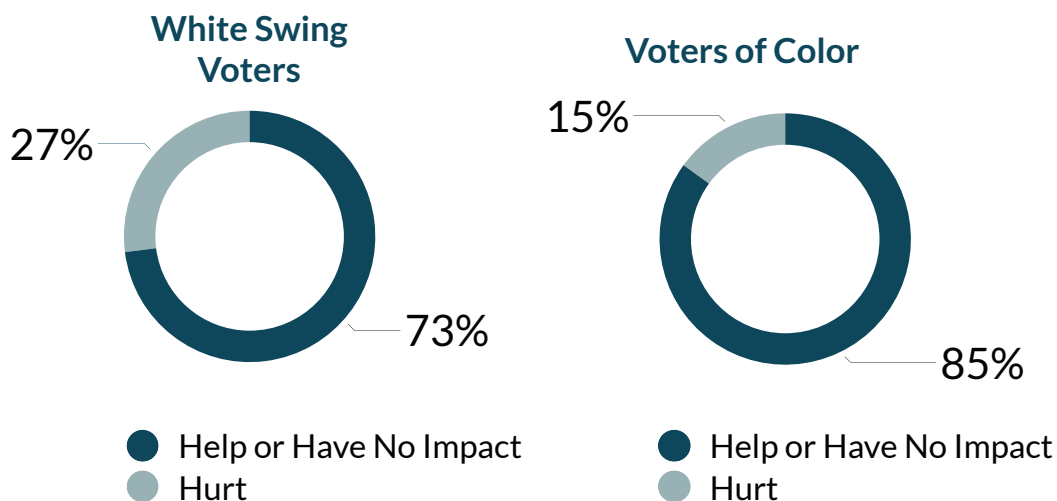
When it comes to clean energy, working class people supported increasing the production and use of clean energy— like wind and solar—but they didn't necessarily see these technologies as significant job creators. However, they were interested in investing in the new technologies to make electricity and existing industries cleaner.

The single best reason white working class people support clean energy is because it's a renewable resource that will never run out. The single best reason for working class people of color, on the other hand, was because it will help to address climate change.

Working class people also don't buy the attempts to pit jobs against the environment. Seventy-three percent of white working class people and 85% of working class people of color said that environmental laws and regulations help or have no impact on the economy, with just 27% and 15% percent saying they hurt the economy, respectively.

In addition, 42% of white working class people and 44% of working class people of color said the following statement was most important or motivating to them: Good jobs and a clean environment should go together—we should not let politicians try to divide us by creating a false conflict between jobs and the environment.

DO ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS HELP OR HURT THE ECONOMY



**A NEW PLAN FOR WORKERS
THAT CREATES GOOD JOBS,
PROTECTS THE ENVIRONMENT**

Throughout this project, BGA talked to white working class people and working class people of color without four-year college degrees from across the Midwest, including union members and non-union members and people in coal states and industrial states.

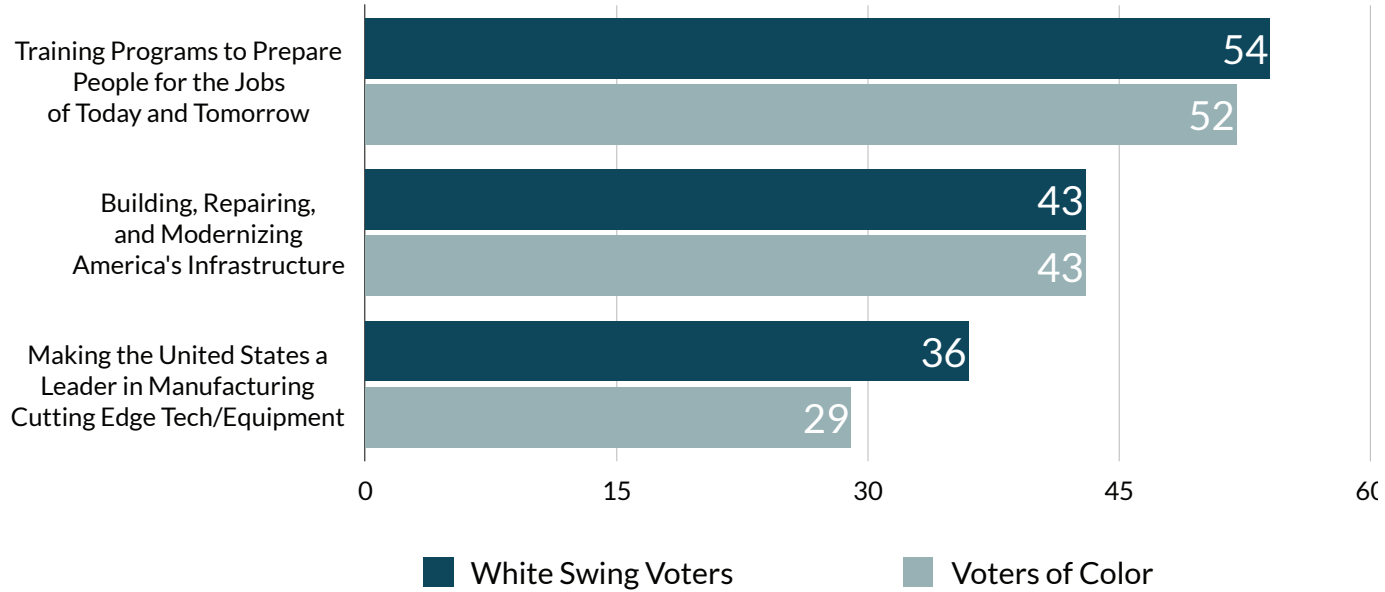
Across the board, we heard that working people are worried about the availability of good-paying jobs in their communities, they are concerned about wages falling behind the cost of living, and they believe corporate greed and outsourcing are the biggest reasons America is losing good-paying jobs.

We heard from working people that they deeply

care about clean air and clean water, and believe that we should be increasing the production and use of clean energy because it will never run out and because it will address climate change. They believe that the best ways to bring good-paying jobs to their community is to invest in job training, infrastructure, and manufacturing cutting edge technologies, and they prioritize increasing the use of clean, renewable energy like wind and solar, new technologies to help make manufacturing processes produce less pollution and that make coal, oil, and natural gas energy sources cleaner.

Working-class people are looking forward, not backward. They want a new plan—a vision for the economy with specific solutions to the economic challenges both our nation and working people are facing today.

**TOP THREE WAYS TO CREATE GOOD-PAYING
JOBS IN MY STATE**



RECOMMENDATIONS

Lean Into Clean.

Working people prioritize clean air and water and increasing the use of clean energy. Working class people of color prioritize addressing climate change and believe children should not have to live with harmful pollution. However, job creation is not seen as one of the top benefits of the shift to clean energy. Rather, white working class people support clean energy because of its limitless supply, while working class people of color support clean energy because it will address climate change.

Think Local and Provide Solutions That Create Good-Paying Jobs in Communities.

Although white working class people are optimistic about the national economy in general, working class people feel their incomes are stagnating or falling behind the cost of living and see little sign of improvement. When talking about job creation, it's important to focus on the need for more good-paying jobs in people's own communities that help them to stay ahead of the cost of living. Broaden the story on jobs and give real examples on how the clean energy economy is benefiting the local community. The most commonly attributed aspects of a good job listed by participants were good pay, good benefits, and health insurance.

Make the Connection Between Good Jobs and Strong Environmental Protections.

Working people reject the idea that environmental laws and regulations hurt the economy—most think it will help the economy or have no impact. Instead, working people blame greedy corporations and CEOs for shipping jobs overseas. White working class people in particular think that it's important to make better trade deals and to crack down on unfair

foreign trade. Focus on creating good local jobs here in the United States, how making existing industries more efficient can help keep jobs here at home, on connecting the dual priorities of good jobs and a clean environment, and on rejecting attempts by corporate CEOs and politicians to divide on these issues.

Messengers People Trust.

Working class people viewed environmental organizations favorably and labor unions also saw a net favorable rating from both groups—though working class people of color favored them more. Companies in the wind and solar industry were viewed much more favorably than other businesses. Working class people had very little trust of multinational corporations, CEOs, and traditional energy companies.

Focus on a Comprehensive Plan for the Economy of the Future.

Provide a vision for the economy that creates quality jobs in local communities and that ensures clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. People see clean energy and technologies as part of the future economy, and they believe we should take advantage of opportunities to make existing energy and industries cleaner and more efficient.

Working class people reject the false choice between good jobs and a clean environment. A stronger message focuses on a comprehensive, detailed plan for the economy of the future—one that creates good-paying jobs in their community by seizing on clean technologies, especially those that make existing industries more efficient and competitive, investing in infrastructure, and focusing on training to help people prepare for the jobs of today and tomorrow.



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