

How Women Really Feel About Voting for Joe Biden

Data already shows women coming out to support the presumptive Democratic nominee, but not all are enthusiastic.

By Caitlin Flynn | Updated Aug 17, 2020 @ 7:00 am



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Women across the country are preparing to cast their votes in November's general election for the presumptive Democratic nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, who will face off against the incumbent, President Donald Trump. But not all women — who represent the Democratic party's base — are voting for Joe enthusiastically. After a primary season that kicked off with a diverse field of candidates, many voters are dealing with disappointment that their No. 1 choice didn't make it to the big race. For others, it's more than that.

InStyle

Women have expressed a number of concerns about Biden, ranging from his voting record on racial and criminal justice issues to the recent allegations of sexual misconduct against him. But their decision to cast their vote for Biden in November is the same: If Trump wins, millions more Americans will suffer.

That heavy sense of responsibility isn't unique to Democratic women right now, either. Domonique James, Founder and CEO of Politics With a Purpose, tells *InStyle* that she expects a sector of Republican women to vote Democrat in 2020 — and it could be enough to push Biden to victory. She cites recent analysis conducted by HIT Strategies, a polling and strategy firm, that shows white women in the key states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Virginia have swung to Biden. The analysis also found that Biden currently has 10% more support in Michigan than Hillary Clinton had in 2016. “Further data suggests that women voters have been moving away from the Republican Party for a while, but Trump’s presidency potentially accelerated [the shift],” James says.

“It’s a combination of [Trump’s] rhetoric and some of his hardline stances that [Republican women] just fundamentally disagree with,” she tells *InStyle*, noting that family separation at the border and the images of children in cages marked a turning point for many women. James also points to the 2018 midterms, when Democrats elected the most diverse Congress (and the most women) ever. “A lot of those women came from suburban communities and swing communities,” she says, which should bode well for Democrats in 2020.

The COVID pandemic has also shifted voters' priorities and outlook. "It's exposed many deficits in our social safety net and, frankly, how we value women in society," says [Heather Colburn](#), CEO of Run the World. Six months ago, issues like climate change and gun control ranked high on the list of voters' top priorities. Now, voters are paying closer attention to healthcare access and the economic recovery of our country. "We're facing these very urgent issues," she says. This is something we're currently witnessing firsthand as data shows that [communities of color](#) are being the most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

An unprecedented catastrophe in U.S. makes it seem obvious that Democratic women would vote for Biden in a heartbeat. But many say they're doing so with reservations. Here's why.

Acknowledging a pattern of impropriety in a post-#MeToo world.

Like many of the women I spoke to, Nancy*, a 26-year-old Latina woman in Los Angeles, says Biden's treatment of women is a top concern for her, citing his alleged [inappropriate touching of women in the workplace](#) as well as Tara Reade's sexual assault allegation (which Biden has denied).

Though the former vice president has volunteered his involvement in the passage of the Violence Against Women Act as evidence of his passion for fighting for women, some perceive that in the era of #MeToo, he's not the ideal representative of the Democratic party. [Na'ilah Amaru, a mixed race woman in her mid-thirties who resides in New York, believes that Biden's treatment of Anita Hill during Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's confirmation hearings in 1991 is especially troubling.](#) Days before entering the presidential race, [Biden called Hill to apologize](#) for how she was treated during the hearings, which he presided over as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Hill called his apology insufficient, adding that Biden and his committee failed to investigate her claims or to take them seriously, and told the *Times* that what she wants to see is "real change and real accountability and real purpose."

Although Hill made clear the apology was unsatisfactory, she has stated that she, too, would vote for Biden over Trump.

Looking at his voting history on race.

“My biggest concerns about Biden’s candidacy are his troubling record on racial justice and his pattern of violating the boundaries of women,” adds Amaru, citing Biden’s opposition of federally mandated busing in the 1970s (which was seen as means to appease his white constituents) as another example of why he was not her first choice. Biden’s position on the issue received renewed scrutiny after fellow candidate Kamala Harris confronted him about the issue at the first Democratic primary debate. He defended his stance by stating that he opposed “busing ordered by the Department of Education” and that busing should be a local decision made by city councils. Harris maintained her position, noting that throughout history, states have failed to “preserve the civil rights of all people,” and that’s when the federal government must step in. Among many other former candidates, Harris endorsed Biden's bid for the presidency in March of this year, saying, "Joe Biden served our country with dignity and we need him now more than ever. I will do everything in my power to help elect him the next President of the United States."



Though Amaru supported Senator Elizabeth Warren in the primary, she will cast her vote for Biden, too, in the interest of the greater good. “I understand what’s at stake: the Supreme Court; countless Black, trans, immigrant, and Muslim lives, and a generation of progress are all on the line,” she tells *InStyle*.

Nancy adds that although Biden has a great team that reaches out to minorities, “his voting record shows that he’s never been for us.” However, she says she’ll vote for Biden because marginalized communities are suffering terribly under the Trump administration.

“It breaks my heart seeing how many [Black Americans] have died at the hands of white supremacists and our administration is enabling that,” she adds, noting recent examples of white civilians and police officers murdering unarmed Black men and women, like runner Ahmaud Arbery and EMT Breonna Taylor. “This is a vote for the marginalized and to make life a little better for them.”

Hoping he's ready to take the debate stage again.

Courtney, a white woman in her early thirties based in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C. area, says that although Warren was her top choice from the start, she also welcomed Biden’s presence in the race. “I was genuinely interested in what he had to say and wanted to see a field with a lot of diversity, including establishment figureheads like Biden,” she explains. But he didn’t quite live up to expectations once the primary debates began. “You get me with your oratory skills and your command of topics,” says Courtney. “Biden crumbled over and over [in the primary debates], embarrassing himself with gaffes straight from the out-of-touch Boomer playbook.” She wonders if he will button up his presentation in time to take on Trump.

Challenging him to fight for all Americans.

The topic of Biden's shaky past with women is clearly a tough pill for many to swallow in order to cast their vote — but others expressed faith in Biden, adding that even if he wasn't the first choice, they're confident he'll succeed if elected. Marseille Allen, a 40-year-old Black woman and activist based in Flint, Mich. who volunteered for Senator Kamala Harris's presidential campaign, says that when it comes to Biden, his past “could have been better, but this is what we have to work with and the Trump administration has to go.”

Allen is focusing on the future and she says that what she wants most from Biden during this election is a clear plan to address the issues facing Native Americans, whom she calls “the forgotten” demographic. “I want to see an extensive plan that addresses treaty violations and the high rates of substance abuse and death by suicide,” she says. Since 2016, Allen has joined the Lakota in a yearly horseback ride that follows the same path Sitting Bull's band took to Wounded Knee before being slaughtered by the 7th Cavalry; a middle school girl who helped Allen learn to ride died by suicide after enduring vicious bullying, so the needs of this community hit home for her.

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Considering his VP pick, Senator Kamala Harris.

Although vice presidential candidates haven't historically influenced the outcome of elections, experts say 2020 will likely be an exception. That Biden committed to choosing a woman for his VP also makes it a race to watch for female voters looking for a name, a person, anything to connect to in this

contest. “I also think that the VP pick needs to appeal to women across the country in various demographics, so not only Democrats — but also Republican women who are fed up with Trump — could see power in her leadership,” James says.

In the first week of August, Biden announced Kamala Harris as his running mate. Confidence in her leadership abilities will be of the utmost importance come November. “Joe Biden is older and, should anything happen, she’ll be one heartbeat away from the presidency,” she adds.



Whether Harris was the woman she was rooting for or not, Allen summed up what’s at stake in this election: “[Trump] has done decades worth of damage,” she says. “We will not survive four more years. Anything we feel is American will be gone if he’s re-elected.”

**Last name has been withheld for privacy.*

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