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VOTERS STRONGLY OPPOSE CUTTING THE INCOME OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS,

Support Extending
Expanded Unemployment
Insurance Benefits

July 2020

- ▶ Framing Unemployment Insurance (UI) as income was the most effective message about reasons to keep expanded UI in effect by a narrow margin.
- ▶ Voters strongly support extending expanded UI, and would prefer to vote for candidates who support it
- ▶ Republican arguments against continuing enhanced UI were not persuasive

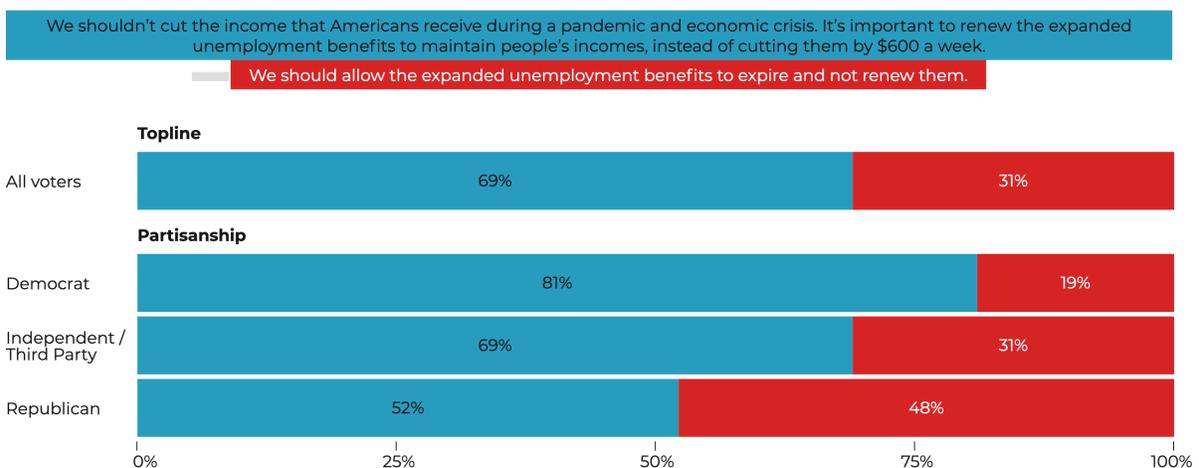
The expanded unemployment benefits, passed as a part of “The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security” (CARES) Act, gave out of work Americans an extra 600 dollars per week on top of their existing state unemployment benefits. The aim of this provision was to ensure that workers would maintain 100 percent of their pre-pandemic wages. This expanded benefit is set to expire on July 31, unless Congress and the White House extend it. In a poll at the end of June and into July, from Data for Progress, in collaboration with Groundwork Action, we tested support for extending this expanded UI benefit. We found

strong support for renewal of expanded benefits, and an indication that voters would reward candidates for supporting its renewal.

We tested two basic frames for the expanded unemployment benefits, one of “income” and one of “benefits”. The income frame was most effective at gathering support for renewal of expanded UI, with 69 percent support for renewal overall. This frame describes unemployment benefits as a part of income that Americans receive during the pandemic, which would be reduced by allowing expanded UI to expire. This frame performed better among Independents and older voters, while young people were a little more persuaded by the benefits frame. Focusing on responses to the income frame, we found that support for extension crossed partisan lines, with 52 percent of voters who self-identify as Republicans supporting it and support among those voters who self-identify as Democrats at 81 percent. It is worth noting this question was presented without a partisan frame.

Income Frame: Voters Support Renewing Expanded Unemployment Benefits

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



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Voters say they'd be more interested in voting for candidates who support renewing the expanded UI benefits, particularly when the renewal is framed as "keeping the same" the amount of unemployment that Americans receive right now. The status quo bias works in our favor in this frame, as people are reluctant to remove an existing benefit.

Fifty-three percent of Democrats say they'd be much more likely to vote for a candidate who voted to renew benefits. Even among Republicans, a majority (54 percent) say they'd be at least somewhat more likely to vote for a candidate who voted this way. Thirty-five percent of voters say they'd blame President Donald Trump if benefits are not renewed, and 23 percent would blame Republicans in Congress. It's clear

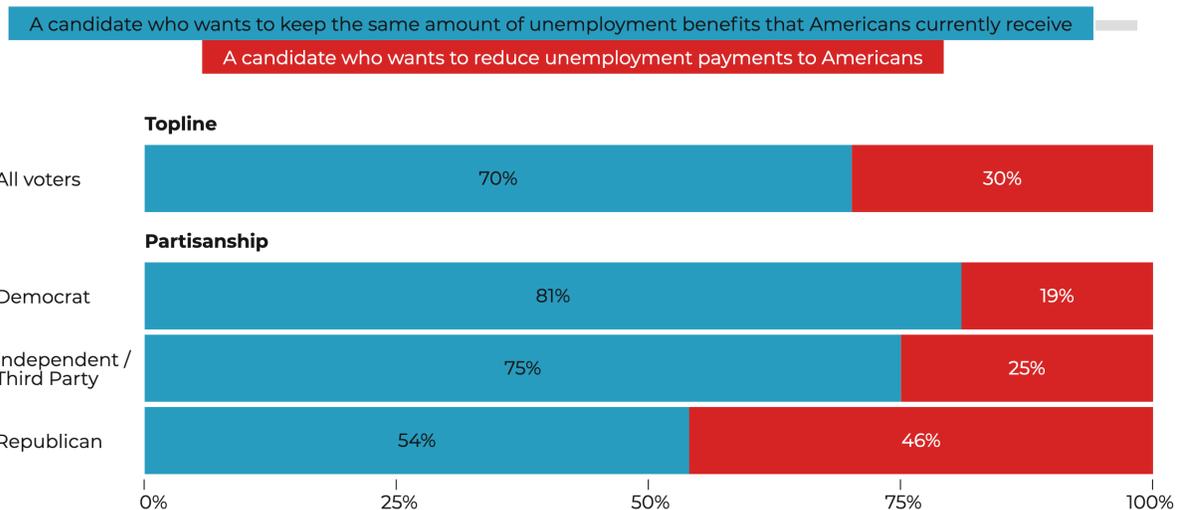
that even without partisan prompting, voters understand that Republicans are the impediment to continuing to provide this assistance to out of work Americans.

We also tested several arguments for renewing benefits compared to a randomized set of Republican counter arguments. We found no significant differences in effectiveness between arguments in this framework. This leads us to believe that the framing of the UI renewal is more important than the specific argument used in favor of it. In all cases, voters overwhelmingly favored extending expanded unemployment benefits.

One Republican argument we specifically engaged with was that expanded UI benefits provide a disincentive to work and hurt the

Voters Prefer A Candidate Who Wants To Maintain The Current Unemployment Benefits

Which candidate would you be most interested in voting for?

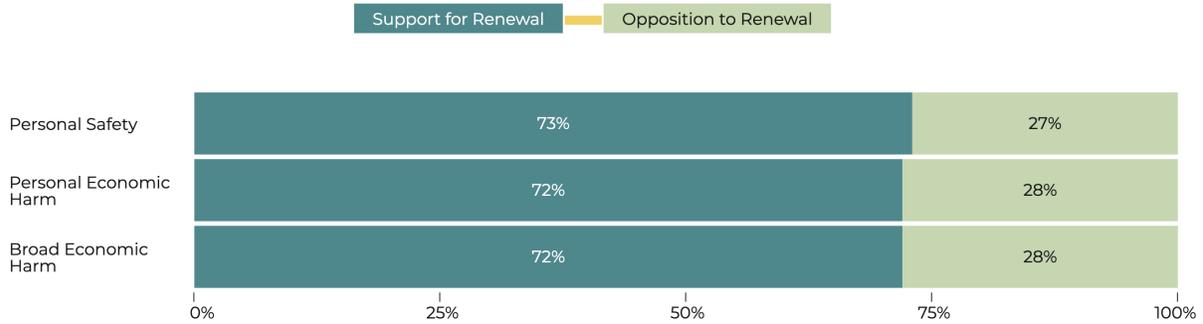


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An Overwhelming Majority Of Voters Support Renewing The Expanded Unemployment Benefits

In three weeks, the additional \$600 a week of unemployment benefits currently provided to out of work Americans will expire, unless it is renewed by Congress. Which of the following comes closest to your view?



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economy. Voters rejected this argument, with 65 percent saying that the benefits actually help the economy by boosting consumer spending. Even among Republicans, only the narrowest of majorities agreed with the disincentive argument, at 51 percent. When set against the progressive arguments for extending expanded benefits, the disincentive argument performed no better than other Republican counterarguments. We find no evidence that this argument is particularly persuasive, and we see voters strongly rejecting it.

CONCLUSION

What these results drive home is that the expanded UI benefits passed as part of the CARES Act remain enormously popular with voters of both parties. The extension of this program also enjoys overwhelming support from voters, tested with several frames.

METHODOLOGY AND AUTHORSHIP

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From June 30 through July 1, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,660 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 +/- 2.4 percentage points.

COVER PHOTO
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