

navigator*

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Update:
Tuesday, March 30

Navigating The First 100 Days:
Women Essential Workers On
The American Rescue Plan



Methodology

On March 23, 2021, GBAO conducted three focus groups online with women working in varying categories of essential work across the country. Women could have worked in these industries over the past year, and several worked multiple jobs across industries. Women varied across demographics—party identification, age, education, and race/ethnicity.



Health care workers
in North Carolina



Service industry employees
in Wisconsin



Educators
in Arizona

Key Takeaways:

- Knowledge of the American Rescue Plan is thin. But when told the components of the ARP, many see their or their family's needs met by a list of the ARP's components.
- Some also clearly see an urgent local need for relief and support, even if they are not sure they will personally benefit. There are also worries about fair distribution.
- While quite a few move with more information, a long list can be unwieldy or seem expensive, raising competing concerns about the debt with a desire to help.

Knowledge Of The ARP Is Thin



NC women

Oh gosh. I'm trying to think what I've seen, I've been working a lot lately. – Biden voter, NC

I'm trying to think what I've seen in the news lately. The recent stimulus checks, they've sent those out. And they're also sending out the checks for the parents, for the children. Those will come out, I think, in June or July and there'll be monthly checks to help. And then there's one other thing. Hang on. – Biden voter, NC

*So there's a lot of things [in] it beyond just the stimulus to the American people and anything with children. There's also recovery to the farmers and other agencies... And there's environmental money, there's money to education. **Those are the top three that I can think of right now.** – Trump voter, NC*

*I know it's a bill that he's working on, but I thought that the stimulus was part of [it] and the student loans. **I don't know if that's completely correct, but to my understanding,** it was in giving businesses and small businesses those small loans and stuff that had to close. From my understanding, I think that's what it entails. – Biden voter, WI*

*[What did you learn tonight?] I learned there was an American Rescue Plan. **I didn't know there was one.** – Biden voter, WI*

But they included all this extra stuff, and I get some of the businesses need it. I get that. And I would be fine if that's included, but when they include other stuff like, "Oh, this is going to include..." I forget what the last one was, gender studies or something in North Africa, or something like that. What does that have to do with COVID? What does it [have to] do with getting people relief? – Biden voter, AZ

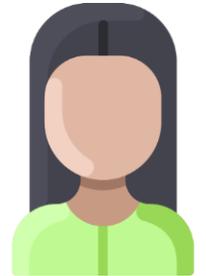
*Yeah. **I don't keep track** of all the names. – Biden voter, AZ*

Beyond Checks, Many See Their—Or Their Family's—Needs Met By Something In The Longer List Of ARP Components

Respondents were shown 13 components of the ARP.

Because I know my brother's got a small business. He's been closed the past year and has exhausted his personal finances. He could not get a loan because all the big businesses had gotten the loans before him. Because of course if you're a bank, why do you want to mess around with a piddly little loan if you can get a nice big one. So I thought I had heard the second one prevented that from happening again. – Trump voter

It actually might be... Because I have adult children too, that actually needed this stuff. I have a 21-year-old and a 19-year-old that's out there living on their own. They needed the unemployment. They needed the insurance, which they got. – Biden voter



AZ women

I just recently applied for the Student Loan Repayment Program through HRSA. And if I am chosen, it will be tax-free, according to this. Because right now, if they do pay back your student loans, you have to count that as income on your taxes. So that will have an impact on me. – Trump voter, NC

My dad retired. He's in his late 60s, and he was a truck driver for pretty much his whole life. So knowing... that his pension is safe. I think that gave him a sense of relief. He brought it up the other day and just said, 'I'm okay. We're going to be okay.' He's going to get that money that he worked so hard for. They're not going to be left by the wayside. My parents are not rich, but they're not living on a fixed income by any means. But just knowing that as hard as he's worked for his life, he's going to get that money back. It was nice to hear that and it was nice to see that little bit of relief for him. – Trump voter, WI



There Is A Local Need For Relief

*The part about helping children who are in poverty. It was hard for me to choose because my heart would have picked almost all of them because **I have compassion and I want people to do well. We're all a team, right?** They all affect me, but I had to really think about my answer. So I'm glad that anybody's getting help. – Biden voter, WI*

*I deal with children every day and the fact that a lot of them are in poverty... **92% of our kids have free or reduced lunch, so it would be great to see those kids thriving and us not having to sneak food into their book bags, or wash their clothes ourselves, or worry about if they have proper housing because it breaks our heart every single day. And so I would love to see a lot of those kids come out of poverty.** – Biden voter, WI*



Biden voters, WI

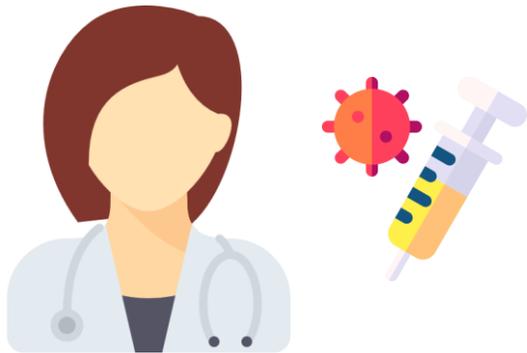


Trump voters, AZ

I know plenty of people that have lost their jobs and are hanging on by a thread. Whether it be support from a local church or their community or GoFundMe, that's the only way they're surviving. So I think that unemployment insurance would go a long way. – Trump voter, AZ

*Our school is a title one school and I've seen so many families be affected obviously by the pandemic. And if they can be helped, **there are kids that stay home virtually because they have to take care of their younger siblings** because mom or dad or both found some job. So I see where it would be beneficial. If all this could be true, if they really do all that, I can see where it would help because I've seen so many. We're providing care packages from our school for so many kids. So that's why I'm leaning more towards it. – Trump voter, AZ*

Participants Use Clinical Language To Explain Why Vaccine Distribution Is An Important Part Of The ARP



Because that would decrease COVID cases, that would protect us in the hospitals and decrease COVID numbers and keep folks safe and just keep everybody healthy. – Biden voter, NC

Yeah, I think it's also needed, just because right now, it's a two-part vaccine. So there has to be a tracking process, because there'll be a lot of people that'll get the first injection but not the second. – Trump voter, NC

For me personally, it's just all of that impacts my job directly. So for me, that's important from a professional standpoint. – Biden voter, WI

More Information Moves Respondents Toward Support

I think America needs a rescue plan. I don't know if it's the right plan, but it's better than no plan.

I think just historically a lot more of Trump's pieces of the plan would have gone towards businesses and corporations and less towards the individual.

*I think that Trump was more about the trickle down thing that has never worked from the beginning. So I don't know how Joe Biden's plan is going to work, but at least... I did say that it wasn't focused, **but now it does kind of reach more people on the ground than trickle down...Trickle down is very focused toward corporations.***



Biden voters, WI



Arizona women

*Yeah, I moved a little bit more towards the positive because from the point that you presented there, it looks like there's not as much outside aid as there was in the first package and I just thought that that was included in this one as well. Some of the stuff in there is still kind of like, 'yeah, I don't really know,' but **I'm definitely more moving towards the positive side, for sure.** – Biden voter*

*Looking at all that, **I like how it targeted people who were in need.** – Biden voter*

***I feel more comforted about it.** – Biden voter*

***I think encouraged. Though I disagree with certain parts, I do feel encouraged because it is providing help to the people that desperately need it.** – Trump voter*

Worries Pervade About The Fairness Of Stimulus Checks And PPP Loan Distribution



WI women

They're giving out money to people that don't even have jobs, people that... I don't know. Some people deserve it, I get it. Some people deserve it, but...I'm delivering McDonald's to these people every day because they got their stimulus and everybody's rich this past month. And it's very frustrating to somebody that work[s] all the time... I don't even hardly get to take a vacation. I struggle all the time.

*They're not putting strict enough guidelines on it. **They're not looking into it and making sure the right people are actually getting it.***

*The small business loans, not really knowing where they're going or who's getting them. I think small businesses that are up and running and want to continue, if they need that help then definitely. **But I've heard stories on the news about people who, 'Oh, I got this however much loan,' and then they went out and bought a car and went on a vacation.** If we're just going to give money out to people, sign me up, I'm in so I can go on vacation... So if you're going to be giving this money away, make sure that the business actually is going to use it for the purpose that you're giving it to them.*

The unemployment bonuses that people are getting, I actually did have friends who prefer to stay on unemployment because they were getting more money than they would make at work. So I understand the thought process behind it, but it's easy for people to manipulate the system in that regard. – Biden voter, NC



*[Does the American Rescue Plan give grants and bailouts to large businesses?] I don't know if this one did but I know the first one did. **I'm getting them mixed up in my head.** – Biden voter, AZ*

Some Wonder If They Need Or Will Benefit From The Stimulus

*I'm still working full-time, I **don't technically need the stimulus**. I'm not going to turn it down, I'm going to take it. But realistically, I'm making ends meet. – Biden voter, NC*



Biden voters, WI

*I think everything on there is beautiful, I really do. However, when it comes to middle-class people, we're nowhere in there essentially, though. **We don't get any benefits or anything**. I make too much to get a stimulus, or again, I only get a fraction of it. Because I'm not unemployed, and because I don't have any student loans forgiven, the student loan thing doesn't affect me.*

*I mean, for me, **we're not someone who needed the checks**. It's nice to have, but for us, we're taking that money and were turning around and... I'm 35 and I'm still paying off student loans, so that's where it's going to is try[ing] to pay off my student loans. We don't need the money, but for me, we're using it to pay off loans at this point. That's helpful for us going forward.*

***So I didn't find much of this to affect me personally**. I don't have a family, my loans are paid off, so there's nothing here that really affects me personally. And I don't agree with number one [stimulus checks] from a societal point of view. Even though it would put money in my pocket, I can't support that. – Trump voter, AZ*

Others—Particularly Trump Voters—Wrestle With Worries About The Debt And Acknowledgement Of The Need

*I felt like those are all valid areas that do need support, but there wasn't much about generating a regrowth. **Well, the general consensus is that our economy was fine before the pandemic.** So when things open back up, the economy will recover, because there wasn't anything fundamentally wrong with the economy. So a lot of what was provided in the stimulus, or the American Recovery Act, was geared towards people who were impacted specifically from the pandemic, which may not have been the economy. But on a larger scale, the US does need some innovation for our industry in terms of on a foundational level to keep this country going, and I don't really ever feel like that's addressed. – NC*

*It's obvious that there are a lot of people in the country that need help, but **there were a lot of people in the country that needed help before this all started.** So now why is it different? Now why are we so up in arms about making sure everyone gets money and making sure people can pay their bills? There were people being kicked out of their homes and living on the streets forever, but we didn't really seem to worry about it that much. – WI*

*It does concern me about all the stimulus money and all that. And it's such a catch 22, because businesses need to open. We need to get the economy going again. And the stimulus money, I don't know, are people spending money like they should? **I do worry about us just going down the hole with the debt.** But on the other hand, what are you going to do? You got to get business moving again. Businesses need to open. – AZ*



Trump voters

A Long List Can Be Unwieldy To The Point Of Backfiring



Biden voters, NC

*I don't feel like anything on that list is going to really help anybody in small businesses. It's not going to help them recover. Giving them a \$1,400 stimulus check is not going to help them build their business back. [What about this one, providing new loans or PPP loans for small businesses and some non-profits?] **Oh, well, maybe I overlooked that one.***

***I think some of these are, they need to be prioritized.** Some, I think, could potentially be put on hold for right now. And it does make me think about, in the future, the debt that we're putting ourselves in and how we're going to make that up in the future.*

*There's a lot of areas that are valid concerns, childcare, insurance, education, those are big keywords that people look for, and it does seem great right now. **But when you think long-term how this is going to impact us,** how are we going to generate the money to come out of the debt that we're putting ourselves in for this quick fix? I don't know.*

*I did and then after I read it, I thought that was healthcare for... After I read it again, it says healthcare for unemployed people that lost their jobs. I was thinking it was providing help, just healthcare for... **I think I went too soon on that.** – Biden voter, WI*

*I don't understand the part about providing more funds to higher education. Why do they need it? I mean, never in my lifetime will I pay off my student loans. I don't know why they need it. Are they not charging enough? I bet they are. [Moderator: What about the part in here making forgiven student loans tax free?] **I don't know what that means.** – Biden voter, WI*

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About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO along with an advisory committee, including: Andrea Purse, progressive strategist; Arkadi Gerney, The Hub Project; Joel Payne, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; Delvone Michael, Working Families; Felicia Wong, Roosevelt Institute; Mike Podhorzer, AFL-CIO; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

About the Study

GBAO conducted online focus groups on March 23, 2021 with women in three areas: Raleigh-Durham, NC (healthcare industry, excluding doctors), Milwaukee, WI (service industry within the past year), and Phoenix, AZ (educators). Women could have multiple jobs across industries. Some quotes have been lightly edited for brevity. Qualitative results are not statistically projectable.

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