

Florida Southern College  
Center for Polling and Policy Research

## **2020 Florida Democratic Primary Election Poll**

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## Executive Summary

As the nation's attention turns to the Florida primaries, our survey reveals a close fight between Joe Biden and Michael Bloomberg, with Bernie Sanders closely trailing the pair. Using live callers, the Florida Southern College Center for Polling and Policy Research conducted a telephone survey of registered, likely, Democratic primary voters across the state. This survey took place during the evenings of Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup> through Friday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, and elicited responses from 313 likely voters (translating into a margin of error of  $\pm 5.54$ ).

When asked the candidate they would select if the election were held today, 23 percent responded Bloomberg, 22 percent responded Biden, and 18 percent supported Sanders. Twelve percent of respondents supported Elizabeth Warren's campaign, 9 percent supported Buttigieg, and 5 percent supported Klobuchar. The numbers suggest Bloomberg has a considerable base of support in the state committed to voting for him in the primary, with Sanders, Biden, and Buttigieg attracting a number of supporters leaning toward voting for them on Election Day.

In addition to asking who voters would support if the election were held today, we also asked respondents to identify their second choice. As the Democratic primary shifts over the next several weeks, these responses may indicate how Florida voters could shift their alliances. Among voters who selected Biden as the candidate they would support if the election were held today, 23 percent identify Michael Bloomberg as their second choice, 19 percent choose Bernie Sanders, and 15 percent choose Amy Klobuchar. Among voters identifying Elizabeth Warren as their first choice, 31 percent identify Pete Buttigieg as their second choice, and 21 percent choose Bernie Sanders. Finally, among those voters who support Amy Klobuchar, 29 percent select Pete Buttigieg as their second choice, 22 percent select Joe Biden, and 15 percent identify Bernie Sanders as their next most preferred candidate.

## Acknowledgments

This survey would have never been possible without the dedication and professionalism of our call room employees: Esteban Cepero, Matthew Favillo, Hannah Flemming, Morgan McDermott, Carson Mitchell, Lexi Potter, Ingrid Ramirez, Julia Simpson, Kaitlynn Swanbeck, James Toy, Sergio Trevino-Rios, Shelby Welch, and Tyler Williams. All of the preceding individuals are current FSC students whose assistance made it possible to bring this study to fruition.

Special thanks are also due to the administration of Florida Southern College, specifically our President, Dr. Anne Kerr, our Provost, Dr. Brad Hollingshead, and the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Sara Fletcher Harding. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Department of History and Political Science, especially Dr. Kelly McHugh and Dr. R. Bruce Anderson, for their unflagging support and aid. I also want to thank Bill Rufty for his advice and assistance over the past several years and for reviewing this report. The survey would not have been possible without the dedication and support of FSC students, faculty, and administration.

The Florida Southern College Center for Polling and Policy Research operates to further the College's mission of preparing students through the use of dynamic and engaging learning opportunities. The College's generous funding of the Center makes it possible for students to gain valuable firsthand experience fielding surveys and analyzing results.

## Results

Twenty-two days before the Florida Democratic presidential primary election, three candidates are emerging as front-runners. When asked who they would support if the election were held today, 23 percent of respondents indicate they would cast a ballot for Michael Bloomberg, 22 percent would support Joe Biden, and 18 percent would vote for Bernie Sanders. Elizabeth Warren received the support of 12 percent of our respondents, Pete Buttigieg earned 9 percent, and Amy Klobuchar, Tulsi Gabbard, and Tom Steyer all earned five percent or less.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1:

If the election were being held today, which one of the following candidates would you support

Candidate	Percent
Michael Bloomberg	23
Joe Biden	22
Bernie Sanders	18
Elizabeth Warren	12
Pete Buttigieg	9
Amy Klobuchar	5
Tulsi Gabbard	0
Tom Steyer	0
Other	1
Don't Know	9

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

To examine the certainty associated with each respondent's choice, we ask if they definitely intend to vote for the candidate, will probably vote for the candidate, or are just leaning toward voting for the candidate. Table 2 reports the results of this question, with each line noting the percent of respondents choosing each of the three options. For example, for those who identify Joe Biden as their preferred candidate, 36 percent are definitely planning on voting for him, 22 percent are probably going to vote for him, and 42 percent are leaning toward voting for him.

Examining these data reveal four interesting trends. First, over half of those naming Michael Bloomberg as their first choice *definitely* plan on voting for him this March. No other candidate currently has over half of their respondents definitely planning on supporting them. Second, Elizabeth Warren's supporters are also confident they will vote for her on Election Day (84 percent answering they will *definitely* or *probably* vote for her). When combining these two categories, no other candidate enjoys this high level of support. Third, while Joe Biden is the first choice of 22 percent of Democratic voters contacted, among his supporters, only 36 percent are *definitely* planning on voting for him versus 42 percent, who are just *leaning* toward casting their ballot in his favor. Fourth, there is both a large portion of Bernie Sanders' supporters who are *definitely* planning on voting for him this March and an almost equally large

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics presented in this paper are rounded to the nearest whole number. Tables may not always add to 100 percent due to rounding.

portion *leaning* toward voting for him. Overall, this table suggests strength for some candidates with others holding only a loose grip on their supporters.

Table 2:  
Would you say that you are definitely, probably, or leaning toward voting for \_\_\_\_\_?

Candidate	Definitely Voting for...	Probably Voting for...	Leaning Toward Voting for...	Don't Know
Joe Biden	36	22	42	0
Michael Bloomberg	51	18	31	0
Pete Buttigieg	28	26	46	0
Tulsi Gabbard	--	--	--	--
Amy Klobuchar	26	38	35	0
Bernie Sanders	45	15	40	0
Tom Steyer	--	--	--	--
Elizabeth Warren	43	41	16	0
Don't Know	--	--	--	--
Other	--	--	--	--

Values not displayed for candidates earning less than 5% support. N = 313

Next, we ask respondents to indicate their second choice among the remaining candidates. Several candidates all receive more than 10 percent support from respondents, including Joe Biden (16 percent), Pete Buttigieg (14 percent), Michael Bloomberg (13 percent), Bernie Sanders (12 percent), Elizabeth Warren (12 percent), and Amy Klobuchar (11 percent). Overall, there is no consensus second choice.

Table 3 reports the relationship between the respondent's first and second choices. This is suggestive of who voters may choose if their first choice suspends their campaign, or otherwise becomes unviable. In Table 3, each row adds to 100 percent (not accounting for rounding). For example, among those identifying Joe Biden as their first choice, 23 percent select Michael Bloomberg as their second choice, 13 percent selected Pete Buttigieg, 15 percent selected Amy Klobuchar, 19 percent selected Bernie Sanders, 13 percent selected Elizabeth Warren, and 14 percent responded they don't know who their second choice candidate would be.

Four trends stand out in these results. First, Michael Bloomberg and Joe Biden seem to be attracting similar supporters. Twenty-three percent of Biden supporters choose Bloomberg second. Likewise, 37 percent of Bloomberg supporters indicate Biden as their second choice. Second, while Warren seems to benefit the most if Sanders withdraws from the race (37 percent say they would shift from Sanders to Warren), Buttigieg would likely win a more significant percentage of Warren voters (31 percent) if she withdraws compared to Sanders (21 percent). Third, if Buttigieg withdraws from the race, Bloomberg (36 percent) and Klobuchar (24 percent) appear to benefit the most. Finally, among Klobuchar supporters, 29 percent identify Buttigieg as their second choice, 22 percent indicate Biden, and 15 percent would prefer Sanders next. While some in

Florida are currently voting, the next several weeks should be informative as campaigns discover their viability moving forward.

Table 3:  
Respondent’s Second Choice Candidates

		<u>Second Choice Candidate</u>									
		Joe Biden	Michael Bloomberg	Pete Buttigieg	Tulsi Gabbard	Amy Klobuchar	Bernie Sanders	Tom Steyer	Elizabeth Warren	Don't Know	Other
First Choice Candidate	Joe Biden	0	23	13	0	15	19	0	13	14	4
	Michael Bloomberg	37	0	13	0	13	17	0	4	14	3
	Pete Buttigieg	14	36	0	0	24	9	5	12	0	0
	Tulsi Gabbard	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Amy Klobuchar	22	4	29	0	0	15	9	8	12	0
	Bernie Sanders	14	14	16	5	4	0	0	37	5	5
	Tom Steyer	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Elizabeth Warren	10	14	31	8	16	21	0	0	0	0
	Don't Know	11	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	86	0
	Other	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Values are not displayed for Gabbard, Steyer, and Other due to small sample sizes. N = 313

Finally, we ask respondents how important certain factors are to their decision of who to support in the upcoming primary. Specifically, we ask how important it is the respondent choose the candidate with the best chance of defeating Donald Trump, with the most political experience, who will best support members of racial or ethnic minorities, who will best support women, who will create a strong economy, and who will disrupt the current political and economic order. We ask respondents to indicate how important each of these factors is to their voting decisions on a scale from zero to ten and report the averages received in the top-line results and Table 4.

Overall, disrupting the current political and economic order was the least important issues (overall average of 7.51), followed by choosing the candidate with the most political experience (7.27), who will best support members of racial or ethnic minorities (8.71), who will create a strong economy (8.81), who has the best chance of defeating Donald Trump (8.99), and who will best support women (9.03). Supporting women and defeating Donald Trump are the first and second most pressing issues—of the topics included here—selected by respondents.

Table 4 reports the average responses given to each of these prompts by the respondent’s first choice of who to support in the election. While defeating Donald Trump is popular across the supporters of each candidate, it is less popular among those who select Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders as the candidate they would support if the election were held today. This table provides insight into the values of each candidate’s supporters. Bloomberg supporters, for example, value defeating Trump, creating a strong economy, and supporting women most. Among all but two (Biden and Warren), defeating Donald Trump in the upcoming presidential election receives the most support. Supporting women is also a high shared priority, appearing second among supporters of almost all candidates and first among Biden and Warren voters.

Table 4:  
How important is it to you to select the candidate with...

	Joe Biden	Michael Bloomberg	Pete Buttigieg	Tulsi Gabbard	Amy Klobuchar	Bernie Sanders	Tom Steyer	Elizabeth Warren	Don't Know	Other
Defeating Trump	9.22	9.54	9.39	--	9.83	8.85	--	7.81	8.44	--
Political Experience	8.14	7.47	5.76	--	6.27	7.27	--	6.53	7.78	--
Racial/Ethnic Minorities	8.81	8.53	8.14	--	8.65	8.84	--	8.98	9.05	--
Support Women	9.32	9.06	8.63	--	9.04	8.67	--	9.05	9.46	--
Strong Economy	8.87	9.28	8.18	--	8.25	8.82	--	8.67	8.68	--
Disrupt Pol/Econ Order	7.85	7.71	6.73	--	6.94	8.18	--	7.17	6.94	--

Values are not displayed for Gabbard, Steyer, and Other due to small sample sizes. N = 313

The following pages describe the methodology employed in conducting this study as well as the questions used and top-line results.

## Methodology

The 2020 Florida Democratic Primary Election Poll was conducted from Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup> through Friday, February 21<sup>st</sup> by live callers employed by the Florida Southern College Center for Polling and Policy Research. All callers are current students at Florida Southern College and received training before beginning work. Additionally, the survey instrument was precleared by the Institutional Review Board at Florida Southern College before implementation. The questionnaire was administered in both English and Spanish, with calls taking place from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. daily to a randomly selected sample of registered Democrats in the state of Florida. The sampling process was conducted by Dynata and included a randomized draw of both landline and mobile phone numbers. The Florida Southern College Center for Polling and Policy Research funded this survey through the generosity of the College.

We received valid responses from 329 registered Democratic voters over the campaign, 313 of whom were evaluated to be likely voters.<sup>2</sup> Only likely voters are used in these analyses. The margin of sampling error for this poll is 5.54. That means that in 19 out of 20 times, the results would vary no more than 5.54 percentage points if every one of the more than 4.7 million registered voters in the state had been contacted. The margin of error will be higher for subsamples of these data.

In addition to sampling error variables such as nonresponse, question-wording, context effects, or news events that occur during the time of the survey could affect opinions. Survey weights are generated to correct for deviations between our sample's characteristics and the known population characteristics of the state's registered voters and the eligible voting population. To correct for nonresponse bias, these data are weighted based on the age and gender of our respondents. A raking approach is used to generate each weight, and information about the population's characteristics are also obtained from Dynata. The analysis was conducted using the R statistical environment and the 'survey' library.

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents are asked how likely they are to participate in the upcoming presidential primary election on a scale from zero to ten. Likely voters are those responding with values over five or indicating they have already cast their ballot.

## Top-Line Results

**Note:** All cells are percent values and are weighted by the age and the self-reported gender of the respondent. Due to rounding, not all tables will add to 100 percent. Screening questions are omitted from the following summary.

Question 1: I am going to read you a list of the candidates currently running for the Democratic nomination. If the election were being held today, which one of the following candidates would you support: Joe Biden, Michael Bloomberg, Pete Buttigieg, Tulsi Gabbard, Amy Klobuchar, Bernie Sanders, Tom Steyer, or Elizabeth Warren.

*Note: The order in which the names were presented to respondents was randomly determined. The table is sorted according to the support received.*

Candidate	Percent
Michael Bloomberg	23
Joe Biden	22
Bernie Sanders	18
Elizabeth Warren	12
Pete Buttigieg	9
Amy Klobuchar	5
Tulsi Gabbard	0
Tom Steyer	0
Other	1
Don't Know	9

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 2: Would you say that you are definitely going to vote for \_\_\_\_\_, probably going to vote for \_\_\_\_\_, or just leaning toward voting for \_\_\_\_\_?

	Percent
Definitely Voting for...	38
Probably Voting for...	21
Leaning Toward Voting for...	35
Don't Know	6

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 3: And which of the remaining candidates would be your second choice?

*Note: The table is sorted according to the support received.*

Candidate	Percent
Joe Biden	16
Pete Buttigieg	14
Michael Bloomberg	13
Bernie Sanders	12
Elizabeth Warren	12
Amy Klobuchar	11
Tulsi Gabbard	2
Tom Steyer	1
Other	3
Don't Know	16

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 4: And regardless of how you intend to vote in this upcoming primary election, which Democratic candidate do you believe has the best chance of winning against Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election?

*Note: The table is sorted according to the support received.*

Candidate	Percent
Michael Bloomberg	27
Bernie Sanders	22
Joe Biden	21
Pete Buttigieg	5
Elizabeth Warren	5
Amy Klobuchar	3
Tulsi Gabbard	0
Tom Steyer	0
Other	2
Don't Know	15

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 5: I'm going to ask you how important certain factors are to your decision of whom to support in next month's primary election. Please respond using a scale from 0 to 10, with zero meaning not at all important and ten meaning very important. You may choose any number from 0 to 10. How important is it to you to select the candidate...

	Mean/Average
...with the best chance of defeating Donald Trump?	8.99
...with the most political experience?	7.27
...who will best support members of racial or ethnic minorities?	8.71
...who will best support women?	9.03
...who will create a strong economy?	8.81
...who will disrupt the current political and economic order?	7.51

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 6: What is your age?

*If the respondent is hesitant, prompt with: Are you between 18 and 24 years old, 25 and 34, 35 and 44, 45 and 54, 55 and 64, 65 and 74, or over 74 years old?*

	Percent
18-24	6
25-34	10
35-44	15
45-54	16
55-64	19
65-74	19
75+	15
Refused	< 1

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 7: How would you identify your gender?

*If the respondent is hesitant, prompt with: Would you identify yourself as Male, Female, or Non-Binary?*

	Percent
Male	42
Female	58
Non-Binary	0
Refused	< 1

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 8: Thinking about the highest educational degree that you have completed, would you say that you have completed high school, completed college, completed graduate school, attended vocational or technical school, or none of these?

	Percent
High School	27
College	38
Graduate School	24
Vocational/Technical School	9
None of These	1
Refused	1

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*

Question 9: Finally, for statistical purposes, would you primarily identify yourself as: Asian, African American or Black, White or Caucasian, Hispanic or Latino, or something else?

	Percent
Asian	2
African American/Black	22
Caucasian/White	60
Hispanic/Latino	11
Other	4
Refused	1

*N = 313; Margin of Error ±5.54*