DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

THE JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTE

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

April 2020

The past month has presented the nation with a crisis, the scope of which is so immense that it has rippled out from the novel coronavirus itself, COVID-19, to create unprecedented effects on our economic system and the way we live our daily lives. At the same time, as the pandemic continues to unfold, our inherent interconnectedness—the shared vulnerability we all have at this moment—is forcing many people to reexamine the ways in which we live our lives and organize our society.

We know that while the coronavirus does not care whether you are Black or white, whether you earn a salary or participate in the gig economy, or what your party affiliation might be, it endangers us all. Because of our interconnectedness, we are only as healthy—or sick—as our most vulnerable member of society. In addition to the medical response, the COVID-19 pandemic requires a broader response that addresses that recognition: This is our moment as a country to move past the politics of blame and division, and to replace it with a politics that centers dignity and care for all of us.

Forced in this moment to reflect on this new reality—and this new recognition of our shared vulnerability—the vast majority of Americans believe that many of our responses to this crisis have, so far, been woefully inadequate and left too many people behind. Indeed, while the virus poses a threat to us all, we have seen how our fractured society has left some more exposed than others, with people of color, and especially Black Americans, disproportionately afflicted.

Inspired and informed by those who most directly experience the current inadequacies of our circumstances, the Emergency Action Plan is a first step toward protecting all of us in the midst of our shared vulnerability—starting with the most vulnerable among us.

We must:

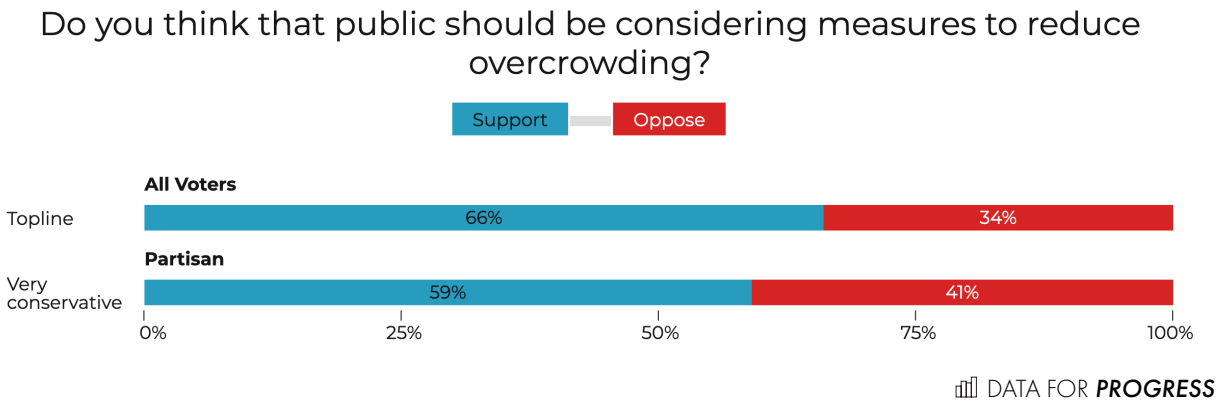
- **Keep Our Communities Safe**
- **Guarantee Housing For All**
- **Build A Care Economy**
- **Make Every Vote Matter**

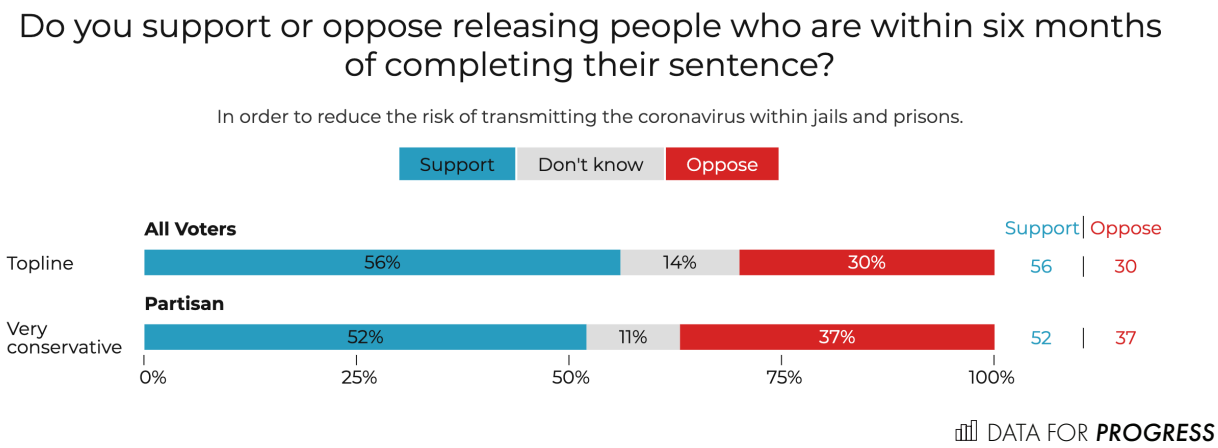
KEEP OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE

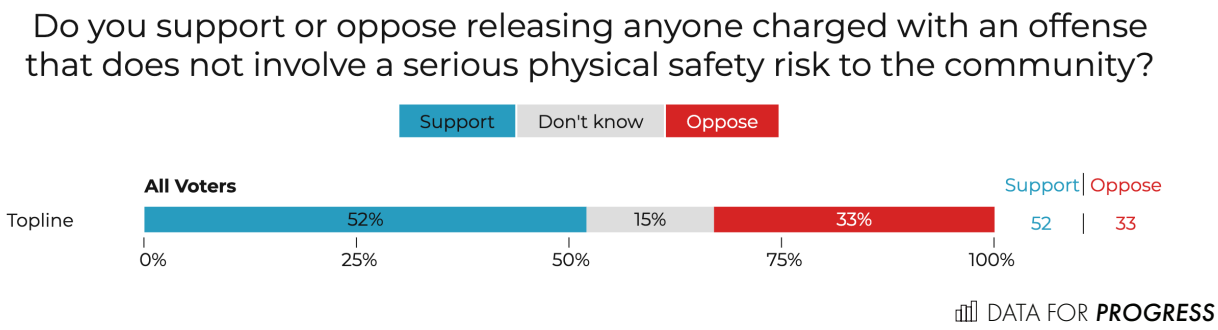
- Bring people home from jails, prisons, and immigration detention.
- Take people into custody as a last resort.
- Do not clear homeless encampments.
- Establish an Emergency Responder Corps to provide wellness checks and targeted assistance to vulnerable populations.

Communities must be kept safe regardless of zip code or demographic. A perverse combination of a shredded safety net and a politics of blame and division has mired us in an incarceration crisis in jails and prisons across America, and a humanitarian crisis at immigration detention centers. Those stains on our society are now facing the threat of the coronavirus, as well. Like a cruise ship or nursing home, but far more crowded, far less sanitary, and inadequately prepared to meet this public health crisis, prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers are perhaps the most dangerous places at this moment. In addition to releasing people already in jails and prisons, law enforcement must take people into custody only as a last resort. Over half of the 10.5 million people put in jail every year are released within 2-3 days.

Public health experts warn that as the coronavirus continues to spread in these facilities, the consequences will be devastating. The suffering will be felt not only on those detained in these places, but also on those who work there, and the families of people who work there—and by all of us as the virus spreads.





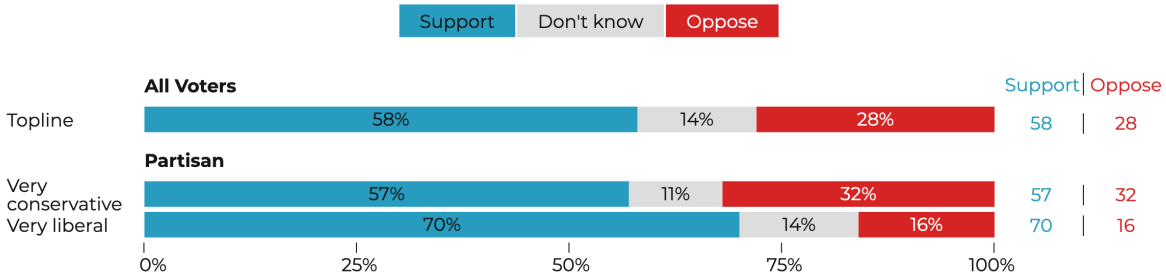


Our polling shows strong, cross-ideological support for the strategy of reducing the number of incarcerated people in response to the coronavirus. Our polling also shows support for the strategy of law enforcement reducing churn into jails by using alternative strategies that avoid arresting and booking people into jail in the first place.

Our polling also shows majority support for suspending new detentions of non-citizens and for pausing deportations of parents, including bipartisan support for an Executive Order from President Trump suspending new detentions for the duration of this emergency.

Do you support or oppose releasing incarcerated people who are elderly?

The CDC says that the elderly are more vulnerable to the coronavirus and have higher rates of mortality than young people.



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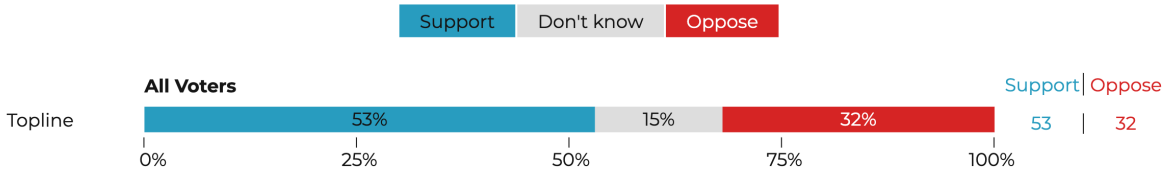
Do you support or oppose releasing incarcerated those the CDC says are vulnerable?

Including those with asthma, cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes.



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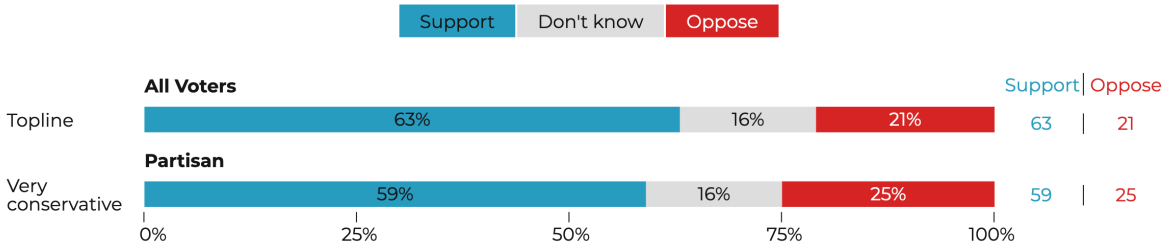
Do you support or oppose encouraging law enforcement to make use of summons or tickets as alternatives to jail?



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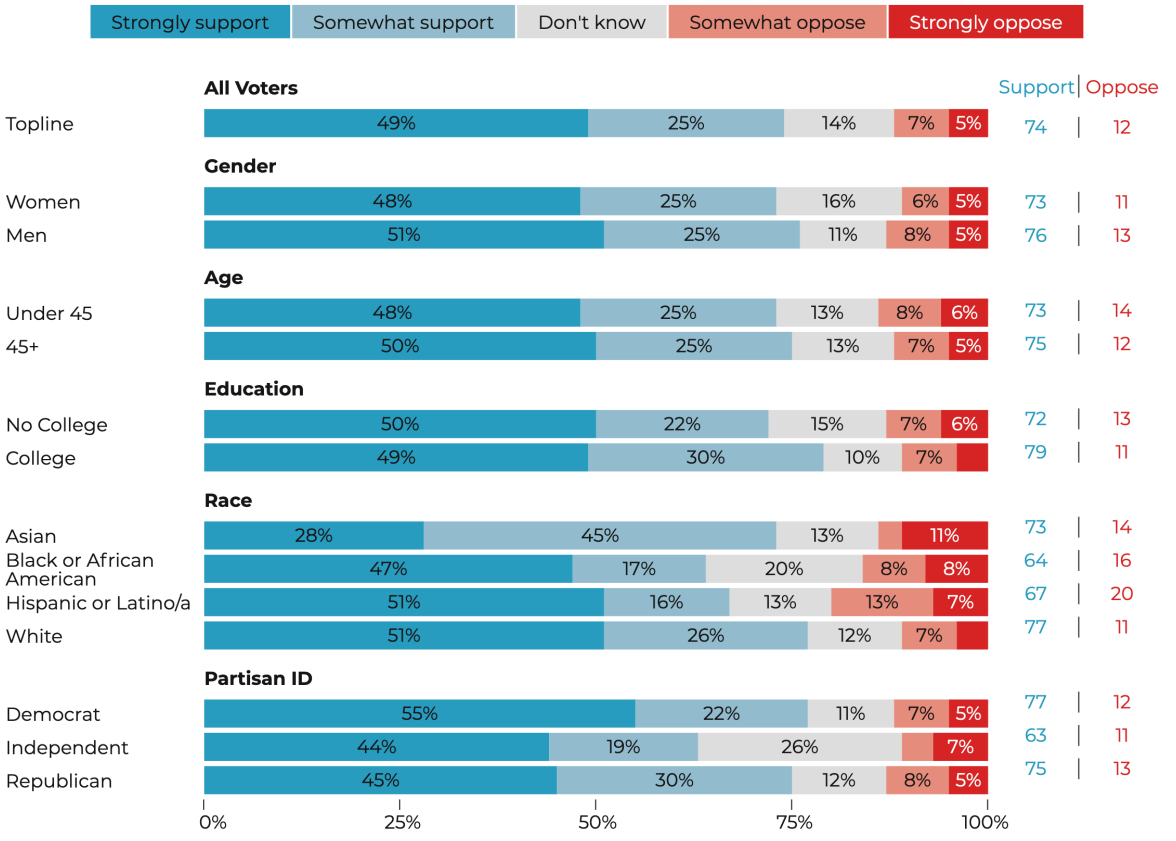
On a typical night, over 500,000 people experience homelessness across the United States. Now, however, the Center For Disease Control has issued guidelines to law enforcement suggesting that officers refrain from clearing the tents and belongings of people who are experiencing homelessness. The safer solution is not simply the inaction of not clearing tents or arresting people sleeping in their vehicles, but to provide safe shelter for people experiencing homelessness and bring needed services directly to the community.

Our polling shows strong, cross-ideological support for the strategy of ending sweeps of homeless encampments and ceasing towing of vehicles in which people reside.

Voters Support A Ban On Clearing Out Homeless Encampments

The Center For Disease Control issued the following guidelines last week: "Unless individual housing units are available, do not clear encampments during community spread of COVID-19. Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread." Would you support or oppose a temporary ban on law enforcement clearing out of homeless encampments, for as long as there remains a state of emergency?



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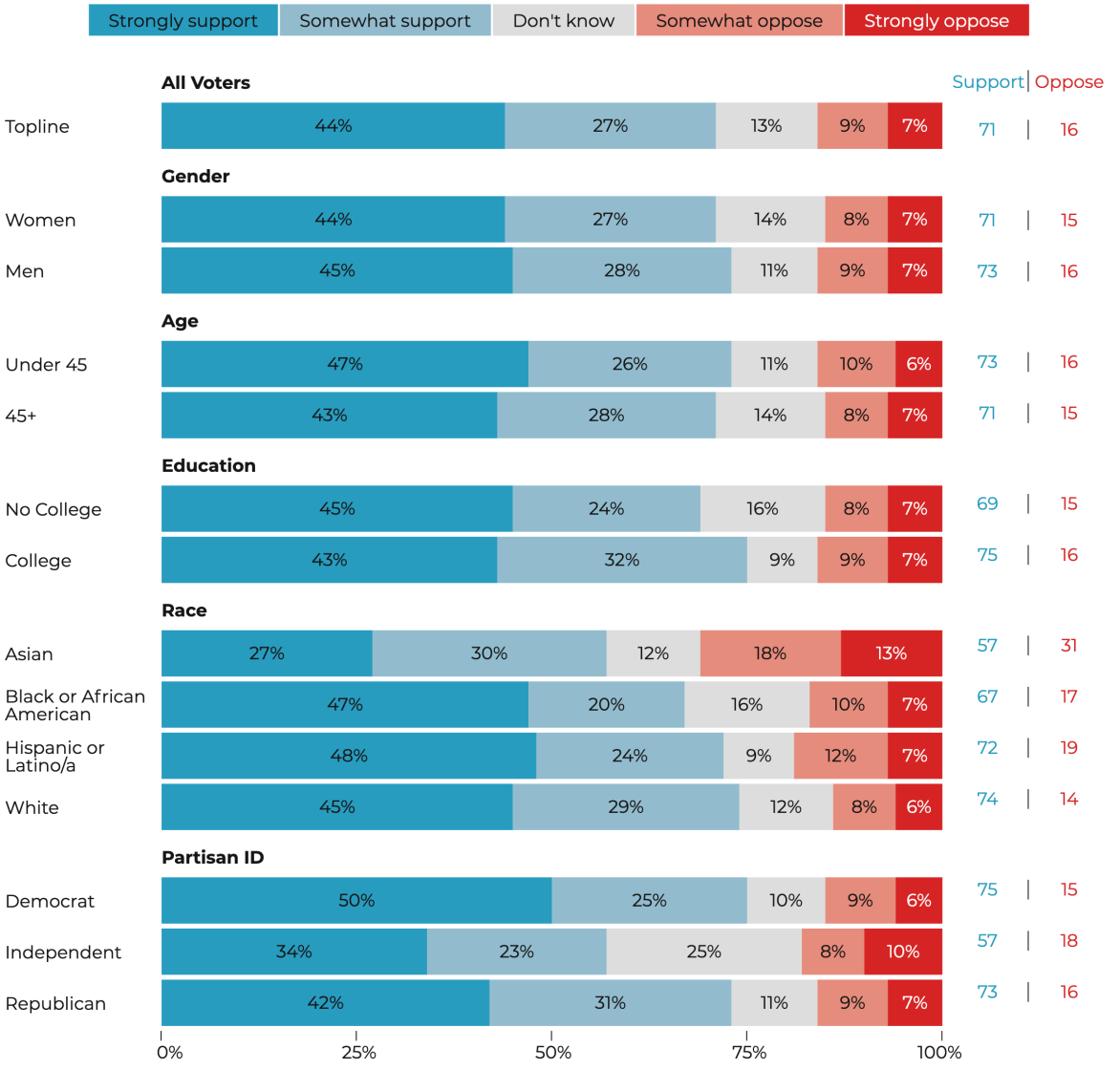
Voters Support A Ban On Towing Cars That People Reside In

Thinking about the state where you live, would you support or oppose a temporary ban on towing vehicles in which people reside, for as long as there remains a state of emergency?



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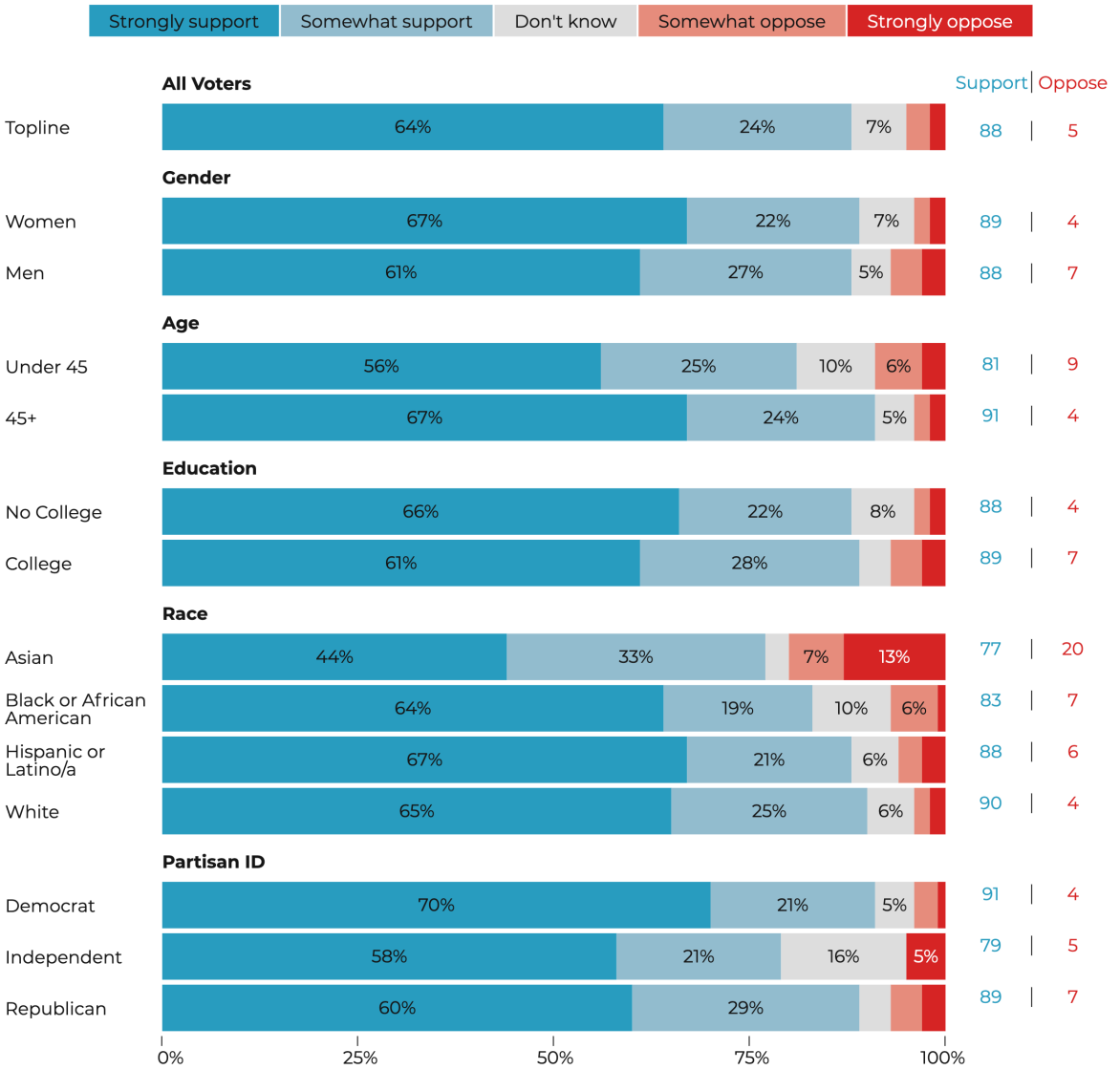
In order to address the extensive vulnerability faced by many people during this crisis, non-law enforcement first responders are needed — people who can provide wellness checks and targeted assistance to those vulnerable populations. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib recently proposed the creation of an Emergency Responder Corps to fill this role. Our polling shows strong, cross-ideological support for the establishment of an Emergency Responder Corps.

These results are in line with strong public support for shifting most first responder responsibilities from law enforcement to health care professionals and social workers whose expertise allows them to best solve the problem.

Voters Overwhelmingly Favor The Creation Of An 'Emergency Responder Corps'

The coronavirus means that certain vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and physically disabled, are at-risk for not being able to get basic necessities such as food and medicine. Would you support or oppose the creation of an Emergency Responder Corps that could provide wellness checks and targeted assistance to these vulnerable populations?



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GUARANTEE HOUSING FOR ALL

- Provide housing for people experiencing homelessness.
- Halt evictions; freeze and forgive rent.
- Halt foreclosures; suspend and forgive mortgages.
- Halt utility shutoffs; freeze utility payments.

Like mass incarceration, housing instability has been a crisis in this country before the coronavirus took hold. The cruel and stubborn reality of this moment, when Americans are being told to "stay home" to "flatten the curve" and keep one another safe, is that the unhoused and those facing eviction, foreclosure, or utility shut-offs are even more vulnerable now. The magnitude and shape of that crisis—and how it hurts all of us—is profound.

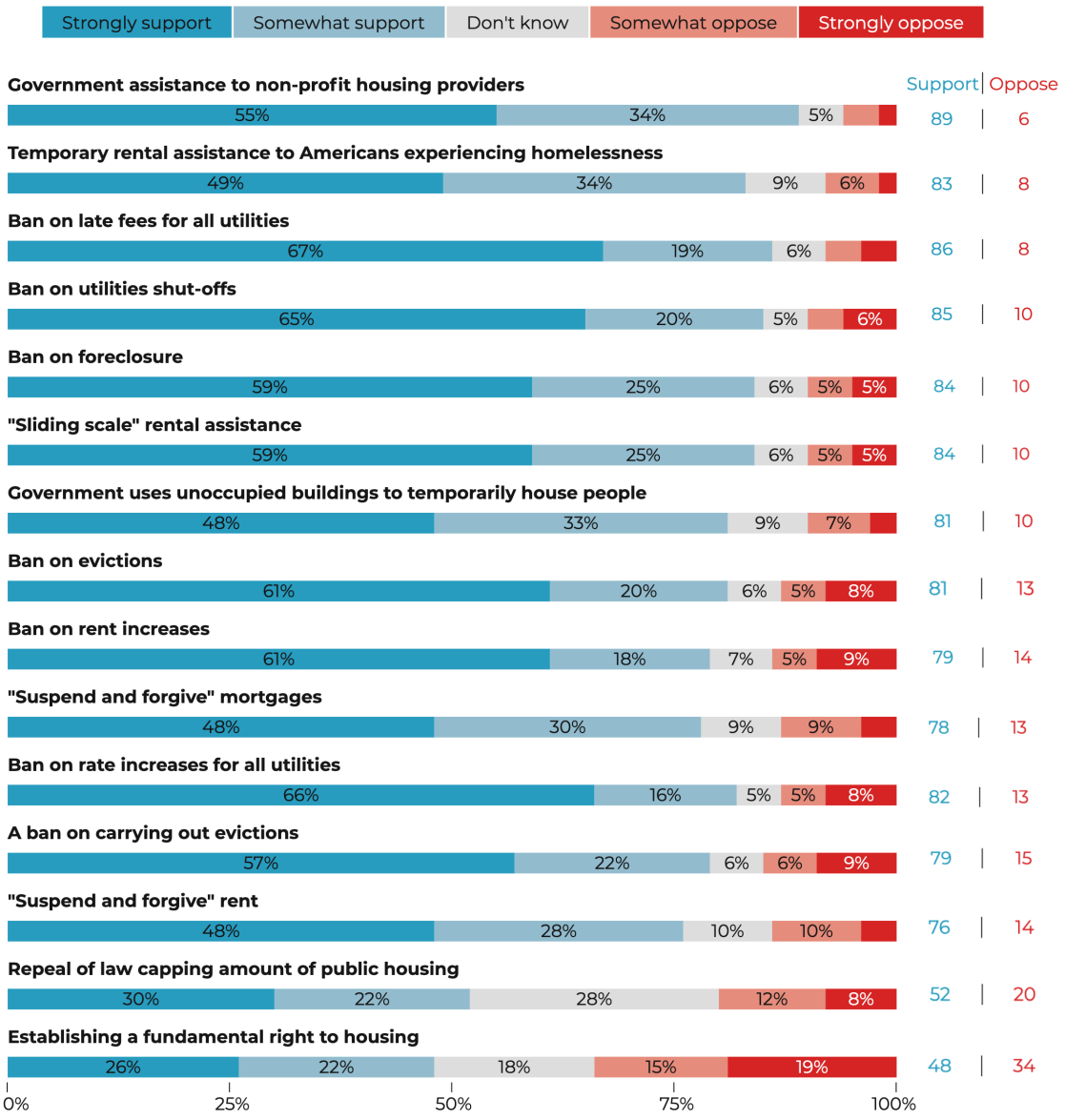
In the U.S., there are approximately four evictions every single minute, which translates into roughly two million families each year at risk of losing their home. Housing is the largest expense for most families, and it's becoming an increasingly large percentage of most families' monthly budgets. The coronavirus is making all of that worse. Retail shops and restaurants are closing down, there is less work available in the gig economy, and people are losing their jobs. A record 6.6 million people filed for unemployment in March. This leaves families unable to pay rent. We must urgently act to secure safe housing by freezing evictions, banning foreclosures, suspending rent payments, and not allowing utility shutoffs. Stable homes are what families need under these circumstances—and it will keep all of us safer.

Our polling shows strong, cross-ideological support for halting freezing and forgiving rent, suspending and forgiving mortgages, and halting both evictions and utilities shutoffs.

Our polling also shows strong, cross-ideological support for ensuring homes for people experiencing homelessness, in the form of government providing rental assistance and also purchasing, leasing, or taking control over hotels and other unoccupied real estate holdings.

Voters Support The 'Housing For All' Approach To Responding To The Coronavirus

Would you support or oppose the following the following proposals?



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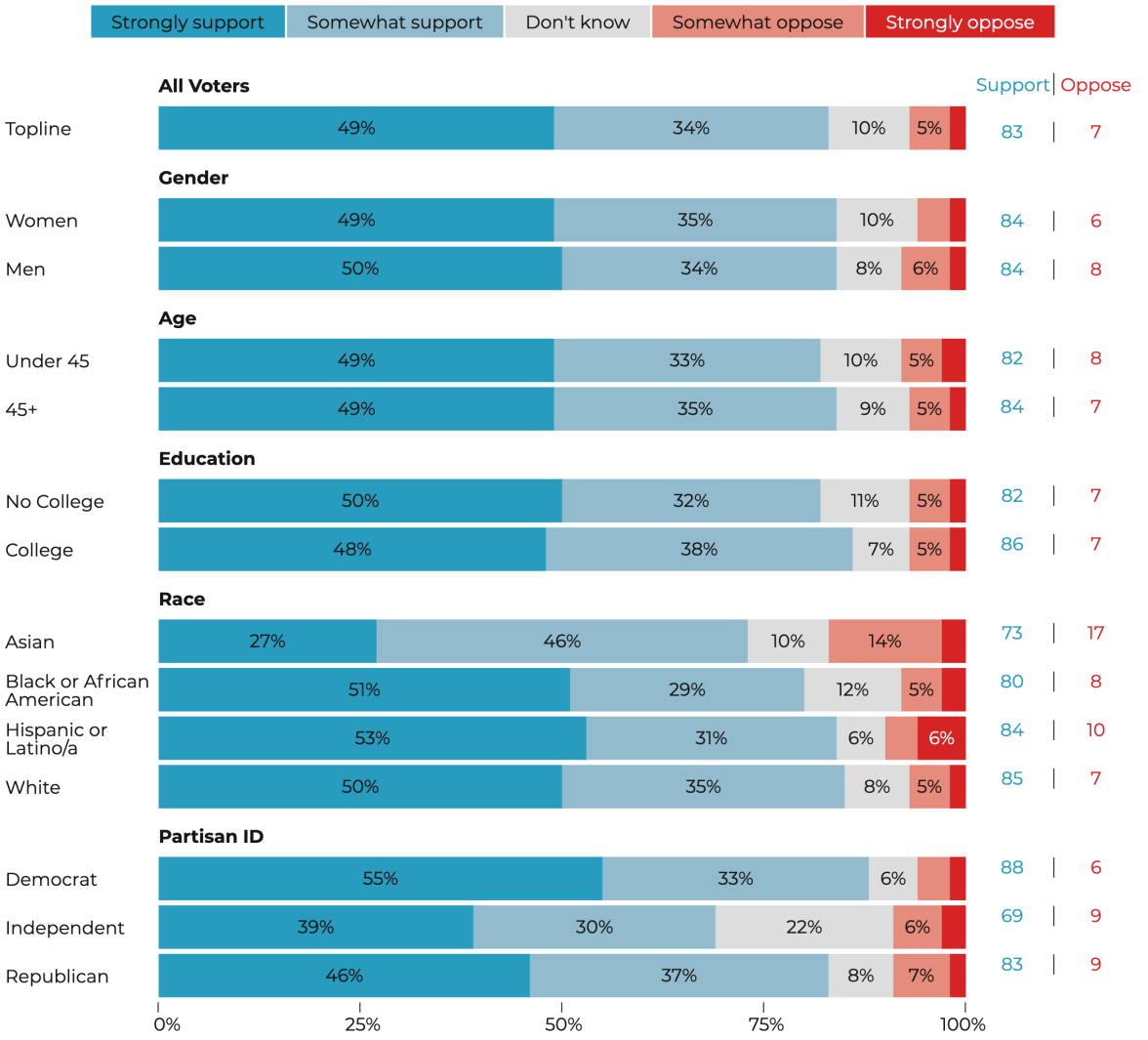
Voter Support Giving Temporary Rental Assistance To Those Currently Experiencing Homelessness

Given the coronavirus emergency, would you support or oppose temporary rental assistance to Americans experiencing homelessness for as long as there remains a state of emergency?



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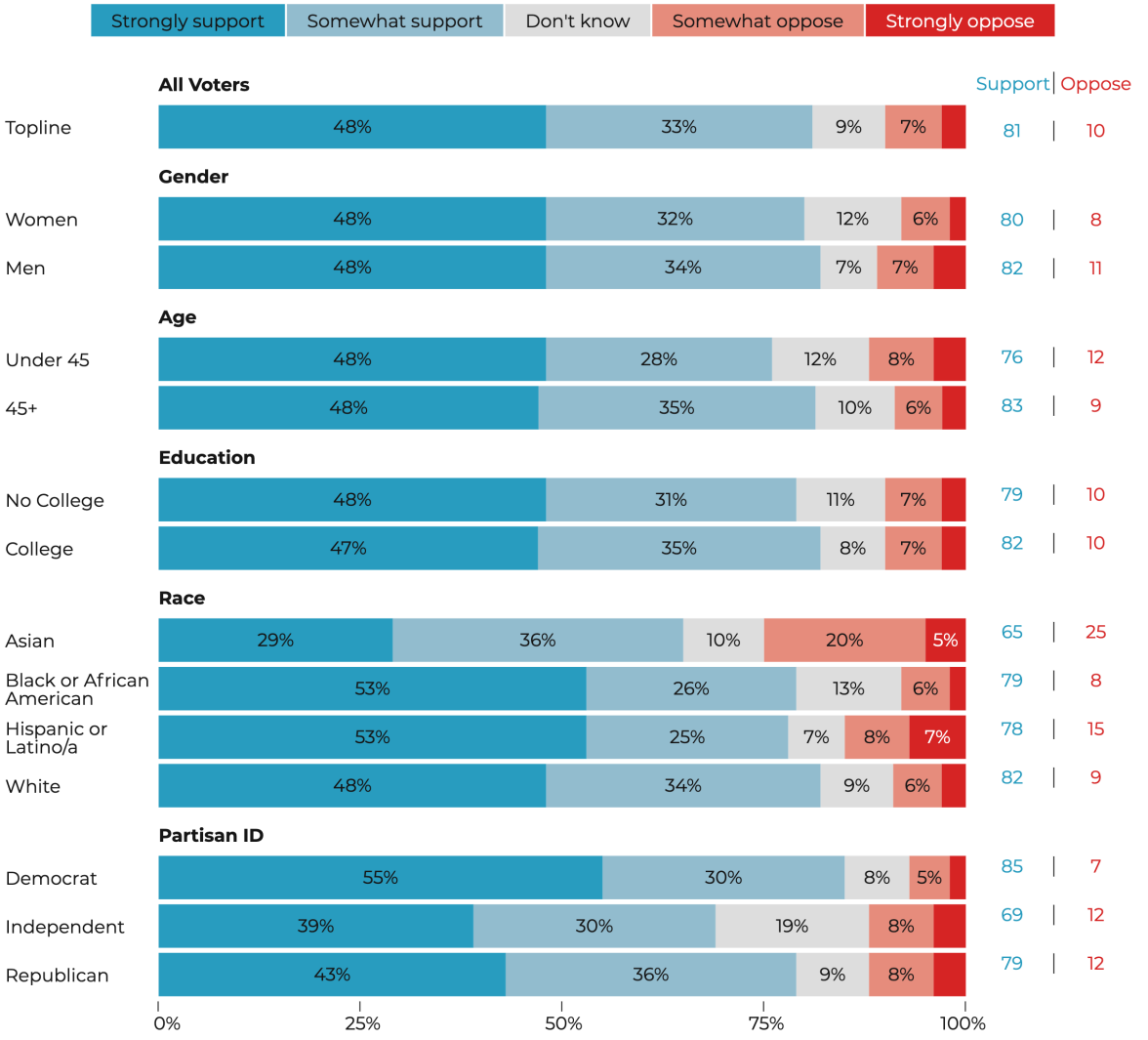
Voters Support The Government Using Unoccupied Buildings and Housing To Temporarily House People Experiencing Homelessness

Given the coronavirus emergency, would you support or oppose measures by the government to purchase or take control of unoccupied buildings and housing to temporarily house people experiencing homelessness for as long as there remains a state of emergency?



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BUILD A CARE ECONOMY

- Provide paid sick and family leave.
- Provide enhanced unemployment insurance.
- Ensure that everyone has access to the food they need to survive.
- Provide universal no-cost comprehensive health care, including mental health treatment, for as long as the nation remains under a state of emergency.
- Provide Universal Basic Income.

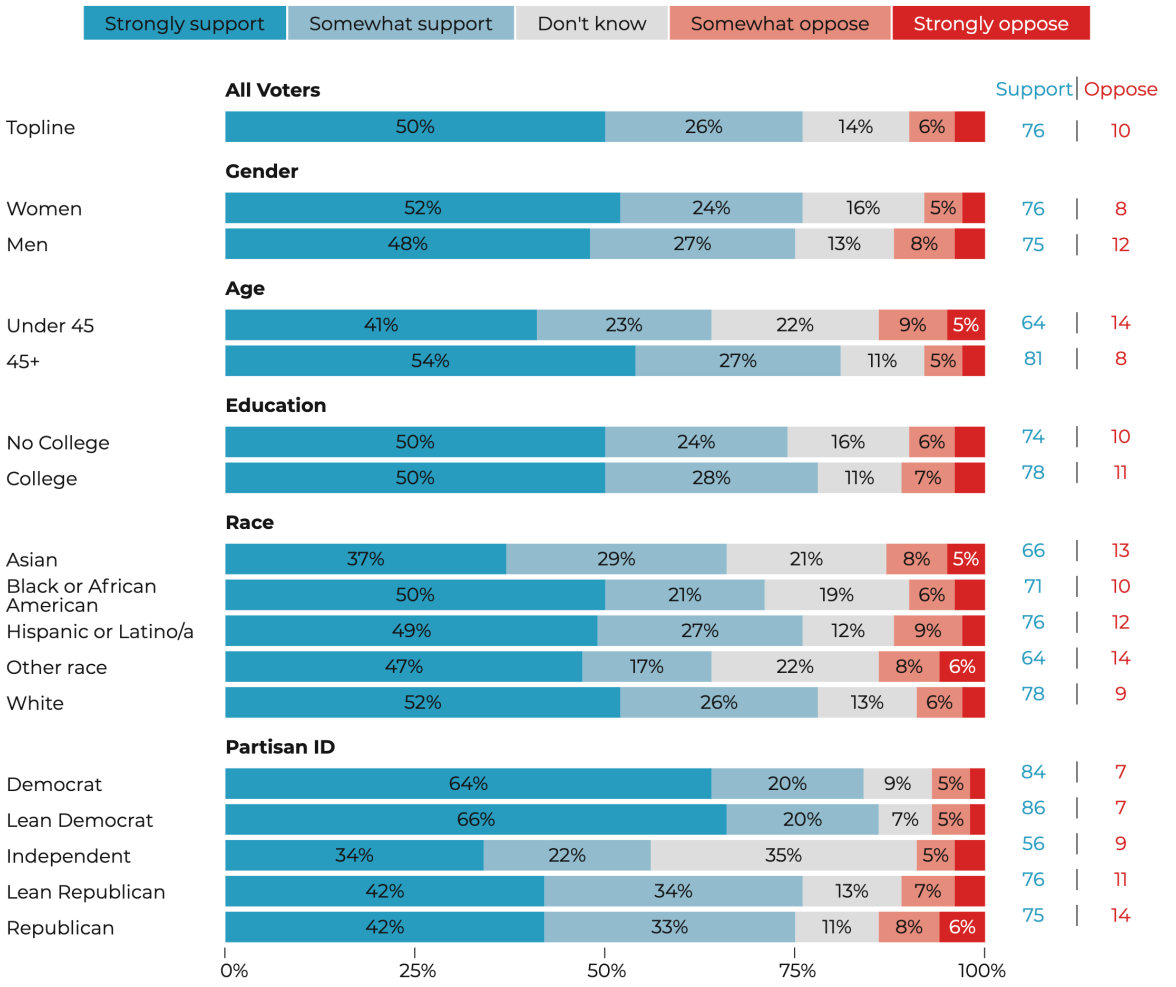
Amy Kapczynski, a law professor, and Greeg Gonsalves, a professor in the Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases, recently wrote how the "coronavirus has shined a light on the cruelty of American life as it has been constructed for much of our lifetimes." We must therefore ground our politics, and our economy, in care to ensure health and stability for everyone.

A care economy means health care that includes universal no-cost access to any vaccine that the Food and Drug Administration approves, as well as simple access to comprehensive care without premiums, copays, deductibles, or other costs. It also means economic stability through robust paid sick and family leave, universal basic income, and the enhancement of social insurance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and unemployment insurance *for all workers*.

An economy grounded in care is widely supported. Our polling shows that even in this fractured political climate, there is strong cross-ideological support for care economy policies that aim to protect *all of us* as more people are realizing, more than ever in our recent past, that our fates are intertwined and our well being is dependent on the well being of others.

Voters Overwhelmingly Support Free Testing For The Coronavirus

Amid growing concerns over the spread of the coronavirus, the Center for Disease Control recently provided guidance to employers that people experiencing respiratory or flu-like illness are "recommended to stay home and not come to work." Some public health experts are calling on lawmakers to pass a package of reforms which would help mitigate the effects of the coronavirus. Would you support or oppose universal, no cost access to testing to determine whether a person is infected with the coronavirus?



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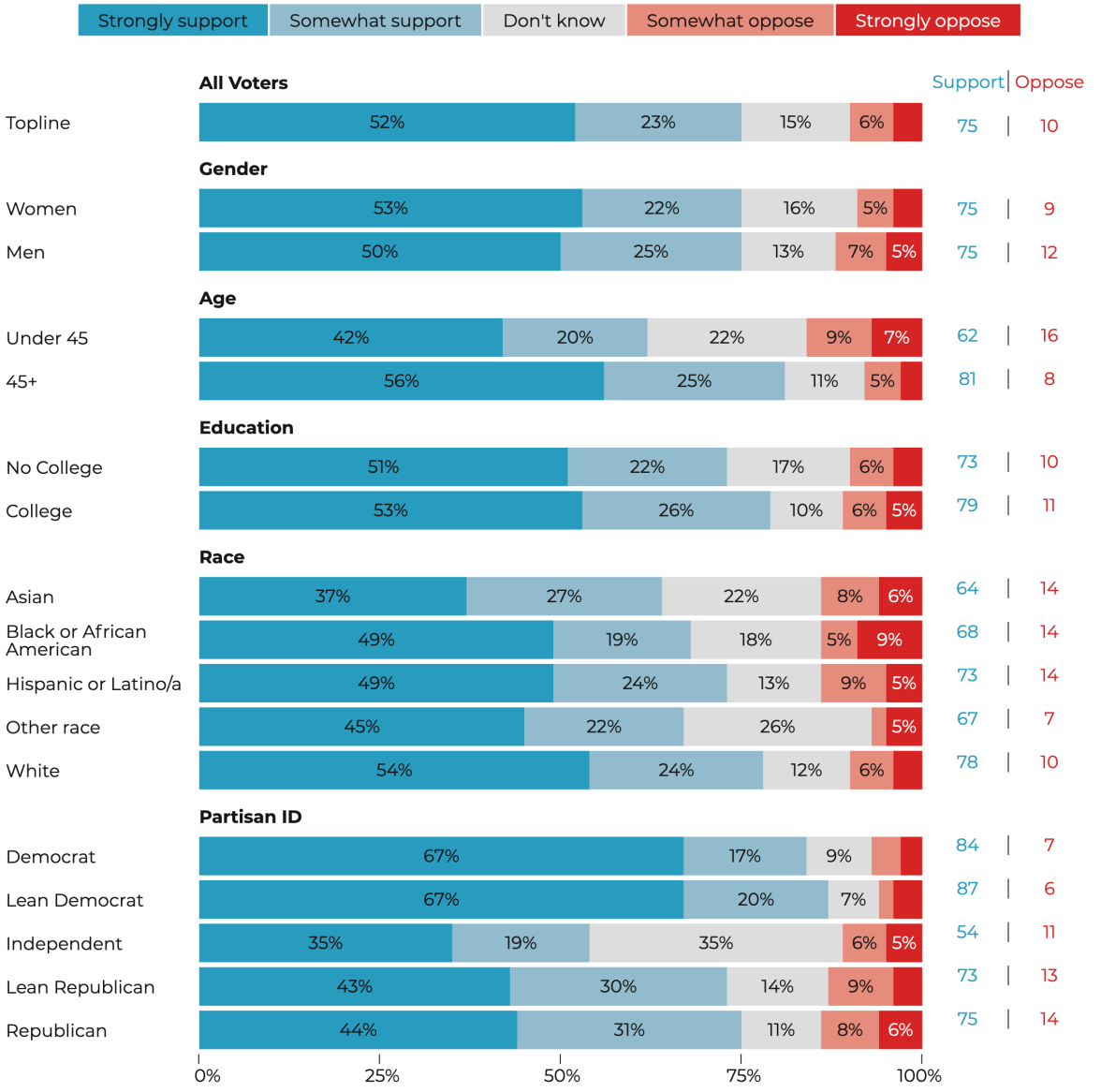
Voters Want Any Vaccine For The Coronavirus To Be Free

Would you support or oppose a proposal to provide universal, no-cost access to any vaccine that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves to treat coronavirus?



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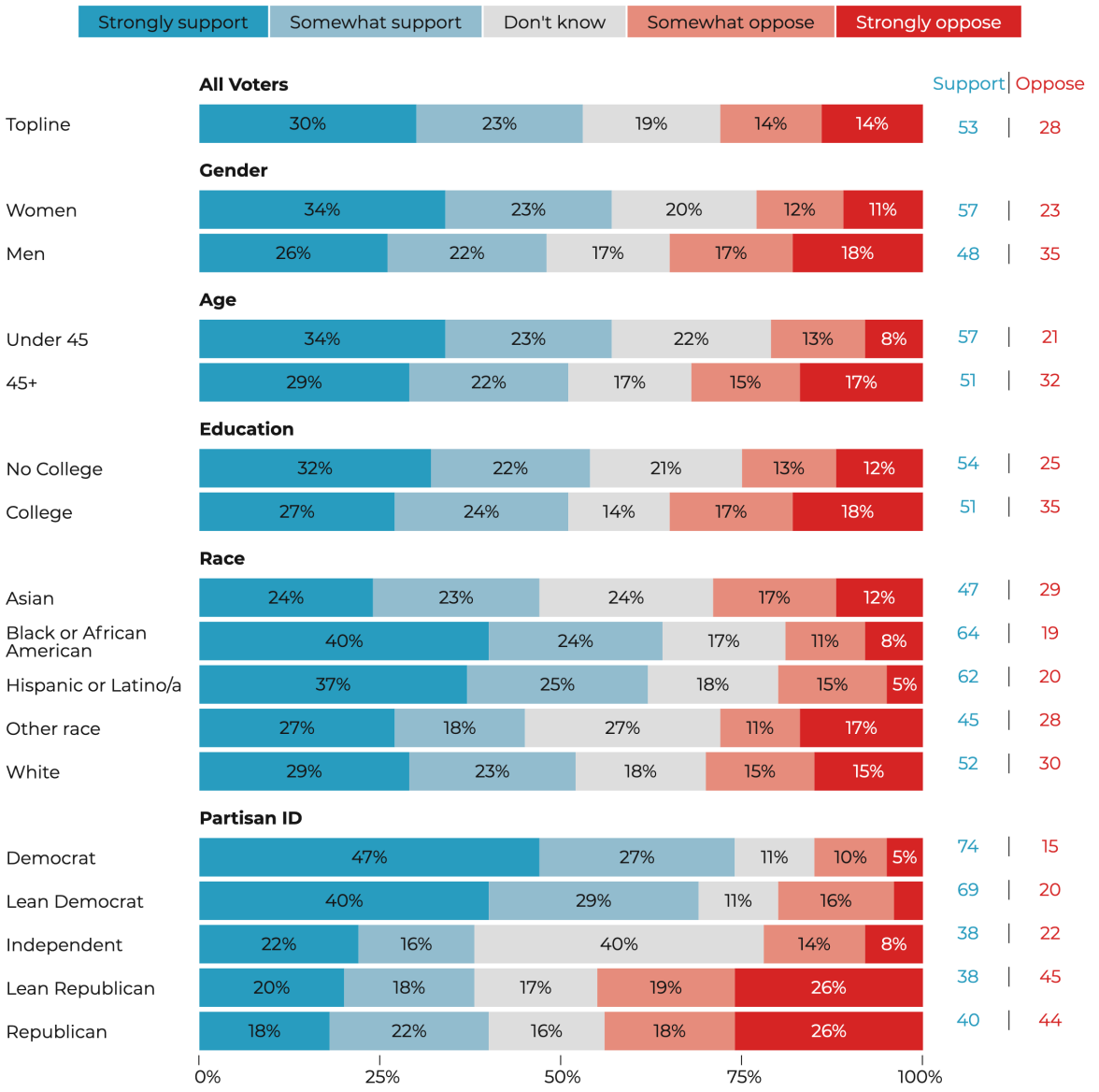
A Majority Of Voters Support Guaranteeing Every American Free Comprehensive Healthcare

Would you support a proposal that guarantees every American comprehensive care without any out of pocket costs for monthly premiums, copays, or deductibles?



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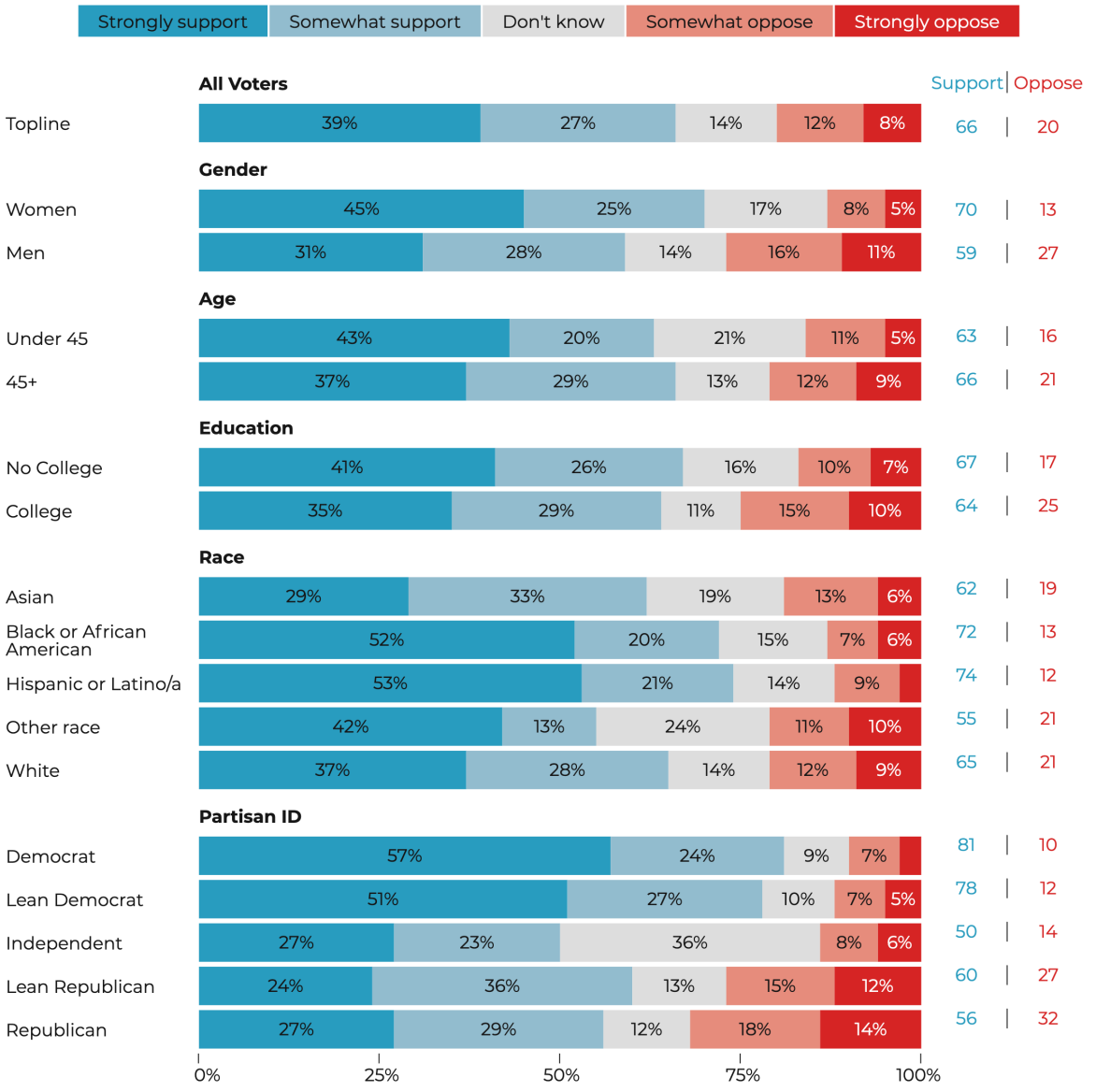
Voters Want *All* Workers To Have Two Weeks Of Paid Sick Leave

Would you support or oppose a proposal to guarantee two weeks of paid sick leave for all workers?



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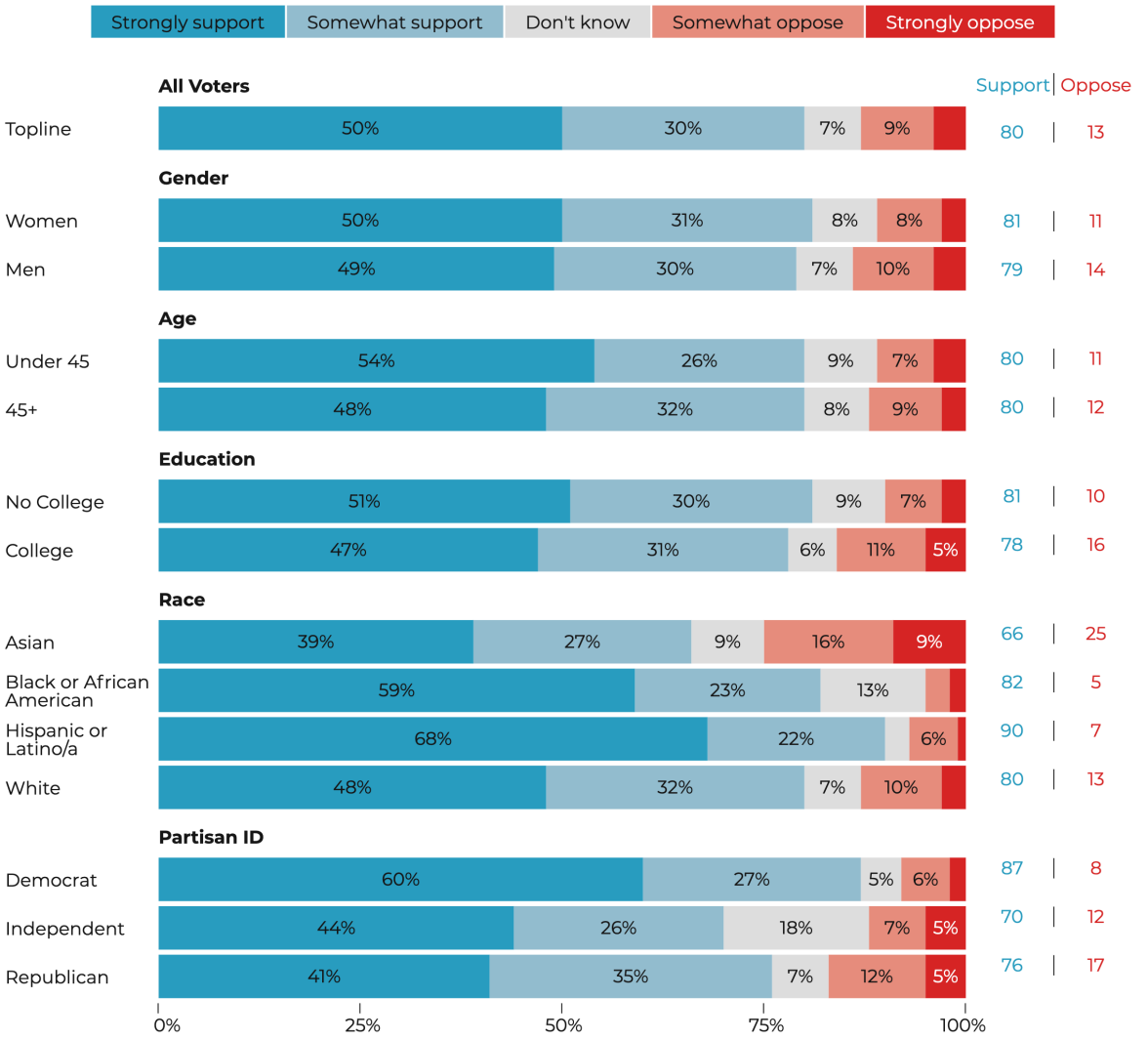
Voters Overwhelmingly Back The Government Replacing 80% Of Workers' Lost Wages

Would you support or oppose the government paying 80% of lost wages for workers who lost their jobs, or face reduced work hours, due to the coronavirus?



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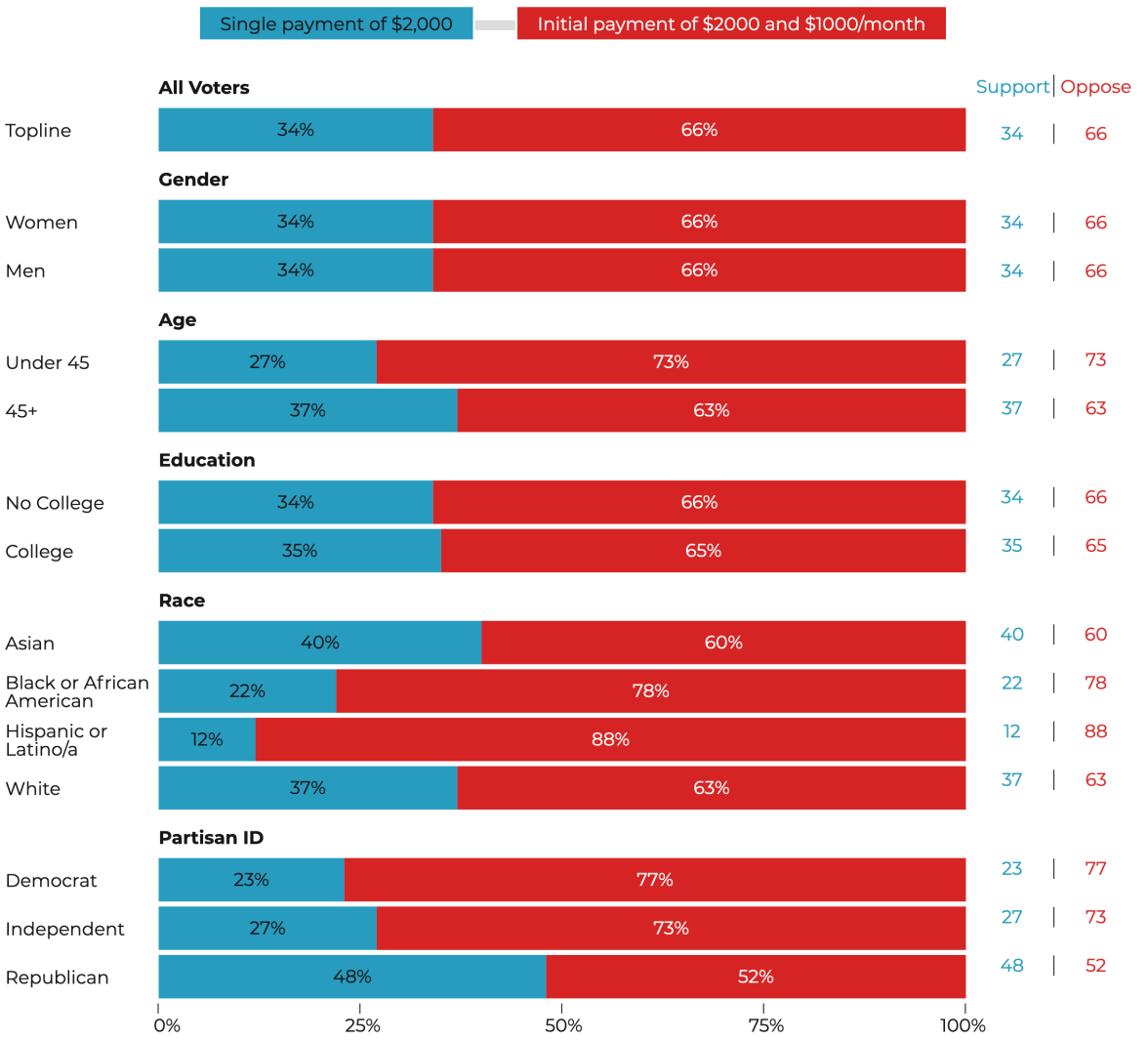
Voters Prefer A Policy That Provides An Initial Payment of $2000 followed by $1000/month

Lawmakers disagree over whether the payments should be one-time or recurring payments for as long as there remains a state of emergency. Which statement do you agree with more?



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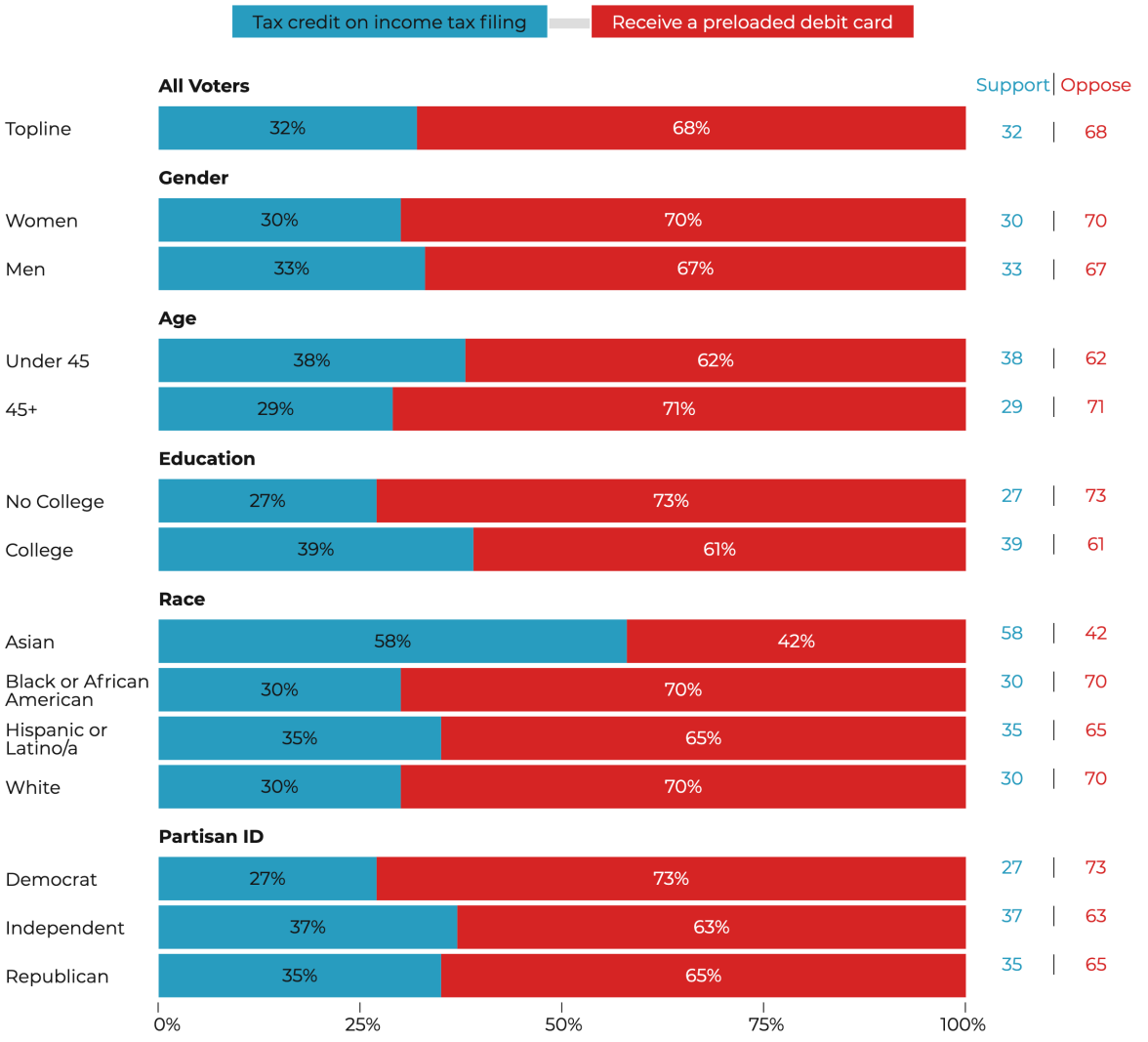
Voter Strongly Prefer Receiving Benefits On Preloaded Debit Card Rather Than A Tax Credit

Lawmakers disagree over whether the amount should be provided as a deduction on next year's income tax or as a pre-loaded debit card. Which statement do you agree with more?



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MAKE EVERY VOTE MATTER

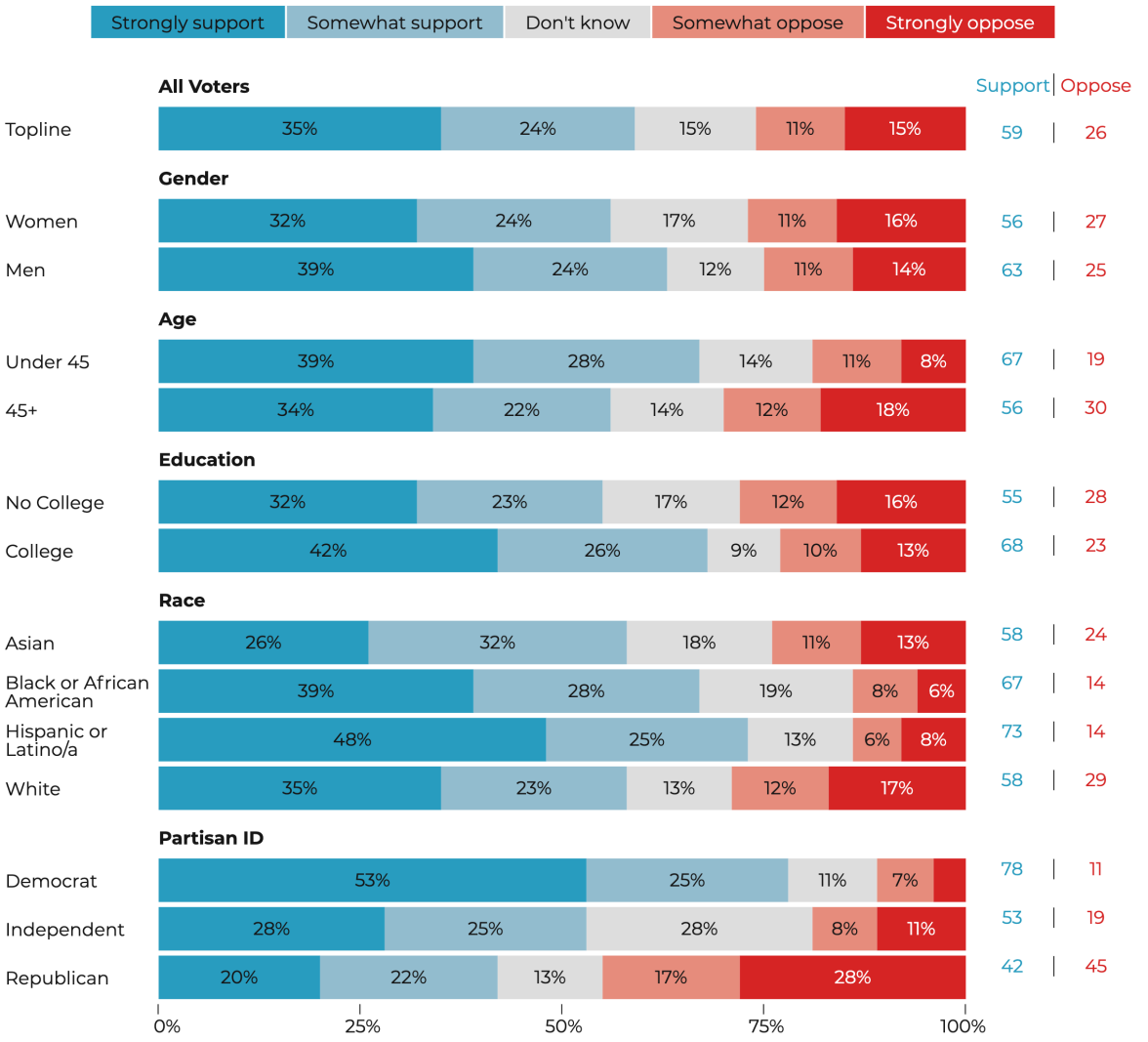
- Expand and automate voter registration.
- Expand early voting.
- Make voting by mail robust and accessible.
- Create safe and sanitary in-person voting.

As we turn to our elected officials to protect and lead us forward during this public health crisis, we must ensure there are protections in place so that when elections occur every vote will be counted and every voice heard. State lawmakers and governors must act now to ensure that in-person voting is safe and sanitary and that automatic voter registration, early voting, and vote-by-mail policies are in place well ahead of the November elections.

No one knows what the future holds for the fight against COVID-19. Ensuring the resiliency of our elections no matter what stage the fight is in come November is essential. This is yet another issue with broad support that only needs our political will for it to become a reality.

Voters Support A Vote By Mail System

Some Democrats in Congress have proposed requiring all states to offer an option to vote by mail if at least a quarter of states have declared an emergency due to coronavirus. Democrats say that this will increase public safety, and allow people to vote without exposing themselves to coronavirus. Republicans say that this will remove control from states over their own elections, and increase voter fraud. Do you support or oppose this measure?



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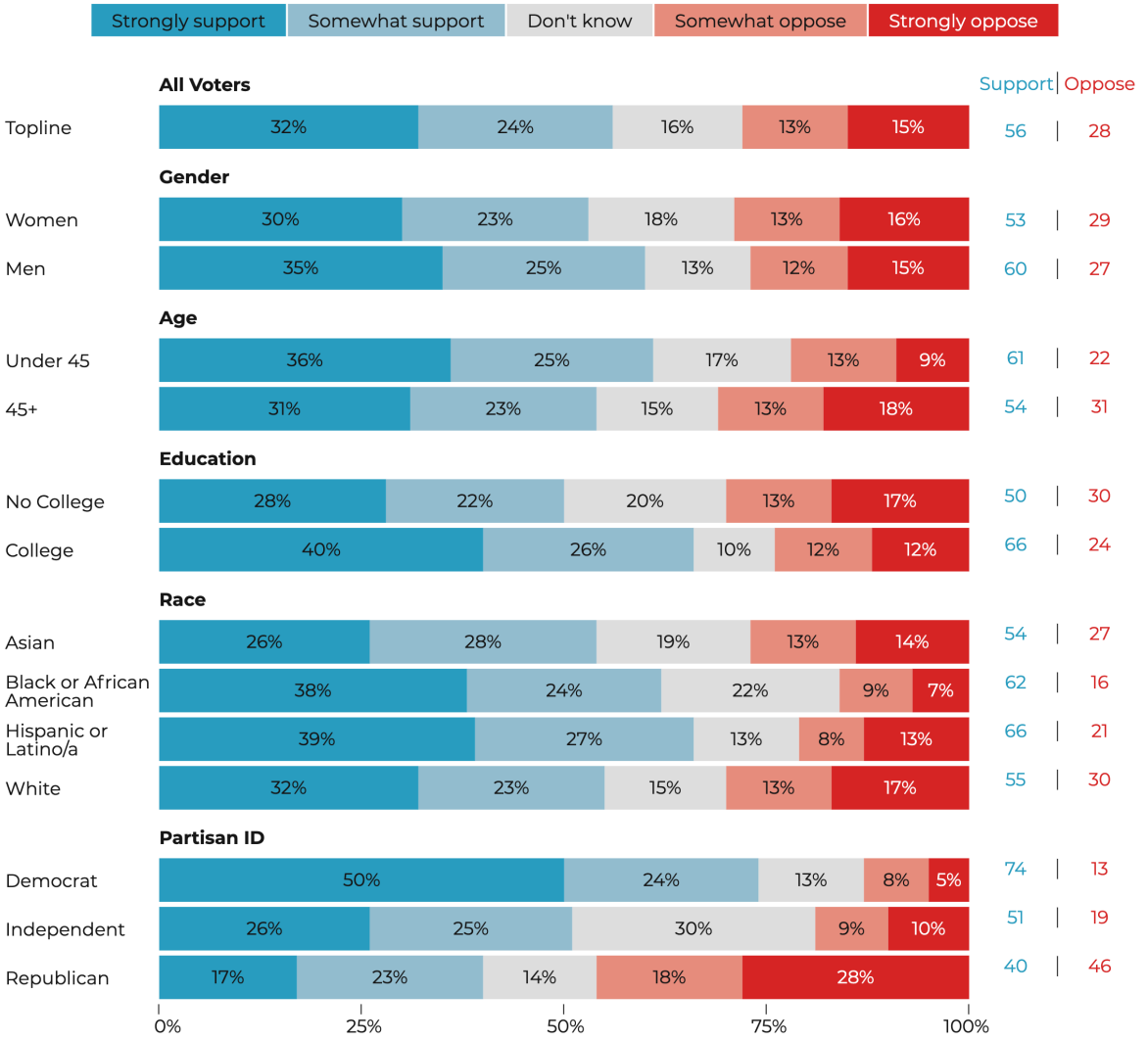
Voters Back A Slate Of Policies To Ensure Elections Can Proceed Even In Case Of Emergencies

Some Democrats in Congress have proposed, as part of the stimulus, requiring all states to have 15 days of early voting, no-excuse absentee mail voting, and the option to mail all voters a ballot during emergencies. Democrats say that this will increase public safety, and allow people to vote without exposing themselves to coronavirus. Republicans say that this will remove control from states over their own elections, and increase voter fraud. Do you support or oppose this measure?



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CONCLUSION

Our government must act boldly in this moment of crisis at the local, state, and federal level to protect all of us. We must mobilize like never before to defeat the novel coronavirus—bringing urgency, resolve, and vigor to addressing the medical crisis, but also to reducing underlying vulnerabilities that this crisis has highlighted.

Our own health and welfare depend on the health and welfare of everyone around us, and the past month has made that clear to more people than at any point in the past half-century. The Emergency Action Plan is a path for turning that shared understanding into needed change.

COVER PHOTO
Isaac Quesada/Unsplash