



Voters Keen on Lowering Student Debt Through Greater Federal Funding

Millennial registered voters more inclined than older generations to support using a wealth tax to fund student loan debt forgiveness

Washington, DC, May 23, 2019 — A new Ipsos/Newsy study looks at student debt issues and sentiment toward policy proposals in light of the upcoming 2020 presidential election. From a list of 10 policy proposals, Medicare for All (33%) and universal background checks for gun purchases (30%) are the biggest determinants of Democratic presidential primary candidate support among registered voters that identify as Democrats or Independents. Student debt forgiveness is ranked as the fifth most important among Democrat and Independent registered voters (15%). However, among millennials (age 18-38), student debt forgiveness is a top-tier policy issue (24%), alongside Medicare for All (28%) and universal background checks (26%).

Looking at a range of policies pertaining to student debt, registered voters are overwhelmingly supportive of lower interest rates on student loans (88%) and increased grant funding for costs associated with college (73%). Support for lower interest rates on student loans is highest among non-millennial voters (90% among ages 39-54, 93% among ages 55+). On the other hand, millennial voters are more supportive of a federally-funded program that would fully pay for any student seeking a 4-year degree (63%, versus 45% of 55+ voters) or a 2-year degree (67%, versus 54% of 55+ voters) When asked whether they would still support federal student loan debt forgiveness and federal funding to fully pay for college if they were funded by a 2 percent tax on Americans worth \$50 million or more, gaps in support by age remain largely unchanged. Hearing how these programs would be paid for does not change views significantly.

Two in five of registered voters (40%), and over half of millennial voters (54%), report borrowing money to help pay for their education. Among voters who borrowed money, older voters tend to report borrowing less than their younger counterparts. Baby boomer voters (55+) borrowed an average of about \$18,000, while Generation X voters (39-54) and millennial voters borrowed more (on average, about \$24,000 and \$28,000, respectively). Half of all voters who borrowed money for education have paid it back, with older generations more likely to say this is the case. Nearly three-quarters of baby boomer voters (72%) report paying off all their student debt, compared to less than a third of millennials (31%).

Address: 2020 K Street NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: +1 202 463-7300

Contact: **Mallory Newall**
Director, U.S., Ipsos Public Affairs
Email: mallory.newall@ipsos.com
Tel: +1 202 420-2014



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1. Are you currently registered to vote?

	Total (N = 2,008)	Registered Voters (N = 1,640)	Age 18-38 Registered Voters (N = 469)	Age 39-54 Registered Voters (N = 428)	Age 55+ Registered Voters (N = 743)
Yes	81%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No	15%	-	-	-	-

2. In your own words, what is the most important issue currently facing the country? *[Open-ended responses]*

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
International Affairs	17%	19%	12%	17%	25%
Economic Issues	15%	15%	17%	21%	10%
Government	15%	16%	11%	16%	20%
Health Care Issues	15%	17%	12%	19%	19%
Safety/Security	15%	15%	17%	12%	17%
Social Issues	10%	11%	11%	12%	10%
Environment	6%	6%	6%	5%	6%
Morality	4%	5%	3%	6%	4%
Education	3%	4%	7%	3%	1%
Dishonesty	1%	1%	-	1%	3%
The People/Citizens	1%	1%	1%	1%	*
Disrespect	1%	1%	1%	*	1%
Everything/All	*	*	*	-	*
Lack of Civil Discourse	*	*	-	1%	1%
Infrastructure	*	*	*	1%	*
Other	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Nothing	1%	*	1%	-	-
Don't Know	13%	7%	18%	3%	2%

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3. Now, from the following list, which do you think is the most important issue currently facing the country? You may select up to two.

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Health care	30%	33%	25%	36%	38%
Immigration policy	28%	30%	24%	23%	38%
Gun violence	22%	22%	27%	19%	21%
Economy and jobs	18%	19%	19%	26%	13%
Climate change	15%	15%	20%	9%	14%
Racial inequality	10%	11%	13%	12%	9%
Infrastructure	8%	8%	5%	10%	10%
Cost of higher education	6%	7%	11%	8%	3%
Employment inequality	5%	5%	9%	4%	2%
Voting rights and redistricting	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Other	9%	10%	5%	11%	14%
Don't know	8%	3%	6%	2%	1%

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4. **[ASKED ONLY OF DEMOCRATS AND INDEPENDENTS]** Thinking about the Democratic presidential primary election, when deciding which candidate to support, which of the following policy proposals are the most important to you? You may select up to two.

	Total (N = 1,090)	Registered Voters (N= 900)	Age 18-38 Registered Voters (N = 247)	Age 39-54 Registered Voters (N = 231)	Age 55+ Registered Voters (N = 422)
Medicare for All	34%	36%	28%	40%	39%
Universal background checks for gun purchases	31%	33%	26%	34%	37%
Reforming the Electoral College	17%	19%	11%	21%	24%
Raising federal minimum wage to \$15/hour	16%	16%	19%	16%	14%
Student debt forgiveness	13%	15%	24%	14%	8%
Federal carbon tax to limit greenhouse gas emissions	12%	12%	12%	12%	13%
Federal legalization of marijuana	8%	9%	11%	12%	7%
Universal Basic Income	8%	8%	13%	7%	5%
Abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)	7%	7%	8%	5%	7%
National paid family leave	4%	4%	9%	3%	2%
Other	9%	10%	6%	7%	14%
Don't know	11%	6%	7%	8%	5%

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5. Do you support or oppose each of the following?

a. Total support

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Lower interest rates on student loans	83%	88%	78%	90%	93%
Increased grant funding for costs of college (including tuition, housing, food, books, etc.)	70%	73%	74%	73%	72%
A federal-state government partnership to increase higher education funding	67%	69%	68%	73%	67%
A federally funded program that would fully pay for any student seeking a 2-year degree	59%	60%	67%	63%	54%
Federal student loan debt forgiveness	57%	59%	69%	62%	49%
A federally-funded program that would fully pay for any student seeking a 4-year degree	53%	53%	63%	56%	45%
Limit the amount that parents and graduate students can borrow from the federal government for tuition	46%	48%	44%	46%	53%

b. Lower interest rates on student loans

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	54%	57%	55%	61%	55%
Somewhat support	29%	31%	24%	28%	38%
Somewhat oppose	5%	5%	8%	3%	3%
Strongly oppose	5%	4%	9%	3%	2%
Don't know	7%	3%	5%	4%	2%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>88%</i>	<i>78%</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>93%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>5%</i>

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c. Increased grant funding for costs of college (including tuition, housing, food, books, etc.)

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	33%	35%	43%	36%	29%
Somewhat support	37%	38%	32%	38%	43%
Somewhat oppose	13%	13%	10%	15%	14%
Strongly oppose	9%	9%	10%	6%	9%
Don't know	9%	5%	6%	5%	5%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>72%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>24%</i>

d. A federal-state government partnership to increase higher education funding

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	33%	34%	39%	35%	29%
Somewhat support	34%	36%	30%	39%	38%
Somewhat oppose	12%	12%	11%	9%	15%
Strongly oppose	10%	11%	12%	9%	11%
Don't know	11%	8%	9%	9%	7%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>69%</i>	<i>68%</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>67%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>26%</i>

e. A federally funded program that would fully pay for any student seeking a 2-year degree

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	31%	32%	39%	32%	26%
Somewhat support	27%	29%	28%	31%	28%
Somewhat oppose	15%	16%	13%	14%	19%
Strongly oppose	18%	20%	15%	19%	24%
Don't know	8%	4%	5%	5%	3%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>59%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>63%</i>	<i>54%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>43%</i>

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f. Federal student loan debt forgiveness

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	33%	34%	46%	34%	25%
Somewhat support	24%	25%	23%	28%	23%
Somewhat oppose	15%	16%	11%	13%	22%
Strongly oppose	19%	20%	14%	18%	25%
Don't know	9%	5%	6%	6%	4%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>59%</i>	<i>69%</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>48%</i>

g. A federally-funded program that would fully pay for any student seeking a 4-year degree

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	27%	26%	34%	29%	19%
Somewhat support	26%	27%	29%	27%	26%
Somewhat oppose	15%	16%	12%	14%	19%
Strongly oppose	23%	25%	17%	25%	32%
Don't know	9%	5%	8%	5%	3%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>63%</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>45%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>38%</i>	<i>41%</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>51%</i>

h. Limit the amount that parents and graduate students can borrow from the federal government for tuition

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	19%	20%	20%	19%	21%
Somewhat support	27%	28%	24%	27%	32%
Somewhat oppose	21%	22%	24%	21%	22%
Strongly oppose	15%	15%	16%	18%	12%
Don't know	18%	14%	16%	15%	13%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>48%</i>	<i>44%</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>53%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>37%</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>34%</i>

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6. To pay for some of these proposals, some people support a plan to put a 2 percent tax on Americans worth \$50 million or more. Having heard more information, do you support or oppose the following?
- a. Total support

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Federal student loan debt forgiveness	58%	60%	71%	61%	51%
A federally-funded program that would fully pay for any student seeking a 4-year degree	55%	56%	66%	59%	46%

- b. Federal student loan debt forgiveness

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	34%	36%	45%	36%	29%
Somewhat support	23%	24%	25%	24%	22%
Somewhat oppose	14%	14%	13%	10%	19%
Strongly oppose	19%	20%	11%	22%	26%
Don't know	9%	5%	6%	7%	4%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>58%</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>71%</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>51%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>44%</i>

- c. A federally-funded program that would fully pay for any student seeking a 4-year degree

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Strongly support	30%	31%	39%	35%	23%
Somewhat support	24%	24%	27%	24%	23%
Somewhat oppose	15%	16%	15%	12%	19%
Strongly oppose	21%	23%	14%	22%	30%
Don't know	9%	5%	5%	6%	5%
<i>Total support (Net)</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>56%</i>	<i>66%</i>	<i>59%</i>	<i>46%</i>
<i>Total oppose (Net)</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>49%</i>

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7. Did you borrow any money to help pay for your education? Borrowing sources might include federal loans, private loans, or credit cards.

	Total	Registered Voters	Age 18-38 Registered Voters	Age 39-54 Registered Voters	Age 55+ Registered Voters
Yes	35%	40%	54%	44%	26%
No	61%	59%	43%	56%	73%
Don't know	4%	1%	3%	-	*

8. **[ASKED ONLY OF PEOPLE WHO BORROWED MONEY FOR EDUCATION]** In total, how much did you borrow for your education? Your best estimate is fine.

	Total (N = 722)	Registered Voters (N = 667)	Age 18-38 Registered Voters (N = 268)	Age 39-54 Registered Voters (N = 199)	Age 55+ Registered Voters (N = 200)
Mean	\$23,858.30	\$23,843.00	\$27,616.70	\$23,974.40	\$18,037.00
Standard Deviation	\$31,923.54	\$32,451.09	\$35,205.40	\$34,029.16	\$24,620.74
Standard Error	\$1,204.24	\$1,273.47	\$2,165.25	\$2,357.04	\$1,852.95

9. **[ASKED ONLY OF PEOPLE WHO BORROWED MONEY FOR EDUCATION]** Thinking about the money you borrowed to pay for your education, which of the following applies to you?

	Total (N = 722)	Registered Voters (N = 667)	Age 18-38 Registered Voters (N = 268)	Age 39-54 Registered Voters (N = 199)	Age 55+ Registered Voters (N = 200)
I have paid off all my student loan(s) or debt	49%	50%	31%	56%	72%
I have paid off less than half of my student loan(s) or debt	20%	19%	28%	17%	9%
I have paid off more than half of my student loan(s) or debt	14%	13%	18%	12%	8%
I have not paid off any of my student loan(s) or debt	14%	13%	19%	12%	5%
Don't know	4%	4%	4%	2%	5%

Additional questions held for future release.

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About the Study

These are findings from an Ipsos poll conducted May 8-13, 2019. For the survey, a sample of roughly 2,008 adults 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii were interviewed online in English. The sample includes 1,640 registered voters, 469 millennial registered voters (ages 18-38), 428 Generation X registered voters (ages 39-54), and 743 baby boomer registered voters (ages 55+). The sample also includes 1,090 Democrats and Independents, 900 Democratic and Independent registered voters, 247 Democratic and Independent millennial registered voters, 231 Democratic and Independent Generation X registered voters, 422 Democratic and Independent baby boomer registered voters, 722 adults who borrowed money for education, 667 registered voters who borrowed money for education, 268 millennial registered voters who borrowed money for education, 199 Generation X registered voters who borrowed money for education, and 200 baby boomer registered voters who borrowed money for education.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=2,008, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/-4.0 percentage points).

The poll also has a credibility interval plus or minus 2.8 percentage points for all registered voters, 5.2 percentage points for millennial registered voters, 5.4 percentage points for Generation X registered voters, 4.1 percentage points for baby boomer registered voters, 3.7 percentage points for Democratic and Independent registered voters, 7.1 percentage points for Democratic and Independent millennial registered voters, 7.4 percentage points for Democratic and Independent Generation X registered voters, and 5.4 percentage points for Democratic and Independent baby boomer registered voters.

For more information about conducting research intended for public release or Ipsos' online polling methodology, please visit our [Public Opinion Polling and Communication](#) page where you can download our brochure, see our public release protocol, or contact us.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

Mallory Newall
Director, U.S.
Ipsos Public Affairs
+1 202 420-2014
mallory.newall@ipsos.com

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With offices in 89 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across five research specializations: brand, advertising and media; customer loyalty; marketing; public affairs research; and survey management.

Ipsos researchers assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media and they measure public opinion around the globe.

Ipsos has been listed on the Paris Stock Exchange since 1999 and generated global revenues of €1,749.5 million in 2018.

GAME CHANGERS

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www.ipsos.com

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