Topline Results

Rethink Priorities is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)3 policy think tank that does polling and policy analysis. Rethink Priorities is not funded by any candidate or political party committee and does not poll on behalf of any political candidate or party. This poll was conducted out of general interest, to test Rethink Priorities's capabilities to accurately poll and forecast policies of interest.

48% approval, 37% disapproval

A national poll of adults found that **Joe Biden (D) has 47.6% approval and 36.9% disapproval rate, for a +10.7 net approval rating.** 15.5% of adults did not have an opinion. The poll sampled 1962 Americans and was adjusted to match a US nationally representative likely voter electorate by weighing on race, age, gender, education, income, socioeconomic status, region, 2016 Presidential vote, 2020 Presidential vote, and religious attitudes. The raw margin of error is +/-3 points with 95% confidence.

The poll was conducted as an online survey via Prolific, on Saturday, 6 March 2021. Notably this was before the distribution of checks from the 2021 COVID relief bill.

Rethink Priorities National Biden Approval Poll

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RETHINK PRIORITIES

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Methods

Survey Deployment

This poll was conducted entirely on Prolific, an online platform where people are recruited and paid to complete surveys. The platform is non-political and non-partisan.

The survey was live on 6 March 2021.

Our survey was advertised to participants on the platform as “A Survey about Attitudes” with the description “In this survey you will be asked a number of questions regarding your attitudes to certain policy proposals. You will also be asked some basic demographic information.” The nature of the survey was not disclosed any further, so we would not expect any additional selection bias in who takes the poll, beyond the bias already present in using an online platform like Prolific.

Only Americans were allowed to take our survey, and we paid an average hourly rate of $11.30. This is normal for Prolific.

Quality Filtering

Online surveys do not always produce accurate information - sometimes participants could be deliberately dishonest or otherwise low quality to the extent where it is best to remove them when conducting with analysis. In this survey, we removed 567 such people.

We started with 2000 possible responses. 8 responses were removed for being duplicates or invalid as determined by Prolific's internal ID system.

33 responses were removed because when asked "How honestly have you answered these questions?" at the very end of the survey, they replied "Not honestly at all" or "Somewhat honestly" instead of "Very honestly" or "Completely honestly" (see Robinson-Cimpian, 2014).

One response was removed because they failed an attention check - when asked "Which of the following social networks, if any, do you use?", they indicated that they used a social media program that did not exist (there was one such program, "Yapyap" on the list - the list contained 5 real programs).

3 responses were removed due to failing a multiple low incidence check (see Lopez and Hillygus, 2018) which uses probability methods to screen for respondents dishonestly entering in unlikely information. This was done using the survey_dud_detector Python package developed by Peter Hurford at Rethink Priorities.

After all of this quality filtering, there were 1962 remaining responses.

Demographic Weighting

Surveys only capture a sample of the population, so we know that the result probably won't exactly match the "true" result that we would get if we surveyed everyone in the population or that we would expect to see on election day.

The margin of sampling error describes how close we can reasonably expect a survey result to fall relative to the true population value. A margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level means that if we fielded the same survey 100 times, we would expect the result to be within 3 percentage points of the true population value 95 of those times.

Without adjustment, surveys tend to overrepresent people who are easier to reach and underrepresent those types of people who are harder to reach. In order to make the results more representative we weight the data so that it matches the population – based on a number of demographic measures. Weighting is a crucial step for avoiding biased results, but it also has the effect of making the margin of error larger. Using US Census data, we can get a rough sense of the proportions of gender, race, and age we would expect to see in our sample.

We used the surveyweights Python package developed by Peter Hurford at Rethink Priorities to create weights to adjust for race, age, gender, education, income, socioeconomic status, region, 2016 Presidential vote, 2020 Presidential vote, and religious attitudes. These weights were used to upsample and downsample responses accordingly to produce results that would end up matching the US Census data. All data to form weights, and sourcing for that information, is contained within the publicly available source code for the package.

Appendix 1: Code

Rethink Priorities values transparency and invites scrutiny of its methods. The code and data for all our data quality filtering, demographic weighting, likely voter weighting, and electoral modeling is available publicly on GitHub under an MIT license.