



# AMERICANS WANT A PROGRESSIVE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

December 2020



Last month, former Vice President Joe Biden was elected in a decisive victory over President Donald Trump in a sharp rebuke to the outgoing incumbent. Reversing the catastrophic damage of the last four years will be a monumental task. Moreover, the Biden administration must address the ongoing twin crises of the pandemic and economic crisis — and fix the underlying structures of our government, economy, and society to reverse a decades-long trajectory of increasing inequality and fraying social fabric. In the face of Republican obstruction in Congress, how the President-elect composes his administration will be of particular importance in determining whether he will stand a chance of achieving these aims. The team Biden is organizing — and what they do or do not accomplish over the next two years — will help determine if the voters who put him in office remain mobilized and willing to vote for Democrats in 2022 and beyond.

There's little doubt that Biden eschewing corporate lobbyists and executives from his administration would stand to shore up his base of support. In fact, closing the revolving door between the private sector and government office would allow him to make inroads with the people who *didn't* vote for him, too. In a polarized political environment, Biden has a rare opportunity to bridge the partisan divide by excluding corporate lobbyists and executives from his administration in favor of individuals committed to advancing the interests of working families.

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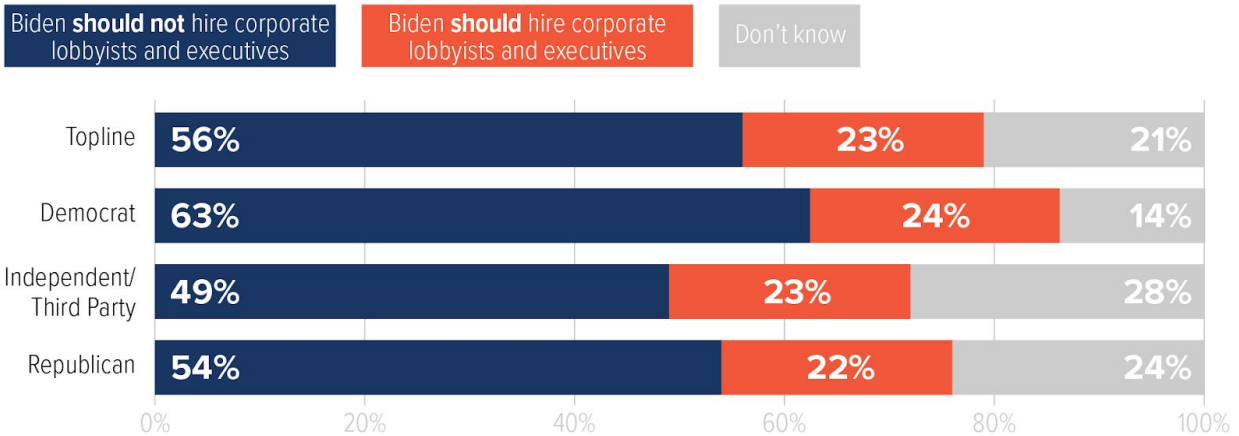
## Americans Want A Corporate-Free Biden Administration

A Demand Progress [poll conducted](#) October 28th to October 29th found wide appeal across partisan lines for Biden committing to an administration free of influence from corporate actors. In one instance, respondents were asked about their views on whether or not Biden should appoint corporate lobbyists and executives to his administration. Across party lines, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that Biden should avoid appointing such figures to his administration because of the dangers posed by the revolving door between government and the private sector.

A firm majority (56 percent) of respondents across party lines opposed appointing such senior corporate alumni because doing so is likely to tilt policies away from those that benefit working families, in contrast to a mere 23 percent who felt that such figures ought to be appointed. A majority of respondents affiliated with the Democratic (63 percent) or Republican (54 percent) parties agreed that Biden should avoid appointing corporate lobbyists and executives. Only 24 percent and 22 percent, respectively, believed a prospective appointee's private sector experience in the industry they would be regulating is a positive.



**If Joe Biden is elected President, when thinking about how he should staff his administration, what comes closer to your view?**

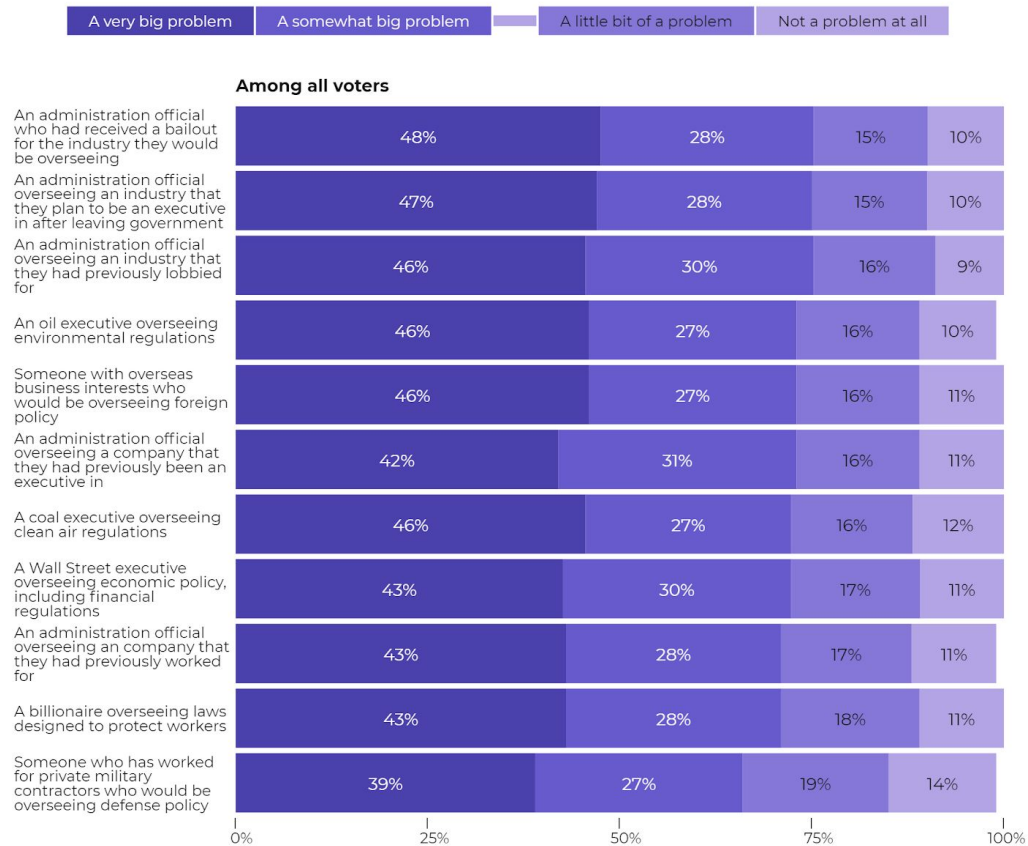


DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

The public opposition to appointees with senior private sector backgrounds set to regulate the same industries they previously worked in was also reflected in a [Demand Progress and Data for Progress poll](#) conducted in June 2020. In the poll, the majority of respondents conveyed concern about public officials tasked with overseeing the regulation of industries they had worked in and the revolving door between government and the private sector.

## Most Voters Think It Is A Problem That Government Officials Go To Work In Industries They Regulated

Thinking of the administrations of a Trump or Biden administration, how concerned would you be about the following: --



Data for Progress

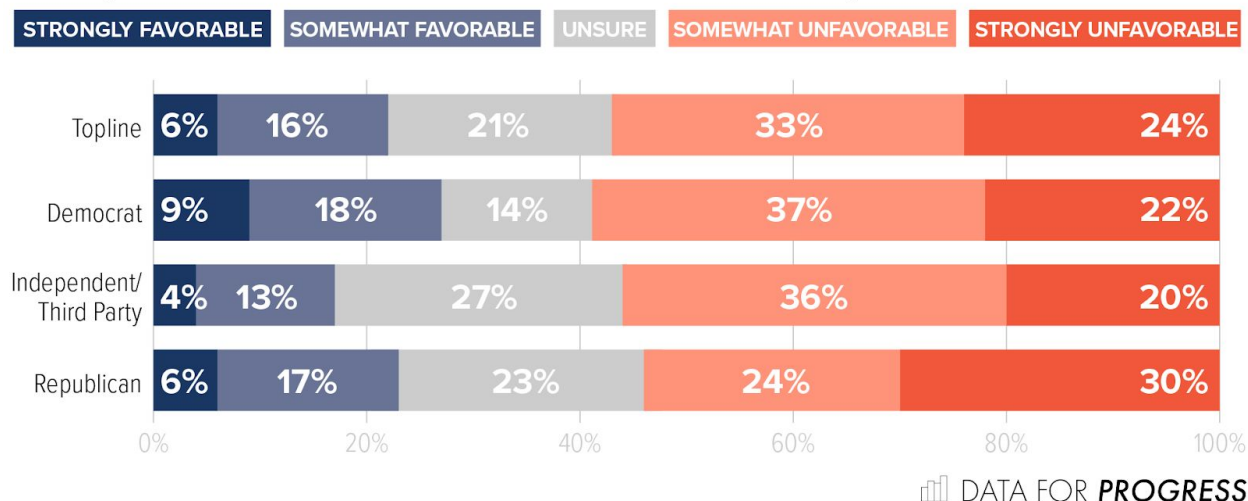
DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

Additionally, respondents in the October Demand Progress poll were asked how Biden hiring “many” corporate executives and lobbyists for positions in his administration would impact their opinions of the President-elect. Across the board, respondents indicated their opinion of Biden would suffer, with 57 percent of respondents indicating they would view Biden “somewhat” or “strongly” more unfavorably. Only 22 percent indicated it would raise their opinion to the incoming President.



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Donald Trump has been criticized for hiring too many corporate executives and lobbyists. If Joe Biden is elected President and also hires many corporate executives and lobbyists, would you see him in a more favorable or an unfavorable way?



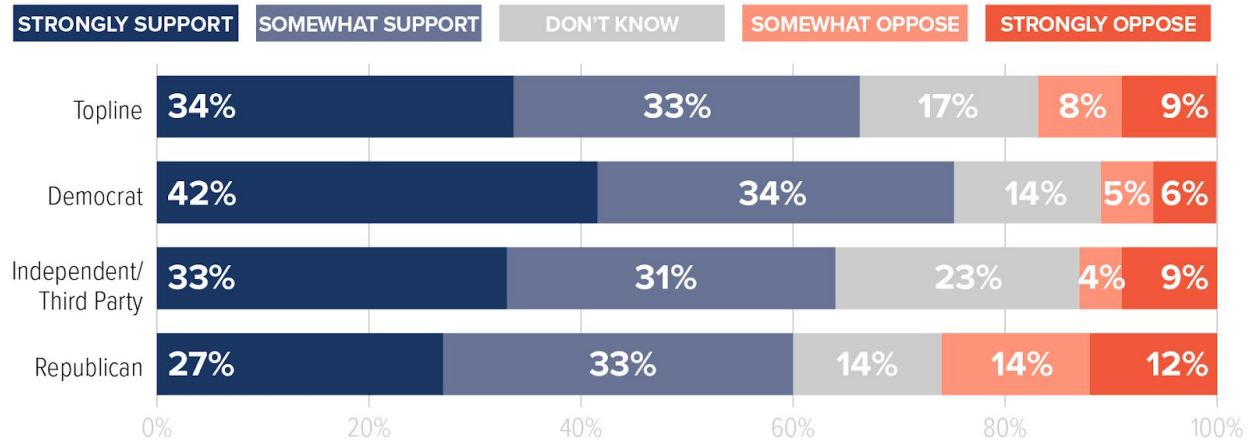
Preventing the Democratic coalition from fracturing will be key for the party's prospects in the 2022 midterms and beyond. As such, the fact 59 percent of Democrats polled indicated their opinion of Biden would sour if he appoints a many corporate executives and lobbyists to his administration illustrates the politically detrimental impact of doing so.

### Americans Want To Reject Corporate Influence

Additionally, respondents were asked whether Biden should compose his administration “without relying on executives and lobbyists from big corporations” because these actors “have too much political influence and the revolving door between the private and public sector is corrupt and dangerous”. A colossal majority across party lines (67 percent) indicated that they agreed the revolving door between government and the private sector is “corrupt and dangerous”. Even a wide majority (60 percent) of Republican respondents agreed with the dangers of the revolving door.

## DEMAND PROGRESS

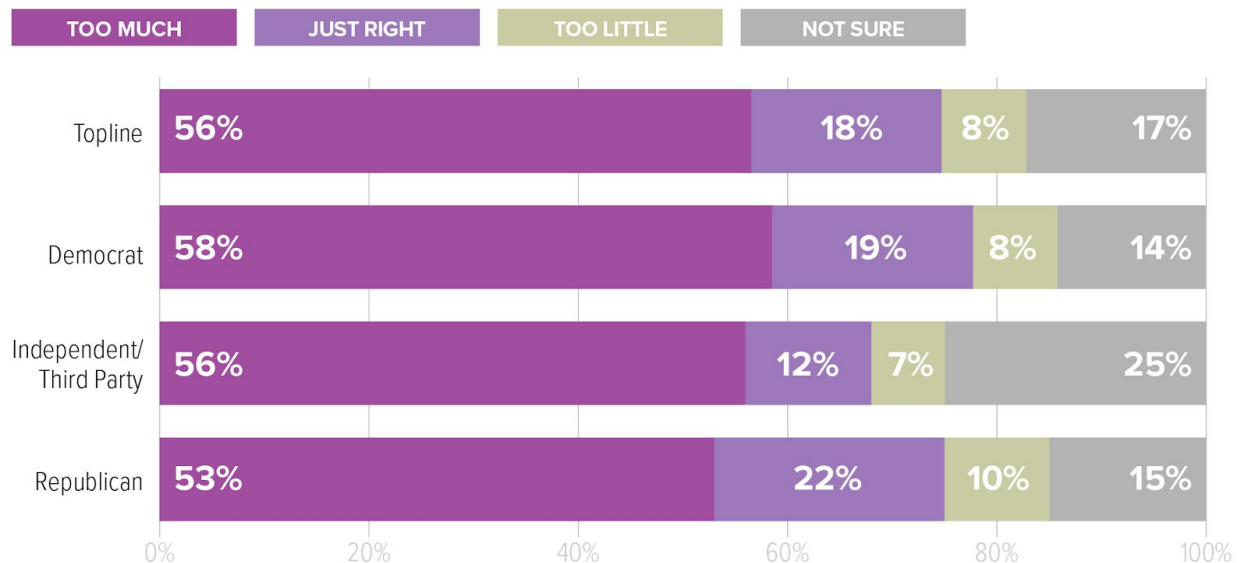
**Say whether you agree or disagree: Biden should build his administration without relying on executives and lobbyists from big corporations because those groups have too much political influence and the revolving door between the private and public sector is corrupt and dangerous**



DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

From September 25th to September 26th, Demand Progress conducted polling to find out which powerful interests voters were most concerned about influencing policy matters. Across the board, respondents indicated they were concerned about the influence of lobbyists on crafting state policy, with 58 percent of Democrats and 53 percent of Republicans believing lobbyists hold "too much" influence over policy. It's clear the President-elect would be well-advised to avoid filling key posts in his administration choosing individuals with histories as career lobbyists for.

**Thinking about different groups, do you think each group has too much, too little, or about the right influence over government policy? (Lobbyists)**

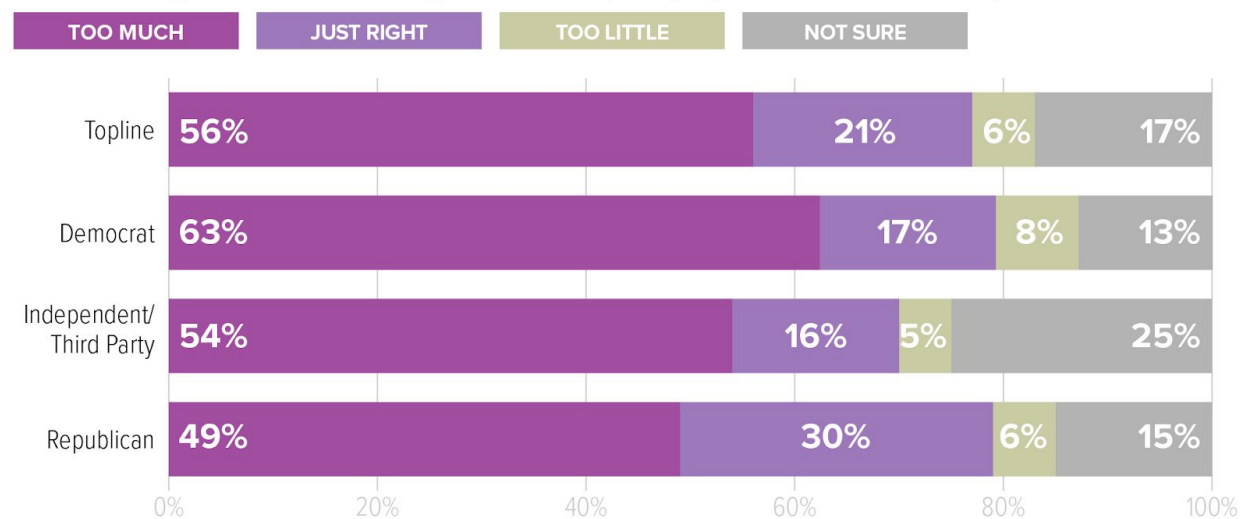


DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

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Given the extent of the current economic crisis, it's unsurprising voters across partisan lines feared Wall Street executives hold too much sway in the policy-making process. Though Americans are divided on many issues, the topic of Wall Street executives' influence on government policy is not one of them. 56% of respondents indicated they felt the group holds "too much influence" over stated policy. Even 49% of Republicans indicated concern there was too much influence from Wall Street executives over government policy, leading those believing Wall Street had the right amount or too little influence by a wide 15 percent margin. The polling illustrates clearly that it would be politically wise for Biden to avoid appointing former Wall Street executives to crucial positions in his administration.

**Thinking about different groups, do you think each group has too much, too little, or about the right influence over government policy? (Wall Street executives)**

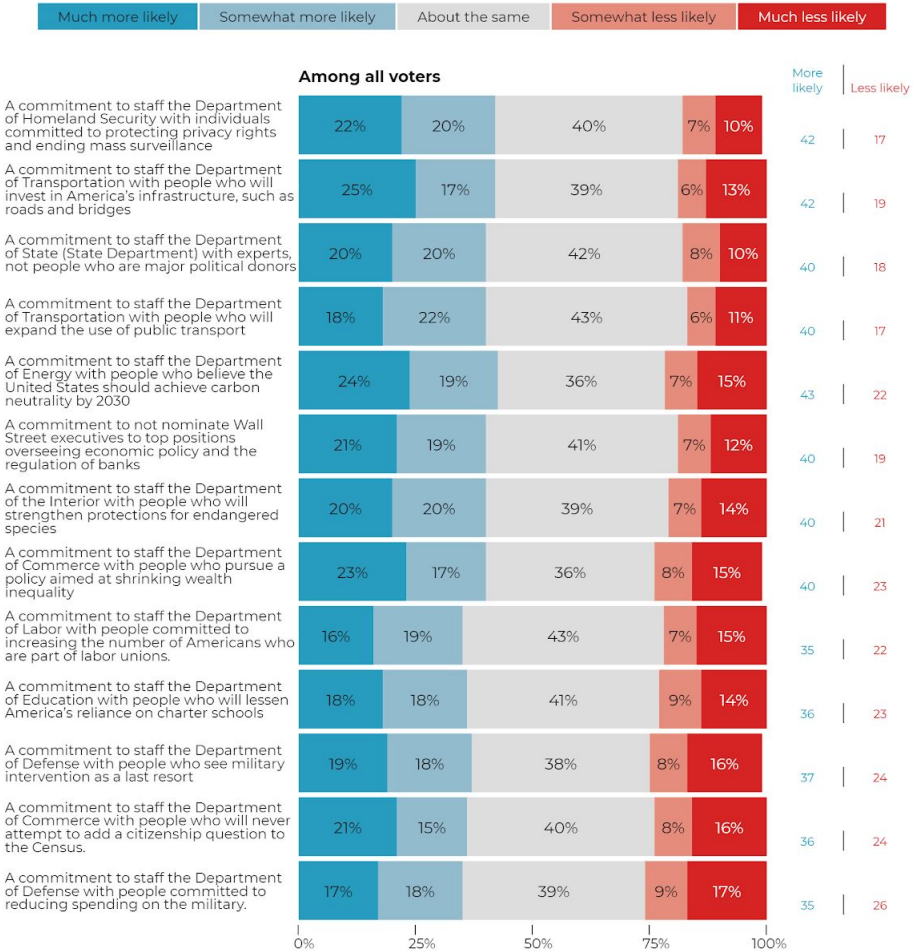


 DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

Polling by Data for Progress conducted in June 2020 found 40 percent of respondents indicated they would be more likely to vote for Biden had the then-candidate committed to not nominate Wall Street executives to economic positions tasked with economic policy and banking regulations. A mere 19 percent indicated it would have made them less likely to support Biden.

## Biden Committing To Building A Progressive Cabinet Wins Him The Support Of Voters

If Joe Biden made the following commitments, how would that impact the likelihood that you would vote for him for President? --



Data for Progress

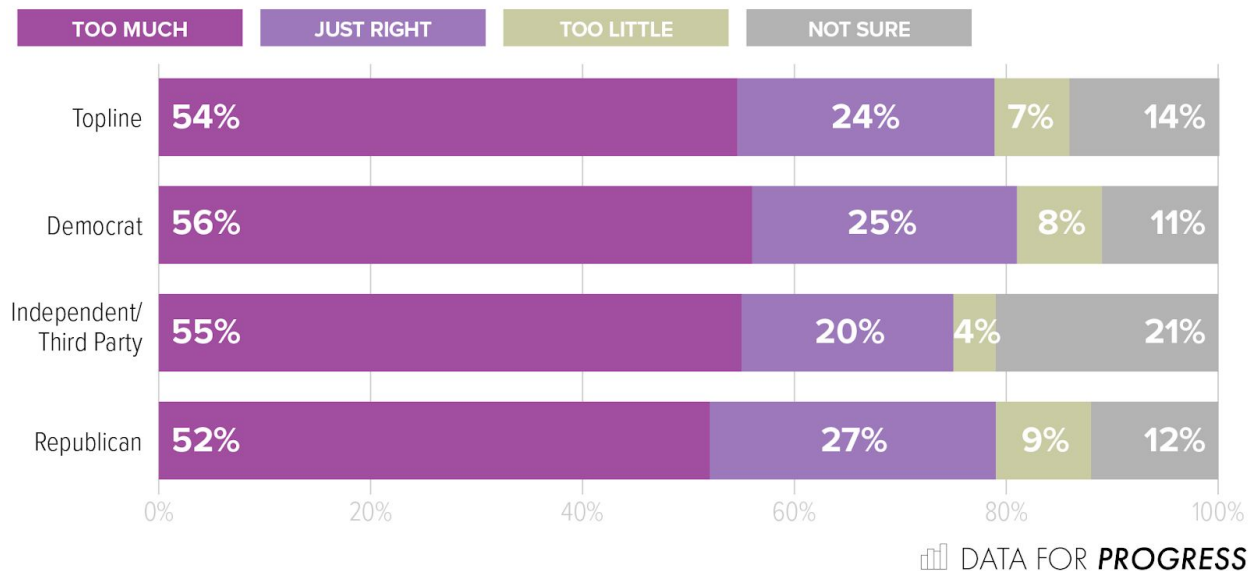
DATA FOR PROGRESS

Large technology companies have been the target of scrutiny for anti-competitive businesses in recent years, Respondents were asked for their opinion on the influence of large technology companies like Amazon and Google on government policy. Across party lines, a firm majority of those polled indicated concern about the influence of large technological companies on the policy-making process. The majority of Democrats (56), Republicans (52), and political independents (55) polled displayed serious concern about the influence of these companies and indicated they believe companies like Amazon and Google have too much influence on government policy.



## DEMAND PROGRESS

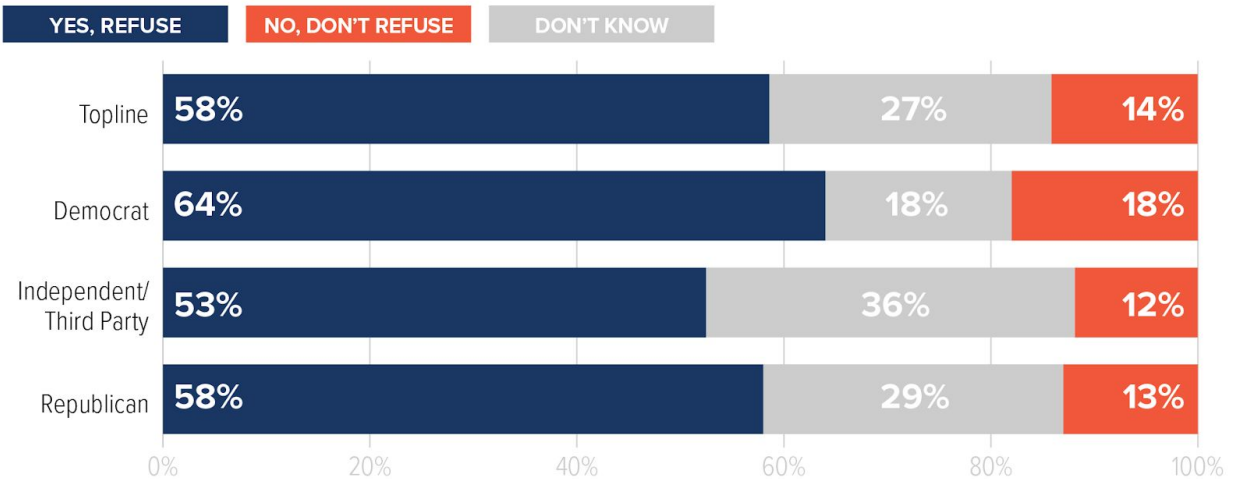
Thinking about different groups, do you think each group has too much, too little, or about the right influence over government policy? (Executives of large tech companies)



Given the ongoing state and federal investigations into large technology companies and the commencement of an [antitrust lawsuit against Google](#), it's clear Biden choosing alumni of large technology companies for positions in his administration would prove ethically fraught and politically detrimental. Indeed, polling taken in late October by Demand Progress also found a firm majority of voters from across the partisan divide agreed Biden "should refuse to appoint executives, lobbyists, or lawyers for [large technological companies facing federal investigation] to positions of power or influence in his administration while this legal activity is pending?"

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Big tech companies are currently being sued or investigated by the Department of Justice and state attorneys general for engaging in illegal, anticompetitive behavior. If Joe Biden wins the presidential election, do you think he should refuse to appoint executives, lobbyists, or lawyers for these companies to positions of power or influence in his administration while this legal activity is pending?

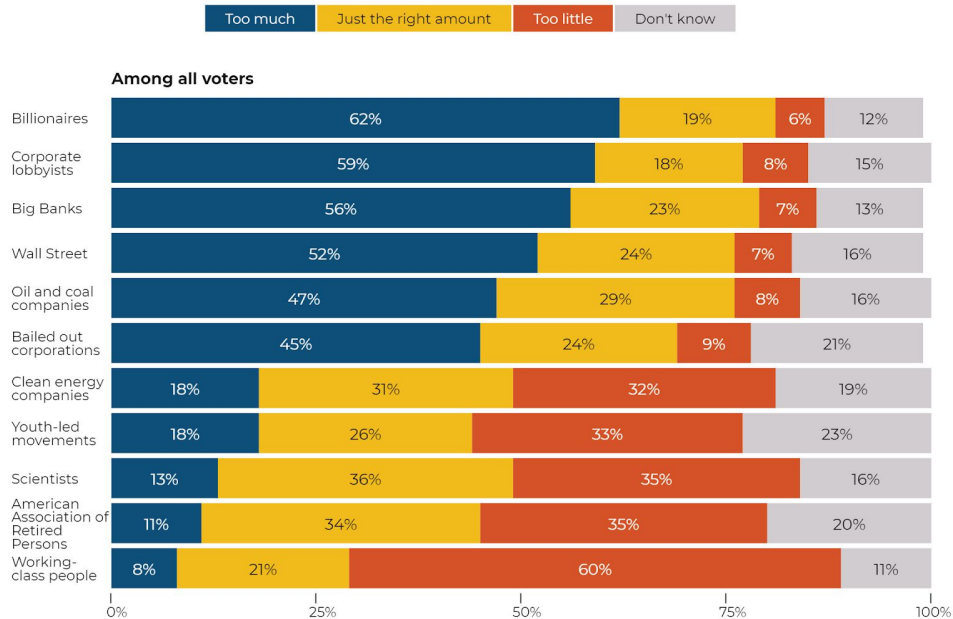


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These results largely align with the findings of a poll from Data for Progress in [June](#), which asked respondents about their opinion on the influence of many powerful interests. In the poll, a majority of respondents indicated their concern that Wall Street and corporate lobbyists have “too much” influence over government policy, with a plurality indicating they felt the same about oil and coal companies.

## Voters Think Billionaires, Corporate Lobbyists, And Big Banks Have Too Much Influence Over The Government

Thinking about different groups, do you think each group has too much, too little or about the right influence over government policy? --



Data for Progress

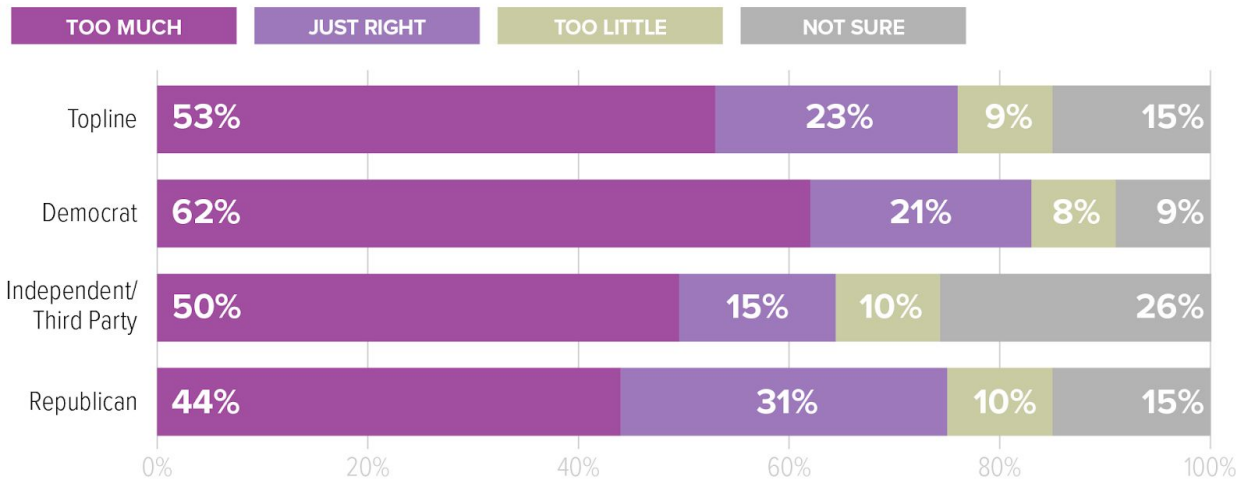
DATA FOR PROGRESS

The question of whether oil and gas executives have too much influence in policy-making was posed to respondents again in September. Given the scale of the climate crisis, it's of little surprise that respondents across party lines indicated their concern about the influence of natural gas executives over federal policy.

A firm majority (53 percent) of those surveyed indicated they believed oil and gas executives hold too much influence in the policy-making process compared to just 9 percent who believed they hold too little influence. Not only did 62 percent of Democrats agree oil and gas executives hold too much influence over government policy, a plurality (44 percent) of Republican respondents did as well. The bipartisan opposition illustrates here is little benefit for Biden to appoint oil and gas executives to his administration.



Thinking about different groups, do you think each group has too much, too little, or about the right influence over government policy? (Executives of oil and gas companies)

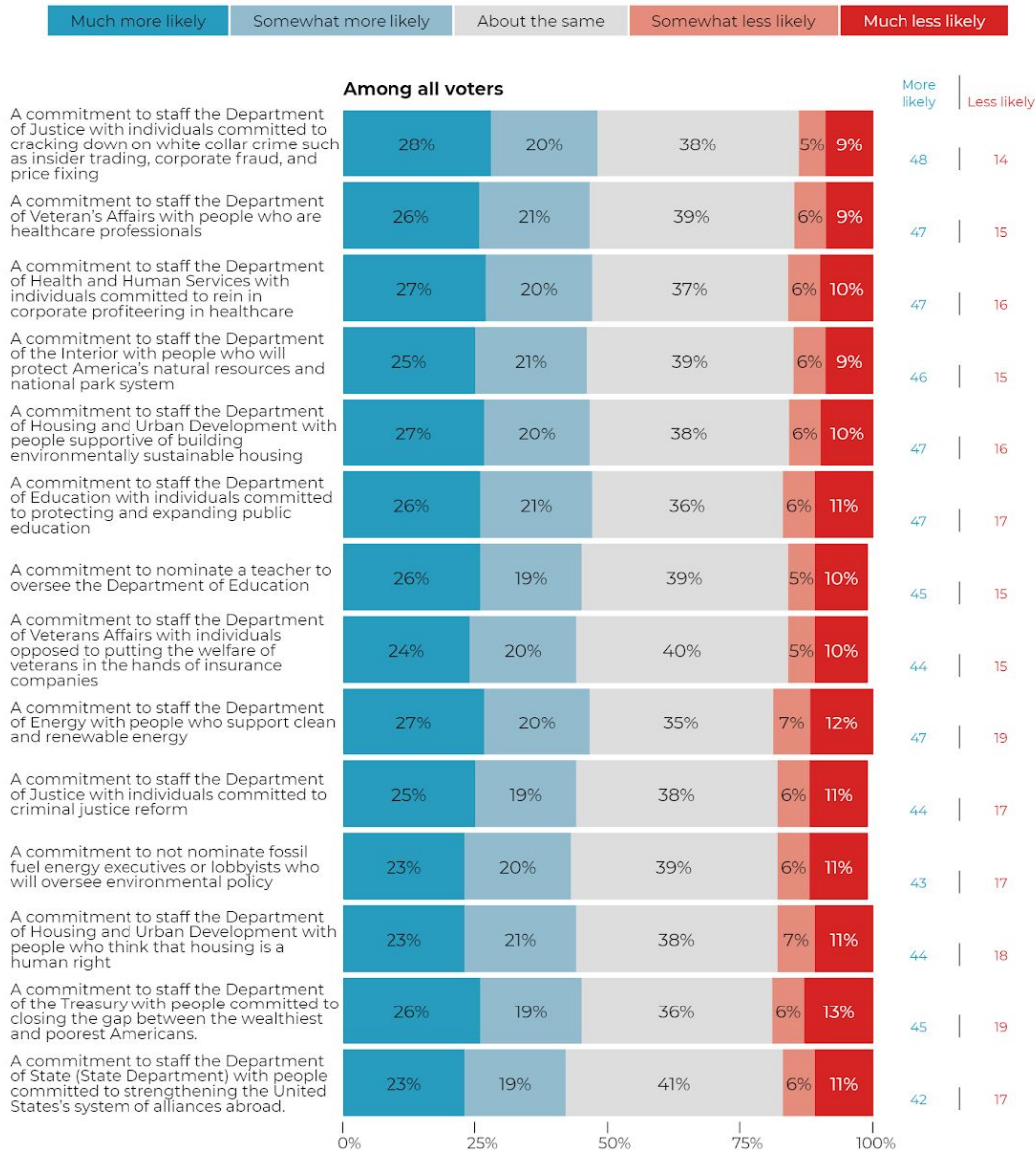


DATA FOR **PROGRESS**

Polling by Data for Progress conducted in June 2020 found a plurality of respondents would have been more likely to vote for then-candidate Biden if he committed to not nominate fossil fuel executives or lobbyists to positions overseeing environmental policy. Voters across party lines are concerned about the influence of the oil and gas industry on public policy, and it's clear that Biden would politically benefit from not choosing alumni of the fossil fuel industry for positions in his administration.

## Biden Committing To Building A Progressive Cabinet Wins Him The Support Of Voters

If Joe Biden made the following commitments, how would that impact the likelihood that you would vote for him for President? --



Data for Progress

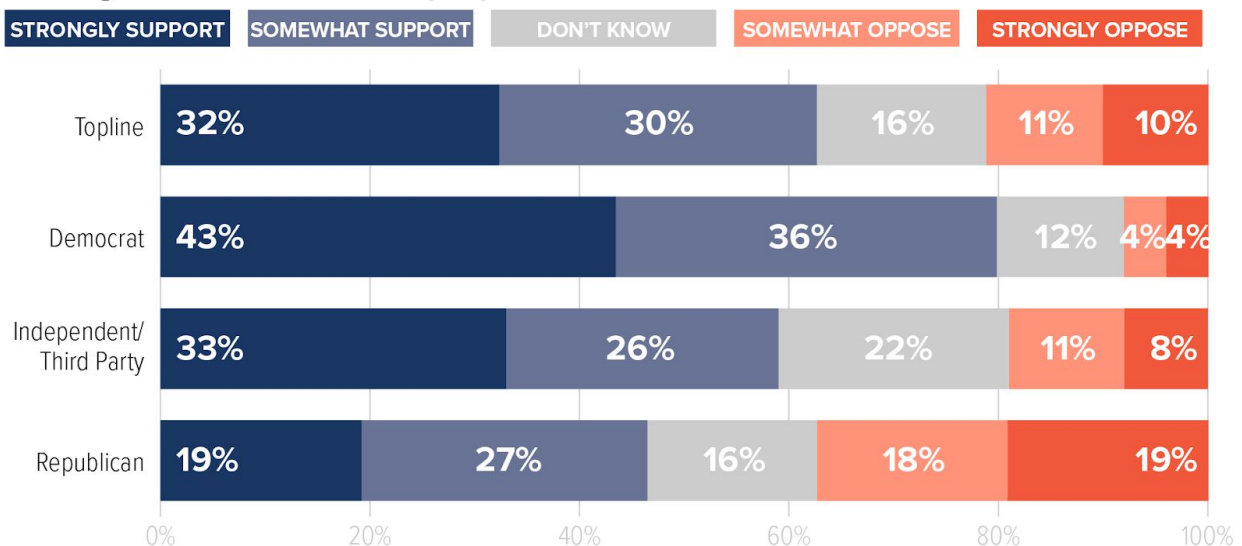
DATA FOR **PROGRESS**



## Americans Want A Diverse Administration

President-elect Biden has a historic opportunity to build the most diverse administration in American history. Respondents were asked if they agreed Biden should prioritize appointing women and people of color to federal offices in order to build a diverse administration. This proposal proved popular across party lines, with 62 percent of all respondents indicating they agreed that diversity should be a top priority for Biden during the cabinet composition process. Among Democrats, this number came to a staggeringly high 79 percent, and Republican respondents indicated they agree with the proposal by a 46 percent to 37 percent plurality.

**Do you agree or disagree that Biden should prioritize diversity within his administration by appointing more women and people of color with backgrounds advocating for working class and low-income people?**

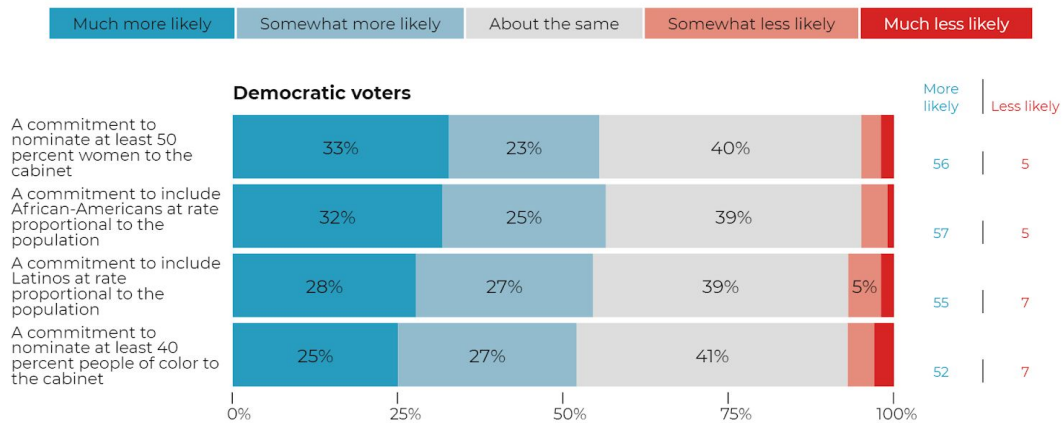


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Polling by Data for Progress in June 2020 on Democratic voter attitudes towards building a diverse administration yielded relatively similar results. A majority of Democrats would have been more likely to vote for then-candidate Joe Biden if he committed to a diverse cabinet, specifically: gender parity, African-American and Latino representation proportionate to the population, and 40 percent of the cabinet be people of color.

## Democratic Voters Would Be More Likely To Support Biden If He Committed To Building A Diverse Cabinet

If Joe Biden made the following commitments, how would that impact the likelihood that you would vote for him for President?



Data for Progress

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## Americans Want To Close The Revolving Door

Further evidence that a firm majority support ending the influence of corporate lobbyists and closing the revolving door between government and the corporate world can be found in June 2020 polling by Data for Progress on Senator Elizabeth Warren's [comprehensive ethics plan](#).

The most popular of proposals included in the Warren plan is the proposed ban on lobbyists taking positions in public office for two years after lobbying, which garnered the support of a whopping 68 percent of voters. Additionally, 65 percent of voters indicated their support for the even bolder proposal to ban lobbyists from taking positions in government for six years after lobbying. A proposal to ban employees of federal contractors or licensees from taking public positions at the agency that awarded contracts or licenses to their former employer for four years garnered wide support from 65 percent of those polled.

A broad 63 percent of respondents supported banning the world's largest monopolies, banks, and corporations from hiring former government officials in order to close the revolving door between the public and private sectors. A proposal to ban companies from immediately hiring or paying government officials from agencies the company in question had recently lobbied proved

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even more popular, with 67 percent of respondents supporting the measure. The bold proposal to ban former Presidents, Vice Presidents, and members of Congress, the cabinet, or the federal judiciary from lobbying for life was met with resounding approval from respondents, with 62 percent of respondents indicating their support for the plan versus just 21 percent indicating their opposition.

Additionally, Warren's proposal to respond to the problem of "golden parachutes" by banning corporations from giving bonuses to government officials who leave their office to join the private sector was met with overwhelming support from respondents. Two-Thirds of respondents supported such a measure compared to a mere 22 percent who opposed the proposal. A proposal to mandate income disclosures from former senior government officials four years after leaving their position also proved widely popular, with 61 percent of respondents indicating their support for the measure. During the administration composition process, Biden would be well-advised to avoid appointing lobbyists and figures from the corporate world given the widespread support for closing the revolving door.

## Voters Support Senator Warren's Ethics Plan



Data for Progress

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## **Americans Want Qualified Civil Servants, Not Corporate Actors, In High Office**

Polling commissioned by Demand Progress following the presidential election found that voters would vastly prefer policy experts, non-profit officials, and individuals with intimate government experience to alumni of the corporate world.

In a survey taken from November 16 to November 17, a whopping 70% of respondents from across party lines indicated Biden should prioritize appointing qualified federal officials committed to the public good. Given the damage Trump has caused by appointing countless unqualified individuals to federal positions over the past four years, this should come as little surprise. It should be no surprise, then, that an overwhelming majority of respondents (67%) indicated they want to see individuals with expertise in the realm of academia and public policy appointed to high positions in Biden's administration. Furthermore, two thirds of respondents indicated that experience working in nonprofits committed to advancing the public good was a positive.

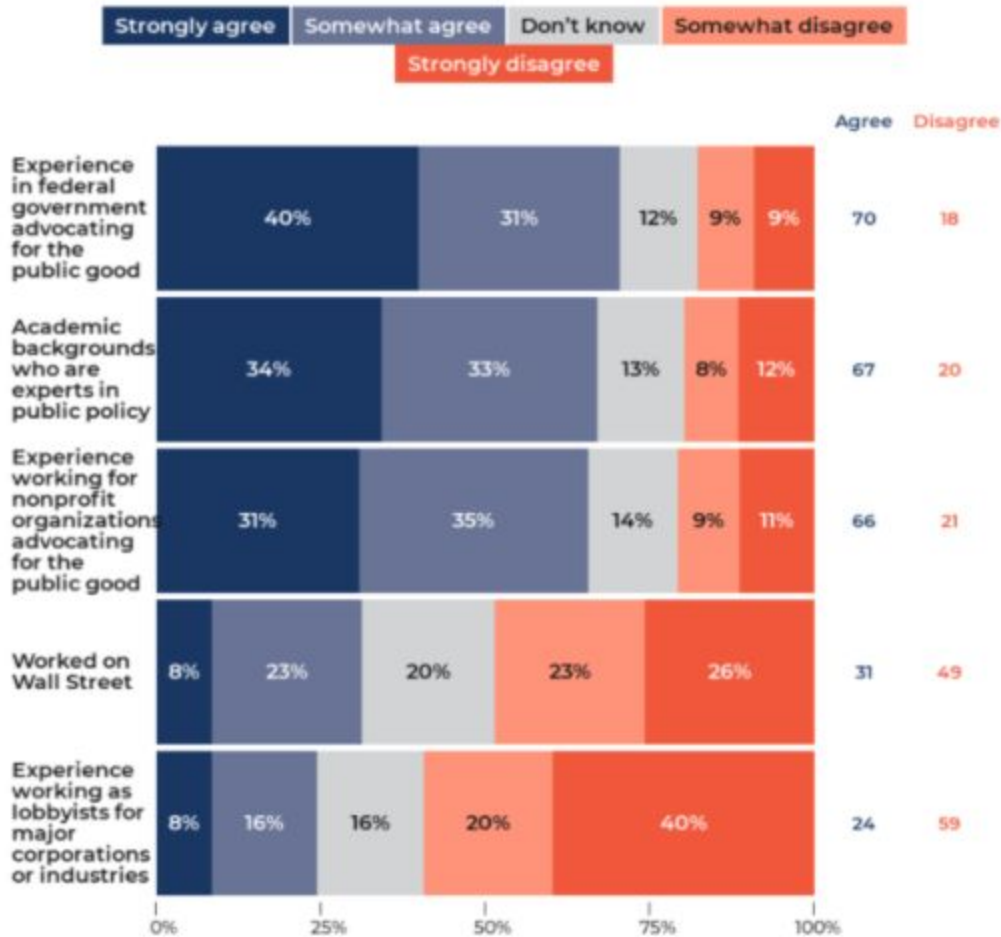
In contrast, 49 percent of respondents considered experience on Wall Street to be a negative when considering administration appointments, while just 31 percent who considered it to be a positive. Even more overwhelming was respondents' distaste towards the prospect of corporate lobbyists serving in the Biden Administration.

When asked if they felt that experience working as lobbyists for major corporations or industries was a positive for potential appointees, the vast majority (59 percent) disagreed, compared to merely 24 percent who agreed.

There's simply no room for ambiguity here: Americans across party lines are tired of the influence of Wall Street and major corporations on federal policy-making and want qualified public servants, not alumni of the corporate world, in positions of power in the Biden

Administration.

## Voters Do Not Want People Who Used To Work On Wall Street Or As Lobbyists To Work For The Biden Administration



Nov 16 to Nov 17, 2020 survey of 1075 likely voters

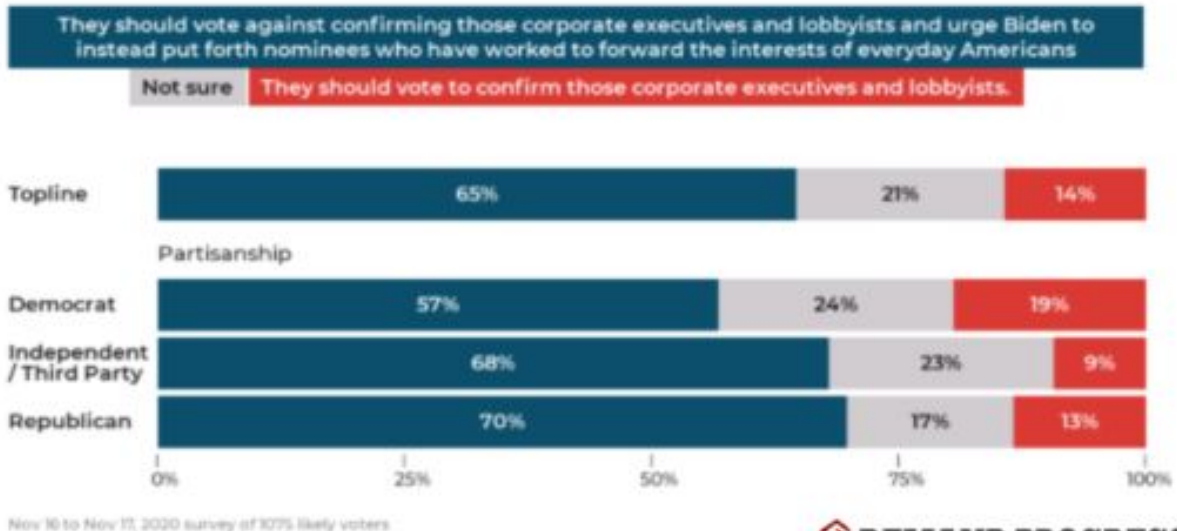
Respondents across party lines indicated that they wanted members of the Senate to vote against the nominations of corporate executives and lobbyists to positions in the Biden Administration. 57 percent of Democrats, 68 percent of independents, and 70% of Republicans indicated they believe that the Senate should refuse to confirm nominees to federal office with histories as corporate executives and lobbyists.





## Voters Do Not Want Senators To Vote To Confirm Corporate Executives And Lobbyists To Positions In The Biden Administration

If Joe Biden wins the presidential election and chooses to appoint corporate executives and lobbyists to top positions in his administration, when thinking about what your senators should do, what comes closer to your view?



Demand Progress further found that respondents favored the appointments of qualified progressives rather than centrists with deep ties to the corporate role when the backgrounds of potential nominees were specified.

The prospect of Rohit Chopra, a member of the Federal Trade Commission known for his fierce opposition to corporate power, being nominated by Biden to a key role in his administration proved overwhelmingly popular. Indeed, a whopping 67 percent of respondents indicated their support for the nomination of Chopra, who has been mentioned as a potential Federal Trade Commission Chair, Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) or Secretary of Commerce, to a post in the Biden Administration.

The prospect of Jared Bernstein, a progressive economist who advised Biden during his vice presidency, being nominated to a position in the Biden Administration also proved popular. Known for his fierce advocacy for workers, Bernstein, who has been mentioned for several key economic positions, garnered the support of 58 percent of respondents compared to just 14 percent in opposition. Raphael Bostic, another progressive economist who currently serves at the helm of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, also garnered the support of a majority of respondents. 58 percent of those polled indicated they would support the nomination of Bostic to a position in the Biden Administration.



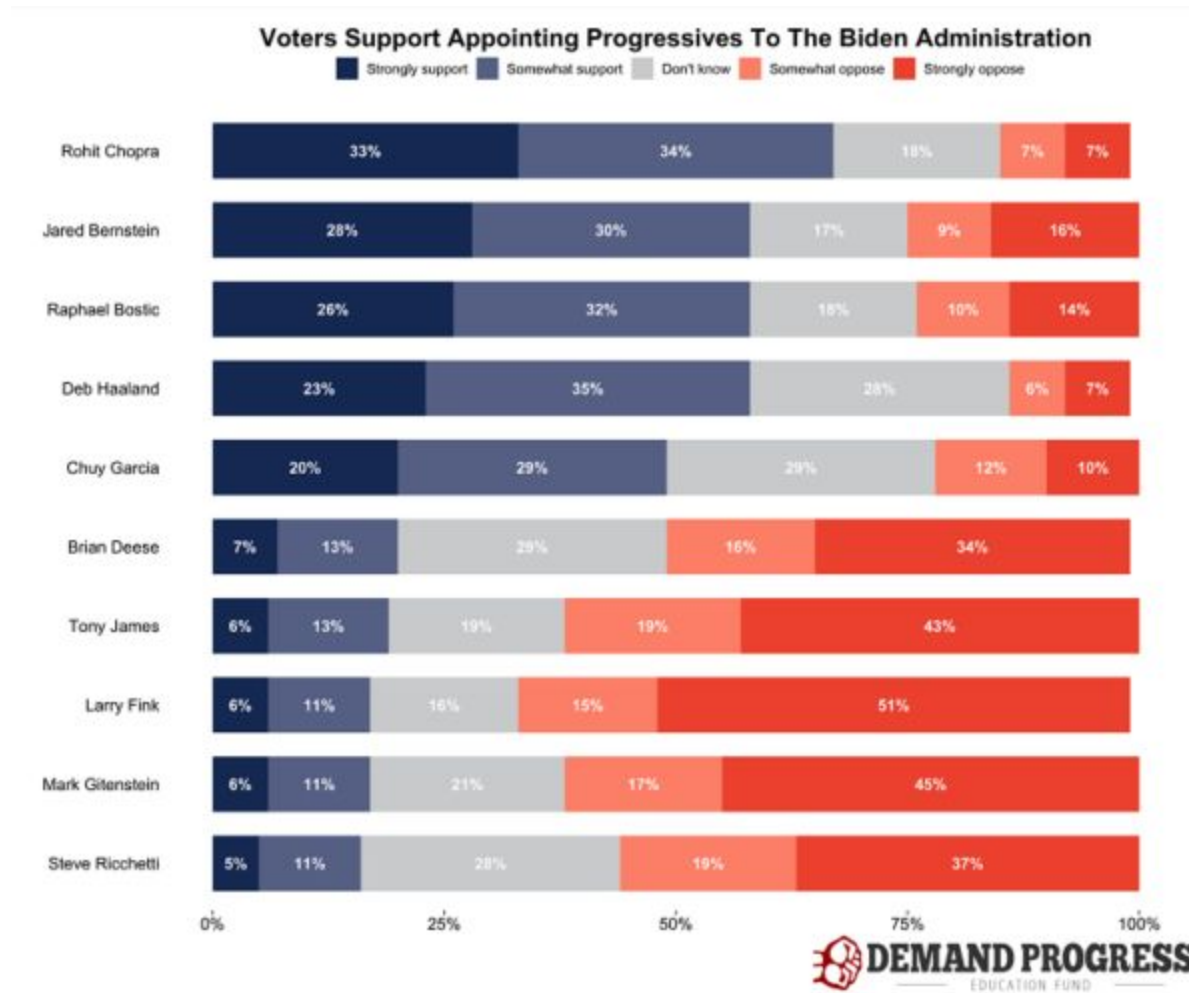
Deb Haaland, a former tribal administrator for the San Felipe Pueblo who has been one of the staunchest advocates for the Green New Deal in Congress, also received the support of most respondents when the prospect of her appointment was mentioned. 58 percent of respondents indicated they would support the nomination of Haaland, who is considered a potential Secretary of the Interior.

Additionally, a firm plurality (49 percent) of respondents indicated they would support the nomination of progressive Representative Chuy García to a role in the Biden Administration. García has been mentioned as a possible choice for Secretary of Transportation or Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

On the other hand, the potential appointment of Brian Deese, a former Obama appointee who currently works at BlackRock, to a position in the Biden Administration proved unpopular. 50 percent of respondents indicated their opposition to the potential nomination of Deese, who serves as Global Head of Sustainable Investing at a firm notorious for being the world's largest investor in coal plant developers. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated their opposition (62 percent) to the potential nomination of Tony James, a billionaire who serves as executive vice chairman of asset management giant Blackstone, to a position in the Biden Administration.

Additionally, a sizable majority (66 percent) of respondents indicated they were opposed to the potential nomination of billionaire BlackRock CEO Larry Fink to a position in the upcoming administration. Indeed, an absolute majority of respondents indicated they were *strongly opposed* to the potential nomination of Fink. 62 percent of respondents stated they opposed the potential nomination of former Chamber of Commerce lobbyist and Obama official Mark Gitenstein to a position in the Biden administration, compared to just 17 percent who stated they would support it.

The prospect of Steve Ricchetti, a political advisor and former lobbyist for companies such as pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly and Company, being nominated to a position in a Biden Administration proved unpopular, with 56 percent of respondents indicating their opposition to his potential nomination. On November 16, Ricchetti was tapped by Biden to serve as Counselor to the President, a position in the White House Office.



Though there may exist a bipartisan consensus among the Washington elite that well-monied corporate interests deserve an even larger seat at the policy-making table, this attitude evidently does not extend beyond the beltway. In a deeply divided country, something that voters across partisan lines can agree on is that the interests of working families, not corporate giants and their lobbyists on Capitol Hill, should be prioritized in the cabinet composition process.

Indeed, by eschewing career corporate lobbyists and executives from his cabinet in favor of building a diverse cabinet composed of qualified individuals committed to the needs of working people, Biden would be able to keep the Democratic coalition intact and also expand his base of support.

## Methodologies

From November 16 to November 17, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1075 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.0$  percentage points. NB: subgroups with a n-size less than 50 (<50) are not shown on these cross-tabs.

We choose not to display N<50 subgroups because the sample is too small to have statistical significance. We did, however, take samples of these subgroups for representational and weighting purposes to accurately reflect the electorate makeup. Some values may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

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From October 28 to October 29, 2020, Demand Progress conducted a survey using the Data for Progress infrastructure of 1,253 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted by Data for Progress to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 2.8$  percentage points. NB: subgroups with a n-size less than 100 (<100) are not shown on these cross-tabs.

We choose not to display N<100 subgroups because the sample is too small to have statistical significance. We did, however, take samples of these subgroups for representational and weighting purposes to accurately reflect the electorate makeup. Some values may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

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From 9/25/2020 to 9/26/2020 Data for Progress and Demand Progress conducted a survey of 1,162 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 3$  percentage points N=1102 unless otherwise specified. Some values may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

From June 21 through June 22, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,353 likely voters nationally, using web-panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted



in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 2.7$  percentage points. Due to rounding, some totals may add up to 99 or 101 percentage points.