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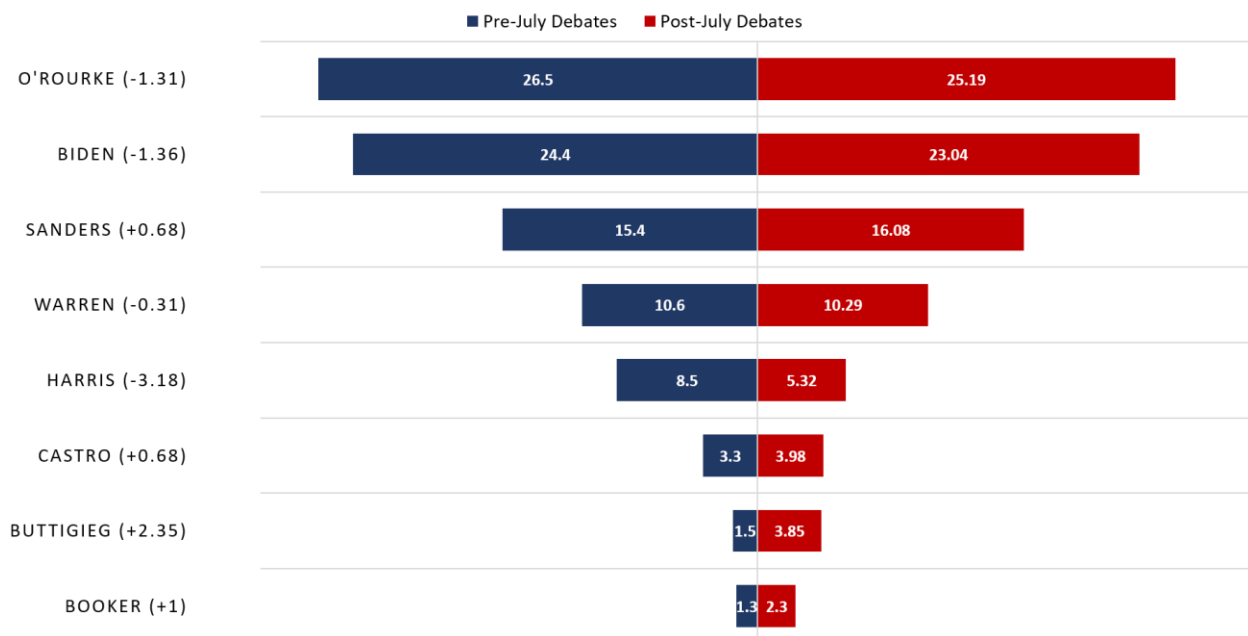
Texas Opinion Survey

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POST-DEMOCRATIC DEBATES: BIDEN & BETO ARE NECK-AND-NECK

Tyler, Texas – In the wake of last week's Democratic presidential primary debates, former-Congressman Beto O'Rourke (25%) and former Vice President Joe Biden (23%) continue to lead the field among registered Texas Democrats. They are followed by Senators Bernie Sanders (16%), Elizabeth Warren (10%), and Kamala Harris (5%).

2020 TEXAS DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY SUPPORT

■ Pre-July Debates   ■ Post-July Debates

Candidate	Pre-July Debates	Post-July Debates
O'ROURKE (-1.31)	26.5	25.19
BIDEN (-1.36)	24.4	23.04
SANDERS (+0.68)	15.4	16.08
WARREN (-0.31)	10.6	10.29
HARRIS (-3.18)	8.5	5.32
CASTRO (+0.68)	3.3	3.98
BUTTIGIEG (+2.35)	1.5	3.85
BOOKER (+1)	1.3	2.3

When asked which candidate they believe did the best job in the debates, regardless of their personal support for the nomination, 19 percent of those who watched all or some of both debates chose Senator Warren, with O'Rourke (18%), Sanders (15%), Biden (15%), and Harris (10%) also earning double-digit backing. Additionally, about 13 percent of Democratic and Democratic-leaning respondents said the debates changed their support for a candidate, while the events affirmed the support of others (43%) and 45 percent are still deciding. Post-debate coverage had no bearing on their assessments of the candidates.

Of the 282-person panel of Democrats who watched all or some of all four Democratic primary debates in June and July, support for "Medicare for All" plans that eliminate private insurance plans increased by 3 percent, while plans that would allow private insurance lost 6 percent support. That said, a noticeable number of respondents shifted from *opposition to* or *support for* the elimination of private plans in July to having a neutral position (17%). Furthermore, about 12 percent of respondents shifted from a clear position (support or opposition) on "Medicare for All" as a general policy choice to having a neutral position. These results suggest that the ongoing debate among Democratic candidates about which path to universal healthcare is the most viable is impacting the attitudes of many Texas primary voters – who have not yet settled on which path they support.

The panel's shift in attitudes toward decriminalizing border crossings is starker. Nine percent of panelists who in June supported or were neutral toward repealing the law that makes unauthorized border crossings a crime moved to opposing the measure in the July survey. On the other hand, 33 percent of panelists who in June opposed the repeal moved to *supporting* it in the July. Overall, support for decriminalizing border crossings increased by 7 percent, while opposition declined by 2 percent.

Democratic voters still want someone who can beat President Trump in the general election. When asked to rank in order of importance the characteristics they prefer in a Democratic nominee, voters chose "electability" as their top priority (45%). President Donald Trump's job approval is down another point from our last survey in July. It now stands at 39 percent approval among all registered Texans. His disapproval stands at 53 percent, including 15 percent of registered Republicans and 56 percent of Independents.
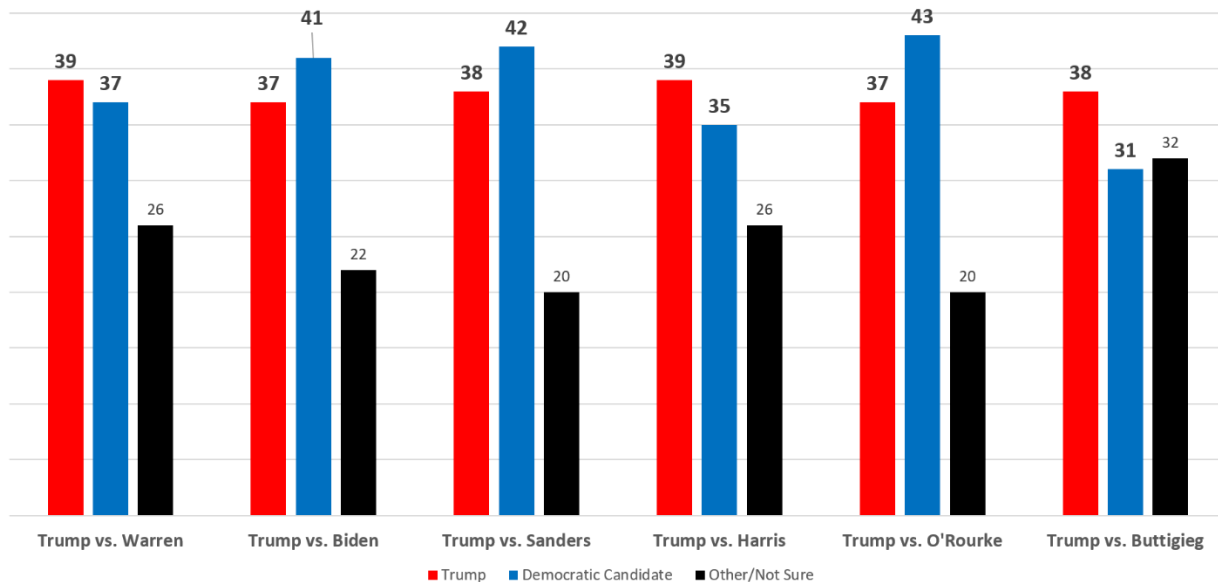
In head to head contests, President Trump is trailing Joe Biden (-4), Bernie Sanders (-4), and Beto O'Rourke (-6), though a sizable percentage of respondents answered "neither/other" or "not sure" in each contest. Trump currently leads Elizabeth Warren (+2 but within the margin of error), Kamala Harris (+4), and Pete Buttigieg (+7), though again, a large percentage of respondents is undecided.

UT TYLER Center for Opinion Research

2020 Texas Presidential Head to Heads

August 1-4, 2019
N=1261 Adults (Registered Voters)
Margin of error: +/- 2.8%

Contest	Trump	Democratic Candidate	Other/Not Sure
Trump vs. Warren	39	37	26
Trump vs. Biden	37	41	22
Trump vs. Sanders	38	42	20
Trump vs. Harris	39	35	26
Trump vs. O'Rourke	37	43	20
Trump vs. Buttigieg	38	31	32

Senator John Cornyn, heading into the 2020 reelection cycle, is at 36 percent approval, with 30 percent disapproving and a sizable 35 percent answering, "Don't know." Between this week and last, the number of voters who are unsure about their opinion about Senator Cornyn has dropped 13 percent. This change is led by 10% more of the electorate who now approve and 3% who disapprove. Voters are certainly noticing the increased campaign activity related to the U.S. Senate campaign in Texas.

On issues, 55 percent of registered Texans support expanding "Medicare for all" (20% oppose it), particularly when private insurance plans are allowed. Nevertheless, expanding "Medicare for all" while eliminating private insurance plans is less popular (40% support eliminating private insurance, 33% oppose it). So, too, is the idea of decriminalizing unauthorized border crossings (33% either "somewhat" or "strongly" disapprove while 29% "somewhat" or "strongly" approve), an issue that continued to be spotlighted in July's Democratic debates.

This poll was conducted over a four-day period (08/01/19 – 08/04/19).

Methodology

Online

The UT Tyler-Texas Opinion Survey poll was also conducted using a Survey Sampling International panel of registered voters that opt-in to take surveys. This is known as Aristotle. The online panel generated a sample of 1261 registered Texas voters, 18 or older.

The data were weighted to be representative of Texas adults. The weighting balanced sample demographics to population parameters. The sample is balanced to match parameters for gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education using through an iterated process known as raking. These parameters were derived from 2016 Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Tables. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the characteristics of the sample closely reflect the characteristics of registered voters in Texas.

In this poll, the sampling error for 1261 registered voters in Texas is +/- 2.8 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.