Instant Insights for Leading Health Systems

With only 15 weeks left until the 2020 presidential election, President Trump faces a difficult political landscape. Surging COVID-19 cases, economic crisis stemming from the pandemic, and widespread civil unrest have all negatively impacted his approval rating. Moving into August, the presumptive Democratic nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, is leading in the polls with a plurality of voters indicating they would pick him if they election were today. However, according to major national polls, the Biden campaign must still prove its case to voters on issues such as the economy.

Medicare for All Is Out Of The Picture

Last week, the Biden-Sanders Unity Task Force introduced health care policy recommendations including a public option insurance plan, lowering Medicare eligibility from 65 to 60 years old, and reinvesting in public health, science, and research. However, the task force is still focused on addressing price transparency and aggressively reviewing M&A in the health care arena.

Hospitals Anticipate Resurgence Struggles

The number of coronavirus cases have now surged higher than the initial peak in April—more than 70,000 cases reported June 16—and the number of fatalities is also on the rise, surpassing 140,000 as of July 18. Once again, hospitals face shortages of PPE for front-line workers and the financial burden associated with halting elective surgeries for a second time.

Time Ticking for Additional Coronavirus Aid

The two parties and White House are divided on 5th coronavirus package, and Congress is up against a tight timeline with less than three weeks before they adjourn for summer recess. Republicans’ idea for a proposal is far less expansive than House Democrats’ $3T HEROES Act from May. While hospitals and providers have already been allocated $175B in the provider relief fund, hospital groups are pushing for an additional $100B.

Ailing Economy and Unemployment

Although the unemployment rate fell from 13.3% in May to 11.1% June, and healthcare regained 45% of jobs lost in March and April, a resurgence of coronavirus cases in parts of the country threatens hospital recovery efforts and workforce. The success of the economy and jobs returning depends heavily on containing the virus, we can expect it to be at the forefront for many voters in the November election.

Civil Unrest and Health Disparities

Polling shows a sharp increase in the number of Americans who believe racism and racial discrimination is a problem in the US. Studies also show that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacts minority communities, highlighting racial health disparities across the country. As more people recognize racism as a public health crisis, hospitals and providers will face increased scrutiny on how they address systemic racism amongst patients and workers.

Who Wins On Key Issues?

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<thead>
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<th>COVID-19 Response</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
<th>Race Relations</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trump</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biden</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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Sources: WSJ/NBC, New York Times, Kaiser Family Foundation
2020, An Election Year Like No Other

Amid a global pandemic, economic crisis, and mass protests, this election year looks unlike any other in the history of the US; the next two months will factor heavily into the election, as the administration aims for an upward trajectory by early October to tout to voters before November 3.

22% of Americans either missed last month’s rent or mortgage payment or have little confidence they can make the next one

48% of all Americans have lost employment income since March 13

11.1% of Americans reported being unemployed in June

$1200 is the amount of the onetime stimulus check received by 1.1 million Americans

$600 is the amount of the weekly supplemental benefit set to expire at the end of July

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau National Survey of 83,302 Adults, Conducted June 4-9, 2020

The Politization of COVID-19

As the U.S. continues to record increasing numbers of coronavirus cases, the commentary around the pandemic has become sharply polarized and political. The President continues to receive harsh criticism for his decisions around the coronavirus: even as the U.S. reaches a record number of COVID-19 deaths, the President has opted against wearing a mask at public appearances and refuses to push for a national masking mandate. The President has even suggested masks are nothing more than a political statement and an infringement on personal liberty.

While many Democratic-led states have already implemented mask-wearing mandates, Republican states have been slow to follow. Recently, however, Republican-led Alabama, Montana, and Arkansas have split from the President and have mandated masks for residents. New polling from Axios-Ipso indicates that nearly two-thirds of Americans report wearing a mask when they leave the house, with Republicans reporting the largest increase, from 35 percent to 45 percent, since the end of June.

Last week, the President received backlash for directing hospitals to bypass the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and instead send coronavirus data to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Officials including CDC Director Robert Redfield defended the change as an attempt to consolidate reporting requirements. President Trump is at odds with other officials within his administration including top disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Initially a leading voice in the Administration’s coronavirus response, Dr. Fauci has since been the focal point of attacks from the President.

Additionally, despite warnings from public health experts, the President has decided to continue with an in-person Republican National Convention (RNC), scheduled to be held in Jacksonville, Florida on August 24th-27th. The RNC was moved to Florida after originally being scheduled to take place in Charlotte, North Carolina. When North Carolina Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and Trump clashed over social-distancing measures, the President changed the event to Florida, where Republican Gov. Rick DeSantis has been an ardent ally of Trump and has implemented minimal public safety precautions around the pandemic.

Alternatively, the Democratic National Convention has decided to proceed with a predominantly virtual event on August 17th 20th. The presumptive democratic nominee, Joe Biden, spent the summer ramping up big TV ad buys in swing states, outspending President Trump by more than $10M in July, according to Advertising Analytics. While it’s not an aggressive strategy, it is strategic for Biden to focus on states that Trump narrowly won in the 2016 election. Recent CNBC polling in six battleground states indicates Trump’s approval rating has hit an all-time low of 45% amongst voters, and that Trump’s ads against his opponent have not been effective with voters.