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# VOTERS WANT A PUBLIC OPTION FOR BROADBAND, CHILD CARE AND HOUSING

Likely voters also favor massive public investments in infrastructure

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As part of a December 2020 survey, Data for Progress polled 1,116 likely voters nationally to measure attitudes toward the creation of public options for broadband, child care, and housing, and government-directed investments in infrastructure.

We find high levels of support for all four of these proposals and that likely voters prefer government-run public options to tax credits. Typically positioned as a “moderate alternative,” tax credits have often been pitched to voters as a way to access quality housing, child care, and internet, and finance infrastructure spending. What these results should make plain is that the electorate not only wants the government to deliver essential social infrastructure but that they want it to be straightforward, accessible, and visible.

## Voters Support the Creation of Public Options

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All four proposals we tested — three different kinds of public options in housing, child care, and for broadband, and a massive government-directed investment in infrastructure — enjoy overwhelming support among likely voters. Public investment in infrastructure is the most popular. Among all likely voters, it enjoys a 74-percentage-point margin of support (83 percent support, 9 percent oppose). This support also extends across partisan lines: likely voters that self-identify as Democrats, Republicans and Independent / Third Party voters back it by margins of 75-points, 77-points, and 73-points, respectively. A public option for housing, broadband, and child care enjoy similarly high levels of support. Among all likely voters, these three proposals are backed by margins of 38-points, 42-points, and 37-points, respectively. Again, this support extends across party lines.

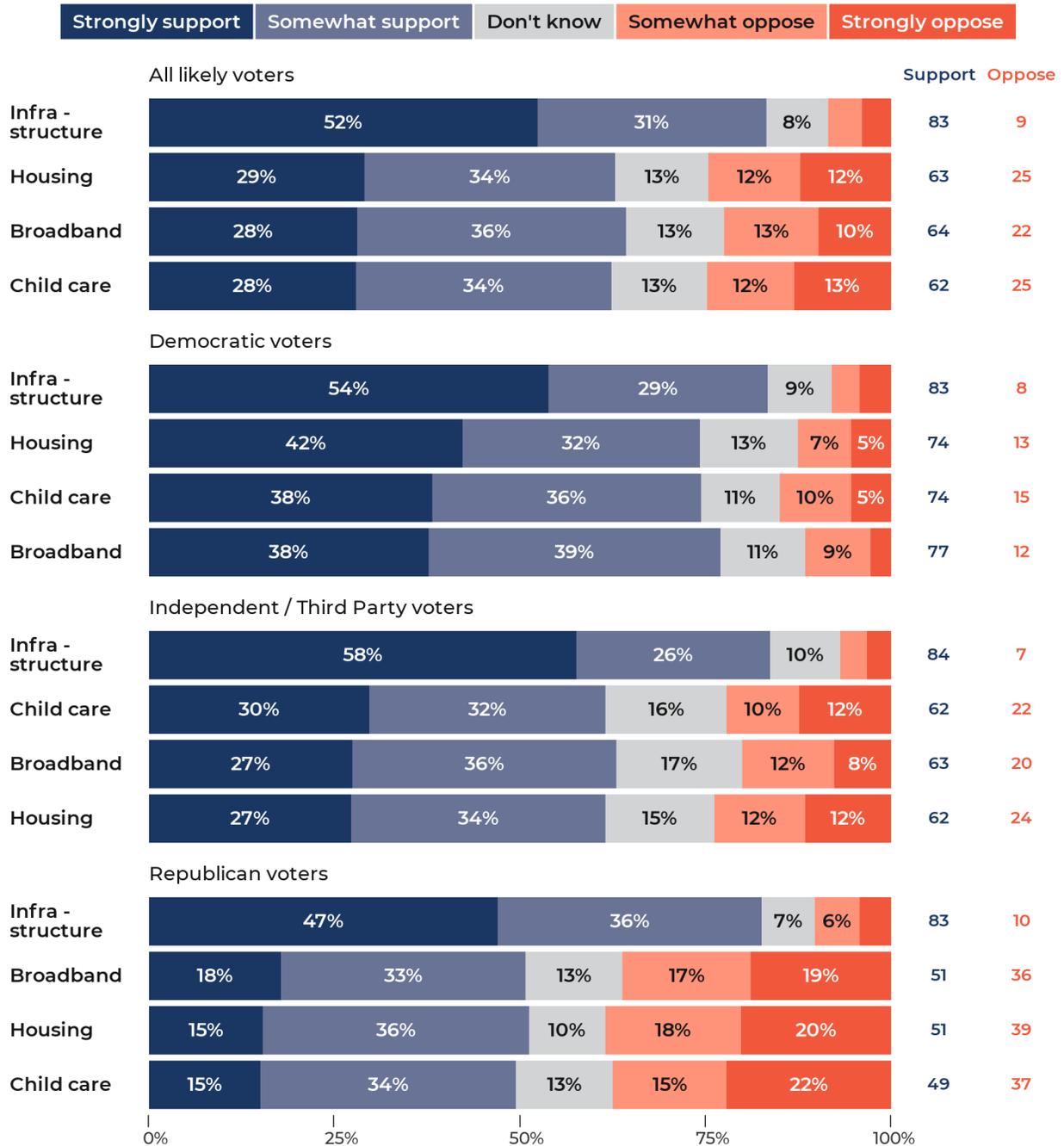
## Public Option vs. Status Quo and Tax Credits

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The survey then presented voters with messaging favoring and opposing these public options and messaging pitting the public option against a moderate alternative — in this case, tax credits. We find that voters not only support the creation of these public investments but in fact prefer them to both the status quo and to tax credits.

# Public Options Are Extremely Popular With Voters

Below you'll read about some policy proposals. For each, say you support or oppose them.



Dec 30 to Dec 30, 2020 survey of 1166 likely voters

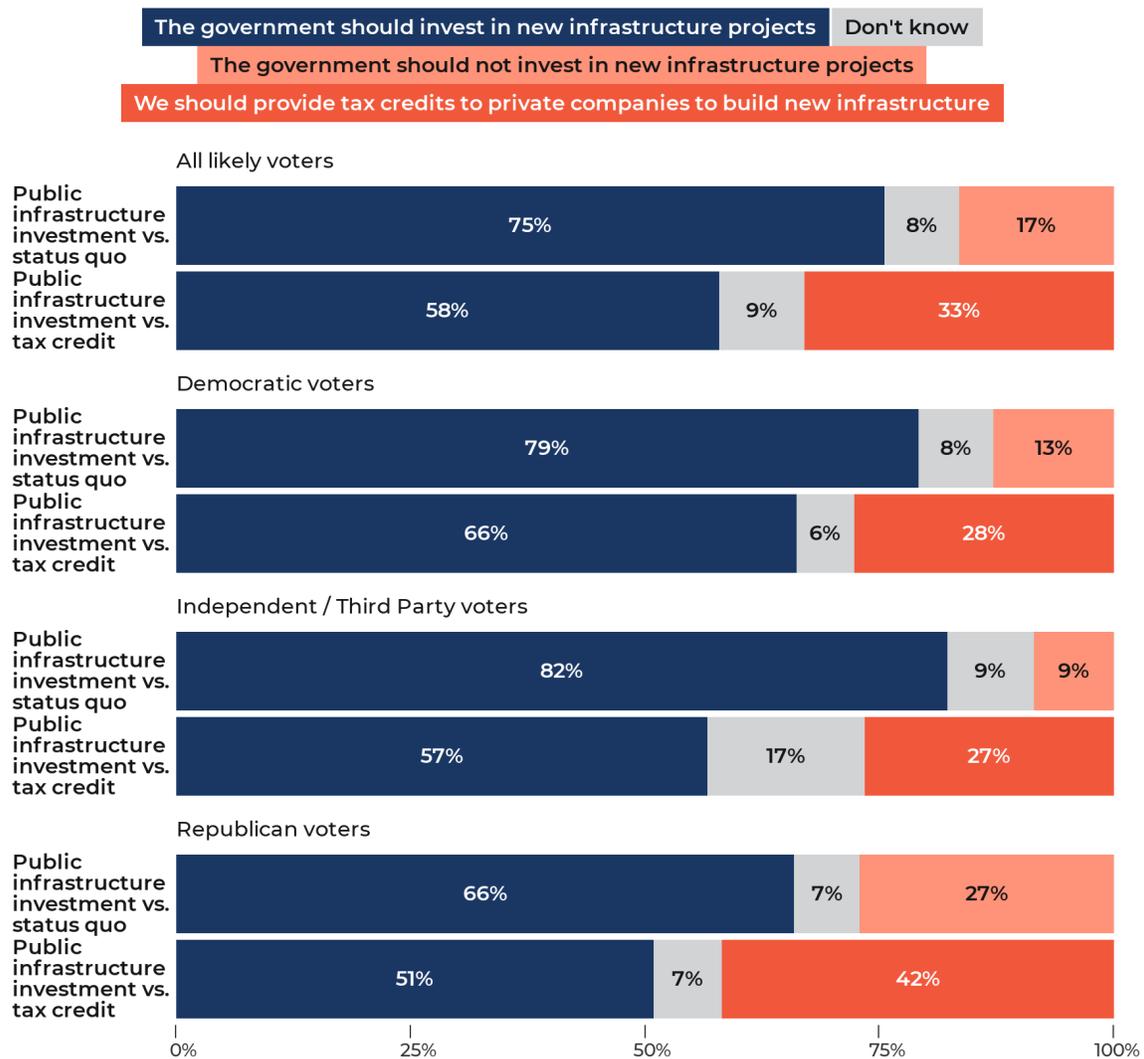
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# Infrastructure

After messaging, likely voters prefer a publicly-directed investment in infrastructure over the status quo of no action being taken by a 58-point margin. We also asked likely voters if they preferred publicly-directed investment or for the government to provide tax credits to private companies (the moderate alternative). We find that likely voters prefer the public option by a 25-point margin (58 percent to 33 percent). Across party lines, a majority of likely voters want to see not only publicly-directed investment in infrastructure when weighed against the status quo but prefer the government lead the way when compared against the use of tax credits.

## Voters Support A Publicly-Directed Infrastructure Investment And Prefer This To Using Tax Credits

Voters were provided statements for and against these proposals and then asked which option came closer to their view.



Dec 30 to Dec 30, 2020 survey of 1166 likely voters

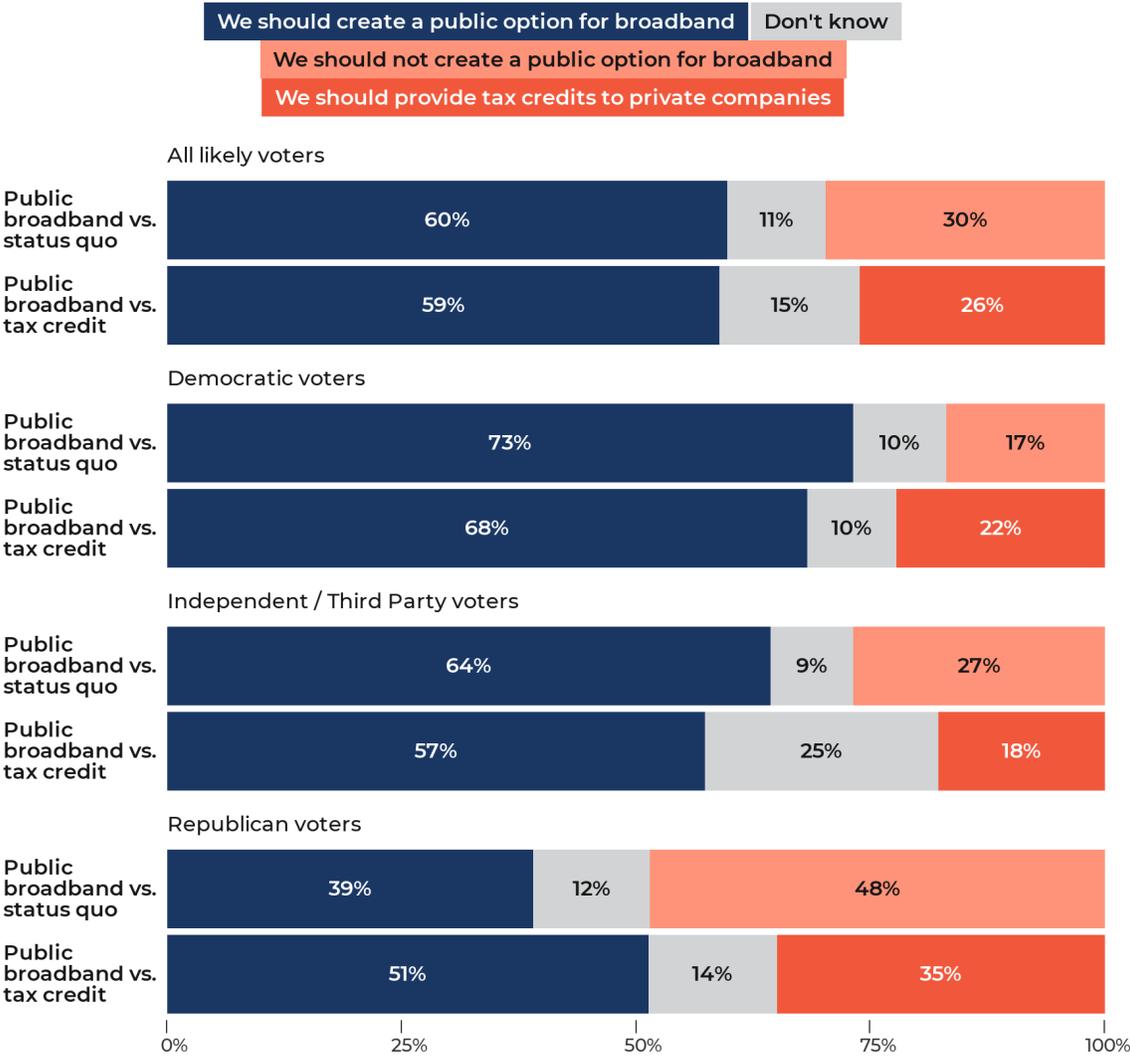
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# Broadband

Among all likely voters, the creation of a public option for broadband is backed by a 30-point margin and a public option is preferred to providing tax credits by a 33-point margin. Among Democrats, a public option is supported by a 56-point margin and preferred to the moderate alternative a 46-point margin. Among Independents, we see similar numbers. A public option is supported by a 37-point margin and preferred to tax credits by a 39-point margin. Notably, while Republicans oppose the creation of a public option when framed as an up-or-down by a nine-point margin, they actually prefer a government-run public option to providing private companies tax credits by a 16-point margin.

## Voters Support A Public Option For Broadband And Prefer It To Providing Tax Credits

Voters were provided statements for and against these proposals and then asked which option came closer to their view.



Dec 30 to Dec 30, 2020 survey of 1166 likely voters

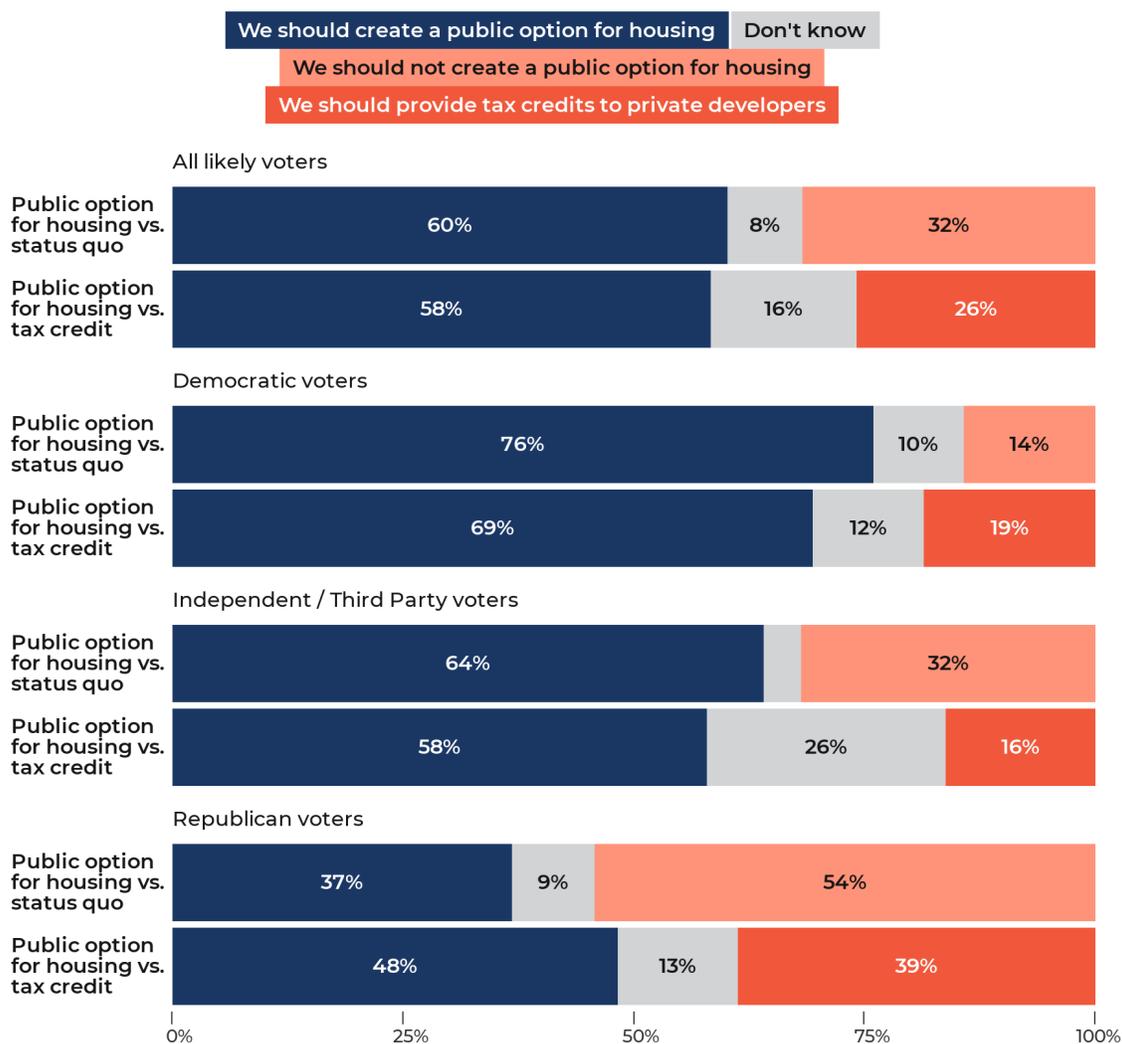
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# Housing

We find a similar pattern when we asked likely voters about a public option for housing. After messaging, all likely voters want to create a public option for housing by a 28-point margin and prefer a public option to a tax credit by a 32-point margin. Among both Democrats and Independents, a public option for housing is preferred by comfortable majorities against the status quo and the moderate by alternative. With Republicans we see a continuation of the same trend as observed in the case of broadband: while Republicans oppose the creation of a public option when framed as an up-or-down choice by a nine-point margin, they actually prefer a government-run public option to providing private companies tax credits by a 17-point margin.

## Voters Support A Public Option For Housing And Prefer It To Providing Tax Credits

Voters were provided statements for and against these proposals and then asked which option came closer to their view.



Dec 30 to Dec 30, 2020 survey of 1166 likely voters

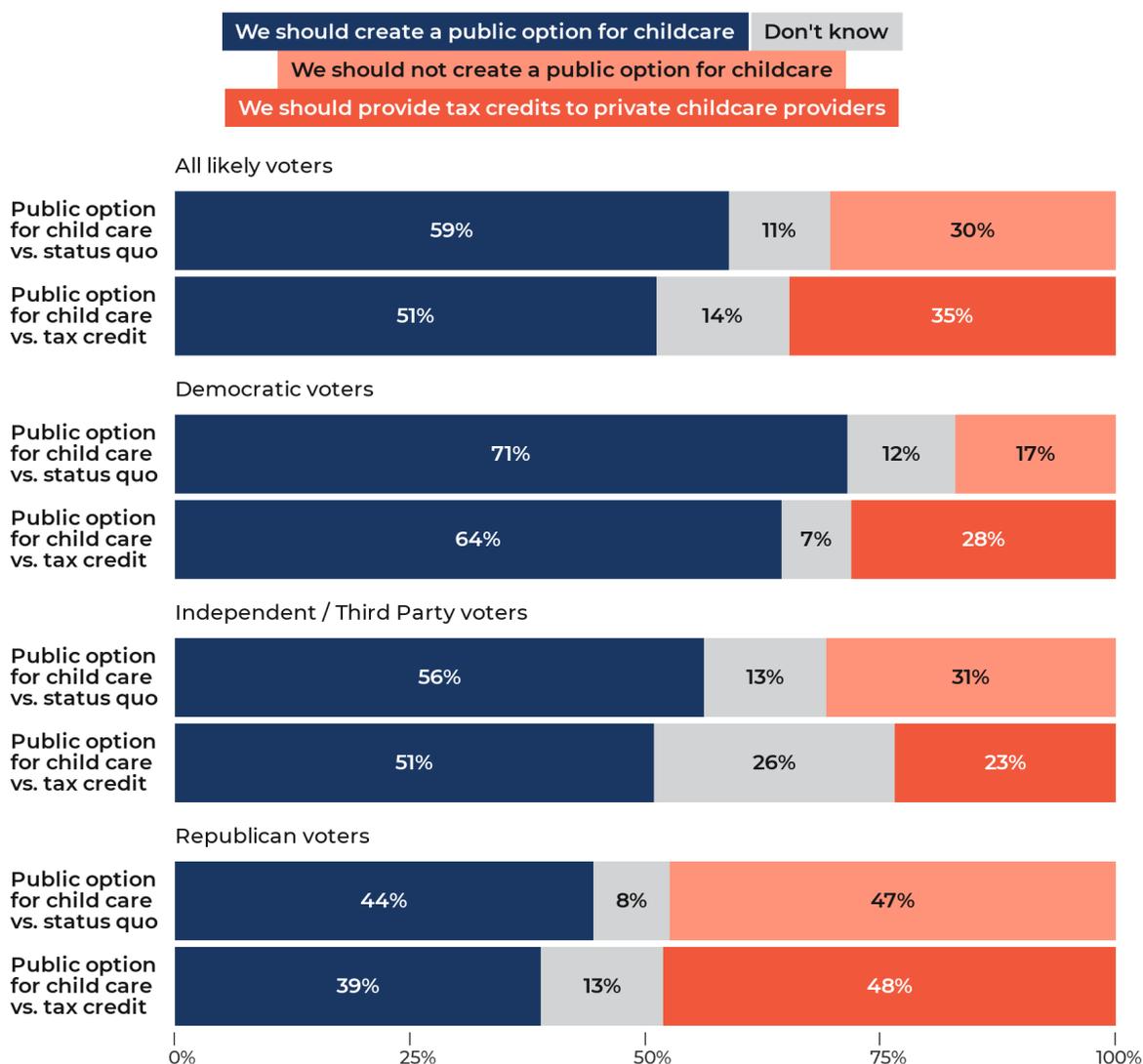
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# Childcare

With child care, we find that by a 29-point margin, all likely voters support the creation of a public option. A public option for child care also retains majority support when positioned against a moderate alternative, being preferred by a 16-point margin. Majorities of both Democrats and Independents support the creation of a public option for child care and prefer it to using tax credits. Among Republicans, by a narrow margin of three points, a plurality opposes the creation of a public option for child care. Similarly, and by an 11-point margin, a plurality prefers the use of tax credits to a public option.

## Voters Support A Public Option For Child Care And Prefer It To Providing Tax Credits

Voters were provided statements for and against these proposals and then asked which option came closer to their view.



Dec 30 to Dec 30, 2020 survey of 1166 likely voters

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## Conclusion

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With victories in both Georgia Senate races, Democrats will be handed a narrow governing trifecta — that is, control of the White House, Senate, and House of Representatives. Unified control is rare, and it is incumbent that Democrats deliver. A major lesson from these races is that Democrats can win, even in competitive races, when they run on popular policies with clear, tangible benefits. In those races, stimulus checks served that function. First distributed in the spring of 2020, stimulus checks created a positive electoral feedback loop in which voters increasingly came to identify the Democratic Party and its candidates with the checks and became supportive of the party when they were told that the election of its candidates would send more money their way. This polling indicates that public options can serve this function as well.

In the United States, one already existing public option is the United States Postal Service (USPS). This is an incredibly popular institution, with a durable presence in American life. It can also be a foundation for future public options. Data for Progress polling has already found high levels of support for allowing the USPS to become an Internet Service Provider, and likely voters are also extremely enthusiastic about postal banking.

Unified control of government comes and goes, but it provides an opportunity for the party in power to deliver for ordinary Americans. This polling demonstrates that likely voters strongly support public options, and prefer them even when confronted with counter arguments or with tax credits as an alternative. Indeed, in adopting popular positions and providing voters clear, salient benefits, Democrats may open up a path for winning long-term support from voters who see real, visible change in their lives.

## Methodology

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On December 30, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,166 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 2.9$  percentage points.

### QUESTION WORDING

*Below you'll read about some policy proposals. For each, say you support or oppose them.*

- ▶ A “public option” for broadband internet access, a proposal where a city or county-run internet provider would compete with private internet providers and would be available to all Americans for purchase.
- ▶ A “public option” for housing, a proposal where cities or counties build new, affordable housing that people can then rent from and which would compete with private housing options.
- ▶ A “public option” for child care, a proposal where the federal government would fund locally-run child care centers, much like public schools, with parents keeping the choice to keep their kids at home, send their kids there, or send them a privately-run center.

- ▶ Government investment in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and updating utility grids
  - ▶ Strongly support
  - ▶ Somewhat support
  - ▶ Somewhat oppose
  - ▶ Strongly oppose
  - ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for the creation of a “public option” for broadband internet access, a proposal where a city or county-run internet-provider would compete with private internet providers and would be available to all Americans for purchase.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that private cable and internet companies don't offer good service in many areas, even as they reap huge profits. Broadband has become an essential public utility, like electricity, because people need it to go to school, work, and see a doctor.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that private companies, like Comcast and AT&T, not the government, should be leading the way. This publicly-run broadband company will just mean a bigger deficit and higher taxes for the middle class.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ We should create a public option for broadband
- ▶ We should not create a public option for broadband
- ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for the creation of a “public option” for broadband internet access, a proposal where a city or county-run internet-provider would compete with private internet providers and would be available to all Americans for purchase.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that rather than the government creating a new internet service provider, they should be providing tax credits to private companies like Comcast and AT&T to support their expansion of internet services. These companies already have the infrastructure in place.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that tax credits won't bring down costs, just increase the profits for companies like Comcast. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic shows broadband is an essential utility, just like electricity, that ensures people can go to school, work, and see a doctor.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ We should create a public option for broadband
- ▶ We should provide tax credits to private companies
- ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for the creation of a “public option” for housing, a proposal where cities and counties build new, affordable housing that individuals and families can then lease, including entering long-term leases. These housing options would then compete with private housing options.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that there isn't enough housing in this country. Public spending to build will mean there's more housing of higher quality with lower rents, creating jobs in the construction sector and saving families money.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that the American middle class is built on the idea of getting to own your own home. The government shouldn't get in the way of that. Building new housing is a job for private companies and individuals.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ We should create a public option for housing
- ▶ We should not create a public option for housing
- ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for the creation of a "public option" for housing, a proposal where cities and counties build new, affordable housing that individuals and families can then lease, including entering long-term leases. These housing options would then compete with private housing options.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that if the government wants to increase the amount of housing available, they should give tax credits to private developers who can then build new housing which can either be rented or sold to individuals and families.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that tax credits won't bring down costs, just increase the profits for wealthy developers. Public spending to build will mean more housing of higher quality with lower rents, creating jobs in the construction sector and saving families money.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ We should create a public option for housing
- ▶ We should provide tax credits to private developers
- ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for the creation of a "public option" for childcare, a proposal where the federal government would fund locally-run childcare centers, much like public schools, with parents keeping the choice to keep their kids at home, send their kids there, or send them a privately-run center.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that this public option for childcare will create more competition, drive down prices, and that this is a worthy investment because childcare shouldn't be a financial burden for hard-working American families.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that the private sector already provides sufficient childcare options and that this government option could lead to the closure of existing childcare centers that employ many people with good-paying jobs.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ We should create a public option for childcare
- ▶ We should not create a public option for childcare
- ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for the creation of a "public option" for childcare, a proposal where the federal government would fund locally-run childcare centers, much like public schools, with parents keeping the choice to keep their kids at home, send their kids there, or send them a privately-run center.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that if the government wants to increase the amount of childcare available the best way is to invest in the private sector by providing tax credits to existing providers, allowing them to increase capacity and hire more staff.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that tax credits won't bring down costs, just increase the profits for investors. A public option for childcare would create more competition and drive down prices, and that this is a worthy investment because childcare shouldn't be a financial burden for hard-working American families.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ We should create a public option for childcare
- ▶ We should provide tax credits to private childcare providers
- ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for government investment in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and updating utility grids.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that our country's infrastructure is crumbling. Massive public investments will allow us to make badly needed repairs to our bridges, schools, and roads, all while creating millions of new, good-paying jobs.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that the country is already trillions of dollars in debt, with a deficit as high as it was directly after World War II. Now just isn't the time for more spending.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ The government should invest in new infrastructure projects
- ▶ The government should not invest in new infrastructure projects
- ▶ Don't know

*Some lawmakers in Congress are calling for government investment in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and updating utility grids.*

*Supporters of this proposal argue that our country's infrastructure is crumbling. Massive public investments will allow us to make badly needed repairs while creating millions of new, good-paying jobs.*

*Opponents of this proposal argue that the private sector, not the government, should lead the way in building new infrastructure and the government can help this process along by offering tax credits to incentivize construction.*

*When thinking about this proposal, which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?*

- ▶ The government should invest in new infrastructure projects
- ▶ We should provide tax credits to private companies to build new infrastructure
- ▶ Don't know