PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

Tennesseans for QUALITY Early Education

Tennessee Early Education Statewide Survey

800 Likely Voters
September 12-16, 2018

PATRICK LANNE | PARTNER
patrick@pos.org

#18956

TURNING QUESTIONS INTO ANSWERS

Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies presents the key findings from a survey of 800 likely voters in Tennessee, statewide. The survey was conducted September 12-16, 2018 and has a margin of error of ±3.46%.

Patrick Lanne was the primary researcher and pollster on the project. Caitlin Reed was the project director and Michael Lopez provided analytical assistance.

The 8 things you need to know

1. Few Tennesseans believe the state's public education system is preparing children for the future.
2. Nearly every Tennessean agrees: Early education, birth through 3rd grade, provides the building blocks for a child's future success.
3. Investments in early literacy and math programs receive a near unanimous endorsement from voters.
4. Ensuring children learn early workforce skills, like conflict resolution and problem solving, is ranked highly by voters.
5. Voters across the state support Pre-K and want it made available to all 4-year-olds.
6. Tennesseans understand quality childcare has short-term and long-lasting effects on children and there is wide bi-partisan support for policies to improve childcare in the state.
7. Voters favor expanding home visiting programs that strengthen parenting skills and prepare children for school.
8. Voters have a more favorable impression of policymakers who support early education issues.

Key Finding #1

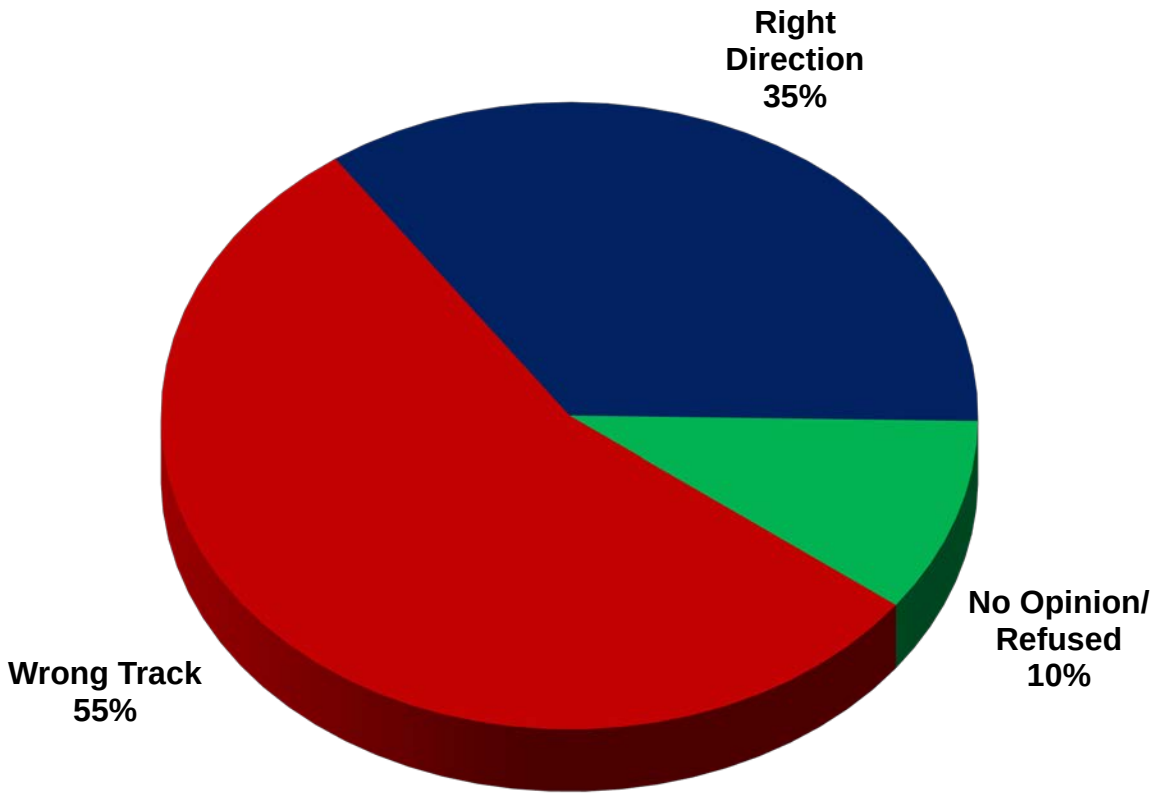
First, **Tennessee voters express dissatisfaction with the public education system**. Discontent with the current state of public education cuts across every major demographic and geographic subgroup.

In addition, two-thirds (66%) of voters believe Tennessee's public education system is NOT preparing children for the future. Again, this sentiment crosses partisan, racial and geographic lines.

Voters want a new direction in education.

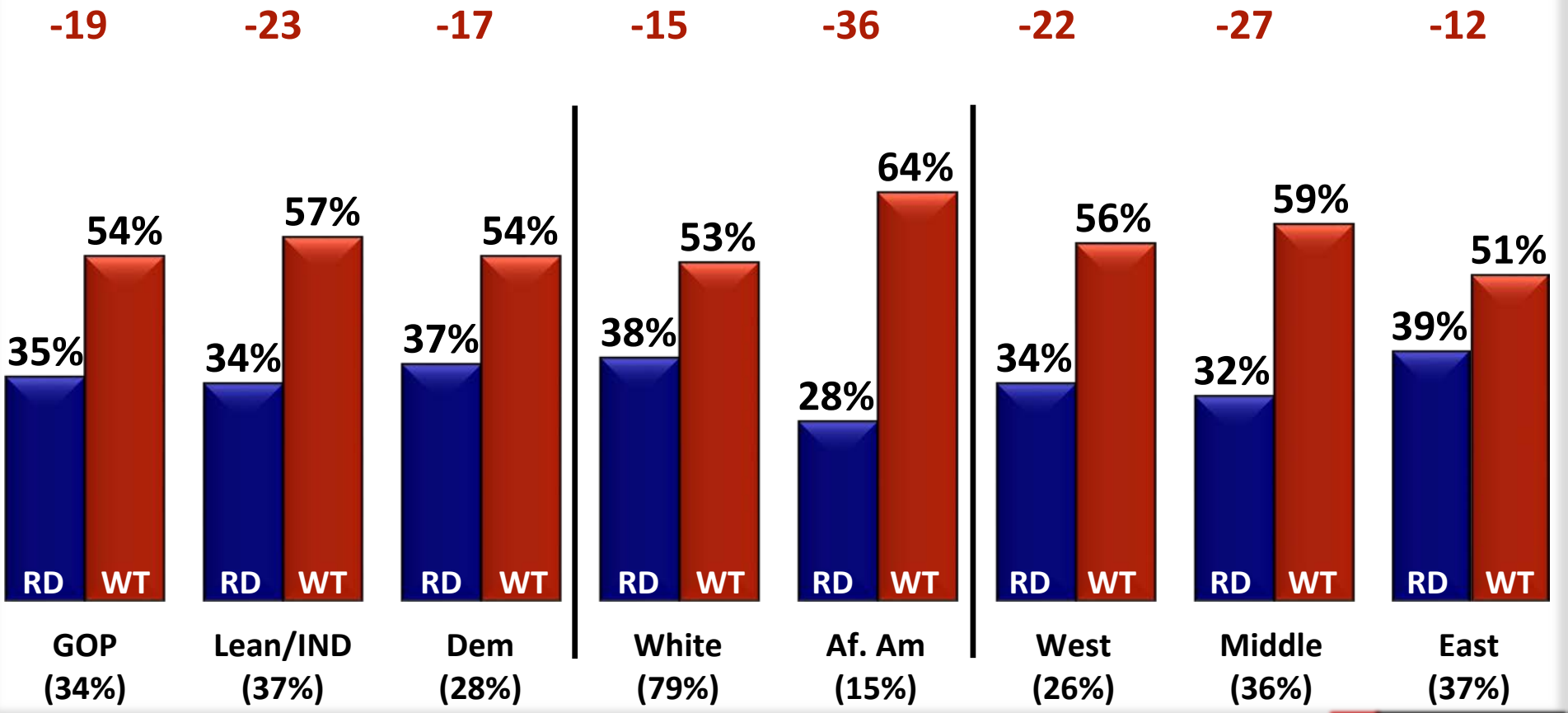
Few voters endorse the education status quo.

First of all, would you say that public education in Tennessee is going in the right direction, or has it gotten off on the wrong track?



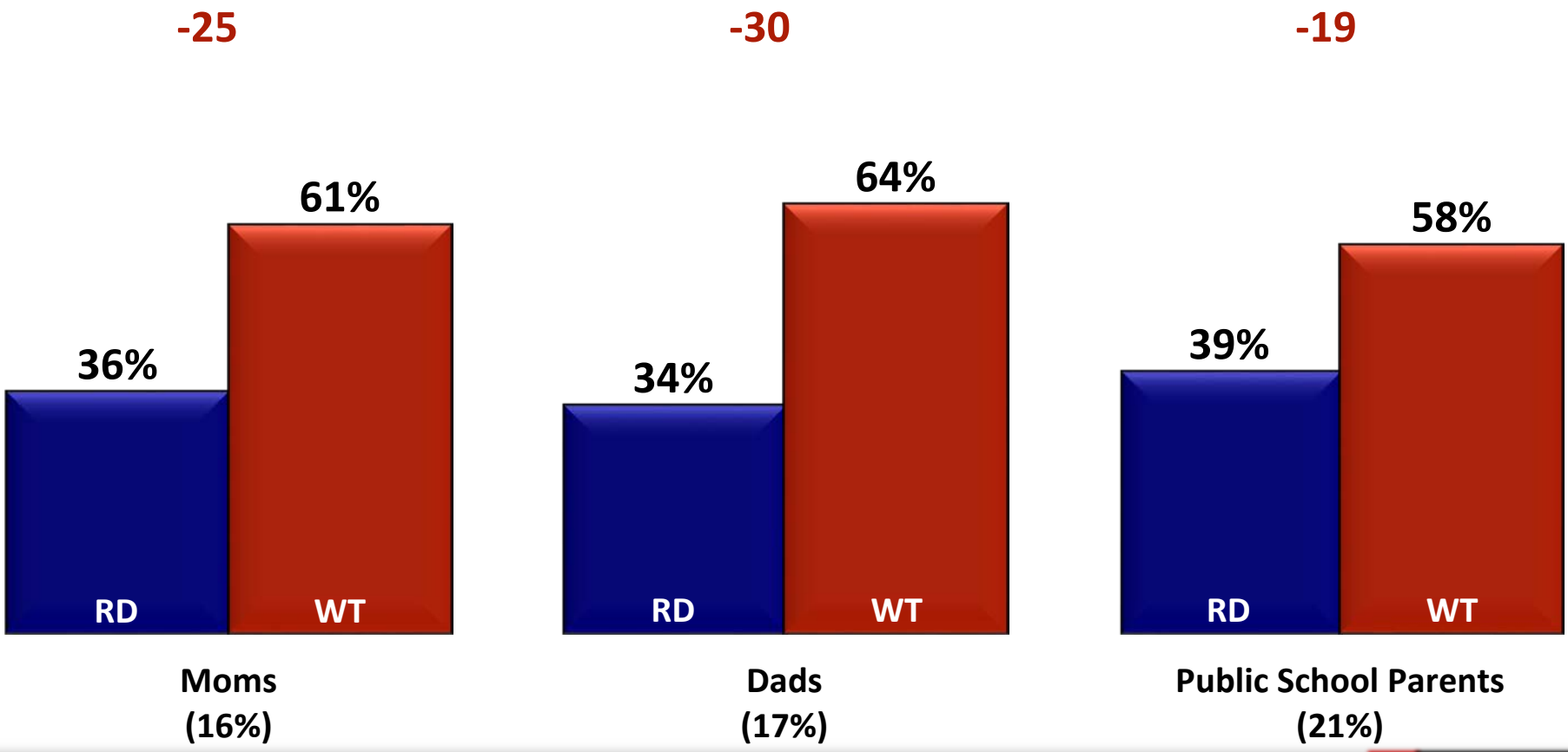
The wrong track sentiment cuts across every subgroup.

Public Education Sentiment By Key Subgroup



Parents of school-aged children are quite negative.

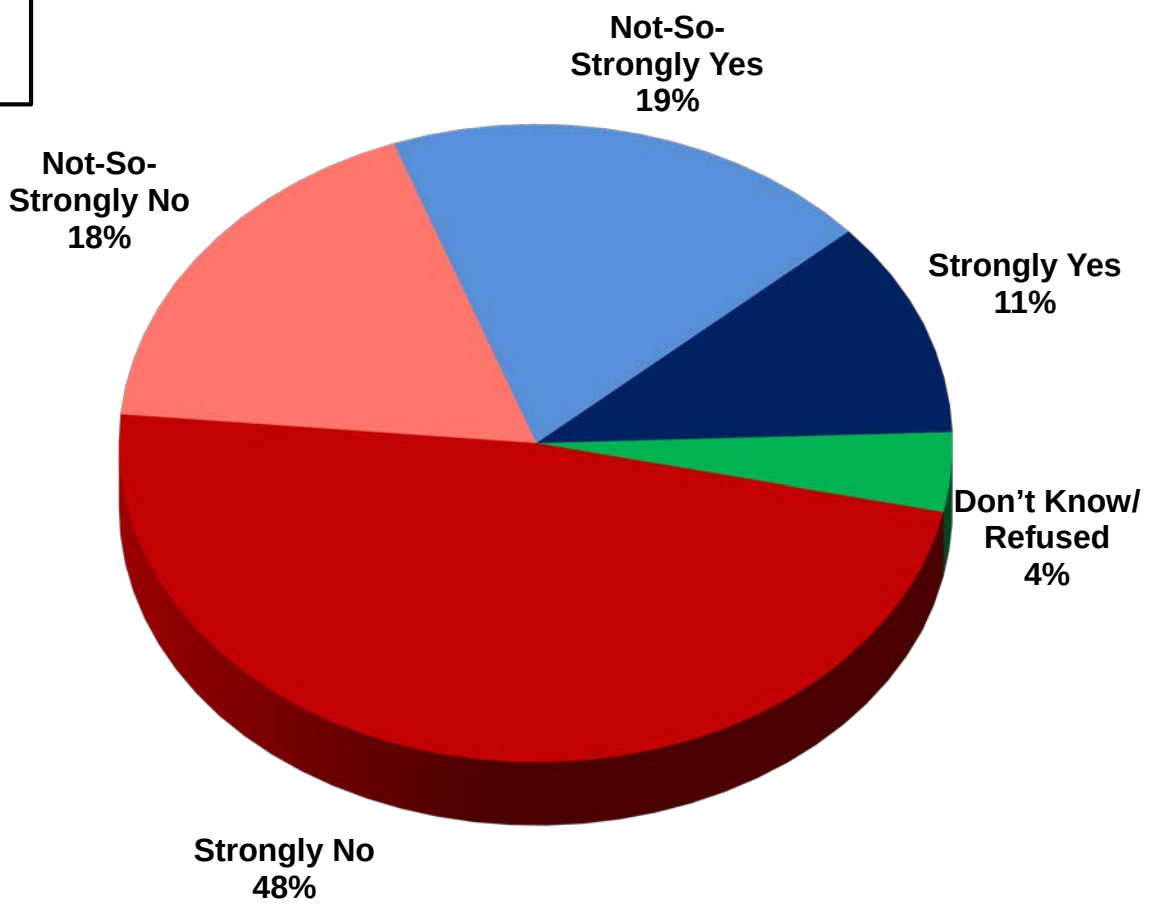
Public Education Sentiment By Parents



Tennesseans believe public education fails to prepare students for the future.

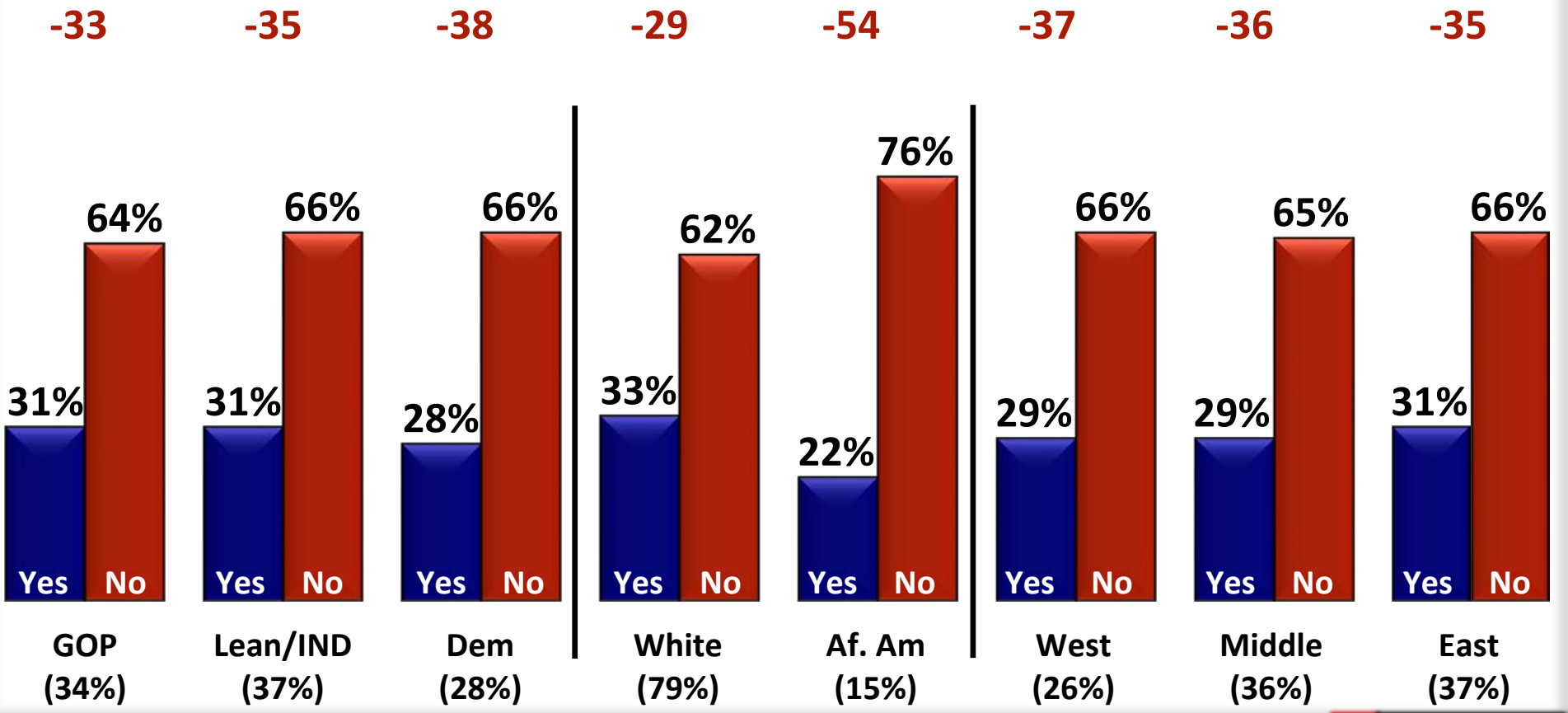
Next, would you say young people in Tennessee are well-prepared for employment and adult life by the public education system?

30% Total Yes
66% Total No



Pessimism cuts across all subgroups.

Public Education Prepares Children By Key Subgroup



Key Finding #2

Tennesseans are nearly unanimous in their endorsement of early education's importance and their support for critical policy initiatives to strengthen early education in the state.

More than 90% of Tennesseans – including 89% of Republicans and 96% of Democrats -- agree with the statement, "***Early education, from birth to 3rd grade, provides the building blocks of all learning***."

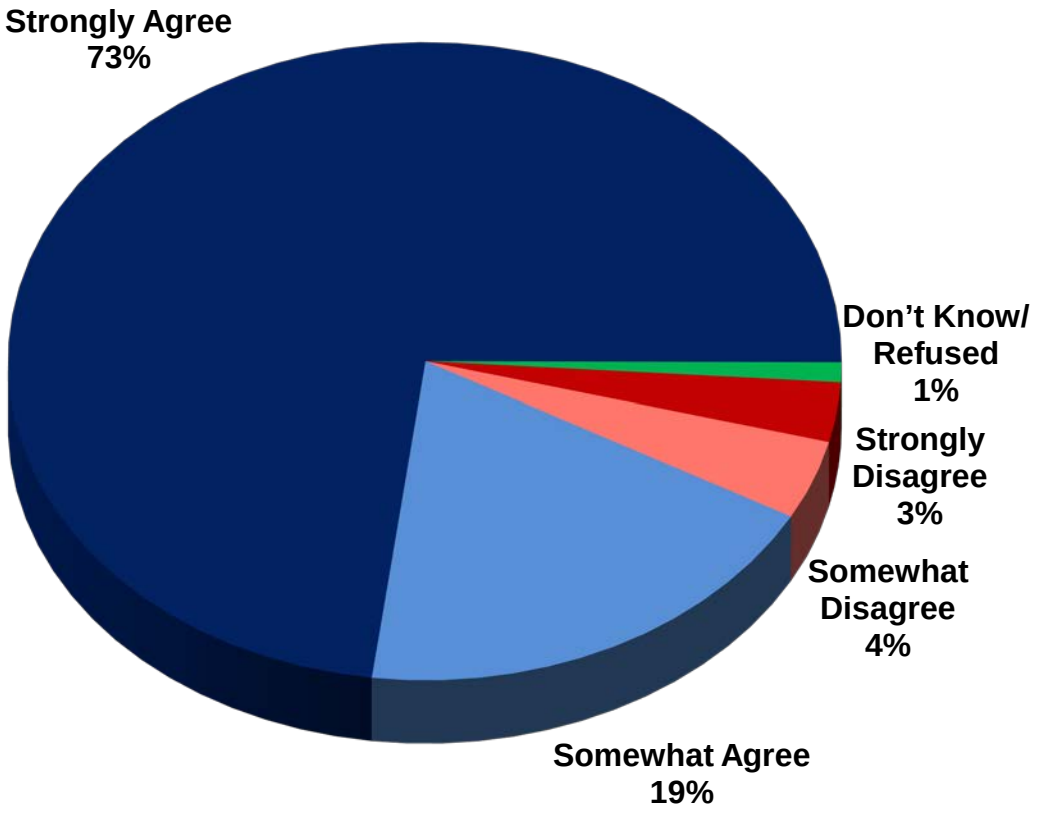
Voters overwhelmingly believe improving the quality of early education teachers and early education programs will improve children's success in school and life.

Nearly every Tennessean agrees: Early Education provides the building blocks of all future learning.

Next, do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements:

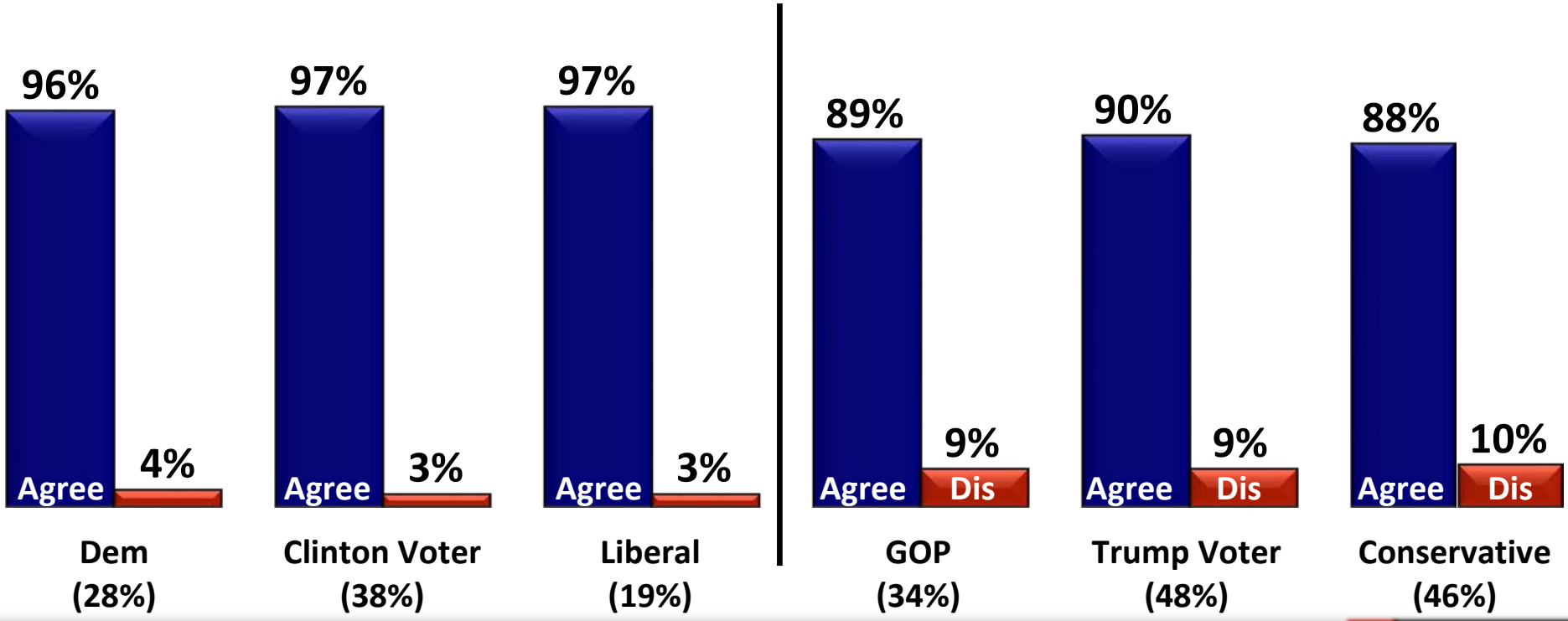
Early education, from birth to 3rd grade, provides the building blocks of all learning.

92% Total Agree
7% Total Disagree



The political right and left both overwhelmingly agree with the "building blocks" argument.

Next, do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements:
Early education, from birth to 3rd grade, provides the building blocks of all learning.



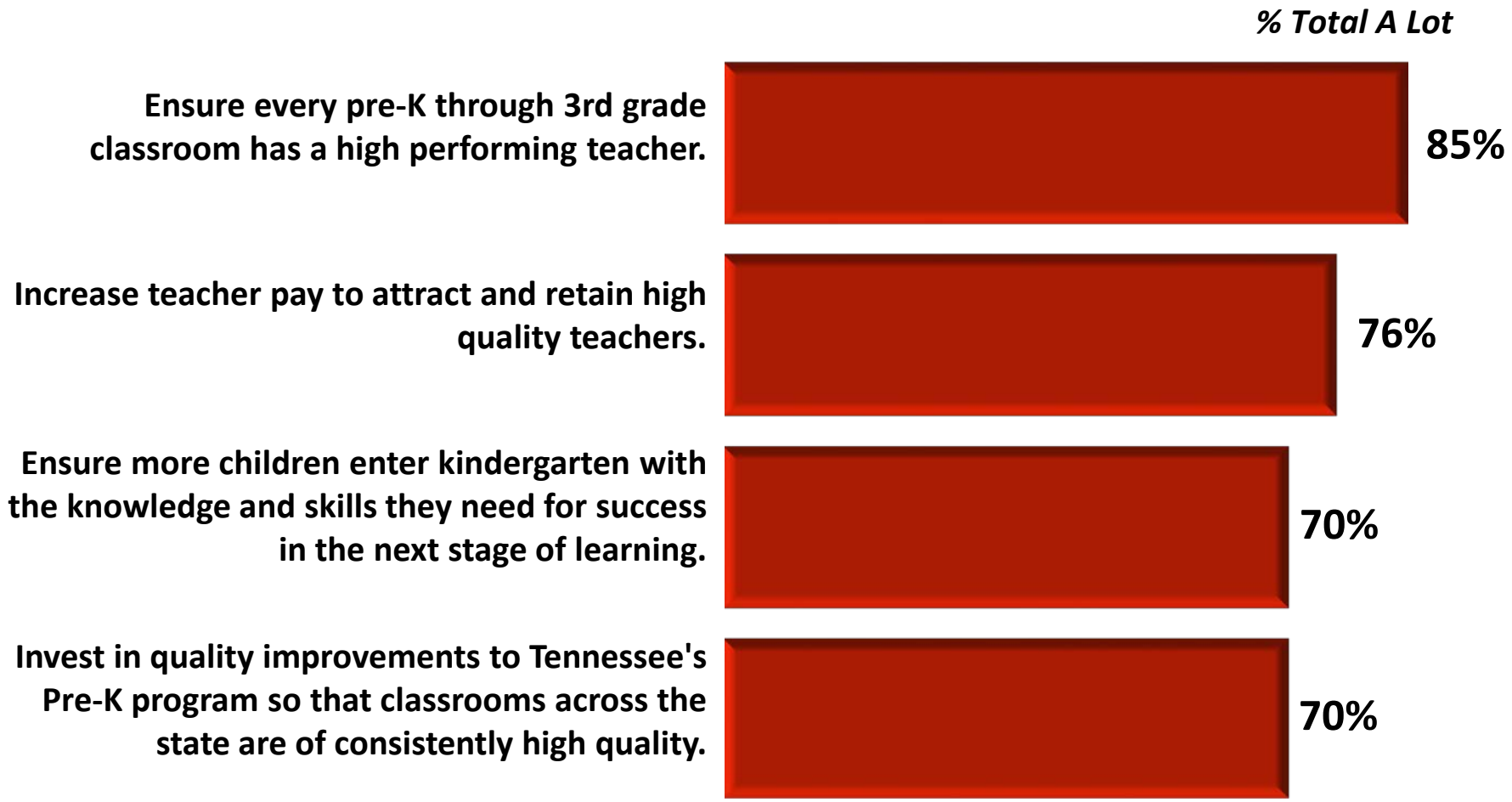
Key Findings #3 and #4

Investments in early literacy and math programs PreK through 3rd grade receive a near unanimous endorsement from voters. Fully 95% support continued investments in early literacy programs, and 93% support investing more state funding in programs to ensure all Tennessee children can do math on grade-level by 3rd grade - a predictor of future academic success

Further, **90% of voters agree children PreK-3rd grade should learn early-workforce skills** such as problem solving, cooperation, sharing, taking turns, maintaining focus on a task, understanding rules and following instructions.

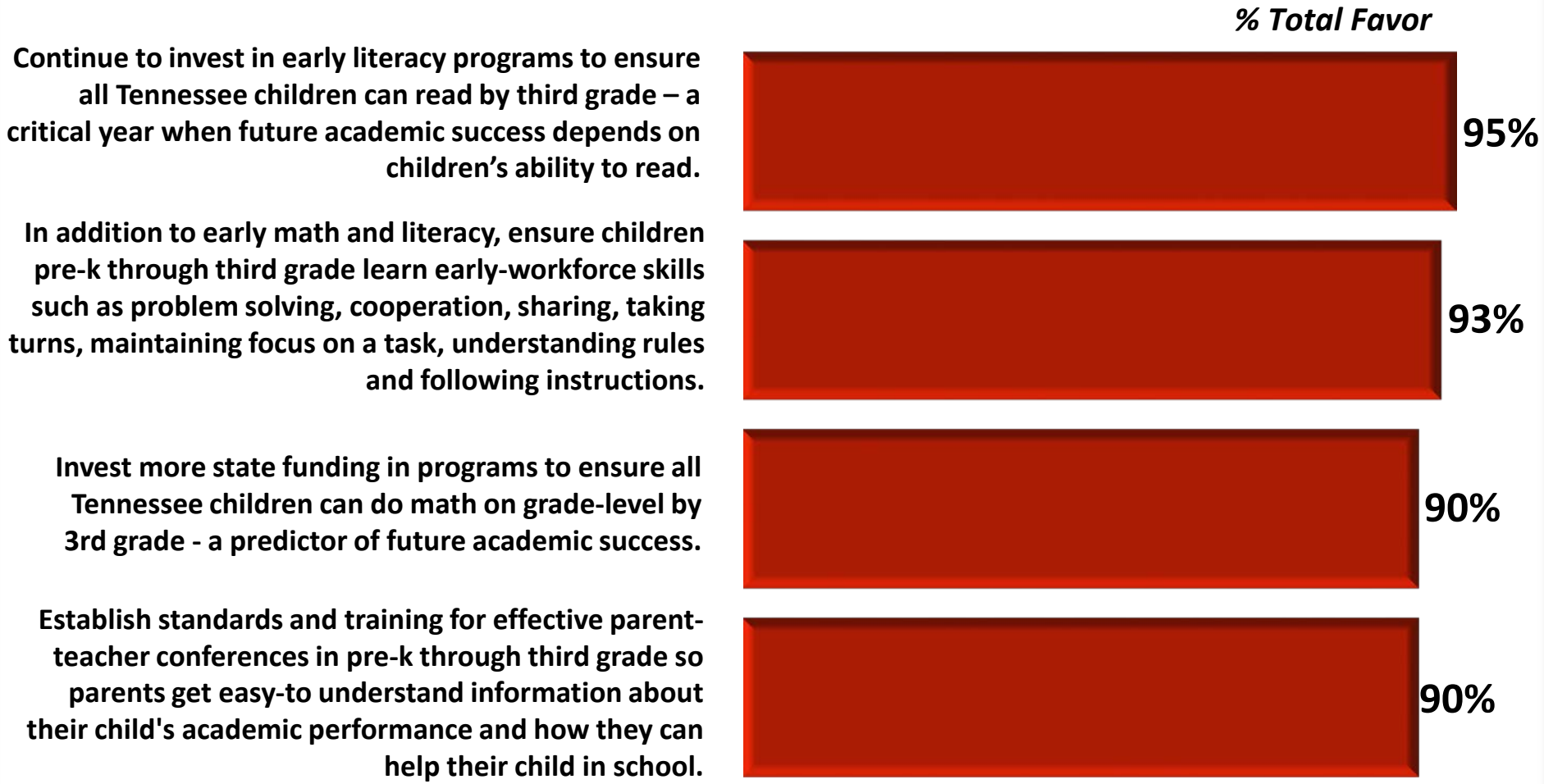
High-performing teachers tops the list of improvements to Pre-K to 3rd grade education.

I am going to read you some things that could be done to better prepare Tennessee's children for success in school and their adult life. As I read each one, please tell me if you think it would do A LOT, A LITTLE, or NOTHING AT ALL, to prepare a child for success in school and life.



Tennesseans strongly support PreK – 3rd Grade investments.

Now, I'd like to read some more proposals being considered by the state legislature that deal with the issue of education. After I read each proposal, please tell me if you favor or oppose that proposal.



Early Education PreK-3rd Grade Proposals – Part 2

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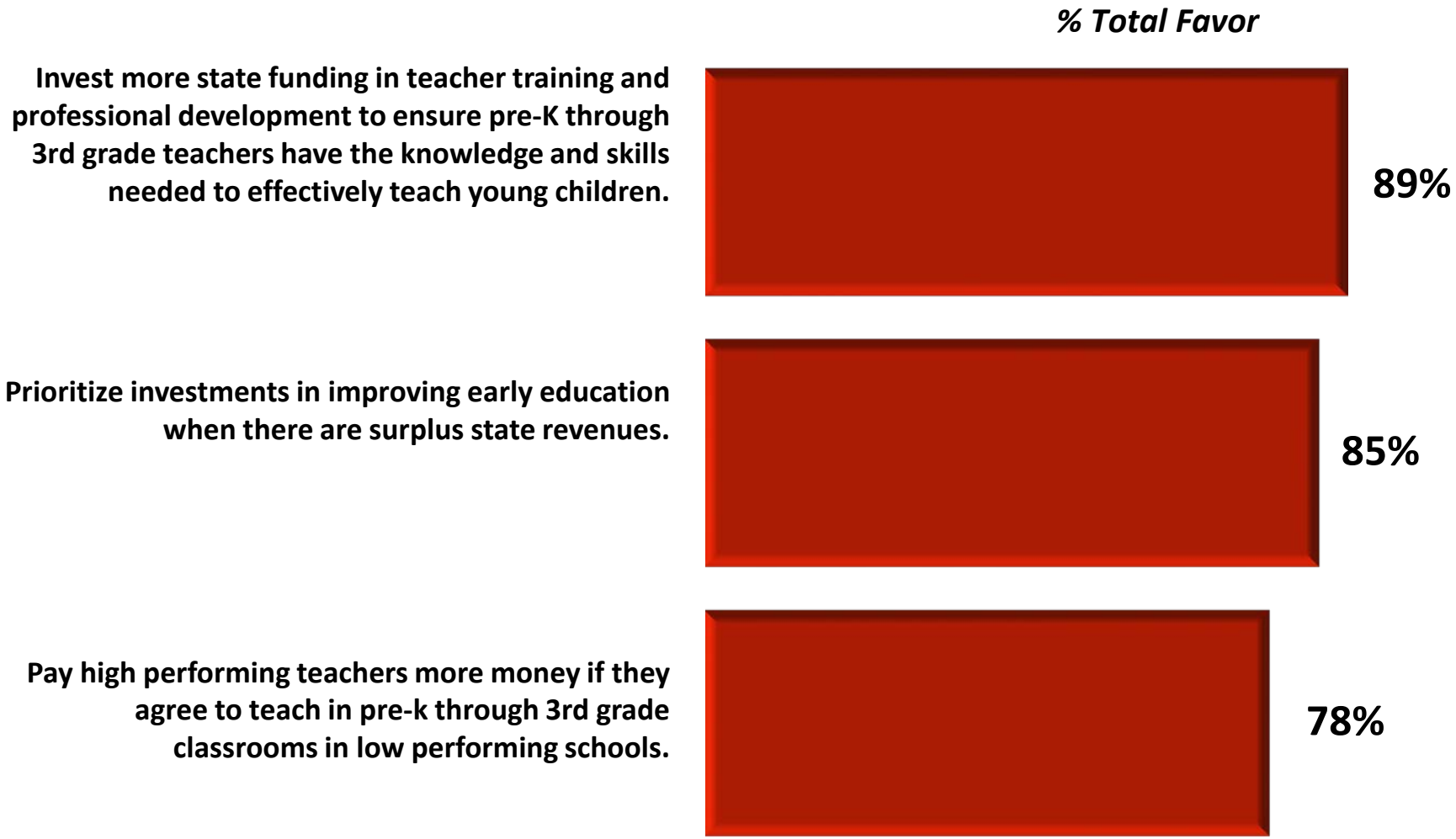


Key Finding #5

Trump and Clinton voters don't agree on a lot – but there is **near consensus** among them **that Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K program should be *an option* for all Tennessee 4-year olds**. Fully 94% of Tennesseans support it.

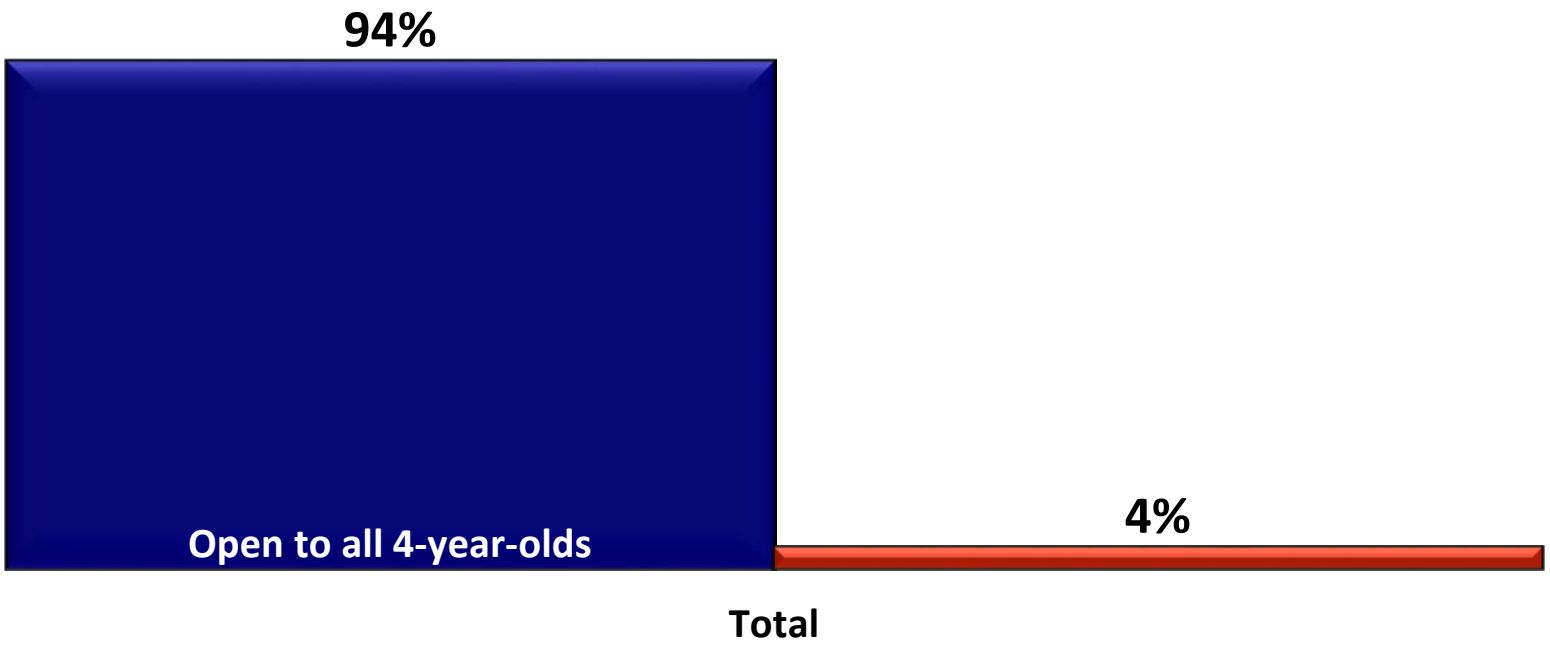
Consequently, a wide, bi-partisan majority (85%) supports increasing state funding for the state's voluntary Pre-K program to ensure enough slots for all disadvantaged kids.

And, 86% of Tennesseans support increased state funding to ensure every 4 year old has the option to attend.

Voluntary Pre-K for ALL Tennessee 4-year-olds has near unanimous support…

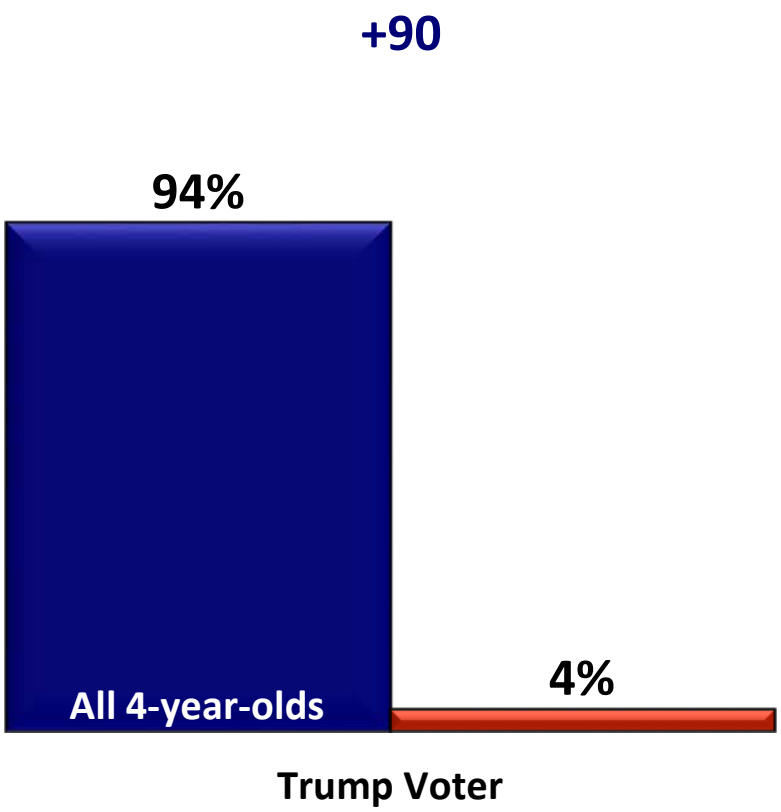
Now thinking specifically about Pre-K in Tennessee...First, do you think Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K program should be limited to children from economically disadvantaged families, or should it be an option for any Tennessee 4 year old whose parents want them to attend?

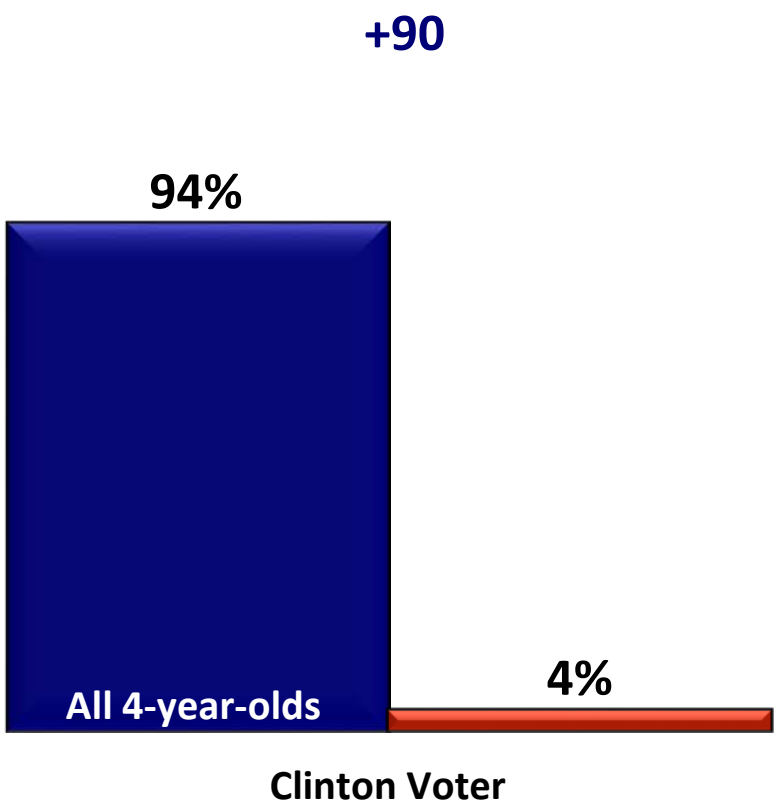
+90



…it even unites Trump and Clinton voters!

Now thinking specifically about Pre-K in Tennessee...First, do you think Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K program should be limited to children from economically disadvantaged families, or should it be an option for any Tennessee 4 year old whose parents want them to attend?

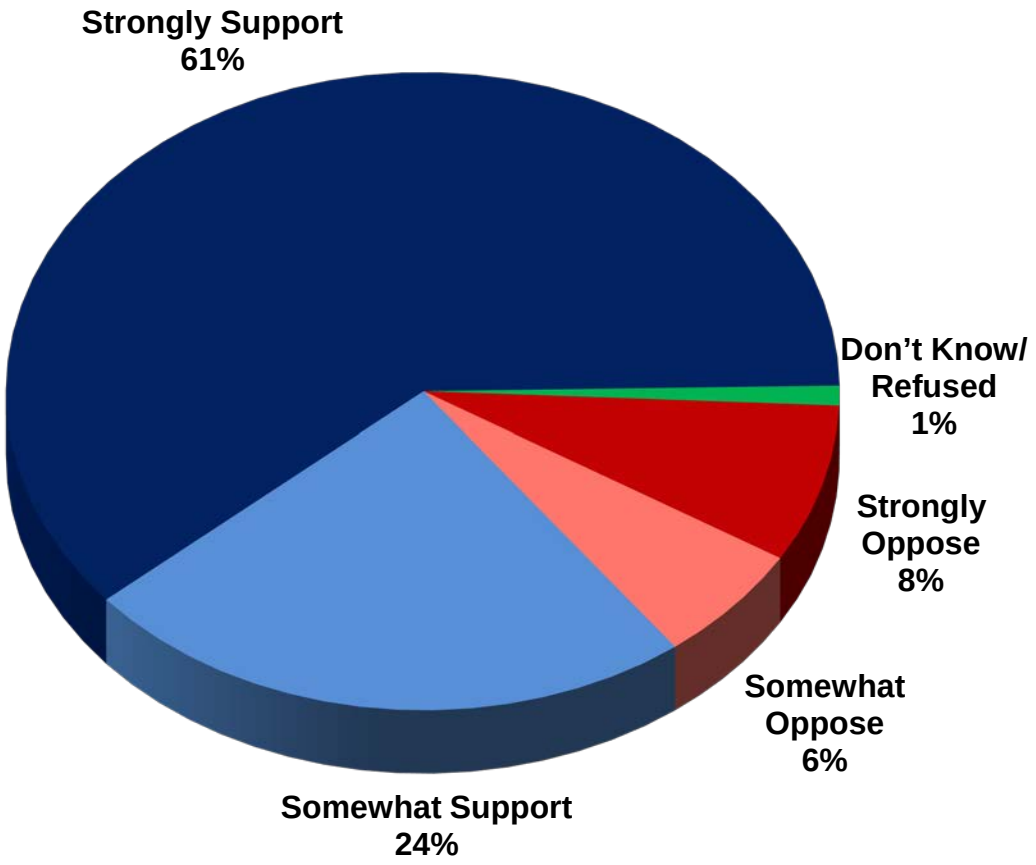




Voters overwhelmingly endorse investing more in the state's voluntary Pre-K program for disadvantaged 4-year-olds…

Next, would you support or oppose increased state funding for Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K program to ensure enough slots for all disadvantaged children to attend?

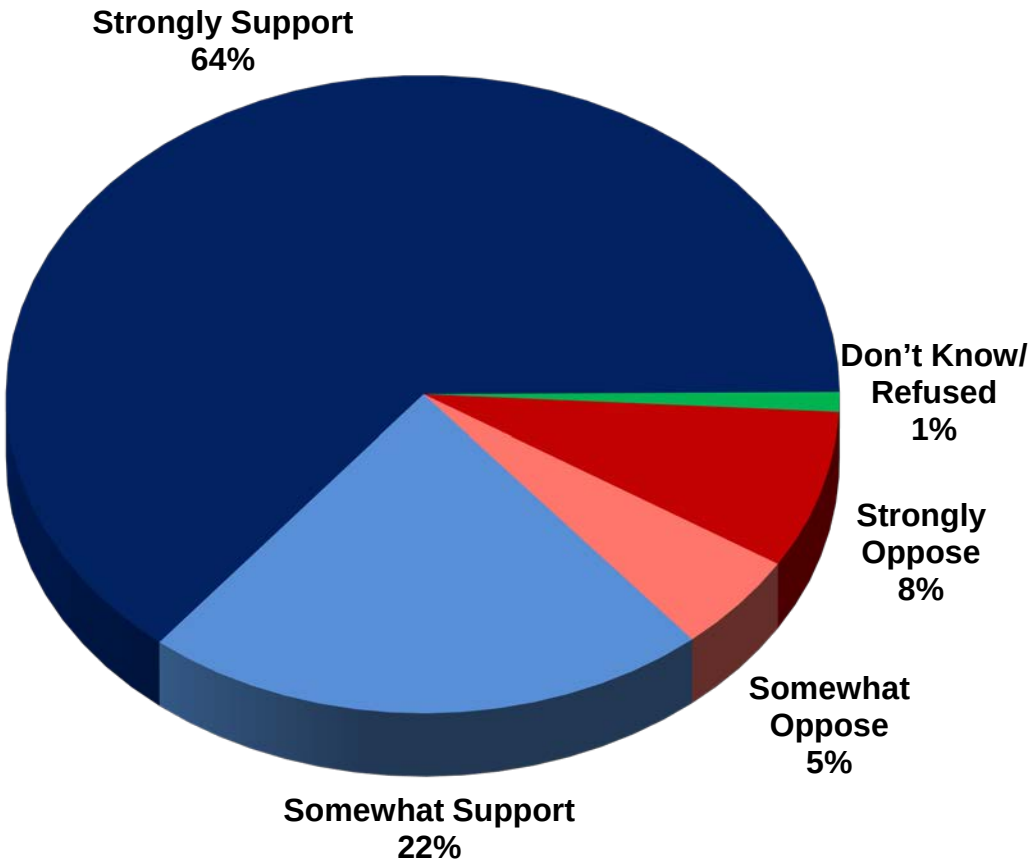
85% Total Support
14% Total Oppose



…and, there is wide support for more funding of voluntary Pre-K for all 4-year-olds.

And, would you support or oppose increased state funding for Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K program to allow every 4 year old has the option to attend, if their parents want them to?

86% Total Support
12% Total Oppose



Key Finding #6

Nearly all Tennessee voters understand the importance of quality child care in preparing kids in both the short-term and the long-term.

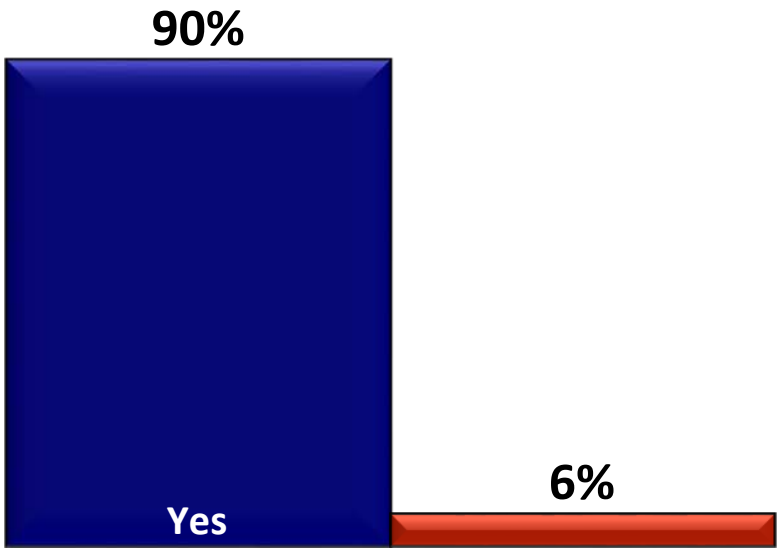
Ninety (90%) of voters believe child care has a major impact on children's kindergarten readiness. And, 87% believe quality child care has a major impact on children's long-term well-being and future job success.

Policies to improve childcare in the state receives wide, bi-partisan support.
Tennesseans know childcare is important and are willing to make investments to improve the system.

Tennesseans universally believe childcare has a major impact on children's short-term and long-term success.

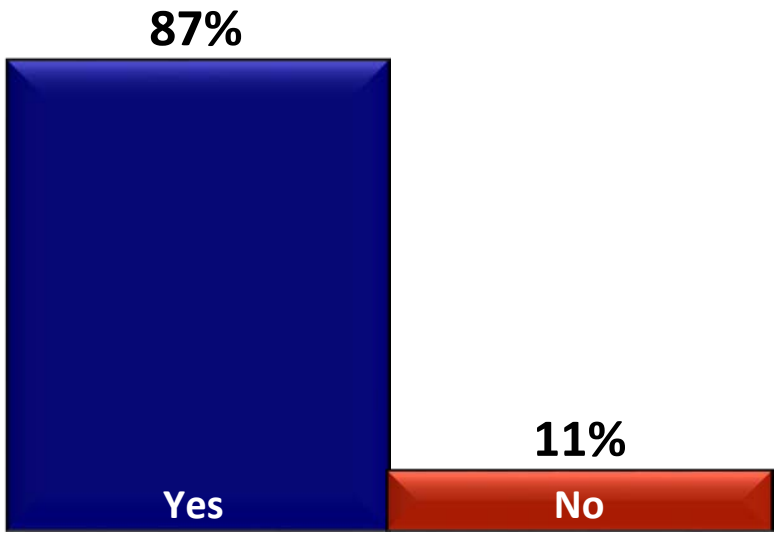
First, do you think that childcare quality has a major impact on children's kindergarten readiness?

+84



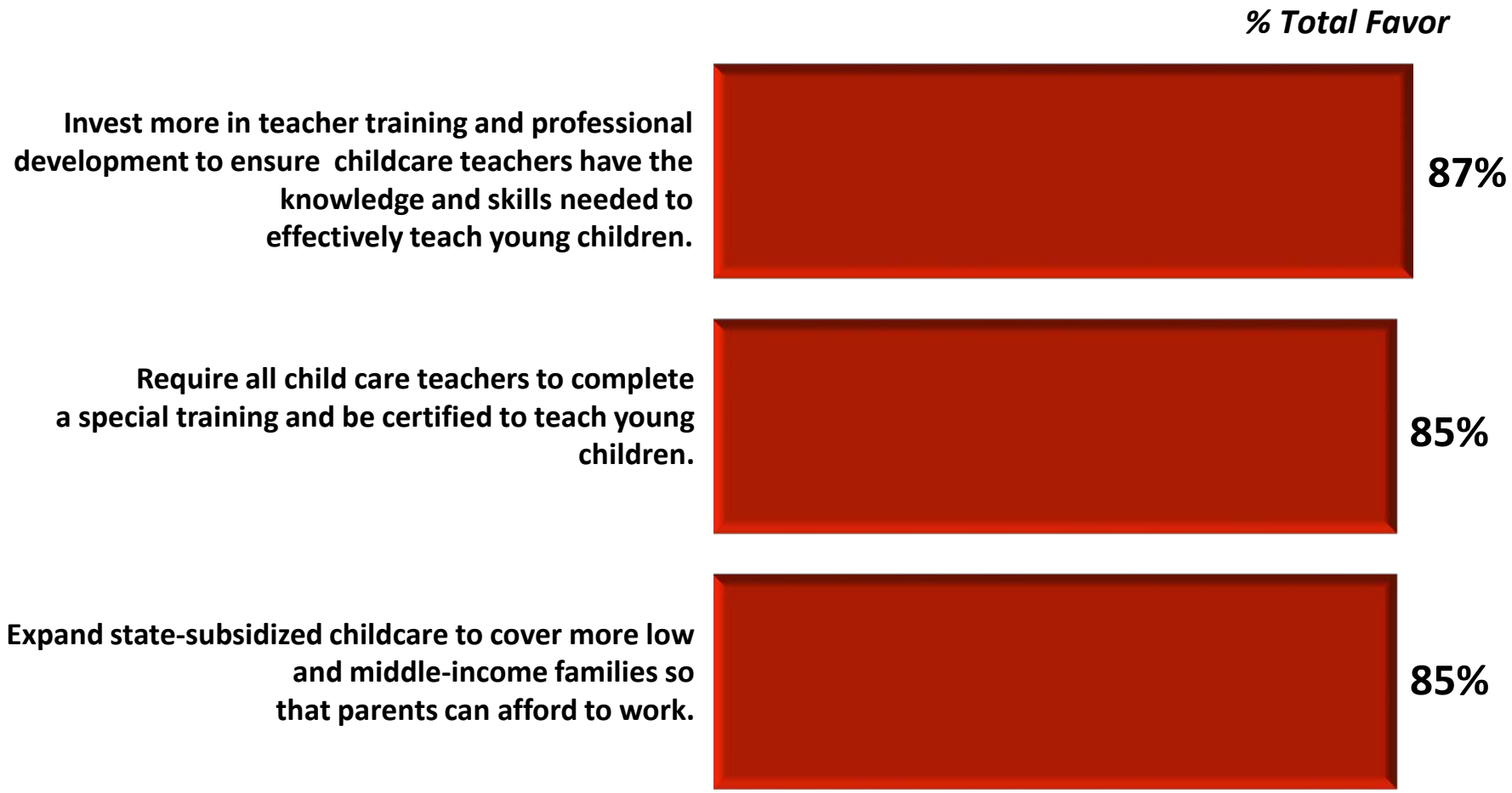
And, do you think that childcare quality has a major impact on children's long-term well-being, and on their future job success?

+76



Policies to improve childcare are very popular.

Next, as you may know, more than 100 million in federal tax dollars is spent in Tennessee each year to subsidize childcare. A childcare provider can receive a license to operate by meeting required safety and health standards but is not required to meet educational standards. Now, I'd like to read some proposals that deal with the issue of childcare. After I read each proposal, please tell me if you favor or oppose that proposal.



Childcare Proposals – Part 2

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% Total Favor

Require the state's childcare subsidy be used only for childcare providers that meet quality education standards.

80%

Increase state payments for subsidized childcare so providers can afford to hire well-qualified teachers.

80%

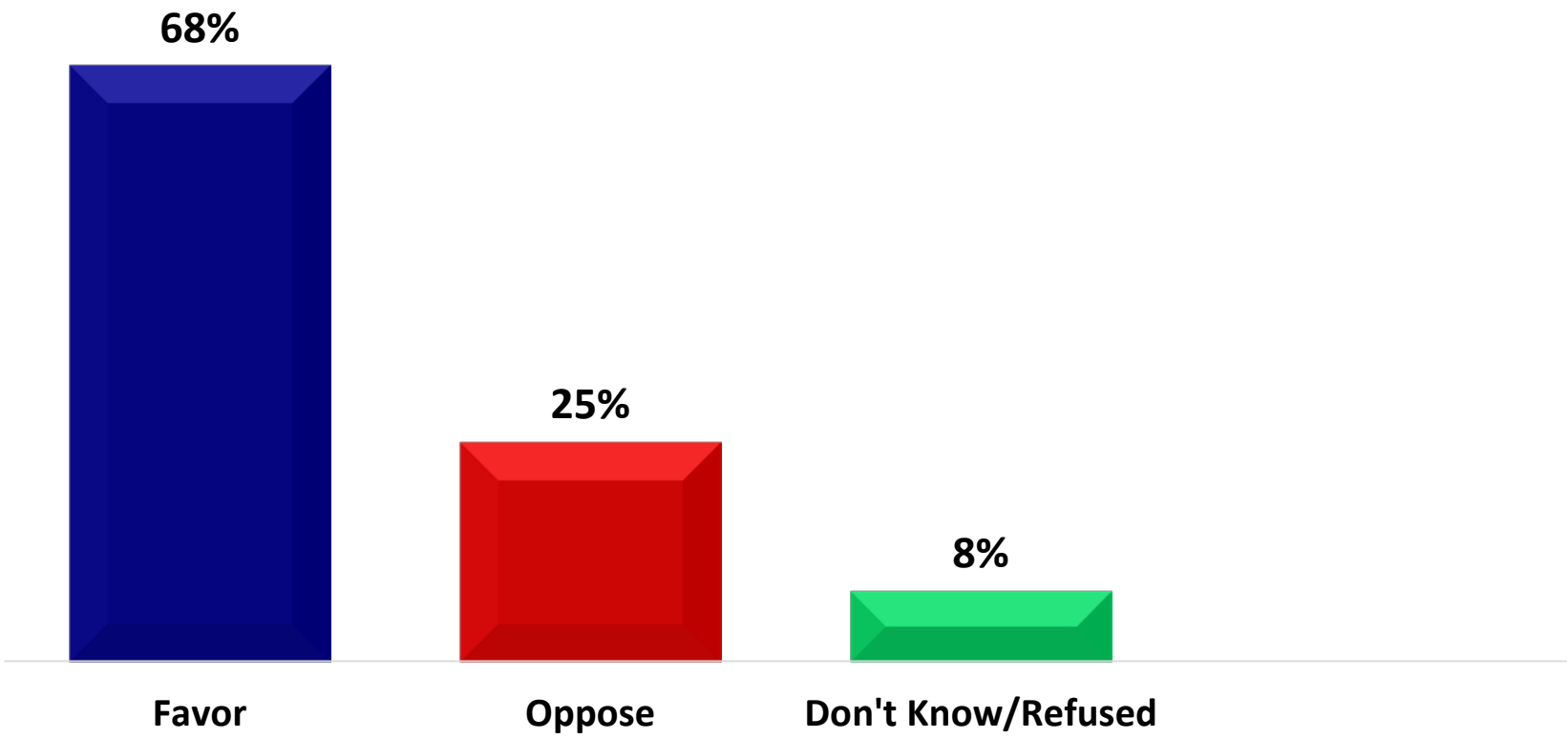
Key Finding #7

Tennessee voters understand the importance of the parent's role in supporting their child's early learning, and want to support parents.

When information was shared with them about **home visiting programs, and the impact such programs have on parenting skills, reducing abuse and neglect, and helping prepare children for school, nearly 70% support expanding such programs by a strong margin.**

Support for Home Visiting is strong among likely voters.

Now, on a new topic... studies show home visiting programs strengthen parenting skills, reduce abuse and neglect and ready children for their school years. In addition, they found home visiting programs are cost effective and could generate a return of up to $5.70 for every $1 invested. Would you FAVOR or OPPOSE a proposal to expand home visiting programs that support parents and families young children?



Key Finding #8

Supporting early education is good public policy and will improve children's performance in school and life.

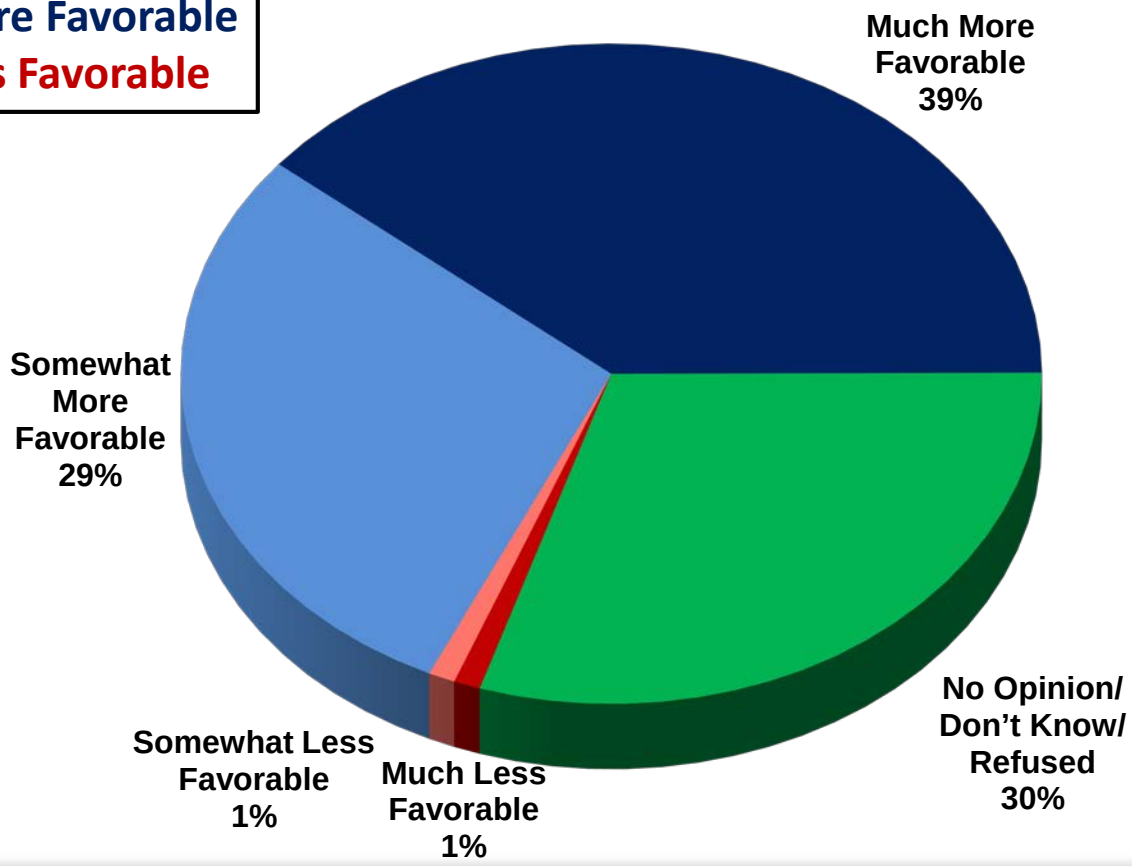
It is also good politics. Fully **68% of voters would have a "more favorable" opinion of a legislator who supported programs and policies to improve early education**.

A pro-early education legislator has appeal across every major demographic subgroup and being pro-early education resonates in every corner of the state.

Overwhelmingly, voters have a more favorable opinion of a pro-Early Ed legislator.

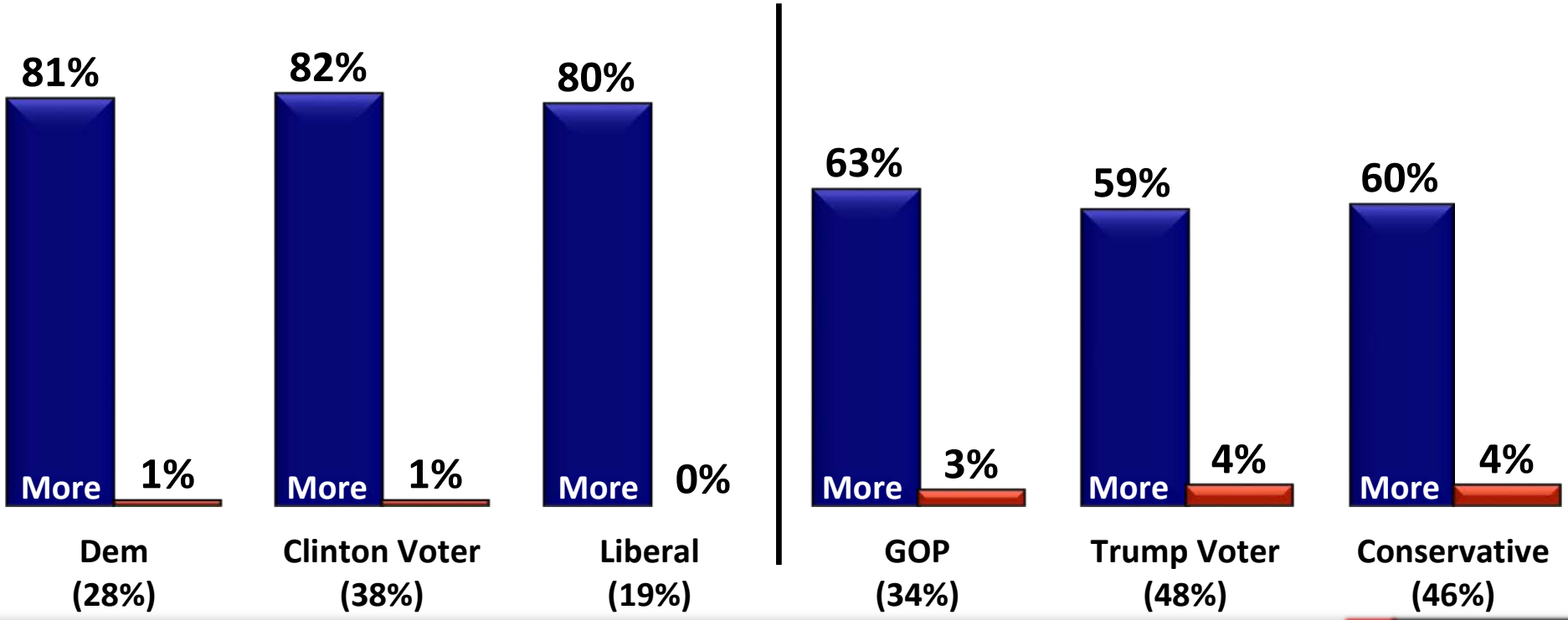
Finally, if your state legislator supported programs and policies to improve early education in Tennessee, would you have a more favorable impression of him or her, less favorable impression or would it not affect your opinion much one way or the other?

68% Total More Favorable
2% Total Less Favorable



A pro-early education legislator is popular with both the political left and right.

More Favorable/Less Favorable By Key Subgroup

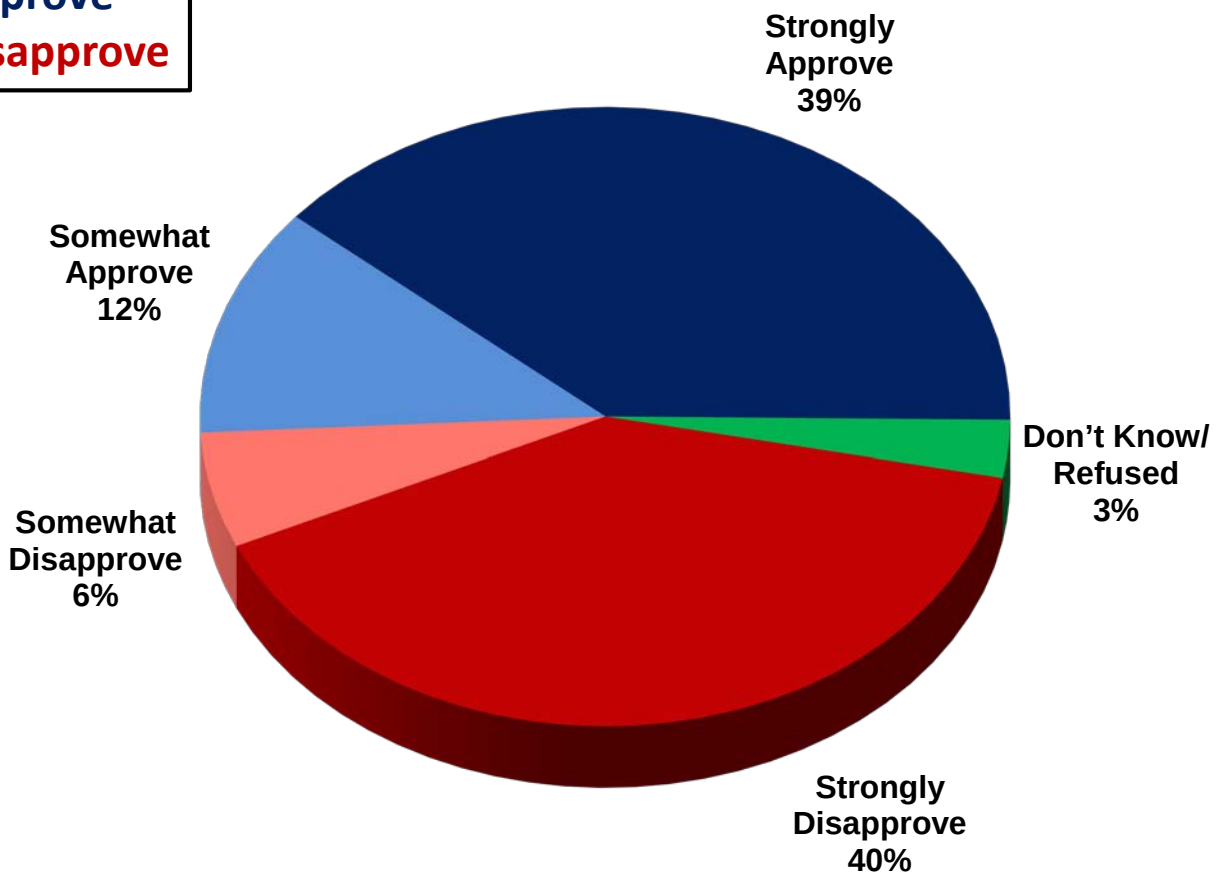


Other Data of Interest

President Trump maintains a majority in job approval.

First, do you approve or disapprove of the job Donald Trump is doing as President?

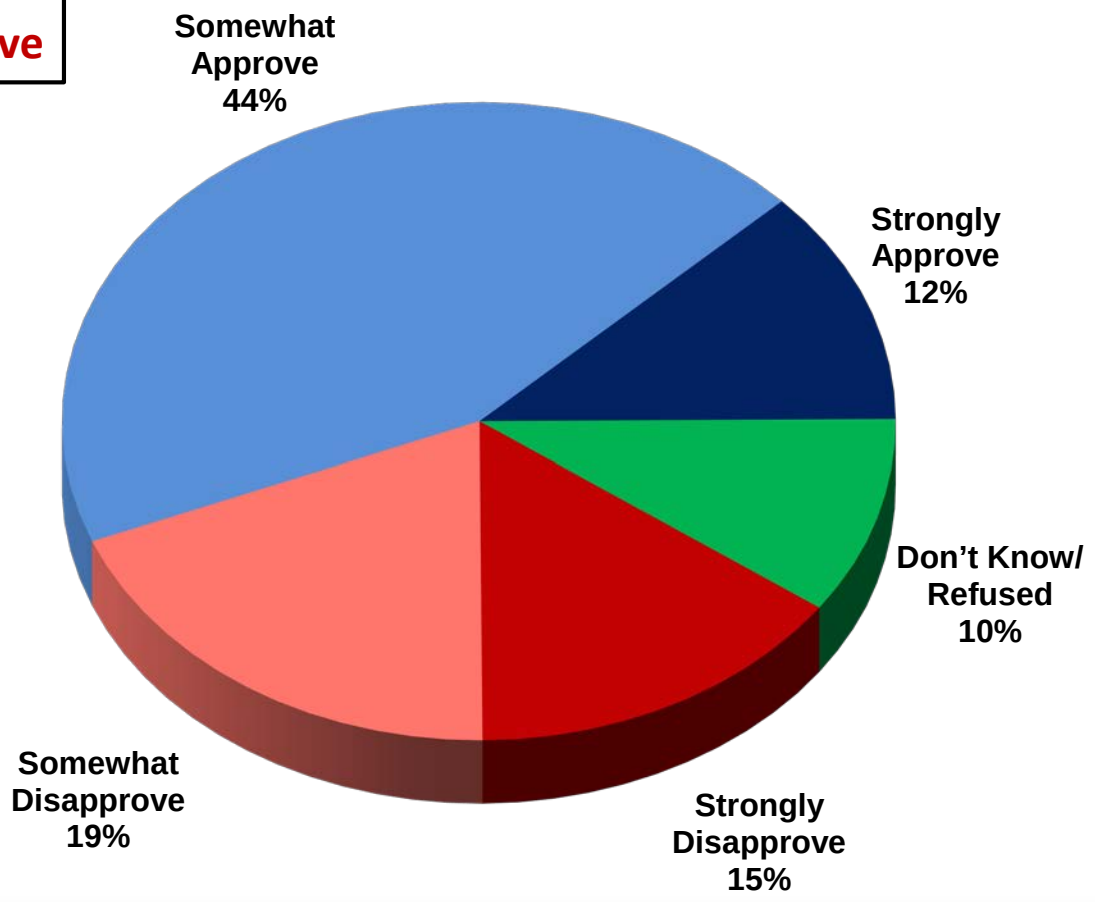
51% Total Approve
46% Total Disapprove



Voters approve of the job the state legislature is doing.

Do you approve or disapprove of the job the state legislature is doing?

56% Total Approve
34% Total Disapprove



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214 N. Fayette St
Alexandria, VA 22314
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