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WITH CHRIS CILLIZZA

Andrew Yang is the hottest 2020 candidate this side of Elizabeth Warren right now

Analysis by [Chris Cillizza](#), CNN Editor-at-large
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(CNN) — A viral crowd surfing video. A massive — and growing — online support network. [Steady polling progress](#). And a promise of “something big in store” for Thursday night’s Democratic presidential debate.

The current reality of the 2020 presidential race is this: Aside from Elizabeth Warren (and her surge into second place behind Joe Biden), there is no candidate with more momentum and buzz than [Andrew Yang](#) headed into tonight’s third debate.



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Which is, if you stop and think about things for 30 seconds, a pretty remarkable statement. Yang started the 2020 presidential race as a total and complete unknown, having never run for elected office ever before. He was polling at 0% because, well, he was a total and complete unknown.

His platform — focused on the dangers posed by our rapidly automating society — was different than what any of the other candidates were talking about. His central idea to offer a \$1,000 universal basic income to every person 18 or older in the country was dismissed as unworkable and crazy.

And yet, Yang will be one of the 10 candidates on stage in Houston for the third debate of the 2020 Democratic primary. He has outlasted much more established political figures like Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (New York), Gov. Jay Inslee (Washington) and former Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper — all of whom have left the race amid fundraising problems and disappointing poll numbers.

And at least at the moment, Yang finds himself firmly in the second tier — with Sen. Kamala Harris (Calif.) and South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg (Indiana) — slightly above bigger names (in politics) at least like Beto O’Rourke and Cory Booker.

How? Good question, without an easy and obvious answer!

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<https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/12/politics/andrew-yang-democrats-2020/index.html>

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