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POLLING ON MEDICARE FOR ALL

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As the Democratic primary heats up, Democratic presidential candidates have begun sharing their plans to pay for Medicare for All. On November 1, 2019, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren [released a plan](#) to finance Medicare for All that would not raise taxes on the middle class, but would instead raise taxes on corporations and the wealthy. We have previously shown that [Senator Warren’s tax plan itself is popular](#); here, we focus on public opinion related specifically to Medicare for All and to the funding mechanisms Senator Warren has proposed. This memo briefly summarizes the results.

Executive summary

- ▶ Senator Warren’s Medicare for All financing plan, that doesn’t raise taxes on the middle class, is supported by a 57–30 percent margin among voters, and it is supported by a 53–32 percent margin among independents as well. One in three Republicans support support this financing plan as well
- ▶ Voters clearly support the goal of universal health coverage, with 59 percent of voters saying they would be more supportive of legislation if they thought it would achieve universal coverage. Seventy-four percent would be more supportive of Medicare for All if they knew it eliminated uncertainty as to whether a patient could see any doctor without worrying about their coverage
- ▶ Opponents of Medicare for All tend to have more comprehensive coverage already and therefore likely do not perceive any benefits to them of moving to a different system. In contrast, those with less coverage or with more uncertainty about their current coverage favor Medicare for All
- ▶ A Democrat running on Medicare for All would defeat Trump in a hypothetical election matchup, a finding consistent across repeated experiments.
- ▶ Voters report that media coverage of Medicare for All overall is mixed, with those who say they have heard a

lot about Medicare for All splitting evenly on whether what they’ve heard has been positive or negative

- ▶ Voters know the healthcare positions of Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, but there is more uncertainty around the beliefs of other candidates, like Pete Buttigieg and Joe Biden
- ▶ Medicare for All is not viewed as political extremism, with more voters saying that it is reflective of common goals seen in other democratic countries than saying it is reflective of a socialist takeover of healthcare by the government

Americans want a system that covers everyone

American voters share the goal of achieving universal access to healthcare.¹ To better understand what voters want out of potential healthcare reform, we asked voters about a series of goals that a Medicare for All policy might be able to provide. Specifically, we asked:

1. Note: In our sample, about 90 percent of US voters report they have health insurance in some form and there are differences between these groups throughout the survey. The rate of health insurance access by party identification is steady, with 91 percent of Democrats, 91 percent of independents, and 92 percent of Republicans reporting they had health insurance in some form. While there are clear differences between the insured and the uninsured, the small sample size of only about 90 voters in our survey who are uninsured precludes us from drawing confident conclusions about how those groups differ here.

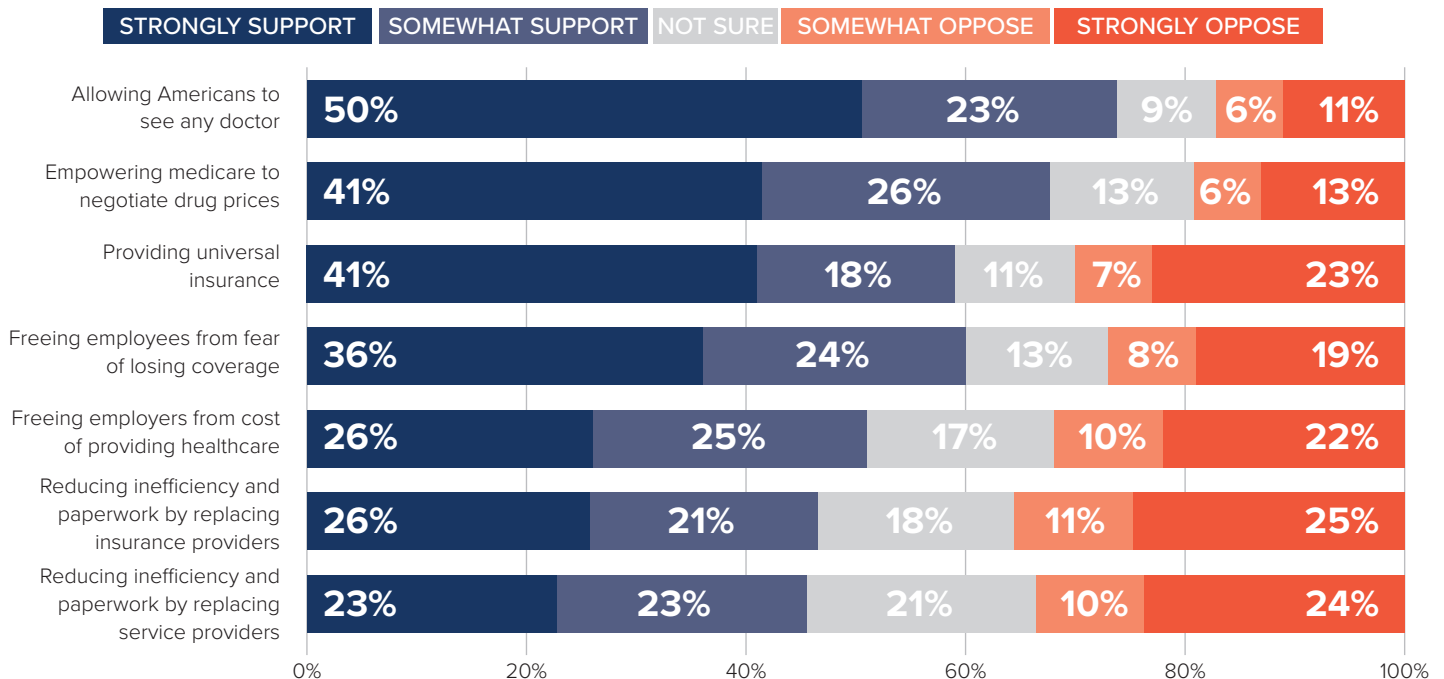
Next, you will see some of the goals members of Congress are hoping to achieve by passing Medicare for All. For each of these goals, please say whether that goal makes you more supportive of passing Medicare for All, less supportive, or if you are unsure.

- ▶ Reducing inefficiency and paperwork by replacing a network of insurance providers with one provider
- ▶ Empowering Medicare to negotiate the price of medicine and prescription drugs with pharmaceutical companies
- ▶ Providing universal insurance, ensuring every American has access to medical care
- ▶ Reducing inefficiency and paperwork by replacing a network of health service providers, such as ambulances, with one provider
- ▶ Allowing Americans to see any doctor without worrying about their coverage

- ▶ Taking control of insurance from employers, freeing people from the worry of losing insurance by quitting their job or their employer canceling coverage
- ▶ Taking control of insurance from employers, freeing companies and small business owners from the need to distribute and manage healthcare benefits to their employees

Voters could report if each of these outcomes would make them much more supportive, somewhat more supportive, somewhat less supportive, much less supportive, or were unsure how they felt about the effect of that policy on their support for Medicare for All. Voters clearly favored each of the policies that would help provide universal coverage. By a 73–17 margin, for example, voters said that the goal of allowing Americans to see any doctor made them more supportive of Medicare for All. By a 67–19 margin, voters supported giving authority to the government to negotiate pharmaceutical drug prices. By a 59–30 margin, a clear majority supports the ultimate goal of providing universal insurance.

SUPPORT FOR MEDICARE FOR ALL BY THE BENEFITS THE POLICY WOULD PROVIDE



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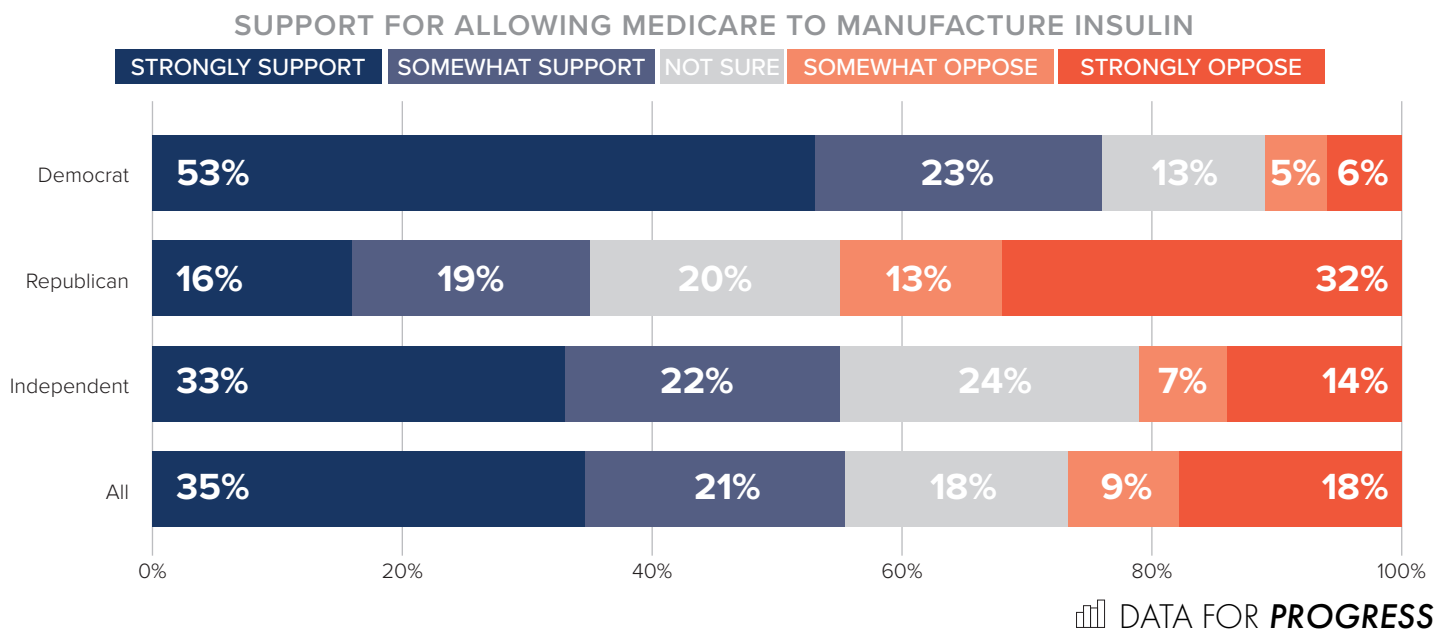
To further explore voters' attitudes toward allowing the government to negotiate pharmaceutical prices, we included an item that focused on the specific question of negotiating the price of insulin. Insulin is a common life-saving drug, the price of which has risen in recent years and is a particular focus of recent political debate. Some advocates for Medicare for All have suggested granting the government authority to provide for the production of generic insulin at a lower cost. To test that policy proposal, we asked voters:

Currently in the United States, a few pharmaceutical companies have access to the patent for insulin, which is required to produce the drug. Some say this arrangement has led to an unreasonably high price for the drug and that the government should

manufacture insulin to reduce prices. Others say companies should be allowed to do what they want with their patents, and that patents are necessary for innovation and job growth.

Would you support or oppose giving the federal government the power to manufacture insulin?

Voters clearly support allowing the federal government to manufacture insulin. Fifty-six percent of voters support the policy, compared to just 27 percent who oppose. About 76 percent of Democrats support this policy, and independents clearly favor it by a 55–21 percent margin. While Republicans narrowly oppose the policy on net, one in three support allowing for the manufacture of insulin by the government.



Voters are willing to raise taxes to expand coverage

Later in the survey, we asked voters to consider financing Medicare for All in the way that Warren released on November 1, with no new taxes on the middle class, only spending cuts and taxes on the wealthy and large corporations. Specifically, we asked:

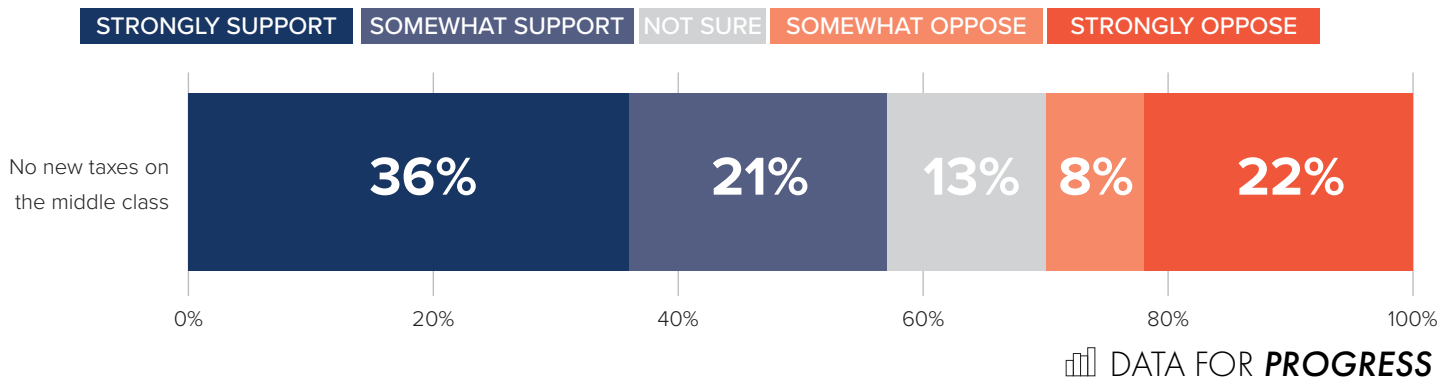
In some versions of a Medicare for All system that have been proposed recently, all Americans would be added to a government-run health insurance plan. This would eliminate all out-of-pocket costs such as co-pays and deductibles, and would eliminate all monthly premiums. These would instead be paid in the form of taxes. The money you pay to health insurance companies would go to the government, and the average American's take home pay would not decrease.

Would you support or oppose replacing out-of-pocket costs, co-pays and deductibles with taxes if the tax plan included no new taxes on the middle class, only spending cuts and taxes on the wealthy and large corporations?

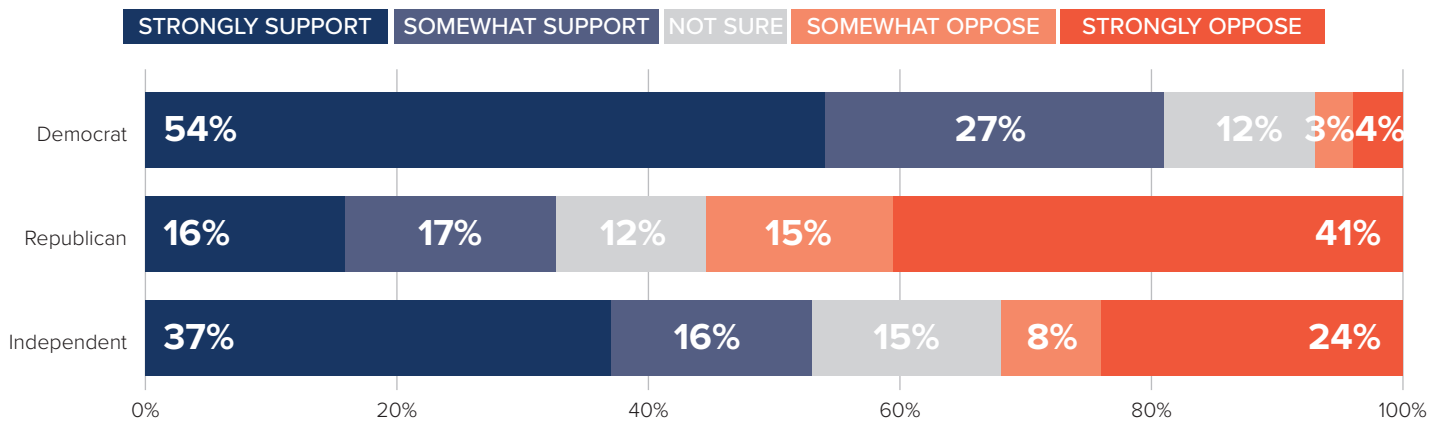
We find strong net support, at about a 57–30 margin. About 36 percent of voters strongly supported the plan and 21 percent somewhat supported it. Just 22 percent of voters strongly opposed it and 8 percent somewhat opposed it, with the remaining 13 percent being unsure.

A large majority of Democrats and an outright majority of independents support Senator Warren's financing plan, as do fully one in three Republicans. Specifically, 81 percent of Democrats support such a financing plan with only 7 percent opposing. While 53 percent of independents somewhat or strongly support the proposal, only 32 percent oppose it. One third of Republicans also support the proposal, showing that Republicans are much more divided than Democrats are on this proposal.

SUPPORT FOR MEDICARE FOR ALL WITH NO MIDDLE INCOME TAX HIKES



SUPPORT FOR MEDICARE FOR ALL WITH NO MIDDLE INCOME TAX HIKES BY PARTY ID



Supporting Medicare for All would not hurt the Democratic nominee

In additional messaging experiments that Data for Progress ran recently,² respondents were randomly assigned to see a hypothetical general election presidential match-up where the Democratic candidate either supported strengthening the Affordable Care Act or supported Medicare for All.

Across these different surveys, we used two slightly different sets of question wording. The results did not significantly differ by wording, so they were collapsed together in the same analysis.

In an August survey, 1,380 respondents saw (the split messaging groups indicated in brackets):

2. Data for Progress and YouGov Blue interviewed a total of 3,437 self-reported registered voters in surveys fielded from July 12-17, July 25-29, and August 15-17, each with YouGov Blue on YouGov's online panel of voters. Each was sampled to be representative of the population of US voters, and they were pooled and weighted to be representative of that population by age, race/ethnicity, sex, education, US Census region, and 2016 Presidential vote choice and were pooled together for this analysis.

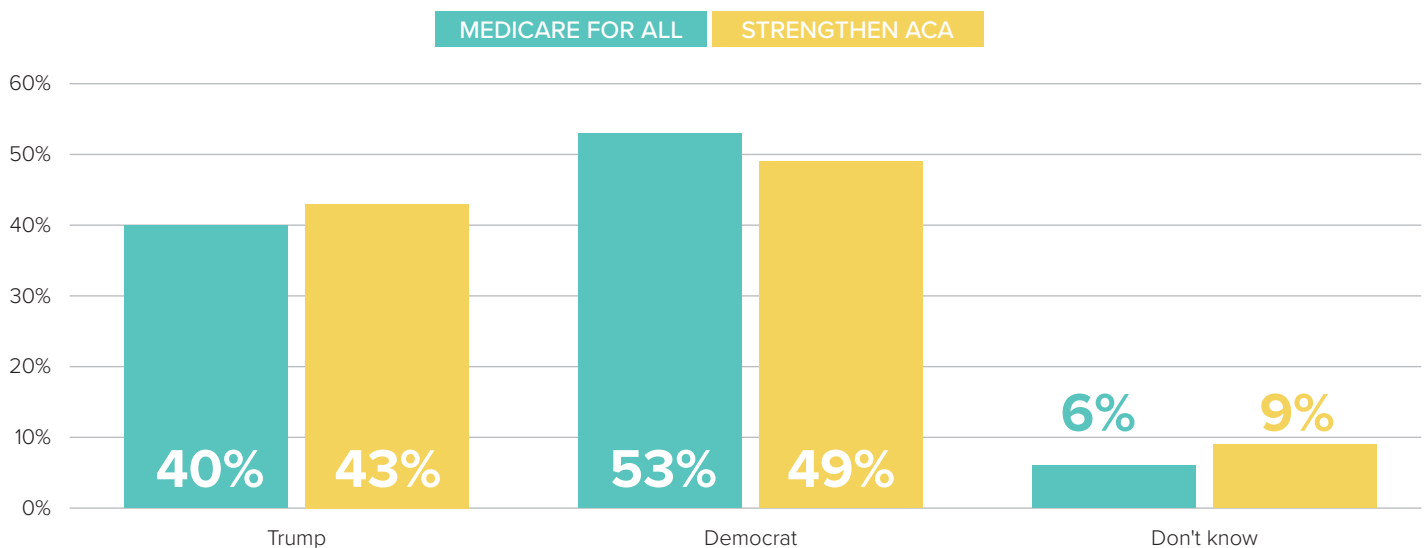
If the 2020 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Donald Trump, a Republican who supports repealing the Affordable Care Act, and a Democrat who supports [strengthening the Affordable Care Act so that state exchanges ensure everyone has access to affordable healthcare OR Medicare for All, which would provide health insurance to every American through a government provider], for whom would you vote?

2,057 people across two surveys fielded in July saw:

If the 2020 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Donald Trump, a Republican who supports repealing the Affordable Care Act ('Obamacare'), and a Democrat who supports [strengthening the Affordable Care Act ('Obamacare') OR Medicare for All], for whom would you vote?

Respondents indicated one of three response options: Donald Trump, Republican; The Democrat; or Don't know.

CANDIDATE COMPARISON MEDICARE FOR ALL VS. STRENGTHEN ACA DEMOCRAT



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Registered voters responded more favorably toward the hypothetical Democrat who explicitly supports Medicare for All (net over Trump +13 points) than the Democrat wanting to strengthen the Affordable Care Act (net +6). The Democratic position on healthcare is generally popular compared to that of Donald Trump and the Republicans, whether it involves expanding Medicare or strengthening the Affordable Care Act.

Voters perceive uncertainty in the healthcare system

We asked voters to tell us whether or not their health insurance plans covered a few common services. Specifically, among those who reported that they had some kind of health insurance, we asked:

Which of the following does your plan cover?

Dental coverage

Vision coverage

Hearing aids coverage

Mental health services coverage

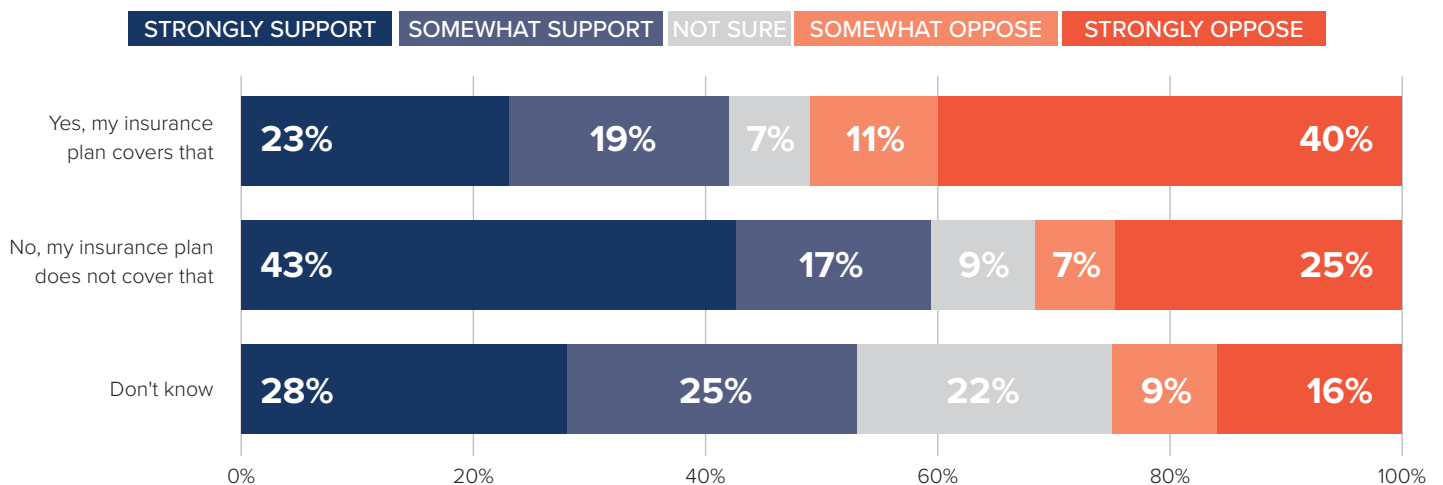
Preventative care services coverage

Critical illness coverage

Voters could respond: “Yes, my insurance plan covers that,” “No, my insurance plan does not cover that,” or “Don’t know.” While almost all voters knew whether or not their plan covered vision, dental, and preventive care, 44 percent were unsure if their plan would help cover the cost of hearing aids. Eighteen percent were unsure if their plan had any mental health coverage, and about 21 percent were unsure if their plan included critical illness coverage, which helps cover things like cancer or a stroke.

Lack of coverage and uncertainty about the quality of healthcare coverage was related to support for Medicare for All. Among voters whose insurance did not cover critical illness, 60 percent somewhat or strongly supported Medicare for All and just 32 percent opposed. Among those who were unsure if they had critical illness coverage, 53 percent somewhat or strongly supported Medicare for All and just 25 percent opposed. Among those who knew their plans covered critical illness, however, just 42 percent of voters supported Medicare for All and 51 percent opposed it.

SUPPORT FOR MEDICARE FOR ALL BY KNOWLEDGE OF CRITICAL ILLNESS COVERAGE



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Voters know where Sanders and Warren stand, but not Biden or Buttigieg

Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders have both publicly stated their support for Medicare for All. South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg refers to his healthcare proposal as “Medicare for all who want it,” which includes a public option. Vice President Joe Biden’s plan includes expanding the Affordable Care Act as well as expanding the amount of coverage private insurance provides on those markets.

Voters demonstrate clear knowledge of where Senators Warren and Sanders stand on Medicare for All. We asked respondents:

Next, you will see some candidates for the Democratic nomination for President. Based on what you know, which of the following Democratic presidential candidates do you think supports Medicare for All?

To which voters could respond, “Yes, this candidate supports Medicare for All,” “No, this candidate does not support Medicare for All,” and “Not sure.”

Across the full sample, 72 percent of voters correctly stated that Elizabeth Warren supports Medicare for All, with just 4 percent incorrectly saying she did not and the rest reporting they were unsure. Seventy-nine percent of voters correctly said Bernie Sanders supports Medicare for All as well, compared to just 4 percent who incorrectly said he did not and the rest being unsure.

Among the candidates who support healthcare reform but do not explicitly support Medicare for All, however, voter knowledge was apparently much lower. 33 percent of voters incorrectly said Mayor Buttigieg supported Medicare for All, 22 percent correctly said he did not, and 45 percent reported they were unsure. Thirty-six percent of voters incorrectly said Joe Biden supported Medicare for All, 29 percent correctly said he did not, with 34 percent being unsure.

Partisans and those with a partisan lean were more informed about the liberal candidates than were pure independents. Seventy-four percent of Democrats and independents who lean to the Democrats correctly said Senator Warren supports Medicare for All, as did 76 percent of Republicans and those who leaned to the Republicans. Eighty-six percent and 76 percent of these groups said the same about Bernie Sanders, respectively. By comparison, 55 percent of independents said they thought Elizabeth Warren and 62 percent thought Bernie Sanders supported Medicare for All.

Among the moderate candidates, differences emerged across party identification. While only 19 percent of Democrats incorrectly thought Pete Buttigieg supported Medicare for All, 29 percent of independents and 50 percent of Republicans did. Only 26 percent of Democrats and 25 percent of independents incorrectly said Joe Biden supported Medicare for All, while 52 percent of Republican voters did.

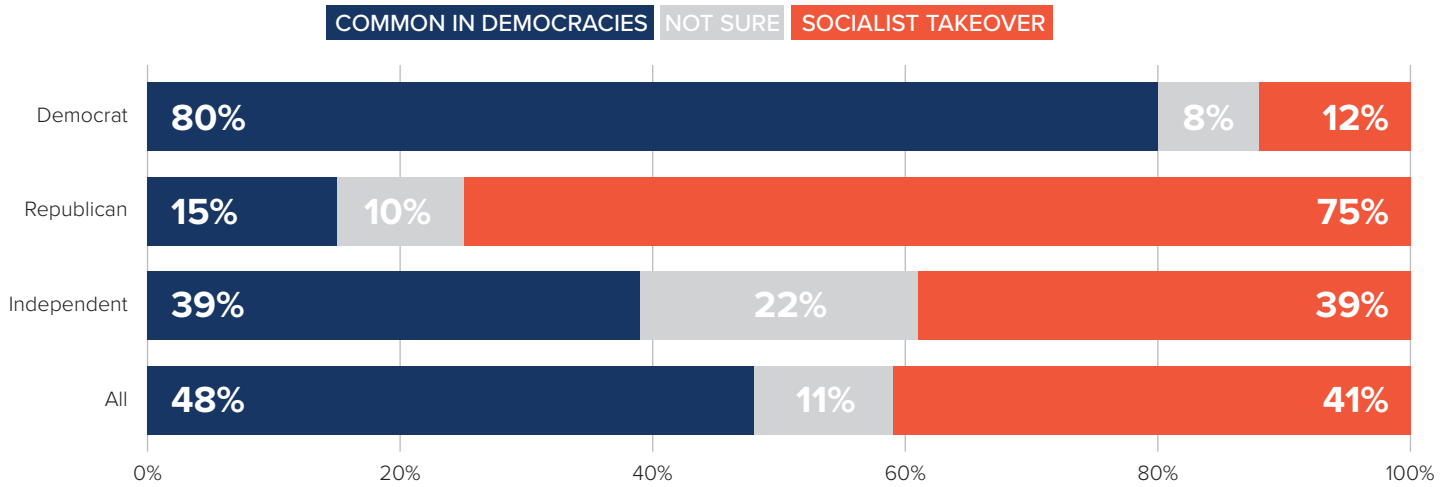
Voters do not view Medicare for All as political extremism

We asked voters to consider whether Medicare for All represented an unreasonably extreme change to the healthcare system akin to a socialist system. We asked,

Even if it’s not exactly right, which comes closer to your view?

- ▶ *Medicare for All is a government takeover of our healthcare system, no different from how they do things in socialist countries*
- ▶ *Medicare for All is a way to guarantee that everyone has access to medical care no matter if they can afford it, no different from how they do things in most other democratic countries around the world*
- ▶ *Not sure*

**BELIEF MEDICARE FOR ALL IS A SOCIALIST TAKEOVER VS.
BELIEF MEDICARE FOR ALL IS TYPICAL IN DEMOCRACIES**



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Voters were more likely to say they did not think of Medicare for All as socialism, with 48 percent saying they did not think it was and 41 percent saying it was. Perhaps not surprisingly, party identification played a clear role in this outcome, with 80 percent of Democrats comparing Medicare for All to programs common in other democracies, compared to just 15 percent of Republicans who felt the same. Independents were exactly split (39–39) on the question of whether Medicare for All was closer to a socialist policy or a policy typical in democracies..

Conclusion

Voters are ready for a Medicare for All system. There is overwhelming support for the universal provision of healthcare insurance, which voters are willing to pay for by changes to the tax code. Our survey experiments suggest that Democrats do about as well by advocating for Medicare for All as they do by expanding the Affordable Care Act, and we show that many voters share the goals that can be most easily attained in a Medicare for All system.

Methodology

On behalf of Data for Progress, YouGov Blue fielded a survey of 1,005 US registered voters on YouGov’s online panel. The survey fielded from October 30 through October 31, 2019, and was weighted to be representative of the population of registered voters by age, race/ethnicity, sex, education, US Census region, and 2016 presidential vote choice.

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