

COLORADO HIGHER EDUCATION SURVEY RESULTS

Key findings from a survey of 802 Colorado residents
conducted March 3-11, 2008.



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March 2008

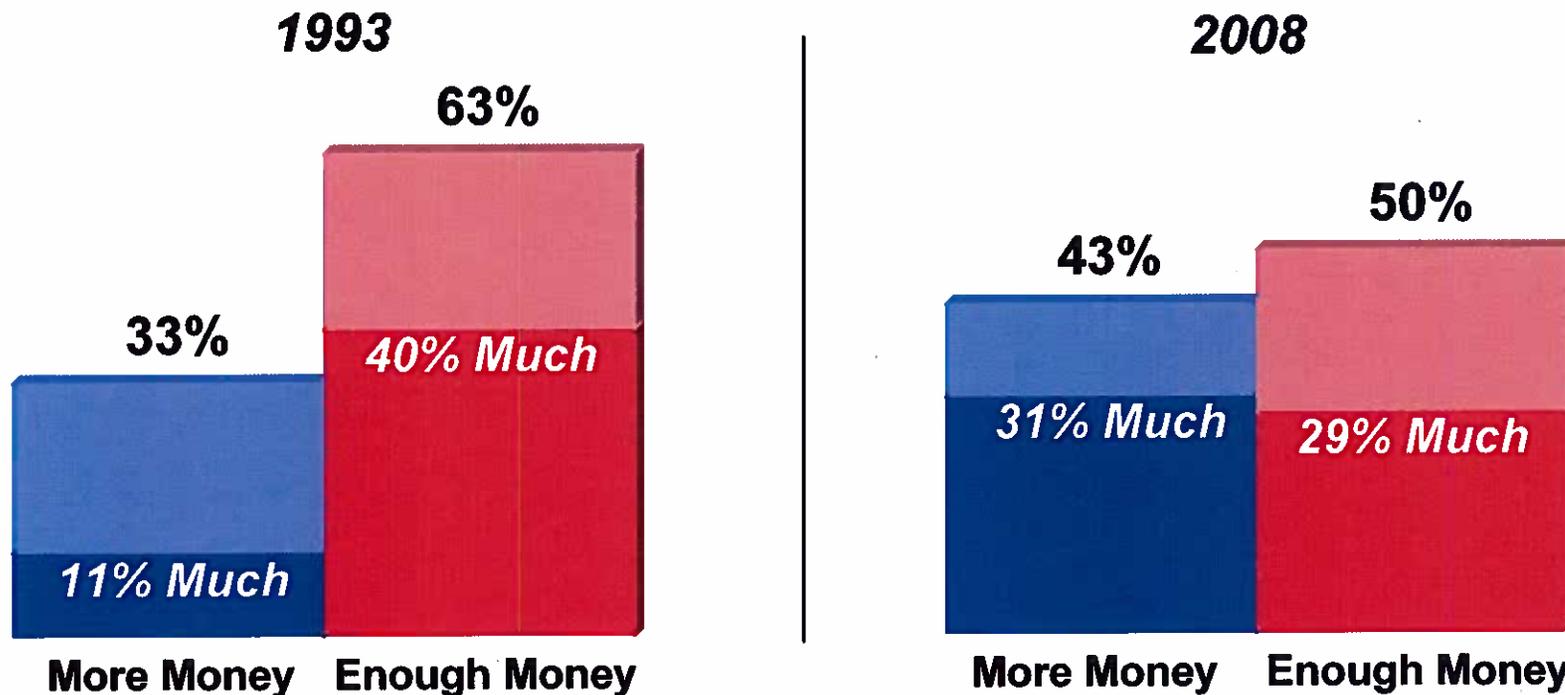
The Bottom Line

- **Coloradans are only starting to realize the current state of funding and how it is affecting Colorado's colleges and universities.**
- **A majority are generally supportive of restoring funding for higher education and even increasing their own taxes to do so.**
- **We learned a great deal about how to better communicate the value of and situation facing our colleges and universities, such as detailing that Colorado now ranks 49th for funding and how this is affecting opportunity for students to pursue an education.**

Colorado voters increasingly view higher education as needing additional funds to maintain quality.

Statement A: To do a good job, Colorado's colleges and universities need more money.

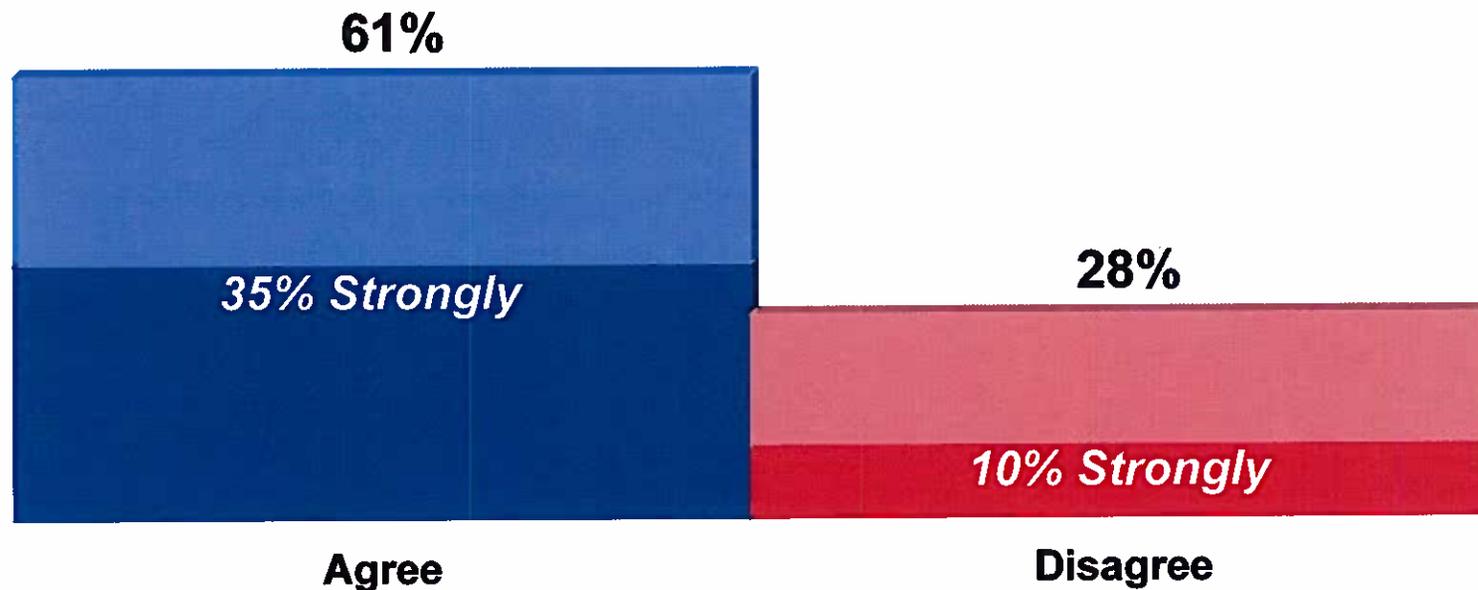
Statement B: Colorado's colleges and universities have enough money, they just need to operate more efficiently.



And would you say that Statement [A/B] is much closer to your point of view than Statement [B/A], or only somewhat closer?

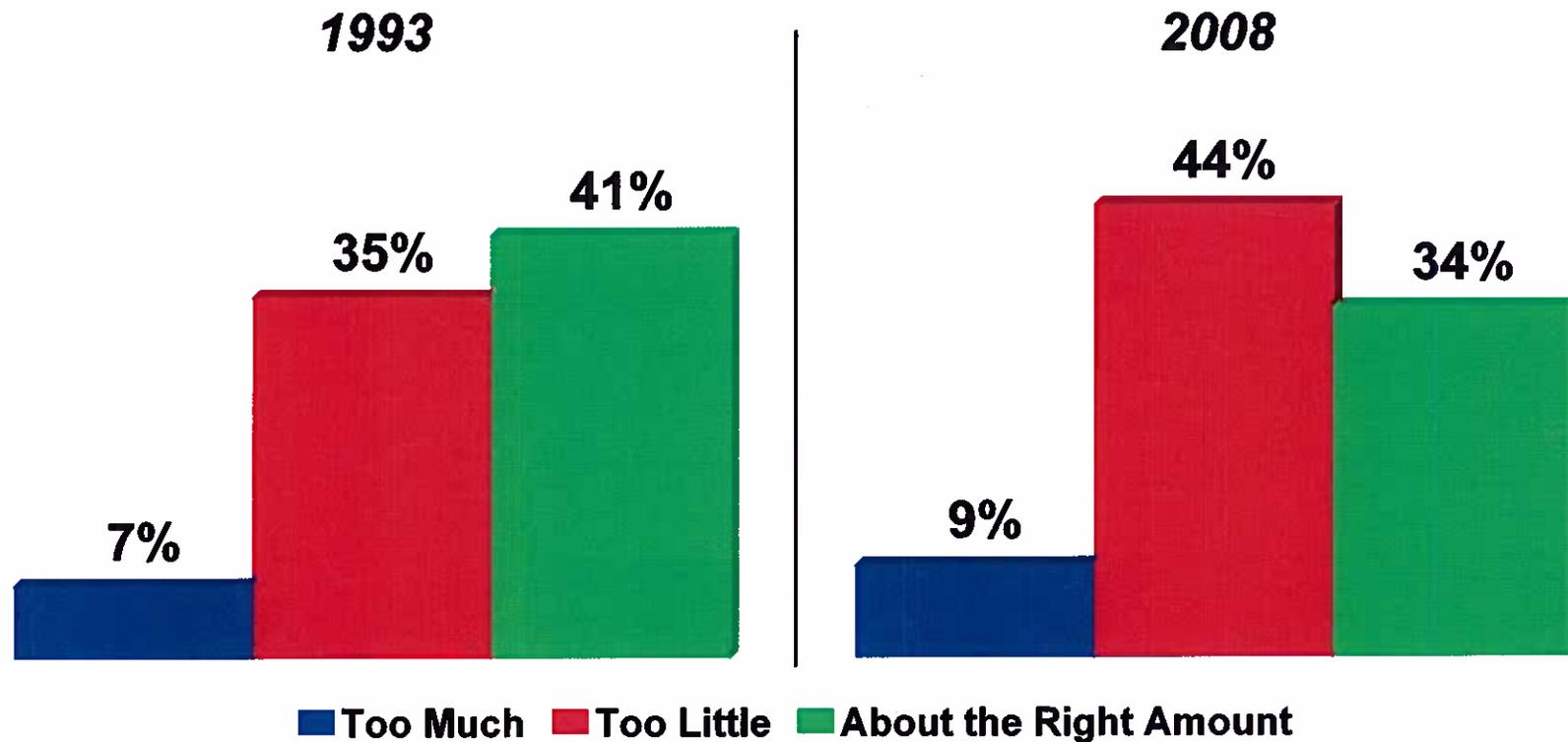
There is a sense that the lack of financial aid is causing some students to miss out on higher education.

There is not enough financial aid or scholarship money, so too many good students either don't go to college or have to drop out because they can't afford it.



I would now like to read you five statements about issues affecting our state's colleges and universities. As I read each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

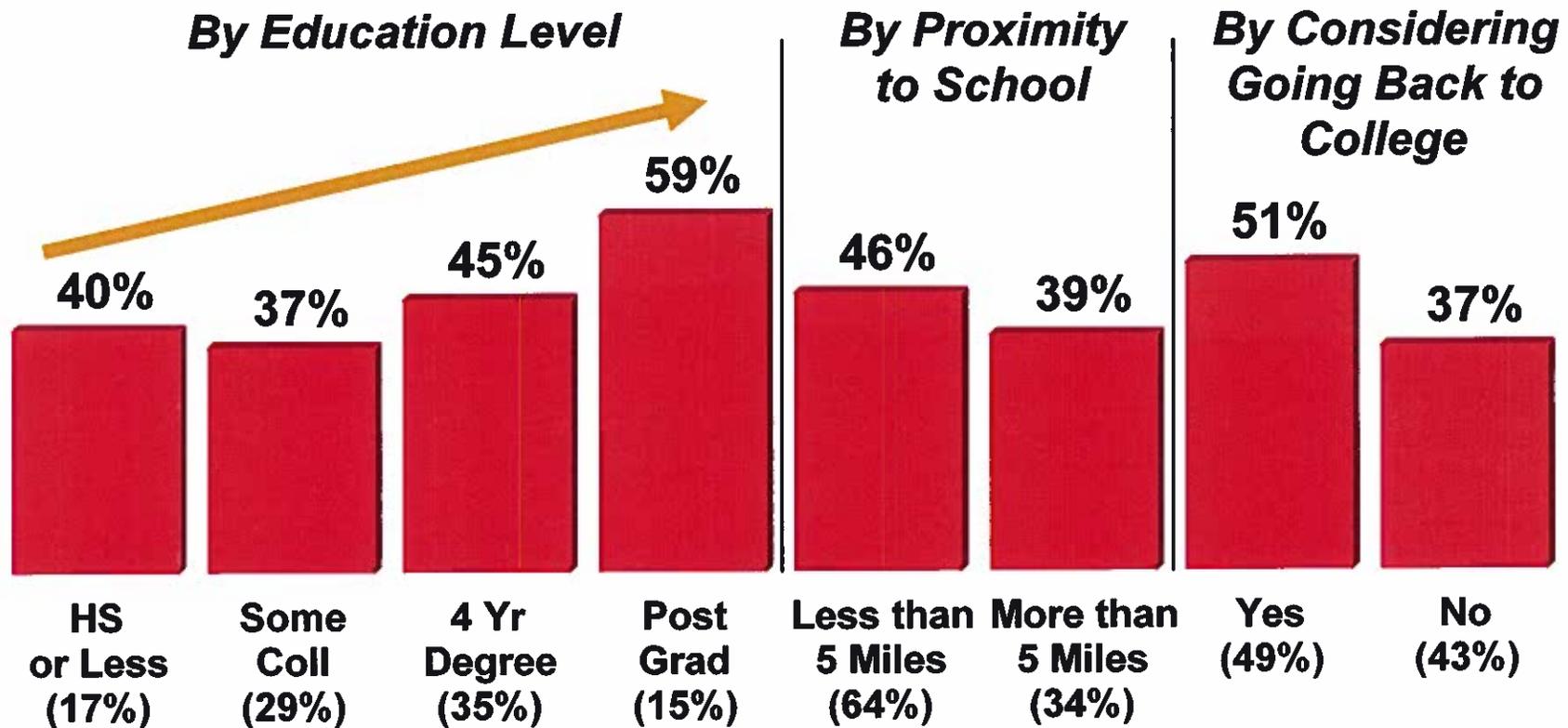
While the trend is positive, less than half think too little is being spent by the state on higher education.



Do you feel that too much is being spent on public higher education in Colorado, too little, or do you feel it is about the right amount?

Connection to higher education does correlate to perceptions that state funding is too little.

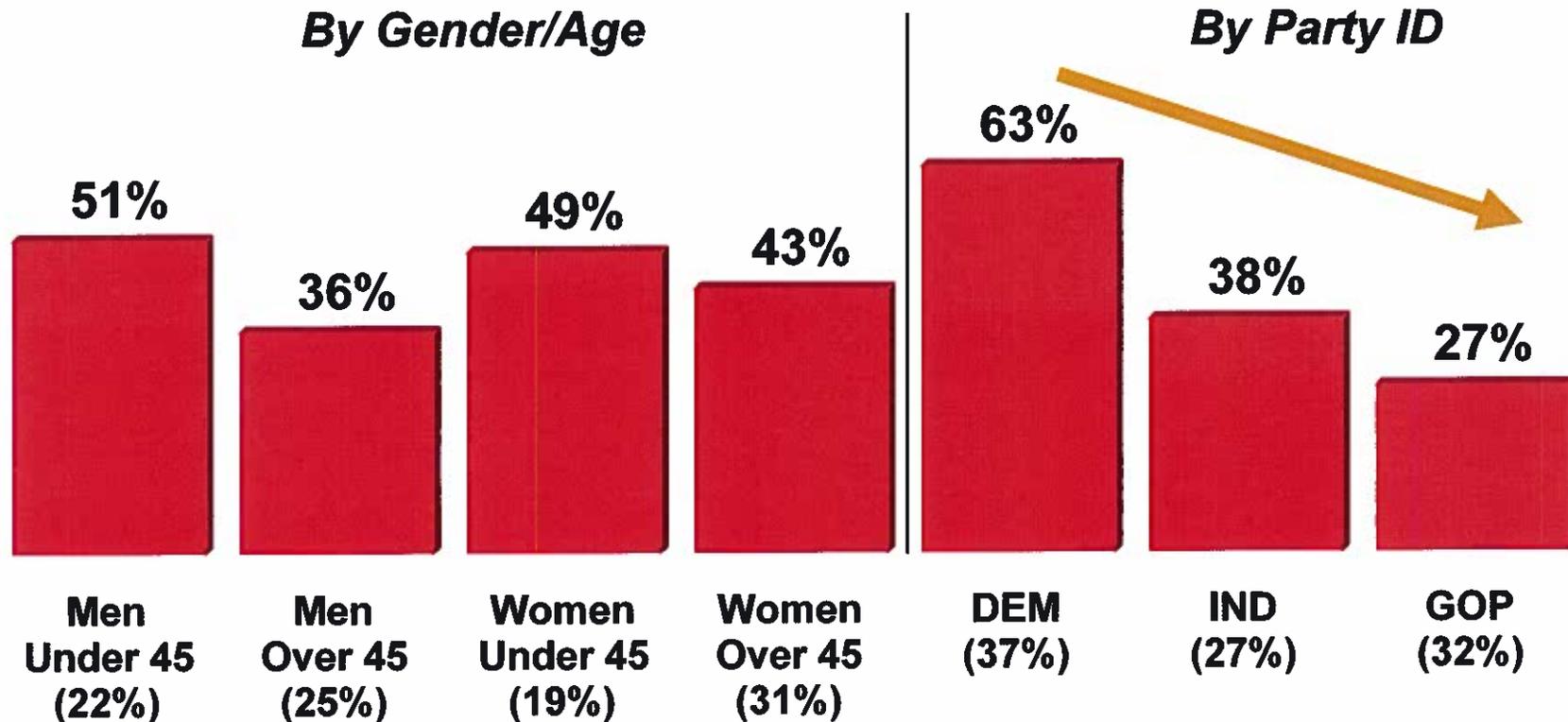
% Too Little



Do you feel that too much is being spent on public higher education in Colorado, too little, or do you feel it is about the right amount?

However, partisan affiliation and age also demonstrate strong correlations.

% Too Little



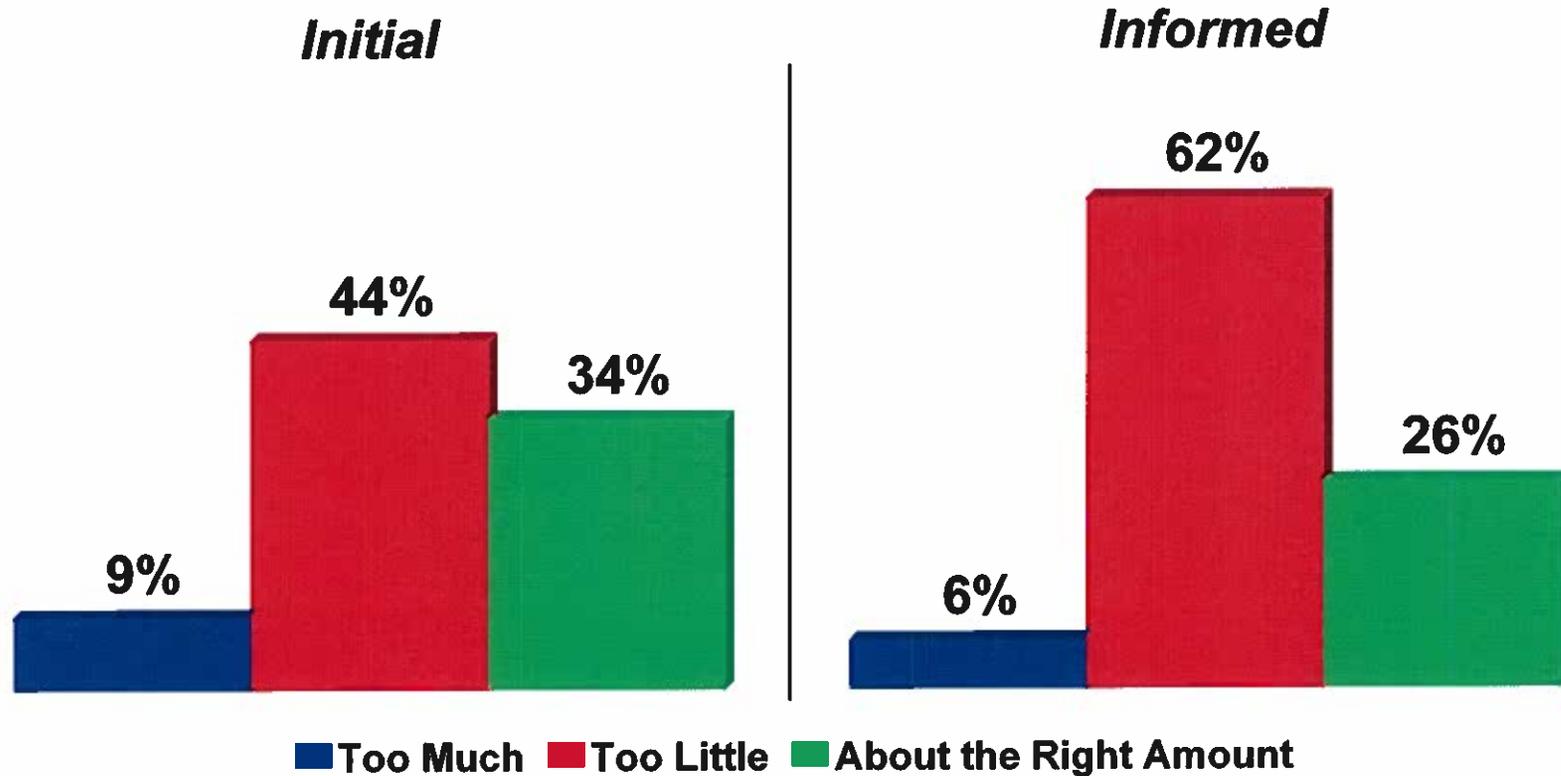
Do you feel that too much is being spent on public higher education in Colorado, too little, or do you feel it is about the right amount?

What We Did

Knowing from the focus groups that few Colorado voters had an accurate impression of the funding situation for the state's colleges and universities, we then provided respondents with one simple fact about how budget cuts have impacted higher education.

In 1982, approximately 25 percent of the state's budget was allocated to higher education. This dropped to 18 percent in 1993, and stands at 11% today. Knowing this, would you now say that too much is being spent on public higher education in Colorado, too little, or do you feel it is about the right amount

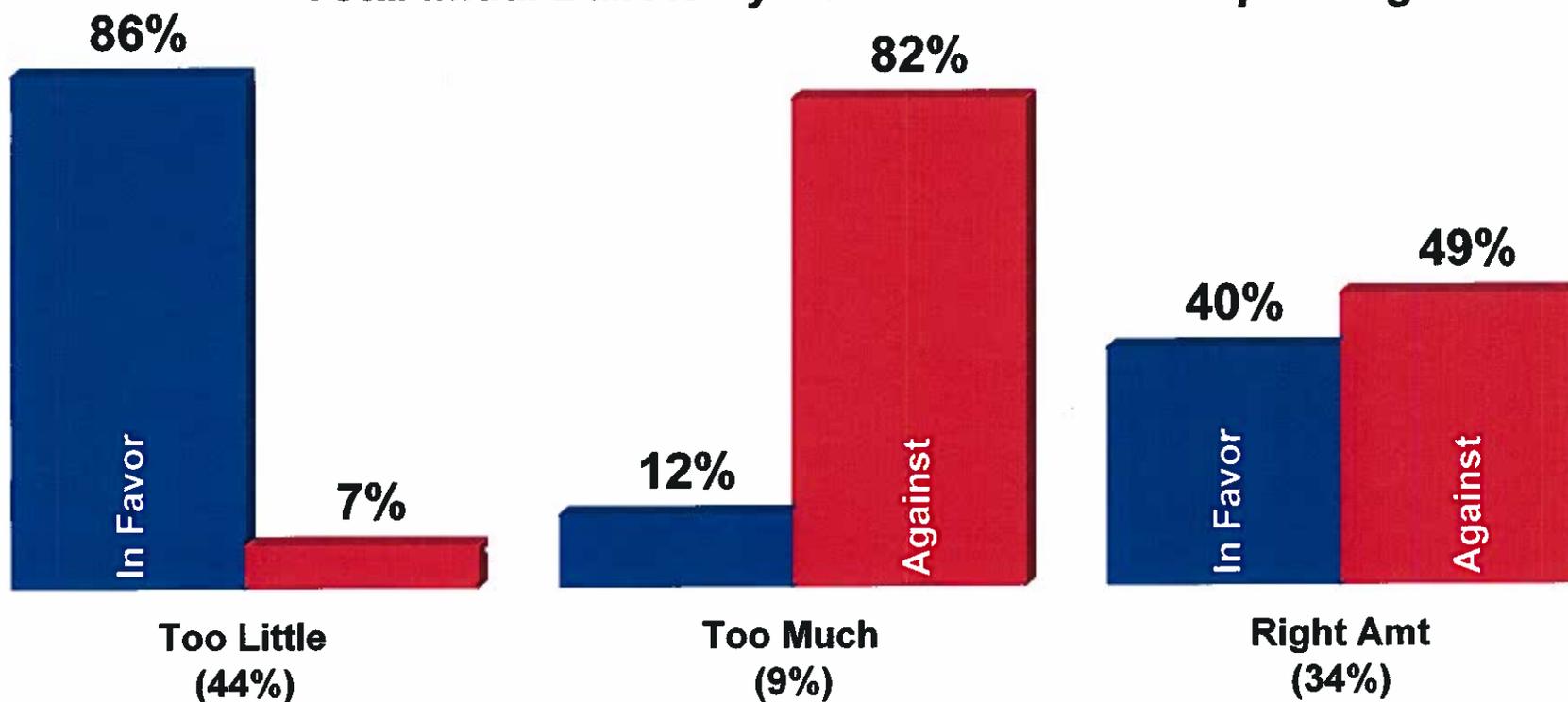
This one simple fact has a dramatic effect on voters' attitudes.



Do you feel that too much is being spent on public higher education in Colorado, too little, or do you feel it is about the right amount?

The one-third of voters who say higher education receives about the right amount initially are an important group to persuade, since they currently lean against a tax measure.

Total Initial Ballots By Positions on Taxes/Spending

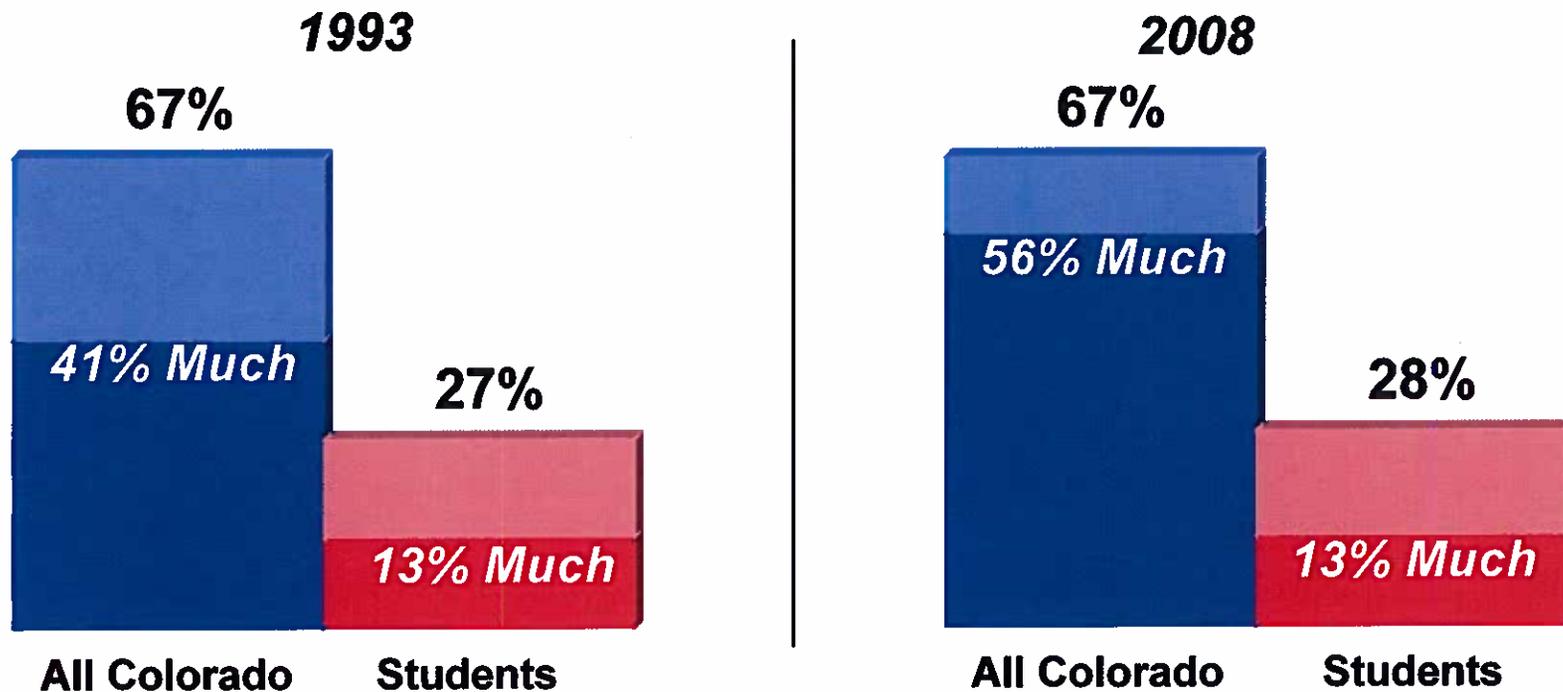


If the election were held today on this ballot proposal, how would you vote? Would you vote in favor of or against this proposal?

They also strongly believe that this system benefits all Coloradans.

Statement A: Colorado's spending on its colleges and universities is an important investment that benefits all Coloradans.

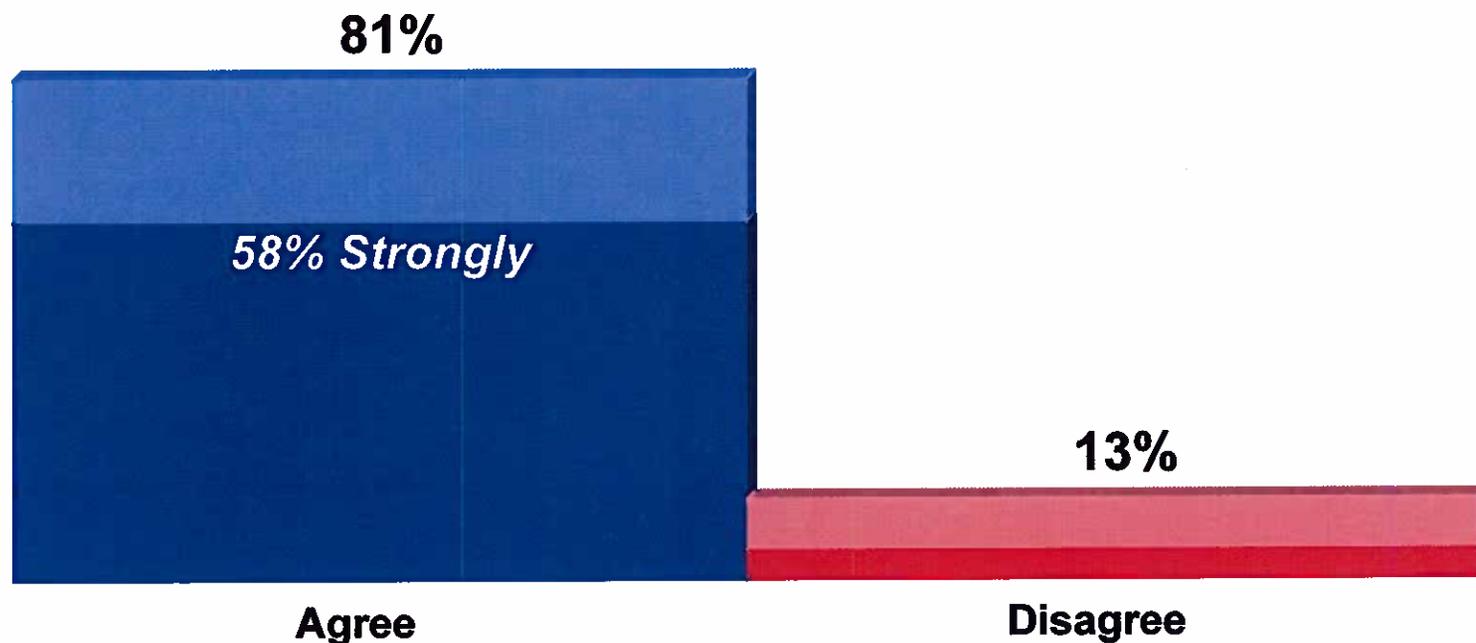
Statement B: Colorado's spending on its colleges and universities pretty much benefits just students and the people who work at the state's colleges and universities.



And would you say that Statement [A/B] is much closer to your point of view than Statement [B/A], or only somewhat closer?

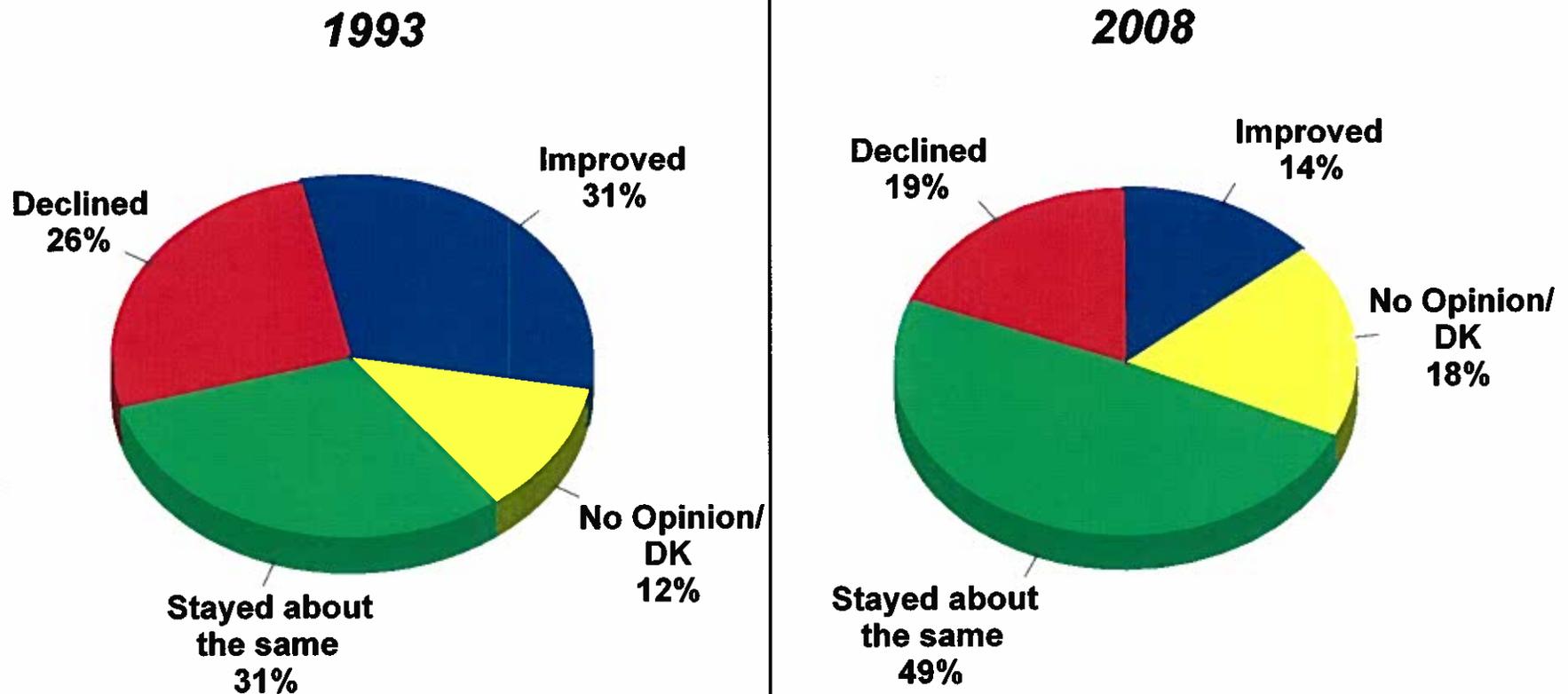
Moreover, they see a direct economic necessity for an individual to have an advanced degree.

Continuing one's education beyond high school is essential to getting and keeping a job.



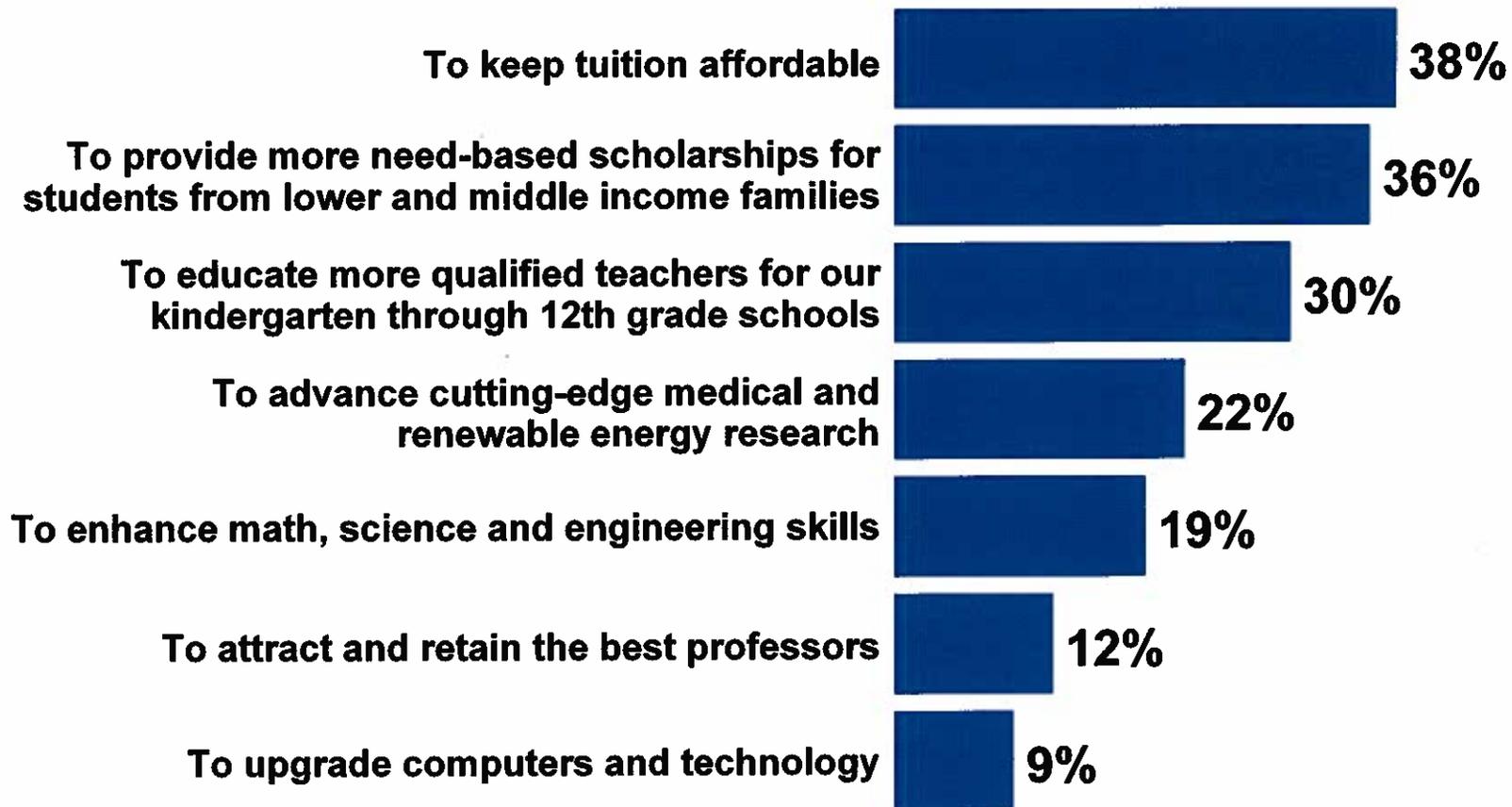
I would now like to read you five statements about issues affecting our state's colleges and universities. As I read each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

Despite the state of funding for higher education, voters do not perceive the quality of education being negatively impacted.



And in the past few years would you say the quality of education provided by our state's colleges and universities has improved, declined or stayed about the same as it was a few years ago?

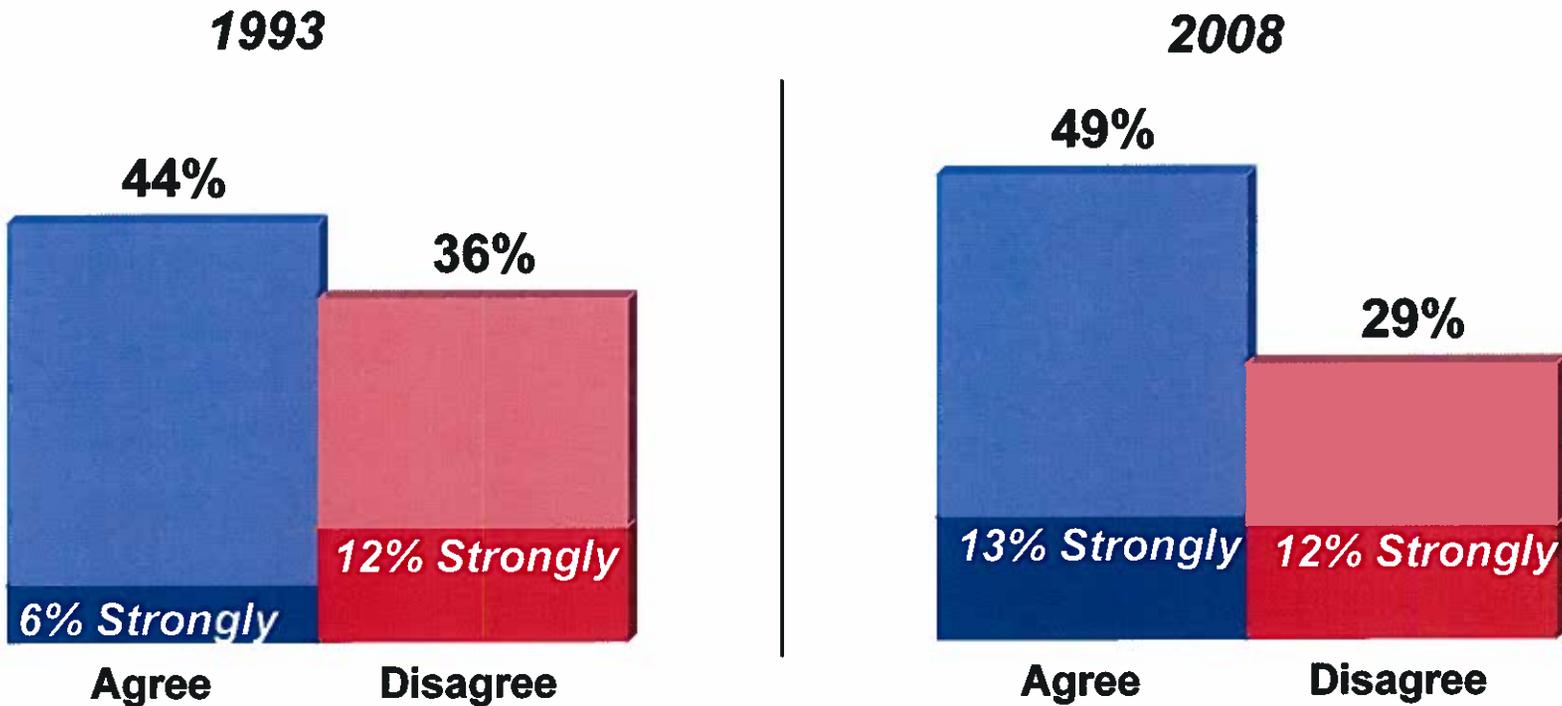
Keeping tuition affordable and ensuring more scholarships top the priorities within higher education for Colorado voters.



There are also several areas of the higher education budget that could receive more funding if this ballot proposal were to pass. I will now read you just seven of these areas, and after I read all seven, please tell me which two areas you think should get the most money.

There has been little change in the perception of efficiency.

In terms of keeping costs under control, Colorado's colleges, community colleges and universities operate fairly efficiently



I would now like to read you five statements about issues affecting our state's colleges and universities. As I read each statement, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

Unfortunately trying to boost the image of higher education in this area really falls flat.

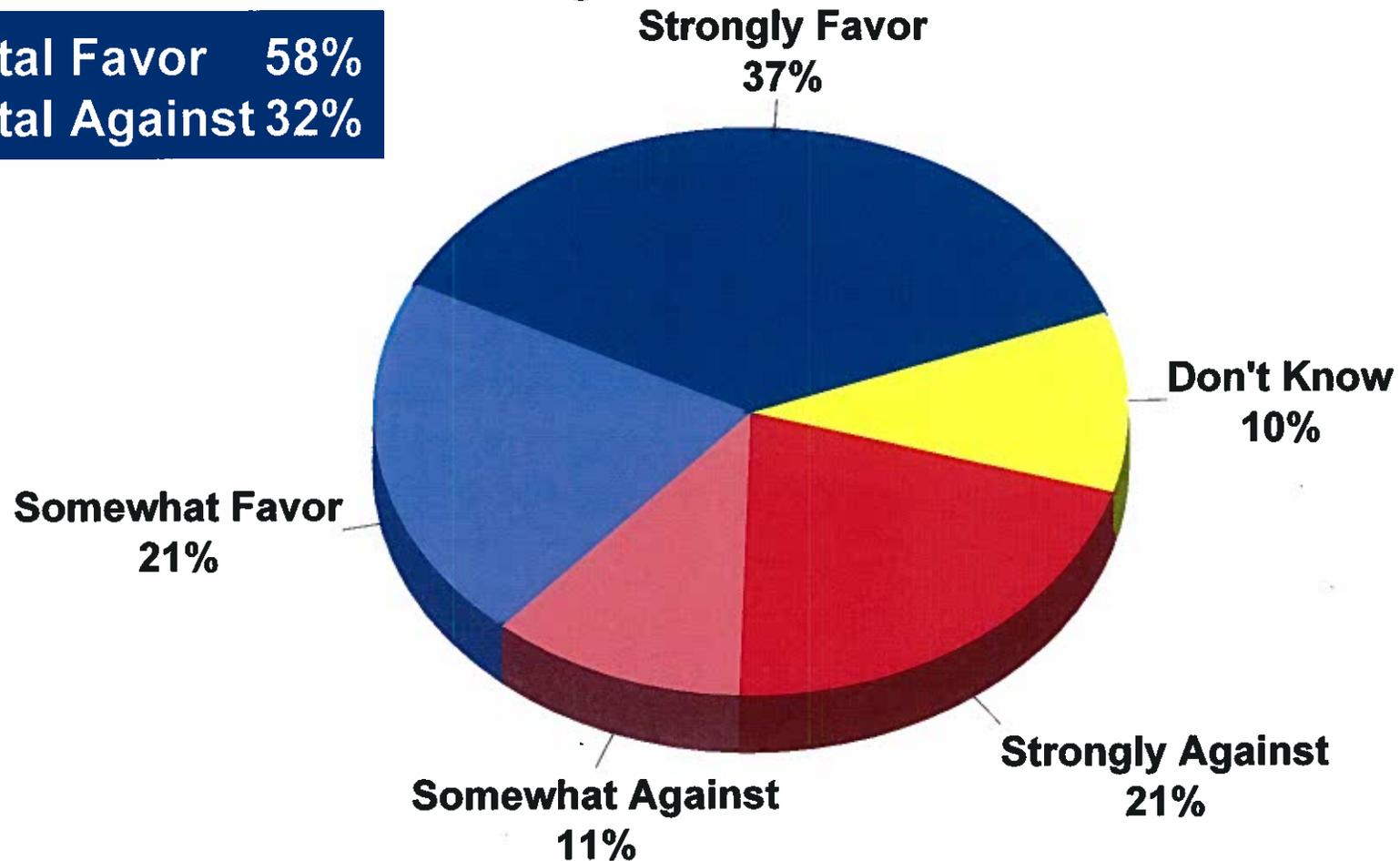
Universities like CU and CSU now spend a third less on administrative expenses compared to other large state universities, like the University of Washington and Michigan State for example, saving the state millions of dollars. But we still need to restore cuts that have been made in university funding in order to stay competitive with other state universities.

A Lot More Likely
to Vote in Favor

18%

Overall, a solid majority say that if the election were held today they would support higher taxes for higher education.

Total Favor 58%
Total Against 32%



If the election were held today on this ballot proposal, how would you vote? Would you vote in favor of or against this proposal?

"Ballot Language"

In the November, 2009 election, there may be a proposal on the ballot to increase taxes by \$150 million a year to provide more funding for Colorado's colleges and university, more specifically for keeping tuition affordable, increasing the number of scholarships for students from middle and lower income families, retaining professors and researchers, upgrading computers and technology, and funding math, science and engineering programs, as well as medical and clean energy research at Colorado's colleges and universities.

"Ballot Language"

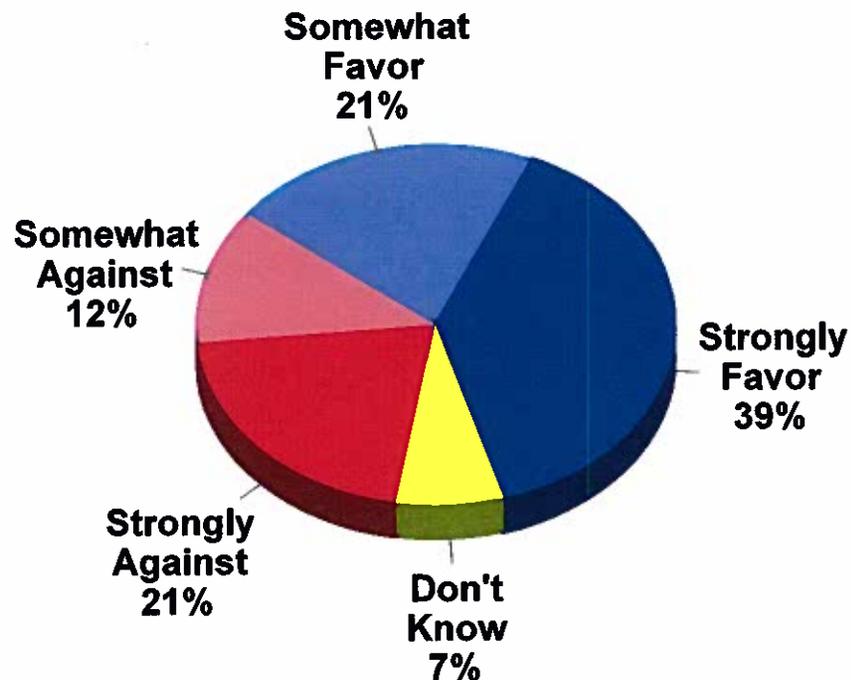
In addition, half of the respondents heard that this ballot measure would also mandate specific reforms to higher education.

Additionally, this ballot proposal will hold the colleges and universities accountable for a package of reforms, including holding down administrative costs, educating more K-12 teachers, meeting the state's need for an educated workforce and preparing annual progress reports to the legislature on the status of those reforms

The addition of certain "reforms" has no statistically significant impact on support levels.

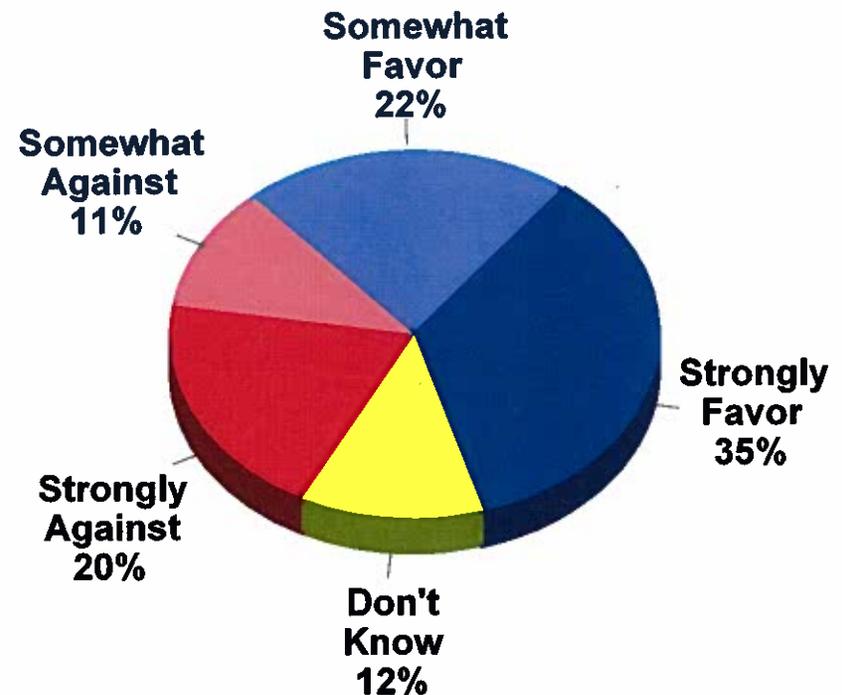
Without Reforms

Total Favor 60%
Total Against 33%



With Reforms

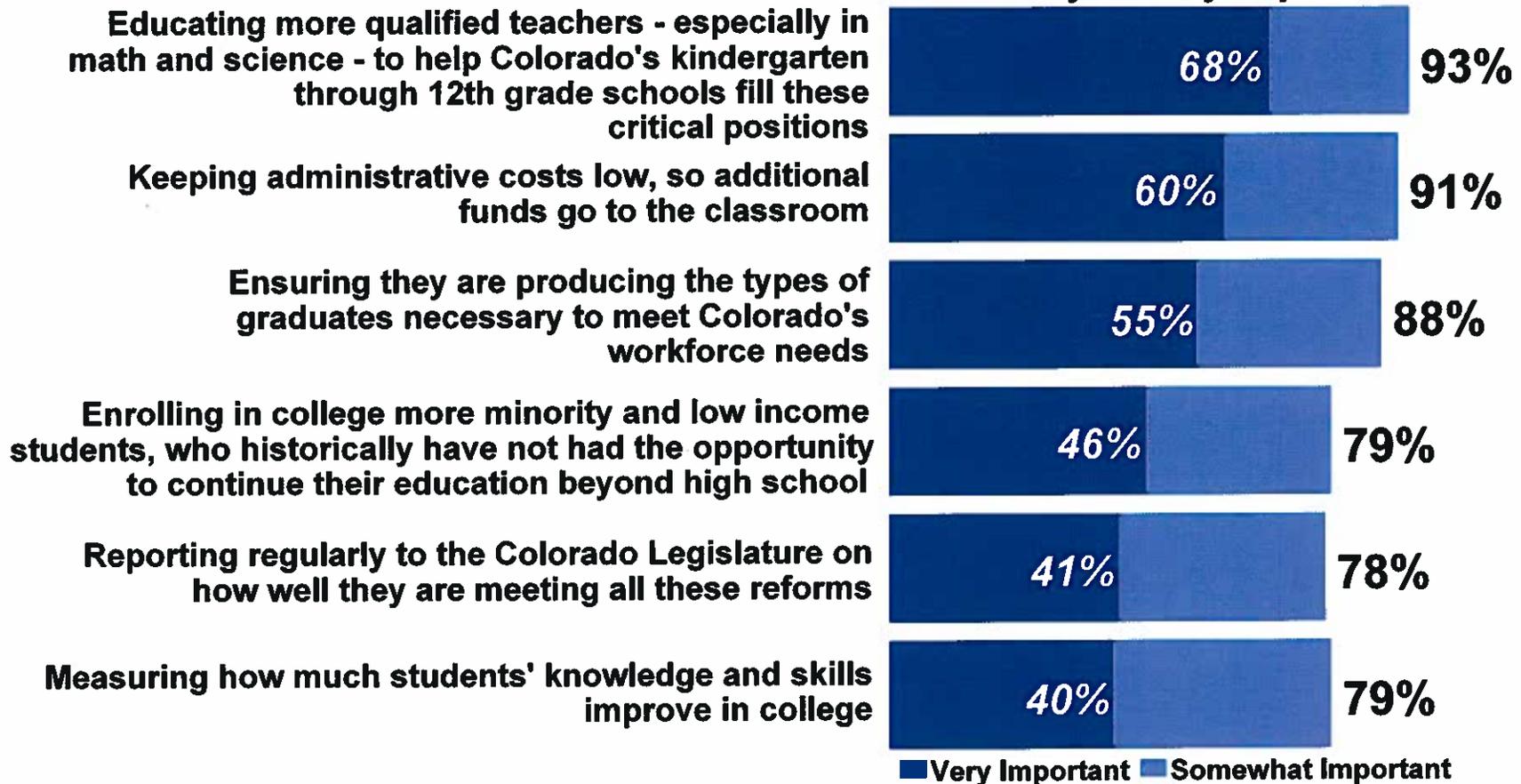
Total Favor 57%
Total Against 31%



If the election were held today on this ballot proposal, how would you vote? Would you vote in favor of or against this proposal?

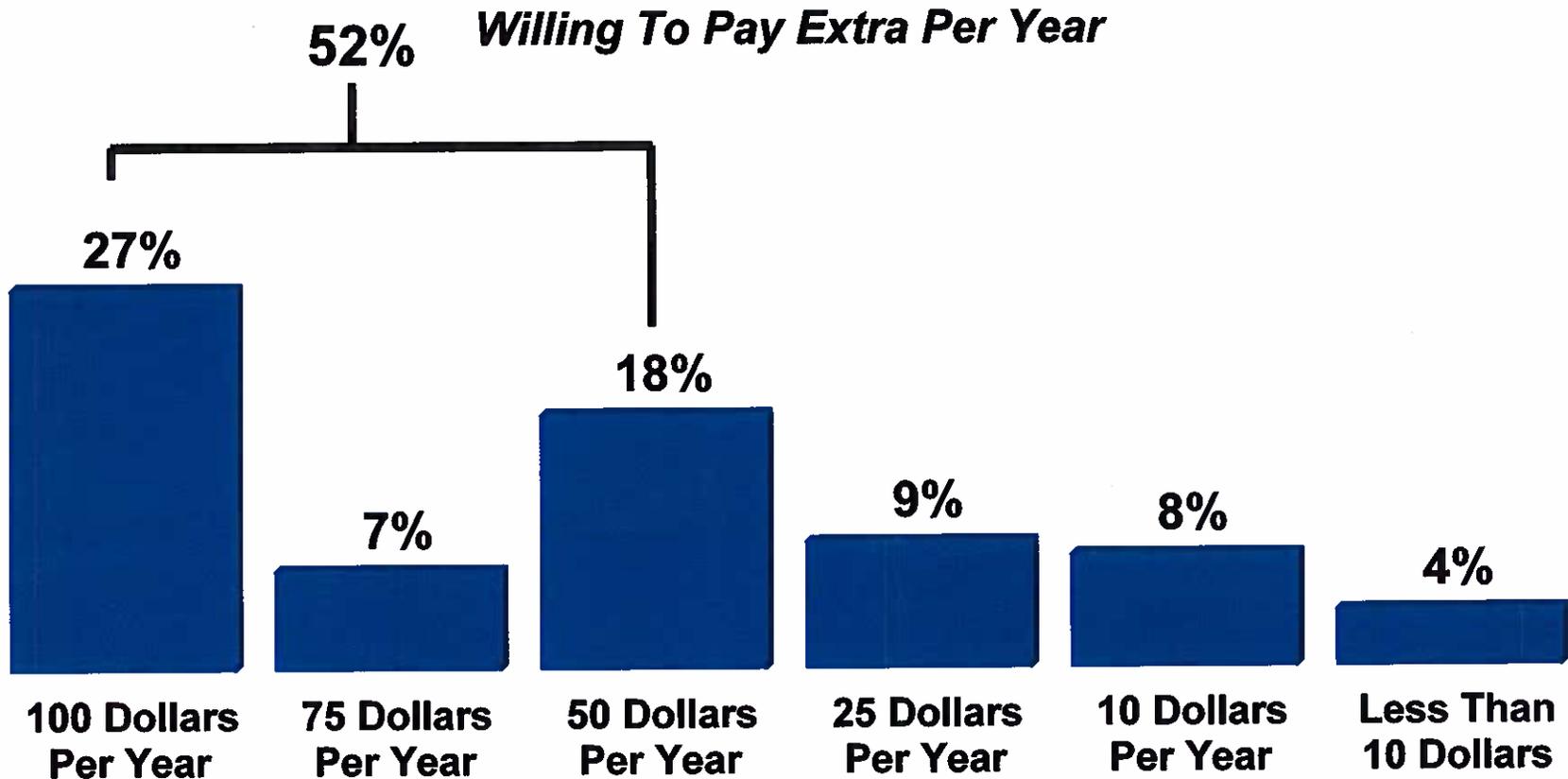
That being said, voters clearly find a number of potential reform initiatives to be very important once they hear more.

Ranked by % Very Important



As part of the ballot proposal to restore money previously cut from the budgets of Colorado's state colleges and universities, these schools will be required to put into action a package of reforms. I will now read you six reforms that could be part of that package, and after I read each one, please tell me how important each is, that is, is it very important somewhat important, not too important or not at all important.

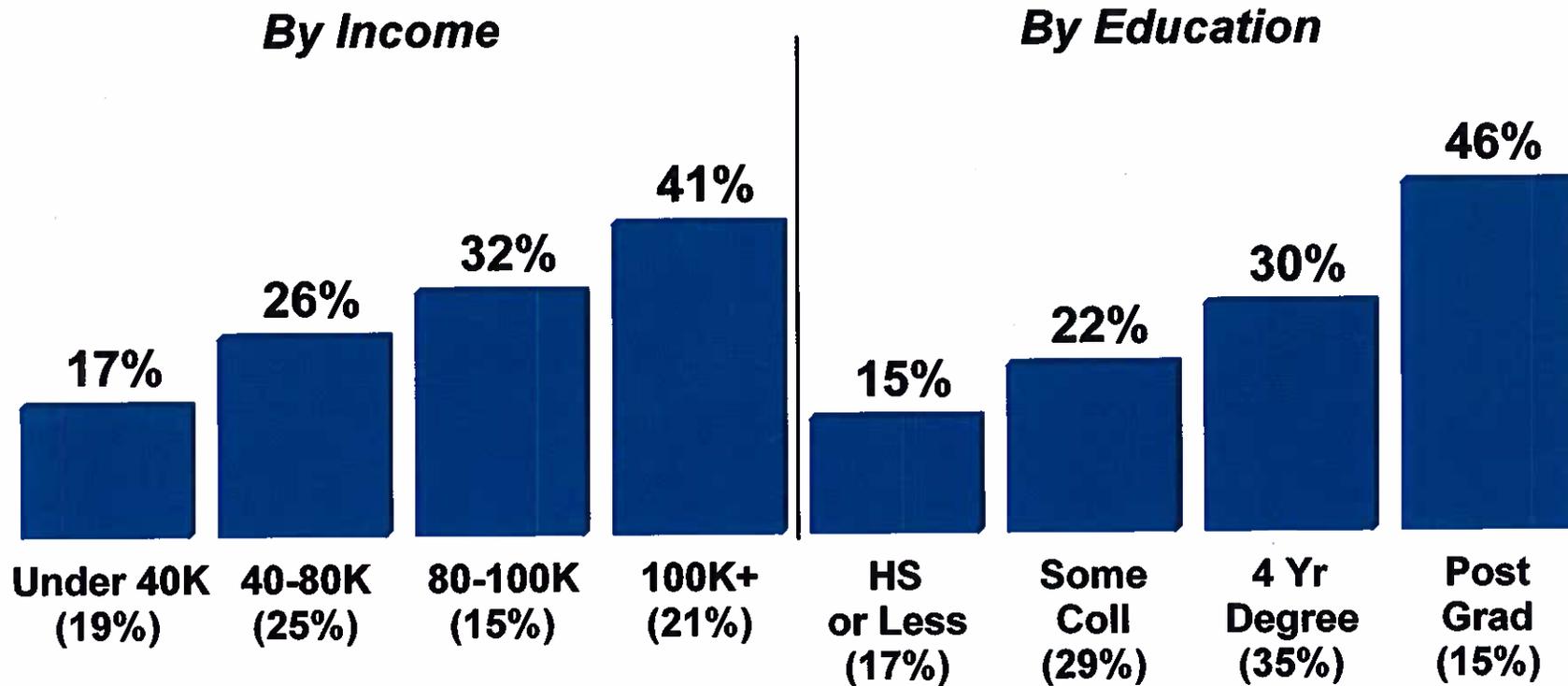
\$50 per year tends to be the "magic number" at which a majority of Coloradans are willing to pay more.



About how much more would you be willing to pay each year in taxes to increase the funding that goes to Colorado's state colleges and universities?

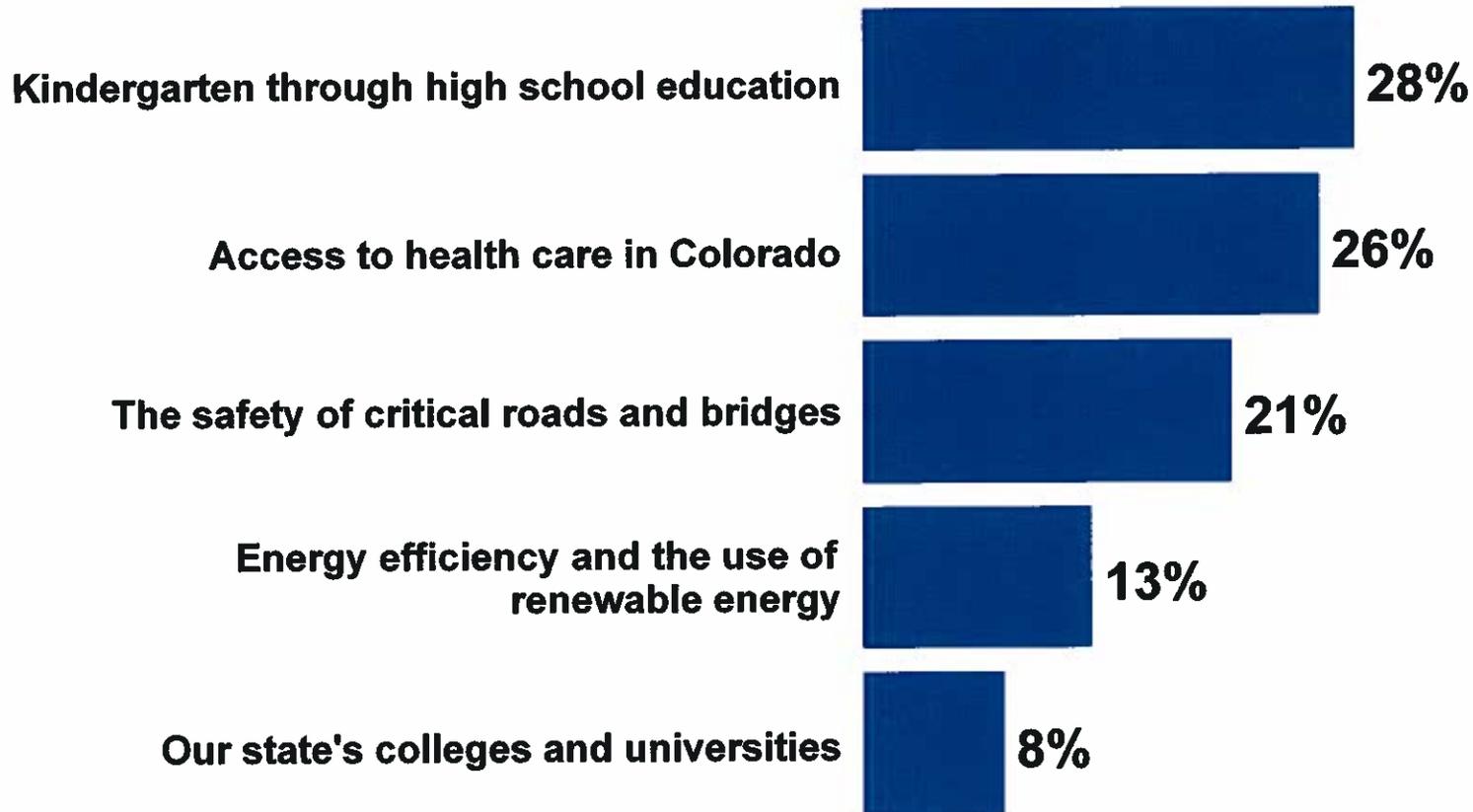
Two key demographics correlate to willingness to spend the most on higher taxes in support of higher education.

Willing To Pay \$100



About how much more would you be willing to pay each year in taxes to increase the funding that goes to Colorado's state colleges and universities?

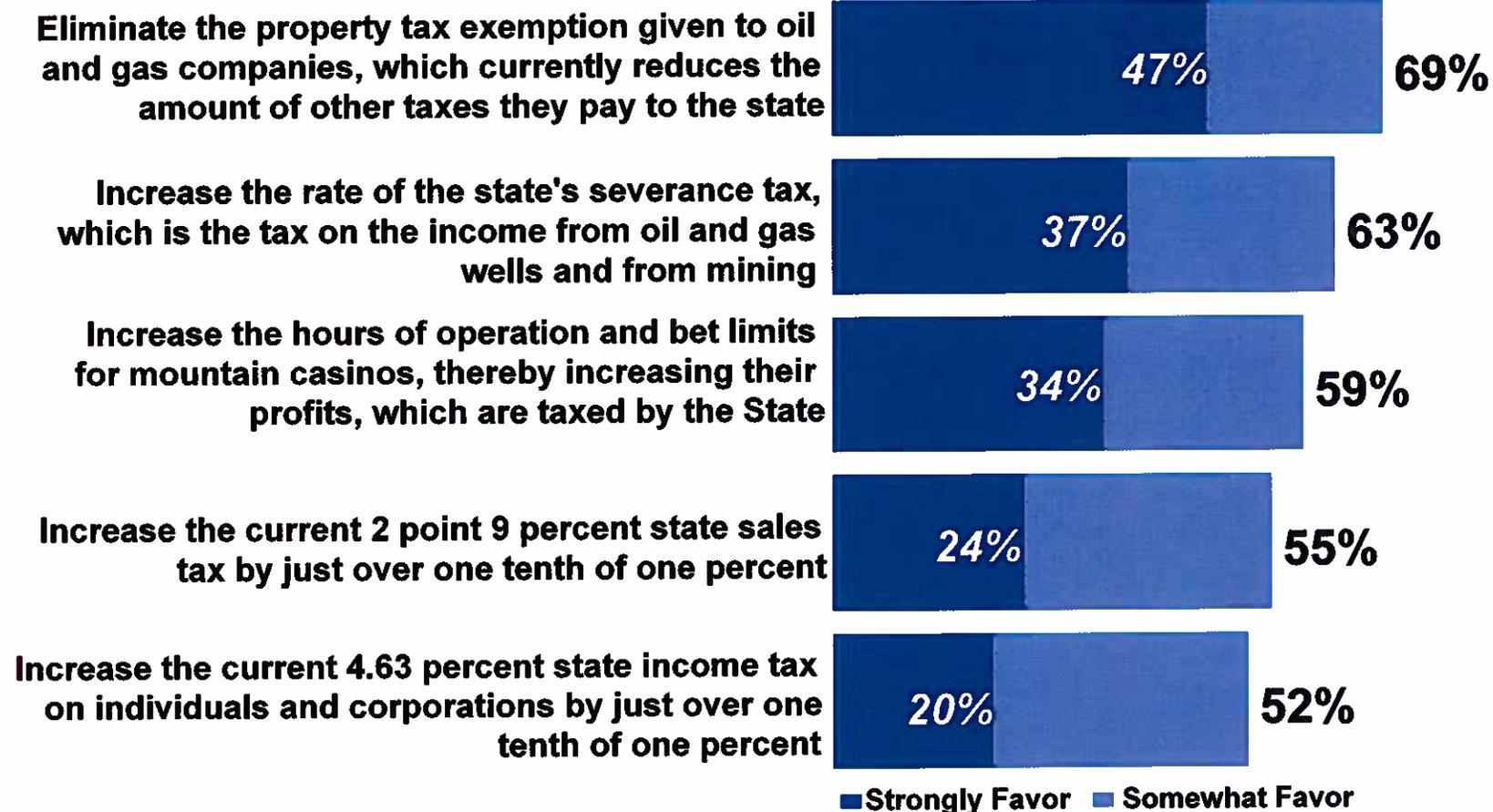
When forced to choose among competing priorities, higher education is the least likely to deserve funding in voters' minds.



Now suppose the State of Colorado had an unexpected \$10 million dollars, and you were asked to help decide how to spend it. I will now read you five areas where this money could be spent. After I read all five, please tell me which one you, personally, feel should receive most of the \$10 million dollars.

Taxing "someone else" generates more support than traditional funding sources.

Ranked by % Strongly Favor



I will read you a list of possible ways, including taxes that could be raised, to come up with the \$150 million dollars annually needed to restore cuts made in funding to our states colleges and universities. After I read each one, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose using that method of raising taxes.

The focus groups showed many are ignorant of the current state of higher education. Once they understand the facts, Coloradans do not want to be next to last in the nation!

A Lot More Likely to Vote in Favor

Colorado now ranks a dismal 49th in state support per student for higher education and dead last among the 50 states in total funding per student. We need to restore money cut from the education budget to keep our colleges and universities competitive

46%

In the past 5 years alone, tuition for a college degree has gone up 125% at University of Colorado and 120% at Mesa State in Grand Junction, pricing many middle and lower income students out of a college education. More state support will keep future tuition increases lower

38%

Even when forced to choose between comparisons, being 49th in the nation is most powerful.

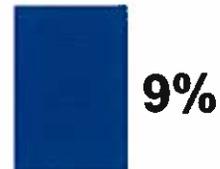
Colorado now ranks a dismal 49th in state support per student for higher education and dead last in total funding per student



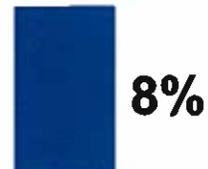
Since 2001, Colorado has cut its budget for state colleges and universities more than any other state in the country



Colorado spends only one-quarter as much per student compared to what neighboring Wyoming spends on its students



Between 2001 and 2005, \$150 million dollars was cut from the annual budget of Colorado's college and university system, which is now \$910 million behind that of other states



Spending for Colorado's colleges and universities was 27 percent of the state budget in 1972 – it's less than 12 percent today



After I read all five, please tell me which statement is the most powerful in terms of convincing you to vote in favor of the ballot initiative to restore money that has been cut from Colorado's higher education budget.

This also comes down to a "fairness" issue for Coloradans. Fairness is a core American value that any successful policy change must be in line with.

The opportunities that result from a college education should not be available to just the children of upper income families. Restoring funding for higher education will help ensure equal access to college for all Coloradans

**A Lot More Likely
to Vote in Favor**

39%

Two messages which include mentions of community colleges also test well.

Quality teachers are the core of any college. Yet today, community colleges in Colorado can afford to pay PhD professors only \$30,000 a year, about the same salary as starting kindergarten teachers. Restoring cut funds will allow us to pay our best teachers what they are worth

Colorado's community colleges train more than 90 percent of the first responder emergency workers and more than half of the nurses in our state, but those programs are now threatened by continuing budget cuts

A Lot More Likely
to Vote in Favor

37%

37%

The economic rationale is also fairly compelling to an electorate increasingly focused on the economy.

A Lot More Likely to Vote in Favor

Restoring some of the \$150 million dollars that has been cut from Colorado's higher education annual budget will make a college degree more affordable and benefit us all, by creating a new generation of educated workers who contribute to our economy, pay taxes, and are active in our communities

35%

Having great places of learning and a highly educated workforce means innovative companies will create good paying jobs here, giving Coloradans the opportunity to compete successfully in the global economy

35%

Connecting the economy to individuals resonates **MUCH** more strongly than simply reciting statistics about higher education's economic impact.

Colorado's colleges and universities contribute 4.25 billion dollars to the Colorado economy each year and generate over 97 thousand jobs, which helps keep our economy steady. Investing more in our state's college system will help lessen the impact of any future recession and speed up the recovery.

Just last month, ConocoPhillips announced that it chose Colorado for its new major renewable energy center, in large part due to the presence of local universities which are conducting cutting edge research on this issue. Cutting funds from Colorado's colleges and universities will help create more new technology jobs like this in the future

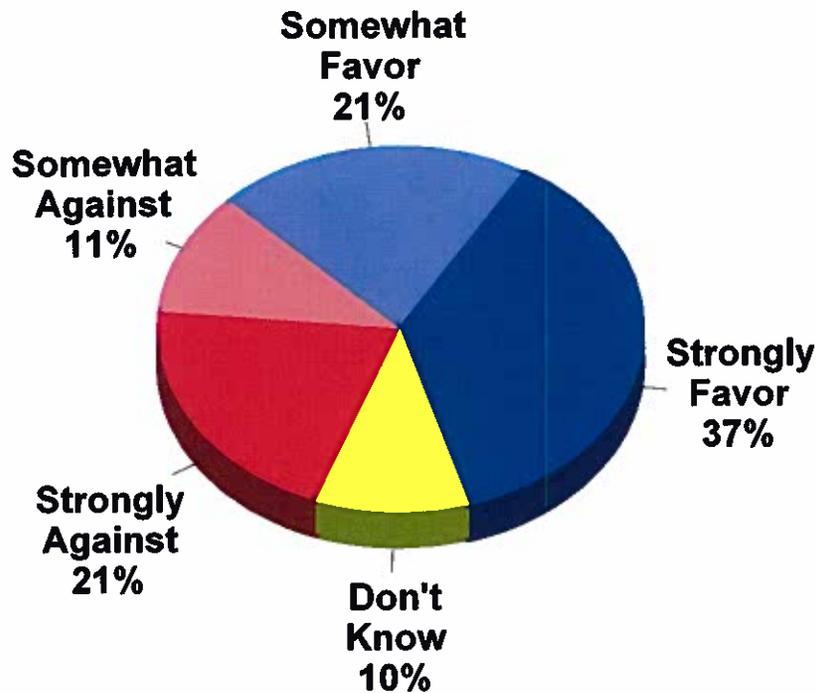
A Lot More Likely to Vote in Favor

19%

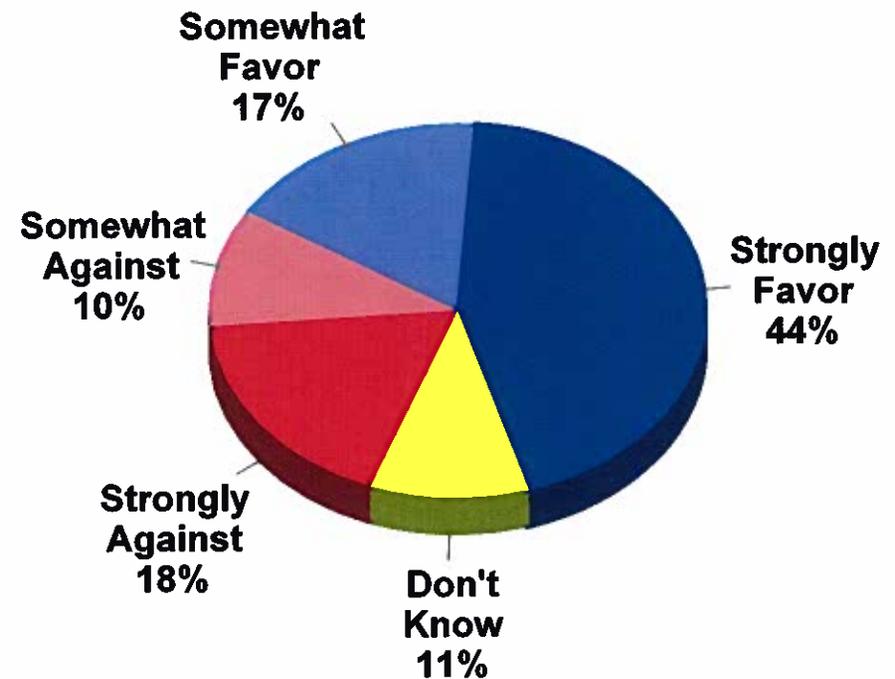
20%

Despite hearing a number of positive messages in support of this measure, there is minimal increase in support.

Initial
Total Favor 58%
Total Against 32%



Informed
Total Favor 61%
Total Against 28%



If the election were held today on this ballot proposal, how would you vote? Would you vote in favor of or against this proposal?

What Does Not Work #1

The phrase “public” or “state” education ought to be avoided. Instead say “Colorado’s colleges and universities.”

Focus group respondents perceive “public” as meaning “open to the public” and therefore available to all. It does not connote high standards or strong quality. It does NOT mean public funding.

“State” implies four year universities like Colorado State University – NOT state government funding.

Saying “Colorado’s” or “our” colleges and universities – while less technically accurate - is much more effective.

What Does Not Work #2

Asking for “increased” funding is not nearly as compelling, as asking to “restore cuts” to higher education. That seems more fair and acceptable.



What Does Not Work #3

Asking for funding for buildings/capital does not work. In one set of focus groups, we conducted an exercise where respondents were able to spend a “budget” of \$100 on competing priorities within higher education. Capital ranked dead last.

Budget \$\$

Providing more need based scholarships for students from lower/middle income families	\$460
Upgrading computers and other technology	\$350
Providing more merit/academic based scholarships	\$280
Attracting and retaining the best professors	\$210
Providing more and updating classrooms equipment	\$170
Conducting more groundbreaking research	\$170
Renovating and building new classrooms and buildings	\$70

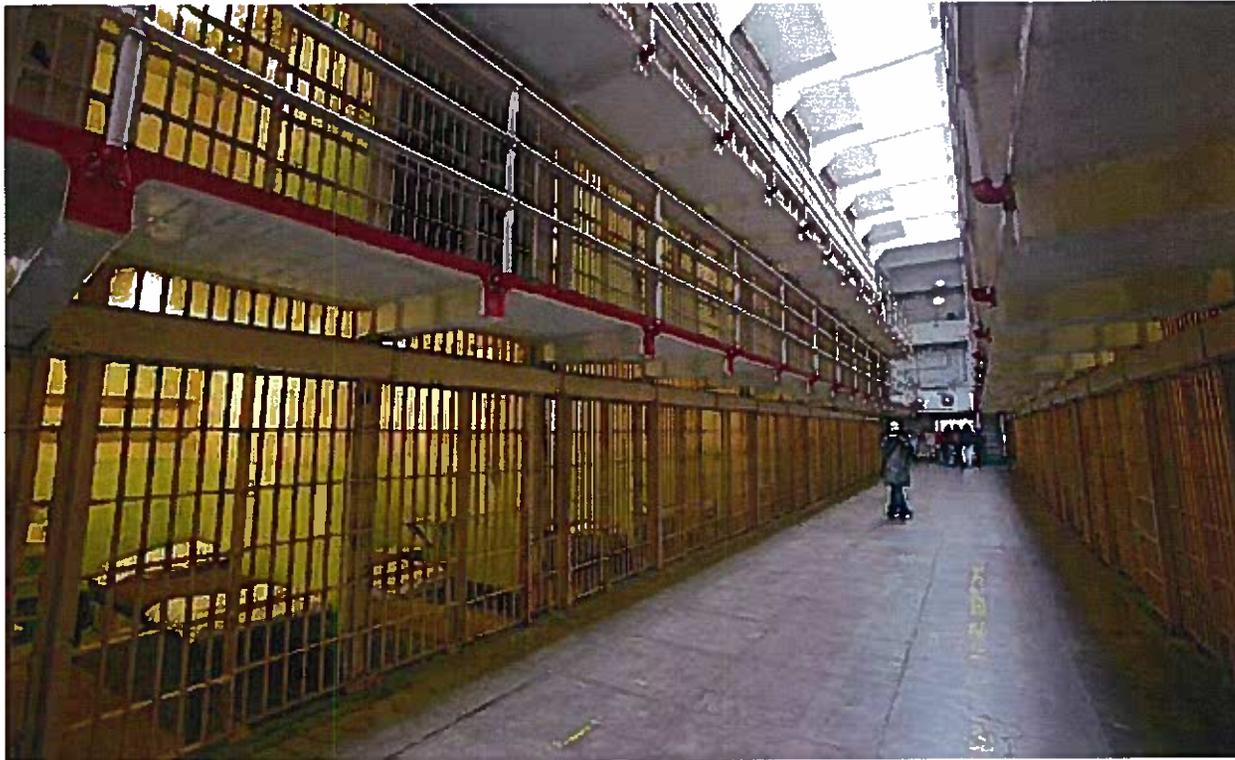
What Does Not Work #4

A college degree being the functional equivalent of a high school degree generations ago and necessary to have a good-paying job, is rejected. Even using examples of occupations which now are often requiring degrees is flat out rejected by respondents.



What Does Not Work #5

Comparing spending on higher education to spending on prisons is a real turn-off for many. While some think this is a great example of misplaced priorities, the more common reaction is a fairly strong negative one.



What Does Not Work #6

The number of students who do not graduate in four years is seen as more a fault of the higher education institutions, rather than a good example of the financial pressures which prevent students from obtaining a degree in an ideal time frame.



What Does Not Work #7

Saying the higher education system is “stretched to its limits” is seen as a stretch by respondents as well.

Instead better phrasing is “While (Colorado’s colleges and universities) have learned to do more with less, some of the funding cuts should be restored before restricted budgets begin to affect the quality of the education students receive.”