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New University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB Poll of African American Super Tuesday Voters Finds 10-Point Advantage for Biden

Former VP leads in almost all categories of African American voters, though 54% of all respondents indicate a possibility of switching their vote before Super Tuesday

Topline results and crosstabs for the poll can be found at www.umass.edu/poll

AMHERST, Mass. – Joe Biden maintains a 10-point advantage over Bernie Sanders among African American registered voters in Super Tuesday Democratic primary states, according to a new University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB poll released today.

One-third of all respondents support the former vice president, while 23% support Sanders. Michael Bloomberg places third with 15%, followed closely by Elizabeth Warren at 14%. No other Democratic candidate registered above 2% support in the poll, which was conducted Feb. 19-24.

"Super Tuesday will be different than the previous contests because it introduces a large bloc of African American voters across the states, and our poll shows unique preferences," says Raymond La Raja, associate director of the poll and professor of political science at UMass Amherst. "African American voters are clearly more supportive of Biden than the rest of the electorate, even if Sanders runs a strong second. Their support for Warren and Bloomberg is in line with national primary electorates, but African American voters have pretty much ignored all the other candidates, including Buttigieg who did so well in the first three trials."

Biden leads Sanders among almost all categories of African American voters, as well, trailing the Vermont senator only among respondents age 18-29 (33% to 24%) and voters who identify as having low religiosity (29% to 27%).

"Biden's candidacy has broad appeal in the black community," says Tatishe Nteta, director of the University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB Poll and associate professor of political science at UMass Amherst. "He has emerged as the preferred candidate among both men and women, working and middle-class blacks, liberals and moderates, and self-identified Democrats and Independents."

"Biden's long history with African-American voters gives him especially strong standing with those who are older," La Raja says. "He gets 40% of people over 55, compared to Sanders who gets 15%."

"Biden's particular strength among older and highly religious African Americans bodes well for black turnout in support of him on Super Tuesday, as decades of research have found older Americans and the highly religious turn out in greater numbers when compared to younger and less religious Americans," says Nteta. "His gamble to focus attention on states with large African American populations is poised to pay off on Super Tuesday."

Half of Voters May Change Their Minds

The poll found some instability in the candidates' bases, however, with 54% of all respondents indicating a possibility they may ultimately vote for someone else. Among Biden's supporters, 53% replied they may vote for another candidate, with 38% of whom stating Sanders as their top alternative. While 46% of Sanders voters say they may switch their votes, Warren was listed as their top alternative at 34%, with Biden named as top alternative by 27% of Sanders voters.

"The lead candidates, Biden and Sanders, would love for the others to drop out," says La Raja. "If the field winnows a bit they are the big beneficiaries, as 25% of African-American voters list Sanders as their alternative and 22% say it is Biden. The next biggest beneficiary is Bloomberg who gets 16% of voters who might switch. If Warren drops out, the African American vote splits evenly between Biden and Sanders, with Bloomberg picking up some, as well. Of course, Biden's fondest wish is for Bloomberg to disappear, because 50% of Bloomberg supports say they would switch to Biden. This is unlikely to happen before Super Tuesday."

Of the respondents who voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, 40% support Biden in this year's primaries, and 24% support Sanders. Sanders, however, retains only 54% of his voters from 2016, with 18% currently supporting Warren and 14% supporting Biden.

High Disapproval for Trump

Nearly a quarter of respondents list the ability to defeat Donald Trump in November as the most important in the primary candidates. "Biden still gets the highest rating for ability to beat President Trump, and this quality is what matters most for African American voters," La Raja says. "In the field of candidates, 28% of African American respondents said he is most likely to defeat Trump, compared to 23% for Sanders and 22% for Bloomberg."

It certainly appears that Trump won't be receiving much support from African American voters in Super Tuesday states come November, as the poll found 92% of respondents disapprove of his job performance, with 83% strongly disapproving it.

"African Americans are not in sync with Trump when he touts that the economy is great for them," La Raja says. "In our survey, 64% of African Americans rated the economy as

fair or poor, rather than good or excellent. This surely has something to do with the fact that African Americans overwhelming disapprove of Trump as president."

"If elections come down to 'it's the economy, stupid' then Biden is well positioned to win the black vote as African Americans see him as the one Democratic candidate best equipped to handle the economy," Nteta says. "But also on other issues of import to the African American community, most notably race relations and criminal justice, African American voters similarly see Biden as the candidate that they trust best to handle these challenges."

Methodology

This [University of Massachusetts Amherst / WCVB Poll](#) of 500 registered voters in Super Tuesday states – Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont and Virginia – was conducted Feb. 19-24 by YouGov. YouGov interviewed 520 respondents who were then matched down to a sample of 500 to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age and education. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2018 Current Population Survey (CPS) one-year sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). 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, years of education, and region. 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 vote choice, and a four-way stratification of gender, age, race, and education, to produce the final weight.

The margin of error within this poll is 5.7%.

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