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 THE JUSTICE  
COLLABORATIVE  
INSTITUTE

**EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

# THE CARE ECONOMY: POLICIES & POLLING ON MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF THE CORONAVIRUS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- ▶ We find popular support among likely voters for a package of proposals that will mitigate the effects of coronavirus, including free access to testing and vaccines, access to comprehensive care without premiums, copays, deductibles, or other costs, and paid sick and family leave.
- ▶ **Overall, voters overwhelmingly support these policies.** Free access to testing, vaccines, and proposals for paid sick and family leave are all supported by at least 66% of voters. Access to comprehensive care is supported by 53% of voters (including 74% of Democrats).
- ▶ **Access to free testing and vaccines had the strongest support, with 76% and 75% supporting, respectively.** This support was strongly bipartisan, with 75% of Republicans and 84% of Democrats supporting each proposal.
- ▶ **Paid leave proposals also had strong bipartisan support. Overall, 66% of voters support paid sick leave for all workers,** including 56% of Republicans and 81% of Democrats. Similarly, **68% of voters overall support paid family leave** for all workers whose children are diagnosed with the coronavirus or whose children's schools are closed due to the coronavirus, including 61% of Republicans and 83% of Democrats.

# INTRODUCTION

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The “coronavirus,” [a recent article in Boston Review](#) concluded, “has shined a light on the cruelty of American life as it has been constructed for much of our lifetimes.” The authors are referring to the neoliberal, go-it-alone policies adopted by both major parties over the last 40 years—policies captured by President Bill Clinton [when he announced](#), in a State of the Union address, that “the era of big government is over.” Clinton’s message, tied to severe welfare cuts, was clear: You’re on your own.

Today, the stress of a growing a pandemic has thrown the failures of those policies into stark relief: A [fractured](#) and “rapaciously profit-driven healthcare system” that excludes huge segments of people, an “austerity-ravaged state” without an adequate social safety net or investments in public health programs (including disease prevention), and mass incarceration as a means of dealing with health problems like mental illness and addiction. All these factors undermine our “social immunity,” hinder our capacity to protect the broader public health, and, in the current moment, are fueling the coronavirus pandemic.

These are the same systemic failures addressed in the Justice Collaborative’s (TJC) [“Blueprint”](#) to end America’s incarceration crisis and build “a more just America.” The Blueprint recognizes that government, in relying so heavily on punishment and incarceration, “is not merely failing to reduce vulnerability, but exacerbating it with the carceral state,” and that the antidote “is to guarantee that all of us have the basic resources we need to live a stable life.” It calls for “vigorous government mobilization to reduce vulnerability” — not the absence of government that leaves vulnerable people without support.

Now, as “social distancing” becomes a mantra of daily life, we know that support is required to “[level the curve](#)” and avoid a tidal wave of infections. People must be able to isolate — to stay home and miss work while still paying rent, to have childcare when school is cancelled and food when the school lunch program shuts down. It requires people to be healthy to begin with, and to have health insurance and ideally a primary care doctor. It requires having a home and the space to spread out, as [the Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) advises](#) people to avoid using the same bathrooms as infected family members. Coronavirus is proving, as [Anand Giridharadas said recently](#), that “your health is as safe as that of the worst-insured, worst-cared-for person in your society.”

That doesn’t bode well for the United States.

Instead of government policies that support universal stability, we have [27.5 million people without health insurance](#). Many Americans live paycheck-to-paycheck, just one illness or job loss away from financial ruin. One in five Americans cannot afford their monthly bills and 40 percent lack the savings to cover an unexpected \$400 expense (even with insurance, [the average out-of-pocket cost for one emergency room visit is \\$500](#)). On any given night, more than half a million people in the United States are unhoused. Millions more are locked in crowded, unsanitary jails and prisons without access to quality medical care.

As Yale Law School professors Amy Kapczynski and Gregg Gonsalves explain in [the Boston Review](#): “Conservatives worked hard to bring this about, always implying that the safety net they were shredding was for someone else—someone darker, at a distance, and less deserving. But as coronavirus is here to tell us, even those who

think they can opt out by virtue of their wealth or status rely on public health infrastructure that keeps us all healthy and safe.”

Their answer to the “cruelty of American life” is a “New Deal for Public Health”—policies that, like TJC’s Blueprint, are grounded in the reality that we must care for one another, that our own health and welfare depend on the health and welfare of everyone around us. Policies designed to support rather than assign blame, and that recognize how our shared vulnerability requires government to meet everyone’s basic needs. That means access to medical care, yes, but access also to jobs, housing, transportation—securing the financial means to live a stable, dignified life.

We wanted to learn whether American voters support economic policy grounded in care as a response to the coronavirus pandemic—a question also relevant to long-term policymaking and at the heart of an urgent political debate, as the Democratic Party charts a policy vision to put against the Trump administration and voters consider the competing agendas of Senator Bernie Sanders and former Vice President Joe Biden.

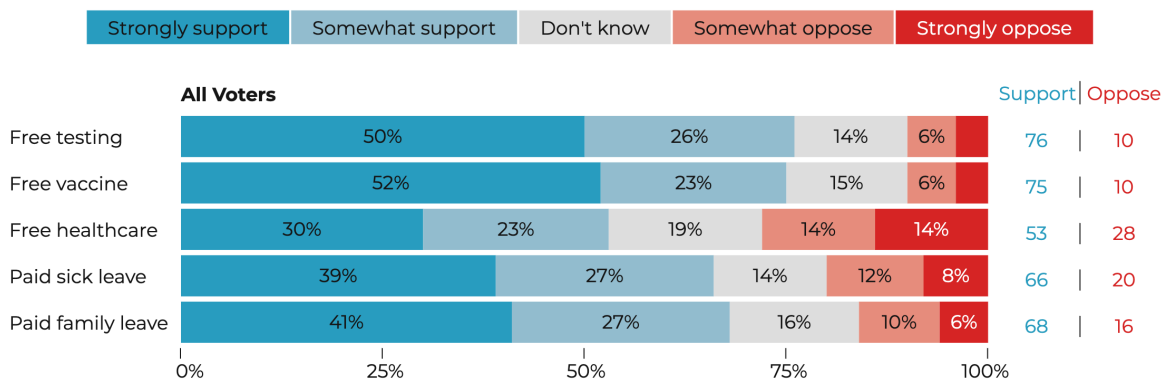
We asked voters about a package of five policies that fall within the Care Economy:

- ▶ universal free testing for the coronavirus;
- ▶ universal free access to any FDA-approved vaccine that is developed;
- ▶ free comprehensive care without out-of-pocket costs for monthly premiums, copays, or deductibles;
- ▶ paid family leave for all workers whose children are diagnosed with the coronavirus or whose children’s schools are closed due to the coronavirus; and
- ▶ paid sick leave for all workers.

Our results show overwhelming support for this package of policies that cuts across party lines. Our results also show that [the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#)—the relief bill that the House passed early Saturday and that President Trump has agreed to sign—should go

much further on some proposals, especially with respect to paid sick leave. On that proposal, voters of both parties support far more aggressive policy intervention to protect the most vulnerable and at risk.

## Voters Support Concerted Action To Mitigate The Effects Of The Coronavirus



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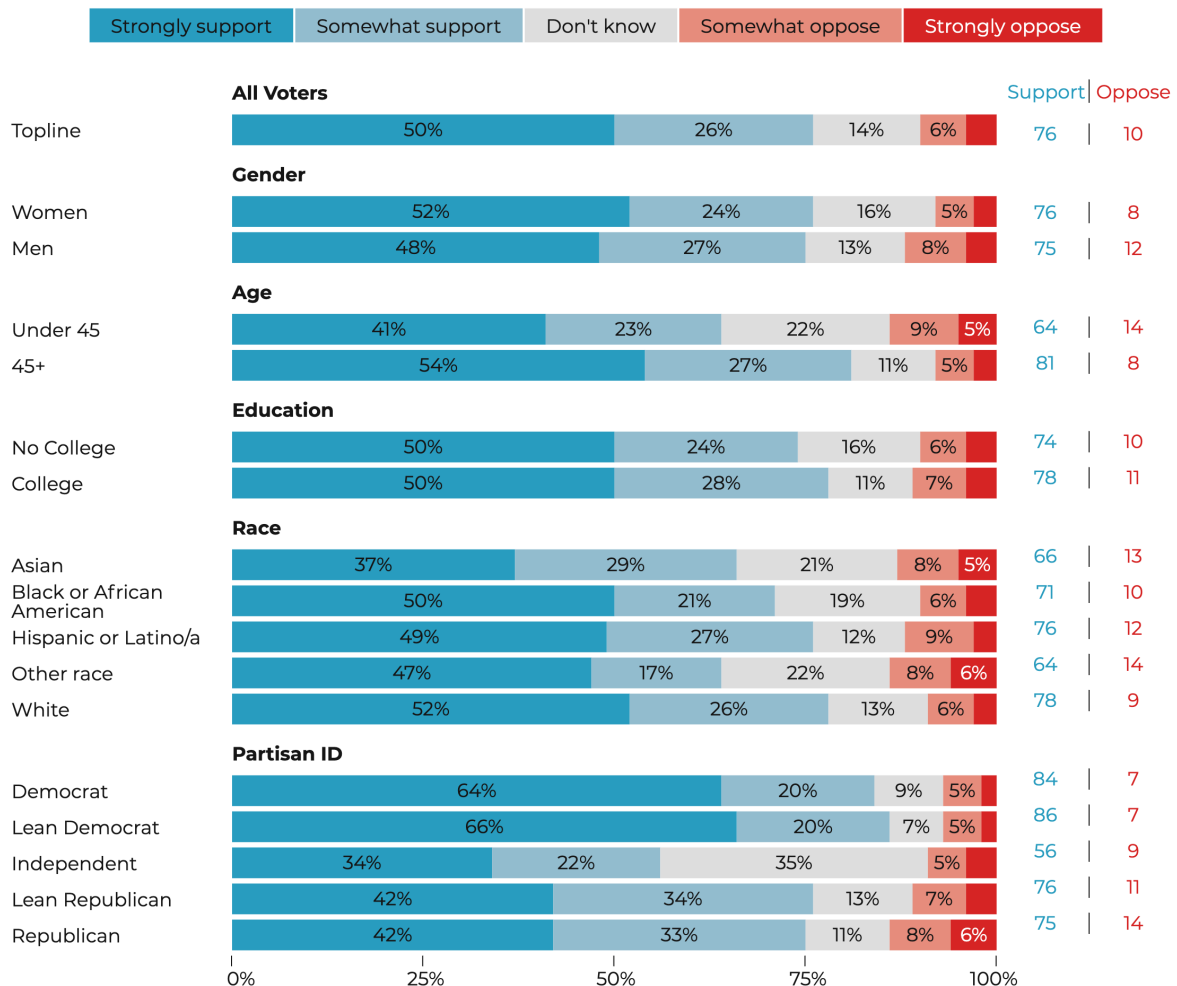
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# POLICIES & POLLING

The first three policies concern universal access to free testing and treatment: No-cost testing for the coronavirus, no-cost access to any FDA-approved vaccine that is developed, and the guarantee to provide “every American comprehensive care without any out of pocket costs for monthly premiums, copays, or deductibles.” All three proposals were popular among voters.

## 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 determine whether a person is infected with the coronavirus?

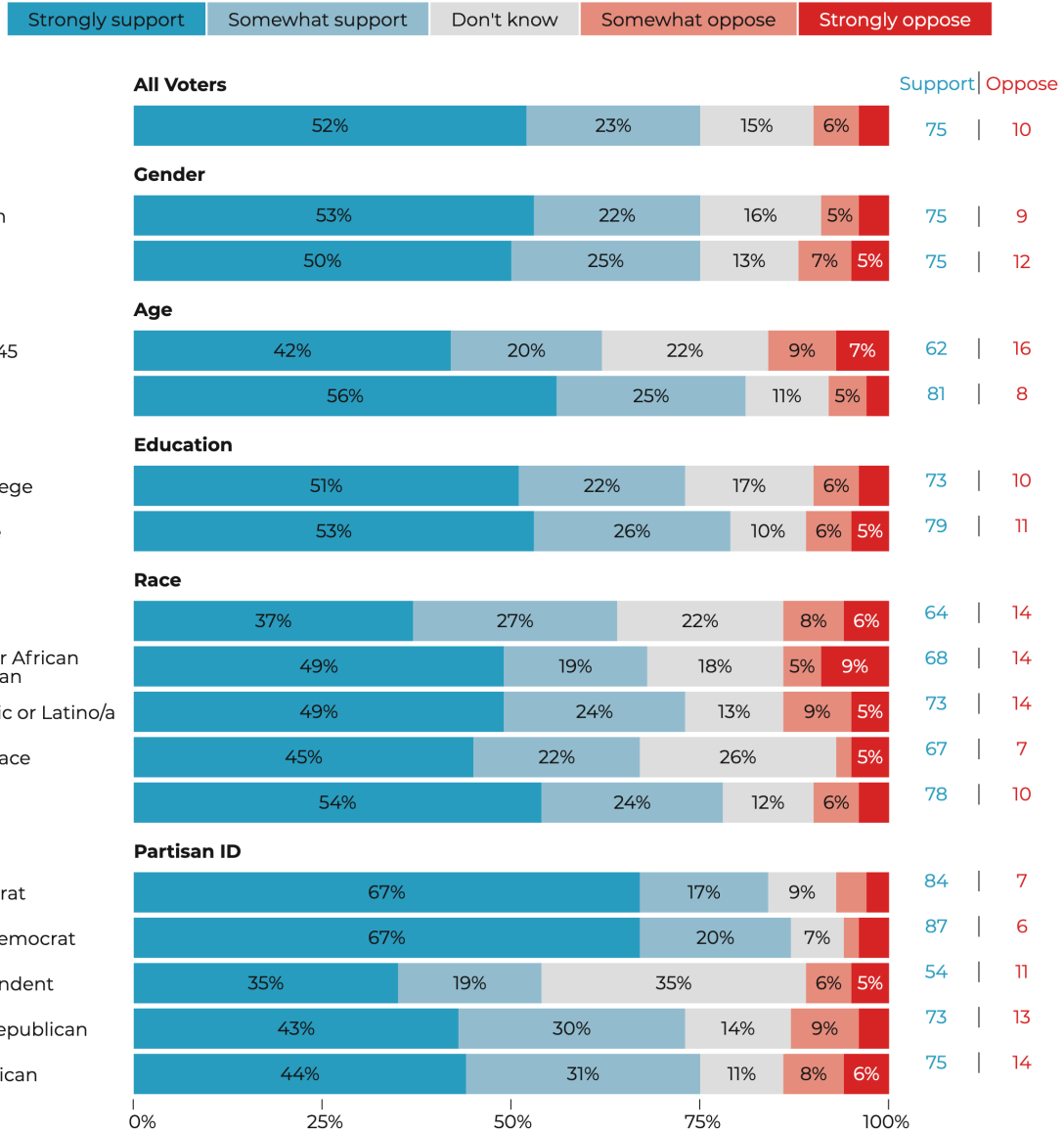


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# Voters Want Any Vaccine For The Coronavirus To Be Free

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?

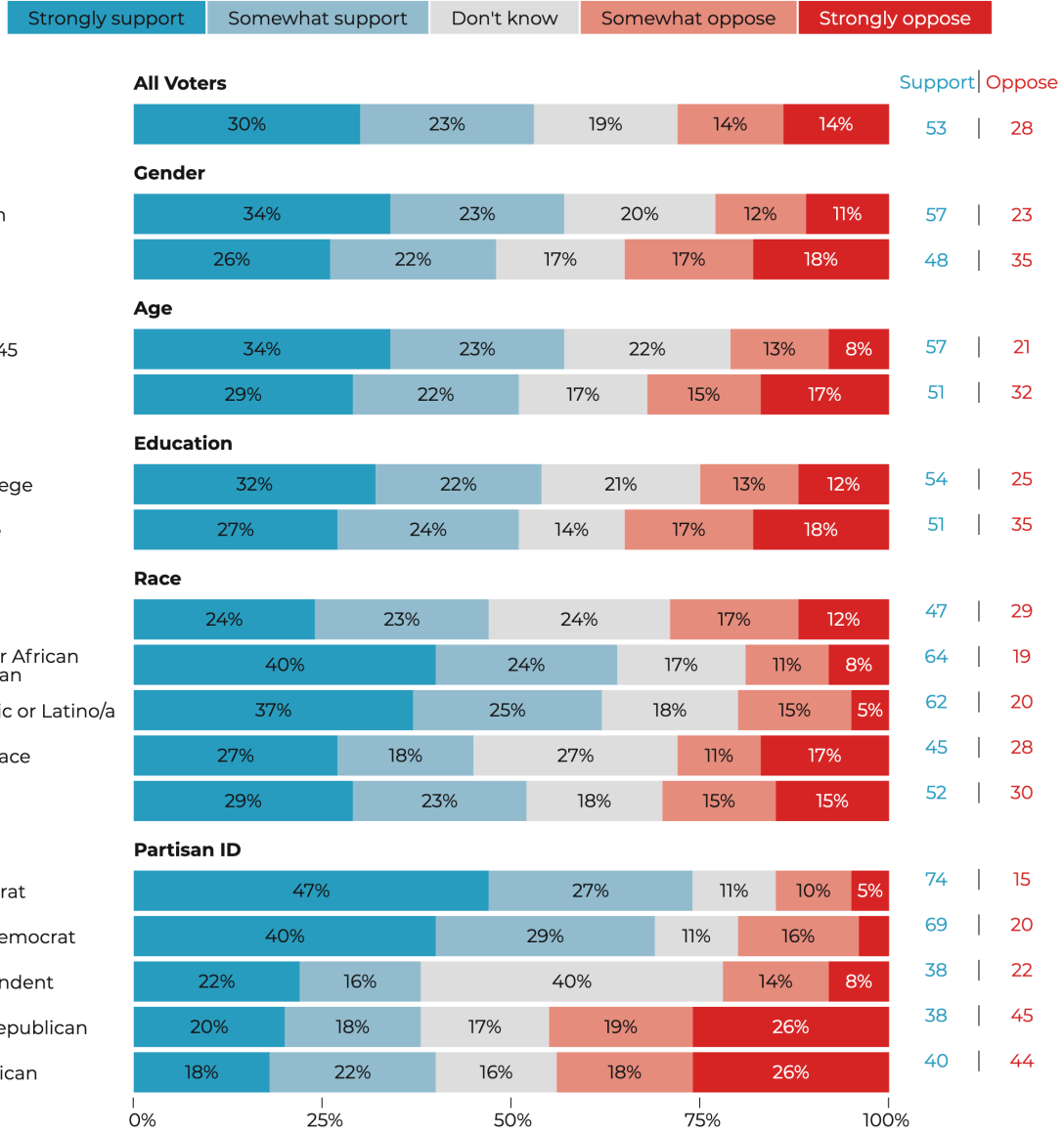


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# A Majority Of Voters Support Guaranteeing Every American Free Comprehensive Healthcare

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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These results show that voters support more aggressive intervention than what the federal relief legislation provides. That bill does include free coronavirus testing, but it does not guarantee no-cost vaccines or access to broader comprehensive care—essential components of successfully treating the disease and slowing its spread.

We also found strong bipartisan support for guaranteeing paid sick leave and paid family leave.

Previous studies have shown that paid sick leave slows the spread of epidemics like influenza. Yet, right now in the United States, almost 30 percent of private sector workers—and 69 percent in the lowest-wage jobs—have no sick pay. That includes workers in the majority of American restaurants, who routinely face the choice of going to prepare and serve food while sick or staying home and losing their pay. In 2014, the CDC reported that 20 percent of food service workers had come to work at least once in the previous year “while sick with vomiting or diarrhea.”

And these employees without sick leave protections do not include gig economy workers and freelancers who, as Kapczynski and Gonsalves

write in the Boston Review, “are entirely cast adrift at a time like this.”

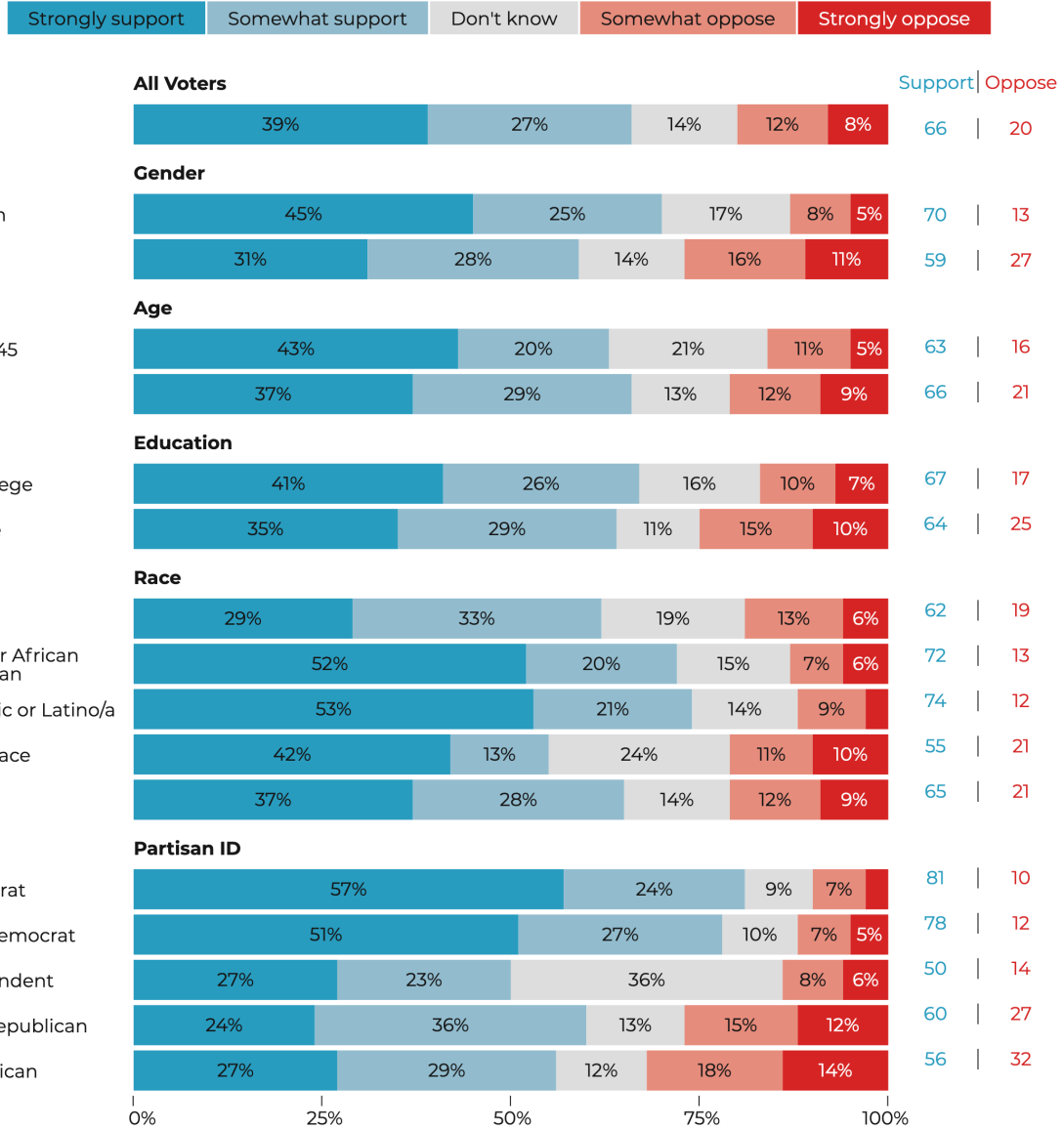
When we asked voters about a proposal to guarantee two weeks of paid sick leave for all workers — a category that includes not just employees but also freelancers and independent contractors — 66% overall said they support, including 81% of Democrats and 56% of Republicans.

Here, our results show that voters support far more aggressive policy intervention than what the federal relief bill provides. The bill has a provision to cover two weeks of paid sick leave but is riddled with exceptions. First, as a New York Times analysis found, the bill guarantees paid sick leave only to about 20 percent of the employees. It excludes large corporations (any private employer with more than 500 employees) like Wal-Mart, McDonald’s, and Amazon (there are 864,000 employees without any paid sick leave working for Wal-Mart and McDonald’s alone). It also allows smaller firms to seek a hardship exemption. Second, the provision applies only to employees—not other workers like freelancers and independent contractors, who are eligible only for tax credits under the bill.



# 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?

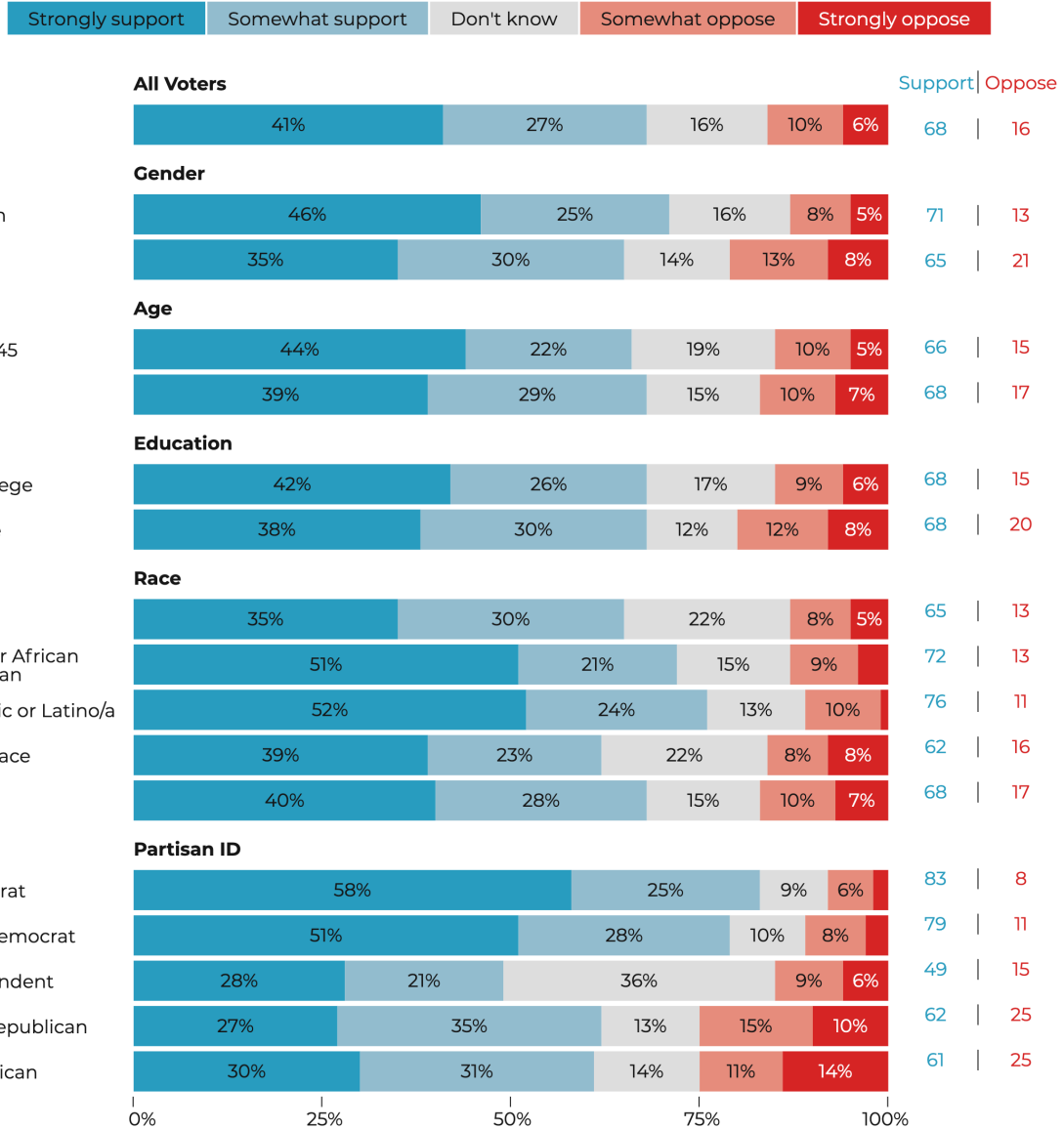


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# Voters Back Paid Leave For Families Affected By Coronavirus

Would you support or oppose a proposal to guarantee two weeks of paid family leave for all workers whose children are diagnosed with the coronavirus or whose children's schools are closed due to the coronavirus?



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Finally, we found that voters support guaranteeing “two weeks of paid family leave for all workers whose children are diagnosed with the coronavirus or whose children’s schools are closed due to the coronavirus.” Again, the support is overwhelmingly bipartisan.

To be clear - two weeks is not long enough given the likely duration of this crisis. The [CDC has recommended](#) cancelling events with fifty or more people for the next eight weeks.

On family and medical leave, the federal relief bill provides for three months of job-protected leave with a guarantee of two-thirds pay after two weeks, but otherwise includes the same carve

outs as the sick pay provision: It excludes large corporations and non-employee workers, huge swaths of the workforce that, we found, voters of both parties say should be covered with paid leave policies to promote the public health.

## METHODOLOGY

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*On March 12th, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 4998 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, urbanicity, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 1.3$  percent.*