

# targetsmart



DATE: August 5, 2020

TO: State Innovation Exchange

FROM: Ben Lazarus and Gabby Weisberg, TargetSmart

RE: Key Findings on Voting and Election Reforms from Recent Multi-State Poll

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Results from a recent SiX-commissioned poll<sup>1</sup> of voters across ten target states<sup>2</sup> reveal significant and timely findings related to voting and election reforms:

- **American voters overwhelmingly support a major, proactive role for state government in voting and election administration.**
- **American voters believe state government should take a proactive role in addressing barriers that prevent Black people from voting.**
- **American voters broadly support reforms to make voting more accessible, and they overwhelmingly support making vote-by-mail accessible to all voters.**

## Voters Unanimously See Role for State Government in Election Administration

Voters across the ten target states unanimously see a role for state government in election administration – 91 percent of voters believe their state government should have a “major” or “some” role in safely and fairly administering elections, with nearly 3-in-4 voters believing it should play a “major role.” In fact, safely and fairly administering elections surfaces as the top policy area in which voters of see a role for government.

## Voters Want State Government to Remove Racial Barriers to Voting

Nearly 7-in-10 voters across the target states also indicate that they believe state government should play an active role in acknowledging and addressing systemic racism (68 percent). Accordingly, roughly two thirds of voters across these target states believe their state government should reduce barriers that stop Black people from voting (65 percent).

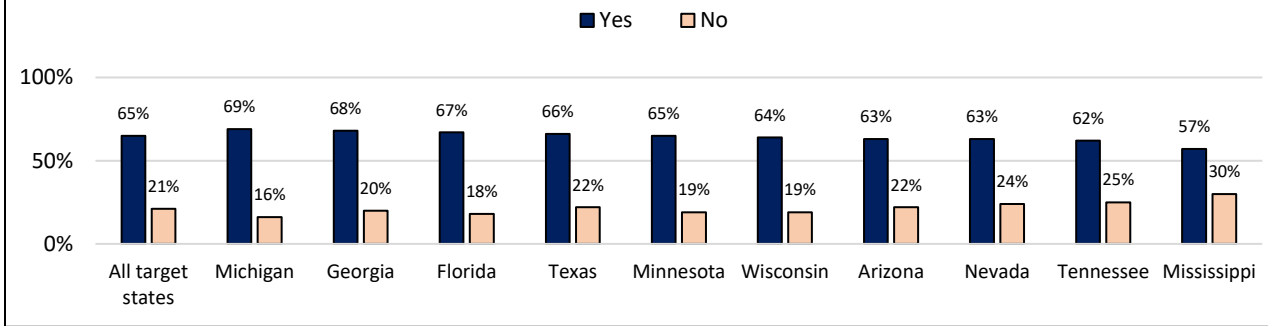
As seen in Figure 1 on page 2, solid majorities of voters in each of the target states want their government to reduce racial barriers to voting, although we see less support for this on the margin among voters in Mississippi. Furthermore, this debate is highly charged along partisan lines, as Democrats almost unanimously support reducing racial barriers to voting (87 percent) and nearly 2-in-3 independents also want these barriers removed (64 percent), while Republicans are much more mixed on this debate (43 percent yes, 36 percent no).

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for survey methodology

<sup>2</sup> Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin

**Figure 1: Do you believe the state of STATE should reduce barriers that stop Black people from voting?**



A cross-racial coalition comes together on this issue as over 6-in-10 white voters (63 percent), 6-in-10 Latinx voters (63 percent), and over 8-in-10 Black voters (85 percent) indicate support for their state removing barriers that stop Black people from voting. Voters with college degrees (71 percent) and voters residing in urban areas (71 percent) most broadly support reducing racial barriers to voting, though voters without college degrees (59 percent) and those who live in suburban (66 percent) and rural (58 percent) areas are also generally supportive.

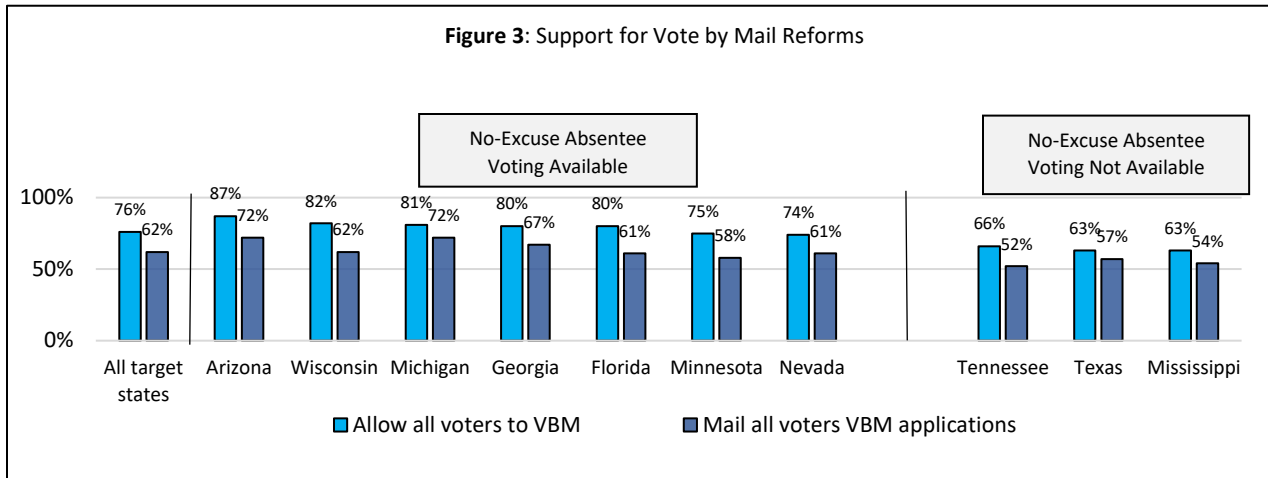
### Voters Concerned About Pandemic’s Impact on Voting in 2020

Voters in target states express significant concerns about voting during the pandemic. Nearly 6-in-10 voters express concerns about the outbreak preventing citizens from voting in this year’s elections (59 percent) and a similar proportion of voters also express concerns about election administration problems like long lines (56 percent). These concerns are much more profound among voters of color, as 81 percent of Black voters and 73 percent of Latinx voters express concerns about the pandemic preventing citizens from voting, and 81 percent of Black voters and 67 percent of Latinx voters express election administration concerns. There is also a partisan bend to these concerns, with Democrats expressing strong concerns (78 percent voting prevention, 76 election administration) while independents are mixed (54 percent voting prevention, 51 percent election administration) and Republicans are only marginally concerned (44 percent voting prevention, 38 percent election administration).

### Vote-By-Mail Laws Very Popular, Even in States Without No Excuse Absentee Voting

Voters across the target states are broadly open to progressive vote-by-mail reforms. Over 3-in-4 voters in the target states support allowing any registered voter in their state to vote by mail (76 percent) and roughly 3-in-5 voters support mailing all registered voters in their state an application to vote by mail (62 percent).

As shown in Figure 3 on page 3, voters in each state broadly support allowing all registered voters to vote by mail, with some of the strongest support coming from voters in Arizona, Wisconsin and Michigan. Mailing all registered voters applications to vote by mail is slightly less popular, but supported by majorities of voters in each state nonetheless. Support for these vote-by-mail reforms is significantly softer, but still strong, in states where no-excuse absentee voting is not traditionally available.

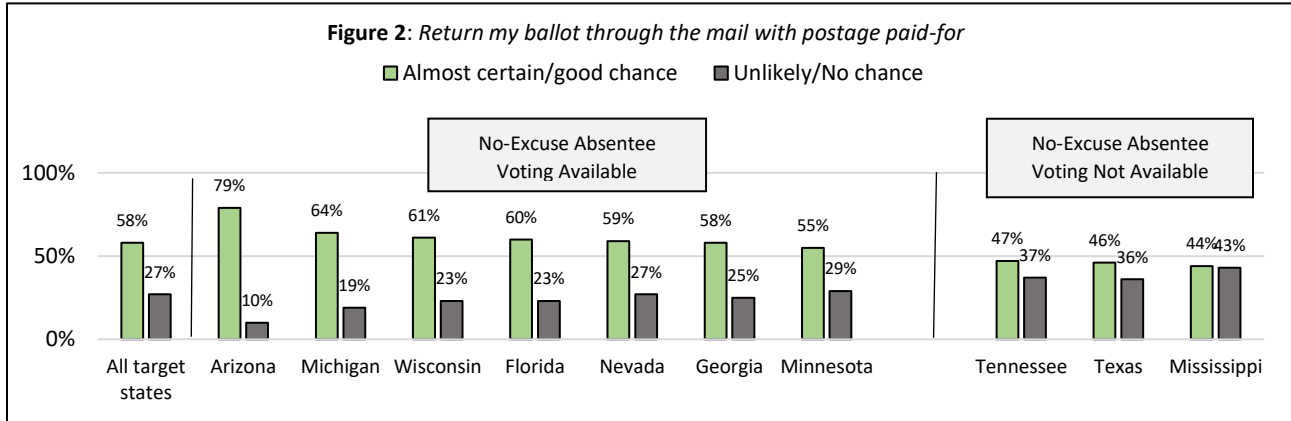


While white voters support both of these reforms on net, some of the strongest support comes from voters of color – Black and Latinx voters both strongly support allowing all voters to vote by mail and mailing all voters applications to vote by mail. Age is another driving factor behind support for progressive vote-by-mail reforms as voters under 50 years old express stronger support for both reforms than voters 50 years and over. Finally, we find voters residing in urban areas express stronger support for both reforms than voters in suburban and rural areas.

**Table 1: Vote by Mail Reforms by Key Demographics**

	Allow all voters to VBM		Mail all voters VBM applications	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
<b>All voters</b>	76%	24%	62%	38%
<b>White</b>	74%	26%	59%	41%
<b>Black</b>	90%	9%	80%	20%
<b>Latinx</b>	83%	15%	75%	24%
<b>Under 50</b>	81%	19%	69%	30%
<b>50+</b>	71%	29%	55%	45%
<b>Rural</b>	68%	33%	55%	45%
<b>Suburban</b>	78%	22%	62%	38%
<b>Urban</b>	82%	18%	71%	29%

A solid majority of voters in target states indicate that they would return their ballot through the mail with prepaid postage if it were available to them (58 percent almost certain or good chance). Notably, we find that voters are more likely to return their ballots through the mail when postage is paid-for (58 percent almost certain or good chance) compared to when it is not paid-for (48 percent almost certain or good chance).



As shown in Figure 2, voters residing in states where no-excuse absentee voting is available report higher levels of likelihood to vote by mail than voters residing in states without no-excuse absentee voting.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, we see voters in vote-by-mail-friendly Arizona over-index on this metric.

<sup>3</sup> Due to ongoing legal action, Tennessee will allow no-excuse absentee voting for elections in 2020, but the state does not traditionally offer voters this option.

## Appendix A: Survey Methodology

TargetSmart designed and administered this multimodal survey. Three-thousand five-hundred ninety-four interviews were conducted online among panelists who were matched to the TargetSmart voter file (3,594 weighted), 1,864 interviews were conducted online using text-to-web and email-to-web (422 email, 1,442 SMS) solicits from the TargetSmart voter file (1,825 weighted), and 300 interviews (379 weighted) were conducted via live phone calls (261 wireless, 39 landline). In total, the survey reached 5,758 adults (5,528 weighted), age 18 or older, who are registered to vote in one of the ten target states identified by State Innovation Exchange.

Quotas were designed to reflect the demographic and geographic distribution of registered voters in each target state. The data were weighted separately by gender, age, race, partisanship (party registration for states with party registration, TargetSmart Partisanship Score for states without party registration), TargetSmart High School Only Score, and a state-specific geography to ensure an accurate reflection of the populations in each target state.

The credibility interval (the theoretical margin of error for a blended-methodology poll that relies partially on telephone-based probability sampling, and partially on non-probability based online panel sampling) is +/- 1.3%. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding