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To: Interested Parties

From: Stanley Greenberg, Greenberg Research & Democracy Corps

2020 takes on new clarity & urgency

Most commentators are failing to read how ordinary Americans, independents, some Republicans and Democrats, are responding to President Trump and how determined they are to bring an end to his presidency and its defining fight against immigration and a multicultural America. Voters are paying intense attention to politics, and their conclusions indicate a landslide win for the Democrats in 2020, whether they nominate somebody like Vice President Joe Biden or somebody like Senator Elizabeth Warren.

This phone, mostly cell phone, survey of 1700 registered voters — 1000 sample of registered voters and oversample of 700 Republicans — was completed between July 18 to 28, before the 2nd wave of presidential debates and before the week of mass shootings.¹ The survey conducts trial runs for a generic presidential ballot, which is no longer useful since the Democratic candidates are well known and defined and produces a high libertarian vote. For practical reasons, we tested two presidential candidates, Biden and Warren, because they defined the ideological range of the current field. We also tested the messages advanced by the major candidates in the debates, including Biden, Warren, Kamala Harris, and Bernie Sanders, as well as the libertarian, Justin Amash.

This was the most compelling survey I have conducted in a unique and transformative time when America is determined to tell itself and the world what it believes about the country, what it believes about Donald Trump, and what kind of president it wants in office. I've rarely seen such intensity of opinion and clarity of trends so early in an election. But there is little nuance in the powerful trends and the contours of the emerging election.

Most commentators suspect that President Trump is succeeding in making immigration an issue, and yes, he is, but to his profound detriment. The president has stoked his base with fatal consequence. He has led voters to defend immigration and immigrants, enlarged the enthusiasm gap in favor of Democrats, and pushed Democrats to be even more consolidated behind a candidate to defeat him. The 8.6 percent margin for Democrats in the 2018 off-year election is poised to be replicated in 2020 in the 8-point advantage in party identification or the 12-point margin for those who disapprove of Trump in an election that he insists in nationalizing around himself. Trump's world is 42 percent who approve of his performance, 41 to 43 percent who vote for him against Biden and Sanders and 40 percent who identify as Republicans. The Democrats' 2020 margin will grow as the 7 percent vote for Libertarian Justin Amash is squeezed.

¹ This phone survey took place July 18-28 among 1,000 registered voters nationally, with an additional oversample of 700 Republicans. Margin of error for the full sample is +/-3.2 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Of the 1,000 respondents, 67 percent were interviewed via cell phone in order to accurately sample the American electorate.

In this report, I will show the trends on immigration, intensity, Democratic and Republican consolidation, the presidential election, and the reach of the Democratic candidates’ themes and messages. All show an early clarity and direction that point to a second even bigger blue wave.

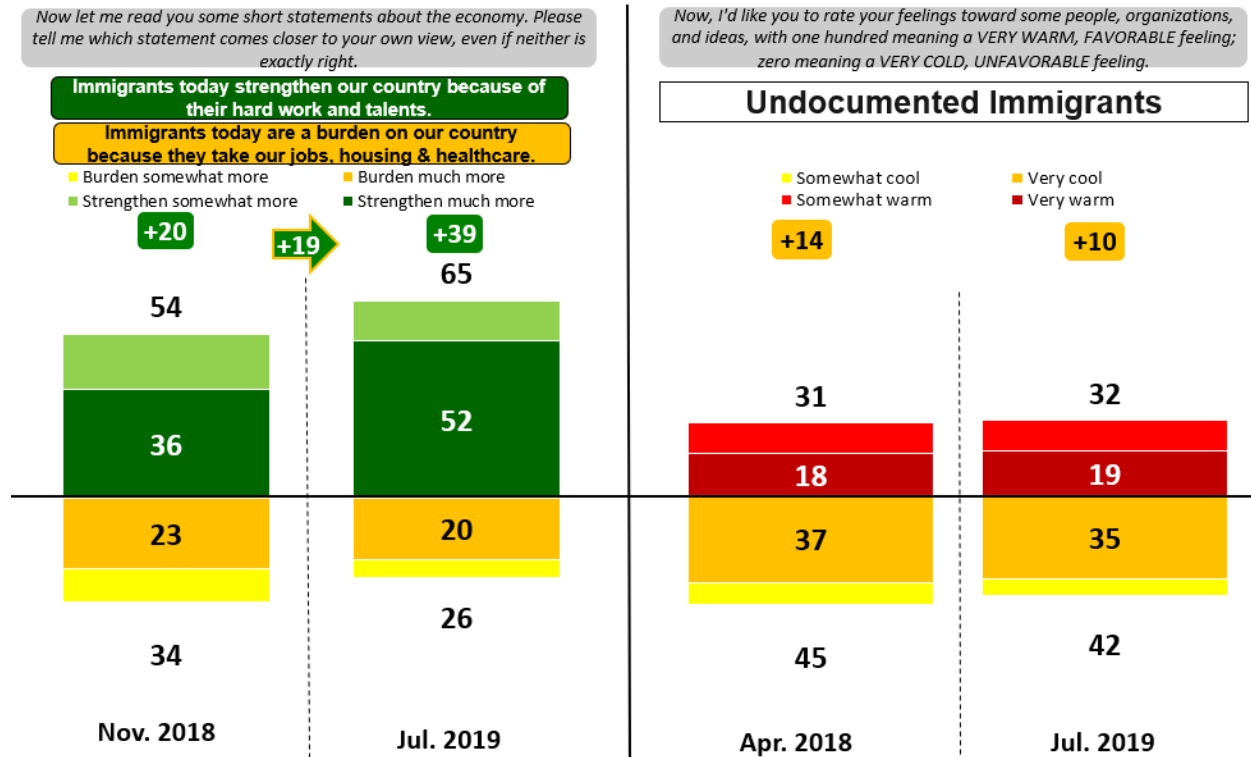
Voters are following politics in ways we have not witnessed before — three quarters at the highest level on our 0 to ten ladder scale, down 2 points from the government shutdown but that was higher than any point in our polling in a presidential year and the first time engagement grew higher after a major election. (This is consistent with Pew which found voters following politics at levels higher than any previous presidential race.)

On that measure, we find Democrats and Republicans. Democratic and Trump voters show identical levels of engagement (about 75 percent choosing 10), but that is where the problems begin. There are many more anti-Trump voters and they are more consolidated in their electoral support.

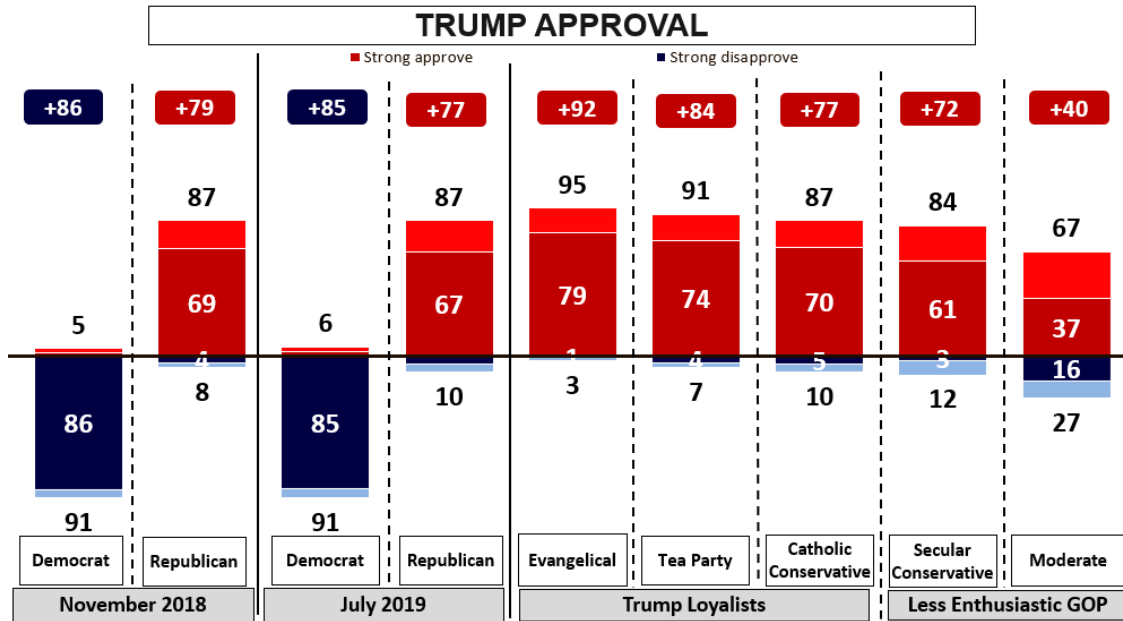
Immigration. Just as in 2018, President Trump is surely making immigration the top voting issue for Republicans; that is hurting his electoral prospects, not helping. The percentage saying immigrants strengthen the country, are not a burden, has risen from 54 percent after the election to 65 percent now, 52 percent strongly. Only 26 percent agree with the president that they are a burden because they take jobs, housing, and health care.

The margin in favor of “immigrants to the US” increased by 8 points since January, with 59 percent now viewing them warmly.

More stunning was the drop in the numbers viewing “undocumented immigrants” negatively, 42 percent — down from 45 percent last year and around 50 percent during the 2016 presidential election.

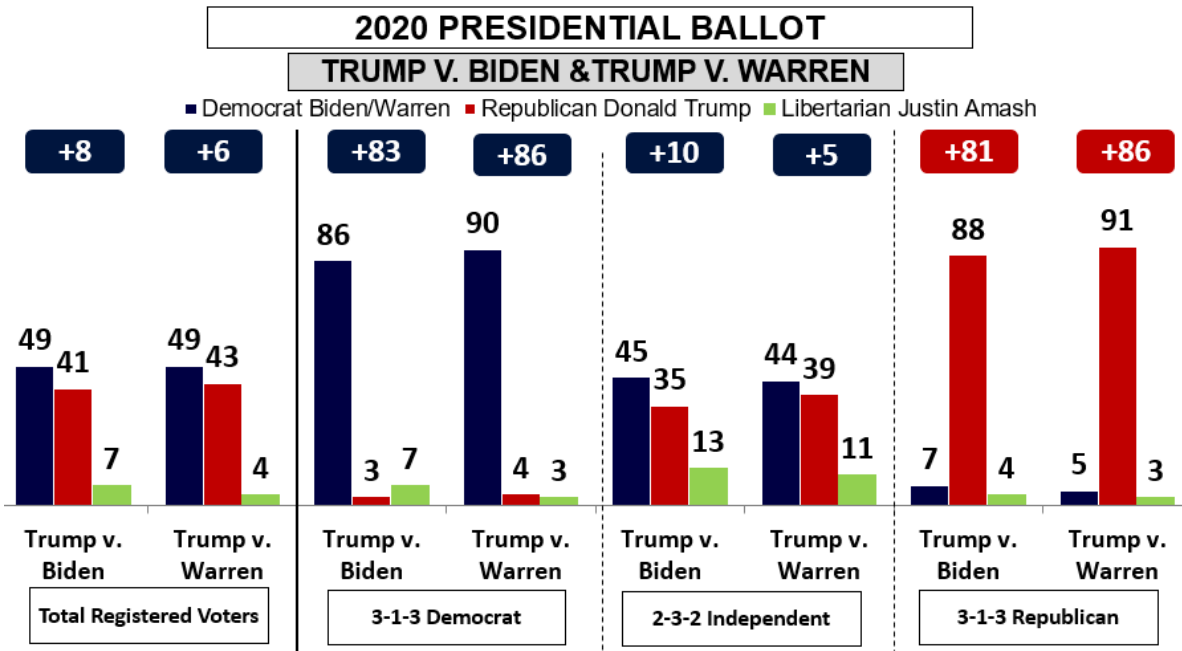


Anti-Trump intensity, Democratic consolidation and GOP fragmentation. The press dutifully reports that President Trump has the approval of 85 percent of Republicans, and this poll shows he has 87 percent. But that is not the same as enthusiasm, and on that Democrats have a big gap: a stunning 85 percent strongly disapprove; while 67 percent of Republicans strongly approve. That is an 18 point enthusiasm gap. (And we know from 2018, it was the less enthusiastic Republicans who did not vote or shifted to the Democrats.)



This poll shows a Democratic primary race that looks very much like the public polls - Biden at 31 percent, Sanders at 22 percent, Warren at 15 percent, Harris at 12 percent and Buttigieg at 8 percent. But the big story is the Democratic consolidation behind Biden (86 percent support among the 48 percent who identify as Democrats) and Warren (90 percent support).

Their consolidation is held down by the 7 percent of Democrats who vote for the libertarian when Biden is the candidate, and 3 percent when Warren. Trump is getting just 3 or 4 percent with the very anti-Trump Democrats. The squeezing of the 3rd party vote will likely raise the Democratic margin to at least the margin in party-identification (8 points) or presidential approval-disapproval (12 points).



Biden has an 8 point lead (close to the 2018 Democratic margin), while Warren is now at 6 points, slightly larger than President Obama’s 2008 margin. Again, both would gain if the Libertarian candidate plays less of a role. Right now, he is benefited by support for impeachment, but his Tea Party history and philosophy may pull those voters away.

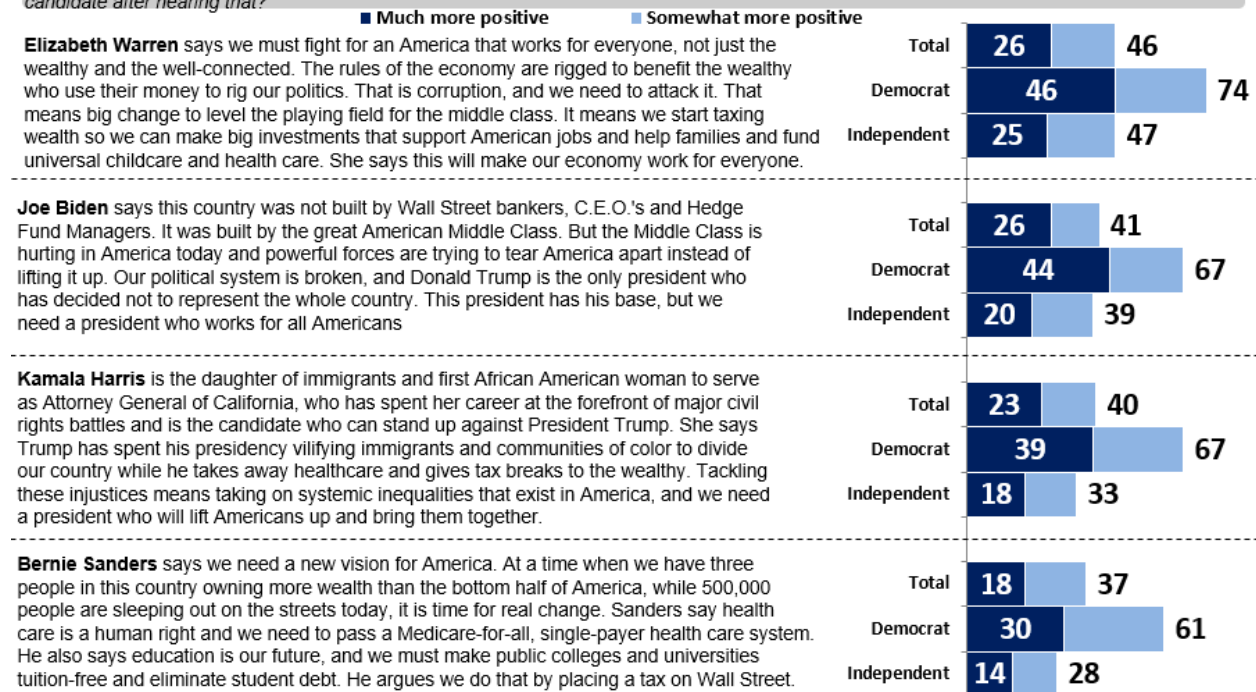
Biden is running as the more mainstream and moderate candidate, and he less successfully consolidates Democrats (86 percent versus 90 percent for Warren). But Biden wins independents by 10 points, while Warren wins them by only 5. Biden picks up 7 percent of Republicans, while Warren gets 5.

Biden gets a stunning 21 percent of the declining breed of GOP moderates, but Warren still gets 15 percent.

There is every reason to believe Warren could grow her vote. In this survey, we tested the robust themes and messages that emerged in the campaign and debates. We used their actual words, and thus, gave a fair hearing to each candidate in the race.

Who has trended up and down in the campaign so far looks very much like results of this message test. Warren and Biden offer the two strongest messages, though Warren’s is a little stronger overall. What is most surprising is how much stronger her message is with independents. The percent who say Warren’s message makes them much more or somewhat more positive is 8 points higher than for Biden and 14 point stronger than for Harris.

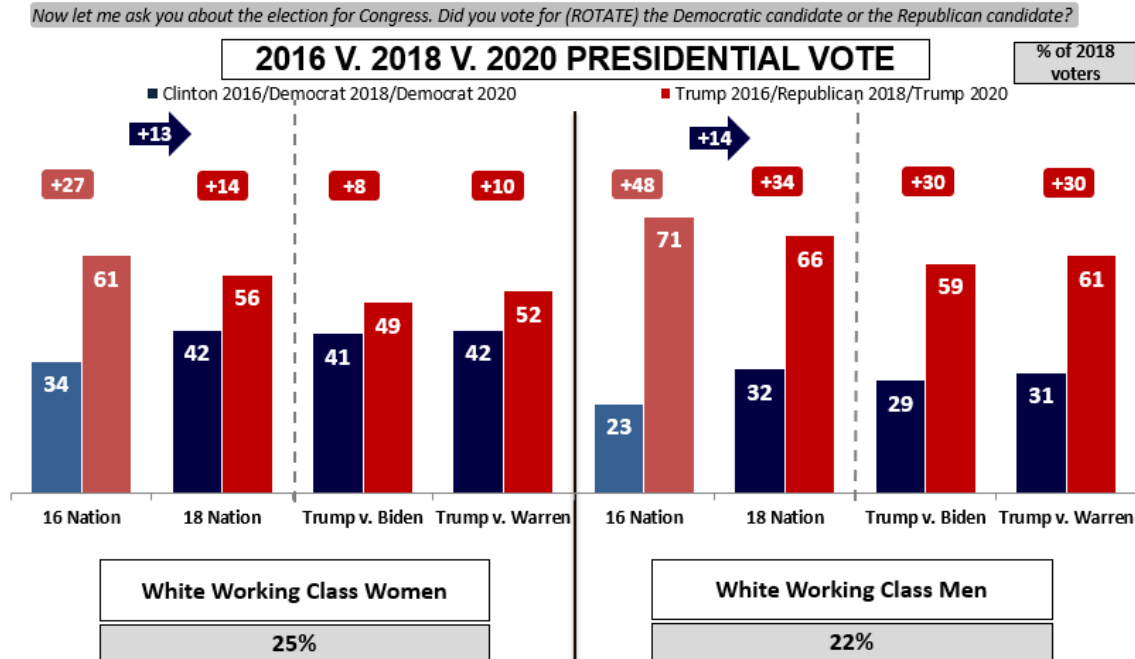
Below are some things candidates for president are saying. For each statement, please tell me how much more positive you feel about the candidate after hearing that?



At the moment, the hypothetical libertarian candidate hurts the Democrats more than Republicans. That could change with the Democratic nominee and people knowing more about Justin Amash’s Tea Party conservatism.

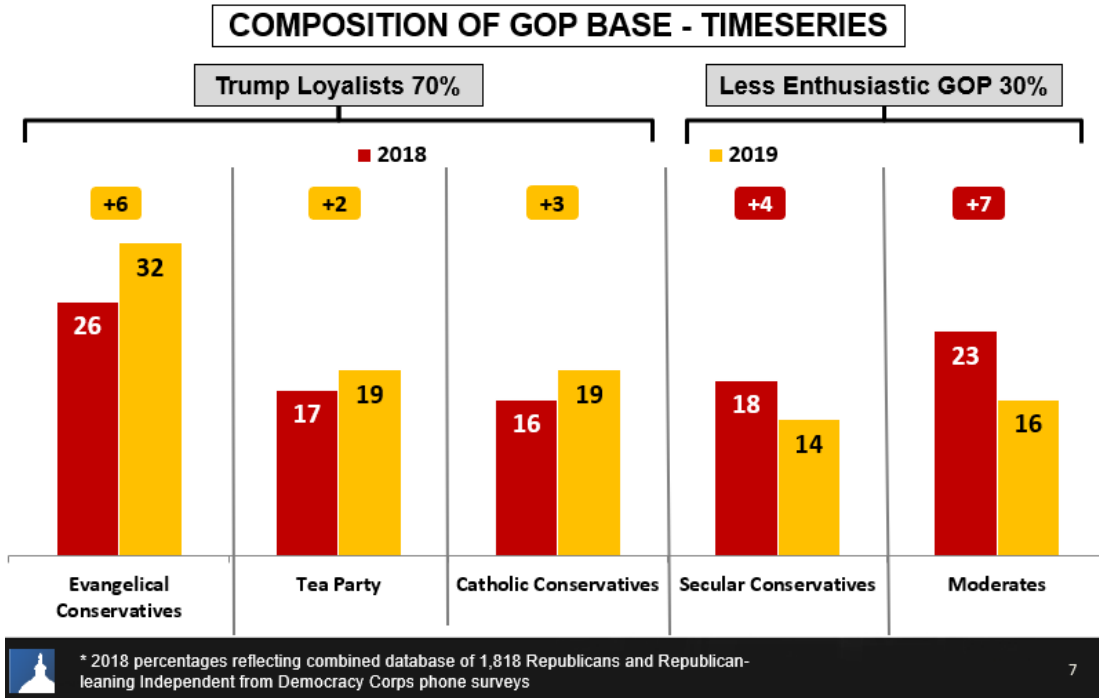
White working class women, Democracy Corps and AFT conducted [focus groups](#) with white working class voters outside the metropolitan area, which was featured in [Ron Rosenstein’s article in the Atlantic](#). While Trump’s base strategy did enable him to consolidate the white working class men, the divisiveness, overclaim on wages, and drug costs drove many away. Did this survey confirm the pull back of working class women?

It does indeed, Trump wins these voters by 8 points against Biden and 10 against Warren, comparable to the margin among these white working class women in 2018 when Democrats made gains and very different from the 27 point Trump margin in 2016.



The changing GOP. Donald Trump has changed the Republican Party in ways that make it hard to reach independents, women, more secular voters and people of color. As one will see in my book, [RIP GOP](#), the Trump GOP is now dominated increasingly by Evangelicals, the Tea Party, and conservative Catholics who embrace his anti-government, pro-life, and economic nationalist populism. Those groups now form 70 percent of the party. The secular conservatives, many who rally to the GOP establishment, and the moderates are in deep decline. The moderates were a third of the party. They were socially liberal, more women and college-grads. They formed a quarter of the party in 2018, but they are down to only 16 percent. The GOP has lost its college grads, women and the socially liberal.

So, this 40 percent party will have trouble growing and attracting voters beyond the base that gives Donald Trump his 42 percent.



Every trend in the country is crystallizing early in ways that point to a big Democratic election, and that is true with either of the two candidates that have proved durable in the Democratic primaries. While the primary debates have raised many legitimate flags for commentators, the voters are focused on the big picture and big choices before the country. That has produced a new clarity in this transformative election.