

What Arizona Voters Want: Exclusive Briefing on Education

Hosted by Education Forward Arizona and
Center for the Future of Arizona

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

Introduction & Importance of Listening to Constituents

Thank you for joining us to discuss an essential topic:

What Arizona voters are saying about the future of education in our state.

Key Findings from the 2024 Arizona Voters' Agenda

Every election cycle, Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) conducts public opinion surveys of Republican, Democratic, and independent/unaffiliated likely voters to explore their perspectives on the election and issues facing the state. The Voters' Agenda focuses on what the vast majority of voters care about.

Findings reaffirm that education is central to the state's long-term success.

Arizonans across party and generational lines want practical solutions to support students and prepare them for the future.

Key Findings from Education Forward Arizona Polls

Over the past year, Education Forward Arizona conducted three public opinion polls on education beyond high school.

Poll 1: The first poll documented that all Arizona voters—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—believe that some learning beyond high school is necessary for a person to be successful in today’s work world, whether that means attending a workforce certification program, a 2-year career-training degree or a 4-year degree.

Poll 2: The second poll surveyed Arizonans ages 18 to 40 about why they hadn’t attempted or finished an education degree or workforce certificate. The majority of respondents said they recognized that their lives would have been better if they had completed additional education or training. They reported that the largest obstacle to pursuing education and training opportunities was cost.

Poll 3: Our latest poll campaign reveals strong public demand for increased access to education and training after high school with some specific policies rising to the top with multiple policies receiving 90%+ support.

Postsecondary Education and Training is Imperative

Arizona voters believe education beyond high school is essential for success—whether it's a workforce certification, 2-year, or 4-year degree.

Voters believe that they will see improved financial outcomes and quality of life for those with additional education.



Voter Sentiment: A Mandate for Action

Voters overwhelmingly support policies that increase access to postsecondary education and training.

There is a disconnect between elected leaders and voters because the poll findings suggest a bi-partisan mandate for Arizona leaders to invest more in education and training opportunities.



Barriers to Education and Training after High School

Why are Arizonans not enrolling and/or finishing education and training after high school?

Cost is the primary obstacle for Arizonans pursuing further education or training.

Many respondents recognize that completing additional education or training could improve their lives.



Recent Statewide Data

The Arizona Voters' Agenda Initiative

Centering the priorities of voters in elections

About the Arizona Voters' Agenda Surveys

- Developed from TWO surveys each election cycle: in the spring before the Primary and in the fall before the General Election
- Conducted by Arizona-based firm HighGround Public Affairs
- Each survey samples 500 likely voters ages 18 and older, reflecting the makeup of the statewide electorate
- Phone surveys conducted in English and Spanish
- Partisan advantage +4% GOP. Margin of error $\pm 4.3\%$. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

The Arizona Voters' Agenda is Built on Where Voters Agree

Policy Items and Value Statements must meet or surpass a high threshold of agreement, defined by the following criteria, in order to be included on the Arizona Voters' Agenda:

50%

Strong
agreement

All Voters

&

50%

Strong and
somewhat
agreement

Every Political Affiliation and Age Group

2024 Arizona Voters' Agenda

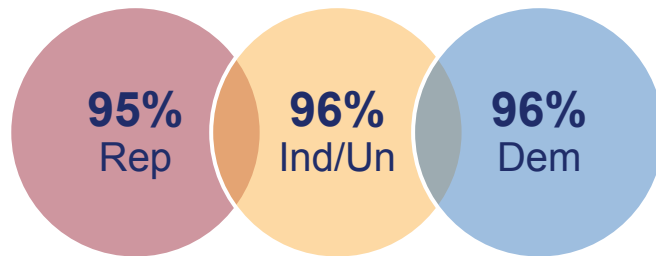
Education

Spring & Fall Surveys

Quality Education for Every Child Regardless of Background

Support for the following statement: Every school should have the resources necessary to deliver quality education that prepares every child for the future, no matter their skin color, background, or zip code.

96%
All Voters



K-12 Education: Invest, Don't Cut

Support for increasing funding for K-12 public education.



79%

All Voters



87%

All Voters

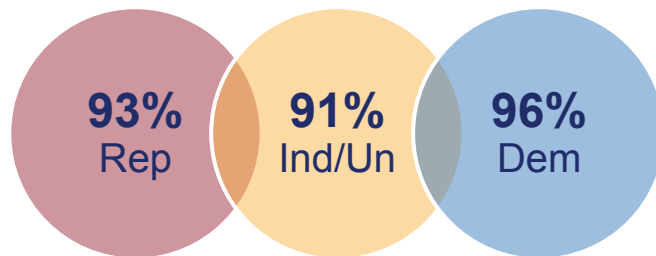
Oppose making cuts to K-12 education to balance the state budget.

Arizona Voters Focused on the Importance of Reading

Ensure teachers are trained in the most effective approaches to teaching reading.

Strong postsecondary system starts with a strong K-12 system

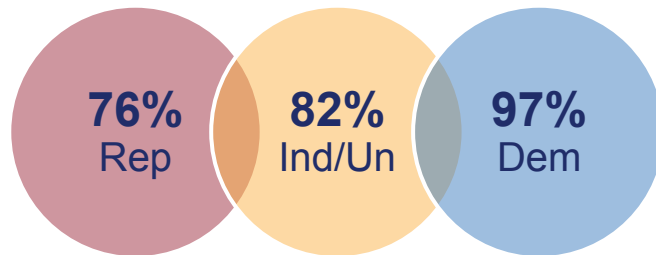
94%
All Voters



Loud and Clear: More Students Need to Pursue Education & Training Beyond High School

Support for the following statement: Currently, less than half of Arizona students enroll in any form of post-secondary education after high school. Arizona needs to increase the number of students who pursue and complete education or training beyond high school (including university, community college or technical/trade school).

85%
All Voters



How to Support More Students to Pursue Education & Training Beyond High School

93%

All Voters

Ensure every student can access dual enrollment or other early college opportunities to earn college credit while in high school.

77%

All Voters

Increase need-based state financial aid to encourage more students to enroll in Arizona's public universities and community colleges after high school.

State Investments in Public Higher Ed Are a Priority to Achieving Postsecondary Attainment

In the last budget, the State of Arizona made cuts to its first and only need-based higher education financial aid program. Is this the right direction or wrong direction for Arizona?

66%

All Voters



Wrong Direction

State Investments in Public Higher Ed Are a Priority to Achieving Postsecondary Attainment

Support for the following statement: Our public universities and community colleges are critical to ensuring Arizona's success now and in the future. State investments in public higher education should be a priority.

79%

All Voters

Arizona Voters' Agenda: Education Summary

All Voters

| POLICY ITEMS | STRONGLY SUPPORT | TOTAL SUPPORT |
|---|------------------|---------------|
| Ensure teachers are trained in the most effective approaches to teaching reading. | 79% | 94% |
| Ensure every student can access dual enrollment or other early college opportunities to earn college credit while in high school. | 78% | 93% |
| Private schools that receive state funding should be held to the same standards as public schools when it comes to financial reporting requirements, academic reporting requirements, and employment standards. | 66% | 80% |
| Increase funding for K-12 public education. | 63% | 79% |
| Increase the number of students who pursue and complete education or training beyond high school (including university, community college or technical/trade school). | 60% | 85% |
| Increase need-based state financial aid to encourage more students to enroll in Arizona's public universities and community colleges after high school. | 56% | 77% |

Arizona Voters' Agenda: Education Summary

All Voters

| VALUE STATEMENTS | STRONGLY AGREE | TOTAL AGREE |
|---|----------------|-------------|
| Every school should have the resources necessary to deliver quality education that prepares every child for the future, no matter their skin color, background, or zip code. | 89% | 96% |
| Our public universities and community colleges are critical to ensuring Arizona's success now and in the future. State investments in public higher education should be a priority. | 53% | 79% |

Digging Deeper: Everything To Gain Polling Data

Conducted September 19-26, 2024

Survey Methodology

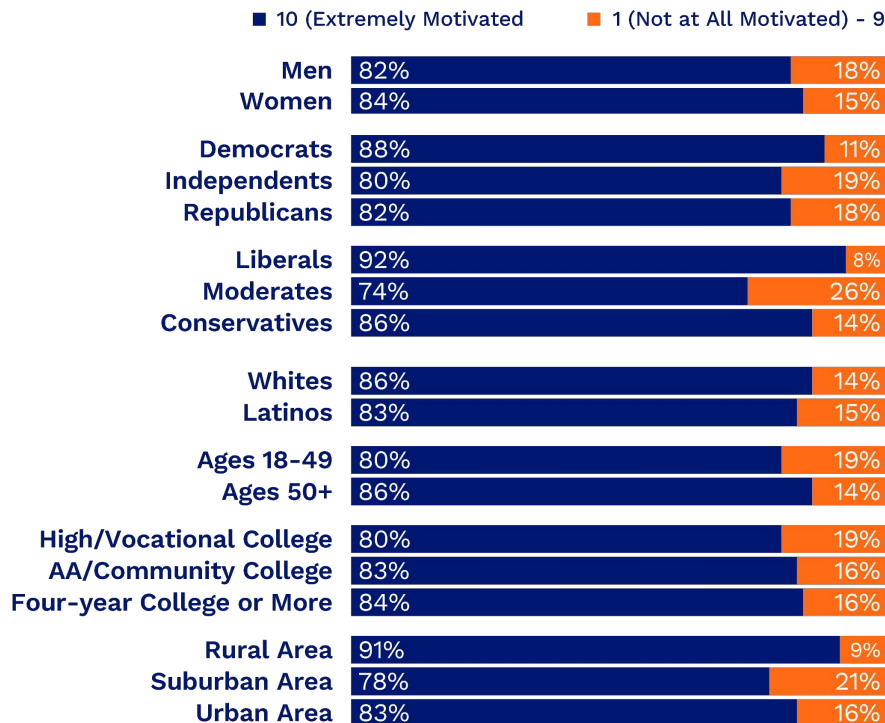
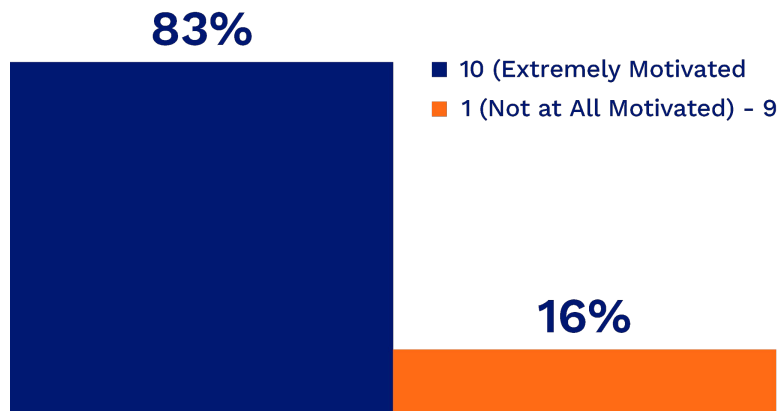
| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Dates | September 19-26, 2024 |
| Survey Type | Dual-mode Voter Survey |
| Research Population | State of Arizona Likely November 2024 Voters |
| Total Interviews | 602 |
| Margin of Sampling Error | (Full Sample) $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level |
| Contact Methods |  Telephone Calls  Text Invitations |
| Data Collection Modes |  Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews |
| Tracking Survey | November 2023 |
| Research Team | Bipartisan Research Team of FM3 Research (D) and HighGround Public Affairs (R) |

(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)

Arizona Voter Election Engagement & Mood Favorability Ratings

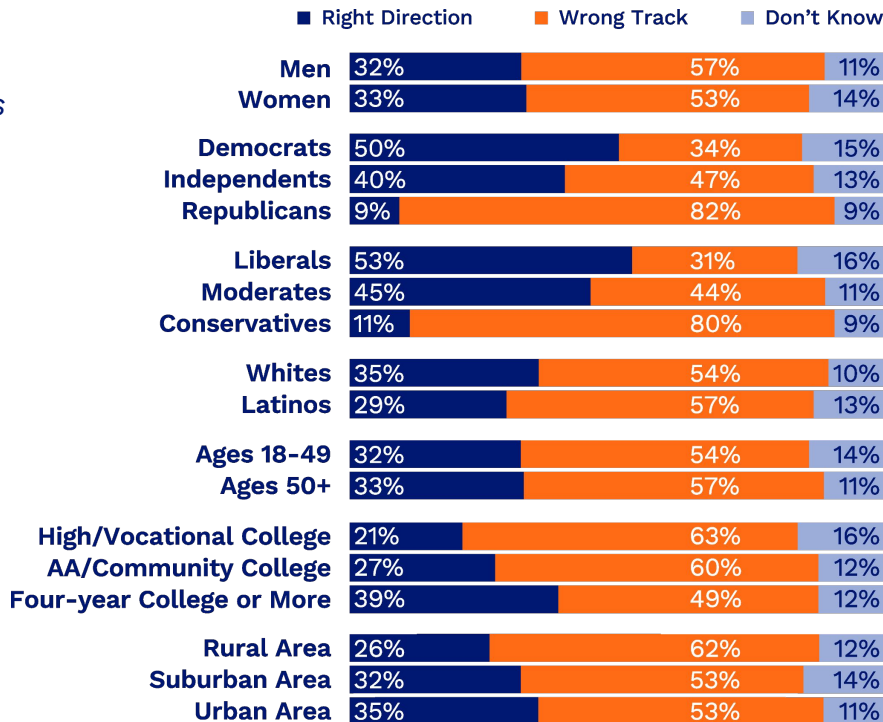
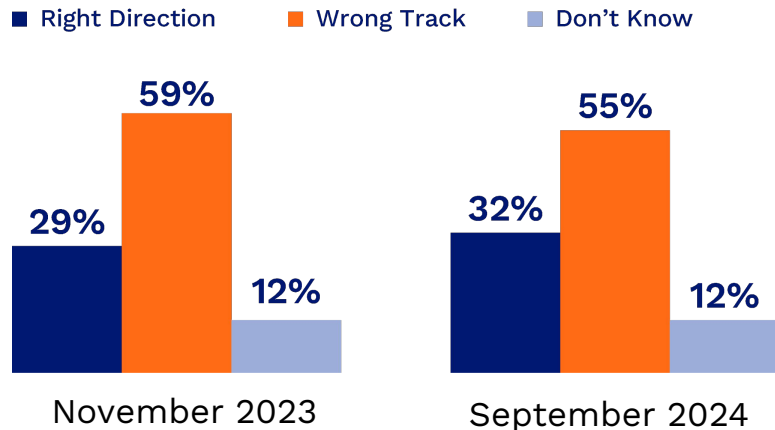
The vast majority of Arizonans were highly engaged with this year's election...

Thinking about the November election for President, Senator, Congress, state and local offices and ballot measures, please rate your level of motivation to vote on a scale from one to ten, where one means you are not at all motivated to vote and ten means you are extremely motivated to vote.



Overall, a majority continues to hold a pessimistic view of Arizona – opinion of the state is most divided along partisan lines.

Would you say that things in the State of Arizona are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things are off on the wrong track?



Six in ten voters continue to have a positive impression of Arizona's community colleges, technical colleges and state universities.

■ Very Fav. ■ Smwt. Fav. ■ Smwt. Unfav. ■ Very Unfav. ■ Never Heard of ■ Can't Rate

Your local community or technical college, such as Mesa Community College, Pima Community College, Arizona Western College



Sept. 2024



Total Fav.

Total Unfav.

63%

9%

Nov. 2023



63%

10%

Arizona's public universities - the University of Arizona, Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University



Sept. 2024



62%

20%

Nov. 2023



61%

25%

Your public school district

Sept. 2024



43%

34%

Nov. 2023



41%

40%

Q4 c-e. I'm going to mention a few people and organizations that are active in public life. Please tell me whether you have an overall favorable or unfavorable opinion of that person or organization. Not Part of Split Sample

Similar to last year, pluralities rate the state's private and online universities favorably.

■ Very Fav. ■ Smwt. Fav. ■ Smwt. Unfav. ■ Very Unfav. ■ Never Heard of ■ Can't Rate

Total Fav. **Total Unfav.**

*Private universities in Arizona, such as Grand Canyon University



Sept. 2024



%

48%

24%

Nov. 2023



%

47%

25%

*Online universities such as the University of Phoenix



Sept. 2024



%

36%

23%

Nov. 2023



%

39%

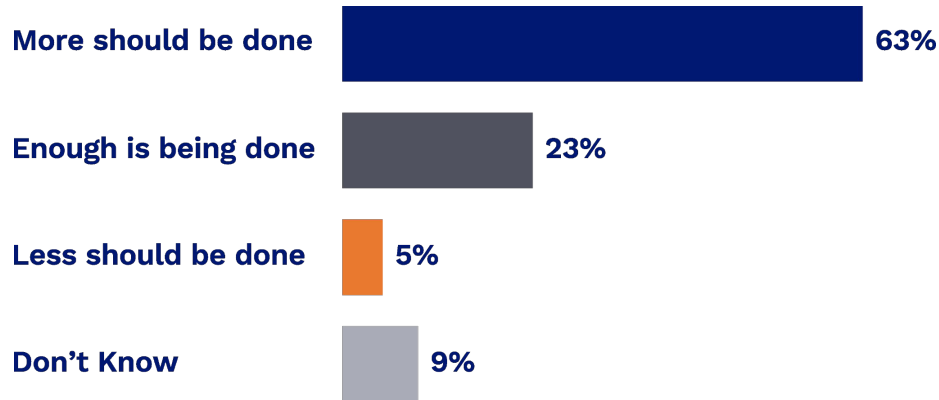
26%

Q4 f & g. I'm going to mention a few people and organizations that are active in public life. Please tell me whether you have an overall favorable or unfavorable opinion of that person or organization. *Split Sample

Meeting Arizona's Need for an Educated Workforce

More than six in ten voters support doing more to reach the goal of 60% of Arizonans pursuing education or training beyond high school.

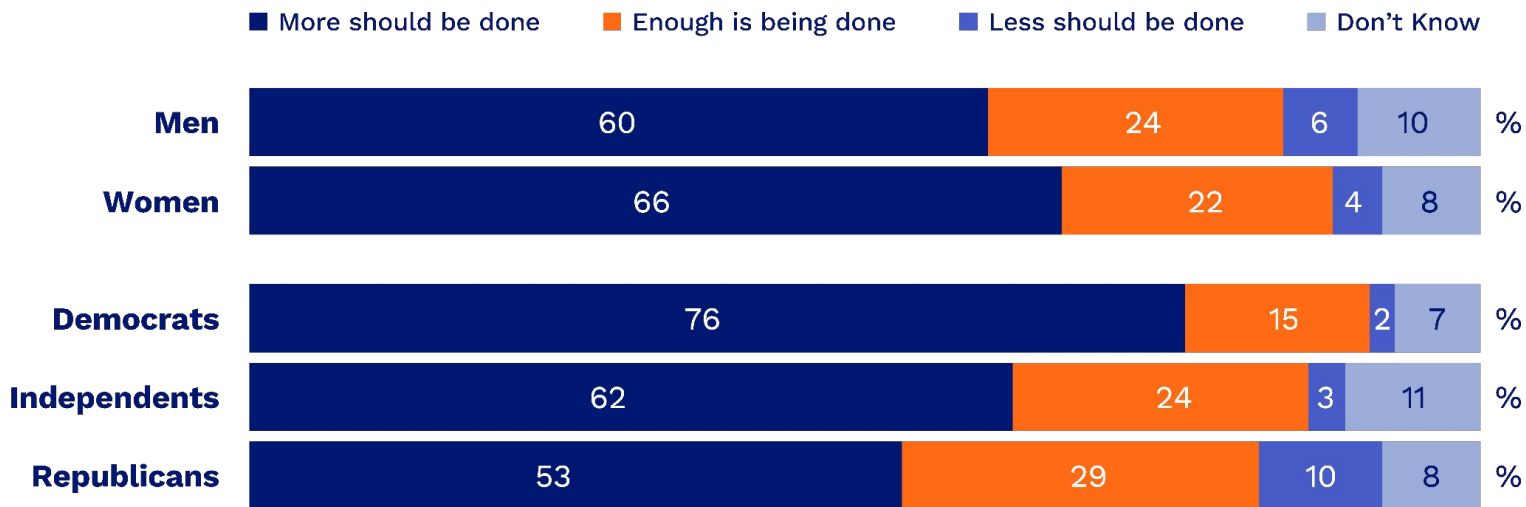
Arizona is working toward a goal that by 2030, at least 60% of Arizonans ages 25-64 will complete education beyond high school, including a four-year college, community college, apprenticeship, or a workforce certification program to ensure the state has a skilled and educated workforce. Currently, only 48% of Arizonans ages 25-64 are estimated to have earned some type of workforce certification or degree after high school.



Q6. In your opinion, should more be done to increase the share of Arizona students with education or training beyond high school, is enough being done, or should less be done?

There is bipartisan support for “doing more” to increase the number of Arizonans who pursue education or training beyond high school.

Meeting 60% Goal by Gender & Party



Q6. In your opinion, should more be done to increase the share of Arizona students with education or training beyond high school, is enough being done, or should less be done?

Regardless of education level, most voters see a need to promote post-high school education among Arizonans...

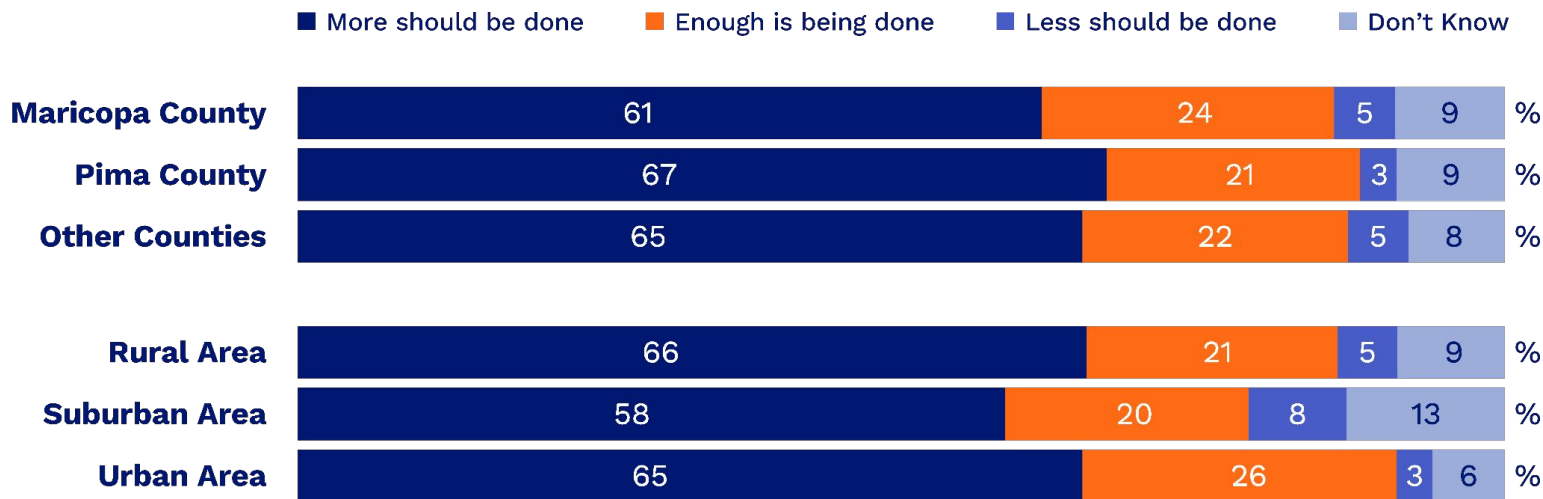
Meeting 60% Goal by Level of Education



Q6. In your opinion, should more be done to increase the share of Arizona students with education or training beyond high school, is enough being done, or should less be done?

Voters in all parts of the state back the idea of increasing the number of Arizonans with an education beyond high school.

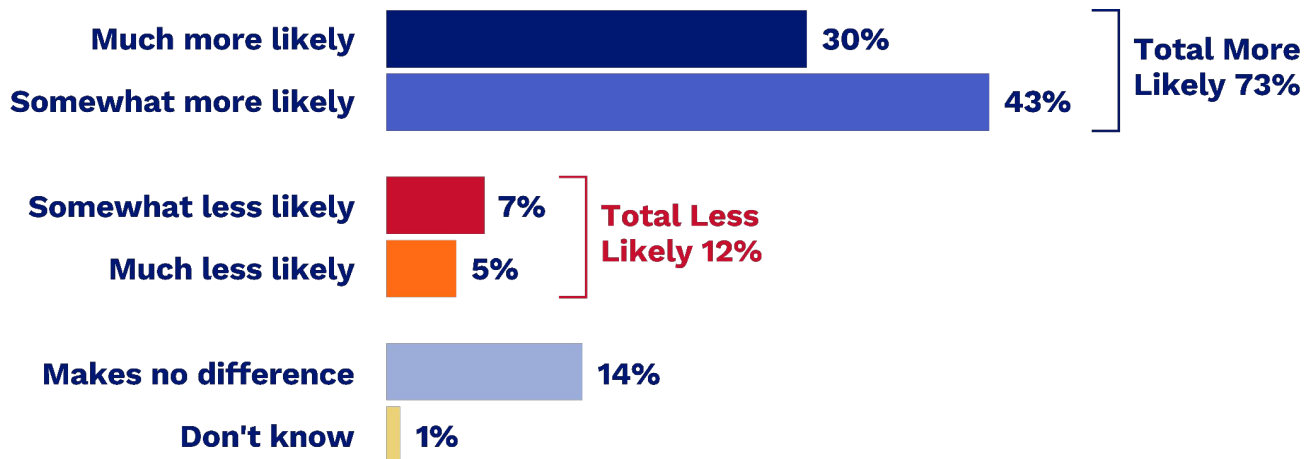
Meeting 60% Goal by County & Type of Area



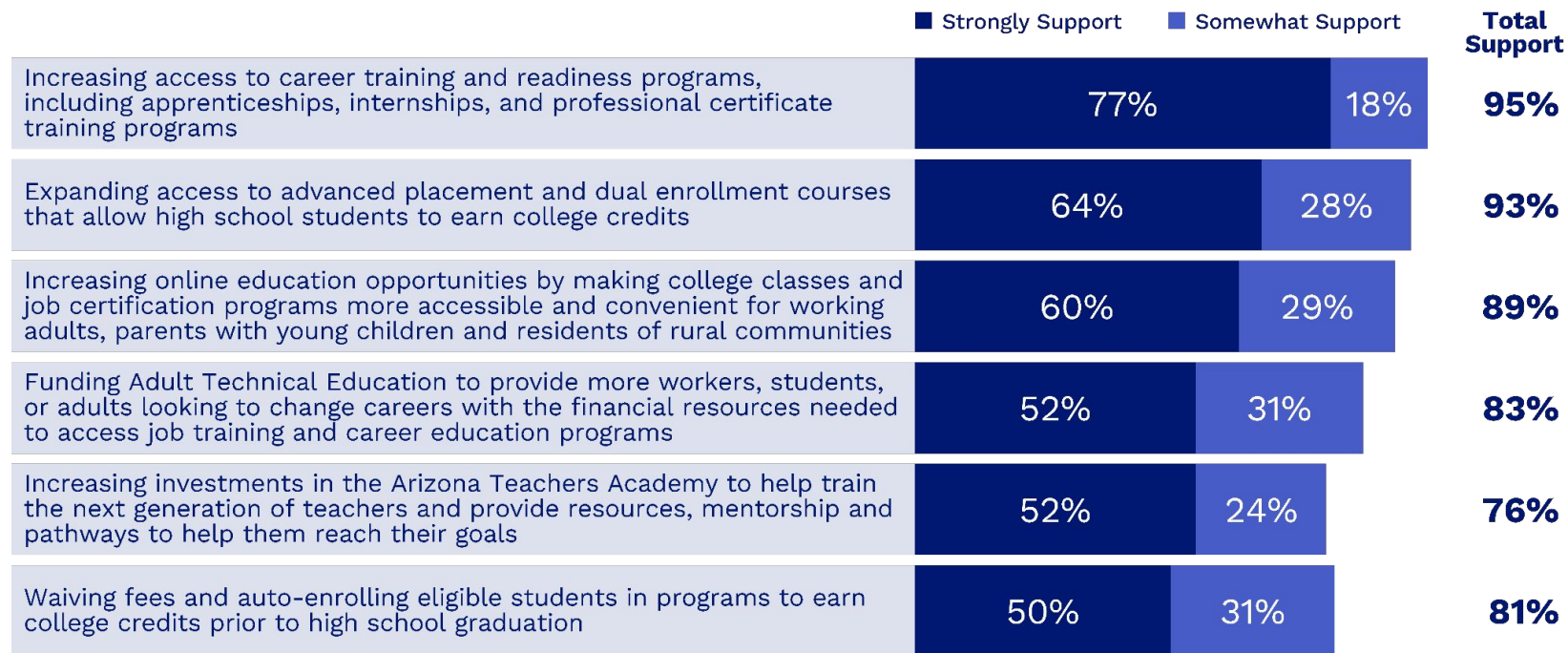
Q6. In your opinion, should more be done to increase the share of Arizona students with education or training beyond high school, is enough being done, or should less be done?

Three in four voters would be likely to vote for a candidate who supports doing more to reach the state's post-high school education attainment goal.

Suppose you knew that a candidate for elected office in Arizona was in favor of doing more to help Arizona achieve the goal of at least 60% of Arizonans completing education or training beyond high school by 2030. Would you be more likely to support that candidate or less likely to support that candidate?



There is a great deal of support for investments to make higher education and career/job training programs more accessible...

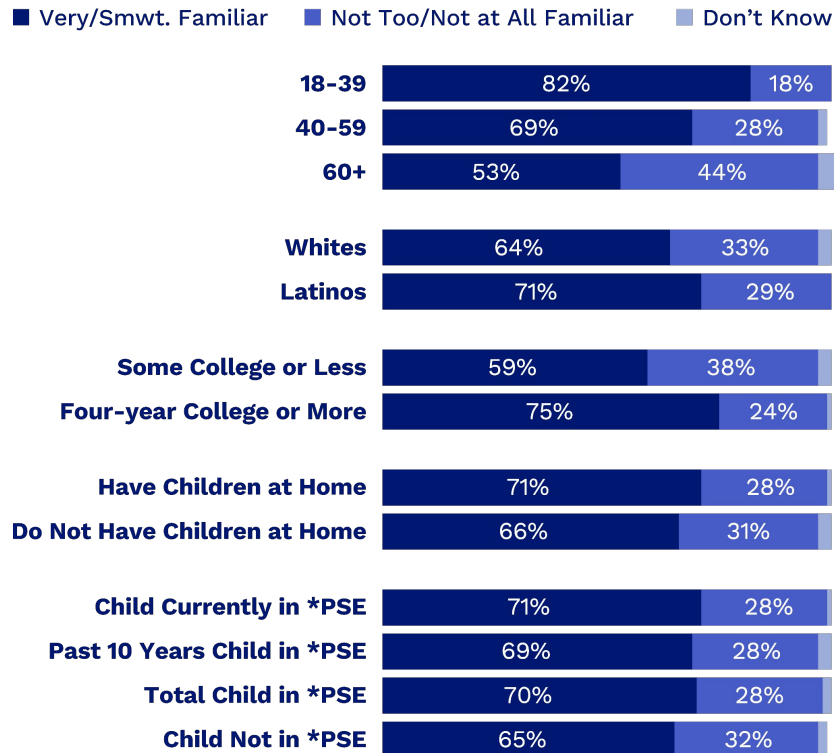
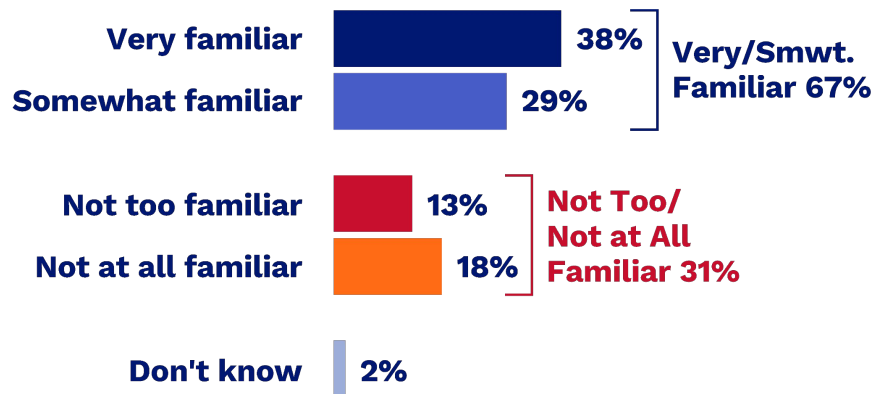


Q10. I am going to read you a list of proposals meant to support the goal that at least 60% of Arizonans complete education beyond high school by 2030. Please tell me whether you support or oppose it

Promoting FAFSA Among Arizona Voters

Most Arizonans are familiar with FAFSA, but especially voters ages 18-39 and those with a college degree.

Overall, how familiar are you with FAFSA, the application for federal student aid? Would you say very familiar, somewhat familiar, not too familiar or not at all familiar?

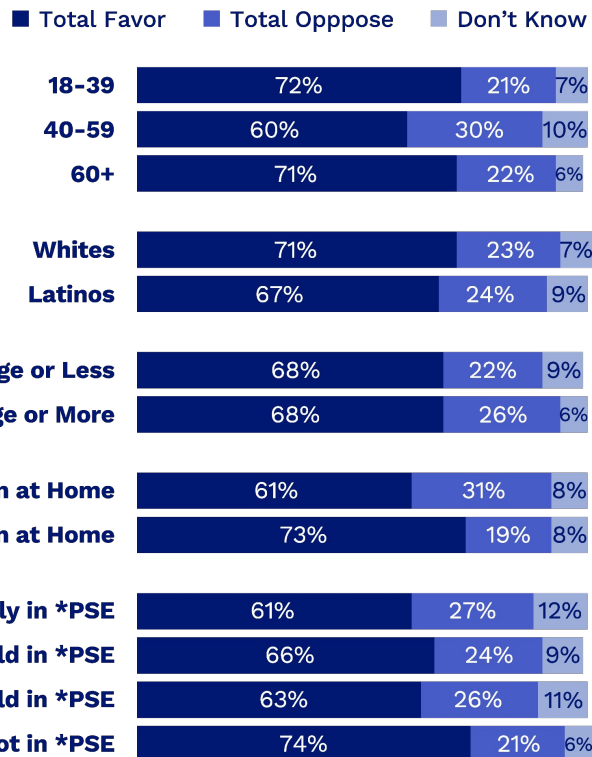
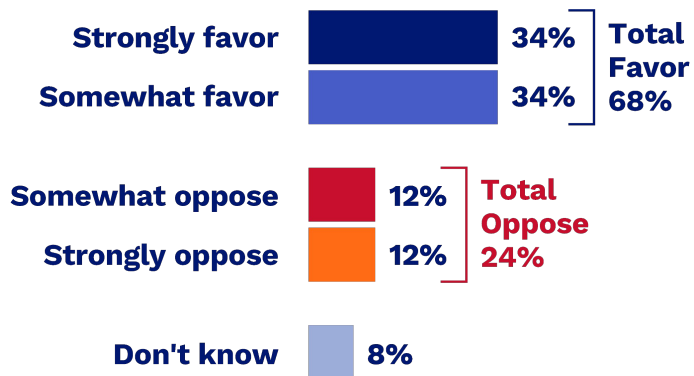


Q11. *PSE=Post-Secondary Education

There is broad support for increasing the number of Arizona high schoolers who complete FAFSA...

FAFSA is considered the gateway to receiving federal student aid for those who want to continue their education after high school, and those students who complete the FAFSA application are 84 times more likely to go attend a community college, four-year university or a career education program.

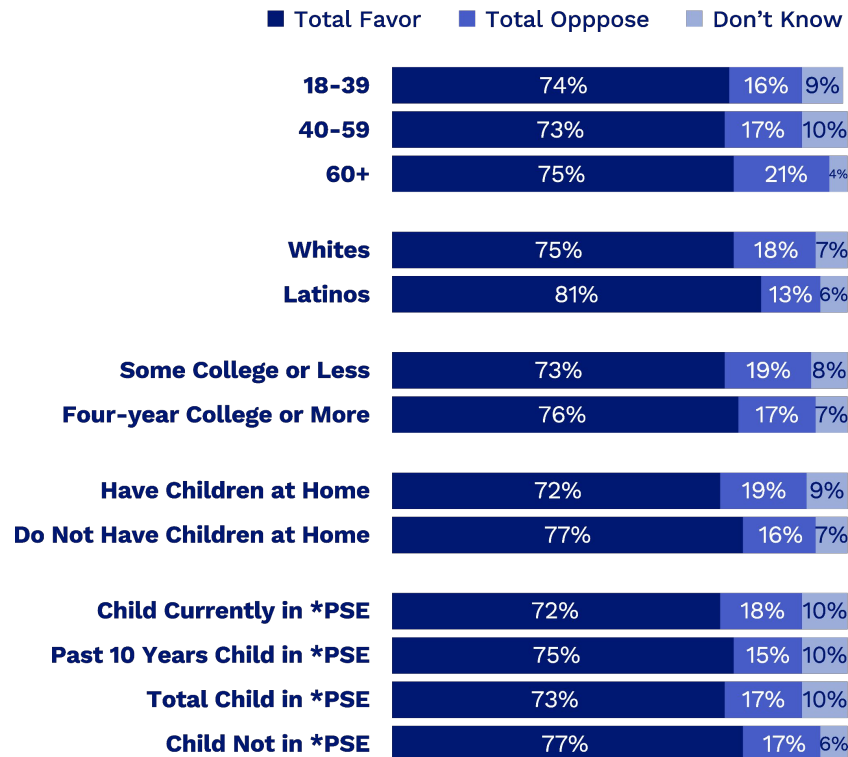
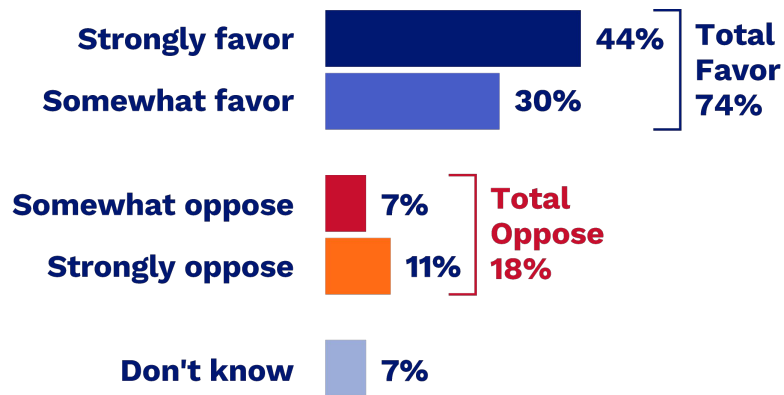
Knowing this, do you favor or oppose creating incentives for Arizona high school students to complete the application for federal student aid?



Q12. *PSE=Post-Secondary Education

...and three in four favor requiring high schools assist students and families with completing the form.

Would you favor or oppose requiring Arizona high schools to provide students and families with assistance to complete the application for federal student aid?



Q13. *PSE=Post-Secondary Education

Conclusions

Conclusions

Despite their overall negative mood, voters' favorable impressions of Arizona's public colleges and universities persist; however, student debt and the cost of a college education remain significant problems.

Six in ten voters favor “doing more” to increase the share of Arizonans with education beyond high school, and support for this idea crosses all major demographic groups, including party affiliation, gender, age, race/ethnicity and income levels.

Three in four Arizonans would be *more likely* to vote for a candidate who supports the educational attainment goal.

Voters strongly support policies to increase dual enrollment, make career/technical education programs and college more accessible and affordable, and there is broad support for increasing the number of Arizona high school students who complete FAFSA.

Disconnect Between What Arizonans Want And What's Happening In The State Legislature

What's Missing in the 2024 Budget?

Insufficient funding for key programs like CTE, apprenticeship opportunities, and dual enrollment.

Need for realignment of legislative priorities with voter demands.

This gap between voter sentiment and legislative action needs to be addressed if Arizona is to meet its Achieve60AZ goal of 60% postsecondary attainment by 2030.

Road Map for Policy Action

Action Steps for Policymakers

- Increase funding for job training and career programs.
- Restore funding for dual enrollment and online education options.
- Support FAFSA completion efforts in high schools.



Let's Work Together

The Path Forward

Elected officials have a unique opportunity to close the gap between voter priorities and legislative action.

Let's ensure every Arizonan has access to the education and training needed to thrive.

**Contact us to set up meetings
and discuss actionable next steps.**

everythingtogain.org

arizonafuture.org/ava



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