



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES



Tennessee Early Education Statewide Survey

**600 Likely Voters
November 18-21, 2019**

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#19470

TURNING QUESTIONS INTO ANSWERS



Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies presents the key findings from a survey of 600 likely voters in Tennessee. The survey was conducted November 18-21, 2019 and has a margin of error of $\pm 4\%$.

Patrick Lanne was the primary researcher and pollster on the project. Daniel Luongo was the project director and Chris Andrews provided analytical assistance.



The 7 things you need to know

1. Tennesseans continue to express **doubts about the public education** system's ability to prepare children for the future.
2. Tennesseans agree **early education (birth through 3rd grade) is THE building block** for a child's future success.
3. Voters overwhelmingly endorse initiatives to **improve teacher training and student math, literacy and workforce skills Pre-K to third grade.**
4. **Home visitation programs** to strengthen parenting skills and get children ready for school are very popular.
5. **Expanding Pre-K programs** receives very wide bi-partisan support.
6. Tennesseans know **quality childcare is critical** to preparing children for future success. That's why a robust childcare agenda is popular with voters across the state.
7. Across party lines, voters endorse **spending more existing federal aid to improve childcare options.**



Key Finding #1

Few Tennesseans endorse the status quo in public education. Just 33% of voters believe the state's education system is headed in the right direction while 58% of voters view schools as off on the wrong track. This pessimism cuts nearly all demographic and geographic subgroups.

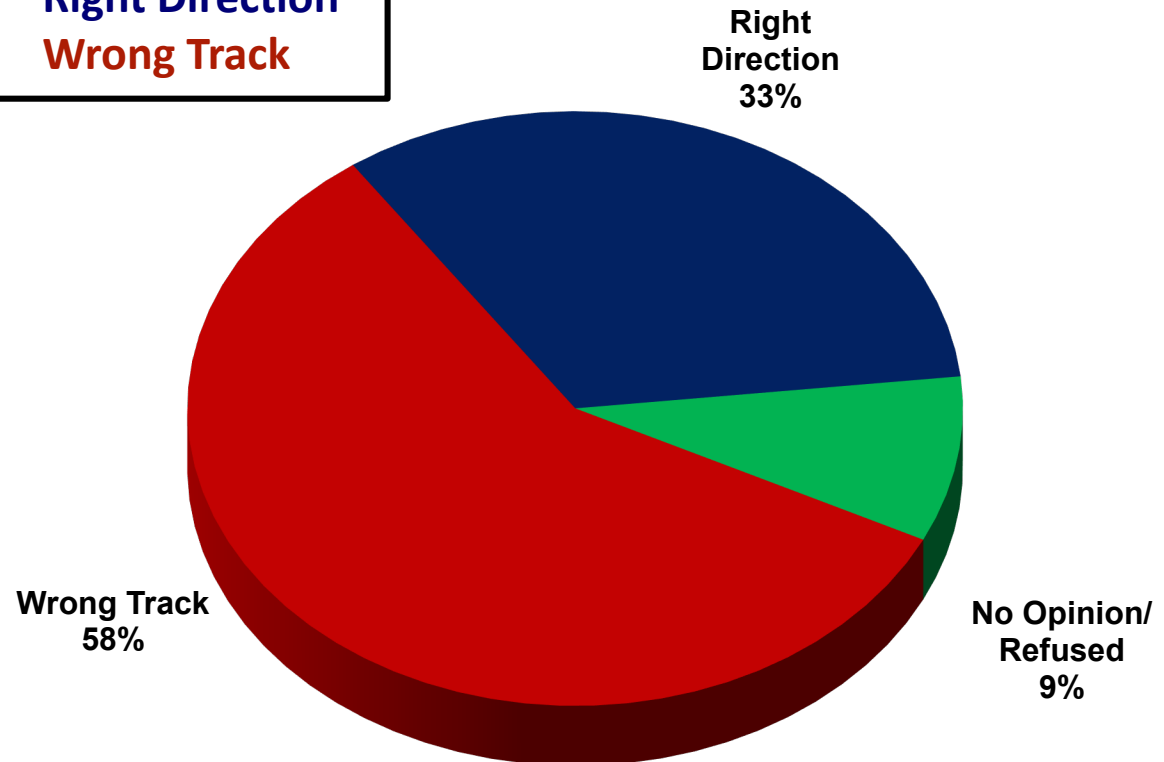
Moreover, fully 72% of voters say the public education system is NOT preparing children for the future. A strong majority of voters across partisan, racial and geographic breaks share this outlook.

Tennesseans want a new approach to education.

Tennesseans continue to be pessimistic about the direction of public schools.

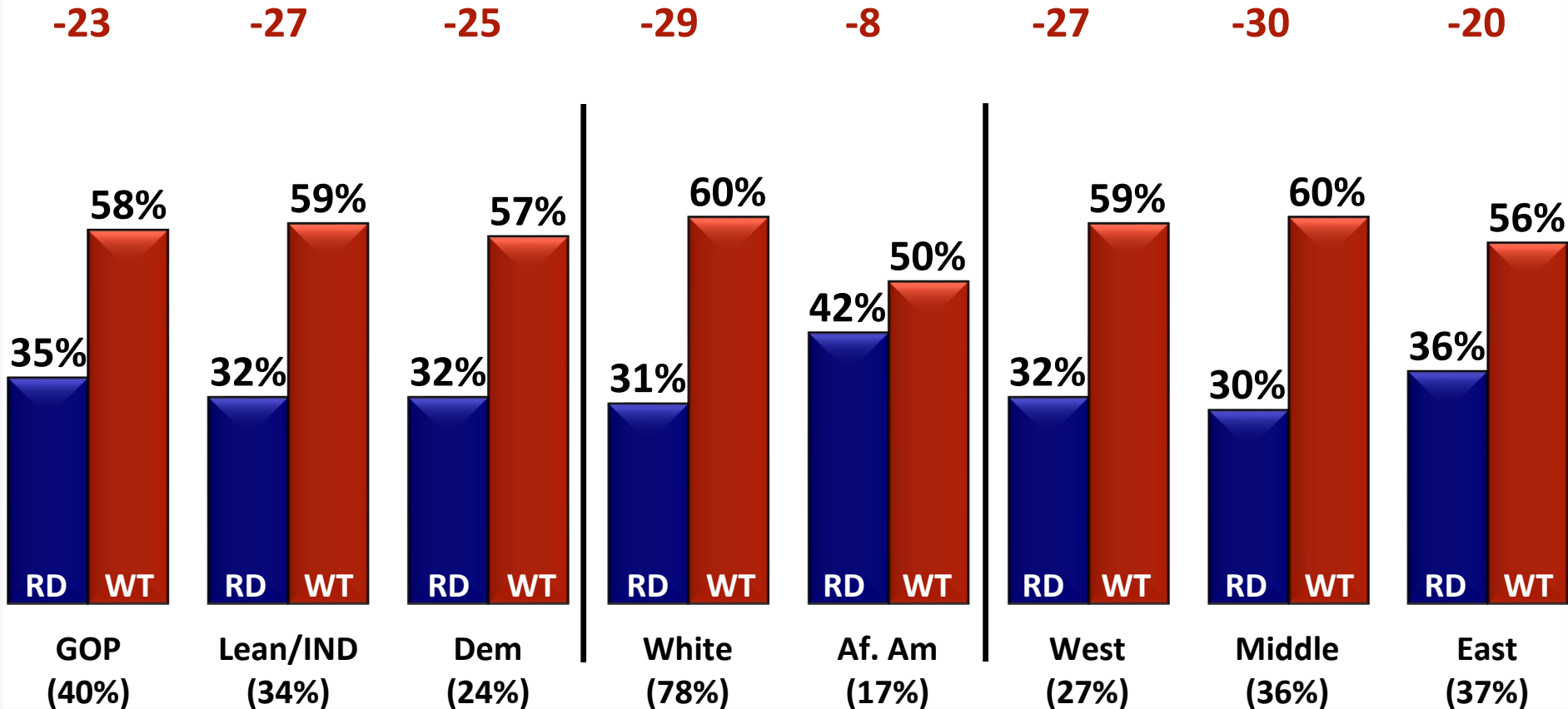
First of all, would you say that public education in Tennessee is going in the right direction, or has it gotten off on the wrong track?

<u>11/17</u>	<u>9/18</u>	<u>11/19</u>	
37%	35%	33%	Right Direction
58%	55%	58%	Wrong Track



All major subgroups want a change.

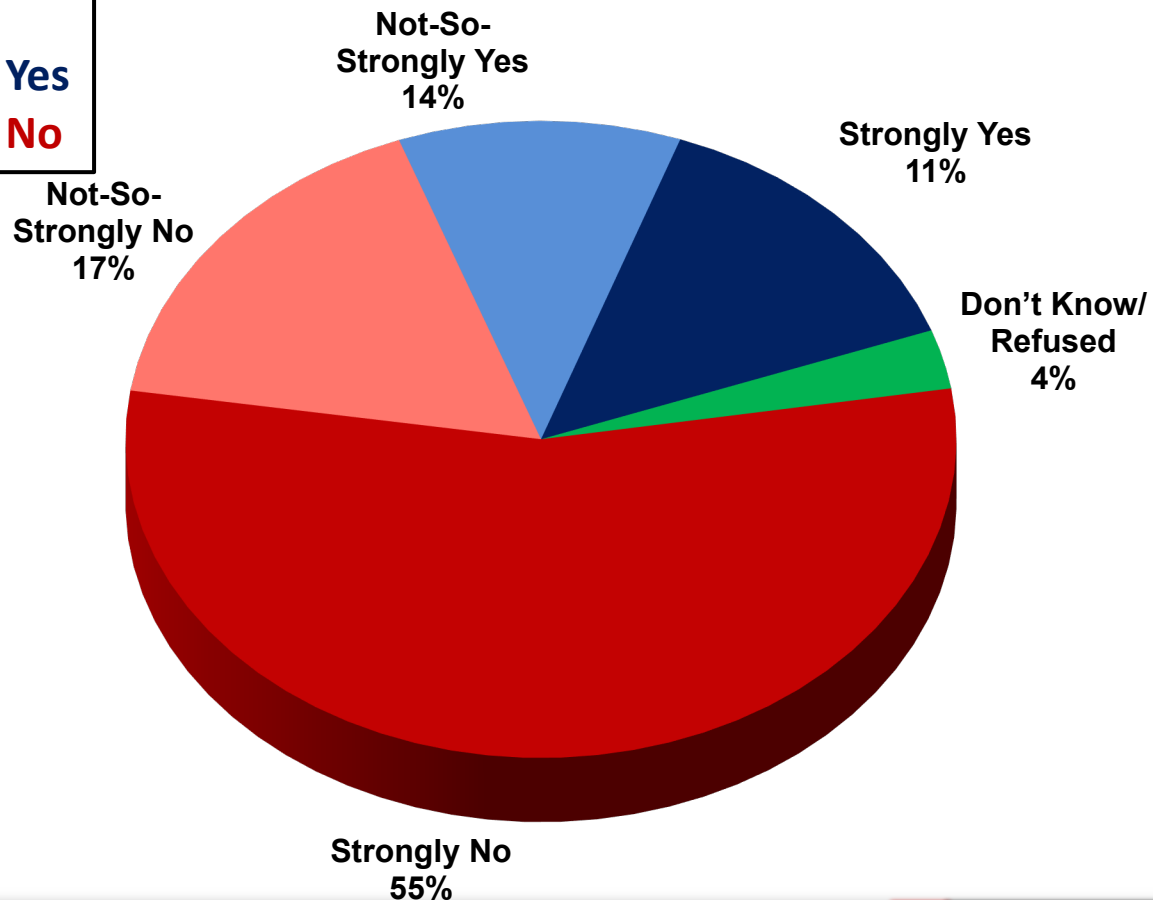
Public Education Sentiment By Key Subgroup



Few voters believe public education is doing a good job preparing children for the future.

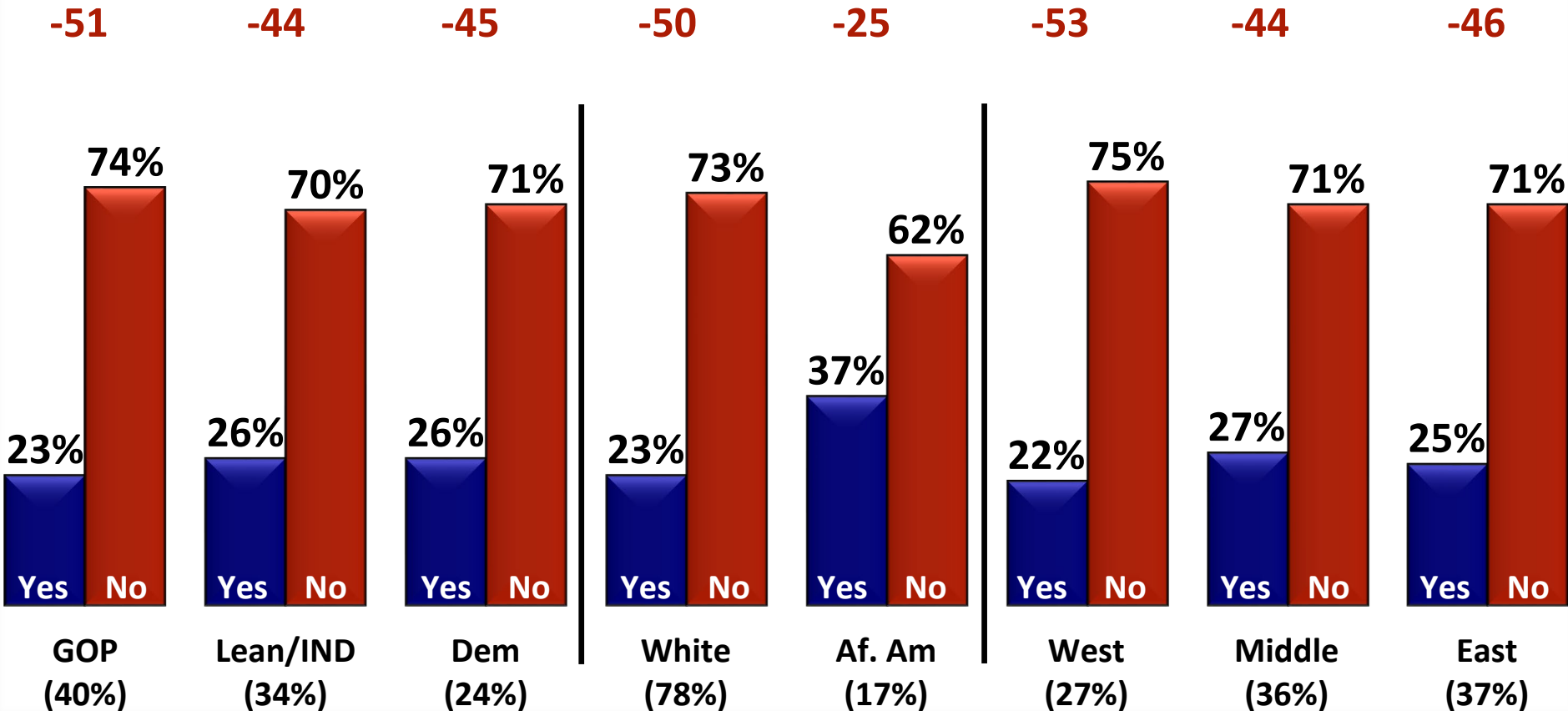
Next, would you say young people in Tennessee are well-prepared for employment and adult life by the public education system?

<u>11/17</u>	<u>9/18</u>	<u>11/19</u>	
30%	30%	25%	Total Yes
67%	66%	72%	Total No



Again, this sentiment cuts across all demographic and geographic lines.

Public Education Prepares Children By Key Subgroup





Key Finding #2

Nearly every Tennessean understands the importance of early education programs to preparing children for the future.

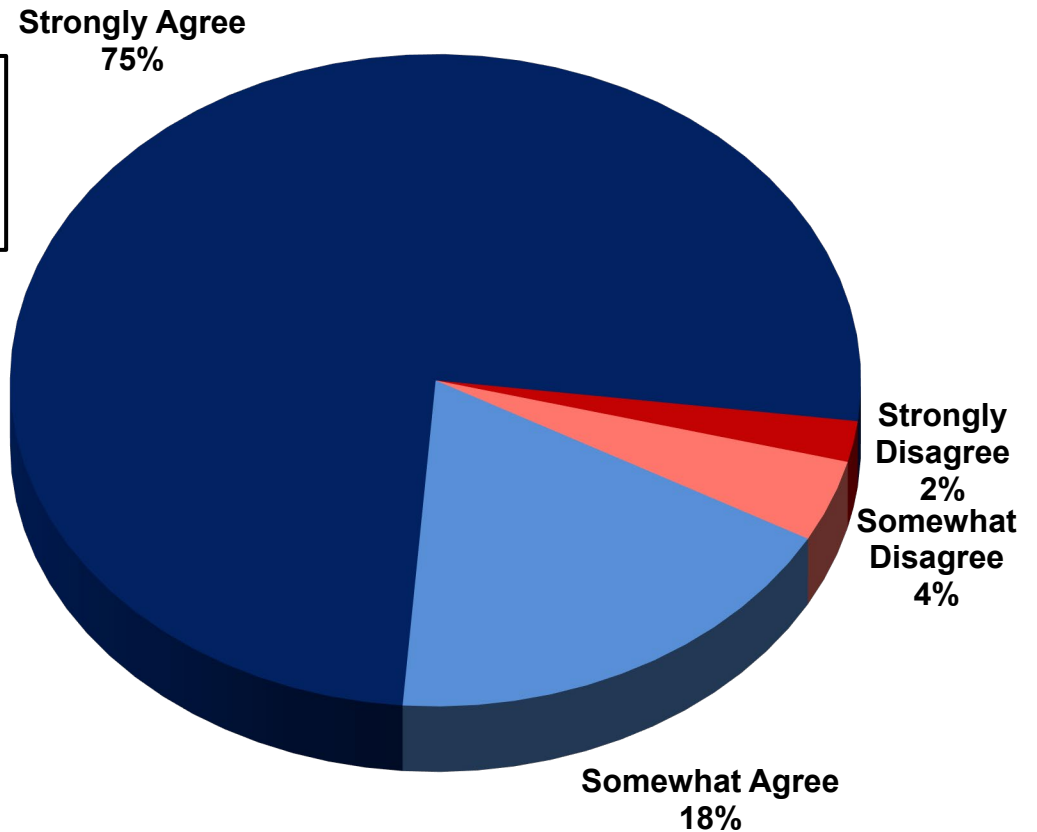
Fully 93% of voters – including 92% of Republicans and 95% of Democrats -- agree with the statement, “*Early education, from birth to 3rd grade, provides the building blocks of all learning.*”

Tennesseans know Early Education is the building block of all future learning.

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

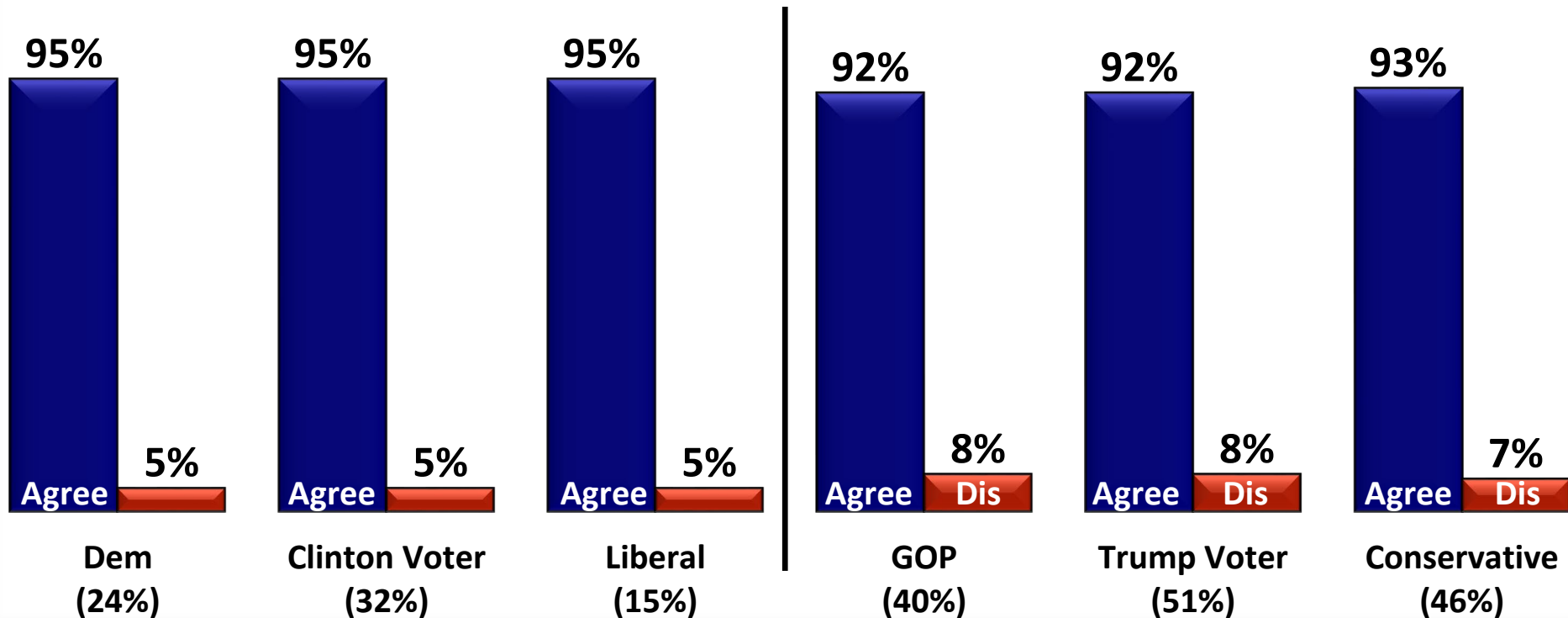
Early education, from birth to 3rd grade, provides the building blocks of all future learning.

<u>11/17</u>	<u>9/18</u>	<u>11/19</u>	
86%	92%	93%	Total Agree
13%	6%	7%	Total Disagree



Both the left and right overwhelmingly agree.

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





Key Finding #3

Voters overwhelmingly endorse policy proposals for improving Pre-K through third grade, with support ranging from 84% to 97%, across party lines.

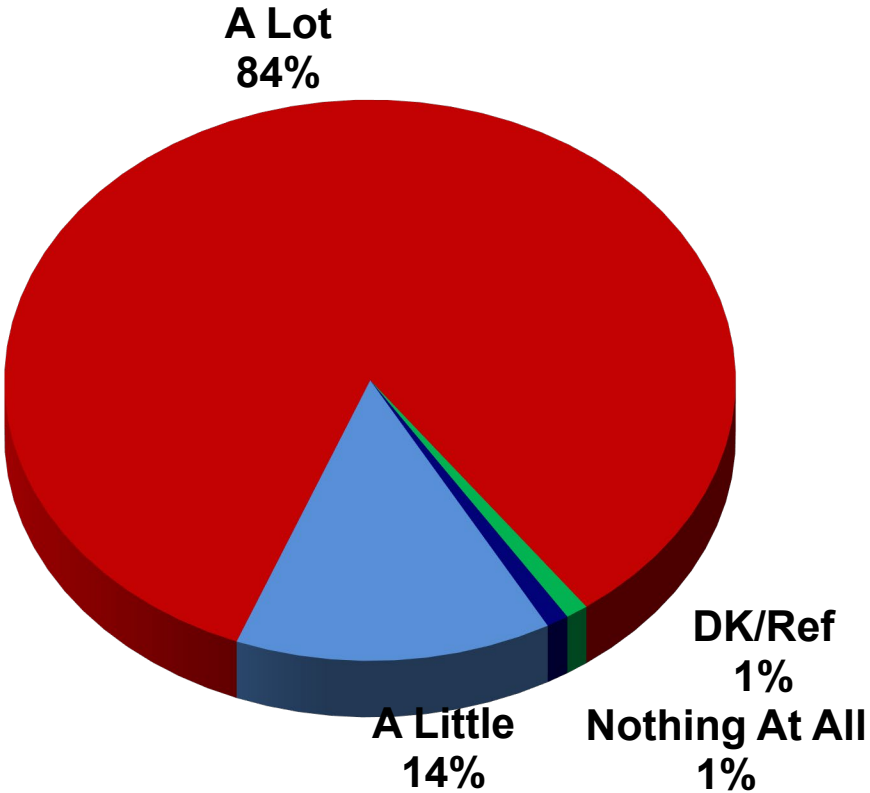
Ensuring a high performing teacher in all classrooms PreK through third grade is widely supported, with 84% saying it would do “A Lot” to prepare a child for success in school and life.

89% of voters want more investments in early grades teacher training; and they think Tennessee should invest in early literacy (97%) and math (93%) initiatives that ensure children are proficient by third grade. What’s more, 94% support investments that ensure “early-workforce skills” are emphasized Pre-K to third grade.

Voters believe ensuring every pre-K-3rd grade classroom has a high performing teacher is critical to students' success.

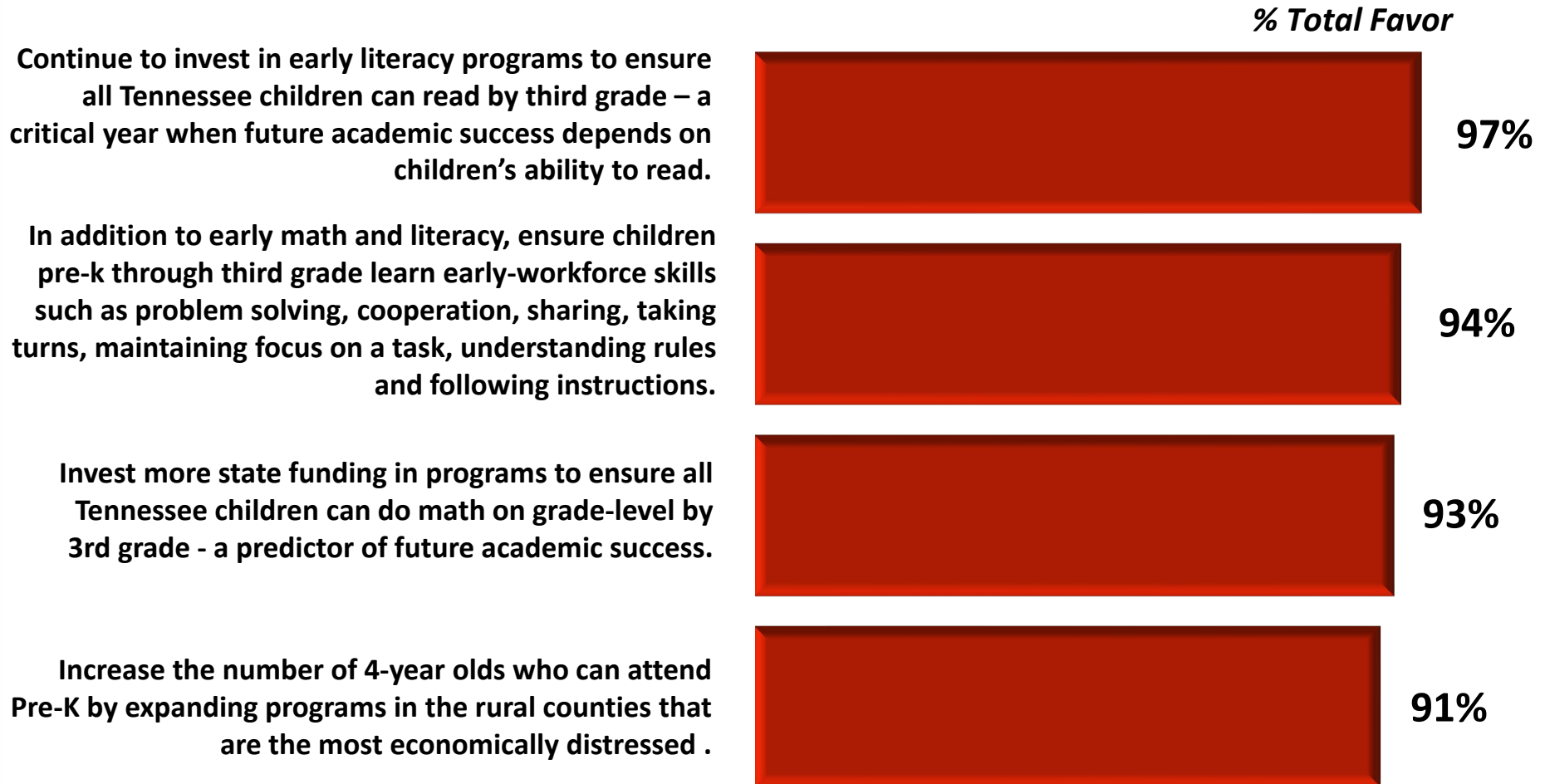
I am going to read you some things that could be done to better prepare Tennessee's children for success in school and their adult life. As I read each one, please tell me if you think it would do A LOT, A LITTLE, or NOTHING AT ALL, to prepare a child for success in school and life.

Ensure every pre-K through 3rd grade classroom has a high performing teacher.



Pre-K to 3rd agenda enjoys near unanimous support.

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.



Pre-K to 3rd agenda – Part 2

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.

% Total Favor

Invest more state funding in teacher training and professional development to ensure pre-K through 3rd grade teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach young children.



89%

Invest in lowering the ratio of school nurses from 1 for every 2,000 students to 1 for every 750 students to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve the health of kids with illnesses like asthma and diabetes.



83%

Invest in lowering the ratio of school social workers from 1 for every 2,000 students to 1 for every 250 students to help children struggling with mental health and to combat school violence.



83%



Key Finding #4

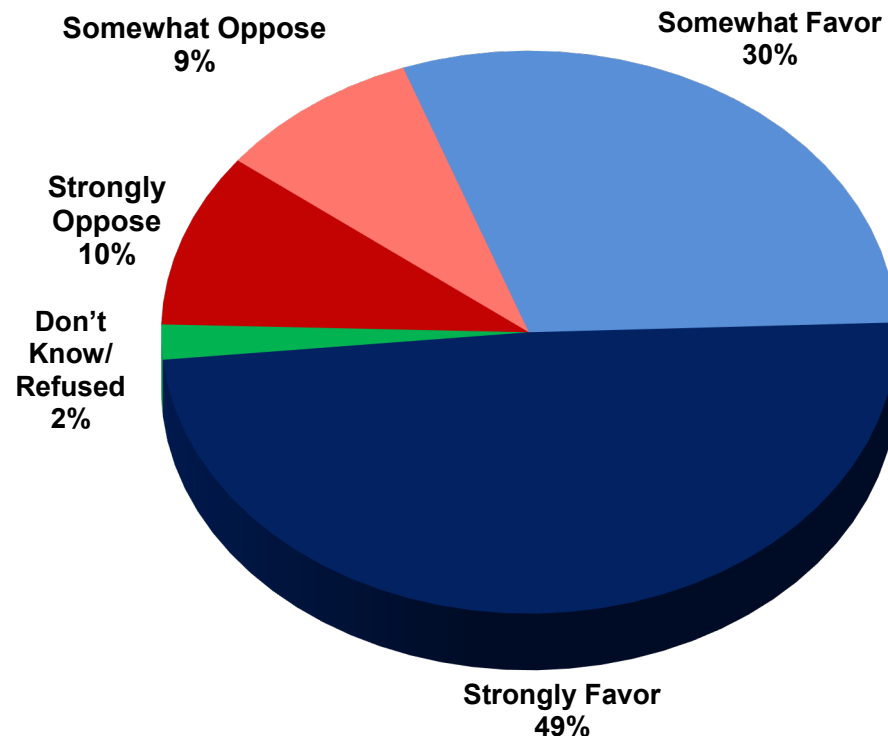
Home visitation programs to strengthen parenting skills and get children ready for school are very popular.

79% of voters favor these programs where a social worker is sent to help struggling parents cope, and which are cost effective and can generate a return of up to \$5.70 for every \$1 invested

Expanding home visitation programs has a deep well of public support.

Studies show home visiting programs where a social worker is sent to help struggling parents cope helps to strengthen parenting skills, reduce abuse and neglect and get children ready for school. In addition, studies 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 of young children?

79% Total Favor
19% Total Oppose





Key Finding #5

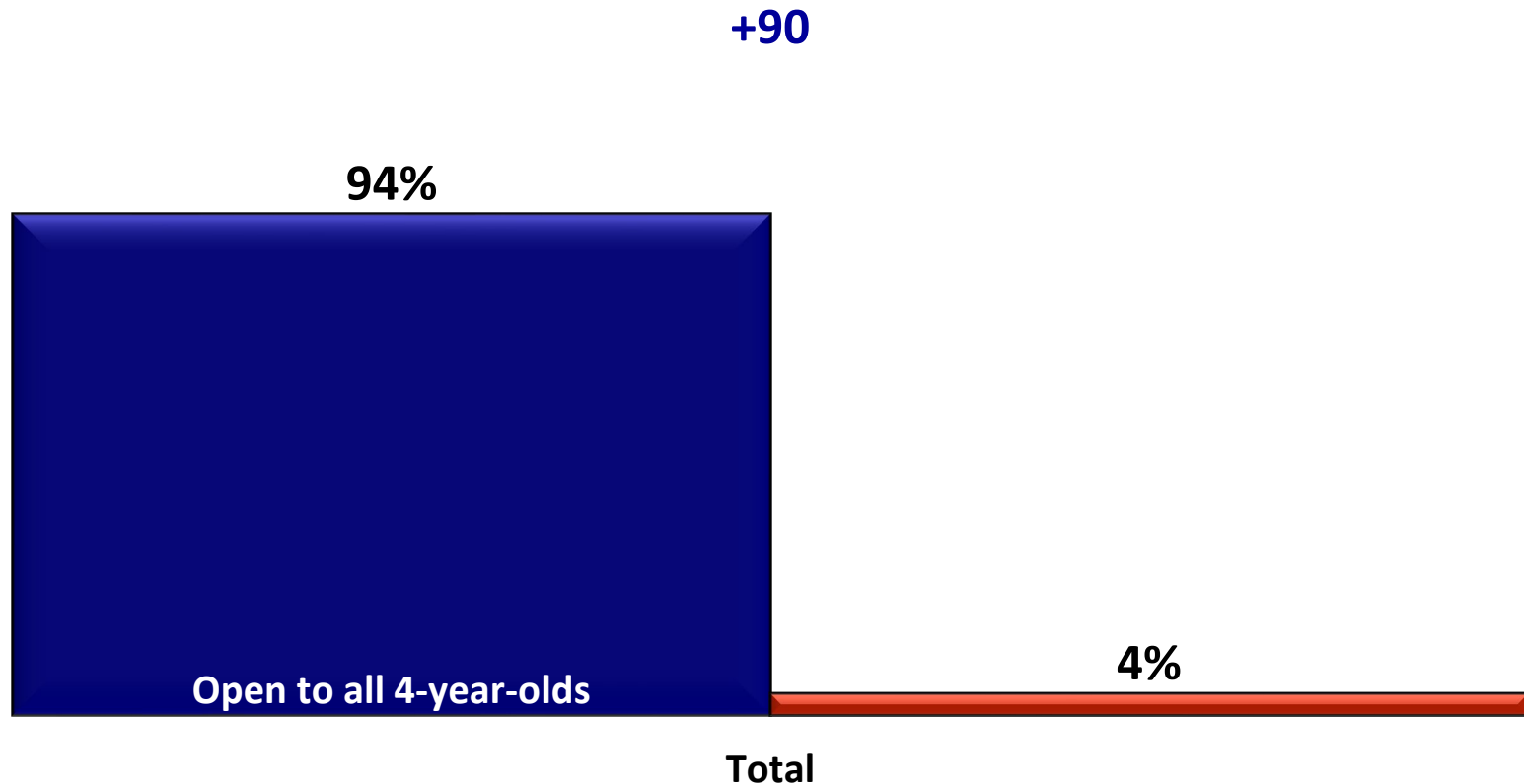
Partisan polarization is extreme but **one policy where Trump and Clinton voters overwhelmingly agree is expanding Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K program to all children. Fully, 94% of voters support it.**

In addition, 85% of voters -- including 79% of Republicans and 96% of Democrats -- support increasing state funding for the state's voluntary Pre-K program to ensure enough slots for all disadvantaged kids.

Moreover, 88% of Tennesseans – including 83% of Republicans and 96% of Democrats -- support increased state funding to ensure every 4 year old has the option to attend.

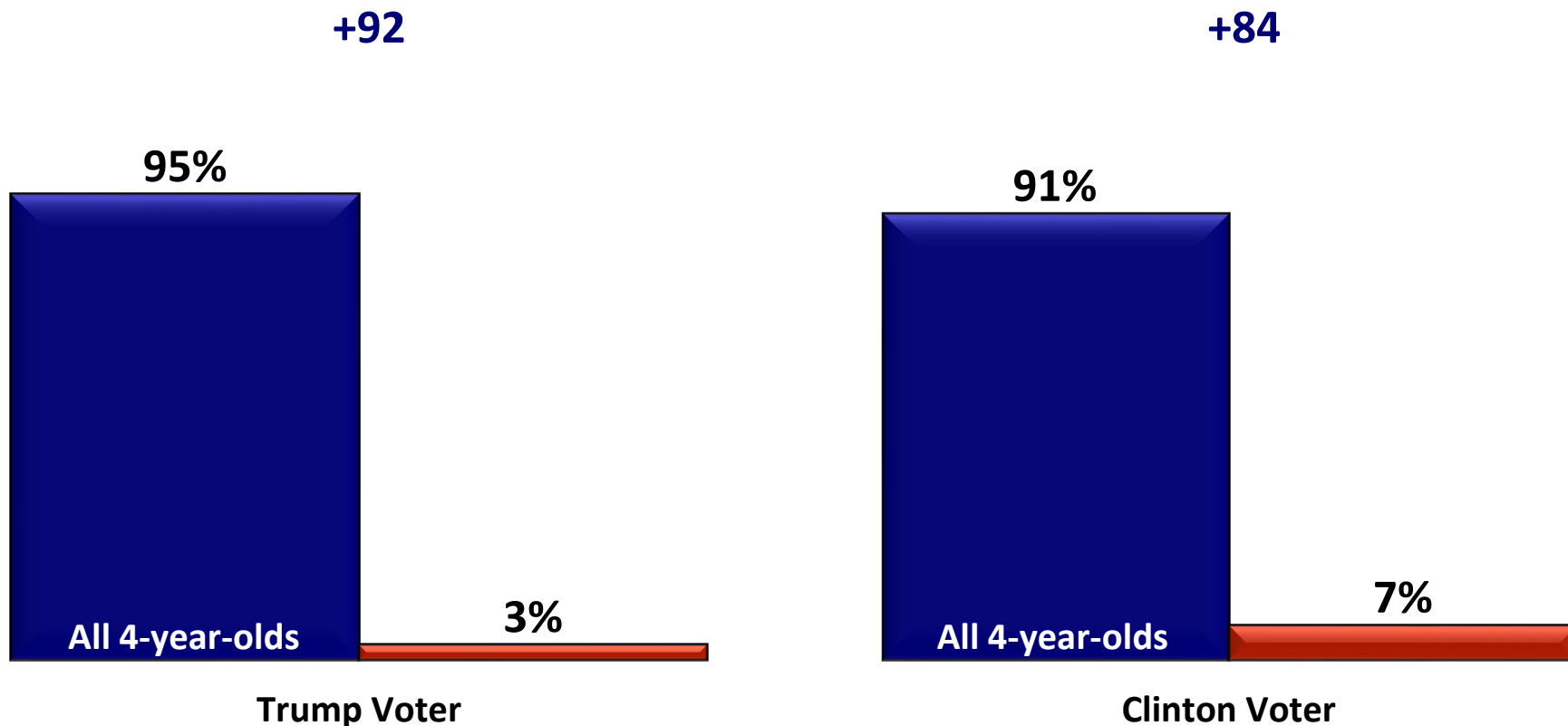
Nearly every voter supports expanding Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K for ALL 4-year-olds.

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?



Even Trump and Clinton voters are united.

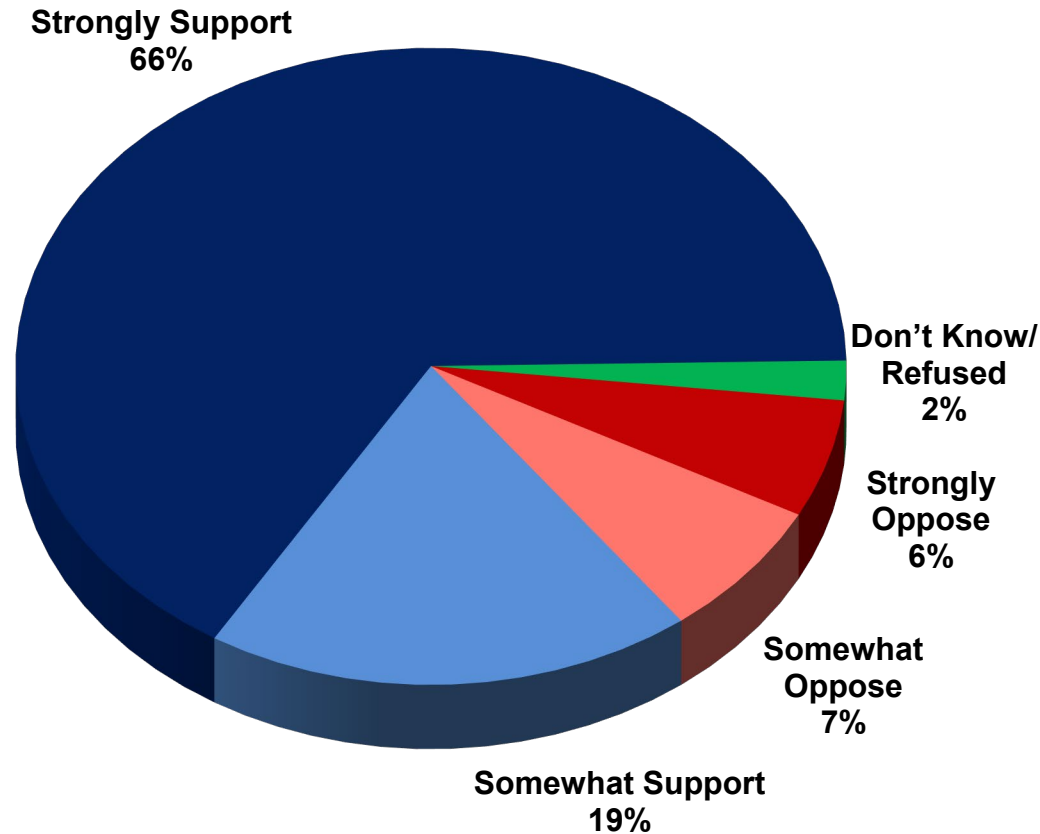
Support by 2016 Vote



Voters heavily endorse investing more in voluntary Pre-K programs 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?

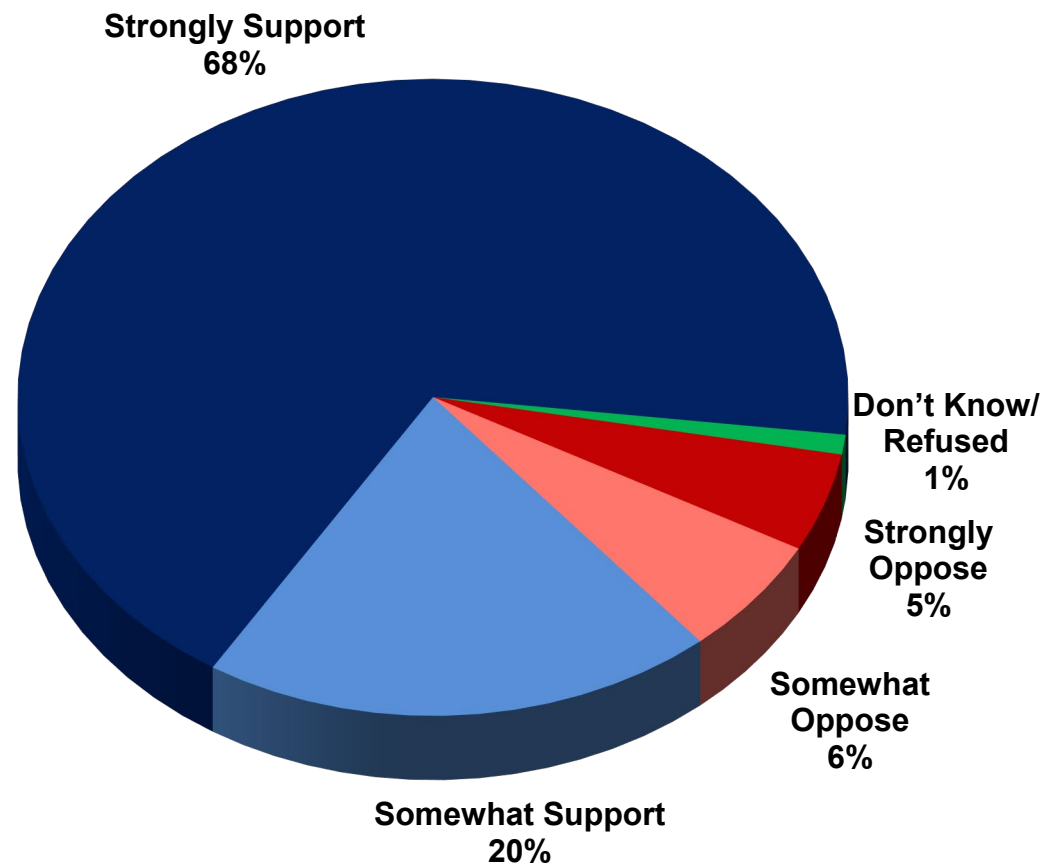
85% Total Support
13% Total Oppose



...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?

88% Total Support
11% Total Oppose





Key Findings #6 and #7

Tennesseans across the partisan divide believe childcare is critical for development and support investments to improve the system – including spending more of the federal aid available to the state.

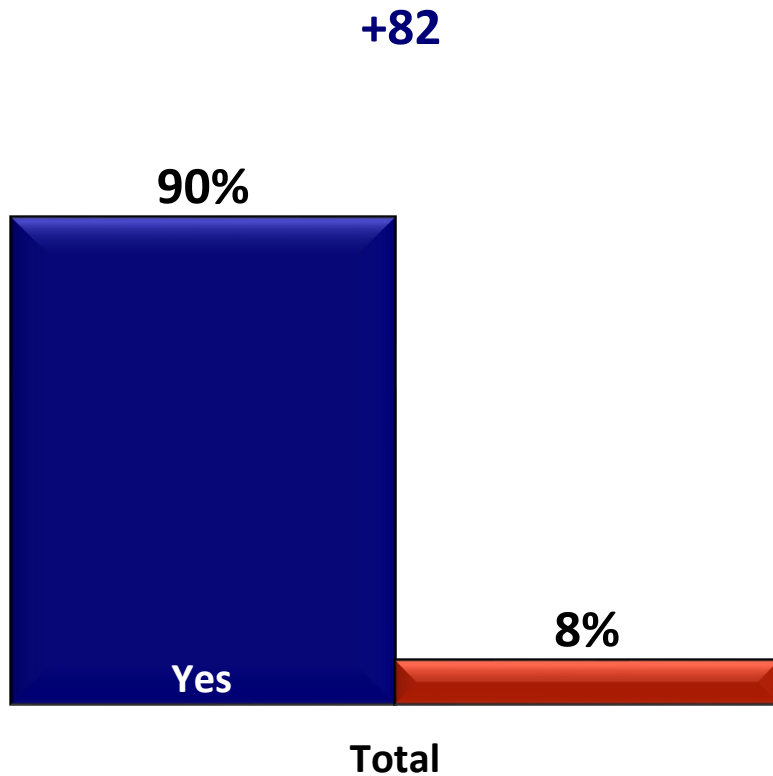
Ninety (90%) of voters believe childcare has a major impact on children’s kindergarten readiness. And, 87% believe quality childcare has a major impact on children’s long-term well-being and future job success.

Of the 5 childcare policies we proposed, the support is very strong, ranging from 89% to 82% across party lines.

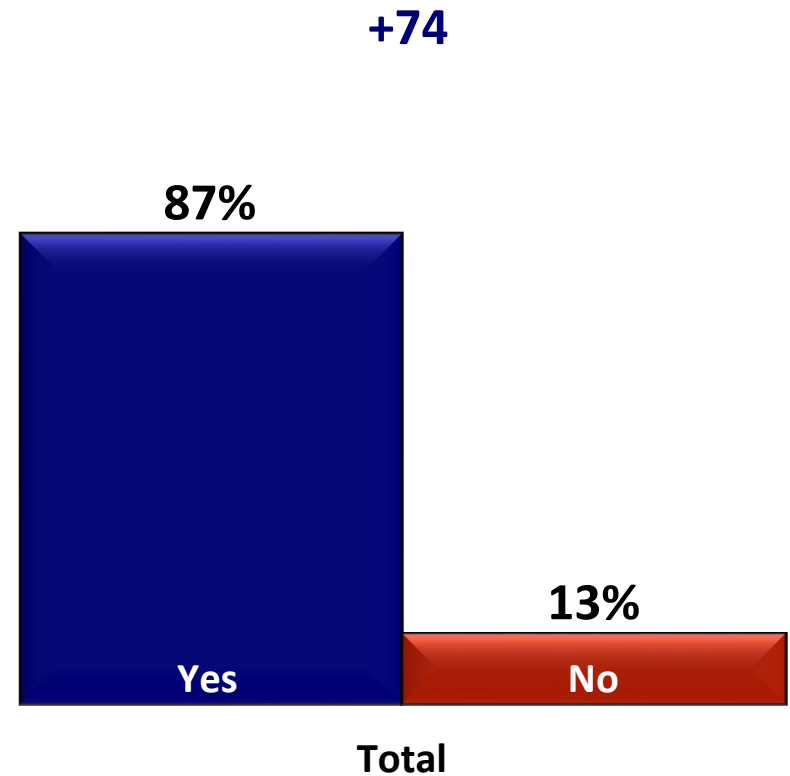
Moreover, 71% of voters support using more existing federal aid to improve Tennessee’s childcare system

Tennesseans acknowledge the importance of quality childcare to short-term and long-term success.

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



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



Initiatives to improve quality childcare programs enjoy wide bi-partisan support.

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.

% Total Favor

Invest more in teacher training and professional development to ensure childcare teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach young children.

89%

Expand state-subsidized childcare to cover more low and middle-income families so that parents can afford to work.

86%

Require all childcare teachers to complete a special training and be certified to teach young children.

85%

Quality Childcare Proposals – Part 2

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% Total Favor

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



82%

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



82%

Across party lines, voters support using more existing federal aid to improve Tennessee's childcare system.

Which ONE of the following statements is closer to your view:

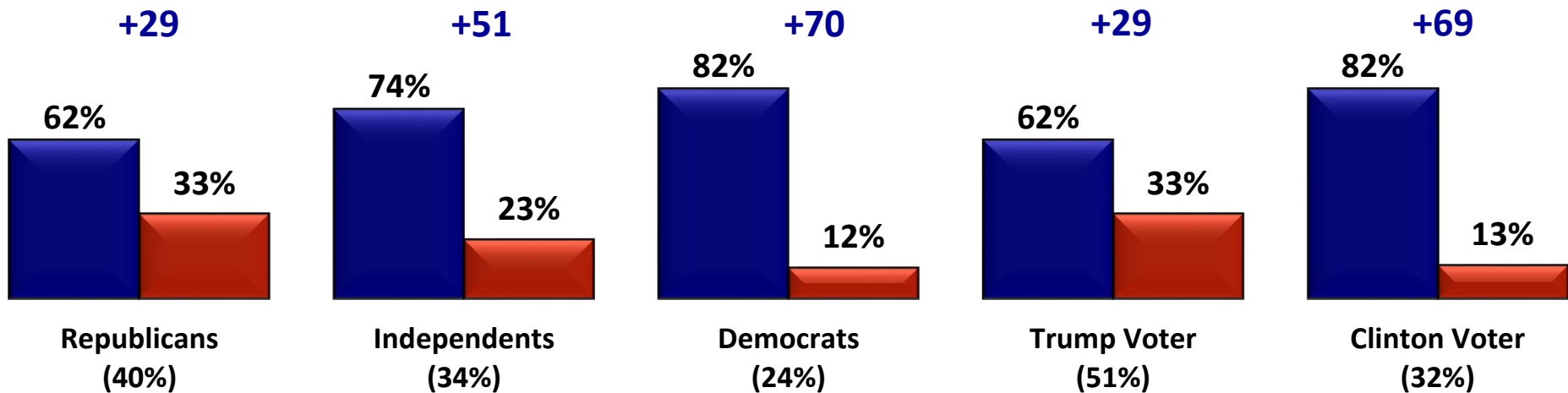
71%

SOME people say Tennessee should use ALL of the federal funding it receives because there are not enough quality, affordable child-care options for families. They say instead of sending our tax dollars to other states, the state could expand child-care options for Tennesseans.

24%

OTHER people say our government spends too much money. They say if government spent less, families could keep more of what they earn – that would do more to help families pay for child-care or other needs.

Total % by Party and by 2016 Vote





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