



Engagious

FPG Focus Pointe
Global

SWING VOTER PROJECT (SVP)

REPORT FOR JANUARY 2020

WILKES-BARRE, PA

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH:

Engagious conducted a mixed-gender focus group in Wilkes-Barre, PA on January 6th with 11 swing voters who voted for President Obama in 2012 and 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 do not represent the views of all swing voters.

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





1

SWING VOTERS STRONGLY SUPPORT PRESIDENT TRUMP'S AIRSTRIKE ORDER THAT KILLED AN IRANIAN GENERAL, AND IT MAKES THEM MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR HIM. BUT SUPPORT BEGINS TO ERODE IF THE ATTACKS LEAD TO AN ALL-OUT WAR WITH IRAN. AND SWING VOTERS ARE CONFLICTED OVER BEING INVOLVED MILITARILY IN A NEW CONFLICT VS. FOCUSING ON DOMESTIC ISSUES.

Swing voters support the airstrike order, issued by President Trump, that led to the death of Iranian General Qassem Suleimani, scoring it 7.9/10 (from “totally oppose” to “totally support”), saying President Trump acted in our country's best interest. In fact, they say that decision would make them more likely to vote for President Trump in November, scoring it 6.9/10 (from “much less likely to vote for President Trump in November” to “much more likely to vote for President Trump in November”).

Yet, if the attack against General Suleimani were to lead to an all-out war with Iran, they would be only somewhat more likely to vote for President Trump in November, scoring it on average 5.6/10, using the same scale.

There is a greater upside for the president on the Iran issue than a downside because he will get a lot of credit if things go well in dealing with Iran, but fewer would hold it against him if it were to go badly.

Our swing voters indicated that national security issues are very important to them. Compared to the state of the economy, national security issues (North Korea, Iran, Russia, etc.) are somewhat more important to them when they vote this year, scoring this at 5.7/10 (from “national security is far less important to you than the health of the economy” to “national security is far more important to you than the health of the economy”). This is notable because swing voters told us the economy will be a major factor for them when they vote in November, and they say national security issues are even more important, on average.

The importance of national security issues is further supported by how our swing voters reacted to this statement, “By taking this action against Iran, President Trump risks dragging America into another costly war. Instead, he should focus on issues that would improve the quality of my life, community, and the country as a whole.” Swing voters somewhat agreed, scoring this 6.0/10 (from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”), but it's a much lower score than how they rated, “I wish Democrats would drop their impeachment inquiry, and instead focus on issues that would improve the quality of my life, my community, and the country as a whole,” which scored 9.3/10.

2 SWING VOTERS DON'T SUPPORT IMPEACHMENT, BUT AGREE WITNESSES SHOULD BE CALLED AND SENATORS SHOULD TRY TO SERVE AS UNBIASED JURORS.

During the focus group, we read the following statement to respondents:

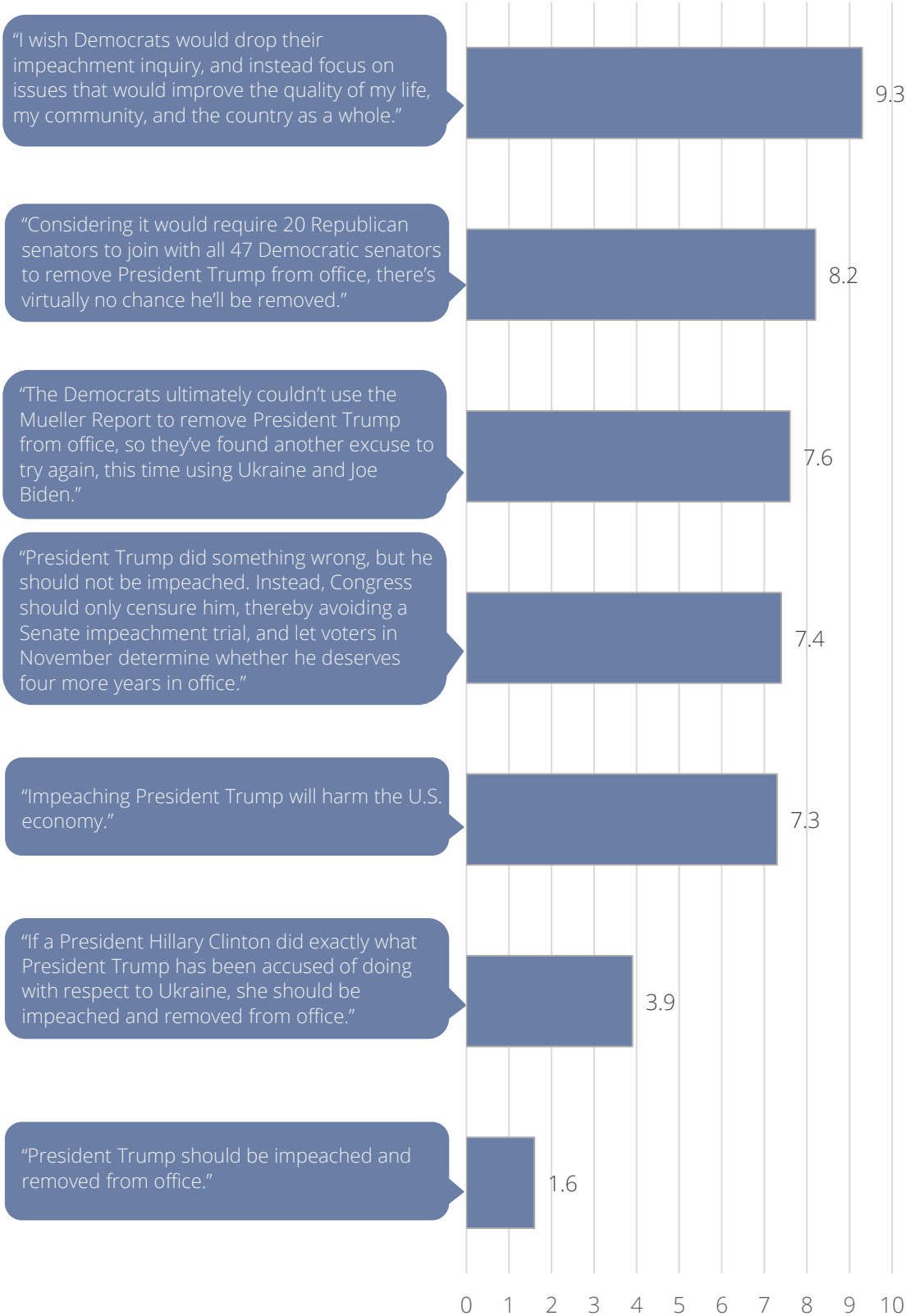
The allegation against President Trump is that in a July 25 telephone call, he asked Ukrainian President Zelensky to “look into” allegations of wrongdoing by Joe Biden, a potential 2020 competitor, and Biden’s son Hunter. A week or more before the call, Trump had directed the withholding of \$391 million in military and security aid that Congress had approved to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia. (Ukraine’s leaders reportedly found out about the withholding of funds in early August; the money was ultimately dispersed to Ukraine on September 11.) President Trump, in that July 25 call and through other actions, was allegedly using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election.

They are not particularly troubled by these allegations, scoring them 5.0/10 (from “not at all troubling” to “very troubling”).



Respondents rated several statements about their feelings on impeachment on a scale from zero to 10 (from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”). The following chart shows how much they agree with these statements, in descending order:

Swing Voters’ feelings on impeachment
0 = totally disagree 10 = totally agree





If Speaker Pelosi were to walk into the room, they would say the following to her about impeachment:

- “Get over it”
- “Why did you start impeachment?”
- “Why are you wasting our money?”

House Democrats’ argument that they have passed hundreds of bills in the House, ones Republicans in the Senate have failed to debate or vote upon, isn’t compelling to our swing voters because all they are hearing about is impeachment. They believe that’s where the focus has been. One swing voter pointed out that the vote on the new trade deal with Canada and Mexico was delayed because of impeachment, and the mainstream media hasn’t been conveying that bills are getting passed in the House and going nowhere in the Senate.

During the dial test, respondents turned their dials up to 60 (on a zero-to-100 like/dislike scale) when Sen. Amy Klobuchar said, in reference to an impeachment trial, “We should be hearing from Mulvaney, who is the one under oath.” This indicates that some of the swing voters are in her camp on this point.

Even though our swing voters don’t support impeachment, they were very troubled to hear that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he is coordinating impeachment strategy with the White House as the president’s trial approaches, and he is not intending to act as an “impartial juror” during the trial. They described this as a “terrible statement,” and believe he has to be impartial. With McConnell’s “impartial juror” statement, he’s “looking for trouble,” said one respondent because it gives the Democrats talking points, and keeps the conversation going about impeachment. They believe all 100 senators must approach the trial being impartial, but they are very skeptical that will be the reality.

It’s notable that they gave a hypothetical President Hillary Clinton a higher score (3.9/10) than President Trump (1.6/10) over whether she should be impeached if she had done exactly what President Trump is accused of. Several respondents in the group “can’t stand her” and admittedly are biased against her.

3

MOST SWING VOTERS HAVE EMBRACED PRESIDENT TRUMP AND BELIEVE THEY ARE BETTER OFF THAN THEY WERE FOUR YEARS AGO.

If another presidential election were being held tomorrow between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, all 11 swing voters would vote for the president again.

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, nine would vote for President Trump and two would vote for President Obama.

Swing voters listed what they like about President Trump politically:

- He speaks his mind and "takes the bull by the horns"
- He's bold (e.g., he ordered the airstrike that killed Iranian General Suleimani)
- The economy is doing better
- He doesn't play politics – he says what he means instead of telling people what he thinks they want to hear
- He's a good leader – strong leadership skills

When they see him on TV or on their device, they feel¹:

- Proud (5)
- Excited (1)
- Privileged (to be alive while he is president) (1)
- Happy (1)
- Curious (1)
- Sometimes frustrated/sometimes proud/sometimes upset (1)
- Frustrated (1)
- Embarrassed (1)

Our swing voters don't trust the media's coverage of President Trump, scoring this 3.5/10 (from "totally mistrust" to "totally trust"), and they feel slightly negatively, on average, about his tweets, scoring them 4.1/10 (from "I hate them" to "I love them").

They have a high level of confidence that President Trump will be re-elected. If they were placing a \$100 bet on the outcome of the election on a zero to 10 scale (from "you are totally confident the Democratic nominee will win" to "you are totally confident President Trump will win"), they would score that 7.7/10. Also, almost all of our swing voters told us they would recommend to an adult in their life they vote for President Trump in 2020. On a recommendation scale from zero to 10 (from "not at all likely" to "very likely") they scored this 7.7/10, as well.

¹ One respondent provided two words to describe how she feels.



Our swing voters, generally, are very satisfied with the progress President Trump has made in our country and believe he has largely done what he said he's going to do, and they are "impressed" by that. Also, some are "sick" of how the Democrats have been acting, and they believe President Trump could have made even more progress for the country if they weren't opposing him so strongly. Right now, a number of our swing voters don't believe the Democrats have a candidate who can defeat President Trump in November.

Eight of our 11 swing voters believe they are better off now than they were four years ago, citing:

- I am making more money at my job
- The stock market is doing well
- My personal investments are up
- Construction is up
- I graduated from college and now I have a career in my field

The good news for President Trump is that almost all of our swing voters are sticking with him, even though he hasn't fulfilled one of his key campaign promises: building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. A slight majority – six of 11 – say President Trump didn't break his promise and he will get the full wall built one way or the other with more time. Three believe he didn't really mean it when he made that promise and they're okay there's no wall across the whole border. Notably, only two believe President Trump won't get the wall built like he promised and will hold it against him in 2020.

4

TRADE ISN'T AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR SWING VOTERS IN 2020, BUT PRESIDENT TRUMP COULD BECOME VULNERABLE IF PRICES RISE SIGNIFICANTLY IN A "TRADE WAR".

Our swing voters modestly support the president's trade policies, specifically the tariffs the Trump Administration has placed on imports of certain goods, scoring their support 6.0/10 (from "totally oppose" to "totally support"). All 11 believe American consumers pay for tariffs imposed on imported goods (not "others"), but most haven't experienced higher prices as a result of the Trump Administration's trade policies. Only two feel they're paying higher prices for goods because of the tariffs, while nine say that hasn't happened for them.

Trade isn't an issue to which they pay much attention. Only five respondents knew the Trump Administration has negotiated with Canada and Mexico a replacement trade deal for NAFTA, while six didn't know whether that had happened. One reason why trade isn't a very important issue to them right now is because they don't know anyone who has been helped or harmed by the president's trade policies.

They indicated that President Trump's actions on trade won't have a significant impact on their vote, scoring it 5.2/10 (from "have no impact on my vote" to "have a significant impact on my vote"). However, if a "trade war" with China were to cause prices to rise noticeably for them and their family, their support for the president would slightly decline. On a scale from zero to 10 (from "my support for him will erode substantially" to "my support for him will grow substantially"), they scored this 4.7/10. Notably, only six of 11 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, which is the lowest percentage to date among swing voters in the cities we have visited. This relatively weak support for America's efforts to secure a fairer trade deal with China suggests President Trump could become vulnerable in a prolonged "trade war" with China that causes prices to noticeably increase.



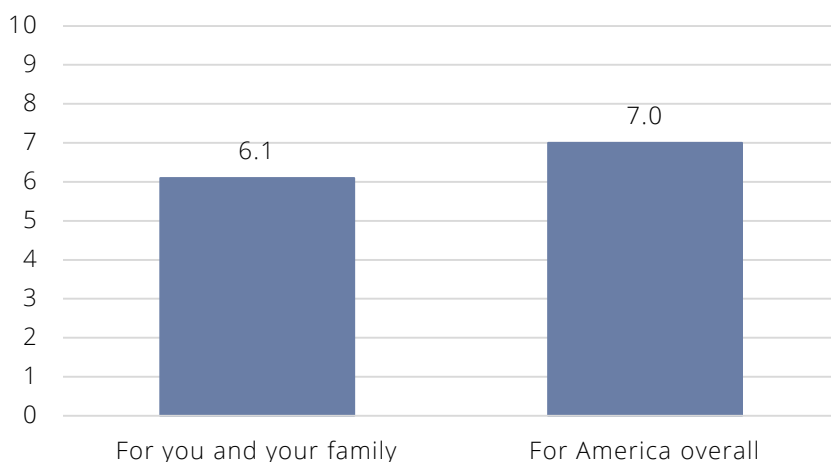
5

SWING VOTERS BELIEVE THE ECONOMY HAS DONE WELL UNDER PRESIDENT TRUMP, AND IT WILL BE A MAJOR FACTOR WHEN THEY VOTE IN NOVEMBER.

With the unemployment rate at 3.5% nationally, the lowest it has been in five decades, and the stock market hovering near an all-time high, six of our 11 swing voters believe the U.S. economy is “booming,” citing more jobs and making money in the stock market.

Respondents rated on a scale from zero to 10 how the economy has been since Donald Trump became president (from “gotten much worse” to “gotten much better”):

How has the economy been since Donald Trump became president?
0 = “gotten much worse” 10 = “gotten much better”



Only one respondent has seen a noticeable increase in wages since President Trump took office – and that swing voter gives him the credit. As we have heard in previous months, those who haven't seen a noticeable increase in their wages since President Trump took office don't blame him for that.

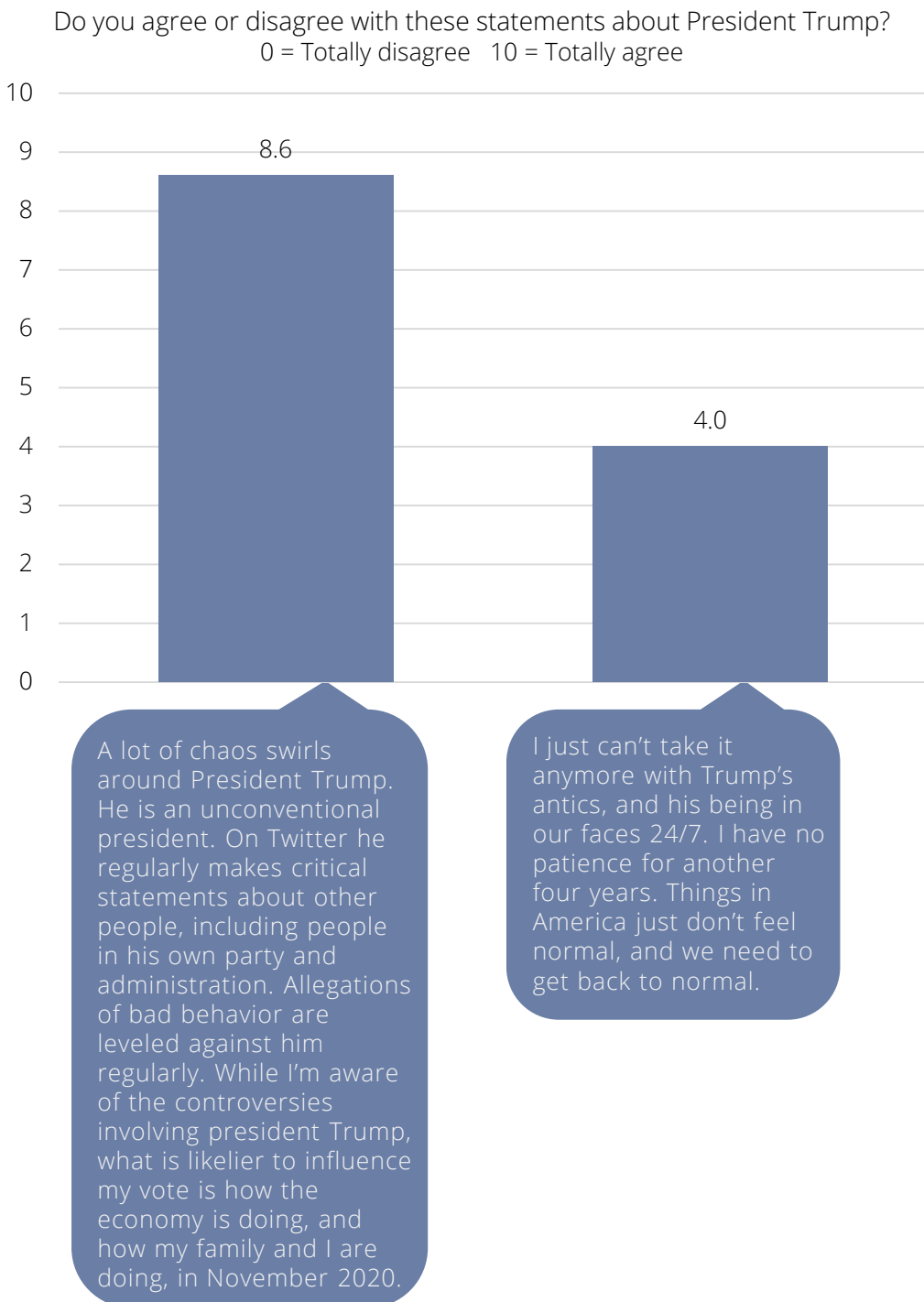
Swing voters indicated they don't think it's likely the U.S. economy will enter a recession sometime in the next year, scoring the question 4.6/10 (from “no chance it will enter a recession” to “it's already in recession”). They believe the U.S. economy is strong and their confidence in President Trump's handling of it has increased over the last several months, scoring it 6.4/10 (from “less confident in President Trump's handling of the economy” to “more confident in President Trump's handling of the economy”).

The state of our economy in November will have a significant impact on whether swing voters decide to re-elect the president. If a recession were to occur before the next election, their support for President Trump would erode somewhat, which would threaten his re-election prospects. On a zero to 10 scale (from “my support for him will erode substantially” to “my support for him will grow substantially”), they scored it 4.4/10.



As the chart below shows, our swing voters are far more interested in the state of our economy in November than getting back to “normal” and moving away from this president.

Respondents told 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.



6

SWING VOTERS ARE SPLIT ON WHETHER WE SHOULD ELIMINATE PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE AND REPLACE IT WITH MEDICARE FOR ALL.

Wilkes-Barre swing voters have heard quite a bit about “Medicare for All” over the past several months, rating how much news they have heard at 6.9/10 from “no news at all” to “a large amount of news.” This number is far higher than the scores from our sessions in 2019.

On average, respondents are slightly opposed to the idea of eliminating private health insurance and replacing it with Medicare for All, rating it 4.5/10 (from “totally oppose” to “totally support”). This split is further illustrated with five saying they could imagine voting for a Democratic presidential candidate this year who called for eliminating private health insurance and replacing it with Medicare for All, and six saying they could not vote for that type of candidate. Those who could not vote for a Democratic presidential candidate who would eliminate private health insurance told us the wait times would be longer and they like being able to choose their healthcare options.

Healthcare, one of the key issues for swing voters heading into 2020, has not been adequately addressed during the Trump presidency. Swing voters rated how satisfied they are with President Trump’s efforts to ensure healthcare is affordable for them and their family, scoring it 4.5/10 (from “not at all satisfied” to “very satisfied”). Their costs continue to rise, and President Trump was supposed to devise a comprehensive plan to address healthcare costs; some don’t believe he had a plan to do that. Others told us President Trump was trying to address the issue, but his critics would “shoot down” his efforts to make healthcare more affordable. Despite their criticisms of President Trump on healthcare affordability, only one swing voter told us it would definitely be a voting issue in November.



7

RETIREMENT SECURITY AND LONG-TERM CARE AFFORDABILITY RANK AS VERY IMPORTANT ISSUES – AND SWING VOTERS BELIEVE PRESIDENT TRUMP NEEDS TO BE DOING MORE TO ADDRESS BOTH.

RETIREMENT SECURITY

Swing voters are very troubled that Social Security's Trust Fund is projected by its actuaries to run out of money in 15 years, rating this 9.2/10 (from "not at all troubling" to "very troubling"). Even so, they don't want presidential candidates touching their Social Security. When a presidential candidate promises, "I will not touch Social Security," they see that as responsible, rating it 7.5/10 (from "very irresponsible" to "very responsible"). Yet at the same time they agree fairly strongly when a presidential candidate declares, "Social Security has to be fixed," scoring it 6.8/10 (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree").

While our swing voters like that the stock market is doing well and their retirement accounts are benefiting, they are very concerned about the future of Social Security. They say President Trump has failed to ensure that Social Security is going to be there for them when they retire. They wonder how the problem is going to be addressed, and whether their benefits will be cut in the future. Right now, they see nothing being done about this issue.

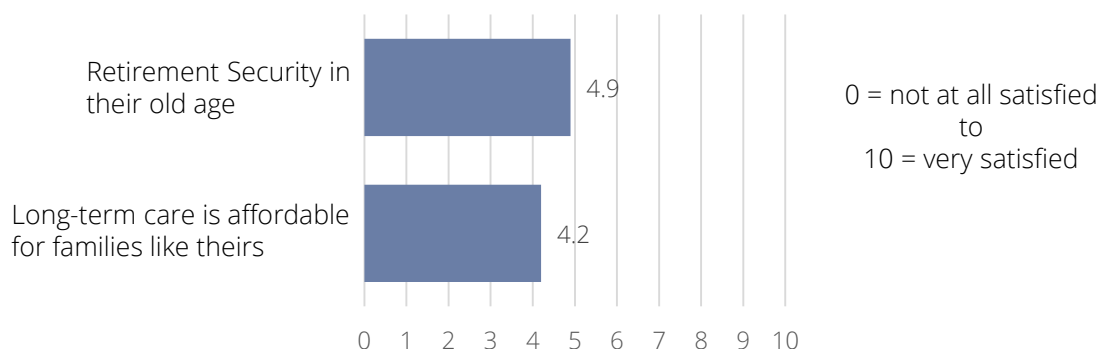
All 11 of our swing voters support raising or eliminating the wage cap on FICA taxes for high-earning individuals.

LONG-TERM CARE AFFORDABILITY

Swing voters are very concerned that a close family member might need long-term care and/or that a family member already needs long-term care, but the cost is very high, scoring this 9.1/10 (from "not at all concerned" to "very concerned"). They believe the federal government should play a bigger role in making long-term care affordable for families like theirs, scoring this 7.3/10 (from "a much smaller role" to "a much bigger role"). One swing voter suggested capping the price of the care, and another wants insurance companies to pay more for long-term care.

Respondents rated how satisfied they are with President Trump's efforts to ensure they have retirement security in their old age, and long-term care is affordable for families like theirs, on a zero to 10 scale (from "not at all satisfied" to "very satisfied"):

How satisfied they are with President Trump's efforts to ensure...



8

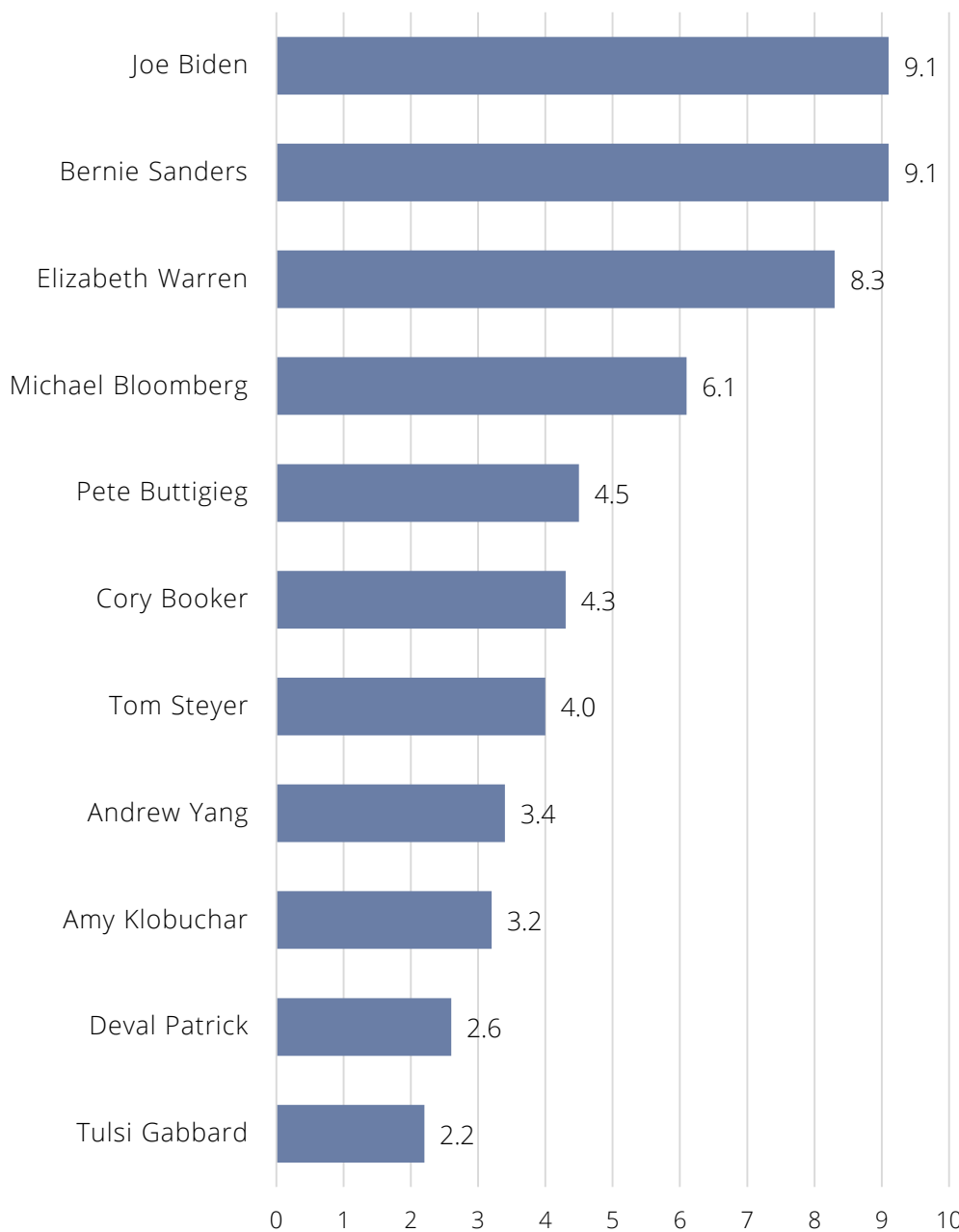
SWING VOTERS RECOGNIZE THE HIGHEST-POLLING DEMOCRATS RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT, BUT MOST OF THE OTHERS ARE STILL UNFAMILIAR TO THEM.

Respondents indicated with their dials their level of confidence in being able to identify unlabeled photos of 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:

Swing Voters' confidence they could identify a person based on seeing an unlabeled photo

0 = no idea who the candidate is 10 = totally confident they know who the candidate is





More than a year after Democrats began announcing their candidacies for president and conducting six primary debates, swing voters indicated many of the candidates aren't recognizable to them. They are getting their news from a variety of news sources, including local TV news, network news, cable news, Yahoo News, The Drudge Report, and Facebook.

We also showed an unlabeled photo of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (6.1/10), who is more recognizable than seven of the 11 Democrats running for president who we asked about, and as recognizable as Michael Bloomberg.

There was no consensus in the group that any of the candidates "excites them," although some mentioned they were "at least somewhat excited" by Pete Buttigieg. None of our respondents could they think of anyone not running who they would like to see run for president.

We showed a highlights reel from last month's Democratic debate, where the candidates presented their policy ideas, and respondents reacted moment-to-moment using their hand-held dials on a scale from zero to 100 (from "totally dislike" to "totally like"). The highest-scoring messaging came from Pete Buttigieg who talked about people not being paid enough in our economy, with respondents scoring this as high as 77/100. Respondents told us "money is pretty much everything," and people cannot afford to live on the minimum wage. Increasing the minimum wage could help a lot of people.

The lowest-scoring messaging came from Elizabeth Warren when she was talking about transgender people, with respondents scoring this as low as 35/100. Our swing voters described this as a "non-issue" with transgender people being such a low percentage of the population. They believe there are more important issues going on in the country.

Also, we showed a recent TV ad from Michael Bloomberg and garnered feedback. Our swing voters were generally split on the ad. Those who liked it said it captured their attention and he makes them feel like he cares about the "everyday man." Those who didn't like it said it highlights that the Democrats running for president only care about the first handful of states and not about the people of Pennsylvania.

Seven of our 11 swing voters have seen ads from Michael Bloomberg, and they say being a billionaire is not an attractive feature because he "can't buy" the election. They say he needs to form a base of ground support. His money has allowed him to run TV ads and get in the race late, but they question whether there is any grassroots support for his candidacy.



Our swing voters would give the following advice to Democrats running for president:

- Stop bashing President Trump – “people are sick of the negativity”
- Stick to the issues
- Be moderate with your policy positions
- Explain how you’re going to pay for your new government programs
- Don’t promise everything to everybody – prioritize

If they were advising President Trump’s Democratic challenger and were asked to come up with a phrase built upon “Make America ____ Again,” they would recommend:

- Unified/United/Whole (5)
- Stable (1)
- Work (1)
- Economically viable (1)
- Compassionate (1)
- Happy (1)
- Loyal (1)

We told our swing voters, “Imagine former President Obama walked into this room right now and he said to you, ‘Look, you all voted for me in 2012. Please vote for the Democratic nominee next year. We need you to do it.’ What would you say to him?” Interestingly, President Obama holds little sway with these voters, even though they all voted for him in 2012.

Most of our swing voters were glad when his second term ended, citing the high cost of Obamacare as something that has harmed them financially, for which they resent him. Aside from President Obama’s policies, one respondent remarked that President Obama wouldn’t persuade him to vote for the Democratic nominee because “political party doesn’t matter to me.”

Some Democrats around the U.S. think President Obama will be their “ace in the hole” on the campaign trail during the general election, but our swing voters are challenging that conventional wisdom – and Democrats should take note.

9

KEY ISSUES HEADING INTO 2020 INCLUDE HEALTHCARE, THE ECONOMY AND JOBS, AND IMMIGRATION.

In the beginning of the focus group, respondents named their top issue of concern heading into 2020²:

- Healthcare (4)
- Immigration (2)
- The economy/jobs (2)
- The shrinking middle class (1)
- Military expenditures (1)

Only two respondents feel the Democrats running for president are speaking about the national issues he or she cares most about.

If America as a country could make a new year's resolution for 2020, it should be:

- Keep our money in this country and help our people (veterans and underserved people) instead of always trying to help people in other countries
- Term limits
- Be kinder and gentler to everybody
- Stop playing politics and do what's best for the country
- Republicans and Democrats should get along instead of constantly fighting each other

Respondents also named the one thing a presidential candidate could propose that would help them economically³:

- Reduce taxes
- Address the cost of health insurance costs
- Reduce tuition rates for colleges
- Raise the minimum wage
- Quit taxing Medicare and Social Security
- Control or cap gas prices
- Regulate banks for overdraft fees

Respondents rated the direction of our country and the direction of Pennsylvania on a zero to 10 scale (from "totally wrong direction" to "totally right direction"). Notably, swing voters are much more satisfied with the direction of the country (6.2/10) than the direction of Pennsylvania (4.6/10). They told us the state "doesn't have any leadership," remarking that members of the state legislature aren't willing to "rock the boat" to address problems. They believe the state's taxes and tolls are unaffordable and "killing the middle class."

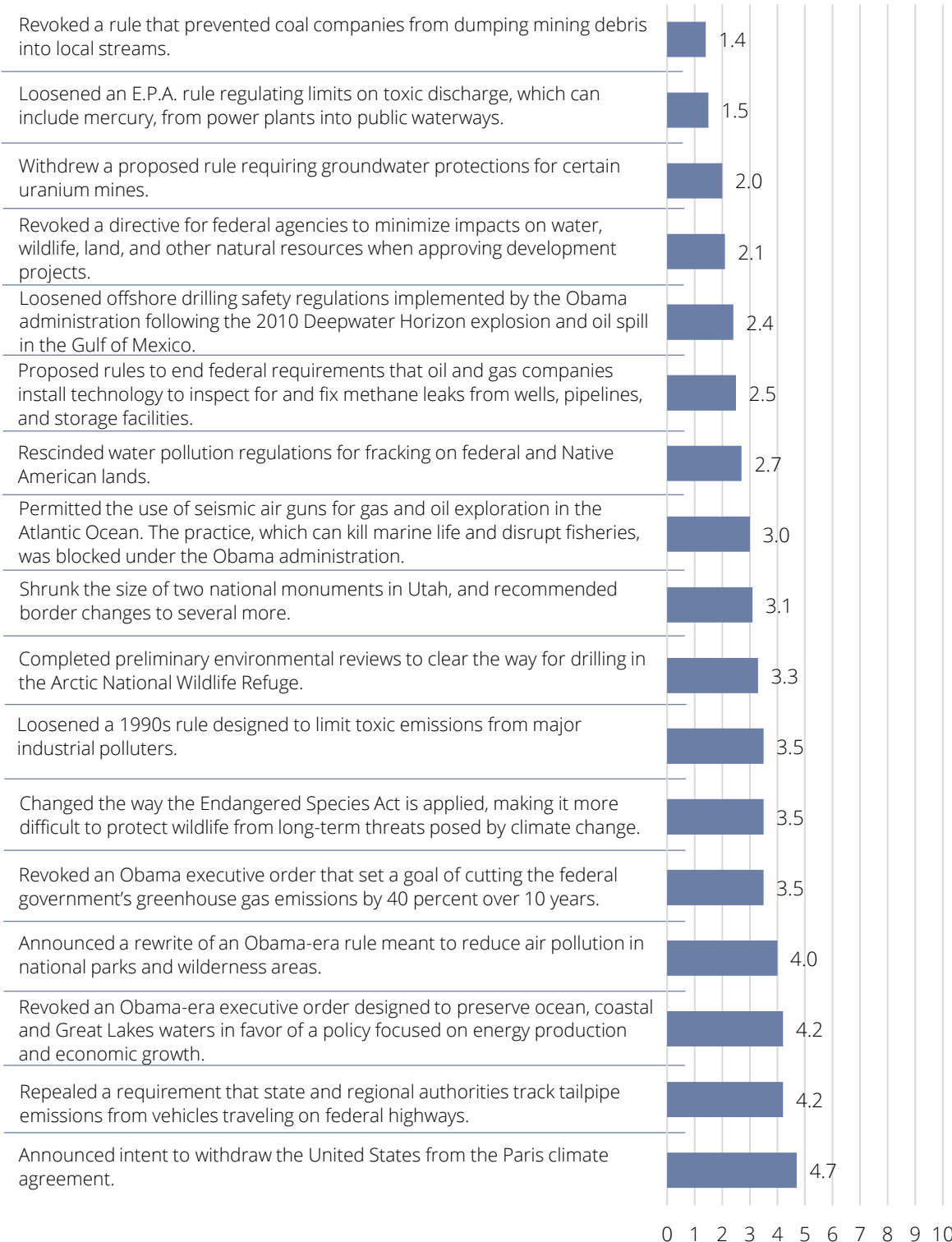
² One respondent didn't provide a response.

³ Only seven of the 11 respondents provided an answer.

10

SWING VOTERS ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO LOOSEN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS, ESPECIALLY IF IT AFFECTS WHERE THEY LIVE.

Respondents rated a list of steps taken by the Trump Administration as it relates to the environment on a scale from zero to 10 (from "totally oppose" to "totally support"). The following chart shows them in ascending order, from most opposed to most supported:

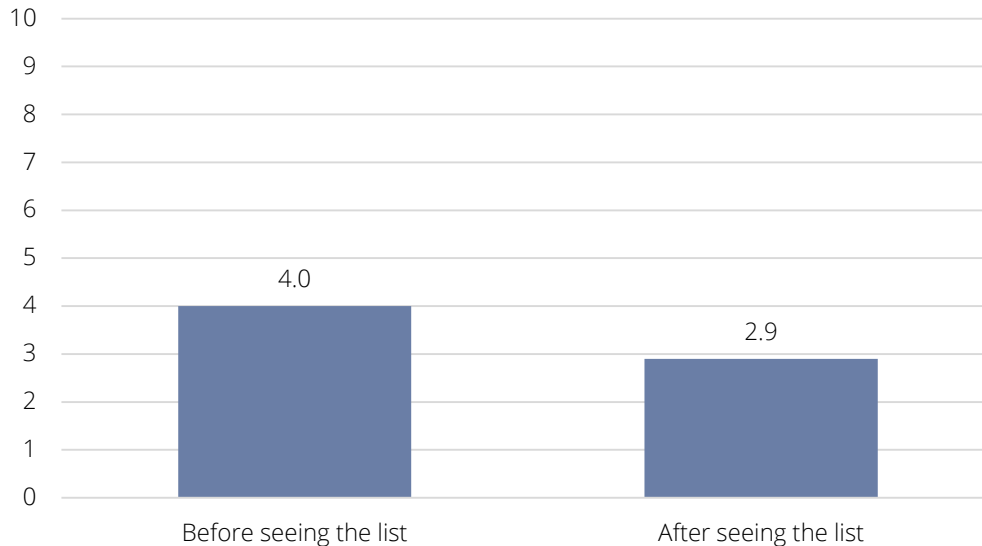




Before and after we read the 17 regulations the Trump Administration has rolled back or is looking to roll back related to the environment, respondents rated how much they support or oppose these efforts, on a scale from zero to 10 (from “totally oppose” to “totally support”).

How much do you support or oppose the efforts of the Trump Administration to roll back environmental regulations?

0 = totally oppose 10 = totally support



Our swing voters told us the Trump Administration’s efforts to loosen environmental regulations is “scary,” “disturbing,” and based on “greed.” The list had a significant effect on them, and five of our 11 swing voters told us this would be a voting issue for them in November.

They are especially concerned that the Trump Administration’s efforts to loosen environmental regulations could impact them personally. They would be very troubled if they found out that one or more of these rollbacks affected air or water quality where they live, scoring it 8.5/10 (from “not at all troubling” to “very troubling”).

11

SWING VOTERS BELIEVE THE WEATHER IN RECENT YEARS SEEMS “WEIRD” AND “WARMER NOW”.



On average, swing voters somewhat agreed that “compared to when you were much younger, the weather in recent years seems weird.” They scored it 6.5/10 (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). Those who agreed cited a “warm January,” more aggressive storms (trees coming down, wind damage), tornadoes, and we don’t really have four seasons anymore (winter and summer only).

They also agreed with the idea that “compared to when you were much younger, certain months seem warmer now,” scoring it 6.5/10, as well.

Democrats have introduced the “Green New Deal” to address climate change, but our swing voters have heard very little about the proposal over the past several months, scoring it 2.3/10 (from “no news at all” to “a large amount of news”). This has been consistent throughout the entirety of this project.