

To: Interested Parties

From: GBAO

Date: February 23, 2022

## SOTU: An Opportunity To Connect With Black Americans' Priorities

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This memo includes an analysis of a survey conducted by GBAO on behalf of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The national multimodal survey of 600 Black American adults, included both registered voters and non-voters. Interviews were conducted February 12-15 via live calls to 155 landlines and 245 cell phones, and 200 interviews were conducted via online panel.

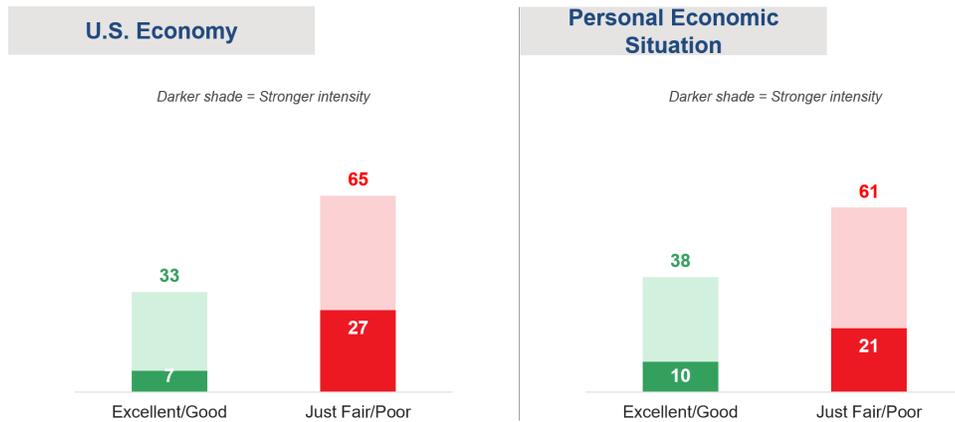
As President Biden prepares to deliver his second State of the Union address on March 1<sup>st</sup>, most Black Americans are planning on watching and expect the speech to address the issues most important to them. While nearly three-quarters approve of Biden's job as president, a majority feel personal economic pressure and are pessimistic about the direction of the country. In this context, they prioritize the economy, health care, and the cost of living – from childcare to college, housing, and daily goods.

### Key Findings

- **A majority of Black Americans are pessimistic about the country, the national economy, and their own personal economic situation.** Half (50%) of Black adults are pessimistic about the direction of the country, and even more (65%) are pessimistic about the economy. While recent [Navigator Research](#) polling among voters shows Americans tend to be more positive about their own financial situation than the country's, in this survey about six-in-ten rate their own situation as fair or poor.



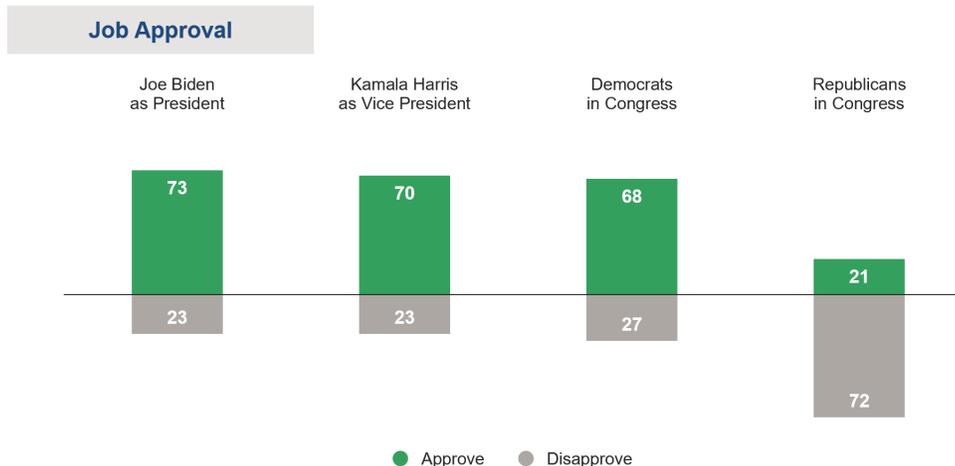
## Black Americans Have A Negative Economic Outlook



These perceptions may not be volatile. A plurality say their situation has not changed in the past year, with as many seeing improvement (28%) as a worsening (26%).

- **Beyond this pessimism, most Black Americans approve of President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Democrats in Congress.** Nearly three-quarters approve of Biden's job as president (73%) and about as many (70%) approve of Harris' job as Vice President. Approval is comparable with partisanship as 76% in this survey identify as Democrats and 42% do so strongly.

## Most Approve Of The Job Biden, Harris And Democrats In Congress Are Doing



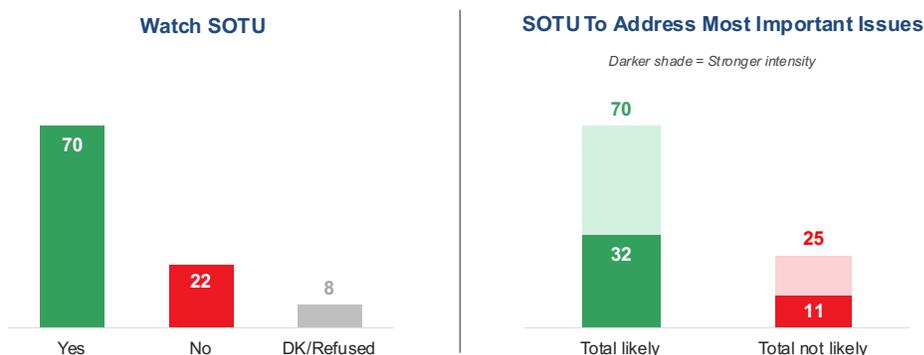
Democrats in Congress also receive positive ratings (68% approval), while one in five (21%) approve of the job their Republican colleagues are doing.

- **The State of the Union address is an opportunity for President Biden to connect with Black Americans' priorities.** Seven-in-ten indicate they plan to watch the State of the Union speech, and the same proportion expect the President to address the issues most important to them during the speech. More say he is very likely to address issues important to them (32%) than the total who say he is unlikely (25%).

### Most Will Watch SOTU Speech And Expect It To Address Issues Important To Them

#### State Of The Union Address

*As you may know, President Biden will give a State of the Union address to Congress on March first. Do you plan to watch the President's State of the Union speech? // And regardless of whether you plan to watch it or not, how likely do you think it is that the President's State of the Union speech will address the issues most important to you?*



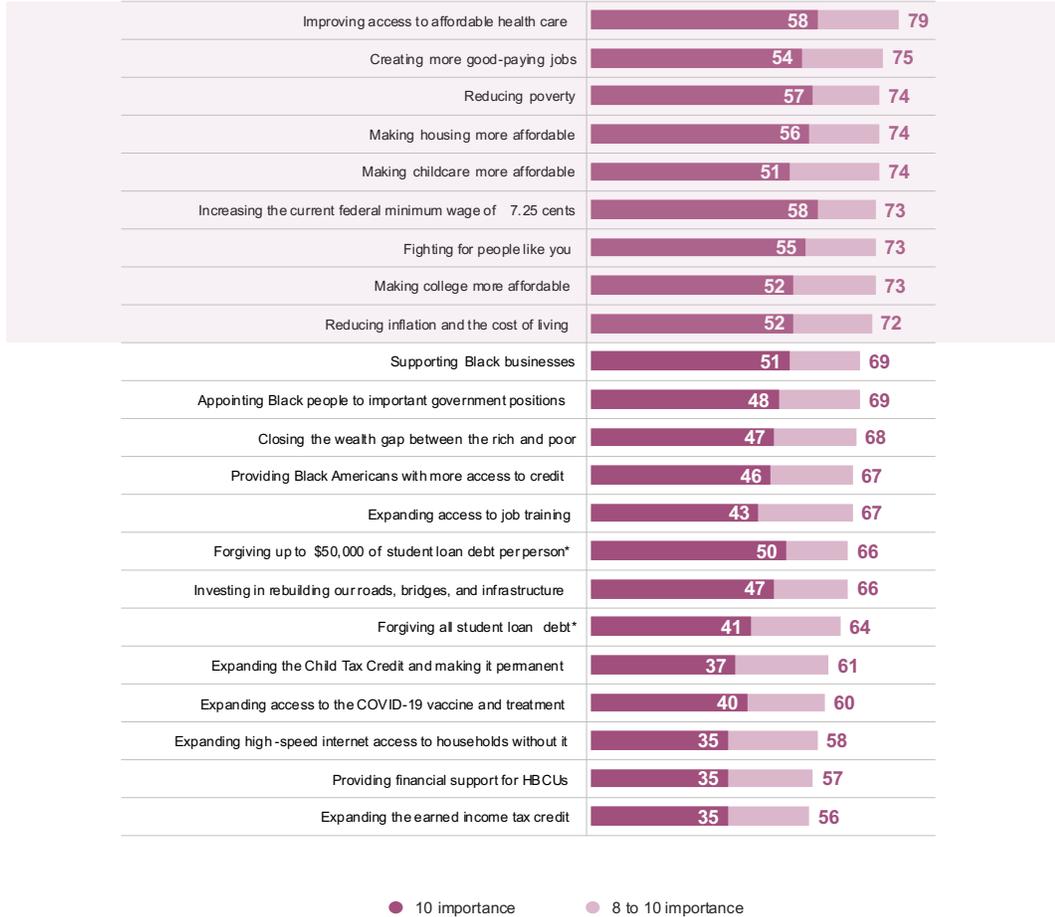
The State of the Union address is also an opportunity for President Biden to engage with the 32% who approve of his job as President but are also pessimistic about the direction of the country. This pessimistic audience is five points more likely to indicate they will watch the SOTU speech than Black Americans overall.

- **Black Americans prioritize many issues for President Biden's agenda, but the economy and health care are top tier.** Considering Black Americans' economic outlook, it is not surprising economic issues are higher priority for Biden to address. Health care, jobs, poverty, wages, and the affordability of college, childcare, housing, and the cost of living are all top mentions.

## Black Americans Rank Economic Issues As Higher Priorities For President Biden

### Issue Priorities

Now, I'm going to read you a list of different issues President Biden could work on. For each issue, please tell me how important of a priority you personally think this should be for President Biden, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means it is not important at all and 10 means it is very important. You can choose any number between 1 and 10.



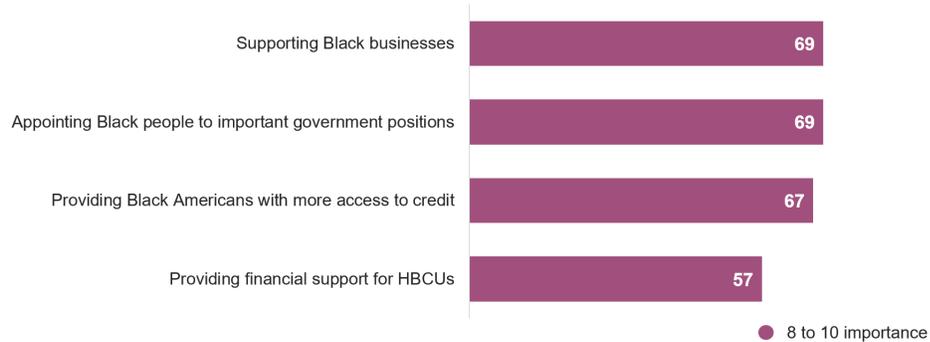
\* Split sample

- **While about two-thirds consider racial equity issues as high priorities, they are slightly lower than economic issues.** Higher-rating racial equity issues include supporting Black businesses (69% rating 8 to 10 on a 0 to 10 scale of importance); appointing Black people to important government positions (69%); and providing Black Americans with more access to credit (67%).

## Not All Racial Equity Issues Score Equally High For Black Americans As A Priority

### Issue Priorities

Now, I'm going to read you a list of different issues President Biden could work on. For each issue, please tell me how important of a priority you personally think this should be for President Biden, using a scale of zero to ten, where zero means it is not important at all and ten means it is very important. You can choose any number between zero and ten.



A majority believe financial support for HBCUs should be a priority, although it scores somewhat lower than the others in the list (57% 8 to 10). It is somewhat more important to those with a college degree (61%).

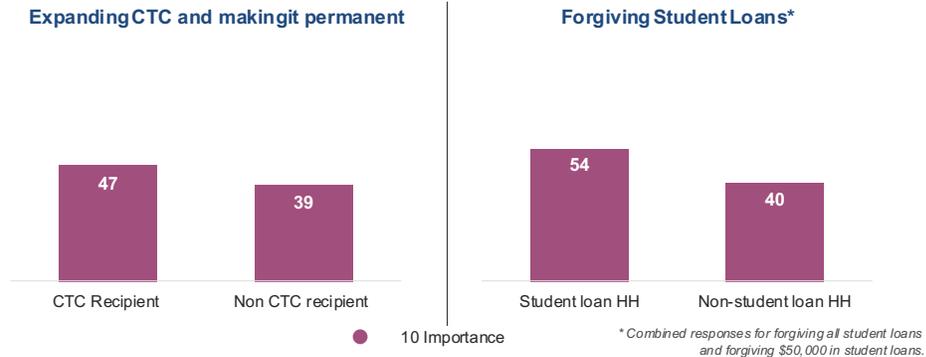
Most see reducing the impact of racism as a government responsibility, yet fewer feel this job is being done well. Most (81%) agree it is the federal government's responsibility to reduce the impact of racism and discrimination on Black Americans, yet half (51%) currently disapprove of the federal government's job on this effort. Those who disapprove are more likely to be younger (under 45), female, as well as more progressive (63%, 56%, and 18% respectively).

- **Recipients of government programs like the CTC or student loans are more likely to consider these programs important for Biden to address.** A majority (53%) have received advanced payments of the Child Tax Credit. For them, expanding the Child Tax Credit and making it permanent is more important (47% rate it a 10 on the 10-point scale) than for those who have not received it (39%).

## Support For Expanding CTC And Student Loan Forgiveness Higher Among Recipients

### CTC/Student Loans

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Slightly fewer Black adults are in households currently with student loans (40%) than receiving CTC payments, yet the gap in importance between recipients is even starker here. Student loan recipients find loan forgiveness a bit more important (54% on the 10-point scale) than those who don't have loans (40% on the 10-point scale). We also compared forgiving all student loans with forgiving up to \$50,000 in student loans, by asking half of the sample one version of the question and half the other version. Interestingly, more prioritize forgiving the specific amount rather than forgiving all loans (50% vs 41% 10 rating on the 10-point scale).

### Summary and Conclusions

- Black Americans support the President, the Vice President, and Democrats in Congress.
- Yet many are feeling personal economic pressure and are pessimistic about the direction of the country.
- Most say they will watch the State of the Union address and expect to hear something important to them personally.
- These Americans prioritize the economy, health care, and the cost of everything from childcare to college, to housing and daily goods.
- A racial equity agenda is not the only priority for Black adults, however half are disappointed with how the federal government is handling racism and discrimination.
- Specific government programs are also particularly important to those directly impacted by them.