



DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

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VOTERS SUPPORT THE BIDEN-SANDERS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

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Over the last two years, Data for Progress and YouGov Blue have fielded twenty-five national surveys—totaling over 1,600 questions—to measure public opinion across various policy areas. This document reviews polling on policies relevant to the recent Biden–Sanders Unity Task Force [recommendations memo](#). We read the document, paying special attention to policies mentioned in the latter half of the memo, and compared it to the database of questions we have asked on nationally representative surveys of self-identified registered voters. We find that most of the policies for which we have data enjoy, at minimum, a plurality of support among the American electorate—and many policies are supported by a large majority.

We compiled a [spreadsheet](#) laying out all relevant polling and corresponding recommendations in the Unity Task Force memo, but we highlight here a number of especially relevant and important polling numbers. We organize this document in the same way as the task force’s memo, with sections for climate, criminal justice, the economy, education, healthcare, and immigration.

CLIMATE

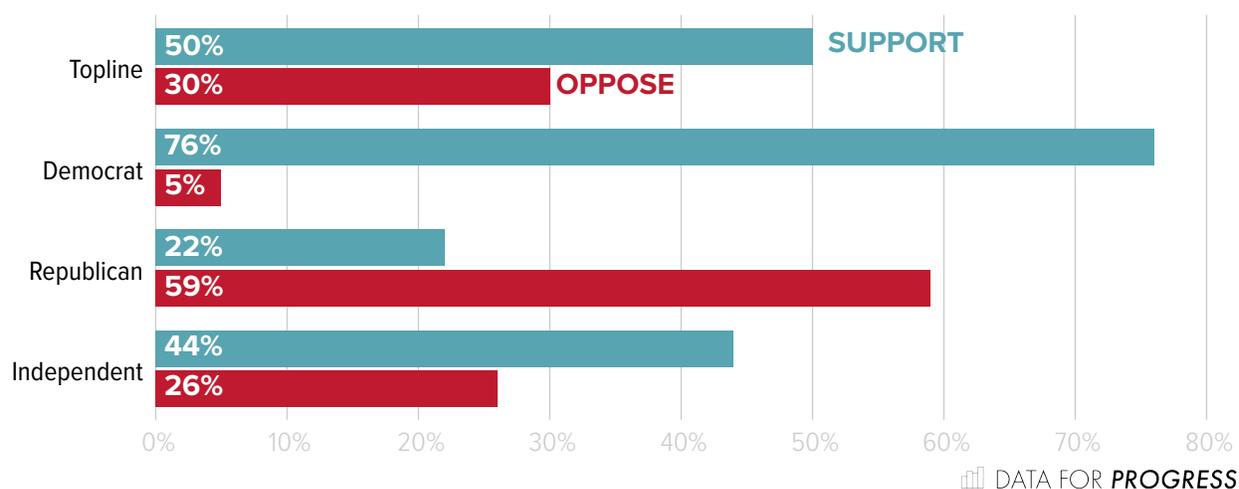
The Unity Task Force recommends an aggressive climate platform. Though it makes no mention of a Green New Deal, the memo’s policies reflect the impact that climate activists have made on the Democratic establishment. One of the most substantial proposals in the memo’s climate section, co-chaired by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and former Secretary of State John Kerry, is to “[e]liminate carbon pollution from power plants by 2035” (p. 47), which voters are likely to support since they already support phasing out coal plants within *ten* years (50 percent support, 30 percent oppose). To help offset the loss of power generated by carbon-producing plants, the task force proposes installing “500 million solar panels” and “60,000 onshore and offshore wind turbines” (p. 47), and we find that voters endorse a similar proposal of providing up to \$1.5 trillion in federal spending to construct enough new wind, solar, and geothermal energy

plants to power all homes and businesses in the country (59 percent support, 32 percent oppose). The task force also suggests rejoining the Paris Agreement, which aims to reduce carbon emissions internationally—a move that voters endorse by a 25-percentage-point margin (57 percent support, 32 percent oppose).

The task force also wants to increase funding to retrofit homes, weatherize them, and make them more energy efficient (p. 47); voters endorse a similar proposal to provide up to \$1.3 trillion in federal spending to weatherize homes and buildings to make them more energy efficient, thus reducing energy bills (60 percent support, 29 percent oppose). As for transportation, the task force wants to install “at least 500,000 public charging stations from coast to coast” (p. 48), and voters support an equivalent plan—to require federal highways to include enough roadside charging stations for electric vehicles to make cross-country trips—by a 42-point margin (66 percent support, 24 percent oppose).

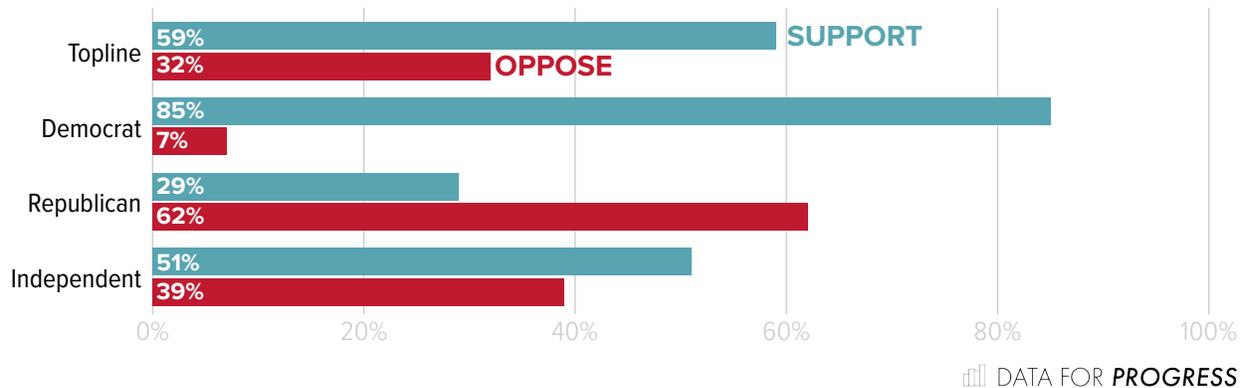
CLIMATE • FIGURE 1

Would you [support or oppose] a policy mandating the phasing out of domestic coal plants over the next ten years in favor of new clean energy facilities?



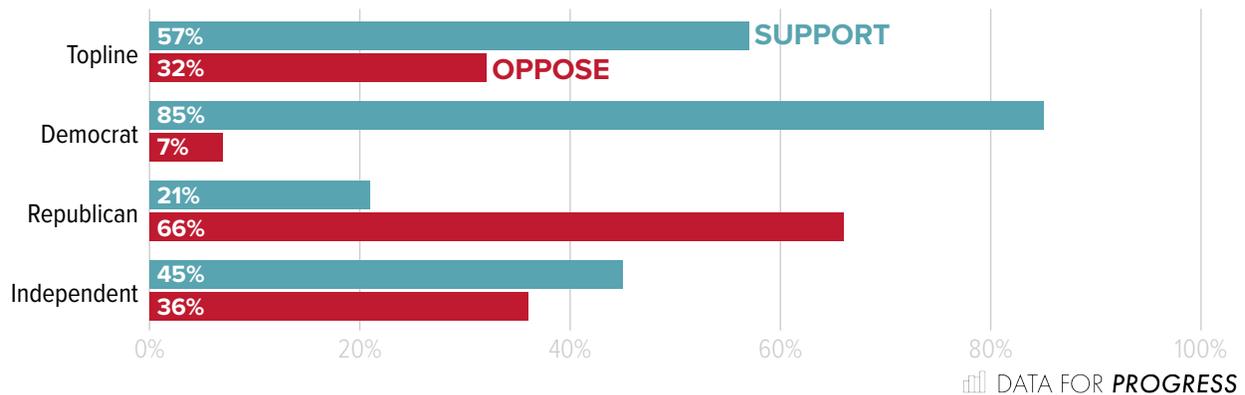
CLIMATE • FIGURE 2

Would you [support or oppose] a policy providing up to \$1.5 trillion in federal spending over the next 10 years to build enough new wind, solar, and geothermal energy plants to power all homes and businesses in the United States?



CLIMATE • FIGURE 3

Would you [support or oppose] re-admitting the United States to the Paris climate agreement, an international agreement to pursue global carbon emission reductions?



In addition to these goals, the task force seeks justice for those adversely affected by pollution and the climate crisis. It proposes to protect rural communities from water and air pollution, and to “stand up to corporate polluters who harm rural communities” (p. 51), partly by establishing an “Office of Environmental Justice” within the Department of Justice (p. 53). Voters are likely to support this because they overwhelmingly endorse taxing polluters to cover the costs of

environmental cleanup and medical expenses resulting from their operations (75 percent support, 14 percent oppose).

The scope of these projects, coupled with their deadlines, would curb emissions, empower workers, promote justice for communities on the frontlines of pollution, and give future generations a chance in the fight against the climate crisis.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Unity Task Force recommends a number of reforms to the criminal justice system, with the dual goals of keeping our communities safe and delivering justice. Its policies range across domains such as increasing law-enforcement oversight and revising the juvenile justice system. It also proposes reforms to the entire criminal justice pipeline: policing, prosecution, public defense, bail, sentencing, prisons, rehabilitation, and reentry.

Among its proposed reforms to the criminal justice system, the task force suggests allocating federal funding to create a civilian corps of unarmed first responders, such as social workers, EMTs, and mental-health professionals (p. 57). This is a very popular policy: 72 percent of voters support creating a new agency of unarmed first responders to handle calls that do not need police

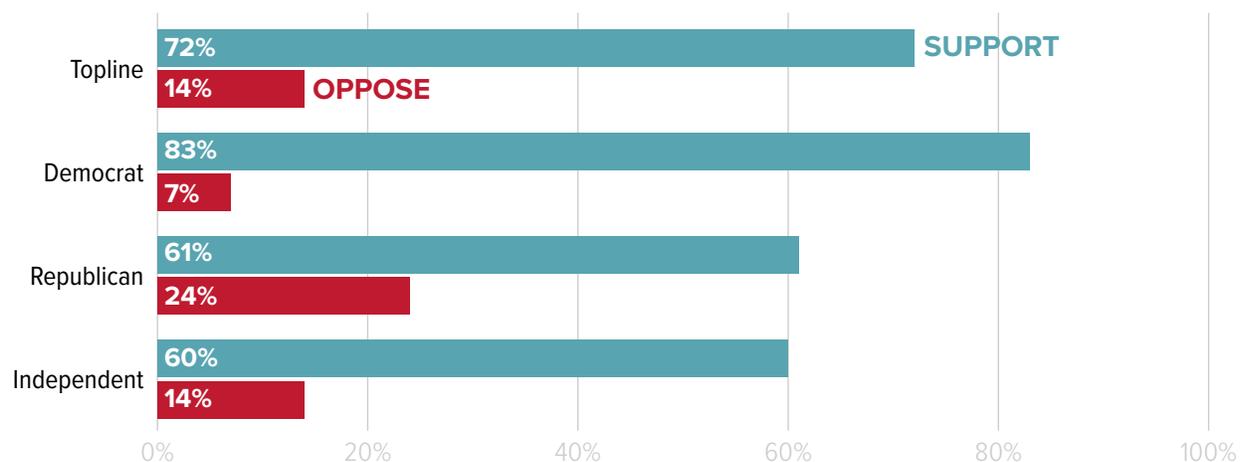
involvement, while only 14 percent of voters oppose it—a 58-point margin of support. (Another survey replicated this level of support, finding a 55-point margin.)

The task force recommends extending funding for education during and after prison sentences (p. 60), a policy that 87 percent of voters support, with only 8 percent opposing it. Reducing criminal penalties for drug possession (p. 59) is also popular, with 69 percent of voters supporting it and 15 percent opposing it. The task force also proposes making data on all core police activities publicly available (p. 57), a proposal that 66 percent of voters support and only 8 percent oppose.

A plurality, if not a majority, of voters support many of the task force’s other proposals, such as: ending cash bail (p. 59; 57 percent support, 26 percent oppose), reforming the bail system to reduce pretrial detention (p. 59; 45 percent

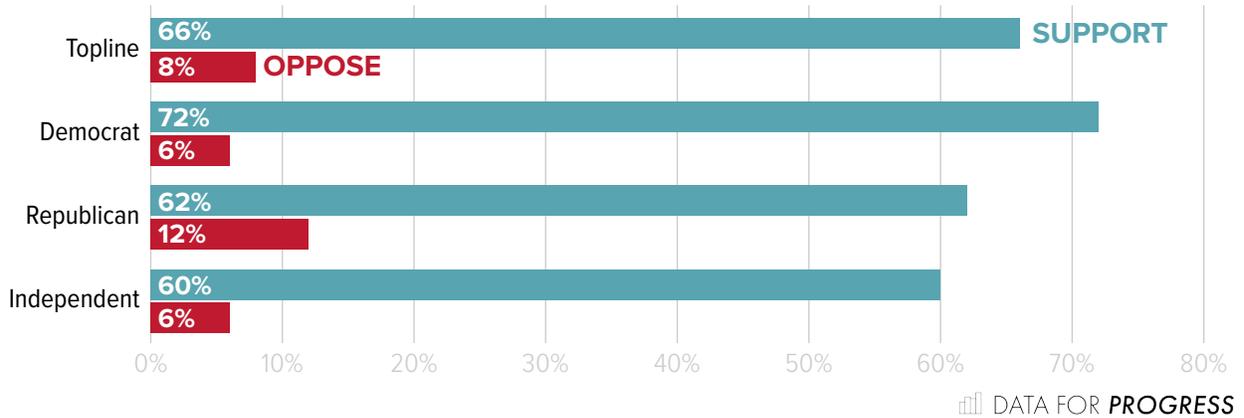
CRIMINAL JUSTICE • FIGURE 4

Recently, some have proposed a variety of ways to reform the criminal justice system. Please indicate whether you would [support or oppose] the following proposed reforms. A reform to... Create a new agency of first-responders, like emergency medical services or firefighters, to deal with issues related to addiction or mental illness that need to be remedied but do not need police

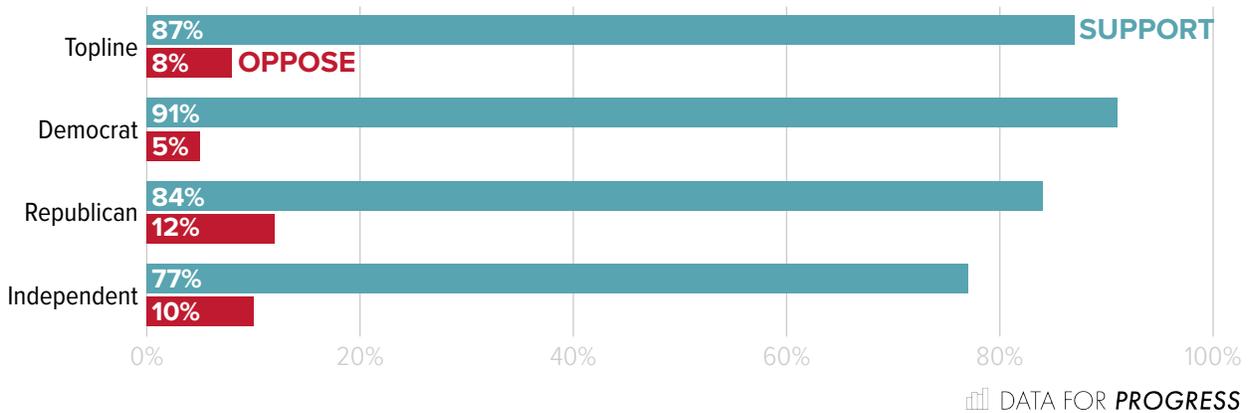


DATA FOR PROGRESS

Would you [support or oppose] making public the details of internal police investigations that find evidence of misconduct, like committing perjury or filing a false report? Public disclosure would be limited to investigations that uncover evidence of wrongdoing.



Recently, some have proposed a variety of ways to reform the criminal justice system. Please indicate whether you would [support or oppose] the following proposed reforms. A reform to... Provide educational and vocational training to all people who are incarcerated to better prepare them for success when they return to their communities



support, 24 percent oppose), ending solitary confinement (p. 59; 52 percent support, 35 percent oppose), and repealing minimum sentencing (p. 59; 60 percent support, 27 percent oppose). Voters also widely support reforms related to removing restrictions to reentry; for example, 56 percent of voters support outlawing discrimination based on felony records in access to housing, education, social services, and employment—with only 27 percent of voters in opposition. Expanding

mental-health counseling and substance-use treatment for reentrants (p. 61) is also highly popular with 75 percent of voters in support and 15 percent in opposition.

Regarding changes to juvenile justice policy, we find that abolishing life without parole for juveniles (p. 61) is narrowly popular—42 percent of voters support this policy and 33 percent oppose it.

ECONOMY

The Unity Task Force recommends several policies attacking a broad swath of economic problems. It proposes passing a federal mandate of twelve weeks of paid family leave (p. 65), capping interest rates (p. 74), establishing postal banking (p. 74), and combating the legacy of Jim Crow (p. 63).

Sixty-six percent of voters support a national twelve-week paid family and medical leave policy, even when voters were told the policy’s cost to the typical full-time worker (about \$2 per paycheck); just 27 percent of voters oppose the policy. This policy is supported by 85 percent of Democrats, 55 percent of independents, and 46 percent of Republicans, with the policy earning net-positive support across the partisan spectrum.

To help America’s unbanked citizens, the task force also calls for reinstating postal banking (p. 74). Voters have not yet made up their minds about postal banking: 28 percent of voters support it, 31 percent oppose it, and the plurality

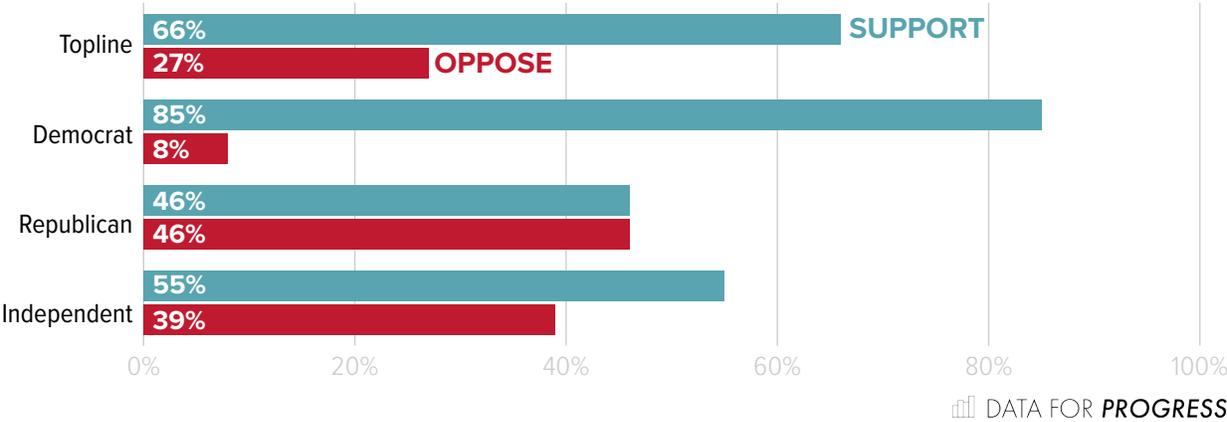
are undecided. Support is driven by Democrats (41 percent support, 18 percent oppose), and opposition by independents (27 percent support, 33 percent oppose) and Republicans (17 percent support, 46 percent oppose).

The task force vows to fight “usurious interest rates” (pg. 74). Voters are sure to support this mission, since 65 percent of them support an interest-rate cap like that proposed in the Loan Shark Prevention Act (15 percent); only 15 percent of voters oppose it. Notably, independents are the most likely partisan group to support this policy, with 67 percent backing it; about 66 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Republicans support the policy.

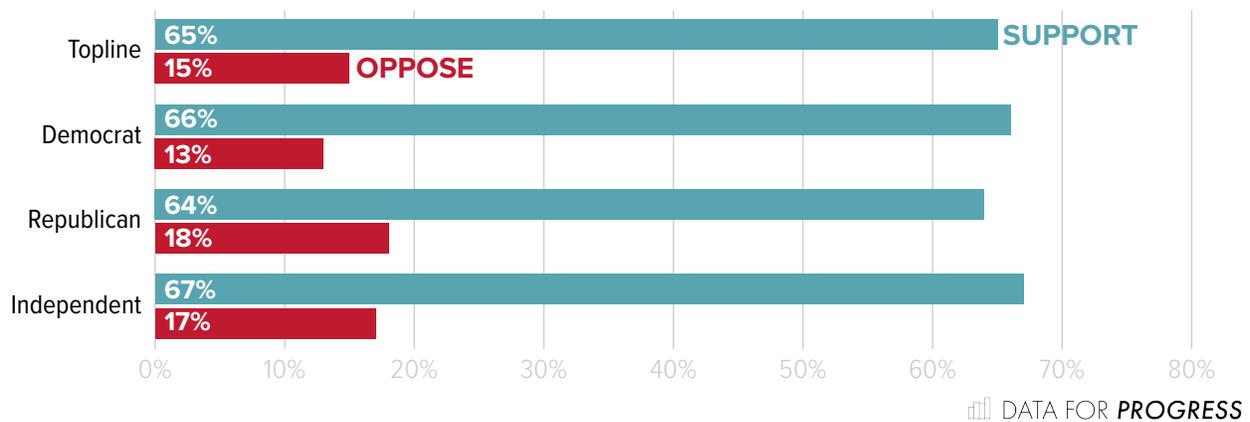
The task force calls for shovel-ready infrastructure jobs (p. 67) as well as the requirement that these jobs adhere to the highest standards of labor agreements. Voters are likely to endorse this idea, since 55 percent support a policy giving every American who wants one a job scaling up renewable energy, weatherizing homes and office buildings, developing mass-transit projects, and

ECONOMY • FIGURE 7

For each of the following policies, please say whether you [support or oppose] the proposal. 12 Weeks of Paid Leave



Would you [support or oppose] a policy capping the interest rate on all consumer credit products at fifteen percent, including credit cards and loans?



maintaining green community spaces; only 18 percent of voters oppose the policy.

The task force also recommends an extensive set of worker protections in federal contracting decisions. The task force calls to:

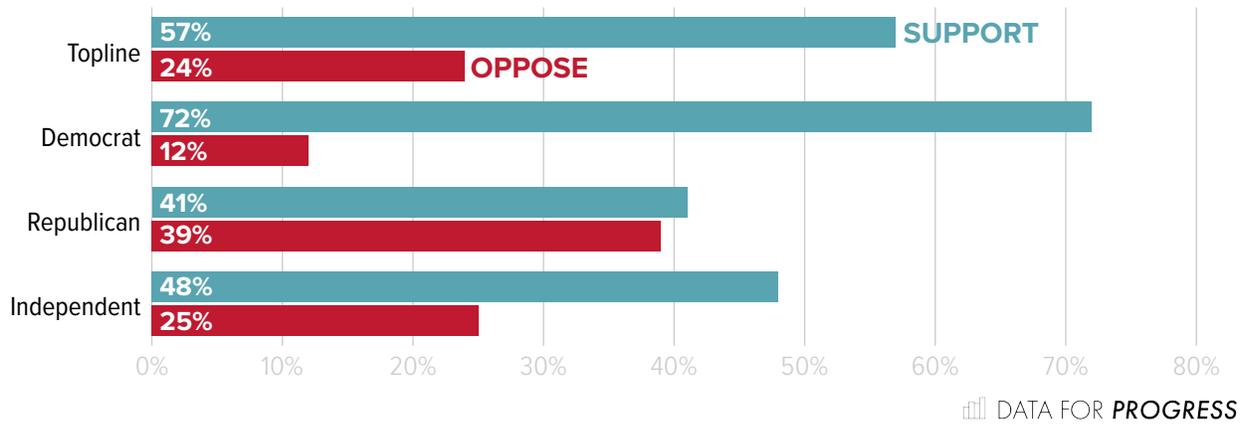
Issue an executive order to prevent companies from receiving federal contracts that outsource jobs overseas, pay workers less than \$15 an hour without benefits, refuse to remain neutral in union organizing efforts, hire workers to replace striking workers, or close businesses after workers vote to unionize. (p. 71)

These kinds of worker protections are very popular. Fifty-seven percent of voters support a policy forbidding federal contracts to companies that pay low wages, outsource too many jobs, or actively prevent employees from unionizing—with only 24 percent of voters opposed. This policy enjoys net support across the political spectrum: Democrats support the policy by 60 points (72 percent support, 12 percent oppose), independents support it by 23 points (48 percent

support, 25 percent oppose), and Republicans support it by 2 points (41 percent support, 39 percent oppose).

The task force also calls for a just economic recovery that empowers communities of color and combats the legacy of Jim Crow. To help close the racial wealth gap, the task force proposes policies “expanding access to credit, working to boost homeownership and build more affordable housing, and supporting minority-owned small businesses” (p. 19). Voters tend to support policies to close the racial wealth gap. For example, 68 percent of voters support a policy requiring funding to be equal between school districts in low-income communities of color and more-affluent communities, with just 20 percent of voters opposing the policy. This policy references the history of using school-funding procedures to ensure that wealthier and historically whiter neighborhoods have better funded schools, while lower-income communities do not, thus perpetuating a racial wealth gap and education gap. (This replicates an earlier survey finding 68 percent support the policy and 22 percent oppose it.)

Would you [support or oppose] a policy forbidding federal contracts to companies that pay low wages, outsource too many jobs, or actively prevent their employees from being unionized?



Voters also endorse policies that would empower local communities to buy, sell, and own homes. Sixty-one percent of voters support a program that trains and employs local residents in real estate development projects, with only 21 percent of voters opposing it. Voters agree with the task force that residents of public housing should be able to control how money is spent to maintain and repair buildings (61 percent support, 21 percent oppose).

The task force plans to target the racist legacy of Jim Crow laws—a move that is sure to be wildly popular with voters. Eighty-two percent of voters support reworking the tax code outright to combat the legacy of Jim Crow, by ensuring tax

credits and government investments are available for jobs and housing in low-income communities; only 9 percent of voters oppose this.

Finally, in situations where homeowners face the loss of their home, the task force calls for a policy to “[p]rovide legal support for low-income individuals seeking to address legal matters related to evictions and foreclosures” (p. 72). Voters agree that low-income people deserve backup when facing eviction or foreclosure: 47 percent of voters support a policy in which the government pays for legal counsel for tenants facing eviction who cannot afford it, and only 27 percent of voters oppose it.

EDUCATION

The Unity Task Force recommends various policies to foster educational equity, secure rights for teachers, move toward universal education, and tackle a bulk of the student debt crisis.

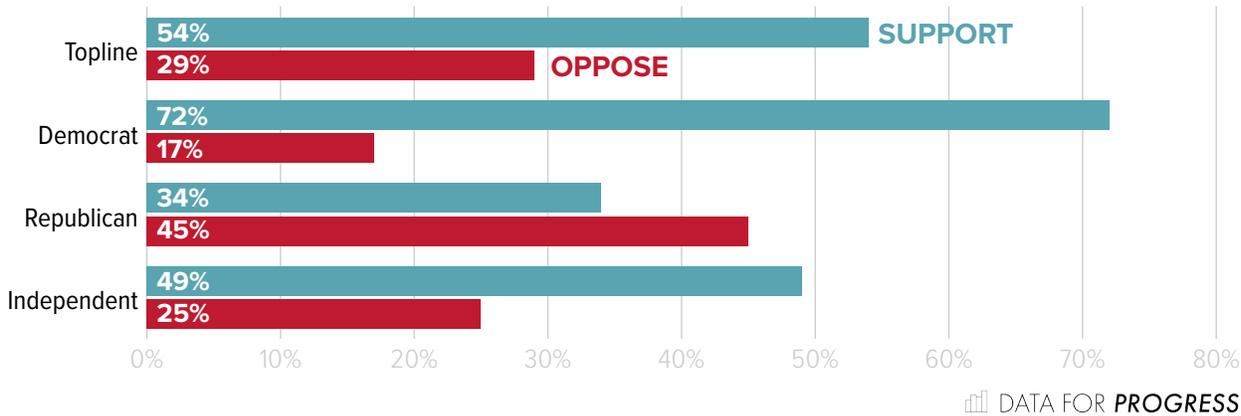
The task force seeks to ensure that early-childhood educators have the right to organize and collectively bargain (p. 79); it also aims to pass the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (p. 82), which gives every public-sector employee the right to negotiate fair wages and working conditions. The United States’s inability to enact sufficiently robust public-health safeties in the wake of the coronavirus has all but ensured that a return to regular schooling will put children and teachers in mortal danger. Many cities currently refusing to cancel in-person classes are seeing their teachers’

unions and local organizers calling for a strike in the fall. Voters overwhelmingly support the teachers’ right to strike (54 percent support, 29 percent oppose).

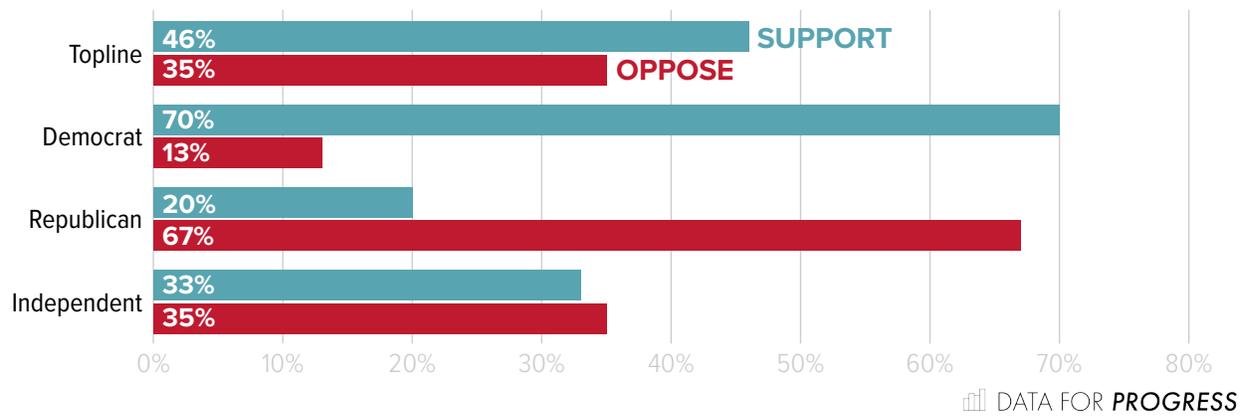
The task force recommends a number of very specific policies to address the student debt crisis (pp. 85-86), such as cancelling student loans for public servants and teachers, borrowers who went to predatory schools, and those with a permanent disability. Voters are likely to support these measures, since they generally support the Democratic Party’s prioritization of addressing student debt. A plurality of voters (48 percent support, 40 percent oppose) endorse the much simpler plan of outright cancelling all outstanding student debt. In two other surveys, we find similar results for reversing the McConnell–Trump tax cuts and using the proceeds to cancel student debt (41 percent support, 35 percent oppose; 46 percent support, 35 percent oppose).

EDUCATION • FIGURE 10

Currently, a majority of states legally prohibit teachers from striking. Do you [support or oppose] the right of teachers to strike?



Would you [support or oppose] reversing the tax cuts passed in 2017 by Congressional Republicans and signed by President Trump, and using any proceeds to cancel outstanding student debt?



Other policy recommendations from the task force address problems in the foundation of American education. Civil rights and educational equity have dogged our school systems for generations. In response, the task force recommends that the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education be revived and empowered to monitor and conduct investigations into racial and ethnic

segregation (p. 87), an idea that the American electorate widely endorses (56 percent support, 28 percent oppose). The task force also proposes a childcare guarantee through grant assistance, encompassing both universal pre-K (p. 79) and childcare services (p. 78). Voters not only support such a program, but also they endorse one that requires workers involved be paid at least \$15 per hour (46 percent support, 32 percent oppose).

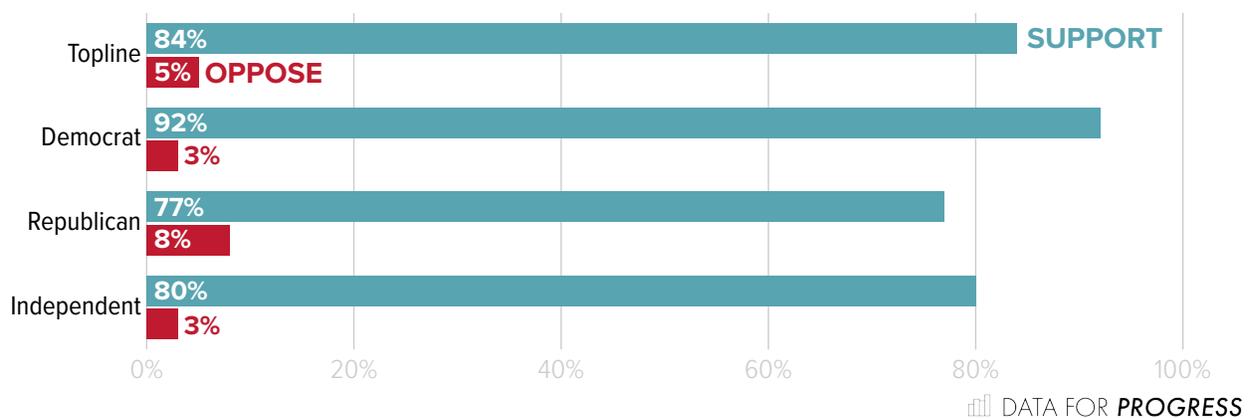
HEALTHCARE

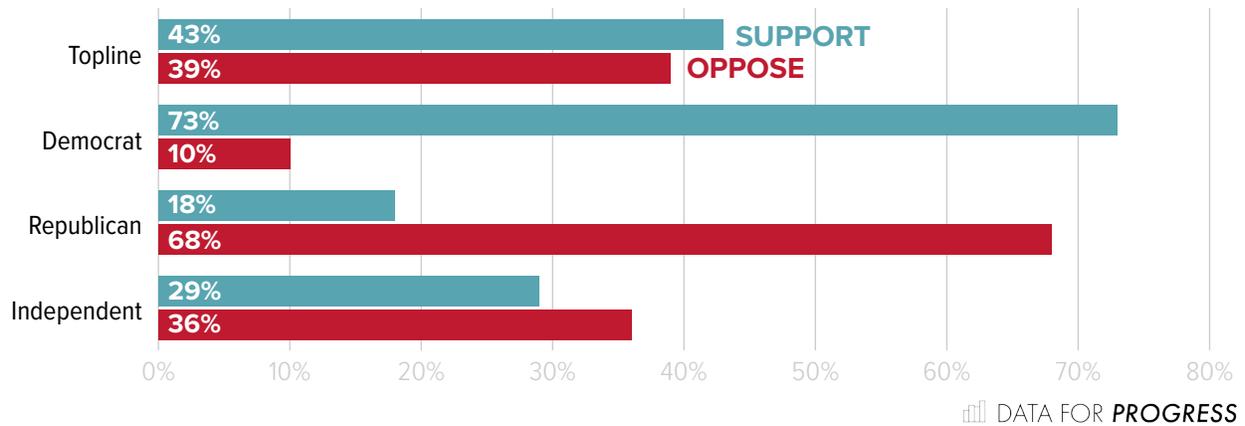
The Unity Task Force recommends a public option for healthcare coverage. Although some leaders involved in the task force have been visible proponents of Medicare for All, the task force advances the public option as a path to universal healthcare access, with the federal government providing competitive healthcare coverage to all Americans who opt in through a Medicare-facilitated program. Forty-three percent of voters support the federal government providing a public option, with 39 percent opposing this idea. Within the various public-option proposals, the task force mentions that every American should be able to access mental-health services or substance-abuse treatment and promote expansion through Medicaid to cover anyone who needs it. Seventy-two percent of voters support the creation of a new agency of first-responders dedicated to addressing addiction or other mental illnesses where police are not needed, an apt step for universal coverage for mental-health care.

The task force also outlines a series of policies that would expand Medicare’s negotiating power and eventually eliminate cost barriers to prescriptions. The task force calls to “defang the outrageous negotiation bar” (p. 94), limit arbitrary cost inflation for name-brand pharmaceuticals and overpriced generic pharmaceuticals, and direct Medicare to address excessively priced drugs through third-party reviewers (p. 94). Sixty-four percent of voters support the removal of the noninterference clause, which disallows Medicare from negotiating drug prices with pharmaceutical companies; only 16 percent of voters oppose this. Voters support for allowing Medicare to directly negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies varies between 84 percent and 77 percent support, with opposition at 5 percent and 8 percent, respectively. In addition, 71 percent of voters support the federal government’s right to revoke the patent on a specific medication if the company is charging a price deemed too high for most people to afford.

HEALTHCARE • FIGURE 11

Some have proposed allowing Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices with pharmaceutical companies. Do you [support or oppose] this idea?



Do you [support or oppose] a policy providing a public option to every American?

The task force mentions a commitment to “health equity and to eliminating health disparities that continue to account for disproportionate death and disease among people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, and rural Americans ” (p. 97). The task force intends to establish reporting services across all relevant federal departments and agencies to study disparities and barriers experienced by people of color. These interested parties would report back and communicate specific policy recommendations, especially regarding disparities within the healthcare system (p. 98). Voters are likely to support this, since 75

percent of them agree that race plays a major role in the quality of healthcare one receives; only 10 percent disagree with this idea. Additionally, 66 percent of voters support measures to invest in “restoring and revitalizing... communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs and mass incarceration, particularly Black and Latino urban neighborhoods.” In that vein, the task force recommends recruiting and investing in healthcare workers of color and expanding cultural competency, medical ethics, and implicit bias training to all medical professionals to address disparities (p. 99).

IMMIGRATION

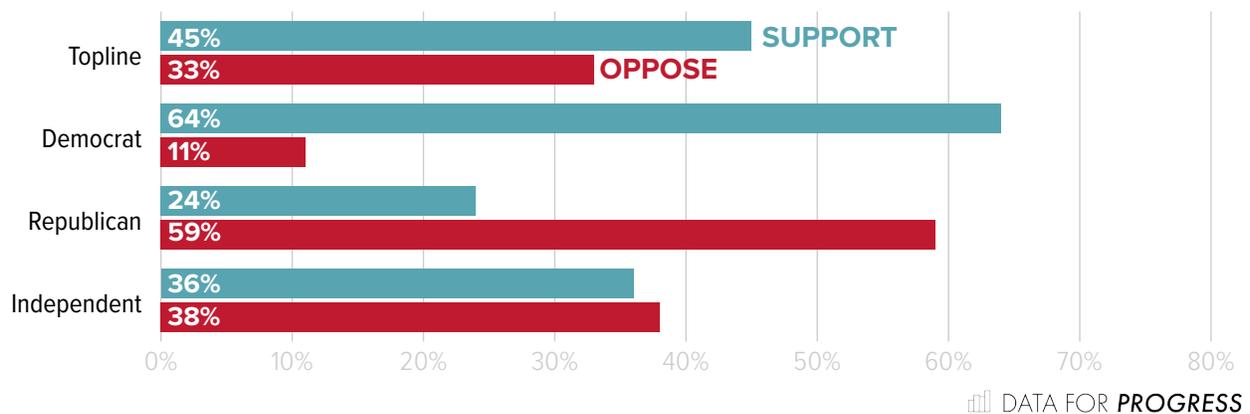
The Unity Task Force recommends many reforms to immigration, focusing on the systems of deportations, detentions, and on reversing discriminatory policies enacted by the Trump administration. The task force proposes prioritizing investments in alternatives to detention (p. 106), ending the use of for-profit detention facilities and use of detention as a last resort (p. 106), and a hundred-day moratorium on deportations (p. 103). Additionally, the task force advocates for conducting a full-scale study on the current practices of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Customs and Border Protection (CBP), leading to the development of recommendations for changing policies and practices at these agencies (p. 103).

Voters agree with the task force’s prioritization. Voters support the hundred-day moratorium on deportations (45 percent support, 33 percent oppose), and a plurality (49 percent) agrees that detention and deportation is not the solution to the eleven million undocumented people in the United States.

The Unity Task Force recommends creating a process for deported veterans (p. 106) and ending the abuse and politicization of the denaturalization process (including the Trump administration’s discriminatory travel and immigration bans; pp. 103-104). Voters also widely support halting the deportation of veterans as well as granting citizenship automatically to every immigrant who volunteers to serve in the military (66 percent support, 20 percent oppose). Likewise, voters support a full repeal of the “Muslim ban” (47 percent support, 40 percent oppose), which severely limits immigration from many Muslim-majority countries.

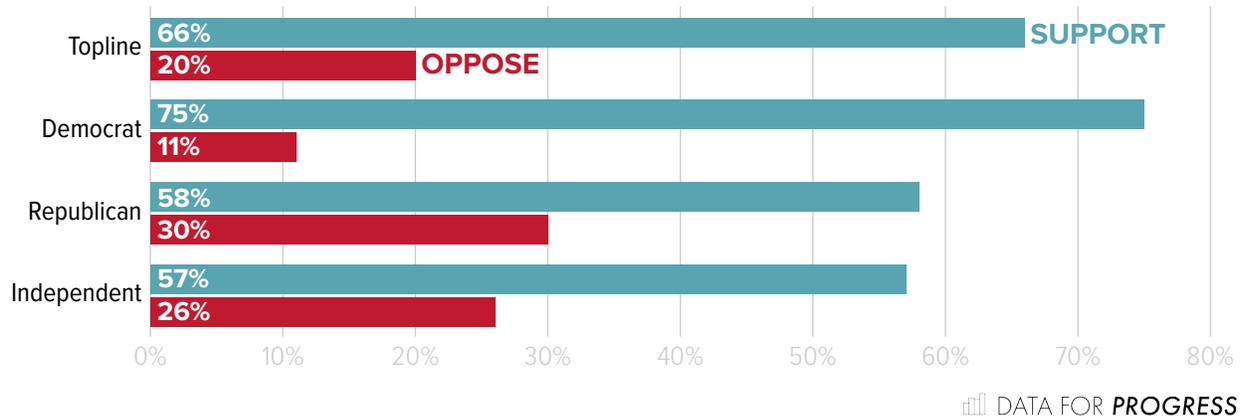
IMMIGRATION • FIGURE 13

Do you [support or oppose] the following policy proposal? Instituting a moratorium on deportations until a thorough audit of past practices and policies is complete.



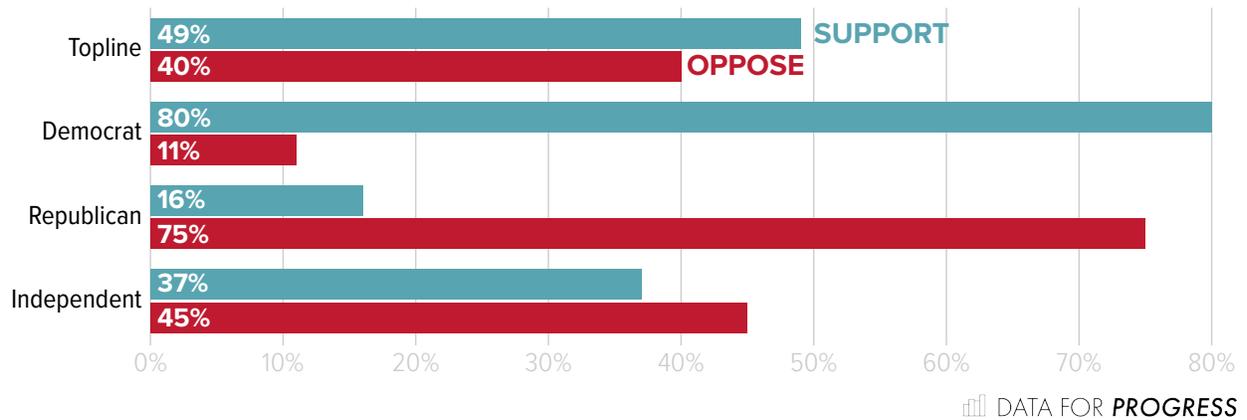
IMMIGRATION • FIGURE 14

For each of the following proposals, please say whether you [support or oppose] that proposal. Halting the deportation of veterans, and granting citizenship automatically to every immigrant who volunteers to serve in the military.



IMMIGRATION • FIGURE 15

Next, you will read statements some are saying about our current immigration system. For each of those statements, please say whether you agree with that statement, disagree, or are unsure. Detention and deportation is not the solution to the 11 million undocumented people in the US.



CONCLUSION

The Biden–Sanders Unity Task Force memo contains many progressive policies, particularly those addressing the climate crisis and student debt. Data for Progress and YouGov Blue have surveyed many of these policies—and closely related ones—over the previous two years, and we find that the task force’s platform enjoys robust support from the American electorate. The United States faces many challenges at the moment, and it is clear that many progressive solutions are popular among American voters.

METHODS

Each survey was conducted by YouGov Blue on the internet, surveying self-reported registered voters. Each sample was weighted according to gender, age, race, education, US Census region, and 2016 presidential vote choice based on the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement. Respondents were selected by YouGov to be representative of registered voters. The following table summarizes the survey details for each of the twenty-five surveys underlying this report.

Survey ID	Survey Date	N	Weight Min	Weight Mean	Weight Max	Weight SD
1	2018-07-14 to 2018-07-17	1515	0.5	1	3.5	0.5
2	2018-10-10 to 2018-10-15	1903	0.6	1	2.8	0.3
3	2019-01-25 to 2019-01-28	1282	0.2	1	4.4	0.5
4	2019-03-30 to 2019-04-04	975	0.4	1	5.0	0.5
5	2019-04-16 to 2019-04-18	1071	0.3	1	6.1	0.6
6	2019-05-30 to 2019-06-03	1057	0.2	1	6.1	0.6
7	2019-06-12 to 2019-06-13	1030	0.2	1	6.0	0.7
8	2019-07-12 to 2019-07-17	1048	0.2	1	6.0	0.6
9	2019-07-26 to 2019-07-29	1009	0.2	1	4.8	0.5
10	2019-08-15 to 2019-08-17	1380	0.1	1	6.0	0.6
11	2019-08-29 to 2019-09-01	1127	0.2	1	6.0	0.7
12	2019-09-11 to 2019-09-13	1280	0.2	1	6.3	0.5
13	2019-09-13 to 2019-09-16	1006	0.1	1	5.9	0.5
14	2019-09-28 to 2019-09-30	1025	0.1	1	6.0	0.8
15	2019-10-11 to 2019-10-14	1024	0.1	1	6.1	0.8
16	2019-10-19 to 2019-10-21	1159	0.1	1	6.7	0.6
17	2019-10-31 to 2019-10-31	1005	0.1	1	6.1	0.8
18	2019-11-09 to 2019-11-11	1216	0.0	1	6.0	0.8

Survey ID	Survey Date	N	Weight Min	Weight Mean	Weight Max	Weight SD
19	2019-11-16 to 2019-11-18	962	0.0	1	6.2	1.0
20	2019-11-27 to 2019-11-29	1029	0.1	1	6.1	0.8
21	2019-12-14 to 2019-12-16	1062	0.0	1	6.0	0.8
22	2019-12-27 to 2019-12-30	1025	0.2	1	6.2	0.9
23	2020-03-20 to 2020-03-23	1114	0.1	1	6.0	0.7
24	2020-05-08 to 2020-05-11	1058	0.1	1	6.0	0.6
25	2020-06-05 to 2020-06-07	1085	0.1	1	6.0	0.6

COVER PHOTO
Ryoji Iwata/Unsplash