It's time to update our image of Trump voters. We thought that Trump voters were less affluent, lived in areas that were losing jobs in manufacturing and in areas impacted by immigrants. All of that turns out to be wrong, according to a massive new study from Gallup based on surveys of over eighty thousand people. Here are the key conclusions:

"It seems that lower social status and material hardship play a role in support for Trump, but not through the most obvious economic channels of income and employment. . . . . Racial isolation and lack of exposure to Hispanic immigrants raise the likelihood of Trump support. Meanwhile, Trump support falls as exposure to trade and immigration increases, which is the opposite of the predicted relationship."

Still, Trump's core supporters do tend to live in areas that are suffering from increased obesity and white mortality rates, and that have lower rates of intergenerational mobility. The study's author speculates that they are not so much worried about their own lives as about the welfare of their communities and the prospects for their children or grandchildren.

Whatever you think about whether environmental regulation has harmed U.S. manufacturing, whether directly or through higher energy costs, that seems to have nothing to do with the problems Trump voters face in their communities. In fact, the study found, Trump voters were more likely to live in areas where there is significant manufacturing today, and they were no more likely than anyone else to live in areas where manufacturing declined after 1990. So unless we want to blame their problems on environmental regulations from the days of Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, it seems clear there's no connection.

By the same token, it may seem that there's little that environmental law can do to help them out, except through its general ability to contribute to improvements in public health. But it's possible that a push for energy efficiency and distributed renewables could help. The reason is that installation for these renewables has to be done locally, which means more jobs in the communities where Trump voters live. That economic stimulus might give them more of a sense that things are going better and that the next generation has some new opportunities. Unfortunately, they often live in states that are resistant to renewables and efficiency, but a national renewable portfolio standard or something equivalent might help.