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**Warren and Sanders Running Neck-and-Neck in the Bay State  
According to New University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB Poll**

*Poll also finds Markey holds slim three-point lead in tight Senate primary race against Kennedy*

**Topline results and crosstabs for the poll can be found at [www.umass.edu/poll](http://www.umass.edu/poll)**

AMHERST, Mass. – A new University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB poll released today shows Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in a tight two-point race ahead of Tuesday’s Massachusetts Democratic presidential primary, with Pete Buttigieg a distant third. The poll also found incumbent Ed Markey holding a slender three-point lead over challenger Joseph Kennedy III with a significant number of voters undecided in their Democratic Senate primary race, which is set for September 1.

Sanders receives the support of 25% of Bay State voters when including leaners, while Warren holds 23% support. Buttigieg trails at 14%, and Joe Biden rounds out the viable candidates at 12%. No other candidate reached double-digit support in the poll.

“For Senator Warren, the Commonwealth is her Waterloo,” says [Tatishe Nteta](#), director of the University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB Poll and associate professor of political science at UMass Amherst. “A defeat here in Massachusetts likely spells an end to a campaign increasingly based on the argument that she is the candidate who can best unify the party. If Warren can’t win her own state, voters may question whether she can beat Trump in November.”

As in other recent UMass Amherst/WCVB polls, more than half of all respondents (54%) indicated a possibility of changing their vote before Super Tuesday, and Massachusetts’ senior senator may benefit by such a late break in the vote as Warren is listed as the top alternative by 21% of those who may flip their vote. Amy Klobuchar and Michael Bloomberg tie for second as voters’ alternative choice at 15% each, followed closely by Sanders and Biden at 14% each.

“Ranked-choice voting is not coming soon enough for Elizabeth Warren,” says [Raymond La Raja](#), associate director of the poll and professor of political science at UMass Amherst. “She could have been the beneficiary of a system where a voter’s second choice is counted if their first choice for a less popular candidate does not. More voters put Warren as their second choice than any other candidate, and she would have picked up a lot of Klobuchar and Bloomberg voters under a ranked-choice system.”

“Here’s why the Democratic establishment is worried,” La Raja continues. “The moderates in the field are taking votes from each other, including in Massachusetts. The voters most likely to switch from current preferences include supporters of Klobuchar, Buttigieg and Bloomberg. For these candidates, roughly three-in-four said they could possibly switch to another candidate. Biden would be the chief beneficiary picking up 29% of Klobuchar supporters, and the same for Bloomberg’s voters. Fifteen percent of Buttigieg voters would go to Biden, with 32% of them saying they would go instead to Klobuchar.”

### **Warren’s Challenges**

Potentially holding Warren back from an outright lead is the 22% disapproval rating she has among the poll’s respondents – registered likely Democratic primary voters, including both registered Democrats and independents. The 13% of respondents who strongly disapprove of the job she’s done equals the 13% who indicated they would vote for President Trump in a November general election against Warren – the highest such number against Democratic potential opponents in the poll.

Defeating Trump is by far what the poll’s respondents are looking for in their candidate, with 35% saying the ability to secure a victory in November is the most important quality among the contenders for the nomination. Sanders is believed to be the candidate most likely to defeat Trump, with 27% saying the Vermont senator is the Democrats’ best choice to win back the White House. Only 12% of Warren’s constituents think she’s the party’s best bet against Trump, trailing Bloomberg (19%) and Biden (14%).

“The lack of support for Warren’s chances in November from voters in her own home state does not bode well for her argument that she is the lone candidate tough enough to go toe to toe with the president,” Nteta says.

“Young people are wildly enthusiastic about Sanders and will affect this election if they show up,” La Raja adds. “Forty percent of voters under 30 say Sanders is their first choice. The candidates who receive the next most enthusiasm from them are still far behind in support with Warren at 23% and Buttigieg at 24%. A majority of young voters say Sanders is the most likely to beat Trump – no one else comes close in their view.”

### **Markey’s Slim Lead Over Kennedy**

“While Markey holds a slim 43-40 lead over Kennedy, the race is still up for grabs as 13% of Democratic voters have yet to make up their minds between the two candidates,” Nteta says. “This lack of clarity is to be expected given the attention on the Democratic presidential primary. As we inch closer to the Senate primary election expect voters to become more informed about the candidates, their vision for the state and the issues they represent.”

Respondents said they trust Markey more to handle the economy, taxes, transportation and taking on Trump, and they believe he'd best represent the interests of the middle and working classes, labor unions, small business owners, veterans and the Western Massachusetts region. Kennedy is thought to be best to tackle the issues of race relations and education, and better represent the interests of women, racial minorities, young people, progressives and Catholics.

Markey carries a 17-point lead (45-28) among young voters age 18-29, a 52-37 lead among ideological liberals, and a 61-27 lead among respondents who voted for Sanders in the 2016 primary. Kennedy leads 47-40 in voters over age 55, ideological moderates and conservatives prefer him 44-37 and 52-16, respectively, and Clinton primary voters from 2016 prefer him by a margin of 52-33.

"There is no gender gap between these two candidates, with both getting equal support from men and women," says La Raja. "Surprisingly, Markey wins the younger voters in Massachusetts. You would expect a young candidate – and a Kennedy at that – would attract these younger Democrats, but endorsements from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez likely helped Markey with this group."

## **Sports Betting**

The poll also asked respondents about their views on sports betting, which the legislature has not yet approved in the Bay State.

"Massachusetts voters are evenly divided into three groups when it comes to support for legalizing sports gambling," La Raja says. "One-third supports it, one-third opposes and a third has not decided. That leaves room for a lot of campaigning to convince the persuadable voters."

## **Methodology**

This [University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB Poll](#) of 400 registered voters in Massachusetts was conducted Feb. 18-24 by YouGov. YouGov interviewed 450 respondents who were then matched down to a sample of 400 to produce the final dataset.

The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education based on known characteristics of Democratic Party primary voters from the Massachusetts voter file and the 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Study. The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity and years of education. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles. The weights were then post-stratified on 2016 Presidential Primary vote choice, and age x gender stratification of Democratic Primary voters from the Massachusetts voter file to produce

the final weight. All figures presented in the poll are for registered adults who indicated that they are likely to participate in the 2020 Massachusetts Democratic presidential primary.

The margin of error within this poll is 5.9%.

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