



Engagious

FPG Focus Pointe
Global

SWING VOTER PROJECT (SVP) REPORT FOR MAY 2019 SIOUX CITY, IOWA

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH:

Engagious conducted a focus group in Sioux City, Iowa on May 6, 2019. The group contained a total of 11 “swing voters,” who voted for President Obama in 2012 and then President Trump in 2016. We explored questions and topics surrounding the President, Democrats running for President, and 2020 issues more broadly.

DISCLAIMER:

The key findings in this report are based upon the opinions and feedback from 11 swing voters in one location. They are not a representative sample, nor should they be viewed as such.

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Example: “30% of female respondents disagreed with the Medicare statement” (according to research conducted by Engagious).

1

SIOUX CITY SWING VOTERS SAY MUELLER REPORT AND RELATED ACTIONS ON CAPITOL HILL ARE A LOW PRIORITY FOR THEM, AND A DISTRACTION FOR CONGRESS.

Six weeks after the summary of the Mueller Report was released, fewer than half of our respondents (five of 11) knew that, according to the Mueller Report, there was no coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russians in the 2016 election. And when shown an unlabeled photo of Attorney General Barr, only two respondents were confident they could identify him.

When we asked them to rate on a scale from zero (doesn't matter at all) to 10 (matters a lot) how much the Mueller Report and the issues around it matter to them, they rated it 3.0/10. Only one of 11 respondents thinks President Trump is undermining the rule of law. They agreed much more with the statement "Congress is spending so much time on the Mueller investigation that it is distracted from working on other issues that matter more to me," rating it at 7.2/10. Respondents commented that the Mueller investigation is "over and done with," and it's time to move on to spend time solving major issues facing the country.

Our respondents oppose impeaching President Trump and removing him from office, rating that idea at only 2.4/10 where zero is strongly oppose and 10 is to strongly support. Nine of the 11 respondents indicated it wouldn't be a wise political step for the Democrats to take, citing the time and money already spent on the Mueller Investigation. If Democrats were to pursue impeachment against President Trump, our respondents would think worse of them. Democrats can impeach the President, but Republicans control the U.S. Senate and they won't vote to remove him from office. Therefore, impeachment would be a meaningless endeavor if removing President Trump from office is the objective.

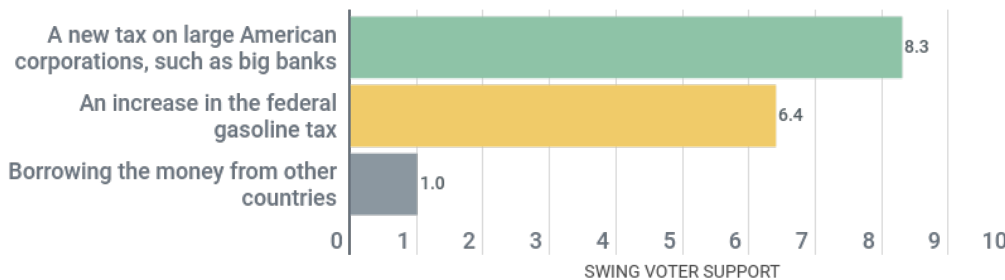


2

SOME RECENT LIBERAL PROPOSALS RESONATED WITH SIOUX CITY SWING VOTERS, SUCH AS CANCELLING STUDENT LOAN DEBT, OR MAKING CORPORATIONS PAY FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS. BUT MAJOR LIBERAL PROPOSALS WERE LARGELY UNFAMILIAR TO THEM.

Eight of the 11 respondents indicated that managing student loan debt is a problem for them personally or for someone they know. When we provided the details of a recently released plan to cancel up to \$50,000 in student loan debt for every American whose family makes less than \$100,000 annually and asked them to rate it for how strongly they support it, it scored at 7.2/10 on a strongly oppose to strongly support scale. During the discussion, respondents said it doesn't seem right that attending college should make young people poor while colleges and universities are making billions of dollars.

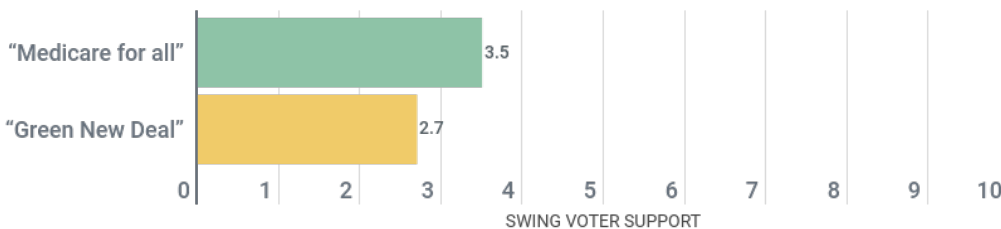
Swing voters strongly support investing in infrastructure (7.5/10). When we asked how we should pay for it, there was a clear favorite:



Respondents commented that we are all using roads and bridges and we need to keep them safe and up to date. One respondent remarked that the banks are making a lot of money on things like overdraft fees, and there are new banks everywhere. She suggested that banks fix a road and put their name on it (e.g., "Wells Fargo Boulevard"). All respondents in the group agreed with her remark.

Two other major liberal initiatives were unfamiliar. During the focus group, we asked:

"On a scale from zero to 10, how much news have you heard over the past several months about a concept called . . ."



3

GIVEN THE CHOICE, THESE SWING VOTERS WOULD VOTE FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP AGAIN OVER BOTH HILLARY CLINTON AND FORMER PRESIDENT OBAMA.

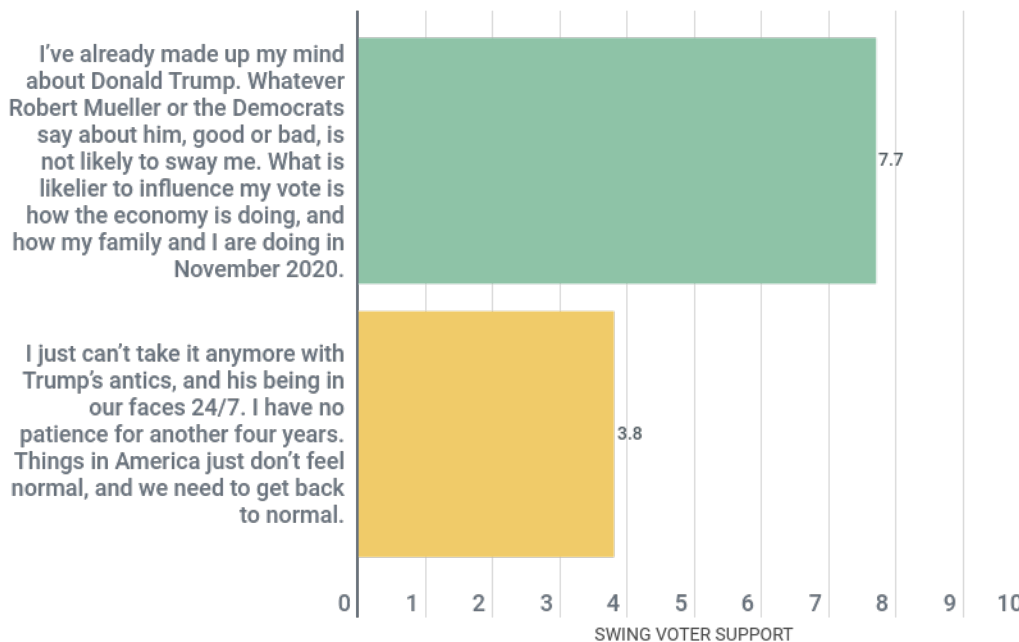
If another presidential election were being held tomorrow between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, 10 of the 11 swing voters in our focus group would vote for Donald Trump again.

Also, if the U.S. Constitution didn't prevent presidents from serving a third term, and former President Obama became the Democratic nominee to challenge President Trump's re-election, eight of the 11 respondents would support President Trump.

When we asked respondents what they like about President Trump politically, they cited the following:

- his immigration policies
- he's different from other politicians (business background)
- he wants to bring our troops home
- he stands up to other countries and tries to make deals (e.g., North Korea)
- his policies are helping small business owners
- he's trying to change "one-sided" trade deals that hurt our country
- his pro-life position
- he moved the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem

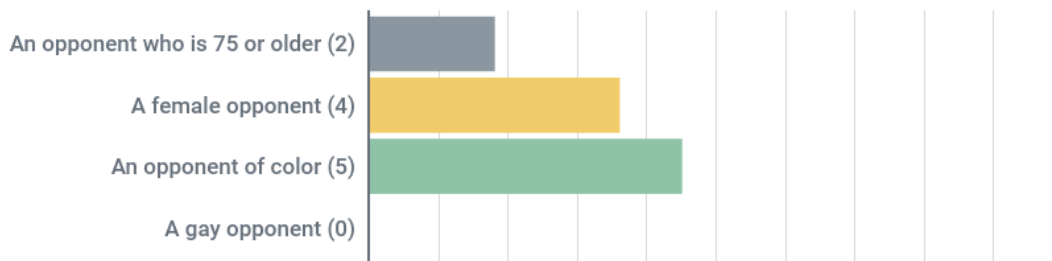
We asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about President Trump, on a zero to 10 scale. Zero means they totally disagreed, and 10 means they totally agreed.



4

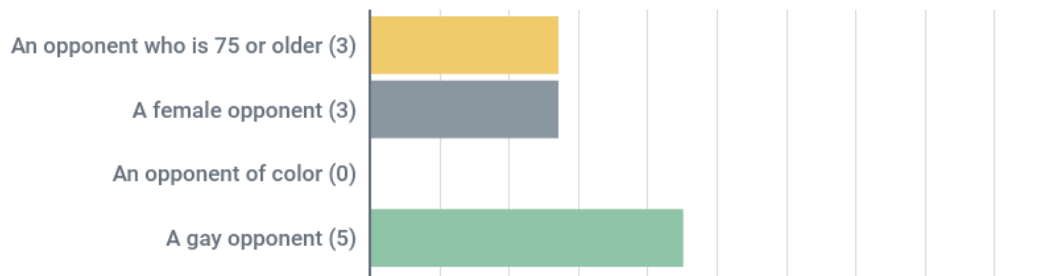
THESE SWING VOTERS BELIEVE PRESIDENT TRUMP WOULD HAVE THE HARDEST TIME DEFEATING AN OPPONENT OF COLOR, AND WOULD HAVE THE EASIEST TIME DEFEATING A GAY OPPONENT.

We asked: *Imagine you're in President Trump's position, and you want to win re-election. What category of opponent do you think you'd have the hardest time defeating?*



These swing voters have already voted for a presidential candidate of color (in 2012), saw him succeed, so it's likely they can imagine that type of candidate being a challenge for President Trump.

We also asked: *Imagine you're in President Trump's position, and you want to win re-election. What category of opponent do you think you'd have the easiest time defeating?*



There was a sense in the group that President Trump's attacks would be particularly acute against and demeaning for a gay opponent. One respondent suggested that people are not as accepting of a candidate being gay as they would claim, which would help President Trump in 2020.

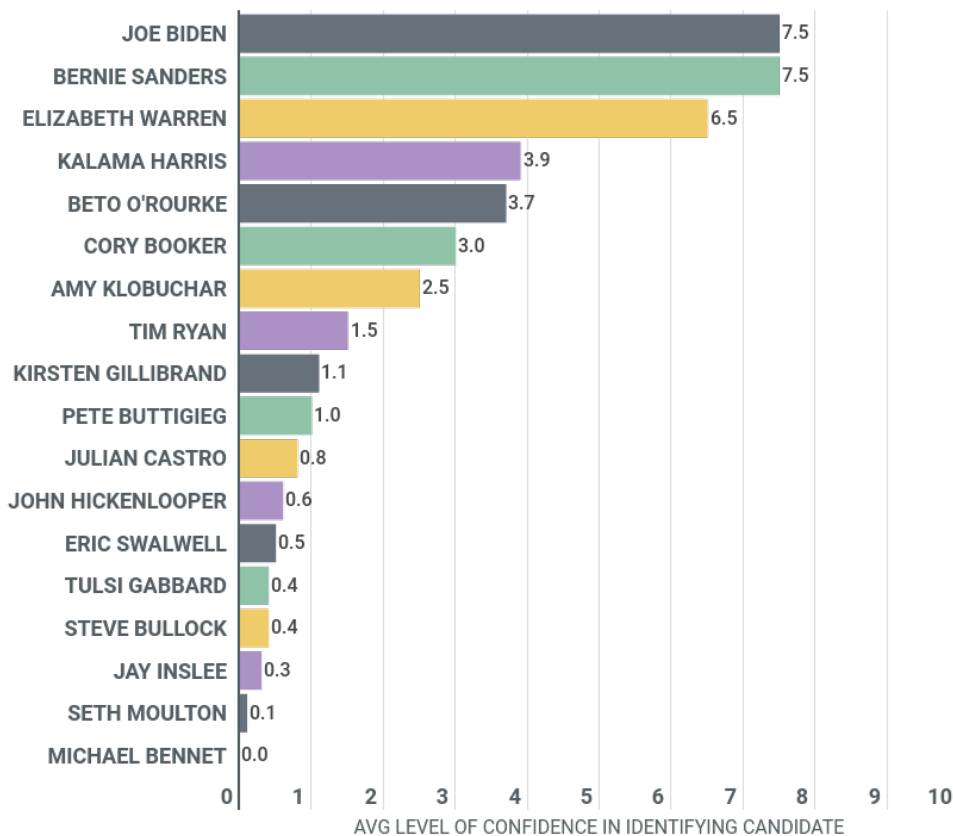
5

NONE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES "EXCITES" THESE SWING VOTERS. BIDEN, SANDERS, AND WARREN ARE THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE DEMOCRATS; MOST OTHERS ARE UNKNOWN.

Swing voters indicated that none of the current Democrats running for president "excites" them. When pressed to name a Democrat who's not running who would excite them, one respondent named Joe Lieberman. No one else in the focus group indicated they would be excited if he were to run, and they were unable to come up with any other names.

Respondents indicated with their dials on a scale from zero to 10 their level of confidence in identifying unlabeled photos of each of the candidates. Zero means they had no idea who the candidate is, and 10 means they were totally confident.

The following chart shows the results, on average, in descending order:



Joe Biden – They knew he was a former Vice President, and that he has boundary issues with women. Two commented on his interactions with Ukraine, saying he has meddled in their elections and church affairs, while his son has profited from a company there.

Bernie Sanders – He is, according to one, a "borderline communist." We also heard that he has been in politics for many years and he just visited Sioux City. Only two swing voters knew he is a U.S. senator.

6

AMONG THE GROUP OF MIDDLE-AGED, DEMOCRATIC SENATORS RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT, CORY BOOKER WAS BEST-RECEIVED BY SWING VOTERS.

During the focus group, we showed swing voters two-minute campaign ads for each of the four middle-aged U.S. senators running for President. When asked how concerned they would be if they were in President Trump's position and had to consider the electoral threat posed by these candidates on a scale from zero (not at all concerned) to 10 (very concerned), swing voters, on average, believe President Trump should be most concerned about Cory Booker (5.6/10), followed by Kamala Harris (4.5/10), Kirsten Gillibrand (4.3/10), and Amy Klobuchar (3.7/10).

Cory Booker was viewed as authentic, homegrown, and for the people. On average, they saw him as the biggest threat to President Trump because he is relatable to the common person, he worked his way up (not coming from wealth), and he's a person of color. He represents what a lot of Americans have gone through in their lives.

Kamala Harris was seen as intelligent and fascinating. A number of respondents told us they were curious to learn more about her. Some disliked her for what they described as her "socialist message," and some thought she was trying to have it both ways on immigration—a welcoming attitude toward illegal immigrants when she used to prosecute illegal gangs.

They were split on Kirsten Gillibrand. Some thought she was courageous and positive, and showed patriotism in her video. They liked her playing on the words "home of the brave" and her message, but they didn't see her as much of a threat to President Trump at this point because they don't know her yet. Others described her as not ready to be President and unimpressive. Also, some thought it was premature for her to go directly after President Trump when she is not yet the Democratic nominee.

Amy Klobuchar was described as having a nice smile, but some thought she was too soft and her message in the campaign ad, where she described her background, didn't resonate.



7

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES TO SIOUX CITY SWING VOTERS ARE THE ECONOMY, HEALTHCARE, ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, EDUCATION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

The top issues for these swing voters as we move into the 2020 election cycle are: the economy (3), healthcare (3), education (2), workers' rights (1), the minimum wage (1), immigration (1), and human rights (1).

We asked: *Imagine you could earmark a portion of your federal taxes to address any problem, knowing that an equal portion of everyone else's taxes would also be used to address that same problem. So, we're talking about a lot of money. What problem would you want that portion of your tax money spent on?*

Respondents named illegal immigration (3), making healthcare more affordable (2), addressing mental health (2), public education/teacher salaries (2), the environment/pollution (2), helping the poor (1), and helping the hungry (1).¹

¹ Some respondents provided more than one answer to these two questions

8

THESE SWING VOTERS FEEL FAIRLY STRONGLY THAT THE ECONOMY HAS GOTTEN BETTER SINCE DONALD TRUMP BECAME PRESIDENT. MORE THAN HALF WOULD SAY IT'S "BOOMING."

With the unemployment rate at 3.6% nationally, the lowest it has been in five decades, and the stock market hovering at an all-time high, swing voters say the economy **for America overall** has gotten better since Donald Trump became President, scoring it 7.0/10 on a zero to 10 scale from "gotten much worse" to "gotten much better" since that time. They cited the low unemployment rate, the gains in the stock market, business expansion, and people are spending more money.

However, when we asked them about **them and their family**, that number dropped to 6.3/10. Only one respondent in the focus group has seen a noticeable increase in wages since President Trump took office—and she doesn't attribute that increase to him. Also, none of the respondents know a long-time unemployed person who has gotten a job since President Trump took office.

9

THESE SWING VOTERS DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT TRUMP'S TRADE POLICY, BUT THEY SUPPORT PLACING TARIFFS ON THE IMPORTS OF CERTAIN GOODS.

Almost no one (one of the 11) was aware that President Trump had negotiated a replacement deal for NAFTA, but they know he's working on a trade deal with China (seven of the 11).

They support his actions on U.S. trade policy, scoring it 7.1/10 on a zero to 10 scale of support. Interestingly, none of the respondents know someone who has been helped or hurt by President Trump's trade policies, nor do they think tariffs have impacted them or the people they know positively or negatively.

As a matter of principle, most respondents (nine of 11) support the placing of tariffs on imports of certain goods. With regard to NAFTA, we heard there needs to be more reciprocity in the agreement because right now, we're being treated unfairly. The benefits from that trade agreement went to Mexico—not the American people.



10

THESE SWING VOTERS HAVE LITTLE APPETITE FOR THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO INVALIDATE OBAMACARE.

When asked how strongly they support or oppose this effort (zero means totally oppose and 10 means totally support), they scored it at 4.1/10. Respondents told us the Affordable Care Act has helped people get healthcare. Most believe we should improve the areas of the law that need it rather than scrapping the entire thing. The improvements they would like to see include lower deductibles and the regulation of prices for prescription drugs, hospital visits, and healthcare services generally.

11

THESE SWING VOTERS VIEW WIND POWER VERY FAVORABLY.

For seven of the 11 respondents, America's energy independence was described as one of the top five issues that matters to them the most. They have a very positive view of wind power in Iowa, rating it at 8.0/10 on a scale from very bad for Iowa to excellent for Iowa. They like wind power because it's a natural and clean source of energy, it attracts businesses to the region, it's abundant, and it's viewed by most (eight of the 11) as cheaper than coal power.



12

THESE SWING VOTERS AGREE THE WEATHER IS GETTING WEIRDER, BUT AREN'T TOTALLY SOLD ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

Swing voters, on average, agree “the weather in recent years seems weird” (6.5/10), citing longer winters, colder temperatures, less snow, winters starting later, and dramatic changes in temperature, but most don’t attribute that to climate change. Only two attribute the recent floods in Iowa to climate change. They agree that “President Trump should ensure the U.S. is better prepared for more-frequent extreme weather events” (7.5/10) and that “President Trump should call for ramping up of private-sector innovation in American clean energy to help reduce carbon emissions” (6.5/10).

They said they want President Trump to embrace wind energy. One respondent remarked—and others in the group seemed to agree—that the climate is always changing, but the President can still encourage sensible, renewable energy policies.

To address climate change, eight of the 11 respondents would prefer a gradual transition versus a radical transformation in the way we produce and consume energy, which they see as more realistic. Eight of the 11 respondents would oppose a proposal if it were on the ballot next year to add a monthly fee of \$10 to consumers’ monthly electricity bill to combat climate change. They told us it’s expensive, and they didn’t understand how having that money coming out of their pockets would help solve the problem—there’s concern about how it would be used.



13

DESPITE A BELIEF THAT CAPITALISM HAS CAUSED AN INCREASED WAGE GAP, SOCIALISM IS A NON-STARTER FOR MOST OF THESE SWING VOTERS.

Swing voters agreed, on average, that “capitalism has caused an increase in the wage gap in America between the highest earners and the lowest” (6.1/10), but they disagreed, on average, that “a socialist system will shrink the wage gap between those at the top and those at the bottom” (3.8/10). Respondents told us nothing is free—somebody has to pay for it—and eventually, you’ll run out of other people’s money.

During the focus group, we asked: *I want you to imagine next year’s Democratic nominee has endorsed all, or most, of the following agenda items: Medicare-for-all, the Green New Deal, guaranteed jobs for all, impeachment, reparations to African Americans, packing the Supreme Court, late-term abortion, banning PAC contributions, abolishing ICE, legalizing marijuana, eliminating the Senate filibuster, opposing all Trump judicial nominees, imposing a “wealth tax,” raising the “death tax” to 77% for estates over \$1 billion, and abolishing the Electoral College. How many of you would very likely vote to re-elect President Trump if his opponent took all, or most, of these positions?*

All 11 swing voters told us it’s very likely they would support President Trump’s re-election in this scenario. They indicated they didn’t like at least some of the positions on the list, with a few saying the economic policies sounded like socialism. We heard that advocating for socialist policies, such as a wealth tax, would lead to Democrats getting votes for the wrong reasons. One respondent remarked that we should not penalize people who worked hard to earn their money.

