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To: Interested Parties

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## **The partisan polarization of the pandemic CVI tracking, wave 2: April 31-May 5**

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The Tea Party-Trump Republican Party was forced to lead the country's response to the pandemic and that accelerated the polarization of the country and marginalization of the GOP — at a very high human cost. Donald Trump took leadership of a modern Republican Party shaped profoundly by the Tea Party revolt against Barack Obama, government health care, and immigration. They sought to gridlock government and polarize America. Now, Trump leads an anti-government party that has been forced to oversee the biggest expansion of regulation and government since World War II.

Trump has cheered governors opening up the economy and protestors liberating their states, and the country and some Republicans fear this will prove tragic.

Fully two-thirds of the country and half of Republicans reacted with horror to the anti-stay-at-home demonstrators who looked a lot like the Tea Party movement protest in 2009 and 2010. Over 60 percent are intensely negative and that leads into the effectiveness of the strongest attack this poll tested against the president. It raised serious doubts for half the country, and left the Tea Party Republicans pretty isolated.

These findings come from the 2<sup>nd</sup> tracking survey sponsored by CVI, using 2,000 on-line interviews, weighted to match the baseline of mostly cell-phone surveys conducted over last two months.<sup>1</sup>

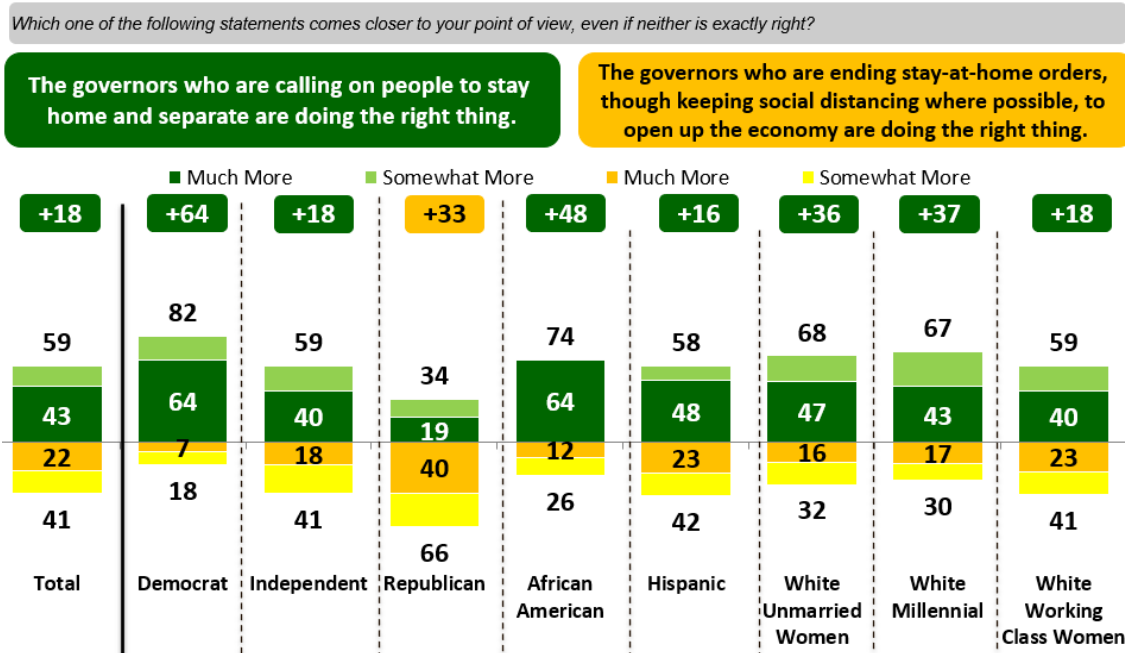
And in states where Republicans have full control of the governorship and legislature, pro-Trump governors moved to open up their economies — led by Governor Kemp in Georgia, Governor DeSantis in Florida and Governor Abbot in Texas. Just 31 percent responded warmly to those governors, and 51 percent coolly, with about 15 percent unsure of what to make of them.

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<sup>1</sup> A large-scale web survey of 2,000 registered voters in the 16-state battleground was conducted online April 29-May 3, 2020 from a voter-file sample. The states included Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin. The web poll was weighted to a rolling average of recent phone polls. The last phone poll of 1,000 registered voters in the battleground that was conducted March 9-16, 2020, from a voter-file sample. 67% of respondents were reached on cell phones. The margin of error in the phone polls is +/- 3.5

When we gave respondents a chance to write whatever they chose to after hearing Governor Kemp’s new policy, the response was overwhelmingly negative, with some intensely negative. Respondents wrote “He’s stupid and nobody is going to follow that”; “unbelievable a governor would make such a move.” About one third agreed with it, though another 9 percent said they supported it but would continue to follow stay-at-home guidelines.

In a statement comparison, almost 60 percent side with the governors who “are calling on people to stay at home and separate,” rather than those who “are ending stay-at-home orders, keeping social distancing where possible to open up the economy.” Independents break for the “stay at home” governors by 18 points, and a third of Republicans pull off too.

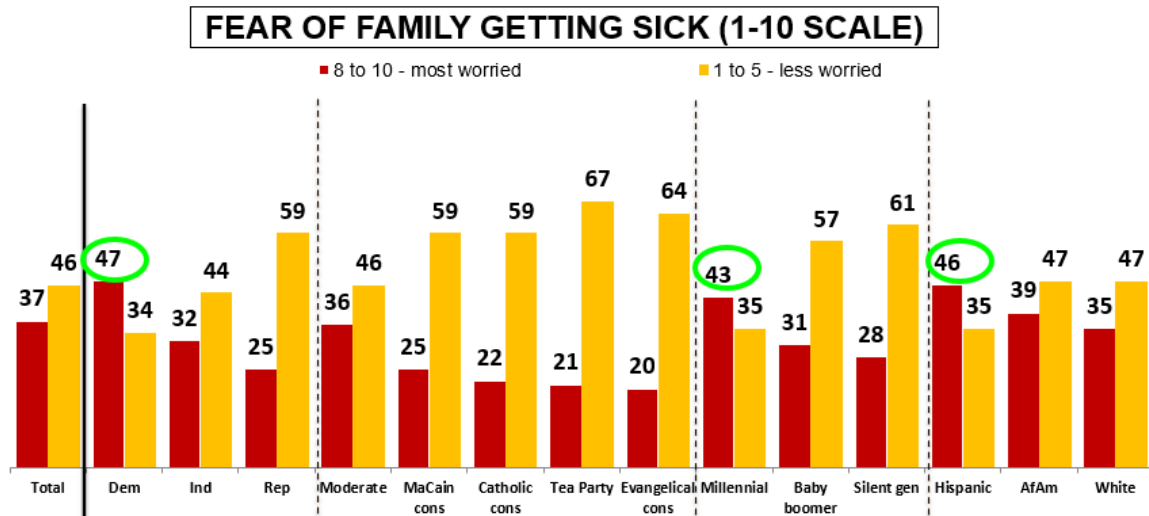


Republicans are vulnerable as the risk to seniors comes front and center. When paired against getting the economy started and getting people back to work, a stunning 56 percent of all voters say, “I am bothered that some leaders seem willing to have a lot more older people die.” Republicans rally behind getting the economy started in an anti-pro-life charge against their party, but Democrats and independents are staunchly behind governors who are keeping people at home until safe.

When we asked people for their open-ended, visceral response to the Texas Lieutenant Governor saying, as a senior citizen, he and other seniors would be willing to take a chance on their survival in exchange for opening the economy again. Fully 60 percent of respondents were hostile to what they heard; indeed, only a quarter indicated agreement. Many utter comments like, “I think it is a cruel and heartless thing to say”; “he can do that for himself, but he doesn’t have the right to make that decision for others.”

The partisan polarization has even shaped how much they fear an immediate family member becoming seriously ill. Half of Democrats score the most worried, 8 to 10 on a 10 point scale, but only a quarter of Republicans. There is almost a bravado in the silent generation (61 percent score on bottom half), Tea Party (67 percent), and Evangelical Republicans (64 percent). That explains why so many Republican political leaders have so much trouble holding the line on government control.

How fearful are you that you will catch COVID-19 and get seriously ill? Please rate your concern from 1 to 10.



Trump’s approval has dropped on handling the pandemic, with a huge shift on intense judgements. The percent strongly approving of his handling of the coronavirus has dropped from 30 to 24 percent, while strong disapproval has moved up from 37 to 42 percent. That intensity gap is translating into an election year where strong disapproval of Trump’s overall performance (42 percent) far exceeds the number who strongly approve (25 percent). In partisan terms, there are many more intense anti-Trump Democrats (78 percent) than strong pro-Trump Republicans (56 percent). And Democrats are 4 points more likely than Republicans to express the highest interest in voting in November (69 to 65 percent).

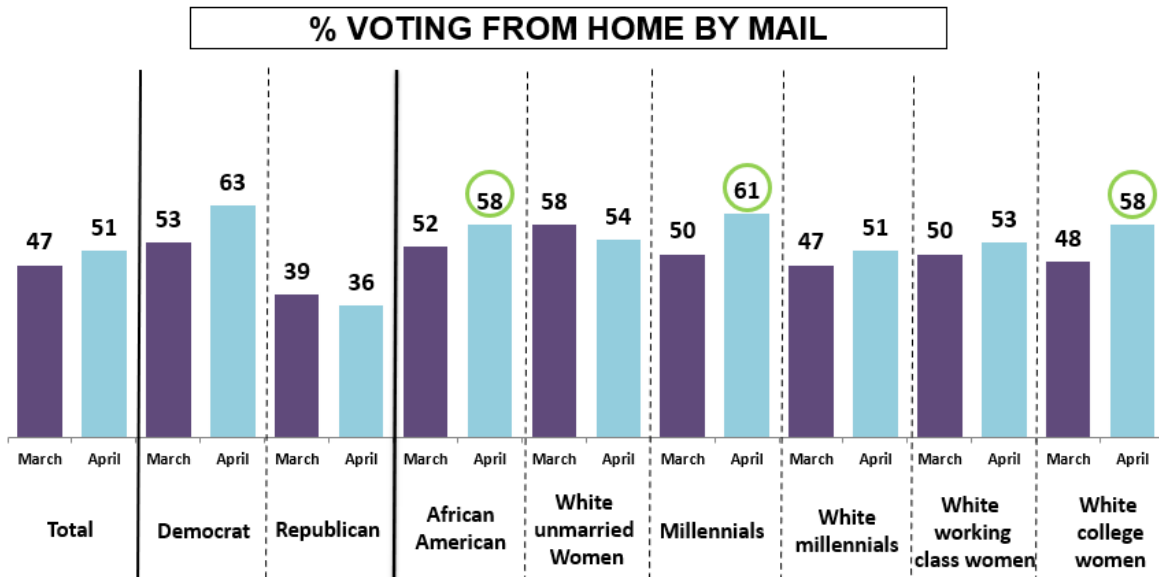
And by the way, 58 percent believe he is not winning the war on the coronavirus.

**Voting in safety**

With the coronavirus spreading uncontrolled in parts of America, a majority of registered voters want to vote at home by mail, up from 47 to 51 percent. This will probably go down as another defining moment of this historic election. The biggest increases came with African Americans, white unmarried women, and white college women. These were all groups engaged by this election and looking for a safe way to vote.

Millennials did move up in their interest in voting by mail from 50 to 61 percent, though Hispanic interest in voting by mail dropped from 58 to 54 percent. These voters were the Sanders’ base, but they will perhaps grow more interested in electing Joe Biden.

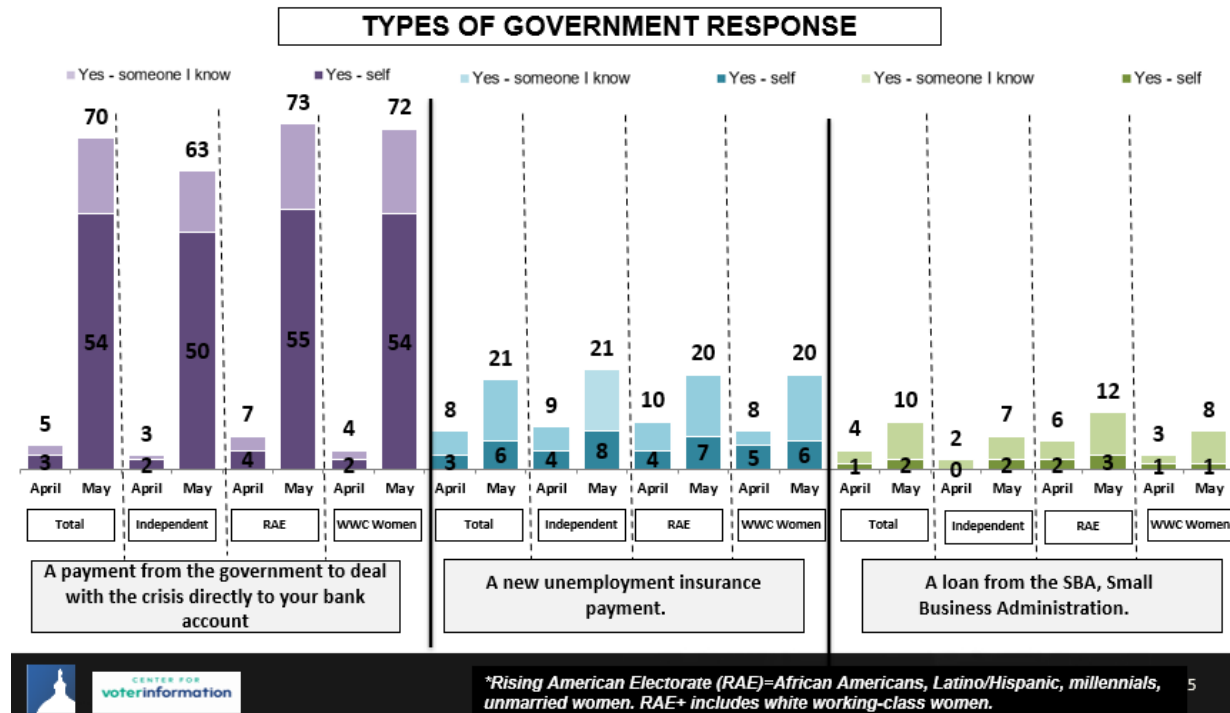
Thinking about how you intend to vote in this election, do you think you will vote early at an official voting place, at home with a mail in ballot, or at the polling place on Election Day?



There is still a huge two-thirds of Americans who are comfortable with reforms that allow no fault absentee voting, with everyone being automatically mailed an absentee ballot, and everybody voting by absentee ballot. That level of support has remained fairly stable over the last three weeks. Republican support has dropped off for most of these reforms, but remains steady for no fault absentee voting during this pandemic.

**The Amazing Government Rescue Plan**

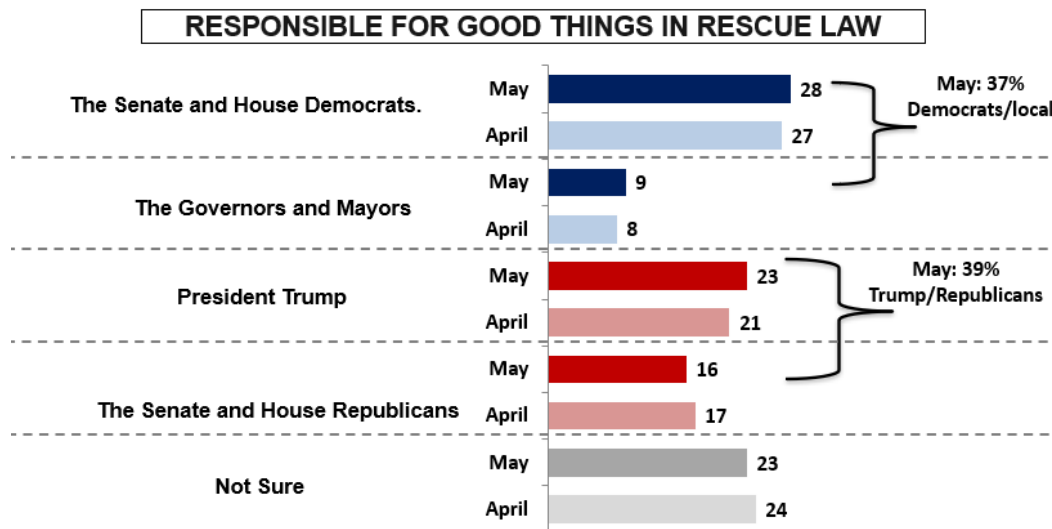
It is hard to express anything but awe at the scale of the government effort that passed Congress at three different points, the last on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. A remarkable 70 percent of voters received a direct payment into their bank account to deal with the crisis, and slightly more of the Rising American Electorate (73 percent) and white working class women (72 percent). That reach is pretty encouraging. At this point, 21 percent of all voters say they received a new unemployment insurance payment, with no drop off with the RAE or white working class women. At this point, 10 percent received a loan from the SBA and more for the RAE (12 percent). That could rise.



So, some of the reason why people have expressed less worry about their finances rather than health is this massive cash support that people received. The number who could afford a sudden \$500 expense jumped from two thirds to three quarters. African Americans are the most likely to say they will not be able to handle a sudden expense, but now 64 percent of Hispanics, 68 percent of white unmarried women, 66 percent of white millennials, and 72 percent of white working class women said they will be able to handle a sudden expense.

So, it is not surprising that 86 percent of registered voters approve of the plan. What is surprising is that Republicans support it with more intensity, considering that House and Senate Republicans were so reluctant to pass anything but business support. Slightly more voters think President Trump along with Senate and House Republicans are responsible for the good things in the bill. Just 28 percent think the Senate and House Democrats are responsible, and 23 percent do not know.

(IF APPROVE) Who do think is mainly responsible for the good things in this rescue law?

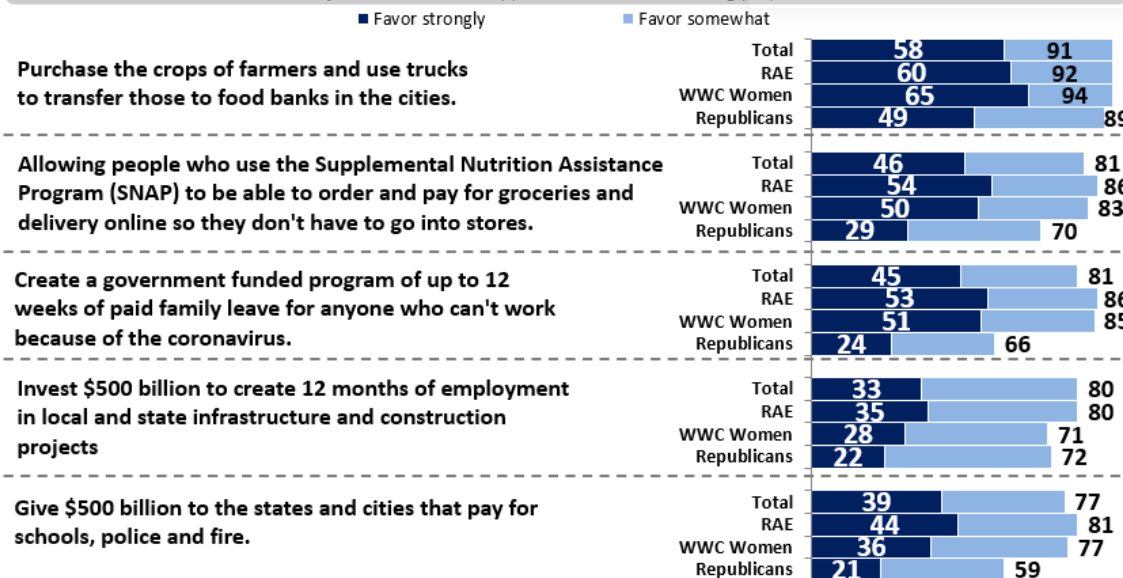


Democratic leaders have not built up trust on handling the pandemic and economic crash commensurate with their achievements. That translates into Democrats enjoying only a 6 point lead over the Republican leaders on trust to handle the current health care and economic crisis (53 to 47 percent); and only a 3 point lead when on trusting “much more” (38 to 35 percent).

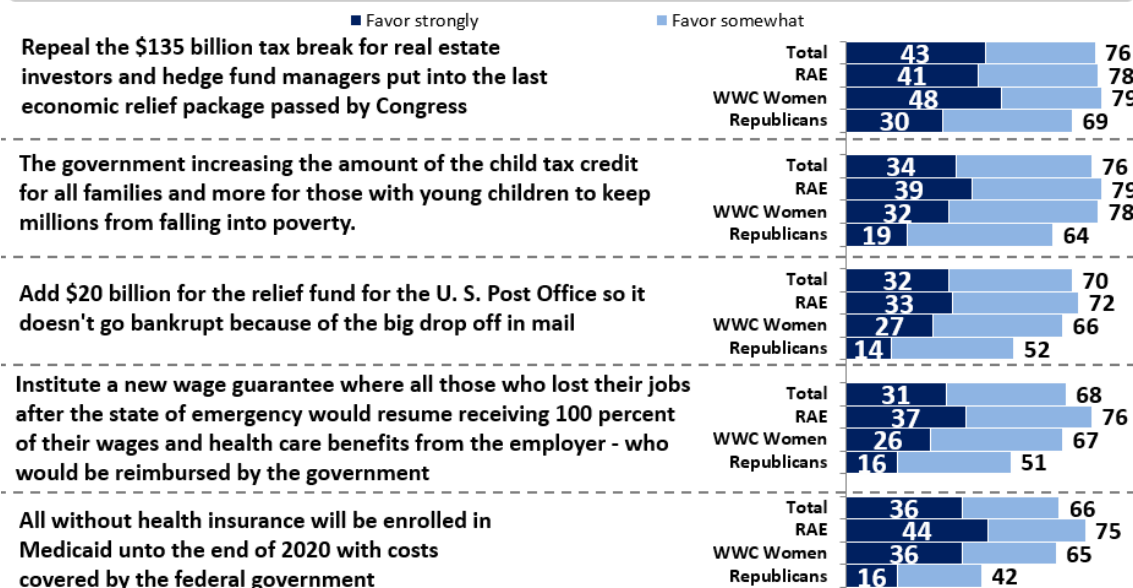
Democratic leaders need to do dramatically better if they are to own the amazing rescue of average citizens and small business.

Voters, it turns out, are strongly supportive of the proposals actively being discussed by congressional Democrats.

Congress has passed major new laws to deal with the pandemic and the economic crash and bring back small and big businesses. Please indicate whether you would favor or oppose each of the following proposals.



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The level of support for new proposals for a possible new CARES package rises to stratospheric levels. At each point in this pandemic crisis, the country becomes even more supportive of the bold options under consideration. At this point in the crisis on May 1, the top five proposals received an average of 82 percent support, including 44 percent strong support. A month ago, we tested five proposals and average support was 6 points lower; strong support was 4 points lower at a still impressive 40 percent. This crisis is producing historic policies, but also historic support for a bigger role for government.

Over 80 percent support people being able to use their food stamps to order deliveries and government paying for up to 12 weeks paid family leave because of the pandemic; almost half strongly favor both proposals. Two thirds of Republicans support both proposals.

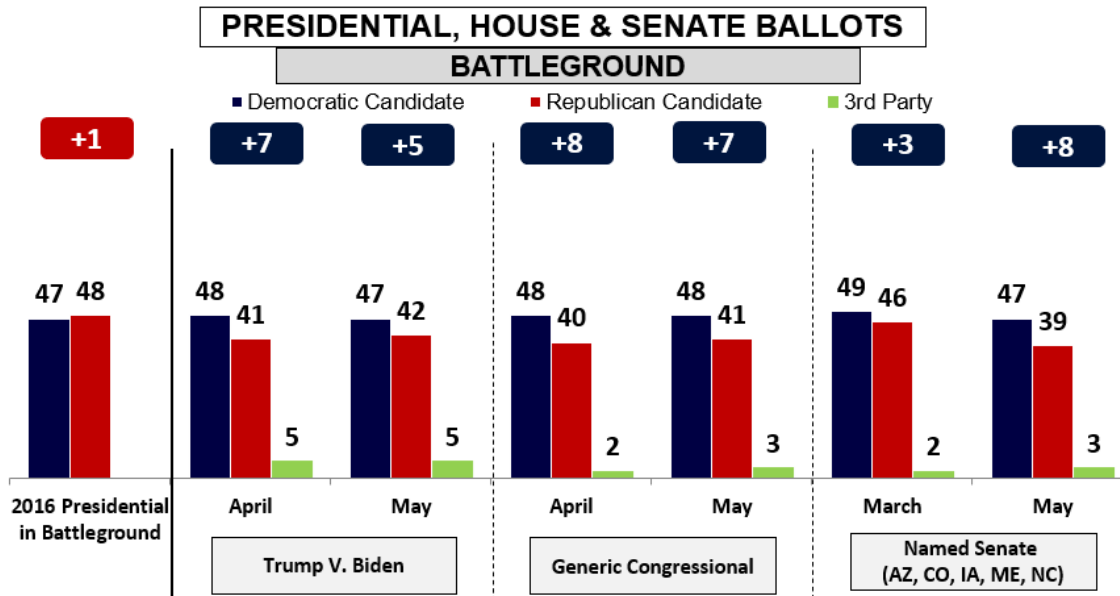
It is unprecedented for the public to support an additional trillion in spending: 80 percent support a \$500 billion program of 12 months employment in infrastructure construction; 76 percent support \$500 billion for the states to pay for schools, police, and fire. Over two thirds of Republicans support both proposals.

Only in this kind of climate do you have to add a second page of graphs on top-testing proposals if you want to show the more than three quarters support for increasing the child tax credit for all families and young children to keep from falling into poverty, and support for repeal of the \$135 billion tax break for real estate investors and hedge managers put in the last package. Two thirds of Republicans are on board with both proposals.

**Presidential race on edge**

Vice President Biden has edged down in the battleground states and enjoys only a 3-point margin in the blue wall states. He faces a threat on the horizon if President Trump could ever get the election down to who can best “bring back jobs,” but his immediate challenge is the Democratic primary contest that remains unfinished, despite being endorsed by all his opponents.

A very healthy 57 percent of Democrats voted or intended to vote for Biden, but 25 percent were for Sanders and another 15 percent for other candidates, including Warren, Bloomberg, Buttigieg, and Gabbard. And they are far from consolidated and engaged behind Biden.

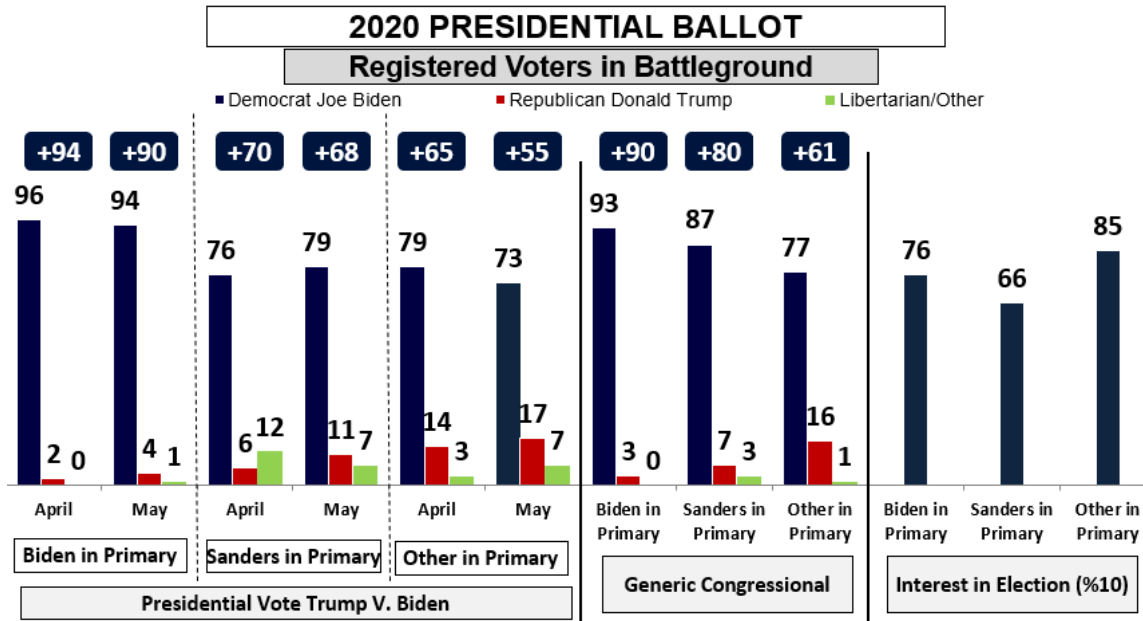


Fully 94 percent of Biden’s primary voters are voting for Biden over Trump, but that drops to 79 percent among Sanders voters and 73 percent for those who supported another primary candidate. Both of the non-Biden supporters give 7 percent of their vote to third party candidates. More alarming, 11 percent of Sanders voters support Trump in the general election, while others may choose to not vote at all: just 66 percent choose the highest level of interest, compared to 76 percent of Biden voters.

The Sanders voters cast 87 percent of their vote for the Democratic congressional candidates and nearly the same for the Senate — 8 points above their disappointing Biden vote.

The non-Sanders bloc is very engaged (85 percent score at the top of the interest scale) — almost 10 points above the Biden primary voters. They give the Democratic House and Senate candidates a very strong vote, but it is the Sanders voters that most underperform for Biden.





Biden is doing very well with African Americans, white unmarried women, and college women, while keeping the race very close with seniors. He gets disappointing numbers with white millennials where he is tied and Hispanics where he gets only 53 percent of their votes. That is why the voters who are most “reachable” for Biden are Hispanics (14 percent), white millennials (15 percent), and millennial men (18 percent).

Biden has a modest 8 point lead on whether voters trust Biden or Trump to handle a pandemic. That is close to the generic and presidential vote in the battleground states – but Biden enjoys no advantage on who would do a much better job. On the other hand, Trump enjoys a 5 point advantage on “getting people back to work” – with a 9 point advantage on who would do a much better job.

With President Trump losing altitude on handling the crisis, Democrats are very close to winning leads in the presidential, Senate and Congressional contests in the battleground states. The Biden drama is still unfolding because Democrats have not come close to settling their primary and Trump could loom in an epic economic battle.