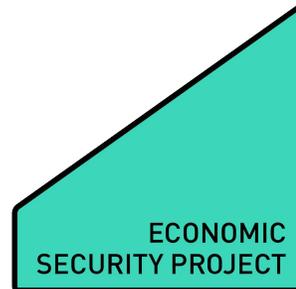


# Tax Credit Message Research

Multiple Projects Conducted 2017-2021



David Binder Research



## Cost of living dominates

### The Economy

- Cost of living – led by housing, education and health care – has been a dominant economic concern for years (\$400 emergency expense fact has been powerful)
- Deep concerns about people working full-time at one or more jobs and still falling behind
- Most believe wealthy people have accountants and lawyers to avoid taxes
- Many also believe poor people get help from government programs

## Working and middle class need help

### Class

- With belief that both the wealthy and poor are taken care of, *“about time the middle class got a break”* comes up repeatedly
- Helping broad population – middle class and lower income people – is more popular than either on their own
- No consensus on how to define regular people, but clear view that we need help and the rich don't
- Result is strong support for tax credits to help the middle class and working class keep up with rising cost of living

## Tax credits are an accessible vehicle for assistance

### Tax Credits

- Framing assistance as tax credits has historically increased support from moderate Independents
- Tax credits are viewed as more deserved and earned, not a handout
- COVID has created a political opening for cash payments such as stimulus checks
- Framing tax credits as an expansion of an existing policy grounds voters, and can reduce concerns about a “new” program

## “Work” is important, but can be defined broadly

### Work

- Voters have historically wanted tax credits to benefit those who work, with some clear racial overtones
- There is consistent support for a broader definition of work incl. family caregivers, students preparing for future jobs, others who are contributing to society but do not have a formal job
- Data show that regular monthly cash *supports* work, doesn't keep people from working

## People who work hard should not struggle to afford basic needs

### Basic Needs

- Deep frustration that people work hard and still struggle to afford basic needs
- Helping people afford basic needs is stronger frame for helping low-income people than reducing poverty – but even stronger is to emphasize when we’re helping middle-class people too.
- People’s “dignity” is one way to convey value that people who work hard should not be suffering

## Protecting families from ruin is critical benefit of tax credits

### Family

- Raising a family amid rising costs creates a widely-shared anxiety that *“I’m ok today but I’m one car accident away from financial disaster.”*
- Strong resonance to the idea that stabilizing families helps our future by providing children with solid foundation
- Some voters also point to mental health benefits of being more financially secure—Stockton data show that monthly cash transfers were about as effective as Prozac

## CTC Messaging Guidance

### Child Tax Credit

- Calling this policy an “expanded Child Tax Credit” increases popularity, “child allowance” is less popular
- Focus on monthly credit amount is stronger than annual amount
- “Supporting parents” is stronger frame than “supporting children”
- Talking about benefits to broad population seems to help:
  - “Critical financial support to families struggling with childcare” tests better than “cutting child poverty”
  - “Middle class” and middle-class examples are helpful
  - Simple explanation of the credit helps, given low awareness
- “Tax cut for families” is popular though it’s more of a Republican frame
- “Help families get through a crisis” better than “through the pandemic”