



February 28, 2020

Poll: Biden leads Virginia's Super Tuesday field at 22%; in striking range are Sanders at 17%, Bloomberg at 13%

Summary of Key Findings

- 1. In the survey of 561 likely voters in the Democratic primary, Biden (22%), Sanders (17%) and Bloomberg (13%) all demonstrate potential to win on Tuesday. Buttigieg and Warren poll at 8%, Klobuchar at 5%, Steyer at 1%.**
- 2. Asked if they will support the party's eventual nominee, 82% of Democratic primary voters say yes, and 67% say "definitely." Of the 18% who are uncertain or who say they definitely won't, two-thirds fear the nominee will be "too liberal" and about one-fifth fear the nominee will be "too moderate."**
- 3. Virginia Democratic primary voters are evenly split on whether electability (49%) or agreement on issues (48%) is more important to their vote.**
- 4. The survey of 866 registered voters finds President Trump facing an uphill battle to carry Virginia, a state he lost by 5.4 points to Hillary Clinton in 2016. Just 38% chose Trump over the option of "Someone Else," which received 59%.**
- 5. On issues, 56% of registered voters support a "wealth tax" of the kind proposed by Elizabeth Warren, including 56% of Independents and 27% of Republicans.**
- 6. A majority (60%) support maintaining the current system of private health care insurance, rather than a "Medicare for All" type option.**

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Analysis

With Virginia's Democratic presidential primary days away, Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, and Mike Bloomberg are positioned to do well, with Biden leading the field with 22% of the vote. Sanders has 17%, and Bloomberg has 13%. Although Biden is safely ahead of Bloomberg, he is within the margin of error with Sanders, and Sanders and Bloomberg are within the margin of error from each other. However, it should be noted that the survey came out of the field before the South Carolina debate and was fielded over much of the month of February, a volatile campaign period. Pete Buttigieg and Elizabeth Warren polled at 8%, Amy Klobuchar at 5% and Tom Steyer at 1% -- lower than Andrew Yang at 5%, who ended his campaign while the poll was in the field. Another 13% of Virginia primary voters said they were undecided at the time of the survey.

Virginia primary voters are evenly split on whether electability (49%) or agreement on issues (48%) is more important to them, a potentially positive sign for Sanders, whose opponents have attacked him as unelectable. The Democratic contest has been fractious, and unity is seen as key to unseating President Trump. Asked if they would still support the party's nominee in the fall if their preferred candidate did not win the nomination, 82% said they would and 67% said definitely. Of the voters who said they may not or would not support the party's nominee if their preferred candidate did not win, two thirds (67%) said they are concerned the nominee might be "too liberal." That is another potential disunity warning for Democrats as the party's mainstream seeks to nominate a moderate while its progressive wing is largely coalescing around Sanders, with Warren standing by.

The lack of a Republican primary and Virginia's open primary system may be encouraging more self-identified Republicans to participate in the Virginia Democratic primary than in 2016, when exit polls put that number at 3%. Among the relatively small number of Republicans in the survey's primary sample, 29% say they definitely will participate in the Democratic primary. That could indicate a Republican crossover vote of as high as 5%, though the low sub-sample size softens that conclusion. Vote preferences among these voters do not display a heavy bias towards one candidate. However, due to the low sub-sample size, we are not reporting these specific breakdowns.

Our overall survey polled 866 registered voters, including our Democratic primary sub-sample of 561 likely voters. The overall group was asked questions about the 2020 election and about several policy issues being discussed in the 2020 cycle. When asked whether they wanted to reelect Donald Trump or elect someone else, voters overwhelmingly chose someone else (59%), with Trump preferred by just 38%. Among those voters, 61% of Independents said they want someone else over Trump. Further, "someone else" was the preference of a majority of women (66%), men (51%), white voters (51%), African Americans (91%), voters 18-44 (68%) and voters 45 and older (56%). Notably, only 2% are undecided, which suggests an entrenched electorate. Asked about impeachment, a majority of voters (54%) said that Trump's conduct regarding Ukraine was improper, and only two out of three Republicans (67%) called his behavior "proper."

Several public policy issues being discussed in the 2020 cycle were tested for support, including in novel ways. On healthcare, voters were asked whether America's current private insurance system should be maintained, phased out over time, or ended promptly. A majority of 60% said "maintain," while just 9% said "ended promptly," with 28% saying "phased out over time." This suggests that a position in the general election of immediately replacing the current system with something like Medicare for All may be a significant liability for the Democratic nominee. The hesitation is across ages and partisan affiliations. While voters under 45 are less likely to say they want the current system maintained (46%) than their older counterparts (64%), younger voters are just as skittish about ending the current system promptly, largely migrating to the "phased out over time" option (44%). A plurality of Democrats (44%) and a majority of Independents (56%) choose the "maintain" option.

Voters were also asked about proposals to eliminate all student loan debt, which have been proposed by some of the Democratic candidates. Only 15% support cancelling loans for all borrowers, and only 14% support cancelling loans only for low-income borrowers, while 38% support reducing but not outright cancelling loans, and 32% support leaving student loan debt as is. Clear party lines emerge on this issue, with Republicans overwhelmingly in favor of leaving debt as it is and Democrats dispersed between the three options that provide relief to borrowers.

However, support for other liberal/progressive initiatives was more robust, with 56% of voters supporting imposing a "wealth tax" of the kind proposed by Warren. While 83% support among Democrats highlights the partisan divide on this issue, even 27% of Republicans support the "wealth tax" proposal, as do 56% of Independents. When asked whether they support passing a federal law to provide for 12 weeks of paid family leave, 70% of Virginia voters indicate they support that measure, including 87% of Democrats, 49% of Republicans and 69% of Independents.

Virginia General Assembly issues

Support for the push by Governor Ralph Northam and the Democratic majority in the General Assembly to tighten gun control laws in Virginia remains strong among Virginia voters, with 66% support for a universal background check and 62% support for the so-called "red flag" law.

Finally, 56% of Virginia voters say they favor legalizing marijuana for recreational use in the Commonwealth, which includes 37% of Republicans, 58% of Independents and 72% of Democrats.

Field Dates: February 3-23, 2020
Full Poll 866 Registered Virginia Voters (MOE = +/- 3.5%)
2020 Democratic Primary 561 Likely Voters (MOE = +/- 4.3%)

Q1: Health care for many Americans is provided by private insurance plans either paid through their employers or by themselves. In an overhaul of the American health-care system, should the private health insurance system be maintained, should it be phased out over time, or should it be ended promptly?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45+	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Maintained	60	81	56	44	62	58	63	53	46	64	82	59	29	57	62
Phased Out Over Time	28	11	34	39	28	28	27	32	44	24	10	31	53	29	28
Ended Promptly	9	5	9	14	7	11	7	13	10	9	7	7	15	11	8
Dk/Ref (vol)	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	2	0	3	1	3	3	3	2

Q2: Americans owe a record \$1.6 trillion in student debt. In your opinion, should student loan debt be cancelled for all borrowers, cancelled for low-income borrowers, should it be reduced for borrowers but not cancelled, or should it not be canceled?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45+	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Cancelled for All Borrowers	15	5	11	24	11	18	8	38	27	11	6	13	32	19	11
Cancelled for Lower Income Borrowers	14	6	15	21	12	17	13	13	18	13	7	14	28	12	16
Reduced, but Not Outright Cancelled	38	28	40	47	36	41	40	35	30	40	27	48	34	39	38
Left As Is	32	60	34	7	41	24	40	12	25	34	60	25	6	30	34
Dk/Ref (vol)	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1

Q3: Some of the Democratic primary candidates support the concept of a “wealth tax,” which would be an annual tax on the net wealth a person holds for people above a certain wealth threshold such as \$25 million dollars. Do you support or oppose this concept?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45+	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Support	56	27	56	83	47	65	51	79	71	53	28	65	88	53	59
Oppose	41	70	41	16	50	34	47	17	28	45	70	33	10	44	38
Dk/Ref (vol)	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	4	1	2	2	2	2	3	3

Q4: Currently, the United States does not offer paid family leave for people who need to take maternity or paternity leave, or take leave to care for a seriously sick relative. Instead, federal law requires employers to provide employees 12 weeks of unpaid leave. Do you support or oppose requiring employers to provide those 12 weeks as paid, rather than unpaid leave?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45 +	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	Non-College
Support	70	49	69	87	63	75	65	87	76	68	48	75	92	70	69
Oppose	28	48	29	10	35	21	31	12	24	29	49	22	6	27	28
Dk/Ref (vol)	2	3	2	3	2	4	4	1	0	3	3	3	2	3	3

Q5: The Virginia General Assembly is currently considering a “Red Flag” Law, which allows a family member or the police to seek a court order to temporarily take away guns if they feel a gun owner may harm themselves or others. Do you support or oppose this policy?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45 +	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Support	62	33	55	94	51	73	58	82	60	63	36	69	91	55	68
Oppose	34	63	39	5	46	24	39	16	35	34	61	26	7	40	29
Dk/Ref (vol)	4	4	6	1	3	3	3	2	5	3	3	5	2	5	3

Q6: The Virginia General Assembly is also considering a bill that will expand the state’s gun background check system to include all gun sales aside from guns that are sold from one family member to another. Currently, guns sold in private, individual-to-individual transactions are exempt from this requirement. Do you support or oppose this policy?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45 +	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Support	66	48	65	83	59	72	67	72	78	63	46	73	85	62	69
Oppose	33	52	35	16	40	27	32	26	22	36	53	26	14	36	30
Dk/Ref (vol)	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	1

7: Would you support or oppose legalizing marijuana for recreational use in Virginia?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45 +	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Support	56	37	58	72	58	54	55	60	74	51	33	64	80	57	55
Oppose	41	61	39	25	38	43	43	37	19	47	66	33	17	40	41
Dk/Ref (vol)	3	2	3	3	4	3	2	3	7	2	1	3	3	3	4

TRUMP: Looking ahead to the 2020 election for President, do you think that Donald Trump should be reelected, or do you think that it is time to have someone else in office?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45+	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Reelect Trump	38	88	33	1	45	33	47	7	29	41	82	23	3	43	35
Someone Else	59	11	61	99	51	66	51	91	68	56	17	73	97	54	63
Undecided	2	1	5	0	3	1	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	2	2
Dk/Ref (vol)	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

IMPEACH: Regardless of how you feel about impeachment, do you think President Trump's conduct regarding Ukraine was proper or improper or do you not know enough about it to say?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45+	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Proper	30	67	26	3	36	25	35	7	22	32	35	16	5	35	25
Improper	54	13	55	89	49	59	49	83	50	55	44	67	85	44	63
Don't Know Enough	15	20	19	7	14	16	16	8	28	12	21	16	9	21	11
Dk/Ref (vol)	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	1

VOTEINT: As you may know on March 3rd Virginia will hold the Democratic Party primary election for president. How likely is it that you will vote in the upcoming primary election?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45+	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Very Likely	54	29	45	85	47	60	51	71	50	55	29	60	86	48	58
Somewhat Likely	11	5	20	9	11	11	10	11	19	9	8	15	8	13	10
Not Too Likely	7	6	10	3	7	6	6	3	9	6	5	8	1	7	6
Not At All Likely	28	60	24	3	34	22	32	14	22	30	58	16	5	32	26
Dk/Ref (vol)	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

VOTECH: Let's say the Democratic presidential primary in Virginia were being held today. I'm going to read a list of names of people running in the Democratic primary and I'd like you to tell me for whom you would vote...the candidates are: [ROTATE NAMES]

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Joe Biden | 22 |
| 2. Bernie Sanders | 17 |
| 3. Mike Bloomberg | 13 |
| 4. Pete Buttigieg [Boot-edge-edge] | 8 |
| 5. Amy Klobuchar [Klow-boo-char] | 5 |
| 6. Elizabeth Warren | 8 |
| 7. Andrew Yang | 5 |
| 8. Michael Bennet | 0 |
| 9. Tom Steyer | 1 |
| 10. Someone else (vol) | 5 |
| 11. Undecided (vol) | 13 |
| 98. Dk/ref (vol) | 3 |

Q10: In determining your vote in the presidential primary what would you say is more important? That the candidate agrees with you on the issues or that the candidate has a high likelihood of being able to win in the general election?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45 +	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
The candidate agrees with me on the issues	48	74	55	35	52	45	47	48	69	42	71	44	35	61	38
The candidate has a high likelihood of winning the general election	49	17	42	63	45	52	50	51	26	55	20	53	63	34	60
Dk/Ref (vol)	3	9	3	2	3	3	3	1	5	3	9	3	2	5	2

Q11: If your preferred candidate loses the nomination, will you still vote for the party's nominee in the general election in November?

	All	Rep	Ind	Dem	Males	Females	White	Black	18-44	45 +	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Non-College	College
Yes, Definitely	67	46	46	87	58	74	67	76	57	70	46	64	92	62	71
Yes, Maybe	15	12	22	11	16	13	15	16	16	14	18	18	5	15	14
No	11	35	16	1	16	8	15	3	13	11	32	8	2	13	10
Not Sure/Have to Think About it	7	7	16	1	10	4	3	5	14	4	3	10	1	10	4
Dk/Ref (vol)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1

Q12: What would you say best describes your hesitation to support the party's nominee? Is it that the nominee might be too liberal to earn your vote, or is it that they might be too moderate to earn your vote? (Asked of the 181 respondents who didn't say they would definitely support the eventual nominee in Q11)
n=181

1. Too Liberal to earn your vote	67
2. Too Moderate to earn your vote	18
98. Dk/ref (vol)	15

Demographics Full Survey n=866

EDUC: Could you tell me the highest level of school or college you had the opportunity to complete:

High school or less	45
College or more	55

HISPANIC: Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?

Yes	6
No	94
Dk/ref (vol)	0

RACE: Do you consider yourself to be:

White	72
Black or African American	19
Other	9

RELIG: What is your religious preference, are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, another religion, or no religion?

Protestant	23
Christian (non-specific) (vol)	28
Catholic	13
Jewish	1
Other	16
None	18
Dk/ref (vol)	1

IDEOL: When it comes to your ideology, would you consider yourself to be a...

Strong liberal	6
Liberal	12
Moderate, leaning liberal	24
Moderate, leaning conservative	22
Conservative	19
Strong Conservative	13
Dk/ref (vol)	4

PARTY: In politics today, do you generally consider yourself to be a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Republican	32
Democrat	36
Independent	30
No Preference (vol)	2
Other Party (vol)	0
Dk/Ref (vol)	0

PARTYLN

Republican	39
Democrat	39
Independent	17

AGE: (Recorded as exact year of birth)

18-24	9
25-34	12
35-44	15
45-54	23
55 & older	41

INCOME: And, just for statistical purposes, in which of the following categories does your family income fall?

Under \$25,000	6
\$25-\$49,999	11
\$50-\$74,999	16
\$75-\$99,999	16
\$100,000-\$149,999	17
Over \$150,000	22
Dk/ref (vol)	12

CELL/LANDLINE

Cell	53
Landline	47

SEX: [INTERVIEWER CODE]

Male	48
Female	52

Demographics Democratic Primary n=561

EDUC: Could you tell me the highest level of school or college you had the opportunity to complete:

High school or less	42
College or more	58

HISPANIC: Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?

Yes	5
No	94
Dk/ref (vol)	1

RACE: Do you consider yourself to be:

White	68
Black or African American	24
Other	8

RELIG: What is your religious preference, are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, another religion, or no religion?

Protestant	21
Christian (non-specific) (vol)	27
Catholic	12
Jewish	1
Other	18
None	20
Dk/ref (vol)	1

IDEOL: When it comes to your ideology, would you consider yourself to be a...

Strong liberal	9
Liberal	17
Moderate, leaning liberal	33
Moderate, leaning conservative	20
Conservative	12
Strong Conservative	6
Dk/ref (vol)	3

PARTY: In politics today, do you generally consider yourself to be a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Republican	16
Democrat	52
Independent	30
No Preference (vol)	1
Other Party (vol)	0
Dk/Ref (vol)	1
PARTYLN	

Republican	31
Democrat	50
Independent	17

AGE: (Recorded as exact year of birth)

18-24	11
25-34	11
35-44	17
45-54	21
55 & older	40

INCOME: And, just for statistical purposes, in which of the following categories does your family income fall?

Under \$25,000	6
\$25-\$49,999	10
\$50-\$74,999	17
\$75-\$99,999	16
\$100,000-\$149,999	18
Over \$150,000	22
Dk/ref (vol)	11

CELL/LANDLINE

Cell	54
Landline	46

SEX: [INTERVIEWER CODE]

Male	43
Female	57

How the survey was conducted:

The results of this poll are based on 866 interviews of registered voters, including 410 on landline and 456 on cell phone, conducted February 3-24, 2020. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. The margin of error for the whole survey is +/-3.5% at the 95% level of confidence. **This means that if 50% of respondents indicate a topline view on an issue, we can be 95% confident that the population's view on that issue is somewhere between 46.5% and 53.5%.** All error margins have been adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, which is 1.2 in this survey. The design effect is a factor representing the survey's deviation from a simple random sample and takes into account decreases in precision due to sample design and weighting procedures. Sub-samples have a higher margin of error. In addition to sampling error, the other potential sources of error include non-response, question wording, and interviewer error. The response rate (AAPOR RRI Standard Definition) for the survey was 17%. Five callbacks were employed in the fielding process. Live calling was conducted by trained interviewers at the Wason Center for Public Policy Survey Research Lab at Christopher Newport University. The data reported here are weighted using an iterative weighting process on age, race, sex, and education to reflect as closely as possible the population of Virginia's electorate. The Democratic primary questions were asked only of a subset of 561 voters who indicated they were somewhat or very likely to vote in the primary. The margin of error for the primary subsample is +/-4.3% at the 95% level of confidence. The cellphone/landline split for the primary subsample is 300 on landline and 266 on cell phones.