**From: Sean McElwee, Co-founder of Data for Progress and John Ray, Senior Political Analyst at YouGov Blue**
**To: Interested Parties**
**Re: June 2019 Presidential primary polling and general election implications**

Topline findings:

- We do not find evidence for the perception that Biden is a runaway frontrunner. Democratic primary voters are considering many candidates, and a nontrivial share have ruled out Biden.
- Democratic primary voters who have heard "a lot about" a candidate are much more likely to believe that candidate can beat Trump. Among all Democratic primary voters Vice President Joe Biden is currently viewed as most likely to beat Trump, but among voters who have heard "a lot about" the leading candidates, clear majorities believe those candidates can beat Trump.
- Voters do not believe that supporting policies like Medicare for All and a Green New Deal make candidates "unelectable."
- We find that voters are more likely to support climate intervention when it is presented as government investment and regulation than when it is presented as a tax on carbon pollution, suggesting the Green New Deal framework has advantages over an exclusively carbon-tax framework.
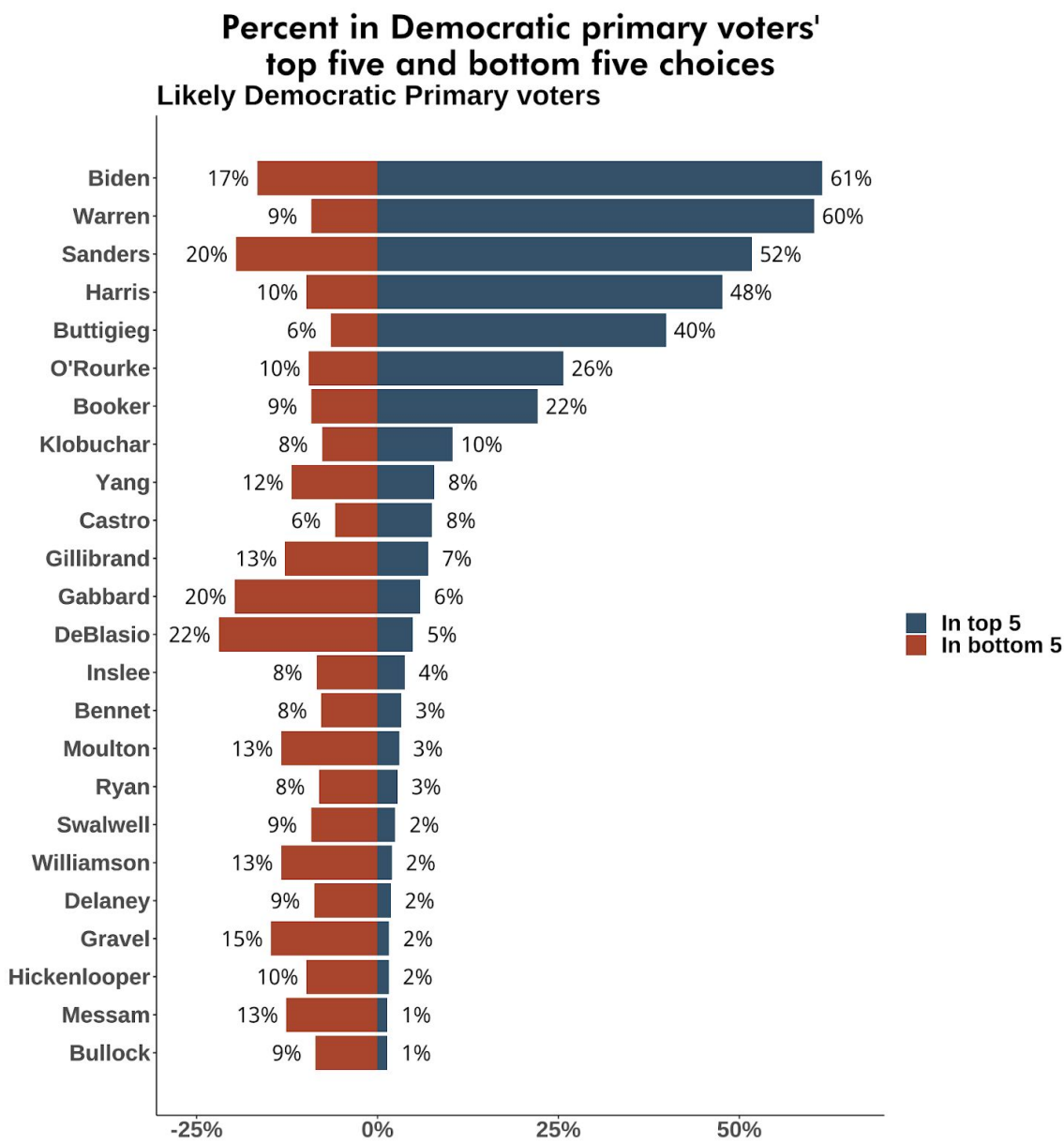
**The State Of The 2020 Field**

Over the past several months, the positions of the frontrunner candidates have mostly been stable. Although Senator Bernie Sanders and Vice President Joe Biden remain in strong positions, several recent polls have shown momentum gathering behind Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren—including a recent Economist/YouGov poll showing Warren in second place.

Our data confirm these general trends. We find that Senator Warren is currently second among top choices for Democrats, narrowly behind Biden and narrowly ahead of Sanders. However, we also find that none of the frontrunners are even close to being "ruled out," and that Democratic primary voters are much more likely to have candidates they prefer than candidates they *don't* prefer. While name recognition is high for a few of the frontrunners, every candidate has room to grow and improve their name recognition, which correlates highly with candidate support.

In our survey, we asked respondents to select their most preferred candidates, up to a maximum of five, and their least preferred candidates, up to a maximum of five. In the following chart, we show the shares of voters who ranked their top- and bottom-five choices among the candidates. Notably, in our data, likely Democratic primary voters supported 3.7 candidates on average, and only 2.8 "least preferred" candidates on average. In a race with twenty-four candidates currently declared, the average voter has not made up their mind one way or the

other on the vast majority of candidates, and is interested in more candidates than they are disinterested in.
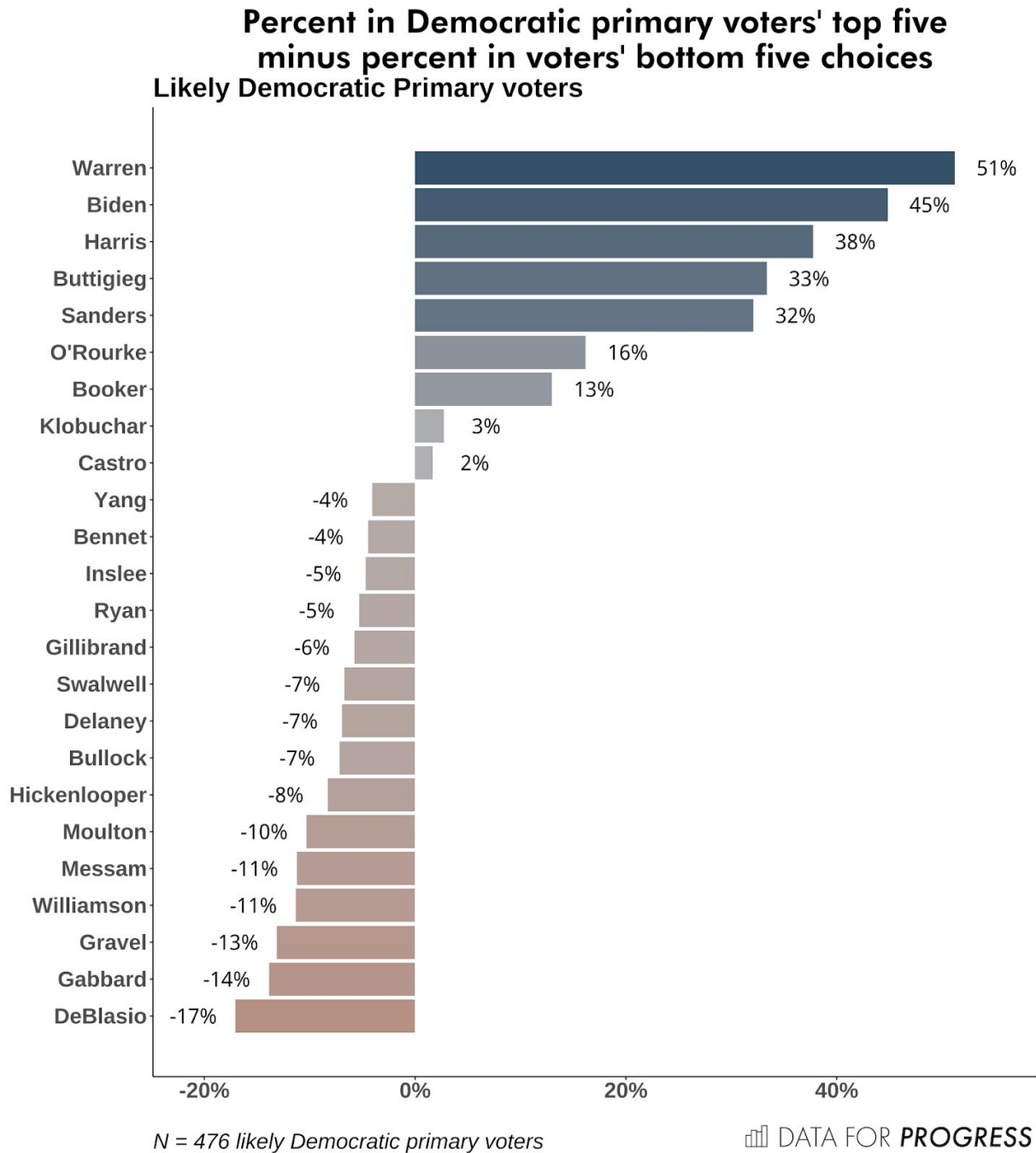
Our results place Vice President Biden narrowly in first in terms of overall voter preferences, with 61 percent having placed him in their top five. Perhaps surprisingly, Senator Warren is in second place, being in the top five of 60 percent of voters. Senator Sanders is in the top five of 52 percent of likely Democratic primary voters, and Senator Kamala Harris is in the top five of 48 percent. As we have found in past waves of our presidential polling, we find that Biden and Sanders have both high favorables and high unfavorables, which is expected for candidates who have spent several months in the frontrunner position.

## Percent in Democratic primary voters' top five and bottom five choices
### Likely Democratic Primary voters

| Candidate | In bottom 5 | In top 5 |
|---|---|---|
| Biden | 17% | 61% |
| Warren | 9% | 60% |
| Sanders | 20% | 52% |
| Harris | 10% | 48% |
| Buttigieg | 6% | 40% |
| O'Rourke | 10% | 26% |
| Booker | 9% | 22% |
| Klobuchar | 8% | 10% |
| Yang | 12% | 8% |
| Castro | 6% | 8% |
| Gillibrand | 13% | 7% |
| Gabbard | 20% | 6% |
| DeBlasio | 22% | 5% |
| Inslee | 8% | 4% |
| Bennet | 8% | 3% |
| Moulton | 13% | 3% |
| Ryan | 8% | 3% |
| Swalwell | 9% | 2% |
| Williamson | 13% | 2% |
| Delaney | 9% | 2% |
| Gravel | 15% | 2% |
| Hickenlooper | 10% | 2% |
| Messam | 13% | 1% |
| Bullock | 9% | 1% |

Legend:
- In top 5
- In bottom 5
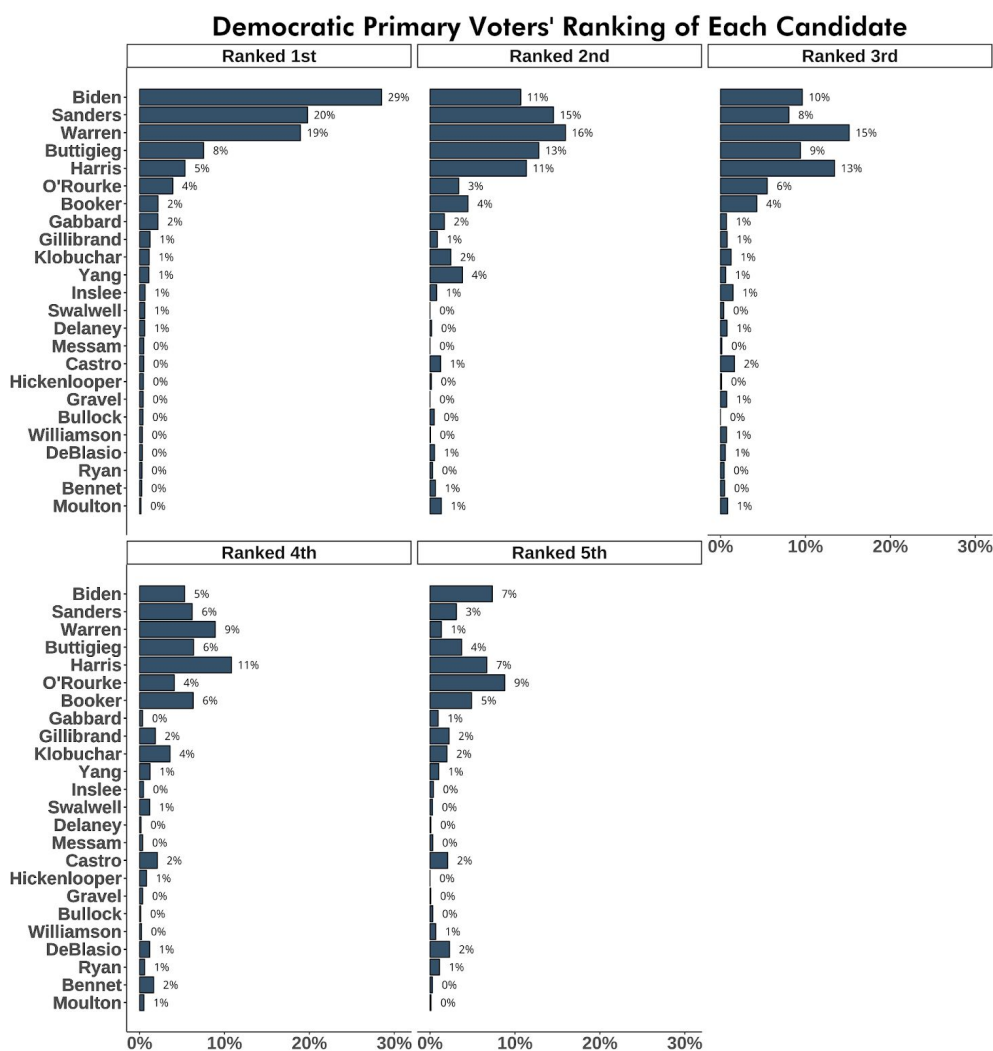
*N = 476 likely Democratic primary voters*

DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

That said, we find surprisingly low unfavorables for Warren, with only 9 percent of Democratic primary voters placing her in the bottom five, compared with 17 percent for Biden and 20 percent for Sanders. Compared to their levels of support, we find surprisingly high unfavorable ratings for lower-tier candidates like Mayor Bill de Blasio, Congressperson Tulsi Gabbard, and former Senator Mike Gravel.

## Percent in Democratic primary voters' top five minus percent in voters' bottom five choices
### Likely Democratic Primary voters

| Candidate | Value |
|---|---|
| Warren | 51% |
| Biden | 45% |
| Harris | 38% |
| Buttigieg | 33% |
| Sanders | 32% |
| O'Rourke | 16% |
| Booker | 13% |
| Klobuchar | 3% |
| Castro | 2% |
| Yang | -4% |
| Bennet | -4% |
| Inslee | -5% |
| Ryan | -5% |
| Gillibrand | -6% |
| Swalwell | -7% |
| Delaney | -7% |
| Bullock | -7% |
| Hickenlooper | -8% |
| Moulton | -10% |
| Messam | -11% |
| Williamson | -11% |
| Gravel | -13% |
| Gabbard | -14% |
| DeBlasio | -17% |

*N = 476 likely Democratic primary voters*

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On net, these results suggest that the relatively high unfavorables for Vice President Biden and Senator Sanders may contribute to a short-term lag in their overall levels of support. For example, by net placement as a top five candidate minus net placement as a bottom five candidate, Senator Warren currently polls above Vice President Biden, and Senator Harris currently polls above Senator Sanders.

In the following chart, we show the shares of each rank allocated to each candidate. For example, Vice President Biden is the first choice for 29 percent of respondents, the second choice for just over 11 percent, the third choice for just over 10 percent, the fourth choice for 5 percent, and the fifth choice for 7 percent, which, subject to rounding, sums to his 61 percent of support overall. The responses to the "Ranked 1st" pane of this chart sum to 98 percent rather than 100 percent because just over two percent of likely Democratic primary voters selected "None of these."
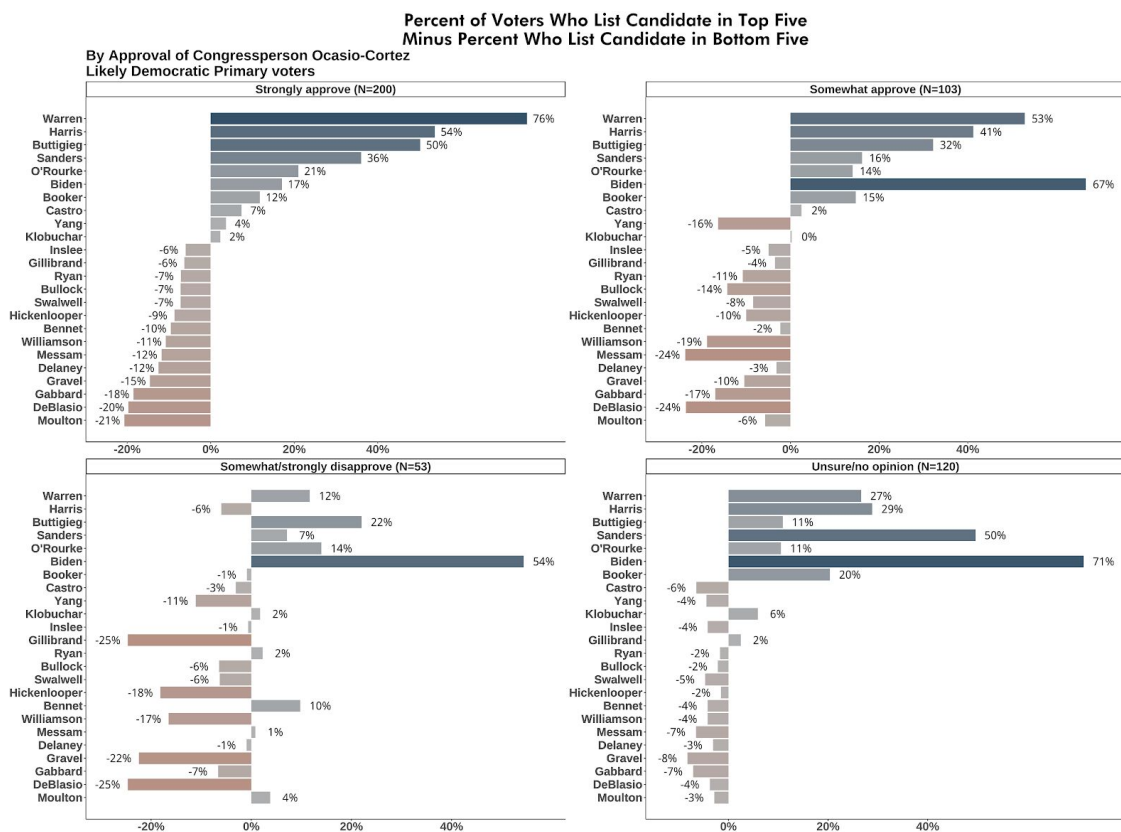


**Democratic Primary Voters' Ranking of Each Candidate**

*N = 476 likely Democratic primary voters*

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**Supporters of Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Favor Warren, While Others Favor Biden**

Elsewhere in the survey, we asked respondents their favorability of New York Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC). With the topic of her potential endorsement currently in the spotlight, in the following chart we break out the views of Democratic and Democratic-leaning Independent voters by their opinions of AOC. We do so following the framework used above, so that each bar represents the percent of voters who placed that candidate in their top five minus the percent of voters who placed that candidate in their bottom five.

The following chart plots the percent of voters who put each candidate in their top five, minus the percent of voters who put each candidate in their bottom five. That result is then broken out by whether those voters strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat or strongly disapprove, or have no opinion of Representative Ocasio-Cortez. We broke out the results this way for balance. In our sample, 42 percent of likely Democratic primary voters strongly approved of AOC (200 respondents), 22 percent somewhat approved of AOC (103 respondents), 25 percent were unsure or had no opinion (120 respondents), and 11 percent felt unfavorably toward AOC (N=53 respondents). We caution against over-interpretation of this result, as the sample sizes involved here are small.



**Percent of Voters Who List Candidate in Top Five**
**Minus Percent Who List Candidate in Bottom Five**

By Approval of Congressperson Ocasio-Cortez
Likely Democratic Primary voters

*Strongly approve (N=200)*

| Candidate | Value |
|---|---|
| Warren | 76% |
| Harris | 54% |
| Buttigieg | 50% |
| Sanders | 36% |
| O'Rourke | 21% |
| Biden | 17% |
| Booker | 12% |
| Castro | 7% |
| Yang | 4% |
| Klobuchar | 2% |
| Inslee | -6% |
| Gillibrand | -6% |
| Ryan | -7% |
| Bullock | -7% |
| Swalwell | -7% |
| Hickenlooper | -9% |
| Bennet | -10% |
| Williamson | -11% |
| Messam | -12% |
| Delaney | -12% |
| Gravel | -15% |
| Gabbard | -18% |
| DeBlasio | -20% |
| Moulton | -21% |

*Somewhat approve (N=103)*

| Candidate | Value |
|---|---|
| Warren | 53% |
| Harris | 41% |
| Buttigieg | 32% |
| Sanders | 16% |
| O'Rourke | 14% |
| Biden | 67% |
| Booker | 15% |
| Castro | 2% |
| Yang | -16% |
| Klobuchar | 0% |
| Inslee | -5% |
| Gillibrand | -4% |
| Ryan | -11% |
| Bullock | -14% |
| Swalwell | -8% |
| Hickenlooper | -10% |
| Bennet | -2% |
| Williamson | -19% |
| Messam | -24% |
| Delaney | -3% |
| Gravel | -10% |
| Gabbard | -17% |
| DeBlasio | -24% |
| Moulton | -6% |

*Somewhat/strongly disapprove (N=53)*

| Candidate | Value |
|---|---|
| Warren | 12% |
| Harris | -6% |
| Buttigieg | 22% |
| Sanders | 7% |
| O'Rourke | 14% |
| Biden | 54% |
| Booker | -1% |
| Castro | -3% |
| Yang | -11% |
| Klobuchar | 2% |
| Inslee | -1% |
| Gillibrand | -25% |
| Ryan | 2% |
| Bullock | -6% |
| Swalwell | -6% |
| Hickenlooper | -18% |
| Bennet | 10% |
| Williamson | -17% |
| Messam | 1% |
| Delaney | -1% |
| Gravel | -22% |
| Gabbard | -7% |
| DeBlasio | -25% |
| Moulton | 4% |

*Unsure/no opinion (N=120)*

| Candidate | Value |
|---|---|
| Warren | 27% |
| Harris | 29% |
| Buttigieg | 11% |
| Sanders | 50% |
| O'Rourke | 11% |
| Biden | 71% |
| Booker | 20% |
| Castro | -6% |
| Yang | -4% |
| Klobuchar | 6% |
| Inslee | -4% |
| Gillibrand | 2% |
| Ryan | -2% |
| Bullock | -2% |
| Swalwell | -5% |
| Hickenlooper | -2% |
| Bennet | -4% |
| Williamson | -4% |
| Messam | -7% |
| Delaney | -3% |
| Gravel | -8% |
| Gabbard | -7% |
| DeBlasio | -4% |
| Moulton | -3% |

N = 476 likely Democratic primary voters

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Among our respondents, those who somewhat or strongly approved of AOC most strongly favored Senator Warren, while other groups of voters clearly favored Vice President Biden. This is perhaps unsurprising given that both AOC and Warren position themselves toward the progressive wing of the party.
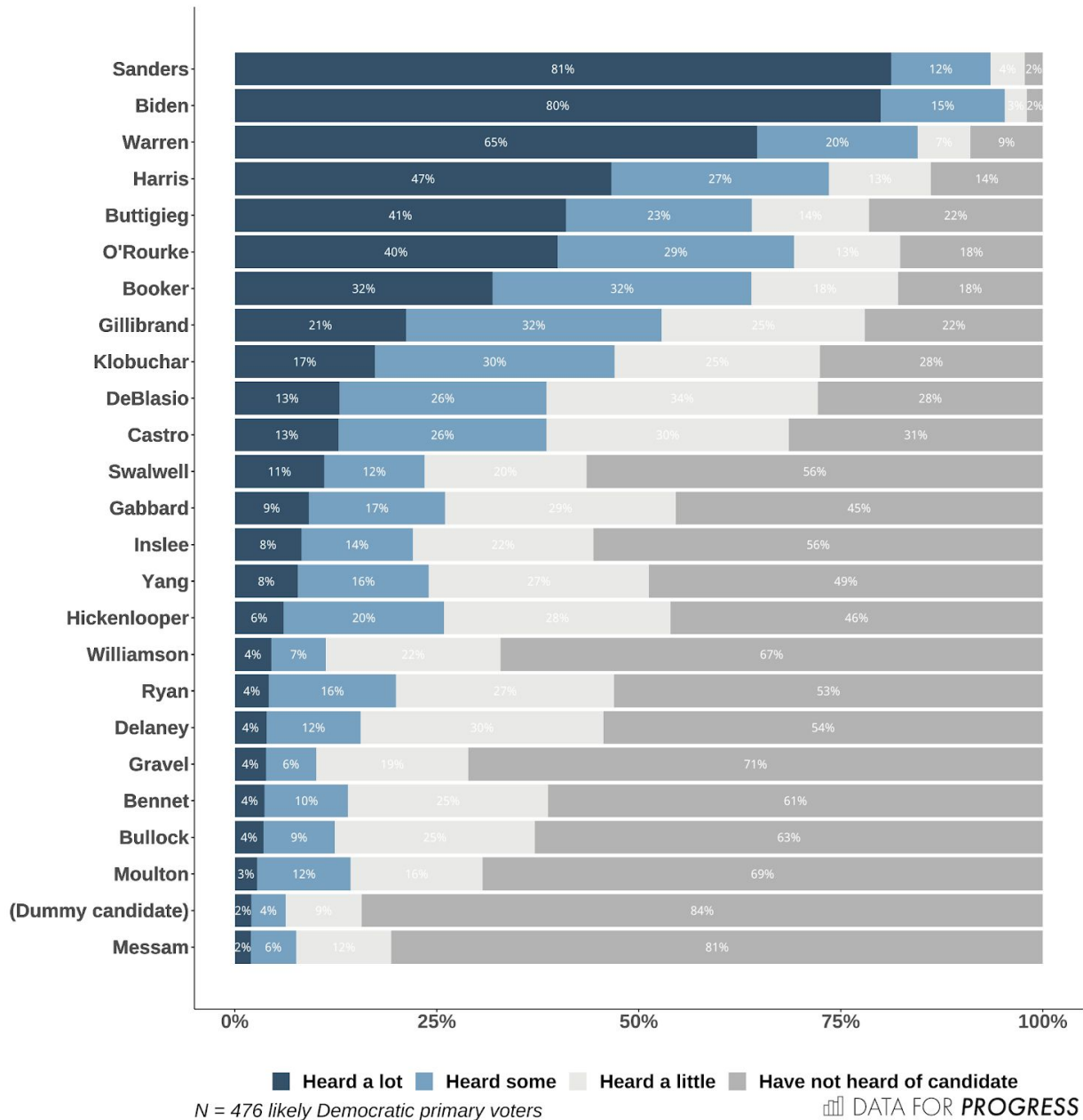
More surprisingly, Senator Bernie Sanders' net top-five support is substantially higher among those with no opinion of the representative than it is with those who approve of her. About 50 percent of voters who were unsure of or had no opinion of AOC placed Sanders in their top five, down to 36 percent of voters who strongly approve of AOC. Meanwhile, Senator Kamala Harris and Mayor Pete Buttigieg find stronger support with those who approve of AOC.

With that in mind, only a few candidates are currently underwater in terms of overall vote choice among Democratic primary voters. Voters have only clearly ruled against a few candidates, and the average voter only actively disapproves of a few candidates at all. While our data suggests there are a few frontrunners, voters approve of and are willing to support a large number of candidates.

Unsurprisingly, we find that candidates' overall levels of support correlate with their name recognition. It is interesting to note that while the cycle is only now getting underway, a majority of voters report having heard of most of the frontrunners. At this point, almost all of the likely Democratic primary voters in our sample have heard of the top four or five candidates.

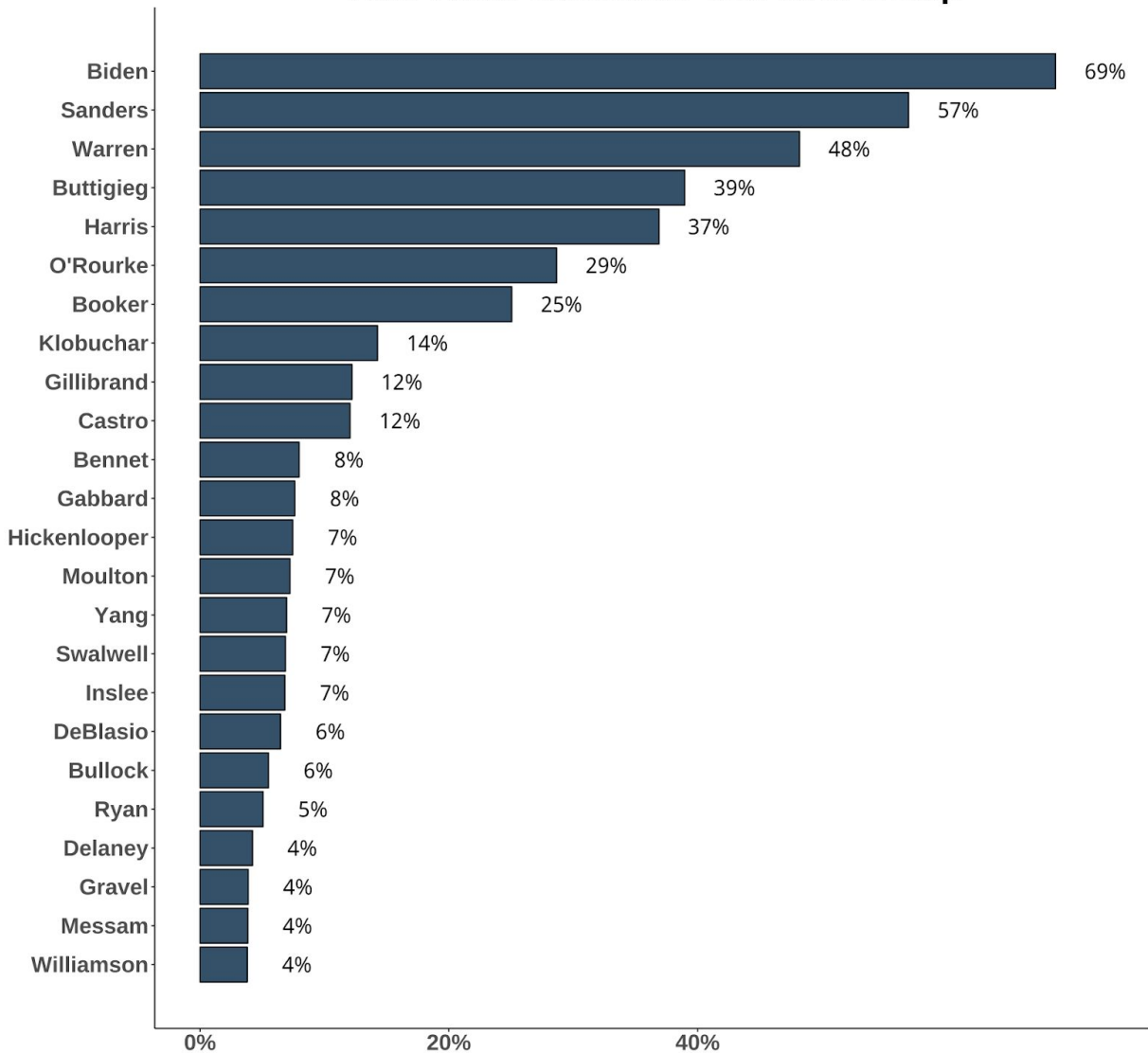## Percent of Likely Democratic Primary Voters
## Who Have Heard of Each Candidate

| Candidate | Heard a lot | Heard some | Heard a little | Have not heard of candidate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sanders | 81% | 12% | 4% | 2% |
| Biden | 80% | 15% | 3% | 2% |
| Warren | 65% | 20% | 7% | 9% |
| Harris | 47% | 27% | 13% | 14% |
| Buttigieg | 41% | 23% | 14% | 22% |
| O'Rourke | 40% | 29% | 13% | 18% |
| Booker | 32% | 32% | 18% | 18% |
| Gillibrand | 21% | 32% | 25% | 22% |
| Klobuchar | 17% | 30% | 25% | 28% |
| DeBlasio | 13% | 26% | 34% | 28% |
| Castro | 13% | 26% | 30% | 31% |
| Swalwell | 11% | 12% | 20% | 56% |
| Gabbard | 9% | 17% | 29% | 45% |
| Inslee | 8% | 14% | 22% | 56% |
| Yang | 8% | 16% | 27% | 49% |
| Hickenlooper | 6% | 20% | 28% | 46% |
| Williamson | 4% | 7% | 22% | 67% |
| Ryan | 4% | 16% | 27% | 53% |
| Delaney | 4% | 12% | 30% | 54% |
| Gravel | 4% | 6% | 19% | 71% |
| Bennet | 4% | 10% | 25% | 61% |
| Bullock | 4% | 9% | 25% | 63% |
| Moulton | 3% | 12% | 16% | 69% |
| (Dummy candidate) | 2% | 4% | 9% | 84% |
| Messam | 2% | 6% | 12% | 81% |

**Heard a lot**   **Heard some**   **Heard a little**   **Have not heard of candidate**

*N = 476 likely Democratic primary voters*

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Additionally, in our "how much have you heard?" item, we embedded the name of a fictional candidate[1] to see how willing or unwilling likely primary voters would be to report hearing about a candidate who was not actually in the race. We found that 84 percent of voters reported not having heard of the fictional candidate, and only 2 percent reported having heard "a lot." While the fictional candidate had the lowest overall name recognition, the fictional candidate's overall

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[1] That name was randomly selected from the junior analytics staff at YouGov Blue, and is reported anonymously here.

share of name recognition was virtually tied with that of Miramar, Florida mayor Wayne Messam.

Additionally, we asked respondents in our sample to select candidates who they thought could beat Trump. Again, unsurprisingly, the share of respondents who report believing that a given candidate can beat Trump in the 2020 general election is highly correlated with the share who report supporting the candidate. And while voters most clearly think Vice President Biden is the preferred candidate to beat Trump, Biden has *fewer* supporters than there are voters who think he could win. Contrary to the narrative that Democrats are flocking toward candidates who could not beat Trump, it seems that many of them are unwilling to support popular candidates who they also believe could successfully defeat Trump.

## Percent of Likely Democratic Primary Voters
## Who Think Candidate Can Beat Trump

| Candidate | Percent |
|---|---|
| Biden | 69% |
| Sanders | 57% |
| Warren | 48% |
| Buttigieg | 39% |
| Harris | 37% |
| O'Rourke | 29% |
| Booker | 25% |
| Klobuchar | 14% |
| Gillibrand | 12% |
| Castro | 12% |
| Bennet | 8% |
| Gabbard | 8% |
| Hickenlooper | 7% |
| Moulton | 7% |
| Yang | 7% |
| Swalwell | 7% |
| Inslee | 7% |
| DeBlasio | 6% |
| Bullock | 6% |
| Ryan | 5% |
| Delaney | 4% |
| Gravel | 4% |
| Messam | 4% |
| Williamson | 4% |

*N = 476 likely Democratic primary voters*

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However, across the board, Democratic primary voters who report they have heard a lot about a candidate are more likely to believe that candidate can beat Trump. While 69 percent of all Democratic primary voters believe Senator Biden can beat Trump, 86 percent of those who have heard "a lot about" Biden believe he can. Among voters who have heard "a lot about" Senator Warren and Senator Sanders just as many, 85 percent and 86 percent respectively, believe they can beat Donald Trump in 2020. These numbers are statistically indistinguishable.

## Percent of Likely Democratic Primary Voters
## Who Believe Candidate Can Beat Trump

**Likely Democratic Primary Voters Who Have
'Heard A Lot' About That Candidate**

| Candidate | |
|---|---|
| Sanders | 86%, N = (363) |
| Biden | 86%, N = (358) |
| Warren | 85%, N = (289) |
| Buttigieg | 75%, N = (183) |
| Harris | 71%, N = (209) |
| O'Rourke | 60%, N = (178) |
| Booker | 59%, N = (143) |
| Gabbard | 46%, N = (41) |
| Inslee | 44%, N = (37) |
| Klobuchar | 42%, N = (77) |
| Castro | 40%, N = (57) |
| Yang | 39%, N = (35) |
| Swalwell | 34%, N = (49) |
| Gillibrand | 30%, N = (95) |
| Bullock | 24%, N = (16) |
| DeBlasio | 20%, N = (58) |
| Moulton | 20%, N = (12) |
| Hickenlooper | 20%, N = (27) |
| Williamson | 19%, N = (20) |
| Bennet | 11%, N = (17) |
| Messam | 11%, N = (9) |
| Ryan | 9%, N = (19) |
| Gravel | 7%, N = (17) |
| Delaney | 6%, N = (18) |

**% Believe
Candidate Can
Beat Trump**

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## How Strongly Does Candidate Radicalism Divide the Electorate?

After the presidential items in our survey, we embedded an experiment to test two competing views of public policy. The purpose of the experiment was to determine the possible effects of candidates taking the "left" position on certain policies versus candidates taking the "centrist" position on those policies. We randomly assigned respondents to view a statement asking if they thought a candidate who supported "Medicare for All and a Green New Deal" could beat Donald Trump in 2020, or to view a statement asking if they thought a candidate who supported "a public option for healthcare and a carbon tax" could beat Donald Trump in 2020. That statement read:

*Do you believe that a candidate who supports [policy statement]
can beat Donald Trump in the 2020 general election?*
 *<1> Yes*
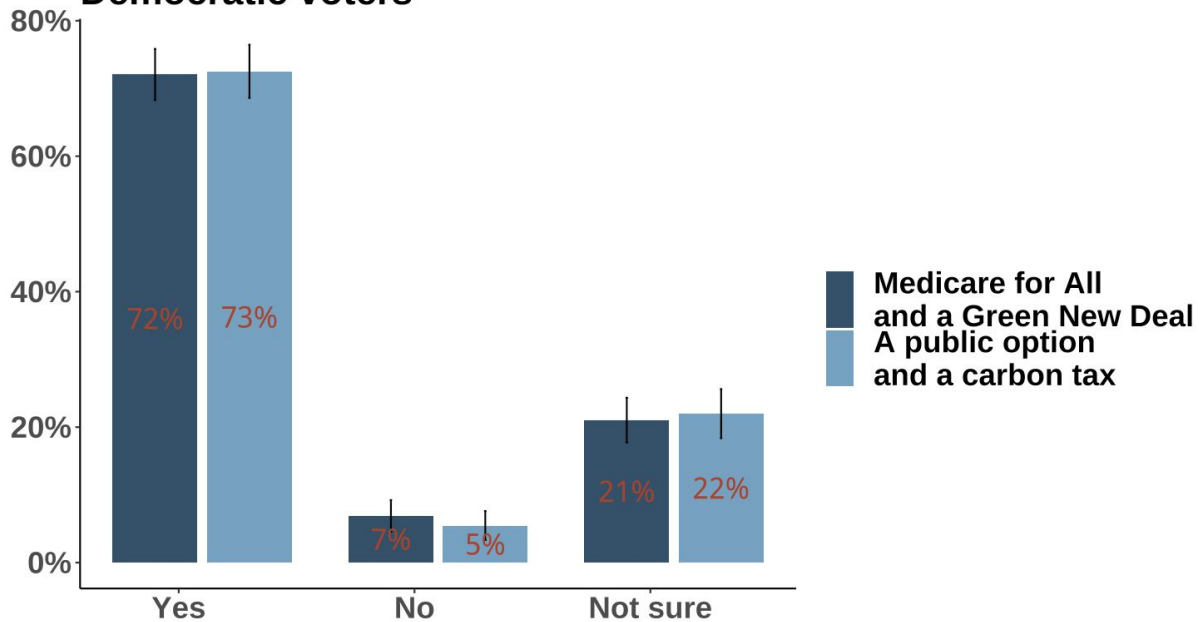 *<2> No*
 *<3> Not sure*

In the following charts, we show the results of this experiment for all of the voters in our sample, for Democratic primary voters, and for pure independents. Among all voters, no statistically discernible effects showed up across the treatment groups. Roughly equal shares of voters across each condition believe that candidates who support "a public option and a carbon tax" versus "Medicare for All and a Green New Deal" can win. Contrary to some speculation that one set of policies is much more popular than the other, we do not find statistically significant differences across these conditions among all respondents in our sample.

## Candidate viability by support for left policy vs. centrist policy
### All voters



N = 1,030 US voters

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The result is substantively identical if we narrow down to just Democratic primary voters. In each condition, about three-fourths of Democratic respondents think that a theoretical candidate who supports either set of policies could beat Trump. As with the result among all voters, the resulting difference between conditions is not statistically significant. We can not conclude that Democratic primary voters feel any differently about the chances of a theoretical candidate who supports the "left" positions on climate and healthcare compared to those of a theoretical candidate who supports the "center" position on climate and healthcare.

**Democratic voters**



N = 430 Democratic voters

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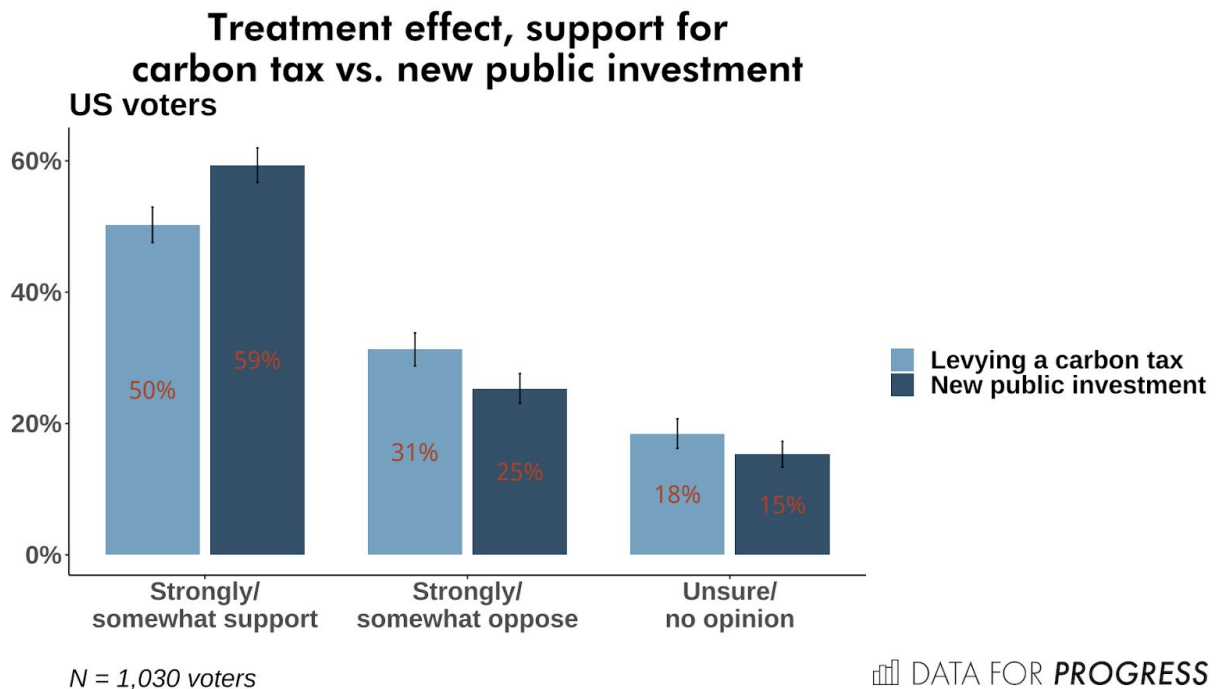**Voters Prefer Public Investment And Mandates More Than Taxes**

Although voters do not discriminate much between a public option and a carbon tax versus Medicare for All and a Green New Deal, they have preferences between a carbon tax and *provisions* a public investment and regulatory framework. Earlier in the survey, we posed another experiment designed to ascertain respondents' support for policies rather than their support for candidates on the basis of those policies. Specifically, we randomly asked respondents to evaluate the following two policies: "levying a new tax on carbon pollution" or "providing for public investment in clean energy infrastructure and requiring carbon emissions reductions through regulation." We asked respondents:

> *Would you support or oppose a policy (either "levying a new tax on carbon pollution" or "providing for public investment in clean energy infrastructure and requiring carbon emissions reductions through regulation") to reduce pollution and protect the environment?*
> *<1> Strongly support*
> *<2> Somewhat support*
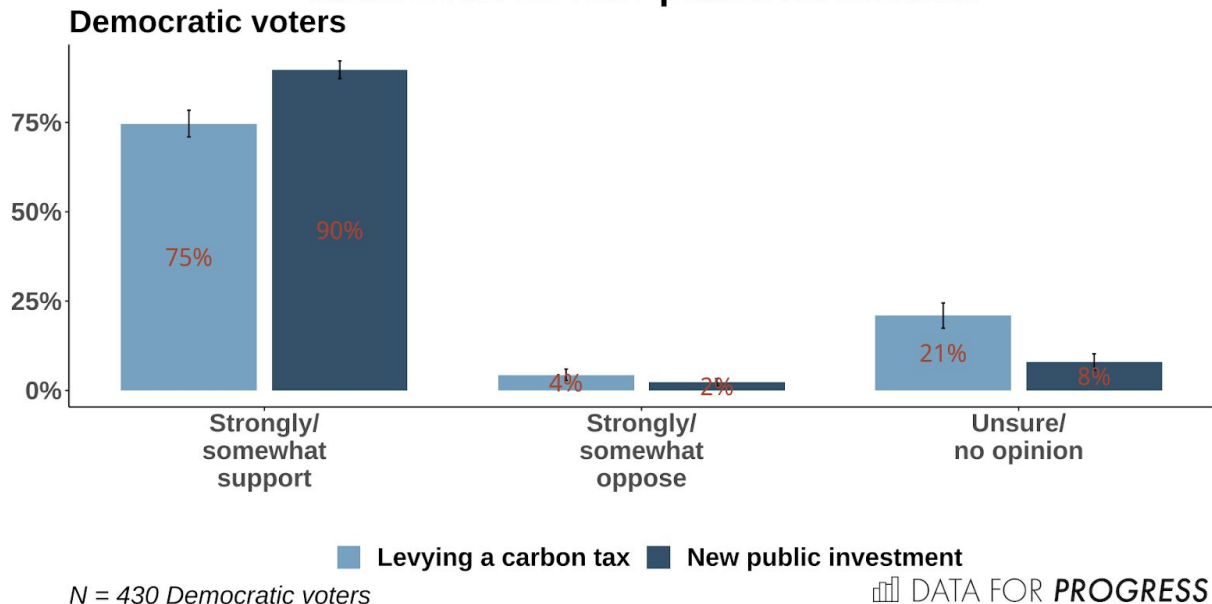> *<3> Neither support nor oppose*
> *<4> Somewhat oppose*

*<5> Strongly oppose*
*<6> Don't know*

Below are the results for all of the respondents in our sample. Among our respondents, slightly more respondents were likely to support the policy in the "new public investment" condition than they were in the "levying a carbon tax" condition. Those voters were also more likely to oppose the "levying a carbon tax" statement than the "new public investment" statement. The difference is statistically and substantively distinguishable from zero, with almost 9 percent more voters supporting the "new public investment" statement than the "levying a carbon tax" statement.



**Treatment effect, support for carbon tax vs. new public investment**
**US voters**

Levying a carbon tax
New public investment

Strongly/somewhat support: 50% / 59%
Strongly/somewhat oppose: 31% / 25%
Unsure/no opinion: 18% / 15%

*N = 1,030 voters*

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Among just Democratic voters, the difference is more clear. While Democratic voters are clearly supportive overall of new carbon reduction policies, support for the "new public investment" policy was almost 15 percent higher than the support for "levying a carbon tax." At the same time, Democratic voters not opposed to either policy, with the share of Democratic voters reporting they opposed either statement being statistically indistinguishable from zero. The difference across groups was driven by a higher share in the "levying a carbon tax" condition being unsure how they felt about the idea. Democrats support one policy more than the other, but are not more opposed to one policy or the other.

## Treatment effect, support for
## carbon tax vs. new public investment

**Democratic voters**



| Strongly/ somewhat support | Strongly/ somewhat oppose | Unsure/ no opinion |
| 75%  90% | 4%  2% | 21%  8% |

■ Levying a carbon tax  ■ New public investment

*N = 430 Democratic voters*

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## Conclusion

Our results suggest a far more open race than media reporting has suggested, with almost all candidates still under consideration and many with clear paths to victory. The "electability" advantage Biden currently enjoys will likely fade as other contenders become more well-known. And in line with other research on the subject, our research further suggests that voters are not very discriminatory on any one policy so far. Posing "left policy" versus "centrist" policy does not produce much discrimination among respondents in our data. However, to address climate change, voters prefer a framework of public investment and mandates over a market mechanism.

*On behalf of Data for Progress, YouGov Blue fielded a survey of 1,030 US voters on 6/12-6/13-19 using YouGov's online panel. The survey was weighted to be representative of the US voting population by age, race, ethnicity, sex, education, US Census region, and 2016 Presidential vote choice. As part of the survey, we fielded several questions about the Democratic presidential primary. Here we report on those results for a subset of 476 voters who reported that they would definitely or probably vote or participate in their state's upcoming Democratic primary or caucus. Throughout this memo, we refer to this subset of the population as likely voters in the Democratic primary. The survey-level margin of error was +/- 3.8 percent, while the margin of error among just the 476 likely Democratic primary voters is +/- 5.7 percent. We caution readers not to over-intrepet the results based on this smaller sample size.*