AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2022 CONGRESS, WHERE IS THE PUBLIC ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILD BACK BETTER LEGISLATION

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This report, based on a new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll, examines the public's views on the Build Back Better plan that the U.S. Congress is continuing to debate. In particular, it looks at whether or not the public believes the overall plan and key aspects of it would, if enacted, help the country and help themselves and their families. The reason to focus on the importance of helping the country and your own family is that this is the way people think about issues in an election. People's priorities are important in making their voting decisions.

The new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll finds that at a time when inflation and COVID-19 top the public's list on concerns for their own families,[1] the public is not very focused on the Build Back Better plan (BBB), and they are not convinced that the plan will help either the country as a whole or themselves and their families.

Only about one in four (23%) report that they know a great deal or quite a lot about what is in BBB; nearly half (47%) say they know not too much or nothing at all (Table 1). Nearly equal proportions of Democrats (28%) and Republicans (24%) report that they know a great deal or quite a lot about what is in BBB.

Table 1. The Public's Self-Reported Knowledge of What Is in the Build Back Better Plan, by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
A great deal/Quite a lot (NET)	**23**	**28**	**24**	**20**
A great deal	8	10	7	7
Quite a lot	15	18	17	13
Some	**29**	**28**	**33**	**27**
Not too much/Nothing at all (NET)	**47**	**44**	**43**	**51**
Not too much	23	23	25	22
Nothing at all	24	21	18	29
Don't know/Refused	1	-	-	2

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, At the Beginning of the 2022 Congress, Where Is the Public on the Importance of Build Back Better Legislation. January 4 – 9, 2022. Base**:** U.S. adults.

Only about one in three (34%) believe BBB will help the country as a whole, and less than one in four (23%) believe it will help their own family. Majorities of the public believe that two items contained in the plan will help the country as a whole: (1) establishing free universal pre-kindergarten for the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds (59%) and (2) providing four weeks of paid leave for U.S. workers, covering all workers who want to take paid time off for the birth of a newborn or care of a family member, as well as for illness or injury (53%). About half (49%)

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believe that policies in the plan meant to lower prescription drug costs would actually reduce drug costs for the country as a whole (Table 2).

Fewer than four in ten believe that the plan's funding of different approaches to try to reduce climate change will actually slow climate change (39%) or that an extension of the Child Tax Credit will help the country as a whole (38%).

Table 2. The Public's Views on Whether Aspects of the Build Back Better Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Would Help the Country and Their Own Families, in percent

	Would help the country	Would help you/your family
Build Back Better plan overall	34	23
Aspects of Build Back Better plan		
Establish free universal pre-kindergarten for the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds	59	26
Provide four weeks of paid leave for U.S. workers, covering all workers who want to take paid time off for the birth of a newborn or care of a family member, as well as for illness or injury	53	41
Federal policies to try to lower future prices for some prescription drugs. These include giving Medicare the power to directly negotiate the price of certain drugs, such as some cancer drugs, and capping out-of-pocket costs for some prescriptions, such as insulin. (% saying this would lower Rx drug prices for the U.S., for you/your family)	49	29
Provide substantial funding for a number of different approaches to try to reduce climate change (% saying this would slow future climate change)	39	NA
Extend the Child Tax Credit, which gives cash payments regularly to people who have children	38	22
Bipartisan infrastructure bill overall	45	24

NA = Not applicable

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In this particular political environment, it is important to know that majorities of the public do not believe that any of these key provisions of BBB will help themselves and their families. The one item seen by the largest share of the public as helping themselves and their families is paid family and medical leave (41%).

Of note, 59% of adults in households with children under age 5 believe establishing free universal pre-kindergarten would help them and their families. Also, 37% of adults in households with children under age 18 believe extending the Child Tax Credit will help them and their families.

When it comes to the already-enacted bipartisan infrastructure bill, again less than half of the public (45%) believes it will help the country as a whole, and only about one in four (24%) think it will help themselves and their families. Even though the bill has already been enacted, few people say they know what was in the bill. Only 18% say they know a great deal or quite a lot, while more than half (53%) say they know not too much or nothing at all about what is in the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

In addition, at a time when inflation is a top concern of the public, more than four in ten believe that both BBB (46%) and the bipartisan infrastructure bill (43%) will increase inflation (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. The Public's Views on the Effect of the Build Back Better Plan on Inflation in the U.S., by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Increase (NET)	**46**	**18**	**71**	**52**
Increase a lot	32	8	57	34
Increase a little	14	10	14	18
Decrease (NET)	**8**	**16**	**5**	**4**
Decrease a little	5	8	4	4
Decrease a lot	3	8	1	*
Would not make much difference	**32**	**51**	**15**	**32**
Don't know/Refused	14	15	9	12

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Table 4. The Public's Views on the Effect of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill on Inflation in the U.S., by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Increase (NET)	**43**	**21**	**67**	**45**
Increase a lot	30	9	53	32
Increase a little	13	12	14	13
Decrease (NET)	**10**	**14**	**6**	**10**
Decrease a little	6	8	3	6
Decrease a lot	4	6	3	4
Would not make much difference	**35**	**51**	**19**	**35**
Don't know/Refused	12	14	8	10

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, At the Beginning of the 2022 Congress, Where Is the Public on the Importance of Build Back Better Legislation. January 4 – 9, 2022. Base**:** U.S. adults.

Of note, Democrats and Republicans differ sharply in their assessments of BBB and the bipartisan infrastructure bill. On the overall BBB plan and the five key items tested in the poll, a majority of Democrats believe all of them will help the country as a whole. In contrast, on none of these plans or provisions do a majority of Republicans believe they will help the country. About two-thirds of Democrats (68%), but only 8% of Republicans believe BBB overall will help the country. Even on the infrastructure bill, which was passed on a bipartisan basis, only 23% of Republicans think it will help the country, compared to 68% of Democrats (Table 5).

Table 5. The Public's Views on Whether Aspects of the Build Back Better Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Would Help the Country, by Party Identification, in percent

	Would help the country			
	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Build Back Better plan overall	34	68	8	28
Aspects of Build Back Better plan				
Establish free universal pre-kindergarten for the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds	59	86	35	58
Provide four weeks of paid leave for U.S. workers, covering all workers who want to take paid time off for the birth of a newborn or care of a family member, as well as for illness or injury	53	82	25	49
Federal policies to try to lower future prices for some prescription drugs. These include giving Medicare the power to directly negotiate the price of certain drugs, such as some cancer drugs, and capping out-of-pocket costs for some prescriptions, such as insulin. (% saying this would lower Rx drug prices in the U.S.)	49	81	20	49
Provide substantial funding for a number of different approaches to try to reduce climate change (% saying this would slow future climate change)	39	64	11	38
Extend the Child Tax Credit, which gives cash payments regularly to people who have children	38	66	12	38
Bipartisan infrastructure bill overall	45	68	23	45

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Only small proportions of Republicans believe either of the bills or their provisions will help themselves and their families. A majority of Democrats see only policies aimed at lowering prescription drug costs (61%) and providing paid family and medical leave (53%) as helping their own families (Table 6). The one item seen by the largest share of Independents as helping themselves and their families is paid family and medical leave (43%).

Table 6. The Public's Views on Whether Aspects of the Build Back Better Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Would Help Their Own Families, by Party Identification, in percent

	Would help you/your family			
	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Build Back Better plan overall	23	45	6	20
Aspects of Build Back Better plan				
Establish free universal pre-kindergarten for the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds	26	42	10	24
Provide four weeks of paid leave for U.S. workers, covering all workers who want to take paid time off for the birth of a newborn or care of a family member, as well as for illness or injury	41	53	22	43
Federal policies to try to lower future prices for some prescription drugs. These include giving Medicare the power to directly negotiate the price of certain drugs, such as some cancer drugs, and capping out-of-pocket costs for some prescriptions, such as insulin. (% saying this would lower Rx drug prices for you/your family)	29	61	13	19
Provide substantial funding for a number of different approaches to try to reduce climate change (% saying this would slow future climate change)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Extend the Child Tax Credit, which gives cash payments regularly to people who have children	22	38	9	20
Bipartisan infrastructure bill overall	24	44	5	24

NA = Not applicable

In addition, Democrats and Republicans differ sharply on the likelihood that BBB and the bipartisan infrastructure bill will increase inflation in the U.S. Only about two in ten Democrats believe that BBB (18%) or the bipartisan infrastructure bill (21%) will increase inflation, compared to about seven in ten Republicans (71% BBB, 67% bipartisan infrastructure bill). Among Independents, about half (52%) believe BBB will increase inflation and 45% think the bipartisan infrastructure bill will do so (Tables 3 and 4).

The poll shows that only 30% of the public will be disappointed if BBB is not enacted this year. This view is held mainly by Democrats (61%), not Republicans (9%) or Independents (23%).

In order for BBB to possibly gain stronger support, the public would need to come to believe that it helps the country and their own families. At the moment, a large share of the public is not convinced about either of these benefits.

METHODOLOGY

The results are based on polling conducted by *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Representatives of the two organizations worked closely to develop the survey questionnaires and analyze the results of the polls. *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health paid for the surveys and related expenses.

The project team was led by Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D., Professor of Public Health and Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis Emeritus, at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Joanne Kenen, Executive Editor, Health Care at *Politico/Politico Pro*. The *Politico* research team also included Adriel Bettelheim and Dan Goldberg; the Harvard research team also included John M. Benson and Chelsea Whitton Pearsall.

Interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,004 randomly selected U.S. adults via telephone (including cell phones and landlines) by SSRS of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The interviewing period was January 4 – 9, 2022. The interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

When interpreting these findings, one should recognize that all surveys are subject to sampling error. The margin of error for the full sample is ±3.4 percentage points. The margin of error for questions asked of half-samples is ±4.8 percentage points.

Possible sources of non-sampling error include non-response bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Non-response in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases and for variations in probability of selection within and across households, sample data are weighted by household size, cell phone/landline use, party identification, and demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, and region) to reflect the true population. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.

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This survey was conducted for *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted via telephone (cell phone and landline) **January 4 – 9, 2022,** among a nationally representative sample of **1,004 U.S. adults**. The margin of error for total respondents is ±3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. More information about SSRS can be obtained by visiting www.ssrs.com.

A. Build Back Better – Overall Assessments

POLQ1. Now I'm going to ask you a few questions about the Build Back Better plan, or BBB, a $1.7 trillion social spending bill supported by President Biden that Congress has been debating the past few months. How much would you say you know about what is in the Build Back Better plan?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
A great deal/Quite a lot (NET)	**23**	**28**	**24**	**20**
A great deal	8	10	7	7
Quite a lot	15	18	17	13
Some	**29**	**28**	**33**	**27**
Not too much/Nothing at all (NET)	**47**	**44**	**43**	**51**
Not too much	23	23	25	22
Nothing at all	24	21	18	29
Don't know/Refused	1	-	-	2

POLQ2. From what you have seen, read, or heard, do you support or oppose the Build Back Better plan? (If support/oppose) Do you (support/oppose) the plan strongly or somewhat?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Support (NET)	**41**	**75**	**12**	**38**
Strongly support	21	49	2	16
Somewhat support	20	26	10	22
Oppose (NET)	**40**	**9**	**76**	**41**
Somewhat oppose	11	5	16	12
Strongly oppose	29	4	60	29
Don't know/Refused	19	16	12	21

POLQ3.   If enacted, do you think the Build Back Better plan would help or hurt the country as a whole, or would it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it would (help/hurt) the country as a whole a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Help (NET)	**34**	**68**	**8**	**28**
Help a lot	22	50	4	15
Help a little	12	18	4	13
Hurt (NET)	**36**	**6**	**67**	**37**
Hurt a little	7	3	9	7
Hurt a lot	29	3	58	30
Would not make much difference	**17**	**16**	**12**	**22**
Don't know/Refused	13	10	13	13

POLQ4.   If enacted, do you think the Build Back Better plan would increase or decrease inflation in the U.S., or would it not make much difference? (If increase/Decrease) Do you think it would (increase/decrease) inflation a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Increase (NET)	**46**	**18**	**71**	**52**
Increase a lot	32	8	57	34
Increase a little	14	10	14	18
Decrease (NET)	**8**	**16**	**5**	**4**
Decrease a little	5	8	4	4
Decrease a lot	3	8	1	*
Would not make much difference	**32**	**51**	**15**	**32**
Don't know/Refused	14	15	9	12

POLQ5.   If enacted, do you think the Build Back Better plan would help or hurt you and your family, or would it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it would (help/hurt) you and your family a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Help (NET)	**23**	**45**	**6**	**20**
Help a lot	13	26	3	10
Help a little	10	19	3	10
Hurt (NET)	**29**	**5**	**63**	**26**
Hurt a little	7	1	16	7
Hurt a lot	22	4	47	19
Would not make much difference	**34**	**39**	**21**	**42**
Don't know/Refused	14	11	10	12

POLQ5a.   If the Build Back Better plan is not enacted this year, will you be disappointed or not? (If disappointed) Would you be disappointed a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Disappointed (NET)	**30**	**61**	**9**	**23**
Disappointed a lot	21	47	6	13
Disappointed a little	9	14	3	10
Would not make much difference	**60**	**30**	**84**	**68**
Don't know/Refused	10	9	7	9

B. Build Back Better – Specific Issues

Now I'm going to ask you about a few of the issues that are included in the Build Back Better plan.

(Asked of half-sample A; n=502)
POLQ6.   The Build Back Better plan includes federal policies to try to lower future prices for some prescription drugs. These include giving Medicare the power to directly negotiate the price of certain drugs, such as some cancer drugs, and capping out-of-pocket costs for some prescriptions, such as insulin. Do you think these policies would lower future prescription drug prices in the U.S., or would they not make much difference? (If lower) Do you think these policies would lower future prescription drug prices in the U.S. a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Lower (NET)	**49**	**81**	**20**	**49**
Lower a lot	23	44	8	19
Lower a little	26	37	12	30
Would not make much difference	**43**	**14**	**72**	**44**
Don't know/Refused	8	5	8	7

(Asked of half-sample A; n=502)
POLQ7.   Do you think these policies would lower future prescription drug prices for you and your family, or would they not make much difference? (If lower) Do you think these policies would lower future prescription drug prices for you and your family a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Lower (NET)	**29**	**61**	**13**	**19**
Lower a lot	15	35	7	6
Lower a little	14	26	6	13
Would not make much difference	**66**	**38**	**81**	**78**
Don't know/Refused	5	1	6	3

(Asked of half-sample B; n=502)
POLQ9.   The Build Back Better plan provides substantial funding for a number of different approaches to try to reduce climate change. Do you think these projects would slow future climate change, or would they not make much difference? (If slow future climate change) Do you think these policies would slow future climate change a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Slow future climate change (NET)	**39**	**64**	**11**	**38**
Slow future climate change a lot	20	42	2	14
Slow future climate change a little	19	22	9	24
Would not make much difference	**55**	**28**	**87**	**55**
Don't know/Refused	6	8	2	7

(Read to half-sample B; n=502)
The Build Back Better plan provides four weeks of paid leave for U.S. workers, covering all workers who want to take paid time off for the birth of a newborn or care of a family member, as well as for illness or injury.

(Asked of half-sample B; n=502)
POLQ11. Do you think that if paid family and medical leave was made available, it would help you and your family, or would it not make much difference? (If help) Do you think it would help you and your family a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Help (NET)	**41**	**53**	**22**	**43**
Help a lot	28	42	12	26
Help a little	13	11	10	17
Would not make much difference	**58**	**46**	**78**	**56**
Don't know/Refused	1	1	-	1

(Asked of half-sample B; n=502)
POLQ12. Do you think that if paid family and medical leave was made available, it would help or hurt the country as a whole, or would it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it would (help/hurt) the country as a whole a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Help (NET)	**53**	**82**	**25**	**49**
Help a lot	37	60	13	36
Help a little	16	22	12	13
Hurt (NET)	**18**	**3**	**40**	**15**
Hurt a little	6	1	18	3
Hurt a lot	12	2	22	12
Would not make much difference	**26**	**14**	**33**	**31**
Don't know/Refused	3	1	2	5

The Build Back Better plan extends the Child Tax Credit, which gives cash payments regularly to people who have children.

(Asked of half-sample A; n=502)
POLQ14. Do you think extending the Child Tax Credit would help or hurt you and your family, or would it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it would (help/hurt) you and your family a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children age < 18
Help (NET)	**22**	**38**	**9**	**20**	**37**
Help a lot	13	25	5	11	22
Help a little	9	13	4	9	15
Hurt (NET)	**12**	**3**	**20**	**12**	**11**
Hurt a little	5	2	8	6	6
Hurt a lot	7	1	12	6	5
Would not make much difference	**64**	**57**	**68**	**68**	**51**
Don't know/Refused	2	2	3	-	1

(Asked of half-sample A; n=502)
POLQ15. Do you think extending the Child Tax Credit would help or hurt the country as a whole, or would it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it would (help/hurt) the country as a whole a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children age < 18
Help (NET)	**38**	**66**	**12**	**38**	**44**
Help a lot	25	47	9	21	28
Help a little	13	19	3	17	16
Hurt (NET)	**30**	**8**	**56**	**28**	**29**
Hurt a little	8	2	14	9	8
Hurt a lot	22	6	42	19	21
Would not make much difference	**29**	**26**	**30**	**31**	**26**
Don't know/Refused	3	-	2	3	1

POLQ16. The Build Back Better plan establishes free universal pre-kindergarten for the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds. Do you think this would help or hurt the country as a whole, or would it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it would (help/hurt) the country as a whole a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children age 0-4
Help (NET)	**59**	**86**	**35**	**58**	**59**
Help a lot	46	73	20	45	54
Help a little	13	13	15	13	5
Hurt (NET)	**15**	**2**	**29**	**15**	**13**
Hurt a little	4	1	7	4	3
Hurt a lot	11	1	22	11	10
Would not make much difference	**23**	**11**	**34**	**25**	**24**
Don't know/Refused	3	1	2	2	4

POLQ17. Do you think establishing free universal pre-kindergarten would help or hurt you and your family, or would it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it would (help/hurt) you and your family a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Adults in households with children age 0-4
Help (NET)	**26**	**42**	**10**	**24**	**48**
Help a lot	20	36	5	19	42
Help a little	6	6	5	5	6
Hurt (NET)	**6**	**1**	**12**	**5**	**5**
Hurt a little	1	-	1	1	3
Hurt a lot	5	1	11	4	2
Would not make much difference	**66**	**56**	**77**	**69**	**47**
Don't know/Refused	2	1	1	2	-

C. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill

POLQ18. Now I'm going to ask a few questions about a $1 trillion infrastructure bill, often called the bipartisan infrastructure bill or BIF, that was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President in December. How much would you say you know about what is in the infrastructure bill often called BIF?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
A great deal/Quite a lot (NET)	**18**	**22**	**17**	**16**
A great deal	7	10	4	6
Quite a lot	11	12	13	10
Some	**27**	**28**	**29**	**27**
Not too much/Nothing at all (NET)	**53**	**49**	**52**	**55**
Not too much	23	23	25	23
Nothing at all	30	26	27	32
Don't know/Refused	2	1	2	2

POLQ19. From what you have seen, read, or heard, do you approve or disapprove of this infrastructure bill having been enacted? (If approve/disapprove) Do you (approve/disapprove) strongly or somewhat?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Approve (Net)	**48**	**75**	**25**	**46**
Approve strongly	23	45	5	21
Approve somewhat	25	30	20	25
Disapprove (Net)	**30**	**7**	**57**	**33**
Disapprove somewhat	12	4	20	16
Disapprove strongly	18	3	37	17
Don't know/Refused	22	18	18	22

POLQ20. Do you think the infrastructure bill will help or hurt the country as a whole, or will it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it will (help/hurt) the country as a whole a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Help (NET)	**45**	**68**	**23**	**45**
Help a lot	32	57	9	30
Help a little	13	11	14	15
Hurt (NET)	**19**	**4**	**35**	**20**
Hurt a little	3	1	5	1
Hurt a lot	16	3	30	19
Would not make much difference	**22**	**16**	**32**	**20**
Don't know/Refused	14	12	10	15

POLQ21. Do you think the infrastructure bill will increase or decrease inflation in the U.S., or will it not make much difference (If increase/decrease) Do you think it will (increase/decrease) inflation a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Increase (NET)	**43**	**21**	**67**	**45**
Increase a lot	30	9	53	32
Increase a little	13	12	14	13
Decrease (NET)	**10**	**14**	**6**	**10**
Decrease a little	6	8	3	6
Decrease a lot	4	6	3	4
Would not make much difference	**35**	**51**	**19**	**35**
Don't know/Refused	12	14	8	10

POLQ22. Do you think the infrastructure bill will help or hurt you and your family, or will it not make much difference? (If help/hurt) Do you think it will (help/hurt) you and your family a lot or a little?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Help (NET)	**24**	**44**	**5**	**24**
Help a lot	14	26	4	14
Help a little	10	18	1	10
Hurt (NET)	**22**	**4**	**42**	**22**
Hurt a little	6	-	13	5
Hurt a lot	16	4	29	17
Would not make much difference	**44**	**46**	**44**	**44**
Don't know/Refused	10	6	9	10