

# VOTERS SUPPORT A RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS THAT MEETS THE SCALE OF THE CRISIS

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The Covid-19 virus is posing enormous challenges to the United States and world at large. We are suffering both an acute public-health emergency and a staggering blow to the economy. In order to save lives, protect working families, and boost our economy in sustainable and healthy ways, we need to take actions that are swift, bold, and well beyond what Congress has thus far been willing to approve.

Oxfam partnered with Data for Progress to poll a host of policies designed to combat the coronavirus and corresponding economic crises it has triggered. We find that the initial bill passed by the House has strong public support - but that there is a similarly strong appetite in the public for a substantially more ambitious response. Given the drastic situation at hand and the public mandate for action - Congress can and should pursue an ambitious recovery agenda.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

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- ▶ Registered voters in the US strongly support immediate, aggressive action in response to both the public-health and economic crises. Among the measures they endorse: paid sick leave for all workers, emergency funding for food supplies for those affected by the crisis, free testing for the virus, and moratoriums on evictions, foreclosures, and utility shutoffs.
  - ▶ Public support is both overwhelming (greater than 70 percent) and bipartisan for measures that directly help working people cope with the crisis, with even “very conservative” voters showing majority support for emergency cash payments, waiving copays for coronavirus treatment, and increasing federal funding for Medicaid. On the other hand, voters are more skeptical of policies that prop up large businesses affected by the crisis.
  - ▶ Women on average support policies to address the crisis at a higher rate than men. As women face additional hardships in times of crisis - perhaps unsurprisingly, they are more supportive of government action.
- We polled along three major axes. The first is informed by the content of the House bill that was signed into law by President Trump on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. The second relates to more-aggressive action that could be taken to combat the coronavirus. The third looks at attitudes toward emergency loans and bailing out of businesses as proposed by the Trump administration.

Those surveyed were first presented the following statement:

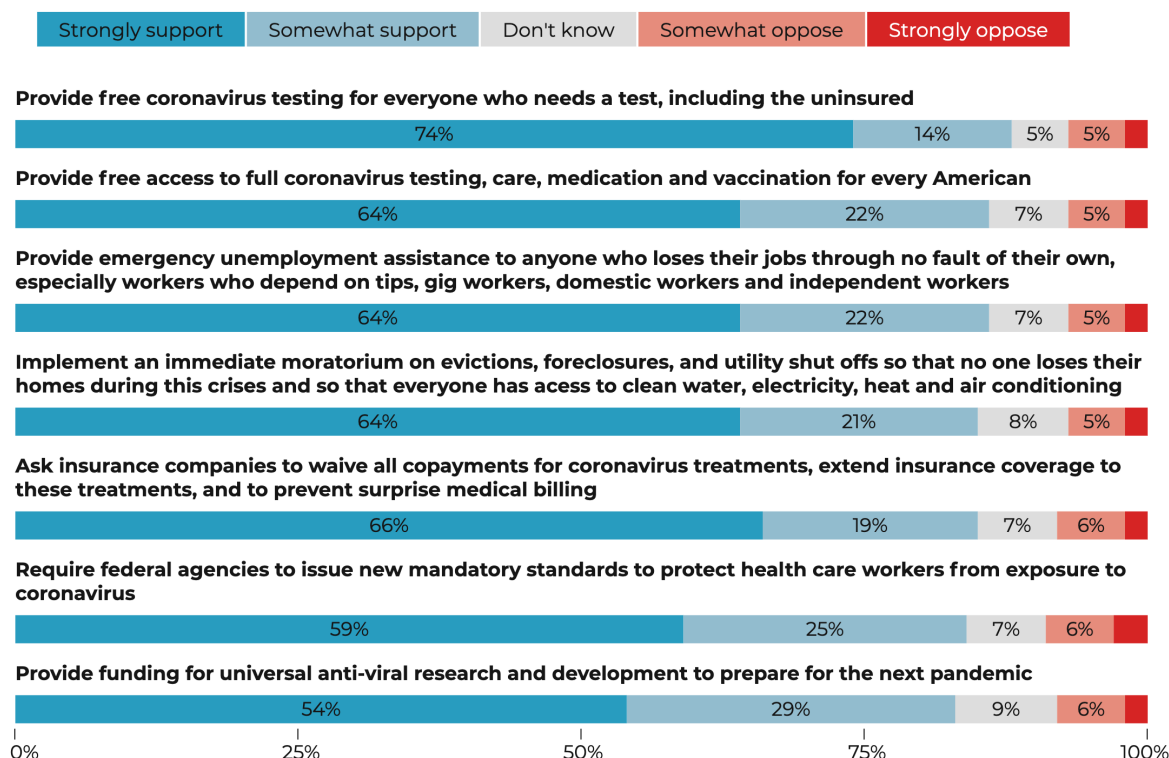
*Covid-19, also known as the coronavirus, is a new respiratory disease caused by a novel virus that appears to have entered the human population from animals in Wuhan, China late last year. While in most cases Covid-19 symptoms are mild and flu-like, in a minority of patients, particularly the elderly or those with poor respiratory health, it causes serious pneumonia and kills ten times as many patients as the flu. Since coronavirus is new to humans, no one has acquired immunity and there is*

*no vaccine. Without preventative measures it will infect a very large share of the population and overwhelm the health system's ability to provide care to those in need of hospitalization. Lawmakers in Congress are discussing various ways that they can respond to the current coronavirus outbreak.*

The chart below illustrates eleven topline questions posed to a nationally representative sample of registered voters, in a Data for Progress survey conducted from March 16 through March 17, 2020.

## Voters Support Sweeping Measures To Combat The Coronavirus

Here we present topline results. Those surveyed were asked, "Should the federal government...?—



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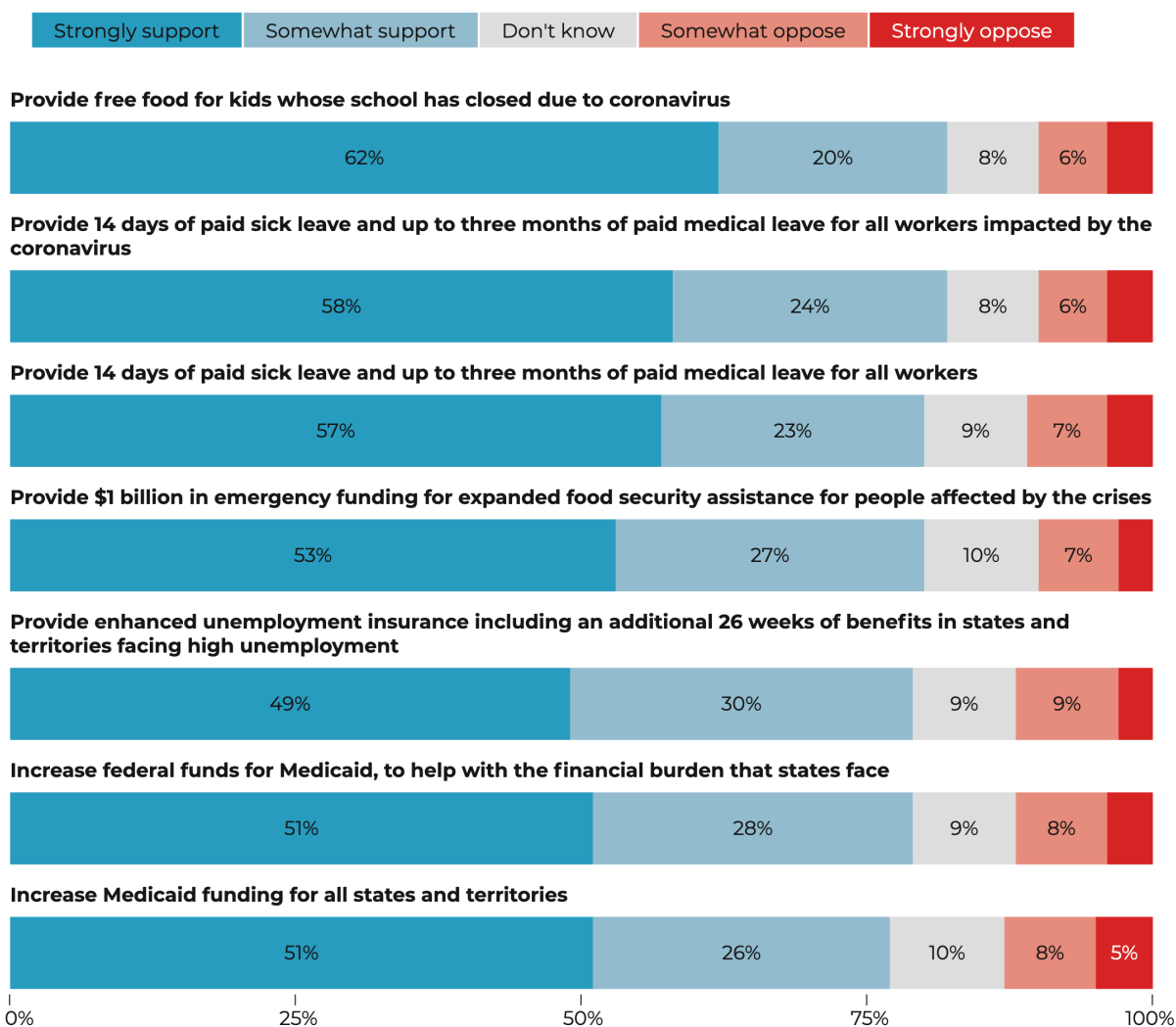


We found overwhelming support for actions that the government could take, including providing free food for children affected by the school closures due to the virus, free testing and

medical care for those requiring treatment, placing a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, and giving cash to families.

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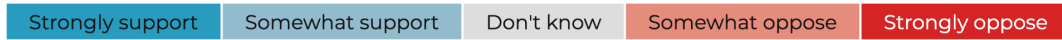


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# Voters Support Sweeping Measures To Combat The Coronavirus

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## Increase federal funds for Medicaid, as states and territories face increased costs



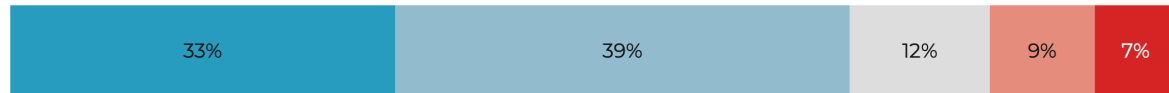
## Provide \$50 billion in low interest loans from the Small Business Administration to firms in affected states and territories



## Make economic stimulus program automatic when the unemployment rate reaches a certain level



## Provide loan guarantees for impacted industries including airlines, hotels, and cruises companies



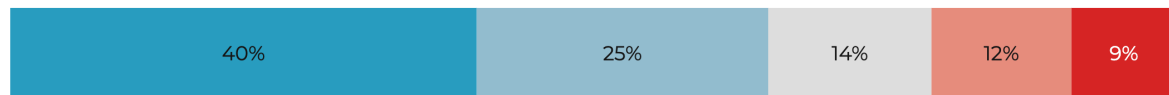
## Give families affected by the crises a one-time cash payment of up to \$3000 per family of four



## Give every American a one-time cash payment up to \$3000 per family of four



## Suspend all payroll taxes until the end of 2020



0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

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Turning to focus specifically on the House Bill. As Ella Nilsen [explains](#) in Vox, The House bill consists of:

- ▶ **Free coronavirus testing:** The bill makes coronavirus testing free by requiring private health insurers (plus government programs like Medicare and Medicaid) to cover the cost of testing, including emergency room visits and doctor fees. This will also cover Americans without insurance.
- ▶ **Emergency paid sick days:** The bill offers some workers 14 days of paid sick leave to be available immediately during the coronavirus (many employers are asking employees to work from home for that amount of time). It ensures sick leave to those impacted by quarantine orders, or those who must stay home to care for their children. The bill reimburses small businesses (those with 50 or fewer employees) for the cost of the 14 additional days of leave.
- ▶ **Emergency paid leave:** The bill creates a new federal emergency paid leave program for those unable to work because they have Covid-19, are quarantined, are caring for someone with the disease, or are caring for a child due to coronavirus-related school closings. Eligible workers receive benefits for a month (the program goes up to three months), and the benefit amount is two-thirds of the individual's average monthly earnings. Those receiving pay or unemployment compensation directly through their employers aren't eligible. There is some precedent for this: Congress [expanded unemployment benefits](#) for up to 99 weeks for Americans left unemployed by the 2008 financial crisis.

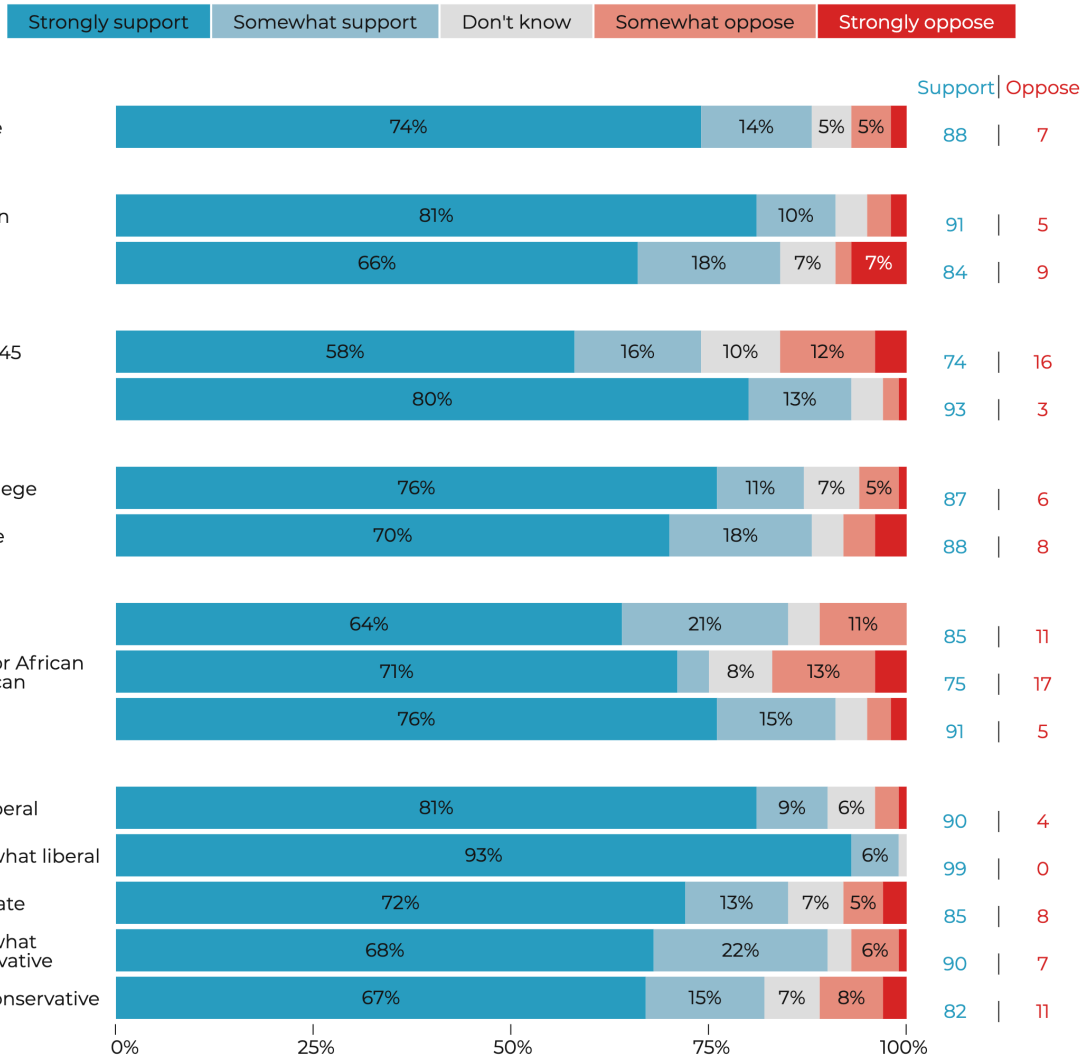
- ▶ **Expanded unemployment insurance:** The bill directs \$2 billion to state unemployment insurance programs, and waives measures like work search requirements or waiting weeks to those either diagnosed with Covid-19, or those who have lost their jobs due to the spread of the virus.
- ▶ **Expanding food security:** The bill directs \$1 billion to expanding access to programs like SNAP (food stamps), WIC, and the emergency food assistance program throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Progressive economists have long believed that expanding existing safety net programs is a highly effective way of stimulating the economy because the low-income people who benefit from them are highly likely to immediately spend any extra money they get; this helps stabilize economy-wide demand. The 2009 stimulus bill featured many provisions along these lines.

On Wednesday, President Trump signed into law the \$104 billion bill passed by the House and Senate. This bill mandates free coronavirus testing, expands paid sick days and medical leave, and shores up unemployment insurance and food-security programs. While all parts of the bill have strong public support, the most popular provision in the bill is the provision mandating that all testing for coronavirus be free.

Making coronavirus testing free has at least 70 percent support among all measured groups. Furthermore, this policy clearly cuts across ideologies, with at least 80 percent support among all ideologies, from “very liberal” to “very conservative.” It is clear that the public supports the policies in the bill that was passed as a first step toward addressing this crisis.

## By A Massive Margin Voters Want Free Coronavirus Testing

Should the federal government provide free coronavirus testing for everyone who needs a test, including the uninsured?



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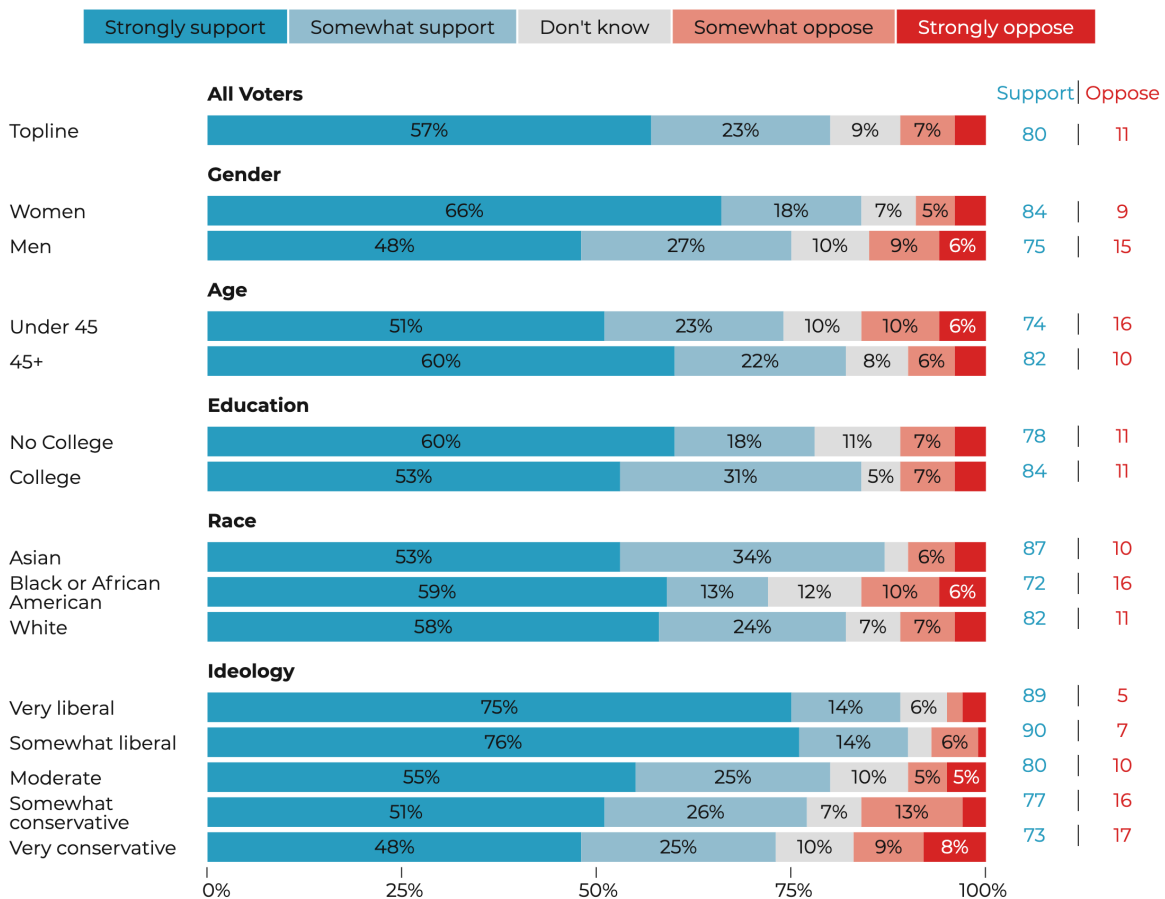
# POLICIES THAT GO FURTHER

Although the current law was a significant step in the right direction—including making coronavirus testing free—more needs to be done to expand sick leave and protect Americans. Our poll results show there is clearly strong demand for more action to extend help and provide

protection to people hurt by the crisis. The new Families First Coronavirus Response law only provides paid sick leave to one-fifth of American workers. The Senate, voting along partisan lines, rejected (51–47) an amendment by Senator Patty Murray to provide fourteen days of paid sick leave and up to three months of paid sick and medical leave to all workers. However, our poll shows that this proposal is extremely popular across all demographics and ideologies, with a topline of 80 percent support.

## Support For Providing All Workers With Paid Sick Leave Is Overwhelming

Should the federal government provide 14 days of paid sick leave and up to three months of paid family and medical leave for all workers



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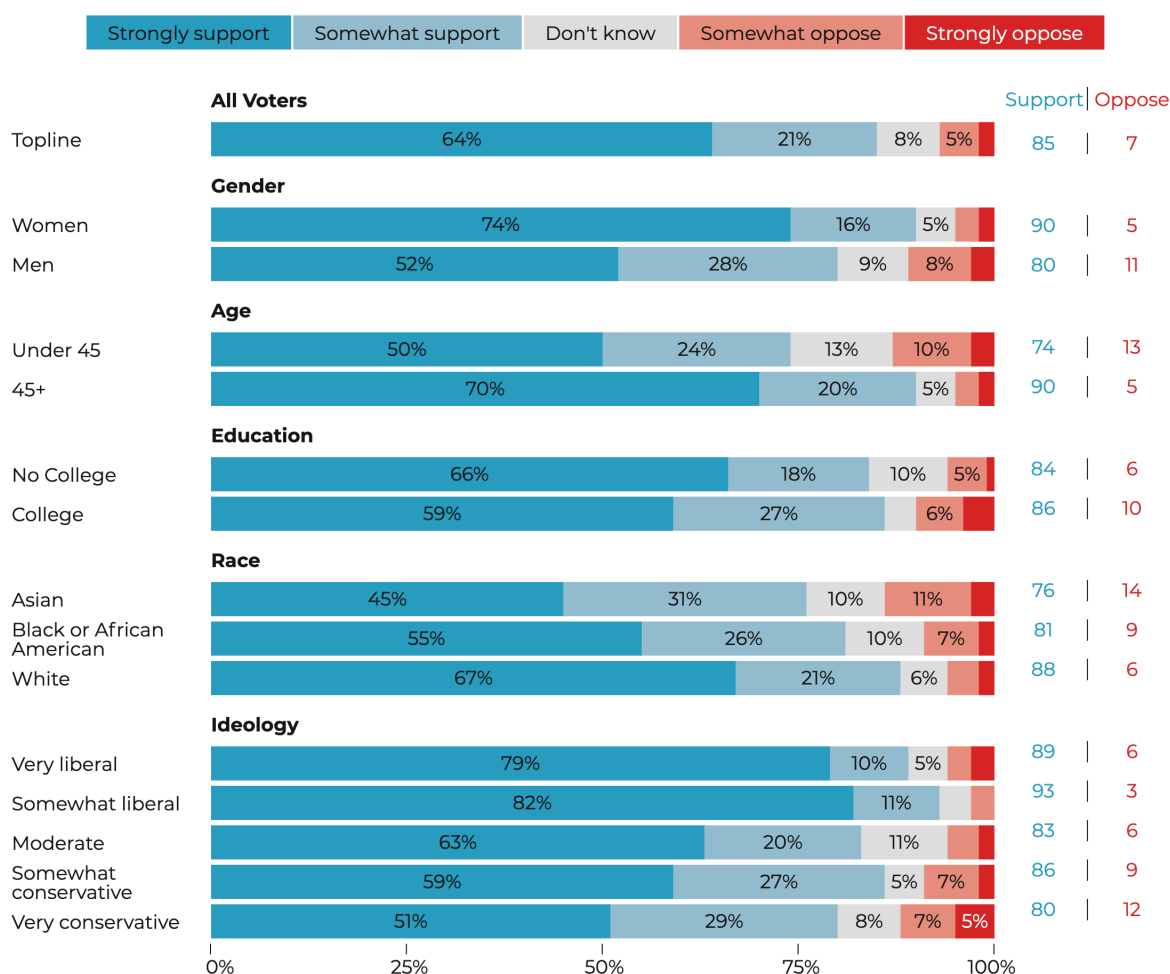


Our poll also shows that the American people want more aggressive action on unemployment benefits, Medicaid funding, and a moratorium on evictions and utility shutoffs. Clearly, there is strong demand for robust policies to ensure

financial security during this crisis, and our leaders should step up to implement those solutions. All of these policies enjoy broad support across ideological, racial and age divides.

## Voters Want a Moratorium On Evictions, Foreclosures, And Utility Shut Offs

Should the federal government implement an immediate moratorium on evictions, foreclosures, and utility shut offs so that no one loses their homes during this crises and so that everyone has access to clean water, electricity, heat and air conditioning?



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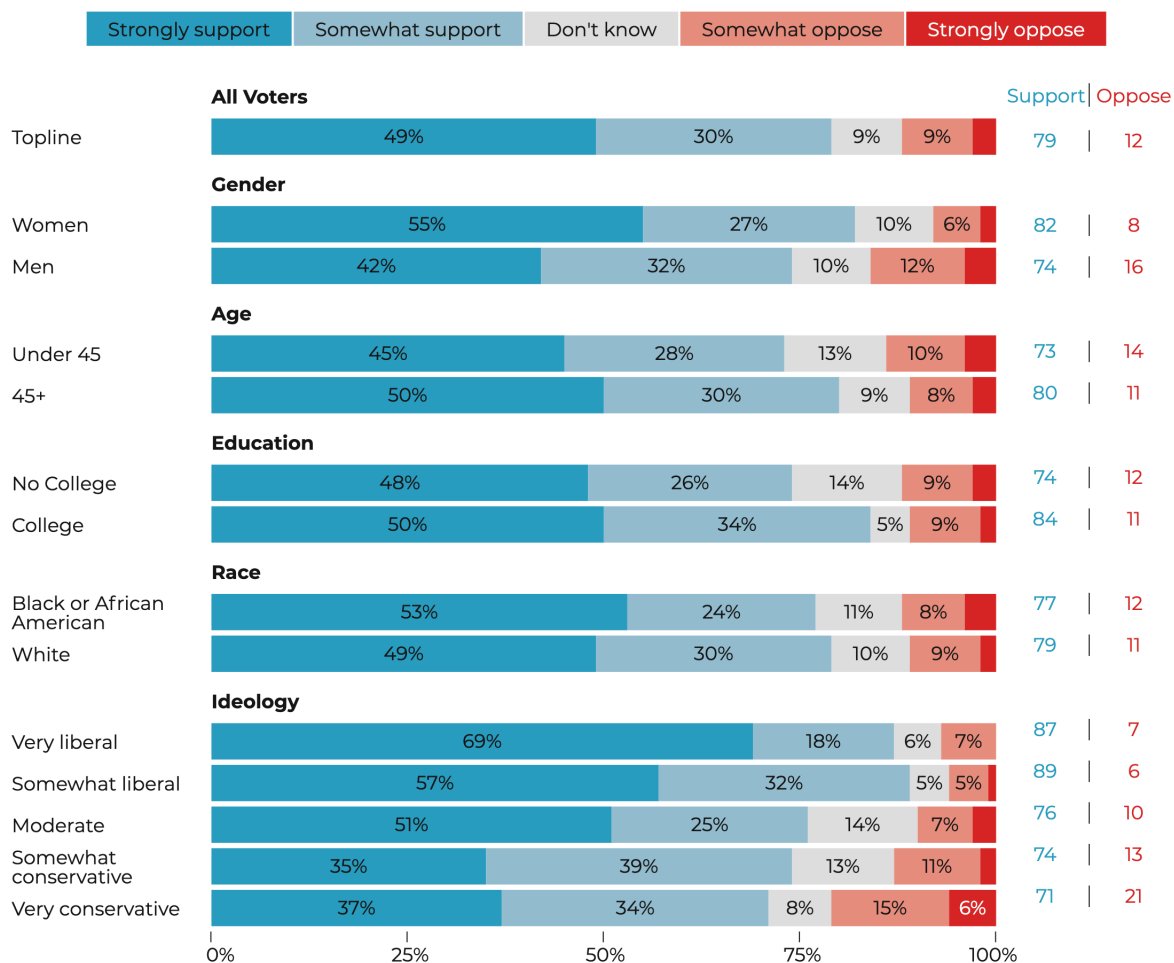
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The virus is exposing the reality behind the myth that the economy is booming; in fact, wage stagnation and erosion of protections have left working families exposed to heightened dangers. People strongly support measures that will

prevent families and individuals from falling into homelessness and bankruptcy. 40 percent of Americans can't afford a \$400 hundred dollar emergency. The coronavirus and the economic fallout are an emergency far beyond a simple \$400 expense and demand government action.

## Voters Want To Extend Unemployment Benefits By 26 Weeks

Should the federal government provide enhanced unemployment insurance including an additional 26 weeks of benefits in states and territories facing high unemployment?



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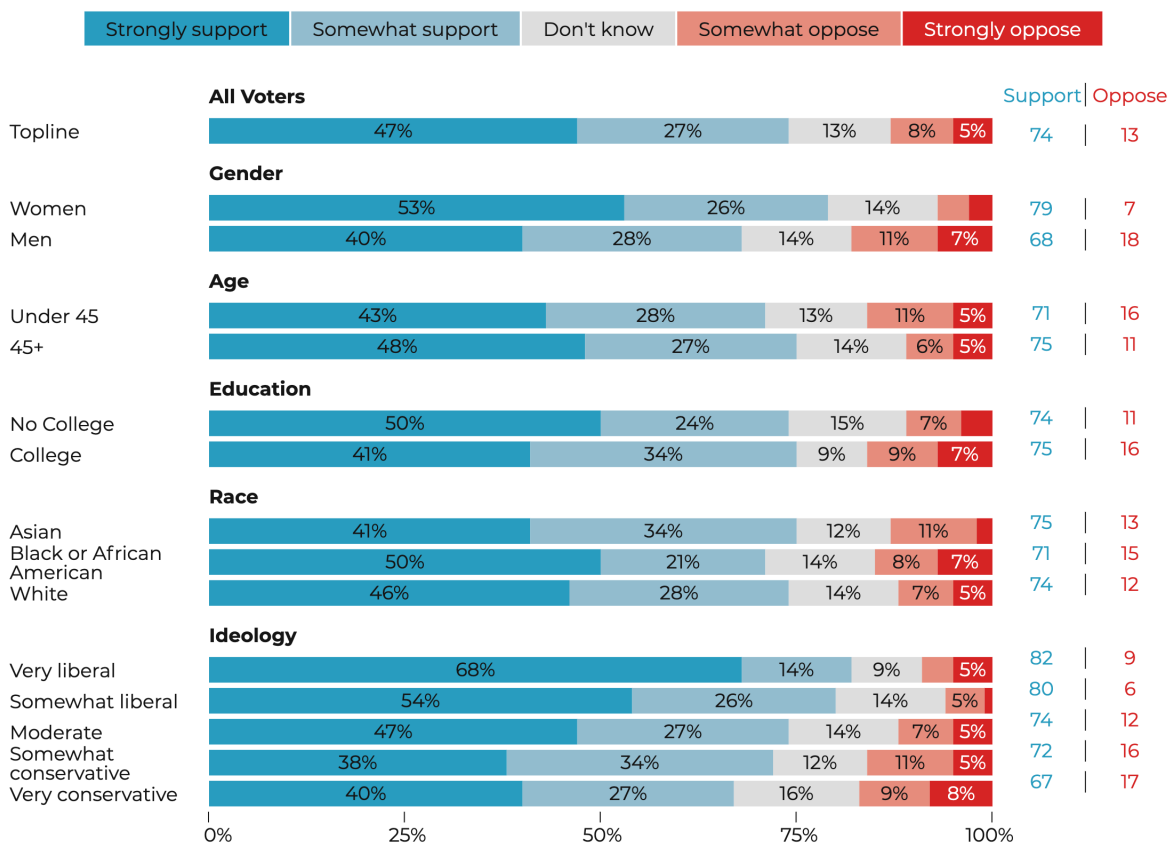
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Voters are extremely anxious about the financial impacts and costs of coronavirus. Already we're seeing a huge jump in unemployment numbers, with claims spiking by seventy thousand last week. Our poll shows overwhelming support for congressional action to increase unemployment claims, with 79 percent of voters in support of increasing by an additional twenty-six weeks the benefits for those who have lost their jobs. By and large, voters express more support for measures aimed at helping workers impacted by the crisis and at enhancing the safety net than they do for proposals aimed at business-sector bailouts

Beyond immediate measures to address the Covid-19 crisis, voters support Congressional action to make economic stimulus programs automatic so Congress does not need to intervene every time there is a crisis. Perhaps surprisingly, this technocratic fix has stronger support across ideologies than even financial support for affected industries and payroll tax cuts. This is likely evidence that voters want immediate financial assistance without waiting for it to be hashed out in Congress.

## Voters Support Making Economic Stimulus Programs Automatic

Should the federal government make economic stimulus programs automatic when the unemployment rate reaches a certain level?



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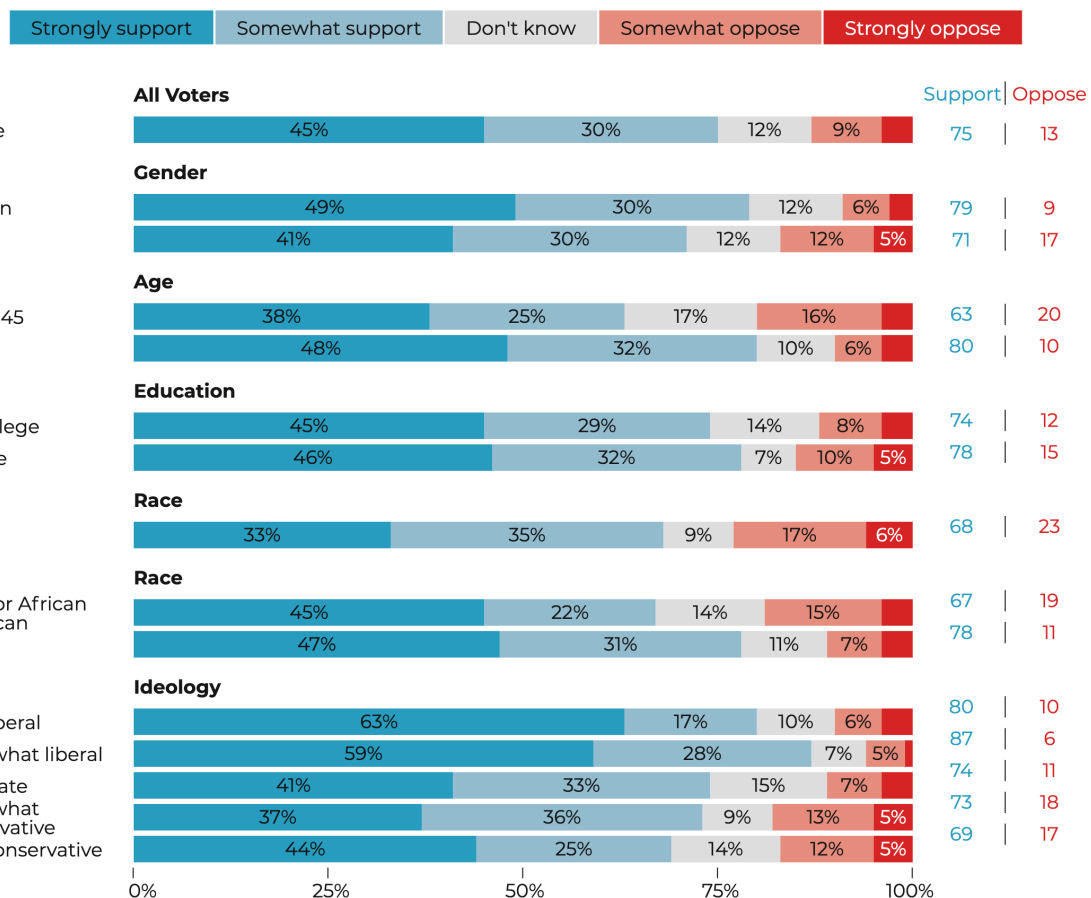
# ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSES

Voters are quite supportive of the federal government taking steps to help save small businesses. However, they are, on the whole, cooler about supporting affected industries than other items we polled. The idea with the

least support of any issue polled was a proposal floated by the Trump administration to provide low-interest government loans to oil and gas companies. Overall, 33 percent of voters strongly support providing loan guarantees for impacted industries, such as airlines and hotels, compared to 45 percent who strongly support \$50 billion in low-interest loans from the Small Business Administration.

## Voters Support Loans To Assist Small Businesses

Should the federal government provide \$50 billion in low interest loans from the Small Business Administration to firms in affected states and territories?



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## CONCLUSION

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This is a crisis - and it demands a swift and decisive response. Congress has broad and popular support for measures which would ease both the humanitarian, medical and economic impact of the crisis. Public opinion on issues like direct cash transfers has shifted rapidly in the past few weeks, opening space for decisive action.

*Oxfam is a global organization working to end the injustice of poverty. We help people build better futures for themselves, hold the powerful accountable, and save lives in disasters. Our mission is to tackle the root causes of poverty and create lasting solutions. Join us. [oxfamamerica.org](https://oxfamamerica.org)*

## METHODOLOGY

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From March 16 through March 17, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 2,509 likely voters nationally, using web-panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 1.9$  percent.

For rounding purposes, all results conveyed in the charts sum to 100 percentage points and thus may deviate slightly from crosstab data.