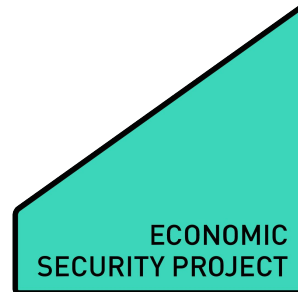


Tax Credit Message Research

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”