

June 9, 2020

Survey of Black voters on whether Joe Biden should select a Black woman running mate

Poll by Northwestern’s Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy finds Black voters favor a Black woman running mate for Joe Biden; Kamala Harris, Stacey Abrams are the top choices

BY: Alvin B. Tillery, Jr., Director

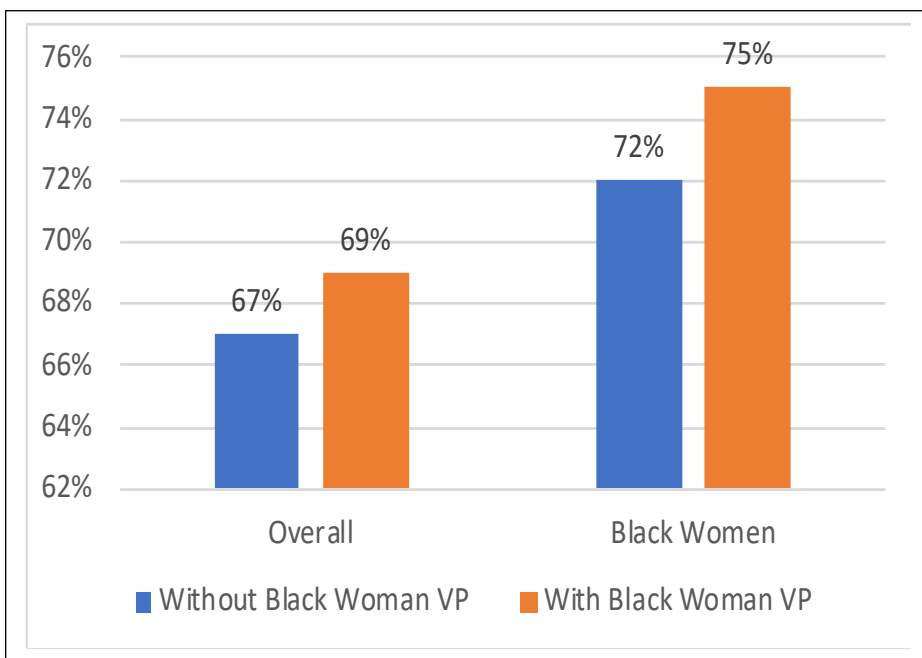
Joe Biden, the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee for president, has stated his [intention](#) to select a woman as his running mate in the 2020 race. We know from media [reports](#) that several prominent Black women are on Mr. Biden’s shortlist for the job. Many activists and pundits have argued that the selection of a Black woman running mate is one of the [keys](#) to mobilizing African American voters in November. What has been missing from this debate is survey data about how Black voters feel about this issue.

Working in conjunction with [Dr. Nadia Brown](#) of Purdue University, a leading expert on the politics of gender in Black communities, the [Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy’s](#) (CSDD) conducted a 45-item poll of 2,676 African Americans about their views on Biden selecting a Black woman for his running mate in the 2020 election.

The survey was a census-matched, internet panel recruited by Cloud Research/Prime Panels on behalf of the CSDD. The data were collected between May 27 and May 31, 2020.

The main finding is that 57 percent of African Americans say they would be more enthusiastic about supporting Joe Biden’s campaign if he selects a Black woman as his running mate on the Democratic Party’s ticket.

Figure 1: Black Voters’ Enthusiasm for Joe Biden in 2020



Source: The CSDD Black Voters on Black Woman VP Poll.

A Black Woman VP boosts Black voters' enthusiasm for Biden:

The survey asked the respondents to rate their overall enthusiasm for supporting Joe Biden's campaign for president on a scale from 0 to 100 percent. As Figure 1 shows, the mean enthusiasm score for Biden among the respondents was 67 percent. The mean enthusiasm score for African American women is significantly higher than for the overall sample at 72 percent. When we subsequently asked the same respondents how including a hypothetical Black woman on the ticket affected their enthusiasm, Biden's scores shifted to 69 percent and 75 percent respectively. While these gains in enthusiasm are relatively small, they are statistically significant at the .01 level. Moreover, given that recent [polls](#) of the general electorate have found that there is a sizable enthusiasm gap between Democratic and Republican base voters, these numbers point to a key dynamic for the Democrats. The fact that our poll also found that there is widespread support for almost all of the leading Black women whom the media have mentioned as contenders for the position means that Mr. Biden faces considerable freedom from Black voters to make his selection. At the same time, it is clear that Senator Kamala Harris and former Georgia legislator Stacey Abrams are the two most preferred candidates with 29 percent and 28 percent support respectively.

Our respondents also reported that they were more likely to support the Biden campaign beyond voting if he selects a Black woman as his running mate. Whereas 41 percent of the respondents said that they would campaign for Biden in their communities regardless of his pick, 47 percent said they would be more likely to do so if he selected an African American woman for VP. Similarly, 40 percent of the sample said that they would help register voters for the Biden campaign no matter whom Biden chooses as his running mate but 45 percent of the respondents stated that they would be more likely to do so if a Black woman was on the ticket.

The Impact of the VP search on Black Women's Support for Biden:

- 59 percent of the African American women who responded to the survey said that they would be more enthusiastic about voting for Joe Biden if he picks an African American woman to be his running mate.
- The mean enthusiasm for voting for Joe Biden among African American women shifts from 72 percent to 75 percent when a hypothetical African American woman is added to the Democratic Party ticket.
- 33 percent of African American women respondents prefer Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) for Biden's running mate; 31 percent prefer former Georgia legislator Stacey Abrams; 21 percent of Black women in the sample prefer Susan Rice, the former national security advisor, and 15 percent prefer Representative Val Demings (D-FL).
- 50 percent of African American women respondents said that they are more likely to campaign for Joe Biden if he selects an African American woman versus 40 percent who said that they will campaign for him regardless of the outcome of the vice-presidential search process.
- 47 percent of African American women respondents said that they are more likely to work to register others to vote if Biden selects an African American woman versus 39 percent who said that they will help with voter registration regardless of the outcome of the vice-presidential search process.

Demographics:

- The gender distribution of the sample was 51 percent female, 49 percent male.
- The age distribution is matched to national census demographics.
- The 2,676 respondents live in 44 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- 41 percent of the respondents earned between 30K and 75K per annum; 35 percent earned less than 30K per annum; 11 percent earned more than 100K.
- 22 percent of the respondents were high school or GED degree holders; 27 percent had taken some college courses but do not hold a degree; 14 percent had obtained a 2-year college degree at the time of the study; 24 percent of the respondents held 4-year college degrees; and 13% of the respondents had obtained a graduate or professional degree at the time of the survey.
- 68 percent of the respondents are affiliates of the Democratic Party; 19 percent consider themselves to be political independents; 7 percent affiliate with the Republican Party.
- 41 percent of the respondents describe their ideology as liberal; 46 percent say that they hold a moderate ideology; 13 percent describe themselves as conservative.
- 71 percent of the respondents voted in the 2016 presidential election.
- 76 percent of the respondents prefer Joe Biden over Donald Trump or another candidate.

About the [Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy](#):

The mission of the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy is to stimulate research, dialogue, and civic engagement about the relationship between diversity and democratic politics. Our intellectual agenda focuses on three core questions: What governing institutions are best at managing differences based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion and promoting equal citizenship in diverse democracies? What are the attitudinal bases of group solidarity and intergroup tolerance in diverse democracies? What can governments, non-governmental organizations, and corporations do to reduce the socioeconomic inequalities that exist between identity-based groups in diverse democracies?

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