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Research Report: The Freelance Political Perspective Report

October 2018

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Understanding The Freelance Vote

The freelance economy is thriving. With approximately 57.3 million freelancers in the US currently contributing \$1.4 trillion to the economy¹, it is anticipated that freelancers and independent workers will make up the majority of the workforce in the US within 10 years². In the 15 biggest metropolitan areas, freelancers generated more than \$110 billion in 2017³. Increased connectivity, accessibility and mobility have made it easier than ever to work from anywhere. Businesses of all sizes have seen the opportunity that an extremely nimble and accessible talent pool can provide, tapping into global talents regardless of ZIP code or even time zone.

The unique professional challenges and social concerns faced by freelancers have the potential to not only impact policy, but also the economy. As more entrepreneurs and businesses rely on the freelance economy to accomplish their goals, the opinions and attitudes of those in the freelance community could have a substantial impact on elections and policymaking.

But what are the political leanings of freelancers? Do they differ from the views of the general American public? What are the key issues and areas that drive the freelance vote, and is it possible to see a “freelance coalition” become a significant voting bloc in the United States?

With the 2018 Congressional midterm elections upon us, understanding the needs of close to 40 percent of the US workforce will be key for policymakers. As champions of the freelance lifestyle, we at Fiverr want to understand how the people behind the changing world of work feel about the issues and policies that are up for debate in the election.

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1. <https://blog.freelancersunion.org/2017/10/17/freelancing-in-america-2017/>
 2. https://npm-assets.fiverrcdn.com/assets/@fiverr/freelance_impact/freelance-economy.0d569d9.pdf
 3. https://npm-assets.fiverrcdn.com/assets/@fiverr/freelance_impact/freelance-economy.0d569d9.pdf

Study Findings

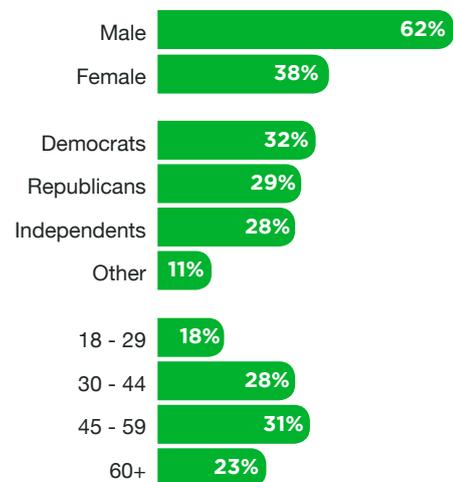
Fiverr and VIGA surveyed over 1,000 freelancers across the United States, specifically targeting those who rely on freelance work for their entire income, those who freelance part-time, and those who freelance as a portion of their broader employment picture.

When it came to specific issues, Fiverr found that American freelancers share many of the same views as the broader citizenry, with a number of stark differences.

Only 34 percent of freelancers felt the country was moving in the right direction, compared to 39 percent of the general adult population. There is an almost even split between those who say their financial situation is improving (34 percent) and those who say it is getting worse (31 percent), which is right on par with the general adult population (34 percent and 34 percent).

As for the freelancer approval rating of the President and Congress, 66 percent disapprove of how President Trump is doing

Survey population demographics



as the President of the United States and almost 63 percent disapprove of the way the Republican and Democratic parties are handling their job.

While those responses are consistent with the larger American population, freelancers split when it comes to healthcare. Over 40 percent of freelancers saw healthcare as the biggest issue, while comparatively, just less than 1 in 3 of the surveyed general population did.

The Key To The Freelance Vote

Given the current structure of employment benefits within the United States, it's no surprise that the largest priority for freelancers is healthcare, however it isn't the only issue that aligns the interests of skilled independents across the United States.

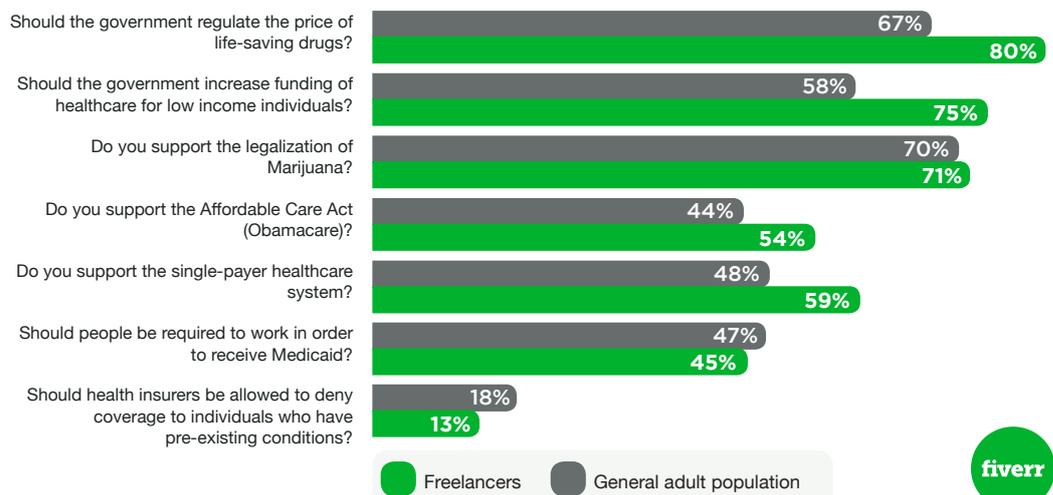
1 Create More & Better Access To Healthcare

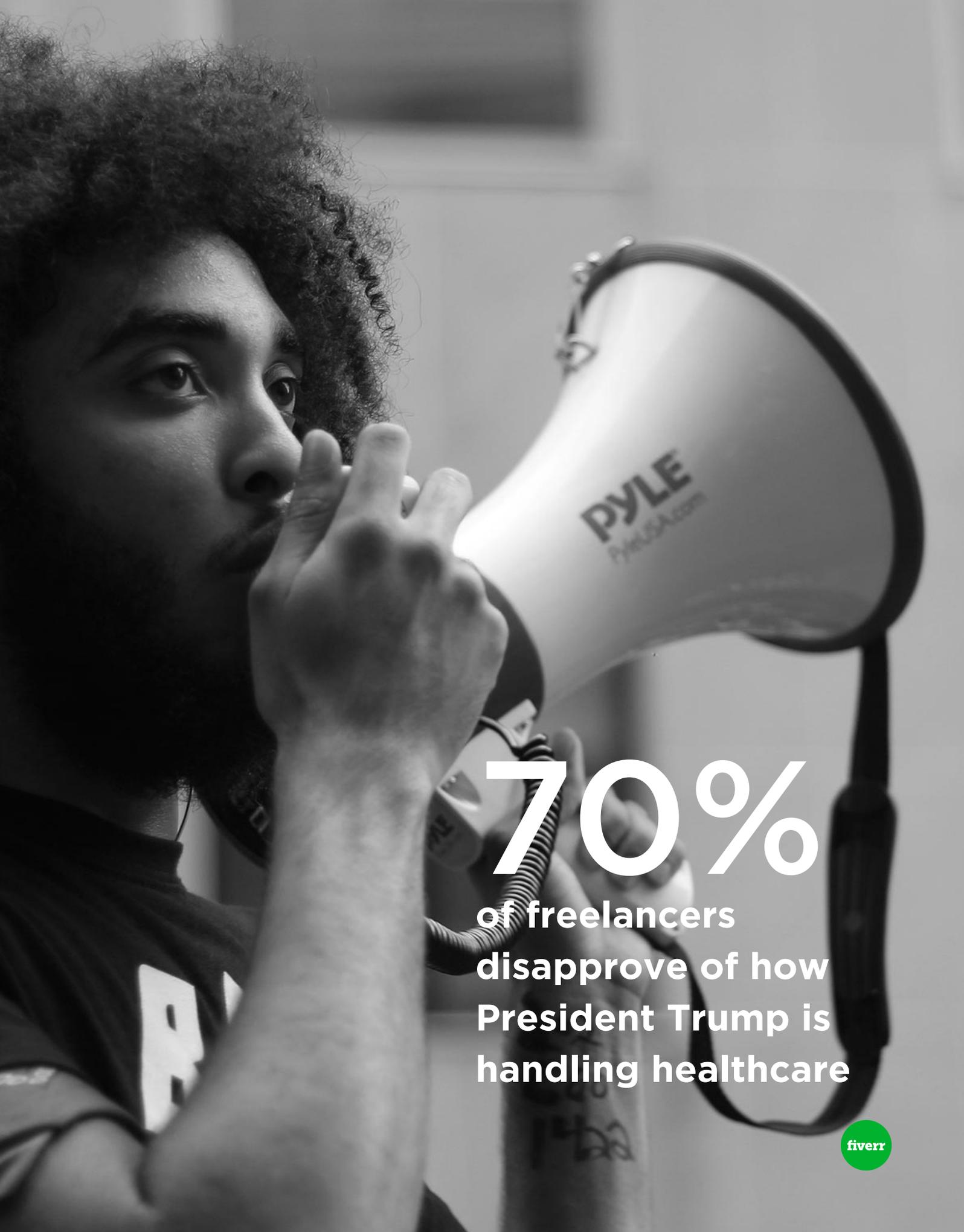
The healthcare system in the US is going through a period of significant change and no one has more to gain or lose than independent workers. So what do independent knowledge-based workers expect from policymakers?

Freelancers are much more likely to advocate for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (54 percent vs. 44 percent), a single-payer healthcare system (59 percent vs. 48 percent) and increased funding of healthcare for low-income individuals than the general population (75 percent vs. 58 percent).

The below chart sheds more light on the freelancers’ perspective on a few of the healthcare issues (the percentages are those who said ‘yes’).

Freelancers want a system where healthcare is accessible and affordable regardless of employment arrangements, and believe the government should be involved in that system. For a coalition of workers who do not have employee benefits to rely on, the ACA and a single-payer system represent both access and potentially lower costs in the future. For their part, 70 percent of freelancers disapprove of how President Trump is handling the issue; an approach that has attempted to repeal the ACA and do away with protections around pre-existing conditions. As both parties grapple with how to “cut through the noise” and define positions on kitchen table issues, the importance of creating and bolstering a healthcare system that supports the changing landscape of work is clearly a major pain point.





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2 Develop A Real Solution To Portable Benefits

For years, many American workers have relied on employers to provide health insurance, retirement, short-term disability, and other benefits. But this traditional relationship is diminishing slowly as the number of independent workers continues to rise and play a larger economic role.

The economic shifts that have created opportunities for more freelancers have also driven interest in portable benefits, with 80 percent of freelancers surveyed stating they do not think the government is doing enough to support flexible working with portable benefits. Illustrating a constantly evolving professional identity, 85 percent of freelancers say it is important to keep/extend benefits without them being tied to a job. But without protections or progress in place today, it's no wonder that 41 percent of side hustle freelancers say being employed to receive benefits is a key reason why they keep a job. While pilot program legislation has been floated in the past, the American freelance community wants more effort around this key block of issues.

80%

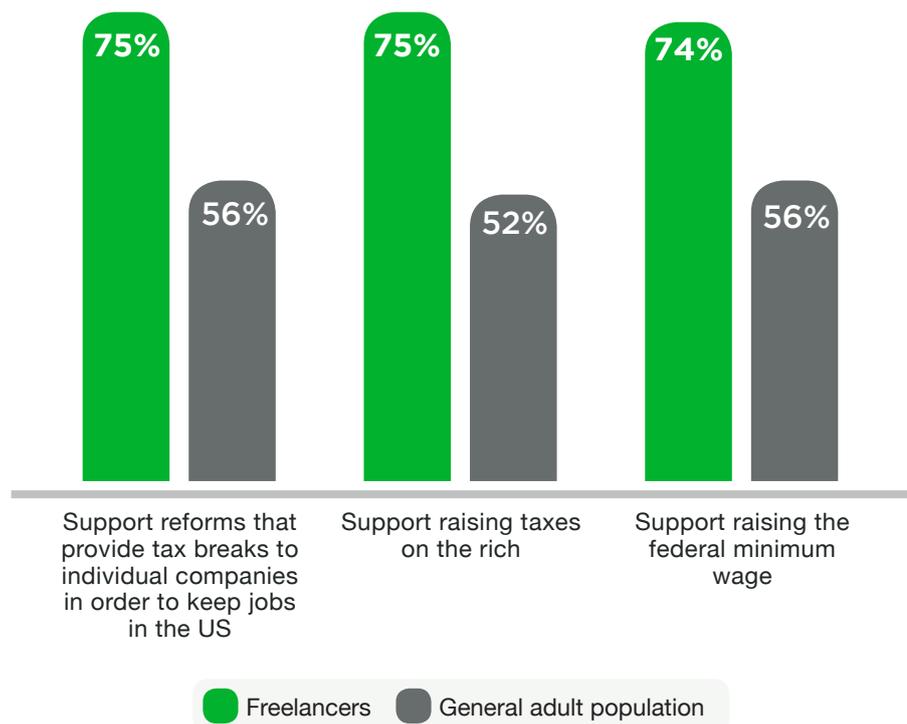
of freelancers do not think the government is doing enough to support flexible working with portable benefits

3 Promote A Progressive Tax System

With a natural labor and economic bent, freelancers have a strong desire to see better paying jobs and opportunity remain in the United States while also implementing a more progressive tax system.

Freelancers, more than the general adult population, support reforms that provide tax breaks to individual companies in order to keep jobs in the US (75 percent vs. 56 percent), raising taxes on the rich (75 percent vs. 52 percent), and raising the federal minimum wage (74 percent vs. 56 percent).

Freelancers expect elected officials to promote policies and practices that support workers and the American labor force, all while expecting more from the rich.





74%
of freelancers believe the
government should raise
the federal minimum wage

4 Do More To Prevent Sexual Harassment & Promote Equality

During the past year, workplaces and the political arena have woken up to some of the most egregious instances of sexual misconduct, with highly publicized cases gaining national attention. The problem is especially present for freelancers, who lack some of the basic protections afforded to traditional employees.

It's no wonder that it was a widely recognized problem and area freelance respondents want improvement, with 63 percent of freelancers stating they were not happy about the progress and feel the government is not doing enough to curb sexual harassment.

Furthermore, 3-in-4 freelancers say the government should be doing more to improve workplace equality, especially for women.



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5 Create More Access To Continued Education Resources

Continued education is a key component of staying up-to-date with the latest advancements, skills and technologies in the workplace. In the freelancing world, 67 percent of freelancers say continued education is important, but only 1-in-4 are accessing public resources like community colleges and higher education. The disconnect between importance and actual use showcases a shortcoming and an opportunity for policymakers, as many freelancers see value in continued education, but few are accessing it.

This same pressure exists for side hustle freelancers, who felt continued education was very important compared to full-time freelancers (48 percent vs. 32 percent) and stated that learning a new job skill was a major priority (37 percent vs. 23 percent). This pattern suggests those who are in the position of using freelance work as a means for extra income are constantly looking to build their skill sets to keep more employment opportunities open. Ultimately, creating more access and opportunities to find continued education strikes a cord with freelancers as a group.



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In Summary

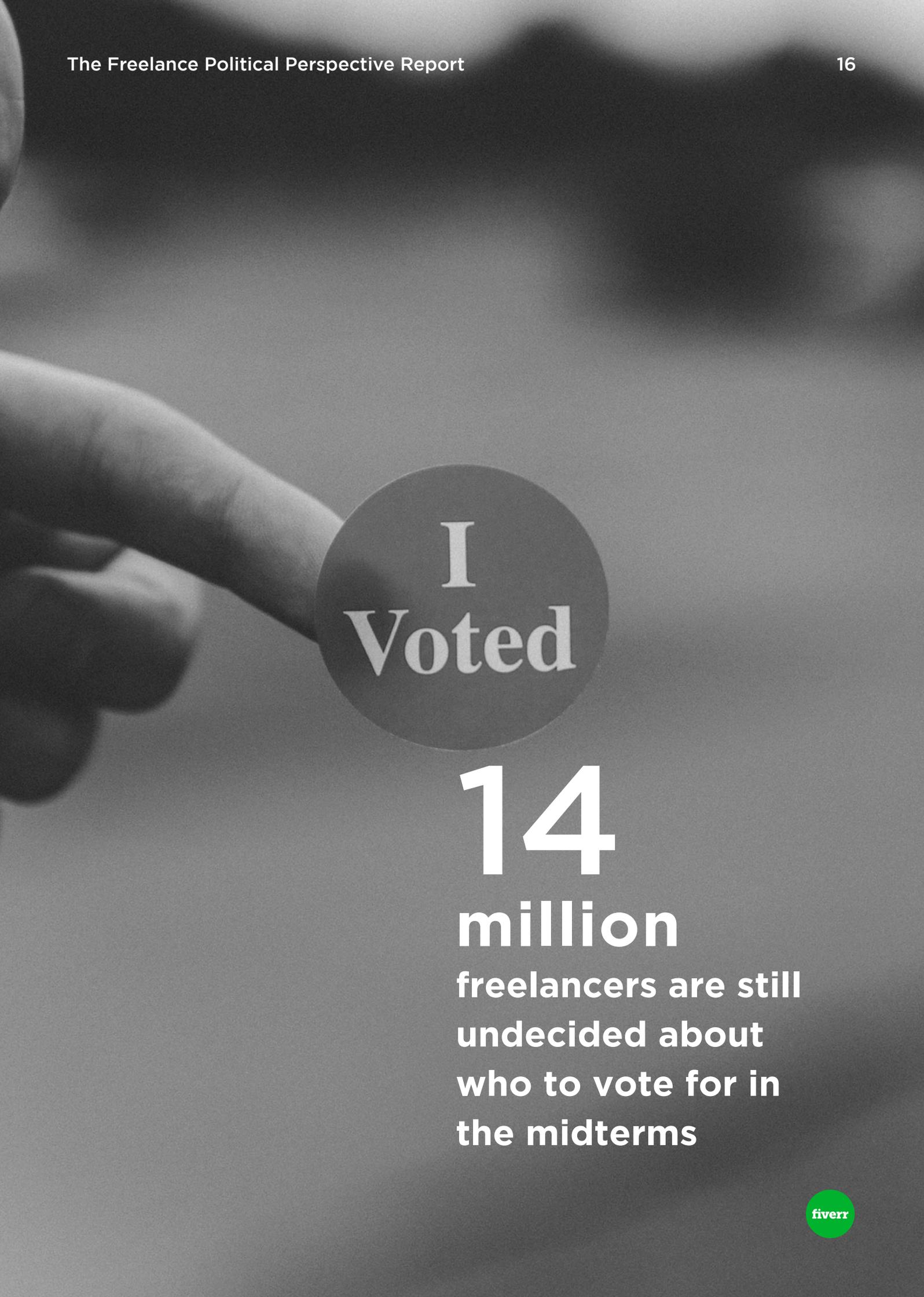
While the freelancer voting bloc may not be as established as other coalitions across the United States, survey data shows that 25 percent of freelancers are still undecided, translating to 14 million freelancers votes in the United States. The primary issues for freelancers center on healthcare, immigration and the economy, but expand to include a much more diverse set of issues and needs from policymakers.

To win their votes, candidates would be wise to focus on building a more inclusive healthcare system and a broader effort to support for portable benefits.

To address their economic concerns, policymakers ought to push bills that encourage flexible working and enables the freelance economy. Freelancers want a more progressive tax system as well as changes to the federal minimum wage laws.

The demands for equal pay and gender equality are also high among freelancers, and they expect more from the government to address the problem.

As a collective of individuals used to primarily working alone and on their own terms, the voice of the freelancer is often difficult to coalesce. But with a large and growing population, the freelancer vote and the issues important to this growing cohort should very much be on the minds of elected officials and policymakers.



I
Voted

14

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the midterms

Research Overview

Research findings are based on a survey conducted by VIGA across the United States between July 12th – 17th, 2018. For this survey, 1,216 freelancers were questioned on their general perspective about the direction the country is taking and their key issues and priorities. The study targeted full-time and part-time freelancers as well as freelancers who are employed.

Respondents are recruited through a number of different mechanisms, via different sources to join the panels and participate in market research surveys. All panelists have passed a double opt-in process and complete on average 300 profiling data points prior to taking part in

surveys. Respondents are invited to take part via email and are provided with a small monetary incentive for doing so.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 2.8 percent percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

The Fiverr logo consists of a bright green circle with the word "fiverr" written in white, lowercase, sans-serif font inside it. This circle is centered on a horizontal green line that spans the width of the page.

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