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THE STATE OF THE NATION:
A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY
REPORT #7: UPDATE ON VOTE BY MAIL

USA, July 2020

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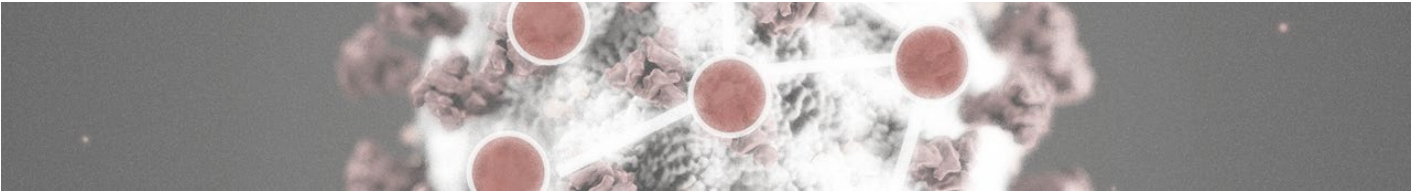Matthew Simonson, Northeastern University

Report of July 30, 2020, v.1

From: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

A joint project of:
Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

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COVER MEMO

Summary Memo—July 30, 2020

The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States
Partners: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

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From July 10 to 26 we conducted the seventh wave of a large, 50-state survey, some results of which are presented in this report. This is the sixth report published by the consortium. You can find previous reports online at www.covidstates.org.

Note on methods:

We surveyed 19,052 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted on 10-26 July 2020 by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on the other waves, see covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the seventh in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors regarding COVID-19 in the United States.

Note that Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Vermont have relatively smaller sample sizes (under 200 likely voters) and therefore larger margins of error. Results concerning those states should be interpreted with caution.

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1. Support for voting by mail

Overall, support for voting by mail is quite high, with 64% of likely voters in our survey[1] supporting making it easier to vote by mail, and only 23% opposing.

Similarly, more Americans who say they plan to vote in 2020 support than oppose universal extension of vote by mail. A total of 66% of likely voters report that they would support giving every American the right to vote by mail in November, with 22% opposing.

Table 1 and Figure 1 summarize support for making voting by mail easier, and for giving every American the right to vote by mail.

Figure 1. Universal right to vote by mail

Would you support giving every American the right to vote by mail in November? [Percent respondents planning to vote]

Strongly support	46%
Support	20%
Neither support or oppose	13%
Oppose	7%
Strongly oppose	15%
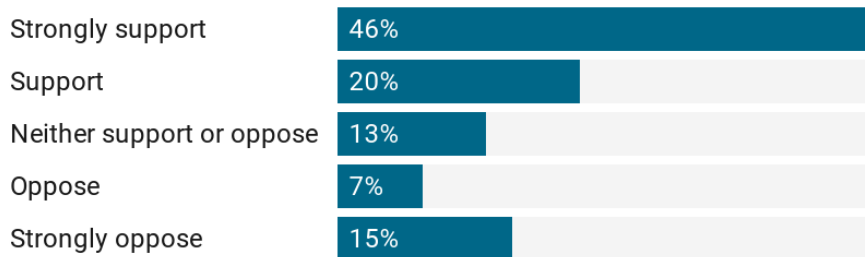
National sample, N =1,881, Time period: 7/10/2020-7/26/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org • Created with Datawrapper

2. Utilization of voting by mail

The unprecedented scale of the potential use of voting by mail in 2020 presents challenges for some states in the administration of the election in November. In response to the question: "When you vote in November, how likely is it that you will vote by absentee or mail-in ballot?", 41% of respondents who say they plan to vote in 2020 responded "very
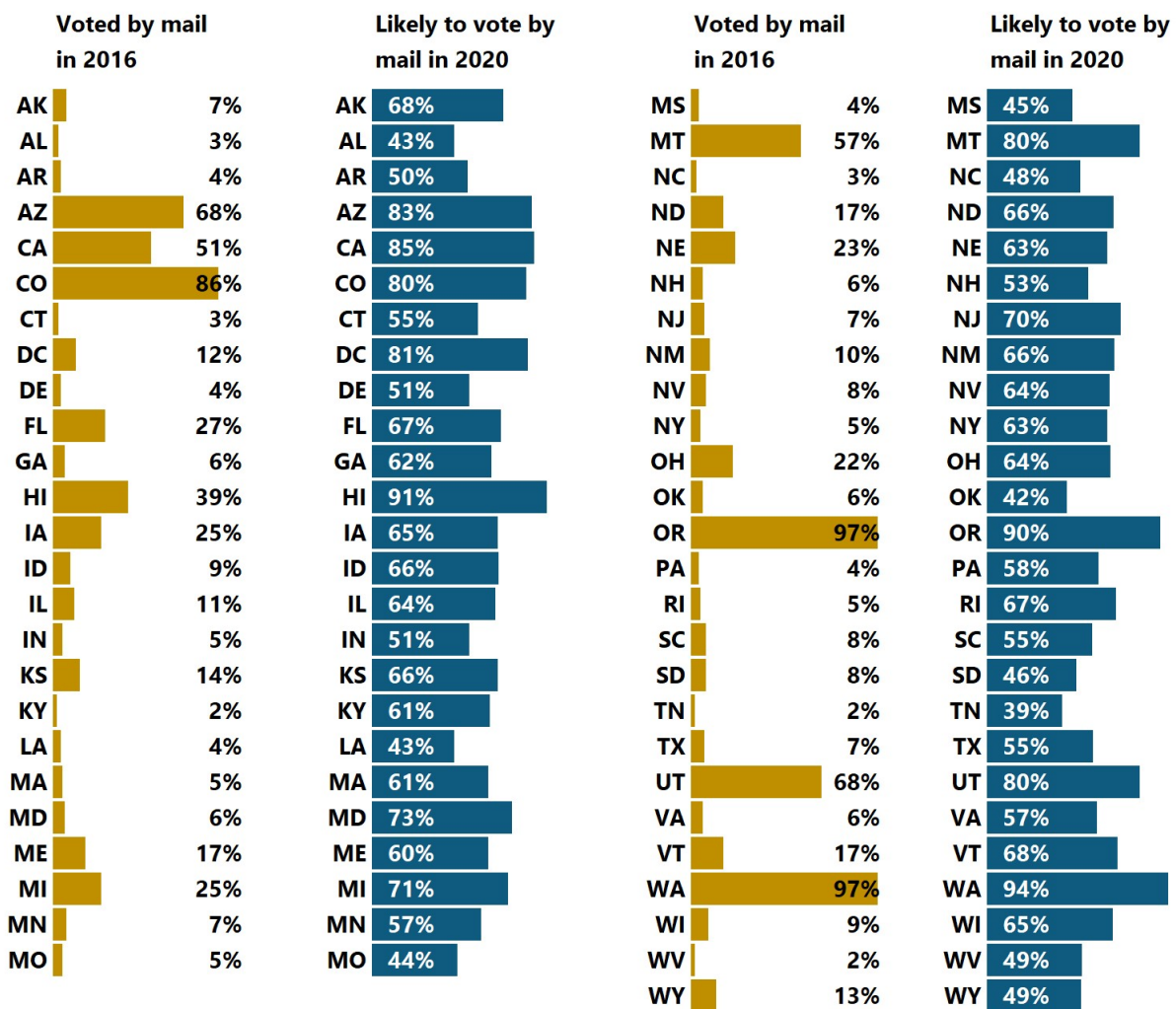
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[1] "Likely voters" here refers to survey participants who responded to the question "Do you plan to vote in the 2020 U.S. presidential election?" with "Yes, I will definitely vote".

likely" and another 23% chose "somewhat likely." As a point of contrast, only 21% of voters cast their ballots by mail in 2016 -- which itself was a historic high.[2]

Figure 2 presents the proportion of likely voters who say that it is "very" or "somewhat" likely that they will vote by mail in 2020, compared to the numbers who voted by mail in 2016; Figure 3, in turn, presents a heat map of expected utilization rates by state.

Figure 2. Voting by absentee or mail-in ballot this November

[Percent respondents planning to vote who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely"]

	Voted by mail in 2016		Likely to vote by mail in 2020		Voted by mail in 2016		Likely to vote by mail in 2020
AK	7%	AK	68%	MS	4%	MS	45%
AL	3%	AL	43%	MT	57%	MT	80%
AR	4%	AR	50%	NC	3%	NC	48%
AZ	68%	AZ	83%	ND	17%	ND	66%
CA	51%	CA	85%	NE	23%	NE	63%
CO	86%	CO	80%	NH	6%	NH	53%
CT	3%	CT	55%	NJ	7%	NJ	70%
DC	12%	DC	81%	NM	10%	NM	66%
DE	4%	DE	51%	NV	8%	NV	64%
FL	27%	FL	67%	NY	5%	NY	63%
GA	6%	GA	62%	OH	22%	OH	64%
HI	39%	HI	91%	OK	6%	OK	42%
IA	25%	IA	65%	OR	97%	OR	90%
ID	9%	ID	66%	PA	4%	PA	58%
IL	11%	IL	64%	RI	5%	RI	67%
IN	5%	IN	51%	SC	8%	SC	55%
KS	14%	KS	66%	SD	8%	SD	46%
KY	2%	KY	61%	TN	2%	TN	39%
LA	4%	LA	43%	TX	7%	TX	55%
MA	5%	MA	61%	UT	68%	UT	80%
MD	6%	MD	73%	VA	6%	VA	57%
ME	17%	ME	60%	VT	17%	VT	68%
MI	25%	MI	71%	WA	97%	WA	94%
MN	7%	MN	57%	WI	9%	WI	65%
MO	5%	MO	44%	WV	2%	WV	49%
				WY	13%	WY	49%

National sample, N = 19,058, Time period: 7/10/2020-7/26/2020

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org

2016 numbers are based on Pew Research Center analysis of IPUMS and US Census data.

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[2] See: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/24/as-states-move-to-expand-the-practice-relatively-few-americans-have-voted-by-mail/

The comparison between 2016 highlights the potential for an enormous leap in voting by mail. There are 7 states where a majority of people voted by mail in 2016. These states will see more modest increases in 2020. However, more typical is a case like New York, where 5% of voters reported casting a ballot by mail in 2016, and 63% of those who say they plan to vote in 2020 currently state that they are likely to vote by mail. The continued struggles of New York[3] and other states in processing primary voting by mail is a worrisome harbinger for the general election.

Figure 3. Americans planning to vote by mail in November

When you vote in November, how likely is it that you will vote by absentee or mail-in ballot?
[Percent of respondents planning to vote who say "very likely" or "somewhat likely"]

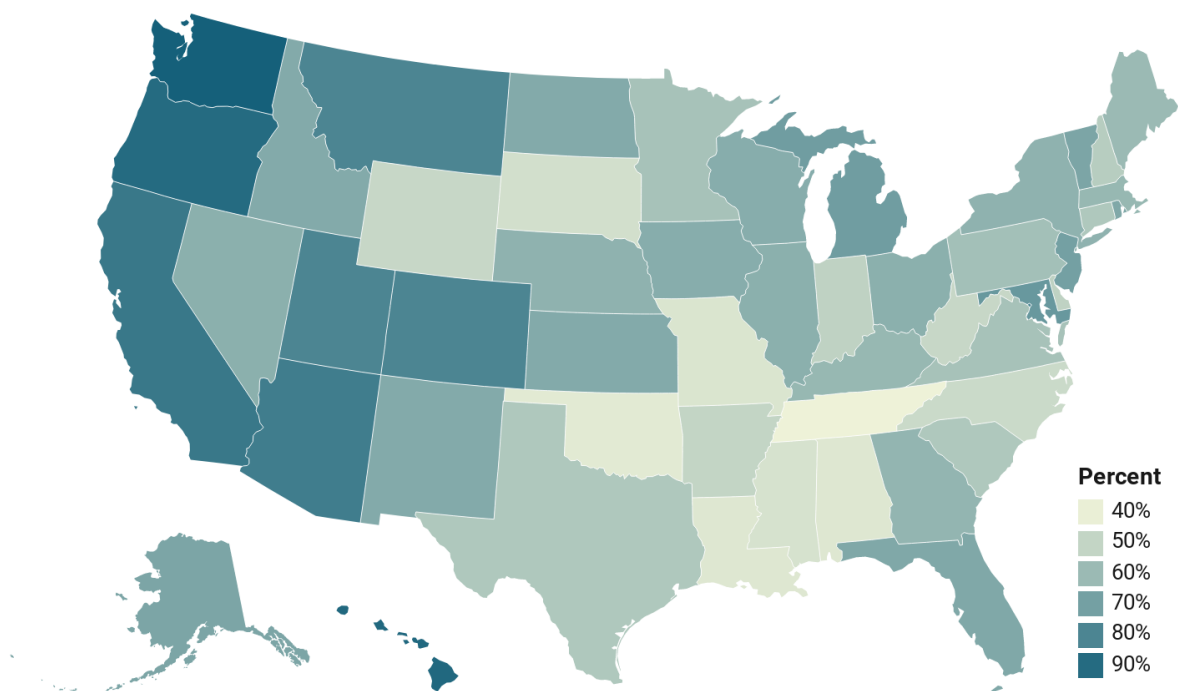*National sample, N = 19,058, Time period: 7/10/2020-7/26/2020*

Source: The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States (A joint project of: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University) www.covidstates.org
• Created with Datawrapper

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[3] See: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/nyregion/voting-nyc-primary.html

3. State tables

Table 1. Would you support making it easier to vote by mail in November? [Percent of respondents who say they plan to vote in 2020]							
	Strongly oppose	**Oppose**	**Neither support nor oppose**	**Support**	**Strongly support**	**Error Margin**	**N**
National	15	8	13	18	46	0	14,836
AK	15	1	18	23	43	13	92
AL	32	11	8	15	34	7	335
AR	25	13	13	14	35	8	275
AZ	13	5	8	18	56	8	271
CA	8	4	11	20	56	7	429
CO	10	6	9	19	57	7	307
CT	15	6	14	16	49	7	311
DC	2	4	10	22	63	7	241
DE	20	11	15	14	40	8	245
FL	15	9	14	21	41	6	397
GA	14	8	16	21	41	7	336
HI	7	6	3	13	71	8	210
IA	11	6	13	13	57	7	307

ID	16	12	13	15	45	8	246
IL	11	8	16	18	48	7	382
IN	18	6	16	16	44	8	249
KS	20	6	13	16	46	7	273
KY	22	11	9	21	38	7	294
LA	32	8	13	17	31	7	306
MA	12	6	13	21	48	7	307
MD	9	8	10	23	51	6	375
ME	14	10	11	23	43	7	251
MI	12	7	12	14	55	7	301
MN	25	7	11	16	41	7	312
MO	22	8	13	19	38	7	277
MS	27	8	19	23	24	7	279
MT	17	8	10	14	52	8	220
NC	23	8	14	25	30	6	347
ND	17	13	9	20	42	10	159
NE	17	10	16	21	35	7	260
NH	15	7	14	19	45	7	262
NJ	13	6	14	25	42	7	315
NM	18	9	13	15	45	9	253
NV	17	7	13	16	47	7	344

NY	12	10	10	20	49	6	372
OH	15	7	16	14	49	6	388
OK	27	5	25	14	29	8	260
OR	6	9	7	14	64	7	327
PA	16	8	13	21	43	7	387
RI	14	9	7	17	52	8	240
SC	19	9	15	25	32	7	295
SD	29	11	17	17	26	8	188
TN	26	12	18	15	29	6	358
TX	19	10	13	15	43	7	369
UT	8	9	14	16	53	7	329
VA	14	6	13	20	47	7	333
VT	13	2	14	17	54	9	162
WA	5	3	10	18	65	6	336
WI	14	5	15	18	49	6	350
WV	19	17	17	17	30	8	258
WY	29	10	15	12	35	11	116

Table 2. When you vote in November, how likely is it that you will vote by absentee or mail-in ballot?

[Percent of respondents who say they plan to vote in 2020]

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	Error Margin	N
National	41	23	14	22	0	14,835
AK	28	41	12	20	13	92
AL	23	20	19	38	7	336
AR	24	25	16	35	8	275
AZ	63	20	3	14	8	271
CA	67	18	8	8	6	430
CO	60	20	11	9	7	307
CT	31	24	17	28	7	312
DC	50	31	12	7	8	241
DE	34	17	17	32	8	245
FL	47	20	10	23	6	396
GA	33	29	15	23	6	335
HI	78	13	2	7	7	210
IA	46	20	17	18	7	307
ID	40	26	15	19	7	245
IL	35	30	16	20	6	381

IN	35	16	17	32	7	247
KS	44	22	14	21	7	273
KY	35	27	13	26	7	293
LA	25	18	17	41	8	307
MA	34	27	19	21	6	309
MD	41	32	15	12	6	374
ME	36	24	18	22	7	252
MI	57	14	7	22	7	300
MN	37	20	15	28	7	313
MO	25	20	19	36	7	277
MS	21	24	20	36	8	279
MT	62	18	10	11	8	221
NC	25	23	16	35	6	350
ND	42	24	12	23	10	159
NE	34	28	13	24	7	260
NH	25	28	20	27	6	262
NJ	41	28	14	17	7	315
NM	39	28	14	20	9	255
NV	42	22	18	19	7	344
NY	39	24	17	21	6	370
OH	42	22	11	24	6	386

OK	20	22	24	35	8	261
OR	75	15	5	5	6	327
PA	33	25	14	28	6	386
RI	41	26	14	19	8	239
SC	24	30	17	28	7	295
SD	23	24	21	33	9	189
TN	24	16	22	39	7	357
TX	33	23	16	29	6	370
UT	59	21	8	13	7	328
VA	34	23	15	28	7	333
VT	46	22	13	20	9	162
WA	80	14	2	4	5	335
WI	44	21	17	18	6	350
WV	29	21	13	38	8	258
WY	40	10	18	33	11	116