

Battleground Independents and Biden's Choice for VP

Warren, Harris Top Poll of Battleground Independents for VP

Warren strongly favored by lower-income, unemployed voters and those still unsure about Biden

Harris favored by highest-income voters, those already committed to Biden

Recently, Data for Progress and YouGov Blue fielded a survey of battleground state Independent voters.¹ The survey included a variety of items gauging battleground state voters' views of the Vice Presidency and their views on who Joe Biden should choose as his running mate. We find that Independent voters in battleground states consistently choose Elizabeth Warren or Kamala Harris as their preferred nominee, and view her as strongest on the subject of leading an economic recovery. Sen. Warren receives more support from Independents in the lower-half of the income distribution. Sen Harris receives more support from Independents in the upper half of the income distribution. Sen. Warren's support is also driven by voters who are considering Biden but not yet definite about choosing Joe Biden, and say the choice of Vice President is very important to their decision. Warren is the preferred candidate of those who are unemployed.

These newly released results are from the same poll that found that Sen. Warren is viewed by Independents as more effective on the economy by three to one over the next nearest choice. The Vice Presidents' effectiveness on the economy is the issue that Independents most want to guide Biden's Vice Presidential choice. The income results released today show Sen. Warren is also viewed across employment and income groups as the most effective Vice Presidential candidate on the economy.

Executive summary

- Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris are the top two potential nominees for Vice President among battleground state Independent voters. They are statistically tied among pure Independents, who do not lean to either party (with Warren earning 23 percent as a first or second choice and Harris earning 21 percent; Warren as a first choice for 11 percent and Harris as first choice for 11 percent). They are also statistically tied among Independents among Independent voters including party leaners (22 percent for both first and second choice, Harris first choice for 12 percent and Warren for 11 percent).

¹ This survey fielded on YouGov's online panel and included 538 Independent US voters living in battleground states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The survey fielded from July 8-July 10, 2020, and was weighted to be representative of these states' electorates by age, race/ethnicity, sex, education, US Census region, and 2016 Presidential vote choice.

- Independent voters who report they are at least considering voting for Biden but aren't enthusiastic about doing so, Elizabeth Warren is the overwhelmingly most preferred candidate by four to one (21 percent, with no other candidate earning over 5 percent)
- Elizabeth Warren's support is higher among Independent voters earning under \$60,000 per year, with her modal supporter earning \$20,000-30,000 per year. Harris's support is higher among Independent voters earning over \$70,000 per year, and with her strongest support coming from those earning more than \$150,000 per year.
- Sen. Warren received the strongest support from the unemployed. Sen. Harris received no recorded support from the unemployed. Sen Harris received strongest recorded support from the retired. Sen Warren and Sen. Harris were statistically tied among full time workers.
- When asked about nominees' potential effectiveness on day one as President should she be called to serve, Independent voters overwhelmingly reported they believed Warren would be most ready (16 percent, with no other candidate earning over 10 percent)

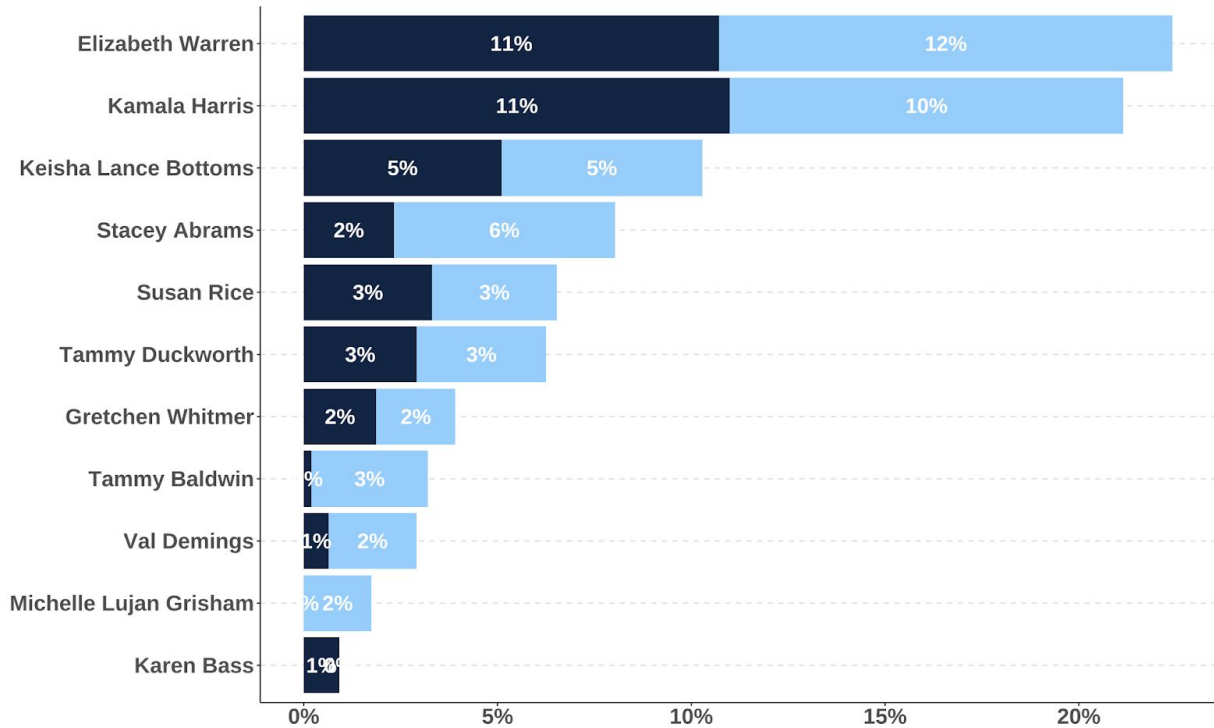
Many Independents are undecided, but the rest prefer Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris

Battleground state Independent voters are largely undecided who should be the next Vice President, but those with an opinion are narrowly split between preferring Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris. These are the only two candidates to break five percent support among Independent voters. We caution that large shares of Independents remain undecided on who should be Vice President.

While about 57 percent of the Independents in our sample reported they leaned toward one party or the other,² 43 percent even when nudged in either direction reported they did not have a preferred party. Among that 43 percent of Independents, Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris are statistically tied, with Warren enjoying the support of 23 percent of pure Independents and Harris enjoying 21 percent as either a first or second choice. Viewed this way, Keisha Lance Bottoms also enjoys significant support, earning the support of 10 percent of voters as either a first or second choice.

² In our sample, 28 percent of Independents report they lean toward the Democrats, and 29 percent of Independents report they lean toward the Republicans. Overall, 37 percent of the Independents in our sample report they lean Biden or prefer Biden, and 42 percent report they lean Trump or prefer Trump.

First or second choice for Vice President Independents without leaners



Of the choices listed below, who do you think should be selected as the Democratic Party nominee for Vice President if Joe Biden wins the nomination for President?

And of the choices listed below, who do you think is your second choice for who Joe Biden should select as the nominee for Vice President?
Survey fielded on 538 Independent US voters living in battleground states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin July 8-July 10, 2020. Margin of error on this subset: +/-8.3%.

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Among *all* Independents in our sample, just under half report they are “pure Independents,” that is, that they do not lean toward one party or the other. Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren are tied for the most preferred potential nominee for Vice President among this group. About 61 percent of “pure Independents” who do not lean toward either party are unsure who should be Vice President.

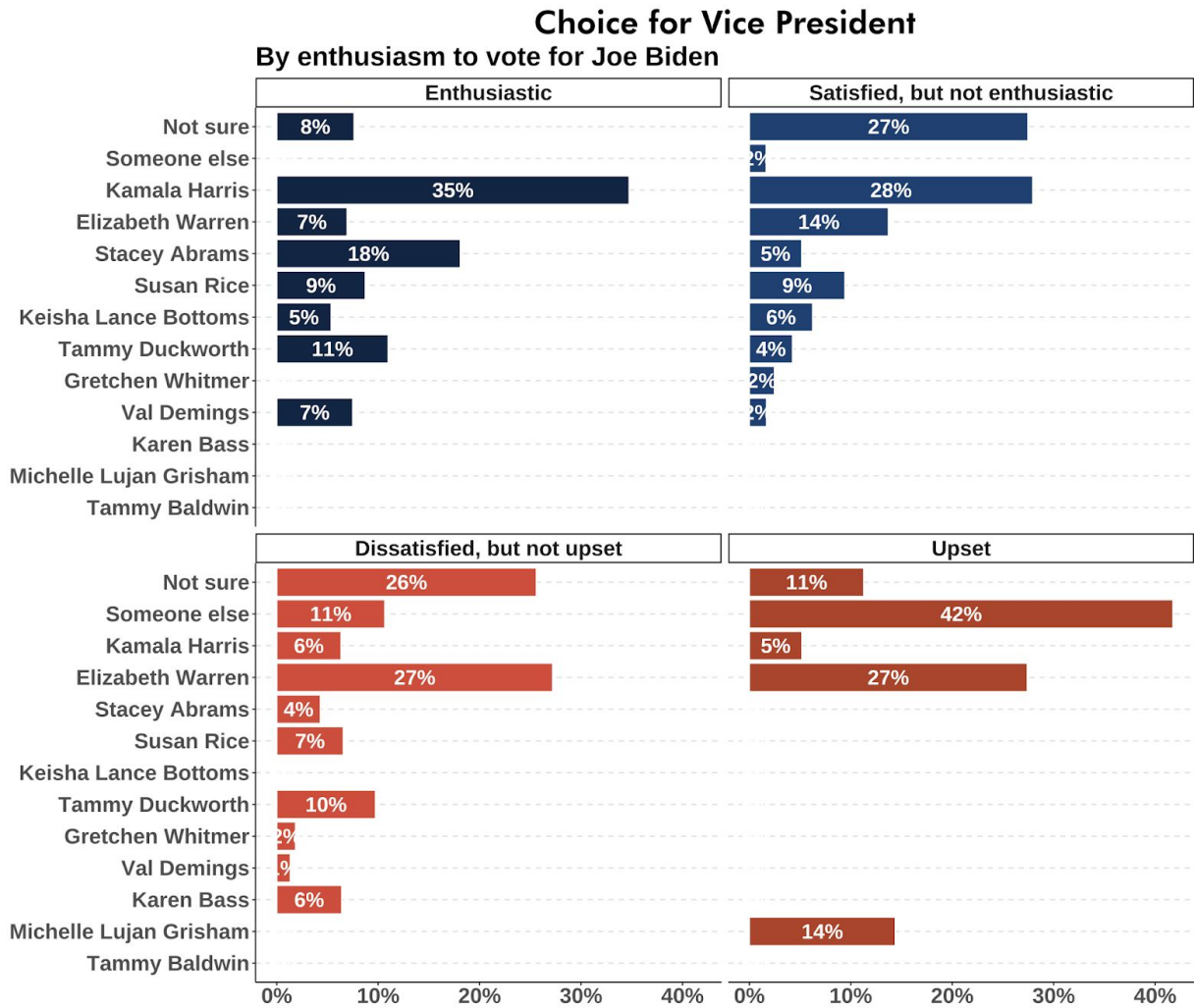
In addition to performing well among Independents who do not lean toward either party, Warren is also the strongest candidate among Independents who say they are voting for Biden but are not enthusiastic about doing so. We asked voters,

How do you feel about voting for Joe Biden?

- <1> *Enthusiastic*
- <2> *Satisfied, but not enthusiastic*
- <3> *Dissatisfied, but not upset*

<4> Upset
 <5> Not sure

Fully 44 percent of Independent voters report they are enthusiastic to vote for Joe Biden. Among those who are less so, however, support for Warren for Vice President gradually increases. While Harris dominates among those who are already excited to vote for Biden, Warren is the clear preferred candidate of those who are dissatisfied or upset at Biden as a candidate. Fully 27 percent of dissatisfied or upset voters support Warren for VP.



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In other words, a candidate like Warren might be able to shore up support for Biden among those most likely to reconsider their preference for him. Despite Warren's reputation as an ideological liberal, this group at the literal center of American politics clearly say that having her as a Vice President would help the case for Joe Biden.

Put another way, a considerable share of Independent voters say their vote could be heavily influenced by who Biden picks as his nominee. Later in the survey, we asked voters,

And how important is your first choice for Vice President to your vote?

*<1> I am definitely voting for **(Joe Biden)**, no matter who the Vice President is*

*<2> I am likely to vote for **(Joe Biden)**, but the right Vice President would make me more excited*

*<3> I am not sure about voting for **(Joe Biden)**, the right Vice President is very important to my vote*

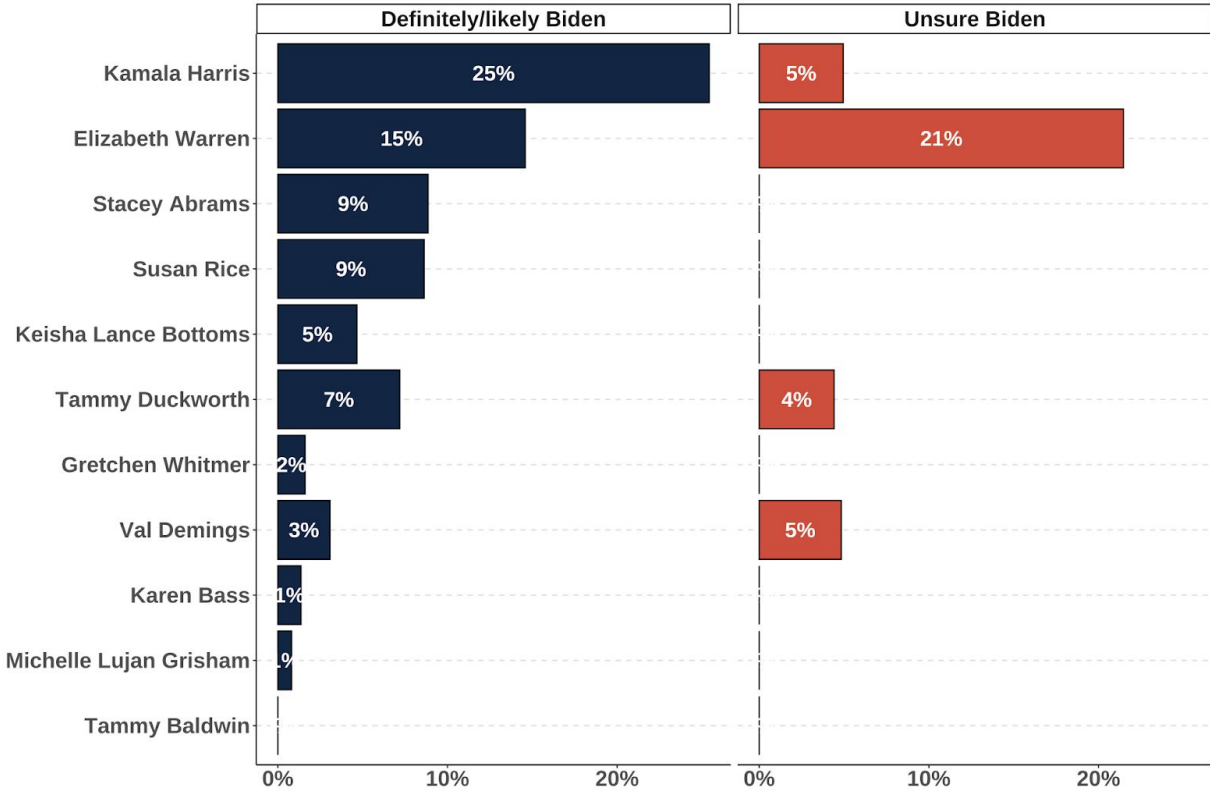
*<4> I am probably not going to vote for **(Joe Biden)**, and his Vice President won't change that*

Fully 38 percent of Independents who reported they were at least considering Joe Biden also reported they were only likely or not sure to do so, but that a Vice President would increase their enthusiasm. (Naturally, a negligible share said they were probably not going to vote for him but were also considering him) Among that considerable share of Independents, Elizabeth Warren is the clear favorite candidate. About 21 percent of Independents who are considering but unsure about Joe Biden would prefer Elizabeth Warren to be the Vice Presidential nominee. No other candidate earns over 5 percent among this group.

In other words, among voters who are considering but less sure they'll vote for Biden, Warren leads 4-to-1 against the next nearest candidate. In contrast, Harris's support is driven by voters who report that they're already planning to vote for Biden and will definitely do so.

This is a notable contrast with Kamala Harris, who currently leads among voters who are less likely to say their vote could be swayed by the right Vice Presidential nominee. Harris's support is much stronger among those whose votes are not dependent on the choice of Vice President.

Choice for Vice President Democrats and Independents, By importance of Vice President to voting for Biden



And how important is your first choice for Vice President to your vote?
Survey fielded on 538 Independent voters living in battleground states of
Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire,
Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin
July 8-July 10, 2020. Margin of error on this subset: +/-6.1%.

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Among *all* Independent voters, including those who lean toward one party or the other, fully 54 percent of all Independent voters are either unsure or did not select a shortlist candidate for the Vice Presidency. There is still clearly a great deal of room for movement in Independents’ attitudes toward the Vice Presidential nominee.

Notably, despite Elizabeth Warren’s reputation as a more left-leaning candidate, we find she performs just as strongly among Independent voters in these battleground states as does Kamala Harris, who was viewed as more of a moderate in the primary. Among *all* Independent voters, even those who report they lean toward a party, Kamala Harris enjoys 12 percent of the vote and Elizabeth Warren, 11 percent. No other candidate earns over 5 percent of this group.

A similar result holds for Independent voters who do not currently support either Joe Biden or Donald Trump. While most of these voters remain unsure, Elizabeth Warren earns 10

percent support, with no other candidate breaking 10 percent. Kamala Harris and Keisha Lance Bottoms are within a few points of Warren. Statistically, this subset of voters is too small to confidently separate the top few candidates.

We also asked voters to provide their second most preferred Vice Presidential candidate. Among those who had an opinion, adding voters' second choice does not much change the overall ranking.

Including first and second choice votes, both Warren and Harris enjoy the net support of 22 percent of *all* Independents.³ Viewed this way, we also see that Stacey Abrams is the first or second choice for 13 percent of voters, and Tammy Duckworth and Susan Rice are each the first or second choice for 10 percent of voters.

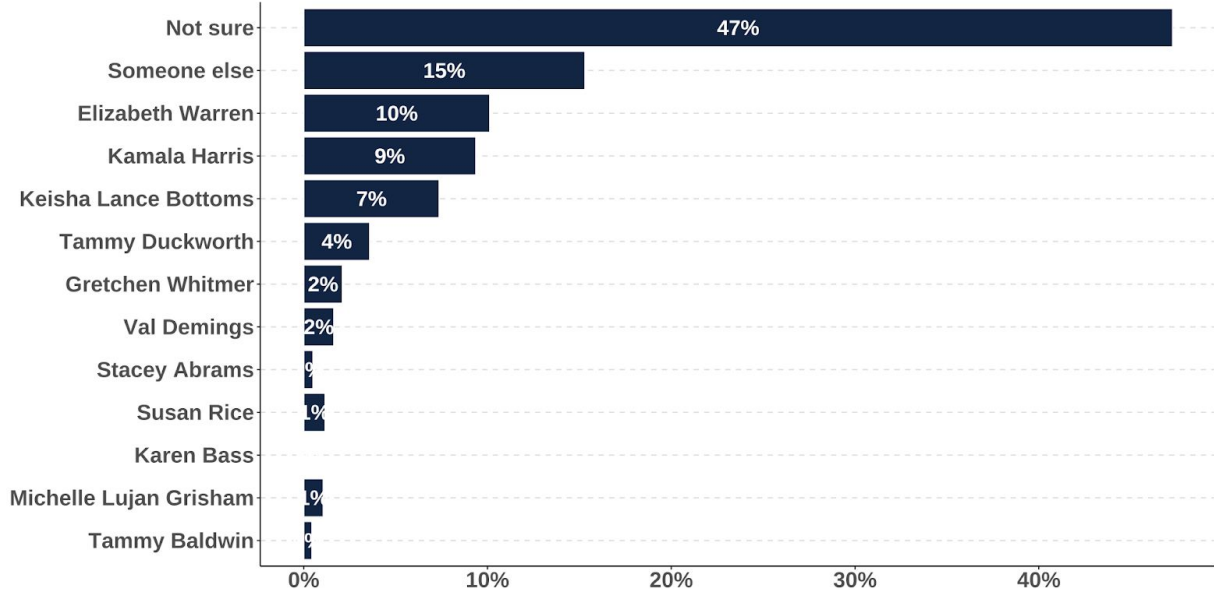
Similarly, among Independent voters who report they do not lean toward either party, Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris are the most preferred candidates. Warren is the first or second choice of 23 percent of pure Independent voters, and Harris is the first or second choice of 21 percent of pure Independents.

It is important to caveat these results in the context of the small sample size and of the high level of uncertainty Independents report. That said, these results are notable for a few reasons. The strong first and second place results for the top few candidates suggest they are broadly acceptable even to those who are not their strongest supporters. That is, no candidate has a very high "first place" supporter share who does not also have a very high "second place" supporter share. Even if voters do not get their first choice, there is no evidence they would clearly move away from the other choices.

The fact that a large share of these voters remains undecided is not surprising. One of this group's defining features includes an opportunity to move toward either party, so it is natural that in addition to not necessarily backing either party they have not opted to back a particular Vice President.

³ In this item, voters were not allowed to select the same candidate as both their first and second choice preference.

Choice for Vice President Uncommitted battleground state independent voters



Of the choices listed below, who do you think should be selected as the Democratic Party nominee for Vice President if Joe Biden wins the nomination for President?

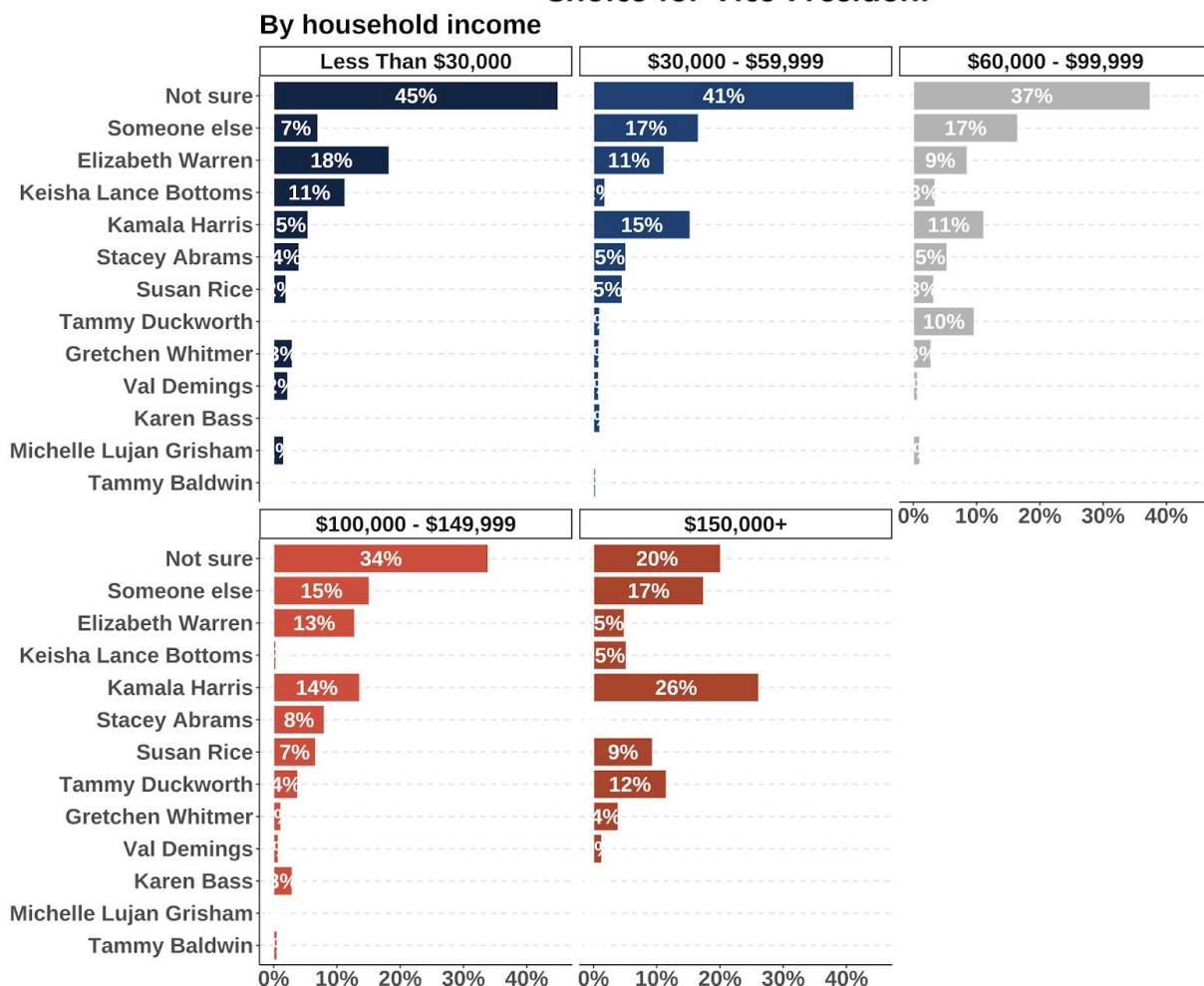
Survey fielded on 538 Independent US voters living in battleground states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin July 8-July 10, 2020. Margin of error on this subset: +/-11.9%.

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Among Independent voters, household income helps predict a good deal of variation in preferred Vice Presidential candidate. Among Independent voters earning under \$30,000 per year, Elizabeth Warren is the overwhelming preferred candidate with 18 percent of the vote, with the next nearest candidate earning 11 percent.

While both Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren emphasized the importance of economic justice throughout the primary, Warren's particular focus on improving access to opportunities for the poorest Americans makes this result somewhat unsurprising. Warren is also recognized as a strong candidate on the economy and on protecting Americans from Wall Street overall, [as Data for Progress has shown elsewhere](#).

Choice for Vice President



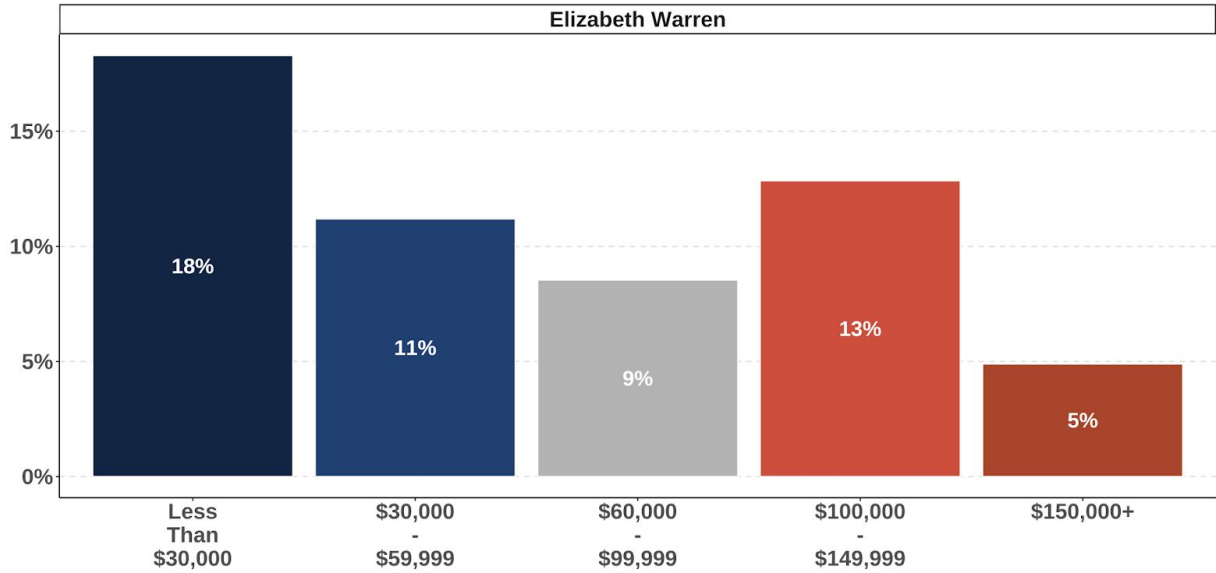
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The contrast between the frontrunners is notable. While there is clear upward skew among supporters of Kamala Harris, the opposite is the case for Elizabeth Warren. The following chart subsets the above result to just the frontrunners. That said, we caution that, at all levels of income, “Not sure” remains a dominant preference. There is still plenty of room for movement on the question of Vice Presidential nominee.

Support for Elizabeth Warren

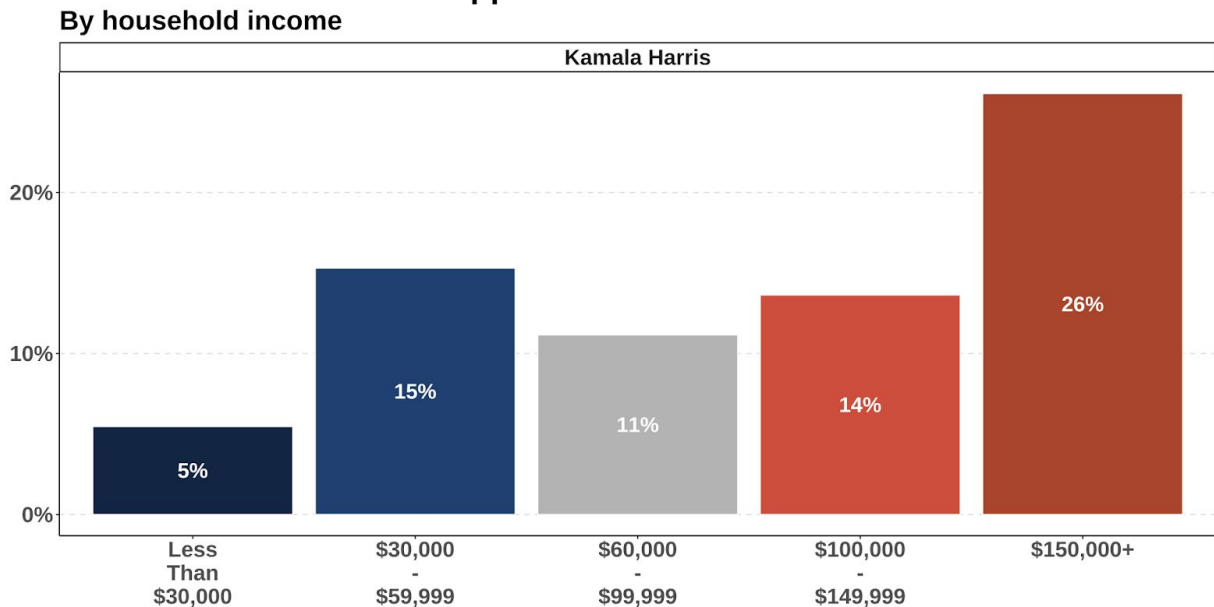
By household income



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Support for Kamala Harris



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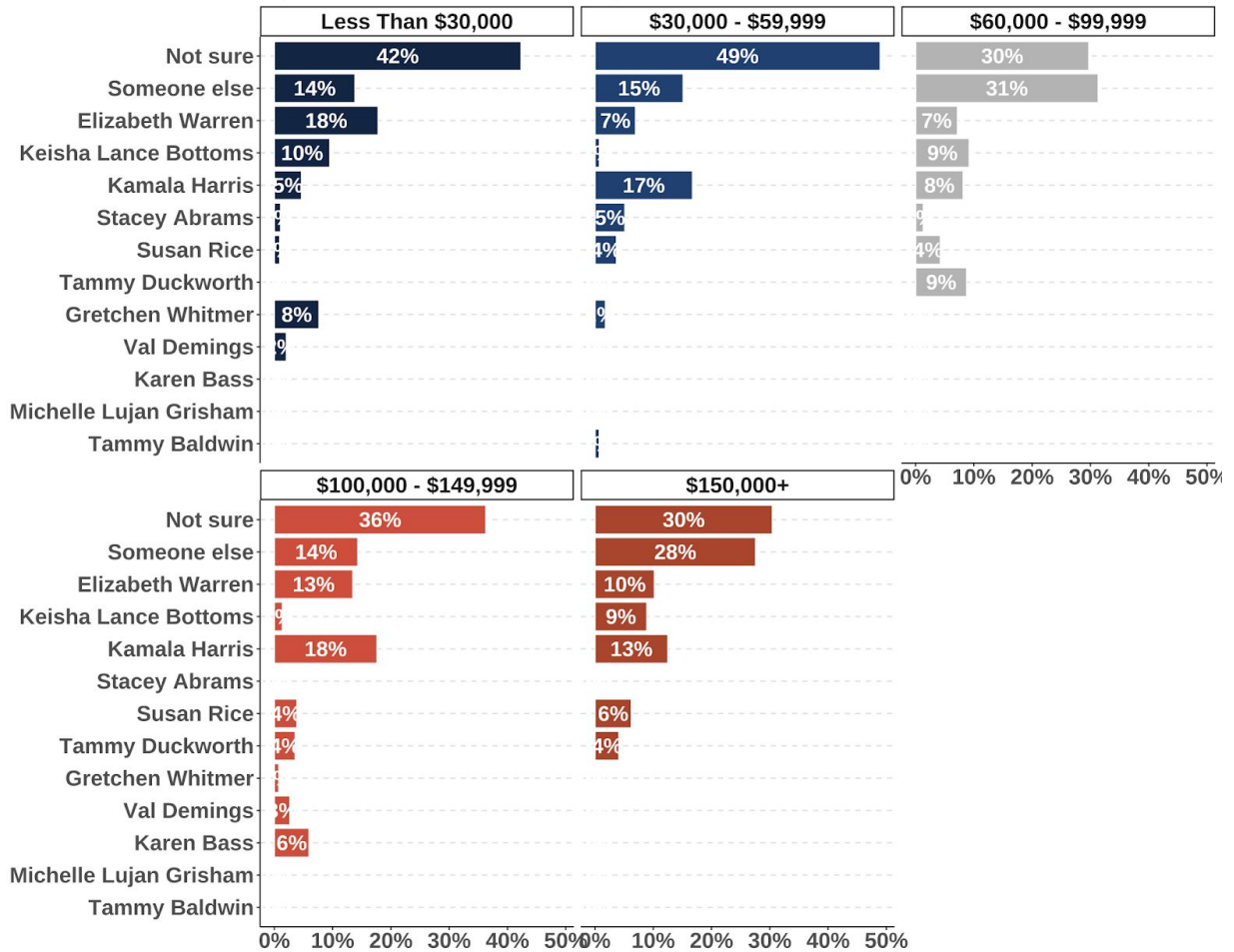
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A similar trend holds among Independents who report they do not lean toward either party. Warren is the clear frontrunner among Independent non-leaners who earn less than \$30,000 per year, at 18 percent. Among Independents who don't lean either way, her support is slightly higher among wealthier voters than among Independents overall. Warren has the support of 13 percent of Independent without leaning voters earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000, and 10 percent of those earning over \$150,000 per year. In both cases, she is clearly behind Kamala Harris, who enjoys the support of 18 percent and 13 percent of those groups respectively.

Put another way, more of Elizabeth Warren's supporters are drawn from the lower end of the household income distribution than other candidates. Among Warren supporters, 51 percent report their household income is below \$60,000 per year. Fully 16 percent of her supporters report earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per year -- a typical minimum wage income in most cases. In contrast, about 52 percent of Kamala Harris's supporters earn over \$60,000 per year, including 33 percent who earn over \$100,000 per year.

Choice for Vice President By household income, Independents without leaners

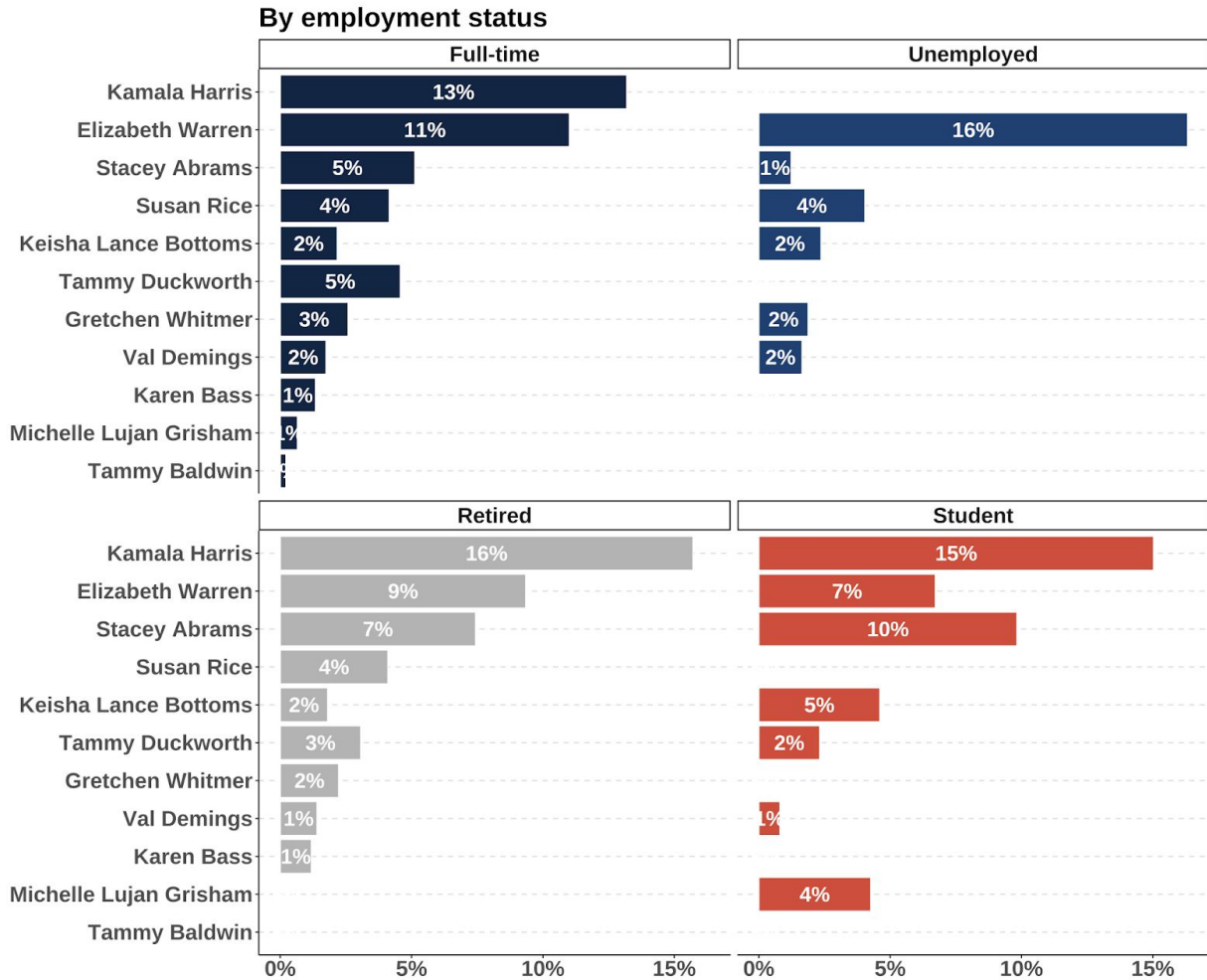


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Similarly, Warren is the overwhelmingly preferred candidate among Independent voters who were willing to report they are currently unemployed. Fully 16 percent of unemployed Independent voters supported Warren, with no other candidate earning over 5 percent of this group. Harris’s support among this group is not measurably different from zero. Among Independents who are employed full time, Harris and Warren are narrowly split, 13-11. Among students, Harris enjoys 15 percent support, with only Stacy Abrams earning over 10 percent of this group.

Choice for Vice President



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This is perhaps unsurprising as Independent voters tend to view Warren as the strongest overall on the question of how to fix the economy after the Trump era ends. Elsewhere in the survey, on the subject of the economy, we asked,

Of the choices listed below, who do you think would be most effective at addressing the economic recovery?

- <1> Stacey Abrams
- <2> Tammy Baldwin
- <3> Karen Bass
- <4> Keisha Lance Bottoms

- <5> *Val Demings*
- <6> *Tammy Duckworth*
- <7> *Michelle Lujan Grisham*
- <8> *Kamala Harris*
- <9> *Susan Rice*
- <10> *Elizabeth Warren*
- <11> *Gretchen Whitmer*
- <12 fixed> *Someone else*
- <13 fixed> *Not sure*

Independents view Warren as most ready to be Vice President on day one

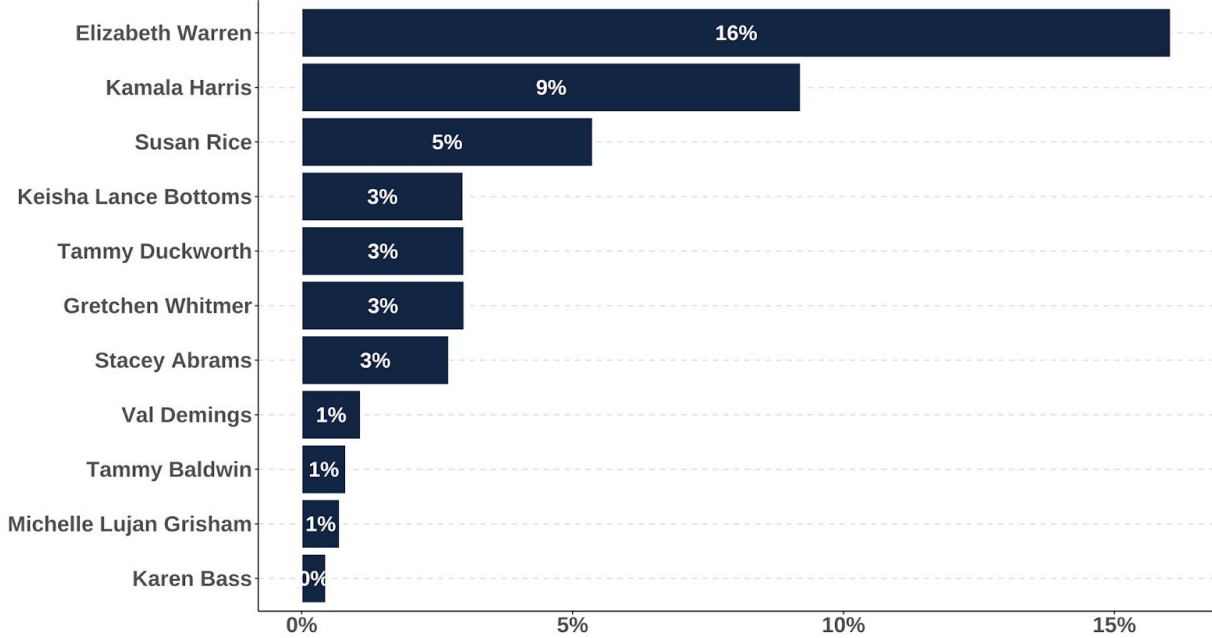
Among those with an opinion, Independent voters put Elizabeth Warren first for who would be most effective day one as President should she be called to serve. About 16 percent of Independent battleground state voters believe she would be most effective as President on day one, more than any other candidate. Should she be called to it, Independent voters believe Elizabeth Warren is ready to do the job. We asked voters,

Of the choices listed below, who do you think would be most effective as President on day one, should something happen to Joe Biden?

- <1> *Stacey Abrams*
- <2> *Tammy Baldwin*
- <3> *Karen Bass*
- <4> *Keisha Lance Bottoms*
- <5> *Val Demings*
- <6> *Tammy Duckworth*
- <7> *Michelle Lujan Grisham*
- <8> *Kamala Harris*
- <9> *Susan Rice*
- <10> *Elizabeth Warren*
- <11> *Gretchen Whitmer*
- <12 fixed> *Someone else*
- <13 fixed> *Not sure*

While large shares of Independents remain unsure, the most Independents with an opinion selected Elizabeth Warren, at 16 percent. No other candidate earned more than 10 percent of the vote by this measure. More Independents believe Elizabeth Warren would be more effective day one as President should something happen to Joe Biden.

Who would be most effective as President Battleground state Independent voters



Of the choices listed below, who do you think would be most effective as President on day one, should something happen to Joe Biden? Survey fielded on 538 Independent US voters living in battleground states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin July 8-July 10, 2020. Margin of error on this subset: +/-5.1%.

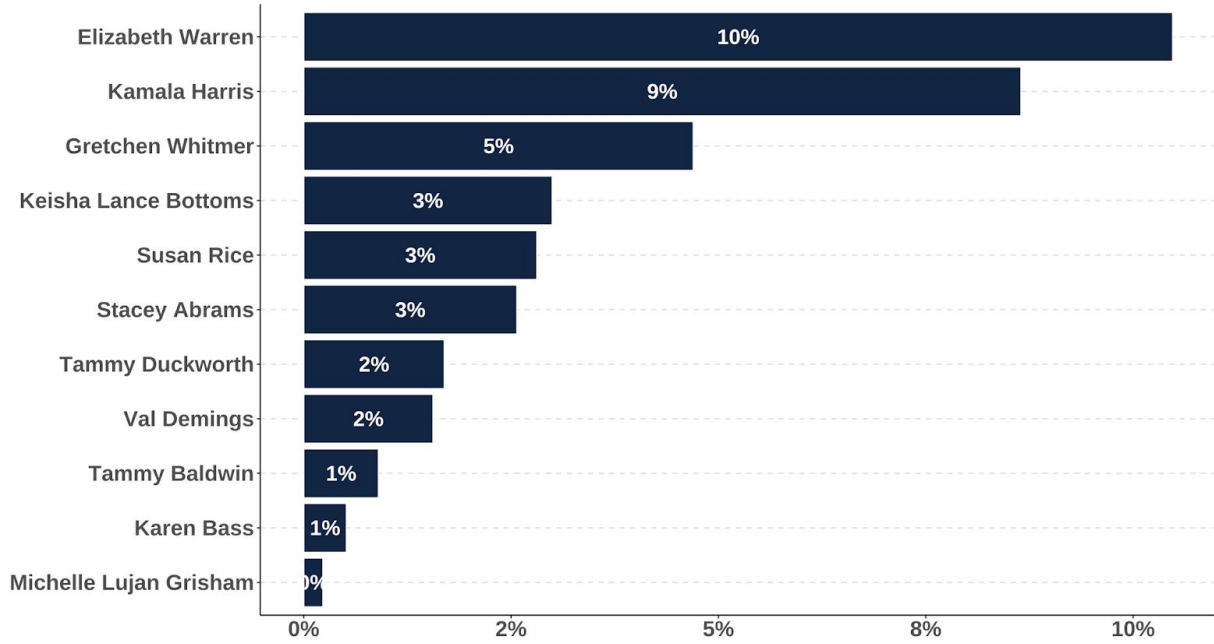
YouGov Blue

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This is also true among battleground state Independent voters who report they do not lean toward one party or the other. Among this population, the choices are much narrower, with Warren earning 16 percent support and Harris earning 9 percent support. Viewed this way, Governor Gretchen Whitmer also moves up, to third place overall, with 5 percent support among pure Independents in battleground states. As with other components of this analysis, we caution that a large share of Independents remain unsure as to who they support.

This result is notable as throughout the Democratic primary Harris and Warren were thought to occupy different “lanes” of the electorate, with Warren supposedly in the more “left” lane that might pose a challenge among precisely the types of swing Independents we study here. These results suggest that the perceived differences between the two candidates have not necessarily carried over to the general electorate. Battleground state Independent voters, measured several different ways, appear to be supportive of a variety of candidates who previously were thought to occupy “lanes” that would be inconsistent with the preferences of the persuadable middle.

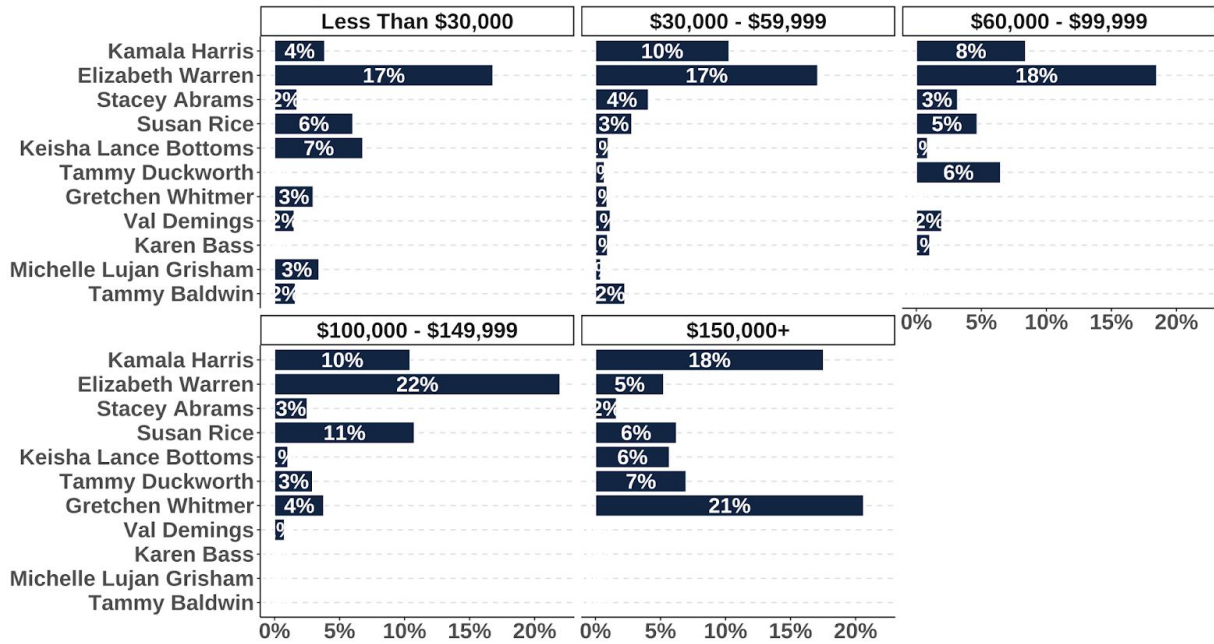
Who would be most effective as President Independent voters without leaners



Of the choices listed below, who do you think would be most effective as President on day one, should something happen to Joe Biden?
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Who would be most effective as President Independent voters, by household income



Of the choices listed below, who do you think would be most effective as President on day one, should something happen to Joe Biden? Survey fielded on 538 Independent US voters living in battleground states of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin July 8-July 10, 2020. Margin of error on this subset: +/-5.1%.

YouGov Blue

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Our results further suggest that this is because Independents are overwhelmingly concerned about the economy, an issue each of the leading candidates emphasized heavily in their primary campaigns. That said, overall, battleground state Independent voters overwhelmingly prefer Warren as Vice President on this issue. On the economy, we asked,

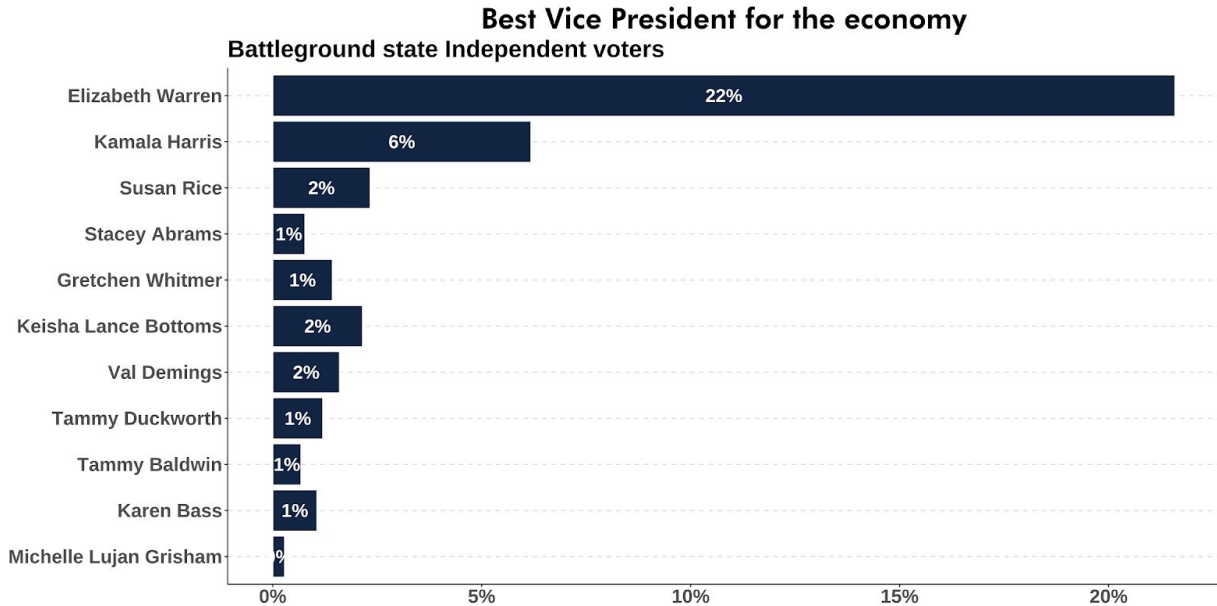
Of the choices listed below, who do you think would be most effective at addressing the economic recovery?

- <1> Stacey Abrams
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- <4> Keisha Lance Bottoms
- <5> Val Demings
- <6> Tammy Duckworth
- <7> Michelle Lujan Grisham
- <8> Kamala Harris
- <9> Susan Rice
- <10> Elizabeth Warren
- <11> Gretchen Whitmer

<12 fixed> Someone else

<13 fixed> Not sure

Among those who had a preference, Elizabeth Warren was the clear favorite on the economy and the economic recovery by three to one margin, at 22 percent, with the nearest second choice at just 6 percent. This result is robust to a variety of demographic subsets among Independent voters.



*Of the choices listed below, who do you think would be most effective at addressing the economic recovery?
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YouGov Blue

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This is also true among the subset of Independent voters who report they are not committed to either candidate. 14 percent of these voters think Elizabeth Warren would be the best candidate for the economic recovery. The next nearest potential nominee on this question is Val Demings, at 6 percent, despite lower name recognition than some other candidates.

Warren's demographic strengths make sense when contextualized with how strongly voters view her with respect to the economy. Low-income and unemployed voters are likely to place even higher value on the promise of economic recovery, which was a central theme of Warren's own primary campaign message. As the economy continues to worsen, the importance of a ticket that can be trusted on the economy will only grow more paramount.

For example, Independents of all levels of income agree it is extremely very important to have a Vice President who can handle the issue of jobs and the economy. Fully 81 percent

of Independent voters earning under \$30,000 per year *and* Independent voters earning under \$150,000 per year say handling jobs and the economy is somewhat or very important.

Overall, battleground state Independent voters are split between Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren. Harris is strongest among highest income voters and those who report they are already likely to support Biden. Warren's strength is driven by lower-income voters and by those who are considering Biden but also report they are currently unsatisfied by the prospect of voting for him.