



# Tennessee Early Education Statewide

Public Opinion Strategies

**600 Likely Voters**  
**November 15-19, 2017**

# Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies presents the key findings from a survey of 600 likely voters in Tennessee. The survey was conducted November 15-19, 2017 and has a margin of error of  $\pm 4.0\%$ .

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

# What you need to know

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1. Voters believe Tennessee's public education system does not prepare children for the future
2. Overwhelmingly, voters believe early education, birth through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, is the building block for future success
3. Voters have a more favorable impression of policymakers who support early education issues.





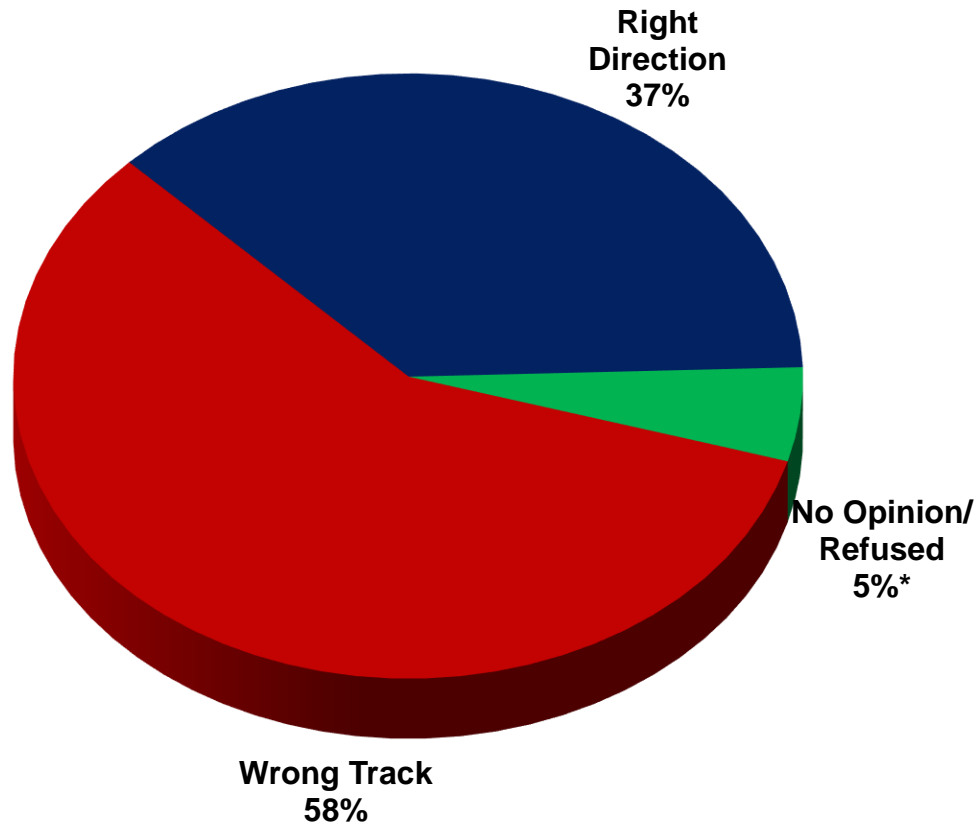
# #1 Key Findings

Discontent with the status quo in Tennessee's public education system is both wide and deep. Across gender, ideology and race, nearly every subgroup believes Tennessee's education system is off on the wrong track, in need of major change and fails to prepare the state's children for their future.

There is a strong appetite for change; the environment is ripe for pushing an aggressive reform agenda. TQEE needs to leverage this sentiment and wrap its agenda around a broader theme of fixing Tennessee's public schools.

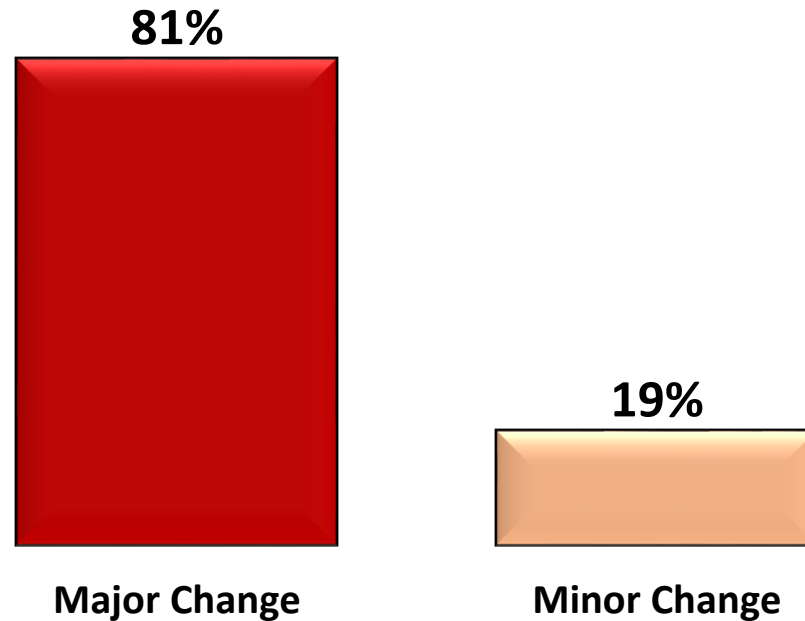
# Few voters endorse the status quo.

*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?*



*And, do you think that the public education system here in Tennessee needs major change or minor change?*

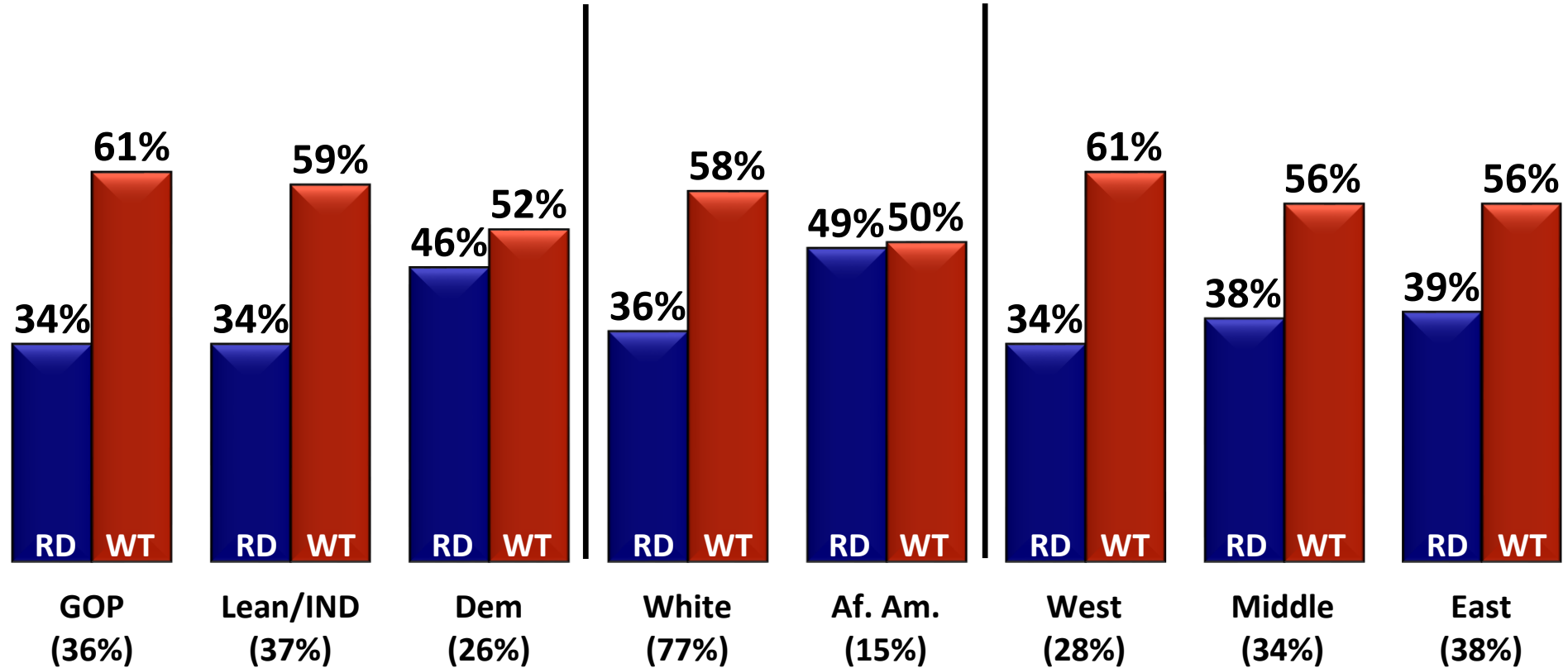
*(Asked among "wrong track" voters)*



*\* Denotes rounding*

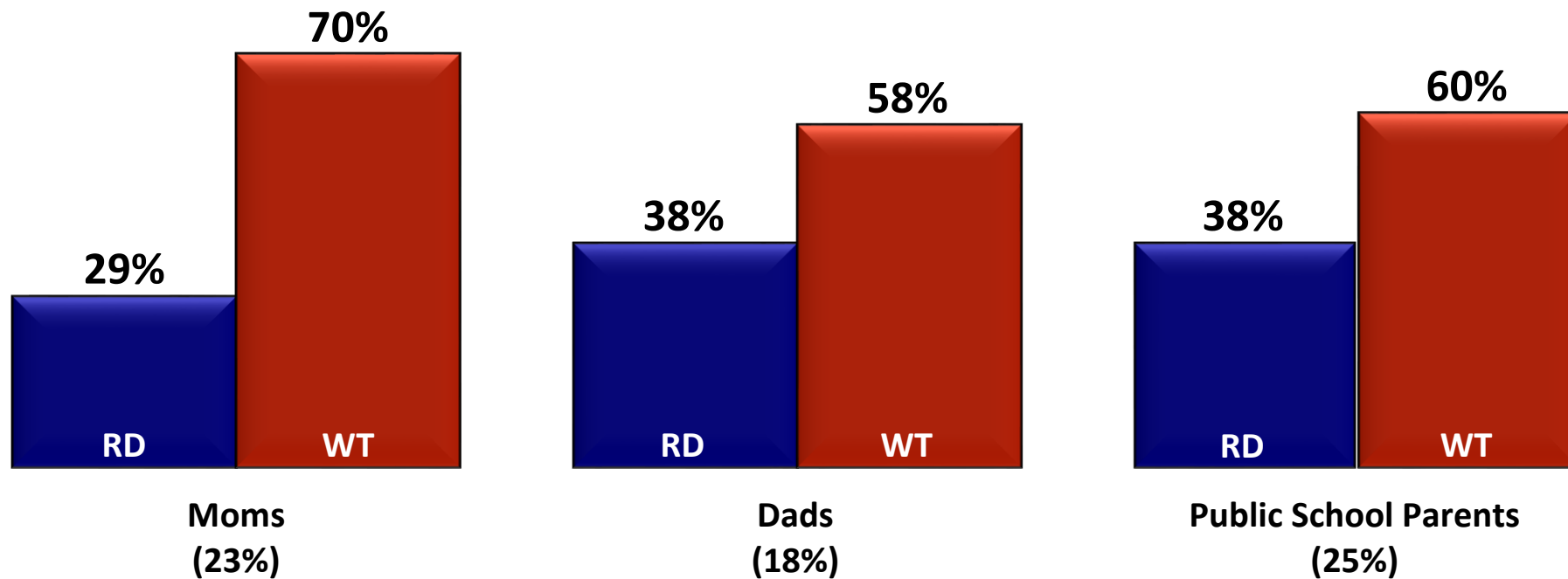
The wrong track sentiment cuts across every subgroup.

*Public Education Sentiment By Key Subgroup*



Parents are among the most negative.

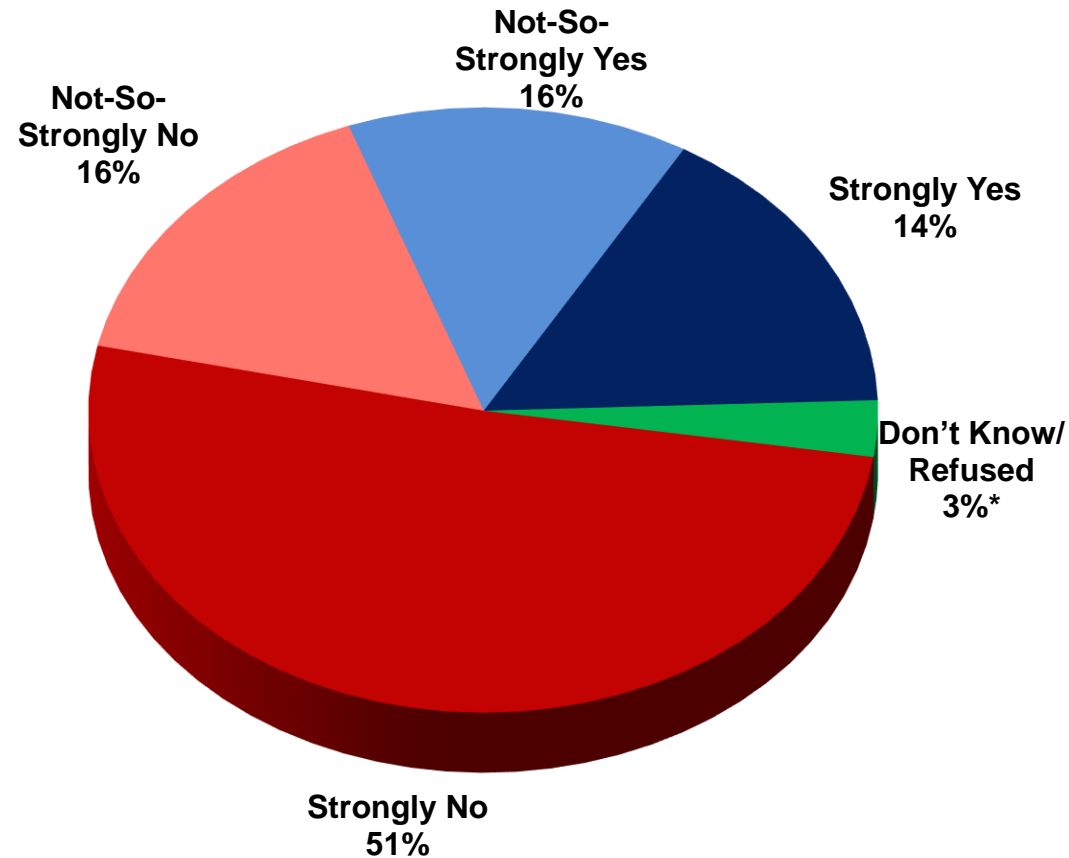
*Public Education Sentiment By Parents*



Overwhelmingly, Tennesseans believe public education fails to prepare students.

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

**30% Total Yes**  
**67% Total No**

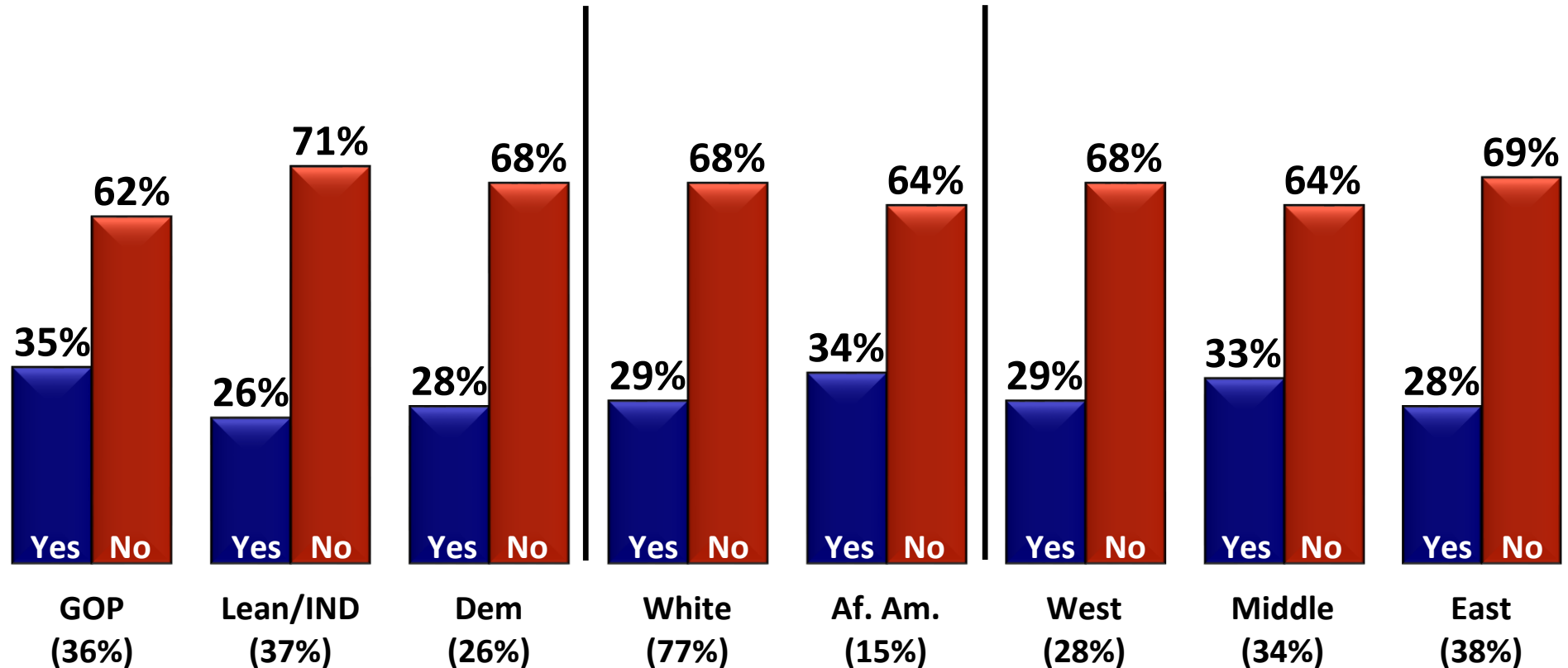


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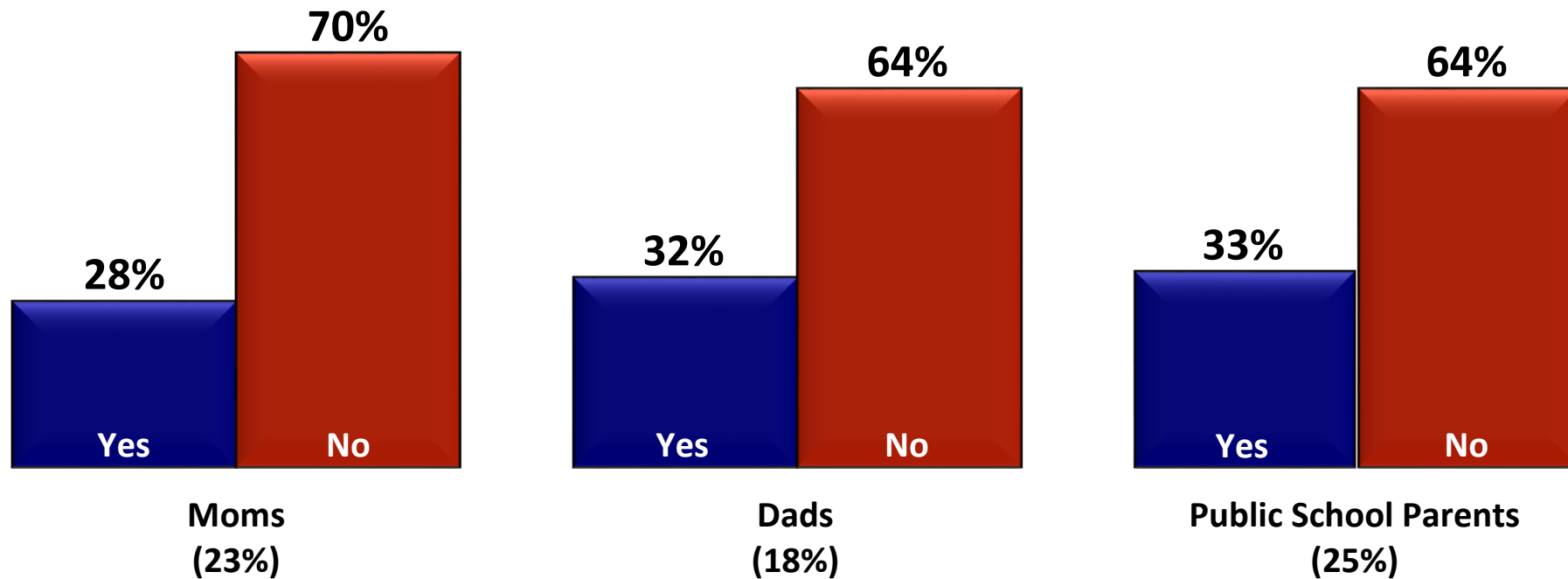
The sentiment cuts across all subgroups.

*Public Education Prepares Children By Key Subgroup*



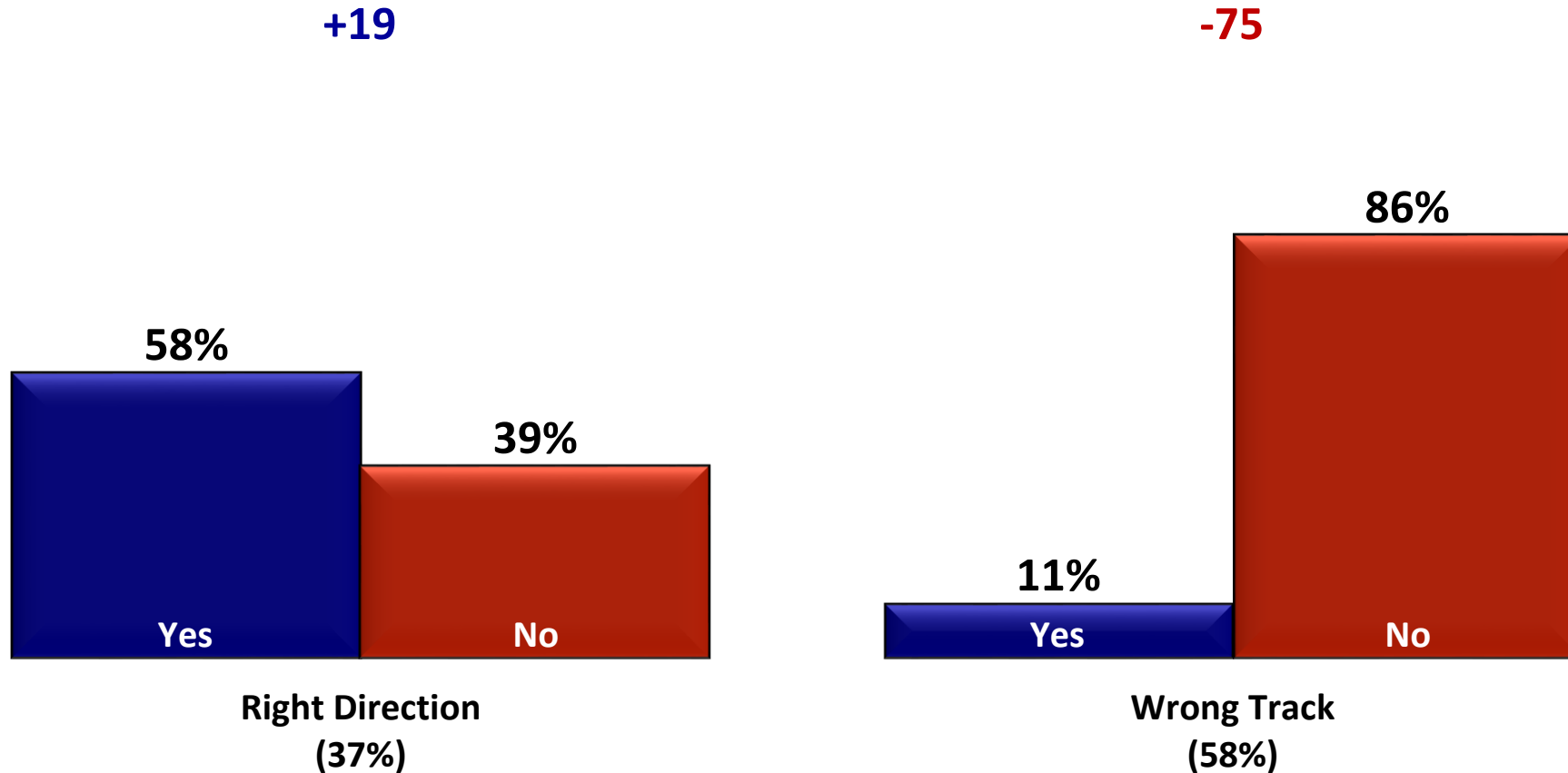
Again, parents rank among the most negative.

*Public Education Prepares Children By Parents*



Wrong trackers nearly universally say schools do not prepare students for the future.

*Public Education Prepares Children By Ed View*

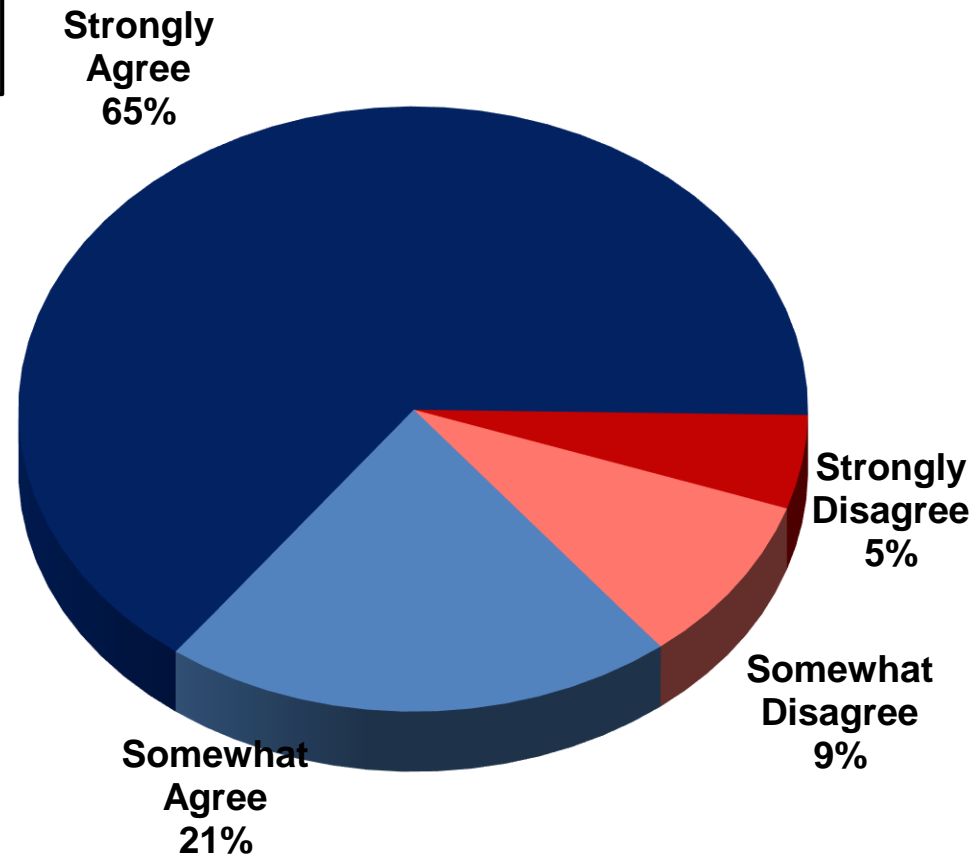


# Nearly every Tennessean agrees early education is the building block of all learning.

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

*Early education, from birth to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, provides the building blocks of all learning.*

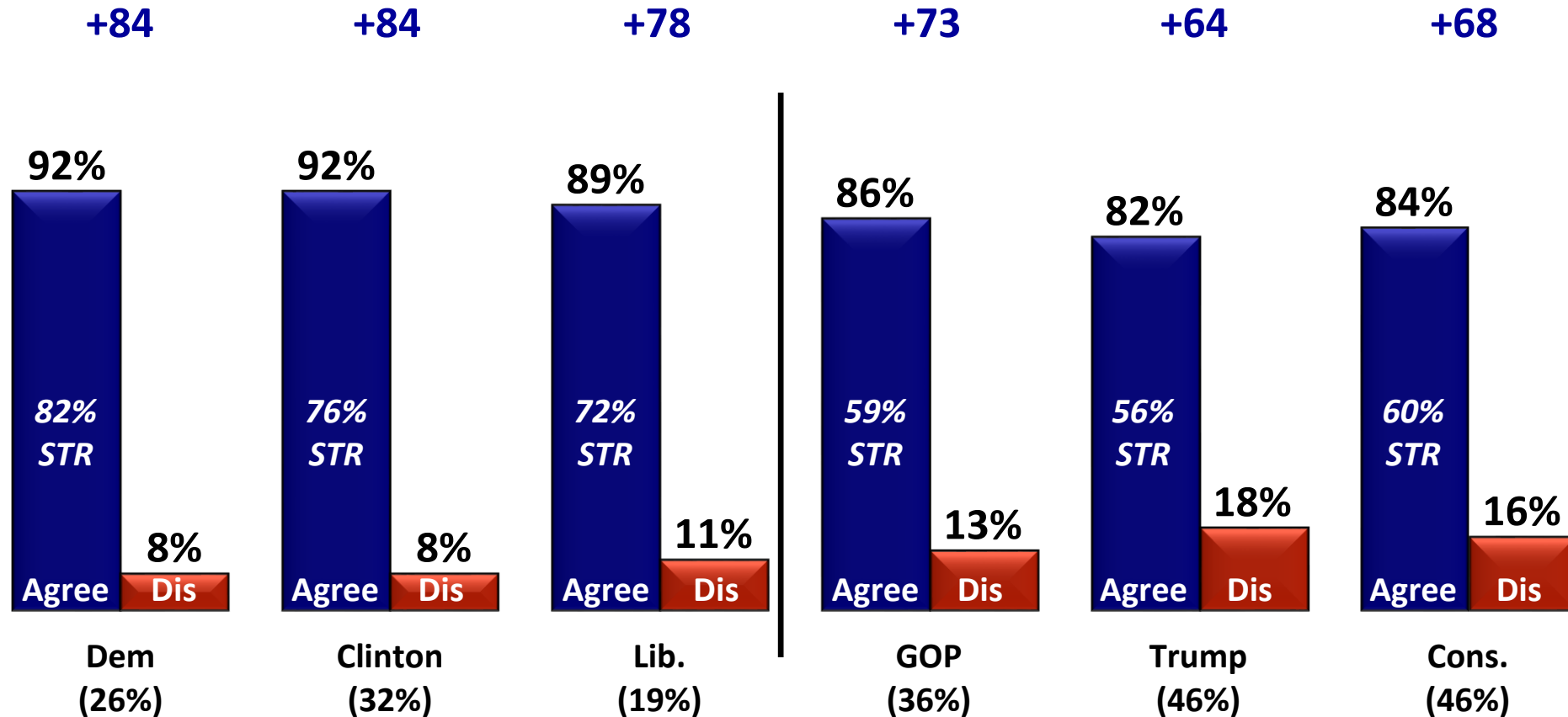
**86% Total Agree**  
**13%\* Total Disagree**



*\* Denotes rounding*

# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, provides the building blocks of all learning.*





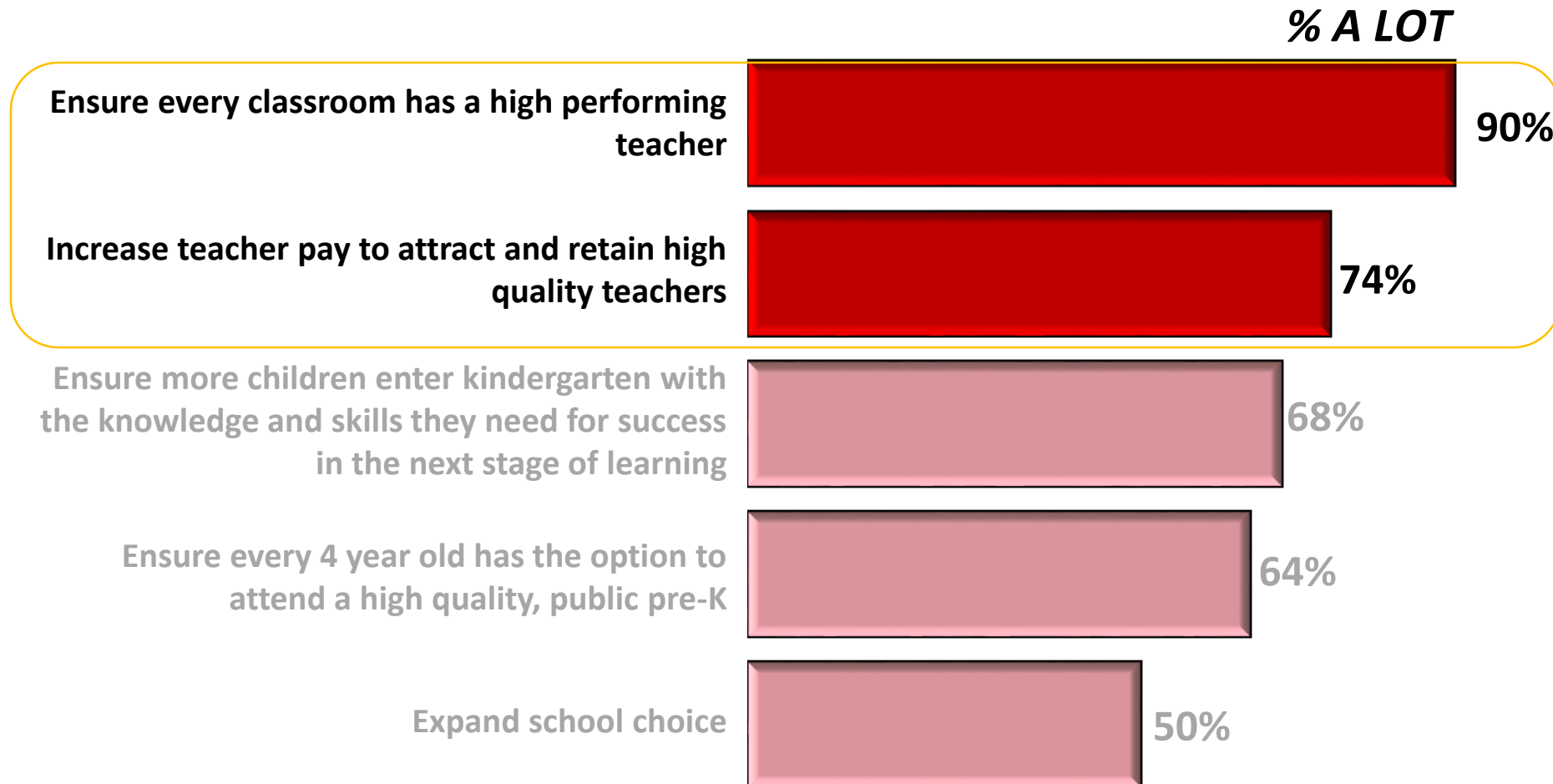
## #2 Key Findings

For Tennesseans, programs/policies that ensure every classroom has a quality teacher is the overwhelming priority.

The individual policy items tested off the charts. We tested sixteen policy proposals; all sixteen received a majority support and fourteen of the sixteen polled 75% total favor or higher. Six proposals were near consensus items, scoring 90% or higher.

# Voters support classrooms with high performing teachers.

*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.*



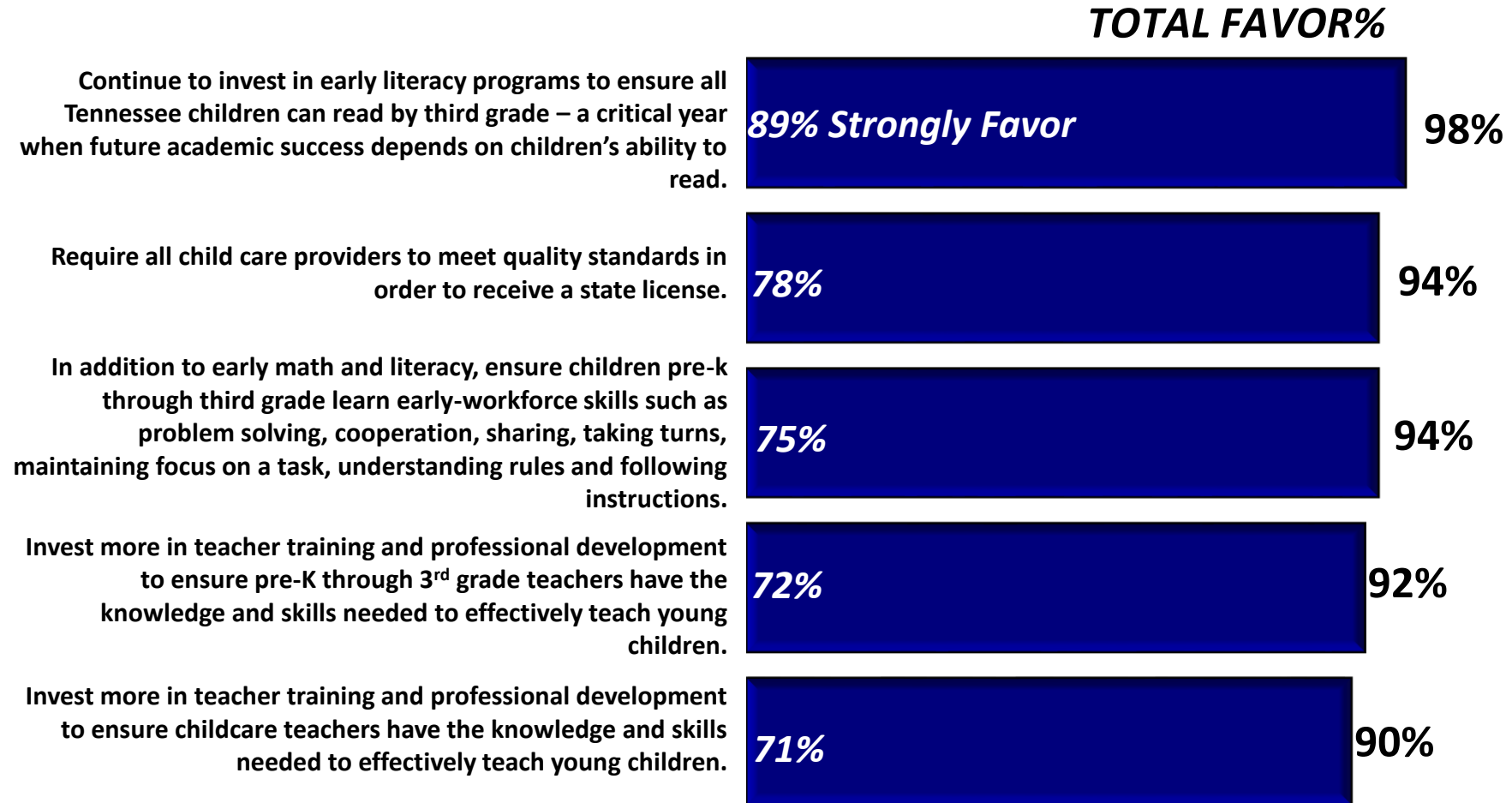
## By Subgroup

| <b>Priorities (A Lot%)</b>  | <b>GOP<br/>(36%)</b> | <b>Lean/<br/>IND<br/>(37%)</b> | <b>Dem<br/>(26%)</b> | <b>GOP<br/>Men<br/>(17%)</b> | <b>GOP<br/>Women<br/>(18%)</b> |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ensure every classroom has a high performing teacher  | 91%                  | 87%                            | 95%                  | 89%                          | 93%                            |
| Increase teacher pay to attract and retain high quality teachers  | 69%                  | 69%                            | 86%                  | 57%                          | 81%                            |
| Ensure more children enter kindergarten with the knowledge and skills they need for success in the next stage of learning | 63%                  | 61%                            | 87%                  | 57%                          | 67%                            |
| Ensure every 4 year old has the option to attend a high quality, public pre-K   | 53%                  | 60%                            | 85%                  | 48%                          | 58%                            |
| Expand school choice  | 55%                  | 48%                            | 46%                  | 56%                          | 54%                            |



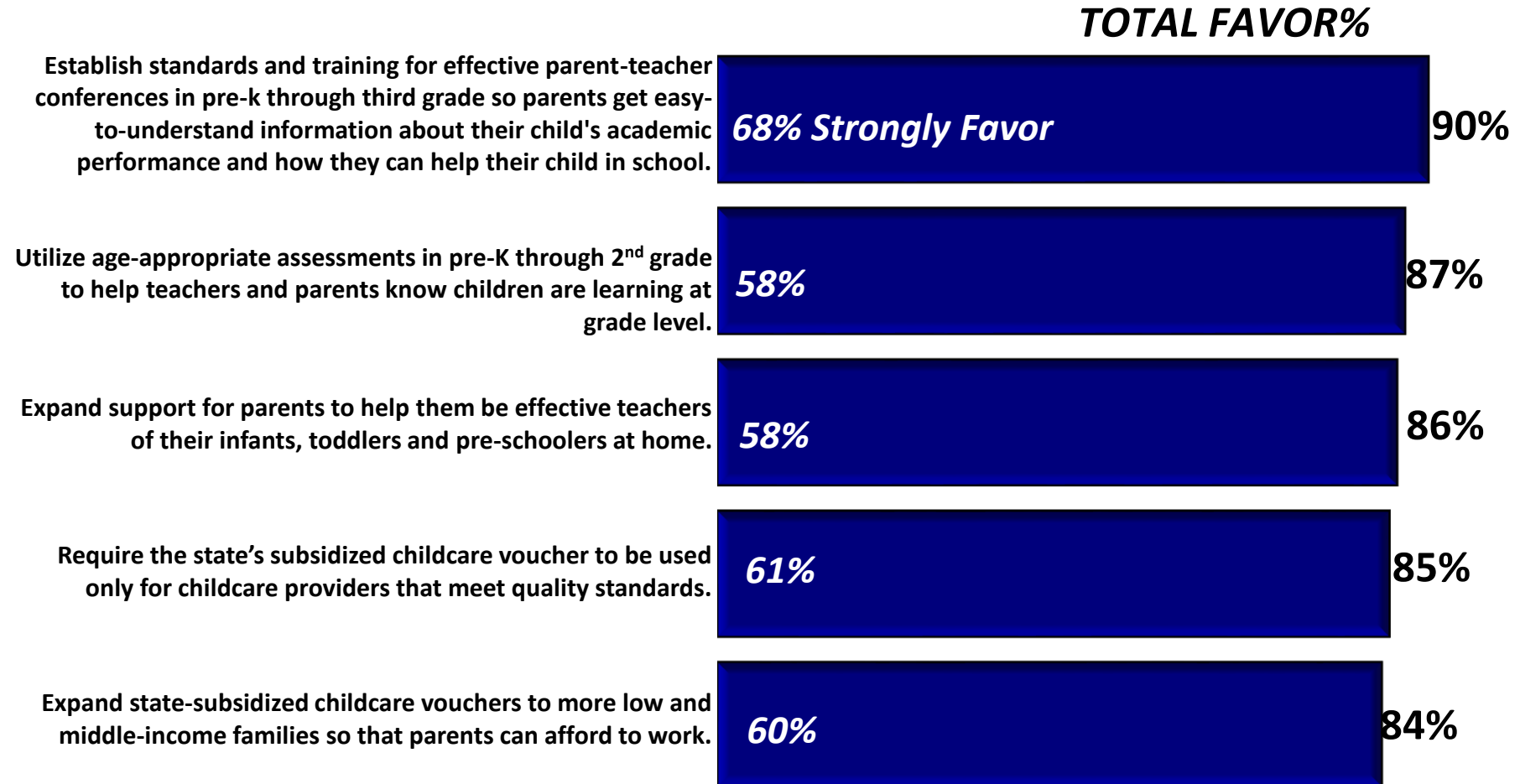
# Near consensus items.

*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.*



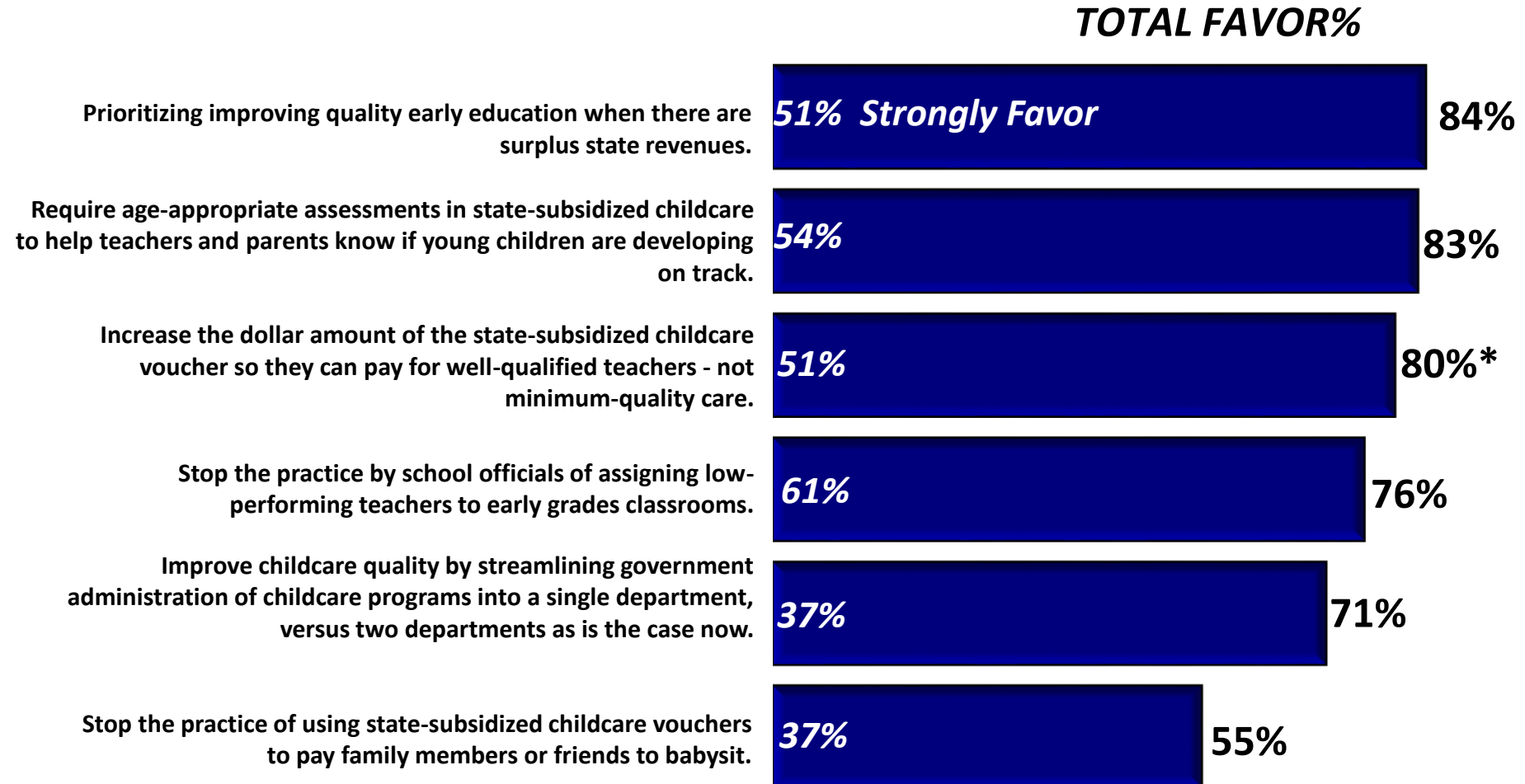
## Second Tier.

*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.*



## Third Tier.

*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.*



*\* Denotes rounding*



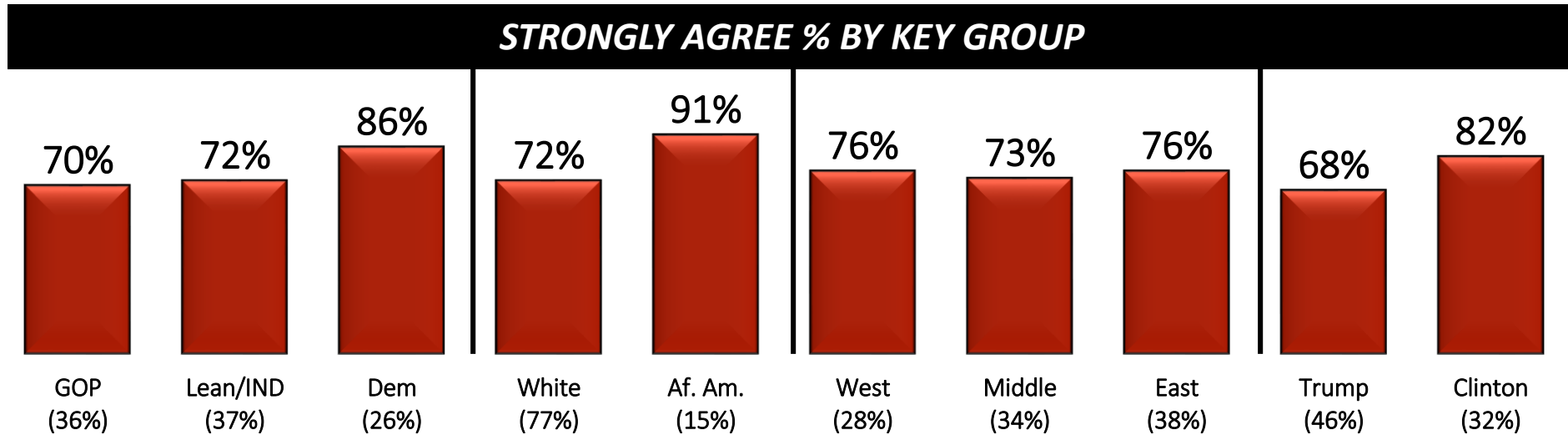
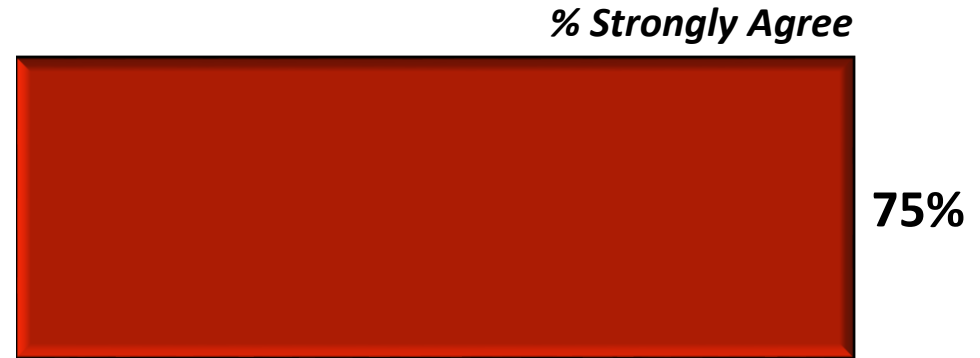
## #3 Key Findings

The message statements we tested resonated loudly with voters.

Specifically, “Parents are our children’s first teachers” and “Every year matters” themes ranked as the top statements overall and rated strongly with subgroups across the board.

# Parents are our first teachers.

Parents are our children's first teachers.  
We should ensure parents get help as  
needed to support their children's  
learning in and out of school.



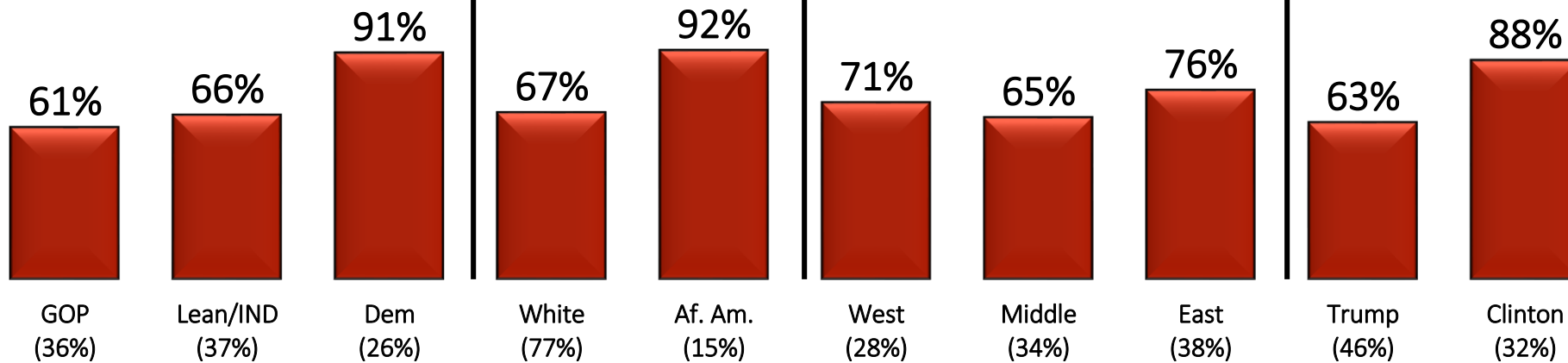
# Every year matters.

**Every year matters to our children.  
Tennessee needs to do more to ensure  
children get a strong start in life so they  
will perform better in school and succeed  
in their careers.**

*% Strongly Agree*

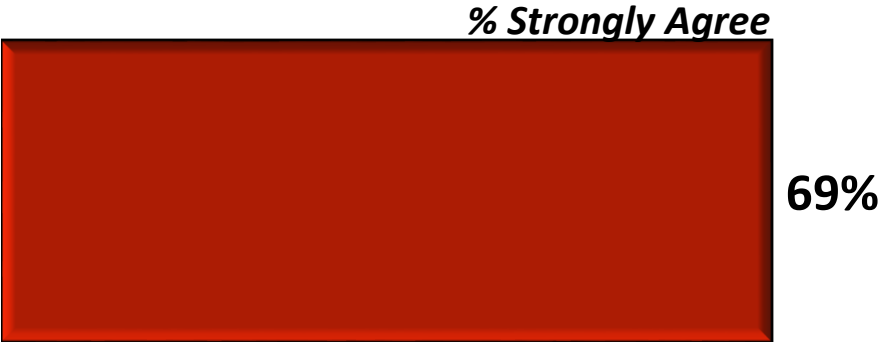


## **STRONGLY AGREE % BY KEY GROUP**

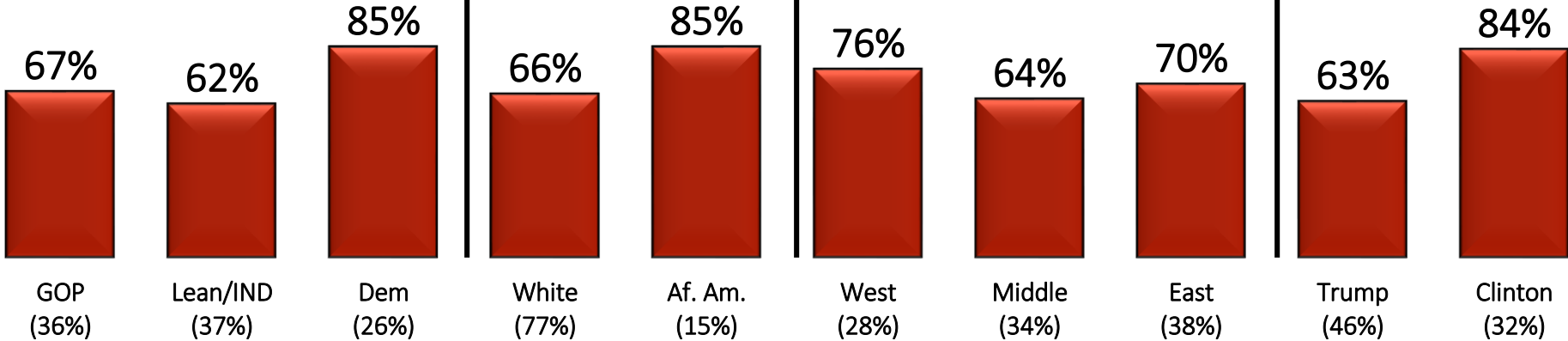


# Foundation.

**It makes sense that children who come to school lacking the skills they need to be successful struggle in later years. Improving early education so every child has a strong foundation is the key to strengthening Tennessee's public education system.**



## **STRONGLY AGREE % BY KEY GROUP**





## #4 Key Findings

Finally 69% of Tennesseans indicate they would have a “more favorable” opinion of a state legislator who supported early education programs – including 66% of Republicans and 58% of Trump voters.

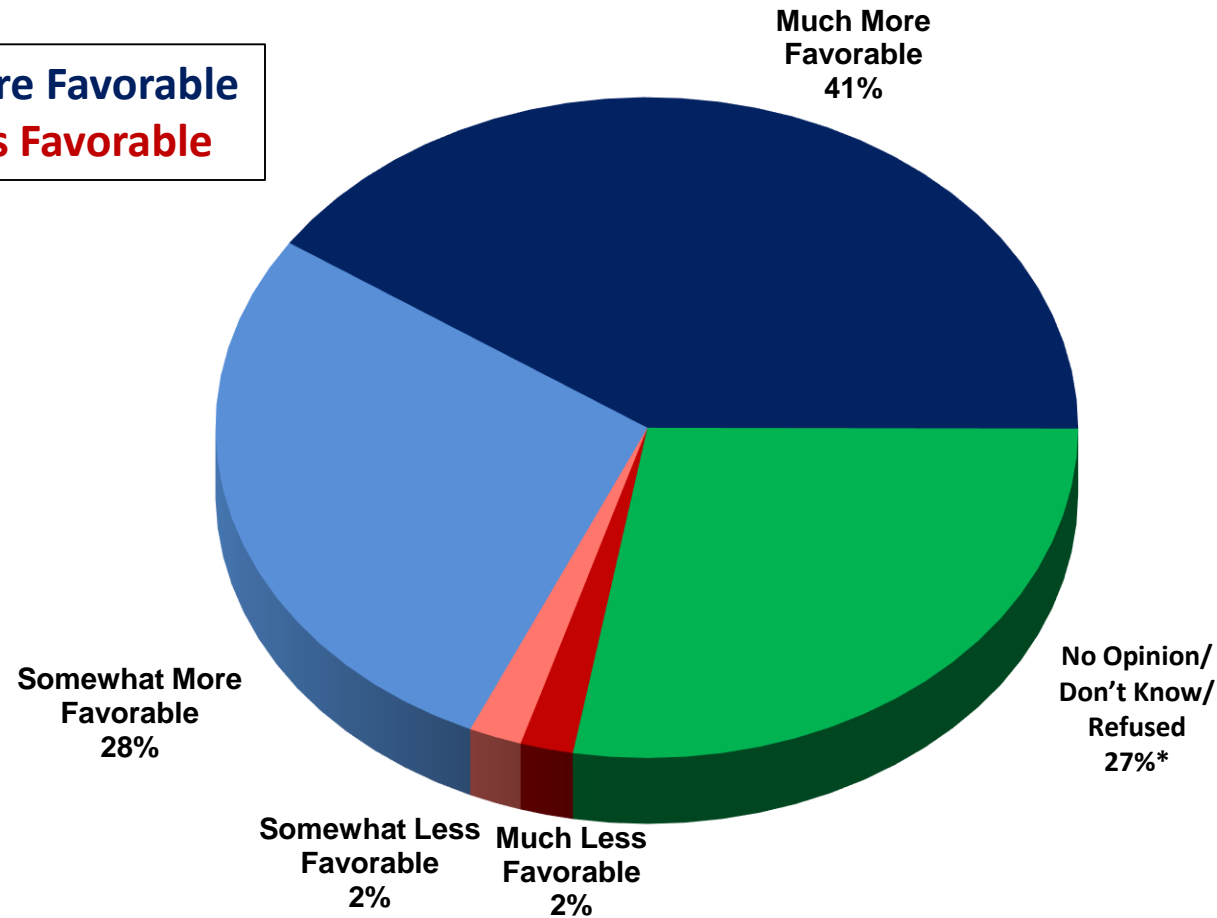
Republican elected officials do not need to fear a backlash on the right – just 3% of Republicans and 4% of conservative voters would have an unfavorable opinion of a legislator who voted for early education programs.



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?*

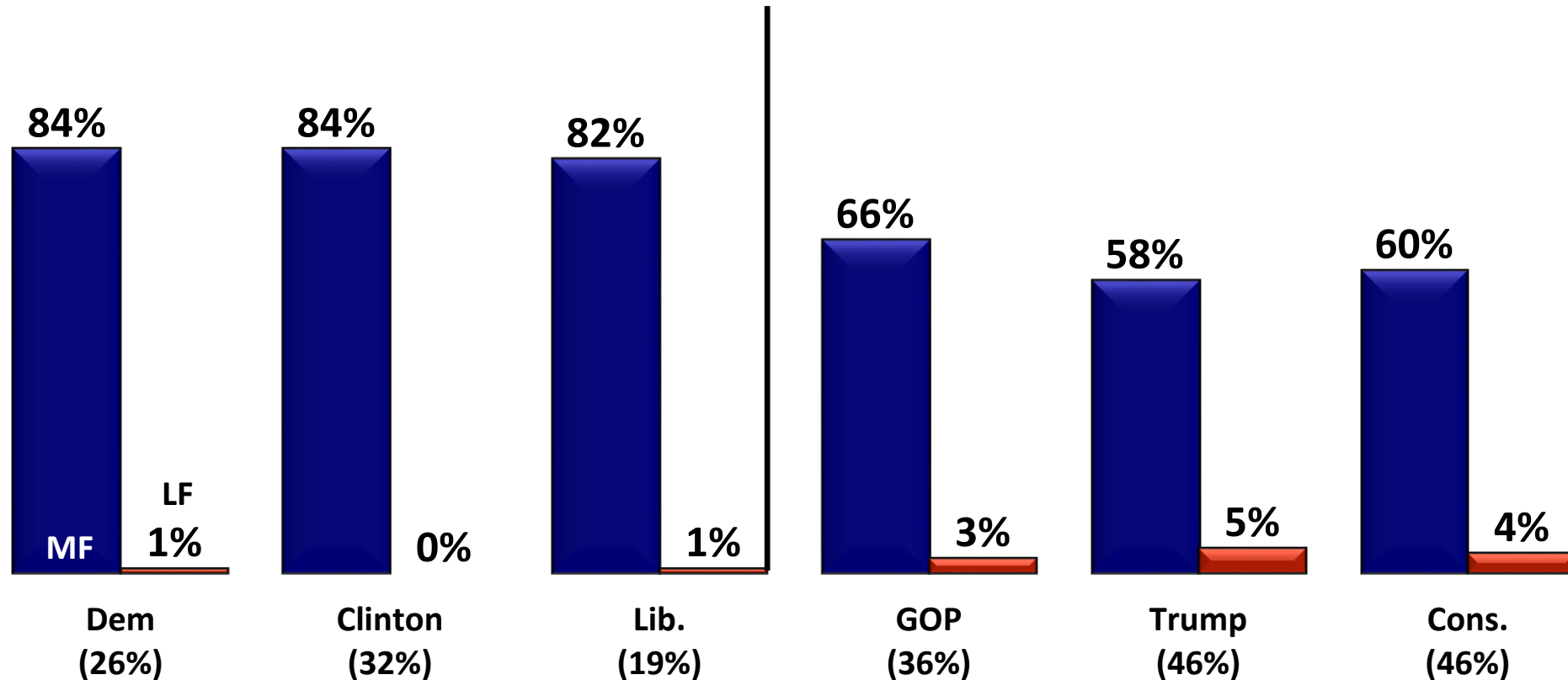
**69% Total More Favorable**  
**3%\* Total Less Favorable**



\* Denotes rounding

Both the political left and right are more favorable.

*More Favorable/Less Favorable By Key Subgroup*



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**PATRICK LANNE | [patrick@pos.org](mailto:patrick@pos.org)**

214 N. Fayette St  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Office: (703) 785-7627