

October 31, 2007

A New America Unmarrieds Drive Political and Social Change

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

America is changing politically, demographically and socially. By 2040, a majority of Americans will be non-white. One in five American high school aged kids now speak a language other than English at home. In 1987, women accounted for 5 percent of those serving in Congress. By 2007, this number more than tripled and promises to only rise further. Single parent households have grown from under a quarter to over a third of American households over the past 25 years and a majority of households are now headed by unmarried Americans for the first time. More than any other of these changes, that has strong implications for our politics.

While demographic change in the country is undeniable in scale, the hunger in this country for *political* change is no less dramatic. In the most recent Democracy Corps survey, no fewer than 70 percent of Americans believe the country is off on the wrong track. Simply put, we have rarely seen this level of frustration, for this extended period of time, in the history of public opinion polling.

It is striking the degree to which unmarrieds in this country drive change, in social and demographic terms and in political terms. In total, there are over 53 million unmarried women of voting age, a number that dwarfs the percentage of seniors, people of color and even union members.

Politically, unmarried women drive the mood for change in this country. Seventy-eight percent of the cohort believes the country is on the wrong track. Unmarried women changed Congress in 2006, giving 66 percent of their vote to Democrats. In our latest poll, they give Hillary Clinton 66 for president. Unmarried women have the potential to emerge as the 'Democrats' Evangelicals.'

They have the power to reshape American politics further, *if they vote*. One quarter of all eligible voters are unmarried women. Unfortunately, in the past their level of participation and registration have ranked well below that of married women. In all, 20 million unmarried women did not vote in the last election.

2008 could be very different, if progressives see the opportunity before them. Unmarried women show a high level of interest in voting, higher, in fact, than married women. Seventy-seven percent express the highest level of interest in the election – 3 points more than do married women. Historically, it is rare to see more interest among unmarrieds. There is the chance that these women, and unmarrieds more generally, may lead the process of change that began in 2006 and emerge as the largest contributor to the Democratic vote in 2008.

Executive Summary

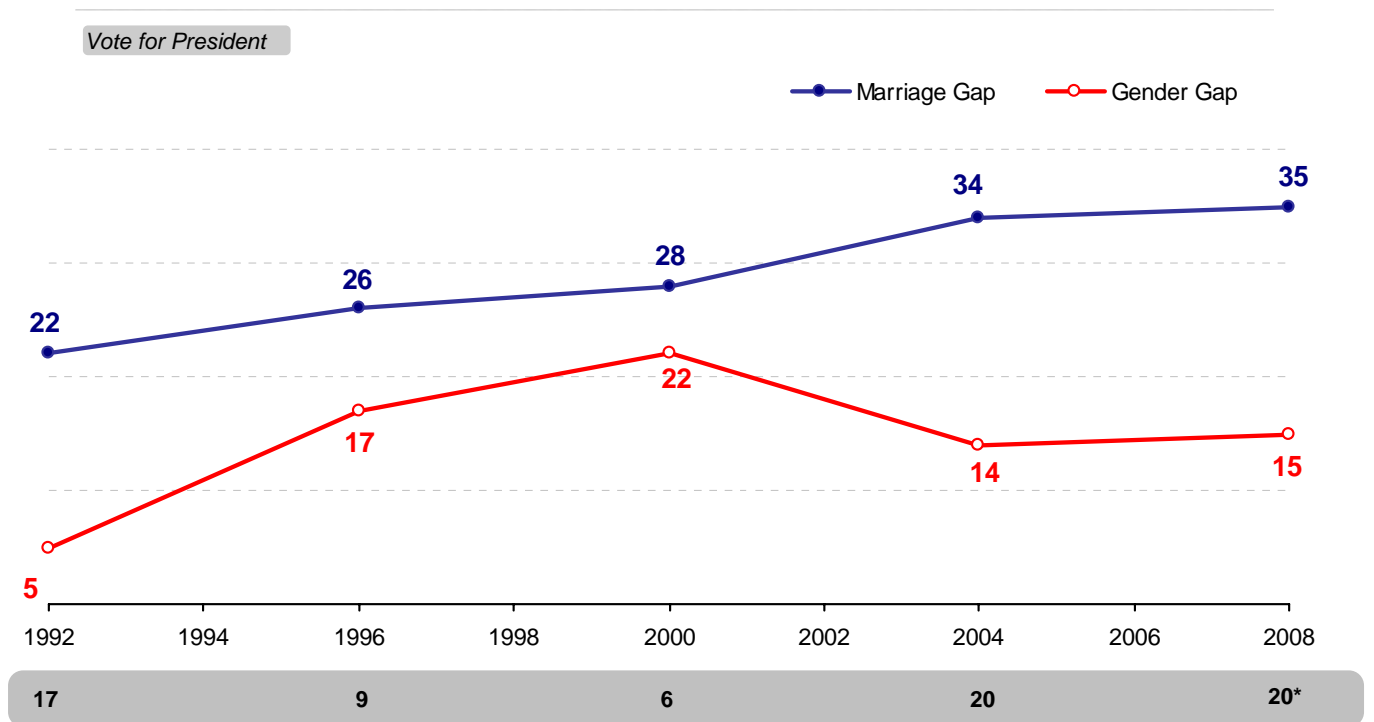
- Marital status is playing an increasingly defining role in elections. For the 2006 congressional elections, the “marriage gap” was 32 points, far bigger than the gender gap, which was just 9 points. Among women, the marriage gap was an even bigger 36 points. Importantly, marital status is a powerful predictor of the vote *within* other voting blocks; unmarried women tend to vote like other unmarried women, regardless of other powerful demographic variables such as age, income and education.
- Making up over a quarter of the eligible voting age population, unmarried women are easily the largest segment of the Democratic base – bigger than Hispanics and African Americans combined. And over the past several cycles they have been the second most loyal bloc of Democratic voters, second only to African Americans. In fact, in their size and loyalty, this cohort closely resembles a key part of the Republican base: white evangelicals. If progressives turn them out, unmarried women can be as important to Democrats in 2008 as evangelicals were to Republicans in 2004.
- The growing political importance of unmarried women is undergirded by a demographic shift that is fundamentally changing America. From 1960 to 2006, the percentage of the voting age population that was unmarried grew from 27 to 45 percent. Between the 2002 and 2006 elections, the growth rate of unmarried Americans was double that of married Americans. If this trend continues, the unmarried will be a majority of the population within 15 years.
- Unmarried women are poised to tip the 2008 election in progressive’s favor. In an electorate that is hungry for change, this cohort is the hungriest, with 78 percent saying the country is on the wrong track. Unmarried women’s ire is focused firmly on the Republicans, and this is reflected in new poll findings that show Democrats poised to blow Republicans out among this group in 2008. In a generic presidential match-up, unmarried women favor the Democrat by a 70 – 24 point margin and in named match-up, Hillary Clinton leads Rudy Giuliani 66 percent – 30 percent among this cohort.
- The only thing preventing this group from playing a truly decisive role in the Democrats’ favor is their lower participation rate. 20 million unmarried women stayed home in 2004 – 41 percent of the cohort. By comparison just 29 percent of married women failed to vote. Things are improving; between 2002 and 2006 the number of unmarried women voters shot up over 13 percent. There is still much room for improvement, which could be achieved in 2008. Unmarried women now express a greater interest in the election than married women. It must be the goal of Democrats and progressives to harness this interest and bring unmarried women’s participation levels nearer to that of the rest of the population.
- If progressives are to bring unmarried women to the polls, we must engage them with an agenda that speaks to the issues they face in their own lives. Along with Iraq, this cohort places a strong emphasis on economic security, including health care. Because of the often stark economic reality of a single-income family, they support an active government that will give all Americans a chance to get ahead, not just the affluent. This is particularly true about health care, this cohort’s top economic concern. This group strongly supports fundamental reform to provide universal coverage that can never be taken away. Combined with strong support for a reduction of troops in Iraq, a message that emphasizes these progressive reforms will meet these voters—and potential voters—where they live.

Political Change

Marriage Gap Increasingly Important To Electoral Outcomes

Since 2000, we have seen a shrinking gender gap. Meanwhile, the “marriage gap,” the partisan difference between the votes of the married and the unmarried, has consistently grown in importance in every election since 1992. In fact, more so than gender and almost every other demographic distinction, marital status drives the decision to vote and participate in the elections and the political choices themselves. Studies have shown that marital status (along with age, education and residential stability) plays a key role in determining turnout rates.¹ Meanwhile, regression analysis conducted by Democracy Corps just after the 2004 election confirmed that marital status was significantly more predictive of the presidential vote than gender.² Whether the gender gap continues to shrink remains to be seen, but there can be no question that the marriage gap will play a defining role in political outcomes in 2008.

Figure 1: Difference Between Marriage and Gender Gaps: Presidential Vote



**Note: Data for 1992 – 2004 from exit polls, data for 2008 from Democracy Corps survey of 994 likely voters conducted October 21-24, 2007*

Equally striking is the power of the marriage gap to predict the vote *within* voting blocks among women. Unmarried women tended to vote like other unmarried women, regardless of other powerful demographic variables such as age, income and education. At the same time, married women tended to vote like other married women.

¹ “Family Structure and Voter Turnout,” Wolfinger and Wolfinger, August 2006.

² Based on Democracy Corps survey of 2000 voters in the 2004 presidential election conducted November 2-3, 2003.

■ **Figure 2: Marriage Gap 2006: House, Senate and Governor³**

		Total	Unmarried Women	Married Women	Unmarried Men	Married Men
U.S. Senate	Dem	55	65	52	62	55
	Rep	40	29	44	34	40
Net	D-R	+15	+36	+8	+28	+15
U.S. House	Dem	53	66	48	62	47
	Rep	45	32	50	36	51
Net	D-R	+8	+34	-2	+26	-4
Governor	Dem	51	63	47	55	47
	Rep	42	30	47	37	47
Net	D-R	+9	+33	0	+18	0

**Note: Data from 2006 Edison/Mitofsky/CNN Network Exit Polls*

Democrats, of course, run up big margins among people of color, especially African Americans. But sometimes lost in these large margins is the fact that even within minority subgroups, marital status plays a key role in progressive performance. In fact, the marriage gap in the 2006 congressional election was more important than the gender gap among whites, Hispanics and African Americans (see Table 1). So while even married African Americans, at +74 points, delivered a huge Democratic margin, they still lagged behind unmarried African Americans by 14 points.

■ **Figure 3: Marriage and Gender Gaps: 2006 Congressional Election⁴**

2006 Dem – Rep: Gender Gaps			2006 Dem – Rep: Marriage Gaps		
Group	Margin	Gap	Margin	Margin	Gap
White men	-9	8	White married	-14	30
White women	-1		White non-married	+16	
Hispanic men	+41	-3	Hispanic married	+32	12
Hispanic women	+38		Hispanic unmarried	+44	
African American men	+73	9	African American married	+74	14
African American women	+82		African American unmarried	+88	

³ Edison/Mitofsky/CNN Network Exit Poll, 11/06.

⁴ Edison/Mitofsky/CNN Network Exit Poll, 11/06.

Looking ahead to 2008, we see that the marriage gap will continue to play an important role, especially among women. Unmarried women remain progressive almost regardless of their demographic profile. Overall unmarried women deliver a 46-point margin in a generic presidential match-up. This margin generally holds among unmarried older women (32-point margin) and younger unmarried women (68 points), among college educated (47 points) and non-college voters (45 points), among unmarried women in the Northeast (47 points), the South (46 points), the West (41 points) and the Midwest (51 points). Rural voters once comprised a Republican base, but are now politically competitive.⁵ Among unmarried women, however, the marriage gap transcends conservative rural instincts (44 points).⁶

■ **Figure 4: Vote Of Unmarried Women By Subgroup: Generic Presidential Race⁷**

Subgroup	Support Democratic Candidate	Support Republican Candidate	Net D-R
All Unmarried Women	70	24	+46
Older Voters	63	31	+32
Younger Voters	82	14	+68
College Educated	70	23	+47
Non-College	70	24	+45
Suburban	70	27	+43
Rural	71	26	+44
Central	72	21	+51
South	70	24	+46
Northeast	71	24	+47
West	68	27	+41

Unmarried Women: The Democrats' Evangelicals

After finding himself on the short-end of a very close election in 2000, Karl Rove famously blamed George Bush's popular vote loss on a poor showing among white evangelicals and vowed to turnout 4 million more in 2004. He mostly succeeded, turning out 3.5 million white evangelicals who had stayed home in 2000 and upping Bush's share of the white evangelical vote from 68 percent to 78 percent. All-in-all, Bush added almost 6 million new white evangelical votes – about double his margin of victory over John Kerry.⁸

The discussion of the importance of white evangelicals to Republican electoral success has been so omnipresent that it has almost become an axiom, and their role (or lack thereof) in the 2008 election remains a constant topic of speculation. But, there is little discussion of the role of unmarried

⁵ Based on Center for Rural Strategies survey of 800 likely voters in rural counties conducted May, 2007.

⁶ Based on Democracy Corps survey of 994 likely voters conducted October 21-24, including an oversample of 435 unmarried women.

⁷ Based on Democracy Corps survey of 994 likely voters conducted October 21-24, including an oversample of 435 unmarried women.

⁸ *US News and World Report*, 2/25/07 and The Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 12/6/04.

women, even though they have the potential to play the same role for the Democrats in 2008 that white evangelicals did for the Republicans in 2004.

Figure 5: Comparison Of Democratic And Republican Base Subgroups

Group	Percent of Voting Age Population ⁹	Democratic/Republican Performance ¹⁰
Unmarried	47	64
Unmarried women	26	66
Seniors	17	49
African-Americans	12	89
Hispanics	9	69
White evangelicals	23	-70

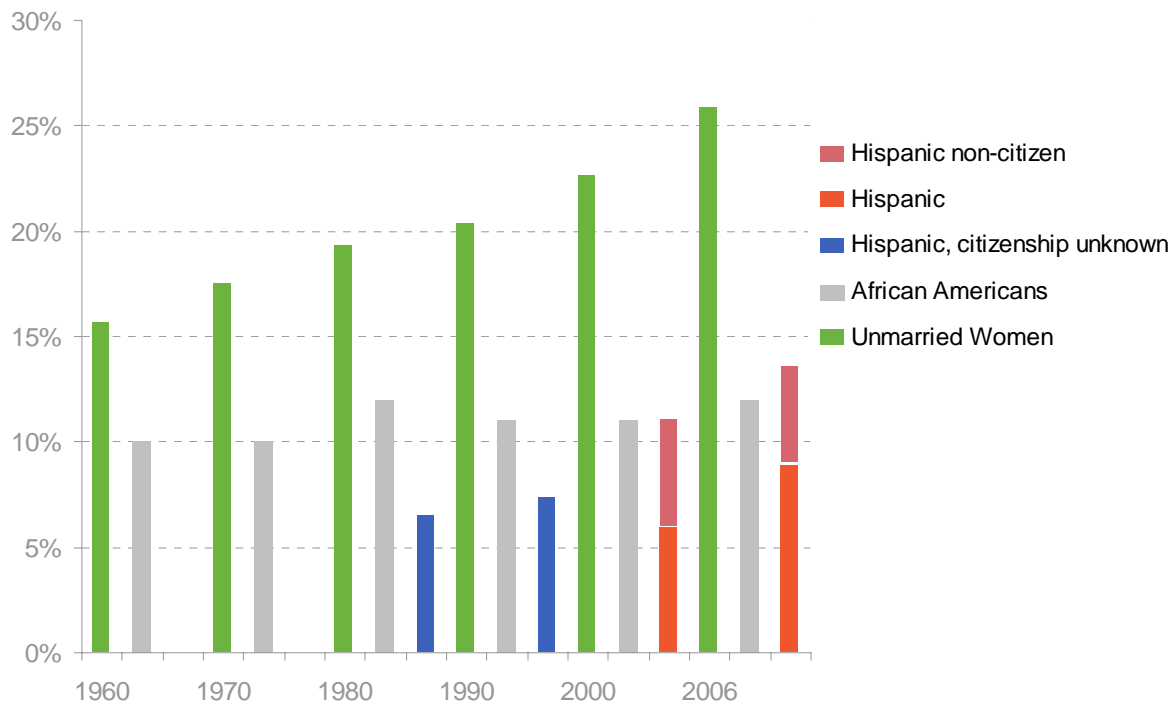
White evangelicals are so important because they make up a relatively large portion of the population – 23 percent – and because their vote is nearly monolithic with 70 percent voting for Republicans in 2006. Unmarried women, meanwhile, present very similar statistics on both fronts. Indeed, unmarried Americans, and unmarried women in particular, represent the largest bloc of potential progressive voters in the country. At a over a quarter of the population, unmarried women constitute an even larger block of potential voters than seniors, African-Americans, Hispanics or other groups often identified as crucial to Democratic political outcomes. Moreover, because of the explosive growth we have seen, and will continue to see, among unmarried women, this cohort will only become a larger segment of the Democratic base. And over the last several elections, unmarried women have been the most loyal piece of the Democratic base outside of African-Americans. In 2004, they delivered a 25-point margin to John Kerry. Similarly, in the 2006 elections, unmarried women supported Democratic congressional candidates by a 66 to 32 percent margin.¹¹

⁹ Based on Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 12/6/04, Census Current Population Survey, 11/06, and Census American Community Survey, 2006. Includes only U.S Citizens.

¹⁰ Edison/Mitofsky/CNN Network Exit Poll, 11/06

¹¹ National Election Poll's Exit Polls, conducted by Edison Mitofsky, November in 2004. The 2006 data from Edison/Mitofsky/CNN Network Exit Poll.

Figure 6: Segments of Democratic Base: Percentage of Population



**Note: Data from US Census Data 1960-2000, ACS 2006*

The major difference between the electoral power of the two groups is that evangelicals turnout at about the same rate as the overall population, while unmarried women participate in lower numbers. If this can be changed in 2008, unmarried women can have the same, or higher, impact for Democrats than white evangelicals did for Republicans in 2004.

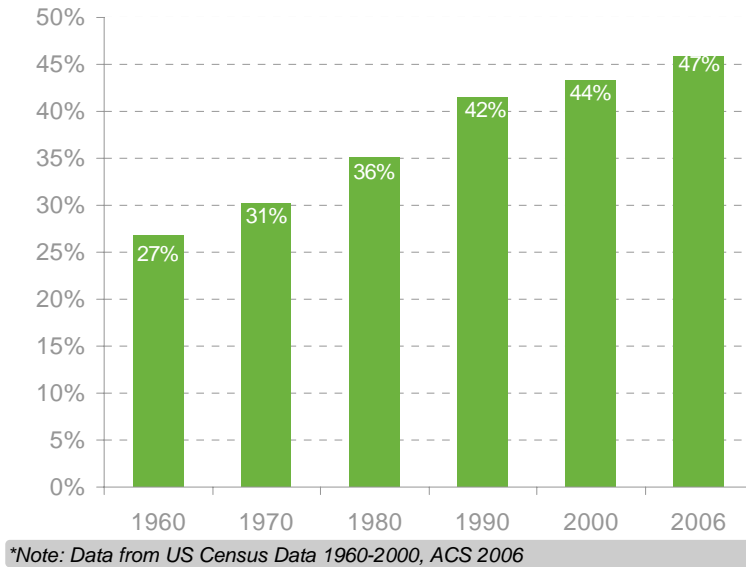
Social Change: The Emerging Unmarried Majority

The importance of adopting new strategies for a changing American is clearly demonstrated by the demographic shift that this country has been (and is continuing to) undergo. Between the 2002 and 2006 midterm elections the proportion of unmarried voting age citizens grew at a rate that surpassed the married population for the first time in our nation’s history. In fact, the rate of growth of the unmarried population was nearly double the growth rate among those who are married.

While the rapid growth of the unmarried population over the past four years is notable, it is merely the continuation of a long-term trend. Between 1960 and 2006, the percentage of the voting age population (as opposed to households) that was unmarried increased from 27 to 47 percent.¹² If the current growth trend continues, the unmarried population will become a majority in the next 15 years.

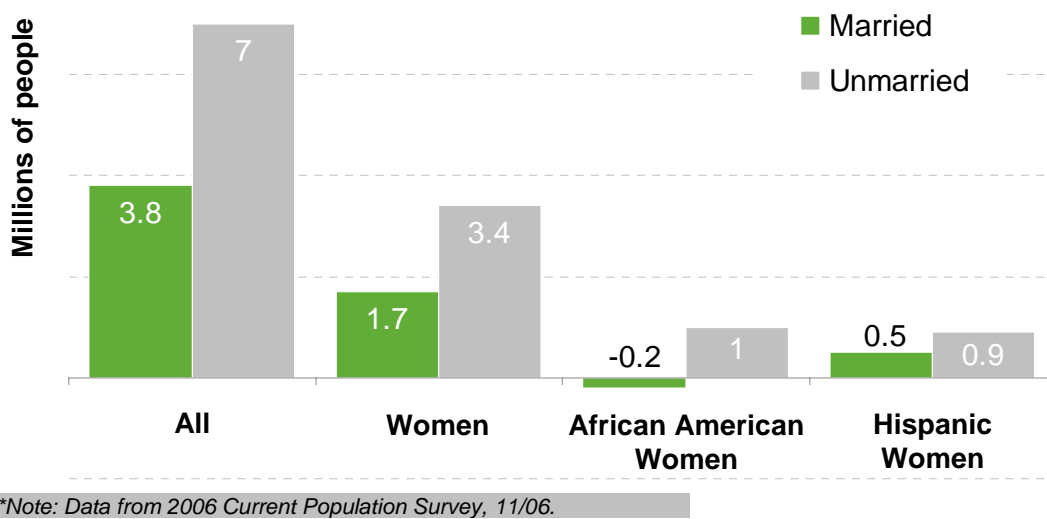
¹² US Census Data 1960-2000, American Community Survey, 2006

Figure 7: Unmarrieds An Increasing Percentage Of Population



And while the number of married Americans aged 21-54 years is dropping in absolute terms for the first time ever, the number of unmarried couples who cohabit and the number of women living without a spouse are on the rise.¹³ The change is being driven in part by younger women. Since 1950, the percentage of women aged 15-to-34 who are married has dropped by about 25 percentage points.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the proportion of people who have never married continues to grow by double digits in every racial and ethnic group.¹⁵

Figure 8 : Growth in Voting Age Population 2002 - 2006



¹³ *New York Times*, 10/15/06

¹⁴ *New York Times*, 1/16/07

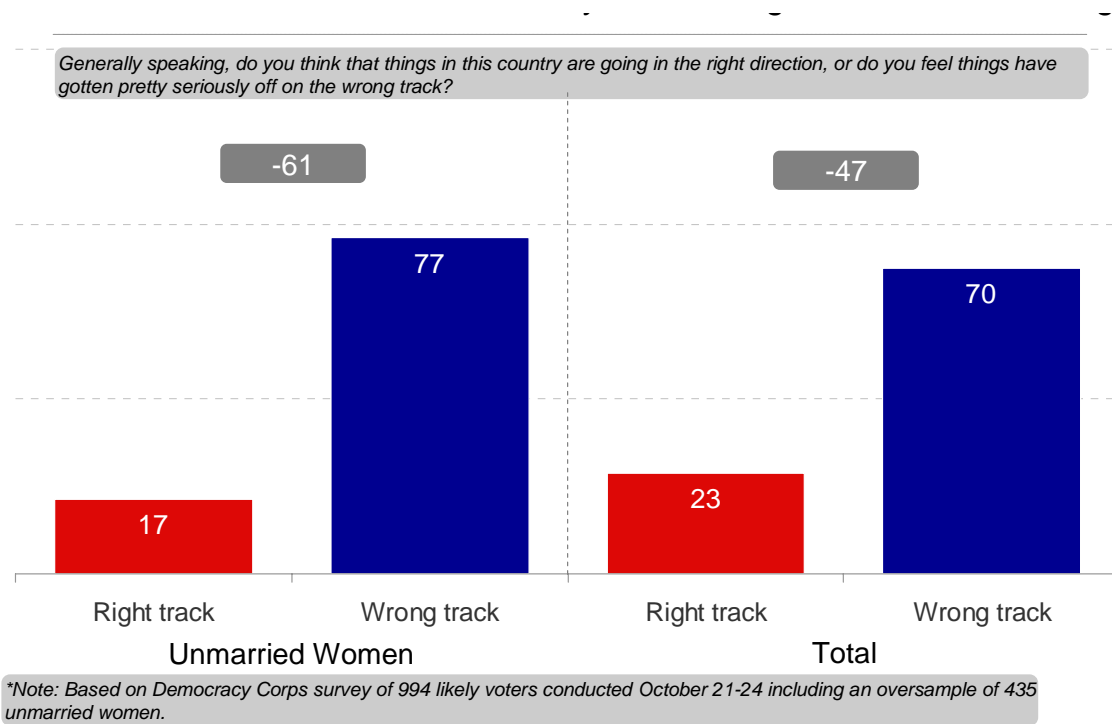
¹⁵ *New York Times*, 7/1/07

Overall, the trends illustrate a generational change that has the potential to alter the fundamental social, and therefore political, structure of the country. As William Frey of the Brookings Institution notes, the numbers demonstrate “a clear tipping point, reflecting the culmination of post-1960 trends associated with greater independence and more flexible lifestyles for women. For better or worse, women are less dependent on men or the institution of marriage.”¹⁶

Regime Change: Unmarried Women Poised To Shift 2008 Election

Newly released polling from Democracy Corps shows that this cohort could move even more firmly into the Democrats’ column in 2008. Unmarried women are unbelievably fed up and hungry for change. Just 17 percent believe the nation is on the right track. Meanwhile, an incredible 77 percent believe the U.S. is heading in the wrong direction.¹⁷

Figure 9 : Unmarried Women Even More Hungry For Change

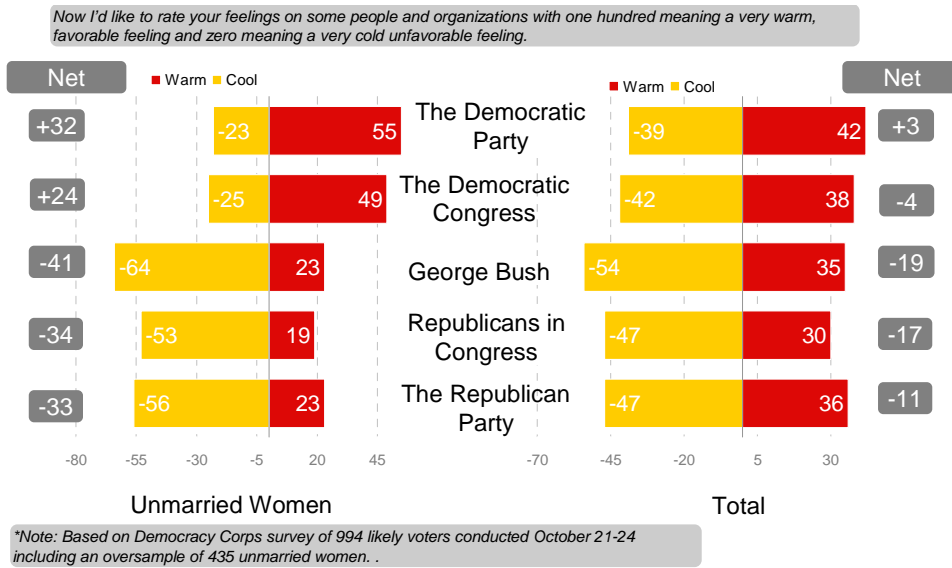


For unmarried women, this unhappiness is aimed squarely at Republicans. The mean thermometer ratings (on a scale of 0 to 100 where 0 is cold and 100 is warm) for the Republican Party, Republicans in Congress and President Bush have steadily declined among this cohort and now sit at just 37, 36 and 32 respectively; Bush’s job approval is at 23 percent. Meanwhile, Democrats have remained popular among unmarried women. The party’s mean thermometer score of 62 is very strong, and even “the Democratic Congress” scores a rating of 57.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, 1/16/07

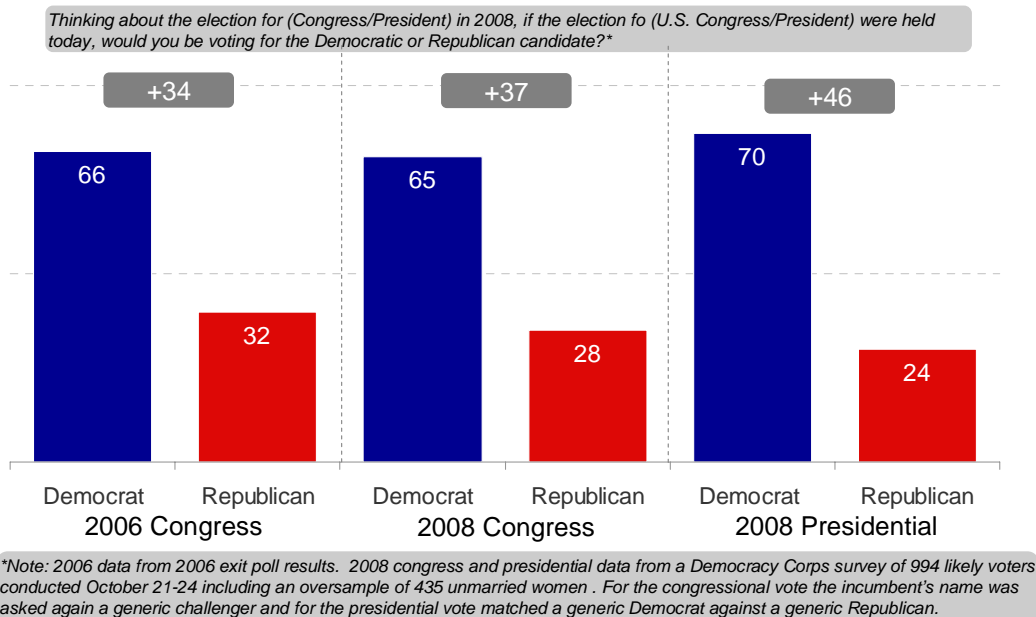
¹⁷ Based on Democracy Corps survey of 994 likely voters conducted October 21-24 including an oversample of 435 unmarried women.

Figure 10 : Partisan Favorability Ratings Among Unmarried Women



All of this manifests itself in a large lead for Democrats heading into 2008. On the named congressional ballot, Democrats lead among unmarried women 65-28, a slightly larger margin than their 66-32 victory in 2006. In a generic presidential race, the gap is even wider, with the Democrat taking 70 percent and a generic Republican just 24 percent – a 46-point advantage. In a named match-up between Hillary Clinton and Rudy Giuliani, unmarried women prefer Clinton 66-30, a 36-point lead.

Figure 11: Unmarried Women Strongly Support Democrats

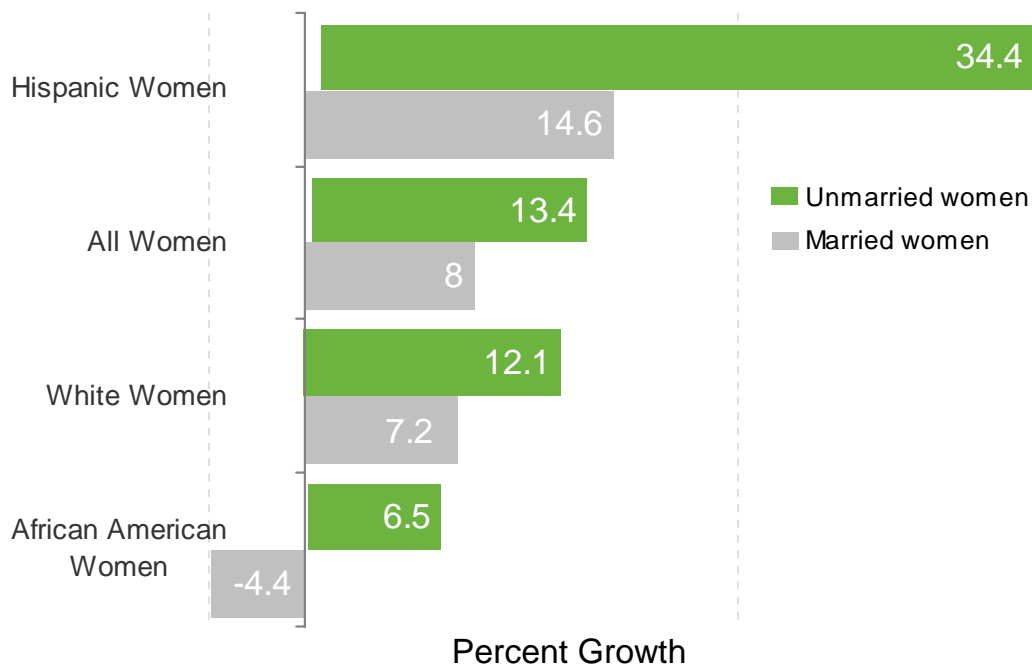


Leaving gender aside, Democrats lead the generic presidential ballot 63 – 32 among all unmarrieds, but tie among marrieds 47-47, creating a marriage gap of 33 points. If a woman heads the ticket in 2008, we will likely see a gender gap reemerge; but it will also likely be smaller than the marriage gap.

Changing Participation: Unmarrieds Could Turnout in Historic Numbers

The unmarried population has not voted at the same levels as the married but we are seeing some important change. While the number of married voters increased a respectable 6 percent between 2002 and 2006, the number of unmarried voters jumped by nearly 16 percent in just one four-year cycle. Among women, we see an 8 percent increase in the number of married voters, but a 13.4 percent increase in the number of unmarried voters. This increase in voters was driven in almost equal parts by a rise in the voting aged population of unmarried women (which grew by 7.4 percent) and a boost in turnout among this cohort (which rose 2 points, from 38 to 40 percent). The increase in unmarried women voters can be seen across all racial groups but, at 34.4 percent, the growth among Hispanic unmarried women voters is particularly striking.

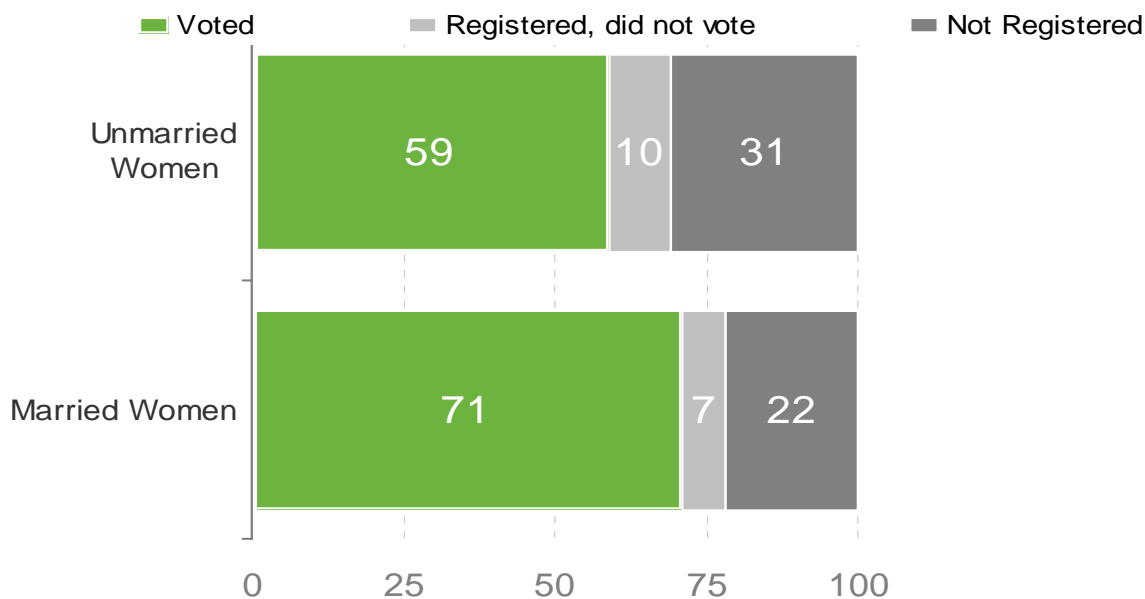
■ **Figure 12: Growth Rate of Women Voters**



**Note: Data from 2006 Current Population Survey, 11/06*

Despite these positive trends, Democrats and progressives are not yet harnessing the true political potential of America’s unmarried women. Looking at the last presidential election in 2004, nearly 20 million unmarried women did not vote - 41 percent of all unmarried women. Conversely, just 29 percent of married women failed to exercise their right to vote.

Figure 13: Turnout and Registration Among Married and Unmarried Women



**Note: Data from Current Population Survey, 11/04*

Newly released polling data from Democracy Corps shows that unmarried women could improve their participation in 2008 to record levels. A survey of low-propensity unmarried women voters (those who, while eligible and registered to vote, missed at least one of the last two presidential elections) in 11 important swing states shows that 64 percent of these usually unlikely voters now say they are “absolutely certain” to vote in 2008.¹⁸ Though different metrics and measures were used, making a direct comparison impossible, a sample of low-propensity voters in 2003 found only 44 percent who said they were “almost certain” to vote.¹⁹ Moreover, unmarried women express a high level of interest in the election, greater even than married women show. Seventy-seven percent of unmarried likely women voters express the highest level of interest in the election, compared to only 74 percent of married women.²⁰ Taken together, this seems to suggest that unmarried women, even those who don’t normally vote, are primed for this election and are open to politicians willing to engage them on the issues important to them.

Change Agenda: Politicians Must Heed Unmarried Women’s New Priorities

As we have laid out above, the electoral clout of unmarried women is rising and will continue to grow in the future. This creates an imperative for progressive politicians. If progressives want to harness

¹⁸ Respondents were asked to rate the chances they would vote in 2008 on a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 meaning “absolutely certain.” Based on a Democracy Corps survey of 158 low propensity unmarried women voters in 11 states and 29 low propensity unmarried women voters nationwide conducted October 21-24, 2007.

¹⁹ Based on a GQR survey of 933 unmarried women under 65 conducted October 23 – November 19 2003, including 288 unlikely voters

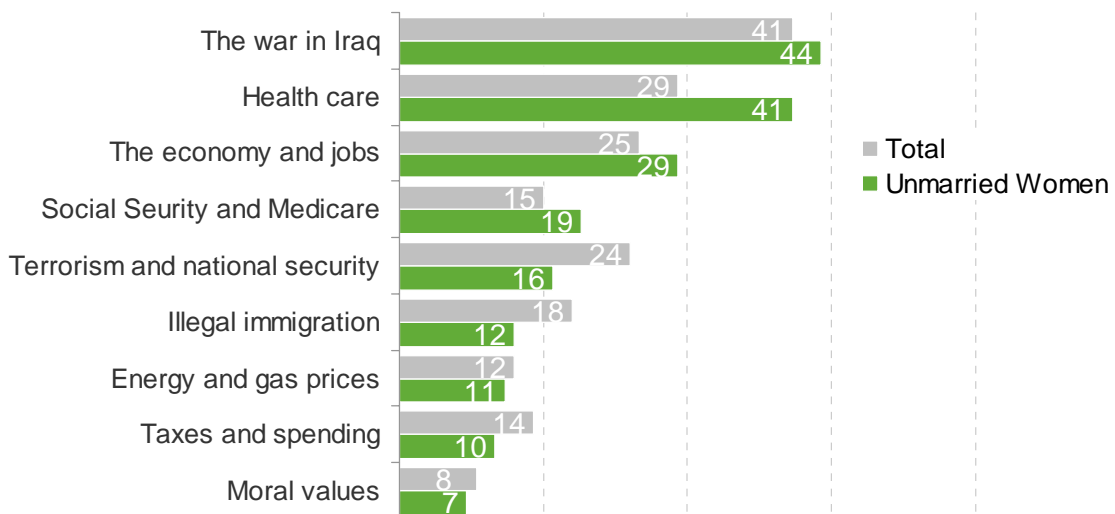
²⁰ Based on Democracy Corps survey of 994 likely voters conducted October 21-24 including an oversample of 435 unmarried women.

these voters in 2008, we must develop an agenda that speaks to the issues in their lives. We need to meet them on their own terms.

As we have noted, unmarried women are hungry for change. More specifically, their focus has three main thrusts: the war in Iraq, health care, and the economy. September’s Democracy Corps survey shows that Iraq remains unmarried women’s top concern, with 44 percent naming it one of their top two choices. Unmarried women’s focus is beginning to shift somewhat, however, to domestic issues. Health care is a close second to Iraq, with 41 percent naming it as one of their top two concerns. The economy and jobs follows in third at 29 percent. Comparing unmarried women with the overall population, we see that this cohort has a stronger interest in health care, the economy and Social Security and Medicare (their fourth most important concern at 19 percent), and a weaker interest in terrorism, immigration and taxes and spending. It is clear that, along with Iraq, this cohort is most interested in issues that directly effect their economic security, which is not surprising considering the relatively insecure economic realities most unmarried women face.²¹

Figure 14: Iraq, Health Care, Economy Top Concerns Of Unmarried Women

Now, I am going to read you a list of concerns that people have. Please tell me which TWO of these you think the President and Congress should be paying the most attention to?



**Note: Data from Democracy corps poll of 1,000 likely voters nationwide from September 16-18, 2007.*

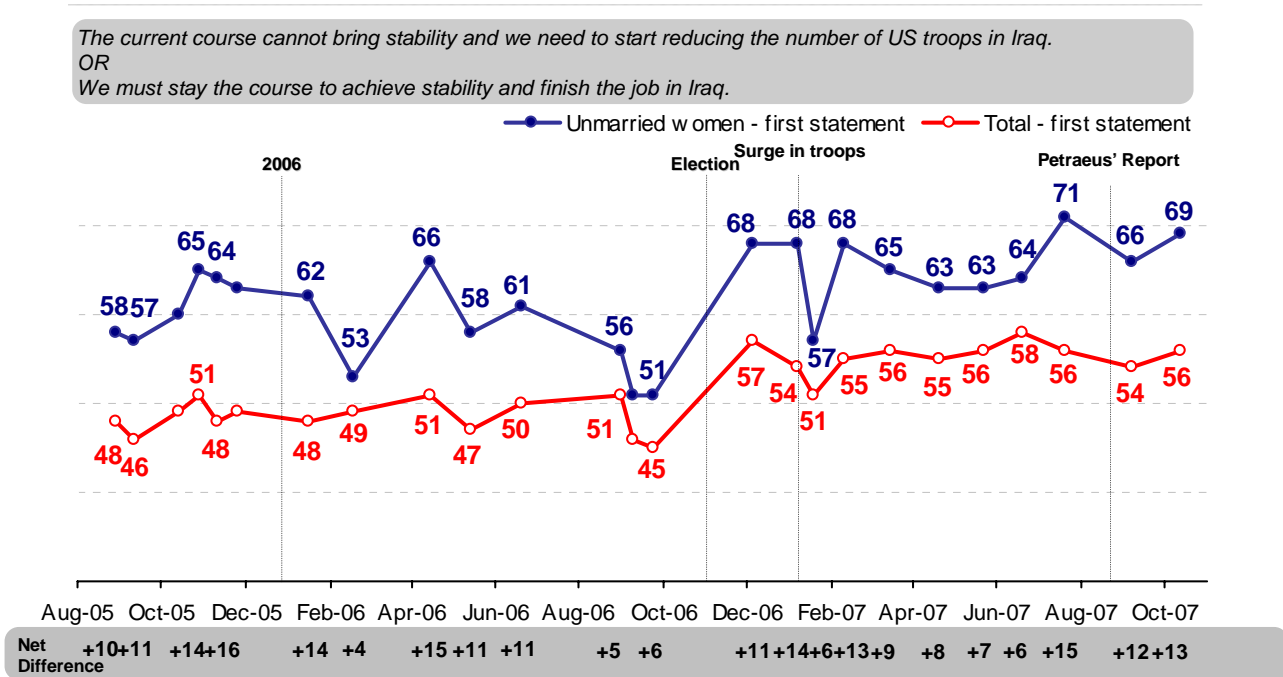
Unmarried Women Demand Change In Iraq

Overall, voters’ reactions to the war have been complex and remain so today. While voters condemned the President’s conduct of the war early on—along with dozens of Republican congressmen and senators—they generally believed in the mission or, at least, believed the cost of withdrawal too high. In fact, Democracy Corps tracking surveys did not show convincing and stable majorities supporting troop withdrawal until after the 2006 elections.

²¹ Based on s Democracy Corps survey of 1000 likely voters conducted September 16-18, 2007, including 201 unmarried women.

In contrast, there was never a moment since Democracy Corps started tracking this question when unmarried women failed to support troop withdrawal. As early as September 2005 unmarried women supported a reduction in troops by a 23-point margin. In contrast, all voters at that time divided evenly on this question. Since the election, and even after the intense coverage of General Petraeus' testimony (which was generally regarded as helping the Bush public relations push on Iraq), support for troop reduction among unmarried women has remained in the mid-sixties to low-seventies.

Figure 15: Unmarried Women Stronger In Call For Troop Reduction



*Note: Based on Democracy Corps surveys 9/05 – 10/07

Americans have drawn important conclusions about the war and come to some consensus not only about its conduct but also about its need for an end. Where they sometimes diverge is the means to that end, as some voters stop short of aggressive congressional efforts—requiring withdrawal, cutting off funding, setting time-tables, etc.—that may infringe on the Commander's Constitutional authority or the conduct of generals on the ground. Unmarried women oppose this war and with less ambiguity about how it ends.

The new Democracy Corps survey shows voters overall somewhat divided on the statements, "I am more concerned that the Republicans will wait too long to withdraw out troops from Iraq," and, "I am more concerned that the Democrats will leave Iraq too quickly," (50 – 44 percent in agreement with first statement and second statement respectively). Unmarried women, however, by a 28-point margin (60 – 32) say they favor the first statement. Similarly, these women prefer, by a 63 – 32 point margin, that their member of Congress "vote for measures that will force the President to change."²²

²² Based on a Democracy Corps survey of 994 likely voters conducted October 21-23, 2007, including 213 unmarried women.

Perhaps most striking, according to last month's survey, by a 71 – 22 point margin unmarried women believe the war has made us less secure. The population as a whole is evenly split on this question and, by a slight margin (44 – 47), married women actually think the war has made us more secure – this represents a 51 point marriage gap among women.²³

Clearly, the Iraq War helped drive these women's choice for change in the 2006 election and remains critical to energizing this population looking forward.

Economic Insecurity Drives Domestic Change Agenda

Politically, unmarried women are defined by, as much as anything else, their economic circumstances. Unmarried women, as a whole, face enormous economic stress, ranging from the cost of health care and gasoline to jobs with fewer benefits and wages that do not keep pace with the cost of living. By definition, these are all single-income households. They want and need government to help make their lives just a bit easier.

As we noted earlier, health care and the economy follow close on the heels of Iraq as unmarried women's top concern. Combined, the two are mentioned as one of the top two most important issues by 70 percent of this cohort.

The concern over these issues arise from some basic economic facts about the unmarried population. Unmarried women earn less and are less likely to have jobs with good benefits than married men or women. Compared to married women, married men, and unmarried men, unmarried women have the lowest mean personal earnings at \$37,264 and only make 56 cents for every dollar a married man earns.²⁴ A Democracy Corps survey released last month reiterated just how much economic pressure unmarried women are facing. Respondents were asked to rate the severity of a series of economic issues including health care costs, gas prices, home foreclosures, the gap between the rich and poor and stagnant wages. On each, over half of unmarried women called the issue a "very serious problem," with a full 77 percent applying that label to health care costs, which was the top response. For each issue, the percent of unmarried women rating the problems "very serious" was significantly higher than that of the overall population.²⁵

Unmarried women have not seen Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy trickle down and they reject the Bush supply-side approach to economics. Instead, they want a government that takes an active role to improve the economic prospects of all Americans. This cohort's outlook was summed up well by a February Democracy Corps survey which asked respondents if America is most successful when "our government helps create conditions so that many can prosper, not just a few," or if we are most successful when "we have a limited government that keeps taxes low so that business and individuals can prosper." While the general population was split about evenly, unmarried women agreed with the first statement by a 24-point margin, 58 – 34 percent.²⁶

²³ Based on a Democracy Corps survey of 1000 likely voters conducted September 16-18, 2007, including 201 unmarried women.

²⁴ Based on 2006 Current Population survey from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Labor

²⁵ Based on Democracy Corps Survey of 1000 likely voters conducted September 16-18, 2007, including 201 unmarried women.

²⁶ Based on Democracy Corps survey of 1014 likely voters conducted February 14-19, 2007, including 200 unmarried women.

Figure 16: Economic Concerns of Unmarried Women

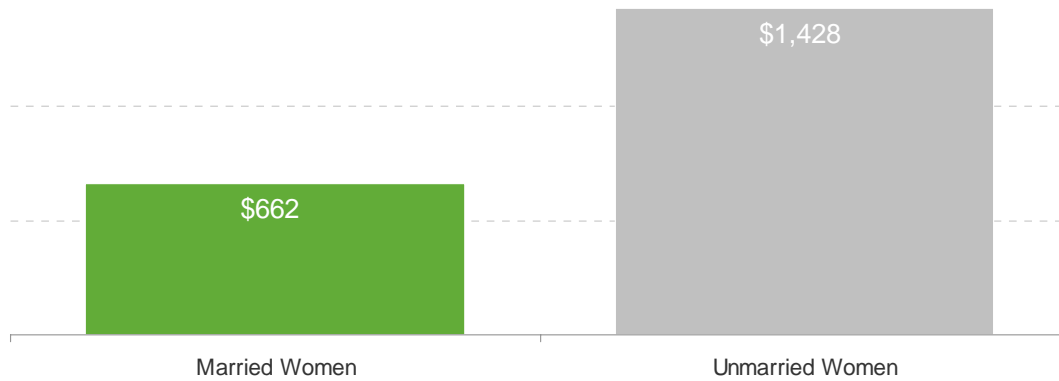
I am going to read you a list of issues relating to the economy. For each issue I want you to tell me whether you think it is or is not a problem in the current economy (percent responding “very serious problem”):²⁷

Issue	Unmarried Women	Total
Rising health care costs	77	62
Rising gasoline prices	55	45
The growing gap between the rich and everybody else	53	44
Home sales and foreclosures	51	38
Stagnant wages	50	33

Unmarried women’s desire for a government that is on their side is nowhere more true than when it comes to health care. Despite their lower income, unmarried women report paying *double* what married women do for their health care. Because health care is so expensive for unmarried women, both in absolute and relative terms, they, unsurprisingly, go uncovered at a higher rate; 14.8 percent of unmarried women lack coverage compared to just 7.6 percent of the married population as a whole.²⁸

Figure 17 : Self Reported Monthly Healthcare Expenses

About how much do you pay each month on health care expenses? This would include the cost of insurance and out-of-pocket costs for things like doctors visits, treatments and prescription drugs.



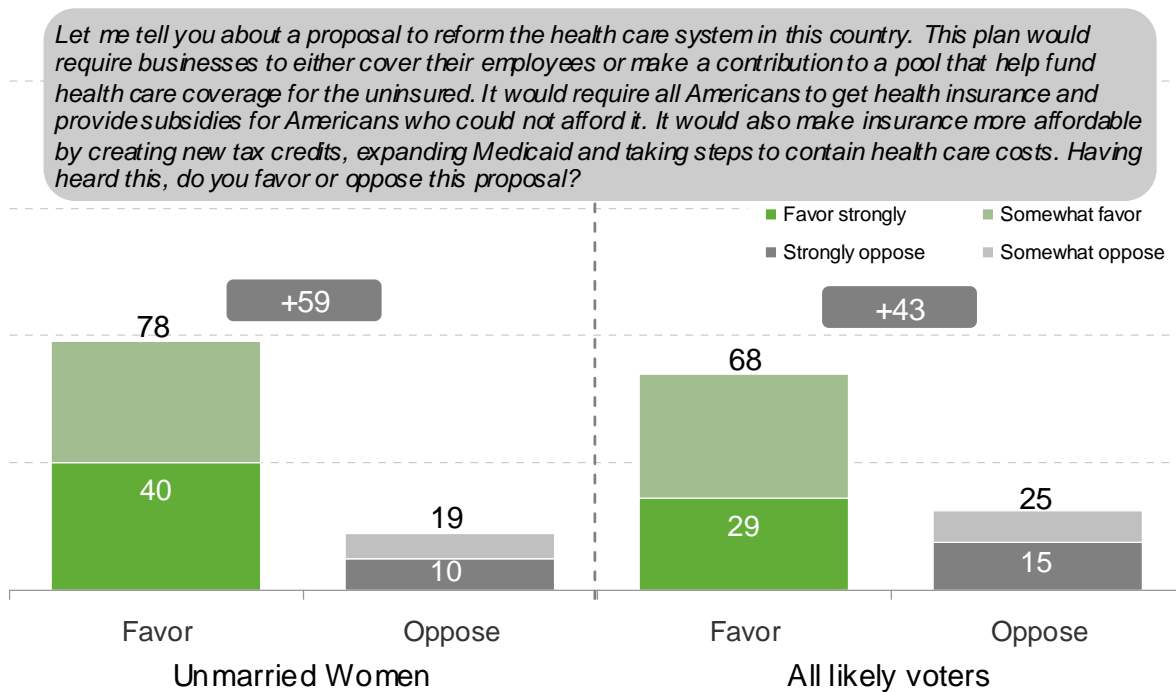
**Note: From Democracy Corps national survey conducted May 29-31, 2007 of 1000 likely voters.*

²⁷ Based on Democracy Corps Survey of 1000 likely voters conducted September 16-18, 2007, including 201 unmarried women.

²⁸ Based on Scarborough USA, 2006

As a result, unmarried women are leading the charge for fundamental change in health care. Unsatisfied and impatient with tinkering around the margins of a system that, to them, is broken, unmarried women push the envelope for sweeping change, in numbers that well exceed other voters. American voters in general may shy away from “radical” steps such as importing a Canadian-style system. Unmarried women, however, embrace such a powerful step. A Canadian system may not be the ideal reform among unmarried women or the best political step for energizing their vote, but their support for such a system testifies to their fundamental desire for change. More relevant for 2008, unmarried women also embrace the “play or pay” reform approach that all three major Democratic presidential candidates are proposing. Seventy-eight percent of unmarried women support such an approach, ten points higher support than the population as a whole. Also telling, when asked who should bear the responsibility of providing health insurance, only 9 percent of this cohort thought that it should be left to the individual, less than half the percentage of the population as a whole. Clearly, unmarried women are wary of a system where they would be left shouldering most of the risk.

Figure 18 : Support For “Play Or Pay” Reform



Perhaps more important for progressives to understand is what, specifically, unmarried women look for in health care reform. Naturally, unmarried women struggle with the rising costs of health care. Unmarried women also insist on high quality and share the progressive goal of universal coverage. But it is health care security, more than any other change, that drives the issue among unmarried women.²⁹ What unmarried women most want is health care that can never be taken away from them. Having such security trumps nearly all other personal health care priorities, not only among unmarried women, but among the broader electorate as well. In head-to-head match-ups, health care security bested lowering costs (by 33 points), improving quality (by 31 points) and maintaining choices (by 22 points) among unmarried women.³⁰

²⁹ This is true among the rest of the electorate as well.

³⁰ Based on a Democracy Corp Survey of 1000 likely voters conducted May 29-31, 2007.

Taking all of this data together, we can paint a coherent picture of the kind of health care agenda that will appeal to unmarried women in 2008. Without question, unmarried women believe no one should be priced out of health care and support universal health care as a normative value. But what they really insist on is fundamental reform of the system that will ensure that their own health care can never be taken away and that they won't be left on their own, at the mercy of the health insurance industry.

Conclusion: Realizing Change

The unmarried have grown as a share of the population for the past 50 years, and the latest data shows that this trend is not abating. The growth of the unmarried population is outpacing the growth of the married population two and a half to one. This population, and unmarried women specifically, are a strongly Democratic group. Their growing numbers and strong Democratic performance make them vital to Democratic and progressive electoral success. In 2006, unmarried women were 20 percent of the electorate and gave 66 percent of their vote to Democrats. Improving on these numbers will help make 2008 an even better year for the progressive cause, and with the prospect of a woman heading the Democratic ticket for the first time, there is reason to believe these numbers will improve. Democrats and progressives cannot simply rely on this assumption, however. We must actively work to harness the power of this cohort and to get them to the polls on election day.

If progressives are successful in bringing more unmarried women into the process, we will not only reap benefits at the ballot box, but also achieve our more fundamental goal of reshaping the national agenda. Unmarried women not only want to change who governs America, but also how America is governed. They demand fundamental reform to our health care system, an economic policy that helps all Americans, not just the most affluent, and they want to bring our troops home from Iraq – all key goals of the progressive movement. By adding the voice of this often too quiet community to the national debate, we will be moving one step closer to effecting the kind of real change this country so desperately needs.