



Engagious

FPG Focus Pointe
Global

SWING VOTER PROJECT (SVP)

REPORT FOR JULY 2019

WARREN, MICHIGAN

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH:

Engagious conducted a focus group in Warren, Michigan on July 8, 2019 with 12 swing voters—nine who voted for President Obama in 2012 and then President Trump in 2016, and three who voted for Mitt Romney in 2012 and then Hillary Clinton in 2016. We explored questions and topics surrounding the President, the Democratic presidential candidates, and 2020 issues more broadly.

DISCLAIMER:

The key findings in this report are based upon the opinions and feedback from 12 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/FPG).

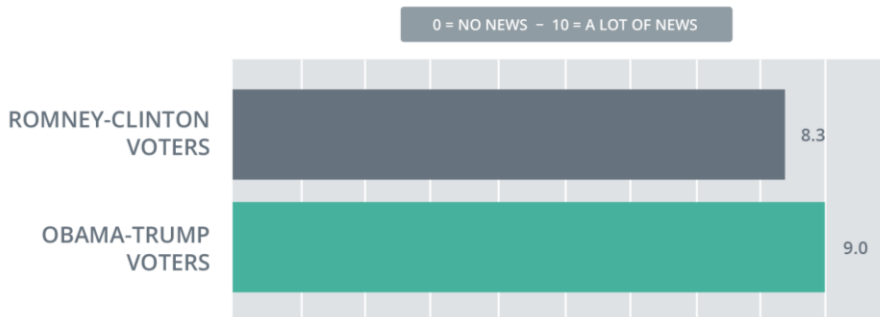


1

THE MIGRANT CRISIS AT THE SOUTHERN BORDER IS DEFINITELY ON SWING VOTERS' RADAR SCREENS—AND MOST STAND WITH TRUMP ON THE ISSUE.

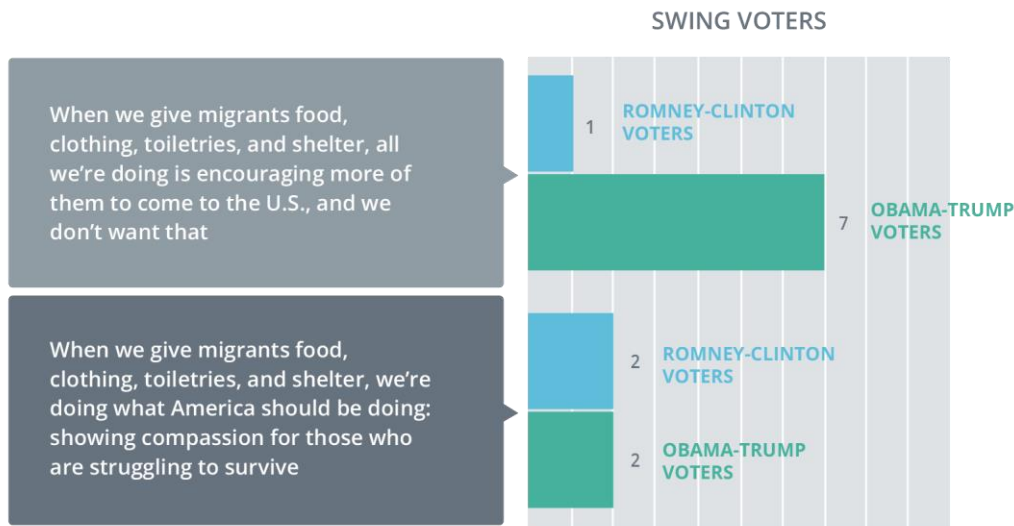
We asked:

On a scale from zero to 10, how much news have you heard recently about thousands of migrants from Latin America being detained by U.S. authorities?



Eight of our 12 swing voters—including six Obama-Trump voters and two Romney-Clinton voters—believe that with the migrant situation, the Trump Administration is “handling the problem professionally and responsibly,” while only four—three Obama-Trump voters and one Romney-Clinton voter—believe the administration has been “handling the problem unprofessionally and irresponsibly.”

We asked swing voters to tell us which of the following statements comes closest to how they feel personally about the treatment of migrants:





Those who agree more with the first statement believe we need to focus on Americans, not immigrants. One female Obama-Trump voter remarked, “I don’t want to be a jerk. I feel terrible for those people, but there are people here in this country that are struggling to survive.” Others said things like this:

“Three years ago was the first year that there was more foreigners born in the United States than Americans. And to me that’s wrong. Because we sent our people in, our guys are dying overseas in all of these conflicts, they don’t have time to make babies, or if they did, they’re done or gone or dead, and we’re helping everybody else. But all these people are coming here free, and they’re getting arrested and stuff, and we’re babying them and ‘poor this, poor that,’ and it’s time that we stop. We gotta think about us first. We need us first, because I’ll tell you when they’re 18 they’re not signing up for the military.”

– Male, Obama-Trump voter, Warren, MI

“We shouldn’t give away our [birthright citizenship] like candy. We’re one of the very few countries in this world that do.”

– Female, Obama-Trump voter, Warren, MI

Also, swing voters expressed frustration that there is “no end in sight” to the problem, and illegal immigrants will continue to exploit our laws. When they hear the Democratic presidential candidates talking about providing free healthcare for illegal immigrants, we heard they experience “higher blood pressure” and they get angry, upset, and frustrated. When asked what we should do with the people coming to our country’s border, we heard that our government should “send them home.”

Those who agree more with the second statement, above, told us that we would just be giving migrants “the basic needs to survive while the crisis is figured out,” and not more comprehensive benefits, like healthcare. Another said this:

“I am African-American. I teach my daughter that she’s African-American and she said to me, a child, eight years old, ‘Mama, we’re from Africa, they gonna send us back?’ What do I say to her? This is a melting pot. America’s not based on one person, one religion. So yeah, there needs to be laws to keep everybody out. Everybody can’t come in. But you cannot sit here and say it’s OK not to feed them, not to clothe them, not to help them. You help everybody in need. God bless America. God would not want us to send people back....Help them. Give them the food. Maybe send them back, but just don’t turn your back on them.”

– Female, Romney-Clinton voter, Warren, MI

2

DESPITE WHAT MANY SWING VOTERS SEE AS PRESIDENT TRUMP'S LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM, THEY ARE STICKING WITH HIM IN 2020.

With the 2020 election cycle gearing up, most swing voters say they aren't looking for a change from Trump, despite their criticisms of what they see as unprofessional behavior.

If another Presidential election were being held tomorrow between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, 10 of our 12 swing voters—including all nine Obama-Trump voters—would vote for President Trump.

Hypothetically, 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 would vote for President Trump (seven Obama-Trump voters and one Romney-Clinton voter), and four would vote for President Obama (two Obama-Trump voters and two Romney-Clinton voters).

When we asked respondents what they like about President Trump politically, they offered:

- His willingness to speak his mind, whether you agree or disagree
- His desire to work on the immigration issue—and he has
- He has pushed other countries with taxes on imports
- He has fired people in his administration who he doesn't like

Later, we asked swing voters why they think some of their neighbors support President Trump. They cited:

- He's a businessman, not a politician
- He's trying to get things done
- They wanted a big change—and he's different
- They wanted someone who isn't afraid to speak his mind
- He's a celebrity on Twitter

We also asked what the single most important characteristic they want a leader to have is. They offered:

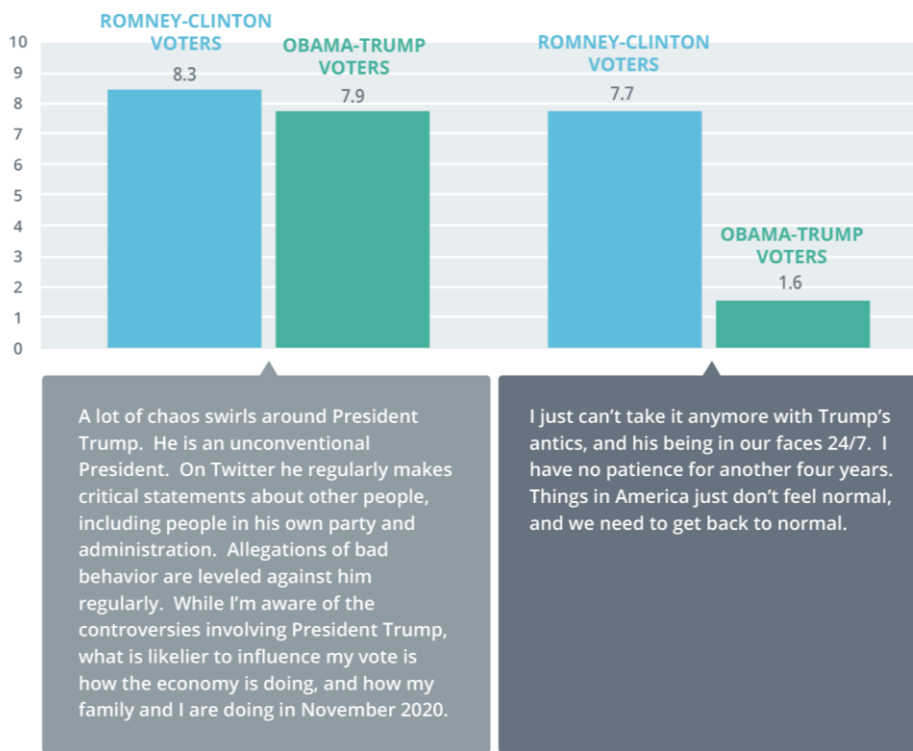
- Follow-through (5)
- Professionalism (3)
- Intelligence/thinking long-term (2)
- Strong leader (2)
- Strong on the economy (1)





Swing voters generally believe Trump is a strong leader who follows through, but some are clearly troubled by his lack of professionalism during his presidency. When we asked which character trait President Trump lacks that they hope his successor—in 2021 or 2025—has in abundance, their responses centered on professionalism, speaking well, diplomacy, and having a willingness to listen to the knowledgeable people around him/her.

Despite the President’s shortcomings, most swing voters will place a higher level of importance on the state of the economy and how they and their family are doing in November 2020 when deciding their vote. During the focus group, we asked swing voters to tell us 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.



Among Obama-Trump voters, there is no appetite for impeaching the President. When asked how strongly they support or oppose the idea on a scale from zero to 10 (from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support”), they scored it at 0.9/10. Romney-Clinton voters support the idea fairly strongly (6.7/10). Interestingly, only one of three Romney-Clinton voters think it would be a wise political step for Democrats to impeach President Trump, considering they want to win the White House next year. Obama-Trump voters are more split on whether it would be a wise political step for Democrats, with four saying yes and five saying no.

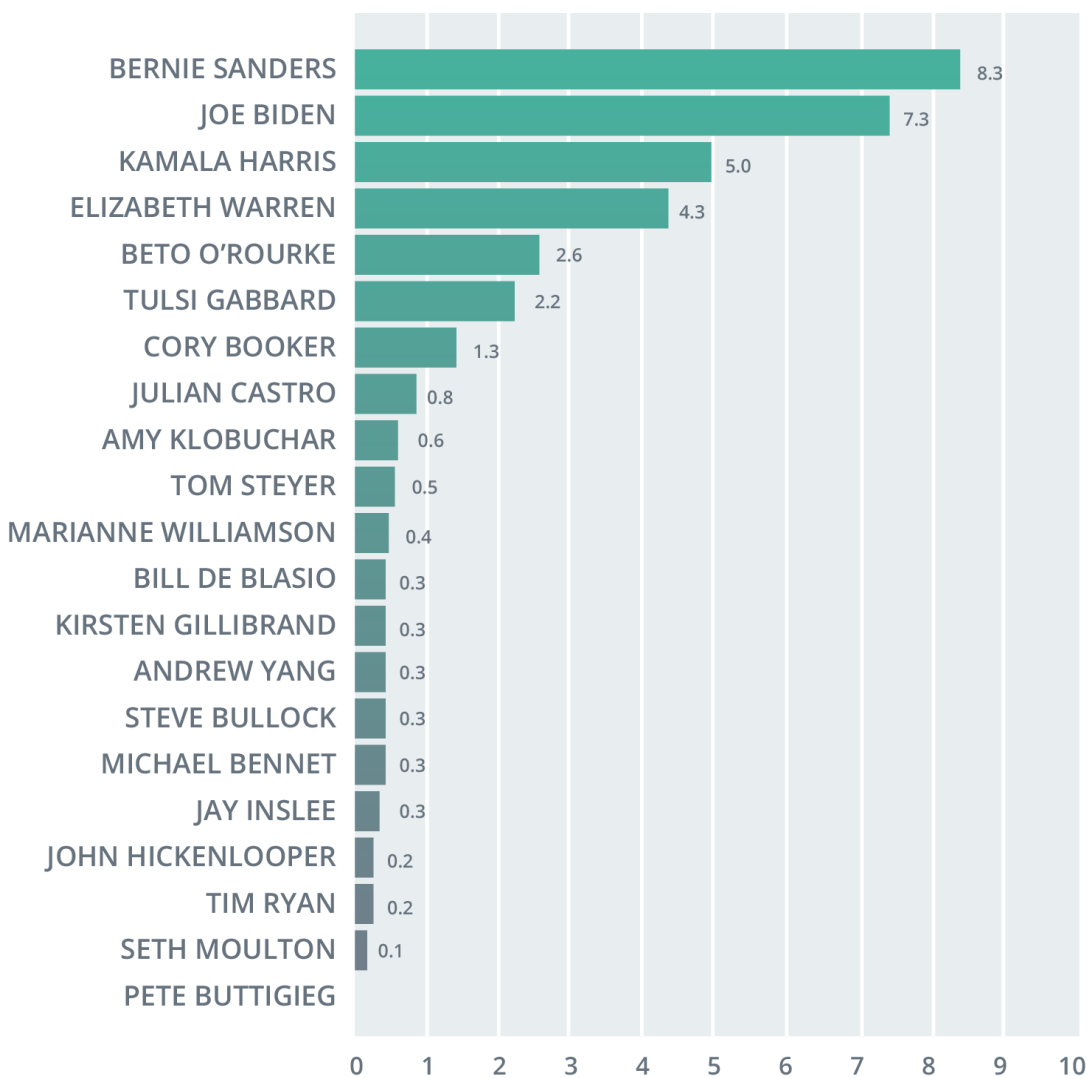


3

FOLLOWING THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC DEBATES, ONLY SANDERS AND BIDEN ARE RECOGNIZABLE TO MOST SWING VOTERS; THE OTHER CANDIDATES REMAIN RELATIVELY UNKNOWN.

Respondents indicated with their dials their level of confidence in being able to identify unlabeled photos of each of the Democrats running for President in 2020, on a zero to 10 scale. Zero means they had no idea who the candidate is, and 10 means they were totally confident they know who the candidate is.

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





Months after Democrats began announcing their candidacies for President, swing voters have no idea who most of these candidates are. In fact, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is more recognizable than 17 of the 21 candidates running for the Democratic nomination that we asked about—and she was not all that recognizable either.

During the focus group, we asked swing voters where they get most of their news. Notably, almost all of them cited local TV news or local newspapers as one of their main news sources. Even among the most recognizable candidates, swing voters' knowledge about them is very low.

Joe Biden

Some respondents knew he is the former Vice President, but no one knew he previously was a U.S. Senator, nor which state he is from.

Bernie Sanders

Only one respondent knew he is a U.S. Senator. Respondents told us he is a “socialist” who is popular with Millennials for supporting policies that would help them, including free college. No one knew which state he is from.

Kamala Harris

No one knew she is a U.S. Senator, but a few have seen her in the news over the past week (following the first Democratic primary debates). No one knew which state she is from.

Elizabeth Warren

One swing voter knew she is a U.S. Senator. When we delved deeper into what they know about her, that same voter said she is “Pocahontas,” but no one was aware of what she was famous for before her current position (her role in criticizing Wall Street and creating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau).

None of the Democrats running for President “excites” any of our swing voters (both before and after watching an 11-minute video where the candidates describe their key policy positions). When we asked if there is anyone not currently running who they would like to see jump into the race, the only person they named is Oprah Winfrey (seven of 12 swing voters would like to see her run). They cited her integrity, professionalism, intelligence, leadership qualities, and her skills as a businesswoman as reasons for wanting her to run for President.

4

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES HEADING INTO 2020
RELATE TO IMMIGRATION, HEALTHCARE, AND DONALD
TRUMP'S BEHAVIOR.

In the beginning of the focus group, we asked respondents to name their top issue of concern heading into 2020. They cited:

- Immigration (5)
- Healthcare (2)
- Donald Trump, with a focus on his behavior (2)
- Lack of jobs
- Protecting Social Security
- Funding education

Also, we asked swing voters to name the one thing a presidential candidate could propose that would help them personally economically. We heard:

- Make healthcare affordable (6)
- Lower taxes (2)
- Reduce the cost of college/help address student loans (2)
- Protect Social Security
- Reduce the cost of car insurance
- Fund public schools

When we asked if there is anything President Trump has not yet followed through on, respondents cited:

- Building the wall
- Lowering healthcare costs
- Adequately protecting Social Security



5

SWING VOTERS SAY OUR ECONOMY IS “GROWING” BUT NOT “BOOMING.”

With the unemployment rate at 3.7% nationally, nearly the lowest it has been in five decades, and the stock market hovering near an all-time high, we asked Michigan swing voters if they believe the economy is “booming.” While none of them would describe the economy in that way, almost all would say it’s “growing.”

Both groups of swing voters indicated that, on average, the economy has gotten better for them and their family since Donald Trump became President, with Romney-Clinton voters scoring this at 6.0/10 and Obama-Trump voters scoring this at 7.2/10, on a zero to 10 scale (from the economy has “gotten much worse since Donald Trump became President” to “gotten much better since Donald Trump became President”). Using the same scale about the economy for America overall, Romney-Clinton voters would say the economy has gotten slightly worse since Donald Trump became President (4.7/10), while Obama-Trump voters scored it the same as they did for them and their family (7.2/10).

While most believe the economy is doing well since the President took office, they indicated a modest level of concern that the U.S. economy will enter a recession sometime in the next year. Using a zero to 10 scale (from “no chance it will enter a recession” sometime in the next year to “it’s already in recession”), Romney-Clinton voters and Obama-Trump voters scored this at 5.3/10 and 4.1/10, respectively. Only one of our 12 swing voters has seen a noticeable increase in wages since the President took office, with that person partially attributing that increase to Trump.

We asked about the direction of our country and Michigan, more specifically. Both groups of swing voters believe Michigan is moving in a better direction overall than our country, on average. We heard negativity surrounding the leadership of the state under former Governor Snyder, who left office earlier this year. Respondents expressed an eagerness for change and suggested that they are more pleased with the leadership of their new governor, who is addressing some of the issues they care about, including fixing the roads (by increasing the gas tax). At the national level, swing voters are seeing progress on some policy items and a lack of progress on others, so their view about the country as a whole is slightly more neutral.

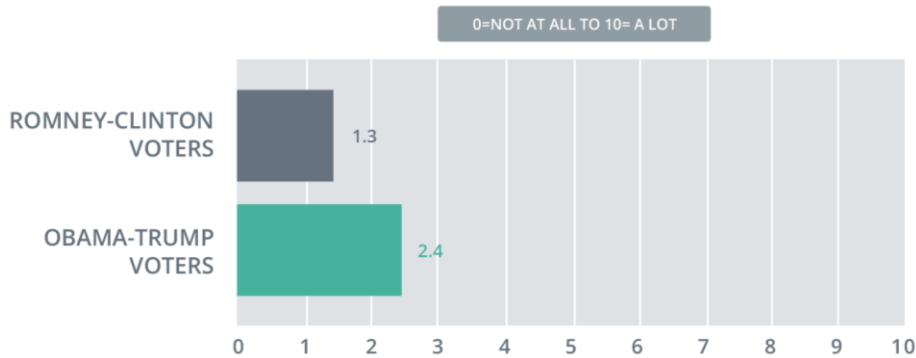
Also, we asked, “Over the past several decades there has been a growing gap between the very rich and everyone else in American society. How much does this problem trouble you, if at all?” On a scale from zero to 10 (“It does not trouble me at all” to “It troubles me a lot”), Romney-Clinton voters and Obama-Trump voters scored it at 6.7/10 and 6.8/10, respectively. When asked what government policies they support to reduce income inequality, respondents said we should limit the trademark protections for large corporations, small companies should receive the same tax breaks that large companies receive, and we should repeal the Trump tax cuts.



6

SWING VOTERS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT LARGE U.S. CORPORATIONS CARE ABOUT WHAT'S IN AMERICA'S BEST INTEREST.

On a scale from zero to 10, how much do you think large U.S. corporations care about what's in America's best interest?



When asked how they don't have our country's best interest in mind, they cited:

- The companies do not adequately compensate their workers
- The companies are more focused on cheap, foreign labor, increasing the number of unemployed people in the U.S.

Swing voters commented:

"I've been in a lot of meetings where we decide where we put the plants—Korea, China, places like that—and America's best interest was [never considered]...It's really not taken into consideration when we decide where to put a plant."

– Male, Obama-Trump voter

"I'd love a nice car, but if we don't have any jobs here, [that's a problem]."

– Male, Obama-Trump voter

During the conversation, we asked what steps large U.S. corporations can take to restore their confidence in them. Respondents offered:

- Pay workers more, while paying their leadership less
- Stop laying off workers, which forces some to retire (before they want to)
- Remember that they are American companies—have an American view (of helping our people), not a global view

7

SWING VOTERS SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS TO USE TARIFFS TO PROTECT AMERICAN JOBS AND INDUSTRIES.

Among Obama-Trump voters, there is fairly strong support for the Trump Administration's actions on U.S. trade policy. When asked to rate their feelings about our trade policy on a zero to 10 scale (from "totally oppose these actions" to "totally support these actions"), they rated it at 7.4/10. Romney-Clinton voters supported our trade policy less, scoring it at 4.3/10.

However, most swing voters—including six Obama-Trump voters and all three Romney-Clinton voters—believe the President should impose tariffs on cars and auto parts made in other countries. We asked how much they support or oppose the Trump Administration placing tariffs on the imports of certain goods, on a zero to 10 scale (from "totally oppose" to "totally support"). We learned there is strong support among both groups. Romney-Clinton voters scored it at 7.3/10, and Obama-Trump voters scored it at 7.6/10.

Eleven of our 12 swing voters—including all three Romney-Clinton voters—believe America's efforts to secure a fairer trade deal with China to help American exporters and to protect our intellectual property is worth the financial pain from higher prices on imports we buy from other countries. For them, it's about protecting American jobs and American wealth, putting our country's interests first.

It's notable that nine swing voters—including six Obama-Trump voters and all three Romney-Clinton voters—indicated that they have not noticed prices rising for the things they buy in recent months. Three have noticed prices rising for the things they buy in recent months, and two of them—both Obama-Trump voters—believe some of that is due to the President's trade policies. If a "trade war" with China were to cause prices to rise noticeably for them and their family, Romney-Clinton voters' support for the President would erode to some degree, but Obama-Trump voters' support for the President would somewhat increase, on average.

Eight of our 12 swing voters (or an immediate family member) work in the automobile industry. When asked to rate on a scale from zero to 10 (from "very negatively" to "very positively") how the President's trade policies have affected the U.S. automobile industry so far, Romney-Clinton voters and Obama-Trump voters scored it at 4.7/10 and 5.9/10, respectively. When asked how the President's trade policies will affect the U.S. automobile industry in the coming years using the same scale, Romney-Clinton voters and Obama-Trump voters scored it at 4.3/10 and 6.7/10, respectively. Overall, Obama-Trump voters are optimistic the President's trade policies will pay off for the automobile sector.





When asked if the Trump Administration's trade policies have helped or harmed them or someone they know, no one said they have helped and only one said they have harmed someone they know. Someone a swing voter knows works for a company in the automobile industry that is concerned about tariffs, suggesting the company is uneasy about setting a strategy before knowing how tariffs may impact them.

With regard to the Trump Administration negotiating trade deals with other countries, only one respondent—a Romney-Clinton voter—was aware that the Trump Administration has negotiated a replacement trade deal for NAFTA. Trade negotiations with China have received far more attention, with nine respondents—including all three Romney-Clinton voters—aware that the Trump Administration is negotiating a new trade deal with China.

8

SWING VOTERS, ESPECIALLY ROMNEY-CLINTON VOTERS, BELIEVE THE WEATHER IN RECENT YEARS SEEMS "WEIRD," BUT THEY ARE SPLIT ON HOW SERIOUSLY IT IMPACTS THEIR VOTE.

When asked to rate on a scale from zero to 10 (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") how much they agree that, "Compared to when you were much younger, the weather in recent years seems weird," Romney-Clinton and Obama-Trump voters scored this at 7.3/10 and 5.4/10, respectively. They cited cooler temperatures in the summer, warmer temperatures in the winter, and the rain they experienced every day of June, which is unusual.

We also asked if they would say climate change is a "top five" issue when they think about all the issues that matter to them when they vote next year. While the group was split, it's notable that five of our nine Obama-Trump voters indicated that it's a "top five" issue for them because they think climate change is "a serious problem for our environment." The other seven swing voters—four Obama-Trump and three Romney-Clinton—indicated it's not a "top five" issue for them because "many other issues matter more to me than this one."

Most swing voters—seven Obama-Trump and two Romney-Clinton—indicated they would not vote against a Republican candidate for Congress who is vocal about addressing climate change as a serious issue. Those who told us they would vote against such a candidate believe there are more important issues to focus on.

There was strong disagreement among respondents as to whether Democrats should hold a presidential debate focused solely on the topic of climate change.

9

THE DEMOCRATS RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT ARE TAKING POSITIONS THAT SWING VOTERS SEE AS TOO LIBERAL, WHICH COULD DIM THE PARTY'S CHANCES IN 2020.

During the focus group, we asked respondents how much of the first Democratic debates they watched, totaling four hours over two nights. Of our 12 swing voters, five watched none of them and six watched under an hour, in total. Only one swing voter watched between one hour and two hours.

Next, we asked swing voters to use their hand-held dials to react, moment-to-moment, to an 11-minute video showing clips from the first Democratic debates where candidates described their key policy positions about topics including the economy, healthcare, education, illegal immigration, clean energy/climate change, abortion, and gun control. They rated how much they liked or disliked what they were hearing on a scale from zero to 100 (totally dislike to totally like).

Overall, the clips that scored fairly well include:

- Warren's support for the development of green energy technologies as a way to grow American jobs (the highest-scoring part of the dial test)
- Sanders talking about healthcare as a "human right," and saying that we must make public colleges and universities tuition free and eliminate student debt by placing a tax on Wall Street
- Biden's education proposals
- Sanders's support for Roe v. Wade

Overall, the clips that didn't resonate include:

- The candidates raising their hand in support of the government providing healthcare coverage to illegal immigrants (this tanked)
- The candidates raising their hand in support of treating illegal border crossings as a civil offense rather than as a criminal offense (this also tanked)
- Abolishing private health insurance in favor of a government-run plan
- Castro's plan for immigration reform
- Warren's economic message
- De Blasio's support for a \$15 minimum wage, universal healthcare, and universal pre-K
- Harris's plan to issue executive orders on gun control if Congress doesn't act
- Castro's support for government-funded abortions for trans females



After they reacted to the video, we asked them to rate on a scale from zero to 10 (from “much too liberal for you” to “much too conservative for you”) the policy options offered by the candidates. Romney-Clinton voters scored them at 4.3/10, and Obama-Trump voters scored them at 4.2/10, indicating that, on average, the candidates’ policy proposals are too liberal for them, but only somewhat so.

When we asked them to rate on a scale from zero to 10 how the policy options offered by the Democratic candidate would impact their vote (from “much more likely to vote for the Democratic Presidential nominee” to “much more likely to vote for President Trump”), Romney-Clinton voters scored this at 4.3/10—slightly more likely to vote for the Democratic Presidential nominee—while Obama-Trump voters scored this at 7.0/10—a notable shift in the President’s favor.

10

KAMALA HARRIS’S EXCHANGE WITH JOE BIDEN DURING THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC DEBATES EXPOSED A PROBLEM WITH HER CANDIDACY: SHE’S TOO CONFRONTATIONAL.

During the focus group, we showed the five-minute exchange between Senator Harris and former Vice President Biden during the debate that garnered much media attention. This was followed by a discussion of respondents’ impressions of the two candidates. While some lauded Harris’s passion and persistence, most thought she was far too aggressive in that exchange and “too confrontational to be President.” One Obama-Trump voter remarked, “[Harris] just seemed to take on a personal vengeance and just tried to chomp off [Biden’s] head...I don’t like her at all.”

When we asked which candidate—Harris or Biden—would pose a more formidable challenge to President Trump, a slight majority (seven of 12) sided with Harris. We heard that she speaks with conviction and wouldn’t be afraid to stand up to President Trump, while Biden seemed “inept” in that exchange. One respondent predicted that debates between Trump and Harris would be “explosive.”

We heard Harris’s behavior during her exchange with Biden seemed too similar to Trump’s— and for those looking for a change from President Trump’s confrontational style, that’s a problem for her candidacy. Those who indicated that Biden would pose a more formidable challenge to President Trump told us that he was knowledgeable, spoke passionately in his own defense, and sounded more diplomatic, which they believe would serve him well.

11

MOST SWING VOTERS BELIEVE AMERICA WILL RETURN TO THE MOON IN THEIR LIFETIME—AND IT WILL BE DRIVEN BY COMMERCIAL REASONS.

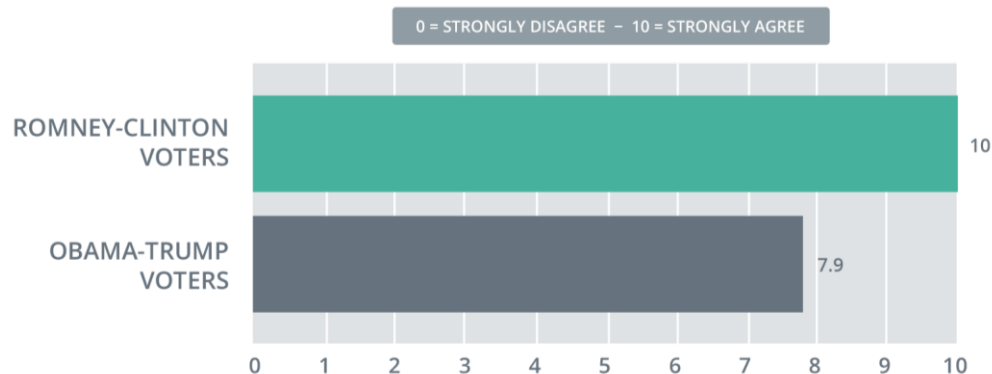
With our country marking the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing later this month, we asked swing voters if they believe America will return to the moon in their lifetime. Most believe we will, but it will be driven by commercial reasons (e.g., satellites). They are far less confident that our government will initiate a return to the moon in their lifetime.

12

RETIREMENT SECURITY IS A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN FOR SWING VOTERS.

During the focus group, we asked swing voters to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following:

Employers should be required to provide retirement savings account options to their employees.



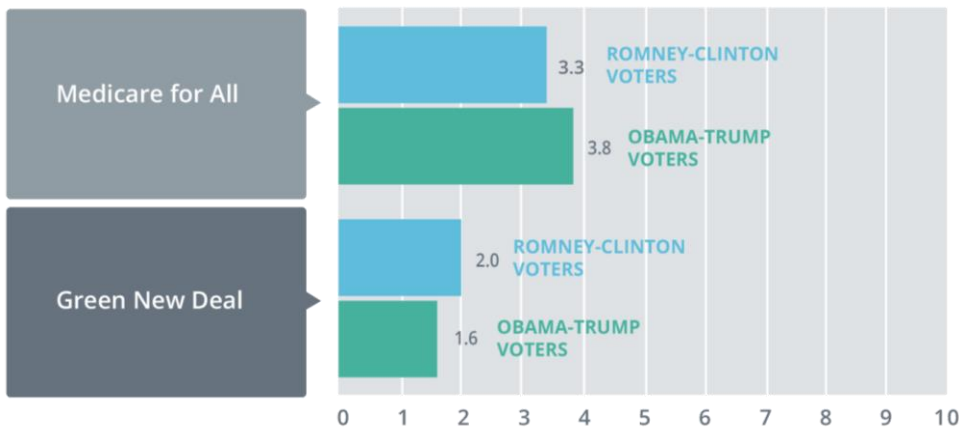
When asked about the biggest obstacles to saving for retirement, they cited:

- The cost of living
- Medical costs
- Auto insurance
- Education costs

13 SWING VOTERS ARE MOSTLY UNFAMILIAR WITH KEY DEMOCRATIC POLICY PROPOSALS.

During the focus group, we asked on a zero-to-10 scale:

“How much news have you heard over the past several months about a concept called...”



With regard to Medicare for All, we asked how much they would support or oppose eliminating private health insurance and replacing it with Medicare for All. On a zero to 10 scale (from “totally oppose” to “totally support”), Romney-Clinton voters and Obama-Trump voters scored this at 2.7/10 and 4.3/10, respectively. Swing voters cited cost and a lack of choice as reasons for their hesitance to support the idea. One respondent remarked, “I don’t think Medicare for All is the answer to healthcare. People have certain needs and different medical decisions, but you can’t just give it to everybody for no reason. And someone’s got to pay for it. It comes back to us. If we do Medicare for All, then our taxes are going to go up substantially because all these costs come back to us. I know it might not look like it, but in the end, we are paying for it.”

We asked swing voters what they worry about more—getting sick or being able to afford getting sick. The group was split six to six. Our discussion revealed that for them, both are quality-of-life issues. We heard that getting sick would reduce their ability to go on trips and enjoy life. At the same time, someone who has to worry about the high cost of medical care, including deductibles, could experience a lower quality-of-life because they would have less money.

With the Green New Deal, there is very little familiarity. Given that context, when we asked how favorably or unfavorably they view the concept on a scale from zero to 10 (from “very unfavorably” to “very favorably”), Romney-Clinton voters and Obama-Trump voters scored it at 3.7/10 and 3.9/10, respectively.