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To: Interested Parties

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CVI pandemic tracking in the battleground Wave 1: March 31-April 5

For the first time in our post-Tea Party era, America responded to a big national challenge with a single voice. Nine in ten Democrats, independents, and Republicans embraced social distancing to fight the pandemic in a way that stopped the economy, split families apart and most of all, left most Americans feeling “anxious,” “nervous,” “scared,” “lonely,” even “depressed.” That is dramatically transforming our politics and elections to come — nowhere more than in their new, rather unified, determination to vote in safety and to vote by mail.

Democracy Corps conducted a 2,000-sample web survey on behalf of the non-profit and non-partisan Center for Voter Information (CVI) in 16 battleground states, the first of a series of tracking surveys on the pandemic.¹ This survey includes important open-ended questions that allows people to talk about their current experience and how they want to vote in these extraordinary times. Three quarters want no-reason absentee voting and two thirds want every voter being mailed an absentee ballot and all voters voting by mail. Nearly every effort to make it easier to vote is supported by a majority of Republicans.

But while the country is united in fighting the pandemic with social distancing, the rising costs are only exacerbating our partisan, racial, class, generational, family type, and religious differences. This is elevating the demand for unprecedented government action and new ways to vote, and an honest leader who can make the brave decisions demanded. That only reinforces the deep doubts about Donald Trump that leaves him damaged.

¹A large-scale web survey of 2,000 registered voters in the 16-state battleground was conducted online March 31-April 5, 2020 from a voter-file sample. The states included Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin. The web poll was weighted to a recent phone poll of 1,000 registered voters in a 16-state Presidential and Senate battleground that was conducted by phone March 9-16, 2020 from a voter-file sample. 67% of respondents were reached on cell phones in order to accurately reflect the American electorate.

Nine in ten Americans supported the two trillion dollar rescue plan, but they think the job is unfinished. An unprecedented three quarters of Americans want to see the government do much more — including paid family leave, state and local infrastructure spending, extending Medicaid to the uninsured, increasing the child tax credit regardless of whether one is in work, and larger food stamp payments.

President Trump has been damaged by this crisis and weakened electorally in the battleground states that allowed him to win in 2016. Joe Biden has a very respectable lead going into post-primary phase.

But it remains an unsettled time for Democrats. The voters in this survey have not rallied to the current Democratic national leaders who have only a modest advantage over the Republicans on being trusted to handle this crisis. Many do not know who shaped the most helpful parts of the rescue package.

And with the primary contest only just completed, Biden still needs to consolidate and unite his own party. He is trusted to unite the country, fight for the middle class and rescue the health care system, and battle to restore democracy where the right to vote itself is under threat.

Fighting the pandemic with social distancing

Americans have joined the fight against the pandemic at a very high cost, despite doubting their president knows how to win the war and uncertain the country's leaders know how to bring the economy back and restore growth.

Nine in ten believed social distancing was the right thing to do and joined it, regardless of party.

It turns out it is the social distancing, more than coronavirus itself, that hits people at their core.

Just 1 percent say they have the virus, and another 3 percent point to a family member, and 11 percent a friend or acquaintance. That rises to 25 percent who choose the top 3 levels of worry about getting seriously ill on a scale of 1 to 10.

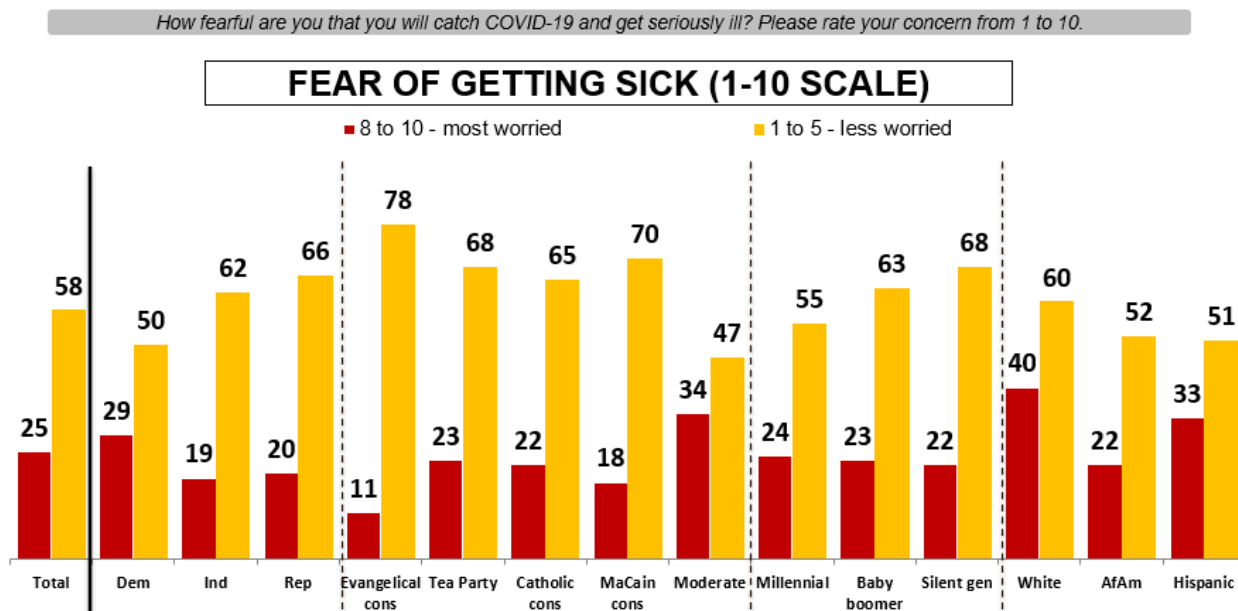
It is striking that fully 58 percent of people opt for the bottom half of the scale, and the pattern of response has little to do with actual risk, with the baby-boom and silent generations less worried than the younger generations.

A kind of bravado dominates the consciousness of the Trump world; two-thirds of Trump voters, Republicans, voters over 65 years, and the silent generation² opt for the lowest level of worry.

² The Silent Generation is the demographic cohort following the Greatest Generation and preceding the baby boomers. The cohort is defined as individuals born between 1928 and 1945.

Among the Evangelical Republicans – the heart of the Trump GOP base – 78 percent choose the lowest level of worry.

Just half of Democrats opt for this lowest level of worry. That is also true for African Americans and Hispanics who have more reason to be concerned. White millennials are less worried (60 percent choosing the bottom half), but not like the Republican partisans who are blocking out the risk of getting disease.



On the other hand, the decision to socially distance has had a powerful impact on people. This protracted isolation and disrupted routines has had a deep emotional and psychological effect that will reverberate through our society. Trump voters, Republicans, Evangelical Republicans, and seniors are much more likely to say they are “fine,” “hopeful,” and “optimistic,” but take note of their other reactions: 45 percent of Republicans say they are “scared,” “anxious,” or “nervous” as well as, “sad,” “lonely,” or “depressed.”

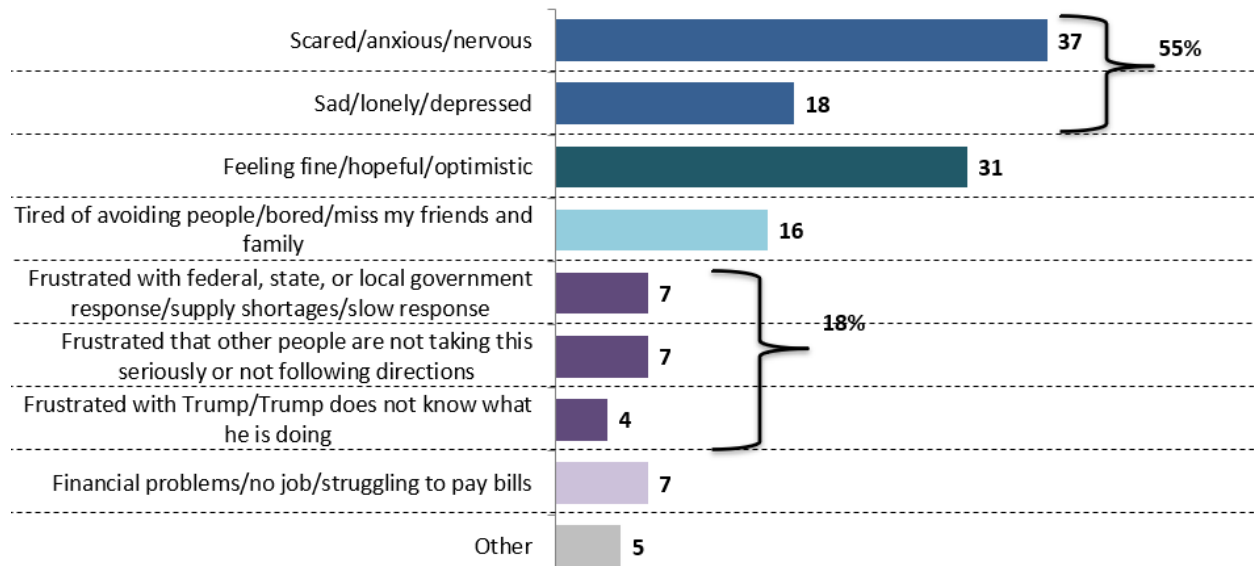
Those being scared and nervous (37 percent) and sad and depressed (18 percent) together comprise a significant majority of the country. And they reach 69 percent of Hispanics, 64 percent of millennials, 66 percent of unmarried women, and 64 percent of white working class women. This pandemic and response will leave scars for many.

Other responses seem more transactional: 18 percent express impatience or frustration with the Trump administration’s handling of the crisis; 16 percent are “tired,” “bored,” and “miss people.”

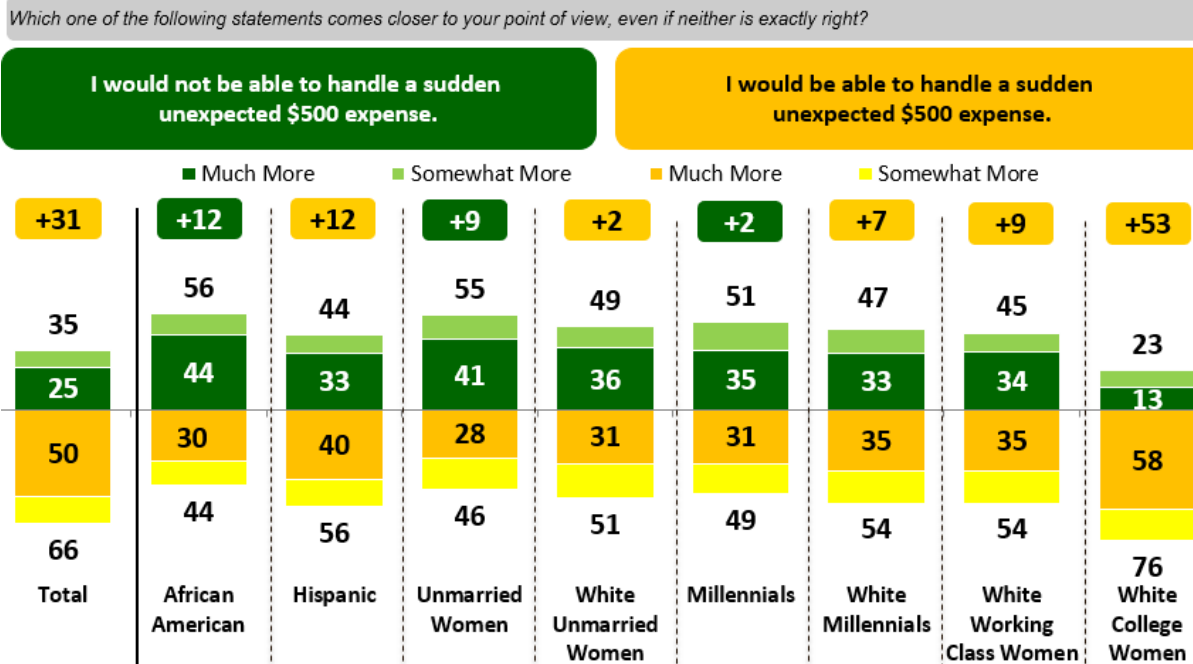
It is interesting that only 7 percent currently cite financial problems, but pandemic fallout and rebuilding is just beginning.

(IF ISOLATING) Please describe what you are feeling these days. Whatever you want to share.

OPEN END – EMOTIONS IN ISOLATION



The economic disruption will play out across the country, and that will be shaped by race, class and what kind of family they have to support them. Whether married or in a single household and whether having a college degree or in a working class job is a big part of that story. A majority of white unmarried women say, they are “pretty much on my own on dealing with these possible health issues.” A significant majority of African Americans and just about half of white unmarried women, millennials, and white working class women could not now deal with a \$500 expense.



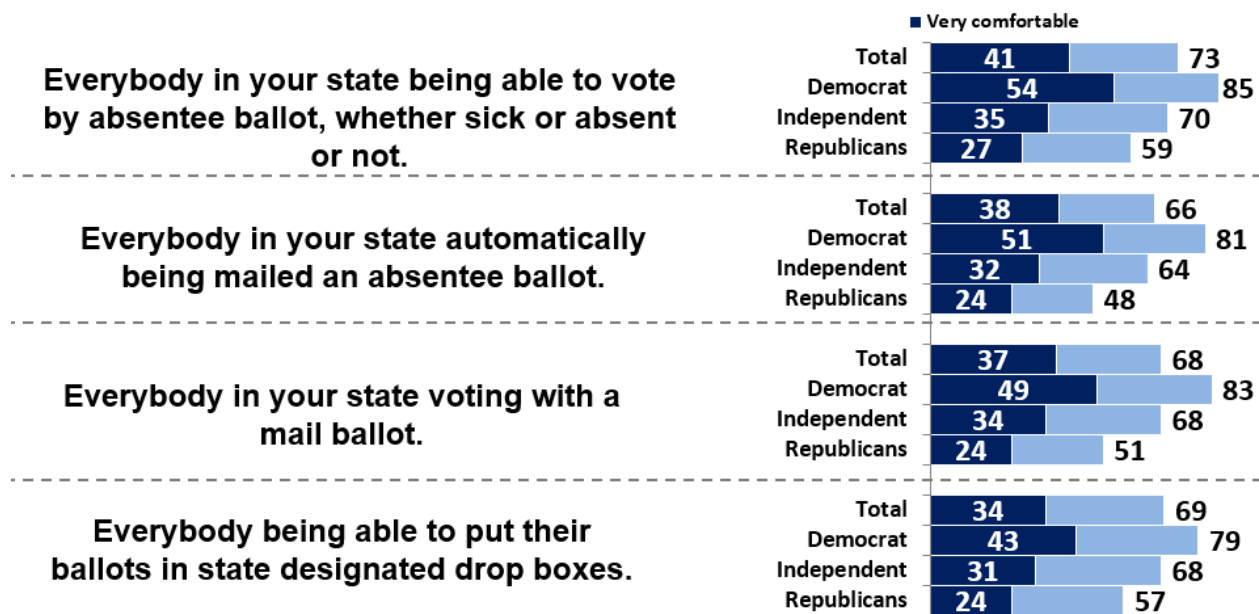
The public answer: vote in safety

The pandemic has led voters to embrace social distancing with a lot of emotion and psychic cost, which leads them to two thirds now being comfortable with every reform we tested to expand voting by mail. There is the strongest support for being able to vote absentee, without showing that they are sick or absent from home. There is equally two-thirds strong support for everybody in the state getting a mail ballot and everybody getting an absentee ballot.

Critically, almost 60 percent of Republicans favor no-reason absentee ballots and over 50 percent, all in the state automatically being mailed an absentee ballot.

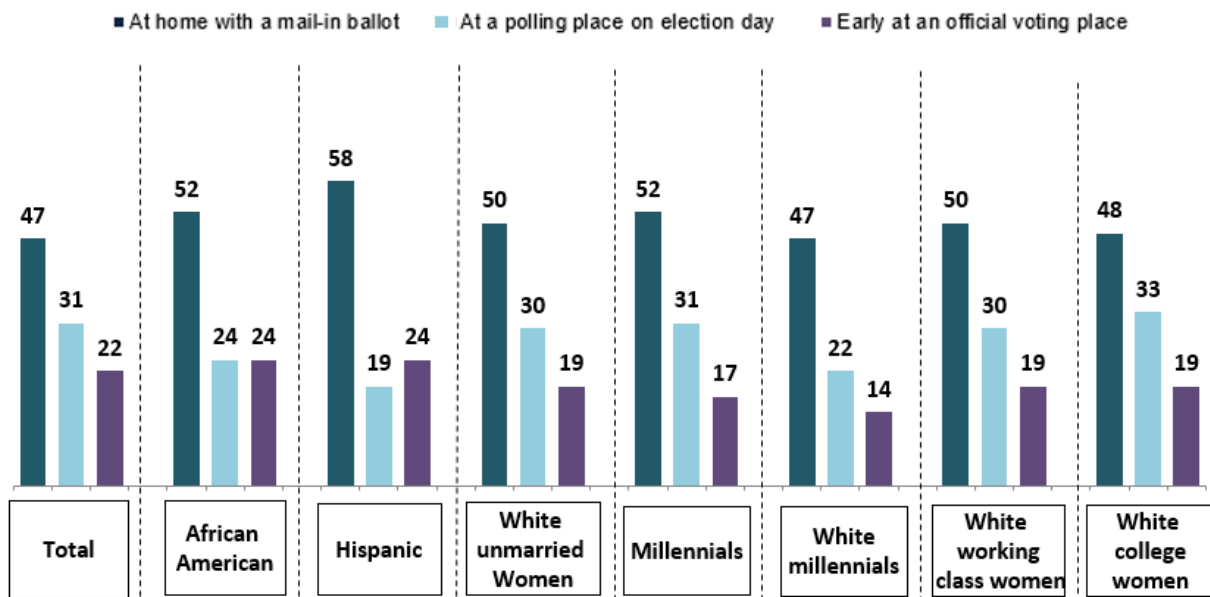
Scenes like those in Wisconsin could mean Republicans paying a price with their own voters; 87 percent of which are social distancing and may view the president’s position as cavalier.

Here are some ways people will be voting this year. For each one, please tell me whether you feel very comfortable, somewhat, not comfortable or not at all comfortable with each.



The pandemic has changed how people want to vote in this democracy. Nearly half the country (47 percent) want to vote at home with a mail-in ballot. That includes 52 percent of African Americans and 58 percent of Hispanics and 52 percent of millennials.

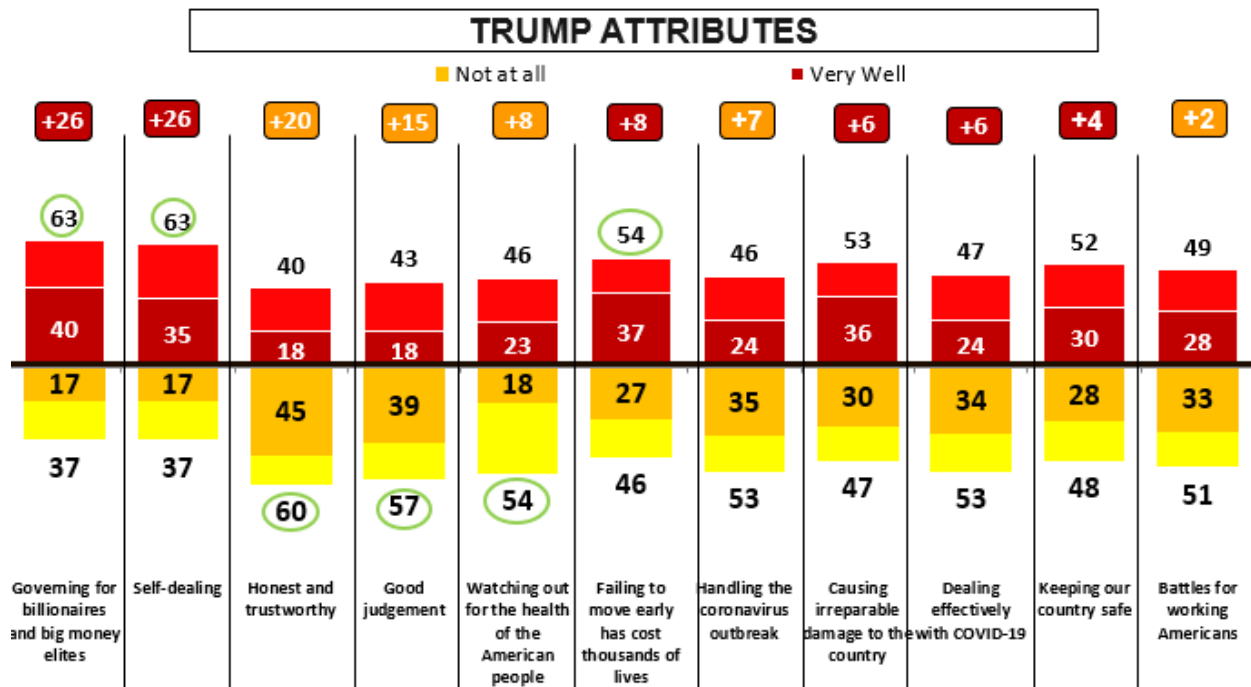
Thinking about how you intend to vote in this election, do you think you will vote early at an official voting place, at home with a mail in ballot, or at the polling place on Election Day?



President Trump is losing the war against the pandemic

Trump’s approval has slipped back to his previous approval rating in the battleground states — where approval was about 3 points above his national rating — and slipped more on handling of the coronavirus. A 54 percent majority say his failure to move early has cost thousands of lives and will be hard to reverse, as the death toll rises.

About 60 percent of the country have settled into a belief that President Trump is governing for the billionaires and big money elites, is self-dealing, not honest and trustworthy, and lacks good judgement. On his own terms, 58 percent in the battleground, including 61 percent of independents and even a quarter of Republicans believe he is losing the war against the pandemic.



The government responds

The scale of the government response defied all history, with three bi-partisan plans to start and then a \$2 trillion dollar package to rescue people. And it won the support of 88 percent in the battleground, but support is not intense — as people do not know who shaped it and who is setting the direction of future responses. We would have expected more than the 38 percent who strongly approve, and it is revealing that Republicans more strongly favor it than Democrats.

About an equal number believe the good things are due to Donald Trump and the Senate and House Republicans than the Senate and House Democrats and the governors and mayors. But fully 24 percent could not answer the question.

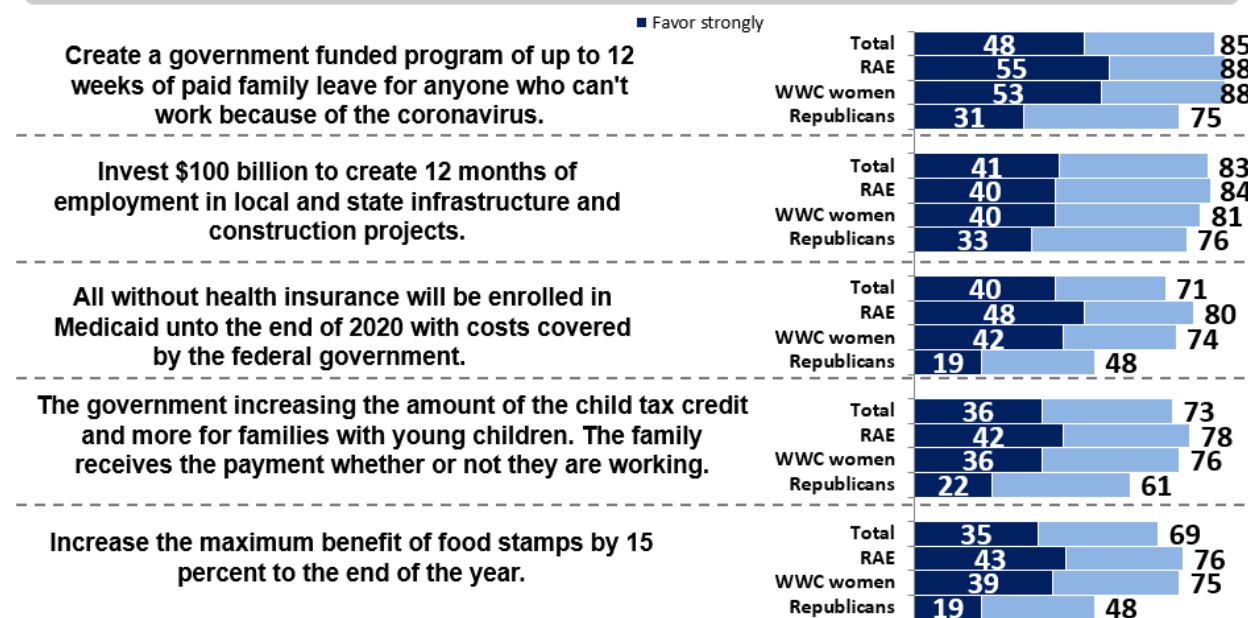
We ask voters which leaders they trusted more to deal with the current health care and economic crisis, and the named Democratic leader won by only 4 points. Joe Biden was trusted over Donald Trump to deal with the crisis, but that is just his vote margin in the battleground states. So, Democrats need to do a lot more to get heard at this critical time.

A third of the country has received a postcard from the president telling them about how to fight the virus. Just 3 percent have received unemployment benefits themselves; 8 percent with someone they know.

It turns out, the country is ready for a 4th rescue package that includes policies that get nearly universal support, with great intensity. Standing out above all others is a government program to fund up to 12 weeks paid family leave for families that cannot work because of the coronavirus. A majority of the Rising American Electorate and white working class women strongly favor it. There, 83 percent support for \$100 billion to create 12 months of employment on state and local infrastructure projects.

There is more than 70 percent support for extending Medicaid to all without health insurance and increasing the amount of the child credit for families with young children and receive it whether working or not. And nearly 70 percent support raising the maximum food stamp payment by 15 percent. Clearly, such an initiative would give Democrats more ownership of the big government actions.

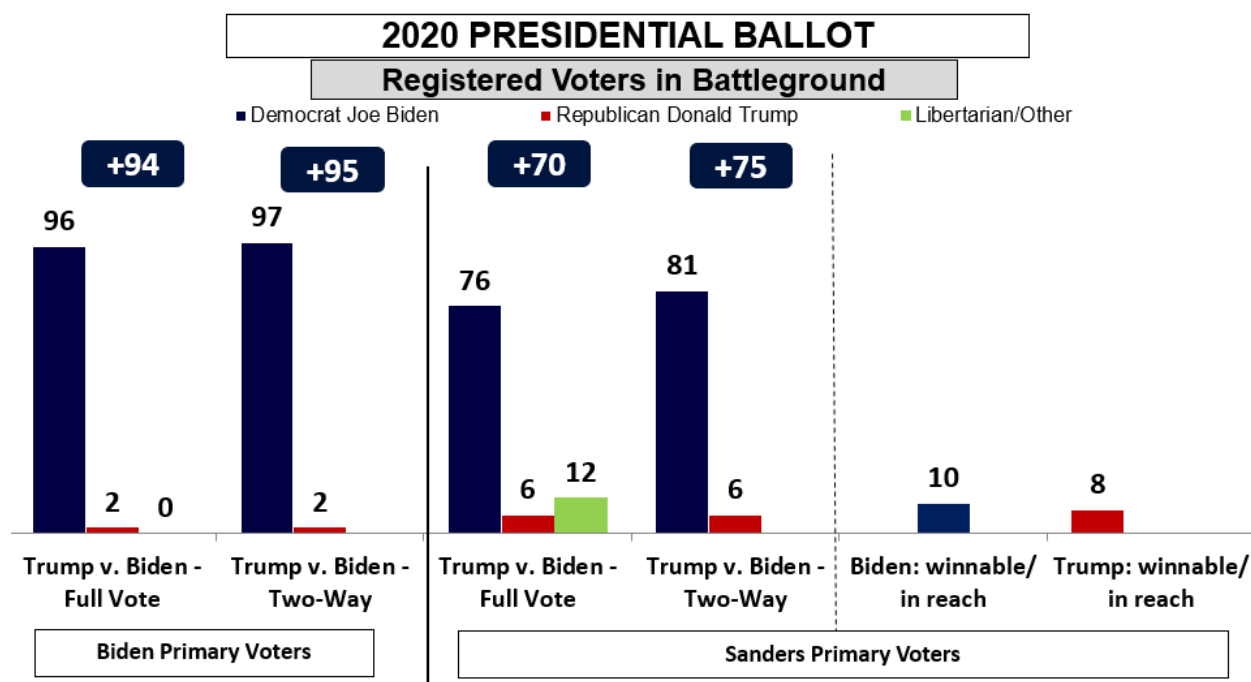
Congress has passed major new laws to deal with the pandemic and the economic crash and bring back small and big businesses. Please indicate whether you would favor or oppose each of the following proposals.



Changed presidential race: post Sanders

The battleground poll shows a 3 point shift in the presidential race and generic congressional ballot, as well as in the key Republican Senate seats. Barring mischief in blocking voting, the general election is stacked in favor of Biden: he has more loyalists (40 to 30 percent) and less unreachable (39 percent versus 50 percent for Trump).

The primary with Sanders ended undramatically and without a momentum creating event — and only three quarters of Sanders primary voters are voting for Biden. If the respondent is given only two candidates, Biden vote rises to 81 percent. That is a problematic number, reinforced by the fact that 10 percent of Sanders votes are winnable for Biden, while 8 percent are winnable for Trump. Consolidation could not be more important if one is to guard against the attempts to steal this election.



Getting a vice president that consolidates is a start, but there are also two new policies embraced by Sanders voters: 69 percent strongly favor instituting paid family leave and 68 percent, extending Medicaid to the uninsured.

When asked whether Biden or Trump would do a better job on various problems, Biden runs well above the current vote in the battleground on uniting the parties and the country, health care and improving things for the middle class. Biden matches his vote margin on who would do better on handling the current crisis. Trump does much better on the economy and on getting people back to work.

2020 is a race still taking form, but it is being shaped by powerful dynamics that make it problematic for Donald Trump and allow Joe Biden to build the kind of vote majority needed for Democrats to win full control of the federal government and delegitimize the forces that threaten our democracy. This also empowers those who want to move during this crisis to reform our electoral system to expand vote by mail and protect the right to vote.