

POLITICO-Harvard poll: Big domestic spending bills seen as stoking inflation

[politico.com/news/2022/01/26/biden-poll-social-spending-inflation-00001785](https://www.politico.com/news/2022/01/26/biden-poll-social-spending-inflation-00001785)

Health Care

At a time when inflation is a growing concern, the survey found more than four in 10 people believe that both the BBB and the infrastructure bill will increase inflation.



About one in three believe President Joe Biden’s entire Build Back Better Act would help the country, and less than one in four believe it will help their own families. | Alex Wong/Getty Images

By [Adriel Bettelheim](#)

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Democrats trying to salvage parts of the Biden social spending agenda will find a limited number of issues that resonate with voters heading into the midterm elections, according to a [POLITICO-Harvard survey](#) that shows significant concern over whether big-ticket items could lead to more inflation.

Respondents think free universal pre-K, paid family and medical leave and efforts to lower prescription drug prices would help their families and the country as a whole. But only about one in three believe President Joe Biden's entire Build Back Better Act would help the country, and less than one in four believe it will help their own families.

"The views of what the American public wants the president and Congress to do are influenced by recent Covid experiences," said Robert Blendon, a professor of health policy and political analysis at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, who designed the poll. "Paid leave is linked to how many people in their families were sick in the last six months, pre-K reflects people trying to get back to life and work who have no place to put their kids and drug prices are influenced by people who are ill or think they are, and who think they'll pay out of pocket."

The survey of 1,004 respondents, conducted from Jan. 4 to 9, also found the majority convinced that the \$1 trillion infrastructure plan Congress passed last year won't help either the country or their personal lives. Independents tended to side with Republicans in viewing the package as inflationary, upending the conventional view that big, bipartisan public works initiatives transcend partisan politics.

"Democrats really need something powerful here, since the bipartisan infrastructure bill that was enacted isn't being strongly supported by many Republicans or independents," Blendon said of the outlook for 2022.

The findings come as Biden continues to rally support for his domestic agenda. At a health care-focused conference hosted by the progressive advocacy group Families USA, Biden on Tuesday touted actions he's taken during his first year in office and renewed calls for the Senate to pass the social spending package that was derailed late last year by more conservative members of his party.

But respondents to the POLITICO-Harvard survey were skeptical about the benefits when asked about five key items in the package.

On social spending policies, 59 percent said establishing free universal pre-K for the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds would help the country, and 53 percent felt the same about providing four weeks of paid leave for U.S. workers. Just less than half believe that policies in the plan meant to lower prescription drug prices would actually reduce the cost of medicines.

There was less enthusiasm for some major environmental and tax policies. Fewer than four in 10 believe that funding different approaches to address climate change will actually make progress, or that an extension of the Child Tax Credit, which expired at the end of last year, will help the country as a whole.

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Blendon said Democrats may need to shrink and rebrand the social spending agenda, and portray it as a tonic for the biggest problems facing families. Using the filibuster-proof parliamentary process known as reconciliation to pass the agenda also carries the risk of confusing the public and diluting the party's message.

“The public is saying they aren't familiar with the Build Back Better bill and are not supportive of it as it stands,” Blendon said. “But if you rebrand the Build Better Better plan and it only has a few things the public thinks are very important, they could reconsider and might love it.”