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Author

DiCamillo, Mark

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Institute of Governmental Studies
126 Moses Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
Tel: 510-642-6835
Email: igs@berkeley.edu

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Climate change and health care reform are top priority issues to Californians likely to vote in the state's Democratic primary

By Mark DiCamillo, Director, *Berkeley IGS Poll*
(c) 415-602-5594

Eight in ten voters likely to be participating in the state's March Democratic presidential primary consider climate change and health care reform top priority issues for the next president to address. Another 54% rate immigration reform as a top priority issue, while 30% say this about reforming the nation's criminal justice system.

When asked which of these issues they would attach highest priority to, about half (47%) choose climate change, while reforming the nation's health care system is chosen by about one in three (32%) in this setting.

The party's liberal voters, especially its very liberal ones, are far more likely than its moderates to cite climate change as their top priority issue. Supporters of the four leading Democratic candidates for president also hold differing views about the issues they consider to be of highest priority. For example, voters backing Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren's candidacy are about twice as likely as those supporting former Vice President Joe Biden to name climate change as their highest priority issue. White non-Hispanics, voters under 30 and college graduates are also more inclined to choose climate change as the top-ranking issue.

The state's Democratic primary electorate was also asked about their views about how best to reform the nation's health care system. By a five to three margin Democratic primary voters prefer modifying the health care system to include a Medicare-type health plan but also enables people to keep their own health insurance over moving to a "Medicare for All" system that creates a single government health insurance program eliminating private and employer-provided health insurance.

While supporters of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders endorse Medicare for All by a two to one margin, majorities of the supporters of each of the three other leading Democratic presidential candidates favor simply modifying the health care system.

These are the findings from the latest *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll was conducted online in English and Spanish November 21-27, 2019 among 1,694 Californians considered likely to vote in the state's upcoming Democratic presidential primary.

Eight in ten Democratic primary voters rate climate change and health care reform as top priority issues

Likely voters in California's Democratic primary were presented with four issues that have been prominently discussed in this year's presidential campaign -- climate change, health care reform, immigration reform and reforming the criminal justice system -- and asked what priority the next president should attach to each. In this setting eight in ten rate climate change and health care reform as top priority issues.

A third issue, immigration reform, is also considered a top priority by 54%, while three in ten (30%) say this about reforming the nation's criminal justice system.

Table 1 California's Democratic primary voter priorities regarding four issues being debated in this year's Democratic presidential primary campaign			
	Top priority %	Important, but not a top priority %	Not as important %
Address climate change by dramatically reducing emissions and greenhouse gases	85	13	2
Reform the health care system to expand coverage and make health care more affordable	80	19	1
Reform the immigration system to provide a path to citizenship for the approximately 10 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S.	54	42	4
Reform the criminal justice system to reduce the number of non-violent prisoners in captivity and provide them with alternatives to prison	30	63	7

Climate change cited most as the Democrats' top-ranking issue

When asked which of these four issues they would consider to be the highest priority for the next president to address, nearly half of the state's Democratic primary electorate (47%) choose climate change. Reforming the nation's health care system is cited next most often by 32%, while reforming the nation's immigration system ranks third at 14%.

The same *Berkeley IGS Poll* found Sanders and Warren the current poll leaders in California, followed by Biden and South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Supporters of the four leading Democratic candidates hold differing views about the issues they consider to be of highest priority. For example, while greater than six in ten of the voters backing Warren's candidacy (62%) rate climate change as their number one issue, only about one in three (32%) of those backing Biden say this.

The political ideology of the state's Democratic primary voters is also related to issue priorities. Party liberals, especially very liberal voters, are far more likely than its moderates to cite climate change as their highest priority issue. White non-Hispanics, voters under 30 and college graduates within the Democratic primary electorate are also more inclined to choose climate change as the top-ranking issue.

Table 2 Which of these issues should be the highest priority for the next president to address across subgroups of California's Democratic primary electorate				
	Climate change %	Reforming the health care system %	Reforming the immigration system %	Reforming the criminal justice system %
Total Democratic primary voters	47	32	14	3
1st choice preference for president				
Sanders	44	35	14	3
Warren	62	26	9	5
Biden	32	38	25	5
Buttigieg	53	32	11	2
Political ideology				
Very liberal	57	30	8	2
Somewhat liberal	46	34	12	3
Moderate or conservative	37	34	23	2
Gender				
Male	49	34	10	3
Female	47	31	16	3
Age				
18-29	57	27	12	3
30-39	49	28	14	4
40-49	39	38	17	2
50-64	47	36	11	2
65 or older	46	33	16	3
Race/ethnicity				
White non-Hispanic	55	32	8	2
Latino	39	30	27	2
Asian American	42	38	12	2
African American*	29	38	12	9
Education				
High school graduate or less	41	27	23	3
Some college/trade school	43	37	14	4
College graduate	53	33	8	2
Post-graduate work	54	30	11	2

Note: Differences between 100% and the sum of percentages for each row equal proportion answering other or none

** small sample base*

The state's Democrats favor modifying the nation's health care system favored over Medicare for All

One of the most heavily debated issues in the Democratic presidential primary has been over the issue of how best to reform the nation's health care system. Voters in this survey were asked which type of health system reform they favored more -- modifying it to allow people to enroll in a Medicare-type health plan but still allowing them to keep their own health insurance if they preferred, or overhauling the system by moving to a "Medicare for All" system that creates a single government health insurance program and eliminates private and employer-provided health insurance.

By a five to three margin (57% to 37%) the poll finds that the state's likely Democratic primary voters prefer modifying the health care system than overhauling it by moving it to a single Medicare for All system.

Here too, differences are observed among the supporters of the four leading Democratic presidential candidates. Likely voters backing Sanders' candidacy favor pa Medicare for All overhaul by a two to one margin. This contrasts with the views of the state's Democratic primary voters backing Biden and Buttigieg, who each overwhelming prefer simply modifying the health care system.

Interestingly, a 52% majority of voters supporting Warren also prefers modifying the health care system to Medicare for All, even though Warren herself has been one of the leading advocates of transitioning the nation to a Medicare for All health care system.

Table 2
Preferences of likely voters in California's Democratic primary regarding how to reform the nation's health care system among supporters of the leading candidates

	Total likely voters %	<u>Sanders</u> %	<u>Warren</u> %	<u>Biden</u> %	<u>Buttigieg</u> %
We should modify the system to allow people to enroll in a Medicare-type health plan, but also allow people to keep their current private or employer-provided insurance if they prefer.	57	32	52	72	81
We should overhaul the system by moving to a "Medicare for All" system that eliminates private or employer-provided health insurance and creates a government health insurance program for all Americans	37	64	44	22	17
Neither/no opinion	6	4	4	6	2

About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on a *Berkeley IGS Poll* completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley. The poll was administered online in English and Spanish November 21-27, 2019 among 3,482 registered voters statewide, 1,694 of whom are considered likely voters in California's Democratic presidential primary.

The survey was administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state's registered voters. Once the survey questionnaire and email invitations had been finalized, they were translated into Spanish. Each email invited voters to participate in a non-partisan survey conducted by the University and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Reminder emails were distributed to non-responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to participate.

Samples of registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of voter listings derived from information contained on the state's official voter registration rolls. Prior to the distribution of emails, the overall sample of voter listings was stratified in an attempt to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents across major segments of the registered voter population.

To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, voters' email addresses and all other personally identifiable information derived from the original voter listing were purged from the data file and replaced with a unique and anonymous identification number. At the conclusion of the data processing, post-stratification weights were applied to align the sample of voters responding to the survey to population characteristics of the state's overall registered voter population. Likely voters were identified based on a voter's stated intention to vote in next year's primary election and factoring in their history of voting in past elections.

The sampling error associated with the results from the survey are difficult to calculate precisely due to the effects of sample stratification and the post-stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that the results from the likely Democratic presidential primary electorate are subject to an approximate sampling error of +/- 4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Detailed tabulations reporting the results to each question included in this report can be found at the *Berkeley IGS Poll* website at <https://igs.berkeley.edu/igs-poll/berkeley-igs-poll>.

Questions Asked

Even the most successful presidents seldom get more than one or two major pieces of legislation through Congress in their first two years in office. This means they must make choices about which pieces of legislation they should advance first. For each issue, please indicate how high a priority you feel it is for the next President to advance legislation on this during their first two years in office. **(ISSUE ORDER RANDOMIZED)**

- a. Address climate change by dramatically reducing emissions and greenhouse gases.
- b. Reform the immigration system to provide a path to citizenship for the approximately 10 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S.
- c. Reform the health care system to expand coverage and make health care more affordable.
- d. Reform the criminal justice system to reduce the number of non-violent prisoners in captivity and providing them with alternatives to prison.

Next, which of these four issues would you give highest priority for the next president to address in his or her first two years?

Which comes closer to your view of what should be done with the nation's health care system?

- a. We should overhaul the system by moving to a "Medicare for All" system that eliminates private or employer-provided health insurance and creates a government health insurance program for all Americans.
- b. We should modify the system to allow people to enroll in a Medicare-type health plan, but also allow people to keep their current private or employer-provided insurance if they prefer.
- c. Neither/ do something else

About the Institute of Governmental Studies

The Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is an interdisciplinary organized research unit that pursues a vigorous program of research, education, publication and public service. A component of the University of California system's flagship Berkeley campus, IGS is the oldest organized research unit in the UC system and the oldest public policy research center in the state. IGS's acting co-directors are Professor Eric Schickler and Associate Professor Cristina Mora.

IGS conducts periodic surveys of public opinion in California on matters of politics and public policy through its *Berkeley IGS Poll*. The poll, which is disseminated widely, seeks to provide a broad measure of contemporary public opinion, and to generate data for subsequent scholarly analysis. The director of the *Berkeley IGS Poll* is Mark DiCamillo. For a complete listing of stories issued by the *Berkeley IGS Poll* go to <https://igs.berkeley.edu/igs-poll/berkeley-igs-poll>.