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NBC News/Marist Poll

Biden Edges Sanders in South Carolina

For Immediate Release

This NBC News/Marist Poll Reports:

In the South Carolina presidential primary for the Democratic nomination, Joe Biden (27%) narrowly bests Bernie Sanders (23%) among likely Democratic primary voters including those who are undecided yet leaning toward a candidate or who have already voted. Tom Steyer receives 15% of the likely Democratic electorate. No other candidate in the field achieves double-digit support. 27% of likely Democratic primary voters remain persuadable, that is those who are undecided or who may change their minds prior to the primary.

“South Carolina closes the chapter on the first phase of the presidential sweepstakes,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. “Will Biden come off the canvas? Will Sanders continue his charge to Super Tuesday? Will someone else emerge as a top tier candidate? South Carolina voters hold the answers.”

SC Likely Democratic Primary Voters

If the Democratic presidential primary in South Carolina were held today, whom would you support if the candidates are: [If undecided: If you had to decide today, are you leaning more towards:] [If already voted: Whom did you support in the Democratic presidential primary in South Carolina?]

	February 2020
Joe Biden	27%
Bernie Sanders	23%
Tom Steyer	15%
Pete Buttigieg	9%
Elizabeth Warren	8%
Amy Klobuchar	5%
Tulsi Gabbard	3%
Other	2%
Undecided	9%

NBC News/Marist Poll SC Likely Democratic Primary Voters

Biden outpaces his competitors by double digits among likely Democratic primary voters who identify as moderate, who are African American, or who are age 45 or older. Among moderates,

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Biden (38%) is out in front of Sanders (15%) and Steyer (15%) by 23 percentage points. Biden is ahead of Sanders by 15 points among African American voters. Here, Biden has 35% to 20% for Sanders. Steyer garners 19% of likely Democratic voters who are African American. Among voters who are age 45 or older, Biden (34%) enjoys a 16-point lead over Steyer (18%). Among women, Biden (28%) has an 8-point advantage over Sanders (20%).

In contrast, Sanders (34%) has a 14-point lead over Biden (20%) among likely Democratic primary voters who self-identify as progressive. Steyer receives 16% of these voters while Warren has 13%. Sanders (40%) leads Biden (14%) and Warren (14%) by 26 points among likely Democratic primary voters who are under the age of 45. Among likely Democratic primary voters who are white, Sanders (26%) has an 8-point lead over Biden (18%). Buttigieg receives the support of 17% of white voters who are likely to cast a ballot in the Democratic primary. Sanders (26%) and Biden (25%) are statistically tied among men.

Six in ten likely Democratic primary voters with a candidate preference (60%) say they strongly support their choice of candidate. Sanders' supporters (72%) are the most committed to their candidate selection. 61% of Biden's backers and 60% of Steyer's supporters say the same.

South Carolinians likely to vote in the Democratic primary divide. 47% think it is more important to have a nominee that comes closer to their views on the issues, and 44% say it is more important to have a nominee who can defeat President Donald Trump in the general election. Moderates (51%) are more likely to favor electability while 41% see issues as their priority. 49% of progressives are more likely to say a candidate's position on the issues is the priority, and 43% consider electability to be more important.

Biden (35%) leads Sanders (17%) among likely Democratic primary voters who consider electability to be more important while Sanders (29%) is ahead of Biden (18%) among those who think a candidate's position on the issues is more important.

President Trump's job approval rating stands at 51% among South Carolina residents. This includes 39% of residents who strongly approve of how Trump is doing his job. 41% of adults statewide disapprove of the president's performance in office, including 30% who strongly disapprove.

As a result of November's elections, a majority of registered voters in South Carolina (53%) say they would prefer a Congress controlled by Republicans. 35% report they would prefer a Congress with the Democrats at the helm.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham is well-positioned in his re-election bid. 54% of registered voters in South Carolina support Graham while 37% back his likely Democratic challenger Jaime Harrison. Two percent supports another candidate, and 7% are undecided. Six years

ago, Graham won the state by 16 points, 55% to 39%.