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# FOR BIDEN, COMMITTING TO A PROGRESSIVE CABINET COULD BE KEY TO VICTORY IN NOVEMBER

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**Aidan Smith** *Electoral Analyst, Data for Progress*

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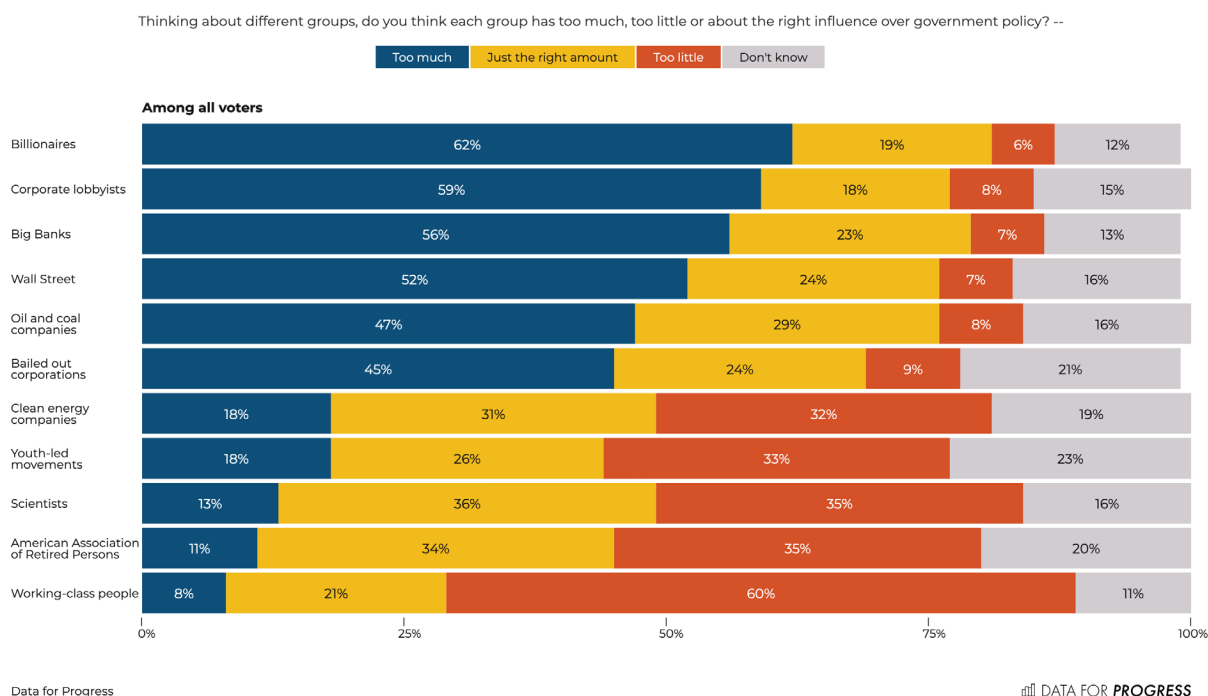
July 2020

Former Vice President Joe Biden is now the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee for president, and with his current lead over President Donald Trump in polls, it is pressing to discuss who might serve in a Biden administration. While Democrats can’t afford to be complacent, the likelihood of Biden’s victory means that progressive groups should be invested in the process of composing his cabinet. In a memo released earlier this month, Data for Progress [outlined what a progressive cabinet might look like](#). We decided to poll the prospect of Biden committing to some of the progressive cabinet proposals outlined in the memo to find out how it might impact his electoral prospects. We found that Biden committing to appoint a progressive cabinet is a popular stance that will further bolster his prospects of winning in November.

Voters of all parties are concerned about the influence of Wall Street, big banks, and corporate lobbyists on policy-making. Billionaires were far and away the group that voters said enjoyed too much sway of government policy, with 62 percent of voters believing so. Conversely, voters are concerned that scientists, the working class, and clean-energy firms do not have enough influence on policy-making.

Voters are also concerned with the revolving door between government officials and the private sector. For instance, a majority of all voters were troubled by the prospect of a cabinet official who received a bailout for the industry they would be charged with overseeing, with 48 percent thinking it a “very big” problem and 28 percent thinking it a “somewhat big” problem.

## Voters Think Billionaires, Corporate Lobbyists, And Big Banks Have Too Much Influence Over The Government

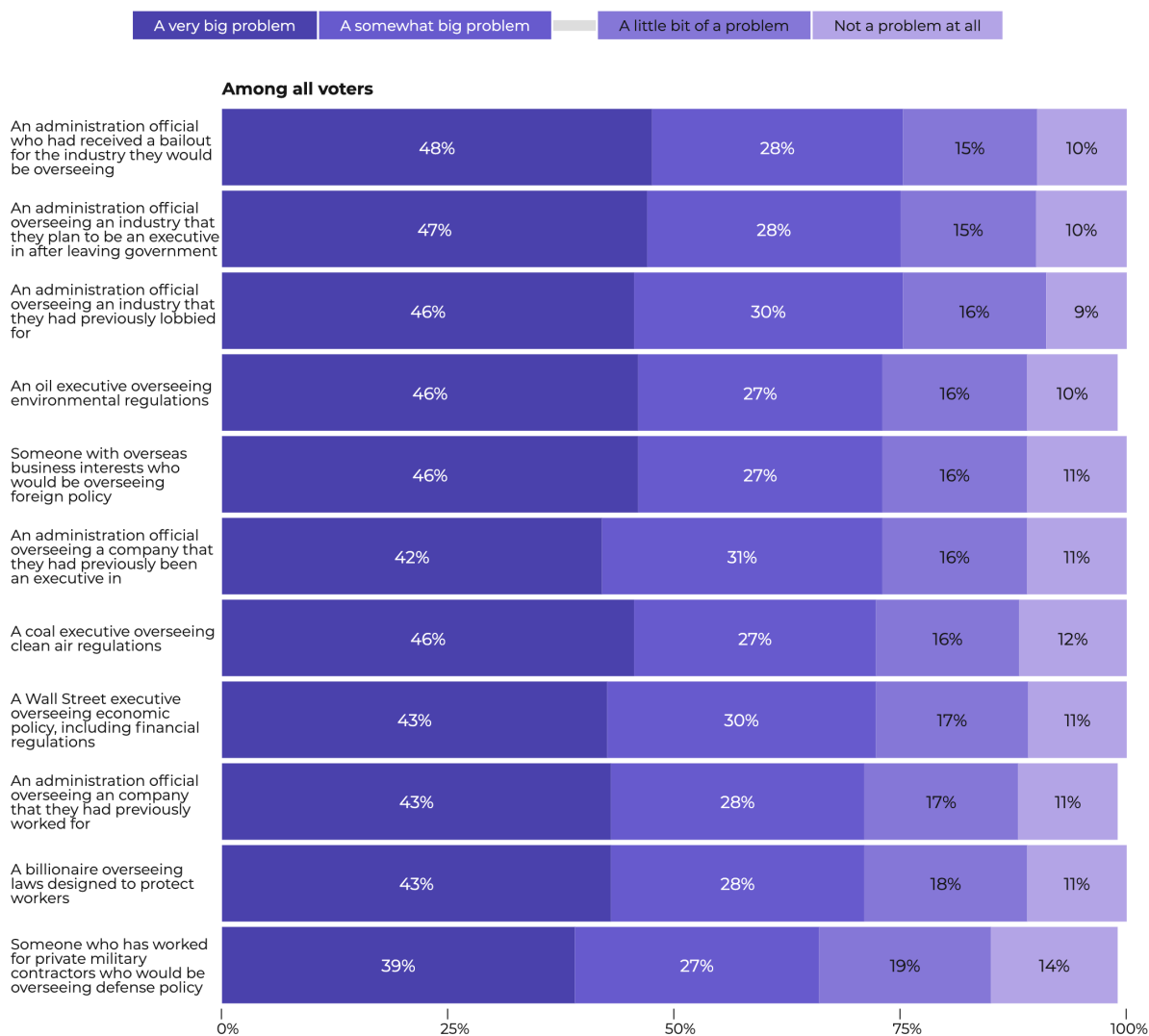


Similarly, voters are concerned about an oil executive overseeing environmental regulations (46 percent saw it as a “very big problem”), a coal executive overseeing clean-air regulations (46 percent for “very big problem”), a Wall Street

executive overseeing financial regulations (43 percent for “very big problem”), and a billionaire overseeing worker-protection laws (43 percent for “very big problem”). It’s clear that voters are tired of this constant back-and-forth between high-ranking government officials and industry.

## Most Voters Think It Is A Problem That Government Officials Go To Work In Industries They Regulated

Thinking of the administrations of a Trump or Biden administration, how concerned would you be about the following: --



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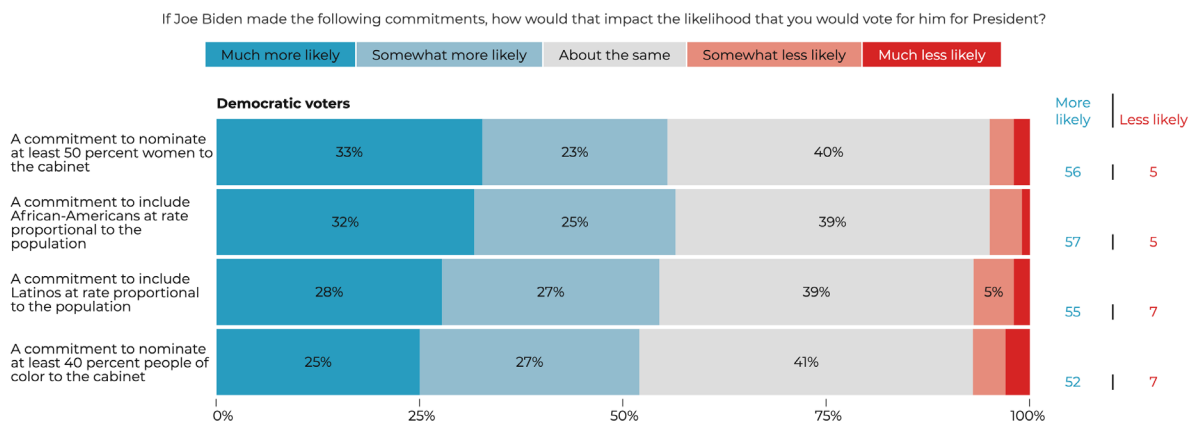
Just as winning the votes of disaffected Republicans and independents is key to Biden winning in November, so is turning out the progressive base of the Democratic Party. For far too long, presidential cabinets have been too white, too male, too wealthy, and generally unrepresentative of the American people as the whole. Indeed, a majority of voters who self-identify as Democrats say they would be more likely to support Biden's candidacy for president if he pledged to appoint women, Black and Latino Americans, and people of color more generally, at a rates proportional to the total population. Our polling shows that Democratic voters want Biden to construct a cabinet that reflects the diversity of the United States.

We also asked voters if they would be more or less likely to support Biden this November if he committed to appointing qualified individuals with progressive worldviews to key posts in government. For instance, the prospect of Biden pledging to staff the Department of Justice with individuals committed to cracking down on

white-collar crime led 48 percent of overall voters to indicate an increased likelihood of voting for Biden, compared to just 14 percent who said it decreased their likelihood of voting for him.

Voters are also receptive to the prospect of Biden pledging to staff the Department of Veterans Affairs with healthcare professionals (47 percent of voters were more likely to vote for Biden), the Department of Health and Human Services with individuals committed to reigning in corporate profiteering in healthcare (47 percent), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development with individuals committed to environmentally sustainable housing development (47 percent). Also worthy noting is that if Biden pledged to appoint a public teacher as Secretary of Education—something Senator Elizabeth Warren committed during her own presidential campaign—45 percent of voters said they'd be more likely to support Biden, compared to only 15 percent who said they'd be less likely to vote for him.

## Democratic Voters Would Be More Likely To Support Biden If He Committed To Building A Diverse Cabinet



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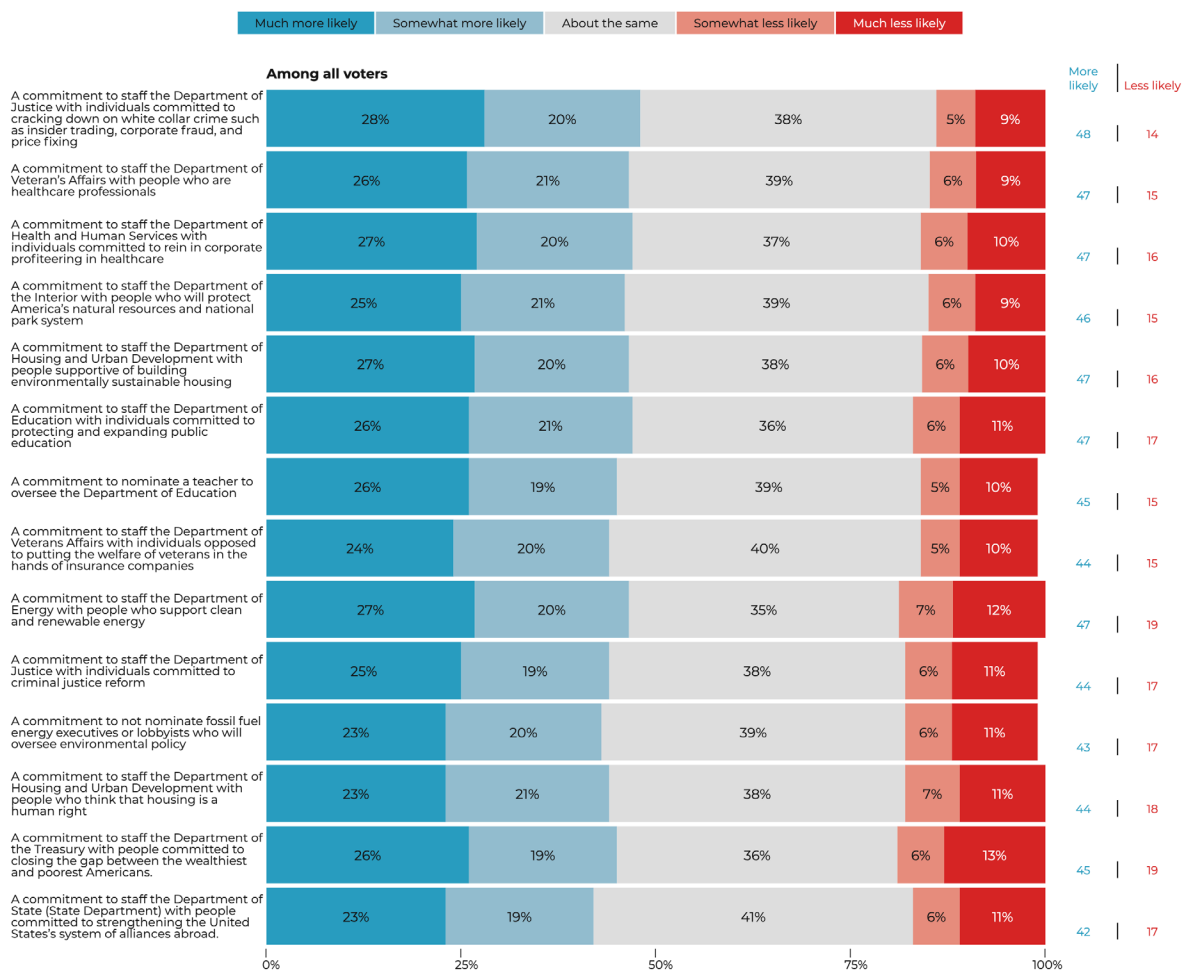


We also found that if Biden pledged to staff the Department of Homeland Security with individuals committed to protecting privacy rights, 42 percent of voters would be more likely to support him, compared to a mere 17 percent who say it would make them less likely. If Biden, a [longtime supporter of rail transport](#), pledged to staff the Department of Transportation with individuals supportive of expanding public

transit, 40 percent of voters indicated they'd be more likely to vote for him, compared to merely 17 percent who say it would make it less likely. Forty percent of voters reported that Biden pledging to staff the Department of Commerce with individuals committed to shrinking wealth inequality would make them more likely to vote for him, compared to a mere 23 percent who say it would make them less likely to do so.

## Biden Committing To Building A Progressive Cabinet Wins Him The Support Of Voters

If Joe Biden made the following commitments, how would that impact the likelihood that you would vote for him for President? --



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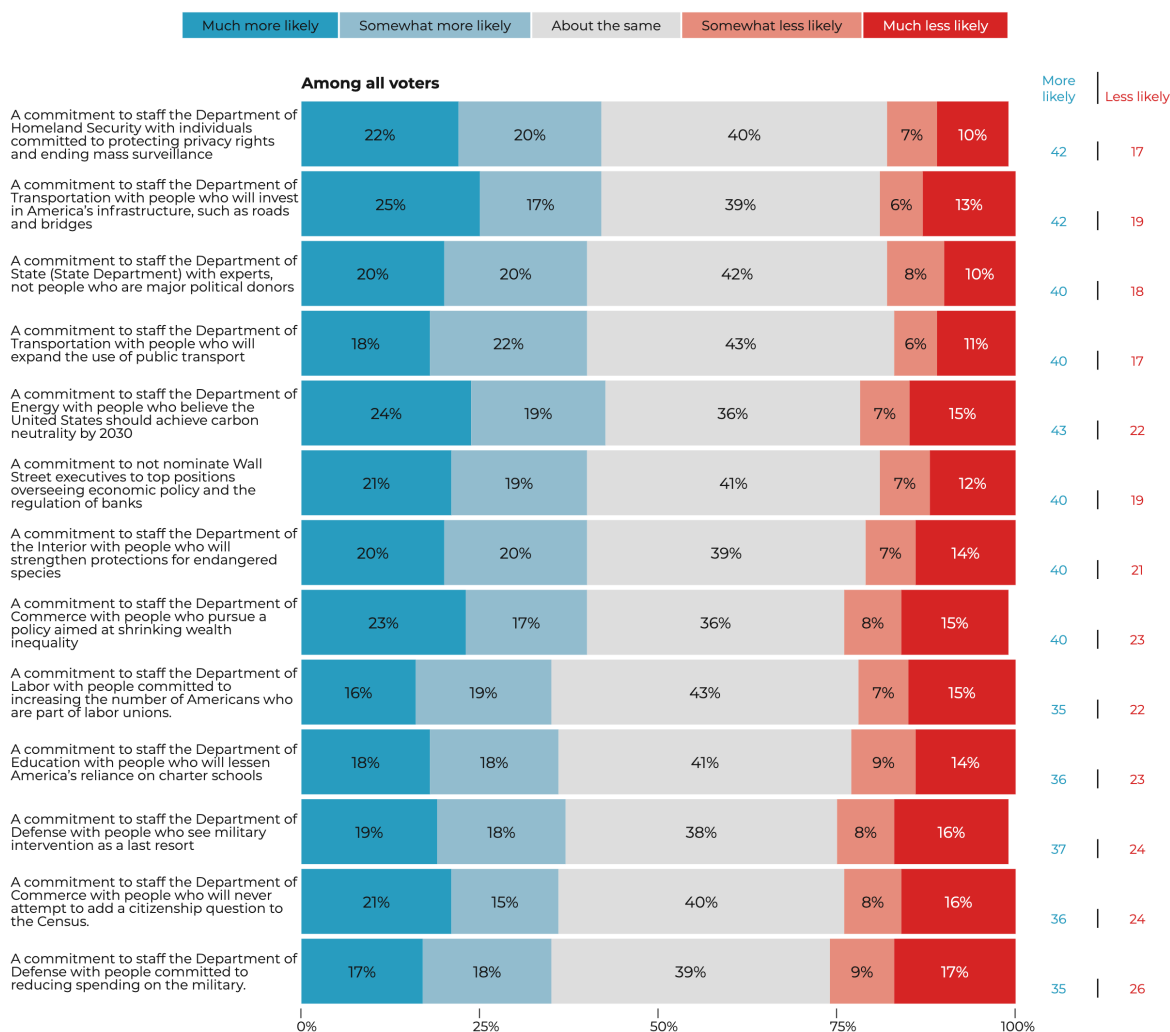
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In addition to choosing a progressive as his running mate, a solid way for Biden to increase his support among voters under the age of forty-five is to pledge to staff cabinet agencies with qualified progressives. Polling shows that Biden pledging not to nominate fossil fuel executives or lobbyists to positions responsible for environmental policy would boost his prospects among voters under forty-five, with 55 percent of all voters under forty-five saying it would increase

their likelihood of voting for Biden. Similar numbers can be found when asked about the prospect of Biden pledging to appoint individuals committed to protecting public education to the Department of Education, individuals committed to fighting corporate profiteering in healthcare to the Department of Health and Human Services, and individuals committed to closing the wealth gap to the Department of the Treasury.

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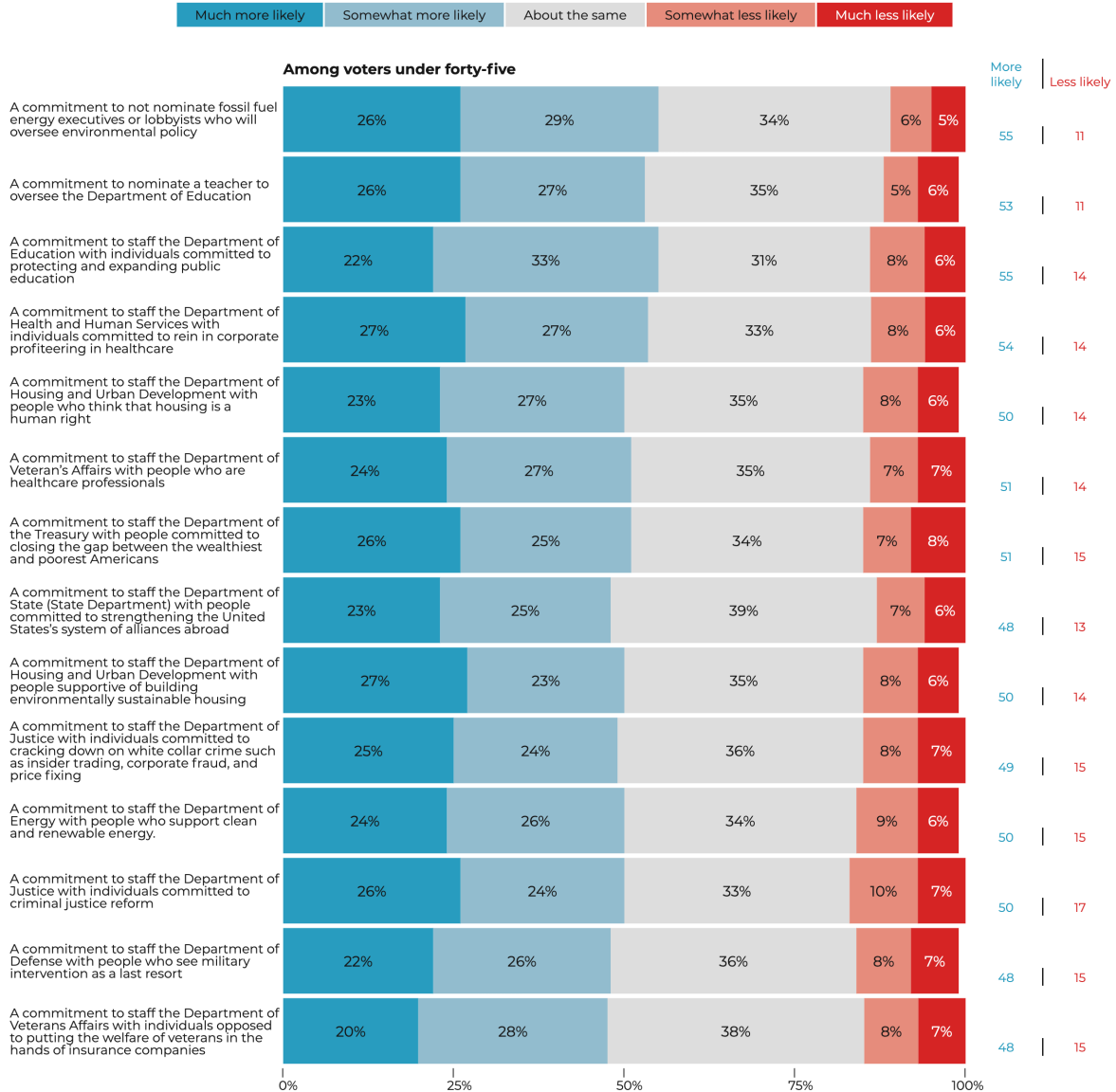


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# Voters Under Forty-Five Are More Willing To Support Biden If He Commits To Building A Progressive Cabinet

If Joe Biden made the following commitments, how would that impact the likelihood that you would vote for him for President? --



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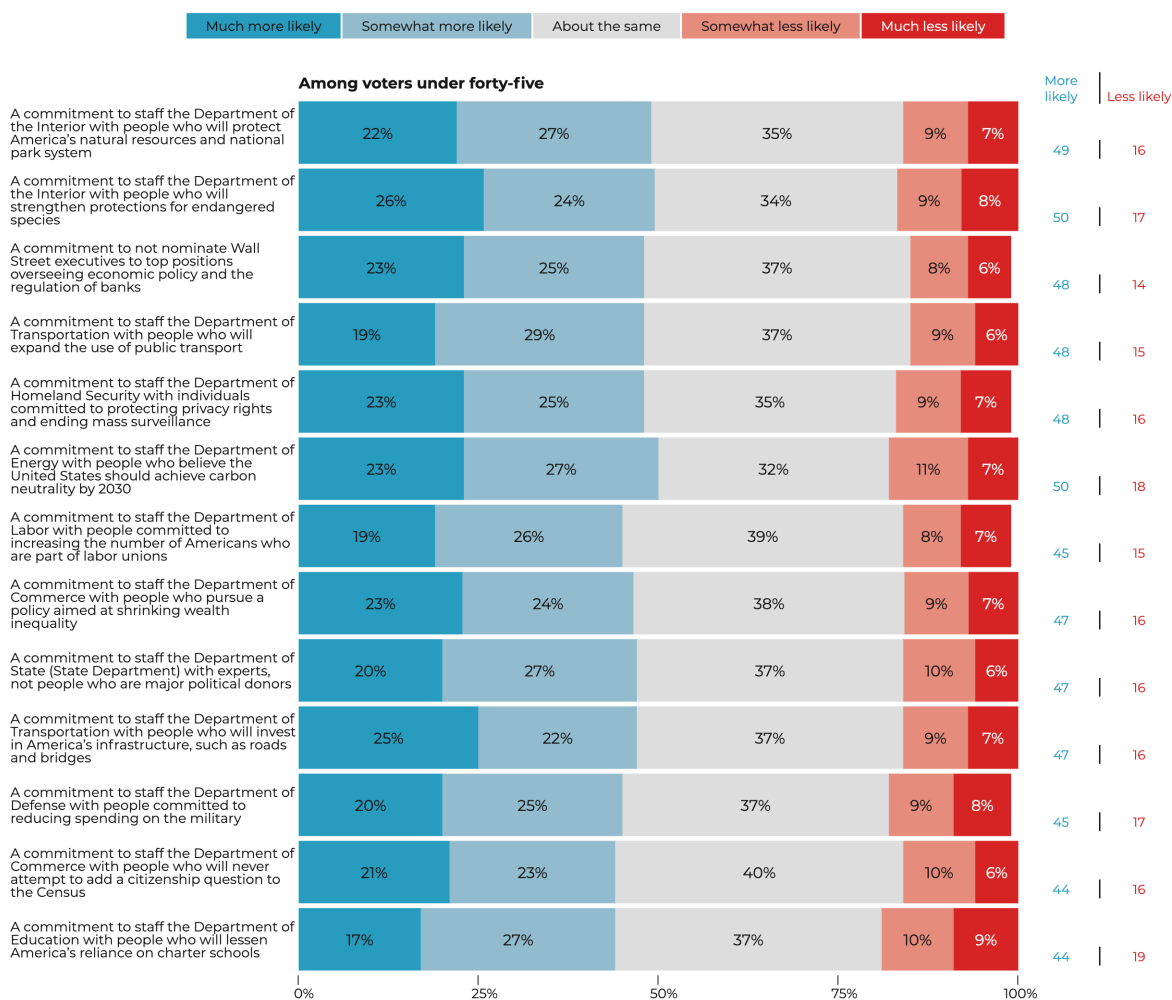


Forty-nine percent of voters under the age of forty-five, irrespective of party, say that committing to staff the Department of the Interior with individuals committed to protecting America's natural resources would make them more likely to support Biden, compared to just 16 percent who say it would make them less likely. Voters under forty-five also support Biden agreeing not to appoint Wall Street alumni to

top economic-policy posts. Committing to staff the Department of Energy with individuals committed to the ambitious goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 in the United States leads to a staggering 50 percent of voters under forty-five, irrespective of party, to proclaim a higher likelihood of voting for Biden, compared to just 18 percent who say it would make them less likely to do so.

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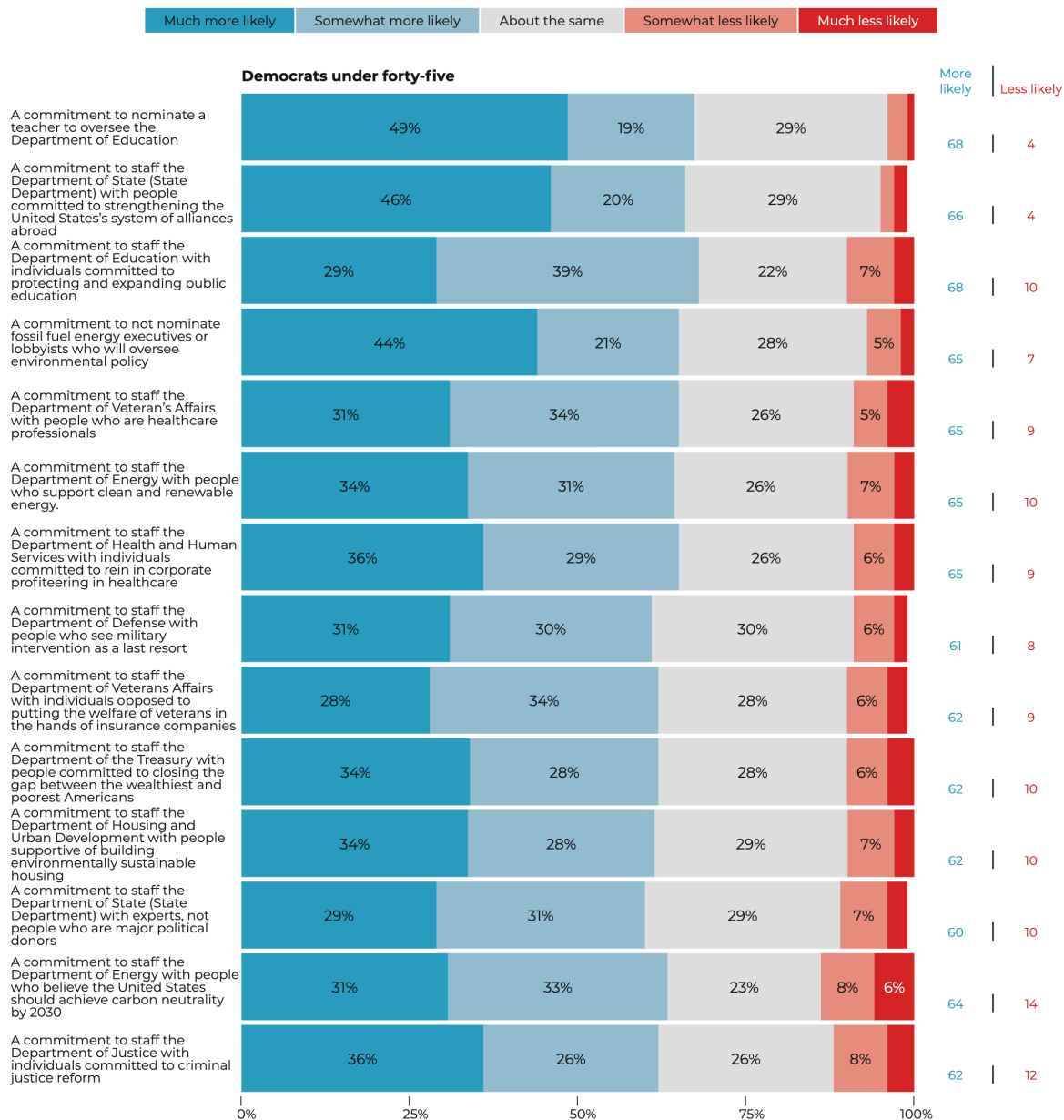
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We also broke out responses to look at attitudes among Democrats under the age of forty-five. For all items tested, we found that Democrats under

the age of forty-five were, on net, more willing to support Biden if he committed to building a more progressive cabinet.

## Democrats Under Forty-Five Are More Willing To Support Biden If He Commits To Building A Progressive Cabinet

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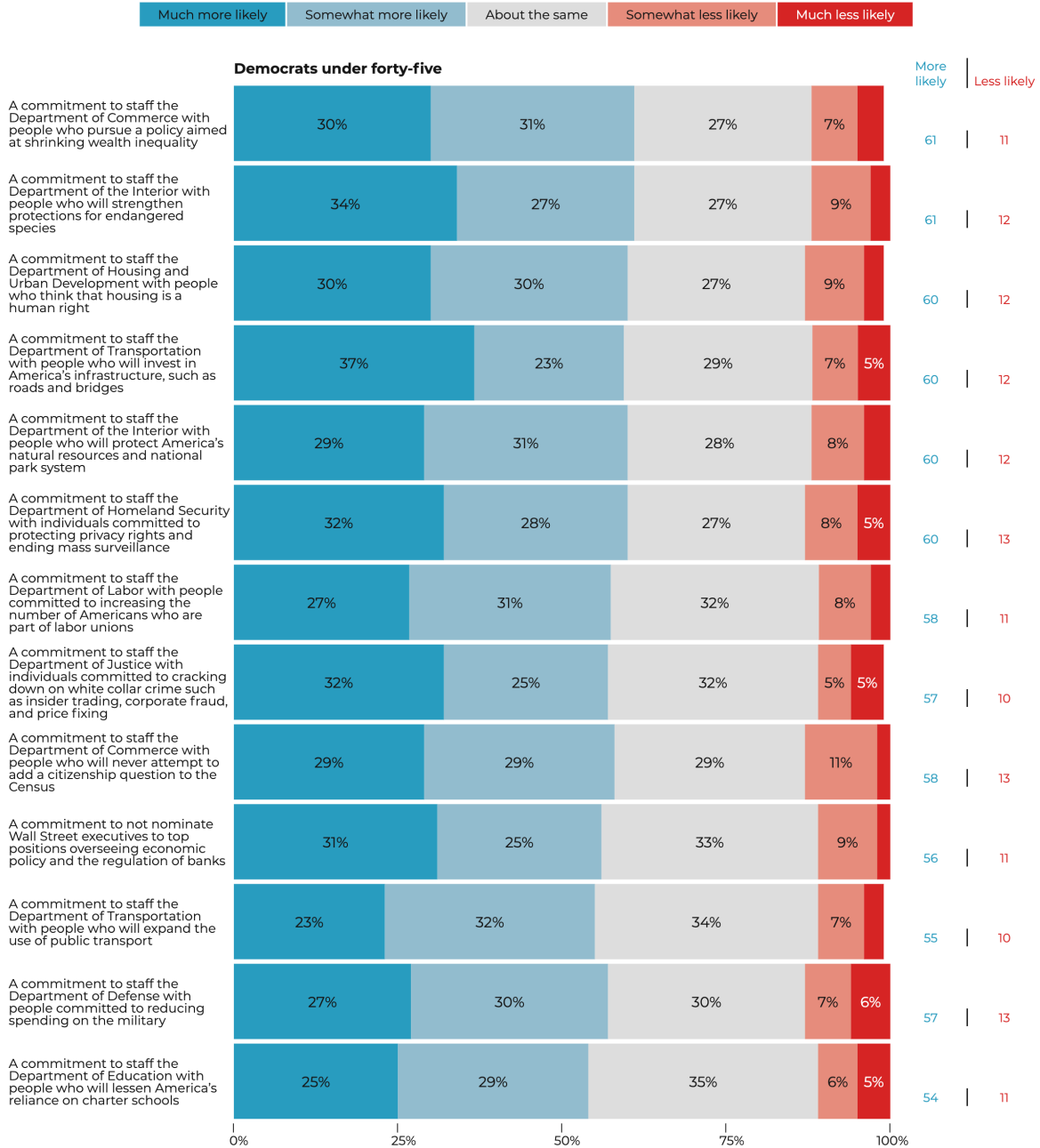


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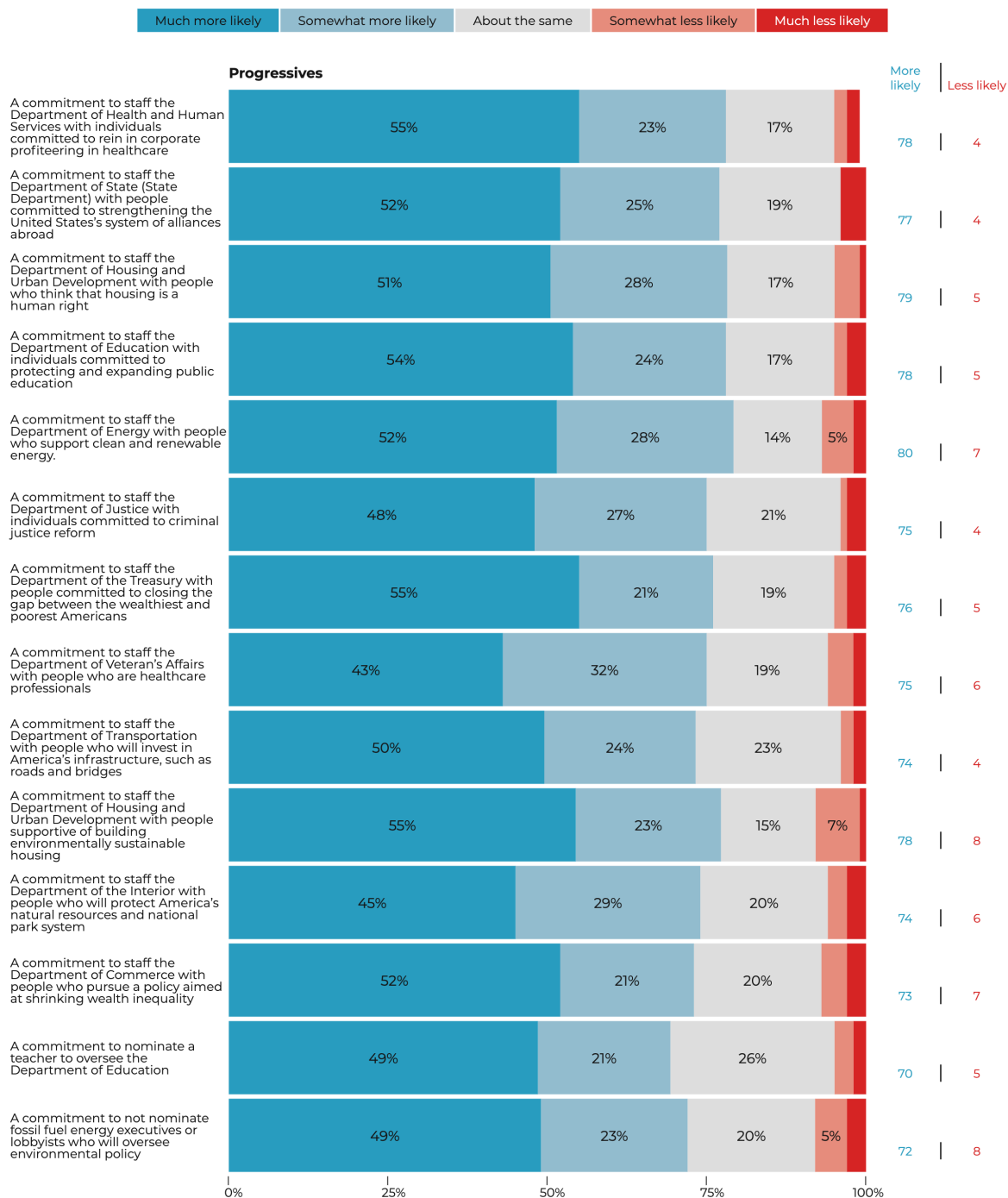


We then looked at responses among voters who self-identify as progressives. We found that, similarly, progressives were incredibly receptive

to these ideas and reported, on net, that they'd be more willing to support Biden if this were to occur.

## Progressives Are More Willing To Support Biden If He Commits To Building A Progressive Cabinet

If Joe Biden made the following commitments, how would that impact the likelihood that you would vote for him for President? --

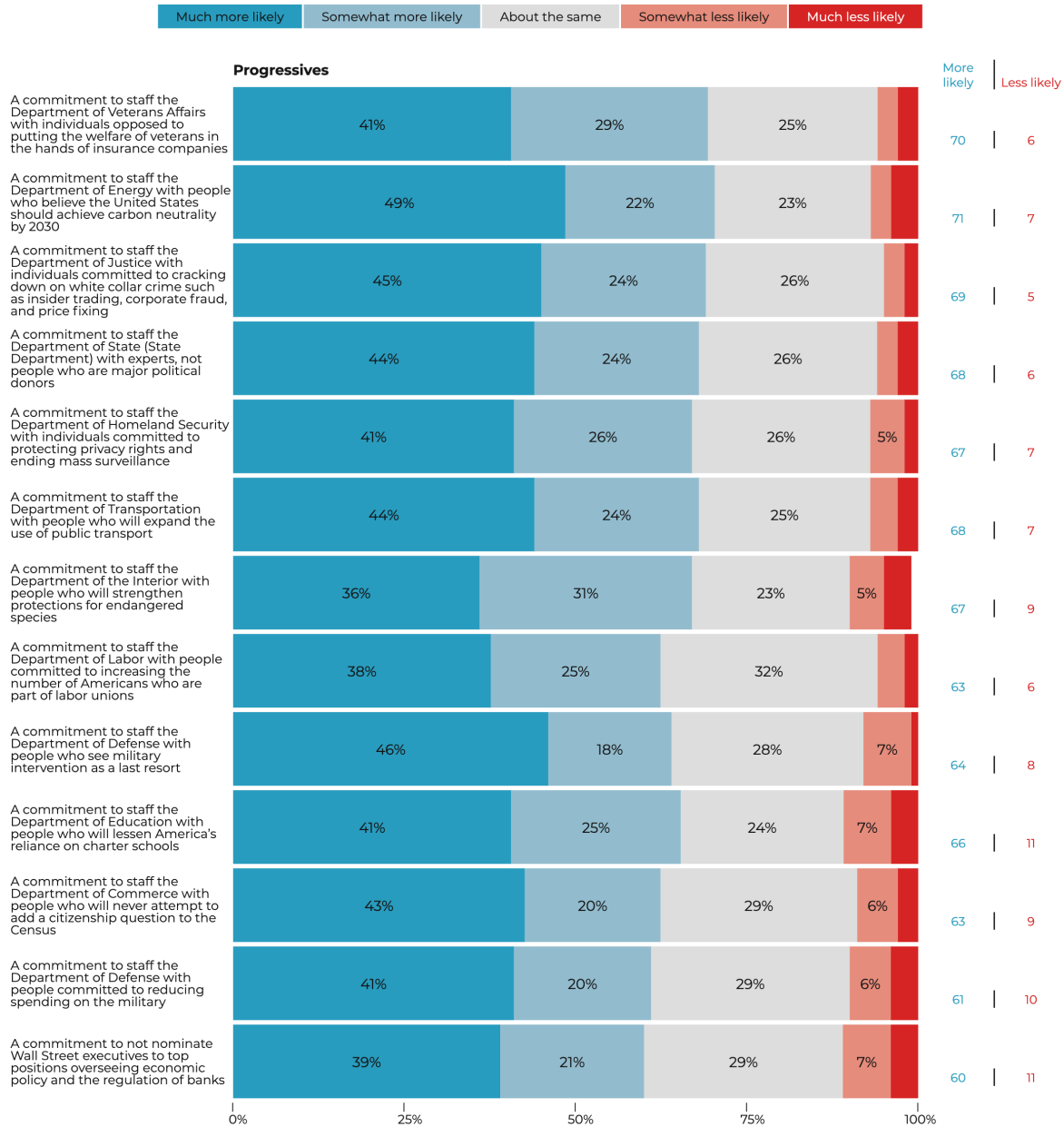


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# Progressives Are More Willing To Support Biden If He Commits To Building A Progressive Cabinet

If Joe Biden made the following commitments, how would that impact the likelihood that you would vote for him for President? --



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We also asked voters about [Senator Elizabeth Warren's ethics plan](#). This plan represents a way to operationalize many of the elements that undergird the Progressive Cabinet Project. Importantly, we found that Warren's proposal enjoys overwhelming support among voters. Each of the plan's policy planks received majority support from voters of all parties, with only marginal opposition.

The most popular plank tested would ban lobbyists from taking government posts for two years after lobbying, which enjoyed 68 percent support of voters overall. Sixty-five percent of voters supported the proposal to ban current lobbyists from taking government posts for six years after lobbying. Sixty-three percent of voters support the proposal to ban the world's largest

companies, banks, and monopolies from hiring or paying any senior government officials, with just 22 percent of voters in opposition. And 61 percent of voters support the proposal to require income disclosures from former senior officials four years after leaving federal employment, with only 23 percent of voters in opposition.

Later in July, Data for Progress plans to release the full version of its [Progressive Cabinet Project](#), which will look at which progressives are the most qualified for positions in a Biden administration. It's clear that pledging to end lobbyists' influence on the presidency, to staff the executive branch with qualified progressives, to implement ethics reform, and to make the cabinet representative of the American people would boost Biden's electoral prospects in November.

## Voters Support Senator Warren's Ethics Plan





# AUTHORSHIP & METHODOLOGY

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**Ethan Winter** is an analyst at Data for Progress.

From June 21 through June 22, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,353 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  $\pm 2.7$  percentage points.

Due to rounding, some totals may add up to 99 or 101 percentage points.

COVER PHOTO  
Gage Skidmore/Unsplash